Radio Killa & RedZone

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THE PENUA PROJECT
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MES ENTERTAINMENT
MYMAN, ABELL, FINEMAN, FOX, GREENSPAN & LIGHT, LLP
ICM
TSG FINANCIAL
VIBE MAGAZINE
GIANT MAGAZINE
FADER
BLENDER
BENTLEY
MERCEDES
LOUIS VUITTON
GUCCI
NIKE
CHRISTIAN AUDIGIER
MOUNTAIN DEW
Soulja Boy

Cranks Out The Birdwalk, Kicks Into The Sneaker Game And Animates Online Video
A Download on the Digital Music Revolution

Billboard's Digital Music Live! - the exclusive digital music track of CES - offers insight from industry insiders on the digital transformation of the music business including: new music services, social media, ad-supported free streaming revenue models, digital DIY artist services and more.

ADDITIONAL KEYNOTES:

PAUL DEGOOYER
SVP of Electronic Games & Music
MTV

DOUGLAS MERRILL
President, Digital Business
EMI Music Group

ALEX RIGOPULOS
CEO and Co-Founder
Harmonica

PETER BRODSKY
SVP for Business Affairs
Sony/ATV Music Publishing

TIM CHANG
Principal
Norwest Venture Partners

TED COHEN
Managing Partner
TAG Strategic

FRED DAVIS
Partner
Davis Shapiro NMPA

MARK MONTGOMERY
CEO
Echo

BILL NGUYEN
Founder/Chairman
Lala

SCOTT RICHMAN
VP/GM, Madison Square Garden Interactive

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GREG SANDOVAL
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ON THE CHARTS

ALBUMS

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THIS WEEK ON .BIZ

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HOME FRONT

360 DEGREES OF BILLBOARD

Events

DIGITAL MUSIC LIVE

LATIN MUSIC
Don't miss the hottest week in Latin music. Join Billboard April 19-23 at the 20th anniversary of the Latin Music Conference & Awards, the single most important Latin music industry event. More at billboardevents.com.

MUSIC & MONEY
Connect with the dealmakers driving the music biz at this exclusive event that gathers the music and financial communities for an examination of the realities facing the music industry. For details, go to billboardevents.com.

Online

CONFAB VIDEO
Visit billboard.com/video to watch interviews with Gene Simmons, Diane Warren and other highlights from the recent Film & TV Music Conference and Billboard's Touring Conference and Awards.
Enron executives have little in common with musicians. But an obscure tax pro-
vision may visit the sins of the former on the latter.

In 2004, Congress added Section 409A to the tax code in response to the Enron executive who had received deferred compensation payments. It was a system that allowed executives to accelerate their deferred compensation before the company went bankrupt.

In the process, Congress ran into the law of unintended consequences. The rules of Section 409A apply not only to agreements with employees, but also to contracts between artists and labels, publishers or other companies if these contracts create deferred income (e.g., royalty or advance arrangements). Although the law became effective in 2005, there has been a transitional period until IRS rules could be finalized. That ends Dec. 31 — in less than a month.

So let’s say an artist or songwriter seeks to receive a royalty or advance earlier than provided in the contract. If the payment as originally structured was subject to Section 409A, the artist receiving the accelerated payment could be subject to a substantial penalty — current taxation on the payment, plus an additional tax of 20% plus interest on the amount of the payment and on any unpaid “deferred compensation” under the contract.

There is an exception from Section 409A for payments made to “independent contractors.” Under a “safe harbor” in the IRS rules, if the artist receives less than 70% of his or her income from his or her “trade or business” from a single “service recipient,” the artist will qualify as an independent contractor. But since the IRS has not defined “trade or business,” this exception poses some interesting questions for recording artists and songwriters. If an artist receives 50% of his or her income from the label and the other 50% from another entity for trading and merchandise, he or she should be below the 70% limit — unless the IRS defines each of these activities as a separate trade or business.

There is also little guidance on the meaning of "service recipient." The IRS defines a service recipient as "the person for whom the services are performed and with respect to whom the legally binding right to compensation arise." With 360 deals becoming common, artists may soon be paid by a single corporation for all of their activities. That means that the independent contractor safe harbor may not be available.

Congress probably did not intent for Section 409A to affect musicians, and a simple clarification by the IRS could address many of these problems. But the IRS has stated that it will not issue any rulings on Section 409A, and attorneys and business managers representing music creators should err on the side of caution in the absence of guidance to the contrary.

Meanwhile, the Recording Academy and Recording Artists’ Coalition are working on resolving the issue in Washington, D.C. Ideally, the IRS will agree to provide a clearer definition of “trade or business” for artists or perhaps offer guidance relating to independent contractors that includes artists in the designation. Without IRS action, the organizations will take this issue to Congress.

Until there are answers to how Section 409A applies to artists, we urge our colleagues in the music business to benefit from this provision. Contracts need to be reviewed carefully and structured so as to not violate any of these rules to avoid having artists paying for the mistakes of Enron.

Jaye Cooper is counsel for the Recording Artists’ Coalition. Bobby Rosenblum is a deputy counsel for the Recording Academy. They are both shareholders in the entertainment practice at Greenberg Traurig.

FOR THE RECORD

■ A Nov. 8 story about BMI Group’s debt obligations should have stated that the company’s earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization in the current fiscal year take into account artist advances.

■ A Nov. 15 story about the quarterly Top 10 Publisher Airplay chart should have noted that Kobalt Music Group has a share of that chart. All Summertime Laser includes local titles and audience and phone number for verification.

■ The story should have stated that Kobalt’s market share in the third quarter was 4.43%.

OPINION

A Taxing Proposition

Artists May Have To Pay For The Sins Of Enron

BY JAY COOPER and BOBBY ROSENBLUM

Regulation is Right

It was great to see an opinion column discuss the Latin market (Billboard, Nov. 15). Leiela Cabo’s article mentioned the critical issues that affect the development of Latin America not only in music but in many other areas. Unfortunately, societies in Latin America are “cash-based,” making cell phones almost the only alternative payment option.

Besides the tax incentive for music, Uruguay has a tax incentive for software development. This is one of the reasons that it has seen an impressive growth of the software industry, with professionals in the industry being paid some of the highest salaries.

As we have recently rediscovered in the United States, regulation is always important and regulation that allows the private sector to grow and gives opportunity to new business models should be a priority for Latin American governments.

Diego Prusky Principal, InStyle St. Louis
LATEST
South Africa.
and territories.
Federation.

The bicentennial performances among others, DJ weren't available though specifics department of Viacom -owned MTV was to deliver details of the cuts to its department heads Dec. 4, according to multiple reports, though specifics weren't available at press time.

LINEUP
DJ Tiesto, Carl Cox, Bloc Party, Deadmau5, the Ting Tings, Cut Copy and Crystal Castles, among others, will perform as part of the 2009 Ultra Music Festival, to be held March 27-29 at Bicentennial Park in Miami. The event will take place in conjunction with the 24th annual Winter Music Conference. Two-day passes for Ultra are available through its Web site for $99.95, and a two-day VIP pass runs $350.

PRE-GAME SHOW
Can The Grammy Nomination Special Draw More Buyers Than Viewers?

This year's transformation of the annual Grammy Awards nominations announcement into a full-blow prime-time TV special could help provide a badly needed boost in sales at a difficult time for the music industry.

But the Dec. 3 "Grammy Nominations Concert Live!*" telecast on CBS fell short of being a ratings winner. The one-hour show finished fourth in its 9 p.m. time slot, averaging 7 million viewers, behind NBC's "Life" with 8.1 million, Fox's "Secret Millionaire" with 8.5 million and ABC's "Private Practice" with 7.8 million, according to Nielsen Media Research.

The audience for the nominations special was also less than half the disappointing average viewership of 17.2 million for the 50th annual Grammy Awards in February.

And even though it featured live performances by Taylor Swift, Christina Aguilera, Mariah Carey, Foo Fighters and John Mayer, the show also failed to resonate strongly with younger viewers, finishing third among those ages 18-34.

Still, the extra exposure could yet provide additional strength to the sales boost that Grammy nominees, especially those with multiple nods, usually enjoy leading up to the awards show two months later.

Speaking from the red carpet before the concert, Recording Academy chairman Neil Portnow called the unexpected concept of a televised nominations show "the Wild West," but one that could give the music business a much-needed lift in the fourth quarter.

"It's very important to always try to raise the bar of what you're doing," Portnow said, noting that unlike the Academy Award or Emmy nominations, "we have the unique ability to make a concert out of it."

Was he looking for a certain ratings share to judge the night's success, given the poor ratings of the Grammys telecast earlier this year?

"I don't view this as an evaluation that could be simply codified by ratings numbers," Portnow said, attributing poor ratings last year to lowered TV viewership overall because of the writers' strike.

Portnow said after the nominations show that he wasn't disappointed by its fourth-place finish, given that it was the first time the event has been televised.

Already on track to have the best-selling album of 2008, Lil Wayne led the field with eight nominations, including nods for album of the year and best rap album for "Tha Carter III," best rap song for "Lollipop," and best rap song collaboration for "Got Money" featuring T-Pain.

Other leading nominees are Coldplay, which earned seven nominations, and Jay-Z, Ne-Yo and Kanye West, who each earned six. Ne-Yo's "Year of the Gentleman" scored an album of the year nomination, while his single "Closer" was honored with a nod for best male pop vocal performance, signaling the R&B vocalist's emergence as a mainstay star.

The Recording Academy has often been criticized for its middle-of-the-road inclinations, such as when it awarded album of the year honors to Steely Dan's "Two Against Nature" in 2001 over Eminem's "The Marshall Mathers LP." But in recent years, Grammy honorees have appeared more in synch with critical tastes, and that's certainly the case this year.

Well-received favorite-dominant album of the year nominees, including Radiohead's "In Rainbows" and Robert Plant & Alison Krauss' "Raising Sand," while it was seen as a best soft rock vocal performance for two tracks from "Amorita's Secret," a vinyl-only four-track live EP of a June 27, 2007, in-store appearance at Amoeba Records in Hollywood. Total sales: 6,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

The nominations also provided a bittersweet Cinderella story. The late R&B singer, Linda Jones, who was best-known for her 1967 hit "Hypnotized," was nominated with her daughter Terry Jones and daughter in her SoundScan.

Envelope, please: Grammy nominations COLDPLAY (top), LIL WAYNE (above left) and LEONA LEWIS for best traditional R&B vocal performance for "Baby I Know." The elder Jones, who was nicknamed "the Empress of Soul," died in 1972 at the age of 27 before receiving the widespread recognition that many felt she deserved. "Baby I Know" was part of a posthumous album of all new material titled "Soul Talkin'" that was released in September (billboard.biz, Oct. 7).

Streaming Ahead

By Antony Bruno

CBS Radio Extends Its Online Reach

While other Internet radio providers are frantically trying to stay aloft in the wake of higher music royalty fees, CBS Radio is using the situation to solidify its standing within the format.

After essentially taking over AOL's Web radio operations earlier this year, CBS Radio has struck a similar deal to power Yahoo Music's Launchcast Internet radio service starting in early 2009. CBS Radio will handle advertising sales for Launchcast's 150 stations, as it already does for AOL's 200 stations. The company has 150 online simulcast and Web-only stations of its own and is a CBS Corp. sibling of streaming music site Last.fm.

Driving CBS Radio's momentum in Internet radio is the growing pressure on webcasters to monetize their traffic more effectively. In particular, the U.S. Copyright Royalty Board's decision last year to sharply increase the performance royalties paid by Internet radio operators has forced such services to ease their resistance to audio ads, which are likelier to reach listeners than display ads (Billboard, Nov. 22).

But portal sites like Yahoo and AOL are geared more toward national ads than the local focus typical of radio ads, another factor pushing them toward partnerships with CBS Radio, one of the largest U.S. terrestrial radio broadcasters.

"Advertisers want to reach specific metro areas that are relevant to their products and services," Yahoo Music head Michael Spiegelman says. "Yahoo is really oriented to sell nationally. That translates well into video and display advertising, but not as well into audio ads." Launchcast doesn't have a dedicated ad sales team. By contrast, CBS Radio has a sales staff of 1,000 dedicated to local markets around the country. And that staff now has more than 500 Internet radio channels to sell inventory on, many of which overlap in major metro areas, allowing advertisers to buy one ad that will run on CBS, Yahoo and AOL stations simultaneously.

CBS Radio's deals with Yahoo and AOL have greatly extended its online reach. In October, the most recent period for which data is available, CBS' Web properties had 1.95 million unique visitors, and Launchcast had 2.87 million. AOL exceeded both with 3.99 million, according to comScore Media Metrix.

CBS doesn't rely on music alone to drive its ad sales. Unlike AOL and Yahoo, CBS Radio curries several stations dedicated to news, sports and talk radio. In fact, sports-oriented WFAN (660 AM) New York is its highest-rated Internet radio feed, according to David Goodman, president of digital media and integrated marketing for CBS Radio.

"We're now the second-largest streaming media company in the world after YouTube," Goodman says, citing CBS Radio's pre-YouTube 3.6 billion streams per month to YouTube's 7.9 billion. "We have the ability to leverage that entire audience, or slice and dice it in a number of different ways, to give an advertiser the best solution for their needs."

CBS Radio's agreement to handle online radio ad sales for both long-time and potential rivals could raise eyebrows, given the persistent merger speculation surrounding the two companies.

The consolidation of three of the top Internet radio entities into one ad network could prove appealing for advertisers keen on reaching an aggregated online listening audience. That, in turn, could keep the participating parties from scaling back their music programming—all the more reason something other online radio outfit would continue to create the new formats. The other downside is that playlists could become homogenized as has happened at terrestrial radio in the wake of consolidation. CBS Radio insists it will leave music programming decisions to its partners.
Commercial Alternative
Deutsch Delves Into Band Marketing With L.A. Indie Artist

At first glance, an indie rock band and a prominent advertising agency might seem to make for odd bedfellows. But Los Angeles country-rock act Miss Derringer and ad firm Deutsch have joined hands in an unusual strategic partnership under which the agency will help in the launch and marketing of the band’s forthcoming album, “Winter Hill.”

Deutsch will construct a new Web site and online store for Miss Derringer and assist in the design of the CD packaging and related merchandise and promotional materials. Perhaps most important, the agency will also pitch Miss Derringer’s music for placement in ads for its clients, a roster that includes big consumer brands like IKEA, Sony PlayStation and Saturn.

For the band, the partnership opens doors to potentially lucrative revenue streams and the marketing savvy of a leading player on Madison Avenue. For Deutsch, working with Miss Derringer gives it a chance to demonstrate expertise to potential ad clients that it has the expertise they need to reach younger demographics.

Big clients “want to see that we have a proven track record with youth culture,” Deutsch New York chief creative officer Peter Nicholson says. “Where we support and develop an act like Miss Derringer—that’s a genuine mark for our street-level credibility.”

Deutsch VP/account director Tim Rivera picked the idea of a partnership to the unsigned Miss Derringer and its manager David Bason earlier this year. While the group isn’t signed to a label, it has released two albums on its own, supported Blondie on tour, appeared on the cover of L.A. Weekly and had one of its songs featured last year in an episode of the Comedy Central show “How I Met Your Mother.”

Rivera says Miss Derringer fits the profile of the type of music act that Deutsch is interested in working with—bands who already know who they are, where they want to go and appear to be on the verge of breaking out to a larger audience, he says.

“They understand what they need in order to get more exposure as a band without a record deal,” Rivera says. “You don’t need to be on the radio. You need eyeballs, quicker, faster word-of-mouth. We’re not music experts. We’re not the radio or a label. But we know audiences and the media landscape.”

Bason, a former Roadrunner Records A&R director who describes Miss Derringer as a “goth-country-anar-noir band,” says the group is interested in reaching nonexclusive licensing deals and partnerships with the right bands.

Rivera “is a music guy,” and he pitched the company like an A&R person does,” Bason says. “The fit had to be right.”

Working directly with an ad agency wouldn’t work for just any act, says Bason, who also manages Razor & Tie rock band Semi Precious Weapons. He says it’s important for the act in question to own its own masters and publishing. That enables it to enter into any number of nonexclusive agreements and everyone can walk away with bigger percentages.

“For a band like ours, synchs are the only way that anyone makes money,” he says.

Deutsch will earn a percentage of each successful revenue stream it has a roll in securing, whether it be a synch deal or album and merch sales. The two sides declined to reveal the exact terms of the deal.

The firm’s partnership with Miss Derringer isn’t the first time it has dabbled in this sort of scheme. In 2006, Deutsch offered Australian rock act Sick Puppies free labor on its CD packaging, logo, merchandise design, Web site and MySpace page design for the group’s album “Dressed Up For Life” (Billboard, March 24, 2007). Deutsch fanned out the project to students at New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology and the band chose a winner out of 15 submissions. Sick Puppies “had some basic brand elements and were basically like, ‘What else can you do with this?’” Deutsch’s Nicholson says. “As a trial study, it was a great way to be exposed to this kind of band, its brand and its audience.”

With that experience under its belt, Deutsch began approaching more bands and, according to Rivera, has worked closely with “two or three” other artists, including one “bigger name” that ultimately walked away.

“An association with an ad agency is something that some groups just aren’t comfortable with,” Nicholson says. “Some artists just want to make art. They don’t want to look at themselves as a business property.”

---

Tap Dancing
Popular iPhone Gaming App Moves Into Multi-Artist Editions

You’ve played the iPhone app. Now get the soundtrack.

EMI Music has become the first major label to line up multiple artists for an edition of Tapulous’ popular iPhone game application Tap Tap Revenge.

The new version of the rhythm game, called Tap Tap Dance, features songs by five EMI acts—Moby, the Chemical Brothers, Digitalism, Daft Punk and Basement Jaxx—as well as independent acts Justice, Junkie XL, Soul Magic Orchestra and Morgan Page.

Tapulous will release all 10 tracks included in the game by the end of the year as a digital soundtrack that will be available exclusively through iTunes. The Palo Alto, Calif., app developer is also in talks with other major labels and expects to launch another application with multiple artists early next year, Tapulous CEO Bart Decrem says.

“We are close to having a formula that the artists, labels, publishers and Apple are all happy with,” he says.

After Apple gets its 30% cut of Tap Tap Dance’s $4.99 sale price, that would leave about $3.50 to be divvied up among Tapulous and the other parties.

The original Tap Tap Revenge, which was free, was the iTunes App Store’s most popular game download of 2008.

