

S X S W 2 0 2 2

billboard

MARCH 12, 2022 • BILLBOARD.COM

YOUNG THUG & GUNNA

HAVE ENTERED THE CHAT

PLUS

SHAWN MENDES

SEBASTIÁN YATRA

KYGO

OSCAR MUSIC
PREVIEW

THE BLOCKCHAIN'S
GROWING PAINS

S X S W 2 0 2 2

billboard

MARCH 12, 2022 • BILLBOARD.COM

KYGO

BUILDS MUSIC'S

NEXT MARGARITAVILLE

PLUS

YOUNG THUG
& GUNNA

SHAWN MENDES

SEBASTIÁN
YATRA

OSCAR MUSIC
PREVIEW

THE BLOCKCHAIN'S
GROWING PAINS

S X S W 2 0 2 2

billboard

MARCH 12, 2022 • BILLBOARD.COM

SEBASTIÁN YATRA

SOARS FROM ENCANTO TO STARDOM

+

OSCAR MUSIC
PREVIEW

THE BLOCKCHAIN'S
GROWING PAINS

PLUS

YOUNG THUG & GUNNA

SHAWN MENDES

KYGO

S X S W 2 0 2 2

billboard

MARCH 12, 2022 • BILLBOARD.COM

SHAWN MENDES

TAKES A LEAP

OF FAITH

PLUS

YOUNG THUG
& GUNNA

SEBASTIÁN
YATRA

KYGO

+

OSCAR MUSIC
PREVIEW

THE BLOCKCHAIN'S
GROWING PAINS

S X S W 2 0 2 2

billboard

MARCH 12, 2022 • BILLBOARD.COM

YOUNG THUG & GUNNA

HAVE ENTERED THE CHAT

PLUS

SHAWN MENDES

SEBASTIÁN YATRA

KYGO



OSCAR MUSIC
PREVIEW

THE BLOCKCHAIN'S
GROWING PAINS

S X S W 2 0 2 2

billboard

MARCH 12, 2022 • BILLBOARD.COM

KYGO

BUILDS MUSIC'S

NEXT MARGARITAVILLE

PLUS

YOUNG THUG
& GUNNA

SHAWN MENDES

SEBASTIÁN
YATRA



OSCAR MUSIC
PREVIEW

THE BLOCKCHAIN'S
GROWING PAINS



S X S W 2 0 2 2

MARCH 12, 2022 • BILLBOARD.COM

billboard



OSCAR MUSIC
PREVIEW

THE BLOCKCHAIN'S
GROWING PAINS

SEBASTIÁN YATRA

SOARS FROM *ENCANTO* TO STARDOM

PLUS

YOUNG THUG & GUNNA

SHAWN MENDES

KYGO

S X S W 2 0 2 2

billboard

MARCH 12, 2022 • BILLBOARD.COM

SHAWN MENDES

TAKES A LEAP

OF FAITH

PLUS

YOUNG THUG
& GUNNA

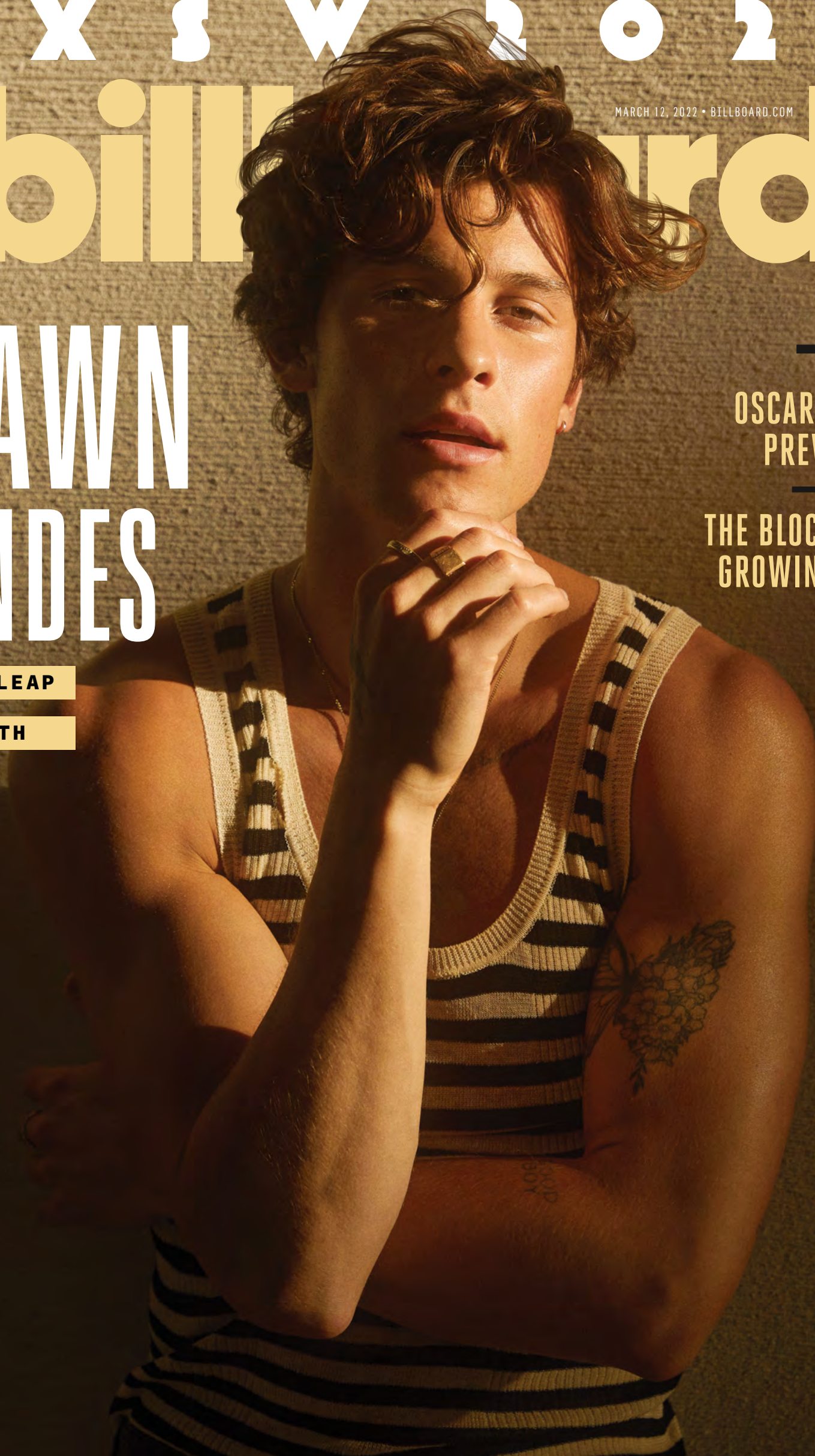
SEBASTIÁN
YATRA

KYGO



OSCAR MUSIC
PREVIEW

THE BLOCKCHAIN'S
GROWING PAINS



ACADEMY AWARD® NOMINEE
BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE



“SONICALLY FLAWLESS, AUTHENTICALLY TEXTURED AND DEEP-ROOTED IN CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE, *SUMMER OF SOUL* SUCCEEDS MAGNIFICENTLY IN CAPTURING THE SCALE, SPIRITUAL RESONANCE AND, YES, SOUL OF THE HARLEM CULTURAL FESTIVAL. IT WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN THIS TIME.”

EMPIRE

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

Directed by **Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson**

Produced by **Joseph Patel, p.g.a. Robert Fyvolent, p.g.a. David Dinerstein, p.g.a.**

A Questlove Jawn
Summer of Soul

(... OR, WHEN THE REVOLUTION COULD NOT BE TELEVISED)

ONXX
COLLECTIVE

hulu

SEARCHLIGHT
PICTURES

SearchlightPictures.com/FYC

© 2022 20th Century Studios

contents

MARCH 12, 2022

VOLUME 134

NO. 3

Features

16

PLAYERS ONLY

Young Thug and Gunna have used chart-topping albums, singular flows and a capital-P Potent catchphrase to command the hip-hop world's attention. But their current hot streak isn't enough for the Atlanta duo.

22

LEAP OF FAITH

For years, **Shawn Mendes** delivered one inescapable radio hit after another. Now, ahead of his fifth album and a massive world tour, he's figuring out what kind of artist he really wants to be.

26

ENCANTADO

With his knack for pop melodies and triple-threat talent, **Sebastián Yatra** broke through the reggaetón boom.

Now he's the voice of the Oscar-nominated song from Disney's *Encanto* — and ready for a much bigger stage.

32

NORWEGIAN IN PARADISE

With music that takes listeners to a tropics of the mind, **Kygo** became one of dance's biggest stars. Now, with his Palm Tree Crew, he's establishing a brand, and a legacy, with an unlikely inspiration: Margaritaville.

ON THE COVERS

Kygo photographed by Meredith Jenks on Feb. 9 in Miami.

Sebastián Yatra photographed by David Needleman on Feb. 28 at Seret Studios in Brooklyn.

Gucci by Alessandro Michele sweater, tuxedo and shoes; MISHO bracelets and rings.

Shawn Mendes photographed by Sami Drasin on Feb. 14 at The Park Santa Monica in Santa Monica, Calif.

Young Thug (left) and Gunna photographed by Diwang Valdez on Feb. 21 at Studio Space in Atlanta.

THIS PAGE

Doja Cat (left) and Normani photographed by Sami Drasin on March 2 at YouTube Theater at Hollywood Park in Inglewood, Calif.

TO OUR READERS

Billboard will publish its next issue on March 26. For 24/7 music coverage, go to billboard.com.

BILLBOARD CHARTS

4

Glass Animals' "Heat Waves" completes a record-shattering 59-week climb to No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100.

THE MARKET

6

Blockchain presents game-changing potential for virtually every facet of the music industry, but will it revolutionize or further fragment the business?

8

ASM Global president/CEO **Ron Bension** on leaving Live Nation and the challenges of managing 350 venues during a pandemic.

THE SOUND

11

OSCAR MUSIC PREVIEW
Conversations with the best original song and score nominees ahead of the 94th annual Academy Awards on March 27.

CHARTBREAKER

40

Rising pop artist **Lauren Spencer-Smith** leaked a song snippet — and unintentionally helped "Fingers Crossed" become a major TikTok hit.

Hannah Karp

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Editorial

ROBERT LEVINE DEPUTY EDITORIAL DIRECTOR
FRANK DIGIACOMO EXECUTIVE EDITOR, ENTERPRISE REPORTING
REBECCA MILZOFF EXECUTIVE EDITOR, FEATURES
CHRISTINE WERTHMAN MANAGING EDITOR
ALEXIS COOK CREATIVE DIRECTOR
JENNY SARGENT PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR
JASON LIPSHUTZ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MUSIC
MELINDA NEWMAN EXECUTIVE EDITOR, WEST COAST/NASHVILLE
LEILA COBO VICE PRESIDENT/LATIN INDUSTRY LEAD
GAIL MITCHELL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, R&B/HIP-HOP
THOM DUFFY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SPECIAL FEATURES/POWER LISTS
JOE LYNCH EXECUTIVE DIGITAL DIRECTOR, EAST COAST
KATIE ATKINSON EXECUTIVE DIGITAL DIRECTOR, WEST COAST
COLIN STUTZ NEWS DIRECTOR

DEPUTY EDITORS **Nolan Feeney** (Features), **Andrew Unterberger**
SENIOR EDITORS **Anna Chan**, **Lyndsey Havens**, **Nick Williams**
INTERNATIONAL EDITOR **Alexei Barrionuevo**
AWARDS EDITOR **Paul Grein** DANCE DIRECTOR **Katie Bain**
SENIOR DIRECTOR **Dave Brooks** (Touring/Live Entertainment)
LEAD ANALYST **Glenn Peoples**
SENIOR EDITOR/ANALYST **Ed Christman** (Publishing/Retail)
DIRECTOR, TECHNOLOGY COVERAGE **Micah Singleton**
SENIOR WRITERS **Griselda Flores** (Latin), **Dan Rys**
HIP-HOP EDITOR **Carl Lamarre** DIGITAL NEWS EDITOR **Marc Schneider**
SENIOR LEGAL CORRESPONDENT **Bill Donahue**
EDITORS AT LARGE **Steve Knopper**, **Joe Levy**
WEEKEND EDITORS **Ashley Iasimone**, **Mitchell Peters**
COPY CHIEF **Chris Woods**
SENIOR COPY EDITOR **Christa Titus** COPY EDITOR **Jaymi Gooden**
REPORTERS **Jessica Nicholson** (Nashville), **Kristin Robinson**
STAFF WRITERS **Darlene Aderoju**, **Rania Aniftos**,
Starr Bowenbank, **Stephen Daw**, **Heran Mamo**,
Taylor Mims, **Neena Rouhani**
STAFF WRITER, E-COMMERCE **Latifah Muhammad**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR **Chris Eggertsen**
ASSISTANT EDITORS **Josh Glicksman**, **Jessica Roiz**
ASSISTANT TO THE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR **Cydney Lee**

Artist Relations

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, TALENT AND PROGRAMMING **Christina Medina**

Design

ART DIRECTOR **Christopher Elsemore**
SENIOR DESIGNER **Lyanne Natividad**
ART PRODUCTION MANAGER **Dan Skelton**

Photo

PHOTO EDITOR **Samantha Xu**
SENIOR PHOTO EDITOR **Jenny Regan** (Digital)
PHOTO RESEARCHER **Michael Calcagno**
ASSISTANT PHOTO EDITOR **Naomy Pedroza**

