

LEADOFF SPOT



The studio offers clients a hair and makeup lounge.



Founders and owners 3D N'Tee (left) and Roxanne Moray opened 3D Studios in October.



Two recording studios are available for artists and creators.



The conference room overlooks New Orleans East from the 11th floor of the Executive Plaza building.



A green screen sound stage has been used for some of 3D Na'Tee's music videos.

PHOTOS COURTESY 3D STUDIOS

'We learn from each other'

The partnership behind the new, women-owned 3D Studios

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One is a successful hip hop artist from New Orleans, the other a former science teacher-turned-entrepreneur who grew up in the country. Together, the two women are giving New Orleans musicians and creators fewer reasons to leave to pursue their careers. They also are part of a growing hub of activity that aims to revitalize New Orleans East.

Samantha Davon James, who goes by her stage name "3D Na'Tee," and Roxanne Moray cut the ribbon on 3D Studios on Oct. 20, marking the opening of

Louisiana's first women-owned and operated entertainment studios. Housed on a penthouse floor in the Executive Plaza on Lake Forest Boulevard, the studios provide a one-stop shop with workspaces and resources for local recording artists, videographers, photographers, podcasters and other content creators.

"I had heard several artists speak of leaving the city; several speak about going to [Los Angeles], New York, Atlanta or all these other places because they feel that they don't have a resource," said James, who co-owns the studio with Moray. "So understanding that (3D Studios)

could become that .. I was like 'Yeah, this is something we need here in New Orleans, especially New Orleans East.'"

James and Moray first joined forces in September 2019 when Moray, property manager of the Executive Plaza building, was challenged with attracting tenants for the top floor. The owner of the building wanted drone footage of the 11th floor, so Moray reached out to James' company Already Legendary Media.

It was only after the job that Moray realized that she had been working with a successful local rapper that had caught the attention of industry legends such as Timberland

and Russell Simmons. After a quick Google search, Moray reached back out to James to apologize for not recognizing her.

The partnership grew when Moray needed help completing a recording studio that fell through for another potential tenant.

"I thought of [3D] Na'Tee automatically just because of her energy, her vibrations were so positive, and I was like, 'I know she's really busy, but hopefully she can help me finish out the recording studio,'" said Moray. "We talked. We vibed, and I'm like, 'There's some connection. You know what? You're the face of this city. You're an ambassador for

New Orleans. Why don't we do this together?"

James joined Moray as a consultant for the project in October 2020 and later became a full partner, with Moray wanting her to be the face of the company. The two officially founded the studios in January 2021 and began renovating the penthouse floor to become what it is today: a podcasting studio, photography studio, editing suite, conference room, green screen sound stage, hair and makeup lounge and two recording studios. The studio also plans to offer training and classes for up-and-coming talent and businesses.

Leading up to the opening, Moray and James shared that the journey was not without challenges. Not only did the two women start a business during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also they renovated a space that — like much of the New Orleans East area — had not been occupied since Hurricane Katrina 16 years ago.

Even with contractors coming in and out of the space, for months the two found themselves doing work as well. Moray took creative direction with much of the space's decor, and James did various do-it-yourself projects to make pieces such as sound insulation panels that can be viewed on her YouTube channel.

"It's been a lot of hard work, blood, sweat and tears. We were delayed a little bit by (Hurricane) Ida," said Moray. "But we were happy

to have the grand opening."

Throughout this process and partnership, both said they relied on each other. They have since hosted community events such as professional development sessions and open-mic nights in the space. They said their deep admiration for what they bring to the table has grown in the process.

"Even though she's younger than I am, and I'm a country mouse, she's city mouse...I think we come with a humble heart, and we learn from each other. We grow. We push each other," said Moray.

With 3D Studios now open for business, the two have shifted their focus to bringing in clients. Artists and creators can rent the various studios and suites, and the business also offers monthly memberships. These memberships allow clients to not be limited to only one resource that 3D Studios offers and will allow them access to members-only communal workspaces. Sign-ups for monthly memberships begin Nov. 1, but those that attended the grand opening were able to enter a raffle that gave away memberships as prizes.

"It's not just about, you know, professionals who have done this and that," James said. "It's about people who are just starting as well as the professionals. Every end of the spectrum, they can come and use this space, be excited about it, and feel like this is a creative hub."

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