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The Road Ahead

The Recording Industry's Approach To Digital Music Enters A New Phase

A few days ago, I returned from the international Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, where the news was bad.

It wasn’t that there weren’t plenty of big brands with new products. My favorite was the Dick Tracy-esque LG Waich Phone, though I struggle to imagine which early adopters would want to risk that sort of mackey.

The problem was attendance, as if in a lack thereof.

One cable pointed me toward a motley crew of dealers and jinns on the Strip. “Normally you can’t see those guys,” he said. “They disappear in the crowds.”

On this night, it appeared they were just pushing their wares on each other. No customers—perhaps it’s a relatable plight?

It’s true, as many at CES noted, that while overall attendance was down—by 22%, according to the show’s organizers, though analyst reports and my own surveys put the number closer to 30%—the “right” people were there. Many companies sent their CEOs and marketing heads but left their junior executives at home to keep costs down.

But off-the-record conversations, the attendees didn’t try putting put their pipe on a pig. Again and again I heard the same refrain: “We’re not spending money until the end of Q1.” This sort of thinking is dangerous, stifling and can be its own self-fulfilling prophecy: Companies fear a bad economy, so they wait to spend. Because they don’t spend, the economy gets worse.

Wash. Rinse. Repeat.

So it was particularly gratifying to hear of the innovations coming from the music business, at Billboard’s own Digital Music Live event at CES.

In one of the keynotes, Douglas Merrill, EMI Music’s worldwide president of digital, cited Henry Ford’s great quote—“If I’d asked my customers what they wanted, they’d have said, ‘A faster horse’”—to explain EMI’s recent launch of a direct-to-consumer site.

“Innovation is not driven by asking people what they want,” Merrill explained. “It’s driven by watching what they do.”

Later at our conference, Rio Caraeff, executive VP of Universal Music Group’s labels division, revealed for the first time UMG’s online video strategy, the details of which are fleshed out in this issue (see “The Big Payback,” page 10). The CMRs for online video are low. UMG reasons, because ads are being sold by dozens of different outlets, commoditizing the viewing experience. UMG hopes to create a single entity to sell ads and then synthesize the content, ads included, back to all the usual suspects.

Maximizing leveraging and demanding new business models? That’s what the current economy and the industry’s position demands.

Since then, news started leaking that Facebook’s proposed music service was dead in the water. Depending on who you speak with, it’s either: because Facebook didn’t want to hand the majors enough ad revenue and customer data, or because Warner Music Group (WMG)—a big investor in Lala, which charges for streams—didn’t want to license the free streaming of music. Either scenario is fine by me, especially considering that the four majors are simultaneously empowering MySpace to have a music service that seems more and more compelling with each passing day.

It appears the music business is entering a new stage in the evolution of its approach to digital services.

The first stage was saying no to everyone who wanted music and demanding ridiculous, unreasonable terms. The second was entering deals it felt had to, for reasons of exposure and perhaps PR. The majors (except WMG, which recently pulled out) have their videos on YouTube, and that’s a growing revenue stream. But at the end of the day, the stream doesn’t appear to have the power to turn all the raging river that could actually be a solution.

So now we’re in the third stage, and it’s the one with by far the most promise: using whatever tactics are necessary to get digital services to the table and then demanding proper value for music, whether it be the lion’s share of advertising revenue or customer data.

It’s the sort of aggressive thinking that’s going to get the business of music to scale up better. Some tactics will work, some will fail. But maximizing leveraging and demanding new business models? That’s what the current economy and the industry’s position demands.

The recorded music business can play as hard as it wants, but the game is rigged against it right now. Changing the game is the way forward, and that takes courage and risk.

I’m no fun of Henry Ford on a personal level, but since his words began the conversation at Digital Music Live, I’ll end with them here: “Even a mistake may turn out to be the one thing necessary to a worthwhile achievement.”

Bill Werde will be writing about his experiences at MIDEM (Jan. 18-21) in Billboard’s Daily Bulletin, available to subscribers.
BEST BETS '09

6 FUTURE SHOCK: We predict a radio daze and more retail woes—but indies and touring will help dull the pain.

7 FUTURE SCLASH: What you won't see in 2009.

8 RETAIL: The sales decline will get worse before digital makes it better.

10 DIGITAL: Biz has plans for online videos; In-game music sales spike; 6 Questions: imeem's Dalton Caldwell.

13 FILM & TV: The year's top 10 projects,

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ON THE COVER: Photograph by Mark Weiss, Lettering by Daniel Pelavin

Events

LATIN MUSIC

Join us April 19-23 at the Eden Roc to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Billboard's Latin Music Conference & Awards, the single most important Latin music industry event. Details at billboardevents.com.

MUSIC & MONEY

Connect with dealmakers at this event for the music and financial communities, featuring Island Def Jam's Jeff Straughn, Sony/ATV's Martin Bandier and Crush Management's Dan Kruczkow. For more, go to billboardevents.com.

MOBILE ENTERTAINMENT LIVE

Wireless, entertainment and advertising industries meet at CTIA's mobile entertainment event, featuring interviews with industry influencers and networking opportunities. More: billboardevents.com.

Online

NO. 1S

What does it take to be No. 1? Watch Ne-Yo, David Cook, Akon, Brandy and other artists who have recently topped a Billboard chart discuss their success. More at billboard.com/ones.
LIVE NATION TICKETING WORKS BUT TICKETMASTER STAYS ON TOP
Live Nation Ticketing won’t overtake Ticketmaster’s overall market dominance—Live Nation has invested too much time, money and reputation to blow the launch of its ticketing division. There will be ancillary revenue brought in by ticketing its own shows, but the upside is even bigger for Ticketmaster, which has its core business at stake, along with the added leadership and leverage that new CEO Irving Azoff and his Front Line Management bring to the party. —Ray Waddell

TOURING BRAVES THE RECESSION
There will be some empty seats this year, but touring has proved its resiliency by posting increased revenue in 2008. Live event strategists have already shown they’re willing and able to offer value through packaging, pricing and promotions, and even a flat year would be considered a winner for this most reliable sector of the music industry. —RW

INDIE DISTRIBUTORS KEEP GAINING MARKET SHARE
The flight of labels away from the big four to smaller distributors will continue. In 2008, Redeye picked up Barsuk from Warner’s Alternative Distribution Alliance and Warp and Bella Union from EMI’s Caroline; the Orchard snagged Vice from ADA. As more majors demand digital rights, some labels may balk and seek an alternative home where they can continue to keep their physical and digital distribution separate. Others may simply grow tired of being one in a crowd and try a boutique option to get more personal attention. —Conrey Duling

OSCARS ENACT MORE FLEXIBLE MUSIC NOMINATION RULES
Early in 2008, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences ruled Jonny Greenwood’s score for “There Will Be Blood” ineligible for Academy Award consideration because of sampling from prerecorded work, including Brahms’ Concerto in D Major. This past fall there was the exclusion—and then the reinclusion—of Hans Zimmer and James Newton Howard’s score for “The Dark Knight” because of initial fears that there were too many contributors, such as the film’s composer, music editor and ambient music designer, who were listed on the music cue sheet used to distribute royalties for the work. Look for the academy’s music branch to remedy these errors by making the nomination process more forthright and relevant to modern music-making technology and techniques. —Ann Donahue

YOUR HOMETOWN RADIO STATION WON’T BE SO HOMETOWN
It’s a trend that’s been on the rise in recent years, but thanks to the worsening economy, 2009 will likely be the year that radio lost most of its local voice. With ad revenue already in the dumpster even before the downturn, radio companies are looking for ways to cut costs: Picking up the syndicated Ryan Seacrest and dropping a station’s local morning team is one way to do that; allowing a jock in one city to prerecord shows in other markets is another. —Ken Tucker

U.K. RETAIL SAILS ONLINE
The late-November collapse of the Woolworths chain and its sister wholesale distributor arm EUK puts Britain’s music retailers in a very different landscape. EUK’s clients included mass merchants Asda, Morrisons and Sainsbury; having lost EUK’s “one-stop” service they face dealing with a stream of different music, DVD and games suppliers, which means they may need to scale down their loss-leading entertainment offerings. Another former EUK client, the 125-store entertainment chain Zavvi, announced Dec. 24 that it was going into administration (roughly equivalent to the United States’ Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection) and in January closed 22 of its stores. All grim news, but surely certain to increase the traffic to online operators like Amazon and Play.com, which are already increasing market share. Music market-leader HMV could also prosper with its recently beefed-up online service. —Tom Ferguson

COUNTRY QUIETS DOWN
With fewer opportunities at radio due to cutbacks on the on-air and programming side, country music, which relies heavily on radio for exposure, will not produce a new breakthrough act—one that sells more than 100,000 units, for the sake of argument. Already spread thin, programmers will have less time to listen to new music, resulting in safer choices. And with more time slots being syndicated, listeners will hear more recent chart-toppers and greatest-hits standards on their local stations since syndication programmers tend to play it safe to appeal to the masses. —KT

LABELS, ISPs AGREE ON MUSIC SURcharge
By the end of the year at least one Internet service provider will agree to offer customers an extra monthly charge in return for letting them access peer-to-peer music services without the threat of disconnection. —Antony Bruno

WAIT ANOTHER DAY FOR DRE
Of albums long-promised by three urban stalwarts—D’Angelo, Dr. Dre and Maxwell—only two will be released. Riding high on his 2008 BET Awards performance, Maxwell toured for the first time in six years and reaped coast-to-coast kudos. D’Angelo showed that he still carries clout when the Internet buzzed about a 2009 iTunes release (“I Found My Smile Again”) that was actually a song he recorded for 1996’s “Space Jam” soundtrack. But despite some Dr. Dre sightings—he rapped on Kardinal Offishall’s “Set It Off” remix and crafted Eminem’s anticipated return—we’re betting the beef guru will keep working and will stretch the “Detox” wait to an even decade. —Hillary Cristley and Guill Mitchell

ARTISTS WHO DELAYED RELEASES REGRET IT
Acts that were supposed to release albums in 2008—Eminem, U2, Jay-Z—may forgo millions of dollars in revenue due to waiting until ’09. Why? CD sales spiraled at the end of last year, and expectations call for an even further drop in the first quarter. With consumers seemingly abandoning the CD, the reduction in retail space devoted to the format and the digital sector’s inability to compensate for lost physical album sales, the days of million-selling first-week debuts for superstar releases may be over. —Ed Christman

LATIN DIGITAL ALBUM SALES RISE
Latin’s digital album sales have remained disproportionately low—their year-end total accounted for slightly more than 2% of all Latin album sales—but they will increase exponentially to become more than 10% of total Latin album sales by year’s end. Heavy marketing is key, from online stores—iTunes Latino in particular, following Vicente Fernandez’s “Para Siempre” and Fanny Lu’s “Dox” being featured on iTunes’ home page—as well as from labels and the artists themselves. —Leila Cobo
DIXIE CHICKS PERFORM AT DEDICATION OF BUSH'S PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY.

KANYE WEST APPOINTS SELF TO VACANT ILLINOIS SENATE SEAT.

NEW STARBUCKS COMPILATION RELEASED EXCLUSIVELY BY WAL-MART.

ACTIVISION RELEASES NEW GAME: "PRO-TOOLS HERO."

PRINCE RELEASES NEW ALBUM, "U & I" BY TEXT MESSAGE.

BJORK ASKS RAPPERS TO TOSS AROUND ICELANDIC CURRENCY TO HELP RAISE ITS VALUE.

MTV INTRODUCES NEW SHOW: "PRETTY GIRLS LOOK PENSIVE WHILE LISTENING TO EMO."

COLLEGE STUDENT WALKS INTO RECORD STORE, BUYS CD.

LIL WAYNE TAKES VOW OF SILENCE, RELEASES BLANK MIXTAPE, "THE QUIET."

FUTURE SCHLOCK!

A LOOK AT THE YEAR THAT WON'T BE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY WARD SUTTON

www.americanradiohistory.com
DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN

Sales Plunge Will Worsen Before Digital-Fueled Rebound

After CD sales fell off a cliff at the end of 2008, sales, distribution and retail executives in the music industry are bracing themselves for even more pain in 2009.

Shrinking retail floor space and a possible decline in the number of catalog titles carried by physical distributors could exacerbate the plunge. And while the CD's precipitous decline has prompted calls for a reassessment of how to market, package and price physical product, digital downloads remain the best hope for an eventual halt to the overall problem.

Universal Music Group Distribution (UMGD) CEO Jim Urie, who predicts total sales will bottom out at the end of 2009, expects downloads to have a big impact in the first two months of the year. During that period, "digital may be bigger than physical because of the impact of the iTunes gift cards," Urie says. "Considering product returns, sliding CD sales and continuing digital growth, we will see digital catch up to physical on a net basis in the first quarter. I am tempted to say both on units and dollars, but certainly on a dollar basis."

Digital sales, including ringtones, account for more than half of Atlantic Records' revenue, while sources say Interscope is also generating more sales from digital than physical. At independent label Koch Records, digital product accounts for 45% of sales. And last year, digital merchants already occupied eight slots among Billboard's top 20 largest music accounts, and four of them were mobile players (Billboard, May 10, 2008).

With digital's continued ascension, some industry executives are optimistic that total sales could start growing again in either 2010 or 2011, although Urie notes that mobile sales, including ringtones and over-the-air downloads, have been disappointing. "There are still a lot of if's out there," he says.
SHRINKING FOOTPRINT

But before digital sales can make up for the continued fall in physical sales, the near-term outlook for CDs is ugly.

“Everyone around here is as anxious as any time in their career as to what the final tally will be,” a distribution executive says. “This may be the single toughest market that any of us have worked in.”

Accepting the format’s decline will be further reductions in retail floor space allocated to music, with even some independents and small chains considering cuts in CD inventory (Billboard, Dec. 20, 2008).

Among big-boxes, the music footprint is expected to shrink at Barnes & Noble and Borders and hold steady at Target and Best Buy, a senior distribution executive says. “As for Wal-Mart, we probably won’t know until spring,” he says. “The chain does three inventory resets a year and nothing will happen to music in the January changeover.”

Label executives complain that retailers keep reducing selection because CD sales are down, it will become a self-fulfilling—and ultimately a self-destructing—prophecy.

“The CD drop is not a consummation shift” to digital, says Sony Music Entertainment executive VP of sales Jennifer Schaidler. “When stores cut shelf space, it cuts CD sales.”

On the other hand, merchants worry that labels won’t be as aggressive as they should be in shoring up physical sales, let alone move forward with green packaging initiatives and online marketing tie-ins, because of the belief that sales will rise once economic conditions improve.

“They have a built in excuse to fire more people and then eventually they expect digital will save them,” the senior distribution executive says.

CATALOG OPTIONS

Amid the continued plunge in CD sales, a top executive at a midsize distributor says his company is considering reducing its catalog titles by as much as 40%.

“It doesn’t make sense to keep deep catalog in physical production,” he says.

But at least two majors disagree with that strategy. Schaidler says Sony isn’t “proactively cutting out catalog” on CD, which she says remains a viable format. “We owe it to our artists to make sure to have the right amount of their music available so that their fans can have access to a full body of work.”

Likewise, WEA president John Esposito says his company remains committed to keeping catalog titles on CD. Last fall, WEA told retailers that they could have a rebate on 3,600 titles, which it planned to begin offering at a lower price in April and sell one way, which it sees as a method to keep deep catalog available physically (Billboard, Nov. 8, 2008).

“Catalog has always been important to the Warner Music Group,” Esposito says. “The continuing shrinking of SKUs, the rapid aging of the catalog, and the loss of catalog at retail has put us into a mode to find out what the catalog business is beyond digital. We want to have a physical catalog business.”

PRICING EXPERIMENTS

If the majors are serious about wanting to remain in the physical world, they must reassess pricing, merchants say.

“The majors have to look at the whole pricing structure. I don’t think they have a choice,” says one top executive at a midsize music retailer. “If they don’t reprice the business, it will be a very serious problem. Even if the labels do reprice the CD, it may be too little, too late.”

In hopes of persuading the majors to become more aggressive on price reductions, some mechanisms have been experimenting with reduced prices. Best Buy recently priced all of its CDs in three markets at $9.99 each in a test that the majors are closely watching.

Last year, Wal-Mart tested new price points of $13.88, $11.88, $9, $7 and $5 (Billboard, Aug. 16, 2008) at 150 stores and had planned a broader rollout in October. “They picked the wrong time of the year to try and change their business model,” says one distribution executive, who observes that the new pricing hasn’t extended beyond the original stores participating in the experiment. “We don’t know what will happen now, if they will roll out the strategy in the spring or abandon it.”

Wal-Mart representatives couldn’t be reached for comment.

Some majors have already experimented with lower prices. “We did a pricing test with one retailer,” says a major-label senior distribution executive. “We found that a massivetheroughout in pricing in the bins doesn’t do much. But we see that select sharp promotional pricing gives a lift. We are still waiting for the full results, and then we will figure out how to speak to the market about it.”

UMG’s Urie is already on record as a proponent of price reductions, having led the charge five years ago with his Jump-Start pricing scheme, under which UMGCD cut front-line CD wholesale pricing to $10.30 from $12.05, in exchange for ending price and position cooperative advertising dollars. For the first few years after the implementation of JumpStart, the other majors resisted price reductions. But by 2008, all the majors were aggressive in offering lower prices as part of programs. The question remains, Will any of them adopt a formal pricing reduction like UMGCD?

While Sony’s Schaidler acknowledges the company is looking at its business model, she declines to give specifics. “We have been strategically rethinking the business model and this downturn has added fuel to that process,” Schaidler says. She says part of the changes being contemplated are being done in conjunction with listening to accounts, which often have different ideas. “We hope to roll out our plans as quickly as possible,” she adds.

KEEPING PHYSICAL RELEVANT

Despite the failure of new physical formats like DVDplus, DFC, CDU+ and MVI to gain much traction, the majors aren’t giving up efforts to design a new physical format that could spark consumer interest.

