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A Fifth Voice

BY RICH BENGLOFF

Now is the time for independent music labels and their artists. As music digitizes, economic and traditional radio and retail barriers to entry become less important due to the economy shift, and the opportunity for independent labels to thrive has never been greater. But it won’t happen without fairness, equity and transparency in this new marketplace.

Radio is a perfect example. Currently, indie labels only 10%-11% of traditional terrestrial radio play, in a market steeped with a 168-hour playlist, experiencing even more competition for audience than ever. But as the nonterrestrial sources of listener growth (satellite, webcasters and cable TV) for example) there are many more opportunities for independent music labeling. Sure enough, the independent share of this listening is approaching 40% of total nonterrestrial audience impressions. Pandora even reports that independent music exceeds 50% of audience impressions.

The key for everyone in the industry, artists and all labels—including the majors—is to make sure we monetize this shift to ensure that this new eco-system can support music creation and that we are all compensated for the music that is created by our artists and invested in by us. As independent labels and artists put out more than 80% of new releases, the new Long Tail access to music provides us with additional hope for the future. In fact, indie labels’ music sales now exceed 30% of Nielsen SoundScan when based upon label ownership, rather than distributor.

Now is the time for all music industry constituencies, major labels, artist groups and other trade organizations to ensure that third parties like the digital media companies, consumer electronics companies and telecoms pay music creators fairly and don’t just use the content to build their businesses. But it has to be in a way that makes sense and helps the music community grow.

The American Assn. of Independent Music (AAM) has a unique—and independent—voice in this dialogue. In some cases, like advocating for a performance royalty at traditional terrestrial radio, we are aligned with the RIAA and artist groups. In some cases, like the Copyright Royalty Board hearings on future mechanical royalty rates, we are aligned with the RIAA and the artist organizations are on the other side.

And in some cases, such as the web-casting rate discussions and proposed Orphan Works legislation, we find ourselves more aligned with the artist groups. We recognize the importance of the pure-play webcasters that support indie label artists and don’t want to see them put out of business. We’re strong advocates of Net neutrality. We work with the Future of Music Coalition to ensure that while the old barriers to entry are coming down, we’re not setting up new barriers for the future.

On the occasion of Independents Day we’d like to challenge our partners and friends in the music community to recognize that in addition to the four major labels, there’s fifth voice—indie labels—via trade organizations like AAIM in the United States and AAIM in the United Kingdom and through membership with Merlin as its distributors and aggregators that are better organized and prepared than ever before. This level playing field is the cornerstone for everything that is exciting about the future of our industry.

We’re celebrating Independents Day alongside the global indie community for the upcoming Fourth of July weekend. Being independent is an exciting choice, and let’s make certain it remains that way for 2009 and beyond. •

Rich Bengloff is president of indie label truce group the American Assn. of Independent Music (aaim.org).

THE OTHER INDEPENDENTS DAY

WIN Gets Serious On A Global Level

The independent international music community is expecting fireworks July 4, when a chorus of liner notes will be unveiled in celebration of the first global Independents Day campaign.

Trade body the Worldwide Independent Network (WIN) is organizing the event, and founding president Alison Wenham says the pieces are falling nicely into place for what she describes as a “monumental step” for indies. Some leading indie labels have donated tracks for the albums, which are individually tailored for each participating market, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Italy, Australia, Spain and France.

In the United Kingdom, the Prodigy, the Charlatans and José González are among the acts that have donated tracks for a special double-CD and vinyl release, “Independents Day—IDO.” The physical album will have a shelf life of just three days, while a digital version will be available online for a month.

In the States, the American Assn. of Independent Music has set up a digital-only collection of rarities and live material, while the Australian Independent Record Labels Assn. will deliver an album, auction and poll of the country’s all-time favorite independent albums.

Wenham says retailers of music, Amazon and Play are all committed to promoting Independents Day, while MTV, U.K. modern rock radio network Xfm and national U.K. TV network Channel 4 will dedicate programming to it.

“My bigger hope is that it enables independents to have a closer relationship with retailers and creates media exposure,” Wenham says.

Also culminating on the July 4th weekend will be a charity eBay auction. A mixed bag of goodies has already proved popular at the U.K. site, with bids for a test pressing of Arctic Monkeys’ “Favourite Worst Nightmare” and an original quarter-inch master tape of Tubeway Army’s “That’s Too Bad” already exceeding £150 ($300) at press time.

Wenham says the seeds for Independents Day were sown at WIN’s inaugural meeting in January 2007—not when Billboard launched its unapproved, Independents Day issue last year—and she hopes the event will become an annual fixture.

“It is primarily designed to establish a profile for the independents,” she says. “So often as an industry we suffer from gloomy headlines. It isn’t all true or appropriate. We think this will create a good, positive story.” —Lars Brandle

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As a string of high-profile hip-hop artists near the end of their record contracts, a question looming over their pending free agency isn't which major label they'll sign with but whether they should sign with a major. One prominent rap artist has already jumped ship: Jay-Z signed a long-term recording, publishing and management deal earlier this year with Live Nation. A Def Jam spokes-
woman says Jay-Z has one album left on his contract with the label, but Def Jam head Shakar Stewart said recently that "we're still working it out." (Billboard, June 14).

While few rappers can match the pull and marketability of the former Def Jam president, big names like 50 Cent, LL Cool J and OutKast will soon be on the market as well. Although they may ultimately sign with major labels, their camps have indicated that they are at least contemplating the possibility of a future without a major-label deal.

50 CENT and LL COOL J, inset, will soon fulfill their contract obligations to Interscope and Def Jam, respectively.

As an artist with an established fan base, there's more than one way to come up with strategic branding. Notwithstanding Lil Wayne's first-week platinum sales for "Tha Carter III," a contemporary rap album is lucky to sell an average of 35,000 copies in its first week. As of June 1, year-
to-date U.S. sales of rap albums were down 25% from the same period last year, compared with an 11.4% drop in overall album sales, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Meanwhile, unauthorized mixtapes, which have recently been among the most buzzworthy releases in hip-hop, have been reaching audiences through independent channels.

While hip-hop's roots are steeped in a DIY aesthetic, could that spirit represent the future of the genre's big stars? Certainly some of the music's leading players have long exhibited a strong entrepreneurial streak, personified by the diversified business interests of Sean "Diddy" Combs, Jay-Z and 50 Cent, and newer stars like Young Jeezy.

50 Cent's holdings, which already include an apparel line, videogames and his Interscope-distributed G-Unit record label, expanded earlier this year with the launch of a branded online social network and content platform. ThisIs50.com.

Meanwhile, LL Cool J, who keeps busy with TV and movie projects, tells Billboard (see story, page 62) that he has more on his mind these days than securing a new record deal. He, too, recently launched a digital distribution platform, Boomdizzle.com. While the site will be mostly aimed at helping aspiring artists get exposure, the veteran rapper says that "it's definitely going to play a big part in my musical future.

What role Boomdizzle will play isn't clear. "I'm not looking for another deal, but I wouldn't be uninterested either," he says.

Signing with an indie label is the best option for hip-hop stars nearing the end of their deals, says Alan Grunblatt, GM/executive VP of Koch Records, which has charted with Jim Jones, DJ Khaled and Yung Berg.

"With a major you'd get an advance, no matters and the deal would be based strictly on royalties," Grunblatt says. "Koch would do a licensing and/or a P&D deal.

Selling music independently via such distribution partnerships has appeal, but majors are creating those partnerships too. In 2007, rap duo the Clipse signed a joint-venture deal with Columbia Records and retained ownership of its masters.

Atlantic Records A&R executive Jean Nelson says not to discount the majors, arguing that 50 Cent, LL Cool J and OutKast would all be appealing signings.

"It's about how much a label can support you, not the advance money," Nelson says. "...
A CELLARFUL OF NOISE?

Biz Lines Up Against Proposed Development Near Capitol Records Tower

The fate of the recording studios in Hollywood's iconic Capitol Records tower could hang in the balance as members of the Los Angeles City Council prepare to vote on a nearby condominium development.

The construction project has sparked a furor among Los Angeles music unions and preservationists, who fear the proposed development—which includes 85 residential units, 15,000 square feet of office space and an underground parking garage—will damage the acoustics at Capitol Studios, where the likes of Nat “King” Cole, Frank Sinatra, the Beach Boys, Celine Dion and Green Day have recorded.

The Los Angeles City Planning Commission approved the condo development in December. The City Council's three-member planning and land-use management committee is scheduled to meet June 24 to vote on EMI's appeal of the planning commission decision. The committee could ask the developer for further mitigation efforts to ease community concerns about the project, or it could approve it and forward it to the full City Council for final authorization to break ground.

EMI no longer owns the tower. The company agreed in September 2006 to sell the property to Argent Ventures of New York for $50 million and has been leasing back the building under a long-term deal.

In the meantime, the studios still represent a steady source of income, something EMI/Capitol is keen to preserve. The company's arguments about the condo project are twofold: first, that recording at Capitol Studios would have to be halted for six to eight months while construction is under way; and second, that noise from the development's underground parking structure would disrupt recording sessions at the studios.

The development is proposed for 6230 Yucca St., near the Capitol Tower, the Welton Becket-designed Hollywood landmark shaped like a stack of vinyl records that opened in 1956. The unusual subterranean recording chambers beneath the recording studios, which many musicians believe gave Capitol's Studios A and B rich, warm sound, would be located about 15 feet away from the underground garage planned by the condo developer, Second State Ventures of Mariana del Rey, Calif.

Aside from a regular stream of pop artists, the location's unique acoustics attract an eclectic variety of other clients as well. Foley artists—the sound effects creators for film and TV—frequently use the studios. And the orchestra that performs during the annual Academy Awards show records a backing track every year at Capitol Studios for use in case anything goes wrong during the live ceremony. Studios A and B can be opened up into one large studio that can accommodate a full-size orchestra, one of dwindling number of recording facilities with that capacity.

Among those who have sent letters to the City Council arguing against the development of the site are Recoding Academy president/CEO Neil Portnow, AFTRA national executive director Kim Roberts Hedgepeth, Society of Composers and Lyricists president Dan Foliart and Vincent Tontinetta, VP of professional musicians for Local 47 of the AFM.

Parties on both sides of the issue agreed recently to third-party testing of the impact of construction on the studios, including the adjacent use of a jackhammer and backhoe on recording quality. Sources opposed to the condo development say the results of those tests indicate that construction noise would impair operation of the studios.

"Although certainly we live in an era of great technology where a lot of recording is done at home, the type of recording that gets done at Capitol is quite unique," says. "It's a very special place, and if it loses its ability to do what it has done in the past, that's a loss for the community and for the musicians who come in there."
The successful navigation of globalized markets, emerging technologies, and complex intellectual property rules requires a willingness to explore original approaches. Instilling these abilities in today's college students is the goal of the Mike Curb Creative Campus Program.

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Lil Wayne, Big Numbers

Dissecting The Data On The Industry's First Million-Selling Week In More Than Three Years

SKU-ING HIGH
Below are the top retail outlets for first-week sales of "The Carter III," along with each store's price point. Prices reflect sales of the standard album, as opposed to deluxe and other specialty versions that many stores carried and priced between $11.99 and $15.99. Total sales figures—gathered through Billboard's exclusive reporting—reflect all prices and editions.

A MILLION TO 12
The complete list of acts that have sold 1 million albums in one week in the Nielsen SoundScan era.

A MATTER OF FAITH
Everyone knew that Lil Wayne's "The Carter III" was going to sell well, but translating that faith into purchase orders involved some behind-the-scenes maneuvers. A number of retailers initially undersold the album, which came out June 10.

After initial orders were placed, Universal Music Group Distribution and Universal Records, which distributes Lil Wayne's Cash Money label, were knocking on doors. "We had a lot of salespeople pushing a lot of buttons," UMCD senior VP of sales Joy Siussak says. "We told them, 'If we could pick one album to swing for the fences, this is it.'

Still, some accounts didn't up orders the way Universal expected, so the label had to go the extra mile: It waived any return penalties on the album, Universal Records executive VP of sales and field marketing Pat Monaco says. Usually, that tactic is reserved for developing artists, not established acts. Universal Records even approved air freight so the albums could be shipped overnight in instances where stores experienced shortages or outages. The label initially shipped nearly 1.5 million units and was up to 1.8 million by June 18. Meanwhile, shipments included about 290,000 deluxe versions of the album. "We sold way beyond our expectations," says Value Music VP of merchandising Brian Poehrer, who adds that his chain is now replenished. "I was pulling the trigger and reordering by Tuesday morning [on the June 10 release date] at 11 a.m. We had stores in shape for the weekend, but we had a fair number of outages by the time Monday morning [June 16] rolled around."
July, 2008

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URL: www.billboard-live.com
More than 20 years after its invention as a promotional event for Brazilian beer brand Brahma, the Rock in Rio festival is on the expansion trail, with China a likely target.

Up next is Rock in Rio’s debut in Spain with five days of music June 27-28 and July 4-6. Sponsored by such major corporations as Philips and Toyota as well as Spanish public TV network TVE, this year’s lineup includes Neil Young, Jack Johnson, Alanis Morissette, Shakira, Amy Winehouse, the Police and Bob Dylan performing in Arganda del Rey, 17 miles outside of Madrid.

Then-advertising executive Roberto Medina launched the event in 1985 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and remains very much hands-on as its promoter. To date, Medina says, more than 4.5 million people have attended Rock in Rio festivals in Rio de Janeiro (1985, 1991 and 2001) and Lisbon, Portugal (2004, 2006 and 2008), with TV coverage of those events having been seen by a claimed total of 1 billion viewers.

Medina spoke to Billboard about his plans to extend the brand and the event’s proposed return to its country of birth.

1. **Spain is the third country to stage Rock in Rio. What’s next?**

We’ll return to Rio in 2014 to coincide with the soccer World Cup in Brazil. Our arrival in Lisbon also coincided with the 2004 European soccer cup in Portugal. Soccer is a total passion in Brazil and a perfect companion for music festivals. But before 2014, we’ll stage two more festivals in Madrid (2010 and 2012) and at least one other country, probably Italy or China.

2. **With some 90 festivals in Spain this summer, will Madrid’s Rock in Rio have sufficient pull to attract up to 100,000 fans per day during its five-day run?**

I will never be bothered about competition from other festivals. There will always be demand for summer festivals in a climate like Spain’s. I am confident of between 350,000 and 400,000 people altogether. Rock in Rio already attracted 385,000 fans to Lisbon [in] 2004, which was a smaller site than Madrid. Headliners Shakira (July 4) and the Police (July 5) will sell out.

3. **What’s happening with international broadcast coverage of the event?**

I hold the international rights and am still negotiating transmissions. TVE has the television transmission rights for Spain, as does national commercial AC network Cadena Cien for radio.

4. **How will fans view the festival’s commitment to combating climate change that you’ve emphasized in the buildup to Rock in Rio in Madrid?**

Since 2006, our cause has been a clean environment. The festival knows music is an element of communication to reach moments of emotion and unity, which includes social commitment to a worthy cause. At Rock in Rio 2001, we opened with a three-minute silence [for peace and a better world] that was also observed across Brazil. The same philosophy crossed the Atlantic to Lisbon in 2004 and will continue in Madrid. Everybody concerned with the festival is focused on keeping CO2 emissions to a minimum.

5. **What will happen to the Rock City complex you’ve built at the festival site in Arganda del Rey?**

We have contracts with Arganda del Rey for 2010 and 2012, but the final decision on Rock City, its permanence or use, is up to local authorities. It’s more impressive than the [original] Rio de Janeiro structure, because it has an amazing theme park concept—there is nothing else quite like it. We shall dismantle some things, including the stages, but the basic installations are permanent.

6. **Is Rock in Rio a Brazilian brand in a European market?**

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Tom Windish

When Tom Windish formed the Windish Agency in 2004 in Chicago after years with the Billions Corp., he was seeking independence and the freedom to sign whichever acts he was interested in.

Now there are 150 acts on the Windish roster, booked by Windish and four other agents. The overwhelming majority of these acts are indie bands, including Aphex Twin, Chromeo, Hot Chip, Justice, Jose Gonzalez and The Low, Windish has built a rep for beating the bushes and finding buyers and venues under the radar of many, if not most, agents.

In the live indie underground world, there are challenges Windish doesn’t necessarily see as challenges. “I don’t expect any of my bands to be played on commercial radio, ever,” he says. “In a lot of ways I think that’s kind of a blessing. These people are independent, they don’t need to worry about making a radio station happy or playing a certain radio show. We work with all sorts of venues: all over North America, from the places where people play like the Fillmore and the Bowery Ballroom, to some unique places like the Guggenheim Museum or the Getty Museum.”

Windish cites Matthew Dear, Chromeo, DJ/2, Girl Talk, the Books, Jamie Lidell, Latintrance, El Guincho and Peanut Butter Wolf as bands that have benefited from playing alternative spaces. But he adds that availability is “a big issue” in these venues. “They don’t do many events that incorporate music [so] production, i.e., technical specs, is usually lower quality than a venue like Bowery Ballroom,” he says, noting that fans respond well to unusual venues. “People like going to museums and unique spaces. They can see art and see a new musician at the same time.”

—Ray Waddell

Boundary Breaker

Diana Reyes

Regional Mexican singer Diana Reyes is not the first major Latin artist to do things independently. But in recent years, no other woman—or man, for that matter—has achieved independence so successfully in the Latin sphere after splitting with her label.

Reyes sings duranguense music—the danceable blend of traditional bands and electronic instruments—and is known as much for her raspy vocals as for her washboard abs and the accordion tattoo that graces her navel. Now, she can also be found wearing a business suit.

Reyes was originally signed to Musicom, an indie licensed via Universal Music Latino; her past three releases nudged the 100,000 sales mark, according to Nielsen SoundScan. But frustrated at not seeing royalty figures, Reyes decided to go solo last year. In partnership with former Universal executives Gabriel Fregoso and Enrique Ortiz, she dug into her own pocketbook and launched DBC records. Distributed through indie Select-O-Hits, DBC houses marketing, promotion, pressing and production under one roof and works in partnership with Reyes’ concert promoters. (Reyes relies on a few shows per weekend.) Its structure allows DBC to quickly turn around albums and ancillary merchandise, like calendars and dolls.

In the old days of dance music retail, DJs paid upwards of $6 for a domestically produced 12-inch and $10 or more for a more exclusive import. Today, Beatport—the download site started by a group of friends in Denver—has been credited with singlehandedly saving the dance music business—employs a tiered pricing structure. The site charges $1.49 for back catalog content, $1.99 for new releases and classics and $2.49 for exclusives. All content is available in 320kbps MP3 format, as well as 192kbps M4A for an extra $1. Its customer base, estimated at 70% professional DJs and 30% casual fans, bears the higher costs gladly. “Old-school DJs have memories of paying a lot of money for vinyl singles, only to play one single track on the release. Beatport is cost-effective when you consider quality, selection and the ability to buy the tracks that really interest you as a DJ,” founder/CEO Jonas Tempel says. “Any DJ who is committed to his or her craft is constantly looking for new music to add to their sets. Customers accept that stores like Beatport need to charge slightly higher prices to do what we do.”

The formula is definitely working. While the site is keeping mum about most of its numbers, Beatport has grown from three to 46 servers in its four years, hosts more than 8,000 labels and recently launched BeatSource, a similar site for hip-hop DJs.

—Courtney Harding

Digital Dance Dukes

Beatport

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—Courtney Harding

‘People like going to museums and unique spaces.’

—TOM WINDISH
Pennywise

Take one venerable punk band, add a pioneering social networking site, throw cash from a text messaging service in to the mix and what do you get? Quite possibly the most successful monetization of free music to date.

Pennywise initially went to MySpace Records because it wanted to utilize the site’s networking functions, according to guitarist Fletcher Dragge. But when label GM J. Scavo threw out the idea of giving away the band’s new album for free with support coming from mobile billing and music delivery service Textango, Pennywise jumped at the chance to try something new.

To date, 630,000 people have signed up with Textango to receive a promo code to download the record, and 400,000 of them actually did so. That’s the same number of people who purchased the band’s highest-selling record, “Full Circle,” released in 1997. The new album has also yielded the band’s highest-charting single, “The Western World,” which peaked at No. 22 on Billboard’s Modern Rock chart.

According to Scavo, the band has seen its live show guarantees rise by 20%, and merch has gotten a boost, too. "Scavo adds that Textango was pleased with the number of new subscribers it signed up, and even the band’s former label, Epitaph, gave its blessing. "Epitaph realized this was a great opportunity for us," Dragge says. "It worked out for everyone."

—CH

JUNE 26, 2008 www.billboard.biz/indies
In the year-end issue of this magazine, we predicted that the Shins would sign to a major label now that their contract with Sub Pop had expired. But the band’s manager, Ian Montone, has a different plan. “We anticipate that James Mercer and the Shins will self-release their next record through James’ label called Aural Apothecary,” he says. “The goal would be to own our masters and, in addition to the marketing tools we have at our own disposal, team up with a label partner that will assist with additional marketing, radio and various costs. The deal will be more of a P&D deal than a traditional record deal. That partner could very well remain Sub Pop, who have done a remarkable job with the band and have a great staff of people who really love music. All of this is being determined. The first goal is to make the record and see where that takes us.”

If anyone can make this happen, it’s Montone, a former music lawyer and the man behind the Raconteurs and White Stripes deals, where the bands own their masters and strike short-term deals with label partners around the world. Montone is the first to admit that his model isn’t for everyone. “It requires a bit more work and responsibility, but when all is said and done, you know that you are in control of your career,” he says. “This isn’t perfect for every artist. But for artists that are willing to take on the extra responsibility, it can make sense.”

We’re able to focus at a great level of granularity with regard to marketing.
—JIM COOPERMAN
Just a few blocks west of the sprawling office buildings housing Yahoo, Universal Music and Sony BMG Music Entertainment in Santa Monica, Calif., a new company is setting up shop in decidedly more modest accommodations.

This is the new home of TopSpin, a company just emerging from stealth mode that could only exist in today’s uncertain, chaotic music industry. Its first product, until now kept a closely guarded secret, is what’s called the TopSpin Manager—a turnkey suite of technologies and services that provides all the content management and customer relationship tools artists need to distribute and market music directly to fans.

“We’ve been going through a period of technology-driven innovation that has disrupted the music industry’s business models, but the new model to replace it hasn’t appeared yet,” co-founder-chairman Peter Gotcher says. As CEO of Digidesign, Gotcher led the creation of the ProTools computer software that revolutionized how music is recorded and produced.

He and the rest of the TopSpin team—which includes former Yahoo Music GM Ian Rogers as CEO and former MusicMatch product strategy executive Shamir Ranaisinghe as chief product officer—believe that new model is a vastly decentralized one where artists mainstream and niche can directly engage with fans without the help of a label, if given the right tools.

Such tools include:

- A content management system that hosts and organizes artists’ music, photos, videos and other media, along with a rights management interface that lets them determine how their content is made available. That includes a commerce engine that facilitates all sales and fulfills all orders, as well as the ability to set prices and usage rules. (E.g., some songs might be given away, streamed indefinitely, expire after a set period of time or be available only to fan club members.)

- A fan management system that collects and organizes information like e-mail, location, age, birth date and sales history, as well as data on how many times a fan streams music from TopSpin-enabled Web sites, shares music with other friends and what other artists they listen to.

- A product creation tool that lets artists develop special offers from their content, such as premium membership subscriptions, bundled ticket/track packages or special e-mail offers—basically any way artists want to offer their catalog to their fans.

- A reporting feature that tracks all of the aforementioned tools in granular detail, such as site visits, song streams and downloads with the associated user detail behind each and all of it available in customized charts.

These are the full spectrum of tools the TopSpin Manager provides, in return for a percentage of all revenue made via the platform. And unlike services offering similar tools, such as ReverbNation or Tagworld, TopSpin is not marketing itself as a customer-branded service. It’s a completely business-to-business offer, meaning artists can incorporate the platform into any Web site or social-networking page.

