

Celebrity Access Bio

Stephen Tarkanish is President, Founder, and CEO of STARS Productions (www.starsproductions.com), a New Jersey State licensed booking agency, management, and marketing company specializing in event planning, promotion, and artist representation in the entertainment business. Stephen and his staff work with night clubs, universities, casinos, fairs, festivals, hotels, resorts, TV, radio, concerts, private corporate, and special events worldwide. He has extensive experience in many facets of the entertainment industry, from the performance and production complexities to established entities in security, recording studios, sound systems, and lighting design as well as an award-winning video production company.

Stephen's education includes Julliard Prep, ECC, Manhattan School of Music, Rutgers University, and Harvard. He has a working knowledge of Russian and Chinese. During the 1970s, he was a trainer for EST, the Werner Erhard Seminar Training. Stephen began his musical career as a drummer/percussionist in the early sixties and touring was his main focus. If the act had its own drummer, Stephen kept working by playing mallets (vibraphone, timpani, or Latin percussion). He was constantly working as a casino house drummer at the old Playboy Clubs, Sands, Riviera, MGM Grand, Tahoe, and when entertainers such as Tony Bennett came in and brought drummer Chuck Hughes, Steve would shift to another percussion instrument. He also played percussion with the Fifth Dimension (Hal Blaine), Lou Rawls, Frank Gorshin, the King Cousins, BJ Thomas, Diana Ross, Liza Minelli, and Mel Torme, as well as drumming with Dizzy Gillespie, Fandango (with Joe Lynn Turner), Clark Terry, Airto, Willie Bobo, Bill Evans, Shirley Bassey, Manhattan Transfer, Jay & the Americans, Freddy Cole (Nat's Brother), Al Martino, and Don Ellis. Steve was endorsed by Ludwig, Tama, and then Pearl Drums, and was given the first Lynn Drum, the drum machine that reinvented the wheel of studio drumming. Stephen was also one of the original performers with the elite NJ Percussion Ensemble conducted by Ray Des Roches, recording and performing compositions by such 20th century composers as Charles Wuorinen, Carlos Chaves, as well as Edgar Varese.

Stephen was always playing, but that sense of financial stability was at times more powerful than the artist within himself. Sam Destefano, at the time the entertainment director of the Playboy Clubs, once quoted Stephen by saying, "No one is secure. It's how we handle insecurity." His coexistence of being a musician and music industry head came in handy when Stephen developed tinnitus (chronic ringing in the ears) and fell full force in the entertainment business. He was prepared. Stephen was always on top of the union guys, musicians, lawyers, agents, managers, producers, and anyone he could network with, digging the well before he was thirsty.

In 1980, he took a 40, 00 square foot empty warehouse in New Jersey and constructed a joint venture to develop an entertainment complex that featured State-of-the-Art rehearsal, recording, video, and sound stage studios, as well as his booking and management agency. An airport was in his backyard and Stephen brought in via limo, flights, or whatever transportation requested whoever needed STARS entertainment services: Joan Jett, Anthrax, Bill Cosby, Bon Jovi, and his members, Stewart Copeland was there, the late, great Wendy O'Williams, the Plasmatics, rap's Fat Boys, Run DMC, Joe Pesci, Yngwie Malstein, Michael Brecker, the Uncle Floyd TV show, Southside Johnny, Rush, Franky Valli, J. Geils, Marshall Tucker, Cheap Trick, Roger Daltry, Biohazard, and John Denver.

It was a great idea. STARS was averaging 200 bands a week, rehearsing and recording. The facility was jammin'. It was at this point that Stephen decided to upgrade and moved his offices to Newton, NJ in 1990.

Stephen's list of clients is extensive and partially includes Goldman Sachs, the Taste of D.C., IBM, ESPN, Paramount, the NFL, PGA, Sony, Nascar, NBA, AT&T, the Superbowl, J.P. Morgan, Lucent Technologies, Merrill Lynch, and countless others. The artists he's worked with through the years reads like a "Who's Who" in the industry: Chris Rock; Eddie Murphy; Meatloaf; Guns n' Roses; Cindy Lauper; Earth, Wind & Fire; Harry Connick; The Beach Boys; Weird Al; Bon Jovi; Deep Purple; Bill Cosby; Lauren Hill; Hall & Oats; Sheryl Crow; Train; the Go-Go's; Jim Belushi; THE NERDS; etc. In addition, he has a strong association with electronics genius Larry Hartke, founder of Hartke Systems. From Carnegie Hall to the White House, MTV, VH1, Bud True Music, A&E, The View, Miller, and Coors, Steve is seriously involved with all his clients. Be it through booking, recording, or performing, he's always building his relationships.

In addition to developing STARS, Steve has written various articles on the music business in trades nationwide and has lectured on the college circuit and for seminars worldwide. He is the former President of the now defunct ITAA (International Talent Agencies Association) and the Conference of Personal Managers. He was also College Agent of the Year three times with NECAA, now called NACA (National Association of Campus Activities), of which he still remains very active, and also held the same title four times with the ACUI (Association of College Unions International). Furthermore, Stephen serves as an expert witness in the entertainment industry. He and his company have been interviewed by the NY Times, LA Weekly, Philly Enquirer, Pollstar, Performance (feature cover, 1991), Billboard, Variety, Downbeat, and dozens of papers and trades internationally, and he has appeared on television and radio both in the United States and abroad. Presently, Stephen maintains his dedication to the involvements of STARS Productions.