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Kevin Lyman photographed for Billboard by Dan Dion on July 9 in San Francisco. KAT, JOHN JEFF AND HARLEY WILLIAMS OF PARAMORE/JOINS OF THE CASUALTIES JANET AND AARON TURNER/WIREIMAGE.COM

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Trumpeter/composer Terence Blanchard will keynote Billboard's Film & TV Music Conference. Also on the bill: live performances, panels and networking at its best. billboardevents.com

**NEXT QUESTION**

Ludacris will be in the house when Billboard convenes its annual R&B/Hip-Hop Conference & Awards, Sept. 6-7 in Atlanta. The hip-hop superstar will take part in a Q&A session that will no doubt be a conference highlight. Details, page 6.

billboardevents.com

**On the cover:**  
Kevin Lyman photographed for Billboard by Dan Dion on July 9 in San Francisco. KAT, JOHN JEFF AND HARLEY WILLIAMS OF PARAMORE/JOINS OF THE CASUALTIES JANET AND AARON TURNER/WIREIMAGE.COM
Biz Must Maintain CD Market While Building Digital Sales

BY ROB PERKINS

If the record labels are not careful, they will soon be confronted with a marketplace where accelerating CD sales declines will far outpace digital growth.

Prerecorded music sales have been in decline since 2000, with the exception of 2004. This is not surprising. After all, the CD is almost 25 years old and its value proposition is no longer competitive with other home entertainment products. The CD has been further devalued as the industry has allowed current hits to be downloaded for the giveaway price of 99 cents.

In addition, younger music consumers—historically our industry’s core customer—have been wooed away by videogames, DVD, MTV, instant messaging, satellite radio, the Internet, cell phones—you name it.

As a response to declining sales, many in our industry believe that salvation lies in digital downloads. But digital downloads alone will not save the industry; it will take a two-pronged attack. The industry must realize the potential of digital music and simultaneously reinvigorate physical sales with a new configuration. Our industry can have both.

Our company, Value Music Concepts, is a great retail organization. So are several of our peers. Many in our industry believe that record companies have more to lose if physical music sales disappear. But we are all home entertainment retailers with many products that can be sold in our space.

At Value Music, we are good at what we do in part because we are emotionally attached to the music we sell. We introduce our customers to new music in print and also alert them through e-mails when their favorite artists come out with new releases. We participate in local community events, and we special order anything they want. We are a friend of the family.

But we have a business to run. We have to create enough profit in our stores to fund payroll, cover operating costs and provide our shareholders with a fair return on investment. As a result, we are forced to allocate our retail floor space to those products that will pay the bills. That is why we also sell videogames, DVDs, books, posters, T-shirts, electronics and a growing variety of lifestyle accessories.

Each fall when we finalize our business plan, we allocate more floor space to product categories that are projected to grow. That space is then taken from those product categories that are projected to decline. For the last several years this process has resulted in music losing space.

This hurts badly. We have to replace the product we lose with products to which we have no emotional attachment. But this process is necessary if we are to remain economically viable.

I try to put myself in the shoes of the music content owners and distributors. I understand the allure of downloading. As a consumer, I love my iPod. But there is nothing like being better than opening a new CD and reading the liner notes, cover to cover, while the music is booming in my den. Are the record labels really going to abandon the collectors and those music fans who prefer physical product and take the chance that they too will embrace digital?

Content owners should approach downloading and the physical market with the same vigor and creativity. Downloading is 10% of the market and growing. But what about the other 90%? Why not give consumers the enjoyment of satisfying their visual and auditory senses simultaneously?

Value Music supported the DualDisc because customers liked it. But there is not a critical mass of product on the market. And there is almost no public relations effort to provide DualDisc education. As an industry we missed an opportunity. Now there are new ideas afoot to enhance physical product, with a new DVD album and packaging more new releases with a DVD.

There is still a great opportunity to grow the physical market, but time is running out. If the content owners do not reinvigorate physical sales, they will lose even more retail floor space. On the other hand, if we develop and market a product that excites music buyers, we can all prosper.

The growth of digital and physical sales in tandem is the answer. As physical sales are reinvigorated, we will be glad to dedicate more floor space to music. We will take out the stuffed animals, candy, poker chips, Yu-Gi-Oh cards, incense, cigarette lighters, greeting cards, shot glasses, flip-flops and return to selling the music we love.

Bob Perkins is president of the 61-store Value Music Concepts chain based in Marietta, Ga.

FEEDBACK

More unsigned musicians and songwriters out there—with real talent—who go unnoticed because we have become an industry obsessed with in-sapid marketing concepts rather than true artistry. It may be entertainment, but it isn’t music.

It pains one to think of struggling blues (or insert your favorite genre) musicians who patiently practice their craft for years, just seeking a little attention and recognition.

I’m sure the concept will be a success since the public’s appetite for mindless drive remains at an all-time high. But shame on Billboard for drinking the public Kool-Aid.

Tom Cartwright
president, RNB Entertainment Group
Pasadena, Calif.

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Protest, 2006 Style

Fans Demand Digital Singles As Labels Delay Releasing Hits

Growing numbers of fans are protesting online when labels delay the digital release of hit radio singles. But these consumer complaints are doing little to stop record companies from deferring the availability of downloads.

Just ask fans of "Hustlin'," the chart-climbing track from rapper Rick Ross. User forums inside the iTunes Music Store are burning up with posts clamoring for the song, which has been available at radio for more than 22 weeks. Ross' label, Island Def Jam, is yet to offer it as a digital download.

Specifically, iTunes shoppers are using the iMix, a community playlist feature intended for music discovery, as a tool to lobby for the track's release. In recent weeks, iTunes users have created more than 100 iMix playlists that feature titles demanding availability of the single. For example, "WwwwwwwWant Rick Ross!!!" is a typical playlist name.

What is for sale is the video for "Hustlin,'" which iTunes offers for $1.99. That too has drawn the ire of some fans. "The song should have come first—not the video," one anonymous reviewer writes of the clip, echoing a common refrain voiced in the user comments.

Other users are advising frustrated fans to turn to file-sharing services to get the song.

Similar "protest" playlist campaigns are mounting inside iTunes, calling for the release of surging radio tracks like "Deja Vu" by Beyoncé (Columbia) and "SexyBack" by Justin Timberlake (Jive). Likewise, emo fans have created hundreds of playlists with titles imploring the release of the catalog of Victory Records' Hawthorne Heights.

Most labels offer tracks for digital sale when a single is released to radio. When they do not, fans quickly react. Playlists demanding the release of "Call on Me" by Janet Jackson and Nelly sprang up when the single was slow to show up on iTunes. It ultimately arrived digitally after more than four weeks at radio.

Whether the songs in the playlist relate to the iMix title (many do not) is beside the point. In the comments section of the playlist, the iMix creators urge other shoppers to give their protest mix the highest possible rating. That makes their pleas more prominent when others search for the song in question. "Vote 5 stars to get "Hustlin'" and other great songs by Rick Ross," a typical iMix creator's note to other users reads.

Fans are unsure about where to place the blame. The vast majority of consumer wrath is directed at iTunes, not at the labels holding back the music. Most labels are unmove by such online outrages. Generally, they are sitting on songs in hopes of driving sales of related products, like ringtones and videos, or—most important—to create a bigger first-week pop for the album and the digital single. Thus, "Hustlin'" likely will not surface as a legal download until Ross' album, "Port of Miami," drops Aug. 1.

Island Def Jam is at the forefront of this trend, using the strategy this year with the likes of "SOS" by Rihanna and "So Sick" by Ne-Yo.

In both cases, iTunes users mounted furious playlist protests to no avail. But in the eyes of some music executives the label's strategy worked. Witness Ne-Yo's "In My Own Words," which debuted at No. 1 on The Billboard 200 after its Feb. 28 release. Similarly, Rihanna's "SOS," released at the end of April, rocketed to No. 1 on The Billboard Hot 100 and set a new record for one-week sales of a digital track, moving more than 157,000 downloads.

In some cases, exclusives with other retailers can hold up the release of tracks. The arrival of Shakira's "Hips Don't Lie" was delayed on iTunes, in part, because Epic Records gave Verizon an exclusive. Atlantic pursued a similar strategy with Snoop Dogg's "Let's Get It," a "What You Know." Subscription services like RealNetworks' Rhapsody are attempting to get around the hold-ups by offering to post music on a streaming-only basis ahead of street date. But label response has been limited.

Label executives and iTunes declined comment. But privately, label executives and retailers remain torn over whether hold-backs affect album sales.

The strategy "is just an old-fashioned record business belief that the first-week numbers have to look great," an executive at one leading digital retailer says. "It's about bragging rights in the marketing meeting."

Tom Quirk, GM of music content and programming for RealNetworks, says the practice is self-defeating. "Conversations I have with labels are, 'Please, let's not be pointless.' When a label says, 'We're not releasing something online,' that just means it's not in the licensed services yet. It's online," he says. "If something isn't there that people want, they will go other places to get it. So you might as well make it available."

RICK ROSS' "Hustlin'" has been on the radio for weeks, but Island Def Jam has yet to release it as a digital download.
THE WHO’S fall out is one of many that should drive a healthy increase in concert grosses.

The group of artists that filed a class-action lawsuit against Sony BMG, alleging the music giant has underpaid them royalties for digital music transactions, has added ringtones to its list of grievances. The plaintiffs, which include Cheap Trick and the Allman Brothers, this month amended the lawsuit, originally filed in April. At issue is whether the record company’s deal with online services for downloads constitutes a license or a sale. The artists assert they should receive the contractual rate due them on the largest percentage of their music, typically about 50%, not the rate due them for royalty on a sale, typically 10%-14%.

Universal Music Group's second-quarter revenue increased 2.2% to $1.08 billion ($1.35 billion) on improved digital sales and higher license income in the United States and the United Kingdom. On a constant currency basis, UMG’s revenue grew 0.7%. Digital sales for the three months ended June 30 totaled $111 million ($140 million)—a 91% increase year over year. Digital represented 10.3% of UMG’s second-quarter revenue. Best sellers during the quarter included new releases from Rihanna, Keane and Nelly Furtado.

Sony BMG’s net loss widened in its fiscal first quarter, a drop it attributes to a change in schedule for a number of unspecified “key” albums that have been pushed back into the second half of the year. For the three months ended June 30, the music major’s net loss expanded to $81 million, compared with a net loss of $18 million in the first quarter a year ago. Revenue fell 14% year over year to $572 million, a drop of $147 million. Restructuring charges totaled $47 million. The company also cites “the continued decline in the overall market” as a contributing factor to its performance.

High Ticket Prices Drive Grosses, But Some Markets Still a Hard Sell

Temperatures are hot, and so is the concert business.

North American concert grosses are up 24.6% for the first half of 2006, compared with January-June of 2005. This continues the pattern shown in the first quarter of 2006, when grosses rose 28%.

And with tours by Eric Clapton, the Rolling Stones, Red Hot Chili Peppers, the Who, Barbra Streisand and others tuned up for North America in the fall, the industry has a good chance of ringing up a healthy increase in year-end dollars from 2006’s numbers.

So far this year, $989.6 million in North American ticket sales have been reported to Billboard Boxscore, up from $794.1 million a year ago.

Despite that good news, it’s apparent that high ticket prices from superstar acts like Madonna, the Rolling Stones and U2 are in many ways driving the box. Total attendance, at 18.2 million for the first six months of 2006, is up just 5.4%.

Still, for an industry that hit a wall in 2004 and barely rebounded last year, any uptick is good news. Additionally, dollars outspending attendance is not new for the concert business, which experienced rapid increases in ticket prices starting in the mid 1990s.

Even if the rampant escalation in ticket costs has slightly slowed, the business is still seeing some of its highest prices ever, including top prices of $150 for Madonna, $400 for the Rolling Stones and $750 for the upcoming Stones tour, with VIP packages costing much more. While there have been some signs of resistance, these tours are still expected to sell out all of their dates.

It is not just the high-priced shows that are contributing to the current box office success. Tours by Bon Jovi, Billy Joel, Paul McCartney, Coldplay, Kenny Chesney, American Idol, Tim McGraw/Faith Hill and Rascal Flatts are relatively affordable for superstar acts, and consumers are responding to the box office (see story, page 28).

To say that the North American concert business is strong across the board, however, would be an overstatement. “This business this year is good in many markets and a bit off in a few markets,” says agent Ken Fermaglich of the Agency Group, who adds that dips seem to be more market-related than artist-related.

“Of course, an act always contributes to sales,” Fermaglich says. “However, I believe that some markets, specifically in the Midwest, are having more issues this summer because of the economic trends and issues in those markets.”

Worldwide figures are not quite as bullish as those in North America but still show increases. Global box office totals reached $1,227 billion and 22 million in attendance, up 13.3% and 2%, respectively.

A total of 6,068 shows have been reported to Billboard this year, down from 7,047 for the period last year. That decrease likely reflects bands’ reporting as opposed to less activity.

The jury is still out as to whether the industry can maintain its current pace. During July and August, when the number of tours passing through a given market usually exceeds double digits, business tends to slow down as consumers are forced to make choices. But with major acts yet to play, the rest of the year looks strong.

Billboard will sit for Confab Q&A

Rap sensation Ludacris will participate in an exclusive Q&A keynote session at the Billboard R&B/Hip-Hop Conference. Billboard senior R&B/hip-hop correspondent Gail Mitchell will conduct the one-on-one interview Sept. 8.

Chris “Ludacris” Bridges started his career as a DJ at an Atlanta radio station, where he honed his skills on the mic, learned about the music business and made a name for himself in the area. Since signing with Def Jam’s Def Jam South subsidiary in 2000, Ludacris has released the multiplatinum albums “Back for the First Time,” “Word of Mouf,” “Chicken-N-Beer” and “The Red Light District.” His next record, “Release Therapy,” will arrive in September. Ludacris is also a sought-after actor, appearing in films like “Hustle & Flow” and “Crash.”

For further information or to register, go to billboard-events.com.

LUDACRIS
CAN KAZAA PLAY IT STRAIGHT?

P2P Network To Pay Majors $115M; Court Rules It Must Filter Out Infringing Files

Kazaa is going legit. Sharman Networks and other operators of the infamous peer-to-peer (P2P) network, where millions of consumers have shared billions of unauthorized MP3 files, have reached a settlement of international litigation with major record companies and P2P judgments that Joltid, including Sharman, United Investors, and owners of the Marlboro and Lucky Cigarette logos, agreed to consent or provide alternative methods to address users of old software versions. Additional confidential terms of the settlement have not been disclosed.

Kazaa software that does not contain "a robust and secure means to exhaustively prevent" users of the software, or any comparable software or system from downloading unauthorized files. The defendants must also use "all reasonable means" to prevent or inhibit infringement, which the RIAA says will require the Kazaa parties to address users of old software versions. Additional confidential terms of the settlement have not been disclosed.

John Kennedy, chairman/CEO of global trade body the IFPI, says the labels have details about how the filtering technology will be used, but they have agreed to keep the information confidential due to its commercial sensitivity. "We will have opportunities to monitor to make sure it's working and offer suggestions on how it can be improved," he adds.

Kazaa now follows in the footsteps of Napster, a one-time P2P phenomenon that was forced to go straight. Although the legitimate Napster has never drawn the number of users that the unauthorized version attracted, Bains says experience does not necessarily dictate what will happen with Kazaa.

In a statement, Hemmings, CEO of Sharman, Kazaa's parent company, was upbeat about Kazaa's future. "This settlement marks the dawn of a new age of cooperation between P2P technology and content industries, which will promise an exciting future for online digital music download to a PC in May, up from 4% (2.4 million households) in May 2005. But the growth in commercial downloading is dominated by Apple Computer's iTunes. Consumer adoption of reformulated P2P networks like iMesh has been negligible. By contrast, Limewire is the largest P2P download service for music as of May, accounting for 64% of downloads. Arran Sinnreich, an analyst with Los Angeles-based Radar Research, says Kazaa's prospects of transforming into a popular commercial digital music service are not good. He says Kazaa is facing the same challenges that every other reformed P2P network struggles with. There are much better interfaces for buying music online, he says. Sinnreich says the problem with P2P networks trying to convert into legitimate operations is that they've outlived their original purpose—namely, connecting music fans with large libraries of digital songs. Their usefulness to consumers has declined as viable alternatives like iTunes have proliferated.

The deal settles the MGMT Studios vs. Grokster litigation in California and the labels' judgment in Australia against the Kazaa parties. The motion picture studios settled their claim for "tens of millions," according to a Motion Picture Assn. of America spokeswoman.

Despite a trial in the Australian case, the labels never learned exactly who holds ownership interests in Kazaa or exactly how it operates. "We think we got to the bottom of it," Kennedy says. "We don't know 100%, but we're looking forward now, and it doesn't matter. There are very substantial damages." He adds that most of the $115 million settlement has already been paid.

"While the award may seem like a vast pot of money," EMi Music vice chairman David Munns says in a statement, "it will merely offset the millions we have invested—and continue to invest—in fighting illegal pirate operations." A class of 27,000 music publishers and songwriters are still negotiating with the Kazaa parties. Separately, Morpheus operator StreamCast is waiting for the court's decision on a motion for summary judgment by the labels, publishers and movie studios in the Grokster case.

IFPI Sees P2P Progress

But Canada Added To List Of Top 10 IP Offenders

Almost 20 billion songs were illegally downloaded last year, the IFPI estimates in its annual global piracy report.

While the record industry has seen no abatement of physical goods piracy, the report touts the labels' settlement with the operators of peer-to-peer network Kazaa as a positive step toward forging partnerships to stem the tide of digital theft (story, this page). The report identifies "pre-release piracy" on P2P sites as a growing problem, IFPI says it is stepping up its fight against the threat, making it a high priority in the coming year.

"We need to keep on working as hard as we are, but as clever as they are," IFPI chairman/CEO John Kennedy says. "Our anti-piracy team is clever, but we are going to need some lucky breaks. I think we will find people who are really intellectual property rights. But I'm optimistic that the new government will do the right thing."

The other priority countries are Brazil, China, Greece, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Russia, South Korea and Spain.

-Susan Butler

"We're hopeful that as Kazaa moves into a legitimate model that it's successful. We're now in a partnership."—MITCH BAINWOL, RIAA

![Discs Seized](images/discs.jpg)

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![CD Burners Seized](images/burners.jpg)

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GM’s Drive For Youth
Automaker Taps Stoute To Help Update Brands

Mike Jackson, VP of marketing and advertising at General Motors North America, is fascinated by a challenge facing the automaker. He wonders aloud, “How do you take an established brand and more effectively affect consumers who don’t consider the brand?”

The consumers Jackson most wants to “affectionate” are a multicultural mix of the young and affluent who live in major markets (coastal living preferred).

To help reach this much-sought-after audience, GM has retained the services of Steve Stoute, founder/chief creative officer of brand marketing firm Translation, which has developed a reputation for successfully maturing Fortune 500 brands and superstar artists.

Though the deal has Stoute working across all GM brands, he will initially concentrate on Chevrolet, consulting with its marketing department and its agency, Campbell Ewald.

Stoute will bring the two challenged industries together: automotive and recorded music.

What makes the deal particularly exciting for Stoute is that it involves “an auto company that is seriously looking at music as a part of its communications to young people.” The featured music and talent he brings to GM will be integrated across a variety of platforms, with “the music and culture remaining authentically” he adds.

If GM can connect with the young, 28-year-old white male with a MBA in San Jose, Calif., Jackson maintains, “This campaign will be successful.”

Though the GM/Translation partnership will not officially roll out for about another six months, Stoute says Chevy will have a tremendous presence at the 2006 MTV Video Music Awards, to be held Aug. 31 at New York’s Radio City Music Hall.

Chevy’s presence at the VMAs will revolve around a “living green, eco-friendly” campaign, Stoute notes.

For Jackson, Translation brings the GM family a perspective, via its relationships with record labels and celebrities, it does not currently have.

“How do we best leverage the core equity we have?” Jackson asks. “Go back through music. Hundreds of songs have mentioned...”

CVE Stoute’s company Translation matches big business with show business for brand enhancement.

The auction process for BMG Music Publishing has hit its second phase. Sources say that those bidders who made the cut include Universal Music Group, Warner Music Group; EMI Group backed by Kohlberg Kravis Roberts; a management buyout led by BMG chairman/CEO Nicholas Firth backed by Bear Stearns; industry veteran Charles Koppelman backed by GTCR Goldner Rauten and BC Partners. Sources say that former Sony ATV worldwide president Richard Rowe and former Sony Music U.K. chairman Paul Russell are advising BC Partners.

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“How do we best leverage the core equity we have?” Jackson asks. “Go back through music. Hundreds of songs have mentioned...”

BMG Publishing countertops continues
Number Of Bidders Narrows As They Eye Pub’s Financials

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Now, if GM wants to attract a younger, hipper demo, it may soon find itself working with the likes of Juelz Santana, Gnarls Barkley, Ne-Yo, Lupe Fiasco, Shakira and the Killers.

In looking at any future campaign, Stoute and Jackson will pose a new set of questions for GM. Will it be a traditional or nontraditional execution? Will there be a viral component? Will it be interactive? What’s the look and feel of the creative?

“We really believe that if we create communications that connect with a young, affluent consumer, they will resonate everywhere,” Jackson says.

Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed, though Stoute and Jackson maintain that it is similar to a traditional agency agreement with Stoute receiving a flat fee from the auto manufacturer.

