

• CHAPTER ONE •

*“I always thought if you could dream it up
you could pull it together.”*

—Michael Lang

JOHN ROBERTS: I went to the University of Pennsylvania with Joel’s brother, Douglas. And in the summer of 1966, Doug invited me out to his home in Huntington, Long Island, for a weekend of golf. We were joined on the golf course by Joel, and that was the way we met. That summer I was sort of up in the air about my plans. I was doing some graduate work at the Annenberg School of Communications in Philadelphia and I had a job down on Wall Street doing research for a small brokerage firm. I was pretty much up in the air about the Army. I was a reservist and I didn’t know when or if I would be called up. So I didn’t know what long-range plans I could make and I had no idea where I should live; Annenberg is in Philadelphia and Wall Street is in New York. I decided to take an apartment in New York and commute to Philadelphia and bunk in with a friend down in Philadelphia for the two or three nights I had to be there. By coincidence, Joel had just graduated from law school and was starting work as a lawyer in New York and was looking for an apartment. So we talked about sharing an apartment.

JOEL ROSENMAN: It was instantly a good relationship because he was able to give me so much help in my golf game. He was able to show me how to stand and correct my grip and realign my shots—generally offer a lot of sarcastic encouragement when I duck-hooked into the woods. He had a terrific sense of humor, which was initially the basis on which we had a relationship. We both liked to kid a lot and he is the master of that sort of thing. He is legendary for it.

I was a little uneasy about taking a place in New York City and moving there. It had always seemed bigger than I was. Not so much anymore, but in those days it was intimidating. And John seemed to know the city very well; he had been here for a good part of his life before I met him and I was grateful to have somebody who knew the ropes to share an apartment with. So we traipsed into the city a couple of times and we stayed at John’s dad’s place at U.N. Plaza. We were taken about by rental apartment agents and finally found a spot that seemed like the perfect setting for two young guys with not-so-unlimited capital who were interested in setting up in New York City: 85th and Third Avenue. It was a high-rise and we took an apartment on a very high floor. When you stood on the balcony, you could see east, south, and north a little bit. It was an intriguing beginning.

Half of the week John was gone, down in Philadelphia. My schedule was fairly nutty. I had a job at night with a band. We played all over New York—down at the Village at the Bitter End and at the clubs on Second and Third Avenue in the Seventies, which were pretty popular at the time. Live entertainment was much in demand at that time and we had

a pretty good act. It was a lot of fun. I was a singer and I played a variety of instruments, none of them very well.

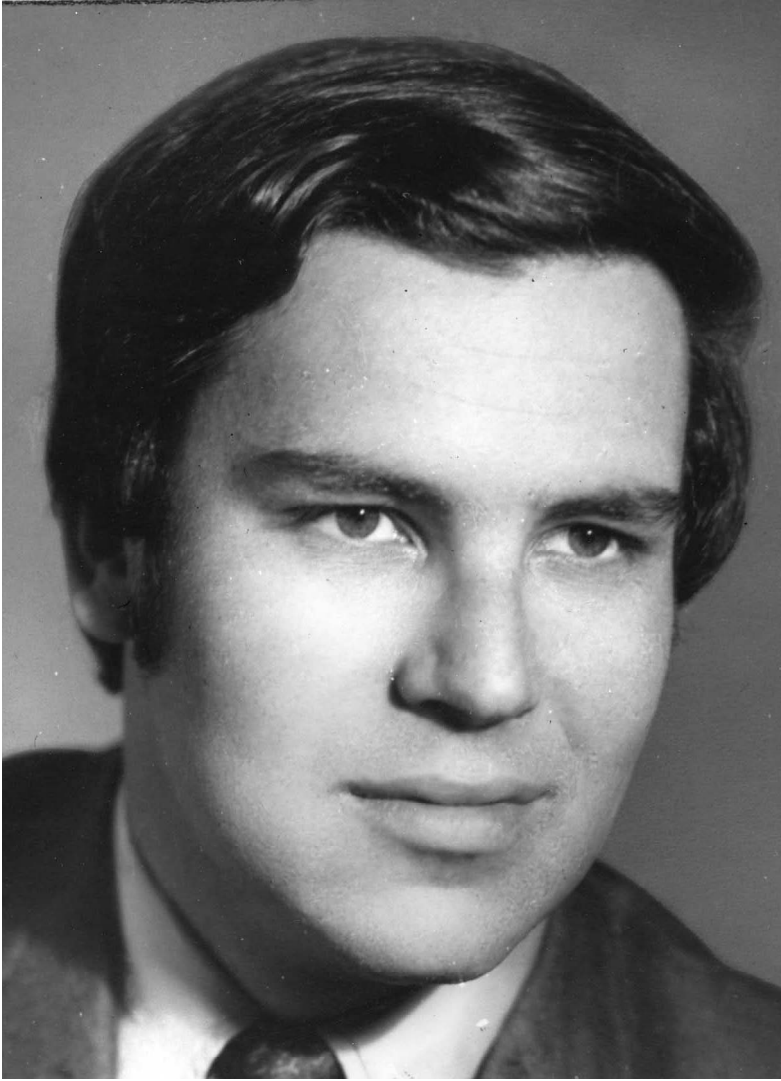
JOHN ROBERTS: That's not true, he played a very good guitar.

JOEL ROSENMAN: It was very exciting. At that time I was twenty-four, twenty-five years old, and it was just the greatest way to start out in New York City. You seemed to get to know everybody very quickly that way. The problem with that was that at the end of our last set it was frequently two, three in the morning and by the time you got home and got to bed it was three-thirty, four o'clock. And then I would have to be at this law firm at nine or ten in the morning. I was starting to get a little frayed at the edges after a while.

