

**LILITH FAIR** Sarah McLachlan (with arms uplifted) headlined the hugely successful women's music festival. Could a mantra-based music festival be next?



*The visionary music executive behind Lilith Fair fell in love with yoga. Now he has the passion—and the business savvy—to make kirtan as recognizable as reggae.*

By ANNA DUBROVSKY

# Could Chant Top the Charts?

# When record executive Terry McBride

launched Lilith Fair with Sarah McLachlan in 1997, he didn't count on the singer disappearing for 90 minutes every day of the traveling music festival. "Back then it frustrated me," says McBride, McLachlan's manager and CEO of Canada's largest independent record label. "Now it would make me smile."

Now, McBride is a dedicated yoga practitioner. Like McLachlan, he sets aside time for yoga, whether on the road or at home in Vancouver, British Columbia. He's on the road a lot. Nettwerk Music Group, the record label and artist management firm he helms, has offices in half a dozen cities and a roster that includes Avril Lavigne, Dido, and Barenaked Ladies. Recently, McBride began adding a different breed of musician to that list. The newest members of the Nettwerk family are devotional chanters—*bbakti yogis*—whose music is rarely heard outside of yoga studios. McBride plans to change that.

Within the music industry, McBride is known for many things. He's known for Lilith, the female-artists concert tour that sold more than 2 million tickets during its three-year run. He's known for unconventional views on music distribution and pioneering approaches to marketing. He's been called a maverick, a visionary, and "the most artist-friendly guy in the industry." His belief that musicians should pocket the lion's share of revenue from their work has put him at odds with major labels. His push to legalize file-sharing has made him a hero to music fans.

McBride may be "quietly carrying out a plan to reinvent the music industry," as *Wired* magazine wrote in 2006, but he didn't get into the business to upend it. He got into the business because he didn't hear enough of the music he loved. In 1984, the year he co-founded Nettwerk, radio stations in North America were enamored of Rod Stewart and Lionel Richie. Chicago's "Hard Habit to Break" competed with Madonna's "Lucky Star" for airtime. The 20-something McBride preferred the indie bands working local clubs and musicians making waves in the UK. He didn't hear their music on

Vancouver radio. So he and two friends started their own label.

Nettwerk's first headquarters was McBride's one-bedroom apartment. For several years, he and his partners continued to work other jobs. McBride held down three at one point. They spent weekends sliding cassette tapes into plastic cases and packing them for shipment. Nettwerk's earliest clients were an eclectic lot of Canadians: the industrial band Skinny Puppy, folk-rockers Grapes of Wrath, and the classically trained McLachlan, who was barely out of her teens and had yet to pen a song when she signed to the label. All found mass audiences.

"If I love it, I know other people will love it," McBride told *Yoga+*. "Whenever I've varied from that, it hasn't worked. Whenever I've signed something because I think it'll sell, it never does. And when I sign something because I love it, it surprises the bejesus out of me."

These days, the music that moves him—literally and figuratively—is the Sanskrit-laced chanting of modern-day *kirtan* masters like Krishna Das and Jai Uttal. "Listening to mixes of a new Krishna Das kirtan CD," McBride blogged earlier this year. "What an inspiring and uplifting feeling one gets from such spiritual music. 2008 is shaping up to be the most amazing musical year for Nettwerk."

To McBride, making music is about making the world a better place. He talks about changing the world in the same matter-of-fact way he discusses music copyrights or digital technologies, unafraid to sound like an altar boy in an industry that glorifies debauchery. "This is not about sex, drugs, and rock and roll," McBride told an interviewer last year. "It's about music. It's about emotive bookmarks. It's about making the world a better place."



**MUSIC INNOVATOR** Terry McBride.

He insists that his artists put their fame to good use by championing social causes. Lilith Fair raised more than \$10 million for women's charities. In the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, McBride organized benefit concerts in Vancouver and Calgary that featured Nettwerk's biggest names.

## CONNECTING WITH YOGA

"He's really a special guy, and his heart's in the right place," says Krishna Das. "Record companies are not in the business of helping artists. They're in the business of filling their own pockets. Terry's completely different. It's not all about money for Terry. Terry's doing this from a different place. He's doing it because he believes in the music."

McBride's passion for music is matched by his passion for yoga. "I think the more people who do yoga or are associated with yoga or witness yoga, we'd have a much better world to live in," he says.

