



**MUSICMATTERS**

THE ASIA PACIFIC MUSIC FORUM 3-5 JUNE 2008, GRAND HYATT, HONG KONG

**Rob McDermott, President, Collective Music Group/ MME  
(Manager Linkin Park)  
Music Matters Interview: May 2008**

A decade after they formed, Linkin Park is currently one of the world's biggest rock acts, with a slew of sold out stadium shows and multi-platinum albums under their belt. Much of the band's success is due to Rob McDermott, President of the Collective Music Group, who is also the group's manager. Under his tutelage, the group is always thinking of new ways to connect with their audience and stay in touch with their considerable fan base. Ahead of his panel at Music Matters, Scott Murphy talked to him about his thoughts on the region and what's next for the group...

**A band related question first. There are continued rumors that Linkin Park will be playing in Macau this fall. What's the status of that?**

**McDermott:** We're looking at our options with that. We're looking at it right now and we'll know how it will come together in the next few weeks. I love the region. The group actually enjoys being over there, loved playing Shanghai and they always love Hong Kong.

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**You've decided to be a panelist at Music Matters this year. Is this your first year or have you attended before?**

**McDermott:** This will be my second year attending. I was on a panel the first year and didn't get a chance to go last year.

**What were your impressions?**

**McDermott:** I loved it. It really kind of helped me fall in love with the region. It was a quick trip and when I came down to Hong Kong, I was fascinated by how much forward thinking there was compared to the States, which has now caught up somewhat.

**Talk about your panel this year.**

**McDermott:** The panel I am on this year is talking about China and how to break in there and the history of Linkin Park and how the Chinese fans really embraced the band from the get go. I'll also be discussing everything we would like to do or attempt to do and hope to learn more as well.





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**Are there any specific issues you will address?**

**McDermott:** I just want to talk about it all. The beauty of going to a whole other world is learning from people. As much as I want to talk about my experiences, I also want to hear everyone's local experiences and what I can do right and what I can do wrong. The music industry part of it is rather small when you think about it.

**Behind the scenes during your tours, did you notice if some parts of the region were gaining in experience or ahead of other parts of the world?**

**McDermott:** I only did a couple of those. When it comes to music, I just remember certain parts of certain regions. Some people had the equipment. Last year I noticed how together everyone is. There's organization and respect and a real love for the band. So from our perspective, it's unfortunate when we have to cancel dates. Last year we had to cancel a lot of European dates and when a favorite band cancels it stinks.

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**How would you compare what's happening in the East versus the West?**

**McDermott:** I think the beautiful thing about music is it turns everyone into one community. As far as our organization is concerned, it's always been well run. I have the greatest crew in the world. They keep everything running afloat. The U.S. is pretty consistent. Eight years ago, some places had to catch up and they did. And the U.S. is catching up with different ways of doing of business around the world, like the 360 degree model, which is prevalent in Asia.

**Let's talk about your background. How did you get started in all of this?**

**McDermott:** I started with Linkin Park in 2000 when they signed to Warner Brothers in 1999 and they went looking for a manager. Before that, I had worked with Static-X. I liked working with them. I started working with Warner Brothers in 1997. I took Static-X to platinum in the U.S. Before that, I had managed various hard rock and metal bands and worked with White Zombie and Pantera. I worked with a mentor turned Andy Gould. I really started in the management industry in 1991. It just kind of happened. I'm an East Coast Long Island based rock kid. I fell into it. I worked with all different types of artists, including dance acts. I briefly managed Junkie XL in 1997. As a manager, you like to try your hand at everything.





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**What concerns, if any, might you address at Music Matters?**

**McDermott:** What I always look forward to is meeting people and having beneficial relationships. The good thing about Music Matters is that they keep it short enough so that people can get to the point of it in every panel. It's interesting to hear concerns in Music Matters that aren't far off from concerns on the other side of the world. The good thing about it is that it's becoming more worldly too. The first year, I was one of seven Western people there. People are hearing about it in the U.S. Hardly anybody has a worldly view in the U.S. after all these years. The U.S. right now is so homogenized. Everything is so watered down. It's not excitement. On top of that, because everyone is gravitating to the new technology, they don't have enough money. If people from the U.S. go to Music Matters, they will learn there's a way to capture audiences properly and do something about it. As an outsider, that's the perspective that I walk into that conference with. Who can I meet? What can I learn? And can I have a drink? (laughs) That's after the conference.

**You're firmly at Warner Brothers when other superstar acts are starting to look at 360 models. What's your take on it in terms of the future?**

**McDermott:** It's really interesting. We're not part of the 360 model in the way they are. If there's a good business model, we're not afraid to think about it. As it stands, Warners is great at marketing for us. You don't mind doing business because you know you will get value. That's the utopian view. We're the ones that have all the ideas that are stuck at the label. The exciting thing about working with Linkin Park is that we were making 'webisodes' and news briefs with our fans in 2002 and 2003. We're frustrated that we can't do some of the things that others are doing because we have record labels. We do have a digital strategy and things on flash-drives and other bits and pieces though. For instance, when you buy a concert ticket at our shows, there's a system where you can download our show four or five days later. It's for the ticket buyers and true fans. We have a digital souvenir pack. After downloading a tour program, they can download all the tracks from the concert. It's only 10 or 15 U.S. dollars.

**These kinds of concepts must make for some interesting meetings with the group right now.**

**McDermott:** All the time, every week. We actually have different set ups in the company where every week we talk about what new options we can do, whether it's online or marketing. You always have to be on your toes and always thinking. We're not afraid to do anything if it makes sense and gives our fans a real experience.





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Would you say that Linkin Park is honing in on the Asian touring circuit to mine its fans and make this a regular stop?

**McDermott:** I wouldn't call it mining. It's investing in our fans. Why shouldn't we come and give them another experience? I think the band is as excited to play for the fans, as they are to hear them. I truly believe that.

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Now that you've played China, there must be other area, like India, where you want to set up tours...

**McDermott:** It's true, there are certain emerging markets. It's not that we're overlooking them. It's hard to be out for eight to ten weeks straight and there are certain areas you have to keep going back to. By that time, you've done three parts of the world and you're way into the album cycle. It's an interesting Catch-22, especially when you want to give the fans so much more. That's what we're striving for: how do we balance the concert experience for the fans, with the timing of getting everywhere in the world?

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So specifically, what new places are you looking at for the next tour?

**McDermott:** We're trying to get into Eastern Europe. We'll get into India, South Africa. We haven't been to Brazil in three years or so. These are a lot of places to go to and I want to do it without burning out the band. After all, if you travel nine or ten months of the year, you'll be exhausted.

Any final words about Music Matters?

**McDermott:** I'm really looking forward to going out there again. It will be fun to see people I haven't seen in a couple years and make some new business partnerships.

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Final question: What's the story with Chester Bennington's new side project?

**McDermott:** It's one of those things where he's been working on the music on his own, similar to what was done with Fort Minor. But I just heard Chester say Linkin Park is his baby. So one day, you'll hear the side project, hopefully.

Thank you.

*Rob McDermott will be appearing on the Markets that Matter: China—Making and Breaking an Artist in the Middle Kingdom panel. Music Matters takes place from June 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> at the Grand Hyatt in Wan Chai, Hong Kong.*

