



HOWARD HERTZ

PRESIDENT, MOTOR CITY MUSIC FOUNDATION

by Keith N. Dusenberry

Affable, easy-going and adventurous — and we're talking about a lawyer? Howard Hertz has gone from hippie-ish Wayne State law student to one of the most powerful attorneys in the music industry, yet comes across as so nice you feel guilty for ever telling a lawyer joke. Hertz ("Call me Howard.") remains down to earth, though he has represented major recording artists — Eminem, Jack White and Marilyn Manson among others — and record labels. Of course, there's a catch: He's secretly Canadian.

"I was born in Canada but when I was four, my parents moved here and I grew up in Detroit," Hertz says. "I went to elementary school and high school in the city — lived by Mumford but went to Cass Tech downtown during the mid-to-late '60s — the heavy Motown period ... — and then I went to undergrad and law school at Wayne State." But he wasn't chained to a library desk. "I always went to lots of concerts — starting with the outdoor concerts, and to the Grande Ballroom and to the East Town after the Grande Ballroom closed down — every weekend," says Hertz. "[I saw] everything from Janis Joplin and The Who and Creedence Clearwater Revival, and they were all playing the Grande Ballroom — just everything — or James Brown at Cobo Hall ..."

The era's prevalent wanderlust also overcame Hertz: There was the hitchhike to Boston, the plane ride to London and the purchase of a secondhand motorcycle that took him through Europe and North Africa for 6 months.

Upon return, Hertz found himself in

school at Wayne again. "I was back for 3 months from Europe and was sitting with some friends in an apartment in Highland Park in December with no heat and someone said, 'Let's go to Mexico,'" says Hertz. "And I said I had only been back 3 months and I promised myself I would do at least 6 months of school. So, the four of us vowed that when we finished our next quarter, whoever had the last exam, we were leaving the next day for Mexico and we ended up doing that ... I won a Volkswagen MicroBus in a poker game and the four of us went for 3 months through the States and Mexico. It was wild." Not even marriage stalled his globetrotting ways. Wed at 24 to the woman he still loves, Hertz and his wife almost immediately took trips through Europe, Asia and the South Pacific.

Upon the surprisingly punctual completion of his law degree, Hertz worked in the public defenders' office and then began practicing entertainment law on the side when a musician friend was offered a music publishing contract. This deal led Hertz on a path that would connect him — through Joel Martin, The Romantics, George Clinton, Bonnie Raitt and FBT — on to Eminem and others.

Somehow, Hertz has found the time to start his own record label (SuperString), manage local rockers The Go and serve as president of the Motor City Music Foundation — organizers of the Detroit Music Awards. His other art-related accomplishments and projects are numerous. On top of it all, Hertz will still sit in with clients' bands on occasion. "Yeah, the harmonica remains in my backpack," he says. "I don't play that much though, but I have it just in case." | RDW

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