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ROCK
"Algo Está Cambiando" comp.: Coi Sorkin ed.: Doble Acuarela Songs WB Music Corp.

Lento comp.: Coi Sorkin ed.: Doble Acuarela Songs WB Music Corp.

TELEVISIÓN
"Vivieje" com.: Blasio Antonacci (EMI) Ignacio Díaz Ballestros (EMI) Laura Pausini (EMI) Ed.: Basta Edizioni Musicali (EMI) WB Music Corp.

"Don Francisco Presenta" comp.: Gerardo Flores ed.: Nuestro Music programa: "Don Francisco Presenta"

CARCÓN DEL AÑO REGIONAL MEXICANO
"El Autobús" comp.: Enrique "Fato" Guzmán ed.: Vander Music

REGIONAL MEXICANO
"Adoros Amor Te Vas" comp.: Juan Gabriel ed.: BMG Songs

"As; Como Hoy" comp.: Omar Arfano ed.: EMDA Music Publishing Sony/ATV Discos Music Publishing

"Aún Sigues Siendo Mía" comp.: Juan Antonio Meléndez ed.: Teocal Music

"Cosas Del Amor" comp.: Luis Gerardo Padilla Rojas ed.: Huina Publishing

"Loca" comp.: Alejandro Vezzani ed.: EMI Music Publishing

"Mi Credo" comp.: Enrique "Fato" Guzmán ed.: Vander Music

"Nada Contigo" comp.: Rogelio Brambila Pelayo ed.: Francisco Candela Vázquez (EMI) Ramón Ortégaa Cantreras (EMI) ed.: Vander Music

"Quiero Saber De Ti" comp.: Wilfran Castillo (EMI) ed.: Promotora Celameliana De Música Universal Music Publishing

"Volveré" comp.: Claudio Natili (EMI) Marcello Randino (EMI) ed.: Essex Music Gabriel Ed. Mus (EMI) IBM Music Ltd Televisa Ediz MUS (EMI)

"Y Las Mariposas" comp.: Joan Sebastian ed.: Vander Music
Yo Me Quedé Sin Nadería
compositor: Daddy Yankee
editores: Iga León, Restrepo Villegas (SGAE)
editoras: Universal Music Publishing

Nombre del Año Tropical
Fiesta El Fin
compositor: Ivan & Nelson Publishing

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BEAUTIFUL STRANGE
E/A: COLUMBIA

ABOVE: After more than 30 years, Debbie Harry and her Blondie bandmates are still rockin’—and heading for rock’s Hall of Fame. See page 33. Photo: Kevin Mazur/Wireimage.com

COVER: Illustration: Ellen Weinstein
I Love You But I’ve Chosen Darkness Photo: Aubrey Edwards
Dear Ketel One Drinker
If only everyone had such good taste.
Musicians: Keep The Politics In Your Songs

BY JAMES MCMURTRY

Once at a show of mine in Plano, Texas, a woman took it upon herself to dance around in front of the stage with a handwritten sign that read, "Keep Politics Out of Music." She had not liked the anti-Bush rant that I had inserted into the song "Level-And I wonder what she thought of the words of Woody Guthrie, John Lennon or Bob Dylan? And would she have been equally as offended by the sentiments expressed in the songs of Merle Haggard, Toby Keith or Clint Black? Was it politics in music that she objected to, or, more specifically, my politics in my music? I probably lost a fan that day, not the first or the last. I used to try to keep politics out of my music not for fear of losing fans—I had no fans—but rather for fear that my songs would become sermons. I did not want to be seen as another mediocre folkie up there preaching with righteous conviction to mask the fact that his songs sucked.

It was a while before I realized that it is possible to write a good politically motivated song. Steve Earle's "The Ballad of Billy Austin," written from the point of view of a death-row inmate, showed me that it could be done. It is a great song first, a biting social commentary second. Kris Kristofferson's work has the same quality—it gets his point across without sacrificing his art. Oddly, when I first heard Kristofferson's songs, I did not notice the political statements in them. I was a child then, and the Vietnam War so thoroughly colored the world I came into that I could not even see it. The war was like your grandmother's kitchen wallpaper you had seen since you were 3 and no longer noticed. The sight of those glum-faced, young soldiers in the airport was perfectly normal to me. The soldiers are back in the airports, but they are older now. I did not want my son's generation grow numb to the sight of them to become "blasé about war," as Lennon once said. So I took a chance and put out a song called "We Can't Make It Here"—put it out first as a free download. I received a lot of nasty e-mails right off the bat, but the download got more attention than anything else I have put on a CD in the last 10 years.

Now, a year and a half later, WXRT Chicago, a station that has not added a James McMurtry song since the early '90s, is playing its own edit of "We Can't Make It Here" and doing quite well with it. (Yes, I am indeed smiling my own horn here. Someone has to since my last manager threw up his hands and ran scared—canceled three concert dates to Connecticut.)

WXRT, Stephen King's classic rock station in Bangor, Maine, was on the song as soon as it hit the Internet. Maine has lost 30,000 jobs to outsourcing, one of the facets of modern American life that the protagonist in my song complains about. You could say that my little song became a hit in Bangor. That is good for me, but not so good for Bangor. "We Can't Make It Here" is not popular in Bangor or anywhere else by virtue of it being a great song. Its popularity, like that of most popular songs, lies in the fact that people are hearing their own lives in it. The lives they are hearing in this song cannot be much fun right now.

In a recent article in The Austin Chronicle, interviewer Andy Langer said to Kris Kristofferson, "Some people say the smart folk things for you like and the Dixie Chicks is just to shut up and sing." Kristofferson's response was, "I would say back, 'Shut up and listen.'"
MORE THAN BRICKS AND MORTAR, there is magic here. The rebirth of a San Francisco icon as The Ritz-Carlton Club® and Residences showcases the combined genius of men who built their legends separately: the architects Burnham & Root, whose skyscrapers shaped a landscape of optimism at the dawn of the 20th Century; and César Ritz, whose hotels were the embodiment of Golden Age opulence. Hidden for decades behind a steel façade, the 1890 Romanesque tower once again commands the corner of Market and Kearney Streets, following a $90 million renovation. The 21st Century is evident in the full array of building amenities, with one welcome exception: the timeless grace of Ritz-Carlton® service.

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Spitzer Sues Entercom
New York AG Targets Radio Group, Extending Payola Probe

In a two-pronged attack, New York Attorney General and gubernatorial hopeful Eliot Spitzer has hit a major radio group with a lawsuit and chided federal regulators to take action, based on mountains of payola evidence.

Describing the music-radio industry as "a black market for the illegal sale of spins," Spitzer ratchets up pressure on the world of payola when his office filed a March 8 lawsuit against Entercom Communications, the nation's fifth-largest radio conglomerate. It is the first suit filed in the investigation, which began in 2004.

But Spitzer's probe has a much broader focus than just direct pay-to-play activities prohibited by federal law, the suit reveals. His office wants to clamp down on some radio stations' promotional programs, which the suit called "window-dressing" for chart-position manipulation and another means for labels to pay for airplay.

"What makes this case especially egregious is the extent to which senior management viewed control of the airwaves as an opportunity to garner illegal payments from record labels," Spitzer says.

Entercom created three promotional programs, according to the suit: The CD Preview program lets labels purchase spins to increase the airplay detected by Nielsen BDS and Clear Channel-owned Mediabase, the charting data services used by the industry; CD Challenge involved selling "detections" under the guise of a song competition to manipulate the charts; and Total Access, shelved after Spitzer's investigation began, for Entercom to sell labels the opportunity to hold a conference call with PDs to pitch a song. It was merely another method for labels to buy adds to the playlists, the suit contends. On the local level, three Entercom stations within Spitzer's New York jurisdiction were identified in the suit. Buffalo

2005 Sales Data: Long Tail is Wagging

NEW YORK—The "Long Tail" is getting longer—exponentially so, Billboard has discovered. But the attached body appears to be on quite a diet. So emerges the picture of the music industry when viewed through the crunched numbers of 2005.

According to Nielsen SoundScan, last year saw the record-breaking total of 60,331 albums released. That marks a 35.6% increase over the 44,476 titles issued in 2004, and that year was up 16.2% from 2003's total of 38,269 albums.

The Long Tail theory goes that, in a marketplace featuring low-cost virtual shelf space, such slower-moving albums as deep catalog, niche genres and independent releases can collectively equal or outsell the best-selling titles. Imagine all sales plotted on a graph, with huge spikes for majors and tiny markers for records that sell in fits. But those tiny markers keep extending, seemingly forever—hence, the Long Tail.

Last year's increase in releases is driven by an influx of digital-only, indie-released product. Nielsen SoundScan defines digital-only album releases as titles where 99% or more of their sales only occur through digital services. Last year, SoundScan counted 16,580 such titles, of which 2,935 were from major labels and 13,645 releases were from independents.

All told, digital-only releases sold a combined 865,424 units, an average that slightly exceeds 52 sales per release. The majors' 2,935 releases averaged almost 155 copies per album, while the independents' 13,645 releases produced total sales of 410,863, about 30 sales per title. Last year's best-selling digital-only album was Sarah McLachlan's "Tribute Original," a 25-track compilation of her work that scanned 12,000 units. Other digital-only top sellers came from Jason Mraz, Jack Johnson and Ben Folds.
Jacksonville, Fla., were charged under the federal Family Entertainment and Copyright Act signed into law last year. If convicted, on counts they each face up to 11 years in prison.

OZZY GOING SOLO TO OZZFEST
The main-stage lineup for Ozzfest 2006 will boast founder and namesake Ozzy Osbourne for 10 shows, along with System of a Down, Disturbed, Hatebreed, Lacuna Coil and an Unholy major not to be announced May 23. The tour, produced by Live Nation and booked by MVO, begins July 1 in San Francisco and will play 20 cities. The Ozzfest dates will be Osbourne's first solo performances in three years, as the artist has performed with Black Sabbath in 2004 and 2005 on Ozzfest.

UNIVISION'S STRONG RESULTS
Univision Communications Inc. on March 2 reported a 5% increase in its 2005 net revenue, which totalled $17.9 million, up from $17.4 million for 2004. Total income for 2005 was reported as $669.3 million, up from $664.5 million for 2004. The company, which comprises Fonovisa Records, Univision Records and Univision Deportes, posted a profit of $31.5 million, up from $23.3 million for 2004. The combined unit sales of the three labels make Univision Music Group the top Latin music company in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Univision's financial report comes in the wake of the company's announcement that it is for sale. No suitors have been confirmed.

WMG LINKS WITH CINGULAR, MUSIC CHOICE
Music Choice network provider Music Choice said March 7 it reached a deal with Warner Music Group to provide Cingular Wireless consumers with music and other content. The Music Choice offering will feature a streaming music service.

SALES (cont.)

from >>p9
Most of the major-label digital-only releases appeared to be from labels repackaging songs from different albums or picking tracks to form digital bundles. But the majority of the digital-only releases that the independent sector are from artists who market their own music and cannot afford to compete in the physical-goods world. “Any little band can digitally put product out there with very little effort,” Nielsen Entertainment director of retail relations and research services Chris Muratore says.

Reissued albums are included in new-release totals, which can also include albums from labels that switch distributors, if the change results in new bar codes being applied to each title.

From the time SoundScan began tabulating new-release data in 1999 through 2003, the major labels consistently released a combined 6,500-7,500 titles per year, except for a dip in 2000 when they collectively issued about 5,200 titles. But in the last two years the majors’ new-release total has jumped up to 9,404 in 2004 and 11,070 in 2005.

Independent labels and artists have always accounted for a majority of new releases. But the annual, aggregated indie total grew from 22,000 albums in 1995 to 49,261 issued last year. In 1995, indies were responsible for 75% of total releases. Last year, that number jumped to 82%.

In 2005, 32 new titles generated sales of more than 1 million units, and collectively, those sold about 57.2 million copies. Those totals are down from 2004 when 42 new releases sold more than 1 million units, collectively selling 83.9 million copies. Not only did 10 fewer titles achieve the million-unit goal last year, collectively sales of top-selling new releases dropped 31.8%.

Another 62 titles achieved sales of 500,000 units or greater, which was pretty close to the previous-year total of 58 albums achieving that distinction. Also, 103 titles each sold in the 250,000-499,999 range, while another 215 achieved scans between 100,000 and 249,999 units. Added together, that is 410 albums that achieved sales of more than 100,000, for a combined total of 169.2 million units. In other words, last year, less than 1% of all releases—0.7%—generated 70% of all sales from new releases.

In total, the new releases were issued by the majors accounted for 204.5 million units, or nearly one-third of the 618 million albums sold in the United States last year. The majors issued 11,070 albums last year, yielding an average of 18,454 sales per release. Independent labels and artists last year issued 49,261 albums, which collectively sold 38.8 million, or an average of 787 copies per album. But if releases that sold less than 100 are excluded—largely comprising albums distributed by the artists that made them—then independent labels averaged almost 2,880 units per release.
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Studio’s Last Dance
Reverberations From Musicland Filing Force Distributor’s End

The Feb. 21 shuttering of Studio Distribution’s New York operation created a big void in the global dance community. Nearly 100 labels are left in the lurch, at least for now. Sources close to Studio blame the closing on a chain of events that began with Musicland’s recent Chapter 11 filing and ended with distribution rights being acquired by Navarre unable to purchase Studio.

Navarre was essentially the distributor behind Studio’s distribution business, handling fulfillment. According to Studio president Dave Watkins, in early January, Studio was in the 11th hour of being acquired by Navarre when the Musicland news hit.

Navarre already was carrying $11.7 million in notes and bank debt as of Dec. 31, 2005, and it had just written off another $4.1 million balance from an unnamed independent label, according to its 10-Q SEC filing. Musicland’s bankruptcy meant another hit of $12.7 million in unsecured credit that Navarre is unlikely to recover. This made it tough for Navarre to justify the acquisition of Studio to creditors.

The 9-year-old Studio partnered with Navarre in 2002. According to one source close to the situation, Studio had a line of credit with Navarre.

“We were finding a solution to our business model,” Watkins says. “There was a total commitment at all times from Navarre to come to a resolution.”

Late last year, two highly prized labels—K7 Records and Global Underground—defected from Studio. K7 is owned by Berlin-based Hors: Weidenmueller, who co-owned Studio with longtime friend and CEO Erich Moenius and Watkins. A source close to Weidenmueller blames K7’s split from Studio on a fractured friendship between Weidenmueller and Moenius. K7 is now distributed by Caroline.

Studio represented nearly 100 domestic and international labels—including Black Hole, Fabric, King Street Sounds, RBB, Redrock and Output. Electronic artists like Tiësto, John Digweed and Jazza novana traveled through Studio’s system.

Though there is much interest from distributors for the labels left in Studio’s dust, the labels are unlikely to be able to sign with another distributor until Studio takes some type of legal action (filing for Chapter 7, for example). Watkins would not comment on Studio’s future legal dealings. Two displaced Studio staffers—head of sales Jon Gray and head of export and manufacturing Charles Tremblay—are in the process of forming, along with Kevin Shawd, the HBD Label Group. Like Studio, HBD will offer independent labels worldwide distribution.

In the meantime, labels affected by Studio’s closing hope to protect their shipped product. King Street Sounds promotions and A&R director Joe Bernato says his company has sent a cease-and-desist to Navarre, to stop them from selling any records; Navarre will then be asked to return catalog, or if Studio’s legal picture resolves, labels can ask Navarre to send catalog to new distribution partners. Bernato says, “We’re looking into ways to resolve this situation.”

Additional reporting by Ed Christman in New York.

ACS FORCED ON XM

An arbitration panel has ruled that XM Satellite Radio will have to introduce advertising on some of its commercial-free music channels. The ruling resolves a legal dispute with Clear Channel, which made a 1998 investment in the satcaster, gaining control over four of XM’s 160 music channels.

UNIVERSAL MUSIC FRANCE, MUSICWAVE PARTNER

Universal Music France has agreed to license its catalog for a wireless music subscription service run by mobile entertainment technology firm Musicwave. The service allows users to select the songs to store and play on their mobile phones for a flat monthly fee, as opposed to paying per download. Universal is the only major so far to license its content to Musicwave.

TOWER EMBRACES PODCASTING

Tower Records is getting into the podcasting game. The struggling retailer will introduce its TowerPod service—a series of free downloadable podcasts—at the South by Southwest Music and Music Media Conference in Austin. The first phase of the service being unveiled will contain ten of 10-15 podcasts produced by Tower from a library of 6,000 pre-cleared tracks, mostly provided by the Independent Online Distribution Alliance. Later this summer, the company hopes to expand the service to let customers create their own podcasts from a library of songs aggregated by Tower. TowerPod features an advertising revenue model that all involved will share.


CD-SWAPPING SITES: THE NEW NETFLIX?

Myspace.com proved that large Web communities could be built around people sharing a common interest in music and other forms of entertainment. Now a new generation of sites is taking the concept a step further with networks that allow users to trade the CDs, DVDs and games they embrace.

Myspace.com proved that large Web communities could be built around people sharing a common interest in music and other forms of entertainment. Now a new generation of sites is taking the concept a step further with networks that allow users to trade the CDs, DVDs and games they embrace.

To give customers what they want, the music industry must change its very foundations. That was the loud and clear message sent to the industry by attendees of the Natpe Music & Money Symposium 2 at New York’s St. Regis hotel.

“The myth of major distributor muscle is going to end,” said CKX Inc. president/chairman Robert Stillerman during his keynote speech. “The people who are the true muscle in music—the creators of it—will assume their logical position in the economic food chain. They create it. They deserve the lion’s share of the wealth from it.”

As for customers, at various panels discussing digital platforms, mobile music and even venture capital investments into music properties, the idea was put forth that customers do not want digital rights management. The lack of DRM interoperability between competing services, devices and platforms continues to be a problem for prohibiting this “anywhere, anyhow” vision. As such, calls rose throughout the day to do away with DRM and release unprotected MP3s, playable on all devices.

“Ninety-five percent of what’s on iPods are MP3 files ripped from CDs or taken from [peer-to-peer] sites,” said Jim Griffin, managing director of Cherry Lane Digital, speaking at a panel earlier in the day. “Haven’t customers chosen their format?”

But major labels see DRM as a necessity for protecting their content from piracy, and still view a music download as a product that can be priced, marketed and sold. Critics say that in the digital age, music is a service to promote the artist. The product of the future is not recorded music, but rather live events and merchandise. Artists will release digital music to drive concert attendance. Bands like Clap Your Hands Say Yeah and Arctic Monkeys have launched their careers via free digital distribution.

“Recognize that the creators and the consumers can now connect directly,” Stillerman said. “We’re happening today is the final death rattle of the struggle of those who create it, with those who distribute it.”

Hyping the trend most recently in Palo Alto, Calif.-based lala.com, a used CD and e-commerce business that launched March 7, applying a Netflix-meets-Myspace concept to swapping second-hand albums.

Users of the site, currently in beta, can create profiles, post pictures, list CDs they own and create a wish list of music titles they want. They then exchange CDs through the mail in prepaid envelopes that the company supplies to all registered users.

Members pay a shipping charge of $1.49 for every disc they receive. There is no charge to users shipping discs.

A handful of other companies, including barterbee.com, TitleTrader and Peerflix, are pursuing similar models. BarterBee and TitleTrader are geared toward a broad array of entertainment products, while others like Lala and Peerflix focus on specific categories like music and movies.

“The idea of used merchandise is heating up,” says Robert Alvin, president of Los Gatos, Calif.-based BarterBee. “We’re doing what brick and mortar stores have been doing for a long time.”

The prospect of social networking sites and other online services allowing music fans to swap their CDs at below retail cost is receiving a cool reaction in music industry circles—even if the practice is sanctioned under copyright law.

But analysts like Rich Greenfield from Pali Capital are high on the concept’s potential to help drive increased music purchasing.

“If people are expanding their musical tastes and buying more, not just swapping CDs, then this is good,” he says. Investors like it too. Lala has received $9 million in venture funding from Warner Music Group financial backer Bain Capital and Ignition Partners.

To avoid the wrath of the labels, these sites ban users who traffic in burned or pirated material. And in the case of Lala, the company is not only pledging to give 20% of its revenue to artists but also planning to sell new CDs and downloads. Licensing deals with the majors still need to be negotiated.

“Trading CDs is an affordable way to test and try new music,” Lala co-founder Bill Nguyen says, “but when you find that album you can’t wait to enjoy, we offer it as a new CD or as a download and, often with additional bonus material, at retail price.”

CD-SWAPPING SITES: THE NEW NETFLIX?
Broadcast Flag Bill Flies Into Controversy

The question of how to make music devices that protect copyright has been an oft-mentioned powder keg. Rep. Mike Ferguson, D-N.J., simply provided the latest spark. With the March 2 introduction of the RIAA-supported Audio Broadcast Flag Licensing Act of 2006, the bill is the latest attempt to mandate that devices must build in copy-protection technology. But those opposed, largely voicing concerns about protecting fair use rights and government-regulated technology, may want to save their energy. Even more strongly worded legislation could be on the way.

The RIAA wants copy protection, but digital device makers are crying foul.

At the heart of the matter are devices that receive—and automatically compile, store and play—hours of music delivered from high-definition radio and satellite radio. The RIAA says that “platform convergence”—with devices like the Sirius S50, the XM Helix and the HD radio with a hard drive—is turning radio and satellite broadcasts into downloadable services. Without reasonable content protection, users could redistribute personal libraries automatically compiled from all recordings available on radio stations over the Internet or on removable media without compensating the creators and copyright holders, the RIAA says.

The broadcast flag system is two-pronged. The “flag” is actually a technical method to mark content as copy-protected. The second aspect involves the creation of standards and rules that define how devices must handle flagged content (e.g., restricting or allowing certain uses like multiple copying or playback). For consumer electronics groups and digital rights advocates, the audio broadcast flag is a hot-button issue. Some decried government-mandated technology or restrictions that could interfere with a possible fair use of copyrighted works. The Home Recording Rights Coalition, headed by the Consumer Electronics Assn. chairman, Gary Shapiro, called the RIAA a “fundamental attack on traditional home taping practices that consumers have engaged in since the first analog cassette recorder.” Critics may be reacting more to a chain of events than to Ferguson’s bill. In 2003, the FCC approved a regulation that all digital TV radio, satellite radio and the device manufacturers to decide on the specific technology and figure out how to make it work within the boundaries of any FCC rules.

The RIAA hopes that the bill will pave the way for the FCC to create an environment in which digital radio services will face similar licensing terms as download and portable subscription business models. As stipulated in the bill, the FCC regulations must permit performing and mechanical rights organizations to monitor uses of music they license.

Greg Orlando, Ferguson’s counsel who wrote the bill, says fair use and other legal exceptions to the rights of the copyright holder were built into the bill. Meanwhile, Ferguson is no lone copyright soldier. Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., a member of the Senate Commerce Committee, has drafted a bill that gives the FCC authority to require manufacturers to adopt video and audio broadcast flags on their digital devices. Ferguson has said he hopes all involved and affected parties will be able to hammer out a compromise that could define legislation.

But a contentious Jan. 24 hearing—featuring the widely disparate (and sometimes inflammatory) opinions of the RIAA, the National Assn. of Broadcasters and the CEAA—made it clear that compromise may be difficult to reach. The committee ordered the three parties to continue negotiating a solution and to report back every three weeks on their progress. A source says they are doing so.

