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Reviews

Susan Steinberg, writer/director/co-producer. *Atlantic Records: The House That Ahmet Built*. Produced for the PBS television series *American Masters*, 2007.

If you have to say goodbye to this world, enjoying a Rolling Stones concert isn't a half-bad way to spend your last few hours. And that is exactly what Ahmet Ertegun was doing when his number was called. A true music man until his dying day, Ertegun dedicated most of his life to finding and developing legendary talent and establishing what has been called by Taylor Hackford, director of the movie *Ray*, "the most important independent record label in history," Atlantic Records.

This 115-minute documentary film chronicles the life of Ertegun and the story of Atlantic Records. Narrated by Bette Midler, the film features interviews with Ertegun as well as twenty other industry heavyweights including Ray Charles, Eric Clapton, Aretha Franklin, Mick Jagger, and Chris Blackwell, plus studio session and performance footage. The film is divided into twenty-three chapters, all of which run seamlessly from one to the next. Ertegun tells us many stories about recordings, performances, records, and other events, by reminiscing about them with a number of top musicians who have been associated with Atlantic Records over the years.

Aside from being highly entertaining, the film has significant value as an educational tool. As it takes us through each phase in Atlantic Records' development, we learn about the era: what role music was playing in society; what the mindset was in the music business at that time; who the top artists were; and who the top producers and songwriters were. The story begins with Ertegun's childhood and his love for what was termed at the time "Black American Jazz" music. The film includes vintage performance footage of Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Ruth Brown, Big Joe Turner, and others. Ertegun talks about starting Atlantic Records in 1947, along with Herb Abramson, intent on "making records for the black audience." He talks about the politics of music and race and about getting arrested for breaking the Jim Crow laws by going to see a black show. We meet Jerry Wexler and learn about how he came to join Atlantic Records and the many artists he was involved in finding and producing. We are treated to several scenes with Tom Dowd, including an interview where

he says, “There are too many people running the record business today... [who] don’t know a bank note from a note on a staff of music.”

Some of the best scenes are those with Ertegun and Ray Charles talking about how they worked together in the early days. Woven into their storytelling are scenes from Charles’ live performances in the 1950s as well as scenes from the 2004 movie *Ray*. Other topics and people that are discussed include Ertegun’s wife, Mica; his brother, Nesuhi; payola and Alan Freed; the Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller era at Atlantic (they had the first independent production contract in the music business); Phil Spector; Atlantic’s expansion into music for *white* audiences, starting with Bobby Darin; working with Stax Records; songwriter Arif Mardin; taking Atlantic Records artists like Aretha Franklin over to perform in England, and bringing back artists like Cream with Eric Clapton, and Led Zeppelin; the 1960s and Woodstock with artists Crosby, Stills & Nash; selling Atlantic Records to Warner in 1967 for stock worth seventeen million dollars (Wexler called it a mistake and took the blame for it); signing the Rolling Stones and partying with them (Mick Jagger tells us “Ahmet likes to do a lot of clubbing,” smiling, as though it is an understatement); the Studio 54 years; signing Bette Midler; Wexler leaving Atlantic in 1975 after “defecting” to Miami; the royalties issues raised in 1987 by many early Atlantic Records artists such as Ruth Brown; and starting the Rhythm & Blues Foundation, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and the Jazz Hall of Fame. As Jerry Wexler points out, Atlantic Records, “is the only major record company for which the owners actually made records; who were line producers in the studio making records.”

The film wraps up with footage from the 2006 Montreux Jazz Festival tribute to Ahmet Ertegun and Atlantic Records and a compelling morphing of scenes between modern-day Steve Winwood and vintage Ray Charles, each performing the same song, *Georgia on My Mind*. Ertegun tells us, “I think that I am very lucky to have worked at what I love, so it never seemed like work.” Bette Midler, as the narrator, tells us he also said, “It is better to burn out than fade away.” Ertegun died at age 83 on December 14, 2006, after falling backstage at a Rolling Stones concert and slipping into a coma.

The film touches upon so many different parts of the history of the record business that it can easily be integrated into a class on record companies, recorded music operations, or any sort of music industry overview course. One way to use it as part of an assignment is to have the students

pick one of the topics mentioned, such as payola, and write a paper explaining the topic and what occurred, in more detail than the film had time to address. However this film may be integrated into music industry studies, it should be considered required viewing.

An insightful interview with the film's writer/director/co-producer Susan Steinberg about the making of the film, can be found at www.pbs.org by searching for her name on the site.

Kwame Amoaku, director/co-writer. *Russell Simmons' Hip Hop Speaks Series: The Industry*. Chatsworth, California: Image Entertainment, 2005.

Most successful hands-on artist managers don't generally keep nine-to-five desk jobs, and they are frequently traveling with their artists. For these reasons, there are few internship opportunities for music industry students in artist management. As a music industry educator, I am constantly searching for resources that can be incorporated into my classes which will expose my students to how things are done in the *real world*. This documentary film offers a day-in-the-life view of several top artist managers working in the hip-hop genre.

Professionally produced, with a running time of just over one hour (62 minutes), the film is divided into sixteen chapters, all of which run seamlessly from one to the next. Be warned, this film is not for the faint-of-heart. It contains explicit language, although not an excessive amount, and occasionally some other urban trappings such as gold teeth and a negative perspective on the police. However, if educators and students can see through the hip-hop wrapper, they will find a very useful educational tool. Rapper and Grammy-nominee MC Lyte serves as the narrator. The film was released in 2005, so we see these managers communicating via regular, no-bells-and-whistles cell phones and two-way pagers, rather than the smartphones we are familiar with today. Some scenes position the viewer as a fly on the wall, listening in on a conversation one of the managers is having; some involve the managers and others talking directly to the viewer about what being a manager is all about.