...
Old School Vs. The New

Heading For NARM, Industry Folk Weigh In On The Physical/Digital Debate

Be prepared for the snarky digerati to have a field day at the expense of those who still champion physical product. That's because as the U.S. music industry pulls into Kissimmee, Fla., Aug. 2-5 for the annual NARM convention, the main concern on the minds of brick-and-mortar retailers is the need to stimulate physical music sales.

With U.S. CD album sales down 7.8% at midyear, a percentage that will likely grow, look for even major label executives to see the need to bolster physical product so the industry remains strong until digital distribution becomes a major sales factor.

This type of logic eludes the digerati, who will either have convolutions or laughing fits when they hear that the CD is the main topic of conversation at NARM this year.

After all, even though the majors are finally charging ahead to conquer digital distribution, the digerati continue to ridicule them for not moving quickly or aggressively enough. As for brick-and-mortar music merchants, they are just dead men walking, or so the digerati would have you believe.

If the digerati had their wish, the music industry would just walk away from $8 billion in annual U.S. CD billing, forcing everyone to get music digitally, no matter the consequences to the industry.

Fortunately, more reasonable business folks want to maintain physical sales too, even as they chase digital dreams. So while digital issues will see plenty of play at NARM, so too will physical remain a big part of the dialogue.

But before retailers and labels can sit down and engage in constructive dialogue about the industry's dire situation, naturally a little sniping at one another's expense is a prerequisite.

One brick-and-mortar merchant is convinced the majors will let the floor drop from underneath the entire industry. "The majors will speed the flame of the downward spiral of physical product," he laments. "They have never been good businessmen, and they don't look at the big picture. All they ever ask themselves is, 'What's good for me now?' Not 'What's good for the overall business?'"

Simply ask why physical CD sales are falling and watch both sides let fly.

"Of course, pricing is the issue, but the labels won't ever acknowledge that," one retail chain executive says. "Let's not even mention the price structure and value offered by other forms of competing entertainment, he says. Between the high-box advertising circulars touting $8.99 and $9.99 CDs; digital albums going for $9.99, the BMG Direct site yourmusic.com selling CDs for $8.99; and all the free music and $5 CDs thanks to, respectively, unauthorized file sharing and counterfeiting, is it any wonder music specialty stores that pay $10-$12 for most CD titles and sell them for $13.99 and up are closing faster than the majors can release hit albums?"

But how retailers can blame the innocent-as-a-newborn-babe manufacturers when loss-leading occurs is a mystery to WAXX independent store in Jamaica, N.Y. Wholesale pricing should be low enough to support a $12.98 price at retail for superstars, $11.98 for stars and $9.98 for catalog and up-and-coming acts, he argues.

But other than Universal Music Group Distribution's (UMGD) JumpStart initiative, the other three majors privately make clear they won't touch the...continued on "'}
Indie Stores Ask, What, Me Worry?

Retail Numbers Plummets, But Many See Hope on Download Horizon

It has been a while since the midyear numbers for indie retail looked good, so let's get the harsh stats out of the way first. Overall album sales at independent stores are down an absolutely staggering 25.7% from the first half of 2005, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

At this time last year, more than 26.4 million units had been sold at U.S. indie stores. The number for this year: 19.6 million.

Meanwhile, overall digital album sales from all sources continue to skyrocket, up from 7 million at this point last year to 15.8 million now.

It's an aspect of the business indie retailers soon hope to have a piece of, and perhaps that's why some aren't sounding the alarm. Heading into the annual NARM convention (Aug. 2-5 in Kissimmee, Fla.), those numbers would normally be cause for a breakout. But the nation's top independent retailers appear unfazed. There is a sense among many that the surviving indie stores have learned to deal with the ever-shifting, tech-driven landscape.

Eric Levin of Criminal Records in Atlanta offers a rundown. "If you're not selling at-off-site sales, if you're not constantly updating your MySpace page, if you're not selling at all the online opportunities, from Amazon to eBay to GEMM, you're doing it wrong.

But when it comes to fully diving into Internet sales, indie retailers are taking their time in an attempt to get it right. In May, the three indie coalitions—the Alliance of Independent Media Stores (AIMS), the Coalition of Independent Music Stores and the Music Monitor Network—announced that each of their members would launch downloadable storefronts. The original plan was to have these outlets up and running by the start of summer.

"That was very ambitious of us," CIMS president Don VanCleave says. "We don't want to launch until everything is perfect, and we're just not there." While VanCleave and Levin, who also runs AIMS, decline to go into specifics, other retailers indicate that there has been a holdup in ensuring that each digital outlet can be individually tailored to each store's needs.

The sites are being created by Burbank, Calif.-based commerce company B3 thanks to an investment from WEA (Billboard, May 19). There's a chance they may not be operational this year. Doyle Davis, who runs Nashville-based indie store Grimey's, speaks of the difficult task B3 has undertaken.

"I just think they didn't realize the different priority each indie store would have," he says. "We're not a one-size-fits-all solution." Davis just hired a full-time staffer to make sure the [download] store is unique to Grimey's. "I'm going to turn her loose on HTML and have her use whatever she is able to customize the site," he says. "I want it to look more like our Web site and not like the user just jumped to a different download store. I want the store to be local.

"The coalitions are working to craft basic, nonexclusive agreements for the right to sell a local artist's digital music. This is where the indie download stores will have their greatest appeal: Such acts as Tennessee's synth-heavy rock act How I Became the Bomb and Atlanta's post-punk band the Selmaeires, for example, are hot sellers in their respective markets, yet aren't widely available on a national level.

In the meantime, expect indie stores to survive on their own ingenuity. Or, as evidenced by a recent promotion at Criminal Records, some customer-driven free labor. To reach out to a young, download-happy audience, Levin's store launched the Criminal Records Aspirational Music Journalism and Mentoring Program last school year. The program allows local school kids to review CDs available on one of Criminal's listening posts. The Criminal staff judges the reviews and publishes a portion on the Criminal Web site and in the store's newsletter (hence beeping up the store's subscriber list). Some winning reviews are eligible for bigger prizes, including a James Blunt autograph and Criminal gift cards.

It was started by avid Criminal shopper Natalie Jamison, an Atlanta-based account supervisor with advertising firm BBDO. "I was at Criminal and wishing in line to purchase a CD." Jamison says. "I overheard Eric say that he wanted to reach the youth market. I contacted him the next day and said I had an idea for him." Jamison then reached out to the local high schools and got the program off the ground. She did it outside of her day job and will be involved in helping Criminal this school year. She also saved Levin from a potentially disastrous idea—sponsoring a high school prom. "I was thinking, 'Please don't do that,' " she says. "That's way too mainstream. He couldn't go that route. Criminal Records is an indie [brand]. You need to maintain that and definitely avoid the mainstream route."
Rudolph Takes The Reins At Bug Music

Industry ‘Matchmaker’ Dons CEO Stripes As Indie Publisher Gets New Owners, Eyes Potential Acquisitions

At a time when interest in music publishing assets is at an all-time high, John Rudolph, a leading broker who specializes in connecting buyers and sellers of song catalogs, is giving up his role as industry matchmaker.

In a surprise move, Rudolph is joining the publisher ranks as the new CEO of Bug Music, which administers the catalogs of Johnny Cash, Willie Dixon, Harry Ruby, Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Annie Roboff, Taj Mahal, and Foo Fighters and others.

Rudolph comes to Bug in connection with a private equity capitalization of the 31-year-old company—a transaction he helped orchestrate.

Crossroads Media, the private equity firm headed by former Viacom CEO Tom McGrath, and Boston-based Spectrum Equity Investors have acquired a controlling stake in Bug from company founders Dan and Fred Burgoise. Financial details were not disclosed.

With the deal, Bug executive VP David Hirshland has been named president of Bug Music and Mark Anders, Bug’s international chief, becomes managing director of Bug U.K. and president of Bug International. Both report to Rudolph.

Dan and Fred Burgoise retain a minority stake in the company. They will hold seats on the Bug board of directors and provide ongoing consultation services to Bug.

Bug’s business has more than doubled over the last decade. The company boasts in excess of $30 million in revenue and more than 150,000 copyrights across a portfolio of blues, country, rock and punk catalogs. In 1995, Bug reported $15 million in revenue and 40,000 copyrights under administration.

For the week ending July 9, Bug claimed publishing shares on three of the top 10 albums on The Billboard 200: Cash’s “American V: A Hundred Highways,” Girard Barkley’s “St. Elsewhere” (which features a sample from Willie Dixon) and India.Arie’s “Testimony: Vol. 1 Life & Relationship” (with a co-write by Bug writer Tony Harrington).

Most of Bug’s business is publishing administration; owned and co-published copyrights represent around 10% of the company. Bug also administers masters for more than half a dozen artists and labels. The Los Angeles-based company has a staff of 46 worldwide and offices in Nashville, New York, London and Munich.

Bug retained Rudolph 18 months ago to find new investors. In his new role, he plans to lead an expansion of Bug in masters administration, licensing and marketing, and digital distribution and related processing services. He will also look for growth through strategic partnerships.

However, all eyes will be on the company’s anticipated catalog expansion efforts under Rudolph, who now holds a minority stake in Bug Music Publishing on its sale to Dimensional Associates; and Compendia Music on its sale to Sheridan Square/Artemis.

With the private equity-backed Bug, he appears poised to compete for any assets that may be sold off in connection with a merger or sale of one of the large publishing companies on the block.

For one thing, BMG Music Publishing is about to change hands; the auction for that giant is in its second round (see story, page 8). And questions swirl around the future of Warner/Chappell in the event of a WMG-EMI merger.

“Those are some of the things we’re excited about. If some of these groups decide there is a section of their business they no longer want, we want it.”

For now, Bug hopes to snap up writers and value-oriented catalogs while larger publishing companies are focused on bigger M&A plays.

“There’s an opportunity to build a long-term sustaining business from everything that falls out of this,” Rudolph says.
A Year In The Life

At 14, Roxanne Yarnold Is Taking Big Steps Toward Her Longed-For Vocal Career

LONDON—Long-term artist development is alive and well in the United Kingdom.

Take the example of Roxanne, a 14-year-old from Brentwood in Essex, southeast England. The ACM-leaning vocalist is being cultivated by her management as a live performer long before releasing a record, with the intent of reaping longer-term benefits.

British producer/songwriter Jon Hammond Hagan—an EMI Music Publishing signee—discovered Roxanne Yarnold singing ‘Some-where Over the Rainbow’ in a karaoke bar in 2003 when the youngster was on a family holiday in Spain.

Hammond Hagan kept in touch with the family when it returned to London and eventually began recording material with her, reflecting such influences as Barbra Streisand, Karen Carpenter and Burt Bacharach.

Billboard has tracked the progress of the fledgling singer during a 12-month period, talking to Roxanne and some of her early backers.


The Ivor Novello Award-winning Hammond Hagan brothers worked with McAteer on a previous project.

The songs include a Jon Hammond Hagan/Grant Black tune, “What If Hearts Grew on Trees,” and a version of the Fifth Dimension’s 1970 global hit, Laura Nyro’s “Wedding Bell Blues.”

“We couldn’t believe her voice and were even more amazed when we found she was only 13,” McAteer says.

July 12, 2005: Carey and McAteer meet with Roxanne and her family.

“We just sat in the garden and had an informal chat,” Roxanne recalls. “They seemed to understand where I was coming from and how important it was to keep up with my schoolwork. I really liked their ideas—everything they suggested was about me doing live work.”

The duo “naturally had some reservations about managing an artist still of school age,” Carey admits. “But when we met Roxanne and her family, our fears were allayed.”

Sept. 11, 2005: Two days after her 14th birthday, Roxanne, Carey and McAteer meet with agent Sol Parker at Concorde Artists in London.

“I found it impossible to believe a 14-year-old could have that good a voice,” Parker says. “Other ‘young’ artists that come through are quirky music for 7-year-olds who move on so quickly, but she’s a young girl doing adult music.”

Parker subsequently agrees to represent Roxanne.

Later that day, Roxanne, Carey and McAteer play tracks for Lewis Carnie, deputy controller of national AC station BBC Radio 2.

Sept. 18, 2005: Roxanne gives a private showcase for Carnie and half a dozen others at London club No. 5, at 5 Cavendish Square.

“When there’s a small number of people, I do get really nervous,” Roxanne says. “The worst is when you’re in front of friends.”

Sept. 25, 2005: Roxanne signs an exclusive contract with MMC.

Nov. 29, 2005: Carey and McAteer meet with Roxanne’s family to discuss an artist development strategy for 2006.

Jan. 9, 2006: The Hammond Hagans begin assembling a live band for forthcoming shows, using players featured on Roxanne’s recordings.


April 6, 2006: Roxanne’s first acoustic gig is at the Betsey Trotwood pub in Farringdon, London.

“It was a warm-up, small and cramped, and I could hardly breathe onstage, but the reception was quite good,” she says.

April 20, 2006: Roxanne does her first full live performance with the band at the Bedford pub in Balham, south London.

Parker says establishing Roxanne as a live artist before a record appears is “absolutely central to the campaign. She’s got a harder job than, say, an 18- or 19-year-old. She’s got to convince adults.”

April 26, 2006: Roxanne’s first broadcast appearance, London top 40 station Capital Radio conducts an on-air interview and plays “Wedding Bell Blues” as part of the U.K. Music Week series of special sessions aired April 24-May 1 across British commercial radio stations.


“Doing the gigs with Westlife is helping her a lot,” Westlife manager Louis Walsh says. Her managers “are in no rush. They don’t want it to be an overnight success.”

Roxanne insists the tour will not interfere with her schoolwork since “the gigs are all on Saturdays and Sundays, and I’ve got six weeks of [summer vacation] coming up.”

May 30, 2006: In an interview with national rock-pop station BBC Radio 1, Roxanne explains how she “will spend her school holidays on tour with Westlife.”

“Only a few [schoolmates] know about it, to be honest,” she says. “It was a good thing, but I didn’t want to come across big-headed.”

June 8, 2006: Concorde confirms Roxanne for the O2 Wireless Festival, June 25 in London’s Hyde Park—the youngest artist ever to play the event. “There’s nothing like throwing an artist in at the deep end and removing the water-wings,” Parker says.

June 25, 2006: Roxanne plays a 30-minute set on the acoustic stage at Wireless, accompanied by two guitarists.

What’s next? On Sept. 21, Roxanne will be the sole performer during a BPI event at the British embassy in Berlin during the Popkomm trade fair.

“She’s so young and so talented, and I think she’s got a great future,” Walsh says. “She’s got a very unusual voice.”

However, Walsh adds, “She should be given a little bit of time before somebody signs her up. She shouldn’t rush in and do a record now. Roxanne’s definitely going to have a record and a career. Nobody said it was easy, but she’s in great hands.”
The Pipettes are coming! The Pipettes are coming!
We don’t know yet whether they are the real
thing or just a tantalizing flashmob, and we don’t
care. These days you’ve got to live one record at a
time, and “Pull Shapes” is a good one.
The Pipettes are Becki, Gwenny and Rose from
Brighton, England (picture Asbury Park in the
good old days), and are produced by Andy
Dragazis and Gaz Parton with the full kitchen-
sink strings and
good
care.

Is the production and arrangement over the
top? It’s a close call (help us, Jack Nitzsche!), but
all we can do is hope they end up being one of
the few English groups who know the difference be-
tween rock’n roll you can dance to and the usual
horror of disco-influenced pop/rock.
The album “We Are the Pipettes” will be out soon.
And for all you future girl groups, there is now
a nationwide Rock Camp for Girls network where
every summer girls are taught how to play an in-
strument, write songs, perform live, make T-
shirts and buttons, design album art and more.
No boys allowed.
But more in boys-will-be-boys news: Primal
Scream’s Bobby Gillespie was beat up in a bar
in Madrid.
The Who tour starts Sept. 12 in Philly, and
a new album is out in October.
And in the Slow as a Turtle File: The Court of
First Instance (whoever they are) has annulled
the European Commission’s 2004 approval of the
Sony-BMG merger.
A little late on that one, boys!
And the state of Arkansas has decided to par-
don Keith Richards for a reckless driving and a
knife conviction from 1975.
Now that’s right on time!
See you next week.

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**COOLEST GARAGE SONGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title/Label</th>
<th>Artist</th>
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<td>Pinkerton’s Assorted Colours</td>
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<td>Bang Bang You’re Dead</td>
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<td>If It Takes a Life Time</td>
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<td>Country Girl</td>
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<td>Everyone Knows</td>
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<td>King of the FREAKS</td>
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<td>Hands</td>
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<td>A.C.D.C.</td>
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**COOLEST GARAGE ALBUMS**

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<td>Rockford</td>
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<td>Ahead of The Lions</td>
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<td>God Bless the Go-Go’s</td>
<td>Go-Go’s</td>
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<td>Rockin’ Bones: ‘50s Punk and Rockabilly</td>
<td>Various Artists</td>
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Little Steven’s Underground Garage column is produced exclusively for Billboard. For more information go to: [UNDERGROUNDGARAGE.COM](http://www.undergroundgarage.com)
MAMA SEeks Sanctuary
U.K.-based Sanctuary Group is discussing a potential hostile takeover bid from media and marketing group MAMA. MAMA Group’s formal all-share bid, described as “in the best interests of Sanctuary shareholders,” was originally made July 14. London-based Sanctuary disclosed the bid July 24, saying it had received no “meaningful response” from Sanctuary. Sanctuary acknowledged MAMA’s approach in a statement that said evaluation remained “at a very preliminary stage,” but added the board would be willing to meet with MAMA Group.

London-based MAMA’s Channelly subsidiary operates several U.K. venues and has interests in music recording, publishing and artist management. At a July 25 statement, Sanctuary would dispose of Sanctuary’s recorded-music assets and merge its business with Sanctuary’s remaining properties to concentrate on live music, artist management, publishing and merchandising.

BARD enters new era
The British Assn. of Record Dealers has renamed itself the Entertainment Retailers Assn. (ERA). In a July 25 statement, the trade body said the new moniker reflects the broadening of the organization’s remit to “represent the whole spectrum of music, video and games retailers” in the digital age.

BARD was formed in 1988 to provide U.K. music merchants with an equivalent to NARM and initiate dialogue between retailers and labels. It now claims to represent 90% of the United Kingdom’s music, film and games retailers, including mass merchants, specialist chains and independent stores.

The makeup of the body’s secretariat and ruling council remains unchanged. According to ERA chairman Steve Knott (managing director of HMV U.K. & Ireland), the body continues to provide “a voice for its members and a platform for dialogue between the entertainment industry, trade associations and government.”

TICKETMASTER ticks off Spain
Los Angeles-based concert ticketing giant Ticketmaster has extended its European reach by acquiring Spanish firm Tick Tack Ticket for an undisclosed sum.

Barcelona-based Tick Tack distributes tickets for more than 400 event organizers through its nationwide retail outlets and web site ticktackticket.com. Tick Tack’s existing agreements and marketing strategies will remain unchanged, according to Ticketmaster, although the company will adopt Ticketmaster’s technology. Tick Tack Ticket managing director Eugeni Calsamiglia Blancafort retains his role in the new setup, and the Tick Tack Ticket brand will continue to be used in the immediate future.

PALLISTER ON TV AT SONY BMG OZ
Sony BMG Music Australia has named TV veteran Pallister Group GM of its new TV and film production division. Pallister was director of programs and content creation for the Australian operations of TWI, broadcast division of talent and rights management company BMG. The appointment takes effect Aug. 21. Pallister will report to Sony BMG Australia chairman/CEO Denis Handlin.

The launch of the TV and film production division was announced in February. It will produce programs featuring Sony BMG artists, TV series and specials, and will also develop formats from the company’s TV and film divisions in other territories.

EMI Rings Up Vodafone Deal
EMI Music has struck a content deal with Vodafone that makes 200,000 full tracks available to the international wireless carrier’s third-generation subscribers in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

The deal gives the users of the dedicated Vodafone Live multimedia portal in those markets direct access to EMI’s digital music catalog of reissues, ringback tones and full-tracks downloads.

UpFront
GLOBAL NEWSLINE

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'80s Makeover Far From Trivial
Hasbro’s Trivial Pursuit embraces pop culture via entertainment icons

Trivial Pursuit is one of the most popular brands in the Hasbro Games family. Since its introduction 24 years ago, the game—the original version and its special editions—has sold nearly 100 million units in 26 countries and 17 languages.

For the game’s newest edition, Trivial Pursuit Totally ‘80s, Hasbro and its agency Grey Worldwide have concocted a top-notch campaign. It features a lively cast of colorful personalities from the decade that gave us asymmetrical hair styles, off-the-shoulder shirts and tight jean shorts.

“Morning Train (Nine to Five)” and, of course, Trivial Pursuit. According to Hasbro Games senior marketing manager Tim Eio, the company has had a strong desire to do an ‘80s edition for quite some time. “With the momentum for the pop culture of that decade continuing to grow, it made sense to do this now,” he says.

Tiffany, D’Arcy & M.C. McDaniel, Downtown Julie Brown, Kelly LeBrock and seven others were spotlighted in the campaign, which encompasses radio and TV spots as well as an interactive online component.

An original song jingle, “Trivial Pursuit, Totally Eighties,” is heard throughout the campaign. Cyndi Lauper and Rockwell wrote the music, while Grey copywriter Michael Lichter handled the lyrics. Grey director of music Josh Rabino and Rockwell produced the track.

A 60-second radio spot introduced July 24 in major markets, including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Philadelphia. This was accompanied by the Totally ‘80s microsite, accessible at trivialpursuit.com.

The site offers access to musical streams, celebrity profiles and behind-the-scenes footage from the TV shoot.

Hasbro should seriously consider making “Trivial Pursuit, Totally Eighties” available as a complement to download and ringtone. This would enhance the overall campaign and further engage the game’s target audience (late 20s to early 40s).

