

CALENDAR

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Jack Healey, the catalyst behind Amnesty International's "Human Rights Now!" tour, joined 72,000 rock 'n' rolling fans at the start of the world tour in Wembley Stadium. Robert Hilburn reports from London. Page 66.



Magical Mystery Tour



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Jack Healey, executive director of Amnesty International in the U.S., with world tour "heroine" Franca Sciuto at London's Wembley Stadium during opening show.

The Amnesty Tour—Conscience & Compromise

By ROBERT HILBURN

LONDON—Frumpy, graying Jack Healey has a folksy demeanor that would make him ideal to play the Barry Gerald role in "Going My Way."

But when Healey, the executive director of Amnesty International in the United States, starts talking about human rights issues, he displays an eloquence and passion that transcends this image. He often becomes so emotional when condemning governments who torture and murder their own citizens that his eyes well with tears.

Healey's such a convincing advocate that it took him only seven minutes in 1986 to persuade U2—the acclaimed young Irish rock band—to devote two weeks to touring the U.S. to raise awareness for Amnesty's human rights activities.

That venture was phenomenally successful for Amnesty and the bands involved. So, it looked like it would be a snap for Healey to put together a world tour to promote Amnesty.

He emerged with a dream package: a five-continent, 18-plus-city tour with Bruce Springsteen, Peter Dinklage and Sting. The six-week jaunt, costing about \$20 million to stage, is not only the most ambitious rock tour ever launched, but also one of the most artistically satisfying. The three U.S. dates include Wednesday night at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.

But, as a series of interviews with tour principals here indicated, the last 18 months has been littered with unexpected and frustrating problems as the idealism of Healey's human rights crusade collided head-on with the realities of big-bucks rock touring.

□ There were massive logistic challenges in putting on shows in some countries—including India and the Ivory Coast—with no history of rock concerts.

□ There was the need for corporate sponsorship—a commercial compromise repugnant to almost everyone involved. The big fear: being "Pepsi-cized."

□ There was the delicate matter of telling artists who had been courted by Amnesty—and even attended an April press conference in Los Angeles announcing the tour—that they were not going to be on the tour (See Letters, Page 103).

□ There was even the hostility from Amnesty sections (chapters) around the world that didn't want to be identified with something as "undignified" as rock 'n' roll.

Hopes and Ambitions

Healey, 50, looked weary as he walked into his suite at the dignified Britannia Hotel. The first concert in the six-week series was less than 48 hours away and a battery of workers for Amnesty's "Human Rights Now!" tour were still scrambling about the suite, which was doubling as the command post. They were going over final budgets and contracts.

Healey led a reporter into the adjoining bedroom, hoping for a quiet place to talk. But he found yet another aide on the phone and more papers piled around.

With nowhere else to turn, Healey dropped into a chair and took a deep breath. It was evening and all day he'd been holding business meetings or giving interviews about the hopes and the ambitions of the tour.

By any standard, it was a remarkable

undertaking. More than 1 million people would see the tour live and maybe another billion will watch a TV documentary that will be shown in December.

Settling into the interview, Healey, a former Catholic priest who retains his missionary zeal, began, instinctively, to outline the goals of the tour. He had done it so many times in recent days that he could almost do it by rote—even when the reporter had asked a different question.

"We're trying to reach everybody," Healey

began. "But we're especially concerned with bringing the message of human rights to the poor young people of the world . . . people who can't read or can't get hold of our printed material. . . ."

Suddenly, he paused, realizing he was answering the wrong question.

"I'm sorry," he said, taking another deep breath to step back from the pace of the day. "What was it you wanted to know—how difficult was it putting all this together? . . ."

"It was a nightmare. I'm telling you . . . a nightmare."



Bill Graham said he is "stupefied" that the Amnesty tour isn't sold out in L.A.



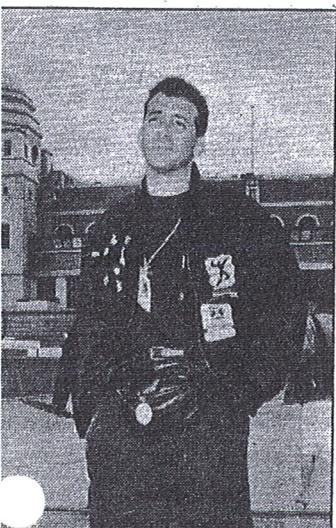
Fans at Wembley hold up U.S. flag with the word "Free" added to Bruce Springsteen's classic "Born to Run" lyric.

