

In conjunction with the in-house production advances, Massey brought in two partners (recording engineer Chris Sinclair and video maker Dean McKenzie) to form Kaiun Productions, a company run within Deepgrooves, who facilitate all production for the label. Now, to produce a music video, Deepgrooves only have to hire a crew and rent cameras as required.

"We have broadcast quality digital editing, so instead of going to a post-production house and spending \$2500 editing, we can do it in-house. What we're doing is pulling down our outgoing overheads and costs, and increasing our turnover."

The majority of Deepgrooves' cost cutting is made during the recording of singles and albums. With recording studios in Auckland charging anywhere from \$200 to \$1500 a day, the advantage of a label operating their own facility is immediately obvious. Recent singles by Sulata, Ermeahn, and Jordan Reyne, were recorded at Deepgrooves. Three The Hard Way have made demos there, and Urban Disturbance and Jules Issa are nearing the completion of their albums.

While much progress is being made in the promotion and production areas of Deepgrooves Entertainment, Massey is experiencing difficulties with the more personal side of the label — the artists. At present, Deepgrooves relationships with Grace and Greg Fleming are strained (if not severed in one case), to say the least. Massey is not slow to point out his grievances.

"Artists are so impatient, most of the time an artist is their own worst enemy, they expect things to happen overnight. The only band, apart from Supergroove, that seems to be doing it at the moment is Shihad. They right up

there for me, not only in terms of music, but in terms of business nous, and getting off their ass and taking responsibility, and doing it themselves. A lot of the problem with Deepgrooves acts, is they stand around and come and ask for handouts. Some artists don't care about making money, there's no incentive for them, they just want to put out the best possible product whether it kills the label or not. We're going to tighten up on the label. In the past Deepgrooves has done everything — photos, artwork, in some cases, picked up the artist and taken them to the recording studio. It's not going to be like that anymore, the artist will have to be more accountable or they're fuckin' out the door. I think you'll find some of the artists on the compilation won't be with Deepgrooves by the end of the year."

Massey's statement was to be proven correct, but a lot sooner than probably even he expected. Earlier this year Fleming began recording the follow up to his *Codeine Road* album at the Lab Studio, with drummer/producer Wayne Bell. Work came to a halt in July when the initial budget for the recording ran out, and studio bills were not paid by Deepgrooves. When first interviewed, Massey insisted Fleming would release his second album on Deepgrooves, but there was no pot of gold to finance the completion of the project.

"Greg's got to wake up basically. We've already spent a five figure sum on the his new album, but what he wants and what is realistic are two completely different things. I really like Greg, but when it comes to making business calls he's got to wake up, he spends all his time in bars."

Days later, Fleming had told *RipItUp*

he would no longer be recording for Deepgrooves, and Massey stated he was dropping "30 percent" of the acts featured on *Deepgrooves 95*, though he would not name them as he claimed they had yet to be informed. Later *RipItUp* received a fax from Massey.

"Despite what numerous bartenders say, out of the ten artists working with the label (as per compilation) there have been only two acts which have caused any rumours. Grace wants to move to a major and Greg Fleming thinks he's on one. Albums for 96, Sulata, Jordan, Grace, Urban Disturbance."

Advised not to comment adversely by his lawyer, Fleming released the following statement: "The split from Deepgrooves was both mutual and amicable. At this point Wayne and I are pursuing other avenues in order to get this album out. Let's hope the music can finally speak for itself."

For the past two months, rumours in the industry have suggested that Grace were on the verge of leaving Deepgrooves, and inking a deal with one of the six major labels. This is despite the band still having one album to deliver as per their recording contract. Massey explains how the rumours started.

"This is the deal. We worked really hard with Grace, put a lot of money on them, \$50,000 or \$60,000 over 12 months into that band. We put the album out here, and got the album breaking even in New Zealand. We repackaged the album for its Australian release and lined up showcases in Sydney and Melbourne. A month before these were to happen, I woke up and watched *Music Nation*, it said, 'Grace have now left

Deepgrooves and have formed their own record label called Kokobutt, and they'll be recording on that'. When that came up, everyone pulled back, I mean, Festival [Deepgrooves' Australasian distributor] watch *Music Nation* as well."

Again, when first interviewed Massey was adamant no one was departing the label, saying Grace and Deepgrooves were, "working towards the second album."

Paul Iossa of Grace would not comment on the *Music Nation* item, except to say it was, "unfortunate", and that the band are "looking forward" to recording their second album with Deepgrooves, while Massey has reiterated his position on the affair. "Grace and I are currently working on a new album, [we] are working hard to present a united front after all the rumours. I think the band have realised what they've done has set them back year. We had problems and they've been resolved."

Whether Massey problems with his artists are resolved remains to be seen, but whatever happens, he remains determined to ensure Deepgrooves Entertainment remains a step or two ahead of the competition. His plans include the release of future Deepgrooves recordings on CD Rom and the Internet, Sega Games featuring his acts ("we could have Mortal Combat, Urban D battling Ermeahn, or Grace taking on Three The Hard Way"), and the big project, the one that Massey informed *RipItUp* was his "dream" in 1993.

"I guarantee we'll be sitting here in two years time, and we'll be watching films Deepgrooves have made. It's not idealistic, it's a business thing."

JOHN RUSSELL

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