

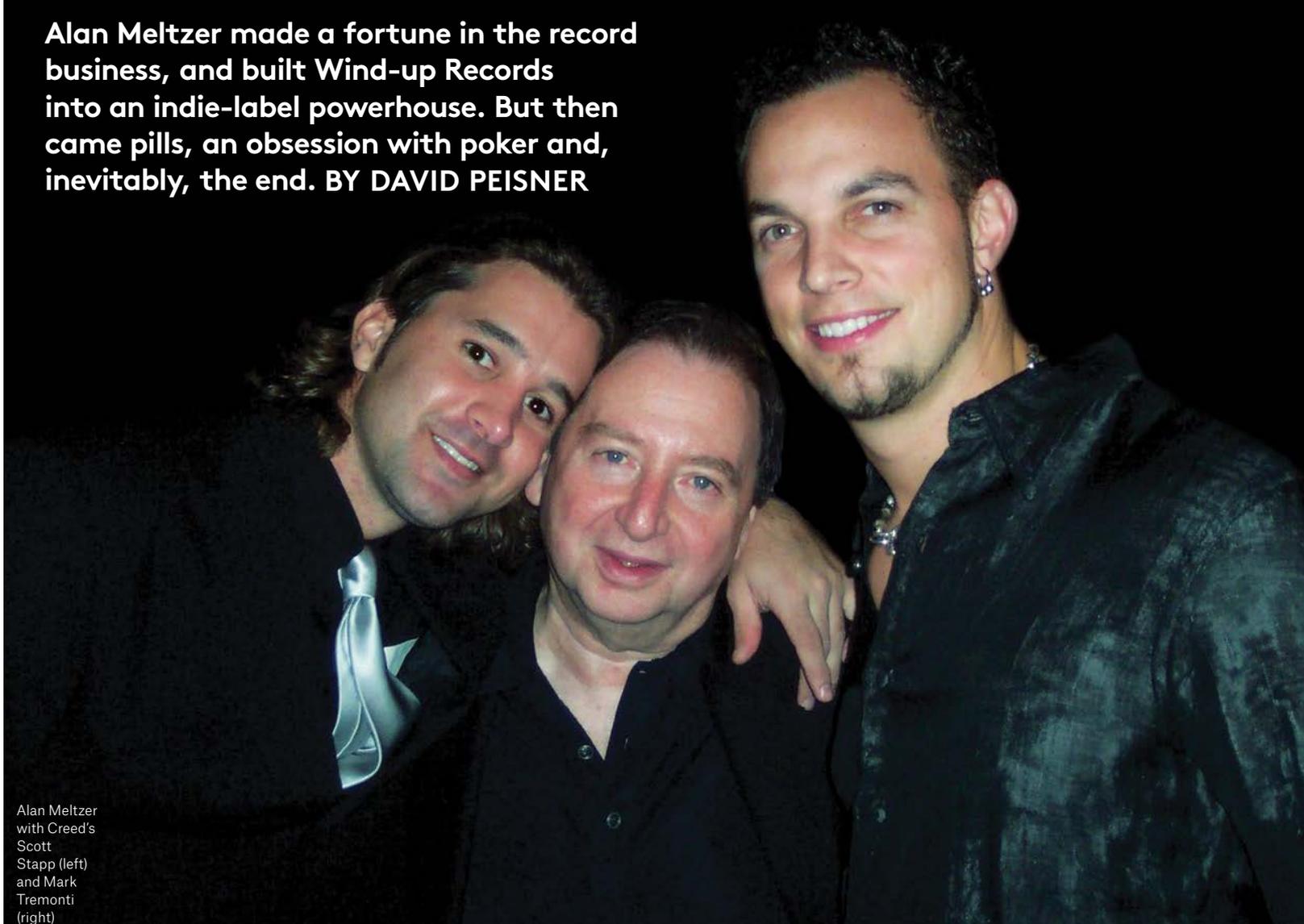
THE HIGH-STAKES RISE, AMBITION-FUELED LIFE AND