The Planning Begins

The genesis of the tour was in the summer of 1986, a few weeks after the "Conspiracy of Hope" tour ended with an all-day spectacular at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford,

Healey made a playful suggestion at that time to Bill Graham—the San Francisco-based concert producer who was the volunteer tour director for that tour—that they ought to take the tour around the world next time. But Healey had no intention of ever doing it, he said later.

He felt he had accomplished his goal of greatly increasing Amnesty's American profile, especially among young people. He had become an accepted speaker on human rights issues, both in the media and on campuses. However, others interested in the Amnes-



Angel Martinez of Reebok.

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ty movement—which monitors human rights violations worldwide and works to free prisoners of conscience—began urging Healey to do something bigger: Use rock music to promote the Amnesty message around the world, especially in Third World countries where Amnesty's printed material is rendered useless by high illiteracy rates.

Finally, someone mentioned that Healey ought to tie the world tour to the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a statement adopted by the United Nations declaring certain universal freedoms and rights. The suggestion appealed to Healey.

One of the first persons he contacted was Graham, who has been involved in hundreds of rock benefits, including the 1985 Live Aid concert in Philadelphia. Graham had been impressed by Healey's "mania and sincerity" on the "Conspiracy of Hope" tour and he agreed to again donate his services.

He also figured that artists would answer Healey's call.

"You've got to remember that no matter how much artists of this level believe in a cause, they are not going to put themselves in someone's hands unless they have complete trust in that person," Graham said backstage at Wembley Stadium, the site of the world tour's first show.

"Healey showed on the 'Conspiracy of Hope' tour that he could be trusted. He didn't misuse the power that these artists gave him."

Before he could proceed, Healey needed the approval of the international Amnesty movement.

That wasn't easy.

Too Western, Too American?

The Amnesty board of directors in the U.S. had raised questions about mixing human rights and rock 'n' roll before the "Conspiracy of Hope" tour, but it was nothing

compared to the "hostility" that Healey encountered when he began talking to sections overseas.

In his hotel room here, Healey explained, "We tried to show them how well the U.S. tour had gone in recruiting new members and raising awareness, but many of them said things like, 'It's not dignified. . . . We don't want young people in our movement because they don't write letters and soon drop out again. . . . What about drugs?' I think most of the people we first approached just kinda hoped the whole idea would disappear."

There were also strenuous objections to corporate sponsorship—a commercialization Healey had been able to avoid on the 1986 tour—and the perception that the tour might be perceived as "too Western" or "too American," thus undercutting the organization's neutral image in much of the non-Western world.

Amnesty's ruling body eventually referred the matter to a three-member subcommittee for a recommendation. Luckily, Healey found an ally in the Italian chairwoman of the subcommittee. She, he said, is the "real heroine of this story."

Franca Sciuto, a member of Amnesty's International Executive Committee, is an energetic woman in her 40s whose manner suggests a combination of the scholarly aura of a college professor and the pragmatism of a banker.

"You must understand the way Amnesty works," she said with a heavy Italian accent. "We are an organization which is one movement, one message, but many voices. Many people tend to operate from a sort of ivory tower. They don't want to be [contaminated] by the rest of the world."

"But I told them we can not stay in our ivory tower and watch the world go by because we will be left behind and we may never be able to catch up. We should use music and the communications media to help

spread our message and ask for people to help us."

Once the idea of the tour was accepted by the subcommittee headed by Sciuto, Healey set out to get the corporate sponsors. It proved more difficult than expected.

Searching for Money

Corporate sponsorship was the most delicate matter of the "Human Rights Now!" tour.

No one involved wanted it.

Yet Amnesty and the artists had to accept corporate sponsorship because they knew they needed more money than the tour itself would generate. One reason was a key tour goal: Spreading the Amnesty message in economically troubled countries where tickets would have to be priced as low as the equivalent of \$3 to \$5 in U.S. money. This would mean a deficit of between \$300,000 and \$500,000 in those stops.

Healey tried to sidestep sponsorship by getting a philanthropist to underwrite any potential deficit.

"I contacted 10 or 20 billionaires who could just write off something like this in a minute," he said. "After all, Steve Wozniak had spent millions on a festival in the desert [the 1982 and 1983 US-Festivals], and here someone had a chance to help change the world."

No luck.

The next idea was to get several corporations to donate \$1 million each so that, in Healey's words, "no one could really lay sole claim to us."

