

R&B // HIP-HOP POWER PLAYERS 2020

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THE
TRUTH
ABOUT
R&B

TEYANA TAYLOR,
KEHLANI, JHENÉ AIKO
AND SUMMER WALKER
ON WHY THEIR GENRE
IS 'THE REALEST
BITCH IN THE WORLD'

EXECUTIVE OF
THE YEAR
KEVIN LILES

GENERATION NOW
ON THE RISE

WHAT BIDEN
MEANS FOR
MUSIC



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TURNING UP:

HEART

BLAKE SHELTON
ASHLEY McBRYDE
BRETT ELDREDGE
HIGH VALLEY



WARNER
MUSIC
NASHVILLE



TURNING UP:

AUTHENTICITY

CODY JOHNSON
MICHAEL RAY
WALKER COUNTY
CHRIS JANSON



WARNER
MUSIC
NASHVILLE

UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP IS PROUD TO CONGRATULATE OUR HIP HOP POWER PLAYERS

AMIR (CASH) ESMAILIAN
ANTHONY "TOP DAWG" TIFFITH
ARI GELAW
ARNOLD TAYLOR
AUBREY "DRAKE" GRAHAM
BILL EVANS
BRITNEY DAVIS
BRYAN "BIRDMAN" WILLIAMS
CARLON RAMONG
CAROLINE DIAZ
CHRIS BLACKWELL
DAMION PRESSON
DAUD "KING" CARTER
DESIREE PEREZ
DIJON "MUSTARD" MCFARLANE
DOMINICK MORMILE
ELLIOT GRAINGE
ETHIOPIA HABTEMARIAM
GELAREH ROUZBEHANI
IBRAHIM "IB" HAMAD
J. COLE
JAMES SUPREME
JAY BROWN
JEFF HARLESTON
JEFF VAUGHN
JERMI THOMAS
JUNIA ABAIDOO
JUSTICE BAIDEN
KATINA BYNUM
KEVIN "COACH K" LEE
LATRICE BURNETTE
LAURA CARTER
MARLENY REYES
MEKO YOHANNES
MR. MORGAN
NICKI FARAG
NICOLE WYSKOARKO
NIGEL TALLEY
NOAH "40" SHEBIB
OLIVER EL-KHATIB
PIERRE "P" THOMAS
RAMON ALVAREZ-SMIKLE
RICH ISAACSON
RODNEY SHEALEY
RONALD "SLIM" WILLIAMS
SEAN FAMOSO
SHAWN "JAY-Z" CARTER
STEVE CARLESS
STEVEN VICTOR
TERRENCE "PUNCH" HENDERSON
TIARA HARGRAVE
TIM GLOVER
TUNDE BALOGUN
TYLER ARNOLD
WALTER JONES
WASSIM "SAL" SLAIBY



UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

billboard Hot 100



24kGoldn

'Mood': Better With A View From The Top

MOOD," BY 24KGOLDN FEATURING IANN DIOR, REBOUNDS for a third week atop the Billboard Hot 100. The song drew 84.2 million radio airplay audience impressions and 19.2 million U.S. streams, and sold 7,000 downloads in the tracking week, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data.

The single also rules the multimetric Hot Rock & Alternative Songs and Hot Alternative Songs charts for an 11th week each and Hot Rap Songs for a fourth week. It's the first title to have led all three lists.

"I think our generation grew up listening to different types of music. We don't think about genre instinctively," 24kGoldn recently told *Billboard*. "Back in the day, it was like, 'Well, you want to be a rock star? You want to be a rapper? Or, 'You want to be an R&B singer?' Nowadays, you can be all three things.

"I feel like this song, reaching the heights it did, that's reflective of a shift in culture," says the 20-year-old San Francisco native. "We're pushing the culture forward and saying, 'All right, now in music, it doesn't matter what genre it is. It just matters that people like it.' We made music that people like, so I'm just glad to be a vessel to help inspire and push the culture." —GARY TRUST

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	CERTIFICATION	Artist IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
1	3	1	#1 MOOD O. FEDI, B. SLATKIN, K. BEAZY (G. L. VON JONES, O. FEDI, B. SLATKIN, K. BACH, M. I. OLMO)	24kGoldn	Feat. iann dior RECORDS/ COLUMBIA	1	13
-	1	2	AIR POSITIONS LONDON ON DA TRACK, T. BROWN, MR. FRANKS/A. GRANDE, T. L. BROWN, N. A. A. CHARLES, A. BARRETT, S. FRANKS, B. V. BATES, L. T. HOLMES, J. JARVIS	Ariana Grande	REPUBLIC	1	2
3	4	3	LAUGH NOW CRY LATER CARD ON THE BEAT, GRY, YUNG EXCLUSIVE, R. CHAHAYAE (A. GRAHAM, R. LATOUR, R. A. MARTINEZ, D. JACKSON, R. CHAHAYAE, D. D. BANKS)	Drake	Feat. Lil Durk OVO SOUND/ REPUBLIC	2	12
4	5	4	BLINDING LIGHTS MAX MARTIN, O. T. HOLTER, THE WEEKND (A. TEFAYE, A. BALSHE, J. QUENNEVILLE, MAX MARTIN, O. T. HOLTER)	The Weeknd	XD/REPUBLIC	1	49
6	6	5	I HOPE R. COPPERMAN, Z. KALE (Z. KALE, J. M. NITE, G. BARRETT)	Gabby Barrett	Feat. Charlie Puth WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WAR	5	45
5	8	6	SAVAGE LOVE (LAXED - SIREN BEAT) JAWSH 685, JASON DERULO (J. NANAI, J. J. DESROULEAUX, J. K. HINDLIN, P. GREISS)	Jawsh 685 x Jason Derulo	COLUMBIA	1	21
10	9	7	LEMONADE MIRA, A. WIGDAHL, L. ETROU, PHARAOH VICE, TAZ TAYLOR (C. Z. TOLIVER, N. S. GORAYAS, G. KITCHENS, N. MIRA, A. WIGDAHL, L. ETROU, H. NICHOLS, TAZ TAYLOR)	Internet Money & Gunna	Feat. Don Toliver & NAV INTERNET MONEY/THOUSAND PROJECTS/CAITOL	7	12
HOT SHOT DEBUT		8	34+35 T. BROWN, P. L. JOHNSON, XAVI, MR. FRANKS/A. GRANDE, T. L. BROWN, S. N. CHOLSON, V. M. MCCANTS, T. M. PARKS, C. X. HERRERA, P. L. JOHNSON, S. FRANKS, A. STANA, J.	Ariana Grande	REPUBLIC	8	1
NEW		9	DAKITI TAINY, MORA (G. M. QUINTERO, M. E. MASIS FERNANDEZ, B. A. MARTINEZ, O. CASO, J. M. NIEVES, C. CORTEZ, N. YERA LANER, E. E. ROSA CINTRON)	Bad Bunny & Jhay Cortez	RIMAS	9	1
2	7	10	WAP AYO, KEYZ (CARDI B, M. J. PETE, A. OWENS, J. FOYE III, J. K. LANIER, THORPE, F. RODRIGUEZ)	Cardi B	Feat. Megan Thee Stallion ATLANTIC	1	13

SANI DRASIN

THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR CURRENT SONGS ACROSS ALL GENRES, RANKED BY RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS AS MEASURED BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA AND STREAMING ACTIVITY DATA BY ONLINE MUSIC SOURCES TRACKED BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA. SONGS ARE DEFINED AS CURRENT IF THEY ARE NEWLY RELEASED TITLES, OR SONGS RECEIVING WIDESPREAD AIRPLAY AND/OR SALES ACTIVITY FOR THE FIRST TIME. SEE CHARTS. LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM/BIZ FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2020, PROMETHEUS GLOBAL MEDIA, LLC AND NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

nielsen
MRC

61

TATE McRAE
"you broke me first."



The 17-year-old Calgary, Alberta, native's first Hot 100 entry also helps her reach a new No. 5 high on the Emerging Artists chart.

What inspired this song?

I was in an emotional mood that day. I had written down, "I don't really care how bad it hurts because you broke me first," and shaped it into a toxic-relationship story. I took experiences from friendships and feelings I've had. The crazy part is that I've never been in a relationship. But there are many situations when you feel like your heart is breaking. I keep those emotions pent up so I can create stories around them.

Why did you shoot the music video on your iPhone?

Two days before filming, I got sent home [due to the pandemic]. My label [RCA Records] told me, "You have to improvise." I taped my phone to the front of my mom's car and propped it up with tissue boxes. My friend drove as I sang. Originally, I wanted to do something dance-based, but I'm happy it didn't happen. It could've taken away from the rawness of the song.

What's it like being an emerging artist during the pandemic?

We can use this time to figure out what we want to sound like — that's huge when you're young. When things are moving quickly, it's hard to stop and think about it. The fact that we can't do live shows means we just have to keep creating. Make sure you're challenging your brain and putting out content. Releasing music continuously is important. —MIA NAZARENO



8
ARIANA GRANDE
"34+35"

Grande adds her 18th Hot 100 top 10. Since her first, "The Way," debuted in the tier in April 2013, her total is the best among women and second only to Drake's 31 among all artists in that span.

WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	CERTIFICATION	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
9	10	11	HOLY		Justin Bieber Feat. Chance The Rapper	3	7
13	14	12	FOR THE NIGHT		Pop Smoke Feat. Lil Baby & DaBaby	6	18
8	11	7	ROCKSTAR		DaBaby Feat. Roddy Ricch	1	29
12	13	14	BEFORE YOU GO		Lewis Capaldi	9	40
15	16	15	GO CRAZY		Chris Brown & Young Thug	9	26
7	12	16	DYNAMITE		BTS	1	11
11	15	17	WATERMELON SUGAR		Harry Styles	1	33
-	2	18	FOREVER AFTER ALL		Luke Combs	2	2
24	22	19	KINGS & QUEENS		Ava Max	19	13
23	17	20	SAID SUM		Moneybagg Yo	17	18

WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	CERTIFICATION	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
14	27	21	LONELY		Justin Bieber & benny blanco	14	3
20	19	22	BE LIKE THAT		Kane Brown With Swae Lee & Khalid	19	17
28	23	23	MORE THAN MY HOMETOWN		Morgan Wallen	23	21
18	20	24	WHATS POPPIN		Jack Harlow Feat. DaBaby, Tory Lanez & Lil Wayne	2	39
27	25	25	ILY		surf mesa Feat. Emilee	25	24
26	28	26	BANG!		AJR	26	18
17	26	27	ONE OF THEM GIRLS		Lee Brice	17	23
16	21	28	GOT WHAT I GOT		Jason Aldean	16	23
47	42	29	LEVITATING		Dua Lipa Feat. DaBaby	29	5
25	29	30	WHAT YOU KNOW BOUT LOVE		Pop Smoke	25	9
22	24	31	COME & GO		Juice WRLD x Marshmello	2	17
NEW		32	MOTIVE		Ariana Grande Feat. Doja Cat	32	1
30	32	33	WONDER		Shawn Mendes	18	5
41	37	34	LOVE YOU LIKE I USED TO		Russell Dickerson	34	9
NEW		35	OFF THE TABLE		Ariana Grande Feat. The Weeknd	35	1
37	36	36	ONE BEER		HARDY Feat. Lauren Alaina & Devin Dawson	36	22
31	31	37	ADORE YOU		Harry Styles	6	48
44	43	38	PRETTY HEART		Parker McCollum	38	17
32	35	39	THE WOO		Pop Smoke Feat. 50 Cent & Roddy Ricch	11	18
NEW		40	POV		Ariana Grande	40	1
57	30	41	BETTER TOGETHER		Luke Combs	30	5
38	40	42	RAGS2RICHES		Rod Wave Feat. ATR Son Son	12	19
NEW		43	JUST LIKE MAGIC		Ariana Grande	43	1
33	39	44	ROSES		SAINT JHN	4	33
60	58	45	SAL DIAMONDS		Sam Smith	45	7
49	46	46	HAPPY ANYWHERE		Blake Shelton Feat. Gwen Stefani	45	15
NEW		47	SHUT UP		Ariana Grande	47	1
RE-ENTRY		48	THRILLER		Michael Jackson	4	20
NEW		49	NASTY		Ariana Grande	49	1
34	44	50	BREAK MY HEART		Dua Lipa	13	32

SALES: AIRPLAY & STREAMING DATA AS MEASURED BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA. SALES DATA AS COMPILY BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA. SALES ARE DEFINED AS CURRENT IF THEY ARE NEWLY RELEASED TITLES, OR SONGS RECEIVING WIDESPREAD AIRPLAY AND/OR SALES ACTIVITY FOR THE FIRST TIME. SEE CHARTS. LEGEND@BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2020 NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA, LLC AND NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
	1	#1 ARIANA GRANDE REPUBLIC		Positions	1	1
NEW	2	TRIPPIE REDD 1400/TENTHOUSAND PROJECTS		Pegasus	2	1
	3	POP SMOKE VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/REPUBLIC		Shoot For The Stars Aim For The Moon	1	18
1	4	LUKE COMBS RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN		What You See Is What You Get	1	52
NEW	5	SAM SMITH CAPITOL		Love Goes	5	1
	6	JUICE WRLD GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Legends Never Die	1	17
NEW	7	BUSTA RHYMES THE CONGLOMERATE/EMPIRE		ELE 2: The Wrath Of God	7	1
	8	LIL BABY QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL		My Turn	1	36
NEW	9	QUEEN NAIJA QUEEN NAIJA/CAPITOL		Missunderstood	9	1
	10	ORIGINAL BROADWAY CAST HAMILTON UPTOWN/ATLANTIC/AG		Hamilton: An American Musical	2	267
	11	21 SAVAGE & METRO BOOMIN BOOMINATI/ISLAUGHTER BOOMIN/REPUBLIC/EPIC		Savage Mode II	1	5
	12	POST MALONE REPUBLIC		Hollywood's Bleeding	1	61
NEW	13	KING VON ONLY THE FAMILY/EMPIRE		Welcome To O'Block	13	1
	14	YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ARTIST PARTNER GROUP/ATLANTIC/AG		Top	1	8
	15	DABABY SOUTHCOAST/INTERSCOPE/JGA		BLAME IT ON BABY	1	29
	16	MACHINE GUN KELLY EST19XX/BAD BOY/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Tickets To My Downfall	1	6
10	17	HARRY STYLES ERSKINE/COLUMBIA		Fine Line	1	47
2	18	BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN COLUMBIA		Letter To You	2	2
RE	19	GRATEFUL DEAD GRATEFUL DEAD/WARNER/RHINO		American Beauty	19	20
	20	ROD WAVE ALAMO/JGA		Pray 4 Love	2	31
	21	POLO G COLUMBIA		The GOAT	2	25
	22	BAD BUNNY RIMAS		YHLQMDLG	2	36
	23	FLEETWOOD MAC WARNER/RHINO		Rumours	1	397
	24	THE WEEKND XO/REPUBLIC		After Hours	1	33
NEW	25	GRATEFUL DEAD Dave's Picks Vol. 36: Hartford Civic Center, Hartford, CT - 3/26 & 3/27/87 GRATEFUL DEAD/RHINO			25	1
	26	JUICE WRLD GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Goodbye & Good Riddance	4	129
	27	TAYLOR SWIFT REPUBLIC		Folklore	1	15
20	28	LUKE COMBS RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN		This One's For You	4	179
	29	INTERNET MONEY INTERNET MONEY/TENTHOUSAND PROJECTS		B4 The Storm	10	10
NEW	30	MR. BUNGLE IPECAC		The Raging Wrath Of The Easter Bunny Demo	30	1
	31	LIL UZI VERT GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		Eternal Atake	1	35
4	32	TY DOLLA \$IGN ATLANTIC/AG		Featuring Ty Dolla \$ign	4	2
	33	BILLIE EILISH DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/JGA		When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?	1	84
	34	MONEYBAGG YO & BLAC YOUNGSTA HEAVY CAMP/CMG/EPIC/N-LESS/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Code Red	6	7
	35	JUICE WRLD GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Death Race For Love	1	87
	36	MORGAN WALLEN BIG LOUD		If I Know Me	13	110
	37	LEWIS CAPALDI VERTIGO/CAPITOL		Divinely Uninspired To A Hellish Extent	20	77
58	38	MICHAEL JACKSON EPIC/LEGACY		Thriller	1	443
150	39	GG CARRIE UNDERWOOD CAPITOL NASHVILLE/UMGN		My Gift	8	6
	40	LIL DURK ALAMO/GEFFEN/JGA		Just Cause Y'all Waited 2	2	26
	41	GUNNA YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/AG		Wunna	1	24
	42	BLACKPINK YG/INTERSCOPE/JGA		The Album	2	5
	43	RODDY RICCH BIRD VISION/ATLANTIC/AG		Please Excuse Me For Being Antisocial	1	48
	44	QUEEN HOLLYWOOD		Greatest Hits	11	411
	45	POST MALONE REPUBLIC		beerbongs & bentleys	1	132
NEW	46	BRING ME THE HORIZON COLUMBIA		Post Human: Survival Horror	46	1
	47	DUA LIPA WARNER		Future Nostalgia	4	31
12	48	GORILLAZ PARLOPHONE/WARNER		Song Machine, Season One: Strange Timez	12	2
	49	TRAVIS SCOTT CACTUS JACK/GRAND HUSTLE/EPIC		ASTROWORLD	1	118
NEW	50	FOR KING & COUNTRY CURB-WORD/CURB		A Drummer Boy Christmas	50	1

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
40	51	SUMMER WALKER LVRN/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Over It	2	57
39	52	JHENE AIKO 2 FISH/ARTCLUB/ARTIUM/DEF JAM		Chilombo	2	35
45	53	FUTURE FREEBANDZ/EPIC		High Off Life	1	25
44	54	DRAKE YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC		Scorpion	1	123
50	55	POST MALONE REPUBLIC		Stoney	4	204
48	56	ELTON JOHN ROCKET/ISLAND/UME		Diamonds	7	156
46	57	HALSEY CAPITOL		Manic	2	42
120	58	PS SOUNDTRACK WALT DISNEY		Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas	52	14
42	59	JOJI 88RISING/12TONE		Nectar	3	6
59	60	CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL FANTASY/CONCORD		Chronicle The 20 Greatest Hits	22	496
56	61	KANE BROWN RCA NASHVILLE/SMN		Mixtape, Vol. 1 (EP)	15	12
51	62	DRAKE OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC		Dark Lane Demo Tapes	2	27
53	63	ARIANA GRANDE REPUBLIC		Thank U, Next	1	91
60	64	EMINEM SHADY/AF TERMATH/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Curtain Call: The Hits	1	501
NEW	65	PUSCIFER PUSCIFER/ALCHEMY/BMG		Existential Reckoning	65	1
57	66	XXXTENTACION BAD VIBES FOREVER		?	1	138
71	67	AC/DC COLUMBIA/LEGACY		Back In Black	4	436
61	68	CHRIS STAPLETON MERCURY NASHVILLE/UMGN		Traveller	1	269
RE	69	U2 INTERSCOPE/UME		All That You Can't Leave Behind	3	95
81	70	MONEYBAGG YO N-LESS/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Time Served	3	43
63	71	SOUNDTRACK WALT DISNEY		Frozen II	1	51
66	72	KENDRICK LAMAR TOP DAWG/AF TERMATH/INTERSCOPE/JGA		good kid, m.A.A.d city	2	419
69	73	JOURNEY COLUMBIA/LEGACY		Journey's Greatest Hits	10	641
65	74	TAYLOR SWIFT REPUBLIC		Lover	1	63
125	75	ANUEL AA REAL HASTA LA MUERTE/SONY MUSIC LATIN		Emmanuel	8	23
67	76	ED SHEERAN ATLANTIC/AG		÷ (Divide)	1	192
74	77	POP SMOKE VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/REPUBLIC		Meet The Woo, V.2	7	39
73	78	LIL UZI VERT GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		Luv Is Rage 2	1	167
68	79	BILLIE EILISH DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Dont Smile At Me	14	150
NEW	80	WIZKID STARBOY/RCA		Made In Lagos	80	1
78	81	THE KID LAROI COLUMBIA		F*ck Love	8	15
79	82	DOJA CAT KEMOSABE/RCA		Hot Pink	9	53
70	83	BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS TUFF GONG/ISLAND/UME		Legend: The Best Of...	5	651
75	84	DRAKE YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC		Take Care	1	401
86	85	ROD WAVE ALAMO/JGA		Ghetto Gospel	10	53
77	86	JACK HARLOW GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		Sweet Action	20	34
85	87	NLE CHOPPA NLE CHOPPA/WARNER		Top Shotta	10	13
RE	88	MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE REPRISE/WARNER		The Black Parade	2	99
90	89	GUNS N' ROSES Geffen/UME		Greatest Hits	3	510
RE	90	2PAC AMARU/DEATH ROW/INTERSCOPE/UME		Greatest Hits	3	347
80	91	GABBY BARRETT WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN		Goldmine	27	20
95	92	SOUNDTRACK WALT DISNEY		Moana	2	206
97	93	KENDRICK LAMAR TOP DAWG/AF TERMATH/INTERSCOPE/JGA		DAMN.	1	186
72	94	FLEETWOOD MAC WARNER/RHINO		Greatest Hits	14	167
83	95	SZA TOP DAWG/RCA		Ctrl	3	178
88	96	TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS MCA/GEFFEN/UME		Greatest Hits	2	382
25	97	TOM PETTY TOM PETTY LEGACY/WARNER		Wildflowers	5	60
96	98	SOUNDTRACK FOX/20TH CENTURY FOX/ATLANTIC/AG		The Greatest Showman	1	152
101	99	YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ATLANTIC/AG		AI YoungBoy 2	1	56
RE	100	MARIAH CAREY COLUMBIA/LEGACY		Merry Christmas	3	92



Grande Goes For Five

Ariana Grande nets her fifth Billboard 200 No. 1 as her semi-surprise studio album, *Positions*, debuts atop the tally. She teased the set on Oct. 14 and released it Oct. 30. It earned 174,000 equivalent album units in the United States in the week ending Nov. 5, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data.

Positions is Grande's third No. 1 in less than two years and three months (following *thank u, next* on Feb. 23, 2019, and *Sweetener* on Sept. 1, 2018), the quickest accumulation of three No. 1 proper studio albums ever by a woman. Male soloists and groups have racked up three chart-toppers faster, including YoungBoy Never Broke Again, Future and BTS.

Grande is the latest female pop star to drop a No. 1 album with little notice, following Taylor Swift, who announced *Folklore* on July 23, the day before it was released.

—KEITH CAULFIELD

THAT'S A POWERFUL LIST!

CHRIS ATLAS

NIKISHA BAILEY

NORVA DENTON

LANRE GABA

KEVIN HOLIDAY

JULIETTE JONES

WALLACE JOSEPH

MIKE KYSER

KEVIN LILES

DALLAS MARTIN

MATT MCFARLANE

JULIAN PETTY

ELI PICCARRETA

RYAN PRESS

BRANDRA RINGO

JAMILA THOMAS

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR POWER PLAYERS

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
92	101	KHALID <small>RIGHT HAND/RCA</small>	American Teen	4	192
98	102	CHRIS BROWN <small>CBE/RCA</small>	Indigo	1	71
109	103	CARDI B <small>THE KSR GROUP/ATLANTIC/AG</small>	Invasion Of Privacy	1	135
104	104	YOUNG THUG <small>YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/ATLANTIC/AG</small>	So Much Fun	1	64
33	105	NCT <small>SM</small>	Resonance, Pt. 1	6	3
100	106	J. COLE <small>DREAMVILLE/ROC NATION/COLUMBIA/LEGACY</small>	2014 Forest Hills Drive	1	309
106	107	THE BEATLES <small>APPLE/CAPITOL/UME</small>	1	1	445
93	108	KHALID <small>RIGHT HAND/RCA</small>	Free Spirit	1	83
62	109	BRYSON TILLER <small>TRAPSOUL/RCA</small>	ANNIVERSARY	5	5
138	110	MALUMA <small>SONY MUSIC LATIN</small>	Papi Juancho	38	11
87	111	DOLLY PARTON <small>BUTTERFLY RECORDS/IZTONE</small>	A Holly Dolly Christmas	16	5
82	112	MONEY MAN <small>BLACK CIRCLE/EMPIRE</small>	Epidemic	24	13
127	113	DABABY <small>SOUTHEAST/INTERSCOPE/IGA</small>	KIRK	1	58
110	114	THE WEEKND <small>XO/REPUBLIC</small>	Starboy	1	206
89	115	BIG SEAN <small>G.O.O.D./DEF JAM</small>	Detroit 2	1	9
107	116	THE WEEKND <small>XO/REPUBLIC</small>	Beauty Behind The Madness	1	270
105	117	TRIPPIE REDD <small>TENTHOUSAND PROJECTS</small>	A Love Letter To You 4	1	50
103	118	HARDY <small>BIG LOUD</small>	A Rock	24	9
84	119	BTS <small>BIGHIT ENTERTAINMENT</small>	MAP OF THE SOUL : 7	1	37
76	120	ADELE <small>XL/COLUMBIA</small>	21	1	490
124	121	GEORGE STRAIT <small>MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN</small>	50 Number Ones	1	162
94	122	JASON ALDEAN <small>MACON/BROKE N BOW/BMG/BBMG</small>	9	2	43
118	123	LIL TJAY <small>COLUMBIA</small>	True 2 Myself	5	56
108	124	LIZZO <small>NICE LIFE/ATLANTIC/AG</small>	Cuz I Love You	4	81
116	125	NF <small>NF REAL MUSIC/CAROLINE</small>	The Search	1	67
136	126	BAD BUNNY <small>RIMAS</small>	X 100PRE	11	98
114	127	DRAKE <small>YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC</small>	Views	1	236
126	128	JACKBOYS <small>CACTUS JACK/EPIC</small>	JACKBOYS	1	45
113	129	OZUNA <small>AURA/SONY MUSIC LATIN</small>	ENOC	17	9
133	130	THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G. <small>BAD BOY/RHINO</small>	Greatest Hits	1	247
RE	131	MICHAEL BUBLE <small>143/REPRISE/WARNER</small>	Christmas	1	83
115	132	A BOOGIE WIT DA HOODIE <small>HIGHBRIDGE THE LABEL/ATLANTIC/AG</small>	Artist 2.0	2	38
52	133	T.I. <small>GRAND HUSTLE/EMPIRE</small>	The L.I.B.R.A.	18	3
119	134	SAM HUNT <small>MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN</small>	SOUTHSIDE	5	31
117	135	TOOSII <small>SOUTHEAST/CAPITOL</small>	Poetic Pain	17	7
130	136	LADY GAGA <small>STREAMLINE/INTERSCOPE/IGA</small>	Chromatica	1	23
131	137	THE BEATLES <small>APPLE/CAPITOL/UME</small>	Abbey Road	1	386
128	138	CHRIS BROWN & YOUNG THUG <small>300/CBE/RCA</small>	Slime & B	24	27
123	139	TAYLOR SWIFT <small>BIG MACHINE/BMLG</small>	1989	1	308
141	140	POLO G <small>COLUMBIA</small>	Die A Legend	6	74
139	141	AVA MAX <small>MAX CUT/ARTIST PARTNER GROUP/ATLANTIC/AG</small>	Heaven & Hell	27	7
99	142	LINKIN PARK <small>WARNER</small>	[Hybrid Theory]	2	237
91	143	GUCCI MANE AND THE NEW 1017 <small>GUWOP/ATLANTIC/AG</small>	So Icy Gang, Vol. One	46	3
NEW	144	MEGHAN TRAINOR <small>HONEST OG/EPIC</small>	A Very Trainor Christmas	144	1
RE	145	BOBBY "BORIS" PICKETT AND THE CRYPT-KICKERS <small>POLYDOR/DECCA/UME</small>	The Original Monster Mash	142	6
169	148	EAGLES <small>ASYLUM/ELEKTRA/RHINO</small>	Their Greatest Hits 1971-1975	1	351
142	147	JUSTIN BIEBER <small>SCHOOLBOY/RAYMOND BRAUN/DEF JAM</small>	Changes	1	38
153	148	KID CUDI <small>DREAMON/G.O.O.D./REPUBLIC</small>	Man On The Moon: The End Of Day	4	147
148	149	IMAGINE DRAGONS <small>KIDINAKORNER/INTERSCOPE/IGA</small>	Evolve	2	176
155	150	SAM SMITH <small>CAPITOL</small>	In The Lonely Hour	2	311



2

TRIPPIE REDD
Pegasus

The rapper keeps up his prolific pace as he logs his fifth top five-charting album in a little over two years (since his first top five set, *Life's a Trip*; Aug. 25, 2018). He's the only artist to claim five top five albums in that span.



19

GRATEFUL DEAD
American Beauty

The band's reissue of *American Beauty* and its new *Dave's Picks* set (No. 25) yield the act's best sales weeks (21,000 and 20,000 sold, respectively, in the week ending Nov. 5, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data) since 1995.



100

MARIAH CAREY
Merry Christmas

Total equivalent album units of holiday music surged 104% to 237,000 in the week ending Nov. 5 as Carey's 1994 title reenters the chart (9,000 units, up 215%) — one of nine seasonal releases dotting the list.

