RBD the hottest Latin sensation is back!

CELESTIAL  
(Spanish Album)  
November 24

REBELS  
(English Debut Album)
### BDS Certified Spin Awards October 2006 Recipients:

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7 Grammy’s

¡Felicidades!
Joan Sebastian
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Yusuf Islam
photographed by Peter Sanders

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NOVEMBER 25, 2006
Digital Music And How The Consumer Became King

By Alain Levy

Throughout the creative industries, from music to film, entertainment, advertising and publishing, content is being sliced and diced, Long-Tailed and pod-casted, playlisted and shared, personalized and downloaded . . . and that’s before breakfast. From here on out, we are now, it is hard to believe that 10 years ago the music industry was functioning, as it had always historically, in a purely physical environment. Then came the Internet and file-sharing technology. The music industry was the first entertainment industry that digital disruption hit squarely between the eyes.

Now, only a few years later, digital is no longer a disruption but our industry’s bright future. More than 10% of music revenue worldwide is now in the digital format, and we predict digital will account for around 25% of EMi’s revenue by 2010.

The growth numbers of digital downloads, subscription services, search engines and online community friends are hugely exciting, but let’s not forget what is at the core of this growth—the consumer. Whatever language we use to describe the Internet, whether Web 1.0 or 2.0, its heartbeat has always been and remains its ability to leverage social connections and give the consumer a voice.

The consumer is now a creator, producer and distributor, too. The digital boom has accelerated the proliferation of user-generated content. So what is considered compelling content in this environment bursting with creativity? Who will be the content winners?

Content’s definition has changed. We are moving from a packaged to a non-packaged world. And, at the same time, the market is expanding to include user-generated content. Does that mean the demise of the media company? I don’t think so.

There will always be demand for compelling content, whatever its source. Compelling content has two components. In terms of the music, it means talented artists, with long-term career potential, who can mature and develop throughout their creative lives. But music alone is not enough. For content to be truly compelling, it must be delivered to the consumer in the format they want.

Traditional media companies are ideally positioned to deliver on this elusive consumer demand for compelling content in the way they want it. We know from research that consumers today are overwhelmed. They are looking for filters. Music companies are an important part of this filtering process.

Let’s take a realistic look at music and see that the majority of artists will decide to go it alone in the digital world, dispensing with record companies completely. We are now 18 months into the surge in user-generated content and a technology base that eases distribution of music. How many self-made stars have we actually seen?

Hardly any. If we look at the so-called “Stars of MySpace,” the acts that have made it form a tiny percentage. But did those acts really do it on their own anyway? There is no doubt that the Arctic Monkeys—the poster-children of MySpace generation—cleverly used the promotional muscle of the online community as a launch pad for their career.

The Arctic Monkeys used their online influence to win a record deal to take their career to the next level on a global scale. They knew that to enjoy a record-breaking album chart debut they needed a record company behind them to distribute the record in a physical and digital world, market their product worldwide and utilize all aspects of their brand, and most important, give them the muscle support to continue to develop as an act.

Our own Lily Allen from the United Kingdom and OK Go from the United States are two interesting case studies. The consumer at-large perceives these two acts as stars plucked from obscurity by the consumer vote. But were they really?

Allen was signed to our Parlophone record label well before she became a MySpace phenomenon. Her rise in the online community is a result of hard work from both the artist, who authors her own engaging, vibrant blogs, and the label.

Similarly, OK Go clocked a massive 7 million views of its “Here It Goes Again” video on YouTube. The band was signed to Capitol Records more than four years ago. In those years, without interruption between products, Capitol has been distributing a constant stream of unique, digital-centric content the band created.

The consumer is not single-handedly picking the winners and hits in the digital world, but they have an increased and vital role. The music companies, disemmed as dinosaurs, also continue to reinvent themselves to harness the power of the consumer by understanding that the Internet has changed the face of promotion.

The new digital consumer has impacted every area of our creative process. They have changed how we source, present and market our content in every way.

Not surprisingly in this changing world, EMi Music has undergone a huge shift in culture to ensure that we now place even greater emphasis on the consumer. This means embracing new trends and not fearing them.

At EMi Music we are actively participating in trials of several new experimental business models. An example of this is our work with Rhythm New Media in the United States, which is testing ad-supported music videos on mobile phones, where the content is free to the end user in return for watching a targeted ad.

By participating in this trial we gain additional consumer intelligence and can then make an informed decision around whether this is a model that will work for us and for our artists.

Alain Levy is chairman/CEO of EMi Music. The above is an abbreviated text of the keynote speech he recently delivered at the London Media Summit, held at the London Business School.
The Safety Dance

Indie Labels Wrestle With Impact Of Album Leaks

Indie labels have traditionally been loath to adopt encryption, Web policing and watermarking, but leaks of high-profile releases have begun forcing their hand.

In the past, cost has been an overriding concern: Watermarking can run more than $10,000 for a small batch of advances, and Internet policing firms cost $5,000-$6,000 per month. However, there is no clear measure of how many sales are lost due to illegal file-sharing. Hazer still, how many are gaining?

Sub Pop is mulling answers to these questions in the wake of the leak of the Shins’ “Winging The Night Away,” due Jan. 23. Sure to be one of the biggest indie releases of 2007, “Winging” was sent to 1,050 journalists and retail employees as a watermarked advance, a first for the label. But 2½ weeks after serving, the album infiltrated peer-to-peer (P2P) networks.

“Winging” was able to hunt down the leaker, who was “cut off” from promotion lists and admonished, but the damage was already done.

The dividing line between albums that will or won’t benefit from encrypted advances is blurry. “With artists who may push 80, 90, 100,000 units over time, we’ve definitely interested in protecting those copies. That means more people have heard of them and don’t need to be told,” Matador GM Patrick Amory says. “For starter artists, it’s like, go ahead, leak away.”

But the label was forced into action prior to the 2004 release of Interpol’s “Antics,” the follow-up to the band’s acclaimed 2002 debut “Turn On The Bright Lights.” That set had shifted 445,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. After unmastered, mono versions of “Antics” tracks appeared online well ahead of street date, Matador hired a policing firm, which was able to quell the distribution.

The indie used a similar company to snuff out leaks of Yo La Tengo’s recent “I Am Not Afraid of You And I Will Beat Your Ass,” while also distributing approved MP3s for blogs to post.

Still, every action precipitates an unpalatable reaction for independent labels, says Press Here Publicity’s Chloe Walsh, who heard plenty of griping from journalists about vinyl-only advances for the White Stripes’ “Get Behind Me Satan” (V2) and heavily encrypted pre-releases of Franz Ferdinand’s “You Could Have It So Much Better” (Domino).

Even after the latter album leaked, the distributor, Epic, wished to keep tight control on the advances, applying encryption that only allowed users to listen to a stand-alone stereo. Walsh was then given fewer than 100 advances for journalists.

“It wasn’t a waste of [Epic’s] money, but we could have sent out more. The first round ofbuzz continued on >>p8
 Fallout Follows Fanfare
In Wake Of Zune Launch, Services Seek Alternatives To DRM

Microsoft unveiled its Zune digital music device and service to great fanfare on Nov. 14, and already the fallout is being felt. Few analysts expect the Zune, which has received tepid reviews, to have a significant impact in the near term. But by launching its own closed digital music system, Microsoft has eroded what little confidence was left in its ability to support PlaysForSure—its interoperable ecosystem of devices and services that uses Windows Media Audio digital rights management (DRM) software. Already, both existing and incoming digital music providers are looking for alternative technologies to bring their services to market.

Sources say Amazon, which initially planned to launch a digital music subscription service and Amazon-branded portable music device likely based on Microsoft’s DRM technology, has abandoned that model in favor of a DRM-free download service featuring unprotected MP3-formatted music. This is the third time Amazon has postponed a digital music service only to back away at the last minute.

Prior to Zune’s launch, MySpace—which announced plans to launch a music service in early September—became another newcomer to the digital music space that has opted to do without DRM. And Yahoo! Music chief David Goldberg has closed its music service,limiting those services to lesser-known tracks from independent labels.

Meanwhile, last month, Rhapsody partnered with SanDisk to install its own DRM technology—called Rhapsody DNA—into the new Sansa Rhapsody device. The Rhapsody service still supports other PlaysForSure devices, and the Sansa Rhapsody device is compatible with competing subscription music services. But the two work best together, enabling faster music transfer speeds and the addition of music recommendations from Rhapsody editors.

Rhapsody plans to include the DNA software in additional devices, and could eventually eliminate Microsoft technology altogether. Even Microsoft’s own PlaysForSure service—the MSN Music Store—is being phased out in favor of Zune. While the service remains operational, purchases are redirected to either Rhapsody or the Zune store, and eventually will be shut down completely.

Some analysts hope that Microsoft will fix the bugs in its DRM technology now that it has the software itself for Zune.

But there is also a good chance that new music services in the future will launch using a closed model similar to Zune and iTunes. Samsung, for instance, is preparing a music service designed specifically for its devices, and already wireless operators like Sprint and Verizon Wireless have introduced closed systems.

The music industry, however, has expressed concern about more closed systems at the expense of interoperability.

“We are not happy about the closed environment that Microsoft just announced than we are about Apple’s,” one major label executive says.

For the most part, though, Microsoft’s customers are taking a wait-and-see, business-as-usual approach. Much of their reaction will depend on the Zune’s success.

Microsoft would not reveal how many units it has shipped or its sales goals. The most aggressive forecasts come from ABI Research, which predicts Microsoft will sell about 500,000 devices by the end of the year.

But Microsoft’s goal is to gain second position behind Apple Computer for both marketshare and mind share in the digital music race. According to data from the NPD Group, today’s MP3-device market share race features Apple in the lead with 75% of the market, followed by SanDisk with 10%, Creative Labs and Sony at 2% each and all others combined for 7%.

Microsoft staged free public concerts in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, New York and Seattle to promote the service launch, and the Zune device is now available in more than 30,000 retail locations nationwide. According to Jupiter Research analyst Michael Gartenberg, any success Microsoft has in reaching its goal will come at the expense of its existing partners.

“Whatever Microsoft gains is not going to come from Apple’s [market share] but it’s going to come from the other guys,” he says.

Additional reporting by Ed Christman in New York.

MILEPOSTS
By Gail Mitchell

GERALD LEVERT, 40
A Singer’s Singer And A Top R&B Talent Of His Generation

Gerald Levert is being remembered as one of the top R&B talents of his generation.

“Gerald was a true singer’s singer,” says R&B singer Melisa Morgan, who also rose to prominence in the mid-’80s. Recalling her first tour with him as one of the “best experiences of my life,” Morgan says Gerald’s spirit will live on forever in song.

Motown president Sylvia Rhone, Levert’s former label chief, called Levert “a real soulmate. He blessed us with his inimitable musical presence.”

Levert, son of O’Jays founding member Eddie Levert, died of a heart attack Nov. 10 at his home in Newbury Township, Ohio. He was 40.

While his warm, powerful voice uncannily mirrored his father’s, Levert was also influenced by pioneers James Brown and Marvin Gaye. Alternately smooth and rough in his delivery, the energetic performer remained a concert draw during his 20-year career. Female fans would rush the stage, eager to grab the stuffed teddy bears tossed into the audience.

Levert first tasted success when he, brother Sean and friend Mark Gordon formed Levert. The Atlantic trio scored its first No. 1 R&B hit in 1986 with “(Pop, Pop, Pop, Pop) Goes My Mind.” That was followed by four more R&B No. 1s: “Just Coolin’” featuring Heavy D and “Baby I’m Ready.”


Levert recorded eight other albums, including 2004’s socially conscious-themed "Do I Speak for the World?" "Voices," a compilation of duets, was released in 2005. Levert, a key adviser to the Rhythm & Blues Foundation, was also a member of LSG with Keith Sweat and Johnny Gill. A skilled songwriter and pro-
MTV Targets Unsigned Bands
Two Initiatives Could Springboard Obscure Acts

MTV is expanding its programming geared at promoting little-known and unsigned acts. The network is rolling out two initiatives, one for rock- and rap-focused MTV2 and another for college music specialist mtuV, that will focus on promising young bands toiling in obscurity.

In the most ambitious initiative, mtuV is teaming with Epic Records on a $1.5 million new-artist discovery contest called “Best Music on Campus.” The winner, to be selected in May 2007, receives a record deal with Epic that promises a minimum of one album, two videos, retail and radio support for the album, marketing and grass-roots support, video premieres on mtuV, booking on mtuV events and a “Making Of?” series on mtuV. Competing bands must have at least one member in college. To enter, artists upload their music and videos to an interactive profile on mtuV.com. MtuV will name 50 finalists in April 2007.

Offering label deals via undiscovered-artist contests is nothing new. But a payday on the scale that Epic and MTV are proposing is rare. The companies are hoping that the financial commitment, coupled with the power of their respective brands, will draw a better-than-average pool of talent to the contest. Online unsigned-band contests are notoriously poor at actually discovering commercially successful acts.

Epic Records president Charlie Walk says the label is aiming high in the type of band it seeks.

“Looking at MySpace and all of these online spaces, there's nothing really broken yet,” Walk says. “We're going to try to identify the next big artist.”

MtVU GM Stephen Friedman says the winner will be selected in part based on which act attracts the most views and streams on mtuV.com.

For bands that may not be ready for a major label deal, mtuV is also offering short-term deals with Epitaph Records, Def Jux and Drive Thru under its “Best Music on Campus” banner. Winners receive EP deals ranging in value from $35,000 to $100,000.

In the second initiative, MTV2 is pushing emerging indie bands through a program called “MTV2 Dew Circuit Breakout.” The program, which highlights acts whose videos have never before been played on MTV2, pits six up-and-coming acts against each other in a battle of the bands. Three finalists will be featured in a Dec. 9 live special, where an ultimate winner will be unveiled. The week prior to the special MTV2 viewers will vote online for their favorite band, “American Idol” style.

“Exposing our audience to new bands is important and we're trying to find ways that are unique for each [MTV2] platform,” MTV president Christina Norman says.

“It’s a great springboard,” Drive Thru Records CEO Richard Reines says. Drive Thru has two acts—Halfaxx and I Am the Avalanche—among the six finalists featured in the show. “For both bands it's their first opportunity to do anything with MTV,” Reines says.

MTV has run both initiatives in past years, but on a much smaller scale. Previous winners of “Dew Circuit Breakout” include Taking Back Sunday, Yellowcard and Hawthorne Heights.

“This gives us a real stake in the ground that shows we have a commitment to these bands,” MTV2 GM David Cohen says.

SANDRA BERNHARD AT DEMMX

Sandra Bernhard will give a special musical performance at the third annual DEMMX Awards, which honor the best in digital entertainment, media and marketing excellence. The awards cap the DEMMX Conference, Nov. 29-30 in Los Angeles.

Bernhard—an actress, comedian, author and singer—is signed to New York-based indie label Breaking Records.

The holiday compilation “Breaking for the Holidays,” out Nov. 21, will include Bernhard’s duet with Iranian singer Sussan Deyhim on the Hanukkah song “Miracle of Lights,” penned by Bernhard and Mitch Kaplan.

During Bernhard’s 25-year career she has recorded several albums, including “I’m Your Woman” (Mercury, 1985), “Without You I’m Nothing” (Enigma, 1989) and “Excuses for Bad Behavior” ($50/Epic, 1994). Her film and TV credits include “Ally McBeal,” “The Sopranos,” “The L Word,” “Roseanne” and Martin Scorcese’s “The King of Comedy.” She recently finished off the Broadway one-woman show “Everything Bad and Beautiful” and was featured on its soundtrack CD.

BILBOARD AWARDS LINEUP GETS BIGGER

Gwen Stefani, Ludacris, the Fray and Mary J. Blige have been added to the performance lineup for the 2006 Billboard Music Awards, which will air live Dec. 4 on Fox from Las Vegas’ MGM Grand Garden Arena. They join previously announced performers Janet Jackson, Fergie and the Killers on the bill. In addition, Bowling for Soup, Carrie Underwood, Carmen Electra, Dave Navarro, Flavor Flav, Three 6 Mafia, Vanessa Minnillo, the “High School Musical” cast will make appearances, along with previously announced contributors Celine Dion, Rihanna, Chris Brown and “American Idol” alumns Katharine McPhee and Chris Daughtry. Finalists will be unveiled Nov. 27 for this year’s awards.

DOCKS

Apple has teamed with Air France, Continental, Delta, Emirates, KLM and United to offer iPod-enabled in-flight entertainment. The six airlines will begin offering passengers iPod seat connections, which will allow them to charge the devices during flight and allow the video content on iPods to be viewed on seatback displays. In-flight connectivity is expected in mid-2007.

Apple is working to secure similar deals with other airlines, a company statement said.

VIVENDI GETS U.S. ANTITRUST OK

Vivendi’s Universal Music has received U.S. antitrust approval to acquire Bertelsmann AG’s BMG Music Publishing. U.S. officials said Nov. 9 that antitrust authorities completed their review of the deal valued at $1.65 billion ($2.08 billion) without taking any action to block it, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission said in a notice. In September, French-based Vivendi topped offers from other bidders for BMG Music Publishing, which owns the rights to songs by acts ranging from Coldplay to Barry Manilow.

MSG ADDS IN BEACON THEATRE

MSG Entertainment has acquired New York’s Beacon Theatre, making it the fourth venue in the MSGE portfolio, which includes Madison Square Garden, Radio City Music Hall and the Theater at Madison Square Garden.

Under MSGE’s management, the Beacon is scheduled to host more than 100 events, concerts and family shows in 2007. In January 2008, the Beacon will be closed for a seven-to-nine-month restoration, for which MSGE has committed a minimum of $10 million for initial renovations.

Compiled by Chris M. Walsh, with reporting by Larr Brandle, Jonathan Cohen, Ray Waddell, Chris M. Walsh, Jeffrey Yorks and Reuters.
Steers, Ranches And iPods

Regional Mexican Panelists Ponder Marketing A Tradition-Based Music In The Digital Age

Who is the regional Mexican consumer? That was the question that permeated much of the discussion at Billboard's first Regional Mexican Music Summit.

It all started during the opening digital and mobile panel. While panelists discussed the use of new technologies to lure regional Mexican purchasing and awareness, Headliner Records president Guillermo Santiso, who would later participate in the immigration panel, asked who this new technology was directed to.

“Our consumer is rural,” he said. “He is an immigrant, he has maybe a single television in his home. And he lives off the nostalgia of his Mexico.”

That is the bulk of the consumer of regional Mexican music, and clearly, many labels simply are not in touch with that consumer. But increasingly, many say, they see another kind of regional Mexican consumer: a younger, bilingual, iPod-toting, more affluent type who is willing to go past traditional outlets to get his music. If this consumer isn’t served, “we will loose them to other genres,” Twins Enterprises producer Adolfo Valenzuela warned.

Throughout the day, it became clear that in regional Mexican music, young and old coexist in sometimes unexpected ways. That multigenere appeal explains the genre’s ongoing and massive popularity, the fan base never ends.

Tradition is maintained by an older generation that buys records, and, in turn, passes along its musical tastes to a younger generation. The trick is how to reach both spectrums.

Jorge Hernandez of Los Tigres del Norte said that when the band performs at a venue that has dancing, the average age of attendees is between 20 and 30 years old. To reach an older, more affluent fan, Los Tigres also play concerts in theaters, where such patrons comfort-ably sit versus the dancing in an open arena or convention hall favored by the younger crowd.

In radio, programmers said the bulk of their listenership is between 18 and 34 years old. But even younger-leaning stations, like Angeles’ KBUE (La Que Buena), find that their listeners enjoy sounds steeped in nostalgia.