Sources say that the majors are working with NARM to develop a new disc format that would put an innovative spin on the old model of a CD that provides access to additional music and information online.

The majors have also made their music available in SanDisk’s new slotMusic format—preloaded microSD cards containing digital rights management-free digital albums—which is only available at Wal-Mart and Best Buy. Meanwhile, album gift cards, which some of the majors launched after Apple began offering iTunes gift cards in brick-and-mortar stores, remain in the mix, with one distribution executive saying that after a year of experimenting with them, “it still remains to be seen if album-specific gift cards will work.”

With all of that activity, some distribution executives believe they believe that the CD will retain some role in a world oriented toward digital, specifically as a premium product for a band’s devout fan base.

“One of our best bets for 2009 for sure is you will see more deluxe packages,” Urie says. “And it is my sincere hope that we will reverse the timing on deluxe packaging. We will start with the release of the deluxe edition, first and then come with the single-CD version sometime after, which up to now the industry has been mostly doing vice versa.”

By doing it the other way—coming out with a CD album and then later releasing a deluxe version at a higher price that contains all the material on the original album in addition to bonus material—the labels leave some fans feeling cheated because they are buying the album twice.

But releasing the deluxe edition first would move the recording industry closer to the model that has long prevailed among book publishers, which typically release new titles in print; hardcover editions before offering a more affordable edition later. But if the majors move in that direction, they will probably do so with a far shorter window between deluxe and regular CD editions than the year or more that typically separates hardcover and softcover editions of books.

What’s In Store

Different Categories, Different Challenges

MASS MERCHANTS

Examples: Wal-Mart, Target

What happened in 2008: Album sales at mass merchants remained strong through most of 2008, but fell off dramatically during most of this decade, before falling to just about even in 2007. But last year marked the first time that the sector outpaced the broader market’s decline, possibly due to a sharp drop in country album sales and distributor Handelmann’s troubles leading up to its liquidation. The gap was significant too: Mass merchants registered a 21% plunge in album sales, versus an overall fall of 14.4% in the U.S. album market.

Challenges ahead: Wal-Mart plans to rechannelize its music department around pricing to stimulate floundering sales. Target needs to become better at replenishing product and more aggressive in securing exclusives, particularly for superstar acts.

CHAINS

Examples: Trans World, Best Buy, Borders

What happened in 2008: The big news here was Circuit City’s Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing. Borders still lagged far behind Barnes & Noble, fueling vendor worries that it could face the same fate Circuit City did after it tried to go toe to toe with Best Buy. Trans World continued to close locations as it struggled to return to profitability, something that management used to say it would accomplish in 2010, but is now hoping to do by 2011.

Challenges ahead: Chains need physical sales to stabilize so they can build profitable lifestyle stores around music. Jazz labels and, to a lesser degree, urban imprints may face problems trying to compensate for Circuit City’s downturn, while classical, world music and folk labels are keeping a wary eye on Borders.

INDEPENDENTS

Examples: Your local indie store

What happened in 2008: Independents hit a home run with Record Store Day, which generated reams of media coverage. Moreover, after suffering a precipitous decline for most of this decade, indie stores appear to be stabilizing, with the sector’s sales down 9.6% for the year, less than the overall U.S. album sales decline.

Challenges ahead: Indies need to expand Record Store Day into an international event. They also have to fend off efforts by the labels from becoming too aggressive with vinyl pricing, which could ruin a nicely developing sales trend.

NONTRADITIONAL (EXCLUDES DIGITAL)

Examples: Starbucks, QVC, Amazon, concert halls

What happened in 2008: The sector enjoyed robust growth, even though Starbucks de-emphasized music in the middle of the year. QVC got back on the map with its “QSessions Live” specials for new releases by Clay Aiken, James Taylor and Barry Manilow. Amazon benefited from moves by brick-and-mortar stores to pull catalog.

Challenges ahead: Nontraditional retailers could be hurt by labels’ and concert promoters’ efforts to use e-mail marketing to lure fans to their sites so they can sell music directly to them.

—EC
THE BIG PAYBACK

Music Videos Make Money Online, But The Biz Aims To Make Them More Lucrative

If 2008 was the year online music tipped the scales in terms of traffic, 2009 will be the year it pays off.

At least, that's the hope of the music business, which is looking to ad-supported online music videos as a much-needed new source of revenue at a time when ad-supported audio streams have been slow to make an impact.

These efforts, which will gain steam quickly in the early part of the year, could lead to the biggest shift in the online video landscape since Universal Music Group (UMG) shook up the business in early 2005, when the world's largest music company began charging for the front-line music videos it used to provide for free.

While charging Web sites for music videos has become standard practice, generating millions in new revenue, the overall take remains a tiny portion of the labels' revenue mix, even as viewership skyrockets.

The number of streams at U.S. online video properties increased from 9.8 billion in January to 12.7 billion in November (the most recent figure available), while total minutes of use jumped from 29 billion to 39.9 billion, according to comScore Video Metrix. November's total video streams represented a 34% increase from the same period a year earlier.

However, the increased traffic has led to the commoditization of Web video, driving down the ad rates that service providers can charge and constraining the resulting revenue stream.

"We've licensed our videos to a variety of services over the years, and while that's been a great foray into the business to learn about ad-supported business models on the Internet, what we've found over time is the effective [rates] have gone down," says Rio Caraeff, executive VP of UMG's eLabs division. "Multiple services are trying to sell the same content to the same advertisers. Whenever you have a situation like that, it makes the content less than premium, so the rates you're trying to sell the content for is somewhat depressed."

For instance, advertisers pay an average of only $1-$8 for every thousand views that their ad receive (known as cost-per-thousand, or CPM, the standard rate unit for online advertising). UMG and other labels would like an ad rate on par with the CPMs that TV and movies command online—upwards of $25-$40.

"To really get to those levels, we really need to make advertisers feel this is a premium buy reaching a desirable audience and that there's only one place for them to go to do so, not some commodity they can get from anyone," Caraeff says. "If you had 10 companies trying to sell the season premiere of 'The Office' to Toyota, then Toyota would have its pick of who to buy that ad from, and it would pick the service with the lowest price."

So UMG instead plans to empower either a third-party partner or a newly created joint venture to sell advertising around its videos and that of any other participating label. That entity would then syndicate these videos—complete with embedded ads—to all the services currently hosting music videos, such as AOL, MSN, MTV, Yahoo and YouTube.

At least in theory, these efforts would provide two benefits. First, it would shift the supply-and-demand advantage back to the content owner by creating a single point of negotiation for brands interested in placing advertising around music videos. Second, it would let the content owners keep all the profits.

That's not to say UMG is considering pulling its videos from any of the sites that host them today, particularly YouTube. Caraeff says some 80% of the company's video traffic comes from YouTube alone, two-thirds of which originates from overseas. The label also licenses videos to several Internet video technology companies that help syndicate its content across the Web, including Brightcove and Vringo.

Meanwhile, MTV launched in October a beta version of a new Web site called MTV Music, where it will host the same music videos that fans have access to on YouTube along with archived content exclusive to MTV, such as artist interviews, live performances and in-studio antics.

MTV Networks Music/Films/Logo Group president Van Toffler says he expects to compete with YouTube on the relevancy and quality of the content.

"I'm a big believer in the premium experience, both as a viewing experience and as a business," he says. "You don't have to tangle with cats and dogs mining Rihanna's songs to find her doing interviews or a live performance. If you find videos and on top of that find B-roll, exclusive videos and performances, that's what this experience will be about."

Professionally produced content like music videos attract more advertising than user-generated content, something that stands to benefit UMG's and MTV's efforts.

According to the Diffusion Group, user-generated videos account for 42% of online video streams but only 4% of video-related advertising. However, professionally produced videos account for 58% of video streams and 90% of the ad-related revenue. Short-form video—clips that run for less than three minutes, like most music videos—command 54% of the ad dollars.

The efforts of UMG and MTV will take time to bear fruit. UMG will have to let all its existing video licensing pacts expire and renegotiate new contracts to account for the syndication model. It also has yet to identify a partner to host and distribute the syndicated material. MTV will have to take MTV Music out of beta and start marketing the site to gain any traction. Currently, the company is busy populating the site with its vast archive of old videos. But both efforts are moving full steam ahead, with more details expected by the end of the first quarter.

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Screen cap: Videos for Avril Lavigne's "Girlfriend" (left) and OK Go's "Here We Go Again" generated traffic, but not great ad rates.

CLICK HERE

There's certainly no shortage of Web sites featuring music videos. But labels looking for the most bang for the buck would be best-served focusing on the following sites that deliver the most traffic.

THE OLD GUARD: MTV
The network that pioneered the form on TV has found itself playing catch-up online. But it was still respected for 8.6 million viewers and 66.2 million videos for the month of October, according to comScore. The October launch of mtvmusic.com represents a new offensive, offering exclusive access to such MTV footage as archived interviews, live performances and B-roll outtakes, in addition to standard music videos.

THE NEW GENERATION: AOL/YAHOO
In the online void left by MTV, AOL and Yahoo emerged as early music video slicers before YouTube came along, and both still are considered must-have partners for launching a Web video initiative. Yahoo streams more than 200 million videos per month, and AOL lets its 18 million users embed videos into their personal pages.

THE UPSTART: MYSPACE
The social networking giant hasn't been much of a factor in the music video space, but its launch of MySpace Music is expected to change that. Along with its ability to stream free songs and let members create custom playlists, MySpace Music will allow artists and fans to embed music videos in not only artist pages, but in that of their fans as well. The labels are keeping a close eye on how this one develops.

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AB
Right Here, Right Now

Location-Based Mobile Services Finally Finding Their Way

BY ANTONY BRUNO

Wireless carriers appear poised to deliver on what the mobile industry has long seen as its holy grail—location-based services.

Today’s mobile phones can provide remarkably specific location data to their users through a combination of embedded GPS chips and network-based cell tower data. It’s a feature that holds great promise for commercial applications by providing the ability to deliver mobile phone users information, entertainment and advertising tailored to their location.

Potential applications could be as simple as alerting fans when artists listed as their favorite on Facebook are appearing in their area, or offering them a discount on the album if they walk by a participating record store. Others can be more complicated, such as using music as a filter on mobile location-based dating services, or letting members of a text-message fan club find each other at concerts.

There are opportunities for the touring business as well, such as providing directions to a venue where an artist might be playing a surprise show, or less aggressive applications such as listing all the gigs scheduled in a user’s immediate area.

Few location-sensitive services have made it to the mass market due to the lack of a common location technology among U.S. wireless carriers and concerns that sharing their customers’ location data with a service provider could trigger privacy complaints.

But in the closing months of 2008, two leading carriers made decisive moves to provide location-based services, otherwise known as LBS, to developers in an effort to jump-start the market.

Verizon Wireless, which first promised to cooperate with application developers a year ago, said it would provide developers GPS data from three of its Windows Mobile smart phones—Samsung’s Omnia and Saga and HTC’s Touch Pro.

Sprint is providing its location data to the aggregators WaveMarket and uLocate, which will then offer it to developers interested in creating apps for their respective platforms. The aggregators say they’ll meet Sprint’s security and privacy requirements.

Thanks to these moves, industry experts expect to see the number of new LBS applications entering the market each year to surge from a handful to the hundreds.

“If you wanted to launch a location-aware app before, you had to strike a deal with the carrier, which is a brutal process,” says Joel Grossman, VP of marketing and product management for WaveMarket. “That’s a hassle not only for developers, but for carriers, because it’s not scalable for them. I think you’ll see the business pressures on other carriers will lead them to adopt a more open solution as well.”

AT&T plans to launch an LBS infrastructure in early 2009, although it has provided no details yet. T-Mobile’s plans remain unknown.

What does this mean for the music industry? Grossman says WaveMarket is already working with several labels he declined to identify to develop LBS apps for new album releases and marketing plans that put a kind of virtual spin on the street team concept.

Label sources admit they are only now starting to scratch the surface of any potential LBS applications, which to date revolve mainly around coupons and contests. Jive/Zomba says it is exploring using the technology in an upcoming David Archuleta campaign.

Island Def Jam created an iPhone app for Fall Out Boy that lets members find each other if they want to, something senior VP of new media and commerce Christian Jorg says could become more common in the year ahead.

“I think we have a better shot this year because we’re seeing people make a bigger commitment,” Jorg says. “We’re expanding what we try to do on mobile. It’s part of offering more services to make mobile overall more interesting to consumers and more fun.”

Exactly how the music industry takes advantage of this move open LBS environment will prove a telling barometer of its confidence in a mobile market that has lost a little lustre in the past year after disappointing mobile downloads and ringing revenue.

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GAMING
THE SYSTEM

Following The Success Of 'Rock Band,' A New Wave Of Titles
Will Ask Users To Put Another Dime In The Xbox

Now that selling song downloads through videogames has achieved liftoff, the business appears poised to rocket into orbit.

In 2008, 'Rock Band' and 'Guitar Hero' users downloaded more than 50 million tracks from the games. Game-linked song downloads are expected to surge in the coming year as the music simulation games continue to extend their reach in the marketplace and, more important, other games allow users to buy and download songs as well.

"What comes with the success of 'Rock Band' and 'Guitar Hero' is the microcosmic view of what the potential of music in this medium can be," says Steve Schnur, worldwide executive of music and marketing for "Rock Band" distributor Electronic Arts. "There are other titles that continue to be not just successful, but outright these games by wide margins. So the question isn't, What's the next 'Rock Band'? The question is, When can we take the model of a 24/7, day-by-day musical relationship with not only music games, but with every game? I believe this is the year that's going to happen."

The 'Rock Band' and 'Guitar Hero' franchises will keep leading the way in music sales. 'Rock Band,' which has been the most aggressive to date, offers new music every week, maintains a selection of more than 500 songs on its platform and has sold an average of four songs per user. MTV says it plans to increase the number of available songs this year to as many as 5,000.

Meanwhile, 'Guitar Hero' has fewer than 100 songs available for sale and has sold an average of one track per user. But Kai Huang, founder/president of 'Guitar Hero' publisher Red Octane, says it will begin offering new music on a weekly basis as well in 2009.

According to the NPD Group, there are about 22 million copies of various 'Guitar Hero' games in the market today and another 5 million copies of the more recent 'Rock Band' series.

While the growing number of 'Rock Band' and 'Guitar Hero' players will likely boost related music sales, both franchises combined accounted for only a fraction of the $16 billion that NPD says U.S. consumers spent through November on videogame hardware and software. That points to a huge opportunity for music sales through other, non-music simulation games.

Such games console as Microsoft's Xbox 360 and Sony PlayStation allow developers to create new game levels, weapons, graphics packs and other content that gamers can buy to update games they already own. While such "microtransactions" haven't yet included song downloads outside of "Rock Band" or "Guitar Hero," Schnur says he expects game developers to begin offering them through the Xbox Live Marketplace and the PlayStation Store.

Gamers can already import songs into games on their own, but in most cases, the added music plays on top of the game's preprogrammed audio, much like listening to an iPod while watching a movie. Music sold and downloaded through a game console would have the added appeal of being directly integrated into a game's soundtrack.

"Once we start allowing people to introduce and incorporate their own songs... I believe games that are not even known for music will soon begin to be important to people musically speaking," Schnur says.

Today, songs purchased for 'Rock Band' or 'Guitar Hero' are only usable within those respective games. But Red Octane parent Activision and MTV, parent of 'Rock Band' developer Harmoniax, say they are interested in bundling download-to own tracks with any song purchased for either game, which could help boost in-game music sales.

Rockstar Games, the developer of "Grand Theft Auto IV," took a small step in this direction when it allowed "GTA" gamers to tag songs in the soundtrack for later purchase at Amazon's MP3 store. Close to 700,000 users downloaded more than 2 million songs, but data isn't available on how many resulted in a sale.

But for game developers to bundle download-to own tracks with game-linked song downloads would require them to work through a myriad of licensing, revenue share and user interface issues. Getting these deals done will be critical to the ongoing convergence of the videogame and music industries.

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Questions

With Dalton Caldwell
by Antony Bruno

It's make-or-break time for free ad-supported online music.

Now that such services as imeem and MySpace Music have secured the backing and investment of the major labels, they have to prove that free access to music can be a profitable business model.

I-meem CEO Dalton Caldwell, one of the pioneers of ad-supported music, weighs in on the risks and opportunities involved.

Have things turned out the way you expected? There are things that turned out better and things that turned out worse than I expected. Using standard Web-based ad models worked better than expected. There are other sites that do ad-supported music that have nonstandard Web ad units—those are much more difficult to sell. Taking the path of least resistance was surprisingly successful.

As far as the downside, running an advertising business is a lot harder than people give credit for. You can't just say you're going to do ads and in two months have a business. It took a lot longer and it took a lot more skill to build an ad business than I ever would have thought.

Is there any deal point that ad-supported services should watch for when negotiating with record labels? Both parties need to understand you need time to make it all happen. You can't just do it overnight. From the music perspective, it's not like us Internet guys can just turn on this spigot of cash and immediately have an ad-supported business. Patience is necessary.

As more ad-supported services go live with access to the same music as imeem, doesn't that drive down advertising costs based on simple supply and demand? I think that presupposes that these are 100% substitutional, which they're not. They're not all the same. When advertisers are making a decision on what site to spend on, they look at the community, the social aspects of it, how engaged users are, traffic patterns and the track record they've had with that site. It's about reputation. It's not like a brand-new site will come out and in two months magically start taking market share. It's not going to happen.

When it comes to optimizing the user experience, how do you strike a balance between music and advertising? That is a fundamental tension. There's been a tendency to under monetize these services for the sake of jumping into the scene and generating traffic. We're very serious about revenue. We're always going to prioritize the user experience, but we realize this is a business and revenue is tantamount to proving that the model works. You have to do both.

What was the biggest hurdle you faced when selling this idea to the labels? It was the question of whether we would see any streaming music would drive music sales. I think we've proven that social music services create a lot of buzz. Our integrated "buy" links for downloads and ringtones have given us proof that a lot of people buy music. I deeply believe we're driving that.

