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Record Store Say

Contemplations and Lessons Learned From Retail's Big Day

BY ERIC LEVIN

The image that opened last week's Billboard article on Record Store Day was the black Keys' Dan Auerbach Dit'ing with a couple of iPods placed conspicuously on top of an unused turntable, which Courtney Harding turned into a "monumental"—and somewhat damning—statement that "even on Record Store Day, the record had been supplanted." That might be an appropriate analogy to draw up for Vinyl Record Day (which isn't until Aug. 12). But to me and to many other retailers, the image that truly represents Record Store Day (which is the third Saturday in April from here on out) is the scene that Harding describes in the second paragraph: "The shop was crowded and the register lines were long." People in record stores. That was the ticket.

Many of us indie retailers across the country are still riding the high from the inaugural Record Store Day. And why not? According to Spinetree, the response to the event increased music sales more than 33% from the same Saturday last year, and, compared with the Saturday prior to Record Store Day, the increase was 47%. In fact, April 19 was the largest day of music sales for 2008 so far.

But Record Store Day is about more than tracking segmented sales. The modern indie record store—the type of retailer that would fully benefit from an organized promotion like Record Store Day—is about more than just music sales. Aside from the tangible product lines (used product, vinyl, video, magazines, etc.) that are not included in the SoundScan data, there's so much more that makes our stores unique, and that "more" isn't anything that can be tracked.

Down here behind the counter, we're looking at a different reality. We're talking to our customers. We don't care how our sales are measured or analyzed, our landlords don't care, and, most importantly, our customers don't care.

The focus on sales, percentages and increased or decreased this-and-that cheapens the whole thing. Sure, the "extra Christmas" in April was certainly a welcome boon for most of us, but, really, that was just a fringe benefit. The opportunity to remind people (or to introduce them to the idea) that indie record stores are still relevant in this day and age was first and foremost our goal. That's what it's about, showing our community that an indie record store is a viable, fun, enthusiastic and endearing business that's worth supporting. Creating a great experience in a record store and leaving customers with positive memories of their visits, this is the lasting effect.

We learned lessons from Record Store Day that are worth recounting. For starters, when we prepare for next year's big day, we'll be asking supporting labels for even more promotional items to give away. In January we asked labels for a minimum of 10,000 promotional items, what we wanted to give, expecting that we'd have 150 participating stores. By the time it got to 400 stores, we simply didn't have enough to give away. Next time, we may ask for 50,000 units, and an even greater diversity of product: country, urban, avant-garde, reggae and more.

Perhaps most important, it became clear that there were stores in each community that really stepped up and did well on Record Store Day because they really put the effort out. But we can't stop just because Record Store Day is over. Some folks say they are working twice as hard for less money, but that's today's market and today's economy. We all also have more tools now to engage with customers. How's your MySpace page? How's your YouTube page? Are you selling off-site? Are you taking every opportunity—a contest, a sale—to make your store better?
ON THE MOVE

MSGE's Christmas Spectacular Sets The Stage For More National Tours

Madison Square Garden Entertainment's plan to launch a touring arena version of its Radio City Christmas Spectacular (billboard.biz, April 30) is the latest move in an increasingly aggressive posture that will see the company launch other tours in the near future. The Spectacular tour marks the most ambitious national project for MSG, a division of Cablevision, which owns and operates New York's Madison Square Garden, the Wall Street Theatre, MSG, the Beacon Theatre and Radio City Music Hall—and recently completed a transaction to acquire the Chicago Theatre.

"We're big believers in the big spectacle. We like this business. We think there is a lot of opportunity for us to work in this space," MSG president Jay Marciano says. "We are in a very advanced stage of pre-development on at least two productions now that are on this (Spectacular) scale."

If the Spectacular tour reaches projections north of $10 million, it is likely MSG will remain bullish in this market. In fact, a touring version of the MSG/Cirque du Soleil production "Wintuk," which debuted in 2007 at the WaMu Theatre at MSG, will mount a national tour in 2010. "We believe what we're trying to get for our Christmas Spectacular will be the same," Marciano says. "If you can once again on the outlook for new content." With more than $25 million in startup costs, not including marketing and promotion, the Spectacular tour certainly shows MSG is jumping in with both feet. "We're in it for the long haul," Marciano says. "And it's not like we're working on a show that's untested. We're working on one of the biggest live entertainment draws in the world—we're just recreating it for the arena space."

The Spectacular production will play 18 cities across the Midwest and South, beginning Nov. 8-9 at the Brown County Arena in Green Bay, Wis. The plan is to hit more than 60 markets in the next three years and then repeat the cycle. Marciano projects that between 650,000 and 700,000 tickets will be sold the first year. The touring Spectacular will also include the elements of the multi-award-winning 75th edition of the Christmas Spectacular at Radio City, which has never been seen before.

The touring Spectacular will boast all the elements of the multi-award-winning 75th edition of the Christmas Spectacular at Radio City, which has never been seen before. "The limitations of most theaters didn't allow for presenting the Christmas Spectacular on a scale that we do at Radio City," he says. "To return to the arenas, which we are able to provide a family show the size of which has never been seen outside of Radio City Music Hall." The show is produced by MSG executive VP of production Jonathan Hochwald and directed and choreographed by Linda Haberman, who conceived and directed last year's 75th anniversary show at Radio City.

The production is bigger than any major rock tour, moving on 30 trucks and 16 buses, with a cast of 56, including the famous Rockettes. "If we're successful in the U.S., we'll start to think about international opportunities," Marciano says. The arena tour has been in the works for two years, he says, with the 75th production acting as a springboard for the idea to tour the Spectacular. "The limitations of most theaters didn't allow for presenting the Christmas Spectacular on a scale that we do at Radio City," he says. "To return to the arenas, which we have produced a family show the size of which has never been seen before than Radio City Music Hall." The show is produced by MSG executive VP of production Jonathan Hochwald and directed and choreographed by Linda Haberman, who conceived and directed last year's 75th anniversary show at Radio City.

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Free For All?

Inside The Costs Of Coldplay's Campaign Launch

Coldplay's decision to give away the lead track from its new album has paid off, with huge demand for the free download of "Violet Hill." According to the band's label, EMI, fans downloaded the track more than 600,000 times in the 24 hours after it went live just after midnight U.K. time on April 29. By (imperfect) comparison, the first-week sales for 'Speed of Sound,' the lead track from the band's last album, "X&Y," yielded 44,000 digital units in the United States and 9,000 in the United Kingdom in 2005, according to Nielsen SoundScan and the Official U.K. Chart Co.

The process has had its glitches. Following several attempts, billboard managed to download a copy, after handing over e-mail and ZIP code particulars. For some users, the site ground to a halt, while others found that the automatically generated e-mail arrived well after the six-hour time limit had expired. Computer users weren't the only ones to tap into "Violet Hill." The track, premiered on U.K. top 40 network BBC Radio 1 then was simultaneously serviced to radio across Europe, earning 300 plays within 24 hours, according to Nielsen Music Control data. Coldplay combined estimated listenership of more than 33 million. In the United States, the song netted 367 plays, according to Nielsen BDS. across all its monitored stations—accounting for 3 million audience impressions. At modern rock, the song ranked as the ninth-most-played song at the format (162 spins for the day.

Last.fm says "Violet Hill" clocked up 13,000 listens on its service in slightly more than 24 hours. From launch, a pair of around one play every two seconds. "Violet Hill" could be the most popular song ever tracked on Last.fm in terms of amount of listens in a specific period of time," a spokesman says. The giveaway doesn't end there. Coldplay's fourth studio album, "Viva La Vida or: Death and All His Friends"—due June 12 internationally and June 17 in the States—will be promoted by free concerts June 16 at London's 4,000-capacity Brixton Academy and June 23 at the 15,000-plus Madison Square Garden in New York. Frontman Chris Martin told Radio 1 that the band would also play a free concert in Barcelona. During his Radio 1 interview, Martin claimed the Garden gig would cost the band $2 million, but well-placed sources suggest it will actually cost around $300,000 to produce, with the band ablowing about $2 in a marketing exercise. Manager Dave Holmes confirms that there would not be any sponsors, at least for the Garden show. Merch sales would help cover that outlay. Based on historical accounts, a capacity crowd at the Garden would be likely to cough up at least $10 per head for a special event such as this, especially on a free ticket, generating around $12 million in revenue. If worst came to worst, the smaller Academy could reasonably ring up $50,000 ($100,000) at the mercy hills.

With attendant publicity, plus the marketing worth of the consumer data gathered, insiders say the show will easily pay for themselves, particularly with the potential $100 million-plus gross the band's full tour is likely to pull. Coldplay's "X&Y" toured grossed close to $60 million in 2005-06. Holmes says he "wasn't sure" if a free Garden show might dilute a future play in the market. "I don't think so," he says. "It's not going to be a full set. It's not a full production. It's very scaled down, almost a 'buzz gig.' It just happens to be a buzz gig in an arena. Really, it's just about giving back to the fans.

Digital

D-LISTED

Playlist Is The Latest Digital Music Suit—Who's Next?

The most effective business card shared between today's innovative new online music services and the music industry seems to be a lawsuit. The recently filed action against Project Playlist—by the RIAA representing nine major labels—is just the latest in a string of legal activity against online music services building their businesses outside of formal licensing relationships with record labels, dating all the way back to YouTube.

Project Playlist, as its name implies, allows users to build and share playlists of their favorite music. The service is fast, easy and very popular. It claims more than 24 million users, with around 600,000 unique visitors per day.

It does not host any of this music itself. Instead, Project Playlist links to music posted on thousands of third-party sites and allows users to stream from them all as a sort of aggregator. It only pays royalties to the performing rights organizations. As such, labels don't make a dime. Other services playing a similar game of chicken include MP3Tunes, a digital locker service; and SeePod, a music search engine. Both are also being sued.

Whether Project Playlist, SeePod or MP3Tunes are breaking any laws has yet to be determined. To date, none of the music industry's lawsuits against enterprising digital services have reached a verdict, and as such there is no precedent. Instead, the industry and the service either reach a licensing agreement or the service goes out of business.

Labels involved in these lawsuits insist they have no desire to shut such services down. They only want to get paid for the activity. And the services, primarily startups, have no desire or ability to sustain a lengthy court battle.

Of the three currently being sued, only MP3Tunes—led by MP3.com founder Michael Robertson, who has never shied away from a court battle—will likely record fully to trial and answer this question once and for all. Project Playlist at least seems open to dealing with labels. Sources say it is in early talks with Sony BMG—which is not a party to the lawsuit. Representatives from Sony BMG declined to comment.

Until then, there are a number of other music services growing in popularity while avoiding label licensing deals:

• Muxtape has a simple interface and is based on the time-honored concept of the personal mixtape. Users upload tracks from the personal libraries to build digital mixes, which can then be listened to by anyone who visits the site. While Muxtape does offer a “click to buy” link for each track that leads to an Amazon page, and does not allow listeners to download songs for free directly, it also operates outside the confines of any agreements with labels or artists. The site in-stead tells users that “by uploading a song you agree that you have permission to let Muxtape use it.” A sample mix on the site’s front page contains tracks by Common, Radiohead and Neil Young & Crazy Horse; the curator, if he or she is sticking to the site’s legal mandate, must be an extraordinarily pro-fits right holder. An e-mail sent to Muxtape seeking comment was not returned at press time.

• Cloud makes the “My Music” application for Facebook, which has 1.8 million installed users as of March, according to Developer Analytics. The plug-in lets users stream the entire digital music libraries of others by linking to a given song’s video on YouTube. This allows listeners to hear a song without seeing the ads that often accompany illegal YouTube clips. The site has a cash and cash, as AOL co-founder Steve Case is a director and investor, and rumors have circulated that BuzzeNet is interested in purchasing the service.

What it doesn’t have is a legal agreement with any labels, and that has some labels concerned, according to sources.

• Social.fm was once known as Mercora, and allows users to stream music from other members’ hard drives to computers and mobile phones. The site pays statutory licenses to SoundExchange for noninteractive webcasting and fees for performance rights to performance rights organizations, but it is unclear what, if any, deals they have with labels. There were reports in February 2007 of deals with a number of prominent indie labels like Sugar Hill, Definitive Jux, Yep Roc and Record Collection, as well as a project with Web site Poppameters. The Poppameters link has not been updated since 2007 and an e-mail inquiring about the status of the deal was not returned at press time. Major-label sources say that they have complained in the past and are still considering legal action.
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**UPFRONT**

**RETAIL BY ED CHRISTIAN**

**AUCTION ACTION**

Entertainment One, parent of Koch Entertainment, has filed a motion to become the stalking horse bidder in Death Row Records' Chapter 11 auction of assets from the label and estate of Marion "Suge" Knight Jr. related to recorded music and music publishing.

As the lead bidder, Koch, which has distributed Death Row since 2001, bid $23 million, setting the bottom price for which the assets will sell. The motion was filed April 24 with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Los Angeles by the Chapter 11 trustee for the estate of Death Row Records.

Earlier this year, Warner Music Group was named as the stalking horse bidder, with a $23 million bid to buy the assets. But it withdrew, thus, the new motion naming Koch.

All other bids for the assets must be in by June 30 and need to include such documentation as a signed asset purchase agreement and a 5% deposit on the bid. The court and the Death Row estate trustee will determine which bids are qualified by June 17. If there is more than one qualified bid, the auction will take place June 24, although bidders must remit the Koch bid by $1 million in order to pay off certain fees, including a breakup fee of $500,000 to Koch.

The auction includes recorded-music assets, such as masters and video and merchandising rights; the music publishing business; and all copyrights, inventory and digital recording rights. It also contains 16,000 tracks and a catalog of about 30 albums by such artists as Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg and 2Pac.

The buyer will assume certain liabilities related to use of the assets after the closing and all assigned contracts incurred after assuming ownership. But the buyer won't assume any royalty payments or other amounts due to any obligations prior to the closing.

The assets don't include debtor's cash, distribution agreements with Koch, Eagle Rock and Ron Winter, or equipment, supplies and furniture. Certain assets are disputed, and there will be additional hearings on those assets as part of the bankruptcy proceeding.

Twenty-six potential bidders have signed nondisclosure agreements to look at the assets, and a due diligence room was set up in May 2007 at the law offices of Kay Scholer, counsel for the Death Row Records trustee. The process to determine the stalking horse bid began in July 2007.

The trustees and creditor committee determined that a sale of the assets would achieve the best recovery for creditors, given that there are significant gaps in the debtor's financial and business records, especially for the time period immediately preceding the petition date.

Moreover, beginning in 2000, a significant portion of Death Row's asset base was moved to third-party entities and "may have been part of a scheme to avoid creditor obligations, including obligations to taxing authorities," according to court documents.

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**REAL BY SUSAN BUTLER**

**Millions From The Top**

AOL and Yahoo have signed a nonexclusive agreement to distribute each other's recorded-music content, becoming the first of three music distribution partnerships to emerge since the death of Suge Knight and the bankruptcy of Death Row Records.

AOL, which launched an initiative last year to add music to its Internet offerings, said it would consider using any music videos and related content on its Web properties, but the deal would not include videos or use rights.

The deal also included a "music-use-adjusted revenue" formula that would allow both companies to share the revenue generated from streams of music videos and related content on their Web properties. The formula would include the value of music videos and related content on their Web properties, but the deal would not include videos or use rights.

The music-use-adjusted revenue is determined by first calculating the net revenue (gross revenue less customary deductions for advertising sales commissions and traffic acquisition costs). Then, the net revenue is reduced by using a "music-use-adjustment factor" (a fraction) to represent the portion of revenue attributable to the music value on the site. The numerator of the fraction is the total number of hours music is streamed to users (as currently measured by each service), and the denominator is the total number of hours that users are using the Web site (as estimated by comScore).

Digital services objected to using comScore estimates, but the judge noted that the services do not maintain this information on a regular basis and use comScore data for their internal business purposes. Under the order, the services may use their own total visitor hours data if, in another proceeding before the court, the services can establish this information with their own data.

The services proposed 2.5% of revenue calculated from the "bottom-up," i.e., revenue directly attributable to certain types of music use. The judge wrote that this approach is too complex, difficult to verify and subject to potential manipulation.

Now, ASCAP and the services must cooperate to compute the royalties so the judge can prepare his final court order.

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Matt Kierscht, Music Supervisor, Quiet on the Set, Inc.
Evyan Klean, Music Supervisor, Neophonic
Kier Lehman, Music Supervisor, Hit the Ground Running
Jonathan McHugh, Music Supervisor, SongStew Entertainment
Julia Michels, Music Supervisor, Format
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As the industry heads into the NARM convention, the U.S. music account base appears healthier enough that no one is missing product payments despite the precipitous two-year decline in CD sales. But questions remain.

Label and distribution executives are10 trying to chart a course for the horizon for at least half of the top 10 largest music accounts (see rankings, below).

For one, the fate of Handleman—one of two rackjobbers that supply Wal-Mart with music—remains up in the air short term until its loan issues are resolved. It is working against a May 31 deadline to produce a budget and cash-flow projections for the next year in order to make its lender, Silver Point Finance, feel comfortable enough to put in place a traditional revolving credit facility for at least the next year.

But even if Handleman lands a revolving credit facility, it and the Troy, Mich.-based company some flexibility, at least executives believe it will eventually be sold or merged into another wholesaler, something that Handleman CEO Al Koch admits is a possibility.

Also, out of the top 10 accounts offer uncertain futures because they are up for sale. Last month, Borders, which is trying to enact a turnaround for two years, put itself up for sale. Likewise, Circuit City is on the block. The company declines to comment on press reports that it is hired Goldman Sachs to shop it; meanwhile, Blockbuster Video made an undisclosed mid-April bid of $6-$8 per share, in a deal that would value the consumer electronics chain at $1 billion-$1.13 billion.

Finally, Trans World Entertainment and Alliance Entertainment Corp. have or will have debt issues that could trouble suppliers. AEC is performing admirably. Sales are up 4.8% to $1.02 billion in a down market, and it even managed to generate $2 million in earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) for the year ended Jan. 31. But its parent company, Source Interlink, is laden with debt from buying the Primedia magazine publishing company in August.

Last year, Source Interlink generated $12.8 million in EBITDA, and this year with a full 12 months of magazine ownership under its belt, the company estimates that it will reach $180 million-$200 million. But Billboard estimates it will have about $110 million in interest payments this year, which means that even if AEC hits its EBITDA goal, the parent company will still be below the 2-to-1 EBITDA-to-interest payment ratio that make institutional investors feel comfortable. At the end of the day, AEC's credit with suppliers could be hurt by its parent's debt load.

As for Trans World, founder/chairman Bob Higgins, with the aid of institutional investor Rile Investment Management, is trying to do a leveraged buyout to take the company private. The two, which own 57% of outstanding shares, have offered to pay $5 per share for the remainder, which comes out to about $75 million.

Sources with experience doing such deals say this one will likely be financed by raising debt. collateralized by the chain's inventory. While Trans World's balance sheet will be able to sustain the debt load, music manufacturers would likely increase the company's turnaround efforts stop the red ink and begin to produce a profitable company. Last year, Trans World lost $99.4 million on sales of $1.27 billion for the 12-month period ended Feb. 2.

Amid these worries, retail brick-and-mortar accounts—whether stable or not—continue to draw down music SKUs to make room for other product lines, although the decline in music space is not occurring as fast as most executives feared. Many executives worried that Best Buy and Target would reduce their music space, but vendor sources have heard from both chains, saying they have no plans to do so at this time. Walmart is in the midst of cutting music by as much as 20% in stores where the product line is weak, with some degree of cuts in all stores. When all is said and done, music inventory overall in Walmart will be reduced by 8%, according to major-label distribution executives.

Circuit City has reduced its music space since it switched from buying direct to being supplied by AEC, label executives says. But the larger reduction in music has happened at Borders. Borders' music SKUs have steadily declined, from 50,000 titles in 2000 to 29,000 by 2003, to 14,000 in 2006 to 11,500 in February of this year, according to its 10-K report.

With shelf space being depleted in the physical world—either through store closures or the downsizing of music departments—Universal Music Group Distribution president/CEO Jim Urie says he is concerned about some of the traditional retailers' resistance to get into digital. "There are so many easy ways to slide into digital."

Wireless carriers aren't staking out their turf in the U.S. market. So far this year, eight of the top 20 accounts are digital and/or mobile. Billboard estimates, led by iTunes, which has nearly an 18% market share, based on purchases from labels. But that's because most brick-and-mortar market shares are generally smaller artists time of the year due to large first-quarter returns to vendors of product bought too optimistically during the holiday selling season. Last year at this time, iTunes was the No. 1 account, but by the end of the year, Wal-Mart ranked No. 1 with a 16.7% share (of its two racks, Anderson Merchandisers had an 11.7% share, all from sales to Wal-Mart; and Handleman, which derives 70% of its 7.05% U.S. market share—which equals 4.94%—from sales to Wal-Mart, followed by No. 2 iTunes at 12.7% and No. 3 Best Buy with 12%. For first-quarter 2008, Billboard estimates Wal-Mart to have a 15.1% share, ranking second. Best Buy's 13.1% ranks it as No. 3.

It's unclear if Wal-Mart will be able to reclaim the No. 1 spot from Apple by the end of this year, due to a combination of factors: iTunes' dominance is expected to grow as digital sales further eat into physical sales; the discount department stores' reduction in store space for music and Handleman's market share lagging last year due to returns and credit issues.

Amazon's market share is up to 4.7% this year from the 3.6% it had last year. So far, its digital download store may be still growing, but it has yet to generate anything in the way of significant sales. Its downloads represent less than 1% of the total music market.

On the other hand, the growth to 4.7% market share this year based on label net purchases doesn't accurately reflect Amazon's strength in the overall marketplace. Amazon also sells product from wholesalers, and those purchases don't appear in its market share. And the sales of the Amazon marketplace, which the merchant says accounts for one-third of all its physical sales, also aren't reflected in its market share. Given those factors, Billboard loosely estimates Amazon's market share at 7% currently.

Behind iTunes, there is a considerable drop in the overall market rankings after the next digital merchant, Verizon. With a 2% market share, Verizon has the largest music market share of all mobile carriers. Last year, its market share was 1.7%; a total that reflects all mobile products, including ringtones and ringbacks.

Other digital players now in the top 20 include Sprint, with a 0.93% market share that has a slight edge on the No. 14-ranked Hastings Entertainment, with 0.87%; Rhapsody/RealNetworks, 0.7%; ATT/Cingular, 0.66%; Napster, 0.66%; and TMZobile and eMusic, both at 0.58%.

The market shares in the chart reveal another challenge—and potential opportunity—for the majors. Only 11 accounts this year have more than a 1% market share. "This is the big issue of the day," one senior distribution executive says. "We don't have enough [acount] breadth in the market. So we are just hoping to hold the fort with the traditional accounts and are searching everywhere to find and bolster nontraditional accounts."

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**PULLING RANK**

These account market shares are Billboard estimates based on interviews with key distribution executives in the major and independent segments, representing close to 90% of the total market. The chart for each retailer was then weighted by the supplier's own market share. Because many independent labels work directly with digital retailers, a sampling of indie-label executives provided digital account market-share data. Market share for 2008 represents first quarter, while last year's data is for the full 12-month period.

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**Table 1:**

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<th>Rank</th>
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<td>Target</td>
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<td>Alliance</td>
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<td>Borders</td>
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**Sources:**

*---M*ark share is ranked by two calculations. Handleman and Anderson Merchandisers' Handleman's total market share is 4.6%. Wal-Mart accounts, 50% of Handleman's licenses, or 3.33 percentage points counted on the retail chart's size. 15% and/or counter share. Anderson's 0.5% market share is a sum entirety through the year. Not available.
Yahoo Music is the second-biggest online music destination with 20.8 million monthly visitors, trailing only AOL Music, which has 21.9 million.

