

Building a Music Museum: The Long and Winding Road

By KAREN SCHOEMER

IN 1989, MICK JAGGER DRYLY REferred to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland as "the Phantom Temple of Rock." In its January issue, Spin magazine complains about the lack of progress in constructing the building, calling it "the Rock and Roll Hall of Shame." It seems people are losing patience.

Jann S. Wenner, executive vice president of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation, had finally announced in early 1990 that, after prolonged delays, "the shovel will hit the dirt this year." It didn't.

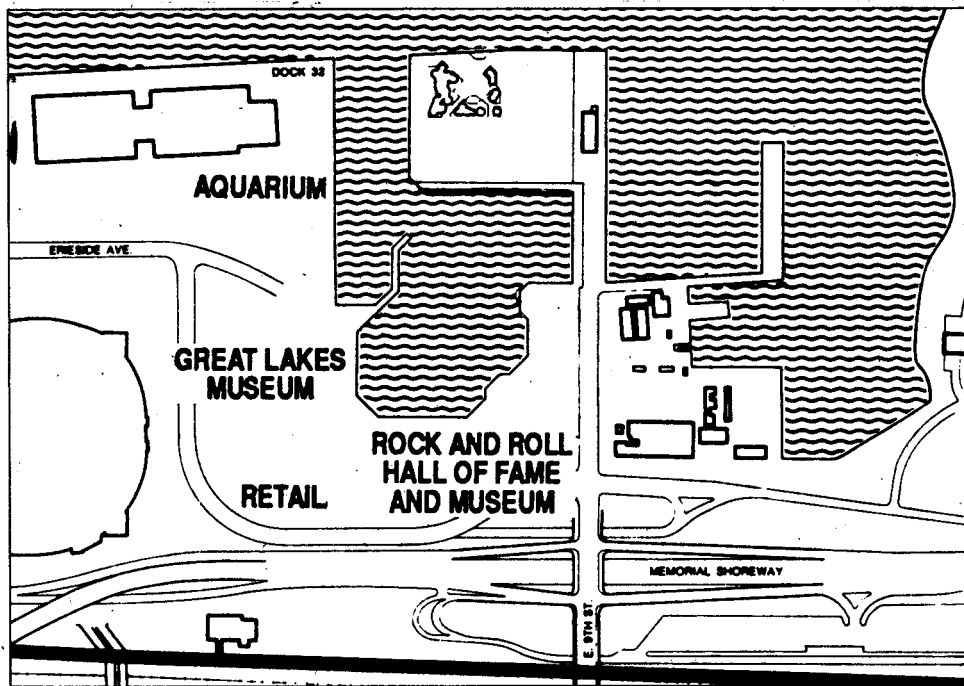
Mr. Wenner and Ahmet Ertegun, chairman of Atlantic Records, along with a team of New York music-industry associates, originally unveiled plans in 1985 for a museum and archive dedicated to the culture and history of rock music. Since then, the Hall of Fame's star-studded induction ceremony, a lavish black-tie dinner and jam session at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, has become one of New York's hot fund-raising tickets; Hall of Fame banquets are becoming renowned for reuniting members of 1960's rock bands (like George Harrison and Ringo Starr of the Beatles) and coaxing rare appearances by reclusive artists (like Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys).

But five years later, with \$43 million raised from public and private sources, not so much as a cornerstone has been laid. In typical music-industry fashion, the Hall of Fame has become a victim of its own hype. The sixth annual induction ceremonies take place Jan. 16; not only has construction yet to begin, but new setbacks have delayed the building for at least another year: on Dec. 18, the Hall of Fame Foundation announced that the building site was being moved.

And thus began the latest chapter in the Hall of Fame saga, a tale of plans gone awry.

The original hall location, adjacent to a development on the Cuyahoga River called Tower City, had stood empty for almost three years while a joint Cleveland-New York committee raised the estimated \$40 million necessary for the project and laboriously negotiated about the building's interior and exterior design. Plans were secure enough for Mr. Wenner to have made his January 1990 announcement, but soon after, the committee decided that the site was inadequate for the hall's projected needs. Ultimately, the build-

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Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum

The new site for the Hall of Fame, at North Coast Harbor on Lake Erie in Cleveland; the aquarium, museum and retail center are in planning stages.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame has already become an institution. But where is the actual Hall of Fame?

ing will house rotating exhibits about the history of rock-and-roll, from performers to styles to trends to technology. It will also include a permanent library of recordings and printed material, as well as a wing dedicated to Hall of Fame members.

The recent announcement about moving the site has fueled speculation about disorganization within the foundation. But Mr. Wenner, editor and publisher of Rolling Stone and Us magazines, defends the committee's slow pace. "We're doing everything for the first time, so we're learning as we go along," he said the other day. "We're doing something

for history, with real integrity, and we want to get it right. Nobody's in the mood to rush it to meet any artificial deadline."

But from the beginning the building has been plagued by problems. Once a city had been chosen (Cleveland had launched the pioneering disk jockey Alan Freed, who popularized the term rock-and-roll), the Tower City site was selected by the New York-based foundation and a committee of Cleveland business and political leaders. Both the original site and the move to the new location (near Tower City, in North Coast Harbor on Lake Erie) have been tied to Cleveland's development goals. "The Hall of Fame is going to have an incredible impact on Cleveland in terms of the number of visitors," said Larry Thompson, director of the Hall of Fame and Museum.