“I’ve never really understood why many of the lyrics connect with my audience,” KBUE PD Pepe Garza said. “Songs about steers and ranches, and most of my listeners have never seen a steer and probably will never set foot on a ranch. And yet, the songs stick.” By the same token, Garza said, his forays into programming urban regional material—a style he heavily pushed some three years ago—didn’t yield the expected results.

“In my case,” he said, “I found listeners wanted their hip-hop at the hip-hop station, and their Mexican music at the Mexican stations.”

Traditional or not, panelists at the digital/mobile session agreed that the consumer for regional Mexican music online and over the phone is growing rapidly, and will continue to do so as more and more of the genre’s catalog is digitized.

EMI Televisa, for example, only recently cleared the rights to sell ringtones of top noroeste band Intocable, and will soon make 20 of Intocable’s top hits available for download as ringtones.

“Carriers are only just beginning to promote: regional Mexican,” EMI Televisa VP of marketing/business developing Richard Bull said. “I keep telling them, ‘Watch out. It’s coming. I think you will see a radical change in the next month.’

On the digital end, panelists celebrated the launch of iTunes Latino and the indie commitment of sites like misrolas.com. Outside, exhibitors for RegionalMexicano.com described a site that is a blend of YouTube, MySpace and Amazon.

“We believe the regional Mexican consumer has never had a real voice,” said Joey Lopez, VP of Joey Records, which is fund- ing the site.

Compilations Competition

Reggaeton Collections Vie For Holiday Dollars

High-profile reggaeton compilations featuring many of the same acts are vying to distinguish themselves this holiday season—and carry sales into 2007.

Since its Sept. 26 release, Luni Tunes and Tainy’s ‘Mas Flow: Los Benjamins,’ has sold 80,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. But hot on each other’s heels this month are “Wisin y Yandel Presentan: Los Vaqueros,” which has sold 26,000 copies since its Nov. 7 release; “Chosen Few: El Documental II,” out Nov. 14; and “Don Omar Presenta: Los Bandoleros Reloaded,” which hits shelves Nov. 21.

Wisin & Yandel, Don Omar and Hector “El Father” each show up on at least three of the releases. The albums also have many up-and-coming acts such as Angel Doze in common.

Since the compilation-happy genre is so new, “it’s hard to measure whether you’re really cannibalizing the busi- ness,” says Mache’s Music president Gustavo Lopez, whose label is putting out three of the four albums. “We try to space them out as much as we can, but it’s never easy.”

Mache’s releases rely on radio airplay and endorsement by Luni Tunes, Wisin & Yandel and Don Omar to generate interest in recordings with lesser known artists.

For its part, Urban Box Office is marketing its “Chosen Few: El Documental II” as a movie with a soundtrack, rather than as a CD/DVD.

The film, which documents the 2004 Chosen Few tour and features performances by Don Omar, Voltio and up-and-comer LDA, will premiere in theaters the week of the package’s retail release in at least eight of the top Latino markets. The movie is set for a wider release to about 150 screens in January.

“It’s more like a reality show because you get to see what the artists see,” producer Boy Wonder says.

The “Chosen Few II” package combines a double-disc soundtrack with 20 videos and tour and behind-the-scenes footage for $14.98. Unique content and price points are also part of Mache’s strategy: the “Los Vaque- ros” stand-alone CD is offered side by side with an $18.98 edition, which includes four extra songs, a DVD and a set of collector’s cards.

“Los Benjamins” will also be reissued in January as a deluxe package with a new version of hit single “Noche de Entierro (Nuestro Amor)” with Ivy Queen.

By sharing reggaeton’s small rost-er of artists, the labels may end up helping each other, Urban Box Of- fice president/CEO Adam Kidron says. “Chosen Few II” even con-tains an advertisement for the next album by Hector “El Father.”

“In this particular product, we all coming together and collaborat- ing advances everyone’s commercial interest,” Kidron says.

NOTAS MUSICALES

An English version of Chelo’s “Yummy” featuring raper Too Short has been sent to radio. Sony BMG is servicing the remix single to Anglo and Latin stations nation-wide, with Spanish Broadcast-ing System’s urban station KXOL Los Angeles the first to play it. An English ver-sion of the “Yummy” video will also feature Too Short.

Indie label La Corporación Muzic has inked an exclusive distribution deal with Navarre Corp. The first releases will be “Latino Explosión,” a compila-tion of music by emerging acts, and a Latin jazz album from producer/percussionist Peter Michael Escovedo.

—Avaya Ben-Yehuda
The Publishers’ Place

SUSAN BUTLER sbutler@billboard.com

Prepping For MIDEM
EU Digital Rights Top The List

As year’s end nears, many publishers are thinking about whom they want to meet at MIDEM in January and what they need to talk about. Since licensing rights for digital distribution is an inevitable topic of discussion, it’s a good time to catch up on an important European Commission (EC) recommendation issued last year.

Rights holders and the societies were given three years to work with their governments to change the regulatory environment and the way collecting societies operate. The purpose was to promote competition among the societies and to benefit rights holders and those who want to license online rights (Billboard, Nov. 5, 2005).

In response, ICMP/CIEM (representing publisher groups like the National Music Publishers’ Assn.) and GESAC (representing the largest European collecting societies) adopted a common declaration eight months later, in July. It covered easing membership restrictions in societies; opening a certain number of seats on their governing boards to publishers; transparent accounting requirements; information sharing; and setting up committees; information sharing; and setting up membership restrictions and setting up membership restrictions

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than another, he says, there may be some that are much worse than others. Some societies are not capable of handling the big, technical job of tracking digital uses, making accurate payments and paying on time.

To comply with the declaration, the societies must also make governance changes, says Jenny Vacher, ICMP/CIEM general counsel. They must change their bylaws—at the very least to permit publishers on their boards. This process will take time.

On the publisher side, some companies are working independently to make changes in their dealings with societies rather than working through trade group negotiations. And in anticipation of electing one society to handle Pan-European licenses for online use (rather than the current process of each society licensing in its territory), some publishers have already notified several societies that they are withdrawing the right to license digital uses, a publishing source says.

Even though there is some progress in responding to the recommendations, EC commissioners are reportedly indicating they want faster results. So MIDEM will be a good time for publishers and societies to continue working through the process. If they don’t make the changes, then they risk that the EC will make changes for them.

Top 10 Publisher Airplay Chart

Third-Quarter 2006 Market Share

1. EMI Music Publishing 22.53%
2. Warner/Chappell Music 15.03%
3. Universal Music Group 8.54%
4. Sony/ATV Music Publishing 8.18%
5. BMG Music Publishing 7.28%
6. Windswept Holdings 4.21%
7. Arthouse Entertainment 3.60%
8. TVT Music Publishing 2.15%
9. Moetetobaline Music 1.93%
10. Chrysalis Music Group 1.67%

Percentage calculations are based on the overall top 10 detecting songs from 1,784 applications weekly. Copyright of Midem

Copyright © 2006. Publisher information for musical works is compiled by the Harry Fox Agency. A "publisher" is defined as an administrative, songwriters and controlling party.

In "large part, the societies are waiting for publishers to tell them [more of] what they’re looking for, which works for majors," an indie publisher says. But considering the low turnover in online sales for indie works, the publisher says that for now, indices can’t spend a lot of time spelling out specific needs. But selection will be important. While there is no one collecting society that is strikingly better

Puerto Rican reggaeton superstars, Los Vaqueros are ready to deliver this sensational 2 disc (CD/DVD) release just in time for the holidays. Added to this 21-track collection is a booklet plus five collector cards. The first single and video is called "Pegao"
Industry Turns Out In Force For Regional Mexican Conference

More than 500 music industry executives, artists, producers, managers, authors, and radio and TV programmers attended Billboard's inaugural Regional Mexican Music Summit Nov. 13-14 at the Beverly Hills Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, Calif. The event, the only gathering in the world for the regional Mexican music industry, attracted press and attendees from the United States and Mexico.

The summit was highlighted by two evenings of performances. On Nov. 13, Promotores Unidos presented six of the genre's top acts: Alacranes Musical, Graciela Beltrán, Banda Limón, Los Nietos, Carla de León and Grupo Inmán. The next night, KBUE (La Que Buena) Los Angeles held its annual music awards at the Gibson Amphitheatre, celebrating the best in regional Mexican music. Billboard plans to host its Regional Mexican Summit every fall. A glimpse at this year's festivities, sponsored by Urban Box Office and Starbucks, follows.
To paraphrase one of her hits, Chaka Khan is every woman—effortlessly shifting between being the creative artist and the savvy businesswoman. "It's called being an entrepreneur," Khan says. "Fortunately, I have great people around me, because I couldn't do it alone. I also have interests, which is a blessing."

She is also fortunate for another important reason—one that is not lost on her. "People are still interested in me enough to want to be a part of my entrepreneurialism," she says.

These days, Khan is on the verge of expanding her fan base with a little help from QVC and W Hotels. On Nov. 29, Khan makes her debut on the QVC network, where she will promote and discuss an exclusive-to-QVC CD package: a bundle of her 1996 collection "Epiphany: The Best of Chaka Khan Volume One" and an unreleased Christmas collection. The two discs will sell for $20.

For Khan, who will very likely perform during the segment, the potential is there to reach new and longtime fans alike. "With QVC, you're dealing with a lot of people all at once," she says. Ka-ching.

For its part, QVC aligns itself with "a legend in the R&B genre," QVC director of merchant listing Rich Yoegel says.

Khan arrives at QVC by way of Vera Sheps, president of marketing company Two Sheps That Pass, who worked closely with QVC rep Jeff Oliphant of W. Oliphant & Associates.

QVC devotes its network to being up-front with its music content of late. This year alone, Barry Manilow, Elton John and Alabama have appeared on QVC to promote new releases.

Yoegel says the best sales occur when an act appears on QVC before a CD's street date and when there is content unavailable elsewhere. "We're selling to fans that want the physical product—the plastic, the liner notes—and the exclusive content," Yoegel says.

And make no mistake, Yoegel adds, "QVC measures success in dollars per minute."

During his recent one-hour appearance, Manilow sold more than 43,000 copies of his new CD, "The Greatest Songs of the Sixties." According to Yoegel, this makes Manilow the top music seller in a one-hour segment in QVC's 22-year history.

Alabama comes in a close second, selling more than 41,000 units of its CD, "Songs of Inspiration," in 60 minutes.

Manilow and Alabama made their QVC appearance pre-CD street date. John did not, and his sales were not as strong. (In an agreement with John's management, QVC cannot divulge his exact sales numbers.) But all three included exclusive content as part of their respective package.

Exclusive content is also part of Khan's cross-marketing partnership with W Hotels. Dubbed the Wonder Women package, it is part of the chain's Women's Week: Whenever campaign and can be accessed via starwoodhotels.com and chakahhan.com.

The Khan/W union plays to the artist's entrepreneurial spirit, shining light on the other roles she plays: author ("Through the Fire"), fashion designer (Chaka Wear) and chocolate maker (Chakalates).

These days when she's not touring or recording songs for her new album (out next year through Sony BLIG imprint Burgundy Records), Khan can most likely be found developing and creating her first line of jewelry.

And who knows, when the jewelry is ready for its close-up, Khan may launch it the same way Paula Abdul introduced her own jewelry line earlier this year—through QVC.

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Laughing all the way to the CREDIT UNION!

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APY = Annual Percentage Yield. Source: Financial institution website and/or phone survey 11/01/06. Rates subject to change without notice. Some rates from other institutions may have additional qualifying requirements. Please check with your financial institution for current rates. Certificates are subject to early withdrawal fees and penalties. First Entertainment deposits insured up to $100,000 by the FDIC. Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Washington Mutual and Citibank are registered trademarks.

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Montreal Marvel

Little-Known Quebec Singer Gregory Charles Surprises The Canadian Charts

TORONTO—Meet Gregory Charles— the Canadian chart-topper most Canadians don't know.

The vocalist was an unknown quantity for the majority of his countrymen when he topped Canada's Nielsen SoundScan chart in late October. The 38-year-old Montreal-based radio/TV host and actor's debut studio album "I Think of You" sold 93,000 copies on its way to No. 1 the week ending Oct. 25.

"That's the kind of first-week figure rarely seen in Canada by domestic acts—excepting Celine Dion or Shania Twain—even established international acts. But what makes it even more remarkable is that almost all the English-language album's sales were in the French-speaking province of Quebec. "I Think of You" will not receive a full national release for several months."

"It's insane," says Charles, the son of an English-speaking, Trinidad-born father and a French-speaking Quebeccois mother.

"I knew some people would buy the album early," he says, "because the title track was played so much in Quebec this summer." It reached No. 3 on Nielsen BDS' Quebec-based English-language airplay chart. "But I had no idea we'd see a first-week sales.

The collection of 11 R&B-styled, Charles-penned songs (published by Editions Marignan) was released in Quebec Oct. 17 by Charles' own Disques NBW label, distributed by Sony BMG Canada. It stayed at No. 1 for two weeks, scanning 44,000 and 23,300 units respectively.

Charles' first-week sales outstripped those of new albums by two Canadian music giants, according to Nielsen SoundScan. The Tragically Hip's "World Container" (Universal) with 27,000 units and Sarah McLachlan with "Wintersong" (Nettwerk) at 19,000 units, entered behind "I Think of You" at No. 2 and No. 3 respectively.

In culturally distinctive Quebec, a media explosion often surrounds album releases by local French-language acts, although it is rare for Quebeckers to buy a domestic English-language album in such quantities.

Charles has been a high-profile radio/TV host in Quebec for two decades—he currently has a weekly regional radio show on French-language network Radio-Canada.

His musical talents, however, received substantial regional exposure through his autobiographical musical show "Noir et Blanc," which ran regularly at Montreal's Bell Centre from 2000 to 2004 and also played in New York and Toronto.

A 2004 live album of spirituals from the show, "Gospel Live Noir et Blanc" (Disques NBW), has sold 64,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

A classically trained pianist, Charles was also a backing vocalist on fellow Quebecker Dion's 1998 world tour. Dion and her manager/husband Rene Angélil are self-proclaimed fans.

"Gregory is so talented," Angélil says. "He sent us the song 'I Think of You,' and Celine and I fell in love with it. I introduced him to our record label Sony BMG."

"We came in very late," Sony BMG Music Canada senior VP of marketing Shane Carter says. The major finalized a Canadian pressing and distribution deal for the album only weeks before its Quebec release, he says, "but when we had the opportunity to jump on it, we were thrilled."

Carter adds that Sony BMG Canada has not presented the album to international affiliates yet. "We want to establish the album first in Canada," he says.

Sony BMG serviced AC radio nationally with the album's title track on Oct. 25. As of the week ending Nov. 6 it was No. 34 on Nielsen BDS' national AC chart.

The major will hold off a national release until spring 2007 to consolidate marketing plans, Carter says.

"We want to be more strategic in English Canada and not just put the album out," he adds.

"We are looking for the right opportunities to bring Gregory to the public—people need to see him."
**Islands Of Sound**

**Foundation Plots Sea Change For Inventive Indigenous Music**

MELBOURNE—George Telek lives in a house with no electricity in the Papua New Guinea village of Raluana, where the main income is from fishing or harvesting coconuts and bananas.

Yet Telek enjoys superstar status in his homeland thanks to his inspired blend of pop and Melanesian rhythms, sung in a mixture of the local Kuanuan language and pidgin English.

Now, Melbourne-based nonprofit organization the Wantok Music Foundation is attempting to spread the music of Telek and his fellow Pacific Islanders to a wider audience.

“World music audiences in the United States and Europe will embrace this music if they are exposed to it,” foundation board member David Bridie says. “But a lot of these recordings are lo-fi, so [they need] bigger budgets.”

The foundation was formed in June this year to promote “cultural exchanges and a greater level of economic empowerment for Melanesian and [Australian] indigenous communities.”

The foundation’s main tool will be the Wantok Music label, officially launched in October, to sign acts and help existing labels such as New Caledonia’s Mangrove Studios and PNG’s CHM get their releases distributed in Australia and internationally.

“Our music needs some more ‘fining up’ before it can be exported,” Mangrove founder Alain Lecante says, “but there are some very talented people here. We are also seeking some support from our politicians—being so isolated is a real big problem for us.”

PNG’s Telek is one of the biggest stars in Melanesia—the South Pacific region to the north and west of Australia including Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia and Fiji. In his homeland, Telek regularly draws 10,000-12,000 people to shows at football grounds, and he says his domestic album releases on his CHM-distributed Telek Records label sell “about 15,000” units each on cassette and CD—impressive figures for a country with a population of 3 million.

Even leading Melanesian acts rarely make it as far as Australia, but Telek has toured internationally, thanks to his 2000 album “Serious Tam” being released through Peter Gabriel’s EMI-distributed Real World label. Other regional acts tour regularly through the Pacific, where individual islands have their own stars and sounds.

New Caledonia acts, for example, fuse traditional music, pop, reggae and hip-hop into a genre known as kanka, while in Vanuatu, a mixture of R&B styles with pan pipes, conch shells and tamtam drums carved from logs is popular. Fiji’s homespun reggae acts tour the region, while domestic audiences also devour the vula genre, which emerged in the 1980s and combines the regionally popular guitar/ukulele string-band style with disco and country elements.

“It’s all inventive and exciting music,” Bridie says, “but underrepresented in global world music.”

Bridie, a successful screen composer signed to Mushroom Music Publishing, is a long-time fan of Melanesian music. He is joined on the foundation board by eight musicians/entertainment industry executives from Australia and Melanesia who make A&R and funding-raising decisions.

Bridie says the label is run on a voluntary basis with no full-time employees and claims 80% of its profits will be passed directly to artists. Initial funding is from national or state government grants and private benefactors.

An Australian distribution deal is currently being finalized, but CDs will initially be available from the foundation’s wantokmusic.org Web site.

“Not all the music will be commercial crossover [releases],” Bridie says, “but hopefully [the artists] can make more money to sustain their careers.”

Wantok launches Nov. 19 with albums from Telek (“Amette”), West Papuan string-band Black Paradise (“Spirit of Mambesak”) and a collection of PNG tracks remixed by Australian dance producers Paul Mac and Nick Littlemore (“Sound of the Morning Star”).

However, Australian retailers say minimal marketing by labels means there is still a small consumer awareness of Australasian/Melanesian world music titles. “They’re not big sellers,” says Phil Voge, assistant manager at single-store Brisbane independent Skinny’s Music, “although we get a lot of inquiries from tourists.”

London-based Virigin Megastores U.K. world music buyer Simon Coe suggests that Melanesia’s melodic, accessible string-band music could yet find a wider international audience but says it will have to take full advantage of every avenue of exposure.

“Constant touring is a great way to build a customer base,” Coe says. “But music used in a TV ad or in a movie creates a lot of demand quickly—and that would help.”

Additional reporting by Nigel Williamson in London.

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**GLOBAL NEWSLINE**

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**IMPALA CERTIFIES INDIE ALBUMS**

Pan-European independent labels body Impala has named the first honorees under its new certification scheme, which recognizes indie’s trade shipments across the continent. Until now, the IFPI Platinum Europe Awards, launched in 1996, have been the only continent-wide certification of trade shipments. They recognize album shipments in excess of 1 million units.

The Impala Awards’ categories are silver (30,000), gold (100,000), diamond (250,000) and platinum (500,000). The same levels will apply to singles and albums, and include download sales. Independent labels from European and international territories nominate recordings to Impala, supplying it with independently verifiable physical shipments data on request.

The first batch of awards to be published, covering the period June-September, includes more than 100 albums. Leading the pack are two U.K. indie acts on Domino Records, Arctic Monkeys and Franz Ferdinand, with their respective debut albums “Whatever People Say I Am, That’s What I’m Not” (2006) and “Franz Ferdinand” (2004). Both are double-platinum, with shipments of 1 million units each.

