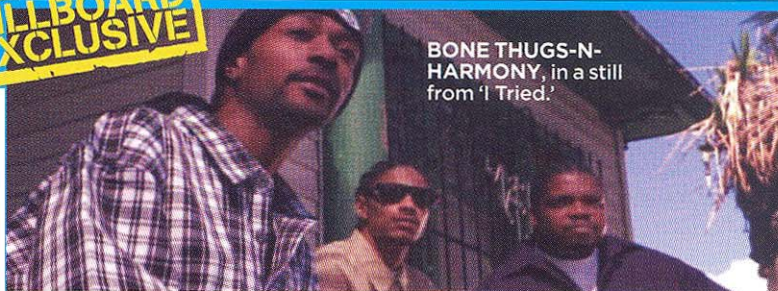


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EXCLUSIVE**



BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY, in a still from 'I Tried.'

HIP-HOP BY GAIL MITCHELL

Bone Thugs-N-Hollywood

Studio Initiates New Revenue Stream With Rap Group's DVD Movie

"I Tried," a feature film starring Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, will inaugurate a new music business model designed by African-American-owned film studio Codeblack Entertainment. The idea is to leverage record labels' existing promotional budgets to create an additional revenue stream.

The Codeblack concept centers on the lucrative DVD market. The company will shoot a full-length feature film starring the label's recording artist while concurrently producing that artist's music video. Then Codeblack and its label/artist production partner will release the movie on DVD. These films will be produced in much the same vein as TV/cable network movies, whose budgets range between \$750,000 and \$1.5 million. Scripts will involve no more than five main characters and locations.

Jeff Clanagan, president/CEO of Los Angeles-based Codeblack, says the new model addresses the twin concerns of declining record sales and digital piracy.

"Creating this piece of product with already allocated marketing dollars for key album releases is a way for record companies and artists to create and generate incremental revenue," Clanagan says.

"I Tried" will bow in September. Preceding it is the May 8 release of Bone Thugs-N-Harmony's new album,

"Strength & Loyalty," on Full Surface/Interscope Records. Lead track "I Tried," featuring Akon, is No. TK on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart this week.

The film "I Tried" is in postproduction. Its plot concerns what life would have been like if the late Ruthless Records founder and rap icon Eazy-E had not discovered the group. The film stars Hassan Johnson of "The Wire" and acting vet Chris Mulky, as well as Bone Thugs-N-Harmony members Layzie, Krayzie and Wish Bone. Prior to its DVD release, BET will premiere the film on a broadcast date yet to be determined.

The BET alliance takes into account another industry reality: The cable channel, like sister MTV, is opting for more original programming.

"You're not going to get as much video play these days," Codeblack executive VP/GM Quincy Newell says. "So being able to promote and then premiere a film on a video channel like BET is the equivalent of having heavy video rotation."

For the time being, Codeblack plans to pursue the broadcast outlet/DVD route, with the former contingent on the target demo for each project. However, Clanagan and Newell don't rule out the possibility of future theatrical releases. In the meantime, the pair is in discussions with more Universal labels as well as other record companies.

