

# MVD KEEPS EXPANDING PAST AUDIOVISUAL

**ALMOST 30 YEARS AGO**, the MVD Entertainment Group sprang up from industry veteran Tom Seaman's business acumen on music videotape distribution. Seaman built a family-run business that is now a full-service music and movie distributor specializing in DVD, Blu-ray, CD, vinyl and music merchandise, including limited-edition collectibles. The family-run business is preserved today with Tom's son, Ed Seaman, leading the charge as MVD's COO.



MVD COO, Ed Seaman

**GOLDMINE:** MVD distributes a lot of "audiovisual content" on DVD/Blu-ray – from Patsy Cline live footage to '60s documentaries on the Beatles and Dylan. Is it safe to say that this format is your best seller?

**ED SEAMAN:** Music-related film is still a huge part of our business, but we've expanded so much in the last 15 years in terms of content and genres. So music films are now about one-third of our overall business,

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for us – essentially the whole was bigger than the sum of its parts.

**GM:** Is there a specific, recent audio release that has done well for MVD?

**ES:** The Todd Rundgren ("Global" album) is doing really well and we expected that; his fans are so loyal and he supports his releases extremely well, doing tours, interviews, in-stores, whatever it takes.

**GM:** You recently welcomed Let Them Eat Vinyl Records to your distribution list. Let Them Eat Vinyl Records brings a niche to many American listeners who enjoy bootleg albums – concert audio that isn't mass produced.

**ES:** We are buying these non-exclusively – we really see it as filling a demand for the fans.

**GM:** You also distribute many other foreign

with non-music film at about one-third and audio distribution the other one-third.

**GM:** Is there a specific music genre or artist that sells the best with audiovisual? For instance, the Beatles docs must do well.

**ES:** It's a funny question. What sells best in music films largely has to do with the collectability of an artist along with the previous exploitations by that artist. The biggest factor is the collectability. If you see lots of people walking around with an artist's T-shirt, that usually means that artist will sell well on home video. And, of course, the quality and content is crucial, considering how fans interact and chatter in today's world; when the fans start talking about how great a music doc is, the sales follow. And vice versa.

**GM:** MVD founder Tom Seaman initially focused on music videotape.

**ES:** Indeed – and MVD stands for Music Video Distributors. About 10 years ago at the height of DVD sales, we were at a convention and someone looked at our Music Video Distributors banner and said, "So, you guys sell videotapes or something?" We decided to rebrand at that moment.

**GM:** MVD also distributes soundtracks. Please elaborate on how well soundtracks

sell. Soundtracks seem to do better than people are aware, no?

**ES:** We've gained some critical mass with soundtracks, picking up some nice labels and great content. It is a natural progression for us, in many ways the missing link between film and music. I believe collectability is critical on packaged goods for soundtracks, whereas digitally it is far more impulse purchase.

**GM:** It does make it unique that the soundtracks you have are available in more than just CD format – for instance, the limited-edition, color vinyl of the soundtrack for the film "Song One." A film like "Song One" – it's setting of the Greenwich Village folk scene – seems perfect for your kind of distribution.

**ES:** Vinyl ties into that collectibility and cult status – although the big draw on this release is that Jenny Lewis contributed to the songwriting.

**GM:** Talk about how MVD merged with Big Daddy Music Distribution to expand into audio distribution.

**ES:** MVD started audio distribution largely as a result of many of our European DVD labels stressing that they wished we did CD distribution, too. In 2006, we pulled the trigger and launched MVD Audio, and soon after took on the merge with Big Daddy, taking over their existing distribution. It solidified us as a player in audio distribution and really helped put us on the map. It also opened up certain audio customers and digital platforms

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labels: SlipTrick, Cherry Red Records, etc. How has your experience been with foreign labels in general? It definitely fills a void for record collectors in the U.S.

**ES:** For whatever reason our business model really resonates with European and U.K. labels. It has always been a large part of our business and looks to grow bigger. There is a European perception that U.S. companies are dishonest, and we have always worked very hard to dispel those feelings; I think our labels in Europe have a lot of faith and trust in us, and we are committed to never let them down.

**GM:** Will MVD be selling more and more vinyl in the near future?

**ES:** Of course – although we all have to be wary of the pitfalls of vinyl and make sure that what gets released *should be* released. We are all seeing too many records

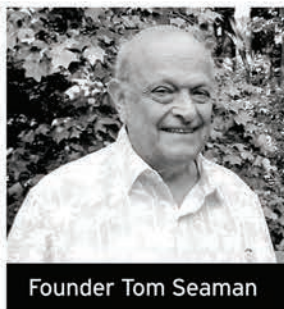
come out that are just a different color of an existing record; there is already backlash about this kind of thing. The good news is that fans have access to so much data these days and are more savvy as a result. So records that shouldn't have been released in the first place suffer from low sales. But yes – we are committed to the format.

**GM:** MVD has always been a family-run business. Do you believe that a family-run business like MVD is more stable than conglomerates in today's entertainment industry?

**ES:** I don't know – running a business is a difficult balancing act no matter what. There are pros and cons with either. The personal commitments of family-run can work for or against the business. At the end of the day, regardless of ownership, the most important thing is having a team that treats the business like their own and commits themselves fully to their career. And that trait is not necessarily dependent on family-run businesses.

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– Patrick Prince



Founder Tom Seaman