

# WOMEN IN MUSIC

# billboard

FEBRUARY 26, 2022 • BILLBOARD.COM

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## MADONNA

by Yam Karkai, co-founder of  
NFT collective World of Women,  
for a special *Billboard* NFT  
series depicting iconic  
women in music



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## CHRISTINA AGUILERA

by Yam Karkai, co-founder of  
NFT collective World of Women,  
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women in music



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## MARIAH CAREY

by Yam Karkai, co-founder of  
NFT collective World of Women,  
for a special *Billboard* NFT  
series depicting iconic  
women in music



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**Congratulations  
to Our 2022  
Women In Music Honorees**

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FEB. 26, 2022

VOLUME 134

NO. 2



Olivia Rodrigo photographed by David Needleman.

#### TO OUR READERS

*Billboard* will publish its next issue on March 12. For 24/7 music coverage, go to [billboard.com](http://billboard.com).

## Features

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### **BILLBOARD'S WOMAN OF THE YEAR: OLIVIA RODRIGO**

With the biggest hit of early 2021, the singer-songwriter was just getting started — and as she gears up to tour her rapturously received album *Sour*, she's already at work on new music.

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### **WOMEN IN MUSIC: THE ARTISTS**

For its annual celebration of top female talent, *Billboard* honors **Saweetie, Karol G, Bonnie Raitt, Doja Cat, Phoebe Bridgers, H.E.R., Summer Walker** and **Gabby Barrett**.

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### **WOMEN IN MUSIC: THE EXECUTIVES**

Reservoir Media CEO **Golnar Khosrowshahi**, the first female founder and chief executive of a publicly traded independent music company, leads this year's list of high-achieving women from every sector of the industry — including 12 Hall of Fame honorees.



SONY MUSIC GROUP CONGRATULATES OUR 2022 WOMEN IN MUSIC.

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The *Encanto* soundtrack and “We Don’t Talk About Bruno” combine for a Billboard 200 and Hot 100 command, respectively, last achieved nearly 30 years ago.

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Artists are eager to get back on the road, but personnel, trucks and stages are hard to find — will profits be in short supply as well?

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Reggae singer **Koffee** made Grammys history as a teen. Now, with a new record deal and full-length debut, she wants to move her genre forward.

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Executive producer **Jamee Ranta** on her critically acclaimed visuals for Justin Bieber, Halsey and more — and why she is now pursuing management.

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After topping *Billboard*’s four Latin genre charts, **Edgar Barrera** talks about his first decade in music and his new label venture with Sony Music.

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Singer-songwriter **Muni Long**’s breakthrough hit, “Hrs and Hrs,” is the result of years of hard work — and a career reinvention.

Phoebe Bridgers photographed by Sami Drasin on Oct. 12, 2021, at The Paramour Estate in Los Angeles.



# CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE.

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## A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

**W**OMEN IN MUSIC have made huge progress over the past year. Michelle Jubelirer became Capitol Music Group's first female CEO in the company's 80-year history. Sherrese Clarke Soares secured \$1 billion from private equity giant Apollo to acquire music and entertainment assets through her new investment group, HarbourView Equity Partners. And Golnar Khosrowshahi took her publishing firm, Reservoir Media, public, joining the rare ranks of female CEOs leading publicly traded companies in any sector. But despite these victories, women are still fighting for inclusion, representation, recognition and equal pay at the top of the music business, from recording studios to C-suites.

Could the metaverse be a more welcoming place?

As the music world scrambles to prepare for a virtual future, *Billboard* wanted to shine a light on efforts to ensure that future will be one of equality. So we decided to create a series of special covers for our annual Women in Music issue that showcase non-fungible tokens that *Billboard* commissioned to honor three iconic female singers: Madonna, Mariah Carey and Christina Aguilera.

To do so, we partnered with World of Women, a company co-founded and launched in July by NFT artist Yam Karkai aimed at welcoming women into the

digital collectible space, using inclusive and empowering imagery. Karkai's original collection of 10,000 diverse female avatars were initially priced at .07 ETH apiece, or about \$200 at the current exchange rate, but some have traded for hundreds of thousands of dollars on the secondary market, as celebrities from Eva Longoria to Reese Witherspoon have snapped them up and sported them as their own online avatars. The collection has generated over \$200 million in trading volume, and the company is now working to support women artists around the globe by promoting their digital art as well.

We're thrilled to introduce our own NFTs designed by Karkai, which will be auctioned on the NFT marketplace FTX later in March. Some of the proceeds will benefit nonprofit organizations of each cover star's choosing, and we'll fly the buyers of these NFTs to Los Angeles for our Women in Music celebration next year, where they will walk the red carpet alongside our star honorees.

We celebrate a broader array of game-changing, cutting-edge artists and executives than ever in this issue, like Doja Cat, Saweetie, Summer Walker, Bonnie Raitt, H.E.R., Phoebe Bridgers, Gabby Barrett, Karol G and our Woman of the Year, Olivia Rodrigo. We'll need their bold leadership just as much in the metaverse as we do in the world they've helped shape so far.



Hannah Karp  
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

On the covers: Aguilera, Madonna and Carey featured as World of Women illustrations and non-fungible tokens designed by Yam Karkai.  
This page: Madonna

*In Loving Memory*  
**Derek Tucker**

*December 3, 1967 – January 24, 2022*



*Courage is grace under pressure.*

*– Ernest Hemingway*

**AEG**  
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# charts

DATA FOR WEEK OF 2.26.2022

A still from Disney's *Encanto*.



## The Magic Is Strong: *Encanto*, 'Bruno' Continue Their Chart Commands

### BILLBOARD 200

1

*Encanto*  
Soundtrack

LAST WEEK

1

PEAK POSITION

1

WEEKS ON CHART

12

**T**HE *ENCANTO* soundtrack and breakout smash “We Don’t Talk About Bruno” combine for a respective Billboard 200 and Billboard Hot 100 double domination not achieved in nearly 30 years.

The Disney animated film soundtrack tops the Billboard 200 for a sixth week, and fifth in a row, while its biggest hit — by Carolina Gaitán, Mauro Castillo, Adassa, Rhenzy Feliz, Diane Guerrero, Stephanie Beatriz and the *Encanto* cast — leads the Hot 100 for a fourth week. *Encanto* and “Bruno” mark the first soundtrack and corresponding song to rule the respective rankings simultaneously for at least four weeks since Whitney Houston’s soundtrack to *The Bodyguard* and “I Will Always Love You” topped the lists for 12 weeks between December 1992 and February 1993.

Meanwhile, “Bruno” scores the longest Hot 100

reign ever for a song from a Disney movie, animated or live action. The song one-ups the three-week No. 1 run of “All for Love,” by Bryan Adams, Rod Stewart and Sting, from the live-action film *The Three Musketeers*, in January and February 1994.

The *Encanto* soundtrack earned 98,000 equivalent album units in the Feb. 11-17 tracking week, according to MRC Data. “Bruno” tallied 32.2 million U.S. streams and 6.5 million radio airplay audience impressions and sold 7,500 downloads.

Says Lin-Manuel Miranda, who wrote all eight *Encanto* songs that have hit the Hot 100, of “Bruno”: “It has been really amazing because ensemble numbers don’t usually get this kind of love.”

“The rollout began with a fantastic film, incredible music and a strong marketing campaign,” adds Disney Music Group president Ken Bunt. “It makes the process a lot of fun.”

—GARY TRUST AND KEITH CAULFIELD

# Hot 100

2 WKS AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title <small>PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)</small>	Artist <small>IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL</small>	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
		<b>#1 for 4 WEEKS</b>				
1	1	1	<b>We Don't Talk About Bruno</b> <small>L.M.MIRANDA,M.ELIZONDO (L.M.MIRANDA)</small>	Carolina Gaitan, Mauro Castillo, Adassa, Rhenzy Feliz, Diane Guerrero, Stephanie Beatriz & Encanto Cast <small>WALT DISNEY</small>	1	8
3	4	2	<b>Heat Waves</b> <small>D.BAYLEY (D.BAYLEY)</small>	Glass Animals <small>WOLF TONE/POLYDOR/REPUBLIC</small>	2	57
2	3	3	<b>Easy On Me</b> <small>G.KURSTIN (A.L.B.ADKINS,G.KURSTIN)</small>	Adele <small>COLUMBIA</small>	1	19
6	7	4	<b>abcdefu</b> <small>P.NAPPI (GAYLE,D.B.PITTENGER,S.DAVIS)</small>	GAYLE <small>ARTHOUSE/ATLANTIC</small>	4	13
4	5	5	<b>Stay</b> <small>CASHMERE CAT,O.FEDI,B.SLATKIN,C.PUTH (C.K.J.HOWARD,J.D.BIEBER,M.A.HOIBERG,O.FEDI,B.SLATKIN,C.PUTH,M.J.MULE,I.DEBONI,S.RAHMAN)</small>	The Kid LAROI & Justin Bieber <small>RAYMOND BRAUN/COLUMBIA/DEF JAM</small>	1	32
5	6	6	<b>Super Gremlin</b> <small>ATL JACOB (B.K.KAPRI,J.D.CANADY,M.A.TIMMERMANN)</small>	Kodak Black <small>SNIPER GANG/ATLANTIC</small>	5	15
7	8	7	<b>Shivers</b> <small>E.SHEERAN,STEVE MAC,FRED (E.C.SHEERAN,J.MCDAID,STEVE MAC,K.LAVELLE)</small>	Ed Sheeran <small>ATLANTIC</small>	4	23
12	9	8	<b>Ghost</b> <small>THE MONSTERS &amp; STRANGERZ,J.BELLION (J.D.BIEBER,J.D.BELLION,J.K.JOHNSON,S.JOHNSON,M.R.POLLACK)</small>	Justin Bieber <small>RAYMOND BRAUN/DEF JAM</small>	8	21
15	12	9	<b>Thats What I Want</b> <small>O.FEDI,B.SLATKIN,R.B.TEDDER,KBEAZY (M.L.HILL,O.FEDI,B.SLATKIN,R.B.TEDDER,K.C.BACH)</small>	Lil Nas X <small>COLUMBIA</small>	9	22
9	11	10	<b>Pushin P</b> <small>JUKE WONG,WHEEZY (S.G.KITCHENS,N.D.WILBURN,J.L.WILLIAMS,W.T.GLASS,L.DEPANTE)</small>	Gunna & Future Featuring Young Thug <small>GUNNA/YOUNG STONER LIFE/300</small>	7	6
8	10	11	<b>Surface Pressure</b> <small>L.M.MIRANDA,M.ELIZONDO (L.M.MIRANDA)</small>	Jessica Darrow <small>WALT DISNEY</small>	8	8
11	14	12	<b>Cold Heart (PNAU Remix)</b> <small>N.LITTLEMORE,P.MAYES,S.LITTLEMORE,C.THOMAS,G.DUDGEON (E.JOHN,B.J.P.TAUPIN,P.MAYES,N.LITTLEMORE,S.LITTLEMORE)</small>	Elton John & Dua Lipa <small>ROCKET/MERCURY/EMI/INTERSCOPE</small>	7	24
10	13	13	<b>Need To Know</b> <small>DR. LUKE (A.Z.DLAMINI,L.S.GOTTWALD)</small>	Doja Cat <small>KEMOSABE/RCA</small>	8	36
13	15	14	<b>Bad Habits</b> <small>FRED,J.MCDAID,E.SHEERAN (E.C.SHEERAN,F.J.P.GIBSON,J.MCDAID)</small>	Ed Sheeran <small>ATLANTIC</small>	2	34
HOT SHOT DEBUT		15	<b>MAMIII</b> <small>OVY ON THE DRUMS (R.M.GOMEZ,D.ECHAVARRIA OVIEDO,E.ROSE,KAROL G)</small>	Becky G X Karol G <small>KEMOSABE/RCA/SONY MUSIC LATIN</small>	15	1
17	17	16	<b>Levitating</b> <small>KOZ,S.D.PRICE (C.COFFEE JR.,S.KOZMENIUK,S.T.HUDSON,D.LIPA)</small>	Dua Lipa <small>WARNER</small>	2	67
14	16	17	<b>Industry Baby</b> <small>YE,TAKE A DAYTRIP,N.LEE (M.L.HILL,D.M.A.BAPTISTE,D.C.SNYDER,N.LEE,J.HARLOW,YE,M.WILLIAMS,R.CUBINAR,LENZO)</small>	Lil Nas X & Jack Harlow <small>COLUMBIA</small>	1	30
19	18	18	<b>Save Your Tears</b> <small>MAX MARTIN,O.T.HOLTER,THE WEEKND (A.TESFAYE,A.BALSHE,J.QUENNEVILLE,MAX MARTIN,O.T.HOLTER,A.GRANDE)</small>	The Weeknd & Ariana Grande <small>XO/REPUBLIC</small>	1	59
18	19	19	<b>Hrs And Hrs</b> <small>D.GRAHAM,R.TILLER (PRISCILLA RENE,T.HARRELL,H.AAABI,D.GRAHAM,J.N.ZIM,B.JOHN-BAPTISTE)</small>	Muni Long <small>SUPERGIANT</small>	16	8
NEW		20	<b>Bussin</b> <small>SWAGGYONO,DJ TIZZ (O.T.MARAJ-PETTY,D.A.JONES,J.GOODS,C.PALMER,R.BARNES GREER,T.GREENLEE)</small>	Nicki Minaj X Lil Baby <small>REPUBLIC</small>	20	1

Go to the Chart Beat section of [billboard.com](https://www.billboard.com) for complete charts coverage.



The 38-year-old Glennville, Ga., native's 11th Hot 100 entry also reaches a new No. 16 high on Country Airplay.

## 79 Cole Swindell (with Lainey Wilson) "Never Say Never"

### How did "Never Say Never" come together?

The last time I had a headlining tour [in 2018], the last show was in New Orleans. We bring songwriters out on the road — I think it helps with ideas to

watch the show and live in my world a little bit. [Co-writer] Jessi Alexander had "never say never with you" written in her phone, but I think [fellow co-writer] Chase McGill started playing that lick at the beginning. Little did we know it would be what it is now, but we always believed in the song.

### How did Lainey Wilson get involved?

When we wrote it, we knew it had to be a duet. Honestly, it was frustrating for a while. There are so many things people don't know about that go on to try to get somebody on a song, with the different labels and legal stuff. Me being a huge Lainey Wilson fan, her name popped up. I texted her, and that was the longest three and a half minutes of my life waiting for her to respond. I can feel that relief all over again just saying that story. This song obviously wouldn't be what it is without her.

### Why do you think collaborations are having a moment in country music?

I honestly don't understand why it took this long — in other genres, that's been happening for years. I don't think people realize what you have to go through to get another artist on a different label on a song. But now [there are] collaborations on everything. I've got another one with HARDY on my new album coming out [April 8]. I think it's opening doors to be able to work with other artists, and other genres, even. Having a different artist is a bigger appeal to fans.

—MELINDA NEWMAN

**Biggest Airplay Gain**

27

"Enemy"

Imagine Dragons X JID



**Biggest Streaming Gain**

33

"Til You Can't"

Cody Johnson



**Biggest Sales Gain**

85

"Numb Little Bug"

Em Beihold



SALES: CHRIS WILSON; AIRPLAY: CHRIS WILSON; STREAMING: CHRIS WILSON; CHARTS: CHRIS WILSON; PHOTO: CHRIS WILSON; STYLING: CHRIS WILSON; HAIR: CHRIS WILSON; MAKEUP: CHRIS WILSON; GROOMING: CHRIS WILSON; PROP STYLING: CHRIS WILSON; SET DESIGN: CHRIS WILSON; ART DIRECTION: CHRIS WILSON; PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRIS WILSON; VIDEOGRAPHY: CHRIS WILSON; DESIGN: CHRIS WILSON; ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS WILSON; TYPESETTING: CHRIS WILSON; PRINTING: CHRIS WILSON; DISTRIBUTION: CHRIS WILSON; PUBLICATION: CHRIS WILSON; ADVERTISING: CHRIS WILSON; SUBSCRIPTIONS: CHRIS WILSON; CIRCULATION: CHRIS WILSON; REPRODUCTION: CHRIS WILSON; PERMISSIONS: CHRIS WILSON; CONTACT: CHRIS WILSON; WEBSITE: CHRIS WILSON; SOCIAL MEDIA: CHRIS WILSON; MERCHANDISE: CHRIS WILSON; EVENTS: CHRIS WILSON; PARTNERSHIPS: CHRIS WILSON; SPONSORS: CHRIS WILSON; ADVERTISING: CHRIS WILSON; SUBSCRIPTIONS: CHRIS WILSON; CIRCULATION: CHRIS WILSON; REPRODUCTION: CHRIS WILSON; PERMISSIONS: CHRIS WILSON; CONTACT: CHRIS WILSON; WEBSITE: CHRIS WILSON; SOCIAL MEDIA: CHRIS WILSON; MERCHANDISE: CHRIS WILSON; EVENTS: CHRIS WILSON; PARTNERSHIPS: CHRIS WILSON; SPONSORS: CHRIS WILSON.

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Melvin "Mel" Miller is an American songwriter, producer, and entrepreneur. He is the Co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of Sipp Soul Entertainment, LLC. Mel is the owner of MEG Global a Technical and Media Firm as well. His music roots date back to the early 80s when his father had a collection of hundreds of records the foundation of a soulful home.



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## BILLBOARD 200

# 14



### Mary J. Blige *Good Morning Gorgeous*

Blige scores her 19th top 10 entry on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums after her newest studio album debuts at No. 9 on the chart. She has only missed the top 10 twice – with two remix projects – in her 21 total entries on the chart.

# 29



### Eddie Vedder *Earthling*

The set marks the Pearl Jam frontman's third solo top 40 entry on the Billboard 200. It also debuts at No. 1 on Top Album Sales and Top Rock Albums – his first solo leader on either chart.

# 46



### Jazmine Sullivan *Heaux Tales*

The album reenters following a reissue on Feb. 11 with 10 bonus tracks. Meanwhile, Bruno Mars' *24K Magic* (No. 75) returns and The Weeknd's *House of Balloons* (113) debuts after the release of new vinyl pressings.

# 8

### Eminem *Curtain Call: The Hits*



Super Bowl LVI leaves its mark on the Billboard 200 as 15 albums tied to halftime performers (and the songs performed) appear on the chart. The Feb. 13 show was headlined by Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Mary J. Blige, Eminem and Kendrick Lamar, with special guests 50 Cent and Anderson .Paak.

Leading the way are Eminem's *Curtain Call: The Hits* and Dr. Dre's *Dr. Dre — 2001*, surging 126-8 and 108-9, respectively. They earned 31,000 and 30,500 equivalent album units in the United States in the week ending Feb. 17 (up 256% and 220%), according to MRC Data. Other Eminem projects are scattered elsewhere on the chart at Nos. 100, 160 and 177, while Dre's *The Chronic* reenters at No. 91.

Blige (with an entry at No. 14), Snoop Dogg (104, 142), Lamar (17, 33, 132), 50 Cent (63), .Paak (50) and 2Pac (22) — thanks to Dre's performance of his feature on "California Love" — round out the rest of the big game's impact on the Billboard 200.

—KEITH CAULFIELD

# Billboard 200

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Artist IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
		<b>#1 for 6 WEEKS</b>				
1	1	<b>1</b>	<b>Soundtrack</b> WALT DISNEY	<b>Encanto</b>	1	12
3	2	<b>2</b>	<b>Gunna</b> GUNNA/YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/AG	<b>DS4EVER</b>	1	6
4	4	<b>3</b>	<b>Morgan Wallen</b> BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC	<b>Dangerous: The Double Album</b>	1	58
7	7	<b>4</b>	<b>Drake</b> OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	<b>Certified Lover Boy</b>	1	24
8	8	<b>5</b>	<b>The Weeknd</b> XO/REPUBLIC	<b>The Highlights</b>	2	53
9	10	<b>6</b>	<b>Doja Cat</b> KEMOSABE/RCA	<b>Planet Her</b>	2	34
6	9	<b>7</b>	<b>Adele</b> COLUMBIA	<b>30</b>	1	13
(101)	126	<b>8</b>	<b>GG</b> <b>Eminem</b> SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/JGA	<b>Curtain Call: The Hits</b>	1	568
133	(108)	<b>9</b>	<b>PS</b> <b>Dr. Dre</b> AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/UME	<b>Dr. Dre — 2001</b>	2	169
10	12	<b>10</b>	<b>Olivia Rodrigo</b> Geffen/JGA	<b>Sour</b>	1	39
(2)	6	<b>11</b>	<b>The Weeknd</b> XO/REPUBLIC	<b>Dawn FM</b>	2	6
17	20	<b>12</b>	<b>Ed Sheeran</b> ATLANTIC/AG	<b>=</b>	1	16
5	11	<b>13</b>	<b>YoungBoy Never Broke Again</b> NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ATLANTIC/AG	<b>Colors</b>	2	4
<b>HOT SHOT DEBUT</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>Mary J. Blige</b> MARY JANE/300/AG	<b>Good Morning Gorgeous</b>	14	1
11	13	<b>15</b>	<b>Taylor Swift</b> REPUBLIC	<b>Red (Taylor's Version)</b>	1	14
15	17	<b>16</b>	<b>Juice WRLD</b> GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/JGA	<b>Fighting Demons</b>	2	10
28	27	<b>17</b>	<b>Kendrick Lamar</b> TOP DAWG/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/JGA	<b>good kid, m.A.A.d city</b>	2	486
18	(18)	<b>18</b>	<b>Lil Baby</b> QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	<b>My Turn</b>	1	103
12	16	<b>19</b>	<b>Polo G</b> COLUMBIA	<b>Hall Of Fame</b>	1	36
37	40	<b>20</b>	<b>Kanye West</b> G.O.O.D./DEF JAM	<b>Donda</b>	1	25

THE BILLBOARD 200 RANKS THE MOST POPULAR ALBUMS OF THE WEEK, AS COMPILED BY MRC DATA. SALES DATA COMPILED BY MRC DATA. \*INCLUDES SALES OF ALBUMS AND STREAMING EQUIVALENT ALBUMS.



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GLOBAL 200

10

“The Joker and the Queen”

Ed Sheeran Featuring Taylor Swift

**THE CARDS REVEAL** good fortune for Ed Sheeran’s “The Joker and the Queen” as the ballad reenters the Billboard Global 200 and reaches the top 10 for the first time following the Feb. 10 arrival of its remix featuring Taylor Swift. (The song, originally a solo release by

Sheeran, spent one prior week on the chart, on Nov. 13, 2021, at No. 99, concurrent with the chart start of his album =.)

The track returns to the Global 200 with 31.1 million streams and 22,800 sold worldwide in the Feb. 11-17 tracking week, according to MRC Data. Sheeran scores his third top 10 on the chart, and Swift adds her fourth.

Meanwhile, “Stay Alive” by BTS’ Jung Kook debuts at No. 13 on the Global 200. On the Global Excl. U.S. chart, he earns his first solo top 10 as the song — co-written and co-produced by BTS’ Suga — soars in at No. 8 with 25.7 million streams and 30,400 sold outside the United States in its first week, following its Feb. 11 release.

As a group, BTS has scored seven top 10s on the chart — tied with Justin Bieber for the most so far — including an artist-leading five No. 1s.

Additionally, among BTS members’ solo performances, Jin hit No. 67 on Global Excl. U.S. in November with “Yours,” Suga reached No. 55 in December with “Girl of My Dreams” with Juice WRLD, and V jingled to No. 43 in January with “Christmas Tree.”

—GARY TRUST

Global 200							
2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART	
		<b>#1 for 3 WEEKS</b>					
1	1	1	<b>We Don't Talk About Bruno</b>	Carolina Gaitan, Mauro Castillo, Adassa, Rhenzy Feliz, Diane Guerrero, Stephanie Beatriz & Encanto Cast	1	8	
2	2	2	<b>abcdefu</b>	GAYLE	1	14	
3	3	3	<b>Heat Waves</b>	Glass Animals	3	59	
4	4	4	<b>Cold Heart (PNAU Remix)</b>	Elton John & Dua Lipa	3	27	
5	5	5	<b>Stay</b>	The Kid LAROI & Justin Bieber	1	32	
6	6	6	<b>Enemy</b>	Imagine Dragons X JID	6	16	
		<b>HOT SHOT DEBUT</b>	7	<b>MAMIII</b>	Becky G X Karol G	7	1
8	8	8	<b>Shivers</b>	Ed Sheeran	3	23	
7	9	9	<b>Easy On Me</b>	Adele	1	19	
		<b>RE-ENTRY</b>	10	<b>The Joker And The Queen</b>	Ed Sheeran Featuring Taylor Swift	10	2
11	12	11	<b>Bad Habits</b>	Ed Sheeran	1	34	
10	11	12	<b>Industry Baby</b>	Lil Nas X & Jack Harlow	2	30	
		<b>NEW</b>	13	<b>Stay Alive</b>	Jung Kook	13	1
9	10	14	<b>Surface Pressure</b>	Jessica Darrow	9	8	
13	14	15	<b>Save Your Tears</b>	The Weeknd & Ariana Grande	1	59	
-	167	16	<b>GG Still D.R.E.</b>	Dr. Dre Featuring Snoop Dogg	16	2	
12	13	17	<b>Pushin P</b>	Gunna & Future Featuring Young Thug	10	6	
15	17	18	<b>Pepas</b>	Farruko	7	31	
19	18	19	<b>Desesperados</b>	Rauw Alejandro & Chencho Corleone	18	9	
18	19	20	<b>Levitating</b>	Dua Lipa	2	72	

ZAKARY WALTERS

THE BILLBOARD GLOBAL 200 CHART RANKS THE TOP SONGS BASED ON STREAMING AND/OR SALES ACTIVITY FROM OVER 200 TERRITORIES AROUND THE WORLD, INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES. AS TRACKED BY MRC DATA, THE RANKING IS BASED ON A COMBINATION OF STREAMING AND SALES DATA FROM OVER 200 TERRITORIES. THE CHART IS A COMBINATION OF AUDIO AND VIDEO MUSIC SERVICES, PLUS DOWNLOAD SALES FROM TOP MUSIC RETAILERS ACROSS THE GLOBE. SEE CHARTS.LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2021 BILLBOARD MEDIA, LLC AND MRC DATA INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.





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Tool onstage at the 2017 Governors Ball in New York.



# TOOL TIME

**THE HARD-ROCK BAND GRABS THE TOP TOUR FOR JANUARY — DESPITE IT BEING THE LOWEST GROSS FOR A NO. 1 IN TWO YEARS**

**I**N THE WAKE OF YET ANOTHER COVID-19 surge — with the omicron variant leading to a massive spike in cases at the end of 2021 — artists, crews and audiences still prepared for a comeback year for live music. Leading the way early on is Tool: After starting its 2022 tour on Jan. 10 in Eugene, Ore., the hard-rock band earned \$13.8 million from 120,000 tickets sold in the month of January, according to figures reported to Billboard Boxscore.

Still, January is typically the slowest month of the year for artists on the road, as album and touring cycles taper off before Christmas and only gradually begin to return as February nears. This year was no exception, particularly with omicron cases not peaking until the middle of the month and leading to cancellations from Elton John, Dead & Company, Adele and others.

As a result, Tool's haul for January is the lowest gross for a No. 1 tour since *Billboard* launched its monthly touring charts in February 2019. The previous record-holder? Elton John's \$19.7 million take in January 2020. —ERIC FRANKENBERG

## Top Tours

	Artist	Gross	Total Attendees	No. of Shows
1	<b>Tool</b>	\$13,760,744	119,702	10
2	<b>Elton John</b>	\$10,083,402	69,206	5
3	<b>Reba McEntire</b>	\$9,856,105	87,445	9
4	<b>Kane Brown</b>	\$8,664,719	132,019	12
5	<b>Eric Church</b>	\$6,675,239	50,848	4
6	<b>Kacey Musgraves</b>	\$5,253,238	63,228	6
7	<b>Katy Perry</b>	\$4,880,014	23,470	6
8	<b>JoJo Siwa</b>	\$4,406,505	80,493	11
9	<b>ATEEZ</b>	\$3,913,806	37,285	4
10	<b>Strictly Come Dancing Live!</b>	\$1,611,404	23,589	5

## Top Boxscores

	Artist(s) VENUE DATE	Gross TICKET PRICES	Total Attendees NO. OF SHOWS	Promoter(s)
1	<b>Elton John</b> TOYOTA CENTER, HOUSTON JAN.21-22	\$4,243,554 \$249.50/\$69.50	25,951 2	AEG Presents
2	<b>Calibash</b> T-MOBILE ARENA, LAS VEGAS JAN.29	\$2,302,483 \$875.91/\$50.78	14,095 1	MGM Resorts International, SBS Entertainment
3	<b>ATEEZ</b> THE FORUM, INGLEWOOD, CALIF. JAN.30-31	\$2,178,720 \$205/\$145/\$105/\$65/\$45	19,868 2	MyMusicTaste
4	<b>Dia Nacional De La Banda</b> T-MOBILE ARENA, LAS VEGAS JAN.28	\$2,163,695 \$548.91/\$50.78	16,779 1	MGM Resorts International, SBS Entertainment
5	<b>Elton John</b> SIMMONS BANK ARENA, NORTH LITTLE ROCK, ARK. JAN.29	\$2,001,666 \$224.50/\$69.50	15,408 1	AEG Presents
6	<b>Eric Church</b> LITTLE CAESARS ARENA, DETROIT JAN.22	\$1,993,372 \$169/\$39	16,791 1	Messina Touring Group/AEG Presents
7	<b>Tool</b> TACOMA DOME, TACOMA, WASH. JAN.11	\$1,986,020 \$146/\$71	18,714 1	Monqui Presents
8	<b>Elton John</b> SMOOTHIE KING CENTER, NEW ORLEANS JAN.19	\$1,972,978 \$224.50/\$69.50	14,454 1	AEG Presents
9	<b>Elton John</b> PAYCOM CENTER, OKLAHOMA CITY JAN.30	\$1,865,204 \$224.50/\$69.50	13,393 1	AEG Presents
10	<b>Eric Church</b> DENNY SANFORD PREMIER CENTER, SIOUX FALLS, S.D. JAN.8	\$1,652,983 \$169/\$39	11,021 1	Messina Touring Group/AEG Presents

TAYLOR HILL/GETTY IMAGES

CONGRATULATIONS

# BILLBOARD WOMAN OF THE YEAR

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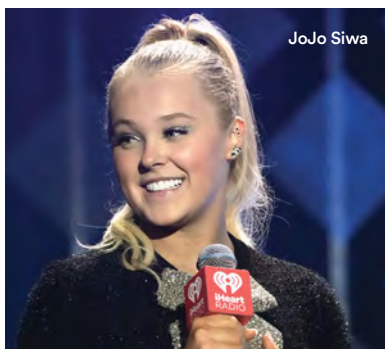
### Top Venues

#### 15,001 OR MORE CAPACITY

	Venue LOCATION	Total Gross	Total Attendees	No. of Shows
1	<b>Honda Center</b> ANAHEIM, CALIF.	\$6,863,834	26,009	2
2	<b>T-Mobile Arena</b> LAS VEGAS	\$5,975,588	44,306	3
3	<b>Toyota Center</b> HOUSTON	\$4,806,102	36,369	3
4	<b>Bridgestone Arena</b> NASHVILLE	\$3,858,591	53,959	6
5	<b>The Forum</b> INGLEWOOD, CALIF.	\$3,726,984	33,883	3
6	<b>Golden 1 Center</b> SACRAMENTO, CALIF.	\$3,599,095	64,774	10
7	<b>Prudential Center</b> NEWARK, N.J.	\$3,550,829	60,663	13
8	<b>Camping World Stadium</b> ORLANDO, FLA.	\$3,278,015	31,762	2
9	<b>Tacoma Dome</b> TACOMA, WASH.	\$3,031,799	54,520	14
10	<b>Simmons Bank Arena</b> NORTH LITTLE ROCK, ARK.	\$2,407,464	22,805	2



Kane Brown



JoJo Siwa

#### 10,001-15,000 CAPACITY

	Venue LOCATION	Total Gross	Total Attendees	No. of Shows
1	<b>Denny Sanford Premier Center</b> SIOUX FALLS, S.D.	\$2,789,158	20,752	2
2	<b>Van Andel Arena</b> GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.	\$2,378,677	27,011	4
3	<b>Gas South Arena</b> DULUTH, GA.	\$1,278,781	9,827	1
4	<b>Maverik Center</b> WEST VALLEY CITY, UTAH	\$1,141,681	9,481	1
5	<b>Bon Secours Wellness Arena</b> GREENVILLE, S.C.	\$1,134,729	10,699	1
6	<b>Ford Center</b> EVANSVILLE, IND.	\$981,440	8,948	1
7	<b>Resch Center</b> GREEN BAY, WIS.	\$869,636	7,250	1
8	<b>Utilita Arena</b> NEWCASTLE, ENGLAND	\$864,683	12,778	3
9	<b>Atlantic City Boardwalk Hall</b> ATLANTIC CITY, N.J.	\$834,754	11,649	3
10	<b>First Direct Arena</b> LEEDS, ENGLAND	\$746,721	10,811	2



Kacey Musgraves

#### 5,001-10,000 CAPACITY

	Venue LOCATION	Total Gross	Total Attendees	No. of Shows
1	<b>Texas Trust CU Theatre</b> GRAND PRAIRIE, TEXAS	\$2,042,458	30,246	6
2	<b>Mohegan Sun Arena</b> UNCASVILLE, CONN.	\$1,109,756	24,343	5
3	<b>Huntington Center</b> TOLEDO, OHIO	\$901,606	7,220	1
4	<b>Broadmoor World Arena</b> COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO.	\$883,212	6,940	1
5	<b>Hard Rock Live At Seminole Hard Rock Hotel &amp; Casino</b> HOLLYWOOD, FLA.	\$848,569	4,895	2
6	<b>Propst Arena</b> HUNTSVILLE, ALA.	\$782,731	6,534	1
7	<b>Bill Graham Civic Auditorium</b> SAN FRANCISCO	\$652,939	11,180	3
8	<b>Dolby Live</b> LAS VEGAS	\$614,980	6,594	2
9	<b>Radio City Music Hall</b> NEW YORK	\$608,849	4,919	1
10	<b>The Anthem</b> WASHINGTON, D.C.	\$582,025	8,334	3

#### 5,000 OR LESS CAPACITY

	Venue LOCATION	Total Gross	Total Attendees	No. of Shows
1	<b>Resorts World Theatre</b> LAS VEGAS	\$4,880,014	23,470	6
2	<b>Encore Theater At Wynn Hotel</b> LAS VEGAS	\$1,894,910	12,620	10
3	<b>Chicago Theatre</b> CHICAGO	\$1,858,109	28,832	9
4	<b>Orpheum Theatre</b> MINNEAPOLIS	\$1,787,782	23,575	13
5	<b>DeVos Performance Hall</b> GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.	\$1,314,740	20,052	13
6	<b>Teatro Telcel</b> MEXICO CITY	\$1,170,808	21,249	21
7	<b>Durham Performing Arts Center</b> DURHAM, N.C.	\$1,149,097	19,527	9
8	<b>Ruth Eckerd Hall</b> CLEARWATER, FLA.	\$1,007,545	18,168	14
9	<b>The Mission Ballroom</b> DENVER	\$652,483	18,036	6
10	<b>Warfield Theatre</b> SAN FRANCISCO	\$583,764	11,443	7

MUSGRAVES: JASON MERRITT/WIREIMAGE.COM; BROWN: TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES; SIWA: JEFF KRANTZ/GETTY IMAGES

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## HOT COUNTRY SONGS



NO. 1

### Johnson's First No. 1

Cody Johnson earns his first Hot Country Songs chart-topper with “ ‘Til You Can’t.” Sparking its coronation — from No. 6 — the song surged by 21% to 8.4 million streams in the week ending Feb. 17, according to MRC Data, as it jumps 7-2 on Country Streaming Songs. It leads Country Digital Song Sales for a second week (3,900 sold) and rises 10-8 on Country Airplay (17.1 million impressions, up 7%).

“I’m so excited to see the ripples that this song has created,” Johnson says of the Matt Rogers and Ben Stennis co-write. “ ‘Til You Can’t” serves as the lead single from Johnson’s *Human: The Double Album*, which arrived at its No. 3 high on Top Country Albums last October — his fourth top 10 entry on the chart. The track “has such a positive message, and it’s so much fun to sing,” he says. “After playing music for almost 15 years, I’m still taken back by the power of a good country song.” —JIM ASKER

Hot Country Songs				
LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title <small>IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL</small>	Artist	WKS. ON CHART
6	1	<b>#1 for 1 WEEK</b> <b>STM</b> <b>‘Til You Can’t</b> <small>COJO/WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN</small>	Cody Johnson	22
4	2	<b>Sand In My Boots</b> <small>REPUBLIC/BIG LOUD</small>	Morgan Wallen	53
2	3	<b>Buy Dirt</b> <small>MCA NASHVILLE</small>	Jordan Davis Featuring Luke Bryan	39
3	4	<b>Fancy Like</b> <small>MONUMENT</small>	Walker Hayes	36
1	5	<b>You Should Probably Leave</b> <small>MERCURY NASHVILLE</small>	Chris Stapleton	47
7	6	<b>To Be Loved By You</b> <small>MCA NASHVILLE</small>	Parker McCollum	35
8	7	<b>Thinking ‘Bout You</b> <small>BROKEN BOW</small>	Dustin Lynch Featuring Lauren Alaina Or MacKenzie Porter	35
9	8	<b>If I Didn’t Love You</b> <small>MACON/CAPITOL NASHVILLE/BROKEN BOW</small>	Jason Aldean & Carrie Underwood	30
10	9	<b>One Mississippi</b> <small>RCA NASHVILLE</small>	Kane Brown	26
14	10	<b>23</b> <small>MCA NASHVILLE</small>	Sam Hunt	23

## HOT LATIN SONGS



NO. 1

### The Gs Take Over

Becky G (above left) and Karol G (above right) debut atop Hot Latin Songs with “MAMIII,” their first collaboration. Becky G, who made her chart debut in 2014, secures her first No. 1 on the all-metric list, while Karol G scores her fourth.

