

**MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT ASSEMBLY**

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**WITNESSES TO THE WOUND**

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*A Covenant Investigation into the Exploitation of the Zamar Carriers*

*100 Years of the Music Business on Trial*

**Report No. 27 of an Ongoing Series**

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# **JOHN MELLENCAMP**

## ***and His Band***

***The Man Who Became a Name He Never Chose — and the Band Who Made the Hits He Couldn't Afford to Keep***

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*ACCOUNT ONE: Tony DeFries / MainMan — same manager, same company as Report 25 (David Bowie) — changed Mellencamp's name to Johnny Cougar without telling him — Mellencamp saw it on the album sleeve — shelved the second album, then released it without involvement in 1983 to cash in on his stardom — number one album in America with no money in his pocket — fifteen years fighting back to his own name // ACCOUNT TWO: The Band — Kenny Aronoff (drums), Mike Wanchic (guitar), Larry Crane (guitar), Toby Myers (bass), John Cascella (keyboards) — Rolling Stone: 'one of the most powerful and versatile live bands ever assembled' — Aronoff fired then rehired, created the Jack & Diane drum part under pressure in five hours — Crane fired for asking for a \$1 million bonus — Mellencamp later said the bonuses would have been worth it*

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**PERSONAL NOTE: Kenny Aronoff, the drummer documented in Account Two, plays on recordings by The Kepha Arcemont Experiment. He also appears in the documentary *Hired Gun*. This report carries personal witness weight. The covenant is not abstract here — it is documented in the work.**

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March 2026 · Kepha Arcemont, Elder and Founder

## SECTION ONE — THE GIFT: WHO YAHWEH MADE HIM

## Biography: The Heartland Voice From Seymour, Indiana

**John J. Mellencamp was born October 7, 1951, in Seymour, Indiana — population 15,000.** At birth he had a spinal defect requiring dangerous surgery and a lengthy hospital stay. He survived and grew up in the small-town Midwest that would become the entire subject of his life's work: the struggles and joys of people who work with their hands, who grow up with big dreams that reality tests, who love their country even when their country ignores them. ***Jack & Diane. Pink Houses. Small Town. Rain on the Scarecrow. Allentown of the Midwest. Authority Song. Paper in Fire.*** He gave voice to a world that mainstream rock had not taken seriously.

He dropped out of college, played in bar bands covering Iggy and the Stooges, and spent 18 months making regular trips from Indiana to New York City trying to be heard. He was told he sounded like a hillbilly. He said: *"Well, I am."* He was signed by Tony DeFries of MainMan Management and released his debut album in 1976. **When the album arrived, he saw on the sleeve a name he had never agreed to: Johnny Cougar.** He had never been called Johnny in his life. He spent the next fifteen years fighting back to his own name.

By 1982 he had the number one album in America, the number one single, and the number two single — and no money in his pocket. By 1983 he had enough commercial leverage to add Mellencamp back to his name. By 1991 the Cougar was gone entirely. He had been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2008. Johnny Cash called him one of the ten best songwriters in music. **He had fourteen top-twenty hits in the United States and holds the record for the most songs by a solo artist to reach number one on the Hot Mainstream Rock Tracks chart.** All of it built on a foundation laid in part by a band that Rolling Stone called one of the most powerful ever assembled — and which Mellencamp eventually could not hold together.

◆ *I am Kepha Arcemont, a blues-rock vocalist and guitarist. I have recorded with many session musicians, most notably Kenny Aronoff and Philip Bynoe. Kenny Aronoff, the drummer documented in Account Two of this report, plays on my recordings. He appears in the documentary Hired Gun. The Jack & Diane drum part that Aronoff created in five hours under pressure in a Miami studio in 1982 is one of the most identifiable drum parts in American rock history. I have been in the room with this man's playing. This report is not abstract to me. The covenant account of what the music industry did with the musicians who made John Mellencamp's commercial legacy is documented here from inside the circle of their work.*

