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Jennifer Hudson
Can America's Dream Girl Make Record Stardom A Reality?

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MOBILE ENTERTAINMENT LIVE!
The official entertainment event of CTIA offers tracks on mobile music, video and social networking, plus interviews with MySpace's Brandon Lucas and Nokia's Kumar Shah. More at billboardevents.com.

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LatinLosses

Reliance On The CD—And Legacy Acts—Hurts The Biz

BY AMIR AGAI

Latin music has been the single genre to register a rise in sales for five years running. But last month, according to Nielsen SoundScan midyear numbers, it suffered the steepest sales drop of any genre for the first six months of the year. Sales of Latin music albums, defined as albums whose content is 51% Spanish, stood at 13.4 million units for the week ending June 29, down from the 16.1 million units sold in the same time period in 2007. That’s a 17.1% drop—a deeper loss than the 16.9% decline that rap experienced.

The industry likes to blame the downturn in Latin music sales on the economy, on immigration issues, on piracy and on an underdeveloped digital market. All those factors are important, yes. But in my opinion the real reason sales are down dramatically for Latin is an over-reliance on CD sales and a lack of support for new talent. These two crucial elements go hand in hand.

On one end, young people buy CDs less and less. And on the other, labels overwhelmingly push artists that have been around for years and who are less and less interesting for the older buyer that could still be excited to purchase CDs—or for the younger buyer looking for something new.

And yet, labels are obsessed with CD sales above all. The market is still there. It is generating more money than ever with mobile deals and with live performances. The consumer is buying even more music than before. But the CD is a tough sell.

In fact, CD sales will inevitably continue to decline. But the fact that CDs don’t sell on new talent makes things that much worse. We are pushing the second generation of Latinos here to purchase the music their parents bought. This is not music they can fully identify with. So they move increasingly toward the mainstream market.

As far as “new” music goes, I’m not only talking about youth appealing acts. In Latin in particular, there are many new or lesser-known acts that can appeal to both a younger generation and older listeners. But the marketing emphasis is always on standards that have sold before. So we are increasing a sales gap that already exists.

Naturally, it is difficult and costly to break a new act. But the situation we’re in is not the same one that existed 20 years ago. Back then, Latinos in this country predominantly spoke Spanish and brought with them the musical tastes and habits of their home countries. Today, there is a new generation that needs music that speaks to them. But this generation is not catered to properly.

There is no easy solution, but we must move as smoothly as possible into a transition where the CD is not the primary source of revenue. Where deals are in place that allow labels to share in other revenue streams; these don’t have to be draconian deals that include every single piece of business, but can still bring ancillary revenue to the labels.

The fact is, digital is rising every day, physical sales are going down, and the challenge is to somehow level the two.

Amir Agai is a partner in SeTrak, a management/entertainment firm with offices in Mexico City and Miami.

FEEDBACK

FOR THE RECORD

■ In the July 12 issue, a story about performance royalty legislation misstated that Rep. Howard Coble, R-N.C., said he planned to vote against the legislation. In fact, Coble supports it.

■ In the July 19 issue, the “Mad- den NFL 09” special report mentioned a marketing deal between Electronic Arts and MTV to sell songs on the Mad- den soundtrack through “Rock Band.” According to the companies involved, that deal is no longer in effect.

■ In the July 26 issue, a headline misstated that Lil Wayne’s “The Carter III” is available on cassette.

■ In the Aug. 2 issue, the name of iLike president Hadi Partovi was misspelled. In the same issue, a phone caption misidentified Kimberley Caldwell, the host of forthcoming CBS show “Jingles.”

Billboard.Biz Poll

Now that Sony has completed its buyout of Bertelsmann’s 50% stake in its joint music label Sony BMG, which music company is most likely to be acquired next?

8% Warner/Chappell

13% EMI

60% Universal

19% Sony

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**Making Free Music Pay**

**Ad-Supported Sites Navigate Tough Ad Market**

When MySpace flips the switch on its long-awaited music service next month, advertising-supported free streaming is expected to play a big role. But the social networking bellwether will launch during an economic slowdown, joining an existing ad-supported music market marked by declining advertising growth rates that have affected even such Internet giants as Google and Yahoo. In this kind of climate, how can startups like MySpace and last.fm or MySpace Music expect to survive?

While they still face hurdles in attracting big-ticket advertising campaigns, imeem VP of marketing and business development Steve Jang says they're doing just fine. "We're somewhat insulated from the overall macro downturn that's happening," he says. Jang specifically points to data that shows spending on multimedia ads—the kind most relied on by ad-supported music services—continues to enjoy robust growth.

After searching advertising, display ads have traditionally captured the bulk of Internet ad spend, with $7.9 billion in the United States last year, according to eMarketer. However, display ads are expected to grow only modestly during the next four years, barely doubling to $16.8 billion by 2012. Meanwhile, radio/media ads, which include audio and video, will more than quadruple in that time and ultimately surpass display totals, from just $2 billion last year to almost $9.5 billion by 2012.

These are the kinds of ads that online music services are courting. For instance, last.fm late last month introduced a new feature giving advertisers the ability to create ads that react dynamically to the music played on the site, essentially "moving" to the beat, and imeem is experimenting with a mix of audio and video ads that play between songs.

Last.fm, imeem and MySpace Music also bill themselves more as social networks than stand-alone online music services. Such networks are another growth area for online ads, with eMarketer projecting a 55% growth in ad revenue this year. While that figure is well below last year's growth rate of 163%, it still outpaces growth in overall online spending.

In terms of positioning, these ad-supported music services are certainly associated with the right growth areas of online content but whether that strategy works depends largely on their ability to attract users.

"Brands primarily are looking for volume," eMarketer analyst Paul Verna says. "Until those sites can develop volume, they're not that compelling. Right now they're just a blip on the radar. . . . A lot of advertisers are going to be sitting on the sidelines waiting for these things to happen."

According to Nielsen Online, imeem and Last.fm have made great strides attracting eyeballs in the last year. In June, imeem's unique monthly audience totaled 3.5 million, up 122% from a year earlier, while Last.fm grew 97% to 2.6 million.

While that's a decent growth rate, those user totals are hardly the critical mass advertisers look for when making big bets online. So far, no ad-supported music service has yet to turn a profit based on ad sales alone, and the bulk of the ads bought to date is considered largely experimental.

For example, a recent Jupiter Research report shows that although spending on social networks is increasing, the volume remains relatively low overall. Half of the advertisers surveyed spent less than 5% of their total online budget on social networks this year, citing uncertainty about their effectiveness.

"Each social network site offers a wide variety of tactics to choose from, and in such a new market, social marketers have little or no performance history to rely on," lead analyst Emily Riley wrote in the report.

Music services aim to get around this by focusing on their ability to target ads based on a user's music preferences, along with more traditional demographic information like age, gender and location.

"Targeting either makes this work or not work," Jang says. MySpace's Hyper Targeting program is credited with doubling the site's CPM rate, and 75% of advertisers have been repeat users. But whether targeting ads based on music preferences is any more effective than doing so based on more traditional demographic tastes is not yet clear.

"It's powerful, but it's not something that is unique to music sites," Verna says. "It's kind of an offshoot of behavioral marketing. On the music sites, it's specific to music, and if you're looking to attach your brand to music, then that's exactly what you want. But it's definitely analogous of what happens with other types of media."

As MySpace prepares to go live with its music service next month, it can only hope music's "cool factor" will be enough to buck these broader Internet advertising trends and lure brands to the fold. If successful, it could have a trickle-down effect on other ad-supported music services. If not, the major labels' equity stakes in these ventures won't be worth as much as they hoped.
STEPPING OUT

MySpace Records’ Kate Voegele Hits The Road

Since MySpace launched MySpace Records amid great fanfare in November 2005, the fledgling label has maintained a relatively low profile and noticed modest sales for most of its releases.

But now the imprint is rolling out its most aggressive promotional campaign to date, with a sponsored headlining tour for singer/songwriter Kate Voegele, whose current 40-date North American trek is partially funded by the University of Phoenix.

MySpace Records, which is distributed by Interscope, has dallied in minor tour sponsorship deals for rock act Sherwood. But the Voegele/University of Phoenix partnership marks the label’s first major step in seeking new opportunities for its roster, which includes Pennywise, Christina Milian, Mexico, Polysics and Jordin Taylor.

“This is the first full tour integration,” MySpace Records GM J. Scavo says. “It will definitely not be our last.”

Voegele has sold 450,000 song downloads and tallied U.S. unit sales of 189,000 for her 2007 debut album, “Don’t Look Away.” According to Nielsen SoundScan, that far exceeds the combined sales of 124,000 units tallied by MySpace Records’ four other album releases and an EP. The label’s second-best-selling single/artist release was Sherwood’s 2007 album, “A Different Light,” which has shifted 36,000 units. A multi-artist 2005 compilation, “MySpace Records Vol. 1,” has sold 51,000 units.

As part of its sponsorship of Voegele’s tour, the University of Phoenix will help cover some of her expenses in exchange for signage in venues and branding on MySpace. Voegele, who is a psychology major at the university, will chronicle her experience on the road through blogs and video diaries on myspace.com/katevoegel.

The 21-year-old singer will also upload exclusive behind-the-scenes footage from the jaunt, post-blast updates and maintain the site’s “Ask Kate” forum. Much of the content will delve into Voegele’s attempt to balance two college courses while playing gigs each night.

“This is a huge bit of awareness that you don’t normally get unless you have a brand partnership,” Scavo says. “She’s not only getting a multi-million-dollar equivalent of ads and awareness on MySpace, but she’s also getting some of her tour expenses covered.”

Tour sponsorships are a logical “evolutionary step” for the social networking giant, Scavo says, adding that the pairing of touring artists with the appropriate brand can also “buy good will” with fans who visit MySpace.

“They’re going to see this offline footprint of their favorite online site,” he says. “That can help strengthen their trust in the brand and the experience.”

In her first role as a headliner, Voegele’s Back 2 School tour launched Aug. 8 at the Glass House in Pomona, Calif., and wraps Oct. 5 at Holloway Hall Auditorium in Salisbury, Md. The tour features support in various cities from Matt White, Amy Kuney, Keaton Simons, Brendan James, Josh Hoge and Leslie Roy.

Voegele cut her teeth on the road in 2007 supporting such artists as Ben Lee, Matt Nathanson and Natasha Bedingfield. She has since released her profile with appearances on the CW TV drama “One Tree Hill.”

With a handful of newly signed acts that haven’t yet released albums—including Milian, Taylor and Mateo—Scavo believes there are plenty of untapped sponsorship opportunities. “I think signing Christina Milian was a giant ‘get’ for us,” he says, noting that the pop singer will tour in 2009. “We’re working all sorts of angles for her.”

“She already has brands that want to be partnered with her,” Scavo adds. “Everybody else started from scratch and we built stuff. For her, we’re having to pair it down to who the perfect partner is.”

Researching Music

Forrester Deepens Industry Focus With Jupiter Buy

The downturn in recorded-music sales is providing new business opportunities for Forrester Research, whose acquisition of rival Jupiter Research will bolster the Cambridge, Mass.-based company’s music industry expertise and client base.

“When a business model is in flux, companies reach out to us and say, ‘What’s going to happen down the line? What are the new opportunities for ways to make money?’” Forrester Research VP of marketing and strategy research Cliff Condon says. “It’s when the world starts to change that they come looking for us.”

With its $23 million acquisition of New York-based Jupiter and its parent company, JUPR Holdings, from MCG Capital, Forrester gains 82 employees and 350 clients. Forrester currently has 1,000 employees and posted revenue of $212 million in 2007. Jupiter, meanwhile, earned revenue of about $14 million in that same year. Both companies provide their broad base of clients with technology-focused market research and consulting services. Coverage of the music industry has been a key part of their business.

“There were more people on the Jupiter side covering music than on our side,” Condon says. “We’ve been covering it pretty well, but certainly adding Jupiter really makes it a lot deeper.”

Jupiter’s research roster includes high-profile analysts David Card, Michael Gartenberg and Mark Mulligan, who are widely quoted in the business press about developments in the music industry and digital media.

As the recording industry struggles to find new ways to generate revenue amid the continued decline in physical music sales, much of Forrester’s commissioned research projects focus on developing trends in digital music, MP3 devices and videogames. Those “represent a good side of the business for me,” Condon says.

“The old business model is radically changing as a result of these technologies,” he says. “So we’re trying to make sure we get a good blend of the strategic view of what is coming down the line and where the industry is going, as well as making sure we’re focused on what you need to be doing today.”

Condon declined to reveal Forrester’s music clients, but says they span many areas of the music business, including label executives, technology companies and marketers. The firm has seen particularly heavy demand for research about market opportunities in the Asia Pacific region, he says.

“It’s the big global music companies who are looking to penetrate that market in a meaningful way,” Condon says. “They’re looking at what we’re [researching] about the way people are using these devices and digesting music.”

Jupiter representatives declined to comment on the merger, referring all calls to Forrester. In a blog posting following the July 31 acquisition, Jupiter president David Schatsky wrote, “We have not always seen things the same way, and we have scooped at times at some of Forrester’s market forecasts and bold pronouncements on the future. But Forrester has a lot of smart people and has gotten a lot right. And they have executed their business strategy masterfully.”
CONGRATULATIONS

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Sony Takes The Wheel

After paying $900 million to buy Bertelsmann’s stake in Sony BMG, the Japanese electronics giant assumes control of the second-largest major label in U.S. market share. It seems like a curious time to be doubling down on the music business but in a message to employees, Sony chairman Howard Stringer said the move will lead to “deeper integration between the music company and Sony’s products... and offer a total entertainment experience to consumers.” Below we provide a history of Sony BMG by the numbers and reaction from industry experts.

### WHAT THE EXPERTS THINK

**Billboard** asked Koch Records president Bob Frank, GreyHorn partner Drew Lipsher and Vogel Capital Management president Harold Vogel to share their thoughts on Sony’s takeover of Bertelsmann’s BMG stake.

Did Sony pay a fair price? Or too much?

Frank: It’s a good deal if you take a long-term view and believe there is a growth point in the market which we certainly do. These are very early days in the new recorded-music business.

Lipsher: If the major-label groups can demonstrate success in morphing the model and proving that they can add real value in the food chain, then the valuations could go up. If not, the valuations will plummet.

Was this a smart move by Sony?

Vogel: I believe it was a good move for Sony as they can easily handle the capital requirements, and Sony has numerous affiliated platforms on which to monetize music assets. Bertelsmann really didn’t have that to nearly the same degree.

In the next year or two, what yardstick should be used to gauge whether this deal was successful?

Lipsher: I think that leading indicators will be non-financial in nature; far more qualitative. What are the perceptions of artists? Are they more or less motivated? What are investor perceptions? Are they investing more or less?

### BIG HITS, SHRINKING SHARE

Below is the combined U.S. market share of album sales of Sony’s and BMG’s music labels since their 2004 merger. At right, we take a look at their biggest hitmakers.
How does design impact our culture? Whether rebuilding on the Gulf Coast in the wake of a hurricane or designing the latest outpost of a worldwide brand, Architecture for Humanity founder Cameron Sinclair and MTV Network/VIACOM senior vice president of core services Ellen Albert advocate environments that not only respond to practical needs, but that also transform users physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Together, these culture-conscious creatives explore the global impact—and social responsibility—of design.

Ellen Albert + Cameron Sinclair
Chasing The Muse
Six Tips On How To Write A Good Song

There’s no foolproof formula for a hit. Some chart-toppers were composed in minutes, while others took years to finish. Many were written solo and others were-completed with collaborators. As part of BMI, Gibson and Billboard’s Industry Insider panel series, professional songwriters met recently at BMI’s New York office to discuss their craft with Billboard executive editor Bill Werde. The panelists—whose credits include songs for Jennifer Lopez, Teddy Geiger and Joss Stone—offered advice about how to pen a successful record.

WRITE OFTEN.
“The more you do it and the more you figure out ideas, the more it sort of gets put in your library of knowledge,” said David Katz, who wrote the music for Cobra Starship’s “Snakes on a Plane (Bring It)” and Boys Like Girls’ “The Great Escape.” “After a number of years of that, when you sit down in sessions you’re just sort of eyeballing someone else and trying to figure out what to do, things will pop into your head because of the amount of things you’ve already written.”

PUT YOURSELF IN UNFAMILIAR SITUATIONS.
“I’m a very good pianist myself but I suck at playing the guitar,” said Daniel Freberg, who has collaborated with such artists as Marc Anthony, Regina Carter and Steven Sater. “So instead teaching myself to play the guitar and to write on other songwriters on the guitar just to have different things.”

HOLD ON TO UNFINISHED SONGS.
“It was redacting about Leonard Cohen, and we all know that song ‘Hallelujah’ because it’s been covered 40 million times,” said Nate Campany, who has written for the Click Five, Teddy Geiger and Backstreet Boys. “But what I didn’t know about that song is it took him five years to write it and he wrote 94 verses, and after five years, he picked his favorites.” The lesson? “You don’t finish every idea you have every day in the shower,” Campany said. “But by working a little bit on each idea, you’ll hone your craft and sharpen yourself.”

ALWAYS BE READY FOR IDEAS.
“I get a lot of ideas when I’m showering for some reason, so I have a shower radio that has a recorder in there and I just sing into the thing with the shower going on,” Freberg said. If you don’t have a recorder handy, he suggests calling your phone and leaving your idea in a voice-mail message. “Yesterday I was driving, I turned on the phone and I called my own studio number and sang through the phone,” Freberg said. “Or if you’re a lyricist, always have a notebook.”

CONSIDER WORKING WITH A COLLABORATOR.
Bring in someone else into the creative process can provide a vital spark to your writing, Campany says. “It’s kind of like every single person you ever write with has heard words differently and says words differently,” he added. That the right collaborators “draw something out of me that only they could.”

BEWARE YOUR ASSESSMENT OF A SONG MAY BE WISHFUL THINKING.
Freberg recalled how he worked on a song he thought was “way better” than another number he collaborated on with Jennifer Lopez and two other writers. But Lopez and LL Cool J recorded the latter song, “All I Have,” which sat atop the Billboard for 100 for four consecutive weeks in 2003. “I was perplexed,” he said. “This record took five, 15 minutes to write and was a throwaway to me at the time. You can’t call what the artist is going to like, you can’t call what the label is going to like.”

6 QUESTIONS
with JOSE ‘PEPE’ SERRANO
by AYALA BEN-YEHUDA

Independent regional Mexican entertainment company Latin Power Music has achieved some rare feats. In the three years since it formed, it has broken new bands on both sides of the border and has single-handedly driven the popularity of “duranguense lite,” a poppy take on the brass- and keyboard-driven genre. American Show Latina, its affiliated label that scored U.S. distribution from Universal’s Machete Music last year, has charted 11 titles on Billboard’s Top Latin Albums chart since last October. Latin Power also has a strategic alliance with legendary A&R man Domingo Chavez’s Primetime Entertainment management firm.

In an interview with Billboard, Latin Power president Jose “Pepe” Serrano discusses how the company runs its business and develops talent.

1. Describe your business model.
To have the artists careers well-controlled, it’s important to have control of management as much as publishing and the record... we do all in-house. We don’t hire anyone. We do the musical production with our people, and we produce the videos with our team. We do the photography and design with our own team. I’ve always thought that the bigger company doesn’t eat the smaller one, but rather the faster one buys the slower one. This gives us a competitive advantage over everyone else in the industry.

2. Describe your business model.
To have the artists careers well-controlled, it’s important to have control of management as much as publishing and the record... we do all in-house. We don’t hire anyone. We do the musical production with our people, and we produce the videos with our team. We do the photography and design with our own team. I’ve always thought that the bigger company doesn’t eat the smaller one, but rather the faster one buys the slower one. This gives us a competitive advantage over everyone else in the industry.

3. How do you start up with an idea for a group and then look for band members to fill it, or do you find artists first?
Sometimes we start with a group and change their concept. We tell them, “You guys are this group, we want to make a group with this concept, you’ll help us fill it, we offer you this guaranteed amount of money whether you play or not, but if you play you’ll get a percentage of the profits generated by management,” and we start to work.

4. Do they’re on salary?
They have a base salary, plus a percentage [after recouping the company’s investment]. That way they don’t worry if things are good or bad... We pay the groups a salary, we take care of the imaging and take the career where we want it to go, and this helps us grow the group quickly... [otherwise] the groups start to despair and do bad work and the projects don’t end well.

5. Have any of your artists reached a certain level in their careers and wanted out?
They go crazy, like all the artists do. Really, we haven’t had problems with anyone. The one group we’ve had, we shouldn’t say a problem but a difference, was with Los Aliados [de la Sierra]. But we came to a good agreement and we’re still working as a team. They’re still a part of the label. We don’t manage them but we help them out with things. We’re friends at the end of the day... Sometimes what artists don’t like are the contract terms. When there are problems in the contract terms it’s better to reach another agreement and keep working together.

