THE HOLIDAY ISSUE
How To Not Get Scrooged In The Fourth Quarter

FEATURING:
THE BIGGEST HOLIDAY THEMED RELEASES
>P.12

RETAILERS' Q4 PREDICTIONS
>P.7

THE LATEST RELEASE DATE AND PRICING STRATEGIES
>P.10

CHRISTMAS IN GERMANY. >P.20
AND JAPAN? >P.20
AND THE U.K.! >P.22

THE NEW KING OF CHRISTMAS BRANDING
>P.24

BATTLING iPOD FOR SPACE UNDER THE TREE
>P.26

GIFT CARDS MAY SAVE YOUR BIZ
>P.8

THE HOTTEST LATIN HOLIDAY ALBUM IN YEARS
>P.18

JAY-Z
A Brand-New Album, A World Of Experience And Def Jam's Market Share Under His Watch >P.30

PLUS:
HD VIDEO, MADE CLEAR
>P.33
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Contents

VOLUME 118, NO. 48

UPFRONT
7 HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS DVD, games, catalog, low pricing could stymie December retail.
16 On the Road
17 Retail Track
18 Latin

FEATURES
30 JAY OF ALL TRADES Not just a business man, a business man: The label CEO, basketball team owner and clothing brand founder finds time to visit Africa with the UN and end retirement from hip-hop with a potential blockbuster album.
33 COMING INTO FOCUS Once a megapixel pipe dream, high-definition video could be the technology that keeps your business in the picture.
36 AT THE EDGE At the Digital Entertainment, Media and Marketing Excellence Conference and Awards, the future is bright and dizzying.

MUSIC
39 JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR Ordered
Snopp and Dre reunite for Doggfather's star-studded new disc.
40 Now Hear This
41 Global Pulse
42 BeatBox, Jazz Notes
43 Rhythm & Blues
44 Real Talk
45 Reviews

IN EVERY ISSUE
6 Opinion
47 Over the Counter
47 Market Watch
48 Charts
65 Marketplace
66 Milestones
67 Backbeat
68 Inside Track
Executive Turntable

ON THE COVER: Jay-Z by Anthony Handke

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DECEMBER 2, 2006 | www.billboard.biz | 5
Ten years ago, there was no such thing as December street dates in the record industry. Def Jam and other hip-hop labels changed that in 1998, and since then the month has blossomed to the point where this year it is chock-full of releases.

Now that the labels have discovered that releasing records in December works, maybe they can get around to discovering January through August, to paraphrase Tom Waits.

It is the same old story. Year after year, retailers plead for releases in the first three months, but the labels, acts and their managers all want to put out their big releases in the fourth quarter.

In fact, earlier this year (Billboard, Aug. 26) Hastings Entertainment’s John Marudakre explained all the reasons why it is seasonal suicide to bunch up releases in the fourth quarter. He concluded with the argument that the industry needs 35 key releases a month, with at least a 40,000-unit initial shipment, to keep customers interested in music.

If labels would embrace such a strategy, it would go a long way toward helping ail- ing retailers. But retailers aren’t the only ones that will benefit. Anything the labels do to help retail will only rebound back to them. A healthy retail account base translates into strong sales for labels. Yet, labels sometimes seem like they aren’t listening to their retail account base.

We all know that CD sales are sliding, and retail says it needs the labels’ help to curtail that. It is saying loud and clear that it needs a steady release schedule throughout the year, either a new physical format or a spilled-up CD, and price cuts. See (Retail Talk, page 17). And doing one of those things isn’t enough. The majors need to address all three factors. And if they are unwilling to do that, they should at least provide remedies for two.

Other than Universal Music Group, which has JumpStart, the other majors are in denial that consumers are demanding lower-priced CDs. They all act like the answer is in creating more value by spilling up the CD.

That’s good because that’s one of the things that retailers are asking for. But so far each major is trying to address that issue in its own way—Sony BMG tried DualDisc, Warner Music Group will try the DVD album, EMI Music will issue enhanced CDs with a Web interface and UMG, in addition to JumpStart, has been issuing a lot of major releases with a DVD component, too. While all the majors are trying something, the four different approaches confuse customers instead of bolstering their confidence in the physical goods world.

Surely this is an area where the majors can work together without running afoul of the Federal Trade Commission. It’s been done before with the CD and DVD.

And the labels don’t even have to work together for each to commit to a steady flow of releases year round. Distribution and sales executives get it: they know the importance of a steady release schedule. But if a coherent release schedule is ever going to be a reality, other label executives, acts and their managers need to be convinced.

Labels often say that they can’t control when their acts give them records, but they can control when they release them. Why not save some fourth-quarter releases for the first quarter?

If labels release some of their star’s records in the first quarter, they will be rewarded. It’s practically the only time of the year that there is breathing room at radio, and retail is bound to embrace any release that has a chance of catching the consumer’s attention. By holding releases until the right time, labels will have more time to set up and create the marketing opportunities for more records. What’s more, in an uncrowded field, releases can build market share.

But it is not about these factors.

Thankfully, Sony BMG says it is endorsing the concept. Sony BMG Sales Enter- prise co-president Bill Frohlich says the company thinks there should be a more fluid release schedule and says the major has about 10 releases slated for the first two months of the year. More labels need to start thinking like that by helping the brick-and-mortar retailers, the labels would be helping themselves, and who would want to argue with that?

Go ahead, keep working on your Internet plans and develop that market. But how much sense does it make if CD sales continue to slide while the brick-and-mortar market were healthy, too?...
Hope For The Holidays

While merchants say they have been experiencing healthy sales in the weeks leading to Black Friday, music merchandisers are still cautious in projecting how music will sell during the holidays. "The last few weeks have been pretty strong at retail, and the release schedule for the next couple of weeks is pretty big," said Wal-Mart district manager Kevin Miller. "But as to what gains traction and what falls away remains to be seen.

Merchandisers are hesitant because since September 'a lot of key releases have fallen short of expectations,' one major-label distribution head says. 'All of a sudden, it's a very different marketplace. It's not a pretty picture out there in the physical world.' Trans World divisional merchandising manager Jerry Kamler agrees and says that in general, "key releases are selling below vendor estimates. What is really alarming is we all know it's going to fall off in week two and three, but those numbers are really deteriorating."

But while most merchandisers hope that music will come through in the remaining weeks of the year, retailers themselves seem fairly optimistic, thanks to the strong sales they expect from videogames, DVDs and portable digital devices. The downside is that those product lines will take sales away from music.

Videogames in particular are expected to enjoy robust sales thanks to the introduction of new platforms, Nintendo Wii, whichstreets Nov. 19, and Sony's PlayStation 3, which hits stores Nov. 17. "A lot of money will go to the game platforms," says a J&R GM of music and video Sue Brynn. However, not as much as consumers would like to spend on them. With PS3, "There will be extreme shortages and many disappointed and frustrated customers this holiday season," she adds.

Another merchant concedes, "Once Sony starts talking, it's not about the launch, it's about the life cycle...you know that means it's all screwed up."

Indeed, every merchant Billboard contacted said they have presold their allotment of PS3s through the end of the year. "It's not about the launch, it's about the life cycle...you know that means it's all screwed up."

Retailers say they have presold their allotment of PS3s through the end of the year. In fact, accounts say that while they were disappointed with their initial allotments, they now wish they would have received much more. "They cut them off further on shipment date," says a retailer.

Merchants say that Nintendo is doing a much better job with its out-of-Wii and will try to capitalize on Sony's shortfall. They also say that a strong slate of November releases from videogame suppliers will scoop up plenty of consumer gift-buying money, too.

Likewise, the DVD new-release schedule is strong with "Pirates of the Caribbean" leading the way. Catalog sales are expected to be better than last year, with the studios offering even more titles at steep discounts. J&R DVD buyer Rob Glatt says. In fact, he predicts this year will see even more $4.99 DVDs on Black Friday. "In music, pricing is a serious topic. The good news is that low pricing should stimulate music sales. The bad news is it could result in a profitless prosperity." According to the gottradeal.com Web site, Black Friday will see Best Buy offering four top titles at $5.99 in an early-bird sale: Justin Timberlake's "FutureSex/LoveSounds," Keith Urban's "Love, Pain & The Whole Crazy Thing," Janet Jackson's "20 Y.O." and "Now That's What I Call Music! 23."


As shocked as industry executives are by that kind of pricing, it's up from last year's low price of $5, which Wal-Mart charged for five hit titles. This year, according to its Web site, Wal-Mart has hit titles in its Black Friday circular priced at $9.72, including a bunch of two-pack exclusive versions of new releases. It also will feature an exclusive Eagles DVD/CD, which sources seem to think will be the "Farewell Tour: Live From Melbourne" that Rhino/WEA put out in 2005 but with three new audio tracks. It will also have an exclusive Garth Brook/C/D DVD package.

Brett Wickard, owner of New England retail chain Bull Moose, sees low pricing as a good thing. "I expect a lot of promotions and aggressive pricing, which will build excitement and hype," he says. "There will be far more $10-and-under titles than we've had in the last 15 years." continued on next page
It’s In The Cards

Gifts Expected To Drive Download Sales

When it comes to digital music retail during the holidays, gift cards are once again positioned to be a key sales driver. But don’t look for an immediate pop in download sales following Black Friday. A concentration on gift cards means that a dramatic rise in downloading is not likely to hit until the week of Christmas and the week after New Year’s Day, when download devices and the cards themselves have been received as presents.

Because—like the industry sold an average of 7 million tracks per week in the weeks leading up to Christmas. The first jump came during Christmas week when more than 9.5 million downloads were sold, according to Nielsen SoundScan. But the biggest holiday-related weeks were those ending Jan. 1, when 20 million downloads were sold, and Jan. 8, when sales topped 13 million.

The big question this year is, How big will the pop in download during be for Christmas? Download sales have run at a steady rate of 10 million tracks per week since February.

Apple, RealNetworks, iMusic and others are ramping up efforts to position cards inside consumer electronics stores, mass merchants and supermarkets. “The challenge is you have to get great placement,” says Eddie Cue, VP of applications for Apple.

He says the scurry among digital retailers will be to gain prime placement for their cards at checkout, on special endcaps and alongside CD racks and MP3 player displays. Circuit City, for instance, is creating a special iTunes gift card rack that sits near its music section.

Just like last holiday selling season, Apple once again figures to lead the pack on card sales. It claims distribution deals with Best Buy, Target, Radio Shack and Kroeger, among others. With iPods expected to be among the most popular gift-giving items this season, Apple considers gift cards—which typically sell for $10-$25—to be companion pieces, as well as stocking stuffers and last-minute gifts.

The wildcard in the equation this Christmas is Microsoft. The company’s heavily marketed Zune digital music player figures to be a factor in device sales, but there is no aggressive gift card strategy for the corresponding store, the Zune Marketplace. Meanwhile, Real and eMusic see gift cards as a way to attract new customers. Real wants to leverage its relationship with Best Buy to drive card sales for their co-branded digital music offering and push the new Rhapsody-branded Sanyo MP3 player from SanDisk.

In addition to physical gift cards, digital retailers will attempt to further maximize the last-minute gift-market with online options. Apple will for the first time tout an electronic gift feature via iTunes that allows users to select specific albums, movies, TV shows and music videos to be given as a downloadable gift. Recipients receive an e-mail with a code to redeem the item. eMusic and Rhapsody are offering online gift certificates.
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Akon f/Eminem, “Smack That”

#1 on Billboard Hot Digital songs,

Akon f/Eminem, “Smack That”

#1 UK single, Akon f/Eminem, “Smack That”
DEF JAM DECEMBER

In Music Retail, The 12th Month Now Matters

Up until 1998, December rarely saw any releases. But in the years since, the month has quickly evolved. Now it’s as loaded with titles as any in the other months in the crowded fourth quarter.


The month’s releases are heavily slanted toward hip-hop, rap and R&B, but the titles stretching Dec. 26 are almost exclusively in those genres. Those titles include N.W.A.’s “Greatest Hits,” the Diplomats’ “Dispens More Than Music Vol. 2,” “Death Row: 15 Years on Death Row,” Jolanta Austria’s “Ocean Drive” and Omariion’s “21.” Also re-releasing that day is a 24-track CD/DVD, a new Family Values tour CD/DVD and Switchfoot’s “Oh! Gravity.”

Until 1998, December generally was a bare month because store owners discouraged new releases under the theory that their employees are too busy dealing with customers then. However, that changed once Island Def Jam started to play. “We want to be the No. 1 label at Christmas,” Newbury Comics buyer Carl Mello says.

That year, Island Def Jam released albums from DMX, Redman and DJ Clue in December (see story, below). Actually, two or three releases arrived at that time from Busta Rhymes and Mystikal. But because of Island Def Jam’s overwhelming presence that year and the fact that the label followed up in 1999 by announcing four releases for December (only two came out), retailers back then started calling the month “Def Jam December.”

Since then it has blossomed into just another month on the release schedule, at least for the majors. For example, Sony BMG Music Entertainment has 13 releases out this December, while Universal Music Group is issuing 20 titles.

Retailers say the releases drive traffic, and they particularly like the ones arriving Dec. 26, one of the best shopping days in the year. “It makes sense to release albums that day, particularly if you look at all the kids coming into stores with gift certificates,” Super D VP of purchasing and marketing Thuy Ngo says.

In fact, “the gift-card business has grown substantially over the last 10 years,” so titles that come out on that day benefit” from that phenomenon, Trans World music divisional merchandise manager Jerry Kamiler says.

But some merchants wonder if all the December rap titles will heighten a growing yet disturbing trend. “We have been shocked how the urban records have underperformed this year and how they seem to be over in a nanosecond,” one head of purchasing at a major account says.

Even the practice of putting out records in December has spread, it’s mainly the majors that use that tactic. Koch Records is one of the few independents putting out records that month, and the label limited itself to Dec. 26 with releases from the Diplomats and the Death Row anniversary album.

“I couldn’t get circular cuts for December,” Koch Records senior VP of sales Ed Franke says. “But it made sense to release the albums the day after Christmas, because people spend a lot of money that day and have gift certificates, too.”

In general, he adds: “We moved a lot of stuff out of the fourth quarter and into the first quarter because we wouldn’t be able to get the proper positioning for those releases.”

In addition to the scarcity of positioning, another reason independent retailers tend to avoid releasing product in December—and for that matter, November—is because, as Chicago’s Drag City head of sales Ryan Murphy puts it, “cooperative advertising prices the chains charge the labels are too high.”

For example, Best Buy’s power-wall typically costs $450,000 per month during most of the year. But for the holiday season, it must be purchased for 13 weeks, and it costs $155,000.

Likewise, even big independent labels like Sub Pop and Epitaph say they usually avoid releasing product those two months. “As a general rule, the answer is yes, we do try to avoid it,” Epitaph head of sales Jon Strickland says. But this year, it issued Tom Waits’ “Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers & Bastards” Nov. 21 “since he’s an artist who could rise through the murk.”

While retailers like the December release schedule, they wonder why the majors don’t save any albums for the new year. “Why don’t they carry that into their logical collision?” Kamiler asks, and discover the first nine months of the year? “Why aren’t they releasing albums in May?”

Likewise: “We would like to see more releases held until January,” Chicago’s Drag City head of sales Ryan Murphy says. “January is so high-traffic, we call it ‘the fifth quarter.’

But help may be on the way. “The real answer is there should be a fluid release schedule from January through December,” Sony BMG Sales Enterprise co-president Bill Fohrlik says. “We have about 10 releases coming out in January and February.”

Def Jam December

How A Hip-Hop Label’s Innovation Altered the Industry’s Year-End Release Schedule

In 1998, Island Music Group CEO Lyor Cohen and Def Jam president Kevin Liles initiated an unprecedented December release schedule, preparing to line the shelves with then-stars DMX, Redman and DJ Clue, retailers were initially skeptical of the hip-hop label’s ability to draw holiday traffic.

“December is a horrible time to put out new releases,” said Ron Phillips, then-senior purchasing VP at Valley Media in Woodland, Calif., in 1998. “It’s the perfect formula for getting lost in the shuffle.”

Yet DMX, Redman and DJ Clue each did well regardless—DMX’s “Flesh of My Flesh” sold the most, scanning 670,000 in its first week, according to Nielsen SoundScan. DMX noted the label’s risky move was so successful that retailers began calling the 12th month “Def Jam December.”

And repeating the release pattern in 1999, Def Jam dropped Jay-Z’s “Vol. 3: The Life and Times of S. Carter” and DMX’s "And Then There Was X," the tune of 493,000 and 698,000 in first-week sales, respectively.

Now, in 2006, hip-hop is eyeing its most robust fourth quarter in years. With Cohen and Liles’ 1998 ingenuity having inspired every hip-hop label, this year’s slate includes the Clipse, Akon, Fat Joe, Lil’ Wayne and Baby, Nas, Ghostface, Jay-Z, Lil Scrappy, Bow Wow, the Game and Young Jeezy. Dropping titles in either November or December. Interestingly, current Def Jam president Jay-Z says that although he molded his release schedule after Def Jam December, it wasn’t the original plan. “It just happened that way,” Jay-Z says. “Nas was supposed to come out in September, but he was still recording. Jeezy was supposed to come out in October, and we figured it’d be a better thing to capitalize on the momentum.”

Surprisingly enough, former Def Jam president Liles agrees with Jay-Z. “With the momentum of the company, the retailers are not questioning the releases,” Liles says. “There might be 10 new releases out there, but the retailers know we have helped to keep the lights on.”
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WINNING WITH WINTERSONGS
Christmas-Themed Releases Off To A Good Start

While there is still a lot of uncertainty about how the onslaught of big new releases will perform during the holiday selling season (see story, page 7), Christmas-themed music itself is off to a strong start, major-label distribution executives and merchants say. Sony BMG Sales Enterprise co-president Bill Frohlich says, “Christmas music was doing particularly well last week. It’s not only the new releases. The Christmas catalog, evergreen titles saw a big pickup from last year.”

In fact, “Holiday music started selling a week earlier this year than last,” EMI Music Marketing president Ronn Werre says.

According to Nielsen SoundScan, the Top Holiday Albums for the week ending Nov. 5—the first week of the year—the company actually compiles that chart—collectively tallied more than 312,000 scans, which is up 7.8% from the nearly 290,000 units the top 100 titles scanned in the corresponding week in 2005. While SoundScan didn’t construct a seasonal chart for the prior week, titles on the Nov. 5 chart scanned double the 158,000 they garnered for the week ending Oct. 29. That 158,000 is an increase of 12.1% from the nearly 140,000 scans from the corresponding week in 2005.

If sales are up already, it could be an indicator of how holiday-themed music will sell, Werre says.

Indeed, Christmas music sales look better than last year, the folks at J&R Music World in downtown Manhattan say. J&R GM for music and video Sue Bryan says Christmas music sales seem like they will be strong thanks to the “Now 3 Christmas” compilation and new releases from Bette Midler (“Cool Yule”), Aimee Mann (“One More Drifter in the Snow”), Sarah McLachlan (“Wintertides”) and Mary Mary (“Christmas”).

‘Holiday music started selling a week earlier this year than last.’

—RONN WERRE, EMI MUSIC MARKETING

J&R store manager Charlie Bagarozza agrees, saying, “It looks better than last year, especially when you get a first record, [‘Twisted Sister’ ‘Twisted Christmas’] title. On the day that it came out, it was the first record we sold, and it was bought by a guy with a gray ponytail, wearing an old Twisted Sister jacket.”

Other new holiday-music releases expected to sell well include a remastered “Charlie Brown Christmas” from Fantasy/Concord with four previously unissued bonus tracks, “A Brad Paisley Christmas” on Arista and “James Taylor at Christmas” on Columbia. Newbury Comics buyer Carl Mello calls Taylor’s record “James Taylor’s first Hallmark Christmas album.” The 4,000 franchised and owned Hallmark stores have exclusively carried a version of the album since 2004, and the title has since been certified platinum.

But so far, 2006’s releases aren’t generating the first-week five new titles have exceeded that mark. McLachlan’s “Wintersong” leads the way, with 17,000 first-chart-week scans and nearly 55,000 units since its release.

Mello says the new titles do well the first year, but there aren’t many people purchasing them who will buy the Sept. 26 release of Ali & AJ’s “Acoustic Heart of Winter” in a few years or even Christina Aguilera’s 2000 release, “My Kind of Christmas.” In 2006, “The holiday titles that sell continuously are the standards from artists like Johnny Mathis and Burl Ives,” Mello says. “Burl Ives stands a better chance at the holidays than Ali & AJ. Christmas is when Ives comes into his own.”

According to SoundScan, Ives has sold 1.2 million units of his various Christmas titles during the SoundScan era.

Such companies as Microsoft, MySpace, YouTube, Motorola and Google are among the leading finalists for this year’s awards. YouTube captured the most nominations with six, including the best of show categories visionary of the year and brand of the year. MySpace and Microsoft closely follow with three apiece.

The DEMMX Awards are the highlight of the two-day Digital Entertainment, Media and Marketing Excellence (DEMMM) event, an exposition and conference with more than 1,500 attendees, developed by Adweek, Billboard and The Hollywood Reporter, with research from the Nielsen companies.

Keynote speakers include Jim Banister, author of “Word of Mouse: The New Age of Networked Media”; Martin A. Nisenholtz, senior VP of digital operations for the New York Times Co.; George Kilavkoff, chief digital officer at NBC Universal; Vince Broady, head of entertainment, games and youth for Yahoo; and Howard Taub, VP/associate director of HP Labs. For more information on the DEMMX Awards, nominees and the conference, go to demmx.com.

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According to SoundScan, Ives has sold 1.2 million units of his various Christmas titles during the SoundScan era.
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Brands Partner With Bands For The Holidays

For ad agencies and their clients, this is to quote a holiday chestnut, the most wonderful time of the year. With consumers in need of gifts for family, friends and lovers, brands are working overtime to capture the attention—and dollars—as many people as possible in the 31 days between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

“There is pressure to make campaigns pop throughout the year,” BBDO New York executive creative director Susan Credle says. “But this time of year, with everyone looking at quarter-four numbers, you want to kick it extra hard. And when it fits, music gives a campaign that extra kick.”

To be sure, music is a passion point for consumers—especially much sought-after young adults. Which helps to explain the thinking behind the new TV commercial created by BBDO New York and BBDO Atlanta for Cingular Wireless to introduce the Samsung Sync.

The spot features Ludacris and the Pussycat Dolls, and the sounds of jamiroquai. The fast-paced clip also playfully references Korn, Vanilla Ice, OK Go, Uncle Kracker, Kiss and Salt-N-Pepa.

