

# Billboard

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## City of Atlanta's Behind-The-Scenes Players

By Rhonda Baraka

*In addition to the big-name artists who keep Atlanta on the musical map, there are others who, working behind the scenes, help the city maintain its reputation as a thriving musical metropolis. We talk with a few of those key players.*

### ENLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

It's been said that behind every good man, there is a good woman. Perhaps. But it is true that behind many good Atlanta producers is a good woman by the name of Tashia Stafford. Stafford's Enlight Entertainment manages some of the city's hottest producers, among

them Dent, who produced the Destiny's Child hit "Survivor," 3LW producer Sean "Sepp" Hall, Japanese producer T'kura and Kevin "She'kspere" Briggs, the man behind hits by TLC, Destiny's Child and Pink.

Stafford, who started out in the music industry working for Elektra Records, says Enlight, founded in 1996, grew out of her desire to be an entrepreneur and mushroomed on its own. "My motive came from



Tashia Stafford and Tonia Kempler

not wanting to work at a label anymore," says Stafford. "I knew that I had a lot of talent and I was really good, but I was very frustrated with the fact that, no matter how good I was, my job depended on somebody else. So, after losing my job at Elektra because my boss lost his job, I started a business that really had nothing to do with music at all."

But little did Stafford know that her reputation in the music industry would eventually be her calling card for a new venture. "I got a call from somebody at Sony, who had heard that I was a great administrator, and they had a producer in Atlanta that needed some help. That was J-Dub [Jeffrey Walker]. He was my first client."

Walker proceeded to tell other producers about Stafford's expertise, and, before long, Enlight had grown wings. "I didn't set out to be a management company," she says. "It just kind of grew into what it is today."

And Enlight continues to grow. Stafford recently partnered with Tonia Kempler to create a New York office for Enlight. "I think it's worked out fairly well because the clients have come to us after hearing what we're doing with other people," says Kempler. Among their New York clients are producers Buckwild and Kovas and writer/co-producer Nicole Wray.

Stafford says Enlight strives to

help clients be more business-minded. "One of the things I try to focus on with the clients when they come under my umbrella is creating their own entities and not just being a producer. I advise them to maintain their production status, in terms of staying in the studio and doing their work, but to broaden their horizons and go outside the box a little bit and try to build their own wealth." ■