THE REAL PINK

SHE'S NOT A 'STUPID GIRL'

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YAHOO SNAFU

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THE NEW LATINOS

ASSIMILATED ACTS EYE U.S. MAINSTREAM >P.26

PLUS

LL COOL J
RICKY MARTIN
COURTNEY LOVE
KEITH URBAN

BABY BOOM
KIDS' TITLES GRAB TOP THREE SPOTS ON BILLBOARD 200 >P.24
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**ADVISER**
After more than two decades, hip-hop pioneer LL Cool J continues to pave the way in style. See page 31.

**PHOTO**
Jame Siliato/Wireimage.com
Vanessa Anne Hudgens photo: Fred Hayes/Disney Channel

**COVER**
Pink photo: Andrew Macpherson
Copyright Term: European Performers Deserve More

BY FRAN NEVRKLA

The Internet introduced radically different ways for mass dissemination of intellectual property-based products. It was a revolution that presented very exciting business opportunities while remaining an enormous challenge—and a potential threat to all creators and those who invest in talent.

It became quickly apparent to all copyright holders (especially those with a penchant for anarchy) that music truly is tailor-made for the digital era, because of the advent of CD—the first step of the digital revolution. They concluded that music no longer should be paid for.

Many individuals, organizations and businesses with their own aggressive agenda, supported by certain sections of the media, positively delighted in a hostile chorus on the theme of “music industry on its knees,” “the record business is dead,” etc.

From public platforms made available through countless seminars, conferences and other events, we were told “the music industry must invent new business models.”

Some of us brave enough to respond suggested the phrase “a new business model” should mean just that—a new way of conducting business.

We quickly shook down because that is not what these “thinkers” had in mind at all. In response to a specific challenge, one of these cynics, after much hesitation, declared: “But surely you can start selling more T-shirts instead!” Right...

Luckily, we are used to—and indeed thrive on—challenges. The music industry now supports a wide range of legal online services as the result of which an enormous catalog of sound recordings is available to legitimate consumers in return for reasonable payment.

The fact remains, however, that more and more people consume more music worldwide, but fewer and fewer are paying for it.

In recent months, the U.K. and European record industries took a deep breath and with some degree of seriousness because of the extreme hostility of the outside world (including some political quarters) launched a determined campaign for an extended period of copyright protection for sound recordings.

This initiative has received support from many British and European artists. But again, this is taking place against howls of protest.

Why this hostility? After all, authors, composers and songwriters—as well as publishers, film directors, actors and many others—already enjoy copyright protection throughout their lives plus 70 years.

In the United States, copyright protection for sound recordings has been extended to 95 years, and several other countries have followed suit and extended their copyright term.

Why not in the United Kingdom and Europe, where the sound recording is a true Cinderella, protected for just 50 years from first release?

America, much-maligned in today’s world, has recognized the continuing shift in asset valuation from physical property to intellectual property.

The United States is developing a framework capable of enabling the growth of a modern economy, increasingly dominated by conceptual products. Thank you, Alan Greenspan.

Looking at China, it is no coincidence that in their negotiations to buy British car maker MG Rover in 2004-2005, the Chinese failed to get excited by the offer to purchase chunky machinery or outdated production lines. Shanghai Auto, instead bought the intellectual property rights for £1 billion ($1.75 billion).

The U.K. government has acknowledged that “copyright industries” represent 8% of European gross domestic product, rising faster than any other sector.

Accordingly, looking after creative industries, including music, is not a favor. On the contrary, U.K. and European politicians have to recognize the crucial importance of these businesses for future economic prosperity and stability of the United Kingdom and Europe as a whole.

Talent and successes are not dirty words—there is no shame in running a flourishing business. Making a profit is not yet a crime! All performers deserve proper remuneration for their work and talent by which they enhance our lives.

Copyright is the very foundation of a system that enables performers and those who invest in their talent to generate an economic reward.

PPL-type performance income represents a fundamentally important income stream, especially against the backdrop of declining physical sales. A longer term of copyright protection will ensure that orchestral musicians, session players, backing singers and others will continue receiving a modest income in their old age when they most need it. Record companies will be able to continue investing in new music and talent at reasonable levels, which must be good for the consumer, too.

What is wrong with that?

Fran Nevrkla is chairman/CEO of London-based PPL, which collects and distributes airplay and public performance royalties in the United Kingdom.

U.S. Right, Canada Wrong On Licensing

The United States has got it right and Canada has it wrong in abolishing compulsory licensing (Billboard, Feb. 25).

As a new indie label, we are able to get legitimate mechanical licenses for small test batches of CDs from the Harry Fox SongFile service and make sure we are on the right track on remakes before ramping up the quantity. We also get to avoid chasing the mechanicals from the publishers or worse, the songwriters, wasting both our time and money.

The result I expect to see in Canada is fewer songwriters making more money per song, but on fewer songs. I think on balance, the U.S. approach probably results in more total money in the pockets of the songwriters and publishers.

Frank Shoffner
President, Shoffner
Lake Forest, Calif.
**GLOBAL**  BY TIM CULPAN

**YAHOO’S CHINA PROBLEM**

‘Deep Links’ Give Portal A Copyright Headache

TAIPEI, China—Yahoo China’s music search engine has turned up bad news for the music industry and possible legal action against the global Web portal.

In a situation that seems to mirror that of market-leading—
and already sued—local portal baidu.com, Yahoo China’s music pages link directly to unlicensed downloads and streams of songs by domestic and international artists.

“Deep linking,” as the practice is known, differs from sending Web searches to other pages that may host unlicensed music. Instead, the links on Baidu and Yahoo directly trigger a download of music hosted by sites that appear to be unaffiliated with Yahoo.

The most obvious examples of apparent copyright infringement on the Yahoo China site include deep links to music by the Beatles. The band’s catalog has never been licensed to a digital service. This is similar to top100.cn, a Chinese music Web site that claimed legitimacy but sold unlicensed music (Billboard, March 4).

Yahoo China management denies that such links are examples of copyright violations.

Yahoo “is a directory of what’s on the Web,” says Porter Erinman, international marketing VP of Beijing-based Alibaba International, the company that manages Yahoo China.

Erisman says that if content is streaming or being downloaded from another site, such violations would be the responsibility of that site. “Yahoo China doesn’t actually post the works which [users] are downloading,” Erinman says.

California-based Yahoo paid $1 billion for a 40% stake in Internet auction site Alibaba last August, then turned over management and operation of its China portal to Alibaba. Yahoo China is a wholly owned subsidiary of U.S.-based Internet portal Yahoo. The U.S. operation yahoo.com links directly to yahoo.com.cn, which makes yahoo.com users three clicks from downloading unlicensed music. continued on >>p8

**LEGAL**  BY TODD MARTENS

**A Question Of Faith**

Buzz Band Mute Math, Preferring Secular Rock, Sues Warner

Rock act Mute Math is so frustrated at being branded a Christian band by Warner Music Group’s Christian outlet Word Records, it has taken matters into its own hands, self-releasing its debut album Feb. 1. And last September, Billboard has learned, Teleprompt Records—the label started by Mute Math keyboardist Paul Meany, his attorney Kevin Kookogey and producer Ted Tjornhom—filed suit against Warner Bros. Records and Word.

The suit is for breach of contract and negligent misrepresentation, and seeks punitive damages. Warner, however, might be somewhat pardoned for the marketing approach.

Mute Math was formed by Meany, formerly of the unabashedly Christian act Earthsuit. Mute Math claims to have sold about 10,000 copies of its debut CD in one month, relying on word-of-mouth among its largely Christian fan base. The album followed an EP—released by Word Records—that sold nearly 30,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, with the bulk of sales coming from the Christian market. The act’s buzz began when it played a string of Christian festivals last summer. And in October and November, the act supported fellow Christian band Mae.

All of which would be just fine, but for one nagging detail: Mute Math does not consider itself a Christian act.

Meany says he never wanted an EP to come out on Word, a well-known Christian brand. “It was just assumed that because that’s where I once was, that was where I was always going to be,” he says. “I had no desire to be the Christian version of a real band.”

Teleprompt argues that releasing the EP via Word caused significant damage to Mute Math’s brand. It claims it was mis- continued on >>p8
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  Video premiered on AOL First View 2/21
- VH-1 added the video out of the box in large rotation
- "Photograph" has surpassed the 1 million download mark, a first in independent label history

NICKELBACK
- LEAD SINGLE, "TAKE IT ALL AWAY" ALREADY ADDED AT OVER 60 STATIONS
  - Featured band on National "Girls Gone Wild Rocks America" Tour
  - Theory of a Deadman/Hinder tour begins in April
  - Self-titled debut in stores March 21st

FAKTION

THE DRESDEN DOLLS
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- NEW ALBUM, YES, VIRGINIA, FEATURING "SING" IN STORES APRIL 18TH

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- IN STORES THIS SUMMER

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- IN STORES THIS FALL

AND THE RETURN OF THE NEW YORK DOLLS
- IN STORES THIS SUMMER
broadcast time. It further seeks damages from Sirius for unfair competition and tortious interference with Stern's CBS contract. Just before the suit was announced, Stern accused CBS Corp., president/CEO Les Moonves of serving a "personal vendetta" against him.

NEW TEAM TO DOCTOR SPIN

The team that launched the cheeky music magazine Spin is about to put a new spin on Spin magazine. McEvoy Group acquired Spin, the music magazine founded by Bob Guccione Jr. in 1965, from Vibe/Spin Ventures Feb. 28. Nion McEvoy, CEO of the newly named Spin Media, immediately appointed Tom Hartle as the magazine's president, Malcolm Campbell as publisher and Andy Pemberton as editor-in-chief. Campbell has previously served as Spin's publisher, while Pemberton was editor-in-chief of the British music magazine Q. In 2000, Campbell and Pemberton were recruited by Dennis Publications to found Blender.

UMG PROFITS BOOST VIVENDI

Universal Music Group made a significant contribution to parent company Vivendi Universal's financial results for 2005. UMG's earnings from operations increased to 480 million euros ($570 million), an 18.9% rise from 2004 on a comparable basis and at constant currency. In a March 1 statement, VU said the increase "reflects higher sales volumes, continued cost-savings efforts and lower restructuring charges in 2005."

PRINCE'S BUNDLED HIT

Prince packs an exclusive monthlong iTunes promotion into a No. 1 ranking on Hot Singles Sales and the Hot Shot Debate slot at No. 60 on The Billboard Hot 100—for his track, "Black Sweat." With the chance for four lucky fans to win a private concert with Prince, 11,500 digital singles were sold of "Sweat" and a second continued on >>p13
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DOJ Follows Spitzer's Lead, Probes Majors On Pricing

The U.S. Department of Justice is piggybacking on New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer’s investigation into online music pricing. Billboard has learned. Each of the four major labels have either been subpoened or are expected subpoenas from the DOJ in the coming days.

Representatives for Warner Music Group, Sony BMG and Universal Music Group declined comment. "We have not yet received anything," an EM representative says. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, however, sources close to each of the four majors confirmed that the subpoenas were, at the least, expected. "The DOJ has phoned the labels to tell them it's coming," one label source says.

"It is [the] Department of Justice, and it is digital pricing," another says. "As best as we can tell, it's identical to the Spitzer thing." In January and February, reports surfaced that Spitzer had subpoenaed the major labels, pushing his probe on radio promotion practices into digital music pricing.

Much of the early chatter in the industry surrounding the Spitzer investigation centered on the major labels’ use of “most favored nation” clauses in deals with download and subscription retailers. Digital music service operators have complained that such clauses, which dictate that a label cannot receive worse pricing terms than its competitors, are too often due to collusion by the record companies. In some cases, the clause allows labels to audit the terms of deals the online retailers have with other record companies to ensure that they are receiving the best pricing terms possible. Digital retail sources say the probe is believed to be investigating whether anti-competitive practices are at play.

Spitzer’s subpoenas began to circulate among digital retailers in late January and early February as well, a source familiar with many of these companies tells Billboard.

What, if anything, either the DOJ or Spitzer’s investigation will do to digital music pricing will remain to be seen. A previous probe by the DOJ into digital music pricing in 2001 came up empty. After a two-year inquiry, the case was dropped, and no antitrust charges were filed. As a public company, WMG will likely disclose the subpoena in the coming days.

A Dirty Victory?

Label Says E-Mail Was A Joke, But Not Everyone Is Laughing

It is unknown how many people received the original message, which contained a list of chains for Victory’s street team to visit.

"It was absolutely a joke," Brummel says. "We need people in stores buying every record possible by artists of all genres. No one associated with us is doing anything at retail that they shouldn't be. You will not find Victory's music on iTunes, and that is because we believe in re- tial, which we prove day in and day out." Labels source says street teams often move CDs to a store's front, as Victory's e-mail directed for Hawthorne Heights "If Only You Were Lonely." But the same sources say that specifically targeting another act's record was almost unheard of.

Sources say DJ called Brum- mel after reading the post, telling the label's music people to get this out of the way. Vinyl's second message followed shortly after.

LATE NEWS

Adkins’ Booty Romp Bumps Album Sales

uire Adkins’ booty-shakin’, tongue-in-cheek country jam “Honky Tonk Badonkadonk” has become the darling of Music City—and beyond. The infectious track has proved itself to be the little song that could, pushing sales of Adkins’ latest Capitol Records album, “Songs About Me,” past the 1 million mark, according to Nielsen SoundScan. The track, whose title Adkins says refers to “hot, beer-joint ass,” has clearly breathed new life into an album that was beginning to lag.

“Badonkadonk” is the third single from the nearly year-old “Songs About Me,” and was delivered to country radio in late September. Within a couple of weeks, the song’s video—think Ney’s “Hot in Herre” set in a Texas barroom—was in heavy rotation on CMT.

The bawdacious ode to the derriere cleverly connects country, hip-hop and techno. Remixes by Jason Deere & Silvio were sent to club DJs, college and professional sports teams, dance instructors and cheerleading squads in December.

“Badonkadonk” peaked at No. 2 on the Hot Country Songs chart in early February. It went to No. 30 and No. 40 on The Billboard Hot 100 and Pop 100, respectively.

The “Badonkadonk” approach flies in the face of the traditional album’s life cycle. "As an industry, we front end most releases," Capitol senior VP of marketing Fletcher Fos- ter says. "Then, a record settles in and finds its groove. You need a dramatic single or a dramatic performance at an awards show to alter that groove."

The goal, early on, was to get this song to the consumer. Foster adds. "Because it has a novelty element to it, we didn't want to let the industry not take it seriously.' Mission accomplished: Sales of “Songs About Me” increased throughout the fall and early winter, culminating in 134,157 units sold the week ending Dec. 25, 2005, more than doubling the album’s chart-topping, opening-week numbers.

Recently, the album has been averaging weekly sales of 40,000 units, compared with weekly sales of 7,000 units last August.

With chart-topping success at the iTunes Music Store and walmart.com, “Badonkadonk” has amassed digital sales of 16,000, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Meanwhile, its accompanying video maintained a No. 1 or No. 2 ranking on cmt.com’s streaming video chart for four months.

And, in less than two months, nearly 100,000 fans have purchased “Badonkadonk” master ringtones, according to Capitol VP of sales Bill Kennedy. This is particularly impressive for a music genre that generally accounts for a small percentage of the ringtone market, which is dominated by R&B/hip-hop.

"I thought the song would be a hit, but this is something else," Adkins says. "It has taken on a life of its own. I'm just standing on the side let- ting it be."

Pausing, he adds, "It's pretty cool being me right now."
Brits Set On Breaking In America

LONDON—Buoyed by the recent American success of such acts as Coldplay, James Blunt and Franz Ferdinand, the British music industry is once again focusing its energy on the U.S. market. And the music community here has found an important ally: the government.

On March 3, Secretary of State for trade and industry Alan Johnson announced a series of initiatives to "help British music companies break into the American market."

"From the Beatles through David Bowie to Coldplay, the U.K. music scene has always led the world, but we have not always capitalized on our talent to break America," Johnson says. "I want to ensure that government works with the industry and our best artists to showcase talent in the U.S."

The U.K. government's initiatives include:

• New research on the U.S. music market broken down by region, available free to British music companies;
• Creation of a new-music portal showcasing the latest British music specifically aimed at the U.S. market, jointly developed by the industry and U.K. Trade and Investment (UKTI), an organization the British government established to foster international trade;
• Training for commercial officers across the network of U.S. diplomatic posts to help them understand the needs of British music companies attempting to enter the market.

James Sellar, secretary general for the Music Managers Forum, admits that in the past the British music industry has been "shy" about joint initiatives with the government. "Because it is a creative industry, I think we were always worried to be associated with the government, but if we were any other industry, no one would bat an eyelid if we worked together with the government in our export efforts," Sellar says.

This government-industry partnership comes as the British prepare to send their biggest contingent of executives and artists to the Austin-based festival-cum-trade show South by Southwest, which runs March 15-19. As part of a mission organized by indie labels body AIM and supported by the UKTI, nearly 100 British music companies will have a presence at SXSW. More than 120 acts from the British Isles will perform.

Warner Music U.K.-signed British alternative rock act Hard-Fi will be among the Brits who will perform March 17 at Exodus. "Anything that can help has got to be a good thing," the band's frontman Richard Archer says. "Other products get help [in being marketed overseas] by the Department of Trade and Industry, so why not music?"

The UKTI's annual budget for the U.K. music industry is £500,000 ($872,000). Approximately £300,000 ($523,000) is used to help music firms attend exhibitions and set up missions abroad.

Billboard understands that the UKTI will plug £35,000 ($56,000) into British music events at SXSW. The AIM-backed mission incorporates travel (grants worth about £45,000 ($78,500)).

"We're supporting the U.K. industry to get into the U.S. because it's a priority market for them. It's the largest market in the world, and the share of British music out there has been very low in recent years," UKTI spokesman Alasdair Crewe says.

In recent years, British repertoire's U.S. standing has improved to roughly 8% of the market, up from less than 1% in 1999, according to the UKTI. As recently as 1986, British music is believed to have accounted for about 32% of the U.S. market.

Paul Curran, group managing director of BMG Music Publishing U.K.—whose roster includes Coldplay, Keane and Hard-Fi—says there is an increased number of British acts whose music connects with American audiences. But he says the key is touring.

"It is about touring and winning friends and keep making friends," Curran says. "That's how British bands used to do it. Take Coldplay—they've been touring constantly. It also helps that they make great records."

Curran says the most useful government input would be to put continuous pressure on the U.S. government to ease its immigration policy regarding temporary visas for performers.

Additional reporting by Paul Sexton in London.
Apple On Top, But Under Fire
Digital Music Leader Faces Mounting Litigation and A Mobile Puzzle It Has Yet To Solve

For Apple Computer, life at the top of the digital music heap is not all it is cracked up to be. The company maintains upwards of 60% market share in MP3 player sales and in February crossed the 1 billion songs plateau for sales at its iTunes Music Store. But as its power grows, so grows the list of potential threats to its dominance.

Rivals vying to play the role of “iPod killer” are already lined up outside the door and around the corner in the traditional download business, with amazon.com emerging as the latest foe. Now the company is facing even more corners as it is confronted with an increasing number of lawsuits from opportunists looking to take a swipe at the iPod gold mine. Apple is also dealing with a more pronounced challenge in the mobile music space from archenemy Microsoft, which is making deals with the likes of Motorola, Verizon Wireless and Nokia.

“These are all symptoms of what happens to a front-runner,” Gartner analyst Mike McGuire says. “It’s almost harder to be the one on top than to be the challenger, because while challengers are building, the one on top is protecting and trying to extend the lead.”

Nowhere is the challenge that Apple faces greater than in the mobile music arena. McGuire points out that Apple must protect its existing iPod/iTunes business while at the same time figuring out how to transition to new products and services for the cell phone.

Determined to make that process as difficult as possible is Microsoft, which is seeding its Windows Media technology standard with a host of wireless device manufacturers and carriers.

Motorola announced at the 3GSM conference Feb. 13 that it will support Microsoft’s Windows Media technology in its upcoming devices. The deal seemingly undercuts Apple’s pact Motorola inked with Apple a year ago.

It was Motorola’s reasoning for Microsoft support that underscores Apple’s challenges: Company executives say wireless operators want devices that support Microsoft’s technology because these units will let them offer their own music download services, while Apple’s technology will not.

Bill Rosenbloum, president of GiantSteps Media Technology Strategies, a consulting firm that specializes in digital rights management, says Apple’s mobile strategy has been tripped up by its focus on side-loading applications. “Apple is not a player in mobile music right now,” he says. “They’re late. They are not out there yet with a true over-the-air mobile service.”

Meanwhile, Microsoft has managed to strike first, teaming with Verizon Wireless to support its VCast Music service. If worrying about the developing mobile music sector is not enough, Apple has to contend with myriad lawsuits alleging everything from patent infringement to antitrust violations to liability for hearing loss.

Likely to attract some of the biggest headlines are the cases that legal experts say are the hardest for Apple to prove. Topping the list is a class action lawsuit that alleges that Apple put consumers at risk of suffering noise-induced hearing loss with its “ear bud” headphones. The complaint, filed Jan. 31 in the U.S. District Court in San Jose, Calif., by John Kiel Patterson, alleges that the iPod fails to contain adequate warnings regarding the likelihood of hearing loss. The suit notes that in 2002, France required Apple to limit personal listening device output to 100dB. In response, Apple pulled its players from store shelves and upgraded the software in European models to impose such a limit, but the suit alleges that Apple did not change its U.S. models.

Plenty of press scrutiny may also result from a claim by Thomas Slattery in the U.S. District Court of Northern California that Apple engages in anticompetitive practices by not licensing its FairPlay DRM technology to third parties.

While those cases may grab the public’s attention, Bobby Rosenblum, an attorney and shareholder in the entertainment practice at Greenberg Traurig, says the cases with the biggest potential implications for the digital music market are likely to be those involving patent infringement.

Among the cases that will be closely followed: Santa Rosa, Calif.-based burst.com in January filed patent infringement claims against Apple’s allegedly unauthorized use of “core audio and video functionality for Apple’s iTunes and the iPod.” Last year Microsoft settled patent infringement and antitrust claims made by Burst by reportedly paying $60 million and licensing the same Burst patents listed in the complaint against Apple.

Apple is also set to fight the next round of its court battle with Apple Corps over the computer maker’s push into the digital music business with the iTunes Music Store. Apple Corps alleges the move is in violation of a 1991 trademark infringement settlement between the two companies. Trial is set for the week of March 27.

“These are the cases that make Apple feel like it is being attacked on all sides,” Rosenblum says. “When you are No. 1, you have a bull’s-eye on your back.”

---

Burst.com’s and the Beatles’ lawsuits may sting. But will mobile music be Apple’s Waterloo?

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The Honeymoon’s Hardly Over, But Show Dog And Big Machine Split

NASHVILLE—Six months after a splashy launch touting their synergy as sister labels, Big Machine Records and Show Dog Nashville have quietly split.