Despite the involvement of EMI Music, the label says it will leave promotion of Tap Tap Dance to the artists involved, according to Cynthia Sexton, EMI Music executive VP of global brand partnership, licensing and synchronization. “We’re talking to them about ways of letting their fan base know through existing social networks,” she says.

While EMI’s planned digital soundtrack for Tap Tap Dance would be a first for Tapulous, the company is also positioning the growing Tap Tap franchise itself as a way for fans to hear new music.

Every Thursday, Tap Tap provides game users free song downloads and exclusive mixes from well-known artists, including Katy Perry, Kaiser Chiefs and Lady Antebellum.

Christmas with Weezer, another new edition of the Tap Tap game, includes covers of six classic Christmas songs including “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” and “Silent Night.”

In an announcement on the band’s Web site, Weezer said the tracks were “recorded exclusively for this game and are not available anywhere else.”

---

>> Fleetwood Mac Returning to the Road

Fleetwood Mac will embark on its first tour in five years next spring, beginning March 1 in Pittsburgh. Tickets for the Live Nation-produced Unleashed tour go on sale Dec. 15. So far, 16 dates are on tap through March 26 in Toronto, but the trek is expected to run through the summer. Core members Lindsey Buckingham, Stevie Nicks, John McVie and Mick Fleetwood are all onboard.

>> Mexican Authorities Raid Nightclubs

Nearly a dozen Mexico City nightclubs were raided by police last month, according to IFPI, for playing music without authorization from rights holders. Acting on tips from Mexican music licensing agency Somexfon, police and representatives of the Mexican attorney general’s office carried out the raids between Nov. 7 and Nov. 21. The raids targeted nightclub owners and DJs who played unsigned CDs with violation notices.

>> Bonnaroo Sets Dates for 2009

The eighth Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival will be held June 11-14, 2009, on its usual site in Manchester, Tenn., an hour southeast of Nashville. A lineup announcement is expected early next year. Last month, Bonnaroo won the top festival honor at the Billboard Touring Awards for the fourth time. The event’s 2008 lineup featured Metallica, Pearl Jam, My Morning Jacket and Widespread Panic, among many others.


www.americanradiohistory.com
MUMBAI MOURNS

Fallout From Terror Attacks For India's Live Biz

At a time when some international recording artists are looking to include India in their Asian touring itineraries, the late November terrorist attacks in Mumbai could have a damaging impact on the country's emerging live entertainment business.

While India's touring market remains relatively small and is hampered by inadequate infrastructure, a growing number of Western recording stars have performed there in recent years, including Beyoncé, 50 Cent, Wyclef Jean, the Rolling Stones, Shakira, Aerosmith, Lionel Richie and Iron Maiden.

"The tragic events in Mumbai will have a huge impact on the decision of artists touring in India in general," Agency Group CEO Neil Warnock says. "This is such a shame, as we have seen the touring business in India becoming more viable over the last several years."

One immediate casualty of the attacks was the Dec. 7 Live Earth India concert, which organizers canceled after gunmen killed 171 people during a three-day siege at two hotels and other landmarks in Mumbai, India's entertainment and financial capital. Live Earth India was to be held at Mumbai's 20,000-capacity Andheri Sports Complex featuring Bon Jovi, Roger Waters, Will.i.am of the Black Eyed Peas, Bollywood actor Abhishek Bachchan and others.

Large concerts in India are typically held in stadiums, with the top markers being Mumbai and Bangalore. Since many shows are held outdoors, the recent terror attacks could raise the question of crowd control and safety.

"They don't have arenas like we have, where you can control the ingress and egress," AEG Live CEO Randy Phillips says. "The question is the confidence level that you have in the security company you're hiring, and whether they can do the job and secure the site."

Warnock says he hopes the Indian government will introduce new security measures at concert venues, noting that such steps would "provide not only the local people but also the international touring community that coming back to India can be achieved in a safe and secure way."

India has about four primary concert promotion companies and a number of up-and-coming promoters trying to tap into the business, according to a booking agent at a international talent firm who asked to remain anonymous.

"Agents and managers will take a step back and want to work with those who have a more proven track record, which unfortunately, in my opinion, may hurt some of the younger guys who are starting to do a good job," the agent says. "But we want to be careful who we're working with."

While safety is a concern, touring acts shouldn't rule out the country, the agent says. Artist fees to perform in India are comparable to other markets in Asia, but since promoters can't charge high ticket prices, most concerts in the country are sponsored, he says. As such, acts can see additional dollars from endorsement opportunities, albeit offset in part by high entertainment taxes.

"They're starting to sell albums in India more than they used to do, so there's a new awareness of Western artists," the agent says, noting that A-list acts sell between 10,000 and 30,000 tickets per show. "If you start closing your eyes to opportunities in the outside world, you're going to cut yourself off."

Amita Sarkar, head of the entertainment division at the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in New Delhi, says she believes India's touring business will recover quickly, buoyed by a growing middle class interested in new entertainment options.

"It is still an emerging sector within the overall context," she says. "But of course, it has huge potential.

AEG's Phillips agree that the Indian market holds promise.

"Time has a way of healing all wounds and changing people's perspective on things," he says. "As a company, we wouldn't mind opening up a market that is potentially big."

Additional reporting by Andre Paine in London.

6 QUESTIONS

With BETSY MCLAUGHLIN

by KAMAU HIGH

Music doesn't account for a large portion of Hot Topic's overall business.

In fact, CEO Betsy McLaughlin says, music CDs and DVDs are only "a single-digit part of what we sell."

Still, the teen apparel and lifestyle retailer has made judicious use of marketing partnerships with record labels and film studios to drive traffic to its stores—and, yes, to sell the occasional CD.

In October, Hot Topic expanded its music retail operations with the launch of a new digital storefront called Shockhound.com, which sells music downloads and licensed merchandise and incorporates social-networking features throughout the site.

In an interview, McLaughlin talks about Hot Topic's approach to music retailing.

1. Some retailers have announced plans to cut back on the amount of floor space devoted to music. Is Hot Topic planning a similar move?

No. We are experiencing double-digit increases in (sales of) CDs. We have more market share because so many of the record stores are going out of business. Last summer we repositioned the inventory to be about small bands. We want only 20-25 of the albums we sell to be really big bands and the rest to be small, regional bands, the kinds of bands people want to support and are willing to pay for a CD.

2. Wal-Mart, Best Buy and Target continue to score exclusive album releases for big-name artists. Does Hot Topic have any interest in vying for album exclusives as well?

It depends. They are paying a lot of money to secure those album releases. We are more interested in small and medium artists than by paying millions in upfront money to larger artists.

3. Hot Topic worked closely with Atlantic and Summit Entertainment to promote the "Twilight" soundtrack, with themed window displays and even a line of "Twilight" apparel. How did that deal come about?

We have a license business as well as a music business. Whether: it's "The Dark Knight" or "The Nightmare Before Christmas" or "Iron Man" or the upcoming "Punisher: War Zone" and "Watchmen," we have this history of doing licensed properties.

Summit, which has the rights to the movie, was looking for a retail partner and they approached us. At the time we had no idea Paramore was going to do the title track. As the soundtrack came together we started to realize a good portion of the music it was applicable to Hot Topic. When the soundtrack was released we were a natural place to put it.

When we placed our order, Atlantic may have been a bit shocked. We actually took our numbers up after we saw presales. We had more people show up for "Twilight" listening parties and presales than we had ever before. Our initial order was for 15,000 units. Then it went to 30,000 and finally up to 50,000.

4. What will be the next "Twilight"?

I don't know. We're still working on "Twilight" and they have maybe three more movies. Harry Potter will be interesting. "Twilight" is one of those licenses that comes along once a decade.

5. Why start another Web site devoted to selling music and merchandise?

The initial plan was to incorporate the digital music piece into hottopic.com. As we started to scope it out, we realized how much opportunity there was for not just rock but other genres. At the time we started planning the site (about a year ago) there were sites selling only music or only with editorial content. There weren't many social-media sites combining merch with music. We have 3 million tracks in all genres. No longer are teens just interested in only one genre of music. They're not just listening to rock but their father's rock or jazz because it's an inspiration to their favorite artist.

6. Who is the Shockhound consumer?

I ask because on the Top Artists page recently, the No. 1 pick was Pink and No. 2 was Dean Martin. One of the things we're seeing is we're getting a wide variety of customers. Less than 50% of people's profiles on Shockhound say that rock is their favorite genre. It spreads out to pop, hip-hop, electronica and jazz. I'm not sure how Dean Martin got up there. Pink doesn't surprise me and country artists have made it to the top five. I'm hoping Tom Jones will hit the top five.
Alan Gordon, 64

Alan Gordon, 64, who co-wrote the Turtles' "Happy Together," Three Dog Night's "Celebrate" and other hits, died Nov. 22 of cancer at his home in Scottsdale, Ariz. Spanning the length of his career, the Natick, Mass., native wrote songs that went on to be performed by an eclectic mix of top musical acts, including Bobby Darin, the Righteous Brothers, Barbra Streisand, Alice Cooper, Joe Walsh and Frank Zappa.

He remained perhaps best-known for the hits he co-wrote with the Turtles with longtime collaborator Garry Bonner, including the 1967 No. 1 "Happy Together," as well as the top 20 hits "She'd Rather Be With Me," "You Know What I Mean" and "She's My Girl."

"We in the music business were so lucky to know such a person, a real man of such joy and greatness," Bonner said in a statement. "He was a wonderful guy," says Charles Koppelman, Gordon's longtime music publisher. "Both Alan and his songs will live forever in everyone's hearts and minds."

Gordon is survived by his wife, Annette; his son, Christian; his daughter-in-law, Giovanna; and his grandson, Joshua.

—Jaclyn Albert

DEATHS
Rob Partridge, 60, the veteran music publicist who helped persuade Island Records to sign U2, died Nov. 26 in London following a lengthy battle with cancer.

Partridge was the founder/owner of London-based music PR and artist management company Coalition Group. A hugely popular and respected figure within the U.K. music business, Partridge began his industry career as a journalist for the British trade publication Music Week before joining the now-defunct weekly music magazine Melody Maker in the mid-'70s.

He became the head of press at Island in 1977, joining the company's board as media director four years later. In that role, Partridge was responsible for a roster that included Bob Marley & the Wailers, with whom he worked until Marley's death in 1981. Partridge subsequently handled press for the Bob Marley Estate until 1997.

Other acts with whom he worked closely at Island included U2, Grace Jones, Kid Creole & the Coconuts, Run-D.M.C., N.W.A., Lee "Scratch" Perry, Robert Palmer, Steve Winwood, the B-52s and Tom Waits.

"Rob Partridge was the first person in the British music industry to sing our praises," U2 frontman Bono said in a statement on the band's Web site. "He not only had an eye for talent, he was a nurturer."

Partridge exited Island in 1990 to launch the PR agency Partridge & Storey with his business partner Neil Storey in early 1991. The company became Coalition PR when Storey departed in 1996. Current acts on its roster include Waits, Marianne Faithfull, Amadou & Miriam, Manu Chao, Billy Bragg, the Charlatans and Daniel Lanois. The company has also enjoyed lengthy relationships with retailer HMV and the Mercury Music Prize.

In 1999, Partridge launched Coalition Management, which has a client list that includes the Music, the Streets, the Zutons, the View, Bloc Party, Embrace and Fionn Regan.

Partridge is survived by his wife, Tina.

—Tom Ferguson

Danny Yarbrough, 64, the former head of Sony Music Distribution, died in his sleep Nov. 3 in Savannah, Ga. Yarbrough was known for his business acumen and for playing a leading role in helping modernize the music industry's sales and distribution practices.

He joined CBS Records in 1963 as a sales representative in the company's Southeast branch in Atlanta. In 1975, he was named field sales manager for the New York branch and a year later became branch manager of that complex. In 1979, he was appointed branch manager of the company's Southwest office in Dallas and then moved back to New York in 1987 as VP of sales for Columbia Records. In 1989, he returned to distribution as senior VP of sales and distribution.

Yarbrough was named president of Sony Music Distribution in May 1994 and became chairman in 1998, replacing Paul Smith. After leaving Sony in 2003, he joined Musicland, staying there for a year before becoming an industry consultant.

Yarbrough is survived by his wife, Mary Ellen. Remembrance donations may be made in his name to the Bethesda Home for Boys at 9520 Ferguson Ave., Savannah, GA 31406 and the T.J. Martell Foundation, 555 Madison Ave., Third Floor, New York, NY 10022.

—Ed Chisman
Happy Holidays?

Indie Retailers Believe They’ll Survive The Season

By all rights, indie record store owners should be chasing Prozac with shots of gin. After all, analysts were predicting that Nov. 28 would be the Blackest Friday of them all (Billboard, Dec. 6).

True, the numbers weren’t bad. But some of the retailers I spoke to are cautiously optimistic.

Part of this may be due to the fact that indies traditionally see stronger sales closer to Christmas. “Black Friday has not been a big dynamic here,” says Todd Robinson, president of the Indianapolis store Luna. “For us, it is closer to the holiday—when people start getting their lists together and stock at chain locations starts to dwindle—that we get super busy.”

“Our biggest sales will come the week before Christmas,” adds Jim McGuinn, owner of Hot Poop in Walla Walla, Wash. “Let’s hope he’s right. Black Friday’s numbers were block, to say the least. New releases from Kanye West and Guns N’ Roses underperformed, with the former moving 450,000 copies and the latter selling 261,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan. The overall decline was 0.7%, with 12.15 million albums sold total, down from 12.24 million for the same week last year.

But even the prospect of Christmas cheer isn’t enough to soothe others.

“We’re hopeful, but in the end we can’t be too sure,” says Ruben Mendez, a buyer at Seattle’s Sonic Boom Records. “New CD sales aren’t what they used to be, and I don’t really know what’s going to be the must-have gift for this Christmas. We’ve been doing well selling vinyl and record players, but now nontraditional stores are also starting to carry them.”

While Mendez is worried that bigger stores take his sales, other retailers happily report seeing the opposite.

“We have more people traveling to the store now from other parts of Long Island,” says Karl Groeger, owner of Looney Tunes in West Babylon, N.Y. “I’ve always believed that this business is about the Long Tail, and as Best Buy and Wal-Mart continue to cut space, more people are coming to us for music. We stock a lot of deep catalog and price it all at $13.99, and people have really responded to that.”

Dennis Callaci, head buyer at Mad Platter Records in Riverside, Calif., adds that he expects catalog to help keep the store open. “We don’t really have the hits, but we have a great base of collectors who’ll keep coming in,” he says. “Even though we’re located in a college town, I’m always shocked when I see a college kid coming in to buy a CD.”

Other stores say that an older client base is likely to take them through the season.

“Thank God working adults don’t know how to download

For the record: Sonic Boom (left) and Hot Poop Marsalis and Willie Nelson.

Appealing to purists also seems to work for John Henderson, the head buyer at Vintage Vinyl in St. Louis. “Vinyl is showing large gains, and CD sales have been slightly up for the year. We have seen increases in overall sales every month this,” he says. But not everyone has been this lucky, and there are a few who think their stockings will be filled with coal.

“There is some truth to the theory that CDs will die off soon, and all the indicators are bad for our business,” says Rand Foster, owner of Fingerprint in Long Beach, Calif. “Unfortunately, the record industry has convinced people they shouldn’t want the core product. I’m trying to stay positive, but it’s not always easy.”

...
Nothing screams holiday spirit like a Buckcherry/Avenged Sevenfold tour. So here's some news to spread yuletide cheer: On the Road can reveal that these hard rock co-headliners have decided to extend their tour with a second leg set to begin Jan. 28 in Albuquerque, N.M. Joining them on the bill will be Papa Roach and Saving Abel.

Buckcherry/Avenged had been kicking tail in secondary markets this fall, and the upcoming tour will add major markets and more secondaries. The four-band bill is priced to sell, with tickets less than $40.

"The idea was to take four acts that could tour alone and pull them together for $40 or less to be able to let people hear three- and-a-half hours of music and experience some up-and-coming acts," says Allen Kovac, CEO of 10th Street Entertainment, which manages Buckcherry and Papa Roach. "You're talking about a demo that seems to be 15 to 25 years old, and their disposable income right now is a lot less than it was before."

Tickets go on sale Dec. 15, and the price tag will ensure they'll be under the Christmas trees of many a headbanger.

Kovac says the original proponents of the pricing and packaging strategy were TKO agency head Dave Kirby and TKO agent Andrew Goodfriend, who represents Buckcherry. Goodfriend also worked on the tour with Ryan Harlacher at Pinacle Entertainment Group, which represents Avenged Sevenfold.

"As long as we keep the packages smart and the ticket prices reasonable, I think people are going to keep coming out," Goodfriend says.

The first leg of the Buckcherry/Avenged package began in the fall, with dates "slam-dunks," according to Goodfriend. That leg, which hit Shinedown in the Papa Roach slot, played in the Midwest and South and wrapped Dec. 3 in Orlando, Fla. The upcoming leg will be majors and some secondaries in the Southwest, Northwest and Midwest. "We're following the same model: keep ticket prices low, lots of underground marketing with 10th Street, keeping it tight," Goodfriend says. "We've been really careful and it has worked."

Kovac notes that fans of these acts don't wait for warm weather concerts. "We've found that rock is a 365-day sport in secondary territories, tertiaries and major markets," he says. "And when you start getting into the tertiary markets, rock is still king."

Radio will be a key element in 10th Street's tour marketing, Kovac says.

"A lot of what we're doing is making sure we have different bands on different formats," he says. "Saving Abel is focusing on AC and pop, while Avenged works alternative and Buckcherry's working active rock. And because Buckcherry has had some success with hot AC and pop, we're using the new track to really make sure that audience knows they're coming to town as well. Papa Roach will focus on the alternative side. It's really a four-format tour; it's not an active rock or alternative tour.

The tour is working with Ticketmaster and venues to keep service charges and facility fees as low as possible, Kovac says. "To make a tour like this happen, it takes cooperation from the agents and managers and artists' perspective," he says. "If you're going to have four acts, that means less money in guarantees for each act. But if it succeeds, there's more money on the back end. I think this shows you can sit down and take a responsible guarantee without compromising the opportunity to have four acts.

Buckcherry and Avenged could have asked for higher guarantees, Kovac says, "but they wouldn't have been able to take these other acts out with them. By taking these other bands out, they will more than make up the loss in guarantees. And when you're doing 6,000- to 10,000- [capacity venues] as opposed to 2,000, that tends to make itself up in many, many areas."

