

‘Musicians To Solve Our Health Problems?’

Vince McCartney As ‘Gold-Finger’

By: Damion Rochester

The music industry is a lot tougher than others may think. Most aspiring artists believe that they too possess that same intense level of tenacity and laser focus as *Beyoncé*. However, calculate being a wife; a mother; a business woman; an actress; a songwriter; a singer; and a political activist; multiplied by being a global touring Mega Superstar, who outperforms and outshines the most elite dancers on the stage with her, equals a lot of stamina. *Beyoncé* is a rarity in the music industry. For a musician with an ambition like *Beyoncé’s*, stamina in the business means being in top health mentally and physically.

The music industry is plagued with unhealthy lifestyle that is both damaging to the mind and the body. Easy access to alcohol; substance abuse and addiction; working irregular long hours throughout all levels of their career; and

touring with high anxiety stress and performance anxiety are just some of the symptoms that lead to the death of many legends in the music industry.

There is a deep-rooted mental-health crisis amongst many musicians in the industry, whose addiction to drugs and alcohol lead to their fatality. Celebrities, such as: *Kurt Cobain*, who was heavily on heroine and overdosed on alcohol committed suicide with a shotgun to his head on April 5th 1994 in Seattle, WA. *Amy Winehouse*, a soul & jazz singer, haunted by her tragic life story was addicted to alcohol and drugs; *Winehouse* died of alcohol addiction on July 23rd 2011, in Camden Town, London, UK.

Whitney Houston was an iconic Multi-Grammy Award Winning Superstar. Her long addiction to drugs is suspected to be the cause of her tragic accidental drowning, in her bathtub, at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, CA in 2012. Legendary King of Pop *Michael Jackson* died on June 29th 2009, in Holmby Hills, Los Angeles, CA from an addiction to and abuse of prescription drugs. *David Bowie’s* addiction to cocaine could have had adverse effects to his cancer treatments. *Bowie* died on January 10th 2016 in Manhattan, NY.

Other legendary musicians who lived an unhealthy addictive lifestyle with drugs and alcohol includes: *Ozzy Osbourne*; *Anthony Kiedis*, of the *Red Hot Chili Peppers*; *Natalie Cole*; *Syd Barrett*, infamously known in Britain’s acid/LSD rock scene; *Neil Young*; *Elton John*; *Izzy Stradlin of Guns N’ Roses* who ended up in a 96-hour coma for digestively smuggling drugs into the borders of Japan; *Legendary Louis Armstrong*; *Ray Charles*; and *Notorious B.I.G.* are just a few of the great music legends who have all taken the plunge into an addictive lifestyle of drugs and alcohol.

A 2015 study from the *Washington Post*, compared musicians’ life expectancy to the genre of the music they play. The study showed that *Hip Hop and Rap was at a homicidal rate of 51%; Metal 36.2% and Punk Rock 30% rate of accidental death; Pop 26.7%, R&B 26.8% and Jazz 30.6% rate of cancer fatality*; all of which is coupled with the high risk to drugs and alcohol addiction. With entry to fame, wealth, influence, and power why would a musician choose an unhealthy lifestyle of drugs and alcohol addiction, causing them to lose sight of their health and career, and ultimately leading them to their fall from grace?

One analysis could be the psychological stress of having to remain being on top of the music charts while gaining access to alcohol and drugs and instant wealth; in addition to the anxiety of job security and stress from an unstable finance, not to mention the cut of artistic budget, should a more marketable musician hit the scene. This however is only a snippet of the problem. In her 2012 article on *thatgrapejuice.net*, 5 Time Grammy Award Winner, *Lauren-Hill*, explains the corruption within the music industry. *"I entered into my craft full of optimism (which I still possess), but immediately saw the suppressive force with which the system attempts to maintain its control over a given paradigm. I've seen people promote addiction, use sabotage, black listing, media bullying and any other coercion technique they could, to prevent artists from knowing their true value, or exercising their full power."* According to *Lauren-Hill*, access to drugs and alcohol is only part of the problem. The real issue is when executives in the music industry strip the artist of his/her true self and use every coercive tactic necessary including drugs, alcohol, and media bullying to get what they want from the artist.

Thankfully however, not all music executives are vicious sharks exploiting artists and feeding their addiction with drugs and alcohol. *Vince McCartney*, a Multi and Double Platinum Producer and Chief Engineer at *GoldHeart Records*, is one music executive whose 30+ years in the business has only benefited the artists he has worked with. With *Quincy Jones* as his mentor, *McCartney* has worked with some of the world's greatest artists, such as: *Sade; Julio Iglesias; Nas; 50 Cents; Ziggy Marley; Will Smith; Etta James; and the Wu-Tang Clang*, just to name a few.