McBride, 48, walked into his first yoga class less than four years ago. He wasn't looking for enlightenment—or even a workout. He was looking for a date. The Canadian Music Hall of Fame inductee was fresh out of a long relationship and



**DEVOTIONAL CHANTERS** From left: Krishna Das, Wade Imre Morissette, Wah!, and David Newman (Durga Das) have all signed with the Nettwerk label.

**+** Watch for a special report in our next issue on devotional chant's top stars, plus hot up-and-comers, events, and more!

didn't relish the idea of chatting up women in bars. "I asked the girls in the office where I could go to meet girls," he recalls. "That was the start of yoga."

McBride didn't find romance in the yoga studio. What he found was a deeper connection with himself. "I come from a musical background, so the spiritual part of me, the emotional part of me, it's there and it's solid," he says. "What the yoga

son in packing and shipping can practice yoga with the CEO, and that creates a completely different bond."

The yoga program Kozan started at Nettwerk headquarters continues to this day, with classes held twice a week. McBride has participated in all three "yoga challenges," committing to a class a day for 30 or 40 days. Kozan noticed him taking two and sometimes three classes a day during the challenges. "It has been awesome to watch his commitment intensify," she says. "Terry has always been this kind of shining light. He's always been really grounded, heart-

Amazon.com and iTunes. That's as far as most "yoga music" gets, but McBride has bigger plans. "Hopefully you'll be able to walk into Best Buy or Borders or Barnes & Noble and be able to find it. Or hop on Walmart.com, and there it is. We'll put it everywhere that we possibly can."

**BRINGING CHANT TO THE WORLD**

Even the biggest names in devotional chant haven't achieved that sort of penetration. That's because their albums are self-released or distributed by small labels that lack Nettwerk's resources or reach. McBride has contacts at radio stations,

*Making a record for Terry is bliss. His only words to me were, "Make the record that's in your heart, and when it's done, turn it in." Given the state of the music industry today, to have that kind of support has been a great gift.—David Newman (Durga Das)*

has helped me do is to understand me better." McBride's practice is a process of self-discovery, and it changes from day to day. "It's really where my body is and where my thoughts are going. That dictates the practice. It's literally never the same. Sometimes I'll finish and think, 'That was a strange one!' I'm always curious about certain things that happen with me."

McBride was still new to yoga when he met teacher Lara Kozan at one of the tsunami fund-raisers. "He said, 'Oh, you're a yoga teacher? Great. Why don't you come into our office and do yoga there?'" Kozan recalls of their first meeting. McBride is the sort of executive who keeps his office door wide open. Yoga in the workplace is an extension of that open-door policy. "It's a great way to break down barriers," he says. "The per-

centered. That's something that a lot of people find in the practice. With him it's brought it out even more."

**A NEW MUSICAL PASSION**

It was Kozan who sparked McBride's interest in mantra-based music, playing one of her favorite albums in class after class. McBride finally asked for the singer's name, and Kozan happily passed it along: Wade Imre Morissette, yoga teacher, devotional chanter, and twin brother to singer-songwriter Alanis. McBride searched for the self-released album. "I couldn't find it, and I know what I'm doing," he says. "So I went and found the artist."

Nettwerk has released two albums by Morissette, sending them to some 3,000 yoga studios. They're available through

film and television studios, and concert venues. He knows how songs wind up on *Grey's Anatomy* and in Starbucks. He knows how to turn a tune into a telephone ringtone and how to turn bloggers into amateur promoters. So it's not surprising that other chant artists are flocking to his label. Nettwerk has signed Krishna Das, who calls McBride "a 100 percent righteous guy," David Newman, also known as Durga Das, and Wah!. It's in talks with several others.

"I think Nettwerk is going to bring a real change in what you see out there and what you hear," Wah! says. "You don't

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really have consolidation within the chant market. Reggae is now a music genre, but chanting isn't yet. It's in some kind of lifestyle section littered with really bad relaxation elevator music. To have a mainstream label supporting this music will be great. It would be fabulous to have chanting as an actual music genre on iTunes. If Bob Marley can do it, we can do it."