### Born

October 7, 1951 — Seymour, Indiana — spinal defect surgery at birth

<b>Early career</b>	Bar bands; 18 months of New York trips; signed by Tony DeFries / MainMan 1974–75
<b>Name theft</b>	DeFries renamed him Johnny Cougar without consent; Mellencamp saw it on the album sleeve
<b>Chestnut St. Incident</b>	Debut 1976 — sold 12,000 copies — excoriated as a Springsteen substitute
<b>The Kid Inside</b>	Recorded 1977 — shelved by DeFries — released 1983 without Mellencamp's involvement to cash in on fame
<b>American Fool (1982)</b>	Number one album, number one single (Jack & Diane), number two single (Hurts So Good) — no money
<b>Name recovery</b>	John Cougar → John Cougar Mellencamp (1983, Uh-Huh) → John Mellencamp (1991)
<b>Classic band</b>	Kenny Aronoff (drums), Mike Wanchic (guitar), Larry Crane (guitar), Toby Myers (bass), John Cascella (keyboards)
<b>Rolling Stone (1988)</b>	Called the band 'one of the most powerful and versatile live bands ever assembled'
<b>Aronoff</b>	Fired from Nothing Matters sessions — earned back the gig — created Jack & Diane drum part — left 1996 under less-than-amicable circumstances
<b>Crane</b>	Fired for asking for \$1 million bonus — Mellencamp later said he regretted it
<b>Kenny Aronoff connection</b>	Plays on The Kepha Arcemont Experiment recordings — appears in Hired Gun documentary
<b>Legacy</b>	14 top-20 hits — record for most #1 Hot Mainstream Rock songs by solo artist — Rock and Roll Hall of Fame 2008

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**SECTION TWO — ACCOUNT ONE: TONY DEFRIES / MAINMAN — THE NAME THEFT**

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## No One's Ever Called Me Johnny in My Life

### The Same Manager, the Same Company, the Same Pattern

**This report documents the second artist in this series to be exploited by Tony DeFries and MainMan Management.** Report 25 documents David Bowie's 50/50 net royalty split, the \$50 million buyout, and the Bowie Bonds. Mellencamp's MainMan wound operates differently — it is a wound of identity rather than a wound of royalties — but the predator is the same. The reader who has examined Report 25 will recognize

the management company, the marketing approach, and the pattern of extracting commercial value from an artist without the artist's fully informed consent. Mellencamp had been making 18 months of trips from Indiana to New York when DeFries heard his demo tape. DeFries liked his voice. He liked his James Dean look. What he did not care for was the German surname. He told Mellencamp that Mellencamp was too hard to market. What DeFries did not tell Mellencamp was that he had already decided what to do about it.

## The Album Sleeve

**Before Chestnut Street Incident hit stores, Mellencamp was surprised to find something missing on the album sleeve: his name.** DeFries had renamed him. The options that had been considered within MainMan: Johnny Indiana. Puma. Mustang. The one that won: Cougar. *"We wanted something uniquely American, something hot and wild,"* MainMan associate Jamie Andrews explained to Seventeen magazine. *"Nothing was as hot as Cougar!"* Mellencamp's response: *"No one's ever called me Johnny in my life."*

**He discovered his own stage name on the sleeve of his own album.** Not in a conversation. Not in a negotiation. On the sleeve. By the time he knew, the album was in stores. He was Johnny Cougar whether he agreed to it or not, because he needed a manager to get another deal and no other manager would take him without keeping the name DeFries had already put in the market.

He told GQ: *"I really, for a long time, hated the fact that I was arm-twisted to become Johnny Cougar."* The five words that carry the covenant charge: **arm-twisted to become Johnny Cougar.** Not persuaded. Not negotiated with. Arm-twisted. Presented with a name on a sleeve after the decision had already been made, and then told he had to keep it or lose his shot at another manager.

## The Shelved Album, the Failed Debut, and the Abandoned Name

**Chestnut Street Incident sold 12,000 copies.** DeFries had over-hyped his new client, comparing him to Bob Dylan before Mellencamp had even begun to write original songs in earnest. The press excoriated the album as a pale Springsteen imitation. MCA dropped Mellencamp. MainMan shelved ***The Kid Inside***, the follow-up album already recorded, and then walked away.

Mellencamp was left with three things: a flop debut, an unreleased album, and a name that was not his. The name was the trap. He later said: *"After that Johnny Cougar debacle, I pretty much rejected about everything managers ever said."* But rejecting everything managers said required first finding another manager — and no other manager would take him without the name DeFries had embedded in the market. **The name was both the wound and the chain.** He could not move forward without wearing it. He could not wear it without resenting it.

## The 1983 Cash-In

**In 1982, American Fool reached number one in America. *Jack & Diane* was number one for four weeks. *Hurts So Good* was number two for four weeks.** Mellencamp had

finally, after six years and five albums, arrived. He told Rolling Stone that year: *"I had the number one album in America and the number one single and the number two single. I didn't have any fuckin' money, I didn't have a dime in my pocket."* The commercial success had not reached him in proportion to its scale.

