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Social Broadcasting

By Ralph Simon

Labels and music publishers have come a long way since the introduction of the first commercial ringtones in North America by Yourmobile in 1999. Majors and indies alike have been buoyed by revenue from mobile music applications, but future revenue growth requires an understanding of what is increasingly becoming known as social broadcasting.

Social broadcasting can be loosely defined as a populist distribution via mobile channels of anything available through social networks. The leading sources of material for social broadcasting over the past nine months clearly have been MySpace and YouTube, where music has become the contextless backdrop to communications and communities anchored through social networking.

Social broadcasting is set to grow dramatically over the next year. Creating mobile music applications that fit into the context of other popular social networks like Facebook and Bebo, to name just two, can be a major spur to artist and audience development. Music fans have an increasing appetite to become social broadcasters themselves, driving fast adoption of user-generated content and loyalty to a brand's music, which produces new music products and commercial opportunities for music and media executives.

A&R, artist development and business executives need to understand that we should no longer simply see ringtones as an easy licensing vector, but rather as a strategic driver within the context of social communities and communications. Executives have to start understanding the basics of how to build, price and promote their music content to social broadcasters for an enthusiastic mobile public that listens to and shares music and artists.

We also must deploy strategic goals to avoid one of the major pitfalls of the European mobile music business in 2006—people “rolling their own ringtones,” which has become startlingly high and a large concern for copyright owners across the pond.

This manifests in two ways: making a social statement (ringtones and ringbacks), and as pure personal entertainment via legal over-the-air downloading and illegal side-loading. Labels have tended to sustain high prices, seeking to

Social broadcasting is a populist distribution via mobile channels of anything available through social networks.

disengage or squeeze out aggregators' margins, which might not be such a good thing. Labels should embrace specialist aggregators that understand how social broadcasting stimulates mobile content sales, including those developing supported content models such as Spiral-Frog and Amobie.

M-Metrics, the industry’s specialist mobile research company, finds that hip-hop and rock/pop are still the most popular ringtone genres, but continued growth will come from serving emerging social lifestyles where music is the lynchpin mobile music to land a far wider target than mere mobile. Each participating partner’s marketing and advertising ensures a significantly bigger national youth audience than were simply available through the telco.

Cunadl label and management company Network dewitts another example of innovative and boundary-breaking social broadcasting by releasing the Pro Tools files of four songs from the now Barenaked Ladies album—allowing fans to mix the tracks from scratch. Downloaders are sure to enhance their

Labels and publishers can play an important role in pulling together the various strands of music, video content and issues of social relevance to maximize the extent to which a mobile device connects social broadcasters with artists, genres and multifaceted pieces of content. It’s time for the creative community to take up the reins and accept the challenge of becoming social broadcasters, too.

Don’t underestimate the value of weaving music into the relevant social fabric of people’s lives.

Los Angeles-based Ralph Simon is founder and chairman emeritus of the Mobile Radio Forum—Americas.

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LIVING ROOM WAR HEATS UP

Apple’s iTV Faces Stiff Competition

Apple Computer made its long-awaited entry into the movie download business earlier this month. The buzz around its film strategy is taking a back seat to the company’s announcement that it has its sights set on a digital device for the living room. Apple’s set-top box-like living room gadget, which has a working name of iTV, will allow users to transmit music, video, games and pictures from computers to TV sets. It is set to bow in first-quarter 2007 and will retail for $299. The device is said to look like Apple’s smallest computer, the Mac Mini, and will work with Macs and PCs. But Apple faces stiff competition from a number of different companies and industries.

Cons: Apple’s willingness to play well with others could be a big problem. Apple has a history of not allowing its technology to work with other products and devices in favor of its own proprietary ecosystem. Analysts warn that consumers may not be willing to surrender control of their living room to a single company in the same way they do with their computers.

Pros: The war for your living room is getting more heated,” says Rich Greenfield, a media analyst with Pali Capital. “Beyond Apple, the [telecommunications companies] are trying to enter the market. Microsoft is improving media center, satellite operators are trying to enter broadband, and sooner or later Sony will get PS3 out with next-gen DVD technology built in.”

Billboard breaks down the competitive landscape for the digital living room:

Apple
- Pros: The leading retailer of digital music and video has now sold more than 1.5 billion songs worldwide and more than 75 million videoclips, a mixture of music videos and TV shows.

- Cons: The company’s early efforts to create a digital living room device and operating system, the Windows Media Center PCs, have drawn a collective yawn from mass audiences. Likewise it has tried to position its Xbox gaming system with its Internet connectivity as a Trojan horse in the living room, a strategy that has yet to play out. Ditto living room music solutions from Microsoft-compatible companies like RealNetworks.

COMCAST, TIME WARNER
- Pros: The cable industry, led by the likes of Comcast, is already in the living room. And with digital cable, the industry today is offering a growing array of on-demand and customization products through its set-top boxes—no additional hardware or software required. It also has proved it can beat competitors like TiVo at their own game. Cable operators have been the ones to mainstream the digital video recorder business by offering the device to its users at no cost upfront with a low-cost monthly service fee. Another inroad: Internet connectivity through its broadband access business. Cable companies are in a good position to set standards for mass consumption of the digital living room experience.

- Cons: While cable companies are great at getting into homes and managing relationships with rights holders, retailing and merchandizing an infinite selection of entertainment products is not a core strength.

VERIZON, AT&T
- Pros: Telecommunication companies like Verizon and AT&T are starting to push into TV and video services via their DSL networks in a bid to take on cable operators. If they can get into the living room, telecom companies offer interesting ecosystem capabilities from the couch to the mobile device—especially as convergence between broadband, Internet-enabled phones and handheld entertainment devices continues.

- Cons: DSL is facing a costly uphill battle against cable in its bid to provide even basic TV services. With no beachhead in the living room, the industry could find itself on the outside looking in.

GOOGLE, YAHOO, AOL
- Pros: While Apple dominates digital entertainment sales, over the long run the likes of Google and Yahoo are in a strong position to play a key role in selling digital media content and services to consumers. That could leave them in an influential position to help define standards for how the digital living room experience will work.

- Cons: No strong consumer electronics connection, well behind Apple in content sales.

Apple’s iTV Faces Stiff Competition

Apple CEO Steve Jobs says it is selling more than 1 million videos a week and it hopes to be selling movies at a similar rate in less than a year. That’s a lot of proprietary digital rights management-protected content that needs an Apple-friendly device for playback. Apple also has a strong history in designing slick, easy-to-use products with well-regarded operating systems.
United Front

At Recording Arts Day On The Hill, Industry Reps Seek Fair Compensation And Overseas Privacy Protection

Voices of the music community cut through all the legal jargon on Capitol Hill during meetings with lawmakers earlier this month. As more than 150 music creators, business representatives and trade group executives convened in the nation's capital for Recording Arts Day, their requests centered around fair compensation for music and protection from global piracy. The proposals affect some of the most important aspects of the music business, from compulsory licenses for compositions to the technology used in new listening devices that store music sent from satellite radio. And the fight to control piracy is especially challenging overseas.

Why is this annual pilgrimage, spearheaded by the Recording Academy, cut at a crucial time for the industry. "It's a consensus-gathering process to make certain when you're crafting legislation, it doesn't have an unnecessary impact on someone," says Rep. Mark Foley, R-Fla., who was honored by the Recording Academy for supporting industry issues. "That's why we try to get a broad perspective of views. It's whether it's the record execs, the trade groups or the talent."

Recording Academy president Neil Portnow says his group's mission on Sept. 6 was to educate lawmakers and show unity as an industry. "The congressmen and senators never see us in one place at one time as a unified music industry," he says. "They've said, 'We need to see you united. We can't fix all of the issues. You guys have to get together on this because divided nothing will happen.' It makes an incredible statement for all of us to be here unified one day at least one time a year."

Portnow says that global piracy, especially in China and Russia, is a priority. Indeed, piracy is top of mind with some officials as well.

Government sources tell Billboard that there is a good probability the United States will file a legal action this fall with the World Trade Organization against China over the country's insufficient intellectual property (IP) protection. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., also honored by the Recording Academy, does not believe a WTO action is necessary the right way to go. "The necessary thing is for the [United States Trade Representative] as well as our government to talk with high-level Chinese leaders," she says.

Feinstein explains that in the 1990s, she went directly to then-Chinese President Jiang Zemin and asked about piracy in one of the provinces. Jiang told her that the governor of that province assured him there was no theft. Then a Chinese person came to Feinstein with a list of 30 pirate companies. She gave the list to the USTR, who was able to close them down. "You have to develop the contacts," Feinstein says. "The Chinese are increasingly attuned to IP rights. Hong Kong has tried to be very assiduous in cracking down on the sale of pirate goods, but you press in one direction and it pops up in another. So it requires constant attention. Our government isn't giving it the constant, high-level attention."

Recording Academy co-sponsor the Perform Act, which would require satellite, cable and Internet broadcasters to all pay the same royalty rates for the performance or distribution of digital sound recordings. Some members of the tech and broadcasting communities object to legislating technology. Yet the senator finds a balance for her constituency's interests.

"Intellectual property laws, with copyrights and patents, are the law," Feinstein says. "Songwriters, music producers and movie makers have certain copyright protections. If we let them be invalidated in the entertainment industry, that's the camel's nose under the tent for virtually every other high-tech industry as well. Either you believe that copyright and patent law is important and should be protected across the board or it isn't. I believe it is."

Shake-Up At Sanctuary

Executive Exits From Artist Management Unit Imminent, Sources Say

Sanctuary Group's artist management unit, the independent music company's cornerstone asset, is bracing itself for a structural sea change, well-placed sources tell Billboard.

The departure of longtime high-level executive Merck Mercuriadis from the music firm is imminent and will be announced in the next couple of weeks. Sources say the company's co-founder and worldwide head of artist relations Rod Smallwood may also be on the way out, taking with him the company's oldest management client, Iron Maiden, according to executives close to the situation.

Another key artist manager, Craig Jennings, is understood to be part of the exodus. Jennings currently manages rock acts Funeral for a Friend, Yourcode/names: Milo, Bullet for My Valentine and Fightstar. A spokesman for Jennings said the artist manager could not comment.

Sanctuary Group CFO Frank Presland could not be reached by press time.

The loss of Iron Maiden would be a severe blow for Sanctuary. The veteran rock act, whose most recent album "A Matter of Life and Death" (Capitol/EMI) opened at the top of Billboard's Top 100 European chart, is understood to have been out of contract with Sanctuary for roughly a year. "Life and Death" entered the top 10 in 19 European countries on its release in early September, topping the charts in nine of those. This week, it enters The Billboard 200 at No. 9 after moving 56,000 units in Iron Maiden's 30-year history, it's the band's first U.S. top 10 album.

A representative for Iron Maiden Holdings, the London-based corporate entity that co-ordinates the band's activities, declined to comment.

Smallwood and fellow Cambridge University student Andy Taylor founded artist management business Smallwood-Taylor Enterprises—later renamed Sanctuary Group—in 1976. Three years later, the pair signed Iron Maiden to a management contract, beginning a relationship that continued until recent times. As previously reported, Taylor was axed from Sanctuary May 26, following a rocky financial period that nearly sank the company. Smallwood could not be reached via phone or e-mail for comment. Taylor also declined to comment on the Iron Maiden situation.

A former A&R and marketing director at Virgin Records, Mercuriadis has served with Sanctuary for more than 16 years, most recently as group CFO. According to the publicly traded company's Web site, Mercuriadis is currently listed as an artist manager.

Mercuriadis is expected to join mega-managers Irving Azoff and Howard Kaufman at Front Line Management. Sources say he will continue to manage some of his acts, including Morrissey, Guns 'N Roses and Joss Stone.

One source says the parting between Mercuriadis and Sanctuary is "amicable." In conjunction with Sanctuary, he is also expected to continue working with Elton John, as a co-manager.

Azoff could not be reached for comment at press time.
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MUSIC DIALS UP MOBILE EFFORTS

At Billboard's MECCA Confab, Execs Say Wireless Content Needs A Bigger Marketing Push

Leading label and wireless executives gathered at Billboard's MECCA conference in Los Angeles in mid-September say record companies need to do more to make mobile a standard part of their marketing spend.

"As an industry we're not doing enough," Universal Music Mobile VP/GM Rom Caraef says. "When we have a new artist we don't have messages with calls to action for mobile. We're just scratching the surface of driving demand."

For its part, Universal Music Group will roll out a campaign to sell ringtones from Snoop Dogg via premium short message service (SMS). UMG will include shortcodes for buying the rapper's ringtones in all marketing messages promoting the new Snoop album, "The Blue Carpet Treatment," due Nov. 21.

In support of a new Doors boxed set, "Perception," also due Nov. 21, Warner Music Group's Rhino Entertainment is running an ad campaign for Doors ringtones that will air on cable TV and online later this month.

The commercials—a rare ringtone TV marketing campaign from a major label—will be 15 and 30 seconds in length and run for two weeks starting the third week of September. Rhino is selling the ringtones through a new premium SMS called RhinoTones.

Rhino Entertainment senior VP of new media strategy David Dom says the label will also run similar TV/online campaigns promoting ringtones from specific genres—'80s and old-school hip-hop—in October.

In a keynote Q&A, the Doors' Ray Manzarek and manager Jeff Jamol told Billboard executive editor/associate publisher Tamara Conneff that the band and Rhino are developing a number of special websites and windowed, mobile-only content releases.

Efforts to drive increased mobile content marketing come amid concerns that early adopters of mobile music and ringtone content are starting to max out.

Multimedia Networks founder Robert Tercek says the issue isn't limited to music. It applies to almost all mobile entertainment content, which, he says, has hit a speed bump.

Caraef adds, "The challenge for us and everyone is to take it to the mainstream."

ELSEWHERE AT MECCA

UMG and MTV Networks have entered a wide-reaching licensing deal for mobile video content, sources say.

Under the agreement, MTV gains access to full videos from UMG artists, as well as live performances of UMG acts on MTV shows, for use in its streaming and downloadable video-on-demand services.

MTV will also be able to create original made-for-mobile programming featuring UMG content that it can distribute across services from all carriers and wireless operators. All music content and consumers who receive MTV music-branded services will be able to access this content.

The deal covers all of MTV's brands and wireless sub-brands, including MTV2, MTV2, MTV Español, mtvU, VH1, CMT and Logo.

In a theatrical opening key-note, "Napster of business development and product innovation Paul Reddick, right, dressed as the title character from the movie "Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby" and tossed loaves of Wonder Bread into the crowd. "Napster is a leading sponsor of the Sony Pictures release and has featured lead actor Will Ferrell in its commercials. Reddick used the address to urge the entertainment industry to take a fresh approach to offering mobile content."

Reddick said that a lack of rights licensing standards is creating a "free for all" bottleneck in the development of wireless entertainment. He also said that with more than 5 million downloads sold through its Sprint Music Store in its first year, it's clear that consumers will pay a premium rate ($2.50 per track) for over-the-air downloads. "We're past the experimental phase of getting people to buy," he said.

Nellmoser and Muze are promoting a one-stop technology and content solution to media companies and other brand marketers looking to get into wireless commerce.

Under the alliance, the companies will jointly market Nellmoser's mobile technology platform and Muze's metadata and multimedia catalog in a combined offering. Muze's platform includes more than 2 million licensed tracks from major and independent labels in North America, more than 5 million licensed streaming music samples and more than 40,000 music videos.

Latin music Web site batanga.com and digital music store elatinmusic.com have joined forces in an Internet operation that merges Batanga's considerable traffic with Elatinmusic's solid digital sales operation.

Batanga will offer 26 Internet radio stations, video on demand, news and the Batanga Music Store, powered by Elatinmusic, under one virtual roof.

The model joins such entities as AOL and Uninvision in offering Latin music content and sales, but Batanga hopes to distinguish itself from broader media companies with a sharply honed Latin music-only focus.

"People who go to Batanga are there because they want music—nothing else," says Miguel Sierralta, president of Elatinmusic, which launched last year and became the first Latin digital store to strike deals with the majors.

"We had the technology, we had the music, now we have an audience that is looking for music."

Launched in 2000, Batanga has seen its traffic and advertising grow exponentially. According to CEO Rafael Urbina, the site had 4.2 million unique users in July, up from 2.5 million in December, 2005, and year-to-year advertising revenue has doubled since 2004.

Batanga's traffic jumped following the merger last December with Planeta, a video-on-demand service where 80% of its content is music-driven. Unlike univision.com or AOL and Yahoo!'s Latin sites, which all try to be everything to everyone, Batanga's audience falls mostly in the 18-34 age group, lives in the United States and navigates in two languages. The entire site's content is bilingual.

"The problem with many online stores is access," to traffic, Urbina says. "Our advantage is our prospective buyers are already in the site."

Urbina says Batanga users spend an average of 30 minutes per month on the site. Last month, visitors listened to 95 million tracks and watched 15 million videos.

Adding a digital store was a logical next step. "We realized that the [Batanga] user also wants to download the music, the ringtone and the lyrics to the songs. We are trying to satisfy all their needs."

Elatinmusic offers a catalog of approximately 250,000 songs, including catalogs from Warner and EMI. Agreements with Universal and Sony are imminent, Sierralta says. Most tracks are Latin or appeal to a Latin lifestyle. The site also supports new and developing acts, and Sierralta plans to develop a digital label. Under the new deal, the site launched on Labor Day as the Batanga Music Store under the Batanga banner.

As the year progresses, the Batanga site plans to incorporate social networking and increase promotions. For example, Batanga has teamed with Jeep for a contest in which unsigned artists submit music to create a new radio station. The site will also launch with a General Motors promotion offering free downloads.
Thanks to My Chemical Romance for bringing The Black Parade to MTV2's 2$Bill.

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Raising The Bar
Matching Fan Demographics To Beverages, Beer And Liquor Companies Rev Up Their Tour Sponsorship Involvement

At a time when exposing a national audience to new music is tougher than ever, many artists are heading straight to the bar to get the job done.

Indeed, beer and liquor companies have become increasingly involved in artist sponsorships and for good reason. On the beverage side, a concert setting is the perfect environment to market alcoholic drinks to 21- to 34-year-olds, says Jay Coleman, founder/CEO of Entertainment Marketing Communications International. “Companies are very interested in that demographic because they’re younger, more impressionable and can become long-term customers,” he says. “They want to put their brand front and center in places of social interaction, and music is always a part of anything social.” From the artist’s perspective, two things should be considered: Does it make sense financially and in the brand a good match, Coleman says.

Scott Siman, who manages Tim McGraw, says past Bud Light tour sponsorships helped land the country star in several commercials during the Super Bowl and Academy Awards. “Those are advertising opportunities most artists can’t afford to be a part of,” the RPM Management owner says.

When seeking out potential tours to sponsor, beer and liquor companies look for “buzz” artists who have a strong connection to the audience they’re trying to reach, according to Steve Knill, president of Radiate Music and Entertainment. “They try to match the demographics of the artists [fans] with the consumer they think are going to use their product,” he says. Knill’s company works closely with record labels, retailers and radio stations to determine which artists sell and get airplay.

Coleman’s company has partnered with brands for more than 25 years, and he believes it’s best if the two parties involved have the same objectives in mind. “If it’s done right, it can be a major attribute to an artist,” he says.

Here’s a look at several alcohol sponsorships that have paid big dividends for artists.

JÄGERMEISTER MUSIC TOUR
Rick Zeiler, director of marketing and brand development for Sydney Frank Importing, is the mastermind behind the annual Jägermeister Music Tour. Since becoming involved in live music sponsorship about five years ago, Jägermeister sales have more than tripled. “This year we’ll sell up to 3 million cases,” Zeiler says. “We think a lot of it has to do with our music promotions and our band sponsorship program.”

The company has created a nationwide program where it provides about 230 bands with promotional items (T-shirts, lighters, shot glasses, guitar picks) that contain the band’s logo, along with the Jägermeister brand. In return, the act helps promote the liquor onstage.

This year’s Live Nation-produced Jägermeister Music Tour starts Oct. 19 in Anaheim, Calif., and ends with back-to-back gigs Dec. 8-9 at San Diego’s 4th & B. The trek will shift from its usual heavy metal lineup to focus on different genres. “We don’t see why we can’t sponsor reggae, country, polka bands—you name it, we’ll sponsor them,” Zeiler says. “As long as they’re loyal to drinking Jägermeister, we’re interested in working with them.” The trek’s target demo graphic is 21- to 35-year-old males, he says.

Matthew Phillips, who manages Jägermeister Music Tour headliners Slightly Stoopid and Pepper, feels the hard-partying fans of the bands are a nice match for the liquor brand. “These two bands both tour a lot, and the feedback from promoters is that they do really good at the bar,” the Silverback Management president says.

BENTLEY
DIERKS BENTLEY/BUD LIGHT
With the recent announcement of Dierks Bentley’s Bud Light-sponsored Locked & Loaded fall headlining trek, Bentley joins George Strait and McGraw as the only country artists to be sponsored by the beer giant. Manager Scott Kernahan couldn’t have asked for anything more.

“In our mind . . . Bud Light is the ultimate endorsement,” Kernahan says. “What they can do for us in bars and on the street level is amazing.”

David Campbell, senior director of entertainment marketing for Anheuser-Busch, agrees. “I think all artists—big and small—look at a partner like Anheuser-Busch as someone who can help generate exposure through marketing that they couldn’t otherwise do themselves,” he explains.

“That can be on a broad scale through television or a smaller scale through radio, outdoor advertising and retail promotions at bars and grocery stores,” Campbell adds.

The Locked & Loaded trek starts Oct. 5 at the Asheville Civic Center in North Carolina and wraps up Dec. 8 at the House of Blues in Las Vegas. Miranda Lambert and the Randy Rogers band will support. The tour marks Bentley’s first headlining jaunt outside the ballpark bar circuit.

“We’ve played every bar in America and outgrown them,” Kernahan says.

“In going out on this headlining tour, our costs have definitely escalated by playing these buildings,” he says. “The fee Bud Light is paying helps us do this.”

HEINEKEN RED STAR SOUL
Heineken generally steers clear of tour sponsorship deals, says Mike McCann, director of integrated marketing, promotions and sponsorships. Instead, the beer company creates live musical experiences, which allows for total control of the event.

Heineken recently announced the eight-city Heineken Red Star Soul concert series, which begins Sept. 12 at Philadelphia’s Theatre of Living Arts and ends Nov. 18 at Atlanta’s Center Stage. The free shows will feature such headliners as Angie Stone, Raphael Saadiq, Bilal and Amel Larrieux. The aim is to reach African-Americans, who account for about 25% of the beer’s consumer base, McCann says, and “are some of our most loyal consumers, so we wanted to broaden our music platform and create an experience from the ground up.”

To promote Red Star Soul, Heineken created a Web site for the concert series and has placed advertisements with XXL magazine and AOL’s Black Voices. “We also have pretty extensive radio running in the markets,” McCann says.

Heineken held its second Amster-Jam music festival Aug. 19 in New York, which featured performances by Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers, Foo Fighters, LL Cool J, Busta Rhymes and others. “What we decided to do with Amster Jam was create a festival that spoke to all our different consumer bases,” McCann says. “We were the producers and built it from the bottom up.”

Approximately 15,000 people attended Amster Jam, which had a ticket cost of about $70, McCann says. AEG Live was a partner in the festival, which was open only to fans of legal drinking age.

PAT GREEN/MILLER LITE
Miller Lite has been a tour sponsor for Texas-based artist Pat Green for two years. Manager Clarence Spalding says he looks for true sponsorship partners, not a company that’s just going to hand over a check. It’s more about “what they can do in markets to help generate interest in your act,” he says. “In the case of Pat Green, who is a mid-level act, I’m looking to get his name out there in any way I can.”

What started as a Texas and Southwest deal with Miller Lite has now expanded into a national sponsorship, which means more support from Miller distributors in cities like Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago. Green, whose schedule has him on the road through December, recently sold out two nights in Chicago, according to Spalding. “We notice that distributors are helping us bring awareness to our act,” he says, noting that the beer company has been running promotions in bars and convenience stores.

Spalding also manages country heavyweight Brooks & Dunn, who have had past deals with Miller Lite and Coors Light. With larger-scale tours, an alcohol beverage sponsorship helps offset large production costs. “When you’re carrying 12-15 trucks on the road, it gives you an opportunity to do things with your show that you couldn’t have done without a sponsor,” Spalding says. “From a creative level, it gave us the opportunity to push the envelope with our production.”

Green’s latest album, “Cannonball,” was released Aug. 22 via BNA/Sony BMG and debuted at No. 2 on Billboard’s Top Country Albums chart.

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Coming Zune To A Store Near You
Microsoft Bets On A New MP3 Player Experience, But Does The Device Hold Up?

As the holiday sales season approaches, one looming question is whether Microsoft's Zune digital music device and service can successfully stand up to Apple's iPod/iTunes.

But even after Microsoft gave press and analysts an extensive sneak peek at both this past week, the best answer is—maybe. It all depends on whether Microsoft can successfully make it more about the service and less about the device.

The Zune itself, manufactured by partner Toshiba loosely based on its GigaBeat product, proves to be a rather underwhelming affair. It seems like a work-in-progress, similar to the still-under-construction campus facility that houses the team developing the project.

The Zune plays music and videos and stores photos. It features a 30GB hard drive and a large, clear color display. It has the standard navigation controls and context organization structure found on most any MP3 player, with few new features other than the ability to view album art in the navigation pane and the ability to customize the screen background with personal photos.

Physically, the player market, Microsoft rests its hopes to achieve this on the only innovation that the Zune brings to the table—Wi-Fi connectivity. With it, Zune owners can connect to other Zune devices and share any music and photos stored on the device, but not yet videos.

But at launch, even that innovation has its limits. The Zune will only be able to connect to one Zune at a time, not anything else, and only when in range of a Wi-Fi hot spot. In time, other devices will be supported, such as Internet-connected PCs, Xbox 360 videogame consoles and mobile phones running Windows Mobile technology.

Once connected, Zune users can share any song or playlist with other Zune users, but each song can be transferred only once to any individual device. The recipient of the shared song can then play it three times or keep it for three days, whichever comes first, before it disappears.

Users can flag any song that interests them to later download a permanent version, either a la carte or via a subscription plan, once synced with a PC running the Zune software and service.

“We're trying to take away the focus on the device,” Stephenson says. “There comes a point when the device becomes less important than the actual service. Over time, connected entertainment is what changes this category.”

The challenge is the simple fact that selling an experience is much more difficult than selling a device, something the company readily acknowledges. Yet the Zune still has a shot at making a real dent.

Apple Computer clearly won round one of the digital music fight, competing with an established market leader on existing attributes rarely works. The fact is, there is little left to innovate with a pure music player. So now the battle shifts to new advancements—mobile connectivity, home entertainment system integration and video services and downloads. In these areas, the playing field is a bit flatter, and it is on this ground that Microsoft is introducing Zune.