Rep. Lamar Smith, R-Texas, a member of the House Judiciary Committee, last fall prompted the RIAA, CEA and others to prepare proposals and participate in a hearing on the broadcast flag. They did, but nothing further is currently scheduled.

Ferguson hopes that the House Energy and Commerce Committee will hold a hearing on HR 4861 soon, but none is currently scheduled.

Additional reporting by Tony Saunders in Washington, D.C.
The Digital Rights Decision

What Is In An Indie Label's Best Interest When Physical Distributors Want Download Revenue?

Physical distributors are increasingly asking labels to part with their digital rights. And why shouldn't they?

To date in 2006, 4.5 million albums have been purchased via download sites. Compare that with 1.8 million for the same period last year, and it is clear that, even though the music biz will continue to focus on traditional retail for years, the sales growth story is being told online.

It is not always clear, though, if the labels are being asked or told. On the record, executives for the major-owned independent distributors typically claim digital rights are part of a service that does not have to be in a deal.

Labels are far more frank. "Physical distributors are requiring on many occasions for labels to give up their digital rights or they will discontinue doing the label's physical distribution," SpinArt's Jeff Price says.

If a label signs with distributors for three years and the digital market continues to grow, a label will have lost a good chunk of change for a service many believe can be done in-house.

"Labels should definitely try to hang on to their digital rights, but that opinion is becoming more and more impervious to distributors interest in them being part of the package," Definitive Jux CEO Amaechi Uzoigwe says.

Even when distributors are not flat-out demanding a cut of a label's digital sales for the duration of a deal, label sources who have met with the major independent distributors—Warner Music Group's Alternative Distribution Alliance, Sony BMG's RED Distribution, Universal Music & Video Distribution's Fontana and EMI's Caroline—all report that they were offered significantly better terms on their physical distribution if digital rights were included.

Price says it is not necessarily unfair for distributors to demand digital rights. The marketing and sales muscle of a major supplier will likely contribute in some fashion to an increase in online sales.

Which leaves the big question. Should indie cut out the digital middleman?

Yes, if at all possible. But there are probably two scenarios in which a label should allow a distributor to have a cut of its digital sales.

One is if a label needs the tail reach of a major supplier. There are worse things, Price says, than losing a percentage of digital sales for a few years.

The second is if an indie has time to deal with, well, the deals. An indie holding on to its rights obviously varies from label to label, but Price says iTunes is SpinArt's largest account. SpinArt is relatively small, and Price says his label is bringing in $9,000-$12,000 per month on iTunes alone. He is not about to split with a distributor and signed with Ryko Distribution.

The majors initially told IODA that they would handle digital rights for indies. "Then we started to see some gaps," IODA's Kevin Arnold says.

The majors are not the only ones angling for these rights. Increasingly, they find themselves competing with digital music aggregators seeking similar terms such as the Orchard or IODA. Kevin Arnold, IODA president, says he is prepared.

"Within the first six months of our existence, we were having conversations with major-owned independent distributors," Arnold says. "What we heard was, 'Oh, we're going to do that. You won't have any legs to stand on.' Then we started to see some gaps.

Arnold says major-affiliated distributors are often restricted to the digital rights management services of their parent company. This gives such businesses as IODA a more global, less restrictive reach. Arnold says Price is offering a cheaper solution for those not ready to commit to a larger distributor. He recently launched TuneCore as an alternative to the aggregators. Instead of an aggregator model that takes a percentage from each sale, TuneCore charges a one-time delivery fee of 99 cents per song or album, as well as an annual fee of $7.98 per album title.

"I despise the economic model of aggregators," Price says. "They're morally repugnant. TuneCore allows anyone to gain access to those channels, but it doesn't ask for any rights or any exclusivity."

In response, Arnold says TuneCore lacks the promotional clout of an IODA and doubts it can maintain its low prices as more sign up. For those attending South by Southwest, Arnold and Price will air their differences at a panel March 18.

If this all seems confusing, that is exactly what the major-owned distributors are betting on. Unlike the retail world, most digital promotions are editorially driven, so distributors are mainly pitching themselves as one-stop shops.

"If you receive a distribution fee on something, it's because you earn it," Price says. "On the physical side, distributors work their asses off. They provide co-op opportunities, they have regional reps. In the digital world, they don't provide that service. They're an aggregator."
Jazz Returns To Weekly TV Via ‘Legends’ Show

Jazz, once a staple of early black-and-white TV programming, is returning to the tube with what is described as the first weekly national network series in 40 years.

“Legends of Jazz,” which debuts April 2 on PBS, will feature conversations with and studio performances by a range of jazz stars. The initial 15 installments, already shot, include Clark Terry, Roy Hargrove, Chris Botti, Benny Golson, Pat Metheny, Lee Ritenour, Marcus Miller, George Duke, Phil Woods, David Sanborn, Kurt Elling, Al Jarreau, Ivan Lins, Oscar Castro-Neves, Robert Cray, Keb’ Mo’, Tony Bennett, Chick Corea and the late Ray Barretto.

Hosted by pianist Ramsey Lewis and produced by LRS-media and WTTW in Chicago, the half-hour show will be shot in high definition with 5.1 surround sound. An additional 13 episodes are greenlighted for next year, and a deal is already in place with WEA to distribute DVDs and CDs from the performances.

“This show will succeed in bringing jazz back to the public’s attention,” says Lewis, who co-founded LRSmedia with music entrepreneur Larry Rosen and investor Lee Rosenberg, who also serves as president/CEO of the venture.

Lewis’ confidence stems from hosting his two-hour weekly radio program “Legends of Jazz,” which is syndicated to nearly 70 stations nationwide. “Five million people tune in each week,” says Lewis, best-known for his 1965 jazz-pop instrumental hits “The In Crowd” and “Hang On Sloopy.” “Not all are diehard jazz fans. Some people are just curious about quality music. We researched broadening the radio idea to television, and we think interest will explode.”

Rosen, the founder of the GRP and N2K labels, agrees, citing the success of Kent Burns’ televised 2001 jazz documentary and the sales of its related CD compilations—as well as the success of “American Idol”—as proof that “people are interested in seeing music on TV.” Each “Legends of Jazz” show is themed-based and features a line between being true to the music and not dumbing it down.”

Rosen reports that more than 80% of PBS affiliates plan to air the series. “That’s huge and represents a lot of potential eyeballs,” he says, and hastens to add, “one challenge is when the stations will program the show.” But, he says, so far, so good. For example, WETA in Washington, D.C., and WTTW will give the show top billing in its kickoff week.

“Legends of Jazz” DVDs and companion CDs of the show’s performances will be distributed by WEA. The first volume (shows one through five) will be available in May, the second (shows six through nine) in June and the third (shows 10-13) in July. A three-volume boxed set will be available for the holiday season.

“This will be a body of work that sells,” WEA president John Esposito says. “Anything that Larry Rosen has done is class. When I heard about the TV launch, I said sign me up. We do a healthy business in jazz. The occasional jazz record may go through the roof, but it’s like Nonesuch’s heritage artists that continually sell over the years.”

Esposito says TV exposure will help the genre. “I have a 20-year-old daughter who tells me that a lot of kids on college campuses are getting into jazz,” he says. “So I’m feeling pretty good about this deal. My job is to sell records, and I believe we’re going to sell a lot.”

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Coachella Gets Wired, Blogged

Navigating more than 80 bands across five stages in two days amidst 50,000 fans is a tall order for anyone attending the annual Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival.

Coachella organizer Goldenvoice envisions helping out with that dilemma. This year, a partnership with Buzznet will allow fans at one stage to use their mobile phones to access photos and fan feedback from concerts at other stages at the same time. The deal is part of a broader strategy for Goldenvoice and other promoters to use blogs to enhance fan interaction before, during and after the event.

"Music festivals are all about community," says Paul Tollett, founding partner of Goldenvoice, "and blogs are a great way for that community to express itself."

Although the festival established a MySpace profile to interact with the 54-plus million registered users of the most popular blog site on the planet, Tollett wanted something unique to Coachella as well.

So he turned to Buzznet, a blog community of about 200,000 members that specializes in multimedia content available only to festival attendees. Once fans buy a ticket, they will receive an e-mail with a unique registration code offering them access to the site.

Buzznet's Coachella community is available from those on MySpace. Questions skip personal details like marital status that are geared for hookups and instead focus on information specific to the event, such as listing their favorite Coachella artists or years attending the event.

Since fans travel from every state to attend Coachella, Tollett hopes they will post photos, videos and journals of their road trips for other members to follow and all the site's content can be accessed via tagged links through MySpace and other blogs.

Participating acts are also involved, including Hasidic reggae phenom Matisyahu, who is posting a mobile blog tour diary leading up to Coachella. Tollett says he would like to eventually convince participating acts to use the system already established by Goldenvoice rather than look for their own blogging opportunities.

Whether fans use the blog to meet up at the event is almost irrelevant. "This isn't a hookup site," Tollett says. The point is to experience the festival through the eyes of other fans with whom a geographical or musical connection is shared.

As for the mobile element, anything posted to the Buzznet-powered service can also be accessed via any Internet-enabled mobile phone. This combination of real-time blogging and access anywhere viewing is expected to bring in an even greater element of interactivity to live events, some of which already embrace text-to-screen messaging.

But wireless access may negatively affect the initial experience. Like many festivals, Coachella takes place in an area—a desert—where a strong signal is difficult to find.

Coachella aside, the wireless industry is keenly interested in these sorts of community-driven, multimedia sharing—read: billable—opportunities. Operator Sprint recently launched a new element to its Picture Mail service that lets subscribers create an online community about any subject and invite friends to add pics, videocasts and text to drive multimedia messaging traffic on its networks. And MySpace is working with youth-focused upstart operator Helio to create a mobile extension of its online community.

Meanwhile, Buzznet hopes to create more custom blog services for ongoing tours and other entertainment events. This is the company's first official partnership. At other events, including the annual South by Southwest Music and Media conference in Austin, the company has posted fliers encouraging attendees to upload pics to the Buzznet site for others to view.

Depending on how this first implementation works, Tollett says he may include a custom blog as a standard part of all Goldenvoice events, including Hootenanny and the New Orleans Jazz Fest, and is recommending the experience to other promoters for events like Lollapalooza and Bonnaroo.

"It's a way to make the experience better," Tollett says. "I don't think it's going to help sell another ticket, but it will make you more invested in the event."

MATISUYAHU

SAMSUNG UPS MUSICPHONE ANTE

Just as U.S. gadget freaks are coming to grips with the wait for Samsung's 4GB 1030x musicphone, the company has now doubled down with an 8GB version.

In addition to the 2,000-song storage capacity, the mobile phone also features Windows Mobile 5 Software, giving it support for WMAs- and AAC- and MP3 and AAC. It also supports dual stereo speakers, dedicated music playback controls, microSD Card for additional storage and a Bluetooth connection with A2DP stereo support.

And if music is not enough, there is a 2 megapixel camera with flash and video recording/playback capabilities. The phone does not hit shelves until the second half of this year and then only in Europe. But with its EDGE wireless transmission technology—used by Cingular—expect a U.S. entry sometime soon after. Pricing details have not yet been unveiled.

—Antony Bruno

BITS & BRIEFS

IN SNOOP'S LEAGUE

Following up on his youth football league effort, Snoop Dogg has turned to the virtual sporting arena, forming the Hip-Hop Gaming League in conjunction with the Global Gaming League. Hip-hop artists competing in the league include Paul Wall, B-Real of Cypress Hill and Wu-Tang Clan founder Method Man. Professional athletes like soccer star Cobi Jones and the NBA's Jalen Rose will also participate.

Videogame matches between the players will run March through May, with a live finals event in Las Vegas. Players will have a custom Xbox 360 console installed in the location of their choice, and all games will take place via the Xbox Live network.

Fans will be able to follow all the games, check stats and leave comments at the league's Web site, hhgl.com.

Snoop says he formed the league to foster the growing intersection of hip-hop and video gaming. An avid gamer, Snoop also hosts Spike TV's "Video Game Awards show.

DJS GET THE MESSAGE

Calling radio stations is about to get a whole lot easier. WXK5-FM Boston (Kiss 108) is allowing listeners to interact with its DJs via mobile phone text messaging. DJ Dashboard is a wireless program that enables listeners to send text in to ad hoc polls, make song requests or answer trivia questions. An additional program, Text Club, lets them register to receive alerts, special promotions and other invitations from the Clear Channel station. WXK5 is working with mobile marketing company Enpocket to manage the interactive program.

ONLINE 'IDOL' CHAMPS

As the "American Idol" TV show continues its weekly trek to the finals, the franchise's online edition has announced its first winners. Run by Los Angeles-based Fluid Audio networks, "American Idol Underdog" allows aspiring musicians to digitally submit songs to the site where viewers can vote for their favorite unknowns. Celebrity reviewers include Isaac Hayes, Collen Raye and David Benoit.

Winners are selected in each of 13 genre categories, including Bettina (pop), Dominiq (top), Deadwood Revival (folk), Matt Roberts Quartet (jazz), Jab (R&B), Katie Minor (faith-based), Tony Ramey (country), Orchestronics (classical), Mitch Fatel (comedy), Chris Burton Jacome (world) and Such a Lazy Snob (electronic).
HFA EXPLAINS DECLINE IN 2005 COLLECTIONS

End-of-year results are in from the Harry Fox Agency. In 2005, the mechanical rights agency collected $371.5 million for its publisher affiliates. That is down 11.9% from 2004.

Explaining the decline in 2005 collections, HFA points to reduced revenue from record clubs and royalty compliance examinations (generally known as audits) and the general decline in recorded music sales.

"Despite the overall market downturn, we actually had a slight increase in regular mechanical collections for physical and digital products," president/CEO Gary Churgin says. He attributes that increase to proactive efforts to collect on a current basis, "rather than solely through a later royalty compliance exercise."

With almost 275 more publishers signing on last year, HFA represents more than 28,000 publishers worldwide, which hold rights in nearly 1.5 million registered songs.

The figures for 2005 collections do not represent calendar-year sales; they more closely reflect the retail period from fourth-quarter 2004 through third-quarter 2005, because fourth-quarter royalties are not due until the first quarter of the following year.

Collections resulting from royalty compliance exams totalled more than $63.3 million in 2005, a decrease of 88% from the previous year. HFA says a number of exams completed the previous year covered audits of a longer range of time and included several "high-dollar settlements," pushing up the 2004 figures. HFA's focus in 2005 also shifted to conducting more frequent exams covering shorter time periods.

Taking compliance-exam collections out of the mix, HFA's results for 2005 show total mechanical collections of almost $364 million, down less than 1% from 2004.

HFA also explained that record club sales are down, resulting in reduced collections.

The number of license requests in 2005 to record and release songs on physical media, such as CDs, increased slightly to 233,946. The number of license requests for digital products was almost 5.7 million. HFA issued more than 1.92 million licenses, including those for digital music products such as ringtones, permanent downloads (DPL licenses), on-demand streams and tethered (temporary) downloads.

However, the figures show that HFA has not issued licenses in response to more than 4 million requests made last year. This comes against a backdrop of online companies that say the music industry is slow in granting licenses.

HFA says there are a number of reasons why it has not issued the licenses in certain cases.

In many instances, the request requires a publisher's permission, which has not yet been granted. In other cases, the appropriate information was not provided by the person or company requesting the license. In still others, HFA does not represent some or all of the publishers who hold rights in a particular song listed in a request.

On the technology side, HFA launched last October a new version of HFA Songfile, its online song search and mechanical licensing tool designed for those who plan to make 2,500 copies or less of their recordings. In the two months after the site went live, more than 4,200 user accounts were created. More than 39,000 licenses were issued using this tool in 2005.

With other technology and management improvements, by the end of 2005 HFA was able to process more than 95% of license requests that required manual handling within 30 days, an improvement over the 60%-70% at the start of the year.

ADDING BULK: The Harry Fox Agency has launched a standardized bulk mechanical licensing program for physical product, such as CDs. The program allows record labels that require a high volume of licenses to transfer basic information from their computer systems without manually entering the information for each of their thousands of requests.

The system then returns to the labels a file with license numbers and "request status" information. The labels can track their requests through HFA's eMechanical online licensing system.

Once the licenses are ready to sign, the label can complete the transaction through eMechanical with a digital signature — reducing a license process that used to take weeks to a few minutes, HFA reports.

With the launch of the bulk physical licensing program, HFA now offers three tiers of online licensing services: HFA Songfile for up to 2,500 prepaid licenses, eMechanical for established HFA accounts to request and sign licenses online; and the bulk, physical and digital licensing systems for high-volume HFA accounts.
LUDACRIS BEHIND THE WHEEL
Rapper/Actor Drives Campaigns For Pontiac, Puma

LUDACRIS

Chris Bridges, better known in the music biz as Ludacris—as well as co-CEO of Disturbing Tha Peace Records—is one busy man these days. Though his sixth solo album, “Release Therapy” (Disturbing Tha Peace/Def Jam), does not drop until the summer, his face is everywhere.

For the past several months, fans have been lining up to see Ludacris in two films: “Crash” (winner of the Academy Award for best picture) and “Hustle & Flow.” Now, the hip-hop artist appears in a new recently launched ad campaign for Puma Sneakers and the Pontiac Solstice.

And on March 28, Ludacris makes a guest appearance on “Law & Order: SVU.” He will play a sociopathic relative of the detective played by another rapper/actor, Ice-T.

“For me, it’s about being versatile and doing the unexpected,” Ludacris says. When it comes to linking with brands, he says he looks for those brands he uses everyday.

Island Def Jam handled all the creative for the color-fantastic Puma campaign, which includes a print component. Zenith Media handled the ad buys.

According to Ludacris, his Puma partnership will grow in the coming months with the debut of Ludacris-branded Puma products.

Shoes are first in line. Ludacris says he is developing a model that has the Atlanta skyline on the side with the Disturbing Tha Peace logo on the back.

Ludacris appears in the Solstice spot, which features the sounds of the Ludacris track “Two Miles An Hour,” from his 2004 chart-topping album “The Red Light District.”

The campaign was created by New York-based urban ad/mar- tion agency Vigilante, chief creative officer Valerie Graves, art director/assistant creative di- rector Paul Osen and copywriter/assistant creative director Jack McGoldrick.

Graves calls the ad “Ludacris-friendly,” and says that “when you’re working with hip-hop artists, it’s important to uphold their creative standard”—while at the same time making sure the client’s product looks great.

This spot is surely targeted at a young, hip, tastemaking au- dience. And it is generating a lot of opinions in the blogosphere. Many people are questioning the Ludacris/Pontiac Solstice al- liance; others doubt the sincerity of his appearance, yet find the ad hot.

One prominent hip-hop pro- ducer views it as a big disconnect. “It’s all check,” he says. “Don’t be surprised if you see [Ludacris] mentioning the brand in a future track—or if you see the car in an upcoming video.”

Ludacris, who says he drives a Solstice, disagrees. “I never do anything for the check—I have enough money,” he says.

Whether Ludacris name checks Pontiac on a future track—or features a Solstice in a video—remains to be seen. Stay tuned.

A GIRL LIKE HER: SRP/Def Jam artist Rihanna has a very cool track on her hands with the Soft Cell-sampling “SOS.” The dance-pop jam—currently ascending The Billboard Hot 100—and the Pop 100—helped launch Nike’s new women’s dance-inspired clothing line and the “Nike Rock- star Workout—Hip Hop” inter- active music video.

Rihanna is also the new face of JCPenney’s juniors line, Miss Bisou. In addition to being part of a national ad campaign, Rhin- nia’s “SOS” video and music will be played in all JCPenney jun- iors departments.

The partnerships are a prelude to the April 11 release of Ri- hanna’s sophomore album, “A Girl Like Me.”

Fitness and music enthusiasts logging on to nikewomen.com can watch an interactive “SOS” video featuring Rihanna. While the pop/R&B artist sings and shakes what her mama gave her, consumers can purchase the Nike gear she is wearing—right then and there, with a simple click of the mouse—and learn her dance moves.

Fitness buffs who then want to take the full, hour-long “Nike Rockstar Workout” can do so at 24 Hour Fitness health clubs nationwide.

The video was created by MTV and celebrity choreographer Jamie King, who has worked with Madonna, Mariah Carey, Prince, Pink, Shakira and others.

Partnering with Rihanna was no brainer for Nike.

“Rihanna embodies the strength and beauty of the Nike fitness dance initiative,” Nike di- rector of U.S. communications for women’s fitness Kellie Leonard says.

But there is more: Rihanna also brings authenticity to the “Nike Rockstar Workout—Hip Hop” theme. And her worldwide appeal comes in mighty handy for a global brand like Nike.

Pausing for a moment, Leonard adds, “We couldn’t be happier that Rihanna’s single ‘SOS’ is so hot right now. That makes the music video on nike- women.com that much more appealing.”

MP3s Ready To Go
Madacy To Market Prepackaged CDs For The Download Shy

NEW YORK—Madacy Entertainment Group will launch a packaged-good Instant MP3 Library se- ries in an attempt to target older demos intimidated by downloading.

The company plans to release CD packages with 72 MP3 tracks priced between $19.99 and $29.99. Madacy, a budget label based in Mont- real, chose the MP3 format so it would be compat- ible with whatever devices consumers use, including the iPod.

As a marketing-oriented company, “this is in line with what Madacy does, coming up with con- cepts and themes to address lifestyles,” says Har- ris Sterling, executive VP of Madacy Entertain- ment Group. The first titles are expected to hit the street April 4.

Others have tried this before. Dublin, Ireland-based Promo Sound has a 100 Megahits MP3 se- ries, each devoted to a different genre or theme; “Blues Anthology,” for example, has tracks by B.B. King, Big Boy Crudup, Bukka White and oth- ers. Priced at 12.99-14.99 euros ($15.50-$18), the MP3 CDs work out to $2 per track.

For consumers, the CDs sidestep the need to download songs and load them on MP3 players. And the discs play in DVD players, computers, and car CD decks, says Andreas Wemsch, a consultant to the Promo Sound label. And since pay- ing royalties on 100 songs is expensive, Promo Sound uses public domain music. It has plenty to choose from since copyrights only have 50 years of protection in Europe as opposed to 70 years in the United States.

Stateside, Madacy is sticking to public do- main music, covers songs and masters it owns for release. This works out well for some com- plications, such as the two-disc “200 Best of the Classics” package, priced at $19.99, or “72 Big Band Favorites,” $29.99, both full of pub- lic domain material.

But on the “100 Workout Music Collection, $29.99, it works out less than fine. The compilation is divided into 10 work- out themes, and on such playlists as “Workout to the ’70s” or “Workout to the ’80s,” practically every song is a cheesy cover version done by the Starlite Singers.

One retailer said his company would consider carrying the Madacy product, but it would depend on what the label is doing to introduce and support the product, which is a new concept for consumers.

In Europe, Promo Sound discovered its prod- uct sells better in computer stores than record stores, Wemensch reports. It is a lesson not lost on Madacy executives, who hope to sell their compilations in the hardware aisle.
Victory E-Mail A Flashback To Record Biz's Past

The first week of March should have been a triumphant one for Victory Records and its controversial leader Tony Brummel. The company shipped more than 800,000 units of Hawthorne Heights' "If Only You Were Lonely," an almost unheard-of number for an independent label release. In its opening week, the album scanned 113,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan, good enough to land at No. 3 on The Billboard 200.

