

## SIXTH SENSE

Think ahead on how to market your music before recording your next track

My business partner and I started Satellite in 1992 by throwing events. About a year later, we opened our first store. We always had a vision of giving people the easiest pathway to hear music. We were the first dance-music store to have listening stations on the East Coast, to expand to multiple cities, to have sound samples on our Website and—for better or for worse—to create the whole system around categorizing music (house, deep; trance, progressive) that the industry adopted.

I was the primary buyer for Satellite, creating its sound and selection for almost 10 years. I listened to between 200 to 400 records a week and broke many records/artists (Basement Jaxx, Adam Beyer, etc.). We built some of the most influential clientele in the world through our values of bringing people the best selection and finding the greatest music. I am also a conservatory-trained musician in composition and brought those skills and knowledge to discovering records. Additionally, I've been DJing in clubs professionally since 1987.

In 1999, we decided to launch Central Park, whose mission it was to release great house music. I discovered and helped develop Tortured Soul, which is now a leading live-house act. We were also on the forefront of working with such artists before they broke as Osunlade, Alix Alvarez, Sandy Rivera and more.

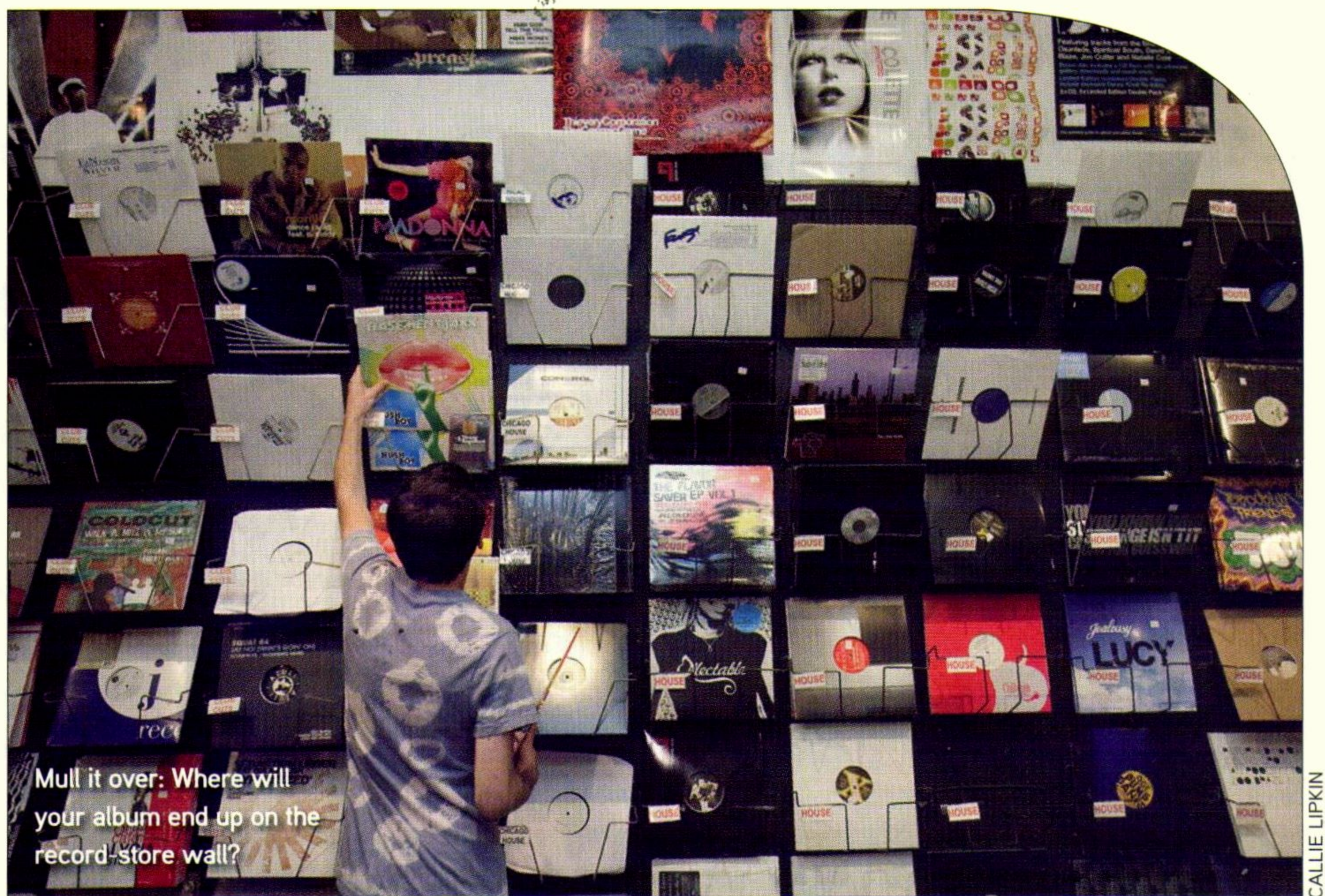
**In terms of how an artist's music will be perceived once released, what's important for that artist to keep in mind before laying down the first note or beat?**