Both labels remain fully functional but are no longer affiliated beyond Show Dog owner/country superstar Toby Keith’s financial stake in Big Machine. Both imprints continue to be distributed through Universal Music & Video Distribution.

At their September launch, the labels were structured as sister companies, sharing most of their staff, including the entire promotion team (Billboard, Sept. 3, 2005). They also shared office space in a Music Row building owned by Big Machine president Scott Borchetta.

Keith has since moved his staffers out. They are now housed in temporary office space while Keith and his manager, T.K. Kimbrell, purchase a new building.

Show Dog retained most of the shared staff, including VP of sales Johnny Rose and VP of promotion Denise Roberts.

“I didn’t think we’d be this busy, this early,” Keith says. “My agenda alone will dominate the staff.”

Borchetta is in the process of hiring a marketing executive for his label; he recently hired a full promotion team, including new VP of promotion Jack Purcell, a veteran country record executive.

Both sides say there was no falling out, and Borchetta says, “I don’t have a better friend in the business than Toby Keith.” In launching Big Machine, Borchetta says, “there was a lot of work I had to do, and (Toby) gave me a huge leg up in getting this together. He was able to fast forward a lot of great opportunities for us.”

But Borchetta says the volume of acts each executive was signing made it apparent they needed to split to adequately work them all without scheduling releases on top of each other.

“I wanted to release four or five things a year,” Keith says. “He wanted to release four or five, and it was just too many new artists.”

The initial structure called for each executive to sign artists separately, and they did so in abundance, particularly Keith. At launch, Show Dog’s roster included Keith and his bandmate and frequent songwriting partner Scotty Emerick. Big Machine launched with Jack Ingram, Danielle Peck and Taylor Swift.

Since the launch, Keith has signed Rebecca Lynn Howard and Sarah Johns, and is in the process of signing Lindsey Haun, co-star in his upcoming feature film debut, “Broken Bridges.” Keith is also working on deals with Tim Rushlow and the group Lynnville Train.

Borchetta, meanwhile, has added Jimmy Wayne and Dusty Drake to his roster.
Legal Matters

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Old Story, New Twists: Manager Sues Killers

Litigation is under way between multiplatinum act the Killers and the group's former manager.

On Feb. 21, Braden Merrick and his company, from the future, sued band members Brandon Flowers, Ronnie Vannucci Jr., Dave Keuning and Mark Stoermer and their Las Vegas-based lawyer, Robert Reynolds, for $16 million for breach of contract and interference with that contract.

Merrick claims the band did not have grounds to terminate his 2003 management contract. A source says the band sees things differently.

While the suit raises many interesting legal questions about roles and responsibilities—of managers, lawyers, artists and labels—the story is not new.

A young music lover hooks up with an unsigned band and becomes the band's manager. He helps it record a demo and land an indie deal overseas after the major labels turn up their noses. Then, the music finally attracts a major, which picks up the band. The U.S. debut album goes multiplatinum—and the management relationship hits the skids.

But the Killers' situation brings in a few more twists and turns.

Merrick was an independent A&R rep who first wanted to shop a deal, then manage the band—and then, according to a source close to the act, went to work for the band's label.

Meanwhile, Reynolds, a lawyer relatively inexperienced in the industry, advised the band and then eventually began performing many management duties. Was he just helping out? Merrick alleges that Reynolds wanted to become the manager, thereby wrongfully interfering with his contracts with the band.

Merrick contends in the complaint—filed in U.S. District Court in Las Vegas—that he was a "regional consultant" for a major label when he found the band on the Internet; that label passed on the band.

Merrick also claims he took the Las Vegas-based band to San Francisco to hook up with Jeff Saltzman to produce some masters to shop a deal. Merrick and Saltzman then entered into a producer agreement with the Killers. Under that agreement, if the band entered into a recording deal, it would pay producer royalties (an override to Merrick and Saltzman on the first three albums, according to the suit).

Merrick's company then entered a management agreement with the band. Eventually Island Def Jam picked up the Killers and released the album, "Hot Fuss." Sometime after the deal was signed, Merrick allegedly began working for 1D (without disclosing the fact to the band, the source close to the act says).

It is not unusual for a major-label employee to also manage a band, but typically it is an act signed with another label. A manager working for the band's label raises questions about their legal duties.

What should a manager—as a fiduciary of the band—or a label disclose to the band when a manager derives financial benefit directly from the band's label? How does this answer change if the manager is an independent contractor rather than an employee? This is a gray area that will likely be explored in this case.

Sources close to the parties say the band provided written notice of breach to Merrick's company, which had 30 days to cure the breach. The letter only provided a few examples, essentially saying that Merrick was not available when needed.

Parties are often hesitant to send a formal legal notice to their representative every time there is a problem. Yet when a person has a contractual right to cure the breach, how much information must the party state in the notice when the breach is a pattern of behavior rather than a single event? Is a pattern a material breach that can be cured in 30 days?

A source close to the band says the breach was a pattern of poor services—Merrick was often unreachable, failed to attend meetings and mishandled opportunities. Reynolds and personnel with the band's label, agent and merchandiser had to pick up the slack, but there were still lost deals, lost revenue and other problems, according to the source.

Peter Paterno with Los Angeles-based law firm King, Holmes, Paterno & Berliner represents Merrick and his company, with Howard King handling litigation. Michael Guido with New York-based Carroll, Guido & Groffman is representing the Killers, who have not yet retained a litigator.

The sad part of this saga is how it will affect the parties in their relationships with others. The industry could use more programs to guide and train new managers, artists and lawyers. After all, the story isn't new.

COO & MORE: Wind-up Entertainment has expanded Jim Cooperman's role in the company, adding COO to his title of executive VP of business and legal affairs.

www.americanradiohistory.com
LOS ANGELES—A tour package with rock acts Franz Ferdinand and Death Cab for Cutie was, simply, meant to be.

Both groups were looking to tour this spring as follow-ups to major-market fall outings, and both wanted to play midsize venues to help build audiences.

When each band's respective booking agents realized the acts had similar game plans, the idea to pair them instantly came to mind.

The package, which features supporting acts for the Gigs on select dates, kicks off March 22 at the Memorial Coliseum in Portland, Ore., and runs through April 28 at the Pacific Coliseum in Vancouver.

"Everybody was just so into the idea," says Trey Many, Death Cab for Cutie's agent at Seattle-based Aero Booking. "The acts have a lot of fans in common, but they each have the potential to gain a lot of new fans as well with this package."

Franz Ferdinand's fall tour grossed more than $907,000 and was attended by about 30,000 people, according to Billboard Boxscore.

The band's prior outing in 2004—which featured 18 sellouts for 21 shows—grossed more than $656,000 and was attended by nearly 37,000 people.

Death Cab for Cutie's fall tour grossed almost $1.2 million and was attended by more than 50,000 people. Nineteen out of its 20 shows were sellouts.

The group's 2004 trek grossed about $480,000 and drew nearly 26,000 attendees.

Many says Death Cab for Cutie already had a spring tour routed prior to pairing with Franz Ferdinand. Ultimately, Many and Franz Ferdinand's agent, Marty Diamond of Little Big Man Booking in New York, slightly tweaked the dates to accommodate common goals.

"We wanted to make the tour as intimate as possible," Many says. "This package is too big for a lot of theaters, but it's not quite right for a full-scale arena show. We looked at each band's history in a variety of markets, including secondary and tertiary ones, to determine what venues would work and what was available."

The agents also wanted to keep ticket prices low and offer general admission seating whenever possible.

"We didn't want to double the price even though it's double the headliners," Many says. "I think the lowest price is about $28, but the highest is only $40. At each tour, we get people close to the stage, and in most cases, we have a GA floor."

Chris Chrisansen, director of entertainment for the Reno (Nev.) Hilton Pavilion, a 3,500-capacity venue that is hosting the show March 24, predicts the show will sell out, although only 1,200 tickets had moved during its on-sale President's Day weekend.

"Death Cab and Franz are two artists that we have been looking to have here for quite a while," Chrisansen says. "Those numbers are expected because sales tend to come much later when people realize what's going to happen. Fans don't tend to jump in there as early to buy them compared to reserved seating."

Both national and independent promoters are touting the tour.

Allen Scott, talent buyer for Another Planet in Sacramento, Calif., is handling the Reno show. He says that promotion activities are geared toward a college-age crowd.

"We are hitting colleges with handbills because they are the core audience," Scott says.

"This is a one-plus-one-equals-three show. Both acts are getting played at alternative and triple-A stations in the market, and they both have crossover fans that will enjoy the other act. We're really excited."

Tour promoters are also taking advantage of the fact that each act will be working a new single—the second from their respective 2005 releases—this spring.

Franz Ferdinand's "You Could Have It So Much Better" (Domino/Epic) has sold 309,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan, and debuted at No. 8 on The Billboard 200.

Death Cab for Cutie's "Plans" (Barsuk/Atlantic) debuted at No. 4 on The Billboard 200 and has sold 580,000 units.

"This tour will help keep up the album cycle for both acts," Many predicts. "Both [acts] need to get out there and do some more work."

The second edition of the Sounds of the Underground tour will again provide a summer home for some of the "bastard children of hard rock," as described by Tim Borror of the Agency Group.

The tour is tentatively set to begin July 7 and will include 25-30 shows. Like last year, SOTU is produced by Borror, House of Blues, Ferret Records label executive/artistic manager Paul Conroy, Ferret owner Carl Seversen and artist manager Lazer Mazer.

Confirmed acts include As I Lay Dying, In Flames, Trivium, Cannibal Corpse, Gwar, Terror, the Black Dahlia Murder, the Chariot and Through the Eyes of the Dead.

The tour will stop at a variety of venues, including indoor and outdoor sites ranging from park-like to civic centers and cut-down arenas. Capacity will be in the 5,000-seat range.

HOB will present with a number of other promoters in many markets.

The audience is ready and waiting, as indicated by buzz on hard music Web sites and chat rooms. "There's already a little culture developing around this tour," Borror says. "This is a tour for a group of kids that didn't have something they could call their own before."

Similarly, SOTU has provided a touring platform for bands that do not nail down slots on other large festival tours. With a somewhat harder edge than OzFest and a dash of the punk spirit that pervades the Vans Warped tour, SOTU has created its own niche.

Still, many SOTU bands play OzFest and Warped at one time or another. "OzFest has been huge for the development of this music and a good home as well," Borror says. "But I think aesthetically we do something a little different. This isn't a big commercial rock tour that also has platinum artists that are on the radio. This is something that is culturally a little more niche, and, as a result, we go out with ticket prices under $30."

The niche, however, is tuned in, and fans have been checking out sounds of the underground tour.com since last fall.

"We realized as we were putting together the tour that we definitely had established our own brand," Conroy says. "When we made some initial announcements, all the appropriate heavy music lifestyle Web sites just blew up with the kids talking about our tour."

Conroy says the feedback on the lineup has been positive. "We've got a good mix of metal, crossover metal, hardcore, and we've got a couple of bands from Europe again this year," he says.

With perennial summer blockbuster OzFest, along with Warped, a Slayer/Lamb of God package with Mastodon and Children of Odin, and the possibility of Megadeath's Gigantour all on the road this summer, the competition for headliners' dollars will be fierce.

"It's going to be a challenging year in certain regards," Borror says. "The OzFest lineup is awesome, the Warped tour lineup is awesome. We compete with all of that, although we stay out of everyone's way as much as possible."

Another issue is promoting bands that have very limited exposure and little access to radio airplay some mainstream rock bands enjoy. "The challenge is knowing how to find the audience, which luckily we do," says Elyse Rogers, senior manager of touring and finance at HOB, adding that lack of radio support is something many acts have to deal with.

"Radio is so limited...that's the exception to the rule as to have a show that you can sell on radio, so we're used to working without it," Rogers says. "Between MTV2, Fuse, music mags, street marketing and the Internet, you can find the audience. You want to know how to market to them? Get in the pit and talk to them and figure out what they like."

Sponsors include Hot Topic, Jägermeister, Music Choice and Revolver, and label partners Trustkill, Metal Blade, Prosthetic and Ferret.

"Those are basically our founding partners and will be part of our tour eternity," Conroy says of the labels. A new sponsor this year is cutting-edge indie Eulogy Records.

SOTU has a strategic partnership with the Syndicate for street and radio promotion, as well as marketing.

Borror describes 2006 as a "transition year" for SOTU. "I don't think it will be so much bigger than last year, but what I think we can do is notch our per- manent place in the framework here and set ourselves up to continue to grow," he says.
Military Finding Lots Of Acts To Entertain The Troops

Regardless of one's political leanings, few in this business would deny U.S. troops "over there" the right to rock.

Marine Corps Capt. Jesse Davidson is circuit manager for Southwest Asia, one of six different circuits through which Armed Forces Entertainment routes tours by entertainers from every genre.

AFE is an Air Force command operation and the lead agency providing transportation and logistical support for the United Services Organization in bringing entertainers to troops. In 2005, AFE conducted 136 tours that totaled 1,268 shows at some 270 military installations worldwide.

Special consideration is given to dangerous, remote and isolated locations. "Our priorities for the program are Iraq, Afghanistan and Djibouti," Davidson says. "But just to get to those areas we have to pass through all these other countries we have bases in, so we make sure the shows hit as many of those places as they can."

Davidson says it is surprisingly easy to recruit acts to play these regions. "There are a lot of acts that, mostly for patriotic reasons, want to go play for the troops," he says. "Sometimes they're a little wary. Some groups are not so big on going into Iraq and Afghanistan because of the security situation."

But the tours are enough in demand that AFE can be selective. Artists apply to the AFE program by submitting promotional materials including CDs and DVDs. The circuit managers review the acts to determine which, if any, circuit would be appropriate for them.

"Basically, we're looking for talent; that's the primary thing," Davidson says. "And, as best we can, we try to gauge how we think they will do out on tour in terms of organization. These tours last for up to a month, going around the world, traveling the whole time."

The program focuses on up-and-coming, recently signed and unsigned acts. "We prefer to have groups that have released CDs and have regional and maybe a little bit of national attention," Davidson says. "Most of the celebrity stuff is handled by the USO, and we coordinate the military side of it."

AFE covers expenses, and artists volunteer their time and talent. "Commercial airline travel, which is how we get them into the area where they're going to be touring, is probably the biggest expense we have," Davidson says. "Once they are in the region, the groups generally travel by military aircraft."

"In the last year in [my] circuit we had 24 tours, about 100 shows total," Davidson says. "Artists play for audiences as few as 250 people to more than 1,000 at the larger bases."

Davidson says the audience in his circuit is generally in the 18- to 25-year-old range. "Some of the other circuits, specifically in Europe, have families they're dealing with, they may want to entertain, sometimes it's an older crowd," he says. "Each of the circuits is different."

Acts that have recently toured via AFE include Las Tres Divas, Niki Barr, Carly Goodwin, Inbre, Placebo, SR-71 and Waking Norman. 2005 USO tours coordinated with AFE included Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey, Toby Keith and Tito Puente Jr.

Davidson says he does not have any aspirations to work in the concert business as a civilian. "I fell into this job kind of randomly," he says. "I don't know if this is something I'm going to pursue after my military career, but I'm definitely gaining a lot of experience in marketing and just putting tours together. It dovetails with my military specialty, which is logistics and transportation."
M-Commerce Gets Renewed Push

Depending on who you believe, mobile commerce is either enjoying a renewed lease on life or simply heading into another hype loop destined to disappoint. In the late '90s, mobile commerce was hailed as a killer app for Internet-enabled wireless devices when the wireless industry was convinced people would use their mobile phones to buy everything from vending-machine sodas to tickets for rock concerts and even books from Amazon.com.

But like many much-hyped wireless initiatives, the reality never materialized. Major corporations like Ticketmaster and Wells Fargo discontinued m-commerce initiatives after they failed to catch on with the public.

The problem was that for all its marketing potential, mobile phones remained lacking as a purchasing tool for all but the simplest transactions. M-commerce's potential is based on instant gratification. Customers can browse, purchase and, for digital goods, have delivered a wide variety of content and services, all from their mobile phones. But the laborious process of entering credit card information—whether verbally or via the phone keypad—takes the "instant" out of the equation.

"Those experiences really aren't great on wireless phones right now," says David Goldberg, executive VP of strategy and business development for Ticketmaster.

On the surface, it seems simple to just add payments to the monthly mobile phone bill, which is what carriers do to sell mobile content like ringtones, music, games and other services.

But this content is often directly offered by the wireless carrier that has control over every element of the transaction from discovery all the way to delivery. Although carriers will add charges for content or services from third-party providers in certain cases, it is hardly a cure-all.

First, it takes time. Carriers are extremely protective of customer relationships and billing systems and are wary about who they partner with for such "billing on behalf of" services, as they are known.

Second, operators limit the amount that can be charged to the phone bill, which makes it difficult to buy a $400 Rolling Stones ticket with a phone.

Third, carriers want a cut of the sale, which ultimately raises prices.

Efforts are under way to route mobile charges through customers' banking accounts—either existing or customized. It is no small task.

"There's a lot of difficulty both in technology and in terms of logistics with relationships and negotiations that have to take place," Goldberg says. This includes navigating a complex Web of partnerships among banking institutions, wireless operators and retailers, not to mention establishing consumer trust.

In early February, the network infrastructure arm of Motorola picked up this gauntlet. The company unveiled its M-Wallet system, designed to let users link multiple accounts in a virtual bank that can be used to pay for various items. This includes access to bank debit, credit and checking accounts, as well as merchant-branded gift and loyalty cards.

Only customers whose wireless carrier has implemented the system and who download the program to their mobile phone will be able to use it. Motorola expects to announce wireless carrier partners in the next two months.

According to Motorola director of business development Sarah Sokhey, the company will then take on the heavy lifting to convince various banking institutions to participate. It will also work with vendors to manage the gift-and-loyalty-card programs.

"We will manage the whole process," Sokhey says, adding that he is in advanced discussions with several nationwide retailers. "The large retailers are the ones we are targeting."

Before the end of the year, Motorola hopes to extend the system to physical transactions as well, essentially redefining "PIN it!"

Phones equipped with a certain type of chip can transmit users' account information to specially designed scanners at point-of-sale terminals, allowing them to be "swiped," similar to a credit card.

This is a different technology than that used to scan bar codes displayed on mobile phone screens, which existing bar code scanners have difficulty reading (Billboard, Feb. 25).

It offers physical retailers the ability to get in the game—issuing opt in customers wireless coupons that could be redeemed at registers.

Nokia and Cingular are testing such a system at Atlanta's Philips Arena. Season ticket holders with certain models of Nokia phones that contain this chip can use them at concession stands, with charges coming from mobile wallet accounts.

Eventually, the technology may advance to the point where mobile phones can "scan" ads or posters with similar chips embedded in them to request more information and ultimately make a purchase.

Of course, these kinds of grand predictions have been made before. But the market and the technology has matured since then. Online banking has become mainstream. U.S. wireless subscribers bought $600 million in ringtones with their phones last year alone.

The pieces are there. If all involved parties can manage the time around, m-commerce could have a real shot at success.

Bits & Briefs

CELL INFO—SAVED
Citing research that shows mobile customers aged 12-24 lose their phones more than two times per year, mobile content provider Oasys Mobile has implemented a "virtual locker" that allows customers to download content if they lose, break, switch phones. The service (formerly known as Summus) is now available from wireless operators Cingular, Sprint and T-Mobile. However, only content purchased from the Oasys store—such as mobile ringtones, games and wallpaper images—can be stored in the locker.

À LA CARTE RULES
According to a new study from Ipsos Insight, more than half of U.S. music downloaders aged 12 and older report that they have paid to access music over the Internet. The study was based on a December 2005 survey that found 67% of respondents aged 25-34 had paid to download music in the 30 days prior to the poll, with 59% of 35- to 54-year-olds reporting the same.

BEER, SHOTS, HITS
Promo Only MPE, which distributes digital promotional singles from unreleased albums to participating radio stations, has added coin-operated digital jukeboxes to its distribution network. Record labels may now issue their promotional singles via the Internet to Max Fire jukeboxes (distributed by SML Entertainment) in bars and nightclubs as a means to promote upcoming releases to music fans. The program's debut will initially be limited to the Canadian market.
Handleman’s Craving Takes Bite Out Of Profits

Handleman Co. remained profitable in its fiscal third quarter that ended Jan. 31, with almost $14 million net income, or 69 cents per diluted share, on sales of $485.2 million. That represented a one-third drop in profits from the $208.8 million, or 94 cents per share, generated in the prior year, when sales were $459.3 million.

The company attributed its sliding profit margin to the addition of Crave Entertainment Group and to the growth of its business in its U.K. operation and in non-serviced accounts.

The main reason for the growth of non-serviced accounts was Kmart taking over the servicing of its own stores last fall, which means Handleman lost that fee and is charging that account a lower price for product.

Overall, the company reported that its gross margin in its third quarter was 16.8%, versus the 19% it generated in the corresponding period a year earlier.

Selling, general and administrative expenses climbed to 12.2% of revenue from 11.9% in the same quarter in the prior year.

In addition to sliding margins, the company said music sales revenue was down 5.2% during the quarter, which it attributed to losing 400 Kmart stores to Alliance and about 25 Wal-Mart outlets shifting to Anderson Merchandisers.

In an attempt to offset the decline in music sales, the company acquired CEG Nov. 22, 2005, which contributed $53.8 million to the company’s overall revenue base. That allowed the company to post a 0.6% increase in sales for the quarter.

Handleman reported that CEG, a distributor of videogame software, hardware and accessories, produced $1 million in operating income on nearly $54 million in revenue during the 10 weeks that Handleman owned it during the quarter. The company says it has identified several integration opportunities to grow sales as well as synergies that will reduce costs. It also says it expects to benefit from those plans in the second half of calendar 2006.

For the nine-month period, Handleman reported $20.1 mil-

for the remainder of the year. All it said is that it expects its operating results to be substantially below the same period for the prior year.

Handleman announced its results the morning of Feb. 24 before the market opened. The company’s weak performance and uncertain short-term results triggered a sell-off, with share pricing dropping 17% during the day to $9.61, from the previous day’s close of $11.58. On Feb. 27, the stock recaptured 26 cents to close at $9.87.

NO BREAKS TODAY: In another blow to independent merchants, Sony BMG Music Entertainment Sales has dropped a couple of hundred independent stores from direct sales. That means those stores will now have to buy the major’s product from one-stop providers.

As one independent merchant put it, “It’s a big blow, because today when we buy from them we get it for $11.86 with whatever buy-in discounts they are offering and don’t have to pay freight charges. Now, when you buy your product from a one-stop, a typical front-line album will cost $12.89 plus freight.”

The merchant says that is a big hit to take.