The Ovy on the Drums-produced single was released Feb. 10 (the final day of the previous tracking week) and debuts mostly on the strength of streaming activity. It generated 17.3 million streams in the United States in the week ending Feb. 17, according to MRC Data. It arrives at No. 5 on the overall Streaming Songs chart and No. 1 on Latin Streaming Songs. It also leads Latin Digital Song Sales with 6,600 downloads sold.

“MAMIII” takes Becky G and Karol G to new heights on the all-genre Billboard Hot 100 with a No. 15 debut — both artists’ highest-charting song.

—PAMELA BUSTIOS

Hot Latin Songs				
LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title <small>IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL</small>	Artist	WKS. ON CHART
HOT SHOT DEBUT	1	<b>#1 for 1 WEEK</b> <b>MAMIII</b> <small>KEMOSABE/RCA/SONY MUSIC LATIN</small>	Becky G X Karol G	1
1	2	<b>Pepas</b> <small>CARBON FIBER/SONY MUSIC LATIN</small>	Farruko	33
4	3	<b>Dos Oruguitas</b> <small>WALT DISNEY</small>	Sebastian Yatra	8
2	4	<b>Dakiti</b> <small>RIMAS</small>	Bad Bunny & Jhay Cortez	68
3	5	<b>STM</b> <b>Yonaguni</b> <small>RIMAS</small>	Bad Bunny	37
5	6	<b>Volvi</b> <small>RIMAS</small>	Aventura x Bad Bunny	29
8	7	<b>Lo Siento BB! /</b> <small>NEONIG</small>	Tainy, Bad Bunny & Julieta Venegas	20
6	8	<b>Todo de Ti</b> <small>DUARS/SONY MUSIC LATIN</small>	Rauw Alejandro	39
7	9	<b>Colombia, Mi Encanto</b> <small>WALT DISNEY</small>	Carlos Vives	8
9	10	<b>Desesperados</b> <small>DUARS/SONY MUSIC LATIN</small>	Rauw Alejandro & Chenchó Corleone	10

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*WOMAN OF THE YEAR*

KAROL G  
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# market

PG. 32 INFLATION'S IMPACT ON MERCH AND VINYL

PG. 34 PUBLISHERS QUARTERLY

PG. 36 BRAZIL COMBATS FAKE STREAMS

MUSIC AND MONEY



## Rough Road Ahead For Tour Managers

Artists are eager to get back on the road, but personnel, trucks and stages are hard to find — will profits be in short supply as well?

BY STEVE KNOPPER // ILLUSTRATION BY KYLE ELLINGSON

**T**O PLAN Dashboard Confessional's 2022 tour with Jimmy Eat World, which begins Feb. 27, the veteran emo band's tour manager, Jack Funk, started making calls in late December to fill two buses with 12 musicians and hire a production crew. Even at the last minute, this process was, in normal times, routine.

Not this year.

"It's a nightmare," he says. "I started talking to people: This guy's busy, this guy's busy. Everybody wants money. And rightfully so — they're in demand. But we're not Bon Jovi. We can't afford it."

In late January, with barely enough time left before the tour started, Funk found the final crew member, a front-of-house engineer. "It's really stressful," he says.

For touring stars, venues and promoters, everything is anxious in 2022. The pandemic seems to be abating, which means everyone wants to be on the road after two disturbing years of canceled dates and up-and-down revenue. Live Nation reports more shows this month than any previous February in the company's history, and the "overall concert pipeline" this year is outpacing 2019.

But abruptly shutting down the multibillion-

dollar touring industry, then restarting it after two years, turns out to be a complicated process. Tour and production managers, as well as promoters, are contending with the same personnel and supply-chain problems afflicting industries from clothing to food. Experienced riggers, stagehands, truck drivers and catering crews have found jobs elsewhere over the past 24 months; the delays that cause supermarket shelves to run out of chicken or popcorn is murder on a business that needs replacement parts for tour bus engines in the middle of nowhere at 2 a.m.

"Every band wants to go back to work, so you need more people, you need more drivers, you need more lighting crews," says Jake Berry, a longtime production manager for shows from U2 to J Balvin's arena tour beginning April 19. "That's not there, so you've got to find them." Adds Corrie Martin, a Wasserman Music agent who represents Imagine Dragons, Rise Against and Riot Fest: "Things that would take 24 hours before are taking two to three weeks."

Barring new variants, most 2022 tours are not in danger of cancellation, and concert industry sources emphasize shows will not

**Olivia Rodrigo** signed a new management deal with Lighthouse Management + Media.

**Snoop Dogg** acquired the Death Row Records brand, which he says will be a non-fungible token label.

**Dwight Yoakam** and **Warner Music Group** settled on the rights to his 1986 debut album.

**Global Music Rights** and the **Radio Music Licensing Committee** reached a settlement to resolve antitrust litigation.

lack crucial equipment or security staff. “We’re not seeing anything holding back the volume of shows,” says Arthur Fogel, president of Live Nation’s global touring division and chairman of concerts. “Some of those challenges exist, but everybody’s already figuring out how to overcome them.”

The personnel and supply-chain issues are cumbersome and costly, however. Jon Dunleavy, My Chemical Romance’s tour manager, hired buses last summer for the band’s European tour in May and U.S. tour in August, but waited until late August to rent seven trucks — and every truck company came up empty-handed. He finally succeeded, but “it was nerve-racking for a minute,” he says. “Everything’s more expensive.”

Rather than raising ticket prices or reducing staff or production, My Chemical Romance will absorb the costs. The group can afford it, Dunleavy says, but “for some bands, it could tip the scales from a profitable tour to a tour in debt.” Tom Windish, a Wasserman agent who specializes in indie

rock, adds that smaller acts may struggle due to higher expenses: “An artist that makes \$500 a night may be losing \$5,000 from their savings account to go on a tour. In some cases, the artist can’t sustain the losses.”

The most pronounced personnel shortages, according to concert business sources, are in transportation. Stephen Maples, vp of entertainment trucking for live-event cargo business Rock-It

**“We’ve lost, by my estimation, 30% of the labor force.”**

—MICHAEL STRICKLAND, BANDIT LITES

Global, estimates that “ready-to-go” drivers are just 65% of what they were before the pandemic. Nashville tour bus company Coach Quarters has just 17 drivers on hand for its 20-bus fleet. The company has had to train new drivers and pay more experienced ones higher salaries — a truck with a trailer that cost \$350 per day before COVID-19 now costs at least \$400. Plus, parts are hard to find. “It’s truly crippling,” says operations manager Jamie Streetman.

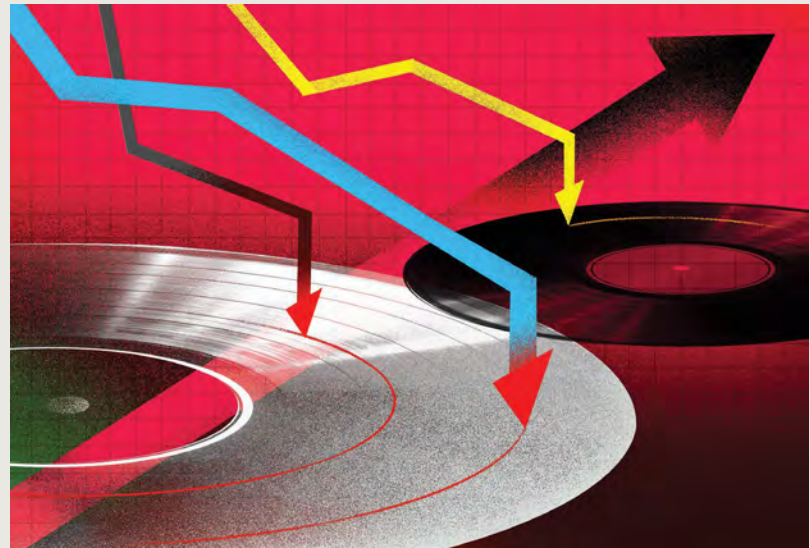
Stagehands are in short supply, too — 20% to 40% fewer personnel are available than usual, according to Rhino Staging founder/CEO Jeff Giek: “It’s like nothing we’ve ever seen. We’re having to [have people travel in] from out of state.”

Sound and lighting companies are struggling with the same issues. Michael Strickland, chair/founder of Nashville’s Bandit Lites, says workers in his industry “that once made X are now requesting 1.5 or 2X,” and the costs of replacing parts have increased “exponentially.”

“We’ve lost, by my estimation, 30% of the labor force,” Strickland says. “There is no short-term fix. It’s not like you can turn the switch and those 30% will come back. They’re gone.”

In Europe, promoters are dealing with shortages for everything: stages, toilets, trucks, fences, security. Costs are up 50%, according to Stuart Galbraith, CEO of 14-year-old U.K. indie promoter Kilimanjaro Group; a stage that cost £40,000 (\$54,300) in 2019 has increased to £75,000 (\$101,800). His company took the unusual step of purchasing, rather than leasing, two stages — and numerous toilets.

“It’s certainly stressful,” he says. “But we’re used to changing the way we do things. This is just another roll of our evolutionary dice. We will come out stronger. With more toilets.”



## Selling A Song Catalog? Now’s The Time

Wealth managers explain what rising interest rates mean for the publishing market

BY DAN WEISMAN AND ADAM SANSIVERI

**ONE OF THE MOST** common questions we hear from creators thinking about selling their song catalogs is “What do they” — the buyers — “know that I don’t?” The answer is simple: The catalog-sale marketplace has been driven by institutional investors, and they are looking for yield — a predictable rate of return. In the low-interest-rate environment of the last decade, it has been impossible to find yield in financial instruments like bonds. Music royalties, though, provide a steady return that is not correlated to traditional asset classes.

Most sellers, however, aren’t thinking about how macroeconomic factors like interest rates affect music royalties. They are inextricably linked, and with inflation at 7.5% — a 40-year high — and the Federal Reserve indicating that it will begin raising rates in March to reduce that figure, a seismic shift in the catalog-sale marketplace could be brewing.

Two years ago in *Billboard*, we highlighted the low-interest-rate environment as the driving force behind the heated catalog-sale marketplace. We also compared a catalog to a bond, which became a widely accepted analogy. Historically, interest rates and bonds move in opposite directions: When interest rates rise, bond prices drop. One of the biggest threats to a bond portfolio is interest-rate risk.

How does this relate to royalties? Bonds pay a coupon rate (a percentage of the face value); catalogs pay royalties.

Here’s how you determine the “coupon” on

your catalog if you sell it. Let’s assume you are selling your catalog for a multiple of 13 times its net publisher’s share (essentially annual gross profit). The effective coupon is 100 divided by 13, which equals 7.69%. As interest rates rise, a bond with a lower coupon rate will generally experience a greater decrease in value than one with a higher coupon rate. So a catalog that sells for a multiple of 13 will experience a greater decrease in value than one that sells for a multiple of 10 because the buyer is assigning greater value to future cash flows.

Higher inflation also affects catalog sales because it reduces the value of future royalty payments. The higher the multiple, the more pronounced the inflation effect because more royalty payments are required for the buyer to be made whole.

Many catalog acquisitions are financed using debt and leverage. If leverage has a floating (or adjustable) interest rate, then every rate increase results in an exponential increase in cost to the borrower.

What buyers also know is that a 7.69% return barely beat inflation last year, when it was 7%, and we’re not even factoring in the cost of capital. When rates rise and inflation settles, institutional investors will look elsewhere for return.

The catalog-sale marketplace won’t disappear overnight, but it will certainly cool, especially when you consider all the big deals that have been made over the last few years. Moving forward, many looking to sell their catalogs will be newer artists with less of an earnings history, which makes the deals far more speculative. Investors will pay lower multiples for speculative fixed income (royalties), especially in a higher-interest, higher-inflation environment.

Bottom line: If you are considering selling, the current economic environment provides an unprecedented opportunity to capitalize financially on your success. **B**

*Former artist manager Dan Weisman is a vp/financial adviser at Bernstein Private Wealth Management in Nashville. Adam Sansiveri is a managing director and head of Bernstein’s Nashville Private Client Group and co-head of its Sports, Media and Entertainment Group.*

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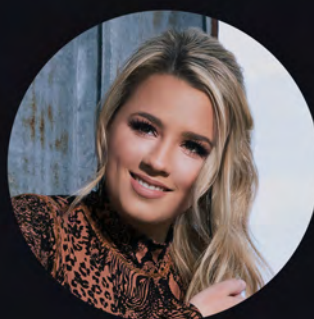


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SONY MUSIC  
PUBLISHING

Robin Williams' estate, Andrew Dice Clay and more comedians filed copyright lawsuits against **Pandora**.

**Christian Nodal** signed a record deal with Sony Music U.S. Latin and Sony Music Mexico.

# Inflation Impacts Merch And Vinyl

"Everybody is paying more to make less money," says one executive

BY GLENN PEOPLES

**W**HEN BILLY CANDLER, CO-FOUNDER of full-service merchandising company Absolute Merch, went to the House of Blues in Anaheim, Calif., in early February, he saw a welcome sight: "The line for merch was out the door," he says. Fans eager to buy T-shirts, hoodies and other items is a great sign for artists touring in 2022 since merch sales at concerts remain vital to many artists.

The road out of the pandemic seems to be filled with potholes, however. Inflation — everything from cotton costs to shipping fees — has sent the costs of merchandise and vinyl records soaring from pre-pandemic levels. Unable to shoulder their higher cost burden, each company in the supply chain has raised prices for its clients. That leaves less opportunity for suppliers and artists to profit from music's much-awaited return to the stage.

"Ultimately, everybody is paying more to make less money," says Candler.

U.S. inflation hit 7.5% in January, the highest level in 40 years, according to numbers that the Bureau of Labor Statistics released Feb. 10. A crucial component of overall inflation is the price of gas, which is baked into product prices and, for musicians, is a major cost of touring. U.S. retail gas prices averaged \$3.41 in January, up 41% year over year, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. That was about 27% higher than the average \$2.69 per gallon Americans paid in 2019. But energy prices are merely a symptom of the problems facing businesses today.

"We're getting squeezed on every side," says Stevie Hopkins, founder/CEO of Second City Prints, a full-service merch company whose clients include Manchester Orchestra and Concord Music Group. Hopkins has raised prices three times in two years, and Candler says his prices increased 30% "across the board." His artists are also finding that venues



now want a larger cut of merch sales. A typical 15% to 20% share of revenue before the pandemic is now 20% to 25%, and up to 30% at big festivals.

Dealing with inflation is like bleeding from a thousand tiny, interrelated cuts. Stocking a merch table at a concert isn't as straightforward as it used to be. Getting goods on time from suppliers can mean paying a premium for a rush shipment. Manufacturers dealing with labor and raw goods shortages have raised prices, and production is unpredictable. Facing their own labor and cost challenges, freight carriers have also raised prices.

Record labels face the same set of factors as merch companies. Freight in particular "is a huge factor" in labels' decision to raise their vinyl wholesale costs, says Nabil Ayers, president of Beggars Group's U.S. operations. "So much of what we make is manufactured in Europe. Even if we ship via boat, which takes four to six weeks, it still costs a lot." Micki Windham, production manager at Thirty Tigers, a Nashville-based labels services company, agrees. "If we have to airfreight, it can be as much as \$2 a unit. Normally, it would cost 75 cents to \$1 a unit." Windham says she can plan for long lead times, but having a title in stock often trumps its cost. "If we don't have the luxury of time, we have to use airfreight — which is astronomical."

Although "extremely reluctant" to raise wholesale prices, many labels began to do so in the fall of 2021, says Glenn Dicker, co-founder of Redeye Worldwide, a North Carolina-based distributor. Thirty Tigers started raising vinyl wholesale prices by \$1 to \$1.50 a unit in January, says Windham. Ayers estimates that higher shipping and materials

costs have caused the average retail price for a standard, single LP to increase from about \$20 to \$24 in the last few years. But labels haven't raised their prices for CDs, which are less expensive than vinyl to manufacture and ship.

Higher vinyl wholesale costs have translated to higher prices at retail. "Our prices are rising — but it's not us," says Chris Brown, CFO of Bull Moose, an 11-store chain in Maine and New Hampshire. "We can't dictate what we pay for things." Rather than adjust its margins to compensate for higher wholesale and operating costs, Bull Moose put extra emphasis on higher-margin used goods through in-store banners, radio spots and social media ads. "You can't increase prices when you market yourself as a low-price leader," says Brown.

The good news is consumers have so far been willing to pay higher prices. According to the RIAA, the average vinyl LP sale price has steadily increased in the last three years, from \$26.06 in the first half of 2019 to \$27.49 in the first half of 2021. But U.S. sales are up 87% over that two-year period and are on pace to increase again in 2022.

There are no industry statistics for music merch sales, but insiders say fans don't seem to be suffering from sticker shock. Shanna Reznik, owner of merch company Threefour, whose clients include indie rocker Phoebe Bridgers, has seen per-head sales at concerts double or triple since artists resumed touring in the summer of 2021. The key is giving fans something that's worth the higher price, says Reznik, such as a concert-specific T-shirt or a more elaborate design. She notes, "People will always pay for quality and something that's going to last." **B**

# UM<sup>e</sup>

# I AM WOMAN



Celebrate Women's History Month with a playlist of empowering and iconic songs.  
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**Sting** sold his entire song catalog to Universal Music Publishing Group.

**Sony Music Publishing** landed 18 synchs for Super Bowl ads — more than any other publisher.

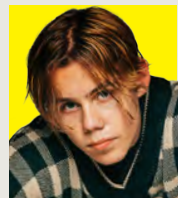
# ADELE MAKES IT LOOK ‘EASY’ FOR SONY

The music publisher tops both fourth-quarter rankings despite market-share declines **BY ED CHRISTMAN**

**T**HE KID LAROI, JUSTIN BIEBER AND ADELE helped Sony Music Publishing continue its winning streak through the end of 2021. The company took the No. 1 spot on both the Top Radio Airplay and Hot 100 Songs charts for the last three months of the year — its third consecutive quarter atop both rankings.

Sony's wins came despite declines in market share for both categories compared with its third-quarter results: from 29.53% to 27.70% in radio airplay and 28.86% to 22.51% on Hot 100 Songs.

The company, which has led the Top Radio Airplay ranking for 17 of the last 18 quarters, had a stake in 59 of the fourth quarter's Top Radio



The Kid LAROI

Airplay songs — the same number it had in the third — and 51 Hot 100 songs — down from 63 in the previous quarter. Sony also had a stake in the No. 1 song on both charts: The Kid LAROI and Bieber's "Stay" on Top Radio Airplay and Adele's "Easy on Me" on Hot 100 Songs.

Four other publishers had a piece of "Stay": Universal Music Publishing Group, Warner Chappell Music, Kobalt and Pulse. UMPG also holds a stake in "Easy on Me," which contributed to the publisher tying Sony on the Hot 100 Songs chart with 51 titles, six less than the previous quarter. UMPG's lower market share of 21.47% resulted in its No. 2 ranking, but that was a nearly two-percentage-point increase over its third-quarter result of 19.80%. The publisher also gained four percentage points in its Top Radio Airplay performance — 21.49%, up from 17.56%, despite its song count dropping from 58 to 55. That quarter-to-quarter market-share bump led UMPG to reclaim the No. 2 ranking on that chart, up from No. 3.

Both market share and song count decreased for third-place finisher Warner Chappell. The publisher was down from 17.90% to 14.80% and from 52 to 44 songs on the Hot 100 Songs ranking and down from 19.22% to 16.08% and from 52 to 44 songs on Top Radio Airplay, where its third-quarter performance had put it in second place.

Kobalt and BMG finished fourth and fifth, respectively, on both charts, positions they've held for three consecutive quarters.

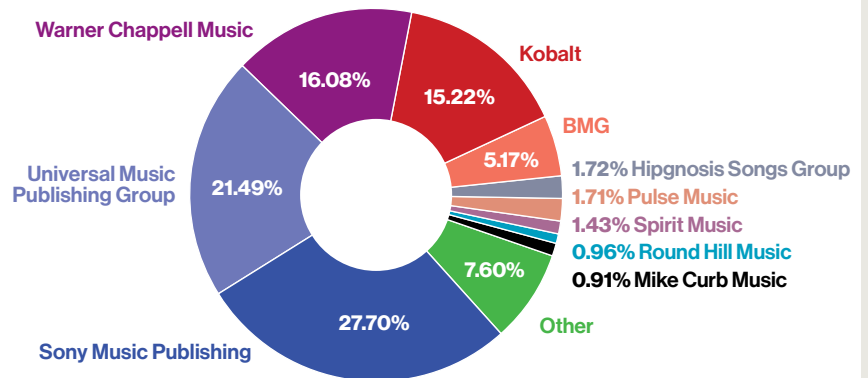
The top songwriter for Hot 100 Songs is the late Johnny Marks, who landed four tunes: Brenda Lee's "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" (No. 16), Burl Ives' "Holly Jolly Christmas" (No. 19), Gene Autry's "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" (No. 62) and Chuck Berry's "Run Rudolph Run" (No. 77). Marks is published by St. Nicholas Music, which he founded.

Dr. Luke took the No. 1 slot on Top Radio Airplay, co-writing three Doja Cat songs: "Need To Know" (No. 5), "You Right" (No. 10) and "Kiss Me More" (No. 15). He also has a co-writing credit for Latto's "Big Energy" (No. 66). Dr. Luke publishes his music through his own Kasz Money Publishing, which Kobalt administers. **L**



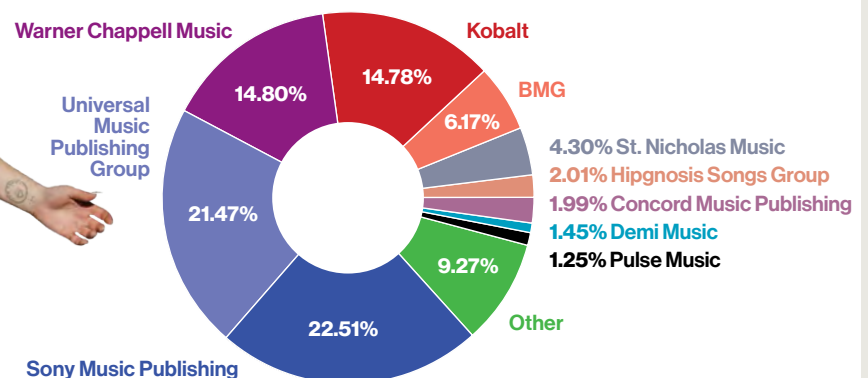
Adele

## Top Radio Airplay: Publishers\*



Rank	Title	Artist	Label
1	"Stay"	The Kid LAROI & Justin Bieber	Raymond Braun/Def Jam/Columbia
2	"Industry Baby"	Lil Nas X & Jack Harlow	Columbia
3	"Easy On Me"	Adele	Columbia
4	"Bad Habits"	Ed Sheeran	Atlantic
5	"Need To Know"	Doja Cat	Kemosabe/RCA
6	"Beggin'"	Måneskin	Arista/Sony Music Latin
7	"good 4 u"	Olivia Rodrigo	Geffen/Interscope
8	"Shivers"	Ed Sheeran	Atlantic
9	"Essence"	Wizkid	Starboy/RCA
10	"You Right"	Doja Cat & The Weeknd	Kemosabe/RCA

## Hot 100 Songs: Publishers\*



Rank	Title	Artist	Label
1	"Easy On Me"	Adele	Columbia
2	"Stay"	The Kid LAROI & Justin Bieber	Raymond Braun/Columbia/Def Jam
3	"Industry Baby"	Lil Nas X & Jack Harlow	Columbia
4	"Bad Habits"	Ed Sheeran	Atlantic
5	"Shivers"	Ed Sheeran	Atlantic
6	"Fancy Like"	Walker Hayes	Monument/RCA
7	"Heat Waves"	Glass Animals	Wolf Tone/Polydor/Republic
8	"Need To Know"	Doja Cat	Kemosabe/RCA
9	"Way 2 Sexy"	Drake Featuring Future & Young Thug	OVO Sound/Republic
10	"good 4 u"	Olivia Rodrigo	Geffen/Interscope

\*For the Top 10 Publishers Top Radio Airplay chart, percentage calculations are based upon the overall top 100 detecting songs from 2,005 U.S. radio stations electronically monitored by MRC Data 24 hours a day, seven days a week during the period of Oct. 1 to Dec. 31, 2021. For Top 10 Publishers Hot 100 Songs, percentage calculations are based upon the top 100 songs as ranked by Billboard Hot 100 points calculated from digital sales, streaming and MRC Data-tracked radio airplay detections during the period of Oct. 1 to Dec. 30, 2021, reflecting the issue dates of Oct. 16, 2021, through Jan. 8, 2022. Publisher information for musical works on both charts has been identified by the Harry Fox Agency. A "publisher" is defined as an administrator, copyright owner and/or controlling party.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE

LIVE  
NATION  
WOMEN

ALI HARNELL

AMY CORBIN

HEATHER LOWERY

KATHY WILLARD

LESLEY OLENIK

MARLA OSTROFF

SHERRI SOSA

THERESA VELASQUEZ

HALL OF FAME HONOREE

DESIREE PEREZ

AND ALL OF THE 2022 WOMEN IN MUSIC

LIVE NATION

**Sony Music's** \$430 million acquisition of AWAL was provisionally cleared by the United Kingdom's competition watchdog.

Members of Spain's **SGAE** voted to change how it distributes royalties for TV in an ongoing effort to eliminate fraud.



## BRAZIL COMBATS FAKE STREAMS

In 2021, an initiative dubbed “Operation Anti-Doping” shut down 84 stream-boosting sites with ties to Russia — the first time that fake streams have been prosecuted as a crime there

BY ALEXEI BARRIONUEVO AND BEATRIZ MIRANDA

**RIO DE JANEIRO** — In 2016, Richard Encinas, a São Paulo state prosecutor, led investigations into organized crime that culminated in a raid of a clandestine warehouse and the seizure of millions of pirated DVDs and CDs that took more than seven trucks to transport. But the transition from physical recorded music to digital streaming has happened at breakneck speed in Brazil, ushering in a booming illegal trade in artificially boosted audio and video streams. So, two years later, Encinas traveled with a group of colleagues to London to learn how to better combat cybercrime, including new challenges emerging in the music industry.

Now, Encinas — who heads the Center for Investigations of Cyber Crimes in the São Paulo public prosecutor’s office, known in Brazil as Cyber Gaeco — has made the pivot to digital, helping launch the music industry’s most-sweeping effort to root out fake-stream operations, dubbed Operation Anti-Doping.

Working with Pro-Música Brasil, the country’s trade organization for record labels and an IFPI affiliate, and its six-person anti-piracy division, Apdif, Cyber Gaeco shut down 84 stream-boosting sites in Brazil in 2021, primarily using cease-and-desist notices and threats of court orders. The sites shopped fake streams, allow-

ing artists or their representatives to buy bot-generated “plays” to boost their songs’ stream counts.

This was the first time in Brazil that fake streams have been prosecuted as a crime. Prosecutors charged that it constituted embezzlement and illicit gain, thus violating Brazil’s Consumer Defense Code. The probe also revealed the international scope of the problem: While the sites were based in Brazil, the actual stream-boosting activity was conducted in Russia through mirror sites, in particular one site called Just Another Panel, says Pro-Música president Paulo Rosa. “No company in Brazil has the technology to make these fake streams,” he says. “This technology comes from websites hosted in Russia.”

While fraudsters often seek to enrich themselves with ill-gotten royalties from fake songs or playlists, some artists are also tapping artificial streams to create “fake velocity.” In other words, “fooling the algorithm into thinking there’s a critical mass of people behind a track,” which pushes it onto important digital service provider playlists and helps them go viral, says Morgan Hayduk, founder/co-CEO of Beatdapp, a Vancouver-based tracking system that authenticates streams for DSPs.

Rather than spend time trying to track down and prosecute individuals,

which can take years and yield uncertain results, the Brazilians have focused on shutting down blocks of sites indefinitely and transferring the domains to Apdif. “What’s the point of arresting these guys?” says Encinas. “Our focus is to protect legal [streaming]” and for “the crime to stop.”

In Germany, the other major music market where IFPI has overseen efforts to combat fake streams, music associations took a similar approach in 2020 and 2021 when they used injunctions and other legal tactics to shut down nine sites. Cyber Gaeco also took down 15 sites — 14 Russian and one American — operating in Brazil that were selling ad-supported services to illegally download video streams from YouTube by outwitting the company’s security measures.

Russian hackers provide technical support to Brazilian hackers, Encinas says. Their assistance in creating fraudulent streams is difficult to stop because the Russian government has been lenient on Russian hackers attacking foreign companies and individuals, so long as they have not operated in Russia. (Hackers often disguise their location with tools like virtual private networks.) “I am unaware of the collaboration of the Russian government with any government of any country in the world,” Encinas says.

IFPI confirmed to *Billboard* that “a large number of streaming manipulation sites seem to be the ‘resellers’ of services operated by third parties,” though “it is often difficult to identify the method of manipulation or the countries in which the operators of these services are based.” Just Another Panel, according to IFPI, “is a name that often appears in connection with reseller sites offering artificial plays and other manipulation activities.” (Just Another Panel has never operated in Russia and is unknown among Russian users and cybersecurity experts.)

The only way to stop illegal Russia-based sites from operating in Brazil, Encinas says, is by blocking access to Brazil’s internet. Prosecutors have used court orders in those cases to force Brazilian internet service providers to forbid Brazilian IP addresses from accessing Russian sites, he says.

Hayduk says the industry should go one step further than recent law-enforcement actions. He advocates creating “foundational platform security” for the DSPs where neutral third-party arbiters (like his own service) would monitor transactional-level streaming data to weed out suspicious streams — a strategy already used in financial services, e-commerce and digital advertising. “The question is, as an industry, can we collectively get smarter and catch [fake-stream proprietors] faster and make the economic incentive less powerful?” Hayduk asks. (Spotify declined to comment on his suggestion.)

While Rosa and Encinas say that their ongoing efforts have rooted out 90% of the fake-stream operators in Brazil, the incentives to defraud the streaming market haven’t changed. Since 2016, Brazil’s streaming revenue has grown by double digits each year, says Rosa. Brazil was Latin America’s fastest-growing major market in 2020, with revenue increasing by 24.5%, driven by a boost in streaming revenue of 37.1% that put it at \$306.4 million in total (ranking 11th in the world), according to IFPI’s Global Music Report.

Brazilian music executives point out that the fake streams coincide with social media growth. Brazil had 150 million social media users in 2021, up 10 million (7.1%) from 2020, for a penetration of 70.3% of its total population (the United States was at 72.3%), according to digital trends site DataReportal.

“I see this as another tool that has been brought into the social media environment,” says Rosa. “Fake streams came about in this ecosystem. It has more to do with: ‘Look, here’s another chance to do some marketing.’ Artists want to create artificial success.” **b**

*Additional reporting by Micah Singleton and Vladimir Kozlov.*



# WAVE

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**LUCY DICKINS**



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**Warner Music Group** launched a global diversity, equity and inclusion institute to help fulfill the company's new DEI commitments.

**LaTrice Burnette** was named executive vp of Def Jam. She brings along her 4th & Broadway label.



Ghazi photographed Feb. 7 at EMPIRE in San Francisco.

## From The Desk Of... Ghazi

**FOUNDER/CEO, EMPIRE**

BY DAN RYS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY KAREN SANTOS

**W**HEN MULTI-hyphenate music company EMPIRE was getting ready to open the doors of its new 10,000-square-foot San Francisco recording studio in the spring of 2019, founder/CEO Ghazi predicted it would propel his independent operation to the next level.

"I told people: 'Once we get a studio, watch the pulse of the company change,'" he says from his Bay Area office. Two years later, the bet paid off, as EMPIRE landed three Billboard Hot 100

hits born from that studio: Yung Bleu, Chris Brown and 2 Chainz' "Baddest," which reached No. 56; Money Man and Lil Baby's "24," which reached No. 49; and Fireboy DML and Ed Sheeran's "Peru," which debuted on the chart in February at No. 79.

As the music business has evolved over the past decade, EMPIRE has often seemed ahead of the curve, disrupting some aspects of the industry while taking the lead in others. The company began strategically as a digital-first distributor in 2010, offering one-off

licensing deals to hip-hop's major-label castoffs and young guns. But once it had cemented its own distribution pipelines, it then expanded as a label, publisher and technology entity with merchandise and social media divisions as well as crypto interests. (Last November, the company claimed it was the first record label to pay an advance in bitcoin.) EMPIRE has opened a studio in Midtown Manhattan (which produced the Jim Jones-Migos collaboration "We Set the Trends") and plans to do the same in Nashville (where it has operated a country music division since 2019). And having established offices in the Middle East and the United Kingdom, the company is set to officially announce the launch of EMPIRE Africa — where it has already operated for two years — with a new local executive structure in place and several label partnerships in Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa and Ivory Coast.

"I think we're the king of the multisector," says Ghazi. "A lot of companies say they are, and while they dabble in other sec-

tors, they're not very good at them. We are really excelling at a lot of things."

### What has been your experience in the African music business?

It has allowed us to connect with some of the most incredible talent we've ever worked with — people like Olamide, Fireboy, Buju. I'll go out on a limb and say we're equally as impactful in West Africa as we are in the United States. People are starting to understand the value of their rights, of the monetization of streaming — what that equates to on a global scale. They've seen a couple of Afropop and Afrobeats artists cross into global economies, like Wizkid and Davido and Burna Boy, and now Fireboy's record with Ed Sheeran. There's also a greater commitment to monetization of the market and to building infrastructure.

### So how does EMPIRE fit into the market?

For us, it's very natural. It's the same thing that we did here in

the United States with urban artists. It's what we're starting to do in Nashville and in some of the Asian territories. It just so happens that there's a symbiotic relationship with the music in Africa, where Afropop/Afrobeats plays very nicely with who we are as a company in terms of our cultural makeup, the type of music that we evangelize. So we're just continuing the same trend of education and investing in talented people and evangelizing our culture and our ideology of joint partnerships and collaboration.

### Last year, you opened a new office in the Middle East/North Africa. What are your plans there?

I learned very early on that in that part of the world, the rights work differently — and in many cases, there are no rights at all. It's still very early in development because there was no infrastructure there for things like copyright and publishing. I know it's going to be a long and hard journey because things are not very monetized over there, so you could put in a lot of work and not see a return.

**CONGRATULATIONS**  
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IN MUSIC HONOREE**

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We celebrate all the visionaries  
on this list inspiring us every day



Artist rights advocate and Gomez founding member **Tom Gray** was elected chair of The Ivors Academy.

A judge rejected **Primary Wave**'s proposal for how Prince's estate should be structured in favor of his heirs.



A collection of memorabilia that includes used cellphones and memorial programs for Young Dolph, XXXTentacion and The Jacka, and a plaque honoring Ghazi as a member of *Billboard's* 2019 New Power Generation. "I often remind myself where we've been to magnify where I'm headed," he says.



Bobblehead figures of rappers Too \$hort (right) and the late Mac Dre. "The Furry Ghost and Short the Pimp are Bay Area hood heroes," says Ghazi.



Far right: The artwork depicting Ghazi's name in Arabic, which was a gift from his executive assistant, Samyah, is "a reflection of my roots as a Palestinian."



A certificate from the mayor of San Francisco honoring Ghazi for his contributions to the community. "I wouldn't be who I am today if I wasn't born and bred in San Francisco."

early talent that's not stuck doing things a certain way. We'll have to develop some talent, so it will take a bit longer [to break them], but I'm OK with that.

### How do your deals stand out from the pack?

Our deals are full-on partnerships, so the way the rights are written, recoupment is likely; master reversion, if there is a reversion, is likely; and artists tend to have a lot more creative input, not control. "Input" is the right word because I think in a perfect world neither party controls the creativity. We come to a collective decision. The deals are framed in a way that makes a lot more sense for both parties to be successful, and a good deal is where neither party is taking advantage of the other side. I always tell people, "I'll take both points of view, but the truth lies somewhere in the middle," and I think our deals lie in the middle. I think that's why we've had so much success. It just took a long time for the attorneys to understand what we were trying to accomplish. The economics of a deal are more important than the advance number, and by economics, I mean splits, recoupment rates, things of that nature. Getting artists and attorneys to understand that took a while.

### What brought them around?

Time. It's creating user behavior. You could pitch the same thing to 10 artists, and they'll all take the deal with the higher advance but the lower split. Convince one artist to take the higher split and lower advance and that they'll make more money on the back

end, recoup faster and get a bigger deal later, and that artist will be a significant champion. We took care of the artists, and then the artist community took care of us.

### EMPIRE claimed it was the first record label to offer an artist advance in bitcoin.

#### Why bitcoin?

It's the same conversation — it's about creating user behavior. We did an advance in bitcoin and furthered that thought process by doing the advance on CashApp, which I believe is the lowest common denominator because it has great market penetration. So if you already have a shitload of people using CashApp to share U.S. dollars, it's very easy to use CashApp to send bitcoin — and now you're starting to get people acclimated to the idea that bitcoin is OK and easy to use. It's insanely powerful.

### How do you see Web3 changing and challenging the traditional industry?

It gives you a whole other medium. Terrestrial radio has its segment of audience; streaming has its segment; traditional social media like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter have their segment; [non-fungible tokens] are going to have theirs. The metaverse brings a whole other powerful segment where you can do a lot of things, from concerts to museums to meeting spaces. Anything you can do in the physical world you could do in the metaverse and without the bureaucracy of the physical world. If I want to build a nightclub in the metaverse, I don't need to get a permit from the planning and zoning committee to do it. Does it have the same implications of a physical nightclub? Maybe not. But maybe it has different implications that are also very successful.

### With your growth and the money pouring into the business, have you thought about selling?

(Laughs.) No. I don't think there's a number that somebody could present that could even make me flinch. It's not about the money for me. **B**

But culturally, it's significant for me because of my Palestinian background. I feel an emotional attachment to do something about it. But also, from the business side of it, it's a long play — it's a gigantic market. There's 300 or 400 million Arabs in that area.