Larry Frank at Milwaukee-based Frank Productions will promote the bulk of the dates. The 10th Street team includes Josh Klemme, who handles day-to-day on Buckcherry; Brad Freiss, head of tour marketing; and Phillip Kovac, head of the 10th Street touring department. Larry Jacobson manages Avenged Sevenfold.

Hair today: BUCKCHERRY

Hair today: BUCKCHERRY

Buckcherry, Avenged Sevenfold Extend Tour

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

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New—Improved

In A Season Where Compilations Were Expected To Rule, Front-Line Releases Take Over

November was supposed to be the month of the compilation, the greatest-hits collection and the live album, with releases from Ricky Martin, Cafe Tacvba and Chayanne on offer.

Instead, the chart week ending Nov. 23—pre-Thanksgiving weekend—ended up being one with surprisingly good performances from front-line Latin releases.

“[Ricardo] Arjona happened,” says Alberto Uribe, the head buyer of the Ritmo Latino chain, referring to Arjona’s No. 1 debut on Billboard’s Top Latin Albums chart of “Solo Contigo,” debuting at No. 4. Los Tucanes de Tijuana (“Propiedad Privada,” No. 6) and Los Inquietos del Norte (“La Borachera,” No. 8).

Tulsa’s sales grew 4.6% from the same week in 2007. Oklahoma City and Shreveport-Texarkana each grew by half a percent.

Carlos Alvarez, Central U.S. promotions rep for A.R.C. Discos, says regional Mexican consumers in particular have been migrating ever further into the heartland in search of. Oklahoma was a very vibrant Tejano market and on top of that is another regional Mexican market,” Alvarez says, noting that Oklahoma City alone is serviced by two FM regional Mexican stations and two major clubs.

PANDA’ CHOPS
Producer Fingarz (aka John Stary), who helped create hits for such Latin urban artists as Lil Rob, Mr. Capone-e and Down (“Lean Like a Cholo”), will write the theme song for DreamWorks’ “Kung Fu Panda 2.” The producer, who has hikes his sites on film scoring, says the track approximates “I Like to Move It,” Reel 2 Real’s song that was remade for “Madagascar.” The Ontario, Calif.-based producer’s upcoming projects include Epic teen rapper Meech.

BROTHERLY LOVE
Following a promo blitz and a 3,500-person sellout in April at Mexico City’s Vive Cuervo Salón, Jonas Brothers are severely upping the ante in the city. Live Nation and Ocesa are bringing the trio to the capital’s Foro Sol Dec. 20 with a show capacity of nearly 40,000. About three-quarters of the tickets (ranging from about $17 to $34) have been sold. Jonas Brothers’ “A Little Bit Longer” album has been certified gold in Mexico (40,000 copies), according to trade group Amprofon; the trio’s self-titled release is platinum (80,000).—Ayala Ben-Yehuda

THE BILLBOARD

Q&A?

After a five-year absence from the recording studio, Puerto Rican singer Yolandita Monge signed a deal with Univision Records and released “Demasiado Fuerte,” which went on to sell 34,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan, and debuted at No. 1 on Billboard’s Latin Pop Albums chart in July 2007.

Now Monge returns with her follow-up, “Mala” (Universal Music Latin), which debuts this week at No. 3 on the Top Latin Albums chart. A pop set that includes a duet with salsa star Victor Manuelle. “Mala” has a youthful energy that belies Monge’s veteran status and the title track is No. 31 on the Hot Latin Songs chart.

During a break from shooting a TV special in Puerto Rico, the Latin diva spoke about her longevity and hipness.

What’s your secret to remaining relevant? It lies in love for the profession. I think artists never stop being artists, regardless of the passing of the years. But success depends on many external factors. Artists don’t retire because they want to. Many times the media loses interest because an artist is a certain age. Many get tired because this is a hard life, very removed from luxury and glamour. In my case, I’m lucky to have a partner [Carlos Mamery, president of programming for Spanish Broadcasting System in Puerto Rico] who is also in the business. I’m thankful for this second wind, where I’m able to bring good music and show that age has really little to do with quality. And I’m not only talking for myself, but for many artists who’ve had to retire. I’m 53 years old, and I say that openly. One should be proud of every stage in life, and I’m enjoying each of those stages.

You did quite well with your previous album, “Demasiado Fuerte,” which was more classic. This new one is far edgier and the single, “Mala,” has a very urban-looking video. I couldn’t release an album like “Mala” two years ago. At that point, I hadn’t recorded in five years, so we needed an artist and a second stage, which is “Mala.” I hadn’t recorded because I had been working in television and in theater—I played roles in “Pedro Navaja” and “Master-esque”—and the opportunity came up to record.

Does your background in TV and theater affect this album? “Mala” is like a great film of 10 interwoven stories where, to go to the next chapter, you have to listen to the one before and the one before to tie everything together. They’re all very visual songs, and the notion is to have the listener feel like he’s listening to a song and also watching a video for the first time. —Leila Cobo

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Greatest Hit: RICARDO ARJONA

TOP latin songs chart:

1. “Mala” — YOLANDITA MONGE
2. “Sus Ojos” — JOMAR & TITAN
3. “Mamita” — CARLOS VIVES
4. “Loco” — CHOPINS
5. “Oye” — DOS CAMINOS

Puerto Rican pop: YOLANDITA MONGE

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Juanes
Record of the Year, Album of the Year
Song of the Year, Best Male Pop Vocalist
Best Short Form Music Video

Gustavo Santaolalla
Record of the Year, Album of the Year

Anibal Kerpel
Record of the Year, Album of the Year

Emilio Estefan, Jr.
Best Tropical Song

Gloria Estefan
Best Traditional Tropical Album
Best Tropical Song

Café Tacvba
Best Rock Song
Best Alternative Song

Julieta Venegas (SGAE)
Best Alternative Music Album
Best Long Form Music Video

Flex
Best Urban Song

Molotov
Best Rock Album
By a Duo or Group

Belanova
Best Pop Album
By a Duo or Group

Sergio George
Producer of the Year

Siggno
Best Norteño Album

Wisin y Yandel
Best Urban Music Album
'X FACTOR' STEALS XMAS

U.K. Biz Calls For More Christmas Hits

LONDON—As the festive season approaches, the best-selling Christmas songs of the past will probably have a yuletide chart encore. But missing from the holiday revelry will be much in the way of new Christmas-themed releases from mainstream pop acts.

Some of the blame rests with the extraordinarily popular TV talent show "The X Factor," which for the fourth consecutive year will release its winner's debut single right before Christmas, effectively rendering the once-pitched battle for the season's No. 1 a one-horse race.

"The biggest artist in the world couldn't beat 'The X Factor,'" says Rupert Adamson, a spokesman for bookmaker William Hill. "The stars steer clear, as it would be slightly embarrassing to be beaten by a performer that, in their view, is not a serious artist."

The fight for the No. 1 single at Christmas has long been a major sales driver and media attention grabber in the United Kingdom, with national press, broadcasters and bookmakers alike speculating on the likely winner of the race. In years past, rock and pop stars ranging from Slade and Mud to Wham and Shakin' Stevens vied for the holiday top spot by releasing Christmas songs.

But 2008 doesn't herald any seasonal releases from their present-day counterparts, prompting retailers and radio programmers to grumble that labels are missing out by keeping their pop heavyweights from the Christmas party.

"They may be missing a trick in not trying to make more of the opportunity the Christmas singles market still represents," says John Hirst, rock/pop manager at market-leading retailer HMV. "I sense this year that the wider public and the media would be prepared to back a song that could challenge the dominance of 'X Factor.'"

Although none of their respective debut singles carried a seasonal theme, "X Factor" winners have shared the Christmas No. 1 in each of the last three years. Leon Jackson was on top last year with "When You Believe" (Syco Music), and Leona Lewis reigned in 2006 with "A Moment Like This" (Syco Music), and Shayne Ward ruled in 2005 with "That's My Goal" (Syco Music).

But while the TV show appears to have a tight grip on the peak of the yuletide chart, demand for Christmas-themed singles remains strong, bringing many previous favorites back to the charts.

The Official Charts Co.'s U.K. singles chart for the Christmas week of 2007 included 10 holiday songs in the top 40, of which only the Killers' "Don't Shoot Me Santa" (Verigo) was a new recording. The chart also contained perennial favorites "A Fairytale of New York" (Warner Bros.) by the Pogues featuring Kirsty MacColl, which became a top 10 hit for the fourth time, and Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas" (Columbia), which revisited the top five a week earlier. This year, Carey and the Pogues appeared on the chart before the end of November.

The impending festivities have at least attracted new Christmas singles from popular alternative acts. The Wombats offer "Is This Christmas" (14th Floor) while Glasvegas lifts "Please Come Back Home" (Columbia) from a mini-album of festive songs packaged as part of a limited edition of its self-titled debut album, which arrived in September.

"I knew a bit about the Slade song "Merry Xmas Everybody" and wanted to create an alternative to that," Glasvegas singer James Allan says. Wombats singer/guitarist Matthew Murphy adds: "It's a bit cheap and cheery to release a Christmas single, but we're bringing it back to the people."

Still, neither is likely to beat the "X Factor" victor's single, which is due after the show's Dec. 13 finale. The strongest challenger is expected to be "Once Upon a Christmas Song" (Polydor) by transsexual singer Geraldine, aka comedian Peter Kay (Billboard, Nov. 1). Geraldine's single will raise funds for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Polydor head of marketing Orla Lee describes it as "a bit of fun and a good cause—people actually want new Christmas songs."

Terry Underhill, head of music for commercial AC radio group GMG, agrees, saying, "If a new song captures the spirit of Christmas, we would definitely play it."

Shakin' Stevens, whose 1985 No. 1 "Merry Christmas Everyone" (Sony) reached No. 22 last year, says the industry should encourage the release of more Christmas songs.

"We have the classics," he says, "but we'd all welcome a few more."

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HOLIDAYS IN SYNCH

A Guide To U.K. Christmas Ad Campaigns

LONDON—Yuletide cheer may be in short supply at record labels, but Christmas music still plays a big role in most U.K. retailers' TV ad campaigns.

This year some artists and stores are taking their relationship beyond a synth deal. Rising Australian singer Gabriella Ciml's version of Connie Francis' 1962 hit "Warm This Winter" appears in an ad for the supermarket chain the Co-operative, which is promoting the song on its Web site.

The supermarket giant Tesco has the U.K. showbiz vet Des O'Connor as the face of its campaign. O'Connor sings "The Christmas Song," while his album "Inspired" (Buzz Records) is available exclusively in Tesco stores.

In an unusual twist, Take That is appearing in a Marks & Spencer ad soundtracked by Macy Gray's "Winter Wonderland," while its own song "Shine" has been used in ads for rival supermarket Morrisons.

But Universal Music U.K. chairman/CEO David Joseph, who helped break the Marks & Spencer deal, says it was "a conscious decision" to not use the band's music in the ad.

"The ad is about the sentiment of Christmas, as opposed to a vehicle to promote new music," he says. "The Morrisons campaign has been running for 18 months and it's working for everyone, so we decided to continue with it."

One of the most notable synth deals of the season was for a non-holiday song used in a TV ad for the department store chain John Lewis. The spot features a cover version of the Beatles' "From Me to You" performed by members of the John Lewis Music Society and marks the first use of a Beatles song in a U.K. campaign in five years, which is part of a recent shift in approach by the Beatles publisher Sony/ATV Music Publishing (Billboard, Dec. 15, 2007).

For those seeking a further respite from Christmas music, there's M.C.Hammer's 1990 hit "U Can't Touch This" that's been wheeled out in a tongue-in-cheek campaign for the catalog shopping company Argos.

—John Wilson

Additional reporting by Mark Sutherland in London.
We've seen a lot over the last 50 years.

But what we really want to see in what the next 50 years hold

So in the spirit of looking ahead, we're heading west. More specifically, Las Vegas. And we're not stopping there. We're adding new categories, new award shows, and a renewed pledge to honor only the most innovative and original thinking. You can help by answering one simple question:

What have you done that hasn't been done?

Entries are open. www.clio50.com

www.americanradiohistory.com
Play On

Merry Christmas Ahead For U.K. Retailer Play.com

LONDON—At a time when the U.K. retail industry is reeling from the collapse of Woolworths (see story, page 19), online entertainment merchant Play.com is quietly anticipating its best Christmas yet.

Based on Jersey, the larger of the two main Channel Islands off of France’s northern coast, Play generated the third-highest volume of Web site traffic among U.K. retailers in October, behind Amazon and shopping catalog merchant Argos, according to the measurement firm Hitwise.

Music is a key part of Play’s product offerings. Counter to trends at most retailers, Play claims its CD sales are up sharply from last year. The company also launched its PlayDigital music download store this year, as well as a secondary ticketing business called Play.com Tickets in October.

Confident its core home entertainment business will overcome the global decline in CD sales, Play recently implemented its largest TV advertising campaign yet.

“In the current climate, people look to the Internet as a value channel,” co-founder/chairman Richard Goulding says.

Play, which launched in 1998, claims to have a registered customer base of 7 million, with about 5 million unique visitors in November. Although the privately held company doesn’t publish annual sales figures, Goulding projects sales will climb to about £400 million ($617 million) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009. He didn’t provide sales totals for the previous fiscal year.

CDs are a robust part of Play’s sales mix. Although the company won’t release sales data, Goulding says that “at this point, CD revenues have grown 30% on year.” That contrasts with U.K. market data from the Official Charts Co. showing an 8.7% year-to-date decline in CD unit sales through Nov. 25 from the same period last year. (Value figures weren’t available.)

The strong sales helped boost Play’s U.K. album market share, which totaled 3.2% of value and 3.6% of units for the 52 weeks ending Oct. 12, up from full-year 2007, when its market share was 2.2% of both value and volume, according to the market research company TNZ.

Play’s CD prices—£8.95 ($13.85) for most chart titles—are competitive rather than rock bottom. While mass merchants and some online retailers beat them on price, Goulding says Play prospers by partnering attractive pricing with strong customer support. Play co-founder/CEO Simon Perrée says the company enjoys good relationships with the major labels for cooperative marketing campaigns.

The company has been steadily expanding its other music offerings as well. In October, PlayDigital became one of the first online U.K. music retailers to sell digital rights management-free music downloads from all four majors. PlayDigital, which launched in February with songs from EMI Music and independent labels, now has a catalog of 3 million titles that it sells for £0.65 ($1) per track.

“They had to do it, because Amazon U.K. [was] going to be launching (downloads) at some point,” says Ben Drury, CEO of the U.K. download store 7digital. Amazon U.K. eventually launched its MP3 service Dec. 2, claiming to offer more than 3 million DRM-free songs.

Also in October, Play entered the secondary ticketing market with its launch of Play.com Tickets. In addition, Goulding says the company is mulling a move into primary ticket sales. Graham Burns, chairman of the trade body Assn. of Secondary Ticket Agents, says Play’s involvement signals that “secondary ticketing has entered the mainstream.”

By being based in the Channel Islands, Play enjoys the political status of a British Crown Dependency but is not legally part of the United Kingdom or the European Union. That means it can ship products priced less than £18 ($27.80) to customers within the EU without being subject to a sales tax, which is 15% in the United Kingdom. Many other online subsidiaries of U.K. retailers now base their operations in the Channel Islands as well.

Goulding and Perrée justify their Jersey base in simple terms. “We have both lived here since we were children,” Goulding says.

Additional reporting by Tom Ferguson in London

PERRÉE (left) and GOULDING

GLOBAL BY LARS BRANDLE

Down Under’s Diving Dollar

Aussie Currency Plunge Stings Tour Promoters

BRISBANE, Australia—The summer festival season is heating up Down Under, but a dramatic slump in the value of the Australian dollar has promoters sweating over bookings of international talent.

After hitting a 25-year high of 98.49 U.S. cents in mid-July, the Australian dollar plummeted to about 64 U.S. cents at press time.

>> Universal Opens Deli

Universal Music Japan is adding a sixth domestic label to its roster of Japanese imprints when Delicious Deli Records launches Jan. 1. Delicious will be part of the company’s Universal International division and will develop Japanese acts that it can market over-
That’s causing quite a lot of problems for all promoters in Australia,” says Vivian Lees, co-promoter of touring festival Big Day Out, which will be held Jan. 16-Feb. 1. “Such a rapid decline has meant everyone has been caught.” Sources say negotiations over Australian tours by Paul McCartney, Neil Diamond, Green Day, Madonna and Metallica have been shelved until the financial situation settles.

Some of those acts were expected to play Sydney’s 21,000-capacity MECC. “We’ve seen a couple of tours blow out,” the venue’s business development manager Don Ifford says. “It probably has a lot to do with the dollar.”

Promoters who agreed to pay acts in U.S. dollars during the Aussie currency’s ascent have been badly stung. For example, if a promoter had agreed to pay an overseas act $3 million U.S. for an Australian tour, paying half of that upfront and the remaining $4.5 million when the act arrives. The second payment would now cost almost $3.7 million Australian—rather than the $4.6 million Australian it would have cost in mid-July. “We’re all taking a battering,” says Andrew Manum, managing director of Melbourne-based AMP.

The recent currency volatility follows two strong years for the Aussie live scene. Ticket revenue topped $1.2 billion Australian ($775 million U.S. at today’s valuations) in 2007, up 16.1% from 2006, when revenue surged 38.8%, according to trade association Live Performance Australia. Non-classical music, musicals and theater were the top three cash-earners.

McManus wants local promoters to insist all fees are paid in Australian dollars. “That cushions the promoters and the acts share the risks,” he says.

But many international touring acts demand payment in U.S. dollars and other promoters—

who wish to remain anonymous—suggest their peers need to nail down currency conversions at the time of negotiation. Billboard has learned of other promoters aggressively renegotiating reduced appearance fees in exchange for larger shares of merchandising sales.

While the Australian dollar’s plunge is on the minds of promoters as they prepare for the summer festival season, some expect it to last just fine.

“We’re lucky because we’ve got the weight of the festival to insulate us from that,” Big Day Out co-promoter Lees says. “Only a fraction of our bands are paid in U.S. dollars.”

Other fests could struggle if they lack marquee names or a “lifestyle” connection with the public, says Richard Moffat, manager of Melbourne-based music programming operation Way Over There, which represents the sold-out Falls Festival (Dec. 29-Jan. 1).