Of the three managers we will meet, the first is Blue Williams. Wil-

Williams manages the Grammy-winning rap duo OutKast, comprised of Big Boi and Andre 3000. When we first meet him in the film, we see him working through two days of events surrounding the release of OutKast's album, *Speakerboxxx/The Love Below*. The events include an in-store promotional appearance by OutKast at Wherehouse Music (sadly, we don't see many in-stores these days); an interview at CNN; another in-store; a record release party; a trip to Puerto Rico for a conference; and an appearance on the *Late Show with David Letterman*. Williams tells us, "[A]s a manager, if I don't hunt, I don't eat. If I'm not out there finding my artist money, I don't eat. I only get paid if they get paid." We see Williams battling with the artist's label, Arista, over the edits made to the non-explicit version of the album, and over how many units the label decided to ship to stores for the first week of sales. In particular, the discussions about the units to ship show how important it is for a manager to understand how the record business works. Too often, when students are taught about artist management, the focus is primarily on creating a buzz for the artist. This focus may be appropriate when managing an artist who is trying to get a first deal; but once an artist is established, much of a manager's role involves representing the artist's position in discussions with the label, or the publisher, or the agent, which cannot be done effectively without an understanding of those aspects of the music business.

Later on in the film, we return to Williams and the events surrounding OutKast's *Speakerboxxx/The Love Below* winning the 2004 Grammy for Album of the Year. Williams and OutKast deal with the upsetting news that the head of Arista, L.A. Reid, was fired, just days before the Grammys. We see Williams involved with the preparation for the after-party, including who gets to park where and how many security people each VIP can bring into the party. There is a particularly touching moment when we see the mothers of OutKast and Williams celebrating the big Grammy win. At the party itself, we finally see Williams relaxing and having some fun. He insightfully tells us, "The thing about life is that what everyone wants is their priority, so when they need it, it's what's the most important thing in the world...everybody needs it today. Like, there's never 'give me a week.' It's 'I need it right now'...and then you've got to figure out what's really about today and what's really not about today."

The second manager we meet is Chaka Zulu, manager of Grammy-winning rapper Ludacris and up-and-comer (back in 2005), Chingy. When we first meet him he is working through two days of preparation for a

performance by both artists at the first annual Vibe Awards. We see Zulu deal with a last minute, “eleventh-hour,” change to his artists’ performances, forced on them by the awards show organizers. When the DJ realizes fifteen minutes before show time that he left the records for the show in the chauffeured vehicle they arrived in, which cannot be located, Zulu remains calm, cool, and collected. The problem gets solved with five minutes to spare. When Chingy doesn’t win the award he was nominated for, Zulu remains positive and offers encouragement. We see Zulu meeting with executives at Capitol Records, and after a tense discussion, Zulu tells us, “When you leave the office, you shake hands, respect each other, and agree to disagree...try to make it a win-win situation and move forward...that’s the language of business.” After the filming of the documentary, but before its release, Chingy ended his relationship with Zulu due to a monetary dispute.

The third, and last, manager we meet is John Monopoly, manager of Grammy-winning rapper Kanye West. Unfortunately, we hear very little from Monopoly, and way too much from West. Monopoly says of West, “It is very obvious that he’s confident.” Given the scenes that follow, that’s a gross understatement. West talks to the viewer for a while about his style of music and how he ran into challenge after challenge as he tried to establish himself as a recording artist. Listening to West talk, I couldn’t help but think of him, in the vernacular, as “out there.” In our brief moments with Monopoly, we get to see that he understands the business (as demonstrated by his explanation that the record label wants a return on its investment).

We hear from other individuals throughout the film: Russell Simmons, co-founder, Def Jam Records; Lyor Cohen, Chairman and CEO, U.S. Recorded Music, Warner Music Group; Kevin Liles, Executive Vice President, Warner Music Group; Chris Lighty, CEO, Violator Management/Records; Mona Scott, co-owner and President, Violator Management; and Kawan “KP” Prather, Former Arista A&R for OutKast, Pink, and Usher. We also see several hours in the day of Tina Davis, Sr. Vice President A&R at Def Jam, who tells us what she listens for when she reviews a demo. The film concludes with the narrator asking the question whether hip-hop will be able to survive its own “corporate hype.”

The Industry provides an authentic look at the life of an artist manager working with an established act. Like so many things these days, it includes a healthy dose of record label bashing—none of which, conveniently, is against Def Jam (Russell Simmons’ label), as all of the artists

are signed to other labels. Although potentially difficult to get through for those who are not fans of hip-hop culture, it contains many words of wisdom from several experienced top managers—wisdom students may find hard to come by elsewhere.

Serona Elton



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Steve Knopper. *Appetite for Self-Destruction: The Spectacular Crash of the Record Industry in the Digital Age*. New York: Free Press (A Division of Simon & Schuster), 2009.

Although the subtitle of Steve Knopper's book telegraphs the author's intent to sensationalize the decline of the record business, *Appetite for Self-Destruction* merits consideration as a useful chronicle that details the end of the twentieth-century business model for merchandising records. Knopper's background as a news and features writer for popular periodicals such as *Rolling Stone*, *Wired*, and *Entertainment Weekly* is apparent in his choice for the prologue to his narrative. He chooses to recount Chicago DJ Steve Dahl's one-man crusade against disco that culminated in a mini-riot at a Chicago White Sox game one summer night in 1979, when Dahl orchestrated a midfield pyrotechnic display that included blowing up boxes of disco records with dynamite. Ten thousand disco-hating fans then stormed the field and literally kicked out the jams, making a mess of the field in the process. Throughout *Appetite for Self-Destruction* Knopper's feature-writing sensibilities draw him to portray the excesses inherent in the major label system and its larger-than-life personalities such as CBS president Walter Yetnikoff, Casablanca's Neil Bogart, and Napster co-founder John Fanning (Napster inventor Shawn Fanning's uncle). Although much of the history he recounts has been covered by others (notably Fredric Dannen's *Hit Men*, which Knopper acknowledges), *Appetite for Self-Destruction* does a credible job of detailing the unprecedented growth of the record business in the 1980s and 90s until its peak in 1999 and continues telling the story of the industry's steady decline through late 2008.

