HOT SPOTS

11 Crossover Cautions
Latin artists like Paulina Rubio are finding it hard to win back core fans after success in the mainstream market.

26 Keep An Eye On This Guy
Jai Rodriguez of hit TV series "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" prepares his debut album.

53 One To Remember
Josh Groban earns his first No. 1 on The Billboard 200 with "Closer."

Cuts Laying Label Era To Rest
New Industry Economics Spell End to Reid Reign
BY GAIL MITCHELL
The ouster of Antonio "L.A." Reid at Arista Records is one more death knell to an era when free-spending label execs made big bets on rising stars in hopes that mega-album sales would lead to huge payoffs.

WMG Braces For Slashes Once New Owners Arrive
BY ED CHRISTMAN
NEW YORK—Warner Music Group is looking to wring as much as $225 million in costs from the company as a welcoming bouquet for its new owners.

Sexual Overload
Angst-Ridden Public's Mood For Raunch Sours
BY KEITH GIRARD and LIZ SKINNER
Christina vamps like a burlesque stripper. Britney's gone from school girl to slut. Pink is punk.

Many of music's reigning divas are partying like it's 1999, even though the world has become a darker, more uncertain and more anxious place since Sept. 11, 2001. With the economy in a funk and record sales down for three years running, even established artists are sexing it up—no doubt encouraged by edgy industry executives.

The problem is, the public just doesn't seem to be in the mood for it, and the recent mediocre

(Continued on page 63)

Rosario de Mil Colores
the gypsy queen returns with her new album "de Mil Colores" rich in style with flamenco soul, her musical trade mark.
in stores February 10th, 2004
It starts with **one unprotected CD**...

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We can prove MediaMax will work for you! Call Michal at 1-866-786-6266 or visit [www.sunncomm.com/bb](http://www.sunncomm.com/bb)
Top of the News
5. The United States Trade Representative puts South Korea back on its Priority Watch List.

Music
11. The Beat: No Doubt’s Tony Kanal gives ‘80s songs reggae beats for Adam Sandler’s new movie, “First 50 Dates.”
13. Legal Matters: The U.S. Supreme Court reverses an emergency stay on a California case involving DVD descrambling.
15. Jazz Notes: Jenny Scheinman’s collaboration with a good friend results in the robust “Shalagaster.”
16. Touring: Linkin Park’s Meteora tour confirms the band’s status as a major road presence.
19. R&B: Stones Throw Records brings to life the vision of its founder, Peanut Butter Wolf.
23. Latin Notes: Conflicting reports show dwindling shipments of Latin music but growing sales.
50. Studio Monitor: Solid State Logic will be the co-recipient of the Technical Grammy at the 46th Grammy Awards.

Retail
33. Universal and Warner are making selected songs available for download as part of Sprint’s MusicTones.
34. The Indies: Rykodisc celebrates its 20th anniversary with a two-CD set featuring such acts as Soul Asylum.
35. Retail Track: Virgin Entertainment Group and Universal Music & Video Distribution resolve their differences over JumpStart.
36. Home Video: A creative DVD package can greatly impact a title’s sales.

Global
39. South Korea’s local labels rush to release Japanese product after the government’s latest deregulation.
41. Global Pulse: Despite a glitch in the beginning of her career, La Malà Rodríguez is ready for an international launch.

Features
18. Boxscore
31. Billboard Picks
38. The Billboard BackBeat
38. Executive Turntable
40. Hits of the World
49. Classifieds
53. Charts
53. Chart Beat
53. Market Watch
66. Last Word

QUOTE OF THE WEEK
6. My thoughts are really irrelevant if I really want each [label] to be itself. I don’t tell Dr. Dre what artists to sign.

LA MALÀ RODRÍGUEZ
Page 65

ARTIST & COMPANY INDEX
(SIGNIFICANT MENTIONS IN THE NEWS)

Artist
Page(s)
Alabama ............................................. 28
Alejandro Fernández ......................... 5
Alicia Keys ......................................... 60
Britney Spears .................................... 1
Bruce Springsteen ............................... 18
Christina Aguilera ............................. 1
Clay Aiken .......................................... 6
Enrique Iglesias ................................. 11
Gooapele ............................................ 19
Jai Rodriguez ..................................... 26
Jenny Scheinman ............................... 15
Kelly Clarkson ................................... 6
Kurt Nilsen ........................................ 51
La Malà Rodríguez ............................. 41
Lee Williams & the Spiritual QC’s ....... 14
Linkin Park ......................................... 16
Marcos Witt ........................................ 23
MercyMe ............................................ 12
No Doubt ........................................... 11

Company
Page(s)
Ardent Studios ................................... 50
BMG Entertainment .......................... 1
Copenhagen Records ....................... 42
EMI Korea ........................................ 39
Launch Entertainment ..................... 26
MCG Records ..................................... 14
Music City Record Distributors Inc. .. 33
Rykodisc Inc. ...................................... 34
Solid State Logic Inc. ........................ 50
Sprint PCS Group ............................... 33
Stones Throw Records ..................... 19
Tender Furs Ltd. ................................. 6
Ticketmaster ...................................... 16
Universal Music & Video Distribution Inc. .. 35
Universal Music Group ..................... 33
Virgin Entertainment Group Inc. ...... 35
Warner Music Germany .................. 33

ARTIST & ALBUM

Top Albums
Billboard No. 1 on The Charts

ARTIST
JOSH GROBAN
ALISON KRAUS + UNION STATION
TOSHIO KITAMURA
JOSH GROBAN
TOBY KEITH
SARAH MCCLACHLAN
FEFE DIBOS
LE JON & THE EAST SIDE BOYS
MICHAEL JACKSON
THE BEATLES
VARIOUS ARTISTS
NORAH JONES
THE CHEETAH GIRLS
LOS TEMERARIOS
YANNI
ALICIA KEYS

ALBUM
"Closer"
"You & Me"
"Rhythm of Love"
"Number Ones"
"ственный"
"Call Me"
"Fela Dibosa"
"King Of Green"
"Number Ones"
"The Beatles"
"Lady Sings The Blues"
"Come Away With Me"
"The Cheetah Girls (EP)"
"Tributo Al Amor"
"Ultimate Yanni"
"The Diary Of Alicia Keys"
"Tupac: Resurrection"

Page(s)
54
50
58
58
58
27
57
56
24
16
18
18
24
24
58
58
58

ARTIST & TITLE
OUTKAST
2 DOORS DOWN
KELLY CLARKSON
MUSIC BOX
LINKIN PARK
JASON DERULO
CHRIS BROWN
MR. BLOOMS

THE BEATLE
Hey Ya!
Here Without You
There Goes My Life
Stoned
You & Me

Page(s)
54
60
30
27
61
20

Videos

Freaky Friday
S.W.A.T. (Widescreen Special Edition)
S.W.A.T.

Top Singles

ARTIST
OUTKAST
KELLY CLARKSON
MUSIC BOX
MICHAEL JACKSON

TITLE
Hey Ya!
There Goes My Life
You & Me
"The Life Go On"

Page(s)
54
30
20
24

Unpublished

Artist
BAD DOGS
LEA "ENGLISH"
SUNDANCE+K.B.
HARDIE BRENNER
DOMINO
THE SUNSHINE BOYS
"Yield"

Title
"Bad Dogs"
"I Was Made For Loving You"
"I Can’t Stop"
"Crazy Like A Fox"
"I’m On A Roll"
"She’s On My Mind"
"I’m Gonna Be Alright"

Page(s)
65
69
13
20
17
20
20

Unpublished

ARTIST
ROBERT PLANT, PAUL McCARTNEY & STEPHEN STILLS
MOMENTUM
IN álbum
LOUIS ARMSTRONG
"Arnold's Eyes"

Page(s)
65
58
24
57
20

Unpublished

ARTIST
BILLIE PARSONS
BILLY BLANKS+TAE BO CARDIO

UNPUBLISHED
Backbeat
SONGBIRD
SWITCHFOOT
CECE WINANS
SEAN PAUL
KELLY BRICE
MICHAEL JACKSON
RUGRATTS GQ WILD
BILLY BLANKS+TAE BO CARDIO

Page(s)
65
57
24
24
24
24
24
24
24
24

BIllboard January 24, 2004 • Volume 116, No. 4
Get the first look between the bullets!

Find out Wednesday what everyone else finds out Thursday.

Get a jump on the competition with Chart Alert, Billboard's early chart notification system.

Every Wednesday morning, you'll get the freshest chart data including debuts, weekly sales, chart news, industry trends, and progress reports as well as early chart data for the Billboard 200, Country, R&B/Hip-Hop, Digital Tracks, Heatseekers and more.

Go to billboard.com/chartalert for registration and more information.
Fernández Reaches Out
Mexican Star Joins CAA, Eyes Film, Sponsorships

BY LEILA COBO

In a further sign of its expansion into different genres of Latin music, Creative Artists Agency (CAA) has signed pop/ranchera Mexican star Alejandro Fernández. Billboard has learned that CAA will represent Fernández across all areas within the U.S.

"We wanted to have a panorama that was more open in every regard," says Fernández, who has just finished filming the movie "Zapata," in which he plays the lead role.

"We're no longer going to focus only on concerts," adds the singer, who plays more than 100 dates in Mexico alone every year. He went on a U.S. arena tour last year with his father, Vicente Fernández. "We're reaching out to sponsors, film, any of the things that can come after the movie."

"Zapata" is Fernández's first major foray into films. The movie was directed by Alfonso Arau ("Like Water for Chocolate") and will be released in Mexico in March. Distribution in the U.S. should be finalized in the coming weeks.

Fernández is the second ranchera star to sign to CAA in the past couple of months. Late last year, the agency signed Pepe Aguilar, another major star in the genre, who performs a blend of pop and ranchera music.

"We are expanding in the Latin realm in general, and (Continued on page 8)
**Changes At BMG U.S. Latin**

**BY LEILA COBO**

MIAMI—BMG’s Latin operation is poised to begin a new cycle, with upper-management changes that will affect the entire region.

Adrian Posse steps down immediately as VP of A&R for BMG U.S. Latin, as well as VP of Latin A&R for BMG International.

Also departing are Fernando Ramos, director of national radio and Puerto Rico marketing, and Rafael Rodriguez, director of international marketing.

Juan Carlos Bernardes is now COO of BMG U.S. Latin and VP of the Latin region. Sources say more changes are expected in the coming weeks.

As COO, Bernardes will supervise the day-to-day operations of BMG U.S. Latin. As VP for the Latin region, he will supervise the efforts of BMG’s various operations in Latin America. He will be based in Miami and report directly to Maarten Steinkamp, president of international for BMG.

Steinkamp, in turn, continues as chairperson of the U.S. Latin organization and will also oversee BMG’s operations in the Latin region. He is based in New York.

Steinkamp took over the Latin operation last fall, after Rodolfo Lopez-Negrete stepped down as senior VP of international/chairman of BMG U.S. Latin. Since then, BMG has been the only major label whose Latin operations report directly to corporate headquarters as opposed to a regional head.

Last November, in conversations with Billboard, Steinkamp said he was planning to implement region-wide changes this month. The biggest changes, he said at the time, would take place in the U.S. Latin operation.

“We need to refocus what the U.S. Latin company is,” he said. “This is a perfect moment for [BMG U.S. Latin] to reorganize itself.” Among other things, Steinkamp said he would be planning to revise the label’s roster in an effort to strengthen its regional Mexican representation. He also noted that several contracts were no longer economically viable for the company and would be examined.

Last year, Posse—a songwriter and A&R veteran—was named interim managing director for the label. At the time, he was BMG’s VP of A&R for the Latin region and championed such projects as Brazil’s Alexandre Pires’ Spanish-language career.

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**Isley’s New Thing: Fashion Furs**

**BY MICHAEL PAOLETTA**

Hollywood. Paris runways. Hip-hop clubs. Fur is everywhere. But long before the arrival of the “bling-bling” culture, fur was always an integral part of Grammy Award winner Ronald Isley’s wardrobe.

Fasion, Isley says, has played an important role in the Isley Brothers’ stage shows and videos. The same is also true of Isley’s alter ego, Mr. Biggs.

Now, after making sartorial statements for more than four decades, Isley is entering into a three-year partnership with Tendler Furs in New York for the Ronald Isley aka Mr. Biggs Fur Collection.

The men’s collection—Isley’s first fashion-oriented endorsement—debuts Feb. 23-26 at MAGIC, the annual apparel convention in Las Vegas. Isley will be on hand to help launch his line.

“For me, it has always been important to maintain a unique style,” Isley says. “If you look back at old Isley Brothers albums, you’ll see us in chinchilla. This was long before rappers discovered fur.”

Isley’s Mr. Biggs character only increases the fur usage. “People always ask me where they can get the ‘Mr. Biggs coat,’” he notes. “There seems to be great interest in what I wear.”

This is not lost on Tendler Furs CEO Larry Marchfield. “Throughout the years, Ronald has always embraced fur,” Marchfield says. “And right now, fur has never been bigger in the urban scene. The timing for this partnership could not be better.”

The men’s fur business, particularly in urban markets, has increased during the past three years, Marchfield maintains. “Currently, 25% of our business comes from our men’s line.”

According to Tendler director of sales/marketing Victoria Bruni, Isley’s first outerwear line is 90 pieces strong and includes chinchilla, sable, fox, coyote, rex rabbit and mink.

To make this collection work, Isley says it was imperative that each design reflect his own “sophisticated edge.”

Additionally, Isley says he worked closely with Tendler’s designers as well as his own designers. “My name is on this collection,” he says. “It must be a true reflection of who I am as Mr. Biggs.”

To ensure that a wide range of people will embrace the collection, which ships in September, suggested retail prices will range from $295 to $2,424 per item.

Several specialty retailers, including Freshwear in Chicago and Dittrich Furs in Detroit, have signed on to carry the line.

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**The Brit Awards Loosen Up**

**BY EMMANUEL LEGRAND**

LONDON—“Raising the bar” is how the organizers of the 24th Brit Awards are approaching this year’s edition of the British music show.

“This year, we’ve looked at all the aspects of the show and looked at, where things could be improved,” says Brits co-chairman Lucian Grainge, who was appointed last year for a three-year term.

“The Grammys or the MTV Awards have their own flavor, but what makes Brits special is that it is a U.K. show,” Grainge adds. “It is a highlight in the calendar of the U.K., it is the music ‘O event in the U.K.’

Interest in the show has intensified, judging by the media coverage after the Brits nominees were announced Jan. 12. (Continued on page 64)
Are You Experienced?

Talk about a perfect experience - imagine having a number one single (Stay) on a number one soundtrack (Reality Bites) before you even have a record deal! And being on stage - it's incredible! Seeing the faces, talking with the fans and sharing a musical experience together, makes me realize why I wrote the music in the first place. And JVC makes those experiences even better because I can sit on the tour bus and write new songs, watch last night's show or just relax with my favorite movies. Lisa Loeb, Singer/Songwriter.

CREATE IT • RECORD IT • VIEW IT • ENJOY IT
Award Breaks Borders
EC Partners With Music Bodies To Reward European Talent

BY EMMANUEL LEGRAND

LONDON—A new music awards ceremony has been added to Europe’s music events calendar.

The Border Breakers Awards honor up-and-coming European talent whose works have started to travel across frontiers within the European Union.

The project is organized and sponsored by the European Commission (EC)—the EU’s executive body—in collaboration with music industry bodies: the European Music Foundation (FELM), the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), and national and European industry bodies.

The award-winning projects will be announced during the MIDEM trade show in Cannes, France, at a Jan. 25 ceremony to be attended by French minister of culture Jean-Christophe Ailleron.

The awards recognize debut albums by acts from any EU country that have been successfully sold outside their country of origin between Nov. 27, 2002, and Nov. 26, 2003. The winners have been selected based on data supplied by the Billboard Information Group.

The awards are based on a concept pioneered by former Billboard Information Group publication Music & Media, which ceased publishing in 2003. Music & Media’s Border Breakers charts tracked artists and songs that were selling or picking up airplay outside of their country of origin.

The nine winners of the inaugural awards will be presented during the MIDEM trade show in Cannes, France, at a Jan, 25 ceremony to be attended by French minister of culture Jean-Christophe Ailleron.

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January 22, 1931 - December 11, 1964

Grammy Award nominee
Sam Cooke Legend DVD

a.k.

www.americanradiohistory.com
Meeting The Digital Future

Billboard has long been the foremost authority on the music industry, and our goal is to continue strengthening our role as the source for music charts, news, reviews, interviews, profiles and analysis.

As part of our effort to assist the industry in its meeting challenges, Billboard is expanding its coverage on several fronts and will open a San Francisco bureau to rapidly evolving digital music, digital games, DVD, video and digital home entertainment industries.

The move is part of a realignment of editorial operations that began last year, when Billboard and its ancillary operations were consolidated into the Billboard Information Group. The goal was to integrate our multiple brands under one roof to meet the needs of readers and customers in a rapidly changing, 24/7 news environment.

Billboard magazine, Billboard special, Airplay Monitor, billboard.com and billboard.biz—a new website designed especially for the industry—will provide a powerful platform to deliver breaking news, analysis and research to the trade and to consumers around the clock.

Here are some of the other changes:

- Melinda Newman will become Billboard talent editor in conjunction with editor-in-chief Keith Girard. She will continue her duties as West Coast bureau chief.
- Ken Schlager will assume responsibility for Airplay Monitor and continue as editor-in-chief.
- Shawn Norton will cover R&B and hip-hop for Billboard and work with Hall on R&B coverage in Monitor.
- Carolyn Horowitz currently manages editor of Billboard Bulletin, will become managing editor of billboard.biz.
- Carla Hay will become editor of Billboard’s BackBeat feature in addition to her other duties.
- Phyllis Stark, Billboard’s Nashville bureau chief, will move from senior writer to senior editor, with a more direct role in shaping music coverage.
- Michael Paolotta, Billboard senior writer, will now edit singles as well as album reviews.
- Deborah Evans Price will take over our gospel column in addition to her Christian music column.

The music industry faces many challenges, but we believe the future is full of potential. This move ensures that Billboard will carry a key partner as the industry reinverts itself. This year is our 110th anniversary, and we plan many more exciting changes. Stay tuned.
Kanal Reworks '80s Cuts On Sandler Soundtrack

While No Doubt takes a brief hiatus to work on various projects, bassist Tony Kanal has just completed work on music for Adam Sandler's new movie, "50 First Dates."

Wonder's tune will be the first single from the Maverick Records soundtrack, which streets Feb. 3. The movie opens Feb. 13.

TOGETHER AGAIN: Wilson Phillips is reuniting for its first album in 12 years. In May, Columbia Records will release "Pacific Coast Highway." The group, which consists of Carrie and Wendy Wilson and Chynna Phillips, will cover songs first made famous by the Beach Boys—helmed by the Wilsons' father Brian—and the Mamas & the Papas, which included Phillips' parents, John and Michelle. Also included will be classic songs recorded by Jackson Browne, Linda Ronstadt and the Eagles. Peter Asher is producing.

"We were more than halfway through writing our third album when Sony approached us," Carrie Wilson tells Billboard. "We thought, 'What better way to let the public know we are back together in full force than by recording songs that people are familiar with and can sing along to.'"

Wilson Phillips, which is managed by Winston Simone and David Simone of Deston Entertainment, last recorded together for the now-shuttered SBK Records. Columbia declined to comment on whether this was a one-off deal or a long-term record contract.

LICK IT UP: Jessica Simpson has created her own line of fragrance (Continued on page 15)

Latin Acts Tread Carefully With Crossover Bids

They say you can never go home again.

And while many Latin acts are trying to disprove that maxim, they are finding a grain of truth in it as they attempt to return to their initial fan bases after recording in English.

Conversely, some Latin acts are finding it difficult to break into the English market after years of success in the Spanish market.

This year Shakira, Marc Anthony and Paulina Rubio will all release new Spanish albums following various degrees of success with English releases. Also, Ricky Martin will deliver his first English album in a number of years.

But the crossover phenomenon, once regarded as a slam-dunk to gain broader exposure and bigger audiences for Latin acts, is treated by labels with more caution in the face of shrinking budgets and diminished sales across the board.

That's because even when targeting the English audience, specific care must still be given to the Latin artist's original Spanish fan base through additional tracks in Spanish, music videos and other costly marketing tactics.

"A crossover act has to record twice, film two videos, do two separate promotions," says Emilio Estefan, who has produced albums for Shakira and Gloria Estefan.

Nowadays, he says, with sales slowing, it is harder to justify that investment in major crossover acts, unless the label believes the artist can achieve international success.

"You have to be persistent, you have to invest money and you have to look for artists who not only have a U.S. market (Continued on page 14)
The music industry continues to struggle with piracy and a harsh economic climate, but the waning months of 2003 brought good news to Christian/gospel music and the industry overall, as sales showed signs of rebounding.

At the mid-year point, sales were down 10.4% from the first half of 2002. However, at the end of 2003, sales of Christian/gospel music were down only 5.2%, cutting in half the mid-year decline, according to Nielsen SoundScan. In 2003, 47.1 million albums were sold, compared with 49.6 million the year before.

Gospel Music Assn. president John Styli calls the rebound "a bit of surprise. Over the last six months, we would gain a half a percent here and a half a percent there, and that all looked good. You never know if that's going to dial back again, but the good news is that [sales] got even stronger, especially at the Christmas season."

Styli attributes sales picking up to "an improvement in the economy and the fourth quarter, which is a good sales period, and there's product out there that people want to buy. MercyMe is continuing real strong, Stacie Orrico is real strong, it's a combination of everything."

Christian/gospel music sales rose at mainstream retail by 6.7% in 2003 over the previous year, accounting for more than 60% of sales in the genre. Styli says, "MercyMe, Chevelle and Stacie Orrico had a lot of visibility in the mainstream, and it makes sense that the sales would occur on that side."

What does Styli see for the industry in 2004? "I don't see that we have a particularly strong first quarter," he says of forthcoming releases. "So it may be the second quarter before we really have much of an idea of what's happening. I think the music business still has another year-and-a-half of transition to a new business model before things settle out. I do think the worst is behind us, though."

"We really try to represent everybody," GMA president John Styli says of the diverse slate of inductees, adding that the occasion will miss the participation of Goodman, who died Dec. 27 (Billboard, Jan. 10). "She's so deserving and so wonderful. I'm really pleased she was able to find out about her induction before she passed away. She was very excited about it."

PERSONALLY: Like so many in the industry, I find it hard to believe Vestal Goodman is gone.

