

Milli 'Singer' Says Arista Knew About Album Hoax

■ **Pop Music:** Milli Vanilli performer and former manager claim the record company was aware before the Grammys that duo didn't sing on record.

By **CHUCK PHILIPS**
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Officials of Arista Records knew that pop duo Milli Vanilli's Rob Pilatus and Fab Morvan did not sing on their 7 million-selling "Girl You Know It's True" album before the duo won the 1989 Grammy Award for best new artist of the year, a group member and a former manager said Friday.

The allegations contradict claims made by a spokesman for the record company earlier, after record producer Frank Farian and Pilatus admitted the performers did not sing on the album.

If Arista officials were aware that Pilatus and Morvan didn't sing, then the company may have purposely misrepresented the album in its marketing and advertising to the public, as well as to the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, the recording industry organization that awards the Grammys. The allegations made Friday also raise questions about the role of Arista President Clive Davis and leading Hollywood talent manager Sandy Gallin in what has become the first major challenge to the integrity of the Grammy awards selection process.

Because Pilatus and Morvan are wrongly listed on the album credits as its vocalists, the pair could lose their Grammy award, a first in the 33-year history of the recording industry award. They won their award during a nationally televised program from the Shrine Auditorium in February.

"We told Clive Davis. We told Sandy Gallin. We told everybody six months before the Grammy awards," Pilatus told The Times on Friday. Pilatus and Morvan

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plan to release written material that Pilatus says substantiates the claim at a news conference next week.

"Everybody who worked closely with Rob and Fab at Arista knew what was going on," said Todd Headlee, who represented Milli Vanilli from August, 1989, to August, 1990. "That's why they always tried so desperately to insulate the guys from the press. Sandy Gallin and Clive Davis did not even want Rob and Fab to appear on the Grammy broadcast."

Headlee, who handled the Milli Vanilli account for the management firm Gallin Morey Associates claims Pilatus and Morvan were pawns in an elaborate corporate marketing scheme, approved by top officials at Arista, a New York-based label owned by the European conglomerate Bertelsmann Music Group (BMG).

Farian, the German studio whiz who produced the album and is the owner of the Milli Vanilli moniker, denied Wednesday that top officials at the labels had any knowl-



Todd Headlee is the former manager of pop duo Milli Vanilli.

edge of the lip-syncing. Farian said he recorded the album in Munich, and it was released by Arista in the United States.

Arista president Davis did not

return numerous phone calls Thursday and Friday. Roy Lott, executive vice president of Arista, denied the charges in a phone interview Thursday.

"There is no way that anyone ever could have known whether they sang or not," Lott said. "We are merely a distributor of their records. Rob and Fab and Frank assured us that they sang on the record."

Efforts to contact Gallin were unsuccessful on Friday.

"I find it very irresponsible that the record companies continue to deny knowing about all this," Headlee said. "As hard as Rob and Fab worked to meet their obligations to these corporations which were raking in millions off the concept. For them to leave them out to dry when the truth hits the fan is reprehensible."

Pilatus and Morvan released a statement Thursday backing up Headlee's claims.

"We have strongly expressed to Frank Farian and to our record labels, Arista Records and BMG

Records, our reluctance to participate in any kind of misrepresentation," Pilatus and Morvan said. "Through a variety of coercive maneuvers, our wishes to creatively participate in our recordings have been denied."

Headlee claims that the duo was manipulated into participating in the lip-sync plan because they were promised the opportunity to sing on tour and upcoming projects, a promise that he said Farian didn't follow through on.

Headlee, who is writing a book about his year with Milli Vanilli, said record company officials and other associates of the duo were concerned about their appearance on the Grammy show, where they lip-synced to a recording of one of their songs.

"Everyone at Arista who worked closely with the group was walking on eggshells before the Grammy lip-sync performance last February," Headlee said. "When they walked off the stage clutching the trophy, I remember thinking to myself that they may not have deserved the Grammy for their performance, but they sure as hell did deserve an Oscar."