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
RE	151	THE ROLLING STONES <small>ABKCO</small>	Hot Rocks 1964-1971	4	347
152	152	MEGAN THEE STALLION <small>ISO1 CERTIFIED/300/AG</small>	Suga	7	35
147	153	TRAVIS SCOTT <small>GRAND HUSTLE/EPIC</small>	Birds In The Trap Sing McKnight	1	217
135	154	FRANK OCEAN <small>BOYS DON'T CRY</small>	Blonde	1	203
156	155	EMINEM <small>SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA</small>	Music To Be Murdered By	1	42
143	156	H.E.R. <small>MBK/RCA</small>	H.E.R.	23	154
146	157	NIRVANA <small>SUB POP/DGC/GEFFEN/UME</small>	Nevermind	1	498
154	158	XXXTENTACION <small>BAD VIBES FOREVER/EMPIRE</small>	17	2	167
134	159	JAMES ARTHUR <small>COLUMBIA</small>	Back From The Edge	39	64
149	160	LIL MOSEY <small>MOGUL VISION/INTERSCOPE/IGA</small>	Certified Hitmaker	12	49
168	161	LYNYRD SKYNYRD <small>MCA/GEFFEN/UME</small>	All Time Greatest Hits	56	105
132	162	CONAN GRAY <small>REPUBLIC</small>	Kid Krow	5	21
140	163	BRYSON TILLER <small>TRAPSOUL/RCA</small>	TRAPSOUL	8	227
165	164	BRUNO MARS <small>ELEKTRA/EMG</small>	Doo-Wops & Hooligans	3	495
151	165	HARRY STYLES <small>ERSKINE/COLUMBIA</small>	Harry Styles	1	61
166	166	A BOOGIE WIT DA HOODIE <small>HIGHBRIDGE THE LABEL/ATLANTIC/AG</small>	Hoodie SZN	1	98
164	167	VARIOUS ARTISTS <small>DREAMVILLE/INTERSCOPE/IGA</small>	Dreamville & J. Cole: Revenge Of The Dreamers III	1	70
160	168	DRAKE <small>YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC</small>	More Life	1	189
153	169	LIL WAYNE <small>YOUNG MONEY/REPUBLIC</small>	Tha Carter V	1	80
RE	170	PENTATONIX <small>RCA</small>	The Best Of Pentatonix Christmas	7	11
157	171	TYLER CHILDERS <small>HICKMAN HOLLER/THIRTY TIGERS</small>	Purgatory	106	25
NEW	172	\$NOT <small>300/AG</small>	Beautiful Havoc	172	1
161	173	MAREN MORRIS <small>COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN</small>	GIRL	4	87
159	174	DRAKE <small>YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC</small>	Nothing Was The Same	1	354
168	175	SAINT JHN <small>GODD COMPLEX/HITCO</small>	Collection One	50	33
192	176	BLAKE SHELTON <small>WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN</small>	Fully Loaded: God's Country	2	47
173	177	FRANK SINATRA <small>FRANK SINATRA ENTERPRISES/CAPITOL/UME</small>	Ultimate Sinatra	32	128
179	178	GUCCI MANE & VARIOUS ARTISTS <small>GUWOP/ATLANTIC/AG</small>	Gucci Mane Presents: So Icy Summer	29	17
183	179	RIHANNA <small>WEST BURY ROAD/ROC NATION</small>	ANTI	1	244
121	180	TREY SONGZ <small>ATLANTIC/AG</small>	Back Home	15	4
175	181	ZAC BROWN BAND <small>HOME GROWN/BMG</small>	Greatest Hits So Far...	20	282
176	182	BILLY JOEL <small>COLUMBIA/LEGACY</small>	The Essential Billy Joel	15	216
189	183	LIL BABY & GUNNA <small>YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/AG/CAPITOL</small>	Drip Harder	4	109
188	184	ELVIS PRESLEY <small>RCA/SONY STRATEGIC MARKETING GROUP/LEGACY</small>	The Essential Elvis Presley	42	71
170	185	BRENT FAIYAZ <small>LOST KIDS</small>	Fuck The World	20	15
RE	186	DARYL HALL JOHN OATES <small>RCA/LEGACY</small>	The Very Best Of Daryl Hall John Oates	34	108
174	187	PARKER MCCOLLUM <small>MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN</small>	Hollywood Gold (EP)	99	3
196	188	BON JOVI <small>ISLAND/UME</small>	Greatest Hits: The Ultimate Collection	5	188
186	189	NF <small>NF REAL MUSIC/CAPITOL/CAROLINE</small>	Perception	1	161
172	190	RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS <small>WARNER</small>	Greatest Hits	18	264
182	191	MULATTO <small>STREAMCUT/RCA</small>	Queen Of Da Souf	44	11
184	192	DON TOLIVER <small>CACTUS JACK/ATLANTIC/AG</small>	Heaven Or Hell	7	34
187	193	ED SHEERAN <small>ATLANTIC/AG</small>	No.6 Collaborations Project	1	69
190	194	LAUREN DAIGLE <small>CENTRICITY/IZTONE</small>	Look Up Child	3	113
NEW	195	CAM <small>RCA</small>	The Otherside	195	1
RE	196	BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND <small>HIDEOUT/CAPITOL/UME</small>	Greatest Hits	8	353
195	197	KANE BROWN <small>ZONE 4/RCA NASHVILLE/SMN</small>	Kane Brown	5	205
RE	198	VINCE GUARALDI TRIO <small>FANTASY/CONCORD</small>	A Charlie Brown Christmas (Soundtrack)	13	81
RE	199	LIL BABY <small>QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL</small>	Harder Than Ever	3	111
197	200	LUKE BRYAN <small>ROW CROP/CAPITOL NASHVILLE/UMGN</small>	Born Here Live Here Die Here	5	13

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR
POWER PLAYERS

CONGRATS TO OUR POWER PLAYERS

JEFF HARLESTON
RICH ISAACSON
RODNEY SHEALEY
NICKI FARAG
DJ MORMILE



BILLBOARD GLOBAL 200

billboard

NOV. 14 2020

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
-	1	1	#1 POSITIONS	Ariana Grande	1	2
		2	DAKITI	Bad Bunny & Jhay Cortez	2	1
		3	MOOD	24kGoldn Feat. iann dior	2	9
	2	4	DYNAMITE	BTS	1	9
		5	34+35	Ariana Grande	5	1
	4	6	LEMONADE	Internet Money & Gunna Feat. Don Toliver & NAV	4	9
	3	7	WAP	Cardi B Feat. Megan Thee Stallion	1	9
	5	8	LONELY	Justin Bieber & benny blanco	5	3
	9	9	HAWAI	Maluma	4	9
	11	10	BLINDING LIGHTS	The Weeknd	7	9
	6	11	SAVAGE LOVE (LAXED - SIREN BEAT)	Jawsh 685 x Jason Derulo	1	9
	12	12	WHAT YOU KNOW BOUT LOVE	Pop Smoke	12	9
	7	13	HOLY	Justin Bieber Feat. Chance The Rapper	3	7
	10	14	FOR THE NIGHT	Pop Smoke Feat. Lil Baby & DaBaby	7	9
	8	15	HOMURA	LiSA	8	4
		16	MOTIVE	Ariana Grande Feat. Doja Cat	16	1
	14	17	WATERMELON SUGAR	Harry Styles	9	9
		18	OFF THE TABLE	Ariana Grande Feat. The Weeknd	18	1
	19	19	YOU BROKE ME FIRST.	Tate McRae	16	9
	15	20	RELACION	Sech, Daddy Yankee & J Balvin Feat. ROSALIA & Farruko	13	9
	18	21	HEAD & HEART	Joel Corry X MNEK	17	9
	31	22	LEVITATING	Dua Lipa Feat. DaBaby	22	5
	16	23	LAUGH NOW CRY LATER	Drake Feat. Lil Durk	5	9
		24	POV	Ariana Grande	24	1
	17	25	ROCKSTAR	DaBaby Feat. Roddy Ricch	8	9
		26	JUST LIKE MAGIC	Ariana Grande	26	1
	21	27	ROSES	SAINT JHN	14	9
		28	SHUT UP	Ariana Grande	28	1
	38	29	LA TOXICA	Farruko	24	8
	22	30	DANCE MONKEY	Tones And I	18	9
	-	31	I CAN'T STOP ME	TWICE	31	2
	-	32	FOREVER AFTER ALL	Luke Combs	4	2
		33	SAFETY NET	Ariana Grande Feat. Ty Dolla \$ign	33	1
	23	34	WONDER	Shawn Mendes	13	5
	13	35	DREAMS	Fleetwood Mac	10	6
		36	NASTY	Ariana Grande	36	1
	29	37	VIDA DE RICO	Camilo	29	6
	27	38	SOMEONE YOU LOVED	Lewis Capaldi	27	9
	28	39	MIDNIGHT SKY	Miley Cyrus	23	9
	66	40	DIAMONDS	Sam Smith	32	7
	25	41	CARAMELO	Ozuna x Karol G x Myke Towers	16	9
	33	42	TAKE YOU DANCING	Jason Derulo	33	9
	24	43	MOOD SWINGS	Pop Smoke Feat. Lil Tjay	13	9
		44	MY HAIR	Ariana Grande	44	1



The collaboration launches with 83.5 million streams and 6,000 downloads sold worldwide. Says Bad Bunny (far left), "Working with Jhay, both Latinos from Puerto Rico representing at a global level, fills me with pride, as we are competing amongst great songs and artists."

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
		45	SIX THIRTY	Ariana Grande	45	1
32	36	46	WHATPOPPIN	Jack Harlow Feat. DaBaby, Tory Lanez & Lil Wayne	17	9
20	28	47	LOVESICK GIRLS	BLACKPINK	2	5
39	37	48	PUT YOUR RECORDS ON	Ritt Momney	37	8
34	40	49	BEFORE YOU GO	Lewis Capaldi	32	9
30	33	50	POPSTAR	DJ Khaled Feat. Drake	11	9
-	163	51	GG THRILLER	Michael Jackson	51	2
26	38	52	ICE CREAM	BLACKPINK X Selena Gomez	8	9
54	52	53	BABY SHARK	Pinkfong	52	9
36	43	54	BREAKING ME	Topic & A7S	21	9
-	39	55	TYLER HERRO	Jack Harlow	39	2
		56	OBVIOUS	Ariana Grande	56	1
63	48	57	SAID SUM	Moneybagg Yo	46	9
53	50	58	SE TE NOTA	Lele Pons X Guaynaa	50	7
40	44	59	JERUSALEMA	Master KG Feat. Burna Boy & Nomcebo Zikode	38	9
37	42	60	HEATHER	Conan Gray	20	9
42	47	61	COME & GO	Juice WRLD x Marshmello	26	9
45	49	62	LIFE IS GOOD	Future Feat. Drake	39	9
44	51	63	UN DIA (ONE DAY)	J Balvin, Dua Lipa, Bad Bunny & Tainy	30	9
		64	WEST SIDE	Ariana Grande	64	1
35	45	65	HOW YOU LIKE THAT	BLACKPINK	24	9
55	53	66	LACURIOSIDAD	DJ Nelson Presenta Jay Wheeler & Myke Towers	41	9
		67	LOVE LANGUAGE	Ariana Grande	67	1
43	54	68	DON'T START NOW	Dua Lipa	37	9
41	46	69	GO CRAZY	Chris Brown & Young Thug	26	9
83	70	70	PARCE	Maluma Feat. Lenny Tavarez & Justin Quiles	70	9
57	61	71	PERFECT	Ed Sheeran	49	9
-	62	72	GOLDEN	Harry Styles	62	2
48	59	73	KINGS & QUEENS	Ava Max	31	9
65	68	74	BAD GUY	Billie Eilish	55	9
52	57	75	TATTOO	Rauw Alejandro x Camilo	28	9
59	58	76	DESPEINADA	Ozuna x Camilo	54	9
121	89	77	LA NOTA	Manuel Turizo, Myke Towers & Rauw Alejandro	77	4
51	60	78	AY, DIOS MIO!	Karol G	25	9
50	56	79	RAIN ON ME	Lady Gaga & Ariana Grande	22	9
64	67	80	SUNFLOWER	Post Malone & Swae Lee	58	9
46	55	81	MY EX'S BEST FRIEND	Machine Gun Kelly X blackbear	25	9
62	64	82	BE LIKE THAT	Kane Brown With Swae Lee & Khalid	44	9
97	78	83	JEANS	Justin Quiles	78	7
		84	FEVER	Dua Lipa Feat. Angele	84	1
61	65	85	CIRCLES	Post Malone	49	9
70	69	86	DAISY	Ashnikko	69	8
58	66	87	LA JEEPETA	Nio Garcia x Anuel AA x Myke Towers x Bray x Juanka	29	9
-	98	88	BICHOTA	Karol G	88	2
		89	MONSTER MASH	Bobby Boris Pickett And The Crypt-Kickers	89	1
74	76	90	UNA LOCURA	Ozuna, J Balvin & Chencho Corleone	74	8
73	77	91	GUARENTE	LiSA	73	4
75	84	92	YORU NI KAKERU	YOASOBI	62	9
85	86	93	BELIEVER	Imagine Dragons	82	9
69	74	94	DEATH BED	Powfu Feat. beabadoobee	43	9
77	83	95	SHALLOW	Lady Gaga & Bradley Cooper	71	9
111	79	96	TRAIN WRECK	James Arthur	79	3

BILLBOARD GLOBAL 200 RANKS THE TOP SONGS BASED ON STREAMING AND/OR SALES ACTIVITY FROM MORE THAN 100 TERRITORIES AROUND THE WORLD, INCLUDING THE U.S. AS TRACKED BY NPD DATA. THE RANKING IS BASED ON A WEIGHTED FORMULA INCORPORATING OFFICIAL ONLY STREAMS ON BOTH SUBSCRIPTION AND AD-SUPPORTED TIERS OF LEADING AUDIO AND VIDEO MUSIC SERVICES, PLUS DOWNLOAD SALES FROM TOP MUSIC RETAILERS ACROSS THE GLOBE. SEE CHARTS. LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM/BIZ FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2020 PROMETHEUS GLOBAL MEDIA, LLC AND NIELSEN MUSIC DATA, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.





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MICHAEL JACKSON
"Thriller"

The classic surges with gains of 95% to 17 million streams and 63% to 10,000 sold worldwide in the Oct. 30-Nov. 5 tracking week, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data. It's one of five Halloween-themed hits haunting the chart, followed by Bobby "Boris" Pickett & The Crypt-Kickers' "Monster Mash" (No. 89; 10 million streams, up 125%), Ray Parker Jr.'s "Ghostbusters" (No. 119; 9.6 million, up 107%), AC/DC's "Highway to Hell" (No. 160; 9.7 million, up 21%) and Danny Elfman's "This Is Halloween" (No. 170; 7.4 million, up 81%).



84

DUA LIPA
FEAT. ANGÈLE
"Fever"

The English- and French-language track by the United Kingdom's Lipa and Belgium's Angèle debuts with 14.4 million streams and 9,000 downloads sold in the week ending Nov. 5, following its Oct. 29 release. Angèle (full name: Angèle Van Laeken) has made prior inroads on the Belgium Digital Song Sales and France Digital Song Sales charts, with "Balance Ton Quoi" topping the latter list for seven weeks starting in May 2019. —GARY TRUST

WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
76	85	97	MEMORIES	Maroon 5	72	9
157	112	98	MI NINA	Los Legendarios, Wisin & Myke Towers	98	4
94	95	99	OLD TOWN ROAD	Lil Nas X Feat. Billy Ray Cyrus	75	9
82	90	100	DIOR	Pop Smoke	61	9
84	91	101	SHAPE OF YOU	Ed Sheeran	79	9
102	105	102	LOVELY	Billie Eilish & Khalid	102	9
81	92	103	SEÑORITA	Shawn Mendes & Camila Cabello	67	9
86	88	104	MI CUARTO	Jerry Di	81	9
105	100	105	DEEP END	Foushee	100	4
93	80	106	ADORE YOU	Harry Styles	68	9
47	73	107	MR. RIGHT NOW	21 Savage & Metro Boomin Feat. Drake	10	5
68	71	108	24	Money Man Feat. Lil Baby	66	9
91	99	109	THE BOX	Roddy Ricch	66	9
80	96	110	INTENTIONS	Justin Bieber Feat. Quavo	65	9
87	101	111	SAY SO	Doja Cat	50	9
71	94	112	WISHING WELL	Juice WRLD	46	9
96	97	113	STUCK WITH U	Ariana Grande & Justin Bieber	60	9
113	107	114	SOFIA	Clairo	107	5
49	81	115	FRANCHISE	Travis Scott Feat. Young Thug & M.I.A.	7	6
-	82	116	SO DONE	Kid LAROI	82	2
72	93	117	THE WOO	Pop Smoke Feat. 50 Cent & Roddy Ricch	40	9
89	104	118	RAGS2RICHES	Rod Wave Feat. ATR Son Son	63	9
NEW		119	GHOSTBUSTERS	Ray Parker Jr.	119	1
107	102	120	TICK TOCK	Clean Bandit & Mabel Feat. 24kGoldn	99	9
88	103	121	ILY	surf mesa Feat. Emilee	56	9
110	114	122	SICKO MODE	Travis Scott	70	9
92	106	123	I HOPE	Gabby Barrett	78	9
56	75	124	RUNNIN	21 Savage & Metro Boomin	9	5
NEW		125	MORE	K/DA With Madison Beer, (G)I-DLE, Lexie Liu, Jaira Burns & Seraphine	125	1
106	111	126	HIGHEST IN THE ROOM	Travis Scott	83	9
95	113	127	BREAK MY HEART	Dua Lipa	47	9
147	119	128	MORE THAN MY HOMETOWN	Morgan Wallen	119	9
101	109	129	BLUEBERRY FAYGO	Lil Mosey	62	9
103	115	130	RIDE IT.	Regard	86	9
-	41	131	SPICY	Ty Dolla \$ign Feat. Post Malone	41	2
117	118	132	LUCID DREAMS	Juice WRLD	103	9
NEW		133	RELOJ	Rauw Alejandro & Anuel AA	133	1
NEW		134	CHICA IDEAL	Guaynaa & Sebastian Yatra	134	2
NEW		135	DIOSA	Myke Towers + Natti Natasha + Anuel AA	135	1
127	122	136	ALL OF ME	John Legend	122	9
79	116	137	YO PERREO SOLA	Bad Bunny	79	9
100	110	138	MAD AT DISNEY	Salem Ilese	67	9
NEW		139	ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS YOU	Mariah Carey	139	1
120	124	140	MARTIN & GINA	Polo G	107	9
185	87	141	BETTER TOGETHER	Luke Combs	87	3
78	108	142	IN YOUR EYES	The Weeknd	78	9
126	130	143	GOOSEBUMPS	Travis Scott	102	9
114	121	144	FALLING	Trevor Daniel	94	9
NEW		145	PARTY STARTERS	ARASHI	145	1
-	168	146	WHOOPY	CJ	146	2
141	134	147	SWEATER WEATHER	The Neighbourhood	134	6
98	117	148	GREECE	DJ Khaled Feat. Drake	38	9

WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
112	128	149	SAVAGE	Megan Thee Stallion	52	9
119	133	150	I DON'T CARE	Ed Sheeran & Justin Bieber	105	9
NEW		151	SANMON SHOSETSU	King Gnu	151	1
NEW		152	WEEEEEE	Trippie Redd	152	1
135	136	153	SAY YOU WON'T LET GO	James Arthur	135	9
NEW		154	STAY DOWN	Lil Durk, 6LACK & Young Thug	154	1
NEW		155	KIDS AGAIN	Sam Smith	155	1
122	131	156	IF THE WORLD WAS ENDING	JP Saxe Feat. Julia Michaels	104	9
108	123	157	YOU GOT IT	VEDO	80	9
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104	120	161	GOT WHAT I GOT	Jason Aldean	104	9
115	139	162	AGUA	Tainy x J Balvin	46	9
144	160	163	DESPACITO	Luis Fonsi & Daddy Yankee Feat. Justin Bieber	130	9
137	141	164	ROBBERY	Juice WRLD	123	9
129	146	165	BANG!	AJR	127	8
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-	178	187	RECAIREI	Os Baroes da Pisadinha	178	2
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131	153	189	BE KIND	Marshmello & Halsey	84	9
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BILLBOARD GLOBAL 200 RANKS THE TOP SONGS BASED ON STREAMING AND/OR SALES ACTIVITY FROM MORE THAN 200 TERRITORIES AROUND THE WORLD, INCLUDING THE U.S. AS TRACKED BY MRC DATA. THE RANKING IS BASED ON A WEIGHTED FORMULA INCORPORATING OFFICIAL ONLY STREAMS ON BOTH SUBSCRIPTION AND AD-SUPPORTED TIERS OF LEADING AUDIO AND VIDEO MUSIC SERVICES, PLUS DOWNLOAD SALES FROM TOP MUSIC RETAILERS ACROSS THE GLOBE. SEE CHARTS.LEGEND.BILLBOARD.COM/BJZ FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2020, PROMETHEUS GLOBAL MEDIA, LLC AND NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



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LADIES SING THE TRUTH

Jhené Aiko, Kehlani, Teyana Taylor and **Summer Walker** are powering an R&B renaissance with their honest-as-hell lyrics and potent new sounds — but they're still hitting the same old industry roadblocks.

52

R&B/HIP-HOP POWER PLAYERS 2020

In a year that brought both a pandemic and racial-justice reckoning, the genres continued to thrive — and change the culture — thanks to the executives and creatives on *Billboard's* annual list, led by 300 Entertainment's **Kevin Liles**.
Plus: The friendship that built rising label Generation Now, the initiatives making an impact on systemic racism and more.

Liles photographed by Flo Ngala on Oct. 21 in New York.

TO OUR READERS

Billboard will publish its next issue on Dec. 5. For 24/7 music coverage, go to billboard.com.

BMI

COUNTRY AWARDS 2020

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Ben Burgess

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Billboard's second Indie Now package highlights how independent artists are meeting uncertain times with fresh strategies — and hoping they pay off. Plus: how to make a nine-figure streaming smash in 10 simple steps, two Nashville publishers on the importance of hustling amid the pandemic and more.

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The late **Robert Ford Jr.**'s reporting for *Billboard* in the 1970s offers a look at the birth of hip-hop.

ON THE COVERS

Photographed by Gizelle Hernandez

Clockwise from top left:

Summer Walker photographed Oct. 26 at Ambient+Studio in Atlanta.

TTSWTRS bodysuit, Bernard James jewelry and Amina Muaddi shoes.

Kehlani photographed Oct. 18 at Hubble Studio in Los Angeles.

Tom Ford for Gucci dress, Chanel bracelets, Lillian Shalom rings, KHIRY necklaces.

Jhené Aiko photographed Oct. 19 at Hubble Studio in Los Angeles.

R13 top, Vivienne Westwood bustier, Dolls Kill skirt, Versace boots and necklace.

Teyana Taylor photographed Oct. 19 at Hubble Studio in Los Angeles.

Skims bodysuit, Balenciaga earrings, Chanel sunglasses, pins, necklaces, bracelets and belt.



Mercuriadis

SONGS FOR SALE BILLBOARD PRO'S EXPERT GUIDE

FOR YEARS, THE VALUE OF PUBLISHING CATALOGS HAS BEEN growing, along with paid streaming. Now, even amid the economic uncertainty of the pandemic, investors are buying due to historically low interest rates, creators who need to compensate for revenue they usually make on tour and the prospect of tax changes (see story, page 24). On Dec. 3, Billboard Pro will host a Spotlight event — a day of panels, presentations and insights — with guests including Primary

Wave founder/CEO Larry Mestel, plus an interview with Merck Mercuriadis, the founder of Hipgnosis Songs Fund, the public company behind some of the biggest deals. Along with it, Billboard Pro will offer a Deep Dive on the subject — available Nov. 30 at [billboard.com/deep-dive](https://www.billboard.com/deep-dive) — with information on how to sell rights and a guide to professionals who can help. Submit questions to questions@billboard.com and watch the Spotlight event at [billboard.com/spotlight](https://www.billboard.com/spotlight).



billboard's 2020 Hip Hop Power List

We Proudly Congratulate Our Agents

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PG. 24 THE TAXMAN COMETH ✦ PG. 26 PUBLISHERS QUARTERLY ✦ PG. 30 THE RIAA'S LEADERS ON THE BIDEN ERA AHEAD



Club Culture

The exclusive new audio-chat app Clubhouse is a hit with music executives, especially in hip-hop. Will it be able to keep them tuning in once the velvet rope lifts?

BY JEWEL WICKER

TUNE IN TO THE audio-only app Clubhouse on any given Wednesday and you'll find a music-business panel with the likes of Scooter Braun, Parkwood Entertainment president Steve Pamon or interim Recording Academy chief Harvey Mason Jr., like a laid-back, A-list executive conference call. You could listen along as 21 Savage plays a *Black Jeopardy* trivia game or discusses relationships with industry figures and fellow rapper Meek Mill, their headshot profile pictures forming a grid across the minimalist iOS app. Elsewhere there are conversations about politics, sneakers and more.

Since launching in March during the pandemic, Clubhouse has stepped in for those missing real-world confer-

ences, VIP rooms and happy hours, captivating and capitalizing on the music industry's attention. In May, *Forbes* reported the company was valued at \$100 million in a \$12 million series A investment round from leading venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz. The app is free to use, without advertisements and growing rapidly in its invite-only beta mode. Its 30,000-person user base doubled in the past month based only on referrals (the more you host or speak in chats, the more invitations you get to share).

Because of its elite participants, Clubhouse has gained a reputation as a kind of online Soho House. Andreessen Horowitz co-founder Ben Horowitz has a reputation as a hip-hop fan who's friendly with Nas, Kanye West and Steve Stoute

(Andreessen Horowitz invested in Stoute's UnitedMasters), and early on, the firm's partners brought celebrities and high-profile executives to the platform. In April and May, Andreessen Horowitz partners invited Stoute, Kevin Hart, Tiffany Haddish, Van Jones, Pamon and Apple Music's Larry Jackson. Horowitz's wife, Felicia Horowitz, who hosts regular "dinner parties" on the app, recruited Gayle King, Ryan Leslie, LL Cool J, Terry Crews and Lecrae.

Entertainment and tech moguls alike understand that hype is bred by exclusivity, be it in the form of a backstage pass or a Facebook invite circa 2004 (when the app first launched only to Ivy League students). That buzz trickles down. Consider how Meek Mill came to join Clubhouse:

Nate Bosshard, co-founder of fitness startup Tonal, joined in April, then invited Jeff Carvalho, co-founder of fashion blog-turned-agency Highsnobiety, who invited designer and Grateful Dead tribute artist Jeremy Dean, who invited John Mayer, who invited Instagram music strategic partnerships lead Fadia Kader, who invited Instagram creative producer Mario Kristian (her husband), who invited producer Chase N. Cashe, who invited entrepreneur Larry Morrow, who nominated the Philadelphia rapper, who has over 8,000 followers who can see whatever chat he's in whenever he's using the app.

It was Meek Mill who told Atlantic Records president of Black music Mike Kyser to get on the app (but apparently couldn't spare an invite),

● CAPITOL MUSIC GROUP CHAIRMAN/CEO **STEVE BARNETT** ANNOUNCED HIS RETIREMENT. ● SPOTIFY INTENDS TO ACQUIRE PODCAST ADVERTISING FIRM MEGAPHONE FOR \$235 MILLION.

who after joining quickly decided Atlantic should have its own Clubhouse room. In October, the label hosted a preparty hang with over 250 attendees ahead of a livestream showcase for new artists Ayanis, Raiche, BENNETT, IV JAY and TeaMarr. More people tuned in to the free concert livestream on Atlantic's website as a result, says Jamila Wright, the company's urban digital marketing manager: "We're already talking about incorporating Clubhouse conversations into our rollouts moving forward."

While celebrities may have been among the first users, Clubhouse co-founder Paul Davison says they were never intended as the primary audience. And while big names attract attention, there are regularly dozens of rooms running at a time. Many center on the Black experience, such as *Black Jeopardy*, a game inspired by the popular *Saturday Night Live* sketch. When Kader joined the app in August, she says, diversity was an issue, so she set out to change that, by giving invites to producers Swizz Beatz and No I.D., songwriter James Fauntleroy and Motown president Ethiopia Habtemariam, among others. "These are spaces that primarily brown and Black creatives are never really invited into," she says. "My intention of onboarding certain people was proximity to conversations that we would never be allowed to be in the room for."

Now some Clubhouse users are debating the power Black users have on social networks, considering that they rarely have had leadership roles in the companies that own them. That's not a new issue: On platforms like Twitter and TikTok, Black creators have voiced similar concerns over the years. Amber Grimes, Capitol Music Group senior vp global cre-

ative and *Black Jeopardy* moderator, says she hopes Clubhouse's owners recognize Black users' contributions "so we can make sure that we're not being used in this space, but we're using a space that they created to be able to help ourselves."

There has also been an ongoing conversation about who should be allowed to participate. (When Russell Simmons, who has been accused of rape, joined Clubhouse, chat rooms were crowded with users saying he shouldn't be allowed there; Simmons has denied all allegations.) And there have been persistent complaints about anti-Semitic, racist and sexist remarks. Clubhouse executives are trying to address these issues with town halls and new features like blocking.

With Clubhouse still officially operating in beta, changes are coming. Once it opens to the public, the exclusivity that appealed to early users will disappear, and some are likely to leave. There's also the revenue issue: How can the company build a business around its community? Davison says he envisions Clubhouse will grow to get musicians, comedians and others paid for their contributions, whether through tipping or the purchase of tickets to attend their events. "We're excited about building a business that supports creatives and really works for them," he says.

The music industry is considering this too. Terrence "Punch" Henderson, president of Top Dawg Entertainment, says he's interested in using Clubhouse to break new artists. "It's a few different ways you can utilize the platform, especially now because of who is there," he says. "It's all the tastemakers and influencers, and once they co-sign something and spread the word around, that's like a trusted friend telling you, 'Check this out.'" **B**



SALE AWAY

BIDEN'S PROPOSED TAX HIKE COULD SPARK MORE PUBLISHING DEALS THIS YEAR

BY GLENN PEOPLES

JOE BIDEN'S WIN IN THE U.S. presidential election has some songwriters rushing to sell their publishing rights before the end of the year.