I saw her backstage at a concert just three weeks before her passing. Someone told her I had been ill, and she immediately hugged me and prayed aloud that the cancer I had would never return. Goodman was like that, always lifting people up.

This world has lost someone very special, and heaven has gained a precious new resident. I think this comment from Martina singer Joyce Martin McCollough best sums up what made her so loved:

"One of my favorite things about Vestal Goodman is that she made me feel like family. She made me feel like my problems and my needs were worth her time, my triumphs and my victories were worth celebrating. She has literally walked through some of my deepest valleys with me and my family and cried and prayed like her life depended on it . . . That powerful voice was just an outward manifestation of the love and faith that lived inside of her."

RED SEA RISES: Albuquerque, N.M.-based Red Sea Records, a Native American Christian label that is part of SOAR Corp., is gearing up for a heavy release schedule this year. In early March, look for a new disc from Vince Redhouse titled "Go Unto Every Nation." Newcomer Rain Song will issue "Rising Son," a praise and worship collection.

Label founder Tom Bee resumed his career as an artist last year with the Grammy Award-nominated praise and worship album "Reveal His Glory." He'll enter the studio again this year working with his wife, Vicki, on a project titled "Songs of Psalms," as well as a new release from his Native American rock band XIT. Their son, Robby Bee, is working on an instrumental project.

(Continued on page 15)
Supreme Court Unscrambles DVD Descrambling Decision

There's a war raging in cyberspace, and this time it is the movie industry that's feeling the heat.

The U.S. Supreme Court reversed an emergency stay on a case involving DVD descrambling Jan. 3.

In so doing, the high court affirmed a decision of the California Supreme Court, which had ruled that the entertainment industry could not force a Texas resident who had published DVD descrambling software on the Internet to stand trial in California.

This means that the defendant, Matthew Pavlovich, who posted the software called DeCSS, is able to distribute the program online.

To the high court, it is a question of geography: The court says Pavlovich cannot be sued in California because he is a Texas resident who does not have "substantial ties" to the Golden State.

"The Supreme Court wisely recognized that there is no need for an emergency stay to prevent Mr. Pavlovich from publishing DeCSS," Cohn adds.

The decision affects numerous defendants, but the sole California resident is Andrew Bunner.

Bunner isn't fighting the jurisdictional issue but is arguing that he has a First Amendment right to distribute the software.

A California appeals court in 2001 agreed, saying that barring Bunner from future disclosures of DeCSS was "a restraint on [his] First Amendment right."

Bunner's case is awaiting an argument date before the California Supreme Court.

A similar case in Europe has already been resolved.

Norwegian teenager Jon Johansen was acquitted Jan. 7 of criminal charges for writing and publishing DeCSS.

In 1999, 15-year-old Johansen published DeCSS on the Internet. He used the program to watch his own DVDs on his Linux computer.

Under tremendous pressure from the Motion Picture Assn. of America, the Norwegian Economic Crime Unit charged Johansen with violating a Norwegian criminal code that outlaws breaking into another person's locked property to gain access to privileged data.

The case was the first time the Norwegian government had attempted to punish an individual for accessing his own property.

DeCSS, which is distributed for free, enables people to play DVDs without technological restrictions, such as forced watching of commercials imposed by movie studios.

The program widely became popular shortly after its dubious debut, being distributed online by thousands of individuals worldwide the first year it was posted.

URGE TO MERGE: Maratt Phelps & Phillips is on a roll.

Through its acquisition last month of New York litigation boutique Parcher Hayes & Snyder, Los Angeles-based Maratt is now arguably the largest business-oriented entertainment law firm in the world.

"This move greatly enhances our ability to serve our clients in New York and on a national scale," says Paul H. Irving, Maratt CEO/managing partner.

But word in the legal community is that the buying binge isn't over yet for this 290-lawyer powerhouse.

With a stunning 40 to 50 lawyers in its entertainment, media and advertising law practice, Manatt's A-list client roster includes the Rolling Stones, Bruce Springsteen, Barbra Streisand, Cher, Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, Eagles, Michael Douglas, Robin Williams, Time Warner, Sony, DreamWorks, Yahoo, ESPN and HBO.

Twelve Parcher attorneys have joined Manatt: partners Peter Parcher, Steven Hayes, Orin Snyder, Cynthia Arato and Gregory Clarick; counsels Andrew DeVore, Robert Jacobs and Alon Markowitz; and associates Marc Isserles, Avi Weitzman, Monica Youn and Elise Zealand. The move boosts Manatt's New York office to 65 lawyers.
Williams Wins Five Stellar Awards

“Move over, industry, because this runaway train is coming through” was the response of MCG Records president James Bullock after his top-selling act, Lee Williams & the Spiritual QC’s, pocketed five trophies at the 19th annual Stellar Gospel Music Awards, held Jan. 10 in Houston. The group beat out the likes of Rance Allen and Mary Mary to be named the year’s top group/duo for its work on its current CD, “Right on Time: Live in Memph.” Williams was also named traditional male vocalist of the year.

Bullock insisted that the win helps bring “modern classic gospel” center stage. A humbled Williams only said, “God has shone favor. I’m sure that the Stellars will have some impact, and for that I’m grateful.”

Vicki Winslow, who led in nominations with eight, earned four awards (five if you count the award her album won for its packaging). Instead of crying of helplessness, she hopes to parlay the momentum into excitement for her latest endeavor, a stage play she’ll produce and star in, titled “Torn Between Two Lovers,” and set to kick off nine months of touring March 2 in Lafayette, La.

Winslow said, “As an artist, I don’t know what I do to receive an award, but it feels good when the industry at large puts you on the back.”

Also among the night’s big winners was Byron Cage, who took home four golden-flamed statuettes, including male vocalist of the year and song of the year for “The Presence of the Lord Is Here.”

More than 3,000 people attended the two-hour event, hosted by Kirk Franklin, Yolanda Adams and Donnie McClurkin. The show was taped for broadcast in syndication and will air between Jan. 20 and Feb. 22. High-lighted among the acts were India.Arie, Marla Schaefer and the Rev. Charles H. Winans.

In The Spirit

McClurkin. The show was taped for broadcast in syndication and will air between Jan. 20 and Feb. 22. High-lighted among the acts were India.Arie, Marla Schaefer and the Rev. Charles H. Winans.

Music Hall of Fame, with Smokey Robinson doing the honors; Patti LaBelle’s presentation of the esteemed James Cleveland Award to Shirley Caesar, as Adams sang a hymn-medley tribute; and performances from CeCe Winans, Mary Mary, Hezekiah Walker and Toox, who— with Sheila E. on percussion—brought down the house.

A complete list of award winners may be found at stellarawards.com.

SIGNING OFF: This column will be my last for Billboard. In signing off, I want to thank my co-workers at the magazine, my editor Ken Schlager (from whom I have learned so much) and all my friends and constituents in gospel who have helped keep me on the road. God bless you all. Peace.
Scheinman Collaborates With Pal On ‘Shalagaster’

Forward-thinking, genre-bending violinist/composer Jenny Scheinman this week releases “Shalagaster,” her second superb disc on John Zorn’s Tzadik imprint and third overall for the saxophonist’s adventurous underground label (her “Live at Yoshi’s” CD was issued on Avant).

Like the album’s namesake—a mythical guardian with a dolphin’s body and bird wings—Scheinman’s 11-track creation is a captivating improvisational collection built with a kaleidoscope of musical elements, from folk to world to avant-garde. While her band features trumpeter Russ Johnson, bassist Trevor Dunn and drummer Kenny Wollesen, the heart of the CD belongs to the rich collaboration between Scheinman and her good friend Myra Melford, who paints the pieces with piano and harmonium colors.

“Myra was a friend of a friend I knew in Berkeley,” says Scheinman, who moved from the San Francisco Bay Area to New York in 1999. “I looked her up, and we connected immediately. We became sandbox buddies.”

Even so, “Shalagaster” is their first recording together. “I wrote a whole lot of material quickly for the project,” Scheinman says. “So we agreed to have it be under my name, even though we plan to collaborate on a joint record in the future.” Still, the virtuoso violinist, who was a serious piano player who attended Oberlin Conservatory, had her keyboard friend in mind while she was composing.

“I wrote on the piano, which was exciting. It was working with an instrument that I know even better than the violin.”

“Shalagaster” is part of Tzadik’s Oracles series, which celebrates women composers. Scheinman is first hooked up with Zorn when he enlisted her to work on a Cobra date in San Francisco. “John approached me to contribute to the Oracles series. He has always been a strong supporter and interested. When musicians send him records to consider for his label, he listens. While she will be touring this year to support the CD, Scheinman also keeps busy performing with guitarist Bill Frisell in his Intercontinental band, doing duo dates with Norah Jones’ guitarist Adam Levy; and has recently launched an exciting and unusual Django Reinhardt covers band with guitarist Marc Ribot.

TheBeat

Continued from page 11

Kast are among the acts that will perform during the 46th annual Grammy Awards Feb. 16 telecast... Niki Ski (Mokey Crui), Taci Gans (L.A. Guns), Scott Coogan and London LeGrande’s new hard-rock outfit Brides of Destruction has invested a three-album deal with Sanctuary Records through Ski’s company 12.11 Productions. Its label bow March 9 in Northern California.

Peter LoFuramento is the new veteran VP of corporate communications for Universal Music Group. He replaces Bob Bernstein, who left the company last December.

LoFuramento is based in New York.

High Ground

Continued from page 12

Red Sea is distributed by Hendersonville, Tenn.-based New Day Christian Distribution.

Red Sea artists are nominated in two Grammy categories this year. “Red Letter” by Fresh L.E. is nominated for best rock gospel album and “Reveal His Glory” is up for best Native American music album.

NEWS NOTES: The Christian Country Music Assn. will hold its 10th annual Christian Country Music Awards Nov. 4. The show will be broadcast live on GAC from Nashville’s Ryman Auditorium. The awards show concludes the organization’s week-long annual convention, which begins Oct. 31 at the Millennium Maxwell House Hotel... Cross Movement Records, an independent Christian hip-hop label based in Deptford, N.J., has signed a U.S. distribution agreement with Provident Music Distribution. The first title to be distributed by Provident will be the debut release from T.R.U.T.H. It streets April 6... Spring Hill act the Booth Brothers have signed with the Harper Agency for booking.
Linkin Park Sets 2004 Touring Standard

BY RAY WADDELL

Linkin Park is flexing some serious box-office muscle on its current Meteora tour, solidifying the band's stature as a major arena-level act. With strong support from P.O.D., Hoobastank and Story of the Year, Linkin Park is headlining the top hard music package out in the early going of 2004, demonstrating health for the genre and the band's own staying power.

The tour is named after the band's current album, which has sold 3.5 million copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

The Meteora tour bodes well for both. “This is a big-league headlining tour, no question,” says Michael Belkin, executive VP of the Midwest region for Clear Channel Entertainment. “There’s no gray area here—this is a home run.”

Belkin bases that claim on how well his own dates have performed. The Jan. 21 show at Cleveland’s Convocation Center sold out in advance, and a Jan. 25 Columbus, Ohio, concert at Nationwide Arena is selling on a healthy clip on a daily basis,” Belkin says.

Linkin Park plays with individual promoters in each market, including CCE, Jam Productions and Another Planet. In its best markets, the tour is not just selling out but selling out quickly, exceeding already high expectations.

According to Jim Glancy, executive VP of CCE in New York, Linkin Park’s Jan. 18 date at Nassau Coliseum on Long Island sold out in one day in mid-December. “We thought it would be good, and it was fantastic,” he says.

That appears to be a trend. “We’re sold out in almost every market for the first three or four weeks of the tour,” says Michael Arfin, Linkin Park’s agent at Writers & Artists Group International. “There’s a lot of fire on this tour.”

**STAYING POWER**

That holds true on the West Coast, where Linkin Park will play HP Pavilion in San Jose, Calif., Feb. 16 and ARCO Arena in Sacramento, Calif., Feb. 18. Gregg Perloff, promoter of both shows as president of Another Planet, expects two sellouts.

Perloff says Linkin Park’s set on Metallica’s Summer Sanitarium tour last summer at Candlestick Park in San Francisco was a strong indicator of how well the band could do in his market.

“When they played with Metallica in the stadium show, the audience went wild; the band turned that trick on its first album tour in 2002. What’s more important is that the band is exhibiting much-valued legs as a touring entity,” Perloff says. “It’s nice to see this audience continuing on with unwavering support for this band,” Belkin says. “These days, you don’t know from album to album what kind of support you’ll see for an act.”

Arfin adds, “It’s becoming evident that Linkin Park is developing into a career band that will be here for some time.”

Glancy agrees. “This feels like the real deal. We may have a major-arena headliner in this band for years to come.”

The tour also is scoring points with promoters for the way it is routed, booked and presented. This tour is old-school... hands-on agentry by Michael Arfin and strong support from the Rob McDermott [at the Firm] and of course, a great promoter,” says Dave Marsden, senior VP of CCE Boston, promoter of the tour’s sold-out date at the Centrum in Worcester, Mass.

Marsden says a combination of venue (the Centrum would be general admission shows), support, a $34.50 ticket and timing are all in the show’s favor. “This is the first big show of the new year,” he points out, adding that great radio support comes from WBCN and WAFF in Boston.

**NICE PACKAGE**

From the beginning, Linkin Park tapped the Briggs of prudent packaging and pricing. The band’s debut arena tour, billed as Project Revolution, featured Cypress Hill, Adema and DJ Z-Trip. That trek grossed more than $6 million in just four weeks of dates, with tickets priced at $29.50.

A second Project Revolution tour last spring—which played mostly secondary markets with Mudvayne, Korn and Blindside—also performed well, though not as strongly as the previous tour.

But this time out, Linkin Park, P.O.D. and Hoobastank are all riding high, and Story of the Year is regarded as a real comer. Even with such a strong lineup, though, the package is priced all-in at $34.50. A very reasonable ticket price is a key factor,” Arfin says. “And we really worked hard at putting together an amazing package. Linkin Park as a band are very involved in the process and in tune with what’s happening.”

The Meteora tour wraps March 16 at Phillips Arena in Atlanta. Next up for the band is another Project Revolution tour for the summer, with the package currently being put together. Whether the band will play indoors or out is still being determined.

Linkin Park will stay mostly state-side in 2004, after successfully touring Asia last October. Arfin says the band sold out three Budokan Hall shows in Tokyo, Japan, 9,000 in Korea and sold out Osaka and Yokohama. Japan, before playing to 25,000 headlining an outdoor fest in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Venue Tests Ticket-Forwarding Program

BY SUSANNE AULT

LOS ANGELES—Taking a leap in the name of customer service, the Jackson- ville Veterans Memorial Arena will be the first Ticketmaster venue to allow its 1,100 elite club seat patrons to forward their unused tickets for non-sporting events.

The Feb. 12 George Strait show at Jacksonville will be the guinea-pig concert for the arena’s Ticket Forwarding software.

Since January 2002, Ticketmaster has provided its forwarding option to any building clients already offering print-at-home ticketing technology to patrons.

With the new Ticket Forwarding, ticket buyers can e-mail their purchased print-at-home tickets to anyone they choose. The recipient prints out the bar-code-embedded ticket, which is scanned at the venue for entry. Ticketmaster charges $1.95 per ticket for the forwarding service.

A number of sports season-ticket holders can already forward tickets. In 2003, 3,759 Ticketmaster tickets were forwarded by fans of a number of basketball franchises, including the San Antonio Spurs and Utah Jazz.

Yet the possibility of repeat financial transactions on tickets—where buyers sometimes resell them for more than face value—has dogged the concert industry’s adoption of advanced ticketing technology that steps into this secondary market (Billboard, May 24, 2003). Typically, tourists, organizers and artists reap revenue solely from the primary ticketing market.

**ADDED CONVENIENCE**

In Jacksonville’s case, strict Florida anti-scalping laws—where buyers are forbidden to resell their tickets for more than face value—mandate that club patrons forward tickets at no cost to their chosen recipients.

That means “it has nothing to do with the secondary market,” notes Glenn Mon, senior VP of stadiums and arenas for Jacksonville’s management company, SMG.

Instead, Mon says, the decision to implement forwarding was everything to do with supporting customer needs.

“We’re constantly looking at product that will make it easier for patrons to access tickets to our events. The convenience is what we’re looking for—the more convenient you make it, the more you’ll generate greater ticket sales,” Mon is monitoring how the software rolls out at Jacksonville to determine if SMG should introduce forwarding for concerts at its other buildings.

“Rather than having to [physically] mail the ticket, [the club seat-holder] does so electronically. The portability of the ticket increases,” Mon says.

**MANAGEMENT DISCRETION**

David Goldberg, executive VP of strategy and business development at Ticketmaster, says it is up to the venue manager what rules they want to pin on their forwarding systems. If a manager approves it, there could be situations where ticket buyers could forward concert tickets at a price above face value.

“If it’s up to the client. We’ve built the products to comply with different sets of regulations that can match different client needs,” Goldberg says. Because Jacksonville is limiting the forwarding option to its club seat holders, Mon says, tour organizers—including those for the Strait show—were not included in the conversations to install the software. Extra revenue attached to premium seats is usually kept out of promoters’ share of the gross anyway, says Jay Glancy to Louis Messina, TMG/AEG Live promoter for the Strait concert.

Yet Messina believes that if venue patrons used ticket forwarding for financial gain, it would be “morally wrong.”

“That’s scaling to me, [with repeat ticket sales], the artist doesn’t participate,” he says. “My personal view is that artists should share in all the revenue that is generated.”

He adds that venues that offer patrons the chance to scalp tickets by forwarding may miss out. “The artist has the option to not play that building. That’s where you put on a poker face and say, ‘We’re not going to play’—it’s like ‘Who’s calling whose bluff?’”

Goldberg hopes that Jacksonville’s Ticket Forwarding launch will spur more of its clients to embrace the software.

“We are going to be happy to point to the other successful markets in the marketplace. And certainly this is one, he says. “With any new technology, there is an adoption curve that goes along with it. There will be early adopters and [there will be] those who wait and see and follow later.”
This is an issue we feel strongly about - you gotta treat your favorite bands with respect. If you know music, you know this is the only way to get real quality. Legal downloads rock.

GOOD CHARLOTTE

WE DOWNLOAD

(Legally.)
Bruce Springsteen and his mighty E Street Band put up some huge numbers on the road in 2003. The record-setting Rising tour kicked some major stadium-level tail all over the world. Springsteen even threw in a world-record stand in his home state of New Jersey. At 54, he put together the top-grossing run of his 30-plus years of national touring. The Rising tour, the Jersey stand and Springsteen’s remarkable year of touring were well-chronicled in these pages. We love Bruce.

But Springsteen was not the top touring artist of 2003, despite numerous media claims to the contrary. Any way you look at it, the Rolling Stones grossed far more than Springsteen did last year (Billboard, Dec. 27, 2003).

From start to finish, the Stones’ three-year tour grossed $259,520,230 from 113 shows dating back to September 2002 (Billboard, Dec. 6, 2002). We lumped the entire tour into 2003’s Billboard Boxscore stats because we received them all at once from printer Michael Cohn’s office at the end of the tour. We do not estimate.

For the year, Springsteen’s reported gross total is $81.7 million worldwide. If you take away the $90 million or so the Stones did fall in 2002, the band still easily outraised Springsteen. The Boss’ tour grossed $221.5 million from 120 shows, so tour for tour, the Stones also topped Springsteen’s by more than $70 million.

There is no sin in being out-grossed by the Rolling Stones, particularly when they charged significantly more per ticket than Springsteen did. The Stones top the list every time they go out. They are the No. 1 touring act of all time.

In just about any other year, Springsteen would have far and away been the No. 1 touring act. Clearly, there is more to a tour’s success than how much money it makes, like critical acclaim, attendance, creativity and profit margin. But Billboard ranks tours by box office. And in 2003, the Rolling Stones performed better at the box office than any act in the world.

SEC KEGGERS: With his holiday tan firmly in place, Kenny Chesney will tune up for a busy year of touring with a brief run through Southeastern Conference (SEC) school markets paired with Uncle Kracker. Chesney will play small venues in SEC markets beginning later this month. While production will be lo-fi and venues will be very small, Chesney will take his tour band with him. Proceeds will be local charities. According to Chesney’s manager, Clint Higham, the tour is about “getting back to grassroots. A lot of Kenny’s audience is college-age kids, and we wanted to reach them first.”

IMAGINE THAT: The Imagine tour, featuring McFerrin, Amy Grant and Beto O’Rourke, will begin Jan. 30 at the Curb Center and hit about 25 markets before concluding March 8 at the Salem (Va.) Civic Center. The tour was booked by Third Coast Artist Agency, the agent for McFerrin.
Stones Throw Taps L.A. Scene

BY RASHAUN HALL

These days, anyone can start an independent label. All it takes is a few dollars and a little know-how. Or so it seems.

With more entrepreneurs getting into the music business, what truly sets an indie label apart from the crowd?

For Los Angeles-based Stones Throw Records, it’s all about sharing the musical vision of its founder/artist, Peanut Butter Wolf.

Founded in 1996, the label serves as a vehicle for Wolf to share his music and the music of like-minded artists.

“When I started, I felt like I had a lot of experience in all the different aspects of the music business—from working at record stores and with a record distributor to DJing at a radio station,” Wolf says. “I just felt like I knew a lot of talented artists in the Bay Area, and it never really crossed my mind that there would have to be a plan B. I just really wanted to do this.”

BUILDING THE BRAND

The label’s first release was Charizma & Peanut Butter Wolf’s “My World Premier.” The single paid homage to Wolf’s partner Charizma, who passed away in 1993.

Once the label launched, Stones Throw quickly made a name for itself on the DJ circuit.

“One thing that worked to our advantage was that we were putting out a lot of breakbeat records,” Wolf says. “We did one with DJ Babu [of Dilated Peoples] called ‘Super Duck Breaks.’ It seemed like every battle DJ was using this record.

“We had the Stones Throw label on the back of every record we did, so you would see this big Stones Throw label spinning around on the turntable. Just from that alone, all of the DJs began identifying with the label, which gave us credibility.”

With a firm foundation in the DJ community that was established with 12-inch vinyl singles and breakbeat records, Stones Throw soon began releasing full-length albums.

In addition to his own music, Wolf has used Stones Throw to introduce acts like Lootpack, Egon, Breakkra and Madlib.

