



27th
Anniversary

LESSONS
LEADERS
& LEGACIES

CELEBRATING

THEA
MITCHEM

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BROWN
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7th Annual **POWER**
PLAY LIST
2022

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EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, HIP HOP AND R&B PROGRAMMING STRATEGY PROGRAM DIRECTOR,
WWPR-FM POWER 105.1 IHEARTMEDIA: NEW YORK, CHICAGO, PHILADELPHIA, BOSTON, WASHINGTON DC, BALTIMORE

ON HER LUMINARY HONOR

**WARNER RECORDS
WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE**

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THEA MITCHEM



EDITORIAL:

Keep Pushin'

And Be Prepared to Change Directions

By Kevin Ross

Greetings everyone. I sincerely hope that life is giving you all that you desire at this moment. I am eternally grateful for your support over the last 27 years for Radio Facts. It is really hard to believe this brand is 27 years old. I had no idea what would happen when I started. I lost "friends" who told me I was going against the grain and I should continue to be a jock instead, and I'm SO glad I didn't listen to their logic. It's not their fault, they saw the situation through their lens, but I have always seen myself as a leader, not a follower. To that end, there was also much more support for what I was doing, and I'm glad I followed that lead instead.

In the instances when I did try to follow, I always fell short. When you never fit into any box or category, there is a blessing in that. You are not SUPPOSED to fit, and you need to create your OWN space. Your support is not always going to come from where you expect it to come from, but it will come if you remain steadfast in your desires.

I say "desires" because that's an automatic "direction." I believe if you do what you love FIRST, everything else will fall into place.

I remember having a meeting with some industry friends and telling them how great it felt to jump out of bed each day with a huge smile and anticipation of the results when you create your own destiny. They looked at me like I was speaking a foreign language. Yung Joc is the first person I have heard in a long time describe that same feeling in this issue. Still, it occurred to me long ago that many people, even entrepreneurs, will rarely experience that bliss, and that's unfortunate because it's an out-of-body experience to know that you are standing in a blessing, especially when you have come from little or nothing.

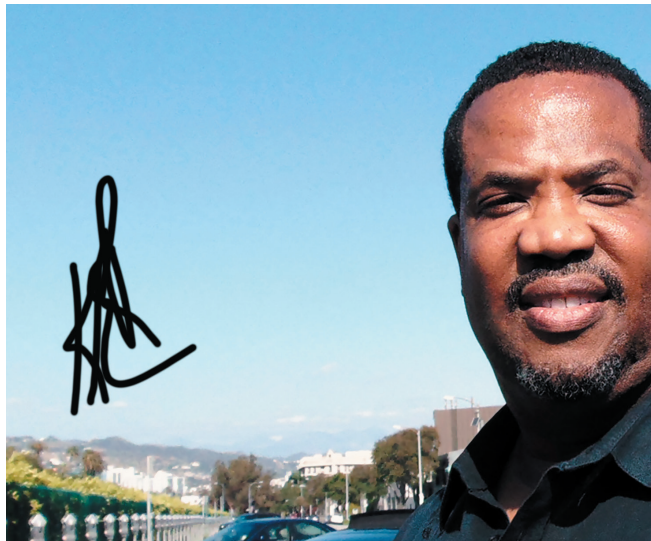
If you do not have joy in your life, no matter how hard you work, it may be time to rethink what you do, who you hang around, where you live

and how you think, and the impact it is having in your life. You are free to change, tweak, or restart and do something else. It's up to you. But know that what you LOVE doing at any given juncture in your life is the path to your greatest success.

I love being an entrepreneur, and I love the industry, but for this issue, I needed to be a student again. I have come to understand during the journey of entrepreneurship that when we stop learning, we stop growing, and we stop living. We are eternal students. Therefore, I decided to do all the interviews for this issue myself. It gave me an amazing opportunity to catch up on a few things, and it also gave me a clearer concept of where our industry is going. In turn, I hope that you get that when you read this issue.

We must focus on the greater things that are going to have the most impact in what we do. Finally, I want to take this time to thank a great mentor, Eric Rhoads, from Radio Ink. I cannot say enough great things about him and how much he has impacted what I do with Radio Facts and as an entrepreneur. Also, thanks to the fans and supporters of Radio Facts, especially the advertisers in this issue and on the site who make it all possible.

Write your goals down for 2023. You have a much better chance of seeing them out that way.



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CONGRATULATES

THEA MITCHEM

JOSHUA "J1" RAIFORD

YUNG JOC

BROWN

AND ALL OF THE RADIO FACTS
2022 POWER PLAY LIST HONOREES



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Shea Mitchem

on being
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Honoree**

Thank you for continuing to
shape and push the
culture forward with
your work.



EMPIRE

CONGRATULATIONS

to all of the honorees and to

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for continuing to salute our industry's leaders.

We want to also thank the industry for supporting the Living Legends Foundation® Inc.'s 30th Anniversary Awards Gala.

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Preserving The Legacy. Protecting The Culture. Inspiring The Future 1992-2022

MUSIC DAY
A VERIFIED HIT — PODCAST
PRESENTED BY THE LIVING LEGENDS FOUNDATION, INC.



BROWN

Radio Legacy Honor

By Kevin Ross

The popular operations manager, known as Brown, has worked in the industry for 25 years at various stations and capacities. Currently, he works at Alpha Media as the OM of the cluster Mainstream Top 40 (WARQ (Live93.5), Alternative Rock WARQ-HD2 (ALT 99.7), Urban simulcast WHXT/ WSCZ (Hot 103.9 & 99.3), Urban AC WWDM (The Big DM 1013), Classic Rock WMFX (Fox 102.3) and Triple-A WPCO-AM (94.9 The Palm).

«I feel we need more opportunities and programs to groom our next Radio stars.»

KEVIN ROSS: At one time, you were known as “Brown HornHit?” Why did you change your name?

BROWN: My Dj name was Dj Brown HornHit for over 15 years. In 2009 while working at WBLS in New York, I dropped “HornHit” and merged my DJ crew name, which was “GooSet” with Brown.

So when I DJ, I go by GooSetBrown, but to the industry, I’m just “Brown.” It’s just easier for my colleagues to call me Brown. My real name is Darrick Williams, but no one knows me as that. They keep confusing me with my good brother Derrick Brown out of Chicago.

KR: Were you anxious or apprehensive about the new challenge of programming so many stations with various formats at Alpha Media?

BROWN: I was a little anxious but felt really comfortable taking on the new challenge. It’s truly all about having a great team and leadership. I was fortunate to have some really great mentors like Skip Dillard, Ray Boyd, Tony Gray, Jay Stevens, and more, who imparted invaluable knowledge that helped me navigate daily.

KR: You are one of few Black Radio pros who work with multi formats; besides the music, is there anything drastically different with each format?

BROWN: Each format has its own culture of listeners. So even though it’s different music or a different lifestyle, in my opinion, it’s the same approach no matter the format. It’s all about the people. Hence, we’re in the people business, and we are here to serve the people. Knowing your target audience is the key.

KR: Tell us about what it’s like to work for Alpha Media.

BROWN: AlphaMedia has been a blessing to me! After things ended with the other cluster in Philly, I was extremely discouraged. I really was considering quitting the Radio industry altogether. But then one of my mentors, Skip Dillard, gave me a pep talk and told me I should consider Louisville, and I did. Alpha Media gave me an opportunity for growth, and I felt like my voice was being heard. This company is truly about the live and local. That’s important to the community, and that’s important to me.

KR: How do you remain focused?

BROWN: Prayer and Meditation. I try to keep a balance between work and my personal life. It’s so easy to get lost in your work because it seems like there are never enough hours in a day. This year, one of my goals is to finally use up all of my vacation time. This will be the very first time I have ever achieved something like this.

KR: Where do you see Radio as an industry in the next five years?

BROWN: I see more consolidation and growth in the digital realm. For Radio to survive, we must strengthen our brands in the digital space as well as terrestrial.

KR: What do you love most about the Radio industry?

BROWN: First ... I’m a music lover, and second, I love how we can positively impact the community.

KR: What are we missing in the Radio industry, and how can we be better?

BROWN: I feel we need more opportunities and programs to groom our next Radio stars.

KR: What’s the most challenging part of your job?

BROWN: Keeping a balance. There’s always a fire to put out daily on the Radio, and I just have to make sure I don’t burn out in the process.

KR: When it comes to finding great, qualified team members and talent, what do you look for?

BROWN: I look for people who are eager, hungry, and willing to learn. It’s very important that they are persistent and consistent.

KR: What are three of the most important aspects of being a great PD?

BROWN: Leadership, Time Management, and Planning.

KR: Name one of the best lessons you have learned in your industry career.

BROWN: To be patient. Every challenge doesn’t need to be solved in a day.

KR: How would you respond to young talent that feels like there are not enough opportunities in the Radio industry?

BROWN: Be patient for that opportunity and get yourself more than one mentor. Our industry is truly about networking.

KR: Where would we find you on a rare day off?

BROWN: In front of my record collection, listening to music. This is a happy space for me. Music is truly healing for the soul.

Thea Mitchem is an amazing, talented, and greatly respected industry leader. She has the innate ability to handle multiple positions for the most innovative Radio and media corporation in the industry, iHeartRadio. Her positions for the company include Executive Vice President of Programming for iHeartMedia, EVP of Hip Hop and R&B Programming, and Program Director for Power 105 in New York, and she oversees New York, Boston, Washington, DC, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Chicago in various formats. She readily admits that she enjoys being a multi-tasker and has developed a science of being in many places simultaneously. When having a conversation with Thea, you cannot help but glean something motivating and inspiring from the great stories she shares. She is humble and credits her parents and great industry mentors for giving her invaluable advice and lessons that she still uses to this day.

THEA MITCHEM

Luminary Honor

By Kevin Ross



“If I can get you to a level of greatness, then I’ve done my job.”

Thea Mitchem

Kevin Ross: Wow, Thea. If somebody hears someone say they do as many jobs as you do, the first thing that comes to mind is, “How do you get a break? How do you stay on top of so many things?”

Thea Mitchem: Well, that’s challenging, which is what I think everyone would think it would be. I’m a great multitasker. I can be on one call negotiating a contract, I can be on another call having a creative brainstorm, I can be on another call dealing with a fire in a market, or have a younger person in my office talking about their future and asking questions about how they can grow or just need advice. You have to put on different hats as quickly as possible and sometimes understand your hat is strategic, sometimes it is creative and sometimes it’s counsel. Especially when you’re managing people, that’s a big part of the job, and you must be able to maneuver pretty quickly. You have to triage what’s the most important thing in that moment, that day, that week or that month. One thing I always try to do is to step back when it gets to be a lot and say, “What’s the one thing right now only I can do that will continue to move things forward expeditiously?” Yes, you can do a lot, but focusing on the most impactful tasks will clear the runway for your team to do what they need to do as well. It’s easy to get caught up in minutia and not look at the bigger picture if you don’t.

KR: Do you even have time to step back?

TM: You have to. I’ve spent my career in Radio. I tell people all the time that we chose a 24/7, 365-day job. It’s the reason why I have two phones. It’s the reason why my staff is always like, “We can call you at 2 AM, and you’ll answer.” Well, yes, that is because I think there’s a problem if it’s 2 AM, so I answer. We chose that. I am used to the pace and what’s expected

and required, and the responsibility when you’re running that many operations at one time.

KR: With the landscape changing, what is your perception of where the Radio industry will be in the next five years?

