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- RECORD OF THE YEAR
  Tom Elmhirst (p)s
- ALBUM OF THE YEAR
  Joni Mitchell
- Larry Klein
- BEST MALE POP VOCAL PERFORMANCE
  Justin Timberlake
- BEST POP PERFORMANCE BY A DUO OR GROUP WITH VOCALS
  Maroon 5
- BEST POP COLLABORATION WITH VOCALS
  Robert Plant
- BEST POP INSTRUMENTAL PERFORMANCE
  Joni Mitchell
- BEST POP INSTRUMENTAL ALBUM
  Beastie Boys
- BEST DANCE RECORDING
  Justin Timberlake
  Timbaland
- BEST ELECTRONIC/DANCE ALBUM
  The Chemical Brothers (p)s
- BEST TRADITIONAL POP VOCAL ALBUM
  Michael Buble (ASCAP)
- BEST SOLO ROCK VOCAL PERFORMANCE
  Bruce Springsteen
- BEST HARD ROCK VOCAL PERFORMANCE
  Foo Fighters
- BEST METAL PERFORMANCE
  Slayer
- BEST ROCK INSTRUMENTAL PERFORMANCE
  Bruce Springsteen
- BEST ROCK SONG
  Bruce Springsteen
- BEST ROCK ALBUM
  Foo Fighters
- BEST FEMALE R&B VOCAL PERFORMANCE
  Alicia Keys
- BEST MALE R&B VOCAL PERFORMANCE
  Prince
- BEST R&B PERFORMANCE BY A DUO OR GROUP WITH VOCALS
  Chaka Khan
  Mary J. Blige
- BEST URBAN/ALTERNATIVE PERFORMANCE
  Jill Scott
- BEST R&B SONG
  Dirty Harry
  Kenny Brothers
  Alicia Keys
- BEST R&B ALBUM
  Chaka Khan
- BEST CONTEMPORARY R&B ALBUM
  Ne-Yo
- BEST RAP/SUNG COLLABORATION
  Jay-Z
- BEST COUNTRY PERFORMANCE BY A DUO OR GROUP WITH VOCALS
  Eagles
- BEST COUNTRY INSTRUMENTAL PERFORMANCE
  Brad Paisley
- BEST COUNTRY SONG
  Josh Kear
  Chris Tompkins
- BEST JAZZ VOCAL ALBUM
  Patti Austin
- BEST GOSPEL PERFORMANCE
  The Clark Sisters
- BEST GOSPEL SONG
  Karen Clark Sheard
- BEST SOUTHERN, COUNTRY, OR BLUEGRASS GOSPEL ALBUM
  Ricky Skaggs & The Whites
- BEST TRADITIONAL GOSPEL ALBUM
  The Clark Sisters
- BEST LATIN POP ALBUM
  Alejandro Sanz (SGMA)
- BEST LATIN ROCK OR ALTERNATIVE ALBUM
  Blackey Guayaba
- BEST LATIN URBAN ALBUM
  Calle 13
- BEST TEJANO ALBUM
  Little Joe & La Familia
- BEST TRADITIONAL FOLK ALBUM
  Levon Helm
- BEST CONTEMPORARY FOLK/AMERICANA ALBUM
  Steve Earle
- BEST HAWAIIAN MUSIC ALBUM
  Daniel Ho
  George Kahumoku, Jr.
- BEST REGGAE ALBUM
  Stephen Marley
- BEST CONTEMPORARY WORLD MUSIC ALBUM
  Angélique Kidjo (FACEMI)
- BEST SPOKEN WORD ALBUM FOR CHILDREN
  Jim Dale (p)s
- BEST COMEDY ALBUM
  Flight Of The Conchords (APRA)
- BEST COMPILATION SOUNDTRACK ALBUM FOR MOTION PICTURE
  Television Or Other Visual Media
  The Beatles (p)s
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  Michael Giacchino
- BEST SONG WRITTEN FOR MOTION PICTURE, TELEVISION OR OTHER VISUAL MEDIA
  Siedah Garrett
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- BEST INSTRUMENTAL COMPOSITION
  Maria Schneider
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  Vince Mendoza
- BEST INSTRUMENTAL ARRANGEMENT ACCOMPANYING VOCALIST(S)
  John Clayton
- BEST HISTORICAL ALBUM
  Jamie Howarth
  Steve Rosenhall
- BEST ENGINEERED ALBUM, NON-CLASSICAL
  Jimmy Hogarth (p)s
- BEST SURROUND SOUND ALBUM
  George Martin (p)s
- BEST ENGINEERED ALBUM, CLASSICAL
  Trent Walker
- BEST CLASSICAL ALBUM
  Leonard Slatkin
- BEST ORCHESTRAL PERFORMANCE
  Leonard Slatkin
- BEST OPERA RECORDING
  Sir Charles Mackerras (p)s
  Brian Couzens (p)s
- BEST CHORAL PERFORMANCE
  Michael Gielen (p)s
- BEST SHORT FORM MUSIC VIDEO
  Johnny Cash
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Video
Billboard.com went behind the scenes at the photo shoot for the Panic at the Disco billboard cover. The band chatted about making “Pretty. Odd...” dropping the “.” from its name, the influence of Tom Waits and more. Watch at billboard.com/panic.
Events
MUSIC & MONEY
Billboard’s Music & Money Symposium unites the best minds from the music, legal and fiscal communities. This year features a keynote from BMG Label Group’s Clive Davis and Charles Goldstuck. For more, go to billboardevents.com.
MOBILE ENTERTAINMENT
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ON THE COVER: Panic at the Disco photographed for Billboard by Patrick Fraser.
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Chavez, The Censor

It May Be Hip To Praise Hugo, But He's Silencing A Singer

When Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez was told to "just be quiet" by the King of Spain in a much-publicized international diplomatic incident last fall, he was quick to protest. "The King may be king, but he can't tell me to be quiet," Chavez said angrily. But, it turns out, Chavez has no qualms about insisting others do the shutting up.

This past week, a show by Spanish star Alejandro Sanz, set to take place Valentine's Day at Caracas' 15,000-seat Poliedro, a government-managed venue, was canceled after officials called for Sanz to be vetoed because of anti-Chavez comments he made three years ago.

The move, particularly coming from an allegedly democratic government, evokes the specter of the kind of censorship seen in Latin America during the military dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s, when many politically-minded artists were banned from the radio or censored from their country's popular music scene.

In this case, the reaction from Chavez's camp should put the artistic community on alert about its creative future inside Venezuela. It should also raise major questions about the motivations of a chief of state who actively courts certain artists—Sean Penn, Oliver Stone and Danny Glover—are Chavez enthusiasts who have visited the country—and actively seeks to discredit others.

Consider the original comments made by Sanz, an artist who gives political opinions when asked, but who—unlike more outspoken acts like Joan Manuel Serrat, Mercedes Sosa or even Manu or Juanes—has never advocated any particular political line. It happened during a 2004 press conference, when Sanz was asked his opinion on an anti-Chavez campaign that had collected more than 3 million signatures asking the president to step down.

"I wouldn't sing if 3 million people asked me not," Sanz was reported as saying. When asked if he didn't like the Venezuelan president, Sanz reportedly responded: "No. But I don't like many other presidents either, including my own."

Sanz's comments were printed and apparently remembered and filed. When concert promoters announced plans to have the artist perform at the Poliedro last November, government officials refused to grant the permit.

"If an artist comes to Venezuela to rally against Chavez, against the Bolivarian project, how do you think the people of this country would respond if he were to be allowed to use" the stadium, higher education minister Luis Acuna asked. But Acuna and his ministry reconsidered and allowed the show to be rescheduled for Feb. 14. However, a week before that date, the legislative council of the municipality of Caracas declared Sanz persona non grata and asked that his show be canceled. It also asked for an exhaustive review of all of Sanz's comments and opinions in regards to Chavez and Venezuela.

Backlash and censorship against artists for their political beliefs or manifestations are, of course, not new. In the Latin realm, Miami stands out as a city where, from 1996 to 2000, an ordinance banned those who had done business in Cuba from doing business in Miami-Dade County. This applied to artists who had performed in Cuba. The ordinance was lifted in 2000 after an American Civil Liberties Union lawsuit. In Latin America, however, this kind of direct government intervention hasn't been seen for years.

"I've never had something like that happen to me in 30 years promoting concerts in Latin America," one promoter says when asked for his opinion on the Sanz case. "Not even in the era of dictatorship in Argentina and Brazil. Then again, none of the Anglo rock artists I took there ever criticized the governments at the time."

As far as Venezuela goes, few artists had ventured any opinion, even in the face of growing government intervention in all areas, media and entertainment included.

The Sanz flap, however, has triggered more cries of artistic protest, including a letter of support signed by dozens of artists, including Jennifer Lopez, Marc Anthony, David Bialik and Miguel Bose. "Because we believe in a Latin America where we are all free to express our opinions, and believe in respecting different points of view, we sincerely hope there is a solution to this misunderstanding," the letter reads.

As for Sanz, in a subsequent interview with Agence France Presse, he lamented the turn of events. "It only demonstrates our opinions and we believe in respecting different points of view, we sincerely hope there is a solution to this misunderstanding," the letter reads.

"For Latin America, we are all free to express our opinions and we believe in respecting different points of view, we sincerely hope there is a solution to this misunderstanding," the letter reads.
SNOCAP ACQUIRE CONTRACT.

Global Spectrum contested, the aligned board of Park with new SMG management free. The venture expected to reports. According to Baidu.com, Google plans to MUSIC SECTOR ENTER.

Tom Petty, left, who obeyed the halftime show, and Maddaway, below, who had a song in a Diet Pepsi ad, parlayed the Super Bowl into huge digital sales increases.

The New York Giants weren’t the only ones to come away from Super Bowl XLI with a storybook ending. Artists who were tied into the game either through live performance or inclusion in advertisements also notched impressive victories, especially on the digital front.

Leading the charge, perhaps unsurprisingly, halftime show stars Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, who performed four of their best-known songs in a well-received 12-minute set. With more than 97 million viewers tuned in to the game—the most in Super Bowl history—Petty and his band dominated the ultimate platform for reaching consumers.

This issue, the group finds itself at the summit of the Top Pop Catalog chart with “Greatest Hits,” which shot up 196% in the week following the Super Bowl with sales of 33,000, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Meanwhile, the band’s “Anthology: Through the Years” jumped 240% to 70,000, taking the No. 6 spot on the same chart. But that’s just the tip of the iceberg. Petty collects his biggest trophy this issue for halftime show entry “Free Fallin.” The track shifted 63,000 digital copies, a gain of 306%, and bow at No. 10 on Hot Digital Songs. “I Won’t Back Down,” “American Girl” and “Runnin’ Down A Dream,” which made up the rest of Petty’s halftime set, all registered similarly notable climbs in the digital realm.

Mike Davis, executive VP/GM of Universal Music Enterprises, which controls Petty’s early catalog, says that advance preparation—especially online—was key to ensuring the best possible sales outcome.

“A huge part of our marketing was online-based,” Davis says. “With big television events, the online aspect is so important because people can see [the performance] happen onscreen and then immediately react and buy it online. With so much music being bought online now anyway, it’s an easy bull’s-eye to market to.”

Davis says iTunes was the biggest account on “Greatest Hits” and notes that 12,000 out of the 33,000 units shifted this week (or 36%) were digital.

But Universal was prepared at retail, too. “We were well-equipped and positioned at every single account,” he says. “We had ramp-up on this.”

“Greatest Hits” actually broke the top 10 on Top Pop Catalog several weeks before the game, and Davis says those results were “mostly driven by retail and Super Bowl bumpers telling people that Tom Petty would be performing.” In the past 10 weeks, the set climbed the chart 98-83-79-70-41-34-9-66-2-1.

Of course, not all the glory went to the Giants and Petty. An edge-of-your-seat matchup on the field meant viewers stayed glued to their TV screens for the duration of the game, only intensifying the attention already paid to that other major player on Super Sunday: commercial spots.

Although results on the retail side were generally underwhelming, several artists scored big with digital consumers thanks to prominent ad placements.

Haddaway’s 1993 Billboard Hot 100 hit “What Is Love?” soundtracked a stunned Diet Pepsi Max commercial that came in at No. 8 on USA Today’s Super Bowl Ad Meter results, a real-time consumer rating of the ads. The spot, which also earned mostly positive reviews in the media, propelled digital track sales of 22,000 in the week following the game, an increase of 200%, and secured the song a No. 68 entry on Hot Digital Songs.

Karim Hartmann of Germany-based Coconut Music, which owns the master recording, says that since the game’s already received offers from U.S. labels “to release the track again” and expects “compilation requests” to rise. She adds, “It was a wonderful feeling to see the ad in the Super Bowl.”

But even artists featured in spots that weren’t as well-received came away with digital sales wins. Doritos spotlighted “Crash the Super Bowl” contest winner
Los Tigres Del Zune
Microsoft Dips Into Regional Mexican

In an unusual branding move between a digital retailer and a regional Mexican act, Los Tigres del Norte is launching its new album on Fonovisa, "Raices," in partnership with Zune and MSN Latino. The campaign running up to the album's March 4 release has the non-English advertising its exclusive track for Zune, "Luaraka," in radio spots in New York and Los Angeles. The band has been heavily featured across Zune Marketplace this month and will get similar treatment on MSN Latino as its artist of the month for March. Video interviews with the group will be placed on MSN Latino's home page and entertainment and sports channels, with links to purchase the album.

The company's most aggressive bid for the Latin market thus far has been its Wisin & Yandel-branded device, released around the reggaeton duo's November album. The Tigres promotion, though on a smaller scale, is part of a more aggressive effort by the company to corner a relatively untapped Latin digital sales market. Digital albums made up just 1.6% of all Latin albums sold in 2007, according to Nielsen SoundScan, compared with digital's 10.4% share of overall album sales.

But within days of the beta-launch of Zune Social—the site that allows users to sample music for sale and recommend tracks to others—Los Tigres logged more than 100,000 streams, according to Peggy Dold, international VP for regional Mexican market-share leader Univision Music Group. "It was pretty astonishing to all of us," she says. "We know that our younger consumers are in the digital space. They're not massive, but they're there and they're growing." Zune's market research revealed that even though young Latinos like urban and pop music, regional Mexican music kept coming up as a way to identify with their culture," Zune cultural marketing senior manager Javier Farfan says. Though Univision Music Group has made exclusive content available to digital retailers in the past, the MSN Latino partnership offered additional exposure for Los Tigres' sales and touring markets in Mexico, Latin America and Spain, Dold says. She adds that for regional Mexican artists, the label and digital retailers, "it is necessary to collaborate at this stage to lead and to invite these consumers to consume their music in a different way than they have historically."

Los Tigres leader Jorge Hernandez says his audience has "little ways to get" in terms of adopting digital sales, but that the partnership should help and expose Los Tigres' music to fans of other genres.

Copyright Victory?
EU Commissioner McCrevey Backs Term Extension

LONDON—Europe's performing musicians face a rosier financial future thanks to a breakthrough in a long-fought copyright battle. On Feb. 14, European Union (EU) internal market commissioner Charlie McCrevey gave an unambiguous backing to industry demands for an extension on the term of copyright on sound recordings, an issue that has rumbled on since a European Commission (EC) review was launched in 2004. McCrevey has proposed an extension of the current 50-year term of protection to 95 years, a move designed to remove performers' status as "poor cousins of the music business."

The U.K. business, including PPL, the BPI and Musicians Union (MU), unanimously celebrated a famous win that, six months ago, few observers would have bet on. U2 manager Paul McGuinness, who read the riot act to internet service providers in his MIDEM keynote speech in January, described McCrevey's pitch as "fantastic news for artists and musicians" in Europe. "This is a proposal to give a fair deal to the next generation of music talent by giving new artists in Europe the same copyright term as their counterparts in the U.S."

IFPI chairman/CEO John Kennedy was similarly delighted, but warned that an extended term was not yet a fait accompli. "This is a very positive step in the right direction," he says. "The EC has made a big policy issue of concentrating on the knowledge economy and a big part of that is the creative industries. This is action to support the creative industries, and on a moral issue, to give an equalization of position regarding recording artists by comparison with songwriters and composers."

In his statement, McCrevey said, "I strongly believe that copyright protection for Europe's performers represents a moral right to control the use of their work and earn a living from their performances."

His words represent day and night when compared with the British government-backed Gowers Review on intellectual property, which in December 2006 recommended that the EC "does not change the status quo," and retain the 50-year term. When the British government sided last year with the controversial Gowers study, bringing the term of copyright plath to European lawmakers was seen as a last-ditch effort. McCrevey proved to have a sympathetic ear.

"I have not seen a convincing reason why a composer of music should benefit from a term of copyright which extends to the composer's life and 70 years beyond," McCrevey said, "while the performer should only enjoy 50 years, often not even covering his lifetime. It is the performer who gives life to the composition, and while most of us have no idea who wrote our favorite song, we can usually name the performer."

His plans would benefit all artists, including session musicians, for whom he proposes record companies establish a royalties fund. "Whilst clearly all recording artists will stand to gain from increasing the term of copyright protection for performers," MU general secretary John Smith says, "there can be no doubt that the countless number of session musicians who have contributed so significantly to the musical heritage of the U.K. will greet this recognition of the value of their work with particular delight and relief."

The commissioner also recommended the introduction of a "use it or lose it" provision that would enable a performer to change camps if a record company was unwilling to release a performance during the extended term. McCrevey reckons his proposal to extend the term should be ready for adoption by the EC—the EU's executive arm—before the 2008 summer break.

"It's the first step in the long EU legislative process," says Patrick Gardiner, a partner at law firm Eversheds. "But the fact that the commissioner supports the extension for performers is hugely encouraging."
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Mighty, Micro Music

At The Mobile World Congress, Music Is Tiny, But Ahead Of The Game

BARCELONA—Music biz execs arriving at the GSMA Mobile World Congress are left in little doubt about their industry’s place in the great scheme of things. MWC, the mobile telecommunication industry’s confab held here Feb. 11-14, is on such a grand scale that it makes MIDEM feel like a small get-together in the back room of a bar. MWC’s attendance is more than five times MIDEM’s (fewer than 10,000 this year), and the enormous site—complete with flamboyant fountains, pastel pink towers and an entire palace atop a hill—reminds Disneyland more than a conference center.

Music companies and other content providers are tucked away in Hall 7, the most remote of MWC’s eight buildings. But, as is often the case, it’s on the margins where the most innovation occurs—and Ballroom A’s own Mobile Backstage event, held in that same palace, showed that the music industry is setting the pace in the key area of mobile entertainment content, one of MWC’s buzz topics.

At Mobile Backstage, a GSMA/Nielsen production also powered by the Hollywood Reporter, the keynote revealed the relative progress made by music and movie industries. The Black Eyed Peas’ Will.I.Am was in no doubt that mobile already represents the future for musicians, praising the platform’s range of creative and marketing opportunities.

“The record industry is like a grandmother—and the artists of tomorrow need to do deals with their granddaughters,” he said to applaud. “It’s the mobile industry that will produce the Michael Jacksons and Madonnas of tomorrow.”

Compare that to Hollywood, where it took the old-school star wagon of Robert Redford to get the notion of mainstream mobile short films off the blocks via actress Isabella Rossellini’s SunChannel-backed “Green Porno” series of shorts.

Nonetheless, Redford told a packed Mobile Backstage event that mobile could revive the short-film genre, saying, “I’m here because I’m excited by new opportunities—suddenly there’s a venue for shorts. I believe there’s a future in cell phones.”

Nevertheless, there was much debate from movie panelists as to the viability of the mobile business, while music executives were able to point to high-profile deals like Noria Coines With Music and Omnifone’s MusicStation Max and unique Juniper Research figures predicting the global mobile music market will yield nearly $18 billion in revenue by 2012. Perhaps by then the music industry will stride through MWC’s gates on equal terms.

MWC SHORTS

■ Apple was absent, but the iPhone’s influence was not. Touch-screen technology was a hot topic, handset design at the top of many agendas and improved music functionality a key feature of many of the new handsets unveiled in Barcelona.

■ All four major labels have experimented with selling DRM-free online downloads, but most mobile music is still sold with some form of the technology. Real Networks senior VP of mobile business, Larry Moore’s was among those calling for more progress on the issue.

■ Wyrest smile of the event came from Sony Ericsson director/head of global content acquisition and partner management Martin Blomkvist during Mobile Backstage’s “Music Unlimited” panel when fellow panellist/Universal Music Group international senior VP of digital music Rob Wells declared, “Doing a deal with Universal isn’t complicated.” UMG is the only major not to have licensed Blomkvist’s RubyNow Arena service.

■ Redford said the last short film he watched on a mobile phone was Rossellini’s “Green Porno” series in which the actress depicts the sex lives of insects. “I love Alanis Morissette’s ‘My Humps’ video parody,” Will.I.Am said of the song he originally wrote. “But there should be publishing on that.”

GROOVE MOBILE ADDS 70,000 TRACKS

Mobile music service provider Groove Mobile has bolstered its music catalog by 70,000 tracks after signing a worldwide licensing deal with Indie Mobile. Works by the likes of Editors, Armand Van Helden, the Pigeon Detectives, Laurent Garnier and Royksopp make up the catalog for Indie Mobile. Groove Mobile says it has completed 60 million transactions since launching the service in 2004.

You make us proud!

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T-Pain
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Akon
Phil Tan
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Usher
Angie Stone
Randy Crawford
Ann Nesby
Ryan Shaw
Alice Smith
India.Arie
Joyce Simpson

OutKast
Soulja Boy
Trisha Yearwood
Alan Jackson
Bill Anderson
Freddy Cole
Casting Crowns
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TAKE IT TO THE BANK

That’s What Live Nation Did in Its New Partnership With Citi

Live Nation’s new marketing alliance with Citi could herald a wealth of mega-deals to come.