“I don’t put out anything that I’m not really excited about personally,” Wolf says. “When you’re in this just as a business, you can say, ‘Well, I really don’t like this, but I know that it will sell.’ I never really take that approach. I guess it’s just my pride in the catalog and the label. I want it to be [respected] the way that Blue Note is with jazz or some of the other hip-hop labels I looked up to in the early years, like Def Jam and Tommy Boy when they first started releasing stuff.”

Stones Throw’s recent releases include Jaylib’s “Champion Sound,” which paired Madlib with equally renowned producer/MC Jay-Jay and Wielded’s “Secondary Protocol.” The albums have sold more than 16,000 units and 9,000 units, respectively, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

In December of last year, Stones Throw also released “Big Shots,” the first full-length album by Charizma & Peanut Butter Wolf. It has sold more than 3,000 units.

Next up for the label is the Madlib project, which combines the talents of Madlib with MF Doom.

As a fan and a label head, Wolf is always encouraging his artists to experiment and collaborate, and not just for Stones Throw.

Last year, Madlib was allowed to access the vaults of Blue Note Records to record “Shades of Blue” on Blue Note Jazz Notes, Billboard, July 6, 2004.

“It was my idea for him to do the Blue Note thing,” Wolf says, “I was talking to the A&R guy at Blue Note, and I said, ‘You guys should let Madlib go through your vaults and do a remix album.’ He thought it was a good idea, and I asked Madlib if he would do it and he was all for it. For me, it’s really important to get him out there as much as possible for music’s sake.”

(Continued on page 20)

Goapele Gets Columbia Joint Venture

Borrowing a phrase from the movie “Bull Durham,” independent artist Goapele is “going to the show.” That’s thanks to the recently announced joint venture between her label, Skylabz Recordings, and Columbia/Sony Urban Music.

“Goapele is tapping Columbia/Jive to distribute. We feel good about this being the right next step,” Skylabz/RED debut, “Even Closer,” Feb. 3. The reissued set will feature a bonus track: a remix of the cut "Childhood Drama." Columbia has also signed a production deal for future Goapele projects.

“Even Closer” has sold more than 50,000 copies in the U.S., according to Nielsen SoundScan.

The singer has also wrapped a video for lead single “Closer.” Directed by Dave Meyers, Goapele’s video is slated to premiere in two weeks. The single is being serviced to urban AC stations and is featured on Elektra’s “Honey” soundtrack. It reached No. 83 on the Billboard Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Singles & Tracks chart in the Aug. 9, 2003, issue.

This major-label deal is gold is the end of a rainbow that started with Goapele’s 2001 EP, “Even Closer.” Its “couple-thousand” independently sold copies paved the way for “Even Closer.” But Goapele vows the joint venture won’t alter her artistic vision.

“I did fear that originally and was mindful of that issue,” she says. “But we’ve been patient regarding who we wanted to move forward with and how we wanted to move forward so that who I am [artistically] still comes across.”

While Skylabz expects to bow more acts in the future, it’s all about Goapele right now. “We’ve learned a tremendous amount working independently,” Skylabz chief and Goapele manager Namane Mokhobane says. “Now we have a huge learning curve regarding being independent and in partnership with a major.”

Future Goapele sightings include upcoming performances in New York (Joe’s Pub) and a Feb. 14 “Soul Train” appearance.

ON THE RECORD: As noted earlier in this column, En Vogue drops its new album, “Soul Flower,” Feb. 24. Its lead single is “Ooh Boy.”

The trio (Cindy Herron, Terry Ellis and new member Rhona Bennett) dropped by Billboard’s Los Angeles office last week to discuss the new album and future plans. The album is on Herron and Ellis’ label, Funky Girl, in association with producers Denzil Foster and Thomas McElroy’s Beat Exchange label, distributed through Bayside.

There will be a promotional blitz tied to the album’s release, including appearances at Super Bowl XXXVIII in Houston. And while original member Maxine Jones has been busy of late with motherhood, she plans to join the group on its next studio album.

Producer Jazze Pha (aka Phalon Alexander) plans to bow his “Big Love” solo album this spring on Atlantic. His protégée Jody Breeze and Ciara are working on solo projects set to debut this summer on Pha’s Arista-distributed Sho Nuff Recordings... Hidden Beach Recordings... Jill Scott returns with her long-awaited new album this summer. In the meantime, she appears in a four-episode arc on UPN’s “Girlfriends” that kicked off Jan. 12.... Cee-Lo Green’s “Goodie Mob” second solo set, “Cee-Lo Green Is the Soul Machine,” lands in stores March 16 through Arista.

AWARDS MANIA: Following the Feb. 8 Grammy honors, the awards hoopla on the urban front continues with the 35th annual NAACP Image Awards. The two-hour ceremony is being taped March 6 at Los Angeles’ Universal Amphitheater. It will air March 11 on Fox. Leading the list of nominees are OutKast (with six nods), Beyoncé (five) and Luther Vandross (four). Those three acts will compete against each other in the cate-
**Stones Throw**

Continued from page 19

With its roots firmly entrenched in West Coast hip hop, Wolf has secured a place for himself and his Stones Throw label as an institution in the hip-hop underground.

"I really came out of the turntable scene in the mid-'90s, even though I had been doing it for a lot longer than that," Wolf says. "In '95, I was a part of this 'Return of the DJ' record with DJ Quik and the Beat Junkies. I just feel like I'm tenured in the whole West Coast hip-hop movement from having my first shot in those early days."

"There are a lot of kids who remember that record and have grown up on Stones Throw," he adds. "We did just a real slow build and never tried to compete with the majors in terms of units sold. By doing it for so long, we have really loyal fans now. We can do a show here in L.A. at the El Rey Theatre, which has a capacity of 1,000, and it can be sold out. There are a lot of major rock groups on major labels that can't sell that place out."

The label's influence is even recognized by fellow independent labels like ABB Records.

"Stones Throw has built a brand that DJs, artists and music fans alike appreciate putting money first, says ABB Records president Ben B. B. "Peet Peanut" Wolf, Egon and Madlib have never been afraid to take chances with the creative process.

The end result—which is good music and a first impression—speaks for itself.

"Their partners, Fat Beats Distribution and Caroline Distribution, have also been instrumental in helping their brand reach taste-makers and fans worldwide," he adds. "Most importantly, and certainly not least, Stones Throw Records helped bring Madlib's musical visions to the world."
Christian King Sets Sights On Secular World

BY LEILA COBO

The name Marcos Witt may not ring any bells among fans of commercial Latin music, but in Latin Christian music, he reigns.

The No. 1-selling artist in the genre, Texas-born, Mexico-raised Witt has sold upwards of 7 million copies of his 22 albums, according to his label, CanZion.

Last year, he won a Latin Grammy for best Christian album.

Now the secular world will get a chance to hear what Witt is all about, thanks to a recently inked deal with Sony Music Norte.

The three-year agreement covers the marketing, promotion, and distribution of Witt's albums to secular outlets worldwide.

The first album to be released under the Sony banner is "Recor- dando Otra Vez," a live disc recorded in November last year at the Los Angeles Sports Arena. It's slated for release March 2 in the U.S. and Latin America.

"It was an opportunity for an expansion and to get a broader audience for the music," Witt says of his decision to sign with Sony.

This isn't the first time Witt has expanded his horizons.

Last year, Houston-based CanZion, in which Witt is a major shareholder, struck a deal with Miami-based Vida Music that enabled Vida/Zondervan to distribute CanZion's 18 top-selling albums, both on the Christian Booksellers Assn. circuit and in the general market (Billboard, March 29, 2003).

At the time, Witt's presence at CanZion was a major factor in the deal. But his product was not distributed beyond the CBA arena.

Today, Vida/Zondervan will continue to distribute Witt's product on the CBA circuit, but Sony will distribute it in the secular world.

"This is going to be the first time that non-Christian accounts will have Marcos Witt," Sony Music Norte president Kevin Lawrie says. "He will be in places like Wal-Mart, Target and Best Buy.

The Sony agreement, which also includes four other CanZion acts, does not cover CBA accounts.

"We want to extend his secular reach," Lawrie says.

Lawrie, who took over the helm of Sony Music Norte upon its creation last year, first saw Witt perform at the Los Angeles concert during which he recorded his upcoming album. Lawrie was bowled over. "When you go to a stadium and you see 20,000 people and you're not part of that, you want to be involved," he says.

At first blush, the soft-spoken bespectacled Witt does not fit the superstar mold, much less that of a Latin superstar.

Born in San Antonio, Texas, Witt moved to Durango, Mexico, with his missionary parents when he was barely one month old. Raised and educated in Mexico, he recorded the first of 22 albums in 1986.

Although recognized as the leader in the U.S. Latin Christian music field, Witt, who founded CanZion, had not seriously considered major-label representation until he signed a management deal with Mauricio Abaroa last year.

EXPANDING REACH

Abaroa, the former president of Crescent Moon Records, took Witt to Sony. Now the label has plans to aggressively market Witt, both to his Christian base and to secular audiences.

"Recordando Otra Vez" will be supported by a targeted TV campaign focused on specific regions and not necessarily exclusive to Hispanic broadcasters.

Witt will be given major visibility at retail, and although he'll be initially promoted on Christian radio, Sony also has plans to take him to commercial Spanish-language radio.

Witt, however, does not plan to change the kind of music he makes to better fit a non-Christian format. "I think the music really stands on its own," he says. "It's great music, and it's a great message."

The release of "Recordando Otra Vez" coincides with Witt's tour of the U.S., Latin America and Spain, which kicks off in February in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The 10-month stint will cover 30 concerts.

As is always the case with Witt's tours, a percentage of the proceeds will go toward opening music schools in Latin America.

The schools, called Instituto CanZion, fall under the umbrella of the CanZion group of companies, which also includes the CanZion, Pulso Records and Más Que Música labels. Branches of Instituto CanZion operate in Argentina, Paraguay, Guatemala, Mexico and the U.S.

Sales Up, Shipments Down: So What's The Story?

It came as a surprise to many that according to Nielsen SoundScan, sales of Latin music for 2003 actually rose from the previous year (Billboard, Jan. 17).

It's surprising because shipments of Latin music, according to the Recording Industry Assn. of America, declined.

To recap, according to SoundScan, sales of Spanish-language albums (excluding those of Shakira or Gloria Estefan in English, for example) for the year ended Dec. 28, 2003, climbed to 26.1 million units from 19.5 million units the previous year.

Total sales of all albums by Latin artists (this time including English albums by Shakira and Estefan, for example) rose to 27.5 million units from 23.7 million in 2002.

In comparison—and keeping in mind that total year-end figures are not yet available—shipments of Latin music from January to September dipped to 29.7 million from 31.1 million the previous year, according to the RIAA. The drop was a little more than 4%, narrower than in previous years.

In any case, the fact remains that an increasing number of Latinos are buying their music at general-market accounts, and more mass merchants are adequately stocking Latin music—specifically, regional Mexican music—in their stores. That's reflected in SoundScan numbers and, quite frankly, it is cause for celebration.

But let's be clear: As far as Latin music is concerned, RIAA numbers and SoundScan numbers are not always in synch.

In this case, they aren't even going in the same direction, for a variety of reasons.

First and foremost, because so much Latin music continues to be sold at mom-and-pop stores and such nontraditional outlets as flea markets, SoundScan cannot reflect all sales of the music.

So, why are SoundScan numbers up? Because sales of regional Mexican music have soared, according to both SoundScan and the RIAA. And that music is now found in more places tracked by SoundScan.

Indie Balboa, which does not report to the RIAA, for example, more than doubled its market share. In the Latin market, that jump makes a difference.

So does the fact that Fonovisa's market share climbed by more than two percentage points. Thanks to its distribution deal with Universal Music & Video Distribution, the label's product is now available at mainstream retailers that previously did not carry it, such as Tower.

Perhaps the most specific example of a shift to SoundScan accounts is that of GrupoMonteze de Durango.

The group's first album on Disa, 2002's "El Sube y Baja," peaked at No. 43 on the Billboard Top Latin Albums chart, despite selling more than 300,000 copies to date, according to the label.

Last year, Disa made a concerted effort to take Monteze's new album, "De Durango a Chicago," to mainstream accounts. As a result, the album debuted at No. 2 on the Top Latin Albums chart.

All this does not negate the fact that the market is under duress and that sales of Latin music overall are down, as reflected by the RIAA's shipment figures.

Make no mistake: This is not a buoyant market. But it's changing in ways that were not anticipated.

Here's to having a year with numbers that go up, together, in perfect harmony.

FOR THE RECORD: "Nocturnal," the recent, independently released EP by former Cafíanes guitarist Alejandro Marcovich, is the first of three, each containing four tracks and retailing for about $5 in Mexico. The next two EPs are in the process of being recorded.

"The purpose is to fight piracy and to provide a different format that conforms with people's changing, consuming habits," Marcovich says. Meanwhile, Discos Termita—which Marcovich founded—is no longer associated with Sony (it was an amicable split). It will continue to function independently.

Discos Termita's first release is slated for March. Marcovich is not signed to Discos Termita.

IN BRIEF: Superstar Luis Miguel is set to launch the second leg of his world tour Jan. 15 with a series of 23 concerts at Mexico City's Auditorio Nacional.
### TOP LATIN ALBUMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist/Imprint &amp; Number/Distributing Label</th>
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### LATIN POP ALBUMS

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<td>La Vida</td>
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<tr>
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### TROPICAL ALBUMS

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### REGIONAL MEXICAN ALBUMS

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**Total Sales Data Compiled by Nielsen SoundScan:**
- **Latin Pop Albums:**
- **Tropical Albums:**
- **Regional Mexican Albums:**

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**Certification Information:**
- **Latin Pop Albums:**
- **Tropical Albums:**
- **Regional Mexican Albums:**

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**Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA):**
- **Certification for net shipment:**
- **Sales data compiled:**

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**www.americanradiohistory.com**

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**The Last Don**

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**www.billboard.com**

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**Billboard January 24, 2004**
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**Latin Pop Airplay**

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**Regional Mexican Airplay**

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**Tropical Airplay**

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BILBOARD JANUARY 24, 2004

Music Dance

A&R Exec ‘Thinks Fink’ For New Launch

BY MICHAEL PAOLETTA

With numerous labels closing, downsizing or consolidating, two dance/electronic veterans are optimistically proceeding hand-in-hand into the future with new game plans. Gladys Pizarro, former A&R director of the defunct Strictly Rhythm Records, is starting a new production company, Launch Entertainment.

Launch will work closely with Strictly Rhythm founder/CEO Mark Finkelstein, whose repertoire-management firm, Think Fink, will handle Launch’s business affairs.

“With Launch, I will continue to do what I’m known for,” Pizarro says. “I will be looking for all styles of dance music— from house to trance and all points in between—that I have a shot of bringing.”

Launch—which is in the process of signing talent—will ship its repertoire to labels in the U.S. and abroad. Pizarro says she will be looking to secure singles deals or license the music for use on compilations.

“With the international contacts and connections in the dance/electronic community, many in the industry acknowledge that Pizarro has what it takes to get the music into the hands of dealers.”

Along the way, Pizarro discovered, nurtured and guided the careers of such globally recognized DJs/producers as Roger Sanchez, Erick Morillo, Armand van Helden and others.

After numerous hits—and misses—Strictly Rhythm created a $50/50 worldwide joint venture with Warner Music Group (Billboard, Dec. 16, 2000). Two years later, the New York-based independent ceased operations (Billboard, Oct. 12, 2002).

Finkelstein remains in litigation with Warner Music Group. According to Finkelstein, the lawsuit involves disputes arising out of the formation and operation of the joint venture between Strictly Rhythm and Warner.

At the end of 2002, Finkelstein opened the doors to Think Fink (Beat Box, Billboard, Dec. 21, 2002). He currently manages the repertoire of several DJs/producers, including Lee Cabrerra and John Nanno.

Last year, Finkelstein says he secured more than 20 licensing deals for accompanying singles and compilations for Cabrerra’s cross- over hit “Shake It.”

In addition to managing repertoire, Finkelstein also handles sub-publishing deals in the U.S. for such labels as Italian dance im-

print Energy.

Since Strictly Rhythm’s closing, Pizarro says she has spent time “re-evaluating things, figuring out where I’m headed and what I need to get there.”

Eschewing the label route—particularly because of the expenses it would entail and incur—Pizarro focused on her A&R abilities.

Today’s dance music business is in licensing, Pizarro notes. And while today’s licensing fees are definitely lower than during the late-’90s licensing frenzy, “with less overhead, you need less in return,” she adds.

Pizarro also stresses the importance of utilizing legitimate digital download services, which she and Finkelstein firmly believe are replacing the 12-inch vinyl store.

Of course, recent sales figures from digital download sites point to a rosy future for singles sales. And because dance music is predominately a singles-oriented genre, the coming months could be an extremely exciting and lucrative time for those in the dance/electronic trenches.

“There is, and always will be, a need for dance music,” Finkelstein says. “The genre will come back really strong within the next three years. Digital downloads will show the way.”

TV’s Queer Guy Optsn For The Musical Life

Jai Rodrigue, the culture maven of Bravo/NBC hit reality series “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy,” is in the studio recording his debut album. If initial tracks are any indication, the full-length will encompass dance (“Love Is Good”), R&B (“Back to L.A.”) and pop (“Shining Star”). And don’t fret, Rodriguez can sing.

Prior to “Queer Eye,” he spent time on Broadway and off-Broad- way, performing in “Rent” and “Zanna, Don’t!” respectively. Last March, Arrive and Eden Productions issued “Love Is Good.”

The track became a favorite in New York, prompting a performance by Rodriguez at the Roxy club. Then came “Queer Eye.”

“I had been trucking along quite well before ‘Queer Eye,’” Rodriguez says, “And while it’s been a huge vehicle for me and I love working on it, I want to be known as a performer, not solely as ‘the culture guy.’”

Rodriguez says he wants the album to be complete by June. Until then, he’ll continue recording, taping episodes of “Queer Eye” and shopping for a label deal.

“A few years ago, I never would have thought that a 24-year-old gay man could have a chance in the world of music,” he says. But the times have changed. Now, anything is possible.

BEBEL BAULE: Fans of Bebel Gilberto’s genre-bending “Tanto Tempo” will be happy to learn that the Brazilian artist is putting the finishing touches on her follow-up disc, which continues to bridge the gap between electronic and jazz (see Jazz Notes, page 15).

Scheduled to arrive in spring, the new Ziriguiboom/Six Degrees album—recorded in Rio de Janeiro and New York and mixed in London—finds Gilberto working with producers Marius De Vries (Bjork, Rufus Wainwright, Guy Sigsworth/Seal, Britney Spears) and Pascal Gabriel (Kylie Minogue, Dido).

COMFORT ZONE: Three years ago, Indonesian-born singer/songwriter Astrid Suryanto crafted a rough demo using audio software that she had downloaded for free from the Internet.


Suryanto followed this with a collaboration with Morgan Page and Gregory Shiff (“All I Know” for Bedrock U.K.). Statra will issue her new single, the breathtakingly beautiful “Rainwater” — which was produced by the singer and Victor Calderone (with additional production by Dave Micalizzi) — Feb. 17.

In a surprising and most wel- come turn, “Rainwater” finds Calderone eschewing his fondness for all things tribal. Here, Calderone mesmerizes with lush grooves and melancholic piano tinklings. Such a lush foundation provides the postcard-perfect foundation for Suryanto’s sweet, yearning vocals.

“Rainwater” precedes the artist’s debut album, due later this year. By the way, for those that absolutely need Calderone’s signa- ture tribalism, a Calderone remix is included on the CD.

CH-CH-CHANGES: Gladys Pizarro, formerly of Strictly Rhythm Records, is opening the doors to new production company Launch (see story, above). She can be reached at 212-844-9400 or launchentinic@aol.com.

TRACK OF THE WEEK: The Machine Head rerub of “I Need More Love” by Robert Randolph & the Family Band. Mixers Jason Bentley & Smitty have concocted a boot- ylicious atmosphere that is equal parts jam band and Sunday-morning revival, replete with soulful vocals, powerful handclaps and roof-raising rhythms. The original version appears on the act’s 2003 Dare/Warner Bros. album “Unclassified.”
### HOT DANCE SINGLES SALES

| 1 | ME AGAINST THE MUSIC | Britney Spears Featuring Madonna | #1 | 4 Weeks At Number 1 |
| 2 | NOTHING FAILS/NOBODY KNOWS ME | Madonna | #2 | 3 | 10 |
| 3 | (THERE’S GONNA BE) MORE TO LIFE | Steacie Orsco | #3 | 11 |
| 4 | RUBBERNECK (PAUL Oakenfold Remix) | Elvis Presley | #4 | 6 |
| 5 | BREATHE (REMIXES) | Michelle Branch | #5 | 5 |
| 6 | SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL (REMIXES) | The Rolling Stones | #6 | 6 |
| 7 | BORN TOO SLOW | The Crystal Method | #7 | 9 |
| 8 | LIMBO ROCK (REMIXES) | Chubbie & 00 Featuring Inner Circle | #8 | 8 |
| 9 | THE DISTRICT SLEEPS ALONE TONIGHT | The Postal Service | #9 | 7 |

### HOT DANCE RADIO AIRPLAY

| 1 | NEVER SOMETHING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO HEAVEN | The Rocc Project Featuring Tina Arena | #1 | 18 Weeks At Number 1 |
| 2 | HEY YAI | Arika | #2 | 18 |
| 3 | GIA | Despina Vandi | #3 | 14 |
| 4 | ALONE | Large | #4 | 4 |
| 5 | MILKSHAKE | M Adina | #5 | 32 |
| 6 | BABY BOY | Beyoncé Featuring Sean Paul | #6 | 32 |
| 7 | IT’S MY LIFE | No Doubt | #7 | 17 |
| 8 | WHEREVER YOU ARE (I FEEL LOVE) | LeAnn Rimes | #8 | 32 |

### TOP ELECTRONIC ALBUMS

| 1 | NUMBER 1 | 4 Weeks At Number 1 |
| 2 | THE POSTAL SERVICE | Give Up |
| 3 | MARIAH CAREY | The Remixes |
| 4 | ENIGMA | Voyage |
| 5 | LOU DIETVO | N.Y.C. Underground Party |
| 6 | BASEMENT JAXX | NURSE |
| 7 | THE HAPPY BOYS | Cyndi Lauper (Remixes) |
| 8 | THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS | Singers ‘93 – ’03 |
| 9 | VARIOUS ARTISTS | Verve (Remixed) |
| 10 | LOU DIETVO | Presents: Ultra-Dance 04 |

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**Billboard Hot Dance Songs Chart**

| 1 | NUMBER 1 | 1 Week At Number 1 |
| 2 | STONED (DEEP DISH REMIX) | Arista | #2 |
| 3 | WONDERFUL (S. KLEINENBERG & D. AUDU MIXES) | Universal | #3 |
| 4 | NOTHING FAILS (REMIXES) | Island | #4 |
| 5 | A THOUSAND BEAUTIFUL THINGS (RAHOFER, G&D, BIMBO JONES) | Arista | #5 |
| 6 | BREATHE (REMIXES) | Maverick | #6 |
| 7 | FALLEN (REMIXES) | Mute | #7 |
| 8 | LUCKY STAR (BENJAMIN JAXX & DEREK ROSS) | Point Blank | #8 |
| 9 | FAKE | Swado | #9 |
| 10 | GIVE IT UP (WHITE LABEL) | ZYX | #10 |
| 11 | ME AGAINST THE MUSIC | Epic | #11 |
| 12 | ARE YOU READY FOR LOVE | Southern Star | #12 |
| 13 | WALK ON BY | Top Pin | #13 |
| 14 | SLOW | Sony | #14 |
| 15 | YOU’RE SO BEAUTIFUL | BMG | #15 |
| 16 | GET IT OFF (THAT KID CHRIS REMIX) | Universal | #16 |
| 17 | JUST A LITTLE MORE LOVE | Golden House | #17 |
| 18 | BORN SLIPPY NUXX (P. OAKENFOLD & R. SMITH MIXES) | BMG | #18 |
| 19 | BELIEVE | Double Up | #19 |
| 20 | ME, MYSELF AND I (JUNIORS REMIX) | Universal | #20 |

**Power Pick**

- **MILKSHAKE (X-Press 2 & DJs ZINC MIXES)**
- **BEYONCE**
- **KEITA**

**Top Electronic Albums**

- **SARAH McLACHLAN**
- **MARIANH CAREY**
- **ENIGMA**
- **LOU DIETVO**
- **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
- **LOU DIETVO**
Set Recognizes Nashville’s R&B Past

BY JIM BESSMAN

NASHVILLE—Nashville's central position in country music history is a given, but its place in the annals of R&B has, until now, been understated.