**DeFries saw the American Fool success and opened the vault.** In early 1983, he released *The Kid Inside* — the album recorded in 1977 that he had shelved and refused to release for six years. He released it without Mellencamp's involvement, without his input on sequencing or presentation, to capitalize on the new Cougar fans who wanted more music. Mellencamp had no control over the album that appeared in stores under his name, recorded from sessions six years old, issued by his former manager into a market created by work Mellencamp had built without DeFries. **This is Vayikra 19:11 applied to a vault: taking from what someone else has built and selling it as if it were your own to give.**

## The Fifteen-Year Fight Back to His Own Name

**The name recovery was a fifteen-year project carried out in increments earned by commercial success.** He had no leverage to negotiate from until he had hit records. As Johnny Cougar he built the leverage. As soon as *American Fool* gave him leverage, he used it: *Uh-Huh* (1983) became the first album credited to John Cougar Mellencamp. He had gotten his surname back. By 1991's *Whenever We Wanted*, the Cougar was finally dropped entirely. He had been John Mellencamp again for the final thirty-plus years of his career. **Fifteen years of commercial output before he could legally record under the name he was born with.** The covenant names what was taken from him on that album sleeve in 1976: not just a name, but the right of an artist to stand before the public as himself.

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### SECTION THREE — ACCOUNT TWO: THE BAND — THE BILATERAL ACCOUNT

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## The Most Powerful Live Band in America — and What It Cost to Be In It

### The Classic Lineup

**During the recording of Uh-Huh in 1983, Mellencamp's backing band settled on the lineup that would define one of the great commercial eras in American heartland rock:** Kenny Aronoff on drums, Mike Wanchic and Larry Crane on guitars, Toby Myers on bass, John Cascella on keyboards. **Rolling Stone called this lineup 'one of the most powerful and versatile live bands ever assembled.'** That assessment is not hyperbole. From *Uh-Huh* through *Big Daddy* — six albums, seven years, a string of top-ten singles that defined the Midwest heartland rock sound — this band delivered at a level that exceeded almost everything around it in American commercial rock.

Mike Wanchic described what working inside it felt like: *"When it was working, it was the most incredible high in the world. Because we were moving and we were successful and we knew what we were doing was going to be heard. We would just go for the throat."* Toby Myers on the band's ethos: *"John never lost the us-against-the-world mentality. We always felt we could make way better records than Springsteen and get one-fourth the credit. We never let go of that."* These are men who believed in what they were doing and gave everything to it. The covenant must enter that testimony alongside the wound.

## **Kenny Aronoff: Fired, Rehired, and the Making of Jack & Diane**

**Kenny Aronoff joined Mellencamp's band in 1980 for the Nothing Matters and What If It Did sessions.** He was pulled from those sessions when the production timeline tightened and Mellencamp brought in session drummers who could work faster. Aronoff was devastated but he did not leave. He stayed, watched, and learned what Mellencamp's music required. He earned back the gig.

**In 1982 at Criteria Studios in Miami, recording American Fool, Aronoff was called to play on Jack & Diane.** The song was not yet fully arranged. Nobody knew what to do with the middle section. A Linn drum machine had been brought in. Aronoff took the machine, programmed his own beat into it, and used it as a tool rather than a replacement. Then came the call: *"Aronoff, we need a drum solo."* A drum solo on a ballad about two kids in the heartland. He spent half a day — five hours or more — working out the drum sound, the entrance, the solo figure. As he was walking up to the drum kit, he thought this is it, I make it or I break it. He played it. Joel looked up from the control room: *"I love it. Yeah. Perfect."*

A year and a half later, after he had been told he was not right for the **Nothing Matters** sessions and had earned his way back, Aronoff turned on the radio and heard himself playing on a number-one hit. **The Jack & Diane drum part — the entrance, the solo, the driving simplicity of it — is one of the most recognized drum parts in American rock history.** Rolling Stone ranked Aronoff the 66th greatest drummer of all time. He has since recorded with the Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, Sting, Bob Dylan, Elton John, and dozens of others. He is, by any measure, one of the great drummers of his generation. He left Mellencamp in 1996 under less-than-amicable circumstances. **But he forged a career where he is on over 300 million songs sold!**

## **Larry Crane: Fired for Asking for a Bonus**

**The break with the classic band came in the mid-1990s.** Four of the core members — Crane, Wanchic, Myers, and Aronoff — anticipated that Mellencamp might be moving in a new direction. They discussed among themselves what an appropriate bonus would be for years of service and commercial contribution. They agreed: \$1 million after taxes each. Toby Myers' own assessment of the ask: *"I think we were a little greedy."* They sent Larry Crane, the elder of the group, to have the conversation.