Cingular is far from alone this holiday season in partnering brand and band. Consider the following:

• Gap features Common, Seal, Bow Wow and other celebrities in its Holiday in Your Hood campaign. In his TV spot, Common’s original rap “Holiday in Your Hood” is placed over a sample of Madonna’s “Holiday.” Black Eyed Peas member Will.I.am produced the track.

• In the campaign, developed by Gap’s creative agency Land+Partners, the retailer wanted to emphasize the significance of peace and love, Gap VP of marketing Kyle Andrew says. “We thought what better way to do that than by featuring some of our favorite musicians and style icons with the ones they love.”

• Hallmark tapped Country Music Hall of Fame inductee George Strait for its 2006 Christmas CD “Fresh Cut Christmas.” The disc is available exclusively in the more than 4,000 Hallmark Gold Crown stores and sells for $7.95 with each purchase of three Hallmark cards. Released Nov. 1, the CD sold one million copies in its first seven days, according to Hallmark VP of strategic music alliances Ann Herrick.

• Nokia is hosting a New Year’s Eve celebration in five party capitals of the world: Hong Kong, Berlin, Mumbai, Rio de Janeiro and New York. Scissor Sisters, the Black Eyed Peas and others are confirmed to headline the global event, which will be broadcast via TV and the Internet.

• The Rolling Stones’ “You Can’t Always Get What You Want” forms the musical bed in the Simon Malls campaign for its Simon Visa debit gift card.

• Bloomingdale’s partnered with jazz trumpeter Chris Botti for a multplatform campaign. Botti, who appears in the retailer’s holiday catalog, performed at its holiday window unveiling Nov. 21 in New York. This was followed by an in-store signing of Botti’s newly expanded Columbia Records seasonal CD, “December,” which is being sold in Bloomingdale’s stores nationwide. Net proceeds from the CD sales are being donated to American Cares. “Usually, brands want to tie in with the latest pop or rock star. So, I appreciated the initial pitch from Bloomingdale’s and how jazz—as well as a charity—was at the forefront of their holiday campaign,” Botti says.

• Bloomingdale’s senior VP of PR Anne Keating acknowledges it is a challenge, each year, to find the right holiday campaign partner, “but Chris is sophisticated and has a whole style about him.” That said, Keating adds that Bloomingdale’s would never enter into such a partnership unless “consensus between our creative and marketing departments says that the fit is right—for our customers, brand and company.”

Campaigns we have heard on high, clockwise from below: GEORGE STRAIT for Hallmark; CHRIS BOTTI for Bloomingdale’s; SEAL for Gap.

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**Opening Doors**

3 Doors Down gives back to Katrina-ravaged Gulf via benefit

T

he lineup for the third annual 3 Doors Down & Friends, set for Dec. 2 at the Mobile (Ala.) Convention Center, is decidedly hard for such a soft-hearted group of guys.

Supporting 3 Doors Down on the bill will be Staind, Hinder and Michael Tolcher. Proceeds from the concert, sponsored by AIG General Life & Accident, will benefit Hurri-cane Katrina victims along the Gulf Coast.

In the past we’ve done a little bit of country, a little rock, a little whatever, and this year’s just a straight-up rock show,” 3DD lead vocalist Brad Arnold says. “Some of the corporations that buy all the tables before they even know who will play, they’re going to have a good time that night.”

Members of 3DD proudly hail from Escatawpa, Miss., and Arnold says the band’s Better Life Foundation was originally created to benefit Biloxi-area children’s charities. But the unforeseen— and devastating—impact of Hurricane Katrina has changed the BLF’s focus during the past two years.

Arnold says faith-based organizations have done a lot of the heavy lifting in restoring the region. “A lot of the money we raised last year went to benefit church groups,” he says. “Those people have come from all over the country. They come down here on their own dime— they don’t charge it to do the labor. They take the [BLF] money and buy supplies for a home, and they can completely rebuild a small home for, like, $5,000.”

The results have been impressive. “They’ll come down here and work for two weeks, and I’m like, ‘Holy cow! I’ve seen homes that looked better than they did before the storm hit,’ Arnold says. “We also gave some money to libraries to get books back in there, and [guitarist] Matt [Roberts] gave some” to his local library.

Arnold says the foundation has raised about $900,000 since it launched. “With the foundation, it’s a dollar in and a dollar out, minus what it costs for us to actually put on the benefit every year,” he says. “Nobody’s on the payroll, everybody does it in their spare time, and we look for charities to benefit that have that same kind of outlook on it. We don’t want to give to somebody where 60% of it goes to administrative fees. We want to donate money to somebody that’s going to use it and put their time with the money and make things happen. We’re just really happy about it has turned out.”

Anyone interested in working with BLF can call foundation director Mark Smith at 251-866-2208.

Meanwhile, an intended 3D writing session recently turned into an impromptu jam session at Roberts’ Biloxi-area home.

“I used to play the drums, and I don’t get to play too much anymore, so I brought a set of drums over here to Matt’s house last night and we set up in his living room,” Arnold says.

“I bet his neighbors are loving us about right now. We started jamming last night, not really writing yet, but just getting those juices back flowing. Man, I tell you what, it felt good to sit down and jam a little bit.”

Arnold says that within the next month or two the band will begin writing the follow-up record to 2005’s “17 Days,” and recording could start by the end of this year or early in 2007.

“Hopefully by March or April we’ll have a new record out,” Arnold says. “But this time I don’t want to put a new record out until you hear it and go, ‘Holy shit! We’re not going to rush it or try to make one in 17 days again. We’re just going to have fun with it. . . .”

The first record we wrote in four weeks, the second record we wrote in four months, the third one we wrote in four weeks. I don’t want to do that anymore.”
Falling Like Snow
What Plummeting Black Friday CD Prices Mean

Black Friday advertising strategies are a whole new ballgame now that there are a slew of Web sites giving sneak previews of the circulars planned for that day. It appears that Best Buy is setting the floor price with four albums advertised at $5.99: Janet Jackson's "20 Y.O.," Justin Timberlake's "FutureSex/Love Sounds," Keith Urban's "Love Pain & the Whole Crazy Thing" and "Now 23." Circuit City, usually the Black Friday price leader, has eight albums at the same $6.99 price it used last year: six Universal Music Group (UMG) titles and two from Sony BMG Music Entertainment.

$5.99
Best Buy is advertising four albums at this price for Black Friday.

Wal-Mart is touting two-packs at $9.72. While all its two-packs are exclusive, thanks to DVD material from Viacom's music-lifestyle channels, two of those titles are even more exclusive. The Eagles two-pack contains three new songs unavailable elsewhere, and Garth Brooks is available only at Wal-Mart nowadays. Kmart and Target have CD titles priced at $9.99 and $9.99, respectively.

While Best Buy appears to be the price leader this year, we won't know until Black Friday itself thanks to the introduction of wild cards. With their hands revealed on the Web, merchants appear to be holding some cards close to the vest.

Last year, Wal-Mart priced five titles at $5 and touted it online and in its stores, but not in its circular. This year, another merchant is using its e-mail list to alert customers to bargains over and above those in its circular.

So we will have to wait and see what other bargains emerge on Black Friday, but we already know what the advertised pricing means for the future. It means a new floor price has been established: $5.99, as Black Friday generally sets the pricing tone for the following year.

The scary thing about all this is that some DVDs advertised in the circulars are priced lower than the lowest CD pricing, with plenty of hit catalog titles listed at $2.49-$4.99. Between DVDs and videogames, the CD could get lost in the shuffle this holiday, even as its advertised pricing likely comes back to haunt retailers next year.

In general, retail circulares and iTunes already make it plain that the value of the CD is $9.99 this year. That means that if you get noticed now you have to discount even more than the $9.99 price point. So far this year, while we haven't seen any superstars at the $6.99 price that Circuit City used last year, we have seen the occasional circular cut at $7.99.

GARTH BROOKS' two-pack is one of the most exclusive of Wal-Mart's $9.72 titles.

This all means that CD prices will continue to fall. If you don't believe me, the average price paid for a full-length CD in the United States from January to September this year was $13.02 versus the $13.21 tracked during the corresponding period in 2005, according to research firm the NPD Group.

Meanwhile, the RIAA says that at the half-year point, U.S. labels had shipped 264.8 billion CDs, which at list price generated $1.87 billion. That means that during the first six months, the average list price for CDs was $14.61, up 3 cents from the previous year's average of $14.58. But those prices include record clubs and other direct-marketing entities. The average list price to retail this year was $16.11, according to RIAA's numbers.

While this isn't an apples-to-apples comparison, if you look at the changes in pricing year to year and the difference between actual in-store pricing and the average list price, you can see that retail is bearing the brunt of discounting. The labels' CD price per unit to merchants actually went up, even if the labels' overall sales volume went down.

With the exception of UMG, the labels are in denial about pricing and how it affects their business. Their answer to falling CD sales is to create value by including visual material either via an added DVD, DualDisc, DVD album or enhanced CDs with Web-interface capabilities. But it's not clear the customer wants all these solutions, while it is apparent they think a CD should never cost more than $9.99.

The other three majors privately make it clear that they won't consider lowering CD prices any further. Why should they if they continue to get lower pricing in the stores anyway? Also, they point out that UMG's JumpStart program, which sees front-line list prices at $13.98, hasn't boosted that major's sales. But they are missing the point. Increasing CD sales at this stage is not the issue. Rather, the game afoot is about slowing the downturn of CD sales — and that's why lower pricing needs to be examined.

Making all retailers foot the bill for falling CD prices will only result in further hardship for them, accelerating the closure of stores and pruning further the breadth of selection in those still open. All of which will come back to haunt the labels in the end.
**Latin Notes**

**LEILA COBO** lcobo@billboard.com

**Mexican Xmas**

**Luis Miguel Hopes That Latinos Will Actually Listen To Holiday Music**

It may sound like a cliché, but it’s a fact: Latinos like to party at Christmas.

This partly explains why Latin dance compilations, not necessarily Christmas-themed, are the preferred fare at Christmastime.

In contrast, Latin Christmas CDs by major acts are a rarity in the U.S. Latin market and don’t have a particularly good track record. The big exception is Gloria Estefan’s “Christmas Through Your Eyes,” released in 1993, which has sold nearly 900,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

But subsequent attempts at marketing the Christmas Latin spirit have largely fallen flat. Raphael’s 2004 album “Vuelve Por Navidad” scanned a mere 1,000 copies; Jon Secada’s “The Gift” (2001) and Christian star Marcos Witt’s “Tiempo de Navidades” (2004) sold only 3,000 apiece.

Enter Mexican crooner and ubers star Luis Miguel, who this year aims to break the jinx with his first Christmas album, “Navidades Con Luis Miguel,” released Nov. 14 on Warner Music Latina.

Boasting big-band arrangements and an upbeat overall feel, “Navidades” features mostly Spanish-language adaptations of Christmas classics, from “Noche de Paz” (Silen Night) to “Te Deseo Muyl Fieles Fiesteras” (Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas).

The twist here is that instead of performing the oft-enused translated versions of these songs, Miguel requested special adaptations for his use from songwriters Juan Carlos Calderon and Edgar Cortazar.

“They wanted lyrics Luis Miguel style,” says Cortazar, who translated “Let It Snow” (Vaya Nevar) and “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” (Frente a la Chimenea). “Frente a la Chimenea,” which literally translates into “in front of the chimney,” has nothing to do with Rudolph and doesn’t feature any reindeer.

“We were looking for something more romantic, but happier, not as nostalgic,” Cortazar says.

Spanish versions of Christmas standards are common in recorded history, and songs like “Silent Night” have been learned by generations as “Noche de Paz.”

But when it comes to translating standards that haven’t fallen into the public domain, permission to translate must be obtained from the publisher.

Kenneth Higney Sr., VP of copyright and licensing for Arc Music Group, says his catalog has probably been translated into Spanish more than any other language and that he prefers literal translations.

“Otherwise, it becomes a new lyric translation, and it’s a different song,” says Higney, whose songs include “I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus,” which has been translated twice into Spanish.

With “Navidades Con Luis Miguel,” Cortazar received an adapter’s fee from the producer and credit on the album, but he doesn’t collect author’s royalties, which is standard for Christmas repertoire.

Aside from Miguel’s album, the other noteworthy Christmas release for the season is “Universidad Navideña” (Christmas University), a collection of standards performed by music ensembles from five schools of music: University of Southern California, Berklee College of Music, Cleveland Institute of Music, the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music and University of Miami.

Out on EMI Televisa, the set was conceived and executive-produced by EMI Televisa manager of business affairs Oswaldo Rossi, who wanted to showcase music students playing a variety of Latin styles, from jazz to salsa to pop.

The album is being marketed through a strong grassroots effort that targets the five schools as well as college radio and college newspapers nationwide.

Not surprisingly, “Universidad Navideña” also includes a Spanish version of “Rudolph.”

But this one is a literal translation where the reindeer is very much the protagonist.

**Ace Up The Sleeve**

**Motown Helps Upstart Miami Label CMG**

Upstart Latin labels financed and run by business entrepreneurs have come and gone rather quickly in the past 24 months.

But Miami-based Coalition Music Group has a big ace up its sleeve. The label has a distribution deal with SRC/Universal Motown Records, which has also put down $5 million to finance the venture, and is lending its marketing and sales resources to CMG.

“CMG is in essence the Latino arm of Universal Motown Group,” CMG founder and CEO Lou Navarro says. “They decided to get into the Latin market, and they chose to make us their label.”

CMG’s first release, “Los Cocorocos,” went to stores Nov. 21. It is being jointly marketed by CMG hired promotion and marketing teams as well as SRC’s sales and marketing staff.

“Los Cocorocos” is a concept album, bringing together tropical and reggaeton acts. Its first single, “Los Hombres Tienen La Culpa,” performed by salvador Gilberto Santa Rosa and rapper Don Omar, is No. 5 on Billboard’s Hot Tropical Songs chart.

CMG is the brainchild of Navarro, a Miami-based attorney who, via a holding company called the Coalition, has his fingers in several entertainment pies, including boxing management and nightclubs.

As an attorney, Navarro has represented clients like Tego Calderon and Zion & Lennox, which gave him an entree into the urban music world and led him to work with founder and CEO Steven Rifkind.

It was Rifkind who urged Navarro to find a major talent with which to start a label. That artist was Zion, who is slated to release his solo debut early next year. His album, Navarro says, will be bilingual and will be worked in the mainstream and Latin markets.

Although Navarro has no previous experience running a record label, Rifkind says he’s confident of the results. “These guys know pretty much what’s going on in reggaeton,” he says. “I have a feeling that my gut is right.”

Rich Isaacs, who used to run Loud Records with Rifkind and is now working as a liaison between CMG and SRC, draws a parallel between CMG and the many hip-hop labels started by entrepreneurs instead of music executives.

“It’s run by people who love the culture,” he says.

Navarro will run the day-to-day operations of CMG, based in Miami. The label also has offices in Puerto Rico and New York, home base to marketing/radio VP Carlos “Tone Capoose” Acosta.

Other CMG projects for 2007 include releases by A$AP Angel & De La Ghetto, a second “Cocorocos” project and any possible collaborations between Zion and Lennox.

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José Luis Terrazas, leader of pioneering regional Mexican band Grupo Montez de Durango, helped popularize the fast, keyboard-infused banda style known as duranguense. The composer, performer, producer and label owner weighed in on the future of traditional music at Billboard’s recent Regional Mexican Music Summit.

**How can regional Mexican attract a new audience?**

In Montez de Durango, we experiment along the way. We need to visit those mom-and-pop stores that still exist and get a feel for what’s actually selling. We owned a record store in Chicago for many years, and we sold in flea markets. My dad still has his little shop at the flea market, and I always go to him and [ask], “What are they buying?”

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How did the duranguense style expand from Chicago?

We have a large following in Texas, Iowa, New York and Florida. We’re expanding now to Central America. We’re going to do a live album from Guatemala. So I think there’s a lot of growth potential for duranguense. I think it’s because it’s fast, and you have to have good songs. I always try and find out who’s paying that $40 ticket to see us play: Are they from northern Mexico, are they from southern Mexico? [In] Washington, D.C., Maryland and New York, where there aren’t that many Mexicans, I see flags from Guatemala, El Salvador. And people from Guatemala marry into Mexican [families].

**What advice would you have for a songwriter trying to break into the business?**

Go out to the shows and make sure we get the CD. Don’t give it to the roadie.

We have an office in Chicago. It’s Terrazos Records, 1654 S. Mannheim Road, Stone Park, IL 60165.
Indie retailers may not be jumping for holiday joy this season, but there's plenty keeping them busy. From continuing to diversify beyond music to include everything from bagels to vintage clothing, indie stores are finding ways to survive as the industry declines and the CD endures a slow death.

First the numbers. Overall U.S. album sales are down about 5% compared with the same period last year, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Most indie retailers contacted by Billboard report a similar dip, although a random sampling found more than one experiencing a slight increase (Sea Level Records in Los Angeles and Horizon Records in Greenville, S.C., among them).

On a whole, however, sales at indie stores are trending down about 21%, according to Nielsen SoundScan. To be fair, the number is inflated due to store closures, and not reflective of what's happening saleswise at the nation's top stores from Amoeba Records in Los Angeles to Criminal in Atlanta.

Yet with the exception of a three-disc set from Tom Waits on Anti-/Epitaph, "Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers and Bastards," due Nov. 21, few releases this holiday season are eliciting much excitement at the indie retail level. A recent industry email from Alliance of Independent Media Stores head Eric Levin was telling, as it outlined many initiatives to drive traffic, including music lessons and vinyl-to-MP3 conversion services, without much talk of any new music.

CD sales are "pretty even," Levin says, but overall sales are up, in no large part to Criminal's recent expansion into the coffee business (Billboard, Nov. 26, 2005). Levin says, "Do you want to know why breakfast pastries versus bagels? The concerns of the music industry are not so much the concerns of Criminal Records."

Indeed, over at Horizon Records owner Gene Berger says sales are down year to date due to the traffic inspired by his co-tenants, the 85-seat restaurant the Bohemian. Also increasing visibility for the store is the fact that in-stores are broadcast live on local public station WNCW. But like Twist & Shout in Denver (Billboard, Aug. 26), Berger's decision was motivated by real estate rather than records.

"I decided I would only make the move three years ago to own the real estate, and the real estate would be valuable with or without Horizon," Berger says. "So if the technology moved real fast and we were just out of luck, I could flip or lease the real estate."

Sea Level's Todd Clifford has increased revenue by selling guitar strings and other musician needs, and Homer's in Omaha, Neb., has teamed with local Toyota dealers, who offer Homer's gift cards to those who test drive a Scion. Store manager Erik Ziegler also notes that Homer's is stocking more used, vintage clothing. But don't think indies are jumping at the chance to take on deeper catalog offerings in the wake of Tower's closing. With sales of digital albums more than doubling, up from 12 million at this time last year to 26 million now, indie stores are not exactly salivating at the thought of setting aside more space to a fading format. Levin says he's hit up daily from labels about expanding his CD offerings.

"With all due respect to a company that faded, any of the pitches I get from people I just put in the junk-mail folder," he says. "Labels are saying, 'Well, now you have this chance for all this classical.' Yeah, now I have an extra $100,000 and all this square feet. My job is keeping this place exciting and keeping the insurance people paid.'"
TOKYO—Amid a seasonal shopping frenzy, the strains of Mel Torme’s “The Christmas Song” fill a tinel-and-holiday-bedecked music store as snowflakes flutter to the ground outside.

A familiar year-end scene—but this isn’t New York or London, and the impending holiday isn’t Christmas Day. We’re in Tokyo, the singer is Japan’s Mariya Takeuchi and the public holiday is the Emperor’s birthday on Dec. 23. Moreover, Japanese music execs are less concerned with Christmas frivolity than with bouncing back from a tough third quarter.

“The last few months have been quite poor for the market,” HMV Asia Pacific president Paul Dezelisky says, “so all retailers are looking forward to some stronger new releases.” Whereas only 1% of Japan’s population is Christian, Christmas has become part of post-WWII Japan’s general year-end revelry. Local customs now include fathers bringing home a Christmas cake for their families and young couples enjoying Christmas Eve dinner dates at upscale hotels—being barefoot on Christmas Eve is unthinkable for single Japanese.

Takeuchi’s 1992 rendition of “The Christmas Song” (Moon Records) is now a Japanese seasonal staple, along with 1986’s “Christmas Eve” by her labelmate and husband Tatsuro Yamashita.

Although Christmas records are not huge sellers here—and no major local acts plan nule-themed singles this year—a string of seasonal compilations is rolling out. Those range from Universal Japan’s four-CD set “Super Jukebox 3000—Christmas Songs,” featuring international acts, to domestic repertoire collections like “Fantastic Christmas” from Sony Music Entertainment (Japan) or BMG Japan’s “Winter Lovers—Xmas & Winter Song Collection.”

As in past years, retail chains are running year-end promotions to attract consumers flush with cash from annual bonuses. HMV has a “best of 2006” campaign, while Tower Records’ “Winter Sale” runs Nov. 21-Jan. 14. But regardless of any seasonal distractions, Japanese execs are focused on how the fourth quarter can lift the world’s No. 2 recorded music market.

Shipments of audio software by the Recording Industry Assn. of Japan’s (RIAJ) 42 member companies in the July-September quarter totalled 74.1 million units, down 12% from the corresponding period of 2005. Trade value was down 14% to 84.9 billion yen ($720.6 million).

“The jury is still out on what the full-year results for Japan will be,” Warner Music Asia Pacific president Lachie Rutherford says. “There are a lot of major releases coming up, but the market’s still flat.”

Toshiba-EMI president/CEO Shojo Doyma agrees. “Unless we have a surprise million seller during December, I expect the market will continue to be tough,” he says.

Universal Music Japan chairman/CEO Kei Ishizaka notes that, according to the RIAJ, “for the past three years, Q4 sales have been 6% up from the third quarter.” This year, we have some strong releases from artists such as [vocalist] Masa-
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SANTA’S SINGLES LIST

Race For Christmas No. 1 Still Stirs Sales In The United Kingdom

LONDON—Any industry doomsayer proclaiming the single format to be dead might do well to observe the lucrative eccentricities of the race to be the United Kingdom’s Christmas No. 1.

“The charts are fairly predictable these days,” London-based HMV U.K. & I Ireland singles buyer Stewart Allan says, “but the one time you just don’t know what’s going to happen is at Christmas.”

The singles market may be as good as extinct in some territories, but in a country where the prestige of having a No. 1 single has survived the format’s falling sales of recent years, the festive battle looks set to be fought as fervently as ever.