TM: I think Radio is all about audio. To me, there’s no better curator of audio than Radio; we are the originators of that. It’s live, immediate, and can be on demand. I believe we get caught up in our industry by comparing Radio, podcasts, and audiobooks; it’s all audio. This is what we do, and the fact that we sit here and debate the delivery mechanism is crazy to me. We are content creators; we entertain, inform, and we’re companions; all of those things. When you look at what people are saying is new, for example, they say that podcasting is new, but it’s not new. The delivery mechanism is. It’s what we’ve done for years in Radio. Podcasting is just more niche. You’ve listened to Morning Show Radio your whole life. I would wake up and listen to Donnie Simpson in the morning, and he would tell these incredible stories and have artists on. He would entertain, and he was community oriented. It’s what it is. The only thing is that now it’s on-demand with podcasts. That’s the technology opportunity, and that’s great for Radio if we lean into it. To me, podcasting is an extension. It’s not one or the other. I think sometimes we do ourselves a disservice because we minimize ourselves in the industry, saying, “Are we the shiny new toy?” We don’t need to be the shiny new toy, but what we do need to do is make sure that we are committed to doing what we do best, which is creating content, letting our personalities shine, serve our listeners and communities, entertain and be open to doing it differently as the audience’s content expectations evolve. We have to keep moving the ball down the field.

KR: What do you say about programmers who believe a jock should follow specific station rules? iHeart is a very progressive corporation, but I’ve heard jocks from other corporations complain that they feel like they are limited from doing outside work. In other words, they are not able to grow.

TM: I think there’s a difference between a personality and a jock. Not everybody is a personality. I think that everyone “thinks” that they are a personality, but some people are just liner-readers, or they are just hitting the post to a song, or mimicking a popular personalities’ style. There’s a difference. I believe the on-air talent style depends on the strategic focus of the Radio station. Honestly, Kevin, I don’t think it’s a, “Oh, you have to stay in a box here, but this programmer lets you do your thing there.” I believe when you are a talent, and you have that “special thing,” as a programmer and as a leader, you have to recognize it, help hone it, and sometimes move out of the way to give them the rope in order to let them shine and grow. You’ve got to understand the difference in talent levels. You’re not going to give that liberty to everybody because everyone doesn’t deserve that trust or have the talent. But there is a special “thing” some talents have, I don’t know how to explain it, but you know it when you hear and see it. It’s our job to embrace it. In my opinion, Radio, in general, should be about bringing more personality to the airwaves, making sure that the talent has a chance to actually show their personality and entertain. Remember, when you’re listening to the Radio, or you’re going to an on-demand Radio site to hear a show you missed earlier, you want to be entertained. You don’t want someone just to talk. It’s about the listener, it’s about the entertainment value of that show to you, and it’s about the companionship and information it provides.



Angela Yee, Thea Mitchem, Sway, Angie Martinez. Courtesy of "Radio Hall of Fame"

So, yes, I think there should be room for personality and expansion, but remember, different stations have different strategies for specific reasons. I do believe programmers must continue to evolve our strategies. It's important that we don't stay in a box. You don't win or evolve your station if you stay in the lines always, for your audience, especially the younger generation, can leap past you. Programmers have to take more strategic risks instead of, "Well, this is how we do it." The bottom line is this isn't always how we "have" to do it. We must continue to evolve and grow with the audience.

KR: One of the greatest challenges I've had is program directors, especially Black program directors, talking about their achievements, and not just program directors but Black Radio people in general. I've noticed that Black programmers are really hesitant about publicity, and we work in an industry where you have to promote yourself. What do you think about that?

TM: I don't think any disrespect is meant to

you or anybody else, but even I have had people invite me to be on panels or in the press, and I've been hesitant because I'm not going to get on there and give away my trade secrets. That's not going to happen. Years ago, there was the "Don't do press" narrative going on in the industry. I believe a lot of people at different companies are scared to say the wrong thing. I don't think it's any reflection of you. I think it is because they're scared to misspeak or say too much, and the job market in the industry is not as robust as it used to be. More is at risk.

KR: I think that's exactly what it is. I also think that they think, "If I go out and get publicity, it's going to make me look like I'm not focused on my job, and that's not going to reflect well with management." I think that's another reason.

TM: It's interesting you say that because I certainly don't covet publicity. Most of us don't have a press person, and I don't even see it as publicity. For example, when you asked me to do this, I looked at it as, "Kevin's going to ask me questions about what I do,

what we're doing, and our shows. Someone's going to read this and maybe get inspired or say, "Hey, I didn't think about it like that." So I look at it differently. It's about sharing my experiences and insights so that others can benefit. It's not about me. It's the opportunity to share and serve. That is my driver, and it will always be my driver. I believe that's our responsibility in leadership. I am a behind-the-scenes person; I have been my entire career, and that is my comfort zone. When I see my talent or my stations, or people who I mentor become successful, I smile from behind the curtain. I am elated. I don't feel compelled to be in the front. So I would say probably in the last five to seven years, I've had enough situations where people have said to me personally, "I wish you would've shared this story sooner and more broadly," or "If I would've heard someone say what you just said, then I would've done things differently." I have always understood the responsibility of sharing one-on-one, but I was a little leery to share in a more public forum until I understood the power of what that can be for people who are really looking for direction, focus, inspiration, and guidance.

CONGRATS COACH!

From Dollie S. Bishop, Charlamagne Tha God
and the entire Black Effect Podcast Network



THEA MITCHEM

RADIO FACTS 2022 POWER PLAY LIST HONOREE

CONGRATULATIONS

My Friend and Sister
Thea Mitchem

Keep Crushing Those
Glass Ceilings!

Doc Wynter and iHeartRadio





Angela Yee, Thea Mitchem, Angie Martinez, Medha Gandhi. Courtesy: Thea Mitchem

KR: What is it like to work for such an amazing and innovative company? I mean, iHeart has been on top of it for a while, and of course, they bought the podcast networks, and they've been on top of the award shows. I know you've worked for other companies, but what is it like to be in a situation where the future is now?

TM: Well, Bob Pittman is an incredible leader and visionary who obviously heads our company. When he came to iHeartRadio, he brought an energy we hadn't had in a long time. Before we were iHeart, we were Clear Channel, and we were always leading. I loved the fact that we had a leader's mentality, and we would do things in the industry that hadn't been done, but Bob came in and took it to a whole other level. When you look at iHeartRadio and what it is now, it's the leading media company, reaching 90% of consumers every month, we are the largest podcast publisher in America, and our audience connection and consumer

reach is in a class of its own; it actually makes me proud to work for a company that is innovative and is where the consumer is now, not waiting to move there 10 years from now. We are always looking forward and building. For me, if you're going to work 24/7 or 15 hours a day ...

KR: ... you might as well enjoy it.

TM: You want to enjoy it, and you want to work for a company that has legs and vision for the future. It's not about what's happening just today, it's about what's happening 5, 10, or 15 years from now, and that's iHeart. For me, it's inspiring and always exciting because I get surprised too. I'm like, "What are we working

on?" You see a presentation of what is coming, and you're wowed, "That's really cool," and "That's my company." We do have different divisions, from Radio to digital to podcasts. We work across those divisions to ultimately complement our audience reach. So, it's exciting, and yes, our company is innovative, but it is also working with the best of the best, and there are high expectations. It's not the place to work if you're someone who doesn't like to give your all.

KR: How important is it that jocks hustle and that they do more than just be on the air?

TM: I believe it's important for jocks to understand that you're building a brand and that everything you do matters. I can't tell you how many times I've seen jocks do things that hurt their brand, and they're like, "This is what I do off the air." However, nowadays, that line is blurred. I'll see things and say to a talent, "I don't know if that post is going to serve you well," because the line is not how it used to be where you would come on, do your on-air shift, and whatever you did in your personal life no one knows. You have to

be cognizant of the fact that you are a brand and you're building a brand, and there's going to be advertisers who are interested in you, not just on the air, but socially and digitally, and so on. I look at social media as a direct link to your audience, just like the request and text lines are, and so there's a responsibility in that.

I always encourage my team to do as much as possible. As their brand extends, I think it helps them as well as the Radio station. You can look at the talent that I have at my station, particularly my direct station, Power 105.1, and you can see our talent does a lot, and I've been supportive. Ultimately we benefit from that as a company. I also think it shows the talent that we are in it with them for the long game. Other companies may see a talent once they've blown up, and then they want to offer them a gig; however, I've been there at the beginning when you haven't blown up and when you just started out. Providing you access and resources. I'm with you through that entire trek. It's cool that they want you now, but were they there the entire time to help get you there?

I have a young Nyla Simone, who is an air talent on Power 105.1 in New York. She was one of our interns. She's DJing on Charlamagne's Comedy Central show now. She was nominated for DJ of the year at the BET Hip Hop Awards. There were five people in the category, and she was the only female. It was a great moment because I remember when she was Angie Martinez's intern, and she was grinding to find her place and space in this game. I told her then the same thing I told Gabe P, another former intern turned air talent, who has a show called "On the Radar," which is blowing up. "Keep going. The difference between the people who make it and those who don't is they stopped." The reason why Kevin, you're the only remaining Black-owned trade is that other people stopped. I'm not saying they wanted to stop. I'm not saying circumstances don't happen but keep going when it gets rough and tough and the door slams, and everything turns upside down. That's the difference.

KR: Wow, very inspiring.

TM: That's the reality. I think it's important. What I've learned over the years is not everybody has the stomach for it. People will tell you what they want, they'll tell you why they deserve it, they'll tell you why they were treated wrongly, and they should have had this, but they didn't because of this or that. That's

happened to all of us! We've all gone through that. We all thought, "I should have had," and "I could have had," but the question is, did I quit? Did I stop, or did I keep going in spite of whatever barrier was in front of me? I think that's the key. What I would say is yes, I think it's important for folks to hustle, but I can tell you not everyone has the stomach for it. I've seen it, and the ones who do are the ones who become successful.

KR: You absolutely have to keep pushing while being grateful for what you have, first and foremost. It's like when people complain about something. You're not going to make much progress. If you are complaining about your situation and where you are, the question is, are you doing something about it? Are you pushing? Do you keep trying?

TM: It's action. I can't control what you do; I can't control what a company does. The only thing I can do is control myself, and the only thing I can do is take action. That's it. That's all I can do. Or I can wallow in whatever I think was wrong or was done to me that I should have, could have, or would have done.

KR: Have you ever come across people like that in your career? What happens when you come across somebody who is negative? Do you find that they have a way of infecting the whole team?

TM: Yes, they do, because usually, folks like that want people to join in and agree.

KR: Rally up.

TM: Yes, but a lot of the time, what happens is the opposite. You may sit in a room and complain, and people will listen and be like, "Oh yeah," as if they agree, but then those same people share with others, "He (or she) is always complaining. They are always upset, and their energy is draining me." This is what happens because when people are inspired or may have an anointing or have a more positive outlook, they don't want to be around that energy. By the way, we all hear about it. That's the other thing I would say to people. If you're going to say it, just know that everybody's going to hear about it, including your boss. Sometimes people stay in places longer than they should, but is that the place's fault or yours?

You have to be careful, as a manager or a leader, to make sure that you're cultivating a positive place and space. Understand that



Charlamagne, Thea Mitchem and Anthony Hamilton. Courtesy: Thea Mitchem

people are in different stages of their careers and people want different things too. Some people want to be the biggest thing in the world, and some people say, "Hey, I'm just happy to be here, and I'm glad to contribute," which is also very important. So, people are in different places; some people are just starting their careers, and for some, things didn't go the way they thought they would go for themselves. As managers and as leaders, you're managing people, you're managing emotions, and you're also trying to get the best out of people and inspire them.

KR: When it comes to putting together a team, as in anybody who works with you or for you, what are the most important aspects that you look for?

