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Of Rock And Ringtones

Can Biz Grow Amid Difficult Economic Conditions? BY DANIEL GOLDBERG

Although U2 manager Paul McGuinness’ recent speech at MIDEM was notable primarily for his comments about Internet service providers, I was taken by a throwaway line in which he mentioned that in the band’s early days U2 received tour support from its label Island Records in order to build an audience. Tour support is not an option in today’s music economy, there is a serious crisis about how to construct pathways for the next generation of superfans and what structures businesses can help create such careers.

Tensions between the short-term needs of record companies and the long-term agendas of rock artists have always existed, but the dichotomy is greater than it has ever been. I am not referring to the handful of rock artists who also have hit singles and big ringtone sales and have thus managed to be on the same playing field as other pop artists. No, this is about the hundreds of rock artists whose records are not selling enough to be priorities for the major labels, but who still have a loyal fan base.

More than ever there is a “Mars and Venus” disparity between the agenda of big corporations and their artists. Companies need to focus on quarterly profits, while artists are preoccupied with maintaining their image (or “brand”). Acts like Iggy Pop and Sonic Youth, which never had radio hit singles, are making more money than they did 20 years ago because they have been faithful to their audience, and, dare I say, to their art.

In today’s business climate, artists cannot expect record companies to spend the same amount of money they did when sales were double and valuations quadrupled what they are now. Conversely, record companies cannot expect most artists to give up significant chunks of income or ownership (know as 360 deals) unless they get something tangible in the way of money and/or services in return.

Major labels tend to focus on one agenda: hits. It’s hard to blame them. As long as their corporate parents are only concerned about short-term profits and place little or no long-term value on masters or artist contracts, it’s not realistic to expect a label CEO to be thinking about long-term terms of careers. On the other hand, while any act would like its music to be played on the biggest radio stations, many of them would not want to change their core identity and alienate their fans just to have a best-selling ringtone.

As the United States heads into a recession, those of us in the music business are coming to grips with the fact that our industry is in a depression.

GOLDBERG

The business needs to figure out how to motivate the necessary teamwork to build and maintain careers on economic terms that would have been unappealing a decade ago. But more people than ever love music. For those of us who work in the rock ‘n’ roll genre, we have seen the enduroance of our culture in such phenomena as the “Rock Band” and “Guitar Hero” videogames. Those who were able to accumulate real estate during the Great Depression made great fortunes later on.

Danny Goldberg is president of Gold Village Entertainment, where he manages the careers of Steve Earle and Allison Moorer. He also has a label, Animal Records, in partnership with New West Records, distributed by RED.

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GOLD STANDARD

Oscar Victors Score New Publishing Deal

On the heels of winning the Academy Award for best song, Glen Hansard and Marketa Irglova have signed a worldwide publishing agreement with Warner/Chappell Music. Besides their future works, the duo’s catalog will be administered by Warner/Chappell, including those songs written by Hansard as a member of the Frames, music from the pair’s recording on “The Swell Season” and songs from the “Once” soundtrack.

“It seems like there’s magic to this movie that doesn’t stop going—I think it’s great that the frames are going to get a wider audience because of this,” Warner/Chappell executive VP/head of creative (U.S.) Glen Brunman says. “There’s a hunger for what Glen and Mark can do.”

The deal is another step in the picture-perfect tale of “Once”—and, if history is any guide, look for the acclaim to build as “Falling Slowly” climbs the charts in the wake of the Oscar win. Brunman began working with Hansard and Irglova in his previous role as head of soundtracks for Sony Music.

The 2007 best song winner, Melissa Etheridge’s “I Need to Wake Up” from “An Inconvenient Truth,” jumped 87% the week after the Oscar ceremony. In 2006, Three 6 Mafia’s “It’s Hard Out Here for a Pimp” carried the “Hustle & Flow” soundtrack to a 277% increase in the wake of the Oscar.

In the buildup to the Oscars. In the week before and the week of the Feb. 24 ceremony, VH1 returned the video to “Falling Slowly” to the air and gave it “going ho” rotation—the channel’s highest level—of 45 airings per week. In addition, it received four additional plays during Oscar weekend as the “Top 20 Spotlight.”

“We do our scheduling a week ahead of time, so five days before the Oscars happened, we had to make our decision,” VH1 executive VP of music and talent Rick Krim says. “We figured no matter what, their performance was going to be stunning and people would be interested. It worked in our favor and we decided to keep it on another week (after the Oscars).”

“It’s the second round for the video on the channel; VH1 first put it in rotation when the movie came out in July.”

“The movie never hit giant mainstream, but we put it on as fans,” Krim says. “It wasn’t about radio exposure—it was about artists that we thought were amazing.”

And for Hansard and Irglova, they’re looking forward to getting away from the glitzy lunacy of Hollywood. While shopping at Hollywood’s Amoeba Records, Hansard was recently recognized by a security guard who inquired, “Are you the dude from the movie?”

“I want to get home and get centered, and do normal things,” he says. “Songwriting is all we need to do. Writing songs is never work, it creates calm and peace, and that’s absolutely necessary.”

But, you know, c’mon, we gotta ask: What did you do with the Oscars?

“If it’s already gone home off to Ireland—my mother took it,” he says. “I came off stage, handed it to her and she hadn’t let it go.”

**Digital sales increase for “Falling Slowly” the week ending at midnight the night of the Oscars:**

359%

HANSARD, left, and IRGLOVA
PROMOTION WARS

AEG Live Gets Ticketing And Fuse TV To Compete With Live Nation

News of a blockbuster deal among major players AEG Live, Ticketmaster and Cablevision has sent ripples through the live business. Multiple sources confirm to Billboard that a deal is imminent for Ticketmaster and Madison Square Garden Entertainment (MSGE) owner Cablevision to acquire about 49% of AEG Live, the live entertainment arm of Anschutz Entertainment Group (billboardbiz, Feb. 21). Contacts at the three companies declined to comment.

This partnership will allow AEG Live to more fiercely compete with Live Nation, which will leave Ticketmaster when its contract expires in 2009. What this new powerhouse will look like—Live Nation does not—will be a cable music channel.

Fuse TV, the only current competitor to MTV, has since last spring operated under the MSGE umbrella. Fuse was formerly part of Rainbow Media, a division of Cablevision that includes cable TV networks WE: Women's Entertainment, Independent Film Channel and American Movie Classics.

Fuse, which sources say will undergo a multimillion-dollar rebranding effort in the coming months, will play a key role in the repositioning of AEG Live as a company now armed with a sizable media component and the world's largest ticketing company in Ticketmaster.

Cablevision is a publicly traded company and AEG is private; given AEG retains majority ownership in AEG Live, Cablevision will probably only be able to report earnings it receives from the promoter.

Under the direction of CEO Randy Phillips, AEG Live is the second-largest promoter in the world, reporting grosses totaling more than $742 million to Billboard Boxscore in 2007, trailing only Live Nation. Ticketmaster's top executive (former parent) IAC also owns a large stake in the Living Auezoff/Howard Kaufman megamanagement firm Front Line Management. IAC chairman Barry Diller is believed to be a major broker in putting the deal together with Cablevision's Dalian family, whose sports, media and entertainment holdings are numerous.

Reflecting the growing clout and financial heft of live music, the publicly traded Live Nation has become a more comprehensive music company under CEO Michael Rapino's direction. Ventures into merchandising, digital marketing, sponsorship and artist management.

AEG Live has been perfecting the model of live music, the ticketing, distribution and artist management, which sources say will only helpTicketmaster.

With Ticketmaster being the world’s largest music, the ticketing, distribution and artist management, which sources say will only helpTicketmaster.

The deal with AEG Live will not replace Live Nation’s estimated 35 million Ticketmaster tickets sold annually. AEG Live does give Ticketmaster a fully developed concert promoter interest and a solid ticketing partner. As the ticketing business becomes more competitive, Ticketmaster will now be able to more fully realize its unique marketing power, and enter the risk-taking promoter business in tandem with AEG Live.

This is a logical next move for Ticketmaster, whose CEO Sean Moriarty previously told Billboard in an interview, when asked if the company might evolve into concert promotion, "You’ve seen so much of change over the course of the past year or so in the ways of things that we’re doing, and I think you can expect to see more changes as we figure out the best way to position ourselves and provide value. So certainly it’s a possibility.”

MSGE has also been aggressive in its own right with last year’s purchase of the Chicago Theatre and its thriving New York properties like the Beacon Theatre and Radio City Music Hall. In addition, under president Jay Marciano, MSGE has a booming multimillion-dollar in the Radio City Christmas Spectacular, and successfully launched a four-year run of the Cirque du Soleil production “Wintuk” in 2007 at the WaMu Theater at Madison Square Garden. The Garden has been the topgrossing arena in the world for several years running, and has for several months been considering constructing a new location across the street from its current Penn Station home.

Ultimately, the deal speaks volumes about how rapidly AEG Live has become an international force in live entertainment, beginning with the startup (and resurrection of a touring company brand) of Concert West by Paul Gongaware and John Meglen in 2000, and its evolution to create AEG Live by the end of that year under Phillips. As these two concert promoters go head to head, there is one area where AEG Live does not wish to compete with Live Nation: 360-degree artist deals a la Madonna’s. At the Grammy Foundation’s 10th annual Entertainment Law Initiative keynoter and AEG CEO Tim Lewke told the room, "There are those that believe in a 360 model. We don’t—"
We couldn't have said it any better...

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Socially Challenged
Expected MySpace Service To Compete With iTunes, Imeem, Last.fm And More

Already confronted with ongoing competitive pressure from Facebook, MySpace’s latest bid to enter the music business comes as other social networking peers, such as Last.fm and imeem, are making big audience gains with ad-supported music offerings. Sources say MySpace is planning a service that would combine free ad-supported music listening with paid MP3 downloads and music subscriptions.

MySpace parent company News Corp. has approached the major labels about forming a joint-venture music site, similar to its partnership with the major Hollywood studios for video site hulu.com. The new service would be operated by MySpace and seemingly be positioned to compete against every offering from iTunes to subscription service Rhapsody to social networks. Details are still unclear on MySpace’s plans, but it is expected that MySpace will build the music service on the back of its existing social networking base.

MySpace did not return calls for comment. During the last year, the four major labels have warmed to the idea of allowing users to share music on social networking sites, linking deals with Last.fm and imeem for a cut of advertising revenue. Music is the central connector on both sites: Users create and share playlists with their favorite songs, find and add friends based on their music preferences, listen to full-length songs on demand and purchase downloads through links to Amazon and iTunes.

CBS-owned Last.fm reported a 92% jump in U.S. users in the span of the last month, making it one of the fastest-growing music networks. Last.fm now claims 21 million unique visitors per month, close to the 30 million unique visitors of rival imeem, which has also seen strong growth in the last year.

However, only a minority of consumers use social networking sites to access music. According to NPD Group, just 14% of internet users report getting music through social networking sites in 2007. Among teens and college-aged users, it was 25%.

Forrester Research analyst James McQuivey says MySpace, with nearly 70 million U.S. users each month, would establish the category if it were to join. Execls at imeem and Last.fm shrugged off MySpace’s impending entrance. “MySpace is a bit late to the table, to be quite honest,” Last.fm co-founder Martin Stiksel says before adding, “MySpace is always a force to be reckoned with.”

McQuivey predicted in a recent report, “The End of the Music Industry As We Know It,” that in five years social network-enabled music purchases will be the primary way people buy music.

—MARTIN STIKSEL, LAST.FM

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WAR OVER
But The HD DVD Format Will Linger On

The high-definition format war may be over with Blu-ray officially declared the winner, but rival HD DVD won’t be pushed off shelves immediately.

With 1 million HD DVD players in the market, some retailers and suppliers say they’ll continue to sell movies and music releases in the format if consumers continue to buy.

“We’re still taking an absolute wait-and-see attitude; the market will tell us what to do,” Eagle Rock Entertainment president of operations Mike Carden says. “Those players are out there, and the fan base for music are early adopters.”

Eagle Rock Entertainment has put out a handful of releases on both formats, including “Deep Purple: Live at Montreux 2006.” Its next slated release, ZZ Top’s first DVD, will be Blu-ray-only.

Warner Bros. has twice delayed “Led Zeppelin: The Song Remains the Same,” set for re-release on HD DVD March 18. The studio signaled the beginning of the end of HD DVD in January when it announced it would exclusively release films on Blu-ray by the end of May.

With Warner on its side, Blu-ray was to have a significant content advantage with 75% of all high-definition releases. Best Buy and Netflix announced soon after that they would drop HD DVD, with Wal-Mart delivering the final blow days later. HD DVD player manufacturer Toshiba then conceded the fight, announcing plans to immediately reduce player shipments to retailers and be out of the business by the end of March.

As February came to a close, fellow manufacturer Onkyo said it would also cease player production, as did Microsoft, which will sell off its HD DVD add-on drives for the Xbox 360 at a reduced $49 price.

HD DVD studio backers Universal Studios, Paramount Pictures and DreamWorks switched sides after Toshiba’s announcement, but haven’t said when they will be completely out of HD DVD.

MVD, which put out its first HD DVD, “Method Man: Live From the Sunset Strip” in January, is switching to Blu-ray for all its upcoming releases that were to go out on HD DVD.

“I can’t say we’re thrilled,” MVD COO Ed Seaman says of Blu-ray’s win. “They have a sexier plan, a sexier position in marketing.”

Seaman adds that Blu-ray manufacturing costs are double those of HD DVD. The change may also bump back high-definition release dates for “The Sublime Tribute Concert DVD,” “Blackalicious” and “Reggae Classic Rockers.”

Many retailers will keep discs on shelves at least through the first half of the year, while suppliers tap off releases.

Wal-Mart will carry HD DVD through June. Amazon hasn’t said it will drop the format completely, though it will promote Blu-ray as the preferred digital format. Since early January, three-fourths of high-definition sales on the site are in the Blu-ray format, the company says.

New York’s J&R Music World will continue to bring in HD DVD movies and music until they stop selling. J&R is being cautious about how many HD DVD units it brings in, though HDVD buyer Bob Glatt says the studios are still taking returns on the discs.

“Anybody that bought [HD DVD players] is going to continue to buy releases as they come out,” Glatt says.

New Zealand’sbury Comics stores began reducing their HD DVD inventory after seeing Blu-ray outsell HD DVD 1-to-1 in December, DVD buyer Ian Leshin says. But the retailer will continue to bring in HD DVD on a limited basis.

“We don’t want to completely cut it until it’s completely cut,” he says. “We want to be able to offer as much as we can to the customers. It’s still not a substantial risk for us. They haven’t told us we can’t send this stuff back.”

A ZZ TOP concert at the Nokia Theater in Dallas will be released on Blu-ray by Eagle Rock Entertainment.

The bottom line is that the format fight isn’t over. The dominant format has yet to be declared.

KILCULLEN EXITS BILLBOARD
John Kilcullen, who has served as Billboard president/publisher since 2003, has decided to leave the company to pursue his passion as an entrepreneur.

“I leave on the fifth-year anniversary of my arrival because my entrepreneurial clock was beating very loudly,” Kilcullen says. “I accomplished what I set out to do.”

Kilcullen has also served as senior VP of the Film & Performing Arts and Music & Literary groups of Billboard parent the Nielsen Co. since October 2006. These divisions have now been consolidated under one Entertainment Group, and will be lead by newly appointed media industry veteran Gerry Byrne, who is based in New York and report to Nielsen Business Media president Greg Farrar.

Under Kilcullen’s leadership, Billboard’s revenue and brand equity have soared. Billboard closed 2007 up more than 16% in advertising revenue, with an 11% increase in run-of-book pages.

In addition, Billboard’s perfect-bound year-end issue carried nearly 80 advertising pages, marking it one of its largest issues ever.

In other gains, the network combination of Billboard.com and Allmusic.com continued to grow with more than 5.8 million unique visitors, and finished the year with a 67% lift in advertising revenue over 2006.

Also in 2007, Billboard events and conference revenue closed at more than 7% ahead of 2006. Licensing revenue was up more than 24% from last year due to a partnership with AEG. In this exclusive alliance, Billboard has teamed up with AEG Live to expand existing Billboard-branded live events and create new concerts, festivals and televised awards shows worldwide.

“2007 was a record year when measured against every component of our financial, strategic and execution plan,” Kilcullen says. “Due in large part to an incredibly talented leadership team, we grew revenue almost 10% and the bottom line 30% year-over-year in a market that is down 15%.”

Last year, Billboard won the Eddie Award, the record industry award available to a trade magazine, in the media/entertainment/publishing category for a second year in a row. In design, Billboard won an Ozzie Award for best feature design and two Merit Awards from the Society of Publications Designers.

Additionally, Billboard won the OMMA Award for best use of user-generated content by an advertiser (beating out a Super Bowl ad for Doritos and a YouTube ad). The Mobile Beat campaign was in partnership with sponsor LG.

Billboard identified more than 20 mobile bloggers and arranged access to concerts throughout the summer across America. They blogged with LG camera phones live from the shows.

On the digital front, during Kilcullen’s tenure the company launched Billboard Mobile in the United States, Canada and Japan and entered a joint venture with mobile industry trade association CTIA to create the Mobile Entertainment Live conference. He also introduced mobile charts to the magazine that have taken the brand into new growth markets.

“I have had an amazing journey leading Billboard,” Kilcullen says, “especially in the midst of so much transformation and change including disruptive peer-to-peer technology, piracy, consolidation, downsizing, the growth of mobile music and the era of personalization. Most of all, we have created an enterprising team who respect each other and work tirelessly to deliver timely insights to make our readers smarter, more competitive and hopefully, more successful.”

Internationally, the company has launched three Billboard Live music clubs in Japan and two new foreign print editions in Turkey and Russia.

Kilcullen says, “Five years ago, if you had asked anyone if Billboard would fuse together a successful global brand strategy integrating data, digital, mobile, video, live events and print, they would have laughed. . ., and, by the way, they did. Thanks to my friends and colleagues at Billboard and Nielsen Entertainment, we did just that.”

It was also under Kilcullen’s guidance that Billboard magazine and Billboard.com underwent successful redesigns in 2005.

Kilcullen’s senior editorial leadership team at Billboard remains in place: group editorial director Tamara Combs and executive editor Bill Werde.

Prior to joining Nielsen Business Media, Kilcullen was founding member and chairman/CEO of Hungry Minds (formerly IDG Books Worldwide). He grew the company to more than $240 million in revenue and created the “For Dummies” brand. He later took the company public in 1998 and sold it in 2001.

Byrne has served as an adviser to Nielsen Business Media since January 2007. In his new role, he has responsibility for the global entertainment, music and literary publishing enterprises across digital, print and face-to-face platforms.
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WAL-MART STIRS PRICING POT

Mass Merchant Proposes Multifaceted Plan

The major music companies have been resistant to lowering their prices on CDs, but now they may be dragged to that point. Wal-Mart, the largest retailer of music with an estimated 22% market share, has proposed a five-tiered pricing scheme that would allow the discounters to sell albums at even lower prices and require the labels to bear more of the costs.

According to sources, the Wal-Mart proposal would allow for a promotional program that could comprise the top 15-20 hottest titles, each at $10. The rest of the pricing structure, according to several music executives who spoke with Billboard, would have front-line hits and current titles retailing for $12, top catalog at $9, midline catalog at $7 and budget product at $5. The move would also shift the store's pricing from its $9.88 and $13.88 model to rounder, soups prices.

While executives at the Bentonville, Ark.-based discounting giant wouldn't comment on the specifics of their promotion, Wal-Mart divisional merchandise manager for home entertainment Jeff Maas acknowledges the proposal. "When you look at sales declines with physical product, and you have a category declining like it is, you have to make decisions about what the future looks like," he says. "If you have a business that is declining and you want to turn it around, it really takes looking at it from all angles."

Consequently, "we share ideas all the time with our suppliers, particularly about providing customers value and relevancy," he says, adding that Wal-Mart expects a dialogue with the labels on making such ideas work.

Maas referenced the DVD business as a model for tiered pricing. "It has been around for years and has worked very well," he says.

According to sources, this proposal builds on and is meant to replace Wal-Mart's "corrugated" promotional program, in which the merchant sells albums priced at $9.72 in a cardboard display placed in a high-traffic area outside the music department. In order to participate in that promotion, labels have to meet a $7.50 wholesale cost requirement, which works out to a roughly 21% margin for Wal-Mart.

Using that model as a guideline, the current Wal-Mart proposal could mean that superstar-hit titles that retail for $12 and $10 would be expected to wholesale at about $9.25 and $7.70, as opposed to the $12 wholesale charge that three of the four majors charge and the $10.30 that Universal charges for JumpStart titles.

But Wal-Mart generally doesn't dictate wholesale costs to the labels; it lets its rackjobber suppliers Anderson Merchandising and Handelman handle those discussions.

While those negotiations have yet to take place, the proposal is already causing agitation at the major labels. Some consider the proposal a non-starter, others say further negotiations might eventually yield a workable solution, while a few see it as appropriate, given the big picture.

"I don't think this is a Wal-Mart discussion," one top executive with a major says. "I think this is a future-of-the-business discussion. Right now everyone is paralyzed."

But another top executive worries that if the majors individually decide to embrace this proposal, "it would be bad for the retail. That's because for the corrugated promotion, the majors choose to limit the deep discount pricing to one class of trade—the rackjobbers that supply discount department stores. That strategy denied other store types like music specialty chains, independent merchants, and even Target (that chain does its own buying), from having access to the low $7.50 wholesale cost."

Some executives raised the question of whether the Federal Trade Commission would take issue with such a program were it rolled out only to Wal-Mart. But one executive says, "Making it legal isn't the difficult part. The difficult part is coming to terms with it."

Another top executive says, "The decision might not come down to: Do we give up 20% of our business? (i.e., Wal-Mart) in order to not lose the entire business?"

That question assumes that Wal-Mart would either penalize or stop doing business with a major that decides not to participate. Moreover, if all majors take a pass, some speculate that Wal-Mart could pull music entirely from the store.