LONG DARK FALL OF

ROCK'S LAST GREAT

HUSTLER

Alan Meltzer made a fortune in the record business, and built Wind-up Records into an indie-label powerhouse. But then came pills, an obsession with poker and, inevitably, the end. BY DAVID PEISNER



Alan Meltzer with Creed's Scott Stapp (left) and Mark Tremonti (right)

IN

late 1971, as Led Zeppelin was set to release its massively anticipated fourth album, Alan Meltzer was running a record store in Connecticut called Rainbow Records. Meltzer was 27, still many years away from making multiple fortunes founding and selling CD One-Stop, a music wholesaler; investing in CDNow, an early online retailer; and building Wind-up Records into the most successful independent record label of its era. With the Zeppelin album dropping in a few days, Meltzer bought advertising time on tri-state area radio for a spot he'd created himself, the crux of which he related to Wind-up chief creative officer Gregg Wattenberg years later.

"The ad said that for a limited time only, Rainbow Records had arranged with Atlantic to have *Led Zeppelin IV* shipped directly from Atlantic's warehouse to Rainbow Records, 'so come in now and pre-order your copy,'" Wattenberg recalls. "It was all true: Every record store had their records shipped directly from the warehouse. But it was said in such a way that it sounded special. The next morning there was a line of 2,500 people so they could pre-order *Led Zeppelin IV*. They got it the same day as every other record store, but he locked up all that business."

The move was an early example of the gambles upon which Meltzer would build a 40-year run in the music business. During his rise, he earned a reputation as a colorful, nerdy and often ruthless executive who would say whatever needed to be said to close a deal, but also perform acts of overwhelming generosity for friends, associates and even strangers. At Wind-up, he defied the odds by betting big on fewer acts—marshaling his resources behind bands like Creed, Evanescence and Drowning Pool, turning them into some of the biggest bands of the late '90s and 2000s. In doing so, he built his independent label into a commercial force on par with the majors. In the late 2000s, as Wind-up struggled amid an industry-wide downturn, his health challenges multiplied and his marriage to Diana Meltzer—who was officially the label's A&R chief—careened toward an acrimonious end, his interests drifted into other areas: TV production, new online businesses and, most especially, poker, which he played frequently against top-flight professionals, occasionally on NBC's "Poker After Dark" and Game Show Network's "High Stakes Poker."

"Alan saw himself as an empire builder," says Derek Graham, who went to work for Meltzer at CD One-Stop during the mid-'80s and later spent 13 years at Wind-up. "He thrived on that excitement of building a company. Once the empire was built, I'm not sure it meant as much to him."

After his divorce, Meltzer sold Wind-up and five months later, took his own life, ending a dramatic and unlikely rise and fall.

"Alan was a character with conviction," says Steve Karas, who spent eight years at Wind-up and now runs SKH Music. "A lot of people with money want to

be in the music business but very few have the backbone. When you look back on the period after the Blackwells and Bransons and Alperets and Mosses, there weren't many Alans."

Meltzer was born in 1944 and grew up in Brooklyn. According to both Karas and Wattenberg, the stories Meltzer told about his early years seemed to mix truth with mythmaking.

"Even those close to him didn't necessarily have the complete picture of his origins," Karas says.

Meltzer was a musician himself, and, it seems, an actor who scored at least one small film role. He told tales of turns as a schoolteacher, a pretzel vendor and the owner of a junk shop who rummaged through trash at apartment buildings on Park Avenue, including one where he later owned a penthouse. He may or may not have gotten his start in the music business by peeling the "For Promotional Use Only" stickers from record company promo albums, then selling them at flea markets.

In the early '70s, Meltzer opened a record store in Brooklyn called Titus Oaks, which later expanded to locations in Huntington and Hicksville on New York's Long Island. Soon after, he added Rainbow Records to his fold. During the '70s, Meltzer, who'd already been married and divorced, met Diana, a former model. She too had been married before and had a young son named Michael, who took Meltzer's last name after the couple married in 1979. Together, the Meltzers made a striking pair: Diana, thin and wiry with a penchant for fishnet stockings, exotic hats and dark sunglasses, and Alan, who stood barely more than 5 feet tall but weighed about 300 pounds for most of his adult life, and wore a black shirt and black pants every day, almost without fail.