Video

ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT, VIDEO PRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT **Lee Schneller**
PRODUCTION AND CONTENT MANAGER **Ciara McVey**
SOCIAL PRODUCER/CONTENT MANAGER **Stefanie Tanaka**
SUPERVISING PRODUCER, NEWS **Brian Zambuto**
SENIOR PRODUCER **Lesley Corral**
HOST/PRODUCERS **Chelsea Briggs**, **Tedrick Kelly**, **Jordyn Rolling**
PRODUCERS **Neha Joy**, **Tiffany Taylor**
POST SUPERVISOR **Jonathan Suhadolnik**
EDITORS **Jason Bass**, **Colin Burgess**
VIDEO EDITOR/SHOOTER **Matt Damiano**

Digital

DIRECTOR OF GROWTH **Danielle Dauenhauer**
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, DATA AND TECHNOLOGY **Glenn Walker**
VICE PRESIDENT, DATA **Julian Pan**
DIRECTOR, DATA ANALYTICS **Tynelle Boothe**
SENIOR MANAGER, SOCIAL MEDIA **Becky Kaminsky**
SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR **Lucy Blonstein**
SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR **Danielle Pascual**
SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER/STAFF WRITER, LATIN **Ingrid Fajardo**
SOCIAL MEDIA INTERN **Dana Cuccurullo**
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, ADVERTISING OPERATIONS **Cheryl Kampanis**

Julian Holguin

PRESIDENT

Business Leadership

MIKE VAN EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT/CO-HEAD
OF GLOBAL BRAND PARTNERSHIPS
BRIAN SZEJKA CO-HEAD OF GLOBAL BRAND PARTNERSHIPS
SILVIO PIETROLUONGO SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
CHARTS AND DATA DEVELOPMENT
JOE MAIMONE VICE PRESIDENT, SALES
DANA DROPPA SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING
ANJALI RAJA SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS OPERATIONS
KELLY SCHWANTNER SENIOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EVENTS
SHAMEKA FRANK VICE PRESIDENT, REVENUE OPERATIONS
JESSICA GRILL DIRECTOR, BUSINESS OPERATIONS
SHIRA BROWN ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT,
VIDEO STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT

Sales/Brand Partnerships

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS **Brendan Hoey**, **Lauren Kiggins**,
Edward Stepankovsky, **Christina Tom**, **Lauren Wray**
SENIOR DIRECTORS **Justine Matthews**, **Nicholas Urkonis**
DIRECTORS **Sam Forrest**, **Sabrina Phillips**,
Cynthia Mellow, **Lee Ann Photoglo**,
Marcia Olival, **Ryan O'Donnell**
MANAGER, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT **Catrise Johnson**

Charts

SENIOR DIRECTORS OF CHARTS **Keith Caulfield** (Billboard 200, Heatseekers
Albums; Los Angeles), **Gary Trust** (Billboard Hot 100, Pop, Adult)
DIRECTOR, CHART PRODUCTION **Michael Cusson**
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CHART PRODUCTION/RESEARCH MANAGER
Alex Vitoulis (Blues, Classical, Jazz, World)
SENIOR CHART MANAGERS **Jim Asker** (Country, Christian, Gospel),
Pamela Bustios (Latin)
CHART MANAGERS **Trevor Anderson** (R&B/Hip-Hop;
Editorial Liaison), **Eric Frankenberg** (Boxscore/Touring),
Gordon Murray (Dance/Electronic),
Kevin Rutherford (Social, Streaming, Rock),
Xander Zellner (Artist 100, Emerging Artists,
Songwriters, Producers; Editorial Liaison)

Events

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **Mary Rooney**
MANAGERS **Taylor Bartenope**, **Mary Carter**,
Kacie Collins

Account Management

SENIOR MANAGERS **Galina Druzhinina**,
Shannon McMahon
MANAGER **Andrea Guevara-Gresch**
ASSOCIATE MANAGER **Kristen Wisneski**

Brand Experiences

SENIOR DIRECTOR, BRANDED CONTENT **Elizabeth Lancaster**
SENIOR BRANDED WRITER/PRODUCER **James Dinh**
BRANDED WRITER/PRODUCER **Walaa Elsidig**
ASSOCIATE MANAGER, BRANDED SOCIAL **Meghan Mahar**
SENIOR DIRECTOR, PROJECT MANAGEMENT **Sara Katzki**
SENIOR PROJECT MANAGERS **Sidnei Afari**, **Sarah Lombard**

Integrated Marketing

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **Chris Santorella**
DIRECTOR **Jasmine Kim**
SENIOR MANAGER **Jeanne Dienstag**
MANAGERS **Brandon Kosikov**, **Brant Pustay**

Design

DIRECTORS **Stacey Saunders**,
Adrian Castillo

SUBSCRIPTIONS Call 800-684-1873 (U.S. toll-free)
or 845-267-3072 (international)
or email subscriptions@billboard.com

REPRINTS AND PERMISSIONS Enveritas Group
(call 864-241-0779 or email licensing@enveritasgroup.com)

Jay Penske

CHAIRMAN/CEO

Gerry Byrne
VICE CHAIRMAN

George Grobar
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Sarlina See
CHIEF ACCOUNTING OFFICER

Craig Perreault
CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER

Todd Greene
EVP, BUSINESS AFFAIRS AND CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER

Mark Howard
CHIEF ADVERTISING AND PARTNERSHIPS OFFICER

Paul Rainey
EVP, OPERATIONS & FINANCE

Tom Finn
EVP, OPERATIONS & FINANCE

Debashish Ghosh
MANAGING DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

Jenny Connelly
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, PRODUCT & TECHNOLOGY

Judith R. Margolin
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL

Ken Delalcazar
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, FINANCE

Lauren Utecht
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES

Nelson Anderson
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, CREATIVE

Rachel Terrace
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, LICENSING & BRAND DEVELOPMENT

Adrian White
VICE PRESIDENT AND ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL

Anne Doyle
VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES

Brian Levine
VICE PRESIDENT, REVENUE OPERATIONS

Brooke Jaffe
HEAD OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS & COMMUNICATIONS

Constance Ejuma
VICE PRESIDENT, SEO

Dan Feinberg
VICE PRESIDENT AND ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL

Ellen Deally
VICE PRESIDENT, AUDIENCE MARKETING
AND SPECIAL PROJECTS

Frank McCallick
VICE PRESIDENT, GLOBAL TAX

Gabriel Koen
VICE PRESIDENT, TECHNOLOGY

Jamie Miles
VICE PRESIDENT, E-COMMERCE

Jerry Ruiz
VICE PRESIDENT, ACQUISITIONS AND OPERATIONS

Joni Antonacci
VICE PRESIDENT, PRODUCTION OPERATIONS

Karen Reed
VICE PRESIDENT, FINANCE

Marissa O'Hare
VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Mike Monroe
CMO, HEAD OF PMC STUDIOS

Mike Ye
VICE PRESIDENT, STRATEGIC PLANNING & ACQUISITIONS

Nici Catton
VICE PRESIDENT, PRODUCT DELIVERY

Noemi Lazo
VICE PRESIDENT, CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
AND MARKETING OPERATIONS

Stephanie Parker
VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING, PORTFOLIO SALES

Victor Hendrickson
VICE PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL

Young Ko
VICE PRESIDENT, FINANCE

Sebastián Yatra

Dharma North America Tour

AUG 25 HOUSTON, TX SMART FINANCIAL CENTRE
AUG 26 IRVING, TX TOYOTA MUSIC FACTORY
AUG 27 HIDALGO, TX PAYNE ARENA
AUG 28 SAN ANTONIO, TX FREEMAN COLISEUM
AUG 31 LAREDO, TX SAMES AUTO ARENA
SEP 02 PHOENIX, AZ ARIZONA FEDERAL THEATRE
SEP 03 SAN DIEGO, CA VIEJAS ARENA
SEP 04 INGLEWOOD, CA YOUTUBE THEATRE
SEP 07 SEATTLE, WA MOORE THEATRE
SEP 08 PORTLAND, OR KELLER AUDITORIUM
SEP 10 LAS VEGAS, NV CHELSEA THEATRE AT COSMOPOLITAN

SEP 11 SAN JOSE, CA SAN JOSE CIVIC
SEP 15 ROSEMONT, IL ROSEMONT THEATRE
SEP 17 LAVAL, QC PLACE BELL
SEP 18 TORONTO, ON HISTORY
SEP 29 ATLANTA, GA FOX THEATRE
SEP 30 ORLANDO, FL DR. PHILIPS
OCT 01 MIAMI, FL FTX ARENA
OCT 07 WASHINGTON, DC THE THEATER AT MGM NATIONAL HARBOR
OCT 08 NEW YORK, NY UNITED PALACE
OCT 09 BOSTON, MA ORPHEUM THEATRE
NOV 12 SAN JUAN, PR COCA COLA MUSIC HALL

GET TICKETS NOW AT LIVENATION.COM



charts

DATA FOR WEEK OF 3.12.2022

From left: MacFarlane, Bayley, Seaward and Irwin-Singer of Glass Animals.



Glass Animals' 'Heat Waves' Completes Slow Burn To No. 1

HOT 100

1

"Heat Waves"
Glass Animals

LAST WEEK

2

PEAK POSITION

1

WEEKS ON CHART

59

GLASS ANIMALS' "HEAT WAVES" hits No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100, completing the longest climb to the summit in the history of the chart: 59 weeks.

The first Hot 100 chart-topper (and entry) for the British quartet — Dave Bayley, Edmund Irwin-Singer, Drew MacFarlane and Joe Seaward — debuted on the Jan. 16, 2021-dated list. Released in June 2020, the song topped Alternative Airplay for three weeks in March/April 2021 and Mainstream Top 40 and Adult Top 40 for two weeks each this January and February. In between, it connected prominently on TikTok, which helped spark its crossover.

"The song is about nostalgia and the past and remembering and missing people," Bayley says. "Through the last couple years, and still now,

people have been missing their loved ones, and not everyone has been able to just go visit their parents or their best friend. It has been quite difficult ... that's my hunch as to why people have gravitated toward this song."

The track leads with 66.7 million radio airplay audience impressions, 14.8 million streams and 2,900 sold in the United States during the tracking week of Feb. 25 to March 3, according to MRC Data. It's from Glass Animals' album *Dreamland*, which debuted as their first Billboard 200 top 10 in August 2020.

"I almost feel like it gives us a little bit of breathing room," says Bayley of the song's success. "I think there's often a lot of pressure to keep putting things out. But because this has kept going, it has given us the confidence to just keep doing what we were doing."

—GARY TRUST AND ANDREW UNTERBERGER

HOT 100



No. 7

Bieber Back At Old Haunt

Justin Bieber's "Ghost" holds at its No. 7 high on the Billboard Hot 100 chart dated March 12. The hit marks his 26th top 10 — the fifth-most among solo males in the chart's history. Drake is the leader in the category — and among all acts — with 54, followed by Michael Jackson (30), Elton John and Stevie Wonder (28 each).

The song concurrently tops Adult Top 40, becoming Bieber's fifth No. 1 and second from his album *Justice*. The project's first chart-topper, "Holy" (featuring Chance the Rapper), ruled over a year ago for two weeks in January and February. Bieber returned to No. 1 last October thanks to "Stay" with The Kid LAROI, which has led Adult Top 40 and the Hot 100 for seven weeks each and ranks at No. 5 on the latter this issue.

Justice spends its 50th week on the Billboard 200 and climbs 28-27 — its highest rank in nearly four months. It debuted atop the chart dated April 3, 2021, and has led for two weeks.

-GARY TRUST

Hot 100						
2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
			PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL		
2	2	1	#1 for 1 WEEK Heat Waves D.BAYLEY (D.BAYLEY)	Glass Animals WOLF TONE/POLYDOR/REPUBLIC	1	59
1	1	2	We Don't Talk About Bruno L.M.MIRANDA,MELIZONDO (L.M.MIRANDA)	Carolina Gaitan, Mauro Castillo, Adassa, Rhenzy Feliz, Diane Guerrero, Stephanie Beatriz & Encanto Cast WALT DISNEY	1	10
4	3	3	SAL abcdefu P.NAPPI (GAYLE,D.B.PITTINGER,S.DAVIS)	GAYLE ARTHOUSE/ATLANTIC	3	15
6	5	4	Super Gremlin ATL.JACOB (B.K.KAPRI,J.D.CANADY,M.A.TIMMERMANN)	Kodak Black SNIPER GANG/ATLANTIC	4	17
5	6	5	Stay CASHMERE CAT,D.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)	The Kid LAROI & Justin Bieber RAYMOND BRAUN/COLUMBIA/DEF JAM	1	34
3	4	6	Easy On Me G.KURSTIN (A.L.B.ADKINS,G.KURSTIN)	Adele COLUMBIA	1	21
8	7	7	Ghost THE MONSTERS & STRANGERZ,J.BELLION (J.D.BIEBER,J.D.BELLION,J.K.JOHNSON,S.JOHNSON,M.R.POLLACK)	Justin Bieber RAYMOND BRAUN/DEF JAM	7	23
7	8	8	Shivers E.SHEERAN,STEVE MAC,FRED (E.C.SHEERAN,J.MCDAID,STEVE MAC,K.LAVELLE)	Ed Sheeran ATLANTIC	4	25
14	9	9	Bad Habits FRED,J.MCDAID (E.SHEERAN,J.FISH,O.S.SYKES)	Ed Sheeran ATLANTIC	2	36
12	10	10	Cold Heart (PNAU Remix) N.LITTLEMORE,P.MAYES,S.LITTLEMORE,C.THOMAS,G.DUDGEON (E.JOHN,B.J.P.TAUPIN,P.MAYES,N.LITTLEMORE,S.LITTLEMORE)	Elton John & Dua Lipa ROCKET/MERCURY/EMI/INTERSCOPE	7	26

BILLBOARD 200



No. 8

Tears For Fears' Top 10 Return

As the *Encanto* soundtrack holds court at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 for an eighth nonconsecutive week, a trio of albums debut in the top 10, including Tears for Fears' *The Tipping Point*. It's the duo's first trip to the upper part of the chart in over 30 years.