The Internal Revenue Service generally treats income from the sale or exchange of "self-created musical works" as a capital gain, currently subject to a top federal tax rate of 20%, rather than personal income. During his campaign, Biden proposed doubling to 40% the top federal tax rate on capital gains, or taxing them as personal income, which is currently subject to a top rate of 37% — although Biden has talked about raising that, too.

For songwriters selling major catalogs, such a change would raise tax bills considerably. "There's always a want-to-do by the end of the year," says attorney Erin Jacobson, who has done deals involving the catalogs of major creators, "but there's uncertainty now because there could be a change."

A tax hike isn't a sure thing: Democrats are likely to control Congress only if they win the runoff elections for the two Senate seats in Georgia. If they do, however, Biden could very well be able to raise both personal and capital gains taxes.

This wouldn't be the first time that tax policy shaped the publishing business by changing the incentives to sell rights. From 1950 to 2006, the IRS treated income from catalog sales, as well as publishing royalties, as personal income. (The debate over how to tax creative works goes back to 1948, when the IRS ruled that, as an amateur author, Dwight Eisenhower could have his earnings from a memoir taxed as a capital gain. Two years later, Congress passed a law that made that impossible.) In 2006, the Songwriters

Capital Gains Tax Equity Act categorized "self-created musical works" — rights to compositions owned by their writers — as capital assets. That meant songwriters still paid federal income tax on publishing royalties but would pay far less in capital gains taxes if they sold the rights.

At the time, the top capital gains tax rate was 15%, while the top personal income tax rate was 35%, and the change opened the floodgates for rights sales. Music executives founded startups like Primary Wave, which in 2007 bought rights from Maurice White, Lamont Dozier and the estate of Kurt Cobain — and the resulting competition for deals drove up valuations. More recently, the boom in streaming and the search for investment opportunities driven by low interest rates attracted big money in the form of institutional investors like pension funds. Flush with cash, companies like Hipgnosis Songs, Primary Wave, Concord Music Group, Round Hill Music and Anthem Entertainment acquire dozens of major catalogs each year.

Transactional attorneys in the publishing business say they're already taking more phone calls from songwriters interested in selling before January. But that doesn't mean selling now is necessarily the right move, cautions Mark Kaplan, a partner at Citrin Cooperman who specializes in working with creators; a catalog could appreciate enough to make up for an increase in taxes. Plus, if current trends continue, there will be no shortage of buyers in 2021. "We have every indication," says Lisa Alter, a founding partner at the law firm Alter Kendrick & Baron who has represented a number of creators as well as Primary Wave, "that the market for music assets will remain strong through 2021 and beyond." **B**

MARKET WATCH

19.66B

↑ 0.8%

TOTAL ON-DEMAND STREAMS WEEK OVER WEEK

Number of audio and video on-demand streams for the week ending Nov. 5.

14.54M

↓ 0.7%

ALBUM CONSUMPTION UNITS WEEK OVER WEEK

Album sales plus track-equivalent albums plus streaming-equivalent albums for the week ending Nov. 5.

861.4B

↓ 10.0%

TOTAL ON-DEMAND STREAMS YEAR OVER YEAR TO DATE

Number of audio and video streams for 2020 so far over the same period in 2019.

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—SFPL



"There's a certain magic behind artists like Stove God Cooks, an unpredictable nature that leaves you hanging on every line"

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WORKING FOR THE WEEKND

Sony/ATV tops the Hot 100 and radio charts, as “Blinding Lights” remains No. 1 in airplay

BY ED CHRISTMAN

SONY/ATV CONTINUED ITS REIGN FROM JULY TO September, ruling both the Hot 100 Songs and Top Radio Airplay charts for the second quarter in a row. The publisher’s market share on Hot 100 Songs surged over six percentage points, to 26.68% from 20.18% the previous quarter, while its share of Top Radio Airplay songs jumped to 22.10% (from 20.11%).

The Weeknd’s “Blinding Lights” also stayed at No. 1 on Top Radio Airplay, but dropped to No. 3 on Hot 100 Songs, where DaBaby’s “Rockstar,” featuring Roddy Ricch, ruled. (Universal Music Publishing Group, Kobalt and Warner Chappell Music have stakes in both songs. Kobalt reps The Weeknd and Ricch; UMPG reps DaBaby.) Among writers, Ricch fell from first to third on Hot 100 Songs. However, he rose to No. 1 on Top Radio Airplay, where he placed four songs, including “Rockstar,” which is No. 4. The late Jarad Anthony “Juice WRLD” Higgins — signed to BMG — topped Hot 100 Songs as a writer with seven song placements, including his “Come & Go” collaboration with Marshmello at No. 17.



The Weeknd

Sony/ATV landed 59 titles on Hot 100 Songs, up from 58, including Cardi B’s “WAP,” featuring Megan Thee Stallion, at No. 2. This is the publisher’s 12th consecutive quarter at No. 1 on Top Radio Airplay — which it also led 32 out of the last 33 quarters — with 56 songs, up from 53, including Lewis Capaldi’s “Before You Go” (at No. 5).

UMPG ranked second on both charts and again placed the most songs on them: 60 on Hot 100 Songs for an 18.98% share (up from 58, but down from 20.03% last quarter) and 58 songs on Top Radio Airplay for a 19.24% share (up from 55 and 17.85%).

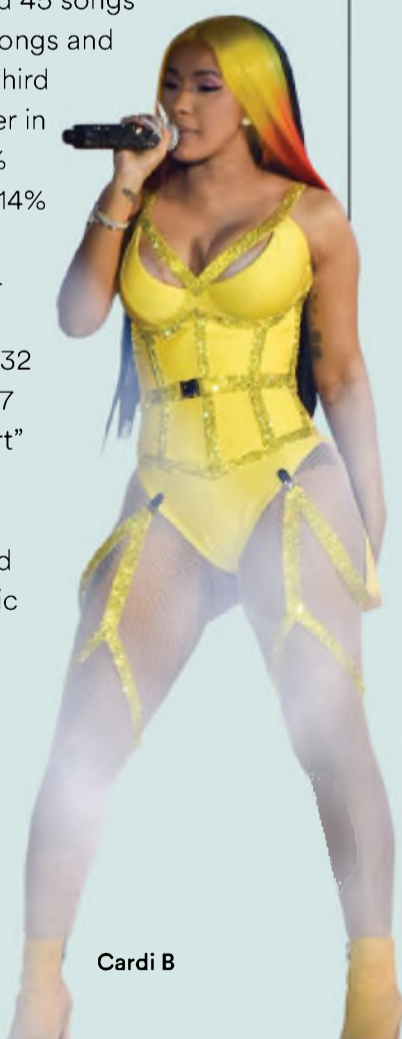
Kobalt ranked No. 3 on both charts, slipping from No. 2 on Top Radio Airplay last quarter with an 18.76% share (down from 19.04%), while increasing its charting songs to 49 in the third quarter (up from 45). Kobalt’s share on Hot 100 Songs declined to 16.14% (from 17.09% last quarter) but the company increased its song placements to 47, up from 40.

Warner Chappell Music repeated its fourth-place ranking on both charts, with 42 songs and a 13.30% market share on Hot 100 Songs (down from 48 songs and 15.09% last quarter) and 45 songs and 13.19% on Top Radio Airplay (down from 52 songs and 14.70%). Warner Chappell did, however, rule the third quarter’s Country Airplay chart for the 15th quarter in a row, despite its market share slipping to 20.62% (down from 21.44% in the second quarter and 25.14% in the first quarter).

BMG came in at No. 5 on both charts, with 34 songs and an 8.45% share on Hot 100 Songs (up from 27 songs and 7.53%), including “WAP,” and 32 songs and 9.17% on Top Radio Airplay (up from 27 and 8.38%), including Dua Lipa’s “Break My Heart” (No. 3).

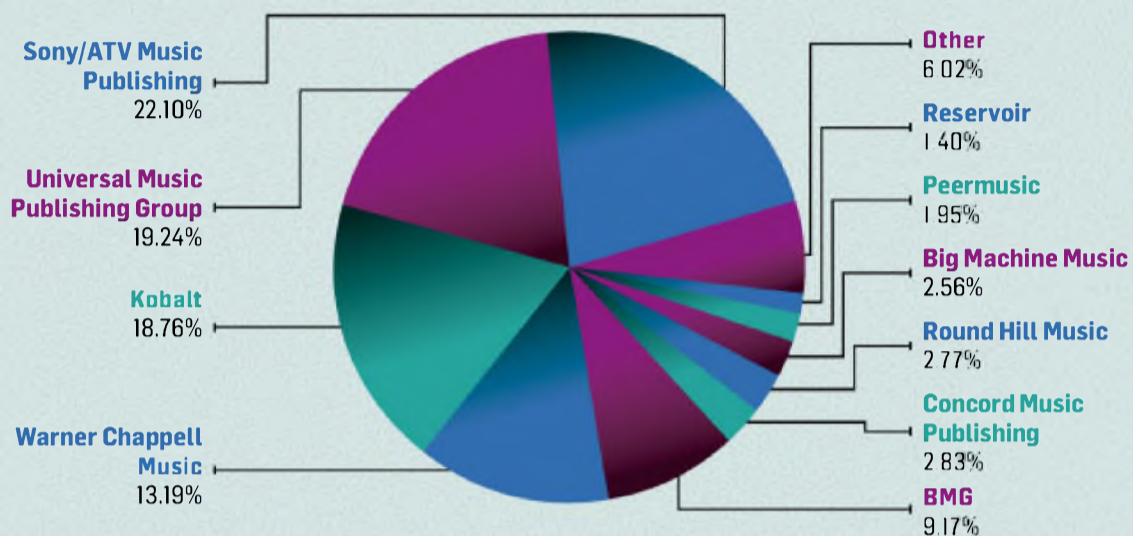
On the Top Radio Airplay chart, Concord Music Publishing ranked sixth (with a 2.83% share), Round Hill Music seventh (with 2.77%), Big Machine Music eighth (with 2.56%), peermusic ninth (with 1.95%) and Reservoir 10th (with 1.40%).

On Hot 100 Songs, Round Hill Music ranked sixth (with a 2.86% share), Concord Music Publishing seventh (with 2.21%, incorporating for the first time Pulse Music Group, in which it acquired a significant stake in January), Big Machine Music eighth (with 1.90%), Reservoir ninth (with 1.54%) and peermusic 10th (with 1.40%).



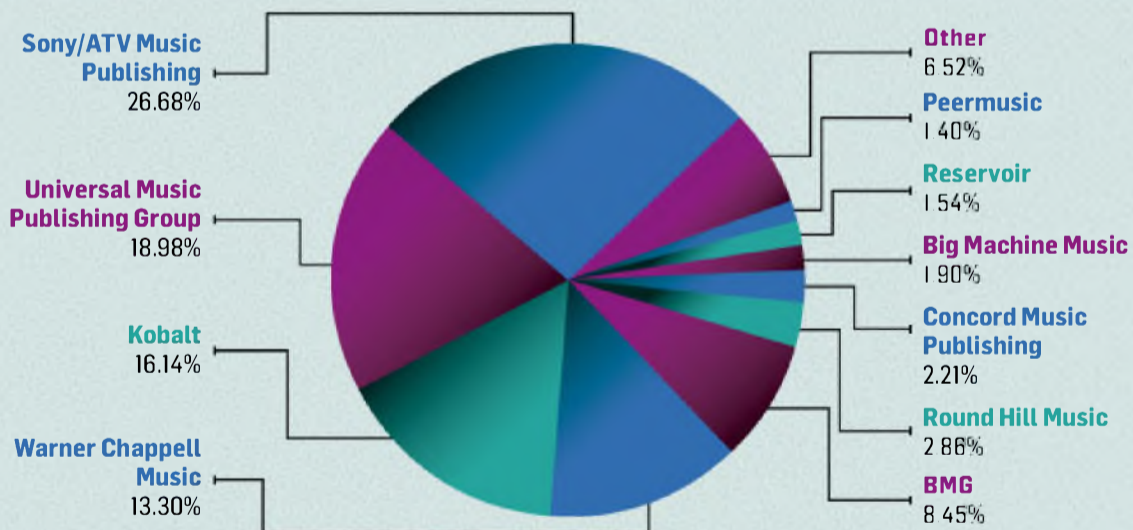
Cardi B

TOP RADIO AIRPLAY: PUBLISHERS*



RANK	TITLE	ARTIST	LABEL
1	“Blinding Lights”	The Weeknd	XO/Republic
2	“Watermelon Sugar”	Harry Styles	Erskine/Columbia
3	“Break My Heart”	Dua Lipa	Warner Records
4	“Rockstar”	DaBaby featuring Roddy Ricch	South Coast/Interscope
5	“Before You Go”	Lewis Capaldi	Vertigo/Capitol
6	“Adore You”	Harry Styles	Erskine/Columbia
7	“Roses”	SAINT JHN	Godd Complexx/HITCO
8	“I Hope”	Gabby Barrett	Warner Music Nashville/WAR
9	“Circles”	Post Malone	Republic
10	“Don’t Start Now”	Dua Lipa	Warner Records

HOT 100 SONGS: PUBLISHERS*



RANK	TITLE	ARTIST	LABEL
1	“Rockstar”	DaBaby featuring Roddy Ricch	South Coast/Interscope
2	“WAP”	Cardi B featuring Megan Thee Stallion	Atlantic
3	“Blinding Lights”	The Weeknd	XO/Republic
4	“WHATS POPPIN”	Jack Harlow feat. DaBaby, Tory Lanez and Lil Wayne	Generation Now/Atlantic
5	“Watermelon Sugar”	Harry Styles	Erskine/Columbia
6	“Dynamite”	BTS	Big Hit Entertainment/Columbia
7	“Roses”	SAINT JHN	Godd Complexx/HITCO
8	“Savage Love (Laxed - Siren Beat)”	Jawsh 685 x Jason Derulo	Columbia
9	“Laugh Now Cry Later”	Drake featuring Lil Durk	OVO Sound/Republic
10	“I Hope”	Gabby Barrett	Warner Music Nashville/WAR

SONY/ATV UPPEP VERONICA VACCAREZZA TO SENIOR VP BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, LATIN AMERICA AND U.S. LATIN. PRIMARY WAVE PUBLISHING PARTNERED WITH OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN.

*For the Top 10 Publishers (Radio Airplay) chart, percentage calculations were based upon the overall top 100 detecting songs from 1,995 U.S. radio stations electronically monitored by Nielsen Music/MRC Data, 24 hours a day, seven days a week during the period of July 1 to Sept. 3. For Top 10 Publishers (Hot 100 Songs), percentage calculations were based upon the top 100 songs as ranked by Billboard Hot 100 points calculated from digital sales, streaming and Nielsen/MRC-tracked radio airplay detections during the period of July 3 to Oct. 1, reflecting the issue dates of July 18 through Oct. 10. Publisher information for musical works on both charts has been identified by the Harry Fox Agency. A “publisher” is defined as an administrator, copyright owner and/or controlling party.

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LOVE ELLIOT X

10K [PROJECTS]



The crowd at Rye Music Festival in Beijing on Oct. 18.

China And Taiwan Stage-Manage A Live-Music Resurrection

Strict virus-control measures have reopened touring in the region, allowing for shows with tens of thousands of fans

BY ALEXEI BARRIONUEVO and BENSON ZHANG

HONG KONG — Frustrated by the shutdown of live music in the United States this summer, the dance music duo BEAUZ made a radical move: The pair left California and moved to China. After arriving in Shanghai in early August, Taiwanese-Indonesian brothers Bernie and Johan Yang quarantined for 14 days, then got to work arranging concerts in a country that had tamed the spread of the coronavirus enough to make touring possible again. Since then, BEAUZ has played 13 club shows and three festivals. “This is the most intense touring we have done in our careers,” says Bernie.

As Europe locks down again and the United States breaks records for new coronavirus infections, further paralyzing both live-music sectors, China and Taiwan have emerged as global outliers in their ability to safely host concerts for up to tens of thousands of fans. So while U.S. and European tour schedules for 2021 are riddled with uncertainty, dates in China are filling up fast. “For next year, our calendar of bookings looks like a normal year,” says Adam Wilkes, CEO of AEG Asia, which operates Shanghai’s Mercedes-Benz Arena.

During China’s national holiday celebrations from Oct. 1 to 8, Chinese promoters arranged more than 4,000 live performances — over 20 of them for up to 10,000 attendees — a 130% increase from the same period in 2019, according to the ticketing platform Damai. Modern Sky put on two- and three-day Strawberry Music festivals in Beijing, Chengdu and Harbin — each with pop, rock and hip-hop acts and a daily attendance of 10,000 to 20,000. Since September, Taihe Music Group has held three Rye festivals, including one in Zibo that drew 30,000 people and one in Beijing that featured headliners such as the hip-hop group Higher Brothers and the indie-rock trio Carsick Cars.

So far, concerts in China and Taiwan have featured mostly domestic artists, as international acts are required to quarantine for two weeks when they arrive, and are not always granted work visas. Most of the bigger shows take place outdoors, where the virus doesn’t spread as easily. But despite health screenings of fans before they enter festival grounds — temperature checks and scanning of contact-tracing smartphone apps

are a must — mask use and social distancing guidelines are not strictly enforced inside the gates. At a recent Rye festival, fans huddled close in front of the stage — many in masks — while others lounged on beanbag chairs clustered together on the grass.

The concert business hasn’t come back without costly challenges. Virus flare-ups in parts of China have forced promoters to quickly cancel events. Modern Sky scrapped one planned Strawberry Music Festival in Dongying because of one reported case of an asymptomatic virus carrier in Shandong province, says Vanessa Chen, the company’s operations director for business strategy. “The stage construction was already completed,” says Chen, “but we have to take responsibility for the health and safety of our audience.”

Chinese promoters began their efforts to bring back live entertainment in May, when Shanghai Disneyland reopened at 30% capacity. By August, China’s Ministry of Culture and Tourism had boosted concert venue capacity limits to 50%. By September, it had raised them to 75% for large-scale outdoor events. The ramp-up has been done “through trial and error,”

and only now is approaching profitable levels, says Wilkes. Mercedes-Benz Arena will hold its first publicly ticketed concert on Nov. 21, with singer Xie Chunhua, for up to 4,700 people (about 40% capacity). Wilkes expects the government to soon approve arena shows at 75% capacity. “Once we get to that 9,000-plus mark, then it becomes commercially viable for purely ticket-driven pop concerts,” he says.

China’s strict virus-control measures, mandated by the government, have laid the foundation for the live-music comeback. Promoters may only hold events for over 10,000 in Chinese cities that have been virus-free for 60 continuous days. Some, like Modern Sky, have decided on their own to shrink audience density to 40%-50%. “Although the box-office income has declined,” says Chen, “the sense of achievement” from putting on festivals during a pandemic “is a bonus.”

Virus-tracking smartphone apps have helped health officials quickly tamp down infection clusters. (People in China have to display their color-coded QR code app to enter most buildings.) Health officials also tightly enforce quarantines: The Yang brothers say they couldn’t go into each other’s rooms during theirs, even though they were staying across the hall from each other. Government staffers wearing hazmat suits tested them for the virus without warning.

The next step, says Wilkes, could be to organize regional tours in Asia, which would require coordination among governments and promoters across the region. “It’s not going to be viable to have an artist come and sit in quarantine in each country,” he says. With approved itineraries and the use of airport “green lanes,” however, international acts could potentially tour Asia, even if they couldn’t perform in their home markets. Dance DJs Alesso and Kayzo have been quarantining in Taipei in order to headline Ultra’s one-day Road to Ultra Taiwan festival on Nov. 14 — the Miami company’s first event since the pandemic began.

For their part, the BEAUZ brothers say they plan to live in Shanghai for at least the next six months. Their live gigs in China have helped promote their music and made it easier to collaborate with Mandopop singers. “Once we heard there were opportunities in Asia, and that they had done the proper management [of the virus],” says Johan, “we took a leap of faith.”

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History is always being written.SM



Ballantyne (left) and Glazier photographed Oct. 29 at the RIAA's new office in Washington, D.C.

FROM THE DESKS OF

MITCH GLAZIER AND MICHELE BALLANTYNE

Chairman/CEO and COO, RIAA

BY CLAUDIA ROSENBAUM PHOTOGRAPHED BY GREG KAHN

DAYS BEFORE THE PRESIDENTIAL election, workers outside the RIAA's new office in downtown Washington, D.C., were busy boarding up storefronts preparing for possible unrest. But the trade organization's leaders — chairman/CEO Mitch Glazier and COO Michele Ballantyne — were calm and optimistic.

"It has been a very bizarre election," says Glazier, sitting opposite Ballantyne on a cream-colored sectional sofa. "Emotions are high, but we are well positioned as an industry." As the 2018 passage of the Music Modernization Act proved, copyright is one of the few issues that can bring together politicians on both sides of the aisle.

The RIAA's planned move to a new, open-concept headquarters, with an event space that can be set up as a theater, was delayed by the

coronavirus pandemic — the staffers' boxes have moved, but the employees haven't. Since March, Glazier, Ballantyne and their colleagues have been meeting with legislators and Capitol Hill staffers over Zoom rather than walking the halls of Congress. In that time, they have lobbied to make sure that the CARES Act would contain language necessary to provide relief for the music business; led a music industry effort to support police reform legislation, which passed in the House of Representatives but stalled in the Senate; and worked with California legislators to amend gig economy law to allow exemptions for independent music professionals.

"We complement each other in almost every way — style, experience and background," says Glazier, a Republican who served as chief counsel for intellectual property to the Judiciary Committee

prior to arriving at the RIAA in 2000. (Ballantyne, a Democrat, worked in the Clinton administration as special counsel to then-White House Chief of Staff John Podesta before coming to the RIAA in 2004.) "We want an organization with lots of perspectives because that's how the industry is going to succeed."

What do you expect from a Biden presidency?

MICHELE BALLANTYNE Vice President [Joe] Biden and Sen. [Kamala] Harris have always been very good on our issues. [Biden served as chairman and ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which oversees copyright.] The first hundred days will likely be focused on addressing the larger issues — social justice, the economy, foreign policy — so I'm not sure how much time they will devote to music. The one thing I can say is that, in the Obama administration, there were records of Google executives visiting the West Wing every week. Biden has shown that he has a different perspective on some of the tech issues and of being more open to hearing from us.

What's on your legislative wish list?

MITCH GLAZIER Trade, trade and trade. This is a global business, and we want to make sure that when our artists' work is released globally we have the highest standards around the world in copyright protection. Sometimes the best way to achieve that is a strong trade agreement. The other issue is what we call "platform accountability": That means having

● WARNER MUSIC GROUP CEO OF INTERNATIONAL AND GLOBAL COMMERCIAL SERVICES **STU BERGEN** ANNOUNCED PLANS TO STEP DOWN. ● WME NAMED **GISSELLE RUIZ** HEAD OF INCLUSION.

the platforms understand that they're not just tech companies — they are music distribution companies that need to be part of the music family in a way that respects artists.

BALLANTYNE We also have to pay attention to how our colleagues in the rest of the business are doing. Being supportive of the Save Our Stages Act [which would provide \$10 billion in relief for independent venues] and making sure that there's appropriate support for performers, musicians and everyone involved in the live business who's suffering.

A perennial issue is legislation that would require terrestrial radio stations to pay royalties to use recordings. Do you think this Congress might be more open to that?

GLAZIER They will be much more receptive because every two years the demographic in Congress goes down by five or 10 years. The people entering Congress now are not people for whom music means radio and CDs. I think radio, which is still fairly ubiquitous, will have a less prominent role in policymaking as digital rises and members' ages go down.

BALLANTYNE We're going to get there. Just not as quickly as we'd hoped.

The RIAA and 17 other music business trade organizations recently signed a letter criticizing the way Twitch allows users to stream music. Isn't there something to be said for giving music away for free in order to get business in return?

GLAZIER As long as that's the choice of the creator, that's fine. What's not fine is Twitch saying, "We're not going to make sure that the songwriter's paid if you use a recording; you have to go take care of that... I mean, we're just Amazon." That's crazy. Twitch should do what any digital service does: Clear the rights, get the licenses, and create a platform that people can use knowing that they're not going to face a lawsuit from another creator.

Right now, you're dealing with the use of major-label music on Twitch by sending takedown notices under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA). Would your members consider suing Twitch?

GLAZIER They could, if there's no compliance. The first thing that you do with any emerging platform is send notices to enforce your rights. That's where we are right now. If they don't comply, you might be forced to enforce your rights through litigation. That's never our first choice.

Livestreaming is only going to get more competitive, and Twitch could limit its ability to grow because it's using the DMCA as its business model. I use Pandora as an example: For years, Pandora just used the U.S. compulsory license [for noninteractive "internet radio"]. And Spotify, Apple and Amazon grew up around them — all with global licenses and global businesses — and then Pandora realized they had been hampering themselves and got the licenses.

You've talked about how the DMCA needs to be updated so content that's taken down stays down. Do you think Congress will address that?



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GLAZIER We've already started engaging with Congress. The question is, what's the best way to fix it? There are three options: One, the ecosystem gets together voluntarily ... two, the government creates a standard for protection without a change in legislation; three, if those don't work, Congress goes in to amend the statute. We would encourage them to be behavioral and not technology-specific, to not allow technology to leapfrog the law in two months.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote some very important copyright decisions. What will be the impact of her absence from the Supreme Court?

GLAZIER It may change who writes copyright opinions because Justice Ginsburg was an expert, and there was deference to her on a lot of copyright issues. And now one of the biggest copyright cases in decades, Google v. Oracle, is before the court. It will have an effect on that case, and on cases going forward, but we don't know what it will be.

There are so many tools available that let artists release and sell music online. How do you make the case that they still need major labels?

GLAZIER That's one of our missions: to help people understand why major labels are more important than ever. We usually just start out with a very obvious example, which is that every day 40,000 tracks are put on digital music services. So how do you break through? You need a marketing team, a promotion team, a team that has global relationships. Artists have never had more choices, and there are all of these opportunities, but they're choosing to go with major labels because of what they offer. A million streams is not a career.

BALLANTYNE And collaboration opportunities: Who's going to set you up with the right people? It may seem like it's easy, but it's not. We bring the expertise. You're not going to just say, "Hi, Spotify, here I am." You need someone to help you navigate that. ☑



3



4

1. In Ballantyne's office, a plaque (left) commemorating the signing of the Music Modernization Act, which became law on Oct. 11, 2018. "It sits in a place of honor in my George Michael celebration zone," she says. "He was one of my all-time favorites growing up." 2. Some of Ballantyne's "ever-growing" collection of Funko Pop! figures. (She likes "badass lady superheroes," Black superheroes and Prince.) 3. A Bluetooth boombox that ASCAP gave to Glazier. "I can stream a new release," he says, "and think about playing my INXS cassette thousands of times in the '80s." 4. "This paperweight has been on my desk since I started at RIAA during the rise of Napster," says Glazier. "It serves as a reminder about how to win for the whole industry."



Congratulations
Adam Leber, Gee Roberson
and Cortez Bryant

From your family at Maverick



The Sound

PG. 35 A HIT-MAKING PLAYBOOK ✕ PG. 38 DIY MERCH TIPS ✕ PG. 40 NASHVILLE'S INDIE PUBLISHING SCENE



INDIE NOW

ROLLING WITH THE PUNCHES

Independent acts are meeting uncertain times with fresh strategies — and hoping they pay off

BY TATIANA CIRISANO



Clockwise from top left: Curtis Waters, Arlo Parks, Lido Pimienta, Band of Heathens and Joji.

CURTIS WATERS WAS understandably stressed when the coronavirus began to wreak havoc on the music industry in late March. Like many independent acts, the 20-year-old recording artist was in survival mode before the pandemic — but the moratorium on touring and global economic crisis amplified all of his existing challenges.

“I didn’t have health insurance and stuff, so I was like, ‘Man, I’m going to die if I don’t make money soon,’” recalls Waters. “At one point I was like, ‘I might just sign a crappy [record] deal — whatever deal comes to me.’”

Waters was able to find stability, thanks to a combination of clever digital marketing and fortuitous timing. After studying online music marketing tutorials, he chose to download TikTok and relentlessly promote his single “Stunin’” on the platform. Within two weeks of consistent posting, the song took off in May — and a handful of major-label offers followed. By June, Waters had signed a licensing deal with BMG. “I was becoming less desperate because the song was growing,” says Waters, who debuted on *Billboard*’s Emerging Artists chart in July. “I realized I don’t need a label. This is going to be huge on its own.”

At a time when the independent community is being hit hardest amid the ongoing pandemic, Waters is not the only one who has turned to what he calls a “gimmick” to stay afloat. The majority of independent artists earn under \$10,000 a year from music, according to a September study from MIDiA Research, deriving roughly

28% of their revenue from streaming and 18% from live performances — the latter of which has come to a halt.

Such concern led Colombian-Canadian multidisciplinary artist Lido Pimienta, who released *Miss Colombia* on ANTI- Records in April, to bolster streaming revenue with handmade merchandise: vinyl covers, ceramics and soon a line of clothing designed to be worn while making art. Many of the items have sold out. “I’m not a rich artist, I’m not a huge commercial artist, but I’ve kept myself focused and occupied,” says Pimienta. She’s now turning her garage into an art and music studio to maximize productivity, placing her among the nearly 70% of independent artists that spent more time than usual making music during global lockdowns, according to the study.

After canceling her plans for a “live-heavy” 2020, London-based musician Arlo Parks shifted to writing her debut album. “I wanted to focus on my work, hone my craft and spend time absorbing new content, figuring out what kind of direction I wanted to take as an artist,” she says. The result, *Collapsed in Sunbeams*, will arrive on Transgressive Records in January. Despite uncertainty over when concerts will resume, Parks is selling tickets for a fall 2021 tour to give fans something “to look forward to.”