As the CD era dawned in the early '80s, Meltzer found himself struggling to keep his stores stocked, so in 1985, working out of his house in Ridgefield, Conn., he opened CD One-Stop, which focused initially on distributing CDs to mom-and-pop shops along the East Coast. The business expanded quickly, adding cassettes to its offerings, and moved its operations into an 180,000-square-foot warehouse.

In the midst of the company's rise, the Meltzers suffered a defining tragedy when Michael died in a car accident in 1991. The couple was devastated, and some close to them have suggested they never recovered. Ira Stone, who'd met Meltzer in the mid-'80s, had become his best friend by this time.

"What more traumatic thing can happen to a parent?" Stone says. In the aftermath, Meltzer seemed to throw himself into his work.

In 1993, Meltzer sold CD One-Stop for a reported \$30 million to Alliance Entertainment, which had recently bought some of its competitors, including Bassin Distributors and Abbey Road One-Stop. The deal stipulated Meltzer would stay on as Alliance's president, but the arrangement proved rocky.

"At CD One-Stop, our mortal enemies were Bassin and Abbey Road," says Syd Schwartz, who started at CD One-Stop in 1989 and continued working with Meltzer until 2002. "We'd be meeting in Alan's office and in the middle of a sentence he'd stop, call one of the competitors and ask if they were having a 'going out of business' sale just to mess with them. After the merger, all these self-made guys had to work together without pissing each other off. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure it was going to be difficult to get everybody paddling in the same direction."

Joe Bianco, the then-Alliance CEO who'd orchestrated the roll-up, says that it was quickly clear Meltzer wasn't going to be satisfied with his role.

"Alan had grander ambitions," Bianco says. "He wanted to run the whole company and be important in the music business."

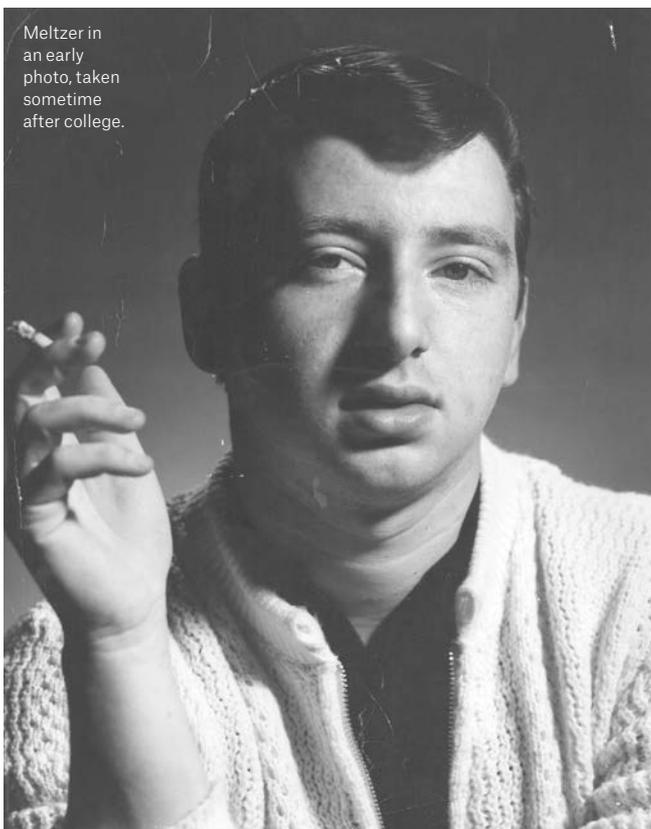
Meltzer tried to push Alliance into new areas, founding a company within the company called Hard Core Marketing, and helping initiate Alliance's 1994 purchase of British indie label Castle Communications. But ultimately he was frustrated by the competing visions within Alliance and announced in a late-night fax in December 1994 that he was quitting.

