

24 Music Biz Lessons From Unsung Marathon: How Some Recording Artists Succeed or Leave the Industry: Music Biz History

isTalent is not enough to succeed in the music business. Judging from recording artists who achieved fame and fortune in different musical eras, business smarts, marketing know-how, the right support system, personal development, authentic values, and good people skills play a role.

99 episodes of *Unsung* aired recently featuring selected recording artists and their hits. R & B, jazz, soul, disco, rap, and hip-hop were primary categories shown. But regardless of one's musical interest, the marathon offers a valuable overview of what many hopefuls experience when they enter the music business., successes, challenges, and failures.

Based on a business point of view, two of *Unsung* top videos made this list of takeaways for industry beginners.

Teena Marie

The late singer, was the first Caucasian featured on *Unsung*. And she successfully prevailed in a lawsuit against her former record company.

<https://youtu.be/nDDRN0vz1SE>

Skilled lawyers uncovered a little-known industry law and used it to win their case. Details noted in MusicBiz Notes.

Kid N Play

Duo added a G rating and kick step to hip hop in the 80s and reportedly found a niche in film, fashion, cartoons, and comics...And the name is marketing genius

Heatwave

Unforgettable inspirational story of perseverance despite tragedy

A multi-racial British-American band formed in the 70s...

Ohio native Johnnie Wilder moved his family to Europe to start a band after his stint in the military.

To compete with many bands already in the industry, Johnnie Wilder added acrobatic dance routines to performances.

Johnnie Wilder ran a tight ship with strict rules, yet violent

tragedies repeatedly befell the group. Several years later, back in the states, during a daytime outing, Wilder was broadsided and left paralyzed from the neck down. But the circumstance did not stop him from remaining in the industry...

Mario Mantese, the bass player for the group paralyzed and unable to continue with the group years would later become an author and spiritual leader.

Ohio Players,

According to *Unsung* the group made funk profitable. They were making money hand over fist and enjoying the good life.

Then the IRS came to funky town...

Arguably the funniest line in the series. Words that underscore the humor-free consequences of ignoring tax issues.

Johnny Gill

He appeared at each concert on time, but when other members of the group failed to appear, concerts had to be canceled and furious promoters sued everyone in the group for breach of contract. Gill had to liquidate his assets to pay for the lawsuit.

Montell Jordan...

Learning that his accountants had not paid his bills, including the IRS, the singer was later forced to sell all the rights to his songs to pay the tax bill.

Issac Hayes

Forced to file for bankruptcy after the record company went out of business without paying Hayes the royalties due.

Force MD's

When someone questioned why the group's contract was structured poorly, the group was in a position to strike and successfully renegotiated terms. Members were able to buy

homes and warm and fuzzy terms financial strategies were put in place.

Musical Youth

Unfortunately, not the case for the group of children later released after selling millions of records.

Note to the industry...Even kids are fair game. Really?

Kashif

Despite a traumatic life as a foster child, the singer became a triple threat as a singer, producer, and songwriter. Author of a top selling industry book and philanthropist for youth.

Millie Jackson

Having left home at age 15, Ms. Jackson unlike many of her contemporaries made wise business decisions and is still in the business approaching age 70

Note: The only segment that had a DSL rating for explicit dialogue.

The censor's buzzer went off every .5 seconds

Mint Condition

All members shared incoming revenue equally.

Later overhauled their unique multi-genre blend of live performance art, settled differences with members amicably, took control of their marketing and came back swinging.

Whispers

This group also practiced a striking pattern of loyalty and financial equity to all members in times of crisis...even if they could not perform.

The Sylvers

Fools Paradise

An interesting source of inspiration...

A history teacher inspired student, songwriter and singer Leon Sylvers to write the melodic militant lyrics based. Later, Leon Sylvers and management would clash and was voted out of the group. That business mistake family voted him out of the

group. A move eventually led to the group's demise.

Melba Moore

Work-life betrayal forced the award-winning singer to start over the industry/

By not sticking to a specific music genre, it is suggested that the award-winning singer has enjoyed longevity in the industry.

Ray Parker Jr.

Wrote a hit song that an industry insider took

without crediting Parker who got even with a little ditty called Ghostbusters

Otis Redding

Left school in his teens yet educated himself about the music business. Redding became a millionaire with his own plane and private runway.

The Force

Began appearing in films producing up and coming caucasian groups like Backstreet Boys and relaunching industry icons like James Brown.

Angela Bofill

Health issues rendered her unable to sing yet her manager devised a new and innovative way for the singer to perform for fans.

Shalimar

Rose Royce

Despite major hits, the talented singers in these groups could not resolve constant conflicts and had to disband.

Yo-Yo

Yolanda Whittaker...hip-hop pioneer with a female empowerment niche. But the discovery that her record company shelved the release of her album because someone failed to get legal clearance to use some of the songs included from other artists, and a strong dislike of other industry practices spurred a decision to stop performing.

Repackaging her skills and experience, Whittaker later started a nonprofit to teach hip-hop and academics to teens.

Stacy Lattisaw

At the height of her career, Lattisaw walked away from a business she disliked.

Martha Wash

Choosing the right name can be challenging. The powerhouse singer behind several popular hits was known as part of a duo under two names

1. Two Tons of Fun

A name that did nothing to communicate the serious nature of the singer's ability.

So the name was later changed to

2. The Weather Girls ...no.

Arrested Development

Hip-hop with a fresh Southern style... Tennessee and

Mr. Wendell

But group conflict derailed early spectacular success.

Dee Adams is editor of Music Biz Notes

<https://nichecreativity.com/music-biz-notes/>

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