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Headline: Tuning in to music matters

Music business trends in the digital age of today may well provide lessons for an audiovisual content business moving into the future. Calvin Wong looks ahead to the Music Matters conference in June 2008 for some insights.

Calvin Wong, 1 May 2008

The music business in the digital era of today faces a host of challenges not dissimilar to those encountered by an audiovisual content market that is moving increasingly towards digital distribution over new media platforms.

Efforts and solutions offered by players in the music industry to tackle problems such as piracy and cross-platform licensing issues, as well as new business models, may well serve as a point of reference for those tackling similar problems in the audiovisual content industry.

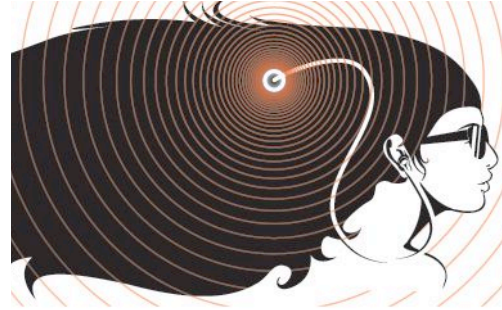
A 'port of call' providing insights into the music business in Asia Pacific comes in the form of Music Matters, a solutions-focused regional music conference for industry players from across the entire value chain of the music business.

Examining the complete music entertainment 'ecosystem' in Asia, industry specialists from record labels, studios and distributors; mobile and digital content providers and distributors; regulatory agencies and investment firms; along with TV, cable and satellite networks, meet to source business partnerships as well as to discuss research findings on music trends and share insights into the future of Asia's music industry.

Now in its third year, Music Matters 2008, being held June 3-5 at Hong's Kong's Grand Hyatt, will explore new business models, licensing and marketing issues; the live music industry; provide 'how-to' guides to the region specifically for territories including China, Japan and India; as well as examine the future of digital music delivery. Organized by events and consulting firm Branded Asia, the two and a half day-event targets to not only bring together the regional industry but also to allow international music and media players to 'Plug into Asia'.

Jasper Donat, president of Music Matters and co-founder of Branded Asia explained, "Music Matters looks to promote Asia Pacific as a global hub and epicenter of the international music industry, and allows key executives the world over to network and interact."





Donat points to Music Matters 2008's '360 Degree Business Models' conference, as music mogul Harvey Goldsmith moderates a panel comprising Walt Disney Records' David Agnew, Warner Music's Lachie Rutherford, Pepsi Co Ltd's Harry Hui, Nettwerk Music Group's Terry McBride and Saregama India's Atul Churamani. Together they highlight broad-based, multifaceted business models that manage and maximize returns across various business fronts. Other notable conferences will spotlight live music, licensing and marketing challenges and trends, as well as the Chinese and Indian markets, with the latter featuring ex-STAR India CEO, Peter Mukerjea, who will share his insights into the Indian entertainment industry.

Highlighting the host of networking opportunities that attendees can expect at the event, Donat added, "Players in the music industry have gone way beyond being just buyers and sellers, and collaborations are now essential to survive and thrive in the new digital media landscape. Music Matters presents a platform where the entire value chain of the business can come together to forge new partnerships."

Especially relevant to players in the audiovisual content industry will be the exclusive release of results from the third year of MTV's ongoing market research into Asian consumers aged 16-34, on what they think and feel about music, content, and the 'exploding digital landscape', as well as their perception of the relationship between brands, music and artistes. The presentation will be made by Ian Stewart, senior vice president, Viacom Brand Solutions International and MTV Networks Asia.

"In Asia, listening has exploded online, with both illegal and legal music downloads surging ahead, and piracy has gotten worse. Overall, MTV has benefited from the general increase in passion as consumers head back to music. I believe the rising online consumption drives music appreciation among consumers up, and benefits the industry as a whole," noted Stewart.

Highlighting some of the findings from MTV's market research, Stewart revealed that approximately 10% of surveyed respondents consume music content via mobile, one third via the internet, and 80% watch music videos and related programming on television. "The prevalence of music consumption via TV suggests that visual and audio quality of music content still rank very highly among consumers' preferences. We've found users to be unwilling to consume music content via mobile due to the high pricing of such services and interestingly, also due to the short battery life of mobile handsets," he elaborated.

On the future of the music industry, Stewart shared, "Music will continue to grow as artistes continue to emerge. I believe we should see the emergence of new business models in content distribution, pricing, and artiste management. At this point in time, it looks like we can expect more advertising revenue-driven content which is free to consumers to become available moving forward."

