

# Billboard

**SPECIAL EDITION**  
**THE 2011**  
**BILLBOARD**  
**MUSIC**  
**AWARDS**

**70+**  
**FINALISTS**

**RIHANNA**  
**EMINEM**  
**TAYLOR SWIFT**  
**LADY GAGA**  
**JUSTIN BIEBER**  
**& MORE**

BACK TO RUN THE WORLD

# Beyoncé

*"No one can  
define me."*

**WINNING**  
**LOOKS**

A YEAR OF  
FASHION EXTREMES

**NEW**  
**WAVE**

KE\$HA  
BRUNO MARS  
TAIO CRUZ  
NICKI MINAJ



**Billboard**  
2011  
**MUSIC AWARDS**

BROADCAST LIVE  
ON ABC, 8 PM MAY 22  
BILLBOARD.COM/BBMA



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**100 YEARS  
SKINCARE  
FOR LIFE**

**THE ONE CREAM TRUSTED  
TO CARE FOR SKIN FOR 100 YEARS**

**NIVEA**  
*Crème*

**NIVEA**

**100 YEARS  
SKINCARE  
FOR LIFE**

"I think if you feel comfortable in your own skin, it shows."

- *Rihanna*

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Which is why we have partnered with another global icon, music sensation, Rihanna. We are thrilled to have Rihanna join us as we celebrate 100 years of beautiful skin, and we congratulate her on being a Billboard Music Awards Finalist.

Through her music, Rihanna touches people. The lyrics of her hit song, "California King Bed", perfectly captures the **beauty of human connections and the intimacy of touch**, so we're delighted to feature it in NIVEA's TV commercial for the 100 Years Celebration.

*"Chest to Chest, Nose to Nose, Palm to Palm.  
We were always just that close."*

For a chance to  
**WIN TWO (2) TICKETS to a RIHANNA CONCERT**  
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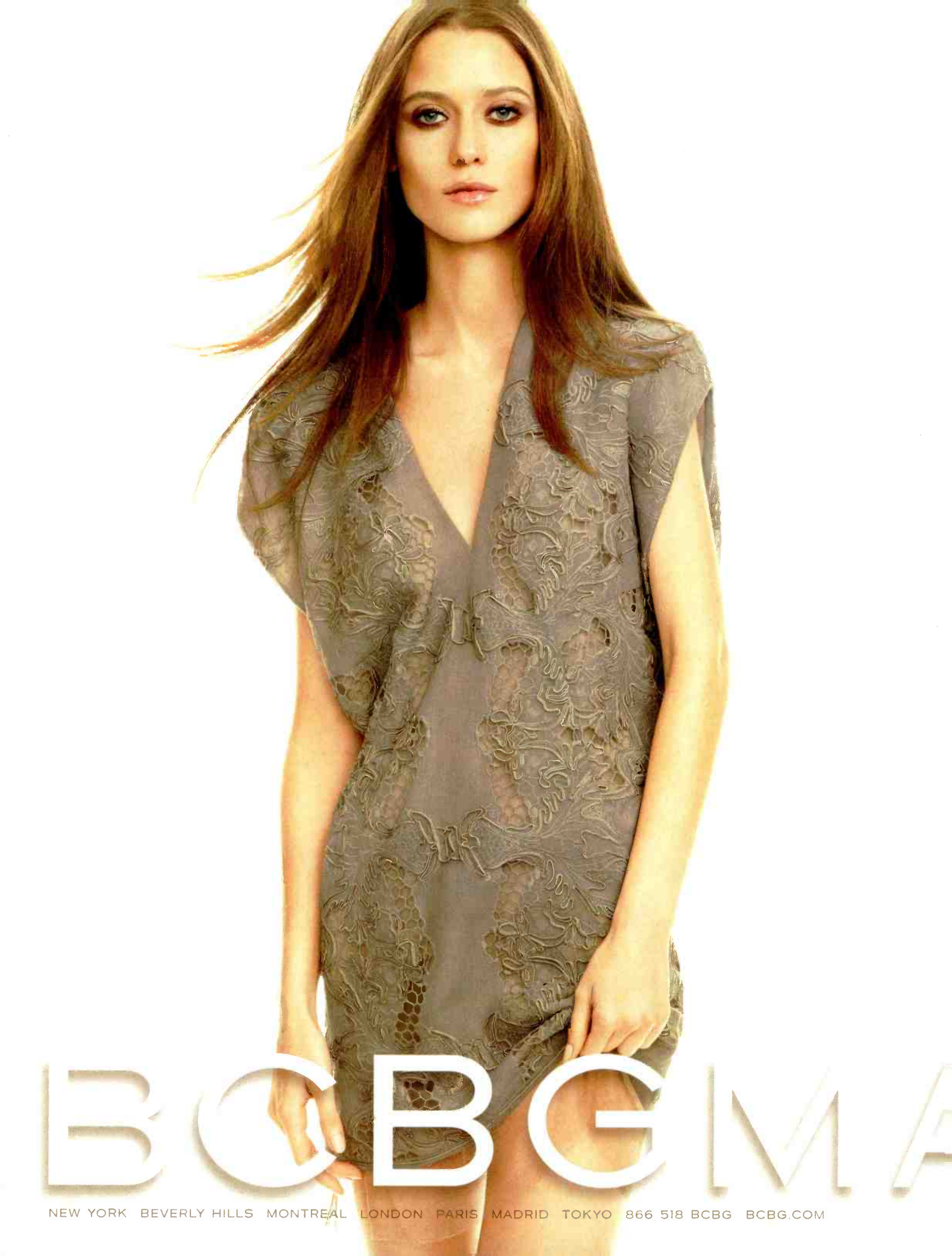
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# Billboard 2011 MUSIC AWARDS

AIRS SUNDAY, MAY 22, 2011  
AT 8 PM ET/PT ON ABC  
[BILLBOARD.COM/BBMA](http://BILLBOARD.COM/BBMA)

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The chart-topping good-time girl celebrates her fans.





Global Entertainer. Singer. Songwriter. Producer. Actress.  
Entrepreneur. Philanthropist. Fashion Icon.  
You truly define the word...*Superstar.*



**CONGRATULATIONS** *on receiving*  
**BILLBOARD'S MILLENNIUM AWARD!**

From your Team at Beyond Productions

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HOUSE OF DERÉON

MISS TINA *by Tina Knowles*

# Billboard 2011 MUSIC AWARDS

AIRS SUNDAY, MAY 22, 2011  
AT 8 PM ET/PT ON ABC  
[BILLBOARD.COM/BBMA](http://BILLBOARD.COM/BBMA)

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**21** 50 MOMENTS THAT  
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A timeline of milestones,  
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The most hair-raising and  
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**BOLD DEBUT**  
Rapper Nicki Minaj  
scored with  
seven songs in  
the Hot 100.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW MACPHERSON/CORBIS OUTLINE



# parachute

## THE WAY IT WAS

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featuring  
"SOMETHING  
TO BELIEVE IN"  
and "KISS ME SLOWLY"

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# BATTLE *of the* BANDS



**18 BANDS. 6 FINALISTS. 1 CHAMPION.**

The best new American bands each road-trip it to Vegas in a Chevy Cruze for the ultimate play-off. Who will put the pedal to the metal and cruise ahead of the pack? Tune-in to see who wins live on ABC on May 22.



Billboard selected eighteen artists from six regions of the U.S. based on their Heat Scores—the online fan engagement formula that drives Billboard's Uncharted chart. Billboard.com voters then selected their six favorite acts to advance to a head-to-head live competition. The stakes? The winner will perform at the 2011 Billboard Music Awards. Sugar Ray frontman and Battle of the Bands mentor, Mark McGrath, helped the bands prepare for the competition, and will also lead the panel of judges: "I had a lot of help coming up in the music business. It's a real honor to mentor these fine artists, talk to them about the road ahead, and ultimately help choose the breakaway winner."

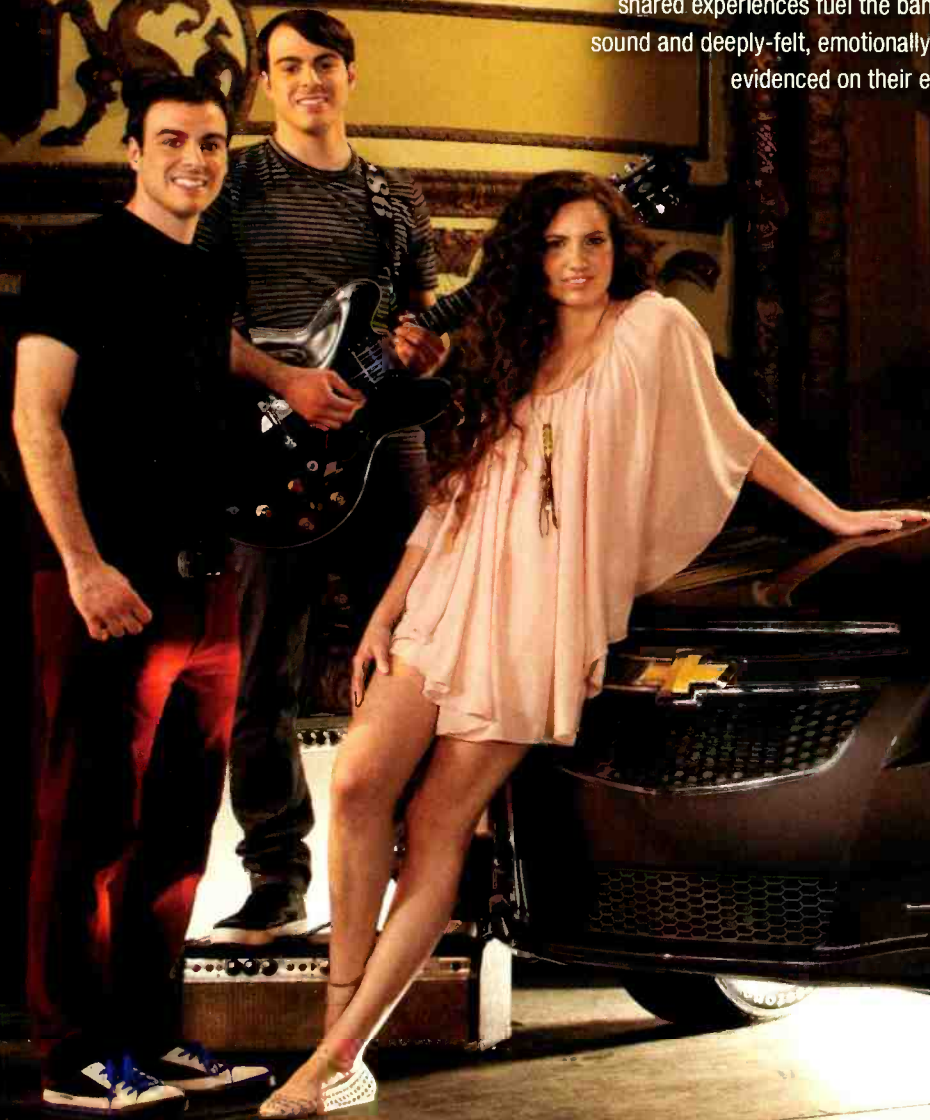


## Side By Side



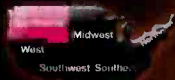
# VS.

Charlotte, N.C.'s Side By Side takes its moniker from one of the band's favorite lyrics, but you'd be forgiven for thinking the name referred to twin brothers Joseph and Michael Pepe who are hard to tell apart when, well, side by side. Rounding out the trio is sultry jazz vocalist Joelle Kittrell. Their shared experiences fuel the band's soulful indie pop sound and deeply-felt, emotionally-searching lyrics, as evidenced on their eponymous debut EP.





## Hotels



Frontman Blake Madden brings a cinematic feel to the songs he writes for his synthed-up Seattle band Hotels. Witness this lyrical lick from their song Cinemascope: "We storm to the beach when parties end/We overlook the love of friends/We switch bodies in the rain/Confess our crimes on midnight trains." Their latest EP, "On the Casino Floor," is aptly titled for a band traveling to Vegas, betting the bank on success.

### CRUZE-ING TO VEGAS.

All six finalists are traveling from their hometowns to Las Vegas in a Chevy Cruze to compete in a live battle of the bands. With every moment documented and uploaded to Billboard.com, fan views will count towards the competition. Fortunately, Cruze challenges conventional compact wisdom with one simple word: more. With Hands-free Facebook®<sup>1</sup> the bands can stay connected to their social network on the go—alerting their fans to tune-in via frequent status updates. Bluetooth® wireless technology<sup>2</sup> lets them take calls with one touch of a button on the available steering wheel-mounted controls—all without taking their eyes off the road.

<sup>1</sup> Through OnStar standard for 6 months. Visit OnStar.com for details and system limitations.  
<sup>2</sup> Visit gm.com/Bluetooth to see which phones are compatible with the vehicle.



## Lightning Love



# VS.

This Detroit-based band consists of Leah and Aaron Diehl and their mutual bestie Ben Collins—which makes it a tad awkward when people ask Leah if she's dating the drummer (he's her brother). Fans find nothing awkward about the stripped down, energetic arrangements on their debut CD *November Birthday* that mix keyboard, guitar and drums with deceptively sweet vocals to create an utterly unique sound.

### ROAD JAM WITH NO CRAM.

There's nothing like an impromptu jam session while driving down the highway. With the USB port<sup>3</sup> available on any Cruze model, our band mates can connect their MP3 player or music-loaded flash drive right into the available Pioneer® Premium Audio System. Plus! XM Radio with three trial months is standard.<sup>4</sup> Best of all, since Cruze delivers more passenger room and trunk space than Honda Civic and the Toyota Corolla, there is plenty of room for some killer air guitar.

<sup>3</sup> Not compatible with all devices.

<sup>4</sup> Requires a subscription, sold separately by XM after the trial period. Service only available in the 48 contiguous United States and the District of Columbia. For more information, visit [gm.xmradio.com](http://gm.xmradio.com).



## AJ Rafael



Moreno Valley, California crooner AJ Rafael is part rock'n'roller, part singer-songwriter and all-around savvy performer. He's leveraged his base of passionate fans into a swelling multi-culti following. Together with three mates from school in Boston, he's about to drop a debut CD entitled *Red Roses* filled with catchy hooks he hopes his fans will sing along to in their cars—loud! What could be more heartfelt?





Otenki



Every band must ride the winds of change, but Otenki is doing it by design—their name is the Japanese word for “weather”. Not surprisingly, their new EP “Kinetic” strikes a balance between the differently blowing influences of rock, pop, alternative and electronica. What doesn’t change is the passionate commitment all five members have to making music. Evidence. Guitarist Enoma Asowata declined an offer to work for his father’s company saying, “Sorry, Dad, I’ve sold my soul to the open road.”





## Gentlemen Hall



These musicians met at Berklee College of Music and acquired a reputation as the ne'er-do-wells down the hall, hence their name. Dorm life in Boston morphed into a communal living situation that breeds creative ferment (one or the other is inevitably still making music at lights out, or breaking into song over morning coffee.) Still, they remain gentlemen, making anthemic, electronic rock that aims to save the world—and get the floor jumping. Their new single, "All Our Love is All We Have" drops this month.

# VS.



### HOT STYLING. FUEL SMILING.

While cruising down the road of life, who doesn't want to look (and feel) like a rock star? Chevy Cruze's sharp angles and sculpted features made certain that our bands travel in high style. And while Chevy provided the Cruzes, the bands ponied up for their own gas — it's a good thing that the new Cruze Eco's efficient 1.4L turbocharged engine offers an incredible EPA estimated 42 MPG, the best highway fuel economy of any gas engine in America.

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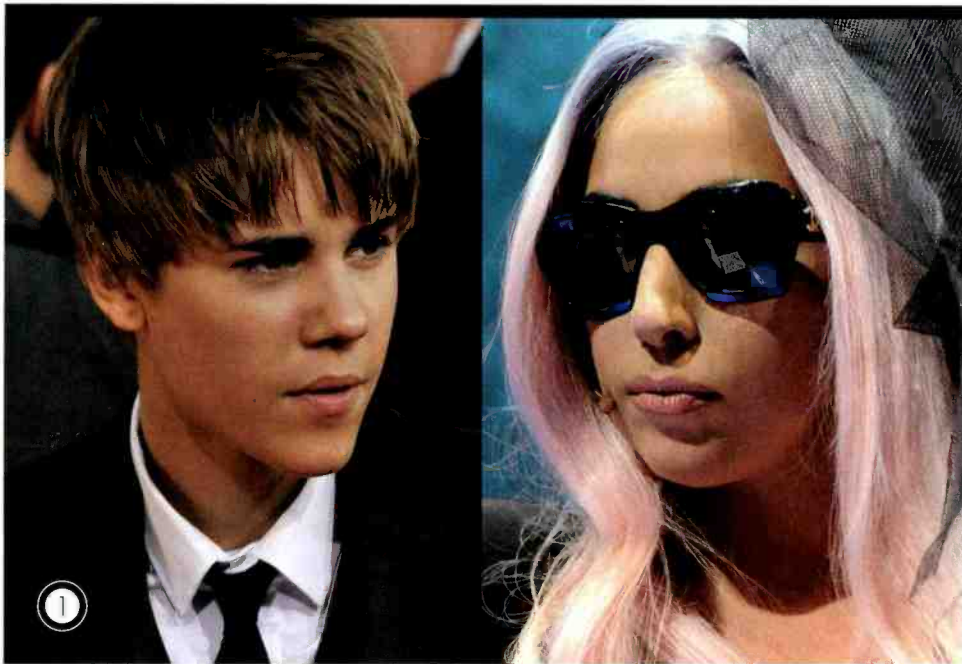
# POP SHOTS

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE; TONY DURAN/FOX; EYVMA SUMMERTON; MICHAEL CAULFIELD/WIREIMAGE; RANDEE ST. NICHOLAS; JOHN SHEARER/EMWIREIMAGE



EMINEM'S COMEBACK. GAGA controversy. Bieber Beliebers. New *American Idol* judges. Taylor Swift breaking records. Arcade Fire rising from the underground. Each of the 12 months of the Billboard Music Awards chart year—from March 2010 to February 2011—offered up a new song, a new scandal, a new technology, a new sensation to knock the world off its feet. Here, we take a look back through recent memories and milestones, tracking the tunes and tweets, highs and lows, goofs and greats.

## MOMENTS THAT ROCKED THE YEAR IN MUSIC



1

## Bieber vs. Gaga: Superstar Face-Off

SPRING 2010 FOUND Justin Bieber and Lady Gaga smashing records and vying for status as pop's biggest phenom. After his 16th birthday on March 1, the Biebs became the youngest male to reach No. 1 on the *Billboard* album charts since Stevie Wonder in 1963. Two weeks later, Gaga's "Telephone" reached No. 1 on the Pop Songs chart, making her the only artist in

history to snag that position six consecutive times. Later in the year, Gaga would hit one billion YouTube views. Though Bieber lagged behind with only 962,726,797, by March 2011, his 3-D documentary *Justin Bieber: Never Say Never* would eclipse Michael Jackson's *This Is It* as the highest domestic-grossing concert film of all time. We'll call it a draw...



3

### VIRAL VIDEO KILLED THE RADIO STAR

THE RUBE GOLDBERG ZANINESS of OK Go's "This Too Shall Pass" music video made it a must-see meme upon its March 2 release, nabbing 1.4 million viewers in 48 hours. That success solidified the viral video as a *de rigueur* inclusion in the myth-making toolbox of the year's biggest acts—from Kanye West's surreal mini-movie, "Runaway," to Arcade Fire's innovative website for "We Used to Wait."



"I LOVE BEING A CONVERSATION PIECE."

NICKI MINAJ



2

### STATE OF THE REUNION

ICONIC INDIE-ROCKERS Pavement unveiled their first live shows in over 10 years—stoking the concert industry's reunion fever. In 2010, Iggy and the Stooges performed their '70s classic, *Raw Power*, in its entirety, UK ska stalwarts The Specials played Stateside for the first time since the '80s, and New Wave rockers The Cars got back in the driver's seat after a 23-year hiatus. Soundgarden, Faith No More, Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, Stone Temple Pilots, Roxy Music, Big Audio Dynamite, Culture Club, and Hole also announced jaunts on the nostalgia circuit. Even Bell Biv DeVoe revived their "hip-hop smoothed out on the R&B tip," and rumors that ABBA might reunite proved that the appetite for new tours from old acts remains mighty healthy.

### OUT, LOUD AND PROUD

4



At the end of the month, Latin pop luminary Ricky Martin released a statement declaring himself "a fortunate homosexual man"—surprising absolutely no one.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MEL ZULMA/REXUS; ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES; TARINA WESTLUND; OMAR CRUZ/IGPHOTO.COM; TOM BRIGLIA/FILMMAGIC; KRISTIAN DOWLING/PICTUREGROUP





## DOWNLOAD, SHMOWNLOAD: VINYL SPINS AGAIN

IT'S OFFICIAL: RECORDS are back. 2010 marked the format's biggest sales numbers in Nielsen Sound-Scan history, and helping vinyl fly off the shelves again is Record Store Day. Taking place every April since 2008, the event has grown into a global celebration of music and the people who sell it, with hundreds of independent record stores participating internationally. With Joshua Homme of Queens of the Stone Age and Them Crooked Vultures serving as the Ambassador of Record Store Day 2010, last year's activities were particularly notable. Legendary Britpop band Blur released its first single since 2003, and a new, limited edition seven-inch of The Beatles' "Paperback Writer" was also pressed. Acts ranging from the Beastie Boys and Bruce Springsteen to Muse and The Hold Steady also put out commemorative special-edition releases.



### VIDEO CONTROVERSY

## M.I.A.: BORN FREE TO RAISE HELL

WITH GRITTY DRUM machines, rave sirens, and echoed howls, "Born Free," the first track leaked from iconoclastic singer M.I.A.'s 2010 album, *Maya*, wasn't fans' anticipated follow-up to the catchy "Paper Planes." But its video proved even more caustic. Helmed by outspoken political artist/director Romain Gavras, "Born Free" is a nine-minute mini-movie

depicting an alternate reality where redheads are oppressed victims of brutal military genocide. Most shocking is a scene where a soldier blows the head off a young ginger portrayed by then-12-year-old actor Ian Hamrick. When asked about the controversy by MTV, Hamrick was philosophical: "I think she was trying to show violence to end violence."

### 7 THE KING OF COUNTRY RULES THE CHARTS

When country legend George Strait's single "I Gotta Get to You" reached No. 9 for radio airplay on April 13, 2010, he became the first artist to have a Top 10 single on any *Billboard* chart for 30 consecutive years.

BEN WATTS/CORBIS OUTLINE

KESHA





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8 MUSIC'S TOP TWEETS

Twitter proved to be a mighty marketing tool and fun pastime for musicians this year.

"Halle Berry was at my table. #badass" @justinbieber

"I am auditioning for Cats today! Wish me luck!" @TheRyanAdams

"I can't believe my grand mothers making me take Out the garbage" @50cent

"Please refer to @nickiminaj as Mrs. Aubrey Drake Graham and dont stare at her too long. She's finally mine. :)" @drakkardnoir

"I want every woman to smile today!!!" @chrisbrown

"our last ever show @ madison square garden NYC on april 2... just saying..." @lcdsoundsystem

"I'm so excited I might give birth to a machine gun." @ladygaga

"@charliesheen can u please send me the address to ur house? I've been dreaming about a party like this all my life #winning! See you soon! Lol" @iamdiddy

"the end.am shutting down all social media tomorrow first thing, from here on i have NO Comment, includes FB, Just waiting to be asked!" @CourtneyLoveUK



Courtney Love



**HAPPENING DUDE**  
Front man James Murphy pulled the plug on LCD Soundsystem.

LCD'S FAREWELL

# Last Trance

9 ONE OF THE most lauded albums of 2010 appeared on May 17, when LCD Soundsystem released *This Is Happening*. The electronic dance-rockers' third long-player was an immediate success: it debuted at No. 10 on *Billboard's* Top 200 Albums chart in its first week, and even knocked Lady Gaga off the top spot in Dance/Electronic Albums. *Rolling Stone* would eventually place *This Is Happening* at No. 10 on its "30 Best Albums of 2010"

list. LCD was indeed happening all year—playing a headlining slot at Coachella, having Spike Jonze direct a music video—so it was bittersweet when they announced that the band would play its final show in April 2011 at Madison Square Garden. "It seems like the right thing to do," was how front man James Murphy explained the decision during LCD's last TV appearance on *The Colbert Report*. "I'm 41, and at a certain point, it gets embarrassing."



"I'M LUCKY TO BE ALIVE."  
**BRET MICHAELS**

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: ADAM WEISS/CORBIS OUTLINE; ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES; ANTONIO DE MORAES BARROS FILHO/WIREIMAGE



A full-page photograph of Beyoncé. She is wearing a long, flowing yellow dress and black high-heeled boots. Her right arm is raised high, holding a glowing orb. The background is a warm, golden light, possibly from a window or a stage light, creating a dramatic and ethereal atmosphere. The overall tone is celebratory and iconic.

EXTRAORDINARY VISIONARY. LEGENDARY.

# BEYONCÉ

CONGRATULATIONS ON RECEIVING BILLBOARD'S MILLENNIUM AWARD.  
WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR NEXT ALBUM COMING THIS SUMMER.

*From Your Columbia Records Family.*





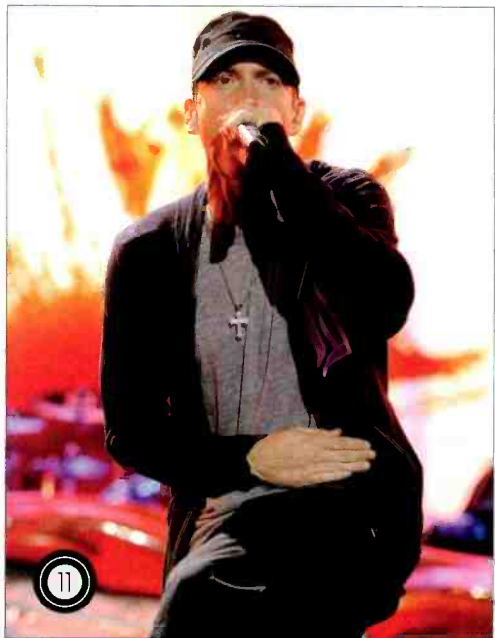
## Summer Heat Wave

THREE SONGS WOULD stand out as the definitive sounds of summer. Eminem's "Love the Way You Lie" lit up the request lines upon its release in June. The ascendance of newcomer Bruno Mars, on the other hand, was a given once the romantic hooks of "Just the Way You Are" stuck in listeners' ears, quickly sending the song to No. 1 in July. Katy Perry, no stranger to success, cemented her status as a superstar with "Teenage Dream." Released on July 23, it was her third single to achieve the top spot on the Billboard Hot 100 Chart, and her second song in a row to reach that position.

## THE MATERIALIZATION OF LAURYN HILL



**12** LAURYN HILL EMERGED as a spectacular talent, first with The Fugees, and then with her smash 1998 solo effort, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, which made her the first woman to win five Grammy awards in one night. By the winter of 1999, however, she'd developed a wary relationship with her celebrity. After a traumatic Fugees reunion tour in 2006, Hill largely removed herself from the limelight. Her few public appearances and eccentric, sometimes controversial statements only increased her enigmatic standing, and she never completed another studio solo album. Yet on June 13, Hill staged a rare performance at the Harmony Festival in Santa Rosa, California, reportedly telling the audience, "I love you—it's so good to see you."