But because Brummel forgets he is already a success and is still hungry enough to fiercely fight for every advantage he can gain, Victory Records has evolved into a label that some love to hate and others love to love. And that means all Brummel's moves are subject to public scrutiny.

Even though Hawthorne Heights' album came in at No. 3, one prominent chain executive labeled it an "unmitigated disaster" that had been way overshipped. "We bought into the hype," he says. Hindsight suggests a more reasonable initial outlay should have been about 250,000-300,000 copies of the album.

Still, it is not like Victory is the only label that ever overshipped a record. Unlike major labels—which often have the attention span of a gum and will move on to the next easy sale as soon as it presents itself—independent labels in general, and Victory in particular are tenacious about working records for as long as it takes to reach sales objectives.

To some, Victory's biggest problem last week was the e-mail sent by street team director Abby Valentine that somehow found its way to the Velcro Rope online message board. That e-mail directed the street team to move Hawthorne Heights to the front of chain stores and to move Neko CD's so they would be difficult to find, let alone buy. Victory's Brummel and Valentine were apologetic and quickly labeled the e-mail a joke. But many of the retail, sales, and distribution executives that I spoke to last week were not buying the Victory explanation. All said they had never heard of one label specifically targeting another's records, and some even condemned the tactic as going "beyond the pale."

Whether such a tactic was intended or just a joke, there is no place for it in the modern record business. But the righteous indignation that came with the condemnations were from people who, in my view, had short memories. I joined Billboard in September 1989, before that I logged eight years working in two independent record stores in Astoria, N.Y., and put in a short stint at Win One-Stop, all sadly defunct.

I may not know anything about heroes and zeros, but I remember when the industry's credo could be summed up by the phrase "whatever it takes." And I still work in an industry where the mantra nowadays is to get your "unfair share."

I remember in the early days of the parental advisory sticker that some labels would put it on albums whether they deserved it or not just so they would sell more records to kids looking for forbidden fruit. I also remember an industry where people accused Wal-Mart of censorship just to drum up publicity for an album that might otherwise have fell under the radar.

I remember when free goods were the coin of the realm, and slush funds were created to pay for activities that could not stand the light of day.

I guess we all forget that before SoundScan began in 1991, the industry's idea of marketing was to convince retailers to in-flate sales when reporting to Billboard just to get a hit record with a bullet. When SoundScan was established, many industry leaders assigned their troops the task of finding out whether the system could be cheated when it came to determining the ranking of The Billboard 200. (It cannot, and they failed.)

I remember one incident when an artist closely identified with a certain label left for greener pastures, and the former label's staff did everything they could in-store to salvage the artist's first release at the next label, including taking down display aids and loading the album in bins, misfiled no less.

And speaking of overshipping, does anyone remember when labels were known to occasionally give retailers free goods to stop them from selling the "unfair share?" But the reps move around, so that tactic was in-vogue just long enough to qualify for platinum and gold certifications? I wonder how many platinum albums really only sold 400,000 units at the time they were certified.

I still work in a business where whenever some sales reps come into a store, the store manager, if he is sharp, has to assign a staffer to act as a secret shopper and follow them around. That way, if the reps move around, the label's merchandise and displays, the staffer can put everything back the way it was.

But during the first week of March, I was apparently the only one who remembered the bad old days. In order to find someone who remembered when tactics like those outlined in the Victory e-mail might have been more commonplace, I called a few retired sales and distribution executives.

Not surprisingly, those former executives, indeed, do remember such a day. One said, "I love it. We used to do it all the time, move our records to the front and make sure you would have to be an explorer to find the other guys' records."

We are all glad the music industry is no longer like the Wild West it once was. But many of the same people condemning the Victory act—whether it was a joke or just an overly aggressive mistake—at one time or another either issued orders, followed them or looked the other way when the activities outlined above took place. So, before you hit the sanctimonious-indignation button, remember we all make mistakes along the way. In the end, let's hope incidents like these raise the industry's business standards even higher.
ITALIAN INDIES VOICE PLEA AT SANREMO FESTIVAL

MILAN—Italian independent labels used the country’s annual music showcase as a platform to appeal for government help to save their businesses.

The 56th edition of the Sanremo Festival in North-west Italy (Feb. 27-March 4) was the first to be held since the launch of independent labels body PMI.

Caterina Caselli, PMI’s honorary president, told executives in Sanremo March 1 that Italy’s music industry is “undergoing a frightening crisis, and independent production risks extinction.”

The festival took place one week before Italy’s April 9-10 general election. In her speech, Caselli asked the attending deputy cultural heritage minister, Antonio Martusciello—who whose brief covers the music industry—or whoever might replace him after April 10 to act quickly.

Caselli outlined digital proposals at forum hosted by local IFPI affiliate FIMI and authors’ society SIAE.

One proposal was reducing value added tax—the European Union-wide tax set at different levels by each member country—on recorded music from 20% to 15%.

Long-term, PMI wants recorded music reclassified as “cultural goods,” attracting the lower VAT level of 4% applied to books in Italy. However, such reclassification has to be EU-wide and requires consent from finance ministers of all member states.

Caselli also asked for tougher government action to tackle Italy’s rampant piracy problem.

FIMI president Enzo Maizza points out that “these are measures [FIMI] has been calling for over several years. These proposals are not just about the indies: we’re all in the same boat.”

PMI currently has 71 members. It was formed in July 2003 after 73 of FIMI’s 85 members quit the association (Billboard, July 16, 2005).

Caselli is also president of the Sugar label, home to tenor Andrea Bocelli. She claimed in her speech that the war force in Italy’s music industry shrunk by 40% between 1999 and 2004.

During that same period, IFPI estimates that Italian recorded music sales dropped 35% from $8.3 million units in 1999 to 37.8 million in 2004. with retail value dropping 17% to $625 million.

Retail figures for 2005 are not yet officially available, but Mazzu says the trade value of the Italian market dropped 4.1% last year to $150 million; shipments fell 5.6% to 31 million units.

Caselli also called for the government’s adoption of a five-point action plan consisting of radio quotas for Italian repertoire; tax breaks for companies digitizing catalogs; the creation of a government department to promote Italian music abroad; encouragement of synergy between the music and cinema industries; and the addition of music to the list of cultural activities receiving financial support from EU funding programs.

Responding to Caselli, Martusciello defended the government’s anti-piracy record, citing the passage of the Urbani Decree on copyright and file sharing (billboard.biz, May 19, 2004).

The minister said he shared the industry’s desire to reduce VAT, but the 4% target was “too complicated at this stage.”

For several years, FIMI lobbied for the introduction of legislation to help the industry, but eventually abandoned those efforts (Billboard, Oct. 4, 2003). Martuscielli described the music industry proposal as “the mother of all issues” and conceded that the government “should have had the courage to do more.”

He added, however, “we intend to lend the music industry a hand—it is our duty to do so.”

PMI members unanimously expressed enthusiasm for Caselli’s proposals. Eddy, Italy’s president Paolo Franchini calls her speech “impassioned and practical, offering measures that could be put into effect immediately.”

Caselli “came up with several new proposals that were not made when we were members of FIMI,” Carosello GM Claudio Ferrante adds.

Such comments are echoed by Bocelli’s manager Michele Torpedine, who praises Caselli’s “highly productive” speech. “This government has done nothing for music,” he adds. “I hope the forthcoming elections produce a new one.”

On Sanremo’s final day, PMI presented a special award to Bocelli for his “contribution to the success of independent Italian music in the world.”

The overall winner of the 2006 festival came from the independent sector. TV viewers gave the most votes to vocalist Povia (signed to PMI member Target) with the song “Vorrei Aveo Il Becco.”

State-owned national TV channel Rai Uno says the final night had an average TV audience share of 48% in its time slot, with 10.8 million viewers, down from 55% and 13.6 million viewers in 2005.
U.K. Indies Scout Trade Deals Down Under

MELBOURNE—The U.K. music industry’s inaugural government-backed trade mission to Australia in February has yielded some swift results—and plans for several return visits.

Nine representatives from Britain’s indie music sector went on the trip organized by British independent labels body AIM and U.K. Trade & Investment, a government organization that provides financial, practical and advisory aid to U.K. companies looking to trade abroad.

“Australia is not only a viable market for British acts, but an important gateway into the Asia-Pacific,” London-based U.KTI music export promoter Phil Patterson says. The AIM/UKTI mission was the second such initiative by the two bodies; in June 2005, the groups brought 26 delegates to New York.

“We [now] plan closer ties with Australia,” AIM’s London-based international and membership manager Judith Govey says. AIM has about 900 U.K. independent labels and distributor members.

As a result of the Feb. 8-15 visit, members of the delegation report at least one distribution deal has already been struck with a Sydney label with other offers under consideration.

Several delegates and their Aussie counterparts expect to finalize further label and tour deals initiated during the Australian visit at South by Southwest in Austin this month.

During the Australian visit, delegates were briefed on label, publishing, media, promotion, digital and retail sectors Down Under, and I held discussions with local independents about the potential for acts in this marketplace.

“Clearly, the fact that [the U.K. delegation] came here to scout the market gave them credibility with local executives,” says Brisbane-based Stuart Watters, executive officer of Australian body the Assn. of Independent Record Labels.

Watters says that AIR has invited a delegation from the French indie sector to visit Oz by the end of 2006 and is investigating Australian trade missions to the United Kingdom, Japan and Southeast Asia.

“We’d be very interested in such initiatives, given the response to the U.K. mission,” says Jonathan Williamson, GM of Melbourne indie Rubber Records. Williamson says Rubber is in talks with three U.K. labels about licensing deals for their acts through Rubber, and vice versa, as a result of the visit.

The British delegates enthuse about several aspects of the Australian music business. In particular, they cite the opportunity to break acts through the live scene and the abundance of venues. Other assets include comparatively easy access to TV and radio, strong sales for indie acts and the buoyancy of the hip-hop and roots music sectors.

“Australia is an inspiring place,” declares Allison McGourty, managing director of London-based Lo-Max Records. “There is an enthusiasm and joy about new music in Australia that is a real tonic.”

McGourty is the first British delegate to strike a deal for an act as a result of the trip. She has licensed San Francisco band the Court and Spark’s current album “Witch Season” to Sydney’s Laughing Outlaw Records. Lo-Max has rights to the album outside North America through a licensing deal with Berkeley, Calif.-based Absolute Koshi Records, which also covers New Jersey alternative rock quartet the Wrens.


McGourty says she is also in talks with promoters for a tour by the Wrens and Lo-Max U.K. act the Favours in Australia this year.

Several other U.K. delegates say they plan to return to Australia. Carl Sjösten, founder of Northumberland-based Cleestar Records, will return to check out tour possibilities for his five-a-coaster. He says he also intends to discuss with local authorities a band interchange” between the cities of Newcastle in New South Wales and Newcastle Upon Tyne in northeast England.

Other delegates say they are following up a string of leads, including producing music for TV and film companies, synchronization offers and deals with touring and distribution partners.

Encouraged by the response to the February expedition, Patterson confirms that a second trade mission is expected to return Down Under in February or March 2007.

...
On The Road

RAY WADDELL rwaddell@billboard.com

BILLY JOEL TENDS TO HIS GARDEN

S
omehow between tick-
ing up an axe for “A Matter of Trust” and a not-perfect rendition of AC/DC’s “Highway to Hell” led by an imposing roadie known as Chainsaw, Billy Joel found another gear.

It was night eight—the big one—of the Piano Man’s historic 12 sellouts at New York’s Madison Square Garden, and Joel had already been kicking butt through 19 songs, beginning with a manic “Angry Young Man.” He had blended classics like “The Entertainer” and “Captain Jack” with obvious crowd pleasers like “New York State of Mind” and “Billy the Kid” and such rarely played chestnuts as “Vienna” and a positively swaying “Zanzibar.”

This was a classic portrait of a musician’s love affair with a city and a venue. What Joel has accomplished in bost-
ing Bruce Springsteen’s 10 Garden sellouts is remarkable on many levels. But, at nearly $20 million in gross, it will not break the biggest one-act box office stand in history, which goes to the Rolling Stones at the Tokyo-
dome in 1995 ($27.6 million). Joel will not have the biggest North American boxscore ei-
ther, which belongs to Wood-
stock ’99 ($28.8 million).

What Joel is likely to set is the top arena gross ever. And this from an artist who does not have current radio hits and a hot album perched atop The Billboard 200. Though he has the current rarities boxed set “My Lives” out now and wrote the classical album “Fantasies and Delusions” (2001), Joel has not released a studio album of new pop/rock material since 1993’s “River of Dreams.”

Regarding his current box-
office success in a backstage discussion with his agent Dennis Arfa and Radio City Entertainment president Jay Marciano, Joel quipped, “I should do fewer albums more often.”

Joel was every bit the rock star Feb. 27 as he charged through a fiery “Big Shot” and an encore of “Only the Good Die Young.” “Scenes From an Italian Restaurant” and, of course, “Piano Man.” The message here, really, is about enduring songs that are en-
ergetically performed by a band that can pull it off with flair and a frontman with star power. That’s still rock ‘n’ roll to me.

DBT IN THE CANNERY:

Two nights before Billy Joel
rocked Madison Square Gar-
den, Alabama’s Drive-By
Truckers reached a milestone of their own by notching their first Nashville sellout by draw-
ing 1,000-plus at the city’s Can-
nery Ballroom. The sweaty,
explosive three-hour Trucker fest had the crowd, the bar and the merch tables jumping. The show was promoted by Flashpoint Entertainment’s Brian Wagner. “The Drive-By Truckers are rock stars,” says Wagner, who has presented roughly half a dozen Truck-
ers shows. “Every time it’s as if we have a young Lynyrd Skynyrd or Allman Brothers Band performing. I say that because of the energy and chemistry onstage, the songs and the response the band gets from the crowd.”

Wagner calls DBT “a new classic rock band who have somehow formed a sound and have material with substance that makes them a very con-
temporary band that working-class Americans can relate to immediately. It’s real rock ‘n’ roll with songs, and not the cookie-cutter rock band that spends two hours on their hair and plays a 45-minute set with no songs and no solos like so many I see today.”

With their next New South album, “Blessing and a Curse,” set for release in April, Wagner thinks the Truckers’ time has come. “DBT is blowing up,” he says. “Every jukebox in town has one of their CDs, and the songs get played. They’ve got one of the greatest live shows out there, and the sick thing is they just keep getting bet-
ter. And people are talking.”

The Drive-By Truckers are booked by Frank Riley at High Road Touring in the United States and Paul Fenn at As-
gard for Europe.

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successful in presenting music around Jazz Fest. The event will return April 28-30 and May 5-7, and Mayers says his company will be active by then.

"I think Jazz Fest will have a lot of support and a good year," Mayers says. "We are still figuring out exactly what we are doing. But we plan to be active and have a good presence."

RISING UP

The New Orleans Arena, adjacent to the Superdome, is also slowly coming back online. The arena hosted Placido Domingo in a theater configuration March 4, with attendance near its 5,000 capacity. The event was produced in conjunction with the New Orleans Opera Society.

"We’re anxious to put [more] shows on sale so we can prove to the talent community that we’re back," says Glenn Minard, GM of the New Orleans Arena for Philadelphia-based facility management firm SMG. According to Beaver’s Fox, SMG executive Glenn Mon was in New Orleans for Mardi Gras on the balcony with some women throwing beads, and he told the New Orleans Arena would be ready for shows in April.

"These early indicators do not mean New Orleans is anywhere near fully returned as an entertainment market, promoters caution. "The city is still not what it was," Fox says. "I'm a big booster, I didn't leave. I'm back in the same location, ready to do entertainment. But there’s a lot of people that still aren’t back yet."

The fact that the city was even able to pull off a Mardi Gras is impressive. "The crowds were smaller, but everybody had a good time," Fox says. "A lot of people came from out of town to support Mardi Gras. And a lot of people that are from here and are now evacuees living in Houston, Austin or Dallas came back to support the city. [Now] they’re going to go where they’re living until they can build their homes back."

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Fox wants to inform agents, managers and artists that they can return New Orleans to their touring routes. "A lot of people are skipping over New Orleans because they think we’re not ready," Fox says. "I had to put 311 in Memphis and Sheryl Crow in Memphis. I had to take Martina McBride and MollyCrib and put them in Baton Rouge [La.] Now we’re ready to bring entertainment back to New Orleans."

Schneidau, a New Orleans native, says the HOB national team "has been doing a great job of convincing the artists that now is a more important time than ever for New Orleans to be included. Our message is, ‘We have a long way to go, and we need a lot of help.’ Our first priority has to be getting our levees straight and getting our people home. But aside from that, the spirit of New Orleans will not be defeated."

Younossi serves as CEO of A List and is in the process of putting together his team. He expects the new office to be up and running this month.

The company’s first major project will be a large club tour for Mobb Deep, whose new album, "Blood Money," will be in stores in early April on G-Unit Records/Interscope.

As the year progresses, Younossi will explore touring opportunities to help promote releases of G-Unit acts Banks and Young Buck.
Patrick Monaghan was not trying to create a panic. But when he saw Best Buy was selling two dozen independently distributed CDs for $7.99, he could not help himself:

The Best Buy endcap is real estate reserved for the very rich, and in his view the very rich are the major labels. Yet here were titles by Antony & the Johnsons and Cat Power, each priced for less than a full-album download at Apple’s iTunes store, let alone the wholesale cost of each of those CDs.

Monaghan, who runs Carrot Top Records in Chicago, went to the first place most music fans turn these days: the Internet. His blog—a rant against the labels that bought into Best Buy’s program—generated responses from Matador, Merge and Secretly Canadian, among others, and began a dialogue about a label’s obligations to its artists and its traditional retail base (Billboard, Feb. 18).

The discussion comes as independently distributed music enjoys a resurgence, with current-album market share increasing to 17.5% in 2005 from 15.8% the previous year. At the same time, the retail base that has nurtured the independent labels is in trouble. For the year to date, sales at independent retailers are down 27.4% from the same period from last year. That is on top of the 28.1% sales decline retailers experienced in 2005, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

“IT’S THE U.S. affairs and the economy we’re in,” Eric Levin of Criminal Records in Atlanta says. “Tire stores and nail salons are going out of business. I don’t understand why a few indie stores going out of business is news.”

Levin, who heads the Alliance of Independent Media Stores, has a right to be upset. The media has essentially pronounced independent retail dead, even though his store has recently expanded, and such outlets as Amoeba in Los Angeles and Good Records in Dallas are as strong as ever.

But while Levin and other independent merchants argue that their surviving indie stores are among the best the U.S. industry has to offer, he might be downplaying the actual number of such store closures. According to the Almighty Institute of Music Retail, which offers a store database online, almost 650 indie stores—and nearly 1,200 chain outlets—have gone out of business in the past two-and-a-half years.

As the number of indie stores has declined, Best Buy and other large merchants have shown greater receptivity to independently distributed titles, offering smaller or one-off marketing programs that are more affordable for cost-conscious labels.

That is good news for the labels, but puts them in the difficult position of sometimes turning their backs on their traditional retail partners, just at a time when the indie stores need them most.

Sub Pop GM Megan Jasper is a proponent of using indie-label marketing dollars to position CDs at independent retail. “The reason I don’t mind paying for it is because these stores have supported us for over 20 years,” she says. “They’re the reason we’ve stayed in business. It’s our responsibility right now to move forward in the digital world and simultaneously find a way to keep these stores relevant.”

But as indie sales shift to larger merchants, it becomes harder for labels to place and promote their product in indie stores. That is because the shrinking account base limits the opportunities to secure premium space.

What is more, the diminishing availability of shelf space helps cooperative advertising return a high pricing structure, even though overall U.S. album sales have dropped 21.2% from 2000’s total of 785.1 million units to last year’s 618 million units.

The Internet is also a factor. Labels looking for a way to forgo underwriting retail ad campaigns are increasingly turning to online solutions. Today, records can get a bounty of Web attention from the top online retailers for little money. However, it is likely that the days of free or cheap online store promotion will not last forever.

MARCH 1, 2006

AFFORDABLE PROGRAMS

Yet independent labels with the money to spend are finding big-box retailers suddenly opening their doors for releases by lesser-known artists—at least when it comes to regional or themed-driven programs.

“Retail has been offering some great programs recently,” says Missi Callazzo, VP of New York-based Megameforce Records. The big-box stores have been very responsive to the indies, and some accounts have even customized programs for the label, she reports.

Kill Rock Stars’ Moon agrees. He cites themed programs, such as the one that pro-voked Monaghan’s ire, as well as a girls-in-rock promotion at Best Buy, in which he placed punk act the Gossip.

“If you want to go whole hog and do a nationwide, store-wide sale, the price has gone up,” Moon says. “But the big chains have more cool, price-conscious options for indies. It feels to me like there’s more affordable options to do targeted retail than there were for us 10 years ago.”

But if the affordable options have increased, so has the competition for limited space.

“We get very frustrated with Barnes & Noble because we think they hit our adult demos,” one indie-label executive says. “We believe in them as a retailer. But we have been turned down quite a bit for their programs, which we can afford.”

Dealing with the larger chains can also backfire on an indie. To invest in such programs a label must be confident its releases will ultimately sell through. If not, the label soon will be eating returns.

And if the big boxes decide independent music is no longer cool, the labels will again be dependent on a weakened indie store universe.

“The chain stores will focus on what’s bringing in business, and they’ll try to go the extra mile,” Sub Pop’s Jasper says. “If, and when the day comes when independent records like Death Cab for Cutie are slowing down and another genre emerges, the independent stores will con-tinue servicing this audience.”

Indie labels still like to work with Tower Records, Virgin Megastore, Borders and Barnes & Noble—chains that carry catalog and have long supported indies—as well as the indie retail community, particularly the store coalitions.

“We love the indie coalitions,” Kill Rock Stars’ Moon says. He also cites indie retailers Amoeba, Other Music and Newbury Comics as “our cornerstones.”

But finding space at the coalitions is just as competitive as the chains. Independent retail has to be selective: Levin says the AIMS coalition usually gets upwards of 70 submissions for about 30 listening-station slots. Likewise, Don VanCleave, who heads up the Coalition of in-

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dependent Music Stores, says, “We are getting more than we can use.” He says CIMS programs such as the metal listening booth and its DVD stations sell out every month.

CIMS’ listening kiosks program runs $3,300, its top program is $8,000. At AIMS, the listening post costs $1,600. The Monitor Ti is program at Music Monitor Network, another coalition, runs $4,750.

CIMS and AIMS rely on a vote among their respective stores to determine which albums will win the opportunity to pay for space.

**THE INTERNET THREAT**

The Internet also plays a role in the marketing dynamic, sometimes supplanting and sometimes replacing cooperative programs.

Sub Pop’s Jasper notes that on the rare occasion that the coalition reject a Sub Pop artist, she can promote the artist online for almost nothing.

“That’s the beauty of amazon.com,” Jasper says. “When you go online, there are more options to actually have your CD released visible. There are so many more options that just don’t require physical space.”