Additionally, Microsoft will enjoy the support of the music industry and a massive retail distribution base, both fed up with Apple's heavy-handed tactics.

The Zune effort includes an emerging-artist program and other yet-to-be-defined promotional aspects geared to appeal to music executives and artists alike. The Zune facility, for instance, will include a live performance studio for capturing exclusive performances, and Zune is providing "digital media experts" to artists to help manage their road blogs and capture content for their sites.

Consumer electronics chains like Best Buy and Circuit City have every reason to support an iPod competitor as well. The profit margin on an iPod for these retailers is notoriously low since Apple prefers to sell its devices in its own retail stores. In some cases, retailers claim they even lose money on each sale.

Other manufacturers offer better margins, and therefore retailers support them more by featuring their products in their advertising circulars and in-store displays. Analysts speculate that's how SanDisk managed to come out of nowhere and seize the second-largest market share for MP3 players.

But before the Zune's potential can be fully judged, more information is needed—price, availability, units shipped and accessible content. And in the end, it comes down to making the service more important than the device, and Microsoft will need all the allies it can get to pull this off.
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Brand New World

R&B/Hip-Hop Conference Panelists See Web Sites As A Great Equalizer

"Advertising is in flux right now because media has changed so much," Valerie Graves, chief creative officer of advertising/marketing agency Vigilante Entertainment, said these words at the onset of the "I’m With the Brand" panel discussion, which kicked off the second day of the seventh annual Billboard R&B/Hip-Hop Conference & Awards.

Such change brings new opportunities, though. Graves said that while the 30-second TV spot is not going away, its role has been diminished by various wireless and digital platforms, as well as by Internet destinations like MySpace and YouTube.

The two Web sites were the most-heard words at the three-day confab (Sept. 6-8), held at the Renaissance Waverly Hotel in Atlanta.

Sites like these allow brands—artists and consumer-products—to create brand experiences, noted panelist Brian Feit, founder/president of marketing firm BMF Media Group and a producer of the Lil’ Kim reality TV show "Countdown to Lockdown." These experiences, he added, "tie into the lifestyle the brand is trying to create."

To be sure, the Internet has proved to be a great equalizer. "It’s possible to become a brand today in a way that was once only possible in a controlled manner—and by somebody else," Graves said. "Now, it’s in the consumers’ hands."

That said, creating credible and believable partnerships is more important than ever. Music World Entertainment founder/CEO Matthew Knowles, who manages the careers of Destiny’s Child and others, illustrated this by pointing to House of Dereon and its juniors-offshoot Dereon. Both fashion lines are helmed by Knowles’ wife, Tina, and daughter, Beyoncé.

When Dereon launches in October, "you’ll never see Beyoncé alone in the ads," Knowles said. "She’ll always be with my other daughter, Solange, the face of Dereon." The reasoning is simple, he noted: Beyoncé wears $300, $400, $500 pair of jeans. So, it wouldn’t be believable to see her in jeans that cost $50-$60. We must be careful how we position the brand."

Similarly, the mothership brand, House of Dereon, is about Tina, Knowles said. "As a female brand [buying the clothes], you don’t care that it’s Beyoncé’s brand. What you care about is the quality of the clothing, which is why [Tina’s mother] Agnes [who was a seamstress] is in all the ads."

But for many, it is Beyoncé’s very involvement that creates an emotional connection. Fila relies on such connections to communicate with its audience. During the recent Lollapalooza festival in Chicago, the Italian sports brand was a sponsor of the coinciding CK one Music Lounge at the Hard Rock Chicago Hotel. By participating in this event, Fila was able to personally connect with more than 30 acts that stopped by the lounge. One act, Grails Barkley, then proceeded to wear its Fila gear during its Lollapalooza performance. "As a brand, this is what you hope for," Fila entertainment marketing manager Jennifer Yu said. "This one appearance gave our brand multiple impressions around the world."

"You’re looking for impressions—traffic—that can be converted to sales," added panelist Alonza Robertson, senior VP of brand strategy firm Westin Rinehart.

Impressions were precisely what BMF Entertainment received with "Being Bobby Brown." As the reality show’s producer, Fila could not initially get sponsors to support the show, BMF partner/producer Wanda Shelly said. "We couldn’t even get a network," she added. "We took a risk and it paid off."

But Shelly said sponsors are already lining up for a second season of the show, which has yet to be confirmed. In the meantime, she and her BMF colleagues are in the process of partnering with brands to offset production costs of "Being Bobby Banton," another controversial figure.

"Being Bobby Brown" was an inadvertent kind of branding, said panelist Chaka Zulu, co-CEO of Disturbing Tha Peace. "It was entertaining but twisted, and full of risks."

"If you take a risk, it usually pays off."

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MELBOURNE, Australia—The coming summer Down Under is gearing up to be a scorcher for Australia’s live music sector. Local promoters reckon the 2006-07 season boasts the territory’s strongest-ever lineup of superstar acts.

“With a doubt, the strength of the Australian dollar makes touring there more attractive for everyone,” says Neil Warnock, CEO of Muse’s London-based booker the Agency Group, who will bring in Motörhead, Art Garfunkel, Dolly Parton and U.K. sopranos Katherine Jenkins in coming months. “Unless an artist can do really well, they can’t go to a market like Australia.”

“Over the last year or so [in Australia] there’s been a definite recovery across all musical genres,” Warnock says, “and there’s an older generation of music lovers going out to concerts.”

“We’ve discovered a lot of the over-40 demographic is returning to concerts after a 10-year break,” Chugg says. However, he also notes that MCE’s research also indicates a much younger demographic demonstrating an appetite for live shows. About “60% of the kids who attended the 2005 ‘Australian Idol’ tour were seeing their first live show,” he says.

Among the veteran acts lined up in coming months is Eric Clapton, with his first Australian visit in 17 years. MCP expects his eight-date January tour to shift 90,000 tickets after four shows sold out within nine minutes.

Meanwhile, Carole King undertakes her debut Australian tour with six shows starting Nov. 16. She is close to selling out 50,000 tickets for Melbourne-based AMP. “It’s taken me nine years to get her here,” AMP managing director Andrew McManus says. “She almost said ‘yes’ five times.”

Warnock suggests that for overseas bookers and managers, Australia’s relative richness in terms of having “several great promoters in a small market” is another attraction. He includes such names as McManus, Chugg, Coppel and Paul Dainty (Dainty Consolidated Entertainment) as among the leading Aussie players.

At present, tickets for front-line international artists typically range from $100 Australian ($76) to $120 Australian ($92) and local promoters say business is big and brisk.

Robbie Williams’ nine-date tour (Nov. 30-Dec. 18) for MCE sold out with 500,000 tickets in two days, while Red Hot Chili Peppers’ nine-date April shows sold out 120,000 tickets in less than three hours for MCP. The same promoter has sold 130,000 tickets for Pearl Jam’s 11 shows in November.

The coming peak Aussie touring season (late October-early April), will also be boosted by the return of U2 and Kylie Minogue for re-scheduled shows.

U2’s Vertigo tour has sold 600,000 tickets for shows running Nov. 7-19 for MCP, after being postponed from March.

Meanwhile, Minogue’s resurrected “Showgirl” tour with six shows starting Nov. 16 is close to selling out 60,000 tickets for MCP. After being postponed from March.

The tour will mark a homecoming for Minogue, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in May 2005.

“On top of what else is going on,” Gudinski says, “those two tours make this season an extraordinary situation.”

Additional reporting by Tom Ferguson in London.
Rock On A Roll
Veteran Producer On Comeback Trail After Metallica Split

TORONTO—Bob Rock says he feels “20 years younger” after his split with Metallica. The Canadian producer parted company with the metal titan earlier this year and is now devoting his energies to other artists and even a return to his own recording career.

According to the 52-year-old Rock, “My life is now about my wife and kids, and recording other bands.”

Currently, those “other bands” are a varied bunch. He’s in Vancouver producing Canadian crooner Michael Bublé—who, like Rock, is managed from that city by Bruce Allen. This fall, he will reunite with Canadian Lava/Atlantic pop/punk act Simple Plan. (He produced the band’s hit 2004 album “Still Not Getting Any”.)

Rock is also heading to the studio with the Offspring for the act’s eighth studio album, “I’m working with [vocalist/guitarist] Dexter [Holland] and helping him sort out songs,” Rock says.

Rock first teamed with Metallica for its self-titled 1991 album (aka “The Black Album”). The Elektra set debuted at No. 1 on The Billboard 200 and charted for 281 weeks. Rock then helmed Metallica’s subsequent albums on through to 2003’s “St. Anger.”

A behind-the-scenes look at the tumultuous making of that project was featured in the following year’s unflinching documentary “Metallica: Some Kind of Monster.” A petition that some 1,500 fans signed was subsequently posted online calling for Metallica to dump Rock, claiming he had too much influence on the band’s sound.

“The criticism was hurtful for my kids, who read it and don’t understand the circumstances,” Rock says. “Sometimes, even with a great coach, a team keeps losing. You have to get new blood in there.”

However, Metallica co-manager Peter Mensch of Q Prime in New York argues that Rock “nursed Metallica out of almost complete collapse on that record. Bob is one of the five best producers on the planet. But it was time to shake things up.” Rock Rubin is producing the next Metallica album.

Rock made his international reputation in the ’80s while he was an engineer at Vancouver’s Little Mountain Sound, working with late Canadian producer Bruce Fairbairn on multiplatinum albums for Loverboy, Joni and Aerosmith.

In 1988 he switched to producing with the self-titled debut Polydor album from Kingdom Come, followed quickly by productions for Bon Jovi, Motley Crue and the Cult. Since “St. Anger,” Rock has increasingly turned to working with fellow Canadians at his home base. Plantation Studios in Maui; producing Bryan Adams, Our Lady Peace and Simple Plan in recent years. At Allen’s urging, he also agreed to produce Canada’s most beloved rock band, the Tragically Hip. The resulting album, “World Container,” is due Oct. 17 via Universal Music Canada, with a U.S. release anticipated for 2007. Rock says working with the Hip was a no-brainer: “I’ve always wanted to make a great Canadian album.”

Tragically Hip frontman/lyricist Gord Downie says, “Bob had a lot of enthusiasm in the studio. And we were up for the ideas he had.”

Rock is also planning to record an album with his own band, the Payolas. Fronted by singer Paul Hyde, the pioneering punk band split in 1986 after four albums for A&M Records of Canada and six Canadian Juno Awards.

The Payolas track “At the Angels Feet” appears on the War Child Canada benefit CD “Help: A Day in the Life” (Sony BMG Canada), released Sept. 5. Rock executive-produced the album. To his delight, the Payolas performed Sept. 10 at the One X One Child poverty benefit gala in Toronto.

He’s even unfazed by talk of touring. “I’d get to go on a tour bus with my family,” he says. “That sounds like fun.”  

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TOKYO—If you're a Western songwriter who's strong on melody, it could be time to look eastward.

An increasing number of non-Japanese songwriters are successfully pitching songs to Japanese pop acts, as local labels and publishers spike up their repertoire and overseas writers become savvier about what sells in the world's No. 2 recorded music market.

One successful overseas writer working with “J-pop” acts is Los Angeles-based songwriter Joey Carbone, who estimates he's written at least 1,000 songs for Japanese acts over the past 20 years. Carbone's clients have included boy bands Shon-entai (signed to the Johnny's Entertainment label) and SMAF (Victor Entertainment), female vocalists Yuki Koyanagi (Warner Music Japan) and Aya Matsurua (Zetima Records) and girl group Max Aves.

Like other writers and publishers, Carbone emphasizes the crucial importance of crafting the catchy, karaoke-friendly melodies that Japanese like. “They want the 'feeling' of American rock or hip-hop, but it can't conflict with Japanese tastes,” Carbone explains. “American songs are very linear—the chorus is only slightly different from the verse. But with a SMAP song, for example, it's climbing Mt. Fuji—it starts low and then builds up.”

Carbone and co-writer Lisa Huang topped Japanese music-trade magazine Orion's composers chart in August thanks to boy band Kat-tun's hit version of their song "Signal," which outsold any other writer's compositions that month. According to SoundScan Japan, "Signal" has sold almost 300,000 copies since its July 19 release on the Joy Stem label.

Akira Tsukahara, international producer at Tokyo-based publisher Fujipacific Music, says Japanese A&R staff are becoming more and more open to collaborations with foreign writers and producers. "Tsukahara says Swedish writers have been particularly successful in Japan recently due to their strong pop sensibilities and their skill in adapting American-style R&B pop for the Japanese market. As an example, he mentions Muryln Music signed writer/producer Jay lay (Jonas Jelberg), who cowrote/produced Japanese female vocalist Double's recent single, "Emotions," released July 26 on the For Life Entertainment label.

Carol Ahe, international director at Tokyo-based publisher Nichicon, estimates that 70% of the songs being placed by foreign writers with Japanese acts are by European writers. "They know how to write good, catchy melodies," she says. Carbone recalls that he first visited Japan in 1982 to attend the Tokyo Music Festival. A trip to Kyoto sparked an interest in Japanese culture, and he says, "I was hooked."

Canadian songwriter/producer Vincent Degiorgio notes that the market is especially good for pop writers.

Degiorgio was an international A&R VP at RCA Records in New York from 1997 until 2002. He says he became interested in writing for Japanese singers in 1999 when he was asked by a TV company to find a vocal coach for successful Warner Music Japan pop vocalist Tomomi Kahala, who was being filmed attempting to establish herself in America as part of Japan's reality TV show "Denpa Sho-en."

"I'd always been interested in the Japanese music scene," he recalls. "They seemed to take a lot more chances than in America," Degiorgio says. His contract with RCA allowed him to write for and produce other artists. After taking a crash course in J-pop—by spending "several hundred dollars" on Japanese CDs—in 2000, Degiorgio pitched his songs to Warner Music Japan.

"I pitched six songs, and two became singles for Kahala," he says. Degiorgio has written songs for other J-pop acts including the Nakane Mori Banc (Imperial, Techiku), female vocalist Satomi (Aozora/Aves) and Mink (Rhythmic Zone/Aves). Mink, who released her first two albums in 2005, has recorded 10 of Degiorgio's songs: "I've been lucky to have been at the forefront of developing careers like hers," Degiorgio says. "I've learned what's right for her."

"The thing I really like about the Japanese market," he adds, "is that the kid who likes pop music still has a real choice."

Degiorgio, who writes alone, is represented worldwide by BMG Music Publishing. Nozomi Daikuhara, BMG Music Publishing Japan's director of international, describes him as "one of the few enthusiastic writers who have come to absorb the essence and share the excitement of our market."

Carbone, who has his own Los Angeles-based publishing company, Joey Carbone Music, lectures on songwriting during his frequent visits to Japan and says his next project will be to write a book offering other Western writers tips on writing songs for the Japanese market.

Carbone's Japanese clients are supplied with demos featuring him singing his English-language lyrics. "It's easier to remember the melody and harmonies that way," he explains.

However, if a song is accepted, most often a Japanese lyricist will be allocated by the label or publisher. With overseas writers, Carbone says, "all the Japanese are concerned about is melody."

www.americanradiohistory.com
Wrangling For Ringtones
Labels Vs. Publishers In A Battle Heading For The Copyright Office

A battle over who gets to license compositions for ringtones and master ringtones is moving to the U.S. Copyright Office. But the issue is broader than simply whether compositions for these uses fall under compulsory license provisions of the Copyright Act.

Important underlying issues are the so-called pass-through license for digital phonorecord delivery (DPD) licenses and the labels' ability to compete with publishers that record their own ringtones.

The Copyright Office will decide whether compositions used for ringtones—monophonic (single melody line) or polyphonic (melody and harmony)—or for master ringtones (taken from a master recording) fall under the compulsory license provisions of section 115. If so, the Copyright Royalty Board would have a rate-setting proceeding. If not, then publishers would be free to withhold permission to use the compositions unless labels or ringtone providers negotiate a license and a royalty rate. A RIAA brief argues that compulsory licenses and the recording (phonorecords) of compositions that were previously recorded and released in the United States.

A phonorecord is a material object in which sounds are fixed and from which sounds can be perceived, like a CD. Mechanical licenses cover physical goods like CDs; a DPD license covers digital transmissions like downloads. Royalty rates for both licenses are currently set by statute.

Under section 115, anyone, like a record label, may obtain a mechanical license or a DPD license to record and distribute "phonorecords" of compositions. A label may pass rights under a DPD license through to a third party, such as Apple Computer for iTunes sales. Apple's payment to the label covers rights for the recording and for the composition; the label is then responsible for paying DPD royalties to the publisher (or its representative, like the Harry Fox Agency).

While this pass-through right may speed up the licensing process from labels to third parties, publishers sometimes lose their share of the royalties. This is because labels sometimes insist in their contracts with artist/songwriters that labels may keep DPD (and mechanical) royalties to recoup certain advances.

The NMPA, SGA and NSAI in their brief argue, among other points, that compulsory licenses do not permit changes to the fundamental character of a composition; or creation of a derivative work. Ringtones fall into these categories because they do not include an entire work. They are also derivative works because they require creative skill and judgment to omit verses, bridges and other portions of the composition.

Also, they argue that compulsory licenses are only for those who intend to make recordings for private use. Ringtones provide notification function and are a means of personal expression through choice of ringtone—not for the private enjoyment of music.

The RIAA argues, among other points, that the commercial practice of creating ringtones and master ringtones—copying a portion of the sound recording—lacks sufficient originality to make them derivative works. Also, the labels' group asserts that once publishers license a composition for a ringtone, that portion of the composition becomes subject to a future compulsory license.

This last argument would mean that any publisher recording its own master ringtones would be forced to license that portion of the composition to others for a statutory rate. A decision is expected in October.
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Catching up on some Coolest Songs we’ve been ignoring while we’ve been ranting and raving.

Radio Birdman is back and miraculously still intact. Rob Younger, Deniz Tek, Chris Masuak and Pip Hoyle from the original band are joined by Jim Dickson and Russell Hopkinson. “Zeno Beach” is the title track of the album on Yep Roc, and the lads still ride the wild Australian surf.

Teddybears from Stockholm started off as a hardcore punk band and have morphed into a punky electronic demon with a notable guest vocal from Iggy Pop on last week’s Coolest Song, “Punkrocker,” from the album “Soft Machine” on Big Beat.

And this week’s Coolest Song comes from the legendary Woggles from Atlanta. They are one of garage rock’s premier live acts out at the moment, bringing tears to young girls’ eyes coast to coast as part of the Rolling Rock and Roll Show. “It’s Not About What I Want” is from their new one “Rock and Roll Backlash” out on Wicked Cool sometime next month.

In other news, expect never-seen-before footage of John Lennon in the new documentary “The U.S. vs. John Lennon” out any minute.

Two of New York’s coolest clubs are scheduled to close over the next few weeks. The Continental may stay open but will have its last music show Sept. 17, and CBGB is scheduled to close Oct. 6. It ain’t over till it’s over is all I’ll say about CB’s, but New York is losing a big part of its rock’n’roll soul.

Meanwhile, Bob Dylan not only has his first No. 1 record since “Desire” in 1976, he’s got Foo Fighters and the Raconteurs opening for him. File this under local DJ does good.

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**COOLEST GARAGE SONGS**

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**COOLEST GARAGE ALBUMS**

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Mo Ritmo, Mo Options

Chain Expands With More Stores, More Merchandise

LOS ANGELES—At a time when music retailers are shutting down, Latin retail chain Ritmo Latino keeps expanding. And expanding.

Although sales for Latin music’s biggest independent chain were up marginally for the first six months of 2006, Ritmo announced plans to open three new stores before year’s end, for a total of 48 stores nationwide, up from 45 the year before.

“My model is keeping overhead low and staying in Latin areas,” says Ritmo president David Massry, who opened his first Ritmo Latino store in 1989.

“It is different than the vast majority of our customers in that it is part of a vanishing breed—the independently owned music store chain,” says Jim Urie, president/CEO of Universal Music Group Distribution (UMGD). “What makes it unique is that it is so niche-focused on its Latin niche and placed in that community.”

Ritmo has kept the Latin focus even as it has changed and diversified its merchandising.

At the annual Ritmo Latino convention, which took place Aug. 29-31 at Los Angeles’ Renaissance Hollywood Hotel, music vendors mingled with hawkers of DVDs, books, clothing, accessories and even candy, all new offerings that are increasingly taking up space in Ritmo stores.

But the candy is Latin-themed and includes traditional treats from Mexico along with Thalia’s Dulceria Thalia, the singer’s Latin candy line with Hershey’s.

Overall, Massry says approximately 65% of Ritmo’s merchandise is music CDs, while the remaining percentage is everything else, with books and DVDs accounting for the biggest growth.

For example, Maria de Jesus Forero, sales manager for Random House’s foreign language division, says that Ritmo’s book orders from the publisher have doubled from last year. Currently, the chain is Random House’s 20th biggest client, from a list of approximately 3,000 clients.

Ritmo has registered consistent growth for the past several years, averaging an annual 5%-10% sales growth year to year. The highest areas of growth have been DVD and book sales, up 20% compared with last year. First-quarter 2006 sales, however, were up by only 1%-2%, with the slowdown attributed to a lack of big releases and economic and immigration issues. Massry says he fully expects things to pick up for the second quarter, fueled by major releases in all Latin genres, including albums by Maná, Marco Antonio Solís and Paulina Rubio.

Ritmo clientele is overwhelmingly first-generation Latinos who are still not into downloads but prefer to purchase their music at a retailer where salespeople actually speak the language and know the music. While Ritmo is heavily into in-stores and other promotions, like added values with a CD purchase, it keeps advertising at a minimum, save for its monthly flyer and word-of-mouth.

Other Latin retailers, like Prain in California and Reyes in Florida, also have an excellent Latin music offering and deep catalog, but Ritmo has the national coverage and sheer number of stores. Plus everything else.

“The consumer can find anything they want. And they also find other services in the store, which for Latinos is very convenient,” says Nydia Lanner, senior director of Latin sales at UMGD. “It’s a very welcoming, comfortable atmosphere to shop at.”

But this is still very much a music retailer, and label relationships are tantamount. At the Ritmo convention, every major Latin label had a showcase or presentation, and the range of live performing acts included Grupo Montez de Durango, Akwid and Alacranes Musical.

And because Ritmo is still a relatively small operation, it can be flexible with its clients, affording good pricing options and a lot of visibility in the form of price and positioning.

Massry is also willing to experiment, and this year, he is opening small, music-only retail operations inside two Gallo Giro restaurants in Los Angeles.

This will mark Ritmo’s first time inside an eatery. Massry is also studying the possibility of opening cafes at some of his stores as well as download music kiosks in the near future.

“We watch our expenses and we try to make as few mistakes as possible,” he says.

LEILA COBO
Opening Round

Bids After Deadline Could Prevent Brutal Tower Liquidation

Just because a liquidator appears to be the only bid so far in the Chapter 11 auction of Tower Records doesn’t mean the chain will be liquidated. Good thing, because for many in the industry, a Tower liquidation could be devastating. But to be sure, the fact that only a liquidator put in a bid can’t be painted as good news either.

At press time (Sept. 12), one of the liquidators—like Gordon Brothers in Boston, Great American in Los Angeles and Hilco Organization in Northbrook, Ill.—was expected to be the only suitor in the opening round of bids for the West Sacramento, Calif.-based Tower Records chain.

This comes after months of Tower Records assure its vendor community that a private equity firm is on the verge of signing a letter of intent. As one bidder pointed out to Retail Track, it’s too early for them to show their hand and what they’re willing to pay for the chain. Even though the formalized process has opening bids due by Sept. 12, and final offers with a signed asset purchase agreement due Sept. 26, the reality is that if a qualified bidder decides to forgo those pressures to sell and shows up in court on the Oct. 5 auction date, retail will be welcomed with open arms. Yeah, other qualified bidders would squawk, but there’s no getting around that cash is king.

While it seemed like there was no potential shortage of bidders when Tower Records filed Chapter 11 on Aug. 20, at least three have indicated to Retail Track that they won’t step up to the plate until Sept. 26, if then. That’s because things have changed somewhat since Aug. 20 and their non-action is also not surprising. Mainly, two major suppliers are comforted with, and one that will invest in the chain so it becomes financially viable. If that occurs, bidders could be induced to back down from their stance that they have a recovery that makes them happy.

Some vendors are already thinking along those lines. The independent community is collectively owed only about $15 million, and if nothing is recovered for unsecured creditors, some suppliers will likely be forced out of business. But if Tower is liquidated, the hurt will be even bigger, according to the head of one large independent distributor.

While Tower Records is not the largest account and has an estimated market share of only about 4%, it can account for about 10% of sales on rock records from new and developing vendors, that executive says.

“For anybody in the indie rock business the possibility of a Tower liquidation has to be brutal.”

—The Head of One Large Independent Distributor

Retail Track, it’s too early for them to show their hand and what they’re willing to pay for the chain. Even though the formalized process has opening bids due by Sept. 12, and final offers with a signed asset purchase agreement due Sept. 26, the reality is that if a qualified bidder decides to forgo those dates and shows up in court on the Oct. 5 auction date, retail will be welcomed with open arms. Yeah, other qualified bidders would squawk, but there’s no getting around that cash is king.

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When last heard from, the major suppliers those secured creditors likely to get whatever’s left over after the bank gets the $78 million it is projected to be owed on Oct. 8—wereouting their trump cards: namely, that they could sink any new owner by not supplying credit if they are unhappy with whatever recovery they get from the $82 million they claim to be owed.

With Tower’s value declining every day and bidders trying to ensure that the price for the chain remains as least as possible, if the winning bid is only large enough to satisfy the bank’s claim, the new owner will still absolutely need vendor support for the chain to become healthy. That’s why it’s in all the bidders’ best interest to put a little more in the heart of vendors. But not too much. Any new owner has to be one that can be liquidated for a store to make a profit.

That’s because Tower Records has filed Chapter 11, every newspaper in the land has painted the store being completely dead. So, if you bid on the chain, you can count on all those papers calling you an idiot for buying a record store in this day and age.

Needless to say, that imagery has been reinforced by the SpiralFrog and the notion that whatever’s left over after the bank gets the $78 million it is projected to be owed on Oct. 8—wereouting their trump cards: namely, that they could sink any new owner by not supplying credit if they are unhappy with whatever recovery they get from the $82 million they claim to be owed.

