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NEW LOCAL LABEL STRONGFRONT FOCUSES ON ABORIGINAL ARTISTS

AARON EPP

Sitting on a white couch in the lounge area of his Main Street office, Jesse Green explained his vision for StrongFront, the record label he launched earlier this month.



Jesse Green recently launched StrongFront Records, and hopes it will become the Universal Studios of the north.

“The aboriginal population is growing so rapidly that eventually it will be the largest in North America,” said the 34-year-old. “We’re preparing the entertainment industry to be ready for it.”

Green grew up in Winnipeg, Vancouver and San Francisco. He is an Anishinabe, originally from the community of Shoal Lake, Ont. The son of bluesman Billy Joe Green, Jesse started his first band, PeaceMaker, when he was 17. They were the first aboriginal recording act with a CD in all of Canada, he said, and they toured for eight years.

“Once that fizzled out it was like, man, where is this all going?” Green said.

He took a TV internship in 1997 and started his own company, StrongFront Audio/Visual Productions Inc., two years later. It began with one \$3,000 computer in his mother's basement, and has since grown to include \$180,000 in equipment, one full-time employee, and numerous subcontractors.

It is his success in the audio/visual industry that has allowed him to expand into the recording industry. He's hoping the two aspects of his business can help each other out: his bands can create music for his video projects, and videos, websites and electronic press kits can be created for his bands.

"The goal of that, eventually, is to be a Universal Studios," Green said. "Just like these big studios in Hollywood. Our plan is to have an aboriginal version of that here."

The label has released four CDs so far—a greatest hits package by Green's father, discs by JC Campbell and C-Weed, and a CD/DVD package by X-Status, the metal trio he sings and plays guitar for.

Green wants to promote his label on a grassroots level. He wants to start by calling mom and pop stores on Manitoba's biggest native reserves, and expand from there.

"We're very optimistic that's where 99 per cent of the sales will happen once it's established. It's a need, and we're here to deliver."

"We're not trying to limit ourselves to the aboriginal people, but we know the best place to start is in our own community."

Green has partnered with Juno Award-winner Brandon Friesen and his 441 Records and Arbor Records imprints to help with the distribution of StrongFront products.

"As a budding record label, we definitely need strategic alliances like that," Green said. "We don't plan to get big overnight."

He'd like StrongFront to get big eventually, though, and he seems to have the business savvy necessary to do it. He speaks like a true

businessman, in any case. Throughout the interview, he repeatedly referred to the music and videos StrongFront produces as “the product,” and said X-Status released its CD/DVD in DVD packaging, and not a CD jewel case, because “market research shows [people have] more shelf space for a DVD.”

No matter what form of media, Jesse Green and StrongFront plan to deliver.

Smiling, he said, “I always say it’s all entertainment to me.”

StrongFront Records’ next release will be a new CD by Billy Joe Green. Visit www.strongfront.tv.