Indeed, Jasper notes, the fan base for Sub Pop acts the Postal Service was built largely via the Internet.

In fact, many label executives cite iTunes as a bigger threat to independent retail than anything Best Buy will do. Like CIMS, they say, iTunes has won over an indie audience by snaring exclusive content for independent artists, including online-only EPs and add-ons to album purchases.

“If you have a little group of kids, even larger than the kids who bought the Postal Service at independent stores who bought that album online,” Jasper says. “They’re going to Amazon and iTunes. There’s a huge obligation we have to continue the health of independent stores. At the same time, we would be fools not to support the business of these companies. It’s a constant question, and it’s hard to predict where it will end up.”

But the economics of the Internet may soon provide the answer. With retail space at such a premium, many fear it is only a matter of time before such Web stores as iTunes follow in the footsteps of traditional retailers and begin charging for marketing programs.

Leila Ransom, head of sales for Chicago-based indie Touch & Go, says, “Brick-and-mortar retail is obviously supporting their bottom line through ad programs, so I don’t see why the Internet wouldn’t start doing that at some point.”

This too will change the equation for labels and retailers. No label is looking forward to the time when co-op dollars must be balanced among the Internet, independent retail and the Best Buys of the world.

“The importance is remembering why you need to do right by each organization,” Jasper says. “The independent stores are the heart and soul, and if you forget that, you lose the reason you even took a job at a label in the first place.”
LOOKED, Avenged Sevenfold logged Years, because Staind, Disturbed and from second grabbed most of the headlines. Rock was relegated to a sort of second-class radio citizenship.

Ironically, programmers had a bumper crop of releases from format superstars to choose from last year, including fresh titles from Foo Fighters, Nine Inch Nails, Green Day, Audioslave, Staind, Disturbed and Mudvayne.

But in 2006, many of these same programmers have turned to a new generation of rock bands to re-energize their stations. Most are pleased with the results.

"There’s a plethora of great product, an embarrassment of riches," says Ron Valeri, PD at active rock WAAF Boston. "I have stuff I want to get to and just don’t have the room for it right now because there’s so much great stuff."

Among the new acts to hit top 10 pay dirt on Billboard Radio Monitor’s Modern Rock or Active Rock chart this year are 10 Years, Matisyahu, Avenged Sevenfold, Hinder and Evans Blue. Avenged Sevenfold logged three weeks at No. 1 on Active Rock; 10 Years hit the pole position at both formats.

For most of 2006 so far, 11 new artists have hunkered down on the 40-position Active Rock chart, which reflects airplay at hard-edged, current-based rock stations. The format has not embraced that many new acts since 2003. In fact, there are four new artists in the current top 10. That has not happened for at least three years.

The situation is similar on the Modern Rock chart: 13 new acts on the 40-position list and two in the top 10—a record if you include the new track from Fall Out Boy.

The simple explanation for rock playing more new acts: supply and demand. The format is running out of new songs to play from last year’s superstar releases.

"That created an opportunity for some of the new bands," says Jim Fox, station manager at active rock KRXQ (98 Rock) Sacramento, Calif. "As a result, bands like Hinder got a shot they may not have otherwise."

With two new bands—10 Years and Hinder—in active rock’s top 10, you would expect Universal Records national director of rock promotion Dave Downey to be optimistic. "The stars are aligning for new artists," he says. "We’re experiencing success now because we’re getting more reactive records"—that is, records that test well and generate positive reaction from listeners.

"Rock music is as vital as it’s been," Columbia Records senior VP of alternative and rock promotion Ron Cerrito says. "There’s an underground." Coheed and Cambria, which is No. 27 at Active Rock with “Welcome Home,” “can sell 2,000-3,000 tickets in a big market three tours in a row," Cerrito says. "Now, they’re out with Avenged Sevenfold and playing 7,000-seaters in a lot of markets. Rock music is very healthy and very much in demand. It’s just a matter of rock radio recognizing and supporting those artists.”

Rock radio’s ability to drive sales has been confirmed by System of a Down, Cerrito says. The band’s back-to-back, thematically linked “Mesmerize” and “Hypnotize” sets have sold a combined 2.7 million units without crossover airplay. "Every other band selling that kind of tonnage gets played at pop, too," Cerrito says. "That’s a source of pride for modern and active rock radio."

Indeed, the outlook has improved for rock radio. For now, the station defections from the format have subsided, and year-to-year ratings are up. Rock (including active, heritage, classic and ’70s) had an 8.2 IAS-plus share in the fall 2005 Arbitron ratings, up from 7.8 in fall 2004, but down from the lofty 8.7 posted in the spring and summer of last year.

Active rock was flat at 2.3 for most of 2005, while modern rock declined consistently: 3.5-3.0-3.0-2.9. The slide is at least
partially due to the loss of key modern rock stations in several major markets.

WHERE'S THE PASSION?

Of course, not every rock station is playing more new bands. At active rock WRIF (the (Riff) Detroit, the response to fewer major releases has been replacing some current positions in its playlist with recurrences. "We have taken a more conservative approach," WRIF operations manager Doug Podell says. "But 2006 looks promising musically."

The Riff's conservatism is a product of its market longevity and older audience. "Their definition of new music is still Audioslave and Linkin Park," Podell says. "We still sometimes get too far out in front of that and may go a little too far, a little too fast with new releases. Last year caused us to be a little more patient and to take what we have and conserve it a little longer. It paid off for us and the listener."

Podell, Fox and other programmers say that in audition testing, the format's listeners have shown less passion for current rock during the past three years. One oft-cited reason is that by relying exclusively on hard rock, active rock became too musically narrow.

"It was different than what disco stations did in 1978," Fox says. "They branded themselves with a fad that passed. Some active rock stations only played music that positioned themselves as devil-worshipping, animal-sacrificing, baby-killing stations. When that fad passed, it became difficult for those stations to continue to pull big numbers."

Instead of this narrow focus, active rock stations are turning to new acts and greater variety. Still, the format has more palette-expanding work to do, some say.

Rock radio is very narrow right now. It needs to be broader," a major-label rock promotion executive says. "Appraising the heavy airplay given to such distinctive-sounding acts as System of a Down and Avenged Sevenfold, the exec says radio has not gone far enough to embrace new and different sounds and textures. Other left-of-center, decidedly rock bands, like the Mars Volta and Coheed and Cambria, have not received significant airplay, he notes.

The executive says radio plays bands that "seem safe" while avoiding edgy or outside-the-box artists. Yet rock radio's textual variety cup runneth over when it comes to gold titles. Ethereal, synth-driven Pink Floyd and acoustic Led Zeppelin tracks are abundant on the airwaves, but such sonic departures are largely verboten for new, unproven acts.

"I honestly believe if Led Zeppelin came out today, it would never take off," the exec says. "I don't think any [programmer] would listen to it today and go, 'Yeah, that's going to research.'"

The following acts currently appear in the top 20 of the Active Rock or Modern Rock charts or both. Also sharing that distinction is British band Hard-Fi, which is profiled on page 54. All sales figures are according to Nielsen SoundScan.

HINDER
Hinder's album "Extreme Behavior" (Universal/UMG) is bulletted at No. 7 on Top Heatseekers, with more than 96,000 units sold. The Oklahoma City quintet's single "Get Stoned" is No. 5 on Active Rock after 31 weeks. Hinder is playing U.S. dates, and "Get Stoned" can be seen on Yahoo Music.

HURT
Hurt's debut album, "Vol. 1" (Capitol), will hit U.S. stores March 21. The quartet's single "Rapture" is bulletted at No. 19 on Active Rock after seven weeks. The video premiered in late February, and the song has been gaining XM and Sirius airplay ever since. Hurt is also touring the States.

MATISYAHU
Matisyahu's surprise hit album, "Live at Stubb's" (JDub/Or/Epic), is up four spots to No. 30 on The Billboard 200 after 17 weeks, with more than 458,000 units sold. The New York artist's single "King Without a Crown" is No. 11 on Modern Rock. He will play Coachella and Bonnaroo.

PANIC! AT THE DISCO
Panic! at the Disco's single "The Only Difference" (DecayDance/Fueled by Ramen) is No. 14 with a bullet on Modern Rock. Its album "A Fever You Can't Sweat Out" is No. 44 on The Billboard 200 and has moved 285,000-plus copies. The Las Vegas quartet is touring the West Coast.

SHE WANTS REVENGE
She Wants Revenge's single "Tear You Apart" (PerfectKiss/Flawless/Geffen) is bulletted at No. 9 on Modern Rock after 13 weeks. The act's self-titled album is No. 95 on The Billboard 200 with almost 82,000 sold. The duo will tour with Depeche Mode starting April 27. —AMY GAVELEK
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WHEN THE ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM staged its 10th annual American Music Masters concert last November at Cleveland’s State Theater as a tribute to Sam Cooke, even the performers were star-struck... Elvis Costello, for one, walked onstage in a haze, leaving behind Solomon Burke and Aretha Franklin to sing “A Change Is Gonna Come.”

Costello admitted that he had to keep pinching himself, says Warren Zanes, VP of education at the museum, who was standing in the wings that evening. The singer—a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee in 2003—could not believe he was performing with his heroes on such a once-in-a-lifetime bill.

These are the moments the museum’s staff works toward.

“If you do it right,” Zanes says, “you then have someone of Elvis Costello’s stature, who is an ambassador, that goes and says [the Rock Hall is] about the music, about teaching the lessons that you can teach from the music.”

On March 13, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame will hold its annual induction dinner in New York. Black Sabbath, Blondie, Miles Davis, Lynyrd Skynyrd, the Sex Pistols and the founders of A&M Records—Herb Albert and Jerry Moss—are this year’s honorees.

Meanwhile, at some point this year, the hall’s 6 millionth visitor will walk into the angular $84 million facility, which was designed by noted architect I.M. Pei and opened in September 1995.

That milestone will merit a brief celebration, perhaps a few balloons and local TV coverage. But otherwise it will be just another day for the museum, which is scenically perched on the shores of Lake Erie.

There is little time for reflection for the institution, which has been strengthening its programs, expanding its facilities and enhancing its image.

“I think one of our biggest challenges is to remind people that this is an art form that changed the world, one that continues to sort of be the platform for many idealists on how the world can be different,” Rock Hall president/CEO Terry Stewart says. Just as the hall has drawn tourists to Northeast Ohio, it also has brought together a unique staff: unabashed rock ‘n’ roll believers, dedicated to not only promoting the institution but spreading its gospel. They include Stewart, former president of Marvel Entertainment Group and extensive memorabilia collector; Zanes, former Del Fuegos band member-turned-academic; and VP of exhibitions and curatorial affairs Jim Henke, a former writer/editor for Rolling Stone.

The staff brings rock’s past alive for, among others, the fans of tomorrow. In addition to reaching roughly 50,000 schoolchildren each year, from elementary to high school age, with various programs held in-house, the hall also offers a distance-learning program via video conferencing, as well as dozens of symposiums and concerts by music industry veterans.

The latest chapter in the hall’s educational efforts is coming to fruition this year, with the opening of a 20,000-square-foot archive and library, located on the Cuyahoga Community College downtown Cleveland campus.

“It’s a library and archives [that are] unique in the world,” Stewart says. It will offer the opportunity “to study original source material and other documents, trying to understand where this art form came from, how it rose to such prominence.”

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation was founded in 1983 and subsequently licensed the concept of the hall of fame and museum to the City of Cleveland.

The hall is funded by contributions from individuals and foundations, from state and federal sources, and via subscriptions from its 13,000-strong membership base. Overall, Stewart says the hall is doing well financially in a difficult climate for nonprofit organizations.

The museum’s vitality depends on its presentation of artifacts and an ever-changing list of notable exhibits, which are either loaned to or owned by the facility.

As for competition within the rock ‘n’ roll memorabilia market, which has proliferated exponentially during the last decade with eBay and other such entities as the Hard Rock chain seeking items, Stewart says there are plenty of items to go around, and more than likely, collectors view donations to the hall as a source of prestige.

The current featured exhibit is “Tommy: The Amazing Journey,” and an extensive Bob Dylan collection is due later this year. Even though diehard fans may find interest in specialized displays, Stewart says focus groups reveal that the desire to pay homage to the art form rather than specific exhibits attracts first-time and repeat visits.

The hall has created another draw for visitors with the CMJ/Rock Hall Music Fest. Debuting late last spring, the multiple-day, multiple-venue festival attracted more than 18,000 music fans.

That is good news for the Greater Cleveland Convention and Visitors Bureau, which estimates the hall’s annual 400,000–500,000 visitors generate more than $100 million in tourism for Northeast Ohio. More important, 90% of the facility’s visitors come from outside of the area, making the hall a first-day destination.

“From the city’s point of view, that’s why the Rock Hall was built: to attract people from literally around the world,” says Dennis Roche, president of the bureau.

Roche says his organization often supports advertising and marketing efforts for the hall to draw visitors from beyond Cleveland. And that is good news for Stewart and his team of true believers.

“It’s not a question of being successful, it’s a question of being more successful,” Stewart says. “We’re talking about [telling] the whole world... to come to Cleveland. It’s a very big deal.”
HENKE ON CURATING: SERIOUS, FUN AND FILLED WITH SPIRIT

BY KEN SCHLAGER

You could say that Jim Henke has the perfect job.

Trained as a journalist and raised on rock ‘n’ roll—in a suburb of Cleveland, no less—Henke is VP of exhibitions and curatorial affairs at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.

In other words, he is the guy who convinces rock stars—and the families of rock stars—to lend or donate their career artifacts to the museum. He is also the guy who decides what to display and how to display it.

Beginning in 1976, Henke spent almost 18 years at Rolling Stone, 10 as music editor. He wrote cover stories on rock legends including Bruce Springsteen, Eric Clapton, Jerry Garcia and the Clash and edited two of the magazine’s historical anthologies.

As a key member of the Rolling Stone staff, he was present at some of the early planning meetings for the Hall of Fame thanks to the involvement of the magazine’s publisher, Jann Wenner. So, when the hall needed a curator, the Ohio native was a natural candidate. Ironically, Henke had made a career change the year before, leaving Rolling Stone in 1993 to become VP of product development for Elektra Entertainment.

But the Rock Hall gig was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and Henke has made the most of it by leaving his stamp on every inch of the museum, helping to create an institution that informs, inspires and entertains its visitors.

Was there an existing museum collection when you signed on as curator in 1994?

There wasn’t really too much. It was more like some stuff from fans. There was very little of any substance.

What was your first move to change that? Because Jann had a relationship with Yoko Ono and John Lennon, he had called Yoko and said, “Jim is going to be the curator now.” I had met her a few times when I was at Rolling Stone.

Through Jann’s arrangements, we got Yoko to give us a nice collection of John Lennon memorabilia. It is on a long-term loan, but it was his “Sgt. Pepper” uniform and the leather jacket that he wore when the Beatles played in Hamburg and also some early song lyrics and school report cards.

So that was the first big collection we got after I got onboard, and that sort of opened the door to trying to get more.

What were some other early challenges? One of the things that I thought was very important was that it couldn’t be a d-flum museum. You actually had to hear music and video and things like that, and that hadn’t been really figured in so prominently (by the design team). We had to try and add those elements and then other stuff too. It had to somehow be serious and also be fun and somehow represent the spirit of rock ‘n’ roll.

I also thought it would be fun to include things like stage props, and no one had really thought about that before. So, we basically had to take [the design] plans and get things to work in there. Then, the other obvious thing was that we really didn’t have a budget to buy things... It was really a matter of convincing primarily the artists or their managers to either loan us stuff or give us stuff. It was really a big sales job.

How did you handle that? I put together a little staff that was, for the most part, other journalists that I had known. I had selected them from either geographic location—like someone who was out in California and someone who was down in Nashville—or sort of by their area of expertise. If someone knew a lot about the blues and folk, stuff like that. That was another one of the things I thought was really important—to go back and cover the roots of rock ‘n’ roll, let it not be all about iconic artists of the ‘60s.

In terms of the sales job, the thing we started doing even as the building was being built, whenever artists would come through Cleveland, we’d invite them down to the museum and the construction site and show them the blueprints and try to explain what we wanted to do. And, to this day, we still do that. It’s probably our most successful thing.

Once we get artists to come through here, even though it’s been open for 10 years now, a lot of them don’t quite know what it is. They may think it’s just a glorified Hard Rock Cafe type of thing. Ninety-nine times out of 100, artists who come through here end up really liking it and are much more likely to give us stuff.

What is it like when artists visit the museum? It sort of varies. We offer them our guided tour and sometimes they’ll ask us if they can do it after hours. Green Day was here this past summer and they came down after the show. A couple of people on my staff took them around. It was just them and the security people and that was it. And there are other people that don’t mind walking through when there are visitors here.

Do you walk around the museum yourself to see how people react to the exhibits? We try to do that. We also get e-mails sent to our Web site from people who have been here with ideas and suggestions. We’ve also got a visitor comment thing. I do try to get out and walk around. I mean, it’s fun out here during a busy day. During the summer when it’s really busy and sort of noisy and there’s music playing all over.

What have you learned from this? I always imagined it would be more iconic stuff like the John Lennon “Sgt. Pepper” uniform that people would care about and the esoteric stuff they wouldn’t really care about.

But what really impresses me is that most of the visitors, I’m always amazed, because they pore over these handwritten lyrics or memos and things like that that we have in our cases.

Is there a kind of Holy Grail out there? Something you really want for the collection? Bob Dylan is one person we’ve tried over the years to get stuff from and haven’t gotten too much stuff from him. Although now we are going to have a Bob Dylan exhibit that was curated by the folks out at [Experience Music Project in Seattle]. He was the one guy we have been consistently going after and haven’t had a whole lot of luck with.

You now have to compete for objects with other museums like EMP. And then there is eBay, which has given people a new sense of the value of memorabilia. Has this made your job more difficult?

It’s sort of gone both ways. In a lot of ways it’s a little bit easier for us now because we’ve been around for 10 years and have a reputation. If we call someone they’re more inclined to cooperate with us. Likewise, when bands come through they want to do stuff with us. People are always interested in giving us stuff.

One thing I have noticed is that the bands themselves are becoming more aware of the value of this stuff. A couple of bands even have an archivist on staff. There’s more awareness in general of the value of this stuff.

Overwhelmingly the collection seems to be about clothing and guitars. What does that say about rock ‘n’ roll?

That’s one of the tricky things about this museum. It seems like they’re going into an art museum where you look at the painting and it’s the original Picasso. If you want to hear the original U2 song you can go buy it in a store.

So, that’s a tricky thing in that we’re displaying the ephemera of the subject, although we do try to tell as much of a story as we can. That was one of the reasons for including more audio and video stuff. I do like seeing the handwritten lyrics where you can see how John Lennon or Bono crossed this verse out, rewrote it in and then rewrote something else in. I tend to like that kind of stuff.

Former music journalist JIM HENKE, now chief curator at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, is impressed by the attention that visitors pay to exhibit details.
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Congratulations on your induction into The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

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Blondie, who knew one word could be so colorful.

Ask anyone who has experienced popular music during the last 30 years, and the mere mention of Blondie is synonymous with a band that rooted itself along the dark edges of punk rock then reinvented the voice of the mainstream, unapologetically turning new wave into top 40.

On March 13, more than three decades after forming in New York, Blondie will be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. A week earlier, the two-disc album "Greatest Hits: Sound & Vision"—featuring a mash-up of "Rapture" and the Doors' "Riders on the Storm"—was released on Capitol.

By this point, Blondie's accomplishments have become folklore: The first rap song to hit No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 was the group's "Rapture," a composition that holds up amid so many hip-hop novelty hits all these years later. And all the hit songs in between—"Heart of Glass," "The Tide Is High" and "Call Me"—are standards in many a post-baby boomer's personal soundtrack.

To this day, Blondie's top 40 catalog maintains a sterling sophistication, though at the time, the act's foray into pop—really, a punk band singing disco—appeared to be a betrayal of its roots. Even so, few bands are able to...
BLONDIE (cont.)
from >>p33

court “cool” from the time they achieve public consciousness through their peak of popularity and beyond. But vocalist Debbie Harry remains as much a musical icon today as she did when she and her bandmates—including the current lineup of Chris Stein on guitar, Clem Burke on drums and Jimmy Destri on keyboards—were just getting started in the mid-’70s.

Before Blondie, Harry was the backup vocalist for a folk group called Wind in the Willows. When Stein met the former Playboy Bunny, they not only became romantically involved but also formed a group, the Stilettos. As they gained popularity at New York/mainstay punk club CBGB, the name was changed in honor of its lead singer’s bleached blond locks.

In 1977, Blondie’s self-titled debut was released on Private Stock Records, as was the single “X Offender.” Neither charted.

That same year, Chrysalis bought the label, issued “Plastic Letters,” and the band toured Europe and Asia. Single “Denis” took them to the upper reaches of the U.K. singles chart and boosted the album to No. 10 there.

“Chrysalis had such a strong belief in Blondie that they paid over $1 million—an unheard-of price back then—to buy the band’s contract from Larry Ulall at Private Stock. Their belief paid off,” says Richard Gottehrer, who initially signed Blondie and produced “Denis.”

Blondie then collaborated with producer Mike Chapman for the third album, “Parallel Lines,” the first of three consecutive projects to top the U.S. album chart. The single “Picture This” hit No. 12 in the United Kingdom, and follow-up “Hanging on the Telephone” scored at No. 5.

Stateside, it took “Heart of Glass” to turn Blondie into a household name—a song the label was hesitant to release because of its overt disco beat. It became not only the group’s first No. 1 hit on the Hot 100 in 1979 but propelled the album to sell 20 million copies worldwide. Singles “One Way or Another” and “Dreaming” followed, both making the U.S. top 10. But the biggest break of the band’s career was yet to come.

In 1980, Blondie teamed with producer Giorgio Moroder for another audacious disco song, “Call Me,” the theme from the film “American Gigolo.” Originally, the song was intended for Stevie Nicks who turned it down, so Moroder turned to Harry, who wrote the lyrics and recorded it over the already completed instrumental track. The title remained at the top of the singles chart for six weeks and became the No. 1 song of the year.

“Blondie helped create a new scene that was the beginning of a whole musical movement,” former Ramones drummer Tommy Ramone says.

Despite its increasingly mainstream, singable hits, Blondie was still accepted as a new wave band whose pop success did little to damper its hip image, even as Harry courted her fame along Main Street USA, appearing on “The Muppet Show” at the turn of the decade while Harper’s Bazaar named her one of the 10 Most Beautiful Women in America.

The fifth Blondie album, “Autoamerican,” was released at the beginning of 1981, preceded by the tropical-reggae pop romp “The Tide Is High,” which gave the group another No. 1 in the United States and the United Kingdom. “Rapture” followed, the group’s fourth and final chart-topping hit, whose videoclip featured a cameo appearance by New York artist and Andy Warhol disciple Jean-Michel Basquiat.

After that, Blondie continued on >>p36

Debbie, Chris, Jimmy and Clem:

Congratulations on 30 years of unparalleled creativity, sound and vision and on Blondie’s induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

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scored only one more top 40 hit before breaking up—"Island of Lost Souls" at No. 37 in 1982.