The desired result is to empower what Rogers calls the “middle class” of artists—those either past or greater numbers.

“Look at all the established artists going direct to fans, or talk to managers, and the trend is trying to go away from the traditional label model,” Gotcher says. “If you have professional management and any access to capital, do a 360 deal with yourself. It’s all about optimizing multiple revenue streams and keeping as much as possible from them.”

Gotcher first conceived the TopSpin idea seven years ago as a potential extension of what was then MusicMatch, but sat on it because he didn’t feel the market was ready for such a step.

“One of the lessons you learn as an investor is that being early is just as bad as being wrong,” he says.

Since then, several important milestones have occurred to pave the way. The increase in broadband Internet penetration led to fans consuming more media online. Social networks created an easy outlet for artists to engage with fans directly. Music discovery began moving from radio to online channels like Internet radio and MP3 blogs. And album sales began their ongoing downward spiral.

At the same time, technology like ProTools made it easier for almost anyone to record music without a major studio or producer. This led to a spate of new content emerging at a time when labels, struggling from the decline of the CD market, began focusing more narrowly on instant hits and either dropping artists that were not carrying their weight or never signing others that didn’t have the potential for blockbuster sales.

Just as ProTools brought the process of recording music out of the expensive studios and into the garage, TopSpin hopes to take the marketing process away from the labels and into the hands of artists and managers.

“All the marketing done by majors is broadbrush marketing, not very focused or tailored to the specific customer,” Gotcher says. “There are a lot of industries that do that well, but the music industry is not one of them.”

Yet all of this is only phase one. TopSpin has a grander goal in mind—not just managing artists’ existing fans, but using the platform to help them find new ones. The company is keeping mum on exactly how it plans to do that, only pointing to an eventual rollout of new services at year’s end or early in 2009. But based on conversations with the founders, it’s clear the strategy is to leverage the fan bases of different TopSpin artists so that one can drive traffic to the other.

“If you sound like Elvis Costello, how do we get you in front of Elvis Costello fans?” Rogers asks. “Those are the kinds of things we’ll be addressing.”

To do this effectively, a critical mass of artists would have to adopt the TopSpin platform in order for it to have real impact among them, and that’s a big gamble. But if the company’s founders are right about the music industry’s future, TopSpin is well-positioned to capitalize on it.

“The revolutionary thing for me is creating a new market out of the artists who have sort of been below the radar in the past,” Rogers says. ‘The revolutionary thing for me is creating a new market out of the artists who have sort of been below the radar in the past.”—IAN ROGERS

For instance, an artist the company declined to name is planning to use TopSpin to give away a new track from an upcoming album to fans in return for their e-mail address. That artist also plans to sell a number of singles in digital and physical formats, as well as the full album, a number of bundled products at various prices, PDFs, lyrics and more, all using TopSpin’s technology but via his own Web site and social-networking widgets.

Others like David Byrne, Jubilee and the Dandy Warhols are using TopSpin to offer fans a subscription package with a host of content either exclusively or before wider release for around $20.

Individually, none of these ideas are in any way new. Radiohead and Nine Inch Nails have popularized the direct-to-fan download model as well as the format bundle. Former Throwing Muses frontwoman Kristin Hersh and L7’s Donita Sparks established CASH Music as an attempt at a subscription model. But what’s revolutionary about TopSpin is how it aggregates all the tools needed to pursue any of these strategies into one easy-to-use platform, which the founders hope will inspire other artists and their managers to attempt the same in the future.
PUNK PRODUCT PLACERS
Matt & Kim

Dance punk duo Matt & Kim might have sold only 6,000 copies of its self-titled 2006 heartcomix release, according to Nielsen SoundScan, but its music has been featured in a flurry of ads ranging from Virgin Mobile in Canada to the trailer for the DVD release of Academy Award-winning film “Juno.” Additionally, a two-page print campaign from Converse made by New York agency Anomaly uses a picture of the two, and, on top of their current campaign, Matt & Kim have a red Converse shoe scheduled to debut this fall.

Besides the placements they’ve scored, Matt & Kim set themselves apart by being tour monsters with a ferocious live show: “Some bands are great live but their music doesn’t synch well, [while] others have great music for synchs but don’t have a great live show and die-hard fans out there. M&K is the full package. They have a huge following as well as lots of fans in the synth community,” says Sannie Haugelsten, founder/head of Zync in New York.

When reached while putting the final touches on their next album and preparing for an upcoming tour sponsored by Vice magazine and Colt 45, Matt Johnson says, “We’re sort of tapping the purity, but if you look at the audience, it is bad to have brands on the wall”.

Band manager Kevin Patrick says the duo has managed to participate in the commercial culture yet retain its indie patina because “there was never any plan to avoid or embrace branding, it just happened. Kim (Schifino) always says, ‘I would never align myself with a company that made or did something that I don’t use in my everyday life.’ If it’s something they use, they’re happy to talk about it and be involved in it.” —Kanan High

HIPSTER HOPPERS
Fool’s Gold

Thanks to acts like Kid Sister, independent label Fool’s Gold is making inroads in monetizing hipster-hyped music. The label was co-founded in April 2007 by DJ Nick Catchdubs and Kanye West’s DJ, A-Trak, and has since grown to a roster of 15 artists whose active touring habits are perfect for keeping the party going.

Sensing a void in the marketplace, A-Trak and Catchdubs were at first simply looking to distribute music they’d heard in their electro-hop-hop club circuit. Inspired by boutique labels like Nervous and Sleeping Bag, they began releasing singles and EPs digitally and on vinyl.

The duo utilized the music A-Trak crafted with his girlfriend, MC Kid Sister, for their first release. Dropping in May 2007, Kid Sister’s “Control” got off to a slow start and has shifted only 5,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. But later that month, West remixed and added the track “Pro Nails” to his highly popular mixtape “Can’t Tell Me Nothing,” igniting the buzz.

With a potential hit on its hands, Fool’s Gold pooled its resources and hired Rob Fleischer, creator of MTV’s reality-based sitcom “Rob & Big,” to shoot a “Pro Nails” video. MTV eventually added the clip in December, and its popularity helped secure Kid Sister a deal with Downtown Records.

Of late, the label has been routinely approached by companies like Scion, T-Mobile and Red Bull to build branding partnerships like A-Trak’s new Nike “Running Man” mixtape.

“It sounds so improbable, because the label is run by two guys with laptops,” Catchdubs says. “But it just seemed like the natural thing to do.” —Hillary Graley

VINYL VISIONARY
Last Gang

Last Gang Records is less a label than it is a music business depot. The Toronto-based company has its hands in publishing, licensing, multifORMAT releases, management and legal, pushing forward-thinking, progressive dance and alternative acts.

Its vertical approach to releasing music has a lot to do with co-founder Chris Taylor, who was a pro musician until he was 30 and decided instead to become an entertainment lawyer. After shopping Canadian rock act Metric without any takers, he and partner Don Tarlton released the band’s “Old World Underground, Where Are You Now?” in 2003 through Last Gang. Then came efforts from Death From Above 1979, MSTRKRFT and Chromeo, all of which achieved international notoriety.

With investment from Canadian music publisher ole, Last Gang has experienced plenty of success in the international licensing sector, particularly with its newest crown jewel, dance/experimental duo Crystal Castles. That group has also benefited from Last Gang’s emphasis on vinyl. When Crystal Castles signed to Last Gang in May 2007, there had already been a handful of vinyl singles circulating through labels like Merok in the United Kingdom and Young Cubs in the United States. Rather than suppressing the singles, Last Gang teamed with the other labels to keep interest building until the release of a full-length album this year. Similarly, MSTRKRFT issued a 12-inch single to select specialty shops to tide over fans while the group finalized licensing deals with Modular (United Kingdom) and PIAS (Europe).

“Since the launch of the label in 2003, we’ve used vinyl as a marketing tool and as a ‘thank you’ to the music nerds who love this stuff, since most of our records start in this community,” Taylor says. Though most production runs of vinyl (with help from U.S. distributor Fontana) sit around the 1,000 mark, he says some worldwide runs can exceed 5,000. —Katie Hardy

‘Is it bad to have brands on the wall?’
—Matt Johnson
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www.americanradiohistory.com
South Africa: Indies Provide Vital Outlet For New Talent

JOHANNESBURG—Africa remains woefully underserved by the major labels—but its thriving indie scene continues to gain vital exposure for the continent's artists. With piracy rampant—estimates suggest such product represents 95% of sales in some countries—and legal retail outlets few and far between, none of the majors have operations on the continent outside of South Africa, although some have appointed agents in other countries. But a new wave of African talent is nonetheless emerging through a network of tiny independent labels.

Insiders say a good barometer of African indie's growing influence is the increased volume of new artists aired on Johannesburg-based Pan-African satellite music TV channel Channel O. GM Yolisa Phahle says companies like Nigeria's Storm Records, Kennis Music and Mozambique’s Bang Entertainment “are doing amazing things.”

“Traditionally these companies are run as a passion with the profits of other businesses,” she says. “The [managing] directors of these companies are working hard against piracy so they can provide an income for the artists and composers.”

Solomon Sonaiya, outgoing head of Lagos, Nigeria-based Storm Records—home to “The first lady of African hip-hop,” Sasha, and part of the wider entertainment group Storm Music Group—acknowledges the difficulties piracy causes.

“The majors will not want to do business here until government deals effectively with the pirates,” he says, noting that pirated albums sell for as little as $1. “You can have a song debut on the radio and five days later it will be on the streets.”

Consequently, many indie looks to other areas of the business to make money, with artist deals frequently also encompassing live earnings. Windhoek, Namibia-based label Ogoopa Butterfly Entertainment says its biggest success has come through booking its acts for shows in Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and Nigeria. Meanwhile, Lagos' one established a Lagos-based management and eventual company, Afrozilla Entertainment, to take advantage of the thriving live scene in Nigeria.

While the thriving South African market offers possibilities for many African labels, others are looking further afield.

“Our vision from the start was to expose our artists to the whole of Africa and get them distribution deals with major labels in Europe and America,” Ogoopa Butterfly Entertainment managing director Suleiman Kyababu says. “And we are headed in the right direction.”

Ogoopa Butterfly is currently negotiating a European distribution deal for Namibian duo Gal Level.

Some indie set up a base overseas while using their local arms to undertake A&R functions. Grafton Entertainment, home to hip-hop act De Indispensables, operates out of Nigeria and the United Kingdom, with De Indispensables scoring hits at home and also picking up club play in Britain.

India: Beyond Bollywood: Indian Indies Offer Break From Usual Soundtrack Fare

NEW DELHI—In a local scene dominated by Bollywood soundtracks, India's independent labels are providing a vital outlet for niche genres. According to local IFPI affiliate the Indian Music Industry, which counts more than 100 indie labels among its 130 members, Bollywood and regional film soundtracks have an 80% share of the Indian music market.

No indie label can compete with the Bollywood giants or major labels, but IMI general secretary Savio D'Souza says the impact of the sector will increase in the coming years, “because indie labels can offer innovative content and use emerging technologies.”

Growing numbers of tech-savvy listeners “are demanding a change from formulaic fare,” he says.

Mumbai-based Phat Phish Records is such a label, “driven by Indie’s rich folk traditions,” according to founder Anurad Pradhan. It only releases debut albums and then allows artists to move elsewhere. The label's 2004 release: "Rabhi" by male vocalist: Rabbi Shergill has clocked more than 175,000 units, according to the label, which executives say compares favorably with typical sales of around 250,000 units for a successful Bollywood release.

Chennai-based Earth Sync Records, another indie label, was established four years ago with an agenda to nurture folk, tribal and native music. The label's 2007 debut release, "Laya"—featuring musicians from the 2004 tsunami-affected regions—sold more than 3,000 units, according to director/CEO Sona Mazumdar.

Earth Sync plans to release five new albums this year. Mazumdar adds that the label has recently inked a domestic distribution pact with Mumbai-based EMI Music India.

Elsewhere, acclaimed female classical vocalist Shubha Mudgal and her tabla player husband, Aneesh Pradhan, established New Delhi-based Underscore Records in 2003 “with a mission to empower artists to own and share their music globally” through a mix of online and direct marketing.

“In most cases, copyrights rest with the artists, who get an 80% share of their online sales revenue," Mudgal says.
Feist Almighty

Arts & Crafts Beef Up After Scoring Hit
By Robert Thompson

TORONTO—Canadian indie Arts & Crafts may be enjoying the biggest hit of its six-year existence, but label co-founder/president Jeffery Remedios says he’ll never change his “quality over quantity” business mantra.

The Toronto-based label has seen Feist’s “The Reminder” become a runaway hit, shifting more than 200,000 copies in Canada since its May 2007 release, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

“It has allowed us to build out our infrastructure,” Remedios says. “We now have all the tools at our disposal that any much larger label has. We can do things that were previously outside our scope.”

Remedios points to increases in the label’s publicity, marketing and retail abilities in recent months as a demonstration of Arts & Crafts’ rise in stature.

The album has proved a worldwide hit, selling more than 600,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, although A&R only has the rights for Canada. The label anticipates “The Reminder” will continue to sell, with a Canadian arena tour slated for the fall.

Such dizzy heights seemed a long way away when Remedios founded the label with Broken Social Scene frontman Kevin Drew in 2002 to put out BSS’ debut, “Feel Good Lost.”

The subsequent success of the band’s second album, “You Forgot It in People,” raised the label’s profile, and with Leslie Feist singing on several BSS songs. Remedios got a preview of the tracks that would later appear on her solo breakthrough, “Let It Die.”

Despite major labels pursuing her in Europe and America, Feist signed to ASC in Canada because of the organic nature of the label, Remedios says.

“When people heard ‘Let It Die,’ bidding wars ensued,” he says. “But before any of that happened, Leslie was deep in with our camp. She wanted to work with us and was intensely loyal.”

“Let It Die,” released in 2003, eventually went platinum in Canada. According to Nielsen SoundScan, it sold more than 115,000 copies, and it also shifted 190,000 in the United States on Interscope imprint Cherrytree Records.

But it’s “The Reminder,” with its Apple sync deals, Grammy Award nods and live Juno Award wins, that has helped Arts & Crafts build its team. The label, which has released 33 titles, now has 14 full-time employees, double the staff from two years ago.

Its A&R policy also seems to have changed, given its recent signings of established bands like former Sub Pop act the Constantines and Montreal’s the Stills, previously signed to Vice Records.

Remedios won’t be drawn on whether he expects either to emulate Feist’s sales. Tim Baker, head buyer at Canadian retail chain Sunrise Records, says it won’t be easy.

“Feist has opened herself up to a wider audience,” he says. “But I wonder if those fans are going to be willing to test out other acts on the label.”

Meanwhile, Remedios maintains that such signings are entirely in line with the label’s founding principles.

He says, “Our goals remain the same: to look for amazing musicians [and] continue to bring out their music in the most honest way we can.”

bluhammock music

www.bluhammock.com
TOKYO—Innovative indie Hostess Entertainment is shaking up the conservative Japanese biz.

In recent months, Tokyo-based Hostess has scored several coups, from securing the December release of Radiohead’s album “In Rainbows” to striking deals with Nine Inch Nails and Beck.

Company president Andrew “Plug” Lazonby founded Hostess in 2000 after moving to Japan from his native Britain, where he had been a classical percussionist.

Initially, Lazonby worked for a local music publisher, where he says, “I found the alternatives for international product here were based on licensing—it was a very primitive structure.”

Lazonby launched Hostess after receiving inquiries from British acts or labels seeking Japanese licensing deals that let them retain some control over how their product was marketed.

With most label deals, he says, Japanese companies “would pick up the big releases and dump everything else.” In contrast, Lazonby positioned Hostess as “a local services company. We’ve never been a record label per se.

“Going direct to fans via a local sales and marketing company like Hostess gives the artist unprecedented direction and control over how the release is presented and delivered in a very rigid, structured market,” he says.

The first sizable Hostess representation deal was struck with Pan-European distributor/label group PIAS in 2003.

Hostess’ “way of doing business and the range of services they offer is very similar to the way we operate,” Brussels-based PIAS Entertainment Group international director Edwin Schrooter says.

Lazonby’s local service approach, Schrooter says, remains unique in Japan, where the scale and importance of the market is countered by it being “very difficult to understand” for overseas labels. He says PIAS’ alternative acts Mogwai, Dinosaur Jr, Enter Shikari and Little Barrie have particularly benefited from the partnership.

Lazonby’s company began drawing serious attention within the Japanese biz when it licensed the Arctic Monkeys’ debut album, “Whatever People Say I Am, That’s What I’m Not,” in January 2006 from U.K. indie Domino Records.

Nielsen SoundScan Japan says the album has sold close to 110,000 copies, as has the band’s 2007 sophomore set, “Favourite Worst Nightmare.”

Sources suggest that one Japanese label hurt by Hostess’ aggressive sourcing of international repertoire is Sony Music Entertainment (Japan), which is reportedly seeking third-party deals. SMEI was unavailable for comment.

However, other Japanese labels have cast approving glances at the Hostess operation. Kentaro Kojima, head of promotion at Tokyo-based indie label Wess Records, says Lazonby is “very good at finding the right market for artists. He knows how to pass the right impression of the artists’ coolness to the audience and media.”

Warner Music Japan international division director Hana Tabata adds, “I am impressed by the speed and antenna Hostess has in acquiring quality artists.”

Such respect has also taken physical form. In March, Hostess signed a deal with Tokyo-based BMG Japan, which now provides the indie with back-end distribution, management services plus nationwide sales and broadcast media promotion support.

BMG Japan president Daniel DiCicco praises Lazonby’s development of a “strong alternative channel” for international artists. “Plug is proactive and aggressive,” DiCicco says. “He and I share many perspectives on the importance of keeping things simple, artist-focused and swift-footed.”

That approach was notably deployed for Radiohead’s “In Rainbows,” when Hostess set up a system that allowed local fans to pay for the album via their mobile-phone accounts instead of credit cards, which are less widely used in Japan than in other major markets.

“In Rainbows” has sold some 100,000 copies in Japan, according to Nielsen SoundScan Japan.

And the deals keep on coming. A January licensing agreement with Universal Music Group’s V2/Cooperative Music was followed in May by a distribution, marketing and promotion deal for Nine Inch Nails’ “Ghosts I-V” in Japan. And on June 3, Hostess confirmed it would handle Beck’s as-yet-untitled new album in Japan.

Hostess is “performing at least as well as a major would with their act,” one Tokyo-based industry consultant says. “With more and more labels releasing on short notice in the U.K. and the U.S., mostly due to piracy concerns, it is very hard for traditional Japanese majors to keep up,” the consultant adds. “Everyone is noticing what Hostess is doing, but it isn’t that easy to change the system.”

Additional reporting by Mark Sutherland in London.
Jonathan Poneman
Sub Pop Founder Takes Stock Of The Last 20 Years And Plans For The Future By Cortney Harding

Venerable indie label Sub Pop has been declared dead twice in its 20 years on Earth: first in 1991, with a Seattle Weekly cover that asked, “Is Sub Pop About to Pop?” and again in 1998, when Rolling Stone said, “Its future looks bleak.” But despite predictions to the contrary, the label that has taken its licks kept on ticking, right up to the present day. One of its latest releases, an album by comedy-folk duo Flight of the Conchords, entered the Billboard 200 in late April at No. 3 and has sold more than 130,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

According to co-founder/label president Jonathan Poneman, he started the label as “a blindly ignorant music fan.” And after breaking Nirvana, helping birth emo with Sunny Day Real Estate and changing lives with the Shins, Poneman is a savvier businessman but not a cynic. “Fandom always drives what we do,” he says. “When you get down to it, we’re all a bunch of music nerds.”

What’s been the key to keeping the label in business for 20 years?
Loving music. At the end of the day, it’s been the fact that we are all music fans. It’s certainly not our massive CD sales (laughs), although our digital sales are growing nicely.

As you take stock of the last two decades, what have been the best and worst business decisions you've made?
Not to be too cynical, but I would say hiring a good attorney has been one of the [best]. For us, the key has been signing bands that we didn’t expect to perform initially and giving them the space to grow and develop. When we started, we didn’t have yearly projections or budgets, but as we matured as a label, we learned a lot more about the value of making modest sales projections and then being happy when the bands exceeded our expectations.

In terms of the worst, we’ve signed artists whose expectations have been too grand and were too impatient to realize that it takes a lot of time to build success. That impedes our ability to form a good, long-term partnership with those acts.

Where does your joint venture with Warner Music Group fit in on the best-to-worst scale? I’ve read interviews with you where you say the deal has worked out, but if you could go back and do it over, you wouldn’t do it.
First off, the people who work at Warner are all good people, and I think very highly of them as individuals. But the thing is, Sub Pop comes from a culture that is very independent, and that does not do well inside a certain system. It is a huge conglomerate, and while we wish them well, we also realize that Sub Pop operates best in our own community. When the deal first went down, there was a lot of culture shock, and now it seems to have settled down. The deal does not in perpetuity and will end sometime in the next decade.

Lots of people buy albums just because they are released by Sub Pop. How have you built this up during the life of the label?
The first time we really thought consciously about this was in the early ’90s. We were thinking about signing non-grunge acts, and the debate over it lasted about five minutes before we realized we’d be fools not to. In a way, I think we reflect the collections of most music fans; unless you are a hardcore genre aficionado, your collection is probably diverse. We were much more regimented early on, but now I think we are just focused on quality and making an impact.

When Nirvana broke, the thought of the band in a car ad was absurd, and now Band of Horses is in Wal-Mart commercials. How have the changes in attitudes about this affected Sub Pop?
We see Sub Pop as being a platform for artist success above all else, and we see our role as being a counsel to our bands when it comes to making decisions about licensing. The final decision is up to the band and their comfort level, but we only give them advice when they ask for it.

I also think the debate about “selling out” is incomplete if you don’t also look at whether an artist is being played on radio. Historically, radio has been driven by ads, and if your song is on radio bookended by five minutes of commercials, then you really have no room to protest. Being on TV or in film accomplishes the same thing, only artists are compensated for their work.

Our film and TV licensing stuff are very good at what they do, and while an individual placement might not pay a lot, it does add up. We have one artist who doesn’t sell a lot of records but has had many placements and has managed to not only recoup his initial costs but make a nice living for himself.

In terms of other revenue streams, does Sub Pop have any sort of 360 deals with artists? Or are you still focused on selling music?
Most of our revenue comes from CD, digital and vinyl sales. Licensing and merch both do well, but music is king. We don’t do any type of 360 deals with our bands; occasionally, we’ll commission some exclusive T-shirt decisions, but we are pretty much a record company.

When you break down the sales, what percentage of them are from the catalog and what percentage is newer material?
This has been a very robust year for us, so the bulk of our 2008 sales are more recent stuff. The Postal Service is still selling, and Nirvana is always going to sell. There are kids today who were born after Kurt Cobain passed away and they are still discovering Nirvana and buying “Bleach.”

Your connection to the Seattle sound in the early ’90s played a huge role in the development of the label and your brand. Nowadays, it seems like bands are more associated with labels or genres or Web sites than the city they reside in. Has this affected Sub Pop?
While the advent of MySpace and the Web certainly changed the way people view local music, I think we are in for a re-emergence in localism in music. The spike in oil prices has put a big dent in our migratory culture, and while the Web remains, it’s going to become increasingly hard for bands to travel. We are in for some hard times economically, and people are going to have to stay home and build local scenes out of necessity.

Speaking of the Web, while Sub Pop has a digital store and your bands all have MySpace pages, you have not embraced the Web as much as some labels that cater to younger fans. What is your digital strategy going forward?
I still represent an old-guard mentality. I think I did it in a more sophisticated way than some other people. I still cling to the perspective that the medium is not always the message, and we have gotten bogged down in all these discussions about file sharing and downloading and CD burning and legality. It’s really about asking the question, What does the music mean to you? You can get everything you want right away, and that is not going to change. If every label, including Sub Pop, were to disappear tomorrow, music would remain. I’d much rather spend my time talking about music and its impact than music and its business practices.