The radio and Internet platforms will be followed in late September by a 30-second TV spot directed by Lauper. Though the singer does not appear in the spot, her voice is heard on the track. (And that’s Tiffany singing the hook.)

Lauper says she initially got involved with the project because she found the people at Grey intriguing. “We sat around and discussed the possibilities,” she says. “They were so creative. The experience reminded me of my record company 25 years ago. It seemed like it would be fun.”

According to Rabino, he and his creative team first presented Hasbro with an anemic “We Are the World” type song for the campaign. But after numerous discussions, including much input from Lauper, the original concept evolved into something “more fun and dancey” (think “Girls Just Want to Have Fun” crossed with “She Bop”).

But as much as the song harks back to the dawning days of MTV, it has wisely been infused with contemporary elements. This way, Rabino and says, “it sounds fresh for those who weren’t around for the ‘80s, while recalling good times for those who experienced it firsthand.”

Will this campaign resuscitate some careers? Stay tuned.

MATERIAL GIRLS: In June, Zot/Rounder act Girl Authority performed at the grand opening of the first Club Libby Lu store in the Boston area. This paved the way to a joint-launching radio campaign linking band and brand. The 30- and 60-second spots feature the tween group singing “All About You.”

Immediately following Girl Authority’s performance, Club Libby Lu executives met with Rounder president John Virant. A Libby Lu representative says that “it quickly became apparent that much synergy existed between the tween girls in the group and what we do.”

The rep adds: “We were looking at boosting our marketing campaign. We saw Girl Authority as a great sound and fit for our consumer.”

Branding/marketing consultant Michael Pagnotta, president of Reach Media, helped broker the deal between Rounder and the specialty retailer.

Club Libby Lu, a wholly owned subsidiary of Saks Fifth Avenue, is an 87-store specialty retailer geared to tween girls, aged 6-13.

Virant sees the partnership as an additional way to help “develop the act as a brand.”

Since its April release, Girl Authority’s self-titled debut CD has sold 42,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. The disc will soon be available for sale in Club Libby Lu stores nationwide. Discussions are under way to determine if the full-length version of “All About You” will be released.

Making the Brand
MICHAEL PAOLETTA mpaoletta@billboard.com

Back to the future: Board game Trivial Pursuit catches up with Tiffani, Cyndi Lauper and D’Arcy D.M.C. McDaniel for its ‘80s editions marketing campaign.
The debate over whether digital rights management technology helps or hinders the digital music market is increasing in volume.

Consider DRM, as it exists today, makes digital music less valuable than music available in physical formats, which for the most part carries no restrictions. They say DRM strips away the right to make copies that music owners have historically enjoyed, and exists primarily to line the pockets of record labels and technology companies implementing it.

Meanwhile, record industry executives say DRM is necessary to protect artists from rampant online piracy, and that it, in fact, helps establish a vibrant digital music market by enabling new business models and revenue streams such as subscription services.

Yahoo Music's concert footage service Smash has begun to feature exclusive webisodes highlighting performances and behind-the-scenes footage of Pink's North American tour. New segments are added each Monday throughout the remainder of her tour.

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David Porter

Executive’s Vision Has Shaped The Wal-Mart Chain Into A Major Music Destination

Wal-Mart already was the world’s largest music retailer when David Porter came aboard three years ago and helped make the chain one of the industry’s most innovative.

Since becoming VP and divisional merchandise manager for movies and music for the company’s U.S. Wal-Mart Stores, Supercenters and Neighborhood Markets, Porter has launched a series of initiatives designed to distinguish the giant merchant’s music presence for consumers, while shaking up the competition.

For one, he has led the two-pack version of big album releases for the chain by partnering with Viacom and its music lifestyle channels to offer versions of albums that contain exclusive video content for Wal-Mart customers.

Like his counterparts at Best Buy, Porter also has begun to forge relationships with artists and managers without telling the labels, sometimes to their dismay. That initiative yielded Wal-Mart’s much-publicized deal for exclusive albums from Garth Brooks. More such arrangements could be on the horizon.

“Porter is an extremely aggressive guy, but very direct: He is a straight shooter,” the head of sales at a major label says. Universal Music Group Distribution president Jim Urie says, “Clearly, Porter has been the most proactive guy [Wal-Mart] ever had in that job. He changed the landscape of how they are represented in music. They went from being a retailer which carried music to, in some cases, leading the market.”

Porter, a 23-year veteran of Bentonville, Ark.-based Wal-Mart Stores, is involved in the strategic integration of digital and physical media, and serves on the corporate strategy team for home entertainment. He started his career at Wal-Mart while still in high school.

What role does music play in the Wal-Mart marketing mix?

Obviously, if you go back to our Home for the Holiday campaign last year during Christmas and the holidays, you would have seen Garth Brooks, Jesse McCartney, Martina McBride, Queen Latifah, Destiny’s Child and the Knowles family... representing a wide variety of music interests. I think that campaign lets you know how much music means.

If I were to guess your U.S. music market share at 22% and revenue at about $2 billion, would those be good numbers?

On market share, it would be slightly higher than that; on revenue, that would be aggressive, but it’s in that neighborhood.

I’m guessing your video market share is about 30%.

In music, we don’t carry [content tagged with] parental advisory notices, whereas in video we do carry R-rated titles, so it would be much higher market share than what you are representing. It would be safe to say we are the leading market-share player in both categories.

Is the Wal-Mart philosophy toward stickered music product changing?

We listen to our customers every day. It’s a business that we are not in today. We carry videogames and R-rated videos that are restricted at point of sale. It is something that we talk about and review periodically.

Does Wal-Mart regard music as a profit center, traffic driver or both?

Every category at Wal-Mart is viewed as important to the total store mix, and also needs to stand on its own business.

Do you ever foresee the day when Wal-Mart will bypass its rackjobbers and buy directly from music suppliers?

Our best example of going direct is with Garth Brooks, where we went directly to the artist. We are always looking at the business. Our suppliers are very important to us. Growth is very important to us, and this space is very difficult and complicated. As the digital world evolves, we are constantly looking at new ways of doing business and new business models.

Will you pursue more deals like the one with Brooks?

We are interested in the business model. Garth is a great artist and helping us to understand the landscape from his point of view... I think it’s fair to say that Wal-Mart is actively looking at many different business models, new and digital, which would include the Garth model as an example.

How do you view the health of the music business?

These are very tough and difficult times. If feels to me like the release schedule... is not being managed to leverage the marketplace across a 52-week calendar, and then you wind up with big records right on top of each other at the holidays. We are concerned that we don’t have a spread of new-release titles where we can build events around them more frequently—like we did last year during the holidays.

Rascal Flatts is an excellent example of a record that came out in a non-holiday time frame that is still selling... and one that many different retailers can rally around and build a campaign.

Wal-Mart is now a music destination. But is store traffic and impulse buying still an important part of your business?

Catalog merchandise and impulse merchandise is still a very significant portion of our business. We specifically have a lot of success around our $9.72 catalog program, which is very impulse-driven.

We recognize that the digital evolution is occurring, but still recognize that the physical CD is an impulse purchase that you can use to put music onto digital devices. We see the numbers and know that many customers—i.e., the majority of customers—are consuming music digitally by filling their devices with music ripped from their CDs either from new purchases or their collections of CDs.

Some see the future as digital only. How does Wal-Mart see it?

We will go where the customer wants to go, but we think there is room for both. We think there will be business in both places.

Do the labels show enough concern about music pricing?

I think the challenge is when you see the industry decreasing in total dollars, you have to listen to what the customer is saying and you have to react differently and take some action points to protect your business. All of us want to see a healthy music business with the total pie growing, and the current trend today is we are seeing that pie shrink, which has to be a concern to everyone in the business.

Is Wal-Mart’s music business growing or shrinking?

It’s a tough business, and we are fighting every day to get our fair share of the pie and to grow the business, and not just for Wal-Mart. We want to see the industry healthy and vibrant, and I think you are seeing efforts from us to contribute in that way. If you talked to the labels involved in our Home for the Holiday campaign, you would hear feedback that to have that kind of push behind music was good not just for us but for everybody, including other retailers.

As we head to NARM, what is the biggest issue for the music industry?

Managing the conversion from physical to digital and how you can grow the total pie and not just put media spins on how [some] segment is outperforming. We need to really manage the total industry to grow within both physical and digital. We need to face the hard truth of the industry shrinking and what needs to be done differently.
Bound For NARM, Retailers Get Word Of Top Titles

New albums from an array of multiplatinum acts, including Evanescence, OutKast, Beyoncé and Justin Timberlake, bodes well for music retailers as they convene for the annual NARM convention and marketplace, set for Aug. 2-5 outside Orlando, Fla. Here is a roundup of 20 notable titles due to drive retail traffic in the months ahead from acts in pop, rock, country, R&B, hip-hop, Christian, Latin, jazz and classical. The entries are ranked by the U.S. sales of each act's previous album, as measured by Nielsen SoundScan. This selection reflects information available at press time, as chosen by Billboard writers Melinda Newman, Phyllis Stark, Gail Mitchell, Hillary Crosley, Leila Cobo, Deborah Evans Price, Dan Ouellette and Anastasia Tsioulcas.

Evanescence
Open Door, Wind-up Records
Rock act Evanescence will release the long-awaited studio follow-up to 2003's "Fallen" on Oct. 3. "Open Door" reunites the band with "Fallen" producer Dave Fortman, and will be preceded by the intriguingly titled first single, "Call Me When You're Sober." "Fallen" has sold more than 15 million copies worldwide, according to the label. U.S. sales alone tally 6.5 million units.

OutKast
Idlewild, Arista Records
OutKast has long been the South's lyrical savior, and André 3000 and Big Boi's five-album history has been a steady upward climb in sales and talent. The pair countered rumors that it had broken up with the release of "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below," which allowed each of them to do their own creative thing and sell 5.6 million units in the process. André 3000 has branched off into Hollywood, acting in "Be Cool" alongside Uma Thurman and John Travolta, and "Four Brothers." Big Boi has launched his own Purple Ribbon label through Virgin Records. His compilation "Big Boi Presents Got Purp?: Vol. II" dropped in early 2006 and featured the hit "Kryptonite." The duo's sixth album, "Idlewild," is slated to drop Aug. 22, alongside the pair's film of the same name ("Billboard, July 22").

Beyoncé
B'Day, Columbia Records/Sony Urban
Following her multiple Grammy Award wins and multiplatinum sales for her first solo album, 2003's "Dangerously in Love," superstar Beyoncé returns with "B'Day," out Sept. 5. The set arrives Sept. 4 internationally, the singer's 25th birthday. First single "Déjà Vu" is soaring up The Billboard Hot 100. Beyoncé, who also stars in this fall's "Dreamgirls," co-wrote, co-produced and co-arranged all the songs on the album with an array of producers that includes Sean Garrett, Rich Harrison, Rodney Jerkins, the Neptunes and Swizz Beatz. "Dangerously in Love," which spawned a number of hits including "Crazy in Love," has sold 4.3 million units.

Justin Timberlake
FutureSex/LoveSounds, Jive Records
It has been a nearly four-year wait for the follow-up to Justin Timberlake's first solo album, 2002's "Justified." This set, which has sold 3.6 million units, established the former 'N Sync lead singer as a solo force to be reckoned with. On "FutureSex/LoveSounds," out Sept. 12, Timberlake worked with such producers as Timbaland, Rick Rubin and Jawbreakers. Timberlake co-wrote and co-produced first single "SexyBack."
from pp18

Angelo. Krall’s last release, 2005’s “Christmas Songs,” was the best-selling holiday album of the year. Her previous non-holiday album, “The Girl in the Other Room,” debuted at No. 20 on The Billboard 200, and has sold 875,000 units.

Bob Seger
Face the Promise, Capitol Records
Rock ’n’ roll never forgets, sometimes it just lies dormant. Bob Seger will release his first new studio album in 11 years when “Face the Promise” drops Sept. 12 on Capitol, preceded by first single “Wait for Me.” Seger, who was inducted last year into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, has not released a studio album since 1995’s “It’s a Mystery.” It has since sold 537,000 units.

Maná
Amar Es Combatió, Warner Music Latina
Following the 2003 release of three greatest-hits collections, Mexican rock group Maná returns with its first studio album in four years, “Amar Es Combatió,” out worldwide Aug. 22. Follows an aggressive promotional campaign that included national spots on the Univision network during the World Cup. First single “Labios Compartmentos” was serviced to radio in July. The album also features a track with bachata star Juan Luis Guerra. Maná is widely considered to be the world’s best-known and top-selling Latin rock band, with 19 million albums sold, according to Warner. The group’s previous studio album, “Revolución De Amor,” sold 462,000 copies in the United States.

Vince Gill
These Days, MCA Nashville
Vince Gill’s next project is a 43-song, four-CD set of country, bluegrass, jazz and rock songs, due Oct. 16. Featured guests include Sheryl Crow, Bonnie Raitt, Diana Krall, Rodney Crowell, Phil Everly, the Del McCoury Band, Emmylou Harris, John Anderson, Lee Ann Womack, LeAnn Rimes, Gretchen Wilson, Guy Clark, Trisha Yearwood, Michael McDonald, as well as Gill’s wife, Amy Grant, and daughter, Jenny Gill. His 2003 album, “Next Big Thing,” debuted at No. 4 on Billboard’s Top Country Albums chart and has sold 286,000 copies.

Chris Tomlin
See the Morning, Sixstepsrecords
In a relatively short period of time, Texas-based singer/songwriter Chris Tomlin has gone from a well-known worship leader to the Gospel Music Assn.’s reigning artist of the year. His forthcoming disc, “See the Morning,” due Sept. 26, is expected to be one of the Christian industry’s blockbuster releases in the fall. His last album, “Arriving,” has sold 190,000 units. The first single from his new album is “Made to Worship,” which went to radio July 14. Tomlin will support the new release with a fall tour.

Marco Antonio Solís
Album title pending, Fonovisa
Mexican superstar Marco Antonio Solís is one of the few artists who has successfully straddled the regional Mexican and pop genres. His last studio album, “Tu Amor O Tu Desprecio,” mixed both styles and has sold 174,000 units. But his upcoming set veers more toward pop, including strings that were recorded in London. Lush arrangements have served Solís well on blockbuster albums like “Travesía” and “Madre De Mis Amores.” This upcoming set, due in the fourth quarter, will no doubt benefit from his joint U.S. tour with Marc Anthony and Laura Pausini.

Amy Grant
Time Again... Amy Grant Live, Word Records
Anytime Amy Grant has a release pending, it’s an event in the Christian music industry, but this record is generating particularly strong buzz. CD/DVD “Time Again... Amy Grant Live,” due Sept. 26, will chronicle the singer/songwriter’s career. The disc is a follow-up to Grant’s “Rock of Ages... Hymns of Faith,” which has sold 110,000 units.

Yo La Tengo
I Am Not Afraid of You and I Will Beat Your Ass, Matador Records
Beloved adventurous indie group Yo La Tengo returns to the expansive mélange of sounds featured on its mid-’90s releases on the wackily titled “I Am Not Afraid of You and I Will Beat Your Ass,” produced by Roger Moutenot and due Sept. 12. The group’s 2003 disc, “Summer Sun,” has sold 70,000 units.

Various Artists
She Was Country When Country Wasn't Cool: A Tribute Album to Barbara Mandrell, BNA Records

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The Allegro Group has been a NARM member since 1980, and is looking forward to being a part of NARM 2006.
WHY WARPED WORKS

BY RAY WADDELL
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAN DION

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Kevin Lyman is spinning plates.

Among the immediate issues the Vans Warped tour founder and producer is juggling this morning at an underperforming date in Nashville are a crew member's minor medical emergency, an upcoming European on-sale for his Taste of Chaos tour, tracking album sales for his two labels and the magical appearance of a key piece of sound equipment that has been chasing the tour across several cities.

Lyman's production office on this day at Starwood Amphitheatre is packed with tour personnel, transportation coordinators, press, artists and a wealth of other, mostly heavily tattooed, individuals who all seem to function at a high level of organized chaos.
A partnership among Vans, Lyman's 4mi Productions and Creative Artists Agency's (CAA) Darryl Eaton, Warped has become one of the most consistent touring properties ever. While it may appear to the casual observer a dysfunctional punk family, the tour, now in its 12th year, works for reasons that transcend the bottom line.

"If this was purely driven by economics, there would be a lot of Warpeds," Lyman says. "But if I laid it all out for you economically, no one could figure it out how it works. It doesn't make sense, because it's not really always based on finances."

What Warped is about is the care, feeding and shepherding of $60-plus people, including more than 100 bands, on 187 vehicles from town to town, and then setting up and putting on a show for thousands of punk kids. Virtually every detail of Warped eventually ends up in Lyman's lap, particularly if there's a problem, and he delegates with aplomb.

"I think he probably learns from his mistakes," observes veteran road warrior Joans Jett, a headliner on this year's tour. "I heard early on the food sucked, and now the food is excellent. I'm sure there are a million little details you have to get together if you're going to make this type of thing work."

It works. Last year, Warped enjoyed its best outing ever, with attendance of 700,000 and a gross exceeding $16 million from a ticket that is generally priced for less than $10.

For a dozen years, Lyman and Warped have continuously pumped new blood—fans and bands—into the punk-rock scene, contributing significantly to the genre's vitality. The sense of community appeals to groups as diverse as the potential new audience.

"Warped gives us a chance to play for people who may not necessarily get a chance to see us otherwise," says Andrew Everding, keyboardist for post-hardcore band Thursday, which played its first Warped in 2002. "The kids that are showing up now that were 12 back then, and for the younger kids the only concert they might go to is the Warped tour."

Others credit Warped with an even bigger role in their development. "I think the reason we have a career is because of the Warped tour," saxophonist J.R. of Less Than Jake says. "We've been doing this so long, we ended up building our fan base on tour, on this tour."

A shared sense of punk purpose surely greases the wheels, but it takes more than good intentions to keep turnstiles spinning, particularly with a tour that practically turns over its audience every three to four years. Warped works—with the venues, promoters, bands, sponsor, crew and, most importantly, the fans.

"We aim to deliver a great experience for the fan coming to the show, the artists that come out on the road with us, our sponsors, crew," CAA's Eaton says. "It is truly a unique community that transcends the 'business' of the tour."

CIRCUS COMES TO TOWN
When the Warped army rolls into a venue, promoters and venue operators are often asked to pretty much turn over the keys and step aside.

"We overrun your venue the 14 hours we're there," Lyman admits. "We respect your venue, but we need you to adapt with us and kind of step back, get out of the way. And for the amount of wear and tear 800 people can do to something, I believe there are bands with 20 people that come in and do more damage."

Other than "adapting," Warped does not ask a whole lot from the venues and promoters.

"Plenty of good forklift drivers, stagehands, some security," Lyman says. "We do all our own catering. There's no way a promoter would cater this. This catering bill, if you based it on a normal deal when you go into an arena, I think it'd be somewhere around $30,000 a day. Most people couldn't handle it."

Shelleylyn Brandler's Ta Da! Catering feeds the tour, with an assist from this year's "barbecue band," the Sunstreak. "We always say 90% of the people on the Warped tour will eat the best they ever do and the other 10% can afford to go out and eat somewhere else," Lyman says. In the egalitarian society that is Warped, bands, crew, bus drivers and producers all stand in line for the same chow, virtually indistinguishable from each other.

At Stanwood, Warped never touched the covered stage or fixed seats, instead setting up its 10 stages and 67 exhibitors in a gravel parking lot behind the shed's lawn. This is the case only when the crowd is smaller. "In most cities we split the amphitheater stage and put our smaller stages on it, especially if it's covered," Lyman says, "because we find it's a good place to get kids out of the sun."

At the venues, Lyman does not want to pay for anything he does not need, and he particularly does not want to be beholden to a bloated "house nut"—the amount of money it takes to produce a show—that can boost expenses. He makes a point of confronting venues to prevent overspending.

"These venues are opening their books for us, which they'll never open to anyone else, and we're breaking out those house nuts and we're tearing them apart," he says. "The house nut continually went up in this business, and I think 99% of the reason it kept going up was people didn't give a shit. My whole thing is to help them bring the house nut down. We come to the show and look at everything."

At one Live Nation shed early in the route, Warped expenses were $14,000 less than the house nut, Lyman says. Venues "are willing to work with us if we can help them lower costs. We get a lot of people that say Warped is the hardest date they work all summer but the one they look forward to the most."

While several Live Nation sheds dot the route, Warped also works with a wide array of independent promoters and alternative venues. A promoter does not have to ultra-deep pockets to bring in the tour.

"We're the only tour on the road that's doing a lot of zero guarantees," Lyman says. "On a day like today [in Nashville] I say I'd kick pretty good, because we're picking up all expenses before we take a penny."

In Nashville and some other markets, Warped worked on a straightforward "back-end" deal, with profit split after expenses. "We probably have $150,000 in expenses," Lyman says. After that is covered, Warped takes 95% (or in some cases 100%) of the ticket revenue. The venues keep the revenue from ancillaries, including rent, concessions and parking.

In Nashville, Lyman was hoping Warped could do 7,000-8,000 people. But final paid attendance ended up at 5,600 for a gross of about $150,000, which barely broke even for the tour. Thankfully, it was his last crowd of less than 10,000 as of press time.

THE BRANDS
Ten stages notwithstanding, Warped has the look and feel of a punk-rock county fair with row after row of booth space. Sixty-seven sponsors and vendors are onboard for this year's 50-date outing, coordinated by Warped's Sarah Root.