Not long after, Meltzer was introduced to CDNow co-founder/CEO Jason Olim. Meltzer helped CDNow resolve a legal dispute that was hampering its ability to attract financing, and subsequently invested \$1.2 million.

"His price for the resolution was that his investment would be on terms favorable to himself, but he showed tremendous risk tolerance doing this deal before we'd properly been vetted," Olim says.

In 1998, CDNow went public and Meltzer earned somewhere in the neighborhood of \$20 million. According to Olim, at the time of the initial public offering, Meltzer was in a position to make even more money for himself but in doing so, would've shaken the confidence of the offering. Olim appealed to Meltzer, who backed off. Olim, who was in his mid-20s at the time, says that in this way Meltzer was always more than just an investor.

"He treated me like a son," he says. "He was really interested in what was going



Meltzer in an early photo, taken sometime after college.

on in my life. His son would've been about my age and he said a few times that he valued our relationship because he had that void there."

In 1995, when Meltzer bought Grass Records for \$950,000, it seemed like an unremarkable investment. The label had a slew of indie acts including the Wrens, Pollen and Brainiac, and Meltzer quickly arranged a distribution deal through BMG. In the first year or so, Grass released roughly two dozen records. None of them sold much.

"I remember Alan bringing in Conor Oberst—whose band, Commander Venus, was on Grass—to run a marketing meeting," Schwartz says. "Conor was an incredibly smart, precocious 15-year-old and Alan told us he had Conor run the meeting because he was a good deal smarter than any of us were ever going to be. If you knew Alan, something like that didn't bother you, but if you're a veteran executive and a 15-year-old tells you you can be doing a better job, that's going to rub you the wrong way."

Meltzer soon hired several executives from the CD One-Stop days, including Graham, Tony Bruno and Steve Lerner, who would become president of Grass and later Wind-up, but the fledgling operation continued to burn through staff, artists and money.

"It was a disaster," Graham says. "Alan had lost easily \$10 million in two years dumping out releases nobody wanted. I remember meeting with BMG people and one of them said, 'Grass is a joke. There are so many releases and all this stuff sucks and doesn't sell.'"

Largely because of this perception, Grass renamed itself Wind-up in 1997. That summer, the label signed a band from Orlando, Fla., called Creed. Its debut album, *My Own Prison*, arrived in August and Meltzer was ready to bet big on it.

"When he signed the band, he pushed the million dollars onto the table and said, 'We're going to go get it,'" Graham says. Wind-up had less than 12 employees and Meltzer became involved in every aspect of the album's rollout. At the time, radio was seen as almost the exclusive domain of major labels, but Meltzer hired a promotion staff that pushed the album to rock radio. When the dust cleared, *My Own Prison* had sold more than 6 million copies (according to Nielsen SoundScan) and Wind-up had a blueprint for the future.

"At that point, Alan made the decision and said, 'We're going to be a rock label,'" says Bruno, who worked at Wind-up until 2004. The label had put out records from heritage acts like Teddy Pendergrass and Dr. John. Bruno says the new directive was, "Drop them and move on."

Meltzer basked in Wind-up's success. He became tight with Creed frontman Scott Stapp, who he sometimes referred to as his "first-born son."

"He was a father figure to me," Stapp says. "Being a guy who was abandoned by his biological father then abused by his stepfather, and not ever feeling like I had a real father, with his situation with his son's death, that was something that really brought us together."

Creed's second album, *Human Clay*, came out in 1999 and was a bigger hit than the first, eventually selling more than 10 million copies. Learning from his experience with Grass, Meltzer focused nearly all the company's energy and resources during these years on a single band. In fact, during 1998 and 1999, the label released only three full-lengths by acts not named Creed. This became Wind-up's MO: fewer records but more money and attention dedicated to each one. In 2001, there were only three releases and two, Creed's *Weathered* and Drowning Pool's debut *Sinner*, were huge hits. The following year, there were five records; two—by Seether and 12 Stones—were strong sellers. By 2003, the output jumped to seven, including Finger Eleven's self-titled breakthrough and the first album by what would become the label's second superstar act, Evanescence. In a business used to a 10% success rate, Wind-up's batting average in the late '90s and early 2000s was unheard of.