We used to talk about what we wanted to do with our lives. He would come up from Philadelphia after that sort of weekly commute, wondering why he was doing what he was doing at Annenberg. Neither one of us was really on a career path that we knew for sure, or even reasonably sure, was the right one. I used to think of entertainment as a fun thing to do, and so exciting, but something tipped me off—maybe it was those threadbare tuxedos on the backs of those forty-five-year-old guys that we were alternating sets with up in the mountains when we played in the mountains or out in Las Vegas when we played out there. And I remember thinking to myself, “These guys haven't made it and some of them were excellent musicians and better singers than I was.” And I remember thinking to myself, “This may not be the right thing to do with your life. It's fun for now but you should be doing something else.” And I would go to the office during the day and I remember thinking, “This can't be what you want to do with your life.” And yet those were such exhausting activities when combined that there was little room for anything else.

JOHN ROBERTS: As far as the Army was concerned, it was mostly trepidation. That was the fly in the ointment, as far as my life was concerned. I was in the Signal Corps in Fort Monmouth. And the build-up in Vietnam was going on and I didn't know if my unit would be called up and I'd be sent away. So it was very difficult for me to think of long-range planning. I kind of knew from working down on Wall Street that I didn't like that kind of environment much. And I knew from the courses I was taking at the Annenberg School that I liked that a lot. I liked writing and I liked entertainment and I thought if I had a real predilection it was going to be towards that field in some sort of way. There wasn't quite the urgency in the sixties to plug yourself into something every minute of the day. In other words, today as I see it, you go from educational achievement to educational achievement to job to advancement, and so on, and there is no breathing space. In the mid- sixties, you could take some time out and figure out a rational plan. No one succeeded in doing that, but we all succeeded in trying to do it anyway. I came from that school of thought—that I didn't want to rush into my life.

I came from a wealthy family. My mother had been the daughter of the founder of a proprietary drug company. He had died shortly before she died and left her a share in that company, the Block Drug Company.



John Roberts

And when she died, she left her interest in the company to my brothers and myself. It was in a trust fund. And I inherited when I was twenty-one about a quarter of a million dollars. For a bachelor in 1966, that was very nice.

Joel and I decided that we would really like to do some writing together. As we lived with each other more, we were drawn to each other as friends and found that the most enjoyable part of either of our day was in interacting together. Joel has always been a fine writer with a fine sense of style and loved to write, and we thought we would like to do some TV writing—sitcoms. I had identified this as a field that was right for exploitation by two people who didn't have the patience or discipline to write anything else.

This started out as a lark entirely. We came to the idea of writing a sitcom about two young men with a lot of money who get into business adventures. There had been a series on detectives and doctors and law-

yers and architects, but there had never been anything on businessmen. In fact, “businessmen” was kind of a bad word in the mid-sixties. But we thought this would have the makings of a very enjoyable sitcom and we were encouraged in that belief by a number of contacts in that field. The only problem was that we didn’t have enough business experience to come up with episodes. So we decided to solve that problem by taking out an ad in *The Wall Street Journal*: YOUNG MEN WITH UNLIMITED CAPITAL LOOKING FOR INTERESTING AND LEGITIMATE BUSINESS IDEAS. It was a little ad in the Business Opportunities section.

We ran the ad for two weeks and we got seven thousand responses, many of which, by the way, were from writers who also thought it was a very good idea; they wanted to know what such an ad would bring. Some of the responses were marvelous. Power sources from the eighth dimension. Edible golf balls that were biodegradable. You know, if you lost it in the woods, the woodchucks would get it. And that ilk. But tucked in amongst these responses were some very intriguing business ideas.

So in the summer of 1967, Joel and I stepped out from behind the anonymity of our box number and actually contacted some of these people and began to explore these things as kind of sidelight to the rest of our lives. And through a path that is circuitous and not particularly germane, one contact led to another and another and we ended up meeting a couple of guys who wanted to build a recording studio here in New York. They came to us for capital and for partnership—essentially, to run the business end of it while they ran the musical end of it. We liked them, we liked the idea, and we liked the field, and we struck a deal. We went out and raised the money and borrowed some money from the bank and brought some other people into it, and lo and behold, Media Sound was born and it went on to all kinds of success over the years. It was a very successful operation.

Miles Lourie knew that we had been putting together this studio operation and he called us in February of ’69. Miles was an attorney in New York and he had Michael Lang as a client. He said, “I have a couple of clients who are very interested in building a recording studio in Woodstock, New York. I know that you and Joel have been involved in building one in New York City. Would you meet with them?” We said, “Sure. What’s on the table?” And Miles said, “Well, they are looking for some advice and maybe some capital, and I don’t know what could come of it but the guys are about your age. They are a little different than you are.” I remember Miles telling us, “Don’t be put off by the long hair and the garb. But why don’t you sit and see what comes of it?”

MICHAEL LANG: I moved to Florida to open a head shop in ’66. I think a friend of mine had one in the East Village of New York. There were a couple of others opening, and Peter Max, who I’d met then, was just starting one, and it was kind of in the middle of that whole era. And I’d been to Coconut Grove before and I wanted to get out of New York for a while. The idea of the shop kind of intrigued me. And so we moved to Florida.

The shop became kind of a center for the whole little movement that was going on down there. We started a little newspaper and started

having concerts in the local park and things like that, and that's how we got the idea for the Miami Pop Festival. It was kind of quick—it was like two and a half weeks from inception to production. It was at Gulfstream Racetrack and I flew up to New York and met with a guy named Hector Morales. We booked the show and put the production together, mostly through a studio called Criteria Sound. We had three stages made from flatbed trailers, and it was in the middle of a drought, I remember, the thirty-day drought. The morning before the show they went out to the Everglades and seeded the clouds. That was our first experience with rain.

