

POWER MIXER



For the Record

ERNIE LAKE AND JOSH KATZ ARE DANCING to their own beat these days—and it’s most likely a customized one you’ll be hearing very soon.

That’s because Lake and Katz are the founders of EL Records, whose specialty lies in creating custom compilations and signature sounds for some of the biggest names in the retail and hospitality industry.

Formed in 2001, EL Records represents a marriage of musical genius and marketing savvy, drawing upon two-time Grammy-nominated Lake’s background as a writer, remixer, and producer, and Katz’s career at a number of large music labels. Positioned as a custom music provider, the boutique company—which creates CDs and music programming with a carefully selected compilation of tracks—has become the go-to label for companies looking for a unique sound to coincide with their brand.

For many clients (such as 60 Thompson, the St. Regis, the Borgata Hotel and Casino, and Tao, to name a few), a partnership with EL Records has been more than music to their ears: Their custom compilations also generate revenue. Why wouldn’t guests who stay at the Hotel Gansevoort want to take home the music they hear during their visit? Katz and Lake see this as a natural extension of a firm’s brand.

“It’s becoming more of a lifestyle-oriented purchase, as opposed to an artist-oriented purchase,” says Katz, adding, “We have a lot of clients who sell more CDs out of their restaurants than some of the biggest record stores in New York City.” This year alone, EL Records is projected to sell close to two million compilations. No wonder Moby reportedly enjoys being featured on the company’s soundtracks.

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Creations are typically based on a profile created by the duo, who analyze a venue to decide its needs. “We really try to get a vibe for what’s happening,” says Katz. Next, tracks are either handpicked or composed by Lake and his team in their Midtown recording studios, then sequenced onto a CD or programmed onto music servers, which are updated on a monthly basis.

Mariah Carey, Usher, Britney Spears, and, most recently, Lionel Richie, also mixed the tracks on volume three of his wildly popular *From the Hamptons to Ibiza* series. “We want to create an empire here,” says Lake.

We know what’ll be playing on its sound system. 212-489-5262; elrecords.com.

—LESLEY BRYCE [G]



Greatest hits: selections from EL Records’ catalogue.