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The Behrend Beacon

College students work on building hip-hop empires

by Clecia Thompson
The Record (Bergen County, N.J.)

Following in the footsteps of such hip-hop moguls as Russell Simmons and Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, some area students are getting a lesson in business that a university classroom can't provide.

"Why can't we get our own money?" asks Tommy Brown, one of many young entrepreneurs whose goal is to build a hip-hop empire.

Brown, a student at Kean University in Union, N.J., recalled working for an urban apparel shop in Newark in which, he said, the owners knew nothing about the culture behind the fashion it was supplying.

"Everyone else is getting our money," he thought - an observation that drove him to unearth his own entrepreneurial spirit.

Achieving progress has been a full-time job for the young man.

"I'm working on this seven days a week," said Brown.

His energy is directed into a number of projects that he is hoping will get him steps closer to success.

Together with friends Benjamin Hobbs, Jeff Jacobs, and Keith Small, all of Maplewood and South Orange, N.J., Brown began Goodfellaz Entertainment, a group that sponsors parties for college crowds. Goodfellaz Entertainment, Brown says, is more for exposure than profit. Hobbs agrees.

"Basically, right now, we're trying to build a following," he said.

The young men explained that each member of the group is developing his own separate venture. Hobbs, for instance, is working on a project that he hopes will become a fashion label.

For Brown, the dream is to lead his venture, Kingpin Records, to success. The company signs and promotes artists with hopes of eventually linking with a major record label. Brown began the company about a year ago and has acquired a home office and studio.

On top of all this, he is still managing his life as a college student. Brown is attending

Kean this fall to continue his business management major.

Like Brown, Cliff "Presice" Hunter, 22, of Passaic, N.J., has recently begun a career in the hip-hop music industry.

High Risk Entertainment, founded by Hunter and Philadelphia residents Kian "Lucky" Kinclow and Jamar "Fear" Hewett, is an artist development company that seeks out and prepares hopefuls for careers in the music industry.

The idea began to take shape when Hunter and Kinclow met as roommates at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Teaneck, N.J., and the three rappers teamed up to start the company.

A year and a half later, High Risk Entertainment is working to recruit artists and gain the attention of record companies.

"I'm developing my craft right now in school working on it," said Hunter, a communications major focusing on film editing and directing. He is using his classes to strengthen his skills as a video director and has two music videos under his belt - both rap songs performed by Hewett.

In addition to making videos, Hunter and his colleagues are working with new talent, developing and producing their own albums, and vying with other amateurs for industry attention. Their singles have hit that area's airwaves.

The biggest struggle the company faces now is finding a distributor.

"Basically, we've just got to stay in our frame of mind and do what we've got to do," he said. "Eventually someone (will) bite."

Hunter said he and the others formed their own company for artistic freedom. "You've got more control over your music," he said. "It's a lot easier when you are making all this stuff yourself."

High Risk Entertainment avoids some production costs by working out of a studio in Kinclow's basement.

"We don't lose any money," said Hunter, who says renting studio time is costly.

"When we get a little disappointment, that is basically a smack on the head letting us know what we have to do," he said.

Web site offers financial advice

by Eric Goodwin
Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service

What's one thing everyone could use more of? Money. The secret of wealth, however, isn't necessarily quantity, but how you manage what you have. To help teens get the most of their money, the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) Teen Resource Bureau founded a Web site, NTRB Online (<http://www.ntrbonline.org>), to educate teens on the basics of fiscal management.

NTRB Online isn't bogged down in the accountant-speak you'd expect. It does a good job of introducing concepts in a concise, straightforward manner that's easily accessible to teens and young adults.

Plus, the site uses a variety of methods to reach

its audience. It has a Q-and-A column called "Ask Madame Moolah" where frequently asked questions on saving and investment are answered. Also, there's a "Spotlight on Teens" section that breaks down teen spending habits and includes tips on budgeting and expense tracking.

NTRB Online's section entitled "Thirty Tips to Becoming Rich" uses Flash animations to illustrate important financial concepts. Some of these include how to cut back on some of your expenses, the time value of money and how stocks increase in value. The section also explains terms such as "mutual fund," "CDs" (not kind you store music on) and "money market fund."

Learning how to manage your money in your teens can help you avoid some of the financial pitfalls many people face as adults. NTRB Online will teach you how to make your money work for you.

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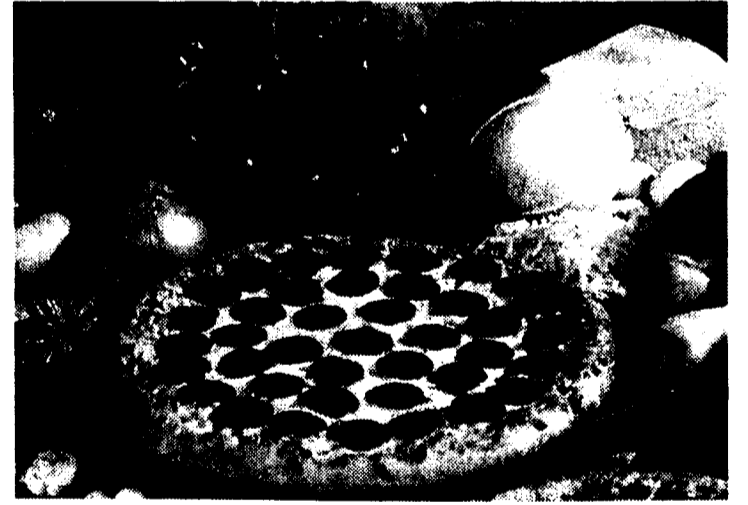


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