## EMINEM'S RAP REDEMPTION

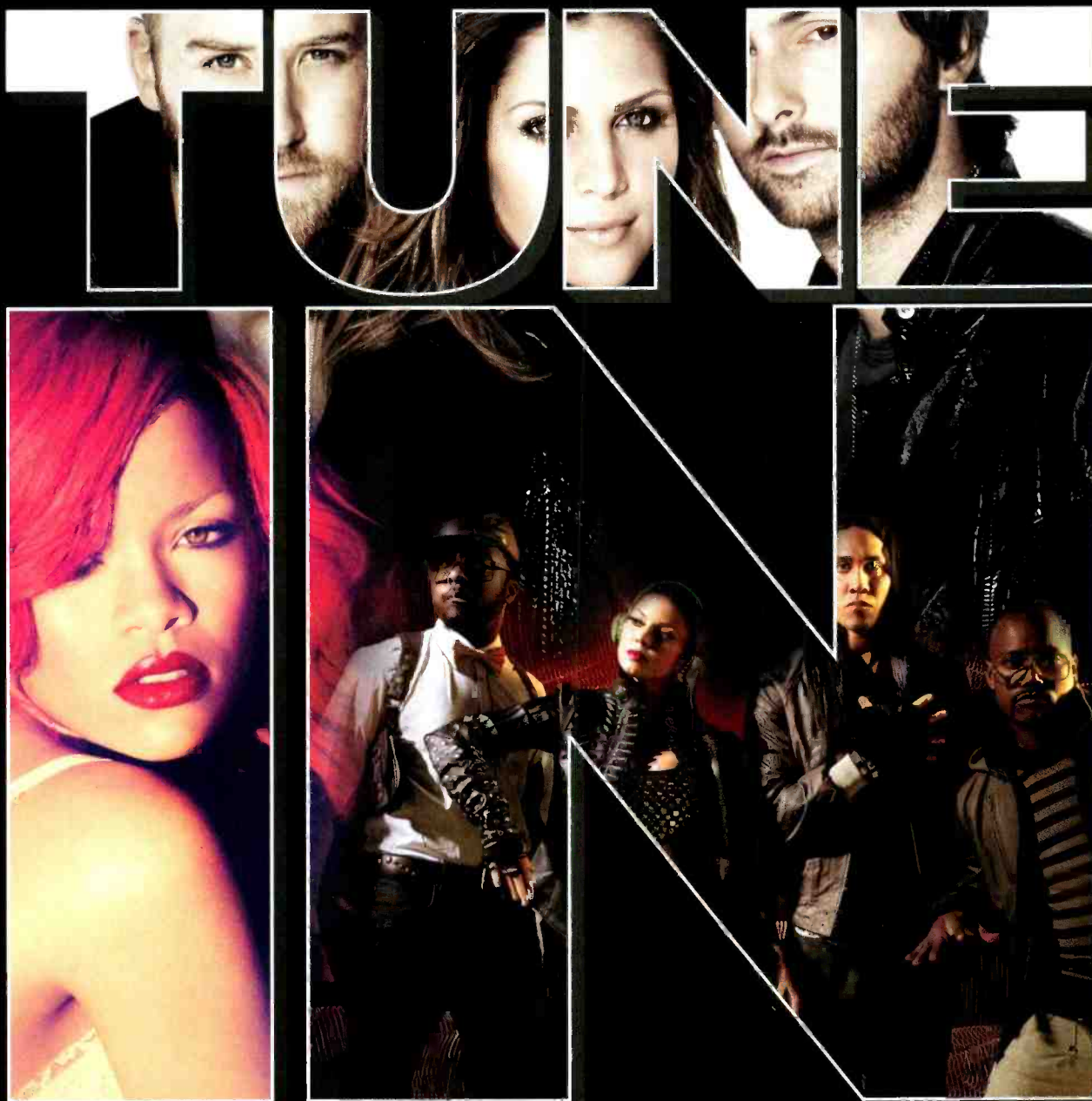
BY ANY YARDSTICK, Eminem is mega—but the Detroit rapper's 2009 album, *Relapse*, was his most critically and commercially disappointing release to date. You can never count Slim Shady out, though, and the triumph of his 2010 follow-up, *Recovery*, confirmed it. Living up to its title, Eminem's sixth major-label solo album provided career redemption in both sales and songs. Driven by the hit singles "Not Afraid" and the Rihanna collaboration, "Love the Way You Lie," *Recovery* would move over two million copies just two weeks after its release; it would go on to sell nearly 6 million copies worldwide, and become the most successful digital album of 2010.

## MASSIVE ATTACK

**13** IN 2010, DANCE-music raves were more popular than ever—and more deadly. In Los Angeles, the two-day Electric Daisy Carnival drew nearly 200,000 revelers over June 25 and 26, with headlining sets from Deadmau5, Moby, and Groove Armada. But scandal ensued when a 15-year-old girl died from drug-related causes at the event, causing EDC—an annual LA event since 1997—to get booted from the city and its home venue, the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. Just one month later, tragedy struck again in Duisburg, Germany, at perhaps the world's best-known rave party, the Love Parade, which drew 1.4 million people. Twenty-one people were killed and 500 injured in a tunnel stampede, causing organizers to shut down the two-decades-old gathering for good.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: EMMA SUMMERTON; KEVIN MAZUR/EM/WIREIMAGE; VALLERY JEAN/FILMMAGIC





**Billboard**  
2011  
**MUSIC AWARDS**

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Jennifer Lopez • Nicki Minaj • Pitbull • Rihanna • Keith Urban  
And Many More...With a Special Presentation to Beyoncé

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# DIVA-OMETER

14 > 19

HOW THE PRIMA DONNAS OF POP FARED IN 2010



**J. LO**

Pop's larger-than-life Latina was *Idol*-ized: becoming the crying-est judge on America's biggest TV show gave her career a makeover.



Buzzkill Queen Bee



**BRITNEY SPEARS**

It's Britney, baby. Despite a history of bad behavior, she's proven bulletproof; her comeback single "Hold It Against Me" rocketed to a No. 1 debut.



Buzzkill Queen Bee



**ADAM LAMBERT**

This *Idol* diva reamed out a fan for cell phone use and just got thrown out of Gaga's birthday bash—staying newsworthy for all the wrong reasons.



Buzzkill Queen Bee



**LADY GAGA**

The divine Miss G owns it all: with songs like "Born This Way," she empowered her fans, flexed corporate muscle, and ruled over social media.



Buzzkill Queen Bee



**CHER**

*Burlesque*'s b.o. wasn't so sexy, but Cher hit No. 1 on the Dance chart with a song from the film, giving her No. 1's in each of the past six decades.



Buzzkill Queen Bee



**CHRISTINA AGUILERA**

Aguilera's Super Bowl "Star Spangled Banner" was less than stellar, *Bionic* fizzled on the charts, and her movie debut underwhelmed.



Buzzkill Queen Bee



## POP CHART INTRUDER

**T-PAIN IT AIN'T:** In late July, a local news report about a home invasion in Huntsville, Alabama, became the viral smash of the year, due to the outrageous taunts of the victim's charismatic brother, Antoine Dodson. "He's climbing in your windows. He's snatching your people up, trying to rape 'em," Dodson said directly into the camera. "So y'all need to hide your kids, hide your wife, and hide your husband, 'cause they're rapin' everybody out here." Not exactly the stuff of a pop sensation, but when The Gregory Brothers—the group behind the "Auto-Tune the News" parodies of current events—turned Dodson's interview into an insanely catchy music video the next day, a phenomenon was born.

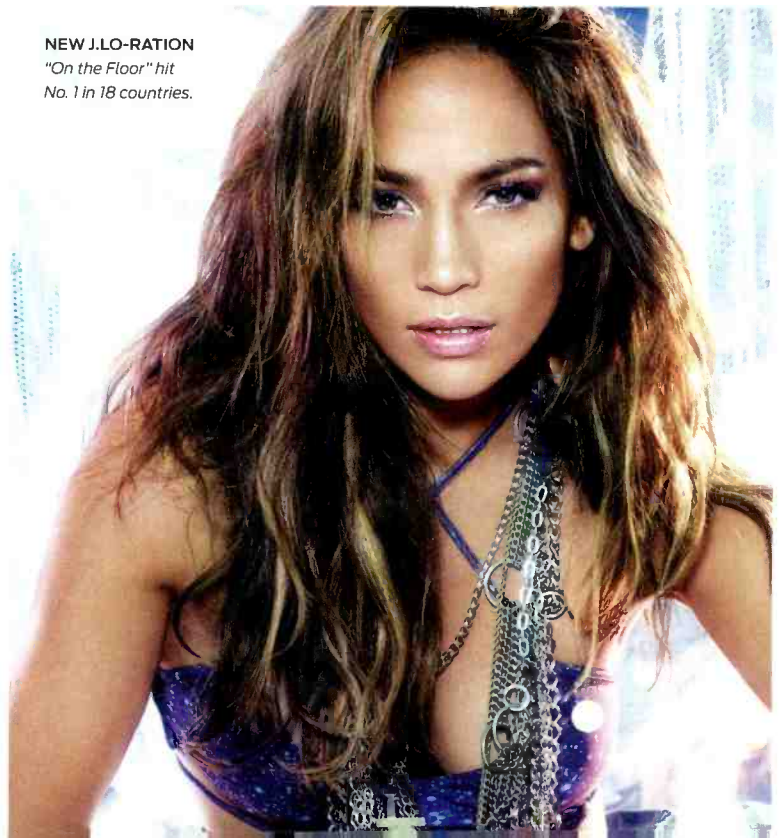
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: FRAZER HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES; LARRY BUSACCA/GETTY IMAGES FOR NARAS; VALERIE MACON/GETTY IMAGES; THE HUNTSVILLE TIMES/ANDREW FOX; LESTER COHEN/WIREIMAGE; DIMITRIOS KAMBOURIS/WIREIMAGE; BEN HIDER/GETTY IMAGES

### IMAGE REHAB

# Judge J.Lo

**21** EVEN BEFORE THE previous season of *American Idol* ended, it was clear that the flagship pop show was faltering. Resident nasty Simon Cowell was exiting the judge's table, along with the far cuddlier Ellen DeGeneres, who only lasted one season. Ratings were shrinking as well, making this TV warhorse finally appear vulnerable; the blogosphere started to wonder aloud if *Idol* was still capable of making successes. What to do? In the final days of July, it was rumored that the producers were ramping up the show's star power by adding Jennifer Lopez. The momentum continued to build when she and Aerosmith singer Steven Tyler were confirmed as judges in September, with Interscope Records' hit-maker Jimmy Iovine to appear in a talent-coaching role. Lopez's single "On the Floor" rose in the charts, her career on an upswing thanks to *Idol*, and tinkering with the formula proved successful: just a few weeks into 2011's new season, a record 55 million people were casting their votes.

**NEW J.LO-RATION**  
"On the Floor" hit No. 1 in 18 countries.







22

**FOUNDING OFF**  
Cee Lo Green topped the charts after 23 weeks.

## RIDING THE F TRAIN

CEE LO GREEN turned the music industry on its head with what became his biggest solo smash, "F\*\*k You." The Atlanta soul man knew exactly what he was doing: The song's first release came on August 19, via a music video that spelled out the expletive-filled lyrics word for word. Dispensing with traditional wisdom, "F\*\*k You" took a unique turn for what *Time* magazine would eventually call the No. 1 song of 2010. It couldn't be played on the radio or TV, but the naughty tune became the talk of the uncensored Internet. When the fall release date for Green's album, *The Lady Killer*, approached, a clean radio edit of the song, retitled "Forget You," magically appeared, and topped the Billboard Hot 100 Chart. Green performed that version at the 2011 Grammys with Gwyneth Paltrow, where he picked up an award for Best Urban/Alternative Performance.



**"I STARTED TO BECOME THAT CLICHÉ: MY OWN WORST ENEMY."  
EMINEM**



## All Fired Up

**23** INDIE ROCK DECIDEDLY entered the mainstream when Arcade Fire reached the summit of the Billboard 200 on August 11 with their acclaimed third album, *The Suburbs*, selling 156,000 copies in its first week of release. The band's triumph proved that being on a small label is no impediment to commercial success: in addition to reaching the No. 1 spot, Arcade Fire would also play a number of sold-out shows at venues like Madison Square Garden, and win Album of the Year at the 2011 Grammy Awards. They paved the way for other underground artists who hit similar milestones—like The Decemberists, who in early 2011 debuted at No. 1 with their album, *The King Is Dead*.



24

## ROCK THE VOTE

ON AUGUST 5, Wyclef Jean announced his candidacy for president of embattled Haiti. "I feel like I'm being drafted by the population right now to give them a different face, a different voice," the Fugees founder told CNN. That voice was silenced, however, when Haitian officials judged that Jean did not satisfy legal requirements to run as a candidate. He wasn't the only high-profile hip-hop star to dip his toe in political waters: in February 2011, Luther Campbell of 2 Live Crew fame announced his intention to run for mayor of his hometown, Miami. "Ahh! Me so...political?"

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: LEFT: KAREEM BLACK/CPLSYNDICATION; ANTON CORBIN; THONY BELZAI/RE/AP/GETTY IMAGES; LESTER COHEN/WIREIMAGE



# Rock Stars Behind Bars



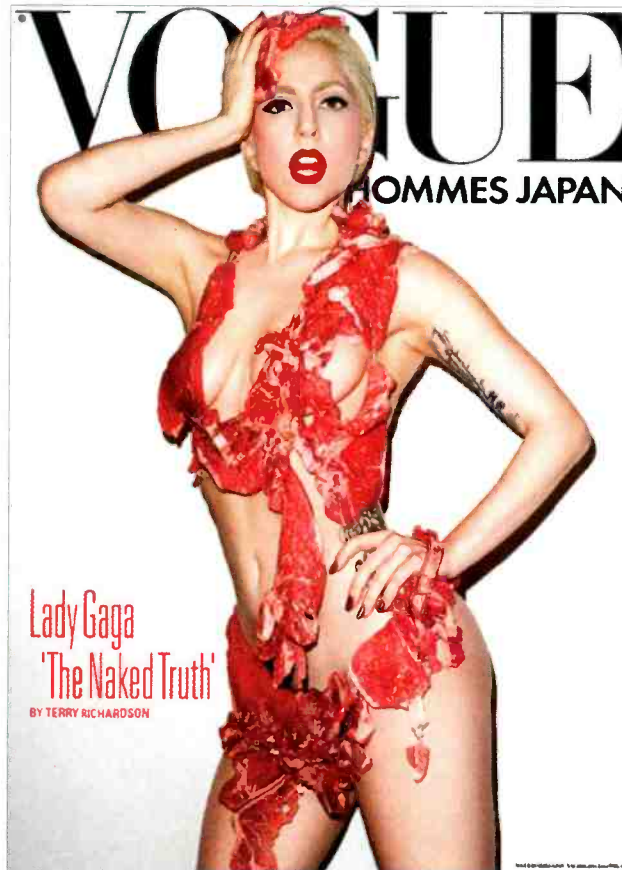
**26** BRUNO MARS PULLED quite a trick in September 2010: right before his song “Just the Way You Are” hit the top spot on the Billboard Hot 100, he was caught with cocaine in a Las Vegas bathroom. Wait a minute—Winehouse maybe, but Bruno Mars? Earlier in the summer, Foxy Brown got cuffed for violating a restraining order and exposing herself. Later, in February 2011, reggae star Buju Banton was convicted on drugs and weapons charges. In perhaps a more poetic musician run-in with the law, ex-Smashing Pumpkins bassist D’arcy Wretzsky was picked up by the cops when her horses escaped in the rural Michigan town where she’d retired. Mars, meanwhile, eventually copped a plea deal, but may have gotten the last laugh: David Schubert, the Nevada Deputy D.A. who prosecuted the case, was himself arrested for purchasing crack in March 2011.



**BUSTED**  
“I’m not gonna preach that I’m a role model,” Mars said after the incident.

## MERCURY RISING

PRODUCERS OF THE Freddie Mercury biopic found somebody to love in Sacha Baron Cohen, announcing on September 16 that the British comic actor would be playing the iconic Queen front man. The film will follow the glam-rock band from its humble beginnings in 1970s London through its triumphant Live Aid performance in 1985. “Queen is one of the greatest rock bands of all time, and a music brand unto itself,” one of the project’s producers, Graham King, said at the time. “Freddie Mercury was an awe-inspiring performer, so with Sacha in the starring role, coupled with Peter [Morgan]’s screenplay and the support of Queen, we have the perfect combination to tell the real story behind their success.” The brains behind *Brüno* + “Bohemian Rhapsody” = blockbuster.



## LADY GAGA’S FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**27** JUST WHEN YOU thought she couldn’t get any more outrageous, Lady Gaga kicked her enfant terrible reputation up a notch with a photograph by bad-boy lensman Terry Richardson for *Vogue Hommes Japan*, wearing what could only be called a “meat bikini.” Both fashionistas and the press were agog over Gaga’s headline-grabbing stunt: “She once wore a dress made of dozens of Kermit frogs. And another that looked like a cataract of Hello Kitty dolls. And a diamanté lobster on her head,” wrote *The Guardian*. “[Now] instead of wearing Kermit’s...she’s standing there, artfully semi-draped in shanks of beef carpaccio. She looks delicious, if a tad impractical for the beach.”

## 28 IPOD-GATE

Only in our Internet age could a president’s iPod playlist create controversy. That’s exactly what happened when Barack Obama revealed to *Rolling Stone* that, among the 2,000-some songs on his device, there were some Jay-Z tracks (gasp!) and even “a little Lil Wayne” (bigger gasp!). “Lil Wayne is emblematic of a hip-hop culture that is ignorant, misogynistic, casually criminal, and often violent,” Thomas Chatterton Williams wrote in *The Wall Street Journal*. “Just as disturbing is Mr. Obama’s appreciation for Jay-Z, the rapper and unrepentant ex-drug dealer.” America, consider yourself warned.

FROM LEFT: PIVAL HOSAIN/GETTY IMAGES; ROB VERHORST/REDFERNS; ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES; OPPOSITE PAGE, INSETS: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE; RUNE HELLESTAD/CORBIS; IAN GAVAN/GETTY IMAGES; JIM SPELLMAN/WIREIMAGE; JASON BELL; TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP

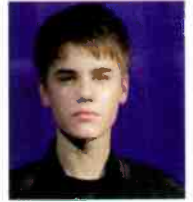


SOUND BITES 30 > 35

MUSICIANS EARNED RAVES beyond the charts this year, ranking high on the best-seller lists, too. Below, match the superstar authors with their quotes:



JAY-Z,  
DECODED



JUSTIN BIEBER,  
FIRST STEP 2  
FOREVER



PATTI SMITH,  
JUST KIDS



KEITH  
RICHARDS, LIFE



SUSAN BOYLE,  
DREAMS CAN  
COME TRUE



VINCE NEIL,  
TATTOOS &  
TEQUILA

A. "It's the artist's responsibility to balance mystical communication and the labor of creation."

B. "I was aware that I was being laughed at, but I've been ridiculed a lot in my life so I've learned how to be resilient."

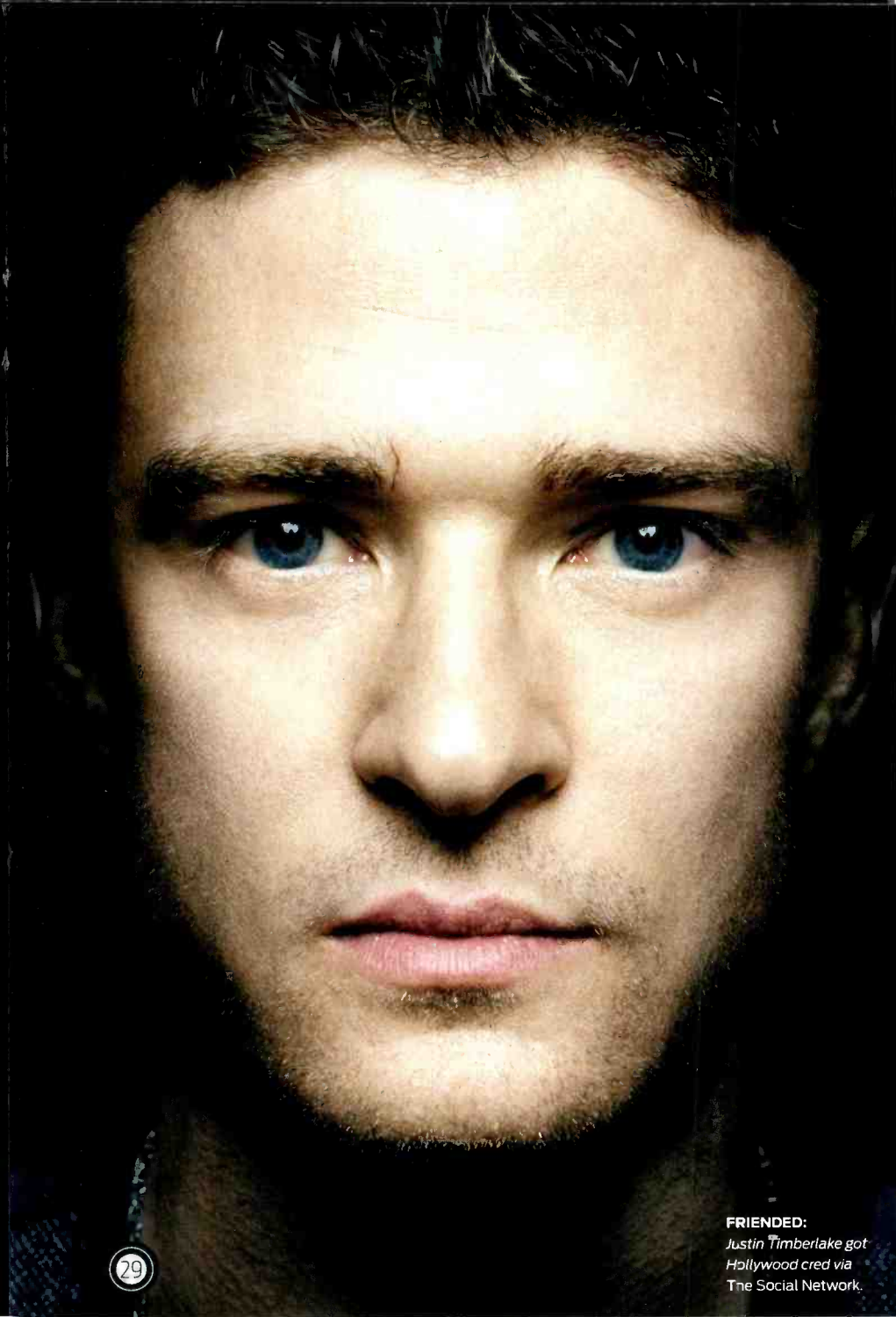
C. "It's really jazz—that's the big secret. Rock and roll ain't nothing but jazz with a hard backbeat."

D. "Today, I'm healthier than a syringe full of cocaine powder I was doing back in '81."

E. "Singers aren't supposed to have dairy before a show, but...I'm a rule breaker. Pizza is just so good!"

F. "A poet's mission is to make words do more work than they normally do, to make them work on more than one level."

Key: A. Patti Smith B. Susan Boyle C. Keith Richards D. Vince Neil E. Justin Bieber F. Jay-Z



79

FRIENDED:  
Justin Timberlake got  
Hollywood cred via  
The Social Network.

# JT on FB

POP IDOL JUSTIN Timberlake had been in movies before, but his acting career hit a new high with his appearance in *The Social Network*, one of the year's most buzzed-about films. Portraying Facebook's irrepressibly naughty ex-president Sean Parker, Timberlake won raves from critics—but didn't get any nods from the Academy. Still, rumors swirled around his departure from the music biz. Soon after *The Social Network* hit theaters, he told *Entertainment Weekly*, "I just don't know [in] what capacity I want to be involved [in music-making] anymore;" however, as of March 2011, he admitted to E! Online that "I haven't been hired for anything, so I may hire myself to write some music."



"REDHEADS  
HAVE MORE  
FUN."  
RIHANNA

FROM TOP: PLATON/CPI SYNICATION; RD/ERIK KABIK/CORBIS



**CHART-BUSTERS**

**36** CONTRARY TO POPULAR reports, people still buy music—at least when female superstars release it. November album sales reminded retailers of better days. By the end of its first week, Taylor Swift's *Speak Now* broke over a million, making her the first artist to do so in five years; two weeks later, Susan Boyle released her second album, *The Gift*, selling over 300,000 initially, and ultimately moving more than 3.7 million copies worldwide.



**JAILHOUSE RAPS**  
Lil Wayne was disciplined for keeping an MP3 player in his cell.

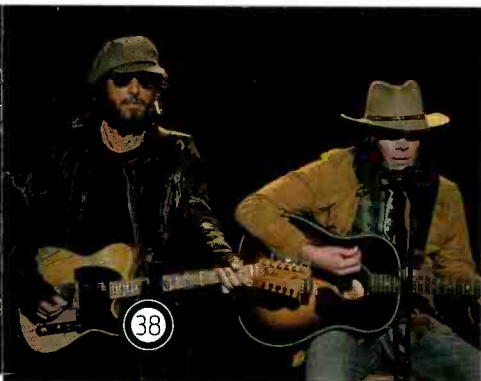
**37**

**NEXT CHAPTER**

**Weezy, Free At Last**

**HIP-HOP HEAVYWEIGHT** Lil Wayne was released from prison on November 4, after serving eight months of a yearlong sentence on New York's Rikers Island for felony gun possession charges. Despite his incarceration, Weezy was hardly out of the spotlight. During his jail time, he managed to release *I Am Not a Human Being*—an album that, upon its rise to No. 1, made it the first offering by an incarcerated artist to reach the top spot

since Tupac, 15 years earlier. From his cell, Lil Wayne also started a popular blog, "Weezy Thanx You." Naturally, upon gaining freedom, the rapper celebrated with a huge party in Miami, which was attended by Rick Ross, Fat Joe, and his protégés Drake and Nicki Minaj. "I forgot about yesterday," Wayne claimed to *MTV News* at the time. "I just want to thank everybody—the fans across the whole world and most of all, my family."



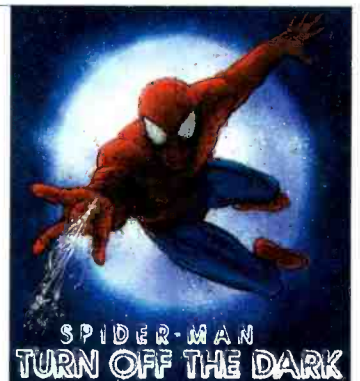
**38**

**BRUCE ALMIGHTY**

Proving even venerable rockers can have a sense of humor, Bruce Springsteen stayed up past his bedtime to perform a surprise cover of Willow Smith's "Whip My Hair" on *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*. Accompanied by Fallon impersonating Neil Young, it was, predictably, hilarious.