### What's next for EMPIRE?

Probably Brazil, maybe India. I know Russia is going to be emerging at some point. You're starting to see money coming out of those territories. And then at some point, you just say, "OK, we got enough areas covered where if you pushed a button and sent the Bat-Signal out, hitting all those different epicenters would, by a process of osmosis, hit surrounding secondary and tertiary [markets]."

Like if you have representation in Singapore and Jakarta, then maybe you'll also get Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand.

### What are the opportunities for a company like yours in such a traditional music city as Nashville?

We've already started to have some success. We just got our first platinum record with Tenille Arts. Terrestrial radio can't be what it is to the country genre forever. It dominated the airwaves for pop, for R&B/soul, for rap, for a long period, and then we saw a transition to streaming. We now know that radio follows streaming in the urban genres. Traditionally, a lot of country artists were of the belief that the only way to succeed was through traditional

radio. Now you're starting to see some acts break through without radio. I think that's the tip of the iceberg — and that's going to help us grow in that market in the next few years.

### How do you shift the mindset of a business sector that has always done things one way?

You go after the younger generation of artists. Everything is about user behavior. I'm not going to fight to change the mind of someone who is used to doing something one way for 20 years. I'm going to go create that user behavior at the inception point. So if you're a brand-new artist, I'm going to teach you to be a streaming artist from the very beginning. That has been the philosophy: signing a lot of



**Downtown and Songtrust congratulate Molly Neuman and Bea Koramblyum as 2022 Billboard Women in Music honorees.**

These leaders are strategic, future-facing, and tireless in their work, advancing opportunities for independent music creators in a complex and quickly-changing music landscape. And they inspire, not only their colleagues, but their industry, in their efforts to promote greater equity and diversity in the music business. Brava!

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# sound

NOW PLAYING

Koffee photographed Feb. 7 in  
Kingston, Jamaica.

## At Long Last

Reggae singer Koffee made Grammys history as a teen. Now, with a new record deal and full-length debut, she wants to move her genre forward

BY NEENA ROUHANI

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DESTINEE CONDISON

**K**OFFEE DOESN'T remember the moment she won her first Grammy Award — or where the trophy is. "I haven't seen it since I left the U.S.," she admits, bashfully. "I swear I don't know who has it."

In 2020, the Spanish Town, Jamaica, singer born Mikayla Simpson became the first woman to take home the best reggae album award, for her debut project, *Rapture* — and the youngest winner ever at 19. *Rapture* wasn't even a full album — the five-track reggae-fusion EP clocked in at just over 15 minutes. Put head-to-head with long-standing reggae heavyweights like Sly & Robbie and Steel Pulse, the win was even more unlikely, and Koffee agrees. "As soon as they got to the reggae category and said [I won], it felt surreal,"



she recalls. "I never thought of the reality of actually winning a Grammy." As scattered cheers began, the 5-foot-tall singer slow-jogged toward the stage with a brace-faced grin and a message: "This one is for all of us. This one is for reggae. This one is for Jamaica."

One of five siblings, Koffee grew up with her mother in the Eltham View neighborhood of Jamaica. "There's a lot of violence happening in my country and countries close by," she says. And while the singer felt shielded from what surrounded her, the looming threats to her community inspired her approach to music. "I don't know if I should say it's life imitating art, but the [gun-heavy] music and what's really happening go hand in hand," she says. "I try to take my own advice in terms of the type of music I create for my fans — upliftment, positivity, love, having fun and all the wonderful things."

Such was the inspiration behind the singer's long-awaited *Gifted* album, out March 25, which will be Koffee's first project on RCA Records following singles "West Indies" and "Pull Up." (The singer signed a U.S. record deal with RCA in February 2020 and remains signed to Columbia Records in the United Kingdom, a deal she signed in 2018.) "We signed Koffee with the knowledge that she was a generational talent," says Joel Quartey, head of marketing at Columbia Records UK. "After an already record-breaking run leading into a truly genre-defining debut album this year, there is no limit to what Koffee can accomplish — and we can expect her to achieve many more milestones in the years to come."

As for the anticipated debut, Koffee says, "The pandemic definitely allowed me to choose my own direction a lot more," noting that she was much more involved in the production, sounds and flow of *Gifted* than on *Rapture*. She reveals that the 10-track album will be more stripped-back and acoustic than her debut EP, "but still trappy when it comes to the bones and having that head-bop ability."

It's that exact approach that suggests Koffee's continued intentions of modernizing reggae — along with any preconceived notions of the genre. Ahead, she's interested in collaborating with artists including Young Thug and prior collaborator Gunna, as well as Afrobeats hitmakers like Burna Boy, Davido and Wizkid. "Reggae will definitely progress, not only in terms of what it accomplishes," but also sonically, she says. "There's a lot of experimentation going on."

At the same time, what Koffee has already accomplished in terms of mainstream recognition was just the beginning of a shift for the genre. In this year's Grammy nominations for best reggae album, Etana earned her second nod in the category alongside first-time nominee and "Dancehall Queen" Spice, becoming the first time two women have been nominated at once in the category.

And while greater gender inclusion is a step forward, Koffee is hoping for continued progress, noting the title "reggae" can feel like a catch-all. "Internationally, reggae and dancehall both are recognized as reggae," she says. "For us Jamaicans, we understand that there's a difference. It would be good to see more appreciation shown for the genres as separate entities."

In April, Koffee will perform at Coachella for thousands of fans amid her own U.S. headlining tour. Later in the year, she will open for Harry Styles across Latin America. "I've overcome the fear of growth," says the now 21-year-old (who is still rocking braces, but "just for a few more months"). "I've become a little bit more confident in my craft, in my stage delivery, [and] I've learned how to deal with certain things that I was new to at 17 or 18, having freshly entered the music industry. It definitely has been a journey for me." **D**



ONE TO WATCH

## GOT the beat

**FROM** Seoul

**AGES** 21-35

**LABEL** SM Entertainment

**FOUNDATION** In 2019, K-pop label SM Entertainment launched the all-male supergroup SuperM — and soon after started thinking about a girl group equivalent. Announced late last year, GOT the beat features some of the label's biggest female stars, including BoA, a 20-year industry veteran and an Asian pop icon; Taeyeon and Hyoyeon from Girls' Generation; Seulgi and Wendy from Red Velvet; and Karina and Winter from new arrival aespa, whose metaverse concept and futuristic beats are on the cutting edge of pop. As for what they all have in common? "GOT the beat is very focused on performance," says BoA. "All the great dancers are together."

**DISCOVERY** For its youngest members, GOT represents a chance to work alongside some of their idols. "I was blown away by BoA's powerful dance moves," Taeyeon says. "When I was young, I always saw her perform on TV or from a distance, but while working on this project, I was able to see her up close and I found myself just staring at her in awe." For the seasoned pros, it's an opportunity to explore new perspectives. "[The aespa members'] strong passion and energy reminded me of my earlier days and motivated me to work harder," Seulgi says. Lead single "Step Back" — a fierce hip-hop track co-written by Tayla Parx that has raked in 6.12 million on-demand official streams in the United States through Feb. 10, according to MRC Data — is "very different from anything that any of us have done before," adds Hyoyeon, "which makes GOT feel new and unique."

**FUTURE** The group is eager to release more music but has no firm plans yet — coordinating schedules, unsurprisingly, is a challenge when assembling some of K-pop's finest. (For their debut performance, the members mostly rehearsed separately with stand-ins.) But GOT the beat is just one configuration of a larger, ongoing Girls on Top supergroup project that will feature different women from SM in future lineups. BoA already has some concept ideas. "I wish we could have GOT the ballad," she says. "We do have a lot of great vocalists." —**NOLAN FEENEY**



# PLAYING BY HER OWN RULES.



There's a reason why Karol G stands atop the world of Reggaetón.

And it's not because she chose to fit in.

Congratulations to Karol G on her genre-bending, women-empowering rise within the Latin music scene.

**AND ON BEING NAMED BILLBOARD'S  
"RULE BREAKER" FOR 2022.**



Ranta (left) on set.

## IN DEMAND

# JAMEE RANTA

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Growing up in income-based housing in Dayton, Ohio, Jamee Ranta says “opportunities were nonexistent” — and while she dreamed of becoming an astro-

naut, music had a more formative impact. Ranta has now worked alongside some of music’s biggest stars as CEO of Artifact Content, a multimedia production company she founded in 2017. She first arrived in Los Angeles nearly a decade prior and hustled to break into the industry, working on as many music video sets as she could. Self-employed since 18, Ranta’s bet on herself has more than paid off: Her work on Cardi B’s “WAP” helped the clip win the 2021 BET video of the year

award, and she more recently executive-produced the visual for Justin Bieber’s Grammy Award-nominated “Peaches.” Now, Ranta is eager for her next adventure: management, signing burgeoning Colombian American singer-songwriter Nathalie Paris as her first client near the end of 2021. “I love the logistical side of making art because it’s very commonly underappreciated,” says Ranta. “I enjoy being part of those systems to support the artist.”

—MEGAN ARMSTRONG

## BIG IN...

### NIGERIA



## Aşa

### WHEN NIGERIAN SINGER-SONGWRITER

Aşa was 11 years old, she realized that the purpose of her education was to “become something” in life. She says that music was “the thing I understood, my warmth and escape” — and nearly 15 years later, in her mid-20s, she made that calling her career. By 2007, the artist born Bukola Elemide released her self-titled debut album, *Aşa*, that included her progressive breakthrough hit, “Jailer,” which she says is “about people who put people down. If you spend so much energy making my life miserable, yours will be as well.”

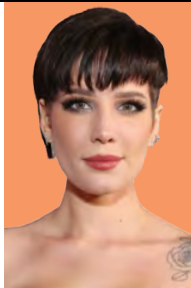
While Aşa says that “Jailer” is not her favorite song, “everyone knows it everywhere I go. Songs that I sing in Yoruba are dear to me.” Co-written by Aşa and Nigerian musician-producer-songwriter Cobhams Asuquo, the hit has earned 1.5 million U.S. streams and 472,000 global streams, according to MRC Data — and even earned a fan in Lenny Kravitz. The pair had a chance encounter nearly a decade ago when Aşa attempted to meet the icon backstage at his show in France, but, as she recalls, “I was met by a wall of bodyguards.” Yet moments later, “I heard Lenny call my name, ‘Aşa!’ And he sang ‘Jailer.’ I was like, ‘What?!’”

While Aşa and Kravitz formed a friendship, with Aşa later opening for Kravitz in 2015, the pair haven’t collaborated on music; in fact, Aşa has never teamed with another artist until now. She tapped others for her fifth studio album, *V*, of which she says, “I’ve learned to follow my instincts.” As a result, she welcomes fellow Nigerian hitmaker Wizkid on the silky-smooth track “IDG” (“I Don’t Go”): “I thought it would be great with Wizkid because it fits his temperament, so I sent it to him and he loved it. It was natural.” The 10-track, Afro-infused *V* also features Nigerian sibling duo The Cavemen and Ghanaian singer-songwriter Amaarae. “I never had enough time to stay at home to form bonds because I was always on tour,” says Aşa. But when the COVID-19 pandemic began and she went home to Lagos, “I opened my door and started meeting people. It was just time.”

—DARLENE ADEROJU

## THE COLLABORATORS

**IF I CAN'T HAVE LOVE, I WANT POWER**  
Halsey



Halsey’s hourlong film *If I Can’t Have Love, I Want Power*, released in 2021 to accompany their fourth album by the same name, was Ranta’s first theatrical release. “Every time I do a project, I live and breathe it,” she says. “This had a very dark storyline. We were in a dark castle. You learn about who you are in the midst of darkness.” Filmed over six weeks in Prague, the project faced various obstacles, from the country shutting down due to COVID-19 restrictions to Halsey’s health during the artist’s pregnancy. “We were all able to pull from personal things,” she adds. “But you need darkness to see the stars.”

**“MARRY ME”**  
Jennifer Lopez



Ranta previously worked with Lopez in 2019 on the visual for “Medicine” (featuring French Montana) and the accompanying *It’s My Party* tour visuals. But for the pair’s latest collaboration, “Marry Me” — the lead single from the rom-com soundtrack of the same name — the executive producer was able to fulfill a dream by partnering with Academy Award-winning cinematographer Robert Richardson. Produced through Artifact this year, the video for “Marry Me” was also its most ambitious venture yet. “It’s a raw deconstruction of who she is,” says Ranta, “and the not-so-luxurious parts of the daily life of an artist like Jennifer.”

**JUSTICE**  
Justin Bieber



Ranta first met Bieber in 2012 while working on a treatment of his “Boy-friend” video. Ten years later, she says she’s “in awe of his trajectory” and feels particularly proud of watching his growth “translate into his music and the videos we created.” Those most recently include the 2021 *Justice* visuals that Ranta executive-produced, from the Diane Keaton co-starring “Ghost” (in which she says Keaton brought “the most magical” energy to the set) to “Peaches,” which earned Ranta her first Grammy nod for best music video/film. The objective for the latter visual was simple: “Show Justin in his element. We hadn’t seen that since he was a kid.”

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20  
22

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WOMAN OF THE YEAR

# Olivia Rodrigo

Photographed by David Needleman

W

**HEN OLIVIA RODRIGO** scored the first big hit of 2021 with the heartbreak ballad “drivers license” — which debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 and spent eight weeks on top, a nearly unheard-of level of achievement for an official debut single — it seemed fairly likely that it would end up towering over the rest of her breakthrough year.

By the time her rookie season came to a close, however, “drivers license” was firmly in her rear view. With the scorching post-breakup missive “good 4 u,” Rodrigo scored a second Hot 100 No. 1 that proved just as culturally pervasive, with a shout-along chorus, searing guitars and pulse-racing drum fills that proved the pop-punk revival percolating just below the mainstream had officially emerged aboveground. And the album both tracks were on, the rapturously received and Billboard 200-topping *Sour*, became one of the year’s biggest full-length sets, earning

an album of the year nod for this year’s Grammy Awards — one of seven awards Rodrigo is up for in April. Merely a year into her solo career, the 19-year-old singer-songwriter isn’t a one- or even a two-hit wonder; she’s simply Olivia Rodrigo.

“When people from all walks of life and all over the world really connect with an album and artist this powerfully, you don’t stand in the way,” says John Janick, chairman/CEO of Interscope Geffen A&M (IGA), whose Geffen label announced Rodrigo’s signing three days before the release of “drivers license” in January 2021. “You do what feels right and what is authentic to the artist and project. You also think long term.”

In the short term, that means preparing for her *Sour* tour — Rodrigo’s first time hitting the road — which begins in March and will take her across America and Europe through early July. But while Rodrigo’s early blockbuster success would undoubtedly allow her to fill arenas, she’s instead visiting mostly smaller amphitheaters and concert halls. “I think it’s important not to skip steps in my career,” she says of the underplay strategy. “And also, I’m just really excited to play these more intimate venues



and get to know my fans on a deeper, more personal level.”

At the same time, *Billboard*'s Woman of the Year will also get reacquainted with herself, as she lays the groundwork for her next album — and she'll do it with a significant new addition to her team. Rodrigo recently signed with Aleen Keshishian and Zack Morgenroth of Lighthouse Media + Management, joining a roster that includes Selena Gomez and a slew of A-list actors. (She parted ways with longtime manager Kristen Smith of Camp Far West in January; Rodrigo declined to comment on the change.)

“Olivia is a once-in-a-generation singer-songwriter,” says Keshishian. “We were blown away by her preternatural intelligence, work ethic, sensitivity and vision. It has been so impressive getting to know her and seeing firsthand how grounded and down to earth she is, as well as how much gratitude she has. Not only is she collaborative, but she is respectful and appreciative of her collaborators. For an artist to be able to take suggestions and synthesize them, while still making sure their vision is implemented, is an extremely unique quality and something at which Olivia excels.”

“Performing the songs now is even more special than it was when I was writing them in my bedroom, because they now have so many other people’s stories intertwined within them.”

It'll be a different process this time around for Rodrigo than when she was a high-schooler better known as a Disney TV star than as a singer-songwriter. But she has already reunited with a familiar face in *Sour* co-writer/producer Dan Nigro, and she says their work on that album's follow-up is underway — and they even have a title already.

**I'm sure there were countless moments in the past year when you thought, “I can't believe this is happening to me” — but is there one that stands out as particularly unbelievable?**

One of the craziest moments in my life was getting to go to the White House and meet President Joe Biden and support vaccination in America. The whole time I was in the White House having this incredible experience, I was just thinking about how I got to do it because I wrote a bunch of songs in my bedroom. That was just a real “pinch me” moment.

***Sour* was one of 2021's biggest and best-reviewed albums, but once it was out, you sort of left it alone musically — no deluxe editions, no bonus tracks, no official remixes, no collaborations or one-offs last year to augment the “*Sour* era.” Was it important to you to just let the album stand on its own?**

I chose not to do any bonus tracks or special editions because *Sour* just felt like such a distinct era in my life, and I felt like I wanted to give the songs and album time to breathe. And yeah, I'm excited to create a new era of my music. I really like the way the album existed as a body of work.

**You're about to head out on tour almost a year after the album came out. Do you find yourself connecting to the songs in different ways after all this time?**

A really beautiful thing about songwriting is watching songs that are so personal to you go out into the world and kind of take on another life. So performing the songs now is even more special than it was when I was writing them in my bedroom, because they now have so many other people's stories intertwined within them, too. I'm really excited to experience that firsthand on tour.

**I know you never really stop writing songs, but have you been able to write any music with a new project in mind yet?**

I have a title for my next album and a few songs. It's really exciting to think about the next world that's coming up for me. I just love writing songs. I'm trying not to put too much pressure on myself. [I want to] just sort of explore and have fun right now.

**Have you been getting back in the lab at all with Dan Nigro, your primary artistic collaborator on *Sour*? Do the two of you feel committed to working together again on whatever the next project may be?**

I absolutely love working with Dan. We have such a good groove together. We are always sharing ideas back-and-forth and have been carving out time to work together in the studio. The craziness of *Sour* being out in the world was something that really only Dan and I could relate to, and I think that has brought us closer together. I trust him so much and really enjoy the music we've been making.

**The explosive success of “good 4 u” seems to have played a large part in pushing the pop-punk revival that had been percolating under the mainstream. Do you feel connected to that?**

I absolutely love pop-punk and emo music. I think more than anything people are longing for those super emotional, less polished moments in music, so the aggressiveness of punk is really enticing.

**What makes you most excited about popular music in 2022?**

I love how increasingly genreless pop music is becoming. Pop music can mean so many different things, and I really love hearing so many different flavors of it these days. I am also just really excited about female singer-songwriters and how honestly and truthfully they're speaking up. That's always really inspiring to me. It's so exciting to me to watch young women's voices be heard and appreciated and celebrated in the ways that they have been lately. I just can't wait to cheer on the future, my peers and future generations of female singer-songwriters.

**Does songwriting feel different now after “drivers license”? Are you able to still write with the same kind of abandon?**

It's definitely a different experience writing a second album after having a debut that was so well received. I still write so much of my music in my bedroom though, and I don't think that experience will ever change. Writing songs will hopefully always be an outlet for me to process my feelings before anything else.

—ANDREW UNTERBERGER



WOMEN  
IN MUSIC  
honorees

# Saweetie

GAME CHANGER

Photographed by Shelby Goldstein



Saweetie photographed  
on Jan. 11 at The Prospect  
Hollywood in Los Angeles.

Styling by Wayman + Micah  
Atelier Zuhra gown and cape,  
Voyetté shoes, Gourmet Aesthetic  
turban, Anabela Chan earrings,  
Dena Kemp bracelet, necklace  
and rings, Jacob & Co necklace  
and ring, Kallati necklace.



S

**AWEETIE WON'T STOP** reminding you that she finished college, but she'll never stop learning. She walks into the Beverly Hills Hotel's Polo Lounge in late January in full Elle Woods regalia: a silk fuschia pantsuit, a red Hermès Birkin in her hands — the kind she has rapped about countless times and showed off on social media — stuffed with notebooks and folders, like an ultra-luxe school bag.

Before diving into her plan for global domination, Saweetie carefully stows away the small plates and silverware at the table ("Sorry, I just don't like clutter," she explains), showing off a surprisingly simple French manicure devoid of crystals or other distractions. Right now, it's the only low-key thing about her.

Since graduating from the University of Southern California in 2016 with a bachelor's degree in communication and an emphasis in business, Saweetie has been balancing her lives as both a hitmaker and an aspiring mogul. She's got the string of hits (three Rhythmic Airplay No. 1s, including the multiplatinum "My Type") and the 2022 Grammy Award nominations (best new artist and best rap song for her Doja Cat collaboration, "Best Friend"), but she has also become a next-gen branding queen, breezing through ads that don't even feel like ads and joining an elite crew of global superstars like BTS and J Balvin who have had their own themed McDonald's meals.

"I've shown that I can still be a respected artist, but I've changed the way businesses present brand partnerships to artists," she says. "Now, it's not just a photo shoot. Now it's, 'We want additional high-level content that can exist on TikTok, on Twitter.' Not only do they want the product placement, they want us to interact in a way that'll make people laugh, make people think."

All the while, the world continues counting down the days until she finally delivers her long-awaited, oft-delayed first studio album, *Pretty Bitch Music* (which, at the least, should arrive before Rihanna drops *R9*). "I've put my foot down. I'm going to finally lock in to record this album," Saweetie says firmly, promising that it will arrive "definitely before the summer." Yes, she has said that before, but Saweetie has had her eye on playing the long game from the start, back when she was uploading viral freestyles from her car that landed her a Warner Records deal in 2018. On her breakthrough hit, "Icy Girl," the artist born Diamonté Quiava Valentin Harper — then living in a small Los Angeles apartment she found on Craigslist — laid out her grand vision: "You tryna get a bag of weed? I'm tryna get a bag a week/Put it in my savings and invest in the right companies."

Four years later, it's still a pretty accurate mission statement for this year's Game Changer, who is redefining what it means to build a brand in the influencer era — and showing her fans the process behind it, even as her music career develops at its own pace.

"Saweetie is the poster child for well-roundedness in the market.

Everyone right now wants to work with Saweetie because she has such great engagement," says Sabrina Brazil, her longtime content manager. The two have been linked since before they were born: Their fathers were in prison together and had babies around the same time once they got out. The two met as kids, but it wasn't until Saweetie transferred to USC, where Brazil was studying business, that they joined forces and "started branding and doing content before we knew we were branding and doing content," Brazil says. She would take photos and videos of Saweetie, and the pair would come up with entire backstories for them. "One day, we're like, 'We're selling *Scarface!*,'" she recalls. Music, Brazil says, has always been a vessel for a lot more: "We're in gaming, we're in cosmetics, we're in fashion."

"No one works harder than Saweetie," adds Warner Records co-chairman/COO Tom Corson. "There's no replacement for true talent, charisma and perseverance."

At times, that ambition has threatened to eclipse Saweetie's identity as an artist: Her biggest hits, "My Type" and "Tap In," are both based around samples of early-2000s hits by Petey Pablo and Too \$hort, respectively, which has led some detractors to question

"I know that my purpose is to deliver a message: to let women know that no matter what you're going through, hard work pays off."

her originality. It was a conversation with none other than Cher, however — they crossed paths as co-stars of a recent MAC Cosmetics campaign — that motivated Saweetie to push herself more on the album. "I don't want to be safe anymore. Now it's time to experiment," she says. Her new single, "Closer" (featuring H.E.R.), is a roller-rink-ready love song that sounds right at home on top 40, and she has teased both an upcoming Latin collaboration and a song about meditation. She pushes back on the idea that she needs to define the "Saweetie sound" — who says a 28-year-old has to have herself all figured out? *Pretty Bitch Music*, she promises, will "address the different layers of who I am as a woman."

"To be relevant and to be charting, that's amazing," she continues. "But I know that my purpose is to deliver a message. My message is to share my truth and to let women know that no matter what you're going through, hard work pays off. I represent colored women, I represent ambitious women. I represent college girls.





Jasmin Erbas Couture gown, Anabela Chan earrings, Dena Kemp bracelet, necklace and rings, Jacob & Co necklace and ring, Kallati necklace.



I represent women who don't give a fuck and who are unapologetic.”

Just as social media-savvy artists score big debuts by teasing and hyping material on TikTok, Saweetie takes the same approach with brand partnerships, often using them as launch pads for new music. In October 2020, she previewed her Jhené Aiko collaboration “Back to the Streets” during a Jack Daniel’s livestream ahead of its release. Last fall, she appeared in a Beats by Dre commercial, listening to her own song “Get It Girl” weeks before it would be officially released on the soundtrack to the final season of HBO’s *Insecure*. (It will also be included on *Pretty Bitch Music*.)

“Saweetie’s potential is limitless,” says Warner co-chairman/CEO Aaron Bay-Schuck. “She has gone from a viral video rapping in her car to a global artist and brand with some of the biggest hit records in the world, along with garnering incredible cultural currency — all of this in just a few short years. Her development has been nothing short of amazing.”

And development is something Saweetie takes seriously. “Sometimes our hit song is bigger than us and we’re just thrown into the game,” she says. She thinks she “rushed” her first two EPs — 2018’s *High Maintenance* and 2019’s *Icy* — to meet demand and doesn’t want to do the same with her album. She scrapped plans for an EP called *Icy Season*, intended to tide fans over until *Pretty Bitch Music*, so she could focus on the main event. “When you get signed, the label wants a hit. They want a return on their investment, which I understand,” she says. “But it’s important for artists to understand themselves before they start seeking for hits. Because if you don’t know yourself, you don’t know your music.”

Saweetie has been open about her desire to improve her performance skills, putting in hours of vocal lessons and dance classes following plenty of Twitter snark and online criticism of some of her 2021 gigs. She’s also candid about what’s going on behind the scenes. In April 2020, she parted ways with manager Max Gousse and brought on her uncle (and MC Hammer’s brother) Louis Burrell to manage her instead. And last September, Saweetie signed with Full Stop Management, home to pop stars like Lizzo, Harry Styles and Gwen Stefani, but says matter of factly that she’s “no longer with them.” It was amicable, she explains, but it wasn’t the right time to grow her team.

The way Saweetie sees it, sometimes it’s better to hit the brakes if it means avoiding a crash landing. And if the process takes a little longer? Well, that’s just an opportunity for more content: She has been filming the making of *Pretty Bitch Music* and plans to release a documentary about it.

“My goal is to be omnipresent,” she says. “When I collaborate with these brands, it’s strategic. It’s to be ubiquitous. It’s to make sure that my name, my music and my message is known globally.” Brazil recalls a tweet from a fan that succinctly summed up their goals. “It said [something] like, ‘The year is 2040. We’re pulling up in our Saweetie cars, drinking our Saweetie drink, eating our Saweetie meal, getting Saweetie gas,’” she says. “It was a funny joke because her name is everywhere. The goal is to take over every sphere that we’re in.”

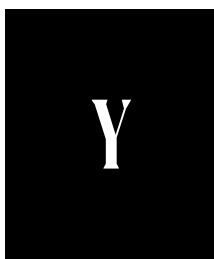
If that means that one day the *Icy* brand becomes bigger than the music, Saweetie’s more than OK with that. “I want *Icy* to be so successful that when I’m long gone, my great-great-grandchildren are running it. It’ll be generational wealth,” she says. “I want *Icy* to supersede Saweetie.” When our interview wraps, she swiftly calls back the waiter and requests their finest cabernet sauvignon. He returns with the glass just as Saweetie pulls out a college-ruled notebook from her Birkin, eager to get back to building her empire.

—HERAN MAMO

## RULE BREAKER

## Karol G

Photographed by Heather Hazzan



**YOU COULD MEASURE** the success of Karol G's first North American headlining tour last year by the numbers: 24 shows, 128,000 tickets sold, a gross of \$10.9 million, according to Billboard Boxscore.

Or you could measure it in wigs: Countless fans, from the floor seats to the rafters, donning aqua-blue hair for the night to mimic the pop

star's own technicolor tresses. The first time she noticed it, "I was very shocked," the 31-year-old says. "But after the tour, I realized Karol G and 'Bichota' — slang for bad bitch, and the title of one of her hit singles — "are a movement."

With her relatable lyrics, empowering expressions of female sexuality and adventurous sound — incorporating elements of R&B, pop, reggae and more — this year's recipient of the Rule Breaker award has become a singular force in the male-dominated world of reggaetón. Last year, Karol G was the first solo Latin female artist to sell out a major North American tour since her fellow Colombian Shakira a few years prior. (In Latin America, Karol G headlines festivals and stadium shows.) And thanks to her third studio album, *KG0516*, which spawned global anthems like the Nicki Minaj collaboration "Tusa," she was also the top Latin female artist of 2021, according to MRC Data. "When I started, I tried to please others," says Karol G (real name: Carolina Giraldo). "Now, I'm me. I talk about what I want in my songs, I dress how I want to dress, and I believe that when I decided to show myself as I am, people really connected with me."

**Do you consider yourself a rule breaker?**

Breaking the rules has long been the foundation of my project. If we're going to work with a brand, for instance, what are we going to do that's completely different? That's why getting this award fills me with so much love and pride — that's always the starting point, even in my lyrics. I reached a point where I got tired of being careful about what I said and

started writing songs as I speak, without a filter, so that it flows organically and naturally. And that broke a bit from [the norm of] femininity that comes with being a woman.

**Are the rules changing for women? And if so, for better or worse?**

For better! Although I still read headlines that say, "Karol G spread her legs, and we almost saw her bichota!" Seriously, I'm selling out stadiums and this is the only thing you can come up with? Women are still very sexualized. I also feel women tend to get down on themselves in panel discussions: "Women don't..." "Women can't..." I don't like that line of communication because it centers on the problem. It's very important for me to tell women that it is possible, there are opportunities, people *do* buy tickets.

**What female artists did you admire growing up?**

The Spice Girls, Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera — they were all artists we followed and admired, but we never felt we could get as far because they sang in English. But Selena, watching that movie [1997's *Selena* starring Jennifer Lopez] was a before-and-after for me. That's when I said, "I want to be a singer, and this is my role model."

**You spoke in your 2021 *Billboard* cover story about wanting to build a brand outside of music, and now you'll have a substantial role alongside Sofia Vergara in the upcoming Netflix series about Colombian drug dealer Griselda Blanco. What has your foray into acting been like?**

I play Carla, one of Griselda's "mules" who transports drugs to the U.S. It's a great role because there's real character development. I'm in acting and body-movement classes, and it totally opened my eyes to a different perspective. When you're not an actor, your goal is to do things well so they're credible. But in acting, you really get inside a character and forget about what people want. It has helped my career as an artist and my development onstage.

—LEILA COBO



ICON

## Bonnie

## Raitt

B

**ONNIE RAITT RESIDES** among the redwoods.

She had always dreamed of living in Northern California like one of her heroes, Joan Baez, did, up in Big Sur. So years ago, once she had wrapped the tour for *Nick of Time* — her 1989 commercial breakthrough on Capitol Records that won her three Grammy Awards, including

album of the year — she took a break and rented a furnished place in Marin County, outside San Francisco. She typically splits her time between here and Los Angeles. But for the past two years, the environment up north suited her especially well. “If I wasn’t going to get to play,” Raitt, 72, says today, verdant foliage encroaching on the window behind her, “at least I could hike and walk by the ocean and be near this incredible mecca of counterculture.”

It makes sense finding Raitt here. Marrying music and activism “is why I agreed to do this for a living,” she says. When she went to college at Radcliffe in the late 1960s, playing guitar was a hobby. “I was going to major in African studies and go work with the American Foreign Service and undo colonialism — yeah!” she says with a fierce little grunt. Amid the student strike of 1970, she fronted a ragtag band called the Revolutionary Music Collective. “The best things in life are free/When you take them from the bourgeoisie!” — that was my hero line,” recalls Raitt with a laugh.

The gig was short, but the career Raitt would enjoy within a couple of years did become pretty revolutionary. Through her mentor, promoter Dick Waterman, she met and learned from the country-blues artists who were her idols — Son House, Mississippi Fred McDowell, Muddy Waters, Sippie Wallace — and became the rare woman of her era not only fronting a band but more than holding her own on guitar while doing so. Her slide guitar prowess, along with her casually confident stage presence and soulful alto, earned the respect (and friendship) of the men who were her closest contemporaries, like Jackson Browne and James Taylor.

Looking back now, Raitt is, characteristically, not terribly impressed with herself. “I mean, I was OK — I wasn’t that great,” she says with a shrug. “I was inexpensive, nonthreatening and interesting.” But she does admit that “it was an unusual thing to have a white woman — any woman — playing country-blues. I know having the chops of playing blues guitar got my foot in the door. I think I bypassed having to prove myself.”

Raitt achieved critical acclaim early on, and Warner Bros.

Photographed by Gabriela Hasbun

Records signed her at just 21. But until *Nick of Time* — and, in the few years following it, her run of hit singles including “Something To Talk About” and “I Can’t Make You Love Me” that introduced her to a new generation of fans, the now elder millennials — commercial success wasn’t her calling card. By her own admission, she has always made her living on the road. Yet Raitt has unwaveringly stuck to her own artistic North Star and to the impulse that led her to music in the first place: using her voice to amplify causes like electing progressive political candidates, sustainable energy and environmental protection — she sets aside a share of her touring profits for them like “the sixth band member” — without ever letting them overshadow the music itself.

And incredibly, this year’s Icon has done that by and large as an interpreter, not a writer, of the songs on her albums — a fact that still can shock even a longtime fan. They all tend to sound like Raitt originals because she never simply sings a lyric; she *inhabits* it. “She was able to glean so much from these songwriters,” says Lucinda Williams, adding that she is often asked to play “Bonnie Raitt songs” that Raitt didn’t actually write. “She had good taste. When I first started out, it maybe held me back a little bit that I wanted to do so many kinds of music — rock and blues and country. But she did it, too, and she made it work. She was a great role model.”

One of those songs, from Raitt’s 1974 album, *Streetlights*, was by her longtime friend, the great singer-songwriter John Prine, who died from COVID-19 complications in 2020. Many artists have covered “Angel From Montgomery,” but it’s Raitt’s version that became definitive. It’s unsentimental yet deeply poignant, a plainspoken expression of longing for something more: “If dreams were lightning/And thunder were desire/This old house would have burned down a long time ago.”

She sang it for her idol Wallace, who told her of the many blueswomen who came before her, “stuck in marriages that were dead ends or being abused but had no agency to leave. Who couldn’t get free.” As a young feminist, she sang it for her

Raitt photographed Feb. 1 at Throckmorton Theatre in Mill Valley, Calif.







mother, for her generation of women “who had to compromise and get no credit for the work they did and then later in life felt like they didn’t do enough.” Today, she sings it to honor Prine and for a whole different group of women around the world who, because of where they live or their circumstances, “don’t get a shot.”

The ones who, in other words, won’t get the chance to become a Bonnie Raitt.

**I** **T WAS ALL I COULD DO** to try to sleep for seven hours — that’s how excited I was,” says Raitt with a glimmer in her eye.

She has just come off three weeks in a Sausalito, Calif., studio with her band, prepping to tour her 18th studio album, *Just Like That...*, out April 22, and she’s positively buzzing. (Williams and Mavis Staples will join her as guests.) “It was like I was 8 years old every morning: ‘What am I going to wear today?’” For Raitt — a die-hard road warrior who consistently fills theaters around the world — the past couple of years of never even being in the same room with her longtime crew were “just crushing. Night would come, and I’d go, ‘That’s it? That’s as cool as it’s going to get today?’”

Raitt learned very early on the value of delivering as great a performance in Topeka, Kan., as at Radio City Music Hall. Her father, John Raitt, was a dashing Broadway leading man in several classic musicals, but he never got too comfortable. “My dad chose to tour his hits regionally instead of just waiting for another Broadway show,” she recalls. “For him, bringing *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel* and *The Pajama Game* to the hinterlands was a life-fulfilling career that brought him great joy.” She also saw that without his proactive impulse to tour, he would simply be waiting for a call.

“I took that lesson to heart,” she says. “I can control which gigs I do, whom I open for, who opens for me when I get a little more famous, how much the ticket prices are, what to pay my band.” And when it came to a label deal, “I didn’t care if they offered me the moon — I would never let anybody tell me how to dress or what to record.”

Raitt spent the majority of her career at Warner Bros. and then Capitol before founding her own label, Redwing Records, a decade ago to release her music. (For *Just Like That...*, it’s partnering with Sub Pop for U.S. physical distribution and Alternative Distribution Alliance for global digital and ex-U.S. physical distribution.) All the while, she has managed to very much remain her own boss. In the late 1970s, after her version of Del Shannon’s “Runaway” became a hit, a bidding war over Raitt ensued between Warner Bros. and Columbia, which had been battling between themselves at the time. (James Taylor had recently left the former for the latter; Warner Bros. then signed away Columbia’s Paul Simon.) Raitt and her attorney, Nat Weiss, recognized her leverage — and renegotiated her Warner Bros. contract, “a really big deal” at the time, she would say later.

And while she doesn’t own her pre-Redwing masters, Raitt has worked out a “gentlewoman’s agreement” with Warner that she likes just fine: “They won’t sell my songs for commercials, and they won’t exploit my material without running it by me,” she explains. “I know I really serve at the good nature of the people who set that up for me, and at any point, some big monster could come in and say, ‘See ya later. If we want to use this for breakfast cereal, we will.’ But it kind of [works] better to work as a partner with your former label to maximize how you get your music out.”

That kind of calm rationale permeates how Raitt thinks about most aspects of her career, and as we talk, a kind of Bonnie’s Rules for Living seem to naturally tumble out of her. Take her advice for being an activist artist: “It’s all about how you do it; making sure you vet where the money goes so people see you’ve really done your homework, and it’s the tone of it, too — I don’t preach from the stage.” Or her preferred vibe in the studio: “If you get the right people in the room, it’s work and it’s a joy. No idiots with bad attitudes, you know?” Or her approach to being a bandleader: “You have to risk not being liked to tell someone you’re not nuts about how they’re playing. If you don’t watch it, you push the Mom button, and nobody likes a bossy know-it-all. One thing that’s good about being in recovery — when I hurt someone’s feelings or squash their idea too soon, I apologize.”