What makes this book a valuable resource to anyone interested in studying the record business is that it includes dozens of excerpts from interviews the author completed between 2006 and 2008 with key executives at every major record label, as well as principals from Napster, Kazaa, the RIAA, and a number of Apple executives. The rich first-person narrative told by the people who made many key decisions that shaped the direction of the pre- and post-Napster record business provides a balanced perspective on the various parties who had a stake in the world of digital music distribution. (One complaint is that there is no mention in the text of the detailed end notes, which I didn't discover until nearly completing the book.) Not surprisingly, some of the executives interviewed have dif-

ferent recollections as to the facts. In one instance, principals involved in the behind-the-scenes negotiations between Napster and the majors tell varying stories of why the deal broke down. Universal's Edgar Bronfman, Jr. claims Napster told him it was entertaining a \$2 billion purchase offer, suggesting the majors would have to match it; while venture capitalist John Hummer, who had invested heavily in Napster and was part of the Napster negotiating team, stated he made no such claim in the negotiations. No matter such disagreements, the reader is still left with a palpable sense of the revolutionary threat that peer-to-peer file sharing represented to the hegemony of the record industry moguls, and the fact that an overwhelming majority of the top label executives believed their only recourse was to sue Napster into oblivion.

Knopper inserts a series of eight short analytical essays he dubs, "Big Music's Big Mistakes," throughout the narrative. They function to provide the reader with a better understanding of the decisions that were made by the industry at crucial times in the past twenty-five years. Three of these mini-essays help the reader see some of the reasons why the record industry's own successes helped to foster poor management decisions that left the sector bloated and vulnerable to disruptive technologies such as Napster. Knopper cites the excesses that grew in the field of independent radio promotion that had such firms earning as much as \$300 million a year from the majors for enticing radio execs to add a particular song. Not only did this prove to be an unsustainable model, it also dampened the majors' own ability to break records. Another of the "Big Mistakes" was the labels' move away from supporting independent record retailers towards an over-reliance on the big box merchants—firms that view music as a loss leader to pull customers into its stores (where they would buy other products with higher profit margins). Knopper lays responsibility for the decimation of the indie retailer firmly at the foot of the executives he profiles. He points out that by consolidating two-thirds of their retail sales with a few big box chains such as Wal-Mart and Best Buy, the majors left themselves vulnerable to the cuts in floor space and inventory made by these same retailers over the past two years in response to the bad economy, thereby further accelerating the decline in CD sales.

The third of the various blunders is the RIAA lawsuits against a reported 38,000 individual music consumers which drew the full attention of the national media. Although the strategy created a dialog about the fairness of unauthorized downloads, among the industry's plaintiffs were

grandmothers, befuddled parents of teens who used peer-to-peer sites, and a twelve-year-old girl in New York City. Like most of the battles fought in and around the courts, Knopper explains that although the record labels may have won judgments or out of court settlements, in the court of public opinion they were pilloried for declaring war on their customers and maintaining a bunker mentality. Unfortunately, the lawsuits did nothing to reduce peer-to-peer sharing of music and left a bad taste in the mouth of many music consumers, a point clearly made by the author.

Knopper tellingly concludes the work with Universal Music CEO Doug Morris' assertion that, "It comes down to developing hits and artists. And it's still the same. Nothing has changed." The author argues that Morris is wrong. Knopper goes on to state that Morris and his ilk, who still maintain control of the majors, will become an anachronism unless they begin to think differently, stop fiercely protecting the old model of selling pieces of plastic, and begin to embrace the "long tail" economy of the internet. Perhaps that's the greatest irony of this very readable book is that the executives Knopper interviewed (and that still run the majors) likely haven't made time to read it, much less profit from its insights. Maybe they already are an anachronism.

Tyler Gray. *The Hit Charade: Lou Pearlman, Boy Bands, and the Biggest Ponzi Scheme in U.S. History*. New York: HarperCollins, 2008.

After reading *The Hit Charade* I was left with an empty feeling due to the fact that the level of both dishonesty and gullibility portrayed throughout it is simply stunning. Lou Pearlman, the central figure, is a combination of legendary showman P.T. Barnum and Charles Ponzi, the man immortalized by cheating investors out of their savings. Hundreds of Pearlman's investors, as well as the dozens of young singers, dancers, and models shared an unshakable belief that Pearlman was a man who was able to beat the odds in both the investment and entertainment industry, spinning gold through his canny business acumen. The story depicted in Tyler Gray's cautionary tale is the exact opposite. Pearlman bilked investors out of nearly \$500 million over his more than twenty-year run and used a portion of these funds to build his pop music kingdom.

As with *Appetite for Self-Destruction*, the author and publisher of

The Hit Charade have aimed this work at a mainstream audience, touting Tyler Gray as “the only journalist to speak with Pearlman while he was in jail,” and that the book “explores persistent rumors about alleged inappropriate behavior by Pearlman toward members of the boy bands.” As a result, Gray focuses the first third of the work on Pearlman’s early years growing up in Queens, as a chubby, slightly nerdy middle-class teen. His studies at Queens College in accounting would give him the knowledge to foster a long-running scam on his investors, the State of Florida, and the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. These investors received statements that they were earning above-average returns while in reality their money provided the capital for Pearlman’s various forays into the airship business, helicopter and jet leasing firms, and eventually his Trans Continental music empire, which was headquartered in Orlando, Florida. While helpful in developing a better understanding of Pearlman, the con artist, it is only when Gray reveals Pearlman’s 1992 decision to get out of the airship business and into entertainment, that the story shifts to the music industry.