The Citi deal (billboard.biz, Feb. 13) is the first to fully leverage the live entertainment giant’s evolving, multifaceted music platform. The relationship has already manifested itself with two major events: Citi presents Billy Joel’s “Last Play at Shea” concert July 16 in New York, and the final North American leg of the Police reunion tour this summer, both promoted by Live Nation.

“This is a great example of what you can expect to see going forward from our company and the strategic partnerships we’re going to form with corporate America to expand our distribution platform, reach more fans directly where they are and sell all artist-related products,” Live Nation CEO of North American music Jason Garner says.

The deal, which makes Citi the “official credit card partner” of Live Nation in the United States, includes concerts, online ticketing and access to Live Nation Artists (right now, Madonna only) through VIP events and promotions.

While neither side would discuss terms of the agreement, it is believed to be a multiyear deal valued at as much as $110 million, or more during the term if multiple components come into play. It’s not a stretch to suggest that this is one of the most lucrative, comprehensive live entertainment sponsorship deals ever provided, all its multiple facets come into play and its potential is realized.

“You start to transform the model from having a sign in the amphitheater to being a strategic partner of a company and solving their needs and in exchange solving yours and the artists,” says Garner, who declined to comment on the financials.

Citi/Live Nation follows a previous deal that Live Nation had in place with American Express, but is much larger and more comprehensive in scope, reflective of Live Nation’s growing database of 26 million fans, a much improved online profile, expanded merchandising capabilities and deeper, longer-lasting relationships with artists. For example, in addition to the multiyear recording and promotion deal that Live Nation now has with Madonna, the company has long-term touring pacts in place with Korn, Maroon 5 and the Jonas Brothers.

Garner expects the artists with whom Live Nation works to avail themselves of this Citi opportunity when it’s not in conflict with another deal. Likewise, Citi will want to offer a broad menu of artist-related promotions. The partnership will be activated through Citi’s recently expanded Private Pass program, a promotion where Citi had previously partnered with Live Nation in private shows (Billboard, March 31, 2007).

The current deal is exponentially broader in scope and demographics. Citi claims a national footprint of more than 150 million credit card accounts, and Live Nation is banking that the alliance will help drive incremental ticket sales for itself and its artists, for all levels of seats and events, not just VIPs, presales and premium seating.

“We have never trouble selling the front row in New York City. That’s not the issue this industry has. In fact, we know that the highest demand is on the best tickets to the best shows in the best markets,” Garner says. “This program can go into El Paso (Texas) and help us sell the upper bowl of the arena or some lawn tickets in St. Louis. That really takes all of the marketing programs you’ve seen to date to a whole new level.”

Garner insists that even a program so broad in scope can be micromanaged out of Live Nation’s Los Angeles-based touring offices. “We’ve spent the last three years investing millions of dollars in our own database, which has grown to 26 million people,” he says. “We have proprietary software that we use to manage that database and to create marketing programs for artists. This allows us to take that program, put it on steroids, add our 26 million names with access to another 150 million names.”

In turn, Citi gets access to Live Nation’s 26 million names. “This isn’t them coming to us saying, ‘Here’s all our names,’” Garner says. “They’re a great big company with a very sophisticated internal database and marketing system saying to us, ‘Well, we’ll use our customer base to help you sell tickets,’ which in turn is obviously of great value to them.”

The deal could lead to other alliances with Citi, such as venue naming rights (Live Nation owns, operates or exclusively books 88 venues in North America) and further ties with Live Nation’s new ticketing operation to be launched next year.

It is anticipated that Citi’s brand messaging and logo will be integrated into online and offline initiatives as well as in signage and direct-mail campaigns and on livenation.com.

DIGITAL

BY JENNIFER NETHERBY

Socially Awkward?

Still Incredibly Trafficked, MySpace And Facebook Level Off

MySpace and Facebook got some more buzzkill news this week, with the latest Web traffic numbers showing fewer users at both sites in January.

That follows reports in the last couple of weeks that users are spending less time on the two sites and a couple of high-profile stories suggesting that people are tiring of social networking altogether. Even Bill Gates dropped his Facebook account this month in a move documented by the Wall Street Journal.

According to Internet tracker comScore, Facebook had 33.6 million unique visitors in January, 700,000 fewer than in December, while MySpace had 68.6 million visitors, 250,000 fewer users than December.

But the January slowdown may be more seasonal than anything, with users spending less time with online friends than with offline friends and family, according to comScore senior manager of industry analysis Andrew Lipsman.

Facebook saw a similar drop the previous year, losing 144,000 users between December 2006 and January 2007. “There are no real signs of weakness,” Lipsman says. “I do agree in general that growth rates for a fast-growing market do slow over time.”

But to suggest that there’s a declining momentum or social networking is jumping the shark is kind of a ridiculous notion.”

In the last year, MySpace has grown 15% with the number of users leveling off around 70 million, according to comScore. During the same period, Facebook has nearly doubled in size to roughly 34 million users each month.

MySpace put out a Feb. 11 announcement hyping its January growth in page views, up 13%, and the time users spent on the site. Users spent an average of 204 minutes on MySpace, 30 minutes more time on average than its younger rival Facebook, which MySpace referred to only as an unnamed competitor that lost users during the month.

But those numbers are a bit misleading. Both sites saw declines in time spent online and page views in December. Lipsman says. January page views and time spent on MySpace were back up near the level they were at in November.

The drop in users doesn’t seem to be raising any concerns in the industry.

“As more and more people experiment with social networking, there are more and more sites with social networking,” Universal Music senior VP of digital business development Cameo Carlson says. “I don’t think it’s going away. People are expanding into where other networks are.”

SLOWING GROWTH

Seven Months Of Static Traffic

For all the hype about social networking sites, the traffic numbers show they may be slowing down.

I don’t think it’s going away. People are expanding into where other networks are.

—CAMEO CARLSON, UNIVERSAL MUSIC

SOURCE: (comscore), US Unique Visitors

Facebook

MySpace

Traffic (in million users

Thousands of Unique Visitors

Jan 2008

Jan 2007

Dec 2007

Dec 2006

Nov 2007

Nov 2006

OCT

NOV

DEC

JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

JUN

JUL

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WINNER
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First, "Hannah Montana" reinvented the secondary ticket market when her sold-out concert tour lead to frantic parents scooting high and low to get seats for their kids. Now, in the wake of that success, "Hannah Montana" has changed another industry: the concert film.

For those unfamiliar with the Disney Channel series, Miley Cyrus plays a normal girl by day, popstar by night. The TV show averages upwards of 5 million viewers per week, so the concert tour earned $24.2 million last year, and the franchise has four CDs on the Billboard 200. But there's a twist to the story. "Hannah Montana" has breached the final frontier: success in movie theaters. "Hannah Montana" momentum has pushed "Hannah Montana/Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds Concert Tour" to become the top-grossing concert film of all time, earning $53.4 million at the box office in two weeks and eclipsing No. 2 concert film, Madonna's 1991 biopic "Truth or Dare," which tallied $15 million (see chart, right).

It's a striking success that may reveal the secrets to how to unlock a segment of the industry that has long been an afterthought or a novelty play. By targeting a vociferous fan base and utilizing new technology that makes the experience more like a live concert and less like a cheesy monster movie, the concert film is on the cusp of becoming a viable—and very profitable—means to reach fans.

There are lessons to be learned from the strategy behind "Hannah Montana." The concert film, like the rest of the empire, targeted teens girls—8- to 12-year-olds. By bringing it to the multiplex, however, Disney tapped into a slightly older demographic that's generally underserved at the movies. Those who are too cool for "Enchanted" but not quite old enough yet for "27 Dresses.

In addition, it's a sign that young audiences don't need a narrative story to a "High School Musical" to be persuaded to see their heroes on the big screen. A much cheaper-to-make concert film at the sweet spot of the property's popularity will suffice for this audience, and can reap big rewards. The budget for "Hannah Montana," for example, is estimated to be $6.5 million.

While the traditional music business doesn't generally see that winfall of profits—these are generally carved among the theaters, the distributors and the artists, depending on wildly varying deals—they aren't left out in the cold. One label source says that labels and publishers may benefit from concert films on several levels, ranging from negotiated licenses upfront for use of the music, to reaching new potential fans, to residual catalog sales. "People come out of the movie and the DVD isn't available yet," the source says, "so they buy a greater hits." The featured artist's label is often in great position to negotiate rights to the soundtracks of such films as well.

The planning for "Hannah Montana" came before her sold-out concert tour, according to Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures Group president Mark Zoradi—but the method by which the movie's tickets went on sale was directly inspired by the tour. "We decided to put pre-tickets on sale on Dec. 1," he says. "It was unprecedented to put them on sale that early, but we knew how hard it would be for parents and kids to get tickets. And then, when we saw the pre-sales for the movie, we knew at that point we had something special."

Originally, the film was released as a savvy piece of counterprogramming, for the tweens that may not have had big money on the big game. "Hannah Montana" was originally intended to be a one-week limited run during Super Bowl weekend on the 600 screens that can handle digital 3-D projection. The immediate response to the film, however, which took in $8.6 million on its first day, persuaded Disney to make the run open-ended.

But beyond the demographic strategy, there's another reason why the success of "Hannah Montana" is noteworthy—its 3-D projection. "It really has changed," Zoradi says of the technology. "The glasses are no longer the red-blue-green ones. There's no eye strain, no headache. In digital projection houses, you get more light on the screen, it looks better, and the sound is fantastic.

"While 3-D was not the essential key to success—"that movie could have been filmed in 16mm black and white and still made $25 million," one filmmaker says—there's another film that uses a new, HDTV digital form of the technology that is hoping to make a mark in "Montana." After earning more than $2 million on 61 screens in limited release, "U23D" will expand to about 500 theaters Feb. 22.

Produced by Jazzy Digital Entertainment and distributed by National Geographic Cinema Ventures, "U23D" follows the band on the Latin- and South-American legs of its Vertigo tour. U2 came about the project at the suggestion of producer John Modell, former owner of the Baltimore Ravens. Modell, long interested in big-ticket technology for stadiums, also became intrigued in LED Video for in-stadium displays. In the late 1990s, there was only one other group using the technology—and that was U2, for its PopMart tour, under the guidance of its visual effects mastermind, Catherine Owens. In 2005, Modell became interested in using 3-D technology for Super Bowl projection, and, after showing off the technology to U2's management, the idea for a film was born. Owens, alongside Mark Pellington, who helmed U2's "One" video, stepped in as director, and Modell pitched in with Jazzy's technology. (He serves on Jazzy Digital's board of directors.)

"We could not have worked with a better group," says Modell, who serves as producer on the movie. "They have a fearlessness when it comes to embracing new things and new ways to present their shows.

Using nine HD cameras situated throughout the stadiums where U2 played, Jazzy captured not just the performances onstage, but also the intensity of the roughly 100,000-strong crowds that watched the shows in Buenos Aires and Mexico City.

Proving that everything old is new again, a film in HD 3-D requires a different editing scheme than the quick-cut chops of MTV, one that better suits the rhythms of a concert film. "3-D is best experienced with the longer shot," says producer Peter Shapiro, who recently made the MAX concert film "All Access: Front Row, Backstage." "It gives your eyes time to adjust and feel like you're in the movement."

The implications for a non-geeky, non-Godzilla-popping-out-from-behind-the-sky-scraper-type of concert film are profound for the music and film industries, analysts say. "This is the next generation for concert films," says Jeff Borch, a box-office analyst at Exhibitor Relations. "If you can't be front and center at the concert, then you see it in 3-D. It's a great experience, up close and personal."

In fact, the only thing that could limit the box office of concert films like "Montana" and "U23D," however, is the technology to show the film is only available in about 1,100 theaters worldwide. But National Geographic Entertainment president David Beal says that the success of "Montana" can only serve to convince more theater owners to install the capabilities to show these kinds of films—and theatergoers to give concert films a try.

"3-D, before, was really just a cheesy effect, but this is really amazing," says Beal, who previously collaborated with U2's Larry Mullen and Adam Clayton on the theme for "Mission: Impossible." "When you look at the state of the music business now, this is really the great tool to reawake how fantastic concerts can be. People got cynical when tickets got so expensive.

"On the horizon, many theater owners are expected to install the projection equipment needed to show the films by December 2009, when director James Cameron releases his first film since "Titanic." It's an HD 3-D film about a space battle called "Avatar," starring Sigourney Weaver and Zoe Saldana, with a precisely $300 million budget.

But given all the hardcore technology involved, does the visceral feeling of being at a concert come through in 3-D? Modell says yes.

"In Buenos Aires, U2 was really delivering quite a performance," Modell recalls. "There was not a dry eye, people were weeping. And I thought, "Wow, if we can get some of this access to the people in the theater, that would be great.' When I went to see the movie at the Bridge [in Los Angeles], I heard the person behind me say, 'I don't want to leave the show.' I watched them—people actually left, then came back in and bought another ticket. It wasn't just a gimmick to them. They were reacting to the emotion of the concert."
DEBUT SINGLE

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ALBUM DROPPING SPRING 2008!

Digital by Jennifer Nethery

Sticking It Out
USB Grows As A Distribution Opportunity

When Universal band the Mars Volta put out its latest album, "The Bellfam in Goliath," last month, the act made an offering to its hardcore fans that is becoming increasingly popular—and creative. Instead of a CD or digital album, fans could buy a $10 USB drive designed like a Osijia board plectrume that comes with a digital rights management-free version of the album and the promise of more bonus materials in coming months. Users simply plug the device into their computer's USB drive and then listen to the album or download it into their music library.

The Mars Volta joins a growing number of acts that have experimented with USB releases in recent months, including Jennifer Lopez, Ringo Starr and Matchbox Twenty (see story, below).

Even more are expected in coming months. Austin-based All Access, the company behind USB releases from Matchbox Twenty and Starr, has signed deals with EMI, Warner Music Group and Universal Music Group to make USB bracelets for other artists.

"The selling point to the labels is a really good one—it's a marriage between merchandising and music so that people will at least buy it instead of stealing it because they want the merchandise." All Access CEO Chris Guggenheim says. "It's the only for sure non-CD product.

At this point, the releases are more offered as collectibles to build fan loyalty rather than make money.

The cost to put an album out on a USB drive is pricer than to release it on CD, partly because bands aren't placing bulk orders and partly because flash drives cost more than disc. Guggenheim says that bracelets generally cost $5-$7 per piece, with the price dropping the more units ordered. But costs can go up to $17 per unit or more for flash drives with more memory and additional features.

Universal doesn't expect to make money on the 2,000 USB units it put out for the Mars Volta release or on the 2,000 USB units it will put out for Erykah Badu's Feb. 26 release, "Nu Amerykah," Universal senior VP of digital business development Cameo Carlson says. But it does expect to keep fans connected to both acts. Those who buy the Mars Volta USB stick get a new extra on the 29th of each month, ranging from bonus tracks to wallpaper. Badu will create new bonus features for fans throughout the year for those who buy "Nu Amerykah" on USB.

"It's not for everybody," Carlson says. "It's for the hardcore fan that wants tons of pictures, who really wants something more and the opportunity to get new stuff every month." For bands, USB drives offer a cooler way to get their music to fans in a souvenir package that fans can wear or carry with them, giving the band free promotion. Starr wore a wristband containing his latest album, "Live," to the Grammy Awards, getting hype for the release that a CD jewel case certainly wouldn't. Starr's sales aren't bad either; Guggenheim says that about one wristband is sold for every three CDs.

In October, Matchbox Twenty released its latest album, "Exile on Mainstreet," on USB bracelets, putting out an initial 25,000 units. Manager Michael Lippman says "tens of thousands" have been sold. "USB is going to be the future," Lippman says. "You don't have to download it on a computer, you put it in and it comes up, and there's plenty of room to add additional material."

Some indie bands have turned to USB drives for releases because they can order fewer units and spend less money than they would for an order of 1,000 CDs, says Ed Donnelly, president of Los Angeles-based Addera, which makes devices for Barenaked Ladies, Jars of Clay and indie bands like Los Angeles' Kilbola. Addera can place orders for as few as 100 USB drives preloaded with their album and other goodies.

Along with the songs from the album, Matchbox Twenty included its first video, behind-the-scenes footage, pictures and an Internet link to the band's site.

Based on the success of its album sales on USB, the band is now selling bracelets of its live show at concerts during its current tour.

All Access replicates the bracelets after a concert in minutes. The bracelets are quickly sent to the merchandising booths, where fans can buy a recording of the show they just saw as they leave. Bracelets are priced equal to what the band sells its concert T-shirt for.

Barenaked Ladies, Willie Nelson, Jars of Clay and the Black Crows also have sold USB bracelets at concerts.

Bands typically sell to 5% of their audience at a show, depending on how tech-savvy the crowd is. For concert bracelets, Addera and All Access do revenue-sharing deals. Rather than an upfront fee to send an engineer and equipment to a show to make the recordings and replicate the bracelets.

Universal's Guggenheim says that contracts and how artists are compensated for USB releases are still evolving and vary. That's why the label is picky about which bands it chooses for the specialized releases.

"We're only putting out things that supervise fans and artists," she says. "It's not something every artist needs or wants or fans would want."
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Eloise Bryan
1957 – 2008

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For the family’s wishes, contributions should be made to: The TJ Martell Foundation/Eloise Bryan Memorial Fund. For contact information, visit their website at www.tjmartellfoundation.org
You Ask, We Answer

A Billboard Latin Music Awards FAQ

With the announcement of the finalists to the 19th annual Billboard Latin Music Awards comes inevitable confusion regarding the names that appear in each of the 54 categories. In an effort to quell all doubts, this week’s Notas addresses the questions we’re most frequently asked.

As usual, we underscore that Billboard does not “nominate” artists to its awards. Our “finalists” are determined solely by their performance on Billboard’s sales and airplay charts, as informed by Nielsen SoundScan and BDS.

What is the difference between a “publisher” and a “publishing corporation”? A publisher is a single entity, whereas a publishing corporation can own or administer several publishers. In the Publishing Corporation category, parent companies receive 100% of the points compiled by publishers in which they own at least 50% equity, and 25% of the points compiled by publishers they administer but don’t own.

My act was high on your year-end charts, but is not part of your finalists for the awards. Why? The eligibility period for the Billboard year-end charts is different from that of the Latin Music Awards. Our year-end charts are based on chart performance from the Dec. 2, 2006, issue through Nov. 24, 2007. The Latin Music Awards finalists and eventual winners are determined by their performance on the charts during a one-year period from the Feb. 10, 2007, issue through this year’s Feb. 1 issue. Also, the awards only honor new titles.

Why February to January? In order to give a fair chance to the many acts that release their albums and singles in the fourth quarter.

What matters more when it comes to the airplay awards: number of weeks on the chart or peak position? Both count. Radio charts reflect estimated audience, based on times of day a song is played, and Arbitron audience, based on the most recent ratings available for each week a song is on the chart.

How do you determine the labels of the year? By combining the gross audience impressions for each of a label’s charting songs for each week those songs appeared on the chart.

This is my act’s third album, yet it is a finalist in a “new” artist category. Why? Acts will be considered “new” if this marks the first time they enter our charts, regardless of how many albums they have released.

Is the criteria for Hot Latin Song of the year the same as the criteria for, say, the Pop or Regional Mexican Airplay Song of the year? The method is the same, but Hot Latin Song awards are based exclusively on the Hot Latin Songs chart while format chart awards are based on each specific chart.

What is the difference between the “album” categories and the “song” or “playdate” categories? “Album” categories are based on sales, as reported by Nielsen SoundScan. “Song” and “playdate” categories are based on airplay, as reported by Nielsen BDS.

How do you determine the finalists for producer and songwriter of the year? By combining audience impressions of produced tracks and compositions for each week they appear on Hot Latin Songs.

This year you have a new Latin ringmaster of the year award. Why isn’t there a Latin digital song category? We haven’t launched genome-based digital song lists yet, and not enough Latin titles have charted on the Hot Digital Songs chart to have a meaningful category.

BUDGET BENEFITS

Discount Product Lines Providing Big-Time Sales

In the year-and-a-half that Univision Music Group’s Linea de Oro budget catalog line has been on the market, the regional Mexican series has moved more than 2.4 million CDs and DVDs, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

The company’s newest budget line, Epoca Dorada, refreshes that series with 12-track albums that retail for as low as $5.98. Epoca Dorada titles from Los Temerarios, Los Bukis and others hold six slots on Billboard’s Top Latin Albums chart this week. Re-releases from that line are in good company, with another 11 titles outside of Epoca Dorada at an MSRP of $8.98 or lower on this week’s chart.

But with a dearth of new albums this quarter, that’s just the beginning of a torrent of budget catalog.

“One of the segments keeping the market afloat is the budget catalog at the mass merchants,” says Guillermo Page, VP of Sony BMG Norte’s commercial division. “In March, Sony BMG will release 10 new titles in its multigenre Diez de Colleción line, which has grown to 500 titles in three years and added a budget DVD component last year.

Despite growth in sales, with a retail price of less than $7, “it’s really a penny business,” Page says, given the high cost of licensing hit songs, and increasing competition in the price range from majors and independent labels alike.

A sales manager at another major label, who declined to be named, says a price point of $5.98 was simply too low to match. At such a price, “you’re not getting a lot of content and the packaging isn’t that great.”

Ritmo Latino West Coast buyer Jose Sanchez says that although the Epoca Dorada lines do offer a lot of music for the price, the song selections are low on well-known tracks—an attribute that prevents cannibalization of front-line product.

Univision Music Group sales VP Jeff Young puts Linea de Oro sales at 3.5 million units, when mom-and-pop stores are included. But unlike that line, which varies between eight and 12 tracks per CD, Epoca Dorada has a dozen songs across the board.

In addition to the price, he credits a nationwide retail positioning program that began Feb. 1, as well as an advertising blitz on Univision and Azteca America, for moving Epoca Dorada’s sales.

