



## Sharon Van Etten

**Date Signed:** 2009  
**Label:** Language of Stone  
**Type of Music:** Singer/Songwriter

### —CONTACTS—

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**A&R:** Greg Weeks

Realizing the implications of her dream in her late teens, Sharon Van Etten moved from Tennessee, where she worked booking bands for a venue, to New Jersey, where she lived in her parents' basement in preparation for a move to New York.

Van Etten played locally and used her time behind a liquor store counter to create one-of-a-kind packages for her CDs, which contained whatever songs she was working on at the time. "The songs were always different," recalls Van Etten.

Soon Van Etten was in New York. "The few people I knew there really took me under their wing. They showed me their favorite venues, introduced me to the owners, and helped me put together shows when I didn't know anything about the scene. Getting to know people and enjoying the music was the first thing." Like many before her, Van Etten faced the problem of finding a job that would allow her to tour at length. "I started interning at a label just to learn the back end of it. I'm not a very organized person. Promotion and publicity? I had no idea how to go about that before."

As far as the music, "You have to figure out a way where people know it's something different and exciting and make it worth their time as well as your own." Accomplished musician and Language of Stone owner Greg Weeks knew he was seeing something special when he met Van Etten in England in 2008.

Weeks and Van Etten recorded her gorgeous, ghostly debut, "Because I Was in Love" at Hexham Head studios and released the recording on Language of Stone. Van Etten approached the project as a collaboration rooted in mutual respect. "It was really relaxed and comfortable. We trusted each other; it was pretty much a handshake. I knew he had my best interests at heart. No contract, no nothing."

Van Etten is currently negotiating publishing rights and the record will find international release through Drag City.

"It should be pretty 'out there,'" laughs Van Etten.

—Joe James



## Cash Cash

**Date Signed:** March 2008  
**Label:** Universal Republic Records  
**Type of Music:** Pop-Rock  
**Band Members:** Jean Paul Makhlof, vocals, guitar; Alex Luke Makhlof, keyboards, sampling; Samuel Frisch, bass, vocals; Anthony Villacari, drums; Michael Doerr, guitar.

### —CONTACTS—

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**A&R:** Avery Lipman, Ben Adelson

New York-area band Cash Cash labored earnestly in pursuit of a deal, churning out song after alternative song. But the efforts bore little fruit. Frustration mounting, lead singer Jean Paul Makhlof penned "Party in Your Bedroom," which was intended as a tongue-in-cheek pop-rock ditty. Despite its blithe beginnings, it earned club play and caught on. Offers from no less than 10 major and indie labels poured in and the band signed with Universal Republic.

Makhlof recalls, "The song was a joke at first, but then we listened to it and it was fresh. We decided to record a few more in the same style. Later we were driving around with some friends and played 'Party' for them. Random people in the car started to sing along. I'd always tried to write a song like that and we'd finally done it. People saw it as a fun-time party song."

Makhlof began to push the single at New York City clubs. Soon a buzz developed and his efforts were rewarded when New York DJ Rob Hitt of Crush Management offered to spin it. "Everybody started talking about it, wondering who it was," Makhlof recalls. "All the other DJs picked it up and it would get played four times a night. At that point, labels wanted to know who we were. When you don't take yourself too seriously and try to do something new, people start to notice."

It's a story underpinned by hard work. "We spent six months crafting those three or four songs that got us the record deal," Makhlof explains. "A lot of bands get two demos done and then go on DIY tours and lose money. I was never a fan of that model. If you're going to do a DIY tour, you have to make sure it's worth it."

*Take it to The Floor*, the full-length CD on Universal Republic, is now in release.

—Rob Putnam



## Michael Keith

**Date Signed:** March 2008  
**Label:** FARINA Records, LLC  
**Type of Music:** R&B, Pop, Soul, Hip-Opera

### —CONTACTS—

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**A&R:** Carlo J. Farina

If you're an artist struggling with the decision to pursue an indie versus a major label deal, consider giving Michael Keith a buzz. As a member of the Grammy-winning band 112, the pressure of a recording deal with Sean Combs' Bad Boy Records, combined with a lack of experience in the music industry, led to a few bumps in the road.

"One of the mistakes 112 made in our first contract was we didn't listen to our lawyers," Keith laments. "It was a family-oriented deal; we assumed everyone had our best interest at heart and that wasn't the case." Still, Keith learned from Combs about the importance of perception and how to develop a thick skin. As Keith now explains, "Music and artistry come second, but that's the name of the game. You gotta play the game."

After 12 years, 112 felt it was time to part ways. "It was time for all of us musically to break," Keith recalls. Yet he knew that labels would expect 112's style from him, and in order to be a new artist he would have to go it alone.

"Me and my manager Carlo J. Farina said, 'Let's just put a label together. Let's just do the paperwork and do it ourselves.'" They realized that with an established name and fan base, it was financially beneficial to start a label.

"On an independent label, as opposed to a major, you can sell fewer records," Keith says, "but end up earning more money at the end of the day." And with Farina, Keith says he is comfortable letting him take the reins of the business.

His first solo, self-titled album includes songs dedicated to his absent father and a self-described wedding song in "No More Tears." Keith feels he's paid homage to the Marvin Gayes of music, making it once again about beauty and love.

"With my album, I speak on different aspects of love. It's my job to say there are good dudes out there, and I am one of those good men."

—Paula Muñoz