That's a 6% drop in traffic for the same month a year ago (1% for AOL), but since then there have been some big changes at Yahoo Music. First, the company shuttered its music subscription service and outsourced it to competitor Rhapsody. Soon after, Yahoo Music GM Ian Rogers left the company to lead a startup digital music service. Michael Spiegelman is now at the music helm, but a recent reorganization puts the service under the guidance of VP/GM of entertainment Karin Gilford, who hinted at big changes in Yahoo Music's future. They include the free streaming of full-length songs supported by ads, the possible outsourcing of other music services and an emphasis on blogging and cross-format social networking.

1. With Rhapsody now managing the premium music tier, what is the focus for the rest of Yahoo Music going forward?

We're going back to the stuff we know we can do best and fits into Yahoo's wheelhouse. I don't think taking money from consumers for media premium services is really Yahoo's strong point, especially when there's very low margins to be had. My focus in the short term is to clean that up and look at other areas where perhaps we can forge partnerships with people who do those things best. And then go back to some of our programming and packaging roots and make sure we stay relevant with the record labels in a mass-market way.

2. Is ad-supported free music the future of online music?

There definitely needs to be an ad-supported model the labels need to invest in, as well as continue to collect money directly from the consumer. Our strength is our audience and our brand, but we'll let the iTuneses and the Rhapsodys of the world fulfill that premium music service.

3. The margins are getting tight on some other music services as well, particularly Internet radio. Any plans to outsource other music elements?

Just like any other business in the Yahoo portfolio, we constantly have to look at how the products we have in the marketplace fit into the overall business objectives of the company. We're going to keep looking for partnerships and evaluating the marketplace. You have to constantly look out on the horizon to see who is winning the investments they're making, and do a gut check by asking, 'Can we really compete in this, or am I better off partnering?'

4. So what new areas of service and functionality do you see as growth opportunities?

The music blog space is really interesting. They're a great way for people to discover music, I want to move those up to get the attention of the more mainstream consumer. It's always exciting for us in the music industry to have a place to talk about bands that are playing the Troubadour, but how do you use blogs to get people who live in the middle of the country as a tool to get them exposed to either what's going on with their favorite artists or help them discover others?

5. Many others are trying to do that, such as MySpace, Buzznet and now AOL with the acquisition of Bebo. Are you planning to offer full-song free streaming like they do?

We already have the building blocks in place to execute against that strategy and you'll see the first steps on that path in a few weeks.

6. How will having all entertainment properties under one division going to affect how Yahoo handles entertainment?

It's the first time in the history of the company the entire entertainment portfolio has been under one leader. Music is a tremendous anchor and the most mature media category on the Internet. So there are so many lessons to be learned there for all the other properties—like movies, TV and up-and-comers like OMG (Yahoo's gossip site).

It liberates you to be willing to let go of some old-fashioned notions, such as doing everything in-house. We're taking a lighter-touch approach to programming and packaging content. We're doing a much better job of cross-promoting across formats. When we start flowing users between these properties in a meaningful way, we're going to really up the game.
PODDING ALONG
Podcast Growth Creating Viable Marketing Route For Artists

In the early part of the decade, Boston-based independent musician Munk spent several years trying to promote tracks from his two albums through traditional PR and college radio. In 2004, he sold scarcely 100 single downloads, according to a CD Baby digital sales report. That number reached 2,500 in 2005, and by the end of 2007, after not releasing an album since 2003, his paid downloads totaled more than 12,000. Munk has now also found success with publishing deals, and he is unequivocal about how he gained exposure: "I know that it was all driven by podcast plays," he says.

Indeed, while the media attention devoted to podcasts in 2005 and 2006 may have waned, Munk is one of many musicians and companies finding that the opportunities around them are steadily growing.

When iTunes launched its platform for free podcast distribution in June 2005, the directory included 3,000 audio programs, most independently produced. Today, there are 125,000 podcasts available on iTunes, 35,000 of them video, with increasing numbers coming from major media companies. Consumption is keeping pace—about six million Americans listened to podcasts in 2005, and a February 2007 Marketer report estimates that the total U.S. podcast audience reached 18.5 million in 2007. That same report predicts an increase to 65 million by 2012.

And with so many potential customers, advertisers and sponsors are flocking to the format—revenue for ad-supported podcasts more than doubled from an estimated $80 million in 2006 to $165 million in 2007, and eMarketer predicts projects growth to $415 million by 2012.

A major player in the monetization of podcasts is online media network Mevio (former Podshow), founded by Ron Bloom and former MTV VJ Adam Curry, sometimes known as the "Podfather" for his role in developing and promoting the format. Mevio now has thousands of podcasts, and since March 2007 has seen a 781% growth in unique visitors, reaching more than 5 million in March 2008, according to ComScore MediaMetrix.

Curry says that because podcasts are episodic and available to subscribers on demand, they earn a level of audience engagement and loyalty that makes the medium increasingly valuable to advertisers looking for reliable properties.

"Brand advertisers want to move online, but aren't interested in showing up on a video of someone shooting a firecracker out of his butt," Curry says. "But we can say, "OK, Dove, you want to have 50 million views of women's programming?" Here are the five shows and 15 episodes your commercial will be featured on. And we can guarantee the views because we'll spend money to market it."

Mevio's biggest growth is in video podcasts, reflecting advances in production and portable player technology. VoloMedia is another advertising and media services company that has grown in the past year because of its focus on episodic, downloadable media."Thanks to proprietary technology that tracks user information and stitches ads to podcasts," says VoloMedia CEO Brian Steel, "we can follow an advertising campaign all the way through the iPod and bring back the measurement that makes a visible business proposition for advertisers."

VoloMedia says. About 2,000 artists, when they develop podcasts free of charge, can gain a substantial audience. "They may not make money at first," says Jason Spiewak, president of Podsafe Music Network, which uses PMN to promote tracks from acts including Collective Soul and Buckcherry. "But they can build a fan base and engage listeners.

"We view it as an artist development tool," says Spiewak, who has also been one of the early pioneers of the medium.

"This is a great way for artists to get noticed," says Curry, who is now also a podcaster himself. "If you're a local band, you can get local exposure."

"It's a great way to promote your music, and it doesn't cost you anything."
- Flash top-line breaking media-news alerts
- Streaming video reports on Mediaweek TV
- Podcasts and Webcasts on hottest media topics
- Expanded dedicated news channels for each major medium
- Direct link to SRDS data and charts
- Exclusive Nielsen data
- In-depth demo/media profiles of top U.S. markets

All from one source.

TALK ABOUT A SMASH HIT

The new mediaweek.com.
Shooting For Sales

‘Grand Theft Auto IV’ Simplifies Songs Purchasing For Gamers

The emerging effort to use videogames as a channel for selling music is entering its next phase with the recent release of “Grand Theft Auto IV.” Phase I has proven a phenomenal success, with “Rock Band” and “Guitar Hero III” selling millions of songs through their respective platforms. But it’s been a limited victory.

Both are music-based rhythm games that use master recordings and cover songs to let gamers “play” along to the tunes using special controllers shaped like musical instruments. Purchased songs can only be used as elements of the game itself. They can’t be transferred to an MP3 player or stored in users’ digital music libraries.

But “GTA IV” includes a feature that lets players buy any song in the soundtrack in order to receive more information about the title and artist, as well as store tagged tracks in a custom playlist on the Amazon digital music store for later purchase. “GTA IV” is not a rhythm game. It’s a story-driven interactive “film” with plenty of side missions that add up to 100 hours of gameplay and features a soundtrack of more than 200 songs—the largest in videogame history.

It’s been well-received. How TV shows, ads and videogames are growing areas of music discovery and promotion. But until “GTA IV,” there’s been no construct that allows for immediate identification and purchase of these songs from videogames. “GTA IV” has added that “buy but- tion, and labels are psyched. “It’s a very big deal for us,” says Cynthia Sexton, senior VP of marketing and licensing for EMI Music North America. “We’re continually looking for new ways to sell our music. There are millions of people buying ‘Grand Theft Auto’ and we hope they will enjoy the music and in turn buy those tracks.”

With this in mind, the music industry could have no better ally than Rockstar. The outfit is one of the few game developers that actually creates and licenses its own soundtracks—a task often left to the game publisher—and the company approaches it with an almost music geek-like obsession.

Consider the back story on how the 1979 cult classic “Walk the Night” by the Skatt Bros. came to appear on the soundtrack. Skatt Bros. member Sean Delaney—also known as the “fifth member of Kiss” for his writing and production work with the rock icons—died in 2003, leaving his publishing share to a brother, a sister and a nephew living somewhere in Utah. They proved so hard to find that Rockstar went through the trouble of hiring a private investigator who flew to Orem, Utah, to locate them.

“Joey” Rockstar music supervisor Ivan Pavlovich says, “It hit the game perfectly, so we were obviously determined to track them down.”

It is this resolve to create the best entertainment experience for its fans, regardless of the circumstances—including posting the game’s release by almost six months due to scheduling concerns, weathering persistent criticism from politicians over the game’s violent content and fighting a hostile takeover bid for parent company Take-Two Interactive from Electronic Arts— that has earned Rockstar and the “GTA” franchise a rabidly loyal following within the gaming community. As a result, the company may be the ultimate tastemaker for the hardcore gamer set.

“The GTA developers have gotten a really good reputation for having really good taste because of the choices they’ve made,” GameSpot editor Ricardo Torres says. “They’re really focused on the quality of the experience for the player [so] there’s a lot of anticipation to see what they’ve deemed as cool enough to include in the new ‘GTA.’ ”

The soundtrack is dominated by the kind of obscure tracks only the hippest DJs know to spin, much of which may find new sales life as a result of Rockstar’s partnership with Amazon. According to Pavlovich, the Amazon music service didn’t even have 40% of the soundtrack in its inventory when the deal was made. Rockstar gathered them from its many licenses so the store could be fully stocked by launch. This separates “GTA IV” from other videogame franchises like the “Madden” football series or “Guitar Hero” and “Rock Band.” These are more casual games generally featuring mainstream hits with the occasional emerging act thrown in.

“‘They’re for the masses,” Torres says. “But when you’re dealing with a flaky crowd like gamers, it has to be really cool and really different.”

How that translates to sales will take some time to determine. It will be months before any meaningful data is collected on the Rockstar/Amazon partnership, and it would be unfair to compare music sales from “GTA IV” with that of “Rock Band” or “Guitar Hero” because the latter two release new music almost weekly, making them a much more effective marketing platform.

But if successful technically and financially, it will be only a matter of time before other games—perhaps even “Guitar Hero” and “Rock Band”—include a similar digital music service link. The latest to announce support is the Reciva-powered line of Internet radios. These include the Tangent Quattro, Revo Pico Work, XXX Digital Classic 600 and the Grace Wireless Internet Radio. Support will expand to more than 40 other products across the United Kingdom and Europe in the next two months. The addition of the locker access allows users to stream their entire digital music collection through the supported devices.

BUILT TO LAST

For the butterfingers among us who have broken countless mobile phones, iPods and other expensive gadgets by carelessly letting them careen into the hard concrete, there is an almost shatterproof solution available.

The Construction Radio and iPod dock is built to withstand “Cloverfield”-like destruction. Weighing in at 10 pounds, this rugged bad boy also features an AM/FM radio, SD card slot, USB jack that can charge connected items, two power outlets and, you know, a spotlight (in case you want to change the dark in the dark).

It’ll set you back $130 and is available at Skymall and other outlets. —AB

BITES & BRIEFS

HAVE IT YOUR WAY

Not all game developers focus so closely on their soundtrack as “Grand Theft Auto IV” maker Rockstar Games. For instance, Criterion Games will allow players of its upcoming “Burnout Paradise” racing game to build custom soundtracks from their own private music libraries on the PlayStation 3. While today’s new-generation consoles let users import their own music from the console menu, few incorporate the feature into the game’s internal setup menu. “Burnout Paradise” will do exactly this, adding the custom soundtrack controls directly into the menu accessible from the pause screen, meaning users won’t have to exit the game.

LOCK IT UP

Despite facing a copyright infringement lawsuit from EMI Music Group, MP3Tunes is showing no signs of slowing down efforts to incorporate its online digital music locker with a wide variety of music devices. The latest

AOL Music

Top Songs
1. VANESSA HUDGENS - Show Me the Meaning of Being 36,208
2. CHRIS BROWN - No Air 20,503
3. TAYLOR SWIFT - Paradise 19,267
4. BRITTNEY SPEARS - Stronger 14,275
5. CLAY AIKEN - No One 9,193
6. CHRIS BROWN - Kiss Kiss 8,397
7. ALICIA KEYS - No One 7,190
8. HADLEY CRUE - Sinner in the Rain 6,724
9. SCARLETT JOHANSSON - Rain 6,250
10. TAYLOR SWIFT - Picture to Burn 5,336

Top Videos
1. LIL WAYNE - Love da Music 416,414
2. BRITNEY SPEARS - Everytime 350,475
3. LEONA LEWIS - Trouble 282,042
4. DANNY KANE - Take Me to the Sky 243,851
5. RAY J - Nice & Slow 190,176
6. CHRIS BROWN - Yes 182,368
7. MADONNA - Four Tet Remix 153,521
8. TAYLOR SWIFT - Picture to Burn 140,083
9. CHRIS BROWN - Yes 117,076

While “Touch My Body” is still red hot on the Web, her latest single, “Bye Bye,” is floating in the top 40 on Billboard Hot 100 this week.

For 24/7 digital news and analysis, see billboard.biz/digital

www.americanradiohistory.com
Publish Or Perish

Indies Ramp Up Forays Into Book Publishing

Indie labels win plenty of awards. P!LUG Awards, BRIT Awards and even Grammys have become fairly commonplace among the independent music community in recent years. But as far as I know, only one indie label has ever won an Oregon Book Award.

That label, Portland-based Marriage Records, not only releases records by Drakkar Sauna and Valet, but last year it issued “The Sky Position,” a collection by noted poet Tom Blood, and ended up with the Literary Arts 2007 Oregon Book Award for poetry. The book is not Marriage’s first foray into the territory of the printed word—the label’s publishing arm, Marriage Publishing House, also puts out Vener magazine, an experimental literary quarterly.

It’s no secret that indies are focused on expanding beyond merely releasing records these days, with labels launching touring, merchandise and branding companies to supplement their business. A growing number are also choosing to enter the literary world, publishing books as either companions to records or stand-alone ventures that fall within the broader artistic vision of the label. Conversely, some publishing houses are also choosing to enter the indie music world.

“There are lots of people who are just as much writers or artists as they are musicians,” says Yeti Publishing founder Mike McGonigal, who released a mix of zines, books and records. “With someone like Tara Jane O’Neil, for example, we did a book of her artwork with a companion CD, because we felt she was equally known for both.”

Originally founded as a zine that was accompanied by a CD, Yeti has recently expanded to publish books like Luc Sante’s essay collection “Kill All Your Darlings” and release such albums as “Halleluiah LP,” a collection of exclusive tracks from artists who played the Halleluiah arts festival last year. “I’m working on projects with Mississippi Records for some forthcoming albums and releasing a Jon Langford book-plus-disc that features him being backed by a Welsh choir,” McGonigal says. He also has several books in the pipeline and hopes to expand Yeti magazine to three issues per year.

“I’d say the income right now for Yeti is about 30% from music and 70% from books and the magazine,” says Steve Connell, who runs Vener Chorus Press and is partnering with McGonigal on Yeti. “We are able to sell ads in Yeti, and thus it can supplement the rest of the projects.”

In the case of Marriage Records and Vener magazine, Marriage founder Curtis Knapp says that a subscriber base has helped keep the publication alive. “We hope to be at the point where each retail copy is getting us closer to breaking even,” he says. “In terms of the revenue from music versus the revenue from publishing, the music is what allows us to keep the publishing going.”

Some publishers and labels have chosen to invest in specific music or publishing projects, rather than founding whole new divisions. Thrill Jockey Records has released a series of discs that are accompanied by books, also created by the performers, that are meant to be companion pieces. “A lot of our recording artists are also visual artists or very crafty people, and we wanted to create an outlet for them,” director of national press David Halstead says. “We did a limited-edition Daniel Higgins record, and the entire run sold out.” On the flip side, Macmillan Publishing is releasing the audiobook of Augusten Burroughs’ new book, “A Wolf at the Table,” with four exclusive music tracks, two of which are performed by indie acts Ingrid Michaelson and Sea Wolf.

In an age when so much music and media is consumed digitally, those going against the grain say they reap the rewards from fans who value tactile products. “All the industry problems don’t really bother me because what Yeti is doing is such a niche thing,” McGonigal says. “I’m one of the last people still doing a physical zine, and I get a great response. People still appreciate the sensory experience.”

Halstead points out that Thrill Jockey’s records-with-books are not that much more expensive to consumers than traditional CDs, but “you get so much more. There are all the elements of looking and listening that create a really full experience you don’t get from just downloading some files.”

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Call for Submissions

Design the program logo and a musical theme for “Connections, with Jennie Saunders,” a new series produced by Plum and Jennie Saunders/CORE, debuting summer 2008.

The show
A half-hour of conversation among cultural heavyweights, icons from the worlds of art, business, culture & entertainment, broadcast throughout the Plum network.

The host
Jennie Saunders, the founder & CEO of CORE, a lifestyle company whose members include leaders in the fields of art, architecture, business, entertainment, fashion, media, politics, sports, science and technology. Jennie’s gravitational pull connects leaders from across the spectrum and around the world.

The network
Plum is a unique television network based in America’s most treasured communities: Aspen, The Hamptons, Martha’s Vineyard, Miami Beach, Nantucket, Sun Valley, Telluride and Vail.

The prize
Your talent exposed on tv to the most sought after, highly influential demographic in the world + $1000

Deadline
Friday, May 30, 2008

The scoop
For complete rules & submission guidelines, visit: www.plumtv.com/contest/connections
In Memoriam
Bruce Kapp's Death Stuns Touring Industry

"It's gonna be huge."

That's what Bruce Kapp always told me. That's what promoters say. And Bruce Kapp was a promoter.

Word that Kapp had died suddenly April 21 of a suspected heart attack shocked the entire touring industry. He was an Energizer Bunny kind of guy, indefatigable in putting together the next deal, tout, show. He had complete and unbridled enthusiasm for whatever project he was immersed in. If Kapp was working on it, then it was gonna be huge.

At the time of his death, he was senior VP of touring at Live Nation, where he oversee tours by Aerosmith, Jimmy Buffett, Def Leppard, Jonas Brothers and others. But his resume shows what a survivor this guy was in a business where you don't survive if you don't do what you say you're gonna do. If you aren't a winner, Kapp's final tour was the current Van Halen reunion, no doubt a challenge, but one he was built for. The tour was rescheduled and rescheduled more than once, where many players had moved on or dropped out, Kapp survived.

Kapp was one of those guys who were so good for so long, it was easy to take him for granted. You just knew he was gonna be around forever, working a big tour, available on the phone often with dogs barking in the background, initiating creative marketing plans, savvy routing, effective sponsorships, powerful performances. He was a reliable source of information, or off the record. He was candid, truthful, enthusiastic and sharp.

At Live Nation, Kapp was competing in an even tougher game and winning often. "Bruce was a tenacious workhorse who was thriving in his career," says agent Dennis Arfa of Artists Group International, another guy who worked with Kapp for decades. "He had already earned the respect of his peers."

Kapp's temperament and skill set made him a vital dealmaker at Live Nation. "Bruce helped make Live Nation a better company with his creative buying and packaging," says veteran agent Howard Rose, whose acts include Buf- fert and Elton John. "His word was his bond."

Through his own tour of life, Kapp inluenced countless careers. Live Nation Texas president Bob Roux among them. "Bruce Kapp was a dear friend and mentor," Roux says. "I had the great privilege of knowing Bruce for over 25 years. If it was not for Bruce Kapp, I may not have had the good fortune to participate in a business I truly love.

Among those Kapp mentored was his own daughter, Kelly, also a Live Nation touring executive. "I am lucky that not only was my dad my Daddy and someone I could count on in good times and bad, but he was also my mentor, as he was to many other people," she says.

As Kapp was with Kapp at the latter's final show, Van Halen's April 19 performance in Las Vegas. "He was in his element and had that sparkle in his eyes of a guy who really loved life," Azoff says. "He was the happiest! I had ever seen him recent, both personally and professionally. He was at the top of his game."

Services were held April 24 at Mount Sinai Hollywood Hills in Los Angeles, followed by a memorial at the Wiltern Theatre. Hundreds paid their respects. "The industry turnout to Bruce's memorial service and reception yesterday reflected just how very much loved and adored Bruce was in our business," Live Nation CEO Michael Rapino says. "Promoters, agents and managers from all over the country came to Los Angeles to remember him and celebrate his life, telling great stories about his adventures in the concert business. I personally will miss his enthusiasm, passion and humor around the office. He was a very good man."

Nice life, Bruce. It was huge.

Hundreds attended BRUCE KAPP'S MEMORIAL service, which was held April 24 at the Wiltern Theatre in Los Angeles, during the past year. Van Halen's manager Irving Azoff knew the tour was in good hands because Azoff and Kapp had history. "I worked with Bruce all the way back to my college days in Illinois," Azoff says. "We booked bands together, when we were kids."

Kapp began his music career booking bands while still in high school in his hometown of Chicago. He formed Celebrity Concerts in the early 1970s, joined Pace Concerts in 1984 and spent a decade there helping shape the modern-day amphitheater circuit. He moved around a bit, and as a journalist covering the live business, I never knew where he would show up next. I just knew he would show up.

One stop was Magic Works where, with current Live Nation touring VP Brad Wavara, Kapp booked such tours as New Kids on the Block. (It was huge.) That was good experience for later tours with Wavara, including Backstreet Boys, 'N Sync and Britney Spears. SFX Entertainment acquired Magic Works in 1998. In those tumultuous times.

Robert the Cable Guy, Ren Collier

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Just Think Music

Primary Wave Teams With Pulse Music

Far from the doom-and-gloom record company reports of revenue drops and corporate restructuring is the excitement building among music publishers. Now is likely the most interesting time to work in music publishing, as companies—big and small—are becoming more creative with their business models. The latest twist comes from indie publisher Primary Wave, which formed a new joint venture called Think Music with production music house Pulse Music.

Think Music is bringing together the in-house producer/songwriter staff of Pulse—and its contacts with the advertising, TV and film communities—with some of the high-profile acts that work with Primary Wave and their songs, like Aerosmith's Steven Tyler, Hall & Oates, Nirvana's Kurt Cobain and Earth, Wind & Fire's Maurice White. Pulse also brings to the venture access to its seven recording studios in its New York facility.

And Pulse has landed some high-profile placements for its music, like the American Express commercial featuring Kate Winslet and Mike's "Live Strong: Lance Armstrong." But Pulse isn't just a production music house. The Pulse team members write and produce records for artists as well. Pulse writer/producers include Joel Kipnis (Herbie Hancock, the Temptations), Adam Anders (Backstreet Boys, CeCe Winans), DJ Kay Gee (Mary J. Blige, Luther Vandross), DJ Reset (who produced the Beck, Jay-Z & Pharrell Williams mash-up "Frontin' on Debra") and Supaflyas (Backstreet Boys).

The venture will develop ways to provide original recordings and rerecordings of songs for the music production market.

As part of the plan, the venture has been building a proprietary Web application rather than a Web site. After launch—expected within the next couple of months—a potential licensee will be able to load its audiovisual material into the application and automatically sync it to music offered by Think Music to test the compatibility of the visual to the music. The licensee could then e-mail that file to others working on the project.

There are thousands of music production houses in business today—many set up as one-person shops or companies using leftover music that producers couldn't get on a record. The largest offerings of high-quality music come from Universal Music Publishing Group and Sony/ATV Music Publishing, which have successful production music divisions.

But Kipnis sees Think Music as different from the others.

"We are marrying our cultures as smaller companies," he says. "There aren't 10 layers to go through, no disconnect between a corporate hierarchy and actually getting things done."

One example is that the venture will be able to customize music in-house at a price point that works for the user and on short notice, he says.