“Lots of times we’ll pay for positioning with advertising funds. This time we didn’t have to do that,” Young says, since retailers were given the biggest discount for positioning for four or five titles at a time.

For news and developments relating to the Billboard Latin Music Awards, see yolotelemundo.com/premiosbillboard.
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EMI Exodus

Indie Labels Jump Ship From Caroline

Every week, I get a handful of e-mails about new distribution partnerships. But one that came in a couple of weeks ago piqued my interest: Redeye Distribution announced that it had signed deals with Bella Union and Warp Records, both of which were formerly distributed by Caroline/EMI.

By now, everyone knows that the state of affairs at EMI are in flux. New owner Guy Hands has stated publicly that he plans to cut acts that don't meet sales expectations, and will lay off as many as 2,000 staff members. But will concerns about EMI's restructuring lead indie labels to an exodus from Caroline, or are Warp and Bella Union isolated cases?

While Billboard certainly found labels that are happy with Caroline, Redeye president Tor Hanson says, "This is a trend. Caroline has folded everything into the EMIs sales department, and they don't have the indie background. They can only get so far down their lists with record store buyers before their eyes glaze over, and indies tend to be at the bottom of the list." Indeed, the last year has seen a number of labels, including Drag City, Ultra, Ipecac and Kranky, exit the service.

For Warp Records label manager Priya Dewan, the biggest issue was Caroline's insistence that she sign a digital deal with the company when she renewed the label's contract. A Caroline representative, who offered no other comment on the record, did confirm that all new and renewing labels would no longer have the option of working with third-party digital distributors and would have to do their physical and digital distribution through Caroline. According to sources at other major-affiliated indie distribution services, not all of them require digital as part of new agreements, but one source predicts, "It is certainly moving in that direction."

"We are very selective about our online sales and see it as an ownership issue," Dewan says. "We are hesitant to do some subscription services, for example, because we feel that they really devalue music. And had we re-signed with Caroline, we would have had no say or veto power when deciding who could have our music online."

Dewan says that staff cuts and diminished communication with Caroline representatives also contributed to Warp's decision to leave. "You had a handful of people doing what a hundred people had done before," she says. "I don't fault the EMI reps; they didn't ask to get a catalog of stuff that they are not familiar with and buyers aren't interested in. I did enjoy working with them for a long time, but their services changed."

Other indies, however, say they're still satisfied with their relationships with Caroline. "A lot of people overreacted to the news about EMI and Guy Hands," says Eva Weiss, head of sales and retail marketing at the World's Fair group of labels, who spent several years working at Caroline. "I've found that the professional level is higher at Caroline than it has ever been. She also says the EMI family offers indies certain opportunities: being part of the label's deal with Amazon and Peep, for instance, and EMI's New York Daily News download campaign, where some editions of the paper contain inserts with a code redeemable for up to three track downloads from the Daily News Web site. Weiss' boss, World's Fair co-founder Kevin Wortis, sees the situation from both sides. Bella Union is part of his group, as is Daptoxe, which left Caroline for Redeye last year. Wortis says that during the course of his research on distributors, Redeye was praised for being efficient and easy to work with, as well as being interested in vinyl and catalog sales. He also felt that Bella Union would receive more attention as "a bigger fish in a smaller pond," and that Bella Union's Americana-focused roster would fit better artistically at Redeye.

But Wortis is also quick to defend Caroline, which distributes a number of other labels in his group, including Def Jux. "They are doing what needs to be done," he says. "While the culture was somewhat diluted with the layoffs, the reps who came in have stepped up, and we've seen our chain sales move up. I would say they've been a huge contributor to World's Fair having their biggest year ever in 2007."

For record stores, the changes at Caroline haven't meant any changes in business. "I was bummed when we lost our local sales guy because I liked him, but it hasn't affected business at all," Eric Levin of Atlanta record store Criminal Records says. "Labels play musical chairs with distributors all the time. It's only a blip until it becomes a trend."
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Doves Take Flight On TV
Awards Will Air Live On Gospel Music Channel

After bouncing around on various networks and in syndication, the Gospel Music Assn.'s (GMA) Dove Awards have landed a new TV home on the Gospel Music Channel, an Atlanta-based cable network airing Christian/gospel music content 24 hours a day.

The multiyear agreement begins with the 2008 Doves, which will be broadcast live April 23 from Nashville's Grand Ole Opry House. GMC has committed to multiple additional airings of the program as well as developing other programming around the awards show, such as a new series leading up to the event, "The Road to the Doves."

"The Dove Awards celebrate all styles, much like the Gospel Music Channel," GMC founder/president Charles Humbard says. "We share very similar mission and values with them, and we feel like the premier night for gospel and Christian music fans should be on the premier channel for gospel and Christian music fans."

GMA president/CEO John Styll also sees the two entities as compatible. "The programming philosophy of GMC is very similar to the GMA philosophy," he says. "Any kind of faith-based music regardless of the style is what the GMA embraces and that's what the Gospel Music Channel embraces. They define gospel as anything from contemporary Christian to a black choir to a Southern quartet to a punk band. So does the GMA, so there's a good editorial fit."

The last time the Doves aired live was in 2002 on the PAX network. In recent years, the program has aired in syndication. "It's hard staying in one place. Networks change. The PAX network is a different network now. The Family Channel is a different network now. TNN is a different network now," Styll says. "I think we're a little bit of a square peg in a round hole in some ways and we're aware that this is a very different kind of show for most networks to air. It's a challenge."

GMC, which launched in 2004, seems a perfect fit. According to Humbard, the network will be in 45 million homes by the end of this year, and is the fastest-growing cable network. Comparable to CMT, MTV, VH1, GAC and other music-driven channels. GMC offers Christian/gospel music fans a place to see the genres established and up-and-coming talent.

Industry insiders are pleased that the show will be live this year, offering greater visibility and better marketing opportunities. "I feel like that's something that's been very lacking in the category," says BMI's Brian Lankford-Jones. "It's a chance to feature the various genres of gospel and give artists recognition."

News of the renewal of the program was announced last month and the show is pegged for airing on the same day as Mike Lacy's "Christians Rock!" on Guide Channel.

The American Bible Society has signed on as the presenting sponsor for the 39th annual awards, as well as the designated charity of the event. Plans call for additional Dove sponsors to be announced in coming weeks.

Casting Crowns, the Clark Sisters, Natalie Grant, Point of Grace, Skillet, Chris Tomlin and TobyMac are the nominees in the artist of the year category. Casting Crowns frontman Mark Hall is the year's most-nominated artist with six nods, including male vocalist and song of the year.

THE CLARK SISTERS, CASTING CROWNS (above) and NATALIE GRANT (inset) are up for the top prizes at the Dove Awards, which will be broadcast for the first time by the Gospel Music Channel.

"Unlike years past, no one is going to know who won until they watch. An awards show needs the drama," Humbard says. Since the awards were previously syndicated, media attending the show announced the winners prior to its airing.

The Doves are the centerpiece of GMA Music Week, the gospel/Christian industry's annual gathering, which is populated with seminars, showcases and workshops for radio, retail, labels, agents and promoters. Styll says there are plans this year to further raise the profile of the Doves with additional activities. There will be an opportunity for media to cover arrivals, similar to red carpet events at other awards shows. GMA will also host an after-party for Dove attendees.

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Touring With Tim
McGraw’s Partners Are More Than Sponsors

Tim McGraw has this tour sponsorship thing down tight. The financial rewards resulting from his sponsorship deals effectively translate into a heightened, interactive experience for ticket-buying fans.

Last year, the Rascal-8-sponsored Soul2Soul II tour featuring McGraw and his wife Faith Hill captured the inaugural Billboard Concert Marketing & Promotion Award at the Billboard Touring Conference, determined by more than 30,000 online votes from fans and the industry at billboard.com and billboard.biz. The award takes into consideration creativity, interactivity and the degree to which the sponsorship improves the overall fan experience—and sells tickets.

Back on his own now for a headlining large venue run, McGraw and his StyleSonic label have some new corporate partners onboard, manager Scott Siman says. KC Masterpiece and Kingsford are sponsoring McGraw’s 2008 Live Your Voice tour, which begins May 9 in Tampa, Fla., with special guests Jason Aldean and Halfway to Hazard (billboard.biz, Jan. 31). Fritos is the “official snack” of the tour and presenter of the StyleSonic Stage, on which artists chosen by McGraw—including Lance Miller and Catherine Raney—will perform prior to the start of each concert. Frito-Lay previously assisted with the launch of McGraw’s “Let It Go” album.

“I really don’t even like to call our associations ‘sponsorships’ anymore,” Siman says. “It boils down to creating an integrated partnership between the artist and the companies. We have some traditional tour sponsorship elements, but the real excitement is in building programs that are meaningful and true to the artist, brand and the company brand.”

The multilayered KC Masterpiece and Kingsford sponsorship deal was brokered by Laura Huttless at Echo, MAC Presents president Marcie Allen Cardwell, Charles Mordy at Kingsford, Eric Carlock at KC Masterpiece and Siman’s team at RPM Management. McGraw’s agent is Rod Essig at Creative Artists Agency.

The two brands will host the VIP Pre-Show Party where McGraw performs a private acoustic set prior to each show. Fan/brand site Echo, a division of Ticketmaster, will integrate the sponsorships through online fan and brand initiatives.

“This will be our first year with KC and Kingsford and they are the perfect fit,” Siman says. “There is going to be a great party atmosphere out there with Fritos, Hazard and Tim as we transition back to Tim’s solo career after two mega years with Faith.”

As an added promotion, McGraw is making StyleSonic music available for free download to everyone who buys a ticket to the tour this year. Details will be available on timmgaw.com prior to the tour’s launch.

“I am really excited about the free music program Tim has put in place with his StyleSonic family of artists,” Siman says. “Basically, everyone that buys a ticket is going to be able to get some great music for download. It’s our way of saying ‘thank you’ to the fans for their support and giving them a chance to check out some of the music projects that Tim is really passionate about.”

In this election year, Rock the Vote will also be along for the ride. “Tim asked us to take the theme of ‘Live Your Voice’ and build on that with our partners this year,” Siman says. “Each of our partners has come up with unique ways to build on that theme and you can expect more details about each program in the coming days.”

Live Nation is a promoter of the Live Your Voice tour, under Brian O’Connell’s direction, and the tour will play primarily Live Nation sheds.

McGraw will also play one-off headlining dates at several festivals prior to the tour, including the Houston Livestock & Rodeo March 3, his debut appearance at the New Orleans Jazz Festival April 27 and the Stagecoach Festival May 4.

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GLOBAL NEWSLINE

9 MILLION OF ‘1’
The Beatles’ 2000 greatest-hits release “1” (Apple/Parlophone) has received IFPI Platinum Europe Award, making it one of the three biggest-selling albums of the past decade. Each award marks shipments of 1 million albums in Europe. The Beatles’ set has now equaled the 9 million shipments of Celine Dion’s Columbia albums “Falling Into You” (1996) and “Let’s Talk About Love” (1997). In the IFPI’s roundup for the last quarter of 2007, five-time Grammy Award-winner Amy Winehouse’s “Back to Black” (Universal Island) collected a third award, while James Blunt got his sixth for “Back to Bedlam” (Atlantic) and Green Day’s “American Idiot” (Reprise) achieved its fourth award. The IFPI says 13 other albums gained Platinum Europe Awards for the first time during the period. In 2007, 57 albums received IFPI Platinum Awards, compared with 46 in 2006.

—André Paine

CPCWON’TAPPEALLEVY RULING
The Canadian Private Copying Collective says it will not appeal a recent Federal Court of Appeal decision that rejected its application to levy a tariff on digital music players. The levy of up to $75 Canadian ($74) on MP3 players—designed to compensate creators for individuals copying music files from their personal collections—was approved by regulator the Copyright Board. The levy was opposed by various retail groups, as well as the Canadian Recording Industry Assn. On Jan. 10, an appeals court decision held that the Copyright Board could not justify the levy based upon current legislation. In a statement, the CPCC said that while it still believes creators should receive compensation for private copying, the organization could not justify taking the case further. The CPCC has collected $199 million Canadian ($197 million) since 1999 from levies on such blank media as CD-Rs.

—Robert Thompson

U.K. CONCERT CHANNEL LAUNCHING
Warner Music International’s video-production arm Warner Music Entertainment has joined U.K. independent Beggars Group, live-music organizer Mama Group and online video developer Perform Group to develop a U.K.-based, Internet-delivered TV service devoted to live concerts. The Lovelive Channel is scheduled to launch this year. Most of the streamed concert videos will be ad-funded and free to consumers, with a section of exclusive premium live shows that viewers will pay for. Up to 500 shows per year will be filmed at five of Mama Group’s live music venues, including London’s Jazz Café and the Garage.

—Juliana Koranteng

AIM TO HAND OUT GOVT’ CASH
A £650,000 ($1.2 million) support program has been launched to assist London-based music businesses in taking advantage of digital opportunities. Local government body the London Development Agency is providing the funding for the 18-month program, which launches in April and will be managed by independent labels’ body AIM. The funding will provide free and subsidized advice/information plus training and recruitment for small music companies, and is intended to help such industry members as artists, venues, publishers, managers and labels. There will be a particular focus on underrepresented groups in the music industry, such as companies led by women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

—André Paine

GLOBAL BY RICHARD SMIRKE

CAPITAL GAINS?
Liverpool’s Local Biz Banks On Year As Cultural Hot Spot
LIVERPOOL, England—“Liverpool left you, but I never let you down,” a jubilant Ringo Starr sang as he performed at the launch party for his hometown’s year as European Capital of Culture. The spectacular Jan. 11 concert in the city’s center, which also featured Eurythmics’ Dave Stewart and local alt-rock stars the Wombats, grabbed widespread media attention—but some local execs are concerned about what will be left behind in the city once the stars have moved on.

Being Capital of Culture “has really benefited Liverpool in that it’s got a lot more people to invest in the town center,” says Alan Wills, managing director of Liverpool-based label Deltasonic, home to local alternative acts the Zombies and the Coral. “But I don’t know if culture has benefited at all.” Further celebrations are planned throughout 2008, with organizer Liverpool Culture Co. (LCC) estimating the Capital of Culture title will attract an extra 2 million tourists and boost the Northwest economy by £100 million ($197 million).

Musical highlights include Paul McCartney at the 35,000-capacity Anfield Stadium June 1 and conductor Simon Rattle returning to his birthplace for a series of concerts in October and November. The city will also play host to the BBC Electric Proms in October and the MTV Europe Awards Nov. 6. Local sources indicate that Capital of Culture status was a key factor in attracting both events. But a series of high-profile rows and

GLOBAL BY STEVE McCLURE

Acing Asia
5 Steps Toward Apple Breaking The iPhone
TOKYO—Apple says it plans to launch the iPhone in Asia—most likely Japan and mainland China—this year, after selling 4 million handsets elsewhere in the world since launch. But with the region’s consumers already enjoying a wide choice of sophisticated handsets and mobile services, it may face an uphill struggle. Billboard identifies the key factors that will determine the iPhone’s fate in Asia.

FIND THE RIGHT OPERATING PARTNER
Apple recently held talks with Japanese telecoms NTT DoCoMo and SoftBank Mobile, plus China Mobile and China Unicom about possible iPhone deals. The biggest challenge for them in Japan is that they don’t have the same kind of leverage with the carriers that they have elsewhere,” says Steve Myers, president of Tokyo-based software developer Theta Music Technologies. He says it’s unlikely that Japan’s “big three” carriers—NTT, KDDI and SoftBank—will accept the terms Apple has been able to negotiate in other markets. Mark Natkin, managing director of Beijing-based telecommunications/IT consultancy Marbridge, says that while China Mobile has not publicly disclosed its required revenue share, “Apple’s proposal to take a 20%-30% cut of income from iPhone users appears to have been too high.”

COMPETE WITH LOCAL PLAYERS
In Japan, the second-generation iPhone faces a market where, according to the Telecommunications Carriers Assn. of Japan, 72% of the 100 million mobile subscribers have high-capacity third-generation handsets. Official figures for handset market share are not available, but industry sources indicate Sharp is the market leader with around 24%, followed by Panasonic with 13%.

Competition in China—where Nokia holds a dominant 35.3% market share, according to a survey by Analysts International—will be similarly intense, says Ralph Simon, London-based chairman emeritus of Mobile Entertainment Forum—Americas, “but whether they will be able to execute Apple’s elegant aesthetic is doubtful.” Simon thinks the iPhone will appeal to business- and status-conscious users, but says its high price will put it out of reach of most of China’s 500 million mobile users.
resignations at the LCC, including that of former artistic director Robyn Archer, have marred proceedings. Many close to Liverpool's music scene doubt the event's long-term impact on the city's creative industries.

Though Wombats singer Matthew Murphy says the city's status as Capital of Culture is a "great thing," he asks: "Are these tourists just going to come over and visit the Beatles Museums, or are they actually going to feel a part of the culture and go to live music venues?"

LCC music program manager Gordon Ross says a number of new enterprises are having a strong impact, citing the Sound Board—a funding initiative for Liverpool promoters—and Liverpool Sound City, a four-day international music festival and conference, which will be held for the first time May 27-30.

"The whole reason for working with local artists, venues and promoters is because they've been doing this for a long time," Ross says. "It's not a case of suddenly picking someone up and saying, 'Start a fantastic music project,' then turning off the tap and they don't know what to do. We're working with those people who are hopefully increasing their abilities so that there's an improved support network for all the music that happens in the city."

Although not directly funded by the LCC, the opening of the 10,000-capacity Liverpool Echo Arena in January is cited by Ross as another sign of the improved infrastructure resulting from Capital of Culture status.

Mike Deane, co-director of Liverpool Music Week, an annual live music showcase that takes place every November and has received financial support from the LCC since 2004, says he feels 100% positive about the LCC.

"I don't think that we would have grown as much as we did in the first four or five years without [their] help," he adds, citing an increase in attendance figures from 26,000 in 2006 to around 50,000 last year.

"Everyone is worried about what infrastructure there is to keep everything in place once the party rolls out," Deane says. "But there's going to be lots of things that will stay. Whether it's an event like us or a new venue like the [Echo] Arena, there will be plenty of legacy from Capital of Culture."

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MELBOURNE—As the Australian festival business enjoys another record summer, genre-specific events are targeting the mainstream by booking crossover acts and signing sponsorship deals.

While official figures for the entire market are not yet available, Matt High, GM of alternative event Meredith Music Festival, says, "Numbers were up by 30% across the board," while his own festival doubled its attendance to 10,000 in December. The likes of Big Day Out (all-ages, 26,000) and Good Vibrations (electronic, 90,000) have also posted record attendance figures.

Increased consumer demand for these events has inspired Australia's other genre-specific festivals to open up their bills, thereby attracting increased brand sponsorship.

Queensland's country music festival, the Toyota National Music Muster, held in August, is attracting interest this year from clothing companies and job-seek firms, in addition to its traditional partners Toyota vans, Castlemaine beer and Bundaberg Rum. Sponsorship has now grown to 20% of the festival's annual $4.5 million Australian ($4 million) revenue, up from 14%-15% in 2004.

Festival booker Brian Samson attributes this demand to his decision to book such mainstream rock acts as Jimmy Barnes and Thirsty McGarve. When he first booked Barnes in 2005, diehard country fans were so negative, he says, "I was petrified." But audiences have since grown by 10%.

Younger fans, who assume they wouldn't like country music, become exposed to it and return the next year for all six days instead of just one, he says.

Barnes says it was also a turning point for his career.

"Doing that one show, with 40,000 cowboy hats getting flung in the air, opened doors for me and widened my audience," the singer says, noting that a meeting backstage with country singer Troy Cassar-Daley led to the two writing and recording together. Now, Barnes' music is regularly played on country radio.

Elsewhere, August/September's Noosa Jazz Festival drew a record 20,000 with Latin-rock superstar Chico Bouchan liner, while Easterfest, formerly the Australian Gospel Music Festival, has announced "Australian Idol" runner-up Matt Corby among its acts.

This year's East Coast Blues & Roots Festival in Byron Bay, which draws 80,000 fans during the Easter holidays, includes such mainstream acts as Ian Brown, KT Tunstall and Australian rock band Eskimo Joe.

Though festival co-founder Peter Noble insists the bills are compiled for artistic, rather than commercial, reasons, he adds: "With too many look-alike festivals with the same bands coming up in recent times, we need to hold on to a game and keep things fresh."

According to Noble, the event's sponsorships total just $400,000 Australian ($359,000) of its $10 million Australian ($8 million) revenue, and he says its brand partners—which include Tootsies Extra Dry beer, Bundaberg Rum, Jim Beam and Blackberry—accept they have to keep a low profile on site. Last year's trial of showing ads on giant screens next to stages led to complaints from patrons, and has been abandoned.

But such concerns have not discouraged brands from wanting to become involved in the festival scene.

Queensland-based content aggregator Mercury Mobility says it is "looking at festivals as one of our avenues to cross-promote" as it targets the rollout of its new "You're My Numb!" mobile channel at the 16-24 demographic.

And Milpitas, Calif.-based memory card manufacturer SanDisk, a first-time sponsor of the Feb 9-17 Good Vibrations festival, says it's now looking at other Australian music events.

"We want to be associated with the progressive music culture," the company's Los Angeles-based global marketing director Dan Hogan says. "Most people there with phones already, but they probably don't know how many features they would have."
Managed Care
California Supreme Court Bolsters Contracts

Personal managers have always been nervous about California’s talent agencies law. If a manager books just one gig for an artist without having a talent agency’s license, the manager risks losing all commissions earned under the artist-management contract and having the labor commissioner void that contract.

But in a recent ruling, the California Supreme Court declared that the management contract is severable, so some of the contract terms may still be enforced. This decision hits home with me.

Under the law, no individual may procure or solicit employment for an artist (actors, musical artists, directors, producers, etc.) without having a talent agency license. The law is meant to protect artists from unscrupulous individuals. Artists may void their contracts and get commissions returned from unlicensed agents.