6. What’s the next hot genre after duranguense lite?
Is that style ready to pass? I still think it’s growing, but it’ll reach its maximum point and go down a bit, but it’ll always be around. I think the music of Huichol Musical can become a strong musical movement. We’re just starting to work them, but I think there’s a big future for that sound. We also have artists in other genres such as banda, in the case of El Presumido, and a new norteo group we’re working that will be our first norteo release. Huichol’s sound is more traditional Mexican. He uses a toloache, a vihuela, a guitar and a violin. It’s like American country music mixed with regional Mexican.
Def Jux, Dim Mak Use Merch To Push Their Brands

When most people think of yard sales, they might picture forlorn piles of musty old junk, slightly stained clothes, dog-eared books and discarded toys. A yard sale held by Dim Mak Records, however, is a different animal. Featuring free beer, food and a DJ lineup to rival any A-list nightclub, Dim Mak yard sales, which have taken place in Los Angeles, New York, Paris and Manila, Philippines, serve to build the label's brand and to showcase the wide variety of Dim Mak merchandise available.

For many years, labels tended to focus their merch energies on promoting bands; label-specific merch was generally limited to a handful of perfunctory T-shirts, key chains and mugs. But in recent years, two labels, Brooklyn's Definitive Jux and L.A.'s Dim Mak, have bucked this trend and have begun to develop merch lines dedicated to promoting not just their artists but the labels themselves.

For Def Jux, expanding its label-specific merch was a natural extension of the strong brand it had sought to develop since its launch in 1999. "We noticed that kids identified with the brand early on in the life of the label," co-founder Amaechi Uzoigwe says. "We did Def Jux-branded tours that did well. We were meeting kids with Def Jux tattoos."

When Def Jux launched its online store in June, it decided to offer more label-centric merch beyond T-shirts, Uzoigwe says. "We have belt buckles, which sell like crazy, and after we noticed some of our artists wearing dog tags, we added those," he says. "And of course, we have the sneakers."

Influential graffiti artist Phase 2 designed the sneakers, which are currently only available at the label's online store but will be at some retail outlets this fall. "I'm surprised at the success of the sneakers, although I always thought it was such a cool idea," Aoki says. Dim Mak produces about 30 T-shirt designs per season, which are sold at fashionable boutiques like L.A.'s Kitson and Colette in Paris. All the T-shirts incorporate the Dim Mak name somewhere in the design.

"The presentation of the Dim Mak name varies from shirt to shirt," label manager Ana Calderon says. "In some cases, it's really in your face; other times, it's more abstract. But we always have the name on the tag and hang tags." Aoki says he plans to expand the fashion line in the future by partnering with a number of designers and working with his sister, model/actress Devon Aoki, to design apparel that includes women's wear and denim. He also plans to hold more events like the yard sales and organizes fashion shoots where Dim Mak artists model the label's latest attire.

"The clothing does well," says Aoki, who declines to say what portion of Dim Mak's revenue is generated by apparel sales. Label brand manager Mike Soops says Aoki's DJ gigs provide the bulk of the label's income, but that the clothing line comes in second, ahead of music sales.

"The clothing line is more active right now," Soops continues. "The label just signed a bunch of new artists, so we don't know whether the merch will continue to be such a big chunk. But it has definitely helped us build up our base of supporters and bring our core community together."
This fall, the Independent Film Channel will be running more music-related programming—on-air and online—than at any other time in its 14-year history.

The latest addition to its music programming roster: online indie-music mainstay Pitchfork Media, which will provide IFC with material from its Pitchfork TV video site, Billboard has learned.

"Pitchfork Airwaves on IFC" will begin airing by the end of August. It will comprise eight-minute blocks of original Pitchfork TV programming, including live band performances and artist interviews.

As part of its content partnership, IFC will make its own music programming available to Pitchfork TV. The two sides are also exploring the possibility of striking joint advertising deals with marketers.

"The idea is to take a more sophisticated approach by not pandering to the audience," Pitchfork Media founder/president Ryan Schreiber says. "We're not trying to reach everybody who could possibly be interested. We will make it for fans of this type of music.

It's a mind-set that jibes with IFC's approach to this type of programming. Air- ing more music shows leaves less airtime for its core film-oriented pro- gramming. But associating itself with the world of independent music will help the channel burnish its credibility with viewers, so the ratings and clicks its music content generates are less of a concern than how they reinforce the IFC brand, according to Craig Parks, IFC VP of digital media and a former producer at VH1.

"Music programming was never a big driver for VH1; it was about relationships, cool content and doing a lot for brand," Parks says. "We're looking at ratings as a longer-term goal. It's more about the vibe and branding."

The shift in programming also gives IFC the opportunity to sell sponsorships and brand integration deals to clients looking to associate themselves with music. IFC runs a mixture of ad-supported TV shows, as well as commercial-free sponsored programming. The company is targeting such categories as retail and auto as potential areas of growth for advertising.

"Obviously IFC has a specific brand, demo and reach, so there are certain advertisers who wouldn't want us," Parks says. "If you're looking for 45-year-old moms, you're probably not coming to IFC." He adds, "We're looking to attract new sponsors or tackle with existing advertisers, such as Target and Red Bull."

Online, IFC runs a blog called the Indie Ear, which follows the world of independent music. Earlier this year, the network also launched Lunchbox, which spotlights the latest viral videos and covers trends in music, politics and film. In late July, the channel launched a competition around indie label McCoury Music's new compilation album, "Moneymade," asking fans to create short films for the songs, with the grand-prize winner having his or her creation aired on IFC and posted on ific.com.

In the next month or two, it will debut a still-unnamed online show featuring a round table of music journalists talking about the state of independent music.

The Long Goodbye

In two years when music clubs formerly owned by Bertelsmann close their doors, the industry will effectively sound the death knell for mail-order record clubs.

In the past, this would have been cause for celebration among store merchants. But in a sign of how far the formerly high-profit clubs have fallen, their imminent demise will probably pass virtually unnoticed by most retailers.

In July, Phoenix-based private equity firm Najafi agreed to acquire Direct Group North America, which includes the Columbia House assets, the BMG music clubs, a DVD club and the Bookspan book club. Terms of the deal were undisclosed.

Although they will soon have a new owner, Direct Group's music clubs don't appear long for this world. In its 2007 annual report, which was released in March before the sale of Direct Group, Bertelsmann said it would discontinue its CD clubs in 2010 "on account of the slump in the physical music market."

Last we checked, physical sales were still slumping. More to the point, 2010 also happens to be when Universal Music Group's record club contract runs out, sources say.

The only other major still supplying Direct Group's music clubs is EMI Music.

Under Najafi's ownership, Direct Group's management team headed up by Stuart Goldfarb will remain in place. Najafi CEO John Najafi says he is taking a long-term view of his new acquisition, which is expected to close in the third quarter. "Exit strategies is not a variable that we analyze when we acquire companies," Najafi says.

Direct Group North America had revenue of at least $39.6 million ($1.4 billion) excluding its Canadian operations, in Bertelsmann's fiscal year ended Dec. 31. The company also noted that Direct Group North America had a $291 million ($428 million) write-off due to impairment of good will and other intangible assets.

Music was the smallest product category, behind DVDs and books. Billboard estimates Direct Group's North American record clubs generated 2007 sales of about $250 million-$300 million. That's a far cry from the estimated $1.5 billion in estimated music revenue the record clubs once generated in the '90s, when the CD was just taking off and Columbia House and BMG were still in their prime.

Record clubs began driving music retailers crazy in 1958, when the first ones opened their doors. Back then, RCA-Victor, Capitol Records and other labels, as well as entrepreneurs and even record store merchants, began forming clubs that year. At the time, merchants were afraid that clubs would eat into their sales. Nor were merchants happy that they'd be competing with their own suppliers. They also feared the clubs would eventually be able to buy directly from labels, without incurring the middleman costs associated with buying from distributors.

By 1980, consolidation had touched the record club business, leaving only two primary competitors: CBS Records' Columbia House, which would eventually become a joint venture between Sony and Time Warner, and RCA Music Service, which would later become BMG Music Service.

The fierce competition between the two clubs led to escalating record club promotions. A typical early-'90s new-member inducement offered 10 CDs for a penny, thanks in part to the sweetheart licensing deals that saw club costs fall to as little as $2.50 per CD. Billboard estimates—far lower than the wholesale prices that retailers were paying. When CD sales started to decline this decade, offers were toned down, and then marketing fell off sharply after the two clubs merged in 2004. The lone exception infuriating stores to this day is Direct Group's yourmusic.com site, which still allows consumers to buy any single CD for $6.99.

Ironically, record club insiders complain that all the loss leading done by big-box merchants is one of the reasons behind the record clubs downfall, in addition to the other usual laments voiced by conventional retail, such as the fall-off of the CD and digital sales and piracy.

In its phase-down mode, Direct Group's music clubs will stop solicitations for new members, sources suggest, although anyone can still sign up online. Also, some of the genre clubs will be, or already are, consolidating.

Although traditional record clubs may be going away, who can say that they won't be back as a digital subscription service? Until now, labels have been loath to license the clubs digitally under existing CD terms. But if the record club wanted to convert itself into a digital club paying the same rates as other subscription services, Direct Group North America probably has a great database of potential subscribers. A Direct Group spokeswoman didn't return a call seeking comment.

The Long Goodbye
Forcoming comedy show "Z Rock" is part of a growing roster of music-oriented programming that IFC is featuring on its cable channel and Web site.

real-life musicians as John Popper, Dave Navarro and Sebastian Bach. "Half the reason this was put together was to answer the question, "How do we expose a band when multimedia is every-thing?" " says Lynn Lendway, who manages ZO2 with her husband, Bob Held. "This is a nice little experiment to see if it will translate into sales."

Despite appearances, IFC insists it is not competing for the same audience as MTV or VH1, both of which now focus primarily on scripted shows and reality programming.

"What we're after is the independent consumer and if they go to MTV or VH1, great. I'm not sure how many of our viewers are on MTV or VH1," Parks says. "I don't know if what we're doing is owned by MTV or VH1. I would argue that it's not."

Also coming soon is "Z Rock," a semi-scripted 10-episode comedy show that follows the exploits of a fictional rock band that plays at children's parties. The show is loosely based on the real-life experiences of the band ZO2, whose members portray exaggerated versions of themselves, and features cameos from such
Assembly Line

IAAM Chief Says Better Market Info Needed

Probably more than anyone, Dexter King has an ear to the ground as to how public assembly facilities are reacting to social and economic pressures. As leader of the International Assn. of Assembly Managers—the broad-based industry organization that represents the operators of arenas, auditoriums, stadiums, theaters, performing arts centers and convention centers—executive director King is constantly immersed in this business. And lately, he’s been sensing some tension among his members.

“The perspective I’m picking up there’s a little bit of apprehension, a little bit of uncertainty as to what the future will bring, so facilities are starting to put in place some contingencies just in case,” says King, interviewed at the 83rd annual IAAM Convention & Trade Show in Anaheim, Calif. “They’re not going to spend money on certain kinds of solutions they had on the radar or had budgeted for. That’s what I’ve been hearing over the course of the last few months.”

As for the touring market, King says he is feeling “some unusual softness in the most recent 60-90 days,” he says. “People have held back spending money to buy tickets to see something, unless it’s a real barn-burner. It’s sporadic.”

In the information age, the key to the IAAM’s relevance to members mirrors the live entertainment business—really, any business—at large: more information.

For the music business, that means keeping track of who is buying recorded music and concert tickets, how they’re buying them and what else they do with their time and money. More specifically for the venue business, it means identifying today’s consumers, trends and best practices. IAAM has identified its objectives as two main agendas, split between business and educational missions, with the constant being the need for receiving and imparting information.

“We’re pretty good at education, but that’s current knowledge,” King says. “What we’re not particularly good at, and where we really want to raise the bar, is new knowledge. That requires data gathering, a focus on our research, and that’s an area where you’re really going to see us ramp up in the coming three years.”

Under new president Robyn Williams, director of the Portland (Or.) Center for the Performing Arts, IAAM will roll out its Venue Research Institute, which will be chaired by outgoing IAAM president Steve Peters, pres-
In the past six months, news of business development projects has flowed from the Garden, including staff restructuring and key personnel additions (Billboard.biz, July 28). Strategic partnerships such as an investment in mega-management firm Front Line (Billboard.biz, June 10), venue acquisitions like the Chicago Theatre (Billboard.biz, May 11), new content projects such as the arena touring version of the Christmas Spectacular (Billboard.biz, May 2) and plans for a $15 million investment in a multiday music festival in upscale New York (Billboard.biz, July 8).

 Owned by Cablevision, MSGE also has growing media distribution platforms, like its cable music network Fuse, which has just embarked on a $15 million rebranding campaign positioning the network as the only fully dedicated channel for music. The Fuse connection can be leveraged to attract artists (including Front Line artists) to MSGE venues, as the network seeks content and artists and events seek exposure.

 The Citi/Wang deal will leverage MSGE’s relationships and expand the offerings at the Wang Theatre. MSGE presentations in New York include Cirque du Soleil’s first family-themed production, “Wintuk”; the Radio City Christmas Spectacular, starring the Rockettes; and such literary engagements as the Radio City Music Hall Speaker Series. The Christmas Spectacular successfully played the Wang in 2004 and 2006, “two very profitable runs” that Marciano says were the genesis of the expanded relationship.

 Marciano says the plan is to book these MSGE venues in tandem, including the Beacon Theatre in New York (acquired last year), Radio City Music Hall, the Wang and the Chicago Theatre and, beginning immediately, the Wang.

 Asked if MSGE’s expansion will be limited at all by geography, Marciano responds, “The geographic reach is potentially unlimited, but we want to be careful with every new theater that we add to our portfolio that we have sufficient content to justify the expansion.”

 But it’s almost a given it will add to that portfolio, including not only acquiring and partnering, but building from the ground up. “[In] major markets where there currently is not a large-scale theater, we will look for opportunities,” Marciano says.

 This two-pronged approach of content and distribution is not without its competitors. “On shows that we develop internally, at this moment in time there’s not a tremendous amount of competition and that’s where we see the void in the marketplace,” Marciano says. “On the controlling distribution side, which means adding additional theaters in our business model, I think there is no shortage of interest from people wanting to acquire, own, operate or develop new theaters.”

 What makes the MSGE model different, in Marciano’s view, is that “we’re putting a lot of effort into what we believe to be the higher-margin side of the business, which is our productions, and at the same time encouraging the music business to use our venues,” he says. “But we have not really entered the music touring space at this time.”

 As a part of the deal, Marciano is a member of the MSGE’s board. His new role is a selfless approach to business, in other words, “What have you done for me lately? If you’re managing a venue, [you think], ‘What has [IAAM] done to make me be more successful in my building financially?”

 Meanwhile, the advocacy part of IAAM’s work “is a selfless approach to the business,” King says. “We do things not just to help you and your building, but to help the entire business environment. It may be helping a piece of the business that’s tangential to our business, and it may help them more than it helps us.”
Who You Gonna Call?

Why Media Companies Turn To MSN For Online Streaming Video Events

When Control Room provided comprehensive online coverage of last year’s Live Earth concerts, it turned to MSN.com to provide the infrastructure.

When RCA bought a partner to webcast Give Da’Vine’s pre-Grammy Awards party in February, it, too, chose MSN.

And when NBC drew up its ambitious plans to provide thousands of hours of live and on-demand video of all the athletic events at this year’s Beijing Olympics, guess who the network turned to for help? Yup, MSN.

So what is it about the Microsoft online business unit that lands it such high-profile gigs?

On the surface, MSN may not seem like an obvious choice to host a webcast.

For one thing, it’s not the largest U.S. web portal. (Yahoo is.) Nor does it have the largest Internet search business. (Google does.) And there are plenty of other online players, most notably AT&T’s Blue Room, that also provide exclusive online footage from live events.

Still, while it’s not the biggest portal out there, MSN’s ability to provide links to news, user comments and video to big events on its main landing pages makes it a valuable marketing partner for content providers hungry for more eyeballs to monetize their investments.

Moreover, MSN has the power of Microsoft behind it, which brings with it online video streaming technology like Windows Media Player and the new Silverlight 2. In addition, MSN and fellow Microsoft brand Windows Live combined had a broader reach than their key Web portal competitors on a global basis, with 212.3 million unique users in June, compared with 189.9 million for Yahoo and 137.6 million for AOL, according to Nielsen Online. Google was the only Web brand with a larger unique global audience in June, with 273.6 million users.

Taken together, MSN has quietly emerged as the go-to partner for content providers interested in delivering highly scalable online streaming video events.

According to MSN GM of entertainment, video and sports Bob Bennett, the success of Live Earth essentially put the portal on the entertainment map.

“Live Earth was a watershed moment in MSN’s history,” he says. “It showed us as someone who can deliver not only complex events in a way that’s not overwhelming, but also someone who can distribute an event on a global scale.”

Throwing up live links to view various events taking place at once is one thing. Doing so in a manner that makes it easy for fans to find exactly what they’re looking for, as well as recommend similar content, is another. Control Room and MSN give MSN props for how it presents their material to viewers who turn to the Internet for a customized viewing experience.

NBC was especially keen on ensuring that its Olympics coverage included a strong online component so younger viewers could use their computers while watching the telecasts. That would help the network maximize viewer exposure not only to the athletic events, but to the ads NBC sold around them.

“If you spend any time hanging out in a room of 25-year-olds on the weekend, you’ll find laptops all over the place,” NBC Sports and Olympics senior VP of digital media Perkins Miller says. Miller emphasizes that it’s important for the network to “deliver the content to them where they want it.”

The more traffic MSN can funnel to NBC’s Olympics footage, the more money both make from advertising. (MSN gets a cut of NBC’s ad revenue as part of the deal.) Online advertising is expected to account for about 5% to 8% of the more than $1 billion in ad revenue NBC is expected to rake in from the Olympics.

Control Room president Aaron Grosky says MSN’s combination of software development and marketing prowess was central to its decision in 2006 to partner with the Web portal for Control Room’s series of live concert webcasts even though MSN at the time was not known as a content distributor.

“We were essentially going to be the first entity to be providing content on a regular basis to be carried across the entire network,” he says. “MSN had a lot of untapped opportunity and potential.”

What interested the company most was MSN’s presence in 42 international markets. Although each MSN territory controls its own marketing and promotion efforts, Grosky credits its ability to execute a marketing plan simultaneously across them all.

“That can be a difficult thing to manage when trying to launch a single piece of content in the same day,” he says. “It’s like releasing a record and trying to have all your marketing activities region by region aligned . . . you won’t get true numbers, real viewers without that kind of a coordinated approach.”

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

CUT THE CORD

Wires are so 1980. The new 12i Stream from Aeriele allows users to create ad-hoc wireless music networks by plugging one of the units into the source of audio (such as an iPod, computer or stereo) and the other unit into a set of headphones or speakers. The connection then streams the audio over a 2.4 GHz connection from the source to the extended device from up to 30 feet away.

With multiple units, several users can share the music simultaneously. Additional accessories include folding portable speakers and in-car stereo connections. The basic one-pack sells for $70, with a two-pack running $120. —AB

BITS & BRIEFS

OH SO SOCIAL

New studies conducted by ABI Research find that members of social networking services like MySpace and Facebook also consume more content on their mobile phones. Two surveys done separately late last year with mobile and social networking users revealed that three-quarters of social network users between ages 18 and 30 were twice as likely to own a smart phone and use it to access mobile content. ABI credits the fact that many social networking services are structured around specific types of media like music or photography for the extension of the same on mobile phones.

LOVE HIM TENDER

MySpace held a contest for Elvis fans to win a trip to Graceland in Memphis, Tenn., by asking them to submit videos of them performing their favorite Elvis song to the MySpace Karaoke site. Sony BMG, MySpace and Elvis Presley Enterprises will pick the winner, who will perform the song live Aug. 12 during Elvis Week 2008. Additional prizes include tickets to an Elvis tribute concert, DVDs and an as-yet-unnamed MP3 player loaded with Elvis performances.

IN THE AIR TONIGHT

Hoping to capture some slice of the market dominated by "Guitar Hero" and "Rock Band" is XS Games, which announced "PopStar Guitar" for the Wii, coming this October. The game features the Air guitar controller, which turns the Wii Remote into an air guitar. The game features a mix of more than 50 covers and master recordings, including tracks from Blink-182, 3 Doors Down and Simple Plan.

HOT RINGMASTERS — AUG 2008

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

www.americanradiohistory.com
Hiram Bullock, 52, guitarist/songwriter, died July 25 in New York due to complications after a battle with throat cancer.

Bullock was born to U.S. military parents Sept. 11, 1955, in Osaka, Japan, before moving to Baltimore with his family at age 2. He began to study piano at the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore and performed his first recital at age 6. He played bass in his high-school rock band before making the switch to guitar. After moving to New York and becoming a session musician, Bullock recorded with such artists as Sting, Billy Joel and Barbara Streisand and toured with Miles Davis and James Taylor.