"We'd put out four or five records a year and really stick with them," Bruno says. "It wasn't just throwing things at the wall, seeing what sticks. It was throwing it against the wall and then as it comes down, pick it back up, throw it up there and try something different. Alan went back to the Motown days: He didn't just sign an artist and put them in the studio. He'd send them to the gym to lose weight, to vocal coaches and acting lessons, and really develop them."

Meltzer was also demanding with his employees.

"He'd get involved in every detail from album artwork to print ads,"

Schwartz says. "He'd spend hours working with you, looking over your shoulder, making sure everything was just right. Then just when you thought you finally had it nailed, he'd change his mind and you'd be back to square one. He could drive you mental, but had an unbelievable knack for getting your best work out of you."

At his finest moments, Meltzer saw his artists and staff as family. When Drowning Pool frontman Dave Williams died in 2002, Meltzer bought Williams' parents the new house their son had always hoped to. When Dave Magee, the drummer for an early Wind-up band called Stretch Princess, was diagnosed with a brain tumor, Meltzer paid medical bills that reportedly exceeded \$100,000. Wind-up subsequently became one of the few labels to offer their artists health insurance.

With the label's success, Diana grew more involved. Current Wind-up CEO Ed Vetri was hired as CFO in 1999 and saw her role evolve.

"When I first started, Diana wasn't an employee," Vetri says. "She'd come in with her two Chihuahuas and be the crazy owner's crazy wife. My then-controller had to walk the dogs. But once Diana felt the excitement, she wanted to be a part of it. We called her 'head of A&R' but primarily she entertained artists when they came to town."

The extent of Diana's A&R role remains a point of debate. (She didn't return messages to be interviewed for this story.) She was frequently credited—often by her husband—as the company's ears, the person who discovered new artists and picked singles. Wattenberg first met her when he was offered an A&R position in 2003.

"She brought me to their apartment, showed me photos of her modeling days and asked if I wanted a massage," he said. "I said, 'No, thank you.' She asked if I wanted rice and beans. I said, 'No, thank

Ira Stone and Alan Meltzer with a private airplane (left), and in New York in 1999.



At first, Meltzer wasn't much of a poker player, but he improved quickly. There are YouTube clips of him winning more than \$400,000 in a single hand—and losing more than \$500,000.

you.' Then she asked if I would help pick her dog up from the dog spa. So I walk back from the dog spa carrying their little dog. Then I called Lerner and said, 'There's no chance in hell I'm taking this job.'"

Nonetheless, later that year, he was convinced to, on the condition—he says—that he wouldn't have to deal with Diana. Inevitably though, he did.

"Alan just wanted her around because she was going crazy sitting at home in Connecticut," he says. "Originally, she got to just hang out with the bands but it turned into taking credit for bringing bands in. There were some A&R people that got thrown under the bus so Diana could look like a champ."

Meanwhile, her husband's interest in Wind-up was waning. The man who was once so intimately involved in every decision was, by 2003, spending a significant chunk of his time at the

Wind-up In Turnaround

"We don't believe rock is dead," new owners say—but diversification helps

In its fourth incarnation by Billboard's count, Wind-up Entertainment continues to build its rock roster, and is ready to diversify into alternative rock/crossover, according to label president/co-owner Ed Vetri.

After losing money in 2010, when founder Alan Meltzer and wife Diana were going through a divorce, the label was sold to Vetri and chief creative officer Gregg Wattenberg for an undisclosed sum in a deal that closed in April 2011. Since then, the company has been in the black, Vetri says.

