

★music business



Bassist Nathan East's self-titled jazz album is generating buzz and has exceeded sales expectations. SUBMITTED PHOTOS

UNCONVENTIONAL HIT

Musician scores chart-topping jazz album with Franklin label

By Nate Rau
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Yamaha Entertainment Group, an unconventional record label operating out of Franklin, has scored a chart-topping jazz album with an artist making an unconventional debut.

At age 58 and with 1,500 record credits to his name, bassist Nathan East is one of the most respected and accomplished musicians in the world.

But while East's resume reads like a music industry's who's who — he's played alongside Michael Jackson, Paul McCartney, Stevie Wonder, Beyoncé, Phil Collins, Eric Clapton, Wynonna Judd and recently with Grammy-winning electronic duo Daft Punk — he had never ventured out on his own as a solo artist in his 35-year career.

After electing to pursue a solo jazz career, East partnered with Yamaha Entertainment Group, the record label and film division of Yamaha Corporation of America, one of the world's top musical instrument

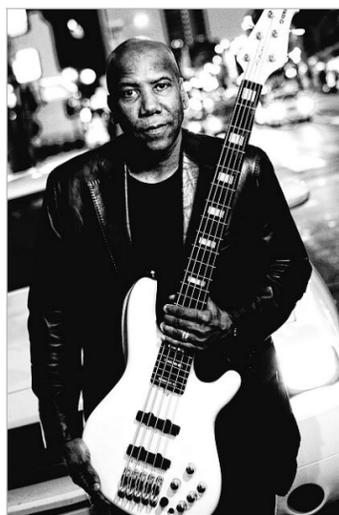
companies.

"I've been wanting to do the project for a while and it's been a matter of which label," said East, who lives in Los Angeles. "It is harder to think in terms of being the artist when your whole career, and life, and role was as a supporting role. But at the same time, it was very rewarding, gratifying and challenging."

Yamaha had long used artists like Elton John to market its products through strategic partnerships. Typically, the artist would use a Yamaha instrument, which would help the company's brand recognition.

But in 2012, the company launched its own record label and film company, which is run by founder and Vice President Chris Gero. In addition to East, bands Leogun and Pull Start Rockets are on the label, which also partners with other artists to release music.

Working with East, a longtime Yamaha partner, was a natural fit, Gero said. "In Nathan's case, he is the most famous person you don't know you already know," Gero said. "He's the most recorded bass player on the planet."



Jazz artist Nathan East has released a debut album with a Franklin record label.

Gero said the greatest challenge in working with East, the consummate supporting player, was deciding how to present him as a solo artist. East and Gero decided to make an album aimed at music fans, not simply bass enthusiasts.

What resulted is a 14-song album, titled "Nathan East," that is generating buzz as a possibility for a Gram-

my nomination.

"When we went into this with him, the greatest challenge I had was turning him from Nathan East who plays with ... Eric Clapton or whoever to just 'Nathan East,'" Gero said.

Still, neither Gero or East knew what to expect when the album was released in March. An old-school smooth jazz album featuring a rookie solo artist on a boutique label in Franklin, Tenn., is not exactly the music industry's boilerplate for success. But the album has exceeded their expectations, selling nearly 20,000 units worldwide, especially resonating with fans in Japan.

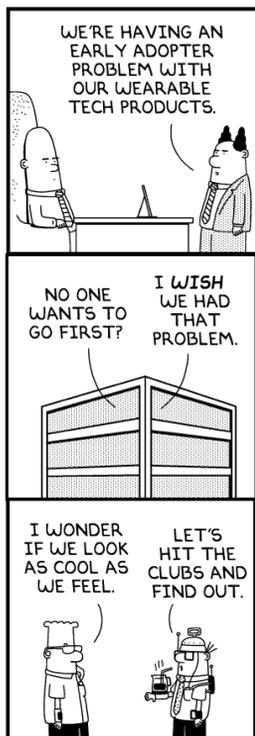
"I cried when I saw the numbers," East said. "In all these years of looking at charts, I never saw my name. It was just pretty overwhelming and remarkable."

A follow-up album is already in the works, and a documentary film by Yamaha Entertainment Group about East's unrivaled musical career is currently in production.

"In the musical community he's one of the most important players there's been in contemporary music," Gero said. "One of the most gratifying things is we recorded, produced and delivered a No. 1 record in little Franklin."

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After 36 years, Moore leaves WME



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Paul Moore will cap a 36-year career as an agent at William Morris Endeavor next month, when he walks out of the handsome Music Circle office he helped design.

Moore, who grew up in Arkansas, where his dad worked in the poultry business and his mom was a homemaker, began as a secretary because his boss, Sonny Neal, was looking for a male assistant.

Moore ascended through the ranks and became the senior vice president, co-head of the Nashville office and head of the lucrative fairs and special events division. He was Reba McEntire's agent early in her Nashville career.

Minutes after booking a date for Aretha Franklin to play at the Minnesota State Fair, a fired-up Moore sat down with The Tennessean's Nate Rau to talk about his career, how he got his start and what's next.

What brought you to Nashville?

I wanted to come to Nashville because I honestly thought I had three options: I had New York, I had Nashville or I had L.A. New York scared the crap out of me, L.A. was too far away and Nashville seemed like someplace



William Morris Endeavor agent Paul Moore is retiring. He is among the longest-tenured agents in Nashville. LARRY MCCORMACK / THE TENNESSEAN

close to home, being from Arkansas.

Did you have a job lined up?

I did. I went to work for a country singer named Donna Fargo. "Happiest Girl in the Whole U.S.A." was her big hit in 1972. I was on the road, they hired me to do backup vocals and keyboard. I worked that gig for six months before she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. I found myself out of work, a musician with no prospects in Nashville, Tenn. That's never happened before.

I seriously called everybody I knew, including a person who had given me a business call from the William Morris Agency, and interviewed for a job

here and got it. July 8, 1978, I walked through the front door as a secretary to a guy named Sonny Neal.

Here's an interesting sidebar: Sonny is deceased now, but he's the older brother to a guy named Kevin Neal, who we just brought into the agency last week from Buddy Lee Attractions.... It's this wonderful symmetry. I'm heading out the door, he's coming in the door and his brother is the one who brought me in.

So it was necessity they chose you?

That's a good way to put it. You know these kids, they come in the door and have this passion for it, they want to be with our agency, they want to be agents. I

just needed to pay the rent — that seriously was it. It was either that or go back to Arkansas and raise chickens, and I just wasn't inclined to do that.

How'd you transition to becoming an agent?

He got mad one day and fired an agent and gave me the Rolodex and said, "You're it." Doesn't happen that way nowadays. Now we groom these kids and bring them up through the system.... They said, "Here's your Rolodex, your telephone, your desk, here's your territory — now go start booking dates." So that's what I did.

What was it like being the agent for Reba?

I'll never forget calling her up and giving her an offer for \$7,500, which was a huge offer at the time, and she said, "Jeez, Paul, I think I can make some money doing this." That was probably 1980.

I remember a meeting and these guys were talking and saying, "We think Reba should do this, and then this." And she was sitting there and she said, "Boys, you're not listening to what I want to do." She started laying out all of her plans. We're all going, "Little lady, girl singers don't do that." She accomplished every single goal she laid out there and, P.S., all of us got fired.

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