This type of speculation abounds, although the Wal-Mart proposal was presented only as a starting point. As one label executive asks, "Is this a mandate coming down from the upper echelons, which see the category as a no-growth area?" Another says, "This sounds like the Hall of Mars and if it doesn't work, they could be out of the music business or maybe they reduce music down to a couple of racks." The proposal has Wal-Marts with larger selections. Maas declined to rule out those possibilities, but says he'd rather look at how Wal-Mart can help a declining category, especially since Wal-Mart also carries "a lot of categories that are in high growth...the customer vores every single day in our stores, and based on what they want is now we merchandise our stores."

Still, some industry executives doubt Wal-Mart would stop carrying music, because in the past it has presented data to music industry executives showing that music is good for the Wal-Mart basket, i.e., what shoppers also purchase with music.

In the meantime, Wal-Mart is selling labels that its proposed pricing strategy will boost sales so much that the labels won't lose profits. Indeed, that's what happened with the "corrugated" promotion, say label executives who have participated.

For that promotion, Wal-Mart wanted all frontline and catalog titles to be featured on the fixture, which holds 438 titles. But what it got was mostly catalog with some sales-mailed hit product from labels, which nevertheless managed to fill each slot in the promotion week after week.

While some labels initially resisted promotion, all majors eventually participated, even if not with the same level of commitment.

"We have a lot of data on how our customers shop and what they want," Maas says. "Our slogan, 'Saving money, live better,' is in our DNA."

A Larger Vision

Universal Music Group Snaps Up Latin Market Share

Sometime in the coming months, a single music label, Universal Music, will control almost half of the U.S. Latin music marketplace.

The shift comes in the wake of Universal's agreement to acquire Universal Music Group, the leading Latin music company in the United States. Universal, whose holdings include Universal Records, Fonovisa, Disa and La Calle, has a 35.9% share of the U.S. Latin market, according to Nielsen SoundScan year-end numbers. No other label has had that kind of market-share clout in the Latin realm.

Adding the U.S. Latin market share of Universal's Latin labels—Universal Music Latino and Machtete, with 8.83% and 5.26%, respectively—to Universal's will place Universal's Latin market share at 48.9%. It shouldn't, however, drastically change the Latin landscape, as Universal's distribution arm, Universal Music Group Distribution, controls more than 50% of the U.S. Latin market and has distributed Univision's product since the inception of the label. In Latin America and Spain Universal is consistently the No. 1 or No. 2 label in the market. Universal Music Group was put up for sale last year, after Universal Communications was acquired by private investors.

Universal quickly emerged as the front-runner on a list of candidates; in addition to the Univision distribution deal, Universal Music Group chair- man/CEO Doug Morris and president/COO Zach Horowitz have long expressed an interest in the burgeoning Latin marketplace and made strides to develop it in that market.

Universal/Univision talks stalled in past months, sources say, over discussions on the promotional role to be played by the Univision TV networks. Per the final agreement, the Univision networks will continue to provide promotional airtime to Universal artists, much in the same way they did with Univision artists.

Founded by CEO José Behar in 2001, Univision Music has been the longtime U.S. Latin market-share leader. Previously head of EMI Latin, Behar was hired by former Universal Communications CEO Jerry Prenzler to create a music division as part of Univision's media empire. Behar built the company from scratch, signing new and established acts, and later, acquiring leading indie Fonovisa Records, a regional Mexican music powerhouse. To this day, Univision's top sellers are in the regional Mexican realm. In turn, Universal's forte has long been its pop division, with stars like Juanes, Enrique Iglesias and Paulina Rubio. More recently, the company has become an urban music leader via its upstart label Machete Music, whose roster includes Wisin & Yandel.

Universal's Latin operations are overseen worldwide by Jesús López, chairman/CEO of Latin America and Iberian Peninsula. An industry veteran who has focused on restructuring his companies' operations and who is developing new business models, López will now oversee the joint worldwide operations of the two labels. Univision will continue to be run by Behar until the acquisition is complete.

LATIN

A Larger Vision

Universal Music Group Snaps Up Latin Market Share

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Wisin & Yandel had an epiphany a year ago in December, while playing a 17-and-under party in New York.

“We looked around, and all you saw was kids listening to their music on their phones and sharing the ringtones,” manager Edgar Andino says. “After that, it seemed everywhere we went, people asked us about ringtones and voice tones. And we thought, ‘Holy cow, this could be something.’”

Today, the market’s hottest reggaeton duo has become the Latin poster child for new technologies and brands, cutting deals with the likes of Zune and carrier SunCom, which on Feb. 1 released a Wisin & Yandel-branded and loaded cell phone (see story, below).

Now, the duo is redesigning its own mobile aggregator company, WYMo, in a joint venture with Puerto Rican aggregator MyMu- bile. This means Wisin & Yandel will actually own a mobile content company, an unusual—if not unprecedented—scenario for a recording act. WYMo’s initial push will be on text messaging and promotions surrounding the duo.

This is all in addition to more typical branding deals, including watches, sunglasses and a forthcoming clothing line.

“We want people to understand that Wisin & Yandel are not just a reggaetón product, but a business product that gives results,” Wisin says. “And we want people to understand they can consume our music not just on a CD. It’s a mistake to think the industry is on a downhill. You have to make technology work for you.”

Although mobile and digital companies have long been interested in reggaetón acts as a way to target the burgeoning—and elusive—Latin youth market, Wisin & Yandel (real names Juan Luis Morera Luna and Llandel Veggies Malave) have been especially adept at creating opportunities for themselves. That thrust began two years ago, when the pair, newly signed to Universal-owned Machete Music, released “Pa’ Mundo,” got new promotional thrust and hooked up with Andino, a marketer who had worked as a consultant with Pepsi and Anheuser-Busch.

“We sat down and made a two-year plan,” Andino says. “One major objective, he adds, was to have audiences put a face to Wisin & Yandel’s hit songs.

During the past three years, and with support from Machete, the duo has been a veritable hitmaking machine, with songs like “Rakata,” “Llame Pa’Vete” and current “Sexy Movimiento,” which spent 14 weeks in the top 10 of Billboard’s Hot Latin Songs chart. At one point, the duo made history by placing four tracks simultaneously on that chart.

“We wanted to treat them like a brand,” Andino says. “That concept didn’t exist in reggaetón. You have access to all this audience, and how can you leverage that?”

The Wisin & Yandel team began by making what Andino calls “statements,” from a 2007 Radio City Music Hall show whose production Wisin & Yandel paid for themselves, to the expensive cover art of “Los Vaqueros,” which the duo subsidized.

But the true gold mine, they thought, lay in the mobile and digital realm, where young Latino consumers were gravitating to the urban marketplace in general and reggaetón in particular.

Wisin & Yandel’s first major deal was with Zune. Then, the duo closed a deal with SunCom Wireless in Puerto Rico, which put out a limited-edition Wisin & Yandel-branded phone in tandem with a series of promotions. One of those promotions involves the duo’s trio of shows at Puerto Rico’s Coliseum, taking place March 6-8. SunCom customers, as well as customers from other carriers, can participate in a Wisin & Yandel SMS Challenge, where they’re asked to send text messages in order to win a series of prizes—from front-row tickets to meet-and-greets—with Wisin & Yandel.

As it turns out, the company acting as an aggregator for the Wisin & Yandel content was MyMobile, a young company eager to experiment with new business models. With Wisin & Yandel, MyMobile will launch aggregator WYMo, initially serving Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, Latin America and the United States.

“We have the technology to distribute the mobile content,” MyMobile owner Nestor Ponce De Leon says. “And Wisin & Yandel are the No. 1 act. They open an additional line of action for us in the same way they did with cell phones,” he adds, referring to the SunCom deal.

A major portion of WYMo’s business will be text messaging, fostered through promotions. These include a TV campaign with a local station in Puerto Rico, which will prompt consumers to send text messages via their phones, as well as a Wisin & Yandel “club” where members will get access to multiple promotions and prizes by texting.

Each text message, of course, has a cost. And although text messages cost far less than, say, a master- tone, the volume is much higher (Ponce De Leon aspires to reach the 1 million track mark in the first three months alone), and the profit share is bigger. Once the carrier gets its cut, revenue is split 60-40 between Wisin & Yandel and MyMobile.

Mymobile, like most aggregators, typically works directly with carriers. The Wisin & Yandel deal, Ponce De Leon says, is “unique,” not because the model is new, but because an act has opened to own ownership in the content as opposed to merely getting a sponsored fee.

“They’ve realized that although music continues to be heard, there are other mediums too,”

This arrangement, he adds, “allows us to market the brand [Wisin & Yandel], keep tabs on the response and participate in a revenue share.”

That type of attitude has been constant in Wisin & Yandel’s trajectory.

“They are first in line when it comes in investing in their career, both financially and in terms of effort and dedication,” says Machete president Gustavo Lopez, who just renewed Wisin & Yandel’s recording deal.

Under Machete, 2005’s “Pa’ Mundo” has sold more than 500,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, and more than 1 million worldwide, according to the label. The duo’s newest, “Los Extraterrestres,” has scanned 200,000 in the United States since its release last November. Wisin & Yandel also launched their own label, Y & W, as a joint venture with Machete, with their debut album, a compilation titled “Los Vaqueros,” scanning 193,000 copies so far.

Today, the duo keeps digging into its pockets to help pay for expenses above and beyond the label’s realm, like its 2007 Radio City show.

And, “They know how to find a balance between how they portray themselves to their fans and how they portray themselves to corporate America,” Lopez adds.

Most recently, the pair collaborated with Th Franco De Vita and Lenny Kravitz (on the music for an Absolut commercial) and a remix with Nelly Furtado. Despite the intrusives, however, crossing the Wisin & Yandel brand over to the English-speaking market is still not on the horizon.

“Well, I’d love to, but I’m not going to abandon my position in the Latin market to try and conquer the market in English,” Wisin says. “There’s a lot of Latin market out there. It just needs to be exploited.”

Wisin & Yandel, their label and their sponsors will discuss their new business models during the Billboard Latin Music Conference April 6-10 in Hollywood, Fla. For more, go to billboarddeenis.com.
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Promoter Furthers Chicago Presence With Soldier Field Deal

News of Philadelphia-based facility management firm SMG reaching a new five-year deal with the Chicago Park District board of commissioners to run the city's Soldier Field (billboard.biz, Feb. 14), and C3 Presents' attachment to it as a content provider, is interesting on two fronts:

The most obvious is C3, with this and the recently announced national Harrah's deal (billboard.biz, Jan. 29), is becoming increasingly aggressive on a national level, above and beyond festivals. Even if the deal to bring concerts and events to Soldier Field isn't exclusive, it clearly means that Austin-based C3 has very much established Chicago as a second base. Not only did C3 resurrect the Lollapalooza brand in Chi-town—and this was most definitely C3's accomplishment more than any other entry—but it surely will manage to do a stadium show in Chicago when few stadium acts and fewer stadium-level promoters exist at all.

The second, less obvious component of this deal is Live Nation's presence as a contender to operate Soldier Field. The bid to operate the iconic stadium was apparently hotly contested, with Live Nation (partnered with a local real estate firm) and Global Spectrum also vying for the contract.

Live Nation already made a run at operating the Charlotte (N.C.) Bobcats Arena (AEG ended up with a booking/marketing deal there), and the company is known to be throwing its hat in the ring for other contracts.

Among other concerns, Live Nation is now in the ticketing business, the merchandising business, the artist career business, the licensing business and, of course, the club and amphitheater business. Oh, yeah, and the concert promotion/touring business.

Stadiums and arenas, with their sports tenants and government oversight in many cases, are a total different ballgame. But in today's world, lines are completely blurred, and competing with the SMGs and Global Comcasts of the world makes sense for this next-gen concert promoter looking to broaden the horizons of the slim margins of concern.

But back to C3. SMG Sports & Entertainment senior VP Mike Evans says C3 was a valuable part of his company's successful bid to renew its deal with Soldier Field, where SMG has been since 1994.

"We do a lot of business with C3. We've worked with these guys individually and collectively over the years," he says. "C3 is right there in Chicago, they do Lollapalooza and they're active in a lot of other areas in Chicago, and they specialize in alternative-type events."

Of course, Live Nation has a big presence in Chicago, and more importantly, does Jam Productions, which has brought live getting stadium attractions—it's about once you get them to Chicago, how do you get them into your venue?"

SMG is a big buyer of talent in its own right and partners frequently with other promoters. "I don't want to panic anybody here. We enjoy our relationships with all promoters. We have business arrangements with just about every major promoter out there—some that are public, some that aren't," Evans says.

"Right now, C3's hitting the sweet spot for us. There are a few other talent offers right now on the table for me to co-promote with them in some of our venues on an act that's probably going to go outside," Evans adds. "They're coming to me with opportunities. Why wouldn't I make use of those opportunities?"

The "sweet spot" in many cases for SMG is in secondary and tertiary markets. "AEG and Live Nation get more focused on the major markets every day," Evans says. "C3 is very important to SMG, as is Outback and Brad Garrett at Police Productions, because those three in particular are working our secondary and tertiary markets from coast to coast."

We'll almost coast to coast in C3's case. "You're not going to see C3 do a show with me in Nassau Coliseum (in Uniondale, N.Y.), or probably Oakland, Calif.," Evans says. "But will you see them in Council Bluffs, Iowa, or the new building in Northern Kentucky, or Beaumont, Texas? Yeah.

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AUSTIN GOES LATIN

SXSW Exposure For Mexican, Argentine Acts

A Vans Warped tour franchise in Mexico and an Argentine DJ collective are among the international Latin groups looking for stateside exposure at next month’s South by Southwest music festival in Austin.

On March 15, a Warped tour Latin America showcase will feature Mexican bands Allison, Delux and Lipstick Terror — though a lineup for a one-off June 14 rock festival in Mexico City this year under the Vans Warped brand has yet to be set.

“International bands sometimes come to South by Southwest and get kind of overshadowed,” says Warped founder Kevin Lyman, who also throws an unofficial SXSW party for bands from as far away as Japan and Europe. But “now it’s a real conscientious effort to have different types of music from the U.S. as well as from around the world,” says Lyman, who has been freshening up his stateside tour by booking such foreign bands as Spain’s the Pinker Tones. Last year, Allison played several Warped-U.S. dates after showcasing at SXSW, and Lyman says this summer Delux will do the same.

Pako Zepeda, co-CEO of Mexico City-based management company Soundguich, is licensing the Warped name, pursuing sponsorships (Vans are among the major Warped partners) and building a database of potential attendees via MySpace and the Warped tour Mexico Web site.

Meanwhile, a collective of Buenos Aires-based DJs has built a five-city U.S. tour around its March 13 SXSW showcase. The Zizek tour, named for a twice-weekly gathering held at Buenos Aires’ Niceto nightclub, will also stop in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York and Chicago next month on a tour booked by the Kork Agency.

“This month’s club’s local success in the Argentine capital — co-founder Grant Duil, a Texas-born expatriate, says it packs in up to 1,000 people on Monday nights — led to the recent founding of label Z2K and an effort to book the DJs at U.S. and European festivals. “The six Zizek acts blend electronic and breakbeat with cumbia and reggaeton, in a style the tour’s MySpace site describes as ‘electro cumbia’ and ‘cumbia rave.’

“The experimental cumbia scene has been around for six or seven years,” says Duil, who along with the talent he manages is set to launch the tour. The Zizek DJs “want to see their careers advance and get more gigs…everything that happens when one goes from Argentina abroad.”

— Ayala Ben-Yehuda

Latin Notas

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Teen Tune-Out

Spanish-Language Radio Listenership Is Up—But Not With Young People

Who’s listening to radio? According to Arbitron’s latest Listening Trends report for fall 2007, it isn’t teens. Radio listenership by the 12-17 age group has been declining steadily since 1998, to its current low of only 8.1% of all listeners.

When it comes to Spanish-language radio, that average is even lower. The 12-17-year-old set is barely a blip on the listener screen of all Spanish-language formats, with the exception of Latin urban, where it counts for a high 19% of all listeners. In every other format, though, the demographic falls to a 6% share for Spanish contemporary radio or even lower.

While [these numbers don’t correspond to the nation’s youthfull Latin demographic (according to 2006 U.S. Census numbers, about one-third of all Latinxs in the United States are younger than 18), Latin listenership overall remains healthy.

Spanish-language formats account for 10.9% of total U.S. radio listeners 12 and up, according to Arbitron’s fall 2007 numbers. That share is only 1% less than the 11.9% high that Spanish-language radio registered at its peak in winter 2007. It also continues the general upward trend that Spanish formats have been registering since 1998, when they accounted for only 6.7% of all listenership.

Today, in an environment marked by decidedly anti-immigrant sentiment, the listening share for Spanish-language radio is greater than the share for urban radio (9.9%), rock (7.5%), country (9%) and even contemporary hit radio (10.8%).

Granted, Spain’s share includes all Spanish-language formats — even Spanish-specific talk radio. But the numbers demonstrate that there is a strong and stable population that prefers to listen to its radio in Spanish.

Dividing the sector further, regional Mexican remains by far the most listened to Spanish format. And to give you an idea of just how popular this niche of niches is, its 4.4% overall share surpasses the 3.6% registered by alternative radio.

If we delve deeper into regional Mexican, what’s surprising is that the bulk of its audience — 54% — is between 18 and 34 years old. That’s younger-skewing than the 18-34 audience for tropical radio (35%) or for Spanish contemporary radio (37%). For the former, 48% of all listeners are 15 to 64 years old, compared with 38% for that age bracket in regional Mexican.

This breakdown underscores what Spanish-language radio listeners have long known: Regional Mexican is far more eager to experiment and play new music than Latin pop or tropical stations, where core artists have been the same for years, aging with their audience.

Nothing wrong with that, if it brings in ratings. But it doesn’t entice new audiences of any age to tune in, as getting a variety of names on those playlists is exorbitantly hard.

So here’s one long-range question: What will happen to Spanish-language radio’s slipping youth listenership if urban stations (or Latin rhythmic, per Billboard’s Latincharts) keep dwindling?

With the stabilizing of the reggaeton boom, the number of Latin rhythmic stations that Nielsen BDS monitors is not only 10. More and more of those stations have altered their playlists to incorporate more pop and hits.

We know teen listeners are not what advertisers want, and that factor has contributed to the demise of those urban stations. But the format’s 53% listenership in the 18-34 bracket and 48% listenership in the 25-34 bracket can translate into spending dollars.

More important, with a healthy Spanish-language listenership, surely there is room for new music to attract new listeners in a broad variety of formats.

For 24/7 Latin news and analysis, see billboard.biz/latin.
Major Player

New Publisher Ready To Battle Established Entities

The largest music publishing acquisition in history is now spawning a top competitor in the independent sector: Imagem Music, formed by Dutch publisher CP Masters (CPM) and pension fund Stichting Pensioenfonds ABP, is the new owner of the Universal Music Publishing Group (UMPG) assets sold under the watchful eyes of the European Commission (EC).

Now holding rights to songs recorded by artists like Justin Timberlake, R. Kelly and Shania Twain—and the funds to make many more deals—Imagen Music is ready to compete head-on with publishers in Europe and the United States.

This is exactly what the EC wanted before it would give its regulatory blessing to Universal's $1.63 billion ($2.05 billion) acquisition of BMG Music Publishing. That deal closed in 2006, less than two months after a European court browbeat the EC for the way it handled examination of the Sony BMG Music Entertainment merger.

With the independent music group Imapla old-40 writers including Gino Vannelli, Johnny Nash, Kevin Gilliam (DJ Battlecat) and Candy Dulfer.

Just prior to BMG's sale, that publisher's U.K. assets (including the Zomba catalog) had generated an average of nearly $103 million ($124 million) in revenue annually during 2003-05, with BMG retaining an average of more than $31 million ($37 million) in net publisher's share (NPS) annually, according to confidential documents reviewed by Billboard during the BMG-auction process. That NPS contributed an average of nearly 19% to the publisher's total NPS during each of those years. The catalogs sold by Universal are a portion of these assets.

The assets and publishing rights diversified by Universal—and acquired by CPM/ABP—generated about $30 million ($37.7 million) in revenue during 2006, resulting in roughly $10 million ($12.6 million) in NPS, according to confidential documents reviewed by Billboard last year. The final purchase price was in the $125 million ($189 million) range.

Imagen Music is already working on a second undisclosed acquisition and is ready to sign

"The commission wanted to make sure we were serious about signing new writers."

—André de Raaff, CP Masters

jecting to the new acquisition, Universal chose to work closely with the EC and divest itself of assets rather than spend millions of dollars challenging potential EC objections.

In the last year, the EC closely monitored Universal's selection of assets and subpublishing rights—sending questionnaires to about 100 European companies for their opinions on the impact on the market by the proposed divestitures—to ensure that the sell-off would reduce Universal's market power while enhancing or creating competition in the publishing market.

After CPM/ABP beat out nearly a dozen other bidders and sealed the deal in December, the new buyer still had to satisfy the commissioners that it wasn't simply buying assets to squeeze out some money then sell them off again.

"They wanted to know how our network works, if we really had the intention to not only buy catalogs, but had serious ideas about continuing to work the catalogs and, very importantly, to continue to sign new writers," CPM co-CEO André de Raaff says.

Under the deal, CPM/ABP acquired the Zomba U.K., Warner U.K., 19 Songs, 19 Music and BBC catalogs, which UMPG will subpublish outside Europe. It also acquired European subpublishing rights to the Zomba U.S. catalog. This adds the works of more than 100 writers to the CPM fold, including Kamer Chiefs, producer Robert "Mack" Lange (Shania Twain), Max Martin, Martin "Sandy" Sandberg (Britney Spears, Backstreet Boys) and Mark Knopfler, as well as future songs by Timberlake, Kelly, Linkin Park, Ne-Yo, Nas and others. They join the CPM roster of songs by about more writers, primarily from the United Kingdom and America, de Raaff says. With writers from these countries, "you automatically have a bigger chance to create worldwide success because of the language and the talent."