Soon after, Harry embarked on a solo career and recorded a batch of songs that remain beloved in the dance community including "Backfired," "French Kissin'" and "In Love With Love." She released five solo albums, including "Koo Koo" and "Def, Dumb & Blonde." She has appeared in nearly 40 films during the past 28 years, including John Waters' 1988 hit "Hairspray."

It would be 17 years before Blondie would return with the remarkably relevant album "No Exit," which sold more than 2 million copies worldwide. Single "Maria"—which fueled two tours of the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe—reunited the band with the charts, accompanied by a videoclip that showed how kind time had been to the long-lived group.

Allen Kovac, CEO of Tenth Street Entertainment, has seen Blondie through its second life. When Kovac met Harry and Stein, he already had under his belt the formidable comebacks of Meatloaf, Duran Duran and other heritage artists that he brought back to life.

"Debbie was intrigued that there was the possibility that a band could reunite—get the people together in a room to heal and sort out their issues—really come back together," Kovac says. "I convinced them that there is no greater path that any individual is going to take that will succeed more than climbing the mountain together. Just seeing them rehearse, I knew the magic was still there. When we shopped the new album, no label wanted it," Kovac recalls of the comeback effort.

So he essentially created a boutique company to release the album and single "Maria." The effort sold more than 1.5 million copies, hitting No. 1 in 14 countries, according to Kovac.

"There just aren't many bands that are willing to break the mold," he says. "When you look at what they have done—helping rap [move] into the mainstream, along with reggae, rock, disco and pop—they opened a lot of doors. Everyone tries to fit into a pipe and that's why we have a generic industry. But with Blondie, people saw that women could take on anything. Before there was Madonna, there was Debbie Harry."

Kovac says it has taken a frustratingly long time for Blondie's body of work to be given the kudos that it deserves.

"People are just now beginning to realize the brilliance of Debbie Harry and the creativity of Chris Stein," along with the songwriting and instrumental prowess of the band, he says. "I learned when we were working to get the Bee Gees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame that it takes more than a body of work and talent, it takes mounting a political campaign. Debbie went out there and shook everybody's hand. That's just what you have to do."

That degree of commitment is why Blondie remains a testament to just how far raw talent and hands-on management can take an ambitious troupe of musicians with the versatility to adapt. In this case, the power of music is ageless.

Additional reporting by Debbie Galante Block.

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ARTIST GROUP INTERNATIONAL

CONGRATULATES

BLONDIE

ON THEIR INDUCTION TO
THE ROCK & ROLL HALL OF FAME

WE ARE PROUD TO BE PART OF THE TEAM!
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER,

AND BLONDIE TOGETHER FOR 28 YEARS!
RIDE THE WAVES (cont.) from >>p38

that. Being an underdog, a dark horse—with no-
obody really tooting our horn for us and say-
ing how great we were—worked in our favor. It gave
us this great groundswell that was very natural
and genuine. That excited the music industry.

Stein: "Heart of Glass" going to No. 1 in
America is definitely one of those moments.
The first time we played live in England stands
out, too. Also, I'll never forget (ChrysalisRec-
do

Blondie, indeed, broke much musical ground.
When the group experienced success with
disco and rap, did that change your outlook at
the time, or is it only when you look back?
Harry: We knew it was different. We were al-
ways experimenting and trying different
things—it was a blessing and a curse. In the
very beginning, it left us without a strong iden-
tity or strong direction. But in later years, it stood
well for us, because we did break some ground.

You also paved the way for other artists to ex-
periment with different musical styles.
Did you realize how visionary Blondie was
at the time?
Harry: I knew that we were changing people's
attitudes to music. We were very urban. [Music]
was very segmented around the country. We
couldn't tour in certain markets in those days,
because there were no audiences for us. Our
music wasn't being heard everywhere.

There is a decidedly raw, imperfect quality on

Then and now: 'Blondie did a lot of
credible, groundbreaking work.' DEBBIE
HARRY says. 'To be recognized with this
induction makes it official.'

Blondie's first two albums. Was this deliberate?
Stein: No. In those early days, we just went in
and played to the best of our abilities and then
did overdubs, and that was it. When we met [pro-
ducer] Mike Chapman, it was a whole different
reality. He was a perfectionist. Today, "Heart of
Glass" could be done digitally in five to 10 hours.
Then, it took us about a week to do it manually.
It's crazy how we did it. It was endless rep-
etition until Mike was satisfied. This drove
me crazy initially, but then I realized the
value of it.

Harry: Well, that's when things start to
sound unique. Being recognizable and
having a sound is not easy to do. Today,
it's more difficult because so much has
gone before.

Many of Blondie's songs have not only
stood the test of time but in fact have
increased in popularity. What do you
attribute this to?
Burke: The songs. The image of Blondie is
irrelevant. Sure, it's what got us in the door, but
we wouldn't be around today if that's all there was.

Harry: I don't know if we were ever terrifi-
cally talented or technical musicians. We're bet-
ter musicians today than we were then. But we
always paid attention to songwriting.

In recent years, Blondie's music has been li-
censed for third-party usage. How do you feel
about such branding opportunities?
Harry: We don't really have any control [over]
the early Blondie material. That's all licensed

continued on >>p42
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BLONDIE is preparing for a major U.S. tour this summer.

RIDE THE WAVES (cont.)

Chrysalis Music. Most of the time they don't even ask us. We definitely make money from it. I can't really complain about that. It's not as if we were licensing it ourselves, though.

We do, however, hold the licensing ourselves for our last two (studio) albums. So, that will be a different world for us if anybody gets interested in that stuff.

Stein: We get a lot of e-mails from teenagers, which means people are discovering our music for the first time. But we don't have any say over these opportunities. You know, the general misconception is that we made a lot of money.

Are there any discussions regarding a new album?
Harry: Yes. But at the moment, we don't have a label deal.
Burke: We're definitely talking about a follow-up to "The Curse of Blondie." Being inducted into the Hall of Fame was a great shot in the arm for us.
Stein: The next record we do has to be a raw rock record. That's the trend now. It's come around full cycle—again.

What about the rumors surrounding the announcement of a big U.S. tour?
Harry: We're planning a post-induction tour of the U.S.
Burke: It is tentatively scheduled for May and June. We're looking at 40 cities.
Stein: We're overdue for shows in the States. The band is the best it's ever been. It's funny, because I wonder what the upside we sounded like back in the old days. It was probably pretty wretched. I know it was pretty rude compared to where it's at now. Everybody's musicianship is in a different place.

So many acts that debuted when Blondie did are no longer around. How has Blondie survived?
Harry: It's been very serendipitous. We're able to ride the waves. One of the reasons we were able to get back on our feet this last time was because we really found an interesting and interested management company. [Tenth Street Entertainment]. That was instrumental.
Burke: Popular culture has aged, and we've aged along with it. It has to do with the generation we're from. People still have an interest in art and music, and it carries through at more of a mass level than before. We're all interested in many different aspects of the media. This enables us to keep going. Now, Blondie is a home base for all of us. I wish we would've seen it that way before.

Stein: I really like "Autoamerican." I was heavily involved with that one myself. I had that crazy instrumental ("Europa") at the beginning. "Autoamerican" was the closest we ever came to a concept album, which is something we had always talked about before.
Burke: We had a good time making "Eat to the Beat." I always say "Dreaming" would've been a bigger hit had it not been for those crazy drums. Those drums were a run-through version. I was kind of walking away on the drums, just outlining ideas—which ended up appearing on the finished track.
"Autoamerican" was all over the place musically. I never grew to like it until I heard it years later, in a bar in London.
I'll never forget when we delivered the album to the label. They said, "What do we do with this? There are no hits."

What is left for Blondie to conquer?
Stein: We're still trying to get into the A-level of rock artists. Regardless of what everybody thinks, Blondie is still not in the same league as Aerosmith.
Harry: I was going to say, "Nasty habits." But I think we've already conquered that. I guess to write new songs—to write another great hit. ...
You have achieved the highest recognition possible from the Music Industry.

Congratulations on your induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and your 30 years of contributions to Rock and Roll.

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Los Angeles  San Francisco  New York
Some bands can boast having had top 40 hits on The Billboard Hot 100, Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs, Mainstream Rock, Adult Contemporary and Hot Dance Club Play charts. But Blondie can.

The genre-bending act's first Hot 100 hit was "Heart of Glass." The disco classic peaked at No. 1, the first of four chart-toppers for the act. In fact, no other New York rock band can claim as many No. 1s. Of course, "Heart of Glass" was not the band's first single—just the first to dent the charts. Earlier releases like "Hanging on the Telephone" and "In the Flesh" simply never charted.

For its second No. 1, 1980's "Call Me," Blondie paired with producer Giorgio Moroder for the theme from the film "American Gigolo."

The driving rock tune spent six weeks at No. 1, helping make it Billboard's No. 1 Hot 100 song of 1980. Soon after, the band's reggae-influenced "The Tide Is High" also shot to the top of the chart, spending 26 weeks overall on the tally.

Then, in early 1981, the landmark "Rapture" spent two weeks atop the Hot 100. Not only is it notable for being the chart's first No. 1 to contain any rapping, but the track also crossed over to a number of other Billboard charts. It hit the top 40 on the R&B/Hip-Hop Songs and Mainstream Rock charts and spent a month at No. 1 on the Hot Dance Club Play chart (as a double-sided hit paired with "The Tide Is High").

Blondie also hit the top 40 of the Hot 100 with "One Way or Another" (No. 24), "Dreaming" (No. 27), "Atomic" (No. 39) and "Island of Lost Souls" (No. 37). The act disbanded in 1982 following the release of the album "The Hunter." After the group re-formed for the 1999 album "No Exit," the set's first single, "Maria," became a surprise hit in the United States and overseas.

In the United States, it gave Blondie its first Hot 100 entry since 1982, and it was a top 10 hit on the Adult Top 40 and Hot Dance Club Play charts.

In the United Kingdom, "Maria" debuted at No. 1 on the Official U.K. Singles Chart, making it the band's sixth No. 1 there. The group also reached the top with "Heart of Glass," "Sunday Girl," "Atomic," "Call Me" and "The Tide Is High."

All told, Blondie has notched 20 top 40 hits in the United Kingdom, with the most recent being 2004's "Good Boys" (No. 12).

Below is an exclusive chart, compiled by Nielsen BDS, which proves the band's enduring popularity on the airwaves. The list ranks, by detections, the group's 10 most-played songs of 2005. The chart surveyed all formats of U.S. radio (including classic rock, college and oldies stations), video channels (like MTV and VH1), satellite radio (Sirius and XM) and cable music service Music Choice.

Blondie's Most-Played Songs Of 2005

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<td>7</td>
<td>Good Boys</td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hanging On</td>
<td>Chrysalis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Logic/Beyond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rip Her To Shreds</td>
<td>Chrysalis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chart ranks, by detections, Blondie's 10 most-played songs of 2005, according to Nielsen BDS. It includes all formats of U.S. radio that survey BDS monitors (including classic rock, college and oldies stations), video channels (like MTV and VH1), satellite radio (Sirius and XM) and cable music service Music Choice.
During the past two decades, the South by Southwest Music and Media Conference has earned a reputation as the premier showcasing opportunity in America for acts on the cusp of breaking into the mainstream. For artists from independent labels, SXSW has leveled the playing field, building critical word-of-mouth that is as valuable as any major-label marketing budget.

Last year the conference and its music festival brought that boost to Hasidic reggae singer Matisyahu, who appeared at SXSW just weeks before Or Music released his album “Live at Stubbs,” with distribution by Sony-owned RED Distribution. The title was subsequently “upstreamed” to Epic Records and has become a fixture on modern rock radio.

In 2004, it was hot Scots Franz Ferdinand who broke out, also moving from an indie label to a major and onto mainstream success, in part because of the buzz the band generated at SXSW.

When the music conference, festival and trade show opens March 15, the 20th anniversary of the event will once again bring high expectations for key bands set to showcase. Critical ears await, among others, Arctic Monkeys and Grand National from the United Kingdom, rock duo Deadboy & the Elephantmen, British rapper Lady Sovereign and Minneapolis-based rock act Tapes ‘n Tapes.

In addition, the Welsh alt-rock act People in Planes is set to headline a Billboard showcase March 16 at the Dirty Dog Bar (see story, page 53).

Yet for every attention-grabbing breakthrough, there are dozens of other stories of how appearing at SXSW at the right time can alter a band’s career—thanks to the conference’s mix of tastemaker attendees, comprising label executives, radio programmers, journalists and other music professionals.

“Their opinion can truly shape what the rest of the audience thinks of you,” says Wayne Coyne, frontman of the Flaming Lips, who released their debut album on independent Restless Records in 1985.

Coyne should know. The Flaming Lips’ SXSW appearances during the past 10 years illustrate how an act can use the festival as a development platform, running the gamut from outrageous experimentation to career revitalization.

By 1997, the Flaming Lips had made the move from Restless to Warner Bros. Records, but was stalled at a crossroads marked by personnel changes and personal tragedies. Then Coyne staged the Parking Lot Experiment, in which he led SXSW attendees to an Austin parking structure and instructed 30 people to simultaneously play on their car stereo cassettes of music he composed. The result was a bizarre symphony that reinvigorated the act and thrilled attendees.

“It was an absurd thing to tell a couple thousand people to come to a parking lot and see this thing,” he recalls. “To call this thing an ‘experience’ would be kind . . . But people showed up with their minds wide open. I think that enthusiasm spread from Austin to the rest of the world.”

And that response opened the door for Warner Bros. to release “Zaireeka,” the Lips’ four-CD concept album that extended the experiment into the homes of fans.

The Lips returned to SXSW as a trio a few months prior to the release of “The Soft Bulletin” in 1999. Coyne has been a featured speaker at SXSW and last year a documentary about the band, “The Fearless Freaks,” was screened there. The promise of musical discoveries and the heady environment of downtown Austin have lead industry professionals to keep returning to SXSW. Sub Pop co-founder Jonathan Poneman’s first visit to SXSW was in 1992, and the indie-label veteran has been back seven or eight times through the years.

“I love Austin, and I like the feeling of the event,” he says. “There’s more merriment and chance for good-old-fashioned hijinks and something spontaneous to happen, instead of more calculated industry-driven events you’d find in other places.”

Poneman recalls standout SXSW performances from such Sub Pop acts as the Shins, Hot Hot Heat and the Pernice Brothers, even though the last two acts have left the label. “There’s been so many that it’s hard to remember them all,” he says. “But it’s done us right.” This year, the Brunettes, Flight of the Conchords, Kelley Stoltz, Band of Horses, the continued on >>>46
20 YEARS (cont.)

from >>p46

Elected and Rogue Wave will perform March 17 at Sub Pop’s showcase at Red Eyed Fly.

Poneman admits to grousing about the expense of putting on the seemingly required showcase.

“But at the end of the day, I guess we don’t really have to be there,” he reasons. “We really come back of our own volition and love for the event.”

Astralwerks GM Enrol Kosoline concurs that SXSW’s location plays a tremendous part in its longevity. “The success of the event and the geographical location of the event are not mutually exclusive at all,” says the executive who first attended SXSW in the late ‘80s when he was working in college radio. “Austin is very much a music town. There is a wide array of music venues that operate year-round. It’s a thriving and very real music community, and that’s a big part of it.”

As such, the venues usually have good sound and top-notch crews. “Those things are crucial,” Kosoline adds. “You can spend a ton of money and put your hanging and sound lighting where a ton of artists down, but if the people who are facilitating the audience’s experience, if those people aren’t professional and don’t have their act together, it can all be for naught. There’s nothing worse than going through all that trouble and then you’re at the gig and it sounds like crap.”

Another plus, Kosoline adds, is that SXSW tends to draw music lovers with open minds. “Once it was more of a rootsy event, more indicative of the Austin vibe than it is today,” he says. “They’ve expanded what they do. Now we can do a gig with bands like Hot Chip and the Juan McClean, who are a bit more rhythmic, and people are more up for it. We had Fatboy Slim close out our big party last year, and it was remanded.” (This year, singer/songwriter Beth Orton will headline one of two Astralwerks showcases.)

It was Austin’s open-minded environment that SXSW founder Michael Caflon suggests to Matisyahu record his debut for the label at legendary hot spot Stub’s and later appear at SXSW prior to its release.

“He delivered, and the timing was perfect,” recalls Caplan, who is now senior VP of A&R for Epic Music Group and president of the upstart NuHaven Music label. “We couldn’t have timed it any more perfect.”

While SXSW’s growth has opened the doors to more international acts through the years, some veterans complain that it has left some early supporters feeling squeezed out.

“I hate to say it, but it was sure fun when it was smaller,” Frontier Records founder Lisa Fancher says. “It’s overwhelming now.”

Fancher remembers the days in the early ’90s of seeing great bands in small venues and meeting the rock critics who gave positive reviews to the albums on her label, but now finds the crowds unbearable and the price of a flight, hotel room and registration prohibitive to her small indie budget.

But just as some indie veterans have decided to forgo SXSW, others will be returning to the festival for the first time in years. Jay Faires, who once regularly attended the conference as the founder of Mammoth Records, will return to SXSW after a hiatus in his new role as president of Lions Gate Music and Publishing.

“I always used to call it ‘spring break for the music industry,’” he says. “There are still great bands and healthy deal-making. And it’ll be a really good opportunity to let people know what you’re up to.”

Among the thousands of bands booked to showcase at the South by Southwest Music and Media Conference and Festival, a handful have earned significant pre-event buzz. Here is a look at some of the acts that arrive with high expectations.

**ARCTIC MONKEYS**

Much like Franz Ferdinand’s 2004 rapturously received South by Southwest debut at Buffalo Billiards, the Arctic Monkeys descend on this year’s festival as one of the hottest bands in recent memory, British or otherwise.

Sparked by an undeniable energy filtered down from punk forefathers like the Clash and the sharp lyrical jabs of 19-year-old frontman Alex Turner, the group’s first Domino set, “Whatever People Say I Am, That’s What I’m Not,” became the fastest-selling U.K. debut of all time last month. It bowed at No. 1 with 360,000 copies sold.

In addition, the Monkeys have already racked up two No. 1 U.K. singles with the infectious “I Bet That You Look Good on the Dancefloor” and “When the Sun Goes Down.” So far, neither tune has made a major impact on U.S. radio, but intense media coverage helped propel the album to a No. 24 debut on The Billboard 200 earlier this month.

For now, the Monkeys are playing only a handful of North American shows surrounding SXSW, allowing their buzz to build while the band focuses more on international touring throughout the summer.

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

Austin’s own! I Love You But I’ve Chosen Darkness is certainly no stranger to SXSW. But for the first time this year, the band will play the festival in support of a full-length album, “Fear Is On Our Side,” released March 7 via independent label Secretly Canadian.

Through the years, two members of Chosen Darkness have been affiliated with fellow Secretly Canadian act Windsor for the Derby, with whom it shares a deliberate, often-instrumental approach. While Chosen Darkness’ 2003 self-titled EP hinted at its potential, “Fear Is On Our Side” reveals a dramatically improved band wielding songs that are impossible to un latch from memory.

On standouts like “Last Ride Together,” “According to Plan” and “We Choose Faces,” the influence of mood-driven 1980s rock outfits, like the Chameleons and Talk Talk, shade the sweeping, cinematic material with a dark edge, underscored by production from Ministry bassist Paul Barker.

After SXSW, the band will embark on a spring U.S. tour.

**GRAND NATIONAL**

Grand National’s 2004 Sunday Beat debut, “Kicking the National Habit,” was eaten up in the band’s native United Kingdom as well as in France and Australia. Until now, it has been available only as an import in North America, but its March 14 domestic release via Recall Records coincides nicely with Grand National’s appearance at SXSW.

The album’s new edition features four additional songs plus three remixes, including Sasha’s dazzling take on “Talk Amongst Yourselves.” Thanks to exposure via music snippets on “CSI: Miami” and “Six Feet Under” and support from West Coast radio DJs like Nic Harcourt and Jason Bentley, Grand National is not a completely unknown entity across the Atlantic.

Also working in the band’s favor is its diverse sound, informed in equal parts by clever samples (“Cherry Tree”), dance-friendly rhythms (“Playing in the Distance”) and pop-rock sensibility (“Daylight Goes,” “North Sound Off”) that brings vintage Police to mind.

The band plans to tour internationally for most of the spring and summer.

**LADY SOVEREIGN**

What would SXSW be without a hotly tipped British rapper?

With such alumni as M.I.A. and Dizzee Rascal, the event has become one of the first stops for U.K. hip-hop acts, and this year is no different. Nineteen-year-old Lady Sovereign is the latest rapper from across the Atlantic to be granted “next big thing” status. But she has one thing going for her that her forebears lacked—a cheerleader as powerful as Jay-Z.

The superstar signed Lady Sovereign to Def Jam, and a full-length is planned for later this year. Right now, the rapper has an EP out on Chicago’s Chocolate Industries, “Vertically Challenged,” which has sold nearly 10,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Like the Streets, Lady Sovereign’s raps find great humor in the everyday, and with production help from Basement Jaxx, her music is club-ready. Pitching herself as a linguistically tricky “white midget,” assembling a reputation for crazy live gigs and already able to boast remixes by the Beastie Boys’ Ad-Rock and Guislain Porter, the...
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CRITICAL EARS AWAIT ACTS (cont.)

DEADBOY & THE ELEPHANTMEN

Like their Fat Possum labelmates the Black Keys, Deadboy & the Elephantmen are a two-piece rock band. But that is where the comparisons to the Keys and fellow boy-girl duo the White Stripes end.

Guitarist Dax Riggs and drummer Tess Brunet cover quite a bit of stylistic ground on their debut album, ‘We Are Night Sky,’ released Feb. 7. Although there is little evidence of Riggs’ formative time fronting the late Louisiana hard rock act Acid Bath, there is plenty of sweaty, no-nonsense rock’n’roll like “Blood Smoke.” “Stop, I’m Already Dead” and the David Bowie-tinted “How Long the Night Was” to be found in the group’s repertoire.

But Riggs and Brunet are just as effective on such harmony-laden acoustic numbers as “No Rainbow” and “Evil Friend.”

In the run-up to SXSW, Deadboy & the Elephantmen were on the road with a similar quirky duo, the Fiery Furnaces. As for that name? It was indeed inspired by the film “The Elephant Man,” which Riggs saw as a 10-year-old and says was the source of his nightmares for years.

ART BRUT

It would be easy to lump Art Brut in as part of the Franz Ferdinand/Bloc Party “art wave” scene (considering the name), but the spunky quintet’s obsession with pop music proves too bewildering for simple categorization.

The South London-based band blends plenty of silly in with the serious, from mid-song shoutalongs to snarky lyrics.

Art Brut’s initial demo, “Brutlogs,” was strong enough to lead to a deal with Rough Trade in 2003, which released the band’s first single, “Formed a Band,” the following year. Shifting to Fierce Panda, Art Brut brought forth the double A-sided single “Modern Art” / “My Little Brother,” which reach No. 49 on the U.K. singles chart, the label’s best showing on the tally.


Following SXSW, the group will embark on a U.S. headlining tour that begins March 19 in Los Angeles.

TAPES ’N TAPES


During the past six months, blog fueled buzz has ratcheted up interest in the band, and it will play no fewer than eight performances at SXSW.