He was recruited by keyboardist Paul Shaffer to play guitar in the World's Most Dangerous Band on “Late Night With David Letterman” from 1982 until 1984, where he gained notoriety for playing barefoot.

Bullock also was a member of the “Saturday Night Live” house band, and he composed six songs for the 1992 Steven Segal film “Under Siege,” in which he also had a bit part. In addition, he performed a popular jingle for Subway, which aired during the Super Bowl in the early 2000s. — Evan Lucy

Michael "Tom" Mooney, 63, touring industry veteran, died June 15 in Sherman Oaks, Calif., of a heart attack.

Mooney is perhaps best known in the music industry for serving as a crew member or tour manager for such artists as Neil Diamond, Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, Rod Steward, Luis Miguel and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young.

Born in Boston, Mooney served in Vietnam before starting his career in 1974 at Bill Graham's San Francisco-based FM Productions. His professional path also led him to work with Fred Rosen and Ticketmaster, where he helped develop up-and-coming artists under the ticketing company's TM Showcase banner.

Much of Mooney's touring career was also dedicated to promoting concerts in South America and Europe. He recently retired from the live music business to focus on consulting and event production for a variety of clients across the industry.

Mooney is survived by his wife, Anne, who he met while on tour with Diamond in 1978. At the time, Anne was working for British rock promoter Robert Patterson. Upon moving to Los Angeles, she continued working in the concert business as an executive at Ticketmaster.

Mooney is also survived by his brother, Joseph, and his mother, Lorraine Mooney. Donations in his memory can be sent to the American Heart Assn., 8465 Figueroa St., Los Angeles, CA 90047. — Mitchell Peters

Michael Berniker, 73

Michael Berniker, 73, producer/multi-platinum Grammy Award winner, died July 25 in Great Barrington, Mass., due to complications from a kidney disease.

Berniker was born June 30, 1935, in Brooklyn, N.Y., and later studied music and philosophy at Columbia University. He then enlisted in the Army, where he maintained a radio show and organized a jazz festival while stationed in El Paso, Texas. After leaving the Army, he enrolled in an in-house A&R training program at CBS Records.

After leaving CBS in 1968, Berniker became an executive at RCA, where he signed such acts as Juice Newton and Daryl Hall & John Oates. In 1977, he returned to CBS, where he created the Columbia Jazz Masterpieces series. He also enjoyed a brief tenure at Angel Records, and he produced “American Dreamer,” a recording of Stephen Foster songs sung by Thomas Hampson.

Berniker was best-known for his prolific work as a producer, having worked on Latin jazz, spoken word, comedy, and classic albums throughout his career. He produced the first three albums that Barbra Streisand recorded for Columbia as well as material by such pop and jazz artists as Johnny Mathis, Perry Como and Ben Webster.

He also worked with Eydie Gorme, who won a 1966 Grammy Award for best female vocal performance for her version of "If He Walked Into My Life," which Berniker produced. His work with Cuban fusion band Irakere also resulted in a 1979 Grammy Award for Best Latin Recording.

Berniker was also heavily involved with Broadway, and his cast recordings of five musicals included "City of Angels" and "The Will Rogers Folies," the latter of which won him a Grammy Award in 1991. In all, he received nine Grammys for his work.

He is survived by his wife, Heather; a son, Mark, of New York; a daughter, Judy Powell, of Boulder, Colo.; and two grandchildren. — EL
Physical Rehab

Labels Turn To New CD Formats To Boost Sales In Japan

TOKYO—Major labels are hoping two new enhanced-CD formats will boost physical sales in Japan, where CD sales have shown unusual resiliency.

Already on the market is Super High Material CD, which Universal Music Japan and electronics maker JVC launched in November 2007. Universal has issued about 450 SMH-CD titles to date and expects to release another 300 by the end of the year. Other labels, including Warner Music Japan and BMG Japan, expect to begin issuing catalog albums in the new format in the coming months.

Meanwhile, EMI Music Japan is preparing to release titles in the Hi Quality CD format, which is slated to be rolled out in September by Japanese optical disc manufacturer Memorex Tech.

Both formats claim to offer better sound than conventional CDs through the use of new materials that they say make it easier to read discs. Unlike previous enhanced-CD formats, such as Super Audio CD and DVD-Audio, which failed to stir much consumer interest, SMHC and HQCD are fully compatible with standard CD players. At the moment, there aren’t any immediate plans to launch either format in the United States or Europe.

Tower Records Japan merchandise operation manager Takeshi Imai says SMH-CDs have already logged “very good sales” at the retail chain. He says the Japanese love of “collectibles” and the possible availability of specifically remastered SMH-CD reissues of catalog albums could further boost the format’s popularity.

The launch of another enhanced CD format would probably draw disinterested shrugs in the United States and Europe. But it’s a somewhat different story in Japan, where the world’s second-largest music market, where CD sales have been holding up better. During the first six months of 2008, unit sales of CDs in the United States plunged 16.3% from the same period last year, according to Nielsen SoundScan. By contrast, physical sales in Japan managed to eke out a 0.9% gain during the first half of 2008 from a year earlier, according to SoundScan Japan.

Universal Music Japan executive director Hiroshi Aono says he believes SMH-CDs have the potential to extend Japan’s nascent physical sales revival, which he calls “unique among developed markets.”

Aono claims SHM-CD titles have sold more than 450,000 units to date, with a retail value of 1 billion yen ($59.3 million), and projects 2008 sales to total 2 billion yen ($186.6 million).

Although digital music is thriving in Japan, Aono says his label’s research shows that older music fans still prefer physical media. “A relatively large group of people—particularly those in their late 30s—aren’t buying digitally and want ‘packaged’ CDs,” he says.

To target that demographic, Universal has released SHM-CD titles by such acts as the Rolling Stones, the Police, jazz pianist Keith Jarrett and several classical titles. SHM-CD reissues retail for around 100-500 yen ($2.80-94.70) more than the 2,600-1,000 yen ($24-29) charged for standard CDs.

Other labels are now resting SHM-CD. JVC’s Victor Entertainment will release 10 albums in October, while Warner Music Japan will reissue several “unplugged” sets by artists including Eric Clapton and Neil Young. A complete Led Zeppelin boxed set follows Sept. 10. And by year’s end, BMG Japan will issue catalog titles on SHM-CD by international acts including Elvis Presley, Half Oakes and Jefferson Airplane.

BMG Japan senior VP of international labels Hironobu Tanaka says he hopes SHM-CD “can bring back old customers and also reach out to new ones” at a time when international repertoire sales are falling. According to the Recording Industry Assoc. of Japan, first-half shipments of international repertoire fell to 28 million CDs, down 14% from the same period last year.

Some labels remain unconvinced of SHM-CD’s appeal. A representative for leading Japanese indie A vex suggests that SHM-CD’s impact will “likely be limited” as the physical CD market contracts long term, noting that Aex isn’t planning any SHM-CD releases.

As for HQCD, Memory-Tech says EMI Music Japan and independent label Pony Canyon are planning to release 52 albums in the format in September.

“We don’t consider SHM-CDs and HQCDs to be rival formats,” an EMI representative says.

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Global Newsline

**TYphoon Takes EM**

Hong Kong-based Typhoon has bought out EMI Music’s stakes in two Hong Kong-based joint ventures and has acquired EMI Music Taiwan, dramatically downsizing the major’s physical Chinese presence. EMI has agreed to sell its stakes in the JVs for an undisclosed sum to Typhoon, the company headed by former EMI Music Asia chairman Norman Cheng. Since 2003, the companies had been partners in Hong label Typhoon Music and label/artist management company Gold Label. Under the new deals, Typhoon becomes EMI Music’s exclusive licensee for physical distribution of international repertoire in China and Taiwan, while EMI has the option to release Typhoon artists internationally. Typhoon also becomes a nonexclusive licensee for EMI digital repertoire in China and Taiwan. Typhoon and Gold artists affected by the deal include Taiwanese pop acts Jolin Tsai and A-mei, along with Cheng’s son, Hong Kong singer Ronald Cheng. EMI declined to comment on whether the deal might result in job losses.

—Andre Painé

**02 Music Faces Five-Year Slump**

The Australian recorded-music market will continue to contract in the next five years, consultancy PriceWaterhouseCoopers says. In its annual Australian Entertainment & Media Outlook, the firm projects the retail value of Australia’s recorded-music market to decline by 6.8% in 2008 to $795 million Australian ($729 million). PWC expects the market to keep shrinking at a compounded annual rate of 1.5% through to 2012 and says the “rapid decline in physical recorded-music sales is not matched by the growth in digital music downloads and ringtones.” The fall in the volume of CDs sales plus discounting by retailers is also affecting margins, the report adds.

—John Ferguson

**Brits Shine at MTV Asia Awards**

U.K. acts put up a strong showing at the 2008 MTV Asia Music Awards Aug. 3 at the 6,000-capacity Arena of Stars in Malaysia’s Genting Highlands resort. The 18-category ceremony was co-hosted by...
The brand is so strong and the concept is so strong that people are prepared to take on the responsibility."

Creamfields tried to expand into the U.S. in 2001 with festivals in Las Vegas and Long Island, N.Y. But the events were called off after its partner Clear Channel Entertainment (now Live Nation) said it wasn't satisfied with ticket sales and "felt the shows needed to be abandoned," Barton says. "We thought, with our experience, the ticket sales were fine and were going to get stronger and stronger as we got closer to the shows."

A Live Nation spokesman declined to comment. Barton adds, "We would love to put on shows to be in North America, but at this moment in time, until we find the time to focus on it or find the right partners to work with, there are no firm plans."

To ensure consistency across the board, the Cream team in Liverpool still predominately handles the programming of each Creamfields event's lineup. But Barton adds that efforts are made to ensure that each event also reflects its individual local market, with promoters, DJs and live acts often chosen not because of their experience, but because of what they can bring to the brand and overall festival experience.

"What's special about Creamfields is that you can feel the passion and the enthusiasm that the whole team has," says DJ Paul van Dyk, one of the headline artists at this year's U.K. fest. "Everyone is there to enjoy electronic music."

"The lineups that do strongly appeal to the market," says Ben Spier, promoter with Manchester-based dance brand Goodgreef, which regularly hosts one of the main stages at the festival's U.K. leg. Spier cites the presence of alternative rock acts Kasabian and Ian Brown on this year's British bill as one way Creamfields has diversified its appeal without alienating its core fan base.

Following an investment of £1.7 million (£3.4 million) in June from Cream's long-term partner, London-based media investment group firm Ingenious (billboard.biz, July 15), Creamfields has expanded its U.K. leg from a single-day event to two days—a development that Barton anticipates continuing for the foreseeable future.

"We want 20 (international Creamfields) as soon as possible," says Barton, naming northern Europe, Canada, China, India and an additional event in South America as possible areas of expansion. "We want to see how far we can take this."

Additional reporting by Ray Waddell.

actor/30 Seconds to Mars frontman Jared Leto and Hong Kong actress/singer Karen Mok. British winners, based on online public votes, included Radiohead (innovation award), Leona Lewis (breakthrough artist) and Muse ("Bring Da House Down" award for best live act). Linkin Park was named favorite international artist in Asia and 30 Seconds to Mars won the video star award for "A Beautiful Lie." National winners included pop vocalist Show Lo (Taiwan), boy band Super Junior (South Korea) and pop vocalist Nicholas Teo (Malaysia). International performers at the event included the Click Five, Panic at the Disco, Leona Lewis, the Pussycat Dolls and OneRepublic.

- Christie Leo

>>> ADA PARTNERS WITH FIRST NIGHT

Warner Music U.K.'s independent label distribution arm Alternative Distribution Alliance has signed stage show recordings specialist First Night Records. The distribution deal with the London-based label is effect immediately. ADA U.K. now distributes all physical and digital releases on behalf of First Night Records in the United Kingdom and Ireland. First Night was launched in 1984 by music industry veterans who have worked with artists and has since released nearly 150 cast recording albums of West End and Broadway musicals. The label was previously distributed through Pinnacle. ADA U.K., launched in 2006, provides sales and distribution services for third-party labels. - Andre Paine

>>> TUIS TWICE THE SIZE

The 2008 New Zealand Music Awards is expected to be the biggest yet, with the event set for Auckland's largest indoor entertainment venue, Vector Arena. The move—which coincides with the signing of a new three-year sponsorship deal with Vodafone—will double the audience capacity for the Recording Industry Assn. of New Zealand event. "By holding the awards in the Vector Arena we can include 3,500 music fans in addition to the 1,500 musicians and industry types," RIANZ chief executive Campbell Smith says. Popularly known as the Tuis, the industry awards will be held Oct. 8, with nominees to be announced Sept. 3.

- John Ferguson

LONDON—A European Commission (EC) ruling ordering an end to the "anti-competitive" practices of European performance rights societies is being welcomed by broadcasters and online music services, even as it triggers warnings from rights organizations about dire consequences for repertoire.

Under the ruling, the 24 European members of CISAC, the international body for author and composer rights societies, have 120 days to drop territorial exclusivity clauses that prevent a rights society from offering licenses to commercial users outside their domestic territory. They must also drop restrictions preventing composers from moving to another collecting society.

In short, the EC observed in a statement that the ruling "will make it easier for users to obtain licenses for broadcasting music over the Internet, by cable and by satellite in several countries from a single collection society of their choice." Digital broadcaster Music Choice Europe, which filed a complaint at the EC against CISAC in 2003, believes the ruling will offer "smaller rights-holders more control and more money." Music Choice Europe head of legal Chris Johnstone says, "I can see why some collecting societies might not like it." Johnstone adds, "They're going to have to be a lot more transparent." Meanwhile, cable operators' trade organization Cable Europe suggested the ruling "could spark wider-reaching reform, declaring itself keen to cooperate with the EC to work out a new copyright regime" that it says "would stimulate the development of new digital content distribution services to the benefit of music authors, cable operators and all businesses who seek to monetize the distribution of content in new and innovative ways."

The decision could also have significant implications for online music retailers, which previously had to secure licenses in each European country it wanted to do business. In a statement, European Digital Media Assn. president Andrew Cecil hailed the EC ruling as one that "will be critical to the development of the online music sector...and to ensuring that consumers have access to a wide variety of content through legitimate services."

Not surprisingly, CISAC blasted the EC ruling, arguing that it "will lead to a catastrophic fragmentation of repertoire and therefore to legal uncertainty for music users." Billboard understands some societies are contesting an appeal against the ruling's implementation. "All options are on the table," CISAC director of communications Marianne Rollet says.

Spanish collecting society SGAE's director of legal services Pablo Hernández insists the ruling is "negative and generates confusion." So far, Hernández says, SGAE has only had to make "a few small adjustments to some contracts" and will "make certain adaptations" to its deals with other collecting societies during the 120-day period.

But not all collecting societies are opposed to the decision. At Dutch society BUMA/Stemra, director of legal affairs and new business development Cees van Bijl welcomes the ruling as a "logical and foreseeable change of the rules of the game." Publishers are also sending mixed signals. The ruling is a "wakeup call to those collect-
Remote Control

Same Faces Blunt Award Show Impact

The fifth annual Premios Juventud was a ratings triumph July 17 for the Univision Network, becoming the most-watched show in the United States—regardless of language—among all adults 18-34, according to Nielsen’s Fast National ratings. But the sales benefit artists performing on the show wasn’t quite as stellar. Newcomer Flex, who made his TV debut on the program, saw sales of his album “Re Quero” jump by nearly 60% from the previous week, pushing it up two notches on Billboard’s Top Latin Albums chart following two Latin Grammy Awards, two Premios to Nuestro, two Billboard Latin Music Awards and two Premios Juventud. In most cases, immediate sales gains were modest and, occasionally, virtually nil.

What’s the problem? A key factor: familiarity breeds indifference. Simply put, Latin award shows are most comfortable with proven hitmakers and their tendency of booking the same acts over and over again appears to have dampened their impact on sales.

In the last two years, Juan Luis Guerra, Wisin & Yandel and Aventura have performed on five of eight shows. Enrique Iglesias has performed on four. And Olga Tañón, RBD, Gloria Trevi, Pepe Aguilar, Don Omar, Ivy Queen and Alacranes Musical on three each. More than 20 other performers have been on two of the last eight shows.

With repeated exposure, Latin award shows seem to hurt their ability to incite viewers to buy anything. But when fresh faces appear, the reaction can be well. The 2007 edition of Premios Juventud, for example, was filled with new faces, and Sony BMG Norte’s “La Cumbia del Rio”.

Latin Notas

Leila Cobol

Los Pikadientes Score With “La Cumbia del Rio”

Just four weeks after signing to Sony BMG Norte, Mexico’s Los Pikadientes de Caborca are No. 13 on Billboard’s Hot Latin Songs chart with “La Cumbia del Rio.” Recorded in scratchy mono, the swinging, two-minute banda track with guitar vaguely recalls the cantina scene from “Star Wars,” with kooky characters on brass and clarinet partying it up.

Los Pikadientes recorded the song earlier this year and it became a viral hit on YouTube, where other users shot their own videos for the song, while other bands posted their own renditions of the track. Sony BMG Norte VP of marketing & A&R Nir Seroussi insists the Pikadientes version is the original. Written by band member Francisco R. Gonzalez Terrazas (no relation to the Terrazas of either Grupo Montez or Los Horoscopos de Durango), it is published by producer/manager Jose Juan Segura’s Gypsyvex. Segura was also the A&R source for Sony acts El Tigrillo Palmos, Los Coates de Sinaloa and El Compa.

“We tried recording it again in multitrack, but it didn’t feel the same,” Seroussi says, adding that the label decided to “just go with this 3 a.m. drum-ass recording that has this feeling.”

Evitación Radio’s La Tricolor started using the song recently as background music for some of its air-personalities. “People started saying, ‘Play the whole song, please’,” Tricolor PD Napo Sanchez says. “It’s something that sounds really old, but people like it.”

Segura produced the rest of Los Pikadientes’ debut album, set to drop Aug. 26. Visitors are being secured for a promo run in September in the U.S. When the group hits TV, viewers may be surprised that the guys behind the dirty-old-man ode to drinking by the river and moving your culito are between the ages of 18 and 25.

“This is summer,” Seroussi says. “We can get away with a lot of quirky stuff.”

—Ayala Ben-Yehuda

SUMO, OS PARALAMAS ON VHI

VHI Latin America is premiering original episodes of “Behind the Music” featuring Latin acts beginning this month. The 2008-09 season will consist of four bimonthly episodes, beginning Aug. 12 with Argentine rock band Sumo. Up next are Brazil’s Os Paralamas do Sucesso in October and Argentina’s Virus in December. Mexico’s Gloria Trevi wraps the season on a date to be announced. VHI is distributed in 19 countries in Latin America, where it reaches 29 million homes.

—Ayala Ben-Yehuda

INTERNET USE SOARS

Internet use by the U.S. Hispanic population is growing faster than previously thought, according to a new report by research firm eMarketer. The study, reported in Mediaweek, revealed 52% of U.S. Hispanics are now online—a figure that adds up to 23 million users, surpassing eMarketer’s projection in 2006 that it would take until the end of the decade for the number of U.S. Hispanics using the Internet to surpass 20 million. The growth is fueled by younger, bilingual, U.S.-born Hispanics, but online advertising on mainsteam Web sites hasn’t always been receptive to reaching that highly fragmented group, the report found. —ABI

SCREEN DEBUT

Film/entertainment company Maya Entertainment has acquired the U.S. rights to Daddy Yankee’s debut film, “Talento de Barrio.” The film, starring the reggaeton artist in the title role, will be released theatrically in the United States in September. The agreement was negotiated by Yankee’s longtime attorney/business manager Edwin Prado with film director George Rivera and Maya’s Kevin Benson and José Martinez Jr. Maya, which is headed by producer Moctezuma Esparza and co-owned by Jeff Valdez, specializes in Latin film and entertainment. Yankee produced the film’s soundtrack, which will be released Aug. 12 in the States.

—Leila Cobol
Kathy Nelson

With the soundtrack to ‘Mamma Mia!’ scaling the charts and a digital label in the works, the Universal exec finds herself as film music's dancing queen.

When you look at Universal Pictures' corporate parentage, there’s no getting around the fact that it's a movie studio owned mostly by General Electric. And that means it's a conglomerate more used to betting its bottom dollar on washing machines and lightbulbs than touchy-feely creative entities like movies and soundtracks.

To that end, Kathy Nelson, president of film music for Universal Music Group and Universal Pictures, has to strike a delicate balance between the constant innovations required in the fast-changing music industry and the need to satisfy the managerial mandates of her bosses.

In tandem with the release of the post-apocalyptic gearhead movie “Death Race” (Aug. 22), Nelson and her team are debuting their record label, Backlot Records, to primarily release the soundtrack digitally, accompanied by only a limited number of physical copies.