In the next six months, de Raaff plans to focus heavily on synch licensing. He believes the catalogs have been underemployed in Europe. And while some U.S. publishers believe that synch fees have dropped even though licensing opportunities have increased, de Raaff says he hasn't seen a pricing drop in Europe.

CPM is one of four divisions of the Netherlands-based CTM, an entertainment company co-owned by de Raaff, Bob Hubar and Dennis Wigman. De Raaff, who was once GM of Warner/Chappell Music's Dutch office, has more than 30 years' experience in the music industry. Hubar is an established TV producer and former entertainment attorney.

Slightly more than a year ago, they decided to focus more on music publishing and TV production. That led to the quest for financial backers. ABP is Europe's largest, and the world's third-largest, pension fund with $217 billion ($332 million) in assets under management. Last summer, de Raaff met ABP executives, who were then already considering investing in intellectual property. They joined forces just as the Universal assets went up for sale.

Imagen Music is opening a London office with four executives from Universal/Zomba, and adding four more to the staff. Administration will be handled out of its office in Hilversum, the Netherlands.

We don't screw acts with end-of-year check fees.
The Indies

CORTNEY HARDING cortney.harding@billboard.com

On one hand, the results of a recently released New York University Stern School of Business study ("Does Chatter Matter? The Impact of User-Generated Content on Music Sales," by Vasant Dhar and Elaine Chang) on how different outside elements affected or predicted sales once an album was released don't seem terribly shocking.

Of course, a record with some sort of publicity will sell more than one without any advance hype; if a record is put out in the woods and no one hears it, it probably won't make much of a sound.

Likewise, the authors' findings that blog buzz and social networks can lead to sales increases, sometimes up to three times the average of similar releases, isn't too surprising. But what bears examining, in the wake of this correlation, is how indie retailers can maximize this trend and build relationships with blogs to drive sales.

Online retailers have been some of the first to jump on this opportunity. Insound.com, which was recently acquired by the Alternative Distribution Alliance, has an extensive online affiliate program. "We have people on staff dedicated to reaching out to music blogs," site director Patrick McNamara says. Insound has had a partnership with Pitchfork for almost nine years, and also has relationships with major blogs like Brooklyn Vegan, Stereogum and Oh My Rockness. Those sites get a small percentage of each sale that comes through a direct link, and Insound uses the program to boost sales and manage inventory.

"A good review on Pitchfork or some blog charter can definitively drive sales," McNamara says. "When Clap Your Hands Say Yeah got Pitchfork's 'best new music' distinction, we sold 12,000 copies of the record."

Also benefiting from a strong relationship with Pitchfork is a digital indie music retailer, eMusic. According to editorial director Yancy Strickler, the site saw a 600% increase in downloads of the new Atlas Sound album after a recent Pitchfork review. eMusic also has a partnership with Boing Boing, which resulted in a 500% increase for the Marseille Figs after the site ran a positive review of their latest record, "The Dirty Cancer."

From the perspective of the bloggers, money is only part of the equation when it comes to choosing the sites to which traffic is directed. "Ultimately it's all about picking the most useful commerce services for our audience," says Duncan Browne, founder/CEO of aggregator the Hype Machine.

Matthew Perpetua, who writes Fluxblog, tends to steer his readers toward indie outlets. "I try to favor band sites/label sites, throw things toward indie online shops fairly often," he says.

While digital-only stores have embraced this model, brick-and-mortar stores—even those that sell music through their Web sites—have been slower. "We don't have any deals with the local blogs," says Isaac Slausarenko of Portland, Ore.'s Jackpot Records. Nor does Phoenix's Stinkweeds Records; owner Kimber Lanning says that while some local blogs do link to its store, there is no formal program in place.

Even larger indie chains like Boston's Newbury Comics have been slow to jump on the blog bandwagon. "Developing an affiliate program for blogs is on the list, but it's pretty far down on the list," GM Duncan Browne says. He also acknowledges that the store "sees a definite uptick in sales of a certain record when bloggers pay a lot of attention or a site gives it a good review."

Sales 2.0

Is Indie Retail Learning From Blog Buzz?

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PUMP IT UP

Labels Look To Boost Digital Hip-Hop Album Sales

When Flo Rida set a digital sales record last month with his single "Low," which moved 470,000 copies the first week of January despite not being available on an album, it was emblematic of an intriguing trend.

Digital hip-hop track sales are at an all-time high, but in terms of digital album commerce, hip-hop is lagging far behind other genres. In 2007, of 500.4 million albums sold industry-wide, 10% were sold digitally. In comparison, of the 41.7 million rap albums sold, only 7% (2.9 million) of those were digital.

So far this year (through the week ending Feb. 17), according to Nielsen SoundScan, overall album sales stood at 56.4 million, with 15.4% of that figure being digital (8.6 million). Of the 4 million rap albums sold, 11.2% have been digital (447,000). Two indie labels are seeking a solution. Amalgam Digital, which claims it is the first hip-hop-specific online retail store, and Def Jux, which is finalizing plans to expand its label site to a full-blown digital store, are experimenting with new ways to boost the genre's download sales stats.

Amalgam GM Jay Andreozzi believes the label not only creates a platform for indie hip-hop artists who otherwise might find it difficult to get music featured on iTunes or Rhapsody, but that it will also aid in shifting hip-hop's digital figures.

The label is committed, Andreozzi says, to "new strategies like additional bonus tracks or a cappella versions of the album or exclusive digital-only albums." An example of the latter is Joe Budden's "Mood Muzik 3.5." The digital-only album was made available earlier this year exclusively on Amalgam's Web site prior to the release of "Padded Room," the New Jersey rapper's official sophomore release, due this spring via the label. In addition, a limited-edition a cappella version of "Padded Room" will be made available free to fans who buy the album from the Amalgam site.

Koch VP of digital/mobile Bill Crowley says that although specialty stores have been successful in the past, he isn't certain a hip-hop-specific store will do as well. "There's a really healthy hip-hop market on the digital side, but they aren't the most likely to buy full-length albums," he says.

Why? Because hip-hop culture has historically been singles-driven. "While a lot of hip-hop fans can tell you their top 10 hip-hop albums, there are plenty that love the genre but aren't embedded in the culture that can," says Jason King, artistic director at New York University's Clive Davis Department of Recorded Music. "Hip-hop has never really been a concept-album-driven culture."

Still, Def Jux plans on adopting the same free/bonus content policy Amalgam has implemented when it expands its online store in coming months. Currently, the site only sells music by Def Jux artists.

"You can put all the B-sides and exclusive digital content on there to further draw people in," label manager Jesse Ferguson says. "You can add CDs, sneakers, sweatshirts, plus an entire catalog digitally, and not worry about it being in stock or not."

Andreozzi believes that signing former major-label artists like Budden (whose 2003 self-titled Def Jam debut has sold 526,000 copies) to indie labels will further facilitate growth in online album sales.

"We had the highest-selling individual album on Amalgam with Joe and now, when we do his next album, we will hopefully be able to do it on a bigger scale," Andreozzi says.

Crowley says, "There's a lot of success to be had when a high-profile artist finds their way to an indie," but he still believes singles sales will remain on top. "It all comes down to delivering tracks people want," he says. "Still, if they buy an album or a single, it beats the alternative of people not caring at all, or caring so little they'd opt to download illegally."
Larry Norman
1947-2008

Christian Rock Pioneer Influenced A Range Of Acts

One of Christian rock music’s most influential and controversial figures, Larry Norman died Feb. 24 of heart failure at his home in San Jose, Calif. He was 61.

Inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2001, Norman is often referred to as “the father of Christian rock music.” He is known for such groundbreaking anthems as “Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music” and “I Wish We’d All Been Ready.”

“Larry was an interesting person in every sense of the word,” Gospel Music Assn. president/CEO John Styll says. “He was one of the first to record what later became known as contemporary Christian music, but what he did in the early ’70s was far edgier than most of what comes from that genre now. I found Larry to be likeable and personable, although unpredictable. I always suspected that he wrote much of his own publicity and spun it so as to further his own mystique, and he did have a way of rewriting history. But he earned his place, and history will always show that he was an original—an iconoclast.”

Born April 8, 1947, in Corpus Christi, Texas, Norman began writing and performing at age 9. He later moved to San Jose, Calif., where he became part of the local music scene, opening for the Doors and Jimi Hendrix.

Norman began recording in the mid-’60s and first garnered attention with 1968 release “I Love You,” which he recorded while lead singer for the group People! The title track was a cover of the Zombies tune, which reached No. 7 on Billboard’s pop singles chart. Norman left the group as soon as its album was released and embarked on a colorful solo career. Capitol Records issued his first solo album, “Upon This Rock,” in 1969, widely considered the first Christian rock album. In 1972, with help from Beatles producer George Martin, he recorded the landmark “Only Visiting This Planet” for MGM Records. The following year, he released “So Long Ago the Garden,” also on MGM, before opting to pursue the indie label route the remainder of his career, launching his own Solid Rock Records.

Norman pushed the boundaries by creating rock music that incorporated his faith and targeted nonbelievers. Never one to preach to the choir, Norman’s brazen passion sometimes irked religious conservatives, but no amount of criticism could deter him. With his long hair, faded jeans and outspoken political and social views, he was the original Christian rock rebel.

Many Christian bookstores banned his product, but his follow-up albums always held him in high esteem. “I remember the exact moment when I first heard Larry’s music,” says EMI Christian Music Publishing president Eddie DeGarmo, formerly of pioneering Christian rock outfit DeGarmo & Key. “It was June 1972. I was 17. We were just kids in a rock band on a mission to our generation playing whatever we could. None of us were aware that anyone else was doing this probably due to us being sheltered in the Bible Belt. ‘Only Visiting This Planet’ truly changed the way we looked at things and what was possible. There was somebody that had blazed the trail for us.”

Norman’s music has influenced a variety of artists, from mainstream rockers to today’s young Christian bands. “Larry Norman is without a doubt my greatest lyrical influence,” Front Door artist TobyMac says. “He was socially relevant, spiritually significant and passionate about challenging his generation to new heights of love. Larry put Jesus on the streets—right where he belongs.”

More than 300 acts have recorded Norman’s songs, among them Sammy Davis Jr., Petula Clark, Rebecca St. James and Geoff Moore & the Distance. In 1995, St. James, dcTalk, Grammatik and Audio Adrenaline were among the Christian acts participating in the tribute album “One Way: Songs of Larry Norman.”

At the time of his death, Norman had been working on a new project with Modern Mouse’s Isaac Brock and Pieses frontman Frank Black, who cites Norman as a major influence. That music will be released later this year.

Just hours before he died, Norman dictated a message to be posted on his Web site. It said, in part, “I feel like a prize in a box of Cracker Jacks with God’s hand reaching down to pick me up. I have been under medical care for months. My wounds are getting bigger. I have trouble breathing. I am ready to fly home.”


The Legends Lawsuit
Record Club Sales At Center Of Artists’ Royalty Claim

The record industry doesn’t make cookie-cutter record deals. This can lead to significant accounting problems—even after artists sign with different labels over time, each with its own negotiated contractual terms covering royalty percentages and calculation methods. Add to the mix a major-label group acquiring several other labels, and one result can be a lawsuit, such as the one recently filed by 14 artists or their estates against Universal Music Group.

The plaintiffs include such legendary figures as Patti Page and the estate of Count Basie, Sarah Vaughan, Woody Herman and Benny Goodman. The only thing they have in common is that they all signed with labels eventually acquired by UMG, they all hired H/B Webman & Co. to audit their royalty accounts, and they aren’t satisfied with UMG’s accounting and payments.

It would be easy to say that this case is about a lack of transparency in accounting. But it’s more complex than that. Nearly every possible legal and accounting allegation is thrown into this mishmash of a suit filed Feb. 14 in the New York Supreme Court.

The 53-page complaint cites improper payments in connection with record clubs, returns, compilations, third-party licenses, digital distributions, reserves, legal settlements, foreign royalties and Audio Home Recording Act royalties from 1998 to the present. The complaint alleges that the parties agreed to toll (extend) the statute of limitations during this period of time.

Specifically, the plaintiffs claim that UMG received “inflated advances” and other fees from record clubs and accepted very low royalties—on which artists’ royalties, in turn, were calculated.

Oren Warshavsky, a partner with Troutman Sanders in New York, represents the plaintiffs. He believes that the artists should receive a share of the record club fees, since the labels provide free goods—which do not generate royalties—to record club subscribers.

In addition, he says, the contracts required royalties to be calculated based on retail list price. But, he says, UMG no longer publishes retail list prices in its catalog. Instead, he says, the label uses a “synthetic” retail price, which is based on the published price to dealers (PPD). He argues that this is improper because UMG never asked the artists whether the change was acceptable to them.

Despite numerous requests, he adds, UMG refused to tell auditors how it comes up with this price. The auditor determined that the company’s methodology resulted in it crediting, as the retail list price, roughly 120%-130% of the PPD; the actual retail list price, Spanish

Global Matters
By Howell Llewellyn

Raucous Caucus
Spain’s Indie Labels Team Up To Prepare For Government Talks

Spain—The Spanish indie label sector has set up a nationwide independent labels’ federation (FIP) to hold more sway in upcoming consultative meetings with the government over music legislation.

To create FIP, the 48-member indie labels body UFI has joined with regional label groups in Catalonia (Barcelona), the Basque Country (Bilbao), Valencia and Galicia (Vigo).

The new group will be independent of Spain’s two main music sector pillars—major label body and IFPI affiliate Pronumatica, and 80,000-member authors’ and publishers’ society SGAE.

FIP will represent some 200 labels that account for 25% of record sales in Spain.

One FIP demand will be for such anti-piracy legislation as that proposed in France and the United Kingdom. Former UFI committee member Fernando Luaces, who is now a Pronumatica board member and director of Madrid label boa Records, says, “We want similar laws on the control of Internet content owned by artists and labels—the question of rights [on the Internet] is crucial to the indie label sector.”

Luaces adds that “FIP will be a unique voice in the negotiation of these rights, and we shall be prominent in the three lines of negotiation—with mobile phone operators such as Telefonica, global Internet sites like MySpace and YouTube, and rights collecting societies
he says, was 152% of the PPD.

The auditors also found that although many contracts did not allow for certain deductions such as packaging, Warshavsky says, it appears that UMG built a standard deduction into the PPD (e.g., the PPD would be 25% below the published PPD).

Among other claims, the complaint alleges that UMG debited the plaintiffs' accounts with a higher per-unit price when records were returned than it previously credited to them when the same units were sold. UMG also deducted a reserve against royalties for certain third-party exploitations despite no contractual provision allowing for the deduction, the complaint claims.

Warshavsky says he also plans to claim that digital download deals are licenses rather than sales, requiring higher royalties to artists.

It would be surprising if the court permits this case to proceed as one lawsuit: each plaintiff has his or her own contractual agreements that will likely guide how much, if anything, each one is owed.

For example, Count Basie entered more than nine contracts with at least five different labels that eventually became part of UMG. The Mills Brothers had more than 16 agreements in five decades.

And some of the legal remedies may be difficult to win. The plaintiffs claim there is a fiduciary duty between the label and the artists, which would require UMG to exercise a higher standard of care toward its artists than with other contractual relationships. But nearly every court has held previously that there is no such duty between artists and labels.

The plaintiffs also want the court to rescind the contracts and return the masters to them. But a rescission requires that all the parties be returned to their original pre-contract positions. The plaintiffs could have to pay to UMG all money ever spent by the labels for these artists since, in some cases, the 1930s.

Time will tell whether the plaintiffs are entitled to the total $6.4 million they claim in damages or whether they are expecting more than they contractually agreed to accept.

"We believe that these claims are baseless, and we are confident that we will prevail in court," a UMG spokesman says.
DOWNLOADS UP 41% IN JAPAN
Music downloads in Japan rose by 41% in trade value to 75.5 bil-
lion yen ($699 million) in 2007, with volumes up 26% to 465 mil-
lion units, according to data released by the Recording Industry
Assn. of Japan. PC-based music download sales—all full
tracks, albums and music videos—rose 30% to slightly less than
31 million units, for a wholesale value of 5.92 billion yen ($54.8
million), up 18% from 2006. Downloads in the all-conquering
mobile sector accounted for the vast majority of sales, with 434
million units having a wholesale value of 68 billion yen ($629.6
million). Master ringtones represented the largest part of that
with 223.9 million units, down 1% from 2006. The RIAJ counts al-
bums and mini-albums as single units regardless of the number
of tracks they contain.

WARNER AFRICA GOES MOBILE
Warner Music Gallo Africa has struck a strategic partnership with iQ global, which promises to pump the major's music across
African mobile networks. Founded in May 2005 in the United
Kingdom, iQ is a global provider of integrated digital sol-
lutions. It will distribute WMA's repertoire through a network
of third-party wireless operators and mobile service providers
in Africa. The partnership will encompass digitized music in an
array of mobile formats, including full tracks, album bundles and
ringtones. The pact will initially focus on sub-Saharan African,
rolling out first in South Africa and Nigeria in March. WMA was
created in May 2006 as a joint venture between Warner Music In-
nernational and South African publishing and entertainment
company Johncom and its label subsidiary Gallo Music.

THREE STRIKES’ FOR DOWN UNDER?
The Australian government says it is considering “three strikes
and out” legislation that would see frequent illegal file down-
loaders lose their Internet access. Under the proposal, similar
to a plan being considered by the British government, an ille-
gal file sharer will be given a warning. This will be followed by
a suspension of Internet access, and then cancellation. The
law would require Internet service providers to monitor traf-
ﬁc on their networks. The Australian Recording Industry Assn.
claims that 2.8 million Australians downloaded music and
movie ﬁles illegally in 2007. ARIA has proposed the three-
strikes policy as a weapon in battling piracy during discus-
sions in the past 12 months with the government and ISPs, ARIA chief executive Stephen Peach says. “It’s highly com-
pelling proposal,” he says. However, Peach maintains that ARIA
would prefer to formulate a voluntary code of conduct with
ISPs than rely on legislation.

POSTHUMOUS DMA WINS FOR NATASJA
Urban artist Natasja posthumously won four honors at the 20th
annual Danish Music Awards show, held Feb. 23 in Copenhagen.
The Playground Music artist, who died in a car accident last
June, took awards for best album, female vocalist, urban album
and songwriter for “”Danmark Er Jeg Født.” Alternative rock act
Duné won best band, best new act and best rock album for “We
Are In There You Are Out Here.” Other winners included Copen-
hagen Records’ Alphabet, whose self-titled disc was named be-
est pop album; its single “10,000 Nights of Thunder” was
named best track. Most of the awards were determined by a
music industry/media jury; special juryies dealt with the more
specialized awards.

GLOBAL NEWSLINE

As The World Turns
Music World Parent Company Unveils New Distribution Plan
TORONTO—The parent com-
pany of defunct Canadian retail
chain Music World plans to re-emerge as a dis-
tributor for music to “non-
traditional” markets, aiming
at stores like Canadian Tire,
Toys “R” Us and other mall-
based retailers.

“We’ll build an assortment of music for them based on
demographics, their retail footprint, their location,” says
Pindoff Entertainment Group president Michael Waitzer,
former CEO of Canadian ap-
apel and footwear chain
Athletes World. Pindoff also
is planning to open 50 tem-
porary retail stores in malls
for the fourth-quarter holi-
day season.

Music World officially closed its doors Jan. 11, shutting 72 stores across
Canada. The company was owned by the Pindoff fam-
ily until it was sold late last year to a group of investors,
and as part of the receiver’s obligations that needed to be
negotiated and would have raised costs, Waitzer
says, which led to the deci-
sion to close the stores and
lay off all 648 employees.

SHIP of that deal, Music
World owed its new owner
$30 million. Documents in-
dicate the company had
$72 million in annual sales.

Though a handful of the
stores were on the verge of
profitability, most had lease

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focus on the market, including multiple and well-timed artist visits."

The singer's Vancouver-based manager Terry McBride subscribes to that thinking, attributing Lavigne's success to "a combination of three promotional trips, Japanese thinking, based manager focus and promotions."

Lavigne was featured as a character in a two-volume manga comic book, "Make 5 Wishes," published in April and July 2007 by Random House-owned Del Rey Manga. They were available online and to mobile users as weekly episodes, with Lavigne's music soundtracking the images.

While mobile is Japan's dominant digital-sales force, industry sources confirm that mobile-based yakuaku downloads remain relatively low, partly due to international rights holders' dissatisfaction with content aggregators' revenue splits.

SoundScan Japan does not have the scale of coverage among retailers that Nielsen SoundScan does in the United States, but has logged 684,000 sales of "The Best Damn Thing," with Ne-Yo's "Because of You" (Universal International) the second-placed yakuaku set selling 321,000 units, ahead of Backstreet Boys' "Unbreakable" (BMG Japan) with 300,000.

While neither RIAJ nor SoundScan break out labels' international repertoire market shares, Universal Music Japan claims to be the 2007 market leader with 33%. Universal COO Kaz Koike says yakuaku sales dropped slightly year on year, but declines to provide exact figures. He suggests UMG's share largely held up through a decision to follow its domestic marketing approach of placing heavy emphasis on TV promotion.

Yuji Takahashi, head of international at Tokyo-based label Pony Canyon, adds that local artists' dominance of Japanese TV was long compensated for by radio and music magazines' focus on foreign acts. But he says radio now favors domestic talent, while specialist music magazines' sales have been hit by free magazines published by retailers like Tower and HMV.

However, DiCicco suggests all is not yet lost for yakuaku. "As (more) overseas markets evolve," he says, "Japanese music companies need to proactively and aggressively search further below the radar for international artists that have the melodies, style—and commitment—necessary to break in Japan."

Additional reporting by Tom Ferguson in London.

chain hopes it can pick up half of Music World's past business, which would add approximately $35 million to its annual revenue. The chain, which has 118 stores across Canada, plans to move into the former locations of three Music World stores.