Raitt has long been open about her past struggle with alcoholism, and her sobriety since age 37 informs another of her personal directives: how to stay not only active, but vibrant, 50 years into a music career. “All of us who are still out on the road, we didn’t used to warm up. Now we warm up our voices. We stopped trashing ourselves in our 30s, just about,” she explains. “You can’t keep up this pace if you don’t do yoga or hike or get some exercise. You have to get enough sleep. You have to keep people who are drains out of your circuitry and your life.” Getting sober “made a huge difference in how easy it is to be out on the road,” she continues. “But it’s a pleasure taking care of myself.”

On *Just Like That...*, Raitt certainly sounds like the best version of herself. Her voice has only become richer and more nuanced over the years, her range spanning a low purr all the way up to a floating falsetto, her ability to effortlessly bend a lyric to her will as supple as ever. “It’s show-based and what-I’ve-already-done-based,” she says of how she has always picked songs for an album: a few “killer ballads,” “a little bit of blues,” something unusual for the guitar and some “pile-driving rockers” toward the end.

Raitt produced the album, which, as usual, is studded with her hand-picked roster of songwriters (ranging from Al Anderson to her late friend Frederick “Toots” Hibbert of Toots & The Maytals), but also includes four originals by Raitt herself, the haunting title track among them. “More and more, the songs I’ve written lately are very personal,” she says. “I could farm it out to somebody more adept than I, but it’s nice to write on assignment. I don’t care if they’re not on everybody’s best-of list: They’re on mine.”

The subject of loss does come up — the close friends Raitt lost amid the pandemic and the heroes who took her under their wing and passed long ago. “But I knew being with those older people was such a gift,” she says. “They didn’t think about when they would go, and I didn’t think about it.” Like McDowell, Wallace and Prine, she has a life on the road she wouldn’t trade for the world. “To travel and wake up in five different cities a week and you’ve got to make sure you’re just as badass as the last time you came through?” she says, still sounding like a breathless 21-year-old. “It’s really fun!”

Bonnie’s Rules for Living, after all, don’t include stopping anytime soon. She always has a five-year plan, and when she is done touring *Just Like That...*, she’ll take a little break, and then the job will go on: time to think about the next record. “I mean, my dad toured till he was 86!” Raitt exclaims as if anything else would be plain lazy. “Look at Tony Bennett. Look at Mick and Keith. I don’t feel any urgency to finish. I feel like I’m pretty well understood, and I’ve felt understood this whole time.”

—REBECCA MILZOFF

WOMEN

IN MUSIC

honorees





POWERHOUSE

# Doja Cat

Photographed by Ramona Rosales

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**LAST YEAR, AFTER TAKING** the Grammys stage for a futuristic, dance-heavy performance of her Hot 100-topping hit “Say So,” Doja Cat broke down in tears. “That one moment set me off in a different way,” she says. For an artist who has been toiling in the industry since 2013, making the rare jump from viral breakout to bona fide pop star in the process, “it was just the buildup and all the hard work and seeing the vision come to life,” she explains.

As it turns out, she was just getting started. Three months later, in June, Doja released her acclaimed third album, *Planet Her*, which debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard 200 and launched two more Hot 100 top 10s with “Kiss Me More” featuring SZA and “Need To Know.” Despite the challenges of the pandemic, this year’s Powerhouse has become one of the era’s biggest success stories, whether she’s showcasing her range by dominating multiple radio formats or putting her classic showmanship front and center at awards shows. “I love making music, but performing has blossomed into something that makes me just as happy,” she says. “I feel most powerful when I am fully in character onstage.”

#### **What performers did you look to growing up?**

It’s pretty obvious that I’m in love with everything Nicki Minaj has put out into the world. You have your Janets and your Beyoncés. I look at [other artists’] projects and performances and go, “Wow, I hope one day I get to that point.”

#### **“Say So” topped the Hot 100 once Nicki Minaj hopped on its remix. Who is still on your dream list to work with?**

I only want to work with people I believe in and who inspire me and make me feel good. I really want to meet Tracee Ellis Ross — and at the same time, I’m terrified because, to me, she’s the boss at the end of the game of life that I’m living. Her and Maya Rudolph.

#### **You’ve long showcased your own humor online and brought it to life while hosting the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards. Would you want to host Saturday Night Live?**

I like the idea of doing that because I love, obviously, to tell jokes. But it’s a little nerve-racking because it’s something friends have suggested to me, [doing] stand-up or comedy. That would kind of be my first gig. Just the thought of that terrifies me a little bit.

#### **Now that more eyes are on it, how do you use social media differently?**

People are always like, “What’s your Finsta?” [a secret Instagram account], and I don’t want one. I don’t like the idea of having to juggle social media, which already sucks as it is. Not to say it hasn’t helped me so fucking much, but the way I feel about Instagram is: I go on, look at pictures of makeup and fashion and cats, and that’s pretty much it. I’ve unfollowed everyone who is a person that I know.

#### **How do you process the success you’ve had in the past year?**

When I’m reflecting on YouTube videos, watching all the stuff I did from another perspective. I had a friend who was like, “Oh, yeah? You watching videos of yourself? You enjoying your own stuff right now?” It was lighthearted, but it did hurt a little bit, and now I feel a little bit like a narcissist when I watch my own things. I feel a little bit guilty. But whatever — you’re observing your existence.

—LYNDSEY HAVENS



TRAILBLAZER

# Phoebe Bridgers

Photographed by Sami Drasin



Bridgers photographed on  
Oct. 12, 2021, at The Paramour  
Estate in Los Angeles.







**HOEBE BRIDGERS IS NOT** in album mode. She's not in touring mode or label-leading mode right now, either. "I'm kind of in like, homey, taking-in-art mode," she says over Zoom. Bridgers is sitting in her sun-filled Los Angeles home, wearing overalls and holding her black pug, Maxine. "Like, walking-around, reading-and-listening-to-records mode — which probably means I'm about to

make something, but who knows."

Bridgers has earned the break. Since the release of her critically acclaimed debut, 2017's *Stranger in the Alps*, she has gained a reputation as a quiet storm, capable of stunning sold-out crowds into silence with intimate lyrics sung in a plaintive near-whisper. Acts from Taylor Swift to The 1975 have invited Bridgers to guest on songs that require an added layer of emotional devastation, while her indie-folk side projects — like the supergroup boygenius, with fellow singer-songwriters Julien Baker and Lucy Dacus, and Better Oblivion Community Center with her "emo role model," Conor Oberst — have spotlighted her prowess as a burgeoning rock star with a wry sense of humor and a fearless attitude toward the genre's patriarchy.

The 27-year-old released her second album, the cathartic *Punisher*, on Dead Oceans in June 2020 amid the height of the pandemic. But while the world was on pause, this year's Trailblazer got to work. She replaced full-scale touring with a packed schedule of inventive livestreamed performances — including a prerelease run she dubbed World Tour with stops like "Kitchen," "Bathroom" and "Bed" — and actively connected with fans on social media with more livestreams, calls for political action, behind-the-scenes photos and candid TikToks.

That October, she also became a CEO, launching Saddest Factory Records under Secretly Group and hand-picking a roster of alt-pop artists and fellow singer-songwriters, including MUNA and her first signee, Claud. And as live performances returned this past year, Bridgers became an even bigger part of the mainstream music conversation, smashing her guitar on *Saturday Night Live* in February and attending the Grammys in March as a four-time nominee, including for best new artist. Following a brief fall tour, she'll head out for more dates across the United States and Europe this spring.

**If you could go back and give yourself advice before launching your own label, what would it be?**

I feel like I followed my own advice. The stuff that has been great to learn and that people have allowed me to learn is more business-related. It's so nice to have business partners who have owned labels before. I would have had way more advice to give myself if I had gone out and done that by myself. Weirdly, there are older versions of me everywhere at the label to stop me from doing stupid shit, and I'm glad that I listened to my own advice to only sign stuff that I love because then every decision is kind of easy.

**Do you feel like a mentor to the people on your roster?**

I've had dynamics, especially when I was younger, where older people I'm intimidated by will be all like, finger guns with me and think that we are peers, but actually, I'm coming in with a totally different life experience. So I try not to be too mentor-y, and I try

also to be like, "You're cooler than me, and I trust you. I don't really know what's up with TikTok, and you probably know way more about Bandcamp bands from your college than I do." Having all of us be mentors to one another is a dynamic I would like to keep.

**It has been over three years since the boygenius EP. Are you planning anything new with Lucy Dacus and Julien Baker?**

Since that band started, our plans have been like, "Whenever it's easy and fun." I'm sure we will, but none of us have gotten to tour our own solo [albums], so we're just meeting up whenever we can. Maybe we'll try to go on a vacation or something. Maybe the next time we hang out will not be for music.

**Speaking of your collaborators, Taylor Swift revealed she was a huge fan of yours this past year when she invited you to guest on "Nothing New" from *Red (Taylor's Version)*.**

**How did that happen?**

I got this random text from Aaron Dessner that was really weirdly worded for him. And I was like, "What the fuck is this?" And as I was reading it, I [realized], "Oh, my God, it's from Taylor Swift." We started texting about all kinds of stuff. It was just a total high. It felt like when you meet someone at a party and you're in the corner all night being like, "Me too!" I'm excited for when we hang out for the first time. We've only been very [COVID-19], online friends.

**Some of the one-off singles you've put out, like your cover of Bo Burnham's "That Funny Feeling," have raised funds for causes like voter rights and abortion access. Plenty of artists are private about their politics — why do you choose not to be?**

I've been outspoken about politics definitely, but with stuff like that, it's kind of a no-brainer. For my generation, politics have never even been that complex. It has always been, like, someone evil [in office]. Music is such a cool way [to get involved] — it's the only thing people care about about me. That sounds reductive, but if you give people something to share and something that will forever go to that [cause], I find it's a way easier way to contribute.

**Rock can feel humorless sometimes, but you're quite uninhibited and often hilarious on social media. How important is it for you to show that side of yourself?**

It's weird because it's all under the umbrella of capital. Some asshole owns Instagram, and people are making this totally unethical algorithm to torture kids and fucking... I don't know. Twitter's evil. It's all evil. But it has been the only connector for at least two years, more so than ever. So I don't know. Working under the constraints of the world that we live in, it's important to me, and I like connecting with fans, and that's my favorite thing about it by far.

**It has been a year since your guitar-smashing moment on *Saturday Night Live* — and the ensuing Twitterstorm, led by rock's outraged elder statesmen. What did that reveal to you?**

It's pathetic and funny. No part of me thought it would piss anybody off. I literally went to sleep and woke up and was like, "What the fuck?" It's just so stupid. I've said this before, but at least the right people hate me. At least it's not like I stepped on something that I didn't mean to. I was just like, "Oh, good." —CHRISTINE WERTHMAN

WOMEN

IN MUSIC

honorees

IMPACT

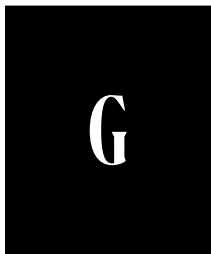
# H.E.R.

Photographed by Munachi Osegbu

H.E.R. photographed  
Feb. 9 in Los Angeles.

Styling by Wouri Vice  
Alexandre Vauthier  
top and pants.





**ABI WILSON ALMOST** didn't become H.E.R.

"There was pressure on me after graduating high school to attend college," recalls the 24-year-old Bay Area native, who has been a performer since she was 10. "I was going to study something in the medical field because my mom is a nurse."

But just a year after graduating, H.E.R.'s decision to forgo college for a music career proved prescient. In 2016, RCA Records released her debut EP, *H.E.R., Vol. 1*, and her slow and steady journey toward releasing an LP began. Last year, *Back of My Mind* finally arrived, and it's now an album of the year Grammy nominee — proof of what a singular artist H.E.R. has become along the way. Her early choice to remain semi-anonymous behind a mysterious persona and sunglasses encouraged listeners to focus on her as a musician: a guitar virtuoso as comfortable playing bass as drums and piano, and a singer whose angelic yet assertive vocals amplify her emotional lyrics about relationships and love.

More recently, H.E.R. has taken on another role: award-winning voice of the times. "I Can't Breathe," sparked by the murder of George Floyd, won the Grammy for song of the year in 2021. That same year, H.E.R.'s "Fight for You" (from the drama *Judas and the Black Messiah* about Black Panther Fred Hampton) took home the Academy Award for best original song. (It's also a current Grammy nominee for song of the year.) All the while, she has continued to showcase her versatility in mesmerizing stage performances, holding her own alongside the likes of Keith Urban, Gary Clark Jr. and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

"It has been so many years of being the underdog, watching other artists blossom and waiting my turn," says this year's American Express Impact honoree. "Women and other artists need to know that good things don't happen overnight. You can't cheat the grind."

Now she's seeing the results of all that work as she expands her artistic pursuits even further. She is rehearsing for a stadium world tour with Coldplay starting in March ("I'll always be a soul baby, but actually, I listen to as much rock as I do R&B"), working as a global spokeswoman for L'Oréal ("It's dope that they're stepping in with curly hair products to support [our] natural hair") and will make her feature-film debut in a new adaptation of the Broadway musical *The Color Purple*. But no matter the medium in which she works, her intent is the same.

"Everything that I've released represents me," says H.E.R. "I'll never put out something just because it looks or sounds good. It has to be authentic to me — all across the board."

#### **How difficult has it been to bridge the space between commercial artist and activist?**

It never occurred to me to be an activist until I got older and

started to realize how much hatred there is in the world. Obviously, in the beginning, it was a lot more about the music. Organically, however, people are starting to hear and see me more, to experience who I am and not just the music. So with that comes my views on the world: how I felt in 2020 when everything was going on and is still going on. It's a bigger fight, [so] it's my responsibility to use what has an impact — my voice — to speak out on some of these things, like the relationship between Black Americans and Asian Americans. [H.E.R.'s mother is Filipina, and her father is Black.] Not because someone told me to, but because it's what I feel.

#### **Which music forebears helped inspire the artist you desire to be?**

At the end of the day, I've always believed that love conquers all. I've listened to Sly & The Family Stone — my favorite — as well as Marvin Gaye, Prince, Nina Simone, Stevie Wonder and Curtis Mayfield. Their message was always the same: "This is what's happening around us, but let's accept and love each other the way we are." And then there's the blues. That's one of my biggest influences just because of the pain in the music.

#### **As a woman who plays guitar, do you encounter men who still see that as an anomaly?**

Not so much more recently. (*Smiles.*) But sometimes it's like, "What's she going to do with that?" Then I play, and they're like, "OK, let me shut up." I will say that a lot of legends have given me my props as a guitar player — and never put "woman" in front of it, which I absolutely love and respect. They simply appreciate my playing without saying, "Even though you're a woman." During the COVID-19 quarantine, I presented a [weekly livestream] series called *Girls With Guitars*, and we featured a bunch of dope female guitarists. I wanted them to be visible because people don't see us enough. I definitely want to bring that back and make it a bigger thing.

#### **How do you determine which projects and offers to accept?**

More recently, I've really been trying to just take control and be the captain of my own ship. Of course, opinions come in with people saying you should do this or this. So there's a little bit of pressure, [but] at the end of the day, I have to love what I do. So if it's not something I enjoy or where I feel I'm not fully being myself, then I probably shouldn't do it.

I've also been taking control of my creative space. I've always had control of my vision musically, but it has become a lot more sacred to me lately. In the studio, I've been locking in on some ideas I want to create. It's like, "OK, if you're not going to help me execute this thing but want to take it in a whole other direction, then it isn't going to work." I'm really stepping into who I am now — certain in the things that I want to do and who I'm meant to be as a woman.

—GAIL MITCHELL

Alexandre Vauthier dress, Gentle Monster glasses.

HAIR BY BRIANA MERCADO, MAKEUP BY MARISSA VOSSEN, SET DESIGN BY EAMONN MCGLYNN.





## CHART BREAKER

# Summer Walker

Photographed by Gizelle Hernandez



**S**UMMER WALKER IS NOT one to pour her heart out in an Instagram caption. The taciturn Atlanta native communicates the way she knows best: by squeezing every tragedy and triumph into buttery-smooth R&B songs. Her second album, last year's *Still Over It*, sounds like a diary — 20 tracks full of brutally

honest lyrics along with personal messages from Ciara and Cardi B, doling out sisterly advice.

That vulnerability has paid huge dividends: *Still Over It* debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200, landed all 18 of its eligible tracks on the Hot 100 and set the record for the biggest streaming week for an R&B album by a female artist in the United States. But for this year's Chart Breaker, getting the chance to express herself is more than enough. "I don't really talk to many people, so I just tell my business in my songs so I can get it out. It's not really like, 'Oh, yeah, hope this one hits the charts!'" the 25-year-old says with a laugh while her infant daughter — known only to fans as "Bubbles" — coos in the background. Walker has come a long way since she was a 17-year-old recording guitar covers for YouTube in her bedroom, but for her, music still serves the same purpose: "It's just therapy for me."

#### What are you most proud of accomplishing in the past year?

Just meeting people that I really fuck with. I'm really shy when it comes to meeting people because I don't want them to feel like I'm burdening them with my fandom. Usually, I would be like, "Oh, no, I don't want to say anything, I don't want to be annoying." But recently, I've been going out of my comfort zone and talking to people. I really love Taraji [P. Henson]. She came up to me, but still — the old me would've just been like, "Oh, my God, I'm leaving!"

#### Why do you think *Still Over It* resonated with so many people?

Because collectively, n—as ain't shit. We can all agree on that.

#### In 2019, you canceled the bulk of your tour dates for mental health reasons. How are you feeling about your upcoming shows?

I feel the same about performing: I don't like it. But I have noticed myself wanting to do more, like a bigger set design. I find myself putting my own input into my sets and videos. I usually just be like, "All right, whatever y'all want to do, you can do it. I don't care." I've taken a little bit more pride in my craft. Now I have an opinion about everything. For *Still Over It*, it's such a fresh wound, I just want to make sure the story is portrayed properly. I don't want anyone to misconstrue my feelings.

#### While your first two albums focused on trap-R&B sounds, your 2019 EP, *Clear*, was much more stripped back. Would you ever return to that?

Oh, for sure. I am hella excited to do *Clear 2*. The last one was like four songs. This one — I want it to be a lot longer so I can really get that sound out. That's my favorite type of sound. I make what I got to make for the radio, but I'm very excited for [*Clear 2*]. Hopefully, my budget will be permitted. [If not], we got to protest. (Laughs.)

#### If you could spend the entire day doing something aside from music, what would it be?

The entire day? What would I do? I would just want to go to Dubai. I don't think that's the right answer. (Laughs.) I just want to travel and see nature — like mountains in Switzerland, shit I've never seen. [Nature] brings me peace of mind. I'm really obsessed with it. I'll be following all these pages that show nature places, and the shit looks so crazy that it looks edited or fake, but it's really real. I just want to see that if I ever get the chance. There's so much to see, and I've never seen none of it.

—NEENA ROUHANI

WOMEN

IN MUSIC

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RISING STAR

# Gabby Barrett

Photographed by Tracy Allison

Barrett photographed  
Feb. 12 at The Paper House  
in Nashville.

Styling by Tiffany Gifford  
New York Vintage top,  
Wolford bodysuit, AKIRA  
pants, Jennifer Fisher earring,  
German Kabirski ring.







**E**ARLIER THIS WINTER, Gabby Barrett and her husband, guitarist Cade Foehner, went skiing for the first time, not far from where she grew up outside of Pittsburgh. “No bones were broken,” she says, giving two thumbs up over Zoom, though she admits with a light chuckle that Foehner “fell down a lot... I also fell down.”

Mountain missteps aside, Barrett has been soaring lately. The 21-year-old’s career took off in 2020 with “I Hope,” a seemingly sweet love song inspired by a cheating high school boyfriend that delighted listeners with its left-turn knife twist at the chorus’ end. It landed Barrett a deal with Warner Music Nashville and hit the top of *Billboard’s* Country Airplay chart, while a remix featuring Charlie Puth rose to No. 3 on the Hot 100. “I Hope” would also rule Hot Country Songs for 27 weeks — the longest run by a solo female artist since the chart launched in 1958 — and helped Barrett snag three trophies at the 2021 Billboard Music Awards, including top country female artist.

This year’s Rising Star, who welcomed daughter Baylah last year, says the misery that inspired the hit has long since passed. “I don’t think I could write that now,” she says. “I am in a very happy marriage, so I think I would write that a little bit differently.” But contentment has served Barrett just as well: Her follow-up single, “The Good Ones” — the thematic opposite of “I Hope,” released in April 2021 — became the first song by a woman to rule Country Airplay for three weeks since 2011.

Barrett’s next coronation moment will come March 7, when she and Jimmie Allen co-host the 57th annual Academy of Country Music Awards with Dolly Parton in Las Vegas. The icon and newcomer happen to have a lot in common: Both come from big families and married young, both are guided by their faith, and it was Parton who inspired Barrett to write her own truths in her songs. “She’s always writing about her life and honest instances,” says Barrett, who has covered both “Jolene” and “I Will Always Love You.”

And that is Barrett’s focus as she works on the follow-up to her gold-certified debut, *Goldmine*. “I don’t know what the theme exactly is going to be,” she says. “I do know that I’m a country gal at heart, and that’s definitely always the kind of music I’m going to make.”

**You write your own material, which is rarely the case for new country artists. Why did you decide to do that?**

After I had come off *American Idol* [Barrett competed in 2018] and got to Nashville, none of the labels wanted anything to do with me, so I decided to work on my writing skills. Some wonderful songwriters taught me how to write songs and showed me what I was capable of doing. I just felt this urge to not sing somebody else’s story, but to sing mine.

**Your father encouraged you to join a Black gospel choir growing up. How did that experience help you develop your sound?**

It impacted me a lot. I originally figured out how to sing R&B music and gravitated to that first. I was 9 years old and ended up joining a gospel choir and staying there for two years. A group of women would work with me every single week. They helped me find my voice and show me what I was able to do with it. Not long after, I fell in love with country music. I think you can hear both — R&B and country — in my vocals.

**You’ve been performing since you were 11, and over the past couple of years, you’ve opened for acts like Keith Urban and Thomas Rhett. What have you learned from them?**

Thomas came [backstage] for almost all of my shows on the entire tour. He didn’t have to do that for me. I’m nobody. And he was just very, very kind. It puts me in the position to make sure that I’m doing that for others if I ever get to that spot someday.

**You posted a picture on Instagram recently of yourself cooking at the stove with a full laundry basket in front of you. Does home life keep you grounded?**

I’m a very Bible-centered person. The Bible does speak about how that’s what I’m supposed to be doing — taking care of my household first and foremost. So I take care of my children, and I take care of my husband. I find it joyful to fold the laundry even on a tired day.

**Warner Music Nashville chairman/CEO John Esposito has said he could see you having an international career like Shania Twain. Do you see yourself balancing that kind of potential future with your faith?**

Wherever the Lord leads it, I’m just here for the ride. I would love to eventually sell out Madison Square Garden one day. That’s definitely a bucket list goal. But my role first and foremost is being a good mother to my daughter and raising her correctly and to love the Lord. I think everything just follows the way that it’s supposed to be.

**Esposito wanted to sign you so badly that he had former Pittsburgh Steelers coach Bill Cowher call your father, who is a huge Steelers fan. Did that help convince you to join the label?**

My dad was a big part of the journey coming up for me. When Coach Cowher gave him a call, he called me freaking out. He was like, “Do you know who just called my phone? Coach Cowher! He’s iconic.” So he was all for my signing with the label after that. *(Laughs.)*

— MELINDA NEWMAN



EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

# Golnar Khosrowshahi

In August, the Iran-born entrepreneur became the first female founder and CEO of a publicly traded, independent music company when Reservoir Media was listed on NASDAQ. “It was a true moment of arrival,” she says

By Kristin Robinson

Photographed by Sage East



Khosrowshahi photographed Feb. 4 at Reservoir Media in New York.



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**N AUG. 30, 2021,** Reservoir Media CEO Golnar Khosrowshahi and rapper Offset laughed as they rang the opening bell at NASDAQ's

Marketsite Studio in New York. As confetti — in Reservoir (and NASDAQ) blue — fluttered around them, Khosrowshahi soaked in the initial moments of becoming the first female founder and chief executive of a publicly traded independent music company.

"It was a true moment of arrival," she recalls.

Although the presence of Offset,

who signed with Reservoir in 2017, and a very pregnant Cardi B may have looked like a contrived photo op, Khosrowshahi says the Migos member had asked to attend the ceremony. "It just came up in conversation, and he told me he wanted to be there," she recalls. And though she admits she was skeptical that he would show, she says the husband-and-wife hip-hop duo arrived at the NASDAQ studio fashionably dressed and precisely on time and continued celebrating with the Reservoir team that day.


Reservoir is one of several independent music rights holders — among them Hipgnosis Songs Fund, Round Hill Music Royalty Fund and One Media iP Group — that have gone public

within the last few years, but, unlike her predecessors, Khosrowshahi chose to launch her company's initial public offering stateside instead of on the London Stock Exchange. "It's a finite universe as far as the investor base goes," she says of the London exchange. With the field there already crowded and a reverse merger with the Roth CH Acquisition II special purpose acquisition company bringing \$115 million to the offering, choosing NASDAQ "made a lot of sense."

As Khosrowshahi sees it, the IPO was the next logical step in Reservoir's evolution. "Our focus as a private company was always to build long-term value, so going public was not really a major adjustment for us,"

she says — then, with a grin, adds, "But it was a lot of paperwork."

Khosrowshahi founded Reservoir Media in 2007 while the music industry was in a piracy-induced free fall and just before the financial crash of 2008 crippled the American economy. Long before private equity's mad dash to buy up music intellectual property for multiples of over 30 times a song catalog's net publisher's share (gross profit), Reservoir was one of the few players outside the major-label groups willing to bet there was still value in a great song. Capitalized in its first decade or so by her father — who also invested in health care, real estate and consumer electronics — Khosrowshahi notes that "it was a grim,



**“Our focus as a private company was always to build long-term value, so going public was not really a major adjustment for us. But it was a lot of paperwork.”**

dark time to start a company, and we were reporting up to a literal parent of mine who is used to investing in businesses that make money,” she says with a laugh. “It was a challenging start. We didn’t know a lot about the industry yet. We didn’t have a network of people, but we learned along the way.” The company reported \$74.3 million in global revenue for the first three quarters of its current fiscal year, but *Billboard* estimates Reservoir generated \$100 million for the full 2021 calendar year.

While many of her counterparts in the publishing sector are second- or third-generation music business professionals, Khosrowshahi, 50, entered music publishing as an

outsider. Born in Tehran, Iran, amid the tumult of the revolution, she and her family fled the country when she was 6 years old and resettled in London. There, she grew up listening to The Doors and The Beatles — for which she credits her mother — and took classical piano lessons a few times each week. Her burgeoning talent led to a rigorous education at the Royal Academy of Music in London that was steeped in music theory and history. (She continues to play for enjoyment.)

Khosrowshahi says the discipline and deep reverence for music that the Royal Academy instilled in her have been key factors in her success as Reservoir’s CEO and in the company’s

growth. Coming to the business with fresh eyes helped, too. “I ignore politics,” she says, noting that in the 15 years since she founded Reservoir, she has “seen a lot of new people come in and out” of publishing with different aims. Her strategy, she says, “has always been about the music.”

“She has a great balance,” says David Israelite, president/CEO of the National Music Publishers’ Association (NMPA). “She approaches her partnerships as someone who understands the economic side of the business but also as someone with an incredible sense of creativity.” Khosrowshahi credits that to her own musical background as well as her staff’s. “It informs our relationships with our writers so much and helps us be their partners.”

It’s why film composer Hans Zimmer; Oak Felder, the Grammy Award-winning producer-songwriter behind hits for Demi Lovato, Rihanna and Alessia Cara; and Ali Tamposi, who has written *Billboard* Hot 100 chart-toppers for Camila Cabello and Kelly Clarkson, all trust Reservoir as a publishing partner. “It has been a real honor to watch them grow,” she says.

Reservoir manages a catalog of 140,000 copyrights, including such contemporary hits as Post Malone’s “Rockstar,” the Black Eyed Peas’ “I Gotta Feeling” and Childish Gambino’s “This Is America,” as well as late-20th-century classic catalogs from Joni Mitchell and Alabama. On the recorded-music side, Reservoir controls 36,000 master recordings, including those from labels like Tommy Boy and Chrysalis. And in 2021, its repertoire placed the music publisher in the top 10 of *Billboard*’s Hot 100 Publishers and Top Radio Airplay Publishers rankings for three quarters. “In the face of competition, we outpace industry growth,” she says.

In the last year, Khosrowshahi has also advocated for songwriters outside of her duties at Reservoir. She is an advisory board member of Silkroad, a musical and social impact-focused collective founded by Grammy-winning cellist Yo-Yo Ma. She is also a board member of the NMPA and, at the end of 2021, was elected to its executive committee, which comprises representatives from each of the majors and two elected independent music publishers who represent their peers. Khosrowshahi says she’s honored to be chosen because “your peers are entrusting you to advocate for them on a lot of important issues, both for their companies as well as for their clients.”

Amid what she calls “unparalleled challenges” facing songwriters in the streaming age, as Copyright Royalty Board action continues for Phonorecords III and Phonorecords IV — which will determine streaming royalty rates for the periods of 2018-22 and 2023-27, respectively — Khosrowshahi says her role at the NMPA is “one of the most rewarding things I do.” Over the last year, she served as the director of the board during two of the NMPA’s greatest victories: striking unprecedented deals with Roblox and Twitch, neither of which were paying songwriters for the use of their work before the association took action. “It’s not complicated,” she says of the settlements. “Songwriters should be paid fair compensation for their creative work, and that’s what we’re constantly advocating for.”

There are rewards outside of work, too. Khosrowshahi is mom to twin daughters who are freshmen at the University of Southern California, and when she’s not on the front lines of the music publishing business, she tries to find time for tennis, running and skiing.

But she’s keenly aware of her position as one of the few women in the industry’s C-suites. She says she could recount “countless unpleasant anecdotes” about men treating the business like a “boys club,” but she has concluded that sharing such stories is “not really productive. What is productive,” she continues, “is to effect change from within.” That comes with thoughtful hiring practices, compensation, recognition and company culture — all of which she has focused on at Reservoir since its inception. “I look forward to a time when being a female CEO is kind of unremarkable,” she says. “At that point, you’ll know the industry has changed.” ■

Billboard's 2022 Women In Music

# HALL OF FAME

## HONOREES

CHOSEN AS THE FIRST AMONG THEIR PEERS IN PRIOR YEARS, THESE FORMER EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR HONOREES REFLECT ON THEIR RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS — AND OFFER THEIR THOUGHTS FOR ADVANCING WOMEN AND OTHER UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY



CO-EXECUTIVES OF THE YEAR  
**2020**

Agyemang (left) and Thomas

**Briana Agyemang**

Co-founder, #TheShowMustBePaused; senior artist campaign manager, Platoon

**Jamila Thomas**

Co-founder, #TheShowMustBePaused; vp of artist marketing, Motown Records

After putting the music industry on notice for its systemic racial bias with the launch of their organization #TheShowMustBePaused, Agyemang and Thomas celebrated the first anniversary of Blackout Tuesday in June 2021 by sending accountability reports to music companies. They asked for an outline of changes that had been made to further growth opportunities for Black executives and employees. Their goal is “radical activism,” which means working to create “lasting change and a safe space for music professionals to strategically address issues affecting Black music and culture,” according to a statement from the two activists.

EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR  
**2019**



**Desiree Perez**

CEO, Roc Nation

When Perez was honored as the Women in Music Executive of the Year in 2019, Roc Nation vice chairman Jay Brown described her as “fearless, a champion and she saves the day. A true humanitarian.” In accepting her honor on the 2022 Billboard Power List in January, Perez noted that Roc Nation is “always putting philanthropic endeavors and community initiatives first” — epitomized by the Team Roc Job Fair in November, which “hosted over 3,000 attendees, offering close to 10,000 jobs and services,” she says. In the past year, Perez also guided Roc Nation’s partnership with the NFL, which led to an Emmy Award nomination for the Super Bowl LV Halftime Show featuring The Weeknd, and the return of its Philadelphia Made in America Festival for its 10th anniversary, which drew 60,000 fans. Roc Nation management division clients Moneybagg Yo and DJ Khaled both reached No. 1 on the Billboard 200 with their albums *A Gangsta’s Pain* and *Khaled Khaled*, respectively, while J. Cole, signed to the company’s recorded-music division, achieved the same feat with *The Off Season*.

AGYEMANG, THOMAS: FLO NGALA; PEREZ: ANDREW ZAEH





CO-EXECUTIVES OF THE YEAR  
**2018**

## Danielle Aguirre

**Executive vp/general counsel,  
National Music Publishers' Association**

Aguirre shared recognition as *Billboard's* Women in Music Co-Executive of the Year in 2018 with Jacqueline Charlesworth, Susan Genco and Dina LaPolt (below) for their support of the Music Modernization Act. This past year she played a role in some of the NMPA's "largest settlements to date" with Roblox and Twitch, which ensured proper compensation for songwriters and publishers on these platforms. Aguirre, 44, and the NMPA set the standard for licensing songs in gaming and social media. "These deals have brought not only value to the music publishing industry," she says, "but also helped develop new relationships and partnerships between publishers and some of these fast-growing platforms."

## Jacqueline Charlesworth

**Principal, Charlesworth Law**

A former general counsel at the U.S. Copyright Office who has worked as a litigator at firms such as Alter Kendrick & Baron and Covington & Burling, Charlesworth struck out on her own in 2021, aiming to create what she called "a dynamic and diverse practice focused on the creative community." A year later, her firm has handled infringement and royalty claims for content creators and distributors, and tackled "thorny" questions of copyright termination and other complex music law issues. "What a difference a year makes," Charlesworth says. "Even a COVID-19 year."

## Susan Genco

**Co-president, The Azoff Company**

Genco is co-president of The Azoff Company alongside Elizabeth Collins (see page 106). The company's Iconic Artists Group, which has acquired stakes in the rights of legacy acts such as The Beach Boys, David Crosby and Linda Ronstadt, "has grown into a safe haven for influential artists who value legacy preservation in addition to monetization," says Genco. Full Stop Management "has led the way in touring, safely bringing the music of Harry Styles, the Eagles, Maroon 5, Earth, Wind & Fire and more to their fans." The music licensing division Global Music Rights "continues to offer the best transparent service to its incredible roster of songwriters, from Drake and Lizzo to Anderson .Paak and Bruno Mars," Genco says. She also notes that the Music Artists Coalition, co-founded in 2019 by Irving Azoff, Coren Capshaw, John Silva and others, has joined forces with other artist advocacy groups "to protect artists," she says. "After all, without them, none of us would have jobs."

## Dina LaPolt

**Founder/owner, LaPolt Law**

LaPolt is a forceful attorney and advocate who says the most important issue facing the music industry in 2022 remains "the failure to adequately compensate songwriters for their indispensable contributions to music." Representing superstars from Cardi B to Steven Tyler, she recently added The Kid LAROI and rapper YG to her roster of clients; negotiated all of deadmau5's non-fungible token deals with blockchain platforms; helped reach an agreement for Offset to be a judge on *The Hype*, the streetwear competition show on HBO Max; and oversaw the sale of Mick Fleetwood's catalog to BMG, among other recent achievements.

EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR  
**2016**



## Bozoma Saint John

**Chief marketing officer, Netflix**

Named the Women in Music Executive of the Year in 2016 for her role as head of global consumer marketing at Apple Music, Saint John subsequently held senior positions at Uber and Endeavor and joined Netflix in 2020. "I have always been a student of pop culture and to now work for Netflix, an organization that is not only shaping but defining culture, is truly remarkable," she says, adding that the video streaming service "believes that more people deserve to see their lives onscreen and has achieved huge strides in increasing representation in front of and behind the camera." She cites the release of *The Harder They Fall* from the Black British director Jeymes Samuel, the directorial debuts of Halle Berry and Lin-Manuel Miranda with *Bruised* and *tick, tick... BOOM!*, respectively. "Being here has also allowed me to continue to be peripherally around music," she says, with Netflix showcasing "incredible female artists" with works like *Blackpink: Light Up the Sky* and *Selena: The Series*. "In the promotion of that show, we broke the Guinness World Record for the largest number of videos of people lip-syncing to the same song ["Como La Flor," by Selena y Los Dinos] uploaded to TikTok in one hour, as part of the #TodosComoLaFlor challenge."

AGUIRRE: COURTESY OF NMPA; CHARLESWORTH, LAPOLT: BONNIE SCHIFFMAN; SAINT JOHN: RICH FURY/GETTY IMAGES; GENCO: TIMOTHY ANDRIS.

EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR  
**2015**

## Jody Gerson

**Chairman/CEO,  
Universal Music Publishing Group**

Gerson achieved multiple music publishing triumphs in the past 18 months, including the acquisition of Bob Dylan's entire song catalog; new relationships with hitmakers like Lionel Richie, Holly Humberstone, Clairo, Louis Bell, Tommy Brown and Julia Michaels; and deals with tech platforms such as TikTok and Triller. As co-founder of She Is the Music, however, her leadership goes further. The nonprofit launched in 2018 with the goal of increasing the number of women working in the global music industry. "The continued success of She Is the Music has been absolutely

astonishing, due in no small part to the leadership of our executive director, Michelle Arkuski, our board, our committee and chapter leaders, and our female members around the world," Gerson says. "Our list of accomplishments from 2021 is long and impressive, but highlights include hosting global writing camps in Beijing, Tileyard Studios London and Jungle City Studios in New York, in partnership with Mercedes-Benz and Alicia Keys; launching our first-ever scholarship program with Blackbird Studio Academy with grants of \$350,000; and completing our third annual Connect TogetHER Mentorship program. Additionally," Gerson continues, She Is the Music "launched its first-ever She Is the Producer online tutorial courses in partnership with Femme House, We Are Moving the



Needle and Ableton; our first-ever college ambassador program, She Is U, in partnership with American Express in each of our chapter cities; a Music Business Basics YouTube series and more. We created SITM to increase the number of working women in music, and we are doing that and more to come."

EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR  
**2014**

## Michele Anthony

**Executive vp,  
Universal Music Group**

"For some years, choosing an achievement to highlight can be fairly straightforward, but that's certainly not the case for 2021," says Anthony, who notes that UMG surpassed its own benchmark from 2020 by holding the No. 1 spot on the Billboard 200 "for nearly three-quarters of the year," with hit albums from Taylor Swift, Drake, Olivia Rodrigo and Morgan Wallen leading the albums chart for 38 weeks total. UMG achieved "unprecedented commercial and creative success, in just about every area of our business," she adds, citing catalog division Universal Music Enterprises scoring top 10 albums with reissues from The Beatles and George Harrison, and PolyGram's film projects on Frank Sinatra and The Velvet Underground.



EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR  
**2006\***



## Julie Greenwald

**Chairman/COO, Atlantic Records\***

Atlantic Records ranked at No. 3 on the year-end Top Billboard 200 Labels list thanks to the success of Ed Sheeran, Cardi B and Bruno Mars, among others, while established labelmates Coldplay, Roddy Ricch, Meek Mill and YoungBoy Never Broke Again also released new albums during the fourth quarter. In January, Gunna topped the Billboard 200 with *DS4Ever*, Kodak Black went top five on the Hot 100 with "Super Gremlin" and Charli XCX released her new single, "Beg for You," featuring Rina Sawayama. In accepting her honor on the 2022 Billboard Power List, Greenwald also emphasized the importance the label places on "our babies," she says, "because that's all you want: to make sure your babies have all the sunlight and oxygen and water to grow." Those rising artists include Pooh Shiesty, whose breakthrough debut, *Shiesty Season*, went to No. 1 on *Billboard's* Top Rap Albums chart, and Dallas-born teen singer-songwriter GAYLE, whose first single, "abcdefu," reached No. 6 on the Hot 100 and No. 2 on Hot Rock & Alternative Songs. Greenwald also supports the growth of rising executives, particularly women. Through the years, among all the major labels, Atlantic has been the most consistent with encouraging veteran honorees on *Billboard's* Women in Music list to step aside so that their younger colleagues could gain recognition (see page 88).

\* also named in 2008, 2010-13 and 2017

EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR  
**2005\*\***

## Judy McGrath

**Board member, Amazon**

McGrath's storied career as the chair/CEO of MTV Networks from 2004 to 2011 and as an Amazon board member since 2014 has given her a particular perspective. Named *Billboard's* Women in Music Executive of the Year three times, beginning in 2005, she urges young women to "create your own path as much as possible, while expanding the relevance and value of your organization," and notes that veteran female executives should "make it a point to connect with a broader, younger community," she says. "Be available to any young woman who needs some inspiration, confidence or a candid storyline from your own experience."

\*\* also named in 2007 and 2009





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We salute our Honorees

**BELINDA LAW**  
**MARY PETRO**

**ERIKA SAVAGE**  
**SARA SCHOCH**

and all our Women In Music

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ALAINA LATONA  
ALANA GITT  
ALEXIS LESKO  
ALISANN BLOOD  
ALLIE FULTZ  
ALYSA MEALER  
ALYSSA ROSENBAUM  
AMANDA CHEN  
ANASTASIA KLOCHKIVSKA  
ANAYA MASONDE  
ANGELICA AYALA-TORRES  
ANNA ANDRESDOTTER-NILSSON  
ANNA DIETZ  
ASHLEY RAMOS  
BELINDA LAW  
BETH MORTON  
BETHANY LEIGHTY  
BIANCA HAWLISH  
BRANDA CAVANNA  
BRANDI BRAMMER  
BRITTNEY KEELOR-HOLZER  
BROOKE MELLER  
CAITLIN GULYAS  
CARMEN CHILES  
CASSIE TRIMBLE  
CATHERINE INGERSOLL  
CHERYL PAGLIERANI  
CHRISTINA AUSTIN  
CLAIRE HEALEY  
CORI GADBURY  
DANI NARINS

DANI SIMMONETT  
ELENI HART  
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EMILY ROBBINS  
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ERIN FRY  
GABRIELLA LIBRIZZI  
GEORGIA ELLIS  
GRACE CUNNINGHAM  
HALEY FAIRMAN  
HANNAH SHOGBOLA  
HARRIET QUARE  
HEULWEN KEYTE  
HOLLY HUNTER  
HOPE MURRAY  
IRENE AGBONTAEN  
ISHSHA BOURGUET  
ISSY POOLE  
IVY HE  
JANET KIM  
JAZMYN BRYANT  
JEN MARTIN  
JENN DELAMAR  
JENNY JOHNSON  
JESS CELELLA  
JESSICA BRAUNSTEIN  
JESSY HUNTER  
JORDAN NIGHTINGALE  
JORDYN MANDELBAUM  
KARINA GONZALEZ

KATE VASTANO  
KAYLEIGH LAWRENCE  
KAZIA DAVY  
KESHIA FLOYD  
KRISTEN SAIG  
LAURA ROENICK  
LAUREN DONALDSON  
LAUREN FISHBEIN  
LAUREN HOLLAND  
LEIGH ANDRZEJEWSKI  
LEX FORMOSA  
LINDSAY HONIG  
LISA STEIN  
LIZ ROCA  
LIZZIE COOPER  
MACKENZIE COBERLEY  
MARIA KANATOUS  
MARISSA LOIL  
MARISSA SMITH  
MARY PETRO  
MEGAN BRALEY  
MELISSA NEWHART  
MERJE VIDOVICH  
MICHAELA STOCK  
MIRANDA GUERRERO  
MIRANDA RENZI  
NATALIE KOE  
NICOLE SCHOEN VISCONTI  
NIDA BAQA  
NOËL MIRHADI  
OLIVIA STRANG  
PARDEES NAIMY

RACHEL WEISS  
RAVEN RICHARD  
REBECCA MURDOCH  
REBECCA PROCHNIK  
RILEY FOLSOM  
RUTH-ANN WYNTER  
SAM KIRBY YOH  
SAMANTHA HENFREY  
SAMANTHA LEVY  
SAMMY GARDINER  
SARA SCHOCH  
SARAH CASEY  
SASHA HUNTE  
SOPHIE ROBERTS  
SYDNEY BRYANT  
SYDNEY WILKE  
TABBIE BURLETON  
TAMMY HSU  
TARA AUSTIN  
TARA VICKERS  
TATIANA DANIELLE  
TEA HUGHES  
TESSIE LAMMLE  
TIANA RAIMIST-CARTER  
TINA DUNCA  
TONI WALLACE  
TRINITY HOOD  
ZOE BAZOS  
ZOE SWINDELLS  
ZOE VASSILAKIS  
ZOE WILLIAMSON

music groups

**Towalame Austin**

EXECUTIVE VP OF PHILANTHROPY AND SOCIAL IMPACT, SONY MUSIC GROUP

**Tiffany R. Warren**

EXECUTIVE VP OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION, SONY MUSIC GROUP

**Julie Swidler**

EXECUTIVE VP OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS/GENERAL COUNSEL, SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

**Melissa Thomas**

EXECUTIVE VP OF INTERNATIONAL MARKETING, U.S. REPERTOIRE, SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

**Deirdre McDonald**

EXECUTIVE VP OF GLOBAL PUBLIC POLICY AND INDUSTRY RELATIONS, SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

**Susan Meisel**

SENIOR VP/CORPORATE DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL, SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

As Sony celebrates the success of artists including Adele, Lil Nas X, Doja Cat, Giveon and The Kid LAROI — “some of the biggest artists and campaigns around the world,” says Thomas — the company is also in what Meisel describes as “a moment of robust strategic investment activity” to increase what it can offer the creative community, while also focusing on its broader needs. Sony’s Global Social Justice Fund has “impacted local communities across more than 30 countries,” says Austin, “providing contributions to more than 800 organizations.” Warren has helped expand equity and inclusion efforts “across all SMG’s global recorded-music, publishing and corporate divisions,” she says. Swidler notes that Sony has created a fellowship program for recent law school graduates to address “the multicultural talent gap” in business and legal affairs industrywide. “We have led the industry in transparency, equity, new music engagement opportunities, artist assistance and so much more,” McDonald says.

**Richelle Parham**

PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL E-COMMERCE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

**Celine Joshua**

EXECUTIVE VP OF COMMERCIAL INNOVATION AND ARTIST STRATEGY, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

**Menna Demessie**

SENIOR VP/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TASK FORCE FOR MEANINGFUL CHANGE, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

**Kristen Bender**

SENIOR VP OF DIGITAL STRATEGY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

**Susan Mazo**

EXECUTIVE VP OF GLOBAL CORPORATE SOCIAL



The **Sony Music** honorees have shared in the global success of **Adele**, whose blockbuster album **30** has spent eight consecutive weeks at No. 1 on Top Album Sales.

RESPONSIBILITY, EVENTS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

**Erika Begun**

EXECUTIVE VP/HEAD OF INVESTOR RELATIONS, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

The senior female executives at UMG shared in the company’s successes of the past year, which include the biggest direct listing in the history of the music industry; a global expansion of its direct-to-consumer business; and new creative and commercial opportunities for its artists, with technologies from blockchain-based Web3 to non-fungible tokens. But they were also involved in the philanthropic and community service-focused efforts of UMG’s employee-driven Task Force for Meaningful Change and the All Together Now Foundation, both launched in 2020. “All of this was accomplished during an unrelenting pandemic, demonstrating the passion, focus and commitment of our colleagues around the world to deliver on behalf of our artists, their fans and our communities,” the UMG honorees said in a joint statement.

**Masha Osherova**

EXECUTIVE VP/CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER, WARNER MUSIC GROUP

**Oana Ruxandra**

CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER/VP OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, WARNER MUSIC GROUP

**Addie Adeniran**

SENIOR VP OF PEOPLE TEAM, WARNER MUSIC GROUP

**Jessica Goldenberg**

SENIOR VP OF DIGITAL STRATEGY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, WARNER MUSIC GROUP

“It has been a massive year for Warner Music Group and for my team,” says Ruxandra, describing the disruption that Web3 technology is bringing “to the way we create, connect and consume.” The label also invested in gaming platform Roblox; signed deals with Twitch, the avatar company Genies and Spotify’s podcast division; and partnered with Snap. “My team is focused on ensuring that WMG and our songwriters are not just part of the story, but we are writing it,” Ruxandra says. Meanwhile, to meet WMG’s business goals, Osherova and her colleagues are focused on the company’s recruitment challenge: “How do we attract creative, independent-minded leaders and build a workplace for the next generation of talent?”

labels &

distributors

**Dahlia Ambach Caplin**

SENIOR VP OF A&R, VERVE/VERVE FORECAST/IMPULSE!

Ambach Caplin is no stranger to Recording Academy honors, having worked in the past on Grammy-nominated works

by Herbie Hancock, Ledisi and Tank and the Bangas. However, the 2022 ceremony could be her biggest yield yet, with Jon Batiste leading all others with 11 nominations for his album *We Are*. At Verve, Verve Forecast and Impulse!, she is proud to help steer the development of new “powerful voices,” such as Kurt Vile, who was previously signed to Matador, and Joy Oladun, who is officially signed with Republic. Both artists have new albums due this year.

**Angela Barkan  
Cyndi Lynott**

SENIOR VPS OF MARKETING, BMG MUSIC

Barkan leads marketing efforts for BMG’s front-line recorded repertoire in New York, with recent achievements including the first virtual global listening event for Soho House worldwide through its ROOMS app and the launch of Duran Duran’s *Future Past* album. Lynott manages its pop and rock repertoire in Los Angeles, where she oversaw a promotional visit for K-pop group Monsta X in December. The group premiered its movie, *The Dreaming*, during a fan pop-up event that generated \$200,000 of revenue over three days. “This year, I am looking forward to releasing the new album from 5 Seconds of Summer,” Lynott says. “It’s an honor to partner with this incredibly talented band and show them what it’s like to have full creative control, full transparency and a full global team with BMG.”

**Marisa Aron  
Brianna Harrison**

VPS OF MARKETING, ATLANTIC RECORDS

**Erica Bellarosa**

SENIOR VP OF BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS, ATLANTIC RECORDS

**Catherine Ciapas**

SENIOR VP OF CREATIVE SERVICES, ATLANTIC RECORDS

In the past year, Atlantic superstars and breakout stars alike have thrived with new releases: Coldplay, Bruno Mars (as part of Silk Sonic with Anderson .Paak) and Cardi B have all landed Hot 100 No. 1 hits, while Ed Sheeran scored his fourth Billboard 200 chart-topper with =, his latest mathematically titled album. Meanwhile, breakout acts GAYLE and CKay added to the label’s international success, with the former’s “abcdefu” and the latter’s “Love Nwantiti (ah ah ah)” reaching Nos. 1 and 2 on the Global 200 chart, respectively. The label shows no signs of slowing down in 2022, with Bellarosa, 43, noting the “roster



CONGRATULATIONS TO RIAA COO  
**MICHÈLE BALLANTYNE**  
BILLBOARD 2022 WOMEN IN MUSIC HONOREE

has been enriched by the signing of top-class talent that we can't wait to bring to the worldwide stage."

### Stacy Blythe

SENIOR VP OF PROMOTION,  
BIG LOUD RECORDS

Big Loud celebrated six years in business in 2021, as well as its second consecutive year in the top five of *Billboard's* year-end Top Country Labels recap, an acknowledgement of the work that Blythe, 38, and her colleagues have put into the company. "We expanded our regional team as well as our promotion executive team to align with our growing artist roster," she says. "We also rounded out the year on top of the all-genre *Billboard* 200 albums chart with Morgan Wallen's *Dangerous: The Double Album*."

### Leesa Brunson-Boland

SENIOR VP/HEAD OF A&R OPERATIONS AND  
ADMINISTRATION, 300 ENTERTAINMENT

Known as "The Closer" by her colleagues, Brunson-Boland was pivotal in the chart-topping success of *Billboard* 200 No. 1 albums *Slime Language 2* by Young Thug's YSL label and Gunna's newly released third album, *DS4Ever*. Overseeing the business of A&R, cultivating relationships and creating balance are essential to Boland and her team at 300 — who are awaiting the release of Megan Thee Stallion's second album, expected later this year. "As a leader, it makes me proud to see the results from the structure I have implemented within the A&R department at 300," she says.

### LaTrice Burnette

PRESIDENT, 4TH AND BROADWAY RECORDS;  
EXECUTIVE VP, DEF JAM RECORDINGS

Burnette was named head of 4th and Broadway in November 2020 and hit the ground running with Young Devyn, helping secure the up-and-coming Brooklyn rapper festival gigs at WQHT (Hot 97) New York's Summer Jam in August and Rolling Loud New York in October. She also helped execute Emotional Oranges' global DHL Fast-Track program last fall, which



**Leesa Brunson-Boland**  
at 300 Entertainment says  
she and her colleagues  
are eagerly awaiting  
the second album from  
**Megan Thee Stallion**,  
expected later this year.

included their "first-ever livestream performance aired from the legendary Capitol Studios," Burnette says. The pop-R&B duo's partnership with the international courier also gave fans what she calls the "world-first" opportunity to win digital and physical merchandise designed by Emotional Oranges and delivered by DHL. Burnette recently took on the additional title of executive vp at Def Jam after previously holding that position at Island Records.

### Kristen Bushnell Perez

HEAD OF FILM/TV, GLASSNOTE

Longtime mainstream-crashing independent label Glassnote has a roster full of veteran alt-rock crossover stars like Mumford & Sons, Phoenix and Two Door Cinema Club. But Bushnell Perez, 33, is eager to highlight the achievements of one of the label's newer signings, singer-rapper-instrumentalist Dylan Cartlidge. Tracks from his debut album, *Hope Above Adversity*, have been used in global campaigns

for brands like Apple and Amazon. "Dylan has progressed tremendously thanks to these moments," says Perez, "combined with Glassnote's ability to nurture developing artists into career artists."

### Katina Bynum

EXECUTIVE VP OF EAST COAST LABELS,  
URBAN, UNIVERSAL MUSIC ENTERPRISES

Throughout 2021, Bynum sought to bring hip-hop and R&B fans the classic music they had been craving from the catalog label's vast archive. Along with heading up special anniversary releases from artists like Lil Wayne, Nicki Minaj, Janet Jackson, The Weeknd and even the late Marvin Gaye and DMX, Bynum also oversaw the creation of UME's Global Cypher series, which saw the brand "introduce music, artists and executives from around the world through interviews, playlists and territory highlights," she says.

### Jennifer Cary

EXECUTIVE VP OF RIGHTS AND ROYALTIES,  
INGROOVES MUSIC GROUP

As part of Ingrooves' continued global expansion, Cary set up worldwide rights and royalty teams to maintain strategy and consistency for its label and artist clients around the globe. The marketing and distribution company (a division of Universal Music Group) further bolstered its accounting solutions with the launch of a new suite of royalty tools for its acts to easily pay out and establish songwriting and publishing splits, among other tasks. "My focus is on making sure everyone can approach royalties with the knowledge and skills they need to make the most out of the tools offered," says Cary.

### Nicki Farag

EXECUTIVE VP/GM, DEF JAM

### Dara Michelle

EXECUTIVE VP/HEAD OF MARKETING, DEF JAM

### Natina Nimene

SENIOR VP OF PROMOTION AND ARTIST  
RELATIONS, DEF JAM

Def Jam had a big year with releases by roster stars Kanye West, Justin Bieber, YG and Alessia Cara, while preparing to welcome incoming CEO Tunji Balogun in January to lead the company forward. "Even as we went through a second year of the pandemic and internal changes at the highest levels of the company, [we achieved] outstanding market share and cultural impact [with] superstar rollouts for some of the biggest artists in the world," Farag says. "It's a testament to the dedication, professionalism and passion of our executives and staff."

### María Fernández

EXECUTIVE VP/COO LATIN IBERIA,  
SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

As Sony Latin Iberia's top female executive, Fernández worked on Sony's acquisition of Brazil's biggest independent label, Som Livre, which is awaiting antitrust approval, and its deal for equity in WK Records, which was founded by star manager Walter Kolm (Maluma, Carlos Vives, Wisin). Fernández is focused on increasing diversity in the workplace — and is proud to have mentored over 15 employees in the organization — as a way to "ensure that our talent has everything they need to reach their full potential," she says.

"My focus is on making sure everyone can approach royalties with the knowledge and skills they need."

— JENNIFER CARY

NMPPA

CONGRATULATES THE

TOP Q4

MUSIC PUBLISHERS

SONY MUSIC PUBLISHING

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## Christy Castillo Butcher

Senior vp of programming and booking, SoFi Stadium/YouTube Theater/Hollywood Park

“Opening two major venues in Los Angeles in the middle of a pandemic and hosting over 1 million concertgoers within five months of each other was a huge achievement,” says Castillo Butcher, whose role at the 300-acre Hollywood Park includes programming at the 6,000-capacity YouTube Theater and the 70,000-capacity SoFi Stadium, which hosted Super Bowl LVI on Feb. 13. (The YouTube Theater will host *Billboard’s* Women in Music event on March 2.) The stadium’s bookings have so far included Kaskade; 1DayLA’s The Freedom Experience with Justin Bieber, Chance the Rapper and others in July; and performances by Los Bukis in August, The Rolling Stones in October and BTS in December. BTS’ four-night run earned \$33.3 million and sold over 200,000 tickets, becoming the sixth-highest-grossing engagement in *Billboard* Boxscore history. “I’m proud that our team curated a diverse lineup of events,” Castillo Butcher says, “building on our goal of making our venues a local and global destination.”



Disney Music Group

SALUTES

**NATALIE** AND **BARBARA**  
**TURANO** **VANDER LINDE**



OUR **2022 BILLBOARD WOMEN IN MUSIC**  
HONOREES WHO WERE MADE TO BE

**L O U D**

FROM YOUR **DMG** FAMILY

**Lori Giamela**

SENIOR VP OF PROMOTION, RCA RECORDS

**Steph Pensa**

VP OF DIGITAL MARKETING, RCA RECORDS

**Sabrina Rivera**VP OF VISUAL CONTENT PRODUCTION,  
RCA RECORDS

Wizkid's summer single — "Essence (Remix)" featuring Justin Bieber and Tems — earned a top 10 spot on the Hot 100 in October, a major breakthrough for African music on U.S. charts. The growth that Afrobeats artists attained through mainstream exposure in 2021 became a focus for RCA Records. "I'm really proud of Wizkid's recent accomplishments and everyone's efforts to take him to No. 1," Giamela says. "We worked really hard to bring an important culture and sound to the world."

**Wendy Goldstein**

CO-PRESIDENT, REPUBLIC RECORDS

**Kerri Mackar**EXECUTIVE VP OF BRAND PARTNERSHIPS,  
REPUBLIC RECORDS**Xiarra-Diamond Nimrod**VP OF MARKETING STRATEGY,  
REPUBLIC RECORDS**Stephanie Perez**VP OF INTERNATIONAL MARKETING,  
REPUBLIC RECORDS

As Republic capped off 2021 with major projects from Drake and Taylor Swift — as well as another No. 1 finish on *Billboard's* year-end Top Labels chart — the Republic Records Action Committee (R2AC) spent the year launching mental health initiatives and providing mentorship opportunities. "We've made incredible strides in bringing awareness to diversity and inclusion throughout our company and the industry at large," says Nimrod of R2AC, which she has been a part of since the organization's launch.

**Ethiopia Habtemariam**

CHAIRMAN/CEO, MOTOWN RECORDS

**Alison Finley**

COO, MOTOWN RECORDS

"There's real ability in the company, and I wanted them to have a chance to fly," Universal Music Group chairman/CEO Sir Lucian Grainge said of Motown in his *Billboard* Power List interview, explaining why UMG had returned the legendary imprint to its status as a stand-alone label under Habtemariam, who was promoted in March 2021 to her new role as Motown Records chairman/CEO. Through its partnership with Quality Control (see page 98), Motown reached the peak of the *Billboard* 200 in recent months with *My Turn* from Lil Baby (five total weeks) and *The Voice of Heroes* from Lil Baby and Lil Durk.

## PIONEERS



## Ethel Gabriel

When Gabriel died at the age of 99 in March 2021, her nephew, Ed Mauro, told *The New York Times* that her success in music came "when the playing field wasn't level." Gabriel — considered to be the first female producer to work for a record label — had another take: She told *The Cincinnati Enquirer* in 1983: "I didn't know I was somewhere I shouldn't be."

The Pennsylvania native affixed labels to records and packed them for shipment at the RCA Victor plant in Camden, N.J., before moving to the company's corporate offices in New York. With RCA, she worked as an A&R executive and eventual vice president, championing the signing of Pérez Prado to help bring mambo to the United States and creating the *Living Strings*, *Pure Gold* and *A Legendary Performer* series. Gabriel produced over 2,500 albums — 15 of them certified gold — and won a Grammy Award for best historical album in 1982. —GARY GRAFF

# excellence

MBK ENTERTAINMENT CONGRATULATES THEIR  
*BILLBOARD* 2022 WOMEN IN MUSIC HONOREES

## H.E.R. Impact Award

JEANINE McLEAN-WILLIAMS Executive Honoree

MISHA HEDMAN-MAYES Executive Honoree



**Allison Jones**EXECUTIVE VP OF A&R,  
BIG MACHINE LABEL GROUP

Big Machine's Carly Pearce has seen her star rise even higher over the past 20 months, after earning a No. 1 Country Airplay hit with the Lee Brice duet "I Hope You're Happy Now." Pearce has since earned two Country Music Association Awards (including female vocalist of the year) and two Academy of Country Music Awards. She also released her third studio album, *29: Written in Stone*, and co-hosted the *CMA Country Christmas* special. Jones notes that "Never Wanted To Be That Girl," with Ashley McBryde, is Pearce's "fastest-rising country radio single to date."

**Michelle Jubelirer**

CHAIR/CEO, CAPITOL MUSIC GROUP

**Dixie Tipton**SENIOR VP OF RHYTHM PROMOTION,  
CAPITOL MUSIC GROUP**Terese Joseph**VP OF A&R OPERATIONS,  
CAPITOL MUSIC GROUP

In December, Jubelirer succeeded Jeff Vaughn as leader of Capitol Music Group (opting for the gender-neutral title of chair/CEO) and became the first woman to helm the label group, which has helped Halsey, Sam Smith and Katy Perry rise to stardom while nurturing new signings like rappers Toosii and Justus Bennetts and electronic musician Surf Mesa. Universal Music Group chairman/CEO Sir Lucian Grainge, in his recent Billboard Power List interview, said Jubelirer has "terrific followership. She has been an independent lawyer, she's got phenomenal relationships with artists, and this is her shot at CEO and putting her stamp on the business. The staff, the teams, the artists, they're excited about her, and I believe that now is the time for her."

**Sheldra Khahaifa**CFO/EXECUTIVE VP OF  
OPERATIONS, COMMERCIAL  
MUSIC GROUP, SONY MUSIC  
ENTERTAINMENT

Khahaifa has a key role at the company that manages Sony Music's partnerships with the Prince estate, Jack White's Third Man Records, AC/DC, Philadelphia International Records and Mariah Carey for the singer's "All I Want for Christmas Is You" holiday campaign, among other repertoire sources. But she has also found "special purpose," she says, in helping launch and lead the Commercial Music Group's diversity and inclusion task force,

including mentorship and career development of Black professionals. Khahaifa is also involved in Sony's Global Social Justice Fund and its Artists Forward program, which forgives unrecovered balances for qualifying acts signed prior to 2000. Says Khahaifa: "It has been a privilege to help lead and meaningfully contribute to an important shift in evolving company practices."

**Cat Kreidich**

PRESIDENT, ADA WORLDWIDE

Over the past year, Alternative Distribution Alliance — Warner Music Group's independent label/artist services division — executed a companywide "culture shift," says Kreidich, which included a new leadership team and its first head of product and integration, Andrea Slobodien, who was named in December. "We've put a global strategy behind the company, with tech as the backbone," she adds, citing the launch of a new website to match ADA's ambition to be "a truly digitally savvy, fast-moving music company of the future."

**Milana Lewis**

CO-FOUNDER/CEO, STEM

The distribution and payments company Stem continued to pursue its goal of bringing financial clarity to the music industry in 2021, launching Recoup Rules, a new feature that allows users to track and recoup expenses before splits are paid out. The

company is also developing non-fungible tokens, partnering with the blockchain startup Royal to develop an interface that will give fans more visibility into the economics of songs in which they purchase shares. "As we look to ways in which NFTs can challenge the traditional music industry," Lewis says, "we are keeping Stem at the forefront of this conversation."

**Cindy Mabe**PRESIDENT, UNIVERSAL MUSIC  
GROUP NASHVILLE

UMG Nashville's biggest victories came from its developing artists, who each "made a huge contribution to growing the country format," says Mabe. Mickey Guyton became the first Black female solo artist to be nominated for a 2021 Grammy Award in a country category with her single "Black Like Me" and followed it up with three nominations this year. Priscilla Block "made her way from exposing new music on TikTok to breaking into the mainstream with her hit single, "Just About Over You," which reached No. 14 on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart, the highest-peaking female country radio debut released in 2021.

**Jennifer Mallory**

EXECUTIVE VP/GM, COLUMBIA RECORDS

**Erika Alfredson**SENIOR VP/CO-HEAD OF MARKETING,  
COLUMBIA RECORDS**Jennifer Frommer**SENIOR VP OF COMMERCIAL LICENSING AND  
BRAND PARTNERSHIPS, COLUMBIA RECORDS

Columbia Records has "a strategy that works for each individual artist; we've been able to build out stories and narratives — telling stories in this attention economy in which we live," Mallory said in comments following her 2022 Billboard Power List honor. That strategy has amplified the talent of a roster that gave Columbia the No. 1 spot for a combined 33 weeks in 2021, the most in a year by a label since MRC Data's information began powering the chart in 1991, with No. 1 hits from Mariah Carey, 24kGoldn, The Kid LAROI, Polo G, Lil Nas X, BTS — and Adele, who has ruled the Billboard Artist 100 chart for 20 weeks as of Feb. 12.

**Victoria Mason**SENIOR VP OF STRATEGIC MARKETING AND  
ANALYTICS, WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE

Warner Music Nashville prioritizes making data "intelligible and exploitable" to bolster its marketing efforts, says Mason, 35. Proof of concept? Gabby Barrett spent

**"Never Wanted To Be That Girl," a collaboration between Ashley McBryde and Carly Pearce (left), is Pearce's "fastest-rising country radio single to date," says Allison Jones of Big Machine Label Group.**



**HARBOURVIEW**

**“At HarbourView Equity Partners,  
we believe Content is Queen.”**



**Sherrese Clarke Soares**

*Billboard Women in Music Honoree 2022*

27 weeks atop Hot Country Songs with her Charlie Puth-assisted hit “I Hope” and closed out the year as the sole country artist on *Billboard*’s Top Female Artists year-end ranking. Mason adds, “We’ve been able to amplify that success by intentionally incorporating data into our strategy and decision-making.”

### Katie McCartney

GM, MONUMENT RECORDS

“Fancy Like” by Monument Records artist Walker Hayes became a pop and country phenomenon, reaching No. 3 on the Hot 100 and becoming his first No. 1 Country Airplay hit. “The strategy put into place by the Monument team and Walker’s team to capitalize on such an amazing moment has been unreal,” says McCartney. “From the original digital moments to sitting on top of the *Billboard* Hot Country Songs chart for multiple weeks to a national TV ad campaign to critical mass airplay in multiple genres — nobody deserves it more.”

### Simone Mitchell

PRESIDENT, QUALITY CONTROL MUSIC

Mitchell, 32, joined Quality Control in 2014 as a part-time employee working in administration and assisting with the Atlanta label’s early signees, including Migos. In October 2021, CEO Pierre “P” Thomas and COO Kevin “Coach K” Lee promoted Mitchell to president of the influential hip-hop indie. In recent years, Quality Control expanded its divisions beyond music and its head count to 30-plus people, and in her new role, Mitchell hopes to make use of the larger team. “With department heads and recent executive hirings,” she says, “we are able to execute ideas and campaigns as a fully equipped unit.”

### Michele Nadelman

CFO, WARNER RECORDS

### Karen Kwak

EXECUTIVE VP/HEAD OF A&R,  
WARNER RECORDS

### Claudia Butzky

EXECUTIVE VP OF BRAND PARTNERSHIPS  
AND SYNC, WARNER RECORDS

“2021 was an extremely challenging

year, to say the least, but I’m very proud of our team, as we pulled together and delivered our highest-revenue year in over 10 years,” says Nadelman. The label’s 2021 successes included Dua Lipa’s rise to global superstardom, Saweetie’s best new artist Grammy nomination, the introduction of Bella Poarch with her hit

video “Build a Bitch” and the breakout of critically acclaimed Los Angeles rapper Remble. “Warner Records is now perfectly poised to make a lot of noise in 2022,” Nadelman adds, citing new projects from Remble, Poarch, Saweetie, Omar Apollo, Red Hot Chili Peppers, The Walters, NLE Choppa, Michael Bubl , Muse, Benson Boone and Nessa Barrett, among others.

### Erica M. Paul

VP/HEAD OF DIGITAL MARKETING,  
ISLAND RECORDS

After a role in which she guided digital initiatives for three of Universal Music Group’s East Coast labels (Def Jam, Republic and Island), Paul last year became vp/head of digital marketing for Island. She has used her expertise to create and capitalize on viral moments for Shawn Mendes, The Killers and R&B vocalist Trinidad Cardona — whose 2017 release, “Dinero,” became a TikTok

**Dua Lipa’s rise to global stardom was an achievement shared by Women in Music honorees at her label, Warner Records.**



smash in 2021. For Demi Lovato’s *Dancing With the Devil... The Art of Starting Over*, Paul created one-on-one fan experiences and intimate listening parties. “Our work is focused on artist integrity,” she says, “while also advocating for fans.”

### Gabrielle Peluso

CO-PRESIDENT, ASYLUM RECORDS

Since joining Asylum three years ago, Peluso has leaned on what she learned during 15 years working for Def Jam, where she discovered how much a small, close-knit team could accomplish. “That was my focus when I was offered this opportunity at Asylum: bring things back to basics,” says Peluso, who is co-president of the label alongside Dallas Martin. Asylum’s roster includes Seddy Hendrix, Ken the Man, Jay Loud and Detroit rapper Sada Baby — whose “Whole Lotta Choppas” featuring Nicki Minaj reached No. 35 on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs. “It may take us longer to break an artist, but the process

is 100 times more meaningful,” says Peluso. “The artists signed to Asylum are in control of their careers, learning the business, becoming their own bosses, and there is nothing more rewarding than that.”

### Sylvia Rhone

CHAIRWOMAN/CEO, EPIC RECORDS

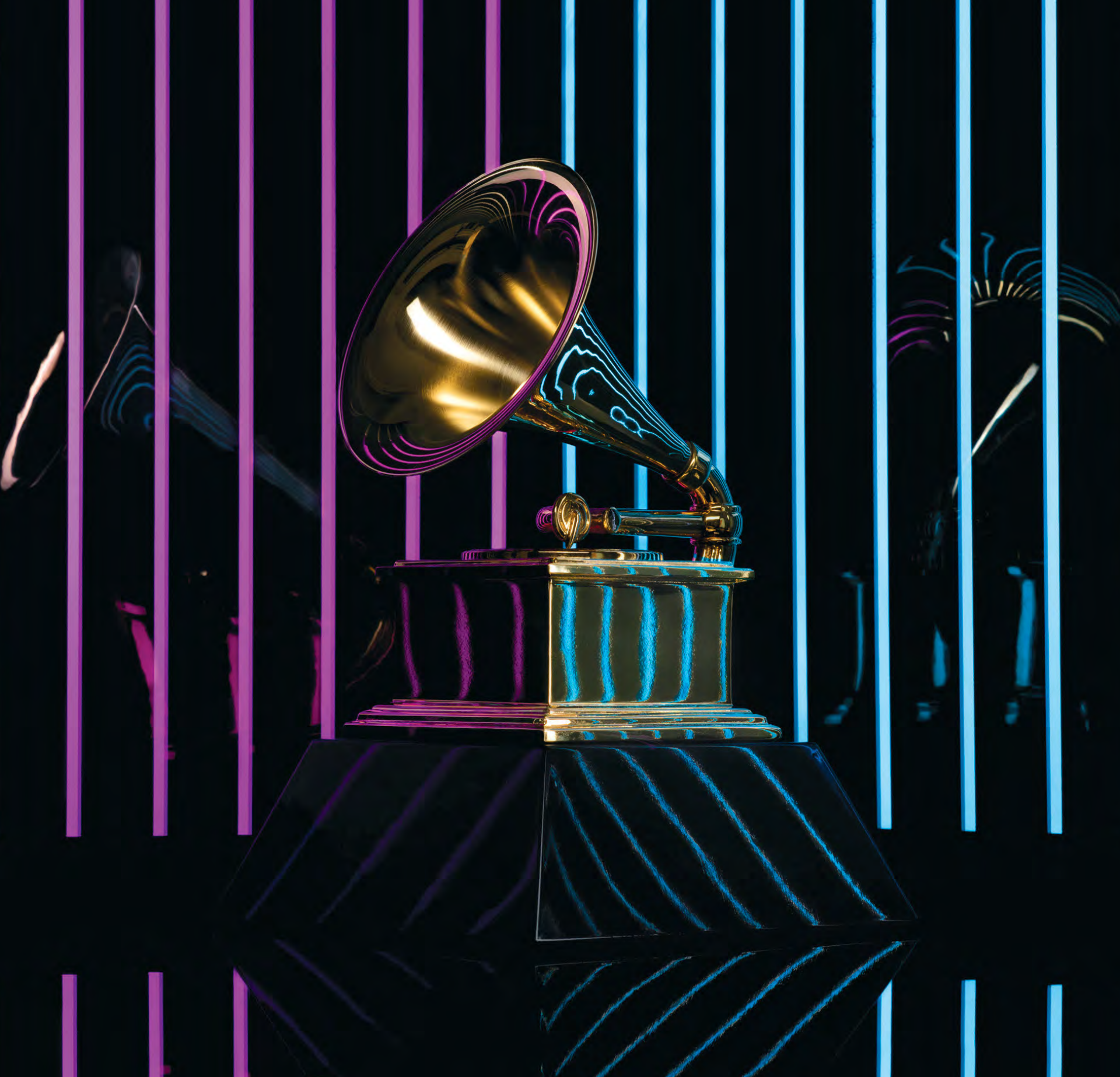
### Margeaux Watson

SENIOR VP OF MARKETING, EPIC RECORDS

With a roster of established hitmakers like DJ Khaled, who landed his third No. 1 on the *Billboard* 200 in May, and Giveon, who turned a breakout year into a half-dozen Grammy nominations, Epic managed a banner year on both fronts in 2021, with BIA and Mimi Webb set to continue making waves as well. “Power is empowering others,” said Rhone in comments regarding her *Billboard* Power List honor in January. “It’s the daily application of your authentic self to effectively uplift those around you. If done right, it makes everyone stronger.”

“2021 was an extremely challenging year, to say the least.”

— MICHELE NADELMAN



# Valeisha Butterfield Jones & Laura Segura Mueller

The Recording Academy® and MusiCares would like to thank you. For your leadership in the face of the industry's evolving challenges. For inspiring through your commitment to the highest levels of excellence. And for elevating those around you at all times.

Congratulations to you both on being included in Billboard's Women in Music honorees. Your efforts to #AmplifyWomen continue to build a stronger music industry.