While the label's best sellers for the last two years under the Vetri/Wattenberg reign have been roster mainstays like Evanescence and Seether—which between them have sold 1.3 million units in that time frame, according to Nielsen SoundScan—the label has also issued James Durbin's *Memories of a Beautiful Disaster*, which has sold 121,000 units since its fourth-quarter 2011 release. The jury is still out on whether other releases have lived up to expectations. For example, *King*, from jam band O.A.R., has sold 70,000 copies—great for an indie label, but the group's lowest-selling studio album to date. Releases from Bayside and Hawthorne Heights have scanned 40,000 and 25,000, respectively—again, respectable numbers for an indie label, but career lows for each band.

Wind-up has high hopes to break acts like Young Guns, the Virginmarys and Jillette Johnson. The label has signed '90s act Filter, and Creed singer Scott Stapp—whose last album sold 395,000 copies—has a new record coming out this year.

Beyond the label, the company's publishing arm is making some noise, Vetri says, and other labels are tapping into its songwriters and producers. "We used to just use the studios for our bands and we have an apartment where they could stay when they were working here," he says. But now, "Universal recorded Phillip Phillips in our studios and our writers got the second track, 'Gone, Gone, Gone,' which will be the next single."

And as major labels dial back on rock acts, Vetri says Wind-up perceives an opportunity. "We will stay deeply committed to rock music, which is our core business, but we see an opportunity in alternative rock crossover, where we are about to dive in deeply," he says. "We don't believe rock is dead. We are doing very well now. It's been quite a turnaround for our little company."

—Ed Christman



Wind-up Records president/co-owner Ed Vetri

office playing online poker. He did make a major contribution to "Bring Me to Life," the breakthrough single from Evanescence's debut, *Fallen*, by suggesting the band add a rap to it, but according to Vetri, that was one of his last real contributions to the company. After the excitement and toil of building Wind-up, Meltzer seemed to find success dull.

"Alan would always put a black cloud over success," Vetri says. "When that Evanescence record came out, Alan got in his biggest depression. Too much success made him feel like he was losing control. The company was so much bigger—it was 60 or 70 employees. He didn't have that relationship with the artists anymore. It wasn't like it was with Creed."

Compounding this were myriad health issues relating to his weight, including serious back problems and arthritis, for which he took a host of prescription painkillers.

"He'd be very medicated," Vetri says. "He took Oxycontin, Vico-

din, Percocet and things of that nature like candy. It affected his day-to-day focus and his ability to stay awake in meetings."

Things got so bad that in 2003, Vetri and Lerner staged what Vetri described as "sort of an intervention." Meltzer took roughly eight months off, during which time he went to Arizona, lost a lot of weight, got his painkiller habit under control and became deeply interested in Buddhism. He returned to the office in 2004 healthier but the change didn't last.

In 2005, EMI offered Meltzer a deal reportedly worth more than \$100 million to buy Wind-up. The sale made sense: Here was a chance to make a lot of money and step away from a business he'd lost interest in, while still remaining involved in an advisory role. The deal was all but signed—some of the Wind-up staff were already in the EMI directory—when Meltzer pulled out at the 11th hour.

The reason he gave several senior executives was that he had cancer, specifically something called chronic myelogenous leukemia, or CML, which would prevent him from being able to carry out his advisory duties. It's unclear whether Meltzer actually had CML—which is treatable, frequently asymptomatic and has a long-term survival rate of more than 95%—but according to Vetri, after the deal died, "it never came up again."

"I think ultimately he just felt like he couldn't sell the company," Vetri says. "Ego-wise, it couldn't go on without him." Furthermore, by this point, as Vetri saw it, "the company really kept his marriage intact."

The aborted sale disappointed some senior staff who'd stood to profit handsomely and had grown weary of the Wind-up drama. According to several sources, Lerner, who'd been Meltzer's closest lieutenant since the CD One-Stop days, simply stopped coming to work for more than six months.

"Alan and Steve had a bit of a battle," Vetri says. "You know that yellow tape you put out when you're blocking off a murder scene? Alan put that across Steve's office when he left."