Now, however, none other than the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum is celebrating Music City’s considerable contributions to the genre with the Feb. 24 release of “Night Train to Nashville: Music City Rhythm & Blues, 1945-1970” on CMF Records.

The two-disc set will be distributed through Lost Highway/Universal. It complements the Country Music Hall of Fame’s exhibit of the same name, which is slated to open March 15. The 18-month schedule of public programs includes concerts, panel discussions, lectures and films.

“A single CD just wouldn’t do it,” Country Music Hall of Fame special projects director Kira Florita says. “It was evident that the recordings were culled from more than 20 labels including Bullet, Nashville’s first notable independent record company, and Excello. Music City’s most important R&B label. The titles were recorded mostly in Nashville but also include outside recordings, such as Nashville native Bobby Hebb’s 1966 pop smash “Sunny,” which he cut in his then-home base of New York.

OUT-OF-TOWN ARTISTS

Other major artists from out of town are also featured on such local recordings as Etta James’ 1962 version of Ray Charles’ hit “What’d I Say,” taped live at R&B nightspot the New Era Club, and Esquerita’s 1958 Capitol recording of “Rockin’ the Joint.” Esquerita fans

Little Richard is present with his 1956 Royal Crown Hairdressing song for one-time Nashville R&B AM radio powerhouse WLC.

As music critic Ron Wynn points out in his liner-note essay, Nashville’s historic importance to African-American music has heretofore been relegated to awareness of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, early Grand Ole Opry star DeFord Bailey and country music legend Charley Pride. But “Night Train to Nashville” brings to the fore such under-recognized local artists as Cecil Gant, whose “Nashville Jumps” (1946) initiated Bullet’s “sepsia” line of early recordings from the likes of B.B. King, Wynonie Harris and Rufus Thomas; New Era Club house band Kid King’s Combo, whose cuts like “Skip Stop” (1953) shaped the Excello label sound; Arthur Gunter, whose self-penned 1954 Excello hit “Baby Let My ‘Paw House” was covered by Elvis Presley at Sun for his first chart single; and Christine Kittrell, who recorded for the Tennessee/Republic Records family and whose included songs “L&N Special” (1953) and “Sittin’ Here Drinking” (1952) place her in the company of R&B greats James and Ruth Brown.

Brown, meanwhile, is represented with a 1962 Nashville remake of her 1953 chart-topper “Mama, He Treats Your Daughter Mean,” produced by Shelby Singleton and starring country legends Jerry Kennedy on guitar and Ray Stevens on piano. Arthur Alexander’s 1962 hit “Anna (Go to Him)” was covered with famed Nashville session musicians Charlie McCoy, Hargus “Pig” Robbins, Kenneth Butterly and the Anita Kerr Singers—was soon covered by the Beatles, while Gene Allison’s 1957 hit “You Can Make It If You Try” was later covered by the Rolling Stones.

Robert Knight’s 1967 hit “Everlasting Love” was arranged and produced by its writers Buzz Cason and Mac Gayden and later covered by U2 and Gloria Estefan. Joe Simon’s 1969 R&B and pop hit “The Chokin’ Kind” was previously Waylon Jennings’ Harlan Howard-penned country hit; also that year, New Orleans R&B ace Johnny Adams’ biggest hit, “Reconsider Me,” was produced by Singleton, again with Kenneth on guitar.

“We originally called it ‘The Lost History of Nashville R&B,’” Florita says, “because people know very little about what went on here in R&B. But it was a very vibrant scene, and Nashville’s role was integral to R&B in the South. And obviously, there was a connection with the country music industry. So many musicians, songwriters and studio session players and producers who worked on R&B records went on to become legends in country music—and vice versa.”

Country Music Hall of Fame associate director of museum services Michael Gray co-produced the set and also contributed liner notes. He further delineates Nashville’s country/R&B relationship.

“Beginning in the late 40’s and into the 50’s and 60’s, Nashville was a real hotbed for R&B,” he says. “That’s overshadowed by Nashville’s identification today with country music, but to fully appreciate its rise as the capital of country music, you need to look at the context within which that emergence took place and the important role of R&B in Nashville becoming a recording center.”

Gray also cites the “A-Team players” associated with Nashville’s country music sessions who graced many of its R&B recordings and holds up Hebb’s story as particularly illustrative of the intersecting genres.

“The whole Hebb family was one of the most famous musical families in Nashville in terms of R&B,” Gray says, noting that Bobby performed as a youngster with his older brother Harold in a tap-dance revue at the Bijou Theater before playing spoons, singing and dancing in Roy Acuff’s band in the early 50’s.

“I was singing standards on [legendary Nashville Sound producer] Owen Bradley’s [local variety] TV show every week, and Roy saw me and liked my act,” Hebb recalls, noting that Acuff had previously employed Acuff. “I sang hits of the time, including [Hank Williams’] ‘Cold Cold Heart.’ I remember Hank telling me to keep on singing it—and believe it or not, I just recorded it in Germany last year. But country music in those days leaned a little closer to gospel; [Pioneering gospel composer] Thomas Dorsey wrote ‘Peace in the Valley’—which his friend Red Foley recorded—and Nashville was a more experimental city at that particular time.”

WIDESPREAD PROMOTION

As the “Night Train to Nashville” set precedes the museum’s exhibit, the Hall of Fame is using it to generate advance press. “The city of Nashville and the Convention and Visitors Bureau will be investing $400,000 to market the exhibit regionally, and the CDs will be mentioned everywhere,” Florita says, announcing a “strong” local print/radio media buy along with an “aggressive” outdoor billboard campaign together with bus benches and wraps.

“We’re working on a media sponsorship and local, regional and national promotions. National partners including the Grand Ole Opry and CMT,” she adds. “We’re exploring new opportunities with BET and others and will have an aggressive online promotional presence.

Co-promotions with Lost Highway are still being finalized, Florita says. “They’ll utilize a point-of-purchase version of an art poster we’ve created for sale,” she notes, “and they’ll obviously try to engage the indie [retail] coalitions, especially in strong R&B markets.”

In-store promotions and performances are also being planned for the museum’s store, Florita says, and possibly at the local Tower Records outlets, “if we can do them without competing.”

“Night Train to Nashville” is not just a R&B record but also a hotbed of black music. In 1998, the label, through Warner Bros., issued the three-CD set “From Where I Stand: The Black Experience in Country Music.”

15 Years Later, Randy Owen Still Cares

This month marks the 15th anniversary of Country Cares for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis.

The country music industry has raised more than $200 million for St. Jude since Randy Owen of the group Alabama founded the Country Cares program in 1989. St. Jude has been embraced by more than 200 country radio stations, nearly every country record label and scores of artists and industry executives as their charity of choice.

A meeting with actor and St. Jude founder Danny Thomas inspired Owen to launch Country Cares. Thomas persuaded Owen to carry on his work raising money to help the hospital research diseases and treat children with catastrophic illnesses.

“Danny mentioned to me he was an old man and he was tired,” Owen recalls. “I think a lot of this was God’s way of using me. He knew he had a willing servant to do that. He had one in Danny Thomas [too], and what a wonderful legacy.”

Early on, Owen was a bit reluctant to use his leverage as the lead singer of a superstar country act to generate support for Country Cares at radio. He thought that “as an artist, I can’t really lean on these people too much, because I don’t want to make them mad,” he says. “I finally made up my mind that we put the kids first and what I do with Alabama is second. That’s the way I’ve done it since the time I made that decision. I’m sure our career suffered a little bit because of that in some cases, but I never did.”

The work strikes a personal chord for Owen. In junior high school he became very ill, but he didn’t go to a doctor because his family couldn’t afford it. That memory is among the things that helped Owen make a connection with a hospital where patients’ families are never asked to pay beyond what any insurance they have may cover.

That always stuck with me,” Owen says. “The thought of being a child and not being able to afford the care that is out there.”

He says his involvement with Country Cares has “made my life rich. It has made my heart different.”

ON THE ROW: Arista Nashville artist Brad Paisley has signed with Fitzgerald-Hartley for personal management. He previously was repped by Jimmy Gilmer of JAG Management in Nashville.

Cindy Wunsch has closed her Nashville artist management firm to return to school to pursue a master’s degree in education. She had represented Lyric Street group Shedaisy, which now shifts to new manager Scott Welch at Nashville-based Mosaic Management.

Dolly Parton will host the CMT Flameworthy 2004 Video Music Awards set for April 21 in Nashville. Shania Twain will perform on the show, set to be telecast live on CMT from 8 p.m.-10 p.m. (ET).

Phyllis Stark is on the industry advisory board for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.
### Billboard Top Country Albums

#### This Week

| Rank | Artist | Title | Last Week's Rank | Sales Data
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<td>Unleashed</td>
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<td>Josh Turner</td>
<td>Long Black Train</td>
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<td>Dixie Chicks</td>
<td>The YO! Of The World Tour Live</td>
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<td>No Shoes. No Shirt. No Problems</td>
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<td>Keith Urban</td>
<td>Golden Road</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Tim McGraw</td>
<td>and the Dancehall Doctors</td>
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#### Greatest Gainer

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<td>Various Artists</td>
<td>Just For You: A Woman's Songs Of Dolly Parton</td>
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### Billboard Top Country Catalog Albums

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<td>3</td>
<td>John Wayne</td>
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### Billboard Top Country Singles

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<td>Bill Engvall</td>
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<td>Rodney Atkins</td>
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*Disclaimer: The data in this document is as of the publication date and is subject to change. For the most current information, please refer to the source.*

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*Footnotes:
1. Nielsen SoundScan provides sales data for a variety of music genres, including Country. The data reflects the sales performance of albums and singles for the specified week.
2. Billboard Top Country Albums charts are based on sales data from various retailers, including digital sales, streaming, and physical copies.
3. The Greatest Hits Vol. II by Toby Keith was released on January 26, 2004, and peaked at Number 1 on the Billboard Top Country Albums chart.
4. Various Artists: Just For You: A Woman’s Songs Of Dolly Parton was a compilation album released in 2004, featuring artists covering Dolly Parton's songs.
5. Other notable releases include Greatest Hits by John Wayne, a compilation of his most popular songs released in 2001, and One Of You by Willie Nelson, released in 2004.*
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ANÍ DI FRANCO

Educated

Produced by: Ani DiFranco
Righteous Babe RR0034

Release Date: Jan. 20

After last year's impressive full-length album “Evolve,” Ani DiFranco announced she was returning to her solo roots. With “Educated Guess,” on ANÍ DI FRANCO has enviable pipes for KATY CHERISH Space,” “Appalatia,” to spacey pop psychedelia of Steve Kilbey’s self-thrive artistically after off-key rectness. There reel Righteous Babe Edited ALBUMS established stateside longtime (the gritty, blues rock-charged “Bud”) and the act of independence: the best track of the collection, “Swim,” with its clinky-clunky guitar line matched by the veracity of her vocals. Overall, DiFranco exhibits a strong-fingered guitar attack on the CD that is characterized by production rawness—for better or worse (traces of key-harmonies) and worse (traces of key-harmonies).—DO

THE CHURCH

Forget Yourself

Produced by: The Church

Spliced 134

Release Date: Feb. 3

It has been a decade since the major-label heyday of this Australian quartet, but the Church continues to thrive artistically after nearly a quar-ter-century at work. The group’s new self-produced effort sports a grand, appropriately theatrical-sounding sound. It also contains the band’s familiar mix of Steve Kilbey’s understated vocalizing, high-energy, post-punk/rock harmonies and space pop psychedelia that effor-cessedly melds the supposedly incompatible styles of such progenitors as Pink Floyd and the Beach Boys.

There is a wealth of superior tracks to select from here, with “Song in Space,” “Appalatia,” “Don’t You Fall” and “Revelal” the strongest tunes. The Church falls between the cracks of established stateside rock radio formats, and the group’s melodic trippiness may elude programmers. But longtime fans will find plenty to cherish on this very atmospheric and tuneful soirée.—CM

KATY ROSE

Because I Can

Produced by: Kim Bullard

V2 27170

Release Date: Jan. 27

Seventeen-year-old Katy Rose certainly has envious pipes for her young age. That said, there is still something for this singer/songwriter to grow into her material. Her voice, a soft sound containing an old soul, is impressively compli-
yed. Yet much of “Because I Can,” the artist’s debut full-length disc, meanders into bland pop territory. However, Rose can be proud of riskier rock-flavored tracks like “Catch My Fall” and earlier-released single “Overdrive.” The former blares to life by way of a screaming Rose, later settling into a wild but incredibly accessible beat. And the latter intelligently mixes pop accents into a hard guitar line. Considering even young music fans are not embracing teen pop as they have in the past, it should serve Rose well to step more heavily on the rock pedal in the future.—SA

R&B/HIP-HOP

☆ ROY AVERS


Produced by: not listed

BBE/Judas RPR0026

Release Date: Jan. 27

Jazz vibrato horn player Roy Avers has been making music for more than three decades. His classic tracks—“Everyone Loves the Sunshine,” “Evolution,” “Get on Up, Get on Down” and “Run-ning Away,” among others—have influ-
enced many DJs, producers and artists in the worlds of R&B, hip-hop, soul and dance. This collection is home to 13 unreleased gems, many of which dazzle in a disco-jazz hybrid that was popular in the mid-to late 70s. "Virgin Ubiquity" opens with the appropriately titled "Boogie Down": featured vocalist Carla Vaughan does just that. Merry Clayton, who is responsible for the voice in the funky “What’s the T?” proves that she, too, knows how to get down. In fact, it becomes readily appar-
down for one reason: They were truly feel-
ing the musically rich landscapes being created by Ayers and his music-
ian friends. Put such artistry alongside today’s so-called divas and the com-
parisons between them and now become incredibly far-reaching. Vaughan and Clayton can also be heard, separately, on other tracks, including “Mystic Voyage (Version),” “Sugar,” “I Really Love You” and “Mystery of Love.” Winding out this essential package are liner notes penned by Ayers himself. Racked in the U.S. by Studio Distribution.—MP

MINDY SMITH

One Moment More

Produced by: Steve Buckingham, Mindy Smith

Vanguard 79736

Release Date: Jan. 27

It seems the beginning of each year brings the bow of a bright new female singer/songwriter. Last year, it was Canada’s Kathleen Edwards; this year, it’s New York-born, Nashville-based Mindy Smith. In October, Smith covered Dolly Parton’s “Jolene” for Sugar Hill’s Parton tribute album, “Just Because I’m a Woman.” She made an impression as heavy company of “Digital Love” and Basement Jaxx’s reworking of “Phoenix” (the only track here from Daft Punk’s debut, “Homework”). First released overseas last December, “Daft Club” will hopefully help fans forgive the band for notoriously waiting years between album releases.—SA

YO-YO MA

Obrigado Brazil—Live in Concert

Produced by: Steve Epstein

Sony Classical SK 58070

Release Date: Feb. 10

In this live recording of his successful and gorgeous “Obrigado Brazil: Con-
cert of Brazil,” Yo-Yo Ma has brought together most of the musical cast that accompanied him on the original studio recording. And that cast— including clarinetist Paquito D’Rivera, guitarist brothers Sergio and Odair Assad, singer Rosa Passos and percussionist Cyro Baptista—continues to lend credibility and interpretative flair to this project. Classical crossovers are the key. The specter of stiffness and tenuity fogs over most of them. But the tracks on “Obrigado”—many not included on the original recording—are effortless. Even the opening “Libertango,” ren-
bited a bit with the crisp piano accompaniment, survives on sheer beauty. “Obrigado” is live more pop-
ulist than its predecessor and has no qualms about including Ary Barroso’s “Aquarela do Brasil.” It is but one example of how great taste can spread what is overly familiar.—LC

DANCE/ELECTRONIC

Daft Punk

Daft Club

Produced by: Daft Punk

Virgin 94241

Release Date: Jan. 27

Perhaps you really cannot have too much of a good thing. For its remix disc, “Daft Club,” French duo Daft Punk (Thomas Bangalter and Guy-
MANUEL DE HOMEM CHRISTO) showcases the work of others—specifically, DJ/producers who reconstructed songs primarily from the act’s 2001 album, “Discovery.” Two tracks (“Aerodynamic” and “Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger”) are revisited more than once here. Fortunately, the vari-
ous versions work. Slum Village adds an ethereal underscore to the origi-
nal’s ethereal “Aerodynamic.” Guess what? These opposing forces bounce well off each other. Jess & Crabbe’s deceptively simple riddim of “Better” completely reinvigorates a song that was pretty much perfect to begin with. In the Neptunes’ hands, “Harder, Bet-
ter” becomes a lounge-styled track; this, too, strikes a great note. Other worthy mentions are Boris Dlugosch’s

CONTRIBUTORS:

Susanne Ault, Keith Caulfield, Leila Cobb, Deborah Evans Price, Chris Morris, Dan Ouellette, Michael Pauelotta, Chuck Taylor, Anastasia Tsicoulas, Philip van Vleck, Ray Waddell. ESSENTIALS: Reissues (reviewed by the editorial team) to keep the top half of one in the complimentary format, CRITICS’ CHOICE (★): New releases, regardless of chart potential, highly recommended because of their musical merit. All albums commercially available in the U.S. are eligible. Send all review copies and single review copies to Michael Pauelotta (BBR, 770 E. 6th Street, New York, N.Y. 10002) or to the writer in the appropriate location.

BILLYARDS

January 24, 2004

www.billboard.com

American RadioHistory
HABIB KOITE & BAMADA
Foly!—Live Around the World
REVIEWED BY: Michael A. De Rock, Daniel Bovin
World Village 460021
RELEASE DATE: Jan. 13
Maalian guitarist/singer Habib Koite is without question one of the most gifted and compelling performers on the contemporary Afro-pop scene—and this joyful, vibrant two-disc set serves as affirmation of his place of pride. Fusing gentle, almost singer-songwriter-like vocals with high-energy, driving rhythms, the album draws its inspiration from myriad Maalian styles, Koite and his band Bamada soar through a collection of their hits. Highlights include the gently pulsing currents of “Ma Ya,” the eminently danceable beats of “Nanaale” and the sly wit of “Cigarette Abandos” (the song that rocketed Koite to stardom across West Africa). This specially priced set lasts for well more than two hours. Of course, when spent in such good company, the time passes in a flash.—AT

CHRISTIAN

THE CRABB FAMILY
Crab Fest Live 2003
PRODUCERS: Gerald and Kathy Crabb
Dudway 1418713802
RELEASE DATE: Feb. 10
Southern gospel artists are known for delivering exuberant performances. This 17-song collection captures the passion and enthusiasm that make Southern gospel gatherings such a huge draw. It accomplishes this by showcasing some of the genre’s top acts singing what they do best. The Crabb Family is joined by Brian Free & Assurance, LordSong, Mike Bowling, the Hoskins Family, Gerald Crabb and the Crabb Family. This week there was no record in Owensboro, Ky., at Crab Fest, the Crabb Family’s annual homecoming event. Bowling was featured on the rendition of “The Call” is powerful, LordSong’s “While I Wait” is a vibrant celebration of faith. The Perrys’ “Calvary Answers for” is another highlight. And when Jason Crabb rips into “Through the Fire,” everyone will want to stand and shout, “Hallelujah!” Accompanied by a VHS/DVD recording, this recording is the next best thing to being there.—DEP

CLASSICAL

NIGEL KENNEDY: MEMBERS OF THE BERLIN PHILHARMONIC: DANIEL STABRAVIA
Vivaldi: Four Seasons
PRODUCER: David Groves
EMI Classics 7243 5 57666 0 1
RELEASE DATE: Jan. 13
Way back in the halcyon days of 1989, classical music’s purported “bad boy,” violinist Nigel Kennedy, released a barn-burning version of Vivaldi’s Four Seasons that sold more than 2 million copies. Fifteen years later, Kennedy is back to the music that has hounded his bread—in a recording that offers disarmingly little new insight. Supposedly, this latest rendering is the first (limited-edition) entry in a whole Kennedy-Berlin Philharmonic series that will eventually explore Vivaldi’s lesser-known output, which is in itself a welcome idea. Unfortunately, though, the A minor and Major double violin concertos featured here (with Daniel Stabrawia) seem merely window dressing to the main event. If you have not had quite enough of Kennedy and the Four Seasons, check out the bonus DVD.—AT

AC

MELISSA ETHERIDGE BREATHE (3:15)
PRODUCER: John Shanks
Produced in association with The Pink/Emi April/EMI Music, ASCAP
Island 19969 (CD promo)
Melissa Ethereidge returns with “Breathe,” the lead single from her eighth album, “Lucky” (due Feb. 10). The track is a cover of Greenwheel’s most recent hit and first single, featuring producer John Shanks, who worked with Ethereidge on her 2001 effort, “Skin,” and in 2003 helmed his Sheryl Crow and Michelle Branch, Etheridge’s voice is always a comforting sound—warm and familiar and perfect for the road. The solid, rock-inspired track combines her gutsy vocals with a killer guitar-driven chorus (“I’m alright/I’m alright/It only hurts when I breathe”). Adult-leaning stations are already on board, but mainstream top 40 outlets should take note as well.—LC

COUNTRY

BIG & RICH Wild West Show (3:58)
PRODUCERS: Big Kenny, John Rich, Paul Worley
WRITERS: Big Kenny, J. Rich, B. Daly
PUBLISHERS: Big Love Music, Songs of Warner-Tamerlane, EMI West Music, AASCAP
Warner Bros. 101210 (CD promo)
Something that sounds different always attracts attention, and this debut single from Warner Bros. duo Big & Rich has a very distinctive vibe that is unlike anything else on country radio right now. The song boasts a hauntingly beautiful melody and lots of quirky Western imagery. This tale of a troubled relationship is peppered with a “hey ya” chant (no relation to OutKast) that injects the song with a mysterious, Native American-flavored flavor, John Rich, who previously had a solo deal on BNA, and Big Kenny have joined forces to create an intriguing new act, propelled by vibrant vocals and an innovative sound, “Wild West Show” proves the duos forthcoming album “Horse of a Different Color.”—DEP

LATIN

PAULINA RUBIO To Quise Tanto (4:06)
PRODUCERS: Emilio Estefan Jr., Archie Peña
WRITERS: Coti Sorokin, Andahl
PUBLISHERS: Doble Acuarela Son, SGAE (ASCAP)
Universal (CD promo)
Paulina Rubio’s previous Spanish-language album, the mega-selling “Paulina” from 2000, was a mix of irresistibly fluffy pop and feminist affirmation—as well as a technochic trap. Even her English-language album, “Exotico,” didn’t quite live up to that. Now, one cannot help but wonder if her follow-up Spanish recording can do the trick. “Te Quise Tanto,” the first single from “Paula-Latina” (due Feb. 10), follows the instantly catchy pattern of the “Paulina” tracks: a chorus that gets tattooed on your mind after the first time thanks to relentless repetition, effortless groove and the maddeningly (though in a good way) easy-to-hum melody. Rubio continues to defy Latin radio’s tradition of having big ballads pave the way for a new album. Ac- cordingly, her latest is a cross-genre blend of the ubiquitous Spanish guitar, Post-Ricky, it may not be the most innovative touch, but it serves its youthful intent and aim.—LC
Sprint’s Music Tunes To Ring With UMG, WMG Songs

BY CARLA HAY

NEW YORK—Universal Music Group and Warner Music Group are the latest players in Sprint PCS Vision’s blossoming Music Tunes business. UMG and WMG are making select songs available for downloadable purchase as part of Sprint’s Music Tunes, which are ring tones that use actual songs instead of simulations.