Tears for Fears was last in the top 10 with 1989's *The Seeds of Love*, which peaked at No. 8, though *The Tipping Point* still marks the act's highest career debut. The album, the duo's first new studio release since 2004, enters with 31,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States during the week ending March 3, according to MRC Data. Of that sum, 29,000 were in album sales — the best sales week for the act since MRC Data began tracking sales in 1991.

Meanwhile, Kodak Black's *Back for Everything* enters at No. 2 on the Billboard 200 (his fourth top five on the list) and Avril Lavigne's *Love Sux* starts at No. 9 (her sixth top 10).

-KEITH CAULFIELD

Billboard 200						
2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Artist	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
			IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL			
1	1	1	#1 for 8 WEEKS Soundtrack WALT DISNEY	Encanto	1	14
HOT SHOT DEBUT		2	Kodak Black ATLANTIC/AG	Back For Everything	2	1
3	3	3	Morgan Wallen BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC	Dangerous: The Double Album	1	60
2	2	4	Gunna GUNNA/YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/AG	DS4EVER	1	8
5	4	5	The Weeknd XO/REPUBLIC	The Highlights	2	55
4	7	6	Drake OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	Certified Lover Boy	1	26
10	5	7	Olivia Rodrigo Geffen/IGA	Sour	1	41
NEW		8	Tears For Fears TFF UK/CONCORD	The Tipping Point	8	1
NEW		9	Avril Lavigne DTA/ELEKTRA/EMG	Love Sux	9	1
6	8	10	Doja Cat KEMOSABE/RCA	Planet Her	2	36

market

MUSIC AND MONEY



OFF THE CHAIN

WEB3 PRESENTS GAME-CHANGING POTENTIAL FOR VIRTUALLY EVERY FACET OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY, BUT WILL IT REVOLUTIONIZE OR FURTHER FRAGMENT THE BUSINESS?

BY MICAH SINGLETON // ILLUSTRATION BY SHIRA INBAR

FOR ONCE IN ITS HISTORY, the music industry has embraced an emerging technology in its infancy, contradicting its decadeslong history of shunning evolution until — as the Napster era demonstrated — it becomes impossible to ignore. Over the past three years, music executives have shown a growing interest in blockchain, a digitally distributed, immutable public ledger — and the basis for the next generation of the internet known as Web3 — because of its far-reaching application potential.

A transparent, secure digital record maintained through a decentralized network of servers that eliminates the

need for a trusted third party can theoretically reinvent how royalty payments are distributed and reduce the time it takes for rights holders to get paid. Tickets sold as non-fungible tokens could end scalping in the live-entertainment industry, because blockchain will give sellers the ability to track and limit the price of resales. And blockchain-based NFTs, which have already been issued by 3LAU, Brandi Carlile, Snoop Dogg, Haleek Maul and the Recording Academy, could become the de facto method for in-app purchases in the virtual world. Meaning, the music industry has already taken a step across the next threshold of digital consumer technology.

Live Nation, Spotify, YouTube and Oak View

Group said they would either not do business in Russia or remove content from Russian state-backed channels.

Music marketplace **Bandcamp** was acquired by Fortnite creator Epic Games.

Investors and music and tech executives interviewed by *Billboard* agree that blockchain will have a significant impact on the music industry. Already, major-label groups including Sony Music Entertainment and Warner Music Group have invested in blockchain startups — NFT platform MakersPlace and Dapper Labs (the company behind NBA Top Shot), respectively — and Ticketmaster acquired the blockchain ticketing startup Upgraded in 2018. But how soon blockchain's impact will be felt, and how much industry buy-in will be required for it to become a generally accepted method of doing business, are still up for debate, they say.

“When you look at the music industry, the blockchain piece may be the biggest value

creator long term,” says Matt Pincus, co-founder/CEO of investment firm MUSIC. That potential comes with a significant caveat, however: “People really underestimate how long it’s going to take before blockchain, even as an ingredient of the stack, is going to be predominant and saturated throughout the market.” (A tech “stack” is the collective infrastructure needed to run an app or service.)

Royalty Revolution

BLOCKCHAIN HAS THE potential to revolutionize how royalty payments are handled industrywide. “Theoretically, it should result in a copyright and royalty system that needs less

with blockchain accounting until the latter becomes generally accepted.

Not everyone who operates in the Web3 universe envisions it eclipsing current methodologies, however. “There’s going to be an important hybrid of Web2 and Web3,” says Mike Darlington, founder/CEO of electronic music label Monstercat. Darlington was an early adopter and leader in the NFT and blockchain music space, but he sees Web3 technology as an “augment to the traditional music industry,” adding, “I don’t see it as a replacement.”

“I’m not a Web3 maximalist in the sense that it’s supposed to be the be-all and end-all,” he says. “But I do see this as a great way to hyper-focus on your 10,000 or 1,000 superfans and create interesting connections and value relationships with them.” Darlington suggests that

“Blockchain has to be able to handle scale, and the music industry has to lean in and let the technology evolve its business — those two measurements will determine how deeply it impacts.”

—SHARA SENDEROFF, RAISED IN SPACE

middlemen or no middlemen at all,” Pincus says. “And there’s no reason [blockchain] shouldn’t be, over the long term, at least a predominant way that digital rights management is conducted.”

The word “theoretically” is often used when discussing blockchain, because in order for it to become a successful tool for rights management or other facets of the industry, multiple companies across multiple sectors need to adopt the technology. Until then, the current model of managing information, which blockchain experts refer to as “off-chain,” will have to learn to interact with the “on-chain” model.

“When people invest in [blockchain], they underestimate how long they’re going to live in an on-chain/off-chain universe.” Somehow, the industry will have to marry the traditional model of bookkeeping

artists should continue developing themselves on Web2 platforms, such as Spotify, Apple Music and other streaming services, while also using “Web3 ecosystems and tools that exist today” to “speak to and develop a superfan community.”

Royal, a startup co-founded by JD Russ and Justin Blau, who is also known as the electronic DJ 3LAU, is a new leader in that space. The company allows musicians to sell a share of their royalties to fans. In November, Royal raised \$55 million in a series A round from investors including Andreessen Horowitz, Creative Artists Agency and Coinbase Ventures — as well as artists including Nas, The Chainsmokers, Kygo and Disclosure — and has so far raised \$71 million.

“It is going to be a lot faster for independent artists to integrate [into the blockchain] than it will be for signed artists, and that’s just the nature of

Universal Music Group reported earnings topping \$10 billion in 2021.

Hipgnosis Song Management acquired rights to Leonard Cohen’s entire song catalog.

existing [intellectual property] law and legacy IP infrastructure,” Blau says. Owning your masters makes it a much easier process to get integrated with a blockchain-based company like Royal, given the bookkeeping changes needed to sell a portion of a song’s royalties. “That’s not to say that established artists still can’t do things; they’re just a little bit more limited in what’s possible,” he adds.

Even blockchain maximalists who believe it will reinvent the internet — like Shara Senderoff, managing partner of venture fund Raised in Space — are quick to note that the impact on the music industry will depend on labels’ willingness to evolve. “Blockchain has to be able to handle true scale, and the music industry has to lean in and let the technology evolve its business — those two measurements will determine how deeply it impacts,” Senderoff says. “We’re seeing certain record labels have more willingness than they ever have before to stay open. They know that they have to be involved; they just don’t know how yet. And that’s not their fault. That’s the need for entrepreneurs to present products and business models that are going to make sense and to allow them to take small steps to what ultimately will be a complete reinvention of the internet, whether they like it or not.”

Interconnection Is Key

ONE OF THE BIGGEST challenges for the future of blockchain will be interoperability across different blockchains. A number of popular platforms like ethereum and ripple exist alongside offerings from major companies including Microsoft, Oracle and IBM (none of which are fully interoperable). They will all need to communicate with each other to make blockchains a feasible replacement for current internet standards.

“The ability to plug and put products — digital collectibles, royalties, whatever it may be — onto a chain and then for them to be allowed to be exchanged and move from one [chain] to another is interoperability,” says Senderoff. “They’re all disconnected at the moment, but the goal long term is interoperability. We need them all to be interconnected for a world to work.”

If that interoperability is achieved, the potential for blockchain in music is truly massive. Says Jake Udell, founder/CEO of Metalink, a social hub for NFT owners: “It’s going to change the music industry drastically, arguably as much as streaming did.”



23.88B

↑1.8%

**TOTAL ON-DEMAND
STREAMS WEEK
OVER WEEK**

Number of audio and video on-demand streams for the week ending March 3.

17.36M

↑2.5%

**ALBUM CONSUMPTION
UNITS WEEK
OVER WEEK**

Album sales plus track-equivalent albums plus streaming-equivalent albums for the week ending March 3.

206.0B

↑12.1%

**TOTAL ON-DEMAND
STREAMS YEAR OVER
YEAR TO DATE**

Number of audio and video streams for 2022 so far over the same period in 2021.

For more in-depth reporting on music-related blockchain, NFT and crypto, see the “A Musician’s Guide To Web3” Deep Dive at billboard.com/pro/deep-dive, which publishes March 14.

Polydor U.K. co-president **Tom March** has been named president of Geffen Records in the United States.

Joe Hadley left Creative Artists Agency to join Spotify as global head of artist and audience partnerships.



Bension photographed Feb. 28 at ASM Global in Los Angeles. A portrait of Van Morrison hangs behind his right shoulder.

From The Desk Of... **Ron Bension**

PRESIDENT/CEO, ASM GLOBAL

BY DAVE BROOKS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DAMON CASAREZ

THE MARCH 2021 announcement that Ron Bension had been named president/CEO of ASM Global, the world's largest facility management company, was received with great interest in the live-event industry. And it wasn't just because Bension had spent 11 years at the much larger competitor of ASM's AEG Presents division. (Many of the sector's major players, including Live Nation president/CEO Michael Rapino and Full Stop

Management chairman Irving Azoff and his Oak View Group partner, CEO Tim Leiweke, have been both colleagues and rivals.) It was that Bension's run at Live Nation had largely been spent overseeing the company's House of Blues nightclub chain, which has an average venue capacity of about 1,850 people.

ASM Global formed in 2019 from the merger of AEG Facilities and SMG, then the No. 3 and No. 1 facilities management companies, respectively. As its CEO, Bension

now oversees 350 venues on five continents — 25 stadiums, 109 arenas, 87 convention centers, 79 theaters and 50 mixed-use facilities — that, by his account, annually host "164 million people [and] 20,000 live events across sports, entertainment and business categories, supported by 61,000 employees worldwide." It's a portfolio that includes Chicago's Soldier Field, Sydney's ANZ Stadium, Stockholm's Avicii Arena and Saudi Arabia's Jeddah Convention Center, as well as the sites of the next three Super Bowls: State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Ariz.; Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas; and the Super Dome in New Orleans.

Bension says his time at Live Nation, as well as previous jobs running MCA/Universal's Recreation Group, which included overseeing its theme parks, and at Tickets.com — where he played a key role in Major League Baseball Advanced Media's acquisition of the company — prepared him well for the work ahead. "I've

either been building, operating or creating content for venues my entire career. I'm really comfortable in that environment," he says. "There aren't many people who have experience with buildings of the size or type [that ASM manages]."

Although many in the industry speculated that Bension had been nudged out the door when he departed Live Nation last December, he insists that he orchestrated his own exit prior to a pandemic-induced companywide reorganization that September, when other senior staff members, like Ticketmaster chief executive Jared Smith, left in similar fashion.

Bension says his relationship with Rapino remains strong and that his time at Live Nation was "one of the most rewarding experiences of my career." That bond will be important as the live industry ramps up again. While AEG Presents and Live Nation compete for the opportunity to land tours and grow their market share in cities around the world, ASM is reliant

on Live Nation to bring concerts to the buildings it manages.

A year into the job, Bension faces a number of challenges, including future-proofing the facilities ASM manages and building new revenue models as the live-entertainment business learns to live with COVID-19. There's also the added muscle that chief rival Oak View Group acquired through its 2021 merger with Spectra, the second-largest facilities management company.

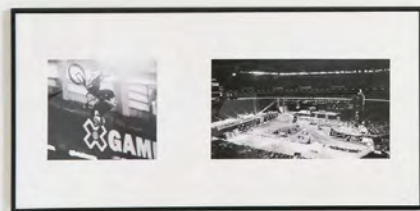
Bension spoke to *Billboard* about these developments, as well as his bullish five-year plan and his expectations for the full-scale return of the facilities business.

Why did you leave Live Nation in December 2021?

I went to Michael [Rapino] in December of 2020 and said, "My job here is done." I helped with the reorganization, thanked them for the opportunity, and it was time to move on. I have an affinity for Michael and Live Nation. They were good to me, and I think I was good to them.

Richard Cusick was named Universal Music Group's chief product officer, global e-commerce.

Walter Jones returned to Sony Music Publishing as executive vp/head of A&R.