U.K. singles sales during Christmas week 2005 totaled 2.1 million units, of which 1.3 million were physical and the remainder—for the first time—were digital, according to chart compiler Official U.K. Charts Co. (OCC). Those were the biggest weekly singles sales of 2005, more than double the corresponding week in 2004.

Hundreds of thousands of consumers place bets on this much-loved tradition. This year, national bookmaking chain William Hill’s early odds favorite is an artist whose identity is still unknown. Placed at odds of 2:7 is the single— provisionally set for release Dec. 20 by Sony BMD—by the winner of TV talent series “The X-Factor.” The release date is only four days after the nationally televised finale on commercial terrestrial channel ITV 1.

That formula worked a year ago, when Syco Music/Sony BMD rush-released “X-Factor” victor Shayne Ward’s single “That’s My Goal.” It sold 742,000 units in four days to become the festive chart-topper. A William Hill spokesman admits the company “took a beating” by leaving Ward’s odds too high, doubling the single would be released in time.

Britain’s best-selling festive song ever is Band Aid’s 1984 single “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” with total sales of 3.55 million, according to the OCC. It’s one of 12 Christmas-themed songs to have been No. 1 for the holiday since the U.K. singles chart was introduced in 1952—four of those being in the mid-1970s heyday of the yuletide novelty.

This year sees Cliff Richard, Britain’s all-time most successful singles artist with 1,166 weeks at the chart, back in a race he has won on several occasions. On Dec. 11, EMI will release Richard’s “21st Century Christmas,” coupled with a new version of his 1958 debut “Move It,” featuring Queen’s Brian May.

In the digital world, “the holiday market is a different landscape,” EMI Catalogue and EMI Liberty director Steve Davis says, “even since Cliff released his last Christmas single, ‘Santa’s List,’ in 2003. But most of Cliff’s audience are not big digital consumers. We’re expecting the majority of sales, at least 80%, to be in physical format.”

The difference in the landscape is likely to be even more pronounced in 2007. Starting Jan. 1, changes to OCC rules will mean that all downloads will be chart-eligible. At present, singles that do not have a physical release do not qualify.

Other key 2006 contenders include teenage classical crossover quartet All Angels’ cover of Robbie Williams’ “Angels” (Universal Classics and Jazz/Universal), out Dec. 18; novelty dance-pop track “Chacarron” by El Chombo (Ministry of Sound); also due Dec. 18; and the reunited Take That’s “Patience” (Polydor).

The Nov. 20 release of “Patience” would traditionally be too early for the holiday prize, but HMV’s Allan believes the digital effect could play a part. “With digital downloads slowing down the rate of weekly change in the charts,” he says, “who’s to say they won’t get to No. 1 [in] late November and stay there throughout December?”

Despite the public feeding frenzy, however, Island Records Group managing director Nick Gatfield doubts the lasting value of the festive chart-topper. “It’s become purely another opportunity for the industry to shout loud about key records as we go into the busiest time of the year,” Gatfield says. “But in terms of long-term profile or benefit to the artist, it’s meaningless.”

Top Of The Tree

Sales of U.K. Christmas No. 1 titles in week leading up to Christmas Day

1996 Spice Girls, “2 Become 1” (Virgin): 429,000
1997 Spice Girls, “Too Much” (Virgin): 252,000
1998 Spice Girls, “Goodbye” (VIRGIN): 380,000
1999 Westlife, “I Have a Dream”/“Seasons in the Sun” (RCA): 215,000
2000 Bob the Builder, “Can We Fix It?” (BBC Music): 360,000
2001 Robbie Williams & Nicole Kidman, “Somethin’ Stupid” (Chrysalis): 100,000
2002 Girls Aloud, “Sound of the Underground” (Polydor): 213,000
2004 Band Aid 20, “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” (Mercury): 231,000
2005 Shayne Ward, “That’s My Goal” (Syco Music): 742,000

London-based Lask now oversees a 100-strong team across product, marketing, systems and operational functions.

According to HMV, Lask’s first priorities will include recruiting a new head of Internet and a head of digital—the latter position is vacant following the recent resignation of previous incumbent Mark Bennett.

—Lars Brandle

GFN STREAMS ON

Leading French music retailer Fnac launched a music streaming service, FnacMusic Illimité, on Nov. 9. The service is available at Fnac’s existing downloads Web site, fnacmusic.com, which launched in September 2004. For €9.99 ($12.70) per month, users of the new service can access unlimited streaming from a catalog of 1 million titles from major and independent labels in the Windows Media Audio format. As yet, tracks are only available to PCs. Fnac.com managing director Franck Leprouz says the company “will see how the current offer works” before making any decision on a “to-go” version that would allow tracks to be streamed to mobile devices.

—Ymeric Pichevin

LASK RISES AT HMV

HMV U.K. & Ireland head of Internet Gideon Lask has been promoted to the division’s board as e-commerce director, with overall responsibility for the ongoing development and implementation of the retailer’s e-commerce activities across its hmv.co.uk and hmvdigital.com Web sites. The role has been vacant since John Taylor retired in July.

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—Christie Eliezer

U.K. ADDS TO HALL OF FAME

Prince, Bon Jovi, James Brown, Brian Wilson, Dusty Springfield, Led Zeppelin and Rod Stewart were inducted into the U.K. Music Hall of Fame during a Nov. 14 ceremony at London venue Alexandra Palace.

They joined Beatles producer Sir George Martin, who received this year’s honorary membership in recognition of his exceptional contribution to British music.

A “supergroup” including Corinne Bailey Rae and Queen drummer Roger Taylor paid homage to Martin with a selection from the Beatles’ 1969 album “Abbey Road.” Wilson, Bon Jovi and Brown also performed live at the event.

Since the Hall of Fame’s launch in 2004, 20 acts have been inducted, selected by a 60-strong steering group including media and music industry executives.

U.K. terrestrial TV broadcaster Channel 4 broadcast the event Nov. 16. U.S. audiences can catch the ceremony Nov. 25 on VH1.

—Lars Brandle

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Once again we find ourselves stretching our umbrella to include the two most unlikely rock gods since Flo and Eddie left the Turtles. Jack Black and Kyle Gass are Tenacious D, and if we didn’t give them sanctuary along with our other freaks, misfits, and outcasts, who would? Good luck finding a ’70s folk/metal chart.

It all began in the Mississippi Delta on Stovall’s plantation way back in the 20th century—in other words, 1985 Los Angeles, where they met as members of the Actors’ Gang theater troop.

They started playing music together, and HBO gave them a series about a band trying to make it in the business. Only two shows aired (what does HBO know?), but four more episodes would be included in 2003’s “The Complete Master Works” of Tenacious D. They are now a major motion picture—“The Pick of Destiny,” which opens this week. The plot includes their fictional beginning and rise to superstardom, and includes Meat Loaf and Ronnie James Dio in the cast. This could be bigger than “Borat.”

In lesser news, Clear Channel, which owns 1,150 radio stations, is being purchased by Thomas H. Lee Partners and Bain Capital, some of the same cats who scored Warner Music Group recently. Publishing catalog is one thing, but radio ownership brings very significant obligations and consequences to our culture. I want Thomas Lee and Bain to know I’m available 24/7 for consultation and advice. See you on the radio.

COOLEST GARAGE SONGS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE/LABEL</th>
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<tr>
<td>POD</td>
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<td>FAVORITE SON</td>
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<td>DANCE LIKE A MONKEY</td>
<td>NEW YORK DOLLS</td>
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<tr>
<td>RIDIN’ THE HOOK</td>
<td>SPONGEBOB &amp; THE HI-SEAS</td>
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<td>WRECK THIS HEART</td>
<td>BOB SEGER</td>
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<td>THE PAYBACKS</td>
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<td>WANNA</td>
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<td>NEVER GONNA DIE</td>
<td>THE SHYS</td>
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<td>PINK CADILLAC</td>
<td>JERRY LEE LEWIS WITH BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN</td>
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COOLEST GARAGE ALBUMS

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<th>TITLE/LABEL</th>
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<td>THE PICK OF DESTINY</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAST MAN STANDING</td>
<td>JERRY LEE LEWIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHINE ON</td>
<td>JET</td>
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<td>BROKEN BOY SOLDIERS</td>
<td>THE RACONTEURS</td>
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<td>ROCKFORD</td>
<td>CHEAP TRICK</td>
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<td>ONE DAY IT WILL PLEASE US TO REMEMBER EVEN THIS</td>
<td>NEW YORK DOLLS</td>
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<td>RIOT CITY BLUES</td>
<td>PRIMAL SCREAM</td>
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<td>SINNER</td>
<td>JOAN JETT &amp; THE BLACKHEARTS</td>
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<td>THE RISE AND FALL OF BUTCH WALKER &amp; THE LET’S GO OUT TONITES</td>
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Christmas Cat
Brian Setzer Becomes The New King Of Jingle Bell Rock

For Indies It's All In The Planning

'Tis The Season To Go All Digital

'Tis the month before Christmas, when all through the store, every major is offering CDs galore. The promos are placed near the doors with care in hope that the customers soon will be there. The few indie discs, nestled snug in their bins, have arrived months before Black Friday begins, for New West's Cameron Stang and other indie chiefs know their CDs can't compete as a fourth-quarter release.

But out on the 'Net they hear such a chatter, some indies take stock to see what's the matter. Away to "all digital" they fly to make cash, tear off CD packaging and program some flash. The online and mobile opportunities glow, giving lustre to streams, ringtones and downloads.

When what to their wondering eyes should appear, but pitches from aggregators and lawyers to hear. Attorney Marc Jacobson, so lively and quick, lets them know in a moment he can offer some tips. More rapid than eagles his courses they come, and he whistles, and shouts, and calls off each one:

"Get all artists' rights for uses known and unknown! For U.S. and EU, every right that they own! To buffer and cache, throughout the universe! Then dash away! Mash away! And license each verse!"

As the lawyers for indies say to me now, they meet with an obstacle 'cause they don't know how to easily license each publishing right from worldwide societies without costly fights.

But then, in a twinkling, a solution draws near. Let the aggregators help lessen the fear! As they grow and expand when next year comes round, their skills and their services will surely abound. Some are dressed like distributors but can clear rights and promote to all manner of Internet sites. A bundle of services they've flung on their backs, looking more like peddlers opening their packs.

The Orchard—how it twinkles! Their crew, how merry! They even pitch songs and protect the unwary. Then IODA is wrapping a plan with a bow. Called Prononet, the service is all about show. Take the music to sites outside stores, target social Web sites and bloggers and more. The rights must be cleared to use music for free, but then the sites would link to where they buy for fees.

Still, digital sales aren't yet chubbly or plump. A switch to "all digital" is a risky jump. IODA's Kevin Arnold says it's not just distribution. They also apply tech to find marketing solutions.

A wink of his eye and a twist of his head soon gave me to know indies had little to dread.

Then RED's Howie Gabriel offered some words: It's harder for Indies to have the right records. Their units must sell to cover high costs, which retailers charge for holiday promo spots.

So perhaps now's the time for Indies to be switching. All it takes is planning, from contracts to brand pitching.

Then next year, they'll exclaim as sales rise out of sight:

"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!"

---

Legal Matters
SUSAN BUTLER sbutler@billboard.com

Joe Surfdog Records artist Brian Setzer, it all began with the 1996 comedy "Jingle All the Way" starring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sinbad. But make no mistake: "I didn't pursue it. It pursued me," Setzer says with a laugh.

"I was asked to create a new version of 'Sleigh Ride' and I had Darlene Love sing on it; the three-time Grammy Award winner says. While in the studio, Setzer says he pictured a hyped-up sleigh ride through the Bronx. "I scoffed up the song a bit and they loved it."

So much so that Setzer ended up creating a handful of holiday songs for the original motion picture soundtrack, including "So They Say It's Christmas," by Lou Rawls with the Brian Setzer Orchestra.

Ten years later, Setzer has become the unofficial face of contemporary Christmas music. This season alone, his mistletoe jams are heard in such big-screen vehicles as "The Santa Clause 3: The Escape Clause" and "Unaccompanied Minors." Fans of TV shows like "My Name Is Earl" and "ER" are also familiar with Setzer's holiday music.

The Brian Setzer Orchestra delivered its first holiday album, "Boogie Woogie Christmas," in 2002. "Dig That Crazy Christmas" followed last year. A live DVD, "Christmas Extravaganza!," was also released in 2005. The WEA-distributed discs, which are marketed via direct-response TV campaigns and retail programs with the major big boxes, have collectively sold more than 500,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

According to SurfDog owner/president Dave Kaplan, the licensing of Setzer's Christmas music to films and TV shows "brings in a great chunk of change. It's been a significant revenue source to Brian and the label."

To be sure, Setzer is having the time of his life being—as Kaplan jokingly calls him—"the king of Christmas."

"I couldn't put the breaks on this even if I tried," Setzer says of his seasonal music, which complements his full-time gig as a rocker. "Now, it's become this big big-band spectacle."

Indeed, Setzer and his 18-piece orchestra kicked off their fifth annual Christmas Extravaganza tour Nov. 20 in Milwaukee. For this four-week, 24-date trek, fans will hear, in addition to "Jingle Bell Rock," classic Stray Cats songs as well as new tracks from the recently released "13," Setzer's 13th album of original material. Dave Kaplan Management oversees Setzer's career and Guy Richard of the William Morris Agency handles his bookings.

The color scheme for this year's tour is blue and gold, Setzer says. White Christmas trees with blue lights, for example. "And I'll have a blue sparkle guitar that Gretsch made me."

Coinciding with the live trek are several TV appearances, including NBC's "Today Show, Weekend Edition" Nov. 25 and "Late Night With Conan O'Brien" Nov. 28.

"Brian has this way of bringing the guitar out of the big-band background to become a lead instrument—not just to imitate jazz horns but to add a bit of rock'n'roll to the mix," says Andrea D'Ambrosio, a producer on "Today Show, Weekend Edition." Take this concept into Santa Claus season and his music goes beyond "your regular holiday album," she adds. "It becomes "a great party album, with Brian's bad-boy swing attitude and fun" leading the way."

"It's funny," Setzer says, "what started out as fans saying, 'Let's go see what this show could be about' five years ago has become more like, 'We can't wait, let's get our tickets early.' It's become an event that people want to see every year."

---

Michael Paoletta
Making The Brand

Michael Paoletta mpaoletta@billboard.com

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DEVICE WARS

Episode Two: Apple’s Competitors Strike Back

Not so long ago, in a Northern California town not too far away, a little white device called the iPod was unleashed on an unsuspecting world.

In the five years since, Apple Computer has sold close to 70 million of them worldwide and captured a dominating 75% of the MP3 player market.

But now, a small band of defiant manufacturers who survived the initial iPod onslaught have regrouped, preparing their counterattacks.

For the first time in recent memory, the iPod and its device wars consumes consumers.

SanDisk is poised to see this share increase now that Rhapsody chose the company’s Sansa RGB flash-memory player as the flagship device for the new version of the Rhapsody service, which Best Buy is co-branding.

First, the device will work better with the Rhapsody/Best Buy service than any other because it includes special software from Rhapsody that enables faster music transfers and automatic music recommendations. Second, it will be the featured product in Best Buy advertisements promoting the music service.

With a behemoth like Best Buy behind it, SanDisk Sansa will have the visibility needed to gain attention in the shadow of the iPod and Zune, which are also sold in Best Buy stores.

This holiday season, music capabilities are expected to be the primary driver of new phone sales, much like camera phones were two years ago. Whether wireless subscribers will use these phones to purchase and listen to music is another matter, but sales are looking up. Sprint recently reported surpassing 8 million downloads, while startup Amp’d Mobile says it sold more full-track downloads than ringtones in October.

Adding to the fray is Cingular Wireless, which became the first operator to allow customers to transfer music from existing music services like iTunes and Napster to mobile phones. To what degree these phones will figure in the coming MP3 player battle royal is the wildcard factor.

Despite their potential, none of the above efforts are expected to take any significant market share from Apple for the next 12-18 months. In this maturing market, it is unlikely that one device will suddenly emerge and find the air vent in Apple’s Death Star.

Instead, this next chapter will be one of attrition—a slow, methodical grinding away over the course of several years.

What we’re seeing this holiday season are the lines being drawn for that battle. Stay tuned.

BIZ & BRIEFS

PHONE TUNES

U.K. mobile operator 3 issued a report claiming that the mobile phone will become the retail channel of choice for music fans in the near future. The report states that purchasing music via mobile phones could overtake buying music on computers within five years. Some interesting stats:

- More than 60% of mobile customers under the age of 24 polled by the company say they have downloaded music on a mobile phone and believe the CD will die out in five years.
- Three-quarters of respondents said downloading music on their phones prompts them to buy music they wouldn’t normally listen to.
- Half those polled under the age of 21 say they prefer paying for music via their mobile bill than with a credit card.

3 leads the U.K. mobile music market with a 75% share, selling more than 1 million music tracks and videos a month.

SHOW US WHAT YOU GOT

NetMusicMakers.com is inviting acts to join a new version of its virtual music studio and broadcast network in preparation for a March 2007 public launch. The site allows bands to download royalty-free music clips, licks and grooves from the studio to incorporate into their own original work. Participating artists can then broadcast their music from their own personal Web site. The company currently has a battle of the bands contest under way, with more than 20,000 submissions collected in the last two months.

SOUNDS OF THE GAME

Spike TV’s fourth annual Video Game Awards will air Dec. 13. Among the award categories are best song, best soundtrack and best original score. Among the nominees for best song are Bloc Party’s “Helicopter” from the game “Getting Up: Content Under Pressure” and AFFS’s “Summer Shudder” from “Madden NFL 07.” Nominated for best soundtrack are “Guitar Hero 2,” “Madden NFL 07,” “Scarface: The World Is Yours” and “Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories.”

HOT RINGTONES

1. SUPER WARIO BROTHERS THEME
2. CRAZY BITCH
3. TENGU
4. SEXY LOVE
5. ROCKSTAR
6. HALLOWEEN
7. WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS
8. WHAT HURTS THE MOST
9. NEW BOOY
10. YOU’RE A MEAN ONE MR. GRINCH

Just Call My iPod

Most iPod accessories stopped being news more than a year ago, but Gear4 has come up with something cool.

The company’s BlueEye headphones use Bluetooth technology to connect iPods to mobile phones. The connection kit will pause music played on the iPod and cut in with the phone’s ringtone. The incoming number appears on the iPod screen and the call can be accepted or rejected by pushing a button on the BlueEye control. No need to touch the phone at all.

Once the call is done, the iPod resumes play from the spot where it paused. What’s more, the BlueEye allows users to store and dial the last nine incoming calls from their iPod, and it acts as an FM receiver for the device, too.

Gear4 is taking preorderers now exclusively through Carphone Warehouse in the United Kingdom for $95.

Wireless Wildcards

According to Jupiter Research, the installed base of music-enabled mobile phones will surpass stand-alone MP3 players by 2009. Nokia, the leading phone manufacturer, says it is on track to ship 80 million music-enabled phones this year, almost double the 46.5 million from last year.

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With a behemoth like Best Buy behind it, SanDisk Sansa will have the visibility needed to gain attention in the shadow of the iPod and Zune, which are also sold in Best Buy stores.

‘Of all the flash devices that are out there, it’s the one that’s got the best shot at the iPod Nano because it’s the only one that comes close to matching its features,’ Gartenberg says.

INSERT SANDISK HERE

Nobody could have predicted that SanDisk, a removable memory manufacturer, would emerge from out of nowhere to produce the second most popular digital music device over competitors who had been in the race far longer. SanDisk now commands a solid 10% market share, far ahead of its closest competitors, Creative Labs and Sony Electronics, who claim just 2% each.

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Michael Gudinski
Australian biz vet enjoys the benefits of the 360-degree business model.

For Michael Gudinski, chairman of the Mushroom Group of Cos., “biggest is best.” His Frontier Touring was the biggest-grossing Australian promoter according to Billboard’s 2006 half-year Boxscore, with a gross of $18,045,149 and sales of 326,741 tickets. It conducted 39 tours this year, with Kylie Minogue and Billy Joel hitting the boards this month.

Mushroom Music is the largest independent publisher Down Under, representing 67 Australian and New Zealand songwriters. Booking agency Premier Harbour has the biggest roster in Australia with more than 300 acts.

 Liberation Music, one of 10 record labels he runs, has a roster featuring acts ranging from multiplatinum veteran Jimmy Barnes to Gudinski’s 18-year-old daughter Kate Alexa. In June, the Queen awarded him the Order of Australia medal for services to entertainment. A month later, he was the sole music executive in prestigious business journal The Bulletin’s list of 100 most influential Australians.

Frontier’s Countdown Spectacular in September was his most recent success. The three-hour extravaganza used acts launched on the “Countdown” music TV show that ran 1974-1983 on the government-run ABC network, shifting 83,000 tickets.

Australian trust law allows one individual to operate a record label, management, publisher and merchandising. Can you give us a good example of how all these worked together to create a successful outcome? The Countdown Spectacular tour. Liberation Music did a joint venture with the Australia Broadcasting Corp. to do the CDs and DVDs associated with the tour. I believe the live-tour DVD will be the biggest-selling in Australian history. A lot of the acts on the tour were on Mushroom, some I used to manage or toured or have their publishing. Mushroom Marketing was involved in some of the sponsorship and marketing of it.

Trust laws in the United States would not allow a setup like the Mushroom Group. But Australia is a small market. A gold record is 15,000 units. Mushroom Records would never have lasted in the 1970s if it didn’t have the other divisions to prop it up during its bad times.

What markets did the Countdown Spectacular open for you? There is a baby boomer market for “soundtrack of our lives” type events that are fast-paced with a song or two from various acts. I want to do a lot more special key events for this market. They will be set up through two- or three-part series through the television division. But these things can take two or three years to build anticipation for. I like to do things big. Bear in mind that a musical like “The Boy From Oz” [based on the music of late singer-songwriter Peter Allen] has sold 250,000-300,000 tickets in Australia. That far exceeds the draw of most tours.

Some would say it’s less challenging to do retro tours than break new artists. There’s nothing unchallenging about retro tours. Factors such as timing, making sure they’ve been absent long enough to make their return an event and having enough original members are crucial.

In any case, retro tours and arena shows are not all that we do. Right through the record label, the tour company and the publishing company, it’s obvious new artists are our future. We’re still one of the larger [tour] companies who work with developing acts.

I started out as a booking agent in nightclubs, and we’re not scared of working 200-seat venues. We brought in Snow Patrol, whose publishing I have in Australia, twice to play small places. It’s looking like a sellout when they arrive for their third visit in February to do 5,000-seat venues.