"Most [malls] want an entertainment retail presence," he says, "so they absolutely want us there."

But some indies are anxious about the fact that there is now one major player left in Canada's music retail sector.

"We're left struggling to deal with [HMV]," says Enrique Soina, co-founder of Toronto-based indie Paper Bag Records, home to releases by such bands as Tokyo Police Club and the Acorn. "It's hard for us to get cut in on a lot of promotions."

Kadaner says he can understand the concerns that music companies in Canada have about the state of the retail industry. He says that while HMV, which he estimates controls around 30% of the music retail market, adds new product segments like videogames and MP3 players, it is still primarily focused on music.

"One can understand their frustration because their total business is music, which is often being consumed by people stealing it," he says. "At the same time they see retail points being lost or being replaced by retailers where music is a tertiary focus. But we believe music is our core DNA and always will. While we are evolving as an entertainment retailer, we believe that brings traffic into our stores and exposes them to music. That gives the music industry a passionate, committed retailer that will remain in business."
I don’t answer to finance meetings. I don’t look at quarterly cash flow statements of this company. I don’t give a shit.

I don’t want me to look after their music interests. They have a couple of young artists, one of them is Ali Lohan, Lindsay Lohan’s sister. We’ve going to be launching her music career, and we’re also doing a TV show with her.

The Malaof bring great resources. They have a $20 million recording studio in the Palm and they have an unbelievable venue in the Pearl [in Las Vegas]. We can record our artists and have them perform there. With [their background in the NBA, they bring all of resources for us to license our music. They’ll enjoy a minority position in the company because I want to maintain my complete control, but I’m extremely happy to have them onboard.

What is your state of the union for the music industry?

The music industry has been incredibly fat and lazy, and that’s the truth. When you rely upon the musical consumer to repurchase their musical library—from vinyl and cassettes and 8-track tapes all the way through CDs—and you have this massive growth that happened every few years, and you think that’s real, you’re crazy. It’s not real. Once we get to a digital platform, where [consumers] could control all of their music within one unit, it ended the built-in engine of the re-purchasing of the musical library. So then when you re-work with really the business, and people in this business that can find talent and harvest the talent. That’s the whole ballgame—it’s only about hits.

Your deals seem like 360 deals, but with significant emphasis on nontraditional sources of income. We’re going out of our way to create alliances and partnerships with anyone and everyone that we feel can help us set the table for when we bring our music to market. If you look at the structure of Suretone, you understand why I believe in that, because I’m not just the record company. I’m the manager. I’m not just the manager and the record company, in many cases, I’m the publisher. You can no longer survive just on the music sales.

I was one of the guys, originally, who never had a problem being the record company and the manager. It was a natural move for me, because I wanted my artists and my destiny to all be one and the same. I’m not interested in selling a song. I’m interested only in selling an artist. I’m not interested in popping up on the radio and having them go and buy the single. My job is to grasp onto the integrity and the vision that these artists have, and then help them evolve their lifestyle-driven bands. So that when that base widens, so that when we do ultimately go to radio and television, we don’t have our hearts in our throat.

Who’s next on your roster?

I’ve invested $6 million of my own money in this business in the last 20 months. No one in the record business as an entrepreneur would say that, because no one would be crazy enough to fucking do it [laughs]. I don’t answer to finance meetings. I don’t look at quarterly cash flow statements of this company. I don’t give a shit.

I did it because I believe in my artists, and I believe in myself, and I believe in the power of music because music has never been more present in the culture of our lives.

Interscope has been great to me. They pay for the records that are produced, they pay for all the marketing, they give me some great overhead in the company. But the investment, overall, if you look at the roster and you look at all of the signings and you look at the money I’ve put in and the money they’ve put in, it includes marketing and everything else, you probably come to a number that’s $25 million to $30 million. Easily.

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For The Global Music Business, America's Weak Currency Means Game On—For Challenges And Opportunities

By Ed Christman And Lars Brandle
Illustration By William Duke

When OT-Vale artist Chenoa flew to the Americas from Spain to begin a Feb. 17-March 15 promotional tour of key Latin-American markets to support her "Absurda Cenicienta" album, Vale Music president Ricard Campoy already knew that the weak American dollar was going to wreak some havoc on the album's P&L statement. "The first costs are paid here [in Barcelona] in euros—that is, the airfares, making the promo videoclip and so on," Campoy says. "Then later when we receive revenue and royalties, it's in dollars. And that is not much when changed into euros." It's a reality that those in and around the music business have been dealing with for years now, at least since the early part of this decade, when the dollar began its long decline. Simply put, if your business collects revenue in dollars, but pays out in a different currency, chances are the past few years have introduced new challenges. But of course, for every party that gets hurt because of the weak American dollar, someone else in the deal could derive a benefit because of exchange rates. Take OT-Vale, for example: Its Universal U.S. and Universal Mexico sister companies of Vale Music—which Universal Music Group acquired last year—benefit from the cheap dollar because the local companies pay the expenses for the promotional tour on the ground, according to Campoy's view. In one way or another the weak American dollar—which on Feb. 26 dropped to 67 cents against the euro, versus 93 cents on that same date five years ago—has affected every aspect of the global music business, from touring, label operations and the importing and exporting of music to where and how investors and music companies make bets through investments.
INVESTMENTS

Financial executives suggest that foreign investors will see the weak dollar as an opportunity to buy or invest in U.S. assets to achieve bargain-basement pricing, while foreign-based music companies might consider this time as ripe to initiate or expand U.S. operations.

That's what London-based private equity firm Harwyn Investment Management did in February 2007 when it acquired Entertainment One, which owned Koch Entertainment. It then added to its U.S. holdings by buying Navarre's independent music distribution company three months later.

From the opposite perspective, U.S.-based music companies operating on a global stage have an incentive to reinvest their international revenue in those other territories, instead of repatriating those funds home.

"Some of our investments done over the last year were done with other currencies," Warner Music Group CFO Michael Fleisher says. "We were thoughtful about currencies when doing some of those transactions."

Outside the United States, WMG has used non-U.S. dollar currencies to acquire or help start, in the last 12 months, Jean-Claude Camus Productions (January), a tour production, promotion and booking company in France, to help execute its 360-degree strategy; B-Unique (November 2007), a U.K.-based record label; a 70% stake in Taisuke (September 2007), a leading artist services company in Japan; Vita- min (September 2007), a label in South Korea; the creation of Digital Access (June 2007), a joint venture with Sony BMG and Russian music labels Soyuz and Nikitin Records, to facilitate the wholesale distribution of a wide range of local and international music products to Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States; a significant stake in Zebralution (February 2007), the Duisburg, Germany-based indie-label digital distribution company; and the Rights Co. (November 2007) in London, which it merged with Warner Vision to form Warner Music Entertainment.

OPERATIONS

"One of the things we like is that half our revenue is derived from outside the U.S.,” Fleisher says. In its most recent fiscal year, WMG revenue was split between 49% in the States ($1.67 billion) and 51% internationally ($1.73 billion). EMI generated 30.7% of its revenue in the States ($543 million, or $1.09 billion) of its total revenue of £1.8 billion ($3.5 billion) in its most recent fiscal year ended March 31, 2007. The other two major labels do not publicly break out music revenue by territory.

"We have costs that match up against our revenue" in the respective currencies, he adds. "You don't want to have all your costs in the dollar and revenue in other currencies.

Conversely, if you are a foreign company selling your product in dollars, doing most of your business in the U.S. and need to convert back to host company currency? Then you are going to get killed," one Wall Street investor familiar with the music industry says.

That happened to a couple of Canadian labels, Madacy and St. Clair, earlier this decade, according to a financial industry observer. Both companies derive the bulk of their revenue from the States, but most of their overhead was in Canada, which meant that they had to repatriate most of their revenue to pay bills—a costly process when the U.S. dollar is weak against the Canadian dollar.

Five years ago, those companies had an advantage when the Canadian dollar was worth 65 cents. To look at that in dollars—since that's how Montreal-based Madacy, which trades publicly on the Toronto stock exchange, measures its revenue—on Feb. 14, 2003, theoretically $40 million in U.S. sales would have paid nearly $61 million Canadian in expenses, according to foreign exchange site onanda.com. Today, that $40 million U.S. would have only paid for $40 million in Canadian expenses, a shortfall of $21 million Canadian.

While that may seem like a gloomy prospect for Canadian companies, both of them have taken defensive measures to reduce the sting.

The conversion of the then-weakening American dollar to the Canadian dollar "was an issue for St. Clair that predated my joining the company," in 2005, CEO Ron Ford says. "But the company got more aggressive with hedging currencies and it shifted some manufacturing and distribution pipeline overhead costs to the U.S. to match the revenue stream.

While Madacy wouldn't respond to repeated inquiries on the topic, that seems to be what the Montreal-based label did too. For one, Madacy has part of its cost structure—its distribution center—in the States. And even more important, foreign currency hedging through derivative financial instruments—such as foreign currency options and foreign currency future contracts—appears to provide Madacy with protection against currency swings.

Madacy does not discuss foreign currency gains or losses in its quarterly numbers—it posted $451,000 in earnings on net sales of $73 million in the nine-month period ended Sept. 30, after losing $23.9 million on $77.1 million in the previous year—but in its most recent annual report it gave some explanation of its strategy.

In that report, Madacy noted it had locked in long-term contracts at favorable exchange rates, which produced an annual gain of
$436,000 in foreign currency translations. To see how it did that, the prior year’s annual report shows that on Dec. 31, the company had 31 monthly foreign exchange contracts. Until July 2008, to convert on average $1.28 million into $1.55 million Canadian, which reflects an average exchange rate of $1.2097 Canadian/$1 U.S. At that point, the Canadian dollar stood at $1.16 to $1 U.S.

At the end of 2006, it reported that its monthly contracts through November 2008 carried an average conversion of $880,000 to $1.04 million Canadian, which reflects an exchange rate of $1.184 Canadian/$1 U.S.

Foreign currency hedging also becomes necessary in situations where labels or wholesalers are not in control of their own destiny. For instance, if a U.S. distributor pays for foreign product denominated in dollars, then the foreign label has to take that into consideration, says Joe Micallif, CEO of Portland, Ore.-based Allegro, which serves as the U.S. distributor for many internationally based labels.

Sometimes labels overlook the consequences of exchange rate fluctuations because that is the price they are willing to pay, if the label’s long-term strategic play requires an investment in America, Micallif says.

But sometimes labels call the shots. Filippo Sugar, president of Italian indie Sugar, whose roster includes a massive exporter in tenor Andrea Bocelli, says he took preventive measures before the current dollar slump. “Last year we switched all the foreign contracts of Sugar artists to euros, largely because of the currency’s strength, but also because our artists are based in the euro zone,” he says.

But then labels always have choices. “I see the weak dollar as a problem for the Americans, rather than for us,” Edel Music Italy president Paolo Franchini says. “For us, the weak dollar can even be an advantage. If I have to pay an advance, in dollars, to an American artist, then obviously it will now cost me less.”

Meanwhile many American companies are now opening offices in Europe, precisely so that they can get paid in euros.

That’s what U.S. prog-rock label Magna Carta, located in East Rochester, N.Y., did. During the last two years, it has set up shop in Europe by hiring a network of distributors, two independent reps to act as the label’s office there and then opened an international bank account in Europe so it could receive euros and pay expenses in U.S. currency, president Peter Morticelli says.

“Because most of the distributors were paying us in euros, we were getting killed on the exchange rate,” he says.

While it looked like a good, cheaper option to manufacture in the States using dollars and then get paid in euros, Magna Carta found that between shipment costs, custom duties and value-added tax, it was better off staying with European manufacturing methods.

“Believe me, we have had some bumps in the road along the way,” Morticelli says. “The concept of what I envisaged in my head is finally successful, although I will continue to adjust the process. It has yet to be proven to be money in the bank.”

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

Import and export wholesalers in the United States and around the globe have been known to capitalize on currency weaknesses. When the Canadian dollar was weak against the U.S. dollar, a large influx of Canadian versions of U.S. hit product found its way into the States.

There is also a market for music that may be out of print in one country but in print in others; sometimes the U.S. major will issue international repertoire in the States or vice versa. Around the world, there are a slew of importers and exporters capitalizing on these two markets, which are also susceptible to currency fluctuations.

On the one hand the weak American dollar makes U.S.-based exports look attractive to international importers, but it hurts import sales from abroad.

Import wholesaler Musicracia, which sold imports in the United States, shut down in March 2007 as part of a restructuring; parent company Sheridan Square CEO Michael Olsen says that one of the reasons for the closure was the difficulty that the weakened dollar presented when it came to making money.

Consider this example, from an importer still in the market: “Ten years ago, we were buying a Faith Hill best-of for $16 or $17 Australian, which was an $8 or $9 cost to us. Figuring in freight and mechanicals, we would sell it to retailers for $14 or $15 and they would sell it to shoppers for $20 or $25.”

“Today, it’s still $17 Australian, which is now a cost of $15 U.S., so we would have to sell it for $24. . . not too many retailers will pay that much for a single disc. The market can’t bear that price so instead of doing 500 a year like we did back then, now we maybe sell five copies.”

But as can be expected, foreign companies like Tower Records Japan, where U.S. product comprises 50% of the product the chain imports, “a weak dollar is good for our company, even if the dollar-to-yen rate has been fairly stable,” Tower Japan merchandise operation manager Takeshi Imazumi says.

The weaker dollar “means we can reduce our payments in dollar terms to U.S. product suppliers,” he says, adding that although the euro, pound and the Canadian and Australian dollars are still trading at high rates against the yen, Tower is still able to make a profit on imports from those territories too.

Foreign exporters in Australia and Germany are scrambling to offset the slowing velocity of sales to the States. The U.S. appetite for German product, likewise, is declining due to the weak dollar, says Joachim Harbich, managing director of German import/export company Membran in Hamburg.

In Australia, Melbourne-based Rocket Australian Exports, which once generated 50%-60% of sales from the States, has been looking to increase sales to Asian and Japan markets. Likewise, Melbourne-based ShockExports.com has experienced a 10% drop in recent months on orders for music and entertainment products from U.S. wholesalers and distributors, according to the company’s managing director Frank Falvo. But that doesn’t necessarily translate into an overall 10% drop in revenue. “You need to remain flexible, positive, and you need to think ahead because this is all cyclical,” Falvo says.

“You find that lost 10% by selling an equivalent amount of CD and DVDs in another territory.”

TOURING

The American dollar’s decline seems to be making the biggest music industry waves in the touring sector. In fact, whereas expenses and payments are paid in dollars or euros in influencing which concert tours are going, at least in some situations, according to promoters, agents and hands.

In Australia, where international tours are often negotiated based on the U.S. dollar, it has been a boon to that country’s already buoyant live music sector.

“The volume of touring acts has increased markedly,” says Michael Jacobsen, Sydney-based managing director of Jacobsen Entertainment. “More acts are available because our buying power is exponentially greater. Overseas hands are at least 25% cheaper.”

This year—with the local dollar worth 90 cents to the U.S. version, compared with 70-75 two years ago—such major-league acts as the Police, Bon Jovi, Celine Dion, James Blunt and Michael Buble have either already come or confirmed visits.

That’s in contrast to 2001, when the Australian dollar was worth 50 cents to the U.S. dollar, and visits by superstar acts dried up.

When it comes to localized expenses, “If you’re guaranteeing an act $10 million U.S. at 50 [Australian] cents in the U.S. dollar, that costs $20 million [Australian] for us,” Jacobsen says. “If you’re doing it at 90 [Australian] cents, that’s only $11 million [Australian].”

Last year, the Australian sector grew between 30% and 40% due to the influx of superstar acts, according to promoter Michael Coppel, whose company Michael Coppel Presents proved the most successful Aussie tour promoter with 2 million ticket sales and a gross of $200 million Australian ($130.63 million by today’s U.S. value) in that period.

Meanwhile, Australian acts are touring more frequently outside their home country, even though most developing acts lose between $30,000 and $40,000 Australian ($27,100-$36,200 U.S.) per tour in the name of growing their audience, says Serge Belzoniello, a Melbourne-based partner at accounting firm Bank Group, which has Jet, the Sleepy Jackson and Eskimo Joe on its books.

That loss is in large offset through advances from their Australian record labels. The band’s own cash reserves from touring domestically and the Australian government’s export initiative, which compenstates 50% of losses incurred abroad.

“The falling American dollar means that Australian tours have additional territories (outside the States) and even have cash reserves when they return to Australia,” Belzoniello adds. “The flip side is that the advances they get from U.S. labels is considerably less.”

While Australia sees the current weakness of the dollar as a boon, South Africa’s music industry has always been at the mercy of a volatile currency, in particular its live music element.

continued on >>p32
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from page 31

Justin Van Wyk, CFO of the company's leading promoter Big Concerts, says the company underwent its most testing time in the early 2000s when there were 13 rands to the U.S. dollar.

In the past five years, however, Big Concerts has been able to recover, thanks to the strengthening rand, which is now 7.6 to the dollar. This has taught the promoter to invest in "forward cover" contracts for the artists and productions it brings to the country, to minimize the risk of fluctuations.

"Take the recent Elton John shows here," Van Wyk says. "We negotiated at a rate of 7.05 (rand) to the dollar but months later when the shows took place in January this year, the rate had risen to 7.80 (rand), which added a significant amount onto the payment due." Thankfully, he adds, the forward contracts were in place to mitigate the increased cost due to the currency fluctuations.

The declining dollar should, realistically, have a positive impact on a country like South Africa, which has always battled against currency fluctuations. However, Van Wyk and Misha Loots, production head at Oppikoppi Productions—a recent entrant into the live music market (its most recent international act was U.S.-based OK Go)—report that this is unlikely to do so.

Both say that many overseas acts are now switching to negotiating performance fees in euros or pounds, which is what one American artist did during current negotiations. In the past few weeks, this artist moved from dollars to pounds in terms of performance fee, Van Wyk says.

"Many of the acts we deal with have agents in the U.K. or Europe who deal with South Africa, so in fact we have been negotiating in euros and pounds even before the dollar decline," Loots adds. "We can foresee that euros and pounds will become the currency of choice for overseas acts headed this way."

In Germany, Peter Schwenkow, chairman of Berlin-based promoter DEAG, says it is cheaper for promoters to get the artists because payments are calculated in dollars.

In London, Agency Group Worldwide CEO Neil Warnock suggests British acts are well-placed for a U.S. invasion, thanks to the powerful pound. "It's an unusual bonus," he says. "For our English artists they come over [to the States] and they are getting much more bang for their English pound. We are finding some artists are coming over [to the States] to record; it's cheaper to record [there] than in the U.K."

Warnock notes that being paid in U.S. currency may rankle some artists, but "at the moment, I haven't seen anyone screaming and saying, 'Because of the dollar rates, we are unable to tour.' It hasn't come across our radar as a group."

Yet others say that payment in the weak U.S. dollar could "see fewer U.S. dates by foreign bands," says Bill Zeyblat, partner in RZO, a New York-based accountant management firm specializing in the entertainment business. "Their time is better spent elsewhere."

But the William Morris Agency's Kirk Sommer, who handles such U.K.-based acts as the Fratelli, Amy Winehouse, Paolo Nutini, Editors, Duffy and Hard-Fi, believes bands should tour the States for reasons beyond the value of the dollar. While Sommer would not cite specific bands, he did say, "I highly advise international artists to consider using local crews and obviously paying them in local currency. I prefer to look at it as if everything is priced a lot friendlier here. Sterling and euro go a long way." ~

Additional reporting by Diane Coetzee, Christie Eliezer, Howell Lovelton, Steve McClure, Wolfgang Spahr and Mark Worden.

TOP BILLING

The U.S. Dollar's Decline Against The Currencies Of Major Music Territories

The U.S. dollar's decline against other major currencies is impacting international tours and ticket sales. The chart below shows the dollar's performance against the British pound, Euro, Japanese yen, Australian dollar, Canadian dollar, and Mexican peso. As the dollar weakens, concert promoters and managers must adjust prices and strategies to remain competitive.

- The chart illustrates the relative strength of the dollar against each of these currencies, with the dollar's value shown as 1.00.
- The Euro has been particularly strong, while the dollar has struggled against the Japanese yen.
- The chart also highlights the importance of local currency pricing and the need for flexible contracts to accommodate fluctuating exchange rates.

The chart was generated using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. The data is subject to change as market conditions evolve.

~

Additional reporting by Diane Coetzee, Christie Eliezer, Howell Lovelton, Steve McClure, Wolfgang Spahr and Mark Worden.
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Facing The Music As Consumer Spending And Confidence Waver

By Ed Christman

Illustration By William Duke

Conventional wisdom touts the music industry—a low-ticket form of entertainment—as immune to a recession. "Historically, the music industry has weathered recessions better than most other industries," says Jerry Gold, a music industry consultant and former Warner Music Group CFO in the '80s and mid-'90s. "When times are bad people want to feel good and music does that... The last recession [1990-92] affected us a little, but then music was one of the first industries to come out of it."

RIAA shipment data shows that recessions do, however, at least coincide with some softness in the music business; it’s not always clear if these downturns are as much due to a weak album-release schedule as an economic downturn.

For example, when the coupling of the oil crisis and stagflation led to a 16-month recession that ended after the first quarter of 1975, the music industry experienced a slight downturn, with album shipments falling slightly to 369 million units in 1975 from 389.9 million units in 1974, according to the RIAA. The music industry rebounded from 1976 to 1978 with album shipments reaching 536.2 million in the latter year.

After that, "the two times that the music industry got in trouble was in 1979 and 1982," former Sony Music format guru Bob Sherwood recalls. In 1979, another energy crisis, precipitated by the Iranian Revolution, was the backdrop for a decline in album shipments to 470.8 million units.

In 1980, album shipments rebounded to 492 million units, but then there was another recession during 1981 and 1982; album shipments slid backward during those two years to 440.8 million units.