TM: I dissect what the market's strengths and weaknesses are from a leadership and product perspective. For example, If I was looking for an SVP of programming for a major market, in addition to looking for a strong leader with presence, experience, and strategic focus, I would assess the Program Director's team skill level, who's strong strate-

gically? Who's strong in the science? Who's strong in the creative? Then who's the best leader to hone those strengths and improve the weaknesses? I believe that it's good to have a team with complementary skills that can work well together because where I'm weak, you're strong. That's really important when you're putting together a team. I believe that's the same with an on-air team. Everyone is going to have different skill sets and things that they're better at than others. You can't be one note as a talent. You can't put together an on-air team that's all the same. Everyone has to have something that's a little bit different. It can complement, and it should, but all can't play the same role.

I always look for those types of things. Obviously, work ethic, ability to multitask, dedication, attention to detail, and skill level. I'm also big on what their judgment is like. I believe it is very important for managers, programmers, and talent to have good judgment. "How do you tackle challenges?" "How do you make decisions?" "What is your filter?" You also take into account where the employee is in their career life cycle, of course.

There's a difference between a 20-year-old and someone who's been in the game for 30 years. I also acknowledge people can be in situations they have never experienced before, and they need guidance and support, so you need to pour into them. But having good judgment plays a big role in me trusting you from a business perspective and, at times, me getting out of the way so you can lead or create without me directing you.

KR: That seems to be the trick because even I have issues with that. It's like you want people you can direct, but then you have to understand that sometimes they need to direct themselves, and you need to get out of the way, as you said. I do see a lot of that in the industry, I see people who just want to be the director.

TM: Because they want the credit. I always lead with my intention. It is not about me. It is about my station, it's about my people, and it's about the folks I work with. It's about the audience. That is my intention. I get the residual effect because my intent is in a good place, but it is never about, "Ooh, me, look at me." It'll never be about that. That doesn't drive or feed me in any way. As you climb the corporate ladder, that may work against you. If I can get you to a level of greatness, then I've done my job. It's just about how I can get you there and what's that path. Ev-

ery talent's different. When I say talent, I'm talking about program directors, air talent, marketing directors, and digital directors. I'm talking about when you're managing people. How do you get them to get to their true greatness? I'm someone that's very direct, and I guess you can tell that, but my intention is always pure. So, if I'm tough on somebody, and you have to work for it, it's because I see something in you and have a high expectation of you, and a lot of times, people need that. It's ok to have the tough conversations for the right reasons.

KR: Today in the industry, you see a lot of older workers over 40 on the air as well, but there was a time, 20 years ago, that once you hit a certain point in your career, you were pretty much done. What do you attribute to all the older workers in the industry, and what would you say is the method or the key to longevity?

TM: You're right. We're not being kicked out the door yet, so you're correct about that. Some would say that we should continue to elevate because we need to make sure that we open the door for the future. I feel very strongly that you've got to open the door for the future and train them up but understand that they may not stay at your company if you don't have a current job opportunity. I can't fault you if you end up going some-

place else. In terms of longevity, I'm going to tell you what the late Joseph "Butterball" Tamburro told me years ago. God rest his soul. He was a great man. I asked Butter, I said, "Butter, 45 years, almost 50 years of programming one Radio station in Philadelphia, WDAS FM. How did you do it? There were different owners, GMs, and managers. How did you do it?" I don't know if you knew Butter; Butter was Philadelphia. He was everything in Philadelphia. If anything happened to you, you called Butter. He owned Philly. He was a strong, wonderful man, and he said to me, "Thea, I always check my ego at the door." I said, "What?" He said, "I always check my ego at the door. So, when new owners came in, I got it. I'd ask what are you looking for? New GMs came in; I always rolled with it. I saw all the other managers posturing around, with an attitude of, don't you know who I am, to new leadership. It was a huge ego contest. Therefore, they didn't last." At the end of the day, his point was, "I'm Joseph Butterball Tamburro. I don't need to tell you or show you who I am. You'll know it as soon as we work together." I always understood that; "Check your ego at the door." He's someone who was a giant. I was like, "Okay, I get it." I've always remembered that in those moments when I'm like, "What's going on here?" I remember to say to myself, "Check your ego at the door."

KR: Have you been challenged on that? Are there people who have challenged your success?

TM: Yes. I think God tests you sometimes to remind you. I've certainly had my tests where, in my head, I say, "Do they know who I am?" Then I remember. "Thea, that response is an ego response." There's a lesson that I need to be receiving in the moment when that happens, and I bring it down. I pull back and refocus on what I'm doing. View it as a distraction. I know it will all work out, and it does. It's important to take the emotion out of it. So, whoever is looking at you with the "Well, who are you or why do you matter?" All that goes away because eventually, those same people come right back to you. Now they realize they can't make it happen without you, and you didn't have to say a word.

KR: You went to church on that one because I remember they used to tell me when I first started that the industry is



DJ Prostyle, Thea, DJ Envy. Courtesy: Thea Mitchem



Bas, Rikki Hughes, Ari Lennox, Thea Mitchem, Doc Wynter. Photo Credit: FlashPointGrafix

like a record. It goes round and round. I cannot tell you how many times the few people who have done me wrong ended up needing me for something. It never fails.

TM: Then the true test for you is, in those moments, you have to handle them with grace. Now the same person who may have discounted you or tried to marginalize you is coming back; it takes a lot to do that, I'm sure. Now I can be a jerk, or I can just handle it with grace and be respectful the way I'd want someone to have respect for me. The other thing is, Kevin, we're not perfect. We sometimes make mistakes. We move quickly, and someone can take that the wrong way. So, you have to treat people the way you want to be treated. In those moments, you've got to show grace, even though someone else may not. I just need

to do the right thing, not let my ego lead.

KR: A friend once told me that when enemies try to align themselves with you, that's a signal of power. They are acquiescing. The other thing is I agree with what you said. You have to handle it with grace, which is a challenge but at the end of the day, if you mistreat them, then it becomes your karma, so something's going to happen negatively to you. The question is if somebody's done you wrong, and then they come to you, and they need something when you say, "handle it with grace," what does that look like?

TM: For me, handling it with grace is doing the right thing. If there is a business need, then I'm going to do it regardless. I know this is totally different because this is minimizing what we just talked about but when

you run into some programmers, and they are like, "I'm not playing this record because the label did this to me." I'm never cutting my nose to spite my face. I don't play that game. If my audience likes it, then I love it. If my ego is that fragile that because you did this, I'm going to act that way, to me, that's ridiculous. I know that's a small point, but I'm just saying do the right thing. I'm not going to put my station or my talent in jeopardy or put them in a bad situation or not move and grow my stations or my clusters because of how I feel. I'm never going to do that. That's me making it about me. It's about the greater purpose. That's what I try to live by. I'm not perfect, and I'm not saying that I don't have my moments of tripping, but ultimately, I try to understand the greater purpose, and I also try to walk with humility and make sure that I am self-checking myself. In our business, it is very easy to



THEA MITCHEM

From the DMV to the Big Apple. Once a mentee, to now being a mentor to many. From selling lemonade and brownies to locals in the neighborhood and White House officials to now being the only African American female

Executive Vice President of Programming for iHeartmedia. Your determination both personally and professionally, as well as your ability to assist others achieve their goals and aspirations are a testament to who you are as a human being. Decades in the music business and nearly 20 years at one company says a lot about your character, your contributions, your countless accolades, your wisdom, your ability to lead and much more. Thank you for your continual support throughout our careers and congratulations again on being a Power Player for 2022!

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Executive Vice President, Hip Hop and R&B Programming Strategy

Program Director, WWPR-FM Power 105.1

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get a big head. It's very easy to think that the buck stops here or get too comfortable. As you said, things keep going around and around, and karma is karma.

I'm a straightforward person, and I'm a direct person. I definitely have the reputation of being a fighter. I don't mean that in a negative way. If there's a battle or a war, I'm the person you probably want with you. I got it, and I'm there, but I always walk with integrity, intention, and purpose. The difference between right and wrong is very important because I, as a person, have to look at myself in that mirror and be happy with who I am. I don't want anyone to take me away from that.

KR: Who were your most significant mentors?

TM: Well, I've been very lucky to have different people at different phases in my life. First of all, my mother and my father were my greatest mentors. My father is an incredible man. My passion for music comes from my father. My leadership ability comes from both my parents. I know that probably sounds like a standard answer. I recognize it even more as I'm older. I'm like, "Oh, I do this because my dad used to do that." My dad was the President of the Council for Opportunity in Education, so the TRIO programs, student support services, Upward Bound, and all those programs that are in over 1,000 universities across the country, he's the person who started the national organization that funds those and gets the appropriations from Congress. He'd come home during Congressional budget season; it didn't matter if it was a Republican or Democrat president, he would say, "It's time to go to war to increase the funding." My mentality of, "Let's go, it's game time," I know where I get it from. I get game time from him. My mother is a strong woman and extremely smart. I get that drive and that strategic side from them. In the industry, I've been very lucky; WHOV, the Hampton University Radio Station, was profound for me. It gave me a place to channel my creative energy, and it allowed me to see that there was actually a career in doing something that I loved. When I started my career, Jay Stevens, who was the Program Director of WPGC was very instrumental in my career. Jay was very creative, competitive, and smart. Then there was Ben Hill, my GM at WPGC, whom I wouldn't say mentored me,

but he influenced me. He created a culture of excellence at PGC. The bar was high. That culture set me up for future success. Doc Wynter has been a tremendous mentor, partner, and friend, and we've now worked together for almost 20 years. Every time that I am with Doc, I always feel like I am smarter after he comes around. He understands the true balance between the science and the art.

KR: And he has a great sense of humor.

TM: He has a great sense of humor, and he's a great person. He's a wonderful mentor to many. It's interesting when you say mentorship because different people are in your life at different stages. I've had the opportunity to work with some really great people, including Dennis Clark. He's an amazing talent coach. He works with our biggest talents, including the Breakfast Club. Also, Guy Napoleon, before he retired, I was doing the music stuff with him. Our national programming team is really strong, with Tom Poleman, Mark Chase, and Brad Harden. I've had a great group of people around me. I've stayed open to learning and growing, and that has made a difference. There's mentorship, and there's sponsorship, and sponsorships literally open the door of opportunities. Young people are often looking for someone to mentor them in everything, and you can just take the key aspects of different people instead.

KR: Tell me about The Breakfast Club, the change that recently happened with Angela Yee announcing her departure. That was news for a minute. When is Angela going to start her show?

TM: Angela's show will start at the end of January 2023. It's been exciting to work on the new show and the development of the project. I know people are asking, "Why are you all announcing it now if it's not till then?" The reason is I needed to recruit. Angela's going to have a co-host, so we're looking for the right person. Eventually, I see us adding one or two new cast members to The Breakfast Club as contributors to that show. There's only so much you can do before something leaks, and I recognize that I'm very protective of our brands and the work that Charlamagne, Envy, and Angela have poured into The Breakfast Club for the last 12 years, so I couldn't let something like that leak until we were ready to tell the world

and recruit. Yee's show is in January 2023. It's going to be fun. It's a personality-driven show; it's not a jukebox. Again, I think it's important, as I said earlier, that we infuse as much personality into the airways as possible. It will be a multi-platform show, so you will hear it live, you will hear it on demand, you will hear it on audio on the podcast, you'll see it on YouTube, and it's going to check all those boxes. It is a 2023 show. It is a "now show." It's not how we did it 20 years ago. Angela is really excited about it, but the show development part, Kevin, has just been inspiring and exciting. We're creating something from scratch. We're brainstorming and just using all those creative juices, and it's the same with The Breakfast Club as we get closer to the end of the original three, as I like to call them. Angela's last day with the Breakfast Club is December 2nd, and then you'll hear her on the best-ofs leading into the holiday season, but that will be her last live show.