Last fall, the band self-released its debut album, “The Loom,” which will be racked at retail via the Coalition of Independent Music Stores in time for SXSW, according to group manager Keri Wiese.

After SXSW, Tapes ’n Tapes will head to the West Coast for a short tour and has its eye on a visit to Europe in May, to be followed by extensive roadwork this summer.

The band is also working on new material it hopes to unveil at SXSW and upcoming shows.

Word is that labels big and small have been sniffing around and that preliminary discussions have taken place with both.

Additional reporting by Katie Hasty and Todd Martens.

WE WERE CATCHING LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE

South by Southwest Co-Founder Reflects on Two Decades of Premier Music Event.

BY TODD MARTENS

Roland Swenson has devoted 20 years of his life to a music festival.

And there is no end to that commitment in sight.

Inspired by the pioneering New Music Seminar in New York, Swenson and his partners—Austin Chronicle editor Louis Black, promoter Louis Meyers and Chronicle publisher Nick Barbaro—considered, but soon jettisoned, the idea of persuading the music industry to come to Austin.

Instead, the four put the emphasis on live music, inviting bands from nearby cities to perform showcases.

At the time, Swenson, the “promotion person” at The Austin Chronicle, expected maybe 150 to come. More than 700 registered.

And the South by Southwest Music and Media Conference, boasting the now-familiar acronym SXSW, became a yearly event.

During the past two decades, the conference has expanded to embrace the creative worlds of film and interactive media. But the music festival remains its heart.

Swenson took a break from preparing the 2006 event to discuss the festival’s history and how the vision for it has changed now that total attendance tops 16,000.

Talk about your original vision and how that has changed as the festival has grown.

As far as our original idea, it was to create an event that the artists and the companies they work with could use to promote themselves. There were various myths about our original intent. Some people say it was only supposed to be for Austin bands. No, it was never intended to be for only Austin bands. In fact, one of the things we worked hardest on in the beginning was drawing in artists from other parts of the country.

Some people say it was just supposed to be for unsigned bands. But that’s not true either. At various times, I worked with bands who were signed to major labels, and I knew they needed resources that could be met by an event like this. This was always designed to work for those artists as well. So the same idea is there. It’s just on a grander scale today.

What were the discussions you and your partners had immediately after the first year like?

Well, we started with very modest goals. We were hoping we would get 150 people to come, and we had about 700 people who registered for this thing. It surpassed our expectations right away. We realized we were catching lightning in a bottle. It was now incumbent on us to not let it out and keep making this work. It was tricky. We thought we understood what we were doing, but each year taught us we had more to learn.

What was your day job prior to starting SXSW?

I was the promotion person, among other duties, at The Austin Chronicle. Prior to that, I had managed some local bands and had a little indie label. I had a working-class, music business experience.

When did this become a full-time position for you?

I started working full time (on the festival) in 1991. Louis Meyers left in 1994. Louis Black and Nick Barbaro are still my partners. It’s been the three of us for the last 12 or 13 years. It meant a big drop in my income for several years, but it was getting to the point where I wasn’t able to work on anything other than SXSW for a good chunk of the year.

I began to see that this is a year-round proposition. After we finish in March, it takes us a good six weeks to finish all the business from the conference—collect all the money and pay all the bills. Then we spend a lot of time compiling all the feedback we get from the registrants.

Each year seems to set a new attendance record. Have you given any thought as to why SXSW is doing so well if the industry is in a perpetual slump?

We grow during tough times for the music industry. When money is tight, we become more attractive. We’re a relatively inexpensive way to promote artists, rather than having a showcase where you fly in a...
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"CATCHING LIGHTNING" (cont.)

from >>p48

bunch of media people and executives. You can have it here and get that audience.

The events that come here to play are being exposed to the press from around the world. We have a good representation from radio, both commercial and noncommercial. We have a good turnout from talent buyers. We have TV people. Then we have the industry itself.

Would you ever put a cap on registration? People think we have some control over how many people come, and we don't. People say we should cut off registration, but that doesn't stop people from coming. They'll just come and not be registered. That partly has to do with the growth of the fringe events.

The other side of the coin is that with more business people coming to the conference, the opportunities for the acts have also risen.

You bring up the fringe events. There is essentially a shadow SXSW now, with all the daytime parties and VIP events at night. It's a double-edged sword for us. Undoubtedly, all the parties and events going on around us is part of what draws people to our events. The other side of that is that we find ourselves competing for an audience with all these daytime events. It's put the onus on us to come up with really strong programming in our panels and to bring traffic into our trade show.

You have had your share of detractors. It seems to have died down, but almost immediately there were anti-SXSW events.

How did that affect you? You know, rebelling against authority is pretty basic in rock 'n' roll. We went through a long period where we were perceived as "the establishment," or something silly like that.

Now that we've been around as long as we are, people have just kind of accepted that this is what we do. The furor has definitely died down, but that's not to say there won't be future backlashes. It seems silly to me, because they wouldn't be doing their event if we weren't doing ours.

What happened when you tried to replicate the model in Portland, Ore., in the late 1990s? That's when we learned we really weren't all that smart. We did that for seven years. It was the kind of thing that was really fun and we loved Portland, but every year was kind of like playing chicken.

‘When money is tight, we become more attractive as a relatively inexpensive way to promote acts.’

—ROLAND SWENSON

What happened is we were working with a weekly paper there, and it didn't turn out the way they wanted. They told us they wanted to do something themselves, and we said, "OK, then we're out."

It turned out to be a good thing for us. If we had gone ahead with the event, it would have occurred Sept. 15, 2001. If we had gone ahead, it could have sunk the company.

Can the film and interactive events ever earn the stature of the music event? We didn't want it to just be that film event that had a lot of music stuff in it. We really wanted it to be an event that could stand on its own and have its own reputation. We've succeeded on that level.

Whenever writers put together a list of the top 10 film festivals in the world, we're always included in that. Every year we're seeing more world premieres and films that are in serious contention for distribution deals.

The interactive media event was tied to the tech boom in that it grew really fast and then dropped off. Now it's kind of picked up steam again. It was us looking to the future trying to figure out where entertainment was going to be in the next century. It seemed obvious enough it was going to be some combination of sound and images and interactivity.

Can SXSW get too big? Any talked-about show seems to fill up quite early in the evening these days, and each year it gets harder to club hop. It's always been about choices. You can't see everything you might want to see. The thing is that even when we were a third the size we are now we had the same problem of people not being able to get into every show they want to get into. To a certain extent, that's the nature of the beast.

If we're bringing bands people want to see and putting them in club-type settings, it's going to fill up. What we've tried to do, and it's kind of a vicious circle, but we keep expanding the number of venues we use to accommodate the attendance.

But that drives attendance, so it's a balancing act. At the same time, there are kind of built-in brakes on the event in that there are so many seats on airplanes and there are only so many hotel rooms. It does get to a point where people just can't get here.
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THURSDAY, MARCH 16th
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217 E. 6th STREET 2:00PM
Presented by TagWorld

THURSDAY, MARCH 16th
@ THE DIRTY DOG
505 E. 6th STREET 12:00 MIDNIGHT
Presented by BILLBOARD

FRIDAY, MARCH 17th
Performing Live
@ WATERLOO RECORDS
600A N. LAMAR 5:00PM

THE EXIT

THURSDAY, MARCH 16th
Live on KROX
from BUFFALO BILLIARDS
201 E. 6th STREET 2:30PM

THURSDAY, MARCH 16th
@ THE DIRTY DOG
505 E. 6th STREET 11:00PM
Presented by BILLBOARD

SATURDAY, MARCH 18th
@ THE BEAUTY BAR
7th & RED RIVER 1:45PM
Presented by The Village Voice/Jelly NYC

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Top Independently Distributed Labels

**Post LABEL Name (Charted Feb)**

1. **TVT (12)**
2. **KOCH (20)**
3. **VICTORY (16)**
4. **BROKEN BOW (2)**
5. **COMEDY CENTRAL (4)**
6. **EPITAPH (17)**
7. **SADDLE CREEK (3)**
8. **SIDEONE DUMMY (4)**
9. **URBAN BOX OFFICE (5)**
10. **RUTHLESS (2)**

Top Independently Owned Labels

**Post LABEL Name (Charted Feb)**

1. **HOLLYWOOD (23)**
2. **TVT (10)**
3. **CURB (10)**
4. **CONCORD (7)**
5. **WIND-UP (10)**
6. **ASYLUM (8)**
7. **RAZOR & TIE (8)**
8. **WALT DISNEY (10)**
9. **MACHETE (10)**
10. **V2 (2)**

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"...his finest studio release... funny, furious, intense and full of good stories."  
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Don't miss Drums & Tube's SXSW Showcase on Friday, March 17 at 11 PM at Opal Divine's Freehouse.

**Michael Waldron**

*Open Ended Question*

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**Top Independent Albums**

**Pos.** | **TITLE** | **ARTIST**/Label
---|---|---
1 | U.S.A.: UNITED STATE OF ATLANTA | Ying Yang Twins/ColiPark/TVT
2 | CRUNK JUICE | Lil Jon & The East Side Boys/BME/TVT
3 | THE SILENCE IN BLACK AND WHITE | Hawthorne Heights/Victory
4 | RETALIATION | Dane Cook/Comedy Central
5 | JASON ALDEAN | Jason Aldean/Broken Bow
6 | GREATEST HITS | Bone Thugs-N-Harmony/Ruthless
7 | MY KIND OF LIVIN’ | Craig Morgan/Broken Bow
8 | I’M WIDE AWAKE, IT’S MORNING | Bright Eyes-Saddle Creek
9 | THE ROAD TO HERE | Little Big Town-Equity
10 | HARLEM: DIARY OF A SUMMER | Jim Jones-Diplotats/Koch
11 | VANS WARPED TOUR 2005 COMPILATION | Various Artists-SideOneDummy
12 | M.I.A.M.I. (MONEY IS A MAJOR ISSUE) | Pitbull-Diaz Brothers/TVT
13 | SILENT ALARM | Bloc Party-Virgin
14 | WHY SHOULD THE FIRE DIE? | Nickel Creek-Sugar Hill
15 | FUNERAL | The Arcade Fire-Merge
16 | DIGITAL ASH IN A DIGITAL URN | Bright Eyes-Saddle Creek
17 | MONEY IS STILL A MAJOR ISSUE | Pitbull-Diaz Brothers/TVT
18 | MAFIA | Black Label/Society-Artemis
19 | SHADOWS ARE SECURITY As I Lay Dying-Metal Blade
20 | COMMIT THIS TO MEMORY | Motion City Soundtrack-Epitaph
21 | A FEWER YOU CAN SWEAT OUT (Part! At The Disco- Decaydance/Fueled By Ramen
22 | THAT’S LIFE | Neal McCoy-903 Music
23 | THE HEART OF THE STREETZ | B.G.-Choppa City/Koch
24 | CHOSEN FEW: EL DOCUMENTAL | Various Artists-Chosen Few/Inmnundi/Urban Box Office
25 | DISCOVERING THE WATERFRONT | Silverstein-Victory
26 | NEAPOLON DYNAMITE | Soundtrack-Lakeshore
27 | THE SOURCE PRESENTS HIP-HOP HITS | Various Artists-Source/Image
28 | IRONIA | Andy Andy-Wepa/Urban Box Office
29 | THOSE WERE THE DAYS | Dolly Parton-Blue Eye/Sugar Hill
30 | NEXT SEVENDUST-7Bros/Winedark
31 | ANTICS | Integer-Matador
32 | TWELVE EIGHTEEN: PART I | /Upstairs
33 | FAIR & SQUARE | John Prine-Oh Boy
34 | CRUNK HITS | Various Artists-TVT
35 | SOLO ACOUSTIC VOL. 1 | Jackson Browne-Island
36 | LIVE AT FENWAY PARK | Jimmy Buffett-Mailboat
37 | ANTOLOGIA DE UN REY | Ramon Ayala Y Sus Bravos Del Norte-Freddy
38 | LIVE IN HAWAII | Jimmy Buffett-Mailboat
39 | ILLINOIS | Rufin Stevens-Asthmatic Kitty
40 | MY BROTHER & ME | Ying Yang Twins-ColiPark/TVT

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This special feature on Independent Music includes year-to-date recaps covering a 12-month period, starting with the Feb. 5, 2005, issue and continuing through Jan. 28, 2006.

More than 33 additional recaps of independent albums, imprints, and labels across multiple genres are available at billboard.biz/indiecharts, including new categories based on the weekly Hot Digital Songs chart.

The Top Independent Albums chart below is limited to titles not sold by a major distributor. But this year, we have also added the recap of Top Independently Owned Labels, shown here. Labels that have distribution through a major are eligible for this recap as long as they are independently owned.

All recaps here are based exclusively on point-of-sale information compiled by Nielsen SoundScan.

In some cases, titles are independently released and are later picked up by major distributors. In those incidents, titles receive credit for points only for the period of time they were sold independently.

A list of the No. 1 titles and labels that appear exclusively in our online recaps appears this issue in Over the Counter (see page 61).
PEOPLE IN PLANES TAKES FLIGHT IN U.S.

NEW YORK—As kids, Peter Roberts threw the ball across the playground and it accidentally smashed into the side of Gareth Jones' head. The two became fast friends. Roberts, sitting in the Coffee Shop in New York's Union Square, laughs at the memory, "I really hit him hard," he says. After such a beginning, what else would grammar school buddies from Wales do but start a band?

Comprised of Jones on vocals, Roberts on drums, Ian Russell on keyboards, and bassist Joaquin Phoenix, People in Planes has landed stateside. This year's South by Southwest Music and Media Conference marks the band's one-year anniversary of signing to indie label Wind-up Records. People in Planes headline a Billboard showcase at SXSW March 16 at Austin's Dirty Dog, which will serve as the kickoff for its U.S. tour with Blue October. The group's U.S. debut album, "As Far as the Eye Can See," hits stores March 28.

Signing an atmospheric alt-rock band, à la Radiohead and Snow Patrol, marked a major A&R shift for Wind-up Records, which is best-known for such hard-rock acts as Evanescence, Finger Eleven, Drowning Pool and Creed.

"The musical landscape is changing. There is a wider range of music penetrating consumers," Wind-up president Steve Lerner says. "It was a four-lane highway, now it has 16 lanes." Signing People in Planes and the Exit marked a move for us to evolve from a hard-rock label to a broader rock, alternative and pop label. Jones sips his coffee as the band members prepare for a long day of promotion for the album. But they are ready. They have been here before. Previously signed to Chrysalis Records in the United Kingdom under the name Tetra Splendour, Jones says he and Roberts went through the textbook label horror stories akin to a "car crash," including label management changes, musical differences, and eventually being dropped. "We were only 20 years old," Jones says. "It was a good lesson. I think it ground us up and taught us that friends and family are the most important thing."

For a still relatively unknown band, People in Planes have friends in high places. Actor Joaquin Phoenix is such a fan, he directed the group's first video for "If You Talk Too Much (My Head Will Explode)." The forthcoming video for the second single, "Falling by the Wayside," was helmed by Mark Pellington, whose credits include directing the feature "Arlington Road" as well as videos for U2 and Creed.

FACT FILE

Label: Wind-up

Management: Jo Hunt and Jake Beaumont-Nesbitt, M Music Publishing (ASCAP)

Touring (U.K.):" 

Publishing: Wicked Broth & Viovodes

Waking Touring (U.K.)

Artist (United States), X-Ray

Music Publishing (ASCAP)

continued on >p54

>>> TWAIN TO ZOMBA

Zomba Music Publishing has signed an exclusive worldwide administration deal with Shania Twain through her company Loon Echo. The deal covers Twain's future compositions as well as her catalog, including such hits as "You're Still The One," "(If You're Not In It For Love) I'm Outta Here," Twain primarily writes with her record producer husband Robert John "Mutt" Lange, whose catalog has been administered by Zomba Music Publishing for close to 30 years. Twain's catalog was previously with Universal Music Publishing. - Susan Butler

>>> AGUILERA'S OLD SOUL

Christina Aguilera gave a few details about her forthcoming RCA album during a March 7 press conference for her new European deal with Sony Ericsson and Orange (see story, p. 14). "Some of the songs are kept authentic, sticking to a really raw, old-school sound, where others combine elements of old blues, jazz and soul with a hard modern-day edge," she said. No release date yet, although it is expected later this year. - Lars Brandie

>>> PEARL JAM DISC, TOUR

Pearl Jam will return to the road May 9 in Toronto, a week after the release of its eighth studio album. The self-titled set will be the band's first for J Records. First single "WorldWide Suicide" is available for free download from pearljam.com.

- Jonathan Cohen

>>> SLAYER REDUX

The four original members of Slayer have reunited to record their first album together since 1990's "Seasons in the Abyss." Founding drummer Dave Lombardo returns to the fold for the project, which will be executive-produced by Rick Rubin, who produced the band's 1986 disc "Reign in Blood." The album will be out this fall on Rubin's Warner Bros. distributed American Recordings.

- Melinda Newman
Bruce Spingsteen.

Retailers are also bullish about the release. Setup began last year when the band released a self-titled EP, which had been promoted at indie retail and college radio while People in Planes was on tour with the Bravery.

Mike Pratt, president of indie retailer Homer's in Omaha, Neb., says, "We sold almost 100,000 EPs, which for us is really good. We expect People in Planes to do very well with their album; they have a big U.S. support base already. We bought 60 to start, and for a developing artist, this is a fair amount."

Virgin Entertain Group is also solidly behind the band. VEG product manager Stephanie Ford says she will include People in Planes as part of the store's "Best of British. The New British Invasion" promotion, which kicks off March 30. 

Lerner adds that Target and Trans World are also planning promotions for the band. Wind-up has also used the Internet as a key tool to market People in Planes. The label created a People in Planes flash game, which fans can personalize. "People inplanes.com gets over 20,000 unique hits a week," Lerner says, "which is huge for a debut artist. We've also bridged the offline and online worlds—there is a mysterious clue in the video "If You Talk Too Much." When fans figure it out, they can access a secret area of the Web site and find an online game."

A few weeks ago, People in Planes played a sold-out show at New York’s Mercury Lounge. The venue filled with hipsters, the band was hailed as the "next big thing." Ironically for Jones and Roberts, they are not getting the same kudos in the U.K. Kingdom. "It's funny that we had to come to the States to be heard," Roberts says. "We aren't mind. Eventually, we'll get credit back home too."

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Additional reporting by Amy Guetelk in New York.

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discounting of the label's shares at the time. Cartwright says he was "fed up."

"At the end of the day, the U.S. label didn't sign us," Archer says, "but we're quite lucky, because they seem to be genuinely up for it. But all the money doesn't count for anything if you haven't got some passion."

The band's label patrons on both sides of the Atlantic certainly express enthusiasm. "They're tremendous workers and incredible songwriters," says Atlantic U.S. CEO Craig Kallman, who traveled to London to see Hard-Fi several times before the deal was signed.

"They're self-starters with a point of view and great influences. Their appreciation for everything from punk rock to dub reggae and being a kick-ass rock-'n-roll band, it's all there." I'm lucky, because they seem to be genuinely up for it. But all the money doesn't count for anything if you haven't got some passion."

Bedford says he heard early demos of the Hard-Fi album about a year before Atlantic signed the band. Much later, he saw a gig at London's Borderline, and remembers, "Very rarely in A&R do you say, 'That's everything.' The look, the sound, the songs; it was a home run."

Clarke previously worked in A&R at London Records, where he had signed Contempo, of

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BYRD FLIES ON WITH HANDLEMAN INDIE

After more than a decade and 10 albums on major labels, country star Tracy Byrd decided it was time to get off the independent route. Since splitting with RCA Label Group last year, Byrd says, "Another major label deal didn't hold a whole lot of promise for me... I wanted to do something on my own, and something where I had a lot of control."

As a result, he has partnered with Arista to Market Distribution, the Handleman Co.'s independent distribution subsidiary, to release his next album, due in July.

Byrd's CD will be the third release from ATMD, which issued albums by Tommy Lee and Sinéad O'Connor last year, and it is the company's first foray into country music. ATMD was launched last year to work with well-known artists and their managers to streamline the supply chain and, thus, sell music at a lower cost. Byrd's CD will carry a suggested list price of $9.99 everywhere. Handleman ships product, including Kmart.

Byrd's manager, Joe Carter of Carter & Co. Artist Management, says an ATMD-style deal "gives artists who are considered mid-level a home where they can continue their own careers."

Carter says major labels are "finding it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to keep mid-level artists who sell 300,000-650,000 units... profitable in their current business plans. The model we're following does just that."

Byrd's last two studio albums, "Ten Rounds" and "The Truth About Men," sold 306,000 and 319,000 copies respectively, according to Nielsen SoundScan. "For majors, that's enough units for them to make a profit but not enough for the [artist] to get out of debt," Byrd says.

"I've been doing this for 15 years now and we have a good, marketable career," Byrd continues. "I feel like I should take control of it myself."

Under his new deal, Byrd pockets both the artist's share of album sales and the record company share, and from that piece of the pie is responsible for handling the project's promotion and marketing. Byrd and Carter will hire independent promoters to work the record to country radio, beginning with a first single in April.

While he knows it will be a lot more work than under the standard label model—"Me and my manager have to do it all," he says—Byrd believes that with ATMD he can start making money at sales of just 100,000 units.

From 1993 to 1999, Byrd recorded for MCA Nashville, where his output included the double-platinum set "No Ordinary Man" and four gold albums. From 1999 until last year he was signed to RCA (later shifting to sister label BNA). On the Hot Country Songs chart, Byrd has notched 13 top 10 hits.

He has already begun recording tracks for the CD, which he is producing with songwriter Mike Geiger. Byrd says the new album will feature more of his self-penned songs than his previous releases.

SIGNINGS: Independent publisher Cal IV has signed songwriter Jim Collins and has purchased his Make Shift Music catalog, which includes such hits as Kenny Chesney's "The Good Stuff" and Trace Adkins' "Then They Do."

Collins' songs have also been cut by Keith Urban, Gretchen Wilson, Joe Nichols, John Michael Montgomery and Little Big Town, among others. As an artist, Collins has recorded for the White Gold, TKM and Arista Nashville labels... Big Loud Shirt Industries has signed singer/songwriter Betsy Ullman. She is the second staff writer to join the 2-year-old publisher, which is owned by songwriter Craig Wiseman.
which, Archer was a member. Clarke sometimes finds it hard to believe that the Hard-Fi album has now exploded to total worldwide shipments to date that he puts at 800,000.

"Eighteen months ago, I was £1,000 [$1,257] overdrawn releasing this record, my budget for putting out [the album] was 500 quid [£579]," Clarke says. "While we lacked in money, it's the same team of people working the record as before we signed to Atlantic.

They include X-Ray Touring agent Ian Huffam, who books the act in the United Kingdom, and William Morris Agency's Kirk Sommer.

Of the U.S. release, Clarke adds, "We couldn't wait for a more fired-up record company. We structured the deal so as not as easily traveled because they're not close to the project, which received prominent exposure from its placement in a Diet Coke commercial. The album, which came out March 7, has far more depth than that track reveals, including the lush "Time Out From the World," slyly "Lovely 2CU" and dreamily "Let It Take You." Enchanting stuff.