You're facing an economic recession and predictions of lower Internet ad sales in 2009. What's your outlook for the next 12 months? In the past couple of weeks, we've sold the largest campaigns we've ever sold. We see a good outlook into 2009 currently. If you look at the online advertising numbers, they're basically saying the rate of growth is slowing, but it's not going to go to zero overnight. If you're just jumping into the pool for the first time in 2009, it's going to be tough. But I'm actually cautiously optimistic.
**SCREEN PLAYS**

**The Top 10 Film And TV Projects To Score This Year**

What do the three soundtracks that went to No. 1 on the Billboard 200 in 2008 all have in common? "Twilight," "Mamma Mia!" and "Juno" all attracted primarily a female audience. For 2009, look for more of the same—teenage girls have a lot of expendable income and a growing number of them appear to be spending it on soundtracks as a souvenir of their favorite movies.

On TV side, a coming shakeup of the late-night TV lineup could reveal new opportunities for artists (Billboard, Jan. 10), but all bets are off if the Screen Actors Guild votes to authorize a strike against the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers; in mid-January, a faction within the guild moved to oust Doug Allen, its chief negotiator, who was pursuing a strike vote.

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**FILM**

1. **“Hannah Montana: The Movie”**: With 2008’s "Hannah Montana/Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds Concert Tour," Miley Cyrus had the all-time top-grossing concert film—so why not try her hand at bringing the storyline of her Disney Channel series to the big screen? In 2009, the "Hannah" franchise will release its own soundtrack to the movie, as well as one dedicated to just the third season of the TV show. With guest appearances from Taylor Swift, Vanessa Williams and Dolly Parton, "Hannah Montana: The Movie" is scheduled for an April 10 release from Millar Gough Ink and Walt Disney Pictures.

2. **Jonas Brothers: The 3D Concert Experience**: Given "Hannah" a run for her audience’s allowance money will be the Jonas Brothers, who get upgraded from their bit part in "Best of Both Worlds Concert Tour" with a full-fledged movie and soundtrack of their own. Filmed during two nights last summer at the Honda Center in Anaheim, Calif., the movie is directed by "Best of Both Worlds" vet Bruce Hendricks. Concert material will be interspersed with behind-the-scenes footage of Nick, Joe and Kevin. Walt Disney Pictures will release "Jonas Brothers" Feb. 27.

3. **"Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel"**: The unstoppable "Chipmunks" (in green) (in green!) will continue in 2009, with the sequel to its first full-length theatrical release tentatively scheduled to open Christmas Day. The film earned $217.3 million at the U.S. box office, according to Box Office Mojo; the soundtrack has sold 958,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

4. **"New Moon"**: On her Web site, series author Stephenie Meyer lists the bands that inspired her during the writing process, many of which wound up on the "Twilight" soundtrack, which has sold 1.2 million copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Look for the "New Moon" soundtrack to do equally well among "Twilight"-philes.

5. **"Footloose"**: While not slated for a release until 2010, the Paramount remake stars filming in March and is currently putting together possibilities for the soundtrack. Zac Efron is slated to star for "High School Musical" franchise director Kenny Ortega, reprising the 1984 tale of teen life in a town where fun is pretty much banned. The goal is to feature covers of songs from the original soundtrack—which included Deuce Williams’ “Let’s Hear It for the Boy,” Bonnie Tyler’s “Holdin’ Out for a Hero” and Kenny Loggins’ title track—as well as entirely new songs in the film.

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**TV**

1. **"The Jay Leno Show"**: Don’t you dare call it "The Tonight Show." In December, NBC announced that Jay Leno, the 16-year veteran of hosting the "Tonight Show," will lose a five-night-a-week prime-time variety show starting in the fall. (He will end his stint as "Tonight Show" host May 29.) The network is still working out the program’s format and how it will differentiate itself from the new iteration of the "Tonight Show" that will be hosted by Conan O’Brien. But at the press conference announcing the new show, Leno said he expected to include musical guests in the mix.

2. **"The Tonight Show With Conan O’Brien"**: While Conan O’Brien does get his long-promised gig as host of "The Tonight Show," he must separate himself from Jay Leno’s legacy, even as his predecessor remains on the air at an earlier hour. O’Brien takes over June 1, in a new studio being built in Burbank, Calif. O’Brien has always exhibited more eclectic musical tastes than Leno—acts on his current show have ranged from Radiohead, the first musical guest to perform when he took over the hosting slot, to more recent guests like Fleet Foxes and Little Big Town. Look for his audience to expand just by the virtue of the earlier time slot. The show will air at 11:30 p.m. Monday through Friday on NBC.

3. **"Late Night With Jimmy Fallon"**: Continuing along NBC’s late-night game of musical chairs, Jimmy Fallon will take over Conan O’Brien’s slot on "Late Night" March 2. On NBC.com, "Saturday Night Live" alums Fallon revealed he’s selected the Roots for his house band. "It’s going to be phenomenal—I don’t know a band like them," he says. "I’m just honored to have them onstage with me. Every night the energy is going to be crazy in the studio." "Late Night" will air at 12:30 a.m. Monday through Friday on NBC.

4. **"NCIS"**: "NCIS" has been on the air since 2003, but for the first time in 2009, the show is releasing a soundtrack—and it’s one with a twist. The two-disc set will be released in the spring, consisting of new music from such acts as the Cure, Dashboard Confessional, Blue October, Jakob Dylan and Oasis—and each track will reveal thematic points for the rest of the show for a season. Want a sneak peek at how mysteries special agent Jethro and forensics expert Ducky will uncover? Buy the soundtrack. "NCIS" had its season debut Jan. 6, airing Tuesdays at 8 p.m. on CBS.

5. **"Glee"**: In December, Fox ordered 13 episodes of "Glee," a one-hour musical comedy that will feature a still-to-be-determined variety of songs as the action focuses on a high school glee club. It all sounds a little "High School Musical"-esque, but expect something of an edge with "Nip/Tuck" and "Popular" creator Ryan Murphy at the helm. Matthew Morrison, one of the stars of Broadway’s "Hairspray," will play the teacher who rallies the club. "Glee" will debut in 2009 on Fox, although the network hasn’t yet announced an exact date.

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**FILM & TV BY ANN DONAHUE**

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[Source: American Radio History]
Could Selling Platinum Perks Be the Concert Industry's Golden Ticket?

As the economic crunch worsens, concert promoters are betting that the willingness of über-fans to pay top dollar for premium seating and VIP perks will offset downward pressure on ticket prices. Meanwhile, promoters, ticketers and tour producers are balancing the demand to keep prices low with the competitive need to provide artists more revenue opportunities.

Live Nation and Ticketmaster Entertainment are seeking new ways to connect fans with artists through the concert experience, which, of course, comes at a price. Beyond seats in the first few rows, well-heeled fans can now pony up for perks that range from bundles that include everything from dinner to parking to merchandise, all the way up to sound-check access or a meet-and-greet with the artist. Venues, concessionaires and third-party firms can add hotel and travel into the mix, and the price tag can rise into the thousands of dollars for superstar artists.

Ticketmaster acquired mega management firm Front Line last year, which already offered the I Love All Access VIP package program for the Eagles, Neil Diamond and Fleetwood Mac. Front Line founder and new Ticketmaster CEO Irving Azoff says bolstering the artist-to-fan experience is a priority, even for acts outside the Front Line family.

Likewise, Live Nation is tapping into this market, driven by its past acquisitions like Music Today and Signatures Network and now jump-started with the launch of its own in-house ticketing company. "We realize in this economy that the guy who gets creative and thinks outside the box on ways to create new revenue is going to win," says Jason Garner, CEO of global music for Live Nation.

Given that only the face value of tickets are reported to Billboard Boxscore, the true revenue is impossible to pin down, but VIP programs clearly could add millions of dollars to overall revenue. "The name of the game is "new sources of revenue,"" says music business accountant Bill Zysblat, a partner at RZO Productions, whose clients have included the Rolling Stones, the Police and David Bowie.

Tamara Conniff, president of music services at Front Line (and the former editorial director of Billboard), says sales at I Love All Access are holding up nicely, even in this economy. "A fan is still going to want to have a full VIP experience right out with Neil Diamond, the Eagles or New Kids on the Block," she says. "They may not be going on vacation, but they do want to do something that's meaningful to them."

Package prices at I Love All Access typically range from $175 to $680, scaled to the price of the actual ticket. Keeping VIPs to fewer than 200 people guarantees exclusivity, and much attention is paid to making the experience truly "special." "The artist decides they want to offer something premium to their fans, and we have reps on the road with the tour and a human being that does all of our customer service," Conniff says.

Throwing in a T-shirt, CD and diner has value, but the true holy grail for fans is face time with an artist. At I Love All Access, a VIP package can include anything from a seat in the first 10 rows, preshow parties, parking, exclusive tour merch and, in some cases, sound checks and meet-and-greets for such acts as New Kids on the Block and even Mick Fleetwood on the upcoming Fleetwood Mac tour.

The key in today's economy may be creating packages and experiences at a wide range of prices points that not only cater to the high-end market but may entice reluctant concertgoers.

Peter Luukko, president of Comcast Spectator, which runs the facility management firm Global Comcast, says the VIP market has already become more price-sensitive. "For the past five to 10 years, people have wanted luxury at one price so they can write one check: now they're more apt to start with a lower-end program and cherry-pick any upgrades they want," Luukko says. "The market has flipped a bit because everyone is more cautious with their dollars and as an industry we have to react to that and provide value at all levels."

The gold-circle concept of premium pricing for choice seats has, in the past decade, evolved into a lucrative opportunity for artists to capitalize on passionate fans with fat wallets. The concept certainly isn't new; Michael Cohl, tour producer for the Rolling Stones—who are pioneers in this space—once defined gold circle as the "5% or 10% [of inventory] where we try to get the high-priced-ticket people to pay for the tour. If you get rid of that golden circle and spread it over the house... then the punters everybody is trying to protect will end up paying 30%-50% percent more," he said.

Off the record, though, many would argue that the "gold circle keeps prices down" stance is just a convenient excuse to jack up the price of the best seats, and most artists charge what they feel the market will bear at a price level. "If the most you can get for the worst seat in the house is $75 and still sell out, then the eliminination of the premium seats will not increase the $75 ticket," a live event producer says. "Trial and error tells you how to scale a house so that you have gotten every dollar out of the market while selling every seat."

Phillips disagrees, saying premium pricing "allows us, especially in this economy, to get a cheaper price in the upper bowl. It's a real thing."

For those selling these packages, it's a critical balancing act. "Our fiduciary responsibility as promoters when an act is a client is to maximize the amount of revenue they'll make on a tour or even a one-off," says Randy Phillips, CEO of promoter AEG Live. "At the same time, working with the act and their reps, we want to make sure the scaling works. The hardest tickets to sell in this economy are the [nosebleed] tickets. Sometimes just adjusting a ticket price $10 can be the difference in selling or not selling a ticket."

Just as in pricing the venue, flexibility and scaling is important in creating VIP packages, and Garner says the launch of Live Nation's new in-house ticketing company gives it more opportunities in this regard. He notes that once a fan invests in a $100 concert ticket, it's a good bet that they'll also be interested in the $20 T-shirt, the $10 CD, the $15 DVD, the $5 VIP parking pass and $5 fan club. "All of those things are 10%-20% of the value of the concert ticket."

Ultimately, creating revenue for artists could be more the driver than lowering prices for other fans: "I don't mean to sound cynical, but I have not seen one case where a tour which has an enormous VIP component has lowered the end of ticket prices to compensate," Zysblat says. "It's simply another income stream."

So despite economic woes, premium deals can withstand offering value and catering to the high-end market. "Long term there's an incredible market for packaging of all types," Luukko says. "If we're smart about it, we can cater to all markets and be very successful, as we have been in other recessionary times."
LET'S GO SEE A SHOW
Legends Lead The Way For This Year's Top Tours

U2

U2's new album comes out March 3, and it's a safe bet that the band will support it with another blockbuster tour. In the past 12 years, U2 has sold nearly 11 million tickets and grossed $706.1 million, according to Billboard Boxscore. Its 2005-07 Vertigo tour—which supported 2004's "How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb"—took in $400 million, the second-highest total ever. In 2008, U2 signed a 12-year deal with Live Nation, which allows the company to participate in the band's worldwide touring, merchandising and U2.com, and its touring alone should generate more than $1 billion in grosses during the tenure of the contract.

BILLY JOEL/ELTON JOHN

Regarded as the top-grossing co-headliners of all time, Billy Joel and Elton John first worked together in 1994 and last shared the stage in 2003. In 2008, they announced a $45.8 million from 24 sellouts, an average of nearly $2 million per night, according to Billboard Boxscore. A handful of North American arena dates had been announced at press time, including visits in March to Cincinnati, Dallas, Miami, Houston, San Antonio and Anaheim, Calif. Joel and John are expected to perform onstage together and individually, as on past outings.

GREEN DAY

Green Day had the 10th-highest-grossing tour of 2005—pulling in $36.5 million from 76 concerts that drew more than 978,000, according to Billboard Boxscore—on the strength of 2004's "American Idiot," which has sold 5.8 million copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Green Day recently was in the studio with veteran producer Butch Vig, and a new album to tour behind in 2009 could mean another top ranking on Billboard's year-end touring charts.

PHISH

After splitting up in 2004, Phish's four members—Trey Anastasio, Mike Gordon, Jon Fishman and Page McConnell—gave fans a glimpse of how they reunited to play last September at the New York wedding of former road manager Brad Sand. Soon after, the famed jam band announced it would regroup in March for a three-night run at the Hampton (Va.) Coliseum. As one of the top touring acts of the past three decades, Phish once ruled the jam band scene,ranking up $175.5 million in concert grosses, with 5.8 million tickets sold to 475 shows reported to Billboard Boxscore between 1988 and 2004. The group's final year of touring grossedabout $20 million, including $10 million from the farewell gigs in August 2004 in Coventry, Vt.

KISS

Kiss co-founder/bassist Gene Simmons says the act will hit the road "eventually, when we're ready to tour America." Refer- ring to Kiss as the "jugemasters of all rock 'n' roll brands" at the Billboard Touring Conference in November, Simmons said, "We've been talking with [manager Doc McGhee] about Europe and then doing a yearlong tour maybe this coming summer, but we'll see ... Kiss and Queen, that would be a smash." A more optimistic take would hit the studio this year to record its first new album since 1998's "Psycho Circus." Kiss last ranked on Billboard's touring charts in 2003 for a co-headlining run with Aerosmith, which grossed nearly $50 million from 43 shows, according to Billboard Boxscore. In 2000, Kiss racked up $56.5 million and drew 1.1 million fans to 109 concerts.

BOXSCORE Concert Grosses

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BRITNEY SPEARS

A series of bizarre events during the past two years may have called into question the future of her career, but Britney Spears made an impressive comeback with "Circus," which bowed atop the Bill- board 200 in December. Ticket sales for her arena tour in March were strong at press time, causing many venues to book additional shows. Spears' box-office grosses are among the highest for fe- male artists; the singer's last trek ranked 17th on Billboard's top 25 in 2004, gross- ing $34 million from 52 shows that drew more than 600,000 people, according to Billboard Boxscore.

AC/DC

On a mild evening in early December at the Forum in Los Angeles, thousands of concertgoers proudly sported their AC/DC T-shirts and blinding red devil horns, which were sold during the show.

While merchandise sales should be impres- sive, AC/DC's ongoing Black Ice world tour—its first out since 2001, when it grossed $28.5 million from 52 shows, ac- cording to Billboard Boxscore—will un- doubtedly rank among Billboard's top tours of the year. Since the band started its tour in late October, most of its North America dates sold out. The group plans to play select stadium dates in spring and summer, according to band representa- tives.

Twelve recent AC/DC concerts re- ported to Boxscore grossed $16.2 million and drew more than 180,000 fans.
Publishers have to watch legislation and work with technology companies in a rough economy.

**ECONOMICS**

Publishing is about the only sector of the music industry that hasn't been significantly affected by the global economic downturn. But some executives fret that worldwide financial woes will catch up with them as the year unfolds.

The accelerating slide in recorded-music sales will hurt, warns Richard Stumpf, senior VP of creative services and marketing at Cherry Lane Music Publishing. “People think twice before they buy.” Stumpf says. “So the first place it happens is less CD buys, which affects us less than the labels, but realistically, there is an impact and we've got to be prepared for it.”

Another key area of concern: declining advertising spending, which could reduce revenue from synch and blanket radio performance deals.

“The synch business may feel continued downward pressure because advertising budgets are affected by the recession,” says Universal Music Publishing Group chairman/CEO David Renzer. “Performance rights negotiations [involving] significant blanket deals with the radio, cable and TV industry are coming up at the end of 2009 and those deals are tied to advertising revenues.”

But Renzer also points out that publishers can rely on a wide range of revenue streams and says publishing remains “a fairly resilient business.”

And while ad cuts could affect synch deals, EMI Music Publishing chairman/CEO Roger Faxon notes that “we are also at an important moment in the expansion of the uses of music” in videogames, greeting cards and other consumer-based businesses.

The recession could also fuel further consolidation of the business. Those hungry to purchase publishing assets expect to see more on the block as owners try to raise cash to cover recent losses in real estate and stock market investments.

**POLITICAL SCIENCE**

Publishers are awaiting the passage of U.S. legislation addressing orphan works, the direct payment of digital mechanical royalties to publishers and the introduction of a performance royalty for terrestrial radio stations.

But because Congress and the incoming administration of President-elect Barack Obama will be focused in the near term on economic issues, publishing executives aren’t expecting much action on their legislative agenda during 2009.

A delay in getting direct payment of digital mechanical royalties is particularly frustrating given the continued, albeit slowing, growth in digital music sales.

“It’s problematic for the entire music publishing community that we are not paid directly by iTunes,” says Sony/ATV Music Publishing chairman/CEO Martin Bandier. “It makes it difficult to see if we are getting paid properly. What progress can we make on this issue?”