***"Then Larry, being the elder band member, did the talking and got the firing."*  
— Toby Myers, bassist, Mellencamp band**

**Crane was fired for asking.** Mellencamp later told Myers directly what he thought of the outcome: *"A million dollars apiece would have been way better invested if he had come up with a real generous retainer to keep us all on. If that was the case, the four of us still would be playing together today."* **The man who fired Larry Crane for asking for \$1 million said afterward that paying \$1 million each would have been the better business decision.** The covenant asks: if the employer knew the provision was proportionate to the service, why was the worker fired for asking for it? Mishlei 3:27 answers: because the good was withheld in the moment even when the power to provide it was present. The regret came after. The firing came first.

## The Bilateral Account: What the Band Said About the Work

**This is the most important bilateral testimony in the extended series.** The Mellencamp band members did not describe the experience as uniformly exploitative. Wanchic, Myers, and Aronoff all spoke about the era with a combination of pride, adrenaline, and honest assessment of Mellencamp's demanding nature. Wanchic: *"John was a very urgent person, very demanding. That's ultimately and finally what brought us to be one of America's great rock bands."* Aronoff: *"To work for John Mellencamp, if you couldn't relate to his drive, you'd quit."* Myers: *"Our band was unstoppable."*

The covenant holds both testimonies simultaneously. **The demanding environment that produced commercial greatness and the firing of a musician for asking for proportionate compensation are not mutually exclusive.** Both happened. The band was one of the greatest live bands in American rock. Larry Crane was fired for asking for \$1 million. Aronoff left in 1996 under less-than-amicable circumstances. The pride and the wound coexist in the same decade of work. The covenant does not flatten either one. It holds them both.

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## SECTION FOUR — THE SERIES CONNECTION: MICK RONSON AT THE CHESTNUT STREET SESSIONS

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## The Thread That Runs Through MainMan

**A direct evidentiary thread connects Report 25 to Report 27.** Among the session musicians who played on Mellencamp's debut album ***Chestnut Street Incident*** at the Hit Factory in New York in 1976 was Mick Ronson — the guitarist documented in Report 25 at £50 a week and no royalties for his contributions to David Bowie's catalog and Lou Reed's ***Transformer***. Ronson played guitar on the MainMan sessions for Mellencamp's debut, under the same management structure, in the same period when he was being held in the MainMan system that paid him wages contemptuous of his contributions. **Tony DeFries brought Mick Ronson in as a session guitarist for Johnny Cougar's debut.** Ronson was already a documented victim of the MainMan system. He played on Mellencamp's album. Two reports in this series. One manager. One company. One pattern: the extraction of extraordinary musical gifts at wages and terms beneath their covenant value. ***MainMan appears in this series not as a single incident but as a***

**documented system of exploitation applied across multiple artists across a decade.** The covenant names the system, not merely the individual instances.

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## SECTION FIVE — THE THREE WITNESSES (DEVARIM 19:15)

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### Corroboration of the Record

**WITNESS One:** John Mellencamp direct testimony: GQ interview 'I really, for a long time, hated the fact that I was arm-twisted to become Johnny Cougar'; Rolling Stone 1983: 'I had the number one album in America and the number one single and the number two single. I didn't have any fuckin' money, I didn't have a dime in my pocket'; American Songwriter 2005: 'That was put on me by some manager.' Wikipedia (John Mellencamp): confirms DeFries renamed him; confirms The Kid Inside shelved then released 1983; confirms name progression Johnny Cougar → John Cougar → John Cougar Mellencamp → John Mellencamp 1991. Ultimate Classic Rock: confirms 'After MCA walked away, so did MainMan, leaving Mellencamp with a flop, an unreleased album and a pretty silly name.'

