

Billboard

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PENTHOUSE

Donovan Germaine started in the music business in 1970, clerking in a Brooklyn record store. Today, he owns a busy studio, three labels (Penthouse, Shocking Vibes, and Madhouse), and a distribution company with offices in Miami and Kingston.

"We try to get the best here,"



PENTHOUSE RECORDING COMPANY

says Germaine. "We have good quality control and success. Like anywhere, if you have the money, you can get the right team to do it for you."

The studio is booked nonstop with work for its own labels, as well as reggae remixes and rhythm tracks for such nonreggae acts as Eddie Murphy, Janet Jackson, and Australian rock group Rock Melons.

At the time of Billboard's visit, in late 1994, engineer/producer Tony Kelly (who, like his brother Dave, has been key to the success of such artists as Shabba Ranks and Patra) was mixing a Buju Banton track. "I don't really engineer anymore except for special people like Germaine," says Kelly.

Almost everyone records at Penthouse. Current projects include albums by Wayne Wonder, Nadine Sutherland (for EastWest), and a young female singer named Twiggy. But Germaine and Kelly seem most excited about Banton's work for his next album (due February on Loose Canon). Kelly calls Banton's sound "the nearest to Bob's [Marley's] sound so far."

Future plans include releasing archival CDs on the Penthouse label. Germaine hopes these recordings will provide the Stateside companies who "just sign and send the music out without promotion" with much-needed education. "If they are investing in something, they have to build it," he says. "You have to learn the culture and the music, before you work with it."