I'd just moved back from Miami and the guy that I was in business with in Miami, Don Keider, who's a drummer, had moved to New York a few months before and had formed a band. And when I got to New York he asked me if I would help him out and manage the band. I had no experience but I thought, "You know, sure. Why not?" Don and I were good friends. So I did, and we were trying to get a record deal and one of the guys in the band, a guy named Abbie Rader, knew Artie Kornfeld, or knew of Artie, and suggested that I call. I did and he said, "Come on up." He was vice president of Capitol Records in New York. So I went up to his office in New York and that's how I met him.

ARTIE KORNFELD: In 1967-68, I was vice president of Capitol Records. I ran production for the East Coast—"contemporary production" was what they called it in those days. I think I was the first company freak. I didn't have long hair but I thought head-wise. I was a head. I was one of the first executives to break through and I was twenty-four. I had just finished the Cowsills. I wrote and produced all the Cowsills' stuff. I had written about twenty-five or thirty hits in the sixties and then became a producer and executive.

And anyway, my secretary said, "There's a Michael Lang here to see you." And I said, "Who's Michael Lang?" And she said, "He said he's from the neighborhood." And I said, "Well, if he's from the neighborhood, tell him to come in." Bensonhurst. It's a section of Brooklyn that's all Jewish and Italian. That's how he got in to see me; by saying he was from the neighborhood.

I think it was the days of hash, and I might have been standing on my desk at Capitol smoking hash when he walked in. I'm not sure. But he had great Colombian and we started to talk. He told me he had just gotten thrown out of his head shop by the police in Miami. He told me his story. He had a band called the Train—which was Garland Jeffries and Mickey Thomas and Ronnie Keever—which sounded not so good on tape, and he started to hang out with my late wife Linda and myself. The three of us were like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and that went on for months. I gave him a deal because I liked him, so I signed the band for like five thousand or ten thousand dollars. I took him in one night, Michael, and we got drunk and nothing really came out on the tapes or anything. So nothing became of the act, but Michael was sort of down and out at that point financially. And I had quite a bit of money because I had just had the Cowsills, and I was a writer, the producer, the publisher, and their manager. Michael started to hang out with Linda and I—every

night we would sit and talk, sit and talk. As I remember it, Michael was telling me about the Miami Pop that he had worked on—this festival that didn't quite happen but had Hendrix.

MICHAEL LANG: I had been thinking about doing a series of concerts in Woodstock. Sort of making it a summer, like in Newport. And I had mentioned it to Artie. We used to kick it around every now and then, and then the idea of opening a recording studio up there, because it was such a good area for that. Bands liked it and there were a lot of people living there—The Band and Janis Joplin and her band and Dylan and parts of Blood, Sweat, and Tears—just lots of different producers and a lot of musicians coming in and out. So Artie and I used to get together and kick that around for a couple of months and at one point, one evening, we thought, “Well, what if we did it all at once?” because I had this experience in Miami of the festival, which was really amazing to me—it was extraordinary in the reaction of the people that came. I mean they sort of seemed transfixed and transformed in a way that evening, in Miami, so I guess that was in the back of my mind. So in discussion

Michael Lang



with Artie the idea sort of took form. And we thought, “Well, it would probably be a good idea to do this festival,” I remember at the time, “and the studio also,” and one sort of evolved out of the other, “and make it a yearly event.” Great way to kick it off, and it was also a great way to sort of culminate all these smaller events that had been going on for the past couple of years. Just get everybody together and look at each other and see what we’re here about.

ARTIE KORNFELD: And it just sort of came together. Michael talks about “How did it all happen?” He says, “Talking with Artie.” And I would say that’s how it happened. Talking with Michael and Linda. I always feel Linda had as much to do with it as Michael or I. She was the spiritual figure. She was a spiritual part of the three of us. I was the music business guy and Michael was the hippie and Linda was in the middle. She was the spirit.

When people say they never knew what was going to happen, if you ask Michael—this was before Joel and John—or if Linda was alive, we knew what was going to happen because we guessed. People would come. We talked about rain and what would happen. It would probably be a free concert because you never could control a crowd that big. And what the political ramifications would be. And we talked about how it would have to be nonpolitical to be political. And how we would have to deal. That was basically talked out that night, that first night, probably behind some Colombian blond, which had something to do with it. Overachieving, pseudo-intellectual Jewish kids with an idea that came from outside of us, I believe. It was the culture.

And Michael, because of his head shop and his Florida connections in that area and what he had seen, and my connections through the music business and what I had seen on the music side—you know, there was an instant connection on what had to be. I prefer to think it came from some power greater than us. And even though we get a certain amount of notoriety and fame and credit, I really don’t think it—not looking to sound humble—I really don’t think that we’re that much different from anybody else that was there, except our job was to do it. It was our gig. It was like producing a record and promoting a record.

MICHAEL LANG: We took it to Miles Lourie. I don’t remember where Miles came from other than it’s possible that he must of been Artie’s lawyer before that ‘cause I didn’t know many people in the business at all.

ARTIE KORNFELD: Miles said he knew some guys who were putting up a studio and they wanted to invest.

MICHAEL LANG: I don’t remember if we went to see John and Joel about the studio or about the festival at first. John and Joel had just become involved with Media Sound. I don’t know what the intent of the meeting was.

JOEL ROSENMAN: At that time, we were kind of practiced in listening to anything. We had been seduced away from our true calling as sitcom writers quite easily as you can see—one letter in seven thousand was enough

**Nixon, Sworn
in as 37th
President,
Declares
Himself to
Search for
World Peace**

Times
New York, N.Y.
January 21, 1969

to distract us. And I think from the beginning we were entrepreneurs looking for an accident to happen. We would look at anything. And although we privately agreed several times before they arrived that the last thing we wanted to do was put the other big toe in before we knew what was happening to the first big toe in New York, we were ready to listen. I was personally kind of intrigued by the warning that we had had from Miles Lourie about these guys, who I expected to be pretty exotic-looking hippies when they came in.

