

OPINION

There is No Shame in Hard Work

There we were in a room filled with Detroit's top marketing and sales stars at The Roostertail. It was a fine night on the river at the annual Marketing & Sales Executives of Detroit gala. Detroit was beautiful on this night. The river and skyline glistened through the panoramic view from the longtime restaurant and entertainment destination.

At the lectern was Saad Chehab, president and CEO of Chrysler Brand, Chrysler Group LLC. Chehab was being honored with the Trailblazer Award for his leadership in the development and execution of the "Imported from Detroit" advertising campaign. The campaign launched the famous "Born of Fire" commercial during Super Bowl XLV. That is almost a year ago now and we are still talking about it. It was that good.

"It's an approach, an attitude. More importantly, it was what they felt was the heart of this city," said Chehab. It also helped sell cars, as is apparent in Chrysler Group's most recent third quarter report of profit up 80 percent to \$381 million – and sales that are up an incredible 200 percent in California.

Chehab praised the virtues of the marketing department at Chrysler and the trailblazing hard-work ethic that encompasses nearly everything and everyone in Metro Detroit. He also brought up a story about another Detroiters that truly impressed him, even though Chehab is one of the power brokers of Detroit's image. That story was about the singer Rodriguez.

Many of you may know this one. Long story made short: Rodriguez cut some records in the '70s in Detroit that went nowhere and went back to his life as a labor worker in this gritty city. He was a common sight on the street: guitar on his back, long black hair and sunglasses after a day of working with his hands. For decades, he rarely performed anywhere. Little did he know, those songs did go somewhere. He was a star in South Africa. He found out about his fame 30 years later through a Swedish filmmaker's call from overseas.

Word was he was dead. Wrong. The next thing he

knew, he was performing before thousands in a sold-out stadium in Cape Town. He had idolizing fans, who knew his songs word for word. He was a mega-star walking the streets of Detroit.

This fall, "60 Minutes" did a feature on him, and it wrapped up the spot at The Old Miami bar in Detroit. Now Rodriguez performs worldwide, but he still lives in his longtime home in Detroit. The documentary about him, "Searching for Sugarman," has won awards in film festivals from Park City, Utah, and Los Angeles to Durban, South Africa and Moscow.

What a story of resiliency and fortitude this is, Chehab exhorted to the room of sales and marketing people. And what a story about the worth and determination of Detroit.

Those who know Rodriguez all praise his humble and down-to-earth nature. That approach to life came through, Chehab said, in one of the few quotes from Rodriguez on "60 Minutes" when he was asked about his life of labor: "Physically it is hard, but there is no shame in hard work," Rodriguez said.

No shame in hard work. That is the message that rings true throughout the world, imported from Detroit, Chehab said.

The word was that Detroit was dead, too. Wrong. This all shows that if you keep to the task and push out your best work, you will get recognized. You are a mega star, but perhaps may not know it yet. Just like Detroit. Just like Chrysler. Just like Rodriguez. ■



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