Sony music has been available for Music Tunes since last July, while UMG songs debuted earlier this month.

WMG songs will become available within two or three months, says Nancy Sherrer, Sprint GM of wireless music (Billboard Bulletin, Jan. 13).

WMG tunes will include songs from Green Day, Seal and Jet, as well as select tracks from Jason Mraz (“You and I Both”), Sonny & Cher (“I Got You Babe”), the Spinners (“I’ll Be Around”), Yes (“Roundabout”), Grandmaster Flash (“White Lines”) and Bobby Darin (“Mack the Knife”).


But the Sprint deal is “just the tip of the iceberg,” says David Ring, UMG e-Labs VP of business development and business affairs. “It’s the first of many such deals we will be doing with wireless companies. We’re excited to see customers will buy downloadable ringers, and our goal is to bring the best content to as many people as possible.”

(Continued on page 34)
FOLK & ACOUSTIC

Billboard’s inaugural Folk & Acoustic Talent spotlight focuses on the genre’s top acts and labels, and highlights the most notable releases. We’ll also feature news surrounding the 16th Annual International Folk Alliance Conference taking place in San Diego from February 26-29.

issue date: February 21 • ad close: January 27
Joe Maimone 646.654.4694 • jmaimone@billboard.com

BRITISH TALENT

Billboard’s British Talent spotlight focuses on the international markets where UK acts are achieving success. We’ll provide a list of nominees for The BRIT Awards 2004 and note key UK talent to watch. We’ll also look at the ties between British music and London Fashion Week and report on the latest news and developments in the marketplace.

issue date: February 21 • ad close: January 27
Frederic Fenucci 44.207.420.6075 • ffenucci@eu.billboard.com

MUSIC & MONEY 1

Billboard’s Music & Money #1 spotlight coincides with the 2004 Music & Money Symposium and takes an in-depth look at the business behind making music. We report on survival strategies for distributors and labels selling into cash-challenged retail accounts and the continually rising value of music publishing assets.

issue date: March 6 • ad close: February 6
Joe Maimone 646.654.4694 • jmaimone@billboard.com

UPCOMING SPECIALS

DANCE & ELECTRONIC #1 issue date: March 6 • ad close: February 6
ROCK & ROLL HALL OF FAME issue date: March 13 • ad close: February 17
PLATINUM STARS #3 issue date: March 13 • ad close: February 17
TOURING SPOTLIGHT #3 issue date: March 13 • ad close: February 17

www.billboard.com

RYKO’S 20-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Sprint

Continued from page 33

mobile customers as possible.”
Sprint says it sold 20 million ringer and screen savers through PCS Vision in 2003. Sprint had 2.7 million PCS Vision customers at the end of third-quarter 2003.

EYEING HIP-HOP

UMG will make more hip-hop music available for Music Tones within the next month, Ring says. He notes that R&B/hip-hop is UMG’s best-selling genre for wireless-phone ringers.
Sprint recently announced that Beyonce’s “Crazy in Love” and “Baby Boy” have together surpassed 500,000 Music Tones downloads since they became available less than six months ago. Music Tones cost about $1.50-$2.50 per song—considerably higher than the 99-cent per-song downloads available through such services as Apple’s iTunes.

Customers are willing to pay more for Music Tones, Sherrer says, because they place a premium on being able to personalize their wireless-phone ring tones.
“People are relying on their mobile devices more and more, and people are looking for their mobile phone to do more than it has in the past,” Sherrer adds. “People want their mobile phones to define their unique musical tastes.”

PROMO OPPORTUNITY

A bonus feature is that Sprint PCS customers can look up artist photos and bios on their wireless phones.
A growing trend involves music companies collaborating with wireless-phone companies to promote certain songs and time an album’s promotion around its release date or when the song is serviced to radio, according to Sprint executives.
“The message that we have to get out is that we’ve got to make sure that these new networks and wireless systems support the legitimate music services,” Ring says.
The 24-unit Virgin Entertainment Group has ended its boycott of the JumpStart program and will now do business with Universal Music & Video Distribution again, sources say. Although many applauded the theory behind JumpStart—especially the lowering of front-line pricing to $9.99—they also criticized its execution.

While accounts fell into several different camps, each seemingly aligned behind a different grievance, in the end nearly 99% of the buying direct from VMMD signed on to the program. The sole exception of the top 20 accounts was VEG, which started buying from one-stops and banned UMMD product from prime in-store positions.

Relations chilled between the two companies after that, with a little tit-for-tat interplay occurring. But on Jan. 8, they had a détente-type meeting, which ultimately resulted in a normalization of business relations, sources say. UMMD executives were unavailable for comment; VEG did not return calls. (VEG chief executive Simon Wright comments on JumpStart and more. See The Last Word, page 66.)

RESHUFFLING: Since June 2001, BMG Distribution has downsized its field staff by one-third. In response to dismal market conditions, BMG Distribution's management has shrunk to six branch managers from nine.

Mike Tawa, the Boston manager, will also oversee the New York office, replacing Dickie Zwirn, who left the company a few months ago. Washington, D.C., branch manager Rob Mansfield will add the Atlanta office to his mandate; while Los Angeles manager Jerry Silman will now oversee the Seattle office too.

As part of the shuffle, Susan Lube, the Atlanta branch manager, and Len Rokozi, the Seattle branch manager, are leaving the company. That leaves in place Tracy Doniboo, who is still the branch manager in Dallas; Diane Stetfens, the branch manager in Detroit; and Mark Van Corp, the branch manager in Chicago, who is based in the Minneapolis satellite sales office.

All the branch managers report to Bob Morelli, senior VP of branch operations and marketing.

HOLIDAY CHEER: Music retail is still racing high from the strong Christmas selling season, as Trans World Entertainment announced that it posted a 4% same-store gain for the five weeks ended Jan. 3. Accordingly, the company has raised its fourth-quarter earnings estimates to 90 cents per share from 75 cents.

For the 11 months ended Jan. 3, same-store sales rose 1%, while total sales rose 3%, to $1.24 billion compared with $1.20 billion last year.

In other Trans World news, the chain has closed another 19 warehouse stores, bringing total closures since its acquisition to 48. This means that there are now 92 stores still operating under that logo.

LOOKING AHEAD: Hastings Entertainment has announced estimates for the year ended Jan. 31. (Final results will be announced in the third week of March.) According to a Securities and Exchange Commission filing, the company expects to report pretax income of $9 million on sales of $511 million.

For the 12 months ended Oct. 31, 2003—which includes three months of results for the last fiscal year and nine months from the current fiscal year—earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization were $46.5 million, or $4.11 per share. For the fiscal year, the company expects total revenue to consist of 26% music, 23% books, 20% rental, 17% sell-through video, 7% videogames, 2% computer software and 5% other product.

Separately, Hastings said used and budget product accounted for about 9% of its total revenue in the 10 months ended Nov. 30, 2003.

LOOKING BACK: Navarre Corp.'s stock price tripled in value, to $6.08 per share Dec. 31, 2003, from $2.01 one year earlier (Billboard, Jan. 17). Borders Books & Music's stock climbed 36%, to $21.92 from $16.10, during the same period. Similarly, Circuit City closed 2003 up 36.5%, at $10.13 per share, from $7.42 the previous year.

In contrast, Hastings Entertainment's share price slid 13.9%, to $6.23 per share, from $4.91 one year earlier.

Localism

Continued from page 33

line promotion, we’ll do some allocation there. But typically, we give the managers information [and] just count on them to buy from Music City,” he adds. “It’s as close as you can come to running your own store without it being your capital invested.”

Cat’s and Pop Tunes do not employ district managers but, in the case of Memphis, one local manager has a major say in the stores’ purchasing.

“Steve Walker is the manager at the Union [Avenue] store and does a very good job of keeping his ear to the street,” Perkins says. “He helps the other Memphis stores. He’ll say, ‘Hey, I’m bringing in a consignment on this piece. I think it’s something that all the stores in Memphis need to have,’ and he’ll get the product out to the stores.”

LIFESTYLE. URBAN ITEMS IMPORTANT

Not surprisingly for a company concentrated in the Mid-South and Southeast, the majority of Cat’s and Pop Tunes’ business is in urban music.

“Speaking generally, Memphis is my predominantly urban market,” Perkins says. “That said, I do have some stores where [local rap group] Three 6 Mafia doesn’t mean that much in Memphis. In Nashville, I’ve got a couple of stores that I consider urban. My Chattanooga store is a very urban-oriented store. Knoxville and East Tennessee, I don’t really have an urban store, short of what crosses over. In the Charleston area, I’ve got one store that does real good urban business.”

The chain is trying to deepen its business in lifestyle items and in used product—growth areas for many indie retailers (Billboard, Nov. 15, 2003).

Concerning lifestyle merchandise, Perkins says, “The stores that do the best with it, it’ll be 1% or 2% of their sales. My better stores will do anywhere between 5% and 7%. I’d love to see all the stores doing 10% or more in lifestyles, because the margins are so sweet.”

Used product is 5%-10% of the chain’s business, Perkins says, “That’s something I’d like to see over 10%.”

Like many an indie retailer squeezed in tough times, Cat’s/Pop Tunes has signed on with a retail coalition, the 96-store Music Monitor Network (MMN) of small chains.

“We recently upgraded our kiosks out in the stores, which feature the [MMN’s] 20 picks,” Perkins says. “They change every two months; there’s a sampler disc. Now we’ve got video capability. It’s touch-screen. They can hear all the songs on the CD and see promotional videos.

“We have internal contests within the chains in the network to try to sell the most of those featured titles,” Perkins adds. “It tickled the stew out of me to get Al Green on that thing, because, hey, that’s Memphis.”
Glittering Jewel Cases Can Sell More DVDs

BY JILL KIPNIS
LOS ANGELES—Though the proverb says that you “can’t judge a book by its cover,” looks do matter when it comes to consumer purchases.

In the home video industry, a creative package can increase a DVD’s collectibility factor. It can also garner more sales, home video executives say.

“We are competing for the consumer’s eye and dollar, and if we’re not releasing something like [Disney/Pixar’s] ‘Finding Nemo,’ we have to have something else to make a title special,” Artisan Home Entertainment president Steve Beeks says. “Consumers definitely respond to packages. A package can have an impact on sales.”

Vince Saydowski, senior director of product for Virgin Entertainment, says that “95% of the time when a DVD has unique packaging, it turns into a bigger winner than we could anticipate. Most importantly, it depends on what the actual content of the DVD is. An awesome combination is having great content and a great package.”

UNIQUE DESIGNS
Most DVDs are released in a plastic jewel case with front and back cover paper inserts. Increasingly, distributors are using the more versatile Digipak, which offers multiple DVD trays and can be covered with graphics on all parts of the package. A number of companies—including Artisan, Anchor Bay Entertainment and New Line Entertainment—are moving beyond these options.


The companies would not provide sales figures for these titles. Several upcoming movies will also include unique packages. Anchor Bay has created special foil design for “Mirror Mirror” (March 6) and “Osterman Weekend” (March 23). (Prices are not yet available.) New Line’s “The Texas Chainsaw Mas- sacre—Special Edition” (March 30, $39.98) will feature a metal face plate on the front and an evidence kit inside.

Not every DVD warrants the extra expenditure of one-of-a-kind packaging. Companies spend more money to create them, which often translates into a higher suggested retail price.

“We do a lot of research before we do something like this,” Beeks says. “We will look at consumers’ purchase intent for that particular product. Special packages cost special money. You don’t do it on every picture. You do it when the idea makes sense.”

New Line Home Entertainment VP of marketing Justine Brody says that in addition to being “fiscally responsible,” the main factor that comes into play is whether a more unique package will generate special money. Special packages cost special money. You don’t do it on every picture. You do it when the idea makes sense.”

New Line Home Entertainment VP of marketing Justine Brody says that in addition to being “fiscally responsible,” the main factor that comes into play is whether a more unique package will generate special money. Special packages cost special money. You don’t do it on every picture. You do it when the idea makes sense.”

“We have a title called ‘Crime Story’ with virtually no art,” Weisneuer says. “We came up with something more creative. We did photography to create a crime file by using real police files and copying them.”

“Crime Story— Season One,” a five-disc set, was released Nov. 4, 2003, for $59.98.

CONSUMER DEMAND
Industry executives say that customers are going to start demanding interesting packaging and that video companies may need to invest more into the packaging process to stay competitive.

“If you have a rabid niche audience, you need to deliver for them,” says Brian Lucas, spokesperson for the Minneapolis-based Best Buy chain. “Collectors like the bells and whistles. More categories are going to start expanding into specialized packaging.”

Horror and action films have been the primary beneficiaries of special packaging since DVD’s debut.

“The horror genre warrants unique packaging and raises the bar for it,” Brody says. “More categories may take advantage of this in the future, because we have to communicate that we are just as devoted to our properties as other companies are to their properties.”

Lucas predicts that companies will tap into the competition and offer multiple packaging choices per title to consumers.


Some mass-market chains are also creating sections specifically to house larger packages. At the Best Buy chain, for example, special DVD packages are often found in a boxed-set section.

“Those sections have been created to handle bigger packages,” Lucas says. “We want to carry these special packages to give us a lot of DVD selection for our customers.”

Writers Guild Seeks More DVD Revenue

DVD revenue will play a large role in upcoming contract negotia- tions, for the Writers Guild of America.

Before the contract expires May 2, the WGA will be negotiating with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) to refine the minimum basic agree- ment already in place with studios and TV networks. In a letter sent to its members in December, the WGA pointed out that writers received “less than one-sixth of 1%” of DVD revenue in 2002. Of the $1 billion generated that year, the WGA says that writers got $18 million.

“Members have been bringing video residuals to our attention since 1995,” WGA assistant executive director Charles Slocom says. “The reason it has become a higher priority now is that the revenue from DVDs is so obvious. The profit margin in the home video area is higher. There is money to be shared, in our point of view.”

The current residual formula was created in the 1980s. Writers get 0.3% from the first $5 million of a project’s wholesale sales. The percentage increases to 0.36% when a title sells more than $5 million in such sales.

The AMPTP could not be reached for comment by press time.

DVD-COPYING SUIT: Copy-protection company Macrovision has filed a lawsuit against 321 Studios, claiming that 321’s “DVD X Copy” software infringes upon Macrovision’s patent- ed copy-protection technology and violates the Digital Mil- lennium Copyright Act (DMCA). “DVD X Copy” products enable consumers to make a backup copy of a DVD.

“Everybody knows that the vast majority of consumers aren’t using this software to make backup copies. They are ripping it,” Macrovision CEO Bill Kregick says. “The DVD media itself has a 20-year life-time, and they are sold on a single-copy basis. We are very firm that there is no such thing as fair use or any requirement to make backup copies of DVDs.”

Macrovision claims that 321’s product bypasses its patented copy-protection process without authorization and that the DMCA prohibits bypassing copy-protection mechanisms.

In a statement, 321 president and founder Robert Moore said that Macrovision’s copy-protection device “has absolutely noth- ing to do with any of 321 Studios’ products. We are confident that 321 Studios does not infringe on Macrovision’s patents and intend to defend ourselves vig- orously and successfully.”

SPRING KICK-OFF: The second quarter already has strong sales poten- tial, with Warner Home Video’s announcement that the final Matrix film, “The Matrix Revolutions,” will be released April 6 for $29.95 as a two-disc DVD.

“We found that the timetable of approximately five months after theatrical release works well,” says Mark Horak, WHV executive VP of world- wide marketing. “This will be supported with one of the biggest television ad campaigns from Warner that rivals what you would see for a major theatrical release.”

Horak also says that "The Matrix" and "The Matrix Reloaded" will be repositioned prior to the "Revolutions" release, though he would not give exact details. He adds that there are no specific plans for selling a "Matrix" boxed set as yet.

The film trilogy has grossed $1.5 billion in worldwide box-office receipts, according to WHV. The company also reports that "Revolutions" grossed $310 million in its first 10 days of release.

RETAIL NEWS: The 2004 Home Entertain- ment convention sponsored by the Video Software Dealers Assn. will return to the Venetian Resort Hotel Casino in Las Vegas this year. The event will take place July 14-16.

Retail sales are already starting out strong this year. Universal Studios Home Video’s “American Wed- ding” sold 3 million units in the three days after its Jan. 2 release, according to the company.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEKEND</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>LABEL/DISTRIBUTING LABEL &amp; NUMBER</th>
<th>PERFORMERS</th>
<th>UNIT &amp; NUMBER</th>
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EXECUTIVE TURNTABLE

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

PUBLISHING: ASCAP promotes Lynne Lummel to senior VP and Seth Saltzman to senior VP of member management in New York. They were, respectively, VP and VP of member management. ASCAP also names Harry Poloner VP of membership in New York. He was VP of creative for EMI Music Publishing.

DIRECT MARKETING: Herb Agner is promoted to VP of EMI Music catalog, marketing for EMI Music Marketing in Los Angeles. He was senior director of marketing. EMI Music Marketing also names Julia Michaels VP of soundtracks and Kenny Dia VP of marketing in Los Angeles. They were, respectively, VP of creative affairs for 20th Century Fox Music and VP of marketing for Warner Bros. Records.

RETAIL: Craig Braasch is named chief marketing officer for Gibson Guitar in Nashville. He was VP of global advertising and youth marketing for Burger King.

FILM MUSIC: New Line Cinema in Los Angeles promotes Jason Linn to executive VP of music development. He adds that title to his current responsibilities as head of New Line Records.

RADIO: Irving Der is named manager of publicity and communications for Radio Disney in Los Angeles. He was senior publicist for the DuVernay Agency.

MUSIC VIDEO: MTV in Santa Monica, Calif., promotes Lois Curren to executive VP of series entertainment. She was executive VP of series and movie development.

The People's Choice

Music stars made their presence known at the 30th Annual People's Choice Awards Jan. 13 at the Pasadena (Calif.) Civic Auditorium. CBS aired a live broadcast of the show. Mandy Moore was one of the awards show presenters. At right, Reba McEntire congratulates Toby Keith on winning the favorite music video award for "I Love This Bar." Other musical winners included Tim McGraw (favorite male musical performer), Beyoncé and Faith Hill (who tied for favorite female musical performer) and Matchbox Twenty, winner of favorite musical group or band. (Photos: Kevin Mazur/WireImage.com)

Norah Goes 'Home'

Grammy Award-winning singer Norah Jones spent time at Sear Sound studio in New York to put the finishing touches on her new album, "Feels Like Home," due Feb. 10 on Blue Note Records. For "Feels Like Home," Jones once again teamed with producer Arif Mardin and engineer Jay Newland, who worked with Jones on her breakthrough debut album, "Come Away With Me." Pictured, from left, are Sear Sound owner Walter Sear, bass player Lee Alexander, Jones, Sear Sound assistant/Pro Tools engineer Steve Mazur, Mardin and Newland.

Winter Season

Edgar Winter and his band visited the studios of syndicated radio program "Rockline" for an interview and live performance. Winter played some of his classics, including "Free Ride," "Dying to Live" and "Frankenstein." Pictured, from left, are Rockline host Bob Coburn, Winter, Ventura Distribution product manager Jill Schlesinger and Winter's manager, Jake Hooker.

Music Laws

Savoy Jazz artist Hubert Laws, seated, recently hung out in the studio with record-label executives during the making of his new album, "Moondance," which Savoy will release March 9. Standing behind Laws are Savoy Label Group VP of A&R Guy Eckstein, left, and Savoy Label Group president Steve Vining.