Think Music won't likely offer top hits from Primary Wave's biggest artists: the publisher doesn't control all rights in the catalogs of Nirvana, Aerosmith and Hall & Oates. Its interest varies with the artist, song, writer and catalog.

For example, Primary Wave acquired an interest in Tyler's share of copyrights (about 160 songs) and made a deal with him to market songs he's written and co-written. EMI Music Publishing is handling worldwide administration of Primary Wave's interest in the Cobain catalog, while many of the Hall & Oates songs are co-published by either Warner/Chappell Music or Universal. And Primary Wave holds rights in only the writer's share of songs White wrote for Earth, Wind & Fire and his publishing rights in other songs.

As Primary Wave continues to offer its catalog for more traditional licensing opportunities and works with the artists and other publishers to market their songs, this venture simply adds another potential revenue stream for the indie publisher.

"There has never been a music house and [indie] publisher who have joined forces like this," Kipnis says. "We've created a solution to getting high-end music not as a library, but as original music to support and service world-class companies."

In advance of Motley Crüe's upcoming album, The Dirt, Billboard will be taking an in-depth look at the band's ongoing popularity as a live touring act as well as what's in store for their future. Our June 21st STARS issue will also profile digital initiatives the band has taken to reach their fan base via online, mobile platforms and their S.I.N. fan club.

Don't miss this opportunity to congratulate this legendary band on their worldwide success!

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Disney Teen Sensation Takes Flight in Mexico

Beginning with cable TV and catapulted by radio, the Jonas Brothers' massive mid-April promotional blitz in Mexico is likely to reverberate in sales for the rest of the year.

The Jonas Brothers had already gone gold in Mexico for sales of more than 50,000 copies of their self-titled album. By the time the group came for concerts, TV tapings and meet-and-greets. The band played the 40 Principales radio festival, which was broadcast live on 40-stations to 30 countries; played its own showcase and concert to air on Disney Channel; taped a special for MTV to air May 13, and greeted fans at a Mixup In-store.

The phenomenon began late last year on the Disney Channel, which claims 20 million households in Latin America. Jonas Brothers videos for Disney movie songs rotated lightly on the channel until January, when videos for the group's own singles began playing in earnest. Segments featuring the group talking about brotherhood, songwriting and other topics dubbed in Spanish began to air as well.

Broadcasting giant Televisa, which launched tween sensation RBO via soap opera, has a 70% audience share in Mexico. But cable viewership "goes to a high-income range," says Robbie Lear, VP of marketing and A&R for Universal Music Mexico, which distributes the Hollywood Records act locally. And though the Jonas Brothers will have their own Disney Channel series, "it's been their music first and foremost" that launched them, says Cary Prince, VP of international for Walt Disney Music Group.

The album was released the first week of February in Latin America. MTV Latin America picked up the single "S.O.S.," and Universal Mexico bought a TV campaign and pushed the song at mainstream radio in March, Lear says.

The trio's movie and soundtrack, "Camp Rock," will be released in late summer in Mexico, followed quickly by a new studio album in August. The band is also exploring festival opportunities in Latin America and perhaps a tour at the end of the year, Prince says. —Ayala Ben-Yehuda

Latin Notas

LEILA COBO lcobo@billboard.com

Viva Reality?

VH1 Ventures Into Latin Content With 'Viva Hollywood'

It's trashy. It's racy. It's deliciously over-the-top, with lots of bare-chested hunks, bikini-clad women and plenty of catfights, fistfights and dramatic deaths.

Welcome to "Viva Hollywood," the first Latin-themed show on music channel VH1.

A reality show where contestants vie for a role in a Telemundo soap opera as well as a cash prize, "Viva" is a loud celebration of soap opera culture, featuring singer/actor Maria Conchita Alonso (dressed in brazenly provocative outfits) and Carlos Ponce as hosts and Latin-fortune-telling icon Walter Mercado (who is known to Latinos everywhere for his flowing cape and lipstick) as sidekick.

Although the soundtrack to "Viva" is mostly reggaeton, and its theme song has Spanish lyrics, it is not a music-themed show. But its absolute Latin-ness is compelling and noteworthy for a music and culture channel that has traditionally been very closed to Latin content in general and Spanish-language fare in particular.

In the past decade, VH1 has played only a handful of Spanish-language videos in its rotation.

"We realize that every time we tap into an audience that hasn't seen themselves in mainstream television, we win," VH1 executive VP of programming and development Jeff Olde says. And there were 12 million viewers that didn't see themselves in the network. We were looking for something.

"Viva" was developed by Miami-based entertainment company Latin World Enterprises, which reps stars like Sofia Vergara, and Los Angeles-based production company World of Wonder, whose productions include "The RuPaul Show."

"We're obsessed with pop culture and very much in love with Latin culture and the intersection of the two," says Randy Barbato, a partner in World of Wonder and executive producer of "Viva." "And we're very aware that while so much of Latin television is hugely popular in America, it isn't always translated into mainstream channels."

Barbato hooked up with Latin World and originally developed "Viva" for the Oxygen network as a reality show for actors with crossover aspirations. But its content changed dramatically when producers pitched it to VH1.

Now, "Viva" is the "only show where you have Latin stars that are known in the mainstream—like Perez Hilton. Daisy Fuentes, Charo and Cheech Marin, together with eminently Latin celebrities like Christian de la Fuente, Angelica Vale and Sofia Vergara," Latin World president Luis Balaguer says.

"Viva" also stands out because many of its contestants speak heavily accented English. In fact, the "tele-novala" scenes are in Spanish, with English subtitles.

"We wanted that crossover MTV/VH1 audience that has grown up watching telenovelas at home and can feel them and identify," Balaguer says.

But, perhaps because it reflects an increasingly culturally diverse American mainstream, the show manages to strike a balance, attracting viewers who aren't Latin and who've never seen a soap. According to Olde, "Viva," which airs Sundays at 10 p.m. and has entered its third week, has already garnered a 2% jump in viewership.

If the audience for "Viva" continues to build, Barbato says, "the hope is to begin a franchise that not only celebrates the stars but most specifically Latin music."

Already in the works is a reality show based on Jenni Rivera's "La vida es un regalo." The singer's hits are being adapted for a starlet in a pop and rock show.

MTV/VH1 audience has grown up watching telenova stars at home and can feel them and identify. It's like a punter. The more colors he has to work with, the more accessible his work will be.

You're not a fan of ProTools. Every musician is going to play in agreement with how he feels—that's the human factor in the orchestra. A computer will never give you that. That's why music is a profession. It's the song and the album and give the best [so] it's pleasant for people to listen to... —A8Y

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With The Brand

JOSH RABINOWITZ joshrabinowitz@grey.com

Jazzed
Branding Lessons Amid New Orleans' Biggest Music Fest

It was the first Saturday of the 39th annual New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, and as I stood in a torrential rain, sans hat, poncho and umbrella, watching Terence Blanchard sit in with Dr. John on the Acura stage, I admit a thought occurred to me: Should I stay?

My feet were submerged several inches under mud, which was several inches under water. This was terribly uncomfortable, but somehow, this festival symbolized New Orleans' music in so many ways: deep and ever-flowing like the Mississippi; true American roots, embraced as much by Americans as by the globe; a true survivor of the elements; and a brand/sound/an aura that's as engrained in the ground's core as anything. So, like so many others (imagining myself at Woodstock), I hunkered down and hung hard.

Thus is the attitude of the "music purists" in attendance year after year at Jazz Fest, as it is for so many other great music festivals such as Coachella in the desert of Southern California or at the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival in the Tennessee Valley. Devotees and enthusiasts galore will undoubtedly be at this year's newcomer festivals like Pemberton in British Columbia; All Points West in Jersey City, N.J.; and Outside Lands in San Francisco. These attendees are willing to confront extreme weather and spend considerable amounts of money on tickets, hotels, food and the like to be a part of it all.

Even as the Internet levels the playing field for those who want to get their music heard, giving them equal access to potential fans, music critics still wonder why there aren't any new movements in music, a fresh musical zeitgeist that's captivating people as it did with the birth of hip-hop, or electronic or grunge, or even early rock 'n' roll.

But the zeitgeist today is the performance, not the song; it's the show, not what's necessarily playing; it's the experience, not just the sound. And if you're with the brand, take note—I certainly did.

As brand-backed music develops from a novelty to a sustainable sector of the muscle business, brands may want to tap into musical purists' psyche, evaluate the mistakes that the record labels have made and take a really sound look at what's engaging so many fans of live music these days. It's the lifestyle. It's the experience.

Music strategists often lose sight of the essence of what is purely musical, or at least have to shelve that aesthetic and ethos and vibe, often times to accomplish what needs to be done in the complex world of music marketing.

I'm certainly guilty at times, thus as personal equalizer and reminder: each and every year, I make a pilgrimage to Jazz Fest. As we all (should) know, New Orleans is a distinguished birth center and fertile crescent of American music, and many of those influential "influencees" have made their home there, from jazz legends like Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton to rhythm and blues greats Fats Domino and Allen Toussaint; funk practitioners like the Neville Brothers, the Meters and Dr. John; brass bands like the Dirty Dozen and Rebirth; and newcomers like Papa Grows Funk and Bonerama, to name a few. Local studios have pumped out so many important records. And the music is potent and varied, yet distinctive, creating a deep mix of R&B, soul, funky funk, Cajun, zydeco, rock, jazz, country, blues, gospel and world beat flavor.

If you've been to the Big Easy, you may have experienced its aura, which originates from a combo of this musical gumbo, the flavorful food, the sweltering heat, the unique geography, the fascinating history, the diverse culture, the racial tensions, the pain from hurricanes past, Southern charm and the fact that the bars and clubs at times stay open 24 hours.

As brands go, New Orleans is certainly sui generis—and I esteem brand music practitioners, who play to consumers' music perceptions, to look to the live music festivals and especially, the Crescent City's music aesthetic, for pure inspiration, with their feet firmly planted in 4 inches of mud under 6 inches of water.

Grey Group senior VP/director of music Josh Rabinowitz writes a biweekly column.

For 24/7 branding news and analysis, see billboard.biz/branding.
UPFRONT

GLOBAL BY HAZEL DAVIS

UPDATING THE CLASSICS

Classical BRITs Hope Star Power Translates To Ratings

LONDON—Labels body the BPI has instigated a star-studded revamp for this year's Classical BRIT Awards, with (Joe) Groban, Andrea Bocelli, Nigel Kennedy and Sarah Brightman all performing at the May 8 event, hosted by high-profile EMI Classics pianist/TV presenter Myleene Klass.

"We wanted to make this the biggest and best show ever," says Universal Classics & Jazz managing director Dickon Stainer, who co-chairs the awards committee with the head of EMI Classics U.K. Thomas Kaurich. "We've had more media coverage than we have ever had for another show at this stage."

The show will air May 15 on ITV1, and Kaurich suggests the big names will "get that entry-level audience tuning in. They already know Bocelli and Brightman, that's a window to get to the developing core artists."

Tony Shaw, head of classical and specialities at market-leading music merchant HMV, says the store always sees a sales boost after the broadcast. Winning or performing artists, he adds, "can see a doubling in sales [across] their catalog.

Kaurich points to the exposure a Classical BRIT win can give developing artists, citing EMI Classics' trumpeter Alison Balsom. According to the BPI, Balm's 2006 victory in the young British classical performer category led to a 334% album sales jump in the week following the show's broadcast. The 2007 recipient of the award, Quartz Music-signed vocalist Ruth Palmer, had her week-on-week sales lift 2.150%.

Average viewing figures for last year's show hit 1.1 million, up from the previous year's 1 million, but some way behind the 6.1 million average of the main BRIT Awards in February.

ITV controller of music and events Guy Freeman says that previous Classical BRITs "tended to appeal to an older-than-average audience for ITV1, which has made it harder for us to attract advertisers."

He adds, "The casting of Myleene, some great performances, plus a more contemporary set are all designed to broaden the show's appeal."

Performer Kennedy, however, remains sceptical. "I'm probably one of the few artists there without a backing track," he says. "There is an assumption that audiences can't cope with 'real' classical music."

But Stainer insists the awards "needed to be closer to what ITV conceived it as," noting that, since their conception, "classical crossover has gone huge."

To illustrate his point, in 1999 — the year before the awards' launch — the BPI top 20 list of best-selling classical albums was dominated by full-blown classical repertoire. In contrast, soprano Katherine Jenkins — who has spearheaded the classical crossover surge alongside the likes of Hayley Westenra and classical "boy band" Blake — had four albums on the 2007 list, while from Male Voice Choir's pop-oriented output claimed two spots in the top five.

According to the BPI, classical album sales actually fell to 4.7 million in 2007, down 8.1% from 2006. However, that decline was less than the 10.8% that the overall U.K. market experienced and, as a result, classical accounted for 1.5% of overall sales volumes — its highest share since 2003.

Kennedy, however, remains disgruntled that classical music has no place in the main BRITs show. "It's still in this ghetto," he says. "The main show incorporates folk, jazz and world — there is no reason to have a separate classical ceremony."

"It's not realistic to say the Classical BRITs will ever be as big as the BRITs," Kaurich says. "That is an enormous media event driven by some of the biggest artists in the world. But we can get better and bigger every year."

Additional reporting by Tom Ferguson.

GLOBAL BY ROBERT THOMPSON AND STEVE MCCLURE

Asian Markets Beckon Canadian Labels

China Mission Aims To Establish Working Relationships

TORONTO — Canada's independent music sector is looking to establish a bridgehead in Asia.

Following a November 2007 trade mission to Tokyo organized by the Canadian Independent Record Production Assn., indie companies and acts are being lined up for a similar trip to Beijing, set up by Tyl van Toorn, developer/co-producer of Vancouver-based music conference Transmission.

The May 29-June 1 event, dubbed Transmit China, will connect Canadian execs and acts with Chinese labels, concert promoters and telcos. Like the CIRPA event, it benefits from public funding, with British Columbia's provincial government and the Canadian federal government committing upwards of $200,000 Canadian ($197,000).

CIRPA claims Canadian participants who initiated deals from the Japan visit can expect to share around $1.4 million Canadian ($1.38 million) of new business — from music licensing to touring — in 2008.

One such company was Toronto-based Paper Bag Records, which sealed a distribution deal for alt-rock act Uncut with Tokyo-based BM.3 Music. Paper Bag co-founder Enrique Soissa says he found the Japanese approach to doing business "extremely fair."

"I'm not saying [they were] overly generous," he adds, "but they seem to begin at the compromise point that we'd aim to reach with anyone else."

Tokyo-based Pulpacific Music International division GM Aki Morishita says the publisher signed a subpublishing deal for Japan with Toronto-based Arts & Crafts Music, while Toronto-based Marquis Classics held discussions with JVC-owned Victor Entertainment about issuing repertoire in JVC's high-end audiophile format XRCD.

Victor Entertainment deputy GM for international repertoire Aya Ohi says discussions also included the possibility of making Victor repertoire available in the format in Canada through Marquis.

The top-selling international album in Japan in 2007 was Avril Lavigne's "The Best Damn Thing" (BMG Japan), with more than 1 million units sold, according to the Recording Industry Assn. of Japan, while fellow Canadian Daniel Powter's self-titled Warner Music Japan debut took that accolade in 2006 (719,000 copies). The RIAJ says international repertoire accounted for 23% of all shipments (volume and value) during 2007.

But van Toorn cautions that finding similar success in China will take longer.

"If you are a company that needs a return on investment right now," he says, "then China is probably not for you."

He expects to showcase 14 Canadian acts, including Montreal rapper Buck 65 (signed to Warner Music Canada) but on indie Strange Famous Records in the United States) and dance-punk band You Say Party! We Say die! (Paper Bag).

There has been industry speculation that the May event could be expanded in the wake of Björk's pro-Tibet comments in China (billboard biz, March 4) and the demonstrations that have followed the Olympic flame tour around the world. But van Toorn insists Transmit China is going ahead, although final approval for all the acts has yet to be received.

Nettwerk Music Group CEO Terry McBride says he will attend, having gained direct experience of the Chinese market as Lavigne's manager. He played six shows there in 2007.

"All record labels in China are [owned/co-owned by] the government," he says. "So you've got to establish relationships with the key people before you can move forward."

"This will help bring additional Canadian bands to China," says Lu Zhongqiang, CEO of Beijing-based indie Thirteenth Month Records and a keynote speaker at Transmit China. "But I also hope to make connections that will allow me to bring acts overseas."

And McBride insists the country has huge potential in a number of music industry outlets, citing China Music's 192 million subscribers.

"The bottom line is you can't apply Western laws surrounding intellectual property to China because they don't exist," he says. "But there are plenty of opportunities for Western music companies."
No Breaks On Levies

Taxing Times For Mobile Music In France

PARIS—Cell phone manufacturers and consumer groups in France are up in arms after the government instituted a levy on audio/video-enabled handsets.

The levy took effect May 1. It will cover all handsets with a memory larger than 128 MB and music/video-dedicated functions. Those specifications mean it covers such handsets as Apple’s iPhone, Nokia’s XpressMusic, Sony Ericsson’s Walkman series, Motorola’s Razr2 and Samsung’s F3100.

The levy, intended to compensate rights holders for unauthorized private copying, ranges from €1 ($1.57) to €50 ($78.34) depending on the phone’s specification. According to the French Ministry of Culture, the levy on the 8 GB iPhone is €7 ($10.97).

Consumer groups are particularly aggrieved that manufacturers have indicated the levy will be passed on to consumers. “We are still in the dark about what France communication minister Darius Horis says, ‘but it is for us to take on ourselves.’

For an iPhone retailing at an additional €7 might fairly painless, but in the case of much cheaper handsets, consumers fear it could be daunting.

Marc Guez, director of SCPP, the major French record labels’ collective, claims the levy is substantially higher than the U.S.’s $2.50 levy and €2.50 MP3 levy. “It will drive consumers to Piracy. For example, a CD costs €15, whereas downloading can be done for €2.50,” he said.

Guez claims French consumers will be adversely affected by the levy, especially in light of increased prices. “We have a ban on importing blank CDs/DVDs, digital music players and PCs. In France the current Copie Privée levy on a 4 GB iPod is €51 ($79.91).”

In 1986, the French government created two nonprofit companies, Sorecop and Copie Privée, to respectively collect levies for the audio and audiovisual sectors and distribute them via the appropriate collecting societies. For music, 50% of the levy is distributed to authors and composers, 25% to artists and 25% to labels.

According to Guez, income from the existing levies represents an average 16% of French labels’ annual profit. Guez estimates that the levy on phones could initially generate €5 million ($7.83 million) per year for rights holders.

Copie France and Sorecop collected a total of €164 million ($256 million) in 2007, although the companies’ joint secretary-general, Charles-Henri Lonjon, predicts that as sales of blank CDs and DVDs decline, private-copying income will shrink in the long term. Most sources agree that the levy is unlikely to affect the growth of the legal download market in France.

The latest levy has not yet been appealed by manufacturers or consumer groups; appeals are already under way against a previous extension of the levy to external disks and USB drives.

Rulings on those appeals, lodged with France’s highest administrative court the Conseil d’Etat in November 2007 and January 2008, are expected shortly but could not delay the May 1 introduction of the cell phone levy.

The central plank of the appeals is that the levy extension financially penalizes consumers who acquire music legitimately. UPC Que Choisir public affairs director Julien Dourgnon claims the levy could be halved if legally acquired music was taken into account. “On one hand,” he says, “rights holders want to control illegal distribution of music. But on the other, they want to extend a levy to it.”

“Those phones are actually music players with the ability to make calls.”

—MARC GUEZ, SCPP

$256M

The amount the private-copying levy raised in France during 2007.

GLOBAL NEWSLINE

>>> WARNER OPENS ODESSA FILE

Warner Music International has struck an exclusive licensing agreement with Odeessa, Ukraine-based distributor Odyssey that will have the latter import, manufacture and distribute the major’s CD and DVD product domestically. Through the agreement, effective immediately, Odyssey will press Cyrillic versions of Warner’s physical product at IFPI-approved local factories and will also import premium-priced international DVD and CD product from WMI’s range. In a statement, WMI vice chairman/Warner Music Europe president John Reid said the partnership would “become a key part of our efforts to offer consumers legal, quality product and to aggressively combat piracy in the region.” The structure of the deal is similar to a licensing arrangement WMI announced in February with Russian independent music firm Nikitin.

—Lars Brande

>>> BUZZ BUILDS FOR M1 JUKEBOX

M1 Jukebox, Singapore’s first mobile-based music subscription service, has signed up more than 8,000 subscribers since its March 19 launch by leading local mobile carrier M1 and digital music services provider Soundbuzz. According to Soundbuzz CEO Sudhanshu Sarnonwala, “The response to date has been very encouraging, and we expect a 30% growth rate month on month for the first six months.” M1 Jukebox offers users unlimited streams from more than 10,000 tracks covering a variety of genres licensed from the major labels plus independents; users pay a monthly $3.40 subscription fee. The service is expected to roll out to other countries in the Asia-Pacific region within the next six months.

—Christie Leo

>>> HMV MP3 SERVICE COMING TO U.K.

HMV will launch an MP3 digital download store in the United Kingdom later this year. During the summer, the market-leading music retailer’s revamped digital music store will be integrated into its hmv.com Web site (currently at hmv.co.uk) to enable physical and digital purchases in one “basket.” The initiative was revealed at a presentation to its product suppliers held April 25 in London. According to product director Gary Warren, “We see a real gap in the market for linking physical and digital product.” The iPod-compatible download service will be linked to HMV’s “social discovery” site getcloser.com, which is in beta testing mode with a soft launch planned for this summer, ahead of a full consumer rollout by year’s end. Warren also pledged a review of store layouts ahead of the Christmas period, allocating greater front-of-store space for campaigns and promos across its key areas of music, film and games.

—LB

>>> GERMAN ACTS SIGN IP PETITION

German acts Herbert Grönemeyer, Peter Maffay, Udo Jürgens, Rosentalz and Tokio Hotel are among the 200-plus signatories for a national campaign calling for greater government support for intellectual property. Other prominent German artists, authors and producers have signed the open letter, published April 25, in which they appeal to federal chancellor Angela Merkel to give top priority to protecting IP. The project was initiated by various creative industry associations, including German labels body Bundesverband Musikindustrie. The letter says that creators do not receive fair remuneration for millions of music tracks, films and audiobooks that are shared over the Internet and also calls upon Internet service providers to join forces with the music and film industries, consumers and data protection experts to develop equitable systems balancing the interests of all parties.

—Wolfgang Spahr

>>> UMPG ADDS BIG LIFE

Universal Music Publishing Group has acquired U.K.-based independent publisher Big Life Music for an undisclosed sum. The deal, structured by Edge Group, gives UMPG worldwide publishing rights to alternative rock act Snow Patrol’s past and future works. Manager Jazz Summers and musician Tim Parry established the publisher in 1987, and it now boasts a catalog containing more than 2,000 copyrights, including works by Badly Drawn Boy, the Futureheads and Gabriela Montero. To date, Big Life has been self-administered in the United Kingdom and sublicensed by a number of third parties elsewhere. Summers and Parry’s respective label and management divisions, Big Life Records and Life Big Management, are unaffected by the new arrangement.

—LB

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James Diener

The label exec has two things on his mind: Bring on the hits and bring on the branding. From Maroon 5 to rocking out with milk, outside-the-box ideas find their place.

How has the company changed with the move to UMG?
I think what Jimmy [iovine, chairman of Interscope Geffen A&M/ Octone] was seeing was some really fantastic artist development being done at Octone through Sony BMG and said, "If you can do this, can you do more of this?" So now what you have is building out the roster; not only did we take our existing artists in the Sony BMG phase, but part of the arrangement is that if there are Interscope acts that are great artist development possibilities, that we could lend a hand to, he's encouraged us to help. So the first one of those actually was the Hives and the next one is an artist called the Hollywood Undead.