Tim Easton, "Ammunition" (New West): Easton's fourth album, out May 16, was recorded during the course of two years, and the diversity of styles shows he was a master at catching the mood on any given day. The Jayhawks' Gary Louris co-produced a number of tracks, which is always a nice stamp of approval for the Americana crowd.

Easton sounds like Peter Gabriel and Michael Penn rolled into one on opening track "Black Dog," but then veers a little too much into Bob Dylan territory on "News Blackout." Easton writes nice melodies, but his real strength is his gentle, knowing way with a turn of phrase such as on "Not Today" when he sings, "You've got everyone's attention, but nobody's heart." "Back to the Pain," a duet with Lucinda Williams, is ready for its close-up, it paints such cinematic images.

Tres Chicas. "Bloom, Red & the Ordinary Girl" (Yep Roc): This is the second go-round for this trio, which comprises Whiskeytown's Caitlin Cary, Hazel黛's Tonya Lamm and Glory Foun- tain's Lynn Blakely. Following 2004's "Sweetwater," the folk-country trioka delivers sweet, harmonically filled sounds on such tracks as the swaying "Red" and "400 Flamingos." Although there is a little too much similarity among the songs on the March 7 release, we bet they really come alive in concert.

Merz. "Loveheart" (Gronland): We had never heard of him, but Merz, aka Conrad Lambert, apparently signed Epic in the late '90s and then disappeared. This album, available on import only, marks his return. Quirky, yet accessible, Merz combines electronica undertones with a singer-songwriter's heart. Highlights are the bittersweet "Warm Cigarette Room."

The Flairz. "Rock and Roll Ain't Evil" (Lefty Records): OK, the EP came out more than a year ago in their native Australia, but it is new to us. This trio is either a fun novelty or the future of music given that the oldest member is only 13. The punk pop on this import is charmingly uncultivated, and it is impossible to dismiss the spunk and burgeoning talent displayed on this four-song EP—although sometimes these poppers are more Brady Bunch than Ramones on such cuts as "Rockin' On."

I Love You But I've Chosen Darkness. "Fear Is On Our Side" (Secretly Canadian): A few years ago, we decided to go see this band based solely on the great name and were not disappointed by its musical ability. LILY&CO released its first full-length album March 7. The project is atmospheric and moody and clearly shows the band's British mid-'80s influences, but some of their previously displayed pop elements thankfully creep in on the almost jaunty "At Last Is All."

Speaking of picking acts to see strictly on their names, we have already started our list of a few faves for this year including the Number Twelve Looks Like You, Skeletons & The Girl-faced Boys, Bible of the Devil and Stardeath & the White Dwarfs.

Paisley, Sugarland Lead ACM Noms

NASHVILLE—Brad Paisley and Sugarland are the top nominees for the Academy of Country Music Awards announced March 8 in Nashville. "American Idol" winner Carrie Underwood makes a strong showing with four nominations, and Bon Jovi nets its first ACM nod.

The awards will be presented May 23 at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, airing live on CBS.

Paisley is nominated for six awards, including three he shares with ACM favorite Dolly Parton for their collaboration "When I Get Where I'm Going." The song appears on Paisley's album, "Time Well Wasted."

Sugarland earned four nominations, and its singer Jennifer Nettles netted a sixth in the vocal event category for her hit duet with Bon Jovi, "Who Says You Can't Go Home." Brooks & Dunn also scored five nominations. Rascal Flatts earned four nominations and is the only act with nods in the top two categories—entertainer and album of the year—the latter for its "Feels Like Today" set. Joining Rascal Flatts in the entertainer category are Brooks & Dunn, Keith Urban, Toby Keith and last year's winner, Kenny Chesney.

Top male vocalist nominees are Dierks Bentley, Chesney, Paisley, George Strait and last year's winner, Urban. The ACM's top female vocalist contenders are Sara Evans, Martina McBride, Gretchen Wilson, Lee Ann Womack and Underwood. Wilson won the award in 2005.

In addition to Lynyrd Street Records' Rascal Flatts, nominees in the album of the year category are for Sugarland's "Twice the Speed of Life" (Mercury). Broken down by label, Arista Nashville is this year's top nominee by a wide margin with 15 nods based on the successes of Paisley, Brooks & Dunn and Underwood. Mercury topped seven nominations while sister label MCA Nashville has six.

Among the most interesting categories this year is top new male vocalist. Independent label Broken Bow Records scored two of the three nominations for its artists Jason Aldean and Craig Morgan. Mercury's Billy Currington snagged the third.

Nominees are selected by the ACM's voting members. Winners will be announced during the telecast. For a complete list of nominees, go to billboard.com/awards. ———

Music

The Beat

MELINDA NEWMAN mnewman@billboard.com

Indie Essentials

Can't-Miss Acts To Catch At South By Southwest

Although many folks still grumble over the number of major-label acts that play South By Southwest every year, there are hundreds of indie acts to choose from. In fact, you could go to show every hour on the hour and never see a major-label act.

Here are a few indie acts with new releases we are hoping to catch in Austin during the March 15-19 festival.

GOLDFRAPP, "Supernature" (Mute): British dance duo has already hit No. 1 on the dance charts with "Ooh La La," which received prominent exposure from its placement in a Diet Coke commercial. The album, which came out March 7, has far more depth than track reveals, including the lush "Time Out From the World," slyly "Lovely 2CU" and dreamily "Let It Take You." Enchanting stuff.

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GOLDFRAPP
Whitacre’s Ace Space
Composer’s MySpace Site Boosts Album’s Visibility

We all know that myspace.com is popular with the kids these days, but who would have expected that it could boost a contemporary classical composer’s career as well?

Eric Whitacre—who has set up a page on the popular online destination—can tell you.

Young composers just like Mosby, who set up a page on the popular online destination—can tell you about the power of myspace.com.

At age 35, Whitacre has already enjoyed tremendous success, particularly among choral and wind band music aficionados, performers and audiences.

His musical work Ghost Train, written when he was just 23, has already been featured on 40 recordings, and his choral piece Water Night has soared to become one of the most popular choral works written in the last decade.

No wonder, then, that the Hyperion disc experienced huge pre-order numbers that seemed to be a surprise, however welcome, to the label and its U.S. distributor, Harmonia Mundi, or that the disc landed at a strikingly respectable No. 11 position on the Top Classical Albums chart in its first week, edging out many of its major-label competitors.

Still, the easygoing Whitacre sees a palpable rise in the popularity of his music. “A few weeks ago,” he recounts, “I was at Northwestern University in Chicago to conduct concert performances of Paradise Lost, a new piece which is kind of an opera/musical/electronica hybrid. The craziest thing was when a lot of listeners started singing along to one of the arias in the piece—the only place that they could possibly have heard it yet is on MySpace.”

CH-CH-CH-CHANGES:
Former Sony Classical presi-...
FACT FILE

Label: Martha Munizzi
Music Group: Munizzi Ministries
Management: Dan Munizzi, Say the Name
Booking: Martha Munizzi Ministries
Publishing: Say the Name (ASCAP)
Last album: "When He Came" (Christmas album, 2004), $1,000
Best-selling album: "The Best Is Yet to Come" (2003), 279,000

George Littlejohn, a founding partner of New York-based indie label Purpose Records, welcomes the influx. "For the first time, a lot of R&B acts—especially the veterans—are finding they can make a living independently," Littlejohn says. "Major labels aren't equipped to work with this type of adult artist." He also notes that people in their mid-30s who grew up on De La Soul and A Tribe Called Quest feel the hip-hop that is out now is not appealing. "They're looking for something different now, like an Eric Roberson or the Rebirth. More live instrumentation, strong vocals and substantive songs." After five years of running Purpose—which catalog includes output from Tortured Soul, Angela Johnson and the "25 Strong" soundtrack—Littlejohn laments that one challenge still remains for the indie operator: getting deserved exposure from TV, mainstream radio and the press.

"Online sites like soultracks.com and soulpatrol.com, satellite radio and Internet radio are very supportive," he says. "But we don't have the same support of finite. It's difficult to get any features or reviews. The media needs to let people know what's happening in this indie scene."

Littlejohn predicts the flow of music will only grow stronger. "More quality artists are going independent," he says, "and the music is getting better. That's exciting. That's what keeps us encouraged."
**Music**

**Global Pulse**

**EDITED BY TOM FERGUSON**
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**Latin Notas**

**LEILA COBO lcobo@billboard.com**

**MySpace’s Latin Explosion**

Part Latina, part Filipina, the singer Miss Issa describes her music as “a combination of R&B and Latin music” and records on indie label Soundond-Sound Entertainment. You may not have heard of Miss Issa, as had not, but on myspace.com she is mighty popular. Her page has been viewed 157,542 times, and the counts 15,808 users as “friends”—people who sign up to send or receive information from her.

While this degree of popularity is now common on MySpace, in the Latin music realm the MySpace phenomenon has gone largely unnoticed even as the online community continues to amass Latin musicians in its ranks.

According to Roslynn Cobarrubias, urban coordinator for music, comedy and fashion at MySpace (Latin also falls under her purview), as of March 2, MySpace has 12,080 Latin music acts—a veritable explosion from the 1,000 Latin acts on MySpace in August.

On MySpace, most Latin acts also place themselves in other musical categories, Cobarrubias says. For example, Sony BMG pop trio Reik is under Latin, pop and acoustic, which ostensibly opens the door for a broader mainstream audience to hear its stuff.

The more genres an act places on its music, the more hits that act will get when a search is launched.

Cobarrubias estimates the overwhelming majority of Latin MySpace acts are indie artists. Perhaps the Latin king of MySpace is Pittbull, who records for indie TV. According to Cobarrubias, the Miami rapper has 1.2 million profile views and 163,000 friends.

Even with all this Latin growth in MySpace, the numbers are underwhelming when compared with the site’s approximately half a million acts (yes, half a million). So, how does an act cut through the clutter?

By December 2005, there were 4.5 million Latin-MySpace members (again, they identify themselves as Latin), with 14,000 new members logging on every day. They were split between male (50.2%) and female (49.8%), with most falling between 14 and 34.

In other words, there is an audience for Latin. The trick is drawing them to your site.

Cobarrubias works with other coordinators to feature various artists, videos and events on the MySpace home page. Eight acts and eight videos are featured every week.

Driving people to specific sites falls mostly on the artists themselves.

“Every time they’re on the radio or on TV and they invite people to MySpace, you see a jump in numbers,” Cobarrubias says.

Although MySpace does not categorize Latin music by subgenres, such as regional Mexican or tropical, such a move is one of her 2006 objectives, Cobarrubias says.

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**Gospel Indies Grow**

Slew Of New Independent Labels Pop Up, Plan Releases

Though mainstream corporations have become a major presence in Christian music as EMI, Warner Bros. and Sony BMG all staked claims on the Christian/gospel landscape during the last decade, independent labels now enjoy a share of the pie. And even though the climate is difficult, new companies keep springing up.

The Grabb Family recently launched a new imprint, Clear Cool Music, which will issue the group’s March 28 release, “Blu the Lines.” Another new venture recently bowed in Franklin, Tenn., Union Street Records, which is launching an impressive new rock band, Roads to Rome.

On the gospel side, industry veteran Shawn Tate has launched Un eigenen Records. Distributed by Central South, the label’s first release is Malcolm Williams and Great Faith’s live set “Walking in My Destiny.”

An indie already enjoying success on the gospel side is Icee Records, a Chicago-based company that is home to Dr. Charles G. Hayes & the Warriors. The group took home choir of the year honors at this year’s Stellar Awards. Icee Records’ Dianne Williams netted the female vocalist of the year award and Icee also won in the music video category for Hayes’ “The Remix.”

“We were excited that we were able to accomplish those three wins because we worked very, very hard to accomplish our goals,” says Dr. Charles T. White, who heads up Icee Records.

The choir has been around for more than 40 years but enlisted producers Percy Bady, DeAndre Patterson, Darius Brooks and Adrienne B. King to work on its Icee debut. The result was one of gospel’s most-talked-about releases in 2005.

Hayes & the Warriors’ current single, “Love You,” was written and produced by Grammy Award winner Brooks, is being worked to gospel and adult R&B stations.

Prior to starting the label, White found success in real estate and he notes the vast differences between the two fields. “I love the record label,” he says. “Unfortunately, it doesn’t make the money that real estate makes.

One can hope that it will grow so big that it will take care of itself.”

While is negotiating with distributors and admits that lack of strong distribution has hurt the label, he is optimistic about Icee’s future. They are working on a new project by Williams and looking to sign additional artists.

“We are hard-working individuals with a common goal,” White says of his team, which includes executive VP Damon "D" Stewart. “All of our players on this team have the artist’s best interest in mind.”

**SESCAC HONORS:** Pete Kipley was named SESAC’s songwriter of the year for 2006. A 21 awards dinner in Nashville recognizing the organization’s top writers and publishers in the Christian field. Worshiping Music, a division of Word Music Publishing, and Kipley’s company Songs From The Indigo Room, were named SESAC’s Christian publishers of the year. In addition to his work with MercyMe, Kipley also received performance awards for songs with Mark Harris and ZoeGirl.

Steve Taylor, Andy Chrisman, Krystal Meyers, Stellar Kart, Project 66 and Tiffany Attackle Lee (the latter is better-known as Cub artist Plumb) were also honored during the event.
with his enduring solo debut, "The Nightfly," (and 13 years since its follow-up, "Kamakahi-Radagast."

MUKANIN - Fan of the Jayhawks, the ghost of Roy Charles, an army of thugs who

DONT SATRIANI: Super Colossal: Producers: Mike Fraser, Joe Satrani

SINGLES

NICK LACHERY "What's Left of Me" (4/06)

PARENT JAM World Wide Suicide (3/27)

VAUS ARTISTS Dave Chappelle's Block Party

HIHOP - R&B

ETTA JAMES All the Way

Producers: various

Release Date: March 14

Rock

DEVO 2.0 Devo 2.0

Hard-Fi Stars of CCTV

Producers: Gerald V. Casale

Release Date: March 14

Devo, in conjunction with Disney Sound, has recast itself with five kids age 10-13 as Devo 2.0. Devo's adult members play on the entire record along with three-fifths of the new lineup, and the package includes two new songs, Devo's first in years. Some lyrics have been changed, as "Girl U Want" runs "Boy U Want" due to singer Nicole Stoeber's gender. This endeavor works as fun, and the electro mashup for the tween generation, but it is up for debate whether parents will view it as a welcome change from kids shrieking along with pop hits or as a stunt to regain relevance by a band that used to speak out against conformity. (More projects like this are planned, with the Go-Go's up next.) -BT

By the way, there's been much musical controversy recently over the use of the N-word in rap songs. Some artists, like Kanye West, have been criticized for using it, while others, like Matisyahu, have been praised for their use of traditional Jewish music. It's a complex issue, and one that's likely to continue to be debated for years to come. But one thing's for sure: music is a powerful force that can bring people together, as well as divide them. And that's something we all need to remember, no matter how we feel about it.
is rhythmically natural as well as catchy, laying the foundation for the listener who already knows the songs. It also helps that Stuart’s saucy is old-school aggressive, the percussion is in your face, and there is a total absence of pinpricks. “Elia y Yo,” performed here as a soneo-laden duet with Tito Rojas, is a throwback to an earlier, less slick sound that is most welcome for this sanitized genre.—LC

WORLD
SAMITE Embalasa
Producer: Samite Mulondo
Triloka
Release Date: March 14

One does not have to be a proponent of a purveyor of chill by Augustus Pablo. Tunes such as “Oluosoka” and “Nalubale” blend a keen melodic sense and intense, intricate percussion, laying the rhythm beneath elliptical flute passages. Drums and kalimba are the ever-present rhythmic heart, while Samite’s flute reflects a more abstract sensibility.—PVV

GOSSPEL
MARTHA MUNIZZI
No Limits
Producer: Noel Hall
Integrity/Columbia
Release Date: March 14

With her last, self-marketed release, Munizzi remained in or near the gospel chart’s top ten for 77 weeks. Expectations are high as the makes her first leap to the majors, and she does not disappoint. In fact, the album’s 17 songs (nearly all written or co-written by Munizzi) showcase her finest, most inspired work to date. While Munizzi clearly knows around her way a solid gospel/R&B groove tune (“Jesus Is the Best Thing,” “You’ve Been So Good”), it is on the abundance of transcendent choral ballads that she truly soars (“Forever You’re My King,” “Always Welcome,” “Come Holy Spirit”). Hit-heavy from start to finish, “No Limits” should find immediate acceptance in the sanctuaries as well as on the airwaves. Munizzi’s explosive talent makes her the brightest new star in the gospel firmament.—GE

VITAL REISSUES
THE PRETENDERS
Pirate Radio
Producers: various/Sire/Warner Bros./Rhino
Release Date: March 14

This five-disc collection (four CDs, one DVD) is a lot of Pretenders. 81 tracks (nearly one-quarter previously unavailable) and 19 videos. The group’s video studio albums and one EP, from 1980 to 2002, are well represented, and shine the light on fearless leader Chrissie Hynde’s swaggering, yet beautifully vulnerable, vocals and lyrics. Also figuring into the mix are B-sides and soundtrack moments like “What You Gonna Do About It” and “Everyday Is Like Sunday,” originally made famous by Small Faces and Morrissey, respectively. Typical of such a hefty collection, hits and classics are placed alongside misses. That said, do not be surprised if you find yourself embracing tracks from 1989’s much overlooked “Viva el Amor.” And 26 years later, “Mystery Achievement” still stands tall. Like Hynde and the other original members (drummer Martin Chambers, bassist Peter Falconer and guitarist James Honeyman-Scott), it is special.—MP

NEW & NOTeworthy
GRAND NATIONAL
Kicking the National Habit
Producer: Grand National
Release Date: March 14

Out since 2004, internationally, “Kicking the National Habit” has, for some reason, eluded U.S. release until now. Believe the hype. The 10-track set is a real treat, rewarding repeated listens with funk, groove-driven tunes. Stylistic comparisons to the Police are obvious, yet the band is due to the Sting-y pitch of Ruperta Lydon’s voice and the band’s penchant for humming bass/ragga-fed guitar interplay. But standouts like “Daylight Goes,” “Amongst Yourselves” and “Drunk To Moving On” work their way into heart. A solid rotation despite that reference point, while the electro-funky “Playing in the Distance” and the sample- added “Cherry Tree” nod to the long-gone Manchester craze of the early ’90s. This new U.S. version features seven extra tracks, the most essential of which is Sasha’s deliciously dark disco remix of “Talk Amongst Yourselves.”—JC

ROB
DANIEL POWTER
Bad Day
(5:53)

Producer: Michael Fromow, Jeff Dawson
Writer: D. Powter
Publisher: Song 6 (BMI)
Warner Bros. (CD promo)

Last year, James Blunt and Daniel Powter exploded across Europe with their debut pop singles. Both were then released in the United States, and by golly, one of them actually broke. While Blunt enjoys gargantuan success with his Billboard Hot 100 No. 1 “You’re Beautiful,” Warner Bros. is wise enough to smell the potential for a second chance for the French-Canadian Powter as the airwaves at last open up to more singer/songwriter pop. “Bad Day” is an instantly memorable song, with a hook that lasts and lasts and instrumentation that sets Power apart from the standard fare. The genre’s current front-runners currently dominating the scene, Elegant, timeless pop/rock that deserves all the success his 2005 classmate has reaped.—CF

FALL OUT BOY
A Little Less “Sixteen Candles,” A Little More “Touch Me” (2:49)

Producers: Neil Avron
Writers: P. Stump, Fall Out Boy, P. Wentz
Publisher: Chicago X (BMG/Sony/Reprise)

Fueled by Ramen/Island Def Jam (CD promo)

Pop-punk act Fall Out Boy has a knack for mixing polished hooks, hyperactive guitars and clever pop culture references. Here, the hilarious throwback title, a tribute to teen movie “Sixteen Candles” and Samantha Fox’s 1986 make-out hit, is more exciting than the song itself. Calling all teenagers suffering from an unattainable crush, this emo-sho-hair relationship drama does little to update the uptempo-breakdown- driven sound, but it certainly honors it. The quartet rips angsty, I’m-so-mess-uped confessions into catchy riffs and a melodic chorus that soars despite its déjà vu feel. However, Top 40 radio is a long shot this time; “A Little Less” is not as infectious as “Dance, Dance” and less anemic than “Sugar, We’re Goin’ Down.” But after the top two singles, a platinum multiplex album and a Grammy Award nomination, these guys can afford a momentary break from mainstream success.—SP

RAY
J What I Need (3:33)

Producer: Rodney Jerkins
Writers: R. Jerkins, F. Jenkins, L. Daniels
Publisher: Various

(Sanctuary) (CD promo)

One “Wish” was like the little brother (Brandy’s, in fact) you could never get rid of, but that radio hit put the spotlight back on Ray J just as his music career seemed to be waning. The uptempo follow-up, “What I Need,” from his latest set “Raydiation,” should be enough to maintain the momentum. Here, Ray J’s vocals once again seem strained (a technique he has somehow made his own) as he cops another plea to the woman he has done wrong (“I know/you had quite enough/But I feel brand new/And I’m fessin’ up”). Despite its sap factor, “What I Need” will likely lap radio play based on the success of the first single.—CH

ROCK
BLUE OCTOBER
Hate Me (6:20)

Producers: Chuck Reed, Justin Furstenfeld
Writer: J. Furstenfeld
Publisher: Paris on Paper (ASCAP)

Universal (CD promo)

The last and only time Blue October saw any Billboard chart action was two years ago on adult top 40 when “Calling You” peaked at No. 35. Now the Texas rock band is scaling the Modern Rock list with “Hate Me,” boldly addressing a relationship collapse in the face of addiction, guitarist/singer Justin Furstenfeld continues his former love for “I hate me for all the things/I didn’t do for you.” His dry-eyed acceptance that he has driven his ex away and that she has to do what it takes to heal gives his intense vocal delivery (reminiscent of Peter Gabriel) even more impact. The painfully honest lyrics and soaring arrangement knock the breath out of you. From upcoming album “Foiled,” due April 4.—CLT

MATISYAHU Youth (4:18)

Writers: Matisyahu Miller, Josh Werner
Producer: Bill Laswell
Publishers: various

Epic (CD promo)

On the heels of his surprise hit “King Without a Crown,” which climbed to No. 7 on Billboard Radio Monitor’s Modern Rock chart and continues to build top 40 airplay, Matisyahu reads the title track from “Youth,” his first major release. Sounding wildly authentic, the frumster MC switches between otherworldly chant to Brooklyn-meets-Kingston flow while his band throws in a phat bassline and screaming rock guitar solo. Lyrically, he tackles anence, roots-reggae tune examines the artist’s own tumultuous past, weaving tales of teenage frustration into a passionate chorus: “Fan the fire for the flame of the youth/Got the freedom to chose/Better make the right move.” The single is not quite as catchy as “King,” but it showcases a powerful new voice of a young man who can still stay well beyond the novelty of seeing a Hasidic Jew rocking and rhyming on MTV.—SP

AC

SHERYL CROW & STING
Always on Your Side (4:11)

Producers: John Shanks, Sheryl Crow
Writer: not listed
Publisher: not listed

A&M (CD promo)

It seems like anytime Sheryl Crow or Sting gurgle they win a Grammy Award. Over time, their efforts have become less and less exceptional, making the grandiose praise ring false. But this pairing is noteworthy because the tune is actually a beautiful, inspired love song. Crow’s unexpectedly fulfilling and convincingly shared. It is a pleasure to see these two names can still showcase moments of purity. This song actually has the makings of a classic.—CT
Ne-Yo’s Big Start; Billboard Salutes Independents

When Ne-Yo delivered his short yet charming turn during the Universal Music & Video Distribution presentation last August at the NARM convention, I knew he had star power. Key retailers there agreed, and it turned out that consumers do, too: as proved by the rookie’s “So Sick” at No. 1 on The Billboard 200 with the biggest sales week of 2006.