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Welcome To Atlanta

Atlanta was the place to be Sept. 6-8, when the Billboard R&B/Hip-Hop Conference & Awards took over the Renaissance Waverly Hotel and the city at large. The seventh annual confab culminated with an awards ceremony, featuring performances by Lyfe Jennings, Shareefa and Ludacris, Lupe Fiasco, Young Dro, Bobby Valentino and Governor. Jermaine Dupri took home the Otis Redding Excellence Award, while Public Enemy was the recipient of the Hip-Hop Founders Award. Other conference highlights included an interview with Ludacris. Throughout the three-day event, buzz words like “MySpace” and “YouTube” were inescapable. “Marketing yourself online is 100% cheaper than marketing yourself offline,” said Sumant Sridharan, director of product management at LiveDigital. For additional conference coverage, see Making the Brand (page 16), Rhythm & Blues and Real Talk (page 66).


ABOVE: "We Hear the Future" was a live artist showcase and competition held on the first day of the conference. Eight acts battled for No. 1, with Dru, shown, and Amir tying for first place. BELOW: The "What the Bling?! The State of Hip-Hop" panel, presented by the Recording Academy, brought together a who's who of the urban community. Shown, from left, are panneiders WVEE Atlanta's Greg Street, Universal/Motown's Troy Marshall, Joyce Wilson, 1Z0ne Entertainment's DJ Toomp, Big Oomp Records' DJ Jelly, Krucial Keys', Kerry Brothers, BMI Entertainment's Jeff Robinson and producer Mr. Collipark.

LEFT: Grand Hustle/Atlantic Records artist Governor performed "Blood, Sweat & Tears" during the awards. ABOVE: Newcomer Mike Milk proved himself a deft rapper at an artist showcase and cocktail hour sponsored by MBK Entertainment and J Records. RIGHT: BMI/Warner Bros. artists Bonagon, left, and Lil Scrappy.

ABOVE: So So Def/Virgin Urban Music's Jermaine Dupri, right, with Virgin artist Johreta Austin, following his "Happy Hour" showcase performance. LEFT: During a Sept. 7 artist showcase, Butter Records artist Jascat, with a full band in tow, waved to the crowd with a blue-eyed-soul sensibility.

ABOVE: So So Def/Virgin Urban Music's Jemtaine Dupri, right, with Virgin artist Johnta Austin, following his "Happy Hour" showcase performance.

PHOTOS: RICK DIAMOND/WIREIMAGE.COM —Michael Paololetta

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First & Fifteenth/Atlantic Records artist Lupe Fiasco, left, rattled off "Kick Push" from his upcoming album, "Lupe Fiasco's Food & Liquor."

Songwriter Bryan Michael Cox, left, and EMI Music Publishing's Jon Platt.

Intaprize/GTT Entertainment sponsored an awards post-party at Atlanta Live. Artist Khao is shown here prior to his live performance.

Columbia/Sony Music artist Lyfe Jennings performing the provocative new song "SEX" at the awards show.

Disturbing Tha Peace/Def Jam artist DJ Drama was omnipresent during the three-day conference. He's shown here chilling out at the awards show.

Disturbing Tha Peace/Def Jam artist Ludacris stages a surprise performance with his artist Shareefa at the awards show.

Public Enemy's Chuck D, left, and Flavor Flav share a backstage moment before accepting the Hip Hop Founders Award.

Jermaine Dupri, right, accepting the Otis Redding Excellence Award. To his immediate left are Redding's widow Zelma and other members of the Redding family.

Corporate Thugz Entertainment/Def Jam Records artist Young Jeezy at the awards.

J Records artist Monica joined the Billboard family—if only for a photo. Shown from left are Billboard's John Kilcullen, Gail Mitchell and Hillary Crosky, Monica, Billboard's Michael Pacietto and Raphael George, and J Records' Nicole Sellers.
Old Folkies Home
From A Venerable Chicago Folk Music School, A Great American Songbook On Disc

After almost 50 years teaching folk traditions in Chicago, the Old Town School of Folk Music is making a bigger move into the world of music retail. The school, which is linked with the city's Bloodshot Records for its Old Town School Recordings, will start advancing beyond the world of kids' music this fall, issuing the first of a multivolume set of songs taken from the school's songbook.

Previously the school has released CDs in conjunction with its popular children's music program, the Wiggleworms. Bloodshot reissued the two-CD set, "Wiggleworms Love You," toward the end of 2005, and Bob Medich, the school's head of marketing, says a first pressing of 10,000 units is nearly sold out, with the bulk of sales coming at the school and through its Web site.

On Oct. 24, Ryko-distributed Bloodshot will issue "The Old Town School of Folk Music Songbook: Vol. 1," a 23-song set designed to provide an overview of the music taught at the school. Robbie Fulks, Dan Zanes, the Mekons' Jon Langford and Freakwater's Janet Bean are among the artists who will contribute renditions of traditional songs ("Trouble in My Mind," "Amazing Grace," "Worried Man Blues," among others).

With about 6,000 students per week attending the school, there is a built-in and continually renewing audience for the CD. While it's likely won't be the kind of disc that flies off retail shelves, Medich notes the school has some grand plans down the road.

"We manufactured the Wiggleworms ourselves and sold it through our store," Medich says. "It came out so well that it seemed like a shame to just let it trickle out. So we called Bloodshot co-founder Rob Miller, and said this is the first thing, but there's all this other stuff—there's archival recordings we have and other series ideas."

Medich notes local director John Anderson, who filmed Brian Wilson's "SMILE" DVD, works closely with the school. He has brought an assortment of folk recordings from the '70s. "As a college student at Northwestern, he would haul his reel-to-reel tape player to the folk clubs," Medich says. "A release is tentatively scheduled for early next summer, and we're looking to do a compilation of some of these concerts. Among these tapes are vintage Utah Phillips, Phil Ochs and Steve Goodman."

And that doesn't even touch on the school's own library. In addition to hosting weekly concerts, musicians are invited to perform workshops at the school. Medich notes that the school has tapes of Doc Watson, Pete Seeger and many others from their appearances at the school in the 1960s. "Everyone came through here," he says.

More recent recordings include such artists as Richard Thompson, Baaba Maal and Ralph Stanley, and Medich is in the process of contacting representatives for each artist to secure rights. He's also compiling volumes 2-4 of the "Folk Music Songbook" and is looking to do a TV special in 2007.

"All the money goes right back into the school, so it's an easy sell," Medich says. "The time has long passed that we should have been doing this."

ADDED VALUE: Value Music continues its efforts to acquire independent music stores, having recently purchased Bart's CD Cellar in Boulder, Colo. Rob Perkins, president of the 61-unit, Marietta, Ga.-based Value Music, says he sought out owner Bart Stinchcomb and will continue to look for quality indie stores to buy.

Value Music recently acquired Independent Media Stores, which announced the purchase in its weekly industry e-mail.

For Value Music, the acquisition allows the chain to expand with a store that already has some local cachet. Perkins says he has no worries about investing in indie stores in today's tough retail climate.

"We think there's still many consumers out there, collectors who have the same love of music that we do," Perkins says. "We think that many communities can support at least one great music store, and we hope to be that store."

JON LANGFORD
is among the artists interpreting traditional folk songs on the Old Town compilation due Oct. 24.
Cory Robbins

The medium for dance music is changing, from vinyl to download, and so is the genre’s sound, which is taking on more rock influences.

How has business been during the last 12 months?
Overall our business is good, but it’s really changed. It’s shifted from [physical] singles and compilations to virtually no [physical] singles and much less compilations. But legal downloads just keep going. They’re an enormous part of our business. The Cascada single is approaching 1 million downloads. We still sell over 10,000 downloads a week, and the record is old. It is our biggest seller so far. D.H.T.’s “Listen to Your Heart” is the next-biggest, with over 600,000 downloads.

We stopped doing 12-inch vinyl singles about a year ago with very few complaints. We were giving away far more than we were selling. On a normal dance record that wasn’t a crossover [hit], we were selling 100-150 copies, and it’s getting to that point with CD singles. But we still do [CD maxi-singles] with every release.

Why keep manufacturing maxis then? Is that for DJs?
There are a lot of lesser-known DJs we don’t service promotionally, and we want them to be able to get the music to play. So, a lot of the few [physical] sales that there are to people who really matter. I think they’re less well-known, local, mobile DJs who maybe are not in record pools or who are not on our mailing list. Some people simply want a physical CD, so we’re still doing it for them as well.

Your label recently released “Trance Party 6” by the Happy Boys, the DJ moniker for you and your label’s A&R director, John Parker. Why do the two of you mix Robbins compilations?
We like doing it, and it works. We might, at some point, have someone body else do them for us. But I don’t necessarily see the difference in sales in a lot of these compilations. We’re well-known to people in the compilations [market], but we don’t play in clubs. With few exceptions, I don’t see the compilations of more well-known DJs selling any better. And if they do, maybe it’s because they’re advertised on TV.

The compilation business has seen better days. Back in 2001 and 2002, almost all of our compilations sold six figures. “Trance Party 1” sold a quarter of a million copies, while “Best of Trance” and “Best of House” did over 100,000 each. Today, nothing goes anywhere near that. We haven’t had a compilation sell 50,000 in a couple of years.

Why is that happening?
Less record stores. A lot of compilations are impulse buys. People go into a store and they want something to work out to, or they’re buying something else and happen to also pick up a dance compilation. With all the retailers that have closed, you have less visibility. If someone wants to buy a Justin Timberlake album, they’d do so in a Kmart or Wal-Mart, places where DJ compilations are generally not sold.

If there are 4,000 less retailers than five years ago and if each one of those stores sold one of my CDs every two weeks—and it was more than that—you’re looking at 2,000 CDs a week that we’re now not selling of a title. But downloading has picked up most of the slack. Our artist albums are doing OK. Between digital and physical sales, D.H.T.’s “Listen to Your Heart” has sold 126,000, and Cascada’s “Everytime We Touch” is at 176,000, and it’s still going.

How did the single “Everytime We Touch” happen?
We put out a Cascada single, “Miracle,” in 2004. It did nothing. We were then offered “Everytime We Touch,” and we signed it. We had it for a while, we didn’t rush to put it out. But we started to hear noise from Canada. The big radio station in Toronto, [rhythmic/dance] Z103 [CICD], was playing it off an import before we released it. It was a top five requested record for them. We started to get some licensing requests from up there.

I didn’t think it would happen in America because it was so different-sounding; it wasn’t an obvious crossover record like D.H.T. And while it wasn’t instantly embraced by dance radio, all of a sudden it started selling downloads like crazy. It was selling 700 a week, and we didn’t know why. Records that were being played on [dance] WKTU [New York] were selling 300, and this one was selling 700. Then it was selling 1,500 and 2,000 downloads a week. We said, “This can’t be real.” How can this be happening?” We really didn’t understand it.

A lot of the hype came from MySpace. Kids were putting it on their page. One kid started it. John and I always say, “The most powerful person in America is some kid we don’t know.”

We stopped doing 12-inch vinyl singles about a year ago . . . We were giving away far more than we were selling.

We stopped 24 In 30 Weeks

How do you account for its success?
It’s a real mystery. But that’s one reason why the record business is so great. We’re a nine-person company. We don’t have power to get radio stations to do anything. We do everything ourselves, except manufacturing and distribution, which Sony BMG handles. When we have a hit record, it’s because of the record itself.

Is the gap between dance and pop narrowing? If so, is that good or bad?
Rock-leaning dance records from groups like the Killers and Bodyrockers help bring more people to dance music. That’s a good thing. I don’t think anyone’s made the perfect rock-dance record yet, but someone will, and that will bring even more people to dance music. But the sound of dance music is changing—it’s accepting more rock influences.

And there certainly are dance records that nobody calls “dance records.” If “SOS” was by an unknown, instead of Rihanna, it would have been labeled a dance record. Soundwise, songwise, the “Tainted Love” sample, it would have been called a dance record—and it would have been less successful. But because of Rihanna’s image, nobody thought of it as a dance record.

What’s next for Robbins?
We are reissuing “Miracle” as the next Cascada single. Though we didn’t get much response the first time around, we’re getting a lot of traction this time. I think the album is full of hits.
Just how meteoric was the Killers’ rise? About three months after they released their debut album, “Hot Fuss,” in June 2004, Washington, D.C., promoter Seth Hurwitz of I.M.P. booked the band at his 1,200-capacity 9:30 Club. Just eight months later, he booked them again—at the 16,000-plus-capacity Merriweather Post Pavilion in Columbia, Md. It was par for the course for the Las Vegas band that went from blogosphere darlings to retail domination. “Hot Fuss” scanned more than 3 million copies in the United States, was nominated for five Grammy Awards and spent 5.5 weeks in the top 50 of The Billboard 200.

The Killers—lead singer Brandon Flowers, guitarist Dave Keuning, bassist Mark Stoermer and drummer Ronnie Vannucci—were arguably the biggest artist development story last year. But for bands hot enough to make the Everest-like climb from club to arena level on one album cycle, getting there is only half the challenge. On the eve of the Killers’ follow-up album, “Sam’s Town,” due Oct. 3 in North America and a day earlier in the United Kingdom, the group is facing the uphill battle of having to prove itself all over again. The toughest part is staying in the big rooms, avoiding a short shelf life and showing the potential for career longevity. The history of rock is littered with tales of bands that blew up big only to fizzle out.

Early signs are promising for the new album and first single “When You Were Young.” The track has built steadily on the Modern Rock chart over its first five weeks and ranks No. 3 on the chart. But label Island Def Jam is discovering that while modern rock radio may be on-board, pop, and the massive, crossover success it breeds, is not an automatic slam-dunk.


By contrast, “When You Were Young” is proving to be more of a grower—at least in its early days. While modern rock radio has embraced it, the crossover crowd is proving to be a tougher sell. The song spent its first two weeks at No. 29 on the Hot 100, before slipping to No. 41 and No. 49 in its next two weeks on the chart. This issue the song comes in at No. 52. Download sales of the track total a respectable 133,000 so far. On the horizon, single “Bones”—a rock opus that features a video directed by goth film master Tim Burton.

THE BOYS FROM LAS VEGAS TAKE A GAMBLE ON A NEW SOUND AND LOOK. WILL THEY WIN BIG?

BY BRIAN GARRITY and RAY WADDELL
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANTON CORBIJN
Fast Breaks

The Killers Aren’t Alone In Their Rapid Rise As A Touring Power

The Killers are among a new crop of bands that have enjoyed a rapid emergence as touring powers. “The best way to do it is move slower, not skip steps and build from smaller clubs to bigger venues,” says Bob McLynn of Crush Management, which saw big touring success with Fall Out Boy earlier this year and is now steering the rise of Panic! at the Disco.

“We realized with Fall Out Boy that we could have sometimes played larger venues, but the goal was to keep playing these markets for many years to come,” McLynn says.

“So there is no rush with this mentality. Our shows always sold out in advance and made it a hotter ticket next time the band came to town to a different, larger venue.”

By the time Fall Out Boy released its double-platinum major label debut in 2005, the band members were already national road veterans. “They built a fan base for two years,” McLynn says. Fall Out Boy “headed every venue in every city leading up to arenas, from 300-seaters to 500-seaters, 1,000, 3,000, then the arenas.”

Panic! at the Disco saw a more rapid escalation. “They released a record less than a year ago, and we are gearing up to headline arenas in November and December,” McLynn says.

“They were an opening band until their first headline tour this summer in 2,000- to 3,000-seater venues.”

Washington, D.C., promoter Seth Hurwitz of I.M.P. says that when determining if a band is ready to make a move up in capacity in his market, album sales figures are what he watches most. “I look for sales, No. 1, and longevity in sales,” he says.

“There’s just a certain look when it comes time to make that move. Panic! at the Disco has just done it.”

Still, retail power doesn’t always yield box-office muscle. “Tickets are a harder sell than records,” McLynn says. “It usually takes a few years to develop a large enough die-hard fan base to fill arenas, even for platinum artists.”

And the top-grossing tours of the year rarely match up with the top album sellers of the year. “Older artists who’ve been touring for a while can many times outsell the younger acts that are currently selling four times the units in stores,” McLynn says.

What’s more, headlining sets are often expected to be in a 90-minute slot, a challenge for a band with one album, or 45 minutes of recorded music. “The band needs to be very creative to make a show long enough and interesting enough,” McLynn says. Hurwitz says patience is a virtue not all bands are blessed with when it comes to upward venue mobility. “I get people pushing me to make that jump that are nowhere near ready, and we have to fight back,” he says.

“Then, of course, I get labeled as a nonbeliever or difficult.”

A reality check is often in order for band management. “I recommend talking to the promoters that they feel tell them the truth,” Hurwitz says. “And not what they want to hear.”

-RAW

Flowers says the members made the music they wanted to make and tried to take their creativity to the next level. Vannucci notes, “We want to be a career band and make the music we believe in.”

Even with the band’s new creative directions, “Sam’s Town” doesn’t stray far from the sound introduced on “Hot Fuss,” with its throbbing bass lines, jagged guitar blasts, vintage synth flourishes and Flowers’ theatrical phrasing. Tracks like “Read My Mind” and “Bones” — slated to be the hits, and this trio of the band’s most actively — are close relatives to the propulsive pop of “Mr. Brightside.”

Label executives say those tracks are as good as anything the band has released and represent big opportunities for pop hits.

Meanwhile, the band continues to develop as a touring power. “Hot Fuss” gots gave it plenty of practice. The Killers toured virtually nonstop in support of their debut to increasingly larger crowds. Demand outstripped supply, but still the Killers proceeded with caution. Hurwitz says the band’s camp seemed to exhibit “intelligent patience” as popularity grew.

“When we wanted them to play Merriweather, they still wanted to play the [9:30] club,” Hurwitz recalls. “I had to talk them into making the jump. They were trying to take it one step at a time.”

Reynolds backs up this notion. “The band has been very cognizant of underplaying — not overplaying — throughout our history. We could have done larger venues. We didn’t seek the huge payday. Even now, if you look at the tour, we’re still not headlining an arena tour yet. We’re pleased with opportunities that present themselves to play the large crowds from time to time when it makes sense.

And now hopes are high as touring gets under way for the Killers in support of “Sam’s Town.” Kirk Sommer, the band’s agent at the William Morris Agency, feels like he has a lot to work with. “The songs are bigger and the band is better.”

The Killers will tour North America in October and begin a European jaunt in November. For the first time, the band will be augmented by an extra musician onstage, Las Vegas-based multi-instrumentalist Ted Sablay.

“We started planning this touring cycle as a team prior to the band entering the recording studio to record ‘Sam’s Town,’ and it will be extremely rewarding to see the shows play out,” Sommer continues. “Every time we see them perform live, listen to the songs and see the crowd’s reaction, it affirms what this is all about for me.

“We strategically created a few select and very special warm-up situations to rehearse some new songs in a live setting for our fans, and we tied them to new and old mediums,” Sommer says. “Secret” shows and radio fests help create a buzz.

Plans call for the band to continue to break in the new material at key festival bookings. At the Virgin Fest Sept. 23 in Baltimore, the Killers are on a bill with such heavyweights as the Who, Red Hot Chili Peppers and the Flaming Lips. “Everyone felt it would be appropriate to play a large festival one week prior to [the album] release with a number of smaller shows under our belt, and we appreciated the idea of performing in between career artists such as the Flaming Lips and the Who, along with many other great bands,” Sommer says.

The Killers will then embark on an October promotional small-venue run that commences with two nights at the Killers in Los Angeles on Oct. 6 and 7, the week of the album’s Oct. 3 release. The brief trek will wrap Oct. 28 in Las Vegas at the Veggie fest at Sam Boyd Stadium.

“This band has always been a technically proficient band,” Stevenson says. “But the shows that I’ve seen them do early on this time are some of the best they’ve ever done. It’s really important they show that growth. This is a record that is very ambitious, and they need to show people they can play it live.”

No one doubts the ambition of the record. And time will tell just how spot-on Flowers was with his “20 years” proclamation.

“We’re not cocky,” Flowers says. “And I don’t mean to sound cocky. We’re just proud of this record. At the end of the day, it’s all in the ear of the beholders. We don’t believe the hype. We believe it’s a good piece of work. I never said we were trying to reinvent the wheel. We just want to keep it rolling.”

...
JACKSON'S JOURNEY

FRESH FROM HIS GOSPEL ALBUM, COUNTRY'S BIGGEST SUPERSTAR TAKES ANOTHER TURN: UNDERSTATED INTROSPECTION WITH ALISON KRAUSS

WRITTEN BY DEBORAH EVANS PRICE
PHOTOGRAPH BY RANDEE ST. NICHOLAS
HEN AN ARTIST has scored 22 No. 1 singles, sold more than 33 million albums since Nielsen SoundScan began tracking country sales in 1991 and won a multitude of industry awards, what does he do next? The answer is simple—whatever he wants. Alan Jackson is among those elite performers whose success has earned him the enviable right to experiment and follow his creative muse wherever it leads. ✳ On his new Arista set, “Like Red on a Rose,” due Sept. 26, the country traditionalist teams with bluegrass star Alison Krauss to create a powerful song collection that explores love, commitment, aging and life on the road from a mature, thoughtful perspective. Jackson and Krauss first discussed their collaboration during a show at Carnegie Hall last fall. Though they originally talked about Krauss producing a bluegrass record, the project quickly evolved into something entirely different.

“A couple of weeks later, she said she had this whole other concept she wanted to run by me,” Jackson says. “She said it wasn’t bluegrass. It was reflective, a ‘man looking back’ kind of thing. That’s how it evolved from there. I told my wife and some other people. ‘I’m getting ready to start a new album, and I just feel like I have to do something that’s not the same old thing that everybody expects from me.’ I am getting older and I thought a more mature, kind of reflective album like that was exactly what I wanted to do.”

“Like Red on a Rose” is Jackson’s second album release this year. It follows “Precious Memories,” a collection of gospel songs he recorded as a Christmas gift for his mother. Though Jackson didn’t intend for it to be a commercial release, Joe Galante, chairman of Sony BMG in Nashville, heard the project, loved it and released it. It quickly became a huge hit, debuting at No. 1 on the Top Country Albums chart in the March 18 issue. It also bowed atop the Christian album chart, where it sat for eight weeks, and has yet to drop below the No. 2 spot. It’s been certified platinum and nominated in the album of the year category for the upcoming Country Music Assn. (CMA) Awards, an unprecedented feat for a gospel record.

“A lot of my fans grew up in the South, and I thought they’d want to hear it. So I figured we’d sell a few, but I never thought it would do something like this,” says Jackson, who recently celebrated the album’s platinum status surrounded by family, friends and industry folk during a party at Sony BMG’s Nashville headquarters.

“Precious Memories” is just the latest in a string of hit albums for the Georgia native. He debuted in 1990 with “Here in the Real World,” before SoundScan began tracking country sales. Since then, 10 of his 17 albums have hit No. 1 on Billboard’s Top Country Albums chart. Jackson’s “Greatest Hits Volume II and Some Other Stuff” camped out at the summit for 11 weeks. Fifteen Jackson titles have been certified platinum by the RIAA based on shipment figures. (See chart for SoundScan sales totals.) Most are multiplatinum, including the six-times platinum “A Lot About Livin’ (And a Little ‘Bout Love).” “Don’t Rock the Jukebox,” “Who I Am” and “Drive” have each shipped more than 4 million. He’s placed 68 titles on Billboard’s country singles chart, scoring 45 top 10 hits and 22 No. 1 tunes. His poignant Sept. 11, 2001, anthem, “Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning)” is among his best-known hits, having topped the chart for five weeks in 2001. He’s won numerous industry awards, including 16 CMA Awards (with three entertainer of the year trophies among those), 14 Academy of Country Music Awards, eight ASCAP honors and one Grammy Award, among other accolades.

Jackson admits that the urge to do something musically different on his new album may have been fueled by a comment Vince Gill made while introducing him at the CMA Awards a couple of years back. “I don’t know if the script writer wrote it, but he said, ‘You always know what you’re going to get from Alan Jackson. It’s like driving through McDonald’s.” Jackson says. “I think he meant it as a compliment, but it kind of made me feel like ‘Dang, McDonald’s, man! I don’t want to be like every time somebody buys an album, they are getting just another quarter pounder with cheese.’ I think he meant it in a nice way at the time, but it just kind of hit that way.”

Jackson says his goal has been to stretch creatively the way Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard and other veteran country artists have done. “Merle Haggard is one of my favorites, and he’s done every kind of album that you could imagine, from blues to swing albums, and just his songs [range] from hard country to songs with horns on them. I’ve always just loved anything he does. So I’m not afraid to do this. It’s a breath of fresh air to go in and do something a little different. One of my favorite albums of all times is ‘Stardust’ that Willie Nelson did. To me, it has a similar mood to this album, some old songs and real moody stuff, and that was a great album.”

Galante says Jackson teaming with Krauss was like one plus one, equaling 14, and he predicts the project will expand Jackson’s audience. “It has a real intimate, sexy quality,” he says. “I think it gives you a glimpse of him like you’ve never seen before. I think that the appeal of this record is much greater then the initial conversation was. I actually was more concerned about a bluegrass record than I was about this. I think what he and Alison did together was spectacular.”

“I find it interesting that he is following up a gospel record, albeit a quite successful one, that was a huge departure for him with yet an even bigger departure, that being the release of an adult record,” says Brian Smith, VP of store operations for Marietta, Ga.-based Value Music Concepts. “By adult, I mean it is a collection of introspective, poignant songs that, with the exception of one that he wrote, [is] written by other writers.”

For her part, Krauss says she knew exactly the kind of album she wanted to produce, and she doesn’t consider it a major departure from Jackson’s sound. “Is it really so different for him to do?” Krauss asks. “I hear him as a beautiful singer, and I hear him as a sensitive man, as a family man and a romantic. I hear him say those things on his records, and I hear him say it on this one. I hear ‘Alan.’ I hear an extension of what we’ve already heard. I think he sounds very natural. He’s a great singer, and it’s just another testimony to his ability.”

Jackson depended on Krauss to find songs for the album. He contributed one cut. “A Woman’s Love,” but the rest were songs that Krauss had either handed up in her stash of favorite tunes or songs she had writers pen specifically for Jackson. When choosing songs to record, her criteria was simple. “What would I want to hear a man say to me? That’s what we did,” Krauss says. “If we were sitting across from a man, what would I want to hear him say? That’s the kind of stuff we recorded.”

The first single is the understated ballad “Like Red on a Rose,” which is No. 18 on Billboard’s Hot Country Songs. It was penned by Robert Lee and Melanie Castleman. “The lyrics are quite positive and loving, yet it has a real dark melody,” Krauss says. “It’s such an
‘I’m not worried about getting old, but I’m not going to act like I’m 20 years old the rest of my life.’

—ALAN JACKSON

emotional combination to have that type of song and [Lee is] a genius at that.’

Krauss has recorded several of Castleman’s songs, including “The Lucky One.” She asked him to write a song specifically for Jackson’s project. The result is “The Fire Fly’s Song.” “I was driving home from a birthday party and [thought], ‘We don’t have this other subject’... a grown man looking at how you do things when you are younger and how you don’t do those things anymore,” she says. “You make other choices now that are much wiser choices.”

