

## The muscle behind the music

*Marty DeAnda turns his label into a launch pad for Jackie Greene and other new artists*

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Marty DeAnda walked away from a six-figure salary to manage a skinny singer hardly anyone knew. But don't tell DeAnda that he's been chasing a dream. "I prefer to say I've been chasing a plan," he says. A business plan - and those organizational charts and mission statements have turned DeAnda into The Man of Sacramento music.

That kid who inspired DeAnda to quit his day job is Jackie Greene, the singer-songwriter whom DeAnda guided to a major record deal and is so popular now that he's headlining San Francisco's famed Fillmore Auditorium on Saturday night. The show kicks off with another Sacramento-area act managed by DeAnda: Chris Webster, the alternative-country artist who also sings with the popular dance band Mumbo Gumbo.

Today DeAnda is CEO of Dig Music. It's a downtown record label that releases albums by such leading local acts as Bucho, and Mick Martin and the Blues Rockers. Dig Music also resurrects rare and unreleased tracks from the 1960s and 1970s - that's part of where Dig Music gets its name. Not bad for a record company that started in 2001 with three partners and grossed just \$4,700 in its first year. Dig Music now has a staff of six, and DeAnda projects that Dig Music will gross in the seven-figure range for 2005.

"It's been a fast ride," says DeAnda. "(The Fillmore show) is really important to me and Dig Music. It's a strong sense of pride. It will be Jackie's night, but there's a part that's glowing in my heart for Dig Music."

DeAnda speaks like he's downed four cups of coffee, but with the toughness of someone who is used to playing hardball - a voice developed from two decades of negotiating deals in the insurance industry. Drop by Dig Music's offices on 19th and V streets and you'll find a boss who dotes on his staff but won't let them slack off.

"I'm driven and focused, and I don't expect anyone to be working less than me," he says. "I believe in letting people run their own department and report up to you. You manage their results. But you have to have free- thinkers."

That's the kind of intensity and business acumen that drew Greene to his future manager. Call it an example of opposites attracting. DeAnda is a master with a spreadsheet; Greene can hardly keep track of how many root beers he's downed in an afternoon. Greene, 24, looks like a young Bob Dylan who's in need of a sandwich or two; DeAnda works out every morning in his home gym to keep his 52-year-old body buff. Greene can play the heck out of any instrument he wants; DeAnda can't carry a tune.

The two met at an open-mike night at the Fox & Goose in March 2002. At that time, Greene had just moved to town from Placerville. Dig Music was then just a part-time gig for DeAnda, who was still wheeling and dealing in the insurance field. "Jackie walked up to the microphone and just exploded," DeAnda remembers. "I was so blown away by the songwriting and his talent."

After the set, DeAnda and Greene exchanged numbers. The next day, they met for a lunch of enchiladas and soon became a team. Greene would release his albums through Dig Music and be managed by DeAnda.

"When we first met Marty, I think I was a little intimidated because he was a business guy and I was just this songwriter kid," says Greene. "We started hanging out, but I knew he meant business. You could tell by the way he talked." DeAnda believed so much in the dude with the guitar that he quit his job as assistant vice president, Western region, for the Fireman's Fund. DeAnda had wanted to work in the music business ever since he'd grown up in West Sacramento and never intended to stick with the insurance industry, anyway.

Good thing he had saved some money, but there was still that mortgage on his house that faces Land Park. There were two teenagers living at home and a 25-year-old son in Santa Cruz to consider. Most spouses would've freaked. But Marcy DeAnda stood by her man-turned-manager. "I had seen Jackie, too, and felt something special about him like (my husband) did," says Marcy DeAnda. "And Marty is a good businessman and he's smart. I always knew music was his passion. If you're not going to do it now, when are you going to do it?"

Don't cross Marty when it comes to Greene. DeAnda says that he's manhandled hecklers and pushy musicians who tried to jump on the stage to jam with Greene. "I'd die for that kid," DeAnda says. But loyalty doesn't always stick in the music business. Once a local act reaches the big leagues, the manager who got it there - often a local guy who's been there since Day 1 - is usually ditched for a more seasoned business team.

"That's the reality of the industry," says DeAnda. "But that's like getting married and spending your honeymoon worrying if you're wife's going to cheat on you or not." Greene's had plenty of would-be managers trying to get his attention, especially now that he's on a major label. Earlier this year, Greene signed a deal with Verve Forecast, a storied singer-songwriter label that's owned by Universal Music. He's also been gigging around the country, opening for the likes of Willie Nelson, Jewel, Los Lobos and Chris Isaak.

"People whisper all the time, but there's no reason for me to (leave DeAnda)," says Greene. "Business-wise, it makes more sense because he doesn't have many artists. So I get a lot of attention. The other thing is that we've been through so much stuff that I've become comfortable on a personal level. If I start all this over again, I might not be as comfortable."

Managing Greene is a full-time job for DeAnda, and his workload keeps increasing. He now manages two other Sacramento-area acts, Bucho, a popular Latin/soul band with an upcoming album, and Webster.

Given the buzz around DeAnda and Dig Music, lots of local bands want to jump on board. "About a year ago, I started getting inundated with press kits," says DeAnda. "There's a lot of local bands that I've been seeing that are great, like Las Pesadillas and Golden Shoulders. But we want to be able to do a great job for a few instead of an average job for a lot of people."

The label is also busy with archival releases from Moby Grape and Maria Muldaur, which are overseen by Dennis Newhall, one of DeAnda's longtime friends and a co-founder of Dig Music. New albums from Sons of Champlin and Cold Blood are also coming soon. "I'm proud to say that we started this company without any funding but Marty DeAnda's savings account," he says. "Now we have six people and we're growing. I like to call it 'the house that Jackie built.' It was our working together that brought us both success and made this thing happen."

But just like with insurance, DeAnda will someday split from the music business. He always wants to be Greene's better business half, but DeAnda sees a time - perhaps sooner than later - when Dig Music will run without him. "In five years, I will be doing something else, maybe a restaurant," he says. "Cooking's like anything else. I'm driving home thinking, 'Hmm, kiwi and pork. Let's do something with that.'"

"I don't follow rules," he adds. "You follow your brain, you follow your instincts."