“This was sort of like throwing our hat in the ring and seeing what comes up,” she says. “I’d rather start out small and have everything be successful and grow it, as opposed to starting out too big and having to scale it back down. If you have a track record and there’s a confidence that you’ve done your homework and you’re not wasting anyone’s time or money, then it’s easier to keep it going.”

It’s an experiment, Nelson admits, but in a year when soundtracks sales have been rejuvenated, it may be an idea bright enough to compete with GE's megawatt bulbs.

Talk about Backlot Records and the digital release strategy.

The soundtrack to “Death Race” is our first release that we’re experimenting with, because it was very safe for us to do this. It’s electronic—the composer, Paul Haslinger, did the whole score—so we didn’t include any orchestra on the soundtrack, and therefore there are no new-use payments.

[Haslinger] used the guy from Tool, [engineer] Joe Barresi, to mix it. So it was approached as though it was a movie score, but sort of with the finishing touches of an electronic record like Nine Inch Nails or whatever.

We had to come up with a name, so we have Backlot Records. We aren’t allowed to use the word “Universal” at all because of the music world. [laughs]

The way things are going right now I’m not really sure what our percentage [will be] in terms of our return—the return obviously has to do with if anybody buys it. But the potential for our return is so much greater. I mean, we hardly get anything when we go to a major for distribution. [But soundtracks are] valuable for us, to have our scores available to people, because where we really make our money is in music publishing. So if other movies use our score for their trailers or commercials, that’s where we really make our money. It’s not so much in record sales.

We thought about other [movie] titles to debut the digital label but they were a little riskier, so we wanted to start with something that was pretty much bulletproof and bomb-proof. The genre of this music is more inclined toward an Internet consumer anyway because it’s electronic. So it’s fun and it’s an experiment for us, but it’s a safe experiment.

And “Mamma Mia!” continues to do well.

It’s all about ABBA. I think in the L.A. Times, Colin Firth said, “Everybody has to come out sooner or later—let’s face it, you either love ABBA or you’re dying.” And mind you, [the sales are strong not because the record company is advertising wildly. It’s totally because of the movie. It’s an experience, and I think it’s going to be the gift that keeps on giving. I think even ticket sales have increased again for the play.

The last time I think our studio had something like this that connected with music to this kind of degree was “S Mile” probably, which people thought was going to be a success. But I don’t think anybody dreamed would be that successful.

It seems film and TV are increasingly becoming places for music to break, especially since people can hear something and then immediately buy it on the Internet.

Gone are the days where you needed the support of a label to be heard. There was a day when I could turn in a song for a movie and the label would turn around and say, “It’s not a hit,” and I’d never get a chance.

Really it was “Gangsta’s Paradise” [by Coolio for the film “Dangerous Minds”) that interrupted that pattern for me, because none of the label promotion heads, nobody thought they could get that record played. The video was sent to MTV and they refused to add it. It really was [then-Walt Disney Studios chairman] Joe Roth that saw it. He heard the record and realize it was the strongest marketing tool they had for the movie.

He just roadblocked it with 30- and 60-second spots of the video. And all of a sudden those same radio stations started playing the song. It’s fairness to all the executives at the record company, it’s not like they didn’t send it out. Nobody would play it.

But it really was one of those magical things where it felt like within minutes, phones lit up. But that’s what the Internet is providing now.

And that sort of importance must it easier to get rights for songs now.

Oh, my gosh, yes. Even the labels have softened their positions and have become so much more willing because at the same time music, TV, film and anything visual—commercials—has become so much more important. There was a time when a marketing person at a studio—when I used to do this back in the day on the record side—the marketing department really thought you were like an annoying fly on their shoulders. Now, I’ve literally had marketing people say to me, “Music makes the campaign.” So there’s been a complete turnaround in how relevant music is to a campaign.

What directors have an intuitive sense about the music in their films?

It’s hard for anybody to talk about music. You kind of have to hear and respond to it because it’s an emotional response. It’s not mathematics.

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THE THRIPLE THREAT

SHE'S ALREADY WON AN OSCAR AND FINISHED IN THE TOP 10 ON 'AMERICAN IDOL.' BUT CAN JENNIFER HUDSON SELL ALBUMS?

BY ANN DONAHUE
Jennifer Hudson doesn't drink coffee. Doesn't like it, she says.

"I don't need it, counters her manager, Miguel Melendez. "It's 6:30 a.m. on a Monday morning in July, and an uncaffeinated Hudson is busting full throttle through her warm-ups within a sound check for a performance on "Good Morning America." It was her first TV appearance in support of "Spotlight," the debut single from her first album." Hudson shaves off any concerns about the ungodly hour. ("The band got there at 4:30 a.m.," she notes.) Melendez, meanwhile, clutched his venti Starbucks as he watched. "Good Lord, she makes me feel old," he sighed.

"It's too bad Jennifer's youth, perhaps thanks to the years she's spent in the pop culture spotlight. At 26, her career path may be impossible to duplicate: She went from being a choir singer at her church in her hometown of Chicago to a Disney Cruise Line chanteuse to an "American Idol" contestant to an Academy Award winner, and wins for being her role in "Dreamgirls." Thanks to the ever-expanding entertainment landscape, what this means is that Hudson has built a significant career on a multiple-octave voice—without releasing an album.

All that changes Sept. 30, when her self-titled debut drops on Arista/RMG. Even under the guidance of Sony BMG U.S. chief creative officer Clive Davis and RCA Music Group senior VP of A&R Larry Jackson, "Jennifer Hudson" faced a difficult task: With a voice that can do anything and an artist who has generated a fan base from numerous outlets, how do you narrow down what the album will contain so that it retains her broad appeal?

The answer: You don't. "Jennifer Hudson" defines classifying and will offer up everything from pop to R&B to gospel.

"We are intent on being true to her, but at the same time to establish that she is a recording star," Davis says. "She has the ability, she has the youth, she has the range, she has the awareness.

Jackson says the album came together during the course of a year after "really making a true, concerted effort not to put her in a contrived, young kind of direction. We could easily do a trendy, faceless, interchangeable sound," and can say proudly that we stayed away from what could be a cliché with her.

In the end, the theme of the album is simple: play to the crowd. "Jennifer Hudson" features a gospel tribute to her days in the church choir with a rendition of "Jesus Promised Me a Home Over There" and a track that Diane Warren penned for the singer's lung-busting balladeer side. "You Pull Me Through." The album will also include the classic "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going" from "Dreamgirls" and "All Dressed in Love" from the recent "Sex and the City" soundtrack.

"It is risky, because people expect you to just do one thing, but I think we just wanted to take the chance and show what else is a part of me."

Besides Warren, among the collaborators on "Jennifer Hudson" are Ludacris, Robin Thicke, Rock City, Timbaland, Tank and the Underdogs. ("Who can Clive get a hold of?" Hudson jokes.) The first single, "Spotlight," produced by Stargate and written and co-produced by Ne-Yo, is an issue on Billboard's Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart. The plan is to roll out the track to top 40 stations starting in September. So far, digital sales are at 51,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

"I was in London at the time and I got this demo from Ne-Yo," Jackson recalls of the genesis of the song. "I like to work between two and six in the morning, and I was listening to this record at, like, five. Both lyrically and melodically, it felt perfect for her."

Under contention for the second single is the sassy collaboration with Ludacris, "Pocketbook," on which Hudson coyly threatens to use her purse to whomp a man who possesses things that she desires. The track was written by the Clutch and produced by Timbaland, and when Hudson was recording the song in London, Ludacris just happened to be in the studio and offered his services. "He's like, 'I gotta get on that,'" Hudson recalls.

The label hopes that the album's diversity will help appeal to a broad spectrum of Hudson's fans from moviegoers to those who still pen interstate blogs posts about her ejection in the No. 7 spot during the third season of "American Idol."

"In a way, the album does demonstrate the versatility Hudson showed on the reality show, where she went from singing "(Love Is Like A) Heatwave" by Martha & the Vandellas one week to Elton John's "Circle of Life" the next. There is, of course, one key difference: "With "Idol," you only get a minute or so to sing a song," Hudson says. "You can't say all you try in that one moment. With each experience you try to do something different so it connects with a fan.

Getting audiences to have the "Aha!" moment that connects the recognition of Hudson from TV and film to her available album is the job of Scott Seviour, RCA Music Group senior VP of marketing.

"I think people have connected with Jennifer over the past five years," he says. "Thankfully, she's been her biggest marketer since then—in doing all this promotion for her movies, she's talked about her album. It's gone hand in hand.

And it's quite a promotional schedule Hudson has ahead of her on the TV circuit; besides promoting on "Good Morning America" two months before the album's release date and a trip that same week to "Live With Regis and Kelly," she's lined up to appear on "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno," "The View," "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" and "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" and is in negotiations to appear on "The Oprah Winfrey Show." In addition, the week the album drops, she'll do a half-hour concert special on BET.

"It's a pretty interesting time in our industry where the sales of records is just half of it," Melendez says. "I think the most important thing is to connect with fans. The strategy to get fans of Hudson: the movie star onboard the career of Hudson the recording artist may not really be a challenge; that was the path of Davido's own introduction to Hudson. He signed her after she saw her screen test for the part of Effie in "Dreamgirls."

"That was the catalyst," Davis recalls. "I called [Hudson's theatrical agent] Nicole David at William Morris and said, 'I'd like to meet with Jennifer.' I signed her after she had done the 'Dreamgirls' filming and before it came out. For my Grammy party in February, I agreed to showcase her.

And what a showcase it was—the video of Hudson's live performance of "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going" at the event has over 600,000 YouTube views, where it has tallied almost 1 million views. Hudson has long been something of a YouTube star, unofficial behind-the-scenes videos filmed by members of her support staff feature her belting out songs from the balcony of a hotel room in Venice (before she was spotted in Chanel and Marc Jacobs) or recording herself on her ice cream cone while being chatted up by a fan. Such off-the-cuff moments are becoming official with the release of "Jennifer Hudson," as her Myspace page will feature segments about the making of the video for "Spotlight," in addition, a Yahoo performance session is in the works. She's also doing practice for an acoustic little moves for my videos in the mirror in my room, with a brush in my hand. I was going to live up every single minute of those 22 hours."

MIX IT UP

"Spotlight" Gets into Another Groove

Within weeks of Jennifer Hudson's "Spotlight" being worked to R&B stations, RCA Music Group senior VP of A&R Larry Jackson started getting calls.

One of the first came from Young Jeezy. Another, from Rick Ross. "I'm getting calls like, "Yo, wasn't you let me hop on that remix?"" Jackson says.

To songs to the song's frequent rotation on R&B stalwart WEVE (V-103) Atlanta—where Jeezy and Ross live—some of the heavy hitters in the genre started doing their own takes on the track, which were then released to R&B radio even before the original version of the record was worked at top 40.

It's a strategy that's also been used to break the song internationally on the club circuit. Moto Blanco's remix is getting plenty in Europe. Afrogrande is working its version on the U.K. dance scene, and Jackson says veteran re-mixer Johnny Vicious also is remaking the track.

For his part, Jackson is thrilled that "Spotlight" is getting so much attention. "We've loaded up the chamber in every respect. We've got every piece of insurance," he says. "We're aiming for ubiquity." —AD
LEADER OF THE PACK

With An Aggressive Push To Lower Wholesale Prices And New Plans To Entice Customers, WAL-MART Looks To Improve Its Already Impressive Market Share

BY ED CHRISTMAN
Here's how negotiations with Wal-Mart usually go: It says what it wants. And then it gets it. But in meetings with all the major record labels in late July, Wal-Mart showed a new side: A willingness to listen to suggestions and modify its plans as warranted. By all accounts, this flexibility is a change in demeanor for the giant retailer, and it may be a response to the broader changes in the marketplace. As the industry evolves into a digital model, how can a giant brick-and-mortar retailer adapt to maintain profit margins and relevance to the consumer? Wal-Mart's strategy is twofold: find a way to strike a deal for lower wholesale pricing to placate the shareholders and rework its offerings to the consumer via a combination of digital initiatives and revamped in-store schemes.

**Wholesale Pricing**

Wal-Mart will easily reign as top brick-and-mortar merchant for years to come, as it earned $12.7 billion in net income on $374.5 billion in sales for its fiscal year ending Jan. 31 and tallied an 11.6% increase in sales—from $345.4 billion in first-quarter 2007 to $351.3 billion for first-quarter 2008. At the end of its fiscal Q1 this year, Wal-Mart had 3,602 discount stores in the United States and 593 Sam's Club outlets, a total of 4,195 stores. It also had 3,148 international stores. The company said in a 10-K filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission that it expects to open 170 Super Centers, 25 neighborhood markets and 25 Sam's Clubs for an increase of 220 stores in the United States this year and another 400 internationally.

With that sphere of influence, it's no surprise that usually what Wal-Mart says goes. In those July meetings with the majors, the retailer outlined a plan for wholesale pricing. By October, Wal-Mart hopes to merchandise its music department so customers can shop it by price: $13.88, $11.58, $9.78 and $7 and $5, a strategy it uses in its video department (although with different price points). In order to support those prices for music, Wal-Mart wants wholesale costs for its rack jobber, Anderson Merchandisers, to be, respectively: $9.50, $8.50, $6.50, $4.25 and $3, sources say.

In return for the lower pricing, Wal-Mart is telling the majors that it is willing to forgo cooperative advertising and other discounts, including buy-ons, catalog merchandising programs and early-payment discounts.

Wal-Mart expects the majors to support its new pricing scheme, it isn't drawing a line in the sand, much to the relief of the labels. Instead, it is inviting the majors to try to work within the pricing parameters it has created.

"We are very encouraged about these conversations and the collaboration that is happening in the industry toward giving our customers a better value in music," says Jeff Maas, Wal-Mart division merchandise manager for movies and music.

Practically all label and distribution executives interviewed for this article say they are willing to try, but they also expressed reservations.

"If we think there's an opportunity to place our titles into one of these price buckets, we will," the head of sales at one major label says. "But don't count on us to accept the entire Wal-Mart blanket pricing initiative.

So far, the main sticking point for the overall initiative seems to be Wal-Mart's desire to have all catalog titles priced at $9 retail/$6.50 wholesale. Executives are wrestling with how to handle that, but some of major-label officials think that Wal-Mart will allow each label the leeway to propose which of their catalog titles should sell at which price points.

After an initial rollout, those executives suggest, each title will be measured for performance, and if Wal-Mart doesn't realize its profit and margin goals, it is likely that labels will be offered the choice to reprice a title or delete the album from the chain's stores.

"We are all happy about the $11.88/$13.88 proposal for superstar and star titles. If their message is, 'Low prices every day,' why not have one price point at $12.88?" one distribution executive asks.

With all that's been done so far, "Wal-Mart has modified its stance and is not hammering their price points home to the labels. But the big unknown is what happens if you don't fit into their pricing categories," one label head of sales says. "Say I try to work with them and place most of my titles into their various categories, but I have a big title coming and I don't want to sell it to them for $9.50. What happens then?"

Another executive agrees. "Some titles are just worth
Wal-Mart is implementing a twofold strategy to lure customers: the in-store music areas will receive increased signage, and online music sales at walmart.com will be in the unprotected MP3 format.

more than others," he says. "Not every title out there can fit into a convenient box."

Meanwhile, not everyone is sure they can completely support the Wal-Mart plan. "We are still sharpening our pencils to see if we can make a go of what they are asking for," the head of distribution at one of the majors says. "We are encouraged that beyond the pricing discussion that they are also engaged in other ways to improve the music department and make the space more productive."

The closest analogy to Wal-Mart's wholesale pricing proposal is Universal Music Group's JumpStart program, but Wal-Mart's strategy includes slightly lower price points. JumpStart prices super- star releases at a $10.35 wholesale cost, with the rest of the front line carrying $9.49 titles and full-line best-selling catalog, $6.06 for mid-line catalog and developing artist pricing, and $4.69 for budget. Currently, the other three majors' front-line product typically wholesales anywhere from $11.86 to $12.07.

Label executives say—to the chagrin of some—that Wal-Mart seems to be moving away from the $9.72 promotion in an attempt to establish its new pricing schemes. That price point goes for titles placed in a corrugated stand outside the music department, and it raises sales by as much as 50% on a unit basis, a label executive says. To get the $9.72 price point, labels have to supply product at $7.50.

Most of the product labels pitched for that promotion was either super-star catalog titles or newer superstar releases that didn't meet initial sales expectations. Occasionally, a new release like Coldplay's "Viva La Vida Or Death and All His Friends" would also be featured in that promotion.

"Whatever Wal-Mart's new pricing strategy is, the labels need to wake up and listen to them," Hastings Entertainment director of music purchasing Bryan Everitt says, and then it should give those pricing concessions to all accounts. "I am in total agreement with the Wal-Mart pricing initiative, if they give it to everybody. If they don't, I would hate to lose 40% of our business."

Walmart WAL-MART

In addition to rethinking its music merchandising, Wal-Mart is doing an overhaul on its brand imagery, including a new logo (top) that's gradually being rolled out.

Wal-Mart, like everyone else, used a digital rights management model for selling downloads. But when Amazon managed to sign up all the majors for the unprotected MP3 format, Wal-Mart gave an ultimatum, telling the majors it would pull their titles from the download site unless it was supplied music in that format too. While Wal-Mart drew a line in the sand in December and then had to redraw it in January, eventually three majors agreed to supply the site with music in the MP3 format.

(Sony BMG Music Entertainment agreed to supply music in the MP3 format under the condition that Wal-Mart agree to its controversial "agency model," in which the music company picks the price the music is sold at and the retailers who sell the music then get to pocket a commission. Wal-Mart initially resisted the agency model strategy, and although no deal has been signed, sources say the issue has been resolved. "It's unclear which side gave in.")

"Wal-Mart is doing more business now that they are in the MP3 world, but shopping their download store is still not the greatest experience," one digital sales executive says. "I don't know how much of that [was] due to the lack of Sony, but Amazon churns out four times as many downloads a week as Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart ought to be doing better, considering they have a year-and-a-half head start on Amazon."

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"Wal-Mart is doing more business now that they are in the MP3 world, but shopping their download store is still not the greatest experience," one digital sales executive says. "I don't know how much of that [was] due to the lack of Sony, but Amazon churns out four times as many downloads a week as Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart ought to be doing better, considering they have a year-and-a-half head start on Amazon."

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around. (Clearly, it is not following a Target model.) That Minneapolis-based chain carries about 775,1,500 titles per store.

Moreover, Wal-Mart also appears to be cutting back on another highly successful tactic: the “two-for” versions of albums it offers on big releases, which come with exclusive DVD video content culled from MTV, CMT and BET. (The two-for means an executive says.)

But the majors don’t seem worried by this kind of SKU reduction. “The titles we will lose only represent 6% of our business with the chain,” one distribution executive says. “By pulling titles, they will be able to focus better on fewer SKUs.”

Some executives in niche genres worry that the SKU reduction could hurt them—but not all genres need to worry. Wal-Mart remains the largest seller of Latin music and it does very well in the Christian/gospel marketplace, distribution and label executives say. And of course, Wal-Mart dominates country music, often accounting for as much as 60% of sales.

In the meantime, independents, which already aren't that well-represented in Wal-Mart, don’t know what to make of its impending SKU reduction. “We know Wal-Mart is a hit-driven account, so we try to be realistic about what it will carry of ours,” Aligator Records president Bruce Iglauer says.

If Wal-Mart has one weakness, it’s in marketing—an area where Best Buy and Target are superior. On the other hand, worldwide Wal-Mart has 176 million shoppers walking through its doors each year, according to the company’s annual report. Instead of using circulars and TV spots like the other two big-box contenders, Wal-Mart likely will continue to focus its marketing efforts on store traffic—but in a more intense manner.

One way Wal-Mart expects to redirect customer traffic flow through the music department is with signage, which will make it simpler to find and shop the area. Wal-Mart also is talking about creating exciting endcaps that will merchandise other things from an artist beyond the CD (see story, right). And the primary way Wal-Mart distinguishes itself to consumers is through exclusives, a practice begun by—and until the last few years—dominated by Best Buy. A few years back, Wal-Mart became aggressive in the area, and subsequently the discount department store chain has landed the biggest exclusives out there, including the Eagles, Garth Brooks and Journey, and it will soon have AC/DC.

LOOKING AHEAD

With its new aggressive stance on pricing and customer relations—and the expectation that consolidation will continue in the retail level—Wal-Mart wants to possess 50% of the music marketplace within three years or when the dust clears, the head of distribution at one major says: “I don’t doubt they will get there,” the head of another major distribution company says.

“In 1995 when Wal-Mart had 11% or 12% market share, they said they wanted to get 20% market share, something they achieved about three or four years later.”

With all due respect, they have succeeded in their plan as to what their role is in our industry,” says John Grady, a partner at Red Light Management. “Their goal was to be everyone’s overwhelmingly No. 1 account. Considering their size, volume and store count I don’t see how they wouldn’t become 50% of our overall business.”