What is the key to success? Specifically, is it the time that you have to work on an artist?
Maroon 5 took five years on the first album cycle. Gavin DeGraw took pretty much four to five, and Flyleaf is two-and-a-half in, maybe three-and-a-half if you consider an EP phase which was set up before the first album. So, time is a factor, and having a permissive environment to do it in, but that's not all. It's an attitude toward how the process works. Some metaphors that I like to use, because I like to try and explain this to the bands too: You're going to win by decision in the 15th round. If you're looking for a knockout punch in the first couple of rounds, it's not how it's done. Our approach to marketing in the sales of Octone artists starts with, first of all, great music. Because if you don't have a great record, it doesn't matter how much marketing is involved. But in the A&R process, we are always looking for almost twenty artists. If people say that this is going to be tough because it doesn't fit a certain format of radio or a certain type of definition, we love that because chances are the act is doing something that is more interesting than any other conventional act.

And the methodology we employ for this type of artist development is infused in everyone at the company. I have an incredibly strong team around me—David Boxenbaum our GM, Ben Berkman the executive VP/head of promotion, and Rome Thomas, head of sales and artist development. And from the head of the company to the support team—it's a small team of about 15 people—we do this as good or better than anyone in the business right now.

How did Flyleaf's opportunity with Milk Rocks evolve, and what impact will it have?
We're always looking for marketing in three capacities: One is touring and personal appearance, two is online and making use of all of the fantastic possibilities that the Internet now provides. The third component are these types of nontraditional marketing opportunities. The Milk Rocks initiative is exactly what we thrive on. Here you have a campaign where we're promoting our artist, in this case Flyleaf, literally around the country for what I think is a two-month window. Think about how many milk-cartons are sitting there on breakfast tables or sitting there being looked at for minutes and minutes and minutes. This came through Scoop Marketing.

This image is going in front of all these people. How do you convert them to act on something? We're highly tuned into the dynamic that music consumers do not want to be hard-sold music. To be too needy and to try and push people immediately to a sale... kids are so sensitive today to be marketed to by record companies. Milk Rocks translates into sales when it's combined into the tapestry of other things going on with Flyleaf: airplay, video play, touring, press, etc. On its own, it probably wouldn't yield too much without the other drivers.

What's coming down the pike that you're excited about?
Three things. First is K'naan, he's a hip-hop artist from Somalia who's based in Canada. He's won several awards and toured extensively with people like Nelly Furtado, the Roots, Mos Def. He's got an independent album coming out through Fontana to set him up, produced by Track & Field, Damian and Stephen Marley, and Tony Kanal from No Doubt. That will be out at the end of June, early July.

Michael Tolcher we're very committed to. We worked his first record for three years, we've sold 100,000. We weren't able to connect the dots with an airplay hit, but the next record he's going into the studio with Glen Ballard producing. We expect that record as well for July or August.

And the Hollywood Undead is one of the biggest MySpace stories of the past year and a half. They're sort of a mixture of Eminem, Limp Bizkit, early Guns N' Roses and also an element of the Beastie Boys. And the record is coming at the end of May, early June.
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RETURN OF THE KING

BY CLOVER HOPE

PHOTOGRAPH BY NORMAN JEAN ROY
OUTSIDE THE WINDOWS of a 36th-floor conference room suite at New York's Mandarin Oriental Hotel, the morning is gray and drab for April showers. Always the trendsetter, Usher has plucked from his wardrobe a navy blue military-style button-up adorned with gold clasps to complete his jeans-and-sneaker ensemble. He is in town to promote his fifth album, “Here I Stand,” due May 27 via Jive, and to premiere, later today, the video for his Polow Da Don-produced hit single, “Love in This Club.”

The synth club track rocketed from No. 51 to No. 1 in its third week on the Billboard Hot 100 in March—the third-highest leap to No. 1 in Hot 100 history and his eighth chart-topper. “This is the ‘Design of a Decade’ and then some,” Usher says of his new disc, referencing Janet Jackson’s compilation of classics. “I’m more excited about this album than I was about the last.”

Usher is a tough act to follow, though, even for Usher himself. After all, his last album, 2004’s “Confessions,” has shifted more than 9.5 million units in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. As with the latest albums from Justin Timberlake and Britney Spears, the marketing team at Jive recognizes the challenge of matching this prior dominance amid today’s depressed sales climate. “The market is our biggest challenge right now,” Jive VP of marketing/product manager Lisa Cambridge says. “When an artist of his stature and his significance comes out, you try to raise the bar every time and hopefully you get there. For us, the single jumping from No. 1 to No. 1 was a great way to set the tone.”

The success showed that Usher retains his core fan base among the other triple-threat stars that have reigned in his absence. “That’s an outstanding performance considering he hasn’t had anything new to release for four years,” radio analyst Guy Zapoleon says of “Love in This Club.” “A lot of new music fans have grown up with Chris Brown and Ne-Yo as their examples of great pop R&B music.” Zapoleon further points out that Usher remains a leader in the urban and rhythmic formats. “Usher, because of his huge track record of No. 1s at top 40 rhythm, R&B/hip-hop radio, as well as hot AC and AC, is known to a wider group of music fans.”

In the span since “Confessions,” the 29-year-old entertainer has stayed active, but without new music to promote. He starred in a Broadway musical (as Billy Flynn in “Chicago”). He changed publicists and talent agencies. (He is now at Creative Artists Agency.) In May 2007, he fired his mom, Jonetta Patton, as his manager and replaced her with Benny Medina (Mariah Carey, Jennifer Lopez). He married stylist Tameka Foster and had his first child, Usher Raymond V, events that have placed his personal life under the microscope more than ever.

Usher admits to having anxiety over all the back-and-forth changes, as well as his recording for the first time without former Arista CEO Antonio “L.A.” Reid, who is now heading Island Def Jam. “Working with Benny Medina [and] new attorneys would definitely be something that you would be nervous about,” Usher says. “It’s new people. It’s a new team, so you’re only hoping for the best. But we’ve got to do great start, [with] a No. 1 single that’s widely been accepted and excited about the prospect of another hit record.”

“It’s always a challenge with someone who was so established with various types of representatives,” Medina adds. “The thing that excited me most is the intense commitment to his art, his incredible professionalism and the fact that I feel as though he’s just hitting a stride.”

In that time, too, the music business has taken a big hit. Though file sharing is largely blamed for the downturn, Usher also cites a lack of quality material. “This industry is not producing an awful lot of substance-filled records,” he says. “You’ll get a Justin, a Kanye West, a Jay-Z, [that’ll] come out with a bang.
When Usher Raymond started out, he was still a boy. L.A. Reid signed him to Arista when he was just 13. Throughout his decade-plus career, his sales and popularity have risen on a steady gradient. Released in 1994, his self-titled LaFace debut has sold nearly 300,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Its follow-up, “My Way,” went gold. Then in 2001, the six-times-platinum “8701” all but solidified his superstar status before “Confessions” hit three years later.

Usher insists that it’s his compelling tales that have kept registers ringing. “It’s like an autobiographical experience every time you hear an Usher album,” he says. “I don’t just release records. I don’t put things out and just allow them to fly. There’s always a story.”

More often than not, those stories have become hits, from the “U Remind Me?”/”U Got It Bad?”/”U Don’t Have To Call” series of No. 1 singles off “8701” to the “Yeah!”/”Burn”/”Confessions Part II” narrative of “Confessions.” This time, again, Usher’s game plan is simple: Tell a story. “The premise of my story is, ‘You truly aren’t a king until you really find your queen,’” he says. “I feel like I found someone who’s the foundation for my life.”

“Here I Stand” represents, to many involved in the project, a portrait of the artist as a grown man. In conversations about the album, the term “manhood” often arises. “The manhood is symbolic of a type of independence, as well as a desire to communicate with his fans on a different emotional level,” Medina says. “This isn’t just a record for him. This is a component and an extension of a personal journey.”

Cambridge, who has worked with Usher since his days at LaFace, adds, “One of the biggest assets Usher has, as just a man, is he had a rocky beginning in the industry. So once he found his footing and his comfort zone as an artist, he appreciates it and he gets it and he knows how much hard work it took for him to get from point A to point B.”

This transition is reflected in songs like the soaring Tricky Stewart-produced ballad “Moving Mountains” and the disco-esque dance cut “This Ain’t Sex.” Another Stewart track, “His Mistake,” finds Usher being blamed for another man’s follies (“Always guilty before the sin/I can’t win”), and on the Dre & Vidal-crafted title track, the singer channels Stevie Wonder.

My initial objective was to create a record that was just full of hits from the beginning to the end, nonstop. I really wanted it to have different levels,” Usher says. “I think that it does. I think that it speaks for the intimate settings. I think it speaks for the good times that you have. It speaks at times for the temptation that you may approach as a man who is in more of a stable situation, the decisions that you make and ramifications for making a bad decision. Then also ultimately, those major steps in your life, the ones that really matter.”

With the new album ramping up, Usher remains busy with other pursuits. Last summer, he launched his eponymous fragrance line, and he still runs his label Us Records, whose roster includes One Chance and Rico Love. Next, he plans on starting his own consulting company to help develop artists. “I really want to go into these record companies and become the builder of different projects,” Usher says. “It’s not necessarily my hands, but it’s my expertise where the right artist has the right choreographer. The right artist has the right stylist, the right marketing plan to help introduce what they’re doing.”

As major companies start compensating for dwindling record sales by focusing more on the artist-as-brand, Usher wants in on that, too. Medina stresses the importance of focusing on the music first. “The best all have a certain creative ADD, and he certainly has that. He is a musician, artist, businessman and entrepreneur,” Medina says. “More than anything else, that’s the greatest challenge — how to manage all the creative opportunities that comes with diversification and still manage to deliver greatness.”

Table: Billboard Hot 100

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Source: Billboard Hot 100 © 2000 Billboard. Used through the new owner, April 12.
Chasing Glory

HOMETOWN GIRL ADELE IS A SUPERSTAR IN THE U.K., BUT CAN SHE WIN OVER AMERICA?
BY CORTNEY HARDING

MAY 10, 2008
At first viewing, 19-year-old Adele Laurie Blue Adkins' performance last August on popular U.K. music program “Later... With Jools Holland” is the picture of composer and grace. Only after repeated viewings can a viewer catch the occasional glance of awe and panic in the young woman’s eyes, as well as the palpable sense of relief as she finishes the song to loud applause. Her slightly tilted nerves are understandable; after all, how many teenagers would be cool and collected sharing a stage with Mick and Paul McCartney not alone a teenager who had just signed a record deal a few months before? The way Adele tells it, her rise to the top of the U.K. charts was a rather charmed experience.

Adele and her entourage are taking the comparisons in stride. "Winehouse is incredible, but Adele sounds nothing like her or any of the others," Dickins says. "People like to pigeonhole, and it's an easy comparison to make. In this situation, it becomes important for us to set her apart visually. We've got her on tour with a very stripped-down sound, just an acoustic guitar, and we want to set her up as an individual."

To establish that persona, XL and Adele's management have steered clear of trying to sell the artist as a personality or build a brand around her. "I only want to be known as a singer," Adele says. "I'm not interested in writing columns for the Guardian or being a star with my own TV show." Adele's album has sold approximately 300,000 copies in the United Kingdom since it was released Jan. 28, according to the Official U.K. Charts Co.

"Adele is first and foremost a singer," Chen says. "That's not to say that if the right opportunity came along we would pass it up, but it would have to be the right fit. People need to be aware of her as an artist before we start with anything else.

Building awareness of Adele in the United States has only been ongoing for a short period of time; she played her first shows here in March, the same month she signed to her U.S. label, Columbia. Columbia and XL will release her album as a joint venture in the States, while XL will retain the rights in the remainder of the world.

"Nick Huggett, who was in A&R at XL, is the head of A&R at Columbia U.K. now," Dickins says. "We met with him, and we decided not to meet with anyone else. Adele is a great fit on their roster; she loves Jeff Buckley and Bruce Springsteen. We also liked that they do things without overthinking, that they make decisions on a gut level."

While Dickins praises Columbia for avoiding overthinking, the label does have a long-term and thought-out plan to break Adele in the States. The first part of this plan will be to release her record digitally more
than two months before it will be released physically (see story, right). XL has the rights to the release state-side until the album's physical street date, when it will become a joint venture between the two labels.

"The decision to delay the physical release was due to touring constraints," Columbia VP of marketing Donna Lombardi says. "But XL wanted to make sure the record was available to people who wanted it. It seemed right to make it available."

Part of the demand stemmed from mentions on Perez Hilton's gossip blog and in a blog post by Kanye West. "There was all this demand because of those posts, and I felt bad that people pay all that money for shipping to buy it from the U.K.,” Adele says. "The growth in the States so far has all been word-of-mouth."

“She’s the type of artist where people love her after one listen,” Lombardi says. "Our goal now is to set her up as a brand, on the basis of everything that she’s done so far. Her live performances are a cornerstone of that strategy, and capturing them is a big part of the campaign." When the physical version of the record is released June 10, the initial run will contain a bonus disc with recordings of live performances from her shows at Joe's Pub in New York, the Hotel Café in Los Angeles and a session she recorded at noncommercial station KCRW Santa Monica, Calif.

The KCRW taping was only the start of Adele’s radio campaign. "XL sent out some vinyl copies of 'Homeless Glory' after the track was iTunes song of the week, but we’re going to make a very focused push at triple A and noncommercial to start," Lombardi says. "We’re planning on following that with an impact date after AC in May."

May also brings appearances on "Today," "Late Show With David Letterman" and "The CBS Early Show" and marks the start of Adele’s tenure as a Starbucks Pick of the Week, a stint as part of VH1’s You Oughta Know campaign and her first real tour, which will kick off May 21, according to promoter Kirk Sommer of the William Morris Agency. "For this tour, she’ll be playing intimate theaters, like the Queen Elizabeth in Toronto. She’ll be with a three-piece band for most of the dates, and our goal is to make these dates feel like special engagements."

Sommer says that when ticket presales began for the May dates, "they sold out instantly," and that plans are already under way to bring Adele back stateside in August and do bigger shows, like the Bumbershoot and Austin City Limits festivals.

"Adele appeals to a very broad range of people, and this campaign is going to go to multiple audiences," Lombardi says. "For instance, young girls love her and see her as a very positive role model; she’s very sweet and confident and comfortable in her own skin. But there is an older crowd that really connects to her, too."

Columbia is banking on those same crowds sticking with her for several more albums. "I still believe you can build careers for the long term," Dickins says. "Too many people these days think a career is a race. Look at how much Amy Winehouse developed between 'Frank' and 'Back to Black.' We all want to make sure Adele has slow and steady growth in order to get the best long-term gain."

"I’m so excited to see what we’re going to be doing for her subsequent albums," Lombardi says. "We’re trying to grow her slowly in the States; for her first tour, she’ll be doing stripped-down sets in smaller venues with a three-piece, which she’ll be doing on her next tour. We want to make sure she gets multiple impressions of her, and we think that people will go to all the shows in their markets."

"I don’t think you come into your own until your second or third record," Adele says. "I don’t want to get too big too soon or try to sell out too much and then have to deal with that whole more curse. It’s more important for me to be able to make a lot of good records than to just have one hit and be forgotten."

Digital Days

**Sometimes Physical Just Isn’t (So) Enough**

Although indies have been staggering digital and physical release dates for almost two years, the major labels are just now picking up the strategy. While Reprise tried it in 2004 with the Secret Machines’ debut, it has not become commonplace among the big four. Columbia seems to be at the forefront of the trend on the major side, with three recent releases all going or slated to go live digitally before the physical product was made widely available in stores.

MGMT was the first Columbia act to release its album in this manner, with its debut, "Oracular Spectacular," going online Oct. 2, 2007, and the physical version being made widely available Jan. 22, 2008. (A physical version of the album was released to members of the Coalition of Independent Music Stores concurrently with the digital release.) The album sold 6,000 copies between the two release dates; it has gone on to sell 49,000 copies, with 41% of those sales being digital, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

According to MGMT’s co-manager Mark Kates, "The band had a tour booked and people were starting to talk about them, but there wasn’t time to set up a full release before they went on the road. We thought that the record should be available to people who wanted it, and I think we sold some digital copies to people who would not have paid for it otherwise."

**SUPER FURRY ANIMALS**, top, are one of a handful of indie bands to release their album digitally prior to a physical release. MGMT was the first Columbia act to use this approach.

In the cases of Adele and the Ting Tings, another Columbia act that will be staggering its release dates, the inability to tour stateside drives the digital-first, physical-later strategy. A source at Columbia says that the growing buzz around the Ting Tings led the label to make the record available online on the same day as the U.K. release date in May. While Columbia says that it would continue the practice if it feels it yields positive results, it would not share specific measurement metrics for success.

Indies that have employed the strategy say they have been pleased with the results. Wind-up Records released the debut album by rock band Stars of Track and Field digitally five months before the physical release, and senior VP of sales Derek Graham says he’s pleased with results so far. "It’s certainly not a one-size-fits-all strategy," he says. "But we would be open to trying it again with the right band.

To date, the Stars of Track and Field album has sold 18,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Of those, 6,000 were digital, more than 3,000 were the indie-store-only release and more than 7,000 copies have been sold since January 2007.

More recently, Super Furry Animals released their album online in August 2007 and in stores Jan. 22. The album sold roughly 2,000 copies digitally before January, and has sold about 8,000 total.

"I still think the original decision was the right one," Beggars Banquet CEO Lesley Bleakley says. "We would have been flooded with imports from the U.K. if we had left the release dates six months apart, and having the digital up there for the early adopters didn’t [make an] impact on promo or ticket sales when the band came over in February." —CH
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IN HIGH DEMAND BY LABELS AND SUPERSTARS, VERSATILE PRODUCER HEADS TO THE TOP

NATE 'DANJAHANDZ' HILLS
HE MAY BE “DANGEROUS,” but Nate “Danjahandz” Hills—or just plain “Danja”—is “a huge talent,” according to none other than Madonna. A self-proclaimed “big fan of his work,” Madonna tapped Hills’ production skills most recently for her hit “4 Minutes,” featuring Justin Timberlake. But she’s just the latest in a long line of big-name production clients—also including Timberlake, Nelly Furtado, Sean “Diddy” Combs, Snoop Dogg, Katherine McPhee, Duran Duran, Britney Spears and Jennifer Lopez—that have made this Timbaland protégé the go-to guy on a wide range of recording projects.

“What sets Danja apart is his rare ability to not just make records, but create records—building brilliant sonic landscapes that make his production style singularly unique,” Atlantic Records chairman/CEO Craig Kallman says. “Far more than a fantastic beat-maker, he takes a hands-on role at every step of the recording process. At the same time, he has the gift of being able to adapt: his sound and approach to the individual artist, bringing out their personal style rather than imposing one sound on everyone.

“He also spans many genres, and has done fantastic work recently for a range of Atlantic artists from T.I. to Simple Plan to Missy Elliott,” Kallman adds. “We’re looking forward to a long future of making hit records together.”

Zomba Music Group executive VP Peter Thea concurs: “He’s an extraordinary producer who we can thank for many recent hits from many artists on our roster. His beats are incredible and he always seems to outdo himself on each successive record. He’s that rare producer whose sonic flair and amazing sense of rhythm are matched by his gift of melody, and it all comes together in the song.

BMG Label Group president/CEO Barry Weiss likewise lauds Hills as “one of the premier producers/creative forces in the world today, citing “his production flair and innovative but commercial sounds coupled with his calm demeanor and great artist sensitivity [that] make him a rare entity in today’s musical landscape.”

Chris Hicks, Atlantic Records senior VP of A&R and head of urban music at Warner/Chappell Music, who signed Hills to Warner/Chappell, observes that Hills is “very quick to step outside the box and not live by any rules creatively.”

Pointing to Hills’ effect on projects by Timberlake, Furtado, T.I. and Usher, Hicks adds, “He just wants to reinvent every time he goes in the studio and he groundbreaks.”

Indeed, Hills is inspired by the Foo Fighters as much as T.I., as his attorney David Ehrlich notes.

“He’s open-minded and doesn’t like to be categorized, and draws influences from a vast variety of creative sources. And he plays piano, drums and guitar, and can explore a lot of different musical areas and opportunities. He’s always evolving, but currently his up-tempo, danceable beats are unique and fresh-sounding, and have proven inspirational to a lot of different artists.”

“And in the last two years,” Ehrlich adds, “you can’t have turned on the radio without hearing a Danja record that he did with Timbaland, from Justin Timberlake’s ‘SexyBack’ and ‘My Love’ to Nelly Furtado’s ‘Promiscuous’ or ‘Say It Right’ to Britney Spears’ ‘Gimme More’ and now to Madonna’s ‘4 Minutes.’”

For his part, Hills agrees that the beat is much of what makes his sound.

“I have a very bright and exciting sound, and it’s because of the beat—the groove, the sound of the drums,” he says. “I might not be doing a lot of drum rolling and double-timing, but I pick one rhythm and make patterns as melodic as my lead lines, so you can hear the rhythm one time and remember it—and it builds over and over again, just like melody.”

Not a lyricist, Hills notes that he is in fact known as “the Melody Man.”

“That’s what they call me,” he continues. “I hear it all the time.”

Hardly anything that might be construed as “dangerous.” So where did that nickname come from?

“A long time ago me and some friends were hanging around making music—a lot of freestyling stuff on the keyboard, and I was playing so fast with my hands,” Hills recalls. “That’s where it came from—Danjahandz. ‘Danja.’ I just spelled it like how I see it.”

The 27-year-old native of Virginia Beach, Va., played drums in church at age 12 before switching to keyboards.

“I was always playing instruments at home and church,” he says, “but I never practiced. I’d just seen how drummers played and hopped right on to the set and picked it up. And I’m self-taught on keyboards, too. I played by ear, listening to songs on the radio or learning in choir and teaching myself the chords.”

His influences included gospel music, of course, “R&B, some hip-hop and anything else that caught my ear. I just kept playing in church, but I was always interested in how I can create music. I was always trying to figure it out but never had the proper equipment until I eventually got a keyboard with a six-track sequencer when I was in high school and could lay down beats and melodies on two tracks.”

Hills gained some studio experience around Virginia Beach, “again basically teaching myself how to use a professional keyboard, microphone and computer. But I was always only a producer, making multiple tracks of all kinds for different types of artists—rock, pop, hip-hop, R&B—all at the same time and nothing sounding alike. I look back and see where I was being prepared for what I am now.”

Among producers, Hills...
Every now & again a songwriter comes along who changes the sound of radio.

NATE "DANJA" HILLS

IS THAT SONGWRITER

SESAC Congratulates GRAMMY® winning songwriter/producer Nate "Danja" Hills
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cites such role models as Dr. Dre, Rodney Jerkins, the Neptunes, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, "of course" Quincy Jones, Timbaland and Teddy Riley.

Working with Natural Blend, an R&B group from the Virginia Beach area, Hills met Leon Sylvester, who introduced him to Riley.

True to his "studio rat" form, Danja began hanging out at Riley's studio in Virginia Beach and co-produced a track on Riley's group Blackstreet's 2003 album "Level II."

But the real career turning point came when a CD containing 30 of Hills' beats was passed on to his idol Timbaland, who was duly impressed. Hills later had the opportunity to play more tracks for Timbaland personally on his tour bus.

"He didn't even listen to three seconds of each track and just knew where I was going," Hills says. "That was enough for him—and that was it."

Still, six months passed. Hills recalls "scraping by, breaking concrete with a sledgehammer doing construction work" during the day while "working and working and working" in the studio at night.

Then Timbaland invited Hills to work with him down in Miami. "I had played some music for Scott Storch, Irv Gotti, Ja Rule, Fat Joe, all these dudes, and nothing came of it," Hills says. "But Tim recognized my talent level and potential from the start. It just goes to show that when it's your time, it's your time."

The Hills/Timbaland partnership then commenced in earnest in early 2004.

"Tim was hard on me, not in the sense of being a tyrant but musically very critical of what I was doing and pushing me to develop, develop, develop, push, push, push," Hills says. "We worked on a lot of different projects together including the Game, Black Eyed Peas, Jennifer Lopez, but nothing major happened. Then we did 'I'm So Fly' for Lloyd Banks, and it was really the first thing that people heard from me and Tim."