—Tom Ferguson

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**INDIAN PIRATES RAIDED**

The Indian Music Industry claims to have seized pirated CDs and other counterfeit goods with a street value of more than 200 million rupees ($4.5 million) in a Nov. 9 raid on a factory in West Delhi operating under the name of Dugobs Replication.

Police and trade body officials seized more than 90,000 CDs (mainly domestic repertoire) and almost 1 million inlay cards and equipment plus 19 CD staplers. The plant owner was arrested and taken into custody.

The raid was the second major piracy bust in India this year. In July, the IMI seized pirated goods worth more than 300 million rupees ($6.6 million) during a raid in New Delhi.

—Nyay Bhushan

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**AMG EXPANDS IN ENGLAND**

U.K. concerts venue owner and operator Academy Music Group has purchased the 750-capacity Oxford, England-based live music and club venue the Zodiac for an undisclosed sum from previous owners Nick Moorbath and Adrian Hicks.

The deal gives AMG a total of 11 U.K. venues, including Carling Academy-branded venues in the London neighborhoods of Brixton and Islington.

A ruling from U.K. regulator the Competition Commission on the proposed acquisition of 51% share in AMG by investment vehicle Hansard, which is jointly owned by venue operator Live Nation U.K. and Irish music-promotion company Gaiety Investments Limited, is due shortly.

—Juliana Koranteng

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**U.K. PUBLIC BACKS COPYRIGHT EXTENSION**

Labels body the BPI claims that almost two-thirds of the British public backs its campaign to extend copyright protection for U.K. acts.

The BPI is making the claim based on a poll it commissioned from International Pollster YouGov. According to the poll, 62% of respondents agreed that home-grown acts should be protected for the same amount of time as their opposite numbers in America. The term of copyright for sound recordings in the United Kingdom is currently 50 years, compared with up to 95 years in the United States.

The poll’s total sample size was 2,034 British adults, and field work was undertaken between Nov. 2 and Nov. 6.

—Lars Brandle
As indie releases get fewer and farther between from now until January, one that has shown remarkable tenacity during this early holiday season is the third effort from gentle rock act Copeland. "Eat, Sleep, Repeat." The album arrived at No. 90 on The Billboard 200 in its first week, with sales topping 11,000 units in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

It is the band’s highest chart position and on par with its top sales week. In two weeks, the album has sold 16,000 units. The total impressed Columbia Records, which announced Nov. 14 that the band had been signed to the major.

The Militia Group sales manager Wyatt Miller says "Eat, Sleep, Repeat," the album of 70,000 units. The label spent about $120,000 at retail alone for the album, which is a charmingly melodic mix of electronic atmospheres and pop hooks.

"We focused a lot on not getting the most pure tone out of instruments," singer Aaron Marsh says of the group’s finest and final album for the Militia Group. "We focused a lot on the sounds that the instrument makes you may not think about, like the sounds of fingernails on piano keys or the motor on a vibraphone." It’s an adventurous album from a label that has been steadily branching out since achieving mainstream success with pop-punk acts like Rufio and Cartel. The Militia Group is also home to Luscious Jackson’s Jill Cunniff and just-signed Parisian pop act Tahiti 80.

But had the Militia Group waited until January to release "Eat, Sleep, Repeat," the risk of it being lost in the fourth-quarter shuffle would have been minimized, and it could have avoided year-end hives in co-op prices. "Everything is so expensive right now," Miller says. "It was a little risky for us, but we wanted it out. We’re trying to be a player, and sometimes you have to take chances.

Miller and label founder Chad Pearson also admit that the Southern California label was in need of some fourth-quarter billing and was happy to oblige the band’s request to get the record out. Pearson knew there was a good chance the album may be sold off the Militia Group’s hands, as the label, whose releases are handled by Sony BMG’s RED Distribution, has an upstreaming deal with the major. Carter moved on to Epic once the Militia Group had gotten the act to about 45,000 units. With Copeland’s 2005 album "In Motion" having sold 8,000, Pearson wonders why it took so long for a major to jump at the band.

"It’s been one of those things that dumbfounded me," he says.

On The Cheap: Indie labels still looking to enter the digital revolution and offer their own downloads for sale may want to look at Merge Records. Rather than repave its entire site into a digital storefront, Merge found a relatively cheap and painless way to sell digital albums—by e-mail. Since the start of this year, the Chapel Hill, N.C.-based label has been e-mailing digital albums to those who order vinyl from the site. The label is selling the individual files for $8. Customers receive a randomly generated code, which is good for generating one e-mail of an album. There’s an honor system, Merge technology guru Spott Philpott says, in case someone happens to lose the file.

Philpott also notes that it will take about 15-20 minutes to receive the album, as long as it’s purchased during business hours. As of yet, Merge’s site isn’t automated, and the company’s mail-order department will have to send out the code. For this reason, Merge has kept its download offerings on the down low.

"Since it is kind of clunky, we haven’t done a lot to promote it," Philpott says.

That will change as the site should be automated in the coming months. Look for Merge to start selling out-of-print Superchunk 7-inches, and songs the label hasn’t found a home for, such as a recent M. Ward cover of Gordon Lightfoot’s "Early Morning Rain" featuring Neko Case and My Morning Jacket’s Jim James.

There is one snag with Merge’s downloads—via e-mail system—the site won’t offer much in the way of single track sales.

"It’s an accounting headache," Philpott says, "and we’d have to generate a separate code for each track."

I happened to be in England for the 20th anniversary of the Beatles’ "Sgt. Pepper" and, being an EMI artist at the time, I was invited to the studio where they recorded it to hear the master tapes. Originally a Georgian townhouse built in 1831, it was converted to recording studio a hundred years later by the company that would become EMI. The Beatles would do virtually all their recording in Studio 2. So I’m there and it was the most amazing experience. The orinigal first-generation tapes sounded so rich, so deep, so complete in their spectrum of frequency, that I felt absolutely stoned for days. Completely drug-free, no kidding. I’ve never felt anything like it before or since. Even in those glorious analog days we had to hear records in a dilute state or we wouldn’t have been able to handle it.

Just 50% of what was being recorded was making it to our home systems and it was still having such a profound impact on us that music became an essential part of our daily needs, an absolute addiction. And I mean physically. Well, digital has killed all that. But I digress.

So Abbey Road Studios celebrated 75 years this week, and everyone who attended walked the zebra crossing barefoot, starting rumors that they’re dead.

Our coolest song in the world this week is Green Day’s "Favorite Son" taken from the first of what will probably be numerous albums to tribute the late CBGB, but none with more talent than this. It’s called "CBGB Forever," out Thanksgiving week. The album includes tracks from U2, the Ramones, Foo Fighters, Audioslave, Velvet Revolver and Good Charlotte.

And to tie it all together, Green Day and U2 cut their Katrina benefit single called "The Saints Are Coming" at, yes, Abbey Road. See you on the radio.

Little Steven’s Underground Garage column is produced exclusively for Billboard. For more information go to UNDERGROUNDGARAGE.COM.
77 MILLION PAINTINGS BY BRIAN ENO

GROUNDBREAKING DVD / ART SOFTWARE PACKAGE

Limited Edition, Numbered Release features

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW DVD

SOFTWARE DISC
Playable on Mac or PC, this program creates a constantly evolving "light painting" with virtually infinite variations accompanied by the music of Brian Eno

52-PAGE BOOK
Includes an extensive essay by Eno and previously unseen images

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Music now offers incredible opportunities. And if you have anything to do with the business of music, MIDEM is the source.

Only the world’s definitive music market brings together so many key international players under one roof – with 10,000 professionals from the recording, publishing, digital & mobile, audio/video and the live sectors, MIDEM is an invaluable source of new business for the year to come.

Register before December 19 and save up to €330 on the regular rate participation fee for MIDEM and MidemNet Forum. To find out more and to register now go to www.midem.com

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Touring Conference Sound Bites
Promoters, Agents And Execs Voice Their Views

The following sound bites are among the highlights from the third annual Billboard Touring Conference & Awards, held Nov. 8-9 at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York.

FROM THE ‘SECRET AGENT MAN’ PANEL: Marty Diamond, president of Little Big Man/Paradigm, regarding Coldplay selling its shed tour to Live Nation: “It certainly didn’t make our lives any easier, it still required day-to-day vigilance. I still sell shows to people.”

When promoter Louis Messina of TMG/AEG Live said, “I hate it when agents cut deals with buildings, it takes the leverage out of promoters,” Creative Artists Agency (CAA) agent John Hule shouted from the floor, “We don’t like promoters who act as agents.”

FROM THE ‘WIRED’ PANEL: David Goldberg, executive VP of sales and marketing for Ticketmaster, noted that it would send 1 billion customer alert e-mails this year.

Bryan Perez, president of digital distribution at Live Nation, said, “This [touring] industry is completely poised to take leadership in the digital music world. “It is incumbent on the touring industry to do what they’ve always done—foster artist development.”

FROM THE ‘THE FUTURE IS NOW’ PANEL: Rob Light, managing partner of CAA, in discussing how he chooses AEG Live or Live Nation, or a national promoter over market-by-market promotion: “When it came time to do Mariah Carey, [Live Nation CEO] Michael Rapino and his team believed in it, they took a chance, and there was a real passion from his staff. [Live Nation executive VP] Brad Wavra stepped up and said, ‘I really want this, I know how to market this,’ and really convinced us, and he did a really great job—the tour went into percentages.

“On the flip side, when AEG comes in and says, ‘We think American Idol is going to be a huge tour,’ go back four years when it was 10 karaoke singers going into arenas, and nobody really knew what it was going to do, and [AEG Live VP] Debra Rathwell comes in and says, ‘I know how to sell this.’

“I don’t go in with any preconceived notions. There are times when everything is equal and you’re just making a gut decision. The worst thing is you wake up and somebody’s gonna hate you and somebody’s gonna love you. Fortunately, it’s not the end of the world, there’s always the next tour. At the same time, Tim McGraw and Faith Hill can go out and arguably make more money doing it show by show than nationally. And guess what? They got it up and down every night without the same production manager from the promoter.”

AEG Live CEO Randy Phillips on cutting in local promoters: “We like to work with other promoters if we can. The problem is that the guarantees are so high that it’s hard to give up any piece of a major market without having an implication on the secondary markets where the risks are much greater.” Seth Hurwitz, president of Washington, D.C., indie I.M.P., chimed in, “But if you lost money, wouldn’t you lose less if you had a local sucker like me?”

Live Nation’s Rapino on promoters and acts: “I think as an industry our greatest downfall, once we get over the inward bickering, is that we have a terrible respect for our long-term investment with the artist in that we all have a very small-time horizon. We have a one-night affair with the band at best. The labels have a seven-year affair, and we’re the ones putting more money into the artists’ pockets. They’re making more money from touring, however you define it, and we’re putting bigger guarantees up. So, I hope every one of you figures out how to have a longer affair with the artist, whether it’s a tour or a three-year local deal. We spend a billion-and-a-half dollars a year for a two-hour affair. That’s crazy.”
Sir Elton John was named Billboard’s 2006 Legend of Live, presented by president/publisher John Kilcullen and executive director of touring Ray Waddell. Pictured, from left, are John, Whoopi Goldberg, Waddell and Kilcullen.

The melding of the digital and live worlds was the topic of the "Wired" panel. From left are Dell Furano, CEO of Signatures Network; Nina Grinich, GM of Control Room; Nathan Hubbard, chief of staff at Music Today/Red Light Management; David Goldberg, executive VP of sales and marketing at Ticketmaster; Bryan Perez, president of digital distribution at Live Nation; Heath Miller, president of Excess db Entertainment; and Janenne Remondino, senior manager at AO Entertainment.

The "Future Is Now" panel featured, from left, Michael Rapino, CEO of Live Nation; Rob Light, managing partner of Creative Artists Agency; Seth Hurwitz, president of I.M.P.; Adam Friedman, CEO of Nederlander Concerts; and moderator Tamara Conniff. Billboard executive editor/associate publisher.

The elite players of the touring industry, including the top agents, managers, promoters and venues, attended the third annual Billboard Touring Conference & Awards Nov. 8-9 at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York.
Cold Feet And Bigger Fools
Why Trans World Should Have Won The Tower Auction

Now that it's a moot point, it looks like Trans World Entertainment, rather than a consortium of buyers led by liquidator Great American, should have won the auction for Tower Records. Nearly a month after it was to close, the sale of Tower.com to consortium participants' Wolfgang's Vault has all but fallen apart, according to sources.

Bill Sagan, Wolfgang's Vault founder, didn't return a call for comment, but it appears he is walking away from his $3.8 million bid. And, Retail Track might add, he seems to be justified in doing so. Regardless, that means that Great American's winning liquidating bid was only worth $130.5 million as opposed to Trans World's $133.8 million.

According to court documents, Sagan became reluctant to close on Oct. 9 because right after the Oct. 6 auction Tower management gave most staff running the Web site their walking papers. This left the online store a shadow of itself with a greatly reduced offering.

Sagan's reluctance to close the deal also stemmed from investment bank Houlihan Lokey waiting until the day of the auction to disclose that Tower, having signed a Federal Trade Commission consent decree, had to follow certain steps before it could sell customer information to anyone acquiring the company. This requirement was so discreetly disclosed that not only did Sagan miss it, but so did Super D, the other bidder for Tower.com.

After an Oct. 11 hearing that supposedly put the deal back on track, the number of active titles for sale on the site was rectified somewhat. But another reason behind Sagan's cold feet might be that he was by far the highest bidder on the asset. Super D bid $2 million, and although Amazon suddenly showed up for the Oct. 6 auction, it never bothered to tender an offer once it heard where Sagan and Super D were at.

Now, Houlihan Lokey is peddling the remaining Tower assets, and sources say it hopes to match the $3.8 million that Sagan was to pay for Tower.com. Like most investment banks, I guess it subscribes to the "bigger fool" theory.

MEANWHILE, the real estate consortium that acquired the assigning rights for the store leases held an auction Nov. 9, and it looks like at least seven Tower stores will stay in the music business.

According to sources, Trans World Entertainment has acquired Tower leases in Nashville, Philadelphia; Stockton and Torrance, Calif.; and two stores in Sacramento, Calif. The only other music merchant to pick up a lease, according to sources, was the seven-unit, Berkeley, Calif.-based Rasputin chain, which scored the Larkspur, Calif., Tower. After any remaining, unauctioned leases are returned to Tower to be rejected, I suppose interested music retailers can approach the landlords to try and cut a deal, which might salvage a few more locations.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT, ALFIE: Source Interlink isn't talking about why its founder S. Leslie Fiegel suddenly resigned as chairman/CEO to become a consultant for the Bonita, Fla.-based company (billboard.biz, Nov. 13). But Retail Track wonders if it has to do with the fact that, after seven months on the block, efforts to sell the music, video, magazine and book wholesaler seem to have come up empty.

In mid-March, Source Interlink announced it was "exploring strategic alternatives to enhance shareholder value," hiring Deutsche Bank Securities to investigate possible recapitalization, strategic acquisitions, and the combination, sale or merger of the company with another entity.

In June, Retail Track reported that a book with the company's financials hit the street in a bid to attract private-equity investors to take the company private. It is important to note that with Fiegel's departure, Alliance Entertainment's former majority owner, Yucaipa Cos., which engineered the merger between AZC and Source Interlink, is now in charge of the board through the naming of Michael Duckworth, a Yucaipa partner who had been a director at Source Interlink, as chairman. Previously, Source Interlink named six of the directors to the company's 11-member board of directors.

At the same time that Duckworth's new position was revealed, the company said it would search for a new CEO. For now James Gillis, COO of the company, and Alan Tuchman, COO for the Alliance Entertainment subsidiary, will serve as interim co-CEOs.

With Duckworth in charge, the effort to sell Source Interlink could be widened to offer it to strategic competitors like Handleman or Baker & Taylor. Or it might mean a return to the drawing board in hopes that the two operating divisions improve profits, which could ultimately justify a higher sale price at a later date. The company's shares closed down 5 cents to $9.14 on Nov. 13.

Stay tuned.
When Consoles Collide

PlayStation3, Wii Court Gamers With New Functionality

With the impending release of Sony Computer Entertainment's PlayStation3 (PS3) and Nintendo's Wii, the videogame industry has now completed a transformation that began last year with the introduction of Microsoft's Xbox 360.

The products are the last of the next-generation gaming consoles featuring new capabilities expected to affect all arms of the entertainment world, not just videogames. While the Wii is advertised purely as a videogame console, and carries a lower price point as a result, the PS3 and the 360 consoles are positioned as multiple-use home entertainment hubs. In addition to support for high-definition video output and surround sound audio, both also feature built-in Internet connectivity, large-capacity hard drives for storing content and a network storefront where users can browse, buy and download digital content.

Such interactive options have defined the Xbox 360 from the very beginning. This year alone, more than 4 million members of Xbox Live have downloaded in excess of 70 million pieces of content from the Xbox Live Marketplace. The vast majority has been game-related content like demos, upgrades and custom images.

But on Nov. 22, the company will begin offering movies, TV shows and other video content for rent and sale via the system as well. It's a major effort to expand the functionality and the market for the console beyond its gamer base.

In the near future, Microsoft is expected to integrate its Zune music service with the Marketplace, allowing members to buy and share music between the Xbox console and the Zune portable music device.

With the introduction of Sony's PS3, Microsoft won't be the only one trying to transform a videogame console into a home entertainment hub. The PS3 also features a networked community, the PlayStation Network, and a content outlet, the PlayStation Store. At press time, Sony had not yet released the details of exactly what kind of content will be available via the store at launch, and did not return numerous requests for comment.

However, sources say it will likely match the rollout schedule of the Xbox 360 — with various game-related content available for sale initially, along with free promotional music and video content. Going forward, Sony is expected to add the ability to buy music and films via the Sony Connect online content service. Sources at Connect hinted that there would be no immediate integration with the PlayStation Store at launch.

Microsoft and Sony have deep interests in delivering content other than videogame content into the home — Microsoft as a technology brand and Sony as a provider of consumer electronics hardware and entertainment content like movies and music. Both companies' new devices support high-definition DVD — the PS3 ships with a built-in Blu-ray DVD player while Xbox 360 fans can buy an optional HD-DVD drive attachment — in addition to support for high-definition video output and surround sound audio.

Nintendo, however, has no such aspirations, and is focusing only on game-related capabilities for its network and content service. Given the growing popularity of videogames, it's easy to see the potential for using consoles as a foothold to deliver additional entertainment into the home. According to research group IDC, more than 42% of U.S. households have at least one videogame console.

The console has the ability to become a Trojan Horse for companies to get people off the PC and onto different devices going forward," Jupiter Research analyst Michael Gartenberg says. "If that happens, we may really start seeing these consoles serve as a secondary digital hub in the home."

After all, they're already hooked up to high-definition TV sets and surround sound home entertainment systems, whereas most PCs are not. Additionally, they're used by the most sought-after demographic in entertainment today — young males aged 18-34.

But discovering music in a videogame soundtrack and using the videogame console to actually buy and download the song are two completely different things. To succeed, content acquired via the consoles must be interoperable with other devices, such as portable MP3 players and home computers. Whether that will be the case is yet unknown.

"I don't expect it to be a significant revenue stream," IDC games analyst Billy Pidgeon says. "It's strictly game content right now. Content owners will want to reach gamers, but if they want to sell to them (via consoles) it's probably wishful thinking on their part."