The original site was donated in 1987 by the developer of Tower City, a \$400 million hotel and retail complex that would be adjacent to the Hall of Fame. The hall and commercial complex were considered mutually beneficial, yet the Hall of Fame property was relatively small. "There is very little in terms of actual land mass," Mr.

Continued on Page 30

Hall of Famers

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees fall into three categories: artists (eligible 25 years after the release of their first recording), early influences (pre-rock pioneers) and nonperformance (for behind-the-scenes contributions). Inductees are elected by a panel of more than 200 popular-music experts.

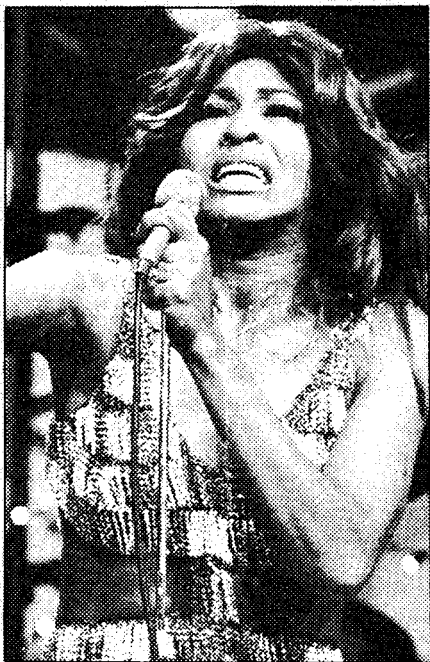
1986 — Artists: Chuck Berry, James Brown, Ray Charles, Sam Cooke, Fats Domino, the Everly Brothers, Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis Presley, Little Richard. **Early influences:** John Hammond, Robert Johnson, Jimmie Rodgers, Jimmy Yancey, Jerry Wexler. **Nonperformance:** Alan Freed, Sam Phillips.

1987 — Artists: the Coasters, Eddie Cochran, Bo Diddley, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, Bill Haley, B. B. King, Clyde McPhatter, Ricky Nelson, Roy Orbison, Carl Perkins, Smokey Robinson, Joe Turner, Muddy Waters, Jackie Wilson. **Early influences:** Louis Jordan, T-Bone Walker, Hank Williams. **Nonperformance:** Leonard Chess, Ahmet Ertegun, Jerome Lieber, Michael Stoller.

1988 — Artists: the Beach Boys, the Beatles, the Drifters, Bob Dylan, the Supremes. **Early influences:** Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly, Les Paul. **Nonperformance:** Berry Gordy Jr.

1989 — Artists: Dion DiMucci, Otis Redding, the Rolling Stones, the Temptations, Stevie Wonder. **Early influences:** the Ink Spots, Bessie Smith, the Soul Stirrers. **Nonperformance:** Phil Spector.

1990 — Artists: Hank Ballard, Bobby Darin, the Four Seasons, the Four Tops, the Kinks, the Platters, Simon and Gar-



ABC

Tina Turner in 1971, when she and then-partner Ike had their biggest hits; both will join the Hall of Fame.

funkel, the Who. **Early influences:** Louis Armstrong, Charlie Christian, Ma Rainey. **Nonperformance:** Gerry Goffin, Carole King, Lamont Dozier, Brian Holland, Eddie Holland.

1991 — Artists: LaVern Baker, the Byrds, John Lee Hooker, the Impressions, Wilson Pickett, Jimmy Reed, Ike and Tina Turner. **Early influences:** Howlin' Wolf. **Nonperformance:** Dave Bartholomew, Ralph Bass.



Michelle V. Agans/The New York Times

The blues guitarist John Lee Hooker will be inducted this month.

The Long, Winding Road to a Hall of Fame

Continued From Page 28

Thompson said. "The site is extremely constraining. One of the questions I first raised was, 'What are you going to do about expansion in the future?' I don't think that had been thought a whole lot about."

Over the next two years, the projected cost for the building would skyrocket from an early estimate of \$15 million to \$40 million. After accepting the architect I. M. Pei's exterior pyramidal design, the committee hired an interior design company. But dissatisfied with their work, the group had to commission a second company to design the interior, a move that pushed the groundbreaking date to late 1990.

Finally, the building boom at Tower City squeezed out the hall. Last spring, Cleveland set in motion long-standing plans for a baseball stadium and arena on property that is currently a parking lot, opposite the Hall of Fame. Mr. Thompson said parking had not been a major consideration. "When you looked at the site you could see parking right across the street, even though there were plans on the books for a stadium." But according to Robert R. Broadbent, the committee's Cleveland chairman, "Even if the stadium and the arena did not go into effect, there would still be a parking problem."

The committee began looking into new sites about eight months ago. Although Mr. Wenner stated that the decision to move originated with the

Construction on the rock-and-roll museum has yet to begin. Has it become a victim of its own hype?

New York faction of the committee, the selection of North Coast Harbor was again closely related to Cleveland's development interests. "From the point of view of the city, Tower City was done," Mr. Wenner said.

"They didn't need us there anymore. What they wanted to develop next was the lakefront, which they've been putting a lot of money into over the last 10 years."

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Since the beginning, the interior space allotted for the hall has grown from 100,000 square feet at the Tower City site to 120,000 to 140,000 at North Coast Harbor. The cost has risen to \$60 million. Construction is now projected to begin in 1992.

But Mr. Wenner has no patience for impatient people: "We could have stayed at Tower City and gotten up the project a year earlier. But all this has been necessary to insure the longevity and character of the museum." □