Also in limbo is the Performance Rights Act, which seeks a first-ever performance royalty for musicians and artists whose recordings are played by U.S. radio stations. While the act wouldn’t benefit publishers directly, it would help performers who record their works. “I believe it still faces an uphill battle . . . so we will just have to stay tuned,” Renzer says.

**NEW TECHNOLOGY**

Publishers will keep an eye on how the changeover from physical to digital revenue will play out. “There is plenty of speculation about when digital revenue will overtake physical in the music publishing sector,” Stumpf says. “It will probably happen quicker than we think, but longer than we need.”

Amid the rapid erosion in physical music sales, other revenue sources are helping to compensate for the resulting loss in mechanical royalties from CDs. For example, publishers are receiving retroactive royalties from music subscription services and are also seeing revenue come in from new territories such as Southeast Asia, India and Dubai, Universal’s Renzer says.

And Sony/ATV’s Bandier sees another digital growth opportunity: lyrics. “One of the things that seems to be getting better and better is the demand for the use of lyrics,” he says. “With that comes licensing and hopefully payment. iTunes has not offered lyrics, but others are now providing it and hopefully that will force iTunes into offering them. People want to know the lyrics and that is another opportunity to grow.”

**ADULT EDUCATION**

Publishing executives are hopeful that the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, which requires universities to formulate anti-piracy policies, will help curb illegal file-sharing on peer-to-peer networks.

“The Higher Education Act sets out some fairly good provisions designed to reduce the piracy problem on college campuses,” says Warner/Chappell Music chairman/CEO David Johnson. “It’s an important beginning for how we should approach the issue of free music consumption on college campuses that is depriving recording artists, songwriters and rights holders from fair compensation for their efforts.”

Outside the United States, there are early signs that other governments might embrace legislation like the U.S. Prioritzing Resources and Organization for Intellectual Property (PROIP) Act of 2008, which protects copyrights domestically and internationally by toughening U.S. criminal laws against piracy and counterfeiting.

Legislation isn’t the only weapon available to publishers. There’s also an old stand-by: litigation. Cherry Lane, for instance, is the lead litigant in a class-action copyright infringement suit against YouTube. “This is another area where publishers are due a heck of a lot of money so it’s an important one,” Cherry Lane’s Stumpf says.

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‘Fewer CD purchases affects us less than the labels, but realistically there is an impact and we've got to be prepared for it.’

—RICHARD STUMPF, CHERRY LANE
Radiohead, Nine Inch Nails and the Eagles have all thrived since leaving major labels. A fresh crop of acts may join them.

**BECK**

Beck’s decade-plus contract with Geffen was fulfilled in 2008 with the release of “Modern Guilt,” which entered the Billboard 200 at No. 4 in July but turned out to be his lowest-selling major-label album at 262,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. It’s not hard to picture the iconoclastic artist going off on his own or perhaps returning to his roots and signing a deal with an indie like K Records. Beck told Spin last fall he might give up touring after his current round of dates and that he may “never make anything again that a major record company would want.” An e-mail to his publicist was not returned by press time.

**RYAN ADAMS**

Few major-label artists in recent memory have released as much material in a concentrated period of time as Ryan Adams did with Lost Highway: nine albums and three EPs since 2001. But the recent “Cardinology” fulfills Adams’ deal with the label, and it seems abundantly clear he’s seeking an arrangement that would allow him to release music whenever inspiration strikes, as he often does on his blog. “As much as we’ve tried to accommodate him by putting out a lot of records, a major-label deal is probably a bit restrictive for Ryan,” Lost Highway chairman Luke Lewis told Billboard in October. “My sense is he’d be better-served by being independent, and by that I mean totally independent.”

**PEARL JAM**

The veteran Seattle band didn’t re-up an album-by-album deal with J Records that it signed in 2004; its lone studio release for the label, a 2006 self-titled set, has sold 704,000 copies, nearly 200,000 more than its 2002 Epic swan song, “Riot Act.” Sources say Pearl Jam is likely to self-release its next studio album, due in summer 2009, in the United States and team with a major for distribution elsewhere. The band, which has long sold its own authorized bootlegs online, has previously inked one-off physical distribution deals for self-released DVDs and live albums. It still has strong ties with Epic, which will reissue the band’s seminal 1991 record “Ten” March 24 as the first piece of a two-year catalog campaign.

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**INDIES BY CORTNEY HARDING and JONATHAN COHEN**

**GOING THEIR OWN WAY**

**METALLICA**

Once derided as a dinosaur for its strong public opposition to Napster, Metallica would now be considered a little more forward-thinking in its older years. The band’s contract with Warner Bros. ended with the September release of “Death Magnetic,” which topped the Billboard 200 for three weeks and has sold 1.6 million copies. In a recent interview, drummer Lars Ulrich hinted the band might do things itself, adding, “It’s just exciting to be able to communicate directly with your fans.” Warner and Metallica offered no comment on the matter.

**50 CENT**

The superstar rapper’s empire goes way beyond music, with an apparel line, videogames, a Vitamin Water deal and the branded online social network and content platform ThisIs50.com batting for time with his recording career. His last album, 2007’s “Curtis,” has sold 1.4 million copies—a respectable number, but a drop in the bucket compared to the 12 million his two previous efforts sold combined. “Before I Self Destruct,” due in February, fulfills his contract with Interscope. A source at Universal says 50 remains a global priority for the company. The artist told Billboard that he plans to “free himself up as an agent” following the release of his new album.

**FRIENDLY FIRE**

Digital distributor: Independent Online Distribution Alliance

Physical distributor: Redeye

The Brooklyn-based indie is pulling out all the stops for the Feb. 17 release of the Faunts’ “Feel.Love.Think.Off.” record, creating a flash videogame as well as the usual music video. This will be followed by a new record from Elk City April 14 and the release of a digital EP and a digital and physical full-length from the Old School, which features former members of Broken Social Scene. Friendly Fire founder Dan Koplowitz is also involved with the music marketing and promotion form TeraBird and uses its resources to promote his acts, as well as to develop creative products to promote the label. Friendly Fire lighters, anyone?

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**INDIE CLASS OF 2009**

Leading Independent Distributors Name Their Picks For The Next Big Indie Label

**FRENCHKISS**

Distributor: RED

Expect a spring of passion and violence from FrenchKiss Records, as it prepares to release albums from New Zealand’s Cut Off Your Hands and Boston buzz band Passion Pit. The subject of a bidding war last fall, Passion Pit is staying indie for the time being, although Columbia will release its debut album outside North America. The summer brings an album from Sam Champion guitarist Sean Bones, which combines his love of reggae with pop influences, and coincides with his role in the feature film “Don’t Rock My Boat.” Finally, an album of new material from the Dodos is scheduled for the fall.

**BARSUK**

Distributor: Redeye

Label head Josh Rosenfeld promises a year of “exciting and mysterious things” for this Seattle-based label. After a quiet first quarter, the label will churn out a steady stream of music, starting with an album from Seattle-by-way-of-Brooklyn act Say Hi. The rest of the year will bring releases from Menomena, Long Winters, Rocky Votolato, Aeduct and a solo album from David Bazan. Barsuk will also issue a series of 12-inch vinyl remixes of Mates of State tracks starting in the spring and plans to keep working Ra Ra Riot by pushing a single to radio and securing the band a spot opening for one-time labelmate Death Cab for Cutie tour.

**CANDLELIGHT**

Distributor: Caroline

The black metal label Candlelight is kicking off 2009 with releases from European acts, including the critically acclaimed French band Blut Aus Nord and Norwegian death metal’s Burzum, who is in jail for murder. The label will also have releases from Emperor in April, Obituary in the second or third quarter and 1349 later in the year. Label head Paula Hogan says that Candlelight will put together a tour headlined by Abus, who has a new album due in the first quarter.
Bolstering The Bottom Dollar

Frugal is the new chic, particularly for Latin music, a market that has never had the big budgets afforded to mainstream acts.

BY LEILA COBO

THE LOW-BUDGET MUSIC VIDEO

Three thousand dollars for a music video? Make it work. Yes, while $3,000 is low budget by any standards, between that and not having a video at all, it may be best to take the low-budget option over no budget period. It’s doable with a digital camera and a single location. To keep costs low—even shooting on film and eschewing the digital camera—consider forgoing the big-name model (who really cares unless it’s Gisele Bündchen?), hire a lesser-known director or hire a director to do a "bundle"—two or more ideas for a reduced rate or a package that includes video, photo shoot and Web site. Consider shooting in foreign countries where labor is less expensive.

PAY FOR RESULTS

Radio promoters are easily the most expensive budget item in an album promotion campaign, so several indie labels are looking for guaranteed returns. "Instead of hiring a promotional crew that I would need to have on the books on a permanent basis, I pay on results," says independent consultant Frank White, who is currently working with Rios. "You get me the adds on a station, and you get paid," says White, who assigns stations based on territory. Are indie promoters willing to work on spec? These days, yes, he says. "It gives them an incentive to go out there."

SMALL PROMOTION, BIG RESULTS

It’s expensive to be No. 1 on radio. Instead, many labels try to invest wisely. "If I don’t go for ‘cosmetic stations,’" one executive says, referring to the handful of stations whose airplay is essential—and costly—to reach No. 1. "I’m not looking for a top 10. I look for sales." Targeting small radio stations often costs far less than going after a handful of big ones. "Wherever there is an antenna, no matter how small the station, I introduce my product and service them," indie promoter Marvin Flores says.

GIVE IT AWAY—OR AT LEAST LOWER THE PRICE

While some labels balk at offering free downloads, others embrace it as an inexpensive promotional tool that yields sales and revenue down the line. "We take the attitude that it is like giving a free sample at Costco," Nacional Records president Tomas Cookman says. "You have a bite and you will want more." He adds that free downloads from iTunes and radio shows have translated into sales spikes and, more than once, into film and TV synchs, that generate revenue for the label.

USE A SPONSOR

Tie in album releases with a sponsor-promoted tour. Having a link with a sponsor helps underwrite travel costs and may bring in a big chunk of promotion. It’s easier said than done for developing acts, but possible—particularly if artists are willing to accept in-kind promotion, as urban batacha crooner Toby Love did when Verizon sponsored a West Coast tour and provided tour support and SMS promotion.

AIRAPPARENT

New Technologies, Pricing Strategies Dial Up Progress In Latin America

In a region where you can buy a high-quality pirated DVD for just a few dollars while stopped in traffic, getting people to pay more than $2 for one mobile full-song download seems like a hard sell. But carriers and labels are betting that more flexible pricing, aggressive marketing, faster networks and a wider music selection will help them move more over-the-air full tracks in Latin America in 2009.

Both major regional carriers, Telefonica’s Movistar and America Movil, have had full tracks available for sale in certain countries since 2007, but getting the mobile business to take off has been a work in progress. Warner and EMI were the only major labels selling full tracks in America Movil’s Ideas Music Stores, though Universal said it was expecting to sign an agreement to sell full songs through Mexico’s Ideas Telcel stores shortly.

Movistar began more strongly promoting full tracks from all four majors in 2008 and plans to launch third-generation networks in all of Latin America in 2009.

"3G is nothing without content," says Mosiri Cabezas, Movistar’s head of content for Latin America. "We invest a lot in the network and we, as a carrier, want to get the most out of it through our services and evolve those services to generate more revenue."

Movistar is counting on a response to revamped music stores with a more user-friendly interface, such as those it recently launched in Mexico and Colombia. As it rolls out its 3G networks throughout the region, Movistar will offer full tracks everywhere from Central America to Venezuela to Uruguay. (America Movil also sells them in at least nine countries.)

Movistar is experimenting with pricing ($88 cents per track in Colombia, including transmission costs) and marketing through Sello Movistar, a label that will sign indie artists in various Latin countries. Those artists will be selected from profiles posted to artistas.movistar.com and will be chosen for tour support, promotion through Movistar’s digital music stores and sponsorships. Movistar says that regional revenue from music downloads (including everything from ringtones to full tracks) went up 20%-30% between 2007 and 2008.

Though Nokia wouldn’t confirm at press time whether it plans to usher in its Nokia Music Store in Mexico next year, it recently introduced two new music phones in Mexico that are compatible with the store in preparation for launch.

Juan Paz, head of research for digital media consultancy Music Ally says mobile music download revenue has grown considerably from what it was and carries "huge potential." But compared with ringtones, "it still is a very limited stream of revenues. Not many people understand how this works, so extensive—and expensive—marketing will be required." So will prices that will appeal to more than the region’s wealthy.

Both that download prices—which vary widely from country to country and depend on whether transmission costs are included, as well as whether the download is prepaid or billed later—are not the biggest factor getting over-the-air tracks to sell. "What’s important is that the navigation is easy, that it has a good marketing strategy," Perez-Soto says, adding that prices should reflect the difference in the physical world between front-line and catalog titles.

But labels don’t set prices—carriers do, depending on each country’s economic circumstances, average revenue per user and the competition. In Colombia, a track from America Movil’s Ideas Comcel store, which launched in early 2008, came to about $2.45 in early January.

Felippe Llerena, executive director of Brazil’s iMusica, which runs the back-end for Ideas Music Stores throughout the region, expects transmission prices to go down, particularly when fast 3G networks come to dominate and carriers can get paid for transmission of data over 3G as part of an overall plan instead of per download.

In Brazil, "most of the people who have computers have broadband access, and they have been pirating the music for free. And then you have the other portion of the population that has never accessed the computer at all and now has a cell phone with a music store inside. So they became our biggest customers.”

Besides improving mobile store offerings, Llerena has built a business around brands paying for online downloads and giving them away to consumers through PIN codes inside their products.

"People will be willing to pay for music again, as long as they don’t perceive that they are paying for music," he says. "We have to seduce the consumer again."
DUDE, WHERE'S MY BRAND?

Beverage, Apparel Makers Will Target Men—With Music

**UNDER ARMOUR**
**Prediction:** Look for the athletic apparel maker to partner with Procter & Gamble's record label, Tag Records, a joint venture with Universal's Island Def Jam. Possibilities include an Under Armour imprint or an artist signed directly to the brand; the company also could use Tag recording artist Q Da Kid in its ads. One cause for concern for Tag: bringing in another brand to its record label may dilute its message.

**SMIRNOFF**
**Prediction:** Earlier this year the vodka—owned by British drinks maker Diageo—launched a campaign featuring remixes of signature tracks from such rappers as Common, Q-Tip and KRS-One. A lack of follow-up hurt the promotion, but watch for another set of songs by different artists and the addition of live performances.

**GILLETTE**
**Prediction:** Gillette's tentative foray into music last year included a promotion with NASCAR where visitors to gilletteyoungguns.com were able to enter a sweepstakes for free MP3s from such country artists as Trace Adkins, Keith Urban and Darius Rucker. The company plans to expand its musical footprint this year, downloads in upcoming promotions will be from up-and-comers rather than established artists. One drawback: None of the acts' names or likenesses will be used.

**RED STRIPE**
**Prediction:** The Jamaican beer maker has been long associated with music in the United Kingdom, including the Red Stripe Music Award for independent acts. In the United States, where the beer is positioned as a Jamaican drink, the brand is likely to use indie musicians rather than mainstream ones as part of its efforts.

**NIKE**
**Prediction:** Nike has long been associated with hip-hop, the company was nominated for a Grammy Award for best rap performance by a duo or group for "Better Than I've Ever Been," a 2007 collaboration between Kanye West and KRS-One. In addition, it sells DJ mixes by such artists as A-Trak and Cassius on iTunes. This year, the company will begin using more rock in its ads—a move that was telegraphed when the Killers were heard in its 2008 Olympics spot.

**MOUNTAIN DEW**
**Prediction:** In 2008 Pepsi launched Green Label Sound, a singles-only label, with music from indie acts the Cool Kids and Matt & Kim available for free. Look for Flosstradamus to release a single through the label, and the soda maker could step up its promotional efforts by using Green Label music in advertisements.

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As Barriers Ease, Chinese Acts Test Taiwan’s Waters

TAIPEI, Taiwan—The Western music biz has long been obsessed with getting into China. But 2009 could be the year that China’s musicians are exported to the wider world, starting with its neighbor: Taiwan.

Relations between the two sides have been fraught since the Chinese Nationalists fled Taiwan after the Communist victory in China in 1949. More recently, ties were further strained during the eight-year administration of former Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian, who openly challenged Beijing’s insistence that Taiwan is a province of the mainland.

But since taking office in May, Chen’s successor, Ma Ying-jeou has been attempting to improve economic and cultural ties with China, and the government is now keen to encourage cultural exchanges across the Taiwan Strait.

In July, the Government Information Office announced that a ban on live performances by mainland artists would be lifted by the end of 2008 (billboard.biz, July 1, 2008). But now Chen Hui-yung, director of the Mainland Affairs Council’s Department of Cultural Affairs, says there is no formal ban. However, Chinese singers applying for entry into Taiwan have previously only been admitted if they are classified as “educational exports” and sponsored by a local organization. Educational experts, crucially, cannot be paid for their work in Taiwan.

The easing of such restrictions would make it easier for Chinese stars to tour Taiwan and branch out to other Mandarin-speaking markets such as Malaysia and Singapore.

Most Taiwan-based executives are skeptical that Chinese artists will find success in Taiwan, claiming that the island’s audiences have little interest in overseas acts, although Singaporean mandopop star Stefanie Sun is one of its most popular stars.

Max Hole, president of Universal Music Asia Pacific Region and executive VP of Universal Music Group International, is more optimistic. “At the moment in Taiwan, you have much greater expertise in production and songwriting, because the Taiwan music industry has been at it for 30-40 years,” he says. “Kids in mainland China think that pop in Taiwan is hipper and cooler than home-grown.”

Consequently, China’s fledgling music industry is likely to turn to Taiwanese know-how. Although China has the largest Mandarin-speaking population in the world, Taiwan is considered the nexus of mandopop, the ballad-heavy, R&B-tinged genre whose popularity stretches from Taiwan to Southeast Asia. According to the IFPI, music industry trade revenue in Taiwan totaled $68.9 million in 2007, nearly matching piracy-ravaged China’s $69.4 million.