How else are you expanding the Mushroom brand name? I’d like to franchise it more. I’m setting up Mushroom Books and Mushroom Games. I’m disappointed we didn’t get into Mushroom credit cards and mobile phones. But there’s too much competition now, and I need to look at the next range of things.

How do you feel about the awards you’ve had this year? Accolades are nice to have, but they’re for the past, and I’m interested in the future. They just remind me I should be doing more.

But they must give you extra clout to lobby for music-industry issues. I can get in wherever I want politically. Being named an influential person by The Bulletin opens many doors for me. But I am concerned about abusing it. People know I might be tough to deal with it, but they’re dealing with someone who’s been around and has credibility, and that means a lot to me.

Do others in the music biz take issue with the way you do things? Our artists are our strengths, and sometimes I’ve had to be tough when representing their best interests. To get an act of ours on a special event, say, I’ll do whatever I can. You look after your own.

When you handle many aspects of an artist’s career, when do you realize there is a conflict of interest? I’ve always made sure they’ve had independent representation, and I’ve never been to court with any of my artists.

What do you attribute Frontier’s five-year run of success to? After I sold Mushroom [Records], I went through a post-sale depression. It was the right thing to do at the time, but it was a hard thing to do. I was 19 when I started [the label]. I went back into the trenches and took control at Frontier. I promoted Gerard Schlachhecke, who’d been with the company for 15 years, and Michael Harrison, who’s been with us for 15, to tour coordinators. We reacquired ourselves with the international contacts, adapted new technology and focused on baby acts. The touring market in Australia is highly competitive. There are too many promoters for a market this size. Overseas agents can take advantage and start a bidding war for acts.

You’re a big fish in a small pond. Do you have any plans to expand to other countries? We’ve had offices in England and America before. It’s not something I’m currently planning or see as a priority. I’m content to supervise things from Australia. But if acts from Liberation and Ivy League [a Sydney independent that Gudinski bought into in 2005] get success [abroad], I’d reconsider.

Do you have any issues with the U.K. or American markets? It was initially tough in England, but we ended up having a hell of a lot of success. I made a conscious decision with my wife to bring up our children in Australia. It was always frustrating not to get a No. 1 single or album in America, especially with a band like Split Enz. Perhaps it was because I never relocated there. But some of the big English acts never [cracked] America either. Anyway, I’m lucky to be in a business I love. What [need is] there for issues?
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JAY OF ALL TRADES

BY HILLARY CROSLEY

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANTHONY MANDLER

If you’re looking to hire a globally known rapper, we may have a hot tip. Check out the Web site supporting Jay-Z’s natty Hewlett-Packard commercial, and you’ll find his interactive “desktop.” It is there that you can catch a glimpse of Jay’s—excuse us, Shawn Carter’s—intriguing résumé. Most of his accomplishments are well-known, but they’re no less impressive to see gathered in one place: president/CEO of Def Jam since early 2005; co-owner of the New Jersey Nets basketball club; owner and co-founder of Roc-A-Fella Records; co-owner of hotspot the 40/40 club; owner/founder of Rocawear. The “miscellaneous” category includes such tidbits as his work on the S. Carter Collection—the fastest-selling shoe in Reebok’s history—his estimated worth of around $320 million and his inclusion, with girlfriend Beyoncé, on Time magazine’s list of the 100 most influential people. Notable, perhaps, is that his MC career—the one that launched him, the one that made him a celebrity nearly as big as Elvis and the one he’s now returning to with the Nov. 21 release of his “coming out of retirement” album, “Kingdom Come”—garners only a few lines. Granted, they are impressive ones: 18 Grammy Award nominations (five victories) and the recent MTV vote that declared him “the best MC of all time.” But still, they seem lost among the accomplishments. It all begs the question: Can a man this successful, this far removed from his dope-and-rhyme slinging roots in Brooklyn, N.Y.’s Marcy Projects, balance a renewed artist career with all of his other roles?
Jay sits at his desk in the New York office of Island Def Jam, deflecting and reflecting on questions. What he calls his "horrible retirement" may be the only thing he has ever attempted to do and failed. He "retired" from making music in the fall of 2003. But within a few months, he launched a mini-concert series at New Jersey's Continental Airlines Arena. Then, he popped up 2005 remixes like Young Jeezy's "Go Crazy," Rick Ross' "Hustlin'" and Bun B's "Get Thowed." He sold out a one-night engagement at New York's Radio City Music Hall in June 2006. Then, there was the good chunk of time—Jay says five months—spent crafting "Kingdom Come."

The album boasts production from such A-listers as Dr. Dre, Kanye West, Swizz Beatz, Just Blaze and even Goldplay's Chris Martin. But Jay sidestepped guest MCs in favor of "voices like John Legend, Usher, Beyoncé, Pharell, Ne-Yo" and new Def Jam signee Chrisette Michele. And for an MC whose bravado is legendary, he sounds a bit demure about the recording, which is not dominated by the anemic party joints of his past. "I hope I don't miss everyone," he says. "It's not left of center, but it's not typical. I brought a lot of different emotions I felt were missing in the game. But I might've risked having the hottest records in every single club. You're not going to like it on the first listen. Maybe on the third, you'd be like, 'OK.'"

Three years on from his last recording, "The Black Album," Jay sounds more comfortable in his own globally aware, CEO skin on "Kingdom Come." "The Jay that sold crack in Brooklyn is long gone. Instead, over Just Blaze's cinematic, horn-driven beats on "Oh My God," he rhymes about lunching with Nelson Mandela, and dedicates the Dr. Dre-produced "30 Something" to "the maturation of Jay-Z." Boasting about his credit rating, he talks of purchasing a house in Rome for his mother and achieving more than even he ever imagined. He's still flashy (first single "Show Me What You Got"), introspective (the Martin-assisted "Beach Chair") and bragadocious ("Kingdom Come").

But "The Prelude" brings the album full circle. The song samples an audioclip from blaxploitation film "The Mack," where the character Goldie asks, "You got this fantasy about getting out of the life and setting the corporate world on its ear. What the fuck you gonna do besides hustle?"

In fact, at those moments when he reaches for the "old," Jay, he sounds a bit hollow. The Neptunes-produced, strip club-friendly "Anything" is fly, but Jay shouting out the renowned strip club Sue's Rendezvous seems a little out of place.

There's no question the album is poised for success. "Show Me What You Got" rocketed 47-6 in its sixth week on The Billboard Hot 100, and its video debuted Oct. 13 on "Monday Night Football." Def Jam senior VP of marketing Tracey Waples says the label looked to the prime-time debuts of Michael Jackson's "Remember the Time" and "Thriller" as inspiration, "because that type of launch hasn't happened since then. We were blessed that ESPN came to the table."

Aside from Hewlett-Packard, Jay linked with Budweiser Select to increase his market visibility. "This is the first time we've had an entertainer actively participate in the marketing process," says Johnny Furt [c. VP of urban marketing and community affairs for Anheuser-Busch], of the multiyear deal, which bestows Jay the title of co-brand manager for Budweiser Select. "We're really interested in reaching the 21- to 35-year-old market, and he's going to give us that insight. We're not putting any boxes on his role, because he's not the type of guy that even recognizes a box exists."

Of course, the Budweiser commercial/music video—shot in Monaco, with Jay in a Ferrari driven by Dale Earnhardt Jr. and speed boats circling private islands—underscores again just how far removed the rapper can be from everyday life.

Directing Def Jam

Most employees of a major label don't have time to spend five months recording an album, let alone promoting such a blockbuster release.

But Jay's boss, Island Def Jam chairman An'ronio "LA." Reid, says all is well at the label's offices. "I feel great about the relationship we have between myself, [ID] Music Group COO] Steve Barretts, [ID] Music Group executive VP of A&R) Rob Stevenson and the leaders of our company," says Reid, who details Jay's value as a mentor and a "golden ear" when it comes to hearing hits. And Reid says the label works around Jay's dual role as an executive and an artist. "We try to be fair and lighten the load, take stuff off of his plate," Reid says. "It's not sure we're successful at lightening the load, because he's a workaholic and always there. He's always a phone call away if he's traveling."

Jay's tenure as an executive has been met with some mixed—very public—reviews.

In June, MC Black Thought of the Roots told Billboard, "In a lot of places Jay-Z is considered God—Philly, our hometown, being one of them. So when people see that we're signed to Def Jam, that holds a lot more weight on a street level than [former label] Geffen Records does." The Roots' "Game Theory" debuted in August at No. 9 on The Billboard 200, with 61,000 first-week sales. But their manager, Richard Nichols, recently grumbled to XXL that Jay-Z didn't have an effective marketing plan for "Game Theory," or maybe just lacked the attention span to necessary to focus on one project.

Jay views the Roots' numbers in a bigger context. "I signed them," Jay says, "so I feel how they feel. Unfortunately, 70,000 [in sales] is the new 150,000. They didn't have a big record. It's funny because they're supposed to be a touring band and grind it out, but with everyone so SoundScan savvy, it looks like a failure. And perception is reality so it's not about whether you like an album. It's about, 'They did 60,000, and its over.' Why's it all in the first-week sales? If we put everything in the first week, we're going to fail."

"Def Jam's biggest-selling rap album is T.I.'s and it's not [sold] 2 million," he continues. "We have to find the next model for music. The consumption of music is at all-time high. We just have to find a way to monetize it, because if don't, your favorite artist won't be able to make a living. It'll happen sooner than you think."

Reid also offers another theory for the struggling: "In the record business, it's very simple. When an artist is successful, it's because they're great. And when they're not successful? It's because the label messed up."

Of course, first-week sales go a long way toward defining the perception of success, especially in the hip-hop world, and Jay's Def Jam has been sploty in this regard.

In June, the Young Guns, Memphis Bleek and Teairra Mari exhibited poor debut-week sales in 2005—the highest first-week gross belonged to Teairra Mari at 69,000. Newcomers Rihanna and Young Jeezy, as well as established star Kanye West saved Def Jam's bottom line, with West's 860,000 in first-week "Late Registration" sales. Apart from newbies Rick Ross and Ne-Yo, 2006 so far has seen more lukewarm numbers from LL Cool J, Method Man, Ghostface, Chris'ina Milian (since dropped from the Def Jam roster) and the Roots.

Perhaps more to the point, while Def Jam may still be one of the market-share leaders in rap and R&B, according to Nielsen SoundScan, Jay has been unable to halt the label's slide in both genres, which began well before he took his executive role (see graph, below left).

The absence of Jay's own blockbuster recordings hasn't helped, along with sales declines of such artists as Ja Rule and Ashanti.

Def Jam's triumphs have evolved, however: Street MCs like Young Jeezy and Ross have managed to score pop success, a non-traditional jump for the 12-year-old hip-hop label. Now, the Def Jam chief is looking to further his brand with some new-artist blood. "If they're from Brooklyn, I'd cry," Jay says, smiling. "Not to overlook Roc-A-Fella artists Peedi, Freeway and Tru Life, but I need someone to lead Roc-A-Fella."

Ultimately, Jay may help his label most with "Kingdom Come." Retailers are already predicting the release will be the biggest in the fourth quarter (see story, page 7). And why not? Out of the 13 albums Jay has released, including collaborations with R. Kelly and Linkin Park, he has garnered eight No. 15 on The Billboard 200—more than any other rapper.

While all that success, fame and celebrity may seem to pull Jay away—from his label, from his fans—there may be another way to view the situation.

"Being around Jay is inspirational to people," Reid says. "I don't care if you're a 40-year-old executive or a 20-year-old intern—having that kind of access to that kind of wisdom, starcom, experience and level of charm could change your life."

Lately, as evidenced by his recent trip to Africa as part of his Water for Life campaign, he could be improving lives on a scale far exceeding the music industry. That endeavor is a collaboration with the United Nations to provide clean water to underdeveloped areas. In Nigeria, Jay saw the difficulties firsthand.

"I followed these little girls down a hill near their school to get water," he recalls. "I'd like to think I'm in good shape, but these girls were flying down this hill. And I'm exhausted. I'm thinking we're going to a well, but it was a brown rivet. Jay's entourage cultivate the village with a purifying water pump. "To turn on the water in these villages for the first time, I had an Oprah moment," he says.

In the Kawara state of Nigeria, "they crowned him King of All Music," says DJ Green Lantern, who served as Jay-Z's recent tour DJ. "They wrapped him up in traditional layers like a king, and he had to ride a horse. It was literally almost 100 degrees, and they kept adding layer upon layer. But he was very diplomatic."

Back home, inspiration might also be what the King of All Music is selling on "Kingdom Come."

"It's all inspirational," Jay-Z says of the luxurious clip for 'Show Me What You Got." But he may as well be talking about the entire album and, in fact, his life. "Wherever I go, I bring the culture with me, so that they can understand that it's attainable. I didn't do it any other way than through hip-hop."
HEN VIRGIN Records sent rock act 30 Seconds to Mars to China in October to shoot a video for the song “From Yesterday,” the label and band were thinking big all the way.

For starters, an American rock video purportedly had never been filmed in the communist state before. Adding to the ambition, the video was shot in the Forbidden City and the Emperor Qin palace and featured more than 300 extras. Then there was the technology used to film the video. “From Yesterday” is among a small but growing number of music videos being produced in high-definition.

That may not be apparent to the average viewer watching the clip on MTV or AOL. HD is a video standard that captures images at resolution rates that exceed those used by standard TVs and DVD players. And it's not yet a technology common to the average household.

But leading record companies like Virgin are preparing for the day when it will be soon.

Virgin is going so far as to sell the HD version for “From Yesterday” as a download through Apple Computer’s iTunes and other digital retailers, starting Dec. 19 (see story, page 34).

With video content becoming an increasingly important source of revenue to the music industry, forward-thinking labels are busy stockpiling videos, live performances, artist interviews, b-roll, EPK material and behind-the-scenes footage all in high-def, label sources say.
AN HD WEB?

HD-quality video on the Internet isn't ready for prime time just yet. But that's not stopping online players like Clear Channel, Yahoo, Microsoft and Apple from preparing for the Web's high-definition future.

As with most online media, consumers will have two choices when it comes to HD: streaming and downloading. HD streaming is coming, but the timing of its availability hinges on cable and DSL companies offering faster bandwidth speeds; current connections of 1.5 mbps can't handle HD-quality streams.

That's good enough for standard-definition TV-quality streams, but tech sources say HD delivery requires connection speeds between 5 mbps and 20 mbps.

As a result, most action in online HD will center on high-def downloads—for now. In December, Virgin Records will become one of the first major labels to sell a music video in HD through iTunes, with the clip for the single "From Yesterday" from rock act 30 Seconds to Mars (see story, page 33). And on Nov. 22, Microsoft began selling HD movies, TV and music videos through its Xbox Live Marketplace.

But users downloading content in HD will need to have plenty of free space on their computer hard drives and lots of patience. The "From Yesterday" video, an 11-minute short film, is expected to take more than 30 minutes to download. And early estimates suggest movies, once they become available, could take as long as five hours to download based on the size of the files.

Nonetheless, labels and tech companies are eager to begin experimenting with online HD. Clear Channel Online and Yahoo Music already have begun producing music programming in high-def.

The radio giant has been filming its original music series "Striped" in HD since October. Likewise, Yahoo announced in November that its new live-performance series "Nissan Live Sets on Yahoo Music" will be filmed in HD.

"We're looking ahead of the curve on this for multipurpose use," says Evan Harrison, head of Clear Channel's Online Music & Radio unit. Harrison says Clear Channel is exploring opportunities in syndication, DVD releases and digital releases. "As new networks take effect, you are looking at distributors and companies in need of content," he adds.

—BG
Today, less than one-third of all U.S. households actually own a high-definition TV, but demand for HD video content from the recording industry is growing quickly. That is because the race for TV networks to lay claim to the HD market is already in full swing, and they need programming.

There are more than two dozen networks now broadcasting in high-definition in the United States. The majority are simulcast companion channels to existing players like ABC, NBC, Fox, CBS, ESPN, HBO and Showtime. In the music space there are two full-time channels dedicated to high-def programming: MTV Networks’ MHD, which launched in January, and Rainbow Media’s Rave HD. Two other networks specializing in HD, Mark Cuban’s HDNet and INHD, the high-def channel from pay-per-view giant In Demand Networks—whoseNicks include Comcast in Demand Holdings, Cox Communications Holdings, Time Warner Entertainment and Advance/Newhouse Partnership—also devote significant numbers of programming hours to music each week. HD programming executives say that music, particularly live concerts, is one of three key pockets of programming, along with movies and sports, that consumers are looking for from a high-def experience.

But with content in short supply from the major labels, which are busy stockpiling their HD catalogs, most high-def programmers have to produce their own music shows or partner with third parties to capture concerts in HD. As a result, much of the music footage available on HDTV networks is focused on concert footage and in-studio performances.

“There is a huge need for content,” says Sal LoCurto, Rave HD VP of programming and acquisitions. “We premiere over 20 hours of new programming each quarter. That’s why we are proactive in generating production and licensing deals.”

Billboard breaks down the leaders in high-def music programming:

MHD
OWNER: MTV Networks
LAUNCHED: 2006
HEADQUARTERS: Vail, Colo.
DISTRIBUTORS: Charter Communications, Comcast, Cox, Insight, Verizon FiOS
CONTACT: Eric Sherman, senior VP/GM
SHOWS: “MTV Video Music Awards,” “VH1 Hip Hop Honors,” “MTV2 $2 Bill,” “MTV Unplugged,” “VH1 Storytellers,” “CMT Crossroads,” “Music With Altitude”
BOTTOM LINE: MTV is a broad approach to programming its new HD channel, mixing original high-def programming (“Music With Altitude”), with simulcasts of awar 3s and performance footage from MTV, MTV2, VH1 and CMT shows. MHD also is one of the few places to see music videos in high-def. It features a limited number of videos from artists, including Alicia Keys, Cream, Rascal Flatts, Gorillaz, Madonna, Sheryl Crow and the Eagles, and adds new videos to its rotation monthly. The channel also occasionally converts music videos not originally shot in high-def for HD consumption in the case of priority artists. Look for MTV to ramp up the amount of day-to-day programming it shoots in HD in 2007. Sherman says MHD plans to triple its programming hours in the next year. The company says that at least 70% of the programs in the year must be shot

RAVE HD
OWNER: Rainbow Media
LAUNCHED: 2004
HEADQUARTERS: New York
HOUSEHOLDS: Less than 1 million
DISTRIBUTORS: DirecTV, DISH Network
CONTACT: Sal LoCurto, VP of programming and acquisitions
SHOWS: “Talks With Dave Fanning,” “Beautiful Noise,” “Later... With Jools Holland,” “Soundstage”
BOTTOM LINE: Satellite-only Rave HD has grown from 175 monthly hours of programming a year ago to more than 200 hours today. The majority comes from third-party distribution deals for shows like “Later... With Jools Holland,” “Soundstage” and concerts from acts including the Cure, Usher, Oasis and the Glas- tonbury Festival. But the channel is also pushing into original programming with “Talks With Dave Fanning,” an interview show, and the live-performance series “Beautiful Noise.”

HDNET
OWNER: Mark Cuban and Philip Garvin
LAUNCHED: 2001
HEADQUARTERS: Dallas
HOUSEHOLDS: 4 million
DISTRIBUTORS: Adelphia Communications, Bright House Networks, Charter Communications, DirecTV, DISH Network, Insight Communications, Mediacom Communications, Time Warner Cable
CONTACT: Evan Haiman, executive producer of music and entertainment programming
SHOWS: “HDNet Concert Series,” “On Stage at World Cafe Live,” “Sound Off With Matt Pinfield,” “True Music With Kate Daryl”
BOTTOM LINE: HDNet understands music’s appeal and HDNet, a pioneer in high-def programming, is the most aggressive music programmer outside the all-music channels.

INHD
OWNER: In Demand Networks
LAUNCHED: 2003
HEADQUARTERS: New York
HOUSEHOLDS: 5 million
DISTRIBUTORS: Adelphia Communications, Bright House Networks, Cox, Cablevision, Mediacom Communications, Patriot Media, Time Warner Cable
CONTACT: Emilio Nunez, VP of original programming
BOTTOM LINE: INHD is pushing the notion of HD music as a video-on-demand experience. In September, the company launched a new feature called “Jukebox” that makes individual song clips from its “London Live” series and its live concerts available for on-demand viewing. INHD will premiere 20 clips per month. Comcast is the first cable operator to support the service and is offering “Jukebox” free to its HD digital cable subscribers.

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READY, SET, GO!
New opportunities in HD video await the music business as consumer adoption of high-definition TVs and DVD players are expected to take off in the next four years. Consulting group Kagan Research estimates that ownership of HDTVs will triple between 2006 and 2010. During the same period, high-def DVD player sales will grow from less than 1 million units this year to more than 30 million.

U.S. HDTV Sales
- Total Units Sold (Million)
- TV Households (Percent)

U.S. HD DVD Player Sales
- Total Units Sold (Million)
- HD TV Households (Percent)

SOURCE: Kagan Research

DECEMBER 2, 2006 | www.billboard.biz | 35
SPECIAL FEATURE

AT THE ED

At The Digital Entertainment, Media And Marketing Excellence Conference And Awards, The Future Is Bright And Dizzying

BY ANTONY BRUNO

The geeks have taken over. Digital entertainment has become hip. The media spotlight shining on digital entertainment developments these days is blinding. From snarky blogs to major business magazines to metropolitan newspapers, it seems everybody has an opinion on the latest developments. And this year has given them much to talk about.

The latest developments and honors for the leaders in the business will be the focus of the third annual DEMMXX Conference and Awards. Recognizing digital entertainment, marketing and media excellence, the event is set for Nov. 29-30 at the Hyatt Regency Century Plaza in Los Angeles.

DEMMXX takes place amid a rapidly changing digital landscape. The rise of Web 2.0 sites catering to user-generated content and social networking is perhaps the business story of the year with these sites fast becoming the media distribution platform of the future.

Meanwhile, this holiday season will preside over a host of new digital entertainment products and services. Yahoo, RealNetworks, MTV, Napster and others continue efforts to put user-generated content at the forefront of Apple Computer's dominance over the digital music market.

The race for the No. 2 spot now includes Microsoft, which introduced its closed Zune system and device on Nov. 14. Wireless operators are getting into the game more aggressively as well.

And videogames have emerged as a prominent source of entertainment and convergence, integrating elements of music, movies and storytelling into a new connected interactive experience. These developments and more have set the stage for next year's digital entertainment landscape. With Napster as the prologue and the iPod as the first chapter, the digital entertainment business is about to write chapter two of its rapidly unfolding story.

