

Beyond Palm Trees and Oceans

Within a couple of minutes, the song comes and goes on the radio.

But there is much more than fantasies behind Jimmy Dee's message to the world in his new album, "American Dream."

This week, Dee's producer Hal Yoergler will be taking the *American Dream* album to the top recording executives in New York and Texas for their opinions. From this general survey, Yoergler will make his decision to release Dee's first truly competitive single.

Of the album's three, top-rated songs, "Lost," "Can She Do It Like She Dances," and "American Dream," none have Chamorro lyrics.

Some people believe Dee has let his people down by not recording more traditional music.

But he sincerely says that the opposite is true. As a professional in the music business for more than a decade, Dee says *American Dream* is the best recording he could possibly do for the Chamorro people.

"We've got to let our people know that Guam is part of America. I'm part of that American heritage," said Dee during a recent Sunday afternoon interview in his Tamuning home.

He explained that the new album does not contain the Chamorro lyrics that many of his fans expected to hear from a local musician. But that doesn't mean the album isn't Chamorro.

"I am Guam. I am Chamorro. I am American. I personally wrote, rather than copy, much of the material on this album. What can be more Chamorro than that?" Dee explained.

Jimmy Dee is a recording artist that Guam has almost learned to take for granted. Yet this album, his most ambitious and by far his best shot at real recording success, goes much farther than regional marketing.

Over the years he has released five albums and refused to believe that a recording artist is doomed to financial failure on an island because of the population's limited buying power.

Fortunately for Dee, he met one of America's biggest recording producers on a trip to Palau and found that this man, Hal Yoergler, also believes in

the potential of Guam talent.

Together with musicians in the Philippines and recording engineers in Japan, they have produced the first competitive recording from Guam aimed at the millions of record buyers throughout the U.S. mainland.

And ironically, they say they have a truly "American" product — "that's what the album is all about," according to Dee's manager.

"American Dream" shows that a Pacific Islander has taken other aspects and built a product. Something we borrowed and made it in our own way," Dee said.

Dee's manager, Jay R. Merrill, pointed out the marketing difference of "American Dream" over Dee's previous recordings.

"What we're talking about in this album goes beyond palm trees and oceans. It's more a view of life...a philosophy of life that the Pacific Islander has adopted over the recent decades," Merrill said.

And all the recording executives associated with *American Dream* are quick to point out that they believe the Pacific holds the key in the next decade.

"The only real frontier for entertainment is in the Pacific. I'm betting on it. And I'm putting my ass on the line for it," said Yoergler during a recent interview. And as one time vice president of ABC Records and vice president of Polydor Records, Yoergler is risking his reputation on Dee's success.

But Yoergler is a proven winner, a man with an eye for the future. He produced the first religious rock-and-roll single in the late 1960s with Norman Greenbalm's "Spirit in the Sky." He was also the first to cross Japanese Kabuki with American rock-and-roll to produce an successfully limited recording.

"First is fun but it can be economically punishing," said Yoergler who happened to meet Jimmy Dee in Palau about a year ago.

The California recording magnate who also owns a crocodile farm in Palau is very much positive about the future of Pacific music. He said he did not consider Jimmy Dee too much of a risk because he was

"building an artist for the future...building the Pacific."

Yoergler further explained that the time is right for Guam and the Pacific Basin's recording breakthrough.

"Europe had it... And Mainland American music has run its course. The new wave won't come from South America. It will be the Pacific and I feel so lucky to be here," said Yoergler giving the interview as he casually lay across the living room floor of the Jimmy Dee home. At the time Yoergler and his wife's baggage was still packed, coming from the Philippines with his proud, new *American Dream* recording.

Yoergler only stayed on Guam for a short period of time as he strategically made plans for selling Jimmy Dee to America.

The recording professional explained that picking the right single to introduce the album to American radio listeners is the most important part of record marketing.

Picking the single with the biggest appeal is most important because an artist is only given one shot, usually, about three minutes to sell himself.

The song has to be a top-notch recording, considering that more than 250 singles are released in America every week.

"A record has to sell itself with what people hear or see with it," Dee said.

He admits that the previous three Jimmy Dee albums have not had what it takes to make it on the American Mainland.

"The other albums are good. But they are very islandish and Chamorro. Record executives have pointed out to me that they can't promote that material in its present form," Dee said.

He added that unfortunately, there just aren't enough Chamorros to make his previous recordings economically feasible on a large scale.

"Economic success will open the way for us to introduce more people to Chamorro music. But somebody has to break it. Once we sell what they like, then we can introduce them to other music," Dee explained.

And Jimmy Dee, although no



Jimmy Dee

teenager himself, believes rock-and-roll is what "they" like.

"Rock-and-roll best explains the feelings and emotions," said Dee.

He added that Europe and America began clinging to the lyrics of rock-and-roll long ago. But now Asian young people are looking for answers and they're also finding satisfaction in the main-staple of the American music junkie's diet: Rock-and-Roll.

Both Producer Hal Yoergler and Dee are confident that they have the package to break at least a limited success on the U.S. record market.

Most of the songs on *American Dream* were written by Peter McCarin, a most talented songwriter and one of California's hottest talents today.

And the team took no shortcuts during recording sessions in the plush Green Hills District of Manila.

"Hal made me sing in a way that people are not used to hearing," Dee said.

He added that now some of his fans are telling him that a particular song is "so good...so great...it doesn't sound like you."

"I take that as a compliment," Dee said with a slight smile.

The recording artist also pointed out that no artificial recording tricks were used to engineer the album.

"I like to be able to say, 'hey man, that was me all the way, no gimmicks,'" Dee explained.

While Yoergler was on Guam, he was also confident that he had chosen the right man to record his latest product.

"How many entertainers do you know that can drive an audience completely crazy and they don't understand a word," said Yoergler commenting on Dee's long-running, phenomenally successful Japanese dinner shows at the

Hilton Hotel.

But Dee himself has the simple explanation of that appeal: "body language."

"Body language. That's an international language," said Dee who is Guam's most popular entertainer in Japan. In fact, he is so well known that many of the Japanese tourists recognize him as a star before he even sings a word during his regular Hilton Hotel dinner shows.

Dee has built his reputation in Japan during the past several years with frequent performances often sponsored by the Guam Visitors' Bureau.

He says his success has been the result of mental factors as well as communication read through eye, face, gestures and other body movements.

For example, he prays, or meditates with his Chamorrila before every dinner show in an attempt to motivate the troupe into a respectful frame of mind for the audience.

"People pay dearly to see our show. Without respect for them it's easy for the people to read us as not being genuine — a phony," Dee said.

He added that developing a "genuine" respect or "love" for people has not been an easy task. And Dee said he has been working on improving his personality for about five years.

"I try to have a shoot'em-in-the-back with love kind of attitude now," the performer said.

And he added that there is a difference between "saying love and being genuinely concerned.

"I've learned you have to give more than you receive," said Dee in a most sincere effort to be understood.

In conclusion to this interview, Dee said he wanted to just say:

"Even if all this doesn't make sense; if it's hard to understand; just remember Jimmy Dee still wishes the very best for you."