KR: As we get to that, what does that look like for The Breakfast Club?

TM: When we come into the new year, we're going to start with guest hosts on the show and have people coming in. Obviously, as you can imagine, I've been inundated with a lot of folks who are interested in joining The Breakfast Club.

KR: A lot of celebrities?

TM: There are definitely some celebrities, definitely air talent, but we'll see. We're going to have fun figuring out who's going to be our new contributors. We're not in a rush, as you can tell. We're going through this process to see who and what will fit. We want to continue to evolve the show so that we can have success for another 10 years. Also, we're moving to a new building in the New Year.

KR: That studio does seem crowded.

TM: Yes, we're moving to a new building in the New Year. We will have a new Breakfast Club studio. Even though Angela will not be with the Breakfast Club in January, we have a really cool mural that we've done for the studio, and she's in that because she will always be an original cast member of The Breakfast Club; DJ Envy, Angela Yee and Charlamagne Tha God, it will always be those three. They've made history!

KR: How do you perceive the industry regarding sexism and racism? We don't often hear too much in the industry; I guess we don't discuss it a lot.

TM: Well, I think in our industry, we still have an issue with diversity; when you look at the stats on even women as programmers, it's fewer than 15% of females that are programmers. That's an embarrassing stat. Here we are heading into 2023, and still, you have all these stations that focus on women, yet no women programmers. We still have a problem. I think that people talk about diversity, but diversity means nothing without inclusion. You can hire people who are diverse, but if they're not included in the process and the conversations or decision-making, it's not impactful. It's about inclusion for me.

I have a unique point of view, shaped by my life and work experiences, knowledge, and cultural reference points, and influenced by different kinds of people I may know or have been exposed to. I recognize that there are rooms that I'm in and decisions that have been made that have potentially been influenced by me, based on that point of view. If I weren't in the room, another decision could have been made without a diverse perspective. That's inclusion. We can't be the only person in the room. So yes, there's still a problem in our industry.

KR: You make a very good point; it's not just about diversity. It is about inclusion. At one time, I was really frustrated when I would see where Black people were being promoted at specific companies, and the press releases would always go to Variety or Hollywood Reporter. Then they would talk about it on social media, and I was like, "Well, why didn't I get that?" Then I realized it's because no black person is working in their publicity department, so they don't know about Radio Facts. That's an inclusion issue. It's not the black person's fault. It's the person's fault who's sending it out to the only two publications they know.

TM: I have a different cultural frame of reference. When you have everybody from one culture, then I'm sure it does feel comfortable and cozy because you all, for the most part, get it. However, I have a different point of view, and frankly, that's okay because you look at the diversity of America, and I'm

reflective of what that is. It's the same thing on the Latin side; having a different cultural point of view and reference points are important; I think it enhances any organization or any group you're putting together.

KR: Final question. Some young Black talent might be frustrated in their situation where they don't see a lot of growth. They might be stuck in a market; they don't have mentors; they don't have guidance. What advice would you give them to be encouraged?

TM: They have to figure out what they want and their purpose. You have to be driven. I can mentor you forever, but if you don't have the drive, it doesn't matter. You've got to want it. When you want it, you start doing things that show that you want it. You use whatever circumstance you're in, in order to get as much as you can out of it. For example, I'm at this Radio station, and I'm going to learn as much as I can. In the meantime, I'm going to try to make connections in the industry, and I'm going to start my podcast. You've got to take action. That's the drive in you, but you can only drive when you know what you want. Yes, we all want to be inspired, and it makes a difference, but sometimes you've just got to inspire yourself because you may see a vision that no one else sees, and that's okay. That's actually probably a good thing. As long as you see it, you know it, you know what you can do, and you believe in yourself, then you just have to take action.

The worst thing you can do is sit back and just talk about what you don't have or why you don't have it, or "I wish this would happen." It's okay to get frustrated. We all get frustrated; I get frustrated. We all have to get it out, but you can't live in that. As long as you know your purpose and what you want to do, and you're driven, you'll be able to do that. I think for all people, especially young people, the biggest mistake people make is they don't act. There's inaction, you bust your butt to get in the door, and then you're like, "Now I'm here." No one's going to hand you anything.

No one's going to just give you something. As we talked about earlier, people are focused on doing a thousand different things. So, yes, you may be the most incredible person, the most incredible talent, the most incredible program director, or whatever it may be. Still, no one has noticed yet be-

cause everyone's going at 150 miles an hour. That's okay; you've got to keep going. You can't just get discouraged. The discouragement is stopping you before you start.

KR: If I can add to that, something you said was very important. I don't think you should ever be mad at hard work because that could be an opportunity. I learned how to do Radio Facts by working at Urban Network. I came up there during the weekends, and I was always looking for something to do, and nobody's going to say, "No, you can't do extra work." As you said, don't sit back and complain about it, but actually, look at it as an opportunity to learn something that's going to give you longevity essentially.

TM: Yes, and it is important. I remember early in my career, I used to work; it felt like 24/7 at PGC when I first started because I knew I wanted to be a Program Director. I came in from Hampton, and I knew that, so I was on a mission. I remember a friend at the time said, "They're not paying you enough, and you're working too much." When they made me full-time, he said what they were going to pay me was insulting, and I should be insulted, and all I could think to myself was, "He doesn't get it." Yes, I am providing a service, I'm working all the time, I'm a producer, I'm an assistant, I'm the researcher, and I'm doing every job in the building. Still, I'm also learning, and I'm gaining experience, and I want to be a Program Director one day. Being in the building is half the battle.

He couldn't see it, but it didn't matter because I knew what I was doing and the vision I had, and how it was serving me. It didn't mean that my contributions didn't matter. Of course, they mattered, but I was getting something out of it too that was propelling me to get to where I wanted to go because I saw the vision of that, and I knew what I was doing. Even someone close to me couldn't change my opinion on it because I knew. You have to be in sync with yourself first. If not, you'll be easily swayed.

KR: Absolutely. Thank you so much, Thea, for your time. This was great, and I really enjoyed talking to you. I appreciate it.

TM: Likewise, thank you, Kevin.

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JOSHUA "J1" RAIFORD

INNOVATOR HONOR

VP of Music Programming - Pandora Program Director SiriusXM Pandora Now

By Kevin Ross

Born and raised in Harlem, New York, Joshua "J1" Raiford always had a love for music. He began DJing at 13 years of age. After seeing the likes of Sean Combs, Kevin Liles, Steve Stout, and Dame Dash, J1 knew he wanted to be a music executive. After working 12 years at Radio One, starting as an intern and ultimately becoming the Program Director in three different markets (Atlanta, Indianapolis, and Washington DC) J1 was named Head of Hip Hop at Pandora music. Using his programming experience and his ear for music and relationships throughout the industry, J1 made an immediate impact by enhancing the current listening experiences as well as curating

new stations and playlists. He also created a "Pandora Playback Series," which features sit-down conversations with various established artists. J1 has been critical in bridging the program gap between SiriusXM and Pandora by creating shareable content, launching specialty shows, and programming initiatives, including Uninterrupted Radio in conjunction with Maverick Carter's Springhill company, hosting a new music show on SXM's "The Heat" based off his Pandora Top Shelf Rap & R&B station, programming "Pandora Now" channel 3 on SiriusXM and breaking new artists. In 2022, J1 was named Vice President of Music Programming.

“I felt like female DJs get more ignored than a lot of male DJs. So, I wanted to just give an opportunity to dope female mixers who know the craft, that appreciate it, that love the music, that love to DJ and showcase their talents.”

Kevin Ross: How long have you been in the industry?

J1: If we want to count, starting from my first internship in the music business, about 20 years.

KR: So, it doesn't seem like overnight for you?

J1: No, it definitely wasn't overnight for me. I wish I could say it was overnight, but no, it's been a long journey. I've enjoyed it, I'm still relatively young for my level of success, and even when I was a program director, I was still relatively young compared to most other program directors.

KR: Alright. So, I want to start and ask you what made you take the job with Pandora instead of sticking with Radio and kind of going through what a lot of other people go through in Radio and what made you say, let me go in the direction of the road less traveled?

J1: I'm always forward thinking even when I achieve an accomplishment, or I get a new position, or I level up. I'm always thinking about what's next. And that's going all the way back to when I first got into Radio as an intern/mixer. I was like, okay, well, how do I crack the Mic? How do I get behind the desk? How do I start programming those logs? So, when I became a program director for Radio One in Indianapolis, my next goal was like, okay, how do I either become an operations manager or how do I get to like a top 10 market? And one thing about me is, man, I give all glory to God, and God has always ordered my steps and has moved me when it's time to move. So, eight or nine months into Indianapolis, they moved me to DC. So, I was in a top 10 market, but again, I'm thinking what's next, and I think the aha moment for me was,

I'm starting to go to these festivals, and I'm seeing artists that I've never played on the Radio before having these huge crowds, signing their songs word for word. That was one. And then, even when I was in Atlanta about to leave, I saw artists like 21 Savage, an NBA YoungBoy who was getting, at the time, \$20,000 to \$40,000 a show and didn't have one song on the Radio.

So, there was something going on that I needed to figure out, and it was definitely that streaming was becoming more and more prevalent, especially since the litigation finally caught up with the technology, being that you remember when streaming first came out, it was the Wild West. They didn't know how to monetize it, and a lot of the labels, especially the urban labels, were losing money.

But once they figured out a way to monetize it, it kind of gave Hip Hop a second wind, and it gave the urban department a second wind. And you were seeing all the sub-labels pop up again, all these artists just pop up and doing shows and getting all these fans without any Radio play. And I'm thinking to myself, I'm like, man, I'm young by industry standards as a program director, so I'm going to have a lot of time in this business. I didn't know what Radio was going to look like in 10, 15, or 20 years. Not saying that it would completely fall off the face of the earth because everybody's been saying, "Oh, Radio's dead." They've been saying Radio's dead for the past 20 years. It's not going anywhere. I just didn't know what it would look like for me and where the growth opportunities were looking in the future 10 years down the road. So, I knew, for me, the next logical step was streaming.

So, I did a lot of research on it. I called different people who would at least talk to me. I got to shout out Tuma Basa. Tuma was one

of those people that gave me a lot of advice and told me what to look for and he told me how they interview. But again, it was divine intervention because then I got a call from one of my label heads saying that Pandora was looking for a new head of Hip Hop. This was like right at the beginning of 2019, and they were interested in me and that my name came up in different circles. So, he asked if he could pass my information along. I was like, of course, this is Pandora.

And I spoke with the hiring manager, everything worked out, and he hired me. But going back to what I was saying about divine intervention, I'm going to tell you a quick story. I was visiting my sister like I normally do around the holidays. She lives in Oakland or Berkeley, California, so she was driving me to the airport to fly back to Atlanta for the holidays where my parents stay.

And when we were driving on the highway, I looked up, and I saw the Pandora sign, and I looked at it. I didn't pay it no mind. I just asked my sister, I said, "Oh, Pandora's out here?" And she said, "Oh yes, their headquarters are out here." So, I was like, "Okay, cool." And then, two weeks later, I got a phone call that they were interested in me. So, I didn't believe that was just a circumstance. I felt like God was really showing me where the next step in my career was.

KR: So, DJs typically, and I don't know if it's like this in your generation, but when I was coming up, DJs were the most ignored people at a station primarily. They kind of did their thing, they did the mixes, whatever, and they didn't get a lot of attention from the program directors, they didn't get a lot of airtime, they were always hungry but they were ignored. Did you see a lot of that when you were coming up? Or was it different?