“Maybe the level of the dollar has made some people a bit too ambitious about the types of shows they put together,” he says.

Other sources say established fests are doing fine. LiveBox business “Bluesfest sales are exceptionally good,” says Peter Noble, founder of the 17,500-capacity Byron Bay Bluesfest, which will celebrate its 20th anniversary April 9-13 with such headliners as Ben Harper and Michael Franti.

While few economists predict Australia’s dollar to fly high again in the near future, many executives are optimistic the touring cycle will soon be on the upswing.

“I’ve got tours dropping our right now,” Ifford says. “But it’ll only be for a minute. Then it’ll be back on again.”

Additional reporting by Christie Eliezer in Melbourne.
Chicago Band Uses Digital Savvy To Goose Album Pre-Orders

After celebrating 11 years as a band, Umphrey's McGee decided it's time to take its career to the next level.

The Chicago-based progressive jam band wants to take its nationwide base of loyal supporters into the mainstream and it's relying heavily on the initialization Day release (Jan. 20) of its upcoming album "Mantis" as the vehicle to achieve that goal. But it's the album's pre-order campaign that is capturing the attention of the music industry.

Album pre-orders are certainly nothing new, and many offer an incentive to buyers of a free download of the first single or access to early ticket sales for concerts. But few acts have gone to the lengths that Umphrey's McGee has.

The group has a variety of content that it's making available to anyone buying the album through the pre-order campaign, including digital singles, rare live performances, behind-the-scenes video footage and photos. But in an innovative twist, the band is not releasing it all at once. Instead it's releasing tiers of content based on how many pre-orders are sold. Each time the number of pre-orders reaches a certain threshold, a new tier of content is released. This idea is to engage diehard fans as evangelists who will convince their friends and family to pre-order "Mantis" so the next tier of content can become available.

So far, it's working. According to band manager, Vincent Iwinski, Umphrey's McGee's release has sold more than 2,400 pre-orders since it launched in late October, including a $50 deluxe package that contains a bonus DVD and vinyl copy. That may not seem like a lot to mainstream acts, but it's twice the number of pre-orders that the band logged for its last album, 2006's "Safety in Numbers," according to Iwinski.

Already Umphrey's McGee has released six of the nine content tiers and had to raise the sales requirement for the remaining tiers to avoid running out of content too soon.

"We're realizing that doing things the way we've done the last few years is not going to keep people's attention," Iwinski says. "What's important to us in this day and age is to give people a reason to buy one copy of the album in return for all this free stuff."

The campaign could serve as a template for how emerging and established acts alike can kick-start interest in a new release. But it's not as if this idea came out of nowhere. For more than a decade, Umphrey's McGee has built its fan base through the strategic use of free content and fan engagement.

The band, which plays some 120 live dates annually, sells out 4,000-capacity venues by charging a core group of eight to 15 fans in each market with the task of giving away free CDs. It then lets attendees freely tape shows; and it sells the sound board mixes for $15 per CD per concert or $10 for a digital download available 72 hours after each gig. It sells upwards of 300 CDs per show and to date has moved 750,000-plus tracks online. It also has a podcast series that releases two 75-minute recordings of live music every month to more than 20,000 subscribers.

The demand that this has created among fans is such that the band has begun holding onto certain content rather than making it available immediately. Select shows were not available for taping or post-event purchase. Umphrey's McGee also stopped performing some of its songs, particularly those to be included on "Mantis." This content, combined with tracks from early out-of-print releases and 11 years of rarely seen photos and videos, is driving the demand for the presale.

"Because we're a band that has always recorded everything, taken photos of everything, used video as much as possible and doing that for such a long time, we have a lot of stuff," Iwinski says.

What's more, Umphrey's McGee isn't frontloading all of this content into the presale. The CD will contain an electronic key that will give anyone buying it—presale or otherwise—access to a site where even more material will be released monthly for a year after the arrival of "Mantis."

The combined strategy has gotten the attention of several digital music experts, including Gartner analyst Mike McGuire, who cites the initiative as the perfect way to implement a pre-order campaign. While for better-known acts like Radiohead and Nine Inch Nails have raised the bar for generating interest in upcoming releases. Umphrey's McGee has become a unlikely role model for a music industry still struggling with the versioning of digital distribution amid rampant piracy.
Paul DeGooyer

The frontman of the ‘Rock Band’ franchise talks about gaming’s place in the music industry and why he had to practice playing ‘Gimme Shelter.’

Walk into the MTV store adjacent to the network’s Times Square headquarters, and you’ll get an immediate sense of what’s most important to the venerable music brand these days: “Rock Band 2.”

There’s the game system itself, related accessories, AC/DC merchandise—part of a partnership that gave “Rock Band” exclusive game rights to one of the band’s live DVDs—even a demo area where customers can try out the game. In fact, the entire front half of the store is dedicated to “Rock Band 2.”

And with good reason: the “Rock Band” franchise is on one hell of a roll. The original and the recently released sequel have sold close to 5 million units combined this year, according to the NPD Group. Consumers have bought and downloaded more than 26 million new songs for the franchise. And MTV just announced an exclusive deal with the Beatles to develop a game that will be released in time for the 2009 holiday season.

Within MTV, the “Rock Band” buck stops with the unassuming Paul DeGooyer. When he’s not busy finalizing licensing deals for new music or demonstrating the game for music industry executives, DeGooyer strategizes about where the success of the “Rock Band” franchise can take MTV—and the music industry as a whole.

Sipping tea in a dimly lit office, clad in an untucked dress shirt and blue sneakers, DeGooyer shared his thoughts about music gaming with Billboard.

People always say that MTV doesn’t really play music anymore. How does “Rock Band” address that?

Music has migrated to become somewhat of a lifestyle accessory for many and that may have been reflected on our channel, as people were acquiring music on the Web for free. “Rock Band” is a bit of an antidote to that, and for our channels it’s a great adjunct, because even if you buy your music legitimately and listen to it on your iPod, chances are you’re not sharing it with people. The whole communal sitting and listening to music thing is now confined to concert experiences, which cost a lot of money. So for MTV to be involved with bringing that back into people’s living rooms is fantastic.

Some acts are featured in “Rock Band” as downloadable songs. Others, like AC/DC, get their own disc, and still others, like the Beatles, get their own game. How do you decide which artist gets what treatment?

The marketplace is a great balance, so if we don’t think the market is going to support a certain type of release, we’re not trying that. We do approach this in the spirit of partnership with artists and labels. If something fails, it’s not good for either of us and when you approach it that way, it really does open up the conversation. So far, we’ve been at a very good place in terms of striking the right balance of artists.

You know, music’s not going anywhere. I’m sure there’s going to be more important music released; I’m sure there was some released yesterday that’s going to be classic in the future. We think that we fit into that, because if we really hold onto that approach, these games will become a legitimate long-term way for people to get into music, to discover music and to really get a deeper understanding of it. I think if we try to give our input into, “Oh, it should be this kind of product,” and really kind of tweak the creative, as you see sometimes in games associated with movies, it would be bad for the category.

Where does “Rock Band” fit into an album release strategy?

Pretty much every release has a sort of windowing strategy. If you can only hear the song in “Rock Band,” it’s tough to have that be the first thing that comes out. You have to have something else. In the case of Mötley Crüe, it was radio, and then iTunes very soon after. So that can work, but that’s a big thing. If it’s a brand-new artist, it probably makes sense to have it come out day and date. But if we like the music and we think it should be in the game, it almost doesn’t matter, because we feel like we can make it work.

There’s also the community aspect of “Rock Band.” When you get a song that’s new and you like it and want to play it with your friend who happens to be in Omaha and you’re in Connecticut, they have to buy it too so you can play it together. So there’s this nice built-in pass-along, and if you get the window right, there really is some leverage there.

Warner Music Group chairman/CEO Edgar Bronfman Jr. caused a bit of a stir in August when he said that labels should be paid more for providing their music to these games. What do you think about that?

I really have no comment on what he said. I will say that we have great relationships with our partners across the board that supply us content, and we continue to get great content from those partners every day.

Activision CEO Bobby Kotick said that he thought labels should pay for the privilege of having their music in these games.

I have no comment, except to say that it’s not a comment we would make.

What kind of integration can we expect between “Rock Band” and Rhapsody, MTV’s joint venture with RealNetworks?

We definitely want to make sure that “Rock Band” is tied very closely to music sales and they are our partner in music sales. It’s very complex, as you might imagine. We don’t own the direct relationship with the consumer when we sell our downloadable content. It’s distributed through Xbox Live Marketplace. We would love to have that solution, and we’re working towards it. And it can cut both ways, because if you purchase a song from Rhapsody that you like, and it happens to be on “Rock Band,” it would be great to make it an easy transition both ways.

Out of all the songs on “Rock Band,” which do you like to play the most?

I go through phases, but I will say that my favorite song to demo was “Gimme Shelter” by the Rolling Stones, because it just sounds incredible when you got it right. Then the people I demo with were telling me that I didn’t do it well enough. So I actually had to practice it. The experience of playing that song and knowing you’re playing a classic rock song is irony overload. But that was my favorite irony overload.

Is there a song you don’t have on “Rock Band” that you would really like?

I would like “Stairway to Heaven.” I like the song “Custard Pie”; that would be cool. But just as Led Zeppelin is a tremendously important band that would be great, there’s also a ton . . . you know, it’s endless.
DON'T WRITE HIM OFF AS A KID WITH A SOULJA BOY TELL 'EM WANTS TO SHOW THE WEB WHO IS SUPERMAN!

Looking like a spoiled kid forced to sit in on his dad's business meeting, DeAndre 'Soulja Boy, Tell 'em' Way and producer Yums soulja Boy Block Star sneakers, then looking at his best friend, Derrick Crooms, then chuckling worthily at his Internet fame and good fortune, Soulja Boy no longer has to explain himself. He has money in the bank, a personal assistant, a expensive apartment, and a new record deal with Jive Records. His first single, 'Watta Man,' has sold over a million copies, and his album, 'The climbBack,' is expected to go platinum. But despite his success, Soulja Boy remains grounded and humble, and he still performs at clubs and parties all over the world. His next goal: to become the next big rap star. But for now, he's just enjoying the fruits of his success.
By the time Soulja Boy signed to Collipark/Interscope Records last summer, he'd already garnered an unfathomable online following from his YouTube channel and MySpace page. "I was one of the first artists to have a YouTube account; if not the first. I joined two months after the site launched," Soulja Boy says. I faked it until I made it. I acted like I was a celebrity. I was signing autographs, taking pictures, but I had no record deal. I was living the life of a star, but I was just a regular kid then.

Soulja Boy then released "Crank That," the top-selling digital track of 2007, according to Nielsen SoundScan, which at 3.9 million digital singles sold is the third-biggest song download since such data started being tracked in 2003. He's gone on to sell 943,000 copies of his debut album, "SouljaBoyTellEm," making him one of the few artists to sell this many digital singles and also sell a decent amount of physical copies of an album. When it comes to ringtones, "Crank That" has tallied 2.4 million, according to Nielsen RingScan (see chart, above).

"We're a smart kid," Gooms says. "Change in the music industry always comes with resistance, but he handles it all very well. He understands this business more than most grown men I know."

Soulja Boy will use this savvy to promote his sophomore set, "SouljaBoyTellEm," due Dec. 16 from Collipark/Interscope Records. Producers Mr. Collipark, Polow Da Don and Drumma Boy helmed tracks for the set, while T.I., Shawty Lo, Sean Kingston, Yo Gotti and Gucci Mane, who Soulja Boy calls his mentor—make guest appearances.

The first single, the dance-inspired "Birdwalk," is No. 47 on Billboard's Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart and has sold 10,000 downloads. "I'm just beginning to work the song—it always starts from the bottom up," Soulja Boy says about the so-far modest sales. "People didn't see the groundwork that went into 'Crank That.' They just saw the success and sales. It probably won't take as long with 'Birdwalk,' but it will still take a little time."

The accompanying video, directed by Erik White, was filmed at Morris Brown College in Atlanta—the same place where the footage for "Crank That" was shot—during a battle of the bands. Soulja Boy has participated in various battles, which consist of a competition between two bands from two different colleges, during which he performs "Birdwalk." "It takes place on Sundays and we have over 30,000 people out there at a time," he says.

Other tracks on the album include promotional single "Turn My Swag On," where Soulja Boy addresses the "haters" over double-speed drums and a heavy baseline. On "Easy" Soulja Boy calls himself "Soulja Boy Pacino" and "Soulja Boy Mandigo" with flutes in the background. Chris Brown wrote the boastful "Yamaha Mama" ("My neck taste like chocolate/Now take a lick.") Soulja Boy rhymes atop piano riffs, and second single "Kiss Me Then the Phone," featuring Sammie and produced by Jim Jonsin, has Soulja Boy rapping alongside a videogame-like beat about longing for a lover.

According to Interscope co-head of marketing Chris Clancy, the campaign is "driven by content. It's a cliché thing to say, but the truth is Soulja Boy has a presence that's interesting and funny. It just makes you want to pay attention."

Aside from constantly feeding his YouTube channel, MySpace page and official Web site souljaboytellem.com almost daily with random, day-in-the-life videos, Soulja Boy will debut a third season of Soulja Boy TV, in which he documents the making of the new album. "On season one it was me getting signed; on season two I was on tour with Chris Brown," Soulja Boy says. "I hopefully want to take this series to TV one day."

Soulja Boy launched a Let's Go Platinum in One Week campaign through his various online portals, where he's telling fans to "get ready for the album and help me go platinum," he says. "I go by the motto that it's never enough money. When I was 16, I said I wanted to become a millionaire. When I got my first million, I wanted more. Now that I've gone platinum with my first album, I want to break that in a week this time around. No one's done it since [Lil] Wayne [who did it with the "Tha Carter III"] in June of this year. If I go 100% and grind, I think it's possible."

Last month, Soulja Boy launched an animated/live-action cartoon, by the creators of Adult Swim's "Robot Chicken," on his Web site. He plays a celebrity teenager that has to go back to class and finish the school year. Soulja Boy, Arab and friend Jabar are animated characters, while the rest of the cast, including Alfonso Ribeiro—who played Carlton in "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air" and here portrays the school principal—are actors. Soulja Boy hopes a TV network will pick up the series and is targeting Comedy Central or Cartoon Network.

On MTV, Soulja Boy has an episode of "Super Sweet 16" dubbed "My Super Swag," covering the celebration of his 18th birthday that took place during the summer. He hopes to branch out into acting through the William Morris Agency, and although he hasn't come across a script he's interested in—"I'm a comedic person. I want my first movie role to reflect my actual personality—he hopes to delve further into it in 2009.

He began a promotional tour Dec. 1 that got a bit of a release, and a more extensive mid-January trek is in the works. For the latter, Soulja Boy hopes to partner with fellow rapper Bow Wow, for whom he recently produced the track "Marco Polo."

Now, about those kicks. This month Soulja Boy launched a sneaker called the Soulja Boy Block Star sneaker and a Soulja Boy clothing line with the apparel company Yums. He partnered with Yums’ in-house designer Tex for the venture and also bought stock in the company.

"I was on the Chris Brown tour with Bow Wow last year, and we had a concert stop in Dallas, Texas. I brought out a local Texas act called I'll Will onstage with me, but when we were backstage I noticed they had these shoes and they were Soulja Boy says. "I asked them where they got them from because I wanted to get some. So I hooked up with the owner, I told him what I wanted to do, we did a deal and after that it's Yums ever since."

To tie the new venture into the online campaign, Interscope brand manager Brian Washington says, Soulja Boy announced a contest that lets fans film themselves doing the inspiration of the Birdwalk dance and upload it to YouTube. The best video will be featured on Soulja Boy’s MySpace page and the winner will receive a pair of Yums.

Other Soulja Boy ventures are generating revenue already. "Really, I don’t depend on royalty checks to make money. Those only come by every six months," he says. "Now I make the most money is from shows. I get up to $75,000 for each, and I might do up to 20 shows a month."

The second-highest income source for Soulja Boy comes from Xcaliber club he recently purchased on the north side of his hometown of Atlanta. "We do teen nights and 18-and-up nights," he says. A third source is his BMI publishing deal and from his tracks for Bow Wow and Lil Vic ("Get Silly"). The smallest amount of revenue comes from his YouTube channel and his official Web site. According to Google Analytics, even though the Soulja Boy channel receives a video or someone leaves a comment on it, Interscope makes money, a percentage of which goes to Soulja Boy. Soulja Boy also runs ads on his Web site, which make him revenue as well.

"The thing he’s accomplished and created is a whole new revenue for artists and companies," Gooms says. "Others are probably not even talking about the digital cut with YouTube, but every time there’s a view, money goes into Interscope by way of a deal cut between Universal Music Group and YouTube. Since Soulja Boy has a 360 deal with the label, they obviously get a cut, but Soulja Boy walks away with a percentage of it as well."

On YouTube Soulja Boy has the third-most-watched music channel of the week with 558,283 views, the second-most watched for the month of November with 4.4 million views and the fifth-most-watched of all time at 258 million views, after artists like Chris Brown and Britney Spears. His MySpace page has 98.2 million plays, 55.8 million views and 855,174 fans. He’s also planning on launching a videogame next year with an undisclosed game maker. That deal, Soulja Boy says, came about from him having the right producers from the Interscope side of the business. "I put up a video on YouTube challenging Xbox Live players around the world. Next thing you know I got an e-mail from a videogame company—in the same way Collipark e-mailed me about signing me—offering me an opportunity to set up a videogame," he says.

Soulja Boy continues to build his music empire in other ways. In 2004, he launched his independent label, SOD Entertainment (which stands for Stacks on Deck), and recently signed a one-off deal with Universal Republic for his group Show Stoppers’ first single, “Whoo Rico.” Although it didn’t make the money he’s accustomed to, it was an experience that he hopes will help him down the line. "I always thought of myself as being hot, but I’m not going to be hot forever," Soulja Boy says. "I wanted to test the waters with them before I released my solo artist, Arab. I want to have an artist with a No. 1 song in the country. I want to have the next big thing. I don’t want the next big thing to come kill my career. I want to be the boss.

"Arab, who he’s known since the eighth grade, will likely be the first artist to follow in his footsteps with an album planned for as early as fourth-quarter 2009, yet Soulja Boy has his hesitations. "That project is tricky," he says. "He’s my best friend and I want him to be ready, but I can’t make him be something he doesn’t want to be. I want an artist that’s got passion and drive. I want to see them on Coke commercials on the Internet promoting themselves—but I can’t force him to do something he’s not ready to do."

