

Jermaine Dupri Inks Deal With Virgin

Written by Robert ID748

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Jermaine Dupri

Jermaine Dupri, a proven hit-maker and producer of three Number One hits from the top-selling album of 2004, Usher's Confessions, has been appointed President of Virgin Records Urban Music, a new division at the label, it was announced by Virgin Records Chairman and CEO Matt Serletic. As part of the arrangement, Dupri will bring the So So Def label into the Virgin family, and will oversee Virgin's entire urban music operation. In addition, he will record as a solo act and produce artists on the Virgin roster, as well as provide his production services to the entire EMI family of labels.

In the newly created position, Dupri will report directly to Matt Serletic, and to Larry Mestel, Virgin COO/General Manager, on operational matters. He will also work closely on a day-to-day basis with Lionel Ridenour, Virgin Executive Vice President Urban Music. Dupri will be based in Atlanta and New York.

"Jermaine Dupri's outstanding work has extended in every direction since the mid-Nineties: as a producer and songwriter, as an entrepreneur, as a label executive and as a recording artist," Matt Serletic said. "All of us at Virgin are thrilled to welcome Jermaine to the company. We know that his remarkable ability to identify and develop talent will continue to build great careers in the years to come, while bringing innovative and refreshing ideas to well-established acts."

Dupri commented: "I am happy to join the Virgin Records family, and look forward to working with Matt, Larry, Lionel and the whole Virgin Records team. As the new President of Urban Music for Virgin Records, I'm up for the challenge. My strengths as a producer and hit-maker

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were magnified this year with the success of my work with Usher. By joining So So Def and Virgin, I plan to do for Virgin what Russell Simmons did 10 years ago, when he moved Def Jam to Island Records. I will catapult Virgin into a young, hip label with chart-topping success in both R&B and rap music. I also hope to change the whole look of the company so when up-and-coming R&B and hip hop artists are looking for a home, Virgin will be the first stop."

"Jermaine Dupri is such a unique talent," Larry Mestel added. "He is a rare blend of artist, talent magnet, creative visionary and businessman. We are very lucky to have the opportunity to add someone of Jermaine's stature in the creative community to our senior management team. I feel very fortunate to work with Jermaine again."

Jermaine Dupri was nineteen when he produced his first Number One record on the Billboard Hot 100, Kris Kross' 1992 single, "Jump." The five-million-plus sales of the teen duo's Ruffhouse/Columbia album *Totally Krossed Out* led to the 1993 establishment of the So So Def label, and marked Dupri among the foremost young entrepreneurs driving the arrival of hip-hop as a central creative and commercial force in mainstream music. So So Def became known as an engine not only of hit records, but of artist development, as members of his first signed act, Xscape, themselves became hit songwriters after scoring two platinum albums as artists, and rap artist Da Brat became the first female solo rapper to attain platinum album sales. Since then, So So Def's vocal group Jagged Edge and rap artist Bow Wow both sold at the multi-platinum level, and the label turned in two of 2004's signature party jams, "Topsy," by J-Kwon and "Damn!" by the Youngbloodz featuring Lil Jon; but it was the breakout success of So So Def's soul man and five-time Grammy nominee Anthony Hamilton that helped to continue So So Def's reign as one of the premier R&B/rap labels.

As an independent producer, Dupri helmed the massive take-off of LaFace/Arista artist Usher in 1997 with his productions of "My Way," "You Make Me Wanna ... " and the Billboard pop Number One "Nice & Slow." Dupri also produced and co-wrote the Number One pop smash "U Got It Bad" from Usher's 8701 album.

In 2004, a succession of three Dupri-produced hits ("Burn," "Confessions Part II" and "My Boo," a duet with Alicia Keys) helped drive over eight million sales of Usher's *Confessions* album, making it the best-selling album of the year. A six-time Grammy nominee, Dupri is twice-nominated this year for the Best R&B Song Grammy, for co-writing "Burn" and "My Boo," and he shares the nomination for Album of the Year for his production and engineering/mixing work on *Confessions*.

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Dupri has also produced, executive-produced, remixed or recorded with such artists as TLC, Whitney Houston, Aretha Franklin, Aaliyah, Jay-Z, Chingy, Ludacris and Toni Braxton, and he produced and co-wrote the Billboard Hot 100 Number Ones "Always Be My Baby" by Mariah Carey and "The First Night" by Monica.

Virgin Records is a division of EMI Music, the world's largest independent record company. Among the top artists on the Virgin roster are: Janet Jackson, Lenny Kravitz, A Perfect Circle, Gorillaz, Ben Harper, N.E.R.D., Stacie Orrico and The Rolling Stones, as well as exciting newcomers Brooke Valentine, Guerilla Black and Ricky Fante. Virgin's U.S. headquarters are located in New York.