And while livestream performances remain an option until then, virtual shows have become an increasingly difficult way to attract attention in an oversaturated market, with Bandsintown listing over 44,000 global livestream events in the first five

months of the pandemic alone. Plus, major-label A-listers like Billie Eilish and Dua Lipa are delivering high-production ticketed events that, without proper staffing or financial resources, are more difficult — if not impossible — for indies to pull off.

Some, like 88rising/12Tone Music artist Joji, have managed to deliver global livestreams to stadium-size audiences; his show, titled *The Extravaganza*, was viewed in 105 countries. But many indie acts are going in the

“This is a billion-dollar problem not just for the music industry, but for everybody.”

—RICHARD BURGESS, A2IM

opposite direction, offering more customized virtual sets. Texas rock group Band of Heathens has sold over 300 private virtual concerts at \$100 each for a session with frontman Gordy Quist or \$200 for Quist and bandmate Ed Jurdi. “It certainly doesn’t compare” to prepandemic revenue, says Quist, but coupled with donations culled during the livestreams, “in terms of allowing us to keep the guys in the band making a baseline so they can pay rent, it has been huge.”

More financial assistance could be on the way. In March, the CARES Act — which allows self-employed workers and independent contractors to apply for unemployment assistance for the first time — was signed into

law. One of its fiercest advocates was American Association of Independent Music president/CEO Richard Burgess, who is now focusing his efforts on the long-delayed HEROES Act stimulus package, which includes provisions to provide financial assistance to indie music venues.

“This is a billion-dollar problem not just for the music industry, but for everybody,” says Burgess. He notes that the indie sector is the backbone of the music industry. “Every artist is independent at some point in their career.”

Merlin, the digital rights agency for indie labels, is also doing its part by pushing out digital revenue payments on a faster-than-usual basis and signing new licensing partnerships with social video platforms like Snapchat parent company Snap Inc. and Triller to help artists generate additional revenue. CEO Jeremy

Sirota, who joined Merlin in January and has since welcomed over 70 new members from around the world, says that indie artists have had to be “very adaptive” to the ever-evolving music industry long before the pandemic.

“Being independent,” says Quist, “you may not have the huge budget of a record label, but oftentimes, I think that’s what makes a record great — the limitations.”

For Parks, her upcoming album will be proof of that. “This was a curveball that no one could have anticipated, but in terms of the independent artist community, there was a sense of resilience,” she says. “We’ve been dealt this blow. How are we going to grow from it?”

SECOND ACTS

BROADWAY’S FREELANCE MUSICIANS ARE FACING THEIR OWN SET OF STRUGGLES



Toohey

AT THE TOP OF 2020, MEG

Toohey finished her run as guitarist for the Broadway musical *Waitress* and released *Butch*, her first solo album since 2001. She planned to tour the project in between theater gigs, but with the live industry on hold, Toohey found unexpected momentum with “Lucky Streak,” her tribute to *Waitress* star Nick Cordero (featuring the show’s composer-lyricist Sara Bareilles), who died in July from COVID-19.

How does a Broadway career compare with a solo career in terms of financial stability?

Broadway is the one gig that musicians look at as a sure

[thing] — it’s a constant cycling of work, you’re in a union. I had great health insurance, I had a regular paycheck that was a great paycheck because of the union, I had vacation days and a 401(k). As far as making a living as a musician, that was the way. You can support a family on a Broadway gig.

Once you realized Broadway was shutting down and you couldn’t tour your album, what were your options?

Everything musical went to social media. So on top of this game of, “Can you get your song on a TikTok?,” every five minutes somebody enormous is doing the same thing you used

to do on Instagram where people might actually watch. Now, all of a sudden, you go live and Miley Cyrus is on with Kamala Harris. With the oversaturation in media, it’s kind of impossible to compete.

How have you connected with fans then?

I was really lucky that Sara Bareilles is part of my latest single [“Lucky Streak”]; obviously it’s a lot easier to get people to listen to you if you have somebody like her. But now, I have a song that has garnered a lot of attention, but I don’t have a label, I don’t have a management team, I don’t have money to throw into plastering it all over the inter-

web and putting together video shoots. I have to create my whole marketing strategy, and I’m not an expert on this stuff.

What’s a misconception about Broadway performers and musicians?

The Broadway community gets angry when people say, “Just go out and get a job,” because we’re talking about people that spent their whole lives studying this craft and paid thousands of dollars in tuition and [put in] countless hours practicing. So many people I know finally got to that level of, “I’m making a living as an artist,” and then all of a sudden it’s gone. It’s all gone. —LYNDSEY HAVENS



A 9-FIGURE STREAMING SMASH IN 10 SIMPLE STEPS

How does a song recorded by a teenager in his suburban Texas home become a top five alternative radio hit with over 100 million worldwide streams? These pivotal moments helped **DAYGLOW** turn “Can I Call You Tonight?” into one of the year’s biggest alternative rock hits

BY ANDREW UNTERBERGER

► FEB. 2, 2018

DAYGLOW RELEASES “TONIGHT” SINGLE THROUGH TUNECORE

“In the recording of the song, I’m actually just, like, 17 years old,” Dayglow’s Sloan Struble says of “Tonight,” which he uploaded from his parents’ house with modest expectations. “I knew the song had potential and it was good, but I wasn’t thinking [about any] preplanned marketing.”

► MARCH 14, 2019

PLAYS WEEK OF SXSW SHOWCASES

Struble drew industry attention with his first appearance at South by Southwest, including from Will Hunt of Foundations, his eventual management team. “About that time, I was emailing and talking to a lot of managers and A&R label people via my school email,” says Struble of balancing classes at the University of Texas with his burgeoning career. “I would be doing online French homework in one tab, and then the next tab is receiving these emails.”

► APRIL 8, 2019

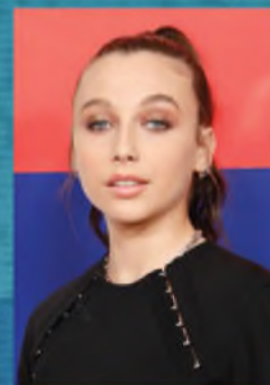
HIRES FOUNDATIONS AS HIS MANAGEMENT

In April, after his SXSW gigs and once “Tonight” reached 1 million plays on Spotify, Struble hired Foundations’ Ryan Langlois and Drew Simmons as his managers. Struble recalls phoning his parents just before flying to Nashville to meet them and his father’s unlikely reaction: “Son, you probably should drop out — you probably shouldn’t be doing school.”

► APRIL 25, 2019

EMMA CHAMBERLAIN SHARES INSTAGRAM STORY PLAYING “TONIGHT”

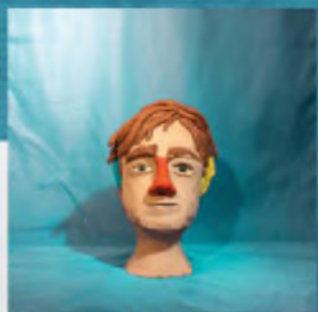
The influential YouTube personality shared a video of herself dancing to the Dayglow single with her 11.2 million Instagram followers. “She’s just a fan who exposed him to that [wider] audience,” says Langlois.



► AUG. 7, 2019

AGREES WITH AWAL TO DISTRIBUTE DEBUT ALBUM

Dayglow had already uploaded his debut album, *Fuzzybrain*, online before he and Foundations agreed to partner with AWAL to redistribute the project with two new tracks, which Simmons says “led us to breathing some new life into the record for the fans that already existed.”



► OCT. 12, 2019

PERFORMS AT AUSTIN CITY LIMITS

“I’m from Austin, and the festival here is Austin City Limits,” says Struble. “I always dreamed of playing [it], and that was my career moment ... this crazy moment where it was like, ‘Man, this is really actually what it feels like to live your dream.’”



► NOVEMBER 2019

SELLS OUT FIRST HEADLINING TOUR

In late 2019, Dayglow set out on a headlining trek, playing 500-capacity venues to already rabid fans. “He sold out every date on the tour immediately, which again was a great sign,” says AWAL president of North America Ron Cerrito. “But then you see a sold-out audience singing the words to every song, and you immediately know that there’s a connection and a really special artist here.”

► OCT. 3, 2020

“TONIGHT” CRACKS TOP FIVE ON *BILLBOARD*’S ALTERNATIVE AIRPLAY CHART

Despite some initial resistance to a 2-year-old song, the streaming success of “Tonight” eventually proved too much for alternative program directors to ignore. “We could look at [Spotify] streaming playlists and say [to PDs], ‘Look, no offense, this is one of the top 10 streaming alternative songs on the market, and you’re not playing it,’” says Lombardi. “And that got us on a lot of radio stations.” The song finally peaked at No. 3 on the chart in early November.

► AUG. 15, 2020

“TONIGHT” BREAKS 100 MILLION STREAMS ON SPOTIFY

Less than a year after hitting the 10 million mark, “Tonight” cracked nine digits on Spotify, largely due to a cross-genre appeal that made it reach listeners outside of alternative. “Someone who’s listening to a Dayglow song may very well be listening to Surf Mesa and Cardi B on either side of it,” says Simmons.

► JANUARY 2020

“TONIGHT” SENT TO ALTERNATIVE RADIO

“At the top of 2020, we engaged the promotion team,” says Cerrito. “Our head of alternative, Dave Lombardi, laid out a strategy of going after the right tastemakers at the beginning and then building it from there — and he executed it perfectly.”

INSIDE LOOK

Same Stage, New Act

How one independent space revisited an old idea to stay afloat through the pandemic

BY TAYLOR MIMS

IN YEARS PAST, STEVE CHILTON HAD often considered opening his Phoenix venue, The Rebel Lounge, as a coffee shop with friends and Driftwood Coffee owners Luke Bentley and Lance Linderman. The space — which has hosted artists including Jimmy Eat World, Lucky Daye and Soccer Mommy — typically sat dormant during the day, and he had the room, but with promoting shows as Psyko Steve Presents and near-daily sound checks, the idea never came to fruition.

Over eight months into a pandemic and with menial revenue for 2020, Chilton's idea is no longer a pipe dream — it's a necessity. "If we're still looking at [another] year until real shows come back or whatever the timeline is, now is the time to invest in [this]," says Chilton.

On Oct. 24, he officially unveiled the Reap & Sow Coffee Shop and Rebel Lounge bar. Open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., the business sells coffee and pastries in the morning before transitioning to a bar in the evening. The partners purchased new furniture, repainted the interior and installed skylights for daytime use. Due to Rebel Lounge's ample space, with a capacity of 300, customers can eat and drink at socially distanced tables, complying with state safety guidelines.



Interior photo of The Rebel Lounge in October.

"Compared with a bar lounge or a coffee shop, we're a pretty large space. But as far as a venue, we're small enough that we can try something like this," says Chilton. "A lot of venues, it doesn't make sense to do this kind of pivot because you're just too big."

As vice president of the nonprofit organization National Independent Venue Association, which launched in March and focuses on obtaining significant federal funding for indie music venues, Chilton has seen other spaces make changes of their own: from outdoor shows to hosting audience-free livestreams to becoming restaurants. But he also understands that investing money into a temporary idea — like his own costs to remodel and market the transformed Rebel Lounge — could be riskier than holding out for the Save Our Stages Act or other federal aid. "I worry that doing some of these ideas badly might be worse than not being open at all," says Chilton, whose Psyko Steve Presents promotes into nearly every other Arizona club.

"If the SOS Act passes after the election and we

"As far as a venue, we're small enough that we can try something like this."

—STEVE CHILTON

can get some capital into all these venues, then that's exactly what that grant is for," he says. "It's for everyone to experiment, try some of these ideas and be able to bring people back to work."

Chilton already hopes to continue operating Reap & Sow even after he can welcome musicians back to the stage. He envisions few implications, other than the bar's hours potentially pushing back sound checks to a later time slot once live music does return, but says, "That's so far away." 📺



D.I.Y. TIP

Ghostly director of special projects and A&R coordinator **AMANDA COLBENSON** launched Ghostly Knowledge Share in 2017 to connect the indie label's team members and artists with aspiring young creatives. During the pandemic, they've livestreamed their networking and education panels on Twitch — and seen a spike in their reach.

"GHOSTLY KNOWLEDGE

Share started from the idea of a community-focused initiative and utilizing the immediate resources we had available — the artists and professionals we work with. We felt passionately about encouraging those interested in music and creative industries and [wanted to] help demystify the process by which one begins and flourishes in the field.

"We worked closely for our first Knowledge Share with a youth-led organization, Neutral Zone, in Ann Arbor [Mich.], whom we had a history with. The teens in this organization have a hand in everything, from programming to their record

label to A&R for the company. We had a full day of curriculum [for them] including workshops, panels, Q&As and one-on-one peer sessions with our artists. From that we gathered so much insight moving forward with events in specific cities about partnering with local organizations, really getting to the heart of what [that community] would be interested in and finding artists who were involved.

"We always had a mission to bring this to a more global audience. Now that things are in a virtual realm, it's a lot easier — or maybe it's more difficult, because there's a much bigger pool [of panelists and topics] to choose

from. It's really exciting to connect people in different cities and time zones who maybe haven't met in person but always wanted to.

"It's really important to have opportunities to share your wisdom and experiences. With the series, it has been interesting to start with 20 attendees in a room and now we've had almost 100,000 viewers total tune in to these. There really is a network of creatives and people who work with creatives who support each other. If you want to start a label, reach out to labels you admire — use your community. And even if they're not directly in front of you, they are out there."

—AS TOLD TO LYNDSEY HAVENS

BILLBOARD'S

R&B AND

HIP-HOP

POWER PLAYERS

CONGRATULATIONS,

DEEDRA CARROLL AND LOU TAYLOR


TRI STAR
SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT GROUP
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT • TAX

LOS ANGELES  NASHVILLE



**LABEL
LOOK**
MIME RECORDS

Original Stax Records songwriter David Porter and 20-year business and legal veteran Tony Alexander launched their entertainment company, Made in Memphis Entertainment (MIME), in April 2015. Alexander quickly realized that in order for the independent label MIME Records

to succeed, the co-founders would need to create some additional revenue streams. “If you’re trying to develop and break artists that are unknown, it requires patience and a lot of capital,” he says. In the years since, Porter (CEO) and Alexander (president/managing director) expanded to include a recording studio, a synch licensing division and a publisher, while launching the only Black-owned distribution company in the United States. And though MIME’s label roster boasts just three acts, Alexander emphasizes the amount of untapped potential in Memphis. “There’s no other city in the country that has produced more talent,” he says. “If you’re in a desert, you want to go where the water is. This is where the water is.”

—JOSH GLICKSMAN



D.I.Y. TIP

To promote the September release of *Haunted Painting*, her second album under the solo moniker Sad13, Speedy Ortiz leader **SADIE DUPUIS** partnered with local vendors to integrate food products into her online merchandise store.

“I’M A BIG FAN OF SMALL-BATCH artisan food-makers, especially as a vegan who travels around the country quite a bit. We were going to do a hot sauce for Speedy Ortiz in 2015, but the logistics of carrying glass bottles on tour for three months was more liability than we were willing to personally accept. As soon as we knew that touring was over [this year], but that I’d still be putting out a record, I was like, ‘I can do all of the cool, glass-bottle food merch I’ve always fantasized about!’ Dragon’s Blood Elixir was the first [vendor] I reached out to, and I got in touch with Craft Tea, which stocks a lot of local venues and cafes with different herbal blends. We planned to do chocolates with Lagusta’s Luscious, a vegan commissary, but we were nervous that fancy truffles would arrive melted, so we ended up doing a Nutella spread.

“Everything is as nonperishable as it can be for organic food, and everything we’ve done merchwise on this album has been in pretty limited quantities, for sustainability reasons. The hot sauce and tea sold out fairly quickly. It’s great for online sales, but I’d say still significantly lower than if we had them on tour — but if we were on tour, I don’t know if we’d be able to have these products anyway. It’s cool to do something that doesn’t feel like it’s contributing to fast fashion. Even if I can’t be playing shows, people have been sending me pictures of meals with the hot sauce on it, and that feels really special to me.

“If there are local businesses you like, [artists] should reach out and see if they’d want to do something together. We’re all struggling and figuring out how to survive as businesses when we can’t have people in our shops or at our shows, so it’s a great time to collaborate.”

—AS TOLD TO JASON LIPSHUTZ

BACKGROUND

In 2012, Porter founded a Memphis nonprofit focused on educating creators about the music business and brought in Alexander to help with legal matters. The two repeatedly saw artists and aspiring music executives relocate to larger music hubs and decided to give Memphis natives a reason to stay. This year, MIME promoted Renisha Mayes — who met Porter at her college graduation and started at MIME in 2018 in its publishing and distribution division — to GM of MIME Records.

THE ARTISTS

The label’s first signee, Porcelan, reached No. 13 on *Billboard*’s Hot R&B Songs chart with her 2018 single “Lois Lane.” More recently, she teamed with labelmates Jessica Ray and Brandon Lewis in June for a cover of Bill Withers’ “Lean on Me” following the police killing of George Floyd. Now, Mayes is teaching artists how to market themselves, from developing an efficient rollout schedule to interacting with fans more effectively. “It’s creating an infrastructure from ground zero,” she says.

KEY STATS

While MIME has 58 total employees, 75% of whom are Black, its label team comprises just 11 full-time staffers. Alexander is proud of avoiding layoffs amid the pandemic. “We made a commitment to help them weather the storm,” he says. “When other companies were laying off en masse, we [were] able to support the team.” In fact, MIME has already made additional hires within its publishing, distribution and synch divisions, and plans to increase its studio staff in 2021.

WHAT’S NEXT

The company plans to open a second studio in Atlanta soon. As for its Memphis artists, all three have released new music during the pandemic, and now the team is focused on continuing that momentum into next year. Mayes hopes to release debut EPs from Ray and Lewis and push for more virtual performances, especially at an event like South by Southwest. “They’ve got the music,” she says, adding that each MIME artist has at least 20 songs at the ready. “We just have to get the timeline.”



SOHOJOHNNY PRESENTS "LET ME HELP, INC" CELEBRITY BENEFIT CONCERT



★ STAR STUDDED CHARITY EVENT

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 24TH 7:00 PM - 1:00 AM EST FREE VIRTUAL CONCERT

STREAMED LIVE ON ICONCERT.TV

SohoJohnny in conjunction with the "Let Me Help, Inc" Foundation joyfully presents the "Let Me Help, Inc" Celebrity Benefit Concert, a virtual, musical celebration benefiting those shattered by the devastation of COVID 19. The evening will be a dazzling six-hour star-studded array of the biggest and most dazzling celebrities and opulent icons taking place from 7 PM – 1 AM ET.

"Let Me Help, Inc" (a 501c3 Charity) is a state and federally approved non-profit Organization created by philanthropist and entertainer John "SohoJohnny" Pasquale to benefit those less fortunate. It's mission is to help those shattered by the devastation and loss due to COVID-19, cancer, bullying, and other life threatening situations that surpass human understanding. What creates the darkness of night within our souls also creates the sparkling of the stars. Please search for the stars within your soul and give generously to this incredible charity event.

ARTISTS INCLUDE:

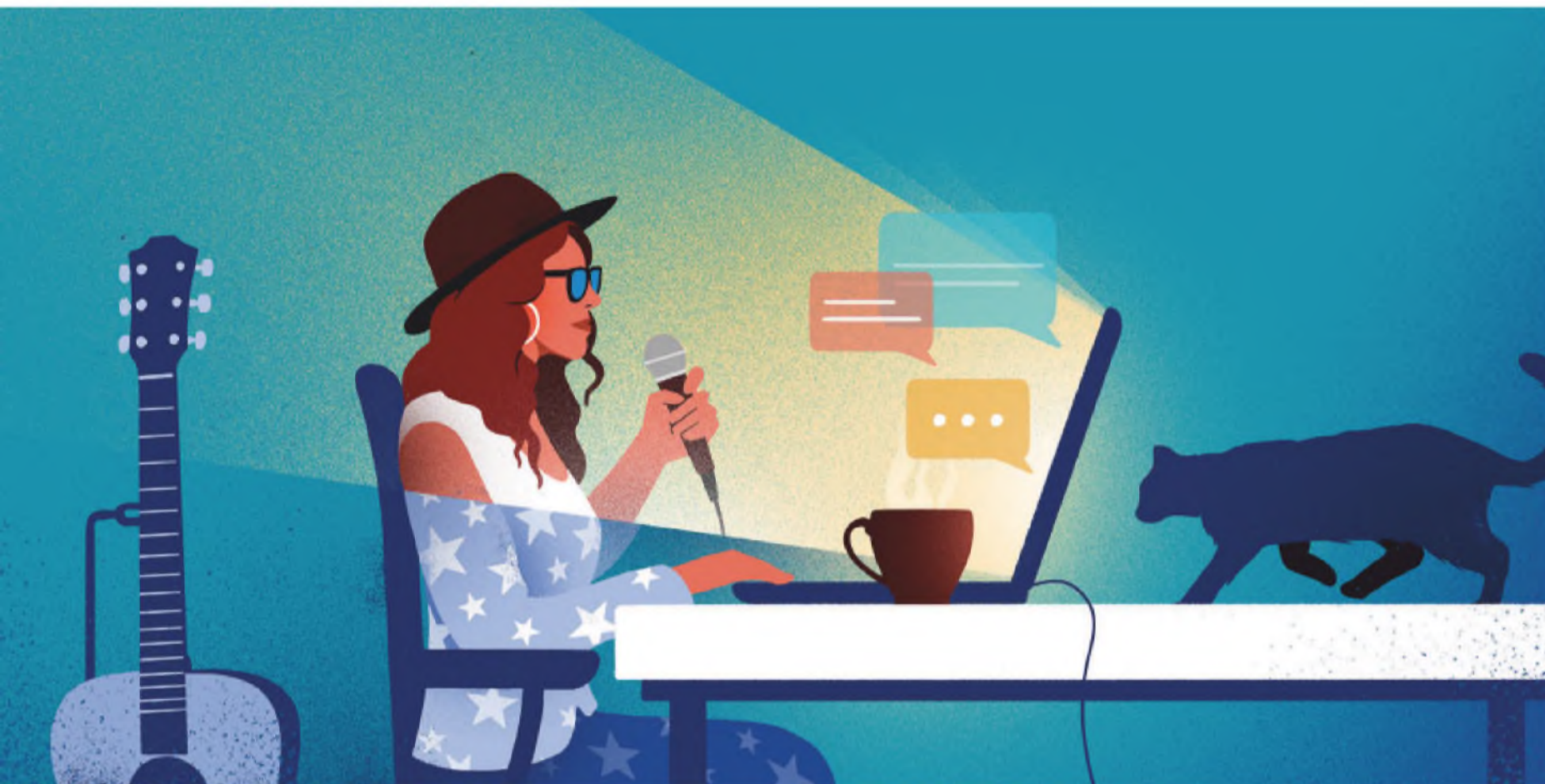
- | | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| JOHN LODGE | KIM SLEDGE | ANDREW COLE | TEN YEARS AFTER | SARI SCHORR |
| SHANANA | KENNY ARONOFF | FRED SCHNEIDER | CECE PENISTON | NATALIE SHAY |
| JASMINE KARA | LELAND SKLAR | SUZIE QUATRO | RICK WAKEMAN | BONFIRE |

SPECIAL APPEARANCES INCLUDE:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| FOR #IAMNOJOKE | JEFF GOLDBLUM | HENRY ROLLINS |
| SIR PATRICK STEWART | JANE LYNCH | HOWARD BLOOM |
| OZZY & SHARON OSBOURN | JULIAN LENNON | MICKEY BURNS |

PLEASE DONATE AT LETMEHELPINC.ORG/DONATE





‘YOU HAVE TO HUSTLE’

How Nashville powerhouse independent publishers Beth Laird and Carla Wallace have found silver linings — and success — amid the ongoing pandemic

BY LYNDSEY HAVENS

WHEN BETH LAIRD WAS preparing to launch her Nashville independent publishing company, Creative Nation, in 2011, she turned to publishing veteran Carla Wallace, co-founder of fellow Nashville indie Big Yellow Dog Music. “I wasn’t telling anybody, but [she was] one of the first people I was hitting up with questions,” says Laird.

“She didn’t take any of my advice,” jokes Wallace, who co-founded Big Yellow Dog Music in 1998.

Over a decade later, Laird and Wallace have remained just as close while leading their respective teams (of around 10 employees each) with cautious optimism and motivating their songwriters to continued success — even through a pandemic. Both companies have landed No. 1 hits this year: Big Yellow Dog Music client Maren Morris had a crossover smash with “The Bones” and newcomer Tenille Townes crowned *Billboard’s* Canada Country chart, while Creative Nation’s Tyler Johnson co-wrote and co-produced Harry Styles’ *Billboard* Hot 100-topping “Watermelon Sugar,” and Luke Laird — Creative Nation’s co-founder and Beth’s husband — co-wrote and co-produced Sam Hunt’s throwback “Hard To Forget.”

“I love being a part of the initial creative magic,” says Laird. “To just think that writers come in and out of these houses on Music Row, write these songs, and we’re the first ones to hear them.” Adds Wallace: “It’s so much more gratifying than it was last year.”

How is being part of such a tight-knit community beneficial?

CARLA WALLACE Beth’s office is across the street from mine, so we are definitely a tight-knit community. We’re so used to running into each other, and then you really find out what’s going on with people. But now [we’re] removed [from] that, so we don’t really have that source of connection.

BETH LAIRD Our community is unlike any in the world, and a lot of it is just proximity to each other. I think that really keeps everybody honest and checks egos and makes people want to do right by each other. We all see each other everywhere, so it makes you care about people beyond just emails, pitches and business. You’re competitive, but in a way that’s healthy.

When the coronavirus first hit, how did you help your songwriters stay motivated?

WALLACE Everyone had to shift gears. We set up a seminar that all of our writers could join to [learn] how to record yourself at home, how to do your vocals, so you’re not having to go to a studio or figure that out. Some of them still come to the office and they’re writing there, but for the most part we’ve had a lot more success on Zoom. If this had happened in Nashville 10 years ago, I think we would have been devastated because so many of our writers were so geared toward sitting together.

How do you find new opportunities right now for your writers who are worried about revenue?

WALLACE We’ve gotten more advertisement and brand placements, and [TV] is just now coming back. We have a whole synch department with synch writers set up, so that never stopped. Everyone looks for opportunities everywhere; especially if you’re an indie publisher, you’re a hustler. You’re not sitting around saying, “Well, I don’t know what I’ll do today.” It’s like, “What *can* I do today? Who should I contact to let them know I’m here?” As far as streaming royalties, I don’t make my business around any of that — it’s got to be about the songs.

LAIRD The biggest thing I’ve learned about trying to do this on my own is people aren’t coming to you until you have established yourself. No matter where you are in the indie-publisher cycle, you have to hustle — and it has to be about being proactive. You can’t be reactive. It’s not like you have 100

songwriters. You have less songwriters that you’re more focused on, so you’re always trying to find them opportunities.

Country artists are starting to crack TikTok — how do you talk to your songwriters about using the app?

WALLACE The artists, for sure, are on TikTok; Logan Mize saw a bump in his duet “Grew Apart” with Donovan Woods. And then you hear about some of our friends finding talent on TikTok and they’re signing them and getting deals and you definitely question yourself, like, “Should I jump on there and start pulling people off?”

LAIRD I’m not TikTok-ing. I feel like, for me, [when] I work with people I’ve got to verify it. I’ve got to go through this process. We don’t sign that many people, and we like to overserve, and we like to vet, so if you blew up on one song and there isn’t a catalog or a depth to them as a songwriter, then that’s not really what we’re looking for. If you blew up on TikTok and you do have that, and that was your outlet to be seen and we listen and think, “This feels like a career songwriter or artist,” then I absolutely would do it. I don’t care where it comes from. But I need to know that there’s more than one song. [Majors] can sign 10 people like that and if one works, they’ll put their resources there and it will pay for all their other deals — Carla and I aren’t in that business. We want everyone we sign to count.

What changes do you anticipate moving forward?

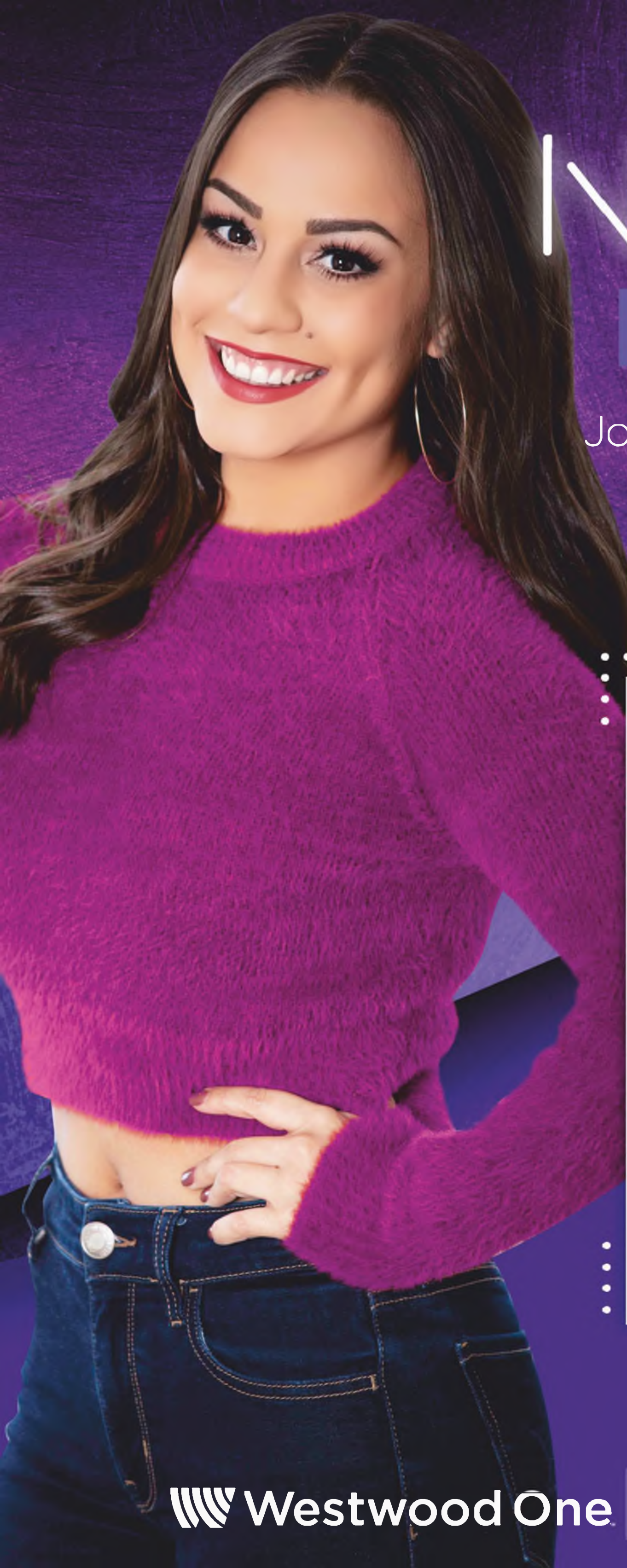
WALLACE A lot of the songwriters have moved away. They have completely left Nashville and gone to their second homes, and they’re just Zoom writing. You’ve got these top songwriters who have left, so I’m curious — later on, I want to know: “What does that mean? What will happen?” Because if I went to my second home, I may not ever come back. Does Music Row go back to the same way?