From here, the author ably reports how Pearlman literally bought his way into the music business, investing three million dollars to carry vocal coaches, stylists, and choreographers on salary, rent sound stages, and purchase an elaborate sound system, all of which helped him to bring his first successful group, Backstreet Boys, to pop superstardom. However, this road to riches, especially for his two largest acts, Backstreet Boys and *NSYNC, was littered with examples of Pearlman’s duplicity. For example, Pearlman hired industry veteran Jeanne “Tanzy” Williams to help him scout for members, and coach the group, that would become the Backstreet Boys, with the promise that she would be vested in the band’s corporation and receive a steady salary during its development. Although Gray states she was an industry veteran, Williams gave up her successful talent management firm to go to work full time for Pearlman, and gullibly accepted his suggestion she defer all but \$100 per week of her promised \$750 weekly salary. Williams would not be the first to be bamboozled by Pearlman’s extravagant lifestyle and seemingly endless supply of money. With respect to her ownership interest in the band’s corporation, Pearlman had no intention of giving Williams any stock, having already incorporated the band in the state of Delaware. Some years later, Williams agreed to an undisclosed settlement after suing Pearlman. In recalling her dismissal after investing thirteen months, day and night, honing the Backstreet Boys’

skills, Williams told the author, “[Pearlman] reminds me of the kid who tears the wings off of flies...just to watch them not be able to fly.”

Another case of Pearlman’s deceit is recounted when Gray explains how the con man fostered the notion that he knew nothing about newcomers *NSYNC, the group that was challenging Backstreet Boys’ supremacy in the teen pop market. Pearlman inferred to the Boys that *NSYNC’s origins were a mystery, when the fact was Pearlman had formed, backed, and managed Justin Timberlake & Co., something the Backstreet Boys didn’t learn until nearly two years after *NSYNC’s debut. Pearlman kept his bands in a non-stop bubble of constant touring, recording, and appearances, so that they had little knowledge of the outside world. Furthermore, the young performers’ industry naïveté is made clear when the author quotes Backstreet Boy Lance Bass who, like Jeanne Williams, was completely duped by the con man-manager. “I always liked Lou a lot...and thought he must be the wealthiest man who ever lived to be able to do the kinds of things he did and give us the support he insisted we needed...I trusted him and felt we were in the right hands... That blind trust would later come back to haunt us all.”

The truth was that Pearlman’s multimillion-dollar upfront investments in his various artists would all be recouped from the income Backstreet Boys would generate from multiplatinum sales success, lucrative endorsement deals, and nearly endless touring, which generated vast sums of money that the boys themselves did not share. Instead, these artists paid for their rock star lifestyle, which included non-stop limos, four-star hotels and restaurants, and jetting around the globe to various appearances out of their own pockets. Gray explains that the young performers Pearlman signed understood little if any of the contractual terms in their agreements with Pearlman or their record labels, resulting in nearly all artist royalties being funneled to Pearlman. When Backstreet Boys finally sued Pearlman in 1998, claiming that although they had enjoyed unprecedented success, each member had earned a paltry \$60,000 since their 1993 debut, while Pearlman had pocketed more than \$10 million, the con man dismissed the suit in the media as a “family disagreement.” The facts were that the members of the band had signed extremely restrictive contracts which guaranteed Pearlman’s recoupment and a huge chunk of the band’s earnings. The settlement terms were never disclosed, but Gray suggests that Pearlman’s contracts with the Boys largely held up in court.

Although much of the book is an indictment of Pearlman and the

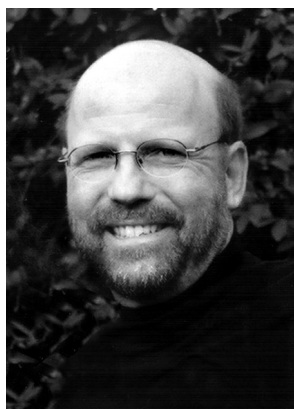
great frauds he perpetrated, there are some observations that can be pulled from the rubble of the boy band phenomenon that merit consideration by any student of the music industry. First, like Berry Gordy, Jr.'s Motown empire three decades before him, Pearlman created a set of vertically integrated media and merchandising companies, setting up fully staffed management, promotion, production, label, and distribution companies under his Trans Continental moniker. In this way, he profited from multiple ancillary revenue streams generated by the groups he controlled.

Next, Pearlman took both Backstreet Boys and *NSYNC to Europe for seasoning and to build a fan base. In Europe and Asia, Backstreet Boys were soon performing to sold out arenas of screaming teens, while selling 8.5 million albums in non-U.S. territories. Pearlman astutely realized that the squeaky clean image his bands projected would be a hard sell in a U.S. market still dominated at that time by the look and sound of grunge so he invested heavily to build his act's early success and cash flow outside the U.S., a lesson other managers might take note of. By the time they made their U.S. re-entry on the charts, at number one for the album *Everybody (Backstreet's Back)* in March 1998, the band's overseas experience had honed their sound and performance abilities to a fine edge, helping to insure the massive U.S. success they would soon enjoy.

The final lesson learned from this book is that no matter how intense one's dreams of success in the entertainment industry might be, there really is no "free lunch." Pearlman's flashy lifestyle and open wallet lulled young performers, their families, and some industry veterans into believing he really was a rich mogul looking to help them realize their dreams of profiting from pop stardom. At the moment of truth, when these artists and their families were presented contracts that would literally and legally pick their own pockets should they find fame, these people willingly and gullibly signed on the dotted line, perpetuating Pearlman's con while becoming a party to yet another saga of corruption and greed in our industry.

Unfortunately, *The Hit Charade* is far from a definitive assessment of the teen pop phenomenon of the late 1990s; we'll most likely have to wait a while longer for such a tome. Instead, this book provides a sad, lonely profile of Lou Pearlman, a man who built a multi-million dollar pop music empire through deceit, while preying on the dreams of the many young performers who believed in him.