Exhibitors have turned into Warped's second-highest revenue stream, up 20% this year. "Now we have to turn a lot of people down, just like bands," says Lyman, who adds that 60%-80% of the "seven-figure" sponsorship value is pumped back into the tour. "It underwrites writing this thing down the road."

Warped sponsors and vendors are not exactly mainstream, outside of entities like Cingular Wireless and Major League Baseball. Instead, most are small indie labels (including Lyman's own SideOneDummy Records and Warcon Records), alternative fashions and other left-of-center concerns.

Largely absent are the extreme sports exhibits that were once a huge presence. "Sports-wise, when we first took this tour out I was able to get some of the top athletes, but now their time is so distracted because of the X Games and Gravity Games," Lyman says. Now Warped hosts local skateboarding competitions. "It's about trying to adapt with the times without screwing up the foundation."

While Southern California fashion brands like Hurley and PacSun have raised awareness through their association with Warped, none has been boosted like the tire sponsor. Footwear company Vans has presented 11 of the 12 Warped tours in the

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most long-lived tour sponsorship in the business.

“We were an $80 million to $100 million-a-year company back in 1996 when we got involved with Kevin,” says Steve Van Doren, Vans VP of promotion and events, whose father Paul (now retired) started the company 40 years ago.

Van Doren says the Warped association has been a highly effective marketing tool, allowing Vans to become known outside of Southern California. “Our customers are 12- to 18-year-old boys and girls. We’ve always been into skateboarding and snowboarding, and music has been a great tie-in.”

This year, Vans is projecting revenue of $500 million, and Van Doren attributes much of the growth to the Warped association.

“We changed from being a manufacturing company to a marketing company. We work with bands, they wear the shoes and the kids want to be like them, and it’s just a win-win,” Van Doren says. “We let Kevin do what he does, we let CAA do what they do, we don’t interfere at all. Those guys know what the hell they’re doing.”

THE BANDS

With more than 1,000 submissions to participate this year, bands obviously love being on the tour, and many are veterans. Bands break on Warped. “The tour has consistently been the launch pad for the next round of new superstar bands,” Eaton says. “Just last year’s tour alone saw bands like My Chemical Romance, Avenged Sevenfold and Fall Out Boy, to name a few, rise to the top. I think the tour really provides a platform for fans to go out and discover their new favorite artists.”

Lyman is not above giving a battlefield promotion. “The first Warped we did, we were on one of the smaller stages, and they bumped us up to the main stage halfway through the tour because the response was so cool,” Thursday’s Eve says.

Less Than Jake has done at least eight Warped tours. “There’s nothing like this tour,” J.R. says. “It’s truly like summer camp. You get up, you go stand in line for breakfast, you stand in line for lunch, you go play a show, run around. The camp counselor is Kevin Lyman.”

Warped is not the best payday in the world. According to Lyman, “There are bands out here making $500 in a night. If you throw them on a tour and drive them across the venue, it only gets them nervous and everything escalates, and the next thing you know, we’re sending people to the hospitals.”

EOLVING WITH THE MUSIC

With tickets rarely topping $30 and so many bands and activities on the bill (117 performed in San Diego), Warped is the best value on the road. But its producers face the challenge of promoting a genre-based tour in a business where tastes change quickly. “We have just tried to evolve with the music and keep up with what a Warped fan wants to see,” Eaton says. “I think that one of the successes of the tour is that we haven’t changed it too much.”

Indeed, Warped has been remarkably consistent by “not screwing with the brand,” Lyman says. “We’ve had one dip in 1998, when our numbers went down and I had arguably my two biggest bands, Eminem and Blink-182. But it confused my audience. They abandoned it, because they thought I screwed up the brand.”

So if numbers are a little off this year, Lyman’s not sweating it. “If we only go out and do 620,000, is that success?” he asks rhetorically. “I did get depressed the first day a little bit when I saw how we were tracking. Then I started thinking, ‘It was only a couple of years ago that we first did 500,000 people.’”

The key, he says, is to find a way to financially make it work. By Lyman’s accounting, the economic model is simple: “You put money in that starts the tour, and if at the end there’s money in the bank, it was a successful tour.”

Lyman remains committed to Warped above and beyond the financial rewards. “I do a lot of other things and I have a lot of other projects, but the first day of the Warped tour when the doors open, the hair on my arms stands up,” he says. “That means it’s still relevant in my heart and soul to do this tour, and it’s not just going out on the road as a job.”

And though he has had offers to buy the tour or turn it over to a national promoter/producer, that’s not likely. “I find I’m terminally unemployable,” he says. “I realized this is what I do really well.”

So how long will it last? “The kids will let us know if they don’t want to come anymore.”
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### TOP 25 Tours

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<tr>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
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<td>130,761</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>70,361</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>$1,354,207</td>
<td>100,761</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
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**Rolling Stones Start The Year Off With Much-Anticipated 'Bang!' by Ray Waddell**

The list of the top tours for the first half of 2006 is predictably top-heavy with veteran rockers, but the lineup also yields a few surprises from developing acts and new arena productions.

At the top of the list compiled from figures reported to Billboard Boxscore from Nov. 1, 2005, through mid-May, as they have been virtually every time they are on the road for the past three decades, are the Rolling Stones. The Stones’ Bigger Bang tour, produced by Michael Cohl, reported $147.3 million in grosses from 45 shows in U.S. arenas and international stadiums.

Through not without its drama—including brain surgery for guitarist Keith Richards following a bizarre accident—the Stones hunkered back into gear July 11 for a European stadium run that could make Bigger Bang the top-grossing tour ever.

The Stones just announced that they will return to North America in the fall “in kind of astounding when it keeps improving 43 years later,” Gold says.

While it’s doubtful it would have passed its elder brethren, U2 would have improved its already hefty take of $73 million for the period had it not postponed dates in New Zealand, Australia, Japan, and Hawaii because of a family illness.

Still, U2’s mega-trek is unarguably one of the most successful tours ever. “The Vertigo tour was an absolute success worldwide,” says Vertigo producer Arthur Fogel, music chairman of Live Nation and head of TNA, the firm’s international touring division.

Most of the $2 million in the midyear report from Latin American Vertigo stops. “The shows in Mexico and South America continued the incredible feat of not one unsold ticket,” says Fogel, who adds that he remains hopeful that the Pacific Rim dates will be rescheduled.

The launch of Bon Jovi’s world tour in support of its “Have a Nice Day” album was orchestrated to perfection by producer AEG Live and agency Creative Artists Agency, and the tour has delivered big time.

Bon Jovi is the third-highest-grossing act for the period, reporting more than $65 million and 86,873 in attendance, selling out 54 of 57 shows.

“We broke the Bon Jovi legs up into fall ‘05 and the first and second quarters of ’06,” AEG Live CEO Randy Phillips notes. “We played all the dates in one year, including the summer stadium dates, we would have sold for top tour.”

Phillips points out that Bon Jovi was the only act other than U2 to play four sold-out Air Canada Centre shows in Toronto. “Also, we played six arenas in the New York metro area, and are now almost clean on three Giant Stadiums in the same market,” Phillips adds.

Bon Jovi will be on the road in the United States and Europe through most of the summer.

Billy Joel’s return to the road last winter was nothing short of spectacular, selling out 33 of 34 dates and ringing up multiples in many markets, including a record-setting 12 sellouts at New York’s Madison Square Garden that grossed $1.2 million.

“The true ‘hall of famers’ are the artists that can fill arenas night after night,” says Dennis Arfa, Joel’s longtime agent at Artists Group International.

A rare newcomer to the touring elite is Cirque du Soleil’s ‘Delirium,’ a continued on p30

### TOP 10 Venues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAPACITIES 15,000 OR MORE</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, NEW YORK</td>
<td>20,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TD BANKNORTH GARDEN, BOSTON</td>
<td>19,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WACHOVIA CENTER, PHILADELPHIA</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIR CANADA CENTRE, TORONTO</td>
<td>19,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PALACE OF AUBURN HILLS, AUBURN HILLS, MICH.</td>
<td>20,654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGM GRAND GARDEN, LAS VEGAS</td>
<td>15,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELL CENTRE, MONTREAL</td>
<td>21,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLISEO DE PUERTO RICO, HATO REY, PUERTO RICO</td>
<td>18,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTINENTAL AIRLINES ARENA, EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J.</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THOMAS &amp; MACK CENTER, LAS VEGAS</td>
<td>19,354</td>
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</table>
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from »p28

new arena product that has quickly become a force to be reckoned with. Since January, "Delirium" has grossed almost $40 million from 64 shows and moved nearly 450,000 tickets. "The great thing about this tour is it's kind of a fusion of music and art," says Brad Wavra, point person on "Delirium" for Live Nation, which is producing the tour. "For the first time in a long time we've created a different type of arena entertainment."

Most importantly, this is not a one-shot deal. "It's not dependent on a hit song or a pop star," Wavra says. "People seem to be coming back again."

Road veteran Aerosmith again asserted its authority this winter, grossing more than $35 million from 32 dates on a tour that was cut short because of throat problems for singer Steven Tyler. The good news is that Aerosmith will strike even harder later this year with a co-headlining run with Motley Crue called the Route of All Evil.

One of the few relatively new acts among the top midyear tours is Coldplay. The band followed up last summer's successful shed tour with a run through arenas that rang up grosses of nearly $30 million and attendance of more than 50,000.

"The year is going very well," Coldplay manager Dave Holmes modestly says. "The U.S. arena leg that ran from Jan. 25 to March 6 was a tremendous success, with all but a couple of the dates doing sellout business."

Coldplay wraps a sold-out arena tour of Australia this summer, and then heads to Asia. "This has been their best year ever," Holmes says.

Luis Miguel's 30-show engagement Jan. 18- Feb. 27 at Auditorio Nacional in Mexico City grossed $19.3 million and drew 267,528 fans, the linchpin for more than $25 million in grosses for the period. The Auditorio Nacional number is believed to be the biggest gross in the history of Mexico and one of the top global indoor grosses of all time.

"He probably could have done more" shows, says Peter Gormsgi, worldwide head of music for the William Morris Agency (WMA), which books Miguel.

The Auditorio Nacional stand, promoted by Showtime de Mexico, wrapped a 101-date tour that started last September in the United States and then played Argentina, Chile and Uruguay before beginning the Mexican run in January. Gormsgi says the tour's total gross was north of $60 million, which he believes could make it the top-grossing tour ever by a Latin artist.

The fact that the period covered includes most of the holiday season gives the Trans-Siberian Orchestra a chance to flex its box office muscle in the chart. TSO—a rock holiday extravaganza that incorporates elaborate staging, metal mixed with Christmas carols and dazzling visuals—has become a winter staple.

For the period, TSO reports grosses of close to $24 million and attendance of 629,145 from 81 performances. "TSO continues to defy conventional formulas," says Marc Geiger, responsible agent for TSO at WMA. "Their growth year over year is a true success story."

Rounding out the top 10 is Paul McCartney, with the eight shows that wrapped his huge 2-05 U.S. tour. Just those eight shows, produced by Barrie Marshall and promoted by AEG Live and Live Nation, grossed $17.6 million and drew nearly 120,000 people.

For the rest of the top 25, notable successes include Depeche Mode ($17.6 million), Nickolback ($17.4 million), Take That ($16.3 million), Rod ($10.9 million), Gwen Stefani ($11.6 million) and Brad Paisley ($14.2 million).

Just getting under way and sure to scalp high is an emerging tour, which has sold out by year's end are Kenny Chesney ($15.3 million), Pearl Jam ($15.6 million), the Who ($14.3 million), Rascal Flats ($12.2 million), Dave Matthews Band ($10.1 million) and Fall Out Boy ($9.8 million).

The emergence of Fall Out Boy is good news for an industry needing new headliners. "We're very excited (with) how the FOB tour went," FOB manager Bob McNally says. "They've built it from the ground up. Kind of surreal to see the same little band selling out all these arenas."

Absent from the chart but sure to make a major dent in the year-end totals are Madonna, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Barbra Streisand and Eric Clapton.

CAPACITIES 10,001-15,000

TOTAL GROSS FACILITY, CITY Date Capacity Total Attendance Total Capacity No. of Shows No. of Sellouts

1 $4,273,283 ATLANTIC CITY BOARDWALK HALL, ATLANTIC CITY, N. J. 13,900 130,832 177,883 17 1

2 $6,942,127 JOHN LABATT CENTRE, LONDON, ONTARIO 10,500 252,838 434,263 57 3

3 $6,587,295 SAPTON CENTRE AT THE SPORTS ARENA, SAN DIEGO 16,000 163,610 258,911 36 4

4 $6,552,662 VAN ANDEL ARENA, GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. 12,864 209,322 327,944 46 8

5 $6,236,851 NATIONAL EXHIBITION CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND 19,000 109,725 114,691 12 2

6 $5,729,043 OCU CENTER, WORCESTER, MASS. 18,000 167,023 294,328 19 2

7 $4,591,618 BRISBANE ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE, BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA 13,500 67,383 70,360 10 1

8 $4,527,597 PATRIOT CENTER, FAIRFAX, VA. 10,404 101,721 192,936 28 3

9 $4,381,328 GIANT CENTER, HERSHEY, PA. 12,500 162,596 263,724 38 4

10 $4,264,283 LONG BEACH ARENA, LONG BEACH, CALIF. 14,500 141,975 201,547 25 5

TOP 10 VENUES RANKED BY GROSS (MARCH 1-APRIL 30, 2006)

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#1 downunder*

*As currently listed by Billboard
(Compiled from Boxscores Nov 1 2005 through May 16, 2006)

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ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS
ARCTIC MONKEYS
ATMOSPHERE
BACKSTREET BOYS
JAMES BLUNT

COCA COLA LIVE ‘N LOCAL TOUR 06
THE COUNTDOWN SPECTACULAR
JAMIE CULLUM
THE DARKNESS
DASHBOARD CONFESSIONAL
DRESDEN DOLLS
THE FEELING
MICHAEL FRANTI & SPEARHEAD
THE FRAY
DAVID GRAY
HARD-FI
BILLY JOEL

JEFF MARTIN
MATISYAHU
KYLIE MINOGUE
SHE WANTS REVENGE
SNOW PATROL
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SPLIT ENZ
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**Top 10 Venues for Box Scores Through May 30, 2006**

### Top 10 VENUES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Total Attendance</th>
<th>Total Capacity</th>
<th>No. of Shows</th>
<th>No. of Sellouts</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>FOX CITY MUSIC HALL, NEW YORK</td>
<td>5,901</td>
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<td>1,549,546</td>
<td>262</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>AUDITORIO NACIONAL, MEXICO CITY</td>
<td>9,683</td>
<td>334,940</td>
<td>360,136</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>THEATRE AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, NEW YORK</td>
<td>5,610</td>
<td>292,695</td>
<td>336,105</td>
<td>82</td>
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<td>GIBSON AMPHITHEATRE, UNIVERSAL CITY, CALIF.</td>
<td>6,089</td>
<td>208,821</td>
<td>218,556</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>NOKIA THEATRE, GRAND PRAIRIE, TEXAS</td>
<td>6,333</td>
<td>173,615</td>
<td>217,392</td>
<td>56</td>
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<td>VERona SUN ARENA, UNCASVILLE, CONN.</td>
<td>9,900</td>
<td>125,979</td>
<td>131,070</td>
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<td>ALADDIN THEATRE, LAS VEGAS</td>
<td>7,059</td>
<td>83,557</td>
<td>138,091</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>POINT THEATRE, DUBLIN</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>ODYSSEY ARENA, BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND</td>
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<td>67,954</td>
<td>67,954</td>
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<td>DODGE ARENA, Hidalgo, Texas</td>
<td>6,800</td>
<td>37,844</td>
<td>40,191</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
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**Top 10 Venues for Box Scores Through May 30, 2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Total Attendance</th>
<th>Total Capacity</th>
<th>No. of Shows</th>
<th>No. of Sellouts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>THE COLOSSEUM AT CAESARS PALACE, LAS VEGAS</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>381,676</td>
<td>403,555</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>FOX THEATRE, ATLANTA</td>
<td>4,600</td>
<td>445,195</td>
<td>797,998</td>
<td>178</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>TEMPLE HOYNE BUELL THEATRE, DENVER</td>
<td>2,850</td>
<td>303,897</td>
<td>417,523</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>TAMPA BAY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, TAMPA, FLA.</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>215,643</td>
<td>262,907</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>BOB CARR PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, ORLANDO, FLA.</td>
<td>3,510</td>
<td>208,323</td>
<td>263,141</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>WHARTON CENTER, EAST LANSING, MICH.</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>184,978</td>
<td>217,575</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>BENEDUM CENTER, PITTSBURGH</td>
<td>2,885</td>
<td>149,304</td>
<td>152,334</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>BROWARD CENTER, FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA.</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>125,034</td>
<td>161,876</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>RUTH ECKERD HALL, CLEARWATER, FLA.</td>
<td>2,174</td>
<td>148,308</td>
<td>191,935</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>ORPHEUM THEATRE, MINNEAPOLIS</td>
<td>2,745</td>
<td>89,281</td>
<td>171,575</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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egawatt winter tours brought big
grosses to arenas, as Billboard's
midyear venues chart show. Billy
Joel, Bon Jovi, Paul McCartney,
Coldplay, the Rolling Stones, Cirque du Soleil,
Aerosmith, U2 and others all played arenas
from November 2005 through mid-May 2006.

New York's Madison Square Garden played
host to most of these tours, and, as usual, the
Garden tops the chart for venues with capaci-
ties of 15,001 or more.

The 20,697-capacity Garden reported grosses
of $52.7 million for the reporting Billboard Box-
score period and attendance of 827,492. The
crowning jewel was Joel's record-setting 12 sell-
outs, which accounted for nearly $20 million
and 226,038 in attendance.

“We benefitted from great headlining talent,”
says Jay Marciano, president of Madison Square
Garden Entertainment, which oversees the Gar-
den, Radio City Music Hall and the Theatre at
Madison Square Garden. “When you've had the
Rolling Stones, Tom Petty and Madonna and,
of course, 12 sold-out Billy Joel [shows] and you
combine that with a New York City marketplace
that is on fire, our venues are having the best
years in our history.”

The Garden has apparently seen no price resist-
ance to big-ticket shows.

“So far, God bless the New
York marketplace,” Marciano
says. “Madonna sold out six shows, and there
[would have been] several more had she had the time
in her schedule to do them.

Based on demand, and this
is an artist that is grossing $3 million a night.”

As in past years, Radio
City Music Hall, propelled
by the gargantuan success of its “Christmas
Spectacular,” sits atop the 5,001- to 10,000-cap-
acity venues chart, and the Theatre at Mad-
ison Square Garden comes in at No. 3.

“You expect the Garden and Radio City to do
well, [but] the big surprise is the Theatre starr-
ing a strong comeback,” Marciano says. “It's
finally finding its place in the market as a great
mid-sized rock room.

As usual, Northeast buildings seem to domi-
nate the chart rating rooms with 15,001 or more
seats, including TD Banknorth Garden in Boston
($27.2 million), Wachovia Center in Philadelphia
($26 million) and Continental Airlines Arena in
East Rutherford, N.J. ($17.3 million).

The hot Canadian touring market is evidenced
by strong showings from Air Canada Centre in
Toronto ($23.6 million) and Bell Centre in Mon-
treal ($19.1 million), as well as the John Labatt
Centre in London, Ontario ($6.9 million), for
10,001- to 15,000-capacity venues.

Meanwhile, the strongest building of its size
in recent memory has been the Atlantic City
(N.J.) Boardwalk Hall, which tops the midyear
list of 10,000- to 15,000-seat venues.

Neil Diamond, James Taylor, Bon Jovi and
Andre Rieu were among the acts that drove at-
tendance and grosses at Boardwalk Hall, ac-
cording to assistant GM Greg Tesone.

“We've had a pretty well-
rounded lineup,” Tesone
says. “And looking for-
ward, we've got a great
summer and fall with
Madonna and 'American
Idol,' and Barry Manilow
in October and Barbra
Streisand in November.”

Promotional partnerships with Atlantic City
casinos remain a key factor in Boardwalk Hall
attracting major events. "Caesars is continuing
to do a lot of stuff with us—the Diamond,
Madonna and Streisand dates,” Tesone says.

with us, Hilton is doing Manilow. We work with
a little bit of everybody.”

As Boardwalk Hall continues to be a top per-
former, Tesone thinks the venue is winning a
battle of perception. “It took us a while, it seemed,
to convince people that Atlantic City was a real
viable market and not just an off-shoot of
Philadelphia or New York,” he says. “It seems
we've convinced people of that now—the num-
bers have proven it—and it seems to have really
opened us up to that next level of business.”

For venues containing fewer than 5,000 seats,
the Colosseum at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas has
been virtually untouchable since it opened three
years ago. The “house that Celine built” still
packs the room with Ce-
lene Dion’s “A New Day...
show and also does
well with Elton John’s

“The Red Piano” residency. AEG Live/Concerts
West promotes the Colosseum's shows.

“Celine continues to play sellout [crowd]s
after 50 shows,” Concerts West president John
Meglen marvels. "Jerry Seinfeld and Elton also
continue to sell out. It's just magical artists in
a magical building.”

In addition to the Colosseum, Vegas chimes in
with the MGM Grand Arena ($21.2 mil-
lon) and the Thomas & Mack Center ($16.5 mil-
ion) for large arenas, and the 7,000-seat Aladdin
Theatre ($1.2 million) among smaller venues.