LAIRD I think it’s going to shift, but nobody knows how much. The one thing that I do know is, most of my writers have said they’re super grateful for Zoom but can’t wait for it to be over. They really, really miss the in-person energy and creativity.

What growth opportunity is there in all of this for the independent community?

LAIRD If you are an independent publisher and are always looking for opportunities and being proactive, the one thing that you learn is that there’s a lot of fear in change, but there’s a lot of opportunity because we shift and move quickly. Carla doesn’t have to go get permission to do something, I don’t have to go run [an idea] through and get approvals. The beauty of being small is that we can come up with really creative ideas, and if you fail, just fail fast and move on. **■**





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R&B HIP-HOP
POWER PLAYERS 2020

LADIES SIN

JHENÉ AIKO, KEHLANI, TEYANA TAYLOR AND SUMMER WALKER ARE POWERING AN R&B RENAISSANCE WITH THEIR



From left: Aiko, Kehlani, Taylor and Walker.

Aiko wears an R13 top, Vivienne Westwood bustier, Versace necklace. Kehlani wears an Alexander Wang top, Chanel pants and belt, Lillian Shalom ring. Taylor wears a Laquan Smith coat, vintage Christian Dior by John Galliano top and sunglasses, Dior chain. Walker wears a TTSWTRS bodysuit and Bernard James jewelry.

NG THE TRUTH

HONEST-AS-HELL LYRICS AND POTENT NEW SOUNDS — BUT THEY'RE STILL HITTING THE SAME OLD INDUSTRY ROADBLOCKS

BY GAIL MITCHELL // PHOTOGRAPHED BY GIZELLE HERNANDEZ



AS STREAMING OPENED the door for hip-hop to dominate the music industry in the past few years, many executives and artists worried that R&B was getting left behind. This year, they have reasons to be hopeful.

R&B is still not nearly as big as hip-hop: It has a market share of 7.43% of overall album consumption units so far in 2020, compared with 19.17% for hip-hop, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data. Yet it's growing — by 4.64% in market share compared with this time last year. (Hip-hop's market share grew less than 1% in the same period.) And as the genre catches up commercially, it's having a renaissance artistically — one that's largely powered by female singer-songwriters who are reimagining and reinterpreting its sounds for a new generation of listeners. Of the 14 releases that have reached No. 1 on *Billboard's* Top R&B Albums chart in 2020, nine of them have been from women.

Among them are the four cover stars of *Billboard's* annual R&B/Hip-Hop Power Players issue. With her confessional relationship anthems, the casually cool Kehlani, 25, scored a career-high No. 2 debut on the *Billboard* 200 in May with *It Was Good Until It Wasn't*. The introspective Jhené Aiko, 32, pushed her atmospheric sound to experimental places on *Chilombo*, which in March also had a career-best No. 2 debut. Triple threat Teyana Taylor, 29, showcased her straight-shooting modern soul on this year's statement-making Juneteenth release *The Album*, which marked her first top 10 entry on the *Billboard* 200. And reserved newcomer Summer Walker, 24, set records with her debut LP, *Over It*, which scored the biggest streaming week for an R&B album by a woman last fall.

"Everyone has their own style and thing going on, but it's all the same truth," says Taylor during a lively virtual roundtable with the others in October. "We're still women who have experienced love and heartbreak. It's

TEYANA TAYLOR

THE TEAM

MANAGEMENT

TAYLORMADE MANAGEMENT

Nikki Taylor, manager
Boe Daney, director of operations

LABELS

DEF JAM

Jeff Harleston, interim chairman/CEO
Tuo Clark, senior vp A&R
Leslie Rosales, marketing director

G.O.O.D. MUSIC

Kanye West, CEO
DeAndre "Free" Maiden, president

AGENT

ICM

Robert Gibbs (music)
April King (TV/film)
Andrea Nelson Meigs (TV/film)

SET DESIGN BY DANIEL LUNA. HAIR BY EDITH DONALDSON WHEELER. MAKEUP BY KEVIN WADE.

Taylor photographed Oct. 19 at Hubble Studio in Los Angeles.

Styling by Teyana Taylor and Kollin Carter. Skims bodysuit, Balenciaga earrings and shoes, Chanel sunglasses, pins, necklaces, bracelets and belt.



Walker photographed Oct. 26 at
Ambient+Studio in Atlanta.

Styling by Todd White
Maximilian Davis jacket, top and skirt.



dope to hear everyone express that truth in their different ways.”

And they’re not alone. Alongside numerous peers — from H.E.R. to SZA, Solange to Ella Mai and Queen Naija — these women are pushing the boundaries of the genre by drawing on everything from trap and alternative to jazz and Afrobeats. “There is an abundance of genre cross-pollination, creating R&B subgenres that collectively appeal to a wider audience,” says Daniella Cabargas, director of A&R for Artist Partner Group, label home to Kehlani. And though radio programmers’ preference for more upbeat tracks has been a challenge for downtempo-leaning R&B in the past 10 to 20 years, Cabargas notes that “playlists have provided artists with an alternative outlet to get their music heard by mass audiences, especially as R&B’s sound expands.”

Despite the genre’s gains, however, executives say there is room for it to grow. “Aside from a handful of artists, R&B was almost treated like a side dish genre to the main course of hip-hop, incorporating it so much that over time R&B began to get lost,” says Noah Preston, senior vp A&R at Def Jam, home to Aiko and Taylor. As a result, R&B singers find themselves competing for the same opportunities as hip-hop artists, despite the differences between them. “We shouldn’t have to fight for limited space,” says Tunde Balogun, president of LVRN, label home to Walker. “The avenues available to R&B artists and their music must be expanded.”

Meanwhile, some of the biggest white pop stars are diving into R&B styles, and getting the kind of pop radio airplay that artists of color who make similar music don’t receive. “The industry will still pigeonhole [my music], saying, ‘Oh, this has to go to urban,’” says Aiko. “I’m like, ‘Why?’”

Some of that is an age-old issue: The industry has long put artists in boxes based on what they look like, not the music they actually make — and that’s especially true for R&B artists of color, who still encounter assumptions from industry gatekeepers about the reach of their music. “The public doesn’t know the difference — only those at the labels who control the budgets,” says David Linton, a veteran label executive and the chairman of the nonprofit Living Legends Foundation, which honors trailblaz-

“If I post a half-naked picture, it’s totally fine. But if I speak on systematic racism or politics, then it’s like, ‘Wait a minute, you’re doing too much.’”

—SUMMER WALKER

ing executives of color in the music industry. “It’s just like [how] hip-hop was a ‘Black thing’ until Eminem sold 1 million in a week and white label executives figured out their kids were listening to hip-hop more than rock.”

Billboard’s cover stars are unfazed by those obstacles, however. To them, the genre has never been in a better place. “R&B keeps evolving, keeps getting cooler, more personal,” says Kehlani. As the four women peel back the curtain on their experiences in the music business, it’s clear they have more to celebrate — like the growing feeling of sisterhood that has not only led them to collaborate more in the studio but also to share advice and support each other privately as they weather the glare of the spotlight. It’s a camaraderie rooted in the honesty and vulnerability that has always been R&B’s calling card. “We’ll always be here,” says Taylor. “R&B is always going to be the realest bitch in the world.”

How do you define R&B?

AIKO It’s true self-expression. R&B has roots in blues, so it’s not just singing about the good times. People are digging into the depths of what they’re going through [more than ever]. With a lot of the R&B I listened to growing up, I didn’t feel like I was getting their true personal stories.

KEHLANI The comparisons we get to the older artists won’t ever make sense because we’re in a different time, experiencing things at a different rate and in a different way. They didn’t have social media, so [our music] is a lot about how we interact with our thoughts. But it’s still people being honest: “I might not be what you think I am — let me take you into what I feel.” That’s what I

appreciate the most right now.

TAYLOR Where R&B is now takes me back to where it was in the ‘80s and ‘90s with Anita Baker and others.

It’s about how they were expressing themselves, how they sang with soul.

WALKER R&B is better than the hip-hop of 2020 to me because that can get super shallow and repetitive. Or there’s the whole mumble rap trend, where you don’t even know what they’re saying. We’re really opening up, getting deeper — and that’s good.

SUMMER WALKER

THE TEAM

MANAGEMENT

THE LGM FACTOR

Lisa McCall, founder/CEO

LOVE RENAISSANCE (LVRN) MANAGEMENT

Tunde Balogun, president

LABELS

LVRN RECORDS

Justice Baiden, head of A&R

Sean Famoso, head of marketing and brand partnerships

Carlton Ramong, creative director

INTERSCOPE RECORDS

Nicole Wyskoarko, executive vp/co-head of A&R

Tim Glover, senior vp A&R

Aura Harewood, vp urban marketing

AGENT

WME

Kevin Shivers

Sarah Tehrani

How does what we’re seeing now compare to the commercial peak that R&B experienced in the late ‘90s and early 2000s?

AIKO There are different sounds within R&B that I’m seeing reflected in other genres. We’re seeing more rappers singing, being more melodic, doing more love and sexy songs. You probably wouldn’t have heard that from a straight-up rapper back in the day. And now there are traditionally pop artists doing R&B albums, but it’s called pop.

TAYLOR (*Laughs.*) Jhené’s about to have us being messy.

AIKO I’m like, “This is a very ‘90s R&B sound, but it’s considered pop.”

TAYLOR If an actual R&B singer sang what the pop artist sang, would the R&B singer get the same exposure?

WALKER Pop gets all the credit, for sure. We’re cute over here when they want to be in their feelings. But when it’s time to get to the money, it’s all about pop.

AIKO I do feel like we’re getting a lot of recognition in this climate. People are turning to R&B because it’s healing and good for your soul. Whatever’s meant for me, Kehlani, Summer or Teyana will be for us.

Any opportunity given to someone else? That wasn’t for me. And it’s fine! But we do recognize certain things. Maybe a traditional pop artist puts out some R&B and gets more mileage. I don’t feel bitter at all. I’m just going to keep doing what I’m doing.

TAYLOR We just want the same opportunities. However, we’re not a bunch of bitter, angry R&B chicks complaining either. We want to be honest without coming off feeling a type of way. These are our truths.

WALKER I do see something that irritates me a little when it comes to radio. It seems the only songs from me that do super good on the radio are those that are more upbeat. I’ll also hear other songs from us and others that are slower, very heartfelt, and a lot of people will fuck with them. But it seems like [with radio], if you can’t shake your ass to the song, then it won’t do what it should do.

AIKO Or if you don’t have a rapper on it!

TAYLOR That’s our point. We don’t think it’s truly changing. That shit is unfair: feeling like you must have a club banger to get on the radio. What

happened to when n—s used to slow dance in the club with their bitch? We want to make music that gives us the freedom to express ourselves, but it can't always feel like a club banger, or like somebody has to be featured. I don't think there's any real change coming unless you've got a powerful team or label making shit happen.

There has been a lot of talk this year about systemic bias in the music industry. What challenges have you faced as women of color who began your careers at young ages?

AIKO I started in this industry when I was 13, going through puberty and my own identity crisis. I'd show up to photo shoots and be told, "You're going to get your hair bone straight, and we're going to put this kind of [bronzer] on you." Only in the last couple of years have I become comfortable with my natural hair texture. And dealing with men — my mom was always around to keep that in check. But looking back, I definitely saw the potential predators and inappropriate things, like how producers and writers would want to collaborate with you but never talk about music. Would you do that to the Migos or Lil Wayne? That kept me from being super friendly with anyone.

KEHLANI There's also a certain respect level that men uphold for each other in this industry that they don't do with us. Why is the respect level knocked down just because I'm a woman? Why do men feel able to talk to me any type of way when I'm handling business?

TAYLOR If we're too soft, people feel like they can treat us any type of way. But if we're too hard, then it's, "Oh, she's too much." Sometimes you have to be like that — especially with me being a Black woman in the industry since I was 15. Like Jhené said, producers might think you're vulnerable. When I walk in the room, I'm like, "What's up, my n—a? What we doing?" Then they tell you it's not ladylike. I don't care what's ladylike to you. Sometimes you have to be like that so n—s don't bother you.

WALKER As far as dealing with guys at the studio, I don't put myself in that situation. I don't really talk much or go to the studio that often. I really stay at home. But as a woman who likes to speak her mind, I do think it's kind of weird that if I show my ass or post a half-naked picture,

KEHLANI

THE TEAM

MANAGEMENT

ABOVE GROUND
David Ali, founder

LABELS

ARTIST PARTNER GROUP
Daniella Cabargas, director of A&R

ATLANTIC RECORDS
Dionnee Harper, senior vp/head of marketing

AGENT

CREATIVE ARTISTS AGENCY
Caroline Yim

it's totally fine. But if I want to speak on systematic racism, religion or politics, then it's like, "Wait a minute, you're doing too much." They kind of want you to just shut up and sing, which is an issue for me.

Teyana, Kehlani, Jhené — the three of you are also mothers. How has that influenced your art and your careers?

AIKO My daughter [Namiko Love] is going to be 12 next month — and with social media, 12 in 2020 is equivalent to 16 when I was growing up. It was easy to bring her with me to the studio when she was younger. Now she has her own opinions, feelings and space. She helps me dig deeper into who I am, my morals and beliefs. I've learned more from her than any book I've read, movie I've watched or class I've taken. It's the reason I make the honest and vulnerable music that I make. I want to be an example for her to be herself. It keeps me wanting to work harder, but the more I spend time with her, I think, "Do I have to travel again? Can I go to college with you? Can we be a group?"

KEHLANI It provides a perspective that you don't get from anything else in life. There are moments when I want to bring [19-month-old Adeya] with me all the time. But I know that having her with her toys and being in her space might be better for her at a particular moment. Those moments are really hard, but I have to ultimately decide what's better for her. I also don't get swept up in things anymore — moments where I'd think, "I'll quit this shit, shave my head,



Kehlani photographed Oct. 18 at Hubble Studio in Los Angeles.

Styling by Scot Louie
Tom Ford for Gucci dress, Giuseppe Zanotti shoes, Chanel bracelets, Lillian Shalom rings, KHIRY necklaces.

buy a one-way ticket out and not talk to nobody." I don't have the opportunity to think like that anymore, and I don't want to. I have something that keeps me grounded. If all this disappears and I can't do this anymore, I still have the most beautiful life in the world. As much as people think parents give to children, I think children give us 10 times more.

TAYLOR It's so crazy, I bought an RV — we're that kind of family. I don't

know if it's because I'm a mother of two now, but I want them with me everywhere. Being back at work as a video director, my contract says there has to be an RV space. I need to have a crib and a table there for Junie so she can paint and do what she does. To Jhené's point, Junie's 4 going on 40. She knows exactly who everyone is on a song. Her love for music is crazy. She has also taught me to be fearless, which is something I never really was.



HAIR BY CESAR RAMIREZ AT CROWD MANAGEMENT. MAKEUP BY PIRILLA PAE AT HENDRIX ARTISTS.

And seeing the way [2-month-old] Rue looks at her sister — sometimes you have to have that pure innocent soul to make you feel the most beautiful. Motherhood is beautiful and tough, yet it's everything.

KEHLANI (*Laughs.*) I'm about to go get pregnant again right now.

TAYLOR Make sure you buy an RV!

A few of you have mentioned the scrutiny that comes with social me-

dia. How do you decide what to share and what's too much?

WALKER I don't think anything is too much as long as you're comfortable with whatever you're sharing. I have a work page and a spam page. I like to use my spam page because it's fun to debate social issues. It's a hobby of mine. I learn hella shit about documentaries and all types of things from debating with people.

AIKO When we were both younger,

Teyana and I were on Myspace and BlackPlanet. That was my diary with all my feelings. When Twitter became a thing, I had to learn that everyone doesn't deserve to know what I think all the time. When I look back at old tweets where I was high or drunk, people took those words and thought that's who I am. Now I give everyone about 30% and keep the rest to myself. I don't have to prove anything to anyone. So much can get

misconstrued when you're reading words or watching a video clip.

TAYLOR It's a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't situation. If you don't address something, then it's, "Why is she quiet?" But what's the point of explaining myself if you're not going to believe me? It's annoying how social media is one big jury saying who's guilty and who's not. I'll say my baby turned 1 today, and they'll be like, "No, she did not!" My



Aiko photographed Oct. 19 at
Hubble Studio in Los Angeles.

Styling by X.S. Studio
Custom Herve Leger top and skirt.

JHENÉ AIKO

THE TEAM

MANAGEMENT/LABEL PARTNER

ARTCLUB INTERNATIONAL

Ketrina "Taz" Askew, principal
Travione Stephens (day to day)
Miyoko Chilombo (operations)

LABEL

DEF JAM

Noah Preston, senior vp A&R
Theda Sandiford, senior vp
commerce and digital marketing

AGENT

CREATIVE ARTISTS AGENCY

Caroline Yim
Zach Iser

baby that came out of my coochie! It's unfair. I can give y'all a little bit, but I'm not going to spend my whole day on this shit.

KEHLANI I used to struggle with social media a lot. I felt I had a responsibility to share. And I was excited that I might learn something as well. We're highly visible people who want to grow in this normal way. Sometimes we want to go on a date and share the date. But these experiences get tainted, so you feel you have to close yourself off. Since Jhené and Teyana have been giving me advice, there's beauty in the relationship I have now with social media. It's about keeping things sacred that you want to keep sacred. I also had to stop taking things so personally. Thousands of people calling me ugly. Thousands telling me they hoped I'd die. I was carrying around the weight of all these opinions from strangers who weren't even thinking twice about me.

Women in R&B are collaborating more frequently. Why is that a good thing for the genre?

TAYLOR Females collaborating is always dope — even more so when it's genuine. I'm not trying to be in no competition. I listen to your shit, be having sex to your shit. Let's just do what we're going to do and be cool. The world has pit women against each other for so long that they believe it. Everyone is about women's empowerment until it's time to empower one

another. That pisses me off. I've never had too much pride to reach out to a bitch to say I want to work with her. We have to stop letting people get into our heads. The bitches want to work.

KEHLANI We already experience so much of that from men and the audience, so us perpetuating that with each other is backward. Men only dip into our world when it's like, "I have a love song" or "I'm making a record for the girls." Otherwise, they work with each other millions of times. One good thing I'm noticing about this pandemic is that it has made people settle into real life and become more grounded: "I got my head out of my ass, I'm blessed to be here and down to do whatever." The energy is a lot clearer. Everybody in this conversation has collaborated with each other. Hopefully, this continues.

TAYLOR Jhené and Summer owe me a verse.

AIKO I've known you the longest, Teyana, and before we did this I was like, "Why don't we have a song together?"

TAYLOR I know! That would be really good because you nasty.

WALKER You should do it. There's no reason not to.

Where is R&B headed from here?

AIKO R&B is heading to a good place because it blurs so many lines with its different-sounding styles. But I also feel it will always be underrated. Most of the things it talks about are too real for everybody to understand. R&B is for people that are really here and really feeling.

KEHLANI R&B keeps evolving, keeps getting cooler, more personal. I hope it evolves to where we call each other up and collaborate on more than just one song. You don't have to cross genre like, "When I leave this third verse open, I'm automatically going to a rapper."

TAYLOR We'll always be here. When a n—a is in the prime of his life, he wants to deal with everyone. But there's always that one girl that's going to be there for him. When he's really ready to get it together and settle down, that's who he'll go looking for. That's what I feel R&B is. R&B is always going to be the realest bitch in the world.

KEHLANI I really love that. "R&B is the realest bitch" — that's a bar.

TAYLOR And once I send this instrumental and all four of us are on it, the shit is lit. At that point, we're going to be on the R&B and pop charts. **■**

LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE BOYS

The women of R&B may be running the show, but the genre's most exciting male vocalists are redefining what it means to be a classic crooner

THE FEARLESS LYRICIST: BRENT FAIYAZ Before Faiyaz became an R&B smooth operator, he was a punch-line-heavy lyricist looking to break into the rap game. It wasn't until his manager convinced him to try singing in 2014 that Faiyaz realized his calling. Three years later, he struck gold when he sang the catchy, made-for-summertime chorus on GoldLink's "Crew." The song earned a Grammy nod and gave Faiyaz his first taste of mainstream success. His appreciation for '90s R&B shines on his buzzy subsequent projects (2018's *Lost* and 2020's *Fuck the World* EP), as does his nimble, fearless writing on self-love, gang culture and Black masculinity in America.



THE QUIET FORCE: BRYSON TILLER Tiller's transcendent

2015 project *Trapsoul* unlocked a new level in the genre: Pairing trap-laden beats with his silky tenor, he proved R&B singers didn't need to rely on ballads or downtempo songs to set themselves apart. Despite his reserved nature, tracks like "Rambo" and "Sorry Not Sorry" showcased his wit and charm as a budding lyricist, and the album went triple platinum, yielding his biggest Hot 100 single yet, "Don't," a slow-burner about wanting another man's woman, which peaked at No. 13. Things have only gotten bigger for Tiller since then: His first Billboard 200 No. 1, *True 2 Self*, came in 2017, and the October release *Anniversary* made the chart's top five.



THE MYSTERIOUS NEWCOMER: GIVEON In February,

Drake uploaded a new record only to SoundCloud and YouTube. "Chicago Freestyle" featured a mysterious young singer who bore an eerie resemblance to U.K. artist Sampha — and was only revealed hours later to be 25-year-old Giveon. After studying Frank Sinatra's music, Giveon learned to embrace his baritone voice, which takes center stage on his March debut EP, *Take Time*. Highlights like "Heartbreak Anniversary" and "Favorite Mistake" showcase his penchant for pensive lyrics and moody soundscapes. He pushed those skills even further in October on the four-track mini project *When It's All Said and Done*.



THE FUNKY POET: LUCKY DAYE From growing up in a religious cult to couch surfing in Los Angeles and Texas, Lucky

Daye's journey has been a rocky one. But the New Orleans-bred singer — who cut his teeth writing for Ella Mai and Trey Songz — caught a break when he met producer D. Mile, who has worked with R&B powerhouses like Khalid, Usher and Ty Dolla \$ign. Mile saw more than songwriting prowess in the young crooner, and for over a year, they worked on his debut album, *Painted*. Daye's affinity for '70s funk and live instrumentation shines throughout the album's 13 tracks, and in 2019, he earned four Grammy nominations.



THE TRUTH-TELLER: PARTYNEXTDOOR In 2013, PartyNextDoor

released his self-titled debut mixtape. On tracks like "Wild Bitches" and "Right Now," his unapologetic candor on sex and relationships, paired with his syrupy melodies, gave listeners a raw dose of reality. The OVO signee's knack for hits developed when he partnered with Drake in 2014 on the single "Recognize," which went double platinum. Their chemistry bloomed from there, and they reunited for 2016's "Come and See Me" (double platinum) and 2019's "Loyal" (certified gold, and Party's first Hot 100 top 20 entry). His success isn't fueled by hit singles alone: He also keeps busy as a songwriter for Kanye West, Rihanna and Usher. —CARL LAMARRE



A full-body photograph of Kevin Liles standing on a sidewalk in front of a vibrant graffiti wall. He is wearing a blue denim jacket over a dark turtleneck, dark trousers, and white sneakers. The graffiti behind him features bold, colorful letters and abstract shapes in shades of blue, green, yellow, and red. The scene is outdoors with trees and foliage visible in the background.

EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

Founder/CEO, 300 Entertainment

KEVIN LILES

Whether supporting [MEGAN THEE STALLION](#)'s monster year, grooming artist entrepreneurs like [YOUNG THUG](#) or showing up for social justice, the independent king is "a pillar" for the culture



Liles photographed
by Flo Ngala on
Oct. 21 in New York.

MIDWAY THROUGH

Megan Thee Stallion's performance of her hit "Savage" on *Saturday Night Live*'s October season premiere, the sound of gunshots cut the music short. Audio clips of an iconic 1962 Malcolm X speech and of Black Lives Matter activist Tamika Mallory played, followed by an impassioned speech from Megan herself, calling for justice in the wake of Breonna Taylor's death in March at the hands of Louisville, Ky., police — and for the protection of Black women and men in this country.

For Megan, 25, it was a powerful statement made on the biggest platform of her career, and the highlight of a year in which she topped the Billboard Hot 100 twice — with her "Savage" remix alongside Beyoncé, as well as the jaw-dropping Cardi B collaboration "WAP," which also ruled the first-ever Billboard Global 200 chart in August. For Kevin Liles, the founder/CEO of Megan's label, 300 Entertainment, it was further proof that nothing — not even a global pandemic — could slow down his newest superstar.

"She's in there every day, going through it and having the conversations and working hard," says Liles, 52, who co-founded 300 alongside Lyor Cohen (now YouTube's head of global music), Todd Moscovitz (now Alamo Records' CEO) and Roger Gold (Camila Cabello's manager). "And her greatest time, right now, is during a pandemic. She's still evolving and telling the story, and she hasn't even put out an album yet."

As Liles sees it, Megan's banner year is also the epitome of 300 in peak form: generating hits, breaking artists and overcoming odds, while maintaining a social conscience and putting people — both artists and employees — first, even in difficult times. "We've all had a hell of a year," says Liles with a self-deprecating laugh. "I might have just had a good business year, too."

That year has certainly helped make 300 a hot commodity in a rights market where investors are streaming into the music industry. Liles plays down the possibility of a sale, but says the company never rules out potential acquisitions, mergers or strategic partnerships. "Two years ago, 300 had a campaign that we're not for sale, and although we've had several companies and investors approach us, we're interested in building a billion-dollar company and servicing our artists and partners to the best of our ability," he says. "There is never an opportunity we won't run down if it's for the betterment of our artists."

Megan's success this past year — which also included a top 10 debut on the Billboard 200 for her *Suga* EP and top 30 Hot 100 hits with non-album singles "Girls in the Hood" and "Don't Stop" with labelmate Young Thug — makes her the latest in a line of standout R&B/hip-hop artists that 300 has signed in its short history. Since launching as an independent in 2013, the company has scored No. 1 singles and/or albums from Fetty Wap (*Fetty Wap*), Migos (*Culture*, "Bad & Boujee" featuring Lil Uzi Vert) and Thug (*So Much Fun*, Cabello's "Havana").

By several measures, 2020 has been 300's most successful year yet. Besides Megan's ascendance to rap's A-list, label artist Gunna (who is signed to Thug's YSL imprint) landed his first Billboard 200 No. 1 with *Wunna*, as well as a Hot 100 top 10 (on Internet Money's "Lemonade"), and Thug dominated the Hot 100 on 14 hits this year (including Travis Scott's No. 1 "Franchise"), all of which were collaborations. "We do CEO business," says Thug of working with Liles. "True partnership shit."

Still, for Liles, 300's strategy goes beyond hit music: Developing artist brands and powering individual empires within the company, like Thug's YSL, are always priorities. "These are signs of building and providing an entrepreneurship inside our company," he says. "I want us to be a wall socket: You plug in and power up."

Liles has been honing this approach for over three decades since his time alongside Cohen as president of Def Jam Recordings in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and through his rise to Warner Music Group executive vp, a role that he held until 2009, when he left the label to launch the management company KWL Enterprises. "We always believed our job was a marathon and not a sprint, and Kevin Liles has proven just that," says Cohen (who remains an investor in 300). "It has been inspiring to watch his journey and continued success."

2020 hasn't been entirely smooth for 300: Megan weathered both an ongoing label dispute (with early imprint 1501; though it has not yet been resolved, she is able to release new music in the meantime) and a traumatic shooting this summer, allegedly by fellow MC Tory Lanez (who was only just charged with assault in October). "All I can tell you is that I've been doing it for 36 years. I've seen every situation you could see, heard everything you could hear, and this too shall pass," says Liles of guiding Megan through these challenges.

"I am grateful for the support and love that Kevin Liles has given me," says Megan. "I value our partnership, love being independent and can't wait to show the world what's next."

Amid the reckoning with racial injustice sweeping both the nation and the industry since the Minneapolis police killing of George Floyd in May, Liles has kept 300 true to its mission: raising money for social justice organizations, donating to charities, joining protests. "I could go down the list," he says. "I told my staff, 'We are a socially responsible company. 300 was created that way.' I didn't need George Floyd — I lived Rodney King. And guess what? I'm Black. I don't need these things to tell me that social [justice matters]. No. I believe people are human. We're a safe place for people to come express themselves, to express their freedom to be themselves."