Hit Factory

R. Kelly's latest studio album of new material, "Chocolate Factory" (Live Records), was recently certified double-platinum by the Recording Industry Assn. of America. Kelly was presented with a plaque commemorating this achievement backstage at the 2003 Billboard Music Awards in Las Vegas, where Kelly was a performer and multiple winner. Pictured, from left, are live senior VP of U.S. record labels Peter Thea, Jive VP of A&R Wayne Williams, Jive president Barry Weiss, Jive senior VP of R&B promotion and marketing Larry Khan, Kelly, live GM/senior VP of sales and marketing Tom Carraabba, live senior VP of artist marketing Janet Kleinbaum and Kelly's business manager, Derrel McDavid.
Korea Opens Up
Market Set For Japanese Repertoire Influx

BY MARK RUSSELL

SEOUL, South Korea—With the new year bringing an end to remaining restrictions on Japanese culture in South Korea, local labels are rushing to get releases by Japan’s leading acts to the domestic market.

The South Korean government has been slowly loosening its post-War II restrictions on Japanese culture in Korea since 1998.

The latest deregulation, effective Jan. 1, was the largest single step to date. It meant that the distribution of Japanese music, videogames, movies and TV dramas was no longer illegal in South Korea.

“We submitted our Japanese artists’ ‘repertoire’ to the Korea Media Rating Board right away on Jan. 2,” EMI Korea marketing representative Jenny Kim says.

The Korea Media Rating Board is a government-funded body. Among its responsibilities is approving and classifying entertainment product before its release in Korea.

Kim says EMI expects each batch of albums submitted for scrutiny to take two or three weeks to be approved.

EMI hopes to have released 12 Japanese albums in South Korea by March, and other leading labels confirm they have similar release schedules.

Seoul-based SM Entertainment is the South Korean licensee for Japanese label Avex. Tokyo-based Avex head of international Haji Taniguchi says the company plans to release between 20 and 40 albums in South Korea by mid-January, subject to the approval of the rating board.

Avex chairman Tom Yoda is also chairman of the Recording Industry Assn. of Japan. Speaking Jan. 5 at an RIJ event in Tokyo, Yoda reiterated the association’s determination to fight for a change to existing law that would allow its member companies the right to ban imports of Japanese product pressed overseas.

CDs are priced significantly lower in South Korea than in Japan, where labels are still able to set retail prices for a period following release because of the country’s saisai fixed-price system.

The imports issue is a major concern on the part of Japanese labels in the face of Seoul’s removal of the remaining restrictions on J-pop.

Chris Lee, executive director of South Korea’s music retail market-leading chain Synnara, says,” We had several trips to Japan and met several companies regarding the opening of Japanese culture in Korea. Starting February, we will stock a few titles.

(Continued on page 48)

MidemNet To Emphasize Upside Of Digital Music

BY JULIANA KORANTENG

LONDON—Organizers of the Jan. 24 MidemNet conference in Cannes, France, are putting a positive spin on the still-emerging digital music sector after a relatively downbeat meeting in 2003.

“Music & Technology: Back on Track?” is the title of this year’s MidemNet, whose organizers urge the music industry to embrace technology, not fear it.

Or, as the MidemNet program notes: “If what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger, then perhaps technology can finally put the music industry on the path to success.”

MidemNet conference director Stephane Gambetta says, “Last year, we addressed piracy and the need to turn consumers into customers,” referring to the industry’s fear that peer-to-peer technology had persuaded consumers that music should be free.

“But this year,” Gambetta continues, “we wanted to say we’re seeing positive things about technology.”

He points to developments that suggest technology can help as well as hurt the troubled music industry: Apple’s success with its iTunes Music Store, Roxio’s resurrection of Napster as a commercial venture, the... (Continued on page 48)
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| NEW = New Entry  | RE = Re-Entry |

**Hits of the World is compiled at Billboard/London.**
### Billboard EuroCharts

**New Wave-Makers For The New Year**

The second of a three-part look at some of the new acts from around the globe likely to make an impact in 2004.

**BAD GIRL DONE GOOD**: Spanish hip-hop artist La Mala ("bad girl") Rodríguez endeavors to live up to her name. "I lose control sometimes," she says, "but without reason. I defend what I am and fight for it."

She began rapping at age 15 on the streets of Seville, Spain, and released an album, "Luego (hierro)", on indie label Zona Brita in 2000. It won critically approval and sold 50,000 units. This brought the attention ofUniversal Spain, which released her second album, "Alevia", at the end of 2003 in Spain. A 12-track CD called "La Nita", compiling songs from both albums, has been released in the U.S. and Mexico. La Mala promises she is ready for the 2004 international launch Universal has planned.

**WINTER WARMER**: Take a pinch of the Pixies, a dose of Serge Gainsbourg and a sprinkling of French spine and you get "Thomas Winter and Rogue" (Source:Virgin), the self-titled debut album from an unlikely pair of urban poets. Thomas Winter is the elder brother of Daft Punk manager Pedro Winter, but the duo favors a stripped-down approach with only a passing glance toward electronics. The album was released at the end of 2003 in France. Releases in Belgium and Switzerland are scheduled, with other territories to follow.

**PHONE-IN SIGNING**: EMI Italy VP of A&R Fabrizio Giannini says Amalia Grè is the label’s "absolute priority for 2004." The self-titled debut from the 39-year-old singer/songwriter was released in Italy at the end of November. "I first heard her on a late-night radio show," Giannini says. "They were playing a track she produced herself, and I called the station, got her number, met her and signed her." He defines Grè’s music as "a curious mix of jazz and melodic Italian pop with an appeal to a more mature, sophisticated audience." She also sings in English, which should increase her chances of breakout success.

**GLOBAL PULSE**

**Steve Adams**

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**Billboard**

**Nigel Williamson, Editor**

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Danish Execs Form Label

**Former EMI Denmark Staffers To Run Copenhagen Records**

**BY CHARLES FERRO**

COPENHAGEN—Four senior executives from EMI Recorded Music Denmark are leaving the company to form a new independent label, Copenhagen Records (CR).

News of the label's launch came within days of EMI president Michael Ritto confirming that he plans to leave his post at the end of February (Billboard Bulletin, Dec. 22, 2003). The new company began trading Jan. 5 from a temporary office in Copenhagen.

Capitol/Medley labels GM Mik Christensen, Medley marketing manager Jakob Sorensen, EMI Denmark head of A&R Nick Foss and A&R director Christian Bachman are the co-founders and main owners of CR.

"We'll start up in two phases," Christensen says. "Jakob and Christian are setting up operations; Nick and I will join them from April 1. Nick and I remain under contract until March 31 and have some projects to complete."

Christensen says he will take the main administrative role in CR, and the other co-founders will "continue to do what they're good at doing." He declines to elaborate on the financial details of CR's structure and ownership for when Ritto might work with CR in some future capacity.

Ritto founded Danish indie label Medley Records in 1978; EMI acquired it in 1992. Ritto is also chairman of the local International Federation of the Phonographic Industry affiliate.

EMI is the dominant player in the country, claiming about a 40% share of the total music market in 2003 through Medley (which concentrates on local repertoire), Capitol and Virgin labels and special marketing arm CMC. EMI is acknowledged by industry observers here as being exceptionally strong in local repertoire.

Although unavailable for comment on his departure at press time, Ritto said in a statement that it had "not been an easy decision." He added, "I feel the time is right: EMI Music Denmark is enjoying considerable success at the moment, even though the market remains difficult. Moreover, the company has just celebrated its 100-year anniversary, so in many ways it seems like a good time to stand it over."

CR has not yet inked a distribution deal or signed any acts. However, Christensen says, "we do not plan to take artists away from EMI. [CR's] aim is to recruit and develop Danish musicians. Sales of Danish artists have not dipped nearly as much as international acts [in Denmark]."

Christensen and Foss have worked at Medley for 28 years. "I've and I have wanted to start a new company for a long time, but Michael persuaded us to stay," Christensen says. "EMI attempted to get us to stay, but after 12 good years with EMI, it's time to move on."

Lars Toft takes over as managing director of EMI March 1, reporting to London-based EMI Music Continental Europe CEO Thomas Hedstrom.

Since 2002, Toft has been executive VP of sales and marketing at Danish furniture company Fritz Hansen. He will first join the EMI Medley operation in 1992 as sales and marketing director, then became BMG Denmark managing director in 1994. He moved to Munich as BMG Classics managing director Europe in 1998.

EMI Music Denmark chairman Michael Mortensen says the company will appoint a new regional MD at the end of April.

The company's director of international exploitation, Ole Mortensen, takes over from Christensen as Medley GM. He will continue in his current role until replacement is found.

Capitol marketing director Morten Myrup is named Capitol/Virgin GM. Virgin GM Jonathan Fane has left the company. Further changes are expected.

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**Canadian Sales**

Continued from page 39

sales were 9.04 million this year vs. the 9.11 million scanned last year in the corresponding period, according to Nielsen SoundScan. That’s a decrease of 0.7%.

Canadian retailers report that it was a catalog Christmas but could not point to a dominant title.

"Catalog sales in the last two weeks were like I haven’t seen in years," says Mike Kenzie, retail manager for SoundWorks. "Sales were across the board."

Several retailers cite Universal Music Canada’s price-reduction policy for the sales spikes. The Canadian initiative is similar to Universal Music Group’s JumpStart program in the U.S. (Billboard, Sept. 13).

"Universal’s market share with us has dramatically risen," Baker says. According to Kenzie, "People shop catalog more [in the week after Christmas], but once they got here and started seeing Universal’s pricing, catalog went nuts."

New titles boosting the 2003 holiday season were Universal’s compilations "MuchDance 2004" and "Big Shiny Tunes 8" and titles by Sheryl Crow, Evanescence and Sarah McLachlan. "MuchDance 2004" started 2004 at No. 1 on Nielsen SoundScan’s album chart. It is the second muchDance compilation (after "MuchDance 2000") to reach the top spot.

**BEST-OF LINES UP**

"The big artist winners were Sarah McLachlan and Josh Groban," MacKenzie says. "Also performing strongly were titles from international acts Dido, OutKast, Rod Stewart and Linkin Park and Canadians Feist Dobson, Michael Rubble and Canadian Idol star Ryan Malcolm."

Crow’s "best of" was cited by several merchants as the season’s unexpected sales winner. “That surprised me,” MacKenzie says. "It was strong right through Christmas. Dido was also unexpected."

"We did well with Britney Spears, which I didn’t expect," says Ken Kozey, purchasing manager at Handleman Co. of Canada—which rakes the 166-store Wal-Mart Canada chain and the 302-store Zellers department chain. "But we also did well with Ryan Malcolm."

All Canadian merchants report that for the third consecutive year, there was increased public enthusiasm for DVDs during Christmas. Top sales titles included "Pirates of the Caribbean," "Finding Nemo" and "The Lord of the Rings (Extended Version)."

"We saw growth in entertainment software, and it was driven by DVD movies and gaming; music CDs were steady," says Lori Decou, director of corporate communications at Future Shop, which operates 105 Future Shop outlets, and Best Buy’s 14 Canadian stores. "DVDs were huge for us," MacKenzie says. "Even bigger than in 2002."

Kozey sees music video as the music industry’s biggest future growth area. "Music DVDs like [those from] Coldplay and Shania Twain played a big role in our Christmas season," he says. "DVD seems to be the software of choice out there, and we’re trying to wake labels up to get a piece of that action."

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**THE INTERNATIONAL WEEK IN BRIEF**

**Eros Ramazzotti’s “9” (Ariola/BMG Ricordi) was the top-selling album in Italy of 2003, according to annual listings prepared for labels body FIMI. The year-end charts are based on over-the-counter sales monitored by the Italian arm of research company ACNielsen. Giorgia’s “Goccie di Memoria” (Dischi di Cioccolata/BMG Ricordi) was the top-selling single. The multi-artist collection “Festivalar Blu 2003” (Colombia) headed the compilation charts, while Vasco Rossi’s @San Siro (IT) (EMI) was the best-selling music-related DVD. Billboard sister company ACNielsen analyzed results from 275 points of sale, ranging from specialist record stores to hypermarkets.**

**Eran Nevrila has signed a new, three-year contract as chairman/CEO of British collection society Phonographic Performance Ltd. The former director of commercial and business affairs at Warner Music U.K. joined PPL in 2000. Nevrila says he has more to accomplish at the society. “A lot of the difficult work has been done in terms of cutting costs, improving the efficiency of the organization and creating better systems... but there’s still a lot to do,” he says. Nevrila says a priority for the coming years is to improve the collection of revenue from overseas. Also high on his agenda is the collection of performance rights from new-media companies. “There has been a seven-year window during which they have used our repertoire without paying,” he says. “They have to be disciplined, and they have to pay us.”**

EMMANUEL LEGRAND

**Dido’s “Life for Rent” (Cheeky/Arista) earned its fourth Platinum Europe Award from the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry in December, marking Pan-European shipments of 4 million units. Christinia Aguilera’s “Stripped” (RCA), Evanescence’s “Fallen” (Wind-up/Epic), M.C.’s “R.E.M. 1988-2003” (Warner Bros) and Robbie Williams’ “Live At Knebworth” (Chrysalis/EMI) each passed the 2 million European shipments mark in December. Black Eyed Pearl “Elephunk” (A&M), Busted’s “A Present For Everyone” (Universal), Florent Pagny’s “Ailleurs Land” (Mercury), Michael Jackson’s “Number Ones” (Epic), Pink’s “Try This” (Arista) and Westlife’s “Turnaround” (SBMG) also passed the platinum milestone that month.**

**The debut DVD by Australian singer/songwriter Delta Goodrem, “Delta,” has become the country’s biggest-selling music DVD ever. The title has shipped more than 165,000 units since its October release, according to Sony Music Entertainment Australia. It has overtaken the Eagles’ 1999 Warner Vision Australia DVD release of “Hell Freezes Over,” which that label says has shipped 157,000 units to date. Shipments of Goodrem’s debut album, “Wish Me Luck,” have also been approaching the 1 million mark in Australia. The album yielded five No. 1 singles on the Australian Record Industry Assn. chart in 2003. Only the Beatles have notched more chart-toppers Down Under in one calendar year, with seven in 1964, Sony says “Innocent Eyes” has shipped 2 million units worldwide.**

**CHRISTIE ELIEZER

**As expected, BMG U.K. and Ireland has inked a long-term joint-venture deal with Hugh Goldsmith, former managing director of Virgin U.K. imprint Innocent Records (Billboard Bulletin, Dec. 2, 2003). The currently unnamed 50/50 venture “goes beyond records and incorporates publishing, management and concert tours,” according to a BMG statement. Goldsmith was at RCA in the U.K. as marketing director, then managing director before exiting in 1997 to set up Innocent, where he has enjoyed success with pop acts Blue, Atomic Kitten and Billie Piper.**

LARS BRANDLE
MIDEM Reflects New Opportunities

Technology, Mobile Phone Exhibitors Highlight Growing Revenue Streams

BY EMMANUEL LEGRAND

LONDON—For international music executives attending MIDEM 2004 Jan 25-28 in Cannes, France, the key topics on the agenda will include finding new revenue streams, exploring new business opportunities and taking advantage of technology.

MIDEM, the international music market, will showcase new music technology as well as play its traditional role as a global gathering for music licensing. Technology companies offering exhibits this year include Microsoft, OD2, Yahoo, Real Networks and Roxio. Joining them will be mobile phone companies NTT DoCoMo, T-Mobile, Vodafone Global, Nokia Entertainment and Universal Music Mobile.

NEW ATTRACTIONS

MIDEM director Dominique Leguern says organizers put a lot of effort into attracting companies with an increasing involvement in music “Mobile services, downloading and streaming are new revenue streams for the industry, and all the major players will be at MIDEM,” she says.

Along with MidemNet on Jan. 24, which will focus on the digital music sector, this year MIDEM has added a Music Mobile Forum on Jan. 26, during which repertoire owners will be able to meet and talk with mobile-services representatives.

Another innovation—and a reflection of the development of an additional new revenue stream for the industry—is the Music for Images session that will focus on music licensing for videogames. This will include a listening session of tracks pitched for Electronic Arts’ forthcoming game “FISA 2003.”

Leguern says these developments—along with the decision by Reed Midem, organizer of the conference, to freeze registration rates at 2003 prices—offer participants a cost-effective gathering. The moves apparently have paid off. Last month, Reed Midem reported an increasing number of registrants and companies compared with 2003, as well as representation from a greater number of countries.

“This is a vindication of our pricing strategy,” Leguern says. “And it is also proof that more than ever, people in this industry need to meet and do business.”

DENMARK, FINLAND: ON THE RISE

Among MIDEM participants from outside the U.S., one country that exemplifies the spirit of the moment is Denmark, according to Leguern. In recent years, this nation of 10 million has become an important source of repertoire and is aggressively trying to export its artists.

“It’s a small market but a very dynamic one when it comes to exporting,” Leguern says. “It has a very deep expert culture, and I am very happy that a country like Denmark invests so much into its local music scene.”

Denmark will host the opening-night party for delegates at the Martinez Hotel.

During the past year, MIDEM has hosted numerous collective stands, presenting companies from a given country, city or national trade group. Music Export Finland (MEF) is an example of a trade group that will host a national stand this year.

MEF director Paulina Ahokas reports that the number of Finnish companies attending MIDEM 2004 is at its highest ever, with more than 20 participating in the national stand.

“In addition to the companies that have already attended MIDEM, we have some new labels and entrepreneurs who are quite fresh in this business but who understand the need to export,” Ahokas says.

She admits that “going to MIDEM is an investment. MIDEM is an expensive platform for business, but it is the most efficient marketplace and the only truly global market.”

Ahokas says that the labels attending MIDEM cover a wide range of music genres—from rock and dance to world and classical. And she surmises that there is an increasing interest in Finland’s talent, following recent international success from such acts as rock outfit the Rasmus, hip-hop duo Bomfunk MC’s and trance act Darude.

(Continued on page 44)
Confab Boosts U.S. Indies

BY STEVE TRAUMAN

More U.S. independent labels, distributors and management firms will have exhibits at this year’s MIDEM, including several important new participants.

Indie distributors collectively ranked first in classical, jazz, gospel and new age. They ranked second in catalog & music video.

Because of this, “participation from the independent sector is definitely up,” says Bill Craig, U.S. market sales VP for MIDEM.

Although the Assn. for Independent Music (AIM) will not have a stand this year, it will most likely be represented through a member company, says its chairman, Clay Pasternak. He is running the indie group on an interim basis, along with board members Duncan Brownie (Newbury Comcis) and Bruce Igliore (Alligtor Records).

The American Dance Labels stand at MIDEM was put together by Craig and Jane Rodriguez so the dance independent sector could be represented.

Preparations for MIDEM are to strengthen the distribution roster and expand further into these newer areas.

Navarre Entertainment Media’s contingent is headed by senior VP/GM Steve Pritchitt, whose primary goals are to meet with current European-based label partners and find new North American distribution opportunities.

Nokia and Symbian have opened the door for new labels in the crush of competitors, making it a market of opportunity.

Another good year for the U.S. will be New York-based Voodoo, which is looking to expand.

Voodoo has a strong presence in the mobile phone music business and recently expanded its product line with the release of its second generation music player. The company is looking to continue its growth in the mobile phone music market, which is forecasted to reach $14 billion by 2008.

Another important goal for the company is to search for new distribution and marketing opportunities. Voodoo is currently working with a number of major-label and independent artists to expand its market share.

Voodoo is looking to expand its distribution network and is currently exploring partnerships with major-label and independent distributors. The company is also looking to expand its product line to include custom-branded devices and other mobile phone accessories.

Voodoo is also looking to expand its international presence, with plans to enter new markets in Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

Voodoo is seeking strategic partners to help it expand its distribution network and to bring new products and services to market. The company is looking for partners with a strong presence in the mobile phone music market and a commitment to quality and customer service.

Voodoo is committed to providing high-quality music products and services to customers around the world. The company is looking for partners who share its commitment to quality and customer service and are committed to helping Voodoo achieve its goals.

Voodoo is looking for partners who are interested in expanding their distribution network and are looking for new products and services to offer their customers. The company is also looking for partners who are interested in helping Voodoo enter new markets and are committed to providing high-quality music products and services to customers around the world.

Voodoo is looking for partners who are interested in helping the company achieve its goals and are committed to providing high-quality music products and services to customers around the world. The company is committed to working with partners who share its commitment to quality and customer service and are interested in helping Voodoo achieve its goals.

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You provide it; we protect it.

See us at MIDEM – Macrovision Stands 27199 & 27198
Palais Des Festivals, Cannes, France – Jan 25-29, 2004
U.S. Publishers Meet The World

BY JIM BESSMAN

For music publishers, MIDEM remains the key gathering place for making and maintaining business contacts and relationships addressing mutual issues of concern. "Our business is quite complex at the moment, and we need to maintain personal contact with all of the people we work with," says Wind-swept Music Publishing CEO Evan Medow. "Most of the people I need to see will be at MIDEM, so I can accomplish quite a bit in a few days. Also, I find that by going, I put myself in the stream of traffic, and something always comes up that I didn't expect."

According to Fox Music senior VP/GM Mary Jo Mennella, MIDEM is "the only global music forum of its kind," and continued attendance and support by Fox Music remains crucial. "Since the [industry] players and companies are always changing, MIDEM serves as the marketplace to meet and establish new relationships around the world," she notes. "This is particularly critical for an independent music publishing operation that has not have regional offices.

The priority for publishers, including Universal Music Publishing Group, then, is for executives to network, negotiate new deals and interact with current clients, "plus meet with potential clients," says director of marketing and new media Rebeakah Alperin.

"We're sending various international executives to MIDEM, including senior VP of international business lisher attendees. "MIDEM is always a universal meeting place for all my sub-publishers from around the world," says Roy Orbison Music president Barbara Orbison. "It saves me loads of trips because I do a lot of [global] business."

Marshall Chess, owner of Arc Music Group, echoes Orbison's goals. "I always look forward to MIDEM as a place to meet with our international sub-publishers," he says. "Although many of them travel to [Arc's headquarters in] New York, [some] don't. It is convenient to meet in Cannes, have everyone trade ideas and network with each other."

Chess notes that at last year's confab, Arc was introduced to India's Deep Emotions Music, with whom go over expectations for the coming year.

As usual, this year I will be joined by our VP of international Mark Anders, who runs our U.K. office, and the head of our German office, Doris Schlosser-Bernter." Hirshland says. "In addition, Garry Velleti, who runs our New York office, will be attending. As Garry has been focusing on writer-publisher clients with primarily an international following—particularly in the dance and electronic genres—he will have the ability to liaise directly with our overseas partners whose attention to these catalogs is essential."

