

Ahmet Ertegun Atlantic Records Founder Passes Away

Written by Robert ID3172

Friday, 15 December 2006 01:29 -

The Founding Chairman of Atlantic Records, Ahmet Ertegun, passed away yesterday in New York City at the age of 83. He had been hospitalized with a head injury since October 29, when he fell backstage at a Rolling Stones concert at the Beacon Theatre in Manhattan.

Dr. Howard A Riina, Mr. Ertegun's neurosurgeon at New York Presbyterian Hospital, Weill Cornell Medical Center said, "Mr. Ertegun suffered a severe brain injury after he fell in October. He was in a coma and passed away today with his family at his bedside."

Mr. Ertegun will be buried in a private ceremony in his native Turkey. A memorial service will be conducted in New York after the New Year.

Many industry insiders and artists have released statements on the passing of Ahmet Ertegun.

Here are a few including a statement from Daryl Hall, one half of the duo of Hall and Oats (Daryl Hall and John Oates).

"Ahmet Ertegun was a giant in the record business. He cared first and foremost about the ARTIST and the MUSIC--much more than the business.

He believed that if the Artist was true to him or herself, good business would follow. Sadly in today's atmosphere, this isn't the case.

But, during Ahmet's days of influence it was!

He was one of the first people to realize our potential and supported us during our beginning - the most important time. We couldn't have done what we did without Ahmet and Arif Mardin's support and encouragement. He changed music and created what I consider its golden age. He will be sorely missed."--- Daryl Hall

Other statements include:

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Atlantic Chairman/CEO Craig Kallman: "All of us at Atlantic Records are profoundly saddened by the loss of our founder and mentor". "The music community has lost a pioneer and an icon, and we have lost our father. Ahmet changed the course of modern music and culture, and he will live on through the timeless legacy of work that was created under his direction and care. Musicians loved him, because he truly loved them and spoke their language. The essence of Ahmet Ertegun is the essence of Atlantic Records. His passion for music and his devotion to the artists who make it have been at the very heart of this company for six decades. The soul of Ahmet Ertegun will forever be our guiding spirit, and as long as there is an Atlantic Records, it will be Ahmet Ertegun's company. Our thoughts and prayers are with Ahmet's wife, Mica, and his family during this very difficult time."

"Ahmet never stopped working, because for him, it was never work, it was life," said Atlantic President Julie Greenwald. "He started Atlantic with a fan's enthusiasm, an independent spirit, and a deep understanding of the music. Ahmet touched the lives of artists, producers, songwriters, and countless others who were blessed by his creativity, wisdom, and humor. He changed the music and he changed the music business, and he is the inspiration to an entire new generation of music people who will strive to follow in his amazing footsteps. Equally at home in New Orleans juke joints and foreign embassies, Ahmet was a human being of rare character, style, and humility. He was the real deal, and the world will be a far lesser place without him."

"Ahmet's visionary talents as a businessman and as a recording industry pioneer are the stuff of legend, but it is his lifelong pursuit of truth -- as distilled into music -- that I find most inspiring," said Edgar Bronfman, Jr., Warner Music Group Chairman and CEO. "For all of us at Warner Music, it has been an honor to work with Ahmet. He showed us all how to live life with passion, integrity, generosity, and joy, and we will miss him deeply."

"I feel so privileged to be able to say that Ahmet Ertegun was a mentor," said Lyor Cohen, Chairman and CEO, U.S. Recorded Music, Warner Music Group. "Here was a man who combined substance and style like no one else. Who affected millions upon millions of people through the music his artists created. Who nurtured those artists under his watchful eye. We were blessed to have him. There will never be another Ahmet Ertegun. His life was simply too incredible to ever be matched by a single human being."

Ahmet M. Ertegun

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One of the most important figures in the history of modern music, Ahmet Ertegun was born in Istanbul, Turkey on July 31, 1923. The son of the Turkish Ambassador to the United States, Ahmet was raised and educated in Switzerland, Paris, London, and Washington, D.C. A passionate music fan and collector, Ertegun borrowed \$10,000 from his dentist and founded Atlantic Records in New York City in the fall of 1947. He signed artists, produced records, wrote songs, and supervised the fledgling label. As he said, "We started Atlantic simply because we wanted to sign a few artists whose music we liked, and make the kind of records that we would want to buy."

Under Ahmet's direction, Atlantic evolved from a groundbreaking, independent R&B and jazz label into one of the world's preeminent music companies. The artists Ahmet discovered and the music he pioneered led a revolution in R&B, soul, and rock music that reshaped the modern cultural landscape -- forming a legacy that includes such seminal artists as Ray Charles, Big Joe Turner, Ruth Brown, LaVern Baker, The Clovers, The Drifters, John Coltrane, Ben E. King, Bobby Darin, Sonny & Cher, Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding, Solomon Burke, Wilson Pickett, Led Zeppelin, Eric Clapton, Crosby Stills Nash & Young, The Rolling Stones, Bette Midler, Roberta Flack, Phil Collins, and many others.

Ahmet was founder and Chairman of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. In recognition of his pioneering contributions to contemporary music and culture, he was himself elected to the Hall of Fame in 1987, and the Museum's main exhibition hall in Cleveland bears his name. In 1991, Ahmet received an honorary doctorate in music from the Berklee College of Music in Boston, and in 1993 he was presented with a Trustees Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences. In 2000, he was honored as a "Living Legend" by the United States Library of Congress, on the occasion of the Library's Bicentennial. In June 2006, he was honored with the opening night concert at the 40th Montreux Jazz Festival. He never retired and remained active at Atlantic until his death, serving as Founding Chairman of the company he started six decades ago.