That, says Liles, is ultimately why his small company of 55 employees keeps punching above its weight, competing with and raising the bar for major labels and indies alike. "I'm built to be a pillar, to be a solid foundation so that people can stand on my shoulders," he says. "It's a way of life. I've dedicated the last 36 years to finding culturally relevant partners to be with to help move our culture forward." —DAN RYS

ACTIVISTS

Brianna Agyemang

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

Jamila Thomas

Co-founder, #TheShowMustBePaused; senior director of marketing, Atlantic Records

Agyemang and Thomas made history when they shut down the entire music industry on June 2 — the start of their #TheShowMustBePaused initiative to end systemic racism. Phase two of their plan, delivered 90 days later, outlined action items, including equitable pay. Thus far, over \$1 billion in commitments from corporations has been made in support of racial justice. “Our mission,” the two say in a joint statement, “is to hold accountable major corporations and their partners who benefit from the efforts, struggles and successes of Black people.”

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

Agyemang and Thomas “With Black musicians dominating the charts, how can they be afforded the same opportunities as their non-Black counterparts?”

Binta Niambi Brown

Co-founder/co-president, Black Music Action Coalition

Willie “Prophet” Stiggers

Co-founder/co-president, Black Music Action Coalition

Shawn Holiday

Co-founder/executive vp, Black Music Action Coalition

Ashaunna Ayars

Co-founder/vp, Black Music Action Coalition

Courtney Stewart

Co-founder/vp, Black Music Action Coalition

Caron Veazey

Co-founder/vp, Black Music Action Coalition

Jamil Davis

Co-founder/secretary, Black Music Action Coalition

Damien Smith

Co-founder/treasurer, Black Music Action Coalition

Less than a month after George Floyd’s suffocation beneath the knee of a Minneapolis police officer ignited ongoing protests and a long-overdue reckoning with systemic racism, the Black Music Action Coalition launched June 19. It has since aligned with over 200 artists, producers, DJs, managers, lawyers and industry professionals to “help end the systemic racism that’s baked into the music business,” says Prophet. Brown notes that BMAC has developed voting/election initiatives, a new Black Music Matters campaign and an independent research study analyzing the history and effects of racism in the music industry — gaining “more than 60,000 followers and enabling BMAC to reach over 1 billion impressions across platforms worldwide.”

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

Prophet “The biggest issues are the same issues facing this nation. The music industry reflects the same racism, disparities and inequalities that exist within this society.”

Sean “Diddy” Combs

Founder, Combs Enterprises, REVOLT Television, Bad Boy Records

Combs was honored with the 2020 Grammy Salute to Industry Icons award on Jan. 25 in recognition of his work as a hip-hop pioneer and activist. That evening, he pulled no punches in taking the Recording Academy to task for its lack of diversity and transparency: “Truth be told, hip-hop has never been respected by the Grammys,” he said at the event. “Black music has never been respected by the Grammys to the point that it should be ... and that stops right now.” Combs has also called for the creation of a new political party focused on the needs of the Black community.

Michael Mauldin

Founder/co-chairman, Black American Music Association

Demmette Guidry

Founder/co-chairman, Black American Music Association

The Black American Music Association (BAM) is dedicated to protecting Black music, its creators and cultural communities. The nonprofit launched in June 2018 and is guided by a 16-member executive committee that includes BlackRock’s Frank Cooper, Interscope Geffen A&M’s Nicole Wyszkoarko and Spotify’s Chaka Zulu. Beyond championing Black music’s influence and economic impact, BAM strives to increase awareness of racial and social injustices to “create positive change in the larger community,” says Mauldin. The organization recently partnered with the Voting Rights Are Civil Rights initiative to engage Generation Z voters and protect the vote in 14 swing states and 54 counties with large African American and Latino populations.

THE SONG THAT INSPIRES ME

Mauldin “Sam Cooke’s ‘A Change Is Gonna Come.’ It gives me hope and inspiration as it emotionally acknowledges our trials and tribulations.”

LABELS AND DISTRIBUTORS

LaTrice Burnette

Executive vp/GM, Island Records

Jermi Thomas

Senior director of A&R, Island Records

Since Burnette joined Island in 2018, her focus has been to “create and foster the hip-hop and R&B music division and culture” at the label, she says. A&R and strategy lead Thomas worked with her on the release of Jessie Reyez’s debut album, *Before Love Came To Kill Us*, which peaked at No. 13 on the Billboard 200 in April, and Skip Marley’s collaboration with H.E.R., “Slow Down,” which made him the first Jamaican artist to top the Adult R&B Songs chart.

WE’LL KNOW CHANGE IS REALLY HAPPENING WHEN

Burnette “We see more Black women and men running companies, departments, divisions and having the ability to make decisions without being questioned. Complete autonomy to win and freedom to be great.”

Katina Bynum

Executive vp East Coast labels, urban, Universal Music Enterprises

After joining catalog specialist UMe in October 2019, Bynum, who worked with Drake, Nicki Minaj and Lil Wayne at Cash Money, has spent the year shepherding Nelly’s deluxe edition of *Country Grammar* (and the July release’s accompanying MelodyVR performance) and Mariah Carey’s 16-album vinyl reissue series

that began in October. “It’s not your father’s catalog,” she says. “An album is considered catalog after 18 months. And the pandemic is a great time for catalog because everybody’s at home.”

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

“Save their money and invest. [The pandemic] caught everybody by surprise. It will make everybody think about, ‘Do I buy that Rolex watch, or do I invest it or just save it?’ Because you don’t know what the next six months has in store for you.”

Sambou “Bubba” Camara

Co-CEO/CFO, Highbridge the Label

Quincy “QP” Acheampong

Co-CEO, Highbridge the Label

Michael “Emm”

Acheampong-Boateng

COO/management, Highbridge the Label

In February, Highbridge the Label star A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie released his third album, *Artist 2.0*, featuring collaborations with DaBaby, Khalid and Young Thug. Co-produced by QP and Bubba, it hit No. 1 on *Billboard*’s Top Rap Albums chart and No. 2 on the Billboard 200. The Bronx label’s roster includes Don Q and Trap Manny. “Start now,” says Emm, 37, offering advice to up-and-coming artists. “Build your team and get to work.”

WE’LL KNOW CHANGE IS REALLY HAPPENING WHEN

Emm “The C-suite at labels, digital service providers, publications and radio becomes more representative of the artists that are in the business.”

Don Cannon

Leighton “Lake” Morrison

Tyree “DJ Drama” Simmons

Co-founders, Generation Now

(See story, page 60.)

Steve “Steve-O” Carless

A&R, Republic Records; founder, S.C. Company

Tyler Arnold

Executive vp A&R, Republic Records

Chris Blackwell

Senior vp creative content, Republic Records

Damion Presson

Senior vp artist relations, Republic Records

Marleny Reyes

Senior vp marketing, Republic Records

Republic won big this year with The Weeknd’s *After Hours* and Nav’s *Good Intentions*, both of which clinched No. 1 spots on the Billboard 200 within two weeks of release. Though the pandemic had labels scrambling to alter release dates and nix rollouts, Reyes admires her team’s gutsiness in staying the course. “We stuck to our release dates with everything going on,” she says. “It was when the world needed music the most. We tried to deliver.”

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

Reyes “Patience. Creating a legacy takes





KEVIN LILES

Co-founder / CEO, 300 Entertainment

BILLBOARD 2020 R&B / HIP-HOP POWER PLAYERS LIST

Congratulations from the YouTube Music team
for being honored as Executive of the Year.
Next up: Golfer of the Year!



time, whether the initial success came overnight or it took a decade. Longevity depends on the same thing in both circumstances.”

“Brooklyn Johnny” Descartes
CEO, District 18 Entertainment

Four years after Descartes helped Cardi B land her deal with Atlantic Records, his Bronx-raised business partner reached the top of the Billboard Hot 100 for the fourth time, with “WAP” (featuring Megan Thee Stallion). Cardi’s four-week reign extended her record as the female rapper with the most No. 1s in chart history. “She just killed it,” says Descartes of her work on “WAP,” which also spent three weeks at No. 1 on *Billboard*’s new Global 200 chart.

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

“Record, record, record and create. You can never know or reach your fullest potential unless you put in the work. Beyoncé still has to rehearse. LeBron James still has to practice.”

Brandon “Lil Bibby” Dickinson
George “G-Money” Dickinson
Peter “Pete” Jideonwo

Partners, Grade A Productions

After the death of Juice WRLD last December, Grade A Productions worked with his mother, Carmela Wallace, to establish the Live Free 999 Fund, which supports youth programs for mental health and substance abuse. In July the label, in partnership with Interscope, released the Chicago rapper’s posthumous album, *Legends Never Die*, which debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 and “cemented his place among the pantheon of the most important artists of all time,” says Jideonwo. The rapper left behind an “enormous catalog” that has helped the company, founded by brothers Lil Bibby and G-Money, work through their “collective grief in a positive way,” adds Jideonwo. “Juice was happiest when he was in the studio making music.”

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

Jideonwo “Surround yourself with a team that you can trust. It’s more beneficial than reaching outside your circle to people who might be more connected, but may not have your best career interests in mind.”

Mitch Dudley

Director of label management, The Orchard

Naji Grampus

Director of urban strategy, The Orchard

The Orchard, the independent distribution division of Sony Music, continued to bolster its R&B/hip-hop roster with the October 2019 signing of West Coast rapper Baby Keem, whose “Orange Soda” went platinum, as well as top 10 albums on the Billboard 200 from Chicago rapper G Herbo (*PTSD*, which peaked at No. 7) and Joyner Lucas (*ADHD*, No. 10).

Grampus, 31, also led the music industry’s fight against New York State law Section 50-A, repealed in June, which allowed law enforcement to shield police-misconduct records from the public.

THE WORD THAT DEFINES R&B/HIP-HOP CULTURE

Grampus “Trendsetting. Whether it’s the shoes on your feet or that new place to eat, your decision to consume was probably triggered by a line you heard in a rap or R&B song.”

Phylicia Fant

Co-president of urban music, Columbia Records

Shawn Holiday

Co-president of urban music, Columbia Records; executive vp A&R, Sony/ATV Music Publishing

Azim Rashid

Senior vp/head of urban promotion, Columbia Records

Dave Gordon

Director of sales, urban, editorial and programming, Columbia Records

Columbia returned to a “competitive presence on the R&B/hip-hop charts,” says Rashid, noting Chloe x Halle’s first top five on R&B Digital Song Sales (“Do It”), rapper Polo G’s consecutive top 10 debuts on the Billboard 200 (*Die a Legend*, *The GOAT*) and Raphael Saadiq’s highest-charting song in the format (“Something Keeps Calling”). In June, in the wake of George Floyd’s death, Columbia’s parent company, Sony Music, established a \$100 million fund to support social justice reform and anti-racism initiatives. “Everyone is uncomfortable now, which is a good thing,” says Rashid, “because change — real change — requires discomfort, self-reflection and ultimately sacrifice.”

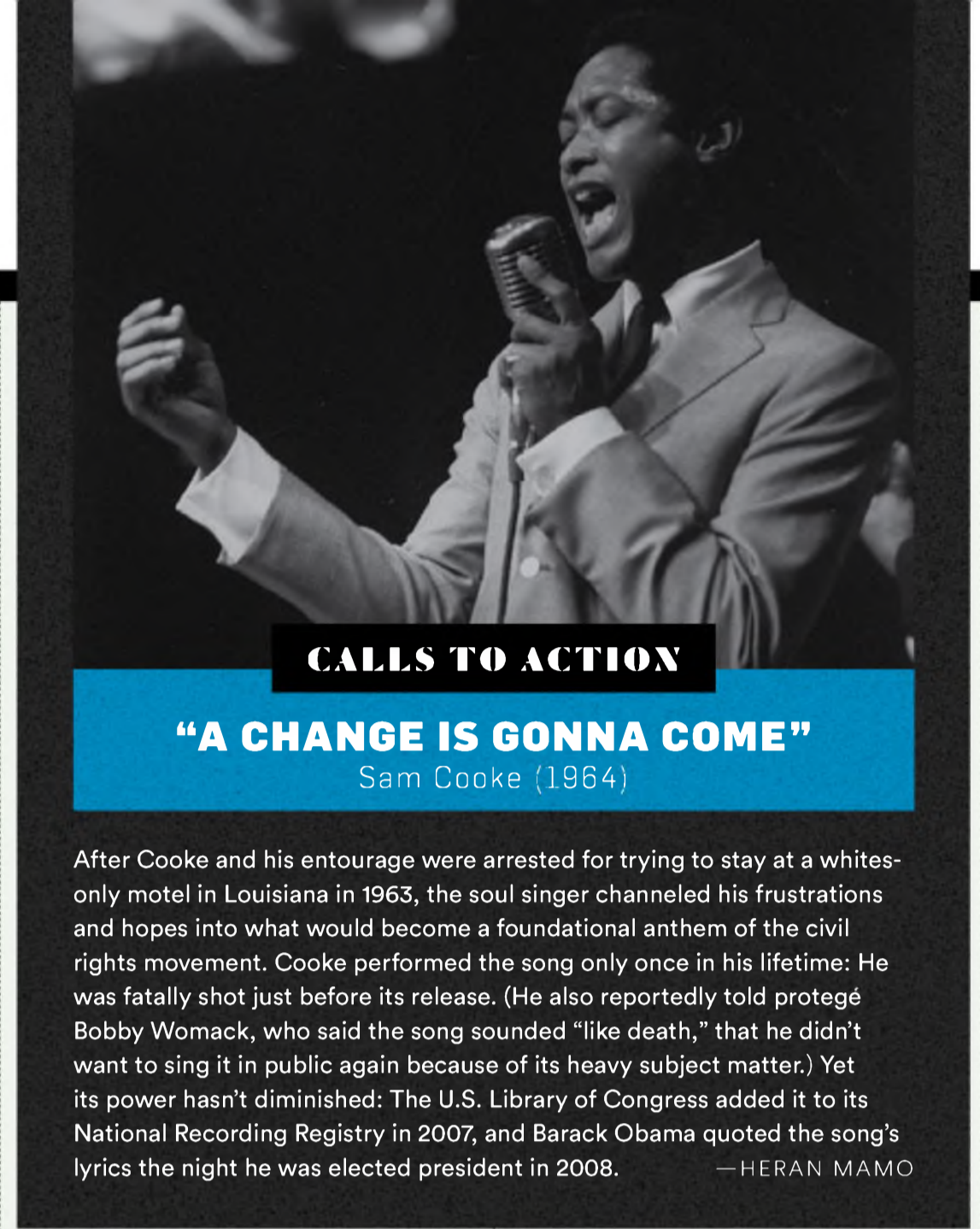
ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

Rashid “Get financially literate. Anyone being given huge sums of money needs to understand taxes, savings and investing. After art, the second most important aspect of this business is commerce.”

Elliot Grainge

Founder/CEO, 10K Projects

Following the success of its early breakout stars Tekashi 6ix9ine and Trippie Redd, 10K “continued to build our roster and find creative ways to help our artists build their audiences,” says Grainge, 27. “Finding the right collaborations has become a cornerstone of artist development.” The next-generation label is now striking big with its new class of chart-toppers, led by iann dior, whose single with 24kGoldn, “Mood,” hit No. 1 on the Hot 100, and Internet Money, whose “Lemonade” (No. 7) has earned 220 million global streams, says Grainge. “To take this ride with Taz [Taylor of Internet Money] and [co-producer] Nick Mira in creating a brand-new artist project has



CALLS TO ACTION

“A CHANGE IS GONNA COME”
Sam Cooke (1964)

After Cooke and his entourage were arrested for trying to stay at a whites-only motel in Louisiana in 1963, the soul singer channeled his frustrations and hopes into what would become a foundational anthem of the civil rights movement. Cooke performed the song only once in his lifetime: He was fatally shot just before its release. (He also reportedly told protégé Bobby Womack, who said the song sounded “like death,” that he didn’t want to sing it in public again because of its heavy subject matter.) Yet its power hasn’t diminished: The U.S. Library of Congress added it to its National Recording Registry in 2007, and Barack Obama quoted the song’s lyrics the night he was elected president in 2008. —HERAN MAMO

really been a thrill for everyone at 10K.”

THE WORD THAT DEFINES R&B/HIP-HOP CULTURE

“Punk rock.”

Alan Grunblatt

President of urban music, eOne

With both new releases and catalog titles putting numbers on the board for eOne, Grunblatt’s department is having a great run. Brandy’s *B7* debuted in the top 10 on both the Top R&B Albums and Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums charts, while Blueface’s 2018 mixtape, *Famous Cryp*, is still paying off thanks to a deluxe version that arrived in July. Plus, upcoming releases from Juicy J, Sevyn Streeter and Latin trap artist Bryant Myers are expected in the fourth quarter. Meanwhile, eOne’s catalog, which now includes Death Row Records, has earned a catalog market share of nearly 1% — putting it among the top independents — thanks to the arrival of Dr. Dre’s *The Chronic* on streaming services widely in April. “We are doing more mature hip-hop, R&B and Latin, and we are even doing an [audiovisual] comedy project with Lil Duval,” says Grunblatt. “Being diverse is our twist.”

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

“Do it on your own, at least in the beginning. Learn the business, and start your own fan base, no matter how small.”

Ethiopia Habtemariam

President, Motown Records; executive vp, Capitol Music Group

Gelareh Rouzbehani

Vp A&R, Motown/Capitol Music Group; founder, Rouz Group

In addition to co-launching Motown Records U.K. with EMI Records president

Rebecca Allen in September, Habtemariam oversaw a busy year for the legendary label. Highlights included a successful partnership with Atlanta-based Quality Control Music, home to Lil Baby, whose *My Turn* debuted atop the Billboard 200 in March and returned to No. 1 in June after the release of a deluxe edition. R&B soul singer Kem returned with his first Motown album in six years, which yielded the smash “Lie to Me,” his first chart-topper on Adult R&B Songs in over five years. Rouzbehani has joined Motown and Capitol Music Group in an A&R role, while songwriters she represents through her Rouz Group worked on hits from Drake and Future (the “Life Is Good” remix) and Megan Thee Stallion (*Suga*) this year.

Tiara Hargrave

GM, Alamo Records

Nigel Talley

Vp A&R, Alamo Records

At Alamo, launched in 2016 by Todd Moscowitz (who previously co-founded 300 Entertainment), Hargrave and Talley helped drive the success of Rod Wave (*Pray 4 Love*) and Lil Durk (*Just Cause Y’all Waited 2*), both of whom debuted in the top five of the Billboard 200, while Houston singer-songwriter Trevor Daniel’s 2018 TikTok-propelled emo smash “Falling” has racked up 629 million U.S. streams. Overall, Alamo has released three top 25 Hot 100 hits and 12 total entries, according to the label.

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

Hargrave “Having more women executives, specifically women of color, in the corporate ranks. We are still hearing words like ‘first African American.’”

RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW

Sweeping initiatives combating systemic racism are starting industrywide, but several focused efforts are already proving immediate impact is possible

BY TAYLOR MIMS

ON THE LAST Sunday in May, Universal Music Group general counsel/executive vp business and legal affairs Jeff Harleston called Motown Records president Ethiopia Habetemariam for the second time that day. It was just six days after George Floyd's death at the hands of Minneapolis police, and UMG chairman/CEO Lucian Grainge had asked Harleston to lead the group's Task Force for Meaningful Change, dedicated to furthering the fight for racial justice through charitable giving, mental health initiatives and more. Harleston, who's also the interim chairman/CEO of Def Jam Records, sent a to-the-point reply: "Only with E."

"Both of us understood that we had not only the responsibility but the opportunity to really make significant change," says Habetemariam. The next day, they scheduled what was intended to be a one-hour town hall to discuss the civil unrest sweeping the country. The virtual event lasted two-and-a-half hours. "There was not one person on that Zoom who didn't cry," says Harleston. The idea of meaningful change, he continues, "means a lot to us, because this can't be about the summer of 2020. Hopefully this is the inflection point we've long waited for."

Like UMG, major-label groups and companies across the industry are starting to enact long-term strategies — assembling coalitions, hiring C-suite officers, developing ongoing educational initiatives — to improve diversity and address systemic racism both within and outside their offices. Though the more ambitious efforts may take some time to yield concrete change, those aimed at a more immediate impact are already showing positive results.

PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS — NOW

Independent label 10K Projects has created the charity 10K Together, setting aside \$500,000 for nonprofits fighting inequality and providing grants for Black creatives. It has already donated to the racial justice organization Color of Change, a GoFundMe for Jacob Blake and his family, and the Louisville Bail Fund; it has also matched 10K duo Surfaces' contribution to the Minnesota Freedom Fund. "We wanted our reach to be varied and broad," says 10K senior vp business and legal affairs Danielle Price, "so that we could effect change in different ways — and that change would have varied effects."

In June, Sony Music Group established a \$100 million social justice fund and offered to match employee donations to the American Civil Liberties Union, Black Lives Matter, the NAACP and The Innocence Project, among others, while Warner Music Group has created its own \$100 million fund to help underrepresented populations, starting with a grant to the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, which protects voting rights in the state.

SUPPORT THOSE ALREADY DOING THE WORK

In October, Live Nation Urban created the Black Tour Directory, an online portal with the names of hundreds of Black tour and production managers, sound engineers, lighting experts, stage and set designers, and more — all from established organizations like Roadies of Color, Diversify the Stage and Black Promoters Collective. "It was important that we spoke with all



of these entities, because they've been doing the work," says LNU manager of marketing and creative services NyAsia Burris. "We wanted to be a partner to amplify the work that's already being done."

UMG has supported protesters by donating to bail funds and helping to pay legal fees for those arrested over the past few months. Harleston says the company also assembled "thousands of backpacks for protesters, which had kits in them with water and bandannas and the things you would want and need on the front lines."

LOWER BARRIERS TO ENTRY

In the midst of the live-music shutdown, says Burris, she has been fielding inquiries from graduating students of color looking for opportunities in the sector — and she regularly connects

them with LNU's network of industry veterans "so that they can learn more once live is back at full scale."

UMG's task force has partnered with its internal resource group Black Label to create UPLIFT, a yearlong mentorship program available to any UMG employee, aimed at increasing retention of Black staff and fostering career advancement. In an effort to diversify and expand their internship programs, companies including Concord Music Publishing and PULSE Music Group have begun reaching out to students at historically Black colleges and universities for paid and college-credit roles, respectively; and 10K Together has gone a step further, seeking out young people lacking the means to pursue higher education. Those internships are paid, says Price, so that young people of color aren't "foreclosed from having that experience on their résumés and potentially breaking into the business at a later point."

Jeffrey Harleston

Interim chairman/CEO, Def Jam Recordings; general counsel/executive vp business and legal affairs, Universal Music Group

Rich Isaacson

Executive vp/GM, Def Jam Recordings

Nicki Farag

Executive vp/head of promotion, Def Jam Recordings

Dominick Mormile

Executive vp, West Coast, Def Jam Recordings

Rodney Shealey

Executive vp, Def Jam Recordings

Harleston assumed the Def Jam helm in February, without giving up his role as UMG's top lawyer. In between delivering chart-topping albums from Justin Bieber, Jhené Aiko, Teyana Taylor, Logic and Big Sean, Def Jam used its social media platforms to log over 5.5 million impressions for internal task force Def Jam Forward's voter education and registration initiatives. "Our significant accomplishment since the pandemic," says Harleston, "has been watching this company come together as a team and as a family."

WE KNOW CHANGE IS REALLY HAPPENING BECAUSE

Harleston "The representation of Black executives at companies like mine has shown a significant increase. I'm talking about senior positions, with creative and [profit and loss] responsibility, reporting lines and real authority."

Mark Hill

Head of urban, Create Music Group

R&B/hip-hop already accounted for a third of Create Music Group's estimated \$100 million in annual revenue. But in 2020, Hill's division took its marketing capabilities to the next level with two big records: Tekashi 6ix9ine's single "Trollz" (featuring Nicki Minaj), which debuted at No. 1 on the Hot 100 while the album debuted at No. 4 on the Billboard 200 in September, and Tory Lanez's *DAYSTAR*, which debuted at No. 10. Meanwhile, Create is still helping build DJ Chose's "Thick" (featuring Beatking), which has racked up 31.2 million U.S. streams. Essentially, says Hill, Create is showing what an indie distributor can accomplish: "To reach No. 1 on the Hot 100, distributed by a fully independent company, we are proving that we can put something at the highest level."

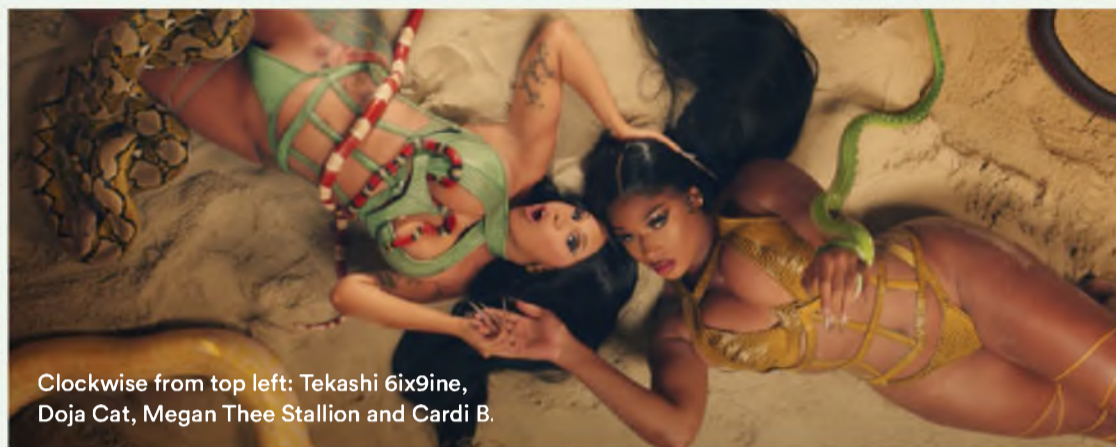
CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

"Brand and advertising dollars. Major brands need to give more respect to hip-hop the way they do to other genres' artists in presenting opportunities."

Jaha Johnson

Head of A&R, Hitco Entertainment

After songwriter SAINT JHN's single "Roses" came out independently in 2016, Johnson, 45, signed him to Hitco. A 2019



Clockwise from top left: Tekashi 6ix9ine, Doja Cat, Megan Thee Stallion and Cardi B.

remix of "Roses" by DJ Imanbek steadily bloomed into a No. 4 peak on the Hot 100 and a No. 1 spot on Hot Dance/Electronic Songs. The track also earned the distinction as the longest-running No. 1 on Shazam's Top 200 Global chart. No surprise, then, that Johnson says his power move of 2020 was "discovering and signing SAINT JHN," giving the company its biggest hit to date. Hitco also has another star on the rise in Yella Beezy, whose 2019 single "Bacc at It Again" featured Quavo and Gucci Mane.

THE WORD THAT DEFINES R&B/HIP-HOP CULTURE

"Honesty."

Michael Kyser

President of Black music, Atlantic Records

Juliette Jones

Executive vp urban promotion, Atlantic Records

Lanre Gaba

GM/senior vp A&R, Black music, Atlantic Records

Kevin Holiday

Senior vp urban promotion, Atlantic Records

Dallas Martin

Senior vp A&R, Atlantic Records

Atlantic has had success this year on the Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart and the Billboard 200 with Roddy Ricch, Meek Mill, Gucci Mane, Lizzo, A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie, Cordae and Lil Uzi Vert, among others. And then there's the phenomenon of "WAP" from Atlantic's Cardi B and 300 Entertainment's Megan Thee Stallion. The song debuted in August at No. 1 on the Hot 100, becoming just the 42nd song to debut atop the chart. It also racked up the most first-week streams ever (93 million), the most weekly streams of 2020 and the biggest sales week for any song in over a year.

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

Gaba "Read Donald Passman's *All You Need To Know About the Music Business*."

Kevin Liles

Co-founder/CEO, 300 Entertainment

Rayna Bass

Senior vp marketing, 300 Entertainment

Selim Bouab

Head of A&R, 300 Entertainment

Leesa Brunson-Boland

Senior vp, head of A&R operations and A&R administration, 300 Entertainment

Mark Robinson

General counsel, 300 Entertainment

Geoff Ogunlesi

Vp A&R, 300 Entertainment; vp, YSL Records

(See story, page 52.)

C.C. McClendon

Executive, 12Tone Music

During the past year, McClendon has worked with Aftermath Entertainment and Full Stop Management to help build on the chart success of Anderson .Paak, who won the Grammy Award for best R&B album in January for *Ventura*, his second 12Tone release in six months. In 2019, 12Tone saw .Paak's album reach No. 4 on the Billboard 200. "We added to his radio chart achievements and expanded his format acceptance," says McClendon, as the artist's "Make It Better" (featuring Smokey Robinson) hit No. 2 on the Adult R&B Songs airplay chart in October 2019.

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

"Lack of diversity. [Minority] executives need the opportunity to be heard and have their opinions carry equal weight."

Dijon "Mustard" McFarlane Meko Yohannes

Co-founders, 10 Summers Records

It has been a promising year for 10 Summers, the label artist-producer Mustard co-founded with Yohannes, 35, who also manages Mustard and Ella Mai. Coming off a successful 2019 — which included launching the sold-out Summersfest in Los Angeles and Mai's Grammy-nominated debut album going platinum — "we made a conscious decision to keep our foot on the gas into the new year," says Yohannes, noting that Mustard's Grammy-

nominated hit "Ballin'" (with Roddy Ricch) went quadruple-platinum in March.

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

Mustard "Individuality. R&B is a specific genre, and hip-hop is a different genre. Though they live in similar spaces, it's important artists feel free to be just one or the other."