WEB 2.0

Google's $1.65 billion acquisition of the video-sharing powerhouse YouTube heralds both the promise and pitfalls of the Web 2.0 sites featuring user-generated content services and social communities.

On the one hand, YouTube has the eyeballs to which media companies want to deliver their content. It offers its 70 million members more than 100 million video streams a day.

However, much of the content distributed via YouTube to date has been bootlegged material, distributed without the approval of copyright owners.

So YouTube and others of its ilk have taken steps to quell the tide of unauthorized submissions. YouTube has taken down all videos of Viacom-owned content at the conglomerate's request. This includes "The Daily Show With Jon Stewart" and "South Park" material from Comedy Central, which regularly made the service's "most watched" list.

MySpace also implemented a music-filtering technology that can identify and restrict the practice of users posting copyrighted material they are not authorized to upload. YouTube is implementing similar measures, and both are threatening to delete the accounts of users who continually attempt such activities in the future.

The reason for the crackdown is twofold.

First, labels, TV networks and film studios want to create their own "channels" on these services, establishing them as the authorized source of their content, based purely on the mass-market potential they hold. Warner Music Group (WMG) has already implemented video channels for artists like Paris Hilton and Diddy, providing YouTube with music videos and other content that users can access for free. CBS has done the same, and other outlets are falling in line.

But the volume of viewers they attract is only half of YouTube or MySpace's appeal to media companies. It's also what those users do with their content that represents the next stage in music promotion and discovery.

VIDEO AND ADVERTISING

The ability for fans to insert themselves into music videos represents a brave new world of new media licensing and content. Fans may feature themselves in a lip-syncing recreation of a video, present a karaoke performance or create a mishmash of original and altered videoclips.

"We want to embrace the enthusiasm that fans have for direct engagement with our artists' work," WMG senior VP of Internet strategy Michael Nash says.

"It's the beginning of looking at this as a unique programming opportunity," he adds. "It's not like with MTV where we just send our videos passively. You're going to see us become aggressively involved in coming up with programming constructs and opportunities that are interesting to advertisers."

For instance, WMG will begin holding contests via YouTube in the near future for video remixes, karaoke performances and similar activities to encourage fan interaction.

"I think you'll see our labels thinking much more consciously about the way video is consumed with respect to so-
cial video and user-generated content, and that's going to affect the kind of video assets we create and the kind of campaigns we're going to establish," Nash says.

"There's an opportunity to create content that is specifically designed to inspire imitation and community engagement, and that's going to substantially expand the audience for the artist and increase the depth of interaction between the fans and the artist, and grow the revenue base through advertising."

COMPETING WITH ITUNES

This community and the power of viral content sharing is behind one of the most anticipated new music services of the year, Microsoft's Zune. It offers a wireless connection to other Zune devices that lets users share songs with one another for a limited time. The Zune model has generated mixed reactions from analysts, but has the support of the music industry, which is hungry to drive more digital sales.

"I think what we're going to see is that the fabric of traditional retailing is going to be stretched from the content owner to the end user," Virgin Records executive VP Jeff Kempler says. "It's possible that devices like what we've seen from Microsoft may be enablers of fan-to-fan commerce," Kempler says.

But like anything else in the digital space, labels have some concerns, specifically with controlling viral distribution. They want to avoid a repeat of the peer-to-peer piracy that characterized the original Napster.

"There's a balance that has to be taken into account," Kempler says. "How many times can a song be lent? How many different recipients can there be? What can they do with material they've borrowed as opposed to purchased? And does the material time out? Is there a reward to lenders who are influential towards purchases?"

MOBILE

Nothing excites the entertainment industry more than mobile distribution of their content. Sprint and Verizon Wireless kick-started the discussion about full-song downloads to mobile phones this year. But in the next six months the business is going to change dramatically.

The question: Can wireless operations run their own branded music services or will partnerships bring more business and profits?

Cingular Wireless has taken a different tack than Sprint and Verizon by offering access to eMusic, Napster and Yahoo Music, and the ability to move subscription tracks from any other music service to five different mobile phone models.

Meanwhile, Apple is expected to soon unveil its long-anticipated mobile device that some have dubbed the iPhone. It would provide the only mobile phone access to the iTunes music store.

The device would pose a strong challenge to Cingular and its other wireless operator rivals by appealing to the iTunes faithful.

The wild card remains Nokia. The world's largest mobile phone manufacturer bought Loudeye earlier this year with plans to launch a global mobile music service of its own. Few details have been revealed since, save a Music Recommenders feature that includes David Bowie as a sort of über-critic helping guide fans to hip new music.

NEXT-GEN VIDEOGAMES

Finally, the videogame market can begin the real battle for the next-generation crown. Sony and Nintendo have now unveiled their next-gen game consoles, joining Microsoft's Xbox 360, which has been in the market for a year now.

The PlayStation 3 and the Wii both feature the same Internet access and community gaming elements as the Xbox. But neither have been as aggressive about using these platforms to also deliver other types of entertainment content as Microsoft has. Regardless, all three systems have increased the sophistication of videogames such that the music soundtrack has become an even more important feature.

Expect tomorrow's games to have more, and better, music. And that translates to more licensing revenue and promotional opportunities to labels and their artists.

DEMMX DISCUSSIONS

The mission of the 2006 Digital Entertainment Media and Marketing Excellence Conference and Awards is to take stock of the developments in digital entertainment and help attendees make sense of this rapidly changing world.

DEMMX brings together leaders from the music, film, TV and videogame industries with innovators in the Internet, mobile and technology space to provide insight into the digital entertainment landscape. The DEMMX Awards will celebrate visionaries in the digital realm. DEMMX is hosted by VNU Expositions and features a program developed by the editorial staffs of Billboard, The Hollywood Reporter, Adweek, Mediaweek and Brandweek.

It takes place Nov. 29-30 at the Hyatt Regency Century Plaza in Los Angeles. Preceding the event will be a one-day special seminar organized by the Mobile Marketing Forum 2006, hosted by the Mobile Marketing Assn. (MMA).

DEMMX's diversity is illustrated by its keynote speakers. Jim Banister, author of "Word of Mouse: The New Age of Networked Media" and chief creative officer of SpectrumDNA, will focus on how digital distribution and new-media technologies can change the craft of storytelling.

Martin Nisenholz, senior VP of digital operations for the New York Times Co., will detail how old-media institutions, such as newspapers, are managing the transition to a digital world.

And Vince Broady, Yahoo!'s head of entertainment, games and youth segments, is expected to discuss how content, marketing and media can coexist on multiple platforms such as the Internet, videogames and mobile.

Billboard's programming includes several digital music-related panels designed to explore how the music industry uses technology to boost profits. The music panels will also explore the legal and market realities that can trip up this goal.

The "Renegades" panel, moderated by Billboard digital/mobile correspondent Antony Bruno, will feature several record label critics who challenge the traditional take on digital rights management, pricing and digital distribution.

Licensing and the challenges of DRM requirements are the focus of the "Digital Disruption" panel moderated by Billboard executive editor/associate publisher Tamara Conniff.

The wisdom and concerns involved with allowing consumers to distribute content to one another is the subject of "The Internal Politics of Viral Media."

The power of mobile phones will be the focus of "Mobile Marketing and Entertainment: Impact of Mobile Marketing on the Entertainment Industry" moderated by MMA executive director Laura Marriott.

The highlight of the event will be the third annual DEMMX Awards dinner on Nov. 29. Awards will be presented in the following categories: visionary, innovator, brand, digital music innovation, advergame, mobile phone game, multiplayer game, console game, casual game, game innovation, digital music community, downloadable/subscription service, interactive TV programming, radio service, on-demand service, best use of sound in a game, best use of technology by an artist and most innovative use of technology for advertising.

For more information about DEMMX, visit billboardevents.com.
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- Chris DeVolefs and Tom Anderson, Founders of MySpace (MySpace)
- Jeremy Allaire, Founder of Brightcove (Brightcove)

INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR
- Bob Dylan (NY Satellite Radio)
- In Game Ads (Real Networks)
- Microsoft XNA Game Studio Express (Microsoft Corp.)

BRAND OF THE YEAR
- Google (Google)
- MySpace (MySpace)
- YouTube (YouTube, Inc.)

>>> MUSIC
DIGITAL MUSIC INNOVATION OF THE YEAR
- Sonos 2.0 and Rhapsody Online Music Service - "A Direct to Service Approach to Digital Music" (Sonos, Inc.)
- The Gracenote Discover (Gracenote, Inc.)
- Vodafone Live Music (Vodafone)

BEST USE OF TECHNOLOGY BY AN ARTIST
- BurnLounge 1.0 (Burn Lounge)
- On Tour: Bare Naked Ladies Special Edition (Pass-A-Lome Networks)
- The Backstage Pass (Mozes, Inc.)

BEST RADIO SERVICE
- Motorola iRadio (Motorola, Inc.)
- SIRIUS (SIRIUS Satellite Radio)
- Yahoo! Music (Yahoo! Music)

BEST DOWNLOADABLE OR SUBSCRIPTION MUSIC SERVICE
- Apple iTunes (Apple)
- eMusic (eMusic)
- Rhapsody 4.0 (Real Networks)

BEST DIGITAL MUSIC COMMUNITY
- MOG (MOG)
- MySpace (MySpace)
- YouTube (YouTube)

>>> GAMES
GAME INNOVATION OF THE YEAR
- ESPN Integration in NBA Live 07 (Electronic Arts)
- Microsoft XNA Game Studio Express (Microsoft Corp.)
- Zuma (PopCap Games, Inc.)

CONSOLE GAME OF THE YEAR
- Half Life 2: Episode One (EA Games)
- The Elder Scrolls IV (2K Games)
- Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advance Warfighter (Ubisoft)

MOBILE PHONE GAME OF THE YEAR
- Call of Duty 3 (Hands-On-Mobile)
- InSanitarium (Gluk Mobile)
- Turbo Camel: Extreme Circus (Gamehouse)

CASUAL GAME OF THE YEAR
- Draw Four! UNO! Brings Classic Game Play Action to Online Game Players (Microsoft Corp.)
- Poppit! (PopCap Games, Inc.)
- The Poipit! Show (EA/Pogo)

MULTIPLAYER GAME OF THE YEAR
- Dungeons & Dragons Online: Stormreach (Atari)
- Guild Wars Factions (NCSoft)
- Second Life (Linden Labs)

ADVENTURE GAME OF THE YEAR
- Fuel Industries for American Dad vs. Family Guy Kung Fu, Deadwood: Dead Man's Hand and Sprite Dunkface

BEST USE OF SOUND IN A GAME
- Call of Duty 3 (Activision)
- Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advance Warfighter (Ubisoft)
- Tony Hawks American Wasteland (Activision)

>>> FILM TELEVISION & VIDEO
DVD OF THE YEAR
- Sex and the City the Complete Series (HBO)
- The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (Buena Vista Home Entertainment)
- Walk the Line Collectors Edition (Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment)

TELEVISION TECHNOLOGY OF THE YEAR
- Apple Video iPod (Apple)
- The Brightcove Network (Brightcove)
- YouTube (YouTube, Inc.)

BEST INTERACTIVE TELEVISION PROGRAMMING
- Music Choice (Music Choice)
- "The 9" (Yahoo! Music)
- YouTube (YouTube, Inc.)

MOST INNOVATIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR ADVERTISING
- Coca-Cola Stageside, featuring Jay-Z (Coca Cola, North America)
- Entourage: Interview with Ari (Deep Focus)
- Sopranos: Crime. Organize. Deep Focus

BEST VIDEO ON-DEMAND SERVICE
AOL Video (AOL)
- Cingular Video (Cingular Wireless)
- YouTube (YouTube, Inc.)

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Just What The Doctor Ordered

Snoop And Dre Reunite For Doggfather's Star-Studded New Disc

"You're about to witness the eighth wonder of the world," Snoop Dogg intones about "The Blue Carpet Treatment," his eighth record and one focused squarely on the street-level gangsterism that fueled his rise from the hoods of Long Beach, Calif., to the top of the game. "It's not about what I'm doing or where I want to go," he says. "I just wanted to make a record that feels good for the hood.

In prescribing his "Treatment," which dropped Nov. 21 via Geffen, Snoop faced an editor's nightmare: whittling 300 tracks down to 21, which he did by adhering to those gangsta criteria.

Needless to say, there are quite a few VIPs walking down the carpet with him. R. Kelly provides a gooey-caramel hook on "That's That"; the Game contributes a call for gangland unity on "Gangbangin' 101"; B-Real adds Latin flavor on the P'iso-produced call for black/brown unity on "Vato"; and Stevie Wonder lends vocals and harp to the redemptive "Conversations," a sort-of remake of Wonder's "Have a Talk With God."

But the set's most eyebrow-raising appointments come from the family doctor: Dr. Dre, with whom Snoop had not collaborated in five years. The most potent of their three co-headlining tracks is "Imagine." Over a vintage-Dre beat of minimalist bang and twirling piano, the pair envisions hip-hop both in an alternate universe ("Imagine Biggie with his son/Imagine Pac being called 'Pop by One'), and never having been born ("Imagine Russell still struggling/No Def Jam, just another n—a hustlin')."

Asked what persuaded him to ask the Dre for a house call, Snoop says simply, "Overdue. We waited long enough. My last two records were good without him. But it's better when we work with him."

However, soliciting Dre's involvement is a tricky proposition, because as Snoop says, fans are looking for him to "make magic every time. When we start up, it's nobody expecting nothing. Now people expect some brilliant shit from us. And 90% of what we do is magic. The rest, you'll never hear it," he says with a laugh.

For his second record, in 1996, Snoop christened himself "the Doggfather," and the title's stuck. There is something of a respected, surviving vet vibe around him in 2006.

As befits his elder-statesman role, Snoop is pounding the pavement in support of "Blue Carpet": performances at the BET and American Music Awards, "TRL," "106 & Park," listening parties on both coasts. "If you've got records coming out in the fourth quarter, you've got to get on the campaign trail," Geffen marketing director Tim Reid says. "You have to do things that'll stay in people's faces, and he's been working real hard."

It's paying off. "That's That" was the No. 1 most-added track at R&B/hip-hop and rhythmic top 40 radio in its first week, and the Akon-assisted "I Wanna Love You," which appears on "Blue Carpet" and Akon's "Konvicted," is No. 1 this week on The Billboard Hot 100.

For his part, Snoop admits to loving the work that comes with dropping an album and reclaiming his place. "I'm like an overseen," he says. "You can say I come at the game from the perspective of a giant or a boss, but at the same time, I still play with the youngsters out there."

How you might ask, does he pull that off? "I do me," he says, with a ready laugh. "When I do other stuff, the shit doesn't work. All I gotta do is be Snoop Dogg."

True to form, "Blue Carpet" kicks off a Snoop-centric media blitz that will last for several months. He's co-authored a book with David E. Talbert. "Love Don't Live Here No More: Book One of Doggy Tales," part one of a purported series loosely based on, not surprisingly, an aspiring rapper growing up in Long Beach. And next spring, he'll star in "A Woman's Touch," a feature film he says will have the following effect: "Every black woman in America will love me," he says, laughing, then breaks into a little Jennifer Holliday: "You're gonna lo-ove me."

"I don't want to give anything away, but it's something I've never done before," Snoop says of his lead role. "I'm coming straight at the women with this. It's not gangsta, not hood. It's strictly for the ladies."

A look, maybe, at the sensitive side of Snoop? " Nah, not sensitive," he says with a laugh, "but an awareness that they are who they are. You know, in my songs it's usually bitches and ho's. But I wanted to make something specifically for them."
Uncle Kracker is eying a February or March release for his next Atlantic album, "Happy Hour." “We just kind of went in and had fun—fun in every way, shape and form,” says the Detroit-based singer/songwriter. Leo Sayer guests on the title cut, which Kracker describes as “‘Love Boat’ meets Chic,” while Boyz II Men join Kracker on the track “The One That Got Away.” —Gary Graff

DJ Jazzy Jeff is putting the finishing touches on “The Return of the Magnificent,” the follow-up to his 2002 solo debut “The Magnificent” (Rapster). Due early next year, the entirely self-produced disc will feature appearances by Method Man, Big Daddy Kane, De La Soul, Rhymefest and KRS-One, among others. —Clover Hope

French rock/electronica duo Air will release its next album, “Pocket Symphony,” March 6 via Astralwerks. The 12-track set boasts vocals from Pulp’s Jarvis Cocker and the Divine Comedy’s Neil Hannon, as well as group members J.B. Dunckel and Nicolas Godin. It was produced by longtime collaborator Nigel Godrich. Several tracks feature Asian classical instruments such as the koto and the shamisen. —Jonathan Cohen

LCD Soundsystem, the brainchild of DFA principal James Murphy, will release its second studio album, “Sound of Silver,” March 20 via Capitol. The nine-track set sports such tunes as “North American Scum,” “G Gut,” “Innocuous” and “New York I Love You But You’re Bringing Me Down.” It’s the follow-up to Murphy’s 2005 self-titled debut as LCD Soundsystem, which debuted at No. 6 on Top Electronic Albums. —Jonathan Cohen

Despite having already scored a contract with storied U.K. indie Rough Trade, exuberant San Francisco rock act Scissors for Lefty is trying to keep one foot firmly grounded in reality. “When we go on tour, we have to take some textbooks with us,” singer Bryan Garza says. He’s joking, of course. Scissors for Lefty likes to keep things light, as evidenced by its Rough Trade debut, "Underhanded Romance," a stylish, fast-moving collection of danceable rock/pop. The band has yet decide on a label home in the U.S., and the cost of rent in San Francisco regularly reminds the four-piece that whatever Euro associations it may have, Scissors for Lefty is still very much unsigned and largely unknown. “We have to keep in mind that we don’t know how long this can last, so we have to keep our minds on the side,” Garza says, noting he’s the only band member without a day job. “Things seem to be going really well for us in San Francisco, and we’ve decided to try and get rid of as many responsibilities as we can and give this a good shake. It’s been rough financially to do it. Our credit cards have really been our best friends here.”

Easing the stress of debt is Rough Trade, which paid for the band’s debut, and was able to get the act overseas dates with Mercury Prize winners Arctic Monkeys. Garza, who logged four years as a biomechanical engineer before becoming a full-time lead singer, is already missing the lush life—by his standards—provided by Rough Trade.

“Over there they give us $20 a day to eat, and we get a regular size van,” he says. “Here, we have our mini- vans, and oatmeal.”

Scissors for Lefty came together about six years ago in college at San Luis Obispo, Calif. Comprising brothers Peter (guitar, keys) and James Kimmel (bass, drums), Garza and his uncle Robby (bass, guitar), Scissors for Lefty self-released the full-length “Bruno” in 2005, of which Garza says the band has blown through about 2,000 copies. It’s decidedly more low-key than Rough Trade founder Geoff Travis says he was turned on to Scissors for Lefty by a friend of the label, who plans to have “Underhanded Romance” out early next year. Manager Joyce Williams, who notes that the band regularly fills 500- to 600-capacity venues in its hometown, hopes to have a U.S. deal by early 2007.

“John Legend, while he’s good, is not the handiest and we don’t want to completely tip her hand. ‘We’ve got offers from labels that I really respect, but we’ve got a partner overseas, a really good partner, and we’ve got a lot of local clout and momentum,’ she says. ‘We don’t feel rushed. We’re just kind of waiting for the perfect opportunity.”

Contact: Joyce Williams, joyce@musicindustrynetwork.com —Todd Martens

Perhaps best described as rock’n’roll for the ADD set, Skybox packs an immeasurable amount of energy and musicianship into its short, wisty tracks. The Chicago-by-way-of-Phoenix quintet—founded by 23-year-old Tim Ellis—self-released its first album, "Arco Iris," last year. The fast-paced set weaves dark lyrical nuances through its mostly bouncy songs: check the weird pop of “Don’t Get Spin Spins,” or the tinkling piano keys of “Various Kitchen Utensils.” One moment, Skybox’s music calls to mind neo-folkie Devendra Banhart, while at the next, it sounds like the atmospheric rock of Muse. Ellis says he’s written around 40 songs since releasing “Arco Iris,” and those in Chicago can hear some firsthand on Dec. 5 at the Empty Bottle.

Contact: Don Bartlett, skyboxmgt@gmail.com —Katie Hasty

Few artists can say they were handpicked by Alicia Keys. But 25-year-old Jermaine Paul knows it’s all about who you know. After singing at a talent show for management firm MBK Entertainment, which reps the star R&B singer, Keys chose Paul to join her on an international tour. His warm falsetto is showcased on the Keys hit " Diary," from her album "Unplugged" (J Records). He and Keys also collaborated on a cover of Lulu’s "I Don’t Think We’re Alone Anymore" and "When the Wind Was Strong and We Were Mine," released on J’s "So Amazing" tribute to the late singer. Now the Spring Valley, N.Y., native is working with hot songwriter/producers Kerry “Krucial” Brothers (Keys), Devo Springsteen (Kanye West) and John Legend while crafting his as-yet-untitled debut. “I just want to stay standing flat-footed and sing,” Paul says.

Contact: MBK Entertainment, 212-542-5270 —Hillary Crosley
Rock

Trivium’s Metal Crusade

Young Florida Band Climbs Charts Across The Globe

Florida act Trivium wasn’t kidding when it named its third album “The Crusade.”

The record has kicked off an impressive charge for the metal band. “The Crusade” debuted on The Billboard 200 at No. 25 with first-week sales of 31,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan. The album has also cracked 10 charts overseas, including debuts at No. 7 in the United Kingdom, No. 12 in Ireland, No. 14 in Australia and No. 23 in Germany. The United Kingdom and Germany are the band’s strongest territories; at press time, “The Crusade” was in its fourth week on those countries’ charts.

Trivium is one of few harder-edged metal bands currently in the development phase of their career to make a noticeable international impact this year. The only other such bands to chart as widely as Trivium are Mastodon and Lordi. According to official international album charts, Lordi’s “The Arockalypse” (riding on the band’s 2006 Eurovision Song Contest win) dented 11 European album charts, reaching No. 1 in Finland, Greece and Spain, and hitting the top 20 in six other regions. Mastodon’s “Blood Mountain” is seeing action on eight charts, with top 20 peaks in Greece and Norway.

Trivium’s international success can be attributed to several factors. The band’s camp chalks it up to relentlessly touring the United States and Europe in the last 18 months in support of Trivium’s breakout record, 2005’s “Ascendancy.” Europe’s summer music festivals alone exposed the band to tens of thousands of people. “Most bands do a few festivals here and there, make the money and fly out,” Trivium’s co-manager Justin Archangel says. “We kept the band over there for five weeks playing every major festival.”

