

Rotary
Club of
Charlotte



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

July 18, 2023

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Dolphus Ramseur *Founder & Artist Manager, Ramseur*

by **Susie Masotti**

Dolph Ramseur was this week's speaker. Born and raised in Concord, NC, his father first influenced his love of music with a variety of music, genres, and artists. He earned a Degree in Professional Tennis Management and toured the country promoting the sport he loved. But music was always his outlet and safe space, so he took his knowledge of promotion and his love of music and put them together to forge a successful career in music management and his own record label.

Dolph played an eclectic mix of songs for those in attendance and then reminded us that each of those songs had some sort of root in North Carolina and stated that by far music is North Carolina's greatest export product and the majority of artists from our state began their music history in Church – either by singing or playing an instrument.

His influencers on building his business were people he grew up watching - Fred Kirby the singing cowboy and his horse Calico (whom he remembered following at the Concord Christmas Parade), Betty Feezor (his Mom watched dutifully and took copious notes on index cards for recipes), and Arthur Smith and Tommy Faille who both had shows on WBTV when he was growing up. He reminded us of local celebrities such as Rockin' Ray, Larry "Sonic Man" Sprinkle (who literally could do it all – sing, dance, comedy), and John Hancock (Charlotte's Most Beloved, who attended today's meeting). He learned from the legends we have locally - Humpy Wheeler whom he named as the greatest marketer of all time, the Crocket Family who recognized that this area LOVED wrestling and Richard "The King" Petty who showed everyone how it was done right – he would not stop signing autographs until there was no one else there.

His record label and artists have performed at such notable productions as the Grammy Awards, Austin City Limits, and Grand Old Opry, among others. He's proud that his artists participate in music festivals such as Bonnaroo and Coachella. His company's goal is to create a strong foundation and sustainable career for each of his artists.

In his career his greatest accomplishment so far has been managing the Avett Brothers – he told of a call he received from CMT asking that the Avett Brothers do a "Crossroads" show with Duran Duran – that idea didn't make sense, so he suggested the Avett Brothers team up with Randy Travis and the show was a huge success. But he said a lot of the lessons he learned were stories from some of the greatest stories of our home-grown celebrities.

He told a story about Ben E. King. He co-wrote the song "There Goes My Baby" but when it came time to show it off to studio executives the singer didn't show up, so he sang it and was invited to join the Drifters. Eventually, the band realized the owner, George Treadwell, had a much better deal than the performers and he set up a meeting to demand more of a share – when it was denied, Ben E. King left the meeting, while other members of the band stayed, Lover Patterson followed him. That loyalty inspired the song "Stand By Me" which is one of the top all-time played songs on the radio.

When asked what his favorite venues are he emphatically said Bojangles Coliseum (originally known as the Charlotte Coliseum) should go down in North Carolina's (and our region's) history as it was a beacon for live music in our state. He said Red Rocks Amphitheater tops his list in the United States.

He was asked with all the technology today how can artists and songs stand out in a crowd. He responded that he wouldn't change how he works with an artist – hard work and learning how to win a crowd is how an act sustains themselves for the long run. The Avett Brothers spent 10 years performing in local bars, small venues, and anywhere that would have them so that by the time they had a hit, they were natural in front of crowds, and it served them well. As far as great songs go, his experience has shown that the best and longest-lasting recordings of songs were truly lightning in a bottle – sung in a studio around 10 times and the best of those was published.

So far, his best memory is of producing the “largest” concert in the world – it took place during Covid with the Avett brothers performing in a socially distanced Charlotte Motor Speedway but live-streamed around the world. It brought back some normalcy and sustained his company during the two years that most live acts were shuttered.

He reminded everyone that the “center of the universe for music” is just a few miles away in Kannapolis – the NC Music Hall of Fame and invited everyone to come out, take a tour and learn more about music made in our state.

*This week’s speaker asked that the presentation not be recorded.