

NF rock entrepreneur in tune with local action

Survivor of the NYC music game comes home to promote hometown talent

By REBECCA BADGER
Special to the Gazette

Maxwell "Lattie" Taylor, 28, wants a piece of the glamorous life.

The life of a major recording artist filled with money, screaming fans and a lot of recognition.

The Niagara Falls native, now working as a local rock promoter, recording artist and cable television personality, got a tiny taste of recognition at the age of eight or nine when he started writing poetry and jingles as he walked around his house.

But he didn't get really serious about music until the 10th grade, when he began writing poetry and playing electric bass and percussion. In 12th grade he progressed to the piano — teaching himself — and now plays well enough to teach someone else.

He graduated from Niagara Falls High School in 1980 and served in the Marine Corps for three years, mostly at Camp Pendleton, near San Diego, Calif.

"I was a Hollywood Marine," he says. "They gave us all sunglasses."

After the service he performed as a comedian at a variety of clubs in and around New York City, including the Discovery in South Hampton and the Latin Quarter. The Discovery offered him a job, but comedy just wasn't for him.

Promoting took him more in the direction he wanted to go.

"I worked with Don King and the Rev. Al Sharpton back in 1985," Taylor says. "I was just learning. They were teaching me the ropes of promoting. Then after that, I got into it myself. I learned how to finance a deal. I learned the ins and outs. I learned how to negotiate deals without having any money."

While still in New York City, Taylor did some work with ICM (they promote Eddie Murphy, for one) and General Talent International (Run DMC). Taylor says he has good track record with both agencies.

"That's what promoting is all about. You have to have a good track record. You have to have a couple of shows under your belt. They want to know if their artists are going to be treated right and they want to know if they're going to be making the

money," he explains.

Back in Niagara Falls now, Taylor is producing music — for Destiny 3 and other young local singers, such as Thomas Pryor and Vickie Williams.

"These are unknown people but they're local people that have talent. I take that talent and I perfect it and develop them and I work with them," he says. If they don't have their own music, Taylor writes it for them, to fit their voices.

Promoting, producing and performing comedy has not been all. Taylor also keeps busy as a popular local emcee. "I feature myself in most of the shows," he says, "and I've done that in Cataract City Productions (of Niagara Falls) under Ron Cunningham."

Taylor has branched out now and formed his own promotion company, Cadillac City Productions. (He says he slyly devised the name to sound similar to Cataract City Productions.)

One of his projects was to rename and manage a disco.

"It was called the Monte Carlo and I painted on the side of it 'The Echo Scratch Disco,'" Taylor says. He did shows every Friday, managing the building and booking the acts. He also became skillful at the advertising game.

"When you relate to kids in their own language through advertising they say 'Hey, that's hip and everything.' They'll come out and see what's going on. Like, if hip people give a show, then shoot, they want to come out and be part of that hip crowd."

"I try to keep kids off the streets and all this gang violence and all these drugs. I try to keep them off that stuff. We try to provide them with a place to go so they won't be hanging around on corners and stuff," he says.

Right now Taylor is coming across to people on Adelpia Niagara cable television (Channel 3) at 6 p.m. every Wednesday on the "The Max-

Cover story

well 'Lattie' Taylor Show," which offers 30-minute segments of MTV-style music videos — singers, dancers, rappers and comedy. It reaches an estimated audience of 80,000 in the Niagara County area.

His producer, Kevin Green, had a lot of positive things to say about Taylor.

"Lattie is in touch with the younger talent. (He) bridges the gap between my generation, his generation and the next generation," says Green. "Plus, he has a lot of talent. He sings, does comedy routines and acts. He has personality and energy."

All these ventures are leading up to Taylor's ultimate goal — to land a contract with a major record label.

"I want a recording contract so bad I can feel it," he says.

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Taylor has recorded a single — produced by Mark Perrecelli, who has a gold record with Kool and the Gang. Perrecelli is currently handling all of Taylor's affairs at Warner Brothers Records, trying to get the young singer into the stable of talent.

Right now Taylor is trying to raise enough money to press a 12-inch single, a necessity if he wants to "get his foot in the door there (at Warner Brothers)." The days are gone, he says, when an unknown artist could send a cassette tape to a record label and receive an audition.

"Thousands of tapes come into their office. You'd be lucky if yours didn't end up in the garbage," he says.

The secrets of success, according to Taylor: "You have to write your own songs, you have to press a record, you have to promote it locally and get airplay."

And get money, of course.

At the moment Taylor has his eye

on two or three very good potential investors. He's cooling his heels to see who will give him the best deal.

"I'm not so much worried about the money or anything like that because if I sign with a major record label, I'm going to find other artists and I'm going to produce and that's going to make me even more money," he said.

"I want to suck up all the talent that they have in Niagara Falls and I want to put Niagara Falls on the map as a talent-producing area. We have a lot of talent here in Niagara Falls and no producer in the world comes here looking for talent. Once I make it out of here, then they'll start coming here saying 'Hey, maybe there's more talent here,'" he says.

"I want to help everybody, black and white," Taylor says. "I'm not prejudiced to color or anything like that because music has no color. I don't want to lay my music as black or white. I just want to lay my music as music."

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