In addition to supporting the band on the road, Trivium’s label Roadrunner handles all its records as simultaneous worldwide releases. This practice organically fits Trivium’s career vision, which is to be a global touring band. Touring is Roadrunner’s primary strategy to sustain “The Crusade” through next year. The band just returned to Europe to support Iron Maiden’s current batch of stadium dates, which has sold out 325,000 tickets.

Metal is a genre that is especially dependent on overseas press, and Trivium reaped immediate rewards last year by becoming the darling of the U.K. metal media. Revered publication Kerrang gave “Ascendancy” constant coverage, including a cover. Then the rest of the country’s metal press followed suit.

Kerrang editor Paul Brannigan says Trivium’s musicianship and songwriting impressed the magazine’s critics, along with singer/guitarist Matt Heafy. Brannigan calls him “a genuine star in our world. He has charisma and personality, and just an aura that you know (a rock star has) when you meet one.”

Trivium’s youth doesn’t hurt its appeal either. Guitar World editor in chief Brad Tolinski says an associate observed that one reason the band took off in the United Kingdom was because “a lot of the young kids that are into metal really identified with them because of the way they look. They don’t look 13, but they don’t look 30 either. They project a real youth, and that excites the audience.”

Back home, Trivium headlined its first North American trek, which ran Sept. 30-Nov. 5. After dates in Japan and Australia in January, the band will return to the States to hit secondary markets. A source, speaking off the record, confirms that Lamb of God is joining Trivium’s next U.S. run.

Roadrunner senior VP of marketing Madeyln Scarpulla says the label will go to active rock radio early next year with another single from “The Crusade,” called “The Rising,” for which the band will shoot a video in January. The metal sector is rooting for the band’s state-side numbers to match its success overseas.

“There is a tremendous need in rock and metal right now for superstars, and I think that Trivium is a band that could do that,” says Revolver editor in chief Tom Beaufour. “You can’t underestimate how much this industry really needs a few torch bearer bands.”...
Weird Science

BT And Thomas Dolby Take Their Experiments On The Road

When BT—aka Brian Transeau, electronic music’s resident renaissance man—was a but a Maryland teenager, he watched Herbie Hancock, Howard Jones, Stevie Wonder and Thomas Dolby perform at the 1985 Grammy Awards. With an Amadeus-wigged Dolby conducting, the crew played a medley of their current hits completely on synthesizers—keyboards, samplers and other plastic boxes that defined the sound of the ‘80s. “I thought, ‘I have to do that someday,’” BT says, without irony.

A few years and a series of auspicious coincidences later—BT’s manager Richard Bishop was the landlord of Dolby’s first studio in the ‘70s, for instance—the two met during Dolby’s April gig at the House of Blues. “We did what my girlfriend calls ‘clearing the dressing room,’” BT says. “There were guys and girls hanging out, and we just sat down together and disappeared down the Firewire virtual instrument wormhole.”

The pair found a good deal of common ground. Electronic musician Dolby, best-known, to his chargers, for ubiquitous ‘80s single “She Blinded Me With Science,” is also the founder of Beatnik, which created the polyphonic ringtone software currently used in more than 100 million mobile phones worldwide. BT has done some programming, too. He created BreakTweaker and StutterEdit software for music production, both slated for release in 2007.

They also shared ideas about technology, the business and the live performance of electronic music and decided to explore them together. They embark on an 18-date U.S. club tour Nov. 28, which include kooky instruments and strong visual components, as well as the requisite synthesizers.

Among BT’s custom-made arsenal is his young daughter’s toy megaphone, altered for maximum noisiness, and a “tricello,” a resaddled, three-string hammer dulcimer. Dolby has vintage film equipment with “enormous brass levers” jacked into synths, creating what he calls a “Cold War vibe.” For visuals, BT got a dedicated VJ working a “mini-Pixel workstation” to generate content on the fly; Dolby will build audio tracks from scratch with Logic software and show the audience his progress via a camera strapped to his head.

Not coincidentally, both are also promoting audiovisual releases: Dolby’s “The Sole Inhabitant,” a DVD live collection from his recent solo tour, comes out Nov. 21, and BT’s “This Binary Universe,” a surround sound electronic symphony release earlier this year, included a DVD component.

Remix Master: It takes a lot to drop the jaws of grizzled dance music vets, but Danish producer Trentemoller has done it more than once this year. His remix of Royskopp’s “What Else Is There?” adapted trendy minimalism, electro for the maximalist dancefloor, and made Karin Dreijer’s Björk-Ian voice feel all the more lonesome and strange. A recent stab at Djuma Soundsystem’s “Les Djinns” kept the focus on the original’s ethnic instrumentation, but added a soulful shimmer that evokes nearly every dance subgenre.

Trentemoller’s latest, a rework of Moby classic “Go,” might be his best yet. Remixing well-loved tracks is risky business—producers frequently get torn between a safe tribute and a total deconstruction. He attacks with loose, looped drum kit sounds, glitchy blasts of synth and even a tambourine, but somehow finds his way back to the original vocal sample, familiar and untouched. V2 is planning an early 2007 release.

Flying Under The Radar

Top-Drawer DVDs, And Two Great CDs You May Have Missed

As the year edges toward its close, it’s time to reflect on albums that flew under the radar within the jazz community. Two significant CDs, both released in the fourth quarter, deserve note as recordings that were among 2006’s best, but unfortunately didn’t raise much of a ruckus when they hit the streets.

The first is pianist Dave Burrell’s superb trio album, “Momentum,” released Nov. 14 on High Two. With bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Guillermo E. Brown, Burrell, 66, crafts a masterwork of lyricism and jaunty adventure that is fueled by tradition and avant-garde sensibilities. On seven originals, Burrell pinks on the keys with a percussive touch, traces melodic lines with a genteel elegance and splashes and sprinkles color with understated dissonance. This is Burrell’s second album after a 30-year hiatus as a leader; judging from this disc, expect more revelations.

The second CD, “Memories of T,” was recorded by drummer Ben Riley’s Monk Legacy Septet, produced by trumpeter/arranger Don Sickler, engineered by Rudy Van Gelder and released Oct. 31 on Concord. Even though I glowingly reviewed the album in Billboard (Nov. 4), I feel it deserves extra kudos, given that the album pays homage to the magical music of pianist/composer Thelonious Monk in such a captivatingly fresh and straightforward manner. While, since his death in 1982, Monk’s harmonically whimsical music has been rediscovered and covered extensively, “Memories of T” stands among the best celebrations of his brilliance.

Dvd Picks: The fervor for video leads to DVD proliferation, which equals visual overload. In light of this, it’s worth noting some of this year’s top drawer DVDs. Highly recommended is the Jazz Icons series of vintage concerts from the late ‘50s to the ‘70s, previously unavailable commercially. Released by music archivists Reelin’ in the Years Productions, the DVDs capture in full-concert action nine jazz legends: Thelonious Monk (“Live in ‘66,” with Ben Riley on drums), Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers, Quincy Jones, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Chet Baker, Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie and Buddy Rich.


One of the most impressive DVDs of contemporary fare is the Pat Metheny Group’s “The Way Up: Live” (Eagle Vision). The 90-minute concert was filmed in Seoul, South Korea, during the band’s tour to support its Grammy Award-winning 2004 CD, “The Way Up.”

And, in a category all its own, there’s the entertaining documentary, “Brotherly Love,” an inside look at the music, life and times of the Heath Brothers: bassist Percy Heath (who died before the film’s completion), saxophonist Jimmy Heath and drummer Albert “Tootie” Heath. Produced by Danny Scher and directed by Jesse Block, “Brotherly Love” premiered at the Monterey Jazz Festival in October 2005; has been screened at film festivals in various cities, including Miami and Barcelona, Spain; and was released on DVD Oct. 17.

Three Dot Lounge: Already a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master, drummer Chico Hamilton was nominated Nov. 3 by President George W. Bush to serve on the National Council of the Arts, the NEA’s advisory body. . . . Tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins has hooked up with Universal Classics and Jazz International to distribute and market “Sonny, Please,” his first album for his own Dooky Records label and his first studio recording in six years. Released digitally by Universal on Nov. 21 and on the Web site sonnyrollins.com, the album will hit stores Jan. 23.

kmason@billboard.com

douellete@billboard.com
Through Thicke And Thin

R&B Artist's Second Album Roars Back To Life Thanks To John Legend Tour

Artistic evolution doesn't happen overnight, and no one knows that better than Robin Thicke. After seeing his 2003 Interscope debut, "A Beautiful World," fall through the cracks despite critical praise, the 29-year-old musician is taking the slow-and-steady approach with his sophomore effort, "The Evolution of Robin Thicke."

Released Oct. 3, the Star Trak/Interscope set bowed at No. 45 on The Billboard 200, shifting 20,000 U.S. copies in its first week, according to Nielsen SoundScan. But sales have surged to 84,000 units since Thicke began a stint as the opening act on John Legend's Once Again tour, which runs through Dec. 2. In less than two months, the disc has already eclipsed "A Beautiful World," which has sold 63,000 copies.

While Thicke is onstage showcasing his soulful falsetto and accomplished songwriting, his promo team is routinely selling out of their allotment of CDs each night.

"It's clearly one of the best word-of-mouth records we've ever had," Interscope Geffen A&M president of sales/marketing Steve Berman says. "When you see him live, that's one of the most powerful marketing tools that exist, so it was important for us to get him a great touring opportunity. We're doing exceptionally well in the markets he tours and seeing markets where the album is kicking into the top 10, like [Washington] D.C. and Norfolk, Va. That's a combination of people seeing it live, hearing it on the radio and relating to the music."

For all parties, Thicke's resurgence is a welcome turn of events. The artist, who is the son of actor Alan Thicke and vocalist Gloria Loring, "...is...an American Idol" finalist, landed a deal with Interscope at 16, then signed to Sony at 20 before returning to Interscope three years later.

But despite "nine months of radio airplay and BET airplay and a Sprite commercial," Thicke's debut album, released simply under his last name, "...was pretty much messed up everything you could possibly mess up with releasing an album," Thicke admits.

Embittered, Thicke "went underground for a few years," penning songs for Usher, Christina Aguilera and Michael Jackson, among others. In 2005, he re-signed to Interscope through the Neptunes' Star Trak imprint, hoping to benefit from the duo's hitmaking reputation.

At first, it looked like Thicke was in for the same industry runaround when "Evolution" was pushed back almost eight months from its planned Feb. 14 release date. A single, "Wanna Love You Girl," featuring Pharell Williams, promptly sputtered at No. 65 on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart.

But with new fans experiencing Thicke each night on the Legend tour, airplay is on the upswing. A new single, the soul-faring ballad "Lost Without U," is No. 35 in its fourth week on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs, a significant improvement over its predecessor.

"The fact that urban radio is playing the song and that John Legend chose him to take out on tour makes us believe that with the right attention and the right artist, you can really punch through in this market," Berman says.

Other artists are taking notice too. Lil Wayne revised the "Beautiful World" song "Oh Shooter" for his own "Shooter," on which Thicke guests, and Mary J. Blige recently plucked the "Evolution" track "Ask Myself" for her new duets album, "...Mary J. Blige...Friends."

And even though his star is finally on the rise, Thicke insists his selling power is not his first priority.

"I've come to realize that my music and my career are two totally different things. My music is perfect just the way it is," he says. "I don't know if I'll ever be as big as Michael Jackson or Usher, so I really just go to the people that are living and breathing this music every day. That's what really matters to me—if you make an impact on people's hearts and souls more than just making them dance at the clubs."

Will "Dreamgirls" be this year's "Grease"? Director Bill Condon, who brings the Broadway musical to the big screen this Christmas, hopes its trajectory will mirror that of the popular stage play-turned-movie starring a then wildly popular John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John.

"'Grease' was one of the last movies where contemporary pop artists were also in the movie and the movie's songs were mainstream pop hits," says Condon, who directed the Academy Award-winning film version of "Chicago." "We hope 'Dreamgirls' echoes back to those times. It will be interesting to see but I hope this crosses over to everybody."

Through his enthusiastic reaction and that of a small group of young teens at a recent intimate screening are any indications, Condon's dream will indeed come true.

"Very few things resonate these days—especially upon a first listen. Or in this case, first viewing. But walking out of that Sunset Boulevard theater, I was humming several of the songs, having experienced the same rush I got when I first heard Stevie Wonder's "Songs in the Key of Life" and Jill Scott's debut, "Who Is Jill Scott?"

This was surprising, considering I was a naysayer earlier this year when we media types were treated to a short clip—plus a meet-and-greet with cast members Beyoncé, Jennifer Hudson and Anika Noni Rose—during the film's shoot in Los Angeles. The clip did nothing to alloy my apprehension that the movie would be nothing more than just a filmed play. For someone who saw the L.A. run of "Dreamgirls"—three times—with the unparalleled Jennifer Holliday singing her ass off on the signature showstopper, "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going," it was near sacrilege to think anyone else could bring the same fervor to that song and role.

Well, ironically, another Jennifer puts her own stamp on the song and it still sends shivers. Hudson, the "American Idol" finalist, holds her own among a cast that includes Jamie Foxx and a surprising Eddie Murphy; her performance calls to mind Oprah Winfrey's powerful acting debut in "The Color Purple."

And rather than this being just a filmed play, a lot of action takes place beyond the theater floors. By weaving in historical subtexts like the civil rights movement, Condon and company give weight to and broaden the story.

Subtle nuances added to the play's original songs by production team the Underdogs, and four new songs co-written by the play's composer Henry Krieger (Billboard, Nov. 18) all add a contemporary sheen and continuity without taking away from the story's 1962-1975 setting. The songs are also threaded into the action as much as possible to avoid the "OK, let's stop and sing" scenario that for me stills a lot of movies with music.

Musicals on the big screen can be a dicey proposition. While the memorable "Lady Sings the Blues" netted Diana Ross an Oscar nomination, "The Wiz" certainly didn't deliver on that promise. Urban old-school faves like "Sparkle" and "The Five Heartbeats" didn't catch any mainstream crossover action. And while "The Bodyguard" still ranks as one of the top-selling soundtracks of all time, the film was not a critical favorite.

But "Dreamgirls" is the total package: enjoyable film and slamming soundtrack. So, yes, I'll be seeing it again. In fact, my 70-something mom (she'd kill me if I put her actual age in worldwide print) is anxious to see it, as is my 13-year-old daughter, part of the "everybody" that director Condon hopes to win over.

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DECEMBER 2, 2006 | www.billboard.biz | 43
Best Of Both Worlds
Lil Scrappy Has 50 Cent, Lil Jon In His Corner On Debut Album

Rapper: Lil Scrappy’s full-length debut, “Bred 2 Die, Born 2 Live,” finally arrives Dec. 5, but it’s been a long road toward completion.

One night back in 2002, though, Scrappy and label exec Vince Phillips were in the right place at the right time. Scrappy was performing tracks like his regional hit “Headbussas” at Atlanta teen venue Club Legacy in front of an audience that included Phillips, who serves as co-CEO of BME Recordings, with crack ambassador Lil Jon.

Blown away, the pair quickly signed Scrappy to BME and featured him in 2004 on a split album with Trillville, “The King of Crunk & BME Recordings Present: Trillville & Lil Scrappy.” Scrappy then broke out nationally with the single “No Problems,” which reached No. 10 on Billboard’s Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart and was complemented by a “Training Day” inspired video starring Lil Jon.

But then a brawl at a December 2004 show in Palatka, Fla., nearly cost Scrappy his career. According to the rapper, organizers say they told him he couldn’t swear onstage, but he insists they told him no such thing. Once the show started and the young audience “went bananas,” police serving as security took the stage, as well as the microphone out of Scrappy’s hands. A fight ensued, during which security allegedly hit Scrappy in the face with a beer bottle, knocking out his two front teeth.

While recovering from reconstructive surgery and preparing to take legal action against his attackers, there was another twist: self-professed fan 50 Cent called up, offering sympathy and the help of his G-Unit organization.

Recognizing Scrappy’s visceral energy and connection to Southern youth culture, 50 saw a viable partnership. “I’ve got love for the kid,” he says. “I only stand next to people that I’m a fan of.”

50 wouldn’t comment on reports he wanted to sign Scrappy to G-Unit outright. But according to Lil Jon, the plan was always for BME and G-Unit to work together. The idea was hatched during downtime while 50 and Lil Jon were on the Anger Management tour together in 2005. “Bred 2 Die, Born 2 Live” will be distributed through Warner Bros. Lil Jon’s albums continue to go through TVT.

Lil Jon and 50 both contributed to “Bred 2 Die” in the studio, but it’s unclear for now how many acts the G-Unit/BME branding partnership will span. Warner Bros. stresses that the project is not a joint venture (“He’s still on BME through Warner Bros.,” says Denise Williams, the label’s senior director of creative and visual content) and that it is looking to keep Scrappy’s branding in-house.

Since he established a persona from the crunk EP with Lil Jon, we developed a TV webisode series called “G’s Up TV,” she says. “Scrappy tells his life story and talks about the record with appearances from Lil Jon, Three 6 Mafia and Young Buck. People always want to know where artists are from and this allowed us to do it outside of MTV and BET.” The feature aired Nov. 17 on Scrappy’s Web site.

Mixtapes like the DJ Don Cannon collaboration “Full Metal Jacket” have helped ignite Scrappy’s buzz. “We’re building his brand using the same format as we did with G-Unit,” says Laurie Dobkins, who co-manages Scrappy for Violator. “But before you branch off, you have to solidify the music because without it, nothing else makes sense.”

To that end, Scrappy is revealing more of himself on “Bred 2 Die” via cuts like the Lil Jon-produced “Gangsta Gangsta,” the video for which is an homage to N.W.A’s “100 Miles and Runnin’.”

“I’m a rapper as well as being crunk,” the artist says, not wanting to be pigeonholed. “People are used to me showing my ass, so they’re not going to accept that I’m really rhyming. But if you bring in 50, then they’ll see that I’m serious. It’s the best of both worlds—crunk and being versatile.”

Believe The Hypphy
Atlantic Signee Mistah F.A.B. Urges Kids To Stay On School Bus While Going Dumb

Last winter, the Bay Area’s hypphy movement hit New York. Encouraged by hipster fodder and E-40’s hit “Tell Me When To Go,” Tay and Jive grabbed up groups like the A’z and the Pack, respectively. Still, a lot of “Yay Area” artists like Keak Da Sneak and Quann initially stayed off the major label chain. Folk began to murmur that many artists were too comfortable in their independent label cycle to consider a major.

Atlantic Records, though, was eager to break into the market—finalized Sept. 29—with Mistah F.A.B., the self-proclaimed “Prince of Oakland.” Mistah F.A.B., whose given name is Stanley Cox, now has a distribution deal through Atlantic Records for his independent label Faeva Afa/Thizz. He’s also signed to Atlantic as an artist for one album, with an option to negotiate and eventually upstream to Atlantic’s priority roster.

Though F.A.B. insists he’s excited about the signing and hopes for the best, he also knows he’ll be financially stable with or without a major endorsement. And he might just be the first person to suggest that hypphy’s not all about ghost-riding whips and going dumb.

“If the hypphy is what gets their attention, then I’m not going to fix what’s not broken,” says F.A.B., draped in a glistening yellow chain shaped like a school bus. “But once you get their attention, it’s up to you to change their perception.”

Banking on not only his charisma but his sturdy lyrical skills, F.A.B. plans to make his tentative first-quarter Atlantic release “The Yellow Bus Rider” a dynamic event. Shocking a lot of DJs during a recent Atlantic showcase by freestyling for almost 20 minutes when his demo CD glitched, he quickly dispelled the prevailing myth that Northern California has no real lyrical prowess.

And since the Bay’s known for getting hypphy, “The Yellow Bus Rider” will hold plenty of party tracks. But the 24-year-old MC will also discuss more personal issues that he deems universal.

“I express that my father died from AIDS, my mother’s a recovering drug addict and my brother’s been incarcerated for the past 12 years,” F.A.B. says. “But it’s not about being demographically biased. Pain is a worldwide issue. So I incorporate that into my songs along with my political views.”

Heading up a campaign titled “Vote Fashhezy” this year, F.A.B. encouraged young adults to participate in Oakland’s recent mayoral race. He also works with local group homes to take needy kids shopping for school clothes and supplies. This year he partnered with San Francisco’s KYLD, where he hosts a weekly Friday-night slot from 10 p.m. to midnight.

“That’s what the yellow movement is about, making it cool to go to school and giving the kids inspiration to do something positive,” he says. “People think hypphy is a sad, but we’ve been hypphy [for a long time]. Matter of fact, we’re tired of hypphy in the Bay, really. But if it works outside of the Bay, then so be it.”

IT’S AN INVASION: DJ Green Lantern, fresh from his world tour with Jay-Z, is on the verge of releasing his most star-struck mixtape yet, titled “Presidential Invasion.” Pulling together some of Jay’s hard-to-find material, new tracks, remixes and live performances, Green was able to grab samples from none other than Coldplay and frontman Chris Martin’s first lady—Gwyneth Paltrow.

“I threw in some parts of the tour in London at the Royal Albert Hall where Jay performed ‘Dead Presidents’ with Nas live and Chris Martin on the piano,” Green says. “I also recorded Gwyneth Paltrow singing the chorus on ‘Song’s Cry.’ In rehearsal she was kind of shy, but by the end of the show, she was belting it out.”

