

# Music's Leading Lady

By Walter Greene

With her accepting the role of President, Sony Urban Music in January of 2006, Lisa Ellis is responsible for the overall management of all Sony Urban Music. This includes all of Epic and Columbia - R&B, hip-hop, gospel, cross over pop, R&B rooted pop music, and all the artists that make up that roster. Lisa is also responsible for Marketing, Publicity, Radio Promotion and A&R. With excellent leadership qualities, a Bachelors of Science degree in Marketing from the University of Maryland, years of experience in the entertainment business, a totally winning personality and drop dead good looks, Lisa Ellis has truly got it going on.



**Lisa Ellis, President Sony Urban Music**

## FRIENDS KEEP THE BALANCE

It's a high powered position and Lisa Ellis goes through her daily chores with the grace of the pro that she is. She makes it look real easy, always charming and engaging with an ever-ready smile and a slick fashion model body. "I am a happy person," says Lisa about the challenges she faces with such a high profile position. "If this place burn down tomorrow, I'll be OK. There are days when everything goes wrong but tomorrow will be sunny...I am single and my friends keep me in touch with reality, I have friends from high school, middle school and college. I worked for Earl Graves, Pepsi Cola, Reebok, CBS Radio and I have friends from all those experiences. I also work on improving my personal life, I read, I'm a political junkie, I go on vacations with friends who don't do this (record industry business)."

## LEADERSHIP ROLES

On the subject of women breaking barriers in business Lisa noted that women are taking leadership roles like herself. "Women are running major corporations like Andria Jung at Avon, Christina Nomer, President of MTV and Stacy Snyder at Paramount to name a few. Women are evolving, these women went through struggles to get to that place, it took a set of priorities to juggle and go through stress to prove it can be done. You also have to look at the people who find and promote these women, it was their decision that a woman can do the job at hand, whatever it may be."

## WOMAN POWER

Lisa questioned the whole glass ceiling theory noting that it was not women who decided on that concept, she feels that's just another prejudice. "I hope that feeling is being shattered, it does loosen up the expectation that women can have a better life....I think women tend to listen better, there is a sensibility that comes with being a woman and a parent. It creates better morals as leaders." Lisa continued; "I pay attention to women leaders, there are four women presidents in my area. I'm in a great place, I'm fortunate. When I was hired at Sony, I was the first Black person to do pop promotion. My boss wanted to diversify. The staff - my staff is half and half. My marketing team is all women, there is one man in the product marketing department. The head of publicity is a woman. I have females on the A&R team, that's not common, it's good."

## NEW ARTISTS

Lisa is very excited about the new artists coming out under her label and gave us a peek at what's new and noteworthy under the Sony umbrella. "I'm very excited about a new R&B artists named Noel from Boston. There is a reggae artist out of Bermuda; Collie Buddz, he's very, very talented. A female R&B artist out of Baltimore named Paula Campbell, as well as Farnsworth Bentley is coming out with a rap album this year, Executive Produced by Kanye West. Tiffany Evans, the 13 year-old singer is coming out soon. Now,

she's just a natural talent that's God given. She's sensational! There is not a single person that has not got up and said 'Oh Lord! Where did this amazing voice come from?'"

## JOHN LEGEND

We couldn't complete the interview without my inquiring about my personal favorite, the fabulous John Legend. Lisa was instrumental in signing this incredible talent and we were one of the first to introduce John on these pages before the record even came out. "John Legend made just a wonderful record that went double Platinum, now, with the Grammy's and everything...he is just remarkable, a great songwriter, vocalist, gentleman, a guy with class. John is so cool and comfortable in his own skin. I knew it from the second I met him. I was in the piano room and he sang 'Used to Love Me' and that was IT!" laughed Lisa.

## BEYONCE AND BEYOND

Lisa said that label Queen Beyonce is due for a single album in September and she's playing the role of Dena Jones in the new film version of 'Dreamgirls.' "The cast album will be on Sony Urban, the movie soundtrack. Kelly Roland is also coming out this year and so is Michelle Williams whose CD will be R&B with spiritual undertones. They are both poised to take it to the next level. And on Beyonce... she's not even got to her peak. On all things, she's still

growing. No one can compete with her."

## AWARDS

Lisa joined the Columbia family in 1995 as Local Promotions Manager and was named National Director, Crossover Promotion in 1998. From 2000 to 2002 Lisa served as Vice President, National Promotion (West Coast) and Vice President of Crossover Promotion, Columbia Records. From 2002 to 2003 she served as Senior Vice President, R&B/Rhythm-Crossover Promotion, Columbia Records. She is the recipient several awards including Radio Music Award for Crossover Executive of the Year 2000, FMOBs Crossover Executive of the Year 1999. Gavin's Crossover Executive of the Year 1998 and 1999.

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