**WITNESS Two:** Toby Myers direct testimony (NUVO magazine, 'Remembering the John Mellencamp Band'): confirms \$1 million bonus request; confirms 'I think we were a little greedy'; confirms 'Then Larry, being the elder band member, did the talking and got the firing'; confirms Mellencamp's later statement that the bonuses would have been the better investment; confirms 'Our band was unstoppable'; confirms 'When it was working, it was the most incredible high in the world.' Mike Wanchic direct testimony (same article): confirms 'John was a very urgent person, very demanding. That's ultimately and finally what brought us to be one of America's great rock bands.'

**WITNESS Three:** Kenny Aronoff direct testimony (Modern Drummer, DRUM! Magazine, MusicRadar, The Giving Arts): confirms initial firing from Nothing Matters sessions; confirms earning back the gig; confirms five hours working out Jack & Diane drum sound; confirms Mellencamp's 'I love it, perfect' response; confirms 'A year and a half after I was fired, I turned on the radio and heard myself playing on a #1 hit song, Jack and Diane. And it had a drum solo!'; MusicRadar confirms departure from Mellencamp 'under less-than-amicable circumstances.' Rolling Stone (2016): ranked Aronoff 66th greatest drummer of all time. Second Disc (2026): confirms Mick Ronson played guitar on Chestnut Street Incident sessions.

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## SECTION SIX — THE COVENANT ANALYSIS

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### The Torah Charges — Both Accounts

#### Account One Charge: The Name — Vayikra 19:14

**"You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your Elohim: I am Yahweh."**

— Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:14

The stumbling block before the blind operates here through omission rather than commission. DeFries did not tell Mellencamp he was renaming him. He renamed him, produced the album under the new name, and presented Mellencamp with a sleeve. By the time Mellencamp knew what his stage name was, it was already in the market. **The blindness exploited here was not ignorance of contract terms but ignorance of what was happening to his own name while he was waiting for his debut album.** The artist who had been called Johnny in the hallway of the music industry for weeks without knowing it was already legally and commercially not himself. ***I am Yahweh.*** The charge extends to the 1983 release of ***The Kid Inside*** without Mellencamp's involvement. Vayikra 19:11: ***lo tignov*** — you shall not steal. The commercial value of Mellencamp's 1982 stardom was used to sell a product he had recorded six years earlier and had no part in releasing. DeFries used what Mellencamp had built, under a name DeFries had imposed, to extract commercial return from work DeFries had previously deemed not worth releasing. **The stumbling block before the blind and the false dealing at the vault are a single MainMan covenant charge entered here for the second time in this series.**

## Account Two Charge: Larry Crane and the Band — Mishlei 3:27 and Devarim 25:4

***"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it."***

— Mishlei (Proverbs) 3:27

**The power to provide the \$1 million bonuses was present.** Mellencamp himself acknowledged it afterward — that paying \$1 million each would have been the better business decision, that it would have kept the band together. The good was due. The power was present. The good was withheld. Larry Crane was fired for asking for it.

***"You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain."***

— Devarim (Deuteronomy) 25:4

Aronoff spent seventeen years treading the grain. He was initially fired before the grain was fully tread. He earned back the gig, tread it for seventeen years, and left in 1996 under less-than-amicable circumstances. **The ox that created the Jack & Diane drum part, the Pink Houses drum part, the Rain on the Scarecrow drum part, the Paper in Fire drum part — seventeen years of the most commercially successful era in Mellencamp's career — departed without the covenant provision that seventeen years of treading requires.** The bilateral testimony of the band members themselves — the pride and the adrenaline and the collective greatness — does not close this charge. The ox that described the work as the most incredible high in the world is still an ox that deserved to eat from what it tread.

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## SECTION SEVEN — THE LIVING WITNESS: KEPHA ARCEMONT, 2026

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## A Blues Guitarist Reads the Record

**Jack & Diane.** Five hours in a studio in Miami. A Linn drum machine brought in as a replacement. Kenny Aronoff taking the machine and programming his own beat into it, using it as a tool. And then the call: we need a drum solo. On a ballad. **What Aronoff created in those five hours is one of the most identifiable drum parts in American rock history.** The entrance. The solo. The simplicity that took a trained classical percussionist five hours of pressure to arrive at. And then the artist looking up from the control room: **"I love it. Yeah. Perfect."**

