

Sylvia Rhone Is The First

Written by Westside ID118
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The return to the music industry's senior executive ranks of Sylvia Rhone, the first African-American woman to head a major record company, is now official.

The former chairman/CEO of Elektra Entertainment Group has been appointed president of Motown Records and executive VP of Universal Records. Kedar Massenburg, who had been Motown president/CEO, exited the company in July.

Universal Music Group chairman/CEO Doug Morris said in a statement, "Sylvia is a first-class music executive who not only brings a unique understanding of the creative community but extensive management experience."

Under the terms of Rhone's multiyear contract, she will helm the Motown label, whose roster includes Stevie Wonder, India.Arie and Erykah Badu. In her executive VP role, Rhone will be involved in various musical projects that encompass the UMG family of labels. She reports to Mel Lewinter, chairman/CEO of Universal Motown Records Group, and, in turn, to Morris.

Rhone's segue to Universal reunites her with both Morris and Lewinter, who worked with her at Atlantic Records.

"Working with both Doug and Mel is a homecoming for me," Rhone says. "I had the privilege of working for Doug in my early years and consider him a mentor. What's exciting about the company is it has such a depth of creative assets. The collaboration possibilities with the sister labels are limitless."

New York-based Rhone's primary focus at this early juncture is to develop and build the Motown roster.

"I see this as a very diverse label," Rhone says. "The Motown of old was in a different time period. People's tastes are very broad now. So we have to adapt to this time period and make sure we appeal to the consumers."

Michael McDonald's second album of Motown covers, "Motown 2," is due this month. The

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label's 2005 slate includes Wonder, Brian McKnight , Badu and India.Arie.

Rhone began her music career in 1974 with Buddha Records. Advancing to senior VP of Atlantic Records in 1988, she became the first African-American woman to head a major record company in 1990, when she was appointed president/CEO of Atlantic division East West Records America.

The following year, she was promoted to chairman/CEO of the combined Atco/EastWest and subsequently EastWest Records America. During that time she worked with such acts as En Vogue, Gerald Levert and Simply Red.

Rhone then became the first African-American and first woman to serve as chairman of a major label when she was named chairman/CEO of Elektra in 1994. She oversaw the consolidation of four labels into the Elektra Entertainment Group, whose roster included rapper Missy Elliott, Metallica, Jet, hip hop's Fabolous and Yolanda Adams. Rhone exited that post in March after Elektra's absorption into Warner Music Group.

Source: [Yahoo](#)