

# Terri Hinte

By Eric Nemeyer

*“I have learned about greed, and I have learned about folly – hardly unique to the music business, but any creative enterprise is especially vulnerable in these areas. I’m always watching out for ‘stars-in-the-eyes’ people – fans, hangers-on—who want something from the artist, and/or who remain convinced that they have something special to give to the artist.”*

**JJ:** Could you comment or offer advice on the importance of developing relevant business acumen?

**TH:** All musicians, men and women alike, have to wear many hats nowadays. With the implosion of the record business, and its slow morphing into something else - we don’t as yet know exactly what - more and more musicians are choosing to release their own music via their own labels. What they invariably find out is that, as a label, they have to provide certain key services to themselves. Women musicians have the added challenge, it seems to me, of how (or whether) to exploit their looks—always a double-edged sword, because sexy, fabulous women are not necessarily taken seriously.

**JJ:** What inspired you to pursue a career in jazz?

**TH:** I never pursued a career in jazz. My original career plans had to do with foreign languages and linguistics. But after moving to California from New York in the 1970s, I took a job with Fantasy Records in Berkeley, figuring I’d be there for a year or two and then go back to school. Instead, I stayed more than three decades, in the process becoming a jazz lifer.

**JJ:** Could you share some of the highlights of your experiences dealing with so many jazz artists during your time at Fantasy and beyond?

**TH:** It so happened that the period in which I joined Fantasy was right after the company had acquired Riverside, Prestige, and Milestone and begun its reissue programs of those catalogs. Orrin Keepnews had been hired the year before to oversee those programs as well as an expansion of all jazz activity, including many new signings—Bill Evans, Stanley Turrentine, Cannonball Adderley, Art Pepper, to name a few. Sonny Rollins and McCoy Tyner came via their existing Milestone contracts. (I was Orrin’s assistant, and also the assistant to then-Publicity Director

and also the assistant to then-Publicity Director Gretchen Horton. I became Publicity Director in 1978.) There was a great deal of recording in the label’s three studios. In fact, my first week on the job, Flora Purim was recording *Butterfly Dreams* down the hall. And one of my indelible studio memories was seeing McCoy Tyner, Ron Carter, and Elvin Jones record “Ruby, My Dear,” for *Trident*. The feeling of that performance is still with me, as if it happened yesterday. A major highlight for me was working with Azymuth, the Brazilian trio, because I’d been studying Portuguese and making plans to travel to Brazil. We became friends, I managed them for a time - that’s a whole other story! - and they introduced me to the music scene in Brazil. I’ve since been there often. Another obvious highlight would be my continuing work with Sonny Rollins, for 35 years and counting. I learn something new from him every day.

**JJ:** What kinds of eye-opening lessons or understandings about human nature have you gained through your experiences in the music business?

**TH:** I have learned about greed, and I have learned about folly—hardly unique to the music business, but any creative enterprise is especially vulnerable in these areas. I’m always watching out for “stars-in-the-eyes” people—fans, hangers-on—who want something from the artist, and/or who remain convinced that they have something special to give to the artist. Laurie Pepper has described “fan assassins” who’d come to Art’s dressing room with drugs. That’s an extreme and drastic example, but even well-meaning people might not be aware of when they’re being intrusive with requests for autographs and photos or with proposals that are not necessarily in the artist’s best interest. At the same time, it’s a delicate balancing act wherein the artist does have obligations toward his fans. Finally, when it comes to doing the actual *work* of the music business, “stars in the eyes”



are a huge negative—but often such people are drawn to the business. Someone has to take out the trash! endeavors:

**JJ:** What are the benefits and drawbacks of women segregating themselves into all-women groups and endeavors?

**TH:** The benefits have to do with solidarity, the drawbacks with marginalization.

**JJ:** Could you share some words of wisdom, or a quotation or idea that you’ve discovered, read or learned through experience that embodies the kind of character, integrity, and ethics to which you aspire?

**TH:** “Pressure produces diamonds.” And similarly, “That which doesn’t kill us makes us stronger - Nietzsche. Sometimes we’ve just got to go through something, no shortcuts allowed.

**JJ:** John Ruskin said: “The highest reward for a person’s toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it.” Could you comment on how this might be relevant in your own life and artistry?

**TH:** Through my years in the business, I’ve been blessed with opportunities to represent this music and its makers, many of whom have become friends and de facto teachers of mine. The jazz community, including all the people who promote the music (from critics, DJs, and agents to producers and labels), is a small pond and sometimes the discourse devolves into “jazz wars.” But overall, it’s an extraordinary world to be a part of. We share “jazz values”: being in the moment, with integrity and joy. ■

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