Keith Hatschek



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Professor Hatschek is the author of two books: *The Golden Moment: Recording Secrets of the Pros* (2006) and *How to Get a Job in the Music Industry* (2nd Edition, 2007), both of which are used by various music programs as reference works. He is currently involved in research into the life and work of Dave Brubeck and contributes a monthly column to the online recording and music technology magazine, *Pro Studio Edition*. He is a member of the AES, MEIEA, NARAS, and IASPM as well as other professional organizations.

Chris Fox Gilson and Carolyn Travis, Directors. *Airplay: The Rise and Fall of Rock Radio*. Travisty Productions, 2008.

In my Music Industry classes at Indiana University we have a discussion segment on the issue of payola. Just a few years ago, at the height of the Spitzer investigations, it was a most controversial topic and we often had heated discussions in class about closed access to the airwaves and misleading public opinion. These discussions have calmed down quite a bit. Actually, this semester I ended up with a monologue as the students were mostly looking at me with an expression of, “why should we care about this issue, nobody is listening to radio anyway?” on their faces. But then I brought in the movie *American Hot Wax*, which is based on the Alan Freed story and his staging of the controversial rock ’n roll concerts. Of course, it features a very young and funny Fran Drescher, but beyond the entertainment value it was amazing to watch how the students became increasingly fascinated with the story, the music, and Alan Freed’s character. In fact, we had to schedule extra time to finish the whole movie as we ran out of time during the initial class session. The lessons from Alan Freed and the payola scandals now transferred easily to the current influence of media on public taste. During the process I realized that rock radio has now become the story of a past generation that needs to be told. 2009 marks the fiftieth anniversary of Buddy Holly’s tragic death in a plane crash and the rise of rock ’n roll. What perfect timing for a documentary on the rise and fall of rock radio.

Carolyn Travis and Chris Fox Gilson from Travisty Productions are the producers of *Airplay*. Some of their previous work includes the 2004 PBS special *Rock Radio Revolution*, which chronicles the explosion of AM radio in the 50s and 60s, and *Wildwood Days*, a documentary on the beach resort of Wildwood, New Jersey, America’s “birthplace of rock ’n roll.” The producers’ previous research on the early period of rock ’n roll feeds nicely into this documentary and manifests itself well during the very detailed presentation of the early days of rock radio. The first chapter, entitled “The Devil’s Deejaes,” paints the breeding ground of rock ’n roll as a society with strong racial tensions and a young generation ready to claim the exciting rhythm and blues music coming out of African-American traditions as their own music, their weapon in a revolution against segregation and the strict *status quo*. In increasing numbers, youngsters of all colors and backgrounds discovered WDIA’s black DJs Nat D. Wil-

liams and Rufus Thomas and they bought race records, not available in the regular record bins. In 1954, Sun Records owner Sam Phillips brought Nashville DJ Dewey Phillips a new record entitled *That's Alright Mama* by a white singer from Memphis. Dewey put the record on and the phones lit up. He ended up playing the song seven times that night and as they say, "the rest is history." The christening of this black music now adopted by white DJs and audiences as rock 'n roll came from Cleveland's WINS DJ Alan Freed, the Moondog. He is credited as a tireless promoter of rock 'n roll and also for putting on the first rock 'n roll concerts. The concerts had unprecedented popularity even though several were eventually shut down by the establishment. The powerful music grabbed the emotions of their listeners and as a result they identified closely with the people who played it for them, the DJs. An extreme example of this deep attachment was WIBC's Bruce Morrow, nicknamed Cousin Brucie. His relationship to his listeners was so intimate that he managed to coax runaway children back to their homes over the air with the help of the far-reaching AM signal. The person who managed to clean up the rift between the establishment and the revolution was Dick Clark with his *American Bandstand*. Even though he showcased the "Devil's Music," the presentation was clean and polished to please the mainstream audience. Through DJ personalities Art Laboe and the Wolfman, the rock 'n roll craze caught on at the West Coast and Mexico. Those Jocks now controlled the making and breaking of hits and happily enjoyed the money, publishing credits, and goods of the widest variety supplied by record promoters ready to supply anything needed to put their products on the air. Those first five tumultuous years came to a crashing halt in 1959 with the payola scandals. The two biggest names in rock 'n roll Promotions, Dick Clark and Alan Freed were indicted for taking bribes to play music. At forty-five minutes into the documentary, the viewers witness Dick Clark's declaration under oath that he had never accepted any payola. Alan Freed was not willing to compromise and pleaded guilty to having accepted bribes. After conviction, the man who was one of the hottest personalities in popular American culture just a few months earlier now had a difficult time even finding a job and died in obscurity just a few years later. The history lesson learned here is the artificial nature of popularity in the music industry, mostly based on commercial value and media image.

The new laws marked the end of the powerful DJ and the beginning of Top 40 radio. Program Directors now selected the music, and frequent

repetition of a few hits determined by playlists became the new format. Next enters the British Revolution and the introduction of the FM band. AM Radio became increasingly commercialized and was dominated by the Top 40 preprogrammed format. There was no established model for FM radio and once again the disc jockeys became the promoters of their favorite underground music. Tom Donahue at KMPX became the Godfather of FM radio by playing new music neglected by Top 40 radio, such as the Doors, the Grateful Dead, and Jimi Hendrix. He captivated the listener with an aura of discovery. FM radio became the voice of the war protesters, the angry, the doubters, the hippies, the peacemakers, and the anti-establishment. Pressure was applied by the Nixon administration and the FCC was asked to step back in to apply tighter regulations. The FM band became assimilated by the AM formats and once again radio became a commercial venture to promote Top 40 hits and the new dance music for non-dancers, disco. Considering the time limitations of classroom teaching periods, this might also be a good time to end the documentary and review the cause and effect cycles so well established by the filmmakers as predictors for the following twenty years of history. At this point, students will also be able to draw from their own anecdotes and recollections.