Healey and his aides had "endless meetings with companies that spent millions of dollars to get the endorsement of rock stars," but none proved fruitful.

In some cases, he said, the companies objected to restrictions limiting the amount of promotion. In others, the Amnesty board objected to some business practices of other potential sponsors. The search dragged on for nearly a year.

In the end, Amnesty found a sponsor the organization felt it could live with: Reebok International. In exchange for pledging to cover up to \$10 million in deficits and setting up an annual Human Rights Award, Reebok got to put its name on the cover of the tour program and on every souvenir T-shirt sold in the stadiums.

(Healey estimated the tour deficit will run around \$4 to \$6 million, depending on whether Moscow is added to the schedule.)

Joseph LaBonte, president of Massachusetts-based Reebok International, was also awarded a coveted place at the press conference alongside Healey, Springsteen and the other tour principals.

Reebok's Involvement

Angel Martinez, Reebok's vice president of business development, was impressed by what he heard of the "Conspiracy of Hope" tour, and felt the company was sensitive to Amnesty's desires for low profile involvement.

"I think the reason we jumped on this so quickly was that we've gotten to the point with the company where we wanted to make a statement about ourselves and wanted to put something back into the community," said Martinez, a whiz kid now living in L.A. who helped design the aerobic shoe in the early '80s that established Reebok in recent

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Amnesty Tour

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as a dominant force in the casual shoe industry.

There was some concern that Amnesty International might be perceived as a part-political organization and that its position on such matters as the death penalty (it might offend some potential Reebok buyers, Martinez, 33, said in an interview at headquarters hotel two days before the concert.)

But they realized the tour and Amnesty had to do with politics [in the strictest sense], he said. "It has to do with the overall issue of human rights and the freedom of speech all over the world to express themselves."

Well, he said, the company did commission a opinion survey to sample public attitudes on Amnesty.

The survey didn't go into specific issues like the death penalty, but simply the issue of joining about the organization. Only about 10 percent of those sampled indicated an awareness of Amnesty, but there was an overriding support for the concept of human rights.

However, he opposed in principle to tour sponsorship, most of the tour personnel had Reebok for being "sensitive" in its association.

Amnesty tour director Graham, "I have been flooded with too many artists this year [the sponsorship involvement is so high] that you are literally being brainwashed if you want to look at the artist on their own. The name of the product is every-

thing stressed [in talks with Reebok] that Amnesty is the real headliner and the real presenter is Amnesty International, and their ads are everywhere."

Would Reebok have backed off if the survey had been negative?

Martinez, "We would have probably done another survey to see why there is a problem with it. . . . But I think we're already committed to the tour."

Reebok wasn't the only one doing research.

Amnesty International checked into the artist's business relationships around the

at that point, Amnesty's Franca Sciuto said. "We didn't want to go into a country where someone get up and say, 'Did you know that company does so and so?' That kind of incident could really damage us as an organization."

Talent Search

It was the next concern.

The original plan was to have various shows up for different legs of the tour, but Amnesty organizers needed a large pool of talent. The organization welcomed volunteers and sent out the word that they wanted more performers.

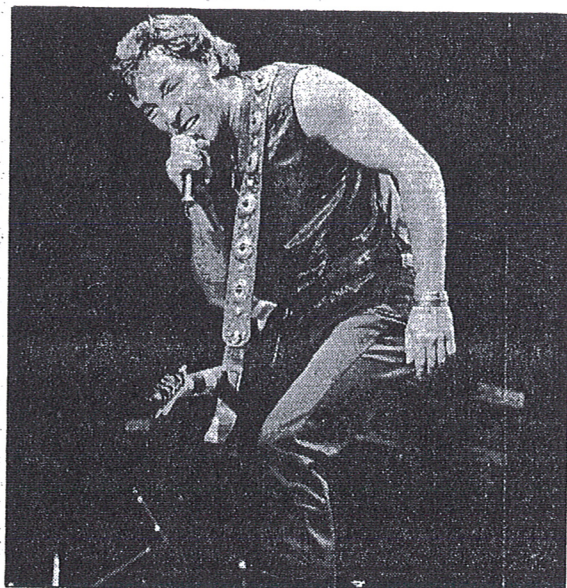
The assumption was that everyone on the tour with Healey and Graham at the April press conference at A&M Records' offices in Los Angeles would be on at least some of the shows. The artists included Sting, Peter Dinklage, Brownie, Robert Cray, Suzanne Vega, Gloria Estefan, Bonnie Raitt, Nona Hendryx, Michael McDonald, Robert Lamm and Richard Page of Mr. Mister.