Sam Chen, CEO of Warner Music Chinese Mandarin Group, says it’s only a matter of time before Mandopop’s center of gravity moves to China. But he believes it currently makes more business sense to use Taiwanese expertise to develop mainland artists within China itself. “For a developing country like China, it’s important to have music that really speaks to people’s sense of identity,” Chen says. “Taiwan went through the same process, first admiring Japanese singers, then Western ones, then finally developing its own stars.”

Hong Kong-based Typhoon Music, which recently bought EMI Taiwan and EMI’s stake in two Hong Kong joint ventures (billboard.biz, Aug. 4, 2008), is angling to profit from what it expects will be greater musical traffic between Taiwan and China. In November, it brought Shanghai singer/songwriter Amon Hu to Taipei, where he performed at the 3,100-capacity Taipei International Convention Center. Typhoon says 95% of the tickets were sold.

“Typhoon Music is committed to music fusion in the greater Chinese area,” says Huang Wei Ching, Typhoon’s GM for Taiwan and deputy CEO of its China operations. “We not only expect Taiwanese and Hong Kong artists to be introduced into China but vice versa.”

Local press reports in Taiwan have linked Chinese stars like Na Ying and Huang Xiao Ming with forthcoming visits to Taiwan. But concert promoters on the island warn that mainland artists still face bureaucratic hurdles at home.

“Musicians must return to their hometowns to apply for passports,” says “43” Chang, organizer of the annual Hohaiyan Music Festival and president of the indie label Taipei Color Music. “Then they must work with a specialized travel agency trusted by the authorities. I don’t even understand how all the different branches of government process these applications.”

In 2007, Chinese rock pioneer Cui Jian finally played the Hohaiyan festival after Chinese authorities rejected his application for the third previous years. Other artists intent on crossing the strait to potential Taiwanese stardom will need the same dogged determination.

“I think they got tired of saying no,” Chang says.

Additional reporting by Mark Sutherland in London.

BREAKING CHINA, TAIWAN-STYLE

Taiwanese acts, which have been big in China since the 70s, boast the advantage of singing in Mandarin, but they also pursue strategies to succeed in the Chinese market that can work for other artists as well. Here are three of them.

1. PUT ON A SHOW

Although the IFPI estimates China’s digital piracy level is 99%, the live experience can’t be copied. Sam Duann, president of Taipei-based Rock Records, says the turning point in China for its boy band Mayday came when it stopped promoting the band with media advertising and put the money into its live show. Secondary markets may open in China this year (Billboard, Dec. 20, 2008), but Mayday succeeded by concentrating exclusively on Shanghai and Beijing, playing up to 30 concerts per year in the two cities. Sam Chen, CEO of Warner Music Chinese Mandarin Group, says Warner Taiwan’s revenue from live shows has grown steadily in the last three years as the concert business develops.

2. THINK ENDORSEMENTS

Chinese and international brands are increasingly targeting mainland consumers—and a star endorsement is a proven way of getting attention. Several brands, including the food company Master Kong, stage “commercial concerts” where the biggest stars can make as much as $100,000 for a 30-minute show. Chen says Mandopop star Stefanie Sun signs as many as 10 endorsement deals per year, bringing in an average revenue of 6 million yuan ($878,000).

3. DON’T GIVE UP ON DIGITAL

The Beijing-based music search engine Baidu may be hurting legitimate online sales, but China’s largest mobile operator, China Mobile, is willing to pay the majors licensing fees upfront for its mobile music service, according to Chen. “As 3G comes in and companies offer better services, we hope we can persuade mobile companies to give copyright owners a bigger slice of profits,” says Max Hole, president of Universal Music Asia Pacific Region and executive VP of Universal Music Group International.

Additional reporting by Mark Sutherland in London.

Made in Taiwan: CUI JIAN rocks Taiwan’s Hohaiyan Music Festival in 2007.
GLOBAL BY LARS BRANDLE

UP FROM OZ

After a banner year for Australian music acts ranging from veterans AC/DC and Kylie Minogue to new faces like pop vocalist Gabriella Cilmi, a host of others from Down Under are ready to make their mark internationally.

SNEAKY SOUND SYSTEM
BASED: Sydney
CURRENT RELEASE: "I" (Whack Recordings)
BOOKING AGENT: New World Artists, Sydney (Australia); William Morris Agency, London (United Kingdom/Europe)
Sneaky Sound System’s shamelessly infectious grooves have ruled the dancefloor since the band arrived on the Australian scene in 2006. The group’s self-titled debut was certified double-platinum (140,000 units), while sophomore set “2” debuted as No. 1 on the Australian Record Industry Assn. (ARIA) chart in August. The Warner Music U.K. imprint 14th Floor Recordings releases an amalgam of both albums in the spring, with buzz already picking up thanks to the nation’s top 40 network BBC Radio 1’s airplay of the recent single “UFO.”

THE TEMPER TRAP
BASED: Melbourne
CURRENT RELEASE: "Sweet Disposition" (Liberation)
BOOKING AGENT: High-Road Touring, Sausalito, Calif. (North America); Creative Artists Agency, London (United Kingdom/Europe/Asia); Har- bour Agency, Sydney (Australia/New Zealand)
The cornerstone of the Temper Trap’s grand alt-rock sound is frontman Dougy Mandagi’s soaring falsetto. “After showcasing in the U.K. and U.S., the feedback was that Dougy is a unique vocalist not just on the Aussie but the world stage,” says Damian Stlevson, Liberation’s A&R/label manager. Producer Jim Abbiss (Arc- tic Monkeys, Adele) will produce the band’s as-yet untitled debut album, due in Australia in April or May.

GEOFFREY GURRUMUL YUNUPINGU
BASED: Elcho Island (near Darwin)
CURRENT RELEASE: "Gurrumul" (Skinnyfish Music)
BOOKING AGENT: Currently seeking representation
The blind singer/multi-instrumentalist was a three-time winner at the Australian Independent Record Awards, his AIR Awards in November, after grabbing the best inde- pendent album honor at the ARIA Awards for the platinum-certified (70,000 units) “Gurrumul.” Now, the Darwin-based Skinnyfish label plans to take his unique sound to the world. “This is an Australian release that can go universal,” label founder Mark Grose says. Skinnyfish will release "Gurrumul" Feb. 9, in Britain, where it will be distributed by Proper. European and U.S. dates will follow...

International Harvester

Universal Launches A Trio Of New Imprints
BY TOM FERGUSON

With major labels trimming rosters in international markets (Billboard, Dec. 20, 2008), it might seem like an odd time for a record company to unveil imprints aimed at developing new talent outside the United States.

But Universal Music Group has just introduced three such labels.

“Having a good spread of labels in each territory is about making sure we are in the market for all the different genres of music that matter,” says Max Hole, president of Universal Music Asia Pacific Region and executive VP of Universal Music Group International.

While the sale and distribution of music have changed, “the art or science of signing hits has not,” Hole says. “Our label policy is really about encouraging maverick A&R men. To make any record company successful, you need domestic repertoire to be strong.”

LABEL: Geffen Records U.K.
BASED: London
HEAD: Colin Barlow, president
GENRE: Nonspecific

During his 14 years at Polydor, the last 10 as co-president, Colin Barlow helped deliver multiplat- inum U.K. hits from James Mor- rison, Girls Aloud and Take That before assuming his current post in October 2008. “The idea is to have a broad roster of artists that have depth, get involved early with artists and develop them,” he says, adding that “a couple of very big players”—one artist and one major company—are being lined up for joint ventures.

Barlow will helm a broad, multinational A&R policy, aiming to build a roster “that’s eclectic and isn’t too big but has got a label that’s fully committed to it.” The label’s first signing, the London-based soul/rock act Vagabond, will release its debut single in May. Geffen will include production, publishing and manage- ment divisions and eventually plans to get involved in film and TV production. “This is about creating and selling brands,” Barlow says.

LABEL: Delicious Deli Records
BASED: Tokyo
HEAD: Kimitaka Kato, managing director
GENRE: Pop, rock

Delicious Deli is designed as a platform where overseas and domes- tic talent can interact—an unusual concept in Japan, where inter- national repertoire’s market share has fallen steadily in recent years. Heading the label will be Kimitaka Kato, managing director of Universal International Japan. “We already have five domestic labels,” he says, “so we decided to give Delicious Deli an interna- tional taste. The objective is to find fresh talent that could go abroad or new talent [or Japanese descent] from abroad that we could reimport to Japan.”

The label’s first release will be the Feb. 18 single “Sakurasakura” by the pop quartet Fuka. Singles from visual kei bands Uchusen- tal Noiz and DespairRay will follow March 4. Veteran Universal staffers Tomoharu Kageyama and Takeshi Yamashita are signed as A&R men.

Kato says Delicious Deli will “actively seek collabora- tions between international and domestic acts.” In the spring, U.S. rocker Andrew W.K. will begin work on an album with some of Universal Japan’s chart-topping pop acts.

Additional reporting by Rob Schwartz in Tokyo, Robert Thompson in Toronto and Mark Sutherland in London.

JANUARY 24, 2009 www.billboard.com 21
Rearview Mirror
On The Wall
Looking Back, Our 2008 Predictions Got Us A .500 Average.
In Baseball, That's A Hall Of Fame Career

WHAT WE GOT RIGHT

NASHVILLE’S BOOMING INDIE LABELS BEGIN PACKING IT IN
On Dec. 16, Equity Music Group, which launched in 2003 with high expectations, thanks to co-founder and flagship artist Clint Black, announced it was suspending operations. The label's greatest success was with Little Big Town, whose 2005 album “The Road To Here” sold 1.3 million copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. The group left the label earlier this year after fulfilling the terms of its contract. At the end of July, Midas Records Nashville, which had a No. 1 airplay hit with Emerson Drive, restructured and the company lost its promotion staff. The remaining staff now focuses on production and publishing.

—Ken Tucker

EVERY LATIN LABEL TRIES A REVENUE-SHARING MODEL
Latin labels, from major to indie, shifted the way they look at contacts in an effort to expand its sources of revenue in 2008. The approaches range from 360 models (although those remained rare) to a share of sponsorships, merchandising and touring.

—Leila Cohe

INTERNET AD SPENDING EXCEEDS RADIO AD SPENDING
While the final numbers aren’t in yet, CPM- and image-based advertising on the Internet accounted for 6.4% of all U.S. ad spending through third-quarter 2008, according to Nielsen Monitor Plus, while spot and network radio accounted for 4.5% of all advertising. While image-based advertising is only a portion of the Web market—search ads are the biggest slice of the pie—indications are that online advertising will indeed surpass radio. The good news for radio is that stations are mounting their own efforts on the Web.

—KT

SANITY COMES TO THE SECONDARY MARKET
We would have to say this did come to pass, at least to a degree, driven by the primary business’ desire to tap into the secondary market for tickets. Examples: Ticketmaster acquired TicketsNow, Live Nation says it will focus on the secondary market with its ticketing launch; more artists are profiting from this revenue; and AC/DC is doing a fair job of reigniting in this sector with paperless tickets.

—Ray Waddell

HIP-HOP ARTISTS WILL RELEASE THEIR MUSIC DIGITALLY
Rappers like Crooked I, Charles Hamilton and Freeway each released monthly or weekly freestyle mixes that increased their visibility and heightened their visibility online and offline. T-Pain delivered several songs through his Nappy Boy Digital label with his first artist, Tay Dizm. Even major-label artists like Ludacris, T.I., Young Jeezy and Kanye West debuted Web sites and blogs—WeMix.com, Streeetcied.com, USDA2day.com and Kanyeuniversity.com. (Still no Beatles, though.)

—Hillary Creasy and Gail Mitchell

WHAT WE GOT WRONG

LABELS FINALLY LOWER CD LIST PRICES
While major labels didn’t lower prices systematically across the board, prices did drop during the year on an event or line basis, or as promotions tied to specific albums. In particular, labels were much more aggressive in setting up catalog deals and would give individual accounts lower prices in return for increased promotional activity.

—Ed Christman

THE SHINS WILL SIGN TO A MAJOR LABEL
The Shins did not sign to a major in 2008, or any other label, for that matter. According to their manager, Ian Montone, “We are in no rush to sign anywhere, as the business continues to change and companies of all sizes come and go. Our plan remains the same: to release music via [lead singer] James [Mercer’s] label and find appropriate marketing and distribution partners on a case-by-case basis. 2009 is going to be a fun year for James and the Shins.”

—Courtney Harding

GUY HANDS SELLS OFF PART OF EMI GROUP
A year ago, the signs pointed to EMI Group contemplating a sale of at least part of its recorded-music assets. That didn’t materialize, although the company did substantially trim back in Asia, selling its stakes in two Hong Kong-based joint ventures to local company Typhoon, which also bought EMI Music Taiwan. After citing a poor release schedule as a major factor in its pro forma loss of £757 million ($1.5 billion) for the year ended March 31, the prospect of divesting recorded-music assets might yet prove irresistible in 2009—a suggestion that EMI recorded-music CEO Elio Leoni-Sceti had trumpeted last November.

—Tom Ferguson

LED ZEPPELIN WILL PLAY ON U.S. SOIL...MAYBE
Or maybe not. We definitely missed this one, wrongly assuming that $300 million offers would be enough to entice Robert Plant to rejoin former bandmates John Paul Jones and Jimmy Page (with late drummer John Bonham’s son Jason filling in). Plant admiringly seems to have found touring with Alison Krauss and charting his own musical course rewarding enough, and while it seems Jones and Page are still keen, any reunion without Plant ain’t Led Zeppelin. Just last week, Page manager Peter Mensch at Q Prime told Billboard, “There is no Led Zeppelin reunion tour.”

—R.W.

ITUNES ALLOWS ALBUM-ONLY SALES
We were wrong, and iTunes stuck to its guns on singles, as holdouts like Radiohead relented and agreed to sell songs by the track on iTunes. (Still no Beatles, though.)

—Antony Bruno
The year is packed with releases from superstars like U2, Eminem and Green Day. But these 15 acts will be making noise of their own.

ALEXANDER ACHA
Alexander Acha’s debut Warner Bros. album, “Voy,” rocketed to No. 2 on Mexico’s national album charts when it was released last summer, almost immediately going gold there on sales of more than 40,000 physical copies.

Credit strong press sales, Acha’s golden-boy good looks and the pursuit of Acha and his girlfriend by the tabloids, but his road to success was paved by his father, veteran pop star Emmanuel. The classically trained (and Berklee Music School-educated) son joined his famous father on tour, where the young singer/songwriter showed off his vocal and piano-playing chops.

In a bit of serendipitous timing, Warner Music Mexico snapped up Alexander before his father’s last album became a hit for Universal. “He has an interesting fan base of women in their 60s and 40s, who were fans of his father, and girls in their 20s,” says Warner A&R director Alejandro Abaroa.

But “Voy” is a strong creative statement by Alexander, who wrote all the songs and recorded them in Italy with producer Loris Ceroni. The distinction will come with time,” Alexander says. “I’m the son of a great artist and a pop icon. I look like him, physically. My voice is a little similar. But those are genetic things.”

—Ayala Ben-Yehuda

THE ANSWER
Northern Irish quartet the Answer may have released its debut EP, “Keep Believin’,” in July 2005, but 2009 should be the year that belief pays off. The band’s breakthrough is set to come from its current world tour with AC/DC. The Answer will spend much of 2009 on the road with the veteran band, promoting its sophomore album, “Everyday Demons” (Albert Productions).

At London-based Albert Productions U.K.—part of the Australian music group Albert & Son—head of A&R James Cassidy insists that despite sharing a label with AC/DC, the support slot was very much the Australian band’s choice. “We made our pitch—like many other bands—and at the end of the day it was very humbling to receive the call,” he says.

“Everyday Demons,” a melange of Led Zeppelin-influenced rock and Cormac Neeson’s Paul Rodgers-like vocals, appears Jan. 28 in Japan through WHD Entertainment; Feb. 27 in Germany (SPV); March 2 in the United Kingdom and Ireland (PIAS) and Continental Europe (SPV); and March 31 in the United States (The End Records/Sony RED). Cassidy signed the band in May 2005 after seeing a north London pub gig. “I was hooked instantly,” he recalls. “It’s a rare occasion when you hear a singer with a God-given pure rock voice and such power.”

—Nick Kelly and Tom Ferguson

DIANE BIRCH
Diane Birch, 26, has been playing the piano since she was 7, but it was only when she moved to Los Angeles in 2001 that she realized she had a voice to complement her compositions.

“A friend was going to vocal classes and she told me to check it out, so I went,” Birch says. “One day I whipped out this song and played while I sang it. People thought it was amazing. Until then, I had no
By the end of 2007 the Michigan-born, South Africa-bred Birch, who'd made a living playing piano at local hotels and restaurants, was signed to S-Curve Records. In April she will release her soulful debut, "Bible Belt," which includes the reflective track "Fools" and "Magic View," about being in love. On it she's worked with horn arranger Tom "Bones" Malone, New Orleans singer George Porter Jr. and the Roots' Adam Blackstone. —Marcello Conception

**BISHOP ALLEN**

Like Vampire Weekend before it, Bishop Allen could be the next indie band to break through to the oh-so- elusive teen girl market. Looking like something straight out of a Sassy magazine "Cute Band Alert" and sounding both twee and rocking, the band has already made inroads by appearing in the film "Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist." It also helps that co-founder/ frontman Justin Rice can appear in indie films like "Mutual Appreciation" and "Let Them Chip Away!" and say things like "We can have meaningless sex on my guitar case, baby" without sounding like a jerk. Hipster teens, start your swooning.