BROWN & JOSHUA “JI” RAIFORD

Your friends at Epic Records would like to congratulate each of you on being nominated as a 2022 Power Player. You both play a pivotal role in establishing artists shape their future. Thank You for your continued efforts in pushing the hip-hop culture forward.

Most importantly, thank you for being amazingly Epic!

Traci, Dontay, CJ, June, Butch, Stephen,
Sylvon, McKayla, Quincy, Brienne & Alston

J1: I think it was different for me, one because I'm in Atlanta, where the DJs have such a major thumbprint. There are certain markets where the DJs are just like the lifeblood of not only the city but the Radio station. I feel like Atlanta's one of those markets, and New York is definitely one of those markets. LA and Chicago are those markets, and even Houston and Dallas to a certain degree. So, I didn't necessarily feel ignored or anything. It was just more so a matter of like how much I wanted to be involved because you do have some DJs that will show up, do their mix, and then they're going home, or they're going to the club, and that's cool that's what they wanted to do. I knew I wanted more; I wanted to be a program director.

But when I got into the actual station and saw how things worked, and when I saw the artists or the label reps walk in, the people that they wanted to talk to, it wasn't the DJs, it wasn't the personalities it wasn't the sales managers; it was the program director. I realized the program director was the one with the real power and could influence and move the music and the culture. And that's when I said, okay, that's the position I want to be in. I felt like I was blessed enough to work for program directors that realized the power of the DJ and shout out to Hurricane Dave. He was actually the program director that made me the mix show coordinator when I came to him with a proposal on how we could organize and amplify the mix show department within Radio One Atlanta at the time.

So yes, I could see how they can sometimes get ignored, but I think that's a two-way street. I think some DJs are just happy with doing their mixes and going home, but you have some DJs that want to be more involved or don't know how to go about it. And you have program directors that sometimes do ignore their DJs, but I was one of those PDs, and still am, that lean on my DJs. I want to know what you're playing. I want to know what people are reacting to because I still think that the DJ is your first line when it comes to like interacting with the music and actual people.

KR: Well, there's also an advantage to it because when you're ignored, then that means you can be unhappy, or you can be an opportunist.

J1: Yes.

KR: So, it's kind of like you obviously were an opportunist, and you saw opportunities, you wanted to go for them. And I've seen some DJs do that. But one last question about DJs. I've always been curious about why is it that, and it must be because of the music, that Black DJs are not making as much money as white DJs, the ones who are on the Vegas Strip, etc. What's the deal with that?

J1: That's something I'm still trying to figure out. It's frustrating because you have DJs from other races that are headliners for actual shows and festivals and stuff and are getting paid and treated like artists. You have that in Hip Hop, but it's like a handful of DJs that get that type of treatment, or you have to come out with some sort of song or be an artist yourself. I haven't been able to put my finger on it, and I don't want to make any assumptions or put anything out there that's not fact-based or anything, but I just know it's something that needs to change. DJs, in general, need to get paid more, but what's happened for DJing as a whole, which might contribute to it, is that the barriers of entry to becoming a DJ have been lowered tremendously due to technology.

Before you had to have a vinyl collection, you had to be able to, like, put records together. There was a craft to it, now all you need is a laptop and somebody else's hard drive, and you don't even have to know the skills of it. The technology will pretty much blend the records together for you. It'll tell you the beats per minute. So, even if you're not musically inclined, all you got to do is set your laptop to the beats per minute and just go from song to song in that spectrum right there. So, I think because more people got into it, you also have more DJs that will say, I'll do this gig and I'll do the whole night for \$150 or \$200. And you have promoters out there that could care less about sometimes the quality of the DJ, but they're just trying to make the bottom line. And as long as they're playing the hits, they don't really care. It's diluted the whole craft of it. So, I think that might have contributed to what's happening. And unfortunately, it's affected Black DJs more than any other race,

KR: So, now that you've made a move to Pandora, do you still have the desire to do Radio or are you looking at other things in the near future? Are you just

into the whole streaming aspect of it?

J1: Well, I mean, the cool part is I still get to partake in the best of both worlds because when I started at Pandora, that's when SiriusXM acquired the company. And even though I was hired exclusively for Pandora at the time, I saw it as an opportunity to kind of bridge the gap because I did have experience in Radio, and I was able to learn streaming relatively quickly. So I was able to kind of talk both languages per se. There were terms in Radio that some of the people in streaming didn't understand, and then there were terms in streaming or data in streaming that some of the Radio people didn't understand. But because I was able to understand both, I could explain it to both sides and say, Okay, this means that, or this is how you would look at it. This is how it compares to research, or this is how we would do things at Radio, and this is how it could translate over here. And then, I program a station on SiriusXM, so, again, I'm able to use the data and the technology that I have on Pandora to create a listening experience on a Radio channel on SiriusXM. So to me, I feel like I was fortunate enough never to completely walk away from it.

KR: What do you think are the qualities of a person in your generation to be successful in the industry today? Where do you think people often fall short?

J1: I think in my generation, we have a tendency to be very impatient. I'm a millennial, and I'm an older millennial, so I kind of get both sides. I understand the younger generation as far as like living in a microwave society because that's the technology that they've grown up with. That's what they're accustomed to. I grew up when all that stuff was changing, but I remember when you had to dial up your internet modem, and it took like a minute or two just to get on the internet, and if somebody called your phone, you got knocked off. A lot of kids, if their Wi-Fi is slow, they are looking at you like you live in the stone age. I remember what it was like not to have a cell phone, and it seems like ancient history. How did we survive without it?

KR: You're talking pagers and beepers?



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THEA MITCHEM
LUMINARY HONOR

JOSHUA "J1" RAIFORD
INNOVATOR HONOR

TIM REID
EXCEPTIONAL LEADERSHIP HONOR

YUNG JOC
RISING RADIO HONOR

BROWN
RADIO LEGACY HONOR



Lil Baby and J1, Photo credit: Morgan Richard

J1: Pagers and beepers. Yes, exactly. So, I think a lot of my generation, or the generations after me, want what we want now. We live in an on-demand society. I mean, people only watch sporting events in real-time now or maybe the news, but most of the time, you get everything you need right here from your phone. So, I think that's where a lot of people fall short; we see what we see on social media, which is the gift and the curse. And we see the success stories, but we don't understand what it took to get there, or the patience or the losses that it took to get there because not a lot of people post that. They only post the wins or when they're up and when they're doing well, or when they have the nice car or have the nice clothes or the jewels or the money and stuff. But they don't post when they have to sleep on their friend's couch, or if they are still staying at home with their parents because you aren't going to get any likes off of that.

KR: Right. What do you think about the people who are the younger generations who say that older people in the industry are holding them back, that they're not providing opportunities? Do you think there's some merit to that?

J1: I think it goes both ways. I think there are people like that in the industry that don't provide opportunities; it's not everybody because I've seen others who either provide opportunities or mentor the next wave of executives or musicians or whatever you call it. I know I can speak for myself personally. I'm very intentional as far as like giving back or at least speaking to people when they want to seek knowledge making myself available for those who want to learn. I'm making sure that I keep going back to my alma mater, Morehouse College, and making myself accessible to those young brothers and sisters at Morehouse, Spelman, and Clark Atlanta University. I'm speaking in classes. I can't provide opportunities for everybody, but at least I can give people the blueprint and the tools. So yes, some of the older generations need to do a better job of providing those opportunities and being secure enough to say, "Okay, if I give this young brother or sister a chance, I'm still going to be okay." I think a lot of it is fear of losing what they have. At the same time, the younger generation can't use that as an excuse not to push forward. When I was coming up, there were a lot of older DJs that didn't want to see me shine or didn't want to give me opportunities. I didn't let that deter me. I used it as motivation. Like,

okay, well, I'm going to knock this old MF off his horse, and I'm going to take my spot if you don't want to help me. That is on you. You know what I'm saying? You could either move up or move out. That was my mentality.

So, I think it has to go both ways, and you also have to ask yourself are you reaching out to the older generation? Are you providing something that they need? I always feel like a mentorship has to be a two-way street, not just to be pouring into you. How are you helping me out? Because I love hearing from people that I mentor. "What do you think?" Because they view the world differently from me, they have a different lens, and they might see something that I don't necessarily catch.

KR: Right. Well, if it's any comfort to you, it's the legacy of the industry because when I was younger, it was the same thing. It's like some of the older people did not let a lot of the younger people in. I do find that a lot of the younger people are, as you said, very impatient, and I think that some of them are, I don't want to say entitled, but I think they understand that they have options and they're not great politicians a lot of times.

J1: No, they're not.

KR: There's a lack of respect, as a matter of fact, sometimes for older industry people. I've seen that, and that's definitely not going to get you anywhere. So, as you said, it's a two-way street. What would you say is, as far as today's industry is concerned, what are we lacking outside of what we just talked about? Diversity's one thing. Inclusion is another. What do you think about that?

J1: I definitely think it's a problem not only in the music industry, but it's a problem in America in general. But if you look at the music industry, since we're talking about the music industry, Hip Hop is pop culture, we can all agree on that. But when you look at who is in the C-suites, who are on the board of directors and what's the composition of the executive levels? We are the minority when the music generating the revenue is the majority, so it's not adding up, and it's something that I've been vocal about. Black artists have to somehow get involved and speak up

when they walk into the rooms and they don't see people that look like them. They need to say something about it because they have the power, and they can help affect change, whereas, like, yes, I can say something. Still, I might not be able to have the impact that somebody, like when Rihanna or Beyoncé walk into the room and say, "Well, I'm not going to work with you all until you get some more diverse executives of color in here."

KR: To their credit, they both have done that.

J1: They have done that, and it's moved the needle. So, we need more of that, and we need it to be more consistent. And I'm not saying that all black music should just be exclusively run by all Black people because you have examples like how Def Jam was founded, you had Rick Rubin, and you had Russell Simmons. Fast forward to 300, you got Lyor Cohen, and you got Kevin Liles. So, I'm not saying that it should be just all Black or all white, but we need to do better. It needs to be more balanced and more diverse as a reflection of the music itself.

KR: Okay. So, I know you've created some shows. Tell me about some of those shows and how the ideas came about.

J1: Yes, so one of the shows that I created is a new music show on The Heat; it's called Top Shelf. And Top Shelf was a station/playlist that I created on Pandora, which features the newest and hottest R&B and Hip Hop. Because I have access to so much new music, especially before it drops, I was able to help curate a show where it's a good listening experience. Shout out to Dion Summers, who is the VP of Music Programming for SiriusXM. He was with it, he helped put the show together, and we've been doing it for like three years now. Then I run Pandora Now, which is a SiriusXM channel, and I do a mix show called Ladies Night Now, where it's all-female mixers, and we rotate female mixers every Saturday night. And I purposely wanted to do that because you got some dope female mixers out there, and we talked earlier about how DJs get ignored. Well, I felt like female DJs get ignored more than a lot of male DJs. So, I wanted to just give an opportunity to dope female mixers who know the craft, that appreciate it, that love the music, that love to



J1 and Megan Thee Stallion. Photo Credit: SiriusXM

DJ and showcase their talents.

KR: Do you find that there are people who either listen to the Radio or streaming? Or do you find people do both?