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**SIZING UP THE SYSTEMS**

**Wii**
- Internet connected: Yes
- Registered networked gamers: none
- Hard drive capacity: No
- HD video capability: 480p
- Cost: $250

**PlayStation 3**
- Internet connected: Yes
- Registered networked gamers: 3 million
- Hard drive capacity: 20GB and 60GB models
- HD video capability: 1080p resolution; HD-DVD drive-on drive
- Cost: $500-$600, based on hard drive capacity

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- HD video capability: 720p resolution; HD-DVD add-on drive
- Cost: $400 with hard drive, $300 without

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**BITS & BRIEFS**

**CINIGULAR SENSATION**

Pyramid Research says Cingular's recently announced mobile music strategy is a likely winner over the offers made by competitors Sprint and Verizon Wireless. The analyst group says Cingular's partnership approach with established digital music services like eMusic, Napster and Yahoo Music, which lets customers sideload music from their existing libraries, is "a more sustainable model" than the walled-garden stance taken by the other carriers. "Cingular can expect its subscriber base to become filled with many more music lovers than its competitors," the report reads.

**MERLOT AND MUSIC**

Redwood Winery is offering 1,000 free music downloads from MSN Music to anybody that signs up for its "spilled the Corks" contest by the end of the year. The winery has plugged three bottles from its Sierra Series with special red corks imprinted with a code and the word "winner," which can be redeemed for the free music. If all three corks are found before Dec. 31, all registered entrants will receive free music downloads as well.

**FROM STUDIO TO PHONE**

Amp'd Mobile has begun offering what record labels are referring to as "mobile albums" — a bundle of music-related content available in a single download at one price. For $5, the "Studio Sessions" bundle includes up to three full tracks recorded live in the Amp'd studios, a master ringtone, an exclusive behind-the-scenes video of the artist and a wallpaper of the artist's latest album art. For $2.50, the "Double Up" bundle includes the original full track with the associated master ringtone. Participating acts include Jurassic 5, Lupe Fiasco and Sleepy Brown, with Wolfmother and Snoop Dogg on deck.

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World music pioneer looks back on two decades of exposing African and Cuban music to a global audience.

Some 20 years ago, young British history graduate Nick Gold joined small London-based concert booking agency Arts Worldwide, run by two women who shared a passion for the then-nascent world music genre. Shortly thereafter, when the company renamed itself World Circuit, Gold found himself overseeing the imprint and producing its early releases. Since then, he has developed East London-based World Circuit into one of the leading independent world music operators in the business, with a roster based mostly around Cuban and West African artists.

In the Grammy Award-winning “Buena Vista Social Club,” the label claims the most successful world music album of all time, with more than 6 million units shipped, while its African artists such as Ali Farka Toure and Toumani Diabate have earned further Grammys. Gold bought out the company’s co-founders, Anne Hunt and Mary Farquharson, in the early ’90s. These days, he is World Circuit’s sole owner and managing director—and still produces most of its releases.

In October, the label marked its 20th anniversary with “World Circuit Presents . . .” a 28-track, two-disc compilation of past favorites and previously unreleased recordings. Ironically, its release came at a critical time for World Circuit, with some of its biggest stars, including Toure and the Cuban singer Ibrahim Ferrer, having recently passed away. Billboard talked to Gold about what lies behind World Circuit’s success—and what the future holds.

World Circuit is one of the few labels to make any serious money out of world music. How do you account for that success? The biggest seller, of course, has been “Buena Vista Social Club,” and I think we were very lucky with our timing there. But a decade before that, we’d come along at a moment when there was a huge surge of interest in music that had previously been almost completely ignored.

My first love was jazz, but that had all been done. In African and world music, there were all these incredible musicians you could work with—and a huge range of possibilities opened up.

What made World Circuit so different from the other world music labels that emerged at that time? Working with Ali Farka Toure was the key. His music and personality were so powerful—and you couldn’t allow it to be sidelined as something obscure and exotic. You had to give it the best treatment on every level.

That led to him recording “Talking Timbuktu” in L.A. with Ry Cooder, which really put the label on the map and gave us our first Grammy.

World Circuit’s U.S. releases come out on Nonesuch. How does that deal work for you? Nonesuch originally approached us about 10 years ago because they were keen on Oumou Sangare, who has now recorded four World Circuit albums. I appreciated that very much. It’s a very comfortable relationship. They are knowledgeable with a great team and they care.

How do you balance the business role of owning and running the label with the creative side? For example, producing most of the recordings? It’s not easy. You get enthusiastic about an artist and project you’re working on, and you want to get it out there in the best possible way to as many people as possible. But the balance is helped enormously by the fact that we’ve got a great, dedicated team at World Circuit which we’ve built up over time.

One British newspaper recently described you as looking for “the Sgt. Pepper effect,” aiming for a perfect record every time. Is that why World Circuit has a fairly small output? I’d like to put more out, but you’ve got to take time to get it right. We don’t put anything out unless it’s the best. If it isn’t, then it doesn’t get released. You hear people say an album needs three or four great tunes, and you don’t need to bother about the rest. That’s anathema to me. Records are expensive. I think it’s shit to expect someone to buy something you don’t think is quite good enough yourself.

The other point I’d make is that in rock music, you’ve got the lyrics and the relationship between the band and its fans to carry a record. With this sort of music you have to find a way of making each album new and special.

Was there a sense that you had a duty to record the “Buena Vista” musicians, who were nearing the ends of their careers, before it was too late? There definitely was that feeling when we embarked upon it and discovered what was there. The pianist Ruben Gonzalez was approaching 80, but he was on fire the first couple of years we worked with him. Ibrahim Ferrer had reached this fantastic maturity in his 70s. And Compay Segundo, who was nearly 90, was singing with huge elegance and authority.

For eight years, you’ve had the recordings of the only concerts the full “Buena Vista” lineup gave. Why no album release? There had been Wim Wenders’ film (“Buena Vista Social Club,” 1999) and I just didn’t think it was the right time. But we’re finally going to release the July 1998 Carnegie Hall concert next year. Its moment has arrived.

Many of the “Buena Vista” stars are now dead, and this year Ali Farka Toure also died. Where does World Circuit go from here? It’s a bit of a “what happens next?” moment for us. Ali has left a huge hole because I’d worked with him for nearly 20 years. But at the same time, we’ve only recently started working with the kora player Toumani Diabate, who is a genius. The first record we did with him was “In the Heart of the Moon,” which won a Grammy this year. We’ve got a new record coming from him, which I’m really excited about.

Is the Cuban music adventure that began with “Buena Vista” now over? There’s going to be a posthumous Ibrahim Ferrer record. It was always his dream to make a purely bolero album. We did two sessions in Cuba. We were due to go out there and finish it when he died in August last year.

On his deathbed, he left me a note asking me to complete the project. The tapes got stuck in Cuba, and we’ve only just got them back, and we’re now trying to finish it. There’s some wonderful stuff there.

Almost all of World Circuit’s artists have been masters of their art. Have you thought of recording young Cuban or African acts in newer genres? I get asked a lot why we don’t do younger stuff, like tumbas and rap, because you’re right—pretty much all the people we’ve recorded have been the finished article. That’s made it easy for me because I wouldn’t know what to do with someone young and raw. Maybe that music’s good, but I don’t like it, and I wouldn’t know how to treat it properly.
The Man Once Known As Cat Stevens On Islam, Air Travel And Why Waiting 28 Years Between Albums Is Sometimes A Good Idea

By Nigel Williamson
Illustration By Edel Rodriguez

The Billboard Q&A

Yusuf Islam

November 25, 2006

www.americanradiohistory.com
**It's the comeback no one ever expected.**

November sees the return to the world stage of the artist known internationally as Cat Stevens, more than a quarter-century after his last commercial recording. • The global release of Yusuf’s album “An Other Cup” marks the latest stage in the musical and spiritual journey of the British singer/songwriter, born Steven Georgiou some 59 years ago. • As Cat Stevens, he enjoyed his first success in the 1960s with such self-penned U.K. chart hits as “I Love My Dog” (1966) and “Matthew & Son” (1967) on the Deram label. Stevens hung out with the Beatles and toured with Jimi Hendrix, but was struck down with tuberculosis in early 1968 at the height of his success. • After hospitalization and convalescence, Stevens re-emerged in 1970 a changed man. Gone was the brash young pop star and in his place, newly signed to the Island label (A&M in the United States), emerged a sensitive, introspective singer/songwriter whose albums “Tea for the Tillerman” (1970), “Teaser and the Firecat” (1971), “Catch Bull at Four” (1972) and “Foreigner” (1974) went on to sell millions internationally. • But an even bigger change came in 1978, when he became a Muslim. He changed his name to Yusuf Islam, sold his guitars and turned away from his fans to become a pillar of the British Muslim community, donating the royalties from his old records to fund Muslim schools and Islamic charities. • Now, finally, comes “An Other Cup,” the artist’s first album since 1978’s “Back to Earth.” The name may have changed but the singer’s gentle voice remains reassuringly familiar, his melodic gifts are intact, and his lyrical insight seems undimmed. • In a rare interview, Yusuf talked to Billboard in London to explain what brought about the return of the Cat.

How does it feel to be talking about a new album for the first time in 28 years? Going into the studio was like going back to a second home for me. What I wasn’t quite prepared for was the commercial and business side, which has grown incredibly corporate and made it more difficult to maintain your balance as an artist. But I’ve been through it before and I can cope.

Did you ever think you would make a record again? Music had been one of the most important things in my life and I’d done it as Cat Stevens. But as Yusuf, this was a challenge. I never really planned it, but (“Cup” co-producer) Rick Nowells set me going. I’d done a live thing for Mandela’s AIDS charity in South Africa, so he knew I was moving towards musical expression again. We met and ended up in a studio and I pulled out an old song and it felt so good—my voice was still there. We did one track and then he rang and asked if I wanted to do some more. It was very organic.

Were you nervous about returning? The last place I wanted to return to was the music business. But it’s the people and the cause that matter and right now there’s an important need, which is my own destiny. The music business, or whatever. But it’s there to do his own thing. Now the story is about my son coming back and bringing a guitar into the house. A couple of years ago, one morning after prayers, his guitar was lying around. I picked it up and my fingers knew exactly where to go. I’d written some words and when I put them to music, it moved me and I realized I could have another job to do. Things just grew from there.

What’s the significance of the album title? It has obvious connotations with “Tea for the Tillerman.” But it’s also a symbol. There’s this talk of the clash of civilizations. But if you do your research you find, for example, that coffeehouses came from Muslim civilization in Turkey and the guitar was developed from Muslims taking the oud to Spain. So culture and civilization is something we share, not something we should fight about. That’s the symbol of the cup. It’s there for everybody to drink from.

When were the songs written? A couple are quite old. “Greenfields, Golden Sands” was written in 1968 for a musical that was never realized and has now found a context almost 40 years later. The first part of the single “Heaven/Where True Love Goes” was written for “Foreigner,” but the main section is a new song.

What’s the history of the album track “In The End”? It’s a song that asks people to look at themselves and check they’re making the right choices. I actually wrote it to sing at Live Aid in 1985 but never got the chance. I turned up with no guitar and they were a bit worried by that. Then Elton John overran and so I said, “No problem,” and walked away.

Songs have a life of their own. Sometimes they’re not meant to be born then and only surface later. Is there a common theme between the old and new songs? It’s like a stream which links past, present and future. The music I made in the past still relates directly to me today because it was coming from a place within me that was unrestricted by the music business or any other shackles.

How strongly did your faith affect the new songs? I think purposefulness and a feeling that we have a direction is probably the message of the album. One song, “Whispers From a Spiritual Garden,” sets to music a poem called **Universal Love** by the 13th century Islamic Sufi poet Rumi. I read him even before I read the Koran— at one point I never went anywhere without my book of Rumi’s poems. When we come to the message of Islam, the root of the word itself comes from peace. Many people on all sides—and some Muslims particularly—have gone extremely far from that basic understanding, and I have a role to play in helping to remind people of the gift of this wonderful religion, which has been politicized and used for other purposes.

Was covering “Don’t Let Me Be Misunderstood” on the album a commentary on what’s happened to you in recent years? It was a perfect fit, and I relate very directly to it. I sent a copy of it to the Pope after he made those remarks about Islam [in September in Germany].

Might it also be directed at U.S. officials who refused you entry on “national security grounds” in 2004—and did you ever get an apology? No, but you gave me a visa, which I never used. Now it’s being renewed or reviewed or whatever. But the issue is bigger than the present U.S. administration. It’s about freedom of thought and freedom of movement.

Will proceeds from the record go to your charity, One Small Kindness? There will be a real benefit for One Small Kindness, which is doing a great job for orphans—our main focus—and also with education for girls [in] places like the Balkans, Indonesia and Iraq. We’ve got a faculty teaching girls management skills in Baghdad University, but God knows how long it can stay there.

Will you be singing these new songs in concert? I’m being pushed very hard. Everybody tells me that’s where the money is—and I tell them I’m not interested in money. But it’s something I have to think about seriously.

What do you hope this album will achieve? It’s there to bridge a gap. When I walked away from the music business I left a hole, and I think it will explain that my heart hasn’t gone that far away from where it always was.

In retrospect, do you regret the long years away from music? No way, because I had to get a life and get off my high horse and join the human race. I’d been a pop star since my teens. When you’re in that privileged position of being rich and famous you can lose touch with reality.

Also, I had another agenda to fulfill: I had to learn my faith and look after my family, and I had to make priorities. But now I’ve done it all and there’s a little space for me to fill in the universe of music again.

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“I CAN POINT A WAY FORWARD TO OUR COMMON HUMANITY”

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www.americanradiohistory.com
IN AUGUST, British authorities foiled a terrorist plot to smuggle explosive liquids onto flights and detonate a series of mid-flight explosions. The breakthrough was a victory, of course, for mankind, but a massive setback for those hoping to fly with shampoo—or a musical instrument. Touring musicians were once again set back in the name of international security. Several concerts and tours were canceled as a result, including a number of events at the Edinburgh International Festival that month, while British rock act Snow Patrol was forced to pull two U.S. dates after flight delays meant band members could not get to the concerts. New York’s 100-member Orchestra of St. Luke’s was forced—after two years of planning—to abandon an appearance at the BBC Proms in London while Russian-born trumpet player Valery Ponomarev broke his arm during an altercation with security at Paris’ Charles de Gaulle International Airport, after he was prevented from carrying his valuable instrument onboard.

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The flurry of inactivity was only the latest challenge in a series of logistical hurdles that have sprung up in the five years since Sept. 11, 2001. The music business—and specifically touring—has been affected by a global climate of fear, with international acts seeking to tour the United States coming under particular scrutiny. Yusef Islam may have been the most high-profile artist to fall foul of this increased attention, when he was denied access to the States in 2004, but musicians across the board have found themselves affected.

Most travel challenges for musicians begin and end with the work visa. Historically, work visas for foreign artists wishing to tour the United States came under the auspices of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. On March 1, 2003, service and benefit functions of the INS transitioned into the Department of Homeland Security as the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Since then, obtaining the proper work visas has become a more involved process for foreign artists touring the States and for U.S. artists wishing to tour internationally. “Security clearance on both ends is definitely a more significant part of the process,” says Jeff Gabel, chief counsel for Traffic Control Group (TCG), a New York-based firm that helps streamline the visa process for international entertainers.

Since 2002, visa processing delays have caused the proportion of U.S. artistic groups using foreign performers to drop from 75% to 60%; the risk is simply too great that foreign artists will be denied visas causing show cancellations, Assn. of Performing Arts Presenters chief executive Sandra Gibson told the Financial Times earlier this year.

Cellist Yo-Yo Ma testified before the House Committee on Government Reform in April to plead a similar case. He said barriers to foreign musicians “have become extraordinarily high.” In particular, he singled out the plight of two Iranian musicians, Siavak Aghaee and Siavak Jahanian; the two are members of Ma’s Silk Road Project, an ensemble of Central Asian and Middle Eastern musicians. Thanks to post-Sept. 11 changes in the visa process, artists must now present themselves in person at their consulate to apply for entrance into the United States. The two Iranian artists had to fly to Dubai for the interview, and fly back to pick up their passports. Ma said they actually had to make the trip a third time because the visa printer malfunctioned; all told the process cost $5,000.

The in-person requirement has been a particular challenge for large groups, such as orchestras. Earlier this year, the Halle Symphony orchestra from Manchester, England, pulled the plug on a U.S. tour after it estimated the costs and travel involved in obtaining visas would top £45,000 ($85,000). Halle CEO John Summers says, “We think this would have taken two days out of our tour schedule, and the whole palaver involved was mind-blowing.”

The expense of applying for a visa doesn’t have to be so great. If bands live close enough to a consulate, the only two required fees are $190 for the filing and $200-$350 for the appropriate U.S. union—for bands, that’s usually the American Federation of Musicians. But expenses can add up quickly. For starters, those fees are per visa petition; travel with a crew and that’s a separate petition.

The bigger fees come in when you need a visa fast—and “fast” by U.S. bureaucratic standards means less than three months, the amount of time most interviewed by Billboard said one needed to allow to have a visa approved. Before Sept. 11, in June 2001, the INS put in place its Premium Processing Service, intended to assist large corporations and others that wished to transfer executive staff to positions in their American operations. The service guaranteed a 15-day turnaround on applications in return for the payment of $1,000 per application, on top of the standard processing fees.

While internationally established acts are generally happy to eat the costs, the price tag can seem exorbitant—and negate potential earnings—for the tours of small acts. “If you paid them $1,000, they moved you to the front of the queue,” says English folk artist/poet Les Barker, who says he was forced to cancel his upcoming U.S. tour when one of the venues where he was due to appear was issued with a “notice of intent to deny entry.” “You’d be appalled to get that treatment from a corrupt customs officer in, say, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea,” Barker says. “But in the U.S. it’s official policy.”

Finally, many acts pay someone else—an attorney, or a nonprofit group—to administer the wade through red tape. Such fees can range from $600 for a nonprofit (New York-based Tamizdat charges $560 per petition) to as much as $2,500 for an attorney.

Still, things are in many ways better for artists than they were pre-Sept. 11. Tamizdat executive director Matthew Covey says, “Before 9-11 you had to perfectly balance your whining and pleading with immigration.” He says, “Since 9-11, U.S. immigration has become much more static and predictable. If you get the checklist right, you get in.”

Nigel McCune, music business official at the United Kingdom’s Musicians Union, agrees that U.S. visa procedures are marginally better than they were, and are certainly no worse than in recent times. “But radical change is still needed,” he says.

Stories abound of artists encountering problems entering the States. In mid-September, Sydney-based indie band the Beautiful Girls were stopped when entering the country from Canada, due to improper paperwork. The band’s keyboardist Lachlan Dooley and drummer Bruce Baybrooke were banned from returning to the States for 12 months, and their tour manager Matt Woo for 10 years.

“It’s not necessarily harder to get into the U.S.,” says Phil Tripp, Sydney-based Australian and New Zealand coordinator of the South by Southwest conference. “But the process has become so slow that it takes up to six months to get a visa.”

Last year, 380 Australian acts applied to Tripp to perform at South by Southwest. Of the 26 that were accepted, three bands were not allowed to enter, Tripp notes.

Touring Indian musicians, particularly from the classical world, have also felt the rub. Renowned Delhi-based classical vocalist Shubha Mudgal explains that, although the visa application process begins months in advance of the planned departure date, the actual visa “is only issued about a week before your flight. What if a visa is re-
Obtaining a visa to perform in the United States is an occasion annoyance for most international artists. But for Latin acts in general, no visa means no access to the world’s largest Latin music market. For Mexican and Dominican artists, for whom the United States is an extension of their home markets, having the right visa in place is essential.

But current, more stringent enforcement of immigration laws can lead to delays in visa applications if requirements aren’t rigorously met.

