

HOT TOPICS

Working around the clock to 'Rock Around the Clock'

CLEVELAND—"We keep seeing Elvis," says Phil Cavotta, vice-president of Cavotta Landscape, which installed the exterior vista at the brand-new 2.5-acre Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame here.

"We used to see rock stars coming in and out all the time," Cavotta says. "I talked to Wolfman Jack just three weeks before he passed away."

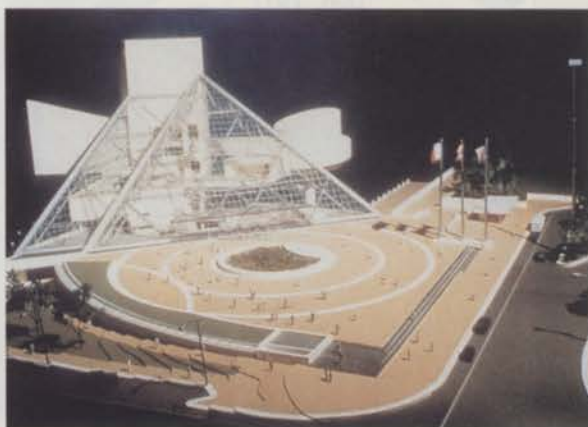
The Rock Hall was due to open Labor Day weekend, but midway through July, contractors were behind schedule.

"This is called the crunch," says Cavotta, whose company sub-contracted the earthwork and sodding. "It will be done on time. But these last weeks are going fast and everybody's push, push, pushing."

"With five weeks left, we're 75 percent done. We could have been all done if the other contractors had been done on time."

"I should be the last guy in, but that's not how it works. The schedule looks good on paper, but the city fathers get involved and something always happens. It's like a domino effect: when one contractor falls behind, we all fall behind."

Building architect I.M. Pei asked that the landscape be kept simple because he didn't want it to detract from the building itself, which features a large



A glass roof that has been known to toast plants adorns the entryway to the new Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame (top). Cavotta Landscaping's installation crew still had a long way to go five weeks before the building's grand opening ceremonies.



glass roof that slants down toward the entrance and exterior rotunda. That glass was an unexpected problem.

"The heat coming off the glass toasted some taxus plants we had put in," notes Cavotta. "The temperature off the glass, depending on the time of day, can be 30 degrees higher than the (ambient) temperature."

"We had to re-plant and re-design the sprinkler system to keep the new plants moist. We added some heads and went to a three-times-a-day watering schedule. Because the wind off the lake is so

variable, it affects the irrigation, too."

Cavotta Landscaping has a crew of six working full-time, including supervisor Tony Gabriel. After the installation is complete, at least one full-time person will be needed to maintain it. Cavotta is still trying to win the maintenance contract.

"The city and the port authority are involved in choosing the maintenance contractor," says Cavotta, "and they're looking at dollars. They can spend \$90 million on the building, but when it comes to landscape maintenance, all of a sudden they're pinching pennies."

When the Rock Hall job is done, Cavotta Landscaping will have another high-profile feather in its cap to go along with the world-renowned Cleveland Clinic, which needs a full-time crew of 12 to maintain 200 acres that include 40,000 New Guinea impatiens in six-inch pots.

"When the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame is done, it'll be another feather in the city's cap, too," Cavotta concludes.

—Jerry Roche

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