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS
Having only recently set up a U.S. branch of London's Notting Hill Music Group in Los Angeles, president Peter Chalcraft says he'll be looking at sub-publishing opportunities at MIDEM and for European companies that may need representation in the U.S. and Canada. "That is one of our big things, because we have the capacity to administer ex-U.S. companies here and work their catalog," Chalcraft says.

MIDEM veteran attendee Dan Ekbäck, VP of operations for Bluewater Music Services Corp., is also centering on administration matters. "My main focus this year is to continue to expand and develop our administration division by meeting with attorneys and publishers to introduce our worldwide administration services," he says.

Byke Group president! Arthur Mann, whose domain includes its Rykomusic publishing arm, also looks to "massage the relationships" with the company's administration clientele. Art Mann, of interest, one which he shares with other MIDEM publisher participants, is in the area of synchronization.

"It's a big part of our agenda," Mann says. "We create a synchpresentation every year with highlights of our national TV advertising campaigns and film and TV programming placements in both the U.S. and Europe, and part of our staff will be focused on meeting with our network of sync agents and sub-publishers.

Ches also points to promoting sync rights at MIDEM.

"This is the second year that I am traveling with [Arc's VP of finance and Latin music operations] Juan Carlos Bargul to promote our one-stop shopping of both masters and synch of our Latin catalog, which includes Discos Fuentes, Maria Victoria and various European acts," Ches says.

Cherry Lane Music's EVP of marketing and licensing Rich Stumpf also speaks of "the more traditional publishing business, specifically catching up with sub-publishers and the independent-owned and administered masters to international labels and new media companies.

Also on the new-media side, Stumpf expects to talk about current events in the international community regarding digital distribution. "Especially ring tones, which is a growing market, and videogames," he says. "We just basically want to find out what's available for our compositions."

Likewise, Mennella seeks to "monetize our catalog through creative ventures with wireless and Internet partners," she says.

But "the key business issue" that MIDEM should continue to address, Mennella says, is combating piracy and establishing educational programs for consumers about copyright.

Ekbäck adds, "Of course, the never-ending issues of illegal downloads, digital distribution, piracy, declining sales and centralized licensing will be on the forefront of all discussions and panels."

Orbison is particularly hopeful that piracy problems will be dealt with.

"My catalog of masters gets bootlegged to the tune of 3 million units a year—and I got this [figure] from a bootlegger!" says Orbison, who holds the copyrights to her late husband's classic hits.

"They really don't address this issue at MIDEM," she continues, referring to piracy of older catalog. "They always think of current artists, but now, of course, back catalog is what everybody tries to [release]—and now [that is] what is supporting all those [record] companies."

Conceding that "I probably sound like a broken record," Hirshland joins in the anti-piracy charge. "Piracy is still the industry's No. 1 problem—both in physical [product] and via the Internet. Since the marketplace is essentially global, everyone attending MIDEM needs to think of global solutions."

LOOKING AT THE FUTURE
But Hirshland looks beyond the ever-encroaching piracy problem.

"For years we have all deprecated the lack of developing new talent as a major contributor to the downturn of the business," he says. "I would love to see increased discussion at MIDEM about creating a more supportive global environment for young, developing artists."

Chalcraft adds that since the Internet is "slowly but surely being policed in the right way, my main worry is addressing the fact that copyright is important. We should be looking at long-term careers rather than short-term records, and record companies should work closely with publishers because the days of the record company and the publisher being one [company] is really fragmented now."

Looking at the long-term, Chalcraft wonders, "Why worry about Elvis catalog being sold on the Internet? Shouldn't we worry about finding the new Elvis?"

To this end, Chess is introducing "the next generation of the Chess family" to the world music community at MIDEM.

"I am bringing my son Jamar to present his current projects," Chess says. "He's been developing Italian/English hip-hop act DropAfro and Spanish/English female MC MC Nahidi, and he will be presenting their recently finished recordings and videos."

Arc will also present music from Brooklyn producer/artist Burke Wainright. "He's begun reuniting the Arc Music catalog with new versions of [blues/R&B] classics 'Boom Boom,' 'Suzy Q' and 'Who Do You Love,'" Chess says.

Indies

Continued from page 44

jazz phenom Peter Cincotti, Karrin Allyson and Ozomatli; a much-anticipated Ray Charles duets CD; and "Ultimate Mancini," the rerecorded collection of Henry Mancini classics.

Tommy Boy's Silverman hopes MIDEM addresses what he calls "the new realities of the music business."

He points to four big questions: Can labels retain the record labels? With publishing mechanics taking a bigger piece of the revenue pie in the digital domain and in long-term revenue, if publishewill want to take more, will they begin to contribute to A&R and marketing costs to reduce risks for labels? How will mobile-phone revenue change record label economics? And what new physical music format will eventually replace the CD?

For Red's Antogetel, piracy is the obvious concern. "How are we going to get our listeners to not abandon music for other forms of entertainment?" he asks. "In this era of megamergers and with the time and energy it takes to get the governmental approval to close them, how are key execs going to focus on finding and developing the talent to drive our business into the future?"

Navare's Pritchitt hopes that participants get the opportunity to better understand the characteristics of today's music market "and to focus on bringing value to the consumer through great music in a great package at the right price."

Rounder's Foley is in full agreement and would like to see MIDEM address the stabilization of music prices. "Our music does not need to be given away," he emphasizes, "and a global campaign to promote the value of music would be a worthwhile direction."

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MidemNet

Continued from page 39

increased use of such alternative disc formats as Super Audio CD (SACD) and the ability to listen to music through gaming consoles.

News that Microsoft and Dell Computers are becoming music vendors illustrates how significant and music are becoming, Garbetta says. Representatives of content owners and technology providers will offer their perspectives. Scheduled MidemNet participants include EMI Music senior VP of digital development and distribution Ted Cohen; Charles Grimsdale, CEO of digital music service provider, OD2; Oliver Sichel, CEO of French Internet service provider Wanadoo; Julia Miller, director at Microsoft's computer games console-maker Xbox Live; and Nora Rothrock, senior VP of new media at Clear Channel Entertainment Europe.

MidemNet will feature several panel discussions. "Sale of the Century—A View From The Top" will examine how digital music is entering consumers' mainstream consciousness. "What's Coming Next: New Formats, New Products" will analyze whether the SACD and DVD-A disc formats have become viable commercial platforms for music. And "Technology Face-Off: DRM vs. Unrestricted Content" will examine how effective digital-rights management systems can encourage consumers to pay for digital music.

MidemNet Attendees:
Our 2004 Priorities

BY JULIANA KORANTENG

Three leading music industry executives participating in MidemNet commented on their business priorities for this year and the primary issues they hope to see addressed at the conference.

Nora Rothrock, senior VP of new media for concert promoter Clear Channel Entertainment Europe: "What I'm focusing on is new-media consumer marketing. We've a strong database of customers who are critical to our future, and we use that to promote our live entertainment, including concerts, via technology.

"Because we work with artists promoting albums while touring, we can use that database to promote new acts. I'm also looking for new ways to use technology to enhance the live experience."

Charles Grimsdale, CEO of digital music service provider OD2: "We've decided to have a fairly sizeable presence compared to previous years. Our main priority is to look for new online retail partners to sell music on our catalog."

"We've licensed 1 million titles, of which 250,000 are live [digital distribution]. We're keen to talk to independent labels and help them get their catalogs online. I think [digital] rights are still restrictive, and we need to work out the complex payment landscape in Europe, as not everyone in Europe carries credit cards."

Jerry Roest, CEO of song-recognition service provider Shazam Entertainment: "This is my first MIDEM, although the company came last year. There are several senior head honchos I would like to talk to about Shazam's technology [that enables consumers to use mobile phones to identify music they hear anywhere]. We shall also be introducing our new head of music. The one big problem the music industry still needs to discuss is privacy, by creating one consortium that talks to technology people."

Korea

Continued from page 39

especially J-Pop and enka [traditional Japanese ballads]. We have already made contracts with a few companies.

"Japanese music will not start big, but it will gradually increase," Lee says. "We expect it will take six months or more to gain popularity." Former Warner Music Korea director of marketing Catherine Park is now head of international sales at movie production and distribution company Tube Entertainment in Seoul. Tube holds the South Korean rights to some 30 Japanese films.

The opening of the South Korean market to Japanese culture is "a ringing of the bell for the ignorant and lazy" in the country's domestic entertainment industry, Park suggests. "Unless they are competitive and creative, they will lose ground."

Additional reporting by Steve McClure in Tokyo.
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by Christopher Walsh

Ardent Studios and the Visible School (both in Memphis) are grabbing a trend and running with it. While some commercial recording studios have recently started providing education in the recording business—or partnering with recording schools—the recently announced partnership between Ardent and Visible goes beyond the traditional arrangement.

The Visible School, founded in 2000, offers one- and two-year certificate programs in recording, live sound production, voice and instrumental performance and songwriting. Among the Visible School and Visible Media Group’s existing learning centers is an independently owned digital project studio—Sounds Eternal—and 818 Studios, a Web design and new-media studio.

Ardent Studios, founded by owner John Fry in 1966, adds considerably to the Visible School’s offerings. With three recording/mix studios featuring Neve and Solid State Logic consoles—plus a mastering studio and a client list that includes ZZ Top, Led Zeppelin, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jimmie Vaughan and Travis Tritt—Ardent adds a high-end, professional environment to the Visible School experience.

“We had been talking to them about two things,” says Fry, who has taught at the University of Memphis and serves as vice chairman of the Memphis and Shelby County Music Commission.

“One was helping them expand their program, because it was initially a one-year program: nine months of classes plus a three-month, summer, practical-application exercise of some kind. They had people saying, ‘We want more.’

“Plus, while the Visible School itself has a uniquely Christian mission—it’s directed toward people who want to be in Christian music—we also wanted to develop an independent path that would be very similar to the course content it presently has, but for people who were not directed toward specifically working in Christian music.”

Ken Steorts, founder of the Visible School, has a long history with Ardent. Once an intern at the studio, Steorts later served as guitarist in Skillet, a group on the studio’s Ardent Records label.

Steorts says Ardent “is definitely a more large-scale music environment and [is involved with] mainstream music. We do a lot with Christian music in our facility, but there’s a lot more real-world experience at Ardent.”

First-year students enrolled in recording programs, Steorts explains, might spend 30% of their time at Ardent, with that figure doubling for upper-level students.

In addition to the education that Visible School students will get in large-format consoles and professional music recording at Ardent, Fry feels that, given the ascendance of digital audio workstation-based recording and home or project studios, education is more important than ever.

“The fact of the matter is, there are an awful lot more people that want to do music recording and various kinds of video and media work in settings and for purposes that didn’t exist in the past. These folks really want or need to be able to do this work themselves,” Fry adds, “but they need to know what it is that they’re doing. It’s great for this equipment to be affordable, but it still requires skillful and knowledgeable use.”

Grammys Recognize SSL’s Technical Contributions

As reported in this column last week, Solid State Logic (SSL), manufacturer of analog and digital consoles for the music recording, film, postproduction and broadcast industries, will be co-recipient of the Technical Grammy at the 46th Grammy Awards. The Oxford, England-based company joins previously honored equipment manufacturers including Shure, Apple Computer, AMS Neve and Digidesign.

Today, there are more than 3,000 SSL-equipped facilities, from multi-room commercial studios in major cities throughout the world to top artists’ private recording studios.

Founded in 1969 by the late Colin Sanders, SSL initially produced solid-state switching equipment for pipe organ control. Since the introduction of its first recording console—the 4000 B Series, in 1977—SSL has grown to its current status, employing more than 380 people and maintaining regional offices in New York, Los Angeles, Milan, Paris and Tokyo.

The 4000 B Series, SSL managing director Colin Pringle says, “came up with this concept of an in-line channel strip, where you had all of the equalization and dynamics in each channel. When it was done, people thought, ‘That’s decadent, why would anybody want all that processing on every channel?’

“Then,” Pringle continues, “because the consoles were becoming more sophisticated along with the growth in multitrack recording—taped machines and the number of tracks were growing exponentially—it was taking several people to stand next to the console and push faders up and down. So the company developed its own computer automation system and integrated that as well. The console really embodied all of those things that people were attempting to do as the number of tracks went up. Signal processing and automation became available to them.”

SSL analog consoles, including the 4000 G Series, the Super Analogue 9000 J Series and, more recently, the XL 9000 K Series, have dramatically influenced the sound of recorded music.

“Providing all of that signal processing allowed people to do things a bit more radically with things like drum sounds.” Pringle says. “A number of well-known engineers using that dynamics processing were able to come up with sounds on which their careers were based.”

Further, Pringle adds, “the automation aspects allowed people to refine their work much more than they had been able to in the past, including revisiting a mix. Previously, that was impossible; suddenly, it became practical to come back and set up a mix and take it from you where you last were.”

In 2003, SSL introduced the C200 digital console, based on its large-format MTP consoles, as well as the C100 digital broadcast console.

At the 115th Audio Engineering Society Convention, held last October in New York, SSL introduced the XLogic line of signal processing equipment, allowing the quality of its console components to be brought into new settings, such as digital audio workstation-based recording environments.

The Technical Grammy, Pringle says, “is a great honor. For a company that prides itself on the design and manufacturing quality of its products, to get something in that company is an important thing.”

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‘World Idol’ Names Norwegian No. 1

The first “World Idol” competition has come and gone, and Norway’s Kurt Nilsen emerged as the winner. The TV talent contest featured “Idol” winners from around the world. Voting was done by audiences in the various countries where “World Idol” aired. Judges guessed over Nilsen’s performance of U2’s “Beautiful Day,” and even predicted Nilsen would be the underdog to win the race.

The rankings for the other “World Idol” contestants were as follows:

1. Kelly Clarkson from the U.S. in second place
2. Peter Eranian from Belgium in third place
3. Heinz Winckler from South Africa in fourth place
4. Will Young from the U.K. in fifth place
5. Ryan Malcolm from Canada in sixth place
6. Guy Sebastian from Australia in seventh place
7. Aliera “Alex” Jonas in eighth place

Nilsen’s debut album, “I,” went platinum in Norway (50,000 copies sold) on the day it was released in September 2003. It has sold 75,000 units so far in that country, according to Anola/BMG, which released the album.

So how did viewers take to “World Idol”? The two-part show got mediocre ratings in the U.S., where it aired on the Fox network, but was a hit in many other countries.

According to Nielsen Media Research, the first part of the U.S. broadcast of “World Idol”—which aired Dec. 25, 2003—got a 2.3 rating/share, or 15.5 million U.S. viewers. In TV terms, "share" equals the percentage of TV viewers tuned in to the program.

Part two of “World Idol,” the results show that aired Jan. 1, scored a slightly higher viewing audience: a 2.8 rating/share, or 7.7 million U.S. viewers.

According to the respective networks that aired “World Idol,” international ratings for part one of “World Idol” included a 22.5 share in Germany on the RTL network.

In other countries, that “World Idol” episode was No. 1 in its time slot, including Poland (26.9 share on the Polsat network) and the Netherlands (25.9 share on the RTL network).

In other countries, part one of “World Idol” was the most-watched show of the day, including Belgium (a whopping 42.1 share on the TFS network), Canada (near 2 million views on CTV) and Australia (2.4 million viewers on Network 10).

Michelle McManus was named the winner of the second season of the U.K.’s “Pop Idol” in the Dec. 20, 2003, broadcast of the show. McManus’ first single, “All This Time,” was released Jan. 5 on SBMG and went straight to No. 1 in the U.K.

Meanwhile, Singapore will get its own local version of the “Idol” TV contest franchise. “Singapore Idol” will premiere on MediaCorp TV Channel 5 later this year.
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 Nielsen Broadcast Data Systems
Groban Gets His No. 1

The chilly sales climate of January and a hot promotion at a major chain of department stores is just the combination Josh Groban needed to notch the first No. 1 album of his young career. And he’s just getting started.

Thanks to juice from a Target Stores campaign, Groban’s “Closer” scores The Billboard 200’s Greatest Gainer award. More than that, it also becomes only the sixth album in the Nielsen SoundScan era and the first since 2001 to leap from a rank below No. 10 to the chart’s highest rung (see Chart Beat, this page).

In this transitional week, when store traffic continues to settle from the high torque of the holiday frames, Groban and Beyoncé were the only artists of the six featured in the Target sale to realize actual increases, and his gain is substantially larger (up 28,000 copies, compared with a 2,500 unit uptick for her “Dangerously in Love”). Thus, he flies 11-1 with a total for the week of 111,000, up 34% over the prior chart.

Groban’s ascent to the penthouse comes just prior to the Jan. 22 start of his tour, which begins with sold-out shows in Boise, Idaho, Seattle, and Portland, Ore.

Amid his road dates comes the high profile of CBS’ Feb. 1 tele-cast of Super Bowl XXXVIII, where Groban will perform a pre-game tribute to the crew of the Columbia space shuttle, just moments before Beyoncé delivers the National Anthem. That exposure could be especially beneficial, as Groban’s two earlier albums always soared in the wake of TV appearances.

ON TARGET: Here’s the recipe for the aforementioned Target promotion. Take six popular albums and tout them in a widely distributed circular. Allow consumers to buy any combination of two advertised CDs and/or DVDs for $20. Simmer in 1,107 stores nationwide and watch it cook.

Each of the half-dozen albums in the campaign rank among the week’s top 12 titles, five move to higher chart positions and the four that sell less than they did the week before each sees much smaller declines than the album market’s 28.3% erosion from the prior-week sales.

Target’s scheme helps explain why 70.2% of Josh Groban’s chart-topping sum comes from mass merchants this week, even though a majority of his career sales have come from traditional music stores (50.7% of 1.96 million on “Closer,” 62.4% of 571,000 for the 2002 CDM/DVD combo “In Concert” and 39.5% of his 2001 freshman album).

Similarly, in a week when a 4.6% gain jumps Beyoncé’s “Crazy Love,” the department-store sector accounts for almost 66% of her current total. That is in contrast to the 53% (Continued on page 56)

‘Titanic’ Leap For ‘Closer’

For only the second time this century, an album moves to No. 1 on The Billboard 200 from outside the top 10. Making this rare leap is “Closer” (434/Reprise), the third album by Josh Groban. With an 11-1 jump, “Closer” becomes Groban’s first chart-topping title (see Over the Counter, this page).

The only other 21st century release to move to pole position from outside the top 10 was Aaliyah’s self-titled 2001 CD. In the wake of her death in a plane crash, the album took a 19-1 jump.

Before “Aaliyah,” the last album to reach the summit from a position below No. 10 was the soundtrack to “Titanic,” which, like “Closer,” made an 11-1 leap. Coincidentally, the “Titanic” move was on the chart dated Jan. 24, 1998, exactly six years ago.

Before “Titanic,” the last album to move 11-1 was “Double Fantasy” by John Lennon/Toko Ono. That move happened the week of Dec. 27, 1980, following Lennon’s murder Dec. 8. After an eight-week reign, “Double Fantasy” moved to No. 2, the spot it occupied on Feb. 27, 1981, the day Groban was born.

WITCHY WOMAN: Broadway cast albums are infrequent visitors to The Billboard 200. After a two-year gap where no Broadway cast albums debuted, there have now been Broadway cast album debuts for five consecutive years. Keeping the run going is “Wicked” (Decca Broadway/Universal Classics Group), the musical that reveals the back story of the Wicked Witch of the West and Glinda, the Good Witch.

“Wicked” is the eighth Broadway cast album to chart this century and the first since the Bernadette Peters version of “Gypsy” debuted in September 2003. The highest-ranked Broadway cast album of the past 20 years is “Rent,” which peaked at No. 19 in September 1996.

Black Is Back: Next month marks the 15th anniversary of Clint Black’s debut on Hot Country Singles & Tracks. His first single, “Better Man,” was a new entry the week of Feb. 18, 1989, and went on to spend one week at No. 1. This week, Black has his first top 20 hit since “Been There” peaked at No. 5 in April 2000. “Spend My Time” (Equity) moves 23-20.

LIKE IT GOES: “There Goes My Life” (Eclipse) is No. 1 on Hot Country Singles & Tracks for the sixth week. It’s the third Kenny Chesney song to remain on top for six weeks or more, making him the first artist since Nielsen Broadcast Data Systems technology was introduced in 1991 to have three songs stay at No. 1 for six weeks or more.

Obie One: Singer/songwriter Obie Bermudez has two songs in the top five of Hot Latin Tracks. His “Me Carse De Ti” (EMI Latin) returns to No. 1, while “Antes” falls 2-4. Bermudez is the first artist to have two simultaneous top five hits since Jan. 13, 2001, when Son By Four was No. 4 with “A Puro Dolor” and No. 5 with “Cuando Seas Mia.” Bermudez is the sixth artist to have two top five hits at once on this chart. Aside from Son by Four, the others are Alejandro Fernandez, Selena, Los Bukis and Julio Iglesias.
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<td>Da Skool Boy Presents Murphy's Law</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUNDTRACK</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Love Actually</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE BEACH BOYS</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>The Very Best Of The Beach Boys: Sounds Of Summer</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MERCY A</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Almost There</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEAN PAUL</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Diddy 9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIM McGRAW</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Tim McGraw And The Dancehall Doctors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BETTE MIDLER</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Just Because I'm A Woman: Sings Of Dolly Parton</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VARIOUS ARTISTS</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>CASTING CROWNS</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A PERFECT CIRCLE</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Thirteen Step</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAMES TAYLOR</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>The Best Of James Taylor</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AL GREEN</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>I Can't Stop</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVRIL LAVIGNE</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Let Go</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENRIQUE IGLESIAS</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JASON MRAZ</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Waiting For My Rocket To Come</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANTHONY HAMILTON</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Come On Where I'm From</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOW WOW</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Bow Wow: Unleashed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. KELLY</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Chocolate Factory</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Justified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPEAKING OF</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Mouth Smile</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.O. D.</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Payable On Death</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STACIE ORRICO</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Stacie Orrico</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE STROKES</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Room Of Fire</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMETHING CORPORATE</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>The Essential Bruce Springsteen</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEVE MILER BAND</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Coverage</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YELLOWCARD</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Ocean Avenue</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUNDTRACK</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>Something's Gotta Give</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JACK JOHNSON</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>On And On</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRAIN</td>
<td>4/17/99</td>
<td>My Private Nation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* **Note:** This list includes the greatest weekly gains in the Billboard charts.
The BILLBOARD 200 A-Z (LISTED BY ARTISTS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTIST</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>WEEKS AT NUMBER 1</th>
<th>PEAKS</th>
<th>MONTHS AT NUMBER 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Michael Jackson | Thriller | 11 | 1 | 1
| Pink Floyd | The Dark Side of the Moon | 12 | 1 | 1
| The Beatles | Abbey Road | 13 | 1 | 1
| Elvis Presley | Blue | 14 | 1 | 1
| Metallica | Metallica | 15 | 1 | 1
| AC/DC | Highway to Hell | 16 | 1 | 1
| Whitney Houston | Whitney | 17 | 1 | 1
| U2 | The Joshua Tree | 18 | 1 | 1
| Pink | Try | 19 | 1 | 1
| The Rolling Stones | Exile on Main Street | 20 | 1 | 1

Share that traditional retailers hold of the 2.6 million copies her solo album has sold to date.