Tracy Chapman



Peter Gabriel



Bruce Springsteen



Sting



N'Dour

In the end, only Sting—of the press conference musicians—would be part of the permanent tour lineup.

Tour organizers realized that they needed more "stadium fillers" for both financial and strategic reasons.

Big paydays in markets like Japan, Europe and the Americas were needed to offset losses in Third World countries. (Though headliners are donating their services, the tour is not strictly a benefit: Band members and stage personnel are getting paid. The main costs, however, are transportation and staging.)

A blockbuster draw was also important to avoid the sight of thousands of empty seats at each stop, thus giving the tour the look of a "loser" and leaving the impression that there's not great support for Amnesty's cause.

Healey first turned to U2, the band that had been the backbone of the "Conspiracy of Hope" tour.

But the Irish quartet was working around the clock on its upcoming film and album, and it didn't know if it would be done in time to join the tour.

Healey's next target: Springsteen.

'Sounds OK to Me'

Healey asked Peter Gabriel—who had committed to the tour early on—to fly shortly after the April press conference to Northern California, where Springsteen was on tour last spring, and ask for the rock star's help. The English singer didn't see Springsteen, who returned to Los Angeles immediately after the concert, but he talked with Springsteen's manager, Jon Landau.

Landau seemed receptive and later met with Healey to get information about the organization and the tour plans before arranging for Springsteen to meet Healey in May when Springsteen played New York's Madison Square Garden.

They met backstage at the Garden for nearly an hour after the show. Springsteen said he had been impressed by the way the "Conspiracy of Hope" tour was run, and he wanted to know more about Amnesty.

"All this time, I had been just thinking of asking him to do one gig," Healey said, remembering the meeting. "But the rhythm was so right that when he finally asked me how he could help, I looked him in the eye and I said, 'We need you to do the whole

tour.'

"He looked up without hesitating and said, 'Sounds OK to me.'"

Bruised Egos

The next decision was format.

For both cost and aesthetic considerations, the idea of a Live Aid-type show with a few minutes each by a dozen or two acts was rejected in favor of longer sets by five artists.

But which five?

Springsteen was definite by this time.

Sting and Gabriel were naturals because of their commercial and critical punch, and because they had been active supporters of Amnesty since the "Conspiracy of Hope" tour.

Youssou N'Dour, from Senegal, had worked with Sting and Gabriel, and added an international flavor to the package. Bill Graham had long pushed for Tracy Chapman, whose sensitive, socially conscious songs in her debut album made her one of the critical and commercial successes of the year.

Healey then had to tell the other artists that there was no room for them on the tour.

The move caused bad feelings among many rejected artists, Healey acknowledged. Def Leppard's manager Peter Mensch accused the Amnesty officials of "playing politics with its bands" and declared Healey has the "spine of an eel." Others were reportedly fuming privately.

On the point, Healey said glumly here, "I had to write them a letter, explaining that we were going to go with just five artists and we are sorry, but the cost of bringing bands in and out just got hellish. I spent three days [after that] being told off. I think some felt we had used them. . . . We may have lost a lot of friends."

A Slow Sell

The final lineup was a prize package—a combination of artists with drawing power and critical acclaim.

So, everyone involved in the tour was astonished when the shows didn't sell out instantly—especially in a rock hotbed like Los Angeles.

"I'm stupefied, I really am," Graham said here. "I thought everything would sell out *bam!* Wembley is sold out, but it took weeks. Philadelphia is sold out, but it took weeks."

"The only thing I can see is that people assumed—even though there were just five names on the bill—that this was going to be another of the shows, like Live Aid and Mandela [a summer tribute at Wembley to South African dissident Nelson Mandela], where you had two dozen artists on stage for two or three numbers each, and lots of people decided they wouldn't be seeing enough of their favorite to spend \$35 or whatever it is."

But what if other factors were also affecting the show's drawing power in Los Angeles. Too high a ticket price (\$35)? The fact the show is on a school and work night? Overexposure in Southern California on the part of Springsteen and Sting? Springsteen fans being put off by the fact that their hero wouldn't be doing his full, three-hour show?

Avalon Attractions's Brian Murphy, who is promoting the Los Angeles date, was as surprised as Graham when the show didn't