



Can't Touch This: Memoir of a Disillusioned Music Executive

Wayne Edwards

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Hollywood, California. October 1988. "I'm afraid I've placed you in an untenable situation." When you're summoned by the company president and he starts the conversation with that, you know it's not going to end well. He was firing me. I wasn't surprised. But by the time the president sent for me, my ability to sign a sellable act was no longer a question mark. My first platinum act was about to blow past one million units sold. The decision to fire me, at the very least, was poorly timed. But from my standpoint this move had less to do with sales and more to do with corporate politics. My new boss and I, the two highest ranking black executives in Capitol Records, were openly feuding. My hope was that the new president had my back. And maybe he had for a while. But his loyalty was not to me. His boss, the newly appointed chairman and Ceo of Capitol-Emi, had brought him on board. The chairman and Ceo had also hired the new head of black promotion, who had in a poorly devised restructuring scheme, become my new boss. No matter how you did the math, the power base of the number-one white guy and the number-one black guy trumped any alliance between the two number twos. I was the lone outsider in the group and the low man on the totem pole. It was a bad combination that made letting me go the logical solution. Four years would pass, however, before I truly understood the magnitude of a moment that had far-reaching implications well beyond hit records and corporate business decisions. And so begins *Can't Touch This: Memoir of a Disillusioned Music Executive*, the fascinating story of one man's love affair with music and the industry determined to destroy it.

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