



NEIL PORTNOW

During the course of his career, Neil Portnow has become a leading figure in the music and recording industry, liaising with music makers, corporate executives, political figures, and worldwide brands. He has served as President of the Recording Academy™ since December 2002, and was named President/CEO in September 2007.

As President/CEO, Portnow works closely with the Academy's Board of Trustees, Chair, 12 Chapter Boards and Officers, as well as the Academy's senior management team to advance the organization's goals and mission—including the creative and strategic vision and operations of the Academy and its related entities (GRAMMY Awards®, Producers & Engineers Wing®, and The Latin Recording Academy®). He also serves as President/CEO of the Academy's charitable affiliate MusiCares®, and he is Chair of the Board of the GRAMMY Museum® L.A. LIVE in downtown Los Angeles. Portnow represents the Academy to its constituents, partners, and music fans, and serves as a leader on issues relating to the music industry—including participation in national caucuses, conferences, roundtables, and keynotes; and key domestic and international industry-related organizations. And in keeping with the Academy's position as an advocate for its constituents, Portnow develops and manages strategic advocacy positions at the national, state, and local levels—both governmental and within music and its related industries.

Throughout his tenure, Portnow's notable accomplishments have enhanced the organization's overall mission of improving the cultural condition and quality of life for music and its makers. Highlights include:

- Creating a GRAMMYs on the Hill® Advocacy Day as a companion to the esteemed GRAMMYs on the Hill Awards event, both of which represent the most significant and unified music industry presence in Washington, D.C.; establishing a strategic alliance with the Recording Artists' Coalition, thereby combining the efforts of both the Academy and the Coalition to amplify artists' rights on Capitol Hill; and co-founding and implementing the first-ever Music Policy Retreat, which continues to be a semiannual gathering that includes leadership representation from music industry organizations, resulting in new, unprecedented cooperation and collaboration between the various creative and business constituencies.
- Leading the largest grassroots initiative for music in the nation; the Recording Academy's District Advocate day. In 2017, for the first time in history, music creators from all 50 states met with congressional offices in their home districts to discuss legislative issues affecting the music industry, including performance rights, copyright reform, and the impact of digital services. As the only organization representing all music creators (no companies), the Recording Academy's District Advocate day continues to bring music issues to the forefront of legislators' minds. Taking place annually in nearly 300 congressional districts across the country, artists and industry professionals advocate for updates to music legislation on behalf of today's creators, and more importantly, the next generation, to ensure they can make a living from their craft.
- Launching MusiCares' 20th Anniversary Giving Campaign and raising more than \$12 million for MusiCares, further ensuring music people have a place to turn in times of financial, medical, and



personal need; and launching the MusiCares Hurricane Relief Fund in 2005 and Nashville Flood Relief fund in 2010—when Hurricane Katrina and floods devastated the lives of people in the Gulf Coast region and Nashville respectively—bringing necessary and immediate assistance and support to music people in need. In 2017, he orchestrated the establishment of a relief fund to support members of the music community affected by the recent devastation of the hurricanes in Florida, Texas, and Puerto Rico.

- Spearheading efforts to open the GRAMMY Museum at L.A. Live in Dec. 2008, in partnership with AEG. The one-of-a-kind cutting-edge Museum—which features interactive, permanent, and traveling exhibits with four floors of dynamic and engaging multimedia presentations—continues to experience great success within the music industry and with music fans from around the world. In 2016, the Museum opened the first official GRAMMY Museum outside of Los Angeles—GRAMMY Museum Mississippi—located in Cleveland, Miss.; followed by the GRAMMY Museum Gallery® at the Musicians Hall of Fame in Nashville, Tenn. in 2016; and the GRAMMY Museum Experience™ Prudential Center in Newark, N.J in 2017.
- Leading the merger of the GRAMMY Museum and GRAMMY Foundation® into the newly expanded GRAMMY Museum, which offers the best of each organization's initiatives in preservation, education, exhibitions, and public programming. The integrated organization is the leading educational institution dedicated to broadening the historical and cultural significance of music.