The remaining fifteen minutes of the documentary mostly chronicle the fall of rock radio. The producers only provide glimpses of two more bright moments in broadcasting history with the rise of hip-hop as an antidote to MTV, which took over the Top 40 format, and new variety and personality oriented shows on satellite radio, launched in 2001. The rise of hip-hop and related new music genres fell victim to conglomeration and the mainstreaming of Clear Channel stations. Sirius satellite radio has not managed to become commercially viable even after merging with its competitor XM in July of 2008. According to a recent report in *Rolling Stone*, satellite radio reported the first-ever drop in subscribers during the first quarter of 2009 attributed to an effort to streamline programming after the merger but most likely an effect of a plunging economy.

At this point, the documentary ends rather abruptly with a few light-hearted remarks by the DJ personalities about being open to new possibilities. What about internet radio, podcasting, new frequencies for low power radio, the demise of Clear Channel, HD Radio, and many other new opportunities in the world of broadcasting? There is no mention of these new technological developments in the documentary, which leads to the assumption that the authors truly believe in the fall, and possibly the death,

of rock radio.

Currently, nearly anyone interested has the tools to create a podcast and make it available to the whole world on the internet. In fact, it is not even necessary to work for a radio station with the official title of DJ to broadcast music. I have a friend in Philadelphia who works in a hospital during the day and produces a series entitled *Jazz and Poetry* as a Live365 station, and there are many similar examples that could be cited. From an educator's perspective, what conclusions can we draw from this documentary, and what discussions might arise in the classroom after screening the film?

- 1) Radio's history runs parallel to the rock 'n roll revolution as a mirror of revolution and assimilation from rhythm & blues to the British Invasion to psychedelic to progressive rock to disco to punk and hip-hop and the large diversity of fusion that we see today.
- 2) Music is a powerful emotional as well as social expression. Teens and "tweens" will always be especially deeply emotionally involved in their music; and their music will be a reflection of social trends. Radio, or whichever form of broadcasting it might be in the future, will always function as a connector in this triangle.
- 3) We have reached another intersection of revolution and assimilation with the revolution in progress on the internet. At the moment we have access to any music out there, we can choose freely what we want to listen to, what we want to support, and what we would like to discover. Unfortunately, the assimilation efforts are already in progress in the form of lobbying against net neutrality by large telecom companies, access restrictions by large record labels, royalty disputes, etc. Are we capable of learning from history this time and avoiding the assimilation of this new medium into the world of commerce as previously witnessed with radio and television?
- 4) The powerful role of the DJ was unique throughout rock history and limited to a few dedicated and lucky people. Access to making music but also to supporting music and becoming involved in the industry has opened up and be-

come a more democratic process, again thanks to the internet and new technological developments. How can we take advantage of these new opportunities and become creative entrepreneurs?

- 5) Today's radio stations are struggling, facing competition from multiple new media who offer a variety of listening experiences. Is radio worth saving or are we ready to leave it behind? If it is worth saving, what would be some strategies to help radio rise as an important catalyst between music and the listener again?

Overall, this documentary is an excellent tool for studying the history of the rock industry and getting to know some of the early personalities and social circumstances facilitating this revolution. I especially enjoyed the reenactments of the outgoing radio mannerisms of some of the early jocks. As with many historical accounts, more emphasis is on the early history. Recent developments are rather condensed with a somewhat abrupt ending that provides very little outlook on current opportunities and the future. Nevertheless, the film sets the stage well for inspiring discussion and productive speculation. I will give it a try next semester.

Monika Herzig



MONIKA HERZIG teaches classes on the Music Industry for the Arts Administration program at Indiana University. As a jazz pianist and Owl Studios recording artist, she has performed at many prestigious jazz clubs and festivals. Groups under her leadership have toured Germany, opened for acts such as Tower of Power, Sting, the Dixie Dregs, Yes, and more. As co-founder of Jazz from Bloomington, a jazz society fostering appreciation and education about jazz, she has booked and presented over forty national jazz concerts and led educational programs for thousands of school children. Her holiday collection *Peace on Earth* will be released Christmas 2009. More information is available at www.monikaherzig.com and at her blog at <http://blog.owlstudios.com/blog/monika-herzig>.

Marty Khan. *Straight Ahead: A Comprehensive Guide to the Business of Jazz (Without Sacrificing Dignity or Artistic Integrity)*. Tucson: Outward Visions Books, 2004. www.outwardvisions.com

The title of Marty Khan's book says it all. This is a no-nonsense, tell-it-like-it-really-is, book that takes you into every aspect of the music business. With over thirty-five years of experience as a manager, agent, concert and record producer, consultant, advisor, and strategic planner, Khan has worked with emerging talents as well as many of the legendary masters of jazz. This book is the culmination of his experience and business relationships. *Straight Ahead* is intended to be used as a business manual for those who are pursuing a career in the industry, and as a text for classroom use when complemented with the teacher's guide (which can be purchased separately).

In the author's words, "This book:

- explains and de-mystifies everything involved in the business of recording and performing
- defines and clarifies the various roles and responsibilities of everyone with whom the artist will be dealing
- offers specific advice on making the most out of every relationship and opportunity
- describes specific methods and concepts that are productive, cost-effective, and proven to be viable
- comprehensively details all aspects of the 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation that is the backbone of the arts industry
- provides samples of contracts, agreements, releases, stage plots, and other useful materials."

"Other useful materials" include sample contracts, releases, and 186 questions answered in a question-and-answer format.