Jackson embraced the song’s mature perspective. “I do songs that fit where I’m at, and that’s kind of where this whole album started,” he says. “I’ll be 48 in October. I don’t feel older and I’m not worried about getting old, but I’m not going to act like I’m 20 years old the rest of my life.”

Overall, the ballad-heavy album leans toward more serious fare and generally subdued tone. “It is completely void of anything remotely considered ‘country’ and is certainly missing the trademark uptempo cuts he is most famous for,” Smith says. Does Krauss worry that fans might miss lighter, more bittersweet tunes such as previous Jackson hits “ Chattahoochee,” “Mercury Blues,” “I Don’t Even Know Your Name” or “Don’t Rock the Jukebox”?

“I think what ultimately makes his fans happy is hearing him and hearing what he has to say and hearing that voice deliver what he has to say,” she says. “His fans love him.”

In his typical, laid-back fashion, Jackson is not worried about reaction to the album. “There’s going to be critics that love it, and then there’s going to be critics that say, ‘You need to go back and do what you’ve been doing.’ I think there will be fans that say the same thing. There will be fans that think this is really cool and they are glad to have something a little different, and then there’s going to be some that say, ‘Man, I wish he’d go back and do “ Chattahoochee” or something like that.’ It happens with every album.”

I believe critics will see it for what it is and give him good reviews,” Smith says, “thereby allowing Alan to not lose his traditional audience but rather gain a new set of fans.”

No matter what others say, Jackson is pleased. “I’m very proud of it,” he says. “It adds a whole different color chapter to my collection of albums. I think it will be one that people who really like my music would like to have in their collection. I think she did good on it. It was pretty much all her. I can’t take a lot of credit. She pretty much had that whole concept around the songs and figured out the production. All I did was go in and sing on them.”

“Like Red on a Rose” is the first album Jackson has recorded without his longtime producer Keith Stegall. Jackson enjoyed working with Krauss, calling her approach “easy and organized,” but says he’s not finished working with Stegall. “I love Keith,” he says. “We’ve made a lot of great music together, there’s nothing against him. It started because we wanted to do a bluegrass album, and I asked Alison to do it because Keith isn’t really a bluegrass producer... there, of course, it evolved into this. But I’m not abandoning Keith, and I think we’ll make some more great country records together.”

In the meantime, “Like Red on a Rose” is already generating strong buzz. Jackson is slated to appear twice on NBC’s “Today,” in support of the album as well as a street date performance on “The Tonight Show With Jay Leno” and an Oct. 12 appearance on “Late Show With David Letterman.” Galante says there are also plans to reach out to other shows such as NPR’s “All Things Considered.”

Gena Cee, operations manager at Tower Opry Mills in Nashville, predicts the album will be a strong seller. “He always does very well saleswise.” Cee says, “and Alison Krauss has gained a huge reputation in the past couple years with all that she’s done. I expect it to do really well.”

The label plans to capitalize on Krauss’ acclaim. “We are getting some ideas on how to alert Alison’s fan base, too,” Galante says. “She made this record, and there’s a lot of her on this.”

“This record will most likely be found in minivans and not in pickup trucks,” Smith says. “Depending on its acceptance saleswise, I believe will determine the kind of record he delivers next time. I think it took courage for both Alan and his label to release an album like this at this stage of his career where the younger set seems to be hogging the spotlight.”

The label plans to reach beyond the usual suspects for retail support. “We’ll probably go places like Borders and Barnes & Noble making sure we get in-store play at a lot of these places because I think people are going to be surprised at this record,” he says. “This is one of those records that could really open up the format, just as [‘O Brother, Where Art Thou?’] did years ago. There are lots of people who have a preconceived notion of what country music is. When they hear this from one of the greatest country superstars out there, they’ll go, ‘Wait a minute. If that’s country, I love this.’”

Since debuting in 1990, ALAN JACKSON has topped Billboard’s country album chart 10 times.
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Year After Year, The Top-Grossing Tours Are Ones That Primarily Play Arenas

This year COLDPLAY grossed more than $30 million playing arenas.
THE GREAT DEBATE
Why Do Some Acts Choose To Play Arenas While Others Tend To Stick To Amphitheaters?
BY RAY WADDELL

Of all the great choices in life—paper or plastic, dogs or cats, boxers or briefs—nothing stirs up controversy in the touring industry as much as the arenas or amphitheaters debate. The indoor/outdoor question arises mostly with major acts capable of playing 15,000- to 20,000-seat venues in the first place. Arenas, with their reserved real estate, generally seem to offer a higher gross potential than a modern-day amphitheater that has two-thirds of its capacity as general admission. Reserved seats simply have a higher market value. Which venue an act chooses depends upon its overall touring strategy. "The economics of the business have changed a bit, and every artist is looking at all of the venue options that are available to them and then making the best financial deal they can," says Jason Garner, executive VP of amphitheater programming for Live Nation.

Garner adds that the perception that Live Nation has an "amphitheater agenda" as a company is incorrect. "In 2005 we promoted the same number of indoor arena shows as outdoor amphitheaters," Garner points out. "When we enter into a tour discussion, we're sitting down with the manager and the artist and having a discussion about what's the best thing for that particular artist and what they want to accomplish."

Year after year, the top-grossing tours play primarily arenas, at least in North America. The equation for this is relatively simple—older acts have older fans who often have more discretionary income to pay more for tickets. And older fans like having a seat. Numbers, at least on the surface, back up that formula. In 2005, $477.5 million in ticket sales and 13 million in attendance was reported to Billboard Boxscore from 1,625 amphitheater shows. Per night, that's an average of $293,681 in box-office revenue and 7,972 in attendance at the sheds last year. Dollars, at least, seem to be improving this year, with the average gross and attendance at midsummer at $318,337 and 7,930, respectively.

On the arena side of the equation, last year North American arenas brought in $1.2 billion and hosted 20 million people at

Acts like DAVE MATTHEWS, TOM PETTY, RASCAL FLATTS and TOBY KEITH, from left, continue to make big bucks playing sheds on a regular basis.

2,348 concerts. Per night, that's an average of $474,243 in box-office revenue and 7,849 in attendance. And those numbers are up so far for 2006, averaging $553,731 and 8,306 in gross and attendance, respectively.

As our number crunching shows, per-show attendance at amphitheaters and arenas is close, but the grosses are about $200,000 higher per show on average from the arena reports.

"The arenas are better facilities to see concerts," says John Meglen, president of Concerts West, a division of AEG Live, an international promoter that promotes primarily in arenas. "You have more reserved seats, you have climate control, production is better." If arenas are so much more conducive to concerts—financially and aesthetically—why would any astute manager book acts through amphitheaters?

Because artists can still make big money playing sheds due to creative deals made by Live Nation, which now operates the majority of amphitheaters.

"Because the business is so competitive, no one's making bad financial deals anymore. Artists are well-advised, they've got [personal] managers and business managers and agents looking closely at deals," Live Nation's Garner says. "The mere fact this year that we've got 10% more amphitheater shows than last year would indicate that the deals are very competitive, and artists and fans are choosing both experiences." Simply put, grosses aren't necessarily indicative of what a band will make. "If you look at another figure—not grosses but what the band actually walks away with—that would be a whole different revelation," says veteran agent Dennis Arfa, president of Artists Group International. "And what the artist walks away with is what really counts."

The fact that shed talent buyers control virtually all revenue streams—like concessions and parking—gives them more money to play with and is in fact why promoters got into the real estate game in the first place. Some estimates put per-ticket revenue from ancillaries for sheds as high as $15 a head.

"Amphitheater promoters need to pay you more because they have all these ancillary rights," Arfa says. "But (arenas) can offer deals on a similar level because they have all those rights they don't share with promoters."

Clearly, many acts have found profitable summer homes at the amphitheaters. Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers, Dave Matthews Band, James Taylor, Jimmy Buffett, Kenny Chesney, Rascal Flatts and Toby Keith are among the acts that rake in millions from shed tours.

But most of these acts play arena dates as well.

Coldplay is a prime example of a superstar act that tried it both ways. A 2005 amphitheater run grossed $18.7 million and moved 486,566 tickets to 27 shows, an average of $692,622 and 18,020 per night.

This year, Coldplay played arenas, grossing $30.6 million and selling 477,077 tickets to 33 shows. The average attendance dipped to 14,456 per show, but the gross ballooned to $930,192 per night. That's an increase of 34.3% per show.

"You have to look at the thought process that went into the planning of that tour," Garner says. "We..."
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"WHAT THE ARTIST WALKS AWAY WITH IS WHAT REALLY COUNTS."
—DENNIS ARFA

sat down with band management and came up with an overall touring strategy for that band, and part of that strategy was to go into the summer with a $30 lawn ticket.

Coldplay manager Dave Holmes says a two-pronged attack was always the plan. "The strategy was to do the shed run first, get big crowds out to see the show with the hope that a lot of those fans would return on the arena run," he says. "This strategy worked, as most of the shed dates sold out quickly, and the reviews were glowing. Consequently, fans who missed the amphitheater dates made sure to catch the arena show, and we gained a lot of new fans."

That arena grosses were more than 30% higher came as no surprise to anyone, Holmes says. "We always knew this was going to be the case, but we felt it was important to play to bigger crowds on the first run," he says, adding that while merch per caps were about $3 a head higher in arenas, the higher attendance in sheds made the gross about the same.

Sometimes it's less about what the band gets paid and more about what the fans will pay. The Family Values tour, for example, found tremendous success this summer with a $10 lawn ticket.

"When you look at the ability to have a very large number of low-priced tickets on the lawn at an amphitheater, that's very advantageous to a band that's growing its fan base. We've been able to develop an economic model that allows that to happen," says Garner, who adds that Live Nation research (and Billboard's, for that matter) indicates that fans make concert decisions based on price.

"If you look across our shows this year and last, you'll see a lot of tickets in the $20-$25 range. That's got to be good for a band to look out at the lawn and see it packed with a lot of fans who, quite possibly based on all the research that all of us have, might not have attended the show," Garner says. "So when a fan is deciding whether to buy a videogame or a concert ticket, lots of times that $20 lawn ticket that costs less than a videogame is more appealing than a $39.50 arena ticket that costs the same as a videogame."

Meglen says amphitheaters don't have a lock on bargain prices though. "You can scale lower in the upper decks and do the same thing in an arena if that's your choice," he says. "I do feel that there's a very big negative in the amphitheaters when they continue to paper the lawn as much as they do. That creates a soft ticket situation in a market where people sit around and wait for free tickets instead of buying tickets."

Meglen does admit that not having access to ancillary revenue in arenas can put Concerts West at a competitive disadvantage as a promoter. "We need to probably be a little more aggressive and get the buildings to work with us as much as they can in those situations," he says.

"But remember, by Billboard's numbers, the arena grosses came out higher on average because you can gross a higher amount in the arena because of the difference in permanent seats and lawn."

Plus, the amphitheater experience is not for all fans or all bands. "Not every act is a lawn act. Not everybody enjoys sitting on a general admission lawn," Arfa says. "If you take an artist that can do 17,000 people, selling the lawn can be a tougher awful. If an artist has enough demand, they can do it, but I'm always concerned about selling the lawn with certain artists. But for other artists, it's perfect."

This year alone, Live Nation is promoting primarily shed tours by Brooks & Dunn, Rascal Flatts, Black Crowes/Robert Randolph, Poison/Cinderella, Styx/Foreigner, Aerosmith/Molly Ring, Def Leppard/Journey, John Fogerty/Willy Nelson, Chicago/Huey Lewis, Earth, Wind & Fire/Chris Botti, Fiona Apple/Damien Rice, Gretchen Wilson, Lynyrd Skynyrd/3 Doors Down and Sammy Hagar.

"Every week I see numbers that say thousands of fans are walking up and buying a lawn ticket," Garner says. "And in today's world where people have so many choices, that has got to be an indication that people like that outdoor experience."

Meglen counters, "Of course there are some shows that probably work better outdoors."

However, Garner does see this ongoing debate as a competition between venues. "I don't think it's about amphitheater versus arena," he says. "I think today's artists are smart, the managers are strategic about the decisions they're making, and we just want to be a thought partner in that process and help come up with the best touring options for that artist. Sometimes it's outdoors, sometimes it's indoors."

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A Voice In The Industry

With The Help Of The Arena Network, Indie Venues Are Getting A Fair Shot

After eight years, the Arena Network is still doing what it does best—networking. An alliance of independent arenas, Arena Network has grown to include 46 venues since it formed in May 1998. It provides strength in numbers for its members, and a one-stop shop for agents and promoters seeking to reach the market the network represents from coast to coast.

For those eight years, industry vet Brad Parsons has served as executive director of Arena Network, overseeing a Los Angeles-based staff of four.

"We are first and foremost an information society," Parsons says. "Our job, my job, is to help these building guys get through the minefield of finding out what shows are out there and how to get to them, and help [with] the lobbying process."

Arena Network debuted with the aim to provide information to its members and strengthen networking among them to collectively boost bookings.

"We've matured in that when we started people didn't know what we were," Parsons says. "It has evolved to the point where we have significant influence on getting people to play indoors first and then to play our buildings when the tour is indoors."

Arena tours have dominated the Billboard Boxscore chart in recent years, and Parsons says Arena Network buildings are well-represented on those tours.

"We're very successful in terms of getting more acts to play arenas than were [playing them] seven years ago," he says. "Frankly, nobody else is even close in terms of the mass volume. We are, in essence, accomplishing what we set out to do."

Arena Network membership includes major-market venues like MCI Center in Washington, D.C.; Staples Center in Los Angeles; Philips Arena in Atlanta; and American Airlines Center in Dallas.

Brad Mayne, president/CEO of Center Operating Co., which runs the American Airlines Center, says Arena Network has become a great asset to his operations in Dallas.

"Not only do we receive timely info on touring shows, but we have also had opportunities to purchase complete tours like Dolly Parton and U.S.A. Gymnastics," Mayne says, adding that the network gives members a voice in the industry. "It gives us the best of all worlds, to be able to choose the direction that is most important to me as an individual facility, but also gives me leverage as most of the time we are [more than 40] venues speaking as one."

The group also represents such smaller-market venues as Pan American Center in Las Cruces, N.M.; Reich Center in Green Bay, Wis.; Birmingham (Ala.) Jefferson Civic Center, Qwest Center in Omaha, Neb.; and the Spokane (Wash.) Arena.

"Information has value and is worth the price of the membership," says Kevin Twolig, GM of the Spokane Arena. "Knowing who is touring and where they are touring and having someone at the Arena Network office tracking this info and watching over for us is a significant value."

That information sharing is still a top priority, above and beyond touring issues. "We discuss operational issues and work together in purchasing services that create discounts and lower our operating costs," Mayne says. "We also discuss operational issues and work together in purchasing services that create discounts and lower our operating costs."

 Arena Network also seeks to streamline the booking process for agents and venues. The member arenas tout such services as research, marketing, database sales and creative deal making. A major function is face time with agents and promoters.

For example, at the annual Billboard Touring Conference in New York, continued on >>P44

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GiantCenter.net
from p42

"we'll have a day where we invite the New York agencies—Artists Group International, William Morris Agency, Creative Artists Agency—to come meet with us separately before the conference starts, and, frankly, it helps a lot," Parsons says.

John Huie of CAA's Nashville offices notes that Arena Network has been very helpful to the agency as well. "Brad does a great job, and I love their avail grid," Huie says. "I still think they can be more aggressive in their lobbying efforts."

Adam Kornfeld of AGI adds, "Brad Parsons and the Arena Network have always been a great help when putting together a tour. Brad is a tireless campaigner for all of the venues involved in the organization."

In addition, the network meets with the promoters, too. "Our common theme is real simple: We just want to do more business with everyone," Parsons says.

Today's tour producers and promoters rely more than ever on what arenas can bring to the table in marketing clout. "We put our marketing managers together and create a force in this industry that is second to none," Mayne says. "Many of our facilities are professional agencies with purchasing power and databases that are unique to our own communities. The resources we offer are better than many promotions companies."

The criteria for membership in Arena Network is straightforward. In addition to paying an annual fee, members must not compete with other members and must have a minimum of 10,000 seats, the willingness to promote shows in-house and the ability to risk capital.

That last stipulation can be tricky, particularly for municipal buildings that often run at a deficit. If a date loses money, Arena Network is not there for a financial bailout.

But the network does provide valuable information to make a profitable date more likely. Likewise, the agents know what Arena Network buildings have to offer in terms of availabilities.

"Our job is to talk as many people into playing arenas as we possibly can, and then getting them to play our arenas," Parsons notes. "I have no doubt that we've been highly successful on both counts."

Recent successes for the alliance include tours by Bruce Springsteen, Dolly Parton, Boom Boom Huck Jam and Gymnastics Champions. As for new business, "There are a few things we're working on, but nothing I can talk about publicly because we're not quite there yet," Parsons says.

"Next year looks like a much better year touring-wise than this year." Because of this ongoing potential, Spokane Arena's Twoghill notes that "it's a good investment for us. The industry has gone from everybody wanting to play amphitheaters back to arenas being a very viable alternative. Some of the credit goes to Arena Network."

—Ray Wuddell

**ARENA NETWORK MEMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location, Venue, Capacity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANAHEIM, CALIF. Arrowhead Pond, 19,400*</td>
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<td>ATLANTA Philips Arena, 20,000*</td>
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<td>BIRMINGHAM, ALA. BJCC Arena, 17,500*</td>
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<td>LITTLE ROCK, ARK. Alltel Arena, 18,000*</td>
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<td>LOS ANGELES Staples Center, 20,000</td>
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<td>MEMPHIS FedEx Forum, 18,500*</td>
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<td>MIAMI American Airlines Arena, 19,094*</td>
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<td>MOLINE, ILL. The Bank of the Quad Cities, 19,000*</td>
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<td>NASHVILLE Gaylord Entertainment Center, 20,000*</td>
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<td>NORFOLK, VA. Scope Arena, 12,779*</td>
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<td>OMAHA, NEB. Qwest Center Omaha, 19,000*</td>
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<td>ORLANDO, FLA. TD Waterhouse Centre, 17,500</td>
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<td>PHOENIX America West Arena, 16,910</td>
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<td>TALLAHASSEE, FLA. Tallahassee-Leon County Civic Center, 12,508*</td>
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<td>WASHINGTON, D.C. MCI Center, 20,200</td>
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<td>WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. LJVM Coliseum Complex, 15,272&quot;</td>
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*Full curtain theater setups and/or lower bowl setups available. All noted venues are also members of the Arena Network Theatre Group, as of July 2006.*
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THE NEW SWEET SPOT
Arena Theaters Come Into Their Own
And Avoid The 'Cut-Down' Curse

Most arenas boast capacities of more than 15,000, but the magic number in touring these days is about 5,000-6,000. "Theaters in arenas aren't just an innovative marketing concept anymore. For many, they are now mainstream venues."

"Now we get a call from an agent asking, 'Hey, can you cut this arena down?' Whereas a few years ago if you brought up the term 'cut-down' the immediate reaction was, 'OK, what can I look at next?'" says Mike Evans, senior VP of sports and entertainment for SMG, the Philadelphia-based venue management firm. "Now it's become a normal part of the business."

The Arena Network, a consortium of 46 arenas that seeks to create content opportunities for member venues, has done well with a subgroup, the Arena Network Theater Group. "We're always picking up rocks and trying to find new things to do," Arena Network executive director Brad Parsons says. "We've had a lot of success in our theater mode, but we haven't had as much as I'd like."

"The fact that arena theaters are even necessary is "kind of a good news/bad news story," Parsons admits. "The good news is there are more theater shows for us. The bad news, if that's the right term, is there aren't enough 15,000-seat shows out there to go around. The only reason we have these setups is because there are more 5,000-seat shows out there than there are 15,000-seat shows."

According to Parsons, 32 Arena Network members have arena theater configurations. "And some of the ones that don't have obvious reasons why they don't," Parsons points out. "Like Joe Louis Arena in Detroit also runs the Fox Theatre, so they already have a 5,000-seater."

John Page, COO of Global Spectrum, another Philadelphia-based facility management firm, says four Global buildings have pure theater configurations and several more have curtaining systems. "If you can strategically go into it, depending on what your market has to offer, you can really give yourself an opportunity to do additional business because of that reduced capacity."

Page says, "The ante is high for an arena to be in the theater loop. The investment to bring a theater capacity to an arena ranges from about $400,000 for a curtaining system to up to $1 million for an elaborate, self-contained theater look and feel."

"Many of our facilities have invested in creating the theater setup and have made a comfortable return on their investment," says Brad Mayne, president of Center Operating Co., which runs the American Airlines Center in Dallas. "At the American Airlines Center, we have found a way to be part of the [Arena Network Theater Group] while using rented equipment. We are pleased with the results we have experienced with the...continued on >> p48
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from p46

shows we have hosted."

SMG’s Evans says that about three years ago the firm suggested to all its arena clients that they should consider some sort of smaller-capacity configuration. "You could see where the business was going," Evans says. "The days of every act being able to sell 17,000-18,000 seats were coming to an end, and the business was in the 5,000-8,000-seat range."

Evans says SMG came up with several options for arenas. "They could either retrofit the building with a curtaining system or, in the case of new buildings like John Paul Jones Arena in Charlottesville (Va.), put a cut-down configuration right in the design plan," Evans says. "Every building we have under construction right now has that capability."

Evans describes the Sovereign Center in Reading, Pa., as an arena that has reconfigured optimally. "They have a curtaining system that goes floor to ceiling, it’s angled, and when there’s a show in the reduced capacity, it’s called the Reading Eagle Theatre," he explains.

"But by far the best of all the buildings I’ve seen it the Sinatra Theatre in the Bank Atlantic Center in Fort Lauderdale [Fla.]."

Evans continues. "You have no clue you’re even in an arena when you’re in the Sinatra Theatre. It has a separate entrance, you park in a separate place, you’re handed champagne and canapes when you come in. The days of just being able to hang a curtain are gone; you have to be able to create special amenities."

Most agree that those arenas with theater configurations have gone a long way toward winning the perception battle once present with agents and managers—that reduced capacities are a safety valve for weak-selling shows.

Still, the "cut-down" phrase remains prevalent, though not with the same stigma. "Nobody likes to use the word ‘cut-down,’ but in reality that’s what you’re doing," Evans says. "Theoretically, no one wants to play a cut-down. A lot depends on your ability to reduce your capacity and not make it look like a cut-down."

SMG has a theater/performing arts division and management contracts with about 20 arenas that have an active reduced-capacity situation. "If you have a book that’s to agents and promoters with all the theaters and traditional performing arts centers," Evans says. "What we did in the last edition, and we will do much more elaborately in the next one, is tell the arenas, ‘If you have a dedicated cut-down-type facility, then we’ll put you in the book.’"

The next edition this fall, most of the buildings will participate. "Page agrees that it’s about working relationships with industry players, adding that it helps if the theater configuration can brand the concept or have a sponsorship concept within it."

"That really gets into that mind-set that you’re not just curtaining off the arena because you can’t sell the tickets," Page says. "With the success in Portland [Ore.] with Theatre of the Clouds at the Rose Garden, the acts and the management aren’t viewing it when they go in as a scaled-down arena, they know they are going in to play the Theatre of the Clouds."

Parsons agrees that the theater setups should have their own identity. "We’ve been trying to set up a venue within a venue, so when somebody plays the theater setup and sells it out, then it’s a sellout; it isn’t like they weren’t good enough to sell out an arena," Parsons says. "That’s not the point and it never was."
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Stadium-level tours may be few and far between these days, but that hasn't discouraged the folks at the Gridiron Stadium Network. In fact, business has been good for some of the 11 stadiums involved with the nonprofit organization, which launched last year.

Take Seattle's Qwest Field and Detroit's Ford Field. Prior to joining the network, the two stadiums hadn't put on concerts since 2003 (when Qwest Field had Metallica and Ford Field had Eminem). This summer, though, both hosted Kenny Chesney. Ford Field, home of the Detroit Lions, welcomed Chesney Aug. 26. The concert grossed $3.4 million and attracted a sellout crowd of 44,836. Meanwhile, Qwest Field's June 24 Chesney date drew approximately 44,500 fans and grossed $2.8 million. Plus, in mid-October, the Seattle stadium will welcome the Rolling Stones with support from the Dave Matthews Band.

"I think Gridiron Stadium Network has brought people back to thinking about using stadiums," notes Kelly Urquhart, senior director of major events at Ford Field. "Before they wouldn't even consider routing dates through a stadium. Now a lot of agents and promoters are thinking about us."

The Gridiron Stadium Network has nine NFL stadium members: Qwest Field, Ford Field, Heinz Field (Pittsburgh), Invesco Field at Mile High (Denver), Lincoln Financial Field (Philadelphia), Dolphins Stadium (Miami), Reliant Stadium (Houston), Paul Brown Stadium (Cincinnati) and Ralph Wilson Stadium (Buffalo, N.Y.). Plus, the network just announced the inclusion of two Major League Soccer stadiums: Bridgeview, Ill.'s Toyota Park and Carson, Calif.'s Home Depot Center.

Meetings have covered everything from how stadiums can utilize their massive e-mail databases to sharing past experiences about putting on concerts.

"Some of them haven't had as much experience as others, so a question about a facility maintenance fee or a production is something we can work out as a group," says Gridiron Stadium Network director Pamela Fallon, who is leaving the organization next month.

Since joining the organization, Urquhart says many stadium reps are now aggressively pursuing concerts, whereas before they were sitting around waiting for the phone to ring. "We kind of just waited for Clear Channel to bring shows," she says.

When the network launched in April 2005, the intent was to bring stadium representatives together to share information and resources. The group's aim was also to get stadiums back on the radar with agents, promoters and managers. In addition, Fallon says, the members wanted to find ways to bring in concerts, festivals, trade shows, rodeos and sporting events when the stadiums weren't being used for football.

"Our main goal for the first year was to get a couple events, to get our name out there and to introduce ourselves to people and make them aware of us," she explains. "I think we've been successful at that."

Future prospects include possible offers for Rascal Flatts stadium shows in 2007, and perhaps working with Live Nation or AEG to create an event that can be brought into stadiums each year, Fallon adds.

Another goal is to create new opportunities in a challenging touring environment.

"Right now, there aren't that many acts that can play stadiums," Fallon says. "It's our job to become creative and see what we can package together, and work with agents and managers."

"It's been a good way to network," adds the Messina Group's Louis Messina, who formerly worked as a consultant to the group. "These stadiums want to be in the entertainment business, so it makes my job easier as a tour producer."

In fact, some of the network's venues may soon be getting a call from Morris Management Group's Clint Higham, who co-manages Chesney along with Dale Morris. "He is going to be doing six stadiums next year," says Higham, who couldn't give specific dates or locations.