Under Portnow's leadership, the annual GRAMMY Awards® telecast has enjoyed an upswing over the past decade. The average audience for the awards from 2011-2017 is 28.18 million viewers, including the nearly 40 million viewers who watched the 2012 telecast, a higher average than the '90s or '00s. Recently, he spearheaded negotiations with the Academy's longstanding broadcast partner CBS, keeping the annual GRAMMY telecast on the network through 2021. He also expanded this partnership to include a series of new GRAMMY specials including the "GRAMMY Salute To Music Legends®" broadcasts featured on PBS' "Great Performances" series. Additionally, Portnow has expanded the Academy's international outreach as the annual GRAMMY Awards telecast is now seen in more than 190 countries. He also was instrumental in facilitating the annual Latin GRAMMY Awards® move to Spanish-language network Univision, where the telecast has enjoyed great success and significant rating increases, and extending the partnership to include new Latin GRAMMY specials.

History

Born in Manhattan, N.Y., Portnow is a professional musician who has played with various bands and has worked as a studio sideman, playing bass and guitar. He graduated with a bachelor's degree from George Washington University, where he served as cultural affairs director booking concerts for the university, and later was elected to an unprecedented two-year term as student body president.

In 1971, Portnow formed his own firm, Portnow-Miller Company, Inc., where he served as president. His client list included RCA Records, The Entertainment Company, Babylon Records, and Playboy Records. Portnow's services incorporated radio promotion, marketing and creative services, music publishing, and record production.



The Screen Gems Publishing Group, later acquired by EMI, named him manager of talent acquisitions and development in 1972. He established the record production division for the company, working with the industry's premier producers, arrangers, musicians, and songs from writer/artists including Fleetwood Mac, Carole King, Melissa Manchester, and Cat Stevens. Portnow also negotiated domestic and international agreements in both the recording and music publishing areas.

A staff producer for RCA Records, Portnow was promoted to the post of executive producer in 1977. He was transferred from New York to West Coast operations in the newly created position of division vice president, artist and repertoire. He was responsible for negotiations that included a distribution arrangement for Elton John's Rocket Records.

In April 1979, he became the senior vice president for 20th Century Fox Records, and was promoted to President the following January. Portnow was responsible for the artistic and financial turnaround of the company. The industry regained respect for the label, crediting the label's and Portnow's success to the development of key new artists (including three gold albums and a gold single from GRAMMY winner Stephanie Mills).

In March 1982, Portnow was named vice president, artists and repertoire, West Coast for Arista Records by Clive Davis. As the principal West Coast executive, he was responsible for all West Coast activity and he functioned as general manager for the company. He also worked on Whitney Houston's stunning debut album in addition to projects involving many of Arista's top acts such as Barry Manilow, Billy Ocean, the Thompson Twins, and Dionne Warwick.

In February of 1985, Portnow was appointed vice president, artists and repertoire, for EMI America Records where he was responsible for all A&R activity worldwide. In addition to supervising all new artist acquisitions, Portnow worked with artists including David Bowie, Sheena Easton, Corey Hart, Nona Hendryx, and Evelyn "Champagne" King. He was instrumental in establishing a black music department, played a major role in the signing of superstar Robert Palmer, and brought platinum and gold album recording artists Pet Shop Boys and Najee to the company.

In 1987, he was named music supervisor for Frank Mancuso Jr.'s production of *Permanent Record* for Paramount Pictures. Music from the film was on the Epic Records soundtrack album, which included the first film underscore as well as songs by Joe Strummer. Throughout his career, Portnow has been involved in many soundtrack projects, including such smashes as *Ghostbusters*, *9 To 5*, *The Stunt Man*, *The World's Greatest Lover*, and the 1986 hit *About Last Night*.

Just prior to becoming President of the Recording Academy, Portnow served as senior vice president, West Coast operations for the Zomba Group of Companies, which included Jive Records, Volcano, Verity and Silvertone Records, Zomba Music Publishing, as well as Zomba's Film and Television Music operations. Zomba, the world's largest and leading independent music company, was sold to Bertelsmann in late 2002 for a historic \$2.7 billion.



Portnow currently sits on the executive board, Music & Entertainment Industry for the City of Hope, where he previously served an unprecedented three-year term as President of the Music and Entertainment Industry chapter from 2000–2002, raising significant funds for the world-renowned cancer treatment and research center. In October 2003, the City Of Hope presented Portnow with its top philanthropy honor, the Spirit of Life Award, at a gala event that raised more than \$2.3 million to benefit research and treatment efforts. He also was named the UJA Federation of NY's Music Visionary of the Year at its annual luncheon in June 2014. Other honors include the George Washington University's Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award, honorary doctorate from Berklee School of Music, and inclusion in *Billboard* magazine's Power 100 and the Variety500 industry lists.