There are many music business texts out there that are very useful—and some that come across as stale and boring. If there is one word I would use to describe this book it is: pragmatic. Khan presents his thirty-five plus years of experience to the reader in a practical manner which, if read front to back (as he suggests), builds a framework for the business from the bottom up. Khan's personality is hard to miss throughout the book. Many times his approach seems cynical, and it is, but never negative or without

reason. When dealing with others in the business it is important to understand where industry people are coming from and why they may respond or act in particular ways. These traits are accounted for in such a way that you will be able to anticipate this behavior and create an outcome that will be beneficial to all involved. Frustration is an inevitable part of the business, particularly when greed and arrogance are factored in, and the musician can be taken advantage of quickly and easily if not careful. Khan does an excellent job of preparing the aspiring musician/entrepreneur for these issues. The advice he provides is timeless; unlike many texts it will not become outdated with the changing marketplace.

The book begins with “Ten Disturbing Facts that Must be Understood.” This sets the tone and mood of the book as a whole by preparing you for the “shady” side of the business. Khan covers a number of economic misunderstandings such as how labels make their money and how that affects the artist, common misconceptions of various goals an artist might have, and the true intentions of arts advocates. This is followed by a glossary of business terms and slang that the author uses throughout the book, and which the reader should also understand when speaking with others in the business. Part II, “The Artist’s Team,” follows. Here the role of each member of the team from the artist to the publicist is laid out so that we get a clear picture of how each team member works with the other and what is expected from each. Part III, “The Business,” describes many topics including: how record labels *really* work, how to get bookings in various venues, how to effectively deal with promoters, stage crews, and even how to treat your audience. In this section Khan also deals with contracts, publishing, funding, and investment. Part IV is entitled “Strategies, Recommendations, Solution” where the keys to success are laid out in an objective and practical manner. He begins with the concept of self-empowerment, how to create a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, and how musicians can work together in bartering services, sharing management, and more. Khan goes into marketing techniques and how to deal with economic issues. In the final two chapters he offers general advice and as mentioned before, there are loads of sample contracts and release forms.

It should be noted there is no index in this book. The author felt it would be impractical and instead offers questions that are answered in each section. As mentioned earlier, one may purchase a teacher’s guide to accompany the book for use in the classroom. This provides a strategic two-semester course plan for using the book as a text.

What makes this book unique is that Khan speaks to the reader from within the business. He pulls you in and helps you understand the business from the inside out in a way that demystifies how things *really* work. Many music business texts seem to take a bird's-eye view of the industry mainly due to the overwhelming complexities that are too difficult to get into in a text format. While reading this book you feel that you are gaining the experience you need to effectively and honestly achieve your goals. Most importantly, Khan addresses what is most essential. As the subtitle of the book states, he helps you to make your way in the business, "without sacrificing dignity or artistic integrity." I know personally that Khan's greatest influence is the life and character of the immortal John Coltrane. The purity of Trane's spirit and his expression of life through his music is a defining factor in Marty Khan's life. We all seek to find that which helps to define our own spirit. A self-professed "failed musician" Khan gave up the saxophone to immerse himself in the business side of the profession. He has genuinely strived to help and empower those who have found jazz to be a vehicle of expression for their own spirit. And he has done this without sacrificing his—or the artist's—dignity or artistic integrity. Buy this book. You will thank him for it.

Eugene Foley. *Artist Development: A Distinctive Guide to the Music Industry's Lost Art*, 5th edition. Greendell, New Jersey: Foley Entertainment, Inc., 2009. www.foleyentertainment.com

It is no secret that recording labels are under a tremendous amount of pressure these days to keep afloat. They no longer have the time or money to take on an artist and nurture and develop him or her into a success. These long term relationships are just not practical in today's unstable market. Labels need artists to be completely polished products before signing them. They need proof that artists have created a sufficient following in their markets, sold a certain number of CDs, are touring with some amount of success in their markets, etc., so that all the label needs to do is push the marketing/distribution/touring button and off they go to the top of the charts. In order for artists to get to this point they need to learn the art of *Artist Development*.

As the title suggests, artist development is becoming a “lost art.” With clients from all fifty states and twenty countries around the world earning nearly forty Gold and Platinum records and three Grammy Awards, Eugene Foley is one of the most sought after music agents/consultants in the country. He has been working with songwriters and musicians for nearly twenty years and continues to see the same general mistakes made by aspiring artists. Foley’s intention with this book is to reach those who don’t have the time or desire to read four hundred pages of text. He felt “it was time...to release a reader-friendly book that musicians, songwriters, managers and new independent label owners would make the time to read. A book that would help them and inform them on many important issues, all relating to developing an artist.” He specifically chose topics he faces on a daily basis that regularly confuse people, and at 180 pages, kept the length reasonable enough for the busiest people to find readable. Therefore, he is very straightforward and blunt in a way that is positive and approachable. He quickly achieves clarity on many complex topics that can overwhelm the everyday musician, and then provides strategies to overcome these obstacles, master them, and achieve the desired result.

The topics covered represent every aspect of the “complete package” needed before an artist begins to approach labels. Songwriting, press kits, advisors, publicity, radio promotion, music videos and TV commercials, touring, record companies (major and indie), distribution, publishing, and music conferences, are all covered in great detail and provide an insider’s view of how to approach each of these important topics. Amazingly, there is too much information to address each of these in a simple review, especially considering the compactness of this book. There are however, certain topics of note that should be addressed.

Foley includes a few unique chapters in his book. In “Random Tips” he describes many ideas that are not often considered by artists. Product endorsement deals, reasons for obtaining a post office box, and the value of remixing are a few of the topics discussed in this chapter. A chapter on alternative career options presents ideas for those who don’t wish to sign with a label and would like to supplement their income using their particular expertise while continuing to network in their field. Foley also includes a chapter which lists his own favorite top forty markets from around the country. This is a listing of venues, radio stations, and publications that he feels are among the best at what they do in the thirty-nine most original music scenes around the United States. For the fortieth he includes To-

ronto, Canada, “which has a solid music scene in its own right.”