This collection of black-and-white photos “represents the variety of entertainment we provide our venue clients and their fans,” says Bension. “That includes everything from X Games to Beyoncé to motocross, bull riding and boxing.”



This heavy-duty, reusable brown paper bag, which a good friend gifted to Bension several years ago, “is my version of a lunch pail.” He eats lunch in the office most days, “a reflection of my attitude about working hard with laser focus on delivering results.”

create a proprietary customer tracking capability that will help our venues understand their customers. We have an unbelievable sponsorship group, and with 350 buildings around the world, we have scale — and scale is good for procurement, for content acquisition, for sponsorship. And it's good for information and understanding what's happening around the world.

How does ASM differentiate itself from its main competitor, Oak View Group?

There are other companies that are noisier, but we're managing more buildings, with more content from Live Nation and AEG than anywhere else in the world. There are some strong competitors on the convention side, but when it comes to arenas, theaters, stadiums and professional teams that we work with and the value of the assets we manage, there is nobody else. You can do your own homework on how many shows we've done compared with our competition, and it is not even close.

What is the biggest challenge you face as CEO?

Besides the potential for another wave of a deadly variant, our biggest challenge is finding good people. We've hired 15 directors and senior executives over the last year and have been very lucky there. But hiring at the local level — whether it's due to the great resignation wave or some other factor — remains a challenge. So instead of running a job fair at one of our buildings, we conducted a global job fair for more than 100 buildings in five

separate countries and received over 1,500 applications.

What kind of contingency plan does ASM have in place to deal with another deadly variant or pandemic?

We all know how incredibly unpredictable this disease has been. Hence, although it's impossible to have a specific plan, over the past year, we have prided ourselves on being nimble. We created Venue Shield, which is the leading venue reopening safety protocol. We were the first venues to have fans back with a sold-out UFC event. We stay close to the situation on five different continents, so we have become very good at responding and changing on the fly.

When do you see business returning to pre-pandemic levels?

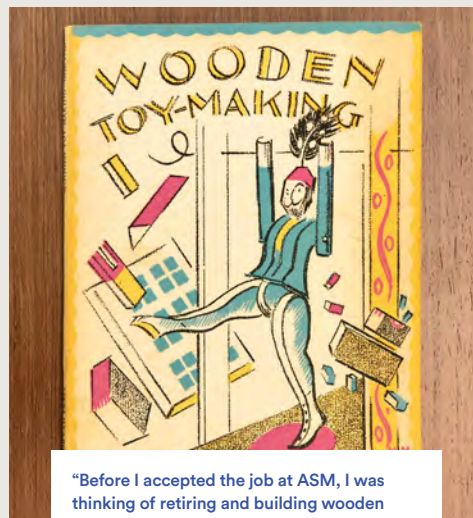
Concerts are back in most countries — not in Asia or Australia, but they'll come back as long as there's not another pandemic. We're already seeing some life in the convention and exhibition business. Unfortunately, it's all long lead, so we are projecting continued slow improvement into the third and fourth quarters. I think you'll see corporate events start up sooner. They're able to move faster. We expect to see a return to normal during the fourth quarter of 2023.

There is long-standing speculation about what happens in five to 10 years when arena and stadium stalwarts like The Rolling Stones, Bruce Springsteen and Paul McCartney curtail their touring, or even stop. Is that a concern?

I'm not necessarily buying that argument. We continue to have record concert attendance and show counts. Billie Eilish, Bad Bunny and many others are selling out throughout the world. Some artists may not have the staying power of those you mention, but the desire to see your favorite artist and the experience and memories that come from that live show are priceless and enduring. There is no replacement for the live experience. **B**



“The House of Blues 25th-anniversary book means a lot to me, as it was one of the major kickoff events we did around the country to successfully revitalize the brand and the venues,” he says.



“Before I accepted the job at ASM, I was thinking of retiring and building wooden toys that I would donate to charity. A friend heard this and bought me this book.”

What attracted you to ASM?

It was the biggest company nobody knew about. I started getting into it and understanding the value proposition of the business. I met with Onex, which is the private equity firm that owns SMG, and I met with the AEG guys. At this stage in my career, it was important that I had great partners since I was stepping into a big and quite challenging role because of the merger's timing with the pandemic.

You recently put together a five-year plan that calls for dramatic growth. Why do you see so much potential for growth?

We are seeing strong growth within our existing portfolio through many of the partnerships and initiatives we put in

place during the shutdown. We closed 27 new deals during the pandemic and are still on a roll with the recent announcement of our deal to manage the Olympia London exhibition center in the U.K., which was a huge win for us. In the past year, we've closed big partnerships both in the U.S., with T-Mobile Arena and Honeywell, and in Europe, with [management contracts for] OVO Arena Wembley [and] Sage Arena [both in the United Kingdom] and Rudolph Weber Arena [in Germany], among many others. We will be announcing several other major new partnerships shortly.

Is part of your strategy to create new business divisions for ASM's clients?

You can call them divisions, but

ultimately, they are added value for the client. We've quadrupled our content teams for convention centers, arenas and theaters around the globe. We've developed technology platforms with Honeywell and Mobilitie, and our own ASM Insights division is developing an entire [customer relationship management] marketing apparatus for our clients. We've launched a social responsibility and corporate services platform called ASM Acts that includes a charitable component along with apprenticeships, internships and scholarships for all our venues.

We acquired partnership interest in AGP, the leading digital technology consulting firm in the country. We aligned ourselves with Qualtrics, the leading customer experience tool, to

3 ACADEMY AWARD® NOMINATIONS INCLUDING BEST ORIGINAL SONG

“No Time To Die” written by Billie Eilish & Finneas O’Connell

WINNER
GRAMMY® AWARD
BEST SONG
WRITTEN FOR VISUAL MEDIA

WINNER
MUSIC CITY FILM CRITICS
ASSOCIATION
BEST ORIGINAL SONG

WINNER
LAS VEGAS FILM
CRITICS SOCIETY
BEST SONG

“NO TIME TO DIE’
COMMUNES WITH
THE SPIRIT
OF ITS FILM

AS WELL OR BETTER
THAN ANY BOND THEME
HAS BEFORE IT, WHICH IS
CRUCIAL, BECAUSE IT’S
ASKED TO CARRY MORE
WATER THAN ALL OF THOSE
SONGS COMBINED.”

INDIEWIRE

WINNER
SOCIETY OF COMPOSERS
& LYRICISTS
OUTSTANDING ORIGINAL SONG FOR
A DRAMATIC OR DOCUMENTARY
VISUAL MEDIA PRODUCTION

WINNER
VARIETY’S HITMAKERS
FILM SONG OF THE YEAR

WINNER
CHICAGO INDIE
CRITICS AWARD
BEST ORIGINAL SONG



**NO
TIME
TO
DIE** ⁰⁰⁷



sound

NOW PLAYING

Clockwise from bottom left: Will Smith in *King Richard*, Zendaya in *Dune*, Kid Cudi and Ariana Grande in *Don't Look Up*, Maribel from *Encanto* and Daniel Craig in *No Time To Die*.

OSCAR MUSIC

P R E V I E W

The music nominees for the 94th annual Academy Awards include Oscar veterans such as Diane Warren (her 13th nomination) and Hans Zimmer (his 12th), as well as six first-time nominees — Germaine Franco, Van Morrison, DIXSON and Beyoncé, and Billie Eilish and FINNEAS. Three of the nominated songs are by individual songwriters — Lin-Manuel Miranda, Warren and Morrison. This runs counter to the prevailing trend on the Billboard Hot 100, where collaborations rule. Meanwhile, *Encanto* was the only film to land nods for both best original song and best original score. It is the first film in three years to register in both categories — *Black Panther* and *Mary Poppins Returns* both achieved the feat at the 91st Oscars. Ahead, song and score nominees discuss what the recognition means leading up to the ceremony on March 27.

BY PAUL GREIN // ILLUSTRATIONS BY ELEANOR SHAKESPEARE

SONGS

"BE ALIVE"

King Richard

Music and lyric by **DIXSON** and **Beyoncé Knowles-Carter**

Had you seen the film before you started writing?

DIXSON No, but I knew the story. I pulled from that information and presented a rough demo.

How did that go?

I played it for [Beyoncé] in person. I was afraid to look at her while I was playing it, [but] she had great things to say and that encouraged me to keep pushing. The track took shape after getting her vocals, rewrites and production notes.

The song incorporates the film's themes of pride, including Black pride and family pride. Why was that important?

I know what it's like to fight for what you love. I think that's a universal message. Obviously, there are some pointed things that are aimed at the themes of the film, but others are universal: If you work hard, you get results.

"DOS ORUGUITAS"

Encanto

Music and lyric by **Lin-Manuel Miranda**

Was it hard to choose one song to submit for Oscar consideration?

I try not to think of it as, "What is the song that could win?" Because that part you really can't control... What you try to do is submit the song you feel best exemplifies the spirit of the movie.

Why was "Dos Oruguitas" that song?

That song covers the foundational emotion and moment when this family began... I was like, "This is the song that feels like the heart of the movie." It has been fascinating to watch people's reactions to it, because they're like, "Oh, Abuela, why can't you let anyone live?!" And then you see what she went through, and it really forces a reconsideration. It's the best example of what I think art can do, which is to engender



▲ Mila Kunis in *Four Good Days* (left) and Benedict Cumberbatch in *The Power of the Dog*.

empathy. And that's the moment when it happens.

"DOWN TO JOY"

Belfast

Music and lyric by **Van Morrison**

Note: The following was edited from answers that Van Morrison gave to Nile Rodgers on Feb. 28 during a Songwriters Hall of Fame virtual event celebrating the nominees for best original song.

When were you first approached to write a song for the movie?

The first phone call, [director Kenneth

Branagh] called me and explained it was his story... He sent me the script. I'm from East Belfast, he's from North Belfast, so I drove from East Belfast to North Belfast, the area he grew up in, and I remembered my recollections from that particular area where I had friends there way back. So, basically, a combination of the script and my recollections of that particular area.

Can you explain the meaning behind the lyrics?

I'm not really good at explaining meanings... Whatever way you want to interpret that. It can be visual. The lyric is, "She was standing there before me as I was coming down to joy." It's kind of meaningless babble, but it works.

TIM RICE has the best track record of any songwriter in the best original song category. He has won all three years he has been nominated: 1992, 1994 and 1996.

ALAN MENKEN

has the best batting average of any nominee in the best original score category. He has won four times from five nods.

"NO TIME TO DIE"

No Time To Die

Music and lyric by **Billie Eilish** and **Finneas O'Connell**

Are you two big James Bond fans?

O'CONNELL Over the years we always were thinking, "Oh, man, wouldn't it be a treat to get to write a Bond theme?"

EILISH [We always thought] people who get to make Bond songs are the coolest people in the world. That's the coolest thing you could possibly get to do. I never, ever thought it would be a possibility; like, not in a million years.

Film is a very collaborative process. Did you get notes?

O'CONNELL I love this as a note, [and] I'm glad they gave it: They really liked the intimacy of our demo. Once you throw a 70-piece orchestra on a song and huge, amazing rock'n'roll guitar, it's easy to lose some of the intimacy that a demo with just a voice and a piano has. They really wanted us to make sure that was maintained.

"SOMEHOW YOU DO"

Four Good Days

Music and lyric by **Diane Warren**

How does this nomination feel different from your previous ones?

The nomination is such a giant win, because we [were competing with] the biggest artists and the biggest movies — and here's my little movie and my song. It's like the little engine that could, and that's always the sweetest.

Were you surprised you made the cut this year?

I was on pins and needles. This is probably the most competitive year in recent history. My song could have gone either way.

How did Reba McEntire come to record the song?

I imagined that Glenn Close [who plays the lead character] would be listening to Reba. Reba has a strength

CONGRATULATIONS

Academy Award Nominees



BEYONCÉ AND DIXSON

Best Original Song

"BE ALIVE"

from the motion picture King Richard



SONY MUSIC
PUBLISHING

HISTORY IS ALWAYS BEING WRITTEN™



▲ Penélope Cruz in *Parallel Mothers*.

about her, a resilience. It's in her persona and in her voice.

SCORES

DON'T LOOK UP

Nicholas Britell

How did you devise the big band theme?

I had a conversation with [director] Adam [McKay] about climate change. I said, "It feels like we're in World War II but we're going to lose. What if I wrote this for a mid-20th-century big band like you'd hear in the war era, but it was totally crazy [with] a toy piano and dueling trumpets?"

What kind of shorthand have you and McKay developed over the course of four projects?

You figure out quicker if you're right or wrong. There were many times where Adam was like, "This is a beautiful piece, [but] it's not going to be in this movie."

RACHEL PORTMAN was the first woman to receive an Oscar nod in a scoring category on her own, and not as part of a collaboration, when she was nominated for *Emma* in 1996.

How do you write for the character of a comet?

We ended up not making music about the comet itself. This is a film where characters didn't really have themes. The themes were tones and feelings [about] the ever-increasing astonishment at how crazy the world is.

DUNE

Hans Zimmer

How did you approach the score?

I knew I didn't want it to be another European romantic-era type score with a big orchestra. I wanted it to be the band that I play with all the time. Basically every instrument [in the score] is a piece of technology of its time. We were making a movie set in some distant future on a distant planet, so why wouldn't we build our own instruments?

You read *Dune* when you were young. How did that affect your composing?

I read this book at 13. [Director] Denis [Villeneuve] read it as a teenager. Rather than looking at the material

with the wisdom and the experience of having done all these movies, it took us right back to being reckless and being a teenager and ready to blow up the power grid. I'm not really happy unless something is blowing up or catches fire.

