

## **Richard Niles Interview**

**You are considered a prolific manager, composer and engineer basically by many big artists, myself definitely included, however, you're very down to earth. Did you see yourself as such an influential voice in modern music when you began?**

My father, Tony Romano, was a composer, singer and guitarist with a highly original personality in his work. He was also highly opinionated. He worked with Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Johnny Mercer and the jazz violinist Joe Venuti. So I grew up with what you might call 'attitude'. I have always looked for another way to do things – more emotion – the hip polymeter - the chord that makes you say 'Whoa!' I always knew my work would be, in the literal sense of the word, remarkable.

**Lately in the industry, a lot of studio engineers have left due to their frustrations or refusal to deal with MP3's and the more fabricated sound mixing of today. How do you hear the music fabric from wax to MP3's? Do you consider their attitudes valid or an overreaction?**

MP3 is a low resolution format. But it is a universal format that is very easy to use and access. And it's a lot better to listen to than scratchy vinyl or a cassette – with or without the dreaded Dolby!

**London has always been a hotbed of cutting edge artists since the 60's. How do you account for this?**

The attitude in LA seems to be: If you're not rich or famous we don't care how talented you are. In New York it's more like: We care about talent, but there are about fifteen million talented people, and that's just in the Village! But London is a small scene where they care about talent. If you're talented, you'll get a chance. Innovative music works well against the background of British tradition.

**Which artists that you've worked with have stood out?**

I've been fortunate enough to work with a lot of artists who were literally phenomenal. Ray Charles, Paul McCartney, Michael McDonald, Pat Metheny, Lyle Mays, Martin Taylor, Jane Monheit, Bob James – come on, Daryl!!!

## **DARYL MAGAZINE ZEN STONES**

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### **Are there any new folks who show promise in your opinion?**

I've recently worked with a great British band called The Feeling. Check them out! Another artist who deserves international success is the young British bassist and composer Janek Gwizdala. Check him out at [www.janekbass.com](http://www.janekbass.com).

### **We understand that you're working with a new female vocalist and are using musicians Billy Cobham and Gary Husbands on the project. Tell us what you like about her.**

Yes, I just finished producing and co-writing an album for, Younee. She's a young Korean singer, songwriter and virtuoso pianist. When forced to describe the music we've created, I say, "Imagine Elton John songs played by Herbie Hancock and sung by the Bangles." Catchy tunes, hip lyrics, emotional ballads, serious grooves. Sounds like a formula for international success to me! The album, "True to You" is available through CD Baby and her website [www.youneeveral.com](http://www.youneeveral.com).

### **What type of long-term directions are you crafting for her music? Do you see her touring soon?**

We're looking for a major label, publisher or management. Meanwhile, we're doing OK on our own!

### **How do you account for your being so sought after by the major players in this business?**

People want to work with me because I am very creatively motivated and very professional. If I do a project, I GUARANTEE it will be artistically remarkable AND on time and within budget.

### **What the hell is happening to the major labels? Can it be addressed, or is indie the future?**

In the 90s, independent labels such as Atlantic, Motown were absorbed by multinational conglomerates. The indies had been run by music loving entrepreneurs such as Ahmet Ertegun or Berry Gordy. Their love and understanding of talent and music enabled them to discover, sign and promote new, exciting original talent. A&R staff were musicians such as Arif Mardin, George Martin, Quincy Jones... The majors who took over were business oriented. They hired people from marketing to do the job of A&R. This was a mistake. They gave us the 'racing form' mentality. 'X is successful, go sign 6 more artists who sound like X.' The public doesn't want clones, they want inspiration. They got bored and stopped buying records. The only hope for creative music is to bypass the majors and use the internet. Technology has put power into the hands of the artist. We can afford our own studios, form our own labels and market our music online. Long live CD Baby and all who sail in her. Long live the revolution!

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But, there's another more serious problem. I teach degree students between the ages of 18 to 30. They have never heard any music before 1995. They don't know Sinatra, Ray Charles, The Beatles, Stevie Wonder, Joni Mitchell, Marvin Gaye, Bob Dylan – much less Bach, Beethoven or Mozart! When I was a kid growing up in the 60s, I was introduced to music. The creativity of artists in the 60s was a result of the collective consciousness at the time. Ordinary people had been brought up with basic classical music, Stephen Foster, Broadway musicals, Louis Armstrong, Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Ella Fitzgerald... That allowed the innovation of the 60s not only to develop, but to be appreciated by the public – who were hip! Today's youth are uneducated and therefore ignorant. An ignorant public buys ignorant music – which is, for the most part, what we have. Our education system in the UK and US is reprehensible, with standards being constantly lowered to cover up the truth of this crisis. Education is paramount. That's why I teach and why it is the duty of every musician to turn young people on to the great artists of the past. This is the real revolution.