Where will you be in 20 more years? Still signing bands?
If I’m not pushing daisies, I’ll be planning them. I’ve gotten to the place where I’m comfortable with the fact that it is all out of my control.

Q&A
Billboard Picked The Brightest Brains In The Business To Put Together This Handy Cheat Sheet

How To...

Sell Your Merchandise

With gas prices up and record sales down, a developing indie act still has one place to turn for profit: merchandise. While many young bands rely on concert guarantees to pay for basic touring expenses, merch sales on the road and off are more important than ever. Here are five tips to help keep your merch sales on track and profitable.

OWN IT

Matchbook Romance bassist Ryan Kienle—who also serves as production manager at Glamour Kills Clothing—has one key piece of advice for upstart indie acts: “Don’t sell your merchandise rights.” Admitting that “all of the money Matchbook Romance personally saw” came from merchandise sales, Kienle says that signing a 360-type deal that gives record companies a cut of that revenue could ultimately kill your band. “That will start eating into your actual paycheck as a musician,” he says.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

When designing a band logo, think the Ramones or Danzig. Merch Direct owner Beck says, “Those guys have sold a million shirts and it was one film and one screen,” he says, noting that one color logo can save artists big bucks. “You’re not Versace. Put a logo on a shirt and call it a day.” If done properly and incorporated onto enough products, a logo “becomes subconscious,” Kienle says. “People start to associate it.”

SELL ONLINE

Offering products online is “such an overlooked thing, because bands don’t realize how much money it can generate,” Epitaph/Heliotrope Records director of merchandising Mike Fontaine says. “If you’re a band in Southern California and you don’t leave California, there could be a kid in Iowa that likes your band. Where else are they going to get your shirt except for an online store?” Selling merchandise online can be as simple as setting up a PayPal account via your band’s Web site, Fontaine says.

SIZE MATTERS

When ordering T-shirts or sweatshirts for an upcoming tour, consider the physique of your fan base. “I’ve had artists that were adamant about wanting an outrageous number of a huge size,” says Chris Esterbrooks, manager of Ink Tank Merch, a division of Saddle Creek Records. “I’ll say, ‘You’re an indie rock band. Hipster kids and indie rock kids wear small and medium T-shirts. You’re never going to move these.’” A medium-sized Fruit of the Loom T-shirt (50% cotton) is “definitely the most popular shirt I move,” he adds.

SEASONAL PRODUCTS

Trying to sell long-sleeve hoodies during the summer is probably not a wise move. Esterbrooks says. Instead, touring acts should be “conscious about what time of year you’re out and what the weather is like,” he adds. In summer 2005 during its time on the Vans Warped tour, Matchbook Romance made a killing from selling water guns. “They cost us 25 cents an apiece to make,” Kienle says, “and we were selling them for $2.”

A slim fan models a Bright Eyes tee.

Get A Good Synch Deal

Let’s face it: You and every other band in the world think you have the perfect bitch-tastic song to play on “Gossip Girl.” But how do you make your dream placement a reality? Razor & Tie director of music licensing Manny Lorenzo gives the scoop.

BE FLEXIBLE

“There are productions that have great music budgets, and then there are some that don’t have as big of a budget,” Lorenzo says. The trick is to work with the music supervisor to get more bang for your buck. “I would definitely consider licensing the song if they had an ad card at the end of the show with a picture of the CD and a voice-over. I had a show where they may not have had a big budget, but there was the opportunity for an onscreen performance by the artist. That’s huge.”

GO WIDE

Don’t quit when you don’t get your dream synch. There are plenty of other outlets out there. “When we get advances of an artist’s music, I’ll service them to music supervisors in film, TV, trailer houses and videogames,” Lorenzo says. The flip side to this, of course, is to do your research and don’t spam the music supervisors with songs that don’t fit their shows. Maybe your old-school single track would work somewhere better than on MTV’s “The Hills”?

FOLLOW UP

“I do a monthly newsletter on behalf of the record label and the publishing company for Razor & Tie,” Lorenzo says. “It’s an HTML e-mail, and it has links to stream the new songs on the album . . . I send out updates if we have a great sales week, and I let music supervisors know if we charted high on a radio chart, if we charted high on Billboard or on a sales position, including the single on iTunes.”

Hire A Good Team

Not to pressure you, indie artists, but choosing the right people for your business team is one of the most important decisions you’ll ever make. Rely on your inexperienced friends, and you could be stuck in the garage forever.

It’s not easy figuring out who to hire or what to ask them. Sometimes even a person who recommends a business rep can be sending you down the dark path. Often the best referral comes from someone who’s been on the other side of the bargaining table.

Billboard asked five experts to share some tips on hiring players for your team.

PERSONAL MANAGER

Ruta Sepetys says: Go for the person with solid international contacts who can generate business overseas and at home simultaneously. Verify the manager’s experience with guerrilla marketing, new media, music publishing, corporate sponsorships, cross-promotions and licensing for film and TV. Be convinced that the person will work 24/7 to make it happen for you. Test the commitment by asking for the manager’s outline of a comprehensive career plan with artistic and financial goals.

Ruta Sepetys founded Sepetys Entertainment Group.
TARGET WISELY

“When I’m in L.A., I set up meetings to speak with the music supervisors and see them face-to-face,” Lorenzo says. “I meet with the music executives at the studios because they pretty much oversee all the music supervisors for their shows.” And getting to know the music supervisors has an additional benefit: You’re less likely to tick them off. “There are certain music supervisors that want me to send music via e-mail; others want CDs,” Lorenzo says.

SAMPLE IT

There can be strength in numbers. Get your work on a sampler CD that’s distributed to supervisors. They are inundated with submissions and providing them with one-stop shopping for a certain kind of music is an efficient use of their time. “Some of them are new-to-dates supervisors, some of them are theme supervisors, like classic hits or the ‘80s,” Lorenzo says. “Even supervisors like ‘love and relationship’ music, things of that nature.”

MUSIC PUBLISHER

Kenny MacPherson says: Connect with ASCAP, BMI or SESAC. Hit their events to meet publishers. Do your homework and check out the publisher’s roster of songwriters, artists and producers. Call them or their managers if you can. Ask what their relationships are like with the publishers. Then meet with the publishers in their offices. Check out the people who work there to get a sense of who they are as human beings. Make sure you’d enjoy breaking bread with them.

Kenny MacPherson is president of Chrysalis Music Group USA.

ONLINE MARKETING REP

Fred Croshal says: Stay away from cookie-cutter plans. Expect a tailored marketing plan that accentuates your brand, drives traffic to your Web pages and involves everything from chat rooms and blogs to Internet press. Look for a plan that evolves through stages, beginning well before a release, peaking at the sweet spot of the week of the release and maintains the interest afterward. Make sure this team coordinates well with all your other teams.

Fred Croshal is owner of Croshal Entertainment Group.

MUSICIAN

Dan Hoffman says: Find someone with a strong understanding of the economics of the music business. Avoid lawyers who are just learning the ropes: they’ll get lost negotiating the variety of income streams and get beset by the other side. Go for people with the most experience as long as they also understand the indie world. Find out which lawyer will handle your work at a firm; it may not be the person you meet. Stay away from lawyers who run up fees by overnegotiating deals or fighting over minor problems.

Dan Hoffman is executive VP of business and legal affairs at Razor & Tie and a former attorney for Tommy Boy and RCA Records.

LAWYER

Kathryn Frazier says: Do your homework on who they have broken. Ask other artists, peers and managers repped by the company what they think and if they’d recommend them. Find out if you will still be maintained and cared for once the regular project monthly fee is over. Ask them for a pitch—if they can’t talk easily and passionately, then it will likely not be worked to the best of its potential. Make sure they do their research. Ask them to see an example of their reports. It’s best to see detailed work so you know what is being done on your behalf.

Kathryn Frazier is owner of Biz 3 Publicity.

PUBLICIST

PLAY TO THE CROWD

This is especially important in New York and Los Angeles, where the bookers for the late-night shows are based. Wilson’s out seeing shows six nights per week. “I always try to get a band when they’re going to be in L.A. around a show,” she says. “I’m really sensitive about budgets, and usually they can just fold the expense of a hotel room into their touring budgets.”

PLAY LIVE

It’s not just Wilson you have to win over. It’s the entire talent department for the show. “I do have to play everything for a jury of my peers,” she says. “It is subject to all of us. It’s nice to have the counsel of the talent department and Craig, because that’s like a little mini TV audience.” And show them how you can win over people in different environments. Wilson says her ideal is telling the jury, “Even though this group is known for playing bigger rooms, here’s a clip on YouTube I found of them playing it to a crowd on a street corner with just a guitar and a bongo.” Another tip on how to win friends and influence people. Ferguson likes country music, and as a result “The Late Late Show” winds up booking more country acts than its competitors.

DROP THE DIVA ACT

Yes, it’s national TV. But don’t think that your being under consideration for late night suddenly equates to making outrageous demands. “The thing that’s so great about having musicians on—people that have to live in [an] Econoven most of the year touring—is that they’re so excited to be on television,” Wilson says. “They know the audience they’re going to get is bigger than any stadium they could play.” The nightmare? “There are [a] few people—the no green M&Ms’ people—that really need to be hand held.”

GET ONLINE

“Listen to all your CDs, but new media is a huge help,” Wilson says. “Now that the whole model is changing, I can hear a band on MySpace, see them on YouTube and read fan comments, which really help. The whole model is changing. It’s not the old-boy networking it used to be that if you’re on a big-time record label, you’re definitely going to get on TV. There’s a fly chance for bands to get in on the ground level and make a relationship on talent.”

So if you haven’t yet napalmmed the bridge with a late-night booker, there are some strategies that performers can employ to boost their chances of being selected for a spot on such a talk show. Billboard received five key tips from Cole Wilson, music booker for CBS’ “The Late Late Show With Craig Ferguson.” —Ann Donahue
Opportunity Knocks
Retail, Music Discovery Trends Favor Indies

The dawn of the Nielsen SoundScan era gave independent labels a big boost by demonstrating that their reach among consumers was far greater than previously thought.

Now, the Internet, satellite radio and other alternatives to traditional terrestrial radio could provide indie's another chance to flex their muscles.

Before SoundScan began tracking U.S. recorded-music sales in 1991, indie labels—that is, labels that do not sell their music through a major distribution company—accounted for an estimated 7-10% of album sales. But during 1992, the first full-year tracked by SoundScan, their market share turned out to be a far more substantial 13.6%.

The numbers were a revelation for retailers, who scrambled to improve their selection of independent releases, thereby providing a further boost to indie's fortunes. Helped also by the growing popularity of hip-hop, which at the time was still mostly an indie phenomenon, the independent sector's share of U.S. album sales climbed to 14.6% in 1993, 16% in 1994 and 19.2% in 1995. Although the majors eventually co-opted the rap genre, indie market share has continued to hover around 20% ever since.

Today, indie's face a similar growth opportunity thanks to the declining influence of terrestrial radio as a means of music discovery and the growing number of ways that consumers can access music.

According to the annual "Infinite Dial" study released in April by Arbitron and Edison Media Research, 13% of the U.S. population age 12 and older listens to Internet radio on a weekly basis, up from 6% in 2002. And 25% of those surveyed said the Web was the medium they turned to first to learn about new music, up from 9% in 2002. Those who said that traditional radio was their first source of information on new music slipped to 49% down from 63% in 2002.

Meanwhile, data collected by SoundExchange reveals that independent music—based on a definition that includes independently controlled labels distributed by majors—accounts for 39% of audience impressions on non-terrestrial radio, compared with 11% for terrestrial radio, according to Rich Bengloff, president of the American Assn. of Independent Music and a SoundExchange board member.

And while independent labels account for 33.7% of CD sales, they account for a somewhat greater 37.2% of digital download sales, based on SoundExchange data compiled by AAIM. Why? The unlimited shelf space of the Web provides a more level playing field and allows for Long Tail sales to emerge. As digital sales gradually account for a greater share of overall recorded-music sales and as consumers increasingly turn away from terrestrial radio to learn about new music, indies stand to benefit enormously, Bengloff says.

"That's not to say that indies aren't being hurt by the decline in CD sales. The disappearance of retail chains like Tower Records and the reduction in space at stores like Borders, which has gone from 50,000 music SKUs in 2000 to 11,500 SKUs as of February, clearly hurt physical sales for indie labels too.

The chains will tell you they don't want to deal with indie labels because inventory turns are low and vendors have too many out-of-stock issues," Bengloff says. "Our response is, 'You don't have to sell our music for $9.99, you can sell it for $13.99 and get a better margin to offset the lower turns.'"

"If brick-and-mortar merchants don't want to stock deep catalog, there are indie niches they can exploit to produce incremental sales that will help them compete against big box merchants," according to Tommy Boy president Tom Silverman. That's not unlike what independent retailers have done all along, differentiating their stores by specializing in certain genres or by selling vinyl records and other merchandise as an easy to-read reference.
Tougher Than The Rest
Mobile Web Poses Big Challenges For Indies

By Antony Bruno

Although provided by indie label Wind-up, it hardly qualifies as a typical indie artist offering. The song was also a popular radio hit, reaching No. 1 on Billboard's Modern Rock chart and No. 6 on the Billboard Hot 100.

"The reality was that 'Paralyzer' was a No. 1 radio record," Cooperman says. "It was huge. You could make a case that it was a huge-selling ringtone because it was such a radio hit."

Indie-focused digital music service eMusic, which started selling full-song downloads through AT&T Mobility last year, says it sees similar trends. Of the 66 million songs downloaded from eMusic since the AT&T partnership was announced, only "a small percentage" originated from a mobile phone.

"The makeup of our downloads varies from our Web-based service to our mobile service," VP of consumer marketing Reid Genauer says, pointing out that mobile eMusic users tend to buy more urban acts and current artists, while users of the PC-based service download a more diverse range of genres from a broader range of music and eras.

Additionally, only 1.1% of eMusic mobile users still an existing eMusic subscription prior to singing up for the mobile service.

"It's a different user group," Genauer says. "I think it's a younger audience."

But that's not to say there isn't an opportunity for the waiting-to-be-discovered indie singer/songwriter to break big on mobile. Genauer points to mobile phone manufacturers like Nokia and Sony Ericsson as potential allies. Phone manufacturers often look to preloaded content on their phones prior to sale to show off their multimedia capabilities. While both phone makers have struck deals with indie-label artists like Ne-Yo and Usher for such purposes, indie artists who are more willing to take chances—as well as accept lower licensing rates in return for the exposure—can benefit as well.

"As the hardware becomes more and more like an iPhone, there's going to be more and more demand for preloaded promotional material," Genauer says. "When you see new technology and promotional opportunites evolve, it tends to be the indie artists that are raising their hands."

Additionally, major and indie labels are expecting the evolution of mobile social networking to play a major role in helping mobile users discover new content. But ultimately, mobile operators will have to embrace the niche music tastes of their broad subscriber base and begin marketing less mainstream fare to them before indie music can really take hold on a mobile platform.

"They're in a logical position to reap a lot of talent demand that exists for product that traditionally has been difficult for certain groups of people to get because of the constraints of the logistics of traditional distribution," Scholl says. "The first operator who really takes this seriously and markets a sophisticated consumer segmentation with a very analytical understanding of what music is selling to whom and what that as a tool for retention and acquisition...you'll start driving a lot of enterprise value. That's a world we're still waiting to see emerge."

NetWorth

Savvy independent artists have found the Internet rife with promotional and distribution opportunities. Cyberspace is literally teeming with new music services popping up almost weekly to offer unknown acts and emerging artists ever-expanding tools to aid their career. Billboard breaks down which services are the most helpful and those to avoid.

THE GOOD

DISTRIBUTION SERVICES: Any online service that can distribute your music to today's most popular digital music retailers for a reasonable price is a useful ally. Rising to the top of this category is TuneCore, which charges a flat-rate annual fee rather than a percentage of sales.

FAN OUTREACH: Many services offer various tools to grow and manage a struggling artist's fan base, through e-mail databases, widgets and touring resources. The honorable mention here is Reverbnation, which offers a suite of six online features in its Artist Toolbox, from its TuneWidget to the newly released GigFinder.

MOBILE MADSNESS: With wireless carriers manning the gates, an unknown artist will have a hard time reaching music fans on their cell phones. But several sites offer an easy way for budding acts to make and distribute ringtones without major operator deals. Bubbling up here is Myxer, which enables artists to create their own ringtones and provides a shortcode that they can use to promote them during shows.

THE BAD

ONLINE "BATTLE OF THE BANDS": While there are certainly exceptions—such as those backed by a known brand with real distribution and brand reach—it's best to avoid contributing to newly launched online music services that hold online "American Idol"-like contests. Most offer dubious promises of a "label deal" or production assistance, but few have the reach, the traffic or the clout to make a real impact on an artist's career and instead are just seeking free content.

"TIP JAR" SERVICES: Online fan-funding efforts certainly sound like a grass-roots and democratic way to launch a career, but the few bands that can actually motivate enough fans to make donations to their recording effort probably don't need the help.

FAKE/FRIEND/SPIN SERVICES: A handful of companies will add fake friends to bands' MySpace profiles or artificially inflate the number of streams their posted songs receive. This is a waste of money on two counts. First, they're easy to spot by the binned eye and will cast users in an unflattering light when discovered. Second, labels are quickly growing skeptical of the importance of such data anyway. It may work today, but in six months these stats will be meaningless.

When you see new opportunities evolve, it tends to be the indie artists that raise their hands.'

—REID GENAUER

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Vampire Weekend has been saddled with the "blog buzz band" tag since day one, but breaking down the data behind those posts reveals more than idle chatter. Who knew that an obscure Wisconsin-based blog drove early interest, or that David Byrne and Animal Collective were the two acts most frequently included in posts about the preppy Columbia grads? Below, Billboard runs the numbers behind the hype.

**Net Gains** Do blogs drive sales? It's impossible to say, but increased chatter certainly offers positive correlation. Below, blog posting volume is plotted against real world events and physical and digital sales.

**Tastemakers Revealed** Each spike in chatter (above) was driven by the following blogs with the most linkbacks. As the band becomes more mainstream, fewer—and more predictable—blogs drive the buzz.

1. **1/22/08** Bloggers chat about album leaks
   - stereogum stereogum.com
   - Dane101: The Collaborative Blog for Madison, Wisconsin dane101.com
   - SFist sfist.com

2. **1/31/08** Chat about the album's proper release
   - A VC avc.blogs.com/a_vc
   - Double-Tongued Dictionary doubletongued.org
   - Jonathan Coulton jonathancoulton.com
   - stereogum stereogum.com

3. **2/06/08** Tickets for upcoming shows go on sale
   - stereogum stereogum.com
   - brooklynvegan brooklynvegan.com
   - stereogum stereogum.com

4. **3/10/08** Band plays "Saturday Night Live"
   - stereogum stereogum.com
   - brooklynvegan brooklynvegan.com
   - stereogum stereogum.com

5. **4/28/08** Band plays Coachella
   - SFist sfist.com

6. **6/14/08** Band plays Bonnaroo
   - brooklynvegan brooklynvegan.com

**Associated Press** This Nielsen BuzzMetrics brand association map shows the secondary topics most frequently cited in posts pertaining to Vampire Weekend; the closer to the center, the stronger the association.
Long-Term Leverage
Family-Owned Serca Finds Stability With New Label

At a time when most labels are either cutting back their operations or diversifying from their core recording business, Serca has taken the opposite approach. After more than 40 years as a successful management/concert promotion operation, the Monterrey, Mexico-based, family-owned company diversified in the other direction, opening its own label, Serca Music, in 2005. Three years later, Serca acts have begun to hit the Billboard charts.

In the past six months, albums by Los Invasores de Nuevo Leon and Cardenales de Nuevo Leon hit Nos. 37 and 22, respectively, on Top Latin Albums. Recently, La Apuesta climbed to No. 29 on the same chart with “10 Exitos de Oro,” up from its entry at No. 55 on the May 3 tally. More telling, however, is La Apuesta’s sales trajectory. In its second week of release in November, “10 Exitos” sold 200 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. During the week ended June 8, it moved more than a 1,000.

The jump underscores Serca’s different approach to the record business in general and to selling albums in particular.

“Many big labels were no longer signing new acts or keeping those that didn’t achieve a certain level of sales,” says Servando Cano Jr., who runs Serca Music and the well-established Serca Publishing. “But we’re not looking at short-term sales. We’re looking at artists who will be stable, long-term acts.”

Frustrated with the way labels marketed and promoted many small and midsize acts, Cano says he and his father Servando Cano (who runs the company’s management and booking business) had long talked about starting their own label. They finally took the plunge in 2005, picking up acts like Los Invasores, who’d been dropped by EMI, and Priscila y Sus Balas de Plata, formerly with Plato. The Serca roster is now 12 strong.

Serca invested in a state-of-the-art recording studio and what Cano considers basic promotional tools, like a video for each single. But buildup was slow, due mostly to a lack of expertise in promotion.

A year ago, the label switched from Sony distribution to indie distributor Select-O-Hits, and with this smaller, more personalized approach, started revving up sales.

“They’re a family-run and -owned company, and they remind me of how our company was,” Nashville-based Select-O-Hits VP Johnny Phillips says. When Phillips and Cano met last year, Select-O-Hits was distributing only a handful of regional Mexican titles. Now, it also distributes DBC titles (Diana Reyes’ label) and is finalizing agreements with other regional Mexican labels.

Select-O-Hits’ approach as an indie, Phillips says, serves indie labels particularly well. “You never give up. Major labels, if after a month nothing happens, they go to the next thing. With us, as long as they want to work, we work with them,” he says.

With La Apuesta’s “10 Exitos,” for example, Wal-Mart initially purchased only a small number of copies, “only because we’d had success with Los Cardenales,” Phillips says.

La Apuesta, which plays a variation of duranguense, had a following in Mexico but was little known here, having sold its albums only independently at its shows. Yet, despite limited airplay, buzz began to build, with the group accruing more performances—which Serca controls—along with record sales. Then, some three months ago, Phillips says, Wal-Mart began placing large orders of “10 Exitos,” while Latin one-stops started buying 150-300 copies per week.

Although La Apuesta’s single “Por Ti” spent only three weeks on the regional Mexican airplay chart, to date Select-O-Hits has shipped close to 50,000 copies of the album, Phillips says. According to Nielsen SoundScan, sales stand at 13,500, but, Phillips says, roughly 50% of his numbers come from indie accounts that do not report to SoundScan. In Mexico, sales are at 40,000, according to Cano, and of course, any songs Serca publishes also generate revenue.

Still, Cano says, although the label covers its expenses, it doesn’t make money, and may never do so.

“Music is going through a rough patch, but it will always be good business, regardless of the format,” he says.

And what if Serca Music were to start losing money?

“We’d find a way to be more efficient,” he says. “But we won’t turn back on this.”
Add It Up

Indie Bands Should Brush Up On Their Accounting Skills Before They Hit The Road

In tough economic times, the little guys always feel more heat, and that's as true in the touring world as much as anywhere. So we're happy to give indie bands access to a few of the best tour accounting and travel minds in the business. This advice is worth at least a tank of gas in the van.

With little if any label money to rely on, "even a small financial mishap can wipe out an entire tour's profits," says Bill Zysblat, partner in RZO Productions, whose clients include David Bowie, the Police reunion tour and the Rolling Stones.

First and foremost, indie bands need to understand that they are on the road to promote themselves, Zysblat says. "Financially speaking, it's usually not as much about making money as it is about breaking even," he adds.

In fact, Chris Hughes, rocker-turned-business manager at Flood Rumstead McCreary & McCarthy, offers this tough love: "Get a job. Most musicians think it's against the rules to be in a band and have a job, but it's the only way to pay the bills while your band is growing."