Then the floodgates opened.

"Nelly (Furtado) came along with some songs, but Tim had a different vision and we just started making music together," Hills says. "The first day we did 'Maneater.'"

Furtado's 2006 hit from "Loose" flowed directly into Timbaland's "FutureSex/LoveSounds" project, the first session of which yielded "What Goes Around... Comes Around."

"We were sitting on those two albums and nothing had dropped yet, but Tim felt really good about it, and I didn't have any choice but to feel good and excited because he was," Hills says. "Then in May of '06, 'Maneater' dropped overseas and started killing, and then the States. The rest is history."

That history now also includes the likes of Madonna, Missy Elliott, Ciara and Fat Joe.

"'Respect,' along with 'fearless' and 'brilliant,' are just some of the words colleagues use in assessing Hills' meteoric rise."

"Danja is brilliant," Universal Motown president/executive VP Sylvia Rhone says. "He has a keen passion for his craft, takes great pride in his work and is the consummate perfectionist. I have watched him emerge from the shadows of his peers to become a major player in his own right—an accomplished producer, composer and musician, a triple-threat in the studio and a genius hitmaker."

Elliott adds, "Danja is not only just a hot producer: He is fearless. That's what makes him hot. His music speaks for itself: When you listen to his beats you hear confidence in the track—hard-hitting, cutting...

continued on >p6
Congratulations Danja!

We're extremely proud to be a part of your team.

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Looking forward to continuing the journey.

David, Alan, Anna-Rachel, & Jenil

David M. Ehrlich & Associates, P.C.
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As he builds his own reputation as a hitmaking producer, Nate “Danja” Hills was asked by Billboard to drop the needle on five favorite tracks by producers that he admires.

TIMBALAND’S “ONE IN A MILLION”:
“It was the start of a new age in music and is the very reason why I wanted to do what I’m doing.”

RICK JAMES’ “SUPER FREAK”:
“It’s hypnotizing. I love the funk in it, and it’s very eclectic: The way all the melodies of the instruments fall together is genius.”

RODNEY JERKINS’ “ANGEL IN DISGUISE”:
“All he did with Brandy was classic but this one I still listen to till this day. It’s a constant inspiration.”

DR. DRE’S “BEEN THERE, DONE THAT”:
“That was a glimpse of the new Dr. Dre that no one got until he came with ‘The Chronic 2001’. I love that it was before its time.”

DJ PREMIER’S “NAS IS LIKE”:
“Love this one because it made me feel like I can rap . . . All of Premier’s tracks do.”

—Jim Bessman

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CONGRATULATIONS DANJA
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WHEN ASPIRING YOUNG producer Nate “Danja” Hills began working alongside studio wizard Timbaland in 2004, it was the breakthrough he had been waiting for. Now emerging as a powerhouse hitmaker in his own right, Hills has produced tracks for an impressive array of stars, including Nelly Furtado, Justin Timberlake, Sean “Diddy” Combs, Snoop Dogg, Katharine McPhee, Duran Duran, Britney Spears, Jennifer Lopez and most recently Madonna. And he’s just begun. Billboard recently spoke with the 27-year-old native of Virginia Beach, Va.

Let’s start with your thoughts on the music business today.
It has switched to songs, songs, songs—hit records, and not albums and artists. I don’t think people care about artists or artistry too much in this day.

Let’s take “Low” [from Flo Rida and T-Pain], for instance. People just want to download on iTunes or the ringtone and that’s it. They don’t really care about who the artist is. It’s just a hooky song.

So a producer like me who came into the game with Tim [Timbaland], we will suffer because nobody listens to the album and we’re just trying to draw attention back to the artist again. But it’s so easy to get one record.

Even though I use iTunes, it’s a horrible idea: You can click on an album and listen to every song and just buy the one you like instead of the whole album.

So no one is telling their story anymore on an album; they’re just trying to do that hot single. It’s so important right now to look at the Billboard Hot 100 [that] the No. 1 album doesn’t even matter because record sales are so low.

How does this affect you?
My style of approach—continued on >>p42
Congratulations Danja

Thanks for letting us be a part of your success.

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from >>p40 ing the business is, “Let me do the album. I will give you a hot single, but I want to do the album.” You can’t make any money without album sales, so in order for me to make money I need to do six or seven songs, and hopefully it will go platinum so there are some kind of residuals.

Is there any way to change the situation? It’s hard to pinpoint the problem. Maybe the artist and producer just need to step up and make better albums. But the reason why Justin’s album worked, Nelly’s album worked, Tim’s, is that the same core of people worked on them—me, Tim, Nelly, me, Tim. Justin, Timbaland and whatever artist he wanted to feature on his album and me. Most successful albums have one producer or one set of producers. Take it back to Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg, DMX, even from hip-hop to rock to pop. One producer producing an album sounds like a body of work, but the music business is not selling a body of work (now). We’re selling songs.

What can the business do? The thing we have no control over is technology and the Internet. It makes it accessible for a 6-year-old—if they want to—to download every song they want and not pay. But that’s out of our control.

There needs to be some sort of law . . . to control who has the music, when it leaves the studio. I don’t even leave the studio with my music [on a CD] anymore. If you want to hear it, hear it in the studio.

You have to limit the amount of hands that touch the music, and that needs to be enforced by the record companies. There should be fines to control the leaks. I hear some say it’s a good thing [when] a record leaks, to show how many people want it. But what sense does that make? If they got their hands on it, they’re not going to buy it.

How would you characterize your experiences in dealing with the artists, labels, managers, attorneys and other music business personnel? Everything’s been pretty smooth. I’ve been totally blessed with the way my business has been arranged, so I have no complaints with anything.

What are your thoughts on contemporary pop music and the related opportunities and perils? Any record can turn pop—become popular. When it crosses over, all sorts of opportunities can come from a hit record—movies, TV shows. And that’s a good thing and necessary because record sales aren’t that good. So there are many other ways for your music to be exploited.

What is the best thing, for you, about the music business today? It allows me to sleep in late—and party when I want to! But it’s a great opportunity to reach the world, once you get successful. It all goes back to a No. 1 record: Once you have a hit all these doors open to every state in the U.S., every country in the globe. It puts you in a place where the world becomes your market.

It takes a lot of push and preparation sometimes. But once you make it, it’s kind of limitless. And like I said, in today’s time there are so many different ways to make revenue. I don’t have to be a mega-hit producer. I can still do movie scores and TV shows and still make as much as I make from selling records. Being able to create music and do what I love doing is always going to be fun, and I come across a lot of people in the business and artists who are good people.

So to me it’s like high school, your senior year all over again. For 10 or 15 years—or however long I get—it’s just a big high school. Just fun. And it’s real good if you want to be famous, but I’m not that type.

Is there anything you know now that you wish you had known when you started out? That’s so political. It’s very, very political. You hear the saying, “Ninety percent business, 10% music?” It’s absolutely true. But that 10% music has to be smash—hot music. It can’t be just something to get by or mediocre because that 10% music makes the whole business run. But there is a lot of business. I had meetings in New York and completely forgot I was a producer at one point. I thought I was an executive.

What advice would you offer to young people getting into the business? I’d first ask, “What would be your reason for getting in?” You can say because you love it, but move the first check rolls in and you’re making money, (you then say), “This is what I’m doing it for.” But you don’t want to cross the line and do it just for the check. It ends up just fizzling away anyway, because then your music is not good anymore. Becoming wealthy or making out good in your lifestyle is definitely a plus and is easy for me because I love what I do. But whenever I feel I’m doing too much business I tell everybody, “Leave me alone. I’m going to do what I’m going to do.”

Here a team of people who have your best interests, from your business manager to your lawyer to your manager. Please don’t try to walk through the business blind, because then you end up on “Where Are They Now?”

—Jim Bessman
Miatta David & MVD Inc would like to congratulate

Nate "Danja" Hills

On your phenomenal career, remarkable humility, and undeniable talent. It is truly an honor to represent you. Here’s to much more success to come!
LUXURY LIFE REAL ESTATE

Kimmel Mansion in Palm Beach, Fla., recently sold for a record-breaking $82 million, but outside that ultra-high end in the region, it's a buyer's market.

As The Credit Mess Takes A Toll On The Realty Market, Demand Stays High For Ultra Luxury Homes

BY CATHERINE APPLEFELD OLSON

During his speech to induct John Mellencamp into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in March, Billy Joel made a self-effacing crack about his recent ride in the tumultuous real estate market. Discussing his involvement with Farm Aid, he joked, "I figured this might work out for me. With all the real estate I've been buying, I just might take up farming soon."

Joel may be laughing, but many homeowners are closer to tears. Dreams of little pink houses and grand mansions alike have come tumbling down in recent months as homeowners default on their mortgages in lemming-like fashion. An Associated Press/AOL poll in April revealed growing anxiety, finding that one of seven mortgage holders fear they won't be able to make their monthly payments on time during the next six months.

For the metropolitan areas where music industry artists and executives flock—New York, Los Angeles, Nashville and Miami—and the high-end properties many seek, the current climate is actually only partly cloudy.

In fact, the housing market in the ultra upper echelons is booming. In many cases homes are selling for figures that well overshadow those from this time a year ago, which is no small feat given the sums of money bandied about on real estate in early 2007.

"We are talking about an affluent group and the high-end market has maintained itself to a degree," L.A. Mortgage senior loan officer Harvey Friedson says of the entertainment crowd. "They are doing much better than the middle area of, say, $650,000-$1 million, which has been hit much harder. We've generally had very little trouble with the bigger loans."

Indeed the distressed economy is clearly taking a toll on the middle market and even the lower high-end. Industry players who've grown used to calling the shots in real estate deals are finding it a whole different ballgame today.

"Most of them don't really understand the financial world," says Christine Lloyd Maddocks, a Los Angeles-based realtor who specializes in homes that contain recording studios and as such has a heavy music industry client base. "They are in the entertainment industry, and their world lives big."

Lloyd Maddocks recalls working with a composer client recently who wanted to sell his

continued on p48

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GREENWICH, CT Nature Lover’s Dream: Spectacular Colonial-style. 3+ acres. $6,495,000. WEB: BB0371647. Old Greenwich Brokerage, Liz Johnson, 203.637.9333

HARRISON, NY 1928 Tudor-Style: 7,704 sq. ft. home redefines tradition. Beautiful property. $5,995,000. WEB: BB0651133. Rye Brokerage, 914.967.1600

BEDFORD, NY 8+ Acre Estate: Elegant 11,000 sq. ft. Pond, 2 paddocks, access to riding lanes. $5,950,000. WEB: BB0721207. Katush Brokerage, 914.767.9669

SUN VALLEY, ID 2 Bedroom Condo: 1,444 sq. ft. Condo. $1,995,000. WEB: BB0411477. Sun Valley Brokerage, J. Holzamb, 208.720.4474


LARCHMONT, NY Larchmont Manor Colonial-Style: 6,060 sq. ft. Home. WEB: BB0661906. Larchmont Brokerage, 914.833.8480

NEW YORK, NY Exceptional Designed by reknowned architects. Lush gardens, sensational pool. $3,950,000. WEB: BB0662319. Scarsdale Brokerage, 914.713.2148

NEW YORK, NY Village Glamour in Premier Condo: 3 bedrooms, 3+ baths. $5,995,000. WEB: BB0134240. Downtown Manhattan Brokerage, T. Cooper, 212.421.2147

BRONXVILLE, NY For Sale: 2 Bedroom Condo: 2,595,000. WEB: BB0147229. Downtown Manhattan Brokerage, 212.431.2469

STANLEY, ID Own Harras’ Town of Stanley: 54 acres. $4,150,000. WEB: BB0411727. Stanley Valley Brokerage, C. Odenb, 208.720.1196, J. Holzamb, 208.720.4474

JACKSON HOLE, WY Teton and Snake River Views: Spectacular log home. $6,500,000. WEB: BB0147354. Jackson Hole Brokerage, Dave Stackman, 307.739.8132

SUN VALLEY, ID Ranch on Silver Creek: 1.444 acres. $19,955,000. WEB: BB0411597. Sun Valley Brokerage, J. Holzamb, 208.720.4474, B. Iseugret, 208.720.8547


SUN VALLEY, ID Sun Valley Atelier Condo: Large plan. 2 combined units. $495,000. WEB: BB0412341. Sun Valley Brokerage, Bill Harris, 208.720.0724

SANTA BARBARA, CA Upper Riviera Mediterranean style. $6,500,000. WEB: BB0112810. Montecito Coast Village Road Brokerage, Mary Kuhl, 805.565.8633

SUN VALLEY, ID Magical Views: Riding trails. 21 acres. 13,000 sq. ft. villa. $6,500,000. WEB: BB01412254. Sun Valley Brokerage, Al Lusz, 208.720.9969

MONTICELLO, CA Ocean-View Rental: Historic Tudor-style. $35,000/mo. WEB: BB0112850. Montecito Coast Village Road Brokerage, Mary Kuhl, 805.565.8633


SANTA BARBARA, CA Island Commons: 5 Bungalows. $675,000-$925,000. WEB: BB0112835. Montecito Coast Village Road Brokerage, Nick Svensson, 805.895.2957

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**SELECTED PROPERTIES**

**LOS ANGELES, CA**
- Cecil B. DeMille Estate: Landmark. 2 acres. 9,500+ sq. ft. $26,250,000. WEB: BB0305034. Sunset Strip Brokerage, Brett Lawyer, 310.888.3808

**MALIBU, CA**
- Villa Versailles: World-class ocean-view compound. $23,750,000. WEB: BB0333408. Brentwood Brokerage, Shamon and Sara Shamoni, 310.713.4492

**OAKHURST, CA**
- Chateau Duras: European-flavor in, French-style villa, restaurant, spa. WEB: BB1040001. Sotheby’s International Realty, Ron Lipstone, 310.724.7000

**BRENTWOOD, CA**
- Trophy Property: Rare and special compound. $9,999,999. WEB: BB0333235. Brentwood Brokerage, Lisa Kinshner, Kacy O’Brien, 310.481.6255

**STUDIO CITY, CA**
- Italian Renaissance-Style: In enclave of Fryman Estates. $9,995,000. WEB: BB0335373. Sunset Strip Brokerage, Tracey D. Clarke, 310.888.3828

**TOLUCA LAKE, CA**
- Tuscan Style Masterpiece. Expertly built. 1± acre. $8,500,000. WEB: BB0274310. Pasadena Brokerage, Tamara Shogren, 626.398.2994

**MANHATTAN BEACH, CA**
- 27th Street: 5-bedroom celebrity contemporary. $2,299,000. WEB: BB0335373. Brentwood Brokerage, Darlene Hutton, 310.481.4351

**FILLMORE, CA**
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**PLAYA DEL REY, CA**
- Vista Del Mar: Beachfront living. $1,850,000-$1,925,000. WEB: BB0312324. Santa Monica Brokerage, L. Brooks, G. James, 310.560.7411

**MOORPARK, CA**
- Equestrian Estate: 20± acres, custom barn, arena. $3,450,000. WEB: BB0422262. Westlake Village Brokerage, T. DeFrances, 310.425.5509

**THOUSAND OAKS, CA**
- 20,000 Sq. Ft. Lot: Recording room, extensive upgrades. $1,775,000. WEB: BB0422210. Westlake Village Brokerage, T. DeFrances, 310.425.5509

**BEVERLY HILLS, CA**
- Seasonal Furnished Lease: 1920s classic Spanish-style. $23,500/mo. WEB: BB0305060. Sunset Strip Brokerage, Lois Arden, 310.913.9339

**WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA**
- Penthouses View: Prewar French Chateau-style. $10,000/mo. WEB: BB0312309. Sunny House Brokerage, Liz Kirshner, Kacy O’Brien, 310.481.6255

**PASADENA, CA**
- Grandza Court: Wallace Neff-inspired architecture. $795,000-$1,155,000. WEB: BB0272891. Pasadena Brokerage, Mark Ogden, 626.398.2908

**FORESTVILLE, CA**
- 5± acres. 1700± sq. ft. timber and glass home. $31,950,000. WEB: BB0424264. Sonoma Brokerage, Jeremy Clifford, 707.973.4588

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Woodland Hills home and relocate to Santa Monica, Calif. "He said he wanted to get 100% financing and take some money over that amount, so basically refinanced it 10%," he says. "I had to explain to him, 'They just don't do that anymore. What was in vogue five, six years ago is not happening right now.'"

As a way to lay down the payment necessary to purchase a home these days, some music artists are taking cash advances on their royalties and using that money to pay down the 20% or other requirements, Lloyd Maddocks says. "Of course it's all hinged on how much they are going to be paid over what period of time, but it's an option I've seen used lately."

Though much of the world looks to the New York skyline as a beacon of the U.S. market, the truth is there aren't any real bargains to be found here in the luxury market.

The number of apartments that closed for more than $10 million in the city rose by 318% in first-quarter 2008 compared with the same period in 2007, says Silvana Malpelli, senior VP/director of relocation and business development at Brown Harris Stevens. During that same period, the average price for a Manhattan apartment rose 47%, she adds. "Our market has stayed pretty strong because there are still more people who can afford to live in all than apartments that actually have it all," Malpelli says.

"All cash doesn't matter so much because most deals at the high end are all cash," she adds. "And with respect to co-ops, many of the top ones now require two to three times the (purchase price in) liquid assets as well."

Many big music and film names are exchasing studios and co-ops for the allure of downtown living. Jon Bon Jovi reportedly paid $25 million for new Soho digs last year. Such gleaming new high-rises as 40 Mercer and 15 Central Park West, where Snoop and Denzel Washington recently bought homes, are attracting celebrities in droves.

"These buildings are tailor-made for that crowd," Corcoran Group president/CEO Pam Liebman says. "Entertainment people love their architecture, their cool factor, the amenities, the privacy. A lot of the typical co-ops have not seen the same sales phenomenon this year. But the entertainment crowd is not necessarily interested in co-ops. The co-ops wouldn't be in, and they don't really want to live there anyway. It's not their lifestyle." Of course, not every entertainment denizen dwells downtown. A townhouse on the Upper East Side, home to former Viacom president/CEO Tom Freston, is on the market for a cool $38.5 million. The six-and-a-half-story home, which was owned by Andy Warhol from 1974 to 1987, has been completely updated and includes a rooftop terrace and seven wood-burning fireplaces.

Another new building of interest to the music industry is the Hit Factory. The famed studio where luminaries from John Lennon to the Rolling Stones to Madonna laid down platinum tracks has been converted into 27 upscale loft-like residences ranging in size from 1,542 to 3,400 square feet. At press time, only four units were still on the market.

Yet while the "trophy listings" are booming, "when you get into the more 'normal' stratosphere, that's where we're seeing more caution from the buyers," Liebman says. "They better feel there's some value or else they walk away."

In Los Angeles, the concept of value is a little more fluid. The entertainment industry was hit big-time with the double assault of a nose-diving economy and the writers' strike. The uncertainty has definitely given more buyers pause, Lloyd Maddocks says.

"My clients are slower to move and a lot more careful," he says. "What's affected them more than anything is the Hollywood (writers') strike. A lot of people went back to work when the strike ended, but a lot also didn't. And they've had to take some time to see what the needs are for music for the series and movies. We are still feeling the fallout."

Lloyd Maddocks estimates that in prime ZIP codes including Beverly Hills and Bel Air, Calif., housing prices are down 10% from last year this time. In Malibu, where fires recently swept through, price tags have been cut even more. "It is most de-
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Inaugural NARM attendees, top, from left: JULES MALAMUD, BILL GALLAGHER, GENE WEISS, CY LESLIE, LEE HARTSTONE and BOB AUSTIN. Far left, presidential candidate JIMMY CARTER stops by in 1976. Near left, DIONNE WARWICK and NARM’s first president, JIM TIEDJENS. Appearing this year, below, from left: JUPITER RISING, ELIJAH KELLEY, DELTA GOODREM and JACKSON BROWNE.

As NARM Marks A Half-Century Of Achievement Amid Turmoil, We Look Ahead At The Future Of Music Retailing

50TH ANNIVERSARY
FULL CIRCLE

As it was in the beginning, so shall it be in the end. ●
While some may think Retail Track is going biblical, the first sentence of this column is actually the answer to the question. What will the record store landscape look like five years from now? ● As retailers and label executives gather in San Francisco for NARM’s 50th-anniversary convention, I asked a bunch of industry executives that very question. ● And while I was collecting answers, I was also reading through the 1958 bound volumes of the Billboard, as this magazine was known back then. Through that research I found that 50 years ago, there were two kinds of retailers—indepen dent retailers, which were called dealers, and the racked accounts—typically stores like Sears, Woolworth’s and supermarkets. ● Through my survey, I found that is also how industry participants believe the evolution of retail will play out in the next five years, at least in the physical realm. continued on >>p54

"Our friends should be companions who inspire us and who help us rise to our best" - Joseph B. Wirthlin

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from >>p52

"The physical retail landscape will be two ends of the spectrum and nothing in the middle," Universal Music Group Distribution president Jim Urie says. "It will be the big boxes and the independent stores. I don't think we will have a lot of midsized chains like we had 10 years ago. I don't see that ever coming back."

Although big boxes are not interested in music, in the future they will carry music, just as a traffic builder, Coalition of Independent Music Stores president Michael Kurtz says. On the other hand, it should come as no surprise that he believes that the future of indie retailers is assured.

Independent stores in urban areas will "superstitute" their customers' cultural entertainment needs, he says.

Likewise, Bull Moose VP of operations and marketing Chris Brown says, "I can't predict what we will look like in five years. What I do know is that there will be things on our shelves that people will want to buy."

Even with the drop in music sales, "a lot of stores are growing and opening stores, so our future is bright," he adds. "But we still need to find our path through the chaos."

Eric Levin, owner of Criminal Records and leader of the Alliance of Independent Music Stores coalition, says that if you are betting whether there will be physical stores selling music five years from now, then that's "safe money."

On the other hand, he concedes that the way record stores sell music may shift due to the digital channel, but not the way most people expect.

"Five years from now, 'online' won't even be a term because music will be everywhere and all you can eat at all times in all media will be available," he says. But, he adds, that will turn out to be the radio of the future.

Kurtz argues that digital is already acting as ready. "Digital is easily accessible, convenient, with good selection, but low quality," he says. "It's almost like we have gone full circle and are back to AM radio."

Having said that, he thinks subscription is a much better model than iTunes a la carte downloads because you can try new stuff before buying it. "It's kind of like a la carte for people," he says.

When the companies offering subscription services finally get their act together and consumers finally understand the subscription music business, that will alter the landscape, Kurtz says. "Rhapsody is a great service, I left Apple a year ago.

But Ben Morse, who oversees Interpunk, a Web site that specializes in lifestyle and merchandise for punk and indie rookers, foresees more competition as online retail becomes easier to get into. But for now, the barriers to entry to sell downloads is too high, Bull Moose's Brown says.

"Some day, somebody will figure out how to get it up so that digital can be smoothly and cheaply integrated into indie stores," he says. They will have an explosion of retailers selling all types of merchandise over the Web," Brown predicts.

Some merchants even see service improving online. One merchant notes that already there is a site that online stores can sign up for that will call a customer who is at the site for a certain period of time, but hasn't purchased, to see if the site needs help.

But even then, Web stores can't provide the same service levels as a good indie merchant, brick-and-mortar retailers say.

"Itunes can't help the customers like my associate who loves bluegrass and can tell you everything about it," Value Music head of purchasing Brian Poehner says. And after he knows the customer, he can "fix them up with recommendations."

While stores like Amazon can make recommendations to its regular customers, that feature becomes a problem for people who use the site for product research. Amazon recommended music to me that I despise, just because I check the site for my job. And when it's not doing that, it's recommending music or books that I already have, thank you very much.

But that's no wonder, according to Poehner. After all, "Itunes is just a relationship with a machine."