EMI came back the following year with another offer—this time for a reported \$60 million plus back-end incentives. Meltzer appeared ready to sell but again backed out late in the game. Following this, Lerner left for good.

Meanwhile, Wind-up was experiencing its first serious commercial setbacks. Creed had broken up, and the label poured money into Stapp's solo debut, *The Great Divide*, with little return. Meltzer himself became an erratic presence in the office.

"He'd have 10 ideas; two would be good," Wattenberg says. "The problem is he'd want you to follow through on all 10."

"For example, he was like, 'There's a big poker craze. Somebody's going to have a hit with a poker song.' He wanted to write the song and wanted me, as the A&R guy, to make one of our bands do it. So he wrote it, played me it and was like, 'You do your thing, make it sound good,' and make this band, Breaking Point, do it. I said, 'Alan, if I make them do it, I'm going to lose all credibility. They're going to hate me.' And he's like, 'Fuck 'em. What else do they got going on?'"

Meltzer also explored non-musical ventures including starting an online memorial service called the Eternal Space (which one person described as "Myspace for dead people"). "He got a little bored with music," Wattenberg says. "He looked at buying a couple of TV production companies, which in hindsight, was pretty visionary."

By 2007 though, most of Meltzer's energy was going toward poker. He took frequent trips to Atlantic City, N.J., and Las Vegas and was routinely bellying up to high-stakes tables stocked with professional

players. Brandon Adams, a poker pro, author and lecturer at Harvard Business School, met Meltzer at the Bellagio in early 2007. Meltzer was in Las Vegas because Evanescence was playing the very first show at the Palms' new indoor amphitheater.

"He mentioned he could only play for an hour because he had to be at the concert," Adams says. "Alan won one big hand, then another and never went to the concert. He stayed and played poker all night."

He and Adams became close. At first, Meltzer wasn't much of a poker player, Adams says, but he improved quickly. He'd always displayed a gambler's instinct in business, and the ruthless nature of the competition suited him. In 2009 and 2010, he appeared on "High Stakes Poker" and "Poker After Dark," but as time progressed, his health became so compromised that it was affecting his play.

"In the last couple of years, his A-game was on par with the top players but he only played his A-game about 30% of the time because his back wasn't good and he didn't have good energy," Adams says. "He'd be uncomfortable sitting for a long period. It would affect his play and his patience."

It also seemed to affect his marriage. Although he was betting big—there are YouTube clips of him winning more than \$400,000 in a single hand and losing more than \$500,000—and clearly

had an addictive personality, sources insist his gambling never had significant financial impact on either Wind-up or his total net worth. But as the label posted weaker sales amid a global economic crisis, poker apparently became an issue for Diana.

"The amounts Alan was gambling were small relative to the money he had," Adams says. "But Diana might have thought the business was suffering because of the time and money Alan was putting into gambling."

Wattenberg believes poker may have just been a symptom of deeper issues.

"She was definitely not thrilled he was playing poker all day long and hanging out with that world of people but like a lot of couples, they grew apart," he says.

Whatever the reasons, the Meltzers' divorce caused tremendous upheaval at Wind-up.

"It was about a year-and-a-half of torture," Vetri says. "By virtue of being married to him, Diana had half the stock." Vetri says that Wind-up sold publishing to finance what Meltzer suspected would become a long, drawn-out divorce. "I had to run the day-to-day and get a bunch of divorce lawyers' opinions on whether we should sign an artist."

As the divorce slogged on, according to Wattenberg, both Meltzers used Wind-up as "their piggy bank."

"They took private planes everywhere, car services were waiting 24/7," Wattenberg says. "It's their business, it's their right, but there was a real financial impact on the company."

Faced with two different bosses—neither of whom was a particularly stable presence during the best of times—engaging in shouting matches and conducting divorce meetings in the office, Wind-up employees tiptoed around the chaos as best they could. The timing, coming as the label was already struggling—its overall market share, which had hovered around 1% between 2000 and 2004, dropped to 0.26% by 2010—exacerbated the problems.