In the 1990s, some court decisions shook up the management community. After Arsenio Hall became a hit on late-night TV, he petitioned the labor commissioner to get out of his management contract with X Management. The contract was voided and all commissions were ordered returned to Hall. In another case, attorney Brad Waisbren couldn’t enforce his contract for commissions from artists working under the banner Peppercorn Productions because he procured work for the owners.

The managers could have avoided these situations by getting talent agent licenses, which required posting a $10,000 bond. But most managers just don’t get around to doing that or can’t afford the bond.

I was one of them. Sixteen years ago, a young artist came into my law office in Los Angeles and plopped several hundred-dollar bills on my desk. A reputable indie label was interested in him, so he wanted to hire me as his lawyer.

I closed the deal and handled the contract. As I was driving him to the label’s office to sign the record deal, the 1992 L.A. riots broke out. We were stuck for several hours in traffic fleeing Hollywood where rioters were heading. We bonded. He asked me to be his manager.

So I referred him to another lawyer and began working as his manager. I hooked him up with a producer/engineer/client of mine to record the album at a discount. I brought in professional musician friends for the recording. I helped the artist find young musicians to build his image.

My commissions only amounted to $3,000, which I let him keep to invest in his music.

But by then, we were both ready to part ways. When I returned to L.A., I was preparing a document to voluntarily terminate my management contract. But instead of calling me and asking how we should handle ending our contract, he hired a lawyer, who sent me a nasty demand letter. I had booked his client without an agent’s license, the lawyer wrote. I must immediately terminate the contract.

Insulted, I said “no.” The artist’s lawyer petitioned the labor commissioner. I fought it out of principle—and won. I tore up the contract when the artist paid me $3,000 for my trouble.

A win was rare back then.

But now, the California Supreme Court has held that while a manager may be required to return commissions for procuring work for an artist, the remainder of the contract may stay in force.

“For the personal manager who truly acts as a personal manager,” the Honorable Kathryn Werdegar wrote for the court, “an isolated instance of procurements does not automatically bar recovery for services that could lawfully be provided without a license.”
Cardiology

Digital Download Cards Are Here, But Will They Sell?

All the major labels—and even Wal-Mart and iTunes—are moving ahead with their own digital album cards in an attempt to spur impulse purchases at retailers that don’t specialize in music. It’s also hoped that the cards will be a safeguard against music specialty stores reducing CD space.

So far iTunes and Sony BMG Music Entertainment have issued album-specific download gift cards. But Universal Music Group (UMG), EMI and Warner Music Group (WMG) are also saying, privately or publicly, that they will test the new product.

But with everyone moving ahead, one big question remains: Do digital album cards sell? Except for some success at Starbucks, so far the answer is no, distribution executives say. Not surprising, if you consider that the consumer doesn’t really know what they are.

To date, the only marketing that Retail Track has seen on them was in the Jan. 27 Best Buy circular. Also, stores have been inconsistent in the placement they give them, and the cards themselves apparently will have different looks, depending on which company issues them.

Meanwhile, in January, the RIAA held a meeting at the Consumer Electronics Show in an attempt to bring some uniformity to the marketing and presentation of the cards so customers won’t be confused.

Undaunted by results so far, WMG publicly confirmed for the first time at a Feb. 6 earning conference call with analysts that it will offer the cards. “We also want to support the Sony initiative for the digital card,” WMG chairman Edgar Bronfman Jr. said. “We think that can be a potentially very positive format as well, and particularly expand the retail availability of music by taking that format into nontraditional music outlets.”

Wal-Mart also is supposedly getting into the act, sources say, and wants to put out its own digital album cards. It will carry them in a new 4-foot space devoted to various digital music products, including the labels’ digital download cards and supposedly MP3 players and iPods.

A Wal-Mart representative declines to comment on specific plans, but says, “Our goal will always be to provide customers the products they are looking for that meet their personal and gift-giving needs in new technologies, including MP3 players and download cards.”

Interestingly, Nielsen SoundScan’s ruling on how the album download gift cards will be counted, even though well-meaning, will increase the confusion surrounding them, distribution and sales executives say. For gift cards where the only option to redeem them is for the album specified on the card (for instance, those from Sony BMG), those sales will be counted as a physical CD album at the time of purchase if it triggers a business process at the record company that is substantially similar to the sale of a physical CD, according to a memo Nielsen SoundScan sent retail accounts.

But if the customer has the option to redeem the digital album card for content other than what the card displays (for example, product from UMG), those sales will be reported as a digital album sale on the point of redemption. (No word yet on how WMG and EMI Music cards will work or how they’ll be counted.)

Some sales executives are disappointed that the cards will be counted either with digital albums or CD albums because they want to see how the cards themselves are selling. But Nielsen SoundScan doesn’t break out the tracking of a new configuration until it becomes established. Otherwise, in the past it would have jumped through hoops ultimately for nothing to track such failed formats as the Mini-Disc, the Digital Compact Cassette, Super Audio CD and DVD Audio. But SoundScan will begin offering its clients an offline chart report on the cards, as it does for the DualDisc format, in the next few weeks, says Rob Sisco, president of Nielsen Music and COO of Nielsen Entertainment East Coast operations.

Mo’ Pitkins is one of the premier performance venues in New York City, it has hosted headliners including The Strokes, Moby and Flight Of The Concorde. A 5-story, 22’ wide, 4-unit (licensed bar and restaurant, performance space, office and a residential duplex with a roof deck) beautifully renovated mix-use building, located in the thriving East Village neighborhood.

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Melvin Benn

With festivals suddenly all the rage stateside, Billboard checks in with a British promoter who has been making them happen for more than 25 years.

While music festivals in the United States are multiplying at a feverish pace, Melvin Benn is a seasoned professional at gathering the masses in the United Kingdom, from the club level to mega-events. The veteran British promoter is managing director of live music specialist Festival Republic, born last summer from the United Kingdom's Mean Fiddler Music Group.

Benn's portfolio includes such internationally recognized summer fests as Reading and Leeds, new boutique fest Latitude and Glastonbury, for which Festival Republic is production organizer.

Benn, longtime managing director of Mean Fiddler, dropped the company's familiar name and sold nearly all its venues in a multimillion-pound deal with U.K.-based MAMA Group in August 2007, only retaining London venues Astoria and neighboring Astoria 2—both of which face demolition in preparation for the 2012 Olympic Games. Benn also recently partnered with C3 Presents for the Vineland Festival in New Jersey (since put on hold until 2009 due to market saturation), Festival Republic's first North American foothold.

At the end of a frenetic year of developments, Benn moved the company to new premises in central London, from northwest London's Harlesden, where the original Mean Fiddler club opened for business in 1982. Fiddler founder Vince Power sold it in 2005 to an investment vehicle controlled by Live Nation U.K. and Irish promoter Denis Desmond's Gaiety Investments.

Benn chatted with Billboard on the developments that have shaped his business and his summertime plans for the years ahead.

How do you view the events of the past 12 months?
It was a pretty interesting period [laughs]. My whole philosophy in life is to not stand still, to move forward and try new things, and it has been a time of doing just that. With the festivals, [2007] was probably the wettest year I've ever had to encounter, but the events and the bands were great. The really big change was the selling of Mean Fiddler and the name change.

Was there a need for wholesale change to move away from Vince Power's legacy?
That certainly came into play. Vince and I were shareholders in what was the original Mean Fiddler and the [publicly listed company]. When Live Nation and Denis [Desmond] bought in, Vince had to go, and there was a desire for me to stay. Because Live Nation and Denis had been my competitors, it took a while for me to believe I could work with them. [But] the relationship couldn't be better.

When it came to selling Mean Fiddler and the name, my initial thought was, "No chance." Initially, staff were aghast at the thought. Live Nation's Paul Latham suggested I should re-create the company in my own image and in the image of my team. It was an opportunity to have a wholesale relook at the company strategy and what we do.

What is the Astoria's status?
I'm reasonably certain it won't be [bulldozed] until 2010, 2011 at the earliest. Working on the basis that the 2012 London Olympics project will go pretty close to the wire, the majority of above the ground work won't actually start until 2011, 2012, and I can't see any reason to knock the venues down for the sake of knocking them down.

Do you see value in club venues?
The Mean Fiddler venues were very disparate in their nature. What that meant was that without a lot of direct, one-to-one attention from the managing director of the group—myself—or someone of equal stature, the venues struggled. Anyone knows my focus has always been about the festivals, and the venues suffered a bit. It's not that I don't see any value in clubland. MAMA can bring that individual attention.

The Reading and Leeds Festivals sponsorship deals with brewer Carling have now expired. Is Festival Republic moving away from headline sponsors?
We've been working with Carling for nine years, and it was good, profitable, and it worked for us. But it had come to a point where it was bringing no additional value to the festival. They were scaling back their interest in it. If a sponsor isn't wanting to be onboard in a proactive manner, then what's the point of being onboard? They need to be an active partner and Carling had ceased to be that. And we just needed a change, really. I wanted to reclaim the name, Reading and Leeds Festivals.

Is the door shut for headline sponsors?
It's not entirely out of the question. But there would have to be a lot of oil on the hinges.

How will the C3 partnership work?
It's 50/50 straight up and down. They are friends, and that's a good way to start. We like each other, we get along well together and even socialize together. We resolved a few years ago that at some point we'd do a festival together, because we thought it would be great to combine the two cultures of America and Europe. It made sense and we can have some fun along the way.

What will translate from the European festivals?
We don't know yet. The European side certainly tends to be a bit edgier than the American style. The American festivals flip between Metallica and Kanye West—that just wouldn't happen in Europe. I don't think we could go all out with European programming, because the American public [wouldn't] be ready for it. Whether or not we have a main stage and a second main stage—in the way all the big American festivals do—remains to be seen. In Britain, there is a culture of every stage competing for an audience. We're looking at whether to put comedy, cinema or art into Vineland.

Any plans for additional U.S. events?
In 2009, I certainly want to try and add another festival. I haven't finalized whether that will be with C3 or others. This is all happening so quickly. I certainly have every reason to think I'd want to continue working with C3.

What about launching festivals in Asia or Australia?
I've been looking really closely at one in the Far East. But at the moment, the time just isn't right. I'd love to do a festival in Australia, more than anything. I love its people, and the outlook on life, but it's a bloody long way away. My head is not ready for it at the moment.

Is there room for growth in U.K. and European festivals?
There's always room for growth. I want to add and create certainly one other property in Europe, whether that's in the U.K. or mainland Europe. I haven't decided yet. There's one particular thing I'm trying to develop, but haven't quite moved forward on that. It's just a time issue really.

Are you concerned that 2007's severe weather will dampen the success of future festivals?
I don't think we're likely to see such severity again in many a year. Flash flooding is something that potentially will be with us forever, but the frequency of it isn't something I'm overly worried about. The last time I had weather like this was 1982. If that sort of thing comes along every 15 or 16 years, I would be pretty OK with it.

Because Live Nation and Denis Desmond had been my competitors, it took awhile for me to believe I could work with them.
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The Glammy Music And Glitzy Style Of Their Debut Made PANIC AT THE DISCO Superstars. Will Fans Follow Their Stripped Down New Sound And Look?

By Cortney Harding
Photography By Patrick Fraser
Changes that Panic at the Disco has made to its image during the course of the last year, it's hard not to read the lyrics to its new album's opening song as a preemptive strike against critics. "Oh, how it's been so long/We're so sorry we've been gone/We were busy writing songs/For you," bassist Jon Walker sings, by way of apology for the two-and-a-half-year lag between 2005's "A Fever You Can't Sweat Out" and the new " Pretty, Odd," due March 25 via Fueled by Ramen/Atlantic.  

Then, he launches into lines meant to comfort fans who have no doubt noticed their favorite band now looks less like Queen and more like the Kinks: "You don't have to worry cause we're still the same band."  

Lyricist/guitarist Ryan Ross describes the song as "a lighthearted way to make an important statement." But despite Ross' insistence that things in Panic-land are business as usual, the fact is, a number of things have changed since the band burst on the scene in 2005, resplendent in layers of makeup and surrounded by circus performers.

The band shed one member (bassist Brent Wilson) and replaced him with Walker. The members traded their Redi Slimman-style black suits for vests, cravats and floral patterns. And perhaps most crucially, they toned down the bombastic, glammy sound of their first record, replacing it with a stripped-down approach that, at times, recalls the Beatles and Bright Eyes. But it was that bombastic, glammy sound that made them stars in the first place. And with Panic at the Disco's history being so tied to it, will it be easy to shed?

**MAKING THE BAND**

Fueled by Ramen president John Janick was introduced to Panic by Fall Out Boy's Pete Wentz, who has his own imprint, Decaydance, through Fueled by Ramen. Decaydance and Fueled by Ramen have also co-signed the Hussling Sound and Cobra Starship (see story, page 35), with Wentz acting as the label's A&R man and fueled by Ramen taking on the marketing. "Wentz told me I had to come to L.A. to check out this new band that had contacted him online," Janick says. "I went and hung out with them, listened to some songs and signed them. At that point, they had never even played a show and were still in high school. We waited until they graduated, then flew them to [Washington] D.C. to make the record."  

Realizing he was dealing with a band that had almost no pre-existing fan base, Janick sent it on the road with Fall Out Boy and set about coordinating an online campaign. Using sites like MySpace and PureVolume, both of which are popular with Fall Out Boy's key demographic, he started to build a grass-roots effort, aligning the new band with the more established one.  

The strategy seemed to pay off—Fueled by Ramen shipped 15,000 copies of Panic's first record, 10,000 sold in the first week. Modern rock stations began spinning songs, despite Janick not actively working the record to radio. "I didn't want them to be thrown in everyone's faces," he says. Instead, the band took its time, continuing to move 4,000 copies per week while shooting its first video, for the song "I Write Sins Not Tragedies." That clip, an over-the-top production that featured the Lucent Dossier Vaudeville Cirque, premiered Jan. 17, 2006, on MTV's "TRL." The video was the first time many viewers saw Panic, and it was crucial in establishing the visuals that would be associated with the band. For the remainder of 2006, the band was a road dog, selling out theaters before embarking on an arena tour. The accompanying stage sets and visuals were slightly and intricate; shows featured ballerinas and acrobats, while Panic's members went through so much makeup that MAC Cosmetics offered to set them up with a supply of eye-liner in exchange for an endorsement.  

They released a series of big-budget videos, again depicting the members as something straight out of the Moulin Rouge, culminating in the band taking home MTV's video of the year award for "Sins" in 2006. Two months prior, "Feve" had peaked at No. 13 on the Billboard 200, before being certified platinum a month later. To date, it has sold 1.67 million copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. After its banner year in 2006, Panic retreated to a cabin in the woods in early 2007 to begin work on its follow-up. Ross describes the initial effort as "a short story set to music. I was mostly working on it by myself, and while the other guys liked it, it wasn't as good as I wanted it to be."  

Janick says the band did some rough recordings in April and May, but by June, it was clear that it wanted to change direction. "Those recordings are on the shelf," Janick says when asked if they would ever be released as B-sides or fan specials. "And because the quality of the recording isn't that great, they will probably stay on the shelf."  

Wentz, who describes his role in the band's development as "Oh-Wan living in the desert," says he heard the lost record and that it sounded like "a bizarre musical about wolves. It felt a bit forced."  

The death of that project, Ross says, "gave me a lot of insight. It became easier to move forward after that was done." Ross adopted the Beatles as his new role models for the next take on the second Panic album. "They weren't afraid to try things and do what they wanted to do," he says.  

"We wanted to grow, and we were really over the circus theme at that point," he continues. "We went out in the woods and got new clothes and all grew beards. Jon [and frontman] Brendon [Urie] wrote songs for the record, and it became more of a band effort and less about me."  

In the summer of 2007, Panic took the opportunity to try out new songs, performing them at several festivals around Europe. For a band whose garish live show had been its staple, it also took a risk by performing, as Wentz puts it, "wearing flannel shirts and jeans. They looked like they were coming out to do covers of the Band."  

If performing looking like Pearl Jam circa 1993 was the band's first airing of its new self, then the next act represented the group throwing down the gauntlet. After two years of being officially known as "Panic at the Disco," the band removed the exclamation point from its name. "We ruined a lot of MySpace names with that move," Urie says sarcastically. "You look silly now if your MySpace name is John at the Disco."  

The fans who haunt the band's MySpace and Facebook pages noticed the change and took to the forums to engage in some grammatically incorrect debates, with an even split between those calling the band a sellout and those writing the minor change off as harmless. Wentz compares the change to "when Kentucky Fried Chicken changed their name to KFC. At the end of the day, it's still chicken."  

For the band, at least, the decision was steeped in meaning. "Dropping the exclamation point was our way of drawing a line in the sand," Ross says. "We have a new record and we feel like a new band. We were all tied of it, and we went ahead and got rid of it."  

"This is going to be like when Kiss took of their makeup," Wentz says. "At the end of 2006, Panic had really just become too known for their look and the circus visual.  

"As artists, they had to reinvent themselves," he continues. "Otherwise you hit a glass ceiling. When I signed them, Brendon was 17 and he didn't have much life experience. He came to see me in California and stayed up all night because he was so excited about not having his parents tell him to go to bed."  

"I have spent time thinking about how our fans will respond to this," Ross says. "But a lot of them are close to our age, and they have also changed between being 18 and 22. I honestly
believe our fans are going to grow with us. They will see that this is a natural evolution and not something calculated.

AN ‘ODD’ KIND OF MARKETING

The “Pretty. Odd.” campaign kicked into high gear Dec. 11, shortly after Billboard announced the release date of the new record. A series of puzzles began to appear on the band’s Web site, with the solution to the first being, “You don’t have to worry.” A second puzzle revealed samples from a song on the upcoming album, and the third led to a blog entry on MySpace, which updated the progress of the album and offered a rough version of the song “We’re So Starving.”

“The label had the original idea for the puzzle and the Web site, but we thought it was a great way to remind people that we were still a band,” Ross says. “It did get a lot of attention. Some people were annoyed by it, but a lot of other people thought it was cool.”

“Panic are a huge online band,” Janick says. “This was definitely an attempt to kick-start the viral marketing and get the chatter going.” As far as specifically addressing Panic’s image shift, Janick says the band wants to get its music out there and let kids judge for themselves. “The kids will see the video and the visuals and hear the songs,” he says. “We’re going to expose them to the new sound and let them decide.”

Janick and the band then set Jan. 29 as the day to unleash the single “Nine in the Afternoon” on MySpace and iTunes. In its first week at modern rock radio, the song entered the chart at No. 29, the second-highest debut of 2008. This week the track is No. 18.

Janick struck a deal with iTunes that placed the band’s ad on the main page of the store, and offered two pre-order bundles: a $12.99 deluxe edition that contained exclusive audio and video, and a standard version for $9.99. He also took the opportunity to maximize the unique arrangement he has with Panic, although he doesn’t have a 360-degree deal with the band. Fueled by Ramen is the service company for the Panic Web store and sells some merchandise designs into retail in addition to releasing its recordings. Under this agreement, the band receives the bulk of the profit from Web sales.

“Because of this, we are able to do more marketing in a more coordinated fashion,” Janick says. “For instance, Panic is going on tour with Hush Sound this spring, and we are able to do things like add a button that says, ‘Do you want to add the Panic record?’ when people go to checkout after buying the Hush Sound album.”

Janick and the band also collaborated to put together a deluxe version of the album that retails for $5.50. In addition to the new CD, the box contains a vinyl version of the album, a DVD and intricate artwork. Despite initial concerns about the high price of the box, given the relatively young age of the average fan, Janick says that about one-quarter of the 10,000 that were produced have been sold.

In the physical realm, Janick is working with retailer Hot Topic to promote a promo bundle that features a shirt along with a card with a code that buyers can redeem online to get a copy of the single. “My goal is to make it easy and rewarding the kids who support the band,” he says.

Those kids will also have a chance to check out “Panic version 2.0,” as Crush Management’s Bob McLynn dub the band, when the group headlines the Honda Civic tour this spring and summer. “This band is all about touring,” McLynn says. “Honda has been a good partner for some of our other bands, and we want to focus on marketing the tour as much as possible.”

As far as other branding opportunities, all the involved parties agree that the band members aren’t about to go out and endorse products at random. “The band is hesitant when it comes to branding,” McLynn says. Wentz says he has no plans to include Panic in ads for his other ventures, including Clandestine Industries, saying, “There really is no purposeful crossover. We’re all just friends.”

“You have to stand by the things you put your name on,” Ross says. “I might do some clothing design with my girlfriend at some point, but it’s still mostly an idea.” And when asked about the Panic “brand,” Urie sounds taken aback. “I’d never thought about us as a brand,” he says. “But I guess we do have a certain image.”

Indeed, whether fans will embrace the new Panic is secondary to the band’s own creative momentum.

“It’s important for us to reinvent our sound and our visual,” Urie says. “We were really young when we wrote the first record, and that teenage angst paid off well. But we CAN make a sequel.”

Sheeran notes that Phantom Planet’s “You’re So Rad,” which was released last month, has sold 11,000 copies, and that the band’s presence in markets where touring, radio and video are strong.” Janick also notes that Phantom Planet’s deal does not include publishing.

For The 11 Fueled By Ramen Bands Currently On The Roster, One Contract Doesn’t Fit All

Deal: 360
Includes merchandise, touring, street teams, fan clubs and publishing
BANDS: (with sales for last album): 360, Paramore (“Riot!,” 705,000), Panic At The Disco (“A Fever You Can’t Sweat Out,” 215,000), New Found Glory (“The Story of/frame: 360,000, on Sony)

This type of deal creates various synergies. Fueled by Ramen president John Janick says. “In Paramore’s case, we sold singles with T-shirts pre-album release and bundled T-shirts with albums week of release in retail where both included large-scale in-store marketing.” Janick says the band is also allowing up internationally now, “so we are strategically working the merchandise in specific markets and stepping up the band’s presence in markets where touring, radio and video are strong.” Janick also notes that Phantom Planet’s deal does not include publishing.