**BROADWAY ROCKS**

**39** THE U2-SCORED *Spider-Man: Turn Off The Dark* opened in previews on the Great White Way, earning big box office despite critical disparagement (*The New York Times* noted it "may...rank among the worst" musicals ever). Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong signed on for 50 more guest appearances in the hit Broadway adaptation of his group's *American Idiot* album. It was also revealed that the blockbuster '80s hair-metal musical *Rock Of Ages* would be turned into an event film starring Tom Cruise, Alec Baldwin, and Mary J. Blige.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF 13 MANAGEMENT; RAY TAMARRA/GETTY IMAGES; LLOYD BISHOP/NBC



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AVAILABLE NOW

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**BORN THIS WAY**

**JUDAS**

**THE EDGE OF GLORY**

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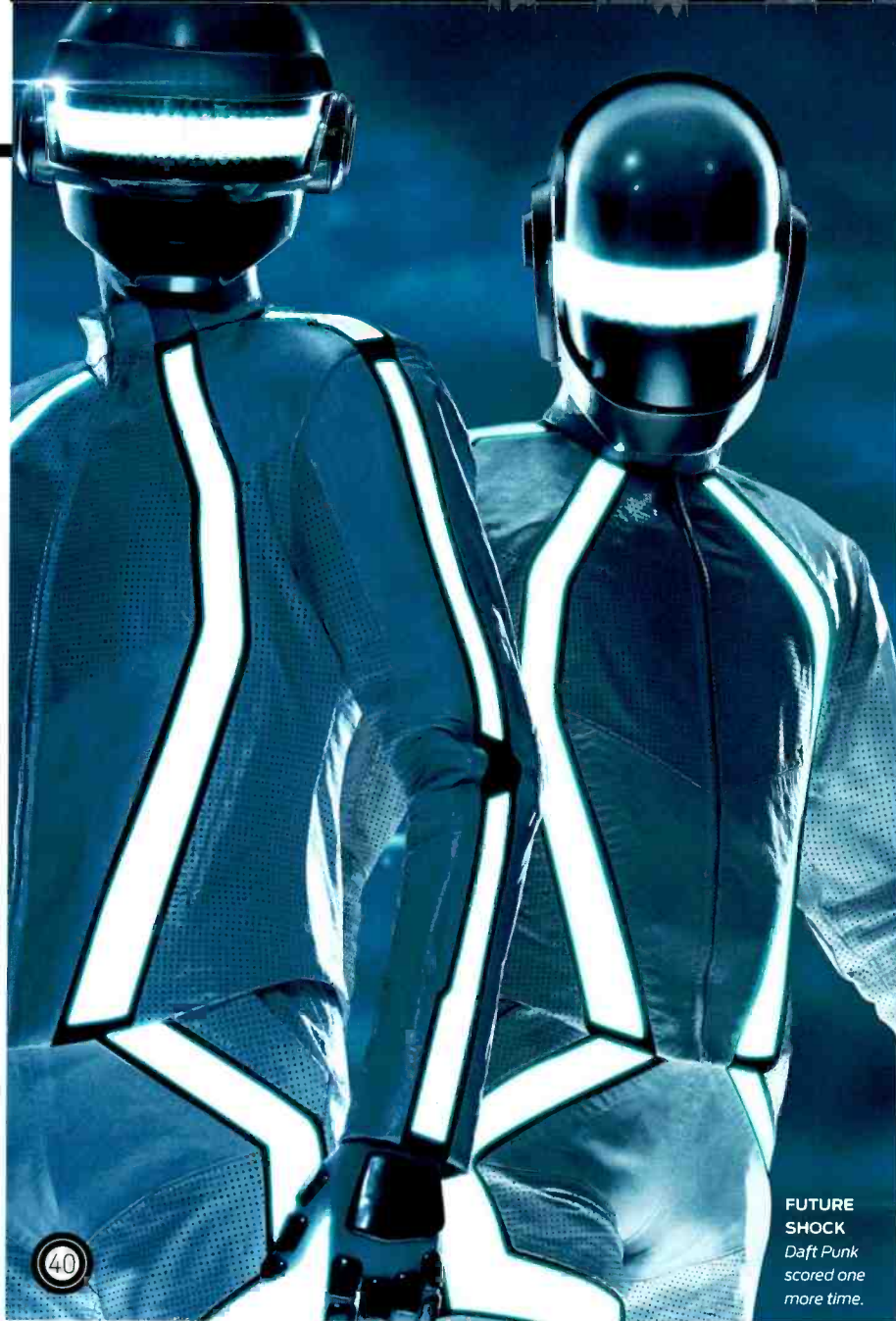


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A&R: VINCENT HERBERT FOR STREAMLINE RECORDS.  
MANAGEMENT: TROY CARTER FOR ATOM FACTORY.

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**FUTURE SHOCK**  
Daft Punk scored one more time.

## Daft Punk Turns on *Tron*



MUSIC'S FAVORITE ROBOTS Daft Punk released their highly anticipated score for the big-budget sci-fi movie *Tron: Legacy*, sending buzz through the blogosphere. Some found the opus, which features an 85-piece orchestra, too techno, others found it not techno enough.

But there was no question Daft Punk turned a soundtrack into a pop-culture phenomenon that nearly equaled the movie it came from. The French duo's efforts heralded a year when soundtracks came back in a big way, from the smash *The Twilight Saga: Eclipse* collection (featuring songs from Vampire Weekend and Florence + the Machine) to *Glee* (six albums were released in 2010) to Trent Reznor's Academy Award-winning score for *The Social Network*.

## DADDY FANTASTIC

**41** ON CHRISTMAS DAY, Elton John and his partner, David Furnish, became fathers to a baby boy, Zachary Jackson Levon Furnish-John, via a surrogate mother in California. "For those of you concerned that we are unusual parents, don't worry. It's not like we are the only two people involved in the child's life—his godmother is Lady Gaga," John revealed in an appearance on *Saturday Night Live*. "It's not a joke. Lady Gaga is his actual godmother, which is ironic because I've always said that Mars ain't the kind of place to raise your kids, and Gaga loves Mars. [She] says Mars has good schools, and great discos."



## QUEEN OF SOUL, SURVIVOR

THE MUSIC WORLD was stunned in early December upon learning that Aretha Franklin had undergone surgery for an undisclosed illness. The totemic diva was forced to cancel performances for much of the year—including a rumored appearance at the 2011 Grammys (instead, she taped a video statement for broadcast). A little more than a month after her hospital stay, Franklin was upbeat about her recovery. In an interview with *Access Hollywood*, she claimed medical authorities assured her, "The surgery that you just had is going to add 15 to 20 more years to your life."



**"HE BELIEVED IN TRUTH, AND DARED TO SPEAK UP."**  
**YOKO ONO,**  
ON THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF JOHN LENNON'S DEATH

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: LEFT: KEVIN LYNCH © DISNEY ENTERPRISES, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED; MONICA MORGAN/WIREIMAGE; CHARLES ESHELMAN/WIREIMAGE





# RIHANNA

THE LOUD TOUR 2011  
WITH SPECIAL GUESTS

*Cee Lo Green*

AND *JCOLE*

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 June 06 Toronto, ON\*  
 June 07 Toronto, ON  
 June 08 Ottawa, ON\*\*  
 June 10 Montreal, QC  
 June 11 Montreal, QC  
 June 14 Detroit, MI\*  
 June 15 Chicago, IL\*

June 16 Minneapolis, MN  
 June 18 Winnipeg, MB  
 June 19 Saskatoon, SK  
 June 21 Calgary, AB  
 June 22 Edmonton, AB  
 June 24 Vancouver, BC  
 June 25 Vancouver, BC\*

June 28 Los Angeles, CA  
 June 29 Anaheim, CA  
 June 30 Oakland, CA  
 July 04 Albuquerque, NM  
 July 08 Dallas, TX  
 July 09 Houston, TX  
 July 12 Atlanta, GA

July 14 Ft. Lauderdale, FL  
 July 16 Greensboro, NC  
 July 17 Atlantic City, NJ\*\*\*  
 July 19 Uniondale, NY  
 July 21 East Rutherford, NJ  
 July 22 Uncasville, CT\*\*\*  
 July 23 Philadelphia, PA  
 July 24 Boston, MA

\* Cee Lo Green will not be support \*\* Cee Lo Green and J. Cole will not be support \*\*\*J.Cole will not be support

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rihannanow.com

**NIVEA**

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New album  
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43

TRIBUTES

REMEMBERING THE MUSICIANS WHO LEFT A LASTING LEGACY

**JOHN BARRY**  
November 3, 1933–January 30, 2011

**SOLOMON BURKE**  
March 21, 1940–October 10, 2010

**CAPTAIN BEEFHEART**  
January 15, 1941–December 17, 2010

**ALEX CHILTON**  
December 28, 1950–March 17, 2010

**GURU**  
July 17, 1961–April 19, 2010

**LENA HORNE**  
June 30, 1917–May 9, 2010

**GREGORY ISAACS**  
July 15, 1951–October 25, 2010

**MARVIN ISLEY**  
August 18, 1953–June 6, 2010

**RONNIE JAMES DIO**  
July 10, 1942–May 16, 2010

**MICK KARN**  
July 24, 1958–January 4, 2011

**ABBEY LINCOLN**  
August 6, 1930–August 14, 2010

**MARK LINKOUS**  
September 9, 1962–March 6, 2010

**CHARLIE LOUVIN**  
July 7, 1927–January 26, 2011

**TEENA MARIE**  
March 5, 1956–December 26, 2010

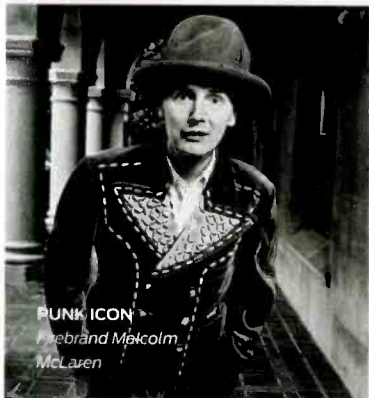
**MALCOLM MCLAREN**  
January 22, 1946–April 8, 2010

**GARY MOORE**  
April 4, 1952–February 6, 2011

**TEDDY PENDERGRASS**  
March 26, 1950–January 13, 2010

**GERRY RAFFERTY**  
April 16, 1947–January 4, 2011

**ARI UP**  
January 16, 1962–October 20, 2010



**PUNK ICON**  
Rebranded Malcolm McLaren

**TOXIC AVENGER**  
Britney strengthened her hold on superstardom.



44

# Britney Hits It Two More Times

WHEN BRITNEY SPEARS released “Hold It Against Me”—the first single from her seventh album, *Femme Fatale*—it debuted at the No. 1 spot on *Billboard*’s Hot 100. In the process, the blonde pop princess became only the second artist in the chart’s history to debut multiple songs at No. 1—diva predecessor Mariah Carey being the first (“3” was Brit’s previous No. 1, in 2009). Go ahead, call it a comeback.



**“I THINK YOU ALL KNOW WHAT SANTA LEFT UNDER THE TREE FOR ME THIS YEAR: A FIANCEE.”**  
**CARRIE UNDERWOOD**

## COMICALLY HIP

**45** THE CULT TV hit *Portlandia* debuted this month, proving that yes, musicians can rock *and* be funny on camera. A satire of grungy bohemia in the Pacific Northwest, its stars and creators have deep music roots: Carrie Brownstein (left) is best known as guitarist and singer for Sleater-Kinney—and *SNL* funnyman Fred Armisen got his start as the drummer for underground Chicago band Trenchmouth.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: RANDEE ST. NICHOLAS; SCOTT GREEN/IFC; AMY SUSSMAN/GETTY IMAGES ENTERTAINMENT; GEORGE ROSE/GETTY IMAGES ENTERTAINMENT



Jimmy Webb *Chairman, Songwriters Hall of Fame*

Linda Moran *President/CEO, Songwriters Hall of Fame*

invite you to



## 42nd Annual Induction Ceremony & Awards Presentation

Thursday, June 16th, 2011

New York Marriott Marquis, Broadway at 45th Street, New York City

### INDUCTEES

John Bettis • Garth Brooks • Leon Russell  
Billy Steinberg & Tom Kelly • Allen Toussaint

### SPECIAL AWARDS

Barry Mann & Cynthia Weil *Johnny Mercer Award*

Drake *Hal David Starlight Award*

Chaka Khan *Howie Richmond Hitmaker Award*

Hal David *Visionary Leadership Award*

"It Was a Very Good Year" *Towering Song*

Words & Music by Ervin M. Drake (Lindobet Music Corp.; ASCAP)

*Executive Producer/Music Producer Phil Ramone*

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*Show Chairs/Associate Producers Charlie Feldman and Karen Sherry*

*Media Chair Robbin Ahrold*

*Publicity by Rogers & Cowan*

*Event Management by Buckley Hall Events*

*Invitation Design by Acron Tilford*

Songwriters Hall of Fame's ongoing mission is to celebrate and honor the contributions of our great popular music songwriters who have written the soundtrack for our nation's history, while developing new writing talent through workshops, showcases, scholarships and digital initiatives.

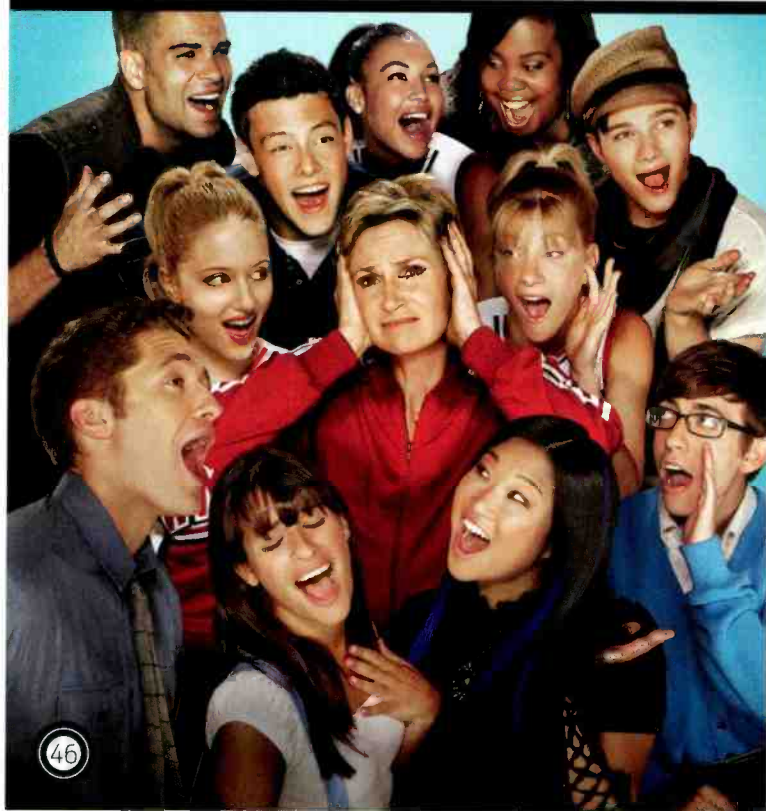
[www.songhall.org](http://www.songhall.org)

 American Airlines

 Gibson  
FOUNDATION

People

Billboard



## RECORD-BREAKING GLEE

THE STUDENTS OF William McKinley High had something to sing about this month, as *Glee* trumped Elvis Presley to attain the most charting singles of all time. Two years earlier, the popular musical TV show came in second only to The Beatles in terms of having the most songs on the singles chart. But in February 2011, *Glee* surpassed the Fab Four, Michael Jackson, and The King to claim the most songs on the Top 100 ever, beating out Presley's 108 hits by just five singles.

## TEAM PLAYERS

**48** SUPER BOWL 2011 scored more pop-culture accolades than usual, thanks to some boldfaced musical touchdowns. Even before the big day, Wiz Khalifa kicked off a hit with his Pittsburgh Steelers anthem "Black And Yellow"—only to be answered by Lil Wayne's Green Bay Packers tribute, "Green And Yellow." Lil Wayne (right) also blogged throughout the game for *The Wall Street Journal*. On the big day, Christina Aguilera didn't suffer a wardrobe malfunction, but she did flub "The Star Spangled Banner."



## Grammy Fallout

**47** From Gaga's egg and Arcade Fire's triumph to Cee Lo Green duetting with Gwyneth Paltrow in a Big Bird-meets-Sun Ra getup, 2011 brought one of the most notable (and entertaining) Grammy Awards in recent memory. Still, not everybody agreed: when jazz musician Esperanza Spalding won Best New Artist over Justin Bieber, legions of Beliebers unloaded their anger on the Internet, filling Spalding's Wikipedia page with threats. Meanwhile, music mogul Steve Stoute was so offended by the ceremony that he took out a \$40,000 ad in *The New York Times* in protest: "The Grammy Awards have clearly lost touch with contemporary popular culture," he wrote in the missive.

## WHOA, NELLY

**49** IN THE WAKE of Libya's bloody revolution, Nelly Furtado made headlines when she promised to donate to charity the entire \$1 million fee she was paid to play a private concert organized by the family of the country's infamous dictator, Muammar Gaddafi. It was a chain reaction: soon after, other artists who'd performed at Gaddafi-linked events—from Mariah Carey to Usher—agreed to donate their fees.



## 50 EVERY INCH THE WINNER

Trent Reznor, the man who once wrote "I want to f\*\*k you like an animal," looked quite sophisticated in his tux at 2011's Academy Awards. The Nine Inch Nails front man accepted his first Oscar, for composing the score to *The Social Network*, an award he shared with partner Atticus Ross.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MIRANDA PENN TURIN/FOX; SANDRINE LEE; MAX ABADIAN/CORBIS OUTLINE



# How to Vegas

Where do the stars go to get dazzled when they're used to seeing their names in lights? They do Las Vegas! Follow the beat of these white-hot music stars and you'll find that Vegas is playing your song—all day and all night long.

*"Vegas is awesome in the summer. I love the fans here—they're uninhibited and in that certain mood that makes playing for them so much fun. When I arrive at my hotel the first thing I do is settle in, get a frozen drink and relax by the pool. Then I like to indulge in serious shopping and take in some shows. Come ready to win a little bit of money at the tables and then spend it all on yourself!"*

Grammy® nominated R&B/pop singer **Keri Hilson** is riding high on the success of her sophomore album "No Boys Allowed," available in stores now.

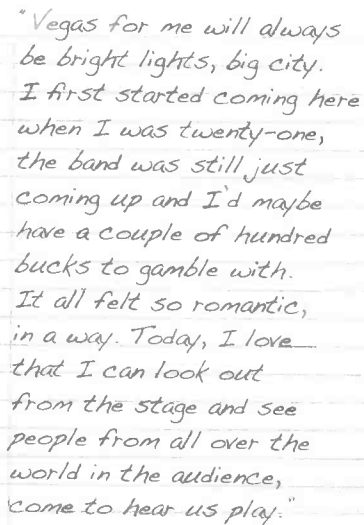
## RUMOR BOUTIQUE HOTEL

Life is short. Summer is shorter. This summer book a get-away at the Rumor Boutique Hotel—Vegas' newest all-suite boutique hotel that offers it all. Stroll out to the pool and unwind in a palm-covered hammock, sip a cocktail at the bar or enjoy tapas at Addiction Restaurant. Best of all, when you stay here your all-new suite is just steps away from the Vegas Strip.

Keri pictured in the Rumor Boutique Hotel, Las Vegas.  
[www.RumorVegas.com](http://www.RumorVegas.com)

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*"Vegas for me will always be bright lights, big city. I first started coming here when I was twenty-one, the band was still just coming up and I'd maybe have a couple of hundred bucks to gamble with. It all felt so romantic, in a way. Today, I love that I can look out from the stage and see people from all over the world in the audience, come to hear us play."*

**Scott Weiland, The Stone Temple Pilots**

His memoir "Not Dead & Not for Sale" hits bookstores this month. Scott's Christmas album of traditional jazz standards drops this holiday season.

**HRH TOWER AT HARD ROCK HOTEL & CASINO, LAS VEGAS**

When day turns to night, or night becomes day, take a break from all that Vegas has to offer in your own private retreat. The penthouse suites in HRH Tower at Hard Rock Hotel are becoming infamous for their luxe appointments. Think patent-leather walls and glass ceilings with built-in, interactive projection units. Absolute decadence.

Scott pictured in the HRH Tower Penthouse at Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas. [www.hardrockhotel.com](http://www.hardrockhotel.com)







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## PALMS POOL & BUNGALOWS

You've always wanted to see Vegas, explore the shopping, indulge in the spas and try your luck in this legendary town. Why wait? There's no better time than summer 2011. Visit The Palms' sleek pool complex, which features shallow lounge pools where you can look cool, calm, wet and fabulous while rocking to the DJ's beats.

Incubus pictured at Palms Pool & Bungalows at Palms Casino Resort. [www.palms.com](http://www.palms.com)



*"We're always very impressed when people come to see our show in Vegas because there's a lot of competition here. This place is just magic from top to bottom."*

*"Entertainment is what Vegas is really all about. This is a playground for grown-ups, you don't come here to rest. You came here to get it on."*

*"Also there are some very fine golf courses here, so you should bring your clubs. And I would say a very small bathing suit so you can show off that bitchin' tan you get by the pool."*

**Incubus** From Left: Jose Pasillas, Ben Kenney, Brandon Boyd, Mike Einziger and Chris Kilmore. This multi-platinum selling rock band is getting ready for the release of "If Not Now, When?", their sixth studio album due out July 12th.




3 FT 6 IN



ONLY Vegas





*"I was on tour in Europe for a month, just got back and already we're hitting the streets running. Packed my flip-flops, shades and white polos and here I am in Vegas. I've got a show here at the Cosmopolitan, so we partied at Marquee all night. It was a great night and I'm feeling happy to be alive this morning!"*

Nas is gearing up for his tenth solo album and plans to record a good portion of it in Vegas.

#### THE COSMOPOLITAN OF LAS VEGAS

Luxury and sophistication in style reach a new height. 52 stories to be exact. Come soak up the finer things in life at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas. Or retreat to an oasis of luxury and rejuvenation in the center of The Strip at the Sahara Spa & Hammam. Then head off to Marquee Nightclub & Dayclub—where 50-foot ceilings encompass 4-story LED screens and projection walls—to dance the night (and day) away. There's more to see, do, eat and play. More to discover.

Nas pictured in The Library at Marquee Nightclub at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas. [www.cosmopolitanlasvegas.com](http://www.cosmopolitanlasvegas.com) or [www.marqueelasvegas.com](http://www.marqueelasvegas.com)





**ONLY**  
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"I love Vegas cuz everybody who comes to hear me DJ is ready to party. Nowhere else in America is everyone really ready to get outta their minds. No pun intended, like my song. Vegas is that place. I love playing at Surrender because they let me be free and be myself, it's family, you know? When I check in at the Encore, they're like, "Welcome back, sir." I'm back home, it's like my second home."

Lil Jon followed up his album "Crunk Rock" by diving into the club scene as one of the most requested DJ's around the world.

#### SURRENDER NIGHTCLUB INSIDE ENCORE LAS VEGAS

Surrender Nightclub brings the night to life at the Encore Las Vegas. This unique nightlife destination offers plush VIP tables surrounded by live dancers, moving to the beat of world renowned deejay's who, like Lil Jon, call Surrender their exclusive Las Vegas home. Outside, extravagant cabanas and bungalows allow guests to party under the stars in an environment unlike any other. When you step out in Vegas for the night, it will be an experience you'll never forget.

Lil Jon pictured at the Surrender Nightclub inside Encore Las Vegas.  
[www.lasvegasnightgroup.com](http://www.lasvegasnightgroup.com) or [www.wynnlasvegas.com](http://www.wynnlasvegas.com)

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# ARTISTS OF THE YEAR

MEET THE RISK-TAKERS,  
HITMAKERS, ICONS, AND UPSTARTS WHO  
BROKE RANKS AND SET RECORDS.  
PLUS, AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH BEYONCÉ.



**FULL SPEED AHEAD**  
Talent, risk, and artistry  
10 Top New Artists  
photographed by  
Isvetniko in Malibu, CA

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# QUEEN

# B

Fifteen years on top have not dimmed Beyoncé's adventurous spirit. Her new album, *4*, breaks out a fresh sound as *Billboard's* Millennium Award winner changes up management and spreads her wings.

BY RAY ROGERS  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
TONY DURAN

**i** N THE NEXT chapter of her career, Beyoncé certainly seems dedicated to breaking new ground. It takes guts for one of the world's biggest pop stars to release such a stridently unconventional single as the militaristic, beat-driven "Run the World (Girls)," built around a freaky sample from relatively obscure indie favorites Major Lazer's club hit, "Pon de Floor." That's just the first salvo in the unexpected collage of sonic textures and unique song structures on her new album, which features edgy new collaborators like Switch (who makes up half of Major Lazer) along with established hitmakers like The-

Dream. "There's nothing safe about it, I know that much," says The-Dream, who cowrote Beyoncé's career-redefining anthem, "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)," and was called in to help pen the new album's lead single. "That [kind of song treatment] would never happen with any other artist of her stature, male or female."

It's a sentiment Beyoncé seems keenly aware of herself. "I feel like my job in the industry is to push the limits, and I have to constantly evolve," Beyoncé explains of her new direction, while she's being chauffeured from a photo shoot on Long Island to a Manhattan recording studio for a meeting with the new creative team she's assembled. This independent woman, rounding the corner to the big 3-0 this year, happily married to Jay-Z, has taken the reins of her career like never before, and she wants it known that she is the one calling the shots. Her forthcoming solo album, *4*, was made this past year without the guidance of Matthew Knowles, her father and longtime manager. She announced on March 28 this year that the two parted ways "on a business level." Raising a clenched fist on the cover of her new single, "Run the World (Girls)," Beyoncé clearly transmits her trademark message of female empowerment.

In this exclusive first interview about her next phase, the star took a look ahead at the thrilling new sounds and creative endeavors in store for her, while also



**SMOKIN'**  
*Beyoncé has won  
11 Billboard Music  
Awards.*





reminiscing about the many milestones along the way that have earned her *Billboard's* Millennium Award.

**Whenever you put out a new song, it seems to generate a catchphrase. Is that something you think about?**

That's what I always want to do—I'm attracted to songs that will become a dinner conversation! [laughs] With "Single Ladies," clearly I'd just gotten married, and people want to get married every day—then there was the whole Justin Timberlake thing [recreating the video] on *Saturday Night Live*, and it was also the year YouTube blew up. With "Irreplaceable," the aggressive lyrics, the acoustic guitar, and the 808 [drum machine]—those things don't typically go together, and it sounded fresh. "Crazy in Love" was another one of those classic moments in pop culture that none of us expected. I asked Jay to get on the song the night before I had to turn my album in—thank God he did. It still never gets old, no matter how many times I sing it.

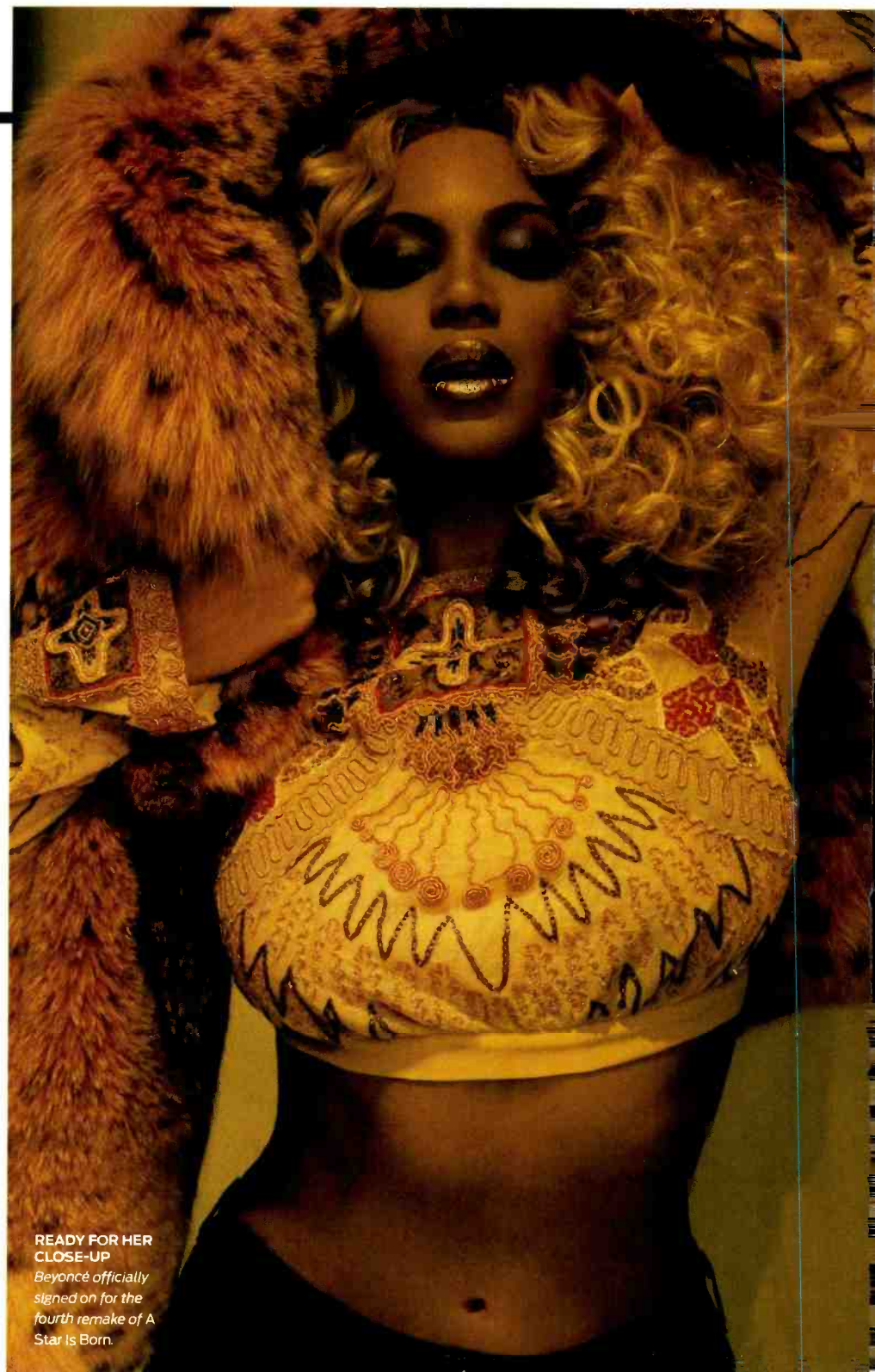
**The new single, "Run the World (Girls)," is a very bold statement for you.**

It's definitely riskier than something a bit more...simple. I just heard the track and loved that it was so different: it felt a bit African, a bit electronic and futuristic. It reminded me of what I love, which is mixing different cultures and eras—things that typically don't go together—to create a new sound. I can never be safe; I always try and go against the grain. As soon as I accomplish one thing, I just set a higher goal. That's how I've gotten to where I am.

