

FROM THE EARLY BEATLES TO HALLMARK CHRISTMAS CDs Teri Brown of TBA Has Done It All in Music Promotion

By [T.L. Stanley](#)

Who: Teri Brown, president of TBA Network Inc.

Why you need to know her: Ms. Brown has helped turn the 4,000-store Hallmark Gold Crown chain into a thriving outlet for music sales. Her company, based in Tarzana, Calif., consulted with Hallmark on which artists to choose for their seasonal CDs. Ms. Brown,



Teri Brown, who helped put together the Beatles' first concert at the Hollywood Bowl, continues to evolve with the rapidly-changing music marketing business.

who's worked with everyone from the Beatles to K.D. Lang to James Taylor, worked as a talent manager and booking agent before helping marketers connect with artists for sponsorships, tours and events.

Credentials: Ms. Brown started her career working part-time for Bob Eubanks, Sam Riddle and Wink Martindale, helping them organize talent for their promotions and local TV shows. "Bob Eubanks signed the Beatles to perform at The Hollywood Bowl and we ran the entire promotion out of my parents' den," she said. "From there, we were the promoters of record for the Los Angeles area, and I ran the office and the promotions for Bob. The Beatles at the Hollywood Bowl was the first ever rock concert. Prior to that, artists performed on stages that featured multiple co-headliners on flatbed trucks and skating rinks or at fairs." Her most recent endeavor in this area was the Salt Lake Winter Olympics, where she worked for NBC contracting the 16 nights of performances at the Olympics Medals Plaza, both live and on TV. During her years as a talent buyer and promoter, Ms. Brown was approached by Anheuser-Busch to do a promotion at their theme park, Busch Gardens, in Williamsburg, Virginia. That promotion turned into an 18-year affiliation with their other parks, where concerts became the main marketing focus targeted at season pass

holders. "I will always do talent buying in one form or another," she said. "I love the live aspect of artists' careers."

Since you've been involved in so many sponsorship deals between marketers and musicians, talk about how those deals used to come together and what they involved. "Early sponsorships were pretty straight forward: outside marquee, inside banners, tickets, print and radio, etc. Any association with a recognizable entertainment name was deemed important to brand managers. At first, it was resisted by those artists as selling out to corporate America. Now, not only do artists realize that they are a business and it helps their bottom line, but the exposure helps market everything from their ticket sales to their current CD product."

How have they changed over the years, both for the artists and the marketers? "Now artists are shopping for brand associations. They understand the power of the brands. And the deals have evolved way beyond tickets, meet-and-greets, and banners."

How do you think they will they evolve further? "I think you are beginning to see the evolution past the live performances and venues. At Hallmark, where I have been fortunate to be involved for the past three years, the promotional CDs have become an intricate part of their annual marketing efforts. I can't take complete credit for that. Hallmark always had promotional CDs that were very successful. I just helped bring it to another level."

How do you structure deals so that marketers feel like they're getting what they want and artists don't feel compromised? "It goes back to the fit. As a brand, you just can't expect that your involvement in the music industry will increase sales of your product if the product doesn't relate in any way to human emotions. So I start with the fit and then work from there. When I did the K.D. Lang deal with MAC make-up, everyone thought that was a reach. But I felt it was a perfect fit. She was Canadian; they were a Canadian based company. She was an environmentalist; they were the first company to recycle their lipsticks. Finally, they were working their marketing efforts through their charity the MAC Aids Fund, which was of interest to K.D. Finally, their spokesperson prior to K.D. was Ru Paul, so her sexuality was not an issue. It lasted three successful years."

You've worked with Anheuser-Busch for 18 years. How has that marketer changed over time in what it wants from its relationships with music and entertainment? "I worked with them from the late 70's thru the early 90's. I not only worked on music projects for them, but I ran programs in NASCAR racing and Rodeo as well. As for the music portion, I worked on the set-up of the Budweiser Presents Concert Series in venues across America, and I was responsible for negotiating and bringing them to a sponsorship agreement with George Strait, which I believe is probably the longest sponsor-artist association in the industry. Also, I continued to supply them their theme park concert attractions, which included Garth Brooks and Tina Turner. I don't see them as active in the music area as they once were. However, their affiliation with Tim McGraw is just outstanding, and certainly hits the mark."

Have you seen any sponsorships that you think missed the mark? "Yes, the Dixie Chicks with Lipton Tea. That was a disaster. I felt so badly for Lipton Tea. It was a natural association for summertime and music tours, which are mostly outdoors. The Dixie Chicks were a hot commodity. But this is a case where you really need to know your artist beyond their music. It is not a criticism of the artist, they are musically a terrific group. But Natalie and the girls have always spoken their minds. It was just a shame that Lipton had to get caught."