Touring fiscal responsibility begins, obviously, with a transportation/accommodation analysis. "Living cheaply is not always about finding the least expensive motel," Zysblat says. "A tour bus, which might seem out of reach to an indie band, can often accommodate the entire band and crew as well as double as a hotel for several nights a week. Many venues have shower facilities, so crunch the numbers. Vans and motels may be more expensive than a very comfortable alternative."

Veteran touring travel agent Nick Gold of Entertainment Travel says he advises most baby bands to book a "cheap but clean driver room" near the gig on show days and either a couple of "cleanup rooms" on off days or sleeping on the bus.

"We keep the rooms anywhere from $50 to $80, which will usually work," Gold says. "That's about all we do to get them on the road, and the nice thing is that they are not winging it from day to day and then getting stuck in a sold-out town with no hotel, or having to stay a long way from the gig, making it harder for the driver."

In booking hotels, car rentals and airfare, Zysblat suggests not only being cost-conscious but also seeking companies with affinity programs. "Get your points and use your points," he says. "If you're using hotel rooms, try the discount chains that give you free rooms after a certain number of nights booked."

In lieu of hotels, Hughes suggests that bands make friends. "Another band's couch or a fan's spare bedroom is much cheaper than a hotel room," he says. "It's also a sure-fire way to find the best places to party in those towns."

One can never underestimate the value of "routing, routing, routing," Zysblat says. "The price of fuel plus wear and tear on the body makes logical routing more important than ever. Traveling an extra five hours to make an extra $500 may make no sense," he says. "If you have an agent, question the routing from a cost benefit point of view. Cross isn't everything. In fact, it's nothing. Net is everything."

In crunching numbers, the cost of per diems should be weighed against actual expenses of the crew. "Per diems have become additional wages in the minds of many people," Zysblat says. "The point of per diems is so the band and crew do not
have to go out of pocket while on the road. But
if the venue is supplying one meal and you’re
springing for pizza after the show, it may save
you money to pay for breakfast, laundry and
toothpaste instead of parting with per diems
for everyone.”
Hughes suggests that bands “raid the cater-
ing” at shows. “If you are lucky enough to be
opening for someone who has a backstage with
catering, see if they’ll let you take whatever is
left over after the show,” he says. “Most bands
started out where they’d understand and
would be much happier knowing the food
was being eaten rather than thrown away.”
When bands do spend money, Zysblat says
it’s well worth the effort to keep receipts. “The
only thing worse than spending money is not
getting a tax deduction for it,” he says. “Fill out
those petty cash envelopes every night. If you
wait until the end of the week, you won’t re-
member what the receipt was for. Be vigilant
and let Uncle Sam pick up 35% of the tab.”
Sell “anything and everything,” Zysblat says.
“For an indie band, most CDs are bought
on impulse. You must sell your CDs on the
road. You can’t rely on the crowd to find the
store near them that is carrying your product.”
Hughes adds, “Those shirts might look old
to you, but there are plenty of fans who haven’t
seen them yet. Don’t be too quick to order
new merchandise when you have older stock
that you can sell.”

A Music Row?
Nashville Publishers
Ponder Lobbying

After the Copyright Royalty Board sets com-
pulsory-license rates for compositions this fall,
digital media and music industry trade groups
will ramp up lobbying efforts as they prepare
for what will likely be another attempt next
year at revising the process for obtaining com-
pulsory licenses. But with that agenda may
come a new voice. A splinter group of inde-
pendent music publishers in Nashville is rum-
bling about forming a new purely indie group
if they feel the National Music Publishers’ Asso-
ciation isn’t fully representing their interests.
Their concerns about the NMPPA emerged
after a bill revising the compulsory license
(section 115 of the Copyright Act) came close
to passing Senate and House judiciary sub-
committees in 2006. Under the Section 115
Reform Act, the Harry Fox Agency, a sub-
sidiary of the NMPPA, would have been the
primary administrator of a new blanket li-
cense for digital uses of all compositions
under the compulsory license. According to
several publisher sources, this prompted some
publishers to believe that their interests
weren’t properly represented by the NMPPA,
which helped draft the bill.
“There has always been a feeling that the
major labels have influence over [their sibling]
publishers,” one of the Nashville publishers
says. “Up to this point, there haven’t been the
kind of world-changing decisions that are
about to be made [by Congress and judges].
Let’s be sure that the pure indie voice is at the
table when these huge decisions are made.”
Nashville “is the last bastion of the way pub-
lishing used to be,” another publisher says.
“Writers come into the office and write a song.
We have a unique perspective on songwriting and publishing
that some other groups that represent catalogs or [primarily col-
lect royalties] don’t have.”
These independent Nashville
publishers warn that if an admin-
istrator for a blanket license
could hold royalties for a long
time or charge quarterly pay-
ments to semiannual payments, the result-
ing delay in their cash flow could put them
out of business.
Some of their concerns about the NMPPA
are rooted in misperceptions about how the
group operates. For instance, one publisher
says he heard that the major publishers con-
trol who is elected to the NMPPA board, that
many board members serve at the majors’
pleasure rather than holding a secure seat and
that the same people hold most board seats
for many years.
For NMPPA president/CEO David Israelite,
clearing up such misunderstandings is one
of his top priorities. According to NMPPA by-
laws, the number of votes an NMPPA member
has to elect a board member depends on the
amount of that publisher’s revenue collected
through the Harry Fox Agency. Israelite says.
But the number of votes is capped so that most
midsize and large independents have the same
number of votes as any major publisher.
There are 18 board seats, four
of which are held by major pub-
lishers. Board member votes are
not weighted; each member has
one vote on NMPPA issues. In
addition, nearly one-half of the
NMPPA board comprises mem-
bers who’ve joined during the
past few years, Israelite says.
Whether the NMPPA will be
able to hold onto the splinter group of indie
publishers remains to be seen. But all the publi-
shers I spoke with agree that a
single united voice will be more powerful
on Capitol Hill.
“I hope that the NMPPA can carry the flag
for 100% of the publishers,” one publisher
says. “It just has to be in a way that indie pub-
lishers can feel secure.”

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Artist Merchandise Items
Available Now At www.Billboard.com/store
Kid Sister

(>34, Capitol/EMI Records) Chicago rapper Kid Sister has gone from underground upstart to the next big thing in hip-hop in record time.

The 27-year-old, who started rapping a mere three and a half years ago, made a splash last year when her Kanye West-assisted single, "Pro Nails," made the rounds on the Internet and the radio. She later signed to Downtown Records (Gnarls Barkley, Spank Rock) and is now slated to release her debut album, tentatively titled "Koko B. Ware," in late July.

The set features production by her DJ/producer/boyfriend A Tish, Diplo, XXXChange, the Count and Sinden, Infamous Trackademicks, Gant-MAN, Yukiie, Sean "C." and others. Nina Sky and West make the solo guest appearances. A follow-up single to "Pro Nails," the most likely "Down Ass Jaws," is expected by the middle of summer.

"We're still really in the process of working on 'Pro Nails' on radio. There's still a lot of life left in that track," Downtown president/CEO Josh Deutsch says.

Now, Kid Sister, born Melissa Young, has not only been nominated in the best female hip-hop artist category at this year's BET Awards, but she's also just signed a promotional deal with McDonald's, recently filming a commercial for the fast food franchise.

In addition, Kid Sister is working on a clothing collaboration with designers Erin Featherstone that will be available at Target stores nationwide. A branding deal with nail salon products inspired by "Pro Nails" is in the works, as well as various promotional radio nail salon events.

"Kid Sister is so easily embraced wherever she goes in large part because she's so extremely personable, which is why we're so positive about her career," Deutsch says. "The team has done a great job with all outlets, but it is all possible because we are dealing with an artist that is so charismatic."

Downtown is hoping that personality translates to such summer live appearances as the Rock the Bells festival tour, Lollapalooza and New York's Central Park Summer Stage.

"Are these people on crack? I'm like, 'Why?' The absurdity of the whole thing is nuts," Kid Sister jokes of her recent accolades. "But I'm so super excited and appreciative. Things are definitely going good. I can't believe any of it, still."

— Marcel Concepcion

A LOOK AHEAD

Billboard Highlights 10 Indie Artists Poised To Make An Impact In 2008

World to Watch

Kid Sister

(U.K. Metal Phenomenon Looks To Extend U.S. Inroads By Christa Titus and Tom Ferguson)

Last Christmas, Roadrunner director of A&R Mike Gitter and his wife were leaving a mall movie theater when they passed a Wii kiosk where shoppers could play videogames. There, Gitter recalls, the couple spotted "a little girl who couldn't have been more than 10 years old, wailing away at 'Guitar Hero,' flawlessly going through 'Through the Fire and Flames.'"

The sight of a tween happily jamming to the most complicated song on "Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock" is proof that Gitter has done his job well. After all, he's the man who licensed DragonForce, the U.K. band behind the little girl's sound of choice, from Sanctuary for North America.

Preteens playing DragonForce indicate the band's cultural impact, crossover effect and career lift-off in the United States. On paper, the group is far from a first-round pick for the metal act with the best mainstream potential. Its progressive songs are over-the-top, technically proficient epics that fly at light speed—much too long and complicated for radio. Gitter describes the band's stage show thusly: "There are trampolines. There are leotards. There are ballads. There are leather pants. These aren't the sort of things that usually attract the "Hannah Montana" demographic.

But DragonForce inadvertently stumbled on a cross-marketing platform with "Guitar Hero." Because families play the game together, preteens of all ages are discovering the band, thereby exposing it to audiences beyond the usual metal-loving male. "It's everyone from hipsters to haters," Gitter says. "It's Death Cab for Cutie fans to death metal fans."

"The videogame's—and DragonForce's—pop culture presence was verified when Ellen DeGeneres had an 11-year-old boy on her talk show to demonstrate his expertise in whipping through the song. DragonForce was already building a U.S. fan base by 2006, between having a viral video hit for "Flames" on YouTube and doing an 11-date U.S. headlining tour, followed by joining 2006's Ozzfest and then a joint with Killswitch Engage. Placement on 2007's "Guitar Hero III" was the tipping point. DragonForce's 2006 album "Inhuman Rampage" has sold 389,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. "Flames" debut radio conversion with its lengthy running time, dizzying speed and guitar acrobatics, managing to peak at No. 86 on the Billboard Hot 100. It also reached No. 42 on the Hot Digital Tracks chart, selling 54,000 downloads and earning gold certification.

In the United Kingdom, "Inhuman Rampage" has sold 75,000 units according to the Official U.K. Charts Co., where it peaked at No. 70. The album also hit No. 54 on Sweden's GLF chart. (London-based manager Stuart McLaughlin considers the States and the United Kingdom, respectively, to be DragonForce's biggest markets, followed by Japan, Canada and Australia.)

DragonForce has toured internationally behind "Inhuman Rampage" for two years, only leaving the road when McLaughlin felt it was time to record a new album, "Ultra Beatdown." The set is due Aug. 20 in Japan on JVC, Aug. 26 in the United Kingdom and Aug. 27 in the States on Roadrunner, followed by the rest of the world.

www.americanradiohistory.com
The eight-track "Ultra Beatdown" features plenty of DragonForce's "extreme power metal," as the band calls its music. The first single, "Heroes of Our Time," demonstrates the act has gained some polish and smoothed the transitions between the breakneck passages in its music.

Guitarist Herman Li says that as one of the performers, it's hard to describe how "Beatdown" differs from "Rampage." However, he explains that the band tried to retain DragonForce's established sound while adding new twists. "It's got elements that we haven't done before, and it's got the element that we're good at, that we've done on the previous album, but [done in a] different way. On this album, there are songs that aren't super fast for us—it's almost kind of midtempo and mixed quite differently."

The road remains the linchpin to Roadrunner's campaign to elevate "Beatdown" beyond the No. 103 Billboard peak that "Rampage" reached. McTaggart says the band will tour "all the way through 2010. The touring is already booked up until the end of February 2009."

DragonForce returns to the States July 9 for the inaugural Rockstar Energy Mayhem tour that runs through August, sharing the main stage with Slipknot, Disturbed and Mastodon. Following the U.S. shows, the band launches a 14-date U.K./Ireland tour Sept. 25 in Oxford, England, running through Oct. 13. Shows in Japan and Australia immediately follow, and then a European tour begins in late January 2009.

The focus on touring is largely dictated by DragonForce's lack of broadcast opportunities internationally. "Because the songs come in at about seven minutes," McTaggart says, "when we do edits, we might edit a single lead track to under five minutes. But there's still too long for a lot of radio stations."

While the main weight of the band's marketing is very much behind the "old-school" approach of heavy touring, other channels will be utilized. Because of the lack of radio play in Europe, the majority of the act's marketing is print media-driven. To capitalize on the publicity that "Guitar Hero" has generated in the States, Roadrunner director of marketing Chris Brown says the label is partnering with game manufacturer Activision to release a download expansion pack on street date that will include "Heroes of Our Time," "Operation Ground and Pound" and "Cry for Eternity" from "Inhuman Rampage." It will be available through the "Guitar Hero III" in-game store for Xbox and PlayStation. "We're also using WEA's college reps and our street team to cover not only the competitive metal tours that are going on this year, but also make sure we're hitting [Vans] Warped tour," Brown continues, noting that Warped has a younger demographic "that Mayhem may be missing a little bit."

Asked if "Ultra Beatdown" could cross DragonForce over from metal band to top 40 act, Brown says he thinks that transition has already begun, what with "Through the Fire and Flames" penetrating the Hot 100. "It's almost becoming a cultural thing because of ["Guitar Hero"]. . . it's stepped beyond metal," he says. "We don't look at it as a metal band. It's DragonForce. It's its own thing."

(Aug. 27, Roadrunner)

"There are keytars. There are ballads. There are leather pants.

—MIKE GITTER
Conor Oberst

(Aug. 4, Merge) Like many young, hip kids nearing the end of their 20s, Conor Oberst is slightly torn, a little jaded and mighty contemplative. “I look back on the good old days with fondness, for sure,” he says over a beer at a bar in Manhattan’s East Village. “That type of freedom doesn’t exist now—rolling into town and playing at some kid’s house, that’s an amazing thing. But on the other hand, it is nice to get paid.”

Of late, Oberst has been channeling his quarter-life crises into another thoughtful, slightly melancholy album. Hailed as the second coming of indie rock in the early 2000s, Oberst never quite managed to become the next Bob Dylan, but he didn’t do too badly for himself, either. (His albums have sold 1.7 million copies combined in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.) And after all, there are worse ways to spend a winter than hole up in Mexico recording an album for respected indie label Merge.

When asked why he chose to split from Saddle Creek, the label that had been his home since he was a teen, Oberst cites a need to give something new a whirl, and that because he signs deals on an album-by-album basis, he had the freedom to switch things up. “I’ve admired Merge for a long time,” he says. “The Saddle Creek folks are all still my friends, and I’m still involved with [sister label] Team Love.”

Oberst also decided to record the new, self-titled album without the help of longtime collaborator Mike Mogis. “The record is a solo record and not a Bright Eyes record because Mike isn’t on it,” Oberst says. “His absence changes the sound.” Oberst recorded instead with the Mystic Valley Band, whose members include Jason Boesel and Nik Freitas. While Oberst’s void narratives are front and center as usual, the record borders on country territory at points, especially on the foot-stomping “NYC—Gone, Gone.”

After the album is released Aug. 4, the band plans to hit the road and stay there through the end of 2008.

Oberst claims to love touring, but part of his road warrior attitude comes from a recognition of the new realities of the music business. “I’ve had the good fortune to see it from all sides and over a long period of time,” he says. “I’d never begrudge people the ability to hear music, but artists still need to get paid, and the industry is really struggling with this. The key to success is managing your expectations, and knowing you are not going to sell as many copies of a new record as you would have 10 years ago.”

With that in mind, Merge plans to push the album at commercial triple-A radio, but Oberst doesn’t really care if he tops the charts. “I’ve always tried to ignore the hype and keep everything in perspective,” he says. “I know that nothing I do is going to please everyone. In the end, I respect my audience, but I don’t value them over my vision.”

—Courtney Harding
Little Jackie
Coppola Returns To Pop With New Project By Mikael Wood

Imani Coppola admits that the story behind her former Little Jackie with multi-instrumentalist Adam Pallin is “really not very exciting at all.” She was in the studio last year working on tracks with producer Mike Mangini (who helmed Coppola’s 1997 debut, “Chupacabra,” with its left-field Billboard Hot 100 hit “Legend of a Cowgirl”) when Mangini suggested that she try writing with Pallin, his go-to programming guy. “And that’s it,” Coppola says with a laugh.

Despite its ho-hum origins, the duo’s debut is anything but pedestrian. A high-spirited mash-up of funky hip-hop grooves and swinging Motown melodies, “The Stoop” (due July 8 from S-Curve) finds Coppola holding forth animatedly about everything from the charm of her Brooklyn neighborhood to partying like a white girl.

Coppola and Pallin (the latter recently worked on “American Idol” alum Elliot Yamin’s debut) recorded the album separately, a setup that Pallin says created a juicy juxtaposition “between what the music suggests and what she does lyrically. It probably wouldn’t have come together the way it did if we had worked in the same room together.”

S-Curve president Steve Greenberg compares Little Jackie to Gnars Barkley, another off-kilter producer-singer collaboration. Though he points out that Coppola has been steadily releasing records since “Chupacabra”—last year she made one for former Faith No More frontman Mike Patton’s label Ipecac—Greenberg acknowledges that “to most of the world” Little Jackie will be an unknown act.

Making a name for the duo is a job he’s well into. Lead single “The World Should Revolve Around Me” will be the theme song for the upcoming season of VH1’s “I Love New York,” while tracks from “The Stoop” have already earned play on Nic Harcourt’s tastemaking KCRW Santa Monica, Calif., radio show “Morning Becomes Eclectic.” Additionally, on street date, Little Jackie is booked to perform on “Late Night With Conan O’Brien.” “I’m a big fan of Imani’s,” Greenberg says. “Anything she does, I’m interested in.”

The Faint

(Aug. 5, blank.wav) The Faint has always been a hands-on band, making its own videos and ensuring its brand of electronic rock sounded little like anything else out there. Now, the Faint is taking the DIY ethic even further by breaking ties with longtime home Saddle Creek and starting its own label, blank wav.

The band's new album, "Fascination," arrives Aug. 5 on the imprint, with distribution via Redeye.

The Faint had long pondered starting its own label but finally pulled the trigger after deciding financial sustainability was possible. Plus, "Our relationship with Saddle Creek turned more into a business relationship. There became a division between bands and label. The sense of 'we're all in this together' went away," guitarist/bassist Joel Petersen says.

So the group purchased and renovated its own Omaha, Neb.-based studio, Enamel, where it wrote, recorded and produced without deadline constraints. "It seemed like the right move that we weren't paying a studio day rate [and] paying the producer," Petersen says.

The Faint is counting on its fan base, which includes everyone from indie rockers to club kids, to stick with it throughout the changes. The group's 2001 breakthrough, "Danse Macabre," has sold 139,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, while 2004's "Wet From Birth" is at 117,000.

"This is all ours now," Petersen says. "At the end of the day, we don't hand it over to anybody."

— Katie Hasty

BEST OF THE REST

R&B (DORCY DIGITAL, "GIGGLES"
(July 1, Koch) The Wu-Tang Clan founder's third album under his Bobby Digital alter-ego is "simply fun hip-hop. It's a perfect blend of reality, fiction, sci-fi and martial arts," he says. Inspector Deck and David Banner are among the contributors.

TICKLE ME PINK, "MADELINE"
(July 1, Wind-up) This Fort Collins, Colo.-based rock quartet jumps to Wind-up after independently releasing two EPs. The band will be on the Vans Warped tour this summer, where its angst-laden tunes about girls and goodbyes should sound mighty fine blasting out into the throngs.

PATTI SMITH AND KEVIN SHIELDS, "THE CORAL SEA"
(July 6, PASK) This double-disc set chronicles Patti Smith's June 22, 2005, and Sept. 12, 2006, spoken-word performances of "The Coral Sea" in London, her homage to the late Robert Mapplethorpe. My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields provides guitar accompaniment.

THE FINES, "MELDICA"
(July 12, Australia, Ivy League) After splitting with Capital, the Australian band returns on its own label with what frontman Craig Nicholls calls "the best album we've done so far." Songs like "MercuryGoRound," "True As The Night" and "He's A Rocker" conjure "a lot of punk, death metal, pop music [and] screaming."

DR. DOG, "Clue"
(July 22, Park the Van) This concept piece sports repeating motifs like trains and clocks and is sequenced like one long unending track, with the songs bleeding into one another. Throughout, the Philadelphia-based band lives up to its hype as one of indie rock's most lovably odd combos.

HAIRBRAND HEIGHTS, "FRAGILE FUTURE"
(Aug. 5, Victory) Following the death of guitarist Casey Calvert last year, the Dayton, Ohio-based rock act resolved its well-publicized feud against Victory Records and completed this new album for the label. Its predecessor, 2006's "If Only You Were Lonely," reached a career-best No. 3 on the Billboard 200.

JULIANA HATFIELD, "HOW TO WALK AWAY"
(Aug. 19, Ye Ode) Members of the Psychodrulic Furs, Nada Surf and Fountains of Wayne lend a hand on Juliana Hatfield's 13th album. All profits will be donated to the Energy Action Coalition.

OHN HER, "COMMON REACTION"
(Aug. 19, Nettwerk) This indie pop duo should be salvation to fans of Goldfrapp and Blondie thanks to saucy tracks like "Say So" and "Run," which have scored sold-out club dates in Los Angeles, New York and London.

LITTLE FEAT, "DON'T ME THE RAIN"
(Aug. 26, 429) Produced by Jimmy Buffett, the first album in five years from these roots rock faves sports high-profile guest turns from Dave Matthews, Bob Seger and Brodsky Dunn, among others.

MATTHEW SWEET, "SUNSHINE LIES"
The Hold Steady

Can The Hold Steady Win Over Middle America?
By Michael D. Ayers

During the last five years, as a critically acclaimed rock band with indie-cred galore balancing family with life on the road, the Hold Steady has been inundated with change.

On "Stay Positive," due July 15 via Vagrant, the Brooklyn-based band confronts these issues not only by expanding its sonic repertoire but also via frontman Craig Finn's insightful narratives.

Finn says the album is "by and large about growing older and being faced with adult choices and decisions," issues particularly evident on "One for the Cutters" and "Lord, I'm Discouraged." "I guess I felt like the end of your 20s— you become sick of going out, and being sick of going out: all the time because you felt like you had to," he says.

Groundwork for the new songs was laid on the road last summer, but Finn knew a summer 2008 release was likely so he was able to refine the material over time. "It helped me a lot to put a riff down and sing it to myself," he says. "It was good to get off the road and have a lot of ideas fleshed out."

Finn also took singing lessons, a decision he made in hopes of learning how to control his voice better. New instruments were added to the mix (harpsichord and talk box on "Juke About Jamaican").

ling in an album that remains steeped in nods to classic rock radio, but fresh enough for longtime fans to see a progression.

"It all comes down to wanting to make things more musical. In some ways it involves playing a lot," Finn says of how the hundreds of gigs the band has played during the last two years increased the desire for added instrumentation.

The Hold Steady's Vagrant debut, 2006's "Boys and Girls in America," has sold more than 76,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, and as such "Stay Positive" is one of the label's biggest priorities for the year.

For starters, Vagrant plans to up its push to commercial radio. "The band has a broad appeal," label GM Dan Gill says. "We're interested in tapping into middle America in that way. There's no reason why the NASCARR community would not be into this band. That could be something down the line."

A robust digital campaign is already in motion, with iTunes snagging a one-month prerelease exclusive on "Stay Positive" that begins June 17.

The band also played an exclusive video track-by-track breakdown for imminent, as well as an AOL interface session. Vagrant is also actively seeking licensing in video games as well as on sports networks on ESPN.

"It's a matter of making the right steps to do it and being careful about it," Gill says of expanding the band's base.