**The new album is called 4. Aside from this being your fourth solo album, what significance does that number hold?**

We all have special numbers in our lives, and 4 is that for me. It's the day I was born. My mother's birthday, and a lot of my friends' birthdays, are on the fourth; April 4 is my wedding date.

**How did the creative process begin with the new body of work?**



**READY FOR HER CLOSE-UP**  
Beyoncé officially signed on for the fourth remake of *A Star Is Born*.

I recorded more than 60 songs: everything I ever wanted to try, I just did it. I started off being inspired by [Afrobeat music pioneer] Fela Kuti. I actually worked with the band from *Fela!* [the hit Broadway musical based on his life] for a couple of days, just to get the feel for the soul and heart of his music; it's so sexy, and has a great groove you get lost in. I loved his drums, all the horns, how everything was on the one. What I learned most from Fela was artistic

freedom: he just felt the spirit. I also found a lot of inspiration in '90s R&B, Earth, Wind & Fire, DeBarge, Lionel Richie, Teena Marie...I listened to a lot of Jackson 5 and New Edition, but also Adele, Florence + the Machine, and Prince. Add in my hip-hop influences, and you can hear how broad it is. I also gave myself more freedom to really belt out some songs, and bring soul singing back: I used a lot of the brassiness and grittiness in my voice that people hear



in my live performances, but not necessarily on my records.

**You're an icon of female empowerment. What does power mean to you?**

Power means happiness, power means hard work and sacrifice. To me, it's about setting a good example, and not abusing your power! You still have to have humility: I've seen how you can lead by example,

I CAN NEVER BE SAFE; I ALWAYS TRY AND GO AGAINST THE GRAIN. **AS SOON AS I ACCOMPLISH ONE THING, I JUST SET A HIGHER GOAL.** THAT'S HOW I'VE GOTTEN TO WHERE I AM.

and not by fear. My visit to Egypt was a really big inspiration for me. Once the sun went down, I saw not one woman; it was shocking and fascinating to me, because it was so extreme. I saw thousands of men walking down the street, socializing in bars, praying in mosques—and no women. I felt really proud when I performed and saw the strength that the women were getting through the music. I remember being in Japan when Destiny's Child put out "Independent Women," and women there were saying how proud they were to have their own jobs, their own independent thinking, their own goals. It made me feel so good, and I realized that one of my responsibilities was to inspire women in a deeper way.

**You're always on the go. Do you ever get downtime?**

I got a day off to take my nephew to Disneyland, which was so much fun. I haven't done anything like that in probably 10 years—the last time I was at a theme park was with Destiny's Child! We rode all the rides, some of them twice, and it was my nephew's first time on a roller coaster. There were thousands of people there because it was Easter, but everyone was really polite and respectful, and let us walk around and have a great time. I had on the biggest Goofy hat! [laughs] It was supposed to be a disguise, with this big brim that covered my face,

and floppy ears on the sides, but by the end of the trip I realized that people knew I was making a fool of myself in this hat. [laughs] It was a really nice memory for me.

**This is your first record that you've made without your father managing you. What sort of options opened up that may be different than before?**

It's not that anything bad happened between us. My family has my support always, and they support me, but when you've been working with the same people for 15 years, it's natural to eventually have your own ideas. I believe that parents prepare their kids for the moment that they're on their own: at this point, I'm taking everything my dad and my mother have taught me, and I'm able to do things my way. We were at a point where we'd learned so much from each other, and now it's exciting for me to do this on my own and hire my own team. I've started managing myself.

**Your film career recently took an interesting turn. You've gone from *Dreamgirls* to *Cadillac Records* to *Obsessed*, and now you're working**

**with Clint Eastwood on the latest remake of *A Star is Born*.**

It's a dream come true; I'm still in shock that it's really going to happen. Clint Eastwood is clearly the absolute best, and I'm so honored and humbled. I was in no rush to do another movie unless it was the right film, and I didn't even want to touch *A Star is Born* unless it was with him. I actually learned that this project was in existence, and kind of claimed it. I want to get to work right now!

***A Star is Born* is an appropriate choice, as it follows the rise of a female singer to stardom. What have been your milestones on the way up?**

I would say when Destiny's Child worked with Wyclef Jean on "No, No, No Part 2"—we were so young and green and in awe of everything, and couldn't wait to sing for him. And winning our Grammy for "Say My Name" was incredible. I remember hearing the song on the radio for the first time: I felt like "Wow, this sounds like a classic—something that will be around forever." Those melodies and that fast, staccato way of singing created a new style; it inspired a whole movement in R&B. Being part of that was amazing.

**After all those achievements, what was it like going solo?**

Scary and empowering! Everyone in the group was very nervous, and terrified to do things on our own. We missed each other; it was hard having to make your own decisions and not have someone there to say, "I agree" or "I don't agree." But going through that is a part of life; it was a big first step for me, but one of many first steps I'm sure I'll have. I kind of feel like that now again.

I'm approaching 30, and finally took a break in my life, which I've never had. I took more than a year off: I traveled around, spent time with my husband, woke up in my own bed, ate whatever I wanted, went to museums and Broadway plays, watched documentaries, and just had life experiences. I never get to go to concerts because I'm usually performing, so I saw so many shows—great bands, like Muse and Rage Against the Machine, that also inspired the album. There were a lot of artists I'd never been exposed to: I'm like a sponge and soak everything up, and I learned so much from watching these great performers. Having time to grow as a human being was really inspiring, and gave me a lot to pull from. I'm excited about growing; I can just have fun, and the artistic freedom to do whatever I want. At this point, I really know who I am, and don't feel like I have to put myself in a box. I'm not afraid of taking risks—no one can define me. ●

**From Mark Burnett**

# **EXPED IMPO**





creator of **Survivor**

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# SWIFT

Having sold more digital songs than any other artist in history, **Taylor Swift** is a country queen for a new generation. Along with the accolades and soaring sales, there's been a dose of heartache, which Swift has deftly turned into songwriting gold.

*BY CHRIS WILLMAN*

*PHOTOGRAPHY*

*BY JOSEPH ANTHONY BAKER*

# ASCENSIO





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**T**AYLOR SWIFT GOES back to November all the time. No, we're not confused about her lyrical content. ("Back to December," of course, is Swift's 12th single to sell more than a million downloads in the US.) It's just that, when she's asked to pin down the most meaningful honor that's come her way over the past year, Swift returns to a moment in early November when her third album, *Speak Now*, sold a million copies its first week. "It's one of the proudest feelings I've ever had," she says on the phone from Los Angeles, where she has recently been house-hunting. Swift's pride in the sales stat is justified, considering that no one had pulled off this feat since Lil Wayne in 2008. "It's something I kind of place into the Things That Have Happened to Me category," says Swift. "You make a record, but the fans are the ones who decide how many it's going to sell. So it's not me selling a million albums in one week—that's the fans going out and buying a million albums in one week."

Swift is maintaining humility, a healthy instinct on her part, given the honors that seem to come her way almost every week. Just a few other recent items from the Things That Have Happened to Taylor department: At 21, she was the youngest person ever named Entertainer of the Year at the Academy of Country Music Awards. *Speak Now* passed the 3.5 million mark after six months, which gives it a shot at catching up with her 5 million-plus selling self-titled debut. Her sophomore effort, *Fearless*, is the biggest-selling album released in the past five years, selling 6.3 million. In April, it was announced that Swift has sold more digital songs than anyone in history, her tally of 22.5 million slipping her just ahead of Lady Gaga. (Wait, did we say she "sold" 22.5 million singles? Correction: Fans bought 22.5 million Swift songs.)

Not bad for diary entries. It may sound reductive to use that term for tunes as meticulously crafted as "Back to December" and "The Story of Us"—but not to Swift. "I write in real time, which is something that adds to the journal-esque quality of each record that I've made," she says. "I've learned that diagnosing how I feel, explaining it, describing it, and turning it into, like, a chorus helps me understand what might be confusing me. I think that's due to my having started writing songs in my formative years, when I was 12, so any kind of pain equals 'I can write a song about that later, so it's okay.' One of my favorite things about growing up—and it's an interesting way to grow up—is having documented almost every single one of my feelings in some sort of verse, chorus, pre-chorus, or bridge."

Speaking of bridges, there are a lot of burned ones in her lyrical oeuvre. Don't let the indelible pop hooks of *Speak Now* distract you from the fact that it's as brilliant an example of the confessional singer/songwriter tradition as has been seen in or out of contemporary folk music in many years. Pretty much every song is as true as it is well crafted, and given the public nature of some of Swift's romances since

she entered the limelight—and clues she's dropped along the way—it's easy to hazard educated guesses about which song might be about which relationship. Is "Back to December" her apology to Taylor Lautner? Beyond a shadow of a doubt. Is "Dear John" an angry letter to John Mayer? Beyond a reasonable doubt. (She won't confirm these assumptions, mind you.)

If Swift has any qualms about being the object of perpetual voyeurism now, she'll keep them to herself. "When I was probably 12 or 13, I remember thinking: 'If you ever get to do that, if you ever get to do what you've always dreamed of doing, never be that person

**"ALL I CAN DO IS WRITE SONGS ABOUT MY LIFE AND NEVER GIVE OUT NAMES...UM, FULL NAMES."**

who wants one thing their whole life, and then gets it and complains about it.' No matter what in life, you're never going to have it all. You're never going to be able to write personal songs but not have people speculate on who they're about. So I accept the fact that all I can do is write songs about my life, what I know and what I'm passionate about, and never give out names." Say what? This is the young woman who wrote "Dear John," "Hey Stephen," and a worldwide smash calling out a high school dude named Drew, right? "Um, full names," she amends.

Journalists have long been flummoxed about whether to compare the barely out-of-her-teens singer/songwriter/superstar to Miley Cyrus or Joni Mitchell, but

**GOLDEN GIRL**  
Swift's three albums  
have sold over 20 million  
copies worldwide.

BIG MACHINE RECORDS





Swift says that she grew up idolizing Shania Twain, and she's certainly followed in those country-pop crossover superstar boots. And when she's asked to identify the personal—not business—highlight of her career, she cites an encounter with an equally sexy but more storied crossover star. "Usually I shy away from meeting my heroes, but Kris Kristofferson became more my role model after I met him than he was before. He was so courageous, and there was nothing he felt he couldn't do as a songwriter, an artist, an actor."

Kristofferson, who in his early years took a janitorial job at Columbia Records to get industry attention, sounds like a man after the heart of the young girl who came to Nashville at 12 and, in hyper-aspirational mode, started literally knocking on doors on Music Row. She landed a publishing contract at age 14. "Being a writer for Sony Publishing and working in their offices every single day for two years, I know what it is to prepare for writing like you're preparing for an assignment, or for someone else. That's a different type of writing than writing something only when you are incredibly inspired to write it."

Her increasingly autobiographical songs led the indie label Big Machine to release her debut at 16. Adult-based country radio didn't immediately take to a teen newcomer, but the fan base she amassed largely through her mastery of social media—the then-dominant MySpace—pushed DJs to play Swift's first single, "Tim McGraw."

Swift and her keepers have been careful to nurture her original country base,

perhaps mindful of how Twain's pop stardom lost her some support at country radio. Until recently, they'd never released two different singles simultaneously to separate markets. But this spring, they took a chance and went with the neo-bluegrass "Mean" for country, and the guitar-charged "Story of Us" for pop radio.

"Mean" tells a story about the fact that no one gets to go through life without getting picked on," says Swift. "That was a song that I wrote when I felt completely powerless." That word would hardly seem to describe Swift, but she took comments from critics who were saying she "can't sing"—like industry blogger Bob Lefsetz, who turned on her—and responded with an upbeat, banjo-inflected stomper that became a rallying cry for the national anti-bullying movement. "I don't feel like I necessarily have to win over every last person," she says. "Knowing that Kris Kristofferson's opinion [of me] is a positive one is going to have me floating on a cloud for weeks and months."

On the pop side of Swift's dual format assault, "Story of Us" is believed to be about nearly encountering Mayer at the Country Music Television Awards last year. "It's a moment I'm glad I was able to represent in a song, when you run into someone that you used to be in love with, but now that's gone, and all that you have is drama and the desperation and the horrible feeling of awkwardness and not knowing what to do or where to stand or how to act natural." She pauses. "That, as well as that I just like seeing how the crowd jumps up and down when I play it." ●

# FULL RECOVERY

Fueling his incendiary rhymes with fresh insight, Eminem launched a comeback that propelled him to new artistic heights—and blockbuster numbers.

BY DUDLEY SAUNDERS • PHOTOGRAPH BY MARY ELLEN MATTHEWS

**J**UST AS BOB Dylan started as a folk singer and expanded beyond the genre, Eminem is now bigger and more significant than rap itself. Like it or not, he's now a permanent part of our culture. "I never thought my life would amount to this," he told *Billboard* in June 2010. "It is so strange to me because I still feel so regular." Rap may be a genre in decline, but somebody forgot to give Eminem fans the memo: his most recent album, *Recovery*, hit the charts at No. 1 and spent seven weeks there, spawning two No. 1 singles and ending 2010 as the year's best-selling album, both nationally and internationally. And it's the best-selling digital album ever. This was the year Eminem made the jump from being merely a popular artist to an important one.

That he would end up making that transition was hardly obvious at first. Eminem hit hard and fast in 1999 with *The Slim Shady LP*, showcasing his comically sociopathic alter ego, gleefully playing out every teenage boy's deepest revenge fantasies in intricate rhymes. Whether enlisting his baby daughter's help in dumping his then-wife Kim's murdered body ("97 Bonnie & Clyde") or killing a schoolyard bully ("Brain Damage"), Eminem worked from an irresistible underdog setup, with the twist that the underdog makes good by daring to be meaner and more evil than the people keeping him down. And where other rap artists boasted, Eminem brazenly admitted to a weak body, cowardice, even outright stupidity, and shrugged it all off with a joke and a stapler aimed at his teacher's testicles. On the album's release, parental outrage ran hot and hard, and kids couldn't buy it fast enough.

A working-class hero like John Lennon often responds to success by trying to grow more refined, to rise up from his humble beginnings. But the working poor (like the lifetime low-wage earners who couldn't scrape together bus fare to flee Hurricane Katrina) are different: they believe their lives will never get better. So when the rare "working-poor hero" unexpectedly rises (e.g., comedian Roseanne Barr), he continues to see the world as exclusionary. And in fact, the criticism that Eminem faced on his ascent seemed aimed not so much at him but squarely at his lower-class, "white trash" identity, at the misogynist, homophobic phrases that made up the language of his real culture. The price of the ticket to acceptability would have been, then, to deny who he really was.

In his follow-up albums, *The Marshall Mathers LP* and *The Eminem Show*, Eminem seemed to become only more angry, more taunting of mainstream mores, telling his fans "I don't owe you a motherfucking thing," showing the dirty details of his abject childhood in our faces ("My mother did drugs, hard liquor, cigarettes, and speed/ The baby came out disfigured...don't you dare make fun of that baby cuz that baby was me"). But in a larger sense he was simply making the choice to paint a portrait of his life, mind, and culture that was painstakingly accurate. Whether in direct-address raps or imaginative, horror-comic-book narratives, Eminem displayed exactly who he was and where he came from with jaw-dropping, unflattering honesty. When he proclaimed "God sent me to piss the world off," it could be said that he was acting out the way a neglected child would, preferring negative attention to the soul-crushing violence of being ignored. But in his case, he was making America see a whole invisible class, too.

Combined, Eminem's first three albums had enough impact to make him a part of music history, and cemented his position as *Billboard's* Artist of the Decade in 2009. But, as he told *Rolling Stone* last year, "Around the tail end of [2004's] *Encore*, the songs started getting really goofy. 'Rain Man,' 'Big Weenie,' 'Ass Like That'—that's when the wheels were coming off." Meaning addiction was taking control of his life. Grieving over the murder of his best friend, Proof, and the dissolution of his marriage, his weight ballooned by 80 pounds and he fell into a four-year-long writer's block. "Nobody could talk to me," he said, "or I'd rip their head off." To the outside world, it looked like one more music-star tragedy on the way.

After a near-death overdose ("The doctors told me I'd done the equivalent of four bags of heroin," he told *Rolling Stone*), he reached out to Elton John for help and got into recovery. Newly sober, he began to take a fresh look at his work. "I would go back and listen to songs off *The Marshall Mathers LP*, *The Eminem Show*, and some of *Encore* and ask, 'Why don't my music feel like this anymore?'"

Inigorated, he began to get his sea legs with 2009's Grammy-winning *Relapse* (an album he now rates with an "ehhh"). But 2010 saw Eminem rise to a whole new level with *Recovery*, which brought his old rage together with new insight. Particularly on the smash hit "Love the Way You Lie," Eminem followed in the footsteps of his earlier Stan by layering his direct-address rap with Rihanna's achingly masochistic chorus. Finally, it seemed, Eminem was able to see his tortured marital relationship clearly. It was easily the most honest, powerful song of the year.

But in some ways it was the album's first single that signaled a new Eminem. "Not Afraid" was something we'd never heard from him before: inspiration, and a call for people in trouble to "take my hand." Somehow, without leaving his working-poor roots behind, he'd made a turn toward hope and was willing to fight for it. "I won't back down," he had Pink sing on *Recovery*. It's a sentiment that, in the recent battle for union rights in his neighboring state of Wisconsin, seemed to resonate with growing crowds of once middle- and working-class people who now find they are turning into Eminem's working poor. Twelve years after his breakthrough, it could well be that Eminem's time has truly arrived. ●



**RAP SHEET**

*Eminem's Recovery sold a record-breaking 500,000 digital copies in six weeks.*



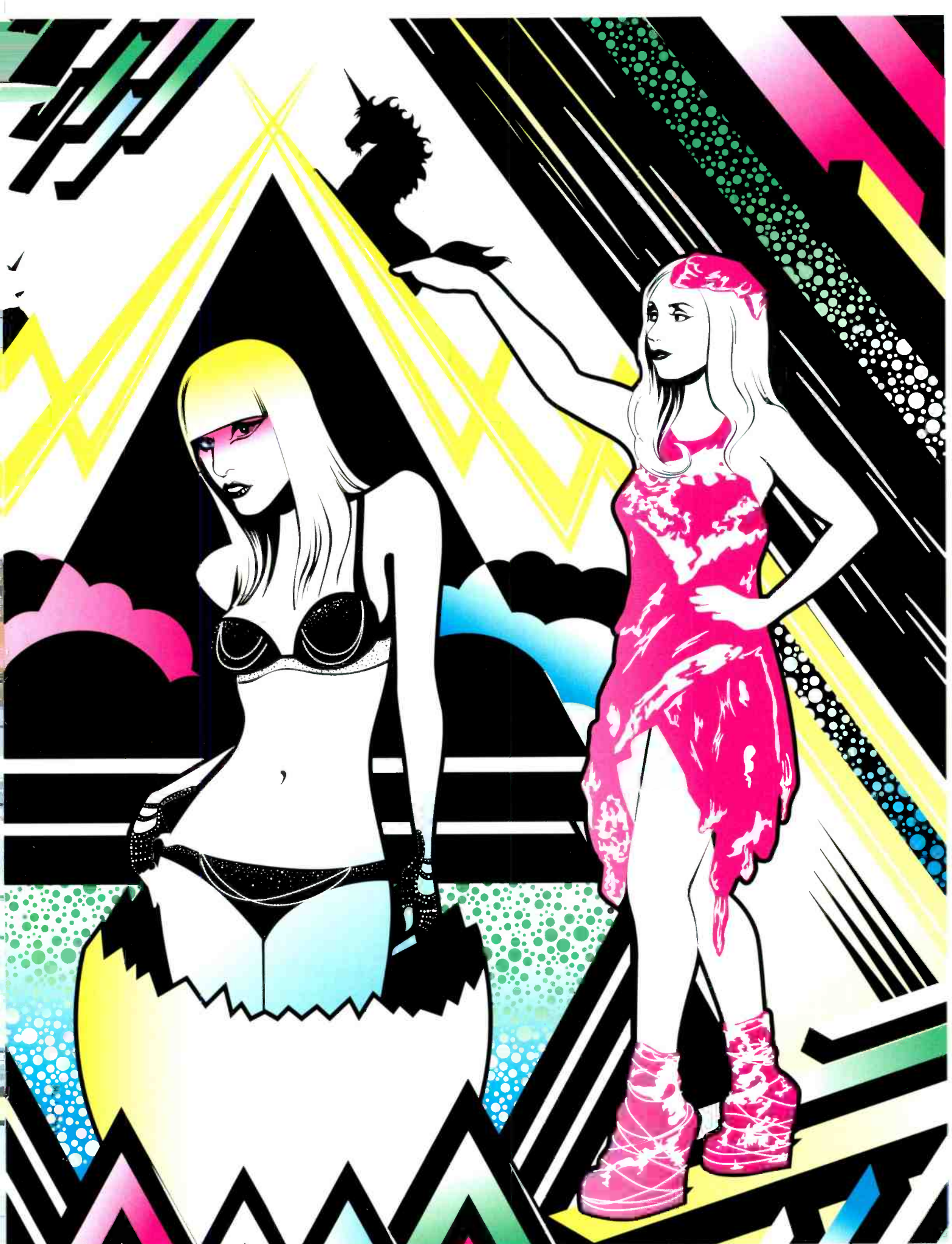


Her edginess can no longer be considered marginal. In 2010, Lady Gaga made the leap from trendsetter to globally recognized artist, social commentator, and mega-brand.

BY ALISON POWELL  
ILLUSTRATION BY ILOVEDUST/BA REPS

# GAGA, INC.







WANTED TO PUT my money exactly where my mouth is.” This is what Lady Gaga, earthborn Stefani Germanotta, says of the impetus behind her globally domineering No. 1 single “Born This Way.” “This is not only my chance to create something that is supportive of my political and social beliefs,” she notes, “it’s also my chance to artistically say, ‘I’m not being safe.’” By not playing it safe, the gal with hair currently the color of amniotic fluid has put the boom back into the bust.

When the 24-year-old former Catholic-school girl was carried onstage at this year’s Grammy Awards in a giant plastic egg, the world should have laughed its ass off. This instance of monumental creative brio outstripped Björk’s strangled swan Oscar dress by millions, and had the makings of a punch line *sans frontières*. And yet, though no one accorded Gaga’s egg the reverence of, say, Leonard Cohen singing “Hallelujah,” neither was the Lady awarded a gold medal for preposterousness. Indeed, the song that Gaga hatched, “Born This Way,” was, seemingly within seconds, the biggest hit on this planet. “You have your entire life to birth yourself into becoming the ultimate potential vision that you see for you. Who you are when you come out of your mother’s womb is not necessarily who you will become,” says Gaga. How true, though very few of us go on national television to get back inside the womb. And yet, the stunt hummed with artistic integrity and no one, least of all her growing list of sponsors, backed away from the egg. After all, Gaga was “born to be brave.”

To begin to explain the stupendous growth of Gaga’s cultural empire, one must talk about *numbers*. A No. 1 hit in 23 countries, “Born This Way” also sold, in just five days, 1 million copies on iTunes—the fastest seller ever in that medium. The track, which gives the new album its name, scored another win that must have been played by the dominoes of the cosmos: it was the thousandth song to hit No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100. Maybe a slide rule will be useful in the weeks to come. If so, Gaga is probably huddled with NASA right now designing one.

The numbers do not lie. This downtown New York City denizen and former NYU student, who knows her Leigh Bowery from the Bowery Boys, and who has cultivated the most surreal public images since Salvador Dali draped painted clock faces like lunch meat on his canvases, has turned her eccentricities into a global brand, complete with major corporate deals and an introduction to the Queen. Her mirrored humps, which are nothing like Fergie’s “lady lumps,” not to mention the shoes that mimic medieval castle turrets, or perhaps the hooves of Clydesdales going to Studio 54, make Madonna’s Gaultier-designed conical bra look like a pinafore on little Laura Ingalls Wilder. As F. Scott Fitzgerald said, “We are all queer fish.”

So, how is it that no one is laughing, really, at her? How is it that over the past three years she has become a trademark so all-encompassing, so significant, that when she backed out of a deal with Target recently (after discovering that the company did not make good on its promise to stop making campaign contributions to anti-gay organizations), they were the ones left with some explaining to do? Mathieu Deflem, professor of sociology at University of South Carolina, teaches a course called “Lady Gaga and the Sociology of the Fame.” Asked just how famous Gaga is right now, Professor Deflem declares that Lady Gaga is “the single most famous and most successful artist in the world of popular music.” And while the tweets back this up, says Deflem, “The use of controversial themes and stylings in her work would not mean anything were it not for the core of Lady Gaga as a creative talent.”

Why is Lady Gaga so big right now? Hits, and more hits. One can chart the growth of Lady Gaga with YouTube alone, but Facebook and Twitter are the assembly lines of ardor. Her first hit single, “Just Dance,” released in 2008, currently counts 136 million YouTube views (three of those were mine). “Poker Face,” also from her debut album, *The Fame*, scores 78 million views. “Telephone,” 108 million. Oh, it goes on. It goes on to...a billion. Her number of “Likes” on Facebook was well more than 33 million when I last looked, and climbs by the minute, like the totes on the national debt calculator. Professor Deflem explains the power surge as the natural cumulative effect of the past three years of persistence and hard work, and “not simply a matter of *this year*.” All the same, other forces are at work. “These dull

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and sad times of economic depression and perpetual war and violence need somebody like Lady Gaga to provide relief. Lady Gaga filled a void in a pop music scene begging for weirdness and creativity.”

Gaga reminds us again that “weirdness and creativity” offer the X-factor that compels dollars from even the tightest wallets, even in the toughest times. (Other recessions made fortunes for the inventors of Pet Rocks, Rubik’s Cubes, and *Terminator* sequels.) Not only is the public buying the act: corporate America is lining up to see through the eyes of Gagavision. In 2010, Polaroid gave Lady Gaga the title of Creative Director, commissioning her to design a pair of “camera glasses” with embedded LCD displays in the tinted lenses. Gaga was on hand to introduce them at the tech industry’s annual Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas this January. “Lady Gaga is a key player in Polaroid’s development of products that enable creativity, celebrate artistry, and make sharing instantaneous,” says Scott W. Hardy, the president of Polaroid. “Her products are truly expressive of [her]





**TAKE A BOW**  
Lady Gaga has over one billion YouTube views.

artistic vision and her commitment to injecting self-expression, fashion, and fun into product development and design."

