



rather do multiple theatre runs in a city than arena dates, because it creates a better customer experience," says Weisman. "We are working harder to make the same money that we would make in a single night at an arena, but we believe in providing his audience with the best experience possible."

The business model is illustrated perfectly by the four shows booked at the UK's Eventim Apollo (3,620-seated) in London and five at the Netherlands' Koninklijk Theater Carré (1,800 seated) in Amsterdam.

"We like to play real theatres with traditional balconies that have a capacity between 2,000 and 4,000, that is our sweet spot. So the Eventim Apollo is ideal. Joe's fans like to be seated and it is typical of the kind of venue Joe likes to play," says Weisman.

The manager is convinced it is the choice of salubrious venues that has helped Bonamassa grow his female fanbase. "Six years ago audiences at Joe's shows were 95 per cent male, but they are much closer to 50/50 male and female," he says. "Women like coming to upscale venues. It is becoming what we always dreamed of – a multi-generational family show."

### Doing it his way

An employee of his father Elliot's Premier Artist Services company, which has worked with Frank Sinatra for the last 20 years of his career, Weisman was a 23-year-old classic rock fan when he first discovered Bonamassa.

"I was looking to sign acts and when I saw Joe perform live I thought it was the most exciting thing I had ever seen," says Weisman.

Weisman assembled Bloodline, a group consisting wholly of precocious teenagers. It saw Bonamassa partnered with the sons of Miles Davis, Robbie Krieger, Sammy Hagar and Berry Oakley of the Allman Brothers. Signed to EMI, and produced by Phil Ramone. The band split after five years and Bonamassa was out on his own again.

Deals with Ramone's own label and Sony followed, but it wasn't long before Weisman stepped in and began to handle Bonamassa's releases in North America independently. Across

the Atlantic, a licensing agreement was signed for Bonamassa Records in Europe with Ed van Zijl, owner of independent label Mascot Records, in the Netherlands.

"Joe's success is based purely on his performance," says Weisman. "From the outset it was always live first, which made it difficult initially, because that didn't chime well with the recording industry, which is why we had to take it over ourselves."

Bonamassa's lack of major chart success shows little sign of hindering his progress. "If you were to poll people coming in and out of a venue Joe's playing, I'm certain most of them would not know the names of any of the songs. They are simply there to see a great live performer that they have seen on TV or have heard is one of the greatest live guitarists.

"We don't work for chart success, I am a little jaded because after 24 years of working with Joe I have learnt not to rely on things I can't rely

on, and you can't rely on radio," he says.

### Tight team

There is certainly no shortage of Bonamassa product, with live album and DVD packages regularly released in between studio albums, his most recent being *Different Shades of Blue*, produced by Kevin Shirley.

This rapid release model means that at any one time there are usually two or three pieces of Bonamassa product in the market helping to feed the live business.

Shirley is a long-time collaborator that Weisman insists is key to Bonamassa's creative development. "The three of us work extremely well together, it is a partnership based on trust and a winning formula," he says.

Weisman's passion and dedication to Bonamassa is as convincing as the guitarist's innate ability. J&R Adventures is a record company, concert promoter, merchandising operation and management company all ▶



Roy Weisman

New York, in 1977 and comes from a long line of musicians. A child prodigy, Bonamassa was first talent-spotted by J&R Adventures Founder, Roy Weisman in 1989 when, at the tender age of 12, the guitarist opened for BB King in upstate New York. The appearance made TV news.

Weisman has managed Bonamassa for the last 24 years, guiding him from clubs up through the venue hierarchy to an established position as a major theatre and arena-level act.

While Bonamassa's ongoing tour plans involve some cut-down arena shows, Weisman says Bonamassa and his fanbase work best in landmark theatre spaces.

"For the most part we would

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