Arab isn’t the only fellow Atlanta Soulja Boy hopes to help. This month, he’s tapping into charity work, partnering with DJ Hit Man in December for a Toys in the Hood toy drive, where he will give away Christmas gifts to 100 families in Atlanta. "He’s kind of set the standard between what the record business should be these days," Clancy says. "The reality is for a guy that most people thought would be a one-hit wonder, he’s a source for entertainment. He proved everybody wrong and has cemented himself as a natural artist."

Soulja Boy unabashedly agrees. "People know I do good business. If I endorse something or say I’m doing something, then it’s getting done and it’s getting done right. With great power," he says, quoting a line from the “Spider-Man” movie, "comes great responsibility."

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**Soulja Speaks**

Register for Billboard's Digital Music Live conference to hear Soulja Boy and his management team discuss the artist's groundbreaking use of the Web to launch his career. Digital Music Live—the official digital music track of the annual Consumer Electronics Show—brings together digital music industry leaders to discuss trends and share insights. For more information, go to billboarddevents.com.

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**www.americanradiohistory.com**
Christmas light: TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA spends $2 million a year on pyrotechnics.

Hey, ho, ho, let's go!

7 MILLION ALBUMS SOLD.
$200 MILLION ON TOUR.
3 MONTHS OF WORK A YEAR.
(WE HAD TO GIVE YOU SOME HOLIDAY CHEER.)

BY MITCHELL PETERS

It's easy to spot Trans-Siberian Orchestra musical director/guitarist Al Pitrelli backstage following the band's late-November concert at the Honda Center in Anaheim, Calif. He's the one wearing a bulky knee brace and hopping around on metal crutches.

Earlier in the evening, Pitrelli—a seasoned guitarist who has also toured with Alice Cooper and Megadeth—had to sit down onstage to shred through the Christmas-themed symphonic rock band's nearly three-hour show. Dressed in a black coat, a white-collared shirt and black slacks, the longhaired musician was "a little overconfident" during the band's tour-opening concert Nov. 1, according to Paul O'Neill, the wizard behind the curtain of TSO's rock operas and effects-filled shows.
"He took a huge jump from stage left onto the main deck, locked his knees and tore his ACL right off," O'Neill says.

Pitrelli remembers it differently. "The true story is that I didn't want to do one of O'Neill's arrangements, so he came up and kneecapped me," he jokes.

O'Neill attempted to hire a temporary replacement guitarist, but Pitrelli wouldn't have it. "He said, 'Paul, I'll leave the tour when I'm dead,'" O'Neill says.

Pitrelli and O'Neill have been friends for 25 years. During the past decade, they've watched TSO grow from theater gigs to a reliable fixture on Billboard's yearly list of the 25 highest-grossing tours. In 2007, the act ranked 15th among Billboard's most profitable tours, grossing $43.3 million and drawing more than 1.1 million people to 128 concerts reported to Billboard Boxscore. This year, the group will play 128 with $47.3 million in grosses from 120 shows.

TSO's albums have collectively sold 6.7 million copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. The act has charted five albums on the Billboard 200, and it has racked up three top 10 sets on Top Pop Catalog, with two of those hitting No. 1 ("Christmas Eve and Other Stories" and "The Lost Christmas Eve").

This success is all the more impressive considering the way TSO defies description. "The only way to describe Trans-Siberian Orchestra's 'Phantom of the Opera' meets the Who, with Pink Floyd's light show," says lyricist/composer/producer O'Neill, who founded the group more than 10 years ago with creative partners Robert Kinkel and Jon Oliva. "This thing has grown so fast and taken off beyond our wildest expectations."

Prior to TSO, the three musicians were involved with the heavy metal group Savatage, which signed with Atlantic Records in 1983 and released such albums as "Hall of the Mountain King" and "Streets: A Rock Opera." (O'Neill wasn't an official member of Savatage, but he produced and wrote much of the music and lyrics.) It was an obscure cut from the band's 1995 album "Dead Winter Dead" — a rock opera about the Balkan War — that led to the creation of TSO.

Former Atlantic executive Jason Flom (now president of J Records) says that Savatage was on its last legs at the label when the band delivered "Dead Winter Dead." The group offered the jet for free, Flom says, "because it was worth it to have their record out on Atlantic, in terms of their touring and European profile."

"Dead Winter Dead" didn't live long. But the band's situation changed in December 1996 when Flom received a phone call from the band's attorney, who told him that the influential radio station WPLJ New York was going to add an obscure instrumental cut from the album called "Christmas Eve (Sara-jevo 12/24)." "After WPLJ PD Scott Shannon read part of the album's liner notes on-air, "the phones melted down and every store in New York sold out of the record," Flom says. By January, other stations around the country had caught wind of the song, and "we had sold an additional 45,000 units," he says.

After thinking about the success of traditional Christmas act Mannheim Steamroller, Flom asked O'Neill if he would be interested in writing a whole album of symphonic rock songs about Christmas.

"People loved the song but they hated Savatage," Flom says. A couple of weeks after Flom's suggestions, O'Neill came back and said, "What do you think about the name 'Trans-Siberian Orchestra'?" Flom recalls. "I said, 'What do I know? I'm Jewish.'"

With Flom's and Atlantis's support, O'Neill and his crew began writing material for the new Christmas-themed album at the musician's New York apartment, nicknamed "the Kitchen Table" after the spot where they do all their writing.

"We just threw ideas around and concepts around, because who was going to buy the record anyway? It didn't matter," Pitrelli says. At the time, heavy metal music was dying.

Through the years, TSO's debut release, "Christmas Eve and Other Stories," has sold 2.8 million copies, according to SoundScan. "They literally took Savatage and put them in tuxedos," Flom says.

TSO's first big TV break was a 1997 booking on "The Rosie O'Donnell Show," according to Flom, who pushed hard to get the band on the then-popular talk show. "The booker wanted nothing to do with Trans-Siberian Orchestra," he says. "She liked very hip sort of stuff."

Flom went to the head of Warner Bros. Studios to get the band's music into the hands of the show's producer. After the episode aired, "they told us it was the biggest reaction to any music guest they had on the history of the show," he says.

Since then, TSO has enjoyed TV exposure on "Good Morning America," "Live With Regis and Kelly," "Today," "Late Night With Conan O'Brien," "CNN and PBS, among other outlets."

Although radio and TV were key to breaking TSO, the real success came after the act built a fan base on the road, according to Adam Lind, who co-manages the group with Kenneth Kaplan. "The band has grown like it's a big rock band in 1973," he says. "It has really gone and broken itself market by market." Lind says that some markets in which the band performs may sell 3,000 tickets, while another market may draw 13,000 people.

The band typically advertises its concerts across radio, TV, print and the Internet. But since people who hear a TSO song on the radio may not immediately realize what group they are listening to, the act's management focuses most of its advertising budget on radio spots and TV.

It's TSO's live performance, however, that wins lifelong fans. The act's over-the-top stage production features a sitting section, a rock band with more than 20 members, multiple vocalists, a narrator, pyrotechnics, a laser/light show and snowfall in the course of a two-hour-and-45-minute show. Past concerts have featured guest vocals from Roger Daltrey, Paul Rodgers, Greg Lake and Jon Anderson.

To help keep concertgoers coming back each year, the group prices its tickets from $20 to $60 and never sells seats with ob-
“If they were a public company, their stock would be through the roof,” says Marc Geiger, the band’s agent at the William Morris Agency.

TSO’s live show—which this year will feature more than $2 million of pyrotechnics alone, according to O’Neill—has kept album sales on track, even though no new studio material has been released since 2004’s “The Last Christmas Eve,” which has sold 1.6 million copies, according to SoundScan. Predecessors “The Christmas Attic” (1998) and the nonholiday set “Beethoven’s Last Night” (2000) have sold 1.5 million and 511,000 copies, respectively.

“The touring gets bigger and bigger, so they’re playing in front of more and more people,” Atlantic VP of A&R Gregg Nadel says. Without a new album to promote, Nadel says that a Miller Lite commercial that ran during the holiday season from 2005 to 2007, featuring the TSO song “Wizards in Winter,” helped keep the group in the public eye. Along with an on-screen tag that name-checked the song, “We worked [‘Wizards in Winter’] to radio and it’s become a hit over the last couple of years,” Nadel says. According to Nielsen SoundScan, it’s sold 175,000 downloads. (It was uncertain at press time whether Miller Lite would use the track again in 2008.)

In another effort to keep the act’s name alive at retail, Atlantic released “10 Years of TSO” exclusively on Amazon in October. For a list price of $69.98, the four-album boxed set “sold out in a matter of hours,” according to Nadel, who says only 500 were available. Additionally, the band offered a free download on Amazon of the new song “Night Enchanted,” which will appear on the act’s forthcoming non-Christmas album “Nightcastle.”

With a minimum of two studio recording sessions going simultaneously, O’Neill has been working on “Nightcastle” for several years now. He promises that “it will be out next year, no matter what. . . the argument is whether to sell it as a single CD, a double-CD or a triple-CD,” he says, “but we want to keep it at a single-CD price.”

O’Neill declines to reveal details about the album’s storyline, but he says that “it will be half rock opera and half a regular record, with a booklet of poetry and illustrations” by artist Greg Hildebrandt. Pittrelli says “Nightcastle” would have been completed a year sooner if the album’s writing team hadn’t recently discovered singers Jeff Scott Soto and Tim Hockenberry.

“We couldn’t have this record coming out without these guys on it,” Pittrelli says, noting that many of the songs had to be rewritten for their vocal parts. “Paul is the kind of person that will take as long as is needed to finish a record.”

O’Neill still plans to keep touring TSO during future holiday seasons, but he says, “The Christmas albums are done. . . for the immediate future.” In 2010, after the release of “Nightcastle,” the band will tour 60 theaters in North America, about 20 venues in Europe and then “fill in the rest of the world,” according to Lind.

“It would be a slam-dunk solo show,” Lind says. “They want to go out and play theaters in markets where they’ve done 20,000 people.”

For the Christmas spectaculars, however, O’Neill wants it to be just that—spectacular. He has a dream of touring baseball stadiums. The reason “I love baseball stadiums is because there’s no limit on the production,” he says. “The fans don’t care if you have a new Maserati or a new house in Tahiti, but the fans do care if there are new toys on the flight deck.”
Proudly acknowledges the accomplishments of Tricky and The-Dream.
RED ZONE ENTERTAINMENT

HOW THE SONGWRITING AND PRODUCTION TEAM IS RUNNING UP THE SCORE IN THE HITMAKING GAME

CHRISTOPHER "TRICKY" STEWART (left) and TERIUS "THE-DREAM" NASH
TOUCH DOWN

THE SECRETS BEHIND RED ZONE ENTERTAINMENT’S DREAM TEAM
BY MARIEL CONCEPCION

In American football, the red zone is the distance from the 20-yard line to the goal, considered the most probable area in which an offensive team can score. To the Stewart brothers — manager Mark, 38, and music producer Christopher, 34, whose nickname is Tricky — who founded Atlanta-based Red Zone Entertainment in 1995. The name of their management/publishing company is an allegory for how close they were to “scoring.”

“We named it Red Zone because we’re all football fanatics,” Christopher says. “It indicates we haven’t scored yet, but we are in striking distance. It was a metaphor of where we felt we were in the business.”

Red Zone started when the Chicago-born brothers, who had been honing their musical skills under the tutelage of eldest brother and producer Laney (Aaron Hall, K-Ci & JoJo) since 1989 in Los Angeles, left for Atlanta to start their own management and production business at the request of music mogul Antonio “L.A.” Reid. “We met L.A. in 1994 through a mutual acquaintance. Our official relationship started when he signed our artist Sam Salter to LaFace,” Mark says. “He flew us down and heard our music and some music by artists we were working with at the time, and he told us he wanted to do more business with us. But he wanted us to move there to work on a day-to-day basis. We cut a deal with him that helped us build and finance our own studio, Triangle Sounds. That’s what started Red Zone.”

Now, after the addition in 2006 of partner and singer/songwriter Terius “the-Dream” Nash (who hyphenates his artist name due to legal issues with a group by the same name), Red Zone can say it’s attained a number of musical touchdowns. Among its hits are Britney Spears’ “Me Against the Music,” featuring Madonna; Rihanna’s “Umbrella”; J. Holiday’s “Bed”; Mariah Carey’s “Touch My Body”; Mary J. Blige’s “Just Fine”; Jesse McCartney’s “Leavin’”; and most recently Beyoncé’s “Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It).” That’s not even including the upcoming projects that are in the works with Celine Dion, Laura Izibor, Jamie Foxx and Mario. These achievements are just the latest for Red Zone, which has been building its rep since 1995. Its first signing was music producer She’kspere, who helmed the No. 1 hit song “No Scrubs” for R&B group TLC in 1999. A month later Christopher produced “Who Dat” for rapper JT Money, which reached No. 2 on Billboard’s Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart. She’kspere went on to produce portions of Destiny’s Child’s 1999 album “The Writing’s on the Wall,” which has sold 6.3 million copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Red Zone continued to produce hits, like Mya’s “Case of the Ex” (which hit No. 2 on the Billboard Hot 100), and manage sought-after artists like Blu Cantrell, executive-producing her debut album, “So Blu,” both released in 2001 via Interscope and Arista Records, respectively. “So Blu” peaked at No. 8 on the Billboard 200 and spawned the No. 2 single “Hit ‘Em Up Style (Oops!).”

Although they were doing well and gaining notoriety, something was still missing. “I was managing and Christopher Stewart was producing and we did Pink and a bunch of other records, but it was nothing profound. Christopher Stewart was talented but something was still missing,” Mark says. “We had a great life, but no one knew who we were. It paid the bills and gave us our lifestyle but we weren’t known like that.”

In 2001, Mark and Christopher met then-up-and-coming singer/songwriter Nash after a common friend introduced them, but they weren’t convinced he was what they were looking for. “We saw his talent, but he had another type of energy,” Mark says. “Our style was different, so it took us some time to find a comfortable working relationship.”

Nash had already been trying his hand at music, first as part of an Atlanta-based singing group and then as a solo artist signed to an independent label owned by a local rapper named Raheem; he guest-appeared on Raheem’s song “Most Beautiful Girl” in 1999 and then wrote a remix of it that became a regional hit.

Three years later, Nash realized that even more than singing, his affinity at the time was in telling stories through music. “I kind of fell in love with being able to write a story melodically. When I was in the band...”

continued on >>p33

Tricky and the-Dream as a team are ‘like lightning in a bottle.’
—SAM KLING, PEER MUSIC PUBLISHING

Tricky kid: CHRISTOPHER "TRICKY" STEWART writing a song this past summer in Malibu, Calif., for the-Dream’s second album

www.americanradiohistory.com
Dear Tricky,

Congratulations on a phenomenal year!

Your peermusic family,
Ralph, Liz, Kathy & Sam
CONGRATULATIONS FROM LA REID AND YOUR ISLAND DEF JAM FAMILY
from >>30
we were playing
someone else's music. When it
was my own, I just felt this sense
of control," Nash says. "I wrote
what I wanted to and fell in love
with that process. That's what kept
me going."

Coincidentally, while Mark and
Christopher contemplated whether
a partnership with Nash made
sense, the artist teamed with Laney
Stewart on B2K's "Pandemonium!"
album later that year, becoming
Nash's first major artist placement.

A year later, by "default," as Christo-
pher says, he and Nash inadver-
tently joined forces for Spears' "Me
Against the Music." "Christopher
Stewart did the track for Britney
and he didn't know if he liked
it. So he left it behind one day,
and I pulled it up, played it and
wrote something to it," Nash says.
"It didn't happen because he
said, 'Let's write.' It hap-
pened because I stole it." It was
then that Mark and Chris-
topher grasped
the notion
that
who
they
needed
to
complete the
team
was
right
in
front of them the
entire
time. "Everything clicked.
When we met him and he became
part of our writing relationship,
that's when things went to another
level," Mark says.

The synergy between Christopher and
Nash as a songwriting and produc-
tion team is "like lightning in a bottle," says
Sam Kling, head of A&R for Peer Music Publishing, which
signed Christopher in 2000. "They have the right sound and
combination at the right time, and perseverance is a part of
that," Kling says. "[Tricky's] been around long enough to have
their time come."

So far, Red Zone's biggest breakout hit, contrary to popular
belief ("Although Britney Spears' "Me Against the Music" was
considered our crossover track because it was the first main-
stream artist we worked with, it wasn't as big of a hit as we ex-
pected," Mark says), has been Rihanna's "Umbrella." But the
track was written with a different artist in mind.

"When Tricky called me and said he had a record that was
crazy, my inclination was to send it to whoever would get it because
there was nothing else out there that sounded like it. I knew L.A.
Reid would, so I sent it to him, but I also sent it to [Warner/Chap-
pell senior VP/head of urban music] continued on >>p34
Great collaborations: TRICKY (left) and STING (right).
congratulations

Radio Killa

and

REDZONE

ENTERTAINMENT

dear Dream, Tricky, Mark, Kuk, Judi and the entire family:

from bass to "falsetto," you have forged a creative voice that is more than "just fine" and continues "moving mountains."

it remains a pleasure working with you under your "umbrella."

with love and respect,

Aaron, Eric, Jeffrey and your extended family at the firm

myman abell fineman fox greenspan light LLP

ATTORNEYS AT LAW
TRICKY, DREAM, MARK, AND THE WHOLE REDZONE / RADIO KILLA TEAM

Congratulations on an incredible year and thank you for making the Studio at the Palms in Las Vegas a part of it.

THE DREAM
M Novel J Blige • Usher • Ciara
Dave Young • Sterling Simms
Keyshia Cole
Jon Mclaughlin • Beyonce
Eve • Gym Class Heroes
Jamie Foxx • Celine Dion • Cassie
Jesse McCartney • LL Cool J
Electrik Red • Lionel Richie

from p34 and consultant because "they are a special group. They bring a lot of fresh ideas and are willing to try new things musically. They are not afraid."

Christopher's publishing contract with Peer expired in June, and Universal is one of the parties interested in picking it up. "To me, it's an absolute no-brainer to continue our association," Olson says.