That the call would come to Lady Gaga to lend her genius to the manufacture of a revolutionary piece of imaging equipment in 2011 is no desperate marketing strategy. Last year saw the pop star's global reach explode. The "Monster's Ball," as she calls her traveling experiential galaxy, creates a relational dynamic in which she is the sun and the fans are stars. Her fans, which she calls her "monsters" and "little monsters," feel intimately connected to her, and cared for by her. In its recent cover story, *Vogue* magazine quoted Gaga as saying, "Sometimes, being onstage is like having sex with my fans." With the new album, she says, "I am not trying to gain new fans. I love the fans I already have, and this is for them." Even if she holds steady right here, which is already a long-vanished possibility, one can see why the *Mad Men* of Madison Avenue have come swarming. The fan frenzy around Gaga, and its attendant purchasing power, is staggering.

For Gaga, though, "it's not about the numbers"—but the numbers keep climbing. Back in 2008 she told *Billboard*, "My goal as an artist is to write and make pop music that has something artistic and interesting to say. If I can get a 4-year-old girl and a 25-year-old art student to appreciate my album, then I've done a good job." As artistic and interesting as her former hits have been, "Born This Way" is the most adventurous yet, and has not brought Sarah Palin or Michele Bachmann out of their Tea Partier's corners swinging. Without incident, Gaga told Anderson Cooper on *60 Minutes*—hardly the homeroom for Young America—that she smokes pot when she writes. The Christian Right is oddly mute, too, in response to Gaga's assertion in the song that "God makes no mistakes" when creating each person.

Using the tools of the time, Gaga has also given her cultural army a language of its own. For example, Twitter-ese demands short, easy-to-understand refrains. "I don't want [the message] to be hidden in poetic wizardry and metaphors," she says. "I want it to be an attack, an assault on the issue, because I think, especially in today's music, everything gets kind of washy sometimes." What people want said for them is not, in most cases, fancy. Historians looking at the lyrics to "Just Dance" alone could understand a great deal about this era: "I can't text you with a drink in my hand." Our attention is fragmented, focused on both the small needs of the moment—a text, a drink—and the larger demands of high-volume, low-syllable modern communication. If Facebook has taught us anything, it's that people can speak to one or to all in a single sentence. Gaga does, constantly.

That is the power. "I was born this way"—what could be simpler, or more livable? It has often been said of the dance floor, by Madonna, for one, that it is a great equalizer, democracy in action. "Likes" are votes. It isn't, ultimately, the volume of units shifted, whether they are CDs, downloads, or instant cameras, that will define this era for Lady Gaga. And it won't be the machinery that moved those units forward that will forever be the story. How she became the pop equivalent of Walmart with the inventory of Warhol (which is, of course, totally Warholian) will fade into the background and what will remain will be the shimmering impact of the show. ●



A full-page photograph of Rihanna sitting in a field of tall, dry grass. She is wearing a vibrant red, strapless, ruffled dress. Her hair is styled in voluminous, wavy red curls. She is looking off to the side with a slight smile. The lighting is warm and golden, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The background is a soft-focus field of tall grasses.

# WILD FIRE

No taboo is too hot for Rihanna. With a killer instinct for hit songs, winning collaborations, and sexy poses, she's pop's perfect storm.

*BY MATT DIEHL*

*PHOTOGRAPH  
BY CAMILLA AKRANS*





**L**HERE'S NOTHING THAT makes a pop star irresistible like some actual edge—and Rihanna cuts through the competition like a candy-coated switchblade. “Trends are boring,” she says. “It’s boring to see everyone doing the same thing.” No one’s yawning at RiRi: In the past year, the beautiful Barbadian diva has proven beguilingly unpredictable. Who could forget her confession this year that she’s sexually submissive, a theme emphasized in the hook to her controversial single “S&M”: “I may be bad, but I’m perfectly good at it/ Sex in the air, I don’t care, I love the smell of it/ Sticks and stones may break my bones, but chains and whips excite me.” *Whew.*

Then she discovered Twitter: speaking her mind online sparked a catty tweet smack-down with R&B singer Ciara. They made up, but Rihanna’s outspokenness didn’t stop. “No more corny label tweets!” she exclaimed. “I just got on there and started talking.” And of course, there is Rihanna’s surprising reason for reducing the limits of her restraining order against physically abusive ex-boyfriend Chris Brown. “I just didn’t want to make it more difficult for him professionally. What he did was a personal thing,” she told *Rolling Stone*. “It had nothing to do with his career. Saying he has to be a hundred feet away from me, he can’t perform at awards shows—that definitely made it difficult for him...[But] it doesn’t mean we’re gonna make up, or even talk again.”

Rihanna faces controversy head on, no apologies: her duet with Eminem, “Love the Way You Lie,” seems to openly confront the issues inherent in an abusive relationship like the one she had with Brown. On the one hand, it’s raw. On the other, it’s impossible to look away—and the combination proved compelling: “Love the Way You Lie” was an international pop-cultural phenomenon, and helped solidify Eminem’s career comeback. “It’s kind of like the closing to that chapter, and now we’re in a new stage,” she explains. Of course, the more this good girl goes bad, the more she cements her superstar status. “She has a swagger that’s unbelievable,” explains Tor Erik Hermansen, half of the production duo Stargate who collaborated with RiRi on “S&M,” “Unfaithful,” “Don’t Stop the Music,” and numerous other smashes.

In November 2010, Rihanna released her fifth album, *Loud*. “I wanted songs that only I

can do, not generic songs that everyone else could sing,” Rihanna says. Case in point: *Loud*’s second single, “What’s My Name,” a flirty collaboration with ex-flame Drake that gets extra frisson from the pair’s did-they-or-didn’t-they chemistry. “[Drake’s] the only person I thought could really understand the melody of the song,” Rihanna says coyly. “The minute he heard it he said, ‘I know exactly what I’m going to do. I love it.’” Knowing what she wants has paid off: *Loud* would sell more than 200,000 copies in its first week—the biggest initial sales of Rihanna’s career, and her fifth Top 10 album in a row. The album’s debut single, “Only Girl (in the World),” meanwhile, would hit No. 1, and go on to win a Grammy for Best Dance Recording. “What’s My Name” would also top the charts, as did “S&M,” making Rihanna the youngest artist ever to have 10 singles top the Billboard 100 in the chart’s five-decade-plus existence.

Even on other people’s records, Rihanna was hard to escape this year. In addition to her Eminem collaboration, she also created fireworks on Kanye West’s *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*, with a cameo on the album’s unforgettable centerpiece, “All of the Lights.” And her name has become a powerful enough brand to move her beyond music: recently, she put out her own signature fragrance, its provocative, poetic name—Reb’l Fleur—exposing deep personal roots. “My grandmother in Barbados used to call me her Rebel Flower,” she told *People* magazine. “I wanted something that said ‘Rihanna was here.’”

She’s also set to make her mark in movies. Rihanna’s first starring role in a film comes in the upcoming big-budget action epic *Battleship*, appearing alongside the young Hollywood likes of model/Andy Roddick spouse Brooklyn Decker, *Friday Night Lights* sex symbol Taylor Kitsch, and *True Blood* hunk Alexander Skarsgård. “My favorite part has been shooting in the ocean,” Rihanna notes. “We were going at top speed, and I had to shoot this really badass weapon off the front of the boat. There was gunpowder all in my mouth by the time it finished.” The fearless firebrand insisted on doing as many of her own stunts as possible—even when a female stunt double was provided. “They always want me to sit down when the dangerous stuff happens, but I’m a control freak,” Rihanna says. “She doesn’t do it like I would do it.” That’s right: nobody does it better. ●



**I**T'S OFTEN EXCRUCIATING to watch child stars grow up, but so far, the usual reasons to look away in dismay do not apply to Justin Bieber. He has yet to grow out of his cuteness; in fact, his recent departure from the trademark swooping, feathery bowl cut has revealed nascent handsomeness. He's certainly no Lindsay Lohan-style train wreck. And his career seems to be nowhere near peaking, given that he's been packing arenas from Tel Aviv to Tokyo on his spring tour.

Instead, what's nerve-racking is having to watch him helm, as a newly-turned-17-year-old, what is both a sometimes rather scary puppy-love cult and a burgeoning multinational entertainment conglomerate: the Bieber-industrial complex.

His April visit to Israel, for instance, prompted global headlines—including this one in *The New York Times*: “Diplomatic Breakdown Amid Bieber Fever in Israel.” The paper reported that he'd become “embroiled in a diplomatic imbroglio” after a planned meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was called off for mysterious reasons. Meanwhile, Bieber went off on a Twitter rant after getting hounded by the paparazzi: “They should be ashamed of themselves. Take pictures of me eating but not in a place of prayer, ridiculous.” Followed by: “People wait their whole lives for opportunities like this, why would they want to take that experience away from someone.” And then: “Staying in the hotel for the rest of the week u happy?”

If you're Justin Bieber circa 2011, *The New York Times* mistakes you for Hillary Clinton, TMZ treats you like you're Brangelina—and you're left to storm off to your (luxury hotel) room.

In February, when Bieber failed to take home the Best New Artist Grammy, winner Esperanza Spalding got inundated with death threats from “Beliebers” on Twitter. For his part, Bieber took the loss with telegenic poise: After running into Spalding backstage, he sat shoulder-to-shoulder with her for an Associated Press video interview in which he declared “I like your hair!” (while petting her Afro), then added “I'm happy for you,” followed by a hug. And he told MTV, “I'm not going to lie—I was disappointed. But, you know, I'm gonna come back and we'll take a few home.”

Even his debut as a *Rolling Stone* cover boy, also in February, was fraught. Bieber got bashed for his response to the

magazine's question about, of all things, abortion: “I really don't believe in abortion. It's like killing a baby?” *Rolling Stone* pressed: What about in cases of rape? “Well, I think that's really sad, but everything happens for a reason. I don't know how that would be a reason. I guess I haven't been in that position, so I wouldn't be able to judge that.”

While the magazine apparently failed to solicit Bieber's opinions about the budget deficit or President Obama's birth certificate, it did manage to get him to sound off on health care: “You guys are evil,” he joked. “Canada's the best country in the world. We go to the doctor and we don't need to worry about paying him, but here, your whole life, you're broke because of medical bills.”

It would be tempting to say that the media blows everything about Bieber—every sound bite, every aside, every tweet—way out of proportion, except that, by every measure of success and pop-cultural impact, he's *already* way out of proportion.

## BOY WONDER

According to a *Los Angeles Times* tally, Bieber fans spent an estimated \$103.7 million on his music alone (physical albums, concerts, digital downloads) in 2010, which put him ahead of even Lady Gaga. He is the first artist to have seven songs from a debut album hit the Billboard Hot 100. And in March, his *Never Say Never* overtook Michael Jackson's *This Is It* as the highest-grossing concert-themed movie in US box office history.

He's a one-man licensing juggernaut—with exactly the sort of quasi-ridiculous branded merchandise you'd expect, including the Justin Bieber Magnetic Split Heart Necklace (\$30) and a doll hilariously called the Justin Bieber Street Style Collection Figure (\$17.99). His nearly nine million Twitter followers may endlessly tweet their sappy devotion (e.g., “#beforwehadjustin I've never cried because of a boy”),

but increasingly, both critics and the music industry are willing to take him seriously. *New York Times* pop-music scribe Jon Caramanica, calling Bieber “a stealth ambassador for 1990s R&B,” even included his *My World 2.0* in his best-of-2010 Top 10 list.

In addition to his Grammy nominations, Bieber won Artist of the Year at the 2010 American Music Awards, and he's a 2011 Billboard Music Awards finalist for both Top Artist and Top New Artist.

In other words, the Tom Jones of the *Twilight* set is now an Establishment artist. His place in pop-cultural history is assured, as the first YouTube star to ever transition so definitively, and so profitably, into a mainstream career. He's a case study in how celebrities are created, or self-created, these days.

The truth is, the kid went viral on his own; the music industry merely latched onto a shooting star. And precisely because he's a digital native, he appears to be acutely aware of what everyone—not just his fans—have to say about him. He

Pop's new superpower Justin Bieber, a finalist for *Billboard's* Top Artist and Top New Artist Awards, triumphed in a year of controversy and acclaim.

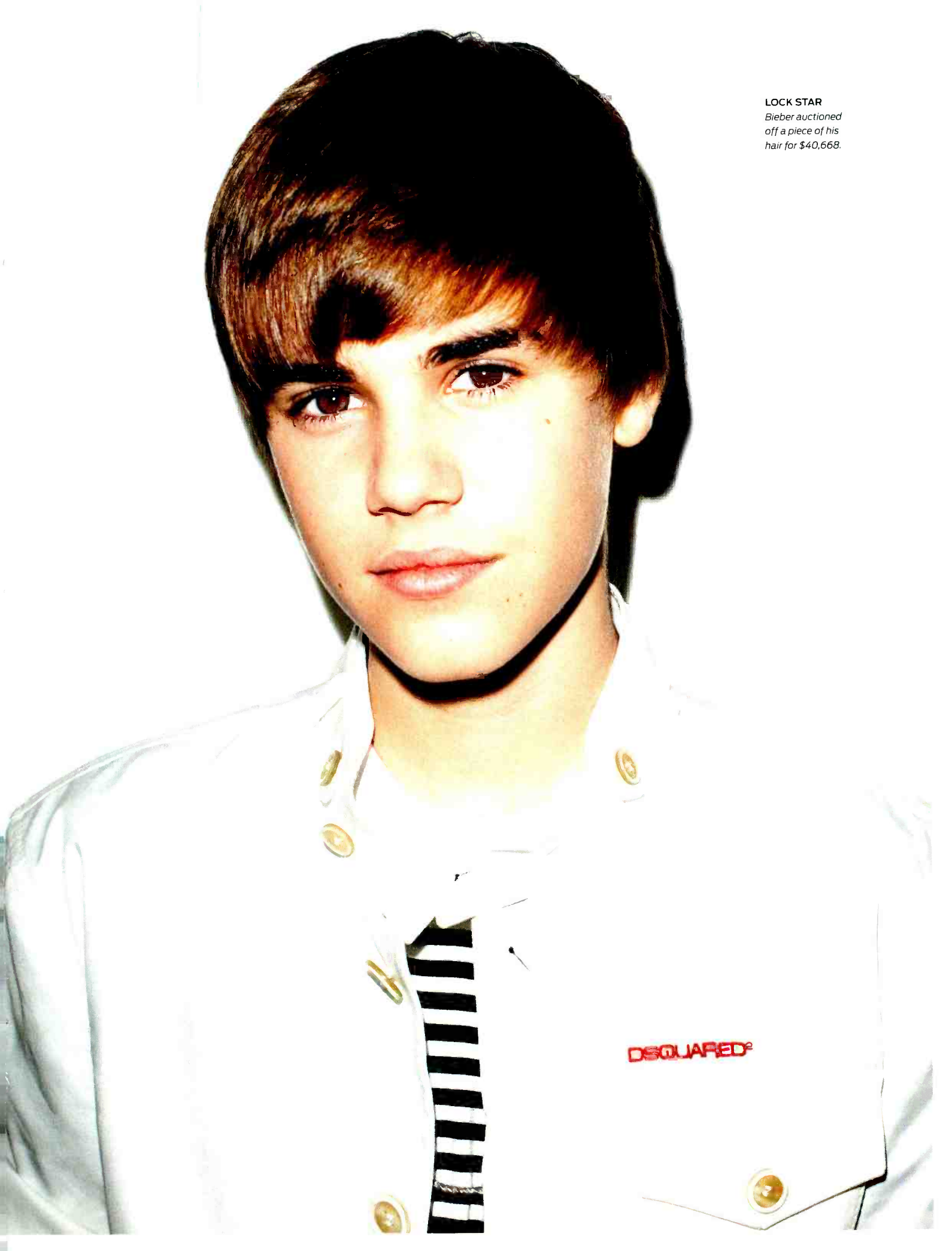
BY SIMON DUMENCO  
PHOTOGRAPH BY  
TERRY RICHARDSON

may have won the industry and certain critics over, but he knows that to millions of non-fans he's just a twinkly little punchline. (*Never Say Never*—with an emphasis on its inspirational small-town-kid-makes-good narrative—was a strategic part of his campaign to convert non-Beliebers.)

Stars of Bieber's magnitude, hounded by the paparazzi and isolated by their own fame, used to be forced to understand themselves through the refracted mirror of the mainstream media. But in the age of Twitter, even a boy in a bubble gets to live among the fans and the haters in the unruly wilds of cyberspace. He knows firsthand exactly what we're all saying about him. The question is, what does he do with that knowledge?

Social media made Justin Bieber. Now we might just get to watch it remake him. ●





**LOCK STAR**  
*Bieber auctioned  
off a piece of his  
hair for \$40,668.*

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# TOP NEW ARTIST

*Finalists*

*Creating monster hits and infectious anthems, the following four newcomers of the year (along with fellow contender Justin Bieber) stormed the front lines of pop.*

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## Ke\$ha

THE "TIK TOK" QUEEN'S CAREER EXPLODED IN 2010, THANKS TO A PARTY-STARTING PACK OF POP HITS. BY NICK HARAMIS • PHOTOGRAPH BY TERRY RICHARDSON

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**Forget everything you think you** know about Ke\$ha. Sure, she's petulant and provocative—and, yes, she knows her way around a bottle of Jack—but the 24-year-old pop star has also mastered the art of upending expectations, as she's proven time and again since skyrocketing to the top of the Billboard 200 in January 2010 with her debut album, *Animal*. When she calls from her tour bus, the Nashville native is sitting in bed, opening her fan mail. "It's actually my favorite part of the day," she says, betraying a sincerity that often gets drowned out by her liquor-soaked lyrics. "What I've gathered from reading letter after letter is that some people just see a wild child, but most of these kids get it." The "it" she's referring to is her message, which runs deeper than glitter, and is fairly straightforward: it's okay to be yourself, bad habits and all.

For every ode to excess Ke\$ha releases—and, thankfully, there's no shortage of those—she's crafted surprisingly insightful and introspective antidotes, such as "We R Who We R," the lead single off last November's *Cannibal*. Despite its text-generation spelling errors, the track represents the work of a wiser, more mature songwriter. (In addition her own songs, Ke\$ha has also cowritten material for the Veronicas, Miley Cyrus, and most recently, Britney Spears.) She was inspired to create "We R Who We R," which entered the Billboard Hot 100 at No. 1, when news cycles began reporting on the alarming increase in suicide attempts among gay teens. "It's really sad that we live in a society where people feel like they can't just be themselves," she says. "That's what I stand for, if I had to sum it up: I'm just being myself, a goofy, rapping white girl. I'm a misfit, which is why my music isn't for everyone." The people who respond to it, however, do so feverishly.

At a recent show, she pulled a boy onto the stage—something she does midway through each performance—but it was Ke\$ha who was left speechless. "He started crying and he told me that the only reason he was alive was because of my music,"

she says. "He'd never felt accepted for who he was, and through my songs he realized that there are people out there who will love him for exactly who he is, and so he decided to come out of the closet." It was this interaction, however brief, that convinced Ke\$ha (born Kesha Rose Seberty) to ignore the critics and focus on her fans. "I'm doing this to make people happy," she says, "and that's translating. Quite frankly, that's the reason I think I was put on the planet this lifetime. I'm here to make music, so the fact that it's resulting in a positive change is the ultimate payoff for me."

Looking back at her incredible year, Ke\$ha still can't believe her good fortune. "Are you kidding?" she says, when asked if she's come to terms with her newfound superstardom. "I'm not used to any of this yet." Then, for effect, she adds, "I just had my first groupie last night!" Okay, so don't forget everything you think you know about Ke\$ha. ●

ART PARTNER







# Taio Cruz

THE LUSH LIFE BECKONS FOR BRITAIN'S HOTTEST R&B HIP-HOP EXPORT NOW THAT HE'S EMBRACED HIS SUDDEN, PHENOMENAL SUCCESS. BY LORRAINE ALI • PHOTOGRAPH BY KURT ISWARIENKO

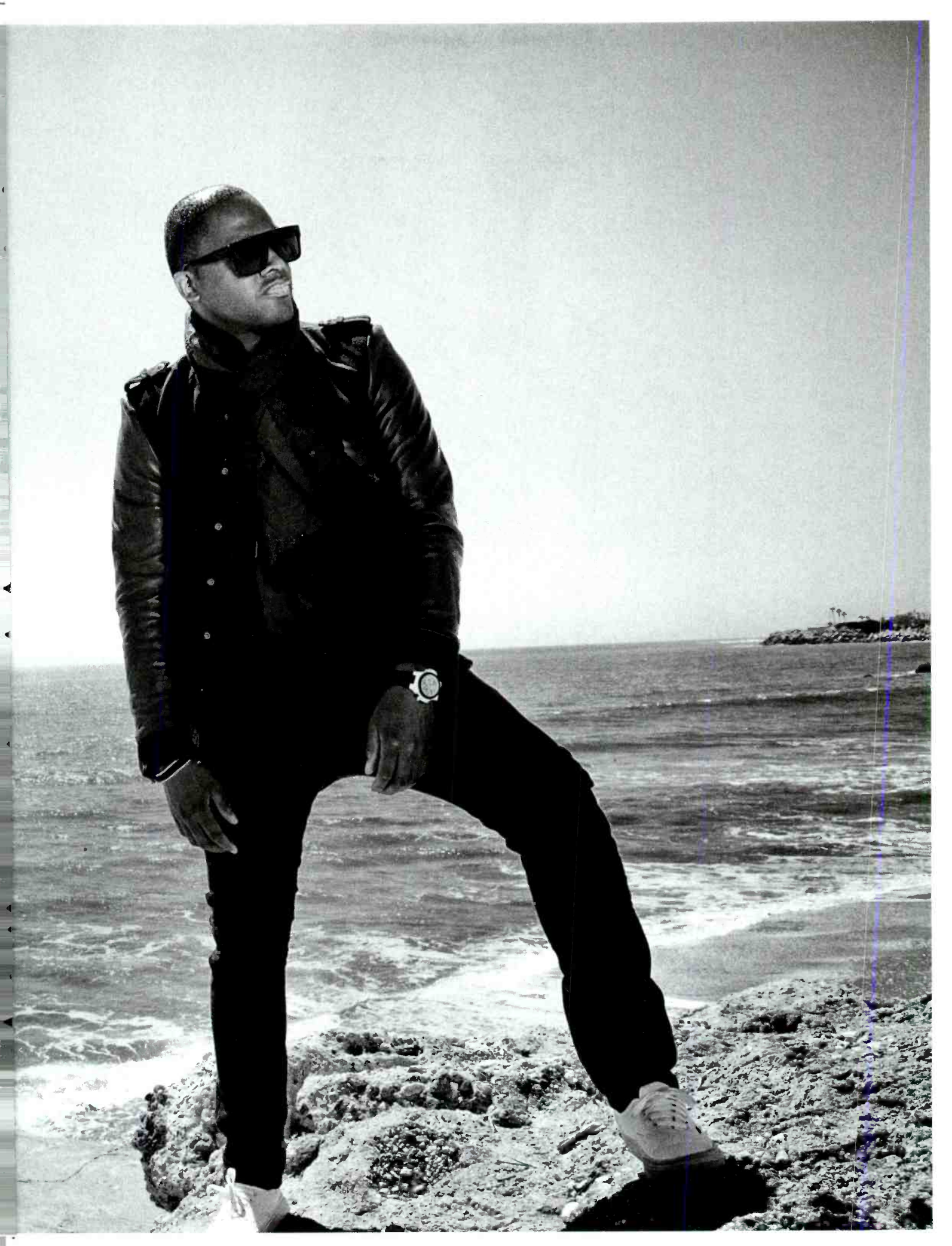
**WHEN TAILO CRUZ SHATTERED RECORDS** last year with his US debut, *Rokstarr*, the electropop/R&B/hip-hop sensation admits he wasn't quite prepared for instant fame. "I broke out in a crazy rash all over, and my doctor told me it was due to stress," says Cruz, 28, who's produced, written, and performed songs with everyone from Kylie Minogue to Busta Rhymes. "I remember taking five flights in one day for shows. There's still a lot to do, but I'm coping with it better. See, no rash," he says, pointing to his smooth, elegant face.

A clear complexion comes in handy, especially when you're YouTube's most-viewed UK artist ever, at 100 million combined hits and counting. Taio (pronounced *Ty-yo*) is renowned for his indelible dance beats, his love of speedboats and supermodels (i.e. the "Break Your Heart" video with Ludacris), and his bawdy duet with Ke\$ha, "Dirty Picture." But in person, Cruz is hardly a Cristal-swiggling playa. At a recent stop in Los Angeles, he ordered a Shirley Temple during lunch, over which he discussed his love for classical music—which was honed during his years at an exclusive English boarding school—and admitted he's "a girl" when it comes to shoes and accessories: "It's sick, really. I need help," he says with a laugh. For therapy, Cruz has parlayed his addiction into a fashion line: now bad-boy luminaries like Kanye West sport sunglasses and watches from the Rokstarr collection.

Despite Cruz's permeation of celebrity circles and American pop culture (including a scheduled appearance on the *American Idol* finale), fans and critics alike have had a hard time figuring out exactly where this anomaly from London's club scene fits in. "I'm getting better at not caring how people characterize me," says Cruz. "I used to get really annoyed when people would say 'You're the best R&B artist in the world!' or 'You're the best rapper ever.' I'm like, 'Okay [*shrugs*], thanks.'" Regardless of what you call him, Cruz is the only UK artist in a quarter century to have two tracks in *Billboard's* Top 10, year-end Hot 100 chart. "Break Your Heart" set another record last year when it shot from 53 to No. 1 on the *Billboard* Hot 100, making it the biggest-ever jump of a debut single by an artist. And, as you probably guessed, he's not done yet.

Cruz cowrote J. Lo's new single, "I'm Into You," and he recently penned a song for Justin Bieber's forthcoming album. He also wrote and performed the title track for the new animated feature, *Rio*. Apparently, Cruz will stop at nothing short of world domination. "I want to remove P. Diddy from that billboard in Times Square, where he's punching the sky, and replace it with me in some Rokstarr sunglasses," says Cruz. "See, I'm never satisfied with where I am." And with that, Cruz announces he's working on a new album, to be released this year. America's certainly ready, but is his dermatologist?











# Nicki Minaj

A CARAVAN OF CULTURAL REFERENCES AND MUSICAL INFLUENCES PLUS A ROGUE'S GALLERY OF PERSONAS EQUALS THE SINGULAR TALENT THAT IS NICKI MINAJ.

BY VIVIEN GOLDMAN • PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW MACPHERSON



**"NOW I'M HAVING FUN WITH MUSIC,"** says singer, songwriter, rapper, and drama queen Nicki Minaj, of a year in which *Pink Friday* rocketed her from "most sought-after guest rapper" status to hip-hop/R&B/pop brand-name beatitude, and a record-breaking seven *Billboard* chart hits in October 2010.

All the richness of Minaj's experience shines on *Pink Friday*, which is extraordinary not only because of hits like "Fly" and "Moment 4 Life," but for its emotional range. Her background is part Indian, and like Kali, the Hindu goddess of birth, destruction, and death, she plays ferocious with Eminem, inspirational with Rihanna, and tender with the dashing Drake (their nuptial kiss in the "Moment 4 Life" video has become a global replay moment). "I'm really happy I finally made my first official album," the breakout star says, speaking from Fort Lauderdale, where she's playing a sold-out date. "People who know me now, and find out about me in years to come, will know about Onika, not just Nicki Minaj."

Onika Tanya Maraj is the name of a bewildered 5-year-old girl who, 21 years ago, landed in Queens, New York, from her family's home in Trinidad, to start a new life. At a young age, she realized that she didn't want to look like the other kids, and would dye her own hair. Fast-forward two decades, and Minaj is "universal," as she sings on "I'm The Best." Caustic, raw, surreal, or romantic, her raps always bear her unique stamp, prompting stars like Christina Aguilera, Kanye West, Usher, will.i.am, and Mariah Carey to come knocking for a flash of her lyrical glitter. "People call me The Collaboration Queen," she says. "It's part of my identity." For Minaj, the acclaim is a vindication—and a relief.