I think the main thing an artist has to remember is his/her place, musically. The main advice I give people is to imagine that they've already made the record, and it's sitting in the store on the wall. What record is it next to? Are the people who are buying the other records going to buy your record? Is your production quality as high as the standard? How will it stand out from the crowd while still being on the wall with others of that genre? Often times, if someone gives me something of inferior quality, I ask them, "Now imagine it isn't you, and you are at a store—would you buy this?"

The next step is to familiarize oneself with the labels in that genre and analyze: Which label do you see as really fitting with that music? After that, find out what way works best for getting your music to the label reps and having them hear it. Call/e-mail them and ask them, and then make sure you follow up.

**Obviously, artists should follow their "muse," so to speak, rather than conform to a type of music in order to fit a trend. But what can an artist do to fit in the marketplace in a potentially profitable way?**

I would have to disagree about following one's "muse" and not conforming to a trend. If an artist does that, he/



Mull it over: Where will your album end up on the record-store wall?

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she might as well just make the music in their bedroom for their own entertainment, and that's where it will stay. One can push the envelope in any given subgenre, but music is all about relational databases; if one likes track A, then check out track B. In my 20 years of music, I have never seen a track that didn't somehow build on the shoulders of a current trend or fit with other records. Like I said earlier, one needs to think about where they fit in the market. Even the biggest artists somehow have a sound that relates to others. Find that sound that inspires you and develop yours from there.

**How much of marketing is the sound, and how much is image and packaging?**

The one thing I have found across the music scene—and I can't say I was thrilled to realize this—is that you can be the most talented, brilliant, groundbreaking artist, but if you don't market yourself in the right way, it doesn't matter. You have to be heard and seen by the right people, have the right friends, network and build relationships. You have to be humble and realize that you need to do what it takes to be out there, no matter how much experience you have or however great your product is. This would include making regular mixtapes, having a Website/MySpace, making sure to get a good photo shoot done, going out regularly and networking.... Keep your profile up, so do what you can to stay out there regularly with remixes, originals, DJ gigs, live gigs, whatever it is that you do. Ultimately, you should create your own image and package that as professional as can be (bio, great photo, original music or DJ mix). Also, your label may not be vested in your DJ career or other aspects other than what they're putting out, so be ready to create different packages for different angles in your career.

**How should an artist work with a label or manager to make their album fit into one cohesive vision?**

Most good labels give their artists guidance as to how to craft their sound best for the label and the market as a whole—that's what great A&R is and how A&R people like Clive Davis became famous. An artist needs to see his or her label or management deal as a partnership. Given that, one should listen to the A&R person or manager and follow his or her guidance; you can make the case for a certain something in your music, but be totally open to what the A&R person says.

**Throughout your career, have you witnessed any career mistakes from artists? What advice could you give them?**

The main mistake is not doing everything it takes to be the complete package—those elements I mentioned earlier. If you think, "I'm good enough; I don't have to do x, y or z," that will often come back to haunt you, and you won't get as far as you could. Another huge mistake that people make is being a jerk to anyone. Many times, you have no idea who that person is or may ultimately become, and it's a much easier ride when people are pulling for you rather than working against you—connections are huge in this business.

Musically, one of the mistakes you can make is being erratic. If you do something in too many different styles, people tune you out or get confused about how to market you. Create different monikers for your various project styles. Also, don't disappear; you'll lose all the momentum you created. Most importantly, don't release an inferior product. When you send a track to a label, and it's not up to snuff, chances are when they get another demo from you (and you are improved but they don't know it), they are much less likely to listen. 