Red Zone also represents other writing teams like the Movement, which comprises J.R. and Corron; the pair has worked on such hits as Lionel Richie's latest single, "Good Morning," released Nov. 3, and Pleasure P's upcoming track, "Birthday Suit." There's another team, songwriter/producer Sean K (Lionel Richie) and Kelly (Jennifer Lopez), as well as songwriter Dean, who has worked with Mýa, Ciara and the Pussycat Dolls. And then there's Kuk Harrell, cousin to the Stewarts, who Mark refers to as "the secret weapon." "He produces all the vocals as well as writes and produces. He's the silent member and a major part of what we do on a creative basis."

Moving forward, one of the major business moves that Red Zone hopes to make is branching out into TV production. In addition to Dion, Foxx, Mario and Izïlah, Nash and Christopher are also working with Sting, Ciara, Jennifer Lopez and Lloyd, as well as Nash's sophomore album, "Love Vs. Money," due in February through Def Jam.

When asked what the secret to their success is, Mark says it's simply a willingness to change. "A lot of people fail off because they don't want to change. But we make adjustments every day. Tricky and I are veterans of the game, but Dream showed us we always have to respect that young energy. He is the guy who really impacted our business. Those kinds of adjustments allow for true longevity."

SOUND ADVICE
TRICKY AND THE-DREAM OFFER THEIR TOP FIVE TIPS FOR SONGWRITING/PRODUCING SUCCESS

1 WRITE FOR THE LISTENER
"The business of songwriting is about service, so always write for others. Keep in mind what you want to hear, but remember you are a storyteller and they are the listener. Tell the story in a way that people can understand."

2 DON'T RUSH YOUR CRAFT
"Be a good listener and a great student. Don't allow your ego to walk through an open door before your heart does, because your ego wants what it wants right now but your heart will be patient enough to wait for it and earn it."

3 DO YOUR HOMEWORK
"Listen to all the other great songs of history and compare them to yours. Once your song sounds like it could be on an album alongside the timeless songs, then you got it. Just don't forget how you got there."

4 HEALTHY COMPETITION IS GOOD COMPETITION
"Out-work the next writer. Write and produce like your mother's life depended on it."

5 REWARD YOURSELF
"If you've done all these things, buy something really extravagant from time to time to remind yourself of your blessings and all you've achieved. And remember, always force those who receive things from your hard work to also be a shoulder and not just a weight. Force them to help and not hurt, force them to know and obtain your knowledge, for there will be a day when your passion will outgrow you and they will understand you best and comfort you when it gets rough."

—Mariano Concepcion

36 BILLBOARD DECEMBER 13, 2008
SALUTES
OUR RADIO KILLA...
THE-DREAM

REDZONE
ENTERTAINMENT

Radio Killa
RECORDS

www.americanradiohistory.com
Celebration: From left, TRICKY, THE-DREAM, JAZZE PHA and DALLAS AUSTIN at wine bar/bookstore Vino Libro in Atlanta, celebrating Rihanna’s Umbrella going to No.1. Right: Tricky and the-Dream while working on ‘Love vs. Money,’ due in February.

**SHAWTY IS A TEN**

**TRICKY AND THE-DREAM’S TOP TRACKS**

Christopher “Tricky” Stewart and Terius “the-Dream” Nash have collaborated on hit after hit since joining forces at Red Zone Entertainment. Here are 10 of their top tracks to date.

- **ME AGAINST THE MUSIC,** Britney Spears Featuring Madonna
  Co-written by Terius “the-Dream” Nash and Christopher “Tricky” Stewart; produced by Christopher “Tricky” Stewart

- **UMBRELLA,** Rihanna
  Co-written by Terius “the-Dream” Nash, Christopher “Tricky” Stewart and Kuk Harrell; produced by Christopher “Tricky” Stewart

- **SUFFOCATE,** J Holiday
  Co-written by Terius “the-Dream” Nash and Christopher “Tricky” Stewart; produced by Christopher “Tricky” Stewart

- **JUST FINE,** Mary J Blige
  Co-written by Terius “the-Dream” Nash, Christopher “Tricky” Stewart, Mary J. Blige and Jazze Pha; co-produced by Christopher “Tricky” Stewart and Jazze Pha

- **TOUCH MY BODY,** Mariah Carey
  Co-written by Terius “the-Dream” Nash, Christopher “Tricky” Stewart and Mariah Carey; co-produced by Christopher “Tricky” Stewart and Terius “the-Dream” Nash

- **LEAVIN’,** Jesse McCartney
  Co-written by Terius “the-Dream” Nash, Christopher “Tricky” Stewart and J.B. and Corron of the Movement; co-produced by Christopher “Tricky” Stewart and J.B. and Corron of the Movement

- **FALSETTO,** the-Dream
  Co-written by Terius “the-Dream” Nash and Christopher “Tricky” Stewart; co-produced by Christopher “Tricky” Stewart and Terius “the-Dream” Nash

- **I LUV YOUR GIRL,** the-Dream
  Co-written by Terius “the-Dream” Nash and Christopher “Tricky” Stewart; co-produced by Christopher “Tricky” Stewart and Terius “the-Dream” Nash

- **MOVING MOUNTAINS,** Usher
  Co-written by Terius “the-Dream” Nash, Christopher “Tricky” Stewart and Kuk Harrell; co-produced by Christopher “Tricky” Stewart and Terius “the-Dream” Nash

- **SINGLE LADIES (PUT A RING ON IT),** Beyoncé
  Co-written by Terius “the-Dream” Nash, Christopher “Tricky” Stewart, Kuk Harrell and Beyoncé; co-produced by Christopher “Tricky” Stewart and Terius “the-Dream” Nash

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**CONGRATULATIONS!**

Your accomplishments this year are a true testimony to your pursuit of excellence.

Continue on this path and strive for nothing less.

From all of us at TSG Financial Management LLC.
SunTrust congratulates Tricky & The Dream and Red Zone Entertainment.

Our Sports and Entertainment Specialty Group applauds your remarkable accomplishments and contributions to the music industry.
Congratulations
to our favorite dynamic duo,
Tricky & Dream!

from your friends and family
here at
Triangle Sound Studios!

Love,

Cynthia, B Luv,
Jason, Steve,
Bobby & Paige

TRIANGLE SOUND STUDIOS
HAMILTON'S HEIGHTS

R&B Star Gets To The 'Point'

Anthony Hamilton is best-known for chronicling heartbreak on songs like "Charlene" and "Can't Let Go." But on "The Point of It All," arriving Dec. 16 from Jive, the artist says it's time to rejoice.

Embodying the message is the first single "It's Cool" featuring David Banner, on which Hamilton sings, "You can conquer the world," over a loopy, guitar-tinged beat. "It's a down-South, feel-good track with a little island thing to it," he says. "The lyrics are about day-to-day life, the struggles and trying to make things happen without a lot. But, of course, there's a happy ending."

The artist's brand of tell-it-like-it-is R&B and soul found an audience on his 2003 So So Def debut, "Comin' From Where I'm From," which has sold more than 1.3 million copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. The follow-up, 2005's "Ain't Nobody Worryin'," has moved 639,000.

Now, Hamilton is looking at the other side of love on the piano-based, up-tempo "Feel Like Falling in Love," which he describes as a combination of an Elvis Presley and James Brown track, and the title cut, a love ballad in contention to be released as a single early next year. "Be careful when listening to it," Hamilton says of the latter cut. "If you don't have kids, you might have some after this one."

Hamilton also addresses the current economic crisis ("Souls on Fire") and the dangers of infidelity ("Please Stay With Me"). "We must not forget things can still go on in the world that affect you and even in your own relationship," he says.

Raphael Saadiq, Jack Splash, Cee Lo, Dre & Vidal, Saliah Remi, Avila Brothers and Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis contributed production to the project, while Banner, Fatin Dantzler from Kindred the Family Soul and Hamilton's wife, Tarisia McMillan Hamilton, make guest appearances.

And while he's enjoyed a handful of radio hits on Billboard's Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart, Hamilton's greatest promotional asset is his live show, according to Jive VP of marketing Lisa Cambridge. The artist has an average gross of $62,211 from 24 shows reported to Billboard Boxscore since 2003.

Hamilton is already on a mostly sold-out club tour in the United States, with dates booked through Dec. 14 in Atlanta, and will play this month on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" and "Good Morning America."

This will be followed by a stateside tour in larger venues, for which Hamilton hopes to partner with Noel Gourdin or up-and-coming artist Yazzarah, who used to sing backup for Erykah Badu and Bilal.

Hamilton is reinforcing the connection with his audience through a tour blog on his official Web site and MySpace page. In the meantime, Jive is working to align him with either a high-end liquor company or a female lifestyle brand to help broaden his audience.

"I just want to make sure it's some real smart stuff that I believe in," Hamilton adds. "I'm not trying to put people in the slaughterhouse. But an occasional glass of wine or cognac won't kill you. I want to make sure it's responsible branding."

Hamilton's guest spots on recent albums have also kept him visible while his own album, which was delayed on a couple of occasions, was nearing release. He appears on Young Jeezy's new "The Recession," two songs on Al Green's "Lay It Down," the "Soul Men" soundtrack and, oddly enough, on songs with country artists Josh Turner and Big & Rich's John Rich.

"I love country," Hamilton says of the collaborations. "I wrote the song for Josh Turner—he's a good friend of mine—and he said he'd be honored if I dueted with him.

It all ties in with an old-school approach to music, one that seems unconcerned with deadlines or deals for the sake of making deals. "Sometimes deadlines get in the way of some really good things," Hamilton says. "That's why I didn't want to rush it. Now, it feels complete."
Early Daze

Newcomer Late Of The Pier Finds U.S. Groove

As frontman of a hyperkinetic, stylistically schizoid, hipster-pranced band like the United Kingdom’s Late of the Pier, one might expect Sam Eastgate to be a handful to interview, distracted, maybe even intoxicated, and on a premature ego trip.

But Eastgate is the opposite of the swaggering rock star he becomes onstage and the shape-shifting voice—from Freddie Mercury to Robert Smith to Simon Le Bon—that springs from him in the studio. He’s thoughtful, affable and gent to the heart of what makes Late of the Pier so different from its post-dance-rock contemporaries: It has thought of everything.

“We definitely have a lot of stuff really planned out; like exactly how it’s going to go,” he says.

To do what the group does, it would have to. The four-piece’s sound is a high-speed, high-art melting of melodic rock and ’80s pop, with fits and starts of the disco energy that’s propelled the dance-rock craze. It was able to capture it on debut album “Fantasy Black Channel” (Artists, due Jan. 13), produced by electronic wunderkind Erol Alkan.

The act can also reproduce it live. While Eastgate and bandmates Ross Dawson (drums), Andrew Foley (bass) and Sam Potter (synths) focus on the music, the careful planning continues among their U.S. techs, who look for what it has in a band with talent this raw.

“We loved the record when we heard it. It was just so all over the place. One moment it sounded like Queen, the next moment it sounded like Numan, and another moment it sounded very contemporary, like something you’ve never heard before,” Alkan says.

Senior project manager Lawrence Lui says “Fantasy Black Channel,” which de-

GLOBAl PULSE

EDITED BY TOM FERGUSON

>>> VERDE GO!

Since winning the best new artist award at Spanish radio network Cadena SER’s annual Premios Ondas awards in 2005, Diana Navarro has gained attention for the “copla” singing style among Spain’s pop-buying public.

Copla, related to southern Spanish flamenco, dates from the 19th century. Navarro’s 2005 debut for Warner Music Spain, “No Te Olvides De Mi,” has sold some 200,000 units, according to the label, and gained her a Latin Grammy Award nomination that year. Her 2007 sophomore album, “24 Rosas,” has sold some 90,000 units, according to Warner, while her new album “Camino Verde” settled in the higher reaches of Spain’s Media Control charts following its Oct. 28 release. The album reworks copla standards made famous in the late 19th century.

Born in the southern city of Malaga, Navarro’s strong voice reveals the clear influence of operas as well as flamenco, adding to her Edie Vedder take on copla. “Diana gives a modern touch to traditional copla while maintaining a deep respect for the genre,” says Warner Music Spain manager of international ex-

‘Post’ Rock

Animal Collective Climbs The Indie Food Chain

When it burst onto the indie rock scene in 2003, Animal Collective was tagged as the leader of the budding freak-folk movement. While that descriptive has since faded, it hinted at one thing: The band likes to do things differently.

That goes for everything from strange band names (Panda Bear, Avey Tare) to songs about weather to an ever-changing musical approach. Most recently, on 2007’s “Strawberry Jam,” Animal Collective ditched the lush, orchestral arrangements of earlier work in favor of a louder, electric guitars-electronics attack.

And even though it recorded as a trio (guitarist Josh “Deakin” Dibb took a self-imposed break from band duties), the move toward a larger sound continues on “Merriweather Post Pavilion,” due Jan. 20 from Domino.

“Since there are only three of us playing, especially for the live situation, it just seemed more interesting to use samplers instead of a lot of live instrumentation,” Dave "Avey Tare" Portnow says. “It’s a lot more low-end—and that was a conscious decision on our part—to make a record that was for the most part more rhythm.”

The result is a heavy mix of thumping, sample-heavy psychedelia, best heard on sprawling opener “In the Flowers” and the romantic, subdued “Blush.” The album certainly sounds like the work of a band, but one not connected to a specific music scene.

That ideology has helped drive Animal Collective to the top of the indie-rock food chain in a relatively short period of time. Although few would call its music accessible, the group has sold 176,000 albums in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, with 2005’s “FEELS” at $5,000 and “Strawberry Jam” at $50,000.

Instead of drawing on direct influences, Animal Collective makes albums with a connection to places in mind. “We usually try to connect to outdoor environments, and there was something about this that was harking back to the time where we would be outside, in backyards, listening to music on a boombox,” Portnow says. “Because that’s how we really grew up and got attached to listening to music together.”

Hence the new album’s title, which shares its name with an amphitheater in Columbia, Md. “I had seen the concerts there, growing up,” Portnow says. “But we didn’t really name it after the venue. We really liked the way it sounds and that it has the word ‘weather’ in it. We cast a lot of the songs to different weather patterns.”

Domino, which picked up the band from Fat Cat in 2007, began rolling out “Merriweather Post Pavilion” through private listening parties last month in the hopes of cultivating word-of-mouth. The label will cater to hardcore fans with the album packaging; the CD features a four-panel Softpak inside an interlocking envelope, while the double vinyl is a gatefold with printed inner sleeves.

Animal Collective will tour throughout 2009, including an appearance at the second All Tomorrow’s Parties: The Fans Strike Back in Minehead, England. The group will play “very limited” as-yet-unannounced dates in the months to follow, concluding with a November show in Chicago.

Reporting by Jonathan Cohen.
Jingle Sells
Indie Acts Board The Holiday Music Train

Holiday albums have usually been the domain of big stars—think Bing Crosby, Dean Martin or Josh Groban. But this year, an influx of indie artists and labels are getting into the holiday spirit, all with different goals in mind.

Artists like Aimee Mann and Sufjan Stevens have proved there’s a market for a different kind of Christmas tune. Stevens’ 2006 collection “Songs for Christmas” has sold 81,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, while Mann’s “One More Drifer in the Snow” from the same year has sold 39,000.

The underlying notion is that there’s a youthful audience that will buy (or at least pay attention to) records that are more left-of-center than the everyday reissue compilation of a classic holiday ballad.

Longtime Stevens colleague Rosie Thomas decided to take the plunge almost on a whim this spring, culling a handful of friends from the Seattle area to help her record “A Very Rosie Christmas.” Released Nov. 4 by Nettwerk, the set’s 12 tracks include Alvin & the Chipmunks’ “Christmas Don’t Be Late.”

“I don’t blame people for overlooking it,” Thomas says with a laugh. “A chipmunk sung it.”

Thomas is on a holiday-themed tour that she hopes to make an annual occurrence. Mann, who is in her third year of touring around “Drifter.”

Nettwerk sees even more potential in “A Very Rosie Christmas,” with the idea being to make “an event” out of each stop and get people fans for years to come, according to manager Mike Cochran. The Coalition of Independent Music Stores’ JunkieBox imprint is handling physical distribution for the album.

Meanwhile, Merge is hoping to carve out a similar niche for former Neutral Milk Hotel multi-instrumentalist Julian Koster, whose “The Singing Saw at Christmas time” recently became the 20-year-old label’s first Christmas album.

For Koster, this is no mere stylistic diversification. “We’ve been approached by other artists to do holiday singles, but this project seemed perfect. For Julian, it’s Christmas 12 months of the year,” Merge publicist Carmin Renza says. “His dog is actually named ‘Rudolph.’”

Indeed, following his stint on the Elephant 6 Holiday Surprise tour, which saw reclusive Neutral Milk Hotel leader Jeff Mangum make several unannounced appearances, koster is topping the holiday charts. Of late, he has been invited to solicite private homes to "carol" in and spread his quirky brand of Christmas cheer. "It would be so nice if music knocked on my door and came to see me," he says of his rationale for staging such a trek.

Other holiday releases have the potential to inject new life into the most recent studio albums from a given artist.

When the Raveonettes released “Lust Lust Lust” in February on Vice, they planned on touring for the remainder of the year, but personnel changes prevented that. Instead, the group released three digital EPs, culminating with last month’s “Wishing You a Rave Christmas.”

“We wanted to keep them on the radar, repurposing a record that came out in February,” Vice Music GM Janie Farkas says. “It was nice timing to have the last one hit right at the point where people are thinking of what came out this year.”

On the compilation front, “I’ll Stay ’Til Christmas,” compiled by Force Field PR owner Daniel Gill and featuring holiday songs from Bliinen Trapper, Sally Shapiro and My Brightest Diamond, was just released digitally, with 100% of proceeds going to charity.

Also on the market is a compilation from Joan Jett’s Blackheart Records, an EP from Underoath drummer Aaron Gillespie’s side project the Almost and the first holiday-themed albums from Mary Chapin Carpenter and Bela Fleck (Rounder).