And, in fact, they were. When they arrived, dress-wise they were quite different from us because we were making an effort to look like businessmen at the time, in the hopes that we were becoming the same. They were making an effort to look like entertainment people on the leading edge of entertainment, meaning a lot of fringe, a lot of denim, a lot of buckskin, a lot of cowboy boots, and a great deal of hair. And so we couldn't have represented more distant ends of the spectrum.

JOHN ROBERTS: We were, in fact, the same age. Lang and I were both twenty-three and Joel and Artie were both twenty-five. So we were exact contemporaries.

JOEL ROSENMAN: Our apartment doubled as an office for us. You could tell you were in the office, thanks to a venture we elected not to get into, which was a light-box display device for use in windows in banks or whatever to illuminate the latest interest rate on your savings account. We had a sign made up by these people as a demo for us, and featured in front of this sign was our corporate name, which at that time was Challenge International Limited, which we thought was an impressive name, something that would inspire people to do business with us and sound worldwide—global. And so we would flip on this switch and the name Challenge International Limited would spring to life in kind of an ultra-violet intensity, almost a neon look. It's embarrassing to recall it now, but at the time this kind of signaled to us that we had gone from our apartment to our office. And that, with the tie and jacket, made us official.

At the same time, these guys looked as if they had just fallen backward off some rock-concert stage somewhere, or out of a recording studio, and we were not unfamiliar with this type because of the work we were doing with Media Sound. But we had never really had an intimate conversation with them about business or projects. We were curious.

JOHN ROBERTS: We were learning as we were going along—everything. A law school education or liberal arts degree were not great qualifications, as we discovered, for figuring out what to do in business or how to collect a receivable or work with an acoustical engineer, or any of the things that we had chosen to start doing in our lives. So we were very open to any kind of new experience. And meeting Lang and Kornfeld—we kind of felt this was our marketplace here. These were the people that would be using our studio. It was something we were both excited to do. I guess we figured our wit would get us by under all circumstances.

JOEL ROSEMAN: And it was clear they wanted something from us, which meant that we could sit and listen. And the tale that they unfolded was an essentially uninteresting tale about the need for a recording studio in Woodstock, New York. They impressed us with the superstars who lived in Woodstock, but they failed to make a case, we felt, for spending the money to construct a huge facility for these stars. We knew enough already, even though we hadn't yet opened our doors at Media Sound, about what it takes to make a recording studio profitable. It takes more than a few albums by a few superstars, no matter how great they are, because the fact they are going to sell a million albums does not increase your rates and does not, unfortunately, increase the amount of time they will book at the studio to produce that album. It takes a lot of little work—tape copies and advertising jingles and fill-in work in and around those superstars.

JOHN ROBERTS: My recollection was that Michael said almost nothing the entire meeting. He'd had the beatific smile. Occasionally, he would say something, but it was almost always monosyllabic and a little mysterious. Some of his comments or interjections felt like nonsequiturs. It was like he was hearing a different tune.

I think one time he was talking about an experience he had—how his mind could leave his body. And he just knew things. He told me once that he had come back to an apartment that he was sharing with some friend, and I remember he said, "I couldn't go through the door." And he left it there. And I said, "What do you mean, you couldn't go through the door?" He said, "I couldn't get through that door, man." And he would just say it and smile at me. And I was thinking, "What is the purpose of this anecdote?" But Michael is an intelligent man and there was always something that he wanted to say to you that you should listen to. So I dug a little deeper and I said, "Was the door locked? Why didn't you open the door and go through it?" He said, "There was a drug bust going down inside." And the obvious question was, "How did you know that?" And he said, "It was the vibes." And he would just leave things like that—mysterious, almost Eastern in his intonations. Until this day, I don't know if Michael was putting that locution together for some effect or because that's just where his mind was. But that was sort of the way Michael would talk when he spoke at all. It was in short phrases that had a great deal of import, or you were expected to read a great deal of import beyond what he was saying.

ARTIE KORNFELD: I was the talker, Michael was the vibe. I was in my suit and still had short hair. I had just come off producing and writing a lot of hits, and they were sort of impressed by that. And Michael made a big impression because he was the only guy with long hair on the block. Michael didn't say much. He just sat there being hip. I wasn't hip yet. I could relate because I was president of my class at Adelphi, even though I did get thrown out for cheating. And Michael was the high school dropout but was in Mensa. I think he said he was in Mensa; I don't know for sure. And I liked Joel and John. I liked the fact that they had a lot of money. We didn't need a lot. We just needed the seed money to start it.

**FCC Seeks Ban
On
Cigarette Ads
Over Radio, TV**

*Post
Washington, D.C.
February 6, 1969*

MICHAEL LANG: I liked John a lot immediately. He was a really sincere, forthright kind of guy. And Joel, I wasn't sure. I don't know, I liked Joel too; he seemed nice. I guess he was less exposed than John, but I liked them. I thought they were kind of typical—I mean, you would describe them as yuppies today. They looked like that kind but they seemed, you know, curious and bright and—I mean, our values were kind of different at the time. But I liked them. Artie did, too. I think they were maybe closer to Artie's way of life anyway. I think that they thought I had just landed from the moon or something, because every once in a while you'd see sort of a look of incredulity.

ARTIE KORNFELD: I thought when I first met them that it seemed obvious that John was the power. John looked like the rich kid and Joel looked like the professional friend of the rich kid. They roomed together, they went through college together, and Joel's dad was a dentist and John obviously was the money, the big money. I liked John automatically and Joel I wanted to like and he wanted to like me but I felt a competition immediately.

JOHN ROBERTS: Kornfeld was much more a sort of caricature version of what we were used to dealing with. He was a businessman, but he was in a business that we had no experience with. He was an A&R man at Capitol Records and as a result of that there was a lot of giggling and high fives and late sixties drug rap and expressions and jiving. And he was just as charming as they come, Artie was.