J1: I think people do both. It just depends on your listening preference. It depends on what you're going to each platform for. So, for example, if I'm like an Uber driver, and in the car by myself, or I'm not talking with people or let's say I'm a UPS driver, I might want to listen to the Radio because I want to hear somebody talk. It kind of gives me the interaction, and if you're a good Radio talent, you make it very personal. I always tell people, or the talents that I've coached, I want you to talk to me. You're not talking to millions of people. You're talking to one person. Who's that one person that you're talking to? And the greats always know how to do it. So, if I'm looking for that, then yes, I'm going to listen to the Radio if I want to know what's

going on in my community. I'm going to listen to the local Radio station and it's still very important. If I want to find out about new music or I want a specific listening experience, then I'm going to go to streaming. I'm going to find that Pandora station that caters to me and what I want to listen to. If I want to listen to nineties Hip Hop, I'm going to go to nineties Hip Hop Radio. If I want to hear new Hip Hop, I'm going to go to new Hip Hop Radio; and if I don't want to hear anybody talk, I'm going to go to streaming. So, it just depends on what each individual's looking for. I think people still listen to both platforms; obviously, streaming has become massive. And the pandemic sped that up, and it set up the consolidation and the syndication of Radio, but I will never write Radio off and just say it's dead.

KR: What do you think when we talk about jocks; I know you're either a personality or a jock. What do you need to be today in order to capitalize and

**«I always tell people, or the talents
that I've coached, I want you to talk to me.
You're not talking to millions of people.»**

go further in the Radio or entertainment industry and to have more opportunities?

J1: You definitely got to be a personality and...

KR: ... Can that be taught?

J1: Well, I mean, there are things that can be taught, like getting in and out of your breaks and stuff and certain ways to address your audience, but you don't want to overteach somebody because then they'll sound like a jock and they'll sound too polished. It needs to sound conversational, it needs to have that connection, and it needs to be authentic. That's one thing about this new generation, or the younger generation, they're into authenticity. They know BS when they see it and hear it. That's why these social media platforms like TikTok are so popular. Some of it is staged, but it's real people just doing stuff, and it moves very quickly. People's attention spans are very short. So, I think you just have to be a total personality and that old phrase that you have a face for Radio doesn't exist anymore because everything is on video now as a video component. People like to see it. You notice most Radio stations, when they're doing interviews, they're filming it as well, to put on their YouTube channel or to put on their apps. So, you have to be an all-around talent. You got to be able to touch people. You got to understand social media. You got to understand how to connect to people. So, personally, when I was looking for talent, I looked for the intangibles before I looked for tangibles. I could teach you what you need to know; I can't teach you how to be a star; I can't teach you how to hold people's attention. Either you got it or you don't.

KR: Who are your greatest mentors? I heard you mention Hurricane Dave earlier, but who are maybe like three people that you look up to in the industry?

J1: Yes. From a Radio standpoint, Hurricane Dave was one of my main mentors. Bill Black was another one, and I am always going to have love and respect for Steve Hegwood because he gave me my first opportunity at Radio, and he is one of the smartest programmers I think that's out there. What he's been able to create is phenomenal as well as how he's continuing to grow in this environment.

KR: And with a small signal.

J1: With a small signal. You got to tip your hat to that man. I also have a lot of respect for my current chief content officer, Scott Greenstein. He's a very smart person and visionary. He takes a lot of chances, which I can appreciate. He's always thinking about the big picture and the next level, so I've learned a lot from him. And then there are just people who I've admired from afar, Kevin Liles. I love the way he's moved throughout the industry, the Tuma Basas of the world. So, for me, I'm a sponge. I feel like I can learn from pretty much anybody, good or bad. Whether you're in the Radio industry or not, whether you work for a label, or whether you're an artist's manager, I try to observe people from all walks of life. Coach K & Pee, I'm a big fan of theirs. LVRN and Tunde Balogun. I used to DJ clubs with Tunde and to see what he's created, and he's my peer. We're pretty much around the same age. And he has a multimillion-dollar corporation, and I love it, so I've even learned from him.

KR: I do want to mention that you have a very good reputation, so you're doing something very right. I haven't heard anything negative, as a matter of fact, people are excited to see that we were going to put you in this magazine.

J1: Oh, man. I appreciate that, and I thank God for it because you know how this industry can be. It's like people will love you one day to hate you the next.

KR: How do you feel about it when people have mistreated you? How do you respond to that?

J1: It depends. There's blatant disrespect, and there's passive-aggressiveness. I almost prefer when somebody blatantly disrespects me because you know where they stand, and you could kind of address it head-on. It's the passive-aggressive people you kind of have to watch out for because they don't outright say it. They say just enough, you know, not to cross the line or not to say anything offensive, but you knew they were taking a shot. Once you allow somebody to upset you in a way that you come out of character, you've given them your power, and I have to catch myself sometimes if I'm upset or I'm offended. They can't interrupt what God has for you.

KR: I'll tell you something I've learned the hard way. When people mistreat you, number one, it's rarely about you. It's almost always about them. Number two, if they do it in front of people, it's not humiliating for you, it's humiliating for them because we're always our own walking resumes. Number three, karma is absolute. So, whenever someone does you wrong, they will always pay for it. You may not witness it, but they pay for it. We get away with nothing. Finally, whenever somebody mistreats you in this industry, they will usually end up needing you for something.

J1: Yes, that's true.

KR: Thanks for your time and continued success.

Tim Reid

Exceptional Leadership Honor

BMG



Photo Credit: Jizelle Reid

Tim Reid is Senior Vice President, Repertoire & Marketing for BMG Recorded Music based in Nashville, TN. Formerly based in Los Angeles, CA, he has spent more than 20 years as a leader in the areas of marketing, branding, business development, and communications in entertainment.

Reid leads a team at BMG for artists such as Logic, Maxwell, Stefflon Don, India.Arie, Lil Dicky, Anthony Hamilton, Big K.R.I.T., Terrace Martin, Ledisi, and Lee-la James, among many others. In the past, he and his team have led release campaigns for Janet Jackson's "Unbreakable" which debuted at #1 on the Billboard 200 chart. In addition, BMG was the #3 overall label for Mediabase Chart share in 2021 for the R&B genre (four consecutive years in the Top 5).

Reid began his professional career as a studio engi-

neer during his college years at UCLA. He was appointed the Head of Marketing at Priority Records in the mid-90s working with artists like Ice Cube, Westside Connection, Jay-Z's debut album Reasonable Doubt, and Master P. He later joined MCA Records and was Vice President of Marketing working with The Roots, Common, Shaggy, Mos Def and Talib Kweli. He next moved to Interscope Records (IGA) where he worked with additional artists including Snoop Dogg, Common, Busta Rhymes, and Avant.

In addition, he was music supervisor and talent executive for TV One Network's series "Verses & Flow" and McDonald's 365Black Awards (BET). Reid's passion and expertise in multiple areas of the business have been a motivational force behind his focus to continue his work at BMG to continue to provide a great destination for artists and creators.

“I like to experience the energy of an artist’s live shows in their hometown, when movement is gaining momentum, and when an artist introduces new music to their fans.”

Kevin Ross: There is often confusion about the many roles BMG plays as a company. Can you simplify it?

Tim Reid: There should be no confusion. BMG is the world’s fourth-biggest music company, the first new global player in the music business of the streaming age, and a record label and music publisher in one. Historically those were entirely separate businesses (many still are). BMG hosts both, under one roof, off the same service platform. We’re one global company with 21 offices across 12 core music markets. We are a full-service music company offering clients a range of services, including production music, films, books, artist management, merchandise, neighboring rights, and live events as well as music publishing and recordings off the same service platform. More often than not, clients are utilizing multiple services.

KR: How is BMG different from other major labels?

TR: BMG is the leading global alternative to the so-called majors through fair and competitive deal structures, artists can own their sound recordings, have creative freedom, and when we are able, we want to create partnerships that utilize BMG globally. All of those are a major draw as more and more established artists are seeking control over their careers. Our partnerships put artists in the driver’s seat and make them the CEO of their music business. We’re not just promoting singles and albums but artist brands.

KR: What made BMG decide to become a label? That was very recent, wasn’t it?

TR: We’ve been issuing recordings for over a decade now. Thousands of recordings. Number Ones around the world. We have incredible Frontline artists and an outstanding Catalog. BMG’s decision to launch in 2008 was with an explicit objective to make things better for artists and songwriters. BMG believes they want and deserve better than the music business has delivered them to date. Artists want more control

over their careers with more service, transparency, and fairness, and a proven global partner. It’s been years, but I joined the company in 2014. BMG is a full-fledged recorded music company and major player in the market.

KR: What does a typical day for you look like?

TR: We’re sourcing new artist partnership deals for BMG Recorded Music. We’re strategizing with artists, managers, lawyers, agents, our teams, colleagues, producers & industry tastemakers across the business about potential new business opportunities. Our in-house Marketing teams handle day-to-day product management services for our projects. BMG is collaborative across every department and business unit to optimize the support for artist campaigns so it’s an everyday exchange of ideas & overall strategy.

KR: In today’s industry, it seems everyone are extreme multitaskers, do you think that that’s indicative of the entire industry? Do you think that in order to survive in today’s industry, you have to be able to do many jobs?

TR: Being a well-rounded executive with knowledge and skill in multiple areas of the business is extremely important for not only the executive & company, but for the artists they work with. A key skill set to possess and constantly improve on is adaptability. Technology is changing at an unprecedented pace, and one must unlearn previous approaches as rapidly as you learn new strategies for our creative partners.

KR: What do artists target to hear their music now? At one point in time, it was just Radio primarily. However, what are the most important arenas that they seek to get exposure today?

TR: It’s the digital age, and artists want everyone to hear & see the content they create. The ultimate goal would be to utilize every platform during a campaign to maximize visibility. Social media & digital

music platforms have added huge vehicles that artists utilize. Direct interaction with their fanbase is so important at every level. Digital activity is an early catalyst that helps build and maintain a base which becomes the foundation for spreading content and supporting streaming growth, live shows, and potential playlisting. Radio remains a major platform that can move the needle and can add to an artist’s fanbase growth.

KR: It seems like artists are under a lot of pressure today, because, at one time, you could just come in and do your job and leave. They could do a concert or an interview; however, now your whole life is on display.

TR: There are definitely new layers of the business that the music community has had to adjust to and add to their business strategy. However, the approach depends on the artist and their unique connection to their existing or target audience. It’s never one strategy fits all. Artists can always be as flexible as necessary while staying on brand, to consistently communicate and to maintain and expand their reach.

In comparison to the past, there are some areas of the business that one could argue is more accessible now for artists than it was years ago in terms of ability to releasing music and communicating directly to fans.

KR: What do you think are the qualities of a great leader?

TR: Passion, focus, expertise, adaptability, resilience, integrity, balance, team building, being a motivator, and solution & goal oriented.

KR: Okay, you travel a lot, right?

TR: Yes.

KR: What are you always on the hunt for when you’re traveling? What is the one thing that you enjoy doing the most that helps you with your job?

TR: I like to experience the energy of an artist's live shows in their hometown, when movement is gaining momentum, and when an artist introduces new music to their fans. One of the most exciting parts of an artists' journey is the strength of that live energy & the reaction that can inspire them even further.

KR: Okay, what's the best advice you've ever been given?

TR: Mr. Al Bell, President of the iconic label Stax Records asked me, "Son, you want to be in the record business? Always take care of the Artist, management, & creative community. As long as you intend to stay in the business, you make sure you do right by them."

When I heard it as a teenager, I said "Okay, got it" but through my own experience, I've gained a true perspective of what he meant. A lot of artists and creators need champions and for them to know that they have real partners who prioritize what they are building. I've carried that with me through today to BMG, now an ambassador of its

philosophy - "Fairness, Transparency, and Service."

KR: I've heard before that being a Manager is the most thankless and the most difficult job in the industry. Would you agree to that or not? Or have you found a way around it?

