

With the Success of His Atlantucky Brewery, Nappy Roots Rapper Fish Scales Has Added to His Already Illustrious Career



Fish Scales
Owner

Nappy Roots
<https://nappyroots.com/>

Atlantucky Brewery
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Interview conducted by:
Bud Wayne, Editorial Executive
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: *Fish Scales, before we get into what you're doing today as an entrepreneur and businessman, would you tell us about your early days, what led you to rap and hip-hop music, and becoming a big name in the industry?*

Fish Scales: I grew up on early hip hop in the eighties. I was a big fan and loved the early hip hop with the Sugar Hill Gang; my parents had their album. I started writing lyrics at about nine years old. My cousins and I had a hip-hop group. I had a big passion for rapping and playing basketball, and I have been fortunate to do both at a high level. I got a scholarship to play basketball at Western Kentucky and that is where I met the rest of the members of Nappy Roots. We became platinum Grammy-nominated artists in the early 2000s, and it has been a great ride ever since. We are still doing shows to this day and still putting out music. We put an album out about a month ago, it's called NAPPY4LIFE.

CEOCFO: *How has the response been to the new album?*

Fish Scales: It's been great. We are independent artists now and with each album we put out, we are learning how to market better and put our music in the right place. We were signed to Atlantic Records in the early 2000s, so we are taking what they taught us and implementing it into our own label.

CEOCFO: *You have done so many great songs like Back Roads, Blind Faith, and Po' Folks. Do you have a favorite?*

Fish Scales: I don't, but there is one I like a lot and that is Back Roads. We did the video in my hometown of Milledgeville, it's a simple song. People love our older stuff a lot, but one of the best feelings is when we go around and people tell us how much they like the new stuff.

CEOCFO: *What was it like to be a 2x Grammy nominee, platinum-selling artist, and be up there with other rap icons like MC Hammer?*

Fish Scales: It has been great going to the Grammy, the AMAs; all of these award shows and seeing people you look up to and people you watched on TV, and being in the same room with them because of the art you created. It is very

rewarding. However, I feel we have created a place in this hip hop world and you have to mention Nappy Roots when you talk about hip hop, or if you talk about Kentucky hip hop you have to bring up Nappy Roots. I'm very proud of it.

CEO CFO: *The music industry has changed over the years. Early rap artists got their start by selling their rap albums and CDs out of the back of their cars on street corners. What is it like today, breaking in and remaining successful financially with the shift in focus being so much on platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, and iTunes?*

Fish Scales: It is not easy but it is a gift and a curse because now you have streaming platforms. You cannot go against the current, you cannot go against technology. This is where people are listening to music, it's so accessible because everybody has a cell phone, which means everybody has access to music.

Back in my day when we sold CDs out of the trunk, we would go up to peoples' cars knowing they had a CD player in their cars, and we would let them play it right away. If someone was not in a car, you had to convince that person that this was a good product and hope they would buy it. Today all you have to do is tell someone that they can listen to your music on a platform such as YouTube, so it helps in that way.

What I have learned is you have to find your core audience and cater your music to them as opposed to trying to reach the whole country. We are now locked into finding people who are interested in Nappy Roots.

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CEO CFO: *You have become a businessman today with your nappyroots.com website, selling merchandise. Would you tell us about that and how fans are responding?*

Fish Scales: Merch is a big part of what we do at Nappy Roots. Merch not only puts money in your pocket, but it possibly promotes your brand. Even when you are not around, people are wearing your T-shirt and promoting your brand. We add the merch to our website. Even when you are not putting out music, we are still pushing our merch. We do well.

We also sell a lot of our Atlantucky merch, although that is a different audience.

CEO CFO: *Would you tell us about the Atlantucky Brewery? Do you produce and sell beer on premise? Do you distribute your beer?*

Fish Scales: We produce beer, we have a 6000 sq. foot tap room. For now, we are just on-premise selling pints, which makes a lot more money than distributing beer. We do not distribute because Georgia has some laws where you cannot self-distribute, so you have to go through a big company to do it. That is what we are trying to fix.