ENCANTO

Germaine Franco

What was your reaction to your nomination?

They announced early [in the morning], so I thought, "If my phone doesn't ring, I can keep sleeping." Luckily, I was woken up by my boss, [Disney's] Tom MacDougall, who called to say, "We've done it. You've done it." Lin was texting me: "Let's go!" Everyone was excited.

What are your thoughts on the category not being presented live on the telecast?

It was unexpected. I'd love to be in the same room with my colleagues. That's my hope, and it's the hope of the other nominees. Everybody worked so hard on their projects. It's unfortunate, but I'm focusing on the positive.

***Encanto* made you the first woman to score a Disney animated film.**

I'm proud to represent women of color. Young female composers all over the world are writing to me. Being the first isn't something I thought about when I was doing it, I was just doing my best. It's important that I'm the first but not the last, and it's important for others to see people who look like us behind the scenes. The door is now open.

PARALLEL MOTHERS

Alberto Iglesias

What was your reaction to your nomination?

It was very surprising for me, because it's a Spanish film — it's not so easy to be recognized with such big films around. It was one of the best experiences for me doing music, so at the same time, I hoped it could happen.

What were you trying to accomplish with this score?

The film makes a path from child-birth until the common grave at the end. In the middle is Janice, [played by] Penélope Cruz, and the music is breathing with her, understanding that she is lying in moments, starting to know something she doesn't want to recognize. That [adds] suspense; I tried to make evident the parallelism between light and shadows — life and death.

What are your thoughts on the category not being presented live on the telecast?

I don't like it at all. Not only for the composers' categories but editors' categories — it's better to celebrate all the people there. I would like to speak to the other composers, and if we can make a kind of pressure to change that, we will.

THE POWER OF THE DOG

Jonny Greenwood

This is your second nomination in the category. What would a win mean?

It would mean having a statue in my sitting room that friends and visitors would be keen to see, hold and improvise amusing acceptance speeches to. That'd be nice.

What appealed to you about this project?

I liked the very visceral script. It's not often you have to compose music to bovine castration and the complexity of Benedict Cumberbatch's character: It felt there was an unusual tone of music needed, and that that would be enjoyable to think through.

What stands out most about scoring this film?

The mistakes — trying to write contemporary classical music for banjo, which led to interesting alternatives, like learning to play my cello like a banjo. People still think it's a guitar in the score... I just wish it had frets on it. **B**

CONTRIBUTORS Katie Atkinson, Keith Caulfield, Griselda Flores, Josh Glicksman, Paul Grein, Lyndsey Havens, Melinda Newman

12 ACADEMY AWARD® NOMINATIONS
INCLUDING
BEST PICTURE | BEST ORIGINAL SCORE
JONNY GREENWOOD

8 BAFTA AWARD NOMINATIONS
INCLUDING
BEST FILM | ORIGINAL SCORE
JONNY GREENWOOD



“THE YEAR’S BEST PICTURE.

A film for the ages. A thunderous drama from Jane Campion.”

PARADE

“JONNY GREENWOOD IS A LEGITIMATE HEIR TO THE LIKES
OF BERNARD HERRMANN AND TōRU TAKEMITSU.

It’s time to give him his long-overdue first Oscar.”

INDIEWIRE

30 WINNER
BEST PICTURE OF THE YEAR
INCLUDING
BOSTON ONLINE FILM CRITICS ASSOCIATION • CHICAGO FILM CRITICS ASSOCIATION
DALLAS-FORT WORTH FILM CRITICS ASSOCIATION
NEW YORK FILM CRITICS ONLINE • PHILADELPHIA FILM CRITICS CIRCLE
PHOENIX CRITICS CIRCLE • UTAH FILM CRITICS ASSOCIATION

14 WINNER
BEST ORIGINAL SCORE • JONNY GREENWOOD
INCLUDING
CHICAGO FILM CRITICS ASSOCIATION • INDIANA FILM JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION
PHILADELPHIA FILM CRITICS CIRCLE • PHOENIX CRITICS CIRCLE
UTAH FILM CRITICS ASSOCIATION

THE POWER OF THE DOG

A FILM BY JANE CAMPION



FILM.NETFLIXAWARDS.COM

SXSW
HEADLINER



Young Thug (left) and Gunna
photographed Feb. 21 at
Studio Space in Atlanta.

Styling by Bobby Wesley



PLAYERS

Young Thug and Gunna have used chart-topping albums, singular flows and a capital-P Potent catchphrase to command the hip-hop world's attention. But their current hot streak isn't enough for the Atlanta duo

ONLY

BY CARL LAMARRE

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DIWANG VALDEZ



Off-White suit, Givenchy shoes, Bobby Wesley
cape, Saint Laurent eyewear.

“LET’S DO THIS SHIT!”

Young Thug bellows as he enters an Atlanta photo studio just after midnight, with Gunna by his side. They are five hours late to their photo shoot, but their laughter is infectious as they swoop in to save the day, and the mood in the room seems to instantly relax when the crew hears the bounce in Thug’s voice.

The term “fashionably late” couldn’t be more apt for the Young Stoner Life label stars. Draped in a short-sleeve denim jacket, a spry Thug towers over everyone at 6 feet, 3 inches, courteously greeting those in attendance, then joking about the size of his too-small shared dressing room. Gunna briskly walks in behind him, exuding the same Southern warmth — handshakes, hugs. “This room small as shit,” Gunna says with a chuckle before sitting down, ready to tell his story next to the man who helped change it.

Young Thug and Gunna’s hip-hop stardom predates the pandemic, each with top 10 hits and A-list collaborations. Yet over the past 12 months, Thug’s YSL, which formed as an imprint under 300 Entertainment in 2016 and signed Gunna that year, has proved to be a formidable force in hip-hop, anchored by recent bigger chart successes. And with three No. 1 albums on the Billboard 200 in the past 12 months — last year’s YSL label group release *Slime Language 2*, then Thug’s rock-tinged opus *Punk* and, finally, Gunna’s early-2022 smash *DS4Ever* — Gunna and Thug are making a compelling case for themselves as the best duo in the genre.

“It’s Batman and Robin,” 300 Entertainment chairman/CEO Kevin Liles told *Billboard* in January. “If one needs to lead, one leads; if one needs to follow, the other one follows.”

After meeting in 2015, when Thug was quickly developing into a mixtape phenom out of Atlanta, the pair formed a close-knit bond. For College Park resident Gunna, choosing to sign with one of Atlanta’s biggest rap heroes was a

no-brainer. “He was already on TV,” says Gunna, 28, of his 30-year-old YSL boss. “So we already looked at him like he was a star that made it.”

Thug’s elastic flow, Southern drawl and kooky lyrics made him stand out from a crowded Atlanta scene, and his eccentric fashion choices — including the dress he wore by Italian fashion designer Alessandro Trincone on the cover of the 2016 mixtape *JEFFERY* — cemented his reputation as a risk-taker. He experimented sonically as well: His 2017 mixtape, *Beautiful Thugger Girls*, had flashes of pop brilliance, which culminated in his “Havana” collaboration with Camila Cabello hitting No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 the following year. His 2019 official debut album, *So Much Fun*, was free-spirited maximalist rap bursting with colorful puns and became Thug’s first No. 1 album on the Billboard 200. By comparison, last year’s follow-up, *Punk*, was a rock-leaning foray — Thug was joined by Blink-182’s Travis Barker, fun.’s Nate Ruess and Gunna for a *Saturday Night Live* performance last fall — but still debuted in the top spot.

Thug’s music also influenced Gunna’s own fearlessness. Following his breakout moment alongside Lil Baby on their 2018 joint mixtape, *Drip Harder*, Gunna showcased his solo prowess on his 2020 sophomore album, *Wunna*. He toyed with different vocal effects while maintaining his pristine, lush trap sound, and *Wunna* debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 with the help of the top 40 Hot 100 hit “Dollaz on My Head,” featuring none other than Thug.

But Gunna’s biggest win was still to come: At the top of this year, *Wunna* follow-up *DS4Ever* defeated The Weeknd’s *Dawn FM* in a head-to-head matchup on the Billboard 200. Give some credit to the 16th letter of the alphabet: “Pushin P,” featuring Thug and Future, became a top 10 hit on the Hot 100, with the “P button” emoji — short for “player,” signifying anything that keeps it real — entering the cultural lexicon. Nike, IHOP, Wingstop, Kim Kardashian and even the Teletubbies tapped into the online craze. “Pushin P,” along with the album’s Drake-assisted “P Power” that dropped late in its debut chart week, helped Gunna secure the No. 1 spot.

“Along with being prepared, when somebody throws an audible, it’s about having the right team in place,” says Gunna’s manager, Ebonie Ward, of the “P” mania. Over the last several years, Gunna has assembled an all-too-rare team led by Black women, with Ward, 300 Entertain-

ment’s Reyna Bass in marketing and The Lede Company’s Courtni Asbury in publicity. “It’s admirable and something he’s extremely proud of that he has been able to put his career in the hands of intelligent and very capable women,” Ward says. “He has been able to put his trust in all of us to execute his dreams.”

Following YSL’s partnership with 300 Entertainment, Thug signed myriad rising artists in addition to Gunna, including Lil Keed, Strick and Nechie — all of whom were showcased alongside their label boss on *Slime Language 2*. As Gunna ascends, Thug, a father of six, is thinking about his long game as an executive. “[Thug’s] form of leadership is something I’ve always looked up to,” says Geoff Ogunlesi, 300 Entertainment vp of A&R and YSL Records vice president. “He’s the leader that knows the fine line between ‘let me lead by showing you’ and ‘let me lead by telling you.’” Now Thug and Gunna are showing how to lead the conversation in mainstream hip-hop.

What first impressed you about Gunna that made you want to sign him to Young Stoner Life?

YOUNG THUG The fact that he wasn’t really star-struck. He was quiet, cool, a chill n— that wasn’t trying to do too much. Just chilling back and relaxing. That’s how we really got super close, though: It just took nights in the studio, like four or five in the morning, just riding this motherfucker out. (*To Gunna*.) I taught you that the studio was like a home.

GUNNA “This could be your spot, come hang at the studio.” That’s how it is now. We at the studio every day. The studio is my spot. If I go home, the studio’s downstairs. I can’t run from it.

What was it about Thug and how he treats his family that you look up to?

GUNNA Everything in the world about [his] kids. I could not have kids yet because I see what he does for them and how much he’s there, watching how he raised all of them. That’s what he been doing, that’s what he hustled for. Even though I ain’t got no kids, I’m still hustling for my kids. I know for sure that I gotta have a legacy. Generational wealth — we gotta be more rich.

Thug, how do you balance being a father, artist, executive and fashion icon all at once?

THUG It’s about being gangsta. I think I’m gangsta enough to the point where I just be more so myself. I don’t really have problems dealing with all that. The hardest

“I think the world is finally getting back to wanting real shit, and we always been pushing that.”

—YOUNG THUG

thing to deal with is coming from poverty and making everybody love you. That’s harder than family. Family, you’re born into that. You don’t learn nothing about family in school. That’s natural instinct.

GUNNA We don’t got family classes. Why is that?

THUG You could have no brain. I’m pretty sure ants know family. Every species. It’s just in you. Coming from what we come from to making it, bruh, that’s the hardest thing. That shit harder than dying. That shit harder than death.

GUNNA Lions know family.

YSL scored three No. 1 albums in the last 12 months. What does that success mean for the culture?

THUG We monetizing each other and family. Because of the pandemic and wack-ass presidents and all this fraud-ass shit, I think the world is finally getting back to wanting real shit, and we always been pushing that. We pushed this shit 10 years straight, and the world is trying to get back to this.

What did you learn about yourselves during the pandemic?

GUNNA I think I found out how to do more fun, cool shit at the [house]. I started doing different colors in the rooms, and I started setting little vibes. I might have a little hookah room. We just cranking different vibes when you pulled up during the pandemic.

THUG I learned that I’m P, but I’m a house n—a. I learned that I actually like being bored. I want to just be sitting in the room while everyone having fun. That’s what I learned about myself.

GUNNA This n—a [Thug] be at home a lot. He like being at home in Atlanta. He really an old-school n—a. He ain’t 34 or 35 just yet, but he just talks with wisdom and shit, and he dropping jewels every time he talk.

THUG What I learned about [Gunna] is that he learned about himself. I learned that he figured out who he was. I just sit back and pay attention to [Gunna], and he

know himself. (*To Gunna.*) The way I saw you in 2017 is how you is right now, but you didn’t see that back then. You done figured out who you really was. Nobody got to talk to you ever again. You know exactly what to do and how your clothes need to be. You learned yourself.

Thug, what is it about Atlanta that has the hip-hop culture on tap?

THUG We just the quickest adapters. Everybody from New York still New York. You got Atlanta n—s that sound like New York n—s, you got some Atlanta n—s that look like Miami n—s, you got some Atlanta n—s living in Los Angeles. New York is just New York. That’s the No. 1 reason we gonna have it for a minute. We adapt, and we pay attention to the charts, we see drill beats, and the New York sound going crazy right now. We gonna adapt and get on it.

Gunna, *DS4ever* was your third No. 1 album. Did it feel differently for you?

GUNNA Yeah, I feel this one because I had an opponent [The Weeknd] that was a pop star. I also feel like my album was anticipated. *DS4* had everyone waiting on this shit, and it had been a while, and I was teasing this shit. [Lead single] “Too Easy” was anticipated as fuck for the album. I was already ready. I had two or three videos ready, but it was clutch timing and just waiting on that window.