Deal: 240
Includes merchandise, publishing and fan clubs
BANDS: Cute Is What We Aim For (“The Same Old Blood Rush With A New Touch,” 200,000)

“We launched Cute Is What We Aim For’s debut album two years ago with an innovative Web store promotion where we launched a series of T-shirts every couple of weeks leading up to the release of the album,” Janick says. “The shirts contained lyrics from a song that we posted the same day online for streaming. When a customer purchased the shirt and album pre-order bundle they received the ringtone for the song as a value-added piece.”

Deal: 120
Includes retail and touring
BANDS: This Providence (“This Providence,” 28,000)

“This is a developing band, so this allowed us to establish a foundation with the merchandise and develop the brand as they grow,” says Janick. “We had the ability to get in to Hot Topic and other retailers that would not normally carry merch from a developing band because we had the Fueled By Ramen name behind it.”

Deal: 90
Includes act’s Web store in addition to releasing its records
BANDS: Cobra Starship (“Viva La Cobra,” 350,000), Fall Out Boy (“Infinity on High,” 1.25 million), Gym Class Heroes (“As Cruel As School Children,” 304,000), Powerspace (“Wicks of Passion,” 8,000), the Hush Sound (“Like Vines,” 63,000), the Academy Is... (“Santi,” 119,000), the Cab (“Debut record out in April”)

“We are launching new lines of merchandise for our bands like Cobra Starship approximately three times a year,” Janick says. “We also create limited-edition items to create excitement as well as generate more sales. We are able to offer our artists an amazing solution because we are able to sell merchandise – albums, digital music, videos and ringtones on one place.”

Note: The sales figures are for week ending Jan. 25, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

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AMY WINEHOUSE, shown here reacting to her song of the year win, performed via satellite from London due to visa issues.

DAFT PUNK'S surprise appearance, its first on U.S. TV, elevated KANYE WEST'S (inset) performance of 'Stronger.'

ALICIA KEYS opened the Grammy Awards with a virtual duet with the late FRANK SINATRA.

ARETHA FRANKLIN had the crowd on its feet during 'Chain of Fools.' Franklin was honored as MusiCares' Person of the Year.

AMY'S RIGHT-HAND MAN MARK RONSON won the non-classical producer of the year Grammy Award, largely on the strength of his production on Amy Winehouse's "Back to Black." "I wish she was here. This is really her night. I'm just along for the ride," Ronson said backstage, who called winning "a blur and surreal." He recalled playing "Rehab" for Winehouse's A&R for the first time. "About the first 15 seconds in, he said, 'Rewind, rewind!' he said, pointing his finger in the air. "I didn't think there would be dollar signs lighting up," Ronson added that there aren't any concrete plans for he and Winehouse to collaborate again, but noted she is featured on "Valerie," the new single from his album "Version." He is also producing Australian artist Daniel Merriweather's upcoming album, which will be released on the Ronson imprint Allido.
The Mood Was Upbeat At The 50th Annual Grammys, And Afterward, The Parties Raged. But Did The Good Times Carry Over To Retail? BY ED CHRISTMAN

Gala, But Gold?

While Amy Winehouse and Herbie Hancock are being rewarded saleswise for their Grammy Award wins, overall, the show is not driving music purchases to the degree that it usually does, merchants say.

Alicia Keys' "As I Am" and the Grammy compilation of the 2008 nominees also saw sales upticks from the 50th annual show.

Indeed, based on early numbers from Nielsen SoundScan's Building chart, which shows sales of next issue's chart week through Tuesday, it appears Winehouse and Hancock may both crack the top 10 of the Billboard 200. Other Grammys acts that saw growth in the early part of the week include Foo Fighters, Josh Groban, Patti, Rihanna and Kanye West. In particular, the Foo's "Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace" looks like it could jump into the top 15 or 20 on this week's chart (see page 56); it's No. 65.

Billboard estimates that the merchants that report to Nielsen SoundScan's Building chart represent 79% of the U.S. retail market. Still, not all physical retailers were seeing increased traffic to such an extent. "We saw Amy and Herbie sales pick up definitely, but compared to years past, the ripple effect from the Grammys was a pimple," Alliance Entertainment Corp. (AEC) senior VP Robert DeFreitas says.

It's possible that much of the uptick happened in the digital realm; many of the same artists who enjoyed growth on the Building chart also saw spikes on this week's charts, which would include Sunday night's digital sales.

In some years, a Grammy show might drive as much as 1 million or 2 million in incremental sales. In 2007, when Grammys sales and Valentine's Day came in the same week, sales jumped to 11.1 million from 9.8 million. The two events first appeared in the same tracking week in 2004, when sales of 18.1 million were larger than any week outside of a November or December.

In the past, the album of the year winner has been rewarded. In 1995, Tony Bennett's "MTV Unplugged" went from 4,000 weeks scans prior to the show to 21,000 units the week after, while in 2001 Steely Dan's "Two Against Nature" went from 3,700 to 32,000 units. In 2002, the "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" soundtrack rocketed from 58,000 to 209,000 units.

Nevertheless, the Grammys still can drive sales for some acts. As she was at the Feb. 10 awards show, Winehouse is turning out to be the big winner at retail.

The biggest pickup is coming at discount department stores like Kmart and Wal-Mart as well as online stores, merchants and executives at Universal Music Group say.

Winehouse's "Back to Black," has been selling steadily all along at core music stores, but her performance on the show was probably the first time that the mainstream consumer got a feel for her music. Consequently, most big-box stores saw a tenfold increase in Winehouse sales on Monday, Feb. 11, compared to the Monday before the show. At core music stores, the increase is more in the 4-1 to 7-1 range, according to retailers and a UMG executive.

"Her album is getting a huge lift because the racks weren't selling it as much before the show," says a source at one company that supplies racked accounts with music.

But AEC's DeFreitas says that while the bigger boxes are feeling a sales increase, it's not as big as the increase that the online merchants are experiencing for the winners and performers.

At Amazon, Winehouse rose to No. 1 on the site's sales chart immediately after the show, while Hancock's "River: The Joni Letters" went from No. 27 to No. 2, by Tuesday, Feb. 12, it was the No. 1 title.

At iTunes, the Winehouse and Hancock albums shot into the online retailer's top 10 after the show, with the former sitting at No. 2 on Tuesday afternoon and the latter at No. 3, "Across the Universe," whose cast members performed during the Grammys, also jumped into the top 10 at No. 6.

While most merchants loaded up on Winehouse—sources say that Universal had 250,000 units in stores in anticipation—the same apparently was not true for Hancock. There were about 50,000 copies of the album in the marketplace, but retailers that didn't anticipate extra demand were shut out for a few days.

One account that had no problem handling Hancock's demand was Amazon, which was offering an exclusive version of his album with extra tracks in time for delivery Feb. 12.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS

Grammy ratings—like those of most major awards shows—are trending down. But a closer look at the demographics shows an alarming lack of interest among young viewers. At the peak of the teen-pop era, for example, young men almost surpassed their older demo brethren; now, they hardly watch at all.

Overall Ratings

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THE UNSIGNED UNDERDOG
Composer MARIA SCHNEIDER took home the best instrumental composition Grammy Award for "Cerulean Skies" after putting her album out through ArtistShare, which allows fans to fund production costs. With her Grammy win, "I can tell all those fans through my Web site, 'We did it!'" said Schneider, who was accompanied at the awards by a fan-turned-executive producer. "We're in the best time for artists, because artists can take control of owning their own music and producing their own music."

THE BIG WINNER
An ebullient Herbie Hancock was thrilled for his album of the year win for "River: The Joni Letters," marking the first time an African-American jazz artist won the award and the second that a jazz instrumentalist triumphed. "It's immeasurable how surprised I am," he said. "I didn't even hear my name at first, and I was waiting to hear my name, and they said it, and I didn't hear it. Then I heard the word 'River,' and I said, 'Is this true? Is this happening?'"

Hancock said he hadn't had a chance to talk to Joni Mitchell yet. "I have no idea what she may be going through," he said. And don't expect any sort of battle to be waged between Hancock and Kanye West, who many thought was the favorite in the category. "Kanye and I are cool," he said. "I saw him earlier, and I said, 'Good luck!' and he said, 'I'd love to wish you good luck . . . but I don't want you to get album of the year.'"

When asked if he was thought of as a conservative choice in comparison to other nominees like West and Amy Winehouse, Hancock laughed. "This is the first time I've been thought of as a conservative choice. What's conservative about me? Maybe the way I dress?"
EMI chief GUY HANDS hit the company's party with new Capitol artist KATY PERRY, whose debut album is due in June.

Dancing their way out of executive mode, Island Def Jam Music Group president/CEO STEVE BARTELS, left, and Universal Motown president SYLVIA RHONE shake their groove things with AKON at Clive Davis' pre-Grammy Awards bash.

*I STOLE SOME DANCE MOVES FROM HIM.*
—T-PAIN ON CHRIS BROWN

'IT'S IMMEASURABLE HOW SURPRISED I AM.'
—HERBIE HANCOCK ON HIS ALBUM OF THE YEAR GRAMMY FOR 'RIVER: THE JONI LETTERS'

The colorful T-PAIN shared the best rap song Grammy Award with Kanye West for 'Good Life.'

A.U.K. star-in-the-making LEONA LEWIS (left and inset) was front and center at CLIVE DAVIS' pre-Grammy Awards bash. Lewis ranks Davis with CARRIE UNDERWOOD.

From left: Universal Music Group Nashville chairman LUKE LEWIS, Vivendi chairman/CEO JEAN-BERNARD LEVY, country album of the year winner VINCE GILL and UMG chairman/CEO DOUG MORRIS celebrate at the Palm Restaurant.

With JAY-Z in the middle, BEYONCÉ reunites with former Destiny's Child member MICHELLE WILLIAMS during the Sony BMG afterparty.
At his friend Mouse Landy notes, Ronnie Johnson liked to call himself "just an old country boy trying to make a living."

But it's clear from the outpouring of grief and tributes from his many colleagues and friends that Johnson, Capitol's executive VP/head of urban music who died Dec. 30 at age 49, was a special kind of music business executive.

"He had the really special spirit that touched people almost out of the gate," adds Landy, now a V.P. of urban promotion at Atlantic Records, where he worked alongside Johnson, having "started next to" with him when both were promotion reps for Reprise in 1989. "There were so many people here that I know he spent time with, and even within a short period of time had made a major impact on their lives."

Landy's words are echoed universally—sometimes virtually verbatim—by those who knew Johnson and loved him throughout his life. When he died, Johnson left behind his wife, Jacqueline Pack-Johnson; his adult son, Matthew Pack; his parents; and extended family members.

Johnson was born and raised in Mobile, Ala., and graduated with a degree in business administration from Georgia State University. He began his professional career in banking in Atlanta, but left his post as V.P. of special assets group for First Union Corp. of Georgia in 1989 to pursue his music interest.

Then again, he actually started in the music business "as a child," his mother Irene Johnson-Ware says. "I started in radio in 1961 and he was born in 1958, so he was not that big of a tyke," says Johnson-Ware, who managed gospel station WGOK Mobile. "And my husband [Fred Ware] was with CBS [Records] for some 30 years, so we had a steady meeting and greeting of artists and people in the industry."

Johnson's entry position was with Reprise in Dallas in 1989. "We were part of the first urban promotion staff for Reprise," says Landy, who worked out of New York. "We were close friends from the very beginning and always stayed in touch, doing our best to try to expose music. He always had my back and knew I always had his, which is very rare in a work-related situation. But aside from being very, very close friends, he was really like my mentor—and there were many people who looked up to him."

Landy cites Missy Elliott, the Isley Brothers, Dru Hill, T.I., Sean Paul, Trey Songz, Montel Jordan and Public Enemy among the many acts he and Johnson worked, "but the thing we enjoyed most," he says, "was breaking acts—and we never minded rolling up our sleeves and going after an act that no one had heard before and building from nothing."

From Johnson's role at Reprise, "success just followed him," Johnson-Ware says. After his stint as regional director of promotion, he returned to Atlanta in 1991 as the label's national director of promotion, then moved to New York in 1992 to team with Landy in heading the urban division at PolyGram Label Group. Johnny Barbi, who was PolyGram's executive V.P. (and now serves in Elton John's management company Twenty-First Artists), notes that Johnson worked with acts including Bob Marley, Salt-N-Pepa, Warren G., P.M. Dawn, Mary J. Blige and Method Man during his stay at the label, which evolved into Island/Def Jam during that time.

"He was just a great human..."

**continued on »p.42**

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**RONNIE JOHNSON**

**FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES EXPRESS DEEP LOSS AFTER THE DEATH OF RECORD EXECUTIVE RONNIE JOHNSON**

**BY JIM BESSMAN**

**SPECIAL FEATURE**
Ronnie Johnson
(July 21, 1958 - December 30, 2007)

A Heart Too Big For This World
Ronnie was a unique person and executive. He never raised his voice or lost his temper—and yet he was respected and loved by everyone he worked with. It was my privilege to work with Ronnie at both Atlantic and Capitol, and I miss him.

—JASON FLOM, CAPITAL MUSIC GROUP CEO

‘When Ronnie Johnson walked into a room, the room changed. His good-natured style, charisma, and overall spirit overtook you. His DNA was all about goodness and inclusiveness, and you always wanted to be next to him because the warmth he emanated. His single flaw was rooted in the Atlanta Braves: Ronnie, if you’re listening, that’s pathetic but I forgive you. I guess you were human after all. You’re always in my thoughts and I will forever miss you.’

—ANDREA GANIS, ATLANTIC RECORDS EXECUTIVE VP

‘My heart is broken. It’s really a loss for humanity because he was so giving. He was the warmest, most humble, compassionate human being I’ve ever met. Everyone who met him felt honored to meet him. And he was a person who didn’t wear suits. He didn’t need to. He was a fine dresser, with casual elegance. His wife] Jackie buried him in his ING Georgia Marathon T-shirt and running shoes.’

—SANDY MAYFIELD, EMORY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE: DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

‘Everyone valued his friendship and professionalism, and he was a humanitarian, which is unique in the music business. And working for him was incredible: I’ve held positions at different labels, and some days I feel like going to work and some days I didn’t. But I actually loved coming to work here because I loved talking to Ronnie, and even if I did something wrong—which I did—I knew he’d work it out with me. I want to be Ronnie Johnson.’

—SAM CRESPO, ATLANTIC RECORDS VP OF URBAN AND LATIN MARKETING AND PROMOTION

‘He was not just my boss but my mentor and friend, and we spent a lot of time together. The thing that impressed me the most about him was that he was so humble for his position: How do you remain so level-headed and forthright and kind and yet still wield authority so that people don’t take advantage of you? He said, “I make sure people never take my kindness for weakness.” And he was always ready to take a bullet for his staff, and artists and managers respected him even more for it.’

—JAMES LOPEZ, ATLANTIC RECORDS SENIOR VP OF MARKETING

Quotes compiled by Jim Bessman.

July 21, 1958 Born in Mobile, Ala.
1980 Graduated from Georgia State University in Atlanta with a degree in business administration.
1989 Resigned as VP of Special Assets Group at First Union Corp. of Georgia to take his first music industry position as regional director of promotion for Reprise Records in Dallas.
1991 Named national director of promotion for Reprise Records, based in Atlanta.
1999 Joined Atlantic Records and became senior VP/GM of the label’s urban division.
2003 Named one of the “Hip-Hop Power 30” by the Source magazine as one of the players who have the ability to change hip-hop’s present state.
2007 Left his position as executive VP of Atlantic Records and joined Capitol Music Group as executive VP/head of urban music.

In fact, Johnson was training for his first marathon when he suffered his second heart attack, which proved fatal. Doctors believe his death was related to an artery condition caused by a childhood illness.

“He flabbergasted everyone when he had his first heart attack at 47, because he’d been the picture of health and didn’t realize there was any damage,” says Sandy Mayfield, development director for the Emory University School of Medicine Department of Medicine. “But he ran in the Peachtree Road Race [in Atlanta] July 4 and was training for the ING Georgia Marathon, so he was putting his edges because he was so happy to survive.”

Capitol Southeast national field promotion director Ric Ross was a longtime friend—and running buddy—of Johnson’s. Ross and Johnson decided to hold a race to raise money for Emory’s School of Medicine program and Ross’ nonprofit organization, the Music Education Group. The inaugural Finish Strong 5K Run/Walk is now set for late summer in Atlanta. “Finish Strong” was the team name under which Ross and Johnson were going to run in the ING Georgia Marathon in March.

“It wasn’t about the music industry or the accolades, but giving back to help people,” Ross says. “That was Ronnie Johnson right there. Not the record guy but the human guy that we don’t see a lot of in this business.”

Trink adds: “It really hit home when I went around from person to person in his stuff and saw how people who had been with him for 10 years said the same things as those who were there only a few months. But he was this incredible mentor to people.”

Landy concludes: “He was the greatest role model, and even though he’s not physically here, I always feel his presence guiding me along. I think of one thing he always said: ‘Mo, either we’re going to win together or we’re going to lose together.’ We didn’t lose too many. That’s the great thing.”
KEEPING RONNIE'S LEGACY ALIVE...

INSPIRE | BELIEVE | DREAM | SUCCEED
The North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance was founded in 1989, when Clark and Elaine Weissman and the California Traditional Music Society invited 125 people to a retreat in Malibu, Calif., to discuss the formation of a coalition of folk organizers. Celebrating its 20th year, the organization is gearing up for what has become the annual "town hall" of the folk community: the International Folk Alliance Conference to be held Feb. 20-24 in Memphis.

"The impetus for founding the Folk Alliance was to make sure that the traditional music community was getting its due," executive director Louis Jay Meyers says.

Today, the 3,000 members of the alliance come from diverse walks of life; the member base comprises artists, publishers, promoters and even fans. "We provide opportunities for all of our members year-round," Meyers continues. "Some of our benefits include discounts on things like health insurance and event insurance, as well as CD manufacturing and marketing. But we also provide a lot of opportunities for people to meet each other and come together. We have six regional conferences in the fall, which are a great way for folk enthusiasts to locate like-minded people in their community."

Performance opportunities are another perk for alliance members. "We have showcases at Tin Pan Alley South and South by Southwest, and we program other events around the world," Meyers says. "We're constantly sharing availabilities to our members in order to help them set up performances and deals."

The overarching mission of the Folk Alliance, aside from serving members in practical ways, is to share musical traditions. While that might suggest that the member base would skew older, Meyers says this is not the case. "We have 14-year-old members, and we have 90-year-old members," he says.

"More and more, I'm seeing an incredibly strong youth presence in the traditional music scene," he continues. "It's almost like we're back to a '60s state of mind. For the first time in 40 years, the time is right for songs to have an impact. Because of the state of affairs in the world and the upcoming election, young people feel like they have a reason to write songs and try to change the world."

Examples of this trend, according to Meyers, include indie acts like Iron and Wine, as well as bigger-selling artists like Feist and the Robert Plant/Alison Krauss collaboration. "We have a young guy involved with the alliance, a 16-year-old named Anthony DiCosta," Meyers says. "Seeing him is like seeing a young Dylan. All told, we're going to have 10 acts under the age of 20 at this year's conference."

Though its membership is mostly based in North America, the organization seeks to expand its presence around the world, Meyers says. "Only about 10% of our membership is international, mostly in Europe, the U.K. and Australia. We have started to focus on this more in recent years, and have established a sister organization in Australia. Our next step is to launch more chapters in more parts of the world."

Other goals for the next few years include the launch of a mentorship program for young artists and an effort to improve the image of the word "folk." "Some people see 'folk' and it has a negative connotation for them," Meyers says. "But most people have some sort of folk music in their CD collection or on their iPod, be it Bob Dylan or Dave Matthews."

Additionally, many aging rock stars are finding a second life in the folk world. "Tommy Ramone is now doing a bluegrass band," Meyers says. "We'd really like to assist these folkies in rejuvenating their careers, and all their fans can hopefully see that they've been helped by the Folk Alliance."

Folks to Note: Although folk music has traditional roots, artists today blend a range of styles from alternative to funk. Below is a baker's dozen of acts to watch in the folk community around the world, many of whom will perform showcases at the Folk Alliance conference in Memphis.

—Jacob Smyle

WOMEN IN DOCS
LABEL: Baria Records (United States only)
WEB SITE: womenindocs.com

Women in Docs describe themselves as a vibrant pop folk duo from Australia that plays music in the vein of such bands as the Waifs and Bluehouse. Their captivating melodies and comedic live performances attract fans worldwide. Their second album, "Red Wine and Postcards," was released in March 2007 and finds the duo sharing lead vocal duties rather than working as a lead vocalist and a harmonizing vocalist. Women in Docs have planned several shows throughout Australia during the next two months.

THE REFUGEES
LABEL: unsigned
WEB SITE: therefugeesmusic.com

The Refugees are a female folk trio that plays a traditional style of folk and is often described as a female version of Crosby, Stills & Nash, but with a twist of humor. They are planning the release of their first album, "Unbound," sometime in 2008. The Refugees have a U.S. tour planned throughout June.

LOWEN & NAVARRO performing at the 2007 Folk Alliance Conference.
Blues, jazz and country.

Eva Hillered is a Scandinavian-born singer whose music has been described as a mixture of folk and alternative country music. She released her latest English-language album, "Life Line," in 2005. Since then, she has been playing shows and charming audiences in Europe and the United States.

Adam Levy is a guitarist/singer/songwriter who plays a style of folk influenced by rock, blues, jazz, and country. Since he's done time as the guitarist for Norah Jones, it's no surprise that Levy's style of music is described as sharing the same laid-back qualities as her. His fourth solo album, "Washing Day," released in August 2007, contains slick and precise guitar riffs that are just as good, if not better, than his songs on his previous albums. He has shows planned in New York, California and Utah through February.

