

Inside The Minds: The Music Business

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The publisher's *Inside The Minds* series compiles essays from chairman-level executives of major companies to explain to the general reader the current conditions and long-range prospects of a specific industry. This compilation deals with one of the most volatile and least predictable industries: the record business. The flaw with this concept—although certainly not a fatal one—is that the executives writing these essays are guided as much by self-interest as they are by the charge to analyze objectively and report factually. The advantage, though, is that professionals of this rank and stature tend to really know what's going on within their sphere.

Among the essayists here are Antonio "LA" Reid, chairman and CEO of Island Def Jam Music Group and former president and CEO of Arista Records; Louis J. Pearlman, chairman and president of Trans Continental Companies and the man behind the creation of such best-selling "boy bands" as the Backstreet Boys and *NSYNC*; Bruce Lundvall, president and CEO of jazz and classics for EMI Music North America; and Scott L. Kauffman, president and CEO of the MusicNow online delivery system. There are seven more lesser-known contributors, all of whom are prominent in some phase of commercial music.

As might be expected, the common denominator among these commentaries is the effect of the Internet on the music business—particularly on industry components like songwriters, music publishers, recording artists, record companies, and record stores. Most admit that record companies are still playing catch-up with today's tech-savvy youngsters, who have grown accustomed to getting music online for free (albeit illegally). But the writers also agree that the Internet offers undreamed-of possibilities for developing and promoting artists and for customizing music sales to fans.

Apart from the various observations about the Internet's past and future impact, the authors also descant on production techniques, entertainment law, finding and grooming new talent, promoting via radio, the role of touring and merchandise sales in an artist's success, and the bright outlook for small, independent record labels.

It is not always clear just which readers the essayists have in mind. Judging by their use of undefined, unexplained terms, some appear to be addressing their industry peers. Others are clearly giving pep talks to would-be artists, producers, and entertainment entrepreneurs. The essays seem to have been only lightly edited and would have benefited from the occasional footnote or bracketed explanation. Still, there is so much useful information here and so many provocative perspectives about what lies ahead for music that anyone involved in—or curious about—the business should find the volume worthwhile.

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