Starr's while Rice and guitarist Christian Rudder were undergrads at Harvard, the band made a splash by releasing one EP per month in 2006. In November of that year, it signed with Dead Oceans and released "The Broken String" in July 2007. The album has sold 10,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

A new project, "Grr," arrives in March. "We toured in the fall of 2006 and played mostly new stuff, which is always a little dicey," Rudder says. "But people were requesting the new tracks and seemed pretty excited about them." —Courtney Harding

**BRUTHA**

Armed with soulful harmonies and energetic dance moves, Brutha provides a compelling argument for the return of an R&B staple: guy groups. Ranging in age from 19 to 25, the Los Angeles-based Harrell brothers — Anthony, Jared, Jacob, Cheyenne and Grady — are determined to reignite the assemblage generated by the Jackson 5, New Edition and Boyz II Men.

Laying that groundwork is Brutha's self-titled debut on Goodfellas Entertainment/Def Jam. Working with such songwriter/producers as the Corna Boys and 112 founding member Daron Jones, Brutha is climbing Billboard's Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart (No. 71) with lead single "I Can't Hear the Music," featuring Fabolous. In the wings is the second single, "She's Gone."

The album's Dec. 23 release coincided with the first-season finish of the sibling-popular BET reality show "Brothers to Brutha." Chroning the issues-plagued maze between family and fame, the show attracted 1.2 million viewers. Tempering Brutha's burgeoning success was the sudden 2008 death of mentor and Def Jam executive VP Shakir Stewart, who signed the group in 2007.

"The one lesson we've learned is that nothing comes easy," Cheyenne says. "Anyone who didn't love music as much as we do would have given up a long time ago." —Gail Mitchell

**GLASVEGAS**

This Scottish rock quartet entered 2009 with U.K. success under its belt—and the United States in its sights. The Glasgow-based, Columbia-signed band, fronted by James Allan, opened at No. 2 on the U.K. albums chart in September with its self-titled debut. The set also hit the top five in Sweden and top 10 in Norway.

Columbia U.K. managing director Mike Smith says British shipments are now at 220,000, with a worldwide total of 350,000.

Smith says a wider European release of "Glasvegas" is imminent with particularly strong reaction in France, Germany and Spain. A January trip stateside, where Columbia just released the album, will include slots on CBS' "Late Show with David Letterman" and "The Late Late Show With Craig Ferguson," while live dates kicked off Jan. 6 at Boston's Great Scott club, teeing up South by Southwest performances in March.

"I can't wait until people in America get a chance to engage with them," Smith says. "A lot of people probably saw them as a good, solid British indie band, but we've always talked in terms of a working-class [band with a] singer/songwriter in the tradition of Bruce Springsteen."

—Paul Sexton

**LAURA IZIBOR**

Twenty-one-year-old Laura Izibor isn't afraid to sing in public—anymore. "When I was 13, I was in drama class in school and my teacher asked everyone to get up and sing. My heart was in my throat, and I was pleading that she didn't ask me," she recalls. "But I went up and sang a Whitney Houston song and both the class and the teacher said I had something. It was from then on that I started tracking solo."

Now, the Ireland native, who has fortunately gotten over her stage fright, is preparing to release her debut Atlantic album. "Let the Truth Be Told," in April. "It's a personal, real, honest, strong and biblical" set, says Izibor, who lists Roberta Flack, Eykika Badu and India Arie as her musical inspirations. Tracks like the gospel song "Mmmbb"; the lead single, "From

"My Heart to Yours"; the second single, "Don't Stay" about a failed relationship, and "If Tonight Is My Last" introduce Izibor's blend of soul, R&B and pop. Christopher "Tricky" Stewart and A&S contributed production, while Izibor wrote and co-produced most of the tracks. —MC

**JOEY + RORY**

It took a reality show for Joey Martin Feek and her husband, hit songwriter Rory Lee Feek, better-known these days as Joey + Rory, to become a singing duo.

At the suggestion of a friend, the pair, who had performed together at writers' nights and sang across the kitchen table together but had never considered a career as a duo, auditioned for CMT's "Can You Duet." With judge/mentor Naomi Judd firmly in their corner from the start, Joey + Rory finished third in the competition and quickly signed with Vanguard.

"Us taking third place has been a blessing," lead vocalist Joey says, citing the creative freedom that signing with Vanguard has afforded them. "The fact that we've gotten to do this together is a fantastic experience." "We never dreamed we were going to be a duo," Rory adds.

Their debut album, "The Life of a Song," was released in late October and has sold 69,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. The first single, "Cheater, Cheater," was released in August and No. 32 on Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart. The duo has also appeared in a commercial for the online retailer Overstock.com. —Ken Tucker

**KID CUDI**

Since releasing the mixtape "A Kid Named Cudi" in July 2008, rapper Kid Cudi has gained significant momentum in the hip-hop world, as well as the admiration of Kanye West, who signed him to his G.O.O.D. Music imprint. On the heels of a performance alongside Travis Barker and DJ AM at the 2008 MTV Video Music Awards, the Cleveland
FEDE LE GRAND

Plenty of dance producers, particularly those whose style leans more toward vocal pop than heady nightclub instruments, have dreams of crossover grandeur. But few have the material or the appeal to pull it off. Then there’s Fedde le Grand. The 27-year-old Dutchman stormed America in 2007 with his breakthrough single “Put Your Hands Up From Detroit,” a showout to Motown with an unforgettable synth riff that made its way into all varieties of DJ sets, from house to hip-hop. He followed up in 2008 with “Let Me Think About,” a Beyoncé-styled club anthem with vocalist Ida Corr, which became the No. 1 track of the year on Billboard’s Dance Airplay chart. His debut full-length, “Output,” is due in the spring on Ultra.

“Fedde has produced two huge hits already, showing us that he has musical chops to cross to top 40 radio,” Ultra president Patrick Monev says.

And the material on “Output” proves that those hits weren’t flukes. Collaborations with Stereo MC’s (“Wild & Raw”) and Will.i.am (“Feel Alive”) are all potential singles. “It’s not 12 tracks that all sound the same,” Le Grand says. “There’s hints of jazz, hip-hop, R&B, some electro, some pop. But it’s an album you can definitely move to.”

—Kevin Mason

RYE RYE

Two years ago, 18-year-old Rye Rye started to write rhymes out of pure boredom. “I used to like to write poetry and stories,” he says. “It was the Baltimore native says. “One day I was home, bored, and I started to compose songs.” Like clockwork, just a few days after she wrote her first ("It was about being from the hood,") she met local DJ Blaqstarr, who liked her sound. They quickly recorded a demo for major success this year.

“The track recently broke onto the Billboard Hot 100 earlier this month, on the strength of record-breaking downloads for “Pony (It’s OK)” as iTunes free single of the week (664,000).

Look for numerous film and TV synchs in 2008, including “Pony (It’s OK)” in the trailer for and the final scene of the upcoming movie “He’s Just Not That Into You,” as well as touring with Brett Dennen and James Morrison. Universal will also work the single to adult top 40. "She has this kind of it factor that you wish you could bottle and spread on all of your artists," Mackay says. “She can go in a room and just own it. Our best asset on this project is getting Erin out and in front of people.” —Jonathan Cohen

REVIVE

Following the trail blazed by such successful acts as the Newsboys and Rebecca St. James, Revive looks to be the next big export to make its mark in the Christian music arena. Signed to Provident Music Group’s Essential Records, the band’s U.S. debut, “Chorus of the Saints,” drops March 10. Revive first developed a following performing at schools and churches around their native Sydney and releasing three critically acclaimed albums in Australia.

Its international break came when it opened for Third Day on its 2007 Australian tour. That band’s members were so impressed, they invited the young rockers to the United States and lead vocalist Mac Powell began working with them in the studio. Revive moved from Australia to Atlanta in December 2007, signing with Third Day’s Consuming Fire Productions and subsequently to Provident Music, Sony BMG’s Christian division. Powell produced the band’s debut release and duets on the poignant ballad “You Know.” Influenced by Steven Curtis Chapman, U2 and Jeff Buckley, Revive has already developed a U.S. following opening for Third Day in 2008 and will also play 35 dates this spring on the group’s Revelation tour.

—Deborah Evans Price

ANGEL TAYLOR

Sara Bareilles might not want to write you a love song, but Angel Taylor is more than happy to oblige. On her debut album, “Love Travelers,” due April 7 on Aware/Columbia, Taylor sings of love lost, found and requited. Despite the fact that she’s barely out of her teens, she manages to toe the line between believing in true romance and giving up all hope.

While Taylor may lack a fantasy courtship, she’s kicked off her career with a fairy tale beginning. Initially, she never considered a music career and planned on recording a few of her tracks as a present to her family. She had the fortune to contact Mikal Blue, who has produced Colbie Caillat and Brendan James, to see about renting a studio; he was so taken with her songs that he offered to help her with a label deal and record a full album.

Taylor certainly has underdog credibility. Until last year, she’d never had a cell phone or flown on an airplane. But while youthful optimism can be gratifying in the wrong hands, Columbia and manager Greg Lattman are banking on Taylor’s wise-beyond-her-years attitude to cross her over to a more adult audience, starting with a stint opening for labelmate Adele.

—CH

JEFF ‘TAIN’ WATTS

The hard-hitting grooves from Jeff ‘Tain’ Watts’ trap set are nothing new to jazz fans: He’s been Branford Marsalis’s drummer for nearly 20 years, spent the preceding seven inWynton Marsalis’s band and has a deep discography studded by four albums as a leader. Watts’s wily wit and mischievous grin are familiar to an even wider audience, courtesy of his role as Rhythm Jones in Spike Lee’s 1990 film “Mo’ Better Blues” and his three-year, early-90s stint in the “Tonight Show” band. For his fifth solo CD, “Watts” (due Feb. 3 on his own Dark Key Music label), he recruited Branford, trumpeter Terence Blanchard and ace bassist Christian McBride. There’s slow blues, fast bop, one killing drum feature, brilliant playing by Branford and Blanchard (separately and in tandem) and even political commentary (on “The Devil’s Ringtone”). Yet it’s the handful of smart, fresh compositions and the authority with which Watts marshals his troops that makes this a notable reintroduction to a talent we thought we already knew.

—Leslie Buxton

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Drowned in Sounds

Album sales keep slipping, but if the trend continues in 2009, it won't be for a lack of blockbuster releases. Chief among them are several albums originally expected to come out in 2008, including U2's "No Line on the Horizon," 50 Cent's "Before I Self Destruct," Eminem's "Relapse" and Dr. Dre's "Detox." And there will also be plenty of new work from veterans (Bruce Springsteen, Pearl Jam, Dave Matthews Band), country hitmakers (Rascal Flatts, Keith Urban) and teen sensations (Jonas Brothers, Miley Cyrus).

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
"WORKING ON A DREAM" (COLUMBIA, JAN. 27)
Reinvigorated by the rich pop that fueled 2006's "Magic" and the tour that followed, Bruce Springsteen, the E Street Band and producer Brendan O'Brien knocked out "Working on a Dream," in occasional sessions while gigging last year (some featuring late keyboardist Danny Federici and his son Jason). The title track and second single "My Lucky Day" hint that Springsteen and O'Brien are continuing along the big, upbeat path that would sound great live. But the opener "Outlaw Pete" is a slow-moving, eight-minute narrative, while "Good Mike!" hints at the swamp-blues sounds Springsteen has occasionally explored on tour.

FRANZ FERDINAND
"TONTING: FRANZ FERDINAND" (EPIC, JAN. 27)
Franz Ferdinand makes good on its stated desire to produce a "dirty pop" album with "rhythm- and dance-based" songs on its third long-player. Throughout, the Scottish band lets its lusty basslines handle much of the heavy lifting, decorating them with vintage synth melodies straight out of the Genesis (" opener "Ulysses") or Sparks ("Live Alone") playbook. Elsewhere, the band's cold grooves nod to Wire ("Turn It On"), Gun ("Send Him Away") and "Miss You"-era Rolling Stones ("Kiss Me," "What She Came For"). Franz's first two albums "were very jerky," frontman Alex Kapranos says. "This one is much more of a swinger."

50 CENT
"BEFORE I SELF DESTROY" (SHADY/INTERSCOPE, FEB. 3)
Originally due late last year, 50 Cent's latest was bumped to the first quarter to allow him more time to hone tracks with longtime mates Eminem and Dr. Dre. "I have a couple of tracks on there with him. It's sick," Eminem says. Dr. Dre's fingerprints are all over the new single "Get It In," while Scott Storch produced the initial single "Get Up," which topped out at No. 44 on the Billboard Hot 100 last year. "Before I Self Destruct" will be bundled with a full-length feature film of the same name, in which 50 plays a budding basketball star who becomes a criminal after his mother's murder.

THE FRAY
"THE FRAY" (EPIC, FEB. 3)
Two-and-a-half years after a key placement on ABC's "Grey's Anatomy," the band utilized another high-profile partnership with the network to introduce the new single "You Found Me" in late November. The track, which has already sold 322,000 downloads, according to Nielsen SoundScan, stemmed from crises among friends and family that prompted singer Isaac Slade to confront the age-old question of why bad things happen to good people. The sound of "The Fray" is "a little more extreme than the last record," Slade says. "It definitely spreads the spectrum a little bit."

DIERKS BENTLEY
"FEEL THAT FIRE" (CAPITOL NASHVILLE, FEB. 3)
"I want something that needs to be on someone's mantle," Dierks Bentley says of his goal for "Feel That Fire." "I have a bunch of U2 CDs, and each one has its own little place, it's not just pumping out another record and say, 'All right, let's get back to the bus.' " The artist, who kept his circle of co-writers close on past albums, expanded his horizons by writing with Rodney Crowell, Rivers Rutherford, and Brad and Brett Warren, among others. "It's not only a chance to write songs, but it's big-brother mentoring, getting to ask questions about life," he says. "It's therapy to some point."

LILY ALLEN
"IT'S NOT ME, IT'S YOU" (CAPITOL, FEB. 10)
Lily Allen's sophomore album retains the playful spirit of her star-making 2007 debut "Alright, Still," but, musically and lyrically, it relocates her from too-cool-for-school hipster-pop to somewhere between the dancefloor and the real world. Despite songs about God ("(Him)") and George W. Bush ("F*ck You"), it's still strong, uncontrived pop music. And it sounds suffused with fun, starting with the lead track, "The Fear." "I did a retro thing last time," Allen says. "And since I did that, a lot of other people did it too. I wanted to separate myself from the group and move forward. People think I've intentionally done something more serious but I haven't."

DAN AUERBACH
"KEEP IT HID" (NONESUCH, FEB. 10)
The Black Keys vocalist/guitarist is taking time off from his primary band to release a tour behind this solo debut, which he admits is "all over the map. Some of them sound like they could be Black Keys songs. But some songs are just acoustic guitar. There's some real dark tunes and some psychedelic ruminations." Indeed, the album runs the gamut from the sparse, drumless opener "Trouble Weight a Ton" and the general acoustic closer "Go!" to raw, swaggering rockers like "Heartbroken, in Distress."

THE LONELY ISLAND
"INCREDIBAD" (UNIVERSAL REPUBLIC, FEB. 10)
The comedy team consisting of "Saturday Night Live" star Andy Samberg and writer Jorma Taccone and Akiva Schaffer draws from its sizable catalog of Internet smash hits for its major-label debut, including "Jazz in My Pants," "Dick in a Box" with Justin Timberlake, "I'm So Far" with Maroon 5's Adam Levine and "Lazy Sunday." Also expected to appear are "Yonan's Boat" with Jack Black, "Boom-box" with the Strokes' Julian Casablancas, "Dream Girl" with Norah Jones and "Santeria DVX" with E-40.

TWO TONGUES
"TWO TONGUES" (VAGRANT, FEB. 10)
Saves the Day frontman Chris Conley and Say Anything, mastermind Max Bemis join forces in this project, which Bemis says he "wanted to be a little more poetic and a little bit less completely verbose." The album reflects the glamrock pop/punk and emo sounds of both bands and their influences, which Bemis cites as "Sunny Day Real Estate, Smashing Pumpkins and

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Beatles with a Britpop element. Balance is very much so what the plot of the album is about. It's really about me and Christ friendship and how that represents anybody's friendship, or anybody's relationship.

MORRISSEY
"YEARS OF REFUSAL"
(ATTACK/LOST HIGHWAY, FEB. 17)
The first few songs on "Refusal" suggest a more rock-oriented effort in the style of 1992's "Your Arsenal," including "All You Need Is Me" and the fiery "Something Is Squeezing My Skull." On "Mama LaySoftly on the Riverbed," Mor- rissey sounds vengeful, declaring, "Rabbits with bad breath, I will sit their throats for you." The curious "When Last I Spoke to Carol" seems influenced by the manic sound of Ennio Morricone, while "It's Not Your Birthday Anymore" experiments with samples.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"DARK WAS THE NIGHT"
(BEGGARS BANQUET, FEB. 17)
Some of the biggest names in independent music banded together to record exclusive songs for this double-disc album, whose proceeds will benefit the Red Hot organization's work with AIDS research. In the works since 2006, the project was curried by the National's Aaron and Bryce Dessner. The lineup includes Spoon, Arcade Fire, Yo La Tengo, the New Pornographers, Cat Power, My Morning Jacket and Iron & Wine. "Dark Was the Night" is also packed with intriguing collaborations, including Fest with Ben Gibbard and Grizzly Bear, Dirty Projectors with David Byrne, Aaron Dessner with Bon Iver, and Bryce Dessner with Antony.

... AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD
"THE CENTURY OF SELF"
(RICHTER SCALE/JUSTICE, FEB. 17)
The veteran Texas rock band is back on indie turf after three albums for Interscope and on "The Century of Self," it has rediscovered the dark, punishing power of its best material. "Pictures of an Only Child" begins as a subdued wash of sound before bursting into a loud, chugging chorus and the brassing "Far Pavilions" has shouted counterpoint vocals from drummer Jason Reece. "On the last two albums, we were really meticulous recording to click tracks and doing overdubs," Keeley says. "This time, we threw all that out. We learned the songs and all tracked live.