And despite the challenges of getting their music heard amidst a glut of holiday releases, most artists say the hardest part of the process was simply picking the material. “That’s always the difficulty with covers—you’re not pressured to do the songwriting, but I am tough about it, because a lot are done so well,” Thomas says of the holiday canon. “Once we figured out what would work, we tried to reinvent them as a unique experience.”
ALBUMS

POP
BARRY MANILOW
The Greatest Hits of the Eighties
Producers: Barry Manilow, Clive Davis, Scott Ericson, Michael Lloyd
Release Date: Nov. 24

With a Christmas single on the AC singles chart for the second year in a row and a fifth sold-out year of live shows beginning in Las Vegas, Barry Manilow’s millennial presence continues to dazzle. Following “The Greatest Hits of the Fifties” (No. 1 debut, 2006), “Sixties” (No. 2, 2006) and “Seventies” (No. 4, 2007), “Eighties” is already off to a merry start with a No. 14 debut this week. Manilow’s gleeful duet with Reba McEntire on “Islands in the Stream” proves what a master arranger/interpreter he is, taking an overtly familiar hit and recasting it honorably. The same holds true for “Right Here Waiting” and “I’ll Be Home for Christmas.” Most surprising are “I Just Called to Say I Love You,” now a live rhumba, and “Never Gonna Give You Up,” where Manilow busts a groove. There’s a lot of uncertainty in the world at large, but “Eighties” is one sure thing.—CT

ROCK
THE ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS
When the World Comes Down
Producer: Eric Valentine
Release Date: Dec. 16

The All-American Rejects’ 2005 effort “Move Along” spawned a number of radio-friendly hits that appealed to the Vans Warped Tour crowd and mainstream listeners alike. “When the World Comes Down” doesn’t evince much growth, proffering more of the same hokey pop/rock centered around adolescent love and heartache. Accelerated rockers like “I Wanna” and “Breakin’” are the best of this lot, while on “Give Me You,” singer Tyson Ritter does his best Freddyo Mercury before leading into a stompin’, “Beverly Hills”-like chorus. Orchestral flourishes pretty up the otherwise strummy “Sunshine,” and guitars are largely absent from “The Wind Blows,” adding a welcoming twist to the band’s straightforward approach to the rest of the songs. For fans of AAC’s past work, “World” is a familiar listen, but the group could benefit from a bit more outside-the-box thinking.—JW

DANCE
JUSTICE
A Cross the Universe
Producer: Justice
Release Date: Dec. 9

Unfortunately for Justice, the act’s “live” CD/DVD sees release a few weeks after the blogosphere had a field day with a photo that showed it playing ferociously on MiDi equipment—which was visibly unplugged. No matter, though. The Justice live show—like any proper nightclub party—is more about communal experience than music playback, as the crowd noise on this 18-track synth blitz proves. Just listen to those kids fill the silence with a singalong during “We Are Your Friends” or bust a gut cheering when the familiar sing-song refrain to the hit “D.A.N.C.E.” first drops. Nearly every track here is from the French duo’s 2007 debut “Cross,” tweaked and sequenced for maximum rock concert-like impact. Does it upset the applecart of ethics of both DJing and live performance? Absolutely. But hearing a crowd go wild for a kick drum has to do the dance community proud.—KM

FOLK
CHARLIE LOUVIN
Sings Murder Ballads and Disaster Songs
Producer: Mark Nevers
Release Date: Dec. 9

Amid daily news of tragedy and economic collapse, now is either the worst or best time to release a collection of songs about death and mayhem. But either way, this album from country legend Charlie Louvin, who began his career with his late brother Ira in the early ’40s, is a welcome remembrance of traditional American folk music and its role as an ancestor of today’s news cycles. Louvin’s once-crystalline voice does wear his 81 years, but it also carries deeper understanding of the heartache central to the disaster songs he first recorded decades ago, including the adapted spiritual “Wreck on the Highway,” the coal-miners’ lament “Dark As a Dungeon” and the tragic waltz “Mary of the Wild Moor.” The songs don’t vary greatly in rhythm or simple sing-song melody, but they are stories as much as tunes, and Louvin and his first-rate musicians are engaging storytellers indeed.—EN

MAROON 5
Call and Response: The Remix Album
Producers: various
Release Date: Dec. 9

Remix albums rightfully have a bad rap. Too often they’re merely contract satisfiers—easy ways to give big artists something fresh on the shelves or to separate dedicated fans from more of their dough. But “Call and Response” is everything the format could and should be. The band enlisted names big and small to get deep into its two-album catalog, and judging from the thoughtfulness of the contributions, they’re all pre-existing Maroon fans. Snizz Beatz uses an uncharacteristically loose and light hand on “If I Know Better,” while Antoine Fuquay and J. Blige to contribute a great vocal to his funky take on “Wake Up Call”; and Pharrell Williams’ “She Will Be Loved” is lo-fi and completely devoid of schmaltz or radio trickery. No one was trying to make new hits here or take their stock remix loop and carelessly plop it on an unrelated melody—they seem to just really love the songs.—KM

KEVIN RUDOLF
In the City
Producer: Kevin Rudolf
Cash Money/Universal Republic
Release Date: Nov. 25

Kevin Rudolf is a new face in pop—but not to those who pay attention to liner notes. The New York musician is one of producer Timbaland’s resident studio aces, with playing credits on albums by Justin Timberlake, Nelly Furtado, the Black Eyed Peas and Tim himself, and that pop/rock/hip-hop cred has made him the first non-rap artist signed by Cash Money Records. “In the City” is not a musician’s album, however; Rudolf is as much of a top 40 aspirant as any of the folks he’s worked with, and the dozens tracks on his solo debut, on which Rudolf plays nearly everything, hew toward the hooky, tuneful and danceable. The three collaborations with rappers—including first single “Let It Rock” with Lil Wayne plus hookups with Nas (“N.Y.C.”) and Rick Ross (“Welcome to the World”)—are thumping, synthesizer-heavy club anthems, while “Coffee and Donuts,” “She Can Get It,” “Gimme a Sign” and “Luv It Up” are brightly intertem- po and, in spots, new wave. Such mellower moments as “I Song” and “Scared” have the pop mainstream firmly in their polished coin hands, but it’s not until the album-closing opus “Great Escape,” with guitar and piano solos laced throughout its six-and-a-half minutes, that Rudolf really displays some of the chops that could ultimately separate him from the pack.—GG
bristling with heated horn solos, is a potent instrumental number. Chopette’s reach extends beyond Afrofunk, however. “Upendo” is all about South Africa, including a lyric sung in Swahili. Malian griot Cheick Hamala Diabate joins the band on “Wili Ninine,” working a song that, appropriately, praises the band members. The closer. “No Condition Is Permanent,” features D.C. rapper Head-Roc in a bangin’ rag-Afrofunk fusion that sounds exactly like something from the Field Strung Instruments. He all is kicking.—PVV

TESLIM

Teslim

Producers: Kaila Flexer, Gari Hegedus
Self-released
Release Date: Dec. 9

Teslim’s Kaila Flexer and Gari Hegedus are, respectively, a violinist and an instrumentalist of bewilder- ing proficiency, including the oud, lauto (an eight-stringed Greek lute), frame drums and viola. Together they make exquisite music, drawing inspiration from Sephardic, Greek and Turkish traditional sources. Their tunes are ex- otic, and their virtuosity is spellbinding. “Ajagar De Novia Gliana/Timarkou Street Dojo” is a medley, blending a Sephardic tune with a Hege- dus original, “Stone’s Throw” is a gorgeous original number by Flexer, with Hegedus on viola and guest-olov, holographic on nylon guitar, following another Hegedus original, “Patalouda” (“butterfly” in Greek), is a string tour-de-force, featuring Flexer on violin and Hegedus on cusa saz and divan sas (Turkish string instruments). The album concludes with a gentle medley, “For a S/Karsi- amas for Sara”—PVV

LEGEND CREATES

EDITED BY JONATHAN COHEN
(AlBUMS) AND CHUCK TAYLOR
(SINGLEs)

CRITICS’ CHOICE ♦: A new release, regardless of chart potential, highly recommended for musical merit.

ALL ALBUMS AVAILABLE TO REVIEW.

SI NGLES

ION JAMIE FOXX FEATURING T.I.

Just Like Me (3:26)
Producers: Tricky Stewart, the-Dream
Writers: J. Foxx, C. Harris, T. Stewart, T. Nash
Publisher: not listed

JAMIE FOXX FEATURING T.I.
Just Like Me (3:26)
Producers: Tricky Stewart, the-Dream
Writers: J. Foxx, C. Harris, T. Stewart, T. Nash
Publisher: not listed

TAYLOR SWIFT
White Horse (3:24)
Producers: Taylor Swift, Nathan Chapman
Writers: Taylor Swift, L. Rose
Publishers: Sony/ATV Tree/Taylor Swift, BMI

THE HIVES FEATURING CYNDI LAUPER
A Christmas Duel

THE ORCHARD

JOSH KELLEY
To Remember (Holiday Mix)

DKV/Rocket Science

www.americanradiohistory.com
Come One, Come All

The Circus’ Comes To Town For Take That

Former boy band Take That is delivering some very grown-up sales figures.

The act—U.K. sales phenomenon since original members Gary Barlow, Mark Owen, Jason Orange and Howard Donald reform in 2005—posted the biggest first-day U.K. album sale of the year Dec. 1. Its Polydor album “The Circus” sold 133,000 copies, according to the Official Charts Co. (OCC), beating Coldplay’s “Viva La Vida or Death and All His Friends” (Parlophone) by 8,000 copies. That sale was delivered despite the album being unavailable at many key U.K. retailers after wholesaler EUK went into administration, which is similar to U.S. Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection (see story, page 19).

“The business is in transition,” says Universal Music Group International executive VP Max Hole, also president of Universal Music Asia Pacific. “But if you’ve got great music and great artists, you can still do quite remarkable numbers.”

“There’s a huge amount of love out there for the band,” says Rudy Osorio, head of music at market-leading retailer HMV. “And they have such broad appeal. It makes the album the perfect family gift.”

The numbers are the latest landmark achievement for the band, which smashed U.K. box-office records in October when 600,000 tickets for its 2009 stadium tour sold out in less than five hours. The group subsequently added more dates and has now sold a total of 700,000 tickets for its 34 stadium shows, kicking off June 5 at the Stadium of Light in Sunderland. The first single from the album, “Greatest Day,” debuted at No. 1 on the OCC’s Nov. 30 chart with sales of 70,300. It’s the group’s 11th No. 1, a tally topped only by the Beatles (17) and Irish boy band Westlife (14).

Universal Music U.K. chairman/CEO David Joseph signed the reformed act after working with its original incarnation at RCA (featuring Robbie Williams) before the group split in 1996. He attributes Take That’s success to its desire not to just relaunch its old sound.

On its previous album “Beautiful World,” “the whole approach was to make them sound like they would if the band had been making records for the previous 10 years,” he says. “Now they can afford to take a creative risk knowing that they look and sound like a supergroup.”

“Beautiful World” went on to sell all of the band’s previous albums in the United Kingdom, providing 2.5 million of a career sales total of 6.1 million units. However, Hole notes its “reasonably modest” performance in the rest of the world. The album hit No. 1 in Ireland and the United Kingdom and went top 10 in Austria, Der mark, Germany and Switzerland.

“The band is committed to giving us the time we need to get them on TV around the world,” he says. “We flew a lot of media and our own people into Paris for the album launch to focus everybody’s minds on how amazing Take That are live.”

“The Circus” was released worldwide Dec. 1, except in France where it hits stores in February and the United States. Only the original lineup’s swan song album, “Nobody Else” (Arista), received an official U.S. release with sales of 287,000, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

“We have a lot of interest in the music from our American partners,” says Joseph, who adds that a decision on a U.S. release will be made in the next few months.

In the meantime, the band is concentrating on further boosting its U.K. sales, with a prime-time ITV special airing Dec. 7, following up a special edition of the same channel’s “The X Factor,” which featured the band’s songs Nov. 29. The act also stars in mass merchant Marks & Spencer’s current Christmas ad campaign (see story, page 16).

“All the key indicators are there, and we’re looking at a very healthy first-week number,” Joseph says. “We’ve got a few really great parts of the campaign to unveil in the next two weeks so it’s not all front-loaded—it could lock in at No. 1 for the rest of the year.”

A FINE NEST

What does it take to debut on Billboard’s Top Latin Albums chart at No. 17? A little help from your friends, which in DJ Nesty’s case, include reggae superstars Wisin & Yandel.

Nesty’s “La Mente Maestra” on WY Machete, which is No. 2 this week, is the latest example of the “duo de la historia” giving a boost to its protégés. Through their Machete/Universal-distributed label, Wisin & Yandel have put out such compilations as “Los Vaque- ros” (200,000 copies sold in the United States and Puerto Rico, according to Nielsen SoundScan) and “Los Vaqueiros Wild Wild Mixes” (60,000), as well as a solo album by reggae sensation Tony Dize ($3,000). In each case, Wisin & Yandel have lent their voices, not just their names, to the projects.

In the case of Nesty (aka Ernesto F. Padilla), the Puerto Rican DJ was the main producer, an executive producer and co-writer with Wisin & Yandel on “La Mente Maestra.” Other acts on the WY roster, such as Franco “El Gorila,” Dize, Jayko, Gadiel and Tico “El Eliminador,” also appear on the album. Nesty began working on albums with reggae sensation’s original hitmaking producers, Luyi Tunes, in 2004. After several releases, including Wisin & Yandel’s hit album “Pa’l Mundo,” he scored credits on several hits for Calle 13, Votio and Hector “El Father”.

Wisin & Yandel manager Edgar Andino says the duo discussed the notion of a compilation album with Nesty and co-producer Victor “El Nasi” Martinez because such albums had become scarce after they were all the rage a few years ago. The final concept was an album presenting Nesty and Victor but co-produced by Wisin & Yandel, who also sing the first single, “Me Estas Tentando.” The song is No. 15 on the Hot Latin Songs chart this issue.

“Fans are already into the songs, and a Wisin & Yandel endorsement is important,” Andino says. Universal Music Latino/Machete president Walter Kolm adds, “Wisin & Yandel have transcended the natural barriers of the urban market and exploded into the mainstream.”

In the month after “Me Estas Tentando” became available as a single, it was purchased 9,000 times, with 2,000 ringtones. Key to the promotion is Nesty’s slick videos that have already been uploaded to support the album. Currently in rotation is the “Tentando” video, directed by film director Jesse Terrero. Three more videos have been shot, including one of a remix that isn’t on the current album.

BY MARK SUTHERLAND

‘DREAM’ ON

Triple A radio has been kind to Bruce Springsteen in the past decade, and the good vibes continue this week for “Working on a Dream,” the first single from the Boss’ Jan. 27 Columbia album of the same name. “Dream” debuts at No. 13 on Radio & Records’ Triple A chart, marking it only the fifth title to debut in the top 15 since the chart expanded to 30 positions in August 2006.

Springsteen is also the only artist to achieve that distinction twice; “Radio Nowhere” debuted in the same position in 2007 and eventually climbed to No. 2. Since the chart launched in 1996, Springsteen has notched five top 10s, including a No. 1 with “The Rising.”

“Dream” debuted during a Nov. 2 rally for Barack Obama in Cleveland. Excerpts from the studio version soundtracked a package of NFL highlights that aired Nov. 16 on NBC, while the full track hit digital retailers Nov. 24. In its debut week, the song sold 8,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

A second new track from the album, “My Lucky Day,” went live Dec. 1 on Amazon and MySpace. Fresh off winning the top tour honor at the Billboard Touring Awards, Springsteen and the E Street Band will return to live duty Feb. 1 as part of the Super Bowl XLIII halftime show in Tampa, Fla. —Jonathan Cohen

HAPPENING NOW

MUSIC

THERE’S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

THE MOVIE

Back to work: SPRINGSTEEN

Additional reporting by Leila Cobo.
Christian

By Deborah Evans Price

Loud And Clear

Jeremy Camp Notches Hefty Debuts

It's a cold winter morning at a Starbucks outside Nashville, and Jeremy Camp raises his voice slightly to be heard above the whirl of barista activity. It may be hard to hear him in this environment, but Camp's music is ringing loud and clear this week on the Billboard charts.

His new BEC Recordings set "Speaking Louder Than Before" debuts this week at No. 2 on Top Christian Albums and No. 38 on the Billboard 200, after selling 33,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

"It's a call to action, but a call to action through love," Camp says of the new project. "If you are a believer, you don't have to go out and be a street evangelist. We all have the opportunity to share the gospel and we should - that's what we were called to do. If you don't have much passion, well, get on your face and pray for the passion and get into the word of God. That's what I've been sharing. That's the whole concept."

Camp's desire to share his faith, combined with an amazing voice and great songwriting chops, has made him one of the Christian industry's most successful artists. Since releasing his 2003 debut album, "Stay," the Indiana native has had three albums certified gold, won five Dove Awards - including two male vocalist of the year titles - and earned three ASCAP Christian songwriter of the year honors.

The new album marks the first time he's worked with veteran producer Brown Bannister and the first time Camp has served as co-producer. Inspiration was still striking even at the last minute: The first single "There Will Be A Day" wasn't even supposed to be on the record because it wasn't in existence a month before we started recording," Camp says of the song, which is No. 2 on Hot Christian Songs.

Though only 30, Camp has experienced a tremendous amount of heartbreak. His first wife died of ovarian cancer just four and a half months after their marriage. Now remarried and a father of two daughters, Camp's past still colors his work, especially on such songs as "Healing Hand of God," a poignant ballad about surviving tragedy with God's help.

"Speaking Louder Than Before" is accompanied by 12 video devotionals, which can be accessed via a link on the CD to a special Web site or on the DVD that comes with the expanded edition of the album.

"He is sharing thoughts behind the songs based on scripture and pulling life applications out of them," BEC Recordings GM Tyson Paletti says. Camp adds, "I want to eventually do a study guide that [can] go along with videos to have material for youth groups."

BEC is encouraging fans to participate in the "Speak Louder" concept through a YouTube contest, where they can upload videos to the site and "speak up about whatever is on their mind." Entrants can win autobiographed memorabilia and meet-and-greets with Camp.

At retail, Wal-Mart has an exclusive track with its version of "Speaking Louder Than Before," while iTunes has an exclusive Chrismas tune, "Christmas Has Come." During street week, Camp did album-launch events in Dallas and Corona, Calif. In addition to touring the United States in 2009, he's planning a European jaunt that will take him to Ireland, Scotland, the Netherlands and Germany.

Rivers, Deep

A Jermaine Dupri song about partying excessively seems a far cry from a Brian Wilson song about sweetly loving a girl. The tie that binds these polar opposites of pop music is the ever-eclectic Rivers Cuomo. As the frontman for Weezer, Cuomo has sung wistfully about time spent alone in the garage, and with the arrival of "Alone II:" his second album of rare and unreleased solo tracks, it's becoming more and more obvious he spent that time recording heaps of music.