JOEL ROSENMAN: He was invariably confident, up, very up—very, very, very, very up—and, in retrospect, a trained salesman, so that he was extremely alert for anything that we responded to positively. We were at a loss to determine what the purpose was of this other fellow in the room. Michael came on much more slowly and I think he had very little to say. He came in every now and then, but just muttered something and I remember that he seemed shy or diffident or both but comfortable with the little that he had to say. Artie was all over everybody all of the time. He was like a big puppy, very enthusiastic and very engaging. You wanted to be around this guy and be his friend, just to have as much fun as he was having with everything that he was doing. I enjoyed him a lot.

JOHN ROBERTS: The substance of Artie's self was quite beguiling also. What Artie said was basically that Woodstock was the center for artists and that a recording studio there would have a natural constituency and that if the four of us wonderful young men were to get together to do this, it would be a success. Because we all brought such disparate and wonderful expertises to the doing of this venture. And it was enormously illogical but strangely flattering to sit with Artie Kornfeld and hear him tell you what a great businessman you were, and what a genius your partner Joel was, and how you had just the right skills to make this into the biggest and best recording studio that the world had ever seen. You sat there thinking, "Is he noticing something that I'm not?" And yet your natural tendency was to believe this guy. Artie said, "I already bring to this the fact that I

am one of the most successful A&R men at Capitol Records. That Alan Livingston, the president of Capitol Records, is a close, personal friend. And I can use those contacts to bring all of Capitol's recording artists."

Michael's role was different. He was a) living in Woodstock at the time and b) a man of the people. He knew all of the local people up there; they trusted him. All you'd have to do is to present Mike Lang and you could see that it was a hip business, and this was not a business where you would be ripped off. He would be responsible for creating the environment, and, in fact, would run the recording studio. He was there as the operations guy. He spoke the language, he knew the people, he knew recording, he knew music. Artie would be the business getter.

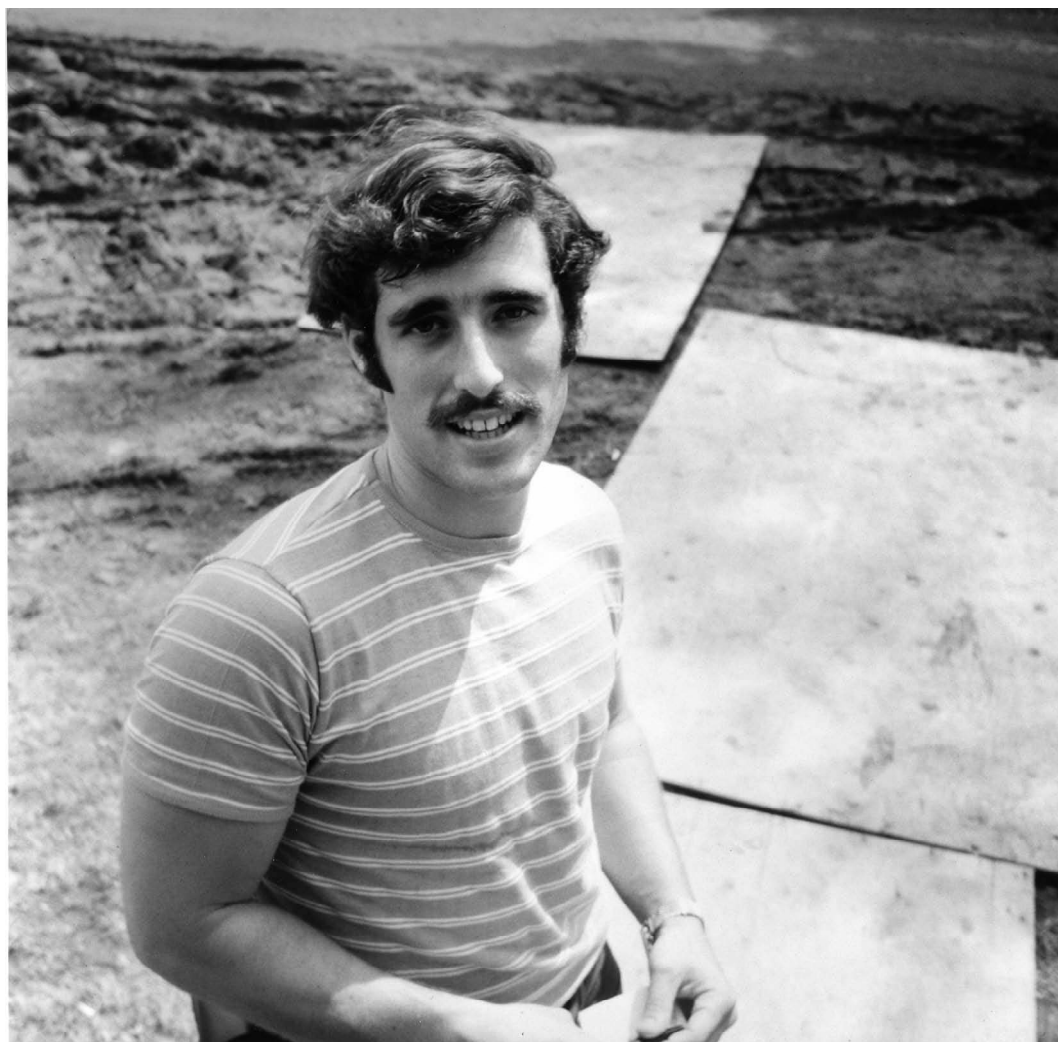
MICHAEL LANG: John and Joel seemed pretty interested when we saw them. It was pretty funny actually. I mean we were sort of from different worlds, the four of us. We expressed the ideas and I remember that John thought it was kind of cute. And I think in terms of the studio I think he was less interested at that meeting because they were so ensconced in their own studio. We left with them thinking about it, and I think we—I don't remember if we'd come to them with a budget that day or if we were going to come back with a budget the next day, or something like that happened. Probably we were going to bring one back; I don't think we would have come with a budget.