Julian Petty

Executive vp, head of business and legal affairs, Warner Records

Chris Atlas

Executive vp, urban music and marketing, Warner Records

Norva Denton

Senior vp A&R, Warner Records

Petty joined Warner Records in 2019 after spending 15 years in private practice and helped build the label's R&B/hip-hop roster by negotiating the signings of Freddie Gibbs, Lil Zay Osama, Chika and NLE Choppa. Atlas has guided the returns of Saweetie and Wale, as well as shepherding Choppa's label debut, *Top Shotta*, and his singles "Walk Em Down" and "Camelot." Denton helped bring Freddie Gibbs to Warner and co-produced Wale's "On Chill" (featuring Jeremih), which reached No. 22 on the Hot 100.

THE WORD THAT DEFINES R&B/HIP-HOP CULTURE

Atlas "Dominant."

Mark Pitts

President of urban music, RCA Records; CEO, ByStorm Entertainment

Tunji Balogun

Executive vp A&R, RCA Records; co-founder, Keep Cool

Geo Bivins

Executive vp urban promotion, RCA Records

Carolyn Williams

Executive vp marketing, RCA Records

Camille Yorrick

Executive vp creative content, RCA Records

Chris Brown's "No Guidance" broke the record for longest-running No. 1 on the R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay chart at 27 weeks, besting the mark set by Miguel's "Adorn," another RCA hit. And the breakout success of Doja Cat, whose *Hot Pink* moved 848,000 equivalent album units seven years after she signed to RCA at age 17, is an example of the label's faith in artist development — but for Pitts it's also part of a crucial cultural shift. "All the women artists and MCs that are coming to life — I haven't seen that since [Queen] Latifah and Monie Love," he says. "And us having three of them — Doja Cat, Flo Milli and Mulatto — we're having a great year."

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

Pitts "Not being able to perform. R&B — I want to hear it, but I also need to feel it, see it. And hip-hop is suffering because a lot of records you don't get until you're in the club. You need to hear that bottom, that bass vibrating on your back."



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(VP / EMPIRE Publishing)

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

How three college buddies who came up in the '90s Atlanta scene turned decades of experience — and relationships — into the tastemaking label Generation Now

BY CARL LAMARRE

IT'S THE LATE 1990s, AND Southern rap music is beginning to bubble up in the mainstream. In New Orleans, Master P's No Limit Records is gaining steam on the heels of his "Make Em Say Uhhh" and Cash Money Records is thriving on buzz from Juvenile and Lil Wayne. Memphis is entering the fray with the emergence of Three 6 Mafia. And in Atlanta, OutKast is making a bid for hip-hop's crown, following its seminal album *Aquemini*. Throughout that city's historically Black college campuses, students are looking to break into the scene — including three young men who will one day help change the sound of hip-hop.

At Clark Atlanta University, Tyree Simmons studies communication by day; by night, as DJ Drama, he crafts mixtapes with the hottest new tracks. His Clark classmate and friend Don Cannon, who's studying business management, lives in a dorm full of aspiring rappers, so he starts honing his own DJ skills and begins producing, eventually hooking up with Drama and DJ Sense to form a crew called The Aphilliates. Just a few blocks south, at Morehouse College, Leighton "Lake" Morrison — a political science major who dreamed of being an MC since age 15 — takes a job at a nightclub, where he meets Cannon and, later, Drama.

Now, after 20 years and various jobs in the music industry, the friendship the trio built has not only survived but thrived — and it's the foundation of their flourishing label, Generation Now. "Through us all growing in the music industry, we just kept in touch," says Lake, 41, today over a Zoom

call with his longtime friends and partners. "It turned into conversations, and conversations turned into a business."

Since signing a joint-venture deal with Atlantic Records in 2015, Generation Now (the name comes from a 2004 mixtape Drama and Cannon curated) has risen to the top of hip-hop's crowded field of imprints and boutique labels by building on each founder's expertise and investing in artist development from the ground up. In the process, it has signed two of the genre's biggest 2020 success stories: Lil Uzi Vert and Jack Harlow. "They represent the cross-section of traditional hip-hop artist development and culture and what the kids want to hear," says Atlantic chairman/COO Michael Kyser of Generation Now's principals. "They bring decades of experience and knowledge, as well as their unique ability to adapt to the speed and methods that fans want for their music in 2020."

Generation Now's road to success has paralleled that of the music its founders loved in their youth. Drama, Cannon and Lake kept in touch after college. And as the 2000s began, Drama made a name for himself as mixtape host to a slew of Southern rap all-stars — Wayne, Jeezy, T.I. — with his *Gangsta Grillz* series, then expanded his reputation over the next decade with mixtapes for Pharrell Williams, Chris Brown and the late Nipsey Hussle. By 2014, he had landed an A&R job at Atlantic; soon after, he opened his own Means Street Studio in Atlanta, an incubator for budding local talent.

Producing for Drama on *Gangsta Grillz*, Cannon, too, realized the power of building relationships. He landed credits for



50 Cent, Jeezy and Fabolous, and in 2008 left The Aphilliates to focus on his own production company, hosting Big Sean's *Finally Famous Vol. 3: Big* mixtape and creating beats for Jeezy and Curren\$y. In 2013, he became vp A&R at Def Jam Records.

Lake's rap dreams didn't last beyond college, but a key friendship did. In 2004, he was at a video shoot for Ma\$e (whom he had met through a friend at Morehouse), where Cudda Love, Ma\$e's former manager, changed the way Lake thought about his future. "He pulled me to

the side and said, 'There's all these dudes trying to rap. Try to do business,' " recalls Lake. So he dove into learning music management, eventually co-managing R&B star Bobby Valentino for three years — and, later, Drama and Cannon.

On their own, the three had honed a knack for uncovering raw talent while still maintaining tight-knit relationships with creators they had connected with years ago. At their respective labels, say Cannon and Drama, that didn't always translate to signing the acts they wanted. "We had our

From left: Generation Now founders Lake, Drama and Cannon.



hands close to various artists who are now superstars, who we had the opportunity to sign or just had the feeling like, 'OK, this person is up next. Let's be ahead of it,' recalls Drama. (He and Cannon declined to name who those artists were.) "We missed on some things, [but] we said, 'We don't want to miss anymore.'"

The next time opportunity knocked, in 2014, they grabbed it. Driving to an Atlantic City, N.J., DJ gig, Cannon heard an up-and-coming Philadelphia rapper named Lil Uzi Vert on WUSL (Power 99)

and, intrigued by his flamboyant lyricism, called host DJ Diamond Kuts to learn more about him. "I went back to Philly to meet Uzi and did some research," says Cannon, 41. "I noticed people knew about him, but not too much. I just took it back to the squad and told Drama, 'We need to do this shit for real!'"

Drama went to Atlantic with a major proposition: forming his own label with his college buddies. "I told them, 'I don't do this alone, and my partners are very prominent parts of what I bring to the

table,'" says Drama, 42. "It was a plan we didn't even realize was taking shape. I was always campaigning for my guys." In the meantime, he and Cannon brought Uzi to Atlanta to work on new music, including his 2014 mixtape *The Real Uzi* (which Cannon hosted). By 2015, Generation Now's joint venture with Atlantic was signed, along with its blue-chip prospect. In October of that year, Uzi released his debut project on the label, *Luv Is Rage* — a mixtape executive-produced by Cannon and Drama — and Generation

Now's founders proved once again that they were no '90s relics.

"I think Uzi was a little different from what people expected to come from Dram and Cannon," says Lake. "These guys had a certain style of music for over 10 years. I think people were expecting us to come out with a Jeezy-type artist first — somebody street, somebody gangsta — or even somebody from the South. [Cannon] saw the vision."

Their initial focus on one flagship artist paid off: In 2017, Uzi's emo-leaning single

“XO Tour Llif3” rocketed to No. 7 on the Billboard Hot 100 and set the stage for a monster album debut. Three months later, *Luv Is Rage 2* debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 with 135,000 equivalent album units, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data.

With Uzi’s star rising, Generation Now had the clout to pursue another promising young artist: Kentucky-based Jack Harlow. Drama checked out the then-22-year-old’s Instagram on the recommendation of a friend at Means Street. He was impressed by Harlow’s lyrical dexterity, and he wasn’t the only one: Kentucky



Clockwise from top: Lake, Drama and Cannon.

“IT WAS A PLAN WE DIDN’T EVEN REALIZE WAS TAKING SHAPE. I WAS ALWAYS CAMPAIGNING FOR MY GUYS.”

—DJ DRAMA



engineer KY Engineerin’ (a mixer for 2 Chainz and Meek Mill) had told Lake about Harlow, too. Generation Now met Harlow in Atlanta in 2018 and signed him shortly after. “He’s truthful, and he works his ass off,” says Cannon of the rapper. “He fights tooth and nail for everything.”

By keeping things small, Generation Now had landed two major talents. But that didn’t mean the label was immune to major conflict. In January 2018, Uzi tweeted some advice for fellow artists that fans interpreted as a Drama subtweet: “Sign 2 a major Dont sign 2 a rapper or a Dj ..Its Just Easier When The Time Come For That Fake Shit.” That year, he released just one song, “New Patek,” which peaked at No. 24 on the Hot 100.

In early 2019, Uzi took to social media again with a starker message. “I’m done with music,” he wrote on his Instagram Story. “I deleted everything. I wanna be normal. I wanna wake up in 2013.” He didn’t retire though: That March, he uploaded “Free Uzi” to SoundCloud and Tidal, with lyrics that read like another shot at Generation Now: “I can’t trust none of these n—s, might turn on me/I’m still a millionaire, this shit not hurting me.” On the same day, he announced a management deal with Roc Nation.

The news stunned Generation Now’s founders, who were already confronting backlash from impatient fans for reportedly

shelving Uzi’s next album, *Eternal Atake* — and it also seemed to irk labelmate Harlow. He posted an Instagram shot of himself hanging out with Drama with a caption jabbing at Uzi: “just signed my soul away... double tap if you can’t wait for *Eternal Atake*.” Uzi’s response? Posting a pic of Harlow with the artist’s face covered by the clown emoji and the words “Free Uzi” written on his arm.

“I don’t think there was any hostility between the two,” says Lake today. “Jack was realigning himself with us, which meant a lot.” To this day, the Generation Now guys won’t talk about the origin of the apparent feud with Uzi; they say their experience has taught them to take the high road. “That’s a difficult thing to do,” says Cannon. “There have been times where we were biting our nails, wanting to speak on some things. We never spoke on those things.”

Uzi never broke his contract with Generation Now. By the end of 2019, he was back to releasing new singles, and in March, the long-awaited *Eternal Atake* arrived. “We weren’t as hands-on with *Eternal Atake* in production as we were with *Luv Is Rage 2*,” says Lake. “We wanted to put it out, and when we got the nudge that it was ready to go, we were just as excited as the public.” The hourlong album turned out to be a magnum opus worth waiting for: It debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 and, in its first week, charted

20 titles simultaneously on the Hot 100 (including all 18 album tracks), making Uzi only the third artist (after Drake and Lil Wayne) to achieve that feat. A week later, the deluxe version *Lil Uzi Vert Vs. The World 2* arrived and also shot to No. 1.

In the end, Generation Now’s first big discovery came through for the label. But even while tensions with Uzi unfolded over the better part of two years, the founders stayed busy with Harlow. Throughout 2018 and 2019, they hunkered down in the studio (much as they had with Uzi) to release two mixtapes and start building a fan base. By January of this year, Harlow was set to come out swinging — and he did, with “WHATS POPPIN,” a catchy track highlighting his winning attitude and witty wordplay.

Harlow had befriended Cole Bennett — the 24-year-old Lyrical Lemonade founder and video director known for breaking Lil Tecca and Juice WRLD on his 15.8 million-subscriber YouTube channel — and he tapped him to shoot a video. “WHATS POPPIN” exploded, spawning TikTok challenges, breaking into Spotify’s RapCaviar playlist and earning 108 million YouTube views. Its climb up the Hot 100 was slow, but by July, it hit the top 10 and a week later zoomed to No. 2 thanks to a remix featuring Lil Wayne, DaBaby and Tory Lanez, all of whom hopped on the record thanks to Drama’s efforts.

“The foundation the label has provided has made it a lot easier for me to figure out how I want to navigate the game,” says Harlow. “The three kings have had a huge hand in molding me into a star. They taught me how to move. Their stories and wisdom provide me with endless context and appreciation for tradition.” This winter, he’ll release his debut album — one that Lake isn’t afraid to boldly compare to a contemporary game-changer. “He’s making an album that we think is comparable to [Kendrick Lamar’s] *good kid, m.A.A.d city*,” he says. “He’s rapping with dope concepts where every beat is amazing. Features you wouldn’t expect.”

As the founders have learned over the past 20 years, building a singular label — one that not only becomes part of hip-hop’s long tradition but also moves it forward — doesn’t simply mean finding another Harlow

or Uzi. “We never once tried to sign somebody that sounds like somebody else,” says Cannon. He hopes that if Generation Now follows any prior path, it’ll be akin to Jimmy Iovine’s Interscope Records — a place where Snoop Dogg and Dr. Dre sat comfortably on the roster next to Marilyn Manson. “I think that’s what we’re building,” adds Cannon. “A team that’s comfortable doing what they’re doing and not worried about the time it takes.”

So while Harlow and Uzi continue to shine, Generation Now is investing in its next potential star: Seddy Hendrix, a Jacksonville, Fla., artist Drama met through his manager Willie Joe. Since signing to Generation Now in 2018, Hendrix has gained traction with melodic trap records like “LOWKEY” and “Hands Down” that have garnered millions of YouTube views.

As Cannon, Drama and Lake see it, however, their biggest success isn’t a hit or a diamond-in-the-rough artist find — it’s the fact that, in a business built on relationships, they’ve managed to preserve and protect their own. “It’s a very proud thing to say my best friends that I went to college with 20 years ago are my business partners,” says Drama. “I don’t know if it’s rare, but it feels rare, and it’s key to our success. It’s a proud moment. It feels good to be in business with people who were sharing \$150 to throw parties.”

CONGRATULATIONS



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Sylvia Rhone

Chairman/CEO, Epic Records

Traci Adams

Executive vp promotion, Epic Records

Ezekiel Lewis

Executive vp, head of A&R, Epic Records

Erica Coulter

Vp A&R, Epic Records

Jennifer Goicoechea

Vp A&R, Epic Records

Rhone's Epic team kicked off 2020 with Future's multiplatinum "Life Is Good" from *High Off Life*, his seventh No. 1 album on the Billboard 200. Meanwhile, the ever-prolific Travis Scott's "Highest in the Room," "The Scotts" (with Kid Cudi) and "Franchise" (featuring Young Thug and M.I.A.) all debuted at No. 1 on the Hot 100, making Scott the only artist to have three songs debut atop the Hot 100 in under a year. And 21 Savage, who in January won the best rap song Grammy for "A Lot," debuted atop the Billboard 200 with his Metro Boomin collaborative album, *Savage Mode II*, in October, bookending a highlight-filled year for the label.

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

Lewis "Don't be afraid to bring 100% honesty to your art, even if it makes you vulnerable. The tentacles of 'truth-telling' are far-reaching, and people relate greatly to authenticity."

Arnold Taylor

CEO, South Coast Music Group

Daud Carter

Executive vp, South Coast Music Group; CEO, Social Currency Enterprises

Interscope partner South Coast Music Group became a major player in 2019 when DaBaby earned his first Billboard 200 No. 1 album with *Kirk* and a top 10 single on the Hot 100 with "Suge." This year, the MC solidified his standing among rap's elite by notching his second consecutive No. 1 on the Billboard 200 with *Blame It on Baby*, then dominated the summer when his first Hot 100 No. 1, "Rockstar" (featuring Roddy Ricch), ruled the chart for seven total weeks and earned the title of *Billboard's* Song of the Summer. South Coast's Toosii is also gaining steam after his *Poetic Pain* debuted at No. 17 on the Billboard 200 in September. Rising on the roster: Blacc Zacc, TiaCorine and Big Mali.

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

Taylor "Artists not knowing the business and not knowing their value. We have to bring attention to the fact that the industry needs artists just as bad as artists need the industry."

Pierre "P" Thomas

CEO, Quality Control Music

Kevin "Coach K" Lee

COO, Quality Control Music

The Atlanta-based label and management firm is coming off three straight years

of global sales that have already topped \$134 million, according to Thomas, with 2020 keeping that hot streak alive. In February, the company released Lil Baby's *My Turn*, the most-streamed album of 2020 so far, while the MC's nine top 10s on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs has solidified his status as Quality Control's newest A-list act, following the label's chart-topping success in 2017 and 2018 with Migos. "We take pride in all the hard work it took to develop him into the superstar that we always knew he would be," says Thomas.

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

Thomas "Understand that it takes a strong team to win. Nobody got successful alone."

Anthony "Top Dawg" Tiffith

Founder/CEO, Top Dawg Entertainment

Terrence "Punch" Henderson

President, Top Dawg Entertainment

Top Dawg's top stars Kendrick Lamar and SZA each have new music on the way: In September, Lamar was spotted on the set of a new music video, while SZA's latest single, "Hit Different" (featuring Ty Dolla \$ign), peaked at No. 29 on the Hot 100. After COVID-19 struck, Tiffith's priorities shifted to "staying alive and keeping my family safe," he says. He also stepped in to cover rent for over 300 families in Los Angeles' Watts public housing community, where he once lived. "This virus is killing a lot of people; racist cops [are] out here killing unarmed Black men and women," he says. "So yeah, staying alive is the biggest accomplishment this year."

THE WORD THAT DEFINES R&B/HIP-HOP CULTURE

Tiffith "Global. We are the most imitated culture in the world."

Jeff Vaughn

President, Capitol Records

Bill Evans

Senior vp urban promotion, Capitol Records

Britney Davis

Vp artist relations, marketing and special projects, Capitol Music Group

Quality Control/Motown artist Lil Baby is hitting a career peak this year, with nine top 10 hits on the R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay chart — with one, "The Bigger Picture," reaching No. 3 on the Hot 100 — and *My Turn* becoming his first album to top the Billboard 200, spending five weeks at the summit. But Evans also points to Kem, whose "Lie to Me" topped the Adult R&B Songs chart, as a particular point of success. "The industry needs to publicly acknowledge that Black music is the biggest driving force in the business," he says, "and has been for some time."

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

Evans "Try to maintain some sense of responsibility in your creativity. You don't have to be a role model, but especially during these times, be conscious of your audience and the influence you have on them."



CALLS TO ACTION

"MISSISSIPPI GODDAM"

Nina Simone (1964)

Written in response to 1963 events such as the assassination of activist Medgar Evers and the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Ala., "Mississippi Goddam" marked Simone's shift toward more politically outspoken music. What sounds at first like an upbeat show tune soon transforms into a dirge for Black Americans who've been brutally killed across the South. With her "do it slow" refrain, Simone also takes aim at white moderates who called for the civil rights movement to be more incremental. Radio stations across the South banned the song, and Simone later said the backlash curtailed her career. But in speaking her mind despite the risks, Simone made it easier for other artists to do the same in decades to come. —H.M.

Steven Victor

CEO, Victor Victor Worldwide; senior vp A&R, Universal Music Group

In July, Victor Victor Worldwide released Pop Smoke's posthumous debut album, *Shoot for the Stars, Aim for the Moon*, after the rapper's death in a home shooting in February. It debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200, sent all 19 of its tracks onto the Hot 100 and has since logged 2.1 billion streams — part of the rapper's 3.7 billion career total.

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

"Be about making great art. You'll inspire others to do the same."

Bryan "Birdman" Williams

Ronald "Slim" Williams

Co-founders/co-CEOs, Cash Money Records

This year, the Williams brothers tended to the legacy of their label and their hometown of New Orleans. In June, they committed over \$250,000 to paying the rent of people in subsidized housing. The brothers were also featured in the four-part Spotify docuseries *New Cash Order* and recently signed Fat Yunginn, Casper Bluff, EZ Stevie aka DJ Stevie J and G-Baby to their roster, while their label's catalog racked up 10.3 million album consumption units.

THE SONG THAT INSPIRES ME

Slim " 'Bling Bling' by B.G. It was bigger than a song — the message was, 'There is nothing you can't do.' The song is about opportunity and aspiration. It says that all things are possible."

Nicole Wyskoarko

Executive vp/co-head of A&R, Interscope Geffen A&M

Tim Glover

Senior vp A&R, Interscope Geffen A&M

Caroline Diaz

Vp A&R, Interscope Geffen A&M

Laura Carter

Senior vp/head of urban marketing, Interscope Geffen A&M

Ramon Alvarez-Smikle

Senior director of digital and content marketing, Interscope Geffen A&M

IGA had a year marked by highlights and bittersweet moments, including the death of rising star Juice WRLD last December. DaBaby spent seven weeks at No. 1 on the Hot 100 with "Rockstar" — finishing atop *Billboard's* Songs of the Summer chart — and snared consecutive No. 1 albums with *Kirk* and *Blame It on Baby*, while Juice's posthumous third album, *Legends Never Die*, also debuted at No. 1 in July. "There is an enormous responsibility that comes with assembling a posthumous project and releasing it in a way that's appropriate and befitting," says Wyskoarko. "Juice's kindness, emotional honesty and genius musical ability still shine so brightly."

WE'LL KNOW CHANGE IS REALLY HAPPENING WHEN

Wyskoarko "Our industry comes together to take responsibility and begin the hard work it takes to create meaningful, lasting, systemic and systematic change. We've taken the first steps, but significant change is not an overnight thing; it's a long process, and we have to be resolute and steadfast in our commitment."

MULTISECTOR

Tunde Balogun

Co-founder/president, LVRN

Junia Abaidoo

Co-founder/head of operations and touring, LVRN

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Co-founder/head of A&R, LVRN

Sean “Famoso” McNichol

Co-founder/head of marketing and brand partnerships, LVRN

Carlton Ramong

Co-founder/creative director, LVRN

LVRN has emerged as a consistent powerhouse in R&B with the continued success of 6LACK and the rise of Summer Walker, in partnership with Interscope Records. Last year, Walker debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard 200 with her first album, *Over It*, while her singles “Girls Need Love,” “Playing Games” and “Come Thru” reached the top five of the Hot R&B Songs chart. But in addition to music, establishing a mental health division within the company and fighting for social justice remain top priorities for the Atlanta-based creative collective.

“Though there continues to be indisputable racial and representation issues in the music industry,” says McNichol, 31, “I find it much too hard to focus on that while our brothers and sisters are still being shot in the streets.”

THE SONG THAT INSPIRES ME **Baiden** “Lauryn Hill’s ‘To Zion.’ Lyrically, it takes you to a place where you know you’re not alone and you can always shape your future.”

Shawn “JAY-Z” Carter

Founder, Roc Nation

Desiree Perez

CEO, Roc Nation

Jay Brown

Vice chairman, Roc Nation

Roc Nation’s Megan Thee Stallion is “blossoming into a superstar,” says Perez in the wake of the artist’s two No. 1s on the Hot 100: “Savage,” on which she’s the lead artist, and Cardi B’s “WAP,” where she’s the featured vocalist. Meanwhile, Roc Nation management clients Alicia Keys and Mariah Carey both scored with their respective new memoirs, *More Myself* and *The Meaning of Mariah Carey*, the latter hitting No. 1 on *The New York Times*’ nonfiction bestsellers list. The company struck deals with the NFL and the U.S. Open to serve as cultural advisers on social justice issues, and label co-presidents Shari Bryant and Omar Grant curated a compilation album to support such causes, *Reprise: A Roc Nation Album*, featuring Rapsody, Vic Mensa and Jorja Smith.

THE WORD THAT DEFINES R&B/HIP-HOP CULTURE

Perez “Strength.”

Chance the Rapper

Owner, Chance the Rapper LLC

Chance has achieved preeminence as an artist, advocate, entrepreneur and philanthropist. When the three-time Grammy winner isn’t dropping his feel-good lyricism, overseeing designs for his “3” hat

line or kicking up dust on social media with bold political and social views, the 27-year-old is fighting for his people. The most important issue for R&B/hip-hop, he says, is “independence and liberation for artists and their craft and in the business. Black artists are in the same position in the music industry that we were when we created rock’n’roll, jazz and the blues.” When will he know things are finally changing? “When I see artists becoming part-owners of their labels and the streaming platforms and when we see the end of imprint deals,” he says.

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

“Don’t sell ownership of any of your [intellectual property] to anybody, and work off licenses and handshake deals.”

J. Cole

Co-founder, Dreamville

Ibrahim “Ib” Hamad

Co-founder, Dreamville; manager, J. Cole

Although the second Dreamville Festival in Raleigh, N.C. — which was on track to sell out 50,000 tickets (10,000 more than its first year) — was canceled due to the pandemic, the Dreamville label started 2020 on a high note with two Grammy nominations: best rap album, for its Billboard 200 No. 1 label showcase/compilation album *Revenge of the Dreamers III*, and best rap performance, for the track “Down Bad” (by JID, Bas, EarthGang, Young Nudy and J. Cole). “The platform [that the album] built, not just for our artists but other artists, is one of the things we’re most proud of,” says Hamad, 36.

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

Hamad “This is going to sound cheesy, but to make music that is true to who they are and excites them, and not what they think is going to get them on playlists or be the easiest way for them to cut through.”

Jocelyn Cooper

Partner, Multiply Creative/Afropunk

Cooper has been a partner in the media and live-music brand *Afropunk* for a decade, helping turn its flagship festival into a cultural cornerstone of the neo-soul and hip-hop worlds. The event went virtual in 2020 due to the pandemic with an event called *Planet Afrofunk*, featuring pretaped performances from around the globe. (Cooper stepped down from day-to-day involvement in *Afropunk* in April.) Meanwhile, through her marketing and advertising agency, *Multiply Creative*, she co-produced the *Your Voice, Your Power, Your Vote* civic campaign for Sony Music, which brought in over 80 artists from all genres to foster voter participation in the U.S. elections and equal rights in the country.

THE SONG THAT INSPIRES ME “Kendrick Lamar’s ‘Alright.’ Every revolution needs a soundtrack.”

Ghazi

Founder/CEO, EMPIRE

Nima Etminan

COO, EMPIRE

Al “Butter” McLean

Vp worldwide creative, EMPIRE

EMPIRE celebrated its 10th anniversary this

year by opening a new, 10,000-square-foot studio in downtown San Francisco; acquiring a majority stake in merch/e-commerce company *Top Drawer Merch/Electric Family*; partnering with Instagram on two original-content shows; and launching a publishing division headed by McLean, formerly of *Kobalt Music*. But it was Money Man’s “24” that provided the year’s highlight. Released at the start of the pandemic, the track earned the rapper his first Hot 100 chart entry, picked up a remix from Lil Baby and became a “streaming monster,” says Ghazi. “It’s a testament to our team’s ingenuity.”

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

Ghazi “Real estate. There are so many artists that don’t necessarily have a formal place to be playlisted or grouped into.”

Aubrey “Drake” Graham

Co-founder, OVO/OVO Sound

Noah “40” Shebib

Co-founder, OVO/OVO Sound; producer

Oliver El-Khatib

Co-founder, OVO/OVO Sound

Mr. Morgan

President, OVO Sound

In May, OVO steered the release of Drake’s mixtape *Dark Lane Demo Tapes*, which included his latest TikTok dance-assisted hit, “Toosie Slide.” The song debuted at No. 1 on the Hot 100, his third to do so, making him the first male artist to ever achieve the chart trifecta. The Toronto powerhouse OVO continues to shape-shift outside of music, with projects including a clothing line with Japanese designer BAPE and an Air Force 1 sneaker with Nike set to debut in 2021. Meanwhile, OVO artist *PartyNextDoor* reached the top 10 of the Hot R&B Songs chart four times in the past year, including collaborations with Rihanna (“Believe It,” No. 4) and Trippie Redd (“Excitement!,” No. 8).

Adam Leber

Partner, *Maverick*; president, *Rebel Management*

The success of *Labrinth*, Leber’s management client of six years, has been a high point of the past year. The British R&B singer-songwriter won an Emmy Award in September for outstanding original music and lyrics for “All for Us,” his collaboration with Zendaya, for HBO’s *Euphoria*. He also earned an Academy Award nomination co-writing and co-producing Beyoncé’s “Spirit” from *The Lion King: The Gift*. Leber himself scored an Emmy nod for best music supervision for his work on *Euphoria*.

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST “Get a great, reputable lawyer who knows entertainment and surround yourself with a team that truly has your best interests at heart. Take your time and do your homework before making any big decision.”

CALLS TO ACTION

“WHAT’S GOING ON”

Marvin Gaye (1971)



A bold departure from the Motown sound that made Gaye famous, the smooth stylings of “What’s Going On” don’t mask the hurt that inspired it. After watching police violently attack anti-Vietnam War protesters in Berkeley, Calif., in 1969, Renaldo “Obie” Benson (of R&B group the Four Tops) relayed his horror to co-writer Al Cleveland, who came up with an early version of the song. Benson later presented it to Gaye, who drew from his conversations with his brother Frankie, who fought in the war. The end result reached No. 2 on the Hot 100 thanks to its healing words: “For only love can conquer hate.” — H.M.

HIP-HOP

SWAY

SHADE 45
CH. 45



RONNIE

HIPHOP
CH. 44

DION

the heat
CH. 46



HONORS

**It's an honor to work
with these honorees**

CONGRATULATIONS

to Ronnie Triana, Dion Summers and Sway Calloway
for being named to Billboard's 2020 R&B/Hip-Hop
Power Players List.

So proud you're part of our radio family.



From left: Jackson; Alaysia Sierra, R&B editorial; and Dionte Goodlett, artist relations, hip-hop and R&B, photographed by Yuri Hasegawa on Oct. 19 at Apple Music in Culver City, Calif.

APPLE MUSIC MEETS THE MOMENT

FOR APPLE MUSIC'S HIP-HOP SQUAD, it was a year of — as global creative director Larry Jackson puts it — leveraging “one’s influence to pour back into the proverbial cup from which we drink.”