Urquhart points out that football and soccer still comes first for all the stadiums. "We're not looking to compete with the arenas and have 10 shows per year," she says. "We're just looking for a couple good shows every year."
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Those are things for doing (Billboard, Sept. 20). We served Southern rock 'n' roll, and we served up the menu just like they wanted it,” McDowell says. "McDonnell says 3 Doors Down, whose members hail from nearby Escatawpa, were stoked to be the first band to return to the arena. "We were honored to have them," he says, adding, "As we got closer, our biggest concern was making sure we had restroom and seats.”

The building had both kinds of seats in place by the time the show rolled in. "However, we did have a little problem with one of our restrooms, forcing us to go to the seven-seat method, which was enjoyed by all but most," McDonnell notes. Remarkably, the event ran up $23 a head in concessions and merch sales, a building record (Billboard, Sept. 9). More than anything, according to McDonnell, it was rewarding to hear live music rocking the MCC again.

"It was great to see smiles on people's faces anxiously awaiting us to take the tarp off our doors," he recalls. "It was great seeing folks visiting with one another before the show, dancing in the back of the hall, having a great time. Those are things you take for granted when you do show after show, but when you've been down for almost a year, and some days there's not a lot of hope of getting back up, those are great memories to relive."

Hank Williams Jr. played the venue Aug. 26, and New Orleans-based Beaver Productions is bringing Stain'd Sept. 23 for a general admission show expected to draw a capacity crowd. Then AEG Live will promote the CMT tour with Trace Adkins, Jason Aldean and Billy Currington Oct. 28, and Live Nation is inquiring about dates in November, McDowell says.

Showbys show that, though, are a lot like an airport managing traffic that wants land,” McDowell says. "A lot of shows want to try and get in here, and we just have to manage it where we can leave enough room where everyone can get out with a nice payday. I've had several promoters tell me we may be the hottest market that's not known about in all of North America."

LYNYRD SKynyrd and 3 Doors Down, above, were the first to play the MCC, which wasn't quite ready for them yet (inset).

**REPORT!** The time is nigh. Stand up and be counted. Agents, managers, promoters and venues need to report all their numbers by Sept. 30 so they can be included in the data for the Billboard Touring Awards, set for Nov. 9 at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York.

The time period covered by the awards is Dec. 1, 2005, through Sept. 30, 2006. Awards are given for a wide range of tours, based on grosses and attendance, as well as recognition for agencies, managers, venues and promoters. They are based on actual box-office achievement. How well did you do? Report all box-office data to Billboard Boxscore manager Bob Allen at ballen@billboard.com.
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Billboard Touring Awards “Legend of Live” honoree SIR ELTON JOHN

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MEXICO'S MASTERFUL SINGER/SONGWRITER RETURNS WITH 'TROZOS DE MI ALMA 2'
It is hard to explain the measure of Marco Antonio Solís’ appeal. Listen to his music, and it is unabashedly raw-your heart-on-your-sleeve romantic, earnest and plaintive. The melodies are luminous, the words entrancing. If you want to court a girl over a candlelight dinner, this is the soundtrack.

See Solís live, and, with his flowing hair and peaceful demeanor, he looks more like a preacher than an entertainer. Standing before a crowd of 60,000, he appears bemused, then merely raises a hand and all hell breaks loose in the audience, even before he pours it out, effortlessly, into the microphone.

And then, there is the voice, that plaintive tenor that beguils you to listen. Although Solís once said there were many singers better than he, the late producer Bébu Silvetti begs to differ. “If he says that, he’s mistaken,” Silvetti told Billboard in 2000. “A great singer is someone who has expression. [Solís] opens his mouth, and every word—not every sentence, mind you—every word, acquires a meaning. We’re talking about a man who’s reached millions and millions of people with his voice. That’s a great singer.”

An astounding degree of international success as a touring performer, an extraordinarily prolific author and a top-selling recording artist makes Solís possibly one of the top five Latin artists in the world. The success straddles his first career as the lead singer of Los Bukis, Mexico’s top-selling romantic grupo in the 1970s and 1980s, and as a solo regional Mexican/pop performer who regularly tops charts throughout Latin America.

Solís’ venture into pop, 1999’s “Trazos de Mi Alma,” was certified platinum the United States and sold more than 1 million copies in Mexico as well. This does not even include the album’s success throughout Latin America. “Trazos” set the highest standard for the potential of popular Mexican acts in the pop market and opened the doors for traditional Mexican acts to be heard around the world, a phenomenon akin to Luis Miguel’s recording of traditional boleros 10 years before.

“Marco is a singer/songwriter who, through his music and lyrics, is able to connect to the masses,” says José Behar, president/CEO of Univision Music Group, which owns Fonovisa. “He’s been able to do it from a regional label, as the leader of Los Bukis, to an international label as a solo artist.”

In the United States alone, Solís has landed 13 titles on Billboard’s Top Latin Albums Chart, including four compilations, since 1995. Five of those titles reached No. 1, four have been certified gold by the RIAA and one was certified platinum.

As a producer, he has taken home Billboard’s Latin producer of the year award on several occasions for work on his own albums and for other artists.

As a songwriter, Solís has had more No. 1s (67) on Billboard’s Hot Latin Songs chart than any other composer. Recognizing the value of his songs early on, Solís created his own publishing companies: Marco Musical in Mexico and Crisana in the United States. He is affiliated with ASCAP, but his publishing remains self-administered.

Onstage and off, Solís is the same man: Soft-spoken and low-key, he shuns the spotlight, holding himself leagues beyond the glam and pretentiousness one could associate with 30 years of stardom. You could call him an accidental star, except that this was no accident but a painstaking, hard-earned career whose first hit can be traced back to 1976.

On Sept. 26, Solís will release “Trazos de Mi Alma 2,” a pop sequel to his 1999 album. On the eve of that release, Solís spoke with Billboard to reflect on a life well-lived and a craft beautifully executed that continues to delight and surprise us.

What is the first memory you have of making music?

It started when I was very young. I remember the early years, my first influences. We were talking about it just recently, when we went to Mexico to celebrate my mother’s [86th] birthday. We were listening to old songs and recalling that those were precisely the songs that I learned first.

They were Spanish versions of rock ’n’ roll hits. Paul Anka songs performed by Cesar Costa. Beatles songs performed by Los Hooligans or Los Locos del Ritmo. Many groups from the ’60s. And, well, Marco Antonio Muñiz and Raphael. That was the music that struck me. I think that’s where I discovered everything, because I began to pay attention to the words, the phrases. Not so much the music or the rhythm, but what was said. I think that was my basic musical influence. And then I began to sing. I began singing in public when I was 8 or 9.

Was anyone else a musician in your house?

My father sang and played guitar, but for fun. He was an entertainer and he enjoyed a good party. In fact, to date, he continues to sing and he dreams of us doing something together. I told him, “OK, let’s do it.” My dad is 85. He said, “Let’s do a song before I die.” I’ve been thinking about that, and it struck me because the idea was his. It’s his wish. So, of course, we’ll do it.

So, when did you begin to sing and write professionally?

In the town fairs. I met a cousin of mine who also sang, Joel Solís, and who eventually became the guitarist for Los Bukis. People liked us, because we not only sang but also played the guitar. We had a duo called Los Hermanitos Solís. Even though we were distant relatives, we considered ourselves brothers.

And I wrote a song for my town [Airo de Rosales], titled “Mi Puebloito.” It was very simple.

That’s a lot of love for your town.

It’s a magical place. I told my father, “The air here is different.” I don’t know why. I arrive here and the air feels different, it’s so fresh. Perhaps it’s the smell of the soil. Because my town is in a cold climate, there is a lot of pine and avocado, and all that perhaps gives it a special aroma. I go other places, and it doesn’t smell the same. But aside from all that, I grew up there, and I had a happy childhood. And all of that comes together in bringing very beautiful memories and a very special affection for that place.

You recorded a first album in 1973 under the name El Dueto Los Bukis. It was only several years later that you became Los Bukis, which made you so famous. Where did the name come from?

At the label, they saw we were very young, and they asked us what we wanted to be called. Los Niños ("the boys"), Los Chavales (a slang for "boys") or Los Bukis. We asked what "buki" meant, and it turns out it’s the word for "boy" in the Yaki dialect, from the Yaki Indians in Northern Mexico.

Los Bukis came to be known as Mexico’s top romantic grupo. How did you arrive at your trademark sound?

It evolved. The first song that stuck was called “Falso Amor,” and I wrote it thinking Los Babys, a very famous group at the time, would record it. But when we had the opportunity to record with Los Bukis, there were only three songs of mine, and “Falso Amor” was one of them. We recorded the entire album in six hours, from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. And that album was continued on >p60
Congratulations

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blessed, because “Falso Amor” became a huge hit. It was even No. 1 in Argentina that year. When the royalty statements came in, we had sold around 300,000 copies of that album.

What else was on that first album? Covers. By Camilo Sesto, by other acts. But it so happened that “Falso Amor” worked very well. I can’t explain what I felt at the time. We were playing gigs at this little place, and I would take one of these small radios to hear myself when the song was played. I would put it up to the microphone and tell the audience: “Hey, this is us!” With that song, we were able to go to bigger places to play.

And from then on, we began playing the big events, the big dances. And we continued recording, and by the second album, all the songs were mine. The label now trusted me as a composer, and things became easier. We’re talking 30 years ago. Because 1976 was the year that first song really went on the air and became a hit. That was the real beginning. Everything else was knocking on doors.

You are one of the most prolific songwriters in the market. When you began doing this, what did you want to be, a composer or a performer? I liked composing better. Even now, I am always searching for that best song, which I haven’t found yet. I’m trying to write it. That is far more interesting to me, because I enjoy it greatly, and I enjoy it alone. Silence says a lot to me.

What I feel at the moment, that trance I fall in when I’m able to capture a precise emotion, is magical for me. It’s divine. It’s a connection with something else. With God, I think.

At that point, I begin to write. It’s a very, very magical moment, and a very personal moment and it’s very satisfying. Singing before a big crowd is a shared experience. But I enjoy both.

Among all the songs, there must be a couple that are special for some reason.

Yes. There are two or three I particularly like. One is called “Tú Eres Mi Lugar,” and the other is “Necesita de Ti.” I wrote them both a long time ago, in different periods of my life, but, I don’t know, they tell me something. There is a great empathy with what they say. The cadence, the melodies, the phrases have a lot to do with me. Among my recent compositions, “Dónde Estará Mi Primavera” is a song that moves me greatly.

Why?

At my age, it’s a song that talks to me more. I feel it more deeply. I wrote it some nine years ago, so it wasn’t the same back then. I feel we change every day. I never feel the same, and I always perceive things in a different way. So, songs I wrote years ago are now truly mine.

You are extremely successful. Do you feel you need to have angst and suffering to write well? Suffering is always there. I don’t know anyone who doesn’t suffer. Part of life itself is suffering, and many things go wrong. I don’t believe in total happiness. If we aren’t able to truly feel the difficult times, if we’re unable to collect a bit of sorrow, we can’t live fully. I’m always very aware of what happens around me. There is always suffering and yearning. All those things. Even if you’re doing well.

I enjoy the moments in which I’m fine and happy, but there are other moments. My wife calls me a masochist because I suffer through so much. But that’s the only way to find other things and to enjoy moments with intensity.

You have your own publishing, and it is very cov-
eted. Did you establish it from the onset of your career, and have you considered giving it to someone else to administer?

People have approached me, but I don’t know. It’s something I’m dedicating far more time to, because it’s my legacy. It’s handled here out of Los Angeles, and we have moved it enormously.

In the very beginning, I gave it to Rimo, the publishing company of our label at the time. Later, I began rescuing those tracks little by little. I bought some, others I negotiated as part of my recording deals, and I rescanned most of them. There are some still lying around that I can no longer rescue because they have another value.

In fact, there are several that I want to record again. Songs that an entire generation doesn’t know because they weren’t around.

With all you have accomplished, what is left?

I’m writing a book. Of anecdotes and positive messages. I want to convey a message of optimism, faith and confidence.

What did you do in particular in that regard?

I had a lot of faith. A lot of confidence. I’m not a born-again Christian, but I consider myself a man of much faith. And I respect people. I like to talk to them, to dig deep, and I learn a lot. It’s not something that amuses but something I enjoy greatly.

And musically, what would you like to do?

Perhaps a musical, or film score. Something that has a different dimension.

Although you write about everything, you are a romantic at heart. What is the secret to speaking about romance and sounding truthful, as opposed to hokey?

You have to be in love. If you’re in love, nothing is hokey.

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As a concert performer, Marco Antonio Solís "exemplifies romance, peace and love like no other artist," says Latin music promotor Jorge Naranjo, president of Cardenes Marketing Network.

Solís has successfully toured for more than three decades, first with his former group Los Bukis, then as a solo artist, with such performers as Ana Gabriel and Joan Sebastian, and most recently on a triple bill with Marc Anthony and Laura Pausini on the Junto en Concierto tour.

The summer tour sets up Solís' Sept. 26 release of "Trozos de Mi Alma 2" (Fonovisa).

"Marco Antonio is at peace with himself as a man and as an artist, and this is reflected in his attitude towards his craft," says Kate Ramos, Live Nation senior VP of Latin music. "Working with Marco was a special experience."

Hector Villalobos has worked with Solís live since 1982, first as a promoter of Los Bukis and since 1995, overseeing Solís' touring interests as a solo artist. He represents Solís in every market except Mexico, but not in the traditional booking agency role.

"I function more as a promoter rep, where I rep his interests in touring, set up co-promotions or buyouts of dates, depending on the circumstances," Villalobos explains. "I co-promote or sell off the show, depending on the relationship they want to establish and the needs of the buyer or the artist. He may say, 'I don't want [a] percentage, I want a buyout,' so it will vary."

The second Junto en Concierto tour rode a wave of increasing popularity for live Latin music in North America. Produced by Live Nation and sponsored by the ING Group, the 20-city tour began in July at the Shoreline Amphitheater in Mountain View, Calif., and played large major-market venues through August.

Ramos says Solís has been one of the most popular and enduring artists in Mexico for more than 30 years. "His 30 years in the business have provided him with a maturity and confidence that is unique," she says. "I have no doubt that the success of our tour was due in part to Marco's leadership and ease to work so closely with other artists."

While Latin tours by such acts as RBD and Juan Gabriel play developing North American Latin markets, Junto was "definitely a Hispanic tour with a Spanish-speaking audience," Ramos says. "And we do many tours, so we know the markets that welcome [Latin] concerts and tours, and usually it's the highest-populated cities."

The concerts were promoted primarily through Latin media. "However, we recognize that many Latinos are bilingual, so there [was] some advertising in English mediums," Ramos says. Solís was "a bit apprehensive going into [Juntos], because he had never toured 20 cities in 30 days with three artists sharing the stage like that," Villalobos adds. "He walked away with an incredible experience. I think he shared the same emotion all of us did—while it looked long at the beginning, it was way too short of a trip. There was a genuine love between the artists."

In North America, Naranjo says Solís is "very strong" in California, the Midwest and in East Coast markets. His best North American markets are Los Angeles, Chicago, New York and Miami. "In California and the Midwest, he appeals to a wide demographic," Naranjo explains. "On the East Coast he appeals to an older audience, 30-plus."

Of course, south of the border, the sky is the limit. "In Mexico he is huge, and in Latin America, like the U.S.A., he has certain markets that work very well for him," says Naranjo, citing Chile, Colombia, Venezuela and all of Central America as Solís strongholds.

"I think right now his strongest market is Chile, the Dominican Republic and the United States," Villalobos observes. "Not so much in the number of concerts but in the extent of demand and fan base. His average concert in Chile is 20,000-30,000 people."

Villalobos says Solís continues to break into new live markets. "Every year he is building new markets. We went to Canada last year and did tremendous business in Toronto," he says. "We’re now looking at [new markets] in South America, Europe. He’s a Marco Polo discovering new worlds."
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Still The Same After An Album-Less Decade,
Bob Seger Returns To The Charts He Never Left

Bob Seger hasn’t made an album for 11 years, but acquainting him with audiences shouldn’t be tough. Truth is, he never went away. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s previous collection of new material, “It’s a Mystery,” entered The Billboard 200 at No. 27 in November 1995. Since then, it’s sold just 537,000 copies. But Seger’s “Greatest Hits” with the Silver Bullet Band has been cemented atop Billboard’s Top Pop catalog chart for 616 weeks now; SoundScan has it at 7.7 million and counting. And now there’s “Face the Promise,” Sept. 12.

Seger lives in Orchard Lake, Mich., in suburban Oakland County, where he says more people reside now than in Detroit itself. His two kids just started a new year of middle school; parts of the new album, he says, are inspired by them: “I always end up slipping a little advice to the kids like Mike Brady.” Seger says they’ll join him on weekends if he hits the road. And he sounds eager to go—by November, he hopes.

“Face the Promise” is a representative from Seger’s Birmingham, Mich.-based management company Punch Enterprises, says of a tour. “He’s doing what he needs to do to get ready for it, and we are, too.” Punch Enterprises is headed by Punch Andrews, who more than four decades ago ran a series of Detroit-area teen clubs called the Hideouts; he put out Seger’s first single, the local hit “East Side Story,” in 1965 and has managed the artist since.

Fans who only know Seger’s music since he finally broke out of Detroit in the late ’70s, and especially his ballad-heavy ’80s and ’90s albums, may well be surprised by “Face the Promise,” which he says might rock as hard as any album he’s made probably ever, if I really look at it.” Most of the set was self-produced, a Seger first, in Nashville with session musicians. Seger says he likes the relative proximity to Michigan—he can fly down in the morning, be back to his family at night and never switch time zones. Nashville also reminds him of Ann Arbor, where he grew up. Plus, “a lot of guys I used to play with are down there.”

One Michigan native who shows up on the record is Seger’s friend and fellow longtime local star-turned-national-superstar Kid Rock, also managed by Punch. Patty Loveless, who Seger calls “my favorite country singer of all time,” makes an appearance, too. And Seger says he even “made friends with the Nashville string community,” which led to the string-section solo in the Iraq War protest track “No More.” The album’s first single, “Wait for Me,” has chucked up some CMT and country radio play, though “it wasn’t by design,” the Punch rep insists. Capitol Records VP of marketing Rick Camino agrees. “We’re not chasing country.” In fact, the crossover embrace is nothing new—Seger’s version of Rodney Crowell’s “Shame On the Moon,” for instance, peaked at No. 15 on the country chart in 1983.

But Seger’s primary constituency remains tuned to classic-rock radio, the Punch rep says, adding that the format is “playing more new stuff, because so many of the classic rock artists are putting out new material.” WCSS Detroit even spun the “Face the Promise” album in its entirety. Younger audiences seem to be discovering Seger, too. “When you’re selling almost 8 million copies of your ‘Greatest Hits,’ you’re always pulling in new people,” the rep says. “Week to week, year to year, his sales are consistent.”

“There’s just so much good will in the marketplace for this guy,” Camino says. And now the team also expects iTunes sales, even though Seger says he doesn’t have an iPod himself. “Pandora is the first Seger song available via download, and as of Sept. 3, fans can finally buy tracks from 1976’s ‘Night Moves’ as well. Seger’s camp was a longtime holdout download-wise “because of a contractual thing they put in in 1910,” Seger jokes. But even now, they’re taking it slow. “The usual M.O. is for artists to put their entire catalog up in one day,” the Punch rep says. “But our feeling is that’s asking too much of the fans to shell out so much money all at once.”

Meanwhile, Seger practices with his band up to six days a week, warming up his voice daily, which he says is necessary when one’s 61. “Joni Mitchell told me my voice is just gonna keep getting lower and lower,” he says. “When you get older, he points out, “everything sinks a little bit.”
Standing Room Only
Well-Attended R&B/Hip-Hop Conference Illuminates Burgeoning Urban Music Issues

Standing-room-only morning sessions like those presented by Michael Patletta's branding panel (see story, page 16) and Elroy Smith's much-lauded Friday-morning radio panel (see Hillary Croesley's column, below) showed how far Billboard's R&B/Hip-Hop Conference has come since its 2000 launch.

Back then, in partnership with BET, Billboard was just getting its feet wet in the urban conference waters. And while consolidation and other factors negated staging such drawing cards as the labels president panel that year, this year's conference illuminated other burgeoning sectors within urban music—notably the international marketplace and indie R&B—while laying the foundation for a promising future.

In terms of indie R&B, eclectic Entertainment president Kevin Harewood declared that "traditional record labels are dying. The indices are picking up the momentum once owned by major record labels. Look at punk and hip-hop in the early days—both came out of indie labels and/or indie distribution. This whole atmosphere is making the R&B/soul scene more vital than ever."

Lamonda Williams, Music Choice director of urban programming, concurred. "People are saying no to the major-label industry standard. You're seeing more artists take chances on their own thing. Between wireless, digital and online possibilities, there are so many ways for artists and their content to be heard and seen."

Eric Roberson, a thriving indie R&B singer/songwriter/producer who operates the Blue Erro Soul label, advised aspiring artists not to wait for a deal with a major: "It's a guarantee for nothing."

Playing devil's advocate, Soul Thought Entertainment president Craig Bowers wondered whether the increased number of outlets for indie R&B artists like BET J, MySpace and YouTube might instead marginalize the music. "Can this music ever be mainstream again?" asked Bowers, whose artist roster includes former Motown artist Donnie.

Roberson countered that while the question was legitimate, it was almost beside the point. The bottom line, he noted, is for artists "to stay focused on your game, make the music you want and don't forget it's also about understanding the business."

These and other dialogues, showcases, the keynote Q&A and awards show (including Billboard and Radio & Records' first-ever urban radio awards) couldn't have happened without key sponsors and supporters. Thanks to Warner Bros., Virgin and Jermaine Dupri, MBK Entertainment, J Records, Atlantic and Grand Hustle, Clear Channel, Remix magazine, Armed Forces Entertainment, the Recording Academy, Butter Music, Bentely, ASCAP, SESAC, the RIAA, Atlanta Live and Taprize/GTT Entertainment, among others. Also a special thanks to Ludacris, Chaka Zulu and their Disturbing Tha Peace staff.

Last but not least, a shout-out to Billboard's event and sales teams plus my two partners on the R&B/hip-hop beat, Raphael George and Hillary. I couldn't do it without you....

Radio Recipe
Panelists In Atlanta Discuss What It Takes To Get Your Song On The Air


Smith's slide presentation, complete with cinematic "Mission: Impossible" sound effects, explored a gamut of issues: When should radio move a record out of rotation? Should PDs act as A&R people? Do label reps make a difference in adding record? Where is the good air talent?

But perhaps the most instructive portion featured Smith plucking a random independent artist from the audience and playing his CD for the PD panel. Sitting the artist in front of the panel, Smith coached him through pitching music to a PD. He suggested that in addition to having a prepared pitch, new artists need to know and share how many spins their track is getting locally, whose mix tapes they're on and what clubs are playing the track. He also emphasized that, for an introductory track, the chorus should come through in the first 30 seconds, unless the lyrics are completely unique. Most important, Smith insisted, if a PD has to play the entire song, it's not a good thing.

After the music was played, each PD gave a critique. Mitchell noted that most artists don't realize that she often won't have a slot for a new song for weeks. New songs usually take a lot more time to rise in rotation, and Mitchell's choice is often between a new artist and an established MC like Philadelphia favorite Beanie Sigel. In a radio battle where familiarity breeds success, a new, independent, poorly produced and unfamiliar song loses every time. So while persistence can pay off, if a PD offers suggestions on the hook, the beat or the lyrics, it's in an artist's best interest to take the advice and run with it.

Compounding the sometimes tenuous relationship among record promotion executives, PDs and MDs, services like Nielsen BDS have made quantitative record information extremely accessible. So even major label executives must pitch the same information as new indie artists shopping their records to someone like WQHT's Avery. Mitchell also denied that multi-station companies like Clear Channel have a nationalist platform that programmers must adhere to, saying, "It really comes down to playing the best music for your market."

On the creative promotional side, Cox Radio's Fields discussed labels putting their artists' songs in radio commercials. This nontraditional radio exposure increases audience awareness with the song, so when it's time to research the track, the results can frequently force a station to add the song. Darden stated that he doesn't add a new song until one of his DJs agrees that it's a go. And WQHT's Dimick pointed out that his station burns through almost 30 hip-hop songs per week.

Radio procedures differ from station to station, but the main lesson was that record executives or indie artists just getting started need to bring their "A" game. Professionalism, research numbers, market spins and a hook that grabs the ear can bring radio recognition.
Fey’s New Phase
A One-Time Mexican Teen-Popper Returns To The Spotlight

In the mid-1990s, a newcomer called Fey took the Mexican market by storm with a self-titled album geared toward the teen market. Like so many teen acts, Fey had her moment of fame, sold millions of copies, then went on hiatus.

Now a second successful album as an adult act highlights the possibility of life after teen stardom in the Latin realm.

This is not as easy as it sounds.

The Latin musical landscape is awash with former kid singers who have gone on to adult careers. Their ranks most famously include Ricky Martin, Luis Miguel, Christian Castro, Lucero and Pedro Fernandez, all of whom can be found in decades-old videos as pint-size performers. But performers who bypassed the kiddie circuit to launch careers in their teens seem a whole other story. Without the childhood fan base, they go through a much tougher transition to adult careers.

In Mexico, land of youth-aimed groups created with TV in mind (think BB), the biggest names to graduate from the teen-pop scene are Benny Ibarra, Paulina Rubio and Thalia, who were all members of Timbiriche. But that band had a caveat—the original lineup, including Rubio and Ibarra, started when they were preteens. Beyond them, no former teenie-bopper has managed to attain more than fleeting adult stardom. Belinda doesn’t count; she’s still very much a teenager.

Among the few teen-turned-adult acts that come to mind in the past few years are Pilar Montenegro and Patty Monterola, former members of ‘80s teen-pop group Garibaldi. Both went on to careers marked by as many downs as ups. For example, Montenegro opportunistically released a reggae album last year. Most recently, Kalimba, an alumnus of OV7 in his 20s, launched his Sony BMG solo career with a very successful debut album in Mexico, and a follow-up is on the way.

And of course, we are seeing the return of rebellious Gloria Trevi, now a mature mother who still acts like a teenager onstage.

But witness instead Fey (real name Maria Fernanda Blazquez Gil), who after a four-year hiatus from recording and touring has reappeared not as a wannabe, erstwhile teenager, but as an adult artist with a defined, sustainable appeal that doesn’t rely on the flavor of the month. Her recently released album, “Faltan Lunas” (EMI Televisa), is a European-sounding blend of electronica, dance and pop that retains the roots of her original albums but sounds infinitely more grown-up—think Latin pop meets Ibiza. It’s a mix that already served Fey well in her 2005 comeback, “La Fuerza del Destino,”

“It was like a renovation, like closing a door,” says Fey, who as a teen artist was signed to Sony BMG. “It’s a new story for me, and it gives you a new push.”

