

The Biz of SHOW BIZ

Movers and shakers
who are building the
entertainment industry


by >> christopher shulgan

WHO'S HOT THIS SUMMER? SUM41, for starters. The four-member Toronto pop-punk band had an instant breakthrough last year with its first full-length CD, *All Killer No Filler*, which has sold 3 million copies worldwide. Now it's recording a second album for Island/Def Jam Records, the U.S. label that signed the group in 2000. But Sum41's success also illustrates the rise of a new generation of show-biz executives, moguls and entrepreneurs whose offstage efforts underpin Canada's role as a global entertainment powerhouse. Take Greg Nori, Sum41's manager, who "discovered" the band in 1998, and Chris Taylor, a Toronto entertainment lawyer who was becoming one of the country's most powerful agents. The pair was instrumental in arranging the Island/Def Jam deal, for which teenagers around the world are presumably grateful.

Across Canada, a new generation of entrepreneurs is creating theater companies, financing movies and leading the burgeoning video-game industry. They are defining the Canadian business of show business. Here are five of the scenemakers:

PETER SIBBALD FOR TIME





CHRIS TAYLOR

>> sanderson taylor

The walls of entertainment lawyer Chris Taylor's Toronto office seem to be papered with silver, gold and platinum albums. They are gifts from the many performers he has helped reach a global market: Nelly Furtado (5 million CDs sold worldwide), pop punksters Sum41 (3 million) and David Usher, front man for Moist, whose latest solo effort has sold more than 100,000 units in Canada alone. Taylor, 35, deserves the souvenirs—he has a reputation among artists as a guy who can win them deals with U.S. labels. To get an idea of Taylor's success, you can look at the floor beside his office chair, where a dozen more gold and platinum albums are piled because there isn't room for them on the walls. Says Taylor, grinning: "Maybe I'll have to get a bigger office."

Taylor's job involves as much talent scouting and creative development as lawyerly negotiating skills. Performers send him about 30 CDs a week, hoping to arouse interest. He takes the best to New York City or Los Angeles, where he plays them for U.S. record executives. If they like what they hear, Taylor starts negotiating for a record deal. He and Nelly Furtado's manager, Chris Smith, worked together for months to drum up interest in Furtado, calling scout after scout to listen to the Portuguese singer's sexy sound. They succeeded with Beth Halper, an A.-and-R. exec at DreamWorks Records, which touted Furtado to radio stations to get her music the airplay it needed to become a hit.

Taylor grew in Windsor, the son of an autoworker and a grocery-store cashier. After graduating from the University of Windsor, he enrolled at Toronto's Osgoode Hall Law School and also founded One, a reggae band; he sang lead. When he got his law degree in 1990, Taylor delayed taking his bar exams to focus on the band. In 1995, nearing 30 and tired of living on the wrong side of the poverty line, he quit and began practicing law in 1997. His music-industry contacts served him well when he joined Sanderson Taylor, a law firm that catered to musicians. His breakthrough came in 1997, soon after the launch of his law career, when he started representing Choclaire, the hip-hop artist, and the Philosopher Kings, a rhythm-and-blues band, both from Toronto. "Basically," he says, "I let the music do the talking." It's talking up a storm. —C.S.