HILLARY CROSLEY hicrosley@billboard.com

www.americanradiohistory.com
First single “Anna Molly,” the punchy “Rogues” and the overriden “A Kiss to Send Us Off,” a vague flashback to previous hit “Megalomaniac.” But it does take breaks from those amphetamine-cranked tempos. The band relaxes on the retro-rockish “Diamonds and Coal,” urvels a simple midtempo ballad on “Love Hurts” and briskly trots to Jose Pasillas’attering percussion on the “Led Zeppelin III”-ish “Paper Shoes” and “Pendulous Threads.” Laid-back, emotive first appears on the easy-going “Dig,” a no-brainer for single No. 2.—CLT

THE CLIPSE
Hell Hath No Fury
Producers: the Neptunes
Re-Up Gang/Jive
Release Date: Nov. 28
After an ugly label battle and an unintended four-year hiatus, sibling duo the Clipse is finally dropping its second album, “Hell Hath No Fury.” Fortunately, the brothers deliver the lyrics their place-holding “We Got It for Cheap” mixtapes promised (“The news call it crack, I call it Diet Coke,” Pusha T raps), and the Neptunes turn in some of their best production work in years. At first the beats are jarring. But like the Clipse’s debut smash, “Grindin’,” once it all clicks, it’s unstoppable. Tracks like “Trill” mix the prickly synth tones favored by vintage Pet Shop Boys with the manic jack-beats, “Nightmares” finds Pharrell and quirky crooner Bilal snatching from the Geto Boys’ classic “Mind Playing Tricks on Me.” With any luck, songs like “Wamp Wamp” will offer a commercial gateway for Virginia’s favorite drug dealers-turned-rappers.—HC

INCUBUS
Light Grenades
Producer: Brendan O’Brien
Epic
Release Date: Nov. 28
In an interview, incubus guitarist Mike Einziger described “Light Grenades” as “a total mess... it sounds like 13 different bands playing 13 different songs.” Not quite. The quintet hasn’t abandoned its spiraling, madcap jam-busters, like frenetic

avril lavigne
Keep Holding On (3:59)
Producer: Dr. Luke
Writers: A. Lavigne, L. Goold
Publishers: various RCA

Amid so many posers in her wake, Avril Lavigne has taken her time, stepped back and maintained her integrity, waiting for the appropriate moment to return. Soundtrack song in between albums? (Next is due in April.) Ideal. “Keep Holding On,” from fantasy flick “Eragon,” due Dec. 15, meshes her authentic lived-it (albeit still youthful) vocal signature with an uncharacteristic orchestral arrangement and anthemic pop chorus (“Keep holding on, cause you know I’ll make it through/Just stay strong, cause you know I’m here for you”). The end result sounds like cross-format sustenance. Industrywise, Lavigne is riding the delicate border between top 40 babe and adult top 40 mainstay. Here, she commands both sides. Gorgeous song, probably requiring an edgy video, but in any case, it sounds like she is set to remain for the long term.—CT

BROOKS & DUNN
Highly Deluxe (3:40)
Producers: Tony Brown, Ronnie Dunn, Kix Brooks
Writers: E. Crisler, C. Wiseman
Publishers: various

Arista Nashville

Brooks & Dunn’s “Highly Deluxe” has already spawned the Country Music Assn. Award-winning single and song of the year “Believe” and the soulful hit “Building Bridges.” This time, country’s top duo offers the album’s title track to remind radio just how skilled it is at delivering a hard-charging honky-tonk anthem. The song goes, “You’re so beautiful/You have all the right grill. Dunn’s vocal firepower fuels this hot remix by the talented Judson Spence. Dunn makes hillbilly life so satisfying, everyone one will want to hit the back roads.—DEP

Releases deemed by the review editors to deserve special attention on the basis of musical merit and/or Billboard chart potential.

ALBUMS

JAY-Z
Kingdom Come
Producers: various Roc-a-Fella/Def Jam
Release Date: Nov. 21
There aren’t a lot of things Shawn Carter has done badly in his lifetime, but he was a pretty incompetent retiree. A mere three years after his mmmm- key farewell disc “The Black Album,” Jay reappears, christens himself “The Ma- jor Recordin’ (phony retirement and all), puts his well-brushed shoulder down and plows through the competition. “Kingdom Come” is front-loaded with just Blaze-produced claims to the throne-the thrilling title track even steals back the “Super Freak” sample from Hammer Town. Jay’s oft-repeated mantra that “30 is the new 20” is heartlessly defensive; his melodic, fielded dirt with Chris Martin (“Beach Chair”) and sad, raging indictment of the nonresponse to Katrina (the blurt “Minority Report,” which confesses, “Though I ponied up a mi, I didn’t give my time”) prove that his ambitions and self-awareness have grown nearly as much as his net worth.—JV

HIT-POP

2PAC
Pac’s Life
Producers: various Amanu/Interscope
Release Date: Nov. 21
Each posthumous 2Pac release has sounded less and less authentic. The only reason it’s hard to make a dead rapper’s old verses seem creative and relevant. Think Elvin Bishop’s entry first appears on the easy-going “Dig,” a no-brainer for single No. 2.—CLT

KILLSWITCH ENGAGE
As Daylight Dies
Producer: Adam Dutkiewicz
Roadrunner
Release Date: Nov. 21
“As Daylight Dies” is the first live-in-studio album that will mostly satisfy fans who anticipated its arrival. KILLSWITCH Engage reliably gallops through its climactic chorus to chorus (“Break the Silence,” “Unbroken”), pulsing with rage and response. The songwriting does get repetitive, aside from the throbbing “Desperate Times” with its perfect opening/track of “Still Beats Your Name.” But vocalist Howard Jones is the first man to make it OK for headbangers to cry since Staind. Cultivating lyrics like its dysfunctional childhood. Whether he bellows the pain of being dumped or singing “This is love burning you” to find you” on champion cuts like “My Curse,” Jones’ majestic voice assures that it takes a very special album to be sensitive.—CLT

MARK KOZELEK
Little Drummer Boy—Live
Producer: none listed
Caldo Verde
Release Date: Nov. 28
Via his work with the New House Painters, Sun Kil Moon and his startling transformations of AC/DC and Modest Mouse songs, Mark Kozelek has become a master of setting his emotive tumult to indelible music. And while his studio work swings from bare-bones acoustic introspection to Crazy Horse-worthy jams, Kozelek in concert is usually a one-man-with-an-acoustic tightrope walk between drama and deception. His live set is uniformly beautiful, but really hits home on originals like “Cruiser” and “Void,” where Kozelek’s matter-of-fact narratives work in lock step with his emotive voice and delicate fingerpicking. Tracks with second guitarist Phil Carney conjure a Simon & Garfunkel vibe, particularly covers of Modest Mouse’s “Four-Fingered Fisherman” and “Trucker’s Atlas.” Kozelek’s music may be down trodden, but with admissions like, “I need someone much more mysterious/To be my mistress,” it’s always grounded in the cold, hard truth.—JC

WORLD

BOLEZAR HARLEM
Bolé2Harlem
Producer: David Schommer
Sounds of the Mushroom Release Date: Nov. 21
This self-titled debut is a 13 tunes distinguished by killer beats and an infectious blending of traditional Ethiopian melodies, funk and hip hop. The inspiration for this project came from producer/percussionist David Schommer and vocalist Maki Siraj. They’ve concocted a sound that’s a distinctive hybrid, an ethnocentric celebration that features native Bahian percussionist Davi Vieira, Malarma kora player Bala Tounkara, vocalist Tigitist Shibabaw (Gigi’s sister) and Ethiopian bassist Henok Tenesgen. Cue up the opening/title track, and the Schommer/Siraj brain wave comes to life. Also check the beat-heavy groove of “Ya Selam” and the horn-driven energy of “Amatelle.”—PPV

REGGAE

IRIE TIME
It’s About Time
Producer: David Schommer
Inherent Music
Release Date: Nov. 28
This Houston quartet’s particular musical thing is a righteous brand of roots reggae, played with conviction and flair. “It’s About Time” is a very hip combination of five choice vocal tracks and five equally beat-rich dub versions of the above numbers. You can drop in anywhere you like on this disc, be it “A New Leaf,” “ ‘New Leaf Dub,” “You... continued on p.46

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from >>p45

Changed My Life" or its dub counterpart, and what you'll get is a great feel and unerring roots-rock repaire. There's just a hint of jazz to lrie Time's sound, particularly on "Won't You Dub" and "Wheel Dub," and that just spices up a project that lays down some of the coolest grooves of the year.—PVW

**CHRISTIAN**

**MICHAEL W. SMITH**

Producer: Matt Bronleewe

Reunion Records

Release Date: Nov. 7

For the first time Michael W. Smith lets go of the production reins and turns to Matt Bronleewe on "Stand." The result is a more organic, earthy-sounding record that has a personal, intimate feel, especially on the poignant "How to Say Goodbye." Co-written with longtime friend Amy Grant, the song was inspired by Smith's daughter going away to college. For the follow-up to 2004's "Healing Rain," Smith also co-wrote seven cuts with 18-year-old Leeland Mooring, frontman for rock band Leeland. The industry icon and young artist generate beautiful music together on such tunes as the gorgeous ballad "Open Arms" for college. For the Amy Leeland Mooring, more organic, go soulful rock band: DECEMBER 7

**JAZZ**

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**

Forever Old Sways, for Luther: Vol. II

Producers: Rex Rideout, Bud Hamer

Rendezvous Entertainment/Universal

Release Date: Nov. 21

Though Luther Vandross' remarkable voice was silenced in 2005, his legacy continues to inspire. Case in point is this follow-up to the 2004 Verve album that included interpretations of Vandross classics, most notably by Ledisi and Laith Hathaway. This outing finds volume-one players Dave Koz and Kirk Whalum covering more Vandross nuggets along with fellow jazzer like Wayman Tisdale, Gerald Albright and Najee. Adding the right amount of vocal nuances are Mayya Kevin Whalum and Patti Austin. Rather than simply regurgitate the songs in Melba Moore's vocal, talented musicians inventively reinvigorate the standard cover proceedings. Jeff Lorber's piano evokes '80s New York soul on "For You to Love," while guitarist Norman Brown and saxophonist Everett Harp ennup's "I'll Baby Come Home." Capping the 10-song set is Will Downing's mesmerizing take on "Superstar."—GM

**DOMINIQUE EADE & JED WILSON**

Open

Producers: Dominique Eade Jazz Project

Release Date: Nov. 14

This album of captivating minimalism is simply the wistful voice of Dominique Eade and pianist Jed Wilson's accompaniment. Eade possesses a lovely, remarkably flexible voice. Her range is as impressive as her creativity, and she adds a fine interpretive gift to all these attributes. Eade composed seven of the album's 11 tunes, including "Go Gently to the Water," and "In My Secret Life," both of which share a blues/gospel vibe. In a different groove, take notice of excellence of "Open Letter," as well as the wistful mood of "W.G."—PVW

**LATIN**

**SIN BANDERA**

Pasado

Producers: Aureo Baquero, Mana Domnit, Jay de la Cueva Norda

Release Date: Nov. 14

It's hard for Sin Bandera to go wrong on a covers album of great romantic songs, considering the souful production the music receives and the subtle intimacy of the duo's vocals. But in the end, the pair doesn't substantially reinterpret or add much that's unexpected to lovely work by Alejandro Sandz ("Lo Ves") or Ricardo Montaner ("Sera"). The modern touches do complement some songs nicely, like the ethereal downtempo treatment given to Miguel Bosi's "Si Tu No Vuelves" and a pleasantly funky version of Alasko Ska's "Impulsos Sobre Ti.

The best track is a simple piano version of "Love Is in the Air," which transforms the cheesy disco classic into a soothing rainy-day tune "Pasado." (Past) is more forward-looking than its name suggests and is recommended, but not required, listening.—ABY

**LEGENDS & CREDITS**

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

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Ajala Ben-Yehudah, Mike Boyd, Jonathan Cohen, Hilary Cross, Clover Dill, Carl Mitchell, Michael Paolotta, Sven Philipp, Deborah Evans Price, Christian L. Titus, Phillip Van Vleck, Jeff Velde

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

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

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

**FOR THE RECORD**

In the Nov. 25 issue of Billboard, producer Howard Benson should have been included in the credits in a review of Chris Daughtry's self-titled album. In addition, the writers of the track "It's Not Over" should have been identified as Chris Daughtry, Gregg Warth, Michael Wilkerson and Brett Young.

**DAUGHTER**

It's Not Over (3:28)

Producers: Howard Benson Writers: C. Daughtry, G. Wattenberg, M. Wilkerson, B. Young

Publishers: various Columbia

A nostalgic a cappella lament, Sandi Thom's U.K. hit "I Wish I Was a Punk Rocker" galvanized triple-nine a radio but failed to cut over to top 40. Kicking off with an uplifting folk-pop groove, her second single casts the Scottish singer in the role of skeptic lover, unable to believe in her own romantic dreams. "You'll be strong/And you'll turn me on/But I've got numb mouths and what if I'm right?" she sings playfully in a sun-kissed voice that is beautifully clear. What "the girl who webcast to the world" lacks is the raw, foot-stomping energy of a KT Tunstall, needed to tear up the dance floor with an acoustic guitar. In Thom's innocent world, she can't handle for hard-clapping—SP

**HINDER**

How Long (3:24)

Producer: Brian Howes Writers: Hinder. B. Howes, J. Miltner

Publishers: various Universal

The retribution of testosterone-driven, emo rock band Hinder's power ballad "Lips of an Angel" sticking to the top five of The Billboard Hot 100 like a fresh tattoo. Follow-up "How Long" is a two-punch tale of love gone wrong that makes clear that this year's rock sensation is more than just a Nickleback facemile. Launching with a giant, jagermeister-fueled hook that spills it into crunching guitars, the rocker has a visceral live sound and showcases Austin Winkler's raucous vocals, which are more volcanic than Chad Kroeger's creature roar. Here are the true jewels of pop metal: melody-focused, hard-rocking and never unappetizingly feeding on rock's most precious clichés.—SP

**DAUGHTER'S**

It's Not Over (3:28)

Producers: Howard Benson Writers: C. Daughtry, G. Wattenberg, M. Wilkerson, B. Young

Publishers: various Columbia

If there ever was a fitting title to a song, Chris Daughtry may have nailed it by naming the first single from his band Daughtry's debut album "It's Not Over." If you recall—and to the dismay of hundreds of thousands of fans—voters discarded him in the closing stages of "American Idol" during season five. Well, guess who gets the last laugh? Tight, focused and ready to rock your face off, launch single "It's Not Over" overflowing with harmonies and axe leads that suck you into the box. If you're not doing that neck-bopping bassic reflex after one listen, check your pulse. Oh, and wait until you feast your eyes on this band's live show. "Idol," schmidol. The man and his band have scored a hit.—MB

**ULTRA NATÉ**

Love's the Only Drug (4:23)

Producers: Eric Kupper, Brian Pope, Ultra Naté

Writers: Brian Naté, B. Pope, O. Wright, E. Kupper

Publishers: various Silver Label/Tommy Boy

ULTRA NATÉ's new single finds the singer stepping back to a time when Grace Jones and Roxy Music ruled dancefloors. But like Onaris Barkley and Hot Chip, Naté looks to the past purely for inspiration. Surrounding her huskier than usual vocals are present-day thick beats and an even thicker bassline. Jagger synth patterns effortlessly keep all the elements in check. And that's just the original version, which does deserve some radio action. The remixes of this song—and there are many—have been universally championed by DJs. Last issue the track climbed to No. 3 on Billboard's hot Dance Club Play chart. A tasty look into Naté's forthcoming (fifth) album, "Grime, Silk and Thunder," "Love's the Only Drug" spotlights an artist who is walking proudly into the future.—MP

**LILA McCANN**

Peace on Earth

Signpost Entertainment Group

JENNIFER WARNES & MICHÉL BERUBE

The Little Drummer Boy

Flashlight

THE LOONEY TUNES ALL-STARS

Jingle Bells

Rent-a-Label

JON PETER LEWIS

California Christmases

Breakdown Records

KELLY SWEET

Silent Night

Razor & Tie

DAVID HERNANDEZ,

DONNIE EDWARDS &

DANNY WAYNE

Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

The Urban Network

UNCLE CARL Hap Hap Christmas

Wrong Records

BILLY IDOL

Frosty the Snowman

Cyber Corps

www.americanradiohistory.com

46 / DECEMBER 2, 2006
The Game Wins Again; How Numbers Can Deceive

The Beatles’ “Love,” a U2 hit album and Jay-Z’s return from rap retirement all hit stores on Nov. 21. When you see a release date studded with that much star power, you don’t have to smell turkey to know it must be Thanksgiving week.

While we wait to see how those chart giants compete with each other, The Billboard 200 belongs to the Game’s second major-label release. The rapper’s “Doctor’s Advocate” started with 358,000 copies, less than what his first Inter- scope-distributed album did when it arrived in January 2005 with 587,000 sold. Still, the Game’s new opener stands about 8,000 units ahead of where Madonna did when her “Confessions on a Dance Floor” bowed at No. 1 during the comparable week last year. His stands out as the only album in this issue’s top 10 to outsell the same-ranked album in the week that ended Nov. 20, 2005.

Notable in that crop was “American Idol” champ Carrie Underwood, who bowed at No. 2 with 315,000 sold, compared with 284,000 for this week’s runner-up, Akon (see Between the Bulletins, page 53).

Tell the truth. Did you have any idea that Underwood’s album would last longer than Madonna’s? “Confessions” spent 37 weeks on the big chart, while the former’s “Some Hearts” stands this issue at No. 13.

The REST OF THE STORY:

By sheer happenstance, I saw an NBC News story on a recent Saturday afternoon that mentioned the liquidation of Tower Records. It turned out to be a glorious example of how a slice of accurate statistics can mislead rather than properly inform. Or, to cite a precious observation Nielsen Music chief Rob Sisco made to merchants and labels at the 2005 NARM Convention in San Diego, “It’s our job to provide the data. It’s your job to torture it to say what you want it to say.”

Amid footage of “Going Out of Business” signs at and around Tower’s mile-

stone location in downtown Manhattan, the NBC story talked about the advent of digital distribution and how the new channel is “bringing down some of the biggest names in the business.”

The report talked about how music chains—not including the department stores and electronics or book chains that also sell music—had dwindled from almost 5,000 stores in 1992 to fewer than 2,000 in 2006. So far, so good, but then came numbers with numbers.

The story essentially laid the reduction of chain stores and Tower’s closure at the feet of downloads, noting that digital album sales increased by 195% in 2005, when CD sales had declined by more than 8%. Those numbers were indeed accurate, but the report made no mention of the fact that while digital album sales had almost tripled 2004’s results, that channel still accounted for less than 3% of the albums sold last year. Nor did it mention that even with digital albums more than doubling again this year, physical goods still claim 93.7% of the albums sold through the first four weeks of 2006.

Such factors as CD burners, peer-to-peer swaps and competition for the entertainment dollar from DVDs and videogames, or low-ball pricing and value-add editions at mass merchants and electronics chains weren’t cited. Also unmentioned was the Federal Trade Commission’s (FTC) elimination of distributors’ minimum-advertised-pricing covenants in 2000, an edict that shifted the terrain in music’s retail landscape.

The story also ignored that digital distribution allows the consumer a far larger menu of individual songs than was ever available in the heyday of the single; a dynamic that affects album sales, be they physical or downloads.

I understand the constraints of electronic journalism. In a two-minute report, it would be impossible to chronicle all the changes that affected music retailing during the past decade. I also know details like loss leader pricing and an FTC ruling sound like a far less sexy story than a duel between iPods and brick-and-mortar.

The consumer press’s tendency to boil this complex story down to such cut-and-dried terms is one of the very reasons that the major music suppliers rooted for Tower to survive bankruptcy. Certainly the industry’s future lies in digital distribution and other new business models, but if conventional media exaggerates the CD’s actual rate of decline, the ripple effect on investors—and even consumers—could add consequences to an already challenging chapter.

Market Watch

A Weekly National Music Sales Report

Weekly Unit Sales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Albums</th>
<th>Digital Tracks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This Week</td>
<td>12,492,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Week</td>
<td>11,958,000</td>
<td>55,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>This Week</td>
<td>13,108,000</td>
<td>64,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last Week</td>
<td>12,806,000</td>
<td>64,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
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Weekly Album Sales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>35 million units</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This Week</td>
<td>4,924,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Week</td>
<td>4,687,000</td>
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Year-To-Date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Overall Unit Sales</th>
<th>Digital Tracks</th>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>4,922,000</td>
<td>687,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>4,687,000</td>
<td>612,000</td>
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ALBUM SALES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>492.4 million</th>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>468.7 million</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>475.8 million</td>
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SALES BY ALBUM FORMAT

<table>
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<th>Format</th>
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<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>475,809,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>33,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cassette</td>
<td>2,283,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>966,000</td>
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</table>

CHART BEAT

READ FRED BRONSON EVERY WEEK AT BILLBOARD.COM/FRED

Two hands that already had a combined 33 Billboard Hot 100 hits team up this week for the second-highest debut on the Hot 100, as U2 & Queen’s “The Saints Are Coming” comes at No. 6.

The late 2Pac begins at No. 92 on Hot R&B/HH Hip-Hop Songs with “Dear Mama,” featuring Bone Thugs-N-Harmony. Since his debut on the chart in 1992, not a year has gone by where the R&B/Hip-Hop list hasn’t housed a 2Pac entry.