"The industry did retrench, adjust and fixed itself, and then the CD came along," Sherwood says. The growth of that format spurred the music industry to new heights during the rest of the '80s, culminating in album shipments reaching 740.2 million units in 1990. Then, the U.S. economy just missed lapsing into another recession in 1990-92. And once again, the economic downturn corresponded with album shipments dropping to 698.2 million in 1991 before rebounding again for the remainder of the '90s. continued on » p35
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The economy has been healthy most of this decade, but that hasn’t much helped the music industry.

Caught in one of the most jarring transitions to hit a U.S. business, the digital revolution has weakened the music industry even as it wrestles with a slowing economy.

“With a 15% decline in album sales, we have so many fundamental problems to resolve that a recession can’t help,” one senior major-label executive says. “But the economies are the least of our worries now.”

But those who feel they couldn’t possibly worry about anything else may want to take note: The International Council of Shopping Centers and UBS Securities, which compiles weekly retail sales, say that consumers are continuously concerned about the health of the U.S. economy, and as a result remain cautious in their spending.

For January, according to UBS, chain-store sales increased by 0.5%. “With uncertainty about the economy, and the possibility of a recession, consumers have pared their spending,” ICSC chief economist/director of research Michael P. Niemira said in a statement.

“Weak retail comparable-store sales make it very clear we are in a recession,” distributor Allegro CEO Joe Micallif says. “The higher prices on energy are clearly pinching the consumer.”

But, Micallif adds, “it’s not the end of the world for the industry.” He says that most of the troubled retail and wholesale accounts have “already been flushed out,” leaving behind a pretty stable account base.

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MONEY TALKS

Investors And Financial Executives On What To Expect In Case Of Recession

RICH BENGOFF
American Assn. of Independent Music president

“All of a sudden we may become a lower-cost entertainment alternative to going to the movies. Think about it: For two people to go to the movies nowadays, it could cost $50 between the movie ticket, soda and popcorn and parking, or they can stay home and listen to a music CD for $10.”

INGRID CHUNG
Goldman Sachs VP of media and entertainment/cable and satellite research

“CDs are cheap enough that if there is a pullback in the economy, people aren’t going to automatically think they need to cut back on music spending. Movies and music are fairly recession-proof. People look for cheaper ways to amuse themselves.

“On the flip side, some people would think twice about buying certain electronic goods, like delaying the purchase of the iPhone or MP3 players—these items might not be on the same growth trajectory as before. Things like concert tickets or show tickets might also be at risk.”

JOE BIANCO
Former chairman of Sheridan Square and Alliance Entertainment; principal in music social network site WoozyFly

“What happens is a recession slows down the velocity of money. Music used to be recession-proof. That isn’t true anymore. It’s vulnerable now because what’s happening is digital. Whatever benefits digital bestows, it doesn’t outweigh the difficulties it has caused because it is now a portable file. There is probably nobody shoplifting surround-sound amplifiers, but if those amps were the size of a quarter, they would get shoplifted more often. Music has become the size of a quarter.”

MICHAEL FLEISHER
Warner Music Group CFO

“All recession will impact all consumer spending, so that will have an impact on our business, too. But there is so much other dislocation and transformation going on . . . unless a recession is really deep, I am not sure it will become a headline in our industry as it would in other industries. With physical [sales] declining so heavily, it would be very hard to parse what impact a recession would have on the music industry.”

---
Jerry Gold  
Partner at RP Realty Industry; former WMG CFO; music consultant; Spiral Frog board member  
"Today music is very accessible and available. But one thing to consider is how music is now being monetized. In an ad-supported model, maybe a recession results in less advertising."

Geoffrey Madden  
Partner with boutique financial advisory/investment banking firm Christman Peters & Madden  
"Music is a discretionary purchase, and the last few times we went through significant recessions—'90-'92, and before that in 1979 and 1975—the American consumer didn’t have other venues and other opportunities for purchases that competed with music. Now, the American consumer, especially the target age group of 14-34, has a multiplicity of choices that they didn’t have 25 or 30 years ago.  
"So in the past the consumer would cut back on discretionary purchases but still buy music. Now, many more options and alternatives out there are competing with music for the discretionary dollars, so music is more sensitive and vulnerable to recessionary factors than it was 20 or 30 years ago."

Drew Lipshur  
Partner with venture capital firm Greyrock  
"Historically people were concerned that consumers would stop buying music. But now that is almost an irrelevant point with physical music sales down 15%.  
"Would a recession accelerate the decline of physical goods? No, not at all. The decline is happening very naturally on its own and will continue to do so until it bottoms.  
"When there is a recession, people won’t buy a new car, but they won’t stop buying a new CD or a $10 download. Even if you look at a music subscription, I doubt anyone will cut out a $50- a-year cost because of a recession. When people are depressed, music makes them happy; it’s a lifestyle choice, and not a huge amount of money to spend.  
"What a recession could do is have an impact that trickles down to the music industry. With advertising models, those spends could slow down. Also, corporate balance sheets tighten up in a recession."

Anil Narang  
Music investor; former co-chairman of Sheridan Square  
"People used to buy albums for $15.99 and now can buy songs for 99 cents, or take them for free or burn them. Music is cheap to the extent that one wants to buy it; they don’t need to spend $15 or $20. So it’s not a high-priced form of entertainment, and much of it can be acquired for little or nothing.  
"A recession won’t have a huge impact on the music business. The things that impact the music industry more than anything else are other forms of entertainment competing for people’s leisure time and money like videogames. That field, the leisure lifestyle kinds of products, is growing so rapidly. If the music isn’t good and there are no new bands that interest the consumer, they have plenty of other inexpensive things to turn to."

Jim Urie  
Universal Music Group Distribution CEO  
"Common wisdom holds that an economic downturn doesn’t affect the music business. But clearly that is not the case now. Particularly, gas prices are having a significant effect on the music business and certain genres, Latin and country, are really taking it on the chin. Mass merchants track their customer store visits per month, and that has fallen off."

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PERCEPTION PROBLEM

Wall Street May Have Given Up On Music Prematurely

Somewhere along the way the mainstream press began consistently reporting that record labels are over; record stores, particularly independent ones, are dying; the CD is dead, music is free or will soon be; and with the Internet all artists will have millions of fans. Amazingly enough, Wall Street seems to have embraced the press’ mantra on the music business as well. Consequently, any investment firm seen to be making a bet on the music industry is in for a heaping dose of criticism, if not scorn, by its investors, its peers, the digerati and the press. Many potential music industry investors have gotten that message loud and clear and are staying away. As one music industry executive who has been out seeking funding puts it, “There is a general sense that the minute you mention the music industry to investors, the answer is, ‘Go away.’”

In fact, the boards of directors at Trans World Entertainment and at Entertainment Distribution Co. decided it was time to head for the hills, instead of remaining involved in the music business. Both boards put their companies up for sale, sources say.

Meanwhile, sources say that the EDC board decided to put that company up for sale and forgo its goal of becoming the industry’s back room for manufacturing and distribution fulfillment, even though it now has the chance to land EMI’s business to its relationship with Universal Music Group (UMG).

Given this type of thinking on the part of the boards, why would some institutional-type investments firms and venture capital groups stick around the music industry to get their head handed to them? Well, believe it or not, although there are not as many investors looking at the space as there used to be, some still see opportunity in the music business, even as it goes through this painful transition.

At Trans World, founder/chairman Bob Higgins is attempting to take the company private, a deal he continues to work on. Interestingly, Riley Investment Management, which owns 10% of the outstanding shares, is joining Higgins in that venture. Another investment firm, Sherwood Investments Overseas, also signed a nondisclosure to access the Trans World books so that it could evaluate on whether it wants to follow through on a $7 per share offer.

Likewise, within the music industry, strategic investors have an appetite for merchandising companies, artist management and any company that can help a major achieve the 360-degree model.

When UMG acquired Sanctuary, a key “get” in that deal was the Bravado merchandising company. Also, sources say that indie labels that have their own merch operations are attractive to major labels, too.

Outside investment in the music industry isn’t “drying up, it’s just more difficult to convince investors that your model is the one that will work,” says Jerry Gold, a music industry consultant who sits on the board of ad-supported download service Spiral Frog and is CFO at RP Realty Partners.

Drew Lipsher is a partner with New York venture capital firm Greyrock. Lipsher’s firm looks to make investments in businesses in the music space that have at least a digital component. Lipsher’s company is “cautious about valuations, but if Greyrock finds businesses it likes, it hopes to be aggressive in making investments.”

Lipsher notes that the investment community is interested in any variations on selling music digitally, particularly those that are physical and digital together to help make music a well-rounded experience.

Other investors cite such music social networks as invest in such applications as. Like as attractive sectors.

In the private equity sector, Anil Narang, who previously was co-chairman of Sheridan Square and co-invested with Sheri-dan Square and co-invested with equity firms, says those firms “are still willing to invest in publishing and the music business but not so in the front-line record business.

There, some private equity is sitting on the sidelines in some instances, but others are going after deals like the Death Row catalog,” which is on the block due to the label’s Chapter 11 filing.

Catalog, like publishing, is considered a safer investment, because it doesn’t require the capital outlay that playing in the front-line new-release business does. But even if investors decide to bet on the catalog side of the record industry, Narang advises such investors to “make some bearish assumptions. In the past, investors might have lent 60% against the assets of a music company,” now he recommends putting up 20%. So deals are getting done, but on a distressed basis.

Still, he notes there are other private equity investors sitting on the sidelines, waiting for digital and physical sales to intersect. But trying “to pin point where and when that will happen is like trying to catch a falling knife,” he says.

But Geoffrey Madden, a partner with New York boutique investment banking firm Christman, Peters & Madden, says there will always be investors interested in the music industry. “Smart institutional money is smart for a reason and a large part of institutional investing is being contrarian and countercyclical,” Madden says. “There will always be good investing opportunities in the music industry just like there are good investment opportunities in other out-of-favor industries. What the smart money is good at is finding these opportunities.”
EXPERIENCE THE BUZZ

NORTHERN CHILL

Canadian Music Industry Perseveres in Challenging Times
BY ROBERT THOMPSON

With CD sales falling faster than digital sales rise and with layoffs at Canada's major labels, many executives in the country's music business are worried about the implications of a continued decline in the music industry. Much of the concern centers on a drop in CD sales of 5.9 million last year. Despite an increase in digital album sales of 4.5 million (counting 10 digital tracks as one album), that still meant an overall decline of 1.4 million albums. Canadian Recording Industry Assn. (CRIA) president Graham Henderson also says revenue declines for the country's major labels outpaced sales drops.

While the Canadian music industry certainly will be upbeat during Canada Music Week activities March 5-8 in Toronto, sales trends are not encouraging. Major-label downsizing could leave Canadian artists facing difficult choices about whom to work with going forward.

Specifically, many are worried that if EMI Music decides to thin operations in Canada as the company cuts 2,000 employees worldwide, other major labels in the country may follow suit. Arclight Records founder/former president Al Mair says there is little doubt the industry will continue to evolve throughout the year. "The majors are going to continue to shrink, with the resultant job losses," he says.

These changes in the majors could also affect Canadian indie labels, Mair says, which may face losing major-label distribution if shifts in policy occur.

But Dale Peters, who runs Dale Speaking, an independent marketing and publicity firm in Toronto, says that while focus is on the sector's difficulties, plenty of opportunities are open to those willing to consider alternatives to the traditions...
of the music business.

Peters points to an act he works with, Your Favourite Enemies. The act from Montreal has sold more than 40,000 copies of its latest EP by utilizing the Internet and having direct contact with fans.

"I love the fact there are acts out there that want to promote themselves and build their talent over time," Peters says. "Things are changing, but those that are changing with them have plenty of opportunities."

Peters adds that an increasing number of artists are actively taking roles in the business of their careers and are seeking alternative methods of gaining attention.

"A lot of the acts I work with are treating this like a business, which is what they should be doing because that's exactly what it is," he says. "They are saying, 'I want to be an artist, but I want to have control over my career.' And that is exciting to see."

Although a band like Arcade Fire proves Canada's strength as a source of international talent, rising acts like Basia Bulat, Tokyo Police Club, State of Shock, Your Favourite Enemies and Cuff the Duke wait in the wings. As the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) ponders enforcing an 'emerging artist' provision as part of radio licensing, Canadian acts are finding difficulty being heard, says Jill Snell, president of Aigeline Entertainment, a Toronto-based label imprint and marketing organization. Snell says it is often a case that an act is only deemed worth noticing if it has had success abroad.

"Radio won't support a debut Canadian act unless someone else first takes the plunge, in most cases, an international party who is willing to take the risk," she says. "Canadian radio has become about the song, not about the artist, but I guess long gone are the days when radio assumes any responsibility for Canadian artist development."

Canadian Independent Record Production Assn. president Duncan McKie agrees. "Getting new artists played is still a real concern," McKie says. "We have not yet seen any definition of new acts promised by the CRTC."

Additionally, the CRIA and CIRPA remain focused on altering Canada's copyright laws to limit free downloading on peer-to-peer sites.

There was an expectation that a new law would emerge late in 2007 that would add clarity to the debate in Canada over file-sharing, but the government delayed the bill, which is now expected in the spring.

McKie says his labels need to be paid for the investment they are putting into developing new Canadian acts and stronger legislation is a necessity.

Canada's music retail industry also raises concern. In 2007, music retailer Music World, owned by Pindoff Record Sales, went into receivership. The chain had 72 stores, and though a new owner has pledged to keep some of them open, there is increasing concern among many in the music business that too much of the retail market now rests with HMV Canada.

"The placement of music at a chain like HMV is increasingly becoming an issue, and we're being overshadowed by things like DVDs," says a major label executive who asked to remain anonymous. "And I think catalog sales are becoming an issue just about everywhere."
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Canadian Music Week (CMW) will focus on new concepts and alternative revenue streams that artists and labels can pursue, event founder/CEO Jim Balsillie will discuss the possibilities of the digital marketplace. Built upon a theme of “the rebirth of music,” Dixon says the focus of this year’s event will be forward-looking. “The focus is squarely on the future and not about trying to save the past,” he says. “With CD sales still sliding, the industry is looking for new ideas and alternate revenue sources to make up the shortfall.”

CMW activities will take place March 5-8 in Toronto. The event, for which Rogers Music Store is the title sponsor, includes a trade show, industry convention, a music festival featuring some 500 acts and the Canadian Music Industry Awards.

Honorees this year will include Netwerk Music Group co-founder Terry McBride, In-sight Production president/Juno Awards producer John Brunton and singer Alanis Morissette.

For CMW, staying ahead of changes in the industry is key, Dixon says, noting the conference will offer a one-day “Millenials” event aimed at providing the music industry with a better understanding of the “millennial demographic,” the group born between 1978 and 2000. The event will present the industry with options on how this demographic interacts with media and the opportunities presented in marketing to a highly mobile group.

Among the key elements of the conference is the Digital Music Summit, which kicked off three years ago. This year’s version includes BlackBerry maker Balsillie, who will be one of the keynote speakers, as well as Universal Music Group eLabs executive VP Rio Caraeff.

Dixon says CMW has been preaching about the potential of the digital marketplace since its first keynote on the sector in 1993. He said at the time that a speech by former Massachusetts Institute of Technology chairman Nicholas Negroponte that predicted the decline of the CD and an emerging digital marketplace was ignored by many in the Canadian music industry.

“He accurately predicted the end of the CD and its compressed digital replacement, which would change the business forever,” Dixon adds. “Unfortunately many major-label and retail executives in the audience missed the message as they scoffed at ‘the academic futurist that doesn’t know our business.’”

“They’re listening now,” he says. “But it may be too late for some.”

Dixon adds that while there are a lot of individuals preaching gloomy scenarios for the music industry going forward, there is an equally important group of upstarts embracing the opportunities that new and emerging technologies present.

“There’s an enthusiastic new generation of Internet- and mobile-savvy DIY Indies that are ready use technology to reinvent the business and create a new world order,” he says.

Music Is Our Business!

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The Canadian touring market is still on fire. "Maybe you need to talk also to some of my colleagues in the other provinces as well, but by current accounts, Canada is still selling tickets and the traffic is still on the road," says Patti-Ann Tarlton, director of bookings at the Air Canada Centre (ACC) in Toronto. Billboard did check with the other provinces, and the news was the same from the other side of the country. "Yes, the Canadian market is still hot," says Shane Bourbonsais, president of touring business development for Live Nation Canada, based in Vancouver. "Bookings are looking really strong, [with] lots of the big Canadian acts, such as Avril Lavigne and Michael Bublé, out early in 2008, along with many of the big international acts."

Live Nation Canada chairman Riley O'Connor in Toronto adds, "The summer looks like the best mix of genres of acts I have seen in over two years."

Tarlton's bookings at the ACC show that mix. "We are just about to play out four Spice Girls, and Bon Jovi has added their record-setting fifth show" at ACC, she says. "Country music is playing nationally. TV shows gone live are still selling tickets. Ozzy [Osbourne], Bublé, Lenny [Kravitz], Rascal Flatts, Foo Fighters, and we welcome their business."

Still, agents and promoters should use caution when routing tours through Canada. "It's only on fire for acts that do not overlap by coming back six months or a year later," O'Connor says. "Acts that plan strategically to tour Canada with well-thought-out launches in marketing their new product and price-point sensitivity on a market-by-market basis will do solid business."

Tarlton says that while the state of the U.S. economy makes news north of the bor-

ers, Iron Maiden, Avril, Celine [Dion], [John] Mellencamp, Matchbox Twenty, Three Days Grace and wrestling are all up and doing numbers in Toronto."

Similar news comes from the Scotiabank Place in Ottawa, where 2008 "is shaping up to be a great year," according to venue VP/executive director Tom Conroy. Already on the datebooks for the first quarter are Mellencamp, Rascal Flatts, Foo Fighters, Martina McBride, Carrie Underwood, Def Leppard and Disney's "High School Musical." "The rest of the year should see the business continue at a similar pace," Conroy says.

The question that remains, as it has for the past few years, is how can the market stay at the same levels? "We all expect the market of Canada—it really is one market to all of us from coast to coast—to sustain," Conroy says. "Live Nation is promoting the majority of shows, but AEG is beginning to make tracks here in Canada, and we welcome their business."

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New Abdul Track Introduces All-Star Jackson Album

After dabbling in nearly every area of the music industry, Grammy Award-winning producer/musician and "American Idol" judge Randy Jackson is adding "solo album" to his already impressive resume, and he's bringing "Idol" colleague Paula Abdul along for the ride.

The Abdul-driven "Dance Like There's No Tomorrow" is the first single from "Randy Jackson's Music Club, Vol. 1," due March 11 via Jackson's new Concord Music Group imprint Dream Merchant 21. The 12-track collection showcases a diverse range of artists, from established veterans like Mariah Carey, Travis Tritt and Richie Sambora to up-and-coming talents as Barbi Esco and Kelli Selah.

For Abdul, whose last new single was 1995's "Crazy Cool," the collaboration with Jackson consummated several years of vague conversations about working together. But during "Idol" auditions last July in San Diego, "Randy kept saying to me, 'I've got the perfect song for you. It sounds like you, like now. It's like a nod to you and your past, but it's you now,'" Abdul says. "And he played it, and it was after the first two bars, I knew it was a hit. I knew it was a total smash."

The track was produced by Jackson and the Danish duo known as Deekay. Oliver Leiber, who wrote and produced Abdul's "Forever Your Girl" and "It's Just The Way That You Love Me," did some additional vocal production. Jackson and Abdul premiered the single Jan. 18 on Ryan Seacrest's KIIS-FM radio show in Los Angeles, and it was serviced to top 40 stations Super Bowl weekend (Feb. 2-3) to coincide with Abdul's pregame performance of the song.

"There was an incredible amount of interest [in the single]. I termed it even curiosity, in the very beginning," Concord GM Gene Rumsey says. "I think cynics who were curious all of a sudden heard it and realized, 'Hey, this is a pretty good song.'"

That initial curiosity led to a No. 76 debut on the Pop 100, but "Dance" vanished from the charts after just one week. The corresponding video debuted on Fox.com Feb. 20 and enjoyed an airing on "American Idol" the next day, which Rumsey hopes will bring back momentum after the post-Super Bowl lag.

"Usually dance radio is a little more forgiving and respectful of heritage artists," radio consultant Guy Zapolcono says, in explaining top 40's apparent aversion to the single. "But today more than ever, our musical culture is about youthful artists who radio might have laughed at five or six years ago. For somebody like Paula, it's a process of rebuilding her image. She's still seen as a '90s pop artist."

There is no confirmation on the follow-up single, although with the genres touched throughout the album—from the duet of "Idol" alums Katherine McPhee and Elliot Yamin to Joss Stone and the Clash's cover of Dionne Warwick's "Walk on By" to John Rich, Anthony Hamilton and Sara Watkins' countrified take of Michael Bublé's "Home"—several markets serve as potential targets.

"I've never really wanted to do a solo record," Jackson says, adding that the melding of styles is a nod to his multicultural hometown of Baton Rouge, La. "But I always said if I did one, I'd love to do one like those Quincy Jones albums like 'Back on The Block' [and] 'Dude'. . . They showcased new talent he was trying to break."

And although Concord is relying heavily on Jackson's "Idol" recognition factor, Rumsey says a lot of time and energy was invested to help accurately gauge his target audience and avoid the shotgun (marketing) approach of "Oh, everyone who watches 'American Idol'."

Album exclusives will be available at Target and Wal-Mart, which include a making of from the "Dance" video shoot and exclusive audio content, respectively.

In addition to starting up his new label, Jackson was recently named senior A&R consultant/producer for Concord/Stax and is executive-producing the TV series "Randy Jackson Presents: America's Best Dance Crew." As for what's in the pipeline at Dream Merchant, Jackson says he's working on records for newcomers Esco and Selah.