Part of McBride's strategy for promoting chant artists is to stage a Lilith-like outdoor festival that attracts tens of thousands of music lovers, yogis and non-yogis alike. The lineup would include devotional chanters as well as hit makers like McLachlan, Nora Jones, and Sting—mainstream musicians "who are talking about consciousness and awakening and community," says Morissette. Classes led by the biggest names in yoga would be interspersed with musical sets. "Terry's an amazing force," Morissette says. "He's got such a platform to make mantra-based music more global, more mainstream, which is what people like us have been looking for. Even Krishna Das or Jai Uttal, they tour, but they've never had the infrastructure that Nettwerk could provide."

#### MAKING IT EASY TO PRACTICE YOGA

Lack of infrastructure is what's hindering the spread of yoga, McBride believes. He wants to do something about that, too. "The majority of yoga studios are mom-and-pop operations. They're set up by people who want to practice and teach yoga, which is amazing. But they don't have access to the economies of scale, to the marketing budgets, to all the things that could really grow yoga."

One evening in 2006, over dinner at Vancouver's East is East organic restaurant, McBride and Kozan got to talking about their "ultimate dream studio." Their fantasy yoga studio had shower facilities, steam rooms, on-site massage, a retail section, lounge areas, and an eatery. It was part spa, part clubhouse, and all green: bamboo floors, clay plasters, nontoxic paints, radiant heat. The conversation lasted four hours and ended with a decision. They would make their fantasy a reality.

Their brainchild is called YYoga. "To me, the name YYoga is a question, and the answer is pure freedom," McBride explains. By end of summer, the business will operate as many as eight yoga centers in Vancouver. YYoga's "valet" division will connect qualified teachers with individuals and businesses looking for a customized yoga program. "We're going to make it so easy to practice yoga," he says.

Market domination isn't McBride's goal. He wants to broaden yoga's fan base. "A lot of people still see it as a New Age kooky thing," he notes. By turning them onto yoga the way Starbucks and Whole Foods have turned people onto coffee and organic foods, respectively, YYoga can boost other yoga businesses. "What we do with YYoga will help all studios in the marketplace because we'll do a very good job of expanding awareness of the benefits of doing yoga," McBride says. "Chances are, if one of our studios isn't close to them and there's another one down the street, that's the one they'll walk into first."

McBride still remembers how wary and self-conscious he felt the first time he walked into a yoga class. "I'd never done any yoga pose in my life, except maybe standing up straight—and even that I wasn't doing right." He wants to demystify yoga, to strip fear and intimidation from the newcomer's experience. "I would so love to lower the barriers to entry."

He also wants to lower the barriers to interaction. At a typical studio, students arrive, spend an hour or 90 minutes moving their bodies and quieting their minds, put on their shoes, and leave. Often they don't know the names of practitioners on neighboring mats. McBride hasn't forgotten what attracted him to yoga in the first place: the potential for human connection. "Yoga studios very well could be community centers. You just need to create that atmosphere and to plant the seeds to allow that to happen." That can be as simple as asking teachers to stay after class to have a cup of tea with students. "And then you have that social interaction of like-minded people, from brain surgeons to bike couriers. I'm not saying that yoga places should be pickup places. But

the ability to interact with others of like-mind is not something the studios have been focused on. That could be so powerful." And then comes his refrain. "It could make this world such a better place."

McLachlan, a three-time Grammy winner and longtime yoga practitioner, has a financial stake in YYoga. Morissette, who discovered yoga as a teenager and has been teaching for more than a decade, will administer programming with Kozan.

"We keep teasing Terry that we're going to send him to teacher training and make him teach his own classes," Kozan says. The music industry maverick—always one step ahead—sampled the view from the teacher's mat earlier this year. It was during five days at sea with Barenaked Ladies and some 3,000 fans of the folk-pop group. McBride's daily yoga practice attracted the attention of others aboard the cruise ship, who joined with him in his practice. "I'm receptive to what the universe puts in front of me," he says. "That's how I've worked my whole life." +

#### { AND YOGA STUDIOS TOO... }



The practice room at Flow YYoga, in Vancouver, British Columbia, one of the YYoga studios that Terry McBride and yoga teacher Lara Kozan, co-founders of YYoga, hope will encourage the spread of yoga. "We want yoga to be accessible to everyone," McBride says. His vision is that the studios will evolve into mini community centers. For more information, go to [www.YYoga.ca](http://www.YYoga.ca).

Find Terry McBride's blog at [www.nettwerk.com/terrysblog](http://www.nettwerk.com/terrysblog).