A growing touring market in Latin America
helps the Coliseo de Puerto Rico in Hato Rey,
Puerto Rico, make the top 10 of large arenas,
with $17.6 million in grosses, and the 9,681-
seat Auditorio Nacional in Mexico City, with
$21.8 million. The latter’s inclusion was largely
propelled by a $19.3 million, 30-show stand by
Luis Miguel.

Other international venues include the 8,500-
seat Point Theatre in Dublin ($4.3 million), the
10,000-seat Odyssey Arena in Belfast, Northern
Ireland ($4 million); the 13,000-seat National Ex-
bition Centre in Birmingham, England ($6.2
million); and the 13,500-seat Brisbane (Australia)
Entertainment Centre ($4.5 million).

—Ray Waddell
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TOP 25 PROMOTERS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TOTAL GROSS</th>
<th>PROCTOR</th>
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On The Road

RAY WADDELL rwaddell@billboard.com

IAAM WELCOMES NEW PRESIDENT

Larry Perkins Will Focus On Security And Business Development At Annual Conference

Former Pinkerton man and security expert Larry Perkins, assistant GM of the RBC Center in Raleigh, N.C., is the right man at the right time to become president of the International Assn. of Assembly Managers.

Perkins, who has risen through the officers' chairs at IAAM, will be named president of the association during the Aug. 4-8 conference and trade show in San Antonio. He replaces David Ross, GM of the Show Me Center in Cape Girardeau, Mo.

"This has been an absolutely rewarding experience," Perkins says of moving through the ranks.

A 30-year veteran of the venue business, Perkins entered the industry in 1976 at the Meadowlands Sports Complex in East Rutherford, N.J.

Before that, he was a security manager and private investigator for Pinkerton, and prior to the Meadowlands complex opening he was tapped to head its security program with the late Pat Malone.

"They took me because my background was as an investigator and a private eye, and I had security experience, and they took Pat because of his [horse] racing experience," Perkins recalls. "We took up the challenge and went down to head up the security program, and needless to say, it was a successful run."

Perkins became deputy director of security for the Meadowlands complex, which grew to include Giants Stadium and the Continental Airlines Arena. Eventually he was named VP of the Meadowlands.

"I left there after 24 years to head to Raleigh, N.C., and now the Carolina Hurricanes are Stanley Cup champions," Perkins notes.

Perkins was well-schooled when he came to the RBC Center, home of the Hurricanes. "There are good things and bad things about working for a big complex," he says. "The good thing is you get to see every kind of event in the world. The bad thing--and it's not necessarily a bad thing--is if you get pigeonholed into your area of expertise, and mine happens to be crowd management, safety, human behavior and those sorts of things."

His security expertise led him to speak at IAAM's annual Crowd Management Seminar. His depth of knowledge in the field has aided him through his rise in the association.

"Security has always been a pet project of mine--and nothing propels it like 9-11, which really put security in the forefront," he says.

While security and crowd management are

As IAAM president, you have to be "a well-rounded individual," LARRY PERKINS says. Important to him, Perkins knows he will have to broaden his horizons as IAAM president.

"The thing about being president is you have so many areas to focus on and you have to be a well-rounded individual," he says. "You can't just focus on any one particular area exclusively."

That said, Perkins will address international affairs, industry affairs, publishing, education, partnerships and sponsorships during his year as president. "Focusing on safety and security for our industry is still paramount in my mind, as I'm sure it is with our membership," he adds.

Perkins says becoming IAAM president was not initially a goal, but "as I got more involved with IAAM, I fell in love with the industry and I wanted to give back in whatever way I could. This is my way of saying thank you to all those people I admired throughout the years.

In addition, Perkins will establish a publishing committee and appoint an international steering committee. "The world is getting smaller," he says. "China is looking to be a major player, and I'm looking at IAAM from the standpoint of, Where will we stand in the future with China?"

"Another area I want to focus on is business development," Perkins adds. "You have to walk lightly in those areas, but I want to be able to have a place where our members can go and look for things like emergency preparedness and find a safety and security assessment. While our allied members have some of that, I want to quantify that and put it in a cohesive form where our members can go."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTIST(S)</th>
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<th>Attendance</th>
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<td>Live Nation</td>
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✓ CONFERENCE & AWARDS AFTERPARTY

LIVE ARTIST SHOWCASES

Jas Cat
Jermaine Paul
K-Def
Mikel Fitz

GET FACE TO FACE WITH THE INDUSTRY’S WHO’S WHO...

CONFIRMED SPEAKERS
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• Fiona Bloom, President, The Bloom Effect
• Craig Bowers, President, Soul Thought Entertainment
• Billy Calloway, Sr. Creative Director, Urban Famous Music Pub.
• Mr. Colpaak, Producer/Manager
• Qiana Conley, Creative/A&R Manager, Nothing Hill
• Chuck D, Chuck D, Founder-Check O Mobile, Co-Founder-Public Enemy, Artist
• Nick DeFonzo, Artist Manager (Dazez Rasad)
• DJ Drama, Air Personality/DJ, Sirius Radio
• Kevin Fleming, Editor, The Urban Buzz
• Max Gossett, Exec VP, Music World Entertainment
• Randall Grass, Sr., Shannex Entertainment
• Rodney Jenkins, President/VP A&R, Patricia Productions/VP of A&R, Def Jam
• DJ Khaled, DJ/Artist, WEDG Radio - Miami & Terror Squad
• James Lewis, Owner, Reflections Emporium
• Jeannie McCauley, VREC, MBB Entertainment Inc.
• Kendall Miller, Entertainment Attorney, Miller & Associates
• J. Perdue, DJ
• Kawan "KP" Prather, Senior VP/VEA&R, Sony/BMG
• Morris Beke, Managing Director/Co-Founder, Westside Rinehart Group
• Jeff Robinson, CEO, MBB Entertainment Inc.
• Robert "Kaspa" Smith, Pres/DEM, Hilltop/D.S.
• DJ Yoopa, Producer, Home Entertainment

ADVISORY BOARD
• Terry Avery, Operations Manager, CBS Radio - Charlotte
• Catherine Breeden, VP, WARQ
• Chuck D, Rap-off/Activist
• George Daniels, Owner, George's Music Room
• Craig Davis, VP of Urban Promotion, Jive
• John Delkis, Program Director, WHONT/Chains
• Jay Dizon, Operations Manager, Cox Radio - Atlanta
• Troy Dudley, Director of Urban Promotion, Universal Motown
• Lisa Ellis, GM, Sony Urban
• Tony Fields, Operations Manager, Cox Radio - Miami
• Leo Gatewood, Director of Finance and Operations, BMG
• Erica Grayson, A&R Executive, Interscope
• Ethiopia Habtemeselan, VP, Universal Music Publishing
• Kevin Hall, VP, Rendor Music Publishing
• Cynthia Johnson, Senior VP of Urban Promotion, Warner Brothers
• Ken Johnson, Format Manager, Urban, Cumulus
• Morace Landy, VP of Urban Promotion, Atlantic
• Michael Kaudin, President, Artistic Control Group
• Ceo Copeland, Senior VP of Urban Promotion, Sony/BMG
• Big Jon Matt, Executive VP BMI Music
• Kawan "KP" Prather, Senior VP of A&R, Sony/BMG
• Lionel Rodenius, VP of Urban Promotion, Virgin
• Sylvia Rhone, President, Jive and Motown
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Independence is more than a state of mind—or a music distribution channel. This Power Players report on top indies focuses on the labels that achieved the greatest success in the distributing label category of The Billboard 200 in the past 12 months, and which are largely or wholly owned outside the sphere of the four major music conglomerates. Billboard has long defined an album as “independent” only if it is sold through independent distribution. Ownership as the criteria breaks with that tradition, but provides a broader view of the success of indie labels.

Many of these labels handle only their own repertoire. Others handle a number of imprints. And any hits on those imprints give the distributing label greater points in this analysis. These rankings are based on accumulated sales on The Billboard 200 by albums from qualifying distributing labels for the 12 months ending with the May 27 issue, measuring sales for each week a title appeared on that chart. Each capsule includes the imprints that are credited to that distributing label, and the names of the artists or albums that were most successful during that period.

This report was written by Todd Martens, Phyllis Stark, Hillary Crosley, Leila Cobo and Jim Bessman.
Hollywood Records

Imprints: Hollywood, Lyric Street, Buena Vista. The Pocket
Top Artists: Rascal Flatts, Hillary Duff, Aly & AJ, Jesse McCartney

Hollywood Records' top-ranked success was fueled during the chart recap period for this report by Hilary Duff's "Most Wanted" and Rascal Flatts' "Me and My Gang," which both debuted at No. 1 on The Billboard 200, as well as strong sales for Jesse McCartney's "Beautiful Soul" and Aly & AJ's "In the Rush."

VP/GM Abby Konowitch cites Hollywood's "broad full-service repertoire" including rock, pop, heritage, young musical celebrities and soundtracks.

"Having Bob Cavallo, one of the most legendary artist managers of all time, as our chairman, gives us a distinct edge in making long-range career decisions for our roster," Konowitch says. "We consciously have a limited release schedule so each artist has the focus and the benefit of the expertise of our staff. We have stability at Hollywood at a time when many labels have experienced cutbacks and conglomeration. Our ability to break new acts and our dedication to stick with artists has attracted acts from other major and indie labels including Atreyu, Sparta, Indigo Girls and Plain White T's."

Key upcoming second-half releases for Hollywood include new albums from Duff, McCartney, Breaking Benjamin, Aly & AJ, Los Lobos and label debuts from the Indigo Girls and "High School Musical" star Vanessa Anne Hudgens.

Walt Disney Records

Imprints: Walt Disney, Buena Vista

When Walt Disney's soundtrack to the TV movie "High School Musical" hit No. 1 on The Billboard 200 in March, it became the first TV soundtrack to top that chart since the "Miami Vice" soundtrack spent 11 weeks there beginning in late 1985. Disney made the digital promotion of the album a huge priority, and downloads account for a notable share of the album's total sales of 2.7 million units.

"Digital downloading has now revolutionized the kids business," Walt Disney Records VP of marketing Damon Whiteside says. "It's the start of a whole new world."

As of mid-July, the album had spent more than 25 weeks on the big chart, and was still in the top 10. The past year also saw Disney score big with the soundtrack to "The Chronicles of Narnia" and the eighth edition of "Radio Disney Jams!" And to steer the label through the fall, the company has the soundtrack to hit film "Cars" on the fast track.

Wind-up Records

Imprints: Wind-up, Fox, Musketeer
Top Artists or Albums: Seether, "Walk the Line," Creed, Scott Stapp

With a consistent ability to develop new acts and thanks to a mega-soundtrack or two, Wind-up is a regular on the Billboard charts. Among its newcomers, People In Planes announced its arrival with a debut on the Heatseekers chart. Seether had a smashing entrance at No. 26 on The Billboard 200 with its third album, "Karma and Effect." But Wind-up reached beyond the rock audience with the soundtrack to the Johnny Cash biopic "Walk the Line," which peaked at No. 9 during its 17-week run on The Billboard 200.

"We were kind of the catalyst that created the active modern environment that was kicked off by Creed," Wind-up founder and chairman/CEO Alan Meltzer told Billboard last year. "But every generation is three years now, rather than 10 years or five years. So we have to stay ahead of the curve."

But the label has also amassed a solid catalog. And one of its biggest acts, Evanescence, will release its second album, "Open Door," Oct. 1.

Curb Records

Imprints: Curb, INO
Top Artists: Tim McGraw, LeAnn Rimes, Jo Dee Messina, Natalie Grant, Wynonna

Stability and independence have been the keys to Curb Records' long-term success. In a volatile industry, executive VP/GM Dennis Hannon notes, "we're not being sold. We're not being merged. We're not being re-engineered. We're just focused on maximizing every artist on the label to his or her full potential."

Another strength is the label's diversity. "We are not a one-dimensional label," Hannon says. "We exist successfully in country, Christian and in pop music."

Among the successes Hannon is most proud of in the last year is "the re-establishment of LeAnn Rimes as a core country artist" with three back-to-back top five hits. On the Christian side, Hannon says Natalie Grant has gone from a "core female artist" to a "premier Christian artist." Other top-selling Curb stars are Tim McGraw, Jo Dee Messina and Wynonna.

Curb will have its share of hits from Steve Holy out Aug. 8 and Christmas albums from Wynonna and Kimberly Locke in the fall. Aug. 22 will be a big release day on the Christian side with new projects due from Selah and Nate Sallie.

TVT Records

Imprints: TVT, Diaz Brothers, ColliPark
Top Artists: Ying Yang Twins, Pitbull, Lil Jon & The East Side Boyz

TVT founder Steve Gottlieb believes in Lil Jon's hip-hop crunch niche before the rest of the business, and the Atlanta-based artist has helped fuel a roster of hits for TVT that included albums this past year from the Ying Yang Twins, Pitbull and the East Side Boyz.

TVT also houses the imprints of the Diaz Brothers and producer Mr. Collipark.


"We're still the last label of our kind, a fully operational mini-major," says Bryan Leach, VP of A&R at TVT. "We're really aggressive and have had releases from our entire roster this year. Our next release is Pitbull, coming off last year's gold album, "M.I.A.M.I." That will be Lil Jon's first solo album, "Crunk Rock," in October, and we've got a series of new-artist releases including Magic, Twisted Black and the group AZZ. We'll have singles from Teedra Moses, who shows up on the Billboard charts.

Razor & Tie Records

Imprints: Razor & Tie, Fuseic
Top Albums: "Kidy Bop 8," "Kidy Bop 9: Monster Ballads," "Slow Motion"

The newly successful "Kidy Bop" series propelled Razor & Tie to No. 6 on the Power Play chart. In March, the ninth volume in the series debuted at No. 2 with sales of 98,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Featuring covers of Mariah Carey's "We Belong Together," "We're All in This Together," "Smokey the Bear," "Beverly Hills, 90210" and "The Fame," the series has inspired a Six Flags stage show and Fisher-Price toys, a 10th volume is due in August.

"It's a kids brand that's become more than CDs," label co-founder Cliff Chenfeld says. "It's moving onto touring and other stuff, and that's a different kind of animal than most labels. It's also just one aspect to Razor & Tie. In addition to distributing Alexi Murdoch's "Time Without Consequence," the label has a Christmas album from Twisted Sister and the debut from singer/songwriter Kelly Sweet on the horizon."
Victory Records
Imprint: Victory Records
Top Artists: Hawthorne Heights, Atreyu, Silverstein

One of the biggest indie success stories of the past few years has been Chicago’s Victory Records. In the last year, the label has delivered a slew of hot-selling albums, including releases from such acts as Hawthorne Heights, Atreyu, Between the Buried and Me and Silverstein. None were more eagerly awaited than Hawthorne Heights, and the band posted a No. 3 debut on The Billboard 200 with its second album “If Only You Were Lonely.” It sold 114,000 copies in its first week, a rare feat for an indie rock act, and has sold 390,000 units to date. A month later, the label impressively followed up with a No. 9 debut with Atreyu’s “A Death-Grip on Yesterday,” and then in July, Between the Buried and Me’s “The Anatomy Of” entered the big chart at No. 151.

Few labels have shown such a consistency in recent years, and the label’s artists get massive promotion with a regular presence on indie-friendly rock cable channel Fuse, and a burgeoning online community at victorme.com. New albums from Silverstein, Spitalfield and Aiden are due this fall.

Koch Records
Imprints: Diplomats, Choppa City, DoggyStyle, D-Block, New No Limit, Sure Shot, Underground Railroad, Blacksmith
Top Artists: Jim Jones, B.G., Dipset, Master P, Sheek Louch


“Despite the downturn in physical sales over the last few years the climate for independents has never been better,” Koch president Bob Frank says. “We see new, meaningful revenue streams that did not exist five years ago. The major advantages we have are the ability to move quickly and manage overhead. Combine that with our ability to make profits in specific niche-oriented genres that are too small for the majors and we have an unbeatable formula.”

Concord Records
Imprints: Hear, Peak, Rockingdale, Universal Italian Stax, Fantasy

Buoyed by the success of Ray Charles’ Genius Loves Company,” and boasting a catalog that includes Carole King, Thelonious Monk and John Fogerty, among many others, Concord Music Group marries the old and the new like few other record companies. Recent years have brought growth for the company, as it has acquired the catalogs of such esteemed labels as Fantasy and Telarc. The recent release of a Thelonious Monk/John Coltrane two-CD set, “The Complete 1957 Riverside Recordings,” bodes well for Concord’s work with this catalog. And its new-release roster is also impressive, with albums from Eddie Briggle & New Bohehians and the debut from Fred Martin & the Levite Camp, which is co-produced by Jackson Browne. Concord also has no stranger to the upper echelon of The Billboard 200. Its release “The Long Road Home: The Ultimate John Fogerty:Creedence Collection” entered the chart at No. 13 last November.

V2 Records
Imprints: Third Man, Vill V2
Top Artists: The White Stripes, Grandaddy, Ray Davies

For a label that experienced a state of flux in 2006, V2’s releases this year have been both the same and thank you very much. V2 North America was purchased this year by Shrink Records and saw its releases switched from the Sony BMG system to the WEA/Alternative Distribution Alliance family. But the moves had no impact on the White Stripes, Grandaddy and Ray Davies, who issued his first solo effort, the critically acclaimed “Other People’s Lives.” The album entered Billboard’s Top Heatseekers chart at No. 2. As for Grandaddy, the act’s swan song arrived on Billboard’s Top Independent Albums chart at No. 10, and the White Stripes’ “Get Behind Me Satan” continued to be a steady seller in 2006, having spent more than 20 weeks on the chart.

Aside from releasing what will surely be regarded as one of 2006’s top albums in year-end critic’s polls, Isobel Campbell and Mark Lanegan’s “Ballad of the Broken Seas,” the label will head into the fall with new albums from buzz bands Every Move a Picture and Sugarcult.

Comedy Central
Imprint: Comedy Central
Top Artists: Dane Cook, Lewis Black

Dane Cook set a comedy milestone, and then Lewis Black showed Comedy Central had plenty more to offer. Cook made history when his album “Relatious” debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200. Its release “The Daily Show” made his own splash on the charts, albeit on a much smaller scale. His “The Carnegie Hall Performance” peaked at No. 13. On Billboard’s Top Independent Albums this spring, in the past, the label has released albums from Larry the Cable Guy and Sarah Silverman. It has an advantage on the competition by releasing albums from its own comedy specials and running non-stop commercials for them.

Show Dog Nashville
Imprint: Show Dog Nashville
Top Artists: Toby Keith

Thus far, Show Dog Nashville’s success has come from one artist, label owner Toby Keith. But with numerous developing artists in the pipeline, including Rushlow-Harris, Lindsey Haun, Scotty Emerick, Rebecca Lynn Howard and Flynnville Train, that will change.

The label’s sole release to date, Keith’s “White Trash With Money,” has been certified platinum by the RIAA.

“Having Toby Keith as the head of the company brings a lot to the table,” GM George Nunes says. “We have a lot of resources that wouldn’t normally be associated with a startup label.” Among those “resources” is the ability to put developing Show Dog artists in the opening slot on Keith’s tours, exposing them to 18,000-20,000 people a night.

On Aug. 29, Show Dog will release the soundtrack to “Broken Bridges,” an upcoming Paramount/CMT film in which Keith co-stars. The first single, “Broken,” will be from Haun, who plays Keith’s daughter in the film. Rushlow-Harris, Flynnville Train and Keith also play on the soundtrack.

Broken Bow Records
Imprint: Broken Bow
Top Artists: Jason Aldean, Craig Morgan

Forget the “idile” handle, Broken Bow Records has been competing in the big leagues this year, taking newcomer Jason Aldean’s career from zero to 60 with a gold debut album, continuing Craig Morgan’s winning streak and working to establish Megan Mullins as its next big hit.

Aldean’s success has been particularly sweet for the label. His debut single, “Hicktown,” got to No. 10 on Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart while the follow-up, “Why,” went all the way to No. 1. In May, Aldean was named the best new male artist by the Academy of Country Music.

Broken Bow GM Brad Howell praises the artists “work ethic, accessibility and showmanship” and also credits his “professional, experienced staff that works these artists with a passion. Radio and video outlets know when [Broken Bow] releases something we will be committed and relentless in bringing it home.”

The label’s fall will release Morgan’s third album, which he produced with Phil O’Donnell. Howell says Broken Bow’s new chief creative officer Keith Stegall will “be working with them to take Craig to the next level.”
Fueled by Ramen
Imprints: Fueled by Ramen, Decaydance
Top Artists: Panic! at the Disco, The Academy Is...

Last year’s runaway success of Fall Out Boy looked impossible to top. Then Panic! at the Disco happened. Fall Out Boy’s “From Under the Cork Tree” landed at No. 9 on The Billboard 200, and Panic! at the Disco has been a steady seller for months. In June, the act’s “A Fever You Can’t Sweat Out” hit No. 16 on The Billboard 200 after 26 weeks on the chart.

The Decaydance imprint led by Fall Out Boy bassist Pete Wentz has supplied Fueled by Ramen with such up-and-comers as Gym Class Heroes and the Hush Sound. The label this month will release the soundtrack to the Samuel L. Jackson film “Snakes on a Plane,” loaded with Decaydance and Fueled by Ramen acts.

“Decaydance is more of a boutique” label, Wentz says. “I don’t expect all of our bands to sell 1 million records. At Fueled by Ramen, I think all the bands are more racehorses and there’s a greater expectation. Bands realize that, and now they’ll probably be selling a lot of records.”