**RECORDING  
ACADEMY®**

**Katie Robinson**

VP OF MARKETING, ELEKTRA MUSIC GROUP

Elektra scored with twenty one pilots, which earned their third No. 1 on Top Rock Albums in June with *Scaled and Icy*, and secured a new partnership with Avril Lavigne to support the release of her seventh studio album, *Love Sux*, alongside Travis Barker's DTA Records. The record will "inspire an entire new generation," says Robinson, 38. On the night that the "Bite Me" singer signed to DTA, there was a celebration at Barker's Los Angeles studio that ended with an "epic cake fight," she adds. "Everyone left covered in vegan cake, confetti and champagne."

**Brenda Romano**PRESIDENT OF PROMOTION,  
INTERSCOPE GEFGEN A&M**Michelle An**EXECUTIVE VP/HEAD OF VISUAL,  
INTERSCOPE GEFGEN A&M**Annie Lee**

CFO, INTERSCOPE GEFGEN A&amp;M

**Nicole Wyskoarko**EXECUTIVE VP/CO-HEAD OF A&R,  
INTERSCOPE GEFGEN A&M

In 2021, Interscope Geffen A&M celebrated its highest annual revenue in its 30-year history, according to the company. It's a feat that Lee credits to its growing film division, which in 2020 became a "significant source of revenue" thanks to IGA working alongside partner The Darkroom to produce and sell two Billie Eilish projects — documentary *Billie Eilish: The World's a Little Blurry* and partially animated concert film *Happier Than Ever: A Love Letter to Los Angeles* — to Apple and Disney+, respectively. At the same time, says Lee, "Our core business has thrived," noting continued success for Lady Gaga and Machine Gun Kelly alongside a "new set of superstar artists" including Olivia Rodrigo, Moneybagg Yo and Kali Uchis. "All of these artists have moved culture in their own way."

**Jacqueline Saturn**PRESIDENT, VIRGIN MUSIC LABEL  
AND ARTIST SERVICES

Saturn, who turned her backyard into "a home office and a gathering place for the team," has guided the newly rebranded Virgin as it expanded globally with 12 international offices. The company has leveraged partnerships with Primary Wave/Gaither Music Group, King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard, Soulja Boy and NCT-127, among others. And that's in addition to No. 1 Billboard 200 debuts since 2019 from Lil Baby, Trippie Redd, NF and K-pop act SuperM. Says Saturn: "Power is our artists and label partners trusting us with their vision and empowering us to build and tell their story for them and with them."

## PIONEERS



## Marion Keisker

On July 18, 1953, while working as an office receptionist at Sam Phillips' Sun Records in Memphis, Keisker welcomed 18-year-old Elvis Presley to the building. He came in with \$4 to record two songs, "My Happiness" and "That's When Your Heartaches Begin," for his "mama," she says. Keisker, who was also a radio host and station manager at WREC Memphis, wanted to know more. "Who do you sound like?" she asked Presley. His reply: "I don't sound like nobody."

When Keisker alerted Phillips and his partners to the walk-in session, the gentlemen rebuffed her and then left the studio for coffee — but she decided she would make the record herself. Keisker, who later became a captain in the U.S. Air Force and Memphis chapter president of the National Organization for Women, has had her pivotal role in Presley's ascent well-documented, including in three biopics about The King.

—DEB WILKER



**Congratulations,**

# **DENISE COLLETTA**

And all the **2022 Billboard Women in Music** honorees.



**Denise Colletta**  
SVP and Team Leader  
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# Leaders Of The Mechanical Licensing Collective

**T**he Mechanical Licensing Collective in 2021 completed the first full year of its mission, as described by chief marketing officer Ellen Truley: “ensuring that every rights holder who is eligible to receive mechanical royalties for streams and downloads of their music is paid those royalties on time and in full.”

Created by the 2018 passage of the Music Modernization Act and designated by the U.S. Register of Copyrights in July 2019, The MLC named Kris Ahrend as its first CEO in 2020. He led the effort to build the nonprofit organization from scratch, which meant creating a “diverse and inclusive team that includes people with different backgrounds, views and experiences,” according to The MLC’s statement of its guiding principles.



One sign of The MLC living up to those principles is an exceptional leadership team of nine women. Truley, who is a Women in Music honoree, is a representative of an executive group that also includes CFO Ilene Weintraub, chief legal officer Kristen Johns, chief people officer Leigh McCorkle, head of international relations Indi Chawla, head of operations Joya Carmichael, head of customer experience Lindsey Major, head of finance

Monique Benjamin and head of educational partnerships Serona Elton.

The MLC team has celebrated “meeting several notable benchmarks and milestones despite the challenges created by the ongoing pandemic,” says Truley. “I am particularly proud of the fact that through our extensive outreach and engagement efforts, we were able to double our membership over the course of the year to more than 17,000 members.”

She adds, “Growing our membership to that degree in a relatively short period of time — and distributing more than \$280 million in royalties to those members in 2021 — shows The MLC is already fulfilling its mission,” of distributing mechanical royalties from streaming and downloaded repertoire, “and making a real difference in how rights holders are compensated for the use of their music.”

—THOM DUFFY AND KRISTIN ROBINSON

From left: Carmichael, Johns, Weintraub, Truley, Chawla, Benjamin, Major, Elton and McCorkle photographed by Katie Kauss on Feb. 7 at The Mechanical Licensing Collective in Nashville.

**Michele Smith**VP OF ESTATE AND LEGACY BRAND  
MANAGEMENT, CONCORD

Smith, who is responsible for the label partnership and brand licensing of Stax Records and the estates of Billie Holiday and Tammy Wynette, co-produced the 2019 documentary *Billie*, which won documentary of the year at the 25th annual JJA Jazz Awards. Smith also worked with the Concord Stax Scholarship Fund, which she says will raise \$1 million “for 100 deserving Memphis-based Stax Music Academy students over the next five years.”

**Camille Soto Malave**

CEO, GLAD EMPIRE

Soto Malave’s digital music distributor Glad Empire has released remixes of hit singles “Travesuras” by Nio García, Casper Mágico, Myke Towers, Ozuna, Wisin & Yandel and Flow La Movie and “AM” by García, Bad Bunny and J Balvin, accruing millions of streams. Those successes came through her company’s multimillion-dollar distribution deal with independent label Flow La Movie, which was founded by and named for the Puerto Rican producer who was born José Angel Hernández. Following Hernández’s death in a December plane crash, Soto Malave will continue to serve as exclusive administrator for the company, gearing up to release García’s first solo album, *El de los Hits*.

**Colleen Theis**

COO, THE ORCHARD

The Sony-owned global independent music distributor is celebrating its 25th year with a new partnership with Bad Bunny manager Noah Assad and his Rimas Entertainment, as well as an improved market share, both domestically and internationally. “The power of streaming means music knows no boundaries,” says Theis. “In the past year, we’ve broken boundaries and seen success in every genre. We will continue to redefine distribution by expanding our comprehensive suite of services and tackling every challenge with the artist in mind.”

**Nicola Tuer**

COO, SONY MUSIC UK &amp; IRELAND

One of the highest-ranking women in the music business in the repertoire-rich British market, Tuer has shared in the success of Adele’s record-breaking album *30*, which spent five weeks at No. 1 on the United Kingdom’s Official Albums chart. Breakout hits from Tom Grennan, Joy Crookes and Riton helped further lift the label’s domestic market share, while the launch of Sony’s global Artist Forward initiative confirmed its commitment to supporting acts “across all aspects of their career,” says Tuer, who began her career in music retail. “We only thrive if our artists

do, so this level of holistic support is fundamental to improving our business.”

**Natalie Turano**

VP OF MARKETING, DISNEY MUSIC GROUP

**Barbara Vander Linde**VP OF MUSIC PUBLISHING AND A&R,  
DISNEY MUSIC GROUP

Disney Music Group is dedicated to projects rooted in “authentic storytelling,” says Vander Linde, citing the animated film *Encanto*, with music by Lin-Manuel Miranda; the *Our Family to Yours* holiday ad series starring a Filipino family; and singer-actress Brandy serving as the spokeswoman for the 18-month Ultimate Disney Princess franchise celebration. Turano notes that Disney’s collaboration with ESPN on the *Music for the Movement* EPs is an example of how the company creates “awareness and conversations about social justice through music.”

**Marcela Vaccari**VP OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT,  
LATIN & IBERIA, WARNER MUSIC LATIN

Warner Music Latin is “continuing to grow in market share,” says Vaccari, 36, thanks to the achievements of artists like Myke Towers and Justin Quiles. In April, Towers

won new artist of the year at *Billboard*’s 2021 Latin Music Awards and reached No. 3 on the Top Latin Albums chart with *Lyke Mike*, while Quiles’ *La Última Promesa* peaked at No. 12 in September, propelled by the summer hit “Loco.” To “keep the momentum going,” she says, the label is focused on emerging acts across Latin America, recently signing Micro TDH and Tiago PZK.

**Heather Vassar**

VP OF MARKETING, NASHVILLE, EMPIRE

Vassar helped EMPIRE’s country music division reach new heights with a trio of rising acts: Shaboozey, Sophia Scott and Tenille Arts. Shaboozey is “already causing a stir in hip-hop and country spaces,” says Vassar, 35, while Scott was featured on Iggy Azalea’s “Sex on the Beach” and supported Kelsea Ballerini and the Jonas Brothers on tour, and Arts’ “Somebody Like That” peaked at No. 50 on the Hot 100 and No. 3 on Country Airplay. The latter song became EMPIRE Nashville’s first platinum record, as well as, Vassar says, “the first song to reach No. 1 written, produced and performed by an all-female team in country music.”

**Jennifer Way**SENIOR VP OF MARKETING,  
SONY MUSIC NASHVILLE

Way, 38, has supported the success of Kane Brown, Miranda Lambert and Brad Paisley, among others. But Way also cites

the importance of the Nashville Equity Taskforce, comprising staff from Sony Nashville, Provident Entertainment and Sony Music Publishing, all seeking to improve inclusion among their workforce and support local activist groups. The task force was created after Sony Music Group in June 2020 established its \$100 million Global Social Justice Fund amid the national outcry for racial and social justice. “We have a lot more work to do in addressing equity and inclusion within the [country] format,” says Way, “but I’m incredibly proud of our team’s efforts to effect change in our company and our community.”

**Elsa Yep**CFO/EXECUTIVE VP OF OPERATIONS,  
UNIVERSAL MUSIC LATIN AMERICA  
& IBERIAN PENINSULA

Yep’s successes in the past year include the international growth of the label’s marquee talent, including Karol G and Sebastián Yatra. According to Vevo’s annual year-end recap, Karol G was the most-viewed artist globally of 2021, with 3.11 billion views, beating out The Weeknd for the top slot. Meanwhile, Yatra, who most recently scored his first Hot 100 entry with *Encanto*’s “Dos Oruguitas,” reaching No. 36 (and still climbing), landed three Top 100 Spotify Global hits, including the Myke Towers-assisted “Pareja del Año,” which peaked at No. 10 on the Hot Latin Songs chart.

**Jennifer Way is a Women in Music honoree at Sony Music Nashville, which is celebrating the February nomination of Miranda Lambert (right) for the Academy of Country Music’s entertainer of the year.**





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PLANET EVENTS GENERAL DIRECTOR

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## PIONEERS



# Christine Farnon

**Decades before Deborah Dugan became the Recording Academy's first female president/CEO in 2019, Farnon was the top executive at the organization – and while she never held the big title, there was no question of who was in charge.**

**Farnon started as a volunteer in May 1957 when the academy was in its formative stages and rose to become executive vp. From 1957 through 1987, she worked alongside a succession of 18 elected, volunteer presidents. These men – and yes, they were all men – served their terms and moved on, while she provided continuity and stability. In 1988, Michael Greene became the academy's first paid president. Farnon stayed on through 1992 to ensure a smooth transition.**

**Farnon received a trustees award from the academy upon her retirement. A tribute to her in that year's Grammy program book was fittingly titled "The Recording Academy's Guiding Light."**

**– PAUL GREIN**

## multinational

## sector

### Elizabeth Collins

CO-PRESIDENT, THE AZOFF COMPANY

Collins, who is co-president of The Azoff Company with Susan Genco (page 85), is "very happy with how the year played out" for the multifaceted company. "First and foremost, our entire team showed incredible resilience and flexibility in the face of an ever-changing environment," she says. The company's venue development division, Oak View Group (see page 120), celebrated the opening of the Climate Pledge Arena in Seattle and the UBS Arena in New York. "We also closed on our acquisition of Spectra, which expanded significantly our [live-event] services business. At Full Stop Management, we welcomed back touring with incredible shows by Harry Styles, the Eagles, The Doobie Brothers and Maroon 5, among others. We also had our first full year of operations at Iconic Artists Group, where we are very proud to be involved with the timeless music of [such acts as] The Beach Boys, Linda Ronstadt and David Crosby."

### Danielle Engen

DIRECTOR OF STUDIO OPERATIONS,  
ELECTRIC FEEL ENTERTAINMENT

Electric Feel reports that it was represented on the Hot 100 during every week of 2021 by one of its artists, songwriters or producers. Engen's recent accomplishments include working to open new studios in Miami, Utah and New York, as well as a mobile studio that Post Malone used to record singles such as "Motley Crew" and "One Night Row" during the second leg of his Runaway Tour and at his home during the beginning of the pandemic. Says Engen: "It's amazing to be part of a team hitting such exciting milestones."

### Amber Grimes

EXECUTIVE VP/GM, LVRN RECORDS;  
PARTNER, LVRN MANAGEMENT

Grimes' dual appointments earlier this year — after LVRN announced the hiring and promotion of five female staffers last May — further underscore the company's commitment to invest in and strengthen its female leadership: Currently, 40% of its staff is female. LVRN also teamed with psychotherapist Syreeta Butler to establish its mental health and wellness division, offering employees and artists access to free therapy services. "Female leadership has produced innovative and visionary ideas across our company," says Grimes. "And we hope that as a balanced organization, we will inspire a well-balanced industry."

# WHEN IT COMES TO WOMEN IN MUSIC, THE MLC IS PROUDLY NAMING NAMES

## **THE MLC CELEBRATES OUR WOMEN IN MUSIC!**

Congratulations to The MLC's  
Ellen Truley and all of *Billboard's*  
2022 Women in Music honorees!

Katerine Albert | Faith Allen  
Ashley Almada | Allie Anderson  
Monique Benjamin  
Raleigh Berschback | Maria Brannon  
Jessica Carmack | Joya Carmichael  
Tatyana Carter | Indi Chawla  
Krista Cirillo-Briggs | Cameryn Conner  
Helena Cook | Lacy Cowden | Millie Dantin  
Bethany Dillingham | Jessica Dorow  
Trang Dorris | Margaret Eggers | Serona Elton  
Sydney Evans | Katrina Feyintola  
Whitney Gardner | Brianna Gesling  
Emma Gillis | Sharnett Gordon | Morgan Hall  
Gabrielle Hartl | Susanne Hines | Emma Iacovino  
Renair Jackson | Erin Jarvis | Taylor John  
Kristen Johns | Anna Jones | Baylee Kuss  
Alyssa Lackey | Sara Latimer | Lindsey Major  
Cara McCarthy | Leigh McCorkle | Kayla Ott  
Nancy Prescott | Darian Powe | Savannah Rang  
Krystal Ribble | Ellie Trainor | Ellen Truley  
Amanda Turman | Ilene Weintraub

## Bea Koramblyum

GLOBAL HEAD OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS,  
DOWNTOWN MUSIC SERVICES

In April, Downtown Music Holdings announced “a strategic decision to focus its business interests exclusively on the fast-growing music services sector, providing distribution, copyright management, creative marketing and financing solutions for songwriters and artists,” says Koramblyum, 42, who was promoted to her current position last year after being with the company for a decade. She has negotiated and signed deals with artists and writers including Arca, Ibeyi, Tank and the Bangas and Suzanne Vega.

## Clara Pablo

SENIOR VP OF GLOBAL MARKETING,  
WK ENTERTAINMENT

Maluma’s 27-date Papi Juancho Tour in the United States was one of WK Entertainment’s biggest achievements of 2021. “We were the first to announce a major arena tour post-pandemic cancellations,” Pablo says, adding that “every night was nearly sold out.” The successful trek, which ranked No. 14 on the year-end Top Tours chart with a gross of \$24.5 million, plans to hit Europe in 2022. Additionally, Pablo highlights Los Legendarios, Wisin and Jhay Cortez’s “Fiel” as “one of the biggest Latin songs in 2021 worldwide” released under WK Entertainment and La Base/WK Records. “Fiel” ended the year among *Billboard*’s top 10 Hot Latin Songs.

## Elyse Rogers

EXECUTIVE VP, ARTIST PARTNER GROUP

The past 12 months marked an “incredible new phase” for Artist Partner Group as an independent label, says Rogers. While the company (which also includes a music publishing division) has renewed its partnership with Warner Music Group, its repertoire will flow through WMG’s independent label/artist services division, Alternative Distribution Alliance Worldwide. APG’s roster includes recent breakouts Lexi Jayde and Cico P alongside chart-toppers Jason Derulo and Adam Levine. “It’s so rare to find yourself in a position of having the track record of breaking multiple platinum artists globally and starting 2.0 of what was already a young, successful company,” says Rogers. “It gives us the speed and flexibility to stay on the front edge of the modern music business.”

## Maria Weaver

PRESIDENT, WMX

In November, Warner Music Group launched new services division WMX to connect artists and fans with brands. The platform includes a commercial services and marketing network and a creative



Among the artists with whom **Bea Koramblyum** recently negotiated deals at Downtown Music Services is singer-songwriter **Suzanne Vega** (left). In October, Vega attended the reopening of the Broadway musical *Girl From the North Country*.

content division, giving Weaver control of “culture-shaping brands,” as she calls them, such as Uproxx and HipHopDX, and concert platform Songkick. The division’s online properties have 249 million monthly visitors, according to WMX. Weaver adds: “We’ve multiplied opportunities for our artists, streamlining the media-buying process for advertisers and giving brands unparalleled access to our massive, music-obsessed audience.”

## management

### Lydia Asrat

CO-FOUNDER, 10Q MANAGEMENT

Along with 10Q partner Josh Kaplan and SALXCO’s Wassim “Sal” Slaiby and Gordan Dillard, Asrat has guided the

breakthrough of Doja Cat, whose “Need To Know” returned to the top 10 of the Hot 100 in January (it previously hit No. 8 in November), fueling the continued success of the rapper-singer’s album *Planet Her*. “We have managed the creation, promotion and release of an album that has received 11 Grammy nominations,” says Asrat, citing her artist’s nods for the 2021 and 2022 Grammy Awards.

### Virginia Bunetta

MANAGING PARTNER, G-MAJOR  
MANAGEMENT; ARTIST MANAGER  
(THOMAS RHETT)

After a year of lockdown, Bunetta, 41, can sum up the highlight of 2021 in just one word: touring. Her client Thomas Rhett returned to the road last year, bringing his *Center Point Road* tour to hungry crowds after the pandemic forced a postpone-

ment of 2020 dates. “I’m so proud of launching and executing a successful tour in 2021,” she says. The wins kept coming offstage, too: Rhett scored his 17th No. 1 on the Country Airplay chart with “Country Again,” which also netted him a 2022 Grammy nomination for best country song.

### Kelly Clague

EXECUTIVE VP, EM.CO; PRESIDENT, SAFETOUR

Clague, 53, says her management client Tim McGraw had “an incredible year” that included a starring role in the Western drama *1883*, which premiered on Paramount+ in December. Clague also guides the nonprofit SafeTour, which has established itself as a touring industry leader in battling harassment and discrimination in the work environment while strengthening accountability and best practices. “With our partners at Hollaback!,” says Clague, “we completed the build-out of our new training program and were able to make it available to artists and their tours.”

### Rebecca Drucker

CEO, THAT’S WHAT SHE SAID

Drucker worked closely with star client Ricky Martin and producer Jaycen Joshua on the development of a new immersive headphone and speaker technology, Orbital Audio, which launched in 2020. The company counts H.E.R. and Myke Towers among its users and is “the best on the planet,” she says. Drucker notes that other highlights of the past year include helping to secure a lucrative new deal for Martin with skin-care line Kumiko and his 15-date arena tour alongside Enrique Iglesias, which grossed nearly \$20 million. A new

“We have managed the creation, promotion and release of an album that just received 11 Grammy nominations.”

—LYDIA ASRAT ON DOJA CAT’S *PLANET HER*



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**2022 billboard**  
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**HONOREES**

**ALLISON KAYE**

PRESIDENT OF MUSIC  
HYBE AMERICA

**JEN McDANIELS**

PRESIDENT OF MANAGEMENT  
HYBE AMERICA

**ALLISON JONES**

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, A&R  
BIG MACHINE LABEL GROUP



run of dates is scheduled for later this year.

### Martha Earls

OWNER, EFG MANAGEMENT

Earls' Nashville-based company helped its clients find success on multiple fronts during the past year. Kane Brown staged an NBA arena tour, Restless Road sent its single "Growing Old With You" to No. 1 on Country Digital Song Sales, Dylan Schneider signed with Broken Bow Records, and alt-pop band NIGHTLY joined the EFG roster. Earls says, "I am proud of the work that we did to continue to grow our artists' careers and raise their profiles."

### Ann Edelblute

OWNER, THE HQ

Carrie Underwood's longtime manager guided the launch of the singer's first Las Vegas residency with six sold-out shows at Resorts World Theatre in December. Edelblute also secured an equity partnership between the seven-time Grammy winner and Coca-Cola's Bodyarmor sports drink and oversaw the release of her new album, *My Savior*, with a concert at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville. The event was "livestreamed globally on Facebook on Easter Sunday," Edelblute says, "raising over \$112,000 for Save the Children."

### Kerri Edwards

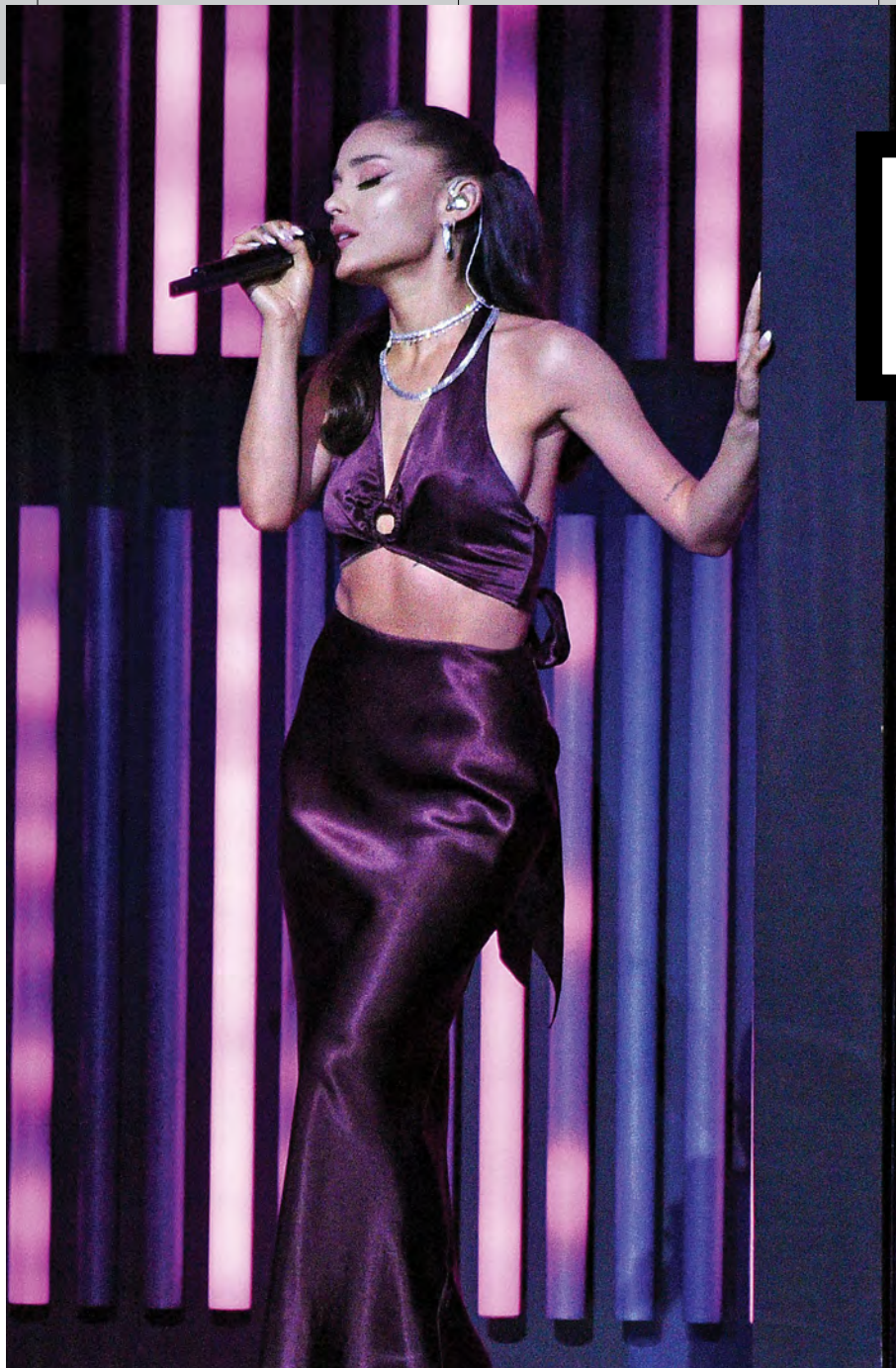
PRESIDENT, KP ENTERTAINMENT

"Team KPE," as Edwards calls it, had plenty of wins in 2021 among its management clients: Cole Swindell scored a Country Airplay No. 1 with "Single Saturday Night," while Dylan Scott's summer hit "Nobody" took home breakthrough video of the year at the CMT Music Awards. And then there was Luke Bryan. The *American Idol* judge and country star's achievements included launching a documentary series on IMDb TV, *My Dirt Road Diary*; earning the Academy of Country Music's entertainer of the year prize; hosting the Country Music Association Awards; and wrapping a 35-date tour.

### Mary Hilliard Harrington

ARTIST MANAGER, RED LIGHT MANAGEMENT

As the leader of Red Light's Nashville office, Harrington, 45, guides the careers of Dierks Bentley, Luke Bryan, Caylee Hammack, Elle King and others. The former chairwoman of the Country Music Association wrapped the year by adding "executive producer" to her résumé with the creation of the country music special *New Year's Eve Live: Nashville's Big Bash*, which aired on CBS and "highlighted our genre and city in a fresh way," she says.



The work of **Jennifer McDaniels** at SB Projects has helped **Ariana Grande** (left) achieve a social media following of 413 million fans, according to the management company.

inclusive vision of our future," she says. "Artists such as Troye Sivan, Lizzo, Orville Peck and Carlie Hanson have a unique and innate ability to connect and give hope to audiences who have historically felt underrepresented and/or unseen." Kennedy was an executive producer of the 24-hour Global Citizen Live event in September that addressed climate change and poverty. Among her clients is Gwen Stefani, a coach on *The Voice* who has wrapped a multiyear residency in Las Vegas and is launching a beauty business. "Bringing dreams to fruition is what I'm passionate about," she says.

### Marion Kraft

CEO, SHOPKEEPER MANAGEMENT

Kraft, 57, saw her superstar client Miranda Lambert claim a third Grammy in 2021 for best country album with *Wildcard*, a sold-out tour and the title "restaurateur," thanks to ownership of the new Nashville hotspot Casa Rosa. Kraft is most proud that Lambert — who holds the record for the most Academy of Country Music Award wins with 35 — is the first female entertainer to stake a claim on

Broadway, Nashville's rollicking restaurant row. Kraft's clients Tenille Townes (a Juno Award winner for *The Lemonade Stand*) and Ashley Monroe have also worked continuously through shutdowns and challenges, as have the Pistol Annies — Lambert's trio with Monroe and Angaleena Presley, which recently released the Christmas set *Hell of a Holiday*.

### Rebeca León

FOUNDER/CEO, LIONFISH ENTERTAINMENT

One of Latin music's most influential managers, León has spent the year paving the way for client Rosalía's next big album for Columbia Records and expanding Lunay's touring footprint with mainstream U.S. festival appearances at Lollapalooza and Austin City Limits despite continuing "uncertainty around touring." There's also a new partnership with Paulus Music to support budding Dominican star Tokischa, whose collaboration with Rosalía, "LINDA," made waves last fall.

### Kelly Hughes

DAY-TO-DAY MANAGER, BLUE RAINCOAT MUSIC

Hughes' client Phoebe Bridgers had a banner 2021, including a *Saturday Night Live* appearance, a collaboration with Taylor Swift on *Red (Taylor's Version)* and the continued growth of her own Secretly Group label, Saddest Factory Records. A successful return to the road, however, was perhaps the most meaningful win. "She set a precedent by moving all shows to outdoor venues and requiring attendees to be vaccinated or tested per state regulations," says Hughes, 35. "Phoebe did everything in her power to keep the band, crew and fans as safe as possible."

### Allison Kaye

PRESIDENT, SB PROJECTS

### Jennifer McDaniels

GM, SB PROJECTS


"The possibilities are endless," said Kaye in January, when she appeared on the

Billboard Power List, describing the \$1.05 billion deal that brought together Scooter Braun's Ithaca Holdings (the parent company of SB Projects) with Bang Si-hyuk's HYBE in April, merging the management homes of Justin Bieber, Ariana Grande, Demi Lovato and BTS. While McDaniels worked closely with the SB Projects team and HYBE during the merger of the two companies, she also played a key role in Bieber's New Year's Eve pandemic livestream from Los Angeles on Dec. 31, 2020, which led to the documentary *Justin Bieber: Our World*. Her marketing skills have helped Grande achieve a social media following of 413 million fans, according to SB Projects.

### Tina Kennedy Dani Russin

MANAGERS, FULL STOP MANAGEMENT

At Full Stop Management, Russin takes pride in her role at a company "whose roster represents such a diverse and



The WK Entertainment & WK Records Family

CONGRATULATES

**CLARA PABLO**

for being named one of the

**billboard**

2022

**WOMEN IN MUSIC**



## Jaime Levine

CEO, SEVEN MANTELS

Shakira's longtime manager scored a coup for her superstar client when she brokered the sale of the artist's 145-song publishing catalog to Hipgnosis Songs Fund in January 2021. Shakira, meanwhile, continued to work on new music for her upcoming 2022 Sony album (which is not part of the Hipgnosis sale). Levine will also serve as co-executive producer, along with Shakira, of the Colombian star's new NBC dance competition series, *Dancing With Myself*. Other TV and film projects are also in development, says Levine.

## Stacia Mac

CEO, ODA MANAGEMENT/HOUSE OF LEGENDS

CEO and "momager" Mac celebrated the success of her son Polo G's hit song "Rapstar," which debuted at No. 1 on the Hot 100 and ruled for two weeks. The single is from his Billboard 200-topping album *Hall of Fame*, which has surpassed 1 million consumption units. "Despite reluctance from others to release 'Rapstar,' [we decided] to proceed," says Mac. She notes of this "pivotal point" in her career: "Being attentive to fans and keeping a pulse on what interests our audience propelled the track."

## Jeanine McLean-Williams

PRESIDENT/MANAGING PARTNER, MBK ENTERTAINMENT

## Misha Hedman Mayes

GM, MBK ENTERTAINMENT

It was a double win for MBK Entertainment when two of its clients, H.E.R. and Tiara Thomas, won the song of the year Grammy Award in 2021 for co-writing "I Can't Breathe" and then captured the best original song Academy Award for co-writing "Fight for You" (from *Judas and the Black Messiah*). "To have two African American women share the honor of both an Oscar win and Grammy win in the same year is historic," says McLean-Williams. "H.E.R. and Tiara exemplify what it means to be bosses, power players and women in music."

## Wendy Ong

PRESIDENT, TAP MUSIC

TaP Music's former superstar client Dua Lipa, whose "Levitating" was the No. 1 Hot 100 song of 2021, launched one of the most anticipated tours of 2022 in February. Ong, who has been helping Noah Cyrus develop new music, is always looking to bring fresh talent into the fold. K-pop superstar CL, a recent signee, is a case in point. "We put a lot of passion into the work we do and take pride in being able to bring value to our artists at any

point in their career," Ong says. It's no coincidence these musicians are all women, as TaP's nonprofit division is working to right the imbalance in representation of female artists.

## Luana Pagani

PRESIDENT, SEITRACK U.S.

Pagani's artist management agency surpassed its expectations in 2021. With Alejandro Fernández, Los Ángeles Azules, Alejandro Sanz and David Bisbal, among others, hitting the road, the company was responsible for 170 dates across the United States between August and December, she says. "I am proud to say that most of the shows were sold out with an extremely low [evidence of] COVID-19 spread," says Pagani, who credits her team for helping make it all possible. Seitrack U.S. also grew its roster by signing Joss Favela, Edith Marquez, The Change and Nuevo Elemento, to name a few.

## Ashley Poitevin

VP OF ARTIST MANAGEMENT, MNRK MUSIC GROUP

As the manager for Canadian acts like electro-pop singer-songwriter Lights and alt-rock band Arkells, Poitevin, 35,

says her MNRK artists have pushed back against the livestream model since the beginning of the pandemic, preferring to keep the focus on "real-life experiences and connection" whenever possible. That included Arkells' return to live shows for 30,000 fans at Toronto's Budweiser Stage last August, which Poitevin calls "a dice-rolling dream that was largely built in three weeks" and "a memory that you cannot buy."

## Tamara Simmons

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, SALXCO

Simmons stayed busy with a flurry of high-profile projects including The Weeknd's Emmy Award-nominated Super Bowl LV halftime show in February 2021, during which he performed hits such as "Blinding Lights" — a track that later made history as the No. 1 Hot 100 song of all time. Fellow SALXCO management client Doja Cat was nominated for eight 2022 Grammys, including album, record and song of the year, while client Metro Boomin was named producer of the year at the BMI R&B/Hip-Hop Awards. Meanwhile, Swedish House Mafia, which is now also under SALXCO management, announced its reunion and a global tour.

When **Shakira** (left) sold her 145-song publishing catalog to Hipgnosis Songs Fund in January, Seven Mantels CEO **Jaime Levine** brokered the sale for her management client.

## Kristen Smith

FOUNDER, CAMP FAR WEST MANAGEMENT

Though they recently parted ways, Smith helped guide client Olivia Rodrigo into the stratosphere during a breakout 2021. Not only did the singer reach the summit of the Hot 100 and the Billboard 200, she earned seven Grammy nominations — including record, song and album of the year and best new artist — and the title of Woman of the Year from *Billboard*. "Olivia has incredible vision for her art," said Smith in January when she appeared on the *Billboard* Power List, "and witnessing her rise to the occasion over and over again is amazing."

## Taren Smith

ARTIST MANAGER, YM&U GROUP

Smith, 31, was at the forefront of music's non-fungible-to-ken boom, overseeing 3LAU's game-changing NFT auctions that have generated over \$20 million in revenue for the independent dance music producer-DJ, the highest-earning musician in the digital-collectible space. After that success, Smith began giving crash courses in NFTs to other managers and industry executives both inside and outside her firm, helping drive much-needed income for artists unable to tour during the pandemic. The Albuquerque, N.M., native also manages an array of other dance acts, and she signed the first digital-artist client, Slimesunday, to her company's new visual arts division.

## Ebonie P. Ward

MANAGEMENT PARTNER, EMAGEN ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

From opening her own clothing boutique to working with a then-up-and-coming Future, Ward established herself in Atlanta's hip-hop scene well before Anthony Saleh asked her to join his artist management company, Emagen, in 2018. Her latest triumph at the firm is client Gunna, whose third album, *DS4Ever*, debuted atop the *Billboard* 200 in January. "Working with my team to develop the marketing and rollout strategy to



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**Congratulations** to our very own **Bess Spaeth**,  
head of Brand Media & Experiences, recognized as a  
**2022 Billboard Women in Music Executive Honoree.**



impact the culture in a way that wasn't done before was a challenge that I was determined to meet," she says.

## publishing

### Audrey Ashby

SENIOR VP OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS, CATALOG, SONY MUSIC PUBLISHING

### Katie Welle

SENIOR VP OF CREATIVE, NASHVILLE, SONY MUSIC PUBLISHING

### Anna Weisband

VP OF CREATIVE, NASHVILLE, SONY MUSIC PUBLISHING

### Meghann Wright

DIRECTOR OF ROYALTY ADMINISTRATION (NORTH AMERICA), SONY MUSIC PUBLISHING

### Jen Gobeille

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF COPYRIGHT (NORTH AMERICA), SONY MUSIC PUBLISHING

As part of Sony Music Group and under the guidance of its chairman/CEO, Jon Platt, Sony Music Publishing continued to pursue a more transparent, songwriter-friendly future. In July, the company launched Songwriters Forward, a new program that allows certain legacy signings to receive royalties from their work even if they have never recouped their advance. The publisher hopes to "wipe the slate clean" for songwriters so that they can "focus on creativity," says Ashby. "Under Jon's leadership, [we have] risen to the occasion."

### Kat Basolo

VP OF CREATIVE SYNCH, KOBALT

### Jamie Kinelski

### Jill Tschogl

VPS OF CREATIVE, KOBALT

Kobalt's creative team celebrated a banner year: Tschogl helped to close recent deals with Young Thug, Roddy Ricch, London on Da Track, Machine Gun Kelly and M.I.A.; Basolo, 39, landed over 100 synch placements for the publisher's artists in campaigns with Google, Apple, Toyota and the Summer Olympics in Tokyo; and Kinelski's signing of Kali Uchis scored a breakout hit with "Telepatía," which spent eight weeks at No. 1 on the Hot Latin Songs chart. Kinelski signed her after catching the artist's set at South by Southwest in 2016, when she "played a show for 10 people," she says, "so it has been thrilling to witness her finally receive the recognition she deserves."