Did you foresee “Pushin P” being such a cultural movement?

GUNNA No, but we knew it would happen. People are just catching on more and more. It’s nothing that we ain’t been doing. We were “Pushin P” before the song got made. Atlanta was already “Pushin P” before the song came out. That’s why we like, “We P’s.” It’s still lifestyle shit.

Talk about your influence on the fashion game. How have you guys been able to intertwine the worlds of rap and fashion so easily?

THUG When you learn fashion, you learn



Bobby Wesley shirt and cape, Off-White jacket, Rick Owens pants and boots, Haffmans & Neumeister + Marcus Paul eyewear.

that it’s just about not giving a fuck. High fashion is all about not giving a fuck and not caring and being open-minded to everything. At the end of the day, what you say don’t matter about me. How you feel about me don’t matter. N—a, I’m having money. It wouldn’t even matter if I didn’t have money. You not up there in heaven with God. God don’t tell you what button to press. There’s nothing you could stop, so it don’t matter. That’s



how we look at it. What matter is, we chosen and we genuine and pure. That's what matters.

Thug, it's hard to picture you ever retiring from rapping, but do you have a time frame in mind where maybe you'll just focus on the executive side?

THUG Yeah. I just don't want to be a certain age and still rapping. I'd rather start doing a different thing. It ain't even about

nobody else, it's just about me and my integrity and how I want to be looked at. Why would I be 45 or 50 years old trying to record albums? When I'm 50 years old, I know 80% of the world is motherfucking 15 to 24. What the fuck am I trying to make an album at 50 for? Why? I'll sell a song to Chanel when I'm 45 or 50. I'll send three or four songs to Balmain. As far as trying to rap, fuck no, I ain't doing it. It's not [that I have] a problem with it, it's

a problem with me doing it. I don't want to do it at that point. I got other business and other shit to be doing. I got kids that gonna need more attention from me in 10 years.

GUNNA I don't want him to stop no time soon. **b**

Young Thug and Gunna will perform at Samsung + Billboard Present THE STAGE at SXSW on March 17.

SXSW
HEADLINER



Mendes photographed Feb. 14
at The Park Santa Monica
in Santa Monica, Calif.

Styling by Tiffany Briseno
BLK DNM sweater vest, David
Yurman necklace, Elliot Gaskin rings.

LEAP OF

For years, **Shawn Mendes** delivered one inescapable radio hit after another. Now, ahead of his fifth album and a massive world tour, he's figuring out what kind of artist he really wants to be

FAITH

BY JASON LIPSHUTZ

PHOTOGRAPHED BY SAMI DRASIN

HIT A LOW POINT A FEW YEARS AGO, Shawn Mendes admits, his brow furrowing beneath his shaggy curls.

The sun is setting over a Santa Monica, Calif., apartment complex, and Mendes is leaning forward from his seat as he explains a recent major life change: his embrace of spirituality. It started with meditation to bring a little balance to his chaotic life of pop stardom. That turned into reading religious texts, which turned into a deep dive on the Bhakti movement in Hinduism. For nearly a year, Mendes has spent every Thursday meditating and discussing scriptures like the Bhagavad Gita with Jay Shetty, the author of *Think Like a Monk*.

"I think everybody has a moment where they just decide it's time to kind of do something different," says Mendes matter-of-factly. Now spirituality is "a part of my life that is much bigger than I actually even let on."

It also provided an anchor as the pandemic turned his life as a road



Saint Laurent tank and jeans, David Yurman necklace, Elliot Gaskin rings.

warrior upside down. Since signing to Island Records as a 15-year-old in 2014, Mendes had rarely taken much of a break from touring, often pre-viewing and workshopping future hits for live audiences. Not being able to immediately perform his 2020 album, *Wonder*, was frustrating — but it also presented its own opportunity. “For years, it was run and gun, constant movement, and from a really young age,” says Mendes’ longtime manager, Andrew Gertler. “I don’t think he got the time until recently to really even go, ‘What do I care about?’”

Mendes has accomplished a mind-boggling amount at the age of 23: four No. 1 albums, 10 top 20 hits on the Billboard Hot 100, stadium shows opening for Taylor Swift while his friends were taking algebra tests, headline arena tours before he was of legal drinking age. With his string of pop-rock anthems — from the shimmering “If I Can’t Have You” to sensual singalongs like “Señorita,” with former girlfriend Camila Cabello — he has earned the adoration of adult-contemporary radio listeners and tween streamers alike, cementing his transformation from teen Vine sensation to one of the most bankable artists in pop.

Yet as Mendes prepares to embark on his fifth studio album, as well as his most expansive tour to date, he describes a quarter-life crossroads. After a few years in which the pandemic drastically shifted his priorities and his personal life received a new level of tabloid scrutiny, Mendes — who has long been candid about the pressures of the spotlight — is wrestling with his creative future. He speaks openly and thoughtfully about how the hit singles and sold-out shows are no longer the end-all and be-all they once were.

“There was a long while where I was convinced that you just had to write big songs,” he says. Now he’s thinking about a different kind of endgame: “the type of music that I want to make, what I want to hear and what is important to me.”

It helps that Mendes has found success when he has stepped outside his comfort zone. “In My Blood,” the lead single from his 2018 self-titled third album, leaned into a louder rock sound, with lyrics that focused on Mendes’ struggles with anxiety. “The night that song was coming out, I was like, ‘I’ve made the biggest mistake of my life,’” he recalls. Instead, “In My Blood” earned Mendes both praise for its vulnerability and a Grammy Award nod for song of the year; it also became one of his most enduring

radio hits, reaching No. 1 on the Adult Top 40 chart during a moment when guitars were scarce on pop formats. (For his part, Mendes is glad that time has passed: “I love the sound of guitar rock, and now everything is guitar rock. Watching Olivia [Rodrigo] take that sound by the horns in an insanely talented way is fun to watch.”)

Two years later, fourth album *Wonder* offered a wide-ranging mix of wall-of-sound pop, synth-driven power ballads, bass-heavy club tunes and heart-on-his-sleeve lyricism, with Mendes co-writing and co-producing

“I only want to play bigger shows if I get to do it by making music that’s authentic.”

nearly every track. Still, while *Wonder* debuted atop the Billboard 200 and included the top 10 Hot 100 hit “Monster” — a Justin Bieber duet about the pitfalls of fame — the album lacked the type of top 40 staples that Mendes has supplied for years. It has earned 513,000 U.S. equivalent album units, according to MRC Data, whereas Mendes’ previous three albums have all topped 2.5 million. “For the first time in his career, he was really at the helm,” Gertler says. “It takes creative risk to do that, and you have to be OK with the fact that some things are going to work and some things aren’t. But from a musical standpoint, *Wonder* is my favorite album he has ever made.”

Mendes wants to continue that approach on his next project, for which he’s already “writing a ton.” He’s working closely with Mike Sabath (Lizzo, Meghan Trainor) and has been drawing inspiration from acts ranging from Bon Iver to Paul Simon to Coldplay — performers that don’t “put themselves in a box,” as he puts it. Mendes and Cabello joined Coldplay frontman Chris Martin onstage at Global Citizen Live in New York last September to sing the band’s “Yellow” — and Mendes was so inspired by the experience, he hit the studio the next day to work on “It’ll Be Okay,” a dramatic piano ballad he co-created with Sabath and released in December as a one-off single.

“I think he really cares deeply about what he’s singing and how he’s singing

it,” Martin says of Mendes. “I don’t think he’s just in it for the fame or just in it for the money or anything like that. I think he holds the responsibility that he has really well because he has been a teen idol and everything. The music could be the last thing on his mind, but I think it’s at the forefront of his instead. He wants to sing things that really hit people deeply, and I think he’s getting better and better at doing that. So I just champion him all the way.”

Mendes’ next album will also be his first with new leadership at Island, which announced Imran Majid and

Justin Eshak as co-CEOs last June after president/CEO Darcus Beese stepped down in early 2021. Now one of the label’s flagship artists, Mendes says his interactions with the new label heads have him feeling excited about his future.

“I got along with them really quickly — they’re just generally positive, about life and the industry,” Mendes says of Majid and Eshak, who were previously co-heads of A&R at Columbia Records. Gertler also points out that much of Mendes’ core team has remained through the regime changes, including Mike Alexander (Island’s newly appointed GM), Sharon Timure (now Island’s head of marketing) and Ziggy Chareton (a longtime Island A&R manager who now shares management duties with Gertler), making up “a nucleus of amazing people who really understand Shawn.”

Before Mendes can officially begin his next album cycle, however, he’s committed to his vision of presenting *Wonder* on the road with a 73-date tour kicking off in Portland, Ore., on June 27. In addition to a European trek that begins in late spring 2023, Mendes will hit global markets that he hasn’t yet visited in Asia and the Middle East, and he’ll also likely play more stadium dates than usual, including in Latin America, according to longtime touring agent Matt Galle. “We’re not trying to rush,” says Galle of Mendes graduating to bigger venues. “Obviously, we all believe that’s going

to happen, and he’s going to be there everywhere at some point. But it’s also important to realize that he’s only 23 — he’s going to have a long career.”

It’s easy to forget how young Mendes is — partly because he has been in the spotlight for such a long time already and also because he lives a low-key life offstage. (His fondness for early bedtimes has earned him the family nickname “Grandpa.”) Since the beginning of his career, Mendes has avoided the types of controversy that often plague young stars adjusting to a bright spotlight — no arrests, no Notes app apologies, nothing that would cause concern for his cross-demographic listenership. Mendes and Cabello, whose duet “Señorita” became his first Hot 100 No. 1 hit in 2019, spent two years as paparazzi magnets before ending their romantic relationship last November, but Mendes says the tabloid focus never bothered him — “I honestly don’t care,” he says with a friendly shrug — or made him lose his focus on the music. “He has always been really good at cutting through the clutter,” says Gertler.

And for Mendes, the path ahead is clear: more shows, more albums, more opportunities to push himself. “I never want to stop playing, even if I’m playing for 10 people in a bar,” he says. “And I only want to play bigger shows if I get to do it by making music that’s authentic.”

The day before our interview, Mendes was 15 miles away at the SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, Calif., taking in the Super Bowl halftime show alongside his pal Niall Horan. As Mendes watched Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, 50 Cent, Mary J. Blige, Kendrick Lamar and Eminem deliver hit after hit at halftime, he wasn’t focused on the setlist or stage setup — instead, he kept thinking about how each artist had changed the contours of the mainstream and shifted popular culture in the process. “In Da Club,” “Family Affair,” “Lose Yourself” — those songs are all timeless in Mendes’ eyes. That’s the bar he has set for his own music.

“For me, it’s not to be like, ‘I have to change the world,’” says Mendes, an earnest smile breaking across his face. “I’m just saying, that’s where my ambition goes — to influence culture. I want to honor the opportunity that I’ve been given as an artist, to make something very true.” **b**

Shawn Mendes will perform at Samsung + Billboard Present THE STAGE at SXSW on March 19.

ENCANTO

With his knack for pop melodies and triple-threat talent, **Sebastián Yatra** broke through the reggaetón boom. Now he's the voice of the Oscar-nominated song from Disney's *Encanto* — and ready for a much bigger stage

BY LEILA COBO

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DAVID NEEDLEMAN



Yatra photographed Feb. 28
at Seret Studios in Brooklyn.

Styling by John Tan
Balenciaga by Demna Gvasalia shirt,
Calvin Klein tank, Tara Babylon pants
and belt, vintage Calvin Klein
205W39NYC boots, Ulysse Nardin
FREAK X Bucherer BLUE watch.



Versace by Donatella
Versace sweater.



NO, NO, NO. You were too late,” says Sebastián Yatra, lifting his phone again and turning it to selfie mode. “One more time.”

It’s nearly midnight at a half-empty restaurant in Miami’s hip design district, and Yatra has roped me into what he calls “Instagram therapy”: lip-syncing on camera to his track “Melancólicos Anónimos,” with me playing the prissy-voiced therapist to Yatra’s lovelorn Romeo.

And while we may technically be filming for the 27-year-old Colombian pop star’s 29 million Instagram followers, there’s another rapt audience here — namely, the young Venezuelan mothers and their well-manicured husbands at the table next to us, not-so-surreptitiously looking on. So I focus on delivering my lines on the beat and, this time, nail it.

“Yes!” Yatra exclaims, uploading the video to both his Instagram account and mine.

With his puppy-like enthusiasm and unpretentious good nature — both on constant display on his social media — Yatra seems more like a chill, cute younger cousin than an artist on the brink of superstardom. But he is very much the latter: Since 2018, he has placed 18 hits on *Billboard*’s Hot Latin Songs chart and scored 10 No. 1s on the Latin Airplay chart, including the sexy duet “Pareja del Año” with Myke Towers, which hit No. 9 on the Global Excl. U.S. chart and No. 16 on the Global 200.

Though he has experimented sonically with different genres, Yatra has achieved all that by largely sticking to a core brand of melodic Latin pop — one reminiscent of 1990s stars Ricky Martin and Enrique Iglesias, who tapped Yatra to open for their 2021 U.S. arena tour — that lately has been overshadowed by reggaetón. His first two albums debuted at No. 1 on the Pop Latin Albums chart. On his current, irresistible bop “Tacones Rojos” (whose music video has 100 million YouTube views and counting), Yatra eschews graphic lyrics for airy good humor, with sweet lines like “My slice of sunshine, the apple of my eye/The one who dances reggaetón with red heels and makes me fly.”