Sanctuary
Imprints: Sanctuary, Sanctuary Urban, Red Head, Arsenal, Nomota, Es Paranza, Fox, Knockout, Music World, Attack
Top Artists: Ray J, Bizarre, Earth, Wind & Fire, Robert Plant & the Strange Sensation, Morrissey

Sanctuary may have made more news for its financial state in 2006 than its releases, but plenty of Sanctuary releases cracked the Billboard charts during the past year.

From hip-hop (Bizarre, Ray J) to rock ’n’ roll vets (Morrissey, Robert Plant), Sanctuary has ping-ponged between developing its urban roster and bringing forward major label stars into the fold. Recently, the label has offered new releases from Widespread Panic, the Charlottes U.K. and Venom. On the horizon, a new album from Iron Maiden, due Sept. 5, could be a sort of wild card, as Roadrunner’s Iron Maiden-inspired Dragonforce is introducing the sound to a new audience. Also of note is the Tegan & Sara DVD, “It’s Not Fun. Don’t Do It,” released this month.

Equity Music Group
Imprint: Equity
Top Artist: Little Big Town

After deals on two major labels that went nowhere, the country band Little Big Town finally found success on a new, independent label: Equity Music Group. The group’s “The Road to Here” CD, released last October, has sold 615,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan, and spawned the hit singles “Boondocks” and “Bring It On Home.”

Equity president Mike Kraski says the label’s success of the past year “starts with a band that gave me a great album and has absolutely committed themselves to doing virtually everything they’re asked.”

The 3-year-old label’s roster also includes co-founder Clint Black, the group Carolina Rain and newcomer Laura Bryna. Earlier this year Equity also signed former Mercury Records hitmaker Mark Wills.

Some labels have obvious strengths and weaknesses, Kraski notes. But what he says has become the “signature” of Equity is “a balanced strength across disciplines” including A&R, sales, media and artist development and radio promotion.

Equity will release the debut CD from Carolina Rain, “Weather the Storm,” next month.

Epitaph Records
Imprints: Epitaph, Anti-, Quannum Projects, Helldent Top Artists or Albums: Cat Power, Cocteau Twins, From First to Last, Danger Doom, Motion City Soundtrack, “Punk O Rama 101”

Epitaph Records has grown up. During the past year, this venerable Los Angeles-based punk label has seen its imprint Anti-Records become a force in the indie rock landscape, with releases from Neko Case, Danger Doom, Betty LaVette and the Coup, among others.

Case’s “Fox Confessor Brings the Flood” and Danger Doom’s “The Mouse and the Mask” both cracked the top 60 of The Billboard 200, and the label scored critical successes from the likes of Tim Fite and Julie Holland as well.

Epitaph itself continues to shine, as Motion City Soundtrack and From First to Last keep the label at the top of the hard rock game. Epitaph has new albums from the Matches as the Draft next month, while Anti-recently released the latest from Michael Franti & Spearhead. Keep an eye on Hal Wilner’s “Rogue’s Gallery,” featuring sea chanties from Bono, Sting, Nick Cave and Jarvis Cocker and others.

S-Curve Records
Imprint: S-Curve
Top Artist: Joss Stone

British R&B singer Joss Stone was a slow-burning success story in the United States. Her debut release, the “Soul Sessions” EP, proved the youngster could handle the classics. Fans agreed, and the EP spent 49 weeks on The Billboard 200, eventually peaking at No. 39. A full-length in 2004 showed Stone was growing up a star, and brought some more hip-hop flourishes to her R&B take. The album spent 57 weeks on The Billboard 200, reaching No. 11.

Alas, it will be Stone’s last for S-Curve, as the label has folded. Established in 2000 by former Mercury Records executive Steve Greenberg, S-Curve also had success with pop act Fountains of Wayne. Sources familiar with the label say that future albums from S-Curve, including Stone and Fountains of Wayne, will be released by Virgin Records.

Disa
Imprint: Disa
Top Artists: Patrulla Blt, Grupo Brynids, K-Paz De La Sierra, Beto Y Sus Canarios

Disa has been described as the little label that could. A family-owned business founded 30 years ago by the Chávez family in Monterrey, Mexico, Disa has distinguished itself as a savvy trendsetter with the ability to develop new talent while keeping costs down. Always a powerhouse in the regional Mexican market, Disa has seen its market share rise in recent years.

After the recap period that determined eligibility for this report, Disa was due to be purchased by Univision Music Group. But at press time the $200 million deal was in limbo, as both sides dispute the terms of a 2001 acquisition agreement. The Chávez family on July 17 filed a suit against Univision for breach of contract (Billboard, July 29).

Nevertheless, the label’s secret to its success, Disa head Domingo Chávez says, has been staying close to the music. “I didn’t manage the label from a desk, but from the street, with the artists, the tours, the events,” says Chávez, who is credited with launching the duranguense movement.

Disa notable in the past year include Grupo Monteon de Durango, which topped Billboard’s Top Latin Albums chart with “Bornor y Cuenta Nueva”; Patrola Blt, which has three albums on the chart in the past six months; and K-Paz de la Sierra, which topped the chart last October with “Más Capaces que Nunca.” K-Paz and Horoscopos de Durango have new albums due in October and November, respectively.

Image Entertainment
Imprints: Caged Bird, Image, Source Top Artists or Albums: Mint Condition, Ron White, “The Source Presents Hip-Hop Hits Vol. 1”

From the widely R&B of Mint Condition to the comedy of Ron White, Image Entertainment possesses one of the more widely diverse rosters in this tally. In 2005, Image Entertainment released Mint Condition’s first album in more than five years, “Livin’ the Luxury Brown,” and the album spent five weeks on The Billboard 200, peaking at No. 5. Yet one of Image’s most consistent success stories over the years has been the hip-hop compilations titled “The Source Presents.” The 10th volume in the series was released in 2005, and hit No. 60 on The Billboard 200. But it was the comedic White with his “You Can’t Fix Stupid” that gave Image its best showing on Billboard’s charts, peaking at No. 11 on the big tally.

In September, Image will release the latest from country singer Billy Gilman, which features contributions from Pam Tillis.
DECAYDANCE’S NET WORTH

In building Decaydance Records, Fall Out Boy bassist Pete Wentz has looked no further than his computer screen.

He signed his label’s biggest band, Panic! at the Disco, after listening to the group online and secured his first soundtrack deal after reading the blogger-fueled hype surrounding New Line’s upcoming camp thriller, “Snakes on a Plane,” opening Aug. 18. “I just called my manager and said ‘I so need you to be involved in this movie’,” Wentz says. “It didn’t really sink in that it was something that we could be a part of. I don’t show up on any lists of the most powerful people in Hollywood or anything.”

Not yet anyway, but Wentz is creating a budding little pop-punk empire. His label, a joint venture with New York-based Fueled by Ramen—where Fall Out Boy is signed—has spawned more than one success story since its launch last year (Billboard, June 11, 2005).

Panic! at the Disco’s “A Fever You Can’t Sweat Out” has sold 831,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, and newcomer the Hush Sound recently debuted at No. 7 on Billboard’s Top Heatseekers albums list with “Like Vines.” Also on the roster is Gym Class Heroes, whose album came out July 25.

Panic! was Decaydance’s first signing. Wentz found the act when he posted “Time to Dance,” one of its first songs, on his LiveJournal blog in late 2004.

Wentz also has taken a page from the Tom Delonge and Mark Hoppus manual for creating a successful punk business. Like the former members of Blink-182, Wentz runs his own clothing firm, Clandestine Industries. The Clandestine line will be available this fall at high-end retailer Fred Segal. The brand is already available online and at Fall Out Boy shows.

With so much on his plate, only his duties with Fall Out Boy, which is in preproduction on a new album, prevent Wentz from becoming a full-time entrepreneur.

“I’m the guy you can reach between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m.,” he says. “I’m just now learning about marketing and that whole aspect of the label. It’s something I’m interested in being involved in, but I’m no expert.”

Decaydance uses Fueled by Ramen’s infrastructure for sales and marketing. Fueled by Ramen goes through Warner Music Group’s Alternative Distribution Alliance and has an upstream deal with Atlantic Records.

Fueled by Ramen founder John Janick says Wentz is welcome to be as involved in running the label as he wishes, as long as it does not take too much time away from Fall Out Boy or Wentz’s A&R duties. The latter, Janick says, is why he gave Wentz an imprint.

“Instead of just getting suggestions from him all the time as to who to sign, I thought starting something new with him was the right thing to do,” Janick says. “I wanted to bring him in to what we were doing so I wasn’t taking bands from him.”

Wentz downplays his interest in the business side, though he says he gets “more sucked into it” with each Decaydance release. But those who have worked with him hint that he could be a closer businessman.

“He’s a rock star first and foremost, but he’s more than just a guy in a band,” says Jason Linn, executive VP of music at New Line, which did a joint venture with Decaydance for the “Snakes on a Plane” soundtrack.

“He has great ideas, and he understands how to do things without relying on a big machine. He would be an excellent marketing guy for any label.”

Wentz says, “I won’t lie. I’m a control freak. I want to fly the plane. I want to prescribe my own medicine. I’m real neurotic about that kind of stuff. But I defer to John on certain decisions. When it comes to doing an end-cap in Best Buy versus Target, he has a better understanding of that.”

Wentz has been heavily involved in the soundtrack to “Snakes on a Plane,” choosing the tracks and picking the remixers for the album. Acts on the album include Panic! at the Disco, the Hush Sound, Cee-Lo, the All-American Rejects and Fall Out Boy, among others.

The title track features members of the Academy Is... Gym Class Heroes, the Sounds and Cobra Starship, a side project from Midtown singer Gabe Saporta. The song went to radio July 11 and has yet to chart.

Wentz is organizing an album release show for Aug. 16 at the Key Club in Los Angeles; the film continued on p.46
from >>>45

opens two days later. To promote the show and give away tickets, Decadance is teaming with friends from other venues, which will post photos of those walking the “red carpet” at the event.

More ambitious is Wentz’s long-term vision for the label, which he sees as a sort of social democracy. New bands are signed only after winning a majority vote from those already on the label, and Wentz is formulating a plan in which each act would share in the financial success of the other.

“All the bands are given incentives or bonuses in some sort when bands go gold or platinum,” Wentz says. “A lot of labels have tried to have a family vibe, but we think it’s important to actually have one, and not just have one when we talk in magazine articles."

As nice as it sounds, such a plan could be a recipe for infighting and disaster, especially if one or two bands carry most of the weight. Janick agrees and says that’s why there’s “no official system in place.”

But Wentz will not be swayed.

Fall Out Boy is this family, and everything is split equally in the band no matter who is doing what,” Wentz says. “I wanted to bring that to Decadance. When everyone is shuffling and taking part of something, you want to do things because you love all these other bands. It hopefully takes away one aspect of jealousy. We’re all succeeding when these bands are succeeding.”

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THE SOUNDS

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Nashville Scene

PHYLLIS STARK pstark@billboard.com

Country Racks Up Solid First-Half Sales

Genre’s Winning Streak Should Continue With A Star-Studded Fourth Quarter

Country music is having a great year.

Through the first half of 2006, country album sales were up nearly 18% over the same period last year, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

But there may be even better news on the horizon.

A strong release schedule for the fourth quarter virtually guarantees that the format’s winning streak will continue at least through the end of the year.

Among the most anticipated new projects is the sophomore set from Mercury Records’ Sugarland, which has gone from a trio to a duet since its “Twice the Speed of Life” was released in 2004. The new set is due Nov. 7. The first album has sold 2 million copies, according to SoundScan.

Here’s a sampling of other fourth-quarter projects due from some of the format’s top sellers, as well as a few other noteworthy fall releases.

On Sept. 12, Sugar Hill Records will release a boxed set based on the eclectic, roots music label’s first 25 years. The four-CD compilation, “Sugar Hill: A Retrospective,” will include 81 tracks plus a bonus DVD containing interviews, videos and photos. The set includes tracks from such past and present Sugar Hill acts as Ricky Skaggs, Marty Stuart, New Grass Revival, Robert Earl Keen, Townes Van Zandt, Chris Hill and Dolly Parton.

Late September will bring a new studio album from Arista Nashville’s Alan Jackson, who worked with bluegrass superstar Alison Krauss as his producer on the project.

Sept. 19 brings “Workbench Songs” from country legend Guy Clark on Dualtone. It features songs Clark co-wrote with old friends Rodney Crowell, Leon Ryparell, Darrell Scott and others, as well as a collaboration with BRS 49’s Chuck Mead.

Brad Paisley will release an as-yet-untitled Christmas album on Arista Nashville in September or October. The debut CD from fourth season “Nashville Star” winner Chris Young is due from RCA Oct. 3. That date also brings a new studio album from RCA Nashville’s George Strait. Also due in October is a new CD from BNA band Lonestar.

Jimmy Buffett’s back in October on RCA and his own Mailboat Records. His last project for RCA/Mailboat, 2004’s “License to Chill,” has scanned 1.5 million copies and spent five weeks at No. 1 on Billboard’s Top Country Albums chart.

The third album from Capitol Records Nashville star Dierks Bentley streets Oct. 31. Its first single, “Every Mile a Memory,” is already the fastest rising hit of his career.

Universal South Records will release a live DVD from Cross Canadian Ragweed on Oct. 31. Columbia duo Montgomery Gentry will have a new set out in October or November. The CD was produced by Mark Witten, with songwriters Rivers Rutherford and Jeffrey Steele co-producing some tracks.

Nov. 14 brings the debut from fifth season “American Idol” finalist Kellie Pickler, who recently signed to 19 Recordings/BNA Records (Billboard, July 29). She is working with producer Blake Chancey on the project. Also due in November is a gospel album from country supergroup Alabama on RCA.

MCA Nashville’s Lee Ann Womack is tentatively set to release a new album in November, although that project could be pushed to early 2007. Additional fall country releases are highlighted in the NARM Fall Preview on page 17, including a live album from Kenny Chesney, a boxed set from Vince Gil, a new studio release from Keith Urban and a Barbara Mandrell tribute album featuring many of the format’s top artists including Reba McEntire, Sara Evans, Paisley, Bentley and Chesney.

Also, our Power Players special focusing on top indie distributors (see page 41) includes details of Craig Morgan’s upcoming third CD, a Wynonna Christmas album and the soundtrack to “Broken Bridges,” Toby Keith’s first feature film.

SUGARLAND

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Acts Call It A Day
Audio Adrenaline, Out Of Eden Release Hits Sets As Finales

In recent months, several of Christian music’s best-loved acts have announced they were calling it quits, including Dove Award-winning foursome 4HIM and husband/wife duo Watermark.

On Aug. 1, two more big acts—Audio Adrenaline and Out of Eden—will bid farewell with hits collections that signal the end of their recording careers.

Audio Adrenaline is saying goodbye after 15 years with “Adios: The Greatest Hits,” a ForeFront Records package that will include two new songs. The band is retiring due to lead singer Mark Stuart’s ongoing vocal problems (Billboard, Feb. 4).

Gathered in the living room of drummer Ben Cissell’s Franklin, Tenn., home, the Audio Adrenaline guys say it’s a bittersweet time.

“We said, ‘Let’s just end it. We’ll go out on tour and give the fans a year, then that’s it,’” Cissell says.

Cissell and band members Will McGinnis and Tyler Burkum say replacing Stuart is not an option. “It just wouldn’t be Audio Adrenaline anymore,” Cissell says. “Mark is the best frontman in Christian music, and for us to go out there with another singer and try to do Audio Adrenaline, it just wouldn’t be the same.”

The band is exiting at the peak of its game. It won two consecutive Grammy Awards in the rock gospel album of the year category for “Worldwide” in 2005 and “Until My Heart Caves In” in 2006. Audio Adrenaline has also won four Dove awards and numerous other accolades. Along the way, it amassed an arsenal of hits like “Oceans Floor,” “Big House,” “Never Gonna Be As Big As Jesus,” “Leaving 99,” “Hands and Feet” and “Some Kind of Zombie.” Those and more are featured on “Adios,” as well as a new cuts “Goodbye” (the album’s first single) and a cover of The Alarm’s “Blaze of Glory.”

ForeFront is issuing a special “Adios” companion DVD that will include a third new song, a cover of Charlie Peacock’s “Down in the Lowlands.” The DVD also contains five Audio Adrenaline videos, live performance footage and interviews with TobyMac, Steven Curtis Chapman, Relient K, MercyMe and other Christian acts saluting the band.

Audio Adrenaline is playing major Christian festivals this summer and headlining dates on its Adios tour. This fall, it will embark on a 35-city trek with MercyMe.

Burkum and Cissell are not sure of their next move after the touring ends. Stuart and McGinnis will continue working in A&R at Flicker Records, the successful indie label they co-founded with Bob Herdman, then sold to Provident Music Group earlier this year. All members will remain active with Hands & Feet, a foundation they started to aid orphans in Haiti.

Stuart says he has no regrets about the miles on the road and countless nights in the spotlight that eventually took a toll on his vocal cords.

“If I was to sing differently or done it differently, it wouldn’t have been the same,” Stuart says. “You have to go out and be who you have to be.”

As for Out of Eden, the group is ending its 13-year career with “Out of Eden: The Hits,” a 12-song Gotee Records collection that will include one new track.

Sisters Lisa Kimmey, Danielle Kimmey and Andrea Kimmey Baca released a statement thanking those who have supported the group. Baca says the sisters will continue doing ministry work “reaching out to young people and sharing Christ with this generation.”

A Monstrous Opera
Twenty Years In The Making, ‘Grendel’ Comes To Life

In the end, did the now-infamous wall make or break “Grendel”?

Certainly, in the run-up to the world premiere of this first opera by composer Elliot Goldenthal and librettists Julie Taymor and JD McClatchy, the technical problems posed by the wall, a central scenery piece, set the media chattering.

When the 46-feet-long by 28-feet-tall wall’s machinery failed, the Los Angeles Opera delayed the opera’s opening by nearly two weeks at a cost of almost $400,000. By the time “Grendel” arrived in July for its New York premiere at the Lincoln Center Festival, the wall was just about all anyone was talking about.

Creating “Grendel” consumed other kinds of resources as well. Goldenthal and Taymor, perhaps best-known for her work on Broadway’s “The Lion King,” have spent 20 years realizing their adaptation of John Gardner’s novel “Grendel,” which retells the Beowulf legend from the monster’s point of view.

Goldenthal says his ideas for the opera’s two most harrowingly difficult vocal parts came two decades ago. “The whole piece is really a two-act monologue for a bass-baritone,” he says. (Indeed, “Grendel” now stands as one of the biggest and most arduous parts written for this vocal type.)

The composer continues, “I’d known for just as long that the character of the Dragon, though male in Gardner’s book, would be sung by a woman, and that she’d start out singing very low, as a contralto, and gradually climb up a ladder of vocal registers. Both these roles represent quite a journey, and they definitely require courageous singers.” In Los Angeles and New York, Eric Owens sang Grendel, while soprano Denyce Graves sang the Dragon; for both artists, these might become signature roles.

Even though critical reaction to “Grendel” has ranged from raves to head scratches, Goldenthal says his team is eager to see the opera move outside a live-audience theater—and not just onto CD or DVD. “Ideally, we’d love to make a small-budet movie on location, and get ‘Grendel’ into some extreme topography of ice, roots and rocks like out in the fjords or in New Zealand.”

So what about all that much-discussed wall? Goldenthal wryly dismisses the hullabaloo. “It was a publicity stunt that the press fell for hook, line and sinker,” he jokes. “Before the stubborn set got all ironed out, the ticket sales were OK, but not great. Afterwards, they went through the roof.”

EMI REGROUPING: The formation of the Blue Note Label Group out of what used to be known as EMI Jazz & Classics has caused a dramatic reorganization (Billboard, July 29).

Tom Evered, formerly senior VP of EMI Jazz & Classics, has been named GM of the Blue Note Label Group. In this role, Evered will oversee all classical releases on Angel as well as the marketing of EMI’s classical artists within the United States.

EMI’s classical crossover artists, including Sarah Brightman, are moving from Evered’s oversight into a group being helmed by GM Ian Ralfini, which also includes the Manhattan and Narada labels.

Separating crossover from core classical activities suggests that Blue Note Label Group president/CEO Bruce Landvall sees crossover as bearing less kinship to the traditional classical marketplace than to other “adult” genres and artists, such as those represented on Manhattan and Narada.
Big Oomp Is On Its Way
 Indie Label Aims For National Success

BIG OOMP

If you dial the phone number on Big Oomp Records' official Web site, Big Oomp himself will likely answer—a true sign of an indie, but the 31-year-old entrepreneur, Kory Roberson, may soon need an assistant to field calls, as his Atlanta-based label attempts the leap from regional to national success.

With a recent Koch distribution deal and a burgeoning Southern hit (DJ Unk’s “Walk It Out”), a breakout could be near. It’s all part of Roberson’s divide-and-conquer strategy.

“I’m trying to place my artists at different levels with bigger machines,” says Roberson, who opened his first Big Oomp record store in Atlanta in 1991 and the label in 1997. “Atlanta music is worldwide now, and so far everything we put out has done well regionally.”

Indeed, the bulk of the label’s album sales—roughly 15,000 of 150,000 U.S. copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan—were generated in Atlanta. Penetrating the national market would position Big Oomp alongside Houston’s SwishaHouse (distributed by Asylum), Atlanta’s Block Entertainment (Bad Boy/Atlantic) and New Orleans’ Cash Money (Universal), as indies that established local legions before spreading their distinct flavors nationwide.

“Once we saw our regional notoriety, we worked on more commercial releases and getting the brand out,” SwishaHouse co-founder and CEO Henry “G-Dash” Guidry says. “That’s the most important thing because [A&R executives] research different markets.”

