

What Is Graffiti Productions?

Graffiti Productions, initiated by jazz composer/pianist Paul Serrato, produces, records, licenses, promotes and distributes music from its catalogue. It was created as an independent jazz label in 1991. Its emergence was an occurrence of timing.

Art student, Michael Stewart, an asthmatic, had been arrested for writing graffiti in a New York City subway station and died during the ordeal. Police misconduct was charged and the events sparked outrage among New Yorkers.

Paul's personal response to the tragedy was to compose *Life and Death of a Graffiti Artist* in memoriam. This was a funky, urban jazz composition in three movements reflecting the spontaneous energy of a newly formed band. Lee Lowenfish of WBAI, N.Y.C., invited Paul and the group to record the piece in the station's studio. One movement of the work was then included on *Nexus*, the debut release of Graffiti Productions. Independently promoted by Paul, jazz programmers picked up *Nexus* and a label was born.

Subsequent national attention was stirred when Barbara Marsh of The Wall Street Journal included Paul and Graffiti Productions in a piece, *More Producers Start Their Own Labels*, (11-13-91).

Graffiti Productions' *Nexus*, released originally in the then popular cassette format, proved to be "the little cassette that could", setting the stage-and model-for future releases on the label.