We had, in the interim, seen other people, and I think it was Larry Utall who had expressed a desire to go ahead with the project. Someone that Artie knew. And I remember that Joel in particular and John, too, I guess, was very disappointed, frustrated by the fact. I guess they were trying to get going in their own business and larger entities, that when they'd come up with a deal someone would always come up and grab it from them. So they expressed something like that. In any case, we liked them a lot. We thought it would perhaps be more interesting to do it with John and Joel. And we started to have some meetings to put the deal together.

JOEL ROSEMAN: We had this stock response when we weren't sure how the other one thought about it and I think Artie did so much of the talking and John and I did so much listening and so little back and forth with him, except asking the questions that we already knew to ask from the Media Sound project. We let him get out of the door and then we turned to each other and tried to figure it out.

JOHN ROBERTS: We had actually been a little politer than that because we had asked them if they had anything on paper, which is a fairly standard way to conclude a meeting and to gently get you from the first meeting to the second meeting. In this instance, they had nothing on paper unfortunately. If they'd had something on paper they could have left it behind and we could have called them or called Miles Lourie and said, "Really, we're not terribly interested." But they said, "No, we'll get you something." So that created the momentum for another meeting.

ARTIE KORNFELD: I had closed enough deals in the music business that



Joel Rosenman

I knew this was a deal. They had to go to their lawyer. And I remember Michael said, "Give me five." Michael always had the hip expressions. He was the first guy that I heard say, "Right on." Michael always had the expressions.

JOHN ROBERTS: I don't know how many days later they met with us but I know Miles called that afternoon to say that his clients had had the most fantastic meeting of their entire career. And they thought that we were just the two greatest guys that they had met, and they were just so looking forward to working with us on this project. And I think Joel and I said something like, "Whoa. We weren't all that excited about their idea. They're getting us more detailed information on it. Miles, this is not a done deal." Miles said, "Well, there was a lot of good feeling created in that meeting. And I just have a feeling that you guys are going to do something together," or words to that effect. And in fairly short order, we had a proposal presented to us by Michael and Artie.

JOEL ROSENMAN: Within a very short period of time, we had enough written material to look at so that we knew conclusively between ourselves that this was not the kind of project that we wanted to get involved in. One of the questions that we asked them, because we were so keen on promoting the recording studio in Manhattan, was, “How are you going to let people know about the recording studio up in the woods? The locals are going to know—and we admit that these locals are not yokels—but what about the rest of the world that you need to make your studio go?” I think that tipped them off to the need for a promotional gimmick, and the promotional gimmick that they came up with was a press party to which they were going to invite recording studio execs from New York, recording studio budget people from the record companies, managers, artists—anybody they could get who had anything to do with the recording industry. They were going to ferry these people up to New York somehow—by bus, limo, whatever—and premier the studio that way. And in their written proposal they had a budget for this press party. There was nothing in there for talent because, as Michael or Artie explained to us in the second discussion, the talent was going to perform for free. They would be going to be so happy to have a recording studio in the neighborhood so they wouldn’t have to hassle with New York City that they would just donate their services. Bob Dylan was going to hum a few tunes for free at the press party.

It was that little addendum to their project proposal that caught our eye. I remember saying to John, “This is really a yawn, don’t you think?” And he said, “There’s no way we would want to get into this project.” And I said, “But you know the idea of having a concert with those stars. Why don’t we just skip the studio idea and just do a big concert? We could make a fortune.” And he said, “This is not what they’re proposing.” And I said, “These guys will go for anything.” I was wrong about that. They fought tooth and nail because they had already been to a couple of concerts. They knew what a rocky road you had to travel. They knew how difficult it was to get through a rock concert with your wallet and your hide intact.

It turned out, in retrospect—and we did a lot of thinking about this—that Michael and Artie were approaching us out of a desire to make their lives a little more conservative. They were thinking about being family men; Artie had just had a daughter. These guys had been through a lot of hell-raising as entertainment creatures. And what they wanted was something a little more stable. They wanted that recording studio. They wanted it for reasons that we couldn’t even conceive of. We were looking for excitement. They were looking for some stability. And they regarded that asset—a recording studio, with a lot of equipment, and a clientele, and a reputation, and a piece of property—as stable, conservative, dependable, unexciting but comforting aspects of the entertainment business. They had had their fill of excitement, I think. And when we started talking about concerts—well, the last concert that they had been involved with Michael had nearly been killed in Miami because of something to do with somebody who didn’t like what he—I don’t even know the story well enough to repeat it, but it wasn’t attractive. And they knew that these things were risky and unpleasant, or could be. So they shied away from our suggestion that we turn the project upside down, explode the

press party into a big concert, and sidetrack or forget about the recording studio. They thought this was pretty dangerous talk.

As it turned out later, after considerable back and forth over the next couple of weeks, they were willing—maybe they didn't have another good project cooking or something—to go ahead with this notion of doing a concert. And we agreed that if they would do that, with the profits from the concert we would build a recording studio in Woodstock. To which Michael said, "Fine, I have just the place to put it." He had a piece of property that we could construct this studio on.

JOHN ROBERTS: That recording studio remained uppermost in their minds—in Michael's mind, certainly—all the way through. I can remember that the weekend of the festival itself, Michael and I were tooling around on his motorcycle placating landholders on Friday afternoon. And at some point he said, to me, "If we take a bath here, does that mean we won't build the recording studio?" And I said, "Well, Michael, the understanding was that we'd use the profits from this venture to build the recording studio." And I'm thinking, "How can he be thinking about that? The gates aren't up, the people are spread all over other people's land. It's not clear that the performers are going to arrive, there's fifty thousand people in the performance area, and he's thinking about that recording studio."