Recently, a much more unlikely hit has been introducing Yatra to a significantly bigger audience. He’s the voice of “Dos Oruguitas,” the gorgeous all-Spanish tearjerker by Lin-Manuel Miranda from Disney’s *Encanto* that’s now Academy Award-nominated for best original song. (Yatra will perform it at the ceremony on March 27.) It has become Yatra’s highest-charting entry on Hot Latin Songs yet (reaching No. 2)

and his first appearance on the Billboard Hot 100 (where it cracked the top 40) at a time when, suddenly, it feels like the artist is everywhere. He’s now starring in the Netflix musical series *Érase Una Vez, Pero Ya No* (*Once Upon a Time... Happily Never After*), in which he plays dual lead roles and sings the theme. All of that has set the stage nicely for Yatra’s third album, *Dharma*, which debuted in February at No. 2 on Pop Latin Albums — and came after a period of intense work and introspection.

“‘Dharma’ means the acceptance of reality,” he says — the word is tattooed in tiny cursive above his right wrist. “We all know the meaning of karma: If you do bad things, bad things will happen to you. But dharma refers to the lessons learned in life. [Before], I was giving the best of myself and wonderful things were happening to me, but I was obsessed with controlling everything. Every problem metastasized. Now I face issues head on, and that’s amazing because you take their power away.”

“I love reggaetón, but you can’t stay in one genre forever ... I think pop in Spanish is having one of its best moments again.”

“Yatra is in an exceptional moment in terms of personal and musical maturity,” says Universal Music Latin president Angel Kaminsky, who signed Yatra. “As a composer, he’s at a moment where he not only releases hit songs but is also a well-rounded artist who is recognized by all markets and all ages in the Latin region.”

Like his role model Iglesias, Yatra is a pop singer who likes to explore other genres but is obsessed above all with songcraft. Yet he began his career at a time when urban music and the stars performing it, like fellow Colombians J Balvin and Maluma, were dominating Latin music and expanding far beyond its borders.

“When I first started, everyone was reggaetón, reggaetón, reggaetón,” recalls Yatra. “And my dad told me: ‘It’s better to have 10 people go hear you sing the music that really touches your soul than to sing what you don’t like for thousands.’ That stuck with me. I said, ‘I’m going to do the music I love, no matter what genre it is, but I want to do songs that I think are great.’ I love reggaetón, but you can’t stay in one genre

forever, in the same beat forever, and think that’s the only thing that can transmit emotion. I think pop in Spanish is having one of its best moments again, and it’s going to get stronger and stronger.”

Unlike the vast majority of Colombian stars — from veterans like Carlos Vives and Juanes to younger superstars like Maluma, Balvin and Karol G — Yatra spent most of his childhood and teenage years in the United States. His well-to-do family fled Medellín in the early 2000s amid escalating political violence in the country that threatened many civilians’ lives, moving to Miami’s suburban Pembroke Pines area, a “Colombian bubble” where his close family lived in the same neighborhood and Spanish was spoken at home.

After he landed the lead role of Troy in a middle school production of *High School Musical*, “something just clicked,” Yatra says. He began wearing a scarf, as some singers do to care for their vocal cords (yes, his flair for the dramatic began at age 12),

and threw himself into a kind of triple-threat training, taking voice, dance and guitar lessons while writing songs and cutting demos. His mother, who supported him from the onset, became his manager (she’s still involved in the back office, though Yatra says their relationship has become more mother-son than “momager“-client), and together they brainstormed a stage name that would have international appeal but still feel natural. (His given surname, Obando Giraldo, didn’t quite roll off the tongue in English.) They arrived at “Yatra,” a Sanskrit word meaning “journey” or “pilgrimage” in Hinduism and Buddhism.

“I always had in my mind that at some point in my life, I was going to sing in English and have a more global career, so I was preparing myself,” says Yatra. “It’s like building a big city: If you don’t plan it well, the roads are tiny and the access doesn’t work. I wanted to lay the foundation so that people could pronounce my name easily.”

Once he graduated high school, Yatra returned to Colombia, a more manageable market in which to launch a career, and

began performing at high schools and radio stations. He hired a manager, Roberto Andrade (now managing director at Warner Music Latina), who arranged a songwriting session with Dandee of successful pop/reggaetón duo Cali y El Dandee. Together they wrote “Por Fin Te Encontré,” a track intended for the pair, but when Spanish DJ Juan Magán jumped on it, Yatra also asked to be included.

That feature became Yatra’s entry to the Hot Latin Songs chart — and to record labels’ radar. By 2016, he was on the verge of signing with Sony Colombia when Universal Music Latin executives Kaminsky and then-managing director Alejandro Duque (now at Warner) flew to Medellín from Miami with instructions not to return without signing Yatra. Enticed by the deal’s international potential, Yatra took it, also signing a co-management agreement with Universal’s

“I always had in my mind that at some point in my life, I was going to sing in English and have a more global career.”

management/artist development division, GTS, which fast-tracked him to priority status at the label and immediately offered him ample touring support.

At just 21, Yatra was well on his way to becoming the global artist he had always imagined he would be. From the start, Universal developed him not country by country (as is usually the case with new Latin artists) but with simultaneous emphasis on the United States, Colombia, Spain, Argentina and Mexico. By the time the coronavirus pandemic began in early 2020, Yatra was an established star in Latin America. But he had yet to achieve massive success stateside, and, between albums, felt stuck.

“Sebas was right at his inflection point,” says Paula Kaminsky, Angel’s sister, who took over as Yatra’s manager two years ago when Universal Music Latin hired her to helm GTS. “He was about to explode. If an artist is lucky to get to that big moment, the problem is, what comes next? The challenge was getting past that stage.”

“I felt like I was losing momentum,” Yatra recalls. “You’ve seen a lot of artists go through that: You’re *the* artist one day, you’re on top of your game, and then

maybe you don’t have the same engagement. Even if from the outside things look great, you can get into your head. And you can’t overcome that by making more hits or releasing more songs. You overcome that by making an interior change, by going somewhere else within you and realizing you make music for love of the music and the songwriting and the performance, but not for the results.”

He began meditating and, for the first time in his life, going to therapy, which he still does weekly. (“You have to work on yourself every day,” he says.) And with the pandemic pause, he began to regroup professionally, too. “Sebastián started this crazy career seven years ago, exploded and never had time to sit down and figure out what kind of album he wanted to do,” says Paula. “He told me he wanted an organized plan and to try new things.”

She sought out opportunities for Yatra that felt somewhat outside of music but still related to it. Amid the pandemic, Yatra filmed a Disney talent show, *Conecta y Canta*, and the Netflix series, and also appeared as a judge on *The Voice Kids* in Spain, which helped solidify his profile in that country. Paula also enacted a more cohesive Latin American touring strategy, setting up a year of global dates in advance instead of piecemeal in response to demand.

But the most effective opportunity for Yatra was entirely unplanned. Matt Walker, senior vp of music for Walt Disney Animation Studios, stumbled upon Yatra after hearing “Robarte un Beso,” his 2017 duet with Carlos Vives, the Colombian music legend who had been tapped early on to contribute a song for *Encanto*. “Robarte un Beso” led Walker to two poignant Yatra ballads, “Fantasía” and the bilingual “No Hay Nadie Mas.”

“Both those masters blew me away because I heard a voice that was intimate but powerful,” says Walker. “There was no audition. I sent the tracks to [*Encanto* composer] Lin-Manuel and the directors, and they said, ‘He will kill this song.’”

Yatra sings “Dos Oruguitas” — a song telling the story of two caterpillars that transform into butterflies, which Walker calls “the heart and soul of the film”— entirely in Spanish, without subtitles, during *Encanto*’s emotional climax, a dialogue-free flashback montage in which the characters of Abuela and her husband are seen fleeing violent marauders and he is killed trying to protect his family. It’s a distressingly familiar tragedy for Colombians that Yatra brings to heartbreaking life, in one of only two musical numbers not performed by cast members. (The other is Vives’ jubilant “Colombia, Mi Encanto.”) “Sebastián could not only perform it but act it,” adds Walker, “so we felt [the characters’] love and presence.”

Walker called Paula, and within an hour, Yatra was in. He flew to Los Angeles and recorded at Capitol studios, with Miranda coaching over Zoom. “Sebastián was prepared,” says Walker. “When he started singing that first verse and bringing that character to the performance, that’s when we said, ‘This is special. Something miraculous is happening.’ We were all convinced this was the song we wanted to present to the Academy [of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences].”

A “Dos Oruguitas” Oscar would go to Miranda, but Yatra’s performance — especially in the wake of *Encanto*’s extraordinary, and ongoing, success on the charts — could be a game-changer for his career. “He’s already a star,” says Walker. “The Academy Awards would be able to open up entirely new audiences to how talented this man is.”

And soon, he’ll have a chance to see just how many people now want to know who Sebastián Yatra is. In August, he’ll embark on the Dharma tour, with over 70 dates in Central and South America and Spain (where he’ll play the 15,000-seat Wiznik Center in Madrid), as well as 22 U.S. shows at venues ranging from Los Angeles’ YouTube Theater to Miami’s FXT Arena. Already, he has performed on *Good Morning America* and *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* — where, midperformance of “Tacones Rojos,” he threw in a shy “What’s up, USA?” and was greeted by the audience’s supportive screams.

“We haven’t done the work yet [outside the Latin market],” says Yatra. “Once all that starts, stuff starts to happen. There’s an opportunity for me to get known here as a person and not just as a voice.” **b**

Sebastián Yatra will perform at Samsung + Billboard Present The STAGE at SXSW on March 19.

Gucci by Alessandro
Michele sweater and
pants, MISHO bracelets.





Kygo photographed Feb. 9 in Miami.

Duvin X Palm Tree Crew shirt and shorts.

NORWEGIAN IN

With music that takes listeners to a tropics of the mind, **Kygo** became one of dance's biggest stars. Now, with his Palm Tree Crew, he's establishing a brand, and a legacy, with an unlikely inspiration: Margaritaville

PARADISE

BY KATIE BAIN

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MEREDITH JENKS

KYGO TAKES HIS COFFEE black. No sugar. Given the past 72 hours the Norwegian producer has just careened through, his need to mainline caffeine is understandable. On Friday, he flew out of Los Angeles on a private jet for a show at Las Vegas mega-club XS. The next morning, he touched down in Arizona, played a set at the Phoenix Open golf tournament, then ping-ponged back to L.A. to perform that night at a pre-Super Bowl party hosted by *Sports Illustrated* and

Palm Tree Crew, his own musical collective and lifestyle brand. There, a horde of VIP types — some of whom paid upwards of \$35,000 for a table near the stage — warmed up to an opening set by Goldman Sachs CEO David “DJ Sol” Solomon, guzzled free alcohol-laced seltzers and passionately sang along when Kygo blasted his signature remix of Journey’s “Don’t Stop Believin’.”

The next day, the artist born Kyrre Gørvell-Dahl attended the actual Super Bowl, then an afterparty, then, naturally, another afterparty. It was 3 a.m. by the time he returned to his base here at the Four Seasons, where, just 12 hours

later, he’s sitting in a quiet room overlooking the pool, lifting a porcelain mug of steaming coffee to his mouth. A black “X” Sharpie’d on his left hand from one of the weekend’s events is the only sign of his three-day marathon.

On his right wrist, its countermeasure is tattooed in tidy block letters: “balance.” It’s not just lip service rendered in black ink. Tomorrow morning, Kygo will fly back to his native Norway for two weeks at his waterfront home in the coastal city of Bergen, where he spends his time boating, golfing, hanging with friends and family, and tinkering on his piano. (The keys tattooed on several fingers emphasize his affection for the

instrument.) Bergen is famous for fjords, not clubs — and that’s the point.

“Every time I have more than two weeks off, Bergen is where I want to be,” Kygo says. “I want to go back home. It’s where I don’t have to live out of a bag, where I can get into a nice routine, go to the gym. It’s where I can be myself and take time off and be away from everything.”

In the dance genre, Kygo’s preternatural calm is both an outward manifestation of his mellow-centric brand and the key to its sustained success. While many producers burn out from the physical and mental demands of the lifestyle — including Kygo’s late idol Avicii, who died in 2018 after a whirlwind career defined by serious bouts of exhaustion and whose logo is tattooed on Kygo’s forearm — Kygo has always instinctually declined the things (shows, collaborations, tours) he would simply rather not do.

“For me, it’s all about the balance,” he says. “When it comes to how many shows I’m doing, I always want to plan when I can go back home for a couple of days. Obviously, there are festivals I want to play and go back to, but if it doesn’t fit with the schedule, I’m just going to say no.”

This innate sense of chill also extends to what Kygo says yes to, like the production of a breezy strain of pop-forward electronic music dubbed “tropical house,” which he began releasing nine years ago. Effervescent and accessible, often outfitted with steel drums and bongos — as well as a bright chorus with chopped vocals that has become known as Kygo’s signature — it’s music made for kicking back on the beach. That may seem counterintuitive for an artist who loves living in a city where it rains 270 days a year. But Kygo’s goal is to transport his listeners to a tropics of the mind — wherever that may be.

“This genre of music is very likable,” he says. “It’s kind of melodic and happy and has this nice vibe to it. You can be 5 years old or 75 years old [and enjoy it].”

And now, it has become the foundation upon which Kygo’s empire — and the vision for its future — have been built. Five years ago, he and his manager, Myles Shear, met island vibes icon Jimmy Buffett and realized he had perfected a model for what Kygo’s own Palm Tree Crew could become: the business juggernaut that is Margaritaville. “He created so many areas where [his fans] can come together — it doesn’t even need to be at his shows. It can be at his hotel or a Margaritaville bar,” says Kygo. “That’s what we’re trying to create: something that’s bigger than the music. A community, a movement.”