According to those familiar with Sony BMG’s thinking, this move is one of the last steps taken in the consolidation of the two distribution arms from the Sony-BMG merger. Those cut apparently do not meet new volume requirements that were implemented, or have other characteristics like paying late or passing street date, which Sony BMG does not approve of.
Brazin Steps Up Digital Offer Down Under

Music Retailer Outfits Stores With Download Kiosks

SYDNEY—Market leader Brazin is Australia’s first music merchant to unveil a “bricks’n’clicks” strategy for the post-iTunes legitimate download market. Brazin operates 307 stores under the Sanity banner, plus 71 Virgin and 27 HMV outlets.

“Everyone is going to have broadband access, making online delivery of music files slow,” says Paul Heppelwhite, managing director of four-store New South Wales group the Rock Factory, which is also studying kiosks as part of a “bricks’n’clicks” business. “I doubt they’ll ever be a major part of a music store’s business.”

Milne says the kiosks’ brand-specific styling and content will reflect the chains’ specific customer profiles. Sanity stores, he explains, appeal mostly to the 18 to 25-year-old or 35-plus demographic and are more heavily visited by female consumers than HMV, which is focused toward males aged 15-25. Most Virgin outlets are based in Myer department stores and target family shoppers.

Other retailers are watching Brazin with interest. Gavin Ward, Sydney-based GM of the 200-outlet Leading Edge chain, says he is looking into kiosks for his operation. “Kiosks are an interesting move, but I don’t know if they’ll be a significant part of retail,” he says. “Spontaneity and the whole social aspect of the shopping experience is what drives music retail.”

Paul Heppelwhite, managing director of four-store New South Wales group the Rock Factory, says he is also studying kiosks as part of a “bricks’n’clicks” business. “I doubt they’ll ever be a major part of a music store’s business.”

Milne believes downloads and downloads will be a major part of a music store’s business. “They’re more likely to appeal to people wanting single tracks for special occasions.”

Geoff Hudson, director of single-store Perth independent 78 Records, says, “If the demand is there, I’d certainly consider a kiosk.”

However, he adds, these “machines appeal to top 40 music fans who buy their records in suburban shopping centers, and our clients are hardcore fans who prefer physical CDs.”

On the same day it announced the kiosk rollout, Brazin began selling ringtones over-the-counter to Virgin store customers. Milne says consumers can select from “several thousand” ringtones either displayed in-store or held on a central database. Upon purchase—$4.55 Australian ($3.80) for a polyphonic and $5.55 Australian ($4.13) for master ring-tones-counter staff release the tone to the customer’s phone.

Brazin also has expanded features at its Sanity Digital Web Store (sanitydigital.com.au). The download site has added music videoclipst from major and indies at $3.99 Australian ($2.95), and Milne says Brazin is negotiating with companies for film, TV and sports content.

Milne denies that Brazin’s new digital strategy is an attempt to take on Apple’s iTunes Music Store. Launched last October in Australia. Rather, he says, kiosks could allow Brazin to replace physical CD racks with more diversified stock.

No digital sales figures have yet been released by the Australian Recording Industry Assoc.

However, many retailers agree with Milne’s assessment that digital accounts for 5% of national sales, up from about 1% in 2004.

Apple has not released sales figures, but label sources suggest it sells 200,000 tracks each month.

SGAE Tries New Approach For Indies, Young Writers

MADRID—Spain’s authors’ rights society SGAЕ has signed a groundbreaking accord with local independent labels and is making moves to attract new songwriters away from the burgeoning “copyleft” movement.

On Feb. 15, SGAЕ and independent labels body UFI inked an agreement that frees the latter’s members from paying mechanical reproduction advances.

Until now, most Spanish independent labels have been required to pay SGAЕ in advance 9% of the trade value (published price to dealer) of however many recordings they wished to press. SGAЕ would then issue a license to manufacture. The system, common in continental Europe, did not apply to major labels or Spain’s largest independents.

UFI secretary general Yann Padron calls the new agreement “by far the most important accord we have signed since we formed two-and-a-half years ago.”

The trade body has 30 members including well-known indies BOA, Subterfuge Records and Nuevos Medios. “We expect that number to double as a result of the advantages this accord brings us,” Padron says.

Mechanical rights will now be paid on the basis of shipments. Padron says it previously cost an indie label about 900 euros ($1,080) to get a SGAЕ license for 1,000 CDs. “It wasn’t so much the money that was the problem as the concept,” he claims. “UFI formed in part to solve this problem.”

Padron says UFI members have annual revenue of about 30 million euros ($36 million).

SGAE has simultaneously introduced an online mechanical license request system for all labels called LION.

SGAE GM Enrique Loras says the initiatives emerged from market analysis conducted by SGAЕ on how to best adapt to new technologies and changing times.

“A new industrial outline is being drawn up,” he adds, and “SGAE wants to be there as it takes shape.”

In that spirit, SGAЕ will offer aspiring songwriters free three-year associate memberships even though they may be giving away their songs on the Internet without seeking authors’ rights.

SGAE corporate relations director Pedro Farré says the goal is to provide a “promotional license” for new artists who want to distribute their music on the Internet without being fully

internet for free downloading. “We see the danger of losing these people.”

An associate membership’s benefits include legal advice and access to SGAЕ’s online tracking system. “We will watermark works put online by associate members and track their movement,” Farré says. “At any time, the member can ask how many times his work has been downloaded, for example. And if that work is a success, it’s likely the author will change his mind about copyright.”

Farré says several young artists asked SGAЕ for details in the first few days. “We expect more interest in time,” he says. SGAЕ has 65,000 members.

Loras and Farré insist the free scheme is not a concession to the so-called “copyleft” movement popular among many young European musicians who argue that music must be freely available on the Internet.

“The new initiatives are commercial, as the end aim is to gain new members,” Farré says.

“But we also want the new generation to see SGAЕ as useful to their careers, and as a cultural service, not just a collecting society.”

He adds that other European rights bodies are watching the SGAЕ initiative. “In Europe, there is some concern about growing support for copyleft,” he says. “Our position is unchanged—copyright is sacred! But we are adapting to the changes brought by new technologies. Many young authors in Spain are distant from SGAЕ, so we have to move ourselves closer to them.”

Juan José Castillo, GM of authors’ trade body ACAM, says his group supports the SGAЕ initiative because “it’s thought out to bring the world of authors’ rights closer to new artists.”

“It also transmits the idea that defending their work in the digital society through collective management is the only way to preserve their rights and ensure their professional future.”
Indie Acts Feel Snubbed By Juno Awards

TORONTO—The Canadian music industry’s annual Juno Awards ceremony may feature a number of the country’s leading independent acts, but the indie sector remains aggrieved that entire genres seem to be excluded from the televised show.

This year’s Junos will be celebrated over three days, beginning March 31 with Junofest concerts featuring local talent and nominees in venues around Halifax, Nova Scotia. Canadian acts/artist/Pamela Anderson is confirmed to host the main awards ceremony that will be broadcast live April 2 on national network CTV from the Halifax Metro Centre. “This is going to be one kick-ass awards show,” says Anderson, who was raised in Ladysmith, British Columbia.

Independent label signings confirmed for the show’s nine performance slots include alternative rock acts Broken Social Scene (Arts & Craft) and Bedouin Soundclash (Stomp), plus urban vocalists Divine Brown (Black Smith Entertainment) and Massari (Capital Prophet). They will appear alongside major-label stars including Bryan Adams, Nickleback and Michael Bublé.

EMI Canadian act Nickleback leads this year’s Juno contenders with six nominations, making the rock band from Alberta an obvious choice to appear on the show. “It’d be a huge gap if we didn’t have them,” says Ross Reynolds, chairman of the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, which organizes the event.

“We are trying to be reflective of the successes of the previous year,” CARAS president Melanie Berry adds. However, only about one-quarter of the 39 award categories are expected to be presented during the two-hour televised show. The majority—including the roots and jazz awards—are traditionally presented at the non-televised Juno dinner the night before the Sunday TV show.

As a result, critics say the televised program rarely spotlights alternative, folk, classical, world music, jazz or country acts—all genres that have strong roots in Canada.

“If you are nominated in those categories, you get your award on the Saturday night,” complains booklet Doug Kirby, president of Live Tour Artists in Oakville, Ontario.

“There’s no jazz unless Oscar Peterson or Diana Krall happens to be in town,” adds Tim Baker, buyer for Sunrise Records, which operates 30 stores in Ontario.

“As an independent blues label, I know what the answer is before I even lobby for a TV slot,” says Fred Litwin, owner of Ottawa-based NorthernBlues Music. “I’m beyond being upset.”

Canadian independent label representation on the TV show might have been even lower in recent years if it were not for the Foundation to Assist Canadian Talent on Records. The group has insisted that a performance slot be reserved for an independent act as part of its Juno sponsorship deal since 2001.

“We felt it was important that up-and-coming artists get an opportunity to be on the television show,” FACTOR president Heather Osterberg says.

Several industry figures question the longstanding CARAS contention that some music genres do not work on a national TV broadcast and are therefore not considered for the main event.

“It’s sad that CARAS doesn’t think they might be able to present some of these acts in an imaginative way,” Toronto-based roots and blues publicist Richard Flohil says.

True North Records VP of sales and marketing Stewart Duncan recalls that the 2004 Junos featured notable performances by crooner Bublé—then little known—as well as roots-based indie acts Blackie & the Rodeo Kings with Kathleen Edwards and a native drumming ensemble. “Those are acts that can make the show stand out,” Duncan says.

However, Toronto-based Julien Paquin, director of talent booker/artist management company Paquin Entertainment Agency, says, “They need viewership. The more variety, the less likely people are to watch the show.”

“There are still some challenges,” Reynolds says, “but we are under the constraint of being a TV show where ratings are crucial.”

Reynolds rebuts criticism from some industry insiders of broadcaster CTV Media Group’s role in the show.

CTV operates 21 TV stations in Canada and has interests in a further 14 specialty channels. Its national CTV network televises the talent show “Canadian Idol” and entertainment program “eTalk Daily,” and some complain that the broadcaster attempts to take advantage of the Junos by placing personalities from its shows as presenters of Juno awards.

“CTV treats the Junos as a promotional vehicle for its television shows,” Baker claims. “The perception is that CTV is running the Juno show.”

“Obviously, we do respect their judgment on what works on television,” Reynolds says. “[But] CTV has never dictated what we do.”

PAMELA ANDERSON will host the 2006 Juno Awards on April 2.

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Ken Antonelli is back with his own company. The former head of Sony BMG’s independent arm RED Distribution has officially launched Icon Music Entertainment Services, which will operate as a sort of label/marketing firm hybrid.

Antonelli says Icon will partner directly with retail and distribution outlets, focusing on a number of nontraditional stores. For instance, Antonelli says Icon will have the ability to service music to grocery and drug retailers like Eckerd Drugs, 7-11, Winn Dixie, Walgreen’s, BiLo and Giant Eagle.

Antonelli points to Wal-Mart’s direct relationship with Garth Brooks and Starbuck’s Hear Music as the kind of retail partnerships and branding Icon will strive to create.

“Wal-Mart can sign a deal with Garth Brooks, but they’re not going to sign a deal with 28 people who suddenly become free from a major label,” Antonelli says. “We will be a conduit for those kinds of things. We’ll look at new artists, and we’ll look at doing some special projects with heritage acts who may be dropped from major labels.”

Thus far, Icon has an eight-person staff, with Antonelli expecting to add maybe two more. Antonelli says he has a pick, pack and ship arrangement in place, but declined to name the company.

Sources familiar with Icon say it has some sort of working relationship with one-stop Alliance and IDN, its independent arm. IDN GM/VP Lou DeBlase declined to comment, but sources close to the company say an announcement should be coming soon.

Icon’s first project is a joint venture with Maple Jam Records, a newly formed indie run by producer Greg Ladanyi (Don Henley). The Maple Jam/Icon partnership will release the debut from classic-rock-leaning act the Terms this spring.

Kinks’ Music Komfortable With Kommercials

Sixteen years after they were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and 23 years after their last top 10 hit (“Come Dancing”), the Kinks are in the spotlight again—thanks to a number of TV spots that feature their distinctive pop music.

A couple of weeks ago, the British band’s top 10 hit from 1964, “All Day and All of the Night,” helped launch a new Tide campaign created by Saatchi & Saatchi. In the coming weeks, the group’s “I’m Not Like Everybody Else” and “Everybody’s Gonna Be Happy” will be heard in spots for IBM (handled by Ogilvy & Mather) and Abbott Labs (Pooe Cone & Belding), respectively.

According to Sanctuary Records Group VP of film/TV licensing Kenny Ochoa, additional sync licensing opportunities for the Kinks’ music are in the works. Even though many of the songs used were not big U.S. hits, Ochoa credits this “Kinks renaissance” to the timelessness of the band’s music, which has influenced many of today’s rock bands.

He says an additional credit must go to Hewlett-Packard and its ad agency (Goodby, Silverstein and Partners in San Francisco), which licensed the Kinks’ “Picture Book” for an award-winning 2004 campaign.

Ochoa says that spot opened some new ears to the Kinks. Many of those ears, it turns out, belonged to creatives at ad agencies.

“They just came back to us,” Ochoa says. “The music and visuals drove that spot—it was a perfect marriage.”

MISTAKEN ROMANCE: More than one reader pointed out a boneheaded error in the Feb. 25 Indies column. It is Epitaph’s Matchbook Romance that has a new album released this month; a somewhat similarly named major-label act was incorrectly mentioned.

NEW ICON HOPES TO MAKE MARK IN THE BIZ
Former RED Head Antonelli Unveils Label/Marketing Firm

ICONS/FONTANA’S BAG:

Toronto-based Paper Bag Records has switched distribution from Southern Records in Chicago to Fontana, Universal Music & Video Distribution’s independent arm. The move gives the three-person label blanket coverage in North America via UMVD, which has already handled the label’s releases in Canada.

The roster for the budding Paper Bag includes a handful of well-liked indie acts, including the disco-punk of Controller Controller and the female power-pop trio Magneta Lane. The latter will release its full-length debut, “Dancing With the Daggers,” April 4 in the United States.

Also coming April 4 is the intriguing “See You on the Moon,” a collection of children’s music from such indie rockers as Sufjan Stevens. Broken Social Scene, Mark Kozelek, Alan Sparhawk (Low), Hot Chip and Junior Boys. According to label co-founder Trevor Lorocque, the album was initially born out of more capitalistic pursuits.

“I was having a conversation with my lawyer, and we were just talking about what markets were still open,” he says. “We said, ‘Wouldn’t it be funny if we did a children’s label?’”

Future volumes are in the works, but Lorocque does not want to divulge what he committed. He says once the label announced its first release, he received a call from a major label in the United States that was working on a similar project. He says he wished the label luck, and never spoke to its representatives again.

In related news, Paper Bag’s former distributor recently finalized its own deal with Fontana, according to sources close to UMVD Southern, which acts as a label and a boutique distributor, sells direct to a number of indie accounts, and previously used Caroline Distribution to get product at the chain level. Southern distributes such labels as Chocolate Industries, Discord Records and Brassland, among others. A Southern representative declined to comment.

“Other People’s Lives” by the Kinks.

The song captured the overall spirit of the spot,” says Eric Korte, VP/music director of Saatchi & Saatchi in New York.

The same is true of the new Tide spot, which Korte worked on. While the lyrics of “All Day and All of the Night” cleverly fit in with the detergent’s clean-clothes-at-all-times mantra, the song’s classic guitar lick is just as powerful.

“You hear that guitar part and your brain starts singing the song’s hook,” Korte says. “This is helpful in advertising.”

Which helps to explain why many classic ’60s and ’70s rock songs, with simple hooks and recognizable riffs, are being championed in campaigns today.

Indeed, those paying close attention will recall that “All Day and All of the Night” has been used during the past couple of years in spots for Kohl’s, Saab and GM.

Unfortunately, many of these classic songs, including “All Day and All of the Night” and Picture Book, “are not available at the iTunes Music Store.”

What is available at iTunes is the new solo album from Kinks’ frontman Ray Davies. Issued Feb. 21 in the United States via V2, “Other People’s Lives” arrives at a time when there appears to be a renewed interest in the band Davies helped form.

Sadly, V2 says it has no plans to connect the dots between the voice heard in all these TV ads and Davies’ new album. This seems like a missed opportunity. Imagine the additional eyes and ears that could have been exposed to the rich heritage behind “Other People’s Lives.”
Jason Flom injected a well-needed dose of humor into the record business when his appointment as chairman/CEO of Virgin Records was revealed in October 2005.

Flom, who had held the same title at Atlantic Records Group, took out an ad in Billboard that spoofed the film poster for "The 40-Year-Old Virgin," complete with the dreamy, distant look in his eyes, announcing himself as "The 44-Year-Old Virgin" (see photo, right).

Now it seems that Flom got lucky faster than even he might have hoped.

Among the highlights of Flom's early tenure are releases from British singer/songwriter KT Tunstall and R&B/hip-hop act Dem Franchise Boyz. Tunstall has been boosted by support from triple-A radio, iTunes and VH1 and is poised to break through to the mainstream. Dem Franchise Boyz, signed by Virgin Urban president Jermaine Dupri, are following up their R&B smash "I Think They Like Me" with "Lean Wit It, Rock Wit It."

Flom's tenure also has seen the departure of such Virgin vets as COO/GM Larry Mestel and executive VP of marketing Randy Miller, as well as the arrival of new recruits, including executive VP/GM Lee Trink, executive VP Jeff Kempler and A&R execs Steve Tramposch, Ken Blaustein, Don Rohr and Josh Freni.

The label has signed a number of acts, including rock band the Red Jumpsuit Apparatus and Australian singer Che'Nelle, both of whom will have singles out this spring.

In addition to his official title, Flom sees himself as Virgin's "morale officer in chief," whether that means creating a mash-up of Tunstall and Dem Franchise Boyz songs to herald their high debuts on The Billboard 200 or running staff contests. "That's part of my job . . . to inspire people to want to come to work, to walk through walls for Virgin Records." Flom talked to Billboard from Aspen, Colo., where he was working between snowboard runs and mountain hikes.

Q: You have been at Virgin for four months. What do you see as its key strengths?
A: There are two things that are most important: the roster and the staff. We've made some moves in both areas, and I think things are starting to turn around much more quickly than I had any reason to expect, which is great fortune.

I got a box of records when I accepted the job at Virgin, and I was thinking to myself, "I hope there's one really magical, new artist in here that we can grab onto and make a giant priority and really hit it out of the park." I heard the KT Tunstall record and thought, "Wow, this one is something special." This girl, she's got more magic than she even needs. It's a rocket. It sold over a million in the U.K. but that doesn't always translate [here]. English tastes can be very different, and there can be different reasons why things sell over there.

Q: Tunstall is from the United Kingdom, as are the Gorillaz, who are also on your roster. Do you feel like the U.S. arm is relatively dependent on Virgin U.K. for artists?
A: I think we're lucky that we have the best team in the business in our English office. They consistently come up with great, great projects and they also had a real can-do attitude in terms of their view of American repertoire.

But you're absolutely right, we have to shore up our A&R presence here. We've taken great steps toward doing that already. David Wolter is really the senior A&R guy, but on the A&R side what I've chosen to do is get a crew of young, hungry kids that remind me of me when I was 22, who think they know everything and are ready to take on the world—and just give them a little benefit of my experience and try not to take out any of their fire.

Q: What are the weaknesses at Virgin?
A: The weaknesses are that there aren't enough great artists on the label. This is a weakness and also a great signing tool for us because when I sit down with a new band and show them a release schedule that's basically empty, generally they get pretty excited. When I got there, the release schedule was practically blank except for the urban side, which, of course, Jermaine, in very short order, has brought a great deal of heat and a tremendous presence to.

Literally, there were four releases on the calendar year, which is April to April for us. On the pop side and two on the rock side. I believe in long-term commitment and less is often more, but you still have to put some records out. You can't have a release schedule with two records on it.

Q: You were at Atlantic for 26 years and worked your way up through the ranks. What is the biggest challenge of working in at the top of an existing structure?
A: That's an easy one to answer. The biggest challenge for me was trying to get to know and get a sense of the staff. And coming into here, you get a million people talking into your ear saying this one's that and everyone has their own agenda and people are talking trash about people or talking up their friends or whatever it is. So you have a relatively short time to identify the stars and figure out who the team is going to be . . . But I have pretty good intuition, and they were basically a really terrific core of people [here]. It's just they didn't have the right records.

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Q: What mandate were you given by EMI North America chairman David Munns?
A: The mandate is basically to turn the place around and make it a destination record company again; to make it everything you should think of and used to think of when you think of the name Virgin. It's not much more complicated than that.

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Q: Jermaine Dupri publicly announced his disappointment over Larry Mestel's departure. Do you feel you have managed to smooth over that situation?
A: Yeah . . . I'm very happy that JD and I are seeing eye to eye, and I think he understands that I am here to help him in any way I can. He's obviously one of the greatest hitmakers of all time, and he's still in his early 30s, and I'd be crazy to want to do anything to interfere with his ability to put points on the board.

If I can do anything and really work together with Virgin [Urban] to maximize his hits and help drive our pop and rock success, we're going to have a real different story, a real different look for the company, in not a long period of time.

Q: Are you looking to do more deals like the Korn deal where EMI has profit participation not only in record sales, but touring, merchandise and publishing?
A: Absolutely.

Q: Are any of the new signings like the Red Jumpsuit Apparatus and Che'Nelle structured that way?
A: They are not, although we are discussing with them whether to amend those deals to reflect the new model, and so there's a possibility that they may move in that direction. We needed to move very quickly on those deals, and that's not a move you can make quickly when you do those new model deals.

But I'm very happy to be part of EMI, which has been the most forward thinking when it comes to these new structures and new revenue streams, so I think that bodes really well for us to move ahead for more creative deals; and I've been very delighted in the artist community, they've been very open to it. They see how these other deals are working out, and I think all the skeptics are going to be proven wrong.
ALECIA MOORE'S FATHER IS a Vietnam veteran and a staunch Republican. She is a devout Democrat. There was a point when their political differences almost ruined their relationship, until they decided not to talk about the war in Iraq, abortion, the government's failure to locate Osama bin Laden or any of President Bush's speeches or initiatives.

Then, Moore—known to the world as Pink—wrote a simple song called "Dear Mr. President" with songwriter/producer Billy Mann. Taking a young girl's perspective, Moore sings: "Dear Mr. President, What do you feel when you see all the homeless in the street? Who do you pray for at night before you go to sleep? What do you feel when you look in the mirror? Are you proud?"

"This is one of the smarter songs I've ever written," Moore says. "My way is usually waving the flag and saying, 'You're wrong, burn in hell.' This is subtle and provocative, and it's very innocent."

"Dear Mr. President," which features the Indigo Girls, may never be released as a commercial single, but Zomba Label Group president/CEO Barry Weiss says it will surely get critical acclaim and buzz.