◆ *I have recorded with Kenny Aronoff. I know what it is to have a drummer of that caliber in the room with your music. What he brings is not just technical mastery — it is musical intelligence. The ability to hear what a song needs and provide the exact version of it that serves the song rather than displays the player. That is what he created for Jack & Diane. That is what the band created for the entire Uh-Huh through Big Daddy era. And it was built in an environment of urgent demand and high pressure that also, by the musicians' own testimony, produced some of the greatest American rock of that decade. The covenant holds the greatness and the wound simultaneously. Larry Crane was fired for asking for \$1 million. Kenny Aronoff left under less-than-amicable circumstances. The band described it as unstoppable. All of those things are true at the same time.*

DeFries changed Mellencamp's name on an album sleeve. He shelved his second album and released it six years later without involvement. He left Mellencamp after the failure with a flop, a shelved album, and a name that wasn't his, that he had to keep to get another manager. In 1982 Mellencamp had the number one album in America and no money in his pocket. **Fifteen years of fighting back to his own name. That is the covenant cost of the stumbling block placed before the blind in 1976.** And the band that built the commercial era that finally gave him the leverage to reclaim himself did so at wages and conditions the covenant examines with the standard of Devarim 25:4. **The ox that treads the grain must eat from what it treads. Selah.**

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## SECTION EIGHT — THE COVENANT VERDICT

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### Yahweh's Record on John Mellencamp and His Band

Two accounts. One series thread connecting MainMan across two reports. One bilateral testimony where the musicians called the work unstoppable and the employer fired the one who asked for what was proportionate.

**ACCOUNT ONE — DEFRIES / MAINMAN: Tony DeFries renamed John Mellencamp to Johnny Cougar without his knowledge or consent. Mellencamp discovered the name on the album sleeve after the decision had been made and the album was in production. DeFries shelved The Kid Inside in 1977 and released it in 1983 without Mellencamp's involvement to**

capitalize on the stardom Mellencamp had built without DeFries. In 1982 Mellencamp had the number one album in America and no money in his pocket. He spent fifteen years in incremental commercial leverage fighting back to his own name. Vayikra 19:14 — stumbling block before the blind: the name changed without consent. Vayikra 19:11 — false dealing: the vault opened without involvement. The judgment is entered. NOTE: This is the second indictment of Tony DeFries and MainMan in this series. Report 25 (David Bowie) and Report 27 (John Mellencamp) document the same manager applying the same extraction pattern to two different artists. MainMan is entered in this series as a documented system of exploitation, not merely an individual incident.

ACCOUNT TWO — THE BAND: Rolling Stone called the Uh-Huh through Big Daddy lineup 'one of the most powerful and versatile live bands ever assembled.' Kenny Aronoff created the Jack & Diane drum part in five hours under pressure and left in 1996 under less-than-amicable circumstances after 17 years. Larry Crane was fired for asking for a \$1 million bonus after years of contribution. Mellencamp later said the bonuses would have been the better business decision. Mishlei 3:27 — withhold not good from those to whom it is due when it is in your power: the power was present; the good was withheld; the worker was fired for asking. Devarim 25:4 — the muzzled ox: seventeen years of treading the grain that built the Mellencamp commercial empire.

BILATERAL COVENANT ENTRY: The band members' own testimony documents the era as 'unstoppable,' 'the most incredible high in the world,' and the product of 'an incredible discipline that most bands don't have.' The demanding, high-pressure environment produced genuine commercial greatness by the musicians' own account. This does not cancel the charges. The ox that described the work as the greatest experience of its professional life is still an ox that deserved to eat from what it tread. Both are permanently in the covenant record.

***"Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is Elohim in his holy habitation. Elohim settles the solitary into a family; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity."***

— Tehillim (Psalms) 68:5-6

***He leads out the prisoners to prosperity.*** John Mellencamp was a prisoner of the name Johnny Cougar for fifteen years. He fought his way out one album at a time. He is now John Mellencamp, inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, with fourteen top-twenty hits and the record for most number-one rock songs by a solo artist. **The covenant honors the fight back and documents the wound from which it began.**

The name on the album sleeve in 1976. The vault opened without permission in 1983. The band that built the commercial legacy and was told no when the elder member asked for what was proportionate. All of it is in the permanent record. **Selah.**

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#### SERIES NOTES

**Report No. 27 is the second report in the series to indict Tony DeFries and MainMan Management.** Report 25 (David Bowie) and Report 27 (John Mellencamp) together establish MainMan as a documented pattern of exploitation across multiple artists, not an isolated incident. The series now carries 27 completed reports across the extended catalog.

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**Selah.**

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*Miqdash Bethel Covenant Assembly · Pearl River, Louisiana · March 2026  
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