The percentage declines that the other four hits in the Target promotion experience from prior-week sales are the smallest among the big chart’s top 40 albums. Toby Keith drops by a scant 2.4% (9-5), No Doubt by 10.5% (5-4), Alicia Keys by 12% (No. 2), and Linkin Park by 13.6% (16-12).

Happy New Year, Part Deux: The upbeat tone of the year’s first frame continues in the second, as album sales are 7.7% ahead of the same week last year, and cumulative sales from the first two weeks are 13.5% ahead of the year-to-date pace in early 2003.

Album sales have now beaten those of the comparable prior-year frame in 14 of the past 18 weeks. Finishing itself.

The Top of the Billboard 200 displays that vitality, where three titles beat 100,000 copies, compared with just one in the same 2003 chart. Each of this week’s top 10—and in fact most—albums on the chart sell more than the titles that were at the same rank one year ago.

Further, there are 16 titles showing gains over prior-week sales, compared with 13 in the comparable 2003 week.

As we did last issue, with the market continuing to shift from the fourth-quarter blast, our sales charts award bullets to titles with smaller-than-average declines from prior-week sales.

Startervin’ Son: Sony Music used CBS Jan. 2 telecast of Michael Jackson’s entertainment special as a springboard for direct marketing sales on “Number Ones,” an effort that yields a 22% gain and a 39-15 jump (47,000).

That’s the album’s highest rank since it bowed at No. 13 eight weeks ago amid headlines of the latest child molestation allegations against him.

Sony says close to 20,000 orders flowed from the effort, from Internet or phone sales, with most consumers opting for the combo in which they could buy the “Number Ones” CD and DVD. He thus claims No. 1 on both Top Internet Albums (11,000 copies) and Top Music Videos (26,500).

On another network, rock band Rooney was all over an episode of hot soap “The O.C.” not only having four songs played but actually taking lines in the script, as band members interacted with characters.

Of that, Rooney’s sales almost triple, good for a 31-3 jump on Top Heatseekers and a re-entry at No. 131 on the big chart.

There were six: In the last Billboard of 2003, TTV made news by distributing the top five albums on Top Independent Albums for the second time in three weeks (Billboard Bulletin, Dec. 18, 2003).

Last issue, TTV extended the chart’s record by one more, locking up the indie list’s top six slots. Providing the winning band, two by Lou & the East Side Boys, Ying Yang Twins, Dashboard Confessional, Default and multi-act “Crunch and Disorder.

A return of “The Oprah Winfrey Show” helps break up the TV party, as the show featuring Dolly Parton, Sharon Twain and Melissa Etheridge has Sugar Hill’s Parton tribute album travel 13-4 with a 70% gain.

The multi-act Parton set gets Greatest Gainer honors on this chart and Top Country Albums (31-16) while re-entering the big chart at No. 124.

It was not one show but several that helped Julie Iglesias win Peacekeeper skirts on Top Latin Albums (up 64%). During the tracking week, he was seen on “Live with Regis & Kelly,” “Today,” “The View” and CNN.

www.americanradiohistory.com
**January 24, 2004**

**Top Pop Cuts**

1. "The New One" - 20.96
3. "I'm Not Alright" - 18.98
5. "All I Can Do Is Smile" - 18.98

**Top Heatseekers**

1. "I'm Not Alright" - 20.96
2. "All I Can Do Is Smile" - 18.98
4. "I'm Not Alright" - 18.98
5. "The Best of You" - 18.98

**Top Independent Albums**

1. "The Best of You" - 20.96
2. "I'm Not Alright" - 18.98
4. "I'm Not Alright" - 18.98
5. "The Best of You" - 18.98
BILLBOARD

BILLSINGLES AND TRACKS INDEX

January 24, 2004

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59

BILLBOARD

BILLSINGLES AND TRACKS INDEX

January 24, 2004

www.billboard.com

59

BILLBOARD

BILLSINGLES AND TRACKS INDEX

January 24, 2004

www.billboard.com

59

BILLBOARD

BILLSINGLES AND TRACKS INDEX

January 24, 2004

www.billboard.com

59

BILLBOARD

BILLSINGLES AND TRACKS INDEX

January 24, 2004

www.billboard.com

59
Alicia Keys’ “You Don’t Know My Name” retains the top spot on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Singles & Tracks for a sixth week and becomes the first record to surpass 90 million listener impressions at R&B radio.

“Name” exceeds the 88.5 million audience total 50 Cent’s “In Da Club” set in the March 8, 2003, issue. The strength of “Name” at adult R&B and R&B-Hip-Hop outlets is the main reason it is outpacing its nearest competitor, the hip-hop-based “Slow Jamz” by Twista featuring Kanye West & Jamie Foxx, by more than 25 million listener impressions on the Hot R&B-Hip-Hop Airplay chart.

That is the largest disparity between the top two titles on the airplay list since the inception of the Nielsen Broadcast Data Systems chart in 1992.

LONG TRAIN RUNNING: Newcomer Josh Turner sets the mark for the most weeks needed to crack the top 20 on Hot Country Singles & Tracks, as “Long Black Train” collects Airplay honors and moves 21-19 in its 52nd week on the chart.

What makes the track’s trip so intriguing is that the record was set entered that part of the chart in the March 24, 2001, issue in its 34th week.

However, looking back at that issue, “Need,” which debuted in April 2000 and did not enter itself on the chart until September of that year, is listed at 25 chart weeks. Since part of the song’s run spanned both chart lengths, the weeks-on-chart figures were adjusted for that title and all other titles in the Jan. 9, 2001, issue to reflect weeks spent at No. 60 or higher.

AFFIRMATIVE: “Yeah” by Usher featuring Ludacris & Lil Jon climbs 40-14 in its third week on The Billboard Hot 100, earning Greatest Gainer/Airplay honors with a gain of 24 million listener impressions. The 26-position jump is the largest for a title entering the top 15 in more than one year and the largest ever by an airplay-only track.

Most titles that link to the upper portions of the Hot 100 with such fecundity do so with the additional steam of a retail single’s release. While other airplay-only singles have reached the top 15 in three or fewer weeks, most have done so by either debuting high enough to reach that portion of the chart quickly or by making the bulk of the climb in their second week.

LOVE STORY: Courtney Love makes her first solo appearance on the Modern Rock chart this week, as “Monro” debuts at No. 29. (The chart runs 40 positions deep at billboard.com and in Airplay Monitor.)

Love is the first female solo artist to appear on the modern chart since Poe’s “Hey Pretty” debuted in the March 9, 2001, issue. It would be more than one year after Poe’s run that another female-voiced track would appear on the chart. In December 2002, the Donnas charted with “Take It Off,” and since that time the chart has been graced by such female-led acts as Evanescence.
Sexual Overload

Continued from page 1

album sales by Spears, Pink and simi- lar artists may reflect a classic case of mismatching.

“When social and economic times are more threatening and pessimistic, we usually prefer others with more mature facial, body and personality characteristics,” says Terry Pettijohn, a Ph.D. social psychologist at Mercyhurst College in Erie, Pa.

TARTING UP

If Pettijohn’s observations are accurate, then industry executives who are pushing artists to “tart it up” are mis-calculating in the market and could be damaging careers.

“Audiences are listening to lyrics more,” says Ron Vos, president/chief executive of Hi Frequency Marketing in North Carolina. “They’re focused on content and story line, not dancing and having fun, and they want the artist to reflect that.”

Indeed, female artists who are succeeding on radio and in the charts have tapped into the post-Sept. 11 soul-searching.

Vos, whose firm worked with Avril Lavigne and Norah Jones, says these artists are those that’s about being in touch with your own values. They portray themselves as self-made people who write about their own feelings, he says.

Sex sells. The concept has been around as long as advertising. But Lavigne and Jones reflect a different kind of sexuality that’s much subtler, more genuine and thus more alluring in a time of crisis.

Given the national mood, such nuances could easily be the difference between strong and mediocre sales.

One of the hottest breakthrough groups of last year, rock band Envrance, is fronted by Amy Lee, who is appalled by the crap marketing of some pop stars. “Talking bad about Britney is like beating a dead horse; I won’t even go there,” she says.

Lee clearly bothers Lee are female artists who are good writers or good singers but have gone from being “really classy and cool to just stripping it all away.”

For example, has gone from folk songstress to cover girl, and 41-something Sheryl Crow struts ostentatious in hot pants even as she bemoans that other artists are being marketed like “porn stars.”

“Obviously, sex is the most basic thing that you can sell,” Lee says. “I mean, you sell yourself, and I just hate it.”

TRAMP TREND

From Spears’ kiss with Madonna at the MTV Video Music Awards to Pink’s ostentatous antics at the Billboard Music Awards, the trend toward trampiness shows no signs of abating.

But some academic research suggests that it runs counter to current economic, social and demographic trends.

Last spring, Pettijohn and University of Georgia professor Abraham Tesser presented a paper to the American Psy- chological Society in Atlanta that examined how the social and economic envi- ronment affects human preferences.

“In times of trouble, strong, stable, supportive people are favored,” he says. “When times are good, we tend to favor the fun person.”

To reach that conclusion, the researchers studied the public’s preference for actresses between 1932 and 1995.

Individuals preferred smaller eyes, thinner cheeks and larger chins in bad times, and women with larger eyes, fuller cheeks and smaller chins in good times, the study found.

“The U.S. is always going back and forth between our puritan values and our need for indulgences,” says Sharon Livingston of the Livingston Group, a Windham, N.H., marketing and research firm.

Indeed, American attitudes about sex have moved in cycles that seem to roughly follow the economy, according to a September study by a history professor at Antioch College in Ohio.

In the early 1900s, the prim “Gibson Girl,” who represented serene self-con-

ience, was the prevailing icon. By the Roaring ’20s, flappers were the rage.

“Flappers were nearly showing their knees,” Pettijohn says. “There was a personal liberation and freedom.”

During the Great Depression and World War II, the prevailing female image changed again. But by the post-war boom of the 1950s, the pendulum had swung back.

Sultry sex kittens like Marilyn Mon- roe, Bridget Bardot and Jayne Mansfield became screen stars, and Playboy maga- zine was launched.

SEXUALLY AWARE

As part of his research, Pettijohn studied the physical characteristics of every Playmate of the Year, from 1960 through 2001.

Then he compared his findings with a “hard times” indicator made up of U.S. rates of unemployment, marriage, murder and other factors.

“During difficult years, models tend- ed to be slightly older, heavier and taller, with larger waist and bigger bust-to-hip ratios,” he says.

Madison Avenue also seems to be keenly aware of sexual economic swings in national mood.

During the booming 1980s, Calvin Klein pushed the envelope with an ad campaign featuring the then-15-year-old Brooke Shields and Madonna, of course, launched vamps during the 1990s.

Calvin Klein once again typified the swing to racier advertising when the economic recession then followed the 1990-91 recession. It launched its controversial “teen porn” advertising campaign in 1995. And remember “heroin chic”?

The road to raunch for artists like Spears, Pink and Aguilera began about the same time, but for some reason, no one has chided them in that the national mood has changed.

In contrast, Madonna, who has switched imagery like a snake sheds skins, possesses an uncan- nying ability to judge the social climate.

While some considered her kiss with Spears at the MTV Awards a symbolic anointing or passing of the vamp torch, it was more like she was casting off a worn pair of shoes.

Today, the pop diva’s well-cultivated image as a loving mother and children’s book author is much more reflective of the times.

Likewise, songs with a mellow, intro- spective approach are finding a receptive U.S. audience, in part because of the confusion in the marketplace, he adds.

The wake of Sept. 11, according to Ball State University pop culture expert Richard Aguilera.

That mood plays into the resurgence of the singer/songwriter, where audi- ences are eager to hear what the indi- vidual has to say, he says.

“There’s been a turn toward tradi- tional values,” Aguilera adds.

Alicia Keys is representative of the trend. Her songs are introspective and soulful. Her image, while sexual, also exudes strength and character. Not surpris- ingly, her latest album is doing well on the charts.

Norah Jones is sexy, Livingston says. But she’s also a likable in a genteel way and talking about relationships. It’s a more constructive use of her libido, but she’s still creating interest and intrigue.”

She’s saying, “Come be with me, and you’ll feel good about yourself,” she explains.

The Sex Card

While Keys and Jones are sticking with their images, the industry seems to be prone to playing the sexual card over and over again to juice sales in the tough economy.

Chris Krab, a music business con- sultant in Seattle, is unimpressed. Often, he says, it’s easiest to attract mass- media interest by turning up the sexual angle and seeing how much they can get away with.

“The fear is that such rising stars as Beyoncé Knowles could fall into that trap. Although her vamp quotient is low, some of the songs on her latest album, “Dangerously in Love,” flirt with vampiness.

A spokesperson for Columbia Rec- ords, which put out the former Des- tiny’s Child star’s latest CD, declined to discuss Knowles’ image.

The changed mood has affected other media as well. Felix Dennis, the founder of Dennis Publishing, epitomized the raunch trend in 1997 with the launch of “laddy boy” magazine Maxim.

Van der Pas points out that the European music market represents one-third of the world market. How- ever, the report says that a significant number of components are still unre- ported.

“This situation makes it more diffi- cult—and more expensive—for the circulation of works, artists and cul- tural products,” the report says.

“Mobility is not simply for a cul- tural concern but also an economic one,” Van der Pas says. He suggests that the Border Breakers Awards can highlight the role of the EC in the field of culture.
And corporate mandates to cut costs. His splendid Zen style was out of step with the times.

BMG is declining to comment on mounting bets that Arista may merge with RCA or Jive following the completion of the BMG-Sony Music merger. A discussion of the post-merger management structure of Sony-BMG is premature," BMG said in a statement. "No integration plans or discussions have taken place as yet."

Reid was president/CEO in July 2000, succeeding founder Clive Davis, who now heads the RCA Music Group.

Prior to that, Reid was co-president of Atlantic-based Ladder Records with partner Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds. BGM bought and later incorporated the label into Arista. At the time, it was home to such acts as OutKast, TLC and Usher.

During his nearly four-year tenure at Arista, Reid achieved notable sales success with albums from Avril Lavigne ("Let Go") and Pink ("Missundstood").

Ironically, his ouster comes as one of the label's major success stories is still unfolding. OutKast's double-CD, "Speakerboxx/The Love Below" is up for multiple Grammy awards and has sold 3.3 million units, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Reid also inked several label joint ventures with heavy-hitting production operations, including Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis, Fly Tyme, Arista senior VP Jermaine Dupri's So So Def and the Neptunes' Star Trak.

But Reid also endured heavy criticism. He refused to work with the $100 million deal with Whitney Houston, as well as his signing of Boyz II Men. Much-touted new albums by Houston, TLC, Aretha Franklin and Pink did not perform as expected.

While the U.S. industry was down 3.6% in overall album sales last year, Arista was down 1.1% for the year. According to the report, the label lost as much as $110 million in 2002.

The end of the era of big-spending label execs was heralded by the ouster of Tommy Mottola as head of Sony Music two years ago. His replacement, former TV executive Andrew Lack, has been reining in costs ever since.

With the merger, both companies are looking for further cost cuts and, as just as likely, a change in corporate culture. Nonetheless, Reid will be missed. It's a shame to see Reid go," says Terry McBride, who manages such artists as Sarah McLachlan and Dido. "He's very likeable and talented person."

"McLachlan's "Afterglow" has sold 1.6 million units, up to date, with Dido's "Life for Rent" close behind at 1.4 million, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Up-and-coming acts like Kelsi and Anthony Hamilton could be affected. "I don't think it's going to help," says management's Eli Davis.

Reid's ouster coincides with the exit of senior VP of marketing and artist relations Mark Shimmel.

The company stated that COO Michael Smellie will oversee Arista's executive management team "until further notice." Executive VP/GM Larry Mestel will continue to oversee the label's day-to-day operations. Additional reporting by Ed Christman in New York and Morgan Whitley in Los Angeles.
‘Music Retailers Must Not Think They’re In A Mode Which Can’t Change’

BY TOM FERGUSON

As chief executive of London-based Virgin Entertainment Group, Simon Wright is used to having a high profile in the international music industry. However, it was his role as chairman of the Global Entertainment Retail Association—Europe that kept Wright’s name on the lips of European record companies in late 2003.

In October, GERA—Europe issued a mission statement (Billboard, Nov. 1) claiming piracy was being portrayed as the main cause of decline in the music markets around the world, when “the decline in quality and diversity of releases should be seen as an equally large problem.” The trade body called for increased investment in artist development to counter that perceived problem.

Wright says GERA’s statement provoked strong reactions from record companies; major music merchants in Europe admit that it was a public expression of private frustration that many of them have been feeling in recent times.

Wright “has a great understanding of the key issues in the business,” Sony Music U.K. chairman/CEO Rob Stringer says. “He has always dealt with the dynamic between retail and the record company in a sensible and articulate manner.”

The VEG chief is “committed to breaking new artists,” Universal Music U.K. chairman/CEO Lucian Grainge adds. “So he is someone we can do business with; he’s a retailer who wants to retail music and who has an interest in new artists.”

Wright has also chaired the British Assn. of Record Dealers (BARD). That briefly overlapped with his tenure as chairman of GERA—Europe, representing national associations from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the U.K.

Q: How do you view the current business climate?

A: Over [2003], business was satisfactory in difficult markets, both in the U.S. and the U.K. But 2003 also brought a lot of the restructuring I’ve been doing over the last three years to completion. Our owned businesses are now focused on the U.K., and North America, and we’re actively managing licensed businesses in France, Japan and Australia. We’ve exited all the Continental European territories and we’re very happy with the structure.

Our primary focus is to concentrate on the U.K. and North America, having converted a number of our businesses [elsewhere] to licenses. We see that as the most appropriate way to operate in territories such as Asia or Australia.

Q: You recently relaunched the Megastore in San Francisco with lifestyle products. Will music remain VEG’s key product line?

A: Whatever we do, we must not undermine our credibility in our key product areas of music and film. San Francisco is all about adding new products into the mix; it’s not about supressing music sales. We’re acknowledging that fact that music in the U.S. has had its third year of decline—and in the U.K. we may be starting a few years of decline. We feel the best way forward is to add more product into the mix of what an entertainment store represents.

In San Francisco we’ve added more travel products, more fashion products, health products, more books, hardware. We’ve given the store a different context. We expect to see music to drop as a percentage of our sales in San Francisco, but we hope we don’t see a decline in unit sales.

Q: What’s the way forward for music specialty retailers?

A: Music retailers must not allow themselves to think they’re fixed in a mode which can’t change. You have to adapt to different markets and environments and create a profitable model. In [London flagship shop] Oxford Street, we recently brought [instrument dealer] Sound Control into the basement. It’s got the biggest selection of electric guitars and the widest selection of drum kits in Europe; it gives the store real music credibility. We’ve re-laid everything; we’ve got 20% more stock in the rest of the store, over 25% less space. It’s more crowded, but it actually improves the atmosphere, and we’ve seen a 15% improvement in sales since the change.

Q: Do you see online sales overtaking traditional retailing?

A: Online is always going to supplement traditional retailing. Inevitably, the specialist sector will get smaller, due to a combination of straight Amazon-type online retailing and downloading. Downloading on a paid basis in mass terms is a generational shift. You’re not going to find in two years’ time that downloading has killed everything off. It’s far more subtle than that.

We’re looking at 10% of our market being replaced by downloading, which is just as much a problem. People will have to adapt and consolidate. Losing 10% off their sales would irrevocably damage the business model of most retailers, unless they did something else.

Q: What about indie stores with more niche businesses?

A: I think the real specialist store has got a long life. When you really do specialize, that’s the reason for the store. You’re almost not a record store anymore, you’re a specialist.

Q: What’s your opinion of Best Buy’s North American exclusive on the Rolling Stones’ “Four Flicks” DVD?

A: That was a very bad precedent. I’d definitely not be keen to follow that route. I can’t understand why the band did that, or why the label thought it was a good thing. No one retailer could give them the sales that they could have had if it was out in the wider market.

Q: How do you see GERA’s role developing?

A: BARD and [the National Assn. of Recording Merchandisers in the U.S.] and other bodies have operated quite successfully in their own territories, but the music industry is a global market.

It’s very important that trade bodies in Europe and America communicate and coordinate in such a way that the global content companies acknowledge that retailers act on a global level as well.

Q: How have labels reacted to that recent “mission statement”?

A: We’re very pleased to have got a reaction. But what concerns me is the record companies are interpreting our comments on improving quality and diversity of releases as somehow downplaying the seriousness of the piracy situation. We’re actually saying, “Don’t ignore the general health of the market because of the focus on piracy.”

Q: How can they reverse the perceived decline in musical quality and diversity?

A: I don’t know that there’s any simple answer. One of the good things to come out of the majors’ consolidation might be that record companies get stronger financially, and then hopefully have more money and more capacity to invest in artists over a long period in time. So, there is merit in record companies getting stronger by consolidation, but it would be a worrying trend if they consolidate their artists as well as their operations. Then we end up with fewer artists and even less diversity.

Q: Would Universal Music Group’s JumpStart price-cutting policy for the U.S. work in other markets?

A: That implies that it’s working in the U.S., which I’m not sure it is. The whole point for everybody in the industry should be to provide good value to customers. Good value in the long term is not always served by going for the lowest price possible, because inevitably the market will build itself around very low value [products]. That again will kill diversity of content.

Price reductions achieved by a policy like Universal’s will move volumes—so on one level it would work—but I think long term it would be very damaging. We are a specialist retailer offering range and depth of product and a great marketing space for record companies. It’s a worrying trend for us when the trading policy of a record company undermines the model that we work to.
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