"I'm Not Dead" (La Face/Zomba), Moore's fourth album, will hit U.S. stores April 4. Weiss says Moore has matured with this release—as a singer and a songwriter. "She is among the best singers in the world, and people don't really realize it."

Above all, this album is pure Pink: rebellious and beautiful.

Not to worry—Moore does take out her flag and attack stereotypes and negative images. The album's first single, "Stupid Girls," is an assault on Hollywood's obsession with thin, blonde and beautiful. In the video, which more than 8.6 million people downloaded as soon as it was available on the Internet, Moore mocks the likes of Jessica Simpson, Paris Hilton and Lindsay Lohan, among others—and in a very telling scene, shows the repulsiveness and destructiveness of bulimia.

In fact, shortly after the video was released, the International Assn. of Eating Disorder Professionals issued a statement saying the song "highlights the culture's relentless and unrealistic pursuit of thinness and unattainable drive for physical beauty."

Moore, sitting in a New York bar, bounces in her chair and sips a glass of red wine. She is excited that "Stupid Girls," a song she fought for, is a song her label did not want to release as the first single, is inspiring dialogue and raising awareness. It is healing for her, because she suffers, too. Moore has "fat days." She has days when she gets depressed and feels like she is not good enough. She is not superhuman, she is honest. She says writing and singing about it is cathartic. She wants young women to know they are not alone.

"I'm not trashing everyone in 12 tracks," she says. "I don't pick a different group to trash [in] each song. Most of the time, I'm just trashing myself."

The label changed its tune about "Stupid Girls" once it saw the video. "God, did she hit a chord," Weiss says.

Zomba Label Group senior VP of marketing Janet Kleinbaum says that because Moore is such a visual artist, the label actually released the video before going to radio with "Stupid Girls."

"Radio programmers went online to download the audio from the video in order to get it on radio," Kleinbaum says. "Lyrically, it's an important voice for her. It's a topic that a lot of people have wanted to comment on, but haven't."

Moore admits, "The first single is always hard, because it's supposed to represent a record that pretty much is like the first single. But with me, my only consistent thread is my voice, not even my humor is the same. My albums are just so eclectic. It's not all just funny, it's not all deep. It's everything in between."

Moore's breakthrough album was her 2001 sophomore release "Missundaztood," which sold more than 5.2 million copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Her next effort, "Try This," which hit stores in 2004, only sold 701,000 copies.

"Try This" was my rebellion against deadlines," she says. "Fine, you want your fucking records, I'll write 10 songs in a week, and you can press it and put it out. I don't have to think about it, I don't have to get emotionally invested. I was tired of talking about divorce. I was tired of talking about my life and talking about being lonely. I walked out of half of my interviews crying. I needed to coast for a while, and that's what I did."

Moore did not just coast. She got back to herself. Married her longtime boyfriend, motorcross star Carey Hart, and spent time with her dogs. When she was ready, she headed back to the recording studio to make the album she wanted to make.

"That should suit retailers. Stephanie Ford, Virgin Entertainment Group's rock/popc music and music DVD product manager, says: "We are a big supporter of Pink. We've held several in-store signings with her, and she will be well-represented in our upcoming Girls Rock promotion... We are very optimistic for high sales on her latest release."

There is also optimism globally. The album will be released April 3 Internationally.

Zomba Label Group senior VP of international John Fleckenstein is bullish about Moore's overseas impact. He notes that "Try This" did better abroad, selling more than 1.8 million. To support the global push, Moore will do a series of strippepc-down showcase gigs throughout Europe. "We want people to hear her," Fleckenstein says.

For Moore, the most fulfilling part of recording "I'm Not Dead" was her father's reaction to "Dear Mr. President."

"I saw goose bumps on his arms," Moore recalls. "He said, 'I feel like I'm back in the '60s. Isn't it great that you live in a country where you can say those things and they can be heard? Good for you for exercising the right that we fought for.'"

In Moore's view, "Bush is the worst president the United States has ever had." After hearing "Dear Mr. President," her father told her, "I think you're right."

Additional reporting by Amy Gavelek.
Suddenly—and without warning—the music business is experiencing a baby boom.

Children’s music dominates The Billboard 200 this week, with kids-oriented albums—the “High School Musical” soundtrack, “Kidz Bop 9” and “Sing-a-Longs & Lullabies for the Film Curious George”—grabbing the chart’s top three slots. But this is not a one-week phenomenon. Children’s music sales are up 58% year-to-date compared with 2005, according to Nielsen SoundScan data. That vastly outpaces the overall album market, which is down 2.1% this year.

Consumers have already purchased more than 1.9 million children’s albums this year versus 1.2 million at this point in 2005. And the 2006 figure does not include the “Curious George” title, which counts as a soundtrack and is not in the Top Kid Audio numbers.

The boom appears to be driven by several factors, starting with a number of compelling releases for the underserved elementary-school and tween markets.

But the kids’ market is also enjoying a windfall of post-holiday digital business, with downloads accounting for substantial sales on the biggest hits. Kids’ titles are also benefiting from strong media tie-ins and creative retail alliances.

“There is a big audience of kids that are too old for Baby Einstein, but their parents aren’t comfortable with them listening to 50 Cent,” says Cliff Chenfeld, co-owner of Razor & Tie, home of the successful “Kidz Bop” franchise. “There hasn’t been a lot of effort to create and market things for that gap between the toddler and adolescent. We continue to see that the market is interested and needs products.”

The biggest hit filling the gap is the TV movie title “High School Musical” (Walt Disney), which has scanned 404,000 units since its Jan. 10 debut. It jumps six places this week on The Billboard 200 to a new peak at No. 1.

The album features songs performed by the movie’s actors—including leads Zac Efron and Vanessa Anne Hudgens—and helps retell the story of two teens who meet at a karaoke contest. “High School Musical” originally aired Jan. 20 on the Disney Channel and has had multiple re-airings.

Also strong is Jack Johnson’s “Curious George” project from Brushfire/UMRG. The album debuted at No. 1 on The Billboard 200 in the Feb. 25 issue and has sold 369,000 units. In addition to attracting Johnson’s audience, the album appeals to a post-toddler crowd and fans of the Universal Pictures film, which opened Feb. 10.

Razor & Tie is well-represented in the kids’ market with its “Kidz Bop” series—geared toward children ages 5-12—and strong-selling releases by the popular Laurie Berkner Band, whose new CD/DVD is being marketed in conjunction with Starbucks.

“Kidz Bop 9,” released Feb. 21, sold a franchise record 98,000 units in its first week; it debuts at No. 2 on The Billboard 200 this issue—also a new high for the series. Each “Kidz Bop” CD features well-known pop hits performed by children and adults in a singalong style. The full franchise, which includes 12 separate albums, has sold close to 5.8 million units since its introduction in 2001.

Digital downloading has been especially important for “Curious George” and “High School Musical.” Album downloads account for 20% of sales for “George” and 15% for “Musical.” Disney has been particularly aggressive, building its advance campaign for the soundtrack around online elements.

“Prior to the holidays, we didn’t try to drive the digital business much at all. But we knew going into the holidays last year that the paradigm would shift with millions of people buying iPods and the cost of the players going down,” says Damon Whiteside, VP of marketing for Walt Disney Records. “Digital downloading has now revolutionized the kids business. It’s the start of a whole new world.”

Whiteside says that before the airing of “High School Musical,” a promotion that ran in tween magazines including Teen People gave consumers a code to download the soundtrack’s “Breaking Free” for free on the Disney Channel’s Web site.

After the movie aired, demand for a commercial version of the song boomed, and it jumped from No. 86 to No. 4 on The Billboard Hot 100 due to digital downloads. It was the biggest one-week jump on the chart. The track was also No. 1 on iTunes for three weeks.

The full album dominated iTunes the week after the film first aired, becoming the No. 1 most-downloaded album and accounting for six of the site’s top 10 most-downloaded tracks.

“Clearly kids have iPods and MP3 players, and they obviously know how to download,” Whiteside says. “We’ve become obsessed with digital now.”

Digital elements are playing an increasing role in all of Disney’s upcoming children’s projects. Prior to the March 24 premiere of Disney’s new TV series “Hannah Montana,” for example, a music video featuring the main character will be available exclusively on iTunes. The label will launch a major digital initiative surrounding the series’ soundtrack debut this summer.

Digital downloads accounted for 26% of first-week sales for the “Curious George” project. It had the second-best opening sales week in iTunes’ history, behind only Coldplay’s “X&Y” (Billboard, March 4).

Digital album sales had never reached 10% of a No. 1-selling album’s total business prior to the “Curious George” release.

“We’re not entirely sure who is buying online, though it’s probably a combination of parents and kids,” says Monte Lipman, president of Uni-
versal Republic. "We anticipated that this would do well digitally because the music comes from an organic place. Jack says that this was a gift to his son. But this wasn't about attracting the 8-year-old; it was about focusing on parents who want to turn their kids on to good music and about fans of Jack's other studio projects."

While digital sales are encouraging, children's music still makes a strong case for the CD.

"Though the music business is having a hard time on the physical side, there's an audience of consumers that like to buy finished products for their children," Chenfeld says. "They are looking for the whole album experience and don't just want to buy a single."

Increasingly, nontraditional outlets such as coffee, grocery and lifestyle chains are garnering significant portions of overall kid sales.

The "Curious George" project is stocked in grocery chain Whole Foods Markets as part of its "Feed Your Soul" music campaign and has become a top seller for the chain, according to Universal.

"Whole Foods is a perfect account for Jack," says Kim Garner, Universal senior VP of marketing and artist development. "It's mostly known for organic and healthy foods, and Jack fans are part of that whole culture. It's a way to get appropriate music to places where people are doing things in their everyday lives."

The chain's Doug Wallace describes the project as a "very successful and powerful extension of our brand."

Meanwhile, Starbucks is having its own success with the Laurie Berkner CD/DVD, "We Are... The Laurie Berkner Band" (Razor & Tie/Tomatoes Records/Starbucks Hear Music). The title debuted at No. 1 on Billboard's Top Music Videos chart largely due to its availability at the coffee chain, which was responsible for more than 80% of first-week sales.

"This was a very compelling opportunity because Laurie Berkner delights children and parents alike," Starbucks Entertainment president Ken Lombard says. "This is not a specific move on our part to market to children. We spend a tremendous amount of time trying to locate just the right music and entertainment options that will interest our customers."

Berkner—a singer/songwriter who has built a loyal following among kids and parents—was attracted to working with Starbucks because she "assumed the album will seem much more available when it's in every Starbucks versus having to make the trip to a more traditional brick-and-mortar store to pick it up. A lot of people are going to Starbucks anyway, and it's a destination for many parents to go with their kids."

Such special promotions aside, mass merchants are still the primary places where kids' audio gets purchased, accounting for 74% of sales year-to-date.

"That's where children's music gets the best positioning," says Emily Wittman, VP of Nick Records. "Nontraditional chains like groceries and pharmacies and downloading make impacts overall, but the products with strong branding do great at the Wal-Marts and Kmart's."

That is because labels like advantage of cross-marketing opportunities at every level they can.

For example, Nickelodeon's Nick Records, which has a distribution agreement with Sony BMG, can cross-promote its music projects using its TV networks, Web site and print publication. According to the company, Nick sells an average of 12,000 CDs per week, and total album sales in the last 18 months exceeded 1.2 million units.

Its biggest sellers of late include "Dora the Explorer: Dance Fiesta!," which features Nick Jr. cartoon character Dora singing Latin favorites with such acts as Santana and Los Lonely Boys. The title, which was promoted across all Nick properties, has sold 108,000 copies since its October release, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Similarly, "High School Musical" was promoted throughout Disney's media outlets.

Universal attributes much of the "Curious George" soundtrack's success to its sister studio's film marketing campaign. The project has done especially well at Wal-Mart, where it had a larger percentage of sales than previous Jack Johnson releases.

According to Garner, Universal will continue its campaign for the soundtrack this summer, in conjunction with the children's music tour Jamarama Live!, and into the fall, when the "Curious George" DVD will be released. (The Laurie Berkner Band is another Jamarama performer.)

Without its own media outlets, Razor & Tie leans heavily on direct response prior to a CD's release as a key element of its marketing strategy for the genre.

"Kids are responding just as much or better than before to these ads," Chenfeld says. "The ads help build the brand and build demand before a product is even available at retail."
Marcos Hernández barely speaks Spanish. He grew up listening to Barry Manilow, the Temptations, Michael Jackson and U2. And on his debut album, “About Me,” he sings soulful R&B—in English.

But Hernández is of Hispanic heritage, a fact that he, and his label, TVT, have embraced and exploited when it comes to making and promoting his music.

“We were careful about me being Latin, R&B and pop,” Hernández says. “About pulling the strings of my Latin heritage.”

Although “About Me,” released late last year, has Latin tinges on a couple of tracks, and even a Spanish-language remix, it is not a Latin album by any stretch of the imagination. But TVT has been marketing it to the pop mainstream and Latin markets alike, banking on a growing number of Americans who are like Hernández: First-, second- and even third-generation Latinos who may not speak Spanish, but who still define themselves as Latin—“a Mexican kid from the South” is how Hernández describes himself in his album liner notes—and share a common cultural identity.

This growing population of assimilated Latinos—and the growing awareness of their buying power—is changing the way Latin artists are signed, marketed and promoted.

Increasingly, mainstream labels are signing home-grown Latin acts, often with an eye toward the R&B/hip-hop market. Meanwhile, Latin labels are opening up to having their U.S.-born artists record in two languages from the get-go.

At Sony BMG Latin, for example, the philosophy of the label’s urban division—founded last year—is to treat its artists as main-
stream acts who happen to be Latin.

"If we did [the] marketing and still respect their culture," Burgess says of the first Latin-language pop album to be released by one of the top music labels in the last decade. "We're not talking about a cultural appropriation here, we're talking about a genuine respect for the culture of the artists."

Burgess says that the marketing campaign for the album, "The One," by Frankie J, was a success because it targeted Latin audiences. The campaign included two ads, one of which featured a video of Frankie J singing his hit single "Calle 13." The second ad was a radio spot that featured a message in Spanish encouraging listeners to "Listen to the Beat that Makes You Feel Good." Both ads were aired on Spanish-language radio stations across the country.

According to Burgess, the album sold more than 1 million copies in its first month of release and has since gone on to sell more than 4 million copies worldwide.

Burgess says that the success of the album is a testament to the growing number of Latin fans who are interested in Latin music. "We've seen a huge increase in the number of customers who are interested in Latin music," he says. "And we've seen a huge increase in the number of customers who are interested in Latin music."
Discs In Demand

MEDIA REPLICATORS ARE STILL THRIVING IN AN AGE OF DIGITAL DELIVERY • BY STEVE TRAIMAN

IN an era of dazzling new choices in digital entertainment delivery, reports of the death of the optical disc have been greatly exaggerated.

“The industry is literally ‘living’ the theme of this year’s IRMA Recording Media Forum,” says Charles Van Horn, president of the International Recording Media Assoc. That theme, he says, is “living in a multiflavor environment.”

And with that focus, he says, “we hope to answer the key question: What is the role of packaged media in today’s world of incompatible platforms?”

The 36th annual Recording Media Forum, taking place March 9-11 at La Quinta (Calif.) Resort & Club, promises to bring together “an excellent cross-section of the industry,” Van Horn says, “including the content community for music, movies and games; all major replicators and their suppliers; and the research and financial community.”

The event is positioned as the ideal opportunity for all those involved in packaged media “to catch up on the latest economic, technological and marketing trends facing the global industry,” he says.

The North American and global market for optical disc manufacturing remains robust, according to Understanding + Solutions, co-producer of the forum.

“Many people seem too quick to write off the optical disc,” U+S president Jim Bottoms says. “But with new formats coming on stream, emerging world markets gathering momentum and the stimulus they can often get from electronic delivery options, we still expect to be involved in projecting disc markets for some time yet.”

BEHIND THE TRENDS

Bottoms will highlight the numbers behind the manufacturing trends in his talk, “Welcome to the New World of Portable and Personal Entertainment.”

North American replication topped 6.02 billion units in 2005, up about 2.9% from the prior year, based on fourth-quarter projections by Jeremy Wills, research consultant for U+S optical disc/storage media statistics.

“Exclusive of video CD manufacturing, primarily in the Asian and Middle East markets,” he notes, “North American replicators handled 40.4% of worldwide optical disc demand of 14.915 billion units, down slightly from 41.3% in 2004.”

While DVD output growth slowed to 10% in North America in 2005, after a 14% gain in 2004, total output was still a solid 2.86 billion units.

The slower growth was due to a combination of weaker release schedules, a mature DVD hardware market in the United States and fewer twin-disc SKUs sourced by the major Hollywood studios,” Wills says. “Our latest music forecasts indicate that 2005 saw a downturn in North American demand, and CD audio output fell 5% to 1.548 billion units.”

The maturation of the demand for videogame titles playable on first-generation game consoles also has caused slower growth in the manufacturing of DVD-ROMs. But the total output of 337 million units still represented a 11.6% gain for that format, Wills says.

Similarly, CD-ROM production in North America fell about 3% to 1.27 billion units. That is part of a global decline driven by the increased delivery of computer software online and the shift of PC games to DVD-ROM. Computer software and driver replication has been moving from North America to Asia, following the path of some hardware assembly.

Van Horn notes that the multitude of content delivery systems announced in January at the Consumer Electronics Show “demonstrates that every means possible will be used to get content to the consumer.”

“From our view,” he says, “one of the key elements that distinguishes our industry’s packaged media from downloaded or mobile delivery is the package itself. While many content owners have viewed the package as a ‘necessary evil’ and continually looked at lowering costs, the CD album, DVD movie or PlayStation, Xbox or GameCube game package is the one thing that a consumer sees on the shelf to provide that visual impulse buy.”

THE HIGH-DEF BATTLE

However, even the future of packaged media for videos is in flux, as evidenced by the battle shaping up between HD DVD and Blu-ray, the incompatible high-definition video formats. The forum will address the state of that competition.

“Whichever hi-def format prevails—with the consumer making that choice—there has to be more than a better picture and sound quality,” Van Horn says. “The higher capacity of the new formats will provide much better interactivity, with onscreen displays offered during movie watching or game play that will allow soundtrack downloads or bonus game codes with just a click.”

Van Horn suggests that younger consumers, who have grown up with multitasking, will respond more eagerly to the many choices HD formats present.

Another key topic for the forum is the state of global piracy of movies, games and music, which results in billions of dollars in lost sales, according to estimates.

IRMA has invited representatives from the Motion Picture Assn. of America and Walt Disney Studios to present statistics on how quickly bogus products are getting to market, Van Horn says. “Pirate DVDs are coming out [simultaneously] with the film’s release—much better than earlier knockoffs shot in the theater from hand-held cameras. It’s a global problem, and we certainly hope that copy protection built into the new formats is very robust.”

A session billed as “The Battle Against Piracy” will offer an update on how increasingly sophisticated technology is helping in the ongoing fight against intellectual property theft. The panel will feature MPAA executive VP/chief technology officer Brad Hunt and Walt Disney Studios anti-piracy strategy and operations VP Richard Atkinson.

The IRMA anti-piracy plant certification program continues to grow, Van Horn reports, with major expansion into Mexico, Brazil and other South American countries. There is also more interest from Russia and Eastern Europe. The program informs optical disc customers that an IRMA-certified plant has met stringent quality control and anti-piracy client checks, verified by a detailed on-site inspection.

“In hotbeds of pirated media,” he explains, “legitimate plants want to distinguish themselves as responsible replicators. IRMA also is working with responsible parties in China to bring their major plants into the program. While we’re educating them to our values, it’s very difficult to achieve success.”

HD video has been hailed as the savior of the optical disc industry, but the switch from analog to HD TV in the United States is still three years away, and only a small percentage of TV sets today are fully compatible with HD TV broadcasts.

Providing insight on “The Migration to HD” will be Andy Parsons, senior VP of Pioneer Electronics, speaking for the Blu-ray Disc Assn. and a representative of the HD DVD Promotion Group. The two will compare the interactive features of the two formats.

“Cross-Platform Opportunities for Content Delivery” is the forum’s opening session. It will feature keynote Adrian Alerovich, Sony Pictures Home Entertainment executive VP of international. He will focus on expanding range of consumer options for content access and how his company capitalizes on cross-platform marketing/publishing opportunities. Also slated for the leadoff segment is SanDisk mobile entertainment director Pedro Vargas, who will discuss “Delivering Pre-Recorded Content on Flash Memory.”

Information on other speakers slated for the forum is available at recordingmedia.org.
Who’s Fighting Piracy?

These IRMA-Certified Plants Are.

IRMA Anti-Piracy Certified Plants are dedicated to ensuring intellectual property is protected during the manufacturing process. These plants have earned the right to proudly display the IRMA Anti-Piracy Certified Plant symbol - it’s your sign of quality and protection. Your Assets...Our Word...No Piracy

List as of 10 February 2006 • For plant contact information, go to www.recordingmedia.org

SONY DADC AUSTRALIA PTY LTD
Huntingwood, NSW, Australia
SONY DADC HONG KONG LTD.
Kwun Tong, Hong Kong SAR
SUMMIT CD MANUFACTURE (M) SDN. BHD.
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
SUMMIT CD MANUFACTURE PTE LTD
Singapore
SUMMIT TECHNOLOGY AUSTRALIA PTY LTD
Silverwater, NSW, Australia
TECHNICOLOR
Camarillo, California, USA
TECHNICOLOR a THOMSON DMS BUSINESS
Gwent, United Kingdom
SCHILLER, Luxembourg
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THEMEDOWN SDLC LTD
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VICO捨て DE MEXICO
San Diego, California, USA
VIVA OPTICAL DISC MANUFACTURING LTD
Aberdeen, Hong Kong SAR
VORGE TRADING VIDEO NV
Kuurne, Belgium

CD and CD-ROM Replication
DVD and Multi-Media Authoring
DVD Replication
Pre-Mastering
DVD-R/CD-R Duplication
Graph Design
Video Duplication
Pre-Press
Cassette Duplication
Packaging
Software Duplication
Custom Assembly
Mini Discs
Warehousing
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Printed Components
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24hr Quick Turns
CD-R and DVD-R

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AMERIC EVOLVED INC.
Charlotte, North Carolina USA
CINRAM GmbH
Aadorf, Germany
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Huntville, Alabama USA
CINRAM INTERNATIONAL
Richmond, Indiana USA
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CINRAM MFG.
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CINRAM OPTICAL DISC S.A.
CINRAM FRANCE
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CINRAM QUEST S.A.
Galico France
CINRAM UK LTD.
Ipswich, United Kingdom
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L & M OPTICAL DISC LLC
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Slough, Berkshire, United Kingdom
MEDIAMOTION MANUFACTURING
Veld, Holland
OPTICAL DISC SOLUTIONS INC.
(formerly SANOY Laser Products)
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OPTICAL EXPERTS MANUFACTURING
(OEM)
Charlotte, North Carolina USA
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20 Years With
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DEAR LL

CONGRATULATIONS ON 20 YEARS OF MAJOR SUCCESS.