Erica Wheeler's musical style ranges from contemporary rock to country and bluegrass. Her voice has been described as rich and warm, the perfect complement for her introspective, autobiographical lyrics. Wheeler's fifth album, "Good Summer Rain," was released on Dec. 11, 2007. A musical travelogue of the North American landscape, the set was sponsored in part by conservation organization the Trust for Public Land. She has several East Coast shows planned in February in support of the release.

Hoots and Hellmouth play experimental folk music that combines major elements of blues and country. Relative newcomers to the scene, they released their debut, self-titled CD just last year. They currently have a tour of the East Coast and Midwest planned throughout February and March.

Diana Anaid is a young singer/songwriter who hails from Australia. Described as a blend of pop, alternative rock and folk, with five Australian Record Industry Assn. Award nominations and notable success in downloads a record, she is planning on releasing a new album this year, "In Your Words," that will be a return to her original acoustic-driven synth-rock style.

Shannon Wurst describes her music as acoustic folk and bluegrass with influences ranging from Dolly Parton to Gillian Welch. An Arkansas native, Wurst's first record, "Sunday Pie," was released in 2007. She has many shows planned throughout the South, including several at the Folk Alliance conference, during the next couple of months.

Brad Colerick has been playing music for more than 20 years, many of them as a commercial composer, before he returned to his traditional mixture of country and folk music, releasing the long-awaited "Cottnwood" in 2006. The follow-up, "Lines in the Dirt," was released in July 2007. He has several shows planned across the United States throughout this year.
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What's In A Name?

Despite Moniker Changes, Quintanilla Keeps Selling

In a world where name recognition is everything, A.B. Quintanilla has flipped conventional wisdom by tinkering with his group’s moniker with certain regularity.

What began as A.B. Quintanilla III y Los Kumbia Kings evolved into A.B. Quintanilla III Presents Kumbia Kings, and finally A.B. Quintanilla III Presents Kumbia All Starz.

The mutations are not in name only. Possibly no other group in contemporary Latin music has produced as many offshoots as Quintanilla’s Kumbia Kings and Kumbia All Starz, with a roster of alumni that includes Frankie J, DJ Kane and K1.

Through it all, Quintanilla’s fan base has remained stable, a remarkable feat for a bandleader who is not a lead singer.

But as arranger/producer/composer/bassist, Quintanilla is the architect of a particular urban cumbia sound that has managed to transcend years, names and vocals.

“In the end, I think I can change the name to A.B. Quintanilla and whatever,” Quintanilla says on the phone from Argentina, where he is filming three videos for new album “Planeta Kumbia.” Due March 4 on EMI/Televisa, the 15-track set is his sophomore album with his new group, Kumbia All Starz, following his much-publicized breakup with longtime musical partner Cruz Martinez.

“The thing about it is, when people are buying Coca-Cola or Tide, it always has to be new and improved. Stronger-smelling, fresher,” Quintanilla says. “But even though the chemicals may change, it’s still the same brand. I believe when people hear A.B. Quintanilla, they know they’re going to buy a quality cumbia album.”

Caught up in an ongoing dispute with Martinez over the rights to the Kumbia Kings name, Quintanilla is now focused on Kumbia All Starz. The group’s debut album, 2006’s “From K.K. to Kumbia All Starz,” has sold nearly 200,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

“Planeta Kumbia” is a continuation of Quintanilla’s distinctive mix of traditional beats, pop, hip-hop, loops and synth. But the album is more dance-oriented and Latin-leaning than other Quintanilla productions. While all previous albums have included English-language tracks, this time, everything is in Spanish.

“I definitely have more Spanish-speaking consumers now than the bilingual crowd,” says Quintanilla, who has concentrated much of his promotional efforts in Mexico during the past two years. “Now, it’s very important to be Spanish-consciouns.”

Despite the changes, the blend is as defined by Quintanilla’s touch that first single “Por Ti Baby” features a guest singer, new EMI Televisa artist Flex, whose debut album, “Te Quiero,” is No. 4 on Billboard’s Top Latin Albums chart.

The second single features newcomer Melissa Jiménez on vocals, and the third features Spanish rapper Malo Rodriguez and Argentine rocker Vicentico. Kumbia All Starz singer Ricky Rick handles lead vocals on most of the other tracks.

The videos were shot simultaneously in Argentina in an effort to provide a unifying visual thread. “At an international level, we are going to concentrate in South America, and we are also committed to releasing and pushing him in Spain,” EMI Televisa president Rodolfo López-Negrete says.

In the States, Quintanilla has been a consistent top seller, with his early albums nearing the half-million sales mark, according to Nielsen SoundScan. All of his studio sets have topped 200,000 copies.

Quintanilla maintained the momentum even after his split with Martinez, a testament to his appeal.

“Not to be cliché, but it’s the music,” López-Negrete says. “He created this style.”

López-Negrete says “Planeta Kumbia” will be immediately pushed with particular emphasis in the United States in a strong bid to reclaim this market. Formal promotion begins with a performance of “Por Ti Baby” on Univisión’s Premios Lo Nuestro Awards telecast, marking Quintanilla’s first U.S. TV performance since the 2005 tribute to his late sister, Selena.

Quintanilla is also planning to tie in promotional efforts with his search for new singers. While Rick remains with the band, the other singers departed after the album was recorded. Sources say former Kumbia Kings singer DJ Kane could return to Quintanilla’s Kumbia All Starz. In addition, Quintanilla is in conversations with two major TV networks about doing a reality show that doubles as a talent search, with the winner landing slots in his group.

“If you go from the first Kumbia Kings album to Kumbia All Starz, you notice there is a continuous flow of hit after hit on each album,” Quintanilla says. “And each time, there are different vocalists interpreting the songs.”

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NOWHEARTS
YOUR GUIDE TO UNSIGNED BANDS
Compiled by Katie Hasty

For 10 years with the Rebel Crew collective of breakdancers, DJs and musicians. She’s earned additional attention from her licensing deal with Dodge; the company loaded up a flash drive key chain for the Dodge Avenger with her music and streamed tracks on its website. “My goal is to be able to do this full-time—break out of the 9-to-5 thing and go on tour,” says Nistal, who pulled together a backing band for a tour of the Middle East last fall with Armed Forces Entertainment. She was also named the 2007 Houston Press Award winner for best local rap/hip-hop artist. Nistal is set to perform a South by Southwest showcase March 12 at the Molotov Lounge in Austin, and will take the Latin stage April 27 at Houston’s International Festival. Meanwhile, she’s working on her second album, tentatively titled “Nistalogue.” “I’m going to do more Latin stuff, but it’ll be more soulful than the last album,” she says. —Ayala Ben-Yehuda

1999

LATCH KEY KID Contact: Forrest Reda, manager, forrest@the-
bandgroup.com, 818-784-1818
If you were one of the Super Bowl’s 97.5 million viewers this year, there’s a good chance you heard Latch Key Kid. In a commercial for Coke, the Californian singer/songwriter’s “Good Times” played while James Carville and Bill Frist humped up their bipartisan friendship. It’s the latest licensing placement for the charming 31-year-old, who also has credits in such TV shows as “The Amazing Race” and “Survivor.” It all originated with a fruitful collaboration with publishing company Experience Records and action sports.

“Guys who make these documentaries and feature films are always looking for cheap, original music to throw over their segments,” says Latch Key Kid, aka Gavin Heaney, whose tunes are the backdrop for several films on surfing and mountain biking. “My music isn’t necessarily high-octane or anything, but I mix up a lot of genres. If an individual song doesn’t fit the feel, I can always work close with the filmmaker to remix it.”

And that’s one of Heaney’s biggest strengths: He produces, plays multiple instruments, is stylistically diverse and Internet-savvy and has a deep back catalog of tracks ready to use. His live show has been marketed, too, as he anticipates shows on big Los Angeles clubs like the Roxy and the Troubadour this season.

Heaney has already released his self-titled debut record and is prepping the physical release of his sophomore set, “Mystic Mile”; it is already available on iTunes. “The Super Bowl thing certainly helps with funding an album release,” he says. —Katie Hasty

2006

KARINA NISTAL Contact: Tanya Pelit, manager; tanya@astarlightbeats.com, 832-642-0092
If you happen to be in Houston during Karina Nistal’s monthly residency at the GRAB (Game Room & Bar), you might learn her signature dance. “Stand straight forward—one step to the right, swing your hips, [step] left, swing your hips, drop,” Nistal says of crowd favorite “Trabájalo.”

The Spanish track is from the breakfast/dance/electronic artist’s bilingual 2006 debut, “Nisticly,” on Houston indie Starlight Beats & Bites. The dance is “my sales pitch for the CD sometimes,” says Nistal, who has performed in Houston

LATEST BUZZ

"BODY" OF WORK
Mariah Carey has dubbed her new effort “E=MC²” and will release it April 15 via Island/Def Jam. The R&B-leaning first single, “Touch My Body,” hit U.S. radio Feb. 12. The set features producers Jermaine Dupri and Will.I.Am, plus DJ Toomp, Stargate, Bryan-Michael Cox, Nate "T-Pain" Hills and James Poyser. Other collaborators include hitmaker T-Pain and Damian Marley.

HEARD ABOUT YOUR BAND
The Replacements’ first three albums and an EP will be reissued in remastered, expanded form this spring, completing a long-awaited upgrade of the seminal band’s early work. “Sorry Ma, Forgot to Take Out the Trash,” “Slink,” “Hootenanny” and “Let It Be” will arrive April 22 via Rhino. Later this year, the label will continue the reissue campaign with expanded editions of the band’s Sire catalog: “Tim,” “Babyshambles” and “Trash.”

TAKE FLIGHT
New Zealand duo Flight of the Conchords skewers synth-pop, the French, David Bowie, American R&B, hip-hop and unattainable sexual confrontation on its self-titled debut, due April 22 via Sub Pop. The 15-track set features songs first aired on the Conchords’ hit HBO series, but they have been retooled in the studio with producer Mickey Petrelli. The first single is the Pet Shop Boys-esque “Inner City Pressure.”

WOMEN WAIT FOR NO ONE
Scarlett Johansson has revealed details of her debut album, “Anywhere Laid My Head.” The set includes 10 Tom Waits covers and one original, and will be released May 20 via Atco/Rhino. “Anywhere” was produced by TV on the Radio’s Dave Sitek, who says he was going for a “congh medicine/Tinder Bell” vibe, sound-wise. David Bowie lends his distinctive vocals to two songs, while Yeah Yeah Yeahs guitarist Nick Zinner and members of the band Celebration contribute throughout.

Reporting by Jonathan Cohen and Katie Hasty.

NOWHEARTS
YOUR GUIDE TO UNSIGNED BANDS
Compiled by Katie Hasty

Black Tide proves you’re never too young to rock

When Black Tide’s members were barely out of high school, they landed an Ozzfest date on the second stage. Another act dropped out of the lineup, so Black Tide was invited to join the rest of the tour. However, second-stage sponsor (cigarette) company didn’t want to look like it was promoting underage drinking. Black Tide’s fans swarmed Internet message boards demanding the judgment be reversed. And then a miracle occurred: Ozzfest’s organizers asked the band to open the main stage, and it rocked the crowd accordingly.

Such have been the formative years for Florida’s Black Tide, a quartet that merges classic rock with a modern style. Debut album “Light From Above” (Interscope, March 18) reflects the influence of such icons as Judas Priest and Iron Maiden, whose catalog is older than Black Tide’s members. In fact, guitarist/lead singer Gabriel Garcia just turned 15.

Black Tide’s youth hasn’t hindered its progress, which has been swift. The band formed just a few years ago and picked up a demo deal with Atlantic before signing with Interscope in 2006. Its triumph at Ozzfest indicated a victory on another level. Unlike pop-R&B, where teen acts are more readily accepted, metal audiences have little patience for music that seems contrived. Black Tide earned major credibility by proving it

Smells Like Malkmus, Jicks Rediscover The Joy Of Collaboration

Stephen Malkmus’ last release, 2005’s “Face the Truth,” was a mostly one-man affair, the result of what he describes as “me playing around in my basement.” But “Real Emotional Trash,” due March 4 on longtime label Matador, is a reminder that Malkmus can still play well with others.

Like the ex-Pavement leader’s self-titled first solo effort, “Face the Truth” only carried Malkmus’ name on its jacket. But “Trash” follows more closely in the footsteps of 2003’s “Pig Lib” by giving

ROCK
BY CHRISTA TITUS

ROCK
BY SUSAN VISAKOWITZ

STEPHEN MALKMSUS & THE JICKS

NISTAL

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Asked what he'd like people to know about "Light From Above" or Black Tide, bassist Zakk Sandler says with a laugh, "[That] it's not bullshit. That's actually real. I know a lot of people are like, 'Oh, this is going to last a week, because they're young and whatnot.' That's never the case at all. We don't plan on treating it like that either."

According to Interscope product manager Dyna Kass, Revolver magazine is one of the first media outlets to support Black Tide in a big way; its current issue features a four-page spread on the band. Editor in chief Tom Beaudoin says, "There needs to be a new generation coming in of kids that young people that can identify with as peers or slightly older...I can't see a 15-year-old looking at a dude up onstage who's 35 who literally could be his dad and be like, 'That's me.' I feel with this band that it fills this gap."

Although Interscope is targeting a rock audience, Black Tide is also gathering coverage in such mainstream magazines as Spin, Blender and Entertainment Weekly. Kass says the crossover press happened organically. "They're such an interesting confection of old school meets new school, and we're really doing a two-prong approach," she says. "We're making sure we're getting more of that kind of classic-metal-audience- slash-rock, and then additionally getting that youth audience and the [Vans] Warped tour audience."

Black Tide is staying on the road for the rest of the year, and will do dates on the Rockstar Energy Mayhem tour and possibly Warped. Some of the higher-profile partnerships it has formed include an in-the-work-studio-deal with Monster Energy drink, an ad campaign with No Fear clothing and song placement in such videogames as the next edition of "Rock Band," due later this year.

There is also a major initiative with Guitar Center that includes a sweepstakes, in-store appearances and having Black Tide paired with some of its rock heroes on the cover of a Guitar Center catalog that will be sent to 50,000 customers as a direct-mail piece. Kass could not comment on who else would appear on the cover with the band.

Team Spirit

Hawksley Workman

Finding material for a new album has never been an issue for Canadian singer/songwriter Hawksley Workman. Like his surname would suggest, Workman is something of a prolific songwriter.

Since his last outing, the largely acoustic "Treeful of Starling" in 2006, Universal Music-signed Workman has written and recorded two albums' worth of material. One of those sets, "Between the Beautifuls," had a local release Jan. 29, opening at No. 13 on the Canadian chart. "In the last two or three years I've made about four records," says Workman, who is known for his off-the-cuff stage shows and fanatical fans. "There are records between albums that I've made to keep myself occupied. I also made a big rock record as well." Some of Workman's more recent, rockier recordings will show up on a separate album, "L's, Maniculous," which will get a release in France, Germany and Australia at a date yet to be announced. "L's Maniculous" will feature four songs from "Beautiful" and a cover of Led Zeppelin's "The Ocean."

The artist is booked by Rob Zirlak of the Agency Group and published by Hawksleytown Publishing.

—Robert Thompson

Biondi

LOVE IT LIVE

Italian Mario Biondi might be labeled a smooth jazz artist, but his career trajectory has been anything but conventional. The singer had a sleeper hit with debut 2007 album "A Handful Of Soul" on the Schema label (Billboard, June 2, 2007). But for his follow-up, Biondi went his separate ways with the label and released a double live album, "I Love You More Live," through his management firm's imprint, Live Tour. Milan-based Live Tour also represents Biondi as his booking agent.

"People thought we were mad to release a live album by an artist who only had one studio album to his name," says Paolo Franchini, president of Edel Italy, which distributes the album. "But it has been in the top 10 since before Christmas and has gone platinum, with sales in excess of 70,000 units."

Franchini adds that Biondi, who sings in English, has "generated quite a lot of interest abroad and we're currently talking to a number of people."

Biondi's Dec. 7 live album release includes a cover of the Burt Bacharach standard "Close To You"—that as is now common practice in Italy—received an airplay and digital-only release. "Being a live track, it didn't get much airplay," Franchini says, "but it reached the top five of the Italian general iTunes charts and is continually No. 1 on the jazz charts." Many of Biondi's songs are covers, but his original material is published by Ishtar Edizioni.

—Mark Worden
Carnival Attractions
Trinidad And Tobago Event Launches Next Soca Stars

Trinidad and Tobago's indigenous music—steel pan, calypso and especially soca, calypso's energetic offspring—dominate the culturally diverse Caribbean nation's annual pre-Lenten carnival festivities.

The carnival season officially commences right after Christmas and concludes with a parade of masqueraders through the streets of Trinidad's capital Port of Spain on the Monday and Tuesday (this year, Feb. 4-5) before Ash Wednesday.

According to a report by the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, carnival attracts approximately 50,000 visitors and injects more than $100 million into an economy already thriving thanks to vast oil and natural gas reserves.

Because carnival is the premier event for soca, many of Trinidad and Tobago's soca artists annually release new carnival music with hopes of scoring hit songs, which can yield significant financial returns.

“For anyone interested in soca, carnival is the essential spot,” Trinidad and Tobago's most popular artist Machel Montano says. A former child star, Montano, 33, sold out back-to-back concerts in March 2007 at New York's Madison Square Garden. He returns to the venue March 28 and hopes to conquer a broader swath of the mainstream in 2008. Still, he places tremendous value on his continued carnival success.

“I could be booked with old songs but I like to write new songs to keep the business rolling,” Montano says. He enjoyed several hits this season, including the frenetically paced “Blazin’ D Trail” and the engaging, retro-flavored “Wining Season.” “We play every night during carnival and use the money we make to survive when it is downtime,” he says.

Montano’s management, as well as other queried artists, refused to disclose their seasonal earnings. But according to Mortimer Baptiste, a promoter of Trinidad’s popular Outta De Blue fete, a newcomer with a single hit will make between $500 and $1,000 per performance, while top-tier artists with established repertoires can command “up-wards of $15,000 per show. At the height of the season, the artists with the biggest songs might be booked at six fetes per night, so the money really adds up,” Baptiste adds.

The success of the season’s most popular artists, however, is not reflected in their record sales. The recently launched trinidadrecords.com, the first official legal download site for calypso/soca, receives 400-500 hits per day and maybe 3% of those people are actually purchasing music,” says Jean Michel Gibert, one of the site’s founders.

“The top 10 soca artists combined don’t sell 100,000 CDs, so we depend on our shows,” adds Bunji Garlin, who made a stunning return to prominence this year with his Jamaican dancetall-inflected, breakneck-speed delivery on the hits “Mash Up” and “Fiery.”

Plus, hits can lead to endorsements: Garlin, Montano and other soca stars are featured in local/wireless company Bmobile’s phone campaign. “And because promoters come to carnival to hear what’s happening, you can get opportunities to perform at shows all over the world,” Garlin says.

Darryl “D Life” Payne, who plays soca on New York’s influential urban WQHT (Hot 97), travels to carnival to hear the latest music, secure exclusive song mixes and book artists for soca/carnival events in the New York area. He cites Montano’s “Make Love” (featuring Buju Banton) and soca neophyte Hunter’s rum-drinking anthem “Bring It!” (featuring Garlin) as having the potential to have an impact on a mainstream audience.

“These songs have strong melodies and lyrics that a wide audience can understand,” he says, comparing them to prior Billboard Hot 100 soca hits by Kevin Lyttle and Rupee.

Neither Lyttle nor Rupee comes from Trinidad and Tobago, but their songs enjoyed massive popularity there prior to hitting the mainstream, which underscores carnival’s importance for breaking soca hits beyond the Caribbean.