JEREMY ENIGK
"OK BEAR"
(LEWIS HOLLOW, FEBRUARY)
Jeremy Enigk returns to the heavier rock sound of Sunny Day Real Estate on his third solo album, recorded outside Barcelona with a group of musicians introduced to Enigk by his mutual friend from Seattle. "These guys are Sunny Day Real Estate fans and the moment they got their hands on my songs, whether they were mellow or not, they turned them into heavy rockers," Enigk says. Look for driving tracks like "Late of Camera" and "Find Idea," alongside "April Storm." "That's a Ryan Adams/Love Is Hell-type of kid," Enigk says and the Gram Parsons-inspired "Same Side Imaginary." U2 "NO LINE ON THE HORIZON"
(INTERSCOPE, MARCH 3)
This long-gestating album was originally expected in fourth-quarter 2008 but the band wasn't satisfied with what they had and kept recording. The finished product blends such classic U2 rockers as "Crazy Tonight" and the single "Get on Your Boots" with more experimental fare like the seven-minute "Moment of Surrender" and "Tripoli." The former is an electro-leaning track with an Eastern-inspired scale in the chorus, making it one of the weirder U2 tracks in decades. "The last two records were very personal, with a kind of three-piece at their heart, the primary colors of rock—bass, guitar and drum," Bono says. "But what we've become is the same order as the transition that took us from "The Joshua Tree" to "Achtung Baby.

NEKO CASE
"MIDDLE CYCLONE"
(ANTI, MARCH 3)
Neko Case went back to nature for the subject of many of her new songs; the first single "People Got a Lot of Nerve" is "really about how we expect animals in the wild to be civilized," she says. The album's title is related to a number of the tracks, notably "This Tornado Loves You." But don't expect a dark record about personal turmoil; "I'm not much of a metaphor person," Case says, confirming that "Cyclone" is more upbeat than 2004's "Fox Confessor Brings the Flood." "When I talk about a tornado, I am literally talking about nature." The Band's Garth Hudson, M. Ward and members of the New Pornographers, Calexico, Los Lobos, Giant Sand, the Lilys and the Sadies all make appearances.

CHRIS CORNELL
"SCREAM"
(MOSLEY MUSIC/INTERSCOPE, MARCH 3)
In one of the more unlikely pop music pairings of late, Chris Cornell drafted hip-hop maestro Timbaland to produce his third solo album. As to be expected with Timbaland behind the boards, songs like "Long Gone" and "Watch Out" move Cornell in much more R&B-oriented direction, with busy drum machine beats, bopped-up chorus vocals and string samples filling the nooks and crannies. "I don't care what anyone says," Cornell says. "What we did together is different than anything that has been done before.

KELLY CLARKSON
"ALL I EVER WANTED"
(RCA, MARCH 17)
The biz is watching this album closely, since Clarkson's last release, 2007's "My December," was marred by her public feud with Clive Davis over her desire to write her own material. The set has sold 782,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan, a far cry from the 6 million-plus of 2004's "Breakaway," which featured a number of co-writes with experienced songwriters. "All I Ever Wanted," which sports assistance from Dr. Luke, Max Martin and Howard Benson, is introduced by the single "My Life Would Suck Without You," a propulsive blast of rock-tinged pop that just hit U.S. radio.

MSTRKRFT
"FIST OF GOD"
(DIM MAK/DOWNTOWN, MARCH 17)
This Canadian dance duo previewed "First of God" last fall with the single "Bounce," a collaboration with reggae star N.O.R.E. The album's other guests include Ghostface Killah, E-40, Freeway, Lil Mo and John Legend—a definitive move to a different sound that group member Jesse Keeler says "we thought would alienate some people. "We wanted to make a record that was more musically like a throwback to when rap and R&B production was old school, the line between that and dance was very blurry," he says. Group member Al-P adds, "It's the same as when the Strokes came out; rock music returning to what it was born from. When you get back to the essence of things, sometimes cool stuff happens.

HANNAH MONTANA
"HANNAH MONTANA: THE MOVIE" SOUNDTRACK
(WALT DISNEY, MARCH 24)
The free world's favorite regular teen/ pop superstar gets the big-screen treatment April 10, with a Hannah-packed soundtrack in March. In addition to the first single "The Climb," the album is expected to include new songs from Taylor Swift and Rascal Flatts, plus performances from up-and-coming Hollywood artist. U.K. native Steve Rushton. The two "Hannah" soundtracks, which made star Miley Cyrus a household name, have sold nearly 7 million units in the United States combined, according to Nielsen SoundScan, so it makes sense Disney has yet another Hannah project up before year's end. The show's season-three soundtrack is set for a July 7 release.

THE DECEMBERISTS
"THE HAZARDS OF LOVE"
(CAPITOL, MARCH 24)
Frontman Colin Meloy describes the Decemberists' second major-label album as "a narrative that was pieced together out of common folk-song motifs," adding that it was a product of listening to British revival folk. He also says he wasn't afraid to make an album that needed to be consumed as a whole. "I suspect the idea that people are only listening to singles is largely a myth," he says. The lyrics remain typically gothic and literary, although there are some surprises. "On "The Queen's Revenge in the Crossing," we pretended like we were a sludge metal band for bit," Meloy says. "And "The Raleigh Song" really skirts the limits of what is appropriate. When I played it for my wife, she was appalled."

MARTINA McBRIE
"SHINE"
(RCA NASHVILLE, MARCH 24)
After a long association with Paul Worley and after self-producing 2007's "Waking Up Laughing," Martina McBride decided it was time for a change. The results come through loud and clear on this album, which she co-produced with Dann Huff (Faith Hill, Rascal Flatts). "There were things left on this record," she says of Huff's guitar playing, which is woven throughout. The Rolling Stones-inspired intro to "Wrong Baby Wrong" and the Beatles-inspired "Sunny Side Up," are among the highlights, as is the effervescent "Sunny Side Up," which McBride co-wrote with Brad and Brett Warren.

MASTODON
"CRACK THE SKYE"
(WARNER BROS., MARCH 24)
Got a hankering for a heavy metal concept album about the assassination of Rasputin, space travel, evil spirits,
heaven and hell? Look no further. Recorded in Atlanta with Brendan O’Brien, Mastodon’s second major-label album features seven songs, one of which (“The Czar”) is split into four movements. It opens with “Oblivion,” which drummer Brann Dailor says is “real moody,” and wraps with the 15-minute “The Last Baron.” Fans can expect the same complex packaging as with prior releases as “Leviathan” and “Blood Mountain.” Dailor says, “It makes me think. Wow! Now we’re on this trip and the next few records will keep evolving in this style.”

BLUE OCTOBER
“APPROACHING NORMAL” (UNIVERSAL, MARCH 24)
The term for Blue October’s fifth album is “dramatic slash theatrical,” according to bassist Matt Novey. “There are all sorts of different directions in this record,” he says of the follow-up to 2006’s platinum “Foilied.” “The extremes are a lot more present—from the saddest, most depressing moments to the happiest most joyful moments.” The quintet recorded with producer Steve Lillywhite at Willie Nelson’s Pedernales Studios near Blue October’s hometown of Austin.

KEITH URBAN
TBA (CAPITOL NASHVILLE, MARCH 31)
The follow-up to 2006’s “Love, Pain & the Whole Crazy Thing” is led by the single “Sweet Thing,” a driving, banjo-tinged ode to the object of Urban’s desire (presumably his wife, actress Nicole Kidman). Like most of Urban’s work, it’s pop rock rather than country, but it’s a formula he’s perfected with producer Dann Huff and writer Monty Powell. And for good measure, the video was shot in a barn in Spring Hill, Tenn.

BILLYRAY CYRUS
“BACK TO TENNESSEE” (WALT DISNEY/LYRIC STREET, MARCH 31)
In a nifty stroke of synergy, the title cut from the follow-up to 2007’s “Home at Last” also serves as a theme song for the new “Hannah Montana” movie, which opens April 10. Billy Ray Cyrus co-wrote that song and one other for the set, “Country as Country Can Be.” Powerhouse writers Jeffrey Steele, Neil Thrasher, Craig Wiseman and Rivers Rutherford contributed the balance of the tunes. While “Thrillibilly” is country fun in the vein of Big & Rich, “Somebody Said A Prayer” is a pure country power ballad.

THE BLACK EYED PEAS
“THE END” (INTERSCOPE, MARCH)
The group, which has been planning more of a “music diary” than a conventional album with “The End,” which stands for “The Energy Never Dies.” “It’s a diary…of music that at any given time, depending on the inspiration, you can add to it,” Will.i.am says. “When it comes out, there’ll be 12 songs on it, but the next day there could be 100 songs, 50 sketches, 1,000 blogs all online around the ‘END,’ so the energy really, truly never dies.” He describes the music as “a lot of dance stuff, real melodic, electronic, soulful. We call it, like, ‘electric static funk,’ something like that.” He continues, “These beats break away from the concept of an album. What is an album when you put 12 songs on iTunes and people can pick at it like scabs?”

FLIGHT OF THE CONCHORDS
TBA (SUB POP, APRIL 14)
The New Zealand duo, whose bumbling adventures in life and the music business are at the heart of its self-titled HBO show, has emerged as one of the biggest success stories in comedy in the past two years. Its 2007 Sub Pop debut “EP The Distant Future” won a Grammy Award for best comedy album; its 2008 self-titled full-length has sold 239,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan, and is up for a Grammy in the same category. Songs from its sophomore album are rolling out through iTunes a day after each episode and will be bundled there with five extra cuts. “More than one of them leans on a ‘70s soul sound,” Sub Pop head of A&R Tony Kiewel says. “I’ve also heard this choir-like sort of thing, a Meat Loaf sort of thing and a crazy top 40-type jam.”

DOVES
TBA (ASTRALWORLKS, APRIL)
U.K. rock act Doves is back amid the friendly confines of Astralworlks for the North American release of its fourth album. After issuing its 2000 debut “Lost Souls” on Astralworsks, the band’s last two albums came out on Capitol statewide. The new set is led by the single “Kingdom of Rust,” which frontman James Goodwin describes as “really expansive with a wistful melody. It’s quite emotional.” Also due to make the final cut on the follow-up to 2005’s “Some Cities” is the Kraftwerk-inspired “petsteam,” “a nod to our electronic past” sung by guitarist Jez Williams: “The Outsiders,” which has a “pierdriver baseline and a Can-like backbeat”; and “Winter Hill,” a vaguely country rock-esque tune.

BOOKER T. JONES
“POTATO HOLE” (ANTI, APRIL)
For his Anti-debut and first solo set since the ’80s, this 66-year-old soul man enlisted the Drive-By Truckers as his backing band for an album of all-new instrumentals. “In the public’s mind, it’s going to be a new sound for me,” he says. “In my mind it’s not. I’ve loved rock for a long time— in the ’60s I wrote a few ‘rock’ songs for Otis Redding and Eddie Floyd, but it was too soon for us to be doing that kind of music.” Neil Young handles lead guitar duties throughout, and the 10-song set includes covers of OrlKast’s “Hey Ya” and Tim Wains “Get Behind the Muse.”

GREEN DAY
TBA (WARNER BROS, SPRING)
The punk trio’s 2004 album “American Idiot” was one of the biggest left-field smashes of the past decade, selling more than 5.8 million U.S. copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. But before getting down to business on the follow-up, the band members quarreled as garage rockers Fobolos Hot Tubs and played small club gigs to get the rust off. It quickly shifted into high-concept mode, dividing new songs into three tentatively titled acts: “Heroes and Cons,” “Cartalians and Saints” and “Horses and Handgrenades.” According to Alternative Press, characters like Gloria and Christian appear throughout the narrative, while songs like the Clash-ish “Know Your Enemy” and the ballad “Last Night on Earth” and the bristling “Before the Lobotomy” should not only sate old fans but usher in new ones.
JAY-Z
TBA (DEF JAM, SPRING)
Jay-Z’s final album with Def Jam before he begins recording for Live Nation has already generated a hit with the M.I.A.-sampling “Swagga Like Us,” a duet with T.I. featuring Kanye West and Lil Wayne. A “part two” of the song is expected to be a similarly all-star affair, with contributions from André 3000, Nas and Young Jeezy. Other tracks tipped to appear on the as-yet-untitled album are the Santana-gold collaboration “Brooklyn Go Hard” and two West-produced cuts: “Jokin’ Jay-Z” (which samples Run-D.M.C.’s “Dumb Girl”) and “We Made History.”

CLIPSE
“TILL THE CASKET DROPS” (COLUMBIA, SPRING)
The Virginia-based hip-hop duo taps a slew of new producers for its third studio album and Columbia debut, including Swizz Beatz, Khalif and Sean C&D L.V. But the sibling rappers also teamed with longtime collaborator Pharrell Williams on the set and promise that overall, not much has changed. “The title comes from us continuing to do what we do till the wheels fall off,” Pusha T says. “We still have infectious beats and East Coast boom-bap shit that cater to what the Clipse fans love.” Supporting that claim are songs like “Never Will It Stop,” featuring Re-Up Gang’s Al Liva, and “Kinda Like A Big Deal,” with a guest appearance by Kanye West.

SILVERSUM PICKUPS
“SWOON” (DANGEROUS, SPRING)
“Some guitar magazine said about us: ‘They’re pretty cool, but they’re too dreamy for us.’ We were pretty proud of how we smeared things. Even vocally, you might think I’m a girl sometimes. On this record, we went for those times.” That’s how Silversum Pickups frontman Brian Aubert describes the follow-up to the Los Angeles band’s 2006 breakthrough, “Caravans.” Look for tracks like “The Royal We,” “ Panic Swrm,” “Walking Bird” and “Growing Old Is Getting Old,” plus a 16-piece string section on select cuts.

YUSUF
TBA (UNIVERSAL, SPRING)
The former Cat Stevens follows up 2006’s “An Other Cup,” his first secular album in 28 years, with a set that recalls his straightforward troubadour days. “This one was really a result of me writing a lot of songs and being kind of inspired again,” says Yusuf. “After I recorded [‘Cup’], people just wanted to hear me do a lot of simple stuff, just with the guitar.” The single “Boots & Sand” features Paul McCartney and Dolly Parton — with a video shot by Jesse Dylan, son of Bob — while Michelle Branch and Gunnar Nelson assist on the track “To Be What You Must.”

CHAMILLIONAIRE
“VENOM” (UNIVERSAL, SPRING)
It’s no more Mr. Nice Guy for Chamillionaire, who says his third studio album was inspired by the titular “Spider-Man” villain. “Spider-Man wanted to save the world, but only when the bad guy came out did people start paying attention,” the Houston rapper says. “People have this friendly image of me, but I was just waiting for my bad guy to come out.” The album is led by the single “Creepin’ (Solo)” featuring Lu-dacris, where Chamillionaire expresses distrust toward those around him, and takes some shots at the industry on “You’re Famous.” Scarface and the late Limp Cref set make to appearances.

THE CRYSTAL METHOD
“DIVIDED BY NIGHT” (TINY E, SPRING)
The output of electronic duo the Crystal Method is best described by the title of its last artist album, 2004’s “Legion of Boom.” But Scott Kirkland and Ken Jordan are taking a less bombastic, more nuanced approach here. “We were looking to work with people we hadn’t worked with before and take our time to really flesh out a track rather than be satisfied with making an instrument,” Kirkland says. “Night” features song-based collaborations with She Wants Revenge’s Justin Warfield, Los Angeles singer-songwriter Meiko (the memorably elegant “Fallin’ Hard”), New Order’s Peter Hook and Matisyahu, who provides vocals on the first single “Drown in the Now.”

TAKING BACK SUNDAY
“NEW AGAIN” (WARNER BROS., SPRING)
There’s a feeling of rebirth on “New Again,” according to vocalist Adam Lazzara. “It was unconscious, but there’s a whole lyrical theme of reentering on the record.” “New Again” includes influences from all over the spectrum: “Winter Dance” was influenced by a relaxed “Hall & Oates or Sade feel, like the last slow dance at an eighth grade dance.” “Everyday Must Go” features a prog guitar lick, “something we would’ve never done before” [Fazzy]. And throughout, Lazzara tried to inject a “little more soul .. like Al Green” to his vocal takes.

ISIS
“THE WAVERING RADIANT” (PEACEMARKS, SPRING)
Vocalist/guitarist Aaron Turner says doom rock outfit Isis’ upcoming album is “perhaps a little more orchestral in feel” than its four predecessors. “There’s more layers going on and more interplay between the instruments rather than layering of parts,” he says. With band members no longer scattered between U.S. coasts, Isis was able to “work out some of the more subtle aspects of the songs before we hit the studio. In the past I think some of the recordings were a little too clean in their final form.” There was everything about the energy that seemed to be lacking. This one seems to feel more like us than anything else.”

ALLEN TOUSSAINT
“THE BRIGHT MISSISSIPPI” (NONESUCH, SPRING)
Allen Toussaint teams with producer Joe Henry on this album of “old standards,” which include “St. James Infirmary” and “Just A Closer Walk With Thee.” Duke Ellington’s “Solitude,” Thelonious Monk’s “Bright Mississippi,” Django Reinhardt’s “Blue Drag” and “West End Blues,” which was popularized by Louis Armstrong. Toussaint plays piano throughout the album but is joined by Brad Mehldau on Jelly Roll Morton’s “Winin’ Boy Blues,” while Josh Redman plays tenor saxophone on Ellington’s “Day Dream.” Toussaint says of Henry, “He came up with a direction I never would have chosen, but I’m so glad he did.”

JONAS BROTHERS
TBA (HOLLYWOOD, JUNE 16)
Not even a year after their platinum-plus latest album, “A Little Bit Longer,” Jonas Brothers will be back this summer with another new release. There aren’t substantive details just yet, but Chris Brown told Billboard he’s already done two songs with the siblings, which could add some R&B pizzazz to the Jonas’ shiny pop-rock sound. Still, we’ve got something the band has never done before. “When we’re writ-ing together, we’re really open to each other’s ideas, which I think is really important when you’re writing songs,” Nick Jonas says. “No one can be closed-minded, because then nothing is going to work. For us, it’s really just one of our passions. It’s kind of our roots.”