YOU ARE THE GREATEST!

JASON AND JASON

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SLOANE, WEBER, OFFER AND DERN
It is hard to imagine rap music without LL Cool J. After more than 20 years, he remains at the top of his game, having spit out hit after hit and increasing his visibility as an actor and sex symbol.

He has endured and, in some instances, outlasted hip-hop trends, lingo and fads. From Kangols and shell-toe Adidas to sagging jeans and glistening grills, from conscious rap and gangsta rap to crunk and snap—LL has seen it all. Year after year, he has always been relevant, and often at the top of the charts. (In fact, his latest single featuring Jennifer Lopez, "Control Myself," marked his highest debut on the R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart in eight years.)

As an artist, LL has stayed true to his style, never deviating too far from what has worked for him through the years. He has resisted trends, and even when he has stepped left of center—with songs like 2004's "Head Sprung"—fans have followed him willingly, enjoying the creative diversion and knowing that he will always return to the style for which he is best-known.

LL has handily mastered the art of reinvention, consistently finding new ways to be successful not only as an artist but as a businessman.

"I've seen him come through the clinches of this business and manage to keep his head, his integrity and his strength as a strong black brother," Angie Stone says.

But like everyone else, he had to start somewhere, and for LL it was in his beloved New York. Born James Todd Smith in St. Albans, Queens, LL grew up like so many kids of his generation listening to the likes of the Sugar Hill Gang, mouthing their lyrics line for line in front of his bedroom mirror. But unlike most of his peers, LL was destined to claim his own spot in rap music history.

In 1985, at 17 years old, LL Cool J—which stands for "Ladies Love Cool James"—became the first artist to release an album on Def Jam Recordings. From that album, "Radio," came his first hit single, "I Can't Live Without My Radio." He was an immediate standout in the hip-hop com-

continued on >>p32

HIP-HOP VETERAN HAS SURVIVED FADS AND MASTERED THE ART OF REINVENTION

BY RHONDA BARAKA

MARCH 11, 2006 | www.billboard.biz | 31

LL COOL J
LL COOL J (cont.)

from >>p31

munty: good-looking enough to catch the eyes of the ladies and hardcore enough to earn the respect of the fellas.

Indeed, LL paved the way for many of today's hip-hop artists, and Def Jam set an example for other record labels, as well.

"LL Cool J is one of the founders of the hip-hop revolution and without a doubt one of the most important rap artists of all time," Warner Music Group executive VP Kevin Liles says. "His influence goes beyond music alone. LL Cool J is a cultural force."

Atlantic Records president Julie Greenwald agrees. "LL Cool J did what everyone said was impossible. He defied every rule and paved the way for hip-hop to reach a whole new level of global influence and achievement. LL Cool J was . . . the first superstar that rap artists could be career artists. Over the past 20 years, he has continued to reinvent himself and stay on top."

CAREER KUDOS

LL’s music career is filled with an impressive list of highlights.

In 1987, "I Need Love" became the first rap song to reach No. 1 on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart.

Then, 1991’s “Mama Said Knock You Out” made huge waves, winning an MTV Video Music Award for best rap video and earning LL his first Grammy Award for best rap solo performance in 1992. The song was included among the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s list of “500 Songs That Shaped Rock & Roll.” Also in 1992, he became the first black recording artist to be featured on “MTV Unplugged.”

He won his second Grammy in 1997 for “Hey Lover,” while “Mr. Smith” was nominated for best rap album. The album earned double-platinum status in the United States. "Hey Lover," feature-

*HIS INFLUENCE GOES BEYOND MUSIC.*

"LL COOL J IS A CULTURAL FORCE."

—KEVIN LILES, WARNER MUSIC GROUP

R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart: "Bigger & Defer."

"Walking With a Panther," "14 Shots to the Dome," "10" and "G.O.A.T."

His latest offering, "Todd Smith," is due May 2. The album’s first single, "Control Myself," marks his 40th Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart appearance since 1985, ranking him third among rappers (Billboard, Feb. 18).

"LL simply put, gets it," says Phyllana Williams, senior VP of marketing at Island Def Jam Music Group. "He is always on the pulse of what’s hot and incorporates it into each of his albums, while at the same time staying true to himself.

Those who know and work with LL say there are several reasons for his longevity and across-
the-board success.

"Few are able to get to the top, [but] LL Cool J has stayed there and thrived," Jennifer Lopez says. "From ‘Rock the Bells’ to ‘Around the Way Girl’ to our new collaboration, ‘Control Myself,’ LL’s hard work and inspired creativity have allowed him to stay as relevant and influential today as ever. He is a great guy whose positive outlook is contagious to those around him."

Williams adds that LL’s marketability can be credited to his knack in appealing to a broad de-

row. That word pops up frequently in conversation with LL Cool J. Indeed, since the rapper became the first Def Jam artist to release a single some 20 years ago, it seems to have be-
come part of his mantra.

His focus on professional and spiritual growth has resulted in a slew of hit records, two Grammy Awards and noteworthy roles on TV and in film. That still does not take into account his numerous humanitarian efforts, his role as a product pitchman or the recent launch of his Todd Smith clothing line during New York’s Fashion Week.

Fresh off the success of his latest film with Queen Latifah, “Last Holiday,” and on the eve of releasing his 12th Def Jam album—"Todd Smith," which comes from the rapper’s given name, James Todd Smith—LL looks back on what has powered his double-decade career.

The theme of “Last Holiday” was all about possibilities in life. This could be applied to your own. Did you think 20 years ago that you would be where you are now?

Honest to God, I can tell you that the an-
swer is no. I mean, where I’m at was a fan-
tasy back then. I guess I focus so much on trying to build and trying to grow that maybe sometimes I don’t even pay attention to where I’m at.

In the past you have said you feel you are at the beginning of your career again because there are so many possibilities out there. Do you still feel that is true?

Yes, of course. I’m still very young in dog years. I’ve just been doing this a long time in terms of being a professional. I still look for-
ward to having a lot more fun [and] introdu-
cing the world to some interesting things I have going on in my life, [like] doing more films [and] working on more companies.

Since finishing your new album, “Todd Smith,” how would you compare the studio process then versus now?

If I had to chose whether or nor it gets easi-
er or harder, I would have to say it gets harder. Well, you know what, maybe that’s not correct. It’s just different. The chal-

lenges always becomes trying to do the best work you can, trying to make the best music you can, trying to do something that’s really exciting—and at the same time not repeating yourself.

In such a youth-oriented industry, do you feel pressured to make records that will at-
tract that market?

I really don’t know how to do that. All I can ac-
ually do is what I do and what comes natural, what I love.

All I can do is make the best music I can and hope that people enjoy it. Whatever project I’m involved with, I try to make it positive and fun and cool. I just make it to my taste, in other words, and go from there.

What was your aim when you started out in this business?

I just wanted to hear my record on the radio and get a Mercedes. In that order. [laughs] That was it. I just kept working at it, and God blessed me.

What has changed the most about the music in-
dustry in the last 20 years?

Rap music has become much more visually driven, much more money-driven and even more producer-driven.

Is that a good or bad thing?

Just different. The visual thing is tough but not necessarily bad. Nowadays, your video is as im-
portant as your song. So now you not only have to be a person who can make great music, but you have to be able to deliver a vision on it. But then again, that part is good, because it makes you really have to dig deep as an artist.

As far as it being more economically driven, I mean, you know, that’s good and bad. You make more money, but at the same time it’s a trade-off.

Do you think you could start in the record busi-
ness today?

It’s cool that’s a question I’ll never have to answer. [laughs] I’ll let you answer that. Whatever you say is right. How about no? That’s even funnier.

After all these years, do you consider yourself a legend?

A legend? I guess I’d say no, only because con-
sidering yourself a legend would mean letting your past hold your future hostage, and I don’t do that. At some point you embrace what you’ve done and [are] happy. If you’ve got your hands on the plow and you look back, the lines won’t be straight in the ground. You’ve got to keep moving forward. But I definitely respect and ap-
preciate the amount of time I’ve been doing what I’m doing, and I know it’s a unique posi-
tion to be in, and I don’t take it for granted.

Jay-Z once said no one wants to see a 45-year-
old rapper. Do you agree there is a shelf life, so to speak, for rappers?

We’ve got to see where this industry is going. As much as I respect that sentiment, the real-
ity is there will be 45-year-old rap fans. Who will they want to see? So the question more impor-
tantly for me would be, continued on >>p36
Thank you from The Island Def Jam Family for paving our way in Hip-Hop
Steve Stoute and translation tip our hat to LL Cool J for 20 Years of Excellence
We have no problem kissing up to you!

Congratulations on your 12th album, and your newest venture into fashion.

See LL Cool J in action as he co-hosts Rip The Runway March 23 @ 9/8c
I DO WHAT I LOVE’ (cont.)

from p.32

If I want to do this in 10 years? I can’t answer that. I don’t know what I want to do 20 years from now. I don’t know if when I’m in my mid-40s I’ll want to do what I was willing to do in my mid- to late 30s.

For the past 10 years you have managed your own music career. Is it hard juggling being an artist and a manager? Do people think they can take advantage?

[laughs] Well, you can think what you want to think. Now whether or not you can actually pull it off, that’s another conversation. This isn’t just 20 years of champagne popping and chain swinging. I prefer to take a hands-on approach to my career; it just gives me a certain level of comfort. I don’t want to make it seem I’m the be-all, end-all and the buck stops here all the time. I have a lot of people I consult with.

You have had your brushes with disses, and watched the feud between Nas and Jay-Z play out. How do you feel about these types of feuds in the hip-hop community?

Peace is always better than war. Competition is fun in hip-hop, but you can be competitive by making good records. We don’t have to do one another. But at the same time, there’s nothing wrong with that either as long as it stays [rooted] in fun.

Which of your albums represents the quintessential LL Cool J?

I don’t think there is such a thing as quintessential. To use Michael Jackson as an example, you could compare “ABC” to “Rock With You” — they are from different eras but equally important.

On a sentimental level, “Mama Said Knock You Out” is an important record, because it was dedicated to my grandmother [who] passed away. Album-wise, I don’t really have a favorite. Maybe the “Mr. Smith” album to a certain extent, just because it was a time of maturity and a time when I went to a different level in my mind — spiritually, emotionally, mentally, psychologically.

Art is funny. I don’t have one [favorite] record. I have quite a few singles I like lot. My favorite single is “Doin’ It.”

Who are your biggest influences?

I’m influenced by everything. As music changes, my influences change. What influenced me in 1986 is not necessarily what influences me now. Right now, I’m influenced by everything that’s out now, that’s going on now.

Madonna has been a strong influence on me in a lot of ways. I’ve always admired the way she’s handled her career. They counted her out, and she’s caught up right now.

There’s a very what-have-you-done-for-me-lately mentality in the music business. But art and the music business are two different things, and you can never count a great artist out.

Who haven’t you worked with yet who is still on your wish list?

Those are the types of things I kind of let happen naturally.

Are you planning to tour?

I haven’t thought about any of my albums since, like, “Mr. Smith,” but I think I may tour on this one. I like it. I think it’s worthy. Not that the others weren’t. But I think this one feels like a record that I want to get out and tour on. It just feels right.

Do you like touring?

This next question is for the ladies. How often do you work out to maintain your physique?

I’m actually in the process of doing a book. We just put together a deal for a workout book that will give people the ins and outs of how I do what I do physically — my diet, my workout, my philosophy, my ideology. It will probably come at the top of next year.

Is there a second autobiography on the horizon?

I want to see what happens with this workout book. It has a lot of material in there, [and] it will be very personal. We’ll see what happens from there. If, God willing, I live a little bit more, then we can address the sequel.

T

Twenty-one years after launching his music career with his first hit, “I Can’t Live Without My Radio,” LL Cool J finds himself entering another profession: the world of high-end fashion.

The rapper-turned-actor’s new clothing line, Todd Smith (named after his real name, James Todd Smith), arrives in stores like Neiman Marcus, Bergdorf Goodman and Nordstrom in the coming months (Billboard, Feb. 25). Produced and distributed by Standard Fashion, a company co-founded by LL and Seventh Avenue executive Ronald Gallo, the Todd Smith collections for men and women arrive just in time for the fall ’06 season.

“The menswear is a city chic with a lot of suiting and some luxury casual separates including cashmere sweaters and crocodile jackets,” says Maureen Cahill, VP of marketing communications at Todd Smith. “The women’s collection has a 1970s Bianca Jagger feel to it. Think about the Golden Globes — women are looking more sophisticated, more elegant. The versatile clothes are for someone who has some success in their life.”

For both sexes, the “made in Italy,” head-to-toe Todd Smith collection is comfortably elegant and decidedly sophisticated, with price points to match. “Pants could be between $200 and $300 or more,” LL says. “Suits will be in the $1,200 to $2,500 range — maybe more.”

While LL mentions such European designers as Prada and Zegna when discussing his collection, his name, similar to Bianca Jagger, is the brand name. In this case, however, he is the man behind the label.

LL Cool J, front, smiles backstage at Olymposium Fashion Week, where the clothing line bearing his given name, Todd Smith, gained attention. cussing the overall quality of Todd Smith, such global brand names were not the inspiration for the line.

As silly as this will sound, the inspiration for the collection was not clothing. It was [luxury lifestyle magazine] the Robb Report, it was the Rockefellers,” he pauses, adding, “It was the luxury spirit.”

For LL, this means a combination of classic tailoring, neotraditional lines and new luxury sensibilities — with “added color and flair.” Indeed, LL’s sartorial vision in 2006 is much different from that of his earlier forays into fashion. Longtime fans will recall that he helped launch hip-hop brands Troop and Fubu in the ’80s and ’90s, respectively. Of course, that was then, and this is now. With Todd Smith, LL is actively involved in the design process, which is overseen by head designers Jeremy Brandrick (men’s) and Matthew Priestly (women’s), formerly of Dolce & Gabbana and Marni, respectively. LL says he gets final approval on all designs.

His reasoning is simple: “Remember, if it’s a success, I get credit. If it’s a failure, I get even more credit. So, I must be involved in all aspects.”

For example, a fit model may be “cool” for a “regular guy fit.” LL says, but for a larger size, “please bring me another guy with a little more backbone. Everyone’s not the same body type.”

According to LL, a moderately priced men’s and women’s collection, TS, is in the works. But for now, he is focused on Todd Smith.

“I want to support this brand in a healthy way — while also giving it room to breathe,” he says. “I’m not the front man for Todd Smith. I am the inspiration, and I happen to be a famous guy in another business. We’ll see what happens.”

Additional reporting by Debbie Galante Block and Katy Kroll.
ONLY 2 PEOPLE in the WORLD CAN CALL THEMSELVES

THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME

ONE of THEM KNOCKED PEOPLE OUT FOR A LIVING

THE OTHER DID IT

BECAUSE HIS MOMMA SAID SO!

CONGRATULATIONS FROM LYOR, KEVIN, JULIE, RUSSELL & RICK
RANKING
THE TOP HITS
AND ALBUMS

LL Cool J's titles on these career recaps are ranked by their peak position on Billboard's Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums and Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs charts through the Feb. 11, 2006, issue. If more than one title peaked at the same position, ties were broken by the number of weeks a title spent at the peak. If ties still remained, they were broken by the number of weeks on the chart, then in the top 10 and/or the top 40, depending on where the title peaked. This chart information was compiled by Keith Caulfield.

LL Cool J's Top Singles

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<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PEAK POSITION</th>
<th>DEBUT DATE</th>
<th>LABEL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Luv U Better (Babyface Featuring LL Cool J, Howard</td>
<td>1 (4 weeks)</td>
<td>Aug. 3, 2002</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>ivett, Jody Watley &amp; J 2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>I Need Love</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aug. 8, 1987</td>
<td>Def Jam/Columbia</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>This Is For The Lover In You</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oct. 26, 1996</td>
<td>Epic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Bobby Brown Featuring LL Cool J, Howard Hewett,</td>
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<td>Jody Watley &amp; J 2)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Hey Lover</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nov. 11, 1995</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Loungin'</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>July 6, 1996</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>All I Have (Jennifer Lopez Featuring LL Cool J)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dec. 14, 2002</td>
<td>Epic</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>I'm Bad</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>May 23, 1987</td>
<td>Def Jam/Columbia</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Around the Way Girl</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nov. 10, 1990</td>
<td>Def Jam/Columbia</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>The Boomin' System</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Aug. 18, 1990</td>
<td>Def Jam/Columbia</td>
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<td>Headsprung</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>June 12, 2004</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Doin' It</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>March 9, 1996</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>I'm That Type of Guy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>June 3, 1989</td>
<td>Def Jam/Columbia</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Mama Said Knock You Out</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>March 2, 1991</td>
<td>Def Jam/Columbia</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Jan. 31, 1998</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Going Back To Cali (From &quot;Less Than Zero&quot;)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Feb. 6, 1988</td>
<td>Def Jam/Columbia</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Paradise (Featuring Amerie)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Oct. 26, 2002</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Hush</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sept. 11, 2004</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>I Can't Live Without My Radio</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Nov. 23, 1985</td>
<td>Def Jam/Columbia</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Phenomenon</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Nov. 1, 1997</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Rock The Bells</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>March 8, 1986</td>
<td>Def Jam/Columbia</td>
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LL Cool J's Top Albums

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<th>DEBUT DATE</th>
<th>LABEL</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bigger &amp; Deffer</td>
<td>1 (11 weeks)</td>
<td>June 20, 1987</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Walking With A Panther</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
<td>July 1, 1989</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>14 Shots To The Dome</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>April 10, 1993</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>Nov. 10, 2002</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>G.O.A.T. The Greatest Of All Time 1 (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sept. 30, 2000</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mama Said Knock You Out</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Oct. 6, 1990</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>The Definition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sept. 19, 2004</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Mr. Smith</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dec. 9, 1995</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Phenomenon</td>
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<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dec. 28, 1985</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
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We congratulate

LL COOL J

on 20 years of
groundbreaking music
When you win 1 year they call you a Champion

When you win 4 years they call you a Dynasty

When you win 20 years they call you...

LL Cool J

Virgin Records

www.americanradiohistory.com
ROMANTIC SOUND DRIVES PRIMAVERA TO NO. 1

There are very few constants in the music industry, but this is one: When Conjunto Primavera releases a single, there is a good chance it will hit No. 1 on Billboard's Regional Mexican Airplay chart.

During the past nine years, the Mexican group has placed 27 titles on the chart, with 12 of those reaching No. 1 and 20 going top 10.

And so it continues with the first single from the group's Feb. 28 album, "Algo de Mi." The title track from the Fonovisa release is No. 1 on the Regional Mexican Airplay chart for its fifth consecutive week.

The secret of Primavera's success lies in its perennially favored romantic norteño sound, which is married to the soothingly beautiful and distinctive voice of lead singer Tony Meléndez. In addition, Primavera maintains direct interaction with its audience, and this has an impact on everything the group records, down to its decision never to drastically change its sound, look or arrangements.

"Lots of people had been telling us to record songs that were more norteño, like on our older albums," Meléndez says. "The mix of norteño and romantic styles is very natural for us. The important thing is that people like it."

For Primavera, and many other purveyors of a romantic, regional Mexican sound, what worked 20 years ago continues to succeed today.

Continued on p42

FACT FILE

Label: Fonovisa Records
Booking/Management: Jesus Guillen
Best-selling album: "Mam de Amor" (2000); 200,000
Latest album: "Hoy Como Ayer" (2004), 116,000
The stations play music that spans from 1975 to as recent as six months ago. “And the growth of oldies stations—including our José format in some respects—is about listening to music they were comfortable with when they were young. So, there's still emotional attachment,” Liberman adds.

This explains why many duranguense groups, to give one example, sing covers of romantic standards from the 1970s and 1980s.

While it does not veer far from romance, Primavera has broadened its audience with the insertion of a few pop tracks on recent albums. In February, the group played a sold-out show at the Gibson Amphitheater in Los Angeles, a departure from its usual route of county fairs, arenas and large dance halls.

“armonica to their songs is more appealing to a wider audience then the upbeat norteño, or at least that is what we noticed with the previous release,” says Monica Ricardez, national Latin product director for MTS Incorporated/Tower Records.

But Primavera's core audience is still Mexican, and that audience has carried the group's sales over the years to the tune of three RIAA gold certifications and one platinum album.

Mindful of that audience, Meléndez does not want to upset his balance of success. Every weekend, after every gig, Primavera sets one hour aside to meet and greet fans.

During that hour, we live with our audience,” Meléndez says. “Because, without a doubt, everything we have is thanks to them.”

—TONY MELÉNDEZ, CONJUNTO PRIMAVERA

Loca For Martin
Artist Shows Staying Power With Latin Market

Quite often, when people recall Ricky Martin's glory days, they speak of "Livin' La Vida Loca" with affection and of "She Bangs" with derision.

If they were to see Martin's new rendition of "She Bangs" as he performs it on his current tour, One Night With Ricky Martin, they might have a drastic change of opinion.

The revamped "She Bangs" is acoustic, featuring a white-clad flamenco dancer "bang"ing on the wooden floor with her heels. The ability to turn around what was, quite frankly, a rather cheesy track into something compelling and credible speaks not to reinvention, but to staying power. Particularly in the Latin market.

On Feb. 19, Martin played the second of two shows in San Juan, Puerto Rico, ending the U.S. leg of his tour. Tickets for the 15,000-seat Coliseo José Miguel Agrelot sold out in mere hours, setting a record for the venue. Martin played a total of 20 sold-out concerts in 18 U.S. cities. Last year, on the tour's first leg, he played South and Central America.

Adviser Bruno del Granado says his U.S. audience was overwhelmingly Hispanic.

The fact has not gone unnoticed. This week Martin premiered the video of his new Columbia single, "Déjate Llevar," the Spanish-language version of "It's All Right." The track also shipped to Latin radio and expectations are high following positive response in Mexico.

There is still no release date for "It's All Right"—the English version—in the United States, although the track will be worked initially in Europe with Martin scheduled to begin his European tour April 22 in London.

The hope is that "Déjate Llevar," with its pop leanings, will perform better at radio than the hip-hop-tinged "I Don't Care." Regardless of what Martin sings, he is clearly retaining his Latin fan base, and this will influence his future direction.

"He is anxious to get back into the studio to record his next Spanish-language album," del Granado says.

MADACY LIKES MAYA: "Maya & Miguel," the popular animated PBS children's series about bilingual, bicultural Maya and her family and friends, is extending its brand into music via a series of albums designed to appeal to mainstream and bilingual audiences.

The three-CD collection will be released on Madacy Latino, the first set, "Best Friends," came out Feb. 28. The "Maya & Miguel" discs feature hits performed by Madacy's in-house kiddie group, the Tweens.