With everything else Wal-Mart has gone for it, the chain is “in the sweet spot in the economy now, with more people buying into them,” Value Music president Rob Perkins says. “Sometimes it’s better to be lucky than smart, and Wal-Mart is both lucky and smart.”

Promo Power

Artists Tune Up For Wal-Mart’s Soundcheck
By Gail Mitchell

Sinatra-cool in a single-breasted black suit set off by a black fedora and white shoes, Ne-Yo stands before a microphone. Behind him in the warm, smoky room, an eight-piece band smoothly executes the opening rhythms of “Because of You.”

Ne-Yo takes it from there. With mic in hand, he ascends the floor as his expressive tenor fills the room. As the song’s final notes waft into memory, the hot lights dim as a disembodied voice declares, “Cut. That was perfect.”

Instead of a club stage, Ne-Yo is actually standing on a Burbank, Calif., soundstage filming an exclusive performance and interview segment for Wal-Mart Soundcheck. This intimate atmosphere is in keeping with the up-close-and-personal feel the retailer envisioned when it launched the in-store and online music program in 2006.

“We know our customers love music, entertainment and pop culture,” Wal-Mart business manager of music and digital media David Zieses says. “Soundcheck engages them and brings them closer to the music and artists they love. It’s not just about selling physical CDs anymore. Music has become this rounded, 360-degrees experience.”

Each Soundcheck—whether featuring an emerging or established talent—receives an exclusive, two-week flight in-store. Customers can watch the footage on the stores’ high-definition TV walls as well as on TVs stationed in various departments (i.e., health and beauty, apparel) and at the checkout aisles. Re-inforcing these shows are special store signage, plus Soundcheck’s view-on-demand online counterpart coupled with the chance to buy or preorder albums or purchase MP3 audio tracks for 94 cents.

“The strategy is to raise awareness and drive customers back and forth between the store and online,” Zieses says.

More than 50 artists have participated in Soundcheck, which offers two to three new segments per month based on label release schedules. The spots comprise either the aforementioned performance clips or artist-hosted listening parties. June Soundcheckers featuring Ne-Yo, Kelly and Ashanti join previous musical profiles of such acts as Sheryl Crow, Mariah Carey, John Mayer, Rascal Flats, John Mellencamp and Fall Out Boy.

The Miley Cyrus Soundcheck launched July 1 in advance of her “Breakout” re-release (July 22). Playing now is children’s music artist Laurie Berkner. Rounding out the August attractions are New Kids on the Block (Aug. 15) and Solange Knowles (late August).

New this year as Soundcheck’s exclusive sponsor is Unilever, the parent company behind the Vaseline brand. Succeeding former sponsor Procter & Gamble, Unilever has begun taking out full-page print ads to further boost the program’s exposure.

Declining to divulge actual sales figures, Zieses says Soundcheck’s extra exposure has resulted in sales increases. Citing recent segments with Colbie Caillat and Sara Bareilles, he notes the retailer saw sales spikes of 24% and 34%, respectively, during their two-week windows.

Having completed its second Soundcheck, Ne-Yo is a firm believer. “Wal-Mart has been a huge, huge, huge supporter of my career,” he says. His third Def Jam album, “The Year of the Gentleman,” debuts Sept. 16.

“They took a chance, and if you did it, they just backed you,” he continues. “So we always have to do something a little more special for the Wal-Mart shoppers.”
A BENEFICIAL BALANCE

Digital Music Growth In Japan Offsets Decline Of Physical Market

"Ecosystem" is a word that's become fashionable to use when describing how different elements interact in a given business model. It has a special resonance for the recorded-music business, which some say is headed for extinction, at least in its current form.

But in Japan—the world's second-biggest music market—the mood is more upbeat, thanks to what key industry players say is an business ecosystem characterized by an emerging symbiosis between the physical and digital sectors.

Like other major music markets around the world, the Japanese market has shrunk in recent years. In 1998, recorded-music production peaked at 607.9 billion yen ($5.3 billion), according to the Recording Industry Assn. of Japan, whose member companies account for some 90% of recorded-music sales in the territory.

But in 2007, annual production had fallen to 391.1 billion yen ($3.7 billion), including music DVDs and videos. At the same time, there's been strong growth in digital music sales in Japan in multiple formats. The burgeoning popularity of such mobile-based digital-music products as ringtones, master ringtones and full-track downloads helped boost overall digital-music sales in 2007 to 465 million units, up 26% over 2006, for a value of 75.3 billion yen ($699 million), up 41%, according to the RIAJ.

As a result, the overall Japanese recorded-music market—physical and digital—was worth 466.9 billion yen ($4.43 billion), compared with 461.9 billion yen ($4.38 billion) in 2006.

That's a small increase (just 1%), but it means that Japan is still the only major music market where expanding digital sales are making up for the slide in physical sales.

"In Japan, the physical and digital markets are growing symbiotically, and this seems to be a trend for the foreseeable future," Universal Music Japan chairman/CEO Kei Ishizaka says.

Universal Music Japan's recent success with "Sobaniirune (I'll Be With You)," the second single by female vocalist Thelma Ayomaya, is a case in point. The track debuted digitally as a master ringtone Dec. 7, 2007. But sales took off when it was released Jan. 23 as a full-track download and a physical CD single. Universal Music Japan says "Sobaniirune" is the first single to sell 2 million full-track downloads in Japan, some 90% via mobile downloads, in line with the overall trend in the Japanese digital-music market.

And the label says the buzz surrounding digital sales of the track has helped boost its physical sales to more than 550,000 copies, making "Sobaniirune" the top-selling CD single so far this year in Japan.

Ishizaka says that thanks to this kind of physical/digital symbiosis, there are signs that the physical market's decades-long decline may actually halt, with hit single tracks as the driving force.

Another executive who subscribes to that sanguine view is BMG Japan president Daniel DiCicco. "The still vibrant physical-single market in Japan has been further bolstered by growing digital sales, opening the door to more opportunities to develop new artists," DiCicco says. "In many ways, the growth of digital is spurring the total growth of especially the domestic artist market, as single hits of even debut artists are driven to new heights combining physical and digital sales."
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August-September 2008 Show Schedule

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<td>Elliot Yamin</td>
<td>Aug. 28-31</td>
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<td>Billy Paul</td>
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<td>S.M.V. (Stanley Clarke/Marcus Miller/Victor Wooten)</td>
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<td>Diane Reeves</td>
<td>Sep. 22-23</td>
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<td>Howard Jones</td>
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Billboard Live Japan Club and Restaurant opened in August 2007 with Hanshin Contents Links serving as the master licensee of Billboard in Japan.
Sony Music Entertainment (Japan) CEO Naoki Kitagawa says, "Record companies have jointly established the infrastructure for digital music distribution services at an early stage and have made efforts to develop business models such as Chaku-Uta [master ring tones] and Chaku-Uta Full [full-track downloads]. Such efforts have had positive effects on current music-market conditions."

Like Ishizaka and DiCicco, Kitagawa also stresses the need to achieve symbiosis between physical and digital: "It is important to mix distribution services and package sales more effectively in the marketing of music."

But there's concern in the industry as to whether the digital market's growth can be sustained, due to the apparent lack of a new "killer-app" mobile music product to give the market continued momentum.

"Major products and services which might soon take the place of the existing ones are not at the horizon yet," Ishizaka says. "But I believe there is still considerable room for growth in digital, especially mobile-music downloads."

He says that of the 60 million mobile-phone subscribers in Japan whose handsets support music downloads, only 10 million actually use their mobile phones in this way.

DiCicco says, "While most fans have already switched to higher-priced Chaku-Uta Full from Chaku-Uta, there remains still further growth ahead in the music-equipped [third-generation] mobile phone base, and we expect digital-music sales to continue to grow."

While such domestic artists as Aoyama and female singer/songwriter Utada Hikaru are riding the crest of the digital-sales boom, foreign repertoire has been slow to find a niche in Japan's emerging music biz ecosystem.

RIAJ data shows shipments of foreign product (excluding music videos and DVDs) in 2007 plunged 23% in volume to 62.6 million units, for a value of 76.5 billion yen ($713.6 million), down 17%. Foreign product accounted for 23%, in volume and value terms, of recorded-music sales in Japan in 2007, compared with 27% and 26%, respectively, in 2006. Industry observers say the decline in sales of international repertoire is part of a general trend in Asia.

One Japanese industry player that's trying to reverse that trend is Tokyo-based indie Hostess Entertainment, whose recent coup includes securing the December 2007 release of Radiohead's album 'In Rainbows' to striking deals with Nine Inch Nails and Beck.

Run by transplanted Briton Andrew "Plug" Lazanny since 2000, the company specializes in sourcing, marketing, promoting and distributing finished products, with the basic idea of getting international product into the hands of Japanese music fans faster than the major labels have traditionally been able to do.

DiCicco praises Lazanny's development of a "strong alternative channel" for international artists.

Ultimately, the success or failure of any music-business ecosystem depends on one key element: hits, a point that Ishizaka never tires of stressing.

"Hit singles are the major driving force" of the industry, he says. "A&R people need to establish new creative and business models to meet the needs of the times and put more emphasis on producing great and thrilling single tracks."
at the heart of music, there is always a song.

Festivals Maintain Japan's Touring Status As Top Stop

ON THE CIRCUIT

BY STEVE MCCLURE

Japan remains one of the world’s top touring destinations, with such major summer events as Fuji Rock making the territory a crucial part of the international summer-festival circuit. But there’s continuing concern among concert promoters in Japan about possible saturation of the festival market, as well as the ability of the country to attract A-list talent to its shores in what is seen as an increasingly competitive global touring market. "The summer festival market in Japan is oversaturated and has a negative impact on the music industry that affects the whole year," says one Tokyo-based promoter, who wishes to remain anonymous for fear of ruffling feathers within the tight-knit concert-promotion community.

There’s certainly no lack of choice when it comes to summer music options in Japan.

Take the country’s two best-known summer festivals, Fuji Rock and Summer Sonic. This year’s edition of Fuji Rock (held July 25–27 in Naeba, Niigata prefecture) gave special prominence to British acts. Smash president Masahiro Hidaka, an Anglophilic whose model for Fuji Rock is Britain’s Glastonbury Festival, says that’s because 2008 marks 150 years of diplomatic relations between Japan and Britain.

U.K. acts that appeared at Fuji Rock this year included My Bloody Valentine, Primal Scream, Travis, the Music and Kasabian.

In the 11 years since the first Fuji Rock was held during a typhoon in 1997, the festival has featured a wide array of talent from Japan and international markets.

To give music fans a chance to relive past performances by such acts as Joe Strummer & the Mescaleros, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Oasis, the Beastie Boys, Iggy Pop and Patti Smith, Smash on July 23 released "Fujirockers," a 296-minute doubled-sided DVD. The album includes classic live sets by 123 acts, as well as documentary footage of festivalgoers enjoying the unique Fuji vibe in the bucolic setting of Naeba.

"It is a groundbreaking film to be released only in Japan, which reflects the festival’s free and open mind and tells the story through personal tales and incidents with an equal amount of international and Japanese artists," Smash says in a statement.

Frank Takeshita, executive GM of Tokyo-based Summer Sonic promoter Creativeman, is upbeat about Japan’s summer-festival market.

“There are many festivals now, and as long as it has a place and demand in the market, shouldn’t it be OK?” he asks. “I feel that most importantly to exist in the market, festivals need to have good taste in the bookings and lineup to continue.”

As in past years, the 2008 edition of Summer Sonic is planned for Aug. 9-10 at two venues (Makuhari Messe and China Marine Stadium) in Chiba prefecture, just east of Tokyo, and at the Maishima outdoor site in Osaka. Acts due to perform at the festival include Coldplay, the Kooks, Alicia Keys, the Verve, the Prodigy and Panic at the Disco.
As with Fuji Rock, Summer Sonic also features a variety of local talent, reflecting what Takeshita says is a general trend on the Japanese live-music scene. "We have more Japanese acts opening for international acts, which is opening doors for possible collaborations," he says.

Another highlight of Japan’s summer-festival season is record label Avex’s A-Nation package tour that plays at venues throughout the country. This year’s trek kicked off July 26 at the Ningineer Stadium in Matsuyama, Ehime prefecture, on the island of Shikoku and continues with seven other dates, including two final shows at Tokyo’s Ajinomoto Stadium.

Avex acts performing at A-Nation this year include TRF, Miku Koda, Ai Ohtsuka, Ami Suzuki and Tohoshinki.

Other major summer fests include Rock in Japan, held Aug. 1-3 at Hitachi Seaside Park in Ibaraki prefecture, north of Tokyo. Like A-Nation, Rock in Japan is a showcase for such leading domestic acts as Art-School, Dragon Ash, Elephant Kashimashi and Kaela Kimura.

There’s also the Rising Sun Rock Festival, set for Aug. 15-16 in Otaru, on Japan’s northernmost island of Hokkaido. Featured acts include Ringo Shina, Denki Groove and the Sherbets.

A new addition to Japan’s summer music scene is Wild Card, a series of free club shows featuring indie acts from Japan and overseas sponsored by Tokyo radio station InterFM morning program “Good Morning Garage,” which has set new standards for inspired craziness in Japan’s generally conservative broadcasting biz.

The first Wild Card event, featuring such bands as the Mugwumps, Lazy Guns Brisky and One Thought Moment, was set for Aug. 6 at Tokyo club the Game.

Meanwhile, the future of Japan’s touring market remains unclear. "It will be interesting to see over the next few years how the music festivals will fare, when the domestic market is not increasing and there’s a limited pool of big-name stars that can draw fans and still be affordable," the anonymous Tokyo-based promoter says.

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Solange Breaks Onto The Charts On Her Own Terms

It’s no twist of fate that the opener on Solange’s sophomore album, “Sol-Angel and the Hadley St. Dreams” (Aug. 26, Music World/Geffen), is a track titled “God Given Name,” on which the 22-year-old artist reminds fans and skeptics alike that she’s her own woman.

“I’m not her and never will be/Two girls gone in different directions, striving towards the same galaxy/Let my star light shine on its own/No, I’m no sister, I’m just my God-given name,” Solange sings about being compared to her superstar sibling Beyoncé.

Yet she’s quick to set the record straight: This album isn’t any more about Beyoncé than it is “about your mom, auntie or cousin. I’m very good at saying that’s not what this project is about. The idea of me being compared to my sister has been addressed before. Fans don’t want to hear the same thing and I definitely don’t want to answer the same thing.”

“Solange wasn’t concerned with being perfect on this album,” manager/father Mathew Knowles told Billboard earlier this year. “Beyoncé’s already got pop and she’s perfect at it. Solange just wanted to sing from the heart. She wants her feelings and emotions to touch you. That’s why ‘God Given Name’ was purposely the first song—so she can share with you how different she is.”

With the help of producers the Neptunes, Jack Splash, Q-Tip and Mark Ronson, Solange created a sound on “Sol-Angel” that is less pop and more of a “marriage of ’60s and ’70s music with subtle hints of electronic,” unlike her pop-driven 2002 Music World/Columbia debut, “Solo Star.” That album reached No. 23 on Billboard’s Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart and has sold 112,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

“I knew what I wanted then, I just didn’t know how to execute it,” Solange says about her debut. “I was 15; I loved reggae, soul, alternative, R&B and hip-hop. And although I knew I had those tastes, the album became one with no identity. The songs were good independently, but as a collection it wasn’t a body of work.”

Topically, it’s Solange’s frank approach that drives the album. “Sol-Angel” is bursting with honest, real-life-driven tracks like breakup song “Valentine’s Day,” the Billal penned “Cosmic Journey” and the regretful “T.O.N.Y.,” “about a one-night stand.”

The Neptunes-produced lead single “I Decided” is a light-hearted love song that has shifted 38,000 combined physical and digital copies in the United States. The second single will be “Sandcastle Days,” whose clip was helmed by Solange in her directorial debut.

Solange’s self-assured mind-set is what initially attracted Geffen president Ron Fair to the blooming artist. “Solange is a complete, free-spirited, unique, fabulous, fascinating artist who can sing her ass off,” says Fair, who signed her last year. “She’s her own person who can succeed on her own terms. She’s gracious and she has a vision, and we’re backing it.”

Connecting the Solange-as-her-own-woman thread to the marketing campaign is the job of Music World’s Gita Williams, who says all recent and upcoming performances—including with Rahzel DeVaughn and Christy Michele on the Art of Love tour and a future trek with Janelle Monae, the Knux and Chester French—will be filmed for exercting on the artist’s MySpace page and YouTube channel.

Solange has already scored some big branding deals, most recently with Armani Jeans, joining partnerships with L’Oreal and Samantha Thavasa handbags. Beyond those venues, she is confirmed for fall guest appearances on TV shows “Ghost Whisperer” and “Lincoln Heights” and will also perform in September on CBS’ star-studded “Fashion Rocks” special.

Meanwhile, Solange will continue to pen songs for her sister and former Destiny’s Child members Kelly Rowland and Michelle Williams. Solange wrote Williams’ latest single, the Billboard Hot Dance Airplay chart-topping “We Break the Dawn,” and is hoping to further expand her reach into other genres.

“I really hope that I achieve what my definition of success is,” Solange says. “I’m going to continue to make music. I will definitely do things on my own terms and standards. I want to be at a level where this feels totally organic and it feels fun and enjoyable and it doesn’t feel like a job. If that’s the case, then I would’ve just gone to college and gotten a nine-to-five.”
A Different Role
Oscar Nominee Howard Delivers Debut Album

It's 6:30 p.m. on a Friday in Los Angeles. The car ferrying Academy Award-nominated pianist Terence Howard has just left the landmark Orpheum Theatre, the downtown dropoff for such movies and TV shows as "Dreamgirls" and "American Idol." It's where Howard will return the next morning to direct the video for "Sanctuary," the soulful ballad/lead single from his Sept 2 Columbia debut, "Shine Through It." 

Racing through a day that segued from a segment of the PBS series "Independent Lens" to a video production meeting and then this Billboard writer was subdued Howard revs up when the subject switches from his jam-packed schedule to music. "This album is about bringing back the nostalgia for musicianship," the "Iron Man" co-star says. "Young kids are being inundated with a watered-down version of what used to be music; an electronic idea of what used to be a feeling."

Other than declaring early on that his formal foray into music would not be a takeoff on his role as rapper DayZ in 2005 film "Hustle & Flow," Howard says he simply went where the mood took him. "I didn't know going in if the whole album would be just me on guitar and completely acoustic," he recalls. Then I heard other possibilities, like putting a bass here or strings there."

Recorded live in 11 days, "Shine Through It" reflects his diverse musical taste, ranging from pop and rock (Bread, Don McLean), world music (Buena Vista Social Club), jazz (Nina Simone) and R&B (Impressions, Dramatics). Working with a five-piece band that included co-producer Bassist Miles Mosley (Lauryn Hill, Herbiv Hancock), Howard wrote, arranged and produced the set in addition to singing and playing lead guitar.

Calling to mind Phil Spector's storied Wall of Sound technique, the songs comprising "Shine Through It" are mini-stories inspired by Howard's late father and arranged with a cinematic flair: "Sanctuary"—which is being worked at smooth jazz radio—was inspired by Howard meeting Seal and Heidi Klum and observing their close relationship. A teenage love affair is the impetus behind "Mr. Johnson's Lawn," which fields a mix of island and hip-hop rhythms. "Plents" call to mind R&B pioneer Curtis Mayfield, while Latin and Middle Eastern influences course throughout the instrumental "Spanish Love Affair."

The album is a culmination of a musical dream the Cleveland native originally envisioned 16 years ago. That's when he first traveled to Los Angeles to audition for the Jackson 5 biopic "The Jacksons"—he wanted to meet Motown producer Suzanne de Passe and develop his music career. But his stint in the biopic led to other acting jobs instead, including "An American Dream," "Mr. Holland's Opus" and "The Best Man."

In the wake of "Hustle & Flow," Howard met Sony Music Label Group executive VP Lisa Ellis and later to Sony Music chief Rob Stringer. Citing McLean's international hit "Vincent" as the inspiration for the type of music he wanted to create, Howard secured a two-album deal.

Columbia's goal in making consumers aware of Howard's music persona trades on his established brand as a film and Broadway ("Cat on a Hot Tin Roof") actor plus his core demo appeal to females 24-44. Having partnered with Bloominglead's to distribute and promote its fall releases, the label is featuring Howard's debut under that banner. The campaign will entail ads in such major print publications as the New York Times and Los Angeles Times, "Shine Through It" CDs available on counters at 40 store locations nationally and an in-store signing as well as a private Vanity Fair party performance at Bloomie's New York flagship.

A series of East Coast showcases kicks off Aug. 20, in Annapolis, Md., while TV appearances include the Alma Awards (taping Aug. 17 in L.A.), "CBS Sunday Early Morning" (Aug. 31), and release-week performances on "Today," "Late Show With David Letterman" and "The View," plus "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" (date TBA) and "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" (Sept. 12). Having been invited to host the MOBO Awards in October, Howard is also eyeing a promotional tour of Europe around that time.