"They both grabbed all the working capital out of the company," Wattenberg says. "It couldn't have been a worse time to handcuff a company while the industry is already getting crushed. Artists are looking for money to make records. You can't sign bands. In this business, it's all about taking bets—you've got to double down on bands you think are going to do well. We couldn't double down on anything."

As this was going on, Wind-up got yet another



those visits grew more infrequent.

"I'd go visit him and it was insane," Vetri says. "Like Oscar Madison, just a disaster in how he organized his life. He was sloppy and really becoming reclusive."

His friend Ira Stone says that the two of them had planned on taking a handful of trips around this time but Meltzer kept cancelling at the last minute.

"He was having trouble walking," Stone recalls. "He'd fallen and broken his wrist, then fallen again and hurt the other wrist. Balance was getting to be tougher for him."

Vetri and Wattenberg sent trainers to Meltzer's apartment, including one who specialized in working with obese people, but Meltzer chased him away. Stone believes that by this time, he'd given up on getting healthy.

"He lived life to the fullest and felt like it caught up with him," he says. "Anyone that loved Alan wanted him to take the weight off and cut down on the painkillers, but he felt like it just wasn't possible towards the end."

As Vetri recalls, "Alan told me his body was failing his brain and he didn't want to go on like that." For a man who constantly sought to be in control, the idea of not being able to manage his own body must have been particularly galling.

Still, when Vetri spoke to Meltzer on Friday, Oct. 28, 2011, his former boss didn't seem particularly despondent. "Alan had very dark moments, but that day we had a conversation about reality television and one of the crazy shows he'd watch," he says. "He was just laughing on the phone. We made dinner plans for the following Wednesday."

That weekend, alone in his apartment, Meltzer took an overdose of his prescription painkillers and never woke up. A note was found at the scene.

Vetri says that Stapp was one of the few Wind-up artists who passed along condolences, an indication of how far Meltzer had drifted from the music business in his last few years. In January 2012, the New York Post ran a story about how Meltzer had left \$1 million to his chauffeur and \$500,000 to his doorman. Stone, who is the executor of Meltzer's estate, says that while the bequests are likely less than the Post reported—both the chauffeur and doorman are promised a percentage of the estate—

the sentiment behind the gifts is indicative of someone who took pride in never forgetting his humble roots.

"He'd do these random acts of kindness where he didn't expect anything in return," he says.

Diana, who left the music business after the divorce, saw things differently when quoted in the same Post story about her ex-husband's inheritance.

"He can leave it to whoever he wants," she said. "I could care less. If he wants to give it to the bums, he can give it to the bums. He could fuck a nun. I couldn't give a shit."

Wind-up, for its part, is nowhere near the lofty heights it scaled in the early 2000s, but its continuing existence is evidence of the mark Meltzer made.

"His legacy is Wind-up and what he taught me and Ed," Wattenberg says. "Don't be afraid to be kooky. You've got to be a free thinker and take big chances."

No matter the circumstances, suicide almost always leaves more questions than answers. Many who were close to Meltzer felt like in the end he believed he had lived a full life, wanted to take back control from a body that had failed him and was ready to move on to the next chapter.

Meltzer was one of the last of a breed of independent, self-made music moguls. During an era when major labels had all the commercial clout, he proved that an indie with deep pockets and icy veins could compete with them and frequently win. While it's easy to cast his demise as a cautionary tale, it's also possible to see it as the natural evolution for a guy who clearly enjoyed the challenge of the unknown more than the comforts of success.

As Stone puts it, "Alan was a gambler from day one. Where anybody else would figure out all the reasons not to do something, if Alan wanted to, he went for it. And he went for it." ●

Top: Alan Meltzer on season five of GSN's "High Stakes Poker"; right: Diana Meltzer (in shades) with Evanescence in November 2011.



"Diana asked if I would help pick her dog up from the dog spa. So I walk back from the dog spa carrying their little dog. Then I called and said, 'There's no chance in hell I'm taking this job.'"