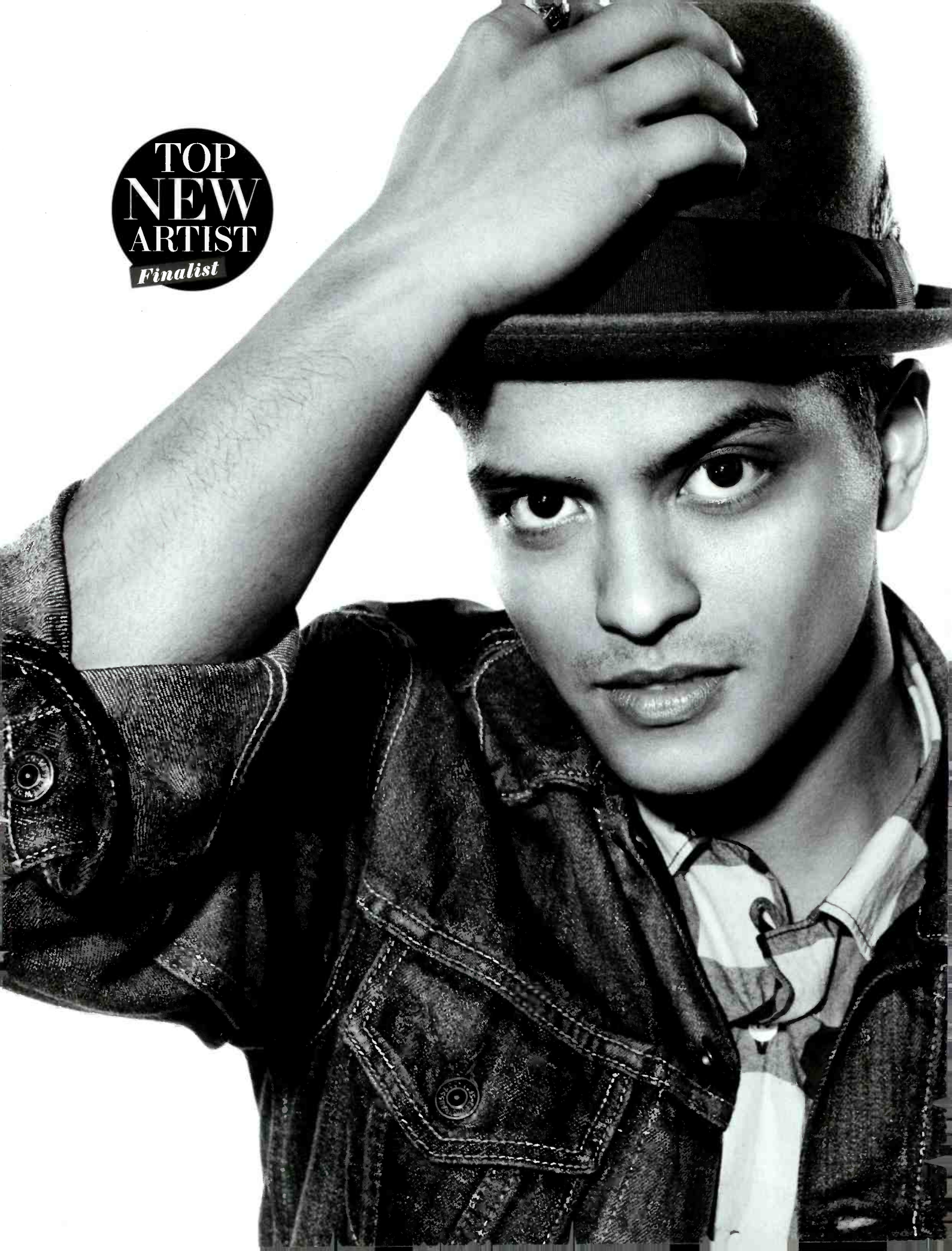
"All year, I worried about creating the first album," she admits. "I didn't know if my underground popularity would translate to mainstream success. Having sold 1.5 million copies of *Pink Friday* worldwide, now I know I've accomplished something."

What alchemy has positioned Minaj so neatly at the heart of the zeitgeist? Her prodigious musical and performance skills are crucial, of course, as is her imaginative glamour. "Acting was my first love," Minaj says, and the former drama student inhabits her characters, from alter egos Roman Zolanski and his mother, Martha, to her turn as a creepy schoolgirl on *Saturday Night Live*. Whether she's a vampire, a jungle guerilla fighter, or a sultry Cleopatra in her videos, Minaj sends a message: women don't need to be sold by tired sexual clichés.

Crucially, though, in Minaj we sense an unconventional survivor who is still laughing, an adventurer who relishes life and can handle danger. Most significantly, she grew up witnessing her father's crack addiction, which made him try to burn down the house while her mother was still inside. An affectionate album dedication to him shows that they've moved toward a family healing. "These things are festering—they need to be spoken about," Minaj reflects. "The record's not all about my childhood, but I've never been one of those artists not to talk about it, starting on my first mixtapes."

Warmly, she recalls the African street vendors on Jamaica Avenue in Queens who sold her tapes. "They're the heart and soul of rap, and I still release mixtapes because of them. No matter what I say, do, or wear, I still feel I'm a rapper from Queens. It shaped my character; you always have this hunger and this drive." ●

**TOP  
NEW  
ARTIST**  
*Finalist*





# Bruno Mars

THE NEW CROSSOVER KING HAS MOTOWN, REGGAE, HIP-HOP, AND ROCK IN HIS ARSENAL, POWERING A CATALOG THAT MAKES THE SINGER-SONGWRITER A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

BY ALAN LIGHT ● PHOTOGRAPH BY MARY ELLEN MATTHEWS

A genuine triple threat is a rare thing. But when a musician comes along who is a truly top-rank singer, songwriter, and producer—think Smokey Robinson, Prince, The-Dream—they alter the sound that's in the air. On car radios, playing in department stores, suddenly there's a distinctive new style that you hear everywhere you turn.

Bruno Mars made that kind of impact last year. Raised in Hawaii, playing from a young age in his family's band, and even working as a peewee Elvis impersonator, Mars and his signature blend of Motown, hip-hop, doo-wop, funk, pop, reggae, and more became inescapable in 2010. Mars shrugs off the idea that this is simply some natural talent. "I think it's more about being a fan of all different styles of music," he told *Billboard*, "understanding what makes those songs so special, and trying to incorporate that into your own music."

First came the hits he worked on for other artists, often in collaboration with his producing team, the Smeezingtons—B.o.B's "Nothin' on You," "Billionaire" by Travie McCoy, and "Right Round" by Flo Rida featuring Ke\$ha. K'naan's "Wavin' Flag" became an international smash when it was chosen as Coca-Cola's promotional theme for the 2010 FIFA World Cup tournament.

The real big bang came in August, when Cee Lo Green's irresistible, unlikely anthem "F\*\*k You" (which Mars cowrote and coproduced) became a viral sensation. From *Saturday Night Live* to *Glee*, the deliriously profane song turned into something more than just a hit, though it also made it all the way to No. 1 on the Billboard Top 40; it was a true cultural moment.

This barrage of successes all served as the run-up to the release of Mars's own debut album, *Doo-Wops & Hooligans*, in October, which shot to No. 3 on the Billboard 200. The back-to-back blockbusters "Just the Way You Are" and "Grenade" made him the first male act in more than 13 years to take his first two charting radio singles as a lead artist to No. 1 on the Hot 100. (Despite his commercial triumphs, the year still held challenges for Mars, like his arrest for cocaine possession in Las Vegas in September; he pleaded guilty to the charge, and said that what he did was "foolish.")

While the ascension of Bruno Mars hit like a thunderbolt, don't assume that it came without a struggle. "A lot of people think this was an overnight thing," he said. "Before 'Nothin' on You' were some very dark times—just me in the recording studio, figuring out the production process and the writing-songs process."

That period of experimentation led to a unique sonic mix, incorporating all of the music that Mars loved, a balance that manages to be both classic and progressive. But not everyone in the industry immediately understood this stylistic diversity, nor Mars's own multiethnic background (he is of Puerto Rican and Filipino descent). "That was my struggle coming up," he said. "No one knew what I was. 'What is he, what kind of music is it?'" He was aware that he was doing something outside conventional categories. "I guess if I'm a product, either you're chocolate, you're vanilla, or you're butterscotch," he once said. "You can't be all three."

Apparently, though, this posed no problem for listeners, who flocked to Mars's work, whether it felt like old-school crooning, a funky roller-coaster ride, or a cathartic curse-out over a sunny backbeat. Like all real game-changers, Bruno Mars threw away the rules, and his own explanation for his success is simple: "There are no tricks," he has said. "I don't have mascara on one eye. It's honesty." ●

# the FINAL

THEY ROCKED. THEY INSPIRED FAN FRENZIES. THEY SET STYLE TRENDS. THEY PACKED HOUSES AND SMASHED SALES RECORDS. MEET THE FINALISTS OF THE 2011 BILLBOARD MUSIC AWARDS.

## TOP HOT 100 SONG

Breaking into the Hot 100 is an impressive feat, but topping it and staying there requires serious sonic magic—just ask the following finalists for Top Hot 100 Song. British R&B singer **Taio Cruz**'s "Dynamite" exploded this year. It's his second top-three single, following "Break Your Heart," from last spring's Top 10 *Rokstarr*. In the video for the song, Cruz performs for a crowd of sexy female mechanics in front of a backdrop of flying sparks. You could say the energy on Cruz's track is electric. Meanwhile, **Eminem**'s "Love the Way You Lie," featuring Rihanna, centers on a couple whose problems quickly escalate from friction to full-on house fire (actors Megan Fox and Dominic Monaghan portray the pair in the music video). The second single off Eminem's seventh studio album, *Recovery* claimed the top spot on the Billboard Hot 100 for seven weeks, and earned Shady five Grammy Award nominations. Although he shares a name with the red planet, **Bruno**

**Mars**'s "Just the Way You Are" is white-hot, and concerned more with burning desire than anything else. Usurping Katy Perry's "Teenage Dream" for the Hot 100's top spot last October, the predominately R&B love song has since been covered on an emotional episode of *Glee*, and earned Mars the Grammy for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance. Speaking of **Katy Perry**, her West Coast beach-culture anthem, "California Gurls," featuring Snoop Dogg, was a smash-hit ode to sun, skin, and sweets. The party jam peaked at No. 1 on the Hot 100 charts, and went four-times platinum stateside. Perry has said she wanted to record a West Coast answer to Jay-Z and Alicia Keys's "Empire State of Mind," and, wow, did she succeed: "California Gurls" is so hot, indeed, it'll "melt your popsicle." No stranger to bringing the heat, **Usher**, along with will.i.am, released "OMG," the third single off his sixth studio album, *Raymond v. Raymond*. Usher's ninth No. 1 song in the United States, it welcomed another milestone in his already prolific career: he became the third artist,

behind Michael Jackson and Paul McCartney, to collect Top 10 hits on five consecutive albums. In the song, Usher, who played with the Black Eyed Peas at this year's Super Bowl, turns up the heat with lines like: "Baby, you got it all/ Sexy from her head to the toes/ And I want it all."

—Nick Haramis

## TOP BILLBOARD 200 ARTIST

The five finalists for this year's Top Billboard 200 Artist proved that people still buy albums—lots of them. Preceded by the initial success of "Baby," which has sold more than 3 million digital copies in the US as of April, **Justin Bieber**'s *My World 2.0* debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200. "Somebody to Love" and "U Smile" were chosen as the album's second and third singles, and *My World 2.0* still hovers around the top 20—astonishing given that it was released in March 2010. Bieber's remix album, *Never Say Never*, is currently holding strong in

the Top 10. Scottish singing sensation **Susan Boyle** captivated the world's attention when, in April 2009, she performed a rousing rendition of "I Dreamed a Dream" on the popular television series *Britain's Got Talent*. She released her first studio album, *I Dreamed a Dream*, that same year, and followed it up with 2010's Christmas album, *The Gift*, which dropped in November. The collection of holiday songs, which also features covers of Lou Reed and Leonard Cohen tracks, debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200, where it stayed for four weeks, despite dipping to third place in its third week. Based on the success of its three hit singles, "No Love," "Not Afraid," and "Love the Way You Lie," **Eminem**'s seventh studio album, *Recovery*, became the best-selling album of 2010, moving more than 5.7 million copies worldwide and earning the provocative lyricist a Grammy for Best Rap Album at last year's awards. *Recovery* debuted at the top of the Billboard 200—Em's



# STS



**TRIPLE THREAT**  
Kanye West,  
Taylor Swift, and  
Katy Perry made  
the cut.



sixth album to do so—where it spent nine nonconsecutive weeks. It currently holds the title of the best-selling album in digital history. **Lady Antebellum**, the unstoppable country trio from Nashville, released their sophomore album, *Need You Now*, in January 2010. In addition to its title track, the album's first single, "American Honey," followed by "Our Kind of Love" and "Hello World," tore up the charts, making it the year's third best-selling release. *Need You Now* earned the band five Grammy Awards, debuted atop the Billboard 200, and has since been certified three-times platinum. On her third album, *Speak Now*, country sensation **Taylor Swift** spoke up—and the world listened. The album's four singles—"Mine," "Back to December," "Mean," and "The Story of Us"—confirmed that Swift had quickly become one of the strongest voices in contemporary music. *Speak Now* debuted atop the Billboard 200, and every single song on the album charted on the

Billboard Hot 100. Not bad for a woman who once let Kanye steal her thunder. —N.H.

## TOP RADIO SONGS ARTIST

This year, it was nearly impossible to pull up to an intersection without hearing the following five artists' songs blasting from idling cars. **Drake**, who first achieved modest fame as a television actor, grew into a full-on rap superstar with *Thank Me Later*, the debut studio album that dropped last June. True to the release's title, audiences showed their gratitude by playing its first single, "Over," well, over and over again. Following that song's success were "Find Your Love," "Miss Me," and "Fancy." Add to that "Best I Ever Had," the Grammy-nominated song from his 2009 EP, *So Far Gone*, and Drake made it very clear that he was



one of the biggest players in hip-hop today. **Bruno Mars**, the charismatic, fedora-wearing crooner, rushed the worldwide stage last October with the release of *Doo-Wops & Hooligans*, his debut album. "Just the Way You Are" was one of the most buzzed-about tracks of the year, and it spent four consecutive weeks at the pinnacle of the Billboard Hot 100. Following its chart-topping reign, Mars released "The Lazy Song" and "Grenade," which is still one of the most-played radio songs despite having been released last September—out of this world, indeed. **Katy Perry**, the purveyor of sexy confectionary pop, has dominated airwaves with the release of her second studio album, *Teenage Dream*, last August. Since then, she's been ubiquitous, with catchy fare like "California Gurls" featuring Snoop Dogg; "Teenage Dream;" "Firework;" and "E.T.," her superhuman pop jam boasting backup vocals courtesy of Kanye West. **Rihanna** released *Loud*, her fifth studio album, last November, only a year after *Rated R* surprising listeners with edgier fare such as "Rude Boy," "Hard," and "Russian Roulette." With *Loud*, which marked a return to Rihanna's dancehall roots—and a shift away from the anger heard on her previous album—the Barbadian superstar trafficked in powerful anthems like "Only Girl (In the World)," "S&M," "California King Bed," "Raining Men," and "What's My Name" (and her backing vocals on Eminem's "Love the Way You Lie"). He's been on top of the game since the 1990s, and even though

his first Billboard hit was "Nice and Slow," **Usher** shows no signs of easing up. On his sixth studio album, *Raymond v. Raymond*, Usher unleashed an arsenal of dance-floor bangers, from "Lil Freak" with Nicki Minaj, to "Hey Daddy (Daddy's Home)," "OMG" featuring will.i.am, "There Goes My Baby," and, most recently, "More," which had everyone hungry for exactly that. —N.H.

## TOP TOURING ARTIST

This year's top touring artists have redefined the concert experience: what was big is now bigger, what was previously lavishly produced is now even more spectacular, regardless of the era the artist hails from. **Roger Waters** brought back his former band Pink Floyd's classic concept double album, *The Wall*, to perform as a live concert experience: His solo-show revision of it in 2010 proved even grander. Retitled "*The Wall Live*," Waters's autobiographical vision now includes numerous massive video screens and new visuals, transcending nostalgia to make for one of the most memorable arena experiences in recent memory. **Michael Bubl **'s "Crazy Love Tour" swapped out the expected cabaret revue for an elaborate, innovative light show, complete with eight-piece orchestra, resulting in the fourth highest-grossing tour in North America and the sixth biggest worldwide this past year. Of course, when it came to going over the top, no one did it



**ROCK STEADY**  
Bon Jovi released special editions of their 10 classic albums this year.

**"PLAYING IN FRONT OF PEOPLE IS ABOUT INCLUSION, NOT POSTURING. YOU'VE GOT TO LOOK THEM IN THE EYE, EVEN IF THEY'RE AT THE BACK OF THE STADIUM."**

—JON BON JOVI

better (or bigger) than **Lady Gaga** and her "Monster Ball Tour." Running from November 2009 until May 2011, the show captures Gaga's pop-art performance in several theatrical segments, each featuring even more outrageous costume changes, video interludes, laser-spiked dancing, and smash hits than the last. But not even Gaga could top **U2's** "360° Tour," which played to stadiums with fans seated in a circle around "The Claw," a massive multimedia support apparatus that didn't just dazzle audiences, but set records for the largest stage ever toured. With ticket sales reaching more than \$700 million since its mid-2009 start, it's the largest-grossing concert tour ever. U2's only competition for hugeness came from **Bon**

**Jovi's** "The Circle Tour," which commenced in early 2010 and is still rocking: it would become the top-grossing tour of the year, with more than \$200 million in revenue. "Having the biggest tour on the planet was pretty neat," front man Jon Bon Jovi admits. "We're still number one for this year, so who knows where that will lead? After 27 years, it's nice to still be pulling in those numbers. In the beginning, we'd go anywhere and play with anyone. That was the foundation—learning to play in front of people is how you build a career. It's all about inclusion, not posturing: you've got to look people in the eye, even if they're at the back of the stadium. It's still about being in that moment, and taking that ride."

—Matt Diehl

ABOVE: KEVIN WESTENBERG; PREVIOUS PAGE, FROM TOP: UNIVERSAL MOTOWN; JAMES MINCHIN; LAUREN DUKOFF; JAMES MINCHIN III; ANTHONY MANDLER



## TOP DIGITAL MEDIA ARTIST

Back in 2007, a Canadian woman using the channel name "kidrauhl" began posting homemade videos of her 12-year-old son singing Chris Brown and Justin Timberlake covers. Despite their poor lighting and low definition, the handful of clips made it crystal clear that the kid had talent.

The wunderkind's name was **Justin Bieber**, and today he is, of course, a pop sensation, whose 2010 video for "Baby" has drawn more than 527 million views. With nearly 9 million Twitter followers and 25 million Facebook fans, Bieber owes his career to the digital media world.

The same can be said of his fellow finalists in the Digital Media Artist of the Year category, who all stand firmly at the intersection of art and technology. **Lady Gaga**, who already has one of the most downloaded songs of all time on iTunes (which accounts for 70 percent of domestic download business) saw another marquee year in 2010. "Bad Romance" now has more than 372 million views on YouTube and her Twitter followers top even Bieber's impressive numbers. **Eminem** had a triumphant return last year with his album, *Recovery*, which sold its first 500,000 digital copies in just six weeks, faster than any other album in history. It yielded a massive hit in "Love the Way You Lie," a collaboration with Rihanna—now at more than 5 million downloads in the US market alone. **Rihanna** continues to dominate the US Hot Digital Songs chart, with nine No. 1 hits—more than any other artist—including two, "What's My Name" and "Only Girl (In the World)," from her 2010 album, *Loud*. "I always knew digital would be the future," says **Akon**, whose new site, fantrace.com, promises to connect fans to artists in

### GOOD TIMES

*The Black Eyed Peas took it to the dance floor with The Beginning.*



an unprecedented way. "And I always used those platforms to market and promote myself, even back when the major labels didn't understand what digital was."

Although his Twitter followers don't number in the millions, Akon sees the power of social media in forging interpersonal connections, and sends out inspirational tweets. "Everything I go through, I find a way to word it so that everyone can relate to it," he says, "rather than just tweeting: 'I'm on my way to Benihana.'"

—Stacy Gueraseva

## TOP DUO/GROUP

The bands dominating the past year in pop demonstrated the genre's diversity. **The Black Eyed Peas** brought dance music to the fore, following up their clubtastic smash album *The E.N.D.* with the equally dance floor-ready *The Beginning* and its *Dirty Dancing*-sampling hit "The Time (Dirty Bit)." The hip-hop supergroup was everywhere, from touring with U2 to rocking the Super Bowl's famous halftime show to leader will.i.am's newfound ubiquity

on *American Idol*. America clearly needed country, as the success of **Lady Antebellum's** sophomore effort, *Need You Now*, proved. It earned five Grammys for the Nashville group, including Record of the Year honors for the title track, beating out the likes of Eminem's "Love the Way You Lie" and Cee Lo Green's "F\*\*\* You." **Bon Jovi** also proved perennial crowd-pleasers. The wide embrace of the anthemic New Jersey rockers' 11th album, *The Circle*, and its resulting blockbuster tour showed that the band remains current in the hearts of fans. Namesake front man Jon Bon Jovi doesn't expect the band to rest on their laurels anytime soon. "I'm contemplating taking some time off," he admits. "But I say that every time—then I start another record. I can't help myself! The band has a work ethic that stems from the very beginning. It's about persistence more than anything—waking up with that same chip on your shoulder like when you were 21, and never getting comfortable with it. It's still us against the world." Experimentation, meanwhile, also showed it still had a place in the mainstream. **U2** broke boundaries with 2009's *No Line on the Horizon* and subsequent high-tech

"360° Tour," and then Bono and The Edge wrote music and lyrics for the controversial Broadway juggernaut *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*. **Linkin Park** pushed into unexpected zones as well: both sonically, with new album, *A Thousand Suns*, and charitably, bringing great awareness—and funds—to the world's tragedies via their Music For Relief program.

"When the earthquake struck Haiti, it was an obvious time for us to go to work," says Linkin Park's Mike Shinoda. "We created a project called 'Download to Donate,' and got artists from all walks to contribute songs. And when the tsunami hit, we wanted to take that idea and make it work for the people of Japan. We make an effort not to preach: it's just who we are, and if you want to be part of it, you're welcome to join." —M.D.

## TOP POP ARTIST

With themes ranging from serious social agendas to pubescent puppy love, the following five finalists represent the year's best and brightest pop sensations—and each one of them knows how to get the party started. Seventeen-year-old **Justin Bieber** has

already released four consecutive Top 10 albums (one EP, one LP, an acoustic album, and a remix collection); starred in *Justin Bieber: Never Say Never*, a box office-topping, 3-D music documentary about his life; and has been nominated for two Grammy Awards, including Best New Artist. His first full-length album, *My World 2.0*, topped the Billboard 200, making Bieber the youngest male solo act to do this since Stevie Wonder in 1963. Naturally, his fans refer to themselves as "Beliebers." With an equally devout following, **The Black Eyed Peas** released their sixth studio album, *The Beginning*, which became the hip-hop quartet's third Top 10 album. Comprised of Fergie, will.i.am, Taboo, and apl.de.ap, the Peas also tore down the house during the halftime show at this year's Super

Bowl XLV. The second single off their new album, "Just Can't Get Enough," broke into the Billboard 100's top three. **Ke\$ha**, a brassy, bawdy Nashville native, took the world by surprise when, last year, she topped the Billboard 200 with her debut album, *Animal*. In November, the self-described misfit released a follow-up EP, *Cannibal*—its lead single, "We R Who We R," debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100. Of her nominations this year, she says, "It means that my message is coming across, that it's actually translating. The fact that I'm up for these awards is a massive, massive deal. Who knows if I'll win any, but just being nominated is incredibly flattering." It's been three years since **Lady Gaga** released her debut album, *The Fame*, and she's still one of the most talked-about musicians on the planet. With the May release of *Born This Way*, Mother Monster—who recently attended the Grammy Awards locked inside an egg-shaped incubator dubbed "The Vessel"—will surely have everyone's

tongues wagging for years to come. **Katy Perry**, who first entered the fray with "Ur So Gay," her acidic ode to an ex, debuted atop the Billboard 200 when she released her second studio album, *Teenage Dream*, last August. The record's four singles each charted at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100, making her the first female artist to achieve such a feat in more than 20 years. As if she didn't have enough going, Perry recently married comedian Russell Brand, whom she met while filming a cameo for last June's *Get Him to the Greek*. —N.H.

## TOP COUNTRY ARTIST

The five artists vying for the title of top country artist represent the dynamic—and incredibly varied—landscape that currently exists in the country music universe. **Jason Aldean's** *My Kinda Party* gave him his 10th Top 10 hit, but it was his duet with Kelly Clarkson that proved Aldean's appeal extends far beyond the world of country radio. Earlier this year, the Aldean/Clarkson power ballad, "Don't You Wanna Stay" became his fifth No. 1 hit. Similarly unstoppable

was **Lady Antebellum**, whose monster single, "Need You Now," helped them snag a closetful of awards, including Grammys for Record and Song of the Year for 2010, and the Academy of Country Music award for Album of the Year. Meanwhile, even though he was busy touring and producing documentaries about football for much of the past year, industry MVP **Kenny Chesney** still found time to release a new album—*Hemingway's Whiskey*, his 13th—and snag his 18th No. 1 hit with "The Boys of Fall." "Being able to get back out there with my band and see the energy of the stage come alive again has been incredible," Chesney says. "The year away really made everybody hungry: crew guys, band guys, and the fans. And when that happens—when it's all fresh—it's really a lot of fun." One of the few acts that's at home playing on country stages, at indie-rock festivals, and noodling with jam bands, the **Zac Brown Band** (led by the always-knit-capped Brown) saw their latest studio album, *You Get What You Give*, go gold in the past year, and subsequently racked up nine nominations at the 2011 Academy of Country Music Awards. They brought home the trophy for "As She's Walking Away," a collaboration with country music icon Alan Jackson. The song, says guitarist Clay Cook, "is a metaphor for the way Alan has counseled Zac in business and life."

Last, but certainly not least, is **Taylor Swift**. Having sold more than 20 million albums and 33 million singles worldwide, Swift—much like the other finalists for Top Country Artist—proves that the country genre is



**COUNTRY LIVING**  
Lady Antebellum rose to Nashville royalty.

MIRANDA PENN TURIN





more than a deeply felt American art form: it also remains a worldwide phenomenon.

—T. Cole Rachel

## TOP ROCK ARTIST

Each Top Rock Artist finalist underwent dramatic evolutions in their respective careers this year. With their fifth album, *Come Around Sundown*, **Kings Of Leon** fully transformed from indie faves to stadium superstars—but not without hiccups. A concert at the Verizon Wireless Amphitheater in St. Louis got cut short due to excessive pigeon droppings, and the band courted controversy when they rejected use of their music in *Glee*: Kings drummer Nathan Followill subsequently taunted *Glee* creator Ryan Murphy on Twitter, telling him to “Buy a new bra.” **Mumford & Sons** rose even more stratospherically, coming out of nowhere to become the “new Coldplay;” a breakthrough Grammy performance with the likes of Bob

Dylan capped the London folk-rockers’ newfound visibility.

**Muse**, another English alt fave, proved resistance was futile to their epic prog rock, finally becoming true arena stars in the US. (Fathering a baby with new love Kate Hudson, front man Matt Bellamy also entered gossip columns for the first time.) Veteran roots-rockers **Train**, meanwhile, found their popularity exploded anew when their single “Hey, Soul Sister” trampoline into the Top 10 in January 2010. The song became iTunes’ most downloaded track of the year, and one of the biggest songs of all time: it went five-times platinum, earning the band its third Grammy, and ranking as Columbia Records’ biggest-selling single ever. Modern-rock icons **Linkin Park** also tweaked expectations with their fourth album, *A Thousand Suns*—the group’s most experimental and left-field effort yet, drawing comparisons to the maverick likes of Radiohead and Pink Floyd. However, *A Thousand Suns* still found its

place on the charts and in fans’ hearts, with the second single from the album, “Waiting for the End,” proving to be a radio smash. “This was a really risky album for us: we expected resistance, and it took a while for people to come around,” explains Mike Shinoda, Linkin Park co-front man and cofounder. “Months later, we’ve had this crossover success. For me, personally, this was a moment where I went ‘Wow, this is great—the fans are still with us.’ It’s been an awesome year.” —M.D.