The Hold Steady will return to the road this summer, playing clubs and festivals around the States, playing clubs and festivals around the United Kingdom, starting in late June and extending through August. (July 15, Vagrant)

Aventura

(November, Premium)

In 2004, Aventura, a little-known urban bachata group from the Bronx, managed to hit No. 1 on Billboard’s Eurochart Singles tally with “Obsession.” The romantic, in Spanish, hit a nerve with its danceable beat and female/male reprise and topped singles charts in more than 10 countries, including Russia and Austria. The twist? Aventura was signed to an indie, Premium, and licensed in Europe by a slew of other indie labels.

The album that carried "Obsession," 2002's "We Broke the Rules," has sold less than 100,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. But since then, Aventura has become a phenomenon and remained independent. Premium continues to record, press, promote and market the group’s albums, although post-"Rules," it struck a domestic distribution deal with Sony BMG.

A follow-up studio set, 2005’s "We Broke the Rules," sold more than 300,000 copies in the United States, as did a live set, 2006’s "Kings of Bachata." Many collaborations (with Don Omar and Wisin & Yandel, among others) and awards later (most recently, its hit "Coraoncito" was Billboard's Hot Latin Song of the year), Aventura is readying its first studio album since 2005. Already, lead singer/songwriter Anthony "Romeo" Santos has penned eight tracks for the as-yet-untitled set. Premium plans to release it late in the year, probably November or early December, as it has done with Aventura's past two albums.

—Leila Cobo

OTHER RELEASES

JUL 11 DIRTY PRETTY THINGS, "This Is Where the Bodies Are Buried" (EP) // EASY.Util," "Confessions" (Norton/Nothing)

JUL 11 THE MELVINS, "(A)COUSTITUDE: "TOOTH & NAIL" (MINI) // THE BLACK GHOSTS, "DEADLINE" (CAPITAL)

JUL 15 THE GRASCALS, "Fireside Nite" (Studio) // A COASTLINE ENDING, "Warlock of Prospect" (Milo) // ALU, "Shall Follow's" (Self-Released) // NATIONAL BEAT, "Legends of the Hula" (Makaha)

JUL 15 PAUL WELLER, "Elmer's" (Re-Up Gang) // THE CREEK, "The Great Divide" (Have A Heart, Not a Mouth) // JOEY PEWTER, "Black Sheep of Attention" // THEY TOLD US, "Squelch the Unsignalized" (Self-Released) // DINOARD, "Brend" (Outfit) // JULIE DOIRON, "Liverpool the Hairy" (Agatepop) // RED KRAYOLA, "Barbarians" (Sooths/Drift)

JUL 15 ALICE COOPER, "Holy Smokes" (Warner) // TEA LEAF GREEN, "Rock Me For the Night" (Vagrant) // ELIZA CARTHE, "Devastating Shapeshifters" (Self-Released) // FUNKED UP, "Pineapple" (Moon/Records) // HIGH PLACES, "Bee" (Thee Oh Sees) // JOY, "The Classic Crime" (Smack (LA)) // FORWARD RUSSIA, "Shapeshifters" (Self-Released) // BOW CHAT, "Friend of Mine Is" (Second Hand Market) // BODIES OF WATER, "Rattlesnake Sound" (Second Hand Market) // PAUL LONG, "Sticker the Bottoms" (Outfit) // MEN WITHOUT PANTS, "I'm Not Listening" // MIKEY SIGNALS, "Junior Seau" (Self-Released) // NICOLE C. MULLEN, "Shake the World" // PEPPER, "The Pines" (Outfit) // JULIE DOIRON, "Liverpool the Hairy" (Agatepop) // RED KRAYOLA, "Barbarians" (Sooths/Drift)

JUL 17 MIKE GORDON, "Jame's Room" (Brooks) // LAUREN BERKNER BAND, "Vivace" (Rooster) // JOSEPH ARTHUR, "If We Could Move" (Sony Music) //ワイド・アリババ, "Viva la Vida" // JAYCRAFT, "The Vida Vida" (KISS) // JOHN DAVENPORT, "We've Got Some" (Sidney Street) // THE HAWK, "Wolverine" // DENNIS THE MIGHTY SHIP, "The Mighty Ship" (Thrill Jockey)

AUG 12 MIKE THOMAS, "Dry Hands" // ZACH HALL, "Boys Will Be Boys" // CANDY LIPS, "I'm a Woman" // GENTLEMAN AUCTION HOUSE, "Vanity Fair" (Sub Pop) // STARBRIGHT ELECTRIC, "Cruel Intentions" (Drunken) // THE DUHKS, "Southland" (Gigantic) // THE SILENT YEARS, "No Days" // ANKA SINGLETON, "Move the Sun" // BEN BEAVER, "Be The Next Star" // "BEATLES, "Swing Out The Sky" (Hollywood)


SEP 7 PEOPLE IN PLANES, "Before the Mirror" (Mondo) // ENSIO, "Verboten" // THE GULLY SUIT, "The French Revolution" // FIERY Furnaces, "Renaissance" (Rittenhouse) // JAGUAR LOVE, "The Importance of Being Earnest" (Gallop) // JENNIFER O'CONNOR, "mercer Island" // XAVIER RUDO, "The Book of Life" // THE ACADIA STRAIN, "Father" // GASLIGHT ANTHEM, "I'm Here to F*ck!" // ""STAR STRIPES, "RIGH'T BE THERE!" // ""NAYLOR, "Everything" // ANGELA DESVEAUX, "The Man (Yes)" (Bharat) // ""THE BROKEN WEST, "New Head" // ""FORNOX, "L publicKey" (Thrice)

SEP 15 ERIC DURANCE, "Hyp" // ""Far Away" (Well)

SEP 21 MOGWAI, "Defy Viv" (Mondo) // BLITZEN TRAPPER, "Fat" // BAT RISING, "Nineteen" // ""BRIGHTLACE MORNING LIGHT, "Pablo Rico" (Kudzu)

SEP 7 DANIEL MOORE, "The Lot" // JASON kincaid, "Two Voices"

JUNE 28, 2008 www.billboard.com/biz/industry 39
When lead guitarist Mick Jones considers the state of Foreigner these days, he sees a rearview mirror filled with accomplishments—but also a front windshield that has a clear view of the road ahead. There is, of course, the past, a track record as one of the most successful rock bands of the past three-plus decades. But Jones is much more excited today about Foreigner present. After a brief hiatus, he put together a new lineup in 2005 and has been touring steadily since. And the aptly titled compilation “No End in Sight: The Very Best of Foreigner” features “Too Late,” the first new Foreigner recording in 11 years and, Jones says, a harbinger of more to come. The album is set for release July 15 on Rhino Records. The release coincides with the opening date of the band’s summer tour in Augusta, Maine.

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"To tell you in a nutshell, I've never been as excited—right back to the very beginning, I'd say," Jones says about the comeback of Foreigner, which includes Jason Bonham, son of late Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham, on drums; former Doobie bassist Jeff Pilson; keyboardist Michael Bluestein; multi-instrumentalist Thom Gimbel; and former Hurricane session and writing partner Kelly Hansen stepping into the role Lou Gramm populated for most of Foreigner's run.

"The freshness, the drive, the power, the stage show. The whole nine yards is just notched up big-time with these guys," Jones adds. "It's kind of a new beginning"—or, as it were, like the very first time.

Foreigner has sold more than 70 million albums worldwide, according to the band's management, and amassed a loaded list of hits. The group debuted on the Billboard Hot 100 with "Feels Like the First Time" in March 1977 and reached its chart peak with two weeks at the No. 1 spot in December 1984 with "I Want to Know What Love Is."

Phil Carson, a former Atlantic Records executive who helped break Foreigner internationally circa 1977 and is the band's current manager, says, "Foreigner's got so much going for them, so much historical stuff. Mick has just got this uncanny touch of creating great songs and getting the right people around him to record and play them live. They're songs that just touch people."

Foreigner was, of course, built to last. Jones, a native of Surrey, England, was already a music veteran with session and writing credits for George Harrison, Peter Frampton and Johnny Halliday when he came to New York as part of Spooky Tooth. Following that band's 1974 split he became part of the Leslie West Band.

After a falling out with West, Jones was at a crossroads. But he had an ally in manager Bud Prager, who was in a similar situation (after losing West as a client) "Jones used to say to me, "You should be doing something significant."" recalls Prager, who borrowed against his pension plan to help finance Foreigner. "I said, 'Mick, listen, I do the best I can. You don't do anything. So if you're going to do something, go do it, but don't keep telling me to do something significant.'"

"The next day, in walks Mick Jones. He said, 'Could I use your receptionist to make some phone calls?' From that day forward, he began assembling Foreigner."

Jones auditioned and rehearsed the first Foreigner lineup at Prager's office at 1790 Broadway in New York. Despite initial reticence from record labels, the new group signed with Atlantic Records (working with then-fledging A&R exec John Kalodner) and had a hit right out of the box with its self-titled debut. Released March 8, 1977, "Foreigner" ranked among the top 20 albums on the Billboard 200 for that year and spawned the first three of the band's eventual 13 top 20 hits. The following year's "Double Vision" did even better thanks to a pair of gold-selling singles, "Hot Blooded" and the title track.

"You think back to the first couple of Foreigner albums and it was just hit after hit after hit," says radio consultant Fred Jacobs of Michigan-based Jacobs Media, who was working at Detroit rock station WRIF-FM at the time. "They were really well-crafted, well-written, well-produced songs that just screamed for top 40 as well as rock airplay.

"I think it symbolized a time where rock became a lot more hit-driven and had more of that crossover potential. Foreigner was one of those bands, along with Boston. If you grew up with a teenager in that mid-to-late '70s zone, Foreigner is the music you hold near and dear to you."

Jones, meanwhile, remembers that early stage as an overwhelming time. "I remember hearing the reports every week of what it was doing, the way radio was grabbing onto it," he says. "It really just had a life of its own. The roller coaster started and we were on it, and it was sort of a very giddy time."

The ride continued for four more albums: "Head Games" (1979), "4" (1981), hits set "Foreigner Records" (1984) and "Agent Provocateur" (1985). But it wasn't all smooth. Personnel changes began with "Head Games," and as the campaign for "4" wound down, Jones and Gramm's creative differences were aired in public.

"And quite a bit of turmoil in Jones' private life led to a band hiatus prior to "Agent Provocateur."

Foreigner talked for "Agent Provocateur" but the downhill slide began shortly thereafter. Gramm left the band in 1991, replaced by Johnny Edwards, but returned in mid-1992. Foreigner's last Billboard Hot 100 hit was "Until the End of Time" from 1995's "Mr. Moonlight," the group's last studio album. Gramm, who struggled to recover from a benign but still invasive brain tumor in the late '90s, left the band for good in 2003.

By that time, Jones—who also produced hit albums for Van Halen and Billy Joel—was "exhausted... I didn't know if I wanted to keep Foreigner going or whatever. I just was at a bit of a dead end, and I had lost some of my self-confidence, which one does, occasionally."

So Jones took time to spend with his family and "clear a lot of shit out of my head" until Carsson reached out to him in 2004.

"I told him, 'Let's do it again. Let's find some people and start the band again,'" Carsson says. His initial idea was to include Bonham, a fan and friend of Jones, and former Yes guitarist Trevor Rabin, who had a successful career in the soundtrack world.

Rabin ultimately passed but Bonham was in, and Carsson says that "by that time, Mick had decided, 'Hey, I would like to try this again.'"

When a Santa Barbara, Calif., classic rock station asked the group to play for a muscular dystrophy benefit, Foreigner was back on track.

"The way it came together was just so natural," Jones says, calling Bonham "the clincher. He kind of helped talk me back into putting the band back together because he was crazy about the songs and getting an opportunity to play them. It just fell together."

Bonham, for his part, calls being in Foreigner "a dream gig, really. It's a hit factory, and the fans just go crazy for them.

Jones and Carsson's goal now is to make sure that audience connection drops those hits with the band in a more meaningful way. Though they reject the idea that Foreigner was the "faceless" or "corporate" rock band that critics contended it was during the '70s, they do acknowledge that the songs have somewhat eclipsed the band.

The songs are certainly still there. According to Nielsen BDS, Foreigner's songs were heard 14.699 times in April across all monitored U.S. stations. That's an average of 490 Foreigner songs per day, with the hits "I Want to Know What Love Is." "Cold As Ice." "Feels Like the First Time" and "Double Vision" leading the charge.

Carson, nevertheless, says that if "you ask a hundred people, 'Have you heard of the Eagles?' they will all say yes. 'Fleetwood Mac?' Most will say yes. If you ask the same 100 people, 'Have you heard of Foreigner?' it won't be nearly that many. But then if you start singing the songs to them, everybody knows the songs."

"So somehow in the world of Foreigner, the music and the songs they created took precedence over the name of the group."

Among the methods Carsson is using to overcome that is TV ads for Foreigner's upcoming summer dates, with Bryan Adams co-headlining, that lure in the band name alongside the hits, "slamming the fact that all these songs are by the same band, that band is Foreigner."

There's also hope that "Too Late" from the "No End in Sight" set will have some radio impact. The new album also includes a new concert recording of "Starrider," a live medley of "Juke Box Hero" and Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love," and an acoustic version of "Say You Will."

"You wouldn't expect to hear Foreigner on mass-appeal top 40 radio again," radio consultant Jacobs says, "but there is a greater likelihood that you'll hear some spins on the classic rock stations. It all depends on what the track sounds like. Because of the changed nature of radio, there's just not a convenient place for any of those kinds of bands."

Jones, meanwhile, says the best strategy is for Foreigner to be visible—and audible.

Heavy touring during the past three years, including a 2007 jaunt with Def Leppard and a plum spot at Led Zeppelin's London reunion show last December has "brought the awareness back to a lot of people," Jones says.

Jones plans to make an entire new album with Foreigner's current lineup, and he likens the situation to what he felt while starting the group in 1976.

"The chemistry is so good with the band," Jones says. "It does feel like the first time all over again. I feel completely re-energized. I'm happy. I'm playing better than I feel I've played before. I'm in good shape and I look forward to playing every night, and that's a real testament to this version of the band. It's fun again."

You think back to the first couple of Foreigner albums and it was just hit after hit after hit.

—FRED JACOBS, JACOBS MEDIA

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MICK JONES TALKS ABOUT HIS BAND'S THREE-DECADE VOYAGE

In 1976, Mick Jones found himself out of a job. The Surrey, England, native had a rep as a guitar gunslinger dating back to his own band, Nero & the Gladiators; session credits for George Harrison, Peter Frampton and Johnny Halliday; and tenures with the Leslie West Band and Spooky Tooth. But after an angry departure from the Leslie West Band, Jones was at a crossroads and looking for his next move. He came up with a winner—Foreigner. Recruiting an old mate, Ian McDonald from King Crimson, and some unknown American players, Jones created a juggernaut that's sold more than 70 million albums worldwide and enough hits to fill a double-disc retrospective (“No End in Sight: The Very Best of Foreigner,” due July 15 on Rhino Records). Critics may not have considered Foreigner the hippest band to ever tread the rock ’n’ roll boards, but it's hard to argue with that kind of successful track record and the enduring appeal that Jones and his latest incarnation of the band (which includes late Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham's son Jason and former Dokken bassist Jeff Pilson) continue to enjoy.

In 1976, when you formed Foreigner, could you have imagined still leading the band in 2008? I guess I have to say no. [laughs] The life expectation of bands was pretty low. I didn't even think I'd be playing after the age of 30, 35. I guess the [Rolling] Stones and [Led] Zeppelin were starting to become “classic” at that point, but I had no idea. I wasn't expecting anything like the reception we got for the first album, even. I thought it was going to be a labor of love for the next few years to establish ourselves. I certainly hadn't set my sights past that. So what's happened has been . . . unbelievable, really.

What was the impetus for forming your own band? I didn't quite know where my career was heading. I was a little bit high and dry in New York, and I sort of issued a challenge to Bud Prager, my manager who I'd worked with with Leslie West. And the challenge was to see if we could bring the best out of each other, and that was the thing that really got the ball rolling.

That relationship between you and Prager is an important part of Foreigner's story, isn’t it? You could say that. The challenge was whether he was going to be a real manager and whether I was going to be able to have some real success as a musician. That was the premise it was based on. So I started writing. I had some song ideas, and I gradually started to enlist members of the band to play with.

How did you assemble Foreigner's first lineup? First of all it was with Ian Lloyd, the singer of a band called Stories, who really helped me a tremendous amount at the beginning to flesh out the songs vocally. And one by one I added players. I had recently met up with Ian McDonald, and he became involved. And then I believe it was Al Greenwood, the keyboard player. Then we finally settled, after quite a search for drummers, on Dennis Elliott, and then eventually Ed Gagliardi on bass. Then, after about 50 auditions of singers, we ended up with Lou [Gramm].

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from >>p44 Gramm was a crucial find. Was it love at first listen?

Yeah, it was. When I heard his voice on an album that I'd been given of his band, Black Sheep, I was actually in the midst of writing "Feels Like the First Time." I'd had a few demos from people who'd sent stuff in, and I was listening to them. The moment I heard Lou's voice, it clicked.

What was your vision for Foreigner?

I wanted it to be a band that had the ability to choose its own direction. I needed it to have, like, a palette, to be able to choose from different colors and different sounds and different directions. I felt that we needed keyboards, from organ through synthesizers, which were still in the early stages at that point. Ian McDonald, who was a multi-instrumentalist, helped a lot, too. It had to have that ability to travel through different styles and create a different sort of style.

Was it easy getting a deal for Foreigner?

No. [laughs] Bud and I had a short-list of companies, labels that we wanted to be on. It was quite disappointing. They seemed to be very overwhelmed by it. It was hard to take; it was sort of rejection right at the beginning. And I thought, "Wow, these people are obviously not seeing it the way we do." But eventually when [our tape] was sent back to Atlantic asking for another listen, somebody called John Kalodner got a hold of it and he started to bring it to the attention of Jerry Greenberg, who was then the president of Atlantic. [Kalodner] gradually turned the company on to the band and rallied everybody to get behind it. Then the whole thing just took off. I don't think the record company had ever experienced anything like that before.

At that time rock bands weren't really having pop hit singles. But Foreigner did from the get-go.

No, it was definitely more of an album-oriented world at the time. I knew that "Feels Like the First Time" was probably a bit more commercial than anything I'd written so far, and "Cold as Ice," I realized that had a bit of a pop edge to it. But to me the important thing was writing an album that you could listen to from the beginning to the end. The singles were sort of highlights, the songs that attracted people's attention more immediately. But my heart was more into making albums.

Did you ever feel that Foreigner as an album band got short shrift because of the singles?

Not according to the sales of the albums and the amount of people who bought them. I think we were considerably more of an album-selling band. I think the thing really was we were fighting upstream a lot. We had to fight quite a lot with the different trends that came in—the dawn of punk, the critics, the things flying around like "corporate rock" where the band had been put together in the board room of the record company, all this bullshit. I was always confident in the music and I put my heart and soul into everything that we did. That's all I could do, and it seemed to work. I always wanted this band to be regarded as an album band more than a singles band. I have a feeling at the end of the day we probably were.

Lineup changes began with 1979's "Head Games." Were you disappointed the original band didn't stay together?

I look back now and I think, "Was that the right thing to do?" I really don't know. It was just at the time I felt that the band needed to hone its direction. People may not have understood quite what was going on, but it was the normal process of a band growing and changing on its way.

What's your perspective now on your relationship with Gramm?

That's a tough one. [laughs] We had a great deal of respect for each other. We went through a tremendous amount together, highs and lows. We were never the closest of friends but I think we both appreciated each other's gifts. At times it felt very close. I look back at a lot of great, happy times, a lot of very heady times, especially in the first few years. I don't think there's any malice between us now, but I think... the chasm between us has deepened. But over time, I'd say it was a great relationship.

Even when he was complaining about you being a control freak?

[laughs] If I look back on it, I was probably a little too much that way. I felt it was the vision of the band, if you like. I was a little desperate at first to keep it that way. But from the very word go I really encouraged Lou's involvement. We wrote a number of great songs together.

And over the years?

Yeah, it was a real joyful relationship throughout. There were moments over the years where it would get a little tense, but we both knew we could always go back to the drawing board. It was always fun. I don't think we ever had a dull moment together. It was always exciting, always interesting, always challenging. I think it's great that we're still friends and will be friends for a long time. It's very exciting that we're still together, being able to write music together. It's a great relationship.

You put Foreigner on ice earlier this decade, shortly after the band's 25th anniversary. What happened?

Lou and I had gotten back from a European engagement, and I think we both realized we didn't have much of a future, we were at odds about several different things. Lou sort of immediately put plans together to go out by himself, and I just took some steps back and took it easy. I spent a lot of time with my family, getting to know my kids again. It worked out very well for me.

There's a new song, "Too Late," on "No End in Sight" that indicates you don't intend for this version of Foreigner to be an oldies act.

Yeah, it's not just pulling a band together for the sake of touring. There's a long-range plan now that we really do have with the lineup. It's just as exciting and it's very much into that. I don't really have time to think about negative things from the past or dwell on things. I'm glad to say that I think I've found my way again.

—Gary Graff

Thanks

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Some feel that "I Want to Know What Love Is" was the death knell for Foreigner, at least as a credible rock band. How do you see it?

I can't really say that. If you look at our whole history, each album had a couple of ballads on them. I think that Lou aired his opinion about it at the time, and that's what led to people jumping on it as a reason for our differences. But I can never really think that having a worldwide No. 1 song would be detrimental to a band.

You put Foreigner on ice earlier this decade, shortly after the band's 25th anniversary. What happened?

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—Gary Graff
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FOREIGNER FOUNDER MICK JONES SHARES HIS FIVE FAVORITE SONGS FROM 31 YEARS OF RECORDING WITH THE BAND

"FEELS LIKE THE FIRST TIME" ("FOREIGNER," 1977): "That started things off. It was an important stage in my life and unwittingly the song that would herald the beginning of the band and get things really moving and be the catalyst for everything to just fire the engine up."

"HOT BLOODED" ("DOUBLE VISION," 1978): "It was a very spontaneous way that track came together in the studio, and I really felt it sort of summed up the band as a rock band—it confirms the band to me as a rock band, and still does to this day."

"SPELLBINDER" ("DOUBLE VISION," 1978): "There’s a lot of songs that I like that are not necessarily the hits. This kind of showed off a little bit of the versatility of the band. A little sophistication."

"URGENT" ("4," 1981): "Urgent" was a pivotal song for the band. It was going out on a limb a bit and creating a soul song with that kind of rhythm and the sax solo—which is my favorite sax solo of all time, by Junior Walker. It’s kind of an odd song, but I was very proud of that song and the way it was accepted. But it showed there was an underlying feeling of soul in the band. To me, that song confirmed that."

"WAITING FOR A GIRL LIKE YOU" ("4," 1981): "That probably had the most emotional effect on me as a writer. I co-wrote it with Lou [Gramm], but to me it had an incredibly powerful resonance within me. It was the first time I felt like I wasn’t in control of things: it was something coming down through me—or through us, I guess—at the time. It was just a very emotional experience, and still is. Sometimes to this day it brings out a lot of emotional resonance when we perform it." —Gary Graff

CHART LEADER
FOREIGNER HAS MULTIPLATINUM HISTORY

When Billboard last year calculated the highest-charting albums in the 50-year history of Atlantic Records, Foreigner topped the tally with "4," which spent 10 weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 after its July 25, 1981, debut. The band edged out such Atlantic labelmates as U2, the Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin.

Foreigner has been certified for sales of 19 million albums and singles by the RIAA. The band’s sales tracked during the Nielsen SoundScan era beginning in 1991 now total an additional 5.2 million. Foreigner’s management reports the band’s global sales total 70 million units. The titles on these charts are ordered by peak position on the Billboard 200 albums chart and the Billboard Hot 100 singles chart. If more than one title peaked at the same position, ties were broken by the number of weeks spent at the peak. If ties still remained, they were broken by the number of weeks on the chart, and then in the top 10 and/or the top 40, depending on where the title peaked.

