



5TH EDITION

MUSIC BUSINESS HANDBOOK & CAREER GUIDE

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BASKERVILLE, Ph.D.

ASCAP
Award Winner

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5TH EDITION

MUSIC BUSINESS HANDBOOK & CAREER GUIDE

FOREWORD By STAN CORNYN, President
Warner New Media

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The Editors

FOREWORD

STAN CORNYN, President
Warner New Media

It's never easy. The road to success in the music business is as rife with ruts and detours as that of any other field. No pat personality profile, no set philosophy guarantees entry to the big time. The men and women who've carved out positions of respect and influence in the industry are an amalgam of many different styles, psyches, temperaments. Some have come a long way; others took shortcuts. Some are incredulous that they are where they are; for others, the goal was inevitable.

One certainty unites them all: that nothing in this business is certain. The achievers have all exhibited, in one form or another, an ability to adapt, to alter long-standing opinions, to substitute professional intuition for conventional logic. They take chances.

There are two kinds of people in the world, talkers and doers, men and women of action, of inaction. I don't want to downgrade a very critical element of this business — one very near and dear to me — that of articulating your point, but for some people that's as far as it goes. Anyone can think of a great idea and pin your ear to the wall detailing it, and most people at some time do. But only doers can take a plan out of the grey matter and put it into action. The individuals who attain some level of leadership in the record community are as good as their word — and deed.

Record companies do not, however, turn people loose in their corridors just because they have a few plans to carry out. Those who have ideas had better also have quite a few facts at their disposal. And it takes years to develop a full understanding of all the elements needed to make a hit record, from recording it, to packaging it, to publicizing it, to airing it, to selling it.

Recently, a young up-and-comer suggested an idea he thought was sure-fire — putting flyers into record jackets listing an artist's collected works. He had no idea of the time, money and manpower involved in getting flyers into jackets. His scheme would have raised the cost of an album six cents per unit which would have meant a reasonably large loss of net profit.

We're concerned, then, with the nuts and bolts side of our operation as well as with the more nebulous concept of "art" in our industry, an equally on-going dilemma in the realms of literature and film. Selling music is not exactly selling blenders. I won't deny an album's objective presence. We at Warner Bros. follow that chunk of vinyl's every move until it shows up, hopefully, on our computer runs in the "sold" column. That's what we're here for.

But not completely. We're dealing with artists, personalities — not objects — and that makes this business quite unlike any other. We're selling taste and emotion, not Landau tops or rear-window defoggers. This casts much of what we do in a very subjective light, raising age-old questions about the relationship between art and commerce. If it's not commercial, how do we sell it? Don't certain "uncommercial" works of music deserve to exist on artistic merit alone? If so, which ones? And how do you persuade the public, even your own staff, of the value and viability of unfamiliar, challenging musical concepts?

In contrast to other businesses, some of whom have been in operation for hundreds of years, the record industry as recently as 30 years ago was by and large a back-room affair. Street-corner groups were sent into dingy one- and two-track studios with a \$400 budget to turn out hits that made millions for the label, but not a cent for them. Serious recordings were never expected to be profitable.

Today the record business is coming of age and we have the first generation of college texts on the subject to prove it. Those entering the business have the challenge of giving it new form and focus. An exciting, rewarding, clearly upbeat experience awaits you. That you can *almost* be sure of.

. . . and now, some years later . . .

In the years since I wrote the Foreword for the first edition of this book — the foreword which, presumably, you've just read — the record business has been slapped silly. For five years (1979-1983), my business was assaulted by such tremors as home taping; video games; rises in copyright fees and the costs of independent promotion; music video and MTV; decline in the "black vinyl" disc percent of market; the vanishing of 8-track tape; the virtual disappearance of independently distributed labels; and (no kidding) the price-of-gasoline crisis ("kids can't afford to drive to record stores").

Then, for the remainder of the 1980s, there occurred the financial boom of the Compact Disc, as list prices of albums moved from the LP's \$8.98 to the CD's \$14.98 . . . a huge jump. Discs didn't get any more popular — unit sales stayed fairly level — but the industry experienced great relief.

That relief was somewhat artificial, because doing the same this year as last year is largely unacceptable, either to company owners (who expect growth) or music collectors (who deserve freshness).

During those years, and since, my belief in *the future belonging to those who make it happen* has repeatedly been rejustified.

I have now spent 30 years in the record business (and am launching new recording forms: interactive Compact Discs, with video on them). In the 30 years I've spent in the business, the business has not gotten any less open to executives who will *do* something new. This business is still open to those who will *do* that new thing, who will create with that new talent, and who will *please* us old-timers with a fresh way of doing *anything* in this business.

Many times over the years, young people wanting a job in the record business have come to me for advice. Invariably, they speak of their passion for music, their obsession with the record business. I disillusion them. To love the music makes you a good consumer. To become a good employee, bring to this industry a fresh skill, and find your own way to put it into operation.

In 30 years that has not changed. Nor will it in the next 30.

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