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Vince McCartney whose track record includes being a Studio Engineer & Record Producer at *Sony Music*, and Chief Engineer at *The Johnson's Record Studio, Planet Sound Studio* and *Compass Point Studio* in the

Nassau Bahamas(*McCartney's* native land), saw first-hand the crippling effects of corruption in the music industry for both the artist and the music executive. Prior to leaving *Sony Music*, *McCartney* was offered the Chief Engineering position at *The Hit Factory Studio*, where he would have collaborated with the King of Pop, *Michael Jackson*. However his feelings of artistic suffocation and corruption caused him to renounce the position. *"I worked every part of the music industry, engineering, technician and producer. My life was set! I was and am the tip of the spear. I could travel around the world and demand my own price as an engineer. The issue for me is that I had something inside of me. What was suffocating inside was knowing that there is a part of me that wanted to live. I was called Gold-Finger. Whatever I touched they are going to make money off of. I felt like I needed to get out of the situation. I have untouched talent. I wasn't playing music the way I saw it."* His departure from *Sony Music*, lead to the genesis of his record label *GoldHeart Records*.

For *Gold-Finger* who sites *Beyoncé* as an example of healthy stamina in the business and who lives a dedicated life of practicing good karma for his business,

suggests that an artists' longevity rest in practicing healthy living: spiritually, physically and mentally. *Gold-Finger* works with new artist through a program he created called *The Right Step*. *The Right Step* is a very selective program, where the artist is screened and evaluated for stamina as he moves through the pre-production – production phase of his career, while unlocking his full potential.

About the program *Gold-Finger* says *“Working with new artists, I ask questions such as: Tell me some of your favorite songs; tell me some of your favorite artist; tell me some of your favorite lyrics; and tell me some of your favorite melodies, very simple. Like a psychiatrist, I can pull out what kind of stories they like to tell, and what kind of music they like to feel. Eventually they will see themselves coming together. The experience of being with me is a journey into yourself.”* With over 30yrs of experience in the business, working with *Gold-Finger* in *The Right Step Program* would be a place for the artist to comfortably *“let his/her hair down and unleash the inner spirit flowing inside.”* The principles of karma and spiritual meditation have long been a practice for *Gold-Finger*. During his earlier years in the Bahamas at the *Compass Point Studio*,

Gold-Finger remembers late nights after gruesome studio sessions. *“I was always a grand pianist in the studio room. When we were done, late at nights, I would let my hand sit there and meditate. I would let my hand just touch a note in the dark, and I would just follow along and start playing. That was one way of relaxing, the ripple effect. I would close my eyes and play in the dark.”*

Although he now has his own studio, *GoldHeart Records*, to help him disengage from the corruption in the business, still, working along various temperamental personalities in the business who do not practice a lifestyle of karma and meditation, can be distracting. *Gold-Finger* explains how after all these years, working in dire situations where personalities clash, he has been able to remain focused with clarity to produce the great music he envisions. *“As an engineer when I was younger, I had a picture that I used to imagine in front of me and Mixing frequencies together, I had this tunnel, this road, with trees on the side of it, it was a 3D image that I put together in my head. Walking down that pathway I could see the image building in my head, I could see the picture in front of me. When you could walk through there and see the*

song, the difference in real time and seeing the intro of the verses. The first step in the road is like a journey on the road, you could see everything falling into place. It helped me through a lot, being able to focus on the actual mix. The intro starts and then it goes up, valleys and mountains, and the suspense of music. The image allows creating suspense, different parts of it that keeps the listener interested and attracted to it.”

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Music executives who are constantly negotiating deals, working long hours alongside various egos in the recording room, and refining the temperament and brand identities of their artists throughout the various digital platforms and news media gives a glimpse to the intense stress of the industry today. This unwanted stress that comes with being a music executive could have adverse effect on their health and ultimately become the deal-breaker with maintaining their business.

When *Gold-Finger* suffered an appendicitis attack during the summer of 2016, he was

working on 5 albums. After feeling a massive pain in his abdomen post a late dinner from working in the studio all night, he was hospitalized at 5am, only to discover that his appendix had been ruptured and that ulcers were attacking his intestines.

Post his appendicitis treatment *Gold-Finger* was only left with 1 album project. Four of his clients left him while he was admitted in the hospital. He explains how having poor health: mentally, physically and spiritually can affect his business. *“When it comes to the business that I do, I cannot put together music if my spirit is not in the right place. I cannot put together music if I don’t feel physically fit. You have to be in the core of everything. You have to be able to perform. I cannot fake it; this is one of those businesses that you cannot fake. It is a big thing to be totally in shape out there on the stage when representing your-self. That is a big selling point. Physically you are out there and you have to mentally stay focused, from performing, to playing the guitar, to playing the drums, some people dance around, so health is a very important part of this business.”*