The book also includes a glossary of terms and a conclusion that wraps up the thoughts and advice offered throughout the work. This may seem redundant in some respects but it serves the purpose of putting everything into the proverbial nutshell. Foley uses this section to help the reader grasp the bigger picture and emphasize that this is all something that can be done, not to feel overwhelmed by the business side of things, and to take things step by step as he has outlined.

Throughout the book Eugene Foley keeps the tone very positive. He mentions that he really does listen to every demo and look at every press packet his agency receives and makes a point of offering honest advice to those who he thinks might benefit because he genuinely wants to help musicians. In each chapter he describes the issues he frequently sees with many artists’ materials. He does this not only to show what not to do, but why artists might not be aware of the correct methods of doing things. This helps readers to feel that Foley is in their corner from step one.

Finally, *Artist Development* doesn’t pretend to be more than it is: “A distinctive *guide* to the music industry’s lost art.” Many of the topics (such as music publishing) will need further exploration and the assistance of an entertainment attorney to gain true expertise. That being said, Foley’s book is a great resource, or pocket guide if you will, for students who might be taking courses in music industry or business, and are looking for that record deal. As educators, we know 400-page texts are not for everyone. We are always on the lookout for resources that will help a particular student demographic whether it is jazz, classical, or popular. For those who need information on artist development in a concise and straightforward format, this is the best I have seen.

Michael L. Keepe



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Matthew Walt. *Reality Check: A Common Sense Guide to Breaking into the Music Industry (An Insider's View from the Trenches)*. iUniverse.com, 2009.

Reality Check: A Common Sense Guide to Breaking into the Music Industry (An Insider's View From the Trenches) is an honest and clear-cut, yet clever and entertaining, artist development text promoting the “DIY” tradition for new and growing musical artists and students of music business. It offers readers the practical advice—truly a reality check—that artists need at the inception of their careers to *start* finding work in the current music industry, and how to act or present themselves while getting there. It is the type of music business text that is missing among the literature available for new music business students and those who dream about breaking into the business. The primary purpose of the book is to help readers identify what is expected of them by potential employers, and also to help them recognize mistakes they may make—before they make them. This feature of the text is unique among similar books. Ideally, readers will be made aware of these secrets and this book will serve as a do-it-yourself guide into the biz.

Reality Check essentially mirrors the beginning artist's career—moving in a logical progression from square one to the initial steps of working with music business professionals. Finally, an author speaks to this abstract time in an artist's career—the time just before they are “in.” Typical artists at this point in their careers are most likely asking themselves, “How do I get an agent? What do I say when I call an agent? How should I act? What is that agent looking for in my live show? How do I get a manager? What is the label looking for? How do I talk to a club owner? How do I advance a show? How should I present a press kit? How do I make myself more marketable?” While similar books *define* these items and give job descriptions, this book speaks to how one should *approach* these individuals and situations.

The content of this text reflects upon under-reported music business topics that readers should be made aware of such as the psychological nature of the business, or that of working at a show, why working for free matters, being innovative, the importance of building and maintaining relationships and the right attitude to have when approaching employers and internship sites. These topics are discussed within the context of artists building and branding their business. The book then progresses into advice

regarding various means of presentation using the DIY approach: press kit presentation, “solicitation do’s and don’ts,” advancing a show, performance techniques, etc. Finally, the last section of the book speaks to the part of the artist’s career as it morphs into having the “team” (“managers, agents, labels, oh my!”) that Donald Passman mentions in *All You Need to Know About the Music Business* thus making this book an ideal transition to such a text.

In the educational setting, this book would be an appropriate “pre-intro-course” manual for students—prior to using a book such as the Passman text. The book may best be used concurrently or prior to an introductory music business textbook. Additionally, the book would serve well for students in internship classes. While the traditional “Intro-to-the-Music-Industry” texts dive right into content, *Reality Check* offers advice about a student’s personality traits, interview skills, attitude training, and how to get to the point where the artist *should* be talking to an agent, a manager, etc. The most notable feature of the text is its structure—set up as a series of articles. For college courses, the professor may easily pick and choose by topic for student reading. Further, the writing style—assertive with dry humor—is of note. It is not as flowery and nonspecific as other books in the same vein. Perhaps the only suggestion for the book is to add class activities, questions, or real-world case studies set up for student practice as an appendix or addendum in future editions. Regardless, the absence of such materials allows instructors to adapt and use material in their own ways—allowing more freedom and therefore making the book usable in a variety of settings.

New artists planning to speak to, or solicit the services of a music business professional, should consult this book before having any such conversations, as they will certainly have a better idea of what to say and how to say it. Readers who are currently trying to make it in the business or those who want to refresh their careers will find this book one of the most approachable and informative of its kind, and should consider that the author is a booking agent who critiques bands daily. This is advice that Walt has been giving for years, and now it is in print.

Matthew Walt, the author, is a prominent booking agent, talent buyer, and tour coordinator at Pretty Polly Productions and an independent music business consultant to artists, aspiring professionals, and organizations that incorporate music into their brand. He is the owner of MW Global Arts of Boston. His witty and honest approach, including personal stories

from his own experiences, is quite refreshing among a sea of generic do-it-yourself manuals that rarely cover this specific material. *Reality Check* offers a true common sense approach to taking the first steps into the biz.

Julie Viscardi-Smalley



JULIE VISCARDI-SMALLEY is Assistant Professor of Entertainment Management and Music at Bay State College in Boston, Massachusetts, recently receiving the Faculty Excellence Award (2009). She teaches general music business, music theory, and music history classes. She has also developed several online and hybrid courses in these disciplines. Viscardi-Smalley received her BS and MS in Music Education from Syracuse University and is currently pursuing a DMA in Music Education at Boston University. She is also a member of the Audio Engineering Society, College Music Society, the American Musicological Society, and Music Educators' National Conference. She has worked for several local and national concert production companies and manages a local band, NBFB. Her primary areas of research are music business education and popular music studies.