### Mandy Gabriel

VP OF FILM, TELEVISION AND ADVERTISING, UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING GROUP

### Lillia Parsa

SENIOR VP OF A&R, UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING GROUP

### Ana Rosa Santiago

VP OF LATIN MUSIC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING GROUP

## PIONEERS



# Suzanne de Passe

Joining Motown Records in the late 1960s as creative assistant to founder Berry Gordy, Suzanne de Passe had ascended to president of its TV/film division, Motown Productions, when MCA Records bought the label in 1988. De Passe's remarkable journey encompassed bringing cornerstone acts – The Jackson 5, Commodores and Lionel Richie – to the Motown family, as well as producing award-winning TV specials and miniseries like *Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever*, which featured Michael Jackson's famous moonwalking performance of "Billie Jean."

"I couldn't type, but I could think," recalls de Passe, now co-chairwoman of de Passe Jones Entertainment. "Listen to this music.' 'See this act.' 'Read this script.' Gordy gave me so many incredible opportunities to learn and grow in a company where I never had to apologize for being Black. And being so busy surviving the challenges of my job, the idea of trailblazing was the last thing on my mind."

—GAIL MITCHELL

# Karol G

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Tu familia de Universal Music Latino te felicita por este reconocimiento; por tu inmensa contribución a la industria, comunidad y cultura latina a nivel global

**¡FELICIDADES!**

“The dedication and loyalty of our staff and songwriters not only kept the firm on track but allowed us to continue to thrive during a pandemic.”

— KATHY SPANBERGER

### Taylor Testa

VP OF A&R, UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING GROUP

In December 2020, Universal Music Publishing Group writer Bad Bunny made history when *El Último Tour del Mundo* became the first all-Spanish-language album to reach No. 1 on the all-genre Billboard 200. In 2021, the Puerto Rican star became Spotify's most streamed artist in the world for the second consecutive year with more than 9.1 billion streams and a No. 1 on the Top Latin Albums chart with his recent vinyl-exclusive *Anniversary Trilogy*. “Bad Bunny is a well-rounded artist who constantly surprises our team with his individuality,” says Santiago.

### Golnar Khosrowshahi

FOUNDER/CEO, RESERVOIR MEDIA

### Donna Caseine

EXECUTIVE VP/GLOBAL CREATIVE DIRECTOR, RESERVOIR MEDIA

### Faith Newman

EXECUTIVE VP OF A&R AND CATALOG DEVELOPMENT, RESERVOIR MEDIA

See profile, page 80.

### Carianne Marshall

CO-CHAIR/COO, WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC

### Jenni Pfaff

SENIOR VP/HEAD OF GLOBAL STRATEGIC INTEGRATION AND OPERATIONS, WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC

### Shani Gonzales

MANAGING DIRECTOR, WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC U.K.; HEAD OF INTERNATIONAL A&R, WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC

Marshall, along with Warner Chappell Music co-chair/CEO Guy Moot, has guided efforts to bring a new unified strategy to the publisher that is “department-agnostic,” as Marshall says. One step in that process was the appointment last year of Pfaff, whose role has included gathering input and feedback from Warner Chappell songwriters and their managers from around the world, while working with company leaders in synch, creative services, digital and administra-

tion to promote synergy. In London, Gonzales renewed Warner Chappell's deal for the song catalog of the late George Michael, promoted collaborations across the company's international roster and signed British songwriter-rapper Central Cee, who was nominated this year for three BRIT Awards.

### Clio Massey

GM, WORK OF ART MUSIC PUBLISHING; VP OF A&R, ARISTA RECORDS

Massey's Work of Art scored early by signing JP Saxe in 2019. Since then, she has helped steer the Canadian artist's mainstream breakthrough, led by the hit “If the World Was Ending,” co-written by and featuring songwriter-artist Julia Michaels. The track has notched over 1.2 billion global streams and is certified three-times platinum in the United States. It earned a Grammy Award nomination for song of the year in 2021 — a milestone that Massey notes is “a



Under CEO **Helen Murphy**, Anthem Entertainment in January acquired the publishing catalog of **Kelly Archer** (left). Trisha Yearwood, Reba McEntire, Dustin Lynch and Jason Aldean are among the many artists who have recorded Archer's songs.

particularly meaningful category for songwriters and publishers.”

### Katie Mitzell Fagan

HEAD OF A&R, NASHVILLE, PRESCRIPTION SONGS

### Rhea Pasricha

HEAD OF A&R, WEST COAST, PRESCRIPTION SONGS

Prescription Songs' revenue increased 40% in the past year, according to the company, while it expanded its offices in Los Angeles and Nashville “with new A&R and team hires,” says Mitzell Fagan, 34. The company's marquee songwriter Doja Cat had major success with her singles “Kiss Me More,” “Need To Know” and “You Right,” and is also nominated for best rap song at the Grammy Awards after appearing on Saweetie's “Best Friend.” Elsewhere on the Prescription roster, KbeaZy became one of the youngest producers to have a No. 1 on the Hot 100 with 24kGoldn's “Mood,” featuring iann dior. KbeaZy also co-produced Lil Nas X's “That's What I Want.”

### Helen Murphy

CEO, ANTHEM ENTERTAINMENT

Under Murphy, Anthem Entertainment's most recent achievement is the acquisition of the country hit-laden catalog of songwriter Kelly Archer, whose songs have been recorded by Jason Aldean, Dustin Lynch, Reba McEntire, Trisha Yearwood and many others. Among the Vancouver native's hits are Travis Denning's “After a Few” and Justin Moore's “Somebody Else Will,” both of which hit No. 1 on the Country Airplay chart, and Brett Young's “Sleep Without You,” which reached No. 2. Anthem and RED Creative Group have also signed Archer to an exclusive go-forward deal that covers her future songs.

### Natalia Nastaskin

CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER, PRIMARY WAVE MUSIC

Amid a busy year overseeing artist management clients, brand partnerships, synch rights, NFTs, theatrical musicals and more, Primary Wave continued to make waves with its music catalog acquisitions. It has secured deals with Sun Records and the estates of Prince, James Brown, Luther Vandross, Bing Crosby and Gerry



# CONGRATULATIONS

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**SHAUNA ELVIN**  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
GLOBAL TALENT - ASM GLOBAL



**SHANI TATE ROSS**  
VICE PRESIDENT, SALES & MARKETING  
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Goffin. And in January, it expanded its catalog partnership with Def Leppard. “When we acquire catalogs or sign talent, it is because we believe that we can bring them certain opportunities,” says Nastaskin. More rewarding than working on the world’s “most important music,” she adds, “is knowing that our partners — the creators — are seeing the value of their retained shares increasing through our team’s efforts.”

### Molly Neuman

PRESIDENT, SONGTRUST

Songtrust, which represents over 350,000 songwriters with more than 3 million songs in 245 countries and territories, continues to pursue growth by reaching out to songwriters, producers, collaborators and other music creators. Serving such professionals at all career stages from the DIY sector to established songwriters that own their copyrights, as well as working with music publishing companies that need administration solutions, the Downtown Music Holdings company has expanded its outreach in Africa, Latin America and Asia, where education about songwriter rights and publishing administration services are deeply needed, Neuman says.

### Miwa Okumura

SENIOR VP OF WEST COAST OPERATIONS AND LICENSING, BEGGARS GROUP

Okumura advocates for and works closely with all artists on the Beggars roster, but has found the past year particularly special because it “provided a great opportunity to hone in on our recent signings who happen to [comprise] those in the LGBTQ, BIPOC and AAPI communities,” she says, citing acts including Lucinda Chua, Tkay Maida, Spencer, Yaeji and Arca who all “had great placements in shows like HBO Max’s *Euphoria*, *Gossip Girl*, *Betty* and *Insecure*.”

### Kathy Spanberger

PRESIDENT/COO, ANGLO AMERICAN REGION, PEERMUSIC

Despite disruption in their normal routines — including “huge personal challenges and loss” — independent music publisher peermusic’s staff and songwriters “showed up every day to do their work,” says Spanberger, who has been at the company for 43 years. “Their dedication and loyalty not only kept the firm on track but allowed us to continue to thrive during a pandemic. They are indeed the greatest achievement any executive could hope for.” Spanberger directly supervises, approves and is actively involved in recruitment of all of peermusic’s publishing signings in the United States, Canada and Australia, spanning pop, R&B, hip-hop, rock, Latin and country. The family-owned publishing company ranked at No. 8 on *Billboard*’s year-end Hot 100 Publishing Corporations chart.



**Mandolin CEO Mary Kay Huse** has helped narrow the gap between in-person and virtual experiences, working with streaming clients including **Grace Potter** (above).

### Starrah

FOUNDER, 3:02 PUBLISHING

After co-writing hits for Camila Cabello, Maroon 5 and Drake, Starrah launched her own publishing outfit, 3:02, with manager Nick Jarjour. The company comprises other songwriter-producers that she first met on Myspace, Twitter and Instagram. The publisher’s latest credit? Co-writing and producing Normani and Cardi B’s “Wild Side,” which became its “first No. 1 placement” when it topped the Mainstream R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay chart dated Jan. 1. The milestone, says Starrah, “shows the manifestation power of a team that has the same vision.”

## streaming

### Kathy Baker

HEAD OF U.S. LABEL RELATIONS, YOUTUBE

### Anh Nguyen

GLOBAL HEAD OF MARKETING, MUSIC, PODCASTS AND PREMIUM, YOUTUBE

YouTube made a “steadfast commitment to supporting Black artists” on the platform with the launch of its #YouTubeBlack Voices Fund in 2020, says Baker. The program provides financial support, training and networking for Black creators on YouTube. Rapper Slick Rick served as a mentor for the class of 2022, which includes 52 artists, producers and songwriters from countries such as Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria and Uganda in addition to the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. “We’re providing dedicated partner support, funding for content creation and opportunities to participate in training and networking programs focused on

production, fan engagement and well-being,” says Baker.

### Sara Clemens

FORMER COO, TWITCH

During the pandemic, Twitch established itself as an outlet for artists who weren’t able to perform live shows in front of fans. The service partnered with creators to “build direct fan relationships, launch new music and innovate with live, interactive experiences,” says Clemens, noting that the median viewership for artists making \$50,000 a year was roughly 183 fans. “We were delighted that Twitch was a natural home for these artists to maintain and grow their connections with fans and create new revenue streams at such a critical time,” said Clemens prior to departing from Twitch in January.

### Jillian Gerngross

DIRECTOR, AMAZON MUSIC EUROPE, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

### Rochelle Balogun

SENIOR MUSIC CURATOR, AMAZON MUSIC

### Ana Martínez

SENIOR LABEL AND ARTIST RELATIONS MANAGER, AMAZON MUSIC

Amazon Music worked extensively in R&B/hip-hop and Latin over the past 18 months, which helped grow its subscriber count to exceed 55 million globally. The streaming service is continuing to diversify its Latin music audience with the creation of two new verticals: Whiskey & Tequila, which “brings together regional Mexican and country music,” and Fluent, which “celebrates those that move between languages and generations,” says Martínez. “At Amazon Music, we’re proud to celebrate the fluidity and universal reach of Latin music by connecting cultures, languages and genres.”

### Min Hu


CFO, TENCENT MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

As China’s largest music streaming service, Tencent had over 71 million music subscribers and 636 million monthly mobile music users in the third quarter of 2021. To that end, Tencent Music Entertainment used what it calls a “dual engine content-and-platform” strategy to create “a powerful magnet for launching talent,” especially younger Generation Z artists. The platform offers support services, livestreaming and other opportunities to strengthen the presence of its 300,000 registered acts. “Music platforms need to entertain users,” Hu says, “and, at the same time, build a broad and valuable stage for musicians.”

### Mary Kay Huse

CEO, MANDOLIN

As the live business faced pandemic-related challenges, Mandolin helped bridge the gap between virtual and in-person experiences, working with clients including John Legend, Grace Potter, The Decemberists and the London edition of the Pitchfork Music Festival. The company’s success is defined by its “future-proof hybrid platform,” says Huse, which provides insights on fan preferences to its clients, streamlines fan experiences and “helps virtual fans enjoy the communal aspects of a show as if they were really there.”



# Congratulations to our Women of Influence!

From your partners, Rene McLean, Jon Jashni, Frank Cooper III & Paul Braude

**BlackRock**

**influence**  
MEDIA PARTNERS



WARNER MUSIC

Pictured clockwise from top-right: Pam Chan, Temi Adeniji,  
Billboard Women in Music 2022 Honoree Lylette Pizarro McLean, Lynn Hazan



The sold-out Lollapalooza festival in Chicago in August, featuring artists including **Brittany Howard** (left), was a high point of the past year for **Amy Corbin** of C3 Presents.

### Amanda Marks

GLOBAL HEAD OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MUSIC PARTNERSHIPS, APPLE

### Rachel Newman

GLOBAL HEAD OF EDITORIAL AND CONTENT, APPLE MUSIC

### Jen Walsh

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF CONTENT AND SERVICES, INTERNATIONAL, APPLE

During the past year, Spatial Audio with Dolby Atmos came to Apple Music, “which galvanized the industry to come together to bring the newest advancement in audio fidelity to life on our service,” says Marks. “Working in tandem with our global label partners and the creative community to bring the extraordinary experience of immersive audio to a global listening audience has been an incredibly gratifying challenge.”

### Dawn Ostroff

CHIEF CONTENT AND ADVERTISING BUSINESS OFFICER, SPOTIFY

### Mia Nygren

MANAGING DIRECTOR, LATIN AMERICA, SPOTIFY

For the world’s largest streaming service, which now reaches over 381 million users in 184 countries, Nygren oversees the Latin American region and Ostroff plays a key role in driving the company’s exponential growth in podcasting. Its podcast division now hosts over 3.2 million titles, including exclusive deals

with former President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama, Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, Kim Kardashian — and Joe Rogan. Controversy over the content of Rogan’s podcast led Neil Young, and then other artists, to withdraw their music from Spotify earlier this year. “I do not believe that silencing Joe is the answer,” wrote CEO Daniel Ek in an email sent to Spotify employees. “We should have clear lines around content and take action when they are crossed, but canceling voices is a slippery slope.”

### Lauren Wirtzer-Seawood

CHIEF CONTENT AND MARKETING OFFICER, SOUNDCLOUD

In 2021, Wirtzer-Seawood joined SoundCloud to help supercharge its effort to move beyond music distribution and emerge as a genuine entertainment destination. That included the introduction of the fan-powered royalties program, which allows over 125,000 independent artists to collect funds directly from their followers, an innovation that delivered a 60% increase in revenue over the traditional pro rata model, according to the company. The new First on SoundCloud campaign focuses on nine emerging creators, including rapper SoFaygo, fingernail icon Charmaine and EDM artist Ela Minus, while the company’s new SCENES and SoundCloud Player One features invested in documentaries and gaming, respectively.

## live

### Francesca Bodie

PRESIDENT OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, OAK VIEW GROUP

### Randi Bernstein

SENIOR VP OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, OAK VIEW GROUP

Oak View Group marked multiple business milestones in the past year. “We completed the acquisition of Spectra, one of the industry’s leading venue management and hospitality providers, to create a new full-service live-events company,” says Bodie. In October, OVG opened the Climate Pledge Arena in Seattle — which Bodie calls “the most progressive and sustainable arena in the world” — followed in November by the debut of the UBS Arena at Belmont Park, the new Long Island home of the NHL’s New York Islanders. The company has also announced arena projects in Baltimore; Mesa, Ariz.; Hamilton, Ontario; and São Paulo. “Our next world-class arenas, Moody Center at the University of Texas in Austin and Coachella Valley Arena in Palm Springs, Calif., are opening later this year,” says Bodie, “along with Co-op Live in Manchester, which will be the largest arena in the U.K., opening in 2023.”

### Chen Castaño

MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANET EVENTS  
As one of the few female Latin music

event promoters, Spain-based Castaño consistently produced shows throughout the past year, including Camilo’s maiden tour of Spain that stretched across 20 dates; Concierto Hispanidad in Madrid, featuring Spanish-speaking artists from around the world; and the Los40 Music Awards, Spain’s top music awards show. For upcoming tour dates in her market by the likes of Marc Anthony and Alejandro Fernández, Castaño will continue to work solely “with local partners,” she says. “Supporting each other is key.”

### Christy Castillo Butcher

SENIOR VP OF PROGRAMMING AND BOOKING, SOFI STADIUM/YOUTUBE THEATER/ HOLLYWOOD PARK

See profile, page 92.

### Amy Corbin

PROMOTER, C3 PRESENTS

Corbin was key to the Live Nation-owned festival team’s work on some of the best-attended events in the company’s history, including a sold-out Lollapalooza at Chicago’s Grant Park and a comeback for Austin City Limits headlined by hometown hero George Strait. C3 put on “an incredible amount of concerts successfully,” Corbin says, “while setting industry standards for protocols that created a path to return to live music safely.”

### Sauna Elvin

EXECUTIVE VP OF GLOBAL HUMAN RESOURCES, ASM GLOBAL

### Shani Tate Ross

VP OF SALES AND MARKETING, T-MOBILE CENTER

In October, ASM Global launched its corporate social responsibility initiative, ASM Global Acts, “an extension of our long-standing commitment to creating a better workplace, a more diverse workforce, serving our communities and contributing to a healthier environment and planet,” says Elvin. Its foundation division will support socially conscious and community-based philanthropic efforts, while its career development scholarship program will provide educational



# CONGRATS!

TO OUR PRESIDENT  
OF SBS ENTERTAINMENT

## ALESSANDRA ALARCÓN

AND TO ALL THE OTHER  
WOMEN IN MUSIC  
HONOREES

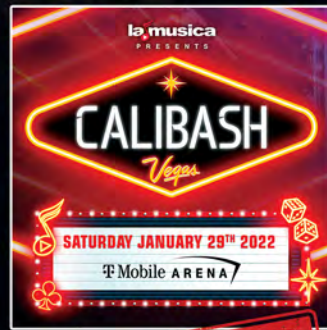
LOS ANGELES

NEW YORK

MIAMI

LAS VEGAS

LAS VEGAS



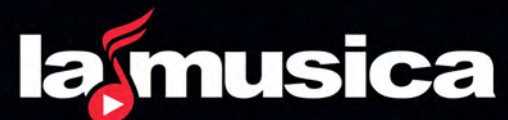
**SOLD OUT**

**SOLD OUT**

**SOLD OUT**

**SOLD OUT**

**SOLD OUT**



SPANISH BROADCASTING SYSTEM

## PIONEERS



# María de Jesús “Chuyita” Lizárraga

**Chuyita manages the 133-employee organization that oversees Mexican supergroup Banda El Recodo and its younger sister group, Banda Los Recoditos. She has been their driving force since 1970, when, at 25 years old, she married El Recodo founder and then-bandleader Cruz Lizárraga, who was more than twice her age: “I told him, ‘I don’t know about music,” she says, “but if you trust me, I’ll help with the business.’ ”**

**The young bride began her career booking shows. Today, she is recognized as the grand dame of Mexican music, and El Recodo, which will turn 84 in October, is known as “the mother of bands,” with nine Latin Grammy Award wins and 52 entries on *Billboard’s* Hot Latin Songs chart. While brothers Alfonso and Joel Lizárraga have led the group since Cruz’s death in 1995, Chuyita still oversees “bookings, clients, distribution, logistics, everything,” she says. “At 77, I haven’t lost my desire to work.”**

—LEILA COBO

opportunities in the fields of entertainment, hospitality and the culinary arts to underresourced communities, according to the company.

### **Kristine Lingle-Griffith**

VP OF MARKETING, AEG PRESENTS/  
CONCERTS WEST, LAS VEGAS

Last year, Concerts West opened its new Resorts World property on the Las Vegas Strip, with residencies since by Céline Dion, Katy Perry, Luke Bryan and Carrie Underwood. The promoter will book the 5,000-seat theater exclusively alongside AEG Presents. Lingle-Griffith says Concerts West “looked forward when so many were looking back,” adding that “what we achieved over the last 18 months in unprecedented times is unprecedented.”

### **Martha Mota-Lowry**

HEAD OF CREATIVE PRODUCTION,  
AEG PRESENTS

### **Kelly Stelbasky**

SENIOR VP OF GLOBAL TOURING,  
AEG PRESENTS

AEG marked an impressive return to touring last year, grossing nearly \$400 million from roughly 2,000 shows. To meet the demand, Mota-Lowry tripled the size of her team to cover new business priorities, from short-form videos and trailers to social media. Stelbasky was one of many promoters tasked with booking, postponing and rescheduling countless dates amid the pandemic, but rallied thanks to her team of “unsung heroes” from talent bookers to road crew, she says.

### **Marla Ostroff**

MANAGING DIRECTOR, NORTH AMERICA,  
TICKETMASTER

Ticketmaster responded “nimble” to the demand from performers and fans alike with its return to live shows, says Ostroff. “We were with our clients every step of the way, developing solutions to support new revenue streams, adapting to new ways of operating and, ultimately, supporting a fast return to live [concerts].” According to Live Nation, the ticketing platform has already sold 65 million tickets for concerts in 2022, after achieving its highest quarter of operating income and adjusted operating income ever, at \$114 million and \$172 million, respectively.

### **Stacy Vee**

VP OF TALENT, GOLDENVOICE

### **Mapi Moran**

VP OF BRANDING AND MARKETING,  
GOLDENVOICE

Stagecoach, Goldenvoice’s marquee country music festival, will return in 2022 with its most inclusive bookings yet and a roster that boasts members of the LG-BTQ+ community, artists of color and top-billed female acts. It will “hit every kind of

# MAC Presents congratulates all Billboard Women In Music Honorees




**MARCIE ALLEN**  
MAC Presents



**JACKIE EBNET**  
MAC Presents



**LAURA GLASS**  
cocolittle media

**We are proud to be working in partnership  
with UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund  
and **

**Own your own body online**





IN MEMORIAM

**Theresa Velasquez**

SENIOR VP, LIVE NATION MEDIA AND SPONSORSHIP

Velasquez, 36 — as well as her parents, Julio and Angela Velasquez — died June 24 in the collapse of the Surfside Towers in the Miami suburb of Surfside, Fla., which killed 98 people. Velasquez was a driving force on the sponsorship team at Live Nation, making a huge impact on its business during her seven-year tenure at the company. Her colleagues described her as a passionate, fun, innovative and fierce leader who worked to break down barriers for women, advocated for equality within the LGBTQ+ and Latina communities, and formed long-standing partnerships with the biggest global brands. She was also an accomplished artist-performer who moonlighted as DJ Theresa. She is “missed dearly and will always be remembered for the amazing human she was,” Live Nation officials said in a statement.

country music fan,” adds Vee. Across town, Moran helped rebrand the Day N Vegas festival with performances by Kendrick Lamar, Post Malone and Tyler, The Creator. She says her team aimed to bring “real intentionality” to the event, noting their collaboration with integrated designers on social content and an on-site darkroom

helped make it a “dream come true.”

**Kathy Willard**

CFO/EXECUTIVE VP,  
LIVE NATION ENTERTAINMENT

**Ali Harnell**

PRESIDENT/CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER,  
LIVE NATION WOMEN

**Lesley Olenik**

VP OF TOURING, LIVE NATION

**Sherri Sosa**

PRESIDENT, VENUE NATION

After 25 years at Live Nation, including 18 as CFO, Willard retired in June, having overseen 10 consecutive years of growth from 2010 to 2019. She advocated for diversity efforts at Live Nation and played a pivotal role in increasing the company’s \$2 billion annual spend on staging and sourcing shows with Black and minority-owned vendors. Known as a champion of women in the music industry, Willard sits on the board of the Music Forward Foundation, which helps underserved youths advance into music professions. Harnell, who leads Live Nation Women, oversees its early-stage investment fund for female entrepreneurs from underrepresented groups. A highlight of 2021 for her was commissioning the Grammy-nominated song “Beautiful Noise” recorded by Alicia Keys and Brandi Carlile, which Harnell calls “a powerful anthem for women’s suffrage and social justice.” Live Nation Women also supported the Diversify the Stage Inclusion Initiative, created by artist

Noelle Scaggs. “Live music contributes so much to local communities, and we really saw that last year as shows returned,” Harnell says. “It was special for me to help women-led efforts to raise millions of dollars for those who need it most in my hometown through the Feeding Nashville and Hometown Rising benefit concerts.”

**Sarah Winter-Banks**

SENIOR VP, MESSINA TOURING GROUP

For Messina Touring Group, Banks leads the pop and alternative marketing team and develops strategies for touring clients including Taylor Swift, Ed Sheeran, Shawn Mendes and The Lumineers. She has worked with Swift and Sheeran from their arena tours to their stadium outings. “My team launched [ticket sales for] the Shawn Mendes Wonder: The World Tour in the fall of last year, and we are very much looking forward to that tour kicking off in June,” she says. Earlier in February, The Lumineers announced their *Brightside* world tour. An earlier globe-spanning run “got cut short in 2020 due to COVID-19,” notes Winter-Banks. “This tour will see stops at Coors Field in Denver and Wrigley Field in Chicago.”

agencies

**Jenna Adler  
Carole Kinzel  
Alli McGregor**

MUSIC AGENTS, CREATIVE ARTISTS AGENCY

**Marlene Tsuchii**

CO-HEAD OF INTERNATIONAL TOURING/MUSIC

AGENT, CREATIVE ARTISTS AGENCY

When touring resumed nationwide last summer, CAA booked three of the four highest-grossing tours of 2021, with the Hella Mega Tour, Harry Styles and the Eagles bringing in over \$186 million combined. The agency also helped fill dates in Las Vegas with residencies by Lady Gaga, Katy Perry, Shania Twain and Carrie Underwood. Outside of touring, CAA continued to broker major deals for its clients, including pairing Jennifer Lopez with Coach, Jennifer Hudson with MasterCard and duo Chloe x Halle as the new faces of Neutrogena.

**Sara Bollwinkel  
Lenore Kinder**

SENIOR VPs, WASSERMAN MUSIC

**Jessica Lawson**

VP OF TOUR MARKETING, WASSERMAN MUSIC

**Stephanie Miles**

SENIOR VP OF BRANDING, WASSERMAN MUSIC

Kinder highlights Wasserman Music’s brand partnerships team as “a huge asset for our clients” during the pandemic, facilitating “multimillion-dollar deals” for both established and emerg-

“Live music contributes so much to local communities, and we really saw that last year as shows returned.”

— ALI HARNELL



# CONGRATULATIONS

ON BEING A **BILLBOARD WOMEN IN MUSIC 2022** HONOREE!



## STACY BLYTHE

SVP OF PROMOTION

- 2021 BILLBOARD 40 UNDER 40 HONOREE • 12 CAREER NUMBER 1'S AT BIG LOUD
- AWARDED SVP-VP/NATIONAL PROMOTION AT THE 2021 CRS/COUNTRY AIRCHECK AWARDS
- HELPED LEAD BIG LOUD TO WIN PLATINUM LABEL OF THE YEAR AT THE 2021 CRS/COUNTRY AIRCHECK AWARDS

**BIG LOUD**

ing artists. The division also promoted two new agents, Edenized Perez and Mallory Smith. Among other opportunities, Wasserman clients Joy Oladokun and Black Pumas discussed music and mental health at the UCLA Health virtual program “We Shine Together” last May, while Pink Sweat\$ performed at AT&T’s Playoff Playlist Live! event during college football’s national playoff championship weekend in January.

### Joi Brown

HEAD OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS,  
ICM PARTNERS

### Yves C. Pierre Jacqueline Reynolds- Drumm

AGENTS, ICM PARTNERS

ICM’s pending merger with Creative Artists Agency has been the biggest agency story of 2021, capping two years of change that have transformed the representation business. “ICM recognized the need for a forward-thinking marketing, culture and strategy team to help guide and build upon the success of the talent aligned with the agency,” Brown says of the mega merger, which still needs approval from the U.S. Department of Justice before closing. Brown joined ICM in August as the agency’s new head of strategic partnerships after 21 years at Atlantic Records. “As one of the only agencies with a department focused on building, ideation and creativity around culture, it was a chance of a lifetime to join the ICM family to lead the efforts.”

### Lucy Dickins

CO-HEAD OF MUSIC, WME

### Ashley Gonzalez

MUSIC AGENT, WME

### Caroline Yim

PARTNER/CO-HEAD OF HIP-HOP/R&B, WME

### Shari Lewin

PARTNER/AGENT,  
BRAND PARTNERSHIPS, WME

WME has celebrated milestones with Adele’s return and Olivia Rodrigo’s rise, both achievements that Dickins calls “super exciting.” WME’s music for visual media group earned a flurry of Academy Award and Golden Globe nominations, with clients Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross winning at both with their score for *Soul*. Meanwhile, pivoting to different platforms provided clients with new opportunities during a challenging time. “Our team’s camaraderie has never been higher,” says Dickins. “I’m so proud of what we have all achieved in the face of touring coming to a halt.”

### Erika Savage

SENIOR VP OF GLOBAL MUSIC  
OPERATIONS, UTA

### Sara Schoch

AGENT, MUSIC BRAND PARTNERSHIPS, UTA

### Belinda Law Mary Petro

MUSIC AGENTS, UTA

Since the start of the pandemic, the music brand partnerships division secured over 500 deals with brands including adidas, ESPN, Fortnite, Ford, Jägermeister, Jack in the Box, Pokémon and Adore Me lingerie, according to the company. The music innovation team paired electronic duo SLANDER with Twitch to broadcast an artist-curated livestream festival that drew over 600,000 viewers, while the music crossover division secured a deal for Florence + The Machine to write and perform the original song “Call Me Cruella” for the *Cruella* soundtrack. Says Savage: “At the end of the year, we shared a well-deserved sense of accomplishment knowing that our global music team is the strongest we’ve ever been.”

### Marsha Vlasic

PRESIDENT, ARTIST GROUP INTERNATIONAL

AGI expanded internationally in the past year. In August, the organization and the United Kingdom’s X-Ray Touring

partnered for a new venture that would bring AGI’s roster of artists — which in 2021 added to its ranks acts such as Jane’s Addiction, Limp Bizkit and Why Don’t We — to a larger global audience. “We were thrilled to be able to close a strategic partnership with our very dear and admired friends at X-Ray Touring,” says Vlasic. And despite the continued complications caused by the pandemic, “we continue to package our artists for stadiums and festivals,” she says.

## activism &

## philanthropy

### Ashaunna Ayars

CO-FOUNDER/EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIR,  
BLACK MUSIC ACTION COALITION

### Caron Veazey

CO-FOUNDER/VICE CHAIR,  
BLACK MUSIC ACTION COALITION

Pledging to monitor industry advances

in racial diversity, equity and inclusion, BMAC released its first Music Industry Action Report Card last June. The organization also hosted its inaugural Music in Action Awards in September, honoring artists, executives and companies — including Motown chairwoman Ethiopia Habtemariam — that are fostering “meaningful change beyond the hashtags and performative gestures,” Ayars and Veazey said in a joint statement. “We reminded the industry why Jamila [Thomas] and Brianna [Agyemang] demanded ‘the show must be paused,’ hopefully inspiring our peers to continue to speak out and fight for social justice and racial equity.”

### Heather Lowery

PRESIDENT/CEO, FEMME IT FORWARD

Femme It Forward, a joint venture with Live Nation Entertainment, celebrated its one-year anniversary in July with the release of *Big Femme Energy Vol. 1*, a “first-of-its-kind compilation led by an incredibly powerful all-female team of artists,” says Lowery, citing tracks by Tayla Parx, Lauren Jauregui, Kiana Ledé, Rapsody, Tierra Whack and Sinéad Harnett, among others. Another standout? The launch of its mentorship program, Next Gen Femme, which she says is working to “make careers in music more attainable to young women of color.”

### Laura Segura

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MUSICARES

MusiCares, which the Recording Academy founded as a charity in 1989, rose to the occasion amid the COVID-19 pandemic, raising and distributing \$29 million to 38,000 industry members in need. “I think the pandemic woke a lot of people up to the importance of preventative and mental health and its impact on our overall well-being, especially within the music community,” says Segura, 42. “I’m so proud of not only our team, who expanded all our services in those areas over the last year, but all the people who rallied around our community to uplift those in need. Through this effort, we were able to support the people who keep the music playing because music gives so much to the world.” Joni Mitchell will be honored at the MusiCares Person of the Year gala that has been rescheduled for April 1 in Las Vegas.



MusiCares, where **Laura Segura** serves as executive director, has named **Joni Mitchell** (left) as the honoree for its Person of the Year gala, rescheduled for April.

# CONGRATULATIONS KATHY SPANBERGER

2022  
WOMEN IN  
MUSIC  
HONOREE

*THANKS FOR YOUR  
VISION, CREATIVITY  
& LEADERSHIP.  
FROM RALPH,  
MARY MEGAN  
& ALL OF US AT  
PEERMUSIC*



**peermusic**  
the global independent

## media

**Alessandra Alarcón**

PRESIDENT, SBS ENTERTAINMENT

Alarcón and her team at SBS Entertainment staged the three-day sold-out Calibash at the Crypto.com Arena in January. Headlined by J Balvin, Ozuna and Daddy Yankee, the event — one of the country's biggest festivals for urban Latin music — returned to Los Angeles after being sidelined in 2021, selling 13,000 tickets each night, according to SBS. Says Alarcón, "I am so proud of my team and me for having weathered the storm and flawlessly executing the biggest Calibash weekend."

**Tolu Ayeni**STRATEGIC PARTNER MANAGER, INSTAGRAM  
MUSIC PARTNERSHIPS, INSTAGRAM

With over 1 billion users globally, Instagram has unique cross-cultural reach. Ayeni is most proud of the platform's role in bringing the African diaspora to the rest of the world, citing its robust partnership with the Ghana-based music, art and culture festival Afrochella. "Music is central to development of creativity and community on a global scale," she says. "Having spent some time in Ghana and Senegal over the holidays, I'm looking forward to exploring new opportunities to push culture forward and support talent from historically under-represented categories and unite the global diaspora."

**Mary Berner**

PRESIDENT/CEO, CUMULUS MEDIA

"Music has an unparalleled power to soothe, heal and connect people, all of which have been vital during these past difficult months," said Berner in January when she appeared on the Billboard Power List. Under her leadership, Cumulus reaches "a quarter of a billion people every month, who listen on every platform that technology enables." She adds: "We need to be mindful of that power and act carefully."

**Megan Daly**ENTERTAINMENT PARTNERSHIPS  
MANAGER, TWITTER

Twitter remained a vital channel for artists engaging with fans during the past year, as well as a key to Olivia Rodrigo's explosive rise and Taylor Swift's continuing domination, while also boosting artists such as Saweetie and Kim Petras. Twitter's new Spaces product in particular has been important. "Artists immediately took to Spaces," says Daly, citing programs with Nick Jonas to launch a conversation about his *Spaceman* album, a virtual meet-and-greet with FINNEAS during Grammy Week and a Jay-Z discussion about his new film, *The Harder They Fall*. "We launched best practices and virtual activations for artists to stay engaged with their fans and found

## PIONEERS



## Bonnie Garner

**By the time Garner landed at Columbia Records in New York as the first woman on the A&R team, she had already booked the Grateful Dead for *Playboy After Dark*, brought Jimi Hendrix onto Dick Cavett's talk show and interviewed to be Mick Jagger's assistant. But it was at Columbia Nashville where she made her lasting mark as the first female vp of A&R, working with Willie Nelson, George Jones and Johnny Cash in the 1970s and 1980s before moving into management.**

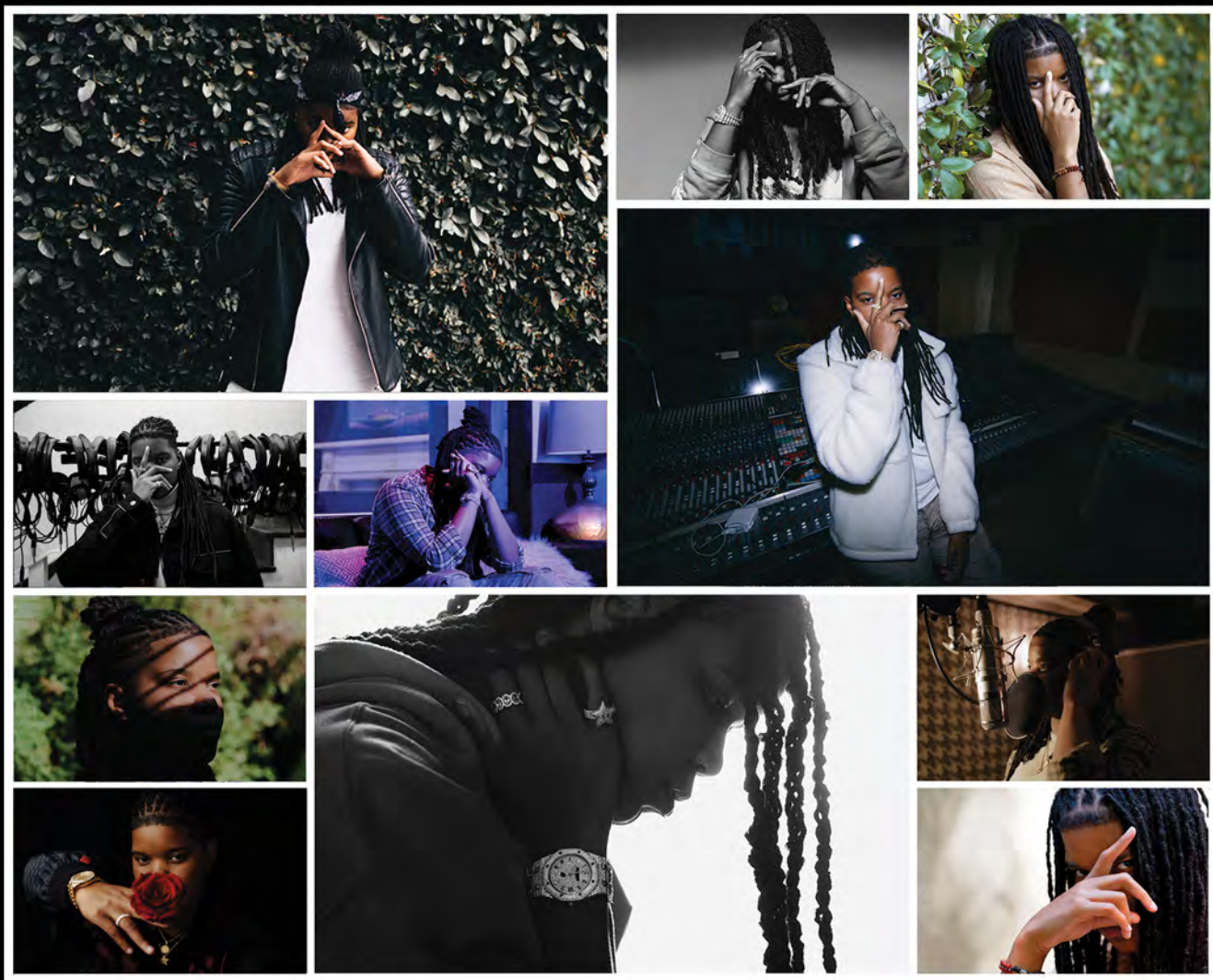
**The key to her success was supporting talent: "You have to make it easy for them," she says. But she also knew when to put her foot down. When the notoriously tardy Jones kept Elvis Costello waiting in the studio, Garner called his assistant and told him to tell Jones that "his mama taught him better than this." A chastened Jones showed up shortly thereafter.**

—MELINDA NEWMAN

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# STARRAH

FOR HER INCLUSION  
IN BILLBOARD'S WOMEN IN MUSIC



# PULSE

MUSIC GROUP



Under **Leslie Fram**, CMT's Equal Play initiative, which aims to elevate underrepresented voices in country music, has celebrated artists including **Mickey Guyton** (left).

a new way to help support their careers during this difficult time.”

