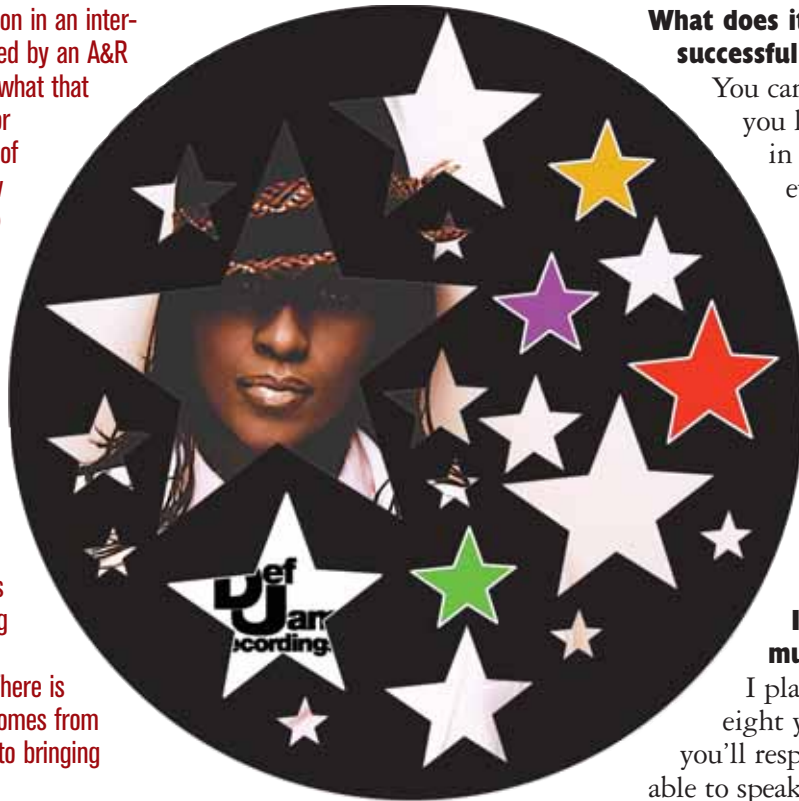


Tina Davis

A & R Executive

Sometimes a band will mention in an interview that they were discovered by an A&R person. Ever wonder exactly what that means? Well, A&R is short for Artists & Repertoire. The job of an A&R person is to find new artists and songs (repertoire) for those artists to record. A&Rs also hire producers to help bring those recordings to life.

As Senior Vice President of A&R at Def Jam/Def Soul Records, Tina Davis spends the majority of her time in the studio. She works with some of the most successful artists in hip-hop and R&B, including LL Cool J, Kelly Price, and Method Man. She believes "There is power in the message that comes from music," and she's dedicated to bringing that music to you.



What's your educational background?

I studied Mass Communications, concentrating in Broadcast and Production, at Grambling State U.

When did your music career begin?

In third grade I used to give concerts at recess for the kids at school. I would cut out pieces of paper and write "5¢" on it and charge people to come and watch me!

How did you end up doing A&R?

I was an on-air personality at a radio station for four years. I was also an anchor and reporter, as well as a commentator for our college basketball and football games. From there, I was Operations Manager for a syndicated radio program, where I also did voiceovers. Later, my best friend was starting the Black Music

division for Chrysalis Music Publishing and hired me as an assistant. After a year, I got the call from Def Jam.

What are your responsibilities?

A&Rs go in the studio and travel with the artist to make sure they have songs in order to make their album. I also make sure that the artists are in the right mindframe to record. If that means I have to sit on the phone at 5 a.m. and talk to an artist about their problems, that's what I do.

What makes you interested in signing an artist?

I like artists who have their own direction and vision—artists who have created their own niche. We don't make stars [at Def Jam], we just enhance what they do.

What does it take to be a successful A&R person?

You can't do this job unless you love it, because you live in the studio. I'm there every single day. I came from the studio at 4 a.m. and I'll be there tonight at 6. My motto is, "Radio never turns off, so A&R never turns off." Also, every act has to have a smash, because you're only as good as your last record.

Is it important to be a musician as an A&R?

I played classical piano for eight years. [As a musician] you'll respect the craft and be able to speak to engineers in their language.

What's the best thing about A&R?

Being able to get close to the artists. They are such creative, intelligent beings—the bond that I have with certain artists cannot be touched. Also, the power of being able to change the mindframe of children today for the good.

What do you like least about it?

You have no other choice but to put your personal life to the side. You have no life, if you work for the right company.

What advice would you give to students interested in A&R?

Keep your ear to the street and know every record that ever comes out. Try to get internships at studios and labels, because that experience teaches you a lot. 