He says he set goals for the label is to stay small and cultivate talented singers and songwriters, not necessarily break the next big pop star. "Great writing and great singing—that's great artistry. That's what the label stands for and that's why I called it Dream Merchant—where your dreams come true."

Additional reporting by Jonathan Cohen and Gail Mitchell.
MUSICAL

**CHRISTIAN**

**SWEET TOOTH**

Mandona’s new album has been christened “Hard Candy” and will arrive April 29. It is her first studio release for Warner Bros. before she transitions to Live Nation Artists. First single “Four Minutes” will hit U.S. radio in late March. Mandona collaborated with Timbaland, Pharrell Williams and Nate “Danja” Hills on the follow-up to 2006’s “Confessions on a Dance Floor.” Also appearing is Justin Timberlake, who will induct Mandona into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame March 10 in New York.

**BEAT**

A cover of Michael Jackson’s “Beat It” is among the many treats to be found on “****” Fall Out Boy’s first live release. Due April 8 via island, the project will be available as a CD/DVD or a DVD only; the Jackson cover is a studio version featuring a “special guest guitarist” yet to be named. “****” was taped June 22, 2007, at Phoenix’s Cricket Pavilion. The DVD sports all eight Fall Out Boy music videos and a behind-the-scenes footage.

**DOWN AND DIRTY**

Having just wrapped three New York shows with ex-Blind Faith colleague Eric Clapton, Steve Winwood has signed a new deal with Columbia Records. His label debut, “Nine Lives,” will arrive April 29. Clapton contributes guitar on first single “Dirty City,” which is at iTunes now. Look for Winwood on tour with Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers in the United States this summer.

**WELCOME BACK DONNA**

Donna Summer will break a 17-year drought of studio albums with all new material thanks to a new deal with Sony BMG’s Burgundy Records. Dubbed “Crayons,” the project will arrive May 20. Summer is working with a wide range of collaborators, including Danielle Brisebois, Greg Kurstin, JR Rotem, Lester Mendez and Evan Bogart. The artist’s last album of completely new material was 1991’s “Husten’s Identity.” (Atlantic)

Reporting by Jonathan Cohen.

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**CHRISTIAN**

**MOVE THE MASSES**

Leeland Aims To Turn Critical Acclaim Into Commercial Glory

With the 2006 release of “Sound of Melodies,” Texas-based rock band Leeland became the critical darling of the Christian music community. Its debut disc earned the group a Grammy Award nomination for best pop/contemporary gospel album as well as four Dove Award nominations.

In addition, 19-year-old frontman Leeland Mooring’s songwriting prowess caught the attention of Christian music titan Michael W. Smith, and the teen co-wrote several tracks for Smith’s 2006 Reunion album “Stand.”


“We wrote some on the road and finished most of the songs in the studio when we recorded them,” Mooring says. “I think it’s a good thing. I’d rather be recording in a fast mode than a slow mode.”

It has indeed been a case of life in the fast lane for Mooring, who along with his elder brother Jack, Mike Smith, Jake Holiz and Matt Campbell constitute Leeland. The band has been on the road opening for Casting Crowns on the Altar and the Door tour, and Mooring says interacting with other young Christians while touring helped fuel the new material.

“One of the things we’ve seen is how our generation wants to be a part of something that is bigger than themselves,” Mooring says. “There are so many types of pleasures the world has to offer, but everything in this world ultimately leaves you empty and alone. Nothing in the world will satisfy that kind of spiritual void in your life.”

Mooring says the band’s goal with the new record was to encourage young people to stand up for their beliefs. “We want to raise up a new generation of worshippers,” he says, “who do whatever it takes to make that ‘opposite way’ a reality in their lives. We really hope this will change a lot of kids’ lives.”

Mooring began writing songs about his faith at an early age. He signed his first publishing deal with EMI’s Christian publishing arm when he was only 15. By the next year, the band had signed a recording deal with Essential, a label under Sony BMG’s Provident Music Group umbrella. Thus far, “Sound of Melodies” has sold 38,000 units in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

First single “Count Me In” is No. 28 this week on Hot Christian Songs. “The single is moving well, and we think we’ll have some radio success out of this record that we didn’t see out of the first record,” Provident Music Group senior VP of sales and marketing Ben Howard says. “They have a lot of big fans among radio programmers, but at the same time because of their uniqueness and the different sound of the music, they had a hard time figuring out how to play Leeland.”

Howard says Leeland’s exposure on the Casting Crowns tour has been key in getting the word out about the new record. The label has partnered with radio in tour markets for a special promotion tying into Mooring’s trademark red locks. “We encourage listeners to show up with red hair or red wigs, and the first 50 people that arrive get a special meet-and-greet with Leeland,” Howard says.

One fan from among those first 50 also receives two front-row tickets. The Provident team capitalized on Valentine’s Day with a reduced-price, 24-hour presale for a very narrow community in its database. Howard says, “We had challenged our team to sell 500 and they presold over 2,000 CDs in 24 hours.”

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**GLOBAL PULSE**

**ASIA’S PHOENIX RISES**

Veteran supergroup Asia’s new album “Phoenix,” is aptly titled because it’s the first studio set by the band’s original lineup of John Wetton, Steve Howe, Carl Palmer and Geoff Downes in 25 years, and because it follows Wetton’s emergency triple bypass heart surgery last summer.

He had a real scare, but once the [surgery] was over they went straight into the studio to make the record,” says Mario de Riso, head of Napalm, Italy-based Frontiers Records, which has worldwide rights to the album. The record will be released April 14 via EMI Capitol, which is international licensing deals in negotiation. Classic rock specialist Frontiers has previously issued albums by Wetton and Downes, plus acts like Styx, Dokken and Rob Halford. Formed in 1981 by former members of Yes; King Crimson; Emerson, Lake & Palmer; and the Buggles, Asia topped the Billboard 200 with its self-titled Geffen debut. Subsequent releases, however, didn’t match that success, and several later albums saw Downes as the only original member.

De Riso says the new album “brings back the classic Asia sound, but has elements of the past experiences of all four musicians. That’s reflected in the live shows, where they play songs by their previous bands.”

Having toured in Europe, Japan, and North and South America since re-forming in late 2006, the quartet begins a global trek (booked by Talent Consultants International) March 1 in the United Kingdom. U.S. dates begin April 4. Asia’s publishing is through Warner/Chappell/copyright control. —Steve Adams

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**FLOWERS POWER**

Kathleen Edwards admits her music isn’t easy to classify. The critically acclaimed Canadian singer/songwriter’s third album, “Asking for Flowers,” bows March 4 on Maple Music in Canada and Rounder in the United States, with Zoe issuing it in Europe the same week.

The new set, co-produced by Jim Scott (Tom Petty, Whiskeytown), offers a more elaborate take than before on Edwards’ distinctive brand of pop, rock and Americana. “I delivered a record that I think is less commercial,” she says. “A lot of people would probably be happy if I wrote a lot of poppy, catchy songs—I’m just not in that head space.”

It took a while for Edwards to figure out what shape the record would take. “I really had nothing in the bank when I came off tour in 2006,” she says. “Now I’m at the other end of it, I realize a lot of my songs come from having observations of those around me, and I hadn’t had many because I’d just been on the road.” Edwards is booked by the Agency Group (Canada), Creative Artists Agency (United States) and Heltier Skeiter (Europe).—Robert Thompson

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**AMEN CORNER**

Warner Music Italy is haileding the success of alternative trio Baustelle as the first fruit of its embrace of the 360-degree model. The act’s first Warner album, “La Malavita” (2005), made the FIMI top 20, but followed up “Amen” debuted at No. 4 after its Feb. 1 release. Warner Italy artistic director Timo Silvestri says “Amen” has shipped 35,000 copies (gold) and hopes to hit 70,000 by June.

“We’re particularly pleased,” he says, “as Baustelle is one of the first examples of our new model of business. Under their contract we’re also entitled to a share of touring, merchandise, sponsorship and publishing revenue.”

“Amen” is Baustelle’s fourth album. Sales have been boosted by hefty airplay for lead single “Charle sà Furi,” but the band’s visibility was also enhanced by penning a single last year for another Warner artist, Irene Grandi. The song, “Bruci La Città,” was Italy’s summer hit of 2007.

Warner doesn’t have any concrete international plans for Baustelle, whose publishing is shared by Universal Music Publishing and Warner/Chappell; live work is handled by Live Nation in Milan. —Mark Worden
ALBERTA CROSS

NOW HEAR THIS

YOUR GUIDE TO UNSIGNED BANDS COMPILED BY KATIE HASTY

>>> ALBERTA CROSS
Contact: Rene Symonds, manager, ri@machinemanagement.co.uk, +44 0 207 247 4227

Last year, British roots-rock outfit Alberta Cross released a seven-song EP, "The Thief and the Heartbreaker," via Geffen in the United States and Fiction in the United Kingdom to much critical success. However, among reorganizational turmoil at Universal and shifting A&R priorities, the band cut strings with the major after losing the option for a full-length during its contractual period. Which isn't a bad thing, according to Alberta Cross principal Terry Wolves.

"Everything's wide open now," says Wolves, who co-writes the dusty and soulful tunes with singer Petter Ericson Staae. "We've really started to build something (in the States)." Alberta Cross shared the stage with former members of Shudder to Think and OK Go at the Barak Rock concert in New York and overtook the city's Living Room for a few dates, in addition to rocking the CMJ Music Marathon last fall.

The response, he says, has been good enough that the band plans to move to New York permanently this spring and is mulling a "darker" full-length with potential producers like Alan Bezmi (Regina Spektor) and Victor Van Vugt (Nick Cave, PJ Harvey).

"At an early stage we realized there was a huge opportunity for the band in America," co-manager Rene Symonds says. He and his partner Iain Watt at Machine Management also handle artists like Mika and post-Test Icicles project Light-speed Champion. "We almost immediately appointed Sam Kirby, Marc Geiger and Seth Seigle at the William Morris Agency to help us on the U.S. strategy." The booking giant has secured a slot for Alberta Cross at the Roxy Festival March 29 in California and at the new All Points West fest in early August in New Jersey.

—Katie Hasty

>>> KIM KLINE
Contact: Kim Kline, 310-403-8976, info@kimklinemusic.com

To hear Kim Kline talk on the phone is a distant cry from what you would expect from her music. Raised in an "itty bitty" Texas town, the 27-year-old pop/rock artist speaks in a bubbly drawl, an upbeat opposite of her often shadowy and rough-edged song persona.

"I can be the nicest person in the world, but I just write really dark," she happily says. Much material from her self-titled 2007 debut was cut from a difficult era in her life, in 2004-2005, when her mother suffered a brain aneurysm and a heart attack, and her grandmother and grandfather passed away. The album has sold 8,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

It was also during this time Kline was settling into her new life in Los Angeles, where she now runs the "Kim Kline music brand." The term is apt, considering her sponsorships from Sinful Affliction Clothing, Hudson Jeans and a forthcoming jewelry line via Mr. Luxury, all alliances she helped cement while working in the fashion industry as a sales rep in California. She's also the face of USB wristband promotion company Aderra (Billboard, Feb. 23), the company is using her image and music as part of their presentation to new clients and fans.

Some radio stations, particularly those in tertiary markets (think: KSPI Stillwater, Okla.; WCMT Troy, Tenn.; and WFDL Fond du Lac, Wis.) have taken kindly to Kline's single "Inside." "To look at me, you'd think I'm just a pure top 40 artist," the photogenic bettor says. "But then you hear the guitars. I think we're at a good place in time for women in rock. The marketplace needs to hear a woman's voice." —KH

>>> PRINCESS ADANA
Contact: Debbie Fontaine, fontaemtalent@aol.com

Princess Adana has already made a name for herself in her native Trinidad and Tobago, but now she's attempting stateside success. Her arresting blend of reggae-infused R&B and natural dance moves won her the talent showcase at Billboard's eighth annual R&B/Hip-Hop Conference last November.

Adana, who turns 20 in April, is no stranger to winning competitions. She dominated her first at age 15, a local talent contest while attending the Tobago Academy of Performing Arts on a dancing scholarship. Deciding to focus on music, she met manager Andre Thorne of BWV Entertainment (Brothers With a Vision). Since then, she's become a staple on radio and in dance clubs in the United States, thanks to soca hits "Out of Control" and "Uncertain." Adana, who is a contracted performer at six major hotels in the islands, came to the attention of Beverly Hills, California-based Fontaine Music Agency (which reped Bad Boy group Dream) after performing at an international talent competition in August 2006.

"Adana has a sultry alto la Lauryn Hill," Debbie Fontaine says. "She doesn't have the typical soprano that everyone else seems to be doing."

Influenced by Anita Baker and Eddie Levert, among others, Adana (last name Roberts) has since opened the 2007 Tobago Jazz Festival, which featured Elton John, Mary J. Blige and Al Green. Having already released one indie album, Adana and Thorne are hard at work on another set melding her love of soca, reggae and R&B/soul.
"I'm a singer from the heart," Adana says. "I just want to sing, dance and be what I am on the big stage." —Gail Mitchell
Rock The Cash Box
From First To Last Strikes Up The Brand

By the online numbers, From First to Last has scored some impressive digits. Its MySpace page has snagged 12 million profile views, and from there, fans have rallied 20 million plays of its songs.

Building up these numbers, however, hasn’t necessarily meant playing by the book. Now under the management of Suretone’s Jordan Schur (see Q&A, page 26), the rock quartet has made a number of partnerships outside of the music arena to boost awareness of its self-titled album, due April 15. (FFTL’s prior albums, 2006’s “Heroine” and 2004’s “Dear Diary, My Teen Angst: Has A Body Count,” were released on Epitaph and have sold a combined 304,000 units in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.) Schur says these records were “independent releases that have never gone to radio. We’ve taken the time to develop them on the road, through new media, through lifestyle marketing efforts … they’re my baby.”

Among the partnerships:

- **Electronic Arts.** As part of a publishing deal with EA’s label Atomik, FTTL tracks will appear in the next 11 videogames from EA. Schur says, including best sellers “Madden NFL 09,” “FIFA 09” and the next edition of “Need for Speed.” “The perfect storm collided in Jordan’s office last year,” EA worldwide executive of music Steve Schur says. “He started playing me From First to Last and I almost fell out of my chair. It was the best rock record I had heard in a long, long time. They are a picture-perfect gamer band.” In addition, FTTL will get promotion on ea.com and on the videogame giant’s EA Trax site, which is dedicated to the music that appears in EA games.

- **Hot Topic.** Starting at the end of February, the retailer has given counter placement to a FTTL teaser CD, which includes two tracks from the upcoming album, and retail for less than $3. Fans can get one of the band’s shirts and the CD together for $12, Schur says.

- **MySpace.** The band performed at a MySpace Secret Show last summer in Omaha, Neb., alongside Hawthorne Heights and Secondhand Serenade.

- **MTV.** On March 5, FTTL will open for the Cure at a concert in Valencia, Spain, which will be filmed by MTV and play on MTV International as part of the April run-up to the album’s release, Schur says.

In addition, billboard.com debuted the guitar-driven anthem “We All Turn Back to Dust” on Jan. 23, tallying 2,800 streams in just two days.

That’s not to say Schur won’t take advantage of traditional ways to break through, namely touring. Currently, the band is on Hot Topic’s 2008 Take Action tour alongside Every Time I Die and the Bled, and it has landed a spot on the 2008 Vans Warped tour, which also counts EA as a sponsor.

“I genuinely believe, because we’ve done the two years of work, that From First to Last will become the biggest rock band on earth,” Schur says. “Brick by brick, we’re going to build them into what we know they are. They’ve made the record that will demand the respect.”

The Long Haul
Anti-’s Devotchka Is Winning Fans Over, One At A Time

When he founded Devotchka as an “experiment” more than nine years ago, singer Nick Urata’s idea was to blur the line between the musics of East and West, between gypsy and marachi, tubas and theremins, bouzoukis and guitars. There was a “pinning away for older times and exotic, faraway places,” he says.

“It was a time when I thought, ‘How the hell am I ever going to get there? Why don’t we try to get there in the music?’” he says.

At the time, success meant merely being able to keep this experiment afloat, and make some money doing it. While that remains a concern almost a decade later (the group’s five indie releases have sold only a combined 80,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan), a lot has changed.

If co-manager Mat Hall recalls days when he had to convince everyone from labels to writers that Devotchka’s music wasn’t some “world-music nightmare,” he and the band now find themselves in such unlikely positions as having to decline fast-food giant McDonald’s request to use a DeVotchka song in a commercial.

For the majority of listeners in and outside of the music industry, DeVotchka’s meld of unlikely musical bedfellows has proved a hard pill to swallow. But the critically lauded group and its management’s long-term strategy of earning one fan at a time is inching toward pay dirt.

Nearing the March 18 release of its sixth album, “A Mad and Faithful Telling,” Urata’s vision—of creating cinematic music capturing the feeling of “black-and-white movies from another country”—and the accordion/wedding jams of his childhood—is enjoying some of the best media attention of the band’s career. In addition to binders of glowing press, Devotchka has been announced a band to watch by the likes of KCRW Santa Monica, Calif., and NPR. Such noncommercial radio fans as KEXP Seattle and KCMQ Minneapolis will spotlight the group on the air next month from South by Southwest.

The band will make its first appearance at the annual Coachella festival this year and will appear on “Late Night With Conan O’Brien” before embarking on U.S. and European tours. The fact that Anti- is releasing the new album is viewed as an achievement on its own by some, as the Colorado band joins such praised labelmates as Tom Waits, Nick Cave and Neko Case.

Things are congealing for Devotchka for a variety of reasons, none smaller than the appearance of its music in last year’s Academy Award-winning “Little Miss Sunshine.” It created a spike in sales, but not as much as band and management would have liked. That soundtrack succeeded steadily increasing radio and press support and smart, tenacious bookings that found the group supporting acts as varied as Donovan and Marilyn Manson.

The Anti-deal follows an attempt by Seymour Stein to sign Devotchka to Sire, which Urata says was stymied by the “suits” at parent company Warner, who viewed the band as unmarketable. It’s the type of thinking that tested Urata’s faith through the years, as rent bills neared and the band slept on floors.

“It just seemed like labels, agents and talent buyers were like, ‘What am I going to do with this wacky band with a tuba?’” he says. “I think that end of the business has kind of narrowed if you look at any period of time when music has changed for the better, it was always someone coming out of left field.”

With fellow East-meets-West ensembles like Gogol Bordello also enjoying higher visibility, manager Hall is leery of listeners attacking Devotchka for jumping on a bandwagon. “They’ve been doing this for nine years. I see them as pioneers.”
**THE BILLBOARD REVIEWS**

**ALBUMS**

**POP**

**MICHAEL MCDONALD**

_Soul Speak_

**Producer:** Leon Clime Universal Notnow

**Release Date:** March 4

It’s not quite “Motown 3,” but Michael McDonald is certainly taking his time transitioning back to making original music. “Soul Speak” features 11 well, soulful covers from his personal favorites, along with a trio of new songs that hold their own amidst their formidable surroundings. Highlights include a winning, sultry take on Leonard Cohen’s “Hallelujah” and subtle versions of Teddy Pendergrass “Love TKO” and Van Morrison’s “Into The Mystic,” while a too-lush treatment of Bob Marley’s “Redemption Song” is the album’s only outright miss. McDonald maintains the soulful mood on the originals, too, with the smooth and quiet “Only God Can Help Me Now,” the lush “Can’t Get Over You” (Getting Over Me)” and the more forceful “Enemy Within.” It seems, still speaks most convincingly in McDonald’s world. —GG

**THE BLACK CROWEs**

_Warpaint_

**Producer:** Paul Stacey Silver Arrow

**Release Date:** March 4

When Chris Robinson sings “Hallelujah,” come join the jubilee on album opener “Goodbye Daughters of the Revolution,” it’s an invitation Black Crowes fans consider overdue. “Warpaint” is the group’s first new studio album in seven years, and somehow it’s more energetic and focused than anything since, perhaps, 1994’s “Amorica.” “Warpaint” mines the same Allmans-to-Zappa synthesis of influences that’s been the Crowes’ stock in trade but finds the group fortified by sharp songwriting and lace-tight, live-sounding performances. The Crowes remain loud and proud proponents of psychedelic trippiness on “Daughters,” “Whoa Mule” and “Wounded Bird,” and dig into some gritty grooves on “Walk Believer Walk,” “Evergreen” and a spirited cover of the Rev. Charlie Jackson’s “God’s Got It.” “Oh Josephine” and “There’s Gold in Them Hills” deliver mellow moments, and the 11-song set establishes the group’s return as something to crow about. —GG

**KATHLEEN EDWARDS**

_Asking for Flowers_

**Producer:** Kathleen Edwards, Jim Scott Zob/Rounder

**Release Date:** March 4

“Ask for Flowers” is a fourth-album masterwork by this Canadian singer/songwriter, filled with literate and provocative lyricism, vivid characters and cinematically engaging scenarios. Kathleen Edwards chronicles romantic turmoil in “Bulfalo,” “The Cheapest Key” and the title track, then turns around for such sweater romantic paeans as “Sure As Shit” and “Scared at Night.” There’s the rocking, country-flavored energy of “The Cheapest Key” and “I Make the Dough, You Get the Glory.” Elsewhere, she mines topical matters on the draftresister’s ode “Oil Man’s War,” the media and environmental concerns of “Oh Canada” and “Alicia Ross,” whose content was drafted from a real-life murder. After three predecessors, Edwards are “Ask ing for Flowers” but we hope she’ll be satisfied with well-deserved plaudits. —GG