"Best Friends" features 15 pop standards, including "Happy Together," "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing" and "Imagine." The other two albums, "Radio Favorites" (featuring mostly Latin pop songs) and "Party Fiesta" (containing radio hits in both languages) are slated for release in the spring. Also in the works is a Christmas disc and a second CD collection for 2007.

Because music is such an integral part of "Maya & Miguel," extending the brand in that direction made sense, "Maya & Miguel" project director Arminda Figueroa says.

The program's music "supports the show's authentic and natural cultural portrayal," Figueroa says. "It also allows the Santos family, in the show, to experience family time quality and explore creativity in the show—great values to emulate."

"Maya & Miguel" is produced by Scholastic Media ("Clifford," "Magic School Bus"), and is the first bilingual show from the children's publishing and media company.
Hip-Hop On The Up And Up

Hip-hop's mainstream status is getting a double boost.

The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History is launching a new permanent exhibition, "Hip-Hop Won't Stop: The Beat, the Rhymes, the Life." Russell Simmons, Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash and other rap pioneers came together Feb. 28 for the museum's formal announcement and donation ceremony at the New York Hilton. A launch date for the exhibit has not been set.

Stretching from rap's 1970s origins to its current global popularity, the multyear project will feature a range of artifacts. Among items on the collection's wish list are vinyl records, boomboxes, clothing, DJ equipment, videos and interviews. Initial funding comes from Universal Music.

No doubt a candidate for inclusion in this exhibit will be Three 6 Mafia's upcoming performance of best original song Academy Award nominee "It's Hard out Here for a Pimp."

The Memphis group's March 5 appearance will mark the first time a rap song will be performed at the Oscars. However, this is not the first time the awards have flirted with hip-hop. Eminem's "Lose Yourself" from 2002 movie "8 Mile" won the best song statuette, but the rapper declined to perform at the ceremony.

"Hip-hop is here to stay," Three 6 Mafia's Jordan "Juicy J" Houston says. "It's in clothes, perfumes, rims, cars. Everything is hip-hop now." Houston, together with fellow member Paul "DJ Paul" Beauregard and Cedric "Frayer Boy" Coleman (an artist on the Hypnotize Minds label), co-wrote the music and lyrics for "Pimp." The song, a centerpiece of the movie "Hustle & Flow," was performed in the film and on the soundtrack by the movie's main character, pimp-turned-rapper Djay. The role was played by best actor nominee Terrence Howard.

Joining Houston, Beauregard and Coleman onstage will be another group member, Darnell "Crunchy Black" Carlton, and actress Taraji P. Henson, who sings the song's hook in "Hustle & Flow."

Although some of the song's more colorful language will be altered, Houston does not see the changes as a cop-out. "We've done a lot of clean shows in the past on BET and MTV," he says. "We're not trying to make everyone upset. We just want to put on a good performance, letting everyone know rappers aren't bad. We know how to keep it business and still have fun."

Speaking of business, Houston notes the nomination has resulted in several potential deals to write for other movies. He adds that Three 6 Mafia is working on a new album by Project Pat (Houston's brother Patrick) as well as the group's next album. Both projects are due this year. Three 6 Mafia's gold-certified album "Most Known Unknown" (Hypnotize Minds/Columbia/Sony Music) is No. 16 on Billboard's Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart.

While most predict Dolly Parton's "Travelin' Thru" from "Transamerica" will claim best song, Houston is not fazed by the forecast. "We haven't thought about winning or losing. Being nominated and also performing, we've already won," Houston says. "However, there remains an even deeper bottom line for Houston. "This is big for hip-hop, but we're also representing for the black community, letting kids know you can do something positive and make it bigger than life."

IN BRIEF: Veteran Industry executive Ernie Singleton (MCA, Warner Bros., Ruthless Records) is consulting new independent label Birmingham Entertainment and Publishing through his Los Angeles-based Egg Entertainment. Headed by Ron Pole, the label has offices in Birmingham, Ala., and Inglewood, Calif. Due in spring are projects by rapper Trend and gospel rapper LP...
Love On The Way
Artist Working On Follow-Up To ‘America’s Sweetheart’

Courtney Love is on her second set of demos for her first solo record since “America’s Sweetheart,” which came out in February 2004. “I’m working on them,” says Love. “I’m going to produce the album,” Love says. Love has written much of the material herself with such co-writers as Billy Corgan. If her current album rotation is any indication, her new set could be very interesting: “I’m listening exclusively to [Bob Dylan’s] ‘Blood on the Tracks,’ so that’s where I’m kind of going. I haven’t used a drummer yet.”

In addition to Perry, Dylan collaborator Daniel Lanois has heard some cuts, although Love says she does not know if they will work together on this project. “But I got some really good feedback from him.”

Still up in the air is a label home for Love. Her manager Peter Asher says he “doesn’t know” if it will come out on Virgin, home of “America’s Sweetheart.” “We’re thinking about all that,” he says. “All label options are open to us.”

SEEKING SEEGER: What took him so long? Bruce Springsteen will release “The Seeger Sessions” April 25 on Columbia. The album features songs made famous by one of Springsteen’s main influences, Pete Seeger. Although we do not think the Boss would ever do anything so mundane as a series, we could see him following this path with full albums featuring the music of Woody Guthrie or other influences like Bob Dylan. But we have to say, we would love a full-on rock album from Bruce and the band sooner rather than later.

A TO SEES RED: ATO Records has amended its distribution deal with Sony BMG to allow titles to go through either the major distribution arm or its indie wing, RED. The first album to go through RED will be the May 2 release from Gomez, “How We Operate.”

“We were just looking at RED’s recent successes in a world that we feel we live in and, to an extent, were thinking there could be similar [results],” ATO president Michael McDonald says. RED has helped launch the careers of Matisyahu, Los Lonely Boys and Aqualung. Also contributing to the decision was Bob Morelli, who is now executive VP/GM of RED. Morelli was “our first point of contact at Sony,” McDonald says. “We have a tremendous relationship with him.”

McDonald says decisions will be individually made on which projects will move through RED or Sony BMG. He adds that a target has not been set as to when a well-selling project should move from RED to Sony BMG. Among the acts signed to ATO are Patty Griffin and Gov’t Mule.

Any acts signed to ATO’s joint venture with RCA, such as Ben Kweller or Jem, will continue to come out through Sony BMG Distribution. Speaking of Jem, her 2-year-old album, “Finally Woken,” is seeing nice gains thanks to the usage of the track “24” in the trailer for forthcoming flick “Ultraviolet.” For the week ending Feb. 19, sales were up 51% over the previous week, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Digital sales of “24” increased 123% over the same time frame.

AT YOUR SERVICE: Producer Gavin MacKillop, drummer Victor Indrizzo, bassist Martyn LeNoble and singer/songwriter Ari Shine have formed Slim Music Productions. The Los Angeles-based company will offer a full range of services from co-writing to session work to production out of Full Kilt Studios. Individually, the foursome have worked with such diverse acts as Jane’s Addiction. Porno for Pyros (LeNoble was a member from 1992 to 1996), Beck, Macy Gray, Sarah McLachlan, Willie Nelson and Cafe Tacuba. The group is collectively seeking a publishing deal.

UPDATE: “Sing Me Back Home,” an album featuring such New Orleans icons as Dr. John, Irma Thomas and members of the Meters and the Neville Brothers, has found a label home. The Leo Sacks-coordinated project (Billboard, Oct. 15, 2005) will come out April 4 on Honey Darling/Burghundy/Sony BMG under the collective artists name the New Orleans Social Club. Executive producer Andy Kowalczyk is donating a portion of the proceeds to MusiCares, the Salvation Army and the New Orleans Musicians Clinic Health Fund.

Love On The Way

It was just shy of a decade ago when Paul Oakenfold was first introduced to the United States via two releases on compilation powerhouse Global Underground. Now, he is primarily thought of as a DJ on the cheesier side of trance, a somewhat unfair categorization. Oakenfold’s interests were always diverse: Those first double-CDS featured tastes of breakbeat, hip-hop and plaintive, folkly vocals, in addition to the melo-thetical soundscapes of early trance. Before the launch of his DJ career, he served as A&R manager of London-based Champion Records, a veritable stockpile of classics, signing records by then-unknowns like Salt-N-Pepa, DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Price, Raze and Royal House.

His debut artist album, 2002’s “Bunkka” (Maverick), was a licensing gold mine, with pop-conscious single “Starry Eyed Surprise” becoming the very recognizable soundtrack to a sun-baked Diet Coke commercial. A 2003 remix of Justin Timberlake’s “Rock Your Body” was straight-faced disco nostalgia, and landed on the radio.

So if you have been listening closely all these years, Oakenfold’s second artist album, “A Lively Mind,” out April 11 on Maverick, makes a whole lot of sense. The 12-track set is undoubtedly the work of a trend-aware, genre-independent, former A&R guy with an eye on more mainstream success.

And while each track is an independently licensed vignette, the overall sound is trance-rock: guitar licks ranging from Dick Dale surf to Foo Fighters power pop, over tough beats and basic synth riffs. For an artist弹簧 from the trance genre, where 14-minute tracks and all-night sets are the norm, it is catchy, smart, expertly rendered stuff. I can make a DJ compilation with my eyes closed,” Oakenfold says. “But songs are really hard to come up with. You have your soul. You put everything on the table.”

Like “Bunkka,” “Mind” features blockbuster collaborations: Pharrell Williams does his hip-hop-soul thing on “Sex N’ Money,” Grandmas- ster Flash gives “Set It Off” shades of “Planet Rock.” But the album’s finest moments belong to the unknowns Oakenfold has chosen to embrace.

“They were exciting, they were vulnerable, they were nervous: They were everything you’d want to find in a young, developing act,” he muses about Bad Apples, a band he first heard at Los Angeles’ Key Club. Lead singer Ashley contributes vocals to cry-for-mercy ballad “Vulnerable.”

Oakenfold found Spitfire—his favorite collaborator on “Mind”—outside a coffee shop. The singer shares writing credits and performs on “No Compromise” (reminiscent of “Bunkka” hit “Ready Steady Go”) and “Feed Your Mind” (a paean to after-hours antics with a “Sympathy for the Devil” interpolation). Both artists have signed album deals with Oakenfold’s Perfecto label.

And in her music debut, actress Brittany Murphy coos it up Juliette Lewis-style on first single “Fastest Kill Pussy Cat,” which could pass as a remix of last year’s guitar-sampling Deep Dish hit “Flashedance.” It seems that riffs are standard equipment for dancefloor bombs these days. “Finally, eh?” Oakenfold agrees. “Where has everyone been?”

GRAMMY REVIEW: With all the ballyhoo over Grammy Award nomination pros and cons, the outcome of the Feb. 8 telecast set a few things right. The Chemical Brothers finally wrested best dance recording away from a pop artist (last year’s winner? Britney Spears), and also took the second-ever best dance/electronic album trophy for “Push the Button” (Astralwerks). And living legend Little Louie Vega got his best remixed recording Grammy, watermarking a career already packed with time-withstanding work. Kudos to both.

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SHOUT FACTORY WHIPS UP AN ALPERT CLASSIC

LOS ANGELES—It takes a lot of nerve to mess with a classic album, and in this case, also a lot of whipped cream.

On March 7, Shout Factory is issuing a sweet new take on the 40-year-old legendary project “Whipped Cream & Other Delights” by Herb Alpert’s Tijuana Brass.

Titled “Whipped Cream & Other Delights: Re-Whipped,” the album features the original’s 12 tracks, though here they are each reimagined by remixers including John King of the Dust Brothers, DJ Foosh, Moecean Worker, Thievery Corporation, Ozomatli, Medeski Martin & Wood and Camara Kambon. Alpert himself also recorded new trumpet solos for each remix.

The album is the brainchild of Shout Factory VP of A&R Shawn Amos, who says the idea to remix “Whipped Cream” came to him after the company acquired Alpert’s catalog several months ago.

Shout Factory started releasing remastered versions of the artist’s projects under the “Herb Alpert Signature Series” moniker in February. The initial remasters included the first two Alpert & the Tijuana Brass albums, 1962’s “The Lonely Bull” and 1965’s “South of the Border,” as well as a new compilation of unreleased tracks from 1963 to 1974 called “Lost Treasures” (Billboard, Dec. 4, 2004).

“Everyone has a memory of ‘Whipped Cream,’” Amos says. “It’s the first record of my parents’ that I dug as well. I wanted to introduce Herb to a new generation of people, so a remix album was always in my mind from the beginning.”

The original “Whipped Cream” was Alpert’s first No. 1 album and was in the top 10 of the chart for more than a year.

The album featured “Taste of Honey,” which reached No. 7 on The Billboard Hot 100, as well as “Whipped Cream,” which was used as the theme to “The Newlywed Game.” Working with remix producer Anthony Miranelli, Amos developed a wish list of artists for the project.

Ozomatli member Wil-dog, who remixed “Love Potion #9,” says the idea of remaking a track of his former boss’ was instantly appealing. Ozomatli’s first album was released on A&M Records, a label founded by Alpert and his A&M Records co-founder/partner Jerry Moss.

“It seemed like no-brainer to do it,” Wil-dog says. “Growing up, it was an album I remember hearing all the time and I knew every song on there.”

After each group remixled a song, it was sent directly to Alpert, who then added his horn solos via Pro Tools.

“Some of them worked even better than they did on the original album,” Alpert says. “I just feel that there is a good, interesting album here.”

The new album cover, designed by the firm Meat and Potatoes, features much less whipped cream than the 1965 original, though the dessert treat is still meticulously placed to hide parts of the scantily clad Condon.

“What was racy in ’65 isn’t racy now, and we had a lot of discussions figuring out how to do it,” Amos says of the cover. “In the end, we went with what we thought the 21st-century version of what this whipped-cream girl would look like.”

Amos says some tracks from “Re-Whipped” are already getting played on triple-A station KCRW Los Angeles, and that the full album will be serviced to smooth jazz stations and underground dance programs nationwide.

Mike Fratt, GM of Nebraska chain Homer’s Records, says radio play will be key for the project. “If it gets some traction on radio, it may get some sales,” he says. “One would think that due to the awareness of Herb Alpert’s music over the years that this might have some potential, but we’re seeing remix packages having varying degrees of success.”

The company is promoting the project via acidplanet.com, where users can re-edit an Alpert track.

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Costello ‘Burns’ Bright
Artist Jazzes Up His Own Material And Others’ On Live Set


Previously Costello, best-known as a wistful yet raucous rocker with a multiple musical personality, exhibited this on his 2003 piano-based “North” (also on Deutsche Grammophon), as well as on the Mingus Big Band’s 2002 CD, “Tonight at Noon: Three of Four Shades of Love” (Decca), on which he wrote lyrics to Charles Mingus’ “Invisible Lady” and performed the tune with exuberant perfection.

“My Flame Burns Blue” was recorded live at the 2004 North Sea Jazz Festival in the Hague, Netherlands. Costello gives jazz spins to some of his own compositions (such as “Almost Blue”), while adding newly crafted lyrics to such jazz standards as Billy Strayhorn’s “Blood Count” (retitled “My Flame Burns Blue”) and another Mingus gem, “Hora Decubitus.”

The latter tune opens the CD with string-swelled intrigue and solo trumpet, saxophone and guitar jolts. “It’s not straight jazz,” Costello says, chatting in a suite at New York’s W Hotel in Union Square the day of his Joe’s Pub showcase with Allen Toussaint for their dynamic “River in Reverse” tour (to be released in May on Verve Forecast). “But I am playing with a great jazz orchestra. I’m not trying to prove anything. This captures the freedom to just go up there and sing a song. It was a terrific experience.”

As for his jazz-orchestral rendition of his pop hit “Watching the Detectives,” Costello says, “It was fun realizing the song in the kind of idiom that I dreamed of when I wrote it. Back then I didn’t have the access to all those sounds.”

AVANT HILL: “I don’t believe in a hope chest of music,” says 66-year-old pianist/composer Andrew Hill, whose brilliant new Blue Note CD, “Time Liness,” was released Feb. 21. “This is all new music that I’ve written over the last couple years, so none of it is old-fashioned or outdated.

In fact, if Hill had revisited music from his classic Blue Note period (1961-66), it would be deemed advanced harmonically and rhythmically. Case in point: his 1964 album, “Point of Departure,” a landmark recording that is still considered ahead of its time.

This is Hill’s third go-round with Blue Note (he also recorded two discs in ’89-’90), which to him means “going full circle” career-wise. As for being off the radar screen for much of his 40-plus years as a leader, he waxed philosophically: “I don’t feel overlooked. I feel like I’ve been supported. I love the music, and that’s enough in itself.”

Regarding having to deal with lung cancer, which is currently in remission, Hill says that he has had to “adapt to living with a terminal illness.” As a result, he says, “Right now, I’m focusing on quality, not quantity.”

THREE DOT LOUNGE: Phil Elwood, the dean of the San Francisco Bay Area’s jazz writers who died Jan. 10, will be celebrated by the jazz community March 18 at a matinee memorial/tribute show at Yoshi’s jazz club in Oakland, Calif. That date would have been his 80th birthday. In celebrating the Feb. 21 release of his Palmetto Records solo album, “Fred Hersch in Amsterdam: Live at the Binhuis,” pianist Fred Hersch will perform Feb. 28-March 6 at the Village Vanguard in what is, remarkably, the first time in the legendary Greenwich Village club’s history that a pianist has played an entire week solo.

Cox’s R&B Toolbox
Songwriter/Producer Builds Hits For Carey, Blige And Others

Songwriter/producer Bryan Michael Cox is a music lover who plays jazz piano in his spare time. But right now he is on a quest to save R&B.

“Several years ago nobody was trying to feel me when I told them I was doing R&B,” Cox recalls. “But this current hip-hop generation is growing up and finding there’s nothing wrong with some R&B in your life.”

Those who were not feeling the 28-year-old Atlantan back then are no doubt feeling him now. During the last several years, Cox has been crafting quite a résumé, anchored by his work on two Grammy Award-winning blockbusters, Mariah Carey’s “The Emancipation of Mimi” and Usher’s “Confessions.” The former boasts Cox’s imprint on the No. 1 R&B/pop hit “Don’t Forget About Us.” The latter features his handiwork on the crossover hits “Burn,” “U Got It Bad” and the title track.

Before ringing out 2005, Cox added Chris Brown’s “Say Goodbye” to his credits. Then he ushered in 2006 with Mary J. Blige’s No. 1 hit “Be Without You.”

Though his reputation is building among the industry cognoscenti, Cox and his Blackbaby Entertainment production company are not exactly household names. And Cox is cool with that.

“Producers are instrumental in making an artist popular, but I don’t want to overshadow the artist,” he says. “I don’t jump into the video or the TV show; I’m not out there tap dancing. And I don’t put a label on my sound. I only want to make records an artist can shine on.”

Cox’s writing partners include Johnta Austin (also a solo artist on Virgin Records), Adonis Shropshire and newcomer Kendrick “Wyldcard” Dean, Austin, who co-penned Blige’s “Be Without You,” traces his relationship with Cox back to 1998. Among their other collaborations is the 2002 Ginuwine top 10 R&B track “Stingly.” Shropshire co-wrote Usher and Alicia Keys’ “My Boo,” while Dean collaborated with him on Brown’s “Say Goodbye” and a new Toni Braxton track, “Trippin’.”

Cox’s team spirit dates back to 1997 when he relocated from Houston to Atlanta. He eventually hooked up with So So Def owner and now Virgin Urban president Jermaine Dupri to work on projects for Jagged Edge and Usher.

An earlier mentor was fellow SESAC songwriter/producer Greg Curtis. Curtis, whose Grammy-nominated credits include Yolanda Adams, began coaching high schooler Cox in Houston.

Cox admits he was a “strange child” who wrote fictitious album credits while doing homework. As a senior, his schoolmates included two freshmen: Beyoncé Knowles and one-time Destiny’s Child member LeToya Luckett.

After Columbia signed the group, Beyoncé suggested to her dad and manager Mathew Knowles that they work with Cox. “Greg and I . . . last recorded three songs with the group,” Cox says.

Although those songs did not appear on an album, Cox remembers that recording session as the day “I knew this is what I wanted to do.” Producing professionally since 1996, his first formal credit was 1999’s “Get Gone” by Houston vocal group Ideal. That opened the door to creative pairings with Aaliyah, Lil’ Bow Wow, B2K, Fantasia and Destiny’s Child on the trio’s final album.

“That was surreal,” Cox says of the “Destiny Fulfilled” experience. “We were kids together, dreaming together and now we’re adults doing it.”

A partner with Noontime production/management company’s Christopher Hicks in the Beatfactory label, Cox is grooming projects by Luckett (whose debut album is on Capitol), female group Bella, singer Q.Amye and male group Dirty Rose.

Aspiring to “make a mark in every music genre,” Cox recently completed a song for Jessica Simpson. And calling himself a “vocalist by nature,” he is entertaining the notion of recording his own album.

But his solo debut will have to wait. Cox says Usher is itching to get back in the studio. And there is the follow-up to Carey’s comeback. Not to mention songs that he, Austin and Dupri are polishing for Whitney Houston.

“She is getting her mojo back,” Cox promises. “People will be surprised. You should never underestimate true talent.”
Acoustic guitar duo Rodrigo y Gabriela is an unlikely chart-topper in Ireland.

The Mexican act's self-titled third album entered the IRMA chart at No. 1 one week after its Feb. 17 release on RMG-distributed independent Rubyworks. The album appears in the United Kingdom and continental Europe through local distributors March 13.

Produced by John Leckie (Radiohead, Muse), "Rodrigo y Gabriela" teams original flamenco/Mexican folk-styled tracks (published by Dublin-based Elevate) with instrumental covers of Led Zeppelin and Metallica songs. Its success rewards Rodrigo Sanchez and Gabriela Quintero's constant gigging since 1999, when they moved to Europe after playing in a heavy metal band for seven years.

Eventually, they settled in Dublin and worked up from busking in the streets to supporting local favorite Damien Rice and the touring Buena Vista Social Club. Dublin-based artist manager Niall Muckian signed Rodrigo y Gabriela to launch his own Rubyworks label, recording its demo CD "Foc" as "Re-Foc" in 2002. "Because it's all instrumental," he says, "we found it hard getting major-label interest or any radio play, so I put it out myself." More European touring preceded "Live Manchester and Dublin," a July 2004 IRMA top 20 album.

Muckian says "Rodrigo y Gabriela" has had enthusiastic mainstream and specialist radio support in Ireland and reports interest from a number of American labels.

U.K. shows in March, booked through London-based GAA, precede Australian dates in April. The act is signed to IMP for U.S. work. —NICK KELLY

TELEX REACTIVATED: Pioneering Belgian electronica trio Telex may have been silent for two decades, but never really went away. "We stopped making new records in 1986, but didn't actually split up—or re-form," founder Marc Moulin declares.