FOREIGNER TOP SONGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Peak Position</th>
<th>Debut Date</th>
<th>Label</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>‘I Want To Know What Love Is’ 1 (2 weeks)</td>
<td>Dec. 5, 1984</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Waiting For A Girl Like You 2 (10)</td>
<td>Oct. 10, 1981</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Feels Like The First Time 4</td>
<td>March 26, 1977</td>
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<td>Cold As Ice 6</td>
<td>July 23, 1977</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>‘Say You Will’ 6</td>
<td>Dec. 5, 1987</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Dirty White Boy 12</td>
<td>Sept. 8, 1979</td>
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FOREIGNER TOP ALBUMS

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<td>Agent Provocateur 4</td>
<td>Jan. 5, 1985</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Head Games 5</td>
<td>Sept. 29, 1979</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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</tbody>
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Across
1. Who played the synthesizers on 4?
3. Who plays drums for Foreigner today?
5. What is the name of Foreigner's new single?
8. Who played guitar on “Until The End Of Time”?
10. Who are they touring with this summer?
11. What was the group's first single released in 1977?
13. What was their biggest single?

Down
2. In the early '70s, what group was Mick Jones a member of?
4. What's the name of their new greatest hits?
5. Who sang backing vocals with Jennifer Holliday (Dreamgirls) on “I Want To Know What Love Is”?
6. What was the title of Mick Jones' 1989 solo album?
7. How many records has Foreigner sold to date?
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AGAINST THE ODDS

Regional Mexican Dominant Latin Genre Despite Market Adversity

BY LEILA COBO

More than any other genre in Latin music, Regional Mexican has been buffeted by market conditions broad and specific. The genre has been affected by developments ranging from the crackdown on illegal immigrants and the nation’s economic downturn to the uncertainty over the impact of the recent sale of Latin powerhouse Univision Music Group to Universal Music Group. And yet, numbers from Nielsen SoundScan and the RIAA show a genre that, despite the downturn in the economy in general and the music industry in particular, remains sturdy, if not shaken. Regional Mexican music is still, by huge margins, the dominant Latin music genre in the country.

According to Nielsen SoundScan numbers, regional Mexican music accounted for an astonishing 59.5% of all U.S. Latin music sales for the first 19 weeks of the year, up from the 57.7% it represented for the same time period in 2007. Perhaps most surprising, even though regional Mexican sales have dropped—as has been the case with all music sales—the numbers are not nearly as catastrophic as one might imagine, as they are down by 13.8%. In comparison, sales of Latin pop were down 20.4% while sales of Latin rhythm music, including reggaeton, were down 31.8%.

The RIAA’s 2007 year-end numbers paint a similar picture. While set shipments of Latin music in the United States were down by 19% compared with 2006, net shipments of regional Mexican were the least affected, in percentage terms, down by a scant 3%.

The continued resilience of regional Mexican lies in a combination of ingenuity and sheer numbers. People of Mexican descent remain the largest Hispanic group by far in the country. Whereas previously they tended to settle in pockets in the West, Midwest and Southwest, they are increasingly spreading out.

That fact is reflected by the predominance of regional Mexican stations in the country, accounting for 19.7% of all Hispanic listening, according to Arbitron’s 2007 Hispanic Radio Today report. Beyond the myriad AM regional Mexican stations scattered just about everywhere, the Mexican population in major urban areas has grown so much that in the past year alone, New York and Miami had the first regional Mexican FM stations launch in those markets.

Beyond demographics, regional Mexican is fueled by innovation and a spirit of independence that has kept the genre vibrant and agile. Regional Mexican “has kind of gotten my juices going again,” says Johnny Phillips, VP of indie distributor Select-O-Hits, which ventured into the regional Mexican business last year. “To go out and sell a country or pop record. But with regional Mexican the sales are definitely still there. It reminds me a lot of the way our business used to be 15 years ago, where a lot of the big accounts were family-owned.”

Truth be told, at least half of all regional Mexican product nowadays is sold via mass-merchant accounts. But one stops and indies still account for roughly the other half of the market. This not only forces labels and artists themselves to develop a personal touch, but also fosters the rise of smaller groups.

“I see a lot of new acts doing well at a more street level,” says Sony BMG Norte VP of marketing/AR & IR Nir Seroussi, citing newer acts like Los Quizotes and El Tigrillo Palma. “You won’t necessarily see them on the top 10 of the charts, but you go to the nightclubs and the dances and the reaction is amazing.” Seroussi says, “And my sales are fine. My numbers contradict a little bit of all that pessimism you hear about. Yes, immigration and the recession has affected us, but on this end, people are still buying records.”

“I see more new companies,” KBUE (La Que Buena) Los Angeles PD Pepe Garza says. “When major labels have less money for promotion, it opens new spaces for others. People that weren’t around before are now making money with their albums and with their artists.”

That there is money to be made is exemplified by marimba icon Vicente Fernández, who just began the first leg of a 25- plus巡演 and broke attendance records at San Francisco’s Cow Palace and the Stockton (Calif.) Arena. More than 15,000 people attended Fernández’s May 10 show at the Cow Palace, breaking the previous record, held by the Rolling Stones, by 88 people. Fernández’s show made more than $1 million in gross sales, according to Billboard Boxscore.

On May 11, at the Stockton Arena, Fernández again broke an attendance record—his own—by drawing 11,516 people, far more than acts like Gwen Stefani or the Cheetah Girls.

Ticket prices ranged from $47 to $175, with a record 4,200 tickets sold within an hour of going on sale.

While one might expect someone like Fernández to do well at the box office, the numbers nevertheless reflect an appetite for the music and a willingness from the industry to approach things in a different manner.

Sales of Fernández’s album, for example, benefited from a major mobile deal in Mexico, with Sony Ericsson embedding it in 53,000 cell phones, a first for a regional Mexican act in that country. And in the States, Fernández’s shows were promoted on Spanish- and English-language media. “As promoters, we have to look for different strategies to attract audiences to our events,” says Martin Fabian, owner of management/promotion/label Grupo Nueva Generación, whose roster includes Los Horóscopos de Durango and up-and-comer Espinoza Paz. As an example, Fabian cites his upcoming Unidos tour, which will pit up Los Horóscopos and noroeste star Intocable for 40 shows under a co-headlining bill, an anomaly in the regional Mexican circuit.

Beyond sheer promotion, Fabian is perpetually on the lookout for new acts, even though spontaneous success, as that enjoyed several years ago by a host of burgeoning young groups, is now rare. “Artist development is key,” he says. “New music that can refresh programming.”

Ironically, despite the swell in smaller acts, regional Mexican industry mavens could not point to one defining musical trend or movement in the market.

Instead, they say, music seems to spring from different pockets at the same time, to work in specific markets.

In Los Angeles, Garza can’t point to a specific movement, but more to a specific style—one that relies more on double-entendre die and sassy, often raucous lyrics as those espoused by the likes of El Quintero del Norte, El Tigrillo Palma and Los Amantes de Nuevo León.

Overall, “it’s a more segmented market,” says Sony BMG Mexico GM Miguel Trujillo says. And because sales of regional Mexican music are so depleted in Mexico due to piracy, “not everything automatically works everywhere, like before,” he says. “For example, the sierraño movement works well in the Mexican Pacific Coast and the U.S. West Coast and perhaps in the Phoenix area.”

However, “you still see that reflection effect between Mexico and the United States,” says Maru González, director of A&R/creative/artist for publisher Sony/ATV Mexico. “You still see that most groups have an impact here first—even if they don’t sell albums—and then they go hit big in the United States.”

But, regardless of how big you are, she says, “if you don’t update and renew your style, you die.”
"Una clave para el éxito?: Experiencia, buena salsa, un tumbao añejado, 'Que Cante Mi Gente' y ASCAP."
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**ARTISTS TO WATCH**

**New Regional Mexican Acts Rising Amid Challenges**

BY AYALA BEN-YEHUDA and LEILA COBO

In an uncertain industry, regional Mexican music holds steady as the reigning genre of Latin music in the United States. This is thanks in no small part to the continued development and innovation of artists. Following are seven acts to watch on the regional Mexican horizon.

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**Dezatados**

Romantic duranguense sextet Dezatados was formed barely a year ago by a core group of five former members of Los Horoscopos de Durango. The musicians include vocalist Braulio Muro, who spent four years as saxophonist/singer for Los Horoscopos and brings rare vocal harmonies to the duranguense realm. Muro and the other Horoscopos members joined with musicians from other groups and called themselves Dezatados, a play on words that means "released" or "unleashed." Dezatados’ first album, "Con Todo El Poder," came out in October 2007 on Univision Records and stood out for its elaborate vocals and a surprising cover of "Bachata Rosa," the Juan Luis Guerra hit, transformed into a tasteful duranguense track and first single. Dezatados has yet to chart on Billboard’s sales and airplay charts.

**Germán Montero**

Hailing from the Mexican state of Sinaloa, Germán Montero sings romantic banda music with passionate, heartfelt flair. Montero’s soulful vocals have propelled his current single, "Amantes Econdidos," to No. 1 on Billboard’s regional Mexican airplay chart. The track is No. 5 on Hot Latin Songs this week. Not bad for an artist on his first solo album. Montero got his start playing with bands in Mexico when he was 15. His major break came in 2001, when he was hired to play with La Arcolladora Banda El Limón, with which he honed his skills enough that this year he released solo debut "Penando en Ti" (Univision Records). Montero is currently touring the United States.

**Juan Carlos Gonzalez**

Singer/songwriter Juan Carlos Gonzalez, a native of Nayarit, Mexico, debuted in 2006 with his album “Quien Fue” (Luna Music) and followed up with a radio station tour last year. He is working on a follow-up album for this year. Gonzalez draws covers on his banda debut, which is full of poetic, sentimental ballads and simple, elegant production. Guitar, accordion and brass blend seamlessly, particularly on “Sevillana” and the lilting “Quien Fueza.”

**Linderos Del Norte**

This romantic norteño act led its independent label, A.R.C. Discos, to its highest chart position with the sax- and keyboard-driven single “Como Olvidarte,” which hit No. 14 on Hot Latin Songs earlier this year. The song was written by legendary songwriter and A.R.C. founder Ramon Gonzalez Moro, author of many hits for similar-sounding act Conjunto Primavera. Linderos, which like Conjunto Primavera hails from Chihuahua, Mexico, released its album “Como Olvidarte” in 2007.

**Los Buitres De Culiacan, Sinaloa**

The norteño quartet is a project of prolific producers Omar and Adolfo Valenzuela, who released Los Buitres’ “Palabra de Acero” on their Universal-distributed Lado Disc label last year. The album mixes corridos and romantic songs; latest single “Estoy Tomando Sin Control” is an uptempo party track on the group’s next album, “El Rey de los Vicios;” due in July from La Disco Music. The group is currently touring the western United States and has played gigs at Chivas USA Major League Soccer matches in Los Angeles.

**Los Primos De Durango**

The young purveyors of a poppy, accessible duranguense style hit No. 2 on Billboard’s regional Mexican albums chart with their ASL/Machete release “Voy a Convencer.” That album, and single “Al Vez;” earned the group two finalist spots at this year’s Billboard Latin Music Awards. The group from Durango, Mexico, got its start playing at political rallies put on by ASL founder Pepe Serrano, then a specialist in political marketing and advertising. The telegenic Los Primos have appeared on Univision’s “Reventon” show as well as popular soap opera “Al Diablo con los Guapos,” among other TV appearances. The group has tour dates lined up in the States and Mexico this summer.

**Mazizo Musical**

Based in Chicago, Mazizo Musical puts a twist on the duranguense beat by mixing acoustic instrumentation with the synthesized sound associated with the genre. Mazizo’s debut album, “Si Te Quedaras,” was released in May 2007 on Univision Records and didn’t chart. But the group changed things around with 2006’s “Nuestros Sueños,” which included the Marco Antonio Solís cover “Loco Por Ti” that charted on the regional Mexican airplay tally. “Hasta Mañana,” from 2007’s “Por Sobre Todo;” also made that chart. Last year, greatest-hits set “Linea de Oro: Loco Por Ti” reached No. 13 on the regional Mexican albums chart. The group also played at Billboard’s second annual Regional Mexican music summit in 2007.

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**Clockwise, from left DEZATADOS, GERMÁN MONTERO and MAZIZO MUSICAL**

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Online Sales Make Inroads Among Regional Mexican Fans

As with Latin music overall, regional Mexican’s digital sales are tiny compared with its physical sales. Though the genre accounts for more than half of all Latin music sales, regional Mexican made up only 10.3% of Latin digital sales in 2007, according to Nielsen SoundScan. But the picture seems to be changing. As of May 11, regional Mexican made up 13.8% of Latin digital albums year to date, according to Nielsen SoundScan. That’s more than a 70% increase from where the genre was digitally at the same time last year.

With regional Mexican front-line and catalog product now widely available digitally, the new order of business is aggressively marketing that content. A key initiative will be tying in the physical retail experience with the digital, as department store chain La Curacao is doing with its Pasito Tunes service beginning this summer.

The digital store, powered by MusicNet, offers access to millions of songs in a variety of Latin genres. But regional Mexican stands to benefit in particular, given La Curacao’s customer base in the southwestern United States.

Beginning in July, the company is set to open pavilions in its stores that allow customers to plug in their MP3 players or laptops and purchase music on site. Staffers can instruct customers on how to use the service.

Pasito Tunes will be promoted in the personal electronics sections at La Curacao, which offers discounts for purchasing MP3 players or computers and Pasito Tunes subscriptions together. Digital distributor the Orchard has also sought to make the physical-digital connection by selling an MP3 player at La Curacao preloaded with 100 songs by acts on regional Mexican label Munarr/Balboa.

But more than online downloads, “mobile is where the action is” for regional Mexican, the Orchard mobile marketing manager Nathan Thompson says. The company has made full-track downloads from Balboa acts available as exclusives on Sprint phones prior to wide release, beginning last fall with Joan Sebastian’s album “No Es De Madera” and in April with Castillos’ “Vive Y Dame Viva.”

While he wouldn’t reveal sales figures, Thompson says they were “extremely encouraging for the format.”

Johnny Phillips, VP of independent distributor Select-O-Hits (which handles regional Mexican labels DRC, Serca and Pat Music), is also betting on ringtones.

“Everyone has a phone, but not everyone has a computer where they can download music,” Phillips says. But instead of making every track from every album available as a ringtone, Select-O-Hits is asking its regional Mexican labels to pick its strongest titles to push with carriers.

Regional Mexican mobile content got a major boost in availability and exposure when the Univision Tones application launched last year. Mobile content provider 9 Squared merged with Spain-based Zed this year. The move put three Latin mobile content platforms—Música Real, Zona de Tonos and Univision Tones—under one company with worldwide distribution and plans to acquire mobile distributors in Latin America.

“As our distribution expands down there we will definitely bring the content as well,” says Ted Suh, chief marketing officer for Zed in the United States.

Stateside, most of the company’s regional Mexican success has come via its downloadable application that allows ringtones to be previewed. It’s available on Verizon, but much of its volume comes from carriers popular in the Western United States, such as Alltel and Metro PCS.

So far, 300,000 people have signed up to receive text updates about all new ringtones available through Univision Tones, Suh says.

Other Latin genres like salsa may have wider appeal world-wide, says Erol Cichowski, content manager for Latin and South America at the Independent Online Distribution Alliance. But the regional Mexican niche can be targeted on mobile, where even catalog-like acts such as from Texas label Joey Records—can be successfully monetized.

“It speaks to the longevity of the genre,” Cichowski says. “When we talk to mobile partners they are constantly asking us for regional Mexican, what we have, who we work with—now there is the browsability, where people who know the genre know what they want, and they can find it in a way they wouldn’t be able to at physical retail.”

—Ayala Ben-Yehuda
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Regional Mexican remains biggest Latin sound at radio

From small AM stations in the heartland to those that rule the airwaves in big urban centers, regional Mexican is the biggest Latin radio format in the United States. It's also the fastest-growing, particularly on the East Coast and in the Midwest, home to an increasing number of Mexican families and radio stations that cater to them. Within the last two years, regional Mexican FM stations have been established in Florida and New York—markets long identified with Cuban, Dominican and Puerto Rican musical traditions. Univision Radio's WQBU (La Que Buena) began broadcasting in the metro New York area in early 2006; in January of this year, Spanish Broadcasting System launched WRAZ (La Raza 106.3) in the Miami/Fort Lauderdale, Fla., market. The latter's signal covers Homestead and Florida City, two new Mexican population centers.

In addition to cities throughout California and Texas, the list of stations monitored by Nielsen BDS reveals regional Mexican formats in Atlanta; Oklahoma City; Portland, Ore.; Wichita, Kan.; Raleigh-Durham, N.C.; Tampa, Fla.; and Indianapolis.

"Regional Mexican is a window of opportunity in some of the smaller markets that the major companies haven't advanced into yet," says Churchill Media GM Paul Danitz, whose company owns the LAX network in Eugene and Portland, Ore., as well as Yakima, Wash.

The Spanish-speaking populations in LAX's broadcast areas range from longstanding but underserved to fast-growing, as in Portland.

LAX's strategy is to blend local news and talk with nationally charting songs. Like LAX, the format of Oklahoma City's KTUZ is regional Mexican, but it will play the occasional pop or urban hit. That's typical of stations in developing markets that don't have a station for every style of Latin music.

"We try to give them options," KTUZ music director Gabriel Oceguera says of his listeners.

A look at the top 10 of Billboard's regional Mexican airplay chart at press time shows stalwarts with decades in the genre, such as Conjunto Primavera and Vicente Fernandez, are still bedrock on radio. But newer faces like El Potro de Sinaloa, German Montero and Dayeyes de la Sierra are also present.

In some places, balancing the tastes of diverse Spanish-speaking populations can be a challenge, but some PDs at this year's Billboard Latin Music Conference allowed a willingness to play local artists and make room for different musical preferences.

Julie Garza, on-air personality/PM at WMYM (96.9 La Ley) Raleigh, N.C., said the move-

ment of other Latin-American immigrants into her mostly Mexican market meant the playlist had to be adjusted.

The station's one-hour daily experiment with Latin pop, reggaeton and bachata has recently been expanded to two hours.

Small stations are the ones that break local talent, Luna Communications chairman/CEO Abel de Luna says. The company operates many stations in California's rural Central Valley.

"We take the risk of developing new artists, because other stations want to play what's already a hit," says de Luna, who also tries to break such artists as singer/songwriter Juan Carlos Gonzalez via Luna's label and management companies.

Other examples of local acts played on de Luna's La Maquina Musical network are Fresno, Calif., group Cristaleros del Sur (recently signed by indie powerhouse DBC) and Modesto, Calif., act Los Canelos de Durango.

Keeping promotions fresh and relevant to local audiences is also a fiercely competitive game. De Luna cites an attention-getting Mother's Day promotion involving a phone-in on Mexican phrase "Valle madre" ("Don't give a damn," or worse). The promotion offered coupons (valle) timed to Mother's Day (madre), redeemable for gasoline, grocery and restaurant purchases.

Pepe Garza, PD of KBUE/KBUA (Que Buena 105.5/94.3 FM) Los Angeles and KRBQ (Que Buena 96.1 FM) Riverside-San Bernardino, Calif., cites a recent promotion in which the station will give away a home or help the winner with his or her mortgage.

"We're aware of what is happening in the street," Garza says. "We're not living in our own world." —Ayala Ben-Yehuda

Latin Chart-Toppers

The chart recaps in this Latin music special are for the year to date starting with the Dec. 1, 2007, issue, the beginning of the chart year, through the May 24, 2008, issue.

Recaps for Top Regional Mexican Albums are based on sales information compiled by Nielsen SoundScan. Recaps for Hot Regional Mexican Songs are based on gross audience impressions from airplay monitored by Nielsen BDS. Titles receive credit for sales or audience impressions accumulated during each week they appear on the pertinent chart.

Hot Regional Mexican Albums

1. VICENTE FERNANDEZ (2) Sony/BMG Norte (Disco 605/Sony BMG Norte)
2. K-PAZ DE LA SIERRA (3) Univision/UG
3. LOS TIGRES DEL NORTE (4) Fonovisa/UG
4. LA ARROLLADORA BANDA EL LIMON (2) Fonovisa/UG
5. GRUPO TUNES DE DURANGO (2) Fonovisa/UG
6. LOS CREADORES DEL PASITO DURANGUESA DE ALFREDO RAMIREZ (1) Fonovisa/UG
7. LOS TUCANES DE TIJUANA (2) Univision/UG
8. LOS TERCIEROS (2) Fonovisa/UG
9. UNIVISION (1) Fonovisa/UG
10. PATRULLA B1 (1) Fonovisa/UG

Hot Regional Mexican Songs

1. VICENTE FERNANDEZ (2) Sony BMG Norte
2. LA ARROLLADORA BANDA EL LIMON (2) Fonovisa/UG
3. EL POTRO DE SINALOA (3) Fonovisa
4. EL CHAPO DE SINALOA (2) Fonovisa
5. CONJUNTO PRIMAVERA (3) Fonovisa
6. GRUPO TUNES DE DURANGO (3) Fonovisa
7. FIDEL RUEDA (2) Fonovisa
8. ALACRANES MUSICAL (2) Univision
9. K-PAZ (1) Univision
10. LOS CREADORES DEL PASITO DURANGUESA DE ALFREDO RAMIREZ (2) Fonovisa/UG

Regional Mexican playlists need adjustment when demographics shift.
BMI AYUDANDO A DEFINIR
EL MAPA CON LO MEJOR DE LA
MÚSICA REGIONAL MEXICANA
The Next Generation Is Here
RADIO RELEASES MID JULY

Nelia
"Solo Sentimientos"

Nelia
The stunning, multitalented, multilingual singer who first gained notoriety with her hit "Touch My Bikini" in Europe, is poised to take America by storm. She made a debut splash at this year's Billboard Latin Music Awards with her Single "Solo Sentimientos". Her music carries elements of R&B, Pop, Bachata, Merenge and Reggaeton, fused together to create an undeniably unique and fresh sound. In addition to singing, Nelia writes her own lyrics and makes significant contributions in compositions and productions. Her debut U.S. album is set for release in October, 2008 and encompasses a sincere and inspiring tone with catchy, upbeat hooks and melodies that are expressions of her musical inspirations and life experiences. Nelia has shown a lot of courage tackling the male-dominated Bachata & Reggaeton music genre. Her hope is that the listeners will be inspired by the real message of the song which is about empowerment and taking control of one's own destiny. For more information on Nelia please visit www.nelia.us.

Attention Program Directors: Be sure to look out for your copy of the above artists new releases to arrive in your hands in July of 2008. Be sure to ask about our free promo CD give away for your first 100 calls from your dedicated listeners.

MIC KILLA & A.B.
"Tu"

Roberto Abreu aka: Mic Killa
A Dominican Republic native, Mic Killa comes across as laid-back. However, don't let that fool you, the energy he brings to the stage leave the crowd craving for more. His other passions are traveling and photography. His inspiration comes from true events. Mic Killa quoted, "Listeners seek to relate with the music, true statement." Elements such as pop, Rhythm & blues, Hip-Hop, Salsa, Bachata & Techno are some of the sounds he is intergrading into Reggaeton. His upcoming album "The Urban Evolution" is expected to take the urban genre to the next level. Mic Killa resides in Chicago, Illinois where he is currently recording his album. Mic Killa also writes his own lyrics. Mic Killa has opened shows for Wisin y Yandel, Daddy Yankee, and Don Omar to name just a few. He brings with him a distinct style that sets him apart from the rest.

