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who he accompanied to Jamaica last year for a recording session. "It was the first time a (foreign) lyricist got anywhere," he comments wryly. His "77 Articles of Distraction" music/poetry work with poet Shintaro Tanikawa is expected out on Interactive LaserDisc by the end of this year.

Michelle Hart has been in and out of Tokyo for the last four years, having worked professionally in Los Angeles as a singer/dancer in TV specials, a backup singer in recordings, and a singer of countless commercial jingles. Last year she released an album here on the Meldac label, which has sold some 5,000 copies so far despite very little promotion. In addition to the occasional live gig and studio session, Michelle sings jingles for TV ads, seven of which are currently on the air.

Mike Ellis and Tom Alexander are two straight ahead sax players who've had a surprising amount of success here for jazz musicians. Last year they released a CD titled M.E.T.A. Physics which, according to Ellis, is "selling moderately." Ellis feels that promotion by Alfa, the label, was grossly insufficient. "They didn't lift a finger, except to take out a few ads. They really haven't done anything." On the other hand, he feels optimistic about Pan Music, his production agency. "They're going places, taking chances and being creative."

Other musicians have found it best to take their own chances. Deborah Katherine, a cabaret-style singer of pop tunes, released an album titled "Cocooning" on Toshiba-EMI last year which she financed herself. "It cost me about ¥3 million; but I pre-sold about half of that. I knew it would be easy to cover costs," she explains, adding that she made the album mainly for the experience and as a promotion tool for her live performances. "I'd love to do another, but I'd rather do it with someone else's money."

Progressive compos-

er/performance artist Sadato, an Iranian raised in Europe who has lived here for over ten years, has also managed to finance an album of his group Alef. "Several record producers told me to make more commercial music, and they'd be willing to talk. But I just can't do it," he admitted. With records in Tower and a few other record stores around Tokyo, Sadato is now on a self-promotion tour of the U.S. and Europe. And, Barry Gjerde, leader of the R&B rock group Hotel No Tell, recently told me his group is just finishing up in the studio, and hopes to have a record out sometime soon—self-financed, of course.

Joshua Popenoe, an American singer-songwriter of adult-oriented pop songs, has just finished a promotional video with Dentsu. Hoping to land a recording contract soon, Popenoe despairs that record producers often tell him "We want your songs" but aren't interested in him as a performer.

Apparently, most foreign musicians take heavy doses of power optimism to make up for a lack of real opportunity as creative artists in Japan. One interesting exception, however, is rock singer Sherri Michael. Along with a whole string of TV jingles and occasional live gigs at Crocodile, she's busy putting together a demo tape to take to London and New York. I have to agree with her when she says, "I don't want to put out a record in Japan. There's no future here."

Why do Japanese labels continue to record foreign musicians, but hardly promote them? Money is lost, no doubt. Isn't this just another example of Japanese being overly charitable to (invariable white) foreigners?

Hardly. One explanation is that record companies need to keep their own people busy between the really important recording sessions by Japanese artists who receive tremendous promotion. The directors, producers, engineers, backup musicians, studio workers, cover designers, photographers—everyone. These people are on salary. Or if they're free-lancers,



Sadato (standing) and his band "Alef"