

Hammering out the hits

“WITHOUT blowing my own trumpet I've got a track record of breaking four acts in ten years. That's better than most A&R men in major labels today.”

So says Phil Passera, the man behind small label Anvil Recordings Co, which is celebrating its first decade on the scene tomorrow.

The label began by releasing the first single from 2001 Mercury Music Prize-nominated Turin Brakes and, later on, the first three EPs by 2007 nominee Fionn Regan.

More recently it put out an album by international reggae band Prince Fatty, led by Lily Allen and Graham Coxon producer Mike Pelanconi, and an EP by Australian band Little Red, who have gone on to sell 30,000 albums in their home country and have just signed a record deal in the UK.

Not a bad hit rate for a label which has only put together 14 releases in the past ten years.

“Anvil is a first release label,” says Phil, who runs the business with the help of right-hand man Phil Marten.

“If they go on and a bigger label wants to sign them, or if a track gets picked up by an advertiser, then Anvil makes money from that by doing a deal.”

Phil is currently working on a project very close to his heart – Leon Lace – which sees him return to the music business as a performer as well as a label owner and band manager.

“When I was 16 I sold my saxophone, bought a bass guitar and started a band,” says Phil. “Eventually I learned studio techniques and put out some records in the days of Big Beat as one half of the duo Kitty Bronx.”

“We got signed to Junior Boys Own and did a record with them, but at that point I realised that I wanted to concentrate on the business side of things as opposed to the music side. I didn't make any music for about six years.”

Leon Lace sees him reunited with former Kitty Bronx bandmate Sonny Baxter, with new

ANVIL RECORDING CO TENTH ANNIVERSARY PARTY

The Hope, Queen Street, Brighton, tomorrow

EP Live From Henriques St scheduled to be the next Anvil release.

“We started off thinking it would take three months to make an EP, but in fact it has taken three years,” says Phil.

“I knew it had to be great – otherwise it would fall by the wayside, as there is so much music coming out every day.”

That's not to say he has ignored other bands, as this anniversary party will show.

Headlining will be longtime Anvil associates heavy soul electro-guitar band The Pangs, backed by electro-noise scamps Videodrome, who will be releasing a single on Anvil soon, the Chester-based flamenco/ska duo Fran And Josh, who “are probably going to end up on Anvil”, and Phil's latest management signings, folksy girl duo The Wellingtons.

“Anvil has to be quality music,” says Phil. “I'm into raw, expressive music and all the acts who have been on Anvil have this raw quality. There has never been a category or genre for Anvil.”

In terms of the direction Phil hopes Anvil might follow, he is looking less towards the success of recent independent labels like Domino, and more towards Tony Wilson's disastrous Factory Records.

“I never wanted to take out a big loan, pay staff and put out two records a month to try to make it a business,” says Phil.

“The Factory story is a wonderful story – I love Tony Wilson's approach. He said: ‘Some people have to make money, and some have to make history.’”

Duncan Hall

INFO Starts 7pm, tickets £3.
Call 01273 325793.