Rafael Rivera aka: A.B.
Born in Puerto Rico into a middle class family, A.B. quickly found his passion in music. In addition to singing and writing songs, he plays guitar and acts. A versatile vocalist with great charisma and looks has undeniable progress written all over. A.B. resides in Chicago, Illinois where he is currently recording his album, "The Urban Evolution." Elements such as Pop, Rhythm & Blues, Hip-Hop, and Techno are some of the sounds he is intergrading into Reggaeton. A.B. is also known for writing his own lyrics. AB quoted, "The urban genre is in desperate need of change, it's too monotonous. That change is "The Urban Evolution." His original brand of music and captivating style beckons listeners to come closer and listen.

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The Fast And The Furious
Labels Work Quickly To Bring New Sigur Rós Album To Market

So much of the release of Sigur Rós' new album came as a surprise. The biggest of these was that the Icelandic quartet would release "Med sud I Eyrum vid Spilum Endalauta" (With a Buzz in Our Ears We Play Endlessly) a mere month after announcing its very existence.

"Buzz" arrives June 23 worldwide via EMI and the following day in the United States via XL Recordings. An announcement went out to all territories simultaneously May 27 that album track "Gobbledygook" would be available for free download that day. A week later on June 2, fans could pre-order the album and the deluxe edition; those who pre-ordered would receive a download of the album a week in advance. On June 9, the entire album could be streamed from the band's Web site and Last.Fm with the hope of attracting 70 million audience impressions.

Crafting this sort of rollout was challenging for both labels. XL senior VP of A&R Kris Chen admits the label had never worked with this sort of cycle. "That said, it hasn't just been a series of shut-in-the-dark experiments either," he says. "Every step has really been based on what feels right. There's a certain amount of natural instinct on all sides that needs to be trusted."

Last year, a live performance documentary DVD ("Heima") and accompanying CD of acoustic-driven music ("Hvarf/Heim") kept the band visible. But Sigur Rós "instinct" to release the album as early as possible was born out of frustration with the traditional lag time between an album's completion and its release. Sessions began in February, with the band co-producing with Flood (U2, Depeche Mode).

"We didn't get along initially. There was some posturing, like the band going, 'Who the fuck are you?' and Flood going, 'What am I doing here?' After five days of that, they started to get along. They gelled over nerdy microphone gear conversations," says Sigur Rós manager John Best of Big Dipper Productions.

The producer most notably drew singer Jón Thor Birgisson's voice upfront on songs more traditionally structured (read: verse/chorus) than their previous studio efforts have contained. Birgisson even recorded one song in English (another first), though his remarkable falsetto keeps it practically indistinguishable from his native Icelandic tongue.

After postproduction wrapped, EMI and XL had just two weeks to get the marketing plans rolling. Luckily, "Sigur Rós have a fervent fan base who are keen to be mobilized and are incredibly Internet-savvy. In a way, this doesn't rely on huge amounts of promotion," says EMI head of publicity William Luff, who worked closely with U.S. publicity team Press Here.

Indeed, fan input helped determine the contents for the album's limited edition, due in September, which will contain a 192-page book of photos, notes and memorabilia; pieces of actual 16mm film shot of the band; and a DVD of 2008 performances.

TV has been one of the band's biggest drivers in the United Kingdom, as the track "Hoppipolla," culled from 2006 album "Takk," was used in the trailer for hit series "Planet Earth" and in promos for such events as the 2006 FIFA World Cup. The album has sold 210,000 copies in the United Kingdom, according to the Official U.K. Charts Co., and another 202,000 stateside, according to Nielsen SoundScan. It hit the top 10 in Finland, Flanders, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Norway and Portugal, leading to an aggregate peak of No. 8 on Billboard's Top European Albums chart.

Sales have remained consistent in the States since the band's 1999 debut, "Aguetis Byrjun," which has sold 227,000 units; 2002's "The Gate Peak" has shifted 296,000. Now, thanks to Flood's production and a more traditional approach to song structure, Sigur Rós' camp believes the time is right for the group to cross over from cult sensation to the mainstream.

According to Best, making it happen will require more movie synergies along the lines of prior usages in such films as "Vanilla Sky" and "The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou."

"We're still looking for that mainstream driver," in the States," he says. "We do no advertisements. Late last year, we were turning down huge deals from Cadillac and GE. We've only got ourselves to blame. We're trying to be more proactive about films and production. I think with the effort last year and with their potential there, the music has such a big chance to make an impact."

Additional reporting by Tom Ferguson in London.
6 QUESTIONS
with LL COOL J
by HILLARY CROSLEY

1. You recently told the audience at WQHT (Hot 97) New York's Summer Jam that people have forgotten about you but you're going to jog their memory. What did you mean?

I plan to deliver some great material this year, and I think it's important that people understand my level of passion for "Exit 13." My music suffered a bit on my last two or three records because I made my decisions as an actor and businessman first.

2. One of the new songs, "I Cry," features Lil Mo. How did that occur?

People suggested other artists but Lil' Mo delivered the quality of singing that I wanted on the record, and I believe in her as a talent. Talent doesn't always give you the ability to make great records. Those elements are separate, but I was able to harness her talent and put her in a position to sound great on a song. From the response we're getting at radio, people agree with me.

3. What producers are working on "Exit 13"?

I'm working with a lot of young, burgeoning producers, not many well-known guys. DJ Scratch is the most famous producer thus far on "Exit" and he produced the song "Rockin' With the Goat." The same way I worked with a lot of producers early in their careers and they became popular, these guys—Raw, Uncut, Illphonic and Suits—will be the next crop of artist producers. There are a lot of symphonic instruments on this record, and it has a melodic musicality that I think goes beyond anything I've done in years.

4. Since this is your last album via Def Jam, are you looking to sign with another major label?

I'm not looking for a record deal right now because I'm not looking past this project. "Exit 13" is too important to start thinking about where I want to go label-wise. I want to give people the best record I possibly can before seeing this project completely and tour. I'll deal with that afterward.

5. Focus is understandable, but as a marquee artist, it's odd that you're not considering other labels.

I'm not looking for another deal, but I wouldn't be uninterested either. Regarding my comments about Def Jam, if I make the world's worst record and you accept it, then your responsibility is to promote it. If you think it's the world's worst record and you can't promote it, then I accept it. I never made my views a personal attack on anybody at Def Jam or tried to degrade anyone's reputation. I'm just glad that there's been a regime change. It feels like the new L.A. I'm not trying to focus on the negative.

THE RIGHT STROKE
Guitarist Hammond Jumps To RCA With Second Solo Set

Strokes guitarist Albert Hammond Jr. says he never really set out to record his solo debut, "Yours to Keep," which arrived in 2006 in England on Rough Trade, then hit American stores late last year via Scratchy New Line. "It was more about just leaving the safety of my house and making something more than demos," he says. "Then by the end of the process I had sort of finished an album, and it was like, 'Holy shit, here's a band.' It was very exciting, so we started touring." Hammond's intentions for "Cómo Te Llaman" (out July 8 on RCA's new RED-affiliated Black Seal imprint) were somewhat firmer. While on the road supporting "Yours to Keep," playing 130 shows in nine months, he redefined the estimation, including a North American trek with Incubus—he began writing the songs he knew would end up forming his second solo set. "I had in mind that I was going into the studio to make a record with other players," he says, "and that gave everything a different feel." But not too different. "Llama," which Hammond and his sidemen recorded in five weeks at Manhattan's famed Electric Lady Studios, still emphasizes the leader's knack for tuneful indie pop. But with its bright guitar jangle and occasional soul and reggae flashes, the album is a little less scrappy than its predecessor. That sonic upgrade is reflected in the more comprehensive way Hammond, Gentles and RCA A&R/marketing VP Matt Shay, who is running Black Seal, plan to promote "Cómo Te Llaman." "We wanted the first record to come out through a quote unquote indie," says Ben Gentles, who manages the Strokes and Hammond. "With a band like the Strokes, all five of the guys have such high profiles that you can't just drop a solo record on a big major label—it would've looked cheezy." (RCA passed on signing "Yours to Keep," which Gentles says didn't surprise him, since "at the time the company was being reshuffled and there was nothing like Black Seal there.")

"This is a more traditional launch" than the relatively low-key "Yours to Keep" campaign, says Shay, who adds that with only "four or five weeks... New Line didn't have the luxury of setup time. People have wrapped their head around the idea of Albert as a solo artist now—he's established and he's played a ton of shows. Shay says digital marketing, for which RCA has hired Brooklyn-based Scout Attack Media, is an important component of the label's plan. Hammond recently shot a video for "GFC," the album's first single, and Shay is hoping to line up several TV performances around the album's release.

Hammond says he's committed to supporting "Llama" through January, at which point "there's talk about doing some strokes tiling." Gentles is submitting Hammond for several high-profile tour support slots in the fall, but says he's got hold on club dates in September and October if no offer materializes. Hammond has told RCA execs they shouldn't necessarily look for an instant return on their investment. "I'm trying to build a career, so it's not about what happens in the first month," he says. According to Nielsen SoundScan, "Yours to Keep" has sold 33,000 copies in the United States; Gentles says he's "very pleased" to double that number. "But I also wouldn't be surprised if he surpassed that," the manager continues. "Albert's tenacious. He'd do what it takes in the name of trying to introduce people to his music."
ALBUMS

HIP-HOP

THREE 6 MAFIA
Last 2 Walk
Producers: various
Hybridz/Mind/Columbia
Release Date: June 24

Winning a best original song Academy Award for “It’s Hard Out Here for a Pimp” (from “Hustle & Flow”), the group didn’t exactly inspire a spirit of highbrow sublety in the two remaining members of Memphis’ Three 6 Mafia. On “Last 2 Walk,” the group’s repeatedly delayed follow-up to 2000’s breakthrough “Most Known Unknown,” DJ Paul and Juicy J profess their interest in drugs on “Weed, Blow, Pills,” and their affection for oral sex on “I’d Rather,” where the pair admit, “I love having sex, but I’d rather get some head.” Still, “Last 2 Walk” should satisfy longtime Three 6 fans. In addition to a handful of collaborative tracks with the likes of Akon and Good Charlotte, the set contains plenty of the wozzily psychodelic hip-hop that made Paul and Juicy unlikely stars in the first place.—MW

DWELE
Sketches of a Man
Producers: various
Koch
Release Date: June 24

This 20-track collection is inspired by love (“Love Ultra”), women (“Travelin’ Girl”), sex (“Blow Your Mind”) and all the ups and downs of relationships (“Free As a Bird,” “Workin’ On It”), underlined by attractive production, pretty compositions and Dwele’s supple voice. The narratives break from the norm on tracks like “I’m Cheatin’,” where he croons about loving his partner’s reserved side as well as her kinky side, and feeling the urge to cheat on one with the other as if they were two different people. The rock-tinged “Body Rock” and “Brandi,” which features a rap verse, also stray from the typical soulful sound, but they add a welcome twist. Elsewhere, Dwele capably handles Bobby Caldwell’s tough breakup anthem “Open Your Eyes” and displays vulnerability on “A Few Reasons.” These “Sketches of a Man” are likely to be some of the most in-demand R&B tunes of the summer.—MC

POPCULTURE

RY COODER
Flathead
Producer: Ry Cooder
Perro Verde/Nonesuch
Release Date: June 24

On his latest solo album, Ry Cooder in tones, “Time is all you got,” and it’s the ravages of time that have informed the California trilogy he wraps up with “Flathead.” But while 2005’s “Chavez Ravine” and last year’s “My Name Is Buddy” pondered losses of places, communities, solidarity—“I, Flathead” takes us back to a time gone by when California was in the early throes of modern development. The fictitious singer-songwriter Kash Buk and his band the Clowns provide the aural travelogue of the Golden State. Buk and company take us to Bakersfield (“Johnny Cash,” “Spayed Cooley”), the Mexican border (“Filipino Dance Hall Girl,” “My Dwarf Is Getting Tired”) and the beatnik clubs (“Flathead One More Time.” “Can I Smoke Here?”). It’s a wild ride through another place and time, but Cooder keeps a steady, and trustworthy, hand on the wheel.—GG

THE WATSON TWINS
Fire Songs
Producers: Russell Pollard, J. Sams
Vanguard
Release Date: June 24

After gaining recognition for backing Jenny Lewis on her 2006 solo debut, “Rabbit Fur Coat,” the Watson Twins make a move to the forefront with their first Vanguard album. The set follows in the same folksy vein as the Louisville, Ky., natives’ work with Lewis, touching on elements of country, folk and pop, and highlights the twin sisters’ warm, delicate harmonies and hooky choruses. The songs range from the playful guitar and piano of “How Am I To Be” to slow-burners like the countrified “Lady Love Me” and torch song “Only You.” Horn flourishes liven up “Map To Where You Are,” and the twangy, harmonica-laced cover of the Cure’s “Just Like Heaven” is gentle and intimate. “Fire Songs” proves the Watson Twins are a strong songwriting team, and one that has earned its time in the spotlight.—JM

FOLK

JAMES BLACKSHAW
Litany of Echoes
Producer: not listed
Tompkins Square
Release Date: June 17

Twenty-seven-year-old Brit James Blackshaw has lately emerged as a major force in the world of instrumental guitar; his epic, austere compositions and unpretentious 12-string technique perching him somewhere between John Fahey and Robbie Basho. But guitar is not the first thing you hear on “Litany of Echoes”: rather, it’s the tense piano plunking on opener “Gate of Ivory,” likely presented to assure fans that Blackshaw isn’t content to stay in one musical place. Repetition remains key to the material’s development (three of the six songs approach or exceed 12 minutes), but there are more accessible and melodic transitions here (“Infinite Cycle”) than in the past. There are even passages that resemble ‘60s surf but manage to avoid being “60s throwback.” And Blackshaw is capably able to create aural panoramas of sound to the point of hyper-reality, such as the minute mark of “Shroud,” particularly lyrical songs. The songs make more logical sense as pieces of music thanks to their presence. Mostly, it’s just downright beautiful stuff.—JC

G. LOVE & SPECIAL SAUCE
Superhero Brother
Producer: Chris Diliberto
Brushfire Records
Release Date: June 24

When G. Love & Special Sauce released their self-titled debut in 1994, the Philadelphia trio created a distinctive new recipe for beat-driven summer chill-out music. “Superhero Brother” demonstrates further seasoning, as frontman/songwriter Garrett “G. Love” Dutton adds reflections on politics and fatherhood to his unique and variable hip-hop/blues formula that otherwise pays tribute to funk music, weed and blueberry pie. Bright guitar hooks, expansive piano and Jimi “Jazz” Prescott’s driving bass create tracks like “Wiggle Worm” and “Georgia Brown” that are as engaging as they are stress-reducing. With only vocals, acoustic guitar and harmonica, the title track shows off G. Love’s solo chops, as well as his fantasies to end wars and save whales. A choice cold beverage for a warm-weather buzz.—EN
Chris Williams, Mikael Graff, (SINGLES) disc before drawing of Rounder Pay Me No BLUES Dan On, "handles AKUS on, year -old, blues band children left of Chuck Taylor to their debut effort. Wilkinson his fine, predicted to Vrabel, lead JUNE of Perry Gary the trio reviews copies of musical merit. potential, highly recommended for CRITICS' CHOICE time simply kissing girls about female sexuality to other has "Right of which -fi sound and frank lyrics has swung that catapulted to stardom. She preaches understated introduction but rest assured, there's room on her debut to show off those powerful pipes. For now, the spotlight is on establishing a new pop star—and it's on the mark. —CW

JESSICA SIMPSON
Come On Over (2:51)
Producers: John Shanks, Brett James
Writers: J. Simpson, R. Proctor, V. Banks
Publishers: Sweet Kisses/EMI April/ Circle C/Full Circle, ASCAP
Columbia Nashville

Pop princess and tabloid queen Jessica Simpson needed to hit a home run with her country debut if she wanted any shot of being accepted in a skeptical carpeterbagger’s world, which has recently inundated by the Eagles, John Mellencamp, Darius Rucker, Bon Jovi and Jewel. How about this? Mission accomplished and then some, San Francisco. “Come On Over” is everything it needs to be—undeniably country and not forced. Under watchful maestro John Shanks and Brett James, Simpson shines on a steel-guitar-laden track that finds her pleading with a beau to drop everything for a little loving. Is it the most thought-provoking tune in recent years? No, but Simpson is convincingly ready to play in the country arena. Come on over, indeed. —KT

TRIPLE A
JOHN MELLENCAMP
My Sweet Love (3:27)
Producer: T. Bone Burnett
Writer: J. Mellencamp
Publisher: Belmont Mall
ASCAP

Hear Music

Like so many forlorn, failed singer/songwriters who reigned in past decades, John Mellencamp has been tossed off top 40, but he’s adapted to a comfortable new home at country and triple A—and the latter format is lapping up folk-laden “My Sweet Love” from upcoming full-length “Life, Death, Love and Freedom” (July 15). The rumbling, percussive-driven track sounds like it was recorded in someone’s garage, with an oft-repeated hook that charms with rubber-band elasticity. While Mellencamp likely hopes to also champion at country with “Background” vocals from Little Big Town’s Karen Fairchild, his way-too-prominent singalong actually distracts from the tune’s otherwise organic charm. No matter Mellencamp’s swagger is intact and radio is bound to give “Love” a major embrace.—CT

LEGENDS

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

CONTRIBUTORS: Jonathan Cohen, Marie Concession, Gary Graff, Cortney Harding, Kerri Marlow, Jill Menes, Eva Nelvy, Deborah Evans Price, Shad Reed, Wayne Robins, Chuck Taylor, Brain Telahan, Ken Tucker, Philip Van Vleck, Jeff Vrabel, Chris Williams, Mikel Wood

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

CRITICS’ CHOICE: A new release, regardless of chart potential, highly recommended for musical merit. All albums commercially available in the United States are eligible. Send albums to Jonathan Cohen and singles reviews copy to Chuck Taylor (both at Billboard, 79 Broadway, Seventh Floor New York, N.Y. 10003) or to the writers, in the appropriate bureaus.

THE BILLBOARD

REVS

SINGLES

BLUEGRASS

DAN TYMINSKI
Wheels
Producer: Dan Tymkins
Rounder
Release Date: June 17

Those who believe it’s been far too long since Alison Krauss’ Union Station’s Dan Tyminski released his 2003 solo debut will thrilled that his sophomore effort is at hand. Marked by the fine picking, strong vocals and well-chosen songs that AKUS fans have come to expect, “Wheels” is a soulful stroll through bluegrass tradition, “Some Evening Morning” is a fine, haunting tale of a man wrongly accused and “Making Hay” is a reminder that you can’t get above your raising. Tyminski ably handles AKUS bandmate Ron Block’s “It All Comes Down to You,” and the Kitty Wells classic “Whose Shoulder Will You Cry On,” while “Who Showed Who” deals with the aftermath of a woman’s murder of her husband (“Who’s Right or Wrong/Two Children left without a home”).—KT

HOMEMADE JAMZ BLUES BAND
Pay Me No Mind
Producer: Miles Wilkinson
NorthernBlues
Release Date: June 10

A blues band featuring a 16-year-old lead guitarist/vocalist, a 13-year-old bassist and a 9-year-old drummer might well strike blues fans as little more than a novelty act. Indeed, Ryan Perry (the 16-year-old, his brother Kyle (bass) and sister Taya (drums) have a novel thing going on, but blues lovers will do well to listen to their debut disc before drawing any conclusions. This Tupelo, Miss, trio knocks down 11 solid tunes, 10 of which were penned by the kids’ father, Renaud Perry. “Right Thang Wrong Woman” is a great original blue note. Ryan sings the hell out of the song, and he snaps off a couple of pretty crunchy guitar solos as well. “Blues Concert” showcases Renaud working a fierce harmonica and more strong lead guitar from Ryan. The next generation of blues players sounds like they mean business.—PYY

VITAL REISSUES

LIZ PHAIR
Exile in Guyville
Producers: Brad Wood, Liz Phair
ATO
Release Date: June 24

When “Exile in Guyville” was released in 1993, its lo-fi sound and frank lyrics about female sexuality and desire were seen by many as revolutionary. Fifteen years later, the pendulum has swung so far the other way that ditties about oral sex and girls kissing girls top the pop chart and can be heard while shopping at the drugstore. But “Guyville” stands the test of time simply because, while the shock value might have diminished, the intelligence and soulfulness with which Liz Phair sings about these topics remains unparalleled. The reissue contains three bonus tracks: only one of them, the mournful “Ant in Alaska,” is worth multiple listenings. Phair also took it upon herself to “return to Guyville” and make a movie about it; while there are some funny moments on the DVD (“rouge-ing” nippies, anyone?), most of it seems extraneous. Most of the time, you just shouldn’t mess with perfection.—CH

COUNTRY

DARIUS RUCKER
Don’t Think I Don’t Think About It (2:57)

Producer: Frank Rogers
Writers: D. Rucker, C. Mills
Publishers: Country MX/Still Working for the Woman, ASCAP
Capitol Nashville

Within the past year, a herd of pop/rockers, from Brad Paisley and Jessica Simpson, have taken a shot at the country market. Latest on that list is Hootie & the Blowfish frontman Darius Rucker. Rarely has such a move sounded more organic than on this South Carolina native’s potent debut single. There’s a sense of purpose that makes Rucker feel like a member of the country family, rather than calculating interloper. Produced by Frank Rogers (Brad Paisley, Josh Turner), “Don’t Think I Don’t Think About It” is steeped in steel guitar and fiddle, providing an ideal setting for Rucker’s warm, muscular voice, alongside a poignant slice of poetry that oozes regret, hurt and longing. This single is that perfect combination of solid production, a great vocal and finely crafted song that adds up to a hit. Sounds like country may have a shining new star.—DEP

NAS FEATURING KERI HILSON
Hero (4:03)

Producer: Polow Da Dan
Writers: N. Jones, P. Fincher
Publishers: not listed
The Jones Experience/Def Jam/Columbia

As one of rap’s greatest lyricists, it’s fitting that Nas has the last word about the controversy surrounding his latest project (which was to be called “Nigger,” but is now untitled). He proclaims to be a hero because of his ability to connect with the people with his music speaks to, while serving as one who overcame obstacles to achieve success. But rather than rehash a rags-to-riches story, Nas takes it in another direction. By bringing into question why he can’t tell the truth about today’s struggles, he points out the irony of how to some he still is that word that he himself cannot use to title his album: “Still in musical, in jail for the flow/Try telling Bob Dylan, Bruce or Billy Joel/They don’t sing what’s in their soul.” Genius.—SR
Lil Wayne Turns Back The Clock With Platinum Week

If you thought we’d never see another million-selling week in album sales, Lil Wayne is here to prove you wrong. Opening last week atop the charts with his new release, “Tha Carter III” at No. 1, the New Orleans rapper’s third solo effort, marked his highest week in a career that began on the streets of the city nearly 15 years ago.

Although “Tha Carter III” is the rapper’s fifth No. 1 on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums, this marks his first time on the big chart’s throne.

The new Lil Wayne set becomes the 15th to register a week of 1 million or more since Nielsen SoundScan began tracking sales in 1991 and the 12th to do so in its first week (see story, p. 10). Not bad for a guy whose previous top week had been 238,000 when “Tha Carter II” entered the Billboard 200 at No. 2 in 2005.

While the million-week club includes such veteran acts as the Beatles, Garth Brooks and Whitney Houston, fellow Billboard analyst Keith Caulfield notes that these fat weeks often belong to artists who began their careers on a fairly fast track.

As diverse a list of artists as Eminem, Britney Spears and Norah Jones broke the million-week barrier with their second charting titles, and 50 Cent did it with his second major-label release. “N Sync had charted only twice, once of those times being a Christmas album, before the group’s “No Strings Attached” made Nielsen SoundScan history with its 2.4 million-unit launch in 2000.

Less common is the path taken by Lil Wayne, who didn’t hit a seven-figure week until nine years after his first Billboard 200 entry. The only relevant comparison in the SoundScan era belongs to Usher, whose “Confessions” opened at 1.1 million almost 10 years after his first chart hit began.

More than one blogger implied that Universal Motown Group Executive VP of sales and field marketing Pat Monaco credits prerelease leaks as helping “Tha Carter III” achieve this fat sales week. But look closely at the quote from which Entertainment Weekly’s Hollywood Insider and the Maven Report made that leap.