The DGC/Interscope album debuts this week at No. 2 on Billboard's Heatseekers chart with U.S. sales of 6,000, according to Nielsen SoundScan. The first volume in the series, released almost exactly a year ago, started with 14,000 and has gone on to sell 43,000.

"I knew I had a lot more recordings that I wanted to share with the world, but I wanted to wait and see how 'Alone I' was received," Cuomo says. Satisfied with the results, he delved back into the vaults. "I love the process of listening to all the old recordings and picking my favorites and going through my old journals and seeing what I was thinking when I was writing these songs."

About that Dupri song: The producer/mogul sent Cuomo a demo of "Can't Stop Partyin'" but the lyrics didn't initially jive with Cuomo's style. He tried to write his own, but "every line I came up with just sounded stupid compared with his, so I went back and changed the music and gave it some very sad chords filled with longing."
The cover of Wilson's "Don't Be Cruel" follows years of study of the artist's output by Cuomo, which he says has guided his own songwriting.

Cuomo "carefully transcribed" the song's five-part harmonies "in my bedroom on my tape deck. But then I added the element of the modern crunchy-guitar sound. And that's what really helped me figure out what I wanted to do as a songwriter and a performer in Weezer."

Weezer will be back on the road next spring, passing through New York for a newly titled release, dubbed "The Red Album." The group is also putting together its own collection of unreleased material, appropriately titled "Odds and Ends."

"Lavinia Jones Wright

They've Got The Touch

Getting booked onto a major U.S. festival is only a dream for most developing bands. But since playing its first show last December, Austin-based rock act Electric Touch has performed at the Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival, the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival, Lollapalooza, the Virgin Mobile Festival and the Austin City Limits Music Festival, among others.

Electric Touch released its self-titled debut album in late August on Justice Records, and since then the band has spent most of its time on the road "playing in front of as many people as possible" and "winning over one fan at a time," singer/guitarist Shane Lawlor says.

Along with appearances this year at South by Southwest in Austin, Electric Touch has opened for such acts as The Bravery and The Fratellis. Upcoming plans include a handful of gigs in December with Hootenanny and other club dates.

"We've played in front of two people before and we've played in front of 10,000 people before," Lawlor says. "We're always going to be the band that gives everything we've got, to our last drop of sweat on the stage."

The roadwork has helped Electric Touch land additional bookings, according to Justice Records owner Randall Jamali. "The band's name recognition is getting out there and people are starting to talk about the band more," he says. "If they can continue to perform in new markets, the sale of the record is going to continue."

Along for the ride is veteran concert promoter and Electric Touch manager Louis Messina, who is also the father of the band's guitarist Christopher Leigh and drummer Louis Messina Jr. As manager, Messina has exposed Electric Touch to some of the live entertainment business' key decision-makers, but concert promoters and talent buyers won't book a "band that they don't think is worthy of the slot," Jamali says.

Lawlor acknowledges that the elder Messina's credibility in the concert industry has helped open doors for Electric Touch, "but it's up to us to walk through those doors and give it everything we've got," he says. Messina is just as determined: "It's my last challenge in the business to break and get them to the top."

-Mitchell Peters
Light Bows Greet Kanye West, Roses' Return

Think of Kanye West's "808s & Heartbreak" as the turkey in your Thanksgiving dinner. (And no, I'm not taking a poorly worded potshot.) Instead of being the 20-pound bird that some thought, it turned out to be a still-tasty 12-pound gobbler. That's not to say the album's 450,000-unit debut at No. 1 is nothing to feast on. However, many label sales and distribution executives—including some at Universal Music Group—certainly projected higher first-week sales than what it achieved.

West's last album, 2007's "Graduation," started with 957,000 when it bowed at No. 1. Before that, his No. 1-debuting sophomore set, "Late Registration," chucked up an 860,000-unit entry in 2005, while his premiere effort, "The College Dropout," started at No. 2 with 441,000 in 2004.

The hefty debut for "Graduation"—the biggest sales week of 2007—was perhaps helped by an overlaid slowdown with 50 Cent's "Curtis," which came out the same day. Additionally, "Graduation" was armed with the radio hit "Stronger." In the week of the album's debut, it was No. 7 on the Hot 100 Airplay chart with 90.6 million in radio audience. This week "Love Lockdown," the lead track from "808s," is at No. 11 with 69.3 million in audience.

GUNS NOT SO BLAZING: The long-awaited new Guns N' Roses album, "Chinese Democracy," finally arrives . . . not with an assumed gangbuster week, but rather a just-OK 261,000 at No. 3.

What happened? Wasn't this one of the most-anticipated and talked-about albums of all time? Wasn't it steeped in myth and lore that a massive debut week was all but assured? Maybe not.

The release of AC/DC's "Black Ice," while not a perfect comparison, comes to mind. Like Guns N' Roses, AC/DC was a band that had been off the radar for a while and opted to partner with one retailer for the release of its own long-awaited new album. "Ice" ultimately chilled with 784,000 in its debut week—the veteran group's best sales frame since Nielsen SoundScan started in 1991.

And now we have GNR's album, coming 17 years after its last studio set of original material, in an exclusive deal with Best Buy (and iTunes). And it starts with much less.

So, why didn't GNR's number even get close to AC/DC's?

Wal-Mart gave AC/DC the red carpet treatment. The retailer made sure the album had the appearance of an event record—something every Wal-Mart shopper needed to own. If that didn't convince consumers, maybe their famed store-within-a-store displayed did.

With Best Buy stores' massive amount of floor space, filled with TVs and audio equipment, I expected to see and hear GNR's videos and music at the location I visited on street date. Well, that wasn't the case, but the fixture displaying the 'Chinese' CDs was absolutely unmissable. It practically blocked the entrance. Generally speaking, however, from the store locations our staffers visited during release week, Best Buy's promotion was on a different scale to what Wal-Mart did for AC/DC.

And I know—no one ever said Best Buy was going to stage a Wal-Mart-like campaign for "Chinese Democracy." But, because of AC/DC's Wal-Mart deal, there are bound to be people making comparisons.

But beyond the retail promotion of "Chinese Democracy," what about the intangibles? Maybe the public got tired of waiting for an album that was probably never going to live up to their expectations? Maybe fans were turned off by the ever-shifting lineup of band members? Maybe it would have sold more had the group made a promotional appearance in support of the release? Perhaps it would have started stronger had it been available to all retailers?

Or, maybe we should just take a step back, breathe and see where the album goes from here. There very well may be quite a long, healthy road ahead for "Chinese Democracy."

FOR THE RECORD: Nielsen SoundScan reprocessed its sales charts last week after the magazine had already been sent to press early because of the Thanksgiving holiday. Our Web sites reflected the correct chart information, and in this issue, all of the "last week" positions on the charts correspond to a title's correct ranking.
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Though the physical versions of this set didn't arrive until Dec. 5, "lightning" fans scooped up the digital edition, topping No. 1 on Top Digital Albums.

Do you like Christmas albums? Everyone seems to, as this set—which boasts Katy Perry (pictured)—is one of 31 holiday albums on the chart this week.
**TOP INDEPENDENT™**

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<td>Chinese Democracy</td>
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<td>SOUNDTRACK</td>
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**TOP INTERNET™**

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**EXCLUSIVE CHARTS FROM BILLBOARD.BIZ**

**HOT HOLIDAY SONGS FROM.biz**

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<td>BILL BERRY</td>
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<td>A HOLLY JOLLY CHRISTMAS</td>
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<td>THE CHRISTMAS SONG (MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU)</td>
<td>JERRY LEE LEWIS</td>
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<td>IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS</td>
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<td>JINGLE BELL ROCK</td>
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<td>IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR</td>
<td>JOE BULGER</td>
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<td>FELIX NAVARRO</td>
<td>JOE PETERSON &amp; THE PROFESSORS</td>
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**LIKE LIBRARIES: MOST ADDED**

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**BETWEEN THE BULLETS**

**MERRY MARIAH**

Mariah Carey receives an early present, as "All I Want for Christmas Is You" ascends to its first week atop Hot Holiday Songs after appearing on the chart each year since the list's 2001 launch.

Though Carey's 1994 nugget is easily the youngest Christmas classic ever to lead the tally, a look this week's full 30-position chart (viewable at billboard.biz) charts reveals a fairly even decade-by-decade sample of holiday fare, with a spike in titles from the '80s (seven songs) and '70s (six). The '40s, '50s, '60s and '90s each contribute four songs, while, perhaps understandably, just one track makes the list from the 2000s: "Holy Night" by Josh Groban.

—Gary Trust
### HOT COUNTRY SONGS

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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<td>Let It Go</td>
<td>B. Connolly, Montgomery Gentry</td>
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<tr>
<td>I Would</td>
<td>Rascal Flatts</td>
<td>Rascal Flatts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Already Gone</td>
<td>Billy Currington</td>
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<td>Love Story</td>
<td>Blake Shelton</td>
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<td>Start a Band</td>
<td>Brad Paisley Duet with Keith Urban</td>
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<td>Ain't in It</td>
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<td>Country Boy</td>
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<td>Feel That Fire</td>
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<td>Anything Goes</td>
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<td>Let Me</td>
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<td>River of Love</td>
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<td>Muddy Water</td>
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### TOP COUNTRY ALBUMS

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<td>Rascal Flatts</td>
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<td>Trace Adkins</td>
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<td>Carrie Underwood</td>
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<td>Toby Keith</td>
<td>That Don't Make Me A Bad Guy</td>
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<td>Darius Rucker</td>
<td>Learn To Live</td>
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<td>Tim McGraw</td>
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<td>Kelli Pickler</td>
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Data for week of DECEMBER 13, 2008 | For chart reprints call 646.654.4633 | Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data
| ARTIST | TITLE | LABEL | WEEKS | T | P | C | W | H | C | R | J | M
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Some of the chart’s more senior titles benefit from Black Friday excitement. Keyshia Cole (featured), moves over 35-24 (top 10); Chris Brown drops 35-26 (top 10%); and Mariah Carey slides 55-35 (top 15%).

Data for week ending December 13, 2008
### HITS OF THE WORLD

#### UNITED KINGDOM

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<th>Artist</th>
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<td>1. <strong>The Killers</strong> - <strong>Hot Off The Stove</strong></td>
<td>Mika Nakashima</td>
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<td>2. <strong>Guns N' Roses</strong> - <strong>Chinese Democracy</strong></td>
<td>Sheto &amp; Clyde</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. <strong>Leona Lewis</strong> - <strong>Spirit</strong></td>
<td>Shakira</td>
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<td>4. <strong>Pink</strong> - <strong>Try</strong></td>
<td>The Foundations</td>
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<td>5. <strong>The Killers</strong> - <strong>Live In Athens</strong></td>
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<td>6. <strong>The Killers</strong> - <strong>We Are The Ocean</strong></td>
<td>Paolo Nutini</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7. <strong>The Bittersweet</strong> - <strong>Bittersweet</strong></td>
<td>The Young Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. <strong>Bryan Ferry</strong> - <strong>Bryan Ferry</strong></td>
<td>Bryan Ferry</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. <strong>The Killers</strong> - <strong>We Are The Ocean</strong></td>
<td>Elton John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. <strong>The Killers</strong> - <strong>We Are The Ocean</strong></td>
<td>The Killers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### EURO DIGITAL SONGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Artist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 20, 2008</td>
<td>1. <strong>Katy Perry</strong> - <strong>Teenage Dream</strong></td>
<td>Katy Perry</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. <strong>Katy Perry</strong> - <strong>Roar</strong></td>
<td>Katy Perry</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. <strong>Katy Perry</strong> - <strong>Wide Awake (Right Now)</strong></td>
<td>Katy Perry</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. <strong>Katy Perry</strong> - <strong>E.T.</strong></td>
<td>Katy Perry</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. <strong>Katy Perry</strong> - <strong>I Kissed A Girl</strong></td>
<td>K.F.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. <strong>Katy Perry</strong> - <strong>Firework</strong></td>
<td>K.F.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. <strong>Katy Perry</strong> - <strong>Teenage Dream</strong></td>
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<td>10. <strong>Katy Perry</strong> - <strong>Firework</strong></td>
<td>K.F.C.</td>
</tr>
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#### EURO SINGLES SALES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Album</th>
<th>Artist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 3, 2008</td>
<td>1. <strong>Katy Perry</strong> - <strong>Teenage Dream</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. <strong>Katy Perry</strong> - <strong>Roar</strong></td>
<td>Katy Perry</td>
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<td>K.F.C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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French rapper Looba gets his first ever music single album, entering the France 40 at No. 9. Four of his releases have reached the top 10.

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**Note:** This text is a stylized transcription of a historical magazine page from Billboard magazine, 13th December 2008, featuring music charts and artist information. The page provides a snapshot of popular music from various countries including the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Portugal, and more, with a focus on digital music sales and radio airplay.
**EXECUTIVE TURNTABLE**

Send submissions to: exec@billboard.com

**RECORD COMPANIES:** Island Def Jam Music Group elevates Noel Sheer to VP of top 40 promotion. He was senior director of rhythm promotion. Robbins Nashville promotes Joe Redmond to director of national promotion. He was director of promotion for the Northeast and will retain those duties.


Sony BMG International names Caron Veesey VP. She was senior VP of marketing at Island Def Jam Music Group.

**PUBLISHING:** Composer Nigel Westlake and J. Alpert & Son CEO Tim Prescott have been elected to the respective boards of the Australasian Performing Right Assn. and sister organization the Australasian Mechanical Copyright Owners’ Society.

**TOURING:** The Ryman Auditorium in Nashville names Sally Williams GM. She succeeds G. Scott Walden, who is leaving to pursue other ventures. Williams was senior manager of event programming and development at the Country Music Assn.

**RADIO:** Dial Global promotes Kareem Alexander to national account manager. Scott Deane to research analyst, and Nicole Leonardi to senior account coordinator. Alexander was senior marketing and research analyst. Deane was research analyst, and Leonardi was sales associate.

—Edited by Mitchell Peters

**GOOD WORKS**

**HIP-HOP AUCTION FIGHTS DIABETES**

It’s safe to say that Rock the Bells founder/organizer Chang Westley of Guerilla Union lists reuniting Rage Against the Machine for the hip-hop festival’s 2007 edition as a noteworthy accomplishment. But if a recently launched online charity auction between Guerilla Union and Hip Hop Official to raise awareness for diabetes “can help somebody [detect the disease] early … it might be better” than the reunion, he says with a laugh.

Through Dec. 15, visitors of guerillaunion.com/auction can bid on memorabilia from the 2008 Rock the Bells North American amphitheater tour, which featured such acts as A Tribe Called Quest, Nas, Mos Def, De La Soul, Rakim, Pharcyde, Santogold, Kid Sister, Cool Kids and Murs, among others.

“All the artists participated and every day we still get more new things to offer up,” Westley says. Proceeds from the auction will go to the American Diabetes Assn., as well as trusts set up in memory of hip-hop producer/rapper J Dilla and former Motown president/CEO (Jheri) Busby, according to Westley.

**ARTISTS PERFORM FOR INVISIBLE CHILDREN**

Members of Thrice (Dustin Kensrue), Switchfoot (Jon Foreman), Saves the Day (Chris Conley) and Sparta (Jim Ward) will perform acoustic sets Dec. 19 at the Troubadour in Los Angeles to help raise awareness for Invisible Children, a nonprofit group that provides education and economic relief to northern Uganda.

“Whenver they call or have a big event happening, I’m always really excited to support when I can,” says Foreman, who is recording a new Switchfoot album in San Diego. “If music can come alongside what they’re doing, it’s an honor.”

Tickets for the concert are available through ticketmaster.com for $30.

—Mitchell Peters
Gene Simmons had a bit of a mind of his own about how his KISS would work, as Billboard executive director of content and programming for touring and live events Tom Waddell later admitted.

Madison Square Garden Entertainment CEO Melissa Ormond, left, and MSG VP Laurie Jacoby were on hand to receive the top arena award for the Garden and the top venue (90,000 seats or fewer) honor for Radio City Music Hall.

INSIDE TRACK

NOT ON HIS WATCH!

With two albums out, more than 50 songs that haven't yet been recorded and a world gone awry, Tom Morello plans to stay busy as the Nightwatchman for the foreseeable future. "It's not just going to keep going; this is my principal musical focus, as I see it, for the remainder of my life," he tells Track. "From the earliest days of playing open-mic nights at coffeehouses, it was apparent to me that this music was as important to me as any music I've ever been involved in. It really encapsulates everything I want to do as an artist." Morello insists the Nightwatchman will not let his guard down even during the term of President-elect Barack Obama—"despite "eerie similarities" of "both having Kenyan fathers and white Midwestern mothers and having attended Harvard and being devastat-ing handsome."

Having reunited with his former band in 2007, Morello says he's "certain there will be more Rage Against the Machine shows"—and equally sure that there will not be another Rage album. "There are no plans for that," the guitarist says. "We've had a wonderful year-and-a-half of playing shows, and I don't see any reason to not play more shows. The thing is there's only so many hours in the musical day, and mine are very occupied right now."

BILLY JOEL

AC Entertainment president Ashley Caps & Hudson the festival business on a " into the Great State Open panel, sponsored by CMT Universal.

Manager Bruce Allen, right, annotes at Michael McDonald of Nick Management behind it in during the "Someone to Watch Over Me" panel.

EAG Live CEO Randy Phillips, left, accepts the Eventful "Pan-Chad" award for Austin's Austin City Limits concert of the year from Eventful CEO Jordan Glazer, center, and Billboard senior editor Bill Werde.


Jonathan Zelisko during the "Dance" Man "Something to Watch Over Me" panel.
March 5, 2009
St. Regis, New York City

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• Music Publishing M&A
• Behind the Scenes: Case Studies

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Scott Sperling, Co-President, Thomas H. Lee Partners
Robert Ott, Co-Founder and Chairman/CEO, ole
David Porter, Founder/CEO, 8tracks.com
Dan Kruchkow, Head of Digital, Crush Management

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on all the success and accomplishments you have earned over your careers.

Thank you for allowing us to share and work with you guys on so many records.

It's truly been an honor,

Dave Pensado & Jaycen Joshua

Beyonce, Mariah Carey, Mary J. Blige, Usher, Lionel Richie, Janet Jackson,
Celine Dion, Utada, Maroon 5, The Dream, Ciara, Jamie Foxx, L.L. Cool J,
J. Lo, Gym Class Heroes, Mario, Jesse McCartney, Electrik Red.............