Roberson employed grass-roots tactics to establish Big Oomp locally. In addition to working with Big Oomp’s retail outlets—there are now five Southeast locations—Roberson’s team utilized street-level promotions and radio contacts at Atlanta R&B/hip-hop stations WVEE (V-103) and WHTA (Hot 107.9). They even sold Big Oomp CDs right on the street to passing motorists.

“We would get out and sweat all day and night with boxes of CDs and wouldn’t come back ‘til everything was gone,” says Roberson, whose roster includes Baby D, DJ Jolly and Sammy Sam.

The operation’s 18-member staff includes producers, retail clerks and office personnel. Roberson also produces a weekly UPN Atlanta TV program and a radio show that airs on nine Southern stations.

“When radio stations weren’t playing rap, you had to get your music from our outlets,” Roberson says.

Mix tapes have been a big part of the plan. According to Roberson, Big Oomp’s mix tapes helped launch the careers of T.I., Young Jeezy, Lil Jon, Deon Franchise Boyz and others. “Our mix tapes have been the biggest in Atlanta for about 15 years, but now we need to go national to pick up good numbers,” he says.

Which is where Koch comes in. The first release under the deal will be DJ Unk’s album “Beat: Down Yo Block,” preceded by “Walk It Out” — a bouncy cut with catchy synths and an easy-to-learn dance. While it is No. 71 on Billboard’s Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart, its earlier regional popularity—along with Roberson’s provincial influence—is what initially lured Koch.

“He was very wired into the Atlanta scene,” Koch president Bob Frank says. “A lot of what we do as an indie starts out regionally but with his focus and knowledge of his marketplace, he’s going to bring it up another level.”

Roberson says his chief obstacle in transitioning to the national scale will be maintaining control—an issue he encountered in 2000 when Baby D signed, and later severed, a deal with Epic. Frank assures, “He’s going to be involved in the marketing plan and how everything is implemented. It’s not just a handoff on the football field.”

Since linking with Koch in June, Roberson has seen growing interest from majors in his roster. DJ Unk has been the subject of inquiries from Atlantic; Universal, Asylum and Jive, under the Koch deal, he can entertain offers nine months after the release of Unk’s album.

More Acts With Oomp(h)

BABY D
A Big Oomp artist since 1998, Baby D landed the label’s first major deal through Epic but is now back on Oomp. While D initially favored crunk, Roberson says, “He’s more laid-back now.”

LOKO
Influenced by Scarface, 2Pac and Outkast, Loko has contributed to various Big Oomp releases since 1999 and collaborated with Bubba Sparxxx and YoungBloodZ, among others.

SAMMY SAM
An Atlanta legend, Sammy Sam has had two record deals and a number of regional hits, including “Stepdaddy.” According to Roberson, “Anybody that’s put out a record or listened to music down this way knows about Sam.”

TRU
With Tru, Roberson hopes people focus less on the white-rapper stigma and more on skills.

The things he raps about—being in the service, going to Iraq—have universal appeal,” he says.

The Beat

MELINDA NEWMAN mnewman@billboard.com

Film About Artists’ Struggles Misses Mark

Our heart sank as we watched “Before the Music Dies,” a new documentary that has been playing the festival circuit and is aiming for theatrical release this summer.

The filmmakers’ motive is admirable: Friends Joel Rasmussen and Andrew Shapter bonded over the deaths of their siblings, both of whom had been musicians. United in grief, they spent a year cross-country to answer a question their siblings had left them: Is there room for great music today or has style completely subsumed substance? As music fans with no connections, they managed to get a starting array of artists to discuss the question. The list includes Eric Clapton, Dave Matthews, Bonnie Raitt, Branford Marsalis and Elvis Costello.

But as we watched, our disappointment grew. What could have shed some new light on an issue of concern to any music lover—and brought a new perspective since they were approaching it from the outside—simply resulted in more whining and “major labels are bad” rhetoric. And in a bit of shocking news (if it were 1996),

one talking head brings up that it’s a “quasi-to-quarantine business.” It’s worth noting that while artists like Raitt, Matthews and Clapton talk about how they probably could not get signed to a major these days, last time we checked, they were all still on major labels. Erykah Badu is hilarious, commenting that to make it today “you get yourself an ass implant, get some stilettos, some hoop”—but what a disaster that is to female R&B artists out there who are not going that route, but are making a difference.

The Mango Media production has a real chance to make its point when it takes 17-year-old Austin model Taylor Hannah into a recording studio and shows how anyone, thanks to autotuning and other studio gimmicks, can sound passable these days. But it drops the ball. What would have happened if they’d played the demo for major label execs and shown photos of this glamorous girl?

We don’t know because there is not a single major-label executive interviewed in the film. The closest it comes is former RCA exec Bruce Flohr, who now works for Matthews’ ATO Records. He and Doyle Bramhall II—who is used to demonstrate how great artists, even ones hailed by Clapton, can’t always break through on major labels—go to great pains to never mention that Bramhall was on RCA (they just keep calling it “the major label,” perhaps on the advice of lawyers).

And in a moment about as subtle as a sledghammer, the producers interview a former Clear Channel executive, who, while revealing absolutely nothing, speaks from behind an opaque screen with his voice altered as if he’s in the witness protection program. Unmentioned or nixed only in passing are the impact of independent labels, satellite radio, piracy, iTunes and many other factors that could have made this an effective documentary instead of a surface glance at an always fascinating topic.

CH-CH-CHANGES: Veteran publicist Maria Malta is leaving her post as director of publicity at Manhattan/EMI, effective July 31. Malta is opening her own New York-based shop with clients Five for Fighting and Keren Ann. She can be reached at mariamalta@yahoo.com.
‘Musical’ Heads South

Disney Has Big Plans For Its TV Movie In Latin America

In my little, bilingual, bicultural neck of the woods, most every kid I know of a certain age is a fan of Disney’s made-for-TV movie “High School Musical.”

One could argue that the character of Gabriella Montez (played not by a Latina, but by half-Filipino, half-Irish actress Vanessa Hudgens) has something to do with the appeal; a startling three boys in my son’s second grade class wrote reports on her during Women’s History Month.

But Disney is counting on much more than Montez’s cross-cultural appeal when it launches “High School Musical” — the movie and the soundtrack — throughout Latin America in August.

“I think the story is very universal, about finding your talent and not letting naysayers get in your way,” says Carolina LaiCap, senior VP of programming/creative affairs for Walt Disney TV Latin America. “And in our region there is an incredible search for programming that is music-driven.”

Other music-themed made-for-TV shows have had resounding success in Latin America, including “Rebelde” (and its group RBD), “Rebelede Way” (and its group Erreway) and “Floricienta.”

But Disney seeks to take things further with “High School Musical” — even more so, in fact, than it did in the United States.

“High School Musical” will premiere on TV July 30 in Brazil and Aug. 6 in the rest of Latin America. The movie (dubbed in Spanish, but with the songs in their original English renditions) will be followed by a singalong version, a making-of version and a dance-along version, as happened in the States. The movie will be promoted by a daily Disney show called “Zapping Zone,” which is produced in separate versions for Argentina, Brazil and Mexico.

After that initial TV run, the fun begins.

“We believe the potential is far greater than television,” says Diego Lerner, president of Walt Disney Co. Latin America.

“Yes, it will [start] in television. However, we see it as a point of presentation for a major franchise,” Lerner says.

This would include Individual, theatrical productions of “High School Musical” for Brazil, Mexico and Argentina, featuring local talent. In addition, Disney is planning local TV versions of “High School Musical,” also in Brazil, Mexico and Argentina. The cast selection in each country will become a TV program, a la “American Idol.”

Meanwhile, the “High School Musical” soundtrack — still in the top 10 of The Billboard 200 after 28 weeks — will be released on different dates across the region between late July and early August.

The Walt Disney Records album will be licensed and distributed by Universal, which licenses other Disney product for Latin America.

The track listing remains the same as the U.S. edition, save for “Eros Tu,” a Spanish-language version of “What We’ve Been Waiting For,” performed by Mexican pop group Belanova, which is signed to Universal in Mexico.

Despite Disney’s enthusiasm for “High School Musical” in Latin America, there are no plans to target the Latin audience within the United States. “We are producing this for the cultural environment of Latin America,” Lerner says.

With the original version, there was no outreach by Disney toward U.S. Hispanics, Montez notwithstanding. But, from what I can tell, plenty of Hispanic kids embraced it anyway.

Chalk it up to the magic of Disney.

“God wrote those songs,” the Sleepy Jackson vocalist/songwriter Luke Steele says. “I have no idea where the melodies came from.”

Perth, Australia-based Steele is talking about the Australian act’s eclectic second album, “Personality (One Was A Spider, One Was A Bird)” (Capitol), which debuted at No. 10 on the Australian Recording Industry Assn. chart two weeks after its July 1 domestic release.

“Personality” was issued July 24 in the United Kingdom on Virgin with a U.S. release July 25 on Astralwerks. It follows 2003’s all-country-styled EMU debut “Lovers,” which the label says has shipped more than 100,000 copies worldwide.

Sessions for the new set were disrupted by personnel changes, production disagreements and Steele losing his voice. Finally, with only drummer Malcolm Clark remaining from the “Lovers” band, Steele brought in outside musicians and added strings and choral arrangements to the album’s 13 songs.

The results have drawn comparisons to Brian Wilson, Todd Rundgren and the Flaming Lips.

Capitol preceded the domestic release with listening parties in art galleries and shows in theaters in Perth, Sydney and Melbourne booked through Premier Artists. “Our take was, ‘This is an exceptional record, let’s treat it as such,’ ” Sydney-based EMU marketing manager of international Clayton Doughty says.

After a few U.K. and U.S. live shows in July, the band’s new five-piece lineup will play late September for a week of dates booked through Herle Skelter (United Kingdom) and Monterey Peninsula Artists (United States). The Sleepy Jackson is published by Sony/ATV.

—Christie Elizarraraz

SEXUAL TREMORS: What do you get if you cross a human with a chimpanzee? Humanz.

Well, that’s how the four members of Dublin-based alternative rock quartet Humanz explain their name. The hotly tipped band released its debut album, “Tremors,” July 21 in Ireland and the United Kingdom on Polydor/Fiction imprint

Sound Foundation Recordings.

Humanz was voted best new act at the Irish record industry’s annual Meteor Awards in February despite releasing only a delus single, “Fix the Cracks,” the previous November. Second single “Long Time Coming,” released in February, received airplay at U.K. radio and on MTV2. But the video for third single “Diet Pills and Magazines,” released July 17, is receiving limited TV exposure due to its graphic sexual content.

The band insists the clip is a thoughtful commentary on pornography. “They felt very strongly about the song and decided to make the video themselves for only £2,000 ($3,200),” Humanz’s Dublin-based manager Alan Cullinan says. “MTV2 sent it back to be re-edited, but afterwards still weren’t happy and decided to pass.”

“Tremors” is due in late September in Continental Europe, followed by a January 2007 U.S. release on Interscope. The band is booked through the Russell Warby Agency and is published by BMG Music Publishing.

—Nick Kify

LIBERATION DAY: “We’re not a flash in the pan,” claims Ian Watkins, frontman for Welsh rock quartet Lostprophets. “We’ve built this thing so that it grows steadily, level by level — we haven’t overexposed ourselves or gone for the quick reward.”

Regardless of that measured approach, the band’s third album, “Liberation Transmission,” is threatening to explode worldwide.

Lostprophets are signed to Pinnacle-distributed U.K.-independent Visible Noise. The album was released worldwide the week of June 26, with Sony BMG licensing it for release on Columbia in the United States and through Red Ink in Continental Europe and Asia-Pacific.


“It’s a very intelligent rock record, yet instantly accessible,” Weir says. “We’ve had a fantastic response from press to fans to radio and TV programmers and commissioners.

After wrapping a three-week U.K. tour July 22, the band is spending most of the year on the road internationally, booked through ITB. Publishing is with Schnoor Music/Goomies Never Say Die.

—Steve Adams
The Record Books

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VARIOUS ARTISTS
Monseur Gainsbourg
Revisited
Producers: various
Verve Forecast
Release Date: Aug. 1

The recordings of French singer
songwriter Serge Gainsbourg ooze wordly
weariness, but beneath their
lounge-music sheen, they’re strikingly
difficult to classify. So it’s fitting that a new
Gainsbourg tribute, marking the 15th
anniversary of his death, contains everything
from such slavish reworkings as Cat
Power and Karen Elson’s “I Love You Me
Neither”) to free-wheeling modernizations:
Gonzalez raps on “Boomerang 2005,” or
Franz Ferdinand’s indie-rock spin on “A Song
for Sorry Angel.” Gainsbourg’s lyrics have
been translated into English for interpretation
by the likes of Portishead and the Kills,
alongside original singers Francois Hardy,
Dan and Jane Birkin. By the time you get to
Marianne Faithful’s “Lola R. Forever”—with
produce by Sly & Robbie—that sounds like
a lost session from their work with Grace
Jones—you’ll swear there’s a puff of Gitanes
smoke coming from your speakers.—JM

STONE SOUR
Come Whatsoever
May
Producer: Nick Raskulinecz
Roadrunner
Release Date: Aug. 1

Stone Sour was
obviously anxious to reconvene since its
debut arrived four years ago. Sophomore
album “Come Whatsoever” is a
vigorous workout that’s too rough to be
called hard rock but not harsh enough to
be metal. Either way you slice it, it’s an
intense, taut piece of work where every
song could be a single. Lead track
“Through Glass” (exporting a softer,
audible sound) has already triumphed at
radio. The fierce “30-30/150” is a great
choice for the next one, but so are
“Reborn” or “Made of Scars,” where singer
Corey Taylor ticks off a litany of wounds he
has sustained. Stone Sour also gives the
artistic band a runtime on the
title track, aptly following up with a song
called “Hell & Back Home.” But it
unexpectedly closes the record on a sad
note with “Zzyzx Rd.,” a moving track
about coping with mental illness.—CLT

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN
Industrial Zen
Producer: John Mclaughlin
Verve
Release Date: Aug. 1

Malahivean Orchestra
directo. John
Mclaughlin renews the jazz/rock/
world music sphere with this starting
eight-tone display of high-velocity guitar
virtuosity and shape-shifting. One of the
promontors of ’70s fusion
mentored by Miles Davis, Mclaughlin has
traversed jazz throughout his career. But
he’s at his most vibrant reinventing what
came to be known as jazz’s f-word for its
improvisational excesses. Mclaughlin’s
fusion has clarity, focus and surprise, all
of which are exhibited here. Noteworthy
are the tributes: a speedy homage to
Jaco Pastorius, a funky salute to Michael
Brecker, a meditative/open letter to the
Dali Lama and the best of the
batch, an obliquely lyrical appreciation
of Wayne Shorter.—DO

LATINO
DIego Tovres
Andando
Producer: Diego Torres
Sony Bmg
Release Date: Aug. 15

Argentine star Diego
Torres became an
international sensation with 2001’s “Un Mundo
Diferente,” an album that
counted the rhythmic
“Color Esperanza.”
Andando,” his highly
expected new studio set,
picks up on the rocking,
feeling-good themes, most
apparent in the single
“Abrindo Caminos,”
featuring Juan Luis
Guerra, which sounds like
a blend of “Color Esperanza” and “Ojalá que
Lueve Café.” This is too
easy a path for an artist of
Torres’s stature and
talent. Much better are rousing
ballads like “Hasta
Cuando” or the
improvisational “Despues
de Ti,” adorned with
flamenco-tinted guitar. The rich production
is infused with retro touches,
horns, jazz and fun (on
the devastating “Volver.”

among others) This
serves Torres’s pristine
vocals well and highlights
quality that needs no
gimmicks.—LC

TOWERS OF LONDON
Blood, Sweat and Towers
Producers: various
FtV
Release Date: Aug. 1

British outfit Towers of
London attempts to cross
the wanton hair-metal
stylings of, oh, let’s say
Cinderella, with the trashy
stomp of the Strokes, but
the group ladies on the
Sunset Strip schtick so
thick that it becomes only
possible to recognize the
former. Many bands have
tried to exhume hair
metal’s Spend-y
corpse—the Darkness,
Andrew W.K. and
Tenuous D spring to
mind—but they are at
least partly kidding, whereas
Towers of London remains
confoundingly irony-free
throughout obvious tracks
like “I’m a Rat,” “Kill the
Pop Scene” and “Fuck It
Up,” which appears in
acoustic and devil-horns-
in-the-air versions. There
are a few passable GNR
knockoffs here, but if you
truly miss hair metal,
you’re probably better off
sticking with those Poison
reeasures.—JV

ELECTRONIC
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL
Delirium
Producers: none listed
Cirque Du Soleil Musique
Release Date: July 25

“Delirium” is the latest
dstage show to come from the
Cirque Du Soleil think tank, billed as more of
an enhanced live concert
counter rather than a string of
gorgeously costumed acrobatic feats. The music is
culled from past Cirque instruments, rearranged
and set to words by lyricist Robbie Dillon
with astonishing results. These
15 tracks are pure
pleasure—beautiful, gutsy,
neatly classical in lyrism
and performed to perfection
by versatile vocalists. Elise Haroun “Let
Me Fall,” “Cold Flame”
shares a style with
classically trained
Thom Yorke with
Jeff
continued on p.52
from >xp1
Buckley's woeeful vibroto. Jacynthe's "Alone," "Life Line" has the appealing trill of Britney Spears and the "popera" delivery of a "Les Miserables" cast member. Juliana Shepherd "Circle" is a drowsy, downtempo diva with chops. The idea that there are aerialists literally taking flight while Jacynthe launches into the soaring melody of "Alone" is a realization of musical performance that is nothing less than unprecedented.--KM

JAZZ
JOE LOVANO
Streams of Expression
Producer: Joe Lovano Blue Note
Release Date: Aug. 1
Sax man Joe Lovano is working with an expanded version of his nonet on this project, which features his "Streams of Expression Suite" and arranger Gunther Schuller's "The Birth of the Cool Suite." "Streams (Pt. 1)" opens in a pensive mood, giving way to an elliptical, busy saxophone, then a tumultuous, polyphonic passage that resolves in angular trombone, trumpet and sax solos. It's not totally free-form jazz, but it certainly is in the spirit of John Coltrane's groundbreaking 60s sides. "The Birth of the Cool Suite" is Schuller's excellent homage to Miles Davis. He knows of what he plays, having participated in the original "Birth of the Cool" sessions.--PPV

CHRISTIAN SELAH
Bless the Broken Road: The Duets Album
Producers: various
Curb
Release Date: Aug. 8
Selah has endured a number of recent personnel changes, but continues to thrive on "Bless the Broken Road." Longtime members Todd Smith and Allan Hall shine throughout the project and are joined by an incredible cast of duet partners, including Chloë Clavon on the classic "Softly and Tenderly." Nicole C. Mullen is amazing on "Follow Jesus," and Amy Perry's vocals are poignant on "Gentle Healer." But the most compelling cuts are the cover of Julie Miller's "My Tears," featuring Kim Hill, and "Ain't No Grave," which has Adam Crabb on harmonica while his brother Jason unloads his powerful baritone voice alongside Smokey. Those two powerhouse vocalists shake the rafters. Not to be missed.—DEP

DVD
THE CLASH
Rude Boy
Epic/Legacy
Release Date: Aug. 1
"Rude Boy," the 1980 movie by filmmakers Jack Hazan and David Mingay, is finally out on DVD, and there's plenty here for Clash fans to enjoy. The movie stars Ray Gange as a sex-shop worker who becomes a roadie for the Clash during the band's early days, and while the film is entertaining in its depiction of London youth in the punk era, its most indefatigable moments are the concert live performances, filmed over two UK tours. Though Gange is the star of "Rude Boy," the Clash's Joe Strummer, Mick Jones, Paul Simonon and Topper Headon also play central roles (as themselves), and offer a glimpse into their relationships and personalities through the ostensibly fictional story. Highlights include live cuts of "White Man in Hammersmith Palais," "Police and Thieves" and "White." The DVD also digs up versions of "Tommy Gun" and "English Civil War" not included on the original.--FC

LEGEND & CREDITS
EDITED BY: Jonathan Cohen (albumps) and Chad Taylor (singles)
CONTRIBUTORS: Troy Carpenter, Leela Cobo, Katia Hotley,cover hope, Kerr Mason, Jackie McCarthy, Dan Quattlebaum, Deborah Evans Price, christa L. Titus, Philip van Vleet, Jeff Vibelet
PICK: A new release predicted to hit the top half of the chart in the corresponding format.

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

All albums commercially available in the United States are eligible. Send album review copies to Jonathan Cohen and singles review copies to Chad Taylor (both at Billboard, 770 Broadway, Sixth Floor, New York, N.Y. 10003) or to the writers in the appropriate bureaus.