Meanwhile, the physical retailer will always have "wonderful items" to sell to people. Criminal's Levin assures. "We will always sell cool things for cool people, and that includes selling physical ownership of music to the collectors," he says. "There is always room for stores that sell to niches and the avant-garde.

"Think about stores like Shlake It Records or Grimey's or Waterloo, and the list goes on. Do you think people will suddenly stop shopping in stores like that?"
NARM President Jim Donio says NARM is still relevant amid the challenges facing retailers. NARM conventions have been remarkably upbeat and constructive in the past few years.

"Last year, I was shocked at the positive spirit at the NARM convention amidst a negative marketplace," Interscope head of sales Candace Berry says. "I am giving a lot of credit to that upbeat feeling to Jim Donio."

Donio, who joined NARM in 1988, says he expects this year's convention (May 4-7 in San Francisco), which will celebrate the trade association's 50th anniversary, to be every bit as relevant as the industry continues to wrestle through a jarring transformation.

Jim Donio has been NARM president since 2004, during a time when album sales have plummeted 23.7% from 656 million units in 2003 to 500 million units in 2007. Despite these turbulent times, NARM conventions have been remarkably upbeat and constructive in the past few years.

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Mack Avenue congratulates NARM on its 50th Anniversary!

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NARM President
Jim Donio
On Embracing Change In The Record Industry

LOOKING UP

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How would you assess the health of NARM and the industry?

NARM is very fortunate in that it’s been a lean and mean organization for all of its existence. We have been able to weather the myriad changes we have seen over the past five decades. We have shown that we could change and adjust to meet the needs of the members—the types of which also change—and the industry during the pivotal times.

The industry will continue to undergo transformation, and during that period of time some segments will be more vibrant than others. The whole industry is experiencing some element of pain.

I don’t want to be trite and say, “No pain, no gain,” but we will have to continue working through this period to come out on the other side. When we do, it will be new and different, and probably be unlike anything that we have seen for the past 50 years.

But has NARM and the industry been through a period like this before?

Look at what the industry was like in the late 1970s and 1980s. It was definitely a Chicken Little period with everyone claiming the sky is falling. Yet, they worked their way through the malaise and then the CD came about, and next you had tremendous growth.

Today, looking back at five decades of activity, no one knows what is coming, but we are a little bit of change and be there to dig in to find new opportunities, new resources and manage some pretty challenging issues.

What will be the main topics at this year’s NARM?

The new formats will spur some good healthy dialogue. The seeds were planted at last year’s convention, and maybe the single hasn’t come to fruition, but here we are now a year later. That led us to realize that some research on the formats was important, and so we worked with [market research firm] NPD.

We decided to take a step back and see what the consumer thinks, which is why we had the summit in early March to discuss the findings. We think the study will help the industry to take another step forward at the convention.

What about digital issues?

The other thing that I think will be a topic is all this dialogue and speculation about subscription models and “all you can eat,” and the catchphrase that “it has to feel like it’s free even if it’s not free.”

The myriad speculative models out there will be talked about both publicly and privately at NARM. I can’t imagine that this won’t be the primary topic at the convention.

That’s why a couple of new sessions will be a part of the digital NARM phase of the convention. We will bring the artists’ and managers’ perspective into it this year, something we didn’t have last year.

There is a lot of discussion about licensing and fees and royalties happening now, and it’s important that our members understand these issues because these talks will help form the underpinning of the new models as they come forward.

Is there any other issue that might come to the fore this year at NARM?

The evergreen topic about the release schedule will be there. This year it looks like the second quarter will have some strong releases between R.E.M., Leona Lewis, Mariah Carey and Madonna, and Usher may move up from June to May. And that’s all good because it creates excitement.

How will you mark NARM’s 50th anniversary?

One of the things that I am very excited about is that three of the main architects of NARM, James J. Tischler [who owned Milwaukee rock musical NARM Record], who was the first NARM president, will be here, as will Ed Snyder [who ran the Edge rack in Washington, D.C.], who went on to become the owner of the Philadelphia Flyers hockey team. Two other founders, George Berry [and Tower founder] Russ Solomon, will be here.

[Former Musicland chairman] Jack Eugster, [former Spev’s president] Ann Lieff, [former wholesaler One-Way head] Dave Schlang and [former rack operation Sight & Sound head] Bill Hall will all be coming. I better stop now because if I keep on going, I will forget somebody and get in trouble.

We will have a gallery of memories with 50 black-and-white photographs of past conventions and we will have memorabilia from the past 50 years.

Last year we asked members to share memories, and we will use the highlights as sound bites in our video on NARM’s history. But we will have the longer interviews looping and playing continuously so that as members move about the convention, they can stop and watch them.

We will also have a compendium of all the great performances that have occurred here at NARM, from the superstar to the newcomers who began here and returned later as a superstar.

—Ed Christian

NARM

WHAT: The 50th-anniversary convention of NARM
WHERE: San Francisco Marriott
WHEN: May 4-7
WEB: narm.com

WHO: Executives from music retailers, wholesalers, record companies and more. NARM’s retail members account for 85% of the music sold in the U.S. market, while its supplier members represent almost 50% of the music produced for the U.S. market.

SHOWCASES: Algebra (Kedar Entertainment), Anna’s Brother (MFA), Blind Melon (Adrenaline), Mikal Blue (Immergent), the Crystal Method (Adrenaline), Delta Goodrem (Decca), Will Hoge (Ryko), Stanley Jordan (Black Avenue), Elijah Kelley (New Line), Lisa Loeb (Furious Rose), Michael McDonald (Universal Motown), Hiliby McRae (Hear Music/Stone Road), Janelle Monáe (Atlantic/Big Boy), Morning Benders (Highwater Music/A4), Naturally? (Festivallati/EMI Music Marketing), Parlor Mob (Roadrunner), Randy Travis (Warner Bros. Nashville) and the Vowels (self-released)
Neil Diamond doesn't mess with success. That's why he "never doubted" he'd work again with producer Rick Rubin, who steered their 2005 collaboration, "12 Songs," to a No. 4 debut on the Billboard 200. Diamond's best since "The Jazz Singer" in 1982. The album has sold 571,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Indeed, Diamond, 67, says he and Rubin began working on "Home Before Dark," due May 6 via Columbia, "within weeks after '12 Songs' was finished. All of those questions you have when you work with somebody new were yesterday's news. We knew what we wanted to do."

So after "14 or 15 months" of writing, Diamond hit the studio with Rubin and an improvisationally lean band featuring guitarists Mike Campbell, Matt Sweeney and Smokey Hormel and keyboardist Benmont Tench. Dixie Chicks vocalist Natalie Maines chipped in on "Another Day (That Time Forgot)," Diamond's first major duet with a female voice since "You Don't Bring Me Flowers" with Barbra Streisand in 1978.

As with "12 Songs," the material on "Home Before Dark" is drumless, with Diamond's still-commanding voice front and center and his rhythm guitar, which he went three decades without playing in the studio, guiding the way for the other instrumentalists. On "Whose Hands Are These" and the title track, Diamond hammered out the final arrangements (with Tench and Sweeney, respectively) after the regular session was over for the day.

"Working with these guys, and having Rick's ear, made it a great deal of fun," Diamond says. "Of course, I had to have the enthusiasm of the band, and their consent, in a way. When I played them a new song, I wanted them to love it and feel where they belonged in it. I was lucky enough to receive that on all of these songs. They'd be playing along and looking for their places even before I'd finish the first run-through. It was magic, in a way."

Columbia has translated Diamond's enthusiasm to its marketing partners, which include everyone from Amazon (which premiered a live-in-studio video for first single "Pretty Amazing Grace" April 7) to "American Idol" (on which Diamond appeared April 29) to indie blog havens like Stereogum and Brooklyn Vegan.

"(Manager) Katie McNeil came in last fall just to play the music," Columbia marketing executive Chris Poppe says. "We had all these separate, small meetings with promo, publicity, marketing and online, and we watched these people drift away. We used that everywhere else we went — just sit and listen to it. You don't need to say a lot more."

Diamond scored a No. 27 Adult Contemporary hit last time around with "Delicious Love," featuring Brian Wilson, and Columbia is working "Pretty Amazing Grace" to AC as well as triple A, public radio. XM and Sirius. Sirius is also planning a dedicated Diamond channel to launch in the coming weeks.

At retail, a deluxe edition of the album will be available, featuring four live-in-studio videos, including a non-album cover of Simon & Garfunkel's "The Boxer."

And although Diamond now has a Myspace page (with nearly 50,000 friends), the bulk of the promo focus will be on his summer tour, which starts May 24 in Rotterdam, Netherlands, and touches down in North America July 19 in St. Paul, Minn. Included in the itinerary is an Aug. 23 date at Boston's Fenway Park, which Diamond announced with a surprise video appearance on the scoreboard during an April 8 Red Sox game.

Diamond's last tour in 2005 grossed nearly $80 million from 86 shows that drew 1.2 million people, according to Billboard Boxscore.

"I always like to include songs I haven't done in the show in a while," he says, declining to reveal specifics but promising that material from "12 Songs" and "Home Before Dark" will be included. "We just took out one of the songs we'd been using in the show as part of the rehearsals and replaced it with something that was better suited and I had definitely wanted to do but couldn't find a place for."

To ensure concertgoers will be aware of "Home Before Dark," Columbia is working on contests at indie retail featuring ticket tie-ins and will have signage in venues about the new album, according to senior VP of digital sales and marketing Glenn Frese.

In the time since Diamond and Rubin worked on "12 Songs," the latter became co-head of Columbia, but Diamond insists the conversation never turned toward business.

"We talk about the music and the recordings, and that's what our relationship is about," he says. "His work with Columbia is his own challenge, and I wish him well with it. But our relationship with him is all about the art of making great records."
**GLOBALPULSE**

**HEY TONIGHT**

Seven years after its last album, English alt-rock band James is back on the U.K. charts.

James' 11th studio set, "Hey Ma" (Fontana/Mercury), entered the Official U.K. Charts Co.'s albums survey at No. 10 one week after its April 7 release. Formed in 1981 in Manchester, James had eight U.K. top 10 albums, but ceased activity in December 2001. The band reformed last year for U.K./European live dates and will play further U.K. shows Dec. 11-19, booked by London-based X-Ray Touring.

"We knew there was a hardcore constituency of fans that would welcome them back," says manager Peter Rudge of London-/New York-based Octagon Music.

A U.S. release for "Hey Ma" is scheduled for late August through Universal, with September North American dates planned through New York-based Paradigm. "We want to grow James internationally," Rudge says, citing an upcoming U.S. TV ad campaign featuring album track "WhiteBoy" for an as-yet-unnamed major car manufacturer as a strong platform to reintroduce the band. James is published by Chrysalis Music.

—Richard Smirk

**PRAISE BE**

Australian singer/songwriter Robert Forster's latest album "The Evangelist"—released April 29 on Yep Roc in North America—wasn't intended to be a solo record. He'd just begun writing songs for the 10th Go-Betweens studio album with Grant McLennan, his long-time partner in the Brisbane-based pop-rock act, when McLennan died of a heart attack in May 2006 at age 48.

Forster's initial reaction was to quit music. "I thought Robert might not record again," says Bernard MacMahan, head of A&R at the band's U.K. label Lo-Max Records. "But before Grant died [Forster] had started writing articles for a prestigious Australian magazine called the Monthly. I think doing that gave him the space to think about making another record from a clearer perspective. He just called me one day and said, 'I'm ready to record.'"

Forster has said one reason for returning to music was to record "Demon Days," a song McLennan was working on when he died and one of the album's three posthumous co-writes. While London-based Lo-Max has international rights to the Go-Betweens catalog, the new album appeared April 21 on Forster's own Vital-distributed Tag 5 imprint in the United Kingdom, with Lo-Max handling promotion/marketing. Mainz, Germany-based Tuition Records released "The Evangelist" April 4 in mainland Europe; EMI issued it April 26 in Australia.

Live dates are being scheduled for Europe, (through X-Ray Touring) and North America (via Ground Control). Forster's publishing is with Union Square Music. —Steve Adams

**HIP-HOP**

**HE'S GOT IT**

Newcomer 2 Pistols Builds From The Ground Up

In the words of Universal Republic senior VP of urban music, "Rhianna and Marion 5 have joined forces on a remix of "I'll Never See Your Face Again," the lead single from the latter's 2007 effort, "It Won't Be Soon Before Long." The track will appear in June on a series of both acts' most recent albums. Rihanna's "Good Girl Gone Bad" will reach stores June 17, while Marion 5's set will be released in late June.

**INTERVIEW**

**LATEST BUZZ**

**RADIOHEAD BLOWWIND**

It was a pivotal moment for the music industry, one that many feared sounded the death knell for recorded music sales. But Radiohead won't be repeating its decision to let fans choose what to pay for their downloads, frontman Thom Yorke says. "I think it was a one-off response to a particular situation," Yorke says of the band's decision last October to let buyers pay what they wanted for digital downloads of the album "In Rainbows."

**VIRGIN FEST EXPANDS**

Bob Dylan, Iggy & the Stooges, Paramore, Chuck Berry (backed by the Silver Beats), the Black Keys and Wilco will join previously announced headliners Foo Fighters, Jack Johnson, Kanye West, Nine Inch Nails and Stone Temple Pilots for the third annual Virgin Mobile Festival Aug. 9-10 at Pimlico Race Course in Baltimore. In addition to two main stages, there will be a dance tent dedicated to electronic music, including a Moby DJ set.

**FACE' TIME**

Rihanna and Maroon 5 have joined forces on a remix of "I'll Never See Your Face Again," the lead single from the latter's 2007 effort, "It Won't Be Soon Before Long." The track will appear in June on a series of both acts' most recent albums. Rihanna's "Good Girl Gone Bad" will reach stores June 17, while Marion 5's set will be released in late June.

**MONOLITH'S BIG NAMES**

Justice, Devotchka, Silver-Sun pickups, Band of Horses, TV on the Radio, Sharon Jones & the Dap-Kings and Vampire Weekend are scheduled to appear at the second annual Monolith Festival Sept. 13-14 at Red Rocks Amphitheatre outside Denver. Also on the bill are the Avett Brothers, The Mamas & the Papas, X, Smokey Joe, Del Tha Funky Homosapien, Cut Copy, Hickey Avalon, CSS, the Fratells, the Kills, Tokyo Police Club and the Ting Tings.

Reporting by Mariel Conception, Mitchell Peters, Mimi Yajnik and Ray Waddell.
**Rock Radio Titan Back To No. 1 In No 'Time'**

The difference between 3 Doors Down's self-titled new album, due May 20 on Universal Republic and its last, the appropriately named "Seventeen Days," is day and night. Or more appropriately, months and days.

AFTER some 1.4 million copies of "Seventeen Days," far less than the 9.2 million combined that it tallied on its first two Universal Republic releases, band and label decided to slow the process down. "The record company just said, 'Guys, go write, and when you've got it done, we'll be here,'" lead singer Brad Arnold says.

Unlike its last album, which as its title indicated was recorded in 17 days, the new set was a months-long labor of love that was written and recorded while the band hunkered down in Franklin, Tenn., and Orlando, Fla. in both locations 3 Doors Down rented homes into studios and moved in. Only when mixing the set did the band enter an actual studio.

Reminded that he once told Billboard "I like having pressure" when referring to the quick turnaround on the band's last album, Arnold laughs. "Maybe it just seemed like I liked having pressure, because it sure was nice having all that time this time around," he says.

Longtime observers will notice a more positive tone on the new set, the first single from which, "It's Not My Time," is already No. 1 on Billboard's Mainstream Rock chart. "Besides the time issue, I think the biggest difference is that we are all in our places and lives," Arnold says. "I always mean for it to be positive but sometimes it comes out in a bit of a negative way. This time it's staring into the light rather than staring into the dark."

Johnny K, who produced the band's last set, took the reins again. "He didn't get a fair shot to really make '17 Days,' because of deadlines," guitarist Chris Henderson says. "We literally marathoned it—four or five 24-hour days for him and the band. It was a grueling process. This time he got his shot."

The new album campaign began during the holiday season, when the track "Citizen Soldier" appeared in a National Guard campaign that was shown in movie theaters. The cut managed to debut at No. 99 on the Billboard Hot 100 thanks to digital sales.

Now, the quick success of "It's Not My Time" has 3 Doors Down teed up for another platinum release. The song is also No. 15 at adult top 40 and No. 29 at top 40.

"We have had great success with every single they have released thus far," alternative WEND (the End) Charlotte, N.C., PD Jack Daniel says. "We put it 'It's Not My Time' right into rotation the moment we got our hands on it."

Active rock KZRO Springfield, Mo., PD Simon Nites calls 3 Doors Down "the Lynyrd Skynyrd for the new millennium" and says the group appeals equally to older and younger listeners. "It's mainstream [and] it's highly familiar," he says. "Almost as soon as you hear it, you know it's 3 Doors Down."

"We get a lot of airplay on this band, so it's about connecting the dots," Universal senior VP of marketing and artist development Kim Garner says, adding that advertising campaigns are under way at print, radio and TV. "Thanks to 3 Doors Down's strong military support, Garner says the label will also advertise in military newspapers and at base military kiosks. 'That's definitely their audience,' she says.

But it has to be danceable. And from that point on, creativity can be applied." Several songs are politically charged, and many deal with Cuba.

"Algarabia" is predominantly salsa, with touches of reggaeton and rock guitars, as well as a couple of romantic boleros. The album features 13 tracks, and on top of that Chirino recorded two iTunes exclusives.

Following promotion in May and June, dates are being set for Chirino to perform in the United States, Mexico and Europe, finishing with a concert at the American Airlines Arena in Miami at the fall, first arena solo date in the city. But as important as the tour is, Chirino says, his immediate concern is his album.

"I always, always have considered the album to be the single most important project in a career," he says. "It's what remains for others generations to listen to. The true purpose of an artist to become immortal through his work."
It's not your imagination—T-Bone Burnett is everywhere you look these days. He's on the road with Robert Plant and Alison Krauss after producing their Grammy Award-winning 2007 release "Raising Sand." He also has production credits on upcoming albums by John Mellencamp ("Life, Death, Love and Freedom") and B.B. King ("Things I Wish I'd Said"), and he was just tapped by the Who to produce an album of covers, set to be released in 2009.

Oh, yeah—he makes his own music, too. After breaking a 14-year recording hiatus, Burnett released "The True False Identity" in 2006, along with the compilation set "Twenty Twenty—The Essential T-Bone Burnett." And this month he emerges with "Tooth of Crime," a companion album to Sam Shepard's revision of his 1972 play of the same name (now called "Tooth of Crime [Second Dance?")).

The album features the same dry, hollow sound that's become associated with the Texas-born Burnett in recent years, along with the same corps of musicians—including guitarist Marc Ribot and drummer Jim Keeltner—that Burnett considers his team.

One song, "Kill Zone," hails from a late-'80s collaboration with Roy Orbison. These are all welcome additions to a career that includes landmark works as Los Lobos' "How Will the Wolf Survive?" Elvis Costello's "King of America" and the Grammy-winning soundtrack to "O Brother, Where Art Thou?"

1. You're on tour now with Robert Plant and Alison Krauss. Did you feel you needed to personally shepherd "Raising Sand" onto the road—and will there be a sequel?

Well, yeah. When Robert first talked about this he said he wanted to do it as a band rather than as a duet album. And it really turned into a band—and this is an incredible band. Every musician is great, and the two singers are just ridiculous, so it was an irresistible project. And once again I'm in the worst player in the band, keeping with my standard operating procedure—laughing. (As for a sequel), I hope so. I really do, because I feel like we're just starting to know what we can do with this thing. The two of them are so incredibly good that I would hate to not continue to work with both of them. (laughs)

2. You're reactivating your label, DMZ.

It's morphing into a new company called Code, which is spelled X-O-Delta-E. We'll be able to function as a record company if we want to, but first of all it's an artist-driven initiative. We're going to do something similar to THX where there's going to be a fairly large group of artists who have already signed on and who are going to say, "This is the way we want our music heard now." We're going to put out high-resolution audio, and we can come in at any point of the process; there's production, manufacturing and distribution—only now it's "delivery"—and we can do all three of those things. We don't need record companies at all anymore—that's the reality. They've just done themselves out of business with their own greed. They've taken themselves out of the game and they don't know how to do it anymore, so we're just going to take control of our own work and deliver it to people the way we want it delivered.

3. What do you have planned for the Who covers album?

Well, that's exciting. I've been a High Numbers fan (a name the Who took during its mod phase) for some time because I love that song: "I'm the Face," I love the Slim Harpo song "Got Love If You Want It" that it came from—but I loved the way they did it. Roger Daylrey is a very great singer, and we've started going through material. We've picked out about five or six songs that we've all said, "Yeah, it's good"—I'm not going to say what they are because that might take some of the fun out of it. And I'm sure we'll find more as we go on. We'll probably do about 15 songs.

4. What did you want to accomplish with B.B. King on his album?

I saw B.B. at the Central Forest Ballroom in Dallas in '65 or something like that. I remembered exactly how that felt and how that sounded, so I wanted to go back and sort of recreate that very live sound. We all cut it just sitting around in a circle. I tried to be very true to who [King] was when I first heard him and that energy—in other words, not try to update it in any way.

5. How did you find working with John Mellencamp?

I love John Mellencamp. He is a powerful musician and he rocks like crazy and he's really a great singer. He's salty as all get-out, there's no doubt about that, but I enjoy that. I'm at a great time in my life now where everybody I work with is so good you just sort of turn on the tape and they do it—and that's how it was with him, too.

He's a great storyteller and a great artist. I didn't offer much direction, really, but he was certainly open. He encouraged me to play guitar a lot on the record, which I enjoyed. For years and years I stayed away from playing on the records I produced because I wanted to stay outside of the songs. I just wanted to be able to absorb them. But he wanted me to play, so I did, and he's got a great band. It was a terrific experience.

6. You're an artist, songwriter, producer, musical director—do you like any one better than the other?

The best job in show business is a free-standing artist. I shied away from it because I was, I don't know...embarrassed? Kind of. I know I'm not good enough in the face of Ray Charles, you know? I wasn't good enough for myself. And for a long time I haven't known what I wanted to say, at least on my own record.