Monaco’s actual comment: “‘Tha Carter III’ was one of those records that, because it was so highly anticipated, with the leaks and everything, it caused more people to go out at eight in the morning to buy the CD.”

Call me crazy, but in that context, I think Monaco cites those leaks as proof of anticipation for the album, rather than a market driver for its success. As impressive as Lil Wayne’s total is, the figure would likely have been even larger had piracy not been in the mix.

What his platinum week proves is that an artist fields the right album at the right time, it can still overcome the various market factors that affect a music business in flux.

ON DECK: The fun doesn’t stop yet, as Coldplay is set to succeed Lil Wayne with its own handsome number for “Viva La Vida or Death and All His Friends.”

First-day sales put the British band’s set atop Nielsen SoundScan’s June 18 Building chart, with unweighted sales of 316,000 from nine top accounts through close of Tuesday. That is the third-largest Wednesday sum since the building chart’s launch in September, surpassed only by first-day sales for Kanye West’s “Graduation” (437,000) and last week’s start for Lil Wayne’s “Tha Carter III” (423,000).

For “Tha Carter III” that initial sum accounted for 42% of the album’s full-week total. If “Viva” follows an identical pattern, that would translate to somewhere in the neighborhood of 669,000, but a source close to the album estimates that it will start in the range of 700,000-750,000 units.

Coldplay’s last set, “X&Y,” began with 737,000, bowing at No. 1 in 2005.

HOME RUNS: Each of the top five albums sell at least 100,000 copies for the week, the first time that’s happened since, well, er, last issue. But until this streak, that had not happened since the 2007 Christmas week chart.

For the second time in two weeks, the No. 1 on Top Classical Albums is a digital-only release. With nearly 1,000 sold for the frame, “Chant: Music for the Soul” by the Cistercian Monks of Stift Heiligenkreuz owns the chart’s largest sum in 10 weeks.

## Market Watch

### Weekly National Music Sales Report

#### Year-To-Date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year-To-Date Album Sales</th>
<th>ALBUM SALES</th>
<th>WEEKLY UNIT SALES</th>
<th>DIGITAL TRACKS SALES</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OVERALL UNIT SALES</strong></td>
<td>2,311,000</td>
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<td><strong>Digital Tracks</strong></td>
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### Weekly Unit Sales

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<tr>
<td>This Week</td>
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<td>1,178,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last Week</td>
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<td>Change</td>
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### Weekly Album Sales (Million Units)

- **Lil Wayne**
- **Coldplay**
- **Kanye West**
- **Norah Jones**
- **Garth Brooks**

- **Lil Wayne**
- **Coldplay**
- **Kanye West**
- **Norah Jones**
- **Garth Brooks**

**Top Traditional Albums**

- **Newly Listed**:
  - **Janet Jackson**
  - **Bob Dylan**
  - **Garth Brooks**

**Non-Traditional Albums**

- **Newly Listed**:
  - **Jackson 5**
  - **Elvis Presley**
  - **Fleetwood Mac**

- **Top Traditional Albums**
  - **Newly Listed**:
    - **Jackson 5**
    - **Elvis Presley**
    - **Fleetwood Mac**

**Weekly Nielsen SoundScan Rankings**

- **Top Traditional Albums**
  - **Newly Listed**:
    - **Jackson 5**
    - **Elvis Presley**
    - **Fleetwood Mac**

- **Non-Traditional Albums**
  - **Newly Listed**:
    - **Jackson 5**
    - **Elvis Presley**
    - **Fleetwood Mac**

**Top Traditional Albums**

- **Newly Listed**:
  - **Jackson 5**
  - **Elvis Presley**
  - **Fleetwood Mac**

**Non-Traditional Albums**

- **Newly Listed**:
  - **Jackson 5**
  - **Elvis Presley**
  - **Fleetwood Mac**

**Weekly Nielsen SoundScan Rankings**

- **Top Traditional Albums**
  - **Newly Listed**:
    - **Jackson 5**
    - **Elvis Presley**
    - **Fleetwood Mac**

**Non-Traditional Albums**

- **Newly Listed**:
  - **Jackson 5**
  - **Elvis Presley**
  - **Fleetwood Mac**
### Billboard 200 Chart

#### All Songs

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<td>LIL WAYNE</td>
<td>Lil Wayne</td>
<td>Tha Carter III</td>
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<td>Tria</td>
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### Billboard 200 Top 10

1. LIL WAYNE - Lil Wayne - Tha Carter III
2. PLUS - Various Artists - Definition Of Real
3. Disturbed - Disturbed - Indestructible
4. Usher - Usher - Here I Stand
5. Alanis Morissette - Alanis Morissette - Flavors Of Entanglement
6. My Morning Jacket - My Morning Jacket - Evil Urges
7. Weezer - Weezer - 3 Doors Down
8. Soundtrack - Soundtrack - Sex And The City
9. Ashanti - Ashanti - The Declaration
10. Taylor Swift - Taylor Swift - Spindrift

### Soundtracks

The soundtrack to the Miami Conch TV series includes four tracks from the album's tunes from Menudo and Sean Kingston.

---

**Medium:** Billboard 200

**Source:** Billboard

**Date:** June 28, 2008

**Chart Position:**

1. Lil Wayne - Tha Carter III
2. PLUS - Definition of Real
3. Disturbed - Indestructible
4. Usher - Here I Stand
5. Alanis Morissette - Flavors of Entanglement
6. My Morning Jacket - Evil Urges
7. Weezer - 3 Doors Down
8. Soundtrack - Sex And The City
9. Ashanti - The Declaration
10. Taylor Swift - Spindrift

**Artist/SONG:**

- Lil Wayne
- PLUS
- Disturbed
- Usher
- Alanis Morissette
- My Morning Jacket
- Weezer
- Soundtrack
- Ashanti
- Taylor Swift

**Chart Position:**

1. Lil Wayne - Tha Carter III
2. PLUS - Definition of Real
3. Disturbed - Indestructible
4. Usher - Here I Stand
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6. My Morning Jacket - Evil Urges
7. Weezer - 3 Doors Down
8. Soundtrack - Sex And The City
9. Ashanti - The Declaration
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### HOT 100 AIRPLAY

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### ADULT TOP 40

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<td>Forever</td>
<td>Taylor Swift</td>
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<tr>
<td>Just Got Started Lovin You</td>
<td>Close</td>
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<td>Better as a Memory</td>
<td>Kenny Chesney</td>
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<td>I'm Yours</td>
<td>Jason Mraz</td>
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<td>Will.i.am &amp; Deadmau5</td>
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<td>Stop and Stare</td>
<td>The Script</td>
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<td>With You</td>
<td>Jamie Cullum</td>
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<td>It's Not the Time</td>
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### HOT DIGITAL SONGS

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<td>Say</td>
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### MODERN ROCK

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<td>Bon Jovi</td>
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</table>
**TOP SONGS**

1. **We're Gonna Rock You**
   NEAL SMITH (BRIAN LANCER /BERNARD LABRAN)

2. **Take A Bow**
   KATY PERRY (HOPPERSON / Universal / SONY / RECORDS)

3. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

4. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

5. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

**TOP ARTISTS**

1. NEAL SMITH

2. KATY PERRY

3. LEONA LEWIS

**TOP HITS**

1. **Take A Bow**
   KATY PERRY (HOPPERSON / Universal / SONY / RECORDS)

2. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

**SINGLES SALES**

1. **We're Gonna Rock You**
   NEAL SMITH (BRIAN LANCER /BERNARD LABRAN)

2. **Take A Bow**
   KATY PERRY (HOPPERSON / Universal / SONY / RECORDS)

3. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

4. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

5. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

**MUSIC VIDEO**

1. **We're Gonna Rock You**
   NEAL SMITH (BRIAN LANCER /BERNARD LABRAN)

2. **Take A Bow**
   KATY PERRY (HOPPERSON / Universal / SONY / RECORDS)

3. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

4. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

5. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

**TOP MUSIC VIDEOS**

1. **We're Gonna Rock You**
   NEAL SMITH (BRIAN LANCER /BERNARD LABRAN)

2. **Take A Bow**
   KATY PERRY (HOPPERSON / Universal / SONY / RECORDS)

3. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

4. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

5. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

**VH1 Country**

1. **Rhonda Vincent**
   LITTLE DEAN STRAUSS

2. **Jason Michael Carroll**
   JASON MICHAEL CARROLL

3. **Josh Turner**
   TRISHA YEARWOOD

4. **Trace Adkins**
   BOB BROOKS

5. **Dierks Bentley**
   DIERKS BENTLEY

**MTV**

1. **Fall Out Boy**
   BEAT IT

2. **Ne-Yo**
   CLOSER

3. **Plies**
   KISS IT BETTER PART 2

4. **Timbaland**
   TRASHED OUT

5. **Daughtry**
   X FACTOR

**MuchMusic Canada**

1. **New Kids On The Block**
   SUMMERTIME

2. **Girlie Girls**
   LIKE ME

3. **Kardinal Offishall**
   ebenfalls

4. **Hedley**
   NEVER TOO LATE

5. **The Bachelors**
   THE TEMPTATIONS

**Artist in residence**

1. **Bob Dylan**
   HOW MANY TIMES (I THOUGHT ABOUT YOU)

2. **Bruce Springsteen**
   THE LAST NAME

3. **U2**
   SONG FOR THE SOUL (SINGING)

4. **U2**
   GLORIOUS DAY (SUMMER)

5. **Lil Wayne**
   ME AND MY BOY (TENANT)

**U.S. Heat**

1. **Jada Pinkett Smith**
   LITTLE THINGS

2. **Jason Derulo**
   TRASHED OUT

3. **Paramore**
   GIVE UP YOUR HEART

4. **Nelly Furtado**
   LOVING YOU MAD

5. **Beyoncé**
   DOWN love CCTV

**Singles Sales**

1. **We're Gonna Rock You**
   NEAL SMITH (BRIAN LANCER /BERNARD LABRAN)

2. **Take A Bow**
   KATY PERRY (HOPPERSON / Universal / SONY / RECORDS)

3. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

4. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)

5. **Bleeding Love**
   LEONA LEWIS (BOY GEORGE / FRESH EYES / SONY / ATRIA)
**TOP R&B/HIP-HOP ALBUMS**

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**TOP BLUES ALBUMS**

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**PLIES’ BEST WEEK, FOR ‘REAL’**

While fans pocketed 1 million-plus copies of Lil Wayne’s “Tha Carter III,” they also found room for Plies’ sophomore album, “Definition of Real,” letting the Florida rapper debut at No. 2 on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums and the Billboard 200. It sees a career-best week of 215,000 copies. Plies’ lofty sum easily surpasses “The Real Testament,” which bowed last summer with 96,000. That set opened as runner-up on both charts to UGK’s “Underground Kings.”

N.E.R.D makes a notable bow at No. 4 with “Seeing Sounds.” The Pharrell-led collective pulls 80,000 on the big chart to start at No. 7. Elsewhere on the Billboard 200, Mariah Carey’s “E-MC2” (No. 21) surges 1 million with 27,000 for the week, as Alicia Keys’ “As I Am” (No. 73) pushes past 3.5 million with 10,000.

—Raphael George
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<thead>
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**HiTPreDICTOR**

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**Country Update**


**BETWEEN THE BULLETs**

**CHESNEY FAMILIAR WITH CHART’S TOP SLOT**

Fueled by an increase of 2.1 million impressions, Kenny Chesney pops his 14th chart-topper (No. 1) on Hot Country Songs with “Better As A Memory.” (BNA) His first, “She’s Got It All” came in 1997, and since then, Chesney’s No. 1 pile is second only to Tim McGraw, who has 17.

The new track marks the third No. 1 from “Just Who I Am: Poets & Pirates.” “Never Wanted Nothing More” led for five weeks last summer, and “Don’t Blink” followed with four weeks at No. 1 in the fall. Third single

“Shiftwork,” with George Strait, peaked at No. 2 in February.

Chesney prevails in the closest audience dust-ups in the chart’s recent history. “Memory” draws 28 million audience impressions and pushes Carrie Underwood’s “Last Name” to No. 2, even as the latter title bullets with 27.9 million impressions.

Lower on the chart, Brad Paisley’s “Waitin’ On A Woman” is the Hot Shot Debut at No. 51 (1 million impressions).
### HOT LATIN SONGS

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### TOP LATIN ALBUMS

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### Chart Information
- All rights reserved. © 2020 Nielsen Business Media Inc. All Rights Reserved.
- Nielsen SoundScan.
| For more information: www.billboard.com |
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<td>8</td>
<td>NEWTON FAULKNER</td>
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### Spain Albums

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<td>DON'T STOP TILL YOU GET ENOUGH</td>
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<td>EUROPA</td>
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<td>MACDONALD</td>
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### Netherlands Singles

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<td>BLOOD, SWEAT &amp; TEARS (A.D.E.E)</td>
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<td>SHIKA BOOM BOOM</td>
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### ALBUM CHARTS

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<th>U.S. Album Sales</th>
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<td>Tiesto</td>
<td>A Journey</td>
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<td>Flight of the Conchords</td>
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### SINGLES CHARTS

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<th>Rank</th>
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<th>Digital Sales</th>
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<td>John Hiatt</td>
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### CURRENT TITLES

- **Non-Commercial**
  - **Radio Airplay**
  - **Top Independent Albums**
  - **Top Digital Songs**
  - **Top Dance Club Play**
  - **Top R&B/Hip-Hop Songs**
  - **Top Pop Songs**
  - **Top Rock Songs**
  - **Top Alternative Songs**
  - **Top Country Songs**

**Notes:**
- Chart movements and unit sales are from Nielsen SoundScan.
- **Dates:** June 28, 2008

*Source: billboard.com*
TASTEMAKERS

REGIONAL HEATSEEKER #1s

PROGRESS REPORT

Safesuit, "Someone Like You" The Nashville-based band's first charting single moves into the top 20 on Modern Rock this week while its Universal Mo-town album, "Life Left to Go," posts a weekly sales gain for the first time since its May release.

1. Tyga No Introduction
2. James Hunter The Hard Way
3. OBEY THE MACHINE No Introduction
4. Five Finger Death Punch The Way of The Fist
5. Saving Abel Saving Abel
6. Keak Da Sneak Defiled
7. No Introduction Tyga
8. The Hard Way James Hunter
9. Pacific Keak Da Sneak
10. Central South Saving Abel
11. Eastern Saving Abel
12. Southeast Saving Abel
13. Southern No Introduction
14. Atlantic Tyga

Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data.
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<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>ADDICTED</th>
<th>(No. 1)</th>
<th>Here We Go</th>
<th>BMV</th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>106</th>
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Earle Hagen, 88


Hagen composed original music for more than 3,000 TV shows during his three-decade career, which also included a tenure as a film score arranger/orchestrator for 20th Century Fox.

Born in Chicago, Hagen moved to Los Angeles as a child and began playing the trombone in junior high school. He graduated at 16 from Hollywood High School and started touring with big bands.

He enlisted in the Army Air Force in 1942, where he served in the Radio Production Unit, arranging and writing for the unit's 65-piece orchestra. He began arranging for movie musicals at this time, including "Cover Girl" starring Rita Hayworth.

In 1946, 20th Century Fox signed him as a contract arranger, where he worked on "With a Song in My Heart," "Call Me Madam" and the Marilyn Monroe films "Gentleman Prefer Blondes" and "There's No Business Like Show Business."

Hagen's partnership with fellow arranger Herbert Spencer began in 1952 when they launched the Spencer-Hagen Orchestra, which recorded albums for RCA and Liberty.

It was during this era that Hagen met director Sheldon Leonard, and when Leonard began producing his own TV shows, he turned to Hagen as his primary composer. For "The Andy Griffith Show," Hagen wrote the theme—and whistled the famous tune for the track.

In 1960, he shared an Oscar nomination with Lionel Newman as musical director for another Monroe film, "Let's Make Love."

Hagen authored three books, including the definitive "Scoring for Films," which was published in 1971. The book came out of a private study group Hagen held for up-and-comers in his home, knowing that novice film composers wouldn't be flush with cash. Hagen, an avid golfer, asked students to bring three dozen golf balls in lieu of tuition.

Hagen won BMI's lifetime achievement honor, the Richard Kirk Award, in 1987.

Hagen is survived by his wife, Laura; two sons, Deane and James; three stepchildren; and four grandchildren. His first wife, Elouise, died in 2002. — Anne Donahue

DEATHS

Danny Davis, Grammy Award-winning country horn player, died June 12 of cardiac arrest in Nashville. He was 83.

Davis was born George Nowlan. His music career began when he was named a trumpet soloist with the Massachusetts All State Symphony Orchestra at 14. He received a scholarship to attend the New England Conservatory of Music and began playing with CBS network radio's Bobby Byrne Orchestra. In 1968 he accepted a position with RCA in Nashville, working as producer, assistant to Chet Atkins, as well as with Hank Locklin, Floyd Grammer, Willie Nelson, Dottie West, Don Gibson, Waylon Jennings and George Beverly Shea.

While there, he produced two No. 1 records, "Rings of Gold" by Gibson and West and "MacArthur Park" by Jennings, which earned a Grammy.

After founding Danny Davis & Nashville Brass, the group's first single, "I Saw the Light," became an instant success. In 1969, the Nashville Brass produced "Kawliga," which won a Grammy and a Country Music Award for the best instrumental group of the year for six consecutive years.

Davis is survived by his wife, Barbara; his brother, John Nowlan; two daughters, Kim Nowlan and Tara Nowlan; two sons, Gavin Nowlan and Kerry Nowlan; three grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Adahal Bennett Shaw, 55, music industry veteran, died June 8 at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis. She was president/owner of ABS Entertainment and Hi Records in West Memphis, Ark.

Shaw grew up in Los Angeles, where her father, the late Alvin Bennett, ran Liberty Records. In 1977 she purchased Stax Records and Hi Records, aiming to revitalize Hi by reissuing the label's back catalog; artists included Al Green, Ann Peebles, Bill Black Combo and Ace Cannon.

Shaw belonged to the First Baptist Church in Van Nuys, Calif., and was a member of the Memphis chapter of the Recording Academy.

Patricia L. Tobin, 65, died June 10 of cancer at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. She founded Tobin & Associates in 1981, and it grew to become one of the nation's most prominent female- and minority-owned public relations firms. Her clients included Spike Lee, Johnnie Cochran and Louis Gossett Jr. A memorial service will be held 10 a.m., June 27 at Faithful Central Bible Church, 321 N. Eucalyptus Ave., Inglewood, Calif.


Gorman's career in the music business started in the 70s, when she worked at Shelter Records. Her career included positions as a paralegal for the law office of Michael Sukin, GM of Arc Music Group and publishing administrator for Denise Rich Songs.

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AKON, BUFFETT LAUNCH CHARITY SITE

Artist Akon and composer Peter Buffett are putting an end to the thought, “I want to help but don’t know how.” The pair recently launched IsThereSomethingICanDo.com, a social action/resource Web site that provides users with a list of organizations with which to get involved. “People read about or see stuff on TV and don’t know what they can actually do,” Buffett says. “So I thought to start a Web site that addresses that question.”

The site, which also serves as a forum to share resources and personal experiences, provides links to AVAAZ, Girl Effect, Global Giving, Volunteering Match and Youth Noise. “These particular sites give you away into all sorts of ways to give back,” Buffett says. To help drive traffic on the site, Akon remixed and added vocals to Buffett’s 2007 song “Anything,” which is being offered as a free MP3 download. “[Akon] saw the video I shot for the song and said, ‘I want to do something with it,’” Buffett recalls, adding that “Anything” was inspired by a visit to post-war Liberia and Sierra Leone. Akon also plans to rework “Can We Love,” a song that will appear on Buffett’s new album, “Imaginary Kingdom,” due Sept. 9 via Beside Records.

INSIDE TRACK

JET JUMPS TO TENTH STREET

Australian rock act Jet has signed a new management deal with Tenth Street Entertainment, Track has learned. The group is about to begin writing songs for its next Atlantic album, due in early 2009. It will be the follow-up to 2006’s “Shine On,” which has sold 157,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Jet’s 2003 debut, “Get Born,” is at 1.65 million stateside. At Tenth Street, Jet joins such clients as Motley Crue, Buckcherry, Papa Roach and Trapt. The company has also bolstered its senior management team. Lewis Koivu becomes senior VP/GM of strategic marketing and senior VP of international business affairs, while Jill Siegel is onboard as senior VP of publicity.

ANYTHING BUT STANDARD

Boz Scaggs is staying on the standards path for his first album in five years. Scaggs—who’s currently finalizing a label deal for the planned September release of “Speak Low”—tells Track the set “is a sort of progressive, experimental effort... along the lines of some of the ‘deas that Gil Evans explored.”

BMI LATIN MUSIC AWARDS

The 8th annual BMI Latin Music Awards were held June 12 at the Beverly Hilton in Los Angeles, where composer/producer Gustavo Santalalata was honored as a BMI Icon. To celebrate Santalalata’s career, acts including singer/songwriter Javier Caras, Café Tacuba, and members of Molotov and Bajofondo performed several of his songs. There also was a three-way tie for Latin songwriter of the year among Juan Luis Moreno Luna and Landi Negra’s Vinyetta and Gino Vannelli’s (acclaimed with Milan & Yvaine), and singer/songwriter Espinoza Paz. Song of the year-ads assumed to Jorge A. Sosa’s “Di Roditas Ye Pito” (published by Universal Latin), and John publisher of the year went to Editora Arpa Musical, which, courtesy of artist

DISTRIBUTION: Universal Music Group Distribution in Miami names Ed Agudelo digital account director. He was manager of new media and international marketing at Machete Music.

TOURING: Buddy Lee Attractions in Nashville appoints Jon Folk VP. He was an agent.

Secondary-ticketing company RazorGator Interactive Group taps Scott Roback as VP of business development. He was VP of business development and corporate strategy at Yahoo Music.

TV/FILM: Fuse appoints Bob Mitchell VP of consumer and affiliate marketing and Marcelle Karp VP/creative director of creative services. Mitchell was VP of marketing and promotion at 4Kids Entertainment, and Karp was creative director at Lifetime.

Universal Pictures elevates Harry Garfield to executive VP of music and names Eric Polin senior VP of music publishing. Garfield was senior VP, and Polin was a partner at Wiwen Music Publishing.

RELATED FIELDS: Entertainment company Music Umbrellas names Bill Griggs director of business development. He was executive director at Chocolate Soul Entertainment Group.

—Edited by Mitchell Peters
WORLD HUNGER YEAR
Elvis Costello was presented with the ASCAP Harry Chapin Humanitarian Award at the annual World Hunger Year event held June 9 at the Lighthouse at Chelsea Piers in New York. The award is named after the late singer/songwriter and current executive director of C.H.A.P. Ayres, who co-founded WHY. In 1975, he launched his campaign to fight


BELOW: From left: ASCAP assistant VP of special projects Loretta Muñoz, Alain Krauss, Elvis Costello, Robert Plant and ASCAP director of fundraising and marketing Norven Springer.

HEART FOUNDATION TRIBUTE TO BERRY GORDY
The Heart Foundation at Los Angeles’ Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, dedicated to raising awareness of heart disease, honored Motown founder Berry Gordy with the Steven S. Cohen Humanitarian Award at the Beverly Hilton Hotel.

Honorary dinner chairman included Sidney Poitier, Norma Brokaw and Quincy Jones. Dinner chairpersons were Doug Morris, Clarence Avant, Mary Hart and Burt Sugarman. The evening was hosted by “Entertainment Tonight” anchor Mary Hart and featured special musical performances by Louis Prima, Thelma Houston, Teena Marie and “American Idol” contestant Michael Jones, who presented Gordy with the Steven S. Cohen Humanitarian Award.

LEFT: Musical director David Foster, right, and “American Idol” contestant Michael Johns.

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