

Memphis to host four-day urban music conference in convention center

By Jim Masilak

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Last year, Urban Network's annual Music-Entertainment & Marketing Summit was scrapped after Hurricane Ike landed near Houston.

Organizers hope for better luck when they bring the four-day industry gathering to Memphis for the first time in June.

"We think it's a perfect market. It's good to come to a market like Memphis that has such an incredibly deep music history in all kinds of genres," said Miller London, publisher and CEO of [Urban Network](#), a Los Angeles-based trade and consumer publication founded in 1988. "It's a perfect place for us to be."

While Urban Network's annual summit has traditionally been a West Coast affair, organizers are expanding into new markets and increasing the number of events from one to three each year.

Following the year's first event in Los Angeles in March, Urban Network will host a four-day summit at the Memphis Cook Convention Center from June 11-14. It will be open to industry executives and the general public alike.

London expects to draw 2,000 people to the Memphis event, which Urban Network hopes will have regional appeal and develop into an annual event.

Urban Network officials have worked with a number of local bodies, including the Memphis Music Foundation, to bring the summit here.

"On our list of things that are designed to help what we're trying to do here, having a major music industry conference come to Memphis is one of the top items on our list," Memphis Music Foundation president Dean Deyo said. "When this opportunity opened up, it's something everybody jumped on to try to make happen."

David A. Mitchell, a contributing editor at Urban Network, described the summit as an opportunity for attendees to network and learn about the music business.

"We bring the right people," said Arthur Mitchell, Urban Network's vice president of business development. "The hardest thing about becoming an independent artist or label is not knowing what to do next. We can help you learn what to do, where to go and who to see. We can help point you in the right direction."

In addition to panel discussions and seminars, there will also be live entertainment throughout the weekend.

Past participants at Urban Network events include such artists as Will Smith, Wyclef Jean, Lionel Richie, Destiny's Child and Mary J. Blige.

London, a former Motown Records executive, said Urban Network is still in the early planning stages for the Memphis event. However, he hopes Stax Records "will be a big part of what we do because it played such a big part in putting Memphis on the map."

Urban Network Music- Entertainment & Marketing Summit

When: June 11-14, 2009

Where: Memphis Cook Convention Center

What: A networking, informational and entertainment event for music executives, recording artists, the radio broadcasting community, music retailers, new media strategists, producer-songwriters, music publishers, entertainment attorneys, managers, film makers, entrepreneurs, and financiers

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