In a huge chart week, the singer also hit No. 1 on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums with second single “So Rich” reaching No. 1 on The Billboard Hot 100, Top 10 and Hot Digital Songs (see Between the Billboard, pg. 66).

The first week took of 301,000 copies for “In My Own Words” is the biggest track week tracked by Nielsen SoundScan since Mary J. Blige’s “The Breakthrough” arrived during Christmas week 2005 with an opener of 727,000 copies.

Island Def Jam pulled out all the stops for this one. “So Sick,” a huge radio hit, was withheld from the digital market until the album hits stores, and the label invoked UMVD’s robust program for developing ads to bring the set’s sale to as low as $7.98 at price-driven chains Target, Best Buy and Circuit City.

“We know we’re living in a market with different times, so we’re just trying different things,” Def Jam president Shawn “Jay-Z” Carter says. “But, I believe at the end of the day, it was the music that sold this album.”

INDIE CHART LEADERS

Top Independent Imports

Top R&B-Hop-Hop Albums

Ne-Yo’s big start and handson by indie-distributed rock band Hawthorne Heights (No. 3, 114,000 copies) and a religious album by country star Alan Jackson (see Between the Billboards, pg 72), album sales saw 9.4% shy of the same week last year.

That is the frame when 50 Cent’s “The Massacre” bowed with 1.1 million, the only million-plus week by any album in 2005.

MARKET WATCH

A Weekly National Music Sales Report

*Includes track equivalent album sales (TEA) with 10 track downloads equivalent to one album sale.

Nielsen SoundScan counts as current only sales within the first 18 months of a release’s (12 months for classical and jazz albums). Titles that stay in the top half of The Billboard 200, however, remain as current. Titles older than 18 months are catalog. Deep catalog is a subset of catalog for titles out more than 36 months.

For the complete array of indie recaps, visit billboard.biz/indexcharts.

Additional reporting by Anthony Colandro in New York and Carl Misfuiel in Los Angeles.
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<td>All I Want</td>
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<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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**Note:** The above table lists the top 10 pop singles according to the Billboard Hot 100 chart for March 18, 2006. The chart ranks songs based on airplay, sales, and streaming.
### TOP R&B/HIP-HOP ALBUMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>ARTIST</th>
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### TOP REGGAE ALBUMS

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<td>Luciana Presents... Disturbing The Peace</td>
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### BRAXTON TOURS, ALBUM GROWS

As R&B upstart Ne-Yo reigns at No. 1 with the chart's Hot Shot Debut, Toni Braxton shines with Pacetter stripes on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums.

Rising 62-52 with a 32% improvement at core R&B stores, Braxton's "Libra" picks up steam as she kicks off her first tour in 10 years. Headlining dates begin March 10 in Atlantic City, N.J., wrapping April 3 in Houston.

"Libra" has seen lukewarm support from radio, besides the showcasing a No. 36 peak for lead track "Please" on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs. Even so, the set marked Braxton's best debut in five years when it opened at No. 4 on The Billboard 200 in October with 114,000 sold. It has moved 365,000 to date, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

—Ralph George

Data for week of MARCH 18, 2006 | For chart reprints call 646.654.4633

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Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data

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www.americanradiohistory.com
**NOT COUNTRY SONGS**

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<tr>
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<td>Bon Jovi Duet with Jennifer Nettles</td>
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<td>Big &amp; Rich</td>
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<td>Eric Church</td>
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<td>Jason Aldean</td>
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<td>Martina McBride With Dolly Parton</td>
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<td><strong>IF I DON'T MAKE IT BACK</strong></td>
<td>Tracy Lawrence &amp; Mark Chesnutt</td>
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**BETWEEN THE BULLETS**

The seemingly unstoppable Kenny Chesney gets his ninth No. 1 chart, the second-largest gain, 4.4 million audience impressions, for "Living in Fast Forward." The song hops 3-1 in its 18th chart week.

With Nielsen BDS detecting spins at all 123 stations on this chart's panel, Chesney's single chronicles the fast living that comes with being a "hillbilly rock star out of control." It collects 3.7 million impressions during the tracking week and is the second single and first chart-topper from "The Road and the Radio." Lead single "Who You'd Be Today" peaked at No. 2, a position it held for five weeks while trying to unseat Keith Urban's "Better Life" and Dierks Bentley's "Come a Little Closer." Chesney most recently topped the chart with "Anything But Mine," which spent two weeks at the summit starting in the April 23, 2005, issue. The label plans to服务 "Summertime" as the third single from "Road" in early April.

— Wade Johnson
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTIST</th>
<th>TOP LATIN SONGS</th>
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*Note: The chart data is from Billboard Latin Charts for the week of March 18, 2006.*
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<td>Yes! (CD+DVD)</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taosaic</td>
<td>BMG/RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track 3</td>
<td>Virgin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chasing Time: The Bedlam Sessions</td>
<td>Warner Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbye</td>
<td>Virgin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You're Beautiful</td>
<td>Atlantic Records/EMI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stupid Girls</td>
<td>BMG/RCA Records</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Italy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sorry</td>
<td>Warner Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach Me Again</td>
<td>Sony BMG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Spain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronostico</td>
<td>Sony BMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorry</td>
<td>Sony BMG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Brazil

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sucesso Breve</td>
<td>Sony BMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dj Marilbora</td>
<td>Polydor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Flanders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Mundo Bailando</td>
<td>Sony BMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je T'Adore</td>
<td>Sony BMG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Run It!</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beep</td>
<td>Atlantic/BMG Music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## New Zealand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Johnny Cash</td>
<td>Sony BMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbye</td>
<td>BMG/RCA Records</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Argentina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Como Estoy</td>
<td>Sony BMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbye</td>
<td>BMG/RCA Records</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**EURO Track 100**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Touch the Sky</td>
<td>Sony BMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always On Your Side</td>
<td>Sony BMG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Additional Details**

- The chart covers various countries including Japan, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Australia, Canada, Italy, Spain, Brazil, Flanders, Ireland, New Zealand, and Argentina.
- It includes information on singles, albums, and artists.
- Labels such as Sony BMG, Warner Bros., Universal, and BMG/RCA Records are listed.
- The chart spans from March 18, 2006, to March 26, 2006.
Sales data compiled from a comprehensive pool of U.S. music merchants by Nielsen SoundScan. Sales data for HITS/PRODIGY/30 Catalog chart albums is based on Nielsen SoundScan releases and current release of SoundScan from a national roster of core stores that specialize in those genres.

**TOP SALES CHARTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JOHNNY CASH</td>
<td>THE VERY BEST OF JOHNNY CASH</td>
<td>REPRISE</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BON JOVI</td>
<td>THE COLLECTION</td>
<td>SONY BMG</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARTINA MCBRIDE</td>
<td>GREATEST HITS</td>
<td>EMI-CUSTOMS</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARTHA WATERS</td>
<td>WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN</td>
<td>WARNER BROS</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOP INTERNET SALES CHARTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JOHNNY CASH</td>
<td>THE ESSENTIAL JOHNNY CASH</td>
<td>SONY BMG</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOB SEGER</td>
<td>12 STRINGS OF HANG MAN</td>
<td>CAPITOL</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHNNY CASH</td>
<td>THIS NEW WORLD</td>
<td>EMI-CUSTOMS</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARTINA MCBRIDE</td>
<td>WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN</td>
<td>WARNER BROS</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOP COUNTRY CHARTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JOHNNY CASH</td>
<td>A TIME TO REMEMBER</td>
<td>WARNER BROS</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARTINA MCBRIDE</td>
<td>WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN</td>
<td>WARNER BROS</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARTINA MCBRIDE</td>
<td>THE SEVENTH CHORD</td>
<td>WARNER BROS</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARTINA MCBRIDE</td>
<td>WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN</td>
<td>WARNER BROS</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOP DIGITAL SONGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JOHNNY CASH</td>
<td>A TIME TO REMEMBER</td>
<td>WARNER BROS</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARTINA MCBRIDE</td>
<td>WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN</td>
<td>WARNER BROS</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARTINA MCBRIDE</td>
<td>THE SEVENTH CHORD</td>
<td>WARNER BROS</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARTINA MCBRIDE</td>
<td>WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN</td>
<td>WARNER BROS</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SINGLES & TRACKS**

**SONG INDEX**

**MAR 18 2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>ACCOMPANYING A FRAUD SELLING MUSIC 4 MINUTES</th>
<th>-issue: France (Emi))</th>
<th><strong>POP 101</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>ALONG THE WAY (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast). BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>BEST FRIEND (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>BOYFRIEND (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>CAN'T WE TOUCH (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>DANCE DANCE (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>DANCING (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>DON'T FORGET ABOUT (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>DRUNKER THAN ME (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>ELLA COOK'S 10TH BIRTHDAY (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>ENJOY THE SAME (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>EVERYTIME WE TOUCH (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>FAVORITE STATE OF (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>FIRST LOVE (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>FRONT (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>GET LOOSE (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>GOD'S GIFT (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>GOIN DOWN (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>GOLD DIGGER (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>IN THE PIM (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>I'M GONNA BE GOOD (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>I'M GONNA BE GOOD (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>AGAIN (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>AGAIN (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>AGAIN (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>AGAIN (Asap/J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast) BMV/Asap (J. <em>Blk Man</em> Nast)</td>
<td><strong>POP 101</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Co-Founder, Public Enemy

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Cordless Recordings

Jim Ryan
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Cingular

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Fox Mobile

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Generate weekly report on sales activities and prospects for the upcoming 90 days.

Create customized presentation materials for key client meetings.

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Did you graduate from college with a degree in Business, Media, Sales, or a related field? Must have a robust understanding of online advertising and strong knowledge of interactive sales tools, B2P deliverables, strategy and analytics.

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Malibu, Romantc estate 5bd/5ba 5 flp over 11 acres. This pool & beam home while extremely private has amazing views. Love! Jim & Carol Shogren 310.481.6262

**S' JINNING NEW MEDIT**
$4,495,000

**WWW.1067OCORSE.COM**
$4,195,000
Pacific Palisades. 5bd/5ba home w/ classic lines & details. 3oc, fpl, gmrk kit opens to it. 6000sq ft, w/pc & ws. Good entertainers. James Respondek 310.454.0080

**2600 BARRYMORE DRIVE**
$3,795,000
Malibu, Romantic estate 5bd/5ba 5 flp over 11 acres. This pool & beam home while extremely private has amazing views. Love! Jim & Carol Shogren 310.481.6262

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**GRAND SCALE E VILLA**
$8,469,000
Los Feliz. Remodeled drive on estate w/ Hollywood glamour & "movie star" luxury. 4bd, 4.5ba, media rm, marble firs, fpl, elevator, 3 car gar. 8514 HILLSIDE AVENUE

**8514 HILLSIDE AVENUE**
$2,900,000

**PACIFIC VIEW RANCH**
$2,800,000
Caj. Panoramic scenic views of vast mtn ranges & ocean. Channel Islands view. Island kit, 3bd/3ba, 3/4 flr, 3617 sq ft. 3/4 of an acre w/lush grounds, pool & views. Posolik/Posolik 310.839.8500

**235 TILDEN AVENUE**
$3,295,000
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**6477 ZUMA VIEW PLACE #127**
$1,295,000
Malibu. Lovely 3bd/2.5ba townhome w/panoramic ocean views & 2 car, irreplaceable firs, & gateless courtyard. Decorator touches throughout. Winds /Jacobsen 310.454.0060

**2192 BANYAN DRIVE**
$2,549,000
Brentwood. Elegant compound or trad + mod w/ sweeping views. 4bd, fam rm. Expansive remodel w/ finest finishes. Gmrk & kitchen, large yard. Michael Grenowald 310.481.6262

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**REDONE TRAILS W/POOL**
$2,299,000
Los Feliz. 2 story entry w/loggia. Huge LR w/ fpl + Fr drs to pt. Viking kit, 4bd/4.5ba, Spa pass w/pool + wet bar. Elevator + 3car gar Carter/Grand 310.245.2005

**LARGE VIEW HOME**
$1,849,000
Mar Vista. Fantastic redone 4bd/4.5ba contemp. 2 story, 2 car, 4bd/4.5ba. 4500 sq ft. Featuring,artists, backs, & stunning media rm. Kirshner/O'Brien 310.724.7190

**2505 KERILWORTH AVENUE**
$1,375,000

**VENICE ARCHITECTURAL**
$1,298,000
Venice. Unique archit. 3bd/2ba hse on w/ loft, soaring ceilings, fp, open granite kit, rfp deck w/300 degrees w/en, close to Abbot Kinney. Mario Mason 310.260.8209

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**OPEN 1-4 03/12/06**

**OPEN 1-4 03/11/12/06**

**OPEN 1-4 03/12/06**

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**OPEN 1-4 03/13/06**

**OPEN 1-4 03/12/06**

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**5128 MOUNT ROYAL**
$750,000
Eagle Rock. Vintage sun-filled 3bd/2ba California craftsman North of Colorado. Lg lv rm w/pt. fml *in rm w/kit & huge granite rear yd. Posolik/Posolik 310.839.8500

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Mali’s Ali Farka Touré Dies

Blues singer and guitarist Ali Farka Touré, one of Africa’s best-known musicians, died in his sleep March 7 at his Mali home after a long fight with bone cancer. He was believed to be in his late 60s.

According to “The Rough Guide to World Music,” Touré was born into a family of noble origins. As a youth, he learned to play numerous traditional stringed instruments before picking up the guitar. In time, he developed a unique rhythmic picking style, which, along with his nasal, lonesome-sounding vocals, earned him comparisons to American bluesman John Lee Hooker.

Touré became one of the most internationally successful West African musicians. According to his current label, World Circuit/Nonesuch, he “transposed the traditional music of his native north Mali and single-handedly brought the style known as desert blues to an international audience.”

Touré emerged on the global scene with a bluesy, self-titled 1988 release on Island’s Mango label, which also was his recording home of his countryman Salif Keita. The two would become world music stars along with another Malian contemporary, Mory Kante.

After moving to the Hannibal label, Touré won a best world music album Grammy Award for his 1994 album “Talking Timbuktu,” recorded with Texas guitarist Ry Cooder. The album debuted at No. 1 on Billboard’s Top World Music chart and held that position for 16 weeks. His prior Hannibal release, “The Source,” topped the same chart for nine weeks.

Touré’s World Circuit recording with countryman Toumani Diabate, “In the Heart of the Moon,” won a second Grammy the same year, as best world music album.

Touré had just finished work on a new solo album when he died, according to World Circuit.

In recent years, music had largely taken a back seat to Touré’s life as a farmer dedicated to improving conditions in his native Niafunké region. He was such a revered figure in his homeland that he also served as the region’s mayor.

“He will be buried in the village where he was born, Niafunké,” Malian state radio reported.

Touré is survived by three wives, 11 children and numerous grandchildren.
—Sarah Friar with reporting by Reuters

Boys

Boy: Miles Dylan to Erika and Gregg Barron, Feb. 30 in New York. Father is director of licensing at Cherry Lane Music Publishing.

Death

Anthony Burger, 44, of a heart attack suffered Feb. 22 while playing piano on a Gaither Homecoming Caribbean cruise. Burger was an award-winning gospel pianist long associated with the performing groups of gospel music giant Bill Gaither.

Born in Cleveland, Tenn., Burger joined gospel quartet the Kingston Singers while still in his teens. For 10 years, from 1980 to 1990, Burger was voted a top-five gospel pianist by the readers of The Singing News magazine. The honor was especially referred to as the Anthony Burger Award. Burger performed in various settings, from small country churches to sold-out arenas and concert halls. He played at the White House and at several Billy Graham Crusades.

After leaving the Kingdom to embark on a solo career, Burger began performing with Gaither’s groups, including the Gaither Vocal Band, the Gaither Trio and the Gaither Homecoming Friends. Burger is survived by his wife LuAnn; sons AJ and Austin; daughter Lori; parents Richard and Jean; and brothers Randy and Clinton.

For the Record

A report in the March 11 issue headlined “Yahoo’s China Problem” requires several clarifications. The article should have been datelined Taipei, Taiwan. In addition, Yahoo China is not a wholly owned subsidiary of U.S.-based Internet portal Yahoo. Rather, Yahoo owns 40% of alibaba.com, which owns and operates Yahoo China. Yahoo’s purchase of its stake in Alibaba was completed in October.

In the Feb. 25 issue, the wrong photo ran with a story headlined “Sony BMG Is Tops in Brazil.” The photo depicts model Ana Carolina da Fonseca not Sony BMG recording artist Ana Carolina.
MUSIC & MONEY SYMPOSIUM

The music industry's most influential decision-makers and entrepreneurs exchanged ideas and information March 2 during Billboard's fifth annual Music & Money Symposium at the St. Regis in New York.

(Photos: Gary Gershoff/ Wireimage.com)

Billboard legal/music publishing editor Susan Euler, second from right, with her panelists on financing and acquiring music publishing catalogs. They are, from left: Nicolas Firth of BMG Music Publishing, Joel A. Katz of Greenberg Traurig and Mark Levinsohn of Leon Levinsohn Bodiia Hurwitz & Weinstein.

Billboard business editor Brian Garrity poses to take a picture with his panelists before they discussed how to remain influential in media entertainment and technology will affect labels and publishers in 2006. From left are: Harold Vogel of Vogel Capital Management, Thomas Hurwitz of Virginia, John Rudolph of Music Analystica, Gary Greenfield of Pal Research and Hillary Rosen of Eron Rosen Global Strategies.

Billboard executive editor/associate publisher Tamara Conniff conducted a live on-stage interview with Universal Music Group chairman/CEO Doug Morris, who took questions from the audience.

As his brother, Robert P.X. Silberman of Cox Inc. discusses how to best position music in an ever-changing distribution environment.

Billboard digital/mobile editor Anthony Bruno, second from left, reads to lead a discussion on how to make money in the mobile space with, from left, panelists Shashik Khosla of Interactive Broadband Consulting Group, Mark Desautels of CTIA, Ted Casey of Virgin Wines and Greg Clayman of MTV Networks.

Billboard senior news editor Bill Werde, third from right, joins members of his mobile music panel. They include, from left, panelists Brian Tappan of BitTorrent, Shawn Goldman of myspace.com, Jim Griffin of OnPoint, Greg Scheff of the Orchard andbirdman Bootsy Colli and Greg Clayman of MTV Networks.


Industry mogul John "Jellybean" Benitez of Loeb & Loeb and Tom Silverman of Tommy Boy Records chat during a pane break.
THE NUMBERS DON'T ADD UP

Does the five-track EP have a future in the music business? Universal Music Group is musing on the idea of using mini-albums to introduce baby bands, multiple sources say. Company execs have been kicking the tires on the possibility in meetings with top artist reps, a management source briefed on the matter adds.

But the plan, which has been gestating in its current form for the better part of eight months, has yet to receive formal backing from the recorded music giant due to cost concerns. And unless executives can figure out a way to make EPs generate profits more in line with full-album sales, the idea may likely wither on the vine, label sources caution.

The concept of releasing shorter albums, especially from developing artists, has been long discussed in industry circles. But label and distribution sources note that the EP business, as it currently stands, is "lousy." These sources say that manufacturing, production and marketing costs for artists are the same under the five-track model as they would be for a full album. The only things that change are the margins. And with the bulk of music sales still rooted in CDs, a digital-only approach is not considered an option at this point. Some execs also are uncomforthable with the prospect of sacrificing future full-album sales to an introductory product featuring many of the same songs. "It's all in the numbers," says one source close to UMG. "Right now, they don't work."

LIFE IS SWEET

Def Jam Recordings president/CEO Shawn "Jay-Z" Carter is riding high these days. In this issue, newcomer Ne-Yo delivers a trifecta: His debut album, "In My Own Words," opens at No. 1 on The Billboard 200, with 301,000 copies sold, while his single, "So Sick," tops The Billboard Hot 100 and Pop 100.

Jay-Z tells Track that there are more success stories on the way. He points to Rihanna's current single, "SOS," and forthcoming album ("A Girl Like Me"), which he calls "a total maturation" from her last one. He is also excited about the new Roots album, due in September via new imprint Def Jam Left.

As for Nas, Jay-Z says the artist is "trying to get his foundations before he lets anyone into the studio." That said, Jay-Z and Nas will go into the studio together in the coming days to look at the shape of the album. "We'll figure out what we're going to do," Jay-Z says.

EL PREMIO, PT. 1

Tejano/pop singer Jennifer Peña showed up at the El Premio ASCAP Latin Music Awards March 7 in Los Angeles with her boyfriend, singer/songwriter Olivo Bermudez. Bermudez, who won an award for his song "Todo El Año," is working on an upcoming album for Telemundo, due this summer. He has also been helping Peña with her music affairs.

Bermudez's manager, David Malnodo, is helping manage Peña's career and Bermudez has been assisting with her songwriting skills. "It's something I've always wanted to do," a radiant Peña tells Track. Peña will release an album on Universal Records later this year. While songs are still being chosen, Track is confident that some of Peña's own compositions will make the cut.

EL PREMIO, PT. 2

Ricardo Arjona, winner of the ASCAP Latin Heritage award, handed out at the El Premio ASCAP Latin Music Awards, is set to kick off his worldwide tour in support of his album "Adentro." The tour will launch in Mexico in May, and will travel throughout Latin America. It will come to the United States in August.

NORDOFF-ROBBINS GOES WEST

No rooster chicken, warns Latin music impresario who along with Bill Vanneteke, his partner at Provident Financial Management, is launching a West Coast chapter of Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy. The London-based organization is well known for its annual Silver Clef ceremony, which raises money to help autistic children and adults as well as others with a variety of disabilities who may respond to music therapy. The pair, along with Headplay CEO Glen Ward and Robertson Taylor Insurance Brokers founder Willie Robertson, are hosting a March 22 event in Los Angeles to drum up awareness for the charity.

En bild wants to keep the fundraising events unique. "In London, they have horse races and soccer games. We don't want to do banquets where you get rubber chickens and spend $10,000 on a table."

FIVE YEARS OLDER

R&B singer/songwriter Case is making up for lost time. It has been five years since the former Def Jam artist's last album, "Open Letter," which featured the No. 1 R&B hit "Missing You." Now, he plans to issue two new albums this year through indigo Blue, an independent label operated by his manager, Blue Williams. The first album, "The Rose Experience," is due in June, with "Turns Me On" as the first single. The second disc—still untitled—is scheduled for a November release. Indigo Blue is distributed by Narvarre. Case recently wrapped the Ladies Night Out tour with fellow contemporary soulsters Jagged Edge, Ginuwine and Donell Jones.
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