What artist, whose Billboard 200 chart career dates back to 1971, returns this week with not only a new album but a new name? Find out at Fred Bronson’s Chart Beat: Billboard.com/ChartBeat

Over the Counter

GEOFF MAYFIELD gmayfield@billboard.com

 Nielsen SoundScan sales counts are current only weekly within the first 16 months of an album’s release; CD counts for trailers and sold around. First full-list in the top two of the Billboard 200, however, includes sales. This chart and other Nielsen SoundScan counts are a subject of study for many more than 2,000 companies, including record labels and retailers. Nielsen SoundScan counts are current only weekly within the first 16 months of an album’s release; CD counts for trailers and sold around. First full-list in the top two of the Billboard 200, however, includes sales. This chart and other Nielsen SoundScan counts are a subject of study for many more than 2,000 companies, including record labels and retailers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTIST</th>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>NEW</th>
<th>VOLUME</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>COMPANY/DISTRIBUTION/PRICE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AKON</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Story (US Promo / UPC 075678503812)</td>
<td>MCA Records (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>VARIOUS ARTISTS</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>American Classic</td>
<td>Interscope Records (10.98)</td>
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<td>TAYLOR SWIFT</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fearless</td>
<td>Big Machine Records (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAMIEN RICE</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>We All Need to Learn</td>
<td>Heavenly Records (12.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARBRA STREISAND</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Up Where We Belong</td>
<td>Columbia Records (12.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNA NICOL</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Deep Blue</td>
<td>Sonoma Records (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BARRY MANILOW</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Greatest Songs of the '60s</td>
<td>RCA Records (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANDREA BOCELLI</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Under the Desert Sky</td>
<td>Warner Bros. Records (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TONY BENNETT</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Duets: An American Classic</td>
<td>Columbia Records (12.98)</td>
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<td>JOHN MAYER</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Continuum</td>
<td>Capitol Records (12.98)</td>
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<td>THE KILLERS</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sam's Town</td>
<td>Island Records (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LUDACRIS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Release Therapy</td>
<td>Def Jam Recordings (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BARRY MANILOW</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Road To Escondido</td>
<td>RCA Records (12.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KENNY G</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In The Mood For Love...The Most Romantic Melodies Of All Time</td>
<td>Concord Records (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAMES TAYLOR</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Back To Basics</td>
<td>Columbia Records (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHRISTINA AGUILERA</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>My Self</td>
<td>RCA Records (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>JOY</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The High Road</td>
<td>Atlantic Records (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIDDY</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Play That Bitch</td>
<td>Aftermath Entertainment (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROD STEWART</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Still The Same...Great Rock Classics Of Our Time</td>
<td>Atlantic Records (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRAD PAISLEY</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Time Well Wasted</td>
<td>Mercury Nashville (12.98)</td>
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<td>SNOW PATROL</td>
<td>39</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Eyes Open</td>
<td>Parlophone Records (12.98)</td>
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<td>KELLIE PICKLER</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Small Town Girl</td>
<td>RCA Records (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANDREW BIRD</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Like Red On A Rose</td>
<td>New West Records (12.98)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THE BILLBOARD 200 ARTIST INDEX**

[Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data]
**HOT 100 AIRPLAY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist(s)</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><em>My Love</em></td>
<td>Katy Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><em>I Wanna Love You</em></td>
<td>John Legend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>A Thousand Miles</em></td>
<td>Taylor Swift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><em>Irreplaceable</em></td>
<td>Beyoncé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><em>We Fly High</em></td>
<td>The Wanted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td><em>Lips of an Angel</em></td>
<td>Adele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td><em>How to Save a Life</em></td>
<td>Lecrae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td><em>Far Away</em></td>
<td>Jason Derulo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td><em>Fergalicious</em></td>
<td>Fergalicious</td>
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</table>

**ADULT TOP 40**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist(s)</th>
<th>Label</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><em>Chasing Cars</em></td>
<td>Maroon 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><em>Firework</em></td>
<td>Katy Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>Fire</em></td>
<td>Red Hot Chili Peppers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><em>Fire&amp;Water</em></td>
<td>Taio Cruz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><em>Fire with You</em></td>
<td>LeAnn Rimes</td>
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**ADULT CONTEMPORARY**

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<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><em>What Have You Done</em></td>
<td>B.O.B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><em>What Have You Done</em></td>
<td>B.O.B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>What Have You Done</em></td>
<td>B.O.B.</td>
</tr>
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<td>4.</td>
<td><em>What Have You Done</em></td>
<td>B.O.B.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td><em>What Have You Done</em></td>
<td>B.O.B.</td>
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**MODERN ROCK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist(s)</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><em>Welcome to the Black Parade</em></td>
<td>My Chemical Romance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><em>Girls Like You</em></td>
<td>Young the Giant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>Girls Like You</em></td>
<td>Young the Giant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><em>Girls Like You</em></td>
<td>Young the Giant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><em>Girls Like You</em></td>
<td>Young the Giant</td>
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**HOT DIGITAL SONGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist(s)</th>
<th>Label</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><em>I Wanna Love You</em></td>
<td>Shania Twain</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td><em>Fergalicious</em></td>
<td>Fergalicious</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>Smack That</em></td>
<td>Jennifer Lopez</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><em>Irreplaceable</em></td>
<td>Beyoncé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><em>I Love You</em></td>
<td>LeAnn Rimes</td>
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**LEGEND FOR HOT 100 AIRPLAY LOCATED BELOW CHART HOT DIGITAL SONGS:** To compile pole data from 2006. ADULT TOP 40 - ADULT CONTEMPORARY - Modem Rock - Modern Rock are electronically monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. & the Nielsen SoundScan. This data is intended to provide the listener with the best possible representation of the music industry. Nielsen SoundScan. © 2006, Nielsen SoundScan. All rights reserved.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>ARTIST/JOB</th>
<th>WEEKS</th>
<th>Charting Chart</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NO. 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>WANNA LOVE YOU</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>NWA</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>SMACK THAT</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>3</strong></td>
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<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>KIRK FRANCIS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>MY LOVE</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>JASON DERULO</strong></td>
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<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>REPLACEABLE</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>avelina</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>YOU</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Various</strong></td>
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<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>ONE OF AN ANGEL</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>MILEY CYRUS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>MONEY MAKER</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>DAVID GUETTA FEAT. FLO RIDA &amp; KEM CEGI</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>TWO LITTLE TOO LATE</strong></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>THEY</strong></td>
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<td><strong>DATING CARDS</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>IT ENDS TONIGHT</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
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<td><strong>LONELI FEAT. TRAVIS STONE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>CALL ME WHEN</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
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<td><strong>THE WHAT-2'S</strong></td>
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<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>HURT</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>CHRIS BROWN</strong></td>
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<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>SHOUTER</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>WIND IT UP</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>THE GALLERY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>GET UP</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>BUTT</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>18</strong></td>
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<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>SAY GOODBYE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>THE GALLERY</strong></td>
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<td><strong>COME TO</strong></td>
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<td><strong>THE GALLERY</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SHOW STOPPER</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>THE GALLERY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>WAITING ON THE WORLD TO CHANGE</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>THE GALLERY</strong></td>
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**Hot Singles Sales**

**Top 10**

1. **WANNA LOVE YOU**
2. **SMACK THAT**
3. **FERGALICIOUS**
4. **MY LOVE**
5. **REPLACEABLE**
6. **YOU**
7. **ONE OF AN ANGEL**
8. **MONEY MAKER**
9. **TWO LITTLE TOO LATE**
10. **DATING CARDS**

---

**Top 10 Airplay**

1. **WANNA LOVE YOU**
2. **SMACK THAT**
3. **FERGALICIOUS**
4. **MY LOVE**
5. **REPLACEABLE**
6. **YOU**
7. **ONE OF AN ANGEL**
8. **MONEY MAKER**
9. **TWO LITTLE TOO LATE**
10. **DATING CARDS**

---

**HitPredictor**

See chart legend for rules and explanations. Yellow indicators finally titled **Hit** indicates new release.
### Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums

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### Top Blues Albums

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<td>Maria Muldaur</td>
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<td>Joe Bonamassa</td>
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<td>Buddy Guy</td>
<td>Can't Quit The Blues</td>
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<td>Susan Tedesco</td>
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<td>Universal Motown</td>
<td>2006-12-2</td>
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### No Sophomore Jinx for Akon

Akon unlocked the top 10 of his album sales at No. 18 on the chart. However, the album's second single, "Show Me Love," peaked at No. 11 on the R&B/Hip-Hop chart, which was the best performance of the album. The new single, "I Wanna Love You," featuring Snoop Dogg and "Smack That" with Eminem held the top spot on the R&B/Hip-Hop chart for a second week. The former is No. 6 on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs. Raphaël George

Go to [www.billboard.biz](http://www.billboard.biz) for complete chart data
HOT COUNTRY SONGS

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HOT COUNTRY SONGS: 134 country stations are electronically monitored by Nielsen Broadcast Data Systems, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Airpower intended to songs appearing in the top 20 on both the BDS Airplay and Audience charts for the full time. With increases in both detections and audience. © 2006 VNU.

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ALL CHARTS: See Chart Legend for rules and explanations.

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BETWEEN THE BULLETS

Urban, Bentley give hot hand to Capitol
Capitol's Nashville shop dominates this week's chart ink as Keith Urban's "Stupid Boy" takes the Hot Shot Debut on Hot Country Songs at No. 38 as labelmate Dierks Bentley's "Long Trip Alone" pops on at No. 42.

While Urban's arrival becomes the chart's 11th title to debut inside the top 40 in 2006, Bentley's new tune opens at his highest level to date, topping the No. 45 start he posted with "Every Mile A Memory" in the July 15 issue. Although Urban's No. 38 start is impres-
# Latin Airplay

**POP.**

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# Latin Airplay

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# Hot Dance Club Play

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**REGIONAL MEXICAN**

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### Japan
#### Albums
- **AYAKA**
- **STOP THE OVERLY LONG VERSION**
- **KOBUKURO**
- **TACKY & TUSABA**
- **MIMIHARU GT**

#### Singles
- **CHRIS DE'ANNA**
- **VARIOUS ARTISTS**

### United Kingdom
#### Albums
- **DEPECHE MODE**
- **TWENTY FIVE AEGEAN**
- **THE SAINTS ARE JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE**
- **SCISSOR SISTERS**
- **FIORELLA MANNIA DUELLI DEGLI ALTRI TUTTI OUI CLAUDIO BAGLIONI MADE IN ITALY RCA**

#### Singles
- **EMMANUEL MOIRE LES COULEURS DA MA VIE UP FRANK LE YANNICK NOAH MICHEL SARDOU (SNEP DJ)**
- **DAVID GROBAN KEITH URBAN JOSH GROBAN AKON JOSH GROBAN JOSH GROBAN**

### France
#### Albums
- **MICHEL SARDOU**
- **LYNDA LEMAY**
- **RENABAR**
- **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
- **RENAUD**

#### Singles
- **MISS DOMINIQUE**
- **EMMANUEL MOIRE**
- **OLIVIA RUIZ**

### Spain
#### Albums
- **LAURA PAUSINI**
- **GEORGE MICHAEL**
- **ADRIANO CELNTANO**
- **GIGI DALLEOSSO**
- **DEPECHE MODE**

#### Singles
- **LOVE FORNACIARI PEN VOYAGER**
- **ROBBIE WILLIAMS**
- **JAMIROQUAI HEARTS TIMES 1992 - 2000 COLUMBIA**

### Italy
#### Albums
- **LAURA PAUSINI**
- **GEORGE MICHAEL**
- **ADRIANO CELNTANO**
- **GIGI DALLEOSSO**
- **DEPECHE MODE**

#### Singles
- **LOVE FORNACIARI PEN VOYAGER**
- **ROBBIE WILLIAMS**
- **JAMIROQUAI HEARTS TIMES 1992 - 2000 COLUMBIA**

### Switzerland
#### Albums
- **HURT CHRISTIAN AGAZZI ECA**
- **MY LIFE JAMES DE JUFEU**
- **THE SAINTS ARE COMING**

#### Singles
- **UNFAITHFUL UNKNOWN CAPE DUB**
- **LAURA PAUSINI DE DICE & 2006 COLUMBIA**
- **DEPECHE MODE THE BEST OF VOL. 1**

### Finland
#### Albums
- **REPLICA**
- **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
- **MMP**

#### Singles
- **LOUISA TYSNERI**
- **VEA-MATTI LOIRI**
- **VARIOUS ARTISTS**

### Poland
#### Albums
- **WIZA PUBLICATIONS AUDIO (RODE)**
- **ZBIGNIEW KSIAZEK, PIOTR RUBIK**
- **MAREK GRUCHTA**

#### Singles
- **ANDREJ ZYWICKI**
- **MAREK GRUCHTA**
- **PIOTR RUBIK**

### Hungary
#### Albums
- **PUT YOUR HANDS UP FOR DETROIT**
- **MARILYN**
- **NOX**

#### Singles
- **I LOVE YOU BABY 2006**
- **NOX**
- **ROBBIE WILLIAMS**

### Belgium (Wallonia)
#### Albums
- **SINGLES**
- **NEW**

#### Singles
- **NEW**

### Bulgaria
#### Albums
- **SINGLES 1992-2006**
- **NEW**

#### Singles
- **NEW**

### Turkey
#### Albums
- **SINGLES**
- **NEW**

#### Singles
- **NEW**

### Data for week of DECEMBER 2, 2006 - CHARTS LEGEND on Page 62

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SALES

TOP INDEPENDENT

TOP TASTEMAKERS

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| Chart Codes: CS (Hot Country Songs); H100 (Hot 100 Songs); LT (Hot Latin Songs); POP (Pop 100 Song and RBH (Hot R&B/Hip Hop Songs) TITLE (Publisher - Licensing Org.) Sheet Music Dist., Chart, Position. | Chart Codes: CS (Hot Country Songs); H100 (Hot 100 Songs); LT (Hot Latin Songs); POP (Pop 100 Song and RBH (Hot R&B/Hip Hop Songs) TITLE (Publisher - Licensing Org.) Sheet Music Dist., Chart, Position. | Chart Codes: CS (Hot Country Songs); H100 (Hot 100 Songs); LT (Hot Latin Songs); POP (Pop 100 Song and RBH (Hot R&B/Hip Hop Songs) TITLE (Publisher - Licensing Org.) Sheet Music Dist., Chart, Position. |
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Associate Editor, Special Features
Billboard Magazine

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, finance, 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 are required.

Applicants should send a résumé, cover letter and salary requirements to 100073.676@aol.com

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Mileposts

Compiled by Kristina Tunzi, ktunzi@billboard.com

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Ruth Brown, 78

Ruth Brown, the vivacious R&B singer whose early hits established Atlantic Records, died Nov. 17 in Henderson, Nev., of complications following a stroke and a heart attack. She was 78.

Brown suffered a stroke in 2000 and was in declining health in recent years. She had been on life support in a hospital near her home in Las Vegas. After spending the ‘60s and ‘70s in the musical wilderness, the vocalist enjoyed a lively second act in the ‘80s and ‘90s. She won a Tony Award for her role in the 1989 Broadway revue “Black and Blue,” and the following year her Fantasy album “Blues on Broadway” won a Grammy Award for best jazz vocal performance.

Her latter-day film performances included an unforgettable turn as DJ “Motormouth Maybelle” in John Waters’ 1988 movie “Hairspray.”

Brown was born Ruth Weston in Portsmouth, Va., she was inspired by such vocalists as Dinah Washington and Sarah Vaughan. She began touring as a teenager with bandleader Jimmy Brown, whom she married. She later sang with Lucky Millinder’s jump-blues group.

On the recommendation of DJ Willis Conover, Brown was signed to Ahmet Ertegun and Herb Abramson’s fledgling Atlantic label. Her debut session was sidetracked by a grave auto accident that laid her up for nine months. However, her first session with guitarist Eddie Condon’s N.B.C. Television Orchestra spawned the top five hit “So Long” in 1949.

Brown’s decadelong run of lively R&B hits for Atlantic earned her the nickname “Miss Rhythm.” Her biggest smashes were 1950’s “Teardrops From My Eyes,” which enjoyed an 11-week run at No. 1, 1952’s “5-10-15 Hours,” which stayed at the top for seven weeks. 1953’s “(Mama) He Treats Your Daughter Mean,” which took the pinnacle for five weeks; and 1954’s “Oh What a Dream,” a Chuck Willis composition that boasted an eight-week run at the pinnacle.

In all, Brown charted 24 singles, only three of which failed to reach the R&B top 10.

After her split with Atlantic in the early ’60s, Brown’s fortunes waned; for a time, she worked as a domestic. Under the aegis of comic Redd Foxx, she began a comeback in the late ’70s, appearing on such TV sitcoms as “Hello, Larry” and “The Jeffersons.”

Brown’s renewed profile led to her high-profile Broadway and film parts; during the ’80s and ’90s, Brown hosted National Public Radio’s “Harlem Hit Parade” and “BluesStage” and recorded for Fantasy and Rounder’s Bullseye Blues imprint.

She also took on another role as an advocate for her generation of R&B performers. The outspoken singer’s public comments about nonpayment of royalties to R&B veterans and the labels’ onerous recoupment policies helped lead to Atlantic’s 1988 decision to pay back royalties to 35 of its early acts and provide seed money for the creation of the Rhythm & Blues Foundation. Brown became one of the foundation’s first Pioneer Award honorees in 1989.

Brown was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1993. Through the years, she won a dozen awards from the nonprofit Blues Foundation and was inducted into its Blues Hall of Fame in 2002; she frequently served as a co-host of the foundation’s annual awards ceremonies.

Brown published her autobiography, “Miss Rhythm,” co-authored with Andrew Yule, in 1996. She is survived by her sons Lonnie McFadden and Earl Swanson; sister Delia Weston; and brothers Alvin, Lenard and Benjamin Weston.

—Chris Morris

Chris Morris is music editor of Billboard sister publication The Hollywood Reporter.

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BIRTHS
Girl, Miranda Cristina, to Tito Puente Jr. and his longtime girlfriend Gloria Martinez. Father is a percussionist and son of influential Latin jazz/ mambo musician Tito Puente.
THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER/BILLBOARD FILM & TV MUSIC CONFERENCE:
The fifth annual Film & TV Music Conference, held Nov. 14-15 at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles, featured sessions and panels on music for film, TV, Internet, gaming, commercials and other industry-related topics, and attracted many of the industry's most influential executive and creative talents such as Oliver Stone, Olivia Newton-John, Danny Elfman and Stewart Copeland. PHOTOS: PAUL REDMOND


ABOVE LEFT: Composer/drummer and founder of the Police Stewart Copeland.

ABOVE RIGHT: From left are Grey Worldwide senior VP/director of music Josh Rabinowitz, Beacon Street Studio creative director/composer Andrew Feltman, Elia Art executive VP/GM Ann Haugen, SHOOT editor Bob Geldrich, M2M founder/creative director Jeff Katz, and Universal Music Publishing Group VP of film and TV music Ryan Lambert.

LEFT: Composers/lyricist Henry Krieger, left, and director Bill Condon.

RIGHT: Attendees of the Film & TV Music Conference were treated to a live performance by musical act Jascrit.


BELOW RIGHT: From left are Chop Shop music supervisor Alexandra Patsavas,Recording Academy music supervision/LA chapter president Maureen Czarina, Venus Hum artist Annette Strean, Parodi/Fair Production composer/lyricist Starr Parodi, Recording Academy music supervision/L.A. chapter president Mark Geraci, Deutsch director of music and celebrity licensing Kris Weiner, Billboard executive editor/associate publisher Tamara Carriff, and Olivia Newton-John.

ABOVE: Composer and former Oingo Boingo frontman Danny Elfman.

BELOW: BMI VP of film/TV relations Doreen Ringer Ross, left, with jazz musician/film composer Terence Blanchard.
HE'S A PUNK ROCKER

Iggy Pop has spent the full polishing his first album with the Stooges since 1973, due in March via Virgin (billboard.com, Nov. 20). But the 59-year-old rock legend also found time to lend his vocals to "Punkrocker," an infectious tune from Swedish duo Teddybears' Big Beat/Atlantic debut, "Soft Machine." The cut is currently featured in a Cadillac commercial; a music video is nearly finished.

"Being the larcenous little Swedes they are, they filmed me in a Cadillac to get the tie-in," Pop tells Track with a laugh. "They sent me a demo with some of the tracks that are actually on the song and a demo vocal. That had the melody, two or three of the verse lines and the hook line, but it was very Swedish. It didn't make much sense, and it definitely didn't say anything. They gave them half of a new lyric, and we went in and recorded it in one session."

Pop reports he was recently passed a film script with a role earmarked for him, but because of commitments with the Stooges, he probably won’t be able to participate. "It’s a chance to play a teacher," he says. "It came from someone who just doesn’t have funding for their movie yet; a first-time director. [But] it’s a good script and a good part."

Pop last appeared on the silver screen in Jim Jarmusch’s 2003 flick "Coffee and Cigarettes."

DYSFUNCTION JUNCTION

On the eve of their fifth studio album, "Chemically Imbalanced," the Ying Yang Twins are gearing up for the big screen with the comedy "Viagra Falls." The script was originally written by member D-Roc but is being rewritten.

"It’s about some college students trying to get to spring break for the first time," he tells Track. "So and behold, the kids ‘stumble across some Viagra’ along the way."

It seems there’s no shortage of the miracle pill at Ying Yang Twins’ headquarters, hence the film homage. "I don’t know how they got it going, but some kind of way we get a shitload of Viagra and just start slamming Viagra,” D-Roc marvels.

COUNTRY KITCHEN

Cowboy crooner Gene Autry loved Palm Springs, Calif., but that’s about the only country music we’ve ever associated with the Coachella Valley. That will all change May 5-6, when Goldenvoice launches a two-day country festival at Empire Polo Field, the site of the mega-successful Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival.

Sing names confirmed so far are Kenny Chesney, George Strait, Willie Nelson and Sugarland.

The festival was booked by Coachella producer Paul Tollett, Louis Messina of TGM/AEG Live and Steve Moore of AEG Live Nashville. Commenting on the eclectic lineup, AEG Live CEO Randy Phillips tells Track, "There’s a reason this festival is at the Coachella site, and it’s not just because of the palm trees. We wanted it to be diverse, rich and interesting musically, the same way Coachella is for alternative.

Meanwhile, Coachella will expand to three days (April 27-29) for the first time in ’07. Book your hotels and plane tickets now.

SHE CAME AND SHE GAVE, WITHOUT TAKING

Oh, Mandy . . . Moore, that is. As Track reported last week, the artist just wrapped a new album, due in April via Firm Music. "As soon as I left (Epic), I felt like I finally get to make the record that I want to make," she says of the set, which was heavily influenced by Joni Mitchell’s "Court and Spark."

One the phone, Moore

struck us as eens away from the stereotypical young-Hollywood-starlet-turned-pop-star.

"I’m like a 52-year-old in a 22-year-old’s body," she says. "I like to stay in and get to sleep early. I find that it’s impossible—and not fun—to attend every envelope-opening."

THIS AND THAT

Clap Your Hands Say Yeah, the New York indie rock act that scanned 117,000 copies of its 2005 self-titled debut without the help of a label, will return in January with its second set, the Dave Fridmann-produced "Some Loud Thunder." Track has only been able to stream the 11 songs (in subpar audio quality, we might add) thus far, but we can reveal that the opening track cut has a nifty acoustic riff, cowbell and a danceable bass groove. "Emily Jean Stock" is a mostly drumless number with a vaguely girl-group vibe and on "Mercury Walks an Orange Sun," vocalist Alex Ounsworth reminds us, "I hope you notice/I’m no hero/You’re no tortoise."

Even better: Ounsworth calling out to "Satans" on the positively weird "Satans Dance," as he pleads, "My hair turns white and my face turns green/But my feet are still moving, if you know what I mean."

Meanwhile, sibling rock combo Eisley is recording its second Reprisal album featuring Oingo Boingo keyboardist Richard Gibbs at the latter’s home studio in Malibu, Calif. The project is due in the spring.

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

Madonna will appear Nov. 24-26 on HSN to promote an exclusive set of books from her "English Roses" series. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to Raising Malawi, an orphan-care initiative benefitting children from the African nation of Malawi.

JAZZ CLASS IN SESSION

Trumpeter Chris Botti will teach a master class Nov. 29 at the Berklee College of Music in Boston as part of the Berklee City Music Program. Music students from 6th through 12th grade will also be part of the lesson, which will feature pianist Billy Childs and guitarist Mark Whitfield.

FOFGERTY AND FAMILY

John Fogerty and his family spent an hour serving lunch at a United Way-funded homeless shelter Nov. 22 in Detroit. The artist was in the Motor City to perform during halftime of the Detroit Lions/Miami Dolphins game on Thanksgiving at Ford Field.
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