The band returned with the 10-track album "How Do You Dance?", released in Belgium on Virgin and across continental Europe through EMI Feb. 27. U.K. and U.S. releases are not finalized.

The set mixes self-penned material, published through the act's own Telex Something, with covers including Elvis Presley's "Jailhouse Rock" and Canned Heat's "On the Road Again."


During Telex's extended sabbatical, Moulin worked as a writer, broadcaster and jazz artist—releasing albums on Blue Note in 2001 and 2004—while Lacksman founded Brussels' Synsound Studios and Moers worked in graphic design.

"This new album is a top priority for us," EMI Belgium product manager Gilbert Lederman says. "It reflects the spirit of (Telex's) early work, ready to be discovered by a new generation." —MARC MAES

RODRIGO Y GABRIELA

Synsound Studios and Moers worked in graphic design.

"This new album is a top priority for us," EMI Belgium product manager Gilbert Lederman says. "It reflects the spirit of (Telex's) early work, ready to be discovered by a new generation." —MARC MAES

RUM RUNNERS: A quarter century after first charting sales charts worldwide, Duran Duran's two founders are releasing a compilation that pays homage to the band's influences.

Keyboardist Nick Rhodes and bassist John Taylor have compiled "Only After Dark" (EMI)—18 tracks of the glam rock, post-punk and eclectic music that helped develop the group's early sound.

As regulars at the now-defunct Rum Runner club in their English hometown Birmingham, the duo were regularly exposed to a cross-section of music from the likes of David Bowie, Kraftwerk and Ultravox—all featured on the album.

"As we were developing our own sound, this was the backdrop," Rhodes says. "Everything was at a crossroads. Everything was in flux." Coming out May 1 in the United Kingdom, the album's art incorporates images from photographer Paul Edmond's new book "Duran Duran Unseen" (Reynolds & Hearn), which chronicles the 1979-82 Birmingham scene.

—LARS BRANDEL

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Six For The Seminar
Country Label Leaders Address Genre’s Challenges At CRS

Radio’s shortcomings, Eilot Spitzer, digital downloads and the dearth of female artists were among the hot topics tackled by six country label heads at a recent Country Radio Seminar session in Nashville.

While country music sales are holding up, Universal Music Group Nashville co-chairman Luke Lewis said labels are still grappling with competition from illegal downloads. “I don’t see anything on the horizon that looks like an answer to that yet,” he said.

Warner Bros. Nashville executive VP Bill Bennett agreed that “country consumers are stealing the shit out of records and there’s nothing to stop it right now.”

The result of downloading—illegal or legal—according to Capitol Records Nashville president/CEO Mike Dungan, is that “we’re turning into a one-song industry. We’re making beautiful albums and people are buying one song, one download. It’s only going to get worse when the telephone revolution hits,” he said, referring to the rising popularity of mobile music.

The ongoing payola investigation by New York Attorney General Spitzer has dramatically altered the business, said Joe Galante, chairman of RCA Label Group, whose parent company Sony BMG has settled with Spitzer. The biggest change, Galante said, is that the company now has “this compliance officer sitting on our heads all the time.”

Sony Music Nashville president John Grady noted that because of Spitzer, “the rule book has changed. We’d better change with it.”

Dungan, whose parent company EMI has not settled with Spitzer, said business might be easier if it does so because his company has clamped down so tightly on its own. “Our corporate attorneys have basically taken away our ability to market.”

When the topic shifted to country radio, panelists agreed that it was still the prime source of exposure for their music, but there are more options than ever for getting artists heard.

“Radio is still the No. 1 part of our plan,” Grady said, “but thank God it’s not the only plan.”

And the panelists had no shortage of answers when it came to what radio could be doing better. Lewis said it could be “playing more current music.” Grady encouraged radio to “jump off the cliff with us more. Take more chances” with current music.

Big Machine Records president Scott Borchetta wants radio “to get with the excitement.”

“This process [of breaking a record] should not take six months. Have a little bit more faith.”

Galante said radio should stop testing records in callout research before they have enough spins to be familiar. Early testing, he said, kills too many records too early.

While noting that such trends are cyclical, moderator R.J. Curtis, operations manager of Emmis’ KZLA Los Angeles, pointed to the relative dearth of female artists in the format. With the exception of female-fronted Sugarland, Miranda Lambert, Carrie Underwood and some established stars, he said, there are few female acts.

Lewis said his company is now “afraid” to sign female acts and “tensed up about it.” There’s a big, bloody pile of female artists from last year that didn’t work,” he said. “We’re hearing from radio that maybe they have enough.”

Grady said, “I just got my teeth kicked in on a Gretchen Wilson record, so maybe the era [of women artists] is over.”

Dungan said it is harder for women artists to break because “if you’re female it’s tough to play a rocking club doing traditional female material.” But he also noted that the gender balance issue in country music is one that “we have always over-thought.”
DAVID GILMOUR
On an Island
Producers: David Gilmour, Phil Manzanera, Chris Thompson
Columbia
Release Date: March 7
Even without having released any new music in more than a decade, David Gilmour remains a towering figure in rock: a guitarist, musician, and master song craftsman whose influence has never waned. Close your eyes, add him to a host of songs on this solo effort: will transport you right back to Pink Floyd’s ’70s salad days, from the Mec Shepherd’s helm to the gladiator’s delight “The Blue” to the elegant “A Pocketful of Stones.” Gilmour’s guitar work is as memorable as ever, even when he unexpectedly veers off into the straight-up blues of “This Heaven.” To be sure, the major flaw “Island” could be Pink Floyd in all but name only. Still, the project is a success on its own merits, thanks to its substantial song roots in a classic style. —JC

NEKO CASE
Fox Conductor Brings the Flood
Producers: Neeko Case, Daryl Neulord, Andy Burwell
Release Date: March 7
With each solo album, Neeko Case sounds more and more like a woman from another era. And at a time when “American Idol” won winners walk away with little Grammy Awards, Case has never sounded as vital as she does on “Fox Conductor Brings the Flood.” Her fourth effort is arguably her most engrossing, and it certainly features some of her more peculiar arrangements. The groove on “That Teenage Feeling” snaps to close before nostalgia takes the reins, while a guitar on the title track sounds like it is stumbling through an empty house. With a voice that carries a bit of soul, romance and heartache, she waives her way around a backing band that features members of Calexico, the Band’s Garth Hudson and Giant Sand’s Howe Gelb, effortlessly collecting a collection of what should be Western standards. —TM

GOLDFRAPP
Supernature
Producers: Alison Goldfrapp, Will Gregory, Nutte
Release Date: March 7
Last year, Goldfrapp took the stage in New York to Cerrone’s late-70s disco hit “Supernature,” which was a postcard-perfect introduction to material from the group’s disco-spakled album of the same name. Sure, the songs featured on Goldfrapp’s third disc are steeped very much in the supersonic present, but damned if “I Ride a White Horse.” “Lovely 2 C U” and chart-toppers “Ooh La La” and “Number 1” don’t recall the sync workout on the group’s disco and new wave artists like Giorgio Moroder and Gary Numan. Elsewhere, the quietly gorgeous “Let It Take You” and psychedelic “Time Out From The World” offer respite from the disco crowd. The great news for fans is that as is the case with Alison Goldfrapp leading the way, a glam-rock fierceness reigns supreme throughout this stunning collection. —MP

SHAIKRA FEATURING WYCLEF JEAN
Hips Don’t Lie (1:38)
Producers: Jerry "Wonda" Duplessis, Writers: Shaihka, Wyclef, J. Duplessis, O Alfonso, L. Parker

JEWEL
Again and Again (3:50)
Producers: Rob Cavallo, Jewel
Writers: Jewel, J. Shanks
Publishers: various Atlantic (CD promo)

JEWEL’s last solo album in 10 years, Anderson crafts a multifaceted gem that ranges from chugging rockers and slow romancers to slow romancers and jazz swingers. Highlights include the soulful, pealed voted “Better Word for Love,” the bluegry-y “Blues About You Baby,” the gently soaring “Let’s Get Away ‘For A Weekend,” the lyrical beauty “Two Survivors” and the country-hued “Trip Around the Sun” (a 2004 hit for Jimmy Buffett and Martina McBride). Guest vocalists include Sharon Vaughn on the ebullient, horn-lifting “Do Not Disturb” co-written by Delbert McClinton, and Tia Sillers on the catchy “What’s a Thousand Miles.” Highly recommended. —DO

EXENE CERVENKA & THE ORIGINAL SINNERS
See7en
Producers: Exene Cervenka, Jason Edge Nitro
Release Date: March 7
Having just turned 50, the doyenne of L.A. punk is still operating at high intensity here. As backed by the fans, Cervenka has the ballad to roar like X’s early-80s glory days while hopping like a latter-day Wanda Jackson. “Born Yesterday” sets the tone. She nails against one of the great injustices of aging—no longer getting proofed at liquor stores. Speaking of alcohol, “Tavern” and “Highway” Songs are straightforward, rocking, rueful yet unapologetic. The harmonies on “History Now” will remind you of the one-two punch Ex once delivered with her ex from X, John Doe. The reverb drenched “Long Distance” is ace L.A. punk, a better example of the subgenre than the cover of Gun Club’s “Ghost on the Highway.” Less angry but far from complacent, Cervenka’s voice is justifiably, effectively torn-and-frayed, after all, she wasn’t born yesterday. —WR

AL ANDERSON
After Hours
Producers: Al Anderson, Scott Baggott
Legacy
Release Date: March 7
The band may still be known Big Al Anderson’s withdrawal from the group in 1993, but you cannot begrudge his decision to retire to Nashville and become a hit-making country music songwriter. On his first solo album in 10 years, Anderson crafts a multifaceted gem that ranges from chugging rockers and slow romancers to slow romancers and jazz swingers. Highlights include the soulful, pealed voted “Better Word for Love,” the bluegry-y “Blues About You Baby,” the gently soaring “Let’s Get Away ‘For A Weekend,” the lyrical beauty “Two Survivors” and the country-hued “Trip Around the Sun” (a 2004 hit for Jimmy Buffett and Martina McBride). Guest vocalists include Sharon Vaughn on the ebullient, horn-lifting “Do Not Disturb” co-written by Delbert McClinton, and Tia Sillers on the catchy “What’s a Thousand Miles.” Highly recommended. —DO

KRISS KRISTOFFERSON
This Old Road
Producer: Don Was
New West
Release Date: March 7
Nearly 40 years removed from when this Rhodes scholar/jantor revolutionized Nashville songwriting, Kristofferson returns with his first studio record in 17 years. Kristofferson at 70 is at his best when he looks inward and backward, as on the beautifully written title cut, the wry writers’ lament “The Last Thing to Go” and showbiz tributes “Final Attraction” and “The Show Goes On.” But he cannot resist social commentary, most aggressively on “In The News,” but to better effect on “Wild American.” As a singer, Kristofferson remains a hell of an actor, but there is a love to overlook about this record, not the least of which is Don Was’ hands-off production, which puts us in the middle of the room. —RW

VAHMIN MORRISON
Pay the Devil
Producer: Van Morrison
Lost Highway
Release Date: March 7
It requires either incredible audacity or singular brilliance for a singer to tackle classic songs to which other superstar artists have long ago attached their names and definitive interpretations. Luckily, on Morrison’s first full-blown foray into the country music catalog, brilliance shines throughout. On these 12 covers and three original songs, Morrison repeatedly finds his own unique connection with evergreens that include “There Stands the Glass,” “Your Cheatin’ Heart,” “Once a Day” and “ ‘Till I Can Gain Control Again,” rendering them fresh and vibrant with his own inimitable imprint. Pitch-perfect arrangements and instrumentation notwithstanding, it would be crass reductionism to consider “Pay the Devil” the “Van Morrison Country album.” “It is simply his man and his music, as amusing as ever.” —GE

SHAIKRA FEATURING WYCLEFJEAN
Hips Don’t Lie (1:38)
Producers: Jerry "Wonda" Duplessis
Publishers: various Epic (CD promo)

Electronic
COLDCUT
Sound Mirrors
Producers: Coldcut
Ninja Tune
Release Date: Feb. 21
The musically eclectic Coldcut offers since 1997. Was the wait worth it? Well, that depends on where your head is at in 2006. The peaks of this uneven set are two sublime house tracks, “Walk a Mile in My Shoes” and “This Island Earth,” featuring Robert Owens and Mpho Skeef, respectively. Nearly as good is the M.I.A.-savored “True Skool” (featuring Roots continued on pg50

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www.americanradiohistory.com
**BOMBAY DUB ORCHESTRA**

**Producers:** Garry Hughes, Andrew T. Mackay

**Six Degrees**

**Release Date:** Feb. 28

Despite the title of this next double-CD, this is neither a Bollywood extravaganza nor a Jamaican dub project. Rather, it is an absolutely dream-inducing brainwave from noted U.K. musicians Garry Hughes and Andrew T. Mackay. The deal here is chill music on an orchestral scale, written by the duo and performed by a massively talented collection of Indian and English players. Disc one opens with the drowsy trip-hop of “Compassions,” whilst tracks 11-15 (with no break between them) truly supplant the ethereal, chilled vibe of the first CD.—PPV

**GOSPEL**

**BISHOP EDDIE LONG & THE NEW BIRTH TOTAL PRAYER CHOIR**

A New Beginning

**Producer:** Kevin Bond

**Ent Group**

**Release Date:** Feb. 27

This Atlanta megachurch choir’s debut effort shot quickly to No. 1 on the gospel chart in 2004, and this successor appears poised to follow the same trajectory. With Grammy Award-winning hitmaker Kevin Bond back as producer and principle songwriter, New Birth Total Praise Choir retains its hooky accessibility and contemporary sensibilities within a fully choral framework that will surely find a ready home on radio and in the pews. The ever-eclectic Bond and NBTPC strike winning notes with a diverse but cohesive and always-engaging set that includes immediately memorable anthems (“I’ll Shout,” “Thank You”), back-to-back driven into rock (“God Is”) and the steady rolling R&B-flavored gospel of the title, uplifting and inspired.—GE

**NEW & NOTEWORTHY**

**I LOVE YOU BUT I’VE CHosen DARKNESS**

**Fear Is on Our Side**

**Producer:** Paul Barker

**Secretan Country**

**Release Date:** March 7

This world hardly needs another indie rock band with its head stuck in the 1960s, but somehow this awesomely named Austin-based outfit transcends obvious, too-stones like the Chameleons and Talk Talk on its stellar full-length debut. From note one, the listener is heretofore delineated into Chosen Darkness’ unique musical universe where overdriven bass leads, propelling guitar lines and ominous synth hits match with maximum impact. Mood pieces like “Last Ride Together” and “We Choose” are remarkably evocative of those times when the sad realities of life cannot be ignored, while tense rockers like “Lights” and “The Ghost” offer karmic strength to anybody wallowing in old memories that still sting. Another great find by indiana indie Secretan Canadian, Chosen Darkness permeates the brain while jolting the heart.—JC

**DOP**

**LISA LOEB: Single Mo Out (3:11)**

**Producer:** not listed

**Writer:** not listed

**Publisher:** not listed

**Geffen/UMe (CD promo)**

With the launch of the unscripted TV series “I! Single” for E! Networks—which trails her return to New York and search for love in the city—Lisa Loeb releases a new single featuring name tag “Single Mo Out.” From her retrospective “The Very Best Of Lisa Loeb” and the series theme, it is a fitting song to mark the indie darling’s return to the airwaves. Winning hooks, a driving beat and smooth harmonies complement Loeb’s folk-pop sound and smart songwriting. Loeb’s indie credibility and excellent commercial appeal have always been a winning combination among fans of catchy pop, and “Single Mo Out” could win a whole new crowd of admirers.—KT

**MICHAEL STIPE FEATURING CHRIS MARTIN AND JOSEPH ARTHUR**

**IN THE SUN**

**Arthur In the Sun (4:56)**

**Producer:** not listed

**Writer:** not listed

**Publisher:** not listed

**WB Records (CD single)**

Choose your version. R.E.M. frontman and Georgia native Michael Stipe lends an effort to raise money for Hurricane Katrina victims six months after the catastrophe with this charity single’s proceeds going to Mercy Corps. Six mixes are offered, including a truly definitive Stipe solo version. Another mix features Stipe and Coldplay lead Chris Martin (appropriately albeit disparately) in the lead vocal role. It’s a truly inspired effort that complements the singles. Also remixed featuring folk/rock artist Andrew & Joseph Arthur, less a commercial venture than artistic expression. The song is lovely, but radio seems like a long shot. So how do Stipe and friends exactly hope to lead consumers to support the cause? That remains the million-dollar question.—CT

**BOP**

**CLINT BLACK**

**Writers:** R.E. Orral, C. Wright

**Publishers:** Songs of Peer, Fixation Music, ASCAP

**Equity Music Group**

**Label:** Equity Music Group

**“Fair Coffee” (featuring Annette Peacock)**

Owner Clint Black takes this talented trio under his wing, co-producing its latest effort, and it sounds like a winner. Penned by Robert Ellis Orrall and Curtis Wright, the lyric captures that life is often fraught with twists and turns when a couple makes that first visual connection. The guy here knows what he wants and adorns his buddy to just get out of his way as he makes his move. The production is taut and teeming with energy, and it offers great tempo that programmers should find easy to slide onto the airwaves. Lead vocalist Rhea Boyer’s appealing performance is the icing on the cake. Look for the group’s debut album to street this August.—DEP

**ROCK**

**QUEENSRYCHE**

**I’M AMERICAN**

**2 (3:53)**

**Producers:** Geoff Tate, Jason Slater

**Writer:** not listed

**M. Stone**

**Publisher:** not listed

**Rhino (CD promo)**

Afer nearly 20 years, the band that had made it in the charts (and on the marquee) with songs like “Silent Lucidity” and “Mindcrime,” among others, finally releases its first effort since the group’s previous album. Retitled to put a fresh face and new sound on the group’s previous album, here we have “I’m American.” The group’s newest release is a collection of songs that were not listed in their previous album, but will be on the new release.—CLT

**CYNDI LAUPER FEATURING JEFF BECK**

**Above The Clouds**

**Above the Clouds (4:00)**

**Producers:** Cyndi Lauper, Rick Chertoff, William Whitman

**Writer:** not listed

**Publishers:** various

**Cherrytree (CD promo)**

“Above the Clouds” is among the gentlest, most affecting songs in this long-lived artist’s catalog—and that is saying something, given its depth and grace. The second release from Cyndi Lauper’s low-key “The Body Acoustic” is no rebirth of a previous hit, which makes it all the more exciting a discovery. The song’s super-gentle arrangement is a little subtle for radio, but the melancholic guitar accompaniment from Jeff Beck goes a long way in holding together a structure that, unless five members’ performances are vigorous and inspired. The question is not whether this is a good song, but how fans—with their high expectations—will react.—CLT

**GODSMACK Speak**

**3 (3:58)**

**Producers:** S. Erna, T. Rombold

**Writers:** S. Enna, T. Rombold

**Publishers:** Universal Music/ Hammersclaw/Meeveengy Music/Mick Dog (ASCAP)

**United Artists (CD promo)**

It has been a while since we heard from Godsmack, its last record was the 2004 EP “The Other Side,” an acoustic collection of revamped songs and rarities that breathed some life into a band that had become formulaic. Singer Sully Erna is the sole producer on Godsmack’s upcoming new album, which may explain why lead track “Speak” sounds fresher than the group’s last few singles. Announcing itself with a distorted squall that sounds like a launch into orbit, the song has a commanding guitar hook and blazing solo by Tony Rombola, Robbie Merrill’s sturdy bassline and Shannon Larkin’s crash-filled drums. The instruments sound more raw than usual, another mark in the track’s favor. But Erna’s by-the-book performance and the songwriting again fail to push boundaries. If Godsmack wants to remain viable, its album better have a lot more to say than “Speak.”—CLT

**AC**

**LEGEND & CREDITS**

**EDITED BY JOSEPH HANSON (ALBUMS) AND CHUCK TAYLOR (SINGLES)**


**PICK:** A new release predicted to hit the top half of the chart in the corresponding format.

**CRITICS’ CHOICE:** A new release, regardless of chart potential, highly recommended for musical merit.

All albums commercially available in the United States. Send album review copies to Jonathan Cohen and singles review copies to Chuck Taylor (both at Billboard, 770 Broadway, Sixth Floor, New York, N.Y. 1003). or to the writers in the appropriate bureaus.
CHILDREN’S ALBUMS RULE THE BIG CHART

The third album from an opera-light boy band. A collection of ’60s songs from a ’70s superstar. The soundtrack to a children’s film. An R&B singer’s third album.
The soundtrack to a cable channel’s movie.
That list may sound like the remnants that one might have found in a cutout bin a few years ago—but when cutouts were still an option—but in this curious year that is 2006, these descriptions apply to the last five albums to reach No. 1 on The Billboard 200. The already successful set from Disney Channel’s “High School Musical” continues to run on chart-toppers as a 4% gain prompts a 6-1 jump. Even more improbable is the company that “Musical” keeps in the penthouse, as Kids Bop Kids bow at No. 2—the highest rank ever by that child-friendly series—with Jack Johnson’s former No. 1 from the movie “Curious George” following at No. 3. Safe to say that this is the first time in the chart’s 50-year history that kid-leaning albums have occupied all of the top three slots on The Billboard 200 (see story, page 24).

Johnson’s album is absent from Top Kid Audio because motion picture soundtrack albums do not qualify for that chart.

The Disney album basks in further glory, becoming the first TV soundtrack to top the big chart since “Miami Vice” in 1986. “High School Musical” is also the first album from either a cable channel or from any made-for-TV movie to rule The Billboard 200.

“Musical” is the only title from last issue’s top 10 to post a gain over prior-week sales (101,000 copies, up 4,000). Its increase is quick, as the movie—which ran for a seventh time the evening of Feb. 28—did not appear on the Disney Channel schedule during the tracking week that ended Feb. 26.

Razor & Tie’s Kids Bop Kids series gives “Musical” a run for its money, earning the best sales week and highest Billboard 200 peak of any of the 11 “Kids” sets (including three seasonal offerings) that have appeared on the big chart (98,000). Last year, “Kid Bop 8” peaked at No. 6, while an opening week of 74,000 for “Kid Bop 7” had owned the list’s lone Nielsen SoundScan frame.

As one might expect of kids’ music, a decent share of each of this week’s top three titles have come from mass markets, with department stores accounting for 58% of the opening take for “Kid Bop 9.” 39% of the 403,000 copies so far sold of “Musical” and 34% of the 369,000 “Curious George” have stirred.

Newer channels have also been meaningful to this trio of titles, as “Curious” is No. 1 for a third week on Top Digital Albums and “Kid Bop 9” bows at No. 1 on Top Internet Albums. While downloads only account for less than 1% in the “Kids” title’s start, digital distribution accounts for higher-than-average shares of “George” (20%) and “Musical” (14%).