WILCO
TBA (NONESUCH, SUMMER)
After opting for a highly performance-oriented recording approach on 2007’s “Sky Blue Sky,” frontman Jeff Tweedy expects Wilco will “allow ourselves a little bit more leeway in terms of sculpting the sound in the studio and pushing the envelope, the edge of possible.”

SONIC YOUTH
TBA (MATADOR, SUMMER)
Thurston Moore promises “heavy ass double albums” and a tour on Sonic Youth’s Matador debut. “No Way,” the first song we recorded, has a total Wipers vibe, if the Wipers were a no wave band,” he says. The lyrics have been inspired by black metal bands, although Moore promises not to mimic their delivery. Other tracks include “Leaky Life Boat,” which comprises being alive to being in a sinking ship,” and “ Burning Shame,” a tribute to the late Fred “Sonic” Smith. “We’re super inspired to make a fresh start,” Moore says. “We’re glad to be dealing with a label that loves songs.” Beyond that, not much has changed. “It’s rock-centric, but still experimental,” Moore says. “We’re still Sonic Youth. I still don’t know how to play the guitar.”

PARAMORE
TBA (FUELED BY RAMEN/ATLANTIC, SUMMER)
Paramore used sound checks to shape material for the follow-up to its platinum 2007 sophomore album “Riot.” According to guitarist Josh Farro, the new songs are a varied bunch. “I can just see it having more dynamics,” he says. “The first record [2005’s “All We Know Is Falling’] and ‘Riot’ seemed to stay at the same level, but now we’ve got some really, really mellow songs that we kind of expect to hear out of our band, and then we’ve got even heavier songs than we’ve ever had.”

BUILT TO SPILL
TBA (WARNER BROS., SUMMER)
The latest from these Idaho guitar singers will be a mix between newly penned material and retooled tracks considered but ultimately dropped from 2006’s “You in Reverse.” Guitarist Doug Mallea says, “we’ve written more collaborative than ever, owing to the fact that the band is recording to Pro Tools rather than analog tape. “You have endless tracks, so [all three guitarists] can be in a room together and do five takes,” he says, adding, “Then, hopefully somebody can go through it and find out what’s good.” Martsch expects songs like “Nowhere Lullaby,” “Done” and “Good Old Boredom” to make the cut, while “Planting Seeds” reminds me of a Tom Petty song or something, but it probably doesn’t sound anything like that.”

GOOD CHARLOTTE
“CARDIOLOGY” (EPIC, SUMMER)
Madden and company are working on “probably the most Good Charlotte record we’ve ever written”—but the work so far reminds him in spirit of a different band. “I’ve been missing what Blink-182 brought to the world,” he says. “That, hopefully somebody can get through it and find out what’s good.” Martsch expects songs like “Anywhere” and “Dance” and “Good Old Boredom” to make the cut, while “Planting Seeds” reminds me of a Tom Petty song or something, but it probably doesn’t sound anything like that.”

www.americanradiohistory.com
MICHELLE BRANCH "EVERYTHING COMES AND GOES" (WARNER BROS, NASHVILLE, SUMMER)

On her next solo album, Branch stays on the country path she began with the Wreckers, the duo she formed with Jessica Harp. The artist's first solo set since 2003's 'Hotel Paper' sounds "like a natural progression from the Wreckers," she says. "It's more singer-songwriter driven than ever, but I think the term 'country' is all relative now. There's really no room for singer-songwriters anymore at radio, so I think this is a natural step." Dwight Yookam duets with Branch on "Long Goodbye."
New ‘Day’ Dawns
Julian Drive Makes Good On Talent Search Win

In recent years, talent competitions from “American Idol” to“Nashville Star” have become key A&R avenues that have launched many successful acts. For Georgia pop/rock outfit Julian Drive, a Christian artist talent search provided the vehicle that enabled the band members to give up their day jobs and set the stage for “My Coming Day,” due Jan. 27 on Inpop Records.

The group won 2004’s Exciting Him Christian talent search while still performing under its previous name, Refuge. “It gave us confidence and opened enough doors to increase our bookings,” lead vocalist Shane Bowers says. It gained the band a deal with Daywind Records, known as a powerhouse in the Southern gospel arena, but less equipped to drive a pop/rock band up the charts. So despite critical acclaim, Julian Drive’s first album didn’t set radio on fire. It did, however, pave the way for the band to connect with Lynn Nichols (Swintoch, Phil Reagge), who produced its new disc and introduced the band to Inpop, a scrappy independent founded in 1999 by Newboys frontman Peter Furler, manager Wes Campbell and label president Dale Bray.

“With this new record, we have matured and are more focused,” Bowers says of the project he recorded with bandmates Shaun Bennett (keyboards), Jesse Triplett (guitar) and James Nix (bass). “Because of my voice and my background, it is rock worship with a bit of country twang.”

“My Coming Day” also includes an affecting cover of Hoobastank’s “The Reason.” Prior to signing with Inpop, the band had intended to release “My Coming Day” independently and started selling copies at its shows. Inpop director of marketing Stacia Katenberg-Hsu says the label has been educating fans that this is a new version. “We had to do a few interesting things to make them feel like they need to buy this album again in its new Inpop incarnation,” she says. “There’s new mixing, new masters and new packaging.”

Katenberg-Hsu says the label is utilizing street teams to help spread the word. “We have a really great street team called the Inpopazzz,” she says. “It is a team of about 5,000 people from all across the country and we have been prepping them ever since we first signed Julian Drive. We had Julian Drive play our showcase during Gospel Music Assoc. Week and had all of our regional street team members come to that, just to really introduce them and to get them excited. Then we have been sending out tools for them to use on their Facebooks and MySpaces, and we are offering free downloads to introduce the band to potential new fans.”

The band’s heavy tour schedule has also been helpful in promoting the new record. “They never stop. They are a touring machine and always have been, which is one thing that attracted us to them,” Katenberg-Hsu says. “They are going to be taking out one of our other bands—Article One—with them on tour this spring.”

Bowers says that for Julian Drive, it’s all about spreading an important message. “If you look at the lyrics to a lot of the songs, they come back to that central theme that no matter how bad things get for us, there is always a real God that brings you through real problems,” he says. “You are really never alone when you believe.”
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GaGa’s ‘Dance’ Dance Revolution; ‘Idol’ Returns

While January may be light on major new releases, the Billboard 200 often has startling chart moves from new and developing artists.

A year ago this week, Sara Bareilles’ “Little Voice” vaulted from No. 31 to No. 18—a then-new high—on its way to No. 7 peak in the spring. And two years ago, Robin Thicke’s still growing “The Evolution of Robin Thicke” zipped 35-16 with a 58% increase in sales thanks partially to a performance on CBS’ “Early Show.”

This week is no exception, as a number of breaking acts make nice moves.

Most notably, Lady GaGa’s “The Fame” flies from No. 26 to No. 14 with 21,000 copies (despite a 7% sales decrease), giving the new artist her highest rank yet on the chart. With overall album volume down 27% this week, small increases and even relatively minor drops translate into big leaps up the Billboard 200.

“The Fame,” which was released Oct. 28, 2008, is supported by the radio hit “Just Dance” and comes with a consumer-friendly list price of $9.99.

Lady GaGa first hit a Billboard chart when “Just Dance” debuted—naturally—on the May 3 Hot Dance Club Play tally. The tune hit the Dance Radio Airplay list May 24 but didn’t reach the Hot 100 Airplay chart until Nov. 15.

With radio support for “Dance” continuing to increase (the track rises to No. 4 on Hot 100 Airplay this week) and digital sales staying strong, the single held at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 for a second frame. “The Fame” also benefits from Lady GaGa’s performance of “Just Dance” on the Jan. 8 edition of NBC’s “The Tonight Show With Jay Leno,” as well as a $9.99 sale tag at Target. Additionally, both Amazon’s and iTunes’ MP3 services are selling the set for just $7.99.


The songwriter/producer/singer (and former Billboard staffer) has co-written Billboard Hot 100 hits for Christina Aguilera, Hilary Duff, Jonas Brothers, Pink and the first “Idol” winner Kelly Clarkson.

Speaking of Clarkson, her new single “My Life Would Suck Without You,” the first offering from her fourth album “All I Ever Wanted,” was released to radio Jan. 13 as well. Nice timing.

Clarkson has racked up 9.5 million in total U.S. albums sales and 10.1 million in digital song downloads, according to Nielsen SoundScan, through Jan. 4.

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Market Watch

Weekly Unit Sales

Weekly Album Sales (Million Units)

Year-To-Date

Rolling Stone

Sales By Store Type

Year-To-Date Album Sales

Sales By Album Format

New Double

Digital Tracks Sales

Sales by Category

Chain

Hot Mashed Pop

Hot Country

Hot Digital

Hot R&B/Hip-Hop

Hot Latin

Hot Rap

Hot Tastemakers

Over The Counter

Keith Caulfield

Market Watch

Weekly National Music Sales Report

Chart Beat

ELVIS EXCITES

NINE IN A ROW

HOT MASHED POP

CHART WEEKLY

WEEKS AND COUNTING: Taylor Swift’s “Fearless” is No. 1 again on the big chart for a sixth week (72,000, down 20%). It is the longest reign for a No. 1 album since 2005.

The last set to post as many weeks atop the list was 50 Cent’s “The Massacre,” which spent its first six frames on the tally parked in the penthouse.

Swift is the first woman to rack six weeks at No. 1 since Norah Jones did so with “Feels Like Home” in early 2004.

Go to www.billboard.com for complete chart data | 33
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTIST</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label</th>
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**SALES DATA**

### 158

*An $8.99 sale* at Target enables this album's re-entry and its boost rank on the tally since November.*

### 152

The digital mixtape from *Pussycat Dolls* and *Katy Perry's* *Pink's* "So Undeniable" was briefly available through iTunes, but it has since been removed from the service. It sold slightly more than 3,000.

The September release reaches big chart for the first time, despite a 23% drop in sales. The band's winter tour begins Feb. 10 in Minneapolis.
Nickelback breaks the record for most No. 1s in the 13-year history of the Adult: Top 40 radio airplay chart, as "Gotta Be Somebody" rises 2-1 (see page 46). The song is the group's fifth No. 1, breaking a tie with Matchbox Twenty. Sharing third place are Daughtry, Goo Goo Dolls and Santana, each with three.


—Gary Trust

Jazz pianist Breger Edgar visits Top Internet Albums for the first time thanks to a direct request: 71 campaign deeds testing "Immovable You" (No. 5) and "Will Take Romance" (No. 6) encourage 7,200 in sales for each title. The sets enter Top Jazz Catalog Albums this week at Nos. 6 and 7, respectively, as well.
HOT 100 AIRPLAY

1. "I'm Yours" by Jason Mraz
2. "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)" by Beyoncé ft. Alicia Keys, Mary J. Blige
3. "Hot n Cold" by Katy Perry
4. "Everything I Need" by Lifehouse ft. Joseph Augelli
5. "Chopped n' Skrewed" by I-DC

HOT DIGITAL SONGS

1. "Just Dance" by Lady Gaga
2. "Heartless" by Taylor Swift
3. "I'm Yours" by Jason Mraz
4. "Love Story" by Taylor Swift
5. "Disturbia" by Rihanna

ALBUM CHARTS

The Billboard Hot 200 chart is compiled based on album sales, track sales, and streaming activity. The chart is published weekly by Billboard magazine. The chart is based on data from Nielsen SoundScan's New Media Monitoring service, which tracks sales and streaming activity for the entire U.S. music market. The chart is updated on a weekly basis, with new releases appearing on the chart the week they are released.
### Billboard Charts - January 24, 2009

#### Top Music Videos

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<td>4. <strong>KATY PERRY</strong></td>
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#### Hot Video Clips

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<td><strong>Put On Ya</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Cold World</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Just Like Me</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Feel That Fire</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Sober</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Jamey Johnson</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Sugarland</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Brooks &amp; Dunn</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Lollipops</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Something in Your Mouth</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Lost</strong></td>
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Visit www.billboard.biz for complete chart data.
### HOT COUNTRY SONGS

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### TOP COUNTRY ALBUMS

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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Taylor Swift</td>
<td>Taylor Swift</td>
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<td>Rascal Flatts</td>
<td>Greatest Hits Volume 1</td>
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<td>Alan Jack</td>
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<td>Julianne Hough</td>
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<td>George Strait</td>
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<td>Good Time</td>
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<td>Miranda Lambert</td>
<td>Crazy Ex-Girlfriend</td>
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<td>Blake Shelton</td>
<td>Startin' Fires</td>
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<td>Robert Plant / Alison Krauss</td>
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<td>Tim McGraw</td>
<td>Greatest Hits: Limited Edition</td>
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**Weekly Update: January 24, 2009**  
For chart reprints call 646.654.4533  
Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data.
### HOT DANCE CLUB PLAY

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### HOT GOSPEL ALBUMS

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<td>PRAISE HIM NOW</td>
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Data for week of JANUARY 24, 2009 | For chart reprints call 646.654.4653
### Japan Albums

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*Source: Billboard*
The LARGEST SOURCE ENTERPRISES, INC. - Debtor

On January 29, 2009 at 1:00 p.m., in the offices of Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker LLP, 75 East 55th Street, New York, NY 10022 (Attention: Kristine Shryock), to execute the rights of Textron Financial Corporation, a Delaware corporation having an address at 40 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903, as the Secured Party (as defined in the Security Agreement and Note), each dated as of October 31, 2007 executed by Debtor in favor of Secured Party, and (ii) pursuant to Section 9-610 of Revised Article 9 of the Uniform Commercial Code, substantial representations, and agreements, will be offered for sale and sold at public auction with reserve in accordance with the terms of sale to be published at the auction.

THE SALE SHALL BE "AS IS, WHERE IS, WITH ALL FAULTS" WITHOUT EXPRESS OR IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY, QUALITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY OTHER EXPRESS OR IMPLIED WARRANTIES. THERE ARE NO WARRANTIES RELATING TO TITLE, POSSESSION, QUIET ENJOYMENT OR THE LIKE OR ANY OTHER MATTER IN THIS DISPOSITION, WHICH IN ANY WAY EXTEND BEYOND THE DESCRIPTION OF THE FACE HEREOF, AND NO REPRESENTATION OR WARRANTY IS OR WILL BE MADE AS TO ANY OF THE COLLATERAL.

Contact Kristine Shryock at Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker LLP, 75 East 55th Street, New York, NY 10022, telephone number (212) 115-6961 for terms of sale or additional information.

PUBLIC AUCTION

DEATH ROW RECORDS

115 Bankruptcy Court ordered sale of all tangible personal property including 300,000 CD's, entire contents of Executive offices, memorabilia, electric chair, Sunday Jan. 25th - 11 am 1930 W. Malvern Ave. Fullerton, Ca. Call for info & brochure KMC Auctioneers 714-666-8166

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Koch Records appoints rapper Jim Jones VP of urban A&R. He was director of A&R at Warner Music Group and is currently preparing his fourth solo album for Columbia Records.
J Records promotes Trevor Amir Jerideau to VP of A&R. He was senior director.

PUBLISHING: ASCAP names Nicole George assistant VP of membership business affairs. She will also run ASCAP's New York membership office. George was director of business and legal affairs at Zomba Label Group.
The U.S. Copyright Office promotes Marta A. Pallante to associate register for policy and international affairs. She was deputy general counsel.
BMG appoints Taviana Shabestari associate director of writer/publisher relations. She was a music assistant at Fox Sports.

TOURING: Live Nation appoints Steve Herman president of artist services. He was North American CEO at the Agency Group.

MEDIA: MTV and VH1 name Richard Gay executive VP of strategy and operations. He was head of strategy and business operations at VH1 and CMT.

LEGAL: Law firm Cozen O'Connor taps Lori Landew as a member in its business law department. She founded Landew Entertainment Business Associates.

ALKALINE TRIO FIGHTS SUICIDE
Depression and suicide are issues that Alkaline Trio frontman Matt Skiba and his bandmates have dealt with firsthand throughout the years.
"I've had friends die from suicide in the past, and it's a really tricky thing," Skiba says. "It's hard to understand what someone else is going through or why they would kill themselves."
So when organizers of the first Pick Up the Phone tour—which aims to raise awareness of suicide prevention and mental health issues—asked Alkaline Trio to participate in the outing, the rock act jumped at the opportunity.
"It's far too common for people to have suicidal thoughts and tendencies and to go through with it," Skiba says. "It definitely hits close to home and that's part of the reason we're doing this."
Also performing on the bill are Anberlin and Single File. The trek will visit college campuses beginning in April, with dates to be announced. Live performances from the tour will be available online through Synclive.com.

PICK UP THE PHONE: The first Pick Up the Phone tour, which began in March, will feature performances by Alkaline Trio, Anberlin and Single File. The tour aims to raise awareness of suicide prevention and mental health issues.

GOOD WORKS

METHOD TO HIS MADNESS

Tommy Lee is ready for a little mayhem—and not just with Mötley Crüe. The drummer—who kicks off the Crüe's Saints of Los Angeles tour Jan. 31 in Indio, Calif.—tells Track he's started work on his second Methods of Mayhem album, following up the group's platinum 1999 debut. DJ Aero and guitarist Kai Marcus are still on board, and Lee's producing partner Scott Humphrey "is starting to get involved" as the songs are forming.
"We're going to start tracking as soon as Mötley is done (touring) at the end of March, and hopefully I'll have it ready by April/May and done by the top of June," Lee says. "Lee says he wouldn't mind having Methods of Mayhem on the Crüe Fest II tour, which is slated to go out in July, "like [Mötley Crüe bassist] Nikki [SIXX] did with Sixx:A.M. last year. That'd be killer."

As for the rest of the Crüe Fest II lineup, Lee says it's still being discussed. "There's offers going around all over the place," he says. "We actually talked about that a little. Rob Zombie's name came up. Godsmack, Alice Cooper. I'd like to switch it up, add a little bit more variety this year. I think it'd be fun to inject that."

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