“For anything soca-related, you have to go through our carnival to get exposure,” Gibert says. “Dancehall artists [like] Sean Paul, Shaggy and Beenie Man all performed here in 2008 because they want to catch the latest vibe. Above everything else, carnival is a very important international musical testing ground.”
THE BILLBOARD REVIEWS

ALBUMS

POP
ALLISON MOORER
Mockingbird
Producer: Buddy Miller
New Line

Release Date: Feb. 19

Elegant, powerful, and authentically Southern, Allison Moorer's is the rare voice worthy of an entire album of cover songs. So it's not surprising that "Mockingbird" contains more than its share of iPod-deserving tributes (including Nina Simone's "I Want a Little Sugar in My Bowl" and a slowed, acoustic, hornless "Take Me to the River (Part Two)"). What is, however, are some of the songs she revamps, as not all clear the fence. The sound of the Alabama-born, Nashville-grown singer attempting to aural loneliness of Gillian Welch's "Revelator" strikes an intriguing chord, but her take on Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now" doesn't feel right, and she doesn't seem quite dirty enough for Patti Smith's "Dancing Barefoot." Hiccups aside, there's something really brave and thoroughly punk rock about hearing her tackle Ma Rainey's "Daddy Goodbye Blues," considering her father took her and her mother's lives in a murder-suicide. —WO

ROCK
THE RAVENETTES
Lust Lust Lust
Producer: Sune Rose Wagner

Vice

Release Date: Feb. 19

If the Ravenettes surprised us with the sunny pop sheen of 2005's "Pretty In Black," they deliver an even more jarring turn on "Lust Lust Lust." Any artifice of mainstream confection is stripped away, replaced by a fuzzy, lo-fi minimalism that uses reverber and sustain to create a deceptively lush sonic tapestry. "Aly, Walk With Me" mixes Velvet Underground dryness with a deep, urban groove to spooky effect; in this sonic context, an invitation to "walk with me in my dreams/ All through the night" sounds as nightmarish as it does ro-}

manic. "Lust" portrays decidedly ambivalent emotions, while "Expelled From Love" is filled with regrets and recriminations accentuated by her song's moody texture. Even "You Want the Candy," one of the album's rockin' confections, is portrayed as nothing more than a "dirty treat." It's a little scary, but it keeps us listening, too. The album may consign the Ravenettes further to cult-level status, but like a challenging mate, it seduces us into coming back for more. —GG

RAY DAVIES
Working Man's Cafe
Producers: Ray Davies, Ray Kennedy
Animal/New West

Release Date: Feb. 19

You can take the boy out of Britain—and, apparently, a good deal of Britain out of the boy. Ray Davies, the once (and future?) Kinks frontman, has long been among rock's most strident social commentators, with a decidedly British flip to his characters and observations. But on his second proper solo album, Davies drops any sense of U.K. jive and draws on a residential tenure in New Orleans earlier this decade for what is decidedly the most "American" work of more than four decades of recording. "Vietnam Cowboys" bursts forth with a gritty shuffle and ruminations about the impact of the global economy on these shores. "Hymn for a New Age" is an Americana-styled anthem calling for spiritual overhaul, while "Imaginary Man" has a rootsy richness that echoes Muscle Shoals. The net result is smart, personal and potent. —GG

MIKE DOUGHTY
Golden Delicious
Producer: Dan Wilson
ATO

Release Date: Feb. 19

It may be his poppiest and slickest work to date, but "Golden Delicious" is more proof that Mike Doughty still knows where to make the melodies twist and turn to find the sweet spot among the ridiculous, the sublime and the sad. Opener "Fort Hood" is a deceptively boppy-sounding look at a soldier who'd rather "leave the mobs and the murder in a distant land" before throwing out a chorus or two of "Let the sunshine in" and then lamenting that said soldier is no longer of the enviably innocent time where his biggest need is to "blast Young Jeezy with your friends in a parking lot." It's always a little tough to tell how much he's kidding, but there's certainly something sun-splashed about the zany scatting and "na na na's" on "Put It Down" and his smiling reworking of "The Little Drummer Boy" on "I Just Want the Girl in the Blue Dress to Keep On Dancing." —JV

MOUNTAIN GOATS
Heretic Pride
Producers: John Vandersteel, Scott Soiler
4AD

Release Date: Feb. 19

In 1993, Sassy ran a review of Pearl Jam's "Vs." that basically said: People complain that all the band's songs sound the same, but that's not a negative; that's why it's called a style. Fifteen years later, the same argument can be applied to the Mountain Goats. Pretty much all John Darnielle's songs sound the same, but that sameness affords a remarkable consistency. "Heretic Pride" finds him revisiting fractured childhoods, broken relationships and metal clichés. He name-drops famous science-fi authors on "Lovecraft in Brooklyn" and shouts out to a Swedish death metal outfit on "Marduk T-Shirt Men's Room Incident." Darnielle's voice is sweet and gentle, and forces listeners to focus on the lyrics, lest they start thinking this is just another indie-folk singer. He's far more than that: a fantastic storyteller, an unabashed gardener and movie buff, and the owner of his own unique style. —CH

CARLA BRUNI
No Promises
Producer: Louis Bertignac
Downtown

Release Date: Feb. 19

Less than a minute into Carla Bruni's second album, you're just like the French president: hopelessly seduced. The former supermodel has the gossamer aloft of so many other singing beauties—Bridgette Bardot, Marianne Faithfull, Francoise Hardy. But Bruni's source material isn't her own elegant malaise. It's 11 of the world's most celebrated English-language poems, set to her own simple, seaside folk. "Come let me sing into your ear/Those dancing days are gone," she sings on the harmonica-laden opener, lyrics courtesy of William Butler Yeats. It's an achievement just to fit the heady verbiage into a verse-chorus structure. But to do it in a way that seems as natural as the paparazzi at her back is a show of artistic prowess. As majestic as it is playful, this album is pure pleasure. —JM

BELLS
Divine Deep
Producer: Paul Godfrey
Ultra Records

Release Date: Feb. 19

Three years after their bright, acoustic-based "The Antidote," downtempo darlings Morcheeba returns with "Dive Deep," a gorgeous collection of folk- and blues-inflected electropop ballads. No longer looking for a permanent replacement for original singer Skye Edwards, DJ Phil Godfrey and his brother Ross enlist a variety of guest vocalists, including Norwegian singer/ songwriter Thomas Dybdahl, French chanteuse Manda and British songstress Judie Tuzke, who collaborate on the folksy lead single "Enjoy the Ride." The liquid, slo-mo grooves are classic Morcheeba: moody dub beats, aquatic samplers and catchy scratches, but the secret weapon remains Ross' fretwork, which can turn any lounge-y ambient track into a full-bodied pop song. How refreshing to hear Dybdahl's gravelled tenor shiver on three melodic tracks, including the Pink Floyd-ish "Washed Away," while Manda delivers a finger-picked lament, sung in French with blissful melancholy ("Au De La"). —SP

LATIN
SEÑOR FLAVIO
Supersound 2012
Producer: Señor Flavio
Nacional Records

Release Date: Mar. 4

Contrary to its title, this well-crafted solo album by Los Fabulosos Cadillacs' co-founder isn't quite a projection into the future, but more of a throwback to the ska/rock that group merged so beautifully with Latin sounds in its days. The Latin element comes mostly in the form of the language here, but the Cadillacs' ex-bassist/songwriter adds retro sounds, notably surf and garage rock, into the mix. Perhaps the best track on the album is its most stripped-down: The folky, acoustic "De Story de De Loko Unives-Love" sounds like Señor Flavio recorded it while playing guitar on his couch and added a subtle organ later. Still, fans should find plenty to jog their memories on this album, particularly on "Ministra" and the punky "El Apagon." —ABY

REGGAE
VARIOUS ARTISTS
Spirtis in the Material World: A Reggae Tribute to the Police
Producer: Inner Circle Shanachie

Release Date: Feb. 19

Fans of the Police know that reggae was a principal influence for the trio, so the idea of a reggae tribute to the band is a thought blessed with a ruthless logic. Miami's Inner Circle formed the instrumental heart of this 13-track project, backing such acts as Horace Andy, Gregory Isaacs and Toots & the Maytals. Inner

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CIRCLE also cut a fine cover of "The Bed's Too Big Without You" for the project. Other fabulous renditions include Junior Reid's version of "Synchronicity," which offers one of the CD's coolest arrangements. Cyril Neville works an absolutely glorious cover of "Judy's Kiss." The hypnotic fuzz finger, and Joan Osborne is every bit as dynamic with her rendition of the stalker anthem "Every Breath You Take."——PJV

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

ATLAS SOUND

Let the Blind Lead Those Who Can See But Cannot Feel

Producer: Bradford Cox (Mugunt).
Release Date: Feb. 19
Under the moniker Atlas Sound, Deerhunter frontman Bradford Cox's solo debut finds the hyper-prolific artist moving away from the noise-rock leanings of his main band and experimenting with mellower electro and ambient pop. Starting off with a vintage cassette recording of a little boy telling a ghost story, the album slowly creeps and haunts, unraveling in laptop-sculpted layers of guitar feedback and drum loops. In between, it nominally offers intimate glimpses of Cox's personal life. The album is dedicated to and largely influenced by his best friend, Lockett Pundt. The hypnotic fuzz finger of "Recent Bedroom is a direct nod to My Bloody Valentine, while "River Card" is a lush slice of dream pop and "Winter Vacation" thumps a hidden techno beat. Cox followed his muse and ran with it, and what resulted is a collection of music that's as intriguing as its creator.—JM

VITAL REISSUES

NICK LOWE
Jesus Of Cool: 30th Anniversary Edition

Producer: Nick Lowe
Release Date: Feb 19
This album was going to change the world, its rockin' power pop and slyly smart lyrics saving a generation from the torpor of 1978's one-hit disco flashes and smotheringly produced corporate rock. Things went wrong from the moment CBS Records changed the title to "Pure Pop For Now People" for its U.S. release. But Nick Lowe's songs remain as brilliant as ever, full of fame-dooming industry inside jokes, from the rich chords of "Music For Money" to the self-deprecating lines of "I Love My Label" to the celebratory anticipation of concert night in "So It Goes." His encyclopedic knowledge and warm embrace of every post-1950s musical style made the line "Someone in the newspaper said it was art" prophetic in "They Called It Rock." But critics didn't make the rules then any more than they do now, radio's contempt for high-IQ craftsmanship also remains unchanged. Still, "Jesus of Cool" is great at least. Plenty of bonus/alternate tracks, too.—WP

PAULA ABDUL

Dance Like There's No Tomorrow (3:01)

Producers: Randy Jackson, Deekay, Oliver Leiber
Writers: E. Sennaro, S. Skinner, E. Laues
Publisher: not listed

Concord

OK, maybe Paula Abdul's greatest attribute has never been vocal power—but anyone who luxuriated in MTV's golden era can't help but fondly sigh over late-'80s/early-'90s No. 1 hits "Straight Up," "Forever Your Girl," "Cold Hearted," even "Opposites Attract" featuring the animated MC Skat Kat. Abdul's last hit was more than a decade ago, but the 45-year-old "American Idol" judge fires a bull's-eye with uptempo "Dance Like There's No Tomorrow," the first single from producer and fellow "AI" judge Randy Jackson's upcoming album "Music Club: Volume 1." The giddy, beat-intensive track is an ace-on match for Abdul's breathy execution, with rapid-fire verses and a peppery, lively lyric. "I'm so ready to move my body, forget about all my problems/When I hear that song, I'm gonna lose control." With her beloved, sunny disposition, not to mention a Super Bowl performance this month and plenty of props from American's No. 1 TV series, signs point to potential for a fervent cross-over. According to Abdul's Web site, a solo album is also in the making, due this summer. A real feel-good return.—CT

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

All albums commercially available in the United States are eligible. An album review copy sent to Jonathan Cohen and singles reviewers and pop reviews sent to Chuck Taylor both at Billboard, 770 Broadway, Seventh Floor, New York, NY 10003 or to the writers in the appropriate bureaus.

10 YEARS

Beautiful (3:18)

Producers: Rick Parashere, Brian O'Connell
Writers: B. Volin, J. Hasek, M. Wantland, T. Wyrick
Publishers: Dirty Deeds, BMH, Warner/Chappell/Poly, ASCAP

Universal Republic

A few issues ago, we compared A Perfect Circle to "The Stone," the first single by Ashes Divide, a new project from APC member Billy Howerdel. Now another song points to APC's influence: 10 Years' "Beautiful." The bass is the nearly hidden attraction, richly humming like a wide, dark current. Sustained guitar notes and strums outnumbered picking. And Jesse Hasek's vocals are a shade less deep than Maynard James Keenan's. The similarities diverge when it comes to the orchestration, which pumps the background with typical sounding strings. Hasek lamented how a woman promotes her surgically enhanced attributes over her emotional well-being to get ahead and how he should have seen it coming ("Your insecurities are concealed by your pride/Preety soon your ego will kill what's left inside"). "Beautiful" purposely drifts as it rocks, comfortably Swinging to its resigned end.—CLT

TAYLOR SWIFT

Picture to Burn (2:53)

Producer: Nathan Chapman
Writers: T. Swift, L. Deekay/Taylor Swift
Publishers: Sony/ATV/Taylor Swift, BMH, Hillsboro Valley, SESAC

Big Machine

Taylor Swift has been proclaimed the first bona fide country superstar of the MySpace generation, but you don't have to be an internet-obsessed teen to appreciate the honesty in her lyrics and the passion she brings to her music. Last effort "Our Song" remained at No. 1 on Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart for six consecutive weeks. "Picture to Burn" is the fourth single culled from the 18-year-old singer/songwriter's double-platinum debut, a feisty uptempo number marked by Swift's youthful sound and personality-possessed vocals. The lyric finds her dismissing an inconsiderate boyfriend by verbally bashing his beloved pickup truck, threatening to date all his friends and gleefully proclaiming, "As far as I'm concerned you're just another picture to burn." This is a totally infectious slice of fun with a singalong chorus that you won't be able to dismiss from your memory bank. Swift has been a breath of fresh air blowing through the country format (and beyond), and this terrific tune is sure to continue her momentum.—DEP
TALKIN’ 'BOUT THEIR GENERATION

When Doug and Donna Lasit took over as the youth pastors at City Bible Church in Portland, Ore., they wanted to use their musical backgrounds to build a bridge with the teens they served. But with the debut of their CD, "Generation Unleashed: Portland" at No. 10 on last week’s Heatseekers chart (it’s No. 10 this week), the couple has managed to reach thousands of teens across the country. The album has sold 6,750 copies in two weeks, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

"When we started playing music with the kids, we had no idea that it would turn into this," Doug says. "We were using music to connect with kids, and it turned out that some of them had real talent. We traveled and played conferences, but we had no idea about the reach of our songs. It wasn’t until we started hearing that other churches were playing our music that we thought this might be something big.

"We did some recordings for fun, and all of a sudden labels started calling us," Doug continues. "When we told people that we were going to release something, our MySpace page exploded, and the calls and e-mails flooded in."

One reason could be the album’s upbeat, accessible pop/punk sound, which is reminiscent of Blink-182 or Good Charlotte. While therotating cast of musicians who make up the group contain 24 people, Donna recorded all the songs with a handful of teens.

"Because we have so many kids involved, we can play in two or three places at once," Doug says. "That has really helped us get our message out. We’ve never advertised the record—it has all been based on word-of-mouth."

The record is only part of the Lasits’ mini-empire, which includes a youth conference. Doug says he plans to record another album this spring, but adds, "Even after all this, our primary purpose is still kids, not music." —Courtney Harding

DONNA LASIT isn’t just preaching to the choir.

AIRBOURNE

"Runner in Wild" originally appeared in Australia through EMI in June 2007—shortly after the label dropped Airbourne—then on Roadrunner in Europe and Japan in late January. Airbourne’s publisher Artwork Publishing is a joint venture between Vancouver-based Netwerk One Music and Redwood City, Calif.-based games developer Electronics Arts. As a result, its music has appeared in nine games—including "Madden NFL 08," "NASCAR 2008" and "Need for Speed 2008"—that Artwork says have shipped 26 million units globally.

Despite such exposure, "tours is the key," says Airbourne’s manager Greg Doronin, who heads New York-Sydney-based Step2Artist Management. "But it’s touring properly, by not jumping levels too quickly. We want to start from the bottom, at the tiniest club, and work our way up."

The U.S. breakthrough invites comparisons to fellow Aussie band Jet’s 2003-04 success with debut album "Get Born." However, Airbourne is well aware of the dangers of following a hit album with a sales drop—as Jet did—and hopes to have future material by writing continuously on the road. (The movie "Lethal Weapon" had a lot of explosions and blood splatters," singer/guitarist Joel O’Keeffe says. "Lethal Weapon 2" had greater explosions and splatters, and "3" had even more. That’s what we plan to do.

There should be plenty of time for writing in the coming months. Airbourne begins its three months of North American club dates through Creative Artists Agency Feb. 21 in Salt Lake City, before joining the Rockstar Energy Mayhem tour July 10 alongside Slipknot, Sevendust and Disturbed.

Quick Winners

Airbourne Wrestles Its Way To Heatseekers Peak

Airbourne is the latest thunder from Down Under to storm Billboard’s Heatseekers charts—with some help from the likes of the Underkets, John Cena and Shawn Michaels.

The Australian hard rock quartet’s Roadrunner debut, "Runner in Wild," hit No. 1 on Billboard’s Heatseekers chart last week. (It falls to No. 6 this week.) It has sold 11,000 units since its Jan. 29 North American release, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

The band’s current single, "Too Much, Too Young, Too Fast," has spent 11 weeks on Mainstream Rock Tracks, climbing to No. 24. And a Roadrunner release deal with World Wrestling Entertainment also saw the album’s "Stand Up for Rock and Roll" used Jan. 27 as the music for WWE’s globally broadcast pay-per-view event Royal Rumble.

"Every single person at this label loves Airbourne," New York-based Roadrunner president Jonas Nachsin says. "There’s something infectious about their music and the spirit they deliver in it. We will do everything in our power to get that music to as many people as we can.”

There’s something infectious about their music and the spirit they deliver in it." -JONAS NACHSIN

‘QUIT’ GETS THEM AHEAD

Best-known north of the border for their mix of new and classic trucking songs, the Road Hammers, a Canadian band now signed to Nashville-based Montage Music Group, have released a straight-ahead love song as their first U.S. single.

"I Don’t Know When To Quit," from the band’s "Blood, Sweat and Steel," due May 27, is No. 56 on Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart. Country KSOP Salt Lake City music director Debby Turpin says the single stands out from the pack. "[It’s] one solid energetic tune with great lyrics, and it keeps your attention through the entire song," she says. "It’s not just the same old stuff we get every day."

The band—leader Jason McCoy, guitarist/vocalist Clayton Bellamy, bassist/vocalist Chris Byrne and drummer Corbett Frasz—was conceived in 2005 as a side project by McCoy, who also is a solo artist. The group came together under the banner of CMT Canada’s reality TV show “Making the Band.”

"It was an unplanned pregnancy, and it was an experiment on-camera," McCoy says in the band’s bio. "But we’re all really happy with the baby."

After scoring hits and awards in Canada, the band decided to try its hand in Nashville, eventually hooking up with producer Michael Knox (Jason Aldean).

The act’s 2005 self-titled Canadian release included covers of Del Reeves’ "Girl on the Billboard" and Eddie Kendricks’ "Keep on Truckin’," while the new set will include Jerry Reed’s "East Bound and Down" and Little Feat’s "Willin."

"Ken Tucker

THE ROAD HAMMERS

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Brothers, Sisters And Bluegrass

Vincent Siblings Make Chart History

Family is important to bluegrass star Rhonda Vincent and her younger brother Darrin, one-half of new bluegrass duo Dailey & Vincent. The pair grew up performing in their family’s Sally Mountain Band. “He was singing at 1 year old; most kids aren’t talking at 1,” Rhonda says of Darrin.

It’s therefore fitting that Rhonda’s “Good Thing Going” holds the No. 1 spot on Billboard’s Top Bluegrass Albums tally and Dailey & Vincent’s self-titled set debuted at No. 2 in the Feb. 16 issue. It marks the first time in the history of Billboard’s bluegrass and country charts that albums from siblings have held the top two spots.

That both albums are on Rounder, that Darrin co-produced each and that both were recorded in Rhonda’s Nashville studio is icing on the cake. Rhonda’s album has spent five weeks atop the chart, and Darrin and partner Jamie Dailey are spending their second week at No. 2.

Being in the spotlight is a new sensation for Darrin, who has spent a lifetime in supporting roles, including 10 years with Ricky Skaggs’ Kentucky Thunder band. “It’s new for me, but I’m learning and I’m enjoying it,” he says.

The transition was easier for Dailey, who was lead singer with Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver for nine years.

The two men had been mulling the idea of joining forces for a while they collaborated on “Beautiful Star of Bethlehem” for a Christmas sampler. Darrin says, “When I first heard your voices blend, I said, ‘There’s something special about that. We’ve got to pursue this.’”

The decline of such duos as the Osborne Brothers and Jim & Jesse further reinforced their resolve. “We bring something to the industry that’s not there anymore,” Vincent says. “There’s just no duos anymore.”

Of her own success, which includes top-selling albums, seven straight International Bluegrass Music Assn. female vocalist awards and incessant touring, Rhonda credits a work effort instilled by her father. “It was on-the-job training,” she says of the Sally Mountain Band. “There was no-nonsense policy. When it was time to work, it was time to work.”

Her new set, which includes a guest turn by Keith Urban, is her most personal yet. “I have never written five songs to include on an album,” she says. “I have to be inspired to write a song and there’s been no shortage of inspiration lately.” The title cut is a nod to her 24-year marriage to husband Herb Sandiker.

Rhonda Vincent (inset) and her brother Darrin (above, right) with partner Jamie Dailey.

Soulja Boy Video Could Spawn Game, Doll

When executives at Interscope first heard “Yahhh!,” what is now the single from Soulja Boy’s October 2007 album “Souljaboytellem.com,” they were sure it’d be a hit. But, they recognized the same reasons the fun and almost infantile track stood out to them would initially make skeptics out of radio and music TV programmers.

It’s been two months since “Yahhh!” — which Soulja Boy says “is a very comedic song that was made as a joke for the people who were getting on my nerves at the time” — was serviced to radio and TV, and the track just entered the Billboard charts this week. It is No. 78 on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs and No. 7 on Bubbling Under R&B/Hip-Hop Singles, respectively.

According to Soulja Boy’s team, the visually driven marketing plan developed to push the track is what effectively and ultimately reeled in the detractors.

“We knew it wasn’t going to explode immediately, but that it would resonate with the kids if we made it visual enough first and eventually lead up to radio,” Interscope head of urban marketing Chris Clancy says.

Consequently, a witty and visually appealing video was created by Director Rage, who’s done all of Soulja Boy’s videos thus far, and was leaked online prior to its traditional mass-medium release. The treatment features Soulja Boy skipping class and being swarmed by some very improbable fans — including Britney Spears and Hillary Clinton — all while accompanied by a pint-sized cartoon character.

While details were scarce, Clancy hints at a potential videogame and a doll as part of the promotion. “Now look at what’s happening with the video. Sky’s the limit now,” he says.

“I could easily do another song, something easy that goes straight to radio and the clubs, but I like challenges,” Soulja Boy says. “Most artists won’t take a chance and do a record like ‘Yahhh!’ I wanted to put it out there and see if I could work it and make it as big as my other songs.”

—Mariel Conception

 Sly Foxes

The Foxboro Hot Tubs emerged on the alt-rock scene late last year, bringing with them the boisterous sound of ’60s garage rock plus the nagging suspicion that they were actually the members of Green Day fooling around on the side.