MICHAEL LANG: I thought that I could pull anything off. I've always thought that. I've always had that kind of confidence. I always thought if you could dream it up you could pull it together. And that was really my attitude with John and Joel in those days. I was pretty much staying in the background in the beginning of our negotiations but then, you just have a sense of how things can happen. And I knew that I would know how to make it work. I mean I had an image in my mind of what it had to be. And I knew that I could make that a reality.

Frankly, making a fortune was not an issue for me, probably to everybody's—as far as the four of us were concerned—disappointment, ultimately. But profit was not really a motive for me. I mean, sure, I thought there was an investment, we should make money, but I just wanted to see the event happen. And it wasn't even for fame at that point, either. I mean it was the notoriety, it was to have a dream come true. It was the doing of it that was, I think, my motivation.

JOHN ROBERTS: They had nothing else. These guys were open to anything. Artie was in the process of leaving Capitol Records. I don't know whether that was voluntary or involuntary—I really to this day don't know. He was casting around for other things to do.

ARTIE KORNFELD: Capitol was not thrilled with me anymore because all of a sudden these longhairs started to show up at Capitol Records in New York and that was a new experience.

JOHN ROBERTS: Michael was doing God-knows-what at that time. No, I know what he doing: He was managing a group that he had been trying to sell to Artie at Capitol Records, the Train.

JOEL ROSENMAN: Train was having some problems. I think they were a good group. They were sort of a heavy metal group, as I recall, and the problem was that they would get a gig and get paid for the gig and then they would have to give most of it back because of some damage that might have occurred to the plate-glass window in front of the store or the chairs or the bar or something like that. And Michael was kind of breaking even at that time.

MICHAEL LANG: I eventually made a deal with John and Joel, making our organization the manager of Train, but Train just turned into a disaster. It just sort of fell apart in some ways. There's a lot of talent in the group, but it was just very unruly and unmanageable. Garland Jeffries was in the band and a guy named Bob Lenox and Don Tyler and Abbie Rader. Don went on to have a pretty decent career on his own. And so did Bob actually. Bob went to Europe; he was always a talented, gifted keyboard player.

JOHN ROBERTS: This is Roberts and Rosenman at their most gullible, I suppose, but once we got into bed with these guys, so to speak, we—and I think it's our way—embraced them as partners. And Michael and Artie—Artie in particular—had a much broader vision of what we could do together than we did. And you can read your own motivation into this, but Artie thought that Woodstock a) was an important name and would become increasingly important as our efforts succeeded, and that we should trademark that name and b) that we should form all kinds of Woodstock companies, all of which could tie in together. There should be Woodstock Realty, that owned the land on which the recording studio was to be built. There was Woodstock Management, that would manage the artists that would be signed to our own company. There would be Woodstock Records that would record them. There would be Woodstock Publishing, Woodstock This, etc. And as our very first recording group, he said, "Look, Mike Lang is going to be the guy with the most experience in producing this festival. He's going to sign the acts. He shouldn't have to worry about this group the Train that he's managing, and for ten thousand dollars"—or some sum of money like that—"we should set up a company, take them off his hands, and we'll all own it together."

We found ourselves managing a hard-rock group. I think inside of maybe two weeks they threw one table too many through a plate-glass window and became permanently exiled from the music scene, as far as I know. I know Michael and Artie became quite evasive on the subject. But as I recall, the Train derailed very shortly after we signed them.

JOEL ROSENMAN: There was an affinity between Michael and Artie. Artie was the substantial character, at least it appeared that way. He had the home—it was a nicely furnished home—and Michael was bunking in with him and he had the job and money.

ARTIE KORNFELD: I had just come off having big money, and to me, coming from a poor family, six hundred thousand dollars earned in a year in 1967 was a lot of money. But I was using it to support Michael's trips

**900 Students
Routed From
Wisconsin U.**

*Tribune
Chicago, Ill.
February 12, 1969*

and my trips at that point. Michael didn't have any money. Eventually, he started to miss his bus up to Woodstock more and more and he started to hang out—I lived right off Sutton Place at 56th and First. And the cars. I remember I had a new car from Capitol that Michael borrowed and when it came back, the stereo was missing. I remember when he brought it back, it was all banged up. And I had my Stingray that I bought Linda for her birthday. I was a poor kid that had just got rich. And Michael was a rich kid that was playing poor. So it was an interesting combination. I loved him. He has that way of getting into you.

JOEL ROSENMAN: Eventually, we wrote up a shareholders' agreement among the four of us. Some of it was not too well conceived, as it turned out later. But I remember that they were especially keen on getting into that contract our promise that we would take the proceeds of the festival and build a recording studio. In their minds, the whole thing would be a waste of time if we didn't.

JOHN ROBERTS: The basic agreement that we came to was that Joel and I would provide the seed money. I think we agreed to provide up to a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. In those days, you could sell tickets and use the ticket proceeds to finance your undertakings, so that we never would actually have had to take down much more than that hundred and fifty thousand from the bank in seed capital. We would be responsible for all of the business of putting this thing together, up to and including ticket sales, advertising, procuring equipment, fencing, what have you. They would get the talent, do the site planning, do the promotion, set up the outlets, and essentially do the production. And do the lion's share of the work. It was all spelled out. And we would get our money back first—actually, we weren't putting up anything but guarantees to the bank initially—but in the event any money came out of our pockets we'd get it back first, and then we'd split the profits fifty-fifty. Or the profits would go into the recording studio. That was to be the plan, if there was anything that was left over. We figured that we would be able to throw the festival, finance the recording studio, and pocket some money too—all in the space of one year.

JOEL ROSENMAN: Stock ownership in Woodstock Ventures Incorporated was provided for in that agreement. We split the stock twenty-five percent apiece. And by the same document or a similar document, we incorporated four other entities, because we had evolved, in discussion, a master plan for controlling all of the products of this festival and the recording studio and the groups that we would have under management—both at the recording studio and at the festival—and the songs that would be written, so we had a publishing company. I think we had a total of five corporations, including Woodstock Ventures. The original corporation, Woodstock Ventures, was the production vehicle for the festival and the others were for ancillary activities in and around the music business, including management and publishing.