I didn't really feel like I had to be a record artist. I had to learn to accept who I am and let it be that...I have things I want to say now. I've got a whole bunch of songs I've written, and I'm just going to keep working as much as I can to get this stuff down.
**ALBUMS**

**POP**

**GAVIN DeGRAW**

**Producer:** Howard Benson

**Release Date:** May 6

On his sophomore album—the follow-up to 2003’s slow-building platinum smash “Chariot”—Gavin DeGraw deftly weaves together rock, pop, and soul influences without letting the seams show. Courtesy of producer Howard Benson (Daughtry, P.O.D., My Chemical Romance), this 12-song set leaps more on its rock muscle than anything else, with biting guitar chords punctuating DeGraw’s taut and tuneful melodies in the opening track and first single, “In Love With a Girl,” to such classic rock-sampling pieces as “Relative.” DeGraw’s soulful vocal swoops stand out on “I Have You To Thank,” while his ballad side emotes on “Young Love” and “Let It Go.” “We Belong” Together” moves from an anemic start into a delicate dynamic build that provides a master class in DeGraw’s deft straddle between craft and passion.—GG

**NEIL DIAMOND**

**Home Before Dark**

**Producer:** Rick Rubin

**Release Date:** May 6

Though Neil Diamond is riding the good will created by 2006’s Rich Rubin-produced “12 Songs,” there is a song on “Home Before Dark” called “Don’t Go There,” and the danger of overreaching “Heartlight”—itis always a worry. While not quite as revealing and re-awarding as its 2005 cousin, the new album will certainly please fans of Rubin and Diamond’s stark-yet-comfy acoustic direction. The sprawling opener “If I Don’t See You Again” has the right sprincling of epic; “Another Day (That Time Forgot)” is a gorgeous duet with Natalie Maines. It’s hard to shake the feeling that “Home” sounds like the younger brother of “12 Songs,” but it’s a warm, supremely confident next step in Diamond’s unlikely renaissance. Best of all, there’s not a seagull to be found.—AV

**ROBYN**

**Kathy’s Cloak**

**Producer:** Richard图

**Release Date:** May 6

It’s hard to shake the feeling that “Home” sounds like the younger brother of “12 Songs,” but it’s a warm, supremely confident next step in Diamond’s unlikely renaissance. Best of all, there’s not a seagull to be found.—AV

**NO AGE**

**Nouns**

**Producers:** Peter Lyman, Harvey Birrell

**Release Date:** May 6

For their first Sub Pop release, Los Angeles minimalists Dean Spunt and Randy Randall distort and drone in their signature style. But unlike the reissue of singles they have released sporadically during the past few years, “Nouns” is a cleaner and more all-encompassing effort. As the duo’s name suggests, No Age resists being shuffled into a genre or time; the punk-style vocals are pushed to the back, overshadowed by indie riffs and lush but catatonic instrumental production. It’s possible that they could alienate listeners looking for a more robust or more committed from them, but just as likely that they will pick up some fans with their newfound symphonic sensibilities. “Nouns” is a more likable and less abrasive version of No Age, with a little something for everyone and a little nothing for no one as well.—JW

**CLAY AIKEN**

**On My Way Here**

**Producers:** Kipper, Jaymes Foster

**Release Date:** May 6

In the Broadway show that is Clay Aiken’s public life, he is, of course, the leading man. His fourth full-length progresses just like the Original Cast Recording, with character development songs, such as “On My Way Here,” upbeat, lively songs in the middle (“Something About Us”), and a deenue of regret and lessons learned (“Lover All Alone”). Aiken, who debuted on the Great White Way this year in “Spamalot,” sings like a theater veteran: almost too perfect, with a self-aware showmanship. But that doesn’t make pop-rock nuggets like “Ashes” any less catchy, or the ballads—on which Aiken’s breathy tenor could break housewife hearts—ring any less true. With big American melodies, stock AC production and general inoffensiveness throughout, this should satisfy his army of self-dubbed Claymates.—KM

**MINT CONDITION**

**E-Life**

**Producer:** mint Condition

**Release Date:** May 6

Best-known for such ’90s-era hits as “Breakin’ My Heart,” “Pretty Baby,” and “U Send Me Swingin’,” Minneapolis-bred Mint Condition returns with a studio follow-up to its last outing—2006’s tasty performance set “Live From the 9:30 Club.” It’s a treatise on life in the digital age with a principal lesson. The issues predat- ing our computerized world—love, trust, family concerns—still remain. Mint Condition couches its perspectives in catchy R&B, hip-hop, funk and jazz rhythms and meaningful lyrics that resonate after the CD stops playing. A case in point is “Baby Baby Baby Girl,” an ode to father- hood fashioned around an infectious downbeat and An- thony Hamilton’s down-home vocals. At a time when self-contained bands are a rarity, Mint Condition shows it still has the goods.—GM

**THE LAST SHADOW PUPPETS**

**The Age of the Understatement**

**Producer:** James Ford

**Release Date:** May 6

Given that he finds regular employment as frontman of alt-rock phenomenon Arctic Monkeys, it’s unlikely that Alex Turner has any immediate plans to give up the day job. But should he ever decide he’s finished with Monkey business, he could do a lot worse than concen- trate on this extracurricular collaboration with Miles Kane of rising U.K. band the Rascals. Already No. 1 in Britain, “Temporary” is a far cry from the stock-in-trade of grubby urban realism, instead resem- bling a long-lost Scott Walker album or James Bond soundtrack. Songs like “Calm Like You” and “Black Plant” positively swing, and despite the presence of a 22-piece orchestra, the lyrical bite and brisk pacing mean things never topple into cheesy pastiche. Moonlighting hasn’t been this much fun since Bruce Willis had hair.—MS

**JOSEPH GROBAN**

**Awake Live**

**Producer:** Ian Stewart

**Director:** Hamish Hamilton

**Release Date:** May 6

Joseph Groban’s third live DVD chronicles one stop during his 2007 tour in support of 2006 set “Awake,” with a host of creatively retouched arrangements, world music instruments and towering vocals, testifying again that the tenor-tainer is far from your average pop star. “Awake Live” features 20 visual performances, with an accom- panying audio CD sampling nine of them. The CD tracks demonstrate Groban’s far-reaching versatility. “Machine” verges on raucous with its driving jazzy template, anti- apartheid anthem “Weeping” makes a dramatic call for global peace, and an extended version of latest hit “Awake” turns lyrical morning dew into a pounding thunder- storm of emotion. The album’s highlight, a five-minute take on 2007’s “February Song,” somersaults with one soaring build after another—as frenzied as a ballad could ever be. A dazzling display.—CT

**ESTELLE**

**Shine**

**Producers:** various

**HomeSchool/Atlantic**

**Release Date:** April 29

London-bred singer Estelle’s stateside debut, “Shine,” is heaving with catchy, instantly likable hip-hop/R&B/ pop songs produced by the likes of Will.i.am, Wyee, Jean and Mark Ronson, to name a few, and featuring Kanye West and Cee-lo, among others. “No Substitu- tue Love” samples George Michael’s “Faith” and features the 28-year-old songstress bet- tering, if not outdancing and outshining her mischievous boyfriend, croons about wanting to formalize a rela- tionship with a part-time lover on the piano-laden “More Than Friends.” “So many search to find love that’s as good as mine,” a confident Estelle sings on the reggae-tinged “Come Over.”
THE BILLBOARD

REVIEWS

SINGLES

ACE YOUNG
Addicted (3:43)
Producers: Desmond Child, Andreas Carlsson, Jon Nell, Kai Gusse
writers: A. Young, D, Child, A. Carlsson, K. Gusse

Pizzaro

"American idol" season-five finalist Ace Young was among the prettiest, but also most capable vocalists, with understated charm. That makes enthralling first single "Addicted" a bit of a shock—there's nothing laid-back about this TNT-ignited, full-on pop opus, so spum with production elements that Phil Spector would wink. Boasting heavy-duty super-producer Desmond Child and Swede hitmaker Andreas Carlsson, the song's mass of strings, horns, percussion, a gritty guitar solo and craftily layered vocals sound home one hook after another. Reminiscent of Savage Garden or any other cherished melodious fave, Young delivers quite the ace. "Addicted" has every element to break this talent wide open.—CT

TRIPLE A
JARBOE & JUSTIN K. BROADRICK
8mm sweetbitter (6:00)
Producers: Justin Broadrick
writers: J. Broadrick, Jarboe
publishers: groovy, ASCAP

This is one party you don't want to miss.—ABY

TIDAL A
NELLY FEATURING FERGIE
Party People (4:07)
Producers: Polow Da Don
writers: C. Haynes, J. Jones, S. Garrett, S. Ferguson
publishers: Dertty/Universal

With a consistent style and energy all his own, Nelly has delivered 11 top 10 dance jams at R&B, including No. 1 "Hot in Herre," "Dilemma" with Kelly Rowland and "Call On Me" with Janet Jackson. On "Party People," the second single from upcoming "Brass Knuckles," he sticks to the winning formula, with an upbeat track from Polow Da Don, guest vocals from Fergie and verses expertly chopped and screwed. But the standout here, aside from his usual slang and charisma, is Nelly's clever double-time flow with a single rhyme scheme in the third verse. Fergie's accompanying rap hardly measures up alongside Nelly's, but radio's indefatigable devotion to her will help propel the track at pop. An instrument remixed version featuring Lil Kim will better convince the streets. Either way, Nelly's mass-appeal invitation will rally all sides to this "Party.—SR

MARIAN CAREY
Bye Bye (4:27)
Producers: Stargate, Mariah Carey
writers: M. Carey, J. Austin, M. DeBarge, T. Newman
publishers: various

One "Touch" was enough to convince the masses that at 36, Mariah Carey is as much a chart tigress as any one-half her age. Sure enough, "E=MC²" launch single "Touch My Body" became her 18th No. 1 Billboard Hot 100 single. That playful romp is followed by a reminder that Mimi is as capable of putting a weighty message in front without sacrificing melodic juice. "Bye Bye" offers comfort for anyone suffering loss: "This is for my peoples who just lost somebody, your best friend, your baby, your man or your lady/ Lift your head to the sky, cos we will never say bye." A tinkly piano-driven groove eots the lyrical embrace, with oozy synths, a flush of R&B via male shout-outs of "Eh!" and a vocal that builds to a fitting tour-de-force crescendo, though pushed down in the mix to maintain decorum. "Bye" seems poised to have Carey greet the top of the pops for the 19th time.—CT

LATIN

BOSTICH + FUSIBLE
Tijuana Sound Machine
Producers: Rauli Anzecua, Pepe Magt
Nacional Records
Release Date: May 6

Nortec Collective, the group of Tijuana master fusionists of electronically and traditional Mexican instrumentation, presents two of its member DJs in a demented new session. What starts out as a cute do-a-do of accordion and bass moves into a spirited electro-ska rave territory, with chopped-up brass providing the beat... and then we go to a haisy ride on speed. Bostich and Fusible have a perhaps unparalleled ability to show off what an accordion can do: provide a percussive background, a furious dance melody or a meditative jam. Ditto for tubas and trumpets, which build goyoys from New Orleans marching band-style to dancefloor anthem. This is one party you don't want to miss.—ABY

GOSSIP

GAITHER VOCAL BAND
Lavin' Life
producer: Gaither Vocal Band
Spring House Music
Release Date: April 15

Through the years, the Gaither Vocal Band has remained a domineering force in the Southern gospel community by consistently giving the audience what it has come to expect—great songs and soul-stirring harmonies. The act hits the mark again on this fine collection. Patriarch Bill Gaither takes lead on the poignant ballad "Go Ask," which he penned with his wife, Gloria. "Jesus and John Wayne" provides longtime GVB member Guy Penrod a chance to tap into his country roots. Each member gets a turn in the spotlight, with Marshall Hall serving up the beautiful ballad "When I Cry," which he wrote with Benji Gaither. Wes Hampton shines on "There's Always Room at the Table" and "The Difference in me." A thoroughly satisfying effort from one of Southern gospel's most consistent quartets.—DEP

CHILDREN'S MUSIC
BARENAKED LADIES
Snacktime!
producer: Michael Philip Wojewoda
Desperation Records
Release Date: May 6

A Barenaked Ladies children's album is about as inevitable as gas prices climbing above the $4 mark. BNL is uniquely suited with its proper balance of whimsy, heart, silliness and songcraft. It would be hard to find anyone who can't relate to the insightful empathy of Stephen Page's "Bad Day" or the plain-spoken desires ("I wish I could speak with my dog... "). "What a Wild Tune" and "Allergies." With BNL's vocal harmonies intact, "Snacktime!" is a musical lunch worth having at just about any time of the day.—GG

LEGENDS & CRITIC'S CHOICE

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

CONTRIBUTORS: Sophie Baratta, Ayva Baddoula, Maria Concodocic, Gary Caff, Kerr Marsh, Michael Marachal, Ali Memz, Gail Mitchell, Seven Philips, Deborah Evans Price, Shad Reed, Mark Sutherland, Chuck Taylor, Christa L. Titus, Jeff Vrabel, Mikael Wood, Laxinia Jones Wright

PICK 1: A new release predicted to hit the top half of the chart in the corresponding format.

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

All albums commercially available in the United States are eligible. Second place is given to writers to Jonathan Cohen and singles reviews to Chuck Taylor (both at Billboard, 770 Broadway, Seventh Floor, New York, NY 10003) or to the writers in the appropriate bureaus.

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www.americanradiohistory.com
AD ROCK

Apple Taps The Ting Tings For New iPod Commercial

Fritz, Noel Nisim. The Ting Tings? Get ready for the latest band to be featured in an Apple commercial, the U.K.-based, Sony BMG-signed Ting Tings. Their single, "Shut Up and Let Me Go," plays throughout the newest iPod ad, which made its debut April 27 on the CW's "Everybody Hates Chris," ABC's "Desperate Housewives" and Fox's "Family Guy."

Artists typically see a large bump in sales and profile after being featured in Apple ads. Nisim's single "New Soul" (Toor Oard/Atlantic) sold 134,000 copies during the first two weeks it was featured in a commercial for the MacBook Air. Her self-titled album containing the song had yet to be released in the United States.

After an iPod ad featuring her "1234" (Cherrytree/Polydor) debuted, Feist saw single sales jump 586%, from 7,000 the week ending Sept. 16, 2007, to 41,000 the following week, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

The Ting Tings' manager, London-based Stephen Taverner of Out There Management, says the deal came out of his efforts to secure the band's appearances at South by Southwest.

Several people from Apple/iTunes attended the band's showcase at SXSW by Southwest," he says. "They all seemed to really enjoy the band live. A lot of them were talking about 'Shut Up and Let Me Go' but we had no idea we were being considered for a commercial at that stage."

Apple declined to comment on the use of the Ting Tings' music in their marketing, as did agency TBWA/MAcedia Arts Lab.

The Ting Tings' album, "We Started Nothing," will be released May 19 in the United Kingdom, the day before it becomes available digitally in the United States; both through Columbia. A physical release in the States follows June 3. Taverner predicts a top five entry in the United Kingdom, with a "slower build" stateside.

The Ting Tings began their U.K. career as alternative darlings, with a slot on the NME Awards tour earlier this year. In the States, the duo will kick off a 12-date mini-tour of North America with an appearance June 6 on "Jimmy Kimmel Live." Later that month, according to Columbia's Benny Tarantino, they will play New York's Apple store.

And the Apple deal is not the Ting Tings' first time working with a big-name brand. Earlier this year the video for "Great DJ" was one of 24 shown in Mercedes-Benz's Mixtape Music magazine, a monthly online showcase that highlights artists.

In fact, the placement of "Shut Up" in the iPod ad comes amid "Great DJ" being worked to various outlets. Modern rock radio, including KROQ, Los Angeles, has been spinning "Great DJ," which also is available as a free download as iTunes' single of the week. "(Shut Up) Is on sale at iTunes." It's a nice problem to have," Taverner says.

Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, the band is about to break with a third track, "That's Not My Name." Not available to download until May 11, with physical formats in stores the following day, "That's Not My Name" is No. 10 on Nielsen Music Control's Top 10 Radio Growers list, with support from stations ranging from national top 40 network kBC Radio 1 to modern rock regional network XFM.

"Ever since we put that track on MySpace last February, everyone across the board reacted well," Taverner says. "It's one of those songs that translates well across commercial pop stations and alternative formats. But the album is full of great songs—we're looking at [releasing] seven singles from it in the U.K. We want to bear [Michael Jackson's] 'Thriller.'"

INTOCABLE ON TOP

Intocable's "Tu Adios No Mata" debuts at No. 1 on Billboard's Regional Mexican Airplay chart this week, a feat that hasn't been accomplished since Los Tigres del norte's "Lágrimas" debuted in the top spot in 1999.

Intocable's two-year absence from the recording studio may mean there's a pent-up demand at radio for the group's signature mix of norteño with rock and country touches.

Lead singer Ricky Muñoz says Intocable's "2C" album, due June 10 on EMI Televisa, does contain "futuristic" elements—but unlike the strong country feel of Intocable's last album, this one "retakes a little more of the style we started."

"Tu Adios No Mata," by composer Oswaldo Villarreal, arrived as a demo with nothing more than piano behind it. Muñoz and bandmate René Martinez co-produced the album, creating arrangements as they recorded in the studio. The single starts with a pop-rock intro, then kicks in with the accordion; at the end of the song, it comes back to a space, modern arrangement.

"You could say all the music we listen to is in that song," Muñoz says, citing '80s rock from Van Halen and Def Leppard as just as much of an influence on the group as norteño legend Ramón Ayala.

Muñoz also credits the team working the single for its powerhouse debut. Martin Fabián, a leading regional Mexican radio promoter, was brought in for the project.

Musically, "the guys take care of all the details," Fabián says. "When you listen to the song it doesn't sound like it was made in a hurry." Fabián is putting together a tour for Intocable, starting in June, on which the band will headline about 40 shows nationwide with duranguense group Los Horoscopos de Durango and soloist El Gringo. (Fabián manages the latter two acts.)

Intocable, based in Dallas, Texas, is currently touring Mexico. On the Hot Latin Songs chart, its single debuts at No. 10 — Ayala Ben-Yehuda
COUNTRY-BENDER

Darius Rucker Makes A Jump To Country

In the last year, country radio has played songs by the Eagles, Bon Jovi and Jewel. And by year’s end, it’ll likely play a new single from Jessica Simpson.

The latest artist to make the jump from pop to country is Darius Rucker, singer for Hootie & the Blowfish—and so far, so good.

His first single, “Don’t Think I Don’t Think About It,” is No. 47 on Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart after two weeks on the list. The repre-

ented cut, which Rucker co-wrote with songwriter Clay Mills (“Beautiful Mess”), is garnering airplay support on stations in Minneapolis, San Diego, San Antonio and Salt Lake City.

Country KEGA Salt Lake City PD Cody Alan embraces the idea of cross-genre pollination. “I’m not much of an ‘in-the-box’ thinker, so I love the crossover acts, particularly those with instant pop/culture familiarity like Darius.”

But Alan is adamant that the song has to be right. “Aside from it being Darius Rucker, it’s a great country song and lyric. I could hear George Strait singing it.”

It’s an easy out for artists both in country and other wise to try to gain credibility by name-dropping Patsy Cline and Willie Nelson, for example, but Rucker has a genuine affection for the music. “I think my biggest influence is Rodney Foster,” Rucker says, citing Lyle Lovett, New Grass Revival and Dwight Yoakam as other examples. “The first time I heard Foster & Lloyd’s ‘Crazy Over You’ on TV, I went into the record store where I worked early so that I could open the album and hear it.”

Still, he understands that there’s skepticism about his intentions. “You see a lot of people doing one-off, saying, ‘This is my country record.’ But this is a career I’m trying to build. The people that say that they don’t get it, I’ll let the music speak for it self. I plan to do a lot of country records.”

Currently on a radio tour, Rucker says, “It’s fun seeing people’s reactions to the songs. The music is changing everyone’s mind.”

George King, PD for country KJAZ San Antonio, says that when Rucker stopped by the station the staff was “blown away by how country it sounded.”

“We had no problem adding a familiar voice with a great song that sounds like nothing else we’re playing,” he adds.

Mike O’Brien, PD at country KUSS San Diego, says that when Rucker performed for an intimate audience, listeners responded. “Leading up to the show, the buzz was tremendous. People were calling round the clock trying to win tickets.”

Country KREY Minneapolis PD Gregg Swedberg says he estimates half his audience knows Rucker from Hootie & the Blowfish. “They’re loving the fact that Darius is back on the air, and since many of them are now country PJs, I think the marriage could work out well.”

Produced by Frank Rogers (Bral Palsley), Rucker’s as-yet-unnamed album is tentatively scheduled for release on Capitol Nashville. After Hootie & the Blowfish finishes touring this August, Rucker hopes to hit the road with his own band...

CRY ME A WINNER

The Weepies have no reason to cry this week as their album “Hideaway” cracks the top 40 of the Billboard 200, their first ink on that tally. The Nettwerk set moved 14,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, 82% of which were from digital sales.

The album comes on the heels of slow-burner “Say I Am You,” which peaked at No. 41 on Billboard’s Top Heatseekers chart but has sold 83,000 copies since its March 2006 release.

Part of the singer-songwriter duo’s success has to do with film and TV synch licenses—and a lot of them. According to Nettwerk Music Group head of promotion Rae Cline, the California-by-way-of-Boston band has secured more than 40 deals. One particularly helpful push came during the 2007 holiday season, when the track “All I Want” was placed in a prominent commercial for JCPenney and another, “Stars,” was linked with an Old Navy ad.

The Weepies have appeared on such TV shows as “One Tree Hill,” “Grey’s Anatomy,” “Scrubs,” “Everwood,” “How I Met Your Mother,” “Laguna Beach” and “Men in Trees.” They’re also slated to be included on the soundtrack to the forthcoming “Sex & the City” movie.

“We do say ‘no’ to lots of stuff—usually if it’s evil or just plain old bad,” the duo’s Deb Talan says. “But mostly all of that has been a very positive experience.”

The Weepies also shared five co-writes with Mandy Moore on her 2007 album “Wild Hope.”

“They resonate really well with the 30-plus female demographic,” Cline says. “The fascinating thing to me is that we gave the new single (Hideaway) away for free everywhere—on blogs, social networking, iLike me—yet we still managed to sell the track online anyway. I think those digital downloads means that it’s not only young people who buy music online.” Indeed, the title track has sold 13,000 digital sales.

Also part of the magic behind the pair are their personal histories. Talan and Steve Tannen met in 2001 and began collaborating—eventually, the partnership turned into romance and the two were married in the middle of recording “Hideaway” last year. They gave birth to a baby boy in December.

The Weepies’ love story was a big focus in the music videos. You can hear the love in their songs. Each record is a continuation of it,” Cline says. —Katie Hasty

The Grime Is Right

LONDON—Rapper/producer Wiley has long been the nearly man of U.K. urban music. But after several years as a underground artist and mentor to such U.K. rappers as Dizzee Rascal, London-born Wiley has taken grime—the distinctive, fast, British version of hip-hop—into the charts.

“Wearing My Rolex” (Asylum/Atlantic) entered the Official U.K. Charts Co.’s singles listing at No. 4 on April 27 based on download sales alone. Sales totaled 25,000 during its first week, when the track became the third most-played track on national top 40 station BBC Radio 1, according to Nielsen Music Control.

Asylum U.K.’s managing director Ben Cook says “Wearing My Rolex” has genuine crossover appeal as “a cutting-edge piece of music that defies genre.”

The track is also airing on a string of dance or pop-formatted commercial radio stations, including Kiss, Choice FM, Galaxy and Capital FM and attracted Asylum’s attention after Wiley’s independently issued promo reached specialist urban radio.

“It happened very quickly,” Cook says. “There were a couple of taste-maker plays, we heard about it, and within days we had a deal done [with Wiley].”

Asylum will release the single physically May 5—the first single on the new incarnation of the label since it was relaunched in February in the United Kingdom.

“I’m happy that ‘Wearing My Rolex’ has connected with people like it has,” Wiley says. “The fact that [it] was the first music from the Asylum label, and that the result has been more than I expected—it’s all just a lot. It’s a good feeling for me and for grime.”

Wiley had originally followed Dizzee Rascal to XL Recordings in 2004, although his debut “Freddin’ On This In” did not match his protege’s sales. “Wot Do U Call It” was his only previous hit, reaching No. 31 in the United Kingdom that year. Wiley has released two further solo albums, in 2006 and 2007. He is also a member of East London collective Roll Deep.

Wiley will release new album “Grimewave” May 26 in the United Kingdom on his own independent Eskibear Recordings label, although “Wearing My Rolex” is not included. While Cook declines to comment on the extent of Wiley’s Asylum deal, he insists that “we love to continue working with him.” —Andre Painé
M2M: Mariah Holds The Fort, Madonna On Deck

You might have motion sickness if you’ve been watching the No. 1 slot on the Billboard 200 for the past two months, with new albums bowing atop the chart for each of the last eight weeks. Leave it to Mariah Carey to calm down the pace—until next week, when another veteran chart queen will rule the roost.

Despite a second-week slide of 61%, the sum that keeps Carey’s “E-MC²” at No. 1 is respectable at 182,000 copies. That exceeds the 179,000-unit total that Jack Johnson’s “Sleep Through the Static” scored in the second of its three chart-topping weeks. His and Carey’s albums are the only 2008 releases to rule the big chart for more than one frame. The eight-week churn that Carey ends marks the longest turnover streak the big chart has seen since last summer, when albums by Linkin Park, Maroon 5, R. Kelly, T-Pain, Toyo, Jovi, Miley Cyrus and T.I. played Hot Potato with the chart’s top rung.

In the seven weeks leading to the entrance of “E-MC²,” sets by Janet Jackson, Alan Jackson, Rick Ross, Danity Kane, Day 26, George Strait and Leona Lewis each bowed at No. 1.