"If people are expecting a traditional R&B album," Columbia VP of product marketing Liz Hausle says. "But Terrence has created an eclectic fusion of jazz, soul and rock that doesn't fit into a box."

"I don't believe in genres," Howard says as he heads back to his hotel to rest before the first-time director reports back to his video set at 5 a.m. "Music is music, and true music should be able to come out of any radio."

(Originally published on Billboard)
guitarist/vocalist Joey Burns says is a newfound confidence. 
"I feel the main thread here is movement," Burns says. "I think we've been fortunate to have all these different projects. There's a lot of imagination in the music, and I think that because it's all over the map. It's indicating its diversity."

Highlights include the sleepy Pieta Brown duet "Slowness" and the Latin-flavored pop of "House of Valparaiso" and "Victor Jara's Hands." "There was a lot more editing in the process," Burns says. "It was less about the performances and more about the technique of recording."

Touch & Go is thankful for the exposure Calexico enjoyed via "I Am Not There" and the Beam EP, but says it's actually the band's live performances that are its most potent drawing card.

"We do retail programs, we have a press campaign, we have marketing dollars and all that, but the show is consistently great, and people respond to their energy and musicianship," label product manager Chad Nelson says. "But there was a lot of press surrounding that film and the soundtrack, and the reviews only helped to solidify Calexico's contributions. Hopefully, it got new folks intrigued."

Touch & Go's Web site has also offered a free MP3 of album track "Two Silver Trees" and is posting teaser video-clips with snippets of the new songs. Calexico launches an extensive European tour Sept. 10 in Dublin, with six U.S. dates wedged in during the last week of the month.

"This aesthetic choice has paved the way for us--part acoustic, part spacious," Burns says. "We had a wide range of expression to choose from, and this time we were just loose and open to more beautiful mistakes." ...

CALEXICO

"They're a great band, and we've worked hard at bringing them into my sound."

The pop/reggae veteran's hits are collected on the recently issued 18-track U.K. compilation "The Very Best of Eddy Grant... The Road to Reparation" (Mercury/Uni-/Versal), a top 20 entry on the Official U.K. Charts Co's July 5 tally. Grant just signed a new long-term worldwide publishing deal with EMI Music Publishing (billboard.biz, July 28) for new material plus his own Greenheart Music catalog, previously handled by Warner/Chappell. - Diane Coetzer

TRAFFIC JAM

Numerous '80s U.K. chart acts have lately found themselves lucratively locked in the past on revival arena tours. Martin Fry of pop stylist ABC, for example, is spending August touring the United States and Mexico with such names as A Flock of Seagulls and Belinda Carlisle—but he remains determined to keep his band contemporary.

April saw U.K. indie Borough Music release ABC's first new studio album in 11 years, "Traffic." It appeared some 27 years after the Sheffield band's initial lineup first made the British charts with "Shoot That Poison Arrow," followed by chart-topping 1982 debut set "The Lexicon of Love." The new release reunites Fry with David Palmer, who left ABC after that first album but began playing live with the frontman in 2004. Fry revived the ABC name in 1997 for the "Skyscraping" album (Blantant/Deconstruction). "I climbed back in the ring when I realized a lot of people were interested in ABC and my contemporaries from the 1980s," he says. "Traffic" is licensed in the United States to Vibrant/Alliance, which issued it in April. Fry, whose publishing catalog is currently available, is booked for live shows by his co-manager at Blueprint Management, Matt Glover.


WELL DONE

German act Get Well Soon—aka Berlin-based 25-year-old multi-instrumentalist/inger Konstantin Gropper—has been gathering enthusiastic U.K. reviews for his debut album, "Rest Now, Weary Head! You Will Get Well Soon." Issued in February in Germany on City Slang/Cooperative Music/Versal, the set spent four weeks on the Media Control/GfK chart. In June, Nude/Pinnacle issued the album in the United Kingdom, where extracted single "If This Hat Is Missing, I Have Gone Hunting" will be issued digitally Aug. 11. There aren't yet any U.S. release plans.

Gropper says he recorded the self-penned album at home, using many of his contemporaries from the 1980s, he says. "Traffic" is licensed in the United States to Vibrant/Alliance, which issued it in April. Fry, whose publishing catalog is currently available, is booked for live shows by his co-manager at Blueprint Management, Matt Glover.


Few artists, if any, have had a more powerful impact on the Christian music industry than Amy Grant. She burst on the scene as a fresh-faced teen who helped define the contemporary Christian genre before becoming a pop crossover success with such hits as "Baby Baby" and "Every Heartbeat." After 30 years with Word, the six-time Grammy Award winner signed with EMI Christian Music Group last year, which recently issued a 20th-anniversary edition of her landmark "Lead Me On" album. She'll embark on a reunion tour this fall that features most of the band that accompanied her on the original "Lead Me On" trek. She's also reading "The Christmas Collection," which streets Sept. 30. And, she and husband Vince Gill will embark on a Christmas tour around the holidays.

1. Did you have any idea "Lead Me On" would have such lasting significance?

No. When you're recording, you're just hoping someone will listen to it then. I remember just thinking, "I'm not going to be one of those women that's just way past her prime and if I'm still singing when I'm 40, someone gets a hook and comes drag me offstage." That's how I felt in my 20s, but then you get to be in your 40s and go, "I've got so much more to say now." ...

2. What was going on in your life at that time that is reflected on "Lead Me On"?

I was pregnant with my first child Mari, and my grandmother had just died. I was wrestling with facing some more adult issues. [Ex-husband] Gary [Chapman] and I had been married five years, which is long enough to have gone through some rough patches. I had just realized that life can't be tied up in neat bow and I wanted to reflect on that. I think I had done a lot of pompom waving up until that point because of my real love for Jesus and my love of hearing songs that would build people's faith up. I remember back then just going, "You know, life is really messy and there's a lot of heartache." I was more interested in exploring the harder things in life.

3. What's the reunion tour going to look like?

Seven of the original 10 people from that tour are going back out with me to do 20, 30th-anniversary shows. So it's going to be a fun walk down memory lane for all of us because we've all gone on to other lives and other jobs. I'm excited about being back with everybody.

That's what's been so amazing—people have wanted to come back and participate.

4. You've recorded three successful Christmas albums. What will this new project be like?

Signing with EMI, they have brought so much enthusiasm for my catalog. It was their idea to do a "best of" Christmas record and they just asked for two new songs, but I did two new songs and two old songs and they actually liked all four of them. For the other songs, I sat down one night and went through each of those three earlier Christmas records and I picked moments that were favorite moments for me. (I chose) "O Come All Ye Faithful" because it's Phil Keaggy playing guitar. I'm singing. It's really not a good performance. I'm very pitchy, but I love knowing that Phil is playing on this compilation.

5. What can you tell us about the new original songs?

I wrote "I Need a Silent Night" with Chris Eaton. He and I had not written together for eight years. The verses in that song talk about how crazy Christmas has become and the chorus is sort of our response to that—"It's so commercialized, but I need a silent night." On "Baby It's Christmas," Vince was kind of messing around with those chords and it just sounded romantic. We wrote that over a cup of coffee one morning. I don't think anybody really thinks about Christmas Eve as being the most romantic time, especially if you have children, because you are exhausted. But if you could have a very romantic Christmas Eve, what would it be like?

6. Are you writing songs for your next studio album yet?

I've got a dozen songs that I'm ready to record and I hope to be back in the studio and get at least a few of them recorded before I do this tour. There's a song I wrote about Vince and there's a song that a friend and I wrote when she found her birth mom. "Shovel in Hand" I wrote on the airplane flying out to the [Academy of Country Music Awards] in Las Vegas. I was meeting Vince, but I had come from the cemetery watching my son and his friends bury one of their classmates. It's always songs inspired by people in my life.
**Lay Low**

Contact: Kari Sturluson, manager, kari@mgmt.is

What began as a side project became a full-time gig for Iceland's Lovisa Elisabet. A keyboardist/vocalist in another Reykjavik band, she recorded a handful of blues-and-country-influenced songs with a friend and put them on MySpace in 2006 under the name Lay Low. Today, she's sold more than 10,000 copies of her debut, "Please Don't Hate Me," in Iceland (a platinum-selling effort there) and has recently entered the studio with producer Liam Watson (the White Stripes, Holly Golightly) to prep her international debut.

"I can hardly listen to that first album anymore," the 25-year-old singer/songwriter says in her soft Icelandic lilt. "This next set is more band-oriented. Liam and I bonded over the music we love."

The as-yet-untilled effort is slated to hit her home country in October but will come to American shores in late January 2009 with the help of a tight team: Frank Riley at High Road for touring, Girlie Action for publicity and Alternative Distribution Alliance as a distributor unless a state-side label decides to pick it up. Lay Low will showcase her songs, all sung in English, on both coasts come November. Her arrival doesn't come as a total cold call. "Mojo Love," the lead single from "Please Don't Hate Me," was featured on an episode of "Grey's Anatomy" a couple of years ago (the track has sold 1,000 digital downloads in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan). The track "Wonderplace" is slated to be included in "Searching for On the Road," the documentary behind director Walter Salles' feature film adaptation of Jack Kerouac's "On the Road."

Elisabet has also found success in another, unexpected realm: the theater. After the radio and retail success of "Please Don't Hate Me," she was charged to become the musical director and performer of the Pulitzer Prize-winning play "How I Learned to Drive" in Iceland. The subsequent, accompanying mini-album "Okutima" moved 5,000 copies.

All this points to an artist ready to break out of an island country that has only 300,000 people. "I'm comfortable with English and the couple of times I toured in America, in L.A. and New York, I've felt great," she says.—Katie Hasty

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**Deer Tick**

Contact: John Chavez, Ground Control Touring, 718-218-8203, john@groundcontroltouring.com

Some think Deer Tick is a stage name, but it's actually the work of a band fronted by John McCauley. The act's 2007 debut, "War Elephant" (Feow Records), a mostly McCauley recording, showcased such influences as Neil Young, Bob Dylan and Ryan Adams, but the artist says these are recent inspirations.

"I was in a lot of bands in high school, bands that sounded like Nirvana," McCauley says. Once those early bands fizzled, Deer Tick came to life during one fateful car ride. "I heard Hank Williams on the radio," he says. "I stopped by a record store and bought a double-disc Hank record and went home and listened to it over and over again until I finished a bottle of brandy."

With a pair of bandmates backing McCauley, Deer Tick quickly branched out from its homebase of Providence, R.I., playing the indie avant-folk circuit with such acts as Casanet and Jana Hunter, as well as higher-profile acts like Shearwater and Kaki King.

Logging many hours on the road as a trio has enabled McCauley to expand the sound he teased on "War Elephant" into something more upbeat. At times onstage, he plays up his scratchy, nasally delivery; at others he opts for a more laid-back, rootsy sound.

So far, Deer Tick has resonated well with the indie-rock blog world, with a notable recording session available as a free download on daytrotter.com and a segment on NPR. In the next few months, the band plans to relocate to Brooklyn and spend the fall opening for the Felice Brothers' U.S. tour. McCauley also has an arsenal of songs ready to record.

"We're looking to capture our live set in a way," he says of the act's next record. "I kept a lot of things very simple on ["War Elephants"], but it's missing some of the energy. I've got a lot of recordings I want to get out of the way."

—Michael D. Ayers
ALBUMS

POP

JANELLE MONÁE
Metropolis: The Chase Suite
Producers: various
The Waldeland Arts Society/ Bad Boy
Release Date: Aug. 12

Janelle Monáe has already staked out a unique place in the music thanks to her black-and-white wardrobe and pompadour-like hairdo. But on her debut album, a dizzying amalgamation of hip-hop, rock, soul, funk, R&B and electro, she proves her music is just as eccentric as her garb. The spazzy "Violet Stars Happy Hunting!!" seems descended from Outkast's "Hey Ya!" with Monáe belting, "I'm an alien from outer space/I'm a cyber girl without a face." "Many Moons" touches on Gnarls Barkley, with its heavy bassline and churchy organ, but it's not all playtime here. On the hopeful "Sincerely Jane," she wonders, "Are we really living or are we walking dead now?" while questions of poverty and education are raised on the guitar-led "Mr. President."—MC

BLACK STONE CHERRY
Folklore and Superstition
Producer: Bob Marlette
In the Dog Entertainment/ Runaway
Release Date: Aug. 19

"Folklore and Superstition" is entrenched in Southern rock conventions. From the swamp setting of the album cover and a jug-band breakdown, to its images of muddy waters and graveyards, the Kentucky foursome paints the landscape where its roots are planted—one that has plenty of electricity in supply. BSC stretches beyond its Black Label Society-derivative self-titled debut to fill out its boots with its own style, where thick, fuzzy guitars lead its contemporary homage to life south of the Mason-Dixon line. During paddleboat party ride "Deer's Queen," the words "Beelzebub's Queen," the words "wake the Dead," co-written by Ozzy Osbourne, some sly humor—"in (Touch With) Your Feminine Side"—and nods to Cooper's glam rock past in "I'm Hungry" and "The One That Got Away." The tale ends with a terrific twist—but we won't tell you here, just in case Spider is reading.—GG

HEIDI NEUFIELD
What Am I Waiting For
Producer: Tony Brown
Curb
Release Date: Aug. 5

The studio marriage of Heidi Newfield and producer Tony Brown is a match made in heaven. The masterful Brown has helped Newfield stretch vocally in ways that are both deft and subtle, while "Trick Pony" finds Newfield convincingly relating her frustration on a relationship. "Can't Let Go" fits her smoky vocal style perfectly, as the production stands spare and builds to a frenetic climax. Meanwhile, "Knocked Up" is a singalong reminder that Newfield can still rock a barroom with the best of them, and the rich and full title cut is appropriate for the singer and anyone who aspires to greater things. Once thought of simply as a chick singer for the party-hearty trio, Newfield shows on her solo debut that she's way more—KT

LATIN

CROOKED STILO
Cumbia Urbana: The Album
Producers: Johnny Lopez, Victor Lopez Jr.
M Estilo Records/Signs Music
Release Date: Aug. 12

The party comes alive on Crooked Stilo's latest, where the duo replaces samples with instruments in creating its signature "urban cumbia." The best tracks here closer to that than to reggaetón and set Crooked's clever, naughty rhymes to music that has an equal sense of humor. "Dámeles" skillfully blends the electronic synth that's becoming de rigueur in reggaetón these days with brass and a hook that sounds like it was bonged on a toy Casio. Other highlights are "Ese Soy Yo," with its radio-friendly chorus; "Que Sufras," with its awesome wish that the spinning lady gets bitten by an iguana; and "El Vasile," a bouncy, insistent call to crowd the dancefloor. With music this fun, it's hard not to obey.—ABY

DANCE

TITTSWORTH
12 Steps
Producer: Jesse Titsworth
Plant Music
Release Date: Aug. 12

Something's going down in Baltimore, and DJ/Producer Jesse Titsworth (yes, that's his real name) is smack in the middle of it.

IRMA THOMAS
Simply Grand
Producer: Scott Billington
Rounder
Release Date: Aug. 12

It's been nearly 50 years since the Soul Queen of New Orleans' first recording session, and during that time Irma Thomas has earned the nickname many times over. Her voice, even at 67, is a rare blend of smooth simplicity and heart-angling emotion. The concept behind "Simply Grand" was to pair Thomas with a different star pianist on each track, and the results are mostly stunning. The virtuosic accomplishments occasionally draw too much attention from the singer, but for the most part they strike a perfect dramatic balance. Dr. John's strong bass notes swell under Thomas' sultry blues vocals on "Be You," her low alto rolls expertly with David Evang's complicated rhythm on gospel tune "Underground Stream," and Randy Newman's "I Think It's Going to Rain Today" closes the set with a bittersweet touch.—EN

THE JONAS BROTHERS
A Little Bit Longer
Producers: Jon Lind, Kevin Jonas Sr.
Hollywood
Release Date: Aug. 12

You get the sense the Jonas Brothers can actually do the things they purport to do, like sing, play their instruments and even write music. That's why it's unfortunate that much of their sophomore effort is submerged in an ocean of heavy-handed production, so deep that the boys' natural talents struggle to break the surface. But even though there are epic keys, layers of acoustic and electric guitar, and filtered synths zooms on nearly every track, the Jonases still chomp on their 4/4 pop-rock like a veteran band. Young and fresh out of this just太过学校 of seduction on album opener "BB Good." First single "Burnin' Up" out more than a little to Maroon 5, while second single "Love Bug" goes from a campfire strum-along to a Steven Tyler rock waller to power-punk in less than five minutes.—KIM

HOWARD TATE
Blue Day
Producer: Joe Tiven
Evidence
Release Date: Aug. 12

Blues man Howard Tate's 1967 collaboration with producer/writer Jerry Ragovoy, "Get It While You Can," was a criminally overlooked gem. While Tate's singular, soulful voice on a set of Ragavoy originals saw some success on the R&B charts, they were soon overwhelmed by covers from legendary artists (Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, B.B. King, Bonnie Raitt), completely eclipsing Tate's still formidable, definitive talents. Forty years later, after three "come-back projects" earlier this decade failed to do him justice, Tate is given material and production worthy of his strong-as-ever voice (Amy Winehouse tribute "Miss Beehive," "First Class," contributed by Steve Cooper and Felix Cavaliere; "Hope Springs Eternal," "I Live Like a Millionaire") and what, by all rights, should be hard-won recognition and respect.—GE

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ALICE COOPER
Along Came a Spider
Producers: Alice Cooper, Danny Saber, Greg Hampton
SPV
Release Date: July 29

Young Nick sounds shock rocker returns to the conceptual realm on his 25th album, with a tale of a serial killer who wraps his victims in silk (that's the color of their eyes, no less) and cuts off one leg to use in creating his own archnoid appendage. "Spider" might not make you forget "Welcome to My Nightmare," but it's nevertheless a cheerfully twisted yarn delivered with a full-on dose of guitar rockers ("I Know Where You Live," "Catch Me If You Can," "Wrapped in Silk"), the requisite ballad ("Killed by Love"), a soaring acoustic ballad ("Switzerland"), a bit of Beck-flavored groovery ("Wake the Dead," co-written by Ozzy Osbourne), some sly humor—"in (Touch With) Your Feminine Side"—and nods to Cooper's glam rock past in "I'm Hungry" and "The One That Got Away." The tale ends with a terrific twist—but we won't tell you here, just in case Spider is reading.—GG

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Local artists are succeeding where others—like the short-lived booty tech and hip-house scenes of the '90s—have failed, merging hip-hop, house and electro into a single smutty cocktail. From the first strains of "Haiku"—an opening instrumental that merges the acid squelches of early rave with an insistent beat and—yes—congas—it's obvious that this guy's aesthetic is so clear to him that mixing disparate elements is a breeze. Emerging from the records, the outfit is an exciting, funny old-school raps ("Broke Ass Nigga," with none other than DJ Assault), hip-hop party tracks ("WTF" featuring a spark-plug verse by Kid Sister) and even pretty, melodic R&B at a good clip ("Here He Comes" with Nina Sky). This is the answer to the legal quandary of mash-up culture. Just make 'em fresh yourself.—KM

WORLD
SIDESTEPPE
The Buena Vibra Sound System
Producers: Richard Blair, Ivan Benavides
Palm Pictures
Release Date: Aug. 5
The Buena Vibra Sound System is Sideshow founder Richard Blair's Afro-Colombian brainstorm. The 11 tracks here represent the first taste of the Buena Vibra club sound released on disc. The influences that come into play on these tunes are numerous, but it does not ring true that it may not be an album that's easily categorized, but it's definitely easy to love. opener "Sidestepper" is a salsia-inspired number that recalls that heady early groove. "Deja Soft" has a subtle Jamaican dub consciousness, a hip-hop component, an overdubbed vocal track that has a definite Lauryn Hill swag and layered rhythms courtesy of Blair's programming chops. "La Paloma" opens with a purely electronic vamp, then morphs into music that feels more pop, except that the relentless bassline is Afro-Colombian and Jacobo Velez's clarinet, sailing above the groove, is free-form jazz.—PPV

FOLK
DENICE FRANKE
Gulf Coast Blue
Producer: Mark Hallman
Certain Records
Release Date: Aug. 5
Denise Franke writes vivid, compelling musical short stories that adeptly blend empathy and danger on this third album. Many of the songs are set in Galveston, the Texas singer/songwriter's adopted home. Franke's detailing can be as specific as "Hailey Girl," a refreshingly tender appreciation of a biker woman and her guy. "Tara Lee" has you walking in the heels of a woman driven by her needs and desires, in search of a generous stranger while lamenting the tender roughneck missing from her life. Franke knows what conflicts sink some of these men in "Cool Water," self-knowledge and self-destruction grapple with predictable but artfully rendered results. Her lilting, mesmerizing voice and acoustic guitar are at the heart of each track, and Mark Hallman's sympathetic production advances each song with bent electric guitar notes, percussion obs or key-boards sound.—WR