And with that new story comes a new attitude. “Your ego is what’s hit hardest, because we always want to be the biggest,” Fey says about her switch from center-of-the-universe teen act to adult act fighting for record sales. “On the other hand, it’s far more healthy and real to appeal to an audience for your musical work and not just your image. That’s when you realize this is actually better.”

Fey’s first career stage yielded four albums and close to 2 million copies sold worldwide, according to published reports. At her height, she set the record for number of consecutive shows (10) for a female artist at Mexico City’s prime venue, Auditorio Nacional. (That record would be broken by Belinda in 2004.)

Returning after such a track record was a risky move. But in looking for new material, Fey stumbled upon the possibility of recording an album of covers by Mecano, the ’80s Spanish trio often regarded as the most successful Latin pop group in the past two decades. “La Fuerza del Destino” was produced by Carlos Jean, who gave it an ethereal, European sound, and the album was an unexpected hit, selling well in Mexico, Spain and the United States, and effectively restarting a career.

Fey suddenly became a credible adult act with a new story to tell. “Faltan Lunas,” a collection of all-new tracks also produced by Jean, solidifies her reentry into the market.

“When you’re the center of attention, that’s when [the media] attack you the most,” says Fey, who in her heyday was hammered by thetabloids. “It’s a weird aggression. But since the last album, it’s the other way round. People are talking about my career, which is something they would have never done before.”
Shadow In The Spotlight
An Underground Hip-Hop Hero Aims For Wide Radio Appeal

In April, DJ Shadow unveiled the first taste of music from "The Outsider," his first album in four years, and some longtime fans scratched their heads. The track "3 Friks" found Shadow flanked by hyphy stars Keak Da Sneak and Turf Talk for a languid hip-hop track—far removed from the cinematic instruments of his past work.

And while "The Outsider," due Sept. 19 via Universal, does not abandon Shadow's musical roots, it is far from the most hip-hop-focused record of his career. Other guest rappers on the project include Q-Tip, the Federation, David Banner, E-40 and longtime collaborator Latrell.

Bay Area native Shadow (real name: Josh Davis) became enamored with hyphy in early 2003 while listening to local radio during car trips from his house to his studio. But it wasn't until the middle of last year that he started creating his own hyphy beats and reaching out to local artists to join him in the process.

"Until January, hyphy was largely regimented in a 20-square-mile radius in the world," Shadow says. "I went to New York in October last year to tell people this album was coming, and everybody said, 'Hyphy? Who? Who?' Four months later, they were like, 'Oh, we love hyphy. We get it.' Still, that didn't prevent friends and label personnel from discouraging Shadow to release an album combining commercial hip-hop with rock ("You Made It"), mind-expanding instrumental music ("Artifact," "Triplicate") and psychedelic folk ("What Have I Done").

"Some of the feedback I was getting was, 'Well, why don't you do a whole rap album, and then a rock album after that?' But for me, I don't just listen to rap for six months and then rock for six months," Shadow says. "I wanted to make a record that reflects entirely and completely what inspired me, and where I feel like my interest is musically right now."

Thus, preparing to market "The Outsider" has been a company-wide initiative for Universal, according to director of marketing Billy Zarro. "This is the first time I'd worked with our mix-show department, and they got [Shadow] in front of 150 DJs at a mix-show convention," he says. "All the departments had to work together to make sure this music was going to get heard."

Universal has a three-pronged radio strategy for "The Outsider," which began when "You Made It" was serviced in early August to modern rock and triple-A stations. The song is performing well at such rock outlets as KCRW Santa Monica, Calif., and WXPN Philadelphia, but has also been an unlikely audience favorite at AC station KLAC Oakland, Calif., where it edged out Gnars Barketley's "Gone Daddy Done" in a recent listener-voted contest.

Simultaneously, hyphy track "Turf Dancin'" was serviced to clubs and mix shows on vinyl and was, as expected, quickly picked up by Bay Area stations like KMET. Zarro says its ongoing performance in the rest of the country will help the label decide whether to service it as a proper second single. Meanwhile, R&B/hip-hop and crossover radio will get "Snuff" Sept. 19.

On his fall tour, Shadow's shows will feature live rapping from a rotating cast of guests. At least one in-store event is in the works for the album's street date, as are more intimate appearances during the tour where Shadow will field questions from fans.

"I think a common misconception among some in my fan base, and maybe even at my own label, is that I'm happy in my own little box and I don't really want to sell a lot of records and I don't want radio play," Shadow says. "Of course I do. Anybody who makes music, whether they admit it or not, wants to be successful with what they do. I don't consider myself the type of artist who will ever be in the top five, but what I do can work with a lot of people."

Additional reporting by Evie Nagy in New York
Mercury Rising

Arctic Monkeys Take British Prize As Others Rack Up Sales

LONDON—Arctic Monkeys may have been awarded the prestigious 2006 Nationwide Mercury Prize, but the real winners in terms of increased sales and profile come from within the ranks of the 11 "losers" on the list.

Winning album "Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not" (Domino) saw an immediate spike in the two days after its victory, with sales up 52% week-on-week in market-leading retailer HMV's stores. But as the album had already sold more than 1 million units (according to chart compiler the Official U.K. Charts Co. [OCC]), the Monkeys had less to gain than previous winners, who include Franz Ferdinand, Gomez and Antony & the Johnsons.

Monkeys frontman Alex Turner's first words when picking up the British and Irish album of the year award at the Sept. 5 ceremony at London's Grosvenor House Hotel were: "Somebody call 999—Richard Hawley's been robbed!" But in fact, Sheffield-based singer/songwriter Hawley has proved to be the main beneficiary of the spotlight afforded by a place on the Mercury shortlist.

HMV says sales of Hawley's critically acclaimed "Col's Corner" (Mute) have rocketed since the album appeared on the list July 18, with a 336% rise during the nomination period and a massive 492% increase in the two days following the ceremony, with a further boost likely to come from the Sept. 8 broadcast of the ceremony on national TV channel BBC 2.

Hawley's manager Graham Wrench, of Sheffield-based Electric Canyon Management, says the nomination effectively rejuvenated an album that celebrated a year on the shelves on the day of the 2006 ceremony.

"If we hadn't got the Mercury, the album wouldn't still be on the shelves at Christmas," he says.

The Sept. 4 release of a fourth U.K. single from the album, "Hotel Room," directly prompted by the Mercury nomination, has proved crucial, with the song peaking as the third most-played song at national AC station BBC Radio 2, which boasts a formidable weekly reach of more than 13 million listeners. High-profile TV slots on "Newsnight Review" (BBC2) and "The Sharon Osbourne Show" (ITV1) followed.

During the nomination window, Hawley appeared on the front cover of national broadsheet The Independent On Sunday's ABC Magazine (circulation: 216,175) and in debut interview pieces in national tabloids The Sun, Daily Mirror and Daily Mail, which have a combined daily circulation in excess of 7 million copies.

Mute marketing director Howard Corner says he hopes the album will reach gold (100,000 units shipped) by Christmas, from sales of 55,897 before the ceremony, according to the OCC.

The award has also sparked overseas interest. Mute international marketing and promotions manager Francesca Skirvin cites the recent release of the album in India as a direct result of the Mercury nomination. Hawley will also play the Jack Daniel's JD Set event Oct. 6 in Lynchburg, Tenn.

Ticket sales are also buoyant at home. "We took a big chance and booked his next hometown show [Dec. 12] into the City Hall, where the capacity is 2,200," Wrench says. "He's only played the Leadmill [capacity 850] before, but we did 750 tickets in two weeks with no advertising."

Other new artists on the list have rapidly signaled their intent to capitalize on the Mercury effect. Dance act Hot Chip, which saw sales of its debut set "The Warning" (EMI) rise by 189% in HMV stores in the two days after the ceremony, will reissue the single "Over and Over," which the band played live at the ceremony, on Oct. 9. EMI plans new U.K. TV advertising support for the album.

Quirky pop act Guillemots' "Through the Windowpane" album saw sales rise from 14,650 to 48,805 during the nominations period, according to the OCC. But label Polydor will not rest there, using the Universal Music UK Conference Sept. 7 in London to announce a target of 150,000 sales for the album by Christmas.

Nominees without major backing value the award even more highly. Jazz pianist Zoe Rahman, short-listed for "Melting Pot" on her own Manushi label, won praise for her Mercury performance from Muse and Thom Yorke—and saw a 480% rise in HMV sales in the ceremony's immediate aftermath. Rahman handles every aspect of her career herself, apart from distribution, which is through Bognor Regis-based the Woods Distribution.

"Within five minutes of the shortlist being announced, HMV, Virgin and Amazon were on the phone placing orders," Rahman says. "I'd only printed 1,000 copies before the announcement but have printed 4,000 since."

The OCC sales for Rahman still registered less than 1,000 immediately before the ceremony but Rahman sells many of her records direct to fans at her gigs, and with the total cost of the album coming in at under £4,500 ($8,370), the artist says the Mercury attention has put her comfortably into profit.

Despite the increased profile afforded by pieces in The Guardian (daily circulation: 362,844) and The Independent (254,854) and slots on BBC Radio 4 and Five Live, Rahman intends to keep her operation low-key.

"I'm talking to manager "N" re: incoming agents now," she says. "But instrumental jazz is a tricky business proposition for people and, anyway, I like doing things myself."
Time was when Rod Stewart’s songwriting chops regularly helped him crown Billboard charts. Today, the singer sells his millions by interpreting the songs of others, most notably in the four, highly successful volumes of his “Great American Songbook” series. As J/Arista Records GM Tom Corson says, this era in Stewart’s career is “defined by the repertoire.” The tradition continues as Stewart releases “Still the Same: Great Rock Classics of Our Time” on Oct. 10 via J Records.

With covers of Bob Dylan, Badfinger and John Fogerty (“Have You Ever Seen the Rain,” the album’s first single), Stewart is returning, somewhat, to the form and genre that first made him famous. Produced by longtime cohort Clive Davis and Grammy Award winner John Shanks, “Still the Same” will be supported with a full tour starting in early 2007, with much of the same band that backed Stewart during the “Great American Songbook” stint.

Was it difficult narrowing down which songs you would keep on the album? We definitely knew that we didn’t want to do “Stairway to Heaven” or “Brown Sugar” or songs like that. They didn’t need redoing.

We felt, Clive and myself, that these songs were the ones that are due for a revisit and blend together as a single piece of work. We cut an Eric Clapton track, “Lay Down Sally,” and an incredible version of “Me and Bobby McGee.”

How do you decide which ones would blend? Most of the songs, apart from two, were recorded in the ’70s and all sung by great singers like Bob Seger, Bob Dylan, Bonnie Tyler, [John] Fogerty... The attitude that I took from doing the “American Songbook” is that I’m standing on the shoulders of giants and that I just wanted to bring something else to the table—a twist and turn of the phrase, things like that.

Was it your choice or Davis’ to make this album? I really went to Clive with the idea of doing a blue-eyed soul collection, singing soul hits from the ’60s. He said, “No, we’re going to do a ’70s album of rock hits.” The sort of thing that’s so close to people’s hearts. So each release we’ve done is a little hint, a little you. It’s a very good relationship. I’ve been thinking next of doing a country hits album, so we’ll see. We’re a long time from then.

Do you expect to win over new fans with this collection? Well, we can’t consciously make efforts to sell this to 16 year olds. I can’t write songs like “Hot Legs” anymore. I record what pleases me and what pleases Clive. I don’t really know who [the album] is for, it’s generally for people who will enjoy these songs.

My made an appearance in the last season of “American Idol,” helping out the finalists choose and perform their songs. What was that like? It was so much fun. I’m going to do [similar L.K. show] “The X Factor” in a couple of months. Those kids have got some guts. I’m used to big crowds, but even when I do TV shows, I’m on edge.

When was the last time you wrote your own song? I think it’s been about four years. There’s not many songwriters at my age still trying to release albums of their own music, and I’m not planning on it myself. Paul Simon, Elton John, the Rolling Stones have all penned their new records, and all the critics loved them, but they just didn’t sell. When you get too old, people don’t want to play your songs on the radio, so you have to go about it in a different way... I love doing these concept records. Love it. There’s not many like me...
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Still The Shape Of Jazz
Coleman's New Album Explores The Composition Vs. Improvisation Puzzle

When jazz iconoclast Ornette Coleman records a new album, it’s always a newsworthy event. That’s certainly the case with the captivating “Sound Grammar,” the 76-year-old alto saxophonist’s first disc in more than a decade and arguably his most accessible. Released Sept. 12 on his new home spun Sound Grammar label, the album’s musical syntax is spirited, whimsical, playful and, in the case of the sober tune “Sleep Talking,” wistfully lyrical.

The recipient of such prestigious awards as the MacArthur “Genius” Grant in 1994 and the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize in 2004, Coleman has been singularly grooving to a different beat since the late ’50s, when he trailblazed the free jazz movement in reaction to the confines of bebop. Not to be confused with freelwheeling avant blowing that he helped spawn, his “shape of jazz to come” formed a delicate balance of reflection and turbulence, structure and license.

Nearly a half-century later, Coleman continues to confront the mystery of music. “What I’m trying to do is solve the problem between composition and improvisation,” he says. “I’m trying to figure out how to free up ideas to make them pleasurable in the moment. It’s not easy, but it works.”

On “Sound Grammar,” recorded live in concert last year in Germany, Coleman and his band (drummer/son Denardo Coleman and bassists Greg Cohen and Tony Falanga) launch into fluid extemporaneous action spurred by the leader’s indelible melodic framework. The passionate playing is informed by acute listening and responding as the foursome negotiates the twists and turns of seven new originals and two Coleman classics.

“Composing is not hard, not easy. It’s like cooking. You have to know how to use the ingredients,” says Coleman, who continues to actively write new material. Coleman maintains sole control of his Sound Grammar label. The CD is distributed in North America by Harmonia Mundi; iTunes has the exclusive worldwide digital distribution rights.

HILL HOMAGE: When guitarist Nels Cline set out to record “New Monastery,” a compelling interpretation of a minimalist Andrew Hill’s compositions, his only motivation was to honor “a criminally overlooked” musician from the ’60s. “I didn’t realize that Andrew was experiencing a resurgence, that he was recording a new Blue Note album or that he was ill,” Cline says, in reference to Hill’s fight against lung cancer. “But as I’ve listened to his tunes, I wanted to celebrate his music. It’s free, but it’s structured. It swings, then it doesn’t. It’s modal but not modal.”

Cline, who currently fills the lead guitar seat in Wilco, says he “runs the risk of being a pretentious idiot” in interpreting Hill’s music on “New Monastery,” due Sept. 26 on Cryptogramophone. He hastens to note that his goal was to be sincere and horrible throughout. Yet, he says, his band—a sextet comprising clarinetist Ben Goldberg, keyboardist Andrea Parks, cornetist Bobby Bradford, bassist Devin Hoff and drummer Scott Amendola—does take liberties. “We opened the tunes up, so that it’s more of a free jazz approach. . . . There’s electricity and electronics that you don’t hear in Andrew’s music, but is natural to us.”

Global Pulse
EDITED BY TOM FERGUSON tferguson@eu.billboard.com

Hallyday In The Sun
A French Legend Finds New Home; Funky Nashville Finds Denmark

After 43 years with Universal Music and its predecessor companies, French rock veteran Johnny Hallyday has released his first album at his new home, Warner Music France.

The 28 songs on the double live CD “Flashback Tour” were recorded in June at the Palais de Sports in Paris as Hallyday launched his 120-date “greatest hits” tour of France, Belgium and Switzerland. Warner released the album simultaneously in these markets Sept. 4, with Canada and Italy to follow in November. The tour, booked through Paris-based Campus et Campus Productions, runs through February 2007.

A DVD version of the album is scheduled for release Oct. 2 in France, two days after a live broadcast of Hallyday’s Paris-Bercy concert on French TV channel TF1. Warner Music France CEO Thierry Chassagne says “Flashback Tour” initially shipped 230,000 units in France, with DVD orders at 200,000.

“Hallyday’s first studio project for Warner will be a blues album, due in late 2007. He is published by his own Pimento Music. —Aymic Pichelin

DANISH COUNTRY: Funky Nashville’s name suggests a genre collision in America’s South, but the band actually hails from 4,500 miles north-east of Tennessee—in Jutland, Denmark. The quirky American-influenced trio is managed and booked by Manfred Zahringer, CEO of Copenhagen-based iceberg Records, which released the act’s debut album “A Good Day to Drive” in October 2003 in Denmark.

“Their sound has a lot of ‘desert in it,” Zahringer says. “It’s music a la Quentin Tarantino.”

Second set “Hitch a Ride” followed in April, and regional distribution: Bonnier is rolling it out in Scandinavia. An October German release through Net Music Zone/Rough Trade will follow. Mooresco, N.J.-based label 215 Records released the album July 11 in North America, distributed by IDN (United States) and Universal Music (Canada).

The U.S. label reports that the album’s title track has been picked up by triple A station WBLT Nashville, similarly formatted satellite channel XM Cafe, several college radio outlets and other stations in California and North Carolina.

Zahringer says he is now seeking U.S. co-management for the band and notes that a tie-in with mobile phone manufacturer Samsung will see the “Hitch a Ride” single preloaded on a new model issued in Europe in early fall. The band is published by iceberg Publishing in Denmark and sublicensed globally by EMI Music Publishing. —Charles Perez

SONG MEN: In the 1980s, Neil Murray could be found sniping at fellow singer/songwriter Shane Howard in the Australian press when their respective former outfits the Warumpi Band and Goanna were domestic chart rivals.

Goanna’s single “Solid Rock” (Warner Music) reached No. 1 on the Australian Recording Industry Assn. chart in 1982, Warumpi’s “My Island Home” (Parole/Festival) was a chart-topper in 1987. Murray’s beef back then was that Goanna was getting more media attention than his own band. However, the pair have now been close friends for some 15 years.

They finally teamed up as the 2 Song Men for a 16-date club/festival tour (Aug. 3-27) to a positive public and media reaction, which Murray’s Melbourne-based manager Paul Minshull admits “took us by surprise.”

Minshull says the duo is now weighing offers to play Australian festivals over the coming summer and plan a live album in early 2007. Murray has his own MGM-distributed label Goanna Arts, and his publishing is with Universal Music. Howard is signed to Shock Records and published by Mushroom Music. —Christie Eliezer
ELTON JOHN
The Captain and the Kid
Producers: Gus Dudgeon, Greg Penny
Rocket/Interscope
Release Date: Sept. 19
For all the hype that John's "Peachtree Road" was a return to his organic roots (it wasn't), if only the label had waited until now. "The Captain and the Kid" could have been recorded 25 years ago, during El and songwriting partner Bernie Taupin's golden days. Thanks to organic, piano-driven production, stellar storytelling and Sir's redemption to his vocal craft, this is a triumph. The concept album that serves as a bookend to 1975's "Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy" is packed with new classics. First single "The Bridge" (this 68th AC chart entry, the highest total for any artist) is a class act, as is the lovely ode to New York, "Wouldn't Have It Any Other Way." Also great: "And the House Fell Down" (reminiscence of "Honky Cat") and the countrified, autobiographical title track. A master at his finest.—CT

KENNY CHESNEY
Live (Live Those Songs Again)
Producer: none listed
BNA
Release Date: Sept. 19
A host of songs on this cross-country concert collection documents Chesney's nostalgia for days of frat parties and college ball fields and classic-rock oldies he heard there. Most of the rest are about drinking on the beach, both excellent themes for crowd singalongs, especially when the audience members all have female voices.

CHRISTINA AGUILERA
Hurt (4:03)
Producer: Linda Perry
C Guitara L Perry M Rosson
Publishers: various RCA

Christina Aguilera's " Ain't No Other Man," in all its incarnations—single release to chart-topping club remixes—was a triple-play triumph of talent reaching its prime, melodic potency and sheer star power (awesome video, too). Follow-up balled "Hurt," driven by its hits gears from sad to sad, further giving testament to Aguilera's stumping gifts as an emotive, mature powerhouse singer. The force of her vocal as she relates the pain of moving past a relationship in ruins is daunting, with a melody and lush production that carries this potential Grammy Award contender into the clouds. "Hurt" reunites C'ina with Linda Perry, who also helmed the victorious ballad "Beautiful," which hit No. 2 in 2003. We predict one better this time out.—CT

NAOMI STRIERER
Cars
Producers: Narada Michael Walden
Writer: N Strierer Publisher: S Records S Records

Remember the first time you heard Whitney, Mariah or Celine and recognized a star was born? Naomi Strierer will—must—propel beyond her foray at AC and become the commanding diva of the decade. This Canadian beauty possesses so many novel traits—excellent vocals, distinctive phrasing, masterful songwriting—that no notes into heartbeatbreaking first single "Cars," staves will aim toward speakers. Initially signed to an ultimately ditched deal with Epic, she is now the shining star of entrepreneur Steven Novack, who is persuading DJs on a grass-roots level that Strierer is inevitable. Grammy Award-winning contributors Carlos Santana (guitar) and Narada Michael Walden are convinced. The year's most promising melodic debut. A standing ovation of an endorsement.—CE

JAZZ
DIANA KRALL
From This Moment On
Producers: Diana Krall, Tommy LiPuma Verve
Release Date: Sept. 17
On 2004's "The Girl in the Other Room," Krall advertised that she would not alienate her standards-adoring fans by offering self-composed songs for the first time. The album triumphed, creatively and commercially, but on "From This Moment On," Krall abstains from original songs and returns to the well, delivering a remarkably rendered collection of tunes penned by the likes of Cole Porter, Irving Berlin and the Gershwin. Singing with impeccable phrasing, displaying top-tier piano prowess and enlisting the lush support of the Clayton/Hamilton Jazz Orchestra for eight of the 11 numbers, Krall exudes spunk and romance. Among the noteworthy tracks is the samba-inflected "How Insensitive" and a lustfully wistful take on "Little Girl Blue." This, her 10th release, marks Krall's finest hour to date and firmly establishes her status as jazz's premier female song stylist.—DO

ROCK
THE RAPTURE
Pieces of the People We Love
Producers: various Universal Motown
Release Date: Sept. 12
The Rapture led a dance-rock resurgence with club hit "House of Jealous Lovers," a sassy Gang of Four update that both brought production duos the DFA to prominence. DFA is M.I.A. for this new disc, but the Rapture proves that its initial success, and sound, was no fluke. Production team Ewan Pearson and Paul "Phonics" Epworth plus a pre-Gnarls Barkley Dwayne Wiggins bring the quartet at its danceable best. The 10 cohesive tracks launch with a sort of "Suite for the "Bitch and Goltar" five epic workouts (including first single "Get Myself Into It" and the title track) melding raw percussion, spiky guitars and urgent vocals. The propulsive beat slows into psychedelia on "Hurt," and "Lilac Wine," but the album never loses steam. By refocusing on the dancefloor, the Rapture remains a step ahead.—JMC

JOSEPH ARTHUR
Nuclear Daydream
Producer: Joseph Arthur Lonely Astronaut
Release Date: Sept. 17
On his fifth full-length album, singer/songwriter Arthur explores a new minimalism that reaches back to David Bowie and P. Stones, armed with his distinctive vocal arrangements and just a handful of chords. Released on Arthur's own label, the collection of sparse, acoustic guitar-based songs about love, death and the lingering pain of bruised relationships. Simply structured, but rich in texture, standouts like the synth-drenched "Automated Situation" and the majestic "Black Luxus" are gloriously melancholic pop songs, introspective, anthemic and always laid-back. Most of the action happens in the chorus when Arthur, still a force to be reckoned with, becomes a haunting wall-of-vocals that can veer from a Bee Gees meltdown ("Slide Away") to an icy trembling ("Electrical Storm"). The title track offers his own answer to the Stones' "Wild Horses," closing a mature effort that shines with nakedness and clarity.—SP

THE MARS VOLTA
Amputechture
Producer: Omar Rodriguez-Lopez Universal
Release Date: Sept. 12
Like a lot of bands, the Mars Volta does not put its music compartmentalized. But there is no denying that "Amputechture" is a long, woozy prog party where the instruments are repeatedly careen into each other in a drunken cacophony. "Day of the Baphomet" is one spot at which the chemistry gets loud enough to wake the neighborhood, because Latin percussion, erratic horns and scratchy guitar are duking it all out with an undertone of Primus. The heavily textured album could be mistaken for one long song if it were not for quieter jolts like "Vermicide" and the Spanish-flavored "Asilos Megdalena." This record isn't for casual listening, so those checking out the Mars Volta for the first time should take it slow to prevent a sonic hangover.—CLT

HIP-HOP
CHINGY
Hoodstar
Producers: various Slot-A-Lot/Capital
Release Date: Sept. 19
Aside from a few catchy club tracks, there is nothing all that exciting about Chingy's third album. As with his previous effort, "Powerballin," the St. Louis rapper stays within his safe comfort zone, always keeping his lyricism as basic as ever (although he does show off a speedy flow on a couple of songs). The first few cuts, notably "Hands Up" and "Nike Airs & Crispy Tees," are worthy of playlisting but the latter is continued on p.74
“Two Hands,” chronicled his return to full playing after losing use of his right hand for nearly 40 years to the neurological condition called focal dystonia. As with that album, the 78-year-old Fleisher continues to prove that the master of the keyboard he is, and what audiences have been missing all these many years. As ever, he approaches each work with the utmost thoughtfulness, drawing out its individual character, rather than imposing his own personality upon them. The seven songs sing in Bach’s Capriccio in E Flat Major “On the Departure of a Brother.” BWV 992, the sixtieth of Stravinsky’s “Serenade in A” shines gleamingly, and Fleisher dispatches the melodies in Mozart’s E-Flat Major Sonata K.482 with admirable understatement and authority.—AT

CHRISTIAN

BABO BAYS
Between the Dreaming and the Dreaming True
Producers: Jason Ingram, Babo Bays. Glenn Rosenstein
Essential Records
Release Date: Sept. 19

Hope and turmoil are two very different forces, yet they beautifully co-exist and soulfully intertwine on this stunning collection of songs. Norman, with co-producer/co-writer Ingram, has crafted an album that explores hope and heartache. He sings of peace and comfort on the gorgeous string-laden ballad “I Know Now” yet he’s not afraid to write about the turbulent road and trials encountered on the way. Musically, Norman takes it up several notches on his fifth studio set, venturing away from his signature acoustic sound to deliver a sonic feast replete with strings and horns. The highlights are many, among them “Be My Covering,” “Sunday” and “Now That You’re Gone.” In a warm and strong voice, Norman admits life isn’t easy, but listening to this album will make you feel better about the journey.—DEP

VITAL REISSUES

LOU REED
Coney Island Baby Producers: various
RCA
Release Date: Sept. 19

At a low point after the misbegotten, misunderstood “Metal Machine Music,” Reed rebounded back in 1976 with one of his most tuneful solo albums. “Coney” features a powerful, focused band and a handful (eight or nine) of strong songs. An undeniably beautiful burst of happiness surges through the campy opener “Crazy Feeling” (digg those church organ) and “You and Me” (a funk junkie’s dream) before her second single “Belong” hits like a ton of bricks. Reed’s voice remains a celestial gift, hand-waving in its potency and deep-rooted passion. God is smiling.—CLT

DANIEL POWTER
Jimmy
Producers: Michael Froom, Jeff Dawson
Writer: D. Powter
Publisher: Song 6, BMI
Warner Bros

David Powter is suffering from Duncan Sheik syndrome: Debut with a killer song that radio simply doesn’t want to let go of, despite the label’s aim to move forward (there are perhaps worse fates). Gratefully, nothing on Powter’s current self-titled launch is as compelling as “Bad Day,” but at this point, the guy deserves another chance. Single “High” and DOA at radio and now “Jimmy” has the trappings of another, appealing song that may nevertheless catch the masses. Adult top 40 could groom the artist into a staple—but do programmers care about artist development in 2004? Sadly, this could be the final chapter in a thin volume on U.S. Radio 101.—CT

ROCK

LENNON
Where Do I Fit In
(4:06)
Producer: Tony Battaglia
Writer: L. Murphy
Publisher: John Waltz Music, ASCAP
John Waltz Entertainment

You know when you’re mired in the fog of a breakup and you subject yourself to one-night stands and dialing the ex’s voicemail to hear his voice? “Where Do I Fit In” is the song you hear that’s playing in your head. Lennon revamps this torch number from her 2001 Arista debut, “5.30 Saturday Morning,” by appending the grandiose meta production and toning down the strings. Now it’s an up tempo rocker that trods on her strong voice and not strictly taking the angry route and mimicking Alanis Morissette’s “You Oughta Know” line. She also conveys pain and hopelessness in her throaty wails. If you don’t have any other options left but to wallow in your misery, this set track to repeat on your iPod.—CLT

DEENA JONES & THE DREAMS
One Night Only
(4:06)
Remixer: Richie Jones
Sony Urban/Columbia

BeYonce’s “B Day” aside, there’s another party in full force on dancershoes. This festive remix of “One Night Only” revives a staple that every dancing queen vividly remembers from the original: Tony Award-winning “Dreamgirls” cast on Broadway some 25 years ago. Roaring up the club chart, this is the Beyoncé—credited here as Deeno Jones, her character in the movie—that many would prefer to hear. sans the sped up pop production that often overpowers her talent. Helmed by the Underdogs and beat to perfection by Dan Mitelli, this truly the stuff that melodic dreams are made of. This “One Night” is forever.—CT
Beyoncé’s Big Start Paces Rare Comp-Week Gain

Turns out Beyoncé’s birthday is not just a celebration for the singer, but for the whole music industry. The No. 1 bow by her second solo album, “B’Day,” also signals the first time in four months that album sales beat those of the comparable 2005 sales week.