DIVA JUNCTION: Topping Nielsen SoundScan’s April 30 Building chart with 100,000 copies, Madonna is on course to notch her seventh No. 1 album. And, “Hard Candy” will be her fourth to start on the top shelf. That total reflects unweighted first-day sales from nine accounts—Trans World Entertainment, Best Buy, Circuit City, iTunes, Starbucks, Borders, Target, Anderson Merchandisers and Handleman—that Billboard estimates to account for about 80% of U.S. album sales. So, where will a start like that put her at the end of the week?

Since September, when Nielsen SoundScan introduced its Wednesday and Friday Building lists, four other albums clocked first-day sales in that neighborhood, with starts of 107,000 each for Chris Brown’s “Exclusive” and Kenny Chesney’s “Just Who I Am: Poets & Pirates.” On the lower end of that range, Bruce Springsteen’s “Magic” started with 89,000 while Danity Kane’s “Welcome to the Dollhouse” tracked an opening day of 92,000.

Of those four titles, the older-skewing Springsteen and Chesney surpassed 300,000 copies by week’s end, the former at 335,000, the latter at 375,000. The younger-pitched Brown and Danity each ended up with sub 300,000-weeks. Brown at 294,000, Danity at 236,000. Before you assume that the 49-year-old Madonna courts an older crowd, bear in mind that she recruited youth magnets Justin Timberlake and Timbaland to craft lead single “4 Minutes.” Consequently, a source close to the album says iTunes downloads drove first-day sales for “Hard Candy,” which suggests her opening week will settle in the range of 225,000-250,000.

That would mark a decline from the start for two of her last three No. 1 albums—350,000 copies for 2005’s “Confessions on a Dance Floor” and 420,000 for 2000’s “Music”—and more in line with the 241,000 that put “American Life” on top in 2003. Considering that as diverse a list of veteran acts as Radiohead, Alan Jackson and Janet Jackson each led the big chart in 2008 with smaller openings each had in earlier years, I tend to think a start of 225,000 or more would be fairly landline. But, just two weeks removed from Mariah Carey’s career-best start of 463,000, expect consumer media to play the comparison as a diva smackdown.

‘DOLL’ WORSHIP: Pandits wondered if composer Andrew Lloyd Webber was an astute booking for “American Idol.” But ratings didn’t buckle, and some sales ensued.

Combined versions of Sarah Brightman’s “Think Of Me” sell 1,000 digital downloads (up 753%), Michael Crawford’s “Music Of The Night” tallies 3,500 (up 855%), and Madonna’s original take of “You Must Love Me” moves 2,000 downloads (up 816%).

On Top Chart Albums at billboard.biz, “The Phantom of the Opera: Highlights” zips 10-5 (up 99%), while that show’s Original London Cast Recording gallops 14-7 (up 176%).
The Billboard 200 Chart for May 10, 2008:

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<th>ARTIST</th>
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<th>Sales Last Week</th>
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<td>Just Who I Am: Poems &amp; Prayers</td>
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<td>Linkin Park</td>
<td>Minutes To Midnight</td>
<td>Warner Bros</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Plant &amp; Alison Krauss</td>
<td>Raising Sand</td>
<td>Shun</td>
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<td>The Billboard 200 Artist Index</td>
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**Note:** Two former members of the band bands return this week in an indie act after the release of their third album. The Right Reasons, pushed a 65% gain for the set.

**Promotion of the album, timed to the upcoming Mother's Day holiday, pushes a 65% gain for the set.**

**At No. 5, the hip-hop act, & its label, suffer a 59% drop as each store their back sales week deal with its peak ever.**

**Exclusive** means a song in an indie act; Story of the Year (No. 18, 71,000) and Tantine (13,000).

**Two former members of the band bands return this week as an indie act after the release of their third album. The Right Reasons, pushed a 65% gain for the set.**

**At No. 5, the hip-hop act, & its label, suffer a 59% drop as each store their back sales week deal with its peak ever.**

**Exclusive** means a song in an indie act; Story of the Year (No. 18, 71,000) and Tantine (13,000).
## HOT 100 AIRPLAY

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<td>THIS IS HOW YOU REMEMBER</td>
<td>THE AFTERNOON</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>BLINDSIDE</td>
<td>DAUGHTRY</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>YOUR HEART (I WILL POSSESS)</td>
<td>JORDIN SPARKS</td>
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## HOT DIGITAL SONGS

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<td>SHAZAM</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>I'M NOT THE ONE</td>
<td>HARLEY QUINN</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>IN THE MORNING</td>
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<td>PICTURE TO BURN</td>
<td>JOHN FRUSCIETT</td>
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## ADULT TOP 40

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<td>I'M STILL A GUY</td>
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<td>LET'S DANCE</td>
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## MODERN ROCK

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<td>POKETFUL OF SUNSHINE</td>
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<td>STRANGE ANGELS</td>
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<td>WE'RE GONNA MISS THIS</td>
<td>JOSHDUB</td>
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Data for week of MAY 10, 2008 | For chart reprints call 646.654.4633

Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data | 69

www.americanradiohistory.com
### Chart Legend

**ARTIST**

- RCA
- Jive
- Motown
- Mca
- Def Jam
- Universal
- Motown
- Atlantic
- Geffen
- Epic
- Interscope
- Polaris
- Capitol
- Warner Bros.
- Universal
- Hollywood
- Varese Sarabande
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### R&B/HIP-HOP ALBUMS

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### REGGAE ALBUMS

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<td>Stephen Marley</td>
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<td>Various Artists</td>
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<td>The Best Of 2Pac - Part 1: Thug</td>
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### Between The Bullets

Proigy of Mobb Deep has his best showing on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums. His third solo set, "H.N.I.C. Pt. 2," is the Hot Shot Debut at No. 1. He previously made the last summer with "Return Of The Mack," which debuted at No. 9, and the precursor to his current album, "H.N.I.C.," entered at No. 6 in 2000.

Atmosphere also enjoys new highs on R&B Albums as "When Life Gives You Lemons, You Paint That Shit Gold" opens at No. 13. Of the indie rap duo's four previous releases, "Lemons" is the first to break the chart's top 40. Two more bets: a Nielsen SoundScan week of 36,000 and a No. 5 start on the Billboard 200.

Scarface's second-greatest-hits package starts at No. 16. Tiffany Evans enters with her self-titled set at No. 20, and Will Downing rockets 96-54 (up 136%).
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**BETWEEN THE BULLETS**: rgeorge@billboard.com

**USHER AND PALS FIND FAST 'LOVE'**

Usher's lead single from "Here I Stand" reached No. 1 on the chart dated Sept. 7, 2002. The album, "Eight Seven Six," sold over 1 million copies in its first week.

**R&B/HIP-HOP SONGS Top 20**

Since 2000, Usher has been featured on the No. 1 hit "Cement," which reached No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100. For more information, visit www.billboard.com/billboardchartdata.
### Top Country Albums

<table>
<thead>
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<th>No.</th>
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<th>Label</th>
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<td>MCA Nashville</td>
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<td>Red</td>
<td>Big Machine</td>
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<td>Prayer Of A Common Man</td>
<td>Island</td>
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<td>JAMES OTTO</td>
<td>Sunset Man</td>
<td>EMI</td>
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<td>LADY ANTEBELLUM</td>
<td>On Top Of The World</td>
<td>Big Machine</td>
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<td>GARTH BROOKS</td>
<td>The Ultimate Hits</td>
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<td>American Man: Greatest Hits Volume II</td>
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<td>KENNY CHESNEY</td>
<td>Just Who I Am: Poets &amp; Pirates</td>
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### Top Bluegrass Albums

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### Vassar Sets Studio Set Peaks

Phil Vassar stakes new high-water marks for his studio set on the Billboard 200 and Top Country Albums, as "Prayer of a Common Man" starts, respectively, at Nos. 10 and 30. His quick start with "Prayer" is fueled by lead single "Love Is A Beautiful Thing," which topped the charts at No. 5 on Hot Country Songs, his highest perch on the radio list since "Last Day Of My Life" reached No. 2 in 2006. He's topped that chart twice with "Just Another Day In Paradise" (2000) and "I'm A Real Love" (2004).
Don't miss another important

Visit www.radioandrecords.com to sign up for your free daily Country Radio Blast.

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NEW TOP 10 MAKES CHESNEY LEADING MAN

At a time when Kenny Chesney suffered a serious foot injury during a concert performance, opting that his new single hops into the top 10 on Hot Country Songs might be just a tad too clever. However, this particular top 10 feat makes chart history, as "Better As A Memory" becomes his 24th top 10 song this decade, and breaks a tie with Tim McGraw (23).

The new top 10 punctuates Chesney's status as the artist with the format's most active top 10 streak, which now stands at 21 (not counting holiday songs and unsolicited album cuts). The last country artist that nailed this many consecutive top 10 singles was Alan Jackson, who had a 27-song run between 1990 and 1998. Alabama also played the top 10 mark 42 straight times between 1980 and 1993, a run that culminated in 32 No. 1 songs during that span.

The last time Chesney peaked outside the top 10 happened when "Tin Man" stopped at No. 19 in the Oct. 20, 2001, issue.

—Mike Jensen

BETWEEN THE BULLETS

Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data

2008 Data Week

MAY 10, 2008

75
### Top Latin Albums

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
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**DIGITAL SONGS**

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### EURO DIGITAL SPOTLIGHT - SWEDEN
**DIGITAL SONGS**

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#### SINGLE SALES

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<td>ITALY</td>
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<td>CHRIS BOTTI</td>
<td>WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES</td>
<td>JASPER</td>
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<td>OVER THE HILL</td>
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<td>USA</td>
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<td>DIANA KRAAL</td>
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<td>SONY</td>
<td>SOUTH AFRICA</td>
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<td>LOVING YOU BACK</td>
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<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
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<td>PAT BENETT</td>
<td>WITH CHRISTIAN BUDGE &amp; ANDONI EMKED</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>TIMBALAND</td>
<td>I’LL TOUCH YOUR TUSH</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>AMERICAN MARIAN CAREY</td>
<td>GOOD TO BE BAD</td>
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<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
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<td>BRYCE MEIDLING TRIO</td>
<td>CHORES</td>
<td>STEAMHAMMER</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
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<td>KENNY G</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>DUFFY</td>
<td>EYES DON’T LIE</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>HEIDI KLEBER</td>
<td>MARRIAGE</td>
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### ALBUMS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Chart</th>
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<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
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<td>R.E.M.</td>
<td>NEW</td>
<td>SONY BMG</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>MILES FROM THE ANIMALS</td>
<td>YOU</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
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<td>AMERICAN MARIAN CAREY</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
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<td>THE KOOKS</td>
<td>PEACE OF MIND</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>UK</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>VARIOUS ARTISTS</td>
<td>THE RISE OF MY MUSIC</td>
<td>BROS</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>RAY CHARLES</td>
<td>TONY BENNETT BREAKFAST AT TONY'S</td>
<td>CAPITOL</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>DIANNE CHRISS</td>
<td>MESSAGES FROM THE HEAVENS</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
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<td>ANDREW LIDPPO WEBBER</td>
<td>VARIOUS ARTISTS</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>VICIOUS ARTISTS</td>
<td>RETURN TO MORMON</td>
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### RADIO AIRPLAY

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<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>DUFFY</td>
<td>GIVE ME THE TIME</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>AMY WINEHOUSE</td>
<td>BACK TO BLACK</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>DEO</td>
<td>SONGS FROM THE MOUNTAIN</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>MARIJ CAREY</td>
<td>I CE</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>THE ROLLING STONES</td>
<td>A HARD DAY'S NIGHT</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>UDO LINDENBERG</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>AMY MACDONALD</td>
<td>THIS IS THE DAY</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>THE-last SHADOW PUPPETS</td>
<td>THE AGE OF THE UNDERDERTWIST</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>REBEL HEART</td>
<td>REBEL HEART</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>MADONNA</td>
<td>RAYE</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>ONE REPUBLIC</td>
<td>IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE</td>
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### ARTIST CLASSICAL

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>ROLANDO Villazon</td>
<td>SORRY AT THE BRIDGE</td>
<td>R. E. M</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>VARIOUS ARTISTS</td>
<td>THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA AT TEMPLE SQUARE</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>ANDREAS SCHIEFF</td>
<td>VIVALDI VIOLIN CONCERTOS</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>VARIOUS ARTISTS</td>
<td>THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA AT TEMPLE SQUARE</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>EMERSON STRING QUARTET</td>
<td>THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA AT TEMPLE SQUARE</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>UK</td>
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<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>VARIOUS ARTISTS</td>
<td>THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA AT TEMPLE SQUARE</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
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<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>VARIOUS ARTISTS</td>
<td>THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA AT TEMPLE SQUARE</td>
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### ARTIST CROSSOVER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>ANDREAS BOCELLI</td>
<td>ROMANCE</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
<td>MAY 10 2008</td>
<td>THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA</td>
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<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
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<td>THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA</td>
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<tr>
<td>EURO</td>
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<td>THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA</td>
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<td>THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA</td>
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<td>SONY</td>
<td>USA</td>
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</table>

For full chart data, visit [Billboard.com](http://www.billboard.com).
### Chart Title: Album Charts

**Legend**

Sales data compiled from a comprehensive pool of US music retailers by Nielsen SoundScan for Billboard Hot 100 charts. Compiled from National SoundScan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Album Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Sales (Units)</th>
<th>Year of Release</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Beatles</em></td>
<td>The Beatles</td>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>484,000</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Revolver</em></td>
<td>The Beatles</td>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>367,000</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Abbey Road</em></td>
<td>The Beatles</td>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>353,000</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Rolling Stones</em></td>
<td>The Rolling Stones</td>
<td>Decca</td>
<td>342,000</td>
<td>1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Stairway to Heaven</em></td>
<td>Led Zeppelin</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>333,000</td>
<td>1971</td>
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</table>

**Top Digital Albums**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Sales (Units)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Weeknd</em></td>
<td>The Weeknd</td>
<td>425,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dua Lipa</em></td>
<td>Dua Lipa</td>
<td>375,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Billie Eilish</em></td>
<td>Billie Eilish</td>
<td>350,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ariana Grande</em></td>
<td>Ariana Grande</td>
<td>325,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Harry Styles</em></td>
<td>Harry Styles</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chart Title: Single Charts

**Legend**

Songs from the most popular singles compiled from a national sample of retail sales, digital downloads, and streaming services. Compiled from Nielsen SoundScan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hot 100 Peak</th>
<th>Digital (Downloads)</th>
<th>Streaming (Streams)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Eminem</em></td>
<td><em>Lose Yourself</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>5,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Justin Bieber</em></td>
<td><em>Sorry</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>4,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dua Lipa</em></td>
<td><em>Don't Start Now</em></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>135,000</td>
<td>4,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Billie Eilish</em></td>
<td><em>Bad Guy</em></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>3,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Weeknd</em></td>
<td><em>Blinding Lights</em></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>115,000</td>
<td>3,000,000</td>
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</table>

**Top Internet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Downloads (Units)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>ED SHEERAN</em></td>
<td><em>Bad Habits</em></td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Weeknd</em></td>
<td><em>Blinding Lights</em></td>
<td>450,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dua Lipa</em></td>
<td><em>Don't Start Now</em></td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Billie Eilish</em></td>
<td><em>Bad Guy</em></td>
<td>350,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Weeknd</em></td>
<td><em>Save Your Tears</em></td>
<td>300,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Top Gospel Songs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Sales (Units)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Hillsong United</em></td>
<td><em>Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)</em></td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Kenny Chesney</em></td>
<td><em>The Middle of the Mountain</em></td>
<td>950,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lecrae</em></td>
<td><em>No Church in the Wild</em></td>
<td>900,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Elevation Worship</em></td>
<td><em>Break Every Chain</em></td>
<td>850,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lecrae</em></td>
<td><em>I'm On My Way</em></td>
<td>800,000</td>
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**Data for week of May 10, 2008**

See below for charts related to this time period.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track Title</th>
<th>Artist(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LUCKY YOU</td>
<td>Cobra Starship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLOWN AWAY</td>
<td>Rascal Flatts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME AND MY GIRLFRIEND</td>
<td>Jordin Sparks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LULLABY</td>
<td>Cascada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELFRIDGE WAY</td>
<td>Hilary Duff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T LET ME BE YOUR DISASTER</td>
<td>Gabrielle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COME BACK TO ME</td>
<td>The Pussycats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOVE ME AGAIN</td>
<td>Usher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5TH AVENUE</td>
<td>Scott Stapp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREATHE</td>
<td>Taylor Swift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'M NOT THE ONE TO BLAME</td>
<td>Matchbox Twenty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'VE CHANGED</td>
<td>David Cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHAKED</td>
<td>Muse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'M NOT THE ONE TO BLAME</td>
<td>Matchbox Twenty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHEN YOU LOVE A WOMAN</td>
<td>Matchbox Twenty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 YEARS</td>
<td>Matchbox Twenty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 YEARS</td>
<td>Matchbox Twenty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUMPED</td>
<td>Matchbox Twenty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data for week of MAY 10, 2008*
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with photos
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**RECORD COMPANIES:** BNA Records names Bryan Fraser VP of national promotion. He was director of national promotion at Aristat Nashville.

**PUBLISHING:** EMI Music Publishing elevates Kristin Durie to VP of music services and licensing and Jovanka Caires to senior director of music services and licensing. Durie was senior director, and Caires was director.

**TOURING:** International Creative Management in New York taps Mitch Blackman as an agent in the firm's concerts department. He was an agent at Red Entertainment.

**DIGITAL:** Last.fm names Oriena Young VP of marketing. She was global brand manager at Microsoft Xbox.

**SPIRALFROG** appoints Russ Biegel VP of strategic initiatives. He previously oversaw e-commerce, promotion, event marketing, licensing, merchandising and artist relations at marketing firm Pipeline.

**LEGAL:** Philip Daniels joins the Century City, Calif., office of Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton as a member of the firm's entertainment and media transactional practice group. He was an attorney at Beverly Hills-based Goldring, Hertz & Lichtenstein.

**RELATED FIELDS:** Roger "Duane" Clark becomes a VP and owner/shareholder of financial and business management firm Flood, Bumstead, McCready & McCarthy. He was business manager.

**PR company***: Mitch Schneider Organization elevates Libby Henry and Alexandra Greenberg to VPs. They were senior account executives.

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**GOOD WORKS**

**KEITH READIES FIFTH ANNUAL CHARITY GOLF EVENT**

Country artist Toby Keith is gearing up for the fifth annual Toby Keith & Friends Golf Classic, which benefits Ally's House, a nonprofit organization that supports children in Oklahoma who've been diagnosed with cancer. As part of the event, which begins June 6 at Riverwind Casino in Norman, Okla., a number of auction items will be available for purchase. The list ranges from vacation packages and concerts to music memorabilia autographed by musicians, athletes and TV celebrities. The golf tournament starts the following day at Belmar Golf Club. Since its inception, the event has raised more than $5.8 million for Ally's House, which was named after 2-year-old Allison Webb, who died from cancer in 2003.

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**INSIDE TRACK**

**MANÁ PLANS NEXT ALBUM**

As it wraps up its biggest tour ever, Mexican rock band Maná is going to take a couple of months off—and then begin writing for a new album. Drummer Alex Gonzalez was overheard at a promo stop saying that the group plans to return to the studio by the middle of next year, with the goal of putting out a new studio album at the end of 2009. Maná was in Los Angeles promoting its live CD/DVD, "Arde El Cielo," which came out recently on Warner Music Latina.

**'STOOPY' SUMMER TOUR**

As tipped to Track during last week's scrabbling Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival in Indio, Calif., reggae-rock act Slightly Stoopid will embark on a 20-plus-date summer amphitheater tour with support act Pepper, beginning Aug. 1 at the Joint in Las Vegas and wrapping Sept. 6 at San Diego's Open Air Theatre. "It's going to be nuts," Slightly Stoopid's Miles Doughty says. Along with Pepper, reggae duos Sly & Robbie will join the tour as support. "It's going to be a good little tailgate party," Doughty predicts. The summer trek will be Slightly Stoopid's first time headlining sheds. The San Diego-based act will be touring behind full-length 'Slightly Not Stoned Enough to Eat Breakfast Yet Stoopid,' a rerelease of the band's 2005 EP. The set, which drops July 22, features new songs, outtakes and other rarities, according to Doughty.

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**2008 BMI CHRISTIAN MUSIC AWARDS**

BMI named Ed Cash the 2008 Christian Songwriter of the Year, while his composition "Make It Worship" earned song of the year honors. Prior to the presentation of awards, perennial Christian music titan Jars of Clay, rising star Among the Trees, and four panelist artist Isaiah Thomas led the evening's warm tone with soulful renditions of their award-winning songs.

**2008 ASCAP CHRISTIAN MUSIC AWARDS**

ASCAP's roster of Christian music artists, songwriters and publishers were on display April 22 as Christian music industry leaders celebrated the 22nd annual ASCAP Christian Music Awards at Richland Country Club in Nashville. Two-time winner Jeremy Camp again earned the songwriter of the year award. "Unda," recorded by Rush of Fools, was named Christian song of the year, and EMI Christian Music Group Publishing earned the Christian music publisher award for the fifth year running. A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the ASCAP Partner in Song Award to Brown Bannister.

From left: Brown Bannister, ASCAP senior VP for Nashville; Connie Bradford and ASCAP VP of membership for Nashville Dan Keen. PHOTO: COURTESY OF SCOTT MAVER PHOTOGRAPHY.

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From left: Brown Bannister, ASCAP senior VP for Nashville; Connie Bradford and ASCAP VP of membership for Nashville Dan Keen. PHOTO: COURTESY OF SCOTT MAVER PHOTOGRAPHY.
THE DOVE AWARDS

ABOVE LEFT: ForeFront artist TobyMac was named artist of the year April 23 at the 36th annual Gospel Music Assn. Dove Awards at Nashville’s Grand Ole Opry House. TobyMac—otherwise known as Toby McKeehan—previously netted the artist of the year Dove in 1996 as a member of groundbreaking Christian trio deTale. At this year’s Dove Awards, TobyMac also won rock/contemporary album of the year for “Portable Sounds,” and his “Boom!” earned the Dove for shortform video of the year. Incoy courtesy of warner brothers

ABOVE RIGHT: Between lead vocalist Mark Hall and the rest of the band, Casting Crowns claimed a total of seven Dove Awards, including the band’s fourth win for group of the year and the Dove for pop/contemporary album of the year for “The Altar and the Door.” Casting Crowns’ “East to West” was named song of the year and pop/contemporary song of the year. Hall penned the tune with Bernie Herms. Hall earned two more Doves for his participation in the “Glory Revealed” project, which earned special event album of the year, as well as its radio single, “By His Wounds,” which received the award for inspirational recorded song. From left: Casting Crowns’ Chris Huffman, Melodee DeVevo, Hall, Megan Garrett, Hector Cervantes, Juan DeVevo and Andy Williams. Photo courtesy of Toby PHIPPS/WIREIMAGE

INSIDE TRACK

BOI ON BALLET

Not only is OutKast’s Big Boi prepping his first solo album, “Sir Luscious Left Foot: ...Son of Chico Dusty,” he’s also in negotiations to take his recent ballet experiment, “Big,” on an international tour. On April 10, Big Boi debuted “Big,” a collaboration with Atlanta Ballet choreographer Lauri Stallings. The show was a fusion of classically trained dancers intercutting to contemporary OutKast tracks like “Bombs Over Baghdad” and “Morris Brown.” As the tutes twisted, Big Boi performed along with Janelle Monae, Sleepy Brown, Joi Giliham, Scar, Big Rube, Rock D and members of the group Konkrete. "Live Nation and AEG are trying to figure out how to take this ballet on an international tour," Big Boi tells Track. "I'm not sure how that will fit with my tour this summer for 'Sir Luscious,' but they're figuring it out."
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