SINGLES

POP
RICK SPRINGFIELD
What's Victoria's Secret? (3:19)
Producers: Rick Springfield, Matt Bissonette
Writers: R. Springfield, M. Bissonette
Publishers: Super Ron, ASCAP, Dogs in Space, BMI
NewDoor/Universal
It's been 27 years since Rick Springfield began '80s chart supremacy (with 16 top 40 hits), launching with No. 1 pop/rock "Jessie's Girl." He has christened new album "Venus in Overdrive" (July 29) as the son of debut "Working Class God," which spawned "Jesse's Gin." It makes sense then that he would literally revisit the guitar line from his signature song, reminding all that pesky pop power doesn't age. Springfield sounds remarkably youthful and with a career that extends —whoa—beyond 30 years, he proves he's still more than capable of creating relevant music for the now grown women who were screaming back in the day—and yet won't embarrass their kids for sounding retro.—CW

SHWAYZE
Corona and Lime (3:55)
Producer: Cisco Adler
Writers: A. Smith, C. Adler
Publisher: not listed
Suretone/Geffen
Shwayze has managed to pair his laid-back feel and association with Cisco Adler—son of record producer Lou Adler—into a Portiacal commercial. MTV show and plenty of press. For the second single from his Aug. 19 self-titled debut, the self-described "only black kid in Malibu" maintains his brand-friendly alliance with Adler, who handles the chorus, implying, "Baby, will you be my Corona and lime/And I will be your main squeeze?" This admirable new-dad excursion showcases a catalog of women Shwayze has encountered in his day. His line "Let me tell you about a girl I know/She like hip-hop and rock 'n roll" encapsulates the likely audience for this teasty summer drink-along.—AH

COUNTRY
LITTLE BIG TOWN
Fine Line (3:46)
Producers: Wayne Kirkpatrick, Little Big Town
Writers: various
Publishers: Warner-Tamerlane/Sell the Cow/One Music, BMI Capitol
Little Big Town recently inked a new deal with Capitol Records Nashville, and "Fine Line" is one of three songs added to a relaunched version of the group's exceptional album "A Place to Land." Written by LBT and producer Wayne Kirkpatrick, this potent single boasts a visual lyric about a disgruntled lover striving to get more from a faltering relationship, alongside the amazing harmonies that make this group sparkle and shine. Truly, the message offers a portrait of hopeful longing mixed with anger and resignation, while the performance captures every nuance of emotion.—CLT

ROBIN THICKE
Magic (3:35)
Producer: Robin Thicke
Writers: R. Thicke, J. Goss, Max
Publishers: Like 'Em Thicke/DA Gass Co/Heddington, ASCAP
Star Trak/Interscope
Robin Thicke waves a "Magic" wand with the first single from his third album, "Something Else" (Sept. 9), a timeless R&B dance funk favorite that could finally launch the multifaceted artist into superstardom. That's not to dismiss his previous momentum, thanks to 2006's "Lost Without U," Thicke's breakthrough No. 1 adult R&B smash, or hits penned and produced for Usher, Christina Aguilera, Mary J. Blige and Michael Jackson. This time around, the classy, well-groomedेंr makes big band sounds, strings and horns that kick into a groove, alongside his smooth, sensual vocals. With this, the real sexy is back.—MM

MARIAH CAREY
I'll Be Lovin' U Long Time (3:53)
Produced: Albroin "DJ Toppa" Davis
Mariah: Carey
Publishers: various
Publisher: not listed
Island
Lady Mariah's third single from 11th album "E=MC2"—following chart-topping "Touch My Body" and top 20 " Bye Bye"—energizes the beat following the previous pair of midtempo soul tracks. "I'll Be Lovin' U Long Time" offers a playful, beach-befitting groove, featuring a bright sample from DeBarge's "Stay With Me," lushly woven vocals and Carey's highs doting on fans with her son signature. TJ. joins the party with a rap that adds star power, if in a dated context. Beyond radio appeal, "Lovin' U" is featured in an Indaba Music remix contest, with a $5,000 prize for the victor. Curiously, it garnered dubious acclaim as Carey's first single to debut on the Billboard Hot 100 as low as No. 100, but that's surely a temporary dip, it's already charted as her 45th entry on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart. In short order, "Long Time" will be blaring across formats, and radios, from coast to coast.—CT

LEGENDS Continued

THE BILLBOARD REVIEWS

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

ROCK
LINKIN PARK
Leave Out All the Rest (3:21)
Producers: Rick Rubin, Mike Shinoda
Writer: Linkin Park
Publishers: various
Warner Bros
Stepping up to the plate with track No. 5 from still-going-strong "Minutes To Midnight," Linkin Park eases up on its rhythms as it leans hard on introspection. The radio heavyweight gets serious about its personal legacy in "Leave Out All the Rest," framed in the story of waking up after a dream and wondering what will be left with loved ones after they're gone. The lyric implies that it has been far from perfect—perhaps even more flawed than the average Joe. "When my time comes, forget the wrong that I've done/Help me leave behind some reason to be missed," Chester Bennington implores. Musically, it's a standard midtempo ballad that doesn't deviate from the less-is-more production style we've heard from "Midnight." That's not surprising chart successes. —CLT

www.americanradiohistory.com
**ROCK**

**BY JONATHAN COHEN**

**Rick Springs Eternal**

It's The '80s All Over Again For Veteran Springfield

It may have been 20 years since his last big hit, but Rick Springfield is turning back the clock this week with his New Door debut, "Venus in Overdrive." The set sets at No. 28 on the Billboard 200, the best mark of his career, and with 16,000 units, constitutes Springfield's best sales week since Nielsen SoundScan began tracking data in 1991. Although best-remembered for '80s pop smashes like "Jessie's Girl," "Don't Talk to Strangers" and "Love Somebody," Springfield has been recording and touring worldwide with regularity since breaking a decade-long quiet period in 1997. But his albums have barely denied the chart 1999's "Karma" peaked at No. 189 on the Billboard 200, while 2005's "The Day After Yesterday" topped out at No. 197.

So, New Door and parent company Universal Music Enterprises went right to work targeting his core, largely female fan base in the run-up to "Venus," booking Springfield on "Good Morning America," CBS' "Early Show," "Live With Regis and Kelly" and "Fox and Friends" during release week. In addition, his February appearance on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" raised July 21, which UME VP of marketing Jeff Moskov says "really goosed" album pre-orders at Amazon.

The way we describe it, he's been hitting the center of the bull's-eye with his last couple albums," Moskov says. "We want to get to those outer rings and be hitting those people who haven't bought one of his records in 20 years.

While some labels would shy away from Internet promotions for an artist who is nearly 60, UME went the opposite route, sending out e-mail blasts via Springfield's Web site and using Push technology to unlock extra content once the new CD was inserted into a computer. Bonus tracks were also available via Best Buy and iTunes, and Amazon hosted a listening party and a track-by-track video from Springfield.

Further, fans were asked to submit photos of themselves with the artist which were then included in the CD booklet. "We believe that helped drive some early interest," Moskov says. "They wanted to see themselves in the packaging."

"At New Door, what we try to do is sign artists with a catalog to exploit or an artist who has very active touring and fan bases," he continues. "We don't have Rick's catalog, but he's so connected with his fans that it seemed like a great opportunity."

Indeed, Springfield's base is so tuned in that, according to manager Rob Cosa, tickets for his inaugural Rick Springfield & Friends cruise sold out "with no advertising whatsoever—we just let the fans know about it via our e-mail list, fan club and Web site."

The cruise sails from Miami Nov. 14 and will feature performances (one of which will be an all-request show) and numerous opportunities to get up close and personal with Springfield.

The artist has tour dates booked through mid-October in support of "Venus." Kos says, "We do about 80 shows per year [but] we just do weekends. This way everyone can keep a semblance of a normal life and go home to their families."

For Springfield, it's all proof that consumers for Springfield's type of music haven't gone anywhere—they just needed a little reminder. "Rick made a great record, and the account base really supported him," says Moskov. "That's a great thing to have happen. He worked his butt off."

---

**'PLANES' KEEPS SOARING**

More than a year after the track was initially released, M.I.A.'s "Paper Planes" is rapidly climbing the Billboard Hot 100. The cut jumps 36-16 this week and is the greatest digital gain, thanks to downloads sales of 102,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. To date, digital sales are at 662,000. Its Interscope parent album, "Kala," moved 8,600 units, a 47% increase over last week.

"Paper Planes" is featured prominently in the trailer for "Pineapple Express," the Seth Rogan/James Franco stoner comedy that hit U.S. theaters Aug. 6. Airplay is also enjoying a big increase, the song was added to 60 Nielsen BDS-monitored stations last week, including CHIL-Top 40 WHTZ (100) New York.

The song's ascent has not been without controversy, however. When M.I.A. performed the track last September on "Late Show With David Letterman" and when MTV aired the video, the gunshot samples used in the chorus were replaced with generic popping noises. Alternative KROQ Los Angeles, which played the song 45 times from July 30 to Aug. 6, is airing an unedited version of the track. Interscope did not respond to requests for comment at press time.—Courtney Harding
Out Of The Hurricane

New Hit Single Sets Up Eric Benét's Latest

Relaxing after a mixing session for his forthcoming live DVD, Eric Benét recalls the conversation that inspired his latest single, "You're The Only One." "I was sitting with my long-time production partner Demonte Posey and my cousin, writer/producer George Nash Jr. We were talking about how well-crafted R&B songs used to be; those by groups like Blue Magic and the Stylistics,” the Milwaukee native remembers. “That conversation turned into this jam. Then the next thing you know, we had a song—a song that sounds like a classic you haven’t heard in a long time.”

Two weeks ago, the timeless, romantic underpinnings of "You're The Only One" helped Benét garner his first top 20 R&B hit since 1999. The singer/songwriter notched his first and only top 10 hit to date on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart in 1999 with "Spend My Life With You," featuring Tamia. "You're The Only One"—which moves 26-21 this week with a bullet—as the lead single from Benét's fourth album, "Love & Life," on Friday/Reprise/Warner Bros. (Sept. 9).

Coming into the project with complete creative control, Benét says, "Love & Life" is the "purest representation of me creatively. It's almost a journey of the kind of music that made me fall in love with music.

Integrating gospel, jazz and Latin rhythms within its R&B framework, the 12-track album is knee-deep in single-worthy tracks emotionally interpreted by Benét's unmistakable tenor. There's the sensual and spiritual "Chocolate Legs," the '90s R&B-vibed "Don't Let Go" and the sexually energized "The Hunger," which is being shipped this week as the second single. Other notable tracks include the poignant "Evelove" with Terry Dexter (memorially featured on a remix of Benét's aforementioned "Spend") and "Still I Believe," a personal treatise about love and hope with Benét's 16-year-old daughter India handling background vocals.

"Eric went back to the basics," Warner Bros. senior VP of urban promotion Ken Wilson says. "This is solid R&B music that can transcend formats from urban adult to urban and pop mainstream. When you've got real music, it cuts through all the bullshit.

Following the public firestorm surrounding his divorce from actress Halle Berry, Benét released his third album, the aptly titled "Hurricane," in 2005. Although it spun off two singles, "Pretty Baby" and "I Wanna Be Loved," the pop and soul-laced album didn't fare well saleswise. According to Nielsen SoundScan, "Hurricane" has sold 170,000 units. 1999's "A Day in the Life" is at 897,000 and 1996's "True to Myself" has sold 295,000.

"To be honest, I was nervous about coming back with 'Hurricane,'” Benét admits. "It was a departure from my expected genre and some people even described it as a little too apologetic.

Currently in the midst of a lengthy major-market promotional tour and with his "Only One" video having premiered Aug. 8 on Yahoo, Benét says a formal concert trek is "aptly telling his story" at the end of September. Joining him will be fellow R&B crooner Dwele.

Now on the other side of the hurricane, Benét says he felt early on that "Love & Life" would be something his core fans would love. "Now I feel I might get a halfway decent shot at more people discovering who I am musically," he says.

SAVAGE ‘KNOCKS’ ON THE CHARTS

"Pacific hip-hop is going to be the next big global sound," So says Savage, the New Zealand-based Samoan rapper currently enjoying success on the Billboard charts with the Soulja Boy remix of his track "Swing" (Dawn Raid/Universal Republic).

The song is No. 63 with a bullet on Hot Digital Songs this week, with more than 314,000 downloads to date, according to Nielsen SoundScan. It is also No. 22 with a bullet on the Rhythmic radio airplay chart and enters the Billboard Hot 100 at No. 91.

"Swing" soundtracked a pivotal battle scene in last year's successful comedy hit "Knocked Up." But the DVD release of the title last September by Universal proved most crucial to spreading the word on Savage, according to manager Andy Murmane, who is also CEO of Auckland, New Zealand-based hip-hop label/publisher Dawn Raid. Murmane's label released the original track in New Zealand in 2005.

"Things got crazy," when "Swing" was used as the music for the opening menu screen on the DVD, says Murmane, who also manages Savage through his firm Clienete Management. Afterward, the "Swing" video began garnering huge traffic on You Tube; it is now up to 2.3 million views. That brought interest from Universal Republic Records, which signed a worldwide licensing deal excluding New Zealand and Australia for Savage this May.

Savage has been playing U.S. dates throughout the summer and recording new tracks with Akon and Sean Paul for a U.S. version of his 2005 solo debut set, "Moonshine," due in November.

Savage has been a key force in Pacific hip-hop since the late '90s, when he formed South Auckland hip-hop crew the Deceptikonz. The act reached No. 2 on the Recording Industry Assn. of New Zealand chart in 2001 with its album "Elimination" (Dawn Raid). In 2005, Savage's own "Moonshine" bowed at No. 1, "Swing" also topped the New Zealand charts that year.

While Savage is still signed to Dawn Raid for Australia and New Zealand, Murmane has already begun negotiations for its own U.S. label distribution deal. "We're looking at bringing out more Pacific hip-hop acts from New Zealand," Murmane says, "like [producer/MC] Mariok, and to sign American-based Pacific artists.

"—Christie Eliezer

MAIDEN HEAVEN

With excitement building among Metallica fans for the new "Death Magnetic," due Sept. 12 worldwide via Warner Bros., there may be some head scratching about the band's appearance at No. 40 this week on the Hot Mainstream Rock Tracks chart.

After all, the album's lead single, "The Day That Never Comes," is not due until September.

In fact, the chart entry, "Remember Tomorrow," is a cover of a song from Iron Maiden's self-titled 1980 debut. Metallica recorded it for a Maiden tribute CD given away free with the July 16 issue of U.K. 's Kerrang, an issue in which drummer Lars Ulrich described the veteran British metal act as "the blueprint for everything that we have ever wanted to do."

"We've been a fan of Metallica and Iron Maiden for years, and a Metallica play off a really good version," London-based Kerrang editor Paul Brannigan says. "It's a lot of people pumped up for the release of the new album.

The 15-track "Maiden Heaven" also features Avenged Sevenfold's take on "Flash of the Blade," Machine Head's version of "Hallowed Be Thy Name" and Trivium's rendition of "Iron Maiden." The July 16 issue was distributed minus the CD outside of the United Kingdom and Ireland due to rights restrictions, but 23 radio stations on the Mainstream Rock panel still played the track. It was played 205 times in the period ending Aug. 3 and proved a big hit with KOMP Las Vegas (32 plays); KDOT Reno, Nev (24); and KQRC Leavenworth, Kan. (21).

The track wound up on the tribute album only because of a chance conversation when Machine Head was on tour with Metallica in Europe in May.

"It was kind of random," Brannigan explains. "Machine Head's singer [Rob Flynn] was having a drink with Lars Ulrich telling him they had done this song for Kerrang. Then he sent them the MPR, and when Lars heard it, he was like, 'How come Kerrang never asked us to do this?' Their management got back to us immediately."

Around 160,000 CDs were produced, and Brannigan expects the issue to sell up to 120,000 copies, compared to average circulation of 77,000.

Warner Bros. did not respond to questions about whether the Metallica song would be sanctioned for any commercial release. "A label has approached us [to license the album]," Warner Bros. says. "But Metallica are very protective over what they do with their songs." —Andre Painé
Normally, when an album moves to No. 1 in the same week that it experiences a decline, seasonally chart watchers say the title backed into first place. Considering the unique release strategy of Sugarland’s “Love on the Inside,” it might be more appropriate to borrow a phrase from football and say that the country duo scores on a reverse option.

The result? Sugarland’s ‘07 No. 1 on the Billboard 200.

Special editions are practically old hat by now, usually following one of two strategies. Versions with either a couple of extra tracks or a bonus DVD show up at high-ticket discount chains when an album comes to market. Or, months after a title hits store bins, a label seeks to revitalize it with a new edition that goes to all accounts, adding songs, a video element or both to the album’s original content.

Universal Music Group Nashville played mix and match with those game plans, electing to put the deluxe “Love” out a week before the standard 12-song version reached the market (Billboard, July 19).

Last issue, the higher-priced fan edition fetched the act’s largest Nielsen SoundScan week by far, with 314,000 copies (Over the Counter, Billboard, Aug. 9). With the basic edition and its cheaper price coming to market during the title’s second week, the erosion a big release usually experiences is softened, thus reversing the order of last issue’s top two albums.

Without such a buffer, last week’s chart champ, “Breakout” by Miley Cyrus, declines 56%, falling from 371,000 copies to 163,000. The less severe 45% drop on Sugarland yields a total of 171,000 for “Love.”

Based on tracking at Wal-Mart, Target and Best Buy, Ben Kline, the label group’s executive VP of sales, marketing and new media, estimates the standard edition accounted for 54% of the title’s second-week take.

Aside from affecting Sugarland’s sophomore week, Kline likes the notion of putting the deluxe package out first to introduce a higher price at the front of an album’s life cycle “in a $9.99 world,” he concurs with Kline’s thinking, even as he concede that in general, we’re still talking about a $12.99 sale price on a deluxe set with a $19.98 list equivalent.

While retailers continue to press for a CD selling price of $10 or less, Kline says the advance release of this package proves even in a bargain-driven market, the “whoa fan” will be inclined to shell out more when given proper incentive.

SPECIAL TREATMENT: The Sugarland strategy addresses the gripes of critics and fans alike that dropping a deluxe edition months after the standard album arrives forces an artist’s most fervent fans to buy the same songs twice—or find the bonus material outside retail channels. Making the deluxe edition available to every retailer also addresses a longstanding complaint from independent proprietors that offering an added content to larger retailers leaves others selling inferior CDs.

Midstream special editions, with new songs added, have become common in recent years. That scheme can be particularly effective if one of those new songs becomes a genuine hit, as was the case when Usher’s ‘04 album “Confessions” got a boost from the addition of Alicia Keys duet “My Boo” or Mariah Carey’s 2005 set “The Emancipation of Mimi” picked up “Don’t Forget About Us.”

But, later-day special editions have become so commonplace that they are becoming less—you know—special. While Rihanna’s “Good Girl Gone Bad” gained by almost 1,000%) when a deluxe edition hit June in, promoting a 124-7 jump on the Billboard 200 and Blake Shelton’s “Pure BS” earned a larger percentage gain when he added content a couple of months earlier, even those titles were modest compared with the lift Usher and Carey got for their premium editions.

On the swifter side, Fergie’s “The Dutchess” snagged an 8,000-unit bump when that album added four songs in May for a 104-28 chart leap.

OneRepublic and Lifehouse each added five live songs to their current albums. The former got a 3,000-unit spike in impact week, the latter one of 2,000—results that make me wonder about the return on investment.