We have heard stories that once you start distributing beer, you pretty much are losing all your profits because the distributor is between you and the retailer. As a small company, we are not in a rush to play that game. Creating the demand is more important now than getting our beer in Kroger and Publix.

CEO CFO: *How are you addressing the issue of taking your beer beyond your current facility?*

Fish Scales: We are in the process of buying a canning lot where we will produce cans, so that our customers can come in and buy beer to go.

CEO CFO: *How do you design the different types of beer?*

Fish Scales: The different types of beer that we have are being designed by myself and Skinny DeVille, who is also a member of Nappy Roots. We go to a lot of breweries and test a lot of beers, and we decide what beers we should have on tap. Some beers are seasonal, so around Thanksgiving we know we have to do a sweet potato beer. Around October we do an Oktoberfest. In springtime, you want a Juicy IPA. Whatever we want to do, we can do it. We have to sell it but we can do whatever we like, it's like music.

CEO CFO: *Where did the idea for the brewery come from?*

Fish Scales: During the pandemic we could not go on the road for a year and a half, so we had to figure out what to do. That is when we started making beer in my garage. Two or three years later, we got an opportunity to open a commercial brewery. I have always had a passion for beer. For a long time, I just liked the idea of seeking out different beers that other people never tried. That led us to make beer, and I love making beer.

CEO CFO: *Where do you see yourself in two years?*

Fish Scales: As far as where we will be in two years, I have great hope for where we are going. Once we get this canning set up, you will start seeing people around the state in different places without beer and the word will get out even more.

We are also opening a pizza shop. It's called Atlantucky Pies and Paninis. That is another thing that we are going to be passionate about. We'll be making the best pizza in Atlanta. You will start hearing about that from us in the next year or two. Pizza and beer go great together. Hopefully, in January we should be up and running.

"Something I have learned in recent years is you have to be a part of your neighborhood and you have to show up and show your face. You help just because you can make somebody else's life easier. It's also about working with others and showing value to a community; that is very big for us." Fish Scales

CEO CFO: *Does the fact that you are Nappy Roots help the brewery?*

Fish Scales: It helps a lot, that is probably one of the biggest selling points. People are interested in how rappers became brewers. It's going well and we have a great location in downtown Atlanta. We were fortunate to get into this space that we got into and it is fun. Beer is a part of what Nappy Roots has always been. Our audience is bourbon and beer drinkers. Those are the people that come to our shows. We look at it as art and approach it like art, we take our time and study how to do it. We are having fun with it. The Nappy Roots brand and ATLKY brand are phenomenal. They go very well together.

CEO CFO: *Are you looking for partners or people to invest in what you are doing?*

Fish Scales: Yes, we are open to investment. We do not want to be in debt. We are not in debt, and that is the beauty of Atlantucky. A lot of breweries are shutting down. A lot of people expand too quickly and I think we have done a good job of expanding small at a level that we can control, but we are open to investment because we want to grow. We want to take this show to Kentucky, open one in Kentucky, and further the brand in that direction. We are not in a rush because we are just building our brand.

CEO CFO: *In closing, is giving back to the community important for you?*

Fish Scales: Super important. I think there is no way any of this could work if we did not give back. If we were all about making the dollar first and did not care about giving back, I think the neighborhood would recognize that, and the first opportunity they got to not support us, they would. We are in the process of going for our food and liquor license at the moment and you have to get the neighborhood's approval from the neighborhood planning committee. Right away they say "These guys are good, we love them, and they do so much for the neighborhood."

Something I have learned in recent years is you have to be a part of your neighborhood and you have to show up and show your face. You help just because you can make somebody else's life easier. It's also about working with others and showing value to a community; that is very big for us. Before making a dollar, that is what we are trying to establish.

We do have some causes. With one of our beers, 10% of the proceeds goes to an organization called Future Successes where they take kids from a tough neighborhood in Atlanta called The Bluff to college campuses for visits and inspire kids to go to college. The beer is called The Bluff, and we are selling [it] to raise money for these kids.