## TOP ALTERNATIVE ARTIST

This was the year when “alternative” came to mean so many different things. For one, epic, wide-screen rock was back with a vengeance. **Muse** proved that ambitious, complex sounds could play to large audiences. By combining a spectacular multimedia stage production with passionate, virtuoso performances, the Brit trio became one of rock’s most popular touring draws following the release of *The Resistance* in 2009. Similarly, with their latest effort, *Come Around Sundown*, **Kings Of Leon** connected like never before. That success positioned them as the likely heirs to U2’s reign as the arena band with integrity. **Mumford & Sons** proved a different kind of royalty with their breakout debut, *Sigh No More*: the UK four-piece redefined the sound of modern rock with banjos, mandolins, and heartfelt, intimate performances on hits like “The Cave.” Roots sounds were as alive as ever, as the massive success of the gritty, blues-rocking **The Black Keys** proved. The Ohio-bred duo’s sixth album, *Brothers*, became its mainstream triumph. The single “Tighten Up” not only reached the No. 1

spot on the Alternative chart, it also won a 2011 Grammy for Best Rock Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals (*Brothers* would also take the award for Best Alternative Music Album). **Linkin Park** also found its audience broadening. Surprisingly, that shift came via *A Thousand Suns*—the most challenging album of the heavy rockers’ career made a clear break with the group’s hit-making sound. “For us, it was more about the longevity of the momentum,” explains Linkin Park cofounder Mike Shinoda. “I think we’re actually turning some people who didn’t like our music before into Linkin Park fans. We’re constantly pushing the envelope. We really want to make something that’s compelling, challenging, and interesting, and this new record is more like that than anything we’ve done before. We definitely wanted to take you on a journey with *A Thousand Suns*.” —M.D.

## DREAMSEEKERS

Six bands from across the US will cross the country this May, all with one destination in mind: Las Vegas, and the Billboard Music Awards. One band will go the ultimate distance and step onstage to accept the Dreamseeker Artist of the Year Award, a prize given to the group with the most online fan engagement and strongest performance on *Billboard*’s Uncharted charts. The year’s contenders: **Hotels**, indie rockers from Seattle; pop-rock electronica hybrid **Otenki** from Houston; rockers **Gentlemen Hall** from Boston; indie pop band **Lightning Love** from Ypsilanti, Michigan; Charlotte, North Carolina’s soulful, jazzy **Side by Side**; and Moreno Valley, California’s acoustically driven **AJ Rafael**. Stay tuned—you just may discover your favorite new band.

“THIS WAS A REALLY RISKY ALBUM FOR US, WE EXPECTED RESISTANCE. IT’S BEEN AN AWESOME YEAR.”

—LINKIN PARK

## TOP BILLBOARD 200 ALBUM

- **JUSTIN BIEBER, *MY WORLD 2.0***  
2.0 and twice as sweet—Bieber's second album was his first LP to debut at No. 1 on the Billboard 200.
- **SUSAN BOYLE, *THE GIFT***  
A best seller before it was even released, *The Gift* went to No. 1 on Amazon based on pre-orders alone.
- **EMINEM, *RECOVERY***  
The Detroit rapper had the best-selling album of 2010, selling 3.42 million copies of his comeback set.
- **LADY ANTEBELLUM, *NEED YOU NOW***  
The monster title track from the trio's second album spent five weeks atop the Hot Country Songs chart.
- **TAYLOR SWIFT, *SPEAK NOW***  
The unstoppable country star had the biggest sales week of 2010, and *Speak Now* was third in album sales for the year.

## TOP DIGITAL SONG

- **B.O.B FEAT. HAYLEY WILLIAMS, "AIRPLANES"**  
The track was downloaded 138,000 times in its first week, debuting at No. 5 on the Digital Songs chart.
- **TAIO CRUZ, "DYNAMITE"**  
This melody blew up, becoming one of only five songs in 2010 to sell more than 4 million digital downloads.



## Nelly

**FINALIST** TOP STREAMING SONG (AUDIO)

With hits like "Country Grammar" and "Hot in Herre" burning up the charts in the early 2000s, Nelly's popularity bridged urban and pop markets. As for his recent ascension to No.1 with the single "Just A Dream," Nelly muses, "I don't want to say 'reinstating myself,' but just kind of reminding people that I do this a little bit." He adds with a laugh: "It's not a bad thing." —*Trevor Stonefield*

- **EMINEM FEAT. RIHANNA, "LOVE THE WAY YOU LIE"**  
Rihanna's soaring chorus propelled the song to No. 1, her sixth and Eminem's fourth song to reach that spot.
- **BRUNO MARS, "JUST THE WAY YOU ARE"**  
One of the top 10 best-

selling songs of the year, Mars's ode to natural beauty moved 3.28 million copies.

- **KATY PERRY FEAT. SNOOP DOGG, "CALIFORNIA GURLS"**  
"The first time I met Snoop, it was a bit like *Lost*," Perry said. "The door opens, and in comes the Smoke Monster."

## TOP RADIO SONG

- **TAIO CRUZ, "DYNAMITE"**  
Jennifer Lopez added even more ammo to her winning streak by providing vocals for this song's official remix.

- **EMINEM FEAT. RIHANNA, "LOVE THE WAY YOU LIE"**  
Eminem wrote the song with Rihanna in mind, and she didn't disappoint. It's sold nearly 10 million copies worldwide.
- **BRUNO MARS, "JUST THE WAY YOU ARE"**  
The inspiration for the song came from a real-life girlfriend getting "dolloed up," Mars says. "You've got to applaud that as a man."
- **USHER FEAT. PITBULL, "DJ GOT US FALLIN' IN LOVE"**  
Fans fell hard for this Max Martin-produced club banger, pushing it into the top 10 of the Billboard Hot 100.
- **USHER FEAT. WILL.I.AM, "OMG"**  
Since Usher first hit the Hot 100 in 1998, no other artist has outpaced his output of No. 1's; "OMG" notched yet another.

## TOP STREAMING SONG (AUDIO)

- **TAIO CRUZ, "DYNAMITE"**  
Adding to its infectious hook, the hosts of *Today* covered the song in a memorable (and Auto-Tuned) viral video.
- **EMINEM FEAT. RIHANNA, "LOVE THE WAY YOU LIE"**  
The top streaming song of 2010 helped Eminem become the most streamed artist of the year, with more than 94 million total streams.
- **LADY ANTEBELLUM, "NEED YOU NOW"**  
The trio's infectious anthem was one of only



three songs to generate more than 20 million streams in 2010.

● **BRUNO MARS, "JUST THE WAY YOU ARE"**

Gleeks everywhere endorsed the song after it was featured in a November episode of their favorite series.

● **NELLY, "JUST A DREAM"**

"I always hope that I'm reaching new people. You know, every year it's a new generation," the rapper said of his comeback song.

## TOP STREAMING SONG (VIDEO)

● **JUSTIN BIEBER FEAT. LUDACRIS, "BABY"**

The teenage heart-throb's music video is the most watched video of all time on YouTube, with more than 500 million views.

● **EMINEM, "NOT AFRAID"**

The introspective offering from Eminem debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100—a feat only 15 other artists have achieved.

● **EMINEM FEAT. RIHANNA, "LOVE THE WAY YOU LIE"**

Dominic Monaghan and Megan Fox lent star wattage to the video's depiction of domestic violence.

● **LADY GAGA, "BAD ROMANCE"**

Gaga gave director Francis Lawrence all her "weirdest, most psychotic ideas," to create a manic masterpiece.

● **SHAKIRA FEAT. FRESHLYGROUND, "WAKA WAKA (THIS TIME FOR AFRICA)"**

*Listen Up! The Official 2010 FIFA World Cup*

*Album* proved to be a bona fide music hit, and the song charted in more than 15 countries.

## TOP MALE ARTIST

● **JUSTIN BIEBER**

Whether ruling the box office in 3-D or topping the charts with his remix album, few artists dominated this year quite like Justin Bieber.

● **DRAKE**

Since releasing the platinum selling *Thank Me Later* in 2010, Drake has proven himself to be a one-man hit machine and one of rap's most sought-after collaborators.

● **EMINEM**

Eminem reigned anew as a critical and commercial heavyweight with 2010's *Recovery*, the best-selling digital album of all time.

● **BRUNO MARS**

Genre-defying multi-instrumentalist Bruno Mars catapulted to international fame on the back of his smash hit, *Doo-Wops & Hooligans*.

● **USHER**

OMG, indeed: Huge sales of Usher's *Raymond v. Raymond* were helped by the fact that "OMG" has now been a No. 1 song in five different countries.

## TOP FEMALE ARTIST

● **KE\$HA**

Ke\$ha's "Get Sleazy Tour" proves that pop music's messy little sister—and multiplatinum-selling artist—can deliver a hot-ticket dance party in any city she chooses.

● **LADY GAGA**

The unstoppable title



# Monica

**FINALIST** TOP R&B ALBUM, TOP R&B ARTIST

It's been over a decade since R&B singer Monica released her chart-topping, claw-wielding face-off with Brandy, "The Boy is Mine." Her latest album, *Still Standing*, started as a poem Monica wrote at the age of 19, following the suicide of her then-boyfriend, Jarvis Weems. "Even though I've experienced such hurt, it's helped to make me who I am today," she says. "Rather than wallow in the pain, I'd rather focus on how I made it through." —*Nick Haramis*

track from Gaga's *Born This Way* topped the chart in 19 countries and became the thousandth No. 1 song in Billboard Hot 100 chart history.

● **KATY PERRY**

Katy Perry's *Teenage Dream* is one of only nine albums ever to produce four or more Hot 100 No. 1 singles.

● **RIHANNA**

Thanks to the success of 2010's *Loud*, Rihanna snagged armloads of trophies in 2011, including a BRIT Award for best international female solo artist.

● **TAYLOR SWIFT**

At the ripe old age of 21, singer/songwriter/global phenomenon Taylor Swift has sold over 20 million albums worldwide.

## TOP R&B ARTIST

● **ALICIA KEYS**

Having sold more than 30 million albums, Alicia Keys reigns as one of the top R&B artists of the past decade.

● **MONICA**

Nearly 20 years into her career, Monica remains the first artist with No. 1's on the Billboard R&B charts in the 1990s, the 2000s, and the 2010s.

● **RIHANNA**

This is but one of 18 categories in which Rihanna is a finalist—the most for any artist this year at the Billboard Awards.

● **TREY SONGZ**

Trey Songz's collaboration with Nicki Minaj,

"Bottoms Up", helped make *Passion Pain, & Pleasure* one of the hottest R&B albums of the past year.

● **USHER**

The fourth single from Usher's *Raymond v. Raymond* album, "There Goes My Baby," topped the Billboard R&B chart and also earned him a Grammy earlier this year.

## TOP RAP ARTIST

● **DRAKE**

For his 2010 debut, *Thank Me Later*, Drake worked with some of the greatest rappers in the world, including Lil Wayne, Jay-Z, and Kanye West.

● **EMINEM**

Hot on the heels of *Recovery*, MTV named Eminem as the seventh-biggest icon in pop music history.

● **LIL WAYNE**

One of the greatest rappers of all time, Lil Wayne is also one of just 10 acts in the history of the Hot 100 chart to make at least 60 visits to the survey.

● **LUDACRIS**

Ludacris's 2010 album, *Battle of the Sexes*, entered the Billboard 200 at No. 1, with more than 137,000 sales in its first week.

● **NICKI MINAJ**

After the release of her debut album, *Pink Friday*, Nicki Minaj became the first artist ever to have seven songs on the Billboard Hot 100 at the same time.



## TOP LATIN ARTIST

● **ENRIQUE IGLESIAS**

Iglesias holds the staggering distinction of having scored 52 No. 1 songs on various *Billboard* music charts.

● **PITBULL**

Pitbull released an English-language album, *Rebellion*, in 2009, and a Spanish-language album, *Armando*, in 2010; the former has sold more than 7.5 million digital singles and albums.

● **PRINCE ROYCE**

Prince Royce's cover of Ben E. King's "Stand By Me" (from his self-titled debut) won Song of the Year in the Tropical Music genre at the 2011 Premio Lo Nuestro Awards.

● **SHAKIRA**

Not only is Shakira the highest-selling

Colombian artist of all time, she's the second-most successful female Latin singer, after Gloria Estéfán.

● **WISIN & YANDEL**

The reggaeton duo's 2011 record, *Los Vaqueros*: *El Regreso*, features appearances from the likes of 50 Cent, T-Pain, and Sean Kingston.

## TOP DANCE ARTIST

● **THE BLACK EYED PEAS**

Having sold upward of 47 million albums worldwide, the Black Eyed Peas continue to prove themselves to be the preeminent party band.

● **DAVID GUETTA**

Already considered one of the world's finest DJs, David Guetta's

*One Love*—featuring appearances from Kelly Rowland and the Black Eyed Peas—also confirms his status as superproducer.

● **LADY GAGA**

Both *Forbes* and *Time* recently listed her as one of the most influential people on Earth—and there's no denying Gaga's dominance on the dance floor.

● **LA ROUX**

La Roux's self-titled debut has spent the past two years tearing up the global charts, finally earning the band a Grammy for Best Electronic/Dance Album in 2011.

● **RIHANNA**

Rihanna's 10th No. 1 hit, "S&M," got a nice boost courtesy of a remix featuring the one and only Britney Spears.

## TOP CHRISTIAN ARTIST

● **CASTING CROWNS**

The band's fourth album, 2009's *Until The Whole World Hears*, set a new record for the highest Christian album debut in history.

● **MERCYME**

This Texas band's 2009 soaring tune, "Word of God Speak," was named by *Billboard* as the Christian song of the decade.

● **SKILLET**

*Awake and Remixed*, the 2011 EP from the beloved Christian rock outfit, debuted at 98 on the Billboard 200 chart earlier this year.

● **TOBYMAC**

Between his work with

Christian rap/rock outfit DC Talk and his successful solo material, TobyMac has sold more than 10 million albums in the past decade.

● **CHRIS TOMLIN**

A frequent Dove award winner for his work as a Christian recording artist, Tomlin released his seventh studio album, *And If Our God Is For Us*, in 2010.

## TOP HOT 100 ARTIST

● **KE\$HA**

Ke\$ha's first single, "Tik Tok," managed to top the charts in 11 different countries before her debut album was even released.



# Pitbull

**FINALIST** TOP LATIN ARTIST, TOP LATIN SONG

"The beautiful thing about music is that it's a puzzle you can add your own piece to," says Miami-based rapper Pitbull, whose next contribution will be the summer release of collaboration-heavy *Planet Pit* (featuring the likes of Max Martin, Dr. Luke, David Guetta, and Akon). Of his international tour this summer, he says, "People want to sing along and get out there and shake it a little while. I want to help them do that."

—T. Cole Rachel

## ● BRUNO MARS

In addition to being a breakout star performing his own material, Bruno Mars also helped write Cee Lo Green's inescapable "F\*\*k You" song.

## ● KATY PERRY

An open casting call for Perry's "Firework" video generated a crowd of more than 38,000 applicants. The song is her third straight No. 1 from *Teenage Dream*.

## ● RIHANNA

Since 2005, Rihanna has charted nine No. 1 singles on the Hot 100 chart, the most of any artist during that time.

## ● USHER

With the release of "OMG," Usher became 2010's first artist to have No. 1 singles in three consecutive decades.

## TOP DIGITAL SONGS ARTIST

### ● EMINEM

Eminem has sold more than 33 million individual track downloads in the United States alone.

### ● KESHA

Upon its release, Ke\$ha's "Tik Tok" set a record for the most digital downloads sold by a female artist in a single week, selling 610,000 copies.

### ● BRUNO MARS

Mars's track "Grenade" had the highest sales week of 2010, selling 559,000 digital copies in just a few days.

### ● KATY PERRY

Perry's "California Gurls" single sold 294,000 downloads in its first week and remained No. 1 on the Hot 100 chart for the next six weeks.

### ● RIHANNA

On top of winning basically every music award known to mankind, Rihanna has sold approximately 6 million album units and more than 28 million digital singles in the U.S.

## TOP SOCIAL ARTIST

### ● AKON

Akon continues to dominate the Web, most recently thanks to a YouTube parody video with *SNL*'s Andy Samberg and Lonely Island.

### ● JUSTIN BIEBER

Justin Bieber's ubiquitous "Baby" video still beats out Gaga's "Bad Romance" as the most watched YouTube video ever.

### ● EMINEM

In February of 2010,

Eminem became the most popular living human being on Facebook with well over 28 million friends.

### ● LADY GAGA

It continues to be a close race, but Lady Gaga remains the second most "liked" person on Facebook. She's less than two million behind Eminem.

### ● RIHANNA

In addition to being one of the most Googled women on the Internet, Rihanna also boasts more than 4 million Twitter followers.

## TOP STREAMING ARTIST

### ● JUSTIN BIEBER

Bieber's *My World 2.0* made the teen superstar the youngest person to top the Billboard 200 since Stevie Wonder.

### ● EMINEM

Eminem offered fans a full stream of *Recovery* on his MySpace page just before the album's official release.

### ● LADY GAGA

In response to leaked versions of her *Born This Way* single "Judas," Lady Gaga offered fans a quality stream of the track to preview.

### ● RIHANNA

In addition to being named *Billboard*'s Digital Songs artist of the 2000s, Rihanna is one of the most widely streamed artists of the past decade.

### ● SHAKIRA

Shakira gave fans her cover of The xx's "Islands," and she streamed *Sale el Sal* on her MySpace page a week before its release.

## TOP POP ALBUM

### ● JUSTIN BIEBER, *MY WORLD 2.0*

In its debut week, the second album by Bieber joined its predecessor, *My World* (which peaked at No. 5) in the top 10 of the Billboard 200.

### ● BLACK EYED PEAS, *THE E.N.D.*

Thankfully for their legions of fans, the album's title wasn't an official farewell. The Peas followed up with another smash they called *The Beginning*.

### ● KESHA, *ANIMAL*

Glitter attack! Ke\$ha stormed to the top of the Hot 100 with the album's infectious lead single, "Tik Tok."

### ● LADY GAGA, *THE FAME*

Launching Gaga as a cultural phenomenon, *The Fame* spawned the blockbuster hits, "Just Dance," "Poker Face" and "Paparazzi."

### ● KATY PERRY, *TEENAGE DREAM*

Perry's was the first album in more than six years to yield four No. 1 smashes (including "E.T.," her latest chart topper) on the Billboard Hot 100.

## TOP R&B ALBUM

### ● MONICA, *STILL STANDING*

Monica's sixth studio album debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard 200 chart, while "Everything to Me" became her sixth No. 1 hit.

### ● RIHANNA, *LOUD*

Rihanna's fifth studio album also generated her highest ever first-

week sales—more than 207,000 copies.

### ● SADE, *SOLDIER OF LOVE*

A decade out of the spotlight didn't stop Sade from debuting her sixth studio album at No. 1 on the US charts.

### ● TREY SONGZ, *PASSION, PAIN & PLEASURE*

Trey Songz's fourth studio album is also his most dynamic, featuring guest spots from Drake and Nicki Minaj.

### ● USHER, *RAYMOND V. RAYMOND*

Usher's 2010 comeback proved to be a hit-making machine—his certified platinum album yielded five smash singles.

## TOP RAP ALBUM

### ● DRAKE, *THANK ME LATER*

Drake's debut album proved to be a hit right out of the box, selling 447,000 copies in its first week.

### ● EMINEM, *RECOVERY*

Eminem's 2010 mega-hit is not only the best selling album of 2010; it's the best selling digital release of all time.

### ● NICKI MINAJ, *PINK FRIDAY*

With one of the most highly anticipated releases of the past year, Minaj was second only to Lauryn Hill in first-week sales for a female hip-hop artist.

### ● LIL WAYNE, *I AM NOT A HUMAN BEING*

Released while he was in prison, *I Am Not a Human Being* debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard 200 based on digital sales alone, capturing the top spot when the physical album was released.

● **KANYE WEST, MY BEAUTIFUL DARK TWISTED FANTASY**

Kanye's fifth studio album is also his most highly praised, garnering a perfect 10 from *Pitchfork* and five stars from *Rolling Stone*.

## TOP COUNTRY ALBUM

● **JASON ALDEAN, MY KINDA PARTY**

Aldean's eclectic third million-selling album spent a historic five weeks atop *Billboard's* Country charts.

● **LADY ANTEBELLUM, NEED YOU NOW**

A true hit, *Need You Now* is certified triple platinum, and won the Best Country Album Grammy.

● **SUGARLAND, THE INCREDIBLE MACHINE**

Sugarland's fourth album reached platinum status with the help of mega-single "Stuck Like Glue."

● **TAYLOR SWIFT, SPEAK NOW**

Swift's winning streak continues on her third studio album, racking up global sales in excess of 4.8 million copies.

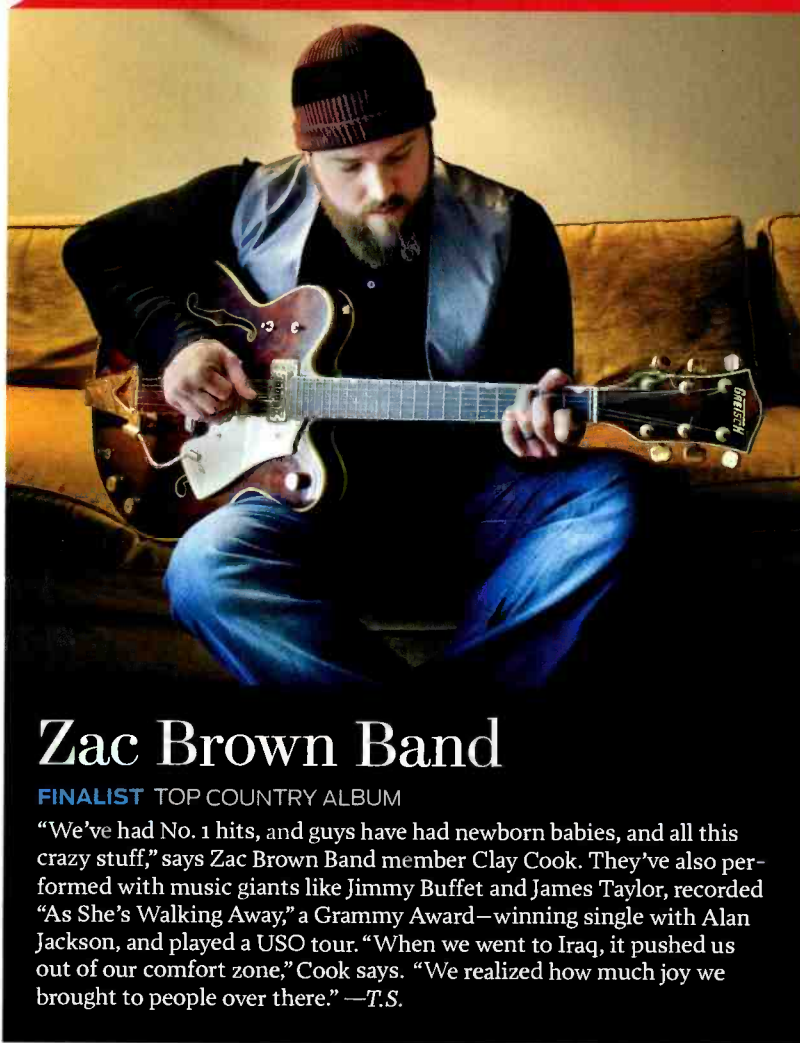
● **ZAC BROWN BAND, THE FOUNDATION**

The band's multiplatinum major label debut album laid the groundwork for their smash follow up, 2010's *You Get What You Give*.

## TOP ROCK ALBUM

● **THE BLACK KEYS, BROTHERS**

The biggest-selling album of the Black Keys' career is also



## Zac Brown Band

FINALIST TOP COUNTRY ALBUM

"We've had No. 1 hits, and guys have had newborn babies, and all this crazy stuff," says Zac Brown Band member Clay Cook. They've also performed with music giants like Jimmy Buffet and James Taylor, recorded "As She's Walking Away," a Grammy Award-winning single with Alan Jackson, and played a USO tour. "When we went to Iraq, it pushed us out of our comfort zone," Cook says. "We realized how much joy we brought to people over there." —*T.S.*

their most critically successful, landing them a Grammy in 2011.

● **JACK JOHNSON, TO THE SEA**

Perpetually mellow Jack Johnson scored his third No. 1 US chart debut with *To The Sea*.

● **KID ROCK, BORN FREE**

Kid Rock bridges all manner of musical genres with an album that boasts guests like T.I., Bob Seger, and Mary J. Blige.

● **LINKIN PARK, A THOUSAND SUNS**

Linkin Park's fourth album proved to be another global smash, reaching the No. 1 spot in 12 different countries.

● **MUMFORD & SONS, SIGH NO MORE**

London's Mumford & Sons shone as last year's breakout stars, with a debut that garnered them top honors at the 2011 BRIT Awards.

## TOP ALTERNATIVE ALBUM

● **THE BLACK KEYS, BROTHERS**

"Tighten Up," the album's first single, was the band's first to reach No. 1 on *Billboard's* Rock and Alternative charts.

● **JACK JOHNSON, TO THE SEA**

*To The Sea* was recorded at two of Johnson's own solar-powered studios, one in Hawaii and the other in Los Angeles.

● **KINGS OF LEON, COME AROUND MIDNIGHT**

The fifth album by Kings of Leon debuted at No. 1 in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

● **LINKIN PARK, A THOUSAND SUNS**

The band's long-awaited concept album debuted at No. 1 on the *Billboard* 200, narrowly beating out Trey Songz for the top spot.

● **MUMFORD & SONS, SIGH NO MORE**

With the release of *Sigh No More*, Mumford & Sons went from relative obscurity to selling more than a million records in the US and in the UK.

## TOP LATIN ALBUM

● **MARC ANTHONY, ICONOS**

On his 2010 Spanish-language album, Marc Anthony covers a selection of iconic ballads by beloved Latin artists.

● **CAMILA, DEJARTE DE AMAR**

The second studio album by Mexican pop band Camila produced three No. 1 singles and landed the band three Latin Grammys.

● **ENRIQUE IGLESIAS, EUPHORIA**

Iglesias's first bilingual album includes appearances from Pitbull, Akon, Usher, and Nicole Scherzinger.

● **PRINCE ROYCE, PRINCE ROYCE**

Prince Royce performed his recent cover of "Stand By Me"—along with the song's original artist and cowriter, Ben E. King—at the 2011 Latin Grammy Awards.

● **SHAKIRA, SALE EL SOL**

Having sold more than 4 million copies worldwide, *Sale el Sol* stayed at the top of the Latin album charts for 12 consecutive weeks.

## TOP DANCE/ELECTRONIC ALBUM

● **DAFT PUNK, TRON: LEGACY (SOUNDTRACK)**

Daft Punk spent two years working on the *Tron: Legacy* score,



even employing an 85-piece orchestra in the process.

● **LADY GAGA, *THE FAME***

Lady Gaga's first studio album originally debuted at No. 17 on the Billboard 200 before going on to sell more than 12 million copies around the globe.

● **LADY GAGA, *THE FAME MONSTER***

Solidifying Gaga's status as a new pop icon, *The Fame Monster* generated another slew of pop hits, including "Bad Romance."

● **LADY GAGA, *THE REMIX***

With the release of *The Remix*, Gaga became the first artist in *Billboard* history to hold down the top three positions on the Dance Album chart simultaneously.

● **OWL CITY, *OCEAN EYES***

After "Fireflies" was chosen as a single of the week on iTunes, Owl City's second album went on to sell more than 600,000 copies in the US alone.

## TOP CHRISTIAN ALBUM

● **MERCYME, *THE GENEROUS MR. LOVELL***

MercyMe's seventh full-length album grabbed the top spot on the Christian Albums chart, moving 88,000 copies in its first week.