Foxboro Hot Tubs’ Web site offered an EP, “Stop Drop and Roll,” for free download early last December. The MP3s were removed the following week, only to reappear and then vanish again. Currently, none of the three songs posted on the band’s Myspace page are offered for sale.

This isn’t the first time Green Day’s members have been accused of moonlighting. In 2003, they were alleged to have recorded a new wave album under the name the Network, which Billie Joe Armstrong released on his Adeline Records imprint.

While Green Day’s reps at Reprise had no comment, there are many clues that strengthen the allegations, such as Armstrong’s distinctive vocals and a link on Green Day’s site that directs browsers to Foxboro Hot Tubs’ Myspace page.

Whoever they are, they’re enjoying success on Billboard’s Modern Rock chart with “Mother Mary,” The cut entered the chart at No. 30 in the Feb. 2 issue and this week climbs 18-16.

Modern rock KNVR Portland, Ore., PD Mark Hamilton says Reprise originally played him the single late last year, but made no mention of the band’s membership.

“I liked the song before I knew it was Green Day,” he says. “It stands alone on its own merits.”

Modern rock WHTG Monmouth-Ocean, N.J., PD Terrie Carr says Foxboro Hot Tubs “are they or aren’t they Green Day?” appeal gives them an edge, encouraging listeners to decide for themselves.

—Leah Kauffmann

Workin’ for the Weekend

Buoyed by a huge amount of blog chatter, New York indie rock act Vampire Weekend cracks the Modern Rock chart this week with “A-Punk” at No. 40. The cut is drawn from the group’s self-titled XL Recordings debut, which has already sold 45,000 copies in the United States since its Jan. 29 release, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

The group is on tour in North America and England through late spring, including a slot at the Coachella festival.
**Chart Beat**

**Simply the Best**
- With more than 18,000,000 sold, Christina Aguilera's "Back to Basics: Live and Down Under" DVD, available only at Best Buy, is the first retail-exclusive release to crown the Top Music Videos chart. Recent Best Buy titles from Justin Timberlake and Tom Petty peaked at Nos. 4 and 6, respectively.

**I Declare!**
- On her gospel songs, Kirk Franklin's "Declaration (This Is It)" ends Marvin Sapp's unprecedented 24-week run at No. 1 with "I Never Would Have Made It." This marks Franklin's second time leading the almost 3-year-old chart.

**Long Time Gone**
- "Fool Again" by Mary Gail found its way back to the Billboard 200 for the first time since 1993 as her album "Blissful" bows at No. 179. She also nabbed her first radio chart hit since that same year, as "Blissful" bows at No. 29 on the Adult Contemporary list.

**Market Watch**

**Weekly Sales (Million Units)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>17.1</td>
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</table>

**Market Watch**

A Weekly National Music Sales Report

**Year-To-Date**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>107.0 million</td>
<td>135.9 million</td>
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**Digital Tracks Sales**

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<th>2006</th>
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<th>2008</th>
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<tr>
<td>Downloads</td>
<td>15,000,000</td>
<td>16,000,000</td>
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**Distributors' Market Share**

12/31/07-02/03/08

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<tr>
<th>Distributor</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UMG</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sony BMG</td>
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<tr>
<td>WMG</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indies</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMI</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Total Albums**

20.1%

**Current Albums**

33.3%

Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data | 55

**Over the Counter**

GEOFF MAYFIELD gmayfield@billboard.com

**Johnson's Second No. 1 Album Sets Digital Record**

For anyone who has been playing Chicken Little because the No. 1 album on the Billboard 200 weighed less than 100,000 copies in the last three weeks, Jack Johnson says, "Cut it out."

Johnson's clout in the digital market. When that soundtrack topped the chart, downloads accounted for 68% of the album's first-week sales, the largest digital sales accounting for 26% of the new album's opening sum.

The previous high for album downloads was 133,000 for Kanye West's "Graduation," but with that album starting at No. 1 with 14% of its first-week tally.

This is the third time in the first six weeks of calendar year 2008 that the total at No. 1 is larger than it was during the same week of 2007. But, with the opening frames of last year including the 405,000-unit start for Norah Jones' "Not Too Late" and the 266,000 debut for Fall Out Boy's "Infinity on High," the average at No. 1 for the first six weeks, 164,816, was higher than it has been in 2008, clogging at 125,463.

According to Nielsen SoundScan's Feb. 13 building chart, which reflects sales through Tuesday of more than 79% of the U.S. market, Johnson's "Sleep" stands a good chance to lead the big chart again next issue.

Of course, next week's chart will also reflect spikes motivated by the Grammy Awards and Valentine's Day shopping, with Herbie Hancock and Amy Winehouse certain to be among the beneficiaries of the former (see story, page 37). Also expect a last start by Michael Jackson's "Thriller: 25," a rerelease of the all-time best-selling studio album, with newly recorded duets of five of the original nine songs.

This week's lists reflect benefits from performances at the Super Bowl (see story, page 7), including Alicia Keys' Greatest Gainer trophy on the Billboard 200 (No. 3, up 1%) and Jordin Sparks, who sees two titles gain on Hot Digital Songs, with "No Air" zipping 31-22 on a 23% increase.

Half-time performer Tom Petty throws two compilations high on Top Pop Catalog Albums, with "Greatest Hits" stepping 2-1, almost tripling its prior-week sales, and 2000 release "Anthology: Through the Years" bowing at No. 6. The chart-topping 33,000 for the former is the biggest week the catalog chart has seen outside the holiday selling season since 2004, when a reissue of the Notorious B.I.G.'s "Ready to Die" pulled 60,000 copies.

**CH-CH-CHANGES:** A policy revision regarding CD/DVD combos, mentioned here in the Feb. 2 issue, kicks in this week. At the behest of retailers and all four major distributors, such packages will no longer chart on both album and music video charts.

Most two-disc combos that pair a CD with a DVD will qualify for Billboard's album chart. In cases where the CD in such a package contains fewer than five songs or less than 30 minutes of music programming, the combo will track on Billboard's Top Music Videos and Nielsen SoundScan's Music DVD chart.

Packages that combine two CDs with a DVD will only qualify for album charts, regardless of the length of the video programming. For combos with four or more discs, ones that house more CDs than DVDs will track as albums, while ones where DVDs outnumber CDs will be considered music videos. In most cases, boxed sets where the number of CDs matches the number of included DVDs will be eligible for the album charts.

As a result of the new policy, 11 titles that appeared on last week's Top Music Video chart have been removed, including Garth Brooks' "The Ultimate Hits," which had led the list for 13 weeks.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTIST</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jack Johnson</td>
<td>Sleep Through The Static</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sheryl Crow</td>
<td>Desires</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alicia Keys</td>
<td>It Is Time For A Love Revolution</td>
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<td>Lenny Kravitz</td>
<td>As I Am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Various Artists</td>
<td>2008 Grammy Nominees</td>
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<tr>
<td>K.D. Lang</td>
<td>Growing Pains</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mike Montana</td>
<td>Greatest Montana</td>
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<td>Miley Cyrus</td>
<td>Hannah Montana (Soundtrack)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taylor Swift</td>
<td>Taylor Swift</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keyshia Cole</td>
<td>Just Like You</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Chris Brown</td>
<td>Exclusive</td>
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<td>Soundtrack</td>
<td>Step Up: 2 The Streets</td>
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<td>Kanyes West</td>
<td>Rhythm &amp; Romance</td>
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<td>Colbie Caillat</td>
<td>Coco</td>
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<td>Hannah Montana</td>
<td>Hannah Montana 2: Non-Stop Dance Party</td>
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<td>In Rainbows</td>
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<td>Jonas Brothers</td>
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<td>Eagles</td>
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<td>Fergie</td>
<td>The Dutchess</td>
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<td>Sarah Brightman</td>
<td>Symphony</td>
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<td>Bullet For My Valentine</td>
<td>Scream AFire</td>
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<td>Michael Buble</td>
<td>Call Me Irresponsible</td>
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<td>Rascal Flatts</td>
<td>Still Feels Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carrie Underwood</td>
<td>Carnival Ride</td>
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<td>OneRepublic</td>
<td>Dreaming Out Loud</td>
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<td>Hoyt</td>
<td>Back Of Your Lyc</td>
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<td>The Dream</td>
<td>Love/Hate</td>
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<td>Soulja Boy Tell em</td>
<td>souljaboytellem.com</td>
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<td>Jai</td>
<td>The Makings Of A Man</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nickelback</td>
<td>Across The Universe: Deluxe Edition</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Radio**: 12,000 copies, it's her band's best sales week since 2006 and spurred by her last album's opening week.

**THE BILLBOARD 200 ARTIST INDEX**

**ARTIST**

**JACK JOHNSON**
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**ALICIA KEYS**
**LENNY KRAVITZ**
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**K.D. LANG**
**MILEY CYRUS**
**TAYLOR SWIFT**
**KEYSHIA COLE**
**CHRIS BROWN**
**SOUNDTRACK**
**KANYE WEST**
**COLBE CAI LLA T**
**HANNAH MONTANA**
**RADIOHEAD**
**AMY WINHOUSE**
**JONAS BROTHERS**
**EAGLES**
**FERGIE**
**SARAH BRIGHTMAN**
**JIMMY BARNES**
**BULLET FOR MY VALENTINE**
**MICHAEL BUBLE**
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**CARRIE UNDERWOOD**
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**JOHNY HORTON**
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**JAI**

**SOUNDTRACK**
**NICKELBACK**

**Robert Plant**
**Alison Krauss**
**Maroon 5**
**Vampire Weekend**
**Jordin Sparks**
**Rihanna**
**Linkin Park**
**Buckcherry**
**VARIOUS ARTISTS**
**PARAMEORE**
HOT 100 AIRPLAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Label</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Low</td>
<td>Coldplay</td>
<td>Repertoire</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Can't Hold Us</td>
<td>Enrique Iglesias</td>
<td>Universal Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Won't Back Down</td>
<td>bracelet</td>
<td>Capitol Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Piece of Me</td>
<td>Katy Perry</td>
<td>Capitol Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I'm With You</td>
<td>Rihanna</td>
<td>Roc Nation / SR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. No One</td>
<td>Dido</td>
<td>Atlantic Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Right Here</td>
<td>Chris Brown</td>
<td>Republic Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Don't Let Me Be</td>
<td>Lily Allen</td>
<td>Columbia Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I Just Want You</td>
<td>Maroon 5</td>
<td>Interscope</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Work Of Art</td>
<td>Rihanna</td>
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ADULT TOP 40

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<td>1. Take Me There</td>
<td>Selena Gomez</td>
<td>Republic Records</td>
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<td>2. I Remember</td>
<td>Kevin Bacon</td>
<td>Atlantic Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Take You There</td>
<td>Nelly</td>
<td>Capitol Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I Don't Want This</td>
<td>Maroon 5</td>
<td>Interscope</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. No One</td>
<td>Rihanna</td>
<td>Roc Nation / SR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sooner Or Later</td>
<td>Pat Benatar</td>
<td>Warner Bros Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I'll Be Missing You</td>
<td>Nelly</td>
<td>Capitol Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Never Too Late</td>
<td>Maroon 5</td>
<td>Interscope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I Wish You Were</td>
<td>Selena Gomez</td>
<td>Republic Records</td>
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<td>10. In The Middle</td>
<td>Maroon 5</td>
<td>Interscope</td>
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ADULT CONTEMPORARY

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<tr>
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<td>1. Don't You Want Me</td>
<td>Sean Kingston</td>
<td>Epic</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. A New Day</td>
<td>Billy Ocean</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Take Me There</td>
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<td>4. I Remember</td>
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<td>5. Take You There</td>
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<td>7. No One</td>
<td>Rihanna</td>
<td>Roc Nation / SR</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Sooner Or Later</td>
<td>Pat Benatar</td>
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<td>9. Never Too Late</td>
<td>Maroon 5</td>
<td>Interscope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I Wish You Were</td>
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MODERN ROCK

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<td>Linkin Park</td>
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<td>2. I Will Not Be</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I Wish You Were</td>
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HOT DIGITAL SONGS

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**POP 100 AIRPLAY**

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**POP 100 DIGEST**

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**MuchMusic Canada**

Data for week of February 23, 2008 | CHARTS LEGEND on Page 70

Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data
### Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums

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### Top Blues Albums

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<td>Willie Clayton</td>
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<td>Omar Kent Dykes &amp; Jimmie Vaughan</td>
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### Between The Bullet

With "Low" by Flo Rida as its draw, the soundtrack to "Step Up 2: The Streets" bows at No. 12 on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums and No. 13 on the Billboard 200. "As I Am" is poised for another boost after Keys' Feb. 16 Grammy Awards performance. After winning best contemporary R&B album, Ne-Yo's "Because Of You" cops Pase-Setter on this chart (47-30, up 88%) and goes 190-139, up 61%, on the big chart.
## HOT R&B/HIP-HOP AIRPLAY

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<tr>
<td>&quot;Don't Wake Me Up&quot;</td>
<td>Usher</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;You're Never Gonna Get It&quot;</td>
<td>Ray J</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>&quot;Ain't No Other Man&quot;</td>
<td>Keyshia Coley</td>
<td>Jive</td>
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<td>&quot;One For All Time&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;All About Me&quot;</td>
<td>Chris Brown</td>
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<td>&quot;Baby&quot;</td>
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## RHYTHMIC AIRPLAY

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<tr>
<td>&quot;Don't Wake Me Up&quot;</td>
<td>Usher</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;You're Never Gonna Get It&quot;</td>
<td>Ray J</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Chris Brown</td>
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## CHARTS LEGEND

- **Chart Rank**: Indicates the position of the song on the chart.
- **Title**: Name of the song.
- **Artist(s)**: Names of the artists.
- **Label**: Name of the record label.

Data for week of FEBRUARY 23, 2008 | CHARTS LEGEND on Page 70

Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hot Country Songs</th>
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<th>Artist</th>
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**BETWEEN THE BULLETS**

**SINGLE MARKS STRAIT'S CAREER-BEST START**

Already a 2007 Country Music Hall of Fame honoree, George Strait finds new glory with a career-high bow on Hot Country Songs with “I Saw God Today,” taking the Hot Shot Debut at No. 19. Serviced to radio Feb. 4, the song draws a whopping 11 million audience impressions at 91 monitored stations during the Feb. 4-10 tracking week. Strait’s prior best start was No. 30, achieved twice with “You’ll Be There” (April 2005) and “Just Comes Natural” (October 2006). Strait becomes only the fifth artist in the 18-year Nielsen BDS era to debut inside the top 20, and his new track is the seventh title to arrive inside that part of the country list during that frame. It is also the Grats’s highest start since Garth Brooks opened at No. 1 with “More Than a Memory” in the Sept. 15, 2007, issue. This is Strait’s 10th entry on the list, where he leads all chart-toppers. The new song introduces “Troubadour,” Strait’s 25th set of new songs for MCA Nashville, excluding Christmas albums, due April 1. —Wade Jessen

Data for week of FEBRUARY 23, 2008

For chart reprints call 646.654.4633

### Hot Latin Songs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<th>Week</th>
<th>Distribution Label</th>
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### Top Latin Albums

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<td>Hayakawa Hikaru</td>
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<td>タキシード (Takishōdo)</td>
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### United Kingdom
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Zucchero</td>
<td>Il Mondo Di Tuo</td>
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<td>Mario Biondi</td>
<td>L'Amore Che Non Vede Niente</td>
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<td>Miguel Bose</td>
<td>Esa chica</td>
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<td>Serrat Sabina</td>
<td>El Mas Grande De Todo</td>
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<td>잨</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>La Vida es Síntoma</td>
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<td>Welcome To The Party</td>
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<td>Lenny Kravitz</td>
<td>It's Time For A Love Revolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Jack Johnson</td>
<td>Sleep Through The Static: Unplugged For The Planet</td>
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<td>Still In Love - The Greatest Hits Vol 1</td>
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<td>Sinead O'Connor</td>
<td>Under The Skin</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Mariza</td>
<td>Conceptos De (Metro)</td>
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<td>PiaVan</td>
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<td>Vários Artistas</td>
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For more charts and data, visit [www.americanradiohistory.com](http://www.americanradiohistory.com).
### Top Christian Albums

<table>
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<th>Label</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>KIRK FRANKLIN / GRADY &amp; HARRINGTON / DISTRIBUTING LABEL</td>
<td>EMD / INTEGRITY EMD / EMD</td>
<td>THERE'S A PLACE / DELUXE EDITION</td>
<td>FEBRUARY 23, 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>RICKY DILLARD &amp; NEW G</td>
<td>EAGLE / INTEGRITY EAGLE / EAGLE</td>
<td>THE TIME TO PROCLAIM / THE TIME TO PROCLAIM</td>
<td>FEBRUARY 23, 2008</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>VARIOUS ARTISTS</td>
<td>EAGLE / INTEGRITY EAGLE / EAGLE</td>
<td>I CAN DO ALL THINGS / I CAN DO ALL THINGS</td>
<td>FEBRUARY 23, 2008</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>TRINI-TÉE 5.7</td>
<td>PROVIDENT / INTEGRITY PROVIDENT / INTEGRITY</td>
<td>TRINI-TÉE 5.7 / TRINI-TÉE 5.7</td>
<td>FEBRUARY 23, 2008</td>
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### Additional Information

- **Top Gospel Albums**
- **Top Gospel Songs**
- **Top Gospel Tracks**
- **Eurocharts**: Data compiled by Billboard from the national singles and album sales charts of 34 European countries.

---

*For chart reprints, call 646.654.4633*
## TASTEMAKERS

**ARTIST** | **LABEL** | **Title**
---|---|---
**Hot Chip** | **Polydor** | **Made In The Dark**
**Vampire Weekend** | **Nonesuch** | **The 2007 EP**
**The Mars Volta** | **Epic** | **Emotional Intellect**
**Tracktown** | **Jewel City** | **No Reason**
**Sara Groves** | **Rounder** | **Tell Me What You Know**
**Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings** | **Daptone** | **100 Days, 100 Nights**
**Grupo Nueva Vida** | **Hook** | **Meyores Caminos Reingados**
**The Loveless** | **Domino** | **Hernando**
**Louis XIV** | **Atlantic** | **Burd & Burn**
**Chris Walla** | **Beggars** | **Sick Dogs And Ponies**

## REGIONAL HEATSEEKER #1s

**KISS KISS KILL KILL** | **HorrorPops** | **Special Company** | **Made In The Dark**
---|---|---|---
**White** | **We The Kings** | **INHUMAN RAMPAGE** | **Whiskey Falls**
**Mountain** | **DISTRICT LINE** | **DRAGONBONES** | **MID ATLANTIC**
**South Central** | **We The Kings** | **DRAGONFORCE** | **South Atlantic**

## BREAKING & ENTERING

It's been 10 years since Dead Meadow formed from the dregs of the Washington, D.C., indie scene, but its sound draws from even earlier years, riffing on psych-rock, metal, punk and roots-rock to form its own distinctive noise. "Old Growth" marks the group's first chart entry. At No. 26 on Top Heatseekers.

Go to billboard.com/breaking to discover developing artists making their inaugural chart run each week.

## NEW ON THE CHARTS

**Air Traffic**, "Fractured Life"

The English quartet, which has been heard in both "Kyle XY" and "One Tree Hill" in the past month, makes its Billboard debut at No. 49 on Top Heatseekers. Now on tour in the United States in March.

**Metal band from St. Louis, Calif., sees its first chart entry as sophomore set starts with 5,000 copies.**

**Heatseekers** are the best-selling albums by new and developing acts, as determined by a formula that weights retailer consultant sales on the last week by 70%, radio airplay by 20% and media exposure by 10%

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- ROYALTY AUDITING
- TAX PREPARATION
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INSIDE TRACK

DOUBLE DUTCH

Fergie

Look for a reissue of Fergie’s “The Dutchess” with extra tracks and remixes this year, Black Eyed Peas manager William Derella tells Track. Will.i.Am’s vote for a title? “’Double Dutch,’” Derella says. “The Dutchess,” which has spawned five top five Billboard Hot 100 hits (three of them No. 1), has sold 3.4 million copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Fergie is the first artist to pull five top five singles from one album since Janet Jackson’s “Rhythm Nation 1814” managed the feat in 1989-90.

REHEATING THE MOMENT

Asia has wrapped recording on its next album, “Phoenix,” due in April and the first to feature the group’s original star lineup since “Alpha” in 1983. “The album’s pretty adult,” drummer Carl Palmer tells Track. “It’s not super progg. Melody-wise it’s unbelievably strong.” Asia plans to hit the road March 1 in the United Kingdom before coming to North America in early April and then hit Japan and Europe in May. As for a possible reunion of prog gods Emerson, Lake & Palmer, who have been inactive since 1998, Palmer says, “We’ve had some talks, but I don’t really see the reason to do anything unless it was absolutely something one couldn’t turn down on a financial basis, to be honest with you.”

BMI AT SUNDANCE

BMI celebrated 15 years of programming music events at this year’s Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. BMI presented its 10th annual composer/director round table, titled “Music & Film: The Creative Process.” Its sixth annual BMI Sundance Snowball, the third year of programming music at Turning Leaf Vineyards, Leaf Lounge; and its 5th year of providing networking opportunities for its composers at the festival. PHOTO: COURTESY OF RANDALL MICHAELSON

ABOVE: From left: BMI senior director of writer/publisher relations/New York Samantha Cox, BMI singer/songwriter Joshua James, BMI senior director of writer/publisher relations, Los Angeles Tracie Verlinde and BMI associate director of writer/publisher relations, Las Vegas Casey Robinson celebrate after James performance at the Leaf Lounge

BELOW: From left: BMI senior director of writer/publisher relations/New York Samantha Cox, BMI singer/songwriter Joshua James, BMI senior director of writer/publisher relations Los Angeles Tracie Verlinde and BMI associate director of writer/publisher relations Los Angeles Casey Robinson celebrate after James performance at the Leaf Lounge.
J.P. + R.J.

love always.
jackie and matthew
xo xo
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