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BOOK REVIEW

Successful Artist Management. Xavier M. Frascogna, Jr.* and H. Lee Hetherington.** New York: Billboard Publications, 1978, Pp. 256. \$17.50

*Reviewed by David L. Maddox****

In an era when society is extremely celebrity conscious, singers, actors, comedians, athletes, authors and almost anyone with a certain degree of talent, effort, and wise counseling can parlay a moment of public prominence into a successful and lucrative career in the entertainment industry. The desire for such prominence and the potential fortune which accompanies it is shared by so many that competition is keen. But that same competition and the constantly changing tastes of the public provide such a high turnover that the possibility of contact with an aspiring artist or celebrity is not as remote as one might think. The role of an artist manager, whether based on a secret ambition or due to a fascination with the entertainment world, gives an individual who lacks performing stage skills the opportunity to share in the exhilaration of mass popularity and its attendant wealth, while maintaining a degree of personal privacy. The attorney has become an indispensable figure in the career of today's artist and artist manager. He is being called upon with ever increasing frequency to become involved in this fast paced, evolving industry.

Successful Artist Management combines and synthesizes the business, artistic and legal aspects of the artist's career as no other publication has yet done. The book is as close to a blueprint as can be drawn for the erection of a career structure that is subject to the wide range of variable conditions and demands encountered in the entertainment industry. What authors Frascogna and Hetherington have done is to outline the steps an artist and manager take as they progress toward career and financial goals, and to call attention to some of the various considerations that must be weighed in selecting from a number of alternative courses.

The authors have dared to define "artist management;" a term that can cover a multitude of "sins" or a lifetime of devotion.

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Actually, artist management consists of anything that will help enhance or further an artist's career. This can range from comprehensive career planning or complex contract negotiation to suggesting a lyric change in a song or commenting on a new recording. The personal manager is the alter ego of the artist; he is the part of the artist the audience never sees. He's a planner, advisor, organizer, strategist, overseer, manipulator, detailman, father figure, traveling companion, and friend. His involvement in an artist's career is total in scope and crucial to its success.

Perhaps, the definition is just a highly personalized description of what a manager does in any business - - -the only difference being that the "product" here is a creative human being who must constantly devise methods of entertaining and maintaining the attention of a whimsical and constantly changing mass audience.

Dealing with a creative person requires a special combination of skills and understanding. The artist must have confidence in the manager's ability to direct his or her career, and confidence in knowing that the artist's career goals are the manager's primary concern. The manager must have a commitment from the artist to accept advice and follow the direction of the manager. Successfully resolving disputes is crucial, because if the relationship of trust and confidence breaks down, management ceases to be effective, and the parties are well advised to seek separate paths.

Perhaps, the most valuable contribution a manager may make is to acquaint the artist with the fact that his or her performance has economic value, and that it must be prepared, maintained and developed as a commercial resource. Creative decisions must be made with the market place in mind and the artist must see his or her professional function as that of a business organization. Reaching this important philosophical point requires diplomacy and sensitivity, and a concomitant effort on the part of the manager to simultaneously reinforce the artist's concept of himself or herself as a human being as well. Identifying the artist's personal fulfillment goals and planning a means to achieve those goals are keystones in the artist-manager relationship.

Once the artist-manager relationship is established and memorialized, the manager may begin to assemble what Frascogna and Hetherington describe as a "professional support team" of accountants, attorneys and business advisors who will provide expert counsel in planning and maintaining the artist's business organization and conserving the proceeds of the endeavor. Such details as banking relationships, equipment and life insurance, bookkeeping and tax planning, employment agreements, and service mark protection are often overlooked as "less-than-essential" while having a pivotal effect on the future success or failure of the artist's business organization.

The book stresses that a career plan has no value without the

involvement of the people who control various aspects of the artist's professional life. The record producer, business affairs, promotion and artist development personnel of the record company, music publisher, booking agent, and all of the other people who have responsibility for marketing the artist and his or her creative products must be consulted, informed and stimulated to channel their efforts toward the ultimate goals of the artist. This group, labeled the "artist's development team," may change as the needs and direction of the artist change, but it is imperative that these types of essential people be involved with the artist's career plan and each step in its development.

There is no quick course in understanding the entertainment industry. The rapidly evolving nature of the business makes information obsolete as it is written. But *Successful Artist Management* does provide an excellent background for understanding the roles of various people and the various aspects of entertainment income sources. Through the hypothetical case method built around artists and their problem situations, some comprehension of the problem solving process the manager must go through is illuminated. This realistic approach makes the work both readable and interesting. It also serves to point out that solutions must be selected based on existent factors which are unique to each situation; and solutions must be evaluated prospectively in terms of the probabilities of certain variables occurring.

Constantly juggling the many problems and finding solutions which reconcile with the career plan are the substance of the manager's function. Remembering the definition stated earlier, the scope of artist management is virtually unlimited and crucial to the success of the artist. As the entertainment industry continues to expand and become more lucrative, competition will selectively shower good, competent artist management with great rewards at the expense of eliminating both the artist and manager whose skills are not well enough refined to succeed and survive commercially.