● **SKILLET, *AWAKE***  
*Awake* topped the Rock, Alternative, and Christian charts before going on to sell more than 700,000 copies worldwide.

● **TOBYMAC, *TONIGHT***  
TobyMac's fourth



## Skillet

**FINALIST** TOP CHRISTIAN ARTIST, TOP CHRISTIAN ALBUM

"An incredible ride," is how Skillet frontman John Cooper sums up the band's last year. After 15 years of constant touring, the group racked up plenty of mileage, but until now, a certifiable hit remained elusive. Then came their single "Awake and Alive," which climbed to No. 1 on Active Rock Radio outlets nationwide. Combined with airplay of their music during ESPN coverage of sports events like the Daytona 500, the exposure propelled Skillet's album *Awake* to gold status. —T.S.

studio album mixes a wide variety of sounds, including pop, rock, hip-hop, Latin, and funk.

● **CHRIS TOMLIN, AND IF OUR GOD IS FOR US**

This album spawned two successful singles and is available with a behind-the-scenes DVD and four bonus tracks.

● **VARIOUS ARTISTS, *WOW HITS 2011***

This two-disc compilation of 2010's biggest hits from Christian radio includes tracks by Skillet, Chris Tomlin, and Amy Grant.

## TOP POP SONG

● **TAIO CRUZ, "DYNAMITE"**

Pop power producers

Dr. Luke and Benny Blanco brought their chart-topping skills to Cruz's single.

● **BRUNO MARS, "JUST THE WAY YOU ARE"**

Mars channeled the 1950s in live performances of his signature song, including a memorable spot on *Saturday Night Live*.

● **KATY PERRY, "CALIFORNIA GURLS"**

"I don't like sand in my stilettos. Whoever wrote that line deserves to be fired!" Perry told *Billboard*.

● **KATY PERRY, "FIREWORK"**

The LGBT-dedicated anthem lit up the charts, scoring Perry's third No. 1 from her sophomore album.

● **KATY PERRY, "TEENAGE DREAM"**

Perry's adolescent anthem proved so infectious that *Glee*'s cover version became the show's biggest selling single ever.

## TOP R&B SONG

● **ALICIA KEYS, "UN-THINKABLE (I'M READY)"**

This track from Keys's 2009 album spent 12 weeks atop *Billboard*'s R&B/Hip-Hop chart, making it the top R&B song of 2010.

● **RIHANNA FEAT. DRAKE, "WHAT'S MY NAME"**

The second single from

Rihanna's *Loud*—a slow-jam featuring Drake—eventually became her eighth Hot 100 chart-topper.

● **TREY SONGZ FEAT. NICKI MINAJ, "BOTTOMS UP"**

The lead single from Trey Songz's fourth album pops with a truly mind-bending alter-ego rap courtesy of guest artist Nicki Minaj.

● **USHER FEAT. WILL.I.AM, "OMG"**

Usher's stadium-ready dance track sold nearly 7 million copies worldwide during 2010.

● **USHER, "THERE GOES MY BABY"**

Usher gets back to his roots with this slinky R&B jam and a sexed-up video to match.



## Far\*East Movement

FINALIST TOP RAP SONG

Seven years and 3 albums into their career, Far\*East Movement finally struck a chord this year, with single “Like A G6” hitting No. 1 on the Hot 100. “We just had a slower learning curve than most,” band member Kev Nish says. “We’d spent so many nights experimenting with music: rock songs, hip-hop songs, rap songs, disco songs. We couldn’t figure out which fit for us until one day it clicked: Why don’t we just mash all our talents together?” It proved an intoxicating mix. —N.H.

### TOP RAP SONG

● **B.O.B FEAT. HAYLEY WILLIAMS, “AIRPLANES”**

Aside from being a global fave, “Airplanes” is also the 21st most downloaded song in British chart history.

● **B.O.B FEAT. BRUNO MARS, “NOTHIN’ ON YOU”**

B.o.B’s first official single also netted him three Grammy noms, including Record of the Year.

● **EMINEM FEAT. RIHANNA, “LOVE THE WAY YOU LIE”**

To call Eminem and Rihanna’s duet a massive hit would be an understatement—the song has been downloaded more than 9.3 million times.

● **FAR\*EAST MOVEMENT FEAT. THE CATARACS & DEV, “LIKE A G6”**

This track is one of only eight songs in *Billboard* history to return to the No. 1 spot again after

relinquishing it briefly to two or more other artists.

● **NELLY, “JUST A DREAM”**

Nelly’s highest charting song since 2005’s “Grillz” sold 135,000 downloads in its first week of release.

### TOP COUNTRY SONG

● **THE BAND PERRY, “IF I DIE YOUNG”**

This meditation on

counting your blessings provided the band with their first No. 1 hit on the country charts.

● **LADY ANTEBELLUM, “NEED YOU NOW”**

Lady Antebellum’s smash single became only the second country song ever to win Grammys for both song and record of the year.

● **MIRANDA LAMBERT, “THE HOUSE THAT BUILT ME”**

“The House that Built Me” is Lambert’s first

No. 1 single in the US, holding on to the top spot for four consecutive weeks.

● **SUGARLAND, “STUCK LIKE GLUE”**

This song holds the distinction of being the 11th most downloaded country song of all time.

● **TAYLOR SWIFT, “MINE”**

“Mine” made Swift only the second female artist to have multiple songs enter the top five of the Hot 100 during a single calendar year.



## TOP ROCK SONG

● **THE DIRTY HEADS FEAT. ROME, "LAY ME DOWN"**

Spending nine weeks atop the Alternative chart, this song is just the fifth to make it to that spot when promoted to radio by an independent label.

● **FLORENCE + THE MACHINE, "DOG DAYS ARE OVER"**

"Dog Days" has sold more than 1 million downloads—not bad for a song made in a studio "the size of a loo," according to Florence.

● **MUMFORD & SONS, "LITTLE LION MAN"**

Boosted by the band's appearance at the 2011 Grammy Awards, this track has now sold more than 1 million digital copies in the US.

● **NEON TREES, "ANIMAL"**

"Animal" reached No. 1 on the Alternative chart after a steady 32-week climb—a record for any song on that particular *Billboard* chart.

● **TRAIN, "HEY, SOUL SISTER"**

This ukelele-inflected song has sold more than 8 million digital copies in the US alone and is one of the most downloaded in history.

## TOP ALTERNATIVE SONG

● **FLORENCE + THE MACHINE, "DOG DAYS ARE OVER"**

Aside from performing the track on an array of talk shows, Florence also sang this at the Nobel Peace Prize



## Neon Trees

**FINALIST** TOP ALTERNATIVE SONG, TOP ROCK SONG

Neon Trees planted its roots in the alternative rock scene with the single "Animal," a drum-driven purge of teenage angst. So it wasn't much of a surprise when the warblers of *Glee* covered the song, furthering the band's earnest and youthful following. "I see myself in [our fans] a lot," lead singer Tyler Glenn says. "I see my younger self. It's exciting that there are still people out there that love music as much as I did as a teenager." —*T.S.*

Concert in 2010.

● **LINKIN PARK, "WAITING FOR THE END"**

After spending 15 weeks on the Alternative songs chart, "Waiting" eventually gave Linkin Park their 10th No. 1.

● **MUMFORD & SONS, "THE CAVE"**

The second single from Mumford & Sons's folksy debut album quickly reached the No. 5 spot on the US iTunes charts.

● **MUMFORD & SONS, "LITTLE LION MAN"**

The debut single from Mumford & Sons's *Sigh No More*, this song also

snagged a 2011 Grammy nomination for Best Rock Song.

● **NEON TREES, "ANIMAL"**

This track was also performed by the cast of *Glee* for an episode titled "Sexy."

## TOP LATIN SONG

● **ENRIQUE IGLESIAS FEAT. JUAN LUIS GUERRA, "CUANDO ME ENAMORO"**

"Cuando Me Enamoro" ("When I Fall in Love") is also the theme song for

a popular telenovela of the same name.

● **PITBULL, "BON BON"**

"Bon Bon" is the third single from Pitbull's *Armando*. He was nominated for six awards at 2011's Latin Grammys.

● **SHAKIRA, "GYPSY"**

This song from Shakira's *She Wolf* album was also her 12th No. 1 single on the Latin Pop Songs chart.

● **SHAKIRA FEAT. EL CATA, "LOCA"**

Featuring UK rapper Dizzee Rascal on the English-language version, "Loca" is Shakira's ninth Top 40 hit on the *Billboard* Hot 100.

● **SHAKIRA FEAT. FRESHLYGROUND, "WAKA WAKA (THIS TIME FOR AFRICA)"**

This track, which was recorded for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, included an elaborate video shot in 3-D.

## TOP DANCE SONG

● **LADY GAGA, "BAD ROMANCE"**

With the release of "Bad Romance," Gaga became the first artist ever to have three singles each sell more than 4 million copies in digital downloads.

● **LADY GAGA FEAT. BEYONCÉ, "TELEPHONE"**

The success of this single put both Gaga and Beyoncé in a three-way tie with Mariah Carey for the most No. 1 pop singles.

● **LA ROUX, "BULLETPROOF"**

Proving to be La Roux's biggest stateside hit, "Bulletproof" has sold well over 2 million downloads in the US.

● **EDWARD MAYA & VIKA JIGULINA, "STEREO LOVE"**

In addition to being the No. 1 Dance Airplay single of 2010, the video for "Stereo Love" has more than 110 million YouTube views.

● **YOLANDA BE COOL & DCUP, "WE NO SPEAK AMERICANO"**

The Australian duo scored an international hit with this track, which eventually sold more than 1 million digital copies in the US.

## TOP CHRISTIAN SONG

● **KRIS ALLEN, "LIVE LIKE WE'RE DYING"**

This single made Allen the first male *American Idol* winner to enter the top 10 on the Top 40 charts.

● **MERCYME, "ALL OF CREATION"**

After releasing "All of Creation" in 2010, MercyMe went on to win the American Music Award for Favorite Contemporary Inspirational Artist.

● **SANCTUS REAL, "LEAD ME"**

This track, from the band's fifth album, landed them Song of the Year at the 2011 Dove Awards.

● **TOBYMAC, "GET BACK UP"**

The second single from TobyMac's *Tonight* album was also a charitable endeavor, with proceeds from the single's first week sales going to relief efforts in Haiti.

● **CHRIS TOMLIN, "OUR GOD"**

"Our God" is the lead track from *And If Our God Is For Us*, Tomlin's seventh album. ●



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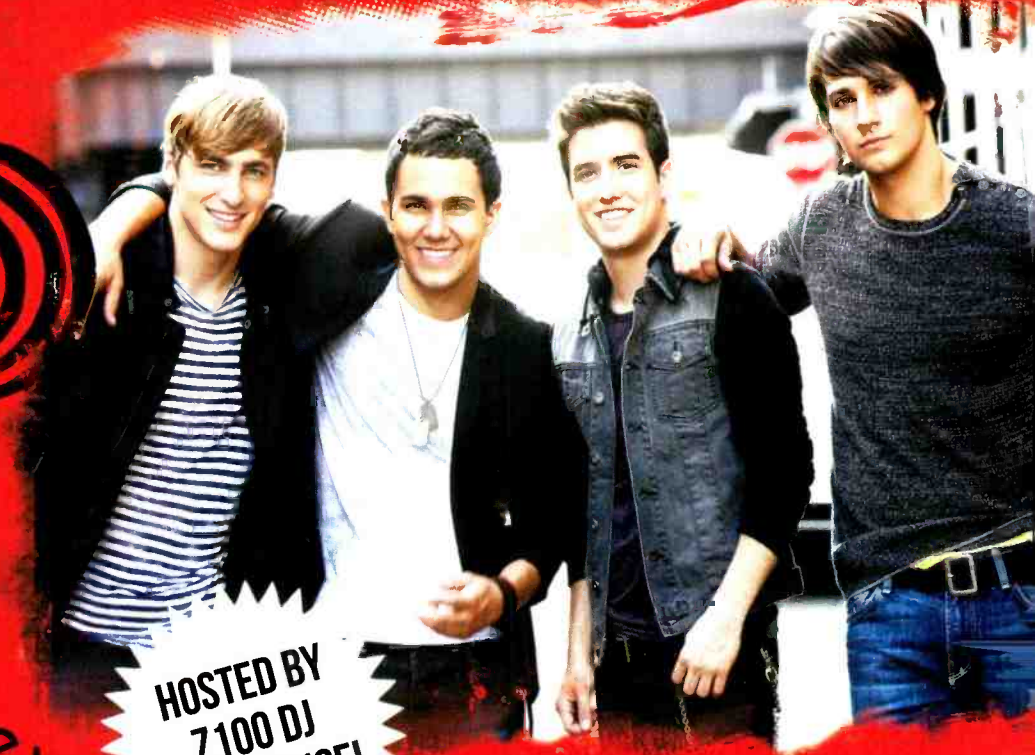
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# STYLE

## OF THE YEAR

# Fashion Fireworks

A memory-searing spectacle of looks lit up the music landscape this year, along with a few that fizzled. **Cintra Wilson** charts the era of the meat dress, and other prime cuts.



EVERYTHING  
**LADY GAGA** WORE  
this past year—including the infamous meat she draped herself in at the MTV Video Music Awards, and the giant egg she emerged from at the Grammys—was, at the very least, something to look at. Or eat, perhaps, if you had been trapped in a Chilean mine long enough. ● For pop stars, it was a year of fashion extremes. From the hourglass curves and Little Mermaid hair on **Katy Perry** to the alien brain/coral formation wigs on **Nicki Minaj** to the fashion non-statements made by **Susan Boyle**, a lot

#### HAT TRICK

Style-makers, clockwise from top: Justin Bieber, Katy Perry, Miley Cyrus, Lady Gaga, Taylor Swift, Nicki Minaj

of eye candy competed for the attention of music lovers. Unsurprisingly, the game belonged to **Lady Gaga**, the gravitational core of the music world's visual information, around whom all others were thrown into a reactionary orbit.

At last, Gaga got over clothing herself in discarded Madonna skins. Madonna, after all, had always made her bones by picking up the trailing edge of the sexual avant garde (voguing, lesbian flirtation, black PVC boots) and dragging it kicking and screaming into the mainstream. La Gaga reanimated it all some two decades later, but first she pulled out all of the overtly sexual teeth from the old looks in order to subvert Madonna's flirty, kitten-punk impact, and make it more scary-art-creature-y.

In true magpie fashion, Ms. Germanotta collects shiny bits from an ever-widening gallery of sources. She's gleaned inspiration from Matthew Barney's *Cremaster* series, Vegas-space-alien and 1980s club-kid looks, and fashion delicacies from the likes of Philip Treacy and the late Alexander McQueen (Gaga so admires Treacy's millinery work that last May, she sent him her resume in a bid to spend the summer as his unpaid intern. Mr. Treacy, it appears, was not so comfortable with the idea of Gaga fetching his coffee). In a recent gambit, Gaga sported jutting, warthog-esque bone "implants" in her cheeks and shoulders—a direct reference to radical French performance artist Orlan, whose work has centered on extreme plastic surgery and facial modification for decades.

Following close behind Gaga's attention-strangling tail feathers, **Nicki Minaj** has also endeavored to make her fashion a relevant extrusion of her music act. For the 2010 American Music Awards, Ms. Minaj wore a Manish Arora dress that looked like the Fabergé sarcophagus

Donatella Versace will eventually be encased in when she is shot into space. In the language of the true fashionista, Minaj claimed the look to be "the dress version" of her album, *Pink Friday*.

Kids, too, seem to be successfully experimenting in fashion determinism—if you consider the phenomenal-offspring-projects of Will and Jada Pinkett Smith to be actual "kids." **Willow**

**Smith's** "Whip My Hair" video, with its Krush Groove, goofy-cool, anarcho-'80s-androgynous style and sneering Neneh Cherry affect, sets a pretty good example for the children in America. Little-girl fashions finally seem to be breaking free of the hyper-stripper, oversexualized sort that have dominated the post-Britney era.

Other relatively young artists had varying degrees of luck coming of age on the red carpet. **Miley Cyrus** attended the Grammys in a Hervé Léger dress seemingly made of blue-gray Venetian blinds, which suggested that her stylist was Venetian—and blind. **Justin Bieber's** \$750, blown-sideways hairstyle—which always seemed to be hovering on the event horizon of a collapsed Flowbee—made news in 2010. This was taken by some to be a sign that society is returning to softer, more feathered bangs on young men, and softer, more feathery pop to go with it. It's at least a haircut that moms won't fear—and at best, will probably imitate.

**Jessica Simpson's** style and up-and-down waistline were constantly criticized, but she had the last laugh with a billion-dollar fashion business that outpaced fellow rag-traders Justin Timberlake and **Victoria Beckham**.

The country-western crossover fashion parade seems to have intentionally rounded off all its own edges, much like the rubberized table corners in a toddler-proof dining room. The fact that **Taylor Swift's** straightened hair at the 2010 American Music Awards somehow sent actual shock waves through the media shows how little else there was to cling to, in terms of style statements in the country sector.

**Katy Perry** turned heads with a blue wig at the 2010 MTV Video Music Awards, but became persona non grata on Sesame Street by infamously appearing in what could be called her "Suckle Me Elmo" gown. She immediately responded by toning down her former fashion recklessness. The chastely pale-pink strapless Badgley Mischka cocktail dress that she wore to the AMAs in 2010 was the almost apologetic

sartorial equivalent of "I'm only drinking club soda tonight, thanks."

**Susan Boyle's** defiant commitment to her own caterpillar eyebrows and tea-cozy frumpishness was so bone-deep and sincere that when stylists tried to reupholster her look in 2010, she lost it. Respect must be summoned for a woman so dead-set against the tyranny of fashion that a mere pluck, blowout and new blazer caused her entire psyche to implode. In her own small, unwaxed way, Ms. Boyle is a cultural hero.

Although the mesh-Daisy-Dukes-and-white-bustier looks that **Rihanna** sports on magazine covers and in music videos are not her most shining fashion moments, she never steps onto a red carpet looking anything short of retro-glam-yet-modern—and scorchingly hot. The best of her outfits—usually a very strong, monochrome couture statement—are by Elie Saab, who seems to understand

## RIHANNA'S ARCHITECTURAL TOUR-DE-FORCE EXTRAVAGANZAS PACK ENOUGH OF A VISUAL WALLOP TO KEEP PACE WITH THE ATTENTION-GETTING TANTRUM THEATRICALS OF GAGA.

precisely the mood that a Rihanna gown must evoke. Saab's creations are architectural tour-de-force extravaganzas (for example, the white number Rihanna wore to the 2010 Grammys was a monolithic, Joan Crawford power-goddess feat of classical construction) that pack enough of a visual wallop to keep pace with the attention-getting tantrum theatrics of Gaga's "Royal Drag Queen Academy of Art" style. But instead of turning Rihanna into a swan boat or a tumbleweed composed entirely of Hot Wheels tracks or an electrocuted gyroscope, her stylist Mariel Haenn and Saab actually allow Rihanna to be a sexualized female.

It's important to understand these paradoxes in fashion—the balance between sweet and scary, hard and soft, sculptural threats and flattering whispers. Rihanna is cleaning all clocks on the red carpet—and for the sake of societal beautification, we can only hope that a new generation of fashion-watching music fans follows her lead. ●

TOP ROW FROM LEFT: CORBIS ENTERTAINMENT; MIKE MARSLAND/WIREIMAGE; JON KOPALOFF/FILMMAGIC; STEVEN LAWTON/FILMMAGIC; SECOND ROW FROM LEFT: STEVE GRANITZ/WIREIMAGE; KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE; JON KOPALOFF/FILMMAGIC; JON KOPALOFF/FILMMAGIC (2); THIRD ROW FROM LEFT: JON KOPALOFF/FILMMAGIC; TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP; JON KOPALOFF/FILMMAGIC; ANITA BLÜGGE/WIREIMAGE; FRONT ROW FROM LEFT: JON KOPALOFF/FILMMAGIC; DONNA SVENNERIK/DISNEY ABC TELEVISION GROUP



PLANET POP  
*The looks of  
the year*





# LOOK BACK

# Greatest Hits

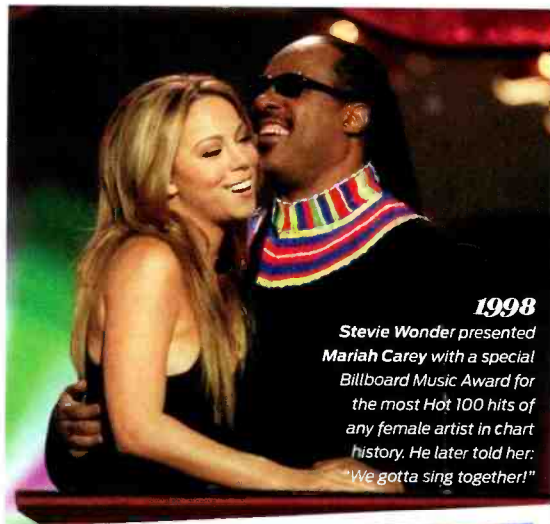
Celebrate the glory, the glamour, and the dazzling talent gathered at the **Billboard Music Awards** ceremonies through the years.



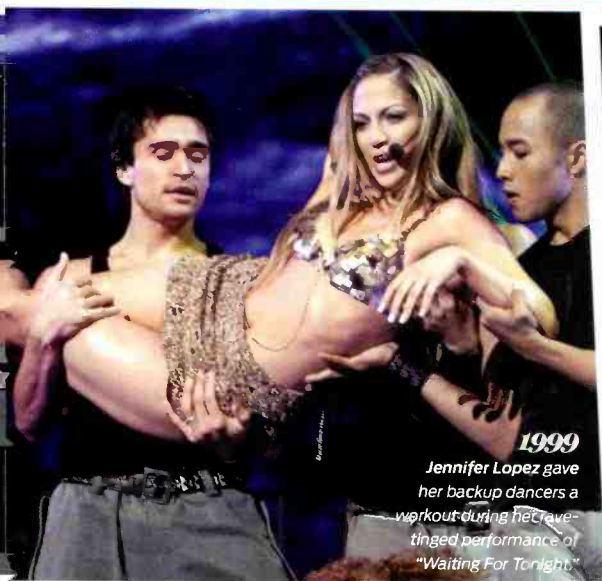
**1993**  
Whitney Houston and Bobby Brown were red-hot as Whitney swept the Billboard Music Awards with "I Will Always Love You" and The Bodyguard soundtrack.



**1996**  
Artist Achievement Award-winner Madonna confessed, "No matter what I do, what choices I make in my career, it's always been about the music."



**1998**  
Stevie Wonder presented Mariah Carey with a special Billboard Music Award for the most Hot 100 hits of any female artist in chart history. He later told her: "We gotta sing together!"



**1999**  
Jennifer Lopez gave her backup dancers a workout during her raving-tinged performance of "Waiting For Tonight."



**2000**  
Kathy Griffin turned the tables on cohosts **\*N SYNC** when she announced that by the end of the night she would marry one of the guys from the band.

THIS PAGE: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE; AFP/GETTY IMAGES; SCHEID/GETTY IMAGES ENTERTAINMENT (2); FRANK MCELLOTTA/GETTY IMAGES ENTERTAINMENT; OPPOSITE PAGE: TOP ROW FROM LEFT: M. CAULFIELD/WIREIMAGE (2); SECOND ROW, FROM LEFT: GREGG DEGUIRE/WIREIMAGE; M. CAULFIELD/WIREIMAGE; BOTTOM ROW, FROM LEFT: FOX/WIREIMAGE; JOHN SHEARER/WIREIMAGE





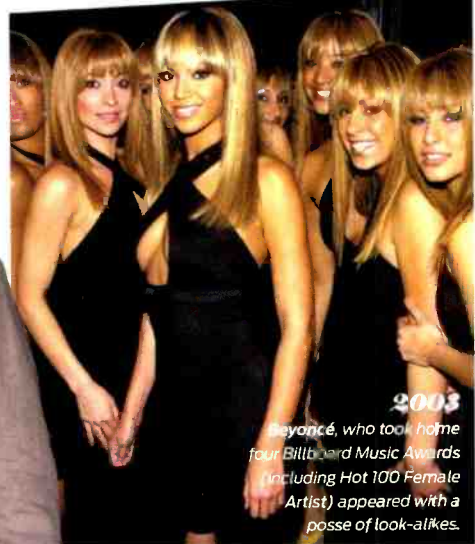
**2001**  
Diddy, Gwen Stefani, and Mary J. Blige led a finale performance of Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On."



**2002**  
Chris Tucker presented Michael Jackson with a special Billboard Music Award for the history-making Thriller album, v.a telecast from Neverland Ranch. Cher, accepting an Artist Achievement Award later that night, said: "I've been doing this for five decades and wasn't sure which Cher to be tonight, so I thought I'd go back to vintage Bob Mackie."



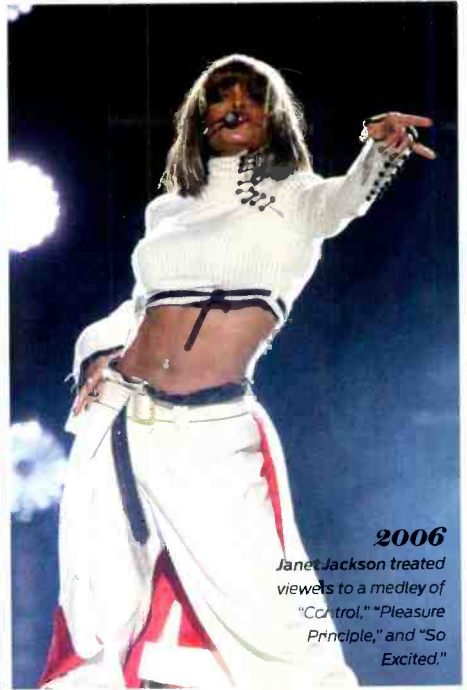
**2004**  
"This is my dream, to be married!" Britney Spears said on the red carpet outside the Awards, with then-new hubby Kevin Federline and chihuahua Bit Bit.



**2003**  
Beyoncé, who took home four Billboard Music Awards (including Hot 100 Female Artist) appeared with a posse of look-alikes.



**2005**  
Green Day nabbed six trophies, including Rock Artist of the Year.



**2006**  
Janet Jackson treated viewers to a medley of "Control," "Pleasure Principle," and "So Excited."



# ENCORE

## He's Got the Look

The 2011 Billboard Music Awards host **Ken Jeong** has had breakout comedic roles in *Community*, *Knocked Up*, and *The Hangover*—but what he really wants to do is *rock*. Here, the funnyman channels Prince circa *Purple Rain* and explains why he'd rather be the Artist Formerly Known as Ken.

### Top 10 Reasons Why Comedians Want to Be Rock Stars:

- 1 Selling out your last show, ever—no, for real, ever.
- 2 People mostly take you seriously when you announce you're running for president of a small country.
- 3 Your alcohol-fueled rages are dubbed "legendary" rather than simply "sad."
- 4 More gigs at "The Garden." Fewer gigs at "Sol's Chuckle Hut."
- 5 Lighting your guitar on fire doesn't get you labeled as a "prop comedian."
- 6 Saying, "Thank you! Good night!" to thunderous applause instead of polite claps from your mom.
- 7 Everyone has to laugh at your jokes.
- 8 Less pressure to be funny. Or even conscious.
- 9 VH1's *Rock of Love Bus*.
- 10 No one thinks twice about your Cuban heels.



PHOTOGRAPHY: CRAIG SJODIN. © AMERICAN BROADCASTING COMPANIES, INC. WARDROBE STYLING: MARISSA BORSETTO; HAIR AND MAKEUP: LISINE USING GIORGIO ARMANI BEAUTY FOR ARTIST'SBYTIMOTHYRIANO.COM; BOTTOM, FROM LEFT: LEWIS JACOBS/NEC; SUSAN HANOVER/ UNIVERSAL PICTURES; FRANK MASI/WARNER BROS. PICTURES







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