### Market Watch

#### A Weekly National Music Sales Report

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly Unit Sales</th>
<th>Year-To-Date</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ALBUMS</strong></td>
<td><strong>SPECIAL ALBUMS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>This Week</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Last Week</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Change</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Weeks</strong></td>
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**Digital album sales are not counted within album sales.**

#### Weekly Album Sales (Million Units)

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<th>Week</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
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<tr>
<td>J</td>
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<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
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#### ALBUM SALES

**‘07** 2,712 million

**‘08** 2,422 million

#### SALES BY ALBUM FORMAT

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
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<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>242,434,000</td>
<td>203,466,000</td>
<td>161,245,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cassette</td>
<td>28,015,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>DVD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>1,086,000</td>
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#### Year-To-Date Album Sales By Store Type

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<th>Store Type</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-traditional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chain</td>
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For sales ending Aug. 2, 2008. Figures are not final. Information is collected by SoundScan's service provider and is based on all reported sales. The full chart is available at Billboard.biz.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTIST</th>
<th>DISTRIBUTOR</th>
<th>LABEL</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miley Cyrus</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>COLUMBIA</td>
<td>Breakout</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUGARLAND</td>
<td>Sony</td>
<td>WARNER BROS</td>
<td>Love On The Inside</td>
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<td>REO SPEEDWAGON</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>WEA</td>
<td>Lead On The Ground</td>
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<tr>
<td>REO SPEEDWAGON</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>WEA</td>
<td>How Long Can This Drag On</td>
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<tr>
<td>JASON ALDEAN</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>WEA</td>
<td>Rock N Roll Jesus</td>
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<td>ALICE COOPER</td>
<td>Sony</td>
<td>EMEC</td>
<td>Along Came A Spider</td>
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<td>KENNY CHESNEY</td>
<td>Epic</td>
<td>COLUMBIA</td>
<td>Just Who I Am: Poets &amp; Pirates</td>
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<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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<td>Troubadour</td>
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<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>Sister Bliss</td>
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<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>The Sound Of Madness</td>
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<td>Still Feels Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>LINKIN PARK</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>WEA</td>
<td>Minutes To Midnight</td>
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**ALTERNATIVE ARTISTS**

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<td>ARISTA NASHVILLE</td>
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<td>REPRISE</td>
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<td>Avion And The Chipmunks</td>
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<td>RICK ROSS</td>
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<td>EMI</td>
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<td>EMI</td>
<td>Julianne Hough</td>
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<td>JOHN MAYER</td>
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<td>Just Like You</td>
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<td>JONAS BROTHERS</td>
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<td>EMI</td>
<td>Flavors Of Entanglement</td>
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<td>MILEY CYRUS</td>
<td>SONY</td>
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<td>SEETHER</td>
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<td>Finding Beauty In Negative Spaces</td>
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<td>THE EAGLES</td>
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<td>EMI</td>
<td>Long Road Out Of Eden</td>
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<td>KISS</td>
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<td>Figuratively Speaking</td>
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<td>THE DREAM</td>
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<td>Mr. Carter/Wisin &amp; Yandel</td>
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<td>SONY</td>
<td>EMI</td>
<td>Love/Hate</td>
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<td>Call Me Irresponsible</td>
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<td>Hard Candy</td>
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<td>THE OFFSPRING</td>
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<td>EMI</td>
<td>Rise And Fall, Rage And Grace</td>
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<td>PARAMORE</td>
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<td>EMI</td>
<td>Riot!</td>
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<td>NOEL GORDON</td>
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<td>After My Time</td>
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<td>ADELE</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>EMI</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIL WAYNE</td>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>EMI</td>
<td>Lady Antebellum</td>
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**THE BILLBOARD 200 ARTIST INDEX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTIST</th>
<th>DISTRIBUTOR</th>
<th>LABEL</th>
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<td>Michael Jackson</td>
<td>Sony</td>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>Thriller</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guns N' Roses</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>oogle</td>
<td>Appetite For Destruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metallica</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>oogle</td>
<td>Master Of Puppets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slayer</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>oogle</td>
<td>Seasons In The Abyss</td>
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<td>Pearl Jam</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>oogle</td>
<td>Ten</td>
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<td>Nirvana</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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<td>In Utero</td>
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<td>Red Hot Chili Peppers</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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<td>Blood Sugar Sex Magik</td>
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<td>Oasis</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>oogle</td>
<td>(What's The Story) Morning Glory?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U2</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>oogle</td>
<td>The Joshua Tree</td>
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The table includes various artists and their respective labels, along with their album titles.
The Billboard 200
AUG 16 2008

Data for week of AUGUST 16, 2008 | For chart reprints call 646-654-4633

Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data
### HOT 100 Airplay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Week of Entry</th>
<th>Peak Position</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Girls Around the World</strong></td>
<td>The A Team ft. Will.i.am</td>
<td>(SRP / Def Jam)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Take That</strong></td>
<td>Ed Sheeran ft. Ella Eyre</td>
<td>(ARS / Warner Bros)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Lollipops</strong></td>
<td>Britney Spears ft. Iggy Azalea</td>
<td>(COLUMBIA)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Don't Stop the Music</strong></td>
<td>Rihanna</td>
<td>(COLUMBIA)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Butter</strong></td>
<td>BTS</td>
<td>(JIVE)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <strong>Blinding Lights</strong></td>
<td>The Weeknd</td>
<td>(POLARIS)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <strong>Montero (Call Me By Your Name)</strong></td>
<td>Lil Nas X</td>
<td>(DAS)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. <strong>Bad Habits</strong></td>
<td>Ed Sheeran</td>
<td>(ARS / Warner Bros)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. <strong>Stay</strong></td>
<td>The Kid LAROI ft. Justin Bieber</td>
<td>(COLUMBIA)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. <strong>Good Days</strong></td>
<td>SZA</td>
<td>(PARLOPHONE)</td>
<td>20</td>
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### HOT Digital Songs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Format</th>
<th>Week of Entry</th>
<th>Peak Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Montero (Call Me By Your Name)</strong></td>
<td>Lil Nas X</td>
<td>(DAS)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Blinding Lights</strong></td>
<td>The Weeknd</td>
<td>(POLARIS)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Stay</strong></td>
<td>The Kid LAROI ft. Justin Bieber</td>
<td>(COLUMBIA)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Montero</strong></td>
<td>Lil Nas X</td>
<td>(DAS)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Stay</strong></td>
<td>The Kid LAROI ft. Justin Bieber</td>
<td>(COLUMBIA)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### ALBUM CHARTS

- **Top Albums**
  - DaBaby, * LinkedList*
  - Lil Nas X, *Montero (Call Me By Your Name)*
  - The Weeknd, *Blinding Lights*
  - The Kid LAROI ft. Justin Bieber, *Stay*

- **Genre Charts**
  - **Hot Digital Songs**
  - **Hot 100 Airplay**
  - **Hot Digital Songs**

### PRICING/CONFIGURATION/AVAILABILITY

- Digital downloads only
- Physical formats available
- Streaming services included

### SINGLES CHARTS

- **Top Singles**
  - *Girls Around the World* by The A Team ft. Will.i.am
  - *Take That* by Ed Sheeran ft. Ella Eyre
  - *Lollipops* by Britney Spears ft. Iggy Azalea

### CONSUMPTION

- **Artist Consumption**
  - Lil Nas X
  - The Weeknd
  - The Kid LAROI ft. Justin Bieber

### HOT DANCE CLUB PLAY

- **Top Dance Tracks**
  - *Good Days* by SZA
  - *Blinding Lights* by The Weeknd
  - *Stay* by The Kid LAROI ft. Justin Bieber

### AWARDS AND CERTIFICATIONS

- **Billboard Awards**
  - Best Digital Song Artist
  - Best Album
  - Best Single

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Billboard Hot 100
- Billboard Digital Songs
- Billboard Airplay
- Billboard 200
- Billboard Country

For more detailed information, visit [www.billboard.com](http://www.billboard.com)
### Pop/Rock Top 40

**Title** | **Chart Position**
--- | ---
1. *Kissed a Girl* (Dave Gahan feat. The Japanese House) | 1
2. *Stay* (The Chainsmokers feat. Halsey) | 2
3. *I Escaped (The Only Way)* (The Weeknd) | 3
4. *Electric Family* (G-Eazy feat. 6LACK) | 4
5. *Dance Monkey* (Tame Impala) | 5
6. *Keep Me* (The Weeknd feat. SZA) | 6
7. *Bad Habits* (Ed Sheeran) | 7
8. *Leave the Door Open* (Anderson .Paak feat. Tame Impala) | 8
9. *My Type* (Lil Nas X) | 9
10. *Fever* (Rita Ora feat. Cardi B) | 10

### Adult Contemporary Top 40

**Title** | **Chart Position**
--- | ---
1. *Leavin'* (Excellent) | 1
2. *I Kissed a Girl* (Katy Perry) | 2
3. *Forever* (Chris Brown) | 3
4. *Take a Bow* (Mary J. Blige) | 4
5. *Shake It Off* (Taylor Swift) | 5
6. *Dangerous* (Leigh-Anne Pinnock) | 6
7. *Pocketful of Sunshine* (The Jonas Brothers) | 7
8. *All Summer Long* (Eminem feat. Sia) | 8
9. *Bottled Up* (Khalid) | 9
10. *Just Dance* (Coldplay) | 10

### Mainstream Top 40

**Title** | **Chart Position**
--- | ---
1. *Kissed a Girl* (Dave Gahan feat. The Japanese House) | 1
2. *I Escaped (The Only Way)* (The Weeknd) | 2
3. *Dance Monkey* (Tame Impala) | 3
4. *Keep Me* (The Weeknd feat. SZA) | 4
5. *My Type* (Lil Nas X) | 5
6. *Electric Family* (G-Eazy feat. 6LACK) | 6
7. *Bad Habits* (Ed Sheeran) | 7
8. *Leave the Door Open* (Anderson .Paak feat. Tame Impala) | 8
9. *My Type* (Lil Nas X) | 9
10. *Fever* (Rita Ora feat. Cardi B) | 10

### Adult Top 40

**Title** | **Chart Position**
--- | ---
1. *Leavin'* (Excellent) | 1
2. *I Kissed a Girl* (Katy Perry) | 2
3. *Forever* (Chris Brown) | 3
4. *Take a Bow* (Mary J. Blige) | 4
5. *Shake It Off* (Taylor Swift) | 5
6. *Dangerous* (Leigh-Anne Pinnock) | 6
7. *Pocketful of Sunshine* (The Jonas Brothers) | 7
8. *All Summer Long* (Eminem feat. Sia) | 8
9. *Bottled Up* (Khalid) | 9
10. *Just Dance* (Coldplay) | 10

### Modern Rock

**Title** | **Chart Position**
--- | ---
1. *It's Not My Time* (Nile Rodgers) | 1
2. *Viva La Vida* (Coldplay) | 2
3. *Peachpit of Sunshine* (The Jonas Brothers) | 3
4. *All Summer Long* (Eminem feat. Sia) | 4
5. *Bottled Up* (Khalid) | 5
6. *Just Dance* (Coldplay) | 6
7. *My Type* (Lil Nas X) | 7
8. *Electric Family* (G-Eazy feat. 6LACK) | 8
9. *Keep Me* (The Weeknd feat. SZA) | 9
10. *Bad Habits* (Ed Sheeran) | 10
### HOT COUNTRY SONGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Sales Rank</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All I Want to Do</td>
<td>Sugarland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<tr>
<td>You Look Good in My Shirt</td>
<td>Kix Brooks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love on My Mind</td>
<td>Tim McGraw</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Hearted Woman</td>
<td>Keith Whitley</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shouldn't It Be Easier</td>
<td>Taylor Swift</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Still Miss You</td>
<td>Keith Anderson</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunpowder &amp; Lead</td>
<td>Miranda Lambert</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do You Believe in Me Now</td>
<td>Jimmy Wayne</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Blake Shelton</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waitin' on a Woman</td>
<td>Brad Paisley</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<td>Holter Bell</td>
<td>George Strait</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning How to Bend</td>
<td>Gary Allan</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<tr>
<td>She Never Cried in Front of Me</td>
<td>Toby Keith</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Summer Long</td>
<td>Kid Rock</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bob That Head</td>
<td>Rascal Flatts</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Come on Over</td>
<td>Jessica Simpson</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better as a Memory</td>
<td>Kenny Chesney</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<td>Country Man</td>
<td>Luke Bryan</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<tr>
<td>I Don't Want to Be Me Anymore (Long Distance)</td>
<td>Carrie Underwood</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johnny &amp; June</td>
<td>Heidi Newfield</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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<tr>
<td>All I Ever Wanted</td>
<td>Chuck Wicks</td>
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<tr>
<td>You Can Let Go</td>
<td>Crystal Shawanda</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>08/16/08</td>
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### TOP COUNTRY ALBUMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Sales Rank</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sugarland</td>
<td>Love on the Inside</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taylor Swift</td>
<td>Taylor Swift</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toby Keith</td>
<td>Eat My Words (EP)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Jackson</td>
<td>Number One Hits</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alan Jackson</td>
<td>Number One Hits</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miranda Lambert</td>
<td>Crazy Ex-Girlfriend</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenny Chesney</td>
<td>Just Who I Am: Poets &amp; Pirates</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garth Brooks</td>
<td>The Ultimate Hits</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rascal Flatts</td>
<td>Still Feels Good</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim McGraw</td>
<td>Greatest Hits: Limited Edition</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad Paisley</td>
<td>5th Gear</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewel</td>
<td>Perfectly Clear</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy Travis</td>
<td>Around the Bend</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady Antebellum</td>
<td>Greatest Hits</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blake Shelton</td>
<td>Pure BS</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trace Adkins</td>
<td>American Man: Greatest Hits Volume II</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Plant</td>
<td>Raising Sundown</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Otto</td>
<td>Sunset Man</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reba McEntire</td>
<td>Reba Duets I</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greatest Hits: Every Mile A Memory</td>
<td>2003-2008</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### HOT COUNTRY SONGS

- **Sugarland clocks in at number one**
  - With "Good Hearted Woman," the band moves to the top of the charts.

- **Toby Keith**
  - "Schoolin' the South" is a new entry at number 19.

- **Garth Brooks**
  - "The Ultimate Hits" stays strong at number 11.

- **Rascal Flatts**
  - "Still Feels Good" continues to climb, reaching number 15.

- **Tim McGraw**
  - "Greatest Hits: Limited Edition" is a consistent hit at number 18.

- **Brad Paisley**
  - "5th Gear" is rising, currently at number 14.

- **Jewel**
  - "Perfectly Clear" makes its way up to number 17.

- **Randy Travis**
  - "Around the Bend" continues to chart, currently at number 16.

- **Lady Antebellum**
  - "Greatest Hits" is strong, currently at number 19.

- **Blake Shelton**
  - "Pure BS" is steadily climbing, currently at number 21.

- **Trace Adkins**
  - "American Man: Greatest Hits Volume II" is expanding its reach, currently at number 22.

- **Robert Plant**
  - "Raising Sundown" is on the rise, currently at number 20.

- **James Otto**
  - "Sunset Man" is gaining momentum, currently at number 23.

- **Reba McEntire**
  - "Reba Duets I" maintains its position, currently at number 26.

**Note:** For complete chart data, visit [www.billboard.com](http://www.billboard.com).
### Hot Dance Club Play

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist/Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Give Peace a Chance</td>
<td>The Isley Brothers - Epic/EMI-Capitol</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I Feel You (Candyman)</td>
<td>Donell Jones - MCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Give Me Just One More Chance</td>
<td>2 Unlimited - Virgin USA/Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jive Talk</td>
<td>Tevin Campbell - Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Feel So Good</td>
<td>Vanilla Ice - MCA/Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>My Love</td>
<td>Dru Hill - Chrysalis/Cherrytree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Can't Live Without Your Love</td>
<td>Todd Terry - BMG-Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>You're The One</td>
<td>Stevie Wonder - Capitol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Come Over (Chill Out)</td>
<td>DJ Jazzy Jeff &amp; The Fresh Prince - Warner Bros.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Can't Help Myself (Sugar Town)</td>
<td>Jimmy Ruffin - Warner Bros.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Feel My Love</td>
<td>Single - Epic</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Stay</td>
<td>Bone Thugs-N-Harmony - Interscope/Epstein</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Just Feel</td>
<td>B.B. &amp; The Fingers - Warner Bros.</td>
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</table>

### Top Dance Albums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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**HITS OF THE WORLD**

### JAPAN

#### SINGLES
- **September Spring**
- **Hidenosaka no Wild**
- **August 2008**

#### UNITED KINGDOM

#### CANADA

#### AUSTRALIA

#### FRANCE

#### CANADA (BILLBOARD CANADIAN HOT 100)

#### ITALY

#### SPAIN

#### BELGIUM

#### SWEDEN

#### IRELAND

#### FLANDERS

#### ARGENTINA

#### EURO DIGITAL SONGS

#### EURO SINGLES SALES

#### EURO ALBUMS

#### EURO RADIO AIRPLAY

---

Kid Rock’s “All Summer Long” continues to rule at #1 as the base fans love his #1 hit. The U.K. Singles chart offering from the Euro Singers hits.

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**Data for week of August 16, 2008 | CHARTS LEGEND on Page 51**

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**www.americanradiohistory.com**

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Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data

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**Singles & Tracks Song Index**

_AUG 16 2008_

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**Contact Us**

For chart reprints call 646.654.4633

Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data

Data for week of AUGUST 16, 2008
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EXECUTIVE TURNTABLE

Send submissions to: exec@billboard.com

RECORD COMPANIES: EMI Music appoints Rob Stevenson president of Virgin U.S. He was executive VP of A&R at Island Def Jam Music Group in the United States.

RCA Music Group names Mark Flaherty senior VP of marketing. He was VP, Razor & Tie Entertainment ups Victor Zaraya to executive VP of finance and operations. He was senior VP.

Zomba Label Group promotes Tice Merriweather to VP of publicity. He was senior director.

PUBLISHING: Scott Francis is appointed to the newly created position of president of Warner/Chappell Music and chairman/CEO of Warner/Chappell Music U.S. He was president of BMG Music Publishing’s Songs North America division.

BMI names Robert Boone VP, chief human resources officer. He was corporate VP of human resources and risk management at Isle of Capri Casinos.

DISTRIBUTION: Alternative Distribution Alliance names Michael Black executive VP of global/GM and David Orleans senior VP of sales and marketing. Black was GM, and Orleans was VP.

DIGITAL: Mobile entertainment company Thumbplay promotes Mitch Rotter to senior VP of content acquisition and strategy and appoints Susan Lietz to VP of corporate communications. Rotter was VP, and Lietz was VP of public relations at Rodale.

Mobile media company Skyfire Labs taps Adam Sexton as chief marketing officer. He served in the same role at Groove Mobile.

RELATED FIELDS: Former Univision Publishing VP of administration Nestor Rodriguez has formed Nestor Rodriguez Entertainment. The new company will encompass publishing administration, publishing consulting, singer/songwriter management, production and digital distribution.

—Edited by Mitchell Peters

GOODWORKS

MAROON 5 CHIPS IN FOR AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

A music video that captures behind-the-scenes footage of Maroon 5 on tour in Japan has been posted exclusively to the Web site for Amnesty International, an organization that exposes human rights abuses and aims to create a safer world.

“We were looking to draw people toward their site,” says Maroon 5 keyboardist Jesse Carmichael, whose father, Bob Carmichael, created the video for “If I Never See Your Face Again.” “I hear a lot of our fans have gone and checked it out and made donations, so we’re happy about that.”

Amnesty International USA executive director Larry Cox says the video has “brought a whole new fan base” to the organization’s Web site. “The band’s support as Amnesty International members will help ensure that tech-savvy youth learn new ways to make a difference in this world,” he says.

Carmichael adds, “I’m grateful that there’s somebody like Amnesty out there looking into those things and raising awareness. I hope that our contribution can help.”

The video can be viewed at musicforhumanrights.com.

—Mitchell Peters

ASCAP TELEVISION AND FILM SCORING WORKSHOP WITH RICHARD BELLIS

ASCAP selected 12 aspiring composers to participate in the 20th annual ASCAP Television and Film Scoring Workshop with legendary composer/arranger/mentor Richard BELLIS. The prestigious program featured a series of seminars and training sessions in Los Angeles through the month of July, culminating in the next generation of emerging TV and film composers. In addition to BELLIS, workshop participants had the opportunity to hear and learn from some of the best in the industry, including Warner Brothers president of music operations, Doug Frank, Academy Award-nominated and Emmy-winning composer John Debney, director Tom Shadyac, music editor Jeff Carson and composers Hans Zimmer and James Newton Howard.

ABOVE RIGHT: From left: ASCAP senior director of film and TV music Mike Todd, John Debney, Richard BELLIS and Jeff Carson.

RIGHT: From left: ASCAP senior director of film and TV music Mike Todd, John Debney, Richard BELLIS and Jeff Carson.

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INSIDE TRACK

PARAMORE WRITING FOR NEW ALBUM

With its Final Riot tour in motion, Paramore is using sound checks to work on new material for its follow-up to its 2007 sophomore album, "Riot!" Guitarist Josh Farro tells Track that the group has "anywhere from seven to 10 songs. They're not complete, but they're really good ideas. I think we have a good chance of using. It's mainly just music that I've written and Hayley [Williams, Paramore's singer] has some lyrics and melodies. She's kind of just waiting on me to finish my musical ideas before I can give them to her. It's a slow process." Farro says he expects the group to start working in earnest on its third album this fall, after coming off the road. He hopes to be in the studio by January and have the album out by mid-2009. A producer has not yet been chosen, but Farro says that "a lot of people are interested, a lot of big-name guys we're going to meet with. It feels pretty good to have some big-name producers that really want to record your band, but I think we're going to wait 'til we have some actual songs that are finished."

The new songs, according to the guitarist, are a varied bunch. "I can just see it having a lot more dynamics," Farro predicts. "The first record [2005's "All We Know Is Falling"] and 'Riot!' seemed to stay at the same level, but now we've got some really, really mellow songs that you'd never expect to hear out of our band, and then we've got even heavier songs than we've ever had. It's going to be a little different."
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