TR: Being a Manager can be both highly rewarding & challenging. No one is professionally, or sometimes personally, closer to an artist than their manager. I've worked with many brilliant managers who have been an integral part of an artist's rise to the top of the charts, selling out arenas after starting in small clubs, having the vision to expand the artist's brand at the right time to successes outside of music.

KR: How's your father doing?

TR: He's doing great. He'll be announcing something new he is working on soon.

KR: What is the greatest lesson you learned from him?

TR: My father has given me so many gems of wisdom regarding life & business. Many focused on knowing your passion, maintaining integrity, focus, & resilience, emphasizing the importance of creation, history, & culture.

KR: Okay, so you moved to Nashville from LA, and some people say that Nashville is a real music town. What would you say is different about Nashville when it comes to music than it is about LA?

TR: There's a lot more to Nashville than just Country music, and its location is central to the industry – whether that's Atlanta or Memphis, NY, or back to LA. Nashville is a rapidly growing, diverse city and a well-rounded musical hub with a rich & unique musical history. There are amazing multi-genre artists, songwriters, and music executives that call Nashville home.

KR: Got it. Thanks for your time, Tim.

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CONGRATS ON MAKING IT
TO THE BIG LEAGUES!!



FROM ALL YOUR FRIENDS
AT BENCHMARK ENTERTAINMENT

YUNG JOC

Rising Radio Honor

By Kevin Ross

Yung Joc has a full plate right now, from doing his syndicated Radio show for Core Media Group and Superadio from the Streetz headquarters in Atlanta called “The Streetz Morning Takeover.” He hosts the show along with comedian Shawty Shawty and Miss Shyneka, and he’s also a major storyline on Love and Hip Hop this season with his marriage problems and his mother’s recent diagnosis with Stage 3 cancer. How he manages all that and keeps pushing is awe-inspiring. The former rapper got his start in Radio a few years ago after repeatedly approaching industry vet Steve Hegwood about being on the air. He admits it was a great challenge, as anyone in the Radio game would assume, to START your career as a morning show host. He said there was a huge learning curve, and he felt defeated at times, but the voice inside told him to keep going. At this point, it’s second nature to him and his show is now syndicated. He has had some of the most interesting segments on his show, which he talks about here, that set him apart from the other shows. We caught up with him after he was filming a project for several days and gained a greater perspective on his career.

KEVIN ROSS: So you were working on a project? Can you tell us about that? A movie project?

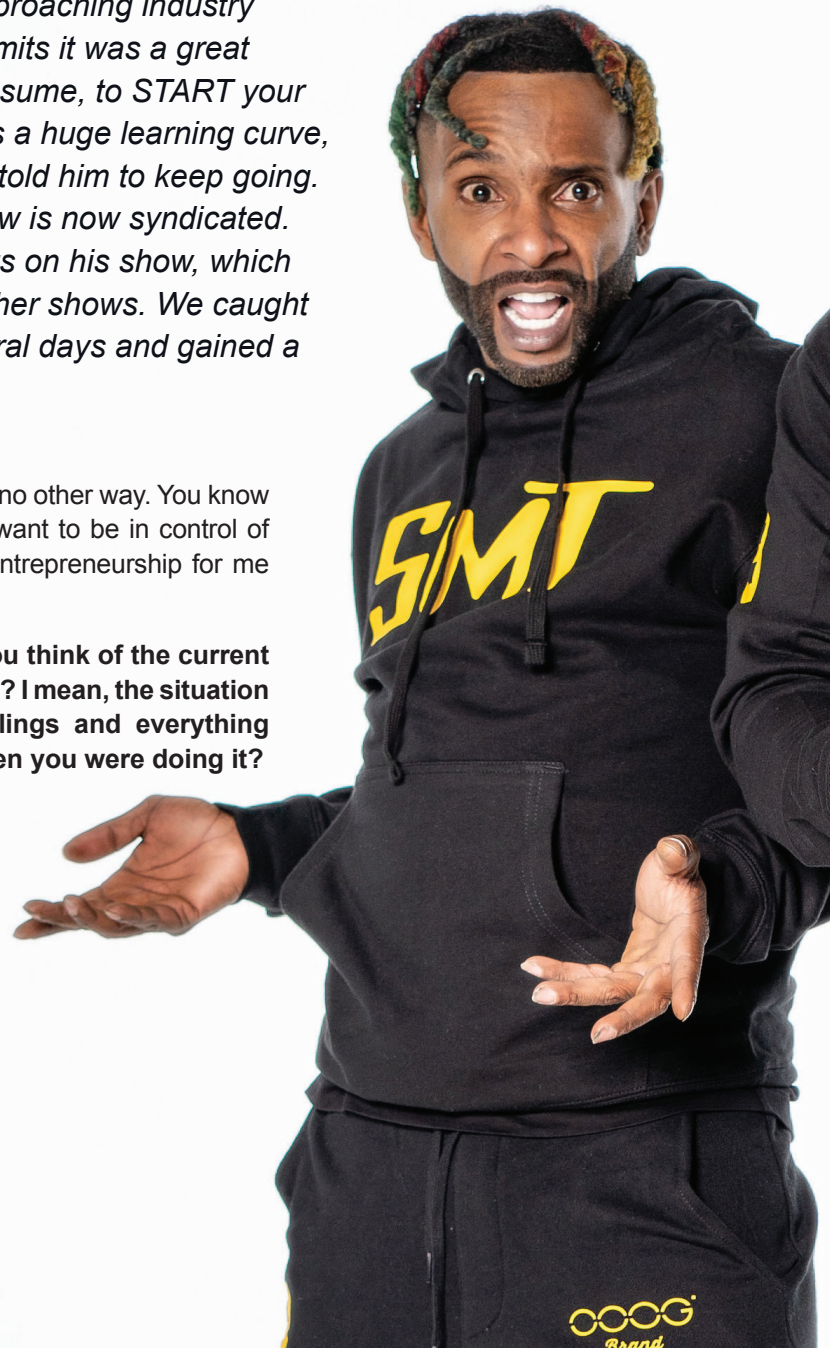
YUNG JOC: Yeah, I’m actually working on two projects. One is a project called “I Got A Story To Tell,” which is an anthology series. I had the opportunity to act in it and write and co-produce on this project. It’s a project done with BET+.

KR: Got it. So you’re an entrepreneur of sorts. You don’t just do Radio or music. How did that come about?

YJ: I just think that that kind of started from a young age by seeing my father be an entrepreneur. So it’s like, it’s a second language because it’s not like somebody got to break down stuff and explain to me how it works. I know what independence looks like; I’ve had the opportunity and the pleasure to watch my father wear that for my entire life. So it’s like I

don’t see myself no other way. You know what I mean? I want to be in control of my destiny, so entrepreneurship for me is the wave.

KR: What do you think of the current state of Hip Hop? I mean, the situation with all the killings and everything else versus when you were doing it?



**“Some days you wake up, and you stand in the middle of a blessing.
The blessing is on you, and you don’t even know it.”**





iPod King and Yung Joc: Photo Credit Superadio/AURN

YJ: I don't think it isn't any different. To be honest with you, I think what's happening now is, and I think, a lot of the things that are taking place with these artists, if you notice, it's when people are allowed to get too close to them.

KR: What do you mean by that?

YJ: With the latest tragedy that we've just seen with Takeoff, I feel like too many people were able to touch him. You know what I'm saying? At the end of the day, it's a part of our lifestyle. That's how we get paid, and the public pays us. But I mean, it's very senseless. One of the things I will say because I just recently interviewed Young Jeezy, and I had to ask him, I posed a question to him, "Where did we go wrong?" You know what I'm saying? "What created this divide or this difference?" I just feel like when I was out here jumping off the porch, doing my thing, we were talking about getting money.

We talked about stuff we saw in the hood, and of course, we talked about what we would do. It's different now because people are finding themselves being able to eat, feed themselves, feed their family, support their team, support their dream through [clout]. That's why you got more rappers who snitch on themselves and their music, talk about what they're doing or have someone else do it to kind of create that talk about that person because

it's more so now a lifestyle. Lifestyle is the key. You want to go viral; you want to make money and expose your lifestyle to people because that appears to be more truthful or more of a solid foundation for artists than their music. You know you can get on there right now and tell millions of people about the 5,000 women you smashed in the last six months. I mean, you could say that. But then, what if you showed me that lifestyle? I would definitely be talking about you. Like, You could rap about it, and I'd be like, whatever. I don't even want to hear it, but if you can show me, I think that's the difference. A lot of people are moving in the space of, let me show you, I can show you better than I can tell you. A lot of the time, the music is just telling people, and the lifestyle is showing people.

KR: Got it. So one of the most interesting segments I've ever heard on your Radio show was during a segment called "Date Dilemma." The theme of the feature is where people discuss their dates that go wrong or go left, and you also have the person on the other side explain their side. You did a very interesting segment where a girl called in and talked about a guy she was dating, and then she lost interest in him because she overheard him talking to one of his friends about how he killed her brother at a gas station. He didn't

know it was her brother. What was the result of that?

YJ: She was with him and some friends, and while they were having a conversation, and I guess they'd been drinking, and you know, people get a little loose when they are drinking. And as he was talking about it, the guys kind of said some things, some key things that made her be like, "Wait, that's my brother you talking about." So it got interesting because detectives came to my Radio station and called us. I even had people telling me they knew about it. Like, they know what's going on. They know who did it, and they know when it happened. I'm just like, "Look, man, I don't want no parts of this because that's not what we did it for. We're not Unsolved Mysteries or Cold Case Files, you know. It wasn't any of that. But it played out. Like, that just shows you how life works, man. You know what I'm saying? Your attempt, your aim, is for one thing, but if the wind blows enough, it will change the trajectory of whatever your efforts are, and you'll land somewhere else. And that's how we got to that space. So, we don't really know what happened after that. We tried to contact the girl, but her mama had changed her number. I mean, that was it.

KR: She was probably bombarded too. Was that the wildest segment that you had, or did anything else happen?

YJ: The wildest thing? Nah, it happened plenty of times. We had this white guy call in about this black woman he was dating. He had never really dated a black woman before. He was over her because, I guess, when he met her, she was one way, and then he felt like she tried to become too Hollywood because she started wearing all these wigs, and she shaved her eyebrows and then would draw them back on. And he felt like she was trying to get too slim to be like a model or something. But on our show, she revealed to him that she was dealing with Stage 4 cancer.

KR: Oh wow.

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Lil Donald, Yung Joc, Mike Sic: Photo Credit Superadio/AURN

YJ: So it's kind of messed up. They were early in the dating process, and she didn't want to put him that deep in her business. But he had actually started to fall for her, but he is just like, "Yo, she changed. She wearing all this makeup and drawing on her eyebrows." She used to have natural hair, but he didn't know she had to wear those wigs. He just thought she was wearing wigs. So when she broke down and told him, "Actually, let me just tell you; I'm dealing with stage 4 cancer, and I didn't want to drag you down, but I didn't know that the change in my appearance was that drastic." Because in her mind, she still looked the same, but it was pretty tough because we were in the studio, everybody was crying, you know, trying to figure out like, "Wow." Sometimes you don't even know the type of play that life will give you.

KR: You never know what people are going through. Sorry to hear that. Atlanta is probably the busiest Radio market in the United States as far as Black Radio. Do you feel like

you have to compete with anybody? Or do you prefer to do things your way? Do you pay attention to what the other people are doing?

