



# People



## Q&A

### LISA ELLIS

▶▶▶ THE EXECUTIVE VP OF SONY MUSIC LABEL GROUP DISCUSSES THE STATE OF URBAN MUSIC

#### What was changed during the reorganization of the Sony Urban division?

We put everything into Columbia Records to make it a stronger label. Instead of having three business units, we have two. [The relocation] was about finances and a shrinking business. We're still in the urban business.

#### There's no female rap Grammy this year. Is that a bad sign?

That's really more of a NARAS question. I don't know [what it means]. Part of the problem this year was, what female rap was out? If there are enough candidates next year, I'm sure they'll reevaluate it.

#### Dreamgirls hit No. 1—but with only 66,000 albums sold. Thoughts?

There are two versions of [that soundtrack], so really it sold almost 90,000 that week. The numbers as they relate to Soundscan are just bad. That has nothing to do with urban music. Everything else isn't selling—in all genres.

#### How can the industry combat the decline in sales?

Don't stop and wait until they tell you something is dead; you keep moving before the first single is over. Beyoncé was a very strategic release—the media plan was successful, and she's a monster star who can perform. Patience is required, too. You have to stick with projects. . . . I hope everyone realizes that no one company will figure it out on their own. Everyone has to support each other and come together to save our industry.

#### What's next for urban music?

Artists like John Legend are getting back to things that are relevant: stories, great songs, musicality, live instruments. Everyone got trapped in the beat machine for a minute, and it went too far. People forgot the hip-hop we loved was about struggle, lifestyle and having fun.