“Since 9-11 the consulates are actually enforcing laws that have always been in the books,” says Michael Felix, an immigration attorney in Santa Fe Springs, Calif., who specializes in obtaining visas for artists and has worked for years with Mexican and Central American acts. “They had never really enforced security checks. Now, they are really cracking down,” he adds.

The crackdown can work both ways.

On the one hand, if all requirements are met, applications are actually being approved faster, says Kevin Tracy, an immigration attorney in Del Mar, Calif.

On the other hand, higher scrutiny means that once-overlooked details are now a major problem.

“What we’re finding is many of the members of large groups have not been truthful about prior illegal entries,” Felix says. If even one member of a group has any prior immigration issues, it can derail the visa application for the entire group. Knowing about the problem on time, however, allows the group to get a substitute member for a particular trip.

There are generally three kinds of visas available to entertainers. Acts that will actually be performing for money can apply for an O visa (for international solo acts of the highest caliber) or a P visa (for groups).

A third visa, the H2B, is for brand-new groups that have received limited press and are coming to the United States for the first time.

If an act is only coming on promotion only, it can apply for the easier to get H2B visa.

Most visas are dolled out for anywhere between a year and three years, depending on the act’s schedule of planned events.

Regardless, artists have to back up their applications with documents like schedules, itineraries and letters from promoters and labels. Some acts are even asked to perform at consulates when they go in for their visa interviews.

Post-Sept. 11, nationals from some countries definitely have a harder time with visas. In Colombia, for example, which has been designated a terrorist state, visas are issued out of a single location in Bogota. This inevitably leads to delays, unless the artist has a good attorney and is willing to pay premium fees for faster processing.

Delays affect artists in different ways. There are numerous examples of newer groups that are unable to come to the States even as their music gains airplay. And while top-selling groups can find enough work to keep them busy in Mexico and other countries while they wait for their visas to be processed, that doesn’t mean the process isn’t a nuisance.

“I’ve worked in the United States for 15 years with my work visa,” says José Angel Medina, leader of duranguense group Patulla 81. “And I never had any problems at all. Now that we’re a famous group, and we routinely sell 400,000 copies of each album, sometimes it takes us a year to get our visa.”
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Indie music fans can be forgiven to looking ahead to 2007. On the horizon for the first or second quarter are new releases by an all-star lineup of indie superstars, including new albums from singer/songwriter Bright Eyes, rock band Arcade Fire and pop darlings Bright Eyes and the Shins.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. This holiday season brings us new music from Public Enemy's Flavor Flav, a holiday-themed boxed set from Sufjan Stevens and a collection of Bright Eyes rarities, among other goodies.

The buzz on a new album from harpist Joanna Newsom started months ago, and longtime Chicago rock act Califone finally landed on the Billboard charts. Fans will have new music from Aiden, the Haunted and three new CDs worth of Tom Waits for the holidays.

And there's plenty more independent releases already making an impact, including sets from Senses Fail ("Still Searching"), Converge ("No Heroes"), Me First & the Gimmie Gimmies ("Love Their Country"), Xzibit ("Full Circle") and Mindy Smith ("Long Island Shores"). Here's a look at several notable indie releases, albums that are either still on the horizon or have just appeared on Billboard's charts.

Capsules compiled by Todd Martens, with additional reporting by Jonathan Cohen and Katie Hasty.
BRIGHT EYES

“Noise Floor,” Saddle Creek

This is not a new Bright Eyes album, but even a holiday release from the indie superstar is not to be taken lightly.

Bright Eyes, aka singer/songwriter Conor Oberst, will have a new CD in early 2007, says his label, Saddle Creek. Until then, “Noise Floor” offers older unreleased rarities.

Oberst is coming off his biggest albums to date—2004’s dual collections “I’m Wide Awake It’s Morning” and “Digital Ash in a Digital Urn.”


THE HOLD STEADY

“Boys and Girls in America,” Vagrant Records

Arriving with a bounty of positive press, the Hold Steady’s debut for Vagrant Records made a smashing entry on The Billboard 200, where it arrived at No. 124 on Oct. 21.

The Minneapolis-turned-New York rockers deliver semi-ironic tales of Sunday school, girls and booze, and “Boys and Girls in America” charted with scant radio and TV exposure.

“I don’t know if there’s a way of calculating this, but I think that [with] a good ratio of our fans, we’re their favorite band,” lead singer Craig Finn recently told Billboard. The hype began with 2005’s “Separation Sunday,” an album that became a favorite of journalists and bloggers.

NELLIE MCKAY

“Pretty Little Head,” Hungry Mouse/SpinArt

The new album from singer/songwriter Nellie McKay arrives on Hungry Mouse/SpinArt after McKay’s well-documented spat with Columbia Records. The major had cut McKay’s 23-track two-disc effort down to a 16-track set and the two sides were unable to reach a compromise.

So McKay formed her own label, Hungry Mouse, with manufacturing from Ryko-distributed SpinArt. Jeff Price, SpinArt co-founder, recently told Billboard that his label “now provides all the services of a record label but does it through a simple distribution deal. It’s very simple and artist-friendly.”

“Pretty Little Head” is the follow-up to McKay’s 2004 double-disc Columbia debut, “Get Away From Me,” which reached No. 1 on Billboard’s Heatseekers chart.

JOANNA NEWSOM

“Ys,” Drag City

Along with Devendra Banhart, Joanna Newsom helped usher in the so-called “freak-folk” movement, a term given to a new breed of indie artists that is experimenting with folk traditions. The harpist, whose crackly squawk of a voice would seem to make her an unlikely choice to spearhead a movement, ultimately charms the listener by cradling her vocals with delicately intriguing orchestrations.

“Ys,” which was set for a Nov. 14 release, comes in at just five tracks—the longest of which is nearly 17 minutes. Yet the album is fit to be performed in a chamber hall, as it features arrangements from famed Beach Boys collaborator Van Dyke Parks and mixing work by Jim O’Rourke (Wilco, Sonic Youth).

Leaked online months ago, the album is already receiving rave reviews across the Web. Backed by a winter tour, Newsom’s album looks to be one that adventurous music fans can turn to as an escape from blockbuster holiday pop releases.

COBRA STARSHIP

“While the City Sleeps, We Rule the Streets,” Decaydace/Fueled by Ramen

Can Decaydace and Fueled by Ramen catch lightning in a bottle a third time?

First came the smashing success of Fall Out Boy, and then that group’s Pete Wentz started his own imprint, Decaydace, which launched the career of Panic! at the Disco.

Already having logged several weeks on Billboard’s Top Independent Albums tally, Cobra Starship is the brainchild of former Midtown singer Gabe Saporta. Midtown may have been adored in the emo/punk underground, but Cobra Starship leans more heavily into pop-rock territory.

“The attitude of Cobra Starship is to have fun,” Saporta recently told Billboard. “I’m not concerned with punk rock credibility. Right now I just want to have fun and make party music.”

While the group’s first single was featured in the film “Snakes on a Plane,” it also introduced fans to Saporta’s catchy, light-hearted project.

The act will be on the road through Thanksgiving, and if Fall Out Boy and Panic! at the Disco are any indicators, Decaydace and Fueled by Ramen will be heavily working this record for all of 2007.

SUFJAN STEVENS

“Songs for Christmas,” Asthmatic Kitty

While folk singer/songwriter Sufjan Stevens continues work on his 50 states project, recording an album about each state in the nation, he puts that on hold each holiday season.

Starting in 2001, Stevens began recording EPs of Christmas songs, ranging in length from seven to 11 tracks. The CDs were given to friends and family but also ended up on peer-to-peer sites.

On Nov. 21, Asthmatic Kitty will release a boxed set of these five collections, dubbed “Songs of Christmas,” which include both sacred and secular classics like “Silent Night,” “Jingle Bells” and “The Little Drummer Boy.”

Each release contains several holiday originals by the quirky songwriter. The package is enriched with Christmas stickers, liner notes and short stories by Stevens, a Christmas essay by author Rick Moody, a songbook with lyric sheets and chord charts and an animated music video by Tom Eaton.

TOM WAITS

“Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers and Bastards,” Anti-

Tom Waits opens his vaults for the first time on the three-disc collection “Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers and Bastards,” due Nov. 21 via Anti-.

Of the 54 tracks, 30 are new recordings. The set will also feature a 94-page booklet. The collection took more than three years to compile, and boasts contributions from Primus’ Les Claypool, guitarists Dave Alvin and Marc Ribot, saxophonist Ralph Carney, harmonica virtuoso Charlie Musselwhite and drummer Bryan “Brain” Mantia.

Waits rarely tours, but he did a small club tour this summer, and will be doing limited press to promote the effort. For about a month prior to the album’s release, four songs were previewed on Spinner/AOL.com. While it may not have as wide an appeal as a singular Waits effort, the collection should be a consistent indie seller this holiday season.

THE HAUNTED

“The Dead Eye,” Century Media

AIDEN

“Rain in Hell,” Victory Records

It’s been a banner year for independent rock music. In Flames, Atreyu, Lacuna Coil, Iron Maiden, Senses Fail, Hellowgoodbye and others have scaled the Top Independent Albums chart.

As the year winds down, here are two acts from two powerhouse labels worth keeping an eye on. Victory’s Aiden has been a fast starter, as the act’s “Nightmare Anatomy,” its first for the label, spent 16 weeks on the Top Independent Albums tally.

The self-described horror rockers have offered fans a combo EP/DVD, released Oct. 31, and are touring this winter.

A bit on the harder, thrasher side, the Haunted also issued a new Century Media album on Halloween, its second proper release for the label.

These are stocking stuffers, perhaps, for the rock fan whose idea of a classic holiday movie is Tim Burton’s “The Nightmare Before Christmas” rather than “Miracle on 34th Street.”

FLAVOR FLAV

“Flavor Flav” Draytown/Redeye

One of rap’s favorite sidekicks went solo on Halloween. His self-titled debut was years in the making, and it arrives as Flavor Flav is experiencing a bit of a renaissance. He’s shot three seasons of VH1’s unscripted series “Flavor of Love,” and on Nov. 28 Slam Jamz Records will release a collection of lesser-known Public Enemy tracks, “Beats & Places.”

For now, though, fans will get a peek, perhaps, at what Public Enemy may have sounded like with Flav in charge rather than Chuck D. “This is my first and only album ever because I want it to be a collector’s item,” Flav recently told Billboard. “I always wanted to do a solo album but coming up through the years there’s been a lot of obstacles that have stopped me from doing.”

Additional reporting by Jonathan Cohen and Katie Haity.
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Myth No. 1: The Nashville concert market is primarily a country music market. Myth No. 2: Country music tours do not play well in Nashville.

The dichotomy of these two myths—assuredly not as widely held as they were a decade ago—show the challenges faced by Music City’s crown jewel of a venue the Gaylord Entertainment Center.

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the Gaylord Entertainment Center (affectionately known as the GEC by locals) has gone a long way toward blowing up both myths.

First, Nashville music fans may love country, but the 20,000-capacity GEC has enjoyed sellouts with acts including the Rolling Stones, Bon Jovi, Prince, Elton John, Nickelback and virtually every family show.

As for the second myth, the GEC has a string of successes in the country music arena. The Nashville landmark recently sold out Rascal Flatts, and the Tim McGraw/Faith Hill Soul2Soul II tour enjoyed a gross of nearly $1.4 million and paid attendance of 17,295.

“Gaylord Entertainment Center has been a great venue to work with from a management perspective,” says Scott Siman, who manages Tim McGraw. “They have always had great people consistently looking for ways to make every event a success.”

McGraw is linked to the GEC in more ways than one as a part owner of the Arena Football League’s Nashville Kats, the arena’s sports tenant along with the NHL’s Nashville Predators.

“We have had some amazing moments there, from four New Year’s Eve events, two Nashville Kats shows, one Tim McGraw show and one Soul2Soul II concert,” Siman says.

The GEC opened in December 1996 with a sold-out gala Amy Grant Christmas extravaganza. GM Hugh Lombardi came onboard six years later. He was immediately impressed by what he encountered, from the arena’s unique architecture, with its signature spire, and the depth and breadth of the market.

“The building had a great group of people running it, it was very clean and well-organized,” recalls Lombardi, who came to Nashville after a stint running the Ice Palace in Tampa, Fla.

In terms of GEC’s place in the market, “I felt this arena had a lot of advantages being in this location,” Lombardi says. “I was welcomed by Music Row, and I thought we got off to a good start.”

Brock Jones, who stepped into his senior director of booking role at the GEC in January, adds: “I think there is a lingering misconception nationally that Nashville’s just a country town.

“I do think that’s changing, and a lot of the shows we’ve been getting with Live Nation and AEG Live are showing that that thought is being challenged and changed,” Jones adds.

Which, again, is not to say country does not play well in Nashville.

“Country actually does very well here,” Lombardi says. “Since I’ve been here all the country acts that have played here are sellouts or near sellouts. But I also felt like not enough other genres of music were being played here.”

A string of high-profile winners outside country prove the market for other genres is substantial, Lombardi says.

Jones says one thing agents, managers and promoters should know is that “Nashville is one of the wealthiest, fastest-growing metropolitan areas in North America.”

“Our ticket sales for all genres over the past year have routinely exceeded expectations, and we are quickly becoming a must-play,” Jones says.

The GEC staff can do whatever it takes marketingwise to put a show over the top, Lombardi says, beginning with their great relationship with the Predators.

“The Predators will do anything they can with their telecasts, both radio and TV, and by any means we have internally, we’ll help promote the event,” Lombardi says.

The GEC’s expansive internal database is also a highly effective tool. “As far as demographics go, we can target [a market] very, very precisely,” Jones says. “We can break down demographics to purchase patterns or specific sales to specific types of shows. We can hit pretty much any demographic we want and tailor any message we want.”

And they do that, Jones says, for practically every event at the arena. “We are constantly assisting promoters in reaching out to the audience for whatever show they’re bringing in,” he says.

The arena and its marketing staff can add juice to an on-sale through internally orchestrated presales.

“An example would be Trans-Siberian Orchestra,” Jones says. “We did a presale this year, and we actually have, as of this week, surpassed our sales from last year, and we’re still 30 days out.”

And, as the nature of today’s business requires, the GEC marketing team works with national and local presales that the act or event brings to the building. “We did that both with Bon Jovi and Blue Man Group on fan-club presales,” Jones says. “With Tim and Faith, we had multiple presales on a national level. We’re very open to working with the promoters or the act on presales.”

As for promoters, the building is an "open house," working with Live Nation, AEG Live, Outback, House of Blues, Police Productions, Beaver and other promoters.

“We’re open to anybody who wants to come in here,” Jones says. The GEC has notched sellouts this year with Bon Jovi, the Blue Collar Comedy Tour, the SEC Men’s Basketball Tournament, Soul2Soul II, American Idols, Nickelback and Rascal Flatts.

Even so, the GEC and Nashville missed out on recent tours by the Rolling Stones, U2, Madonna, Paul McCartney and Eric Clapton.

But typically, the GEC has lost the shows to newer buildings still in the honeymoon period in the same region. Now it seems the arena is attracting shows that other buildings miss.

“Grosses don’t lie,” Jones says. “The reason we’re getting some shows that other markets are not is because we’re coming through for promoters. That’s the bottom line.”

With its huge loading dock, expansive backstage area and numerous dressing and production rooms, the GEC has earned a reputation as an "easy" venue during the past decade.

“It’s very easy to work in here,” Lombardi says. “We’re very accommodating with plenty of Southern hospitality.”

The backstage area is very spacious. “We’ve got quite a few dressing rooms and production offices, and we have the adjacent rehearsal hall that gets used for everything from storage to basketball courts, ping-pong or parties with tents,” Lombardi says.

“That room is 13,000 square feet and although its primary use is for rehearsals, it also is great space that most buildings don’t have that promoters have taken advantage of.”

Basically, the GEC can handle the audio, lights and production gear for any tour on the road.

“We’ve had the Stones, Billy [Joel] and Elton, Boom Boom Huck Jam, etc., and we never had a problem,” says Lombardi.

Production in Nashville is also economically efficient.

“Shows really like coming here because, first, we’re not a union house, we’re an open building,” Jones says. “The union does work here, but they’re not the only crew. So tour managers have the ability to get the best rate possible, which is obviously of interest to them.”

The smart design of the arena and the can-do staff make a great combination, Jones says. “It’s more than just the building itself,” he says. “The building as a production entity is a known quality. The one comment that routinely gets made at the end of the night from the production managers is, ‘When we come in here we know it’s going to be an easy day.’”
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HITTING THE 'SWEET SPOT'

GEC's Music City Theater is Scaled Down But Not Downscale

The Nashville market venue menu had something for pretty much every booking need, from a variety of large and small clubs, to the 2,300-capacity Ryman Auditorium to the 20,000-seat Gaylord Entertainment Center. But what was missing was a large theater venue in the 5,000-plus range. For the past several years, the GEC has found success with its Music City Theater configuration, echoing a trend that large arenas have successfully employed across the nation.

Many believe the "sweet spot" in touring today is about 5,000-6,000 capacity. And for about the past six years, arenas have not just relinquished that business to theaters. Now theaters in arenas aren't just an innovative marketing concept, for many they're mainstream venues.

By design, the Music City Theater fills a niche. "We can go from 5,000 to 9,100 capacity," says Brock Jones, senior director of booking of the GEC. "There's really no 4,000- to 6,000-seat venue in this market and that's what we're trying to fill."

To give the theater its own look, staff employ a sophisticated curtaining system, carpet the floor and give the stage a proscenium look. They can use tables and chairs for one act, general admission seating for another.

The venue has drawn attention from agents and recently sold out a date for the Cheetah Girls.

Other bookings that have enjoyed success in the Music City Theater include the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, 50 Cent and Lord of the Dance.

To get the GEC in the arena-theater booking loop, it has joined the Arena Network Theatre Group, an offshoot of the Arena Network, a consortium dedicated to attracting more business.

"I think [being in ANTG] has been very beneficial," GEC GM Hugh Lombardi says. "The Arena Network does a good job of making the agents and promoters aware of the options they have out there."

Thirty-two Arena Network members are also part of the ANTG.

"We're always picking up rock 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 to see."

Parsons says that the theater setups should have their own identity.

"I actually believe 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 sell-out, 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."

Upcoming bookings for the Music City Theater include contemporary Christian star Michael W. Smith with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra in December.

And the GEC is interested in booking more into the Music City Theater.

"We're actively seeking shows for that configuration," Lombardi says.

—Ray Waddell

The GEC's Music City Theater can host 5,000-9,100 concert fans.

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DOWNTOWN BOOSTER

HOW THE GEC DROVE NASHVILLE'S RESURGENCE

Fifteen years ago, a drive down Nashville's famed Lower Broadway area showcased a cultural fall from grace:

Just off Broadway sat the historic Ryman Auditorium, then in disrepair, and the downtown excitement the Ryman had generated while hosting the long-departed Grand Ole Opry had dissipated.

But by 1996, Lower Broadway is a vital, thriving district, spurred, most believe, by the opening of the Gaylord Entertainment Center in late 1996.

Across the Cumberland River sits LP Field, home of the NFL's Tennessee Titans. New clubs, restaurants and nightspots are thriving. And the Ryman itself is gorgeously renovated and rarely dark.

At the center of this entertainment nexus sits the GEC, with its radio-tower spire reaching toward the heavens, its "wow-factor" architecture and its "town square" marquee showcasing upcoming events.

This is a happening area.

"The Gaylord Entertainment Center led the resurgence of downtown, without question," says Butch Spyridon, president of the Nashville Convention & Visitors Bureau.

During the past decade, the GEC has become "definitely the premier entertainment venue in this city," says Brock Jones, the arena's senior booking director.

Also, the GEC was designed without a home sports team in mind, and instead primarily for live music events.

"I think it's the only large building opened in the last 10 years that was designed for concerts and not for sports in the country," Jones says.

