

Concert: Band In Midst Of Album Negotiations

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The 10,000 Maniacs have other good news just in time for the holidays — members and management are negotiating a major record label contract. Although details are not yet available, Gustafson and Drew are excited at the prospect.

"We hope to sign a deal by the end of the year. We'd hoped to announce (the label) today, but we can't do that yet," Drew said.

"It's nice to know a major label has confidence left (in the band)," Gustafson said. "We've spent two years trying to prove ourselves. We have to remind people the band didn't break up."

Following singer Natalie Merchant's departure in August 1993, the band was dropped from the Elektra label. Former member John Lombardo rejoined the band in early 1994 with Mary Ramsey, singer and viola player.

Although Lombardo had played with the band as early as 1981, the introduction of Ms. Ramsey into the group was an innovation for the longtime friends in the band.

"It was a learning process ... she'd never written songs with us," Gustafson said. "Mary's a wonderful person, a great person."

The band members also announced a publishing deal with BMC Publications that will secure song writing royalties for 10,000 Maniacs' songs.

"It's our first publishing deal," Drew said.

The agreement should prove useful for band members, who began initial recording for a new album

over the summer. Until the record deal is finalized, members postponed recording.

"When we got close to a deal, we decided to stop spending money," Gustafson said.

The Dec. 29 show will showcase new material and a few favorites from the days before the new lineup.

At 8 p.m. Monday Ms. Merchant will perform before a soldout auditorium at Shea's Performing Arts Center in support of her solo album, *Tiger Lily*. The album has sold nearly 1.5 million copies.

Ms. Merchant, who blasted the Jamestown area this summer in national magazines, lauded the region's natural beauties in a published interview this week and expressed concern for the area's economic decline.

"I've seen her about 20,000 times," quipped Drew when asked whether he would attend the Buffalo show. "Everyone should be proud of her. Hopefully she'll continue to say the nice things she said today."

"We wish her the best," Gustafson said.

Philip Morris, executive director for the Arts Council for Chautauqua County, said the benefit will be a great aid to the Civic Center.

"Hopefully we'll keep the place open," he said. "It costs \$30,000 to pay the heating bill. The most important thing is to keep this relationship (with the Maniacs) going. It's wonderful having the band play, especially as they re-emerge."