LONG BEFORE

he became dance music’s king of chill-axing, Kygo was a somewhat-too-chill student in Edinburgh, Scotland, studying

business and finance at university. The remixes he posted to SoundCloud first gained popularity around 2013. “I was making music all the time,” he says. “I barely passed exams.”

His timing, amid the blastoff era for both EDM and digital service providers, was fortuitous. By 2015, early hits like the tear-jerk anthem “Firestone” made Kygo, at the time, the fastest

of the Four Seasons’ lunch spot (a few seats away from Sharon Stone), Shear needs no caffeine boost to expound, rapid-fire, on his strategy for his star client.

“My rabbi always used to tell me when I was young, ‘Myles, don’t miss the bus.’” Shear recalls of his Hebrew school days. “I say that all the time: ‘Don’t miss the bus.’ This is what’s happening whether we want it or not, and this is how content and the whole world is working. You’ve got to be on board with it.”

Most recently, that has meant adapting Kygo’s release strategy, starting with his latest single, the

“I wanted to turn Kygo into a mogul. He’s so much more than music.”

—MYLES SHEAR

artist to reach 1 billion Spotify streams; a year later, he played the closing ceremony of the Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Over the next few years, his music leaned further toward pop, often featuring prominent female vocalists such as Selena Gomez and Ellie Goulding. Most recently, he has had remarkable success spotlighting iconic divas of pop eras past: Whitney Houston’s estate selected Kygo to remix her cover of Steve Winwood’s “Higher Love,” and his 2019 edit became a global hit that remains omnipresent everywhere from festival sets to grocery stores. Official edits of Tina Turner’s “What’s Love Got To Do With It” and Donna Summer’s “Hot Stuff” followed. Kygo calls it “an honor” to rework such classics and says he’s seriously considering doing an entire album of ’80s remixes.

He has 3 billion on-demand streams in the United States alone, according to MRC Data, and has grossed \$35.1 million across 43 shows dating back to 2014, according to figures reported to Billboard Boxscore. (Las Vegas nightclubs, where Kygo has held multiple residencies, do not report sales figures to Boxscore.) And now, at 30, Kygo is turning his sound and all the high-end leisure it connotes into a sprawling business with Palm Tree Crew — which requires a different kind of balance to accomplish.

If Kygo embodies cool Nordic reserve, then his manager, Shear, is the heat and hustle of his native Miami in human form. Sitting at a corner table

sleek, disco-tastic “Dancing Feet” featuring Joe Jonas’ DNCE. Previously, Kygo’s music was kept tightly under wraps before its official release date, but “Dancing Feet” was teased for two months at festivals and in social media clips (primarily on TikTok) before dropping Feb. 25.

“By the time the song comes out, fans want to feel like they’ve heard it,” says Shear. “It’s kind of like the movie industry, where they play the trailer for like six months. This new strategy we’re implementing is long promotion.”

Such agility around consumption patterns is something Kygo and Shear, 29, have demonstrated since meeting almost 10 years ago, when Shear reached out to Kygo on Facebook after discovering his music online. It was then that Kygo — who had seen Spotify’s rise up close from his own Scandinavian perch — “was like, ‘Myles, hey, we need to be focusing on this,’” says Shear.

“In some ways, we’re opposites,” Kygo says. “Myles is a social butterfly. He loves running around networking. I think that’s fun as well, but maybe because I’m from Norway ... I’m more of an introvert. I love to network and talk to people, but he’s at a different level.” So while Kygo focuses on the music, he’s happy to “follow Myles’ lead” when it comes to expanding Palm Tree, a company that now encompasses a label (a global joint venture with Sony Music Entertainment), a six-artist management division (overseen entirely by Shear) and a festival that



Solid & Striped X Palm Tree Crew shirt and shorts.

launched in New York’s Hamptons in August 2021. Now produced by L.A.-based Pollen, it has featured Palm Tree acts alongside the likes of Zedd and Sofi Tukker; upcoming shows are also planned for Aspen, Colo.; Croatia; and Cabo San Lucas, Mexico.

The Palm Tree Festival is particularly key to Shear’s vision for the brand as a whole. It’s intended not simply to gather Kygo fans in luxe travel destinations, but to “create an ecosystem” in which they can live the Kygo lifestyle, he says.

“I feel like that’s the evolution from selling tickets. We can pop into any city, bring all our fans to the show and they get to enjoy all these things we’ve invested in,” Shear continues. “We think our fans would like a healthy soda versus Coca-Cola, so we’re going to put that there. We’re going to put plant-based chicken there because we think that’s cool. We’re going to put our alcohol there. We want to create this hub for our fans.”

Enter Margaritaville. Buffett and Kygo first met about five years ago



at Aspen club Belly Up; Buffett's son is a Kygo fan and wanted to meet the producer. "That was when I kind of realized how big Margaritaville is," Kygo recalls. Later, Buffett appeared during Kygo's 2019 set at Alabama's Hangout Fest, where he performed his flagship hit (tweaking one lyric to "all you Kygo-heads covered in oil").

"Jimmy has become a really good friend and mentor to me," says Shear. "He was like, 'Myles, Kygo is the next me — but global.'"

Palm Tree has a long way to go before approaching the cross-cultural ubiquity of Margaritaville Holdings, which encompasses roughly 30 restaurants, stores, hotels and casinos in the United States, the Caribbean, Mexico and Australia. But it's well on its way toward expanding into the same sort of hospitality establishments — ones designed to attract Kygo fans interested in the boats-and-beaches lifestyle he is both soundtracking and selling through Palm Tree's myriad investments. These include Daring, the maker of

that aforementioned plant-based chicken; the Finland-based Long Drink (a gin-based seltzer Kygo invested in with actor Miles Teller and pro golfer Rickie Fowler that he drinks "all the time back home"); and that healthy prebiotic soda, Poppi.

They're endeavors of Palm Tree Crew Hold Co., an investment fund Shear and Kygo launched in 2020 with \$7.5 million in funding. (Shear declines to name its private investors.) Palm Tree Crew Hold Co. now includes a cryptocurrency fund, PTC Crypto, that Shear says raised \$20 million upon its 2021 launch; it's focused on building blockchain technology and run by Shear's brother, Brett.

"I would never sit in my room and think, 'I'm going to have hotels one day,' but Myles is always thinking one step ahead," says Kygo. "He's talking about Palm Tree restaurants, Palm Tree hotels. He has the biggest plans in the world and he's working at a thousand miles an hour every day, and I'm just trying to keep up."

"I wanted to turn Kygo into a mogul.

He's so much more than just music," says Shear. "Margaritaville is a legacy. Palm Tree Crew will be a legacy."

One big leap toward cementing that legacy happened on the night of Nov. 7, 2020, when President-elect Joe Biden gave his victory speech. Televised live from Delaware, the broadcast ended with Kygo's "Higher Love" edit blasting from the speakers over the assembled crowd and into millions of homes worldwide.

"We were freaking out," recalls Shear, who watched from his house in Miami. Kygo, at home in Norway, woke up "in the middle of the night and just saw my Twitter and everything blowing up."

The pair knew that hearing the song during the event — a moment of salvation for roughly 50% of Americans — was a possibility. Earlier in the election cycle, the Biden campaign's traveling digital director, Olivia Raiser, had reached out to Shear, telling him that "Higher Love" had become a kind of office hype song "when they were in the middle of the campaign and they weren't up in the polls, [to

help them] feel like they could win," he says. Later, she told Shear she was looking into using the song for "something special" and asked him to help clear the broadcast rights. But even Shear couldn't have planned for the ensuing synergy: As the United States entered a new era of political leadership, Kygo was trending on Twitter.

Today, things are, momentarily, quieter. Kygo says he's working on new music and thinking about his fourth studio album (the follow-up to 2020's *Golden Hour*). He recently finished a nine-minute track, a departure from his usual five-minutes-or-less format. "I feel like if you're on a boat," he says, "it's a good song to listen to." In 24 hours or so, after all, he'll be back near his own custom Hydrolift watercraft (with, of course, a palm tree painted on the side) and the remote fjords he maneuvers it through. "You can't put a price tag," he says, "on two weeks back home." **B**

Kygo will perform at Samsung + Billboard Present THE STAGE at SXSW on March 18.

WOMEN IN MUSIC 2022

PHOTOGRAPHED BY SAMI DRASIN

ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2 — just as Women’s History Month kicked off — *Billboard* hosted its annual Women in Music event at the newly unveiled YouTube Theater at Hollywood Park in Inglewood, Calif. The 6,000-person venue was packed with powerful executives and chart-topping artists, including honorees such as Executive of the Year Golnar Khosrowshahi of Reservoir Media and Woman of the Year Olivia Rodrigo. During the two-hour livestream, which aired on Twitter and was hosted for the second time by superstar Ciara, industry guests and fans — plus legends and presenters like Christina Aguilera and Sheryl Crow — were treated to performances by award recipients Bonnie Raitt (Icon), who duetted with Jackson Browne; Doja Cat (Powerhouse), whose plaque was presented by Normani (who told *Billboard* on the pink carpet that she would love to collaborate with the star); H.E.R. (Impact); Karol G (Rule Breaker); Gabby Barrett (Rising Star); Summer Walker (Chart Breaker); plus Phoebe Bridgers (Trailblazer) and Saweetie (Game Changer), both of whom were introduced by their mothers. As Rodrigo told *Billboard* backstage: “I’m just super honored to be in a room full of women supporting each other. There’s nothing better than that.”

—LYNDESEY HAVENS



Rodrigo



"I've accomplished so much without putting out an album," says Saweetie. "I've changed the game, and I'm going to continue to do so with my team."



Doja Cat



Ari Lennox



"With all the obstacles as a woman in my Latina community, I just started believing in myself," says Karol G. "I talk about everything [in my songs] and don't really care what people think about what I have to say."



Barrett



Ali Tamposi (left) with Khosrowshahi, who says: “[My award] means I have reached the highest level in my career. It is the biggest honor that could be bestowed on somebody in my position.”



Bridgers



“I feel so honored that [Doja Cat] wanted me to present her. I’ve been a fan for such a long time,” says Normani. “I’m just honored to have been in the room tonight [with] so many women killing it.”



"I run my own label and company, Beauty Marks Entertainment, and it means a lot when I get to shake hands not only with the artists in the room but the executives," says Ciara. "It's a necessary event for us."



"For the past two years I've been learning my greater purpose — after all the accomplishments, what do we have?" says H.E.R. "It's the legacy we leave, and I realize now the goal is impact."



Raiff



Walker

No. 15

ON BILLBOARD'S

MAINSTREAM TOP 40 CHART

LAUREN SPENCER-SMITH

The rising pop artist leaked a song snippet — and unintentionally helped “Fingers Crossed” become a major TikTok hit

▷ Last November, singer-songwriter Lauren Spencer-Smith was wrapping up a recording session focusing on a snappy, heartbroken ballad titled “Fingers Crossed.” While in the studio with songwriters Fransisca Hall and Jakke Erixson, she filmed a selfie-style video so she could listen back later — but she was so excited to share her progress with fans that she shared a preview of the song in the form of a 15-second TikTok snippet.

Within days, the video generated millions of views, with fans flooding the comments, begging for a release date. While the Vancouver Island, British Columbia-raised 18-year-old had already built a following thanks to her stint on the 2020 season of *American Idol*, the TikTok popularity brought in a swarm of new fans. But as the clip racked up views

and sparked new trends — including an “open verse challenge” in which TikTok users added their own lyrics to the track — the song still wasn’t finished. “I was in a panic because everybody’s attention spans are so short,” says Spencer-Smith. “You have to pay attention to your audience.” As her manager and business partner David Ehrlich puts it: “Lauren has a second sense about things.”

By early January, she independently released “Fingers Crossed,” which entered the top 20 on the Billboard Hot 100. The track caught the attention of major labels, and Spencer-Smith signed a record deal with Republic and Island by February. “Lauren is a generational artist and an undeniable talent,” says Island Records co-CEO Justin Eshak. “She embodies everything this new chapter of Island

represents.” Co-CEO Imran Majid adds: “She’s an incredible storyteller and a powerful vocalist. Lauren is the future.” Republic Records founder/COO Avery Lipman shares in the excitement, saying: “Together we look forward to giving her the biggest platform possible.”

Yet despite the growing spotlight and support team, Spencer-Smith still plans to play by her own rulebook: “I’ll always be the type of person who wants to tease things to my audience to see what they like and what they don’t like,” she says. “Because anytime you go through anything, you think you’re the only person who goes through it, but every time I release a song, you’re like, ‘Woah, I’m not the only one who has been in this awful situation.’”

—RANIA ANIFTOS

CONGRATULATIONS TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND ON FOUR SOLD-OUT SHOWS!



SPECIAL THANKS TO
WAYNE FORTE AND
ENTOURAGE TALENT ASSOCIATES,
EMPORIUM PRESENTS AND NS2



RYMAN

RYMAN SPONSORS



THE LIVE MUSIC
CAPITAL OF THE WORLD
**JUST GOT
LOUDER.**

AUSTIN'S NEW HOME FOR EPIC MUSIC HAS ARRIVED.



MOODY CENTER
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

*Get in
the mood.*

2001 ROBERT DEDMAN DRIVE, AUSTIN, TX 78712 / MOODYCENTERATX.COM

BOOKINGS: Michael Owens mowens@moodycenteratx.com / 417-872-6042