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The following is the first in a series of essays aimed at offering insights into the music business for aspiring artistes and industry persons

With Thaddeus 'Teddy' Laidley

While sitting in the in transit lounge of the airport recently, I was in deep discussion with a small group of veteran musicians and other music industry players. The hot topic: why is it that members of the music industry consistently encounter a lukewarm reception, at best, from the financial and business sector? Banks, insurance companies, credit unions - all seem reluctant to do business with an artiste or a manager or record producer, no matter how well established this person may be. And this, despite the fact that the Jamaican music industry is inarguably one of the top income earners of the country, and has been so for decades, with Jamaican artistes and musicians always dominant on the international scene.

Our conclusion?: We in the music industry need to present a more united, organized, and yes, professional image if we wish to be taken seriously by persons outside the industry, with whom we must do business. Fame and notoriety mean nothing to the credit manager or potential event sponsor, whose final concern is the bottom line: Am I going to make a profitable return on my investment? **The music industry practitioner must be prepared to convince the business community that he or she is a worthwhile risk, an attractive and compelling investment option.**

How to do that? We must be prepared. Preparation is the single factor that can convert mere potential to a viable opportunity. The more prepared, the better equipped; the better equipped, the greater the possibility of success. The aspiring singer, musician, or manager, need to become at least conversant with the various aspects of this multi-dimensional industry.

Information is one of the key elements in the preparation process.

In the Jamaican music industry, we are slow to read, to research, seek out, and share information about our own industry. In fact, even our own local seminars on various aspects of the music business are generally poorly attended.

We need a turnaround in our attitude towards information. In an age when music industry information is so abundant, available from such a wide variety of sources, and relatively inexpensive - even free in many cases - we have absolutely no excuse for being poorly informed.

Let's face it. The music business is a very unique business, but it's a business nonetheless. And, like any other business, poor or otherwise inadequate information will lead to poor decision-making, missed opportunities, limited career growth, even stagnation.

And so it is the intention of this writer to make music industry information - and sources of such information - readily available to those who need it, particularly to newcomers to the music business. This springs from some 20 years of involvement in the entertainment industry, and will encompass material from books and internet resources as well as personal anecdotes. There will be expert opinions from other industry practitioners, and feedback from the public.

Our local music industry is vibrant, historically and currently making waves on the international scene, almost single-handedly responsible for making Jamaica a cultural icon worldwide. Yet, much more can be done to create a Jamaican music industry that is savvy and modern in outlook. Sharing quality information is a great start.

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