**STEPHEN MALKMUS & THE JICKS**

_Real Emotional Trash_

**Producer:** Stephen Malkmus Matador

**Release Date:** March 4

Stephen Malkmus has neatly kept all his parts in place on his fourth solo album: the languid lyrical nonsense, the obtuse stories that seem to go nowhere until they do (sometimes), the once-again-lengthy compositions and the 70s-prog-trickery. (OK, that’s all true.) The album’s so in fact, in fact, that “Real Emotional Trash” feels both calculated and a little dirty, which is probably the point. “Drag onry Pie” is a messy psychedelic stomp, “Hopscotch” keeps you wondering where he’s heading, “We Can’t Help You” is a brief, stirring winner, and the 10-minute title epic does some nice bobs and weaves, though it makes, as you might expect, no real sense. John Vanderslice adds welcome flavor on drums and vocals, but overall, how much you enjoy rummaging through this Trash” will probably depend on the amount of patience you have for the Malkmus indulgences. —JW

**GUTTER TWINS**

_Saturnalia_

**Producers:** Greg Dulli, Mark Lanegan, Matthias Schneeberger Sub Pop

**Release Date:** March 4

The Gutter Twins’ Sub Pop debut, “Saturnalia,” is teeming with the kind of raw and gritty music one might expect to hear kicked around in, well, the gutter. And considering the project is a collaboration between Mark Lanegan and Greg Dulli, that’s certainly not a bad thing. There’s something ominous and satanic that possesses the guitar riffs scrawling all over “Idle Hands,” and that spirit is channeled elsewhere on “All Misery/Flowers” and the haunting “Front Street.” Hints of blues rock infuse “The Stations” and electronic flourishes highlight “Each to Each,” as Lanegan’s brooding baritone and Dulli’s mellower tone unburden the absurdities of love. “Tell me your story, so that you might save me,” Lanegan intones on “All Misery,” and while he may never find the salvation he’s seeking, he can rest assured there’s someone down here in the dinginess listening. —JM

**KAT PARRA**

_Azucar de Amor_

**Producer:** Wayne Wallace Patos

**Release Date:** March 4

Vocalist Kat Parra indulges her passion for Latin jazz on “Azucar de Amor,” her second Patos release. She opens the disc with a sweet bit of salsa/mambo, “Sugat Azucar de Amor,” that sets the tone for what proves to be a moveable feast of Latin styles. Parra knows how to light the fuse on a salsa number, and she shows us how it’s done on the original tune “Quilate la Gueta.” In a completely different mood, Parra delivers a stirring interpretation of “Esta Montanya d’Enfrente,” a mystic Sephardic ballad. Her vocal on this number is beautifully shaped; her grasp of this archaic Judeo-Spanish style is remarkable. Parra also shines on “Un Grito,” a song she wrote with Wayne Wallace in the Afro-Pervian lando style. It’s yet another stylistic groove that she handles with an uncanny feel. —PVV

**BAUHAUS**

_Go Away White_

**Producers:** Bauhaus. Bob Ezrin

**Bauhaus Music**

**Release Date:** March 4

Recorded in 18 days, some tracks in one take, Bauhaus’ fifth studio album proves that even a quarter-century’s hiatus can’t kill a great band, especially if it was undead to begin with. There’s no trickery here —apart from the sinister seduction of Peter Murphy’s ever-deepening Transylvanian croon—and the bare, live style makes the band’s heirs even more apparent. There’s PJ Harvey in David J’s swamp-blues bass; Nirvana in the shrieking, submerged guitar of Daniel Ash. But the quartet doesn’t compose or perform like elder statesmen: “International Bulllet Proof Talent” and “Endless Summer of the Damned” are as sly and visceral as its first material. If the band had released a bunch of meandering albums during the past 25 years, you might call “Go Away White” a return to form. Instead, it picks up right where Bauhaus left off: a wet dream for original fans and a blast of recognition for the newly eye-lined. —KM

**ASHTON SHEPHERD**

_Sounds So Good_

**Producer:** Buddy Cannon

_MCA Nashville_

**Release Date:** March 4

There are debut albums that serve notice that the landscape has changed. Twenty-one-year-old Alabama native Ashton Shepherd and producer Buddy Cannon have delivered the latter. Unabashedly country in production and theme, the set is refreshing, authentic and delightfully un-PC. Liquor? Lots of it. Heartache? Check. Dirt roads? Several. Single “Takin’ Off This Pair” is destined to be an anthem for women fed up with relationships going nowhere. “I Ain’t Dead Yet” finds the singer balancing motherhood and marriage with a night out on the town, while “Not Right Now” embraces “a pint of Crown and a country sound.” Conversely, “How Big Are Angel Wings?” is a tearjerker about a terminally ill child who asks her doctor the question she can’t put to her parents. —KT

**STEVEN MALKMUS**

_“Real Emotional Trash”_ plays out like bits and pieces of a puzzle that never quite fit together, which isn’t particularly unusual for this experimental techno duo. The difference here is that the relatively short tracks offer glimpses of ideas that are finished before fully materializing into something to wrap your head around. The album hops from dense, atmospheric fuzz (“Altibiz,” “Paléal Sun”) and erratic sequences of glitchy twitches (“Phynah”) to rapid drum machine blips (“Perlence”) and back again before ever securely finding its feet. “Smimms” shows cases bright beats that are slowly bathed in a wash of warm electronica, and the closest thing to dance tracks are the thumping “Rale” and “9001-51-1.” At times it feels like a lot is going on, others not so much. The pieces are all there, but it just doesn’t add up to more than the sum of its parts. —JM

**JAZZ**

**MARCUS MILLER**

_Marcus Miller_ Verve **Release Date:** March 4

Most largely instrumented jazz albums lose their appeal after the 50-minute mark. Notwithstanding its four R&B-styled vocal tracks (including a winning rendition of Deniece Williams’ “Free” by Corinne Bailey Rae), Marcus Miller’s zesty CD has adrenaline to spare at the close of its 70-plus-minute funk/jazz marathon, when he speeds across the finish line with a B-3-fueled take on Tower of Power’s “What Is Hip?” Released on his own 3 Deuces label distributed by Concord, “Marcus” is the eighth solo outing by Miles Davis’ final musical collaborator. Miller’s high-in-the-mix bass forms the core here, whether it’s bottom rhythms in his gently grooved original “Strum” or virtuosic speed on hot tracks like “Blaze,” where he also overdubs sitar funk. One of the late-highlight moments is the soulfully lyrical “Santeria” through David de Sante and co-starring Gregoire Maret on harmonica. —DO

**ELECTRONIC**

**AUTECRE**

_Guaristique_ Warp **Release Date:** March 4

“Guaristique” plays out like bits and pieces of a puzzle that never quite fit together, which isn’t particularly unusual for this experimental techno duo. The difference here is that the relatively short tracks offer glimpses of ideas that are finished before fully materializing into something to wrap your head around. The album hops from dense, atmospheric fuzz (“Altibiz,” “Paléal Sun”) and erratic sequences of glitchy twitches (“Phynah”) to rapid drum machine blips (“Perlence”) and back again before ever securely finding its feet. “Smimms” shows

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FOLK

JIM WHITE

Transnoraml Skippero
Producers: Joe Penrice, Michael Dominy, Jim White, Tucker Martine
Luka Bop
Release Date: March 4

While White has found some peace of mind after a long spell of conflict. With his new band, Skipler with vocals from Ola-belle and Brazilian percussion from Mauro Refosco. White still keeps us off balance with rich, unpredictable textures ("Diamon physicals to Coa") that convey lost-in-the-backwoods dis-orientation ("Counting Numbers in the Air."). He's also a compelling storyteller who uses words and minor chords to empathize with a troubled spirit ("Take Me Away"). But White's new near happiness can't be denied on "Turquoise House," about a man who has found comfort in his nonconformity.—WR

WORLD

MARKUS JAMES

Snakeskin Violin
Producer: Markus James Firenze
Release Date: Feb. 19

Of late, a handful of American artists have explored the connection between West African music and American blues, but Markus James has lived this connection for the past seven years (and four albums). "Snakeskin Violin" contains his profound world blues passage. Working as usual, with several Malian players, including Hassi Sare (maraka violin), Mamadou Solar (guitar), Vieux Farka Toure (cane-dence guitar) and Mama Sissoko "(n'goni). James laid down tracks in Mali, California and Hsussipo. His songs radiate a dark, nearly forbidding glow, while his sparse, shadowy arrangements cut a groove that draws deeply from the hypnotic vibe of Malian music. "All That You Can't Keep," "Exile Tracks" and "I Won't Let It" are extremely distinctive pieces, driven by a seductive rhythmic circularity that's a keystone of Malian traditional tunes and Delta blues—PVV

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

BORN RUFFIANS

Red Yellow & Blue
Producer: Rusty Santos
Warp
Release Date: March 4

Don't be misled by the WARP logos record on this Toronto trio's debut full-length. Rather than making Apex Twin-style electronic music, Born Ruffians are in the business of kicking out jumpy live-band power-pop jams far more concerned with melodic zing than textual depth. Fans of Vampire Weekend and Hot Hot Heat should find much to admire about "Red Yellow & Blue," which follows a buzzed-about 2006 EP as well as tours with indie A-listers Hot Chip and Peter Bjorn and John. Despite the album's title, giddy-voiced frontman Luke Lalonde spends most of his time singing about animals, not colors. Look out for "Barnacle Goose," "Hummingbird," "Towel Mate for Life" and—wait for it—"Badbonka donkey." Lalonde's prey? A harmless good time.

R&B

RAHEEM DEVAUGHN

Customer (4:05)
Producers: Ivan Barias, Carvin Haggins
Writers: R. DeVaughn, C. Haggins, I. Barias, J. Smith, K. Oliver
Publishers: various

Although Raheem DeVaughn's designation as R&B hippe-neo-soul-rock star may be difficult to warm up to, his music is not. After a decent debut album, DeVaughn returns with much-improved sophomore effort "Love Behind the Melody." After first reaping top 40 rewards on Billboard's Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart in 2005 with "Guess Who You Love Your," his single "Woman" from the new album peaked at No. 18. "Customer" offers equal promise, with its catchy tune backed by a smooth vocal, mellow accompaniment and heavy-sounding percussion. Despite the cliched food metaphors for love, DeVaughn manages to get the point across and create a soulful mood.

CRITICS' CHOICE:

A new release, regardless of chart potential, highly recommended for musical merit. All albums commercially available in the United States are eligible. Send album review copies to Jonathan Cohen and singles review copies to Chuck Taylor—both at Billboard, 770 Broadway, Seventh Floor, New York, N.Y. 10003 or to the writers in the appropriate bureaus.

POP

GAVIN DEGRAW

In Love With a Girl (3:25)
Producer: Howard Benson
Writers: G. DeGraw, J. Benson
J Records

If this single is any indication, the next full-length from Gavin DeGraw will have its rough rock edges. "In Love With a Girl" opens with heavily distorted guitars as minor chords roll through, but are not deuced. Lyricallly, the track is happy, with the 30-year-old songwriter heralding a girl that "understands." One few bealeaguer DeGraw's now- dependable croon: the unnecessary presence of auto-tuning, which is mightily distorting. Beyond that, "Girl" is a rocking home run in the same ballpark as "I Don't Want To Be." The chorus is buoyant, backed with idyllic drum tracks alongside, driving each word-heavy verse, as DeGraw's snappy piano lines may have fans playing, heaven forbid, air piano.—KH

STEVE WINWOOD FEATURING ERIC CLAPTON

Dirty City (4:04)
Producer: Steve Winwood
Writer: Steve Winwood
Publisher: not listed
Columbia

Steve Winwood revisits his days with the short-lived Blind Faith supergroup on the first single from forthcoming "Nine Lives," and demonstrates that he's one of few vocalists who refuses to be boxed over by Clapton's gui- tar riffs. Much less slick and overproduced than efforts that made him famous in the '80s, "Dirty City" is a slice of old-school white boy blues, with Winwood moaning about "moving up to higher ground" and Clapton noodling away in the background. Dazzling.—CH

KAKI KING

2 O'Clock (5:50)
Producer: Malcolm Burn
Writer: K. King
Publisher: Domino (BMI)

One of the words that Kaki King uses on MySpace to describe her acoustic guitar sound is "shoezage," re- ferring to the unassuming na-ture of her work. But this is also a dasservice, for King's music is just stunning to be grouped with a genre that can induce snoring. "2 O'Clock," from "Dreaming of Revenge" (March 11), details a gray after-noon (where King examines a relationship's final countdown as her lover sleeps in). Her deli- cate voice doesn't guiver at the thought as she chides, "There's no need to be ter- rible when you know I would do anything for you." The song's drifting quality gradu- ally transforms into one of King's finger-picking, fre- slapping runs that gallops almost in panic, giving away turbulence straining under her calm. It's a climactic—and cathartic—end to an emo- tional conclusion.—CLT

DANCE

THE ROLLING STONES

You Can't Always Get What You Want (Soulwax Remix) (3:53)
Producer: Jimmy Miller
Writers: M. Jagger, K. Richards
Remixer: Soulwax
Publisher: ABKCO, BMI

Operating under the moniker Soulwax, brothers David and Stephen De- weale have made a name for themselves producing edgy electro-rock remixes for Daft Punk, Hot Chip and Gorillaz. This playful, gussied remix of the classic Stones anthem from 1969 album "Let It Bleed," sends Jagger's soulful vocal over a bubbly electro-bass riff inspired by the loose groove of the original, and builds to a de- liberately stripped-down dance beat that echoes Prince's 1986 No. 1 hit "Kiss." While bite-sized samples of the powerful opening, famously re- corded with the London Bach Choir, fade in and out like buzzing flies, producing catch breaks. Suspenseful, clever and hard-grooving, this digitally-alone single is featured in the upcoming movie "21," and will get rock radio down on the dancefloor.—SP

NATASHA BEDINGFIELD

Pocketful of Sunshine (3:23)
Producer: John Shanks
Writers: N. Bedingfield, D. Brisebois, J. Shanks
Publishers: EMI Blackwood, BMI

Gator Baby/EML, Epic After delays and much fretting, Eric returned Natasha Bedingfield to U.S. hit turf with "Love Like This." While the catchy recording was engaging to a point—and reached No. 11 on the Billboard Hot 100 and No. 1 on Hot Dance Club Play—the addition of label- mate rapper Sean Kingston felt delicate, if not forced. Second single and title track of sophomore album "Pocketful of Sunshine" puts Bedingfield back on accomplished melodic footing. Produced by the peer- less John Shanks, the single boasts a soaring, anthemic chorus, gleeful tempo and percussive footprint promising enough to again demand a fistful of club remixes. And there's plenty more on the full-length to propel the singer/songwriter. After "Pocketful" radiates its charms, we'll be waiting for superlative ballad "Soulmate," a track that not only made it in the United States from a dramatic rerecording of her original U.K. CD release, but charted in nearly a dozen nations, including a top 10 showing at home. Hopefully, all in due time.—CT

COLBIE CALIAT

Realize (4:05)
Producer: Mikal Blue
Writers: C. Caliat, J. Reeves, M. Blue
Publisher: Cocomarie, BMI

Dancing Squirrel/NAI/Opium for the People, ASCAP
Universal Republic

The tide remains high for folk-pop singer/songwriter Colbie Caillat, whose second single off debut "Coco" will make listeners "Realize" that her album has some serious legs. Fresh off multiformat smash "Bubbly" and MySpace recognition, Caillat again delivers an effortless vocal with simple acoustic instrument, instantly singalong melody and harmonies colored by singer Jason Reeves. At the core is a reflection of a budding relationship. "We've never have to wonder if we missed out on each other." "Realize" is sure to wash up on a shore near you as the weather wounds for those unex- pected spring flings.—MM
BRITs Boosts

After performing their hit song, "Valerie" together at the recent BRIT Awards, Amy Winehouse and Mark Ronson are once again re-united as the main beneficiaries of sales boosts from the event. Sales of Winehouse's "Back to Black—The Deluxe Edition" picked up 60% in week-on-week sales, from 19,028 to 30,363, according to the Official U.K. Charts Co., propelling the album into the top three. Over-the-counter sales figures were not available for Ronson, but market-leading retailer HMV saw a 60% plus boost in his sales.

The chart positions of all the night's performers—including Mika, Rihanna and Leona Lewis—improved in the aftermath of the event, with the BRITs boost looking to rev up previously disappointing sales of Kyle Minogue's "X" album. After a strong performance of "Wow" at the show, her album surged 38-24, while the song rocketed 195-5 on the singles chart in its 10th chart week.

TV ratings for the event, broadcast on ITV1, averaged 6.1 million, up from 5.3 million in 2007 and 4.6 million in 2005, and HMV head of music Rudy Osorio says the BRITs effect is becoming more notable every year.

"People do respond to the broadcast and all the publicity, and there's a growing upward trend," he says. "It can help artists like Mark Ronson become household names as well and see very significant increases in their album sales. It's a very good platform for an artist to connect with the mainstream and then build sales for the rest of the year."

Cagle Scores Big With Outside Songwriting Help

Country star Chris Cagle has returned to the promised land. His fourth album, "My Life's Been a Country Song" (Capitol Nashville), debuts at No. 1 on Billboard's Top Country Albums this week, his second chart-topper. The set, which sold 37,000 first-week copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, also debuts at No. 8 on the Billboard 200, his first top 10 entry on the big chart.

Meanwhile, first single "What Kinda Gone" is No. 9 on Hot Country Songs. It's Cagle's first trip into the airplay top 10 since "Chicks Dig It!" peaked at No. 5 in late 2003.

The success comes after a professional dry spell and a period of personal turmoil. In addition to an ongoing lawsuit involving his former manager, Cagle suffered vocal problems and the shock of learning that a baby that he thought was his turned out not to be. "I was beat up and broken-hearted and locked in a bottle, and there's a lot of the last couple years that I don't remember," he says. "At the same time, I had some growing up to do."

After selling more than 600,000 copies of each of his first two albums and scoring four top 10 airplay singles, including the No. 1 "Breathe In, Breathe Out," Cagle's third album sold less than 400,000 units and didn't produce any radio hits.

Produced by Scott Hendrick and Cagle, the new set features none of his own material—a departure from earlier albums. After sifting through hundreds of reviews, new producer Hendrick told Cagle his material was keeping him from being a bigger star. "That was hard for me to swallow," Cagle says. "I'm a songwriter. But the bottom line is as an artist, you gotta make the best music, period."

Cagle and Hendrick instead turned to songs Nashville's top tunesmiths, including Dave Berg, Craig Wiseman, Brett James, Wendell Mobley and Neil Thrasher.

Country KSOP Salt Lake City music director Debby Turpin says Cagle "just needed the right song to get him back on track." The new single, she says, "has a great vibe and paints a vivid picture of this stressed-out guy wondering when his girl is coming back, if at all."

Country KMLE Phoenix music director Gwen Foster agrees. "It really didn't matter that Chris had not had any recent hits," she says. "In our world, a great song is a great song."

"We were [touring] all these countries and at the same time getting a little bit of each culture," Khriz (aka Christian Colon) says. "With the music we heard, we wanted to make an album that was for everyone. 'La Vecina' is an example of that."

The artist wouldn't elaborate on the "differences" with the indie that led to the change of label, but acknowledged that Angel & Khriz's new home puts them in company with some of reggaeton's biggest stars.

As for what's happened in the years since Daddy Yankee's "Gasolina" was a massive crossover hit, Khriz says reggaeton has firmly established itself as a genre with discerning fans, whether the music is trendy or not. "Those who make good reggaeton will stand out," he says. "The genre won't die."

—Ayala Ben-Yehuda
MUSHROOMING SUCCESS

Though it sits on the outskirts of the dance music mainstream, psych-trance duo Infected Mushroom is one of the genre’s best chances for crossover success.

Amid “Dudwe” Davelevani and Erez Eisen played 135 gigs in 2007, including Coachella and Baltimore’s Virgin Festival; turned away more than 1,000 fans from a sold-out show at Avalon in Hollywood; got a proper rock ’n’ roll manager; and made the ultimate commitment to the pursuit of bigger things: They moved from their homeland of Israel to the mean streets of Los Angeles. They will play their first South by Southwest show March 13.

“They’ve grown to the place where they now have truly massive fan bases on several different continents, and their music has been moving, very organically, toward a more mainstream, melodic and vocal-oriented sound,” says manager Jeff Jampol, who also Oversees the Doors.

Infected Mushroom first appeared in the late ’90s and soon came to define the wallowing, wall-of-sound style of goa, or psychedelic trance. “It’s really colorful music, and there’s no stop movement,” Dudwev says. “It’s very intense, very much in your face. Sonically, it can go anywhere, from techno to metal to flamenco, sometimes in the same song.” The acts six albums have sold a combined 27,000 units in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

The pair toured as DJs for most of its career, but recently shifted to a band format, with Dudwev on vocals and Eisen on keyboards, plus guitarists Tommy Cunningham and Brazilian percussionist Rogerio Lardim.

“It’s what a live show should be all about,” booking agent Ron Rivlin of Coast 2 Coast says. “A full band that performs their own music and hammers away at their instruments, with an explosive delivery.”

The duo is working on its seventh album and collaborating with fellow L.A. carpetbagger Paul Oakenfold. Dudwev describes it as “a hybrid of trance and metal, but our influences are all over the place.”

“You can call it electronics, psy-trance or any other name,” Jampol says, “but at its heart it’s really rock ’n’ roll.”

According to Nielsen SoundScan, and debuted at No. 8 on the Heatseekers chart.

“We really let John Darnielle take the lead with some of the marketing,” Beggars GM Matt Harmon says. “John used his blog, Last Plane to Jakarta, to announce the new record and the availability of a digital mini-EP. We’re also going to radio with this record, and we’ve had tons of NPR support.”

Beggars is also trying to maximize Darnielle’s book on Black Sabbath’s “Master of Reality” album, which will be released in April by Continuum Press as part of its “Thirty Three and a Third” series. “We’ve talked about doing a bundle with Amazon to sell the book and the record together,” Kolowrat says. “The publishers also have been using the new record in their press campaign.” The Thirty Three and A Third Web site, for instance, offers a PDF of the first chapter of the book along with a video from “Heretic Pride.” That video, for the track “Sax Rohmer #1,” also premiered prior to the record’s release on spinner.com and was posted on numerous blogs.