Certainly, Nashville boasts several other venues in addition to the 2,362-capacity Ryman. They include the 9,432-seat Municipal Auditorium (where most adult Nashville natives grew up seeing concerts), the Tennessee Performing Arts Center venues and the 17,000-capacity Starwood Amphitheatre in nearby Antioch. All stay busy.

Christened the Athens of the South for its wealth of educational opportunities, Nashville also has a thriving medical industry, and is known as the Third Coast because of its historic and bustling music business.

But a thriving, affluent area has become even more so, with major companies like LP Building Products, Dell Computer and, most recently, Nissan USA moving major operations to the region.

"Honestly, Nashville is still growing," says Hugh Lombardi, GM of the GEC. "You're looking at not just Nissan and LP, but all these other companies that have moved here to Tennessee."

The growth is having an impact on the GEC's business. "This is an affluent area, and the ticket sales don't lie," Lombardi says. "There's quite a bit of money here, and they're active. We've seen an increase in ticket sales in all genres of music. Downtown, there's a lot going on. The Ryman does a lot of business, downtown is always busy, people are always looking for something to do."

New companies mean new opportunities.

"From a marketing perspective we've definitely reached out to the new corporations; we've expanded our presence with them," Jones says.

Lombardi adds, "I think you'll find when a lot of new companies move in, one of the first things they say as to why they're moving to Nashville is because of the quality of life. And one of the first items discussed is the [NHL] Predators and all the things going on downtown and at the arena. It's not hard to find something to do downtown any night of the week."

The GEC is a public building that reports to the Nashville Sports Authority, which is appointed by the mayor.

"We report to monthly and talk to them daily," Lombardi says. "We're the stewards of the city's money and it's a strong relationship."

But the GEC is also intertwined with the Nashville entertainment business at large, and views its venue competitors as friendly.

"We did the ticketing for the [Country Music Assn.] Music Fest. Brock and I have great relationships with [GM] Pam Matthews at the Ryman, [GM] Bob Skoney at Municipal Auditorium and all the people from Live Nation out at Starwood Amphitheatre," Lombardi says. "We help each other out whenever we can."

But, more important, the GEC is "part of the fabric of the community," Lombardi says. "Being downtown provides a lot of community pride, and I think we've been successful in getting people down here for a wide range of events."

—Roy Waddell
Speaking An International Language

RBD-Mania Spreads From Mexico To The United States, And Beyond

For at least the past two years, EMI executives on both sides of the Atlantic were on the lookout for a successful Latin act with international potential.

Enter RBD, a coed sextet whose initial success in its native Mexico hinged on the popularity of a daily soap opera. Since releasing its first album in late 2004, RBD's chart topping success in Latin markets, has made it a well-known Latin act in the United States, including on the Billboard Latin Songs chart. Its new single, “Tu Amor,” is No. 10 on the Hot Latin Songs chart. RBD's Myspace page has more than 1 million profile views and more than 3 million song plays. Its Web site has 2 million unique visitors per month.

Undoubtedly RBD's success rode on its daily soap, “Rebelle,” but also on its photogenic protagonists and carefully selected repertoire of solid, catchy pop fare. “Young people in Japan or the United States have the same issues,” says Anahi’s manager. “Young people in Japan or the United States have the same issues.”

But Anahi and her fellow RBD cohorts bristle at the suggestion that they are a manufactured phenomenon. “It also has to do with tenacity,” she says testily. “We’ve been working nonstop for three years and it needs to be said.”

RBD’s work in the States began in earnest in early 2006, after the group’s first two studio albums took off. EMI Televisa quickly capitalized on the impact by releasing the live sets, as well as a deluxe set. An extended tour and a TV series followed, as did the releases of an English album. The group’s subsequent arena tours through the United States and Latin America confirmed a solid fan base.

A big plus, EMI Televisa president Rosolfo Lopez-Negrete says, is that RBD appeals to Spanish speakers and to a young, bilingual consumer aware of that for pure pop music in a market with little to offer. And, he stresses, although there’s plenty of cross-marketing and synergies in working RBD in two languages, “they are two different strategies, two different paths, two different promo tours, two different labels.” Executives at Virgin say they initially expect RBD’s English album to do better than “Celestial.” “I don’t think we have any illusions that overnight we’re going to turn this thing into a phenomenon,” Virgin Records GM Lee Trink says. “We’re looking to break the artist here, to give us a better opportunity to break the artist in Europe and Asia.”

RBD is being marketed as an “established” pop act in the States, with all that carries. In addition, Virgin’s strategies include RBD trading cards and reality TV-style mini segments that will run twice a week on MTV.

On the Spanish end, aside from a standard promotion, EMI Televisa, in a bid to maximize its limited promotional time with RBD (the group is currently touring Latin America), separated the members of the group and sent them to different parts of the country—Los Angeles, Texas and Chicago—and Puerto Rico. Members were interviewed individually and then interactively with cameras and radio stations connecting between cities. “It’s a week, we did 400 media outlets,” says Pietro Carlos, EMI Televisa VP of marketing. “It was a week of promotion, but it was an event.”

There are a few different TV campaigns running around the RBD release: a label-generated or one on the Univision-owned networks. One from Wal-Mart that launched Oct. 23 and one from Verizon.

In January, the group begins to shoot its new TV series and also launches its European promotion in Spain with two co-occasions in Barcelona and Madrid. Just how long RBD mania can last is anyone’s guess, but the members of the group have a clear idea: “Still the 30s do us apart,” Christian says wryly.
KASABIAN KNUCKLES DOWN

Brit Bad Boys Pledge All Work, No Play For U.S. Campaign

“We were devastated with our last album,” says frontman Tom Meighan, who is due to release their new album on Sept. 4. “We wanted to do something really different and we wanted to do it on our own terms.”

The band, who have sold more than 18 million albums worldwide, have been working on the album for the past year. The album, titled “Empire,” is due out on Sept. 4, and is the band’s first release since their 2007 album “Westbound.”

“Empire” features nine tracks, including the lead single “We Are the People.” The album is produced by Dan Auerbach of The Black Keys.

“Empire” is the band’s first release in four years, and follows their 2007 album “Westbound.” The album was produced by Dan Auerbach of The Black Keys.

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Out Of The Darkness
Camp Turns Catharsis Into Christian-Rock Gold

Jeremy Camp seems to have lived a lifetime in less than 30 years, and his ability to color his music with that experience has made him one of the Christian industry's most successful artists. His last three albums have been certified gold, and Camp was named ASCAP's Christian songwriter of the year in 2005 and 2006. Along the way, he's also garnered numerous Dove Awards and multiple hit singles. He'll embark on a House of Blues tour next spring.

Camp's latest effort is "Beyond Measure" on BCC Recordings, which bowed at No. 2 on Billboard's Top Christian Albums chart and has scanned 45,400 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. "I think it's the whole personal aspect," Camp says, trying to explain what has propelled an Indiana preacher's kid toward a successful music career. "I've always been real honest in my music and real honest when I play live," he says. "I've always just written my heart and allowed God to do what he wanted to do."

Pouring his life into his songwriting has been cathartic for Camp. He lost his first wife to ovarian cancer when she was 21 and he was 23. The songs that developed out of that difficult period populated his breakthrough album "Stay." The title track won rock recorded song of the year at the 2005 Gospel Music Assn. Dove Awards. Camp netted the best new artist and male vocalist honors in 2004 and repeated his male vocalist win in 2005.

Subsequent releases "Carried Me: The Worship Project" and "Restored" have continued to build Camp's fan base, who refer to themselves as Happy Campers. In 2003, Camp remarried. His wife Adie is the former frontwoman for South African Christian rock band the Benjamin Gate and the couple now have two daughters. (Adie recently released her first solo project, which Camp produced.)

Camp readily admits this is a happy season in his life and the music reflects his current bliss. "God was with me when I felt like I couldn't continue on. I was in such a deep, dark pit of despair after losing my wife," Camp says. He made it through the dark times and has found happiness again.

Musically, Camp says "Beyond Measure" is more stylistically diverse than his previous efforts. "I always write tons of different styles," he says. "There are some rock songs and some ballads, but I think musically I took this to a different level."

"The label shipped the most they ever have for a Jeremy record," says his manager, Matt Balm. "As far as 2007 is

"So much has happened," Camp says of the last few years. "I've been able to talk to so many people and hear stories about how the music has touched their heart and how God has used it to minister to them. It's been a crazy whirlwind, but I'm so blown away by God's hand on my life. He continues to open doors."

GMA NEWS: The 39th annual Gospel Music Assn. Dove Awards are slated for April 25, 2007, at the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville. The event will be hosted by Brian Littrell, Natalie Grant and Donnie McClurkin and will air in syndication during May. Look for

MUSICAL NOTE: The Coalition has acquired Pop Art Records. Coalition chairman Troy Carter says the asses of the Philadelphia-based company include master recordings, copyrights and its publishing catalog, the last of which includes such songs as M.C. Shan's "The Bridge," Roxanne Shante's "Roxanne's Revenge" and Salt-N-Pepa's "The Show Stopper." Established in 1979 by Lawrence Goodman, Pop Art was also home to D.J. Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince and Marley Marl.

All Together Now
Post-Destiny's Child, Good Duos And Groups Are Harder To Find

"I'm winding up my overview of indie releases that deserve a second chance with a look at this year's crop of groups/duos. This particular segment of the R&B population is a faint reflection of the past."

Back in the day, a slew of exciting groups were seemingly jumping out of the woodwork—Sly & the Family Stone, the Temptations, Stylistics, Gladys Knight & the Pips, Parliament/Funkadelic, Ohio Players, Kool & the Gang, Commodores, En Vogue, TLC, Boyz II Men, Soul II Soul—the list goes on.

"These days, in the aftermath of Destiny's Child hanging up its collective heels, groups, be they solely singing acts or acting and playing entities, are more the exception than the rule. It remains to be seen whether newcomers like Cherish or the Usher-backed One Chance have the goods to step in the consciousness of today's fickle music consumer. That said, the group duo pickings on the indie side of the fence this year weren't exactly plentiful. But there were some justifiable bright spots."

Among those was the return of the Broad New Heavies, rejoined by former lead singer N'Dea Davenport. Their critically acclaimed Delicious Vinyl/Universal Music Group Distribution album, "Get Used to It," includes a tasty version of a rarely played Stevie Wonder album nugget, "I Don't Know Why I Love You," not to mention a refreshing dose of organic, danceable funk on "All Fired Up" and "Let's Do It Again."

One of the few standout shows I attended this year was the Brand New Heavies' gig at Hollywood's Roxy Theater. They're back on the road now. If you can't catch a show, tune in to "Late Night With Conan O'Brien" on Thanksgiving. You're in for a treat.

R&B stalwarts the Whispers smoothly illustrate what's made them soul survivors on "For Your Eyes Only," their first self-released disc on Satin Tie. It's hard to believe nearly 10 years have elapsed since their last studio outing, let alone 36 since their first punch up. That's because their silky harmonies are just as pristine now as they were then. "Butta," their melt-in-your-mouth collaboration with Teena Marie, isn't the only noteworthy track here. You should also punch up the gospel number "I Sing This Song for You" as well as the tempo mover "Get It On."

On the duo front, get your fix for adult soul music with a live vibe via Brown Babie Girl (BBG Spot Records). The pair—musician/composer Jamie Finegan, son of Grammy Award-nominated composer/arranger Bill Finegan, and singer/songwriter Lorenda Robinson—released their self-titled debut CD earlier this year.

Brown Baby Girl's simple yet warm mix of jazz grooves and soulful vocals comes together on such tracks as "Stay" and the memorable ballad "Been Here Before." The act's subtle originality calls into play the members' varied back-grounds: Finegan's credits include work with Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie and Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, while Robinson has collaborated with DJ Spinna and his group Jigmas, and the Clark Eno Orchestra.

THE BRAND NEW HEAVIES

Camp's recent reissue of "The Brand New Heavies" included a live acoustic version of the title track, "I Love You (More Than You'll Ever Know)," recorded in 1991 at the Paradise in London.

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G Is For Gift-Giving

Clive Davis Helps Kenny G Sax Up The Great American Songbook

"It was all Clive’s idea. He gets all the credit for this one," says Kenny G, referring to BMG U.S. chairman/CEO Clive Davis. It was Davis who came up with the concept for his new Arista album, "I'm in the Mood for Love...The Most Romantic Melodies of All Time."

The sax player says he discussed an album of new, original material with Davis. During one conversation, G recalls Davis saying that the timing wasn’t right for that. "He pointed to Barry Manilow and Rod Stewart and the success they’re having with albums featuring well-known songs. But Clive left the final decision in my hands."

Pursuing for a few seconds, G adds, "When it comes to music, I live more in a vacuum than most people. I don’t always know what’s going on. I tend to listen to the jazz masters, so I can play my sax better. Clive, on the other hand, keeps himself on the edge musically—and he gives me a crash course in what’s going on."

"I’m in the Mood for Love," which arrived Nov. 14, is G’s first newly recorded, all-instrumental album of popular material in more than four years. It spotlights recent contemporary chart hits (lead single “You’re Beautiful”) and classic moments from the 20th century American songbook (“The Way We Were”).

The disc finds G working with longtime collaborator, producer Walter Afanasieff, and Pete Cibrian, an A&R consultant for RCA Music Group.

G admits that he was not sure the melodies would translate via sax. "But Clive said, ‘You must make each one your own—and not how James Blunt or Alicia Keys sang it,’” G says.

Conversely, the older songs were easier to tackle. "The melodies are well-known," he says. "It’s instinctual to come up with an arrangement that is so classic. I treat them like Christmas songs."

On that note, "I’m in the Mood for Love" arrives just in time for gift-giving season. And Arista is doing its part to reach longtime and new fans alike. This includes a direct-response TV campaign, Google ads, viral marketing and retail promotions. G is also confirmed to appear on "The Rachael Ray Show" and other programs.

"We’re embracing all media to reach Kenny’s audience and hopefully pick up new buyers along the way," says Scott Sevior, senior VP of marketing and artist development at J/Arista.

On the radio front, the album was given a big push Nov. 12 when it premiered on smooth jazz KTWV (the Wave) Los Angeles. For this event, which was syndicated on more than 26 stations nationwide through Clear Channel-owned Broadcast Architecture’s Smooth Jazz Network, the album was played in its entirety.

Paul Goldstein, VP of programming at KTWV and VP of smooth jazz programming for CBS Radio, considers G one of the most important and successful artists in the smooth jazz format. He credits this to G’s "timeless, instantly compelling melodies" and the "distinctive and appealing" tonal quality of his sax, which Goldstein believes sets him apart from other artists.

Attributes like these are music to the ears of retailers. "Kenny G has a place in the same way Enya does," Barnes & Noble Bookellers marketing director of music Steven Scott says. "He’s not only an accomplished artist, but he’s also a brand."

G’s last two albums, 2005’s "The Greatest Holiday Classics" and 2004’s "At Last...The Duets Album," topped Billboard’s Top Contemporary Jazz chart and climbed into the top 40 of The Billboard 200. His 2002 disc, "Paradise," peaked at No. 2 on the Top Contemporary Jazz chart and No. 9 on The Billboard 200.

The three albums have collectively sold 1.2 million units, according to Nielsen SoundScan. In a career that spans more than 20 years, G has sold 32 million albums in the SoundScan era. Globally, he has sold more than 75 million discs to date, according to his label.

While "I'm in the Mood for Love" will be very visible between Thanksgiving and Christmas, Barnes & Noble’s Scott is confident that G’s "signature sound" will sell the CD well into the new year.

Which is when phase two of the label’s marketing campaign kicks in. Indeed, with Valentine’s Day around the corner, J/Arista’s Sevior says he is already in discussions with chocolate, jewelry and floral companies: "The possibilities for cross-marketing opportunities are many."
The Buck Doesn’t Stop Here
Buckcherry Reborn On New Label With Hit Single, Album

Heading into 2006, Buckcherry was, for all intents and purposes, over. It had been four years since the Los Angeles-bred rock band released its sophomore effort, the disappointing DreamWorks album “Time Bomb.” When a breakup followed that release in 2002, the sleaze-rockers fell off most everyone’s radar.

Vocalist Josh Todd was an early candidate to sing with Velvet Revolver. He went solo instead, but his 2004 album “You Made Me” failed to dent the billboard charts. He and co-founder/guitarist Keith Nelson reconnected shortly thereafter, and in 2005 Buckcherry was reborn.

The industry, however, met the re-formed group with a collective shrug. “Time Bomb” and Buckcherry’s self-titled 1999 effort have collectively sold 849,000 units in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, with “Time Bomb” accounting for only 115,000 of that total. But between the start of 2003 and the end of 2005, the two releases sold only 85,000 copies.

When Allen Kovac’s Tenth Street Entertainment shoped Buckcherry in 2005, this fact was repeatedly used as ammo to avoid working with the band. “We had them to virtually every record company, and people had passed on the record,” he says. “So we got them a record with Universal in Japan.”

With the Universal advance, the band recorded its new album, “15,” and went overseas to work it. Todd felt confident upon returning that the band would have a new home in the United States. “We thought we were going to come back to these major-label deals and everything would be great,” he says. “But all we had was Universal in Canada. No one in the States would come forward.”

Kovac says labels weren’t hot on the first single, “Crazy Bitch,” telling him simply that “the song didn’t work.” So Kovac and Buckcherry decided to go it alone, and the band’s “15” became the first release on Kovac’s Eleven Seven imprint. No stranger to turning his management firm into a label, Kovac had previously run Beyond Music, an imprint liquidated at the end of 2002 because of “fundamental disagreements” with his former partner Jeffrey Sydney (Billboard, Jan. 18, 2003).

Beyond had worked with such acts as the Go-Go’s and Blondie, and Kovac again took the lead on resurrecting a rock band. Eleven Seven signed an upstreaming agreement with Warner Music Group’s Alternative Distribution Alliance. As part of the deal, the Warner label can take over a project if its label can sell 57,500 and 100,000 units. In the case of Buckcherry, Eleven Seven and ADA shipped 40,000 units of “15” to start. To everyone’s surprise, the album debuted on The Billboard 200 in April at No. 48 with 26,000 units sold, and Atlantic was working it by its third week of release. This week, the album is No. 117 and has shifted 480,000 units to date.

Early success was driven largely by the Internet and satellite radio, after Eleven Seven released “Crazy Bitch” online in early January. Todd and Nelson point to support from XM’s hard rock channel Boneyard, where it was a top-requested song weeks before “15” hit stores. Atlantic has thus far worked “Crazy Bitch” and “Next 2 You” at rock formats and will take the slower “Everything” to crossover radio in early 2007. “Crazy Bitch” peaked at No. 59 on The Billboard Hot 100 but reached No. 4 on the Mainstream Rock tally.

To Atlantic senior VP of marketing Livia Tortella, Buckcherry connected with its audience because it went with a simpler approach. With Eleven Seven’s limited budget, the first video for “Crazy Bitch” was shot for about $5,000 at the Key Club in Los Angeles. “They did a grimy first video and that was part of its success,” she says. “They didn’t want it to feel like the big corporate rock experience. It was important that it felt like they were on an indie again. They took it down a notch.”

Now Atlantic is ramping it up. The band is in the midst of plotting a headlining tour for early 2007, with Papa Roach being eyed as a possible support act. Atlantic is also rethinking what Kovac says will be a six-figure video for “Everything.”

Tortella notes that the label has also invested heavily in TV for Buckcherry, advertising the band during “South Park” on Comedy Central and “Adult Swim” on the Cartoon Network. More TV spots are expected next year, as Tortella hints that a major promotion with the VWE is in the works.

