

# THE CCM UPDATE

## GMA Under Fire From Black Gospel Industry

NEW YORK, N.Y.—After experiencing the highest-ever level of attendance of black registrants during "Gospel Music 1991" last month, the Gospel Music Association has been the subject of harsh criticism from various black gospel industry executives and artists in the past few weeks. Charges of tokenism and insensitivity to the black gospel community surfaced primarily in *Billboard* magazine, which ran stories on the controversy in three consecutive issues following "GMA Week."

According to some, this year's large turnout of blacks was indicative of the desire and commitment of the black gospel industry to be an active, vital part of the GMA and the gospel industry at large. However, many black registrants clearly felt slighted by the absence (for the first time in four years) of the black gospel concert "Spectacular" and by what they considered a lack of programming and seminars which addressed the unique and specific needs of the black gospel industry. Others, such as artist manager Reggie Rutherford, were angry that the black gospel categories were not included in the telecast portion of the Dove Awards. Quoted in *Billboard*, Rutherford termed the Doves "a Steven Curtis Chapman and Sandi Patz show, all the way."

Marvin Winans of The Winans singing group was one of the more outspoken critics of the GMA. "According to scripture, they're about as non-Christian as you can get. What most upsets me is that they consider their music as Christian, and ours as black Christian, but God is a Spirit. There is no black and white. However, there is a definite plan to keep division there. They toss in a few tokens, but the division is done purposely." Winans encouraged blacks to stop attending GMA as a form of protest. "Change will come when blacks recognize their power and their worth in the gospel music industry."

"I was appalled at the lack of black gospel participation, from performers to panelists," said Theresa Hairston, who is publisher of *Score* magazine and also director of black gospel marketing for Benson. "However, I do feel that this year, probably more than any other, has awakened the GMA to sensitize itself to the needs of the total industry."

"What we need to do is have our own GMA," said Jun Moon, general manager of I AM Records, in one of the *Billboard* articles. "It's clear that the GMA is not meeting the needs of blacks in the gospel music industry."

Others interviewed by *Billboard* were more moderate and conciliatory in their views. Gloria Hawkins, one of two current black GMA board members, said she regretted there was no black gospel "Spectacular" this year, but stated, "I disagree that we should stop going. Not a whole lot has changed, but there are some changes and I think the more black participation we have, the more changes we're going to see. What we have to do is put a stop to the separatism."

While expressing concern about the GMA's effectiveness with the black gospel industry, several black leaders contacted by

The CCM Update last week agreed with Hawkins. Ben Tankard, who is both an artist and vice president of Tribute Records, said that if more blacks became involved with GMA, it wouldn't be perceived as a "racist" organization. "I'm really proud of the things that they do offer—especially from a new artist standpoint," Tankard stated. "It's a great networking spot." He said he was disappointed that there was no "black gospel night" this year and that he believed it actually hurt GMA because it was perceived as a racial situation. "If it was not racially motivated, it could have been done in a more diplomatic fashion so as not to send the black community the message, 'No, we don't want you doing this anymore!'"

Ed Smith, executive secretary of the Gospel Music Workshop of America, feels that important issues are finally coming out into the open. "The industry is finding out that black folk are not going to roll over and play dead but are going to require the industry to be attendant to their needs and supportive of their music. And I think that's right."

On the other hand, Dr. Leonard Scott, head of Tyscot Records, is optimistic about future relations between the black gospel  
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## Tower Veep Gives Retailers a Jolt

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—"You're pretty far behind the times. You're trying to service an industry, and just by being in this meeting, many of you feel you could do a much better job." Those were just a few of the kinder comments spoken by Bob Delaney, vice president of retail operations for the highly influential Tower Records chain. Delaney led a workshop on retail promotion, one of the most talked-about gatherings of the Christian Music and Video Retailers conference held during "GMA Week" recently. Many of the 102 music and video buyers registered were in attendance, held spellbound by Delaney's spellbound for over 90 minutes. Mr. Delaney has been employed by Tower since its infancy, and has had an opportunity to see many of his marketing ideas bear fruit in terms of increased traffic and higher revenues over the past two decades.

Realizing that he was not that familiar with Christian music retailing, Delaney visited a number of Christian bookstores in and around his home of Sacramento, California, to prepare for the CMVR meeting. With the permission of the various managers, he photographed their displays and asked about their marketing techniques. Delaney combined these photos with pictures of different Tower stores and other record outlets, as well as other retailers that he felt were successful at marketing their products. These slides formed the meat of Delaney's presentation.

As slide after slide of the rickety fixtures, hand-lettered signs and messy displays found in the Christian bookstores flashed by, some retailers began to squirm; many no doubt recognizing merchandising schemes that had previously been used (or were perhaps still being used), in their shops. "You have to make me feel something when I first walk in your store," said

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