YJ: You have to. I mean, competition is prevalent and you have to adjust as you go. You know what I'm saying? You have to be steadfast in whatever your plan is. But sometimes, when people shift the gear, you got to shift your gear too. With competition, things change. And so, in our market, things are evolving. Because I've been on the Radio for six years, going on seven, and in this time frame, I've watched every show around me change their format. I've watched them change their approach. I've watched them change the segments. I've watched them change the way they market. Not saying it's because of me, but I do believe that our station had a lot to do with it. I came into the market out of the blue, like, "What? What is that?" Where'd it come from?" Then suddenly, you know, they start seeing the needle move. It's like, wait a minute, hold on. So then you

start seeing them change their shows up, change out people, new talent, take away talent. Take it from a whole cast on the show down to one person. So, it is definitely a real thing, and this is challenging at times because here it is, I got to be out here, and I got to work it. I got to work it like I just started today. I got to work it like people have never heard my show. I got to work it like, hey, we are the only station here because that's when you're talking about competitive marketing. You got to be way ahead of the ball sometimes, man. Sometimes certain blessings will just fall on your lap too.

KR: Right. So when you started seven years ago, you had no Radio experience. What was that like actually to be on a morning show with no experience?

YJ: Hard! It was hard, man. You know how - you just never want to feel defeated, man. You know what I'm saying? And I knew that effort to try to do Radio could be something big for me. And I just didn't want to - I just couldn't allow



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the thought of how big it could be to die.

KR: There you go.

YJ: I couldn't imagine that thought dying just because I wasn't able to see my way through it right away. I mean, it was very tough. It was challenging, man. It was mornings where I had to record and prerecord, just to throw in a simple break, so I could see what it felt like to get the timing down to understand. The biggest fear was knowing that people were listening and they were listening close. And I had to tell myself, well, when I'm on stage or when I'm in front of a TV camera, it is what it is. And I think the most challenging thing for me was the thought of my gestures and my facial expressions not being available. A lot of that stuff sells me when it goes to TV. Before, I used a lot of that to sell myself. They hear Radio, but they don't see me. So, I'm using those assets, I would say, to move the needle. It had to be the inflection in my voice. It had to be sheer charisma, being empathetic, emotional, and being sarcastic when it's time to be. You know, it took all of that. The physical assets were no longer there to help me.

As when we talk about the theater of the mind, that all comes in me projecting my voice and how I use my voice. So it was an interesting learning experience for me, but it was a hell of a learning curve as well because I mean, it took me a good year and a half, almost two years to feel like, you know what? I can do this. And let's face it, a lot of people would've given up way before that, but I saw a future in it. Because as we just talked about, when it comes to Hip Hop culture and space right now, it's so crazy and I didn't want to, man - hey man, I don't want to be out here trying to be no rapper when I'm 50. That ain't my thing. I ain't going to lie to you. I want to be an entertainer, you know? Do I like to do movies? Yeah, television, yeah, Radio, yeah. Podcasts, yeah. Commercials, yeah. Get money, yeah. You know, all of that, but it was challenging. I ain't going to lie. Radio's probably one of the hardest jobs I've ever had in my life, only because it's almost the longest job I've

ever had. Now, I would say the longest job I've had would possibly be, it would have to be [the reality show] Love and Hip Hop. Now, don't get me wrong, music is a job, it's a career, but it's not me clocking in every day to go and do a job. You know what I'm saying? This is every day, five days a week. I'm up in the mornings and out of the house first thing in the morning. I think it definitely yields a reward in the end, now or later and all that, you know what I'm saying?

KR: What do you attribute to your success? I mean, I know it took you two years to get it, but who helped you? Who was there to guide you through the process?

YJ: First and foremost, Steve Hegwood, I would put him at the top of that list because he gave me the opportunity. And having to meet him on a weekly basis, working with my producer at that time, Akini Jeffery, like, that was my professor pretty much, you know what I'm saying? At the time, having a co-host, Mo Quick, at the time was my co-host. She definitely helped me because she had Radio experience, I didn't. So I would have to watch her and just be like, I get it. And also, my best friend, one of my best friends and co-host, Shawty Shawty was out here in the streets with me. We are out here still trying to live like we don't have a Radio show in the morning. And it would take us influencing each other and be like, "Man, we can do this, man. Let's try to do this for 10 years." We're like, "Let's try to do it for five; if we can do it for five, we can do it for 10. I'm willing to try that." So here we are at six on the way to seven [years]; it's been amazing because I was like, "Yeah, it may not last that long, but it's been working, and I'm grateful for the opportunity."

KR: I know that you're working with a limited signal. What kind of impact does Streetz have in the market? Do you hear a lot of responses when you get in the streets?

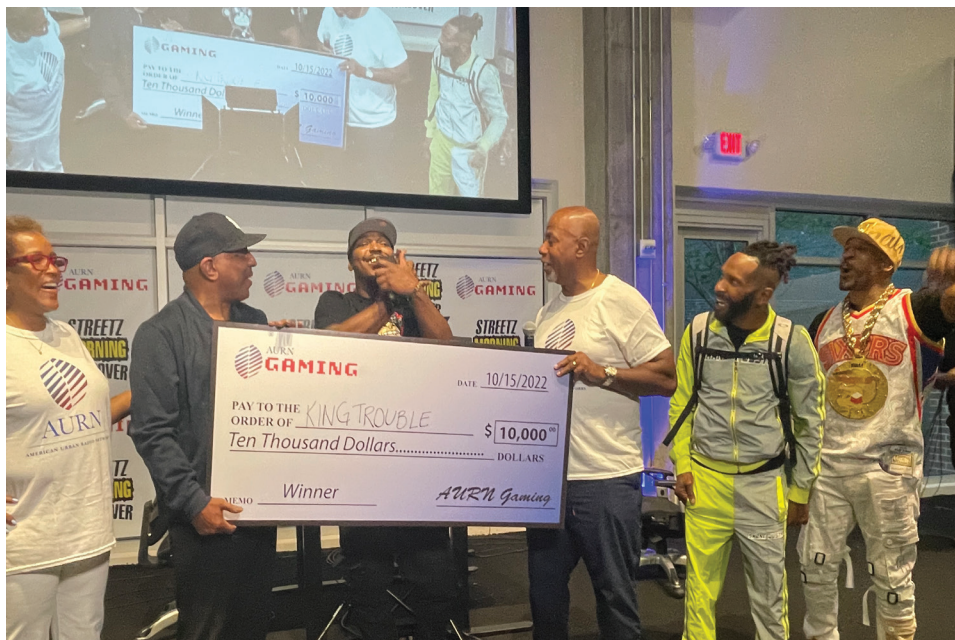
YJ: Well, here's an interesting thing, when you speak to the terms of limited reach, we're nationally syndicated, and

we may not have the most markets. We may not have a million markets, but the impact is real, man. When I go on the streets, it opens my eyes to how many people can truly appreciate [me] trying. You get a chance to see how many people you truly impact because they'd be like, "Hey, I love your show, y'all all crazy" because we go with different antics. Me and Shawty, we are naturally outspoken. We'll say what we want to say, but Miss Shyneka, she's the same, so I feel like we finally got our [bearings]. The blend is good.

KR: Got it. How did the first Super-Radio Gamer event for The Sic 60, which you were a part of, go?

YJ: When I say exceptionally well, it was [not only] good, it was well received. You know, when something really has an impact, when you get a whole new wave of people's interests, you know, it's like now I go to my DMs, it's somebody talking about gaming like they got an event coming up - so it was one of those experiences that really opened my eyes and ears to that world and that community. Because I don't want to be like, "Oh, that community has started to embrace me." I mean, it's a part of our culture, video games. And that's a real thing. It's a real element and a component of our culture. So, we are not going to negate the fact that it's also one of the bigger industries that truly yields billions. You know what I mean? We're not talking about, "Oh, the gaming industry made a whopping 10 million this year." No, it might be like a billion this year. You know what I'm saying? So, you can't negate that. I'm just happy that the powers that be felt that this was a great opportunity, and it could actually cast us along a lifeline, so I appreciate the effort and opportunity.

KR: So with this article, you will have the attention of most urban, Hip Hop or Black Radio stations around the country. How would you sell your show to let them know that you're very different from everybody else and that you deserve a spot on that station?



Chesley Maddox-Dorsey, Eric Faison, (winner) King Trouble, Andy Anderson, Shawty, HipHopGamer, Photo Credit Superadio/AURN

YJ: I'm for the people. It's the simplest thing about it. You know, people don't just know me from a Radio platform. People feel like they know me. And because I'm for the people, I love people. I'm a philanthropist. And when people get a chance to touch me and see me, it's just love. You know, that's why my moniker is, you know, "Favorite cousin" because that's how I feel. And I try to be as respectful as I can. I try to be as aware and enlightened as possible when I'm dealing with people when I'm dealing with topics, and subject matter; I just try to be as solid as I can be in that space, man. I'm not a "shock jock," so I'm not doing anything too over the top to move the needle. But I do feel like once the people get a chance to connect with me, it's hard for them to let go because I don't let go.

KR: So, final question. What is it like to be syndicated? Now that you're in other markets, how does that work for the show? Are you going to make appearances in other markets?

YJ: Yeah, I do appearances in other markets. And it's interesting when I go to those other markets, and meet people who are really listening to the Radio. I mean, because that's part of

our culture. When you tune into that frequency, it means it's what you want, what you're looking for, and what you're interested in. And when you feed those interests properly, you know, you yield fans, supporters, and allies. You know what I'm saying? So, I've been fortunate, man. I wake up, man, and just thank God. Some days it ain't even a wake-up thanking God. It's a wake-up thinking about God. Like, I'm thankful already. I'm thankful every day. But I feel like, why me? What did I do so special to deserve these blessings? What did I do so special to be walking in these footsteps that I'm walking, you know what I'm saying? So the syndication thing has been great, man. It's been different. There's a certain social aesthetic to do that. You know what I'm saying? You get to know what it looks like when you're saying it, what it feels like, and what's the reaction. You got to be able to see [the impact] when you say something, what does a mother think, who's in the car with her seven-year-old child, her 10-year-old child, or a 15-year-old child, or a father in the car; you got to know what it looks like when you say certain things or when you're pushing certain content. And I think being aware of that and hav-

ing that understanding helps. It helps a lot. So, it's been a dope ride so far, man. I just want to keep riding this wave.

KR: I wanted to mention to you that feeling that you described when you get up each day. I know that feeling. When I started my business, and even now, I have that feeling. It's kind of like you jump out of bed looking forward to the day, and you're excited about it. You are in control of your destiny. Do you realize like 95% (or more) of people will never experience that?

YJ: Well, I can't just speak on the percentage, but I do realize a lot of people will never get that opportunity. They just don't see life the same way. They don't. Some days you wake up, and you stand in the middle of a blessing. The blessing is on you, and you don't even know it. It's like somebody sitting there worrying about something, and then within 24 to 72 hours, the worry is gone because they now know that the blessings is bestowed upon them. But when you don't know, that uncertainty, that doubt ...

KR: ... It takes over.

YJ: Yeah. We're taught faith. You know, we'll talk faith, faith, faith. You got to have faith. You got to be faithful. Have some faith. Faith is the size of a mustard seed. It's been preached to you as long as you've been alive. You know, Christianity being introduced to our ancestors as slaves being pushed every day, all day, every day, all day; that's one of the biggest foundations of Christianity, faith. You got to have faith. You know what I'm saying? You must believe; whether you can see it, smell it, taste it, feel it; hear it or not, you got to believe. Yeah, you're right, though; a lot of people won't ever get that opportunity.

KR: Got it. Okay, so I guess that's it. Did you want to add anything else, or is that pretty much it?

YJ: No, I just appreciate you taking the time to just, you know, do the interview.

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