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Nashville Scene

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Blinded By The Night
CMA Awards Backstage Highlights, Caught Like Deer In The Headlights

When I told friends, family and colleagues that I’d be covering the 40th annual Country Music Assn. (CMA) Awards from the backstage press area, the general reaction was, “Oh, it’s too bad that you don’t get to see the show. While my exact position at the show was sometimes not made-for-TV press room show, where safely removed from the stage, artists sometimes let it all hang out.

Actress Kimberly Williams-Paisley, married to Brad Paisley, had the funniest on-camera line of the night. While presenting the group of the year award with Gary Allan, she complained that pregnancy was causing her eyesight to fail and that she couldn’t read the teleprompter. Clearly off script, Allan tried to help her recover with a chat about country singers, to which she replied, “I married one, and now I’m knocked up and blind.” The audience erupted with laughter.

Asked about the moment backstage, her husband was clearly pleased. “I thought I stole the freakin’ show tonight,” Paisley said with a smile. “It was great. We had talked about it. She said, ‘I can’t see anymore.’ She could not read the lines in rehearsals, and I said, ‘Just tell them that.’ Then we went up and it was a disaster—the ad-libbing. I loved it. I’m very proud of that. It’s nice for people to see her personality for real for a second.”

Paisley had a few jokes of her own. When a reporter asked him to “speak to” each of the two awards he had won, the artist asked, “Should I talk directly to the awards?” Later, speaking about his album of the year award, Paisley told reporters, “To any of you that voted for this, thank you. To the others, shove this up your rear end,” he said, laughing and raising the trophy.

Kris Kristofferson, who was on hand to induct George Strait, Sonny James and Harold Bradley into the Country Music Hall of Fame, seemed to be surprised that journalists were interested in talking to him. Asked about the current state of country music, Kristofferson was quick to admit, “It’s like Willie Nelson, George Jones and Ray Price. ‘The young guys,’” he said, pausing, “I think Keith Urban’s really good, I like Toby Keith and Todd Snider.”

Then seemingly uncomfortable about answering further, Kristofferson cleared his throat and said, “I feel like a deer in the headlights right now, so it is OK if I leave?”

Not all the laughs were generated by performers. Initially, reporters will say or do something that gets their fellow journalists laughing—sometimes at their expense. This year two British journalists (unintentionally, methinks) were the source of such laughter. One woman asked every artist she could if they were influenced by Hank Williams. Her predictable question made for a lot of rolling eyes and eventual out-loud laughter at each successive query.

Another British woman, who had a nearly impenetrable dialect, frequently had to repeat her questions. When asking Kristofferson if he had any message for his British fans, he said, “Darlin’, I didn’t understand one word you said.” Through multiple attempts—including shouted interpretations by other members of the press—and Kristofferson misunderstood. His reply? “Well, uh, no.” Huge laughter.

As usual, Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn had their share of one-liners for the press. When informed that the night’s awards pushed them into first place on the all-time CMA list, Dunn responded, “The reason I’m here is because I’m bad at math. I didn’t know that.” Meanwhile, relying to a question about their awareness of other duo’s, Brooks said, “We have a special duo publication. We know all the numbers and what their singles are doing at all times.”
BE A PART OF THE BIGGEST COLLECTORS ISSUE OF THE YEAR!

THE YEAR IN MUSIC & TOURING 2006

Billboard's Annual Year in Music & Touring issue is the ultimate resource tool - referenced year-round by top industry execs and music fans alike. With analysis of every segment of the music industry from touring to global business and the comprehensive year-end charts, this issue is a unique year-long opportunity to attract both industry and consumer attention alike.

ISSUE DATE: DECEMBER 23
AD CLOSE: NOVEMBER 29

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SNOOP DOGG  
*The Blue Carpet Treatment*  
Producers: various  
*Doggystyle/Geffen*  
**Release Date:** Nov. 21  
Resident West Coaster Snoop Dogg returns to his roots for his eighth album, coupling the fancy, commercialist style of recent releases with catchy, thought-provoking tracks. The smooth intro "Think About It" has a jazz-club feel, while the bass-thumping "Candy" (featuring E-40, MC Eiht, Goldie Loc, Daiz and Kurupt) is am-purr-UM music at its best. Also present are run-of-the-mill ladies jams "So Special" featuring Brandy and "I Love You," featuring Lil' Kim. But sonically, "Blue Carpet" is a West Coast record in every sense, as Snoop reunites with Dr. Dre for several tracks, including the bone-crunching "Imagine."*BOX*  
  
**THE BEATLES**  
*Love*  
Producers: George Martin, Giles Martin, Apple/Presley  
**Release Date:** Nov. 21  
For his ambitious soundtrack to Cirque du Soleil's Fab Four homage, original Beatles producer Sir George Martin and his son Giles used the master tapes to revisit and connect new "songs" out of old. Ringo Starr's drumming seamlessly marries "Within You Without You" and "Tomorrow Never Knows," while Paul McCartney's guitar handbook from "Bluebird" is now laced through the evergreen "Yesterday." A stirring take of "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," with added strings, is breathtakingly beautiful, while "Sun King" is heard completely backwards, and snippets from "Yellow Submarine" fit in and out of "Octopus' Garden." The feisty "Get Back" even begins with the opening chord from "A Hard Day's Night." This mash-up, Beatles style, is cool stuff indeed, but is even more dazzling live onstage at the Mirage, Las Vegas. ---MP  
  
**SINGLES**  
FIVE FOR FIGHTING  
*World (3:51)*  
**Producer:** John Ondrasik  
**Writer:** J. Ondrasik  
**Publishers:** BMI  
**Label:** Five for Fighting, BMG  
**Aware/Columbia**  
Five for Fighting's John Ondrasik has built a career on teaming his instantly recognizable voice with universal lyrics that paint vivid portraits of the human condition. He scores again in the vein of "100 Years" and "Superman (It's Not Easy)" with "World," which is admittedly more abstract, but the average listener will pick out such lines as "What kind of world do you want?" and "Be careful what you wish for/History starts now." And find a relatable message. Alongside, the piano-driven, orchestrated melody is his most captivating yet lush and instantly memorable. Simply a beautiful song destined to elevate a somewhat hit-and-miss talent to staple status at AC and adult top 40. A fine, fine effort. ---CT  
  
U2 Window in the Skies (3:59)  
**Producer:** Rick Rubin  
**Writer:** U2  
**Publishers:** various/Island/Interscope  
**Hot on the heels of the punk anthem "The Saints Are Coming" recorded with Green Day, U2 spins off a second new track from 3/12 Singles," its hits collection for the holidays. "Window in the Skies" is an epic ballad that echoes "City of Blinding Lights" and climaxes with the heart-warming couplet "Can't you see what love has done/And what it's doing to me." It's a joyfully lit, flowing and somewhat diluted arena gospel with a big fistful chord and Bono's trademark "oo-ee-oo," but the biggest rock and roll story of the night, perhaps already distracted by the Christmas lights. One of U2's poppiest ever, this huggable tune should gain momentum with the first snowfall and keep fans warm until the next studio album, which drops in 2007. ---SP  
  
**GOSPEL**  
PATTI LABELLE  
*The Gospel According to Patti Labelle*  
Producers: various  
**Release Date:** Nov. 21  
With more than 40 years of mainstream R&B and pop hit-making to her credit, and nearly a catalog unto itself of cameos on other artists' gospel projects, Labelle has delivered a long-anticipated gospel album all her own. Strong songs, perfectly realized production and star guest turns (Kanye West, Mary J. Blige, Lisa Adams, CeCe Winans, Wynonna Judd) are all present. Her landmark work. But this is clearly Labelle's labor of love, continued on p352
and she revels in every note. “Anything” is a rousing R&B anthem. LaBelle and Adams soar on the instantly memorable “Where Love Begins,” and “Walking Away” with Winans is another breathtaking moment in this pinnacle of a stellar career.—GE

HOLIDAY

SUFJAN STEVENS Songs for Christmas
Producer: Sufjan Stevens
Asthmatic Kitty
Release Date: Nov 21

Considering Sufjan Stevens has released six studio albums in six years, any “extracurricular” goings-on were bound to suffer an unfinished veneer. Also, this five-disc set was originally conceived, disc by disc, as gifts for friends and family. That said, the collection is sweet and pretty. Tackling classics like “Away in a Manger” and “O Come Come Emmanuel” (three times), Stevens’ matter-of-fact voice and odd harmonies make these simple songs fresher Diversions like “That Was the Worst Christmas Ever!” and “Oh Dear Mr. Santa,” inject humor and whimsy into the tinkling, banjoed monotony, while “Did I Make You Cry on Christmas Day? (Well, You Desired It)” and “It’s Christmas! Let’s Be Glad!” are great Stevens songs regardless of the holiday slant.—KH

WORLD

LORENA MCKENNITT An Ancient Muse
Producer: Loreena McKennitt
Verve/Quanum Road

Release Date: Nov 21

It’s tragic that Loreena McKennitt does not score movies. The singer/ composer’s ability to transport listeners to faraway lands with Celtic-inspired world music puts her on par with names like Hans Zimmer and Graeme Revell. Travel, meticulous research and multiple instruments weave the tapestry for “An Ancient Muse.” The Gates of Istanbul” has a sultry, seductive dance with viola and Turkish clarinet, whereas “Sacred Shabbat” is an imaginatively constructed study. Her studied recitation well serves “The English Lady and the Knight,” a gorgeous ode to lost love where sighing voices breathe a requiem for a tragically parted couple. “Kechaniki” is a ragtag caravan crossing the nighttime desert. “Never-Ending Road (Amhran Dhain),” which closes the album on a soft note, underscores that the journeys through McKennitt’s worlds are far from over.—CLT

LATIN

VARIOUS ARTISTS Chosen Few: El Documental II
Producer: Boy Wonder
Emek
Release Date: Nov 14

With 35 tracks on two CDs, there’s plenty of space here for the same old drumkick and vapid lyrics found on any other reggaetón compilation. But the follow-up to 2004’s CD and documentary cedes some territory to new voices, themes and sonic departures. Dencel’s hip hop are given their respective day on Notch’s patriotic “Aqui Me Quedo” and in the sex- and politics-infused “Real Latina,” a welcome return by Spain’s La Mala Rodriguez. The production feels like an extended DJ session with some standout hip-hop and reggaeton tracks like Baby Ranks’ spirited “Mambo,” which up its life to its danceable mix with an infusion of quirky synth and brass. Alejandro Sanz’s “No Es Lo Sismo” sounds like it was meant to be a reggaeton mix all along in a lush, inventive version featuring Goty.—ABY

REVIEWS

HILARY DUFF Play With Fire (3:10)
Producers: Richard Vission
Writer: not listed
Publisher: not listed

Hilary Duff has got a brand-new bag. “Play With Fire” is less of the cliched little-girl-playing-tough-girl-rock than it is a truly intriguing exploration into darker, more experimental melodic structures that could attract a whole new crowd of late-night dancefloor minions to the Duff camp. The original version is just fine, but the tweaked-out radio edit from remixer Richard Vission is a true work of art. Refashioning Duff as a potential innovator—and heaven knows there are precious few of those these days. Hil’s new album is due in first-quarter 2007. It will be fascinating to see if this is anything but a fluke, or if America is destined to last see the arrival of its own Kylie.—CT

CHRIS RICE The Christmas Song
INO/Columbia

EDDIE MONEY & RONNIE SPECTOR Everybody Loves Christmas
INO/Columbia

NEWSONG The Christmas Hope
INO/Columbia

CHRIS BOTTI FEATURING ERIC BENET I Really Don’t Want Much for Christmas
INO/Columbia

BAWANNA Santa Claus Is Coming to Town
Curb

SELAH FEATURING PLUMB Mary, Sweet Mary
Curb

JAMES TAYLOR Jingle Bells
Columbia

BIANCA RYAN Why Couldn’t It Be Christmas
Syco/Columbia

JOHN LEGEND Jesus, What a Wonderful Child
Columbia

ALY & AJ Greatest Time of Year
Hollywood

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

EDITED BY JONATHAN COHEN (ALBUMS) AND CHUCK TAYLOR (SINGLES)


PICK A: A new release predicted to hit the top ten of the chart in the conforming format.
New Albums, CMAs Bring Pre-Thanksgiving Snack

In a music business landscape where “flat is the new growth,” then a tiny lift in album volume feels like a call for a pre-Thanksgiving celebration—even if that gain is only a fraction of 1% above same-week sales.

With new albums entering the top four range on 200,000-plus starts, while three other No. 7 releases open within the next seven slots, sales for the tracking week finish 0.1% over the same frame of 2005.

The new compilation from the “Now That’s What I Call Music!” series leads the rally with 337,000 copies, followed by new goods from Josh Groban and Ke$ha Urban, each with about 270,000, and sophomore band Sugarland (“E’ryday the Rain”), 211,000. That’s a trophy case that displays Groban’s highest-charted Billboard 200 debut (although not his best sales stanza), as well as best-ever Nielsen SoundScan weeks for country acts Urban and Sugarland.

Rapper Jim Jones also notches a career-best sum, as “Hustler’s P.O.M.E.” becomes his second top 10 set (106,000). Groban and Urban aren’t the only ones in a tight race. A hits set by Dave Matthews Band edges a live CD/DVD combo from Andrea Bocelli by a whisker, each sells about 65,000, at Nos. 10 and 11, respectively.

The comparison with year-ago numbers is all the more encouraging when you consider that the top 10 from the same week 2005 wasn’t all that shabby. That’s when Kenny Chesney’s “The Road and the Radio” began with 469,000, a bigger figure than can be found on this issuer’s survey. That week also sported an opening of 317,000 for the soundtrack to “Get Rich or Die Tryin’” at No. 2, and top bows for Neil Diamond and Floetry.

An economist might declare such a minuscule gain to be a flat week, but with album sales seeing so few comp-sales gains this year, I’m willing to declare this a win.

COUNTRY COMFORT: Even with so-so ratings, the Country Music Assn. Awards gave new home ABC better numbers than the network typically sees on a Monday night, while delivering its annual dose of country album spikes to music merchants.

Prime in the CMA parade is dual-winner Carrie Underwood, who also sang on the show. Thus, the “American Idol” champ, who also leads Hot Country Songs for a third straight week, collects a 59% swell. That earns Greatest Gainer glory on Top Country Albums (No. 3) and the Billboard 200 (19-8).

Underwood’s rally comes in her album’s 52nd chart week and hats her in a rare club. Her “Some Hearts” and Shania Twain’s “Come On Over” are the only albums by country artists to stand in the big chart’s top 10 a year after bowing at No. 2 or higher. Subtract the word “country” from that sentence, and there would be few other titles to add to that list.

Aside from Underwood, J.J. Hosts and multiple winners Brooks & Dunn also look large. Sales more than triple on “Hillbilly Deluxe” (up 222%, garnering the Pacesetter cup on the country chart (38-13) and the big chart (174-28). CMA juice also adds bullets to The Billboard 200 at Nos. 18, 22, 28, 30, 34, 36, 90, 95, 96, 100, 122, 135 and 178. Those titles also bullet on Top Country Albums, as do ones at Nos. 44, 47 and 62.

JINGLE BELL ROCK: Top Holiday Albums returns to Billboard’s pages, running in the space usually occupied by Top Pop Catalog Albums.

That’s a good trade-off, as the catalog list becomes overrun with Christmas titles this time of year. In fact, seven of the top 10 catalog titles are holiday items, including each of the top five. A week ago, each of the three catalog titles belonged to the holiday.

That I expect to see this time of year. What I could not have predicted is that Larry the Cable Guy’s “A Very Larry Christmas” would beking of this week’s catalog list. Meanwhile, the new Sarah McLachlan set, “Wintersong,” is the first No. 1 of 2006 on the Holiday chart.

Seasonal titles are eligible to appear on Billboard’s current-album charts only in the first year of release. New and older titles compete on Holiday Albums.

The Holiday chart rotates with Top Independent Albums through the first issue of 2007. Top Pop Catalog will continue to be updated weekly on billboard.biz and in Billboard Information Network during its hiatus from the magazine.

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**Weekly Album Sales**

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<tr>
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<td>Last Week</td>
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**Weekly National Music Sales Report**

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<th>Album</th>
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<th>Digital Tracks</th>
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<tr>
<td>Albums</td>
<td>479,250,000</td>
<td>285.6 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital Tracks</td>
<td>285.6 million</td>
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**Year-to-Date (YTD)**

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**Chart Beat**

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**Over the Counter**

GEORGH MAYFIELD gmayfield@billboard.com

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**Market Watch**

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**Popular SoundScan** records as current-only sales within the final 12 months of an album’s chart life, and does not include reissues and ancillary editions. Titles that lack a SoundScan chart are catalog. Digital streaming is a subset of catalog for titles not more than 36 months old.
## POP 100 Airplay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>My Love</strong></td>
<td>Aerosmith</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Daughtry</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Smack That</strong></td>
<td>YMCMB</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>** rented**</td>
<td>The Black Eyed Peas</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Ain't No Other Man</strong></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Smelly</strong></td>
<td>The White Stripes</td>
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<td><strong>Don't Blink</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Crazy</strong></td>
<td>P!nk</td>
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<td><strong>Shed a Tear</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>WALK IT OUT</td>
<td>TI</td>
<td>SOUTHERN CROSS/RCA</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
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<td>33</td>
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<td>JAY-Z</td>
<td>ROC-A-FELLAS DEF JAMO/VIDJMG</td>
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<td>DASIE</td>
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<td>HITPREDICTOR</td>
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<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>WALK IT OUT</td>
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<td>HITPREDICTOR</td>
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**R&B/HIP-HOP AIRPLAY**

**ADULT R&B**

Data for week of November 25, 2006 | Charts Legend on Page 68

**R&B/HIP-HOP SINGLES SALES**

**ADULT R&B**

Data for week of November 25, 2006 | Charts Legend on Page 68

**RHYTHMIC AIRPLAY**

Data for week of November 25, 2006 | Charts Legend on Page 68

**HitPredictor**

Data for week of November 25, 2006 | Charts Legend on Page 68

**Trends**

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Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data.
BETWEEN THE BULLETS

After a show-stopping performance of the power ballad at the No. 6 Country Music Awards, Martina McBride's "Anyway" swipes a new career-high debut on Hot Country Songs. The track collects 3.1 million audience impressions, storming the chart at No. 40. Her quick start is the chart's highest since George Strait opened at No. 30 with "It Just Comes Natural" in the Oct. 14 issue, and the highest for any solo female artist since Carrie Underwood's "Jesus, Take the Wheel."

landed at No. 39 in the Nov. 5, 2005, issue. McBride also tops her own previous best set when "Still Holding On" arrived at No. 42 in June 1997. It's been a good year for high debuts on Hot Country Songs, including Keith Urban's all-time high start when "Once in a Lifetime" entered at No. 17 in the Sept. 2 issue. During the 2006 chart year, which ends this issue, 11 different titles opened inside the top 40, one more than last year.