Artie Kornfeld

have twenty-five thousand people, at six bucks a day per man—that’s four hundred thousand dollars—and two hundred thousand in costs. A ridiculously small amount of money was needed to build a recording studio in those days, compared to these days, and this threw off enough for that, and then some, as I recall. There was a pie-in-the-sky budget that showed if seventy-five thousand people could be induced to attend, that we would all be on Easy Street forever. But none of us seriously believed that could happen.

Michael and Artie, I think, were just like two kids in a candy store, at least for the first month of this thing. “We’ve got partners with deep pockets who believe our rap. Let’s just see what we can do—something good might come out of it for all of us.” And I think there was a genuinely benevolent feeling on the part of Artie—and possibly on the part of Michael—for all of us. But it began to go south pretty quickly in terms of getting the job done.

**Rock
Dominates '68
Golden LPs**

Rolling Stone
March 1, 1969

MICHAEL LANG: Initially, Artie was going to handle publicity and press, public relations. I was going to do the festival in physical terms, produce the physical event. John and Joel were going to do the business administration, ticketing, and make whatever deals had to be made. That's kind of how it went from the beginning—I mean that was its intent. But I guess communication problems started instantly.

JOHN ROBERTS: We began to see that Artie was not much of a performer, pretty quickly—that he was charged with doing something and it wouldn't get done. And then we would find out from someone else that Artie had decided something totally at odds with what we as a group had decided. Michael looked like a get-it-done kind of a guy and he came to us sometime I think in April and said, "I need another office." He said, "I can't work around Artie. It won't happen if I'm working here around Artie." And at the same time he went to Artie and said, "I need another office. I can't work around John and Joel. It won't happen if I'm working here around John and Joel. They're too much like business cats and they turn my people off. If they see these guys behind desks over there, they are going to be turned off. I need a production office."

That was sort of the first statement—I remember Artie and Joel and I comparing notes about this at one of our, sort of let-your-hair-hang-down meetings later on. It was the first sign that there were real rifts developing there. Artie said, "You've chased Michael away out of the office." We said, "We have? You have!" And we all recounted this thing and Artie said, "That son of a bitch. When he was starving I took him in," etc., etc. "Well, let's call him right now and we'll have a meeting tomorrow morning and clear all this shit up, because I'm not going to put up with that for a second." And I remember walking into the meeting the next day with Joel prepared to have an honest expression of opinions and Artie acted as if it had never happened. "Michael is my best friend. You can't drive a wedge between us, and this is a lot of misunderstandings." Michael said, "I never had any problem with Artie, I never had any problem with you, I just want the gig to be done." And Joel and I sitting here trying to figure out why this thing was going south because Joel and I still had the sense that there was essentially goodwill and a communitive interest among the four of us.

MICHAEL LANG: At the time, my handling of it, my method of handling problems, was to avoid them. And so the first thing I did was to move the production office downtown, away from the rest of it. Isolated and away to give it breathing room. Which I think was a good idea. I think it was one of the factors that helped make it a reality, because I think if we had gotten everything caught up in the internal insanity that was going on for those six or eight months, it wouldn't have happened.

JOHN ROBERTS: To this day, I'm not entirely sure what the dynamics of the relationship between Michael and Artie were then, continued to be, and are now. I don't know. Artie does not speak with great kindness of Michael these days, but he could tomorrow. I don't know.

ARTIE KORNFELD: Joel and John were like the thorn in my side, which
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Michael sort of placed there because it took the heat off him. And he had to have—and righteously so—he had to have a free hand. Looking back, I could see how he felt—that I had the strength and was also vulnerable enough and believed in him enough to go along with his trip. Which I didn't know at the time; that's why Michael was so clever. Michael has a way of manipulating people. He's charming and he has his Butch Cassidy-James Dean charisma that he's carefully honed. Don't get me wrong—I don't say that negatively because I love Michael. And I think deep inside Michael loves me, if he's capable of loving anybody but himself. And I think he does love me, you know. And I do love him. Now I do. There were ten or twelve years after the festival that I really despised him and he didn't care for me, either. But I guess that comes with anything when you do something so tender and so touching and so raw emotionally. It's like a divorce. You come out with some bitter feelings.

MICHAEL LANG: The problem that I felt was that no one had a grasp of what the thing was—what we were creating—and maybe there was a problem for me to express what it had to be. I mean, you could express it graphically what it was that we were doing—putting a festival together, putting a show together, and so many people were going to come. But I had another feeling about it: I thought it was going to be more spiritual and special. I had grown up in the midst of the whole sixties movement, and was in the middle of a lot of issues, and my values were a bit different from theirs. And I knew that people that were going to come to the show were in the same frame of reference. So it had to have certain things to make it work. It had to have a certain feeling, it had to ring true in certain ways. It was hard to explain, impossible to explain to John and Joel at that point. So while I wasn't afraid that they were going to hurt the project, I also knew they would not really know how to express properly what it was supposed to feel like. Maybe I was wrong; that was my feeling.

ARTIE KORNFIELD: I don't know. It might have been me, you know. It could have been just paranoia on my part. But I felt trouble coming the day we met. It was the first time I saw or felt that I was some sort of psychic—I've been tested for being psychic—and I felt it. "Trouble ahead, trouble behind, don't you know that notion just crossed my mind." And that's when it crossed my mind, the first meeting. But it was O.K., because it was a start to get something done and nothing comes easy and there's always trouble—no pain, no gain. There's always a price to pay. I didn't know it at the time, but I was prepared to do it, whatever it was, to get the thing done. It was an obsession by that point.