

It's a rap!

C21 star Jordan Tepper tasted success as a singer — but it's real estate that rocks his world

By JOSHUA RATCLIFFE

Being a musician is passion that requires full-time effort. Whether one is looking to become the next major pop star, or loves playing their instrument as a hobby, to be an above-average musician or a recording artist requires a tremendous amount of time and personal sacrifice, which may not leave much time for anything else.

Yet the recording industry is a very volatile world, where some eek out a comfortable living, but most need a day job to supplement their "labor of love."

Jordan Tepper tasted some highs and lows in the music business; experiences that helped drive him into a career in real estate.

"I've been in the business since 2000, but I was always interested in real estate and I thought it would be a nice transition from the world of music to the world executive director of sales for Century 21 New York Metro, a position he's held since January 2008.



Tepper at the height of his career as a rapper.

Prior to joining Century 21, he was the director of sales for Manhattan Apartments, Inc. And though Tepper's initial jump into the real estate business was driven by his desire to still maintain the aura of being a musician, ultimately Tepper found out that real estate was a place where he could showcase his other talents.

"Real Estate is flexible, entrepreneurial and has the aspects of marketing and selling which I felt suited my skill set," said Tepper. "But mainly it's a career that is not necessarily a structured 9 to 5. I could build my

own business and get involved in the more creative side of business and marketing."

Tepper began his career in music as a rapper in the late 1980's, going by the moniker "J.T.," and was signed to the EastWest/Atlantic record label.

The New York City native (by way of Brooklyn and Roslyn, Long Island) released an album called Kick The Funk in 1991, and included songs produced by well-known hip-hop luminaries Clark Kent and Parrish "PMD" Smith from the rap group EPMD.

One of the songs reached number five on the US dance charts. Recalls Tepper, "It was a remix by Kenny Dope and Louie Vega. Jennifer Lopez was one of the dancers in my video before she became the big star that she is. Although I didn't have any huge success, it was an interesting experience."

With his career as a rapper waning, Tepper began producing music for other artists as well as doing some commercial work for the MTV network. By the mid-1990's, he made the musical transition from hip-hop to rock; putting his MC hat down and letting his vocal talents fly as a singer/songwriter for local New York bands such as Liquid and Waxx. "[One of the] bands at

the time had a development deal with Capitol/EMI, but then the band split up and it never really went further than that," remembered Tepper. "After that experience, [the next band I worked with] did local work in the tri-state area; recorded some demos and played at a lot of shows, but we never got signed."

With his musical careers seemingly on the outs, Tepper turned to the real estate profession and made an impact very quickly.

"I did a lot of transactions in my first year," said Tepper. "I developed a good business plan and then stuck to it. Jerry Weinstein [founder and president] of Manhattan Lofts in late 2004, and it did reasonably well."

Now at Century 21, Tepper sees a lot of parallels between real estate and the recording industry that he feels have helped him along the way, particularly from a marketing perspective. "Music these days is all about marketing and so is selling real estate, especially in Manhattan, where you're only as good as your representation and your presentation. And how you market yourself as an agent, your company, your listings and everything in between. If you're not marketing or distinguishing yourself in some unique way, then you're not standing out."

And that strategy is especially helpful when operating through the rough, but lucrative property terrain that is New York City; an area that Tepper prefers. Why?

Because "New York is the number 1 market for metropolitan cities around the world. New York has the largest concentration of wealth than any single metropolitan area in the world,"

Tepper added. "There's so much opportunity in such a short radius of neighborhoods that you can really excel. You don't have to drive around, you get to show properties quite easily, and there are so many buildings. The area is more vertical than horizontal, where you can have someone doing multiple deals in one building, and that's the reality of our market. Accessibility is very easy."

With the first hint of a slow-down just starting to be felt in the city as recorded sales dip for the first time in 18 years, "J.T." isn't worried. He rests his laurels on



"financially solvent individuals in Manhattan, who tend to buy international markets."

Plus there's another factor to Tepper's confidence: international buyers. "Because of the weak dollar,

It was a remix by Kenny Dope and Louie Vega. Jennifer Lopez was one of the dancers in my video before she became the big star that she is.

overseas buying is probably occurring more than it's ever been before," he said.

Yet one should not mistake the availability of wealthy local and foreign buyers as grounds to slack off.

It's true that New York City is loaded with many financially, well-to-do individuals and families. And because of that fact, it is also equally true about an exponential number of brokers vying for the same pot, forcing top brokers to stay sharp and ahead of the competition.

For Tepper, who still works on his music as a hobby, he credits his focus on his work to his days as "J.T."

"A successful broker always happens to be an aggressive and persistent personality. Someone that lives, eats and breathes real estate. A person who enjoys the challenge of making deals, and that's me."



Tepper gave stardom a second shot with two rock groups, including Liquid (above) whose members split after failing to sign a record deal.