Any particularly good ones? "I love the Paul McCartney sponsorships, both with Visa and Fidelity. I think the Rolling Stones have paved the way with new ideas each time they tour. The current AmeriQuest campaign is great. I think the Reba McEntire campaign with Whirlpool is amazing. One of my favorite music sponsorship ties, was a regional affiliation that Chevrolet did with the band Third Day. I wish more sponsors would look to this Christian based marketing with comfort. It proves itself time and time again. This promotion was done in the Southeast for Chevrolet, and promoted via secular and Christian radio, print and direct-mail. The consumer received a free Third Day CD with a test drive of a Chevrolet."

How and why did you start working with Hallmark? "Hallmark was the title sponsor of the Olympics Medals Plaza at the Salt Lake Olympics. I was working on the talent for the Plaza through NBC. I met many Hallmark executives at the Plaza, and received an eye opening look at what an incredible company they were. I knew I wanted to work with them, and kept in touch with them after the Olympics. For the 2003 Christmas CD, I was able to provide them with Christian artist Steven Curtis Chapman, which sold very well. At that point, Hallmark restructured and I met and started working with Ann Herrick to provide the 2004 Christmas CD artist, James Taylor. We have grown the promotional CDs to what it has become today, and extended the opportunities to other holidays, and had great success with Martina McBride last Valentine's Day. We are all a team, which is rare for a consultant to say and feel."

Do you think alternative distribution channels are the future of the music business? "Without a doubt. But it is a slippery slope, and it best be looked at from many different approaches before jumping in. I hope it will never replace the record companies, as they are the people who find, develop and market the new talent."

Because the James Taylor record for Hallmark went platinum last Christmas, and the Michael McDonald CD is already certified gold this year, there's obviously value in these label-less so-called heritage artists. Is it just a matter of marketing them correctly? "Yes, correctly marketing them has a huge amount to do with the success. But, neither of these artists are label-less. It is true that James was just out of his deal at Sony, but James only needs to record a new CD and labels will stand in line. Michael is signed to UMG in Europe for worldwide distribution, so we dealt with his label throughout the entire process. However, that said, I believe the labels never took the time to find new marketing approaches for these artists other than radio. We have had more than one artist tell us how nice it is to create music, and not have to hear 'I don't hear a single in this.'"

If music is so important to so many people, then why do you think the record industry is in such a slump? "I think the record industry is in a slump for many reasons. First and foremost, there are hardly any great record men left. Clive Davis is a prime example of a great record man. He lived the artist and the music. He didn't follow new trends or fads. He just worked with the artists to make great records, and he had the courage to do just that. Mo Ostin was the ultimate artist developer, and consummate record company executive. But, in the defense of the current group of music moguls, Clive and Mo never experienced the bean counters type of management that prevails today. With them it was really all about the music, and now it is all about the business and the marketing and radio, and personal appearances. It is hard to be innovative in the current environment. You really live and die on every record. It makes you cautious, it makes you polarized, and therefore the business becomes stagnant."

Do you have a favorite band? "Well, my uncle, was Les Brown, so I still love the big band music, which is enjoying a renaissance today. I love Michael Buble. But I am a lover of harmonies. First, the Everly Bros., whose music is still being used in commercials today. They inspired the Beatles, who have a special place in my life. The Four Seasons and The Eagles. Among today's groups, Rascal Flatts, Maroon 5 and Coldplay."

Do you play any musical instruments? "No, it skipped me in my family. My grandfather taught music and was the bandmaster of the year many times. My father played trombone in the early years with my uncle and later went on to be a great music publisher, and my brother played anything he wanted by ear. I can't play, but I can read a little music and know pitch."

What's the best live show or performance you've seen this year? "Jersey Boys! Jersey Boys! Jersey Boys! It opened Nov. 6th on Broadway with over 30 songs and a great story about the Four Seasons but really, in some ways, about all of us who grew up in the music business. This is a must see for all ages. Lots of fun! Celine Dion's show at Caesar's Place is the most amazing show I have ever seen in a concert setting. I kept asking the question, 'Who thinks of all this stuff?' Despite her undisputed talent, the show is overwhelming!"

What's on your TiVo? "Every house and garden show there is. My new hobby is remodeling. But beyond that, I am vested in 'Prison Break' and 'Grey's Anatomy.'"