When asked about his experience with the doctors at the hospital, *Gold-Finger* revealed that he felt very safe in the doctors’ care and

that it is a pride-less phenomenon. *“There isn’t any pride that comes with seeing a doctor. If you have to strip naked in front of a doctor then so be it. No one cares what your body looks like, if they have to perform a test on you then so be it, no one is judging you.”* About the musical color he would denote to a doctor and health, he states *“white, because you want to feel healthy and pure. And light blue is a ray of hope. When I think about health, the color is white. It is fitting to say a doctor would be a light blue.”* Since his health scare *Gold-Finger* has been eating better and exercising. Which he believes has brought some positive results to his business. *“I feel healthier. I am eating better and exercising. I have been mainly taking care of myself. It was one of those scares that you don’t necessarily need in your life when you are a professional. I have a lot of commitments from people who have invested their interest in me.”* He further explains that because a big part of his job entails staying out with artists and networking all of the time, that exercising and maintaining a robust diet of chicken and shrimp salad has lead to him losing over 50lbs.

Gold-Finger shared that music is a neurological remedy to relieve mental stress and anxiety, a

successful tool he has used throughout his 30+ years in the music industry. *“For myself I had my own collection of songs on a CD. It helped me to focus and changed whatever I was going through that was blocking my mind from being a 100%, it would change my mood. I listen to the CD in a particular order. I have a collection of songs in different mental parts of my life. I have my own medical music bank.”*

Gold-Finger’s application to music in such a neurological cathartic release to stress is not new. Ancient societies considered music as the essential tool to calm the spirit and out-of-control thoughts. Science has also discovered that music has the power to lower blood pressure. Moreover, Music Therapy has been used as a cognitive shield to protect against post-trauma and push through the borders of inner strength. An example is *Jeremy Deliotte*, a 22yr old in 2001, who was assaulted by three men, set on fire and left to die in his New York Apartment. Using Music Therapy, he pushed through his post-trauma after joining the *Music Therapy Program* at *Beth Abraham Health Service*. *Deliotte* has since written and recorded songs about his life. He uses music as the central source to connect himself to the successes he is having in his

life. Music Therapy gave him the gift to self-express and to feel hopeful about his life again.

Music also has the power to be felt by the deaf at a greater frequency than those who hear it.

Gapersblock.com mentions the vibration in music and the deaf musical experience, "Music is felt on a physical level by everyone. Getting a buzzing in our core when the bass is plucked or feeling the power of a drum that mimics our life force is universal. A hearing person can only try to imagine the sensations that are much more developed in a deaf person. One can try touching the ground and placing a back against walls at shows trying to see if they can tell the difference in rhythm and the type of instrument being played by the feelings that hum along the body when the music infiltrates the molecules in the walls and in ourselves as well."

We are a social action platform for a global generation that wants to solve the world's biggest challenges.

There is a higher purpose for music beyond the limited scope of drugs, sex, rehab, and rock & roll. Music has been around for over 40,000

years, long before the ancient civilizations of our species. According to *Historyworld.net*, "in 1995, deep in a cave in Slovenia occupied 45,000 years ago by Neanderthals, a flute was found. It was made from the leg bone of a young bear. Though broken at both ends, it still has four finger holes. In its prime it could produce at least four notes." It is fair to conclude that 45,000 years ago, fame and addiction to drugs and alcohol was not interwoven with the lifestyle of the early musical Neanderthal. Music would have most likely been used as a symbiotic tool to quell various disputes within their civilization.

Because of the global outreach that it has, it is evident that music serves a function for the greater good of the entire world. Today we see leading examples by musicians and music executives, like *Vince McCartney aka Gold-Finger*, who have joined the movement of *Global Citizens* to end poverty by 2030. Part of *Global Citizens'* mission statement reads, "We are a social action platform for a global generation that wants to solve the world's biggest challenges." The musicians involved are actuating the power of music. They are redefining the role music ought to play in society. They are using the gift of music to advocate for universal

human rights and health care for all. *Beyoncé, Jay Z, President Obama* and *First Lady Michelle Obama* are also members of *Global Citizens*. *Rihanna, Kendrick Lamar, Usher, and Eddie Vedder* who are also members of *Global Citizens* performed in the *Global Citizen Festival Lineup* on July 27th 2016. Each year, *Global Citizens* puts on a concert with some of the biggest names in music. The festival is promoted all over the world.

Music is supposed to empower and better the lives of everyone on the planet. For musicians, in order for them to reach their full potential and perform at their highest peak with great stamina, their lives must radiate positivity and health, without addiction to drugs and alcohol. For the music executive, mental stress and anxiety can be countered with the creation of good music while visibly living a lifestyle that rejuvenates the positive flow of karma within their working environments. There is health for humanity in music. Music is supposed to speak to our collective souls to help us with becoming altruistic and productive members of society, moving us towards the beat of a universal and familial rhythm that awakens our connection to the human organism.