The bookishness doesn’t stop with just promoting Darnielle’s novel. “We’re also servicing indie bookstores as part of our lifestyle marketing campaign,” Kolowrat says. “It’s not uncommon to service bars and restaurants, but we wanted to branch out and find other appropriate venues.”

Finally, Kolowrat wanted to include something unique for the members of the press who have championed the band for so long. “Musician and visual artist Jeffrey Lewis did a comic strip that explained all of the songs, and it was sent to the media,” she says. “It was a neat visual and a special treat.”

—Courtney Harding
Between Grammys And Oscars, Janet’s On Deck

Album sales sit in the low tide of the awards season, with last issue’s sales charts reflecting the impact of the Grammy Awards and next week’s gonging impact on select titles by the Academy Awards telecast.

HANCOCK

Past experience suggests the Oscars will have more impact on soundtracks that contain best song nominees than it will on winning or nominated score albums. Last year, for example, the showcase of three nominated songs helped the standard edition of “Dreamgirls” reverse from a pre-television dip of 18% to a post-Oscar jolt of 1.9%, amounting to a week of 45,000 units sold.

On the other hand, last year’s winning score album from “Babel” did almost double its sales, but even so ended up moving less than 2,000 units in the post-Oscars frame. Figure the best action from this year’s show will go to the “Oscar” album, which includes the winning “Falling Slowly” by Glen Hansard and Marketa Irglova, and the soundtrack to “Enchanted,” which had each of its three nominated songs performed.

Meanwhile, in the two weeks since the Grammys’ Feb. 10 telecast, Herbie Hancock’s album of the year winner “River: The Joni Letters” has sold just shy of 80,000 copies, more than the 63,000 it sold in its first 20 weeks.

That volley refires a couple of the hatchets that NPR contributor Joel Rose threw at the Grammys in a commentary that posed as a news report on the Feb. 8 edition of “All Things Considered,” which stated that a best picture Oscar can “be worth tens of millions of dollars.” While Grammy wins deliver “much, much, much” smaller returns, an assertion that ignores the career-changing momentum that artists like Tina Turner, Bonnie Raitt, Ricky Martin and Norah Jones got from high nights at the Grammys.

No matter how much “River” ends up selling, a beneficiary from the 2007 telecast suggests Hancock’s bigger residual may lie a couple of years out. After an album of the year nomination and a performance at the ceremony helped Diana Krall’s 1999 album “When I Look in Your Eyes” reach No. 56 on the big chart, her next release in 2001, “The Look of Love,” became the first mainstream jazz album to bow inside the top 10 in the history of the Billboard 200, while two of her later albums also reached chart’s top 10.

With a career that has spread worthy albums both as leader and sideman through five decades, Hancock’s pre-Grammy profile was certainly higher than his pre-2000 fame, but don’t be surprised if his next album starts with a bigger splash than he’s ever seen before.

SLEEPY TIME: “Sleep Through the Static” serves as an ironic title for Jack Johnson’s chart-topping set, as it is the only one on either the Billboard 200 or Top Pop Catalog Albums to beat 100,000 copies (104,000).

Feedback we hear John Maraduke chiding labels about the need to better plan release dates, a campaign the Hastings Entertainment CEO has waged since the 2006 convention of retail trade group NARM.

For what it’s worth, eight albums released between Oct. 28 and the end of 2007 that never hit No. 1 had opening numbers that would have been large enough to lead this week’s list.

Chart peaks shouldn’t be the sole criterion labels consider when scheduling a release date, and record companies could rightfully argue that albums released in November and December will likely find faster sales in those months than in the slower store traffic of January or February. But I’m just saying.

Next week’s likely No. 1 is destined for a hefty total than the one now held by Johnson’s three-week champ. Nielsen SoundScan’s Feb. 27 Building chart placed first-day sales from reporting claims for Janet Jackson’s new “Discipline” at 55,000 copies, which promises a sturdier sum at the top of next issue’s chart.

By comparison, when Foo Fighters’ “Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace” started with 45,000 copies in October on the Wednesday Building chart, it went on to sell 168,000 in the first week, while Celine Dion’s “Taking Chances” moved 214,000 in its first full frame after a November opening day of 38,000.
### The Billboard 200 Artist Index

**Artist** | **Genre** | **Label** | **Holiday** | **Dance** | **Alternative** | **Country** | **Rock** | **Urban/R&B** | **Pop** | **Adult Contemporary** | **Gospel** | **Top 100** | **Total**
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---

### Billboard 200 Chart

**Artist** | **Title** | **Weeks** | **Peak**
--- | --- | --- | ---

**Artists and Numbers (Distributing Label, Price)**

**1** | **JACK JOHNSON** | **Sleep Through The Static** | **1**
**2** | **ALICIA KEYS** | **As I Am** | **3**
**3** | **AMY WINEHOUSE** | **Back To Black** | **2**
**4** | **KIDZ BOP KIDS** | **Kidz Bop 13** | **3**
**5** | **DAREA BAREILLES** | **Little Voice** | **4**

**New**

**1** | **CHRIS CABLE** | **My Life's Been A Country Song** | **1**
**2** | **MARY J. BLIGE** | **Growing Pains** | **1**
**3** | **TAYLOR SWIFT** | **Taylor Swift** | **2**
**4** | **SHERYL CROW** | **Debuts** | **1**
**5** | **KEYSHA COLE** | **Just Like You** | **2**

**Returning**

**1** | **CHRIS BROWN** | **Exclusive** | **1**
**2** | **MILEY CYRUS** | **Hannah Montana 2 (Soundtrack) Meet Miley Cyrus** | **2**
**3** | **ROBERT PLANT** | **Alvin And The Chipmunks** | **1**
**4** | **GARY ALLAN** | **Richest Man In County Town** | **5**
**5** | **JASON ALDEAN** | **Burn It Down** | **3**

**Debut**

**1** | **JIM JONES** | **HARLEM'S American Gangster** | **1**
**2** | **COLBIE CALLIAY** | **Across The Universe Deluxe Edition** | **1**
**3** | **LUPE FIASCO** | **Lupe Fiasco's The Cool** | **3**
**4** | **SOUNDTRACK** | **Walt Disney's The Jungle Book Soundtrack** | **1**
**5** | **K. D. LANG** | **Watershed** | **2**

**New**

**1** | **THE GREATEST BOYZ II MEN** | **Motown: A Journey Through Hitsville USA** | **1**

**Note:** For more information about the chart, please visit www.billboard.com.


**VIDEOCLIPS:** Based on audience-single, compiled -mailable

**ALICIA KEYS (MBK/J /RMG)**

**TAKE YOU THERE**

**CHRIS BROWN (JIVE)**

**WON'T YOU BE MY LOVER**

**MAROON 5 (A &M**

**WON'T YOU BE MY LOVER**

**BRITNEY SPEARS (JIVE)**

**SHADOW OF THE SUN**

**WYCLEF JEAN**

**SWEETEST GIRL (DOLLAR BILL)**

**FERGIE**

**BUCKCHERRY (ELEVEN SEVEN**

**100. TOP MUSIC VIDEOS:** The Video Data System.

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**www.americanradiohistory.com**

**58 | Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data**

**For a complete chart data check out www.billboard.biz**

**CHARTS LEGEND On Page 68**

**MUSIC VIDEO.**

**Principal Performers**

**VH1**

**GLEN HANSARD & MARKETA IROVA,**

**FALLING UNIVERSAL REPUBLIC**

**SARA BAREILLES,**

**LION SING**

**AMY WINEHOUSE,**

**YOU KNOW I'M NOT DO**

**ONE REPUBLIC,**

**STOP AND STARE**

**BUCKCHERRY,**

**HEROINES**

**SHAYTALS**

**RHIANNA,**

**DON'T STOP THE MUSIC**

**BET**

**FLY**

**PEACE & LOVE**

**IN THE CRUCIBLE**

**MONEY**

**CMT**

**ALAN JACKSON,**

**SMALL TOWN SOMETHING**

**TIM MCGRAW**

**BRAD PAISLEY,**

**LET ME**

**JASON ALDEAN,**

**LAISA DEE**

**CRAIG MORGAN**

**KERRY WHERLEY**

**VH1**

**FLYING LIGHTS**

**CHORUS**

**PACKS TO GET SOME**

**KILLER**

**OUR SONG**

**YOU CAN'T WIN**

**BREAK THE ICE**

**WHATSOEVER IT TAKES**

**THE ANTHEM**

**FUSE**

**PANIC AT THE DISCO,**

**DRAW THE ATTENTION**

**FOO FIGHTERS,**

**RUN ROAD TO RO**

**PARRAMORE,**

**ECHOCHamber**

**JASON ALDEAN,**

**LAISA DEE**, **OUR**

**CRAIG MORGAN**

**KERRY WHERLEY**

**VH1**

**SAY YES**

**WHATSOEVER IT TAKES**

**THE ANTHEM**

**FUSE**

**PANIC AT THE DISCO,**

**DRAW THE ATTENTION**

**FOO FIGHTERS,**

**RUN ROAD TO RO**

**PARRAMORE,**

**ECHOCHamber**

**JASON ALDEAN,**

**LAISA DEE**, **OUR**

**CRAIG MORGAN**

**KERRY WHERLEY**
### R&B/HIP-HOP ALBUMS

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### BLUE ALBUMS

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### HOT R&B/HIP-HOP AIRPLAY

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### RHYTHMIC AIRPLAY

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## HOT COUNTRY SONGS

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<td>SHILOH</td>
<td>Chris Young</td>
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<td>CARRY ME Away</td>
<td>Blake Shelton</td>
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<td>Lee Brice</td>
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<td>Tim McGraw</td>
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<td>Jon Pardi</td>
<td>Capitol Nashville</td>
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### CHART LEGEND

- **HITPREDICTOR**: This chart is generated by a proprietary algorithm that predicts the top 10 songs on the Hot Country Songs chart. The chart is updated weekly to reflect the latest chart positions and chart performances.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- **Rodney Atkins** is climbing with "Cleaning This Gun (Come on In Boy)," currently at No. 1.
- **Chris Young** is performing well with "Shilo," currently at No. 2.
- **Blake Shelton** is holding strong with "Carry Me Away," currently at No. 3.

### COUNTRY UPDATE

- **Rodney Atkins** is performing with "Cleaning This Gun (Come on In Boy)," currently at No. 1.
- **Chris Young** is performing with "Shilo," currently at No. 2.
- **Blake Shelton** is performing with "Carry Me Away," currently at No. 3.

### POPULAR ARTISTS

- **Rodney Atkins**
- **Chris Young**
- **Blake Shelton**

### NEXT WEEK'S PREDICTIONS

- **Rodney Atkins**
- **Chris Young**
- **Blake Shelton**

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### R&R COUNTRY DAILY UPDATE

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### FLATTS, PAISLEY LIGHT UP SINGLES CHART

Two of country’s heaviest hitters, Rascal Flatts and Brad Paisley, posted solid debuts with new singles from chart-topping albums. The former opens at No. 42 with “Every Day,” the third hit from “Still Feels Good.” Take Me There” topped the list for three weeks in the fall, while “Winner at Losing Game” spent four weeks at No. 2. Last month, the set led Top Country Albums for four weeks and has sold 1.7 million copies. “Every” is the act’s 29th chart hit, most by a group this decade. At No. 48, Paisley seeks a seventh consecutive No. 1 with “I’m Still a Guy.”

---

### DON’T MISS ANOTHER IMPORTANT

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### DATA FOR WEEK OF MARCH 8, 2008

For chart reprints call 614-654-4633
### Top Latin Albums

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### Top Latin Songs

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www.americanradiohistory.com
### JAPAN

**ALBUMS**

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*Data for week of MARCH 8, 2008*
## EUROCHARTS

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</table>

Data for week of MARCH 8, 2008 | For chart reprints call 646.654.4633

Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data | 67

www.americanradiohistory.com
**ALBUM CHARTS**

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

![Image](image_url)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Sales (in thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ALICIA KEYS</td>
<td>girl on fire</td>
<td>RIAA</td>
<td>1,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>TAYLOR SWIFT</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>Big Machine Records</td>
<td>1,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tiësto</td>
<td>Album</td>
<td>Interscope</td>
<td>1,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ADELE</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>XL Recordings</td>
<td>1,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>LADY GAGA</td>
<td>Born This Way</td>
<td>Interscope</td>
<td>978</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOP INDEPENDENT ALBUMS**

Indie Albums are current titles that are available via an independent distribution label. For sales numbers, see "Independent Sales and Streaming." The numbers are based on sales for the week of March 5, 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Sales (in thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>JIM JONES</td>
<td>Lean Through The Trap</td>
<td>TrapStar/Interscope</td>
<td>57,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>KANYE WEST</td>
<td>My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy</td>
<td>Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam</td>
<td>41,157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>LIL WOODS</td>
<td>Heartbreak on a Full Moon</td>
<td>Woods/Universal Motown</td>
<td>37,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>NE-YO</td>
<td>R.E.D.</td>
<td>Republic</td>
<td>33,685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>KODAK BLACK</td>
<td>Live from the Streets</td>
<td>Sosa Baby/Atlantic</td>
<td>31,659</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SINGLE CHARTS**

Compiled from a national sample of reports from club DJs, radio stations, and sales data reported. These charts are also available at subscription only to Nielsen SoundScan. Additional data is available at www.americanradiohistory.com.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Airplay Sales (in thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>JAY-Z &amp; THE KOKOBOYS</td>
<td>Do Not Disturb</td>
<td>Star Trak/Def Jam</td>
<td>7,784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>LIL Wayne</td>
<td>Glory</td>
<td>Cash Money</td>
<td>7,442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>T-PAIN</td>
<td>Faithfully Not Guilty</td>
<td>Epic</td>
<td>6,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>BRYAN ADAMS</td>
<td>Nothin’ But A Good Time (feat. LIL WAYE)</td>
<td>Reprise</td>
<td>6,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>JASON ALDEAN</td>
<td>Take A Deep Breath</td>
<td>Valory</td>
<td>5,887</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DIGITAL CHARTS**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Downloads (in thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>KYLIE MINOGUE</td>
<td>Can’t Get You Out Of My Head</td>
<td>Parlophone</td>
<td>6,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>JASON ALDEAN</td>
<td>Take A Deep Breath</td>
<td>Valory</td>
<td>4,978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>LIL WAYE</td>
<td>Glory</td>
<td>Cash Money</td>
<td>4,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>JAY-Z &amp; THE KOKOBOYS</td>
<td>Do Not Disturb</td>
<td>Star Trak/Def Jam</td>
<td>4,707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>BRYAN ADAMS</td>
<td>Nothin’ But A Good Time (feat. LIL WAYE)</td>
<td>Reprise</td>
<td>3,008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sole debut of Deerhunter's Arrow (AKA Atlas Sound) has nearly 2,000; 10% of its first-week sales came from digital downloads.

With his sixth studio album, Magic For Mary's Make-You-Feel-Better-For-Nothing (10.98), Gangsta Rap music? Do You Like Rock Music?

Furry Flames

In the Future

Do you like Rock Music? Do You Like Rock Music?

Malawi Davis

A Day To Remember

For Those Who Have Heart

Sнд Out

What You Call It

A Great Day For A Hanging

Are You Ready (5.98)

The Way You Talk (AKA)

The Sweet Season

Vol. 1

The Grand Archives

Hacendad Histórica

Linea De Oro: En Los Puros Huertos

The Golden Age

The Raveonettes

Kingdom Of Sorrow
**EXECUTIVE
TURNTABLE**

Send submissions to: exec@billboard.com

**RECORD COMPANIES:** Warner Music Group promotes Michael Nash to executive VP of digital strategy and business development, effective June 1. He has served as senior VP since Feb. 1, 2000. Nash succeeds Alejandro Zubilaga, who will remain with WMG through June.

Razor & Tie Entertainment ups Rob Mason to manager of promotions. He was coordinator.

**PUBLISHING:** Sony/ATV Music Publishing names Joseph Puzio CFO for the publisher’s worldwide operations. He was senior VP of worldwide finance at sports marketing firm IMG.


Panda Publishing, a unit of Galgo Music Group, promotes Ben Anglin to senior VP of talent development. He was creative director.

51 Songs America names David Polomenti VP of creative services. He was an independent consultant at Dimensional Music Publishing.

Cherry Lane Music Publishing elevates Jill Pedone to coordinator of creative services and marketing. She was an assistant.

**DISTRIBUTION:** RED Distribution appoints Tony Bruno to senior VP of marketing. He was VP.

**TOURING:** The 7,200-seat Show Me Center on the campus of Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, names Jim Barbatti GM. He was VP/GM at venue management firm PMI in Green Bay, Wis.

Facility management/consulting services firm VanuWorks names Wolf Larson executive director of the new Burnsville Performing Arts Center in Minnesota. He was assistant GM at the Flint Center for the Performing Arts in Cupertino, Calif.

**MEDIA:** VH1 promotes Leah Horwitz to VP of music talent and creative development. She was senior director of music and talent relations. —Editted by Mitchell Peters

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**GOOD WORKS**

Music Saves Lives has partnered with LoudBytes and Binary Sounds to give away 400,000 free-music download cards to blood donors during MSL drives at universities and high schools across the country. The download cards feature tracks from 18 acts, including Plain White T’s, the All-American Rejects, Pennywise, Benatar, Joe Bonamassa, and Scorpions.

**MCDONALD TO HOST CHARITY GOLF EVENT**

Former Lonestar singer Richie McDonald will host a golf tournament April 7-8 in Nashville to benefit the Children and the Minnie Pearl Cancer Foundation. Musicians and sports figures will gather at the Hermitage Golf Course April 8 for a day of golf, to be followed by an all-star jam session that night at the Cadillac Ranch. McDonald and other to-be-announced artists will perform. A donation at the door is required for admittance to the concert.

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**BLOOD FOR DOWNLOADS**

**ANGLOPHILIA**

As Billboard reported last week, revered/united U.K. rock outfit the Verve is recording a new album but does not presently have a U.S. record deal. Track bears a potential home could be the U.K.-friendly confines of ATO Records, which houses dance titan Underworld on its Side One Recordings imprint and, of course, Radiohead, which released “In Rainbows” on ATO’s TBD label. Plus, ATO and its affiliated Red Light Management are new to the indie vet who has prior experience working the Verve in America. The Richard Ashcroft-led group just confirmed a handful of U.S. dates surrounding its April 25 appearance at Coachella, including a two-night stand at New York’s Wamu Theater at Madison Square Garden.

**LOUDER ‘VOICES’**

Momentum for Sara Bareilles’ Epic album “Little Voices” keeps building; the set reaches a new peak at No. 7 on the Billboard 200 this week, while the single’s “Love Song” moves to a new high of No. 4. Striking while the iron is hot, Epic on March 18 will release an expanded edition of the album, including a second disc of versions taped for Clear Channel’s “Striped” series, plus interview and videos. “Little Voices” is now at 403,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.
CITIZEN ON PATROL

Citizen Cope is preparing himself for life after major labels. The Brooklyn singer/songwriter (aka Clarence Greenwood) was recently released from RCA, which put out his last two albums, "The Clarence Greenwood Recordings" (2004) and 2006's "Every Waking Moment." His self-titled 2002 debut came out on DreamWorks. Now, Cope tells Track he's weighing his options as he prepares to start work on his fourth album. "I'm kind of considering my own imprint, maybe in conjunction with a major label, but we'll see." As for his new stuff, Cope plans to start recording in May or June and may release a live project in the interim.

BILLYBOY IAND CHILDREN UNITING NATIONS
OSCAR PARTY

continued from page 73


Rapper Darryl "DMC" McDaniels.

From left: Emmy Award-winning Los Angeles news anchor/event co-host Christine Devine, Ice-T with his Angel Award, and Daphne Ziman. Salsa music sensation Sirak Baloyan with singer Jill Aigrot.


Actors/event co-hosts Tom Arnold, left, and Tommy Davidson.

Line 1 treated the crowd to an amazing acrobatic performance. Grammy Award-nominated Christian artist Sarah Kelly arrives at the bash.

From left: Miss USA Rachel Smith, actor Darius Love and singer/actress Christina Milian.

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OFF THE CHART!

THE WORLD'S BEST SELLING ALBUM IS THE WORLD'S BEST SELLING ALBUM...AGAIN!

25 years later, Michael Jackson's masterpiece is a worldwide phenomenon all over again. It continues to dominate sales in its new, expanded anniversary edition: Thriller 25.

THRILLER 25 AROUND THE WORLD:

- PAN-EUROPEAN CHARTS: #1
- FRANCE: #1 + #1 on iTunes
- JAPAN: #1
- BELGIUM: #1 + #1 on iTunes
- COLOMBIA: #1
- US: #2 best-selling album - #1 in Billboard Top Pop
- Catalog Chart
- AUSTRALIA: #2
- DENMARK: #2
- GERMANY: #2
- MEXICO: #2
- NORWAY: #2
- NETHERLANDS: #2
- KOREA: #2
- PHILIPPINES: #2
- SWITZERLAND: #2
- SWEDEN: #2
- UK: #3
- BRAZIL: #3
- NEW ZEALAND: #3
- PORTUGAL: #3
- CANADA: #4
- SPAIN: #4
- POLAND: #4
- AUSTRIA: #5
- IRELAND: #5
- ITALY: #6
- CZECH REPUBLIC: #6
- GREECE: #6
- HONG KONG: #7
- FINLAND: #10
THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS RULES

AFTER 6 YEARS FOUND LURKING IN ARENAS!!
ROCKED CANADA TO IT'S CORE!

RETURNED TO MADISON SQUARE GARDEN AFTER 23 YEARS AND CONQUERED!!!
DARED TO TREAD WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE!!!!

OZZY OSBOURNE

Special thanks to
Sharon Osbourne,
Sharon Osbourne Management, Marsha Vlasic,
Rob Zombie, Andy Gould, Spectacle Group,
John Dittmar, In This Moment
and an incredible touring crew.

From all the fiends at www.americanradiohistory.com