Released Sept. 5, the day after her 25th birthday, it opens with 541,000 copies. 59% more than the 317,000 first-week sales that greeted her first solo album, “Dangerously In Love,” in 2003. There was only one frame in the seven-album career of her group, Destiny’s Child, when she had a larger sales week: Third set “Survivor” began at 663,000 in May 2001. The improvement over her first solo album’s start is no surprise. With this record arriving just a few months before her starring role in “Dreamgirls,” her screen success in December, Beyoncé’s celebrity never has been greater, fetching beaucoup ink in magazines and newspapers. Her Aug. 31 performance at MTV’s Video Music Awards set the stage for “B’Day.” The video for second single “Ring the Alarm” was MTV’s most-played clip during release week (29 plays) and also was among the 10 most-played videos on BET and VH1. The song enters The Billboard Hot 100 at No. 12, her highest debut either solo or with Destiny’s Child.

Beyoncé’s opening sums the best Nielsen SoundScan week by any solo artist this year. It is the third-largest total by any 2006 album, exceeded only by Rascal Flatts’ “Me and My Gang” (722,000) and Tool’s “10,000 Days” (564,000).

“B’Day” is the fifth album in 2006 to start in the half-million-plus club, compared with four during the first 36 sales weeks of 2005.

RISING TIDE: Beyoncé’s “B’Day” becomes the 25th album to bow at No. 1 on The Billboard 200 in 2006, but it manages a feat a few of those have accomplished. Namely, it places a gun over last year’s same-week album sales (see Market Watch, below).

Mind you, it’s a slim gain of less than 1%, but a victory, nonetheless. This victory signals the first uptick over comparable-week, 2005 album volume since May and the first since April that wasn’t triggered by a holiday shift.

The Mother’s Day spike of 7.9% posted in the week that ended May 14 was a mirage, as the gift-giving occasion happened a week later; in 2006, it didn’t. Similarly, the 20% advance reported for the week ending April 16, compared this year’s Easter frame to a non-holiday week.

The two weeks leading up to Easter were the last occasions before now when album volume rose without the benefit of a calendar quirk.

In the one that ended April 2, when rapper T.I. bowed at No. 1 with a 522,000-unit start for “King,” album sales were up by 4% over the same 2005 frame. A week later, the 700,000-plus start for the aforementioned Rascal Flatts album led a 15% rise in album volume.

Those advances were the first ones posted since the very first stanza of 2006: a rally that followed consecutive gains in the tracking weeks that ended with Christmas and New Year’s Day.

So, now that a crowded list of A-level talent is dropping albums in the last four months of the year, can the industry cut the 5% gap from last year’s album pace? Not a safe bet, because the last four months of any year are clock-full of new superstar albums.

In the last trimester of 2003, a September-December rally that included new releases from the likes of U2, Janet Jackson scoring on Red Hot Chili Peppers and Steve Holy.

**Market Watch**

Weekly Album Sales

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<td>12.7%</td>
<td>-4.0%</td>
<td>-3.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>This Week Last Year</td>
<td>9,500,000</td>
<td>96,000</td>
<td>6,340,000</td>
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<td>17,586,000</td>
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<td>Change</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>-35.4%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
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Weekly Album Sales

35 million sales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This Week</td>
<td>9,522,000</td>
<td>9,398,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last Week</td>
<td>9,500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
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**Year-To-Date Album Sales By Store Type**

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<tr>
<th>Store Type</th>
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<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>384.7 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>363.5 million</td>
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**Album Sales**

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<td>CD</td>
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<td>Cassette</td>
<td>123,000,000</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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**Sales by Album Format**

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<tr>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>123,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cassette</td>
<td>123,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>123,000,000</td>
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For weekly建筑业. © 2006. Figures are rounded. Nielsen SoundScan compiled data for the Billboard 200 albums, chart positions, and sales data. Nielsen SoundScan is a service of Nielsen Media Research. To order a complete chart, call 800-375-2700.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTIST</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beyoncé</td>
<td>B’Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A*TE האחרון</td>
<td>Revelations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Dylan</td>
<td>Modern Times</td>
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<tr>
<td>Danyt’s Kane</td>
<td>Danny Kane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina Aguilera</td>
<td>Back To Basics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nickelback</td>
<td>All The Right Reasons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iron Maiden</td>
<td>A Matter Of Life And Death</td>
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<tr>
<td>Various Artists</td>
<td>NOW 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>OutKast</td>
<td>Idelwild (Soundtrack)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Dre</td>
<td>Best Thing Smokin’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ricken Cross</td>
<td>Port Of Miami</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rascal Flatts</td>
<td>A Fever You Can’t Sweat Out</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Pussycat Dolls</td>
<td>PCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gnarls Barkley</td>
<td>St. Elsewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mkn</td>
<td>Amar Es Comas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soundtrack</td>
<td>High School Musical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Josh Cherry</td>
<td>Your Man</td>
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<tr>
<td>Method Man</td>
<td>4:21... The Day After</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blu</td>
<td>Game Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Blunt</td>
<td>Back To Bedlam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yung Joc</td>
<td>New Joc City</td>
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<td>Soundtrack</td>
<td>Step Up</td>
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<td>Carrie Underwood</td>
<td>Some Hearts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red Hot Chili Peppers</td>
<td>Stadium Arcadium</td>
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<td>The Roots</td>
<td>Game Theory</td>
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<td>Kidz Bop Kids</td>
<td>Kidz Bop 10</td>
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<td>Breaking Benjamin</td>
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<td>Soundtrack</td>
<td>Broken Bridges</td>
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<td>Snow Patrol</td>
<td>Eyes Open</td>
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<td>Blue October</td>
<td>Foiled</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letoya</td>
<td>LeToya</td>
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<tr>
<td>RI HUH</td>
<td>A Girl Like Me</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corinne Bailey Rae</td>
<td>Corinne Bailey Rae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wreckers</td>
<td>Stand Still, Look Pretty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dixie Chicks</td>
<td>Loose</td>
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<tr>
<td>My Word</td>
<td>In My Own Words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone Sour</td>
<td>Come What(ever) May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Too Short</td>
<td>Blow The Whistle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luther Vandross</td>
<td>The Ultimate Luther Vandross</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paris Hilton</td>
<td>Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 Seconds To Mars</td>
<td>A Beautiful Lie</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTIST</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan Jackson</td>
<td>Precious Memories</td>
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<tr>
<td>KT Tunstall</td>
<td>Eye To The Telescope</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary J. Blige</td>
<td>The Breakthrough</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeremy Camp</td>
<td>Restored</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ray Lamontagne</td>
<td>Tid The Sun Turns Black</td>
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<tr>
<td>All American Rejects</td>
<td>Move Along</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassie</td>
<td>Show Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jars Of Clay</td>
<td>Good Monsters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India Arie</td>
<td>Testimony: Vol. 1, Life &amp; Relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crossfade</td>
<td>Falling Away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodney Atkins</td>
<td>If You’re Goin’ Through Hell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vashtie</td>
<td>Decemberunderground</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kelis</td>
<td>Highway Companion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toby Keith</td>
<td>Rollin’ With The Crew (13.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crazy Frog</td>
<td>More Hits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamb of God</td>
<td>Disciples Of The Faith (12.98)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Billboard 200 Artist Index**

- **September 23, 2006**
- Go to [www.billboard.biz](http://www.billboard.biz) for complete chart data

**Charts Legend on Page 92**

**Sales Data Compiled by**

Nielson SoundScan, Inc.
The only authorized and complete histories of Billboard's major music charts.
### 700,000 SPINS
- **Yeah!** Usher Feat. Ludacris & Lil Jon /LAFACE/ZOMBA

### 600,000 SPINS
- Drift Away/ Uncle Kracker /LAVA
- Sex & Candy/ Marcy Playground /CAPITOL

### 500,000 SPINS
- Breakaway/ Kelly Clarkson /WALT DISNEY/HOLLYWOOD
- Beautiful/ Christina Aguilera /RCA
- That's The Way It Is/ Celine Dion /$50
- You Make Me Wanna/ Usher /LAFACE

### 400,000 SPINS
- Bed Day/ Daniel Powter /WARNER BROS
- Sugar, We're Goin' Down/ Fall Out Boy /FUELED BY RAME/N/ISLAND
- Daughters/ John Mayer /COLUMBIA
- I Can Only Imagine/ Mercy Me /INO/CURB
- These Days/ Rascal Flatts /LYRIC STREET
- I'm A Believer/ Smash Mouth /INTERSCOPE/DREAMWORKS
- Somebody Told Me/ Killers /ISLAND
- Lady Marmalade/ Christina Aguilera, Lil' Kim, Mya & Pink /INTERSCOPE

### 300,000 SPINS
- Me & You/ Cassie /NEXTSELECTION/BAD BOY/ATLANTIC
- Over My Head (Cable Car)/ Fray /EPIC
- Promiscuous/ Nelly Furtado /MOSEY/GEFFEN
- Lean Wit It, Rock Wit It/ Dem Franchize Boyz /SO SO DEF/VIRGIN
- Dirty Little Secret/ All-American Rejects /DOUGHOUSE/INTERSCOPE
- Rag Yo Fingerz/ Lil Jon Feat. E-40 & Sean Paul /BME/TVT
- It's Goin Down/ Yung Joc /BLOCK/BAD BOY/SOUTH/ATLANTIC
- Me, You Boo'h/ Bubba Sparxxx Feat. Ying Yang Twins /NEW SOUTH/PURPLE RIBBON/VIRGIN
- Little Moments/ Brad Paisley /ARISTA NASHVILLE
- Sugar (Gimme Some)/ Trick Daddy Feat. Lil' Kim & Ludacris /SLIP N SLIDE/ATLANTIC

### 200,000 SPINS
- I Write Sins Not Tragedies/ Panic! At the Disco /DECAYDANCE/FUELED BY RAME/L/ISLAND
- Buttons/ Pussycat Dolls /A&M/INTERSCOPE
- The World/ Brad Paisley /ARISTA NASHVILLE
- U And Da/ E-40 Feat. T. Pain & Kandi Girl /SICK WID IT/ BME/WARNER BROS.
- Summertime/ Kenny Chesney /BNA
- Hate Me/ Blue October /UNIVERSAL MOTOWN
- If You're Going Through Hell (Before The Devil Even Knows)/ Rodd Atkins /CURL
- Last Day Of My Life/ Phil Vassar /ARISTA NASHVILLE
- (When You Gonna) Give It Up To Me/ Sean Paul Feat. Keyshia Cole /VP/ATLANTIC
- Bossy/ Kells /JIVE/ZOMBA
- Don't Forget To Remember Me/ Carrie Underwood /ARISTA/ARISTA NASHVILLE
- When The Stars Go Blue/ Tim McGraw /CURL
- Get Drunk And Be Somebody/ Toby Keith /SHOW DOG NASHVILLE
- (When You Gonna) Give It Up To Me/ Sean Paul Feat. Keyshia Cole /VP/ATLANTIC
- Torn/ LeToya /CAPITOL
- Only/ Nine Inch Nails /NOTHING/INTERSCOPE
- Ain't No Other Man/ Christina Aguilera /RCA/RMG
- Better Now/ Collective Soul /EL
- Why You Wanna/ T.I. /GRAND HUSTLE/ATLANTIC
- You're Like Comin' Home/ Lonestar /BNA
- Shoulder Lean/ Young Dro Feat. T.I. /GRAND HUSTLE/ATLANTIC
- Unbreakable (Unplugged)/ Alicia Keys /J/RMG

### 100,000 SPINS
- Sexy Love/ Ne-Yo /DEF JAM/IDJMG
- Pull'in' Me Back/ Chingy /SLOT A-LOT/CAPITOL
- Leave The Pieces/ Wreckers /REAPER/BFNO/SOUTH/ATLANTIC
- Brand New Girlfriend/ Steve Holy /CURB
- Class Reunion (That Used To Be Us)/ Lonestar /BNA
- I Smoke, I Drank. Body Head Bangerz/ BODY HEAD/UNIVERSAL
- Call On Me/ Janet Jackson W/ Nelly /VIRGIN
- For Away/ Nickelback /ROADRUNNER/IDJMG
- Would You Go With Me/ Josh Turner /MCA NASHVILLE
- If You Were Mine/ Marcos Hernandez /ULTRAX/TVT
- Praise You In This Storm/ Casting Crowns /BEACH STREET/REUNION/PLG
- Woman/ Wolfmother /MODULAR/INTERSCOPE
- Building Bridges/ Brooks & Dunn /ARISTA NASHVILLE
- I Know You See It/ Yung Joc /BLOCK/BAD BOY/SOUTH/ATLANTIC
- Save The Last Dance For Me/ Michael Buble /REPRISE
- London Bridge/ Fergie /WILL.I.AM/A&M/INTERSCOPE
- I Can't Unlove You/ Kenny Rogers /CAPITOL NASHVILLE
- Dats/ Gorillaz /PARLOPHONE/VIRGIN
- Stillborn/ Black Label Society /SPITFIRE
- Clarity/ John Mayer /AWARE/COLUMBIA
- Just Stop/ Disturbed /REPRISE
- Miss Murder/ AFI /INTERSCOPE
- Yee Haw/ Jake Owen /RCA
- Try Love/ Faith Evans /CAPITOL
- Strong Tower/ Kutless /BEC

---

**www.bdsonline.com**
**SE_ BELOW**

**TOP SINGLES SALES**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Label</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;Life Is a Highway&quot;</td>
<td>Tom Petty</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;October&quot;</td>
<td>Dido</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;When I Was Your Man&quot;</td>
<td>The Rolling Stones</td>
<td>Decca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>&quot;What's Going On&quot;</td>
<td>Marvin Gaye</td>
<td>Tamla</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>&quot;The A Team&quot;</td>
<td>Sia</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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**TOP AIRPLAY**

<table>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Label</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;Seeds&quot;</td>
<td>Timbaland ft. J. Holiday</td>
<td>Interscope</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;One More Chance&quot;</td>
<td>Jay-Z ft. Beyoncé</td>
<td>Def Jam / Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;Like a Virgin&quot;</td>
<td>Madonna</td>
<td>Sire / Warner Bros.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>&quot;Don't let Me Be Misunderstood&quot;</td>
<td>The Ronettes</td>
<td>Epic</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>&quot;Dancing with Myself&quot;</td>
<td>Cyndi Lauper</td>
<td>Arista / Geffen</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**POP 100**

**Chart Legend**

- **#1** Single at top of chart
- **#2** Single at No. 8
- **#3** Single at No. 15
- **#4** Single at No. 22
- **#5** Single at No. 30
- **#6** Single at No. 40
- **#7** Single at No. 50
- **#8** Single at No. 60
- **#9** Single at No. 70
- **#10** Single at No. 80

**Artists**

- **Deja Vu**
- **Kush**
- **Kerry Washington**
- **I Don't Know You Like That**
- **I'm Not the Only One**
- **I'm Not the Only One**
- **I'm Not the Only One**
- **I'm Not the Only One**
- **I'm Not the Only One**
- **I'm Not the Only One**

**Top 10 Songs**

1. "Life Is a Highway" - Tom Petty
2. "October" - Dido
3. "When I Was Your Man" - The Rolling Stones
5. "The A Team" - Sia
6. "Seeds" - Timbaland ft. J. Holiday
8. "Like a Virgin" - Madonna
9. "Don't let Me Be Misunderstood" - The Ronettes
10. "Dancing with Myself" - Cyndi Lauper

**Top 100 Pop Songs**

- "Life Is a Highway" - Tom Petty
- "October" - Dido
- "When I Was Your Man" - The Rolling Stones
- "What's Going On" - Marvin Gaye
- "The A Team" - Sia
- "Seeds" - Timbaland ft. J. Holiday
- "One More Chance" - Jay-Z ft. Beyoncé
- "Like a Virgin" - Madonna
- "Don't let Me Be Misunderstood" - The Ronettes
- "Dancing with Myself" - Cyndi Lauper

**HitPredictor**

- **Deja Vu**
- **Kush**
- **Kerry Washington**
- **I Don't Know You Like That**
- **I'm Not the Only One**
- **I'm Not the Only One**
- **I'm Not the Only One**
- **I'm Not the Only One**
- **I'm Not the Only One**
- **I'm Not the Only One**

**Additional Information**

- **Artists**
- **Top 10 Songs**
- **Top 100 Pop Songs**
- **HitPredictor**

**Additional Links**

- **Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data**
- **Data for week of September 23, 2006**
- **Charts Legend on Page 92**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R&amp;B/HIP-HOP ALBUMS</th>
<th>ARTIST</th>
<th>ALBUM</th>
<th>WEEKS ON TOP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>BRYCE HEADLEY</td>
<td>The Champions: The North Meets The South</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>DARTH TAKES</td>
<td>From Ashes To Ashes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>THE ISLEY BROTHERS</td>
<td>The Rising Tides</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>MARY J. BLIGE</td>
<td>The Breakthrough</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>CHRISSY BROWN</td>
<td>Step Up</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>BUSTA RHYMES</td>
<td>In My Mind</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>CASSIE</td>
<td>The Big Bang</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>T.I.</td>
<td>From Ashes To Ashes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>DMX</td>
<td>Year Of The Dog... Again</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>NINE INCH NAILS</td>
<td>The Sound Of Revenge</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>ANTHONY GOMES</td>
<td>Music Is The Medicine</td>
<td>1</td>
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**TOP BLUES ALBUMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTIST</th>
<th>ALBUM</th>
<th>LABEL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JAMES HUNTER</td>
<td>People Wanna Talk</td>
<td>WHY NOT</td>
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<tr>
<td>BB MO</td>
<td>Sittin' On Top</td>
<td>WHY NOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JERRY JONES</td>
<td>Songs</td>
<td>WHY NOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTTO JOE WHITE</td>
<td>Uncovered</td>
<td>WHY NOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDDIE JAM</td>
<td>The Definitive Collection</td>
<td>WHY NOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARIA MULDAUR</td>
<td>Many Rivers To Cross</td>
<td>WHY NOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BO BONAMASSA</td>
<td>You &amp; Me</td>
<td>WHY NOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. KING</td>
<td>The Ultimate Collection</td>
<td>WHY NOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUSAN TEDESCHI</td>
<td>Hope And Desire</td>
<td>WHY NOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEORGE THOROGOOD &amp; THE DESTROYERS</td>
<td>The Hard Stuff</td>
<td>WHY NOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANTHONY GOMES</td>
<td>Music Is The Medicine</td>
<td>WHY NOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LARIOUS ARTISTS</td>
<td>Best Of Blues: 50 Hits</td>
<td>WHY NOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDDY GUY</td>
<td>Bring 'Em In</td>
<td>WHY NOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUNESHINE REVOLUT</td>
<td>Cost Of Living</td>
<td>WHY NOT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MILES DAVIS STILL 'COOL'**

Wit & the fourth charting release this year to bear his name, Miles Davis' "Cool & Collected" bowed at No. 4 on Top Jazz Albums, his first top 10 since 2003. "The Complete Jack Johnson Sessions" started at No. 4 in 2003. This release includes standards like "Round Midnight" and "Stella By Starlight," plus his versions of Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time" and Michael Jackson's "Human Nature." Carlos Santana lends his guitar talents to a remix of "It's About That Time." — Ralph George
BETWEEN THE BULLETS

Steve Holy's 'Girlfriend' Goes All the Way

Steve Holy collects his second No. 1 after being absent from the chart's upper reaches for almost five years.

Up 1.9 million, Holy's 'Brand New Girlfriend' makes 34.1 million audience impressions during the tracking week, with spikes detected at each of the 133 stations monitored for chart tabulation. His only previous No. 1 — and his other lone top 10 single — was "Good Morning Beautiful," which ruled for five straight weeks in 2002. That song appeared on Holy's 2000 "Blue Moon" album and the 2001 "Angel Eyes" soundtrack.

The new song's chart feat is particularly savor for Holy, who garnered initial radio buzz by handing delivering white-label copies of the track to select stations. "Brand New" made its chart debut in January, but didn't crack the top 40 until its 16th chart week (April 28). It reigned in its 36th chart week, interrupting a two-week stand at the top by the Wreckers "Leave the Pieces."
### HOT LATIN SONGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>No. 1 On Latin Billboard</th>
<th>Hot Latin Songs</th>
<th>Score on No. 1 On Latin Billboard</th>
<th>Score on Hot Latin Songs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toby Love</td>
<td>Tejero</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura Pausini</td>
<td>No. 5</td>
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<td>La Yma Rose</td>
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### TOP LATIN ALBUMS

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### Charts Legend for rules and explanations.

