

## Star Surf

**WEB WATCH** The first major online record company gives wannabe idols a new stage. By Chandra R. Thomas

THE DAYS OF WAITING FOR hours to belt a few bars for the *American Idol* judges or scheming to get a demo tape into the hands of some record label brass are over. Aspiring singers can now audition for the music industry's top hit-makers from the comfort of their own home computers.

Atlanta-based music and fashion guru Ryan Glover and former Radio One executive Tamara Knechtel partnered with some of the industry's biggest names to launch the world's first major online record company. Described as MySpace meets YouTube meets *American Idol*, *innotsigned.com* allows artists to post profiles, share audio and video with other hopefuls, and, most importantly, get their music to superproducers like Jazze Pha, Brian Michael Cox, and Teddy Bishop.

"If you want to be heard and you want to get signed, this is the site for you," says

Pha, beatmaker for Ciara, Cherish, and OutKast. "If you think you have what it takes, this is an opportunity to be heard. We will be listening!"

Membership to *innotsigned.com* is free and includes regular opportunities for aspirants to engage in live chats with industry execs, producers, and artists.

"MySpace has been great with connecting people, but we are focused on the music industry and bringing people together to create our own music community," says Glover, who had a hand in the success of R&B superstar Monica and was the CEO of the production company that launched Ashanti's career. "We expect this to become a new model for the music industry."

Since *innotsigned.com*'s January launch, it's gained support from stars such as Jermaine Dupri, Ludacris, Lil Wayne, and Bonecrusher. Glover and other staffers scout



the site daily for new talent. "Right now we're primarily focusing on hip-hop and R&B," he says. "But we hope to expand to other genres as it grows. This is going to be a runaway train!"

The site is also linked to a weekly syndicated radio program airing on V-103 (and about 500 other stations nationwide). On the show, Pha and sidekick D.J. Envy share advice and let listeners vote ("dig" or "dis") on two tracks from artists recruited from the site. "I expect some careers to bloom and blossom from this

and really explode," says Pha.

Twice a year, four artists will be selected to perform live and compete for a record label contract. Although the ultimate goal is to find, promote, and develop untapped talent, much like *Idol*, the site will surely attract its share of, shall we say, "talent-challenged" individuals. Glover says that's okay. "Ninety-nine percent of those logging on probably won't be making the cut, you know, 'cause everybody thinks they can sing," he says. "But that's fine, we're an equal opportunity site!" ★

### CRYSTAL BALL

## A BRAVE NEW WORLD

By Elizabeth Westby

When super-media conglomerate Liberty Media brokered a deal to buy the Braves from mega-media conglomerate Time Warner in February, it assured the city that current team leadership would stay in place. On the surface, it seems like little will change if the MLB approves the deal, but we're not so sure. We gazed into our crystal ball to give our fearless predictions for the Braves' future under Denver-based Liberty Media:

- Liberty Media Chairman John C. Malone will call a squeeze play on the budget, trading big-name players in droves. Hot dog costumes and giant cloth cans will surface in garbage bins across Atlanta.

- When Bobby Cox's contract expires at the end of this season, Malone will hand the job over to a familiar face: pal Ted Turner. (Turner managed one game in the 1977 season. His record: 0-1.)
- For the first time in

baseball history, a player will be traded on a home shopping network. (QVC is a subsidiary of Liberty Media.)

- The team will be renamed to reflect exactly what it means to owner-



ship. Put your hands together for the Atlanta Non-Core Assets!