### Leslie Fram

**SENIOR VP OF MUSIC AND TALENT, CMT**  
Fram helped launch CMT's Equal Play initiative, which aims to elevate underrepresented voices in country music. The program has celebrated pioneers of the genre like Linda Martell and Charley Pride as well contemporary stars Mickey Guyton and Our Native Daughters. For its Next Women of Country and Listen Up music franchises, the network named its most diverse classes yet, says Fram, adding that the platform will allow it to “maximize artist exposure within the whole ViacomCBS family.”

### Tracy Gardner

**HEAD OF LABEL LICENSING AND PARTNERSHIPS, TIKTOK**  
TikTok drives music discovery globally for artists both new and old: 175 songs that first trended on the platform cracked the Hot 100 in 2021 — double the prior year's tally, according to the company. “It's no surprise that this combination of discovery and engagement within TikTok led to massive promotional success off TikTok,” says Gardner, 40, who cites the recent rise of PinkPantheress (1.1 million followers) and Olivia Rodrigo (12.4 million) alongside veteran acts like ABBA (2 million). Since joining the app in August, the latter pop act earned its highest debut on the Billboard 200 — and first-ever top 10 — with comeback album *Voyage*, which reached No. 2 in November.

### Zeina Grenier

**DIRECTOR OF NORTH AMERICA MUSIC PUBLISHING, META**

### Megan West

**DIRECTOR OF MUSIC LABEL PARTNERSHIPS, META**

Meta (the new corporate name of Facebook) is helping creators and rights owners build new revenue streams. Since mid-2020: Instagram launched its Reels short-form video platform to compete with TikTok, Messenger added “sound-mojis” — emojis that play music and other audio — and Facebook started streaming official music videos in the United States, which began counting toward the Hot 100, Billboard 200 and other charts in 2021. The addition of music to Meta's three platforms — Facebook, Instagram and Messenger — “has opened up new forms of creativity and expression that have music at their core,” says West.

### Cindy Hill

**VP OF CONTENT AND INDUSTRY RELATIONS, UNIVISION COMMUNICATIONS**

Univision's fan favorite El Bueno, La Mala y El Feo festival featured performances by regional Mexican acts El Fantasma and Los Dos Carnales in Los Angeles and Grupo Firme in Dallas. Its live-music series Uforia returned in August with sets from Karol G and Don Omar in New York and a headlining performance from J Balvin in Dallas. The latter star “returned to the stage for the first time since the pandemic in front of 20,000 music lovers,” says Hill. “We continued to connect wholeheartedly to our listeners via the artists and music they love.”

### Thea Mitchem

**EXECUTIVE VP OF PROGRAMMING/EXECUTIVE VP OF HIP-HOP AND R&B PROGRAMMING, IHEARTMEDIA; PROGRAM DIRECTOR, WWPR (POWER 105.1) NEW YORK**

### Marissa Morris

**SENIOR VP OF ARTIST RELATIONS, IHEARTMEDIA**

### Lisa Worden

**VP OF ROCK AND ALTERNATIVE, IHEARTMEDIA; PROGRAM DIRECTOR, KYSR (ALT 98.7) LOS ANGELES**

Following iHeartRadio's inaugural Living Black! event last year, Mitchem is once again executive-producing its second edition, which will feature performances by Lizzo, Big Sean, H.E.R., Moneybagg Yo and Ari Lennox, and appearances by J. Cole, John Legend, Alicia Keys, Saweetie, Bas and more, all filmed at the iHeartRadio Theater in Los Angeles and Black-owned businesses across the country. “It's a celebration of Black culture while weaving in the story of our culture,” says Mitchem of the special, which fans can access Feb. 23 through TikTok, iHeartMedia stations and the iHeartRadio app.

### Connie Orlando

**EXECUTIVE VP OF SPECIALS, MUSIC PROGRAMMING AND MUSIC STRATEGY, BET**  
Orlando says that BET became “a pioneer in the tentpole and awards space” after the network claimed the top five ranked cable awards shows in 2021 among all Black viewers ages 18-49, according to the company. The BET Awards were “the first to return to full-scale live events with a fully vaccinated audience,” she says, and the Soul Train Awards ended the year on a high note at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, while “acknowledging the important cultural conversations of the moment.”

### Jennifer Witz

**CEO, SIRIUSXM**  
Witz described 2021 as “an outstanding year across the board” in comments that

accompanied SiriusXM's fourth-quarter earnings report released Jan. 31. “We added more than 1 million net new SiriusXM self-pay subscribers for the 10th time in the past 11 years. Our performance last year is a testament to our strong execution — and staying true to our vision of connecting listeners to the content they love.” Acts including Alicia Keys, Ed Sheeran, The Go-Go's, H.E.R., J. Cole and Jason Aldean

performed for SiriusXM's Small Stage series. Exclusive artist channels showcased the music of Keys, David Bowie, J Balvin, ABBA and Neil Young.

## legal

### Lisa Alter

**FOUNDING PARTNER, ALTER KENDRICK & BARON**

Among the estimated \$2 billion in recent music-asset transactions involving clients of her firm, Alter has noted that the sale of Julia Michaels' catalog to Influence Media Partners stood out “because virtually everyone involved in the deal was a woman. In an industry that is still predominantly male-dominated, the deal represents the refreshing face of the future.” Alter and her colleagues began 2022 with yet another major deal, representing Primary Wave in the expansion of its partnership with Def Leppard, which involved the company acquiring an additional stake in the band's music publishing catalog as well as its master-royalty income stream. (Terms of the deal were not announced.)

### Aurielle Brooks

**VP/GENERAL COUNSEL, COLLECTIVE GALLERY; ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY, ARRINGTON & PHILLIPS**

At Arrington & Phillips, Brooks' clients include Muni Long (see story, page 144), whose single “Hrs and Hrs” recently went viral on TikTok; Lil Baby and Lil Durk, who released their collaborative album, *Voice of the Heroes*, in June; and YoungBoy Never Broke Again, who released a joint project with Birdman, *From the Bayou*, as well as the solo album *Sincerely Kentrell* in 2021. At

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**Cardi B (right)** became *Playboy's* first-ever creative director in residence and launched a line of spiked dessert drinks called **Whipshots** in deals negotiated by **Sarah Scott** of LaPolt Law.

Collective Gallery, which connects photographers with top brands and celebrities, Brooks helped to sign six new artists — half of whom are Black women — in 2021, which is helping to put “Black and brown faces in positions to show up and show out in this industry,” she says.

### Christine Lepera

PARTNER, MITCHELL SILBERBERG & KNUPP

As a litigator and adviser, Lepera in the past year has worked with the National Music Publishers' Association in its copyright action against the gaming platform Roblox (which led to a September settlement), represented Dr. Luke in ongoing actions involving Kesha, served as lead counsel for the defense in the copyright suit over Katy Perry's 2014 No. 1 Hot 100 hit “Dark Horse” (featuring Juicy J) and represented Post Malone in a dispute over his 2019 hit “Circles.” “But what I'm most proud of is how my firm is leading through the crisis with COVID-19,” she says, as well as the firm's diversity initiatives, which have included partnerships with a variety of organizations and firm-generated programs addressing gender bias, discrimination against Asian Americans, anti-Semitism, the need for inclusivity and other issues.

### Berkeley Reinhold

OWNER, REINHOLD GLOBAL

For the 24-hour Global Citizen Live broadcast event last September, Reinhold served as chief outside counsel with responsibility for artist contracts, as well as TV production and event production agreements. With the goal of uniting the world to focus on fighting climate change and poverty, the concert's scope was ambitious, simulcast from six continents on multiple networks and media channels, with appearances by over 50 acts including Billie Eilish, Coldplay, Jennifer Lopez and BTS, along with the participation of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. The event raised over \$1.1 billion in pledges to fight poverty and climate change through the planting of 157 million trees worldwide.

### Diana Sanders

PARTNER, MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT, RUSS AUGUST & KABAT

Home to superstar acts Drake and Post



Malone, Russ August & Kabat elevated Sanders to media and entertainment partner in October from her previous role as a senior associate. Recent firm successes range from “resolving significant confidential disputes for our clients” to “helping them enter innovative and creative projects and endeavors in the music and tech space,” says Sanders, 35. “Our firm and practice have continued to grow, and our clients are prospering.”

### Sarah Scott

MANAGING PARTNER, LAPOLT LAW

A former top in-house lawyer at Universal Music Group, Scott has recently focused on negotiating endorsement and collaboration deals for top artists. For Cardi B, she struck a deal in which the chart-topping rapper was named as *Playboy's* first-ever creative director in residence and also helped the star launch a line of spiked dessert drinks called

Whipshots. Scott also represents Saweetie and negotiated partnership deals with both Crocs and Beats by Dre, which featured the rapper as the star of an ad campaign that teased her new track, “Get It Girl.”

### Debbie White

VICE CHAIR, MUSIC INDUSTRY PRACTICE GROUP, LOEB & LOEB

White had a packed year in 2021: representing Primary Wave in catalog





**Christine Lepera**  
Partner

congratulates Christine Lepera and her fellow honorees on being named to *Billboard's* 2022 Women in Music list.

We applaud these talented women and wish them continued success.



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WHITE**

AND ALL OF THE EXCEPTIONAL  
WOMEN RECOGNIZED AS

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2022 WOMEN  
IN MUSIC  
HONOREES**



acquisitions for Stephen Marley; cutting recording deals for Diane Warren with BMG, Nessa Barrett with Warner Records and Duran Duran with S-Curve; and representing Singaporean artist JJ Shin in his soundtrack album deal for Marvel's *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*. Other highlights: a brand ambassador deal between new client Christina Aguilera and Nintendo, and a partnership between BTS and McDonald's to create a BTS Meal in 86 countries. "Seeing BTS and Korean lettering on the meal packaging, and people around the world so excited and accepting of it, felt like a cultural movement," she says. "It was a truly rewarding project."

## finance

### Sherrese Clarke Soares

FOUNDER/CEO, HARBOURVIEW  
EQUITY PARTNERS

A veteran investor — she opened HarbourView Equity in October after previously serving as a managing director at Morgan Stanley and subsequently founding Tempo Music — Clarke Soares has invested in or evaluated more than \$3 billion and over 300 investment opportunities, according to the company. She launched HarbourView with \$1 billion in funding from Apollo Global Management — and chose the firm's name as a nod to her Jamaican roots. She is a board member of organizations including FreeFrom, which promotes economic justice and opportunities for domestic abuse survivors.

### Denise Colletta

SENIOR VP/TEAM LEADER,  
CITY NATIONAL BANK

Colletta, with the help of her team, was able to secure over 200 loans through the Paycheck Protection Program, totaling some \$45 million for City National's clients during the pandemic. "I'm very passionate about identifying ways that the bank and I, personally, can support the music industry and underserved groups with financial education as well as monetary support," says Colletta. She notes that CNB "invested more than \$11 million in our communities in 2021, in organizations that are making real social impact and change."

### Lyllette Pizarro McLean

FOUNDER/CO-MANAGING PARTNER,  
INFLUENCE MEDIA PARTNERS

After buying and subsequently selling a portfolio of music assets to Tempo Music in 2019 and then working with that firm for a while, Pizarro McLean's Influence Media Partners went its own way in 2021, with two investment funds dedicated to partnering with the music community. So far, the company has said

its investment platform has deployed \$300 million across multiple acquisitions. While total funding is so far undisclosed, a June 2021 filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission under the name of Influence X Music Fund II shows that the company had by then raised \$270 million. According to other publicly available information on a partner's website and in news reports, the company's investors include BlackRock, Warner Music and the Municipal Employees Retirement System of Michigan. Pizarro McLean says the company's investments focus on female songwriters and music entrepreneurs with enterprising record labels. In building Influence Media Partners, she says she's proud the company has assembled "a brilliant, swaggy, culturally savvy team that's 75% diverse and 50% female."

### Shara Senderoff

FOUNDER/PARTNER, RAISED IN SPACE

Venture capital firm Raised in Space, which invests in next-generation technology, has spent between \$500,000 and \$5 million on Silicon Valley ventures with applications in music and entertainment. While mum on exactly how many companies it has funded thus far, Senderoff says she is excited about future partnerships in the artificial intelligence sector of the non-fungible token and metaverse ecosystems through its portfolio, Altered State Machine. "NFTs are poised to become true access keys to the metaverse," says Senderoff, by "unlocking opportunities for artists to evolve their businesses and for consumers to engage in new ways."

## business

## management

### Julie Boos

CO-OWNER/CHAIRMAN, FBMM

Amid the changes shaping the music industry, business management firm FBMM has found new avenues to explore for its clients from its offices in Nashville, New York and Los Angeles. Boos is helping lead the company's recent pivot to growth areas such as intellectual property deals with private equity players in nearly every genre. "We have managed to continue our training and coaching programs," adds Boos, which has enabled its employees to "achieve higher levels of expertise."

### Becky Harris

PRESIDENT, HUSKINS-HARRIS

Harris praises the ability of her business management clients to navigate the global shutdown by "learning to be creative in new and innovative ways," she says. She celebrated the victory of client Riley Green,



In May, BMG announced that it had signed a publishing and recording agreement with hit songwriter **Diane Warren** (above). Attorney **Debbie White** of **Loeb & Loeb** represented her in the deal.

who was named new male artist of the year at the Academy of Country Music Awards in 2020, and the success of Chris Young and Kane Brown's radio hit, "Famous Friends," which topped *Billboard's* 2021 year-end Country Airplay ranking.

## branding

### Marcie Allen

PRESIDENT, MAC PRESENTS

Instead of going big with its event productions, MAC Presents focused on creating meaningful impact — from booking private Luke Bryan and Dierks Bentley shows to bring "joy and appreciation to health care employees" to taking on new clients the United Nations and Laura Glass to produce events to "show the power of culture in bringing forth inclusivity and equality," says Allen.

### Shana Barry

HEAD OF MUSIC, CELEBRITY AND ENTERTAINMENT PARTNERSHIPS,  
ANHEUSER-BUSCH

While creating a Notorious B.I.G.-themed line of Budweiser cans and merchandise, as well as a tribute concert at the BRIC Celebrate Brooklyn! festival, Barry's team has also doubled down on community-based marketing moves, like its Bud Light Thursday Night Shoutout commercials that spotlighted Black-owned eateries and a \$100 million commitment from Michelob Ultra to promote equality in women's sports. A partnership between Michelob Ultra Pure Gold and Becky G for a Super Bowl commercial is an example of a "long-term relationship [that] showcases

our commitment not only to women but to celebrating the Hispanic community in an authentic way," she says.

### Diana Dotel

CO-FOUNDER, MTW AGENCY

The independent marketing agency MTW had success in "three different verticals of the music business," says Dotel, citing her team's work in brokering the renewal of Amazon's audio and video podcast *En la Sala* and in leading branding and marketing for HBO Max's Latin music programming, including Romeo Santos' *King of Bachata*. But it was the Nicky Jam-led De Colombia Para el Mundo concert, which Dotel created and produced at New Jersey's Prudential Center in July, that stood out the most, she says.

### Emma Quigley

FOUNDER/PRESIDENT, SHAKERMAKER

"There is tremendous power in the right partnerships," said Quigley in January when she appeared on the *Billboard Power List*. "When there is trust on both sides, that's when the magic happens." The former head of music and entertainment for PepsiCo put that magic to work by bringing Megan Thee Stallion and Charlie Puth together for the Flamin' Hot Super Bowl campaign for Cheetos. The ad featured a new song from Megan that paid tribute to Salt-N-Pepa's "Push It."

### Bess Spaeth

SENIOR VP OF GLOBAL BRAND MEDIA AND EXPERIENCES, AMERICAN EXPRESS

Spaeth, a 20-year veteran of American Express, guides brand marketing at the company, which during the pandemic has maintained its support for the music and

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entertainment industry and its commitment to offering unique experiences to its card members. (American Express is a sponsor of *Billboard's* Women in Music event.) Spaeth oversees the team that manages the brand's industry relationships and experiences like card member passes for Coachella, Austin City Limits and the Unstaged concert series, which features artists including Lizzo, who first partnered with Amex in 2019 for its Proudly Backing Pride program. Within her company, Spaeth is also recognized for her work in mentoring the next generation of female business leaders.

## rights

### Catherine Brewton

VP OF CREATIVE, ATLANTA, BMI

With record returns for its fiscal year closing in June, BMI reported that its domestic licensing revenue exceeded \$1 billion for the first time. Brewton's chief accomplishment, however, was spearheading a new diversity, equity and inclusion task force that allowed her and a team to tackle a number of issues, including identifying and hiring a DEI officer, Sandye Taylor, who she says is "highly respected in this field."

### Erin Collins

VP OF FILM, TELEVISION AND DEVELOPING MEDIA, SESAC

In October 2020, SESAC launched its Reel Change fund for diversity in film scoring. The five-year program, which addresses composers in film from historically marginalized groups, offers mentorships and \$1 million in grants to qualifying applicants; New Music USA will administer it. With Collins, who has been with the perform-

ing rights organization for over a decade, and composer Christophe Beck (*Frozen*, *WandaVision*) at the helm, Reel Change announced its first award recipients in May and has distributed over \$100,000, she says, adding that "SESAC is committed to diversifying the film and television composer landscape."

### Elizabeth Matthews

CEO, ASCAP

As performing rights organizations worldwide suffered revenue declines due to COVID-19, ASCAP was able to increase both the revenue it collected and distributed. Matthews led her team to optimize results across platforms, including major cable, broadcast TV, radio, audiovisual and audio streaming services, and to increase distributions to its members. The organization made several other moves to help its members during the pandemic, including accelerating royalty distributions, launching an information-rich Music Unites Us website and creating a special MusicCares Fund for its members. In comments following her *Billboard* Power List honor in January, Matthews praised "the ASCAP employees who have maintained their grace, goodwill and sense of humor throughout the immense pressure and isolation of the past two years and who consistently give of themselves in order to help songwriters and composers."

### Anjula Singh

EXECUTIVE VP/CFO, SOUNDEXCHANGE

At SoundExchange, Singh has led efforts to modernize the royalty and payment service's infrastructure through investments in new technologies, proprietary systems and creator-facing tools. The organization is prioritizing its future financial growth, adds Singh, despite earning record returns for its roster; it distributed nearly \$1 billion in 2021 — an increase of

almost 5% from 2020. And since its establishment in 2000, SoundExchange has distributed almost \$9 billion.

### Ellen Truley

CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, MECHANICAL LICENSING COLLECTIVE

See story, page 102.

## associations

### Michele Ballantyne

COO, RIAA

Steering policy and legislation, Ballantyne advocates on behalf of labels and the recorded-music industry at large. Her most meaningful moment in 2021? Leading a virtual discussion at the National Museum of African American Music in March, which featured Andra Day and Congressional Black Caucus chair Joyce Beatty, tackling the topics of Billie Holiday, music and race. "RIAA works every day to help artists like Andra and policymakers like Joyce connect and understand each other," says Ballantyne, 55. "It all came together in the most powerful way that day."

### Valeisha Butterfield Jones

CO-PRESIDENT, RECORDING ACADEMY

The Recording Academy unveiled a series of newsmaking measures in 2021. It announced an end to its controversial nomination review committees in April, named Butterfield Jones and Panos A. Panay co-presidents in June and upped the number of nominees in each of its Big Four Grammy Award categories from eight to 10 in November. Butterfield Jones cites another move as the most meaningful, though — its new inclusion rider, "a tool designed to ensure equity at every level of the production" ahead of its 64th annual ceremony in April. The measure will help the academy "cultivate a culture of belonging and respect" in the industry, "while laying the groundwork to combat systemic barriers," she adds.

### Frances Moore

CEO, IFPI

Moore, who leads the trade association of the global recorded-music industry, was honored as a Member of the Order of the British Empire on the Queen's Birthday Honours List in June for her contributions to the U.K. music industry. Under her leadership, IFPI continues to expand its geographical reach, reflecting "the truly

global nature of today's music industry," says Moore. In the past year, it opened a Middle East North Africa office under regional director Rawan Al-Dabbas and also won approval from the Vietnamese government to establish an office in Hanoi.

### Portia Sabin

PRESIDENT, MUSIC BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

The Music Business Association executed over 70 virtual events in the past year, from its ongoing one-hour interview series with industry executives to "multiday deep dives on metadata, brands, streaming, diversity, equity, inclusion, mental health and wellness," says Sabin, 50. The strategy helped Music Biz shift its board makeup from "100% white and 12% female to 70% female and 48% people of color — which is not the end goal but a good start," she adds. "I look forward to leading Music Biz in providing the rooms — both digital and physical — where these conversations can continue and positive action for change can be encouraged and celebrated."

### Sarah Trahern

CEO, COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION

The CMA remains committed to its mission of "expanding country music globally," says Trahern, noting the establishment of the organization's Music Industry COVID Support program to aid music industry professionals across all genres coping with food insecurity, mental health issues and job assistance needs. "MICS allowed us to broaden the dialogue and forge deeper relationships outside of country," says Trahern. "Many of those conversations are informing the way CMA positions itself as a trade organization to the industry at large and continues to innovate through new member strategies."

**CONTRIBUTORS** Darlene Aderaju, Trevor Anderson, Rania Aniftos, Cathy Applefeld Olson, Megan Armstrong, Chuck Arnold, Katie Bain, Alexei Barrionuevo, Starr Bowenbank, Dave Brooks, Keith Caulfield, Anna Chan, Ed Christman, Leila Cobo, Mariel Concepcion, Stephen Daw, Bill Donahue, Thom Duffy, Chris Eggertsen, Nolan Feeney, Griselda Flores, Eric Frankenberg, Adrienne Gaffney, Josh Glicksman, Gary Graff, Paul Grein, Lyndsey Havens, Gil Kaufman, Steve Knopper, Carl Lamarre, Jason Lipshutz, Joe Lynch, Heran Mamo, Geoff Mayfield, Taylor Mims, Gail Mitchell, Melinda Newman, Jessica Nicholson, Glenn Peoples, Kristin Robison, Jessica Roiz, Neena Rouhani, Dan Rys, Micah Singleton, Richard Smirke, Gary Trust, Andrew Unterberger, Christine Werthman, Natelegé Whaley, Jewel Wicker, Deborah Wilker, Nick Williams, Xander Zellner

“There is tremendous power in the right partnerships.”

— EMMA QUIGLEY

**METHODOLOGY** Nominations for *Billboard's* executive lists open no less than 120 days in advance of publication. (To obtain our editorial calendar, please email [thom.duffy@billboard.com](mailto:thom.duffy@billboard.com).) The online nomination link is sent to press representatives who send a request for notification before the nomination period to [thom.duffy@billboard.com](mailto:thom.duffy@billboard.com). *Billboard* editors chose the industry sectors to be included on each list, the most significant companies within each sector and the maximum number of honorees per company. In choosing honorees, editors weigh a variety of factors including, but not limited to, nominations by peers, colleagues and superiors. For Women in Music, we considered the impact of each nominee's company on consumer behavior, as measured by chart, sales and streaming performance; social media impressions; and radio/TV audiences reached, using data available as of Jan. 4. We heavily weighed year-end *Billboard* charts for 2021 and also considered career trajectory and industry impact. Where required, U.S. record-label market share was consulted using MRC Data's current market share for albums, plus track-equivalent and streaming-equivalent album consumption units and *Billboard's* quarterly top 10 publisher rankings. Unless otherwise noted, *Billboard* Boxscore and MRC Data are the sources for tour grosses and sales/streaming data, respectively. MRC Data is also the source for radio audience metrics.

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# players

CELEBRATING MUSIC'S MOVERS

## THE BORDER KID WHO CROSSED OVER



After topping *Billboard's* four Latin genre charts, Edgar Barrera — aka Edge — talks about his first decade in music and his new label venture with Sony Music

BY LEILA COBO

Barrera in 2022.

**A** **UNIQUE PHENOMENON** occurred on *Billboard's* Latin charts in January 2021: Songwriter-producer Edgar Barrera scored No. 1s on the four genre charts: pop, rhythm, tropical and regional Mexican airplay. The songs were Camilo's "Vida de Rico," Maluma's "Hawái," Marc Anthony and Daddy Yankee's "De Vuelta Pa' la Vuelta" and Christian Nodal's "Dime Cómo Quieres," respectively. Eleven months later, Barrera — who is also known as Edge — took home the 2021 Latin Grammy for producer of the year.

The back-to-back honors marked the start of a new era for the fresh-faced 31-year-old, who is celebrating his 10th anniversary as a professional musician in 2022. During that decade, he has placed 74 entries on the Hot Latin Songs chart and spent seven weeks on *Billboard's* Songwriters list, one of them at No. 1.

A hallmark of Barrera's success is his ability to move fluidly across genres, crafting hits for regional Mexican acts (Banda El Recodo, Grupo Firme), pop (CNCO, Sebastián Yatra), urban (Farruko, Rauw Alejandro) and tropical (Anthony, Silvestre Dangond), while working closely with Camilo, Nodal and Maluma. He has collaborated with mainstream U.S. artists Ariana Grande and Shawn Mendes and has songs with Camila Cabello in the works.

Raised near the border between Roma, Texas, and Ciudad Miguel Alemán, Mexico, Barrera grew up with both languages and cultures. As a teen, he hustled his music by handing out custom CDs to artists, many of whom ignored him. One who didn't was Kumbia Kings' Luigi Giraldo, who helped him land an internship with songwriter-producer Andrés Castro (Carlos Vives, Shakira) in 2010. With \$1,300 in his pocket, Barrera made the 1,500-plus-mile drive to Castro's Miami studio in a run-down 2000 Malibu with a broken stereo.

"Edgar is that rarest of writers — a triple threat who is equally at home writing and producing hit singles for the Latin market as he is for the regional Mexican and domestic markets," says Jorge Mejía, president/CEO of Sony Music Publishing Latin America & U.S. Latin, who signed Barrera in 2012 in a deal that included creating his own publishing company, 11 Once.

In February, Barrera launched his BorderKid label, a joint venture with Sony Music U.S. Latin. He says he's most excited about the opportunity to break artists. "I understand the business, but my focus is not the money," he says. "If I'm not passionate about a project, I'm not doing it."

### Your new label is called BorderKid. Why?

It's my connection between cultures. I'm always in the middle. I was raised on the border of Mexico and the U.S. I just released the label's first record. It's a song called "Te Marqué Pedo (I Drunk-Dialed You)," recorded by a duo from Mexico, Alex Luna and DAAZ, and Christian Nodal. I co-wrote it, and it has gone viral on TikTok. [The song also has over 12 million streams on Spotify and made the service's global viral chart.]

### Latin music is growing faster than other genres. What do you consider to be the essential elements of a crossover hit?

It has to connect with the audience. Records have to speak the way that younger generations speak. That's why you see so many up-and-coming artists connecting with audiences while artists with longer careers are having trouble. Songs that chart are songs that go viral on TikTok. But that's tricky. Whenever I'm in the studio and [the artist] starts talking TikTok, it automatically makes the songwriting process feel forced and not legitimate. Features should be natural.

## You write melodies, but lyrics are more your thing. What is your approach there?

It has to do with the essence of the artist. When I write, I write with the artists, and the songs have to feel real to them. With Maluma's "Hawái," audiences connected to that song's backstory [which was Maluma's then-recent breakup with a girlfriend]. It was the same thing with Camilo and "Vida de Rico." That song feels real for Camilo, who comes from nothing. If he sings about swag, he won't connect.

I'm not a songwriter with a folder of songs that I'm shopping around. I help artists write their stories. I have artists who tell me, "I want to sound like Maluma or Camilo," and I say, "But you're not Maluma or Camilo."

## How do you describe yourself as a songwriter?

I'm the one whose words reflect reality, without too much poetry. I'm the one who says, "It's very pretty, what you post on Instagram" [referencing "Hawái"].

## You have written and produced on Camilo's two albums, 2020's *Por Primera Vez* and 2021's *Mis Manos*. How would you describe writing with him?

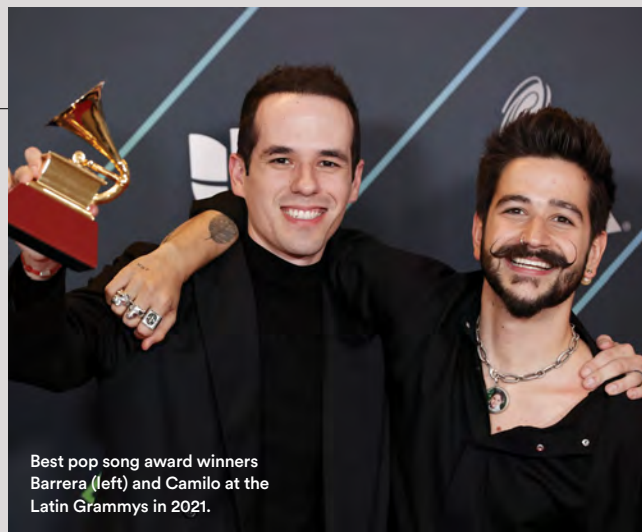
He's one of the few people with whom I can be very realistic and transparent, and I think he feels the same. That's why we get along so well when we write together. We can do crazy, silly things. We play off each other.

## What is the process like with Maluma and Christian Nodal?

I would go on tour with [Maluma] and build a studio wherever he was — in his hotel, in his tour buses, on airplanes — wherever we were inspired. We've become very good friends. With Christian, I've never recorded him in a studio. I have my little backpack where I keep all my studio equipment. I take that with me, record the vocal guide, put some cushions around us for the sound, and we record. With these artists, there's a 20- to 30-minute window of time, and you need to do it right. You have to capture it in the moment.

## Is there a similar distinction between writing a pop or regional song with just a couple of collaborators and an urban track that sometimes has more than 10?

The urban and pop worlds are very different. In urban, the producer is a songwriter. The beat of the song many times is an integral part of the song. Sometimes the engineer has songwriting credit. Sometimes the manager does, too. (Laughs.) I



Best pop song award winners Barrera (left) and Camilo at the Latin Grammys in 2021.

## TRIBUTES

### BARRERA'S ARTIST COLLABORATORS SHARE WHAT MAKES HIM STAND OUT MOST

#### MALUMA

"Edgar Barrera is not just a musician — he's a visionary. He understands different musical planes and makes them all sound so natural, as if each genre were a part of him. We have great empathy in the studio, but what truly defines us is brotherhood."

#### CHRISTIAN NODAL

"Aside from being like a brother to me, Edgar is a truly talented being who writes with his heart in his hand. He knows how to mix genres perfectly. Regional Mexican and *norteño* flow through his blood. I admire and respect him a lot. He's devoted 24/7 to music. Be it for love of the art or love of business, he's always thinking about music."

#### CAMILO

"Edgar and I have a deep connection because of the honest love that he has for songwriting. His devotion to melodies and lyrics that connect to the heart is the main reason that we have chemistry. That blend of honesty, of love and respect for the craft, is a treasure to me. He's a great friend."

#### MAU Y RICKY MONTANER

"Edgar is a secret weapon. He filters your ideas and maximizes them. He's a key element in the studio but also in life. A great guy."

#### ANDRÉS CASTRO

"Edgar is a combination of humility, talent, responsibility, dedication and intelligence when it comes to business. There's not many of those. When he arrived at my studio at 19 years old, he came to learn, but he also taught me many things. Aside from his friendship, he's one of the people I most admire in the industry."

respect each person's approach to their business, but I have mine.

## You don't have a manager. Why not?

I like to have direct contact with people. All my negotiations are different, so it's easier for me to do it directly. I like the business, and I like to be involved in the business. I know everything that's coming in or going out of all my accounts. But I'd like to find a manager who can bring stuff to the table.

## In 2019, you co-wrote and co-produced "boyfriend" for Ariana Grande. How did that come together?

It was the first song that I worked on that was written 100% in English. I later worked on Selena Gomez's Spanish-language project. The challenge is to work with mainstream artists and open the door to their market, which is still very closed off to Latin artists. But now we're being seen differently.

## You recently wrote with Camila Cabello as well.

Camila Cabello is a big fan of Camilo, and Shawn Mendes fell in love with Camilo's music. Camila made a playlist for their producer, Ricky Reed, who looked at the credits and said, "I know this guy." We had worked on a Bomba Estéreo album [in 2016]. Turns out Ricky was the producer on a Bomba track I wrote with Camilo years ago [the first track Camilo and Barrera ever recorded together]. Everything is connected, no? So he called me and said, "Hey, Edgar, what are you doing? Camila wants to meet you."

## When you interned for Andrés Castro, what helped you break through as a producer and composer?

I was the guy who cleaned the sessions [ensuring that no sound elements competed with the musical performances]. One day, Omar Alfanno [the Panamanian singer-songwriter who wrote "Purest of Pain" and "El Gran Varón"] came to the studio to work with Andrés on a song for Thalia. Because I was 20, I was the target audience, so they asked for my opinion. I didn't know who Omar was, so I was brutally honest and said I didn't really like it. He asked why. It was a song about writing letters. I told him, "I don't send letters. I don't know anyone who does," and he said, "OK, I'll give you five minutes to improve it." I wrote a chorus about flying with paper wings, and Omar liked it. He turned his chair around and told Andrés: "Let's have the kid write with us." A few days later, they took me with them to the Sony Latin offices. I went from intern to songwriter in a week.

## What was your split of the song?

Equal parts. I'll always be thankful to Andrés and Omar. [Alfanno and Castro helped Barrera create his Once 11 publishing company.] Andrés is the master Jedi. He was best man at my wedding. Working with him was a schooling. Thanks to Andrés, I met Maluma, who used to go to the studio to write with Andrés when he was just starting out. I told Andrés I had an idea for Maluma. He showed it to him, and he liked it. It was our first song, "Sin Contrato."



# EDGAR BARRERA



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PEAK ON BILLBOARD'S R&B  
STREAMING SONGS

## MUNI LONG

The singer-songwriter's breakthrough hit, "Hrs and Hrs," is the result of years of hard work — and a career reinvention

Long photographed by  
Ssam Kim on Jan. 24 at  
Pour Vous in Los Angeles.

▶ Before Muni Long broke big on TikTok with her R&B ballad "Hrs and Hrs," she first went viral on YouTube in the late 2000s by singing words from the dictionary and an acoustic cover of Drake's "Best I Ever Had." By 2008, she landed her first record deal under her birth name, Priscilla Renea, with Virgin Records, which released her debut album, *Jukebox*, a year later. Yet the artist was dropped in 2014 — forcing her to pivot to a career as a songwriter.

The Vero Beach, Fla., native spent the next several years co-writing chart-topping hits like Pitbull and Kesha's "Timber," Fifth Harmony and Kid Ink's "Worth It" and Chris Brown's "Don't Wake Me Up." All the while, she continued to release music, exploring pop and country, but nothing took off. Then one night in 2021, when she found an R&B beat on YouTube while washing dishes, something clicked. "The first verse came really quick," recalls Long, 33. "I wiped my hands and started typing out the lyrics. It took maybe 20 minutes."

The sumptuous "Hrs and Hrs" was released in November as a last-minute addition to *Public Displays of Affection*, the third of three dreamy R&B EPs that

Long independently released on her Supergiant Records label over a year's time. (Supergiant is led by co-founder/co-manager Rashad Tyler and co-founder/CFO Raysean Hairston, Long's husband.) Long's friend Bre-Z (an actor on The CW's *All American*) and Bre-Z's fiancée used the song as a backing track in a romantic video documenting their relationship, which Long posted on her TikTok weeks later. It quickly ignited the #HrsandHrsChallenge within the LGBTQ+ community and has since garnered over 5 million views.

In January, "Hrs and Hrs" debuted on the Billboard Hot 100, and Long soon topped the Emerging Artists chart thanks to the song, which has collected 99.4 million U.S. streams, according to MRC Data. "Hrs and Hrs" has since reached a No. 16 peak on the Hot 100 and ruled R&B Streaming Songs for five weeks. Now, as Long finishes her next project, she's sifting through numerous collaboration requests — including from artists for whom she has written. "I felt like I was driving Uber in a Lamborghini. I could never go in any direction that I wanted to go," Long says. "Now it's all about freedom for me, no limitations."

—HERAN MAMO

# EDGAR BARRERA

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pieces of music and I'm  
blessed to be a part of  
your journey and vision.**

**Tu hermana,  
BECKY G**

*Felicitades Edgar!*

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MANAGEMENT

*Becky  
G*

The background is a dark, textured brown. In the corners, there are decorative elements consisting of concentric, wavy orange and red lines that form a spherical shape, resembling a stylized globe or a sound wave. These elements are positioned in the top-left, top-right, and bottom-left corners.

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