- **Imprint / Promotion Label**: Imprint / Promotion Label
- **Price**: Price
- **Distributing Label**: Distributing Label
- **Charts Legend for rules and explanations.**

**Rules and Explanations:**

- **Imprint / Promotion Label**: Imprint / Promotion Label
- **Price**: Price
- **Distributing Label**: Distributing Label

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### Additional Notes

- **Mне Matas**: Featuring Nelly Furtado
- **Sigo con Ella**: Featuring Nelly Furtado
- **Enamorado**: Featuring Nelly Furtado
- **Romantic°**: Featuring Nelly Furtado
- **Ya Me Quedo**: Featuring Nelly Furtado
- **Pero No**: Featuring Nelly Furtado
- **Mucho Mas**: Featuring Nelly Furtado
- **Y Se Me Quedo**: Featuring Nelly Furtado

**Data for week of September 23, 2006**

**Charts**

- **Top Latin Songs**
- **Top Latin Albums**

**Legend**

- **Hot Latin Songs**: See Charts Legend for rules and explanations. © 2006, Billboard, a division of VNU Business Media, Inc. All rights reserved.
## Latin Airplay Pop

<table>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>EMI Latin</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>E. E. H.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Adiós</strong></td>
<td><strong>EMI</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A Ti</strong></td>
<td><strong>Amor Y Dolor</strong></td>
<td><strong>EMI</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Témando Flores</strong></td>
<td><strong>Familia</strong></td>
<td><strong>EMI</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tu Peor Error</strong></td>
<td><strong>La Esquina</strong></td>
<td><strong>EMI</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Nuestro Informe</strong></td>
<td><strong>Empezando Ahora</strong></td>
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## Latin Airplay Latin Pop

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<td><strong>Juntos</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Paciencia</strong></td>
<td><strong>EMI</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Carajo</strong></td>
<td><strong>Que No Exista Nadie</strong></td>
<td><strong>EMI</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Belicos</strong></td>
<td><strong>Un Amor Real</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Mambo Orishas</strong></td>
<td><strong>La Frontera Sería</strong></td>
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## Latin Albums

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## Rhythm

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<td><strong>Zona</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tony Dize</strong></td>
<td><strong>EMI</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Despacito</strong> (French Mix)</td>
<td><strong>Yandel</strong></td>
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## Regional Mexican

<table>
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<td><strong>El Chavo</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Te Cuido</strong></td>
<td><strong>La Lupe</strong></td>
<td><strong>EMI</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Los Tigres del Norte</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>La Historia del Norte</strong></td>
<td><strong>La Mafia</strong></td>
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Data for week of September 23, 2006 | For chart reprints call 646.654.4633

Go to www.billboard.com for complete chart data

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**Latin Airplay Dancesales**

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<td><strong>I Feel for You</strong></td>
<td><strong>John Newman</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Common Ground</strong></td>
<td><strong>Andy Milian</strong></td>
<td><strong>EMI</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>My Number One</strong></td>
<td><strong>Alexis Y Fido</strong></td>
<td><strong>EMI</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Promiscuous</strong></td>
<td><strong>Manu Chao</strong></td>
<td><strong>EMI</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>It's Too Late</strong></td>
<td><strong>Selena</strong></td>
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**Rhythm

<table>
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<td><strong>Love Is Gone</strong></td>
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<td><strong>It's Over</strong></td>
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**Regional Mexican

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<tr>
<td><strong>I'm In The Mood</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Don de amor</strong></td>
<td><strong>technologies</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>La Historia del Norte</strong></td>
<td><strong>Los Tigres del Norte</strong></td>
<td><strong>EMI</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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www.americanradiohistory.com
### Japan

**NEW**
1. Yuki - *New First Live Edition* (Epic)
2. Shonan no Kaze - *Mano No Kaze* (Rod Toys Factory)
3. Beyoncé Knowles - *Destiny's Child* (Epic)
4. Sugashikao - *Last Time* (B'z Factory)
5. Aiko - *Kumite* (Capitol)
6. Various Artists - *Special Songs of Love* (Ran On J Digital)
7. Hideaki Tokunaga - *Valeurs Inutiles* (Solo)
8. Various Artists - *The Very Best of Pizza de Kyu-Pizza de Death* (Sony)

### United Kingdom

**NEW**
1. Snow Patrol - *Eyes Open* (Atlantic)
2. Kasabian - *Indestructible* (Sony)
3. Beyoncé Knowles - *Destiny's Child* (Epic)
4. The Feeling - *First Time* (Pompeii)
5. Bob Dylan - *Modern Times* (Columbia)
8. Muse - *Black Holes and Revelations* (Polydor)
9. Pink - *I'm Not Dead* (Columbia)
10. Gary Barlow - *Supersonic* (Polydor)

### Germany

**NEW**
1. Audioslave - *Out of Exile* (Sony/Warner)
2. Iron Maiden - *A Matter of Life and Death* (Columbia)
3. Various Artists - *Changes in California* (Columbia)
4. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
5. Various Artists - *Records of Duets* (Sony/Warner)
7. Beyoncé Knowles - *Destiny's Child* (Epic)
9. Iron Maiden - *A Matter of Life and Death* (Columbia)

### France

**NEW**
1. Johnny Halliday - *Flamboyant Tour* (Sony/BMG)
2. Charlotte Gainsbourg - *Björk* (Polydor)
3. Laurent Voulzy - *La Seconde Voulzy* (Polydor)
5. Olivia Ruiz - *Copine* (Universal)
6. Raphael - *Carnaval* (Universal)
7. Benabar - *Refuse Le Regrets* (Sony/BMG)
8. Diam's - *Dans La Main* (Capitol)
9. Various Artists - *A Matter of Life and Death* (Capitol)
10. Miossec - *L'Extreme* (Capitol)

### Australia

**NEW**
1. Audioslave - *Out of Exile* (Sony/Warner)
2. Pink - *I'm Not Dead* (Columbia)
3. Kasey Chambers - *The Voice of the South* (Mercury/Columbia)
5. Red Hot Chili Peppers - *Stadium Arcadium* (Capitol)
6. Chris Isaak - *Beyond the Sun* (Mercury/Columbia)
7. Christina Aguilera - *Back to Basics* (Columbia)
8. Various Artists - *A Matter of Life and Death* (Capitol)
9. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
10. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)

### Canada

**NEW**
1. Audioslave - *Out of Exile* (Sony/Warner)
2. Various Artists - *Modern Times* (Columbia)
3. Iron Maiden - *A Matter of Life and Death* (Columbia)
4. Beyoncé Knowles - *Destiny's Child* (Epic)
5. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
6. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
7. Eskimo Joe - *Blackholes and Revelations* (Polydor)
9. Various Artists - *Changes in California* (Columbia)
10. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)

### Italy

**NEW**
1. Freddie Mercury - *The Very Best of Mercury* (Polydor/PolyGram)
2. Bob Dylan - *Modern Times* (Columbia)
3. Iron Maiden - *A Matter of Life and Death* (Capitol)
4. Gianna Nannini - *Kiss* (Columbia)
5. Tiziano Ferro - *Vulcan* (Universal)
6. Ayo - *A* (Sony/BMG)
8. Cristina Aguilera - *Back to Basics* (Columbia)
9. Ligabue - *Nelle e Carmen* (Virgin)
10. Various Artists - *A Matter of Life and Death* (Capitol)

### Spain

**NEW**
1. Freddie Mercury - *The Very Best of Mercury* (Polydor/PolyGram)
2. Bob Dylan - *Modern Times* (Columbia)
3. Iron Maiden - *A Matter of Life and Death* (Capitol)
4. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
5. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
6. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
8. Iron Maiden - *A Matter of Life and Death* (Capitol)
9. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
10. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)

### Brazil

**NEW**
1. Successo Magazine - *Out of Exile* (Sony/Warner)
2. Soundtrack - *Out of Exile* (Sony/Warner)
3. Soundtrack - *Out of Exile* (Sony/Warner)
4. Soundtrack - *Out of Exile* (Sony/Warner)
5. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)

### Sweden

**NEW**
1. Iron Maiden - *A Matter of Life and Death* (Capitol)
2. Lisa Miskovsky - *Disillusion* (Sony/BMG)
3. Peter Jöback - *Pia* (Capitol)

### Ireland

**NEW**
1. Snow Patrol - *Eyes Open* (Atlantic)
2. Bob Dylan - *Modern Times* (Columbia)
3. Beyoncé Knowles - *Destiny's Child* (Epic)
4. Kooks - *Inside In, Outside Out* (Polydor)
5. James Morrison - *Undiscovered* (Polydor)

### New Zealand

**NEW**
1. Audioslave - *Out of Exile* (Sony/Warner)
2. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
3. Soundtrack - *Out of Exile* (Sony/Warner)
4. Soundtrack - *Out of Exile* (Sony/Warner)
5. Eyes Open - *Out of Exile* (Sony/Warner)
6. The Black Seeds - *Out of Exile* (Sony/Warner)

### Argentina

**NEW**
1. Soundtrack - *Out of Exile* (Sony/Warner)
2. Mama - *A Matter of Life and Death* (Capitol)
3. Diego Torres - *La Barra* (Columbia)
4. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
5. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
6. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
7. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
8. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
9. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
10. Various Artists - *Beatles* (EMI)
## EUROCHARTS

### SINGLE SALES

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<td>BMG</td>
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<td>EUROMAXX</td>
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### ALBUMS

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<td>CAPITOL</td>
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<td>Back to Basics</td>
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<td>12 000</td>
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<td>The Body</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>THE PEELING</td>
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## RADIO AIRPLAY

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<td>1</td>
<td>CRAZY</td>
<td>Love Myself</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>UNFAITHFUL</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>14 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>PIESON</td>
<td>WALK</td>
<td>SPARTA</td>
<td>13 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>NELLY FORTUNE</td>
<td>St. Thomas</td>
<td>LION</td>
<td>12 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>JOYNER LUZIER</td>
<td>I Don’t Feel Like Dancing</td>
<td>EUROMAXX</td>
<td>11 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>RUDERBOX</td>
<td>2604</td>
<td>BMG</td>
<td>10 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>SEXYBACK</td>
<td>Sorry!</td>
<td>SONY BMG</td>
<td>9 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>PROMISSUCIOUS</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>8 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>RUBIN</td>
<td>Welcome Christmas</td>
<td>NELSON</td>
<td>7 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>REFUAL</td>
<td>Breathe</td>
<td>FTZ</td>
<td>6 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>FACON SEX</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>5 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>ROBIE</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>4 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>NEW</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>3 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>NEW</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>2 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>NEW</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data for week of SEPTEMBER 23, 2006 | For chart reprints call 646-654-4633

Go to [www.billboard.biz](http://www.billboard.biz) for complete chart data | 91
### ALBUM CHARTS

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Sales/Week</th>
<th>Units Sold</th>
<th>Peak Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JARS OF CLAY</td>
<td>Jars of Clay (Elektra)</td>
<td>131,000</td>
<td>223,000</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITTLE BIG TOWN</td>
<td>Little Big Town (Mercury)</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VARIOUS</td>
<td>THIS IS THE LIFE (Epic)</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAVE COOK</td>
<td>Trenchtown Rock (Columbia)</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUNDTRACK</td>
<td>Sonic Youth (V2)</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JASON ALDEAN</td>
<td>Jason Aldean (Mercury)</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THOM YORKE</td>
<td>The National (Mercury)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAPING</td>
<td>More Music (V2)</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLINDSIGHT</td>
<td>Soundtrack (V2)</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANI DIFRANCO</td>
<td>Not a Pretty Sight (V2)</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>LINDA RONSTADT</td>
<td>Ann Savoy (Mercury)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cursive</td>
<td>First Edition (V2)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>69</td>
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<tr>
<td>CARAVANS</td>
<td>Chariot (V2)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BILLIE GILMAN</td>
<td>Dance with Me (Mercury)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRIKE ANYWHERE</td>
<td>Self-Titled (V2)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUEST</td>
<td>Our Love (V2)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANI DIFRANCO</td>
<td>Not a Pretty Soundtrack (V2)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICHAEL FRANTI &amp; SPEARHEAD THE RHYTHM &amp; BLUES</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAMON AYALA</td>
<td>Si Sacavos El Norte (Epic)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAYLOR</td>
<td>The Early November (Antil)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARCTIC MONKEYS</td>
<td>The Last Shadow Puppets (V2)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GWAR</td>
<td>Mordred (Mercury)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VARIOUS ARTISTS</td>
<td>Various Artists: Arista Records - Classic Rock (Arista)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THA DOGG POUND</td>
<td>Live at Ciro's (Mercury)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RED</td>
<td>Weekend Night Live (Mercury)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUNDDRACK</td>
<td>Hunchback of Notre Dame (V2)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTORHEAD</td>
<td>The Best of Motörhead (V2)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE DIPLOMATTS PRESENTS JR WRITER</td>
<td>Never Mind the DJ (V2)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TASTEMAKERS

- **Top Independent Albums**
- **Top Independent Singles**
- **Top Independent Artists**
- **Top Independent Albums**

**Top Independent Albums**:
- **JARS OF CLAY**
- **LITTLE BIG TOWN**
- **VARIOUS**
- **DAVE COOK**
- **SOUNDTRACK**
- **JASON ALDEAN**
- **THOM YORKE**
- **TAPING**
- **BLINDSIGHT**
- **ANI DIFRANCO**

**Top Independent Singles**:
- **JARS OF CLAY**
- **LITTLE BIG TOWN**
- **VARIOUS**
- **DAVE COOK**
- **SOUNDTRACK**
- **JASON ALDEAN**
- **THOM YORKE**
- **TAPING**
- **BLINDSIGHT**
- **ANI DIFRANCO**

**Top Independent Artists**:
- **JARS OF CLAY**
- **LITTLE BIG TOWN**
- **VARIOUS**
- **DAVE COOK**
- **SOUNDTRACK**

**Top Independent Albums**:
- **JARS OF CLAY**
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- **VARIOUS**
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- **SOUNDTRACK**
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**Top Independent Singles**:
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- **THOM YORKE**
- **TAPING**
- **BLINDSIGHT**
- **ANI DIFRANCO**

**Top Independent Artists**:
- **JARS OF CLAY**
- **LITTLE BIG TOWN**
- **VARIOUS**
- **DAVE COOK**
- **SOUNDTRACK**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Songs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CROWDED</td>
<td>BE</td>
<td>BMG Music</td>
<td>Through Glass (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 70, POP 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CALL IT LOVE</td>
<td>JASON MRAZ</td>
<td>EMI Music</td>
<td>Love Is A Battlefield (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 27, POP 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>THE REASON WAY</td>
<td>MIKE OLDFIELD</td>
<td>EMI Music</td>
<td>The Reason Why (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 78, POP 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>DON’T WANT TO BE LOVED</td>
<td>ERICA RAE</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Don’t Want To Be Lonely (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 30, POP 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>BABYFEVER</td>
<td>ELTON JOHN</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Babyfever (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 93, POP 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>SONG IN YOUR HEART</td>
<td>NICK CAVE &amp; THE BAD SEEDS</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Song In Your Heart (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 50, POP 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>REMEMBER THE NAME</td>
<td>ALEH JAY</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Remember The Name (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 56, POP 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>RIGHT WHERE YOU WANT ME</td>
<td>NICK CAVE &amp; THE BAD SEEDS</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Right Where You Want Me (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 25, POP 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>YOU’LL ALWAYS BE MY BABY</td>
<td>CINDY LAUPER</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>You’ll Always Be My Baby (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 91, POP 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>THE DEAR ONE</td>
<td>GREG GILSON</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>The Dear One (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 29, POP 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>TELL ME BABY</td>
<td>GREG GILSON</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Tell Me Baby (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 12, POP 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>DON’T WANT TO BE LOVED</td>
<td>ERICA RAE</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Don’t Want To Be Lonely (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 70, POP 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>BABYFEVER</td>
<td>ELTON JOHN</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Babyfever (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 37, POP 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>REMEMBER THE NAME</td>
<td>ALEH JAY</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Remember The Name (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 11, POP 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>RIGHT WHERE YOU WANT ME</td>
<td>NICK CAVE &amp; THE BAD SEEDS</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Right Where You Want Me (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 37, POP 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>YOU’LL ALWAYS BE MY BABY</td>
<td>CINDY LAUPER</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>You’ll Always Be My Baby (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 88, POP 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>THE DEAR ONE</td>
<td>GREG GILSON</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>The Dear One (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 85, POP 85</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>TELL ME BABY</td>
<td>GREG GILSON</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Tell Me Baby (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 33, POP 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>DON’T WANT TO BE LOVED</td>
<td>ERICA RAE</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Don’t Want To Be Lonely (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 10, POP 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>BABYFEVER</td>
<td>ELTON JOHN</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Babyfever (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 23, POP 23</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>REMEMBER THE NAME</td>
<td>ALEH JAY</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Remember The Name (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 5, POP 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>RIGHT WHERE YOU WANT ME</td>
<td>NICK CAVE &amp; THE BAD SEEDS</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Right Where You Want Me (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 9, POP 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>YOU’LL ALWAYS BE MY BABY</td>
<td>CINDY LAUPER</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>You’ll Always Be My Baby (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 3, POP 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>THE DEAR ONE</td>
<td>GREG GILSON</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>The Dear One (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 27, POP 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>TELL ME BABY</td>
<td>GREG GILSON</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Tell Me Baby (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 19, POP 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>DON’T WANT TO BE LOVED</td>
<td>ERICA RAE</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Don’t Want To Be Lonely (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 52, POP 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>BABYFEVER</td>
<td>ELTON JOHN</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Babyfever (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 63, POP 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>REMEMBER THE NAME</td>
<td>ALEH JAY</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Remember The Name (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 25, POP 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>RIGHT WHERE YOU WANT ME</td>
<td>NICK CAVE &amp; THE BAD SEEDS</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>Right Where You Want Me (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 17, POP 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>YOU’LL ALWAYS BE MY BABY</td>
<td>CINDY LAUPER</td>
<td>ASCAP</td>
<td>You’ll Always Be My Baby (BMG Music Publishing, BMI) 21, POP 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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* Chart Codes: CS (Hot Country Songs), H100 (Hot 100 Songs), LT (Hot Latin Songs), POP (Pop 100 Songs), R&B (Hot R&B/Urban Songs) *

* Data for week of September 23, 2006 *

* CHARTS LEGEND on Page 92 *

* Go to [www.billboard.biz](http://www.billboard.biz) for complete chart data *
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A lengthy Driving Trail a Basketball hoop with 1/2 court, A Covered Porch, AND A SWING SET. LIST GOES ON - Lots of built-in shelves, a large storage area, a open attic and a huge garage area. Owner has the large entrance foyer with 2 closets, access to the raised - ceiling garage, then into the open "main" kitchen with 2 p提倡, a dishwasher, room for refrigerator and freezer, great views, and a wood stove that warms for a cracking fire! The high-ended living room (with exposed wood and beamed) has 1 large windows that gives you a vision of the peace and serenity that surrounds your amazing new home.

The landscaped accessible bedrooms and full baths on the main floor, has a large walk-in shower, a tub with Jacuzzi/steam, a washer and dryer, and grab bars already in place. The barn sits up on a hill, on 1/4 of an acre, at the end of the road, with a roomy and charming Barn Loft.

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Contact: Bob Horgan
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www.BigRedBarns.com
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$5,000,000.
Contact: Matt Rapf - 310 774 5151
www.MattRapf.com
Prichard-Rapf & Associates

Ferocious Divorce

This villa is priced to move as fast as this couple wants to move out of each other's lives. This "too-rich-too-fast" couple threw $2,500,000 down into this house. The "too-right-got-lost" couple came true at $500,000 too late. Your kids don't want to live here any longer than you want to leave it.

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DEATHS

Lou Wills, 72, due to complications from a stroke. Aug. 25 in Los Angeles. He was West Coast regional promotional manager for two major labels. Wills began his career in 1968 at CBS. He left in 1972 to become a member of Warner Bros.' first R&B department, where he helped build a lineup of superstars as Larry Graham, Al Jarreau, Chaka Khan, George Benson, Richard Pryor, Dionne Warwick, Funkadelic and Prince.

Patricia Baird, 59, after a long fight with cancer, Aug. 21 in New York. She was BMI's assistant VP of corporate relations. Baird's music industry career lasted more than 35 years, beginning as a publicist for music producer Jimmy Nemer, with whom she helped launch the careers of Hank Hayes, Donny Hathaway, Three Dog Night and Grand Funk Railroad. Baird joined trade publication Record World in 1974 as assistant editor and seven years later became East Coast professional manager at Aristal/Interworld Music Publishing Group. Baird joined BMI in 1987, heading its media relations department. She was promoted to assistant VP in 1993. She also served as senior editor of BMI's Music World. As a writer, Baird frequently contributed to music publications, and to biographies about Johnny Ace, Tim and Jeff Buckley, and Brian Wilson. A celebration in Baird's memory for her family, friends and colleagues in the industry is being planned for early fall in New York.

David Nives, 52, Aug. 20 in Bayside, N.Y. Nives died suddenly in his sleep; his cause of death has not been announced. He spent the last 11 years at Koch Records, usually as the label's VP of production and catalog. Nives began his career working at Skinny White's store in the early 1970s and did a radio show on soul, R&B and blues while attending Boston University. After college, he moved to the independent label and distribution sector, beginning with Yazoo Records, one of the first independent labels to release historical and classic blues from the 1920s. Soon Nives joined the music industry sales ranks, first as a sales representative for the Record People and then for the Record Depot, two indie distributors. Nives then went to Rounder and ran its New York sales office for 17 years, until leaving Koch. Donations can be made to the David Nives Memorial Fund, c/o Koch Entertainment, 22 Harbor Park Drive. Port Washington, N.Y. 11050-4617.

Oscar Fernando Medina, 20, of injuries sustained in a car crash, Aug. 16 in Durango, Mexico. The son of Patrulla 81 director/lead singer José Angel Medina, he was slated to become the newest member of Patrulla 81 in only two weeks. One of the top-selling groups in the region, Patrulla 81 included regional Mexican music. Patrulla 81 won the 2006 regional Mexican album of the year, male group award at the Billboard Latin Music Awards for its hit “Eres Divino.”

Arthur Lee, 61, of leukemia, Aug. 3, at the Methodist University Hospital in Memphis. He was the singer/guitarist for pioneering psychedelic rock band Love. Lee formed Love in Los Angeles in 1965 and recorded three albums with the group's original lineup, including 1968's psychedelic classic "Forever Changes," frequently voted one of the greatest albums of all time. But the group soon disintegrated, and Lee struggled to find success as a solo artist. Love's early material proved perennially influential. Famously unpredictable offstage, Lee served six years in a California jail for firing a pistol into the air in 1995. Upon his release, he put together a new version of Love and toured extensively. Lee was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia earlier this year and underwent bone marrow transplant surgery in May. Several benefit concerts were held to help him with his medical bills, with former Led Zeppelin frontman Robert Plant headlining a show at New York’s Beacon Theater in June.

Rufus Harley, 70, of prostate cancer, July 31 at Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia. A saxophonist and flutist, Harley is best-known as the world's first jazz bagpipe player. Born in 1936 in Raleigh, N.C., Harley spent the bulk of his life living in Philadelphia. From 1965 to 1970 he recorded several albums for Atlantic, including the critically acclaimed “Scotch & Soul” in 1966. From then into the ’70s, he also played with Herbie Mann, Sonny Stitt and Sonny Rollins.

Bill Meean, 63, of kidney failure and other complications, July 23 in Los Angeles. He was a lifelong music industry sales and marketing executive. Meean began his career with Decca Records in 1967 and worked for a number of labels, including working as a regional sales manager at A&M and as VP of sales and marketing for Island Records in Canada from 1984 to 1989. After leaving Island, his last label job was with Chameleon Records until 1992. When he then embarked on a 10 year career as a sales and marketing consultant for many indie labels before retiring in 2002. He is survived by his son Todd, who is Tower Records’ Los Angeles marketing director.

www.americanradiohistory.com
PHOTO: COURTNEY OF J M HAGANS /CMT

Para Roach and Xzibit performed a collaborative karaoke set at the Bacardi Global Gathering, which took place during the Labor Day weekend at the Palms in Las Vegas. The event was organized by Bacardi and Livestylz. ParaRoach and Xzibit performed on Sept. 2. Performers with a couple of Bacardi Girls are, from left: ParaRoach's Tobin Eirerance and Dave Bucater, Xzibit: and Papa Roach's Coby Dick and Jerry Horton. Photo courtesy of UsaToday.com

PHOTO: COURTESY OF TONY CORDELL

Natasha Bedingfield right, and KT Tunstall join the festivities at Guess' 25th-anniversary party, held Sept. 5 at Capitale in New York. Photo courtesy of UsaToday.com

PHOTO: COURTESY OF BILLBOARD

Elton John left, celebrated with birthday boy Bubba Sparxxx of Scooter Bizzaro Sept. 6 at Morgan's Bar in New York. Photo courtesy of UsaToday.com

PHOTO: COURTESY OF BILLBOARD

Kanye West, left, celebrates his inclusion on the 67th annual International Best-Dressed List Sept. 11 at New York club Butter with producer Scott Storch. Photo: Courtesy of UsaToday.com

Elton John, left, celebrated with birthday boy Bubba Sparxxx of Scooter Bizzaro Sept. 6 at Morgan's Bar in New York. Photo courtesy of UsaToday.com

Elton John, left, celebrated with birthday boy Bubba Sparxxx of Scooter Bizzaro Sept. 6 at Morgan's Bar in New York. Photo courtesy of UsaToday.com

Billboard staffers catch up with country star Taylor Swift, whose single "Tim" McCabe's No. 27 on Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart. From left are: Scott Borchetta, and Wayne. From left to right: from left: Kenny Loggins, Taylor Swift, Wayne and Taylor Swift. From left to right: from left: Kenny Loggins, Taylor Swift, Wayne and Taylor Swift.
SOLID AS A ROCK

Forty-two years after their eyes met, the husband-and-wife team of Nicholas Ashford and Valerie Simpson are still making happy music together. The chemistry was in full effect Sept. 12 at the opening night of " Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing: An Evening with Ashford & Simpson " at New York nightclub Feinstein's at the Regency. The emotionally charged show, which runs through Sept. 21, shines the light on two singer/songwriters who are the proud owners of a musically rich catalog.

"This room is so intimate. You can't hide from yourself," said a visibly nervous Ashford early in the set. But once he and Simpson sang their second song, 1978 R&B hit " Is It Still Good to Ya," all signs of anxiety had disappeared. From that point on, the duo and audience remained closely linked, sharing in many of the highlights of the pair's illustrious career.

In addition to performing its own hits (including "Solid"), the couple delivered renditions of songs it wrote for others, including " I'm Every Woman, " "Let's Go Get Stoned," and " Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing."

Throughout, hardcore fans of the duo—including songwriting couple Marilyn and Alan Bergman, singer Freddie Jackson and songwriter Allee Willis—would be seen singing along to nearly every song.

Jackson even joined the couple onstage for " Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing." After a few bars, though, not wanting the spotlight to remain on him for too long, Simpson turned to Ashford and jokingly said, "Take the mic from him, honey." With a big grin, Jackson returned to his seat.

Also included in the set were three potential show-stoppers from the Broadway-bound " Invisible Life," a musical composed by the couple and based on the best-selling novel by E. Lynn Harris.

For their encore, Ashford & Simpson delivered a poignant version of " Reach Out and Touch (Somebody's Hand)." Glancing over at Warner Bros. Records VP Liz Rosenberg, who worked with the couple during its WB days, Track couldn't help but notice a tear twinkle in her eye. Touching, indeed.

HIS TIME IS NOW

You may have heard that Hasbro is issuing a new version of its popular board game Monopoly called Monopoly Here and Now—complete with new branded properties. Did but you know that "American Idol" graduate Bo Bice is the "voice" of the game's accompanying ad campaign? For his part, Bice has recorded a rockin' cover of the Chambers Brothers' " Time Has Come Today." Track hears the song will soon be available at iTunes.

LUTHER, THE SEQUEL

A second Luther Vandross tribute CD is on its way. "For ever, for Always, for Luther, Vol. 2" is due Nov. 20 via Universal-distributed Rendezvous. The collection is produced by two of the guiding lights behind 2004's first volume: Rex Rideout and Bud Harner. This time out, the lineup includes Kim Hill (making a return appearance), Patti Austin, Jonathan Butler, Jeff Lorber, Wayman Tisdale, Gerald Albright, Will Downing, Maya (of Incognito fame) and Nor- 

man Brown. A portion of the CD's proceeds will benefit the American Heart Assn. Track hears a U.S. tour is being planned for the spring.

Also arriving Nov. 20 from Rendezvous is a disc from Patti Austin, who brings her unique touch to Gershwin's "The French Knights is Red."

Track is happy to report that Belgian singer Axelle Red was awarded a knighthood in the Order of Arts and Literature by France's culture minister Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres. The ceremony took place in Paris.

Signed to Virgin France, Red is considered one of the most successful Belgian artists abroad. She released her first album "Sans Plus Attendre" in 1993. In the ensuing years, she has released four albums and a live retrospective, amassing sales of more than 2.5 million units.

Red's new album "Jardin Secret" (due Oct. 2 in Belgium, Canada, France and Switzerland) was recorded at Willie Mitchell's Royal Studios in Memphis, with strings and horns arranged by Lester Snell.

DANCING WITH THE STARS

Dance music fans are advised to circle Oct. 12 on their calendars. On that evening, Urban Dance Experience launches with a live concert at the Supper Club in New York. UDE places the spotlight firmly on dance music vocalists—those talented tenors who often get overlooked or lost in the DJ/producer-as-superstar shuffle.

For this kickoff concert, artists Helen Bruner & Terry Jones (aka All Rise), Dawn Talman, Godwin, Michelle Weeks and Pepper MaSlay will perform their hits with a live band. Producer/keyboardist Fred McFarland is the event's musical director. Adult R&B WRKS New York air personality Ruben Toro will DJ the preshow music, while his station colleague Barry Mason and singer Lynn Lockamy will co-host.

On the UDE horizon is a newsletter and dedicated Web site.
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