

WORK & wealth

MARKETING URBAN MUSIC ABROAD

VIVIAN SCOTT CHEW
TimeZone International

When it comes to music, domestic sales represent only a small fraction of the economic opportunities available to urban artists. That's where Vivian Scott Chew steps in. After starting out in 1985 as the first African-American female membership representative for ASCAP (The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers), Chew, a Georgetown University alumna, segued onto the front lines of A&R (Artist and Repertoire) at PolyGram Records. Then she earned vice-president stripes at Sony Music and produced consecutive Grammy Award-winning albums with Shabba Ranks. By 1997 the native New Yorker had "hit a corporate ceiling" and decided to reinvent herself. Armed with \$40,000 in savings, she launched TimeZone International with the aim of providing a bridge between the U.S. urban-music market and consumers overseas. Headquartered in Teaneck, New Jersey, with a staff of five and six-figure annual revenues, TimeZone has developed marketing strategies for artists such as Jill Scott, Brian McKnight, India.Arie, Raphael Saadiq and Kindred the Family Soul in 20 territories throughout Europe, Asia, South Africa, Australia and South America. The company also formulated grassroots promotions for McDonald's' I'm Lovin' It campaign.

GLOBAL VISION: "What fueled me in starting TimeZone was that many high-profile urban artists were not getting opportunities for in-

ternational exposure, though approximately 60 percent of all recordings are sold outside North America. I had no business plan, but I had a plan in my heart and a goal to market our music overseas."

TEAMING UP: "It was very lonely in the beginning—just me, the phone and a Rolodex. I later took on a Toronto-based partner, Sol Guy, and TimeZone secured reps in Canada and England, and then we slowly built our international network. It took 13 months to land our first client. My friends and family offered numerous loans along the way to keep the company afloat."

REACHING OUT: "Because I trust my reps, who are multilingual, I've overcome the obstacle of not speaking another language. I wake up very early to do business with Europe before connecting with the East and West Coasts, so my workdays are long. What makes me feel successful is taking an artist overseas for the first time and watching audiences sing along at the shows. I know it's clichéd, but music really is the universal language."

MAPPING THE FUTURE: "TimeZone has opened offices in Holland and Germany, and we've added global licensing and distribution to our repertoire. Our goals include marrying music and corporate entities and securing tour sponsorship, as well as marketing magazines, fashion and film. We're building urban culture as a brand."

—REGINA R. ROBERTSON ▸

how i did it