



“The difference between artists who make it and ones who don’t is a lot of sweat equity.”

Maribel Schumacher broke into the music biz in 1984, when she founded an indie record label in Spain. Through her management savvy and hard work, it became the largest Spanish independent record company; later, she sold it to Warner Music. She then relocated to New York, where she became Vice President for Warner Music Latin America. Part of Maribel’s job at Warner was to start more companies in countries like Colombia and Argentina. But with the record companies in flux in the late ’90s, she felt it was safer to work outside of a label, so in 2003 she started Tu Casa Entertainment, a Latino entertainment and management company. While bouncing between promotional engagements in support of R&B’s next sensation, Jean, Maribel was able to chronicle how she’s managed some smooth sailing on the choppy waters of today’s music industry.

who: Maribel Schumacher
Job: President and CEO,
Tu Casa Entertainment Group

What exactly do you do at Tu Casa?

I sign the talent and do the strategic planning for developing artists’ careers. I liaise with record labels, publishers, sponsors, and booking agents and strike deals with them. Whether artists are doing promo tours or ad campaigns or being cast for films, we provide them with the tools to execute those jobs.

Tu Casa is still pretty new. How’s it going?

It’s been a struggle. Jean is a prime example of someone who maybe five years ago would have been an incredibly easy artist to develop and break. It’s taken us three years, and finally his first single is charting, and booking requests are flooding in. It’s taken longer because record labels don’t have as much money as they once did to break artists. Now, in order to get to that next level, artists have to do all sorts of things themselves that were done by record labels before. Fortunately, we’ve been able to adapt.

What do you find most challenging?

The media—because there are so many media outlets today. The Internet has been a blessing, but it’s also thrown a curve ball. For 30 years, radio was the way to break someone new, as long as you had a good song and artist. That’s not the case anymore. Every day something else, like MySpace, pops up and becomes the next cool thing. You really have to be on top of that. You also have to find new ways to compete, because

there is a lot of music out there. An artist has got to be bigger than life, so you have to make sure your artist is multifaceted and has an image you can sell. Kids watch MTV and think it all happens magically, but it really doesn’t. The difference between artists who make it and ones who don’t is a lot of sweat equity [translation: hard work!].

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

The music. I love whenever I hear a great new song—the hardships all evaporate, and then you can work with it to communicate who your artist is through the song.

What drew you to a music career?

I had a very musical family. My maternal grandmother was a concert pianist in Cuba. I grew up around opera and *zarzuela* because my father was a nut about that. I studied piano, but not professionally. In high school, I was the person who hired the band for the dance. I then studied International Relations and Economics—very far from music, but I’ve always been involved in it in some way. Then I had the opportunity to invest a few bucks to record a band in Spain, and that just turned into a business. Believe me, it wasn’t premeditated. I named my record label in Spain Grabaciones Accidentales, which translates to “accidental recordings,” because my being in the music business was actually the result of some happy accidents.

—Veronica Dominguez-Garcia

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