WELL-RESPECTED MAN: “Other People’s Lives” is by no means the first solo album for the Kings’ leading man Ray Davies. But believe it or not—and this surprised me—none of his earlier solo works saw the light of The Billboard 200. So, despite his obvious fame, Davies still qualifies as Top Heatseekers, where he bows at No. 2. He also enters Tastemakers at No. 6 and the big chart at No. 122.

The Kinks have not charted since 1993, when their Columbia release “Phobia” peaked at No. 166.

ZERO HOUR: Promising R&B rookie Ne-Yo not only looks good for a No. 1 spot on The Billboard 200 but also promises to break up the chart’s old doldrums with a first week that could exceed 275,000 copies.

Based on first-day numbers cited by retailers, chart watchers expect his “In My Own Words” to start in the neighborhood of 250,000-300,000 copies, while Hawthorne Heights’ new “If Only You Were Lonely” should surpass 100,000. Precious Memories,” a gospel album by country star Alan Jackson, might also reach 100,000 ... Makes sense. On last issue’s sales charts, which included sales from Valentine’s Day and the day before, seven of the 25 sets on Top Jazz Albums had the word “love” in the title (a count that included French, with Dee Dee Bridgewater’s “Fa Deux Amours”). Visitors this week to billboard.biz will find that with Cupid’s round eyes finished, that count has fallen to four ... One artist who reaped sales from Valentine’s Day, Michael Bublé, continues to lead Top Catalog Albums. His self-titled first record has been No. 1 for four straight weeks.
### HOT 100 AIRPLAY

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<td>Nelly Feat Paul Wall, L.A. Style</td>
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<td>WEST SIDE</td>
<td>LL Cool J and T-Pain</td>
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<td>THIS IS NOT A DRILL</td>
<td>Eminem</td>
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<td>CAMERON</td>
<td>Lindsay Ellio</td>
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<td>BIG GUNS</td>
<td>Five Finger Death Punch</td>
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<td>FRANKIE, I'M COMING</td>
<td>Young Jee</td>
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<td>FAMOUS</td>
<td>Chris Brown</td>
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<td>TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT</td>
<td>Kanye West</td>
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### ADULT TOP 40

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### HOT DIGITAL SONGS

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### MODERN ROCK

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<td>Chris Brown</td>
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<td>TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT</td>
<td>Kanye West</td>
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</table>
South Carolina native Josh Turner scores his first chart-topping single with "Your Man," which took 32 weeks to reach the summit and ties the Nielsen BDS radio record for the longest walk to No. 1.

Turner's song marches the watermark set when Tim McGraw's "My Next Thirty Years" reigned in the Dec. 16, 2000, issue.

While the two songs rang the top 10 with the same number of chart weeks, the circumstances greatly differ. McGraw's song accumulated several weeks at the chart's lower end based on unsolicited album play before being issued as a radio single.

Turner's accomplishment is a textbook case of sheer determination and a successful—if gradual—infiltration of station playlists. The single drove a No. 1 bow for his similarly titled album (102,000 copies) in the Feb. 11 issue.

Previously, Turner rose as high as No. 13 with "Long Black Train," a feat that also took time. That single jumped 16-13 in the Feb. 14, 2004, issue in its 38th chart week, a set that stood a record for the slowest climb into the top 15. — Wade Jason
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<td>Te Echo de Menos</td>
<td>Ricardo Arjona Featuring Intocable</td>
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<td>Libre</td>
<td>Grupo Montez De Durango</td>
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<td>Chayanne</td>
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<td>Que Vida La Mia</td>
<td>Alejandro Fernandez</td>
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<td>Lagrimillas Tontas</td>
<td>Reik</td>
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<td>12.98</td>
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<td>Que Voy A Hacer Con Mi Amor</td>
<td>Daddy Yankee</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Te Apartes De Mi</td>
<td>Wisin &amp; Yandel</td>
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<td>Wisin &amp; Yandel</td>
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<td>Senor Locutor</td>
<td>Wisin &amp; Yandel</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td>Dia de Enero</td>
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<td>Sin Tu Amor</td>
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<td>Anda y Ve</td>
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<td>Accompanaste a estar solo</td>
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<td>Te Aleccion a la vida</td>
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<td>Check on It</td>
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<td>Hey Seo</td>
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<td>Como Si No Nos Hubieramos Amado</td>
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<td>A. B. Quintanilla III presenta Kumbia Kings</td>
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<td>En El Barrio</td>
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<td>Te Extraño</td>
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<td>Si Tu Te Vas</td>
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<td>Pato De La Sierra con Jose Manuel Zambrano</td>
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**Hot Latin Songs**

HOT LATIN SONGS: A print of 154 stations (129 Latin pop, 13 tropical, 16 Latin rhythm, 9 regional Mexican) are electronically monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. © 2006 VNU Business Media, Inc. All rights reserved. **TOP LATIN ALBUMS**: See Chart Legend for sales and sales reporting. © 2006, VNU Business Media, Inc. and Nielsen Soundscan, Inc. All rights reserved.
### LATIN AIRPLAY POP

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### REGIONAL MEXICAN

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Go to [www.billboard.biz](http://www.billboard.biz) for complete chart data.
### JAPAN Albums

**#1: Hits of the World**
- **Japan**
- **FEBRUARY 28, 2006**

### UNITED KINGDOM Albums

**#1: The Lonely Island**
- **FEBRUARY 28, 2006**

### GERMANY Albums

**#1: Madonna**
- **DEUTSCHLAND SUCHT D. SUPERSTAR**
- **FEBRUARY 28, 2006**

### EURO Digital Tracks

**#1: Bon Jovi**
- **FEBRUARY 28, 2006**

### FRANCE Albums

**#1: ANTHONY & THE JAM**
- **FEBRUARY 28, 2006**

### AUSTRALIA Albums

**#1: POWER**
- **FEBRUARY 28, 2006**

### CANADA Albums

**#1: Fallout**
- **CANADA**
- **FEBRUARY 28, 2006**

### ITALY Albums

**#1: BOOMA**
- **ITALY**
- **FEBRUARY 27, 2006**

### MEXICO Albums

**#1: YURIKA**
- **MEXICO**
- **FEBRUARY 28, 2006**

### THE NETHERLANDS Singles

**#1: The Vapors**
- **THE NETHERLANDS**
- **FEBRUARY 28, 2006**

### AUSTRIA Singles

**#1: James Blunt**
- **AUSTRIAN-PIEGATTI Top 10**
- **FEBRUARY 27, 2006**

### NORWAY Singles

**#1: De Gregorio Francesco**
- **FEBRUARY 27, 2006**

### DENMARK Albums

**#1: Mr. Nice Guy**
- **FEBRUARY 28, 2006**

### PORTUGAL Albums

**#1: Big Fat Snake**
- **PORTUGAL**
- **FEBRUARY 28, 2006**

### GREECE Singles

**#1: Epi Grece Colekte & Toude**
- **FEBRUARY 24, 2006**

---

**Notes:**
- Sourced from Billboard chart data.
- The chart covers various countries and genres including Japan, Germany, France, Australia, Canada, Italy, Mexico, The Netherlands, Austria, Norway, Denmark, Portugal, and Greece.

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**Data for week of MARCH 11, 2006 | CHARTS LEGEND On Page 66**

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**www.americanradiohistory.com**
### EUROCHARTS

#### SINGLE SALES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Sales Chart</th>
<th>Distributing Label</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Week of Release</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Madonna</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>SONY BMG MUSIC</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Britney Spears</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>SONY BMG MUSIC</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>U2</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>SONY BMG MUSIC</td>
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<td>21/3/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Beyoncé</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>SONY BMG MUSIC</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Coldplay</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>SONY BMG MUSIC</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Adele</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>SONY BMG MUSIC</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rihanna</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>SONY BMG MUSIC</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Arctic Monkeys</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>SONY BMG MUSIC</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Taylor Swift</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>SONY BMG MUSIC</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ed Sheeran</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>SONY BMG MUSIC</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
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### ALBUMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of Release</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Distribution Label</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>Madonna</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>U2</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>Adele</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>Coldplay</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>Beyoncé</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>Rihanna</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>Arctic Monkeys</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>Taylor Swift</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>Ed Sheeran</td>
<td>EURONEXT</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### RADIO PLAYAIR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>undefined</td>
<td>undefined</td>
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</table>

### Billboard Top Christian Albums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of Release</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>KIRK FRANKLIN</td>
<td>NEW BEGINNING</td>
<td>INTEGRITY</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>ANDREW WILDE</td>
<td>TO BE OR NOT TO BE</td>
<td>INTEGRITY</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>JUANITA BYNUM</td>
<td>SPARK</td>
<td>INTEGRITY</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>VARIOUS ARTISTS</td>
<td>WESTWARD JOURNEY: THE LEGEND OF JOHNNY CASH</td>
<td>INTEGRITY</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>JUANITA BYNUM</td>
<td>SPARK</td>
<td>INTEGRITY</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>VARIOUS ARTISTS</td>
<td>WESTWARD JOURNEY: THE LEGEND OF JOHNNY CASH</td>
<td>INTEGRITY</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/3/2006</td>
<td>JUANITA BYNUM</td>
<td>MARIA MALL - SPARK</td>
<td>INTEGRITY</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Note:** The image contains a table with various entries for artists, albums, and singles, along with their respective labels and countries of release. The data is used for charting purposes in the Billboard Top Christian Albums chart. The chart is compiled by Nielsen SoundScan and reflects the sales performance of Christian music albums in the United States. The release dates and week numbers correspond to the charting period, which is March 11, 2006.
### SINGLES CHARTS

Compiled from a national sample of data supplied by Nielsen Broadcast Data Systems. Charts are ranked by number of gross audience impressions, computed by cross-referencing exact times of airing with Arbitron IBOSS data. The exceptions are the Rhythmic Top 40, Adult Top 40, Adult Contemporary, Modern Rock and Adult R&B charts, which are ranked by radio detections.

**Songs showing an increase in audience (or detections) over the previous week, regardless of chart movement.**

**CURRENT RULERS**

Songs are removed from the Hot 100 and Hot 100 Airplay charts simultaneously if they have been on the Hot 100 for more than 20 weeks and rank below 50. Songs are removed from the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart and Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay charts simultaneously if they have been on the Pop 100 for more than 30 weeks and rank below 30. Titles are removed from Holiday Songs if they have been on the chart for more than 20 weeks and rank below 15 in detections audience, provided that they are still gaining enough audience points to bullet. Songs are removed from the Adult Top 40, Adult Contemporary, Adult R&B and Hot Dance Airplay charts if they have been on the chart for more than 20 weeks and rank below 15 for Modern Rock and Latin if they are not on the chart for more than 20 weeks and rank below 10.

**SALES CHARTS**

The top selling singles compiled from a national sample of retail store, mass merchandiser, and internet sales records collected, compiled, and provided by Nielsen SoundScan. For R&B/Hip-Hop and Adult R&B Sales, sales data is compiled from a national subset panel of core R&B/Hip-Hop stores by Nielsen SoundScan.

**CONGRUENT SINGLES**

Titles with the greatest club play increase over the previous week.

**TOP SELLING ALBUMS**

Compiled from a comprehensive pool of U.S. music charts by Nielsen SoundScan. Sales data for R&B/Hip-Hop retail charts is compiled by Nielsen SoundScan from a national subset of core stores that specialize in those genres.

- Albums with the greatest sales gain this week.
- Albums that were included, this award indicates the title with the chart's largest unit increase.
- Albums that were included, this award indicates the title with the chart's largest percentage growth.

**TOP 30 SINGLES CHARTS**

Includes albums that enter top 30 of the Billboard 200 chart and have been reissued on CD.

**Pricing/Configuration**

CD/Cassette prices are suggested list or equivalent prices, which are projected from wholesale prices. After-alter indicates albums only available on CD. CD/DVD after price indicates CD/DVD combo only available. * DualDisc available. ** CD/DVD combo available. * indicates vinyl LP is available. Printing and vinyl LP availability are not included on all pressings.
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For more information visit: www.billboardevents.com

Volunteers Needed

If you will be in the Las Vegas area April 3-4 and would like to volunteer at Billboard MECCA, please contact: Courtney Marks cmarks@billboard.com

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DEATHS

Al Altman, 68, of lung cancer, Feb. 22 in Las Vegas. The 23-year SESAC veteran was manager of broadcast licensing and a respected member of the broadcasting community. Altman worked in music publishing with Chappell Music and April Blackwood Music. He is credited with pitching hit song “Bandy” to the band Looking Glass, and produced several recordings, including Black Satin’s “Tears, Tears, Tears” on the Buddah label.

He is survived by his wife, Evie; sons Andrew and Eric, daughter Lorin; and six grandchildren.

John Martin, 57, of cancer, Feb. 23 in Toronto. Manchester, England-born Martin is widely hailed as Canada’s father of music video programming.

After a stint in the current affairs department of government broadcaster CBC.TV, Martin launched weekly tabloid music show “The New Music” in 1979 at Toronto TV station CITY.TV, owned by CHUM Ltd. Before MTV existed in the United States, “The New Music” offered the type of information found in such print sources as Rolling Stone and England’s New Musical Express.

In 1984, Martin launched specialty TV music channel MuchMusic, also owned by CHUM Ltd. As director of music programming, he developed the look and feel of the channel and its contents, which included studio and concert performances, interviews, and music and arts news coverage.

MuchMusic programming helped launch the careers of such notable Canadian acts as Bryan Adams, Red Rider, Blue Rodeo, the Cowboy Junkies and Sarah McLachlan.

Martin left MuchMusic to work as an independent filmmaker. In 1999, he directed the acclaimed film biography of Canadian jazz guitarist Lenny Breau, “The Lenny Breau Story,” a co-production with Toronto’s Sleeping Giant Productions and Winnipeg’s Buffalo Gal Pictures.

Martin is survived by his son, David, and sister, Madelaine Caldwell.
The 37th Country Radio Seminar, held Feb. 5-17 at the Nashville Convention Center, offered attendees multiple networking opportunities at various day and evening gatherings and panel discussions, as well as live showcases of country music's best talent. The event ended with the New Faces of Country Music show featuring such acts as Jeff Bites and Little Big Town.

37TH COUNTRY RADIO SEMINAR

The third annual CMA Artist Relations Luncheon, which kicked off the annual CMA Convention, was held at the Renaissance Hotel in Nashville. From left are CMA board members Trace Atkins, Jay DeMarcus, and Mike Fisher.

Eaton and Universal South suite manager Mike Washburn, from left, are CMA board member Troy Gentry, CMA COO and Universal Records executive Ed Benson, board member, Rascal Flatts, and CMA BP CEO Mike Dungan and CMA chairman Mike Ditka, and CMA Regional Director Sara Lynn Williams.

The 20th anniversary of the RCA Label Group's Scott Bowers, who was present during CRS week, was in attendance as CMA President/CEO Scott Bowers accepted a plaque unveiling the success of the album "Home Sweet Home." The record was the label's debut country album in "MA" history to win a double-platinum award. From left are Arista Nashville VP of promotions; Big Machine Records executive, BNA Records executive VP/Kevin Law, Universal South senior VP/Producer Tony Brown, artists Joe Nichols, Matt Jenkins and Kakaia Evans, and Universal South senior VP of Promotion Michael Powers.

CMA's National Promotion Manager (middle) and Universal South's Manager (right) talked and performed at an ASCMasu music event at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's Ford Theatre. From left are Executive Director Ken Levitan, Williams, and Co-promotion Manager Greg Oswalt and producer Greg Johnson.

The J. Wilk Photography CES 2006/2007 Country Radio Convention was held Feb. 9 at the Renaissance Hotel in Nashville. From left are Arista Nashville VP of promotions; Big Machine Records executive, BNA Records executive VP/Kevin Law, Universal South senior VP/Producer Tony Brown, artists Joe Nichols, Matt Jenkins and Kakaia Evans, and Universal South senior VP of Promotion Michael Powers.

CMA's National Promotion Manager (middle) and Universal South's Manager (right) talked and performed at an ASCMasu music event at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's Ford Theatre. From left are Executive Director Ken Levitan, Williams, and Co-promotion Manager Greg Oswalt and producer Greg Johnson.
WHAT'S BREWING AT STARBUCKS?

Despite two high-profile departures from its music division, Starbucks Entertainment president Ken Lombard says it is business as usual at the coffee chain. Some in the industry are not so sure. Don MacKinnon, Starbucks VP of music and entertainment, resigned Feb. 27. In addition to MacKinnon, who leaves April 14, Starbucks director of artists and repertoire Brenda Walker left the week of Feb. 20.

MacKinnon, who joined the company in 1999 when it purchased his Hear Music label, was a key liaison between the music biz and Starbucks. But Lombard says, "What we were doing with labels, artists and management was, frankly, bigger than any one person." However, a source familiar with Starbucks' deals, says, "Without Don there, it remains to be seen if they can deliver on the original promise of being about the artist, the music and the consumer."

To further enhance its entertainment ties, Starbucks will move up to eight staffers on its content team from its Seattle base to a new Los Angeles office as early as summer. Lombard says the move will allow the content team to "discover new artists, but maintain contacts with labels." There are not any plans to open an LA office.

A search is underway for MacKinnon's replacement. In the interim, the content team, which had reported to MacKinnon, will report to Geoff Cottrill, who joined the company in August 2005 as VP of marketing and product management.

MacKinnon declined to comment. Walker could not be reached.

DOING IT AGAIN

Track hears that Michael McDonald and Steely Dan may be reuniting. McDonald, who played keyboards and sang backing vocals with the band on such projects as "The Royal Scam," "Katy Lied" and "Aja," is in talks to co-headline its summer tour. Each act would do its own set, and then McDonald would join Steely Dan for a number of hits on which he performed, including "Peg."

INDEPENDENT MAN

Ice Cube is planning a June release for his seventh solo album, "Laugh Now, Cry Later." Cube tells Track that he wants to keep it indie, so he will be releasing it on his own label, Lench Mob Records. That said, according to what Cube told Track at a recent listening session for the album, Fontana is poised to snare its distribution rights. Lead single "Why We Thugs" was produced by Scott Storch. Other producers on the album include St.ussy, Sean Garrett and L.J. "Lil Jon" Snoop Dogg. WC are guests on the set. This news comes at a time when Cube fans are awaiting the March 8 premiere of "Black. White." on FX Networks. Cube is one of the documentary series' executive producers.

CLEANING UP AMERICA'S IDLE (AIR)

Sure, chart-topping country artist Trace Adkins is fond of a healthy badonkadonk (see story, page 10). But he also cares about the air that we breathe. Track hears that Adkins has entered into a stock-sharing partnership with IdleAir Technologies. The specifics of the deal will be announced at March 14 press conference at Cotton Eyed Joe in Knoxville, Tenn. Adkins, who tours the country by bus, will be a spokesman/advocate for IdleAir, which installs and operates, among other things, air-filtration systems at long-haul truck stops and fleet terminals—wherever trucks and buses congregate and idle.

GOOD AS GOLDFRAPP

Goldfrapp is not a nominee, but the British duo will be a winner during the Academy Awards March 5. A new Diet Coke spot to debut during the ABC awards telecast features Goldfrapp's track "Ooh La La," which perfectly captures the sassy vibe of the commercial, created by Fooke Cone & Belding. Goldfrapp's third album, " Supernature," arrives March 7 from Mute.

NO LONGER A VIRGIN

On March 3, Richard Bridge waves goodbye to his post as music product manager for dance and singles at Virgin Entertainment Group. Track hears Bridge has accepted an A&R and product development position with Petrol Records, the Australian lifestyle indie that recently inked a worldwide partnership with EMI Music (Billboard, March 4).

EXECUTIVE TURN TABLE

RECORD COMPANIES: Universal Music U.K. in London names Hassan Choudhury VP of international. He was senior director of global marketing/ Europe at Sony BMG Music Entertainment.

Reprise/Warners Bros. Records in New York promotes Tommy Page to VP of A&R. He was VP of national top 40 promotion.

Big Machine Records in Nashville names Jack Purcell VP of promotion. He held the same position at Audium/Koch Records.

Universal Soul Records in Nashville names Chuck Sweeney director of Northeast regional promotion. He was director of national promotion at Capitol Records.

Equity Music Group in Nashville names Jack Christopher Northeast regional promotion manager. He held the same position at Columbia Records.

PUBLISHING: Sony/ATV Music Publishing in Santa Monica, Calif., names Ron Broitman senior VP of film, TV and advertising music. He was VP of film and TV music at BMG Music Publishing U.S.

RETAIL: Handlaman Co. in Troy, Mich., promotes Paul Ignasinski to assistant VP/GM of artist to market distribution. He was director of merchandise planning and analysis. Handlaman also upps Terry FLY to director of genre development. He was rock/pop product manager.

DISTRIBUTION: The Orchard in New York names Nick Gordon manager of artist and label relations. He was distributed label's manager at Caroline Distribution.

RELATED FIELDS: Network Live in Los Angeles names Aaron Grosky VP of music. He was head of artist-label relations and programming at Virgin Digital.

CenterStaging Musical Productions in Burbank, Calif., names Tommy Nasst executive VP of business development. He held the same position at AEG Live.

UltraStar Entertainment in New York taps Ed Micone to lead its artist acquisition and business development efforts. He will continue to produce projects for its Micone Entertainment Group. Micone was executive VP at Radio City Entertainment.

Send submissions to shannon@billboard.com.

SOLAR II SOUL

Fashion retailer Kenneth Cole launches its annual shoe/clothes drive for the homeless March 8 with A Concert From the Soul. The live event at the retailer's Rockefeller Center store in New York will feature Collective Soul. For the remainder of the month, customers who bring in gently worn clothing and/or shoes to any Kenneth Cole location will receive 20% off their next purchase. A portion of proceeds from these purchases will benefit Help USA, which provides jobs, housing and services for the homeless.

SAVE THE SEALS

Animal rights activists Paul McCartney and his wife, Heather, were scheduled to join the Humane Society of the United States March 2-3 on Canada's Gulf of St. Lawrence's ice floes to protest the annual hunt and skinning of seals. For additional info, log on to hesus.org.
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SPEAKERS

Alexis & Fido, Artists, Sony BMG
Elias de Leon, Owner, White Lion
Adam Kidron, President/CEO, UBO
Jim Lawson, VP Programming, Hispanic Division, Clear Channel Communications
Gustavo López, President, Machete
Sergio Lopes, VP Marketing/Digital Development & Distribution, EMI Music Latin America
Mayna Nevarez, Nevarez Communications
Jessica Phillips, Latin Music Buyer, Entertainment Division, Target Corporation
Jenni Rivera, Artist, Fonovisa
Nestor "Pato" Rocha, VP Programming, Entravision Radio
Boy Wonder, Producer, Chosen Few, Emerald Entertainment
Jeff Young, Sr. VP Sales/Marketing, Disa Records

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FINALISTS ANNOUNCED!

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