SINGLES

POP
FERGIE London Bridge (Oh Shh) (3:28)
Producers: Polow Da Don for Zone 4 Inc.
Writers: S. Ferguson, J. Jones, S. Garrett, M. Hartnett
Publishers: various

The arrangement Gunther Schuller's features an expanded version of Blue Notes's "Blue Streams" performance. "Les Revise" is sax man David Sanborn's solo. It's trombone, a musical lion that is roaring. JONATHAN COHEN

COUNTRY
DIERKS BENTLEY Every Mile a Memory (3:53)
Producers: Brett Beavers
Writers: D. Bentley, B. Beavers, S. Hill
Publishers: various

Producers: Landrum Lane, Ray Cervernica, Sherrie Felt
Writer: Lane
Publisher: Superstargirl Music, ASCAP

Billboard Underground exchange head Lourdes Lane inadvertently wrote a new sports ant "wem' when "Victory" scored some prime exposure. The track took off on the air of ESPN, and the sports conglomerate has licensed it. A thick, heavily distorted bassline leads "Victory," while the remaining instruments are covered with a scratchy, industrial coat. Rousing hand claps and chants of "Get up, you fellas and fight" make the song a primal chant for domination, and it's a catchy song that will fit any sports stadium. Lane adds to the kick-ass outline by sawing off an electric violin solo that whines as nastily as a guitar. Whether it's played in a concert or being used to cheer a team on the defense, "Victory" will get fists pumping and feet stomping.—CLT

AC
SHAWN COLVIN Fill Me Up (3:37)
Producers: John Levanthal
Writer: S. Colvin, J. Levanthal
Publisher: Sverd Songs/WB/ Iskra Music & A-Team, ASCAP

Nostalgic—it took five years since Shawn Colvin has had an impact on the charts with "Whole New You," which reached the AC top 25. Fans will also remember her inspired 2001 collaboration with Chris Botti, "All Would Envy," though Colvin probably is best-known for her Grammy Award-winning top 10, "Sunny Came Home," in 1997. "Fill Me Up," Colvin sounds mightily energized with thoughtful instrumentation and a vocal that is crafty perfection. Colvin's literate approach doesn't always connect with mainstream audiences. However, for those in the "know," "Up" is wholly fulfilling and a welcome presence. From the upcoming "These Four Walls,"—CT
Chilly Album Week Sets Stage For NARM Confab

Timing is everything. As music merchants, labels and distributors gather for the annual NARM convention, weekly album volume falls below 9 million units for the first time in more than a decade.

Small wonder that the state and fate of physical product will be a prime topic when the music retailers' trade group gathers Aug. 2-5 in Kissimmee, Fla. Despite its close proximity to Walt Disney World, don't expect this confab to feel like the happiest place on earth.

Album sales—including those sold via digital download—amount to 8.91 million copies for the week that ended July 23. That's the first time Nielsen SoundScan has tallied fewer than 9 million units since 1996, when the frame that closed Feb. 4 marked 8.94 million.

The week that closed Jan. 23, 1994, when album sales dipped to 8.85 million, marks the only time in the past dozen years when volume was lower than the frame that produces this issue's sales chart.

The numbers in The Billboard 200's top 10 echo this week's weak. Were it not for the chart-leading "Now 22," no title on the list would surpass 70,000 copies. The "Now" compilation registers 207,000 units, down 48% from its first-week sales. The runner-up, Los Lonely Boys' sophomore set, "Sacred," scans 67,000, which happens to be the lowest SoundScan total ever for a No. 2 album.

The previous low for an album in that spot since The Billboard 200 switched to SoundScan data in May 1991 had been 71,000 for Aerosmith's "Get a Grip" in May 1993 during that album's fourth chart week.

While not necessarily a call for panic, the fallow week is indeed concerning. It is not unusual to see light release schedules during summer months, and although the last four months of any year always get crowded, that period of 2006 feels like it will be particularly blotted with high-profile releases.

Fold the summer slowdown into the pattern that has seen album sales slide in four of the last five years, and you have a recipe for puny sales weeks.

Of course, the world has changed, shaped in part by the consumer's ability to buy a limitless number of songs a la carte from iTunes and its ilk. The thing is that most conventional music merchants do not benefit directly from the growth of the digital sales channel, which accounts for 5.7% of albums scanned during this tracking week and 5.5% of albums sold in 2006.

Part of this year's album decline can be chalked up to an age-old problem that retailers have long fought: reminding the rest of the world that there are eight other months in the year, aside from the last four, during which albums can be released.

Labels and distribution executives already know that valuable lesson, although there are occasions when the pressures of a company's fiscal year might add to the fourth-quarter glut. The driving dynamic is that artists and managers get drawn toward the Christmas-selling season like bugs to a light. And in this particular year, the slant of high-name talent that will hit store shelves from September on feels even steeper than usual.

By the 29th sales week of 2005, 50 Cent's "The Massacre" had already rung 4.1 million copies, while 17 others had also sold 1 million or more in the calendar year. Besides "Massacre," three others had sold 2 million-plus copies.

This year, the soundtrack to "High School Musical" is top dog with 2.8 million. Only one other title—Rascal Flatts' "Me and My Gang"—has exceeded 2 million copies in 2006, while 15 others have surpassed 1 million.

Some of the albums slated for those last four months are already ready to go. I have a sneaking suspicion stores might be seeing better traffic if some of those titles were already on the market.

And, not for nothing, some of those albums that have been tied to the last four months would be better off if they came out earlier, rather than fighting for visibility in an all-too-crowded field.

SECOND CHAIR: Los Lonely Boys' self-titled debut album never ranked as high as No. 2. That first set peaked at No. 9, but it did log three different sale weeks that were larger than the new album's opening sum.

The best frame for "Los Lonely Boys" was 76,000 during Christmas week of 2004.

For the 27th week ending July 23, 2006. Figures are rounded to the nearest 100 units. Composite retail sales (chart week ending July 15, 2006) are based on sales reported to Nielsen SoundScan. The last four months of any year always get crowded, and although there are occasions when the pressures of a company's fiscal year might add to the fourth-quarter glut, the driving dynamic is that artists and managers get drawn toward the Christmas-selling season like bugs to a light, and in this particular year, the slant of high-name talent that will hit store shelves from September on feels even steeper than usual.

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Some of the albums slated for those last four months are already ready to go. I have a sneaking suspicion stores might be seeing better traffic if some of those titles were already on the market.

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THE BILLBOARD 200 ARTIST INDEX

At No. 47, every "Eighteen Visions" CD contains a $5 discount coupon good toward mem-
bership in the band's fan club.

The phenomenon has spent 23 con-
secutive weeks lodged in the top 10, so far, but only 2.8 million.

Artists who contribute the most to this list are:

KELLY CLARKSON: Breakaway
RISE AGAINST: Civilian
THE SLEEPING WITH SIRENS: TAKING BACK SUNDAY
KEANE: Under The Iron Sky
KENNY CHESNEY: The Road And The Radio
DON OMAN: Wallpaper
UNDEROATH: A Beautiful Lie
 KEITH URBAN: She Used To
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THE AMERICAN REJECTS: No. 16
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ANDREA BOCELLI: Amore
JOURNEY: Open Arms
ALESSANDRA AMOROSO: Ciao
THE ROLLING STONES: She's A Rainbow
JON B.: We're Just Like That
BEATLES: Can't Buy Me Love
SAGA: No. 1 Single

Data for week of August 5, 2006

A NEW DIMENSION (INTERVIEW) by Michael Scott (July 26, 2006)
ANNA NALICK (COLUMBIA)  MS. SEXY LOVE BLUE OCTOBER YOUNG ORANGE FEAT. T.I. CALL JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE is SEXYBACK KT BLACK TEMPERATURE WHAT'S LEFT CHAMILLIONAIRE CHRISTINA ABUILERA (RCA/RMG) BUTTONS AND FEAT. BLIND /IDJMG) AT THE DISCO (EPIC) FEAT. BLIND /IDJMG) Fast LLC. YTUNGBLD002 (ATLANTIC) Inc. All © 2006, See chat o o 87 08 62 40 58 69 5E 104. See www.americanradiohistory.com 23 22 24 26 28 20 17 15 13 11 9 7 5 3 1 53 52 51 50 49 48 47 46 45 44 43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32 31 30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
BETWEEN THE BULLETs: wjessen@billboard.com

ARISTA HOLDS FULL HOUSE ON COUNTRY LIST

Brad Paisley’s sixth chart-topper, his third to hold the spot for more than one week, posts a third week at the summit. “The World” represents his longest No. 1 run to date.

Paisley spent two weeks at No. 1 in December 2000 with “We Danced,” a feat he repeated in July 2002 with “I’m Gonna Miss Her (The Fishin’ Song).” As Paisley’s Arista Nashville labelmate Carrie Underwood bullets at No. 2 with "Don’t Forget to Remember Me," the label has announced “Before He Cheats" as her next official single. That track spent 20 weeks on the chart before unseating album chart, and hits a new peak position this issue (49-43).

Arista Nashville also scraps a recently serviced single by Keith Anderson and resumes working “Every Time I Hear Your Name,” which recaptures a bullet at No. 11. Furthermore, the label owns the chart’s biggest leap with Alan Jackson’s “Like Red on a Rose” (42-28).

Don’t miss another important COUNTRY MUSIC UPDATE


BillboardRadioMonitor.com
**Latino Songs**

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<th>ARTIST</th>
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<td>Wisin &amp; Yandel</td>
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<td>Wisin &amp; Yandel</td>
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**Top Latin Albums**

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<td>5</td>
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**Regional Mexican**

- **Top 10**
- **Top Album**

**Top Artists**

- **Wisin & Yandel**
- **Javier Solís**
- **Don Omar**
- **Jenni Rivera**
- **Marc Anthony**

**Top Songs**

- "Hasta La Vida"
- "La Vida...Los Exitos"
- "Tú de La Tierra, Yo de La Noche"
- "El Dia De Mi Amor"
- "Ya No Quiero"

**Top Latin Albums**

- "La Vida...Los Exitos"
- "Tú de La Tierra, Yo de La Noche"
- "El Dia De Mi Amor"
- "Ya No Quiero"
- "Nuestro Se Hace Vuestro"

**Regional Mexican**

- **Top 10**
- **Top Album**

**Top Artists**

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- **Javier Solís**
- **Don Omar**
- **Jenni Rivera**
- **Marc Anthony**

**Top Songs**

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- "La Vida...Los Exitos"
- "Tú de La Tierra, Yo de La Noche"
- "El Dia De Mi Amor"
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**Top Latin Albums**

- "La Vida...Los Exitos"
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**Regional Mexican**

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- **Wisin & Yandel**
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- **Don Omar**
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**Top Songs**

- "Hasta La Vida"
- "La Vida...Los Exitos"
- "Tú de La Tierra, Yo de La Noche"
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**FRANCE**

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### Single-Chart Sales

**Top Selling Singles**

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<th>Artist/Song</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Sales (Week 1)</th>
<th>Sales (Week 2)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Roar&quot;</td>
<td>EMI</td>
<td>325,000</td>
<td>406,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Let's Dance&quot;</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Shake It Off&quot;</td>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>175,000</td>
<td>220,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Uptown Girl&quot;</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Middle&quot;</td>
<td>Republic</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>175,000</td>
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**Top Digital Songs**

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<th>Sales (Week 2)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Roar&quot;</td>
<td>EMI</td>
<td>325,000</td>
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<td>200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;The Middle&quot;</td>
<td>Republic</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>175,000</td>
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**Top Streaming Songs**

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<tbody>
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<td>1,200,000</td>
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<td>Atlantic</td>
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<td>1,200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Shake It Off&quot;</td>
<td>RCA</td>
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<td>1,000,000</td>
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<td>&quot;Uptown Girl&quot;</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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**Top Downloaded Songs**

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<td>406,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Let's Dance&quot;</td>
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<td>Republic</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>175,000</td>
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Newbury Comics

Buying Job Opportunity

Newbury Comics, Inc., a 26 store music and lifestyle retail chain based in Brighton (Boston) Massachusetts, is looking for an outgoing, driven professional to assume buying responsibilities in our digitized home entertainment (CD + DVD) buying department. The ideal candidate will have experience with complex inventory management systems, 1-5 years of industry experience, and real world negotiating experience as a buyer or as an independent sales or sales management professional. Candidates for this position should be detail oriented, disciplined, analytical and ready to work in an intense, 24-7 environment with people who are passionate about succeeding in their roles.

College degree is preferred but not required. Compensation will be $50,000+ based on experience. Please send your résumé, including compensation history, to:

applications@newburycomics.com
or At: Human Resources, Newbury Comics, Inc.
5 Guest St. Brighton, MA 02135

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Music Publishing company is seeking a legal secretary/assistant to its Vice President Legal/Business Affairs.

The position requires a responsible, detail-oriented candidate with high-level organization and typing skills. Must be able to multi-task with ease.

Experience in the music industry helpful. Must be proficient in Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft Word.

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BIRTHS
BOY: Gabriel Wolff Strassman, to Christine Wolff and Wayne Strassman, July 12 in Livingston, N.J. Mother is a publicist at Geffen Records.
TWIN GIRLS: Savannah Marie and Adyson Amilia, to Kelsi Osborn and Steve Hooper. July 12 in Nashville. Mother is band member of SheDaisy.

DEATHS
Jessie Mae Hemphill, 71, July 22, at a hospital in Memphis. According to Jessie Mae Hemphill Foundation president Olga Wilhelmine Mathus, the blues singer and guitarist died from complications of an infection that may have resulted from an ulcer. The Mississippi-born artist came from a family of musicians. Her grandfather was blind fiddle/fife player Sid Hemphill, and her mother and aunts were also performing artists.
In 1986, she toured France and recorded tracks for the album "Mississippi Blues Festival 1986," which helped her achieve U.S. recognition.
Hemphill won the W.C. Handy Award for best traditional female blues artist in 1987 and 1988.
Her sophomore album, and her first U.S. release, "Feelin’ Good," arrived in 1991 on the High Water label. The album won the Handy Award for best acoustic album that year.
Slowed by a crippling stroke in 1993, she established a non-profit foundation and returned to Senatobia, Miss. Hemphill released her final album, "Dare You to Do It Again," in 2004.
No information on survivors is available.

BIRTHS

Brian Williams, 45, of a swimming accident while boating with friends and family, July 8, at Center Hill Lake in Smithville, Tenn.

Williams was most recently senior VP at SunTrust Bank in Nashville. After establishing SunTrust’s music industry division in 1988, Williams initiated the first full-service bank on Music Row in 1990.
He was the bank’s representative to major record labels, publishing companies, music industry executives and superstar performers, including Garth Brooks, Faith Hill and Reba McEntire.
Williams is survived by his wife Marion, a former publicist for RCA Label Group in Nashville, and two children.
In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Sound and Speed, a charity benefiting the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum and Victory Junction. Memorial donations may be sent to SunTrust, 1026 17th Ave. South, Nashville, TN 37212.

Paul Nelson, 69, of heart disease, July 5 in New York. Nelson was best-known as a pioneering folk and rock critic.
In 1961, Nelson and his friend John Pankake launched Little Sandy Review, a music magazine focused on the surging folk music revival.
Nelson’s aspiration to become a film critic lead him to New York in 1963, where instead he became managing editor of the prominent folk music magazine Sing Out.
With the scene and his taste evolving, Nelson left Sing Out and began to write for rock magazines like Circus and Rolling Stone.
In 1970, Mercury Records’ Ron Oberman offered Nelson a position in publicity and A&R.
“His big concern was that he would have to push acts that he didn’t believe in,” Oberman recalls. “I told him that would not be the case.” At Mercury, Nelson assembled the Velvet Underground’s live album “1969” and signed the New York Dolls.
Returning to Rolling Stone, Nelson wrote features and edited the record reviews section until 1983. In recent years, he worked at a video store in New York.
Nelson is survived by a son, a sister and a grandson.

Backbeat

Virgin Records president of urban music Jermaine Dupri and LG Electronics MobileComm USA, presented the Fusif Launch Party held at the Day After in Hollywood. Proceeds from auditioning LG's Limited Edition Se So Def Music Phone on eBay will benefit the Jermaine Dupri Foundation, with matching funds raised by LG. Here, Janet Jackson and Dupri check out their new Fusif phones, courtesy of LG. PHOTO COURTESY OF BLLE NOTE RECORDS

Country artist Kenny Chesney sold out his first show at New York's Madison Square Garden. Before hitting the stage, he passed for a picture with Sony BMG Music Entertainment executives. From left are Sony BMG Music Entertainment Nashville chairman Joe Edwards; Sony BMG Music Entertainment executive VP of human resources Iris Satie; Chesney; Sony BMG Music Entertainment Nashville executive VP Butch Waugh; Sony BMG Music Entertainment executive VP of artist marketing officer Tim Prescott and Sony BMG Music Entertainment CEO Tim Bowden.

Rock act 30 Seconds to Mars performed at the premiere of MTV2's "All That Rocks" event, filmed July 6 at New York's CGBG. "All That Rocks" will air July 20 on MTV2. Having a rockin' good time, from left, are 30 Seconds to Mars' Jared Leto, MTV2's David Cohen and event host Sam Margera. Photo courtesy of MTV2.

Rhino Records held an exclusive listening party for Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Sam Moore in celebration of his solo album, "Sam Moore: Overight Sensational," at the Pre-Post in New York. From left: Are Rhino Records president Scott Pascaccio; Randy Jackson, who produced Moore's album; Moore; and WEA president John Esposito.

Sony Records' view of the INXS played an exclusive live in Lindsay with "Music at the Blockhead Theatre" in Santa Monica, Calif.: "Six," which started at 8 for the inaugural event in the "Movie in Concert Series" were split in an open-auction format through. Yerba vegetables. "Fusilier" after the show, from left, are INXS Andrew Faris, Tim Farriss and JD Fortune Shontelle's Andy Reis, BCC's Gary Beers, Shontelle's Cole Evans and Tim O'Keefe, Jon Farriss. Standing in the back on the right is INXS Kirk Pengilly.

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CHEEK TO CHEEK
While McFly is largely unknown in the United States, the U.K. pop band is causing quite a stir in the blogosphere. The quartet capped off a week of promotion in the United Kingdom for its new double A-sided single "Please, Please," "Don't Stop Me Now" with a July 22 performance at the G-A-Y club in London. To celebrate the song's No. 1 debut on the Official U.K. Singles Chart, the boys in the band—which has scored five No. 1 singles—striped down to their boxers for the night's final song, and then lost them entirely before scampering off stage.

Video footage and photos from the show taken by fans have since cropped up all over the Web. But the naked news doesn't stop there. The humorous music video for "Please, Please" also borrows some fleshly action. A separately sold DVD single with said action features a "behind the scenes" segment with, yes, more skin. With U.K. radio lukewarm to "Please, Please," it's likely that the added appeal of nudity on the DVD single helped ensure the No. 1 bow.

Not to say that the stripped-down aspect of McFly is the only reason the single is selling so well. The group is also drawing publicity because of its scandalous ties to Lindsay Lohan. The song "Please, Please" is about Lohan, who co-starred with the band in the recent film "Just My Luck." The band's drummer, Harry Judd, claims he had a fling with Lohan dur during the shoot. Lohan denies this.

Tawdriness aside, there is a social redeeming aspect to the release. "Don't Stop Me Now," a cover of the Queen classic, is earmarked as the official Sport Relief single. Proceeds benefit the organization, which raises funds to aid disadvantaged children through sports and entertainment.

DJ ON THE RUN
International DJ/producer Paul Oakenfold and his Perfecto imprint are joining Ultra Records. Effective immediately, all Perfecto releases in the United States will travel through Ultra's distribution. (The man remains signed to Maverick as a recording artist.)

This new arrangement marks the enc of Oakenfold/Perfecto's six-year distribution deal with West Coast dance/electronic label Thrive Records. (A fort scoring mixed CD from DJ Sandra Collins will be the last Perfecto/Thrive release.) Oakenfold and his label become a part of the Ultra family just as it enters a new distribution-plus-partnership with Alternative Distribution Alliance and Warner Music Group (Billboard, July 25).

Oakenfold says his relationship with Thrive was "fratful, but it was time for change." "Upcoming Perfecto releases include a David Guetta single and the soundtrack to the Randal Miller-lensed film "Noble Son," which Oakenfold scored.

On July 30, Oakenfold's becomes the opening act for Madonna on all of the singer's European stadium dates. He says to expect a sound that is "commercial and cool"—with nary a Madonna song. "I'll leave that to her."

EVEN COWGIRLS GET THE FRIZZLES
With our love of cowboys, Track ventured to Cheyenne, Wyo., for Frontier Days, site of the largest outdoor rodeo in the United States. Following an afternoon of bronco bucking and barrel racing, we settled in for a concert by Martina McBride. The country superstar was well into her set, delivering hit after hit, when she stopped and asked if her tour manager was within hearing distance. "I'm pretty sure I left on my curling iron," she said. "Can you go onto the bus and turn it off?" Then, without missing a beat, she went back to her show. What's not to love?

IT'S B'TS WORLD
Track recently attended a very intimate evening at electronic artist/composer BT's Los Angeles home, where he previewed his Aug. 29 release, "This Binary Universe." The project is a CD/DVD that features seven BT compositions set to animation. BT filmed the tracks and then solicited filmmakers through such diverse channels as Craigslist and university bulletin boards. The short films range from abstraction to linear storytelling. The most moving piece is undoubtedly "Good Morning Kaia." BT wrote the tune for his 2-year-old daughter, who sat cradled in daddy's lap for much of the viewing.

BT plans to screen the project in theaters in 12 major markets. He will then take "This Binary Universe" on tour in symphony halls across the country, including Los Angeles' Disney Hall. For the live shows, the animation will be expanded to fit a concert that BT says may range from 90 minutes to more than three hours and will include material from other BT albums. "This is the biggest project, bar nothing, that I've ever worked on," BT tells Track.

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Blair & Randy Tyler 760.862.1425

1088 6TH STREET #: Walk to the beach, promenade from this 1BR, 1 Bath, HW Floors 1-car garage lg eq in Kit opens to lg priv courtyard-patio. $169,900 WEB: 0331289
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6736 HILLPARK DR #202: Hwds Hills. 1bd/1.5ba. Condo. 1,065sqf. Room for 2nd bd. 1 common wall. Balcony, 1st time on mkt in 26 years. Tremendous potential! $465,000 WEB: 0303084
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