—Wade Jessen
**HOT LATIN SONGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Price</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tengo un Amor</td>
<td>Ricky Martin Feat. Akon &amp; Kelis</td>
<td>Sony BMG Latin</td>
<td>$4.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Quédate conmigo</td>
<td>Tu Regalo Feat. Pitbull &amp; Wisin</td>
<td>Sony BMG Latin</td>
<td>$4.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>La Vida En La Ciudad</td>
<td>Quiles Feat. Tito El Bambino</td>
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<td>$4.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Por Ellas</td>
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**TOP LATIN ALBUMS**

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Quien Me Instruccion</td>
<td>Don Omar</td>
<td>Sony BMG Latin</td>
<td>$9.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nuestra Historia</td>
<td>Maluma</td>
<td>Sony BMG Latin</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mi Cielo</td>
<td>Luis Fonsi</td>
<td>Sony BMG Latin</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mi Amor Por Ti</td>
<td>Alejandro Sanz</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mas Alla Del Sol</td>
<td>Various Artists</td>
<td>Sony BMG Latin</td>
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**Data for week of NOVEMBER 25, 2006**

Go to [www.billboard.biz](http://www.billboard.biz) for complete chart data.
### Hits of the World

#### Japan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Hit</th>
<th>Artist/Group</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>The Saints Are Coming</td>
<td>U2 and Green Day (Island/Interscope/Reprise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Joy Trip</td>
<td>All Saints, Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Put Your Hands Up For Detroit</td>
<td>Primal Scream, Eurythmics, Cyndi Lauper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Cher, Bali Bago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Jump</td>
<td>Feist, Hidden Face, The Ecstasy of Quitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Welcome To The Black Parade</td>
<td>My Chemical Romance, My Chemical Romance Reconstituted</td>
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#### France

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Chart</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>The Saints Are Coming</td>
<td>U2 and Green Day (Island/Interscope/Reprise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>I Don't Feel Like Dancing</td>
<td>Madonna, MC Hammer, Universal Music, Universal Music France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>I Don't Feel Like Dancing</td>
<td>Madonna, MC Hammer, Universal Music, Universal Music France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Will.i.am, Black Eyed Peas, Universal Music, Universal Music France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Put Your Hands Up For Detroit</td>
<td>Primal Scream, Eurythmics, Cyndi Lauper</td>
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#### Germany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Chart</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>The Saints Are Coming</td>
<td>U2 and Green Day (Island/Interscope/Reprise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Irreplaceable</td>
<td>What's The Point, Atlantic Records, Universal Music Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>I Don't Feel Like Dancing</td>
<td>Madonna, MC Hammer, Universal Music, Universal Music France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Joy Trip</td>
<td>All Saints, Ministry</td>
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#### Canada

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<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Put Your Hands Up For Detroit</td>
<td>Primal Scream, Eurythmics, Cyndi Lauper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>I Don't Feel Like Dancing</td>
<td>Madonna, MC Hammer, Universal Music, Universal Music France</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Other Countries

- **Italy**: Jump by Madonna, Irreplaceable by What's The Point, Atlantic Records, Universal Music Group
- **Spain**: The Saints Are Coming by U2 and Green Day (Island/Interscope/Reprise)
- **Brazil**: Padre Marcelo Rossi single, Zeke Di Camargo & Luciano single
- **New Zealand**: The Saints Are Coming by U2 and Green Day (Island/Interscope/Reprise)
- **Argentina**: El Mismo Sol by Gustavo Cerati, La Voz del Tiempo by Pablo Milanés

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Go to [www.billboard.biz](http://www.billboard.biz) for complete chart data.
**TOP CLASSICAL**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Artist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Joshua Bell</td>
<td>Violin Concerto No. 2 in E Minor, Op. 74, &amp; Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major, Op. 77</td>
<td>Universal Classics</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Andre Rieu</td>
<td>Canta Mia</td>
<td>Polydor</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Andre Rieu</td>
<td>Maestro Rieu - The Moscow Soloists</td>
<td>Sony BMG Music Entertainment</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Andre Rieu</td>
<td>Maestro Rieu - The Maestro Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Andre Rieu</td>
<td>MAESTRO RIEU: THE VIENNA PHILHARMONIC</td>
<td>Sony BMG Music Entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Andrea Bocelli</td>
<td>CD (c)</td>
<td>Decca Classics</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Andrea Bocelli</td>
<td>Duets: One Night in Central Park</td>
<td>Decca Classics</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Andrea Bocelli</td>
<td>Christmas Time</td>
<td>Decca Classics</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Andrea Bocelli</td>
<td>Time To Say Goodbye</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Andrea Bocelli</td>
<td>An Evening With Andrea Bocelli</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>My Christmas</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
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**TOP JAZZ**

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Diana Krall</td>
<td>Against All Odds</td>
<td>Verve</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ray Charles</td>
<td>The Count Basie Orchestra</td>
<td>Chess</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ray Charles</td>
<td>Michael Buble</td>
<td>Capitol</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Ray Charles</td>
<td>Chris Botti</td>
<td>Concord</td>
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<td>Ray Charles</td>
<td>Chris Botti</td>
<td>Concord</td>
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<td>Pat Metheny</td>
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<td>Ray Charles</td>
<td>Arielle Dombasle</td>
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<td>Ray Charles</td>
<td>Keith Jarrett</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Ray Charles</td>
<td>The Lionel Monk Quartet with John Coltrane</td>
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**TOP CONTTEMPORARY JAZZ**

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<td>1</td>
<td>Kenny G</td>
<td>Love Letters</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Kenny G</td>
<td>The Essential Kenny G</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kenny G</td>
<td>Kiss The Past Goodbye</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kenny G</td>
<td>I'll Be Home For Christmas</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kenny G</td>
<td>Pieces of a Dream</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kenny G</td>
<td>Kenny G Plays For Christmas</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kenny G</td>
<td>A Very Special Christmas</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kenny G</td>
<td>Kenny G Plays For Christmas</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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<td>Kenny G</td>
<td>Pieces of a Dream</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kenny G</td>
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<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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**TOP EUROCHARTS**

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Robbie Williams</td>
<td>New Way to Be</td>
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<td>Jamiroquai</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>RCA Records</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>JJ Cale &amp; Eric Clapton</td>
<td>The Other Side of the Tracks</td>
<td>BMG Masterworks</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Justin Timberlake</td>
<td>FutureSex/LoveShow</td>
<td>RCA Records</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Meat Loaf</td>
<td>Hit Out of Hell &amp; Sacrifice</td>
<td>Capitol</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Rod Stewart</td>
<td>Still the Same</td>
<td>Atlantic Records</td>
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<td>Evanescence</td>
<td>So Much For Mybreakup</td>
<td>Wind-Up Records</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Damien Rice</td>
<td>My Chemical Romance</td>
<td>Capitol</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Seed</td>
<td>So The Story Goes</td>
<td>BMG Masterworks</td>
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<td>Girls Aloud</td>
<td>The Queen of Pop: The Very Best of Girls Aloud</td>
<td>Polydor</td>
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<td>Scissor Sisters</td>
<td>Scissor Sisters</td>
<td>Polydor</td>
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<td>Pink</td>
<td>I'm Not Dead</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Moby</td>
<td>Go</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>My Chemical Romance</td>
<td>Welcome to the Black Parade</td>
<td>RCA Records</td>
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**TOP RADIO AIRPLAY**

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<td>Culture Club</td>
<td>Giant Records</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Promiscuous</td>
<td>Will Young</td>
<td>Polydor</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Jump</td>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Polydor</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>My Love</td>
<td>The Comptons feat. Wellington</td>
<td>Atlantic Records</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>I Feel Like Dancing</td>
<td>Culture Club</td>
<td>Giant Records</td>
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<td>Sexback</td>
<td>Just Through a Window</td>
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<td>You Give Me Something</td>
<td>James Brown</td>
<td>People's Choice</td>
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<td>Hidden Arena</td>
<td>The Secret to Sleep</td>
<td>BMG Masterworks</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>The Other Side of the Tracks</td>
<td>Justin Timberlake</td>
<td>RCA Records</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Placebo</td>
<td>Breathe</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Hurt</td>
<td>Who Let the Dogs Out</td>
<td>Sony BMG Music Entertainment</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Snow (Hey Oh)</td>
<td>Red Hot Chili Peppers</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Unfaithful</td>
<td>Shaggy feat.½</td>
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<td>Snow (Hey Oh)</td>
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<td>Lovelight</td>
<td>Robbie Williams &amp; Chris Martin</td>
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<td>Snow (Hey Oh)</td>
<td>Red Hot Chili Peppers</td>
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A creative, keenly-organized, detail-driven associate editor is needed for Billboard special features. Billboard magazine, published by VNU Business Media, produces more than 80 special features annually, focusing on every aspect of the music business: artists & repertoire, marketing, media, promotion, branding, touring, financing, distribution, digital delivery and more.

Reporting to the special features editor, this individual must have a broad knowledge of these areas of coverage. He or she will have three to five years of editing experience and the ability to independently supervise selected special features, from conception to final proofs.

Billboard special features are coordinated with the magazine’s sales, marketing, events and online efforts, and they drive a significant portion of the magazine’s annual revenue. This is a great opportunity to create compelling editorial packages with a major business impact. This is a job for a business-oriented editor not a music critic. Custom publishing experience is a plus.

The associate editor of special features will:

- Liaise with senior editors, writers, designers, sales staff and advertising clients to conceive and outline each report;
- Assign stories and confirm delivery of outlines, copy and photos on deadline;
- Rewrite or reorganize copy as needed, and do first line edits;
- Plan layouts with designers;
- Write headlines and captions and fit editorial to designed layouts;
- Traffic proofs among the copy desk, designers, senior editors and production;
- Contribute to new editorial packages and strategies to drive new business.

This job requires superior people skills to manage a demanding workflow from staff and freelance writers, both in the United States and abroad. It also requires the ability to work closely with sales staff and advertising clients, balancing business demands with a mandate for editorial quality and integrity.

As special features frequently focus on the careers of major musical artists, an in-depth knowledge of pop music history is a must.

The job demands a self-starter with the ability to juggle multiple projects and deadlines, the flexibility to respond to the unexpected, and good humor under pressure.

Knowledge of Word, Quark, Outlook and Excel is required.

Applicants should send a résumé, cover letter and salary requirements to 100073.676@earthlink.net.

**VNU** is a global information and media company with founding positions in marketing and media information, business publications and trade shows. Its widely respected brands include ACNielsen, Nielsen Media Research, Billboard, Adweek, and The Hollywood Reporter, among many others.

**VNU promotes and enforces an active policy of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) for all individuals. For more information on our brands, please visit www.VNU.com.**
SONGS OF HOPE IV: Songs of Hope IV is an annual silent auction and awards benefit for the City of Hope, was held Nov. 1 at the Esquire House 360 in Beverly Hills. The event honored Stevie Wonder, Jermaine Dupri and Gavin DeGraw, and featured performances by Wonder and DeGraw.

ABOVE: Songs of Hope event chairman and chairman/CEO of Universal Music Publishing Group, David Roven, left, with Stevie Wonder, who received the Cine Dicks Legends in Songwriting Award during Songs of Hope IV. Photos courtesy of www.billboard.com

RIGHT: J Records artist, Gavin DeGraw, left, with Songs of Hope event chairman and chairman/CEO of Universal Music Publishing Group, David Roven, who received the Martin Bandier New Horizons Award at Songs of Hope IV. Photos courtesy of www.billboard.com

CAPITOL RECORDS NASHVILLE HOSTS CMA after-party at Nashville hot spot Sambuca. Pictured, from left, are EMI-Nashville’s artist development VP Phil Guerrieri; Capitol Nashville execs Tom Beccio, Fletcher Foster, Mike Duncan and Joanna Carter, Dierks Bentley; and Capitol Nashvilles, Bill Kennedy, Larry Willoughby and Jimmy Hartlee. Photos courtesy of RICK-AMERICAN-Music.com

COUNTRY MUSIC ASSN. AWARDS: Country music’s biggest night took place at the Gaylord Entertainment Center in Nashville.

ABOVE RIGHT: Big Machine Records’ post-CMA party held at the jack Dorsey’s Old No. 7 Club in the Gaylord Entertainment Center attracted two Billboard staffers. Photos, from left, are billboard VP of integrated sales/associate publisher Brian Kennedy, artist Taylor Swift, Billboard executive editor/associate publisher Tamara Conniff, and Big Machine Records president/CEO Scott Borchetta. Photos courtesy of Lilian Sambuca.

RIGHT: Jon Voight, Bob Sambuca and Jon Bon Jovi stopped by Universal Music Group Nashville’s party at the First Center for the Vocal Arts after presenting the single of the year trophy at the CMA Awards. From left are, Jon Bon Jovi’s wife, Lauren, and Bon Jovi.

ABOVE: Equity Music Group celebrated a milestone following this year’s awards show. Honorees included Larry Gatlin’s concept/nomination. The group, Little Big Town, was nominated for the Horizon Award and vocal group of the year. From left are UMG’s Philip Swallow and Ken Pinckard, Equity president Mike Gaskin, Equity co-founder/partner Clint Black, and UMG’s Kimberly Rodger and Jim Arrington. Photos courtesy of Lilian Sambuca

LEFT: With the CMA Awards, Sony BMG Nashville had plenty to celebrate during its party at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Pictured, from left, are Sony BMG Nashville executive VP of A&R Jennifer Blevin; double award winner Carrie Underwood; Sony BMG Nashville chairman Ice Galante; and entertainer of the year honoree Kenny Chesney. Photos courtesy of Lilian Sambuca.

SONGS OF HOPE IV: Country music’s biggest night took place at the Gaylord Entertainment Center in Nashville.

ABOVE: Sony BMG Nashville hosted an after-party at Nashville’s Jack Dorsey’s Old No. 7 Club. Pictured, from left, are Warner-Chappell’s Judy Staker, WB executive VP Bill Bennett, and BMI’s Michelle Branch. Photos courtesy of Lilian Sambuca.
ONE MORE FAREWELL
Details are scant, but Track hears an archival Elliott Smith release will happen sooner than later. Sources say the project will be culled from previously unreleased material the late singer/songwriter recorded between his 1997 album “Either/Or” and the following year’s commercial breakthrough, “XO.” It is understood that some tracks were produced by longtime collaborator Rob Schnapf. The beloved Smith, who committed suicide in 2003, was posthumously saluted with the 2004 Anti- album “From a Basement on the Hill,” featuring material he was working on prior to his death.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON
Politics and music can make uncomfortable bedfellows. Just ask Gordon Brown, Britain’s chancellor of the exchequer and prime minister-in-waiting. In the final act of the Nov. 14 U.K. Music Hall of Fame ceremony in London, Brown graced the stage to induct legendary Beatles producer Sir George Martin. Brown’s reception, however, was a world away from the delighted screams that accompanied Bon Jovi, James Brown and the other artists honored earlier on a night specifically the parliament member was greeted with a round of boos and catcalls. After the din dimmed, Brown went on to describe Martin as the man who “made the Beatles the most successful group in history.” Earlier the crowd collectively giggled when former President Bill Clinton offered a taped message of congratulations to his “friend” Bon Jovi. Among the bricks for Brown, he got off lightly compared to his colleague John Prescott, the deputy prime minister. At the 1998 BRIT Awards, a member of British group Chumbawamba dumped a bucket of ice water on Prescott’s head.

JINGLE ALL THE WAY
How did an upstart label secure two “American Idol” finalists for its just-released holiday collection, “Breaking for the Holidays”? In the case of New York-based indie Breaking Records, you look no further than Billboard’s own Fred Bronson, who worked with the record company’s president Bernadette O’Reilly to bring “A” season four dynamo Vonzell Solomon and season three favorite Jon Peter Lewis to the mic. Solomon sings “It’s Gonna Be a Cold Christmas,” an overseas hit from the ’70s, while Lewis contributes the original Beach Boys-inspired “California Christmas.” Bronson has been featured on “A,” telling contestants about the history of The Billboard Hot 100. Other artists on “Breaking for the Holidays” include Chaka Khan, “Rockstar Supernova” finalist Jill Goia, Ben Jelen and Sandra Bernhard.

A MILESTONE SONG
eMusic is about to reach its 100 millionth download, which is pretty amazing considering that it took two years (November 2003 to December 2005) to reach the first 50 million and will have less than a year to reach the next 50 million. Furthermore, Barenaked Ladies will write and record a song specifically for the 100 millionth downloader and the winner will also receive a free premium subscription to the service for life. The BNL song will be available as a free download from eMusic beginning in January. It will then be bundled with the band’s upcoming album, “Barenaked Ladies Are Men,” as a paid bonus track.

‘OUT!’ FOR A GAYLA EVENT
Celebrities were stacked double-file for Out magazine’s larger-than-life “100 Most Influential People in Gay Culture” awards gala Nov. 10 at Manhattan’s Capitale. Luminaries included Anne Hathaway, Claire Danes, Iman, Rufus Wainwright, Michael Kors, Isaac Mizrahi, Patricia Field, Terry McNally, Anthony Rapp, Wilson Cruz and Amerie. The 12th annual listing is featured in the magazine’s December issue, highlighted by artist of the year John Cameron Mitchell. The event was hosted by Justin Bond, with musical performances from Jive/Zomba pop/R&B diva Kells and fabu Cordless Recordings musical duo Dangerous Muse.

MANDY ON THE MIC
After spending the past several years focusing on acting in films like “Saved” and “American Dreamz,” Mandy Moore is finishing her first new album since 2003’s “Coverage.” Her last for Epic. Now signed to management powerhouse the Firm’s label, Moore is at Altair Studios in upstate New York working with producer John Alaga. The album, due in April, sports co-writes from Moore on every track with the help of Lon McKenna, Rachael Yamagata and the Weepies.

REGIS AND THE REINDEER
If you’re one of the 115,000 (!) people who purchased “The Regis Philbin Christmas Album” since its September 2005 release by Hollywood Records, you’re familiar with the talk show host’s cover of “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.” Now, Philbin has been transported to the North Pole via the same stop-motion animation from the evergreen “Rudolph” Christmas special as part of a new music video that premiered Nov. 16 on “Live With Regis and Kelly.” If you missed the clip, check it out on liverieganskelly.com.

EXECUTIVE TURNTABLE
RECORD COMPANIES: Universal Republic Records names Joel Klarman senior VP of promotion/artist development. He was exec VP of promotion at Epic Records. Universal Music Classics Group in New York names Paul Foley GM and David Leach senior VP of promotion. Foley was GM of Rounder Records Group, and Leach was COO at Big3 Entertainment. Capitol Records Nashville promotes Steve Hodges to VP of promotion. He was senior director of national promotion. BNA Records names George Briner national promotion director. He was VP of field promotions at MCA Nashville.

PUBLISHING: Dimensional Music Publishing in New York taps Neil Gills as president/COO. He was East Coast GM for Concord Music Group.

Murrah Music names Janice Bane director of administration and Shanna Tapley executive assistant of legal and business affairs. Bane was manager of licensing services at MCS Music America, and Tapley was event sales manager at Andretti.

DISTRIBUTION: Fontana Distribution in Universal City, Calif., promotes Ken Gullic to senior VP of sales and marketing. He was VP of sales.

The Internet Online Distribution Alliance in San Francisco appoints Rob Weitzner to VP of business development. He was head of membership and development at the American Assn. of Independent Music.

TOURING: Creative Artists Agency in Nashville names Marcie Allen Cardwell of Nashville-based MAC Presents as a consultant for sponsorships and endorsements.

MOBILE: Groove Mobile in London appoints Jason Binks to be director of off-portal marketing. He was business development director at U.K.-based Hyperlaunch New Media.

RELATED FRIENDS: Cellfish Media in New York names Andrew Feigenbaum senior account manager of A&R and Caroline Bazbaz account manager. Feigenbaum was an A&R executive at Atlantic Records, and Bazbaz was product manager at Island Def Jam Records. Dial Global names John Murphy senior VP of talk program sales and Dianne Farley VP of marketing. Murphy was VP, and Farley was an account executive at Westwood One.

Send submissions to exec@billboard.com.
Who's on Stage?

2007 Faces to Watch

Join Billboard for our second annual Faces to Watch feature, which profiles emerging new acts set to make an impact in 2007! Our special feature will provide an in-depth look at the stars of tomorrow who either have a highly anticipated debut album or who have been under the radar and are ready to shine. Don't miss the opportunity to place your ad and showcase your brand in Billboard's special feature on the 2007 Faces to Watch!

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