So as Apple Music Radio continued to grow its portfolio of exclusive artist-led shows with Lil Wayne’s *Young Money Radio* — for which Wayne interviewed everyone from Dr. Dre to Dr. Anthony Fauci in its first 12-week season — it also gave back, with Eminem and Twitter’s Jack Dorsey announcing a \$1 million donation to the Detroit Food Bank on *Young Money Radio*, and Apple and Wayne partnering to give \$200,000 to the New Orleans Food Bank.

It also meant aligning quickly with the #TheShow-

MustBePaused movement, so that on June 2 all editorial on the platform was directed “toward supporting awareness of the Black community and current and past traumas, ranging from police brutality to white supremacy,” says Ebro Darden, host/global editorial head of hip-hop and R&B.

Young Money Radio “was birthed out of the initial COVID-19 shelter-in-place era in late spring,” says Jackson. So was Swizz Beatz and Timbaland’s game-changing Instagram Live series *Verzuz*, which in July arrived on the Apple Music platform in a unique deal that calls for artist battles to be simulcast on Instagram as well as Apple Music and Beats 1, with audio of the battles then made available afterward on demand on Apple Music.

The expertise and connections of Jackson and Darden

define Apple Music’s content-first approach to R&B/hip-hop. When the service brought its Rap Life playlist to the stage with a livestreamed event in September, it did so with Howard University students. Darden, who hosted the concert — which paired performances by Wale, Nas, Lil Baby and Rapsody with discussions on social justice, police reform and racial equality — said at the time that the choice of a historically Black college or university campus was crucial.

“These institutions are part of the backbone of Black communities, and hip-hop is from the Black experience,” he says, adding that Rap Life Live concerts will continue to focus on HBCUs in the future: “We believe these campuses and students should be exalted and showcased as often as possible.”

—JOE LEVY



From left: Yomi Desalu, hip-hop editorial; Darden; and Karlie Hustle, artist relations, hip-hop and R&B, photographed by Sage East on Oct. 15 in New York.

Tim Reid

Senior vp repertoire and marketing, recorded music, BMG

Raj Jadeja

Vp creative, BMG

As BMG builds its business “together with the R&B and hip-hop creative community,” says Reid, the company has notched four No. 1s on the Adult R&B chart with hits from Ledisi (“Anything for You”), India.Arie (“Steady Love”) and Charlie Wilson (“One I Got,” “Forever Valentine”), while BMG and its hip-hop imprint, RBC Records, under Brian Shafton, had “tremendous, global success” with releases from rap duo Run the Jewels and British rapper KSI. Other label signings include Anthony Hamilton, Keyshia Cole and Terrace Martin, as BMG aims to be the home for artists “who want to build their own empire on a global scale,” says Reid. Jadeja has played a role in new publishing deals for the works of 21 Savage, DJ Khaled and the late Juice WRLD.

THE SONG THAT INSPIRES ME Reid “Kendrick Lamar’s ‘DNA.’ It speaks to the internal strength and focus necessary to overcome challenges and highlights the root of our inspiration.”

Gee Roberson

Co-CEO, The Blueprint Group; partner, Maverick

Cortez “Tez” Bryant

Co-CEO, The Blueprint Group; partner, Maverick

Jean Nelson

CEO, BPG Records; partner, The Blueprint Group

Al Branch

Chief marketing officer/partner, The Blueprint Group

The Blueprint Group management firm has achieved multipronged success for its stand-alone label BPG Music and its roster of chart-topping artists. G-Eazy and former labelmate Lil Wayne each performed during *Monday Night Football* halftime shows. After holding No. 1 on the Hot 100 for a record-setting 19 weeks in 2019 with “Old Town Road,” Lil Nas X struck partnerships with brands including Gucci, Fenty Skin and Calvin Klein. The Young Money apparel brand closed a deal with American Eagle clothing stores. And Blueprint partnered with Trippie Redd producers Charlene Bryant and Peter Jideonwo and launched the distribution venture Blueprint Distro this year.

Steve Stoute

Founder/CEO, UnitedMasters/Translation

At UnitedMasters, “we are focused on making independence a reality for artists who want to retain full control over their careers,” says Stoute. “Our deals with TikTok, ESPN, Twitch, *NBA 2K*, Bose and more all provide our artists opportunities that independents haven’t had access to

before.” During the past 10 months, he adds, the size of UnitedMasters’ roster grew 250%.

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

“Ownership. Artists want control over their financial and creative futures and you’re hearing the calls get louder and louder, with Kanye [West] being the latest to speak out. The business model is changing, and independence is the future.”

MANAGEMENT

Fee Banks

CEO, Good Money Global

This year, Banks’ Good Money Global — the company behind YoungBoy Never Broke Again’s three No. 1 albums in 12 months — partnered with Interscope Records, a major move for the longtime Louisiana-based executive, who got his start in the business at age 13 and has worked with Lil Wayne and Kevin Gates over the years. But this has been his most successful run yet, as Atlantic artist YoungBoy topped a slew of charts — including the Artist 100, the Hot 100 Songwriters, Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums and Top Rap Albums — and ended 2019 as the No. 1 artist on YouTube in the United States.

THE SONG THAT INSPIRES ME “‘No More Pain’ by 2Pac. I turn to 2Pac because I feel he had great intentions, a message in the madness. He was ambitious and a leader.”

Charlene Bryant

Founder, Riveter Management

Bryant soft-launched Riveter Management in January after working with client Trippie Redd since 2018, and saw his album *Pegasus* debut in November at No. 2 on the Billboard 200. The release racked up 60,000 equivalent album units during its first week. “Artists in the R&B/hip-hop genre are not getting the same accolades as artists in other genres, although it’s the highest-streamed genre in the U.S.,” says Bryant.

THE WORD THAT DEFINES R&B/HIP-HOP CULTURE

“Life.”

Kareem “Biggs” Burke

CEO, Circle of Success Management

Burke, who co-founded Roc-A-Fella Records with Shawn “JAY-Z” Carter and Damon “Dame” Dash but stepped away from the music industry over a decade ago, returned in 2019 to manage SAINT JHN, who has since achieved 999 million career streams and reached No. 4 on the Hot 100 with “Roses” in July. “Finding the same excitement I once had at the inception of the careers of JAY-Z and Kanye West in the work I’m doing with SAINT JHN is somewhat of a full-circle personal success of mine,” says Burke, who

executive-produced the Emmy-nominated HBO documentary *It’s a Hard Truth Ain’t It*.

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

“Lack of ownership, coupled with lack of diversity at an executive level. We need to see more Black executives handling Black business. We need to support Black ownership at all costs.”

Daniel “Birdman Zoe” Desir

Founder/CEO, Timeless Music Entertainment

In August, the creative collective Internet Money, led by producer Taz Taylor, dropped its debut album, *B4 the Storm*, while its single “Lemonade” (featuring Don Toliver, Gunna and Nav) reached No. 10 on the Hot 100. For Desir, 33, the album’s release was one of his “best accomplishments” as a manager, “because I knew what it took from all parties involved — label, management, legal and production — to get it across the finish line and for us to be witnessing the success that it’s bringing in such a short period of time since its release.” Desir also managed the producers of tracks from Juice WRLD, Drake, Lil Tecca and YoungBoy Never Broke Again, among others.

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

“Leadership — because most artists have no real guidance or people they can call to help navigate them in the industry.”

Dre London

Founder/CEO, London Entertainment

London’s marquee management client Post Malone was nominated for 16 Billboard Music Awards in 2020 and took home nine, including top artist. “When your artist gets that, it’s hard to not remember,” says London, who also reps emerging talent Tyla Yaweh and recent signee Tyga. His latest venture is a push into tech with AUX Live, a subscription-based platform that allows musicians and content creators to perform globally with “one-off curated shows” and “a catalog of past performances from artists that people from all ages can enjoy,” he says. “Pandemic or no pandemic, the Dre London business is moving.”

WE’LL KNOW CHANGE IS REALLY HAPPENING WHEN

“People of color don’t have to prove to a white guy why [our culture] is the future. All they care about is data. Music is felt and touches you in your soul, but data can’t.”


Josh Marshall

Founder/CEO, Mogul Vision Music

In 2019, Marshall launched his Mogul Vision label as a joint venture with Arista Records and acts including Cleveland singer KennyHoopla and Atlanta rapper Blaatina. But the artist-manager, who represents Lil Mosey and Smokepurpp, says he’ll always remember his “first top 10 hit” — Mosey’s

CALLS TO ACTION

“FUCK THA POLICE”
N.W.A (1988)



N.W.A pushed West Coast hip-hop to the forefront of protest music with “Fuck tha Police,” whose lyrics take the form of a trial, with “Judge [Dr.] Dre presiding” and “prosecuting attorneys” MC Ren, Ice Cube and Eazy-E testifying against the LAPD. The song prompted the FBI to complain to the group’s label about “discouraging and degrading” lyrics, but the track’s raw message gave voice to the feelings of many Black Americans — and it has reverberated throughout pop culture ever since. —H.M.

DOUGLAS R. BURROWS/LEIS ANIELLES/TIMES/GETTY IMAGES

Rolling Loud

CONGRATS MATT & TARIQ!

CO-FOUNDERS OF ROLLING LOUD
2020 HIP-HOP POWER PLAYERS



*rolling
loud*

LOVE,
MATT & TARIQ

“Blueberry Faygo,” which reached No. 8 on the Hot 100 in July. The breakout track also inspired the first release from Marshall’s new beverage company, Flavr, which he established during quarantine. “Although I’ve accomplished what some would say is a lot, I still believe I’m only 50% away from where I ultimately want to be,” says Marshall. “The glass is half full.”

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

“Collaboration and community are the keys to growth on the creative and executive sides of things. Our culture is so much stronger together.”

Jeff Robinson

Founder/Chairman, MBK Entertainment

Jeanine McLean-Williams

President, MBK Entertainment

While the pandemic has created “one of the worst circumstances” for breaking artists, says Robinson, MBK has thrived thanks to its partnership with RCA and success of management clients including H.E.R., who earned “10 Grammy nominations and two wins in two years of EPs,” he says. McLean-Williams steered the R&B singer’s Instagram live series, *Girls With Guitars*, which featured Sheryl Crow, Melissa Etheridge and Alessia Cara; secured artist branding deals with Tommy Hilfiger, DIFF charitable eyewear, adidas and Beats; and played a role in co-creating H.E.R.’s annual Lights On Festival. Recent performances at the Grammys, Academy Awards and Emmys have only further propelled the multi-instrumentalist. “We have managed to touch every huge stage in this business,” says Robinson. “All at 23 years old and with no debut album.”

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

Robinson “We are driving the music business currently, and we must demand our proper respect and representation in setting up the new and improved music model.”

Paul Rosenberg

CEO, Goliath Artists/Goliath Records; president, Shady Records

Rosenberg’s longtime client Eminem made history with his surprise release *Music To Be Murdered By*, which in February extended his record to 10 straight No. 1 albums on the Billboard 200. The following month, Rosenberg, 49, stepped down as chairman/CEO of Def Jam to launch Goliath Records, a joint venture with Universal Music Group, and reprioritize his Shady Records and Goliath Management businesses. He’s also making headway with Shady newcomer Westside Gunn, who released his debut album, *Who Made the Sunshine*, in October. “Early critical response has been overwhelmingly positive,” says Rosenberg.

THE SONG THAT INSPIRES ME “Push It Along”



CALLS TO ACTION

“FIGHT THE POWER”
Public Enemy (1989)

When Rosie Perez danced to this song at the start of Spike Lee’s *Do the Right Thing*, she didn’t just help create one of the most iconic opening-credits scenes in film history — she also captured what made this track so effective: its ability to get listeners up on their feet, with a beat as urgent as the lyrics about standing up to injustice. The song’s official music video, also directed by Lee, took a more literal interpretation of its message, following the group as it performed at a rally in Brooklyn alongside images of Malcolm X and other “heroes [who] don’t appear on no stamps,” as frontman Chuck D raps.

—H.M.

by A Tribe Called Quest has been my mantra because of its clear message to persist and be brave.”

Anthony Saleh

Partner/CEO, Emagen Entertainment Group

Ebonie Ward

Partner, Emagen Entertainment Group

“The stars kind of just aligned,” says Ward of Emagen’s latest success stories: Both Gunna’s *Wunna* and Future’s *High Off Life* hit No. 1 on the Billboard 200 in May, while the latter’s “Life Is Good” with Drake reached No. 2 on the Hot 100. *Wunna* arrived just a few days prior to George Floyd’s death, which made the Atlanta rapper reluctant to promote the record, says Ward: “He wanted to go and do marches and be an advocate for where we are in the world.”

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

Ward “Government accountability, transparency and corruption. COVID-19 and systemic racism and racial injustice are in the forefront of the hearts and minds of millions.”

Wassim “Sal” Slaiby

Founder/CEO, SAL&CO/XO RECORDS

Amir “Cash” Esmailian

Co-founder, XO RECORDS

Amid the pandemic, Slaiby and his team at Sal&Co have had one of their best years to date. The Weeknd released his massively successful album *After Hours* on XO Records just as lockdowns began, with the hit single “Blinding Lights” breaking the record for number of weeks spent in the top five of the Hot 100, with 28. Doja Cat reached No. 1 on the Hot 100 with her Nicki Minaj collaboration “Say So,” while Nav’s *Good Intentions* topped the Billboard 200. But closest to Slaiby’s heart is the \$1.2 million in relief money the company raised for his home country of

Lebanon following the massive explosion in Beirut in August.

THE SONG THAT INSPIRES ME **Slaiby** “‘Come From Nothing’ by Belly. It reminds me of when we had nothing and the struggle I went through to make it with my team.”

David Stromberg

GM, Cactus Jack; manager, Travis Scott

Travis Scott’s three No. 1 debuts on the Hot 100 in under a year set a record among all artists, but it was just one highlight of a productive year for the Houston MC. While many artists shuffled to Instagram Live for impromptu performances and fan interaction during the pandemic, Scott headlined a virtual stage of his own on *Fortnite*, where 27.7 million players from around the world saw his “Astronomical” performance in April. Stromberg was satisfied with the team’s innovation, especially during an unprecedented industry downturn. “Bringing kids hope and entertainment during such a dark time is something I’ll always be proud of,” he says.

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

“Redoing antiquated deals and giving artists back control of their catalogs and content. We need to eradicate predatory contracts that have taken advantage of artists since the inception of the music industry and somehow still exist.”

Abou “Bu” Thiam

Founder, BuVision Entertainment

Thiam had a new role to celebrate in the past year, becoming Kanye West’s manager and overseeing the lightning-rod artist’s gospel debut, *Jesus Is King*, which brought West nine nominations and four wins at the Billboard Music Awards in October and became his ninth No. 1 album on the Billboard 200. “Prior to making the album, no one thought we would be able to achieve the success we did in the

genre,” says Thiam. “Whether Christian, Muslim or Jewish, it was a good feeling to see people praising God.”

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

“Reconciliation. Black music drives 60% to 70% of the front-line music business any given quarter. So it’s about time the artists and the executives in the space get their just due.”

STREAMING

Tuma Basa

Director of Black music and culture, YouTube

Kathy Baker

Head of U.S. label relations, YouTube

Rachel Jackson

Artist relations manager, YouTube

Brittany Lewis

Artist relations manager, YouTube

Jessica Rivera

Head of artist relations (West Coast), YouTube

The video streaming platform reports that hip-hop acts are among the top “most viewed” artists on YouTube in the United States this year. Basa and his team have leveraged that with an impressive slate of livestreams, including The Roots Picnic 2020, Tory Lanez’s Social Distancing Tour, the live premiere of Cardi B’s “WAP” (featuring Megan Thee Stallion), Gunna’s *Wunna Live* in LA and Aminé’s live performance of his new album, *Limbo*. In January (when in-person galas were still possible), YouTube’s Music Leaders and Legends Ball commemorated the 30th anniversary of LaFace Records with leading R&B/hip-hop executives and musicians. Following the protests in June, Childish Gambino’s “This Is America” returned to YouTube’s U.S. and global Top Songs tallies and spiked on charts in over a dozen countries, according to the platform.

Caiaffa

Vp major label relations, SoundCloud

Erika Montes

Vp artist development & relations, SoundCloud

As the pandemic unfolded, SoundCloud saw a surge of tracks. “But behind this moving creative response was deep financial, mental and emotional uncertainty for creators,” says Montes. “My team helped develop a series of support initiatives to combat the impact of the pandemic, from discounted accounts and a platformwide ‘donate’ button to free track promotion and over \$15 million in direct investment to support creators on the platform.”

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

Montes “Diversity in executive suites. The industry can no longer ignore the elephant in the room.”

DRAKE AGAINST KANYE? THE VERZUZ BATTLES WE'D MOST LOVE TO SEE

R&B/Hip-Hop Power Players weigh in on dream matchups



Swizz Beatz (left) and Timbaland

"It was the perfect time," says Timbaland of the March debut of *Verzuz*. The battle of the hits that he co-created with fellow hip-hop producer Swizz Beatz became a media sensation on Instagram Live and now Apple Music and Apple TV+.

Emerging out of the friendly rivalry of its creators, *Verzuz* has expanded from pairing producers to songwriters and then performers, comparing and presenting their classic tracks in 20-song sessions. Among the artists who have stepped up: Alicia Keys and John Legend; Snoop Dogg and DMX; Bounty Killer and Beenie Man; Erykah Badu and Jill Scott, who performed the first all-female *Verzuz*; and R&B queens Brandy and Monica, whose Aug. 31 matchup drew 21.9 million U.S. on-demand streams. Writer-producer Lena Waithe is already working on a *Verzuz* documentary.

"People say it's a pandemic thing, but it's beyond that," says Timbaland. "It's something that you look forward to; an educational piece; a social gathering."

Billboard asked its 2020 R&B/Hip-Hop Power Players about the *Verzuz* throwdowns they would most like to see.

"Drake vs. Kanye West — arguably the two most prolific hit-makers of the last 15 to 20 years, and two of my favorite artists personally. It would be incredible to see them each play their best records and hear them back-to-back. Not sure one would come out over the other, but it would be incredible to see."

—Ramon Alvarez-Smikle, senior director of digital content and marketing, Interscope Geffen A&M



"JAY-Z vs. Drake — because the culture deserves it."

—Carlton Ramong, co-founder/creative director, LVRN

"Kanye West vs. 50 Cent. Bring back the 106 & Park days!"

—Peter Jideonwo, Partner, Grade A Productions

[*BET* presented the R&B/hip-hop music video countdown show 106 & Park from 2000 to 2014. The program took its name from the location of the studio in Harlem where it was produced.]



"For me, *Verzuz* has been about celebrating classics and living in a nostalgic moment. Mary J. Blige and Faith Evans are classic first ladies of R&B who took us through all the feels of joy and pain. I want to relive the history with them, and my marketing mind thinks about all the possibilities of special guest appearances."

—Laura Carter, senior vp/head of urban marketing, Interscope Geffen A&M

Reporting by Tatiana Cirisano, Naima Cochrane and Thom Duffy.

Tim Hinshaw

Head of hip-hop and R&B, Amazon Music

Rochelle Balogun

Music curator, hip-hop and R&B, Amazon Music

Sharon Bako

R&B and Afrobeats music lead, Amazon Music

Amazon Music's Rotation playlists, launched in 2019 for rap and R&B and steered by Hinshaw, hit No. 3 and No. 9, respectively, on the streaming service's rankings and helped break artists like Lucky Daye and Chika this year. When Black Lives Matter demonstrations spread across the globe, curators began adding topical songs like Lil Baby's "The Bigger Picture." "Based on the work we've been doing with Rotation," says Bako, "it wasn't too far-fetched to resurface music that was speaking to what's going on."

THE SONG THAT INSPIRES ME Bako " 'Bag Lady' by Erykah Badu. It's a reminder you can hold space for the bad stuff without letting those things hold you down."

Larry Jackson

Global creative director, Apple Music

Ebro Darden

Host/global editorial head of hip-hop and R&B, Apple Music

(See story, page 68.)

Nicole Johnson

Head of hip-hop and R&B artist marketing, Pandora

Johnson co-created Pandora's Black Music Month campaign, highlighting artists of color, with over a billion streams and a weekly platform takeover. She also recently expanded her role to head SiriusXM's artist marketing for R&B/hip-hop, incorporating artists like Alicia Keys and Megan Thee Stallion. Johnson brought H.E.R., Brandy and LL Cool J to Pandora's live and virtual stages while recruiting Post Malone and Jhené Aiko to curate the Listen In playlist to comfort fans during the pandemic.

THE SONG THAT INSPIRES ME "Bill Withers' 'Lovely Day' because it makes me smile to know how hard the world was when he recorded that song [in 1977], but he saw the bright side."

Mjeema Pickett

Global head of R&B, Spotify

Carl Chery

Creative director/head of urban music, Spotify

Sydney Lopes

Head of hip-hop and R&B artist marketing, Spotify

Chaka Zulu

Consultant, Spotify

Spotify's influential RapCaviar and Are & Be playlists celebrated their fifth anniversaries in 2020, with Are & Be expanding through the launch of Singles, a series of live and

acoustic reinterpretations of hits from the genre. The Feelin' Myself playlist, which spotlights female rappers, recently became the second-fastest-growing hip-hop song collection at nearly 930,000 followers. On Blackout Tuesday (June 2), Spotify leveraged its social and political muscle with a Black Lives Matter playlist (created in 2015) that had 6 million listeners and 20 million streams. "We've seen listeners go back to that playlist to find comfort and solace after George Floyd's death," says Pickett.

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

Pickett "Even in challenging times, know that your goals and purpose are still destinations that you should strive toward."

Swizz Beatz Timbaland

Co-founders/co-owners, Verzuz

(See story, left.)

PUBLISHING

Nikisha Bailey

Vp A&R administration and operations, Artist Partner Group

Matt MacFarlane

Senior director of A&R, Artist Partner Group

Eli Piccarreta

Vp A&R, Artist Partner Group

Artist Partner Group has played a key role in some of the biggest R&B/hip-hop successes of the past 13 months through its roster of songwriters and producers. "Who doesn't like first-place chart positions?" asks Bailey. "YoungBoy Never Broke Again having three No. 1s [on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums] is a remarkable accomplishment, and I am thrilled to have played a role alongside my APG team in his success."

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

Bailey "Stay consistent. Having consistency in how you release music and content, alongside a consistent work ethic, will drive your name and career very far."

Rob Brown

Vp business affairs, Kobalt Music

Kobalt estimates that its publishing roster accounts for over 40% of the top 100 songs in the United States and United Kingdom, including titles by The Weeknd, Gunna and Childish Gambino. Brown was responsible for the signing of breakout star Roddy Ricch, who secured two No. 1s on the Hot 100 in 2020 with "The Box" and DaBaby's "Rockstar." Brown's latest coups include negotiating Kobalt's deal with producer-mixer Mixx, who worked on Teyana Taylor's *The Album*, which hit No. 1 on Top R&B Albums, and a creative partnership with *Insecure* star Issa Rae's Raedio Publishing that includes live events, music supervision and a joint label deal with Atlantic Records.

Ian Holder

Vp creative, Sony/ATV Music Publishing

Mike Jackson

Vp creative, Sony/ATV Music Publishing

Adrian Nunez

Vp creative, Sony/ATV Music Publishing

Will Skalmoski

Senior manager of creative, Sony/ATV Music Publishing

In the third quarter of 2020, Sony/ATV led both *Billboard's* Top Radio Airplay and Hot 100 Publishers charts with market shares of 22.10% and 26.68%, respectively. The latter gains were due in part to Megan Thee Stallion's breakout hit, "Savage," which was co-written by Sony/ATV songwriter Bobby Sessions, as well as a remix featuring Beyoncé. Other Sony/ATV songwriters, such as DJ Frank Ski and production duo Priority Beats, contributed to two more major hits: Cardi B's "WAP" (featuring Megan Thee Stallion) and Lil Baby's *My Turn*.

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

Jackson "Follow your passion and stay coachable always."

Walter Jones

Co-head of A&R, Universal Music Publishing Group

Ari Gelaw

Manager of A&R, Universal Music Publishing Group

James Supreme

Senior manager of A&R, Universal Music Publishing Group

UMPG's hip-hop roster is celebrating "great chart success" this year, says Jones. DaBaby earned his first Hot 100 No. 1 with "Rockstar" (featuring Roddy Ricch); Megan Thee Stallion teamed with Cardi B on "WAP," the first female rap collaboration to debut atop the Hot 100; and Lil Baby's *Billboard* 200-topping album *My Turn* helped the rapper log 61 career Hot 100 hits. UMPG also had continued success from producers like Cardiak (PartyNextDoor's long-awaited *PartyMobile*), Cardo (Drake's "Laugh Now Cry Later") and Hit-Boy (Nas' *King's Disease*). Jones is a proud member of Universal Music Group's new inclusion and social justice task force for meaningful change, a sign that "we are taking steps in the right direction," he says.

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

Jones "Education on the deal-making process. Artists and songwriters have to know and understand how their deals work and how the partnership works."

Tuff Morgan

Vp A&R, peermusic

Morgan was promoted late last year to help guide peermusic's A&R for pop and urban, and one of his first moves was to work with peermusic president/COO Kathy Spanberger in securing a global publishing deal for Jason "Poo Bear" Boyd, who

executive-produced and co-wrote Justin Bieber's *Changes* album, including the No. 2 Hot 100 single "Yummy" and No. 5 "Intentions" (featuring Quavo). Meanwhile, Roddy Ricch's "The Box," with a peermusic publisher's share, enjoyed an 11-week run atop the Hot 100, while his album *Please Excuse Me for Being Antisocial* debuted at No. 1 on the *Billboard* 200. Those achievements have boosted peermusic into the top 10 of *Billboard's* Publishers Quarterly rankings three times in 2020 so far.

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

"Truly understanding the tremendous value and leverage R&B/hip-hop culture brings to any business venture around the world."

Ryan Press

President, A&R, U.S., Warner Chappell Music

Wallace Joseph

Senior director, A&R, Warner Chappell Music

Brandra Ringo

Senior director, A&R, Warner Chappell Music

For Warner Chappell, the greatest achievement of the past year is bittersweet: *Shoot for the Stars, Aim for the Moon* from the late Pop Smoke, whose estate is represented by the publisher, reached No. 1 on 14 charts around the world, says Press, including the *Billboard* 200, where it has spent 16 weeks and counting in the top five. Press also cites the success of SethInTheKitchen, who produced DaBaby's "Rockstar," which spent seven weeks atop the Hot 100, as well as Belly, who co-wrote The Weeknd's "Blinding Lights," another multiweek chart-topper. "In July, we had five No. 1 songs hit the charts in the same week, which was a huge testament to our team — especially Wallace and Brandra, who have been working hard behind the scenes to sign new talent and set up sessions," says Press.

THE WORD THAT DEFINES R&B/HIP-HOP CULTURE

Press "Powerful. It's a complete movement that shapes culture, and I'm proud to be a part of that."

MEDIA

Fadia Kader

Strategic partnerships lead, music, Instagram

Sharing best social media practices with artists and partners, Kader, 38, has played an essential role in the Instagram Live experience of Timbaland and Swizz Beatz's song-battle show, *Verzuz* (see page 73). In August, the Brandy and Monica pairing attracted 4.2 million total views and 5 billion impressions, making it the most-viewed episode so far, says Kader. "The nostalgia factor was really high there — who doesn't still love 'The Boy Is Mine'? But



When the Compton, Calif., rapper performed this song at the 2015 BET Awards atop a graffiti-covered police car, Fox News' Geraldo Rivera claimed that "hip-hop has done more damage to African Americans than racism." But that year, as Black Lives Matter protests unfolded in the wake of Freddie Gray's death in Baltimore police custody, this soulful stand-out from Lamar's *To Pimp a Butterfly* was the soundtrack: a message of resilience that echoed through the streets. Fans dubbed it "the new Black national anthem" on social media, and the song, which later won two Grammy Awards, continues to be played at protests today. —H.M.

also, we are still in a time of uncertainty and it's helpful to know and see two beloved artists come together to celebrate, reminisce and tell stories."

Jade Lewin

Music partnerships, Facebook

Lewin booked Big Freedia to appear in a Facebook commercial that aired during the Grammys in January. It won two awards from the Association of Music Producers, including one for best artist and brand collaboration. In February, Lewin was involved in the platform's partnership with John Legend on an animated Facebook Watch series for Valentine's Day. In October, she oversaw Facebook's sponsorship and livestream partnership with the A3C Conference and Festival, which included her appearance on the panel "Bridging the Distance Through Music and Storytelling." Says Lewin: "A3C has created such a great community around hip-hop culture and business, and it was amazing seeing the same energy come to life online for the first time."

THE SONG THAT INSPIRES ME "Together Again" by Janet Jackson. It's a classic that instantly lifts my spirits any time I hear it."

Thea Mitchem

Executive vp programming, iHeartMedia; program director, WWPR (Power 105.1) New York

Doc Wynter

Executive vp urban/hip-hop programming strategy, iHeartMedia; program director, KRRL (Real 92.3) Los Angeles

Charlamagne Tha God

Co-host, *The Breakfast Club*, WWPR (Power 105.1), New York; co-founder of *The Black Effect Podcast Network* with iHeartMedia

On June 30, iHeartMedia launched the Black Information Network, described by the company as the "first and only 24/7 comprehensive national audio news service dedicated to providing an objective, accurate and trusted source of news with a Black voice and perspective." Wynter, who has been involved in the creation of iHeartMedia radio brands in New York, Los Angeles, Miami and Houston, says that "nothing was more rewarding than participating in the launch of BIN during one of the worst times in this country for Black Americans."

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

Wynter "Getting our incredibly influential artists to use their platforms to help extinguish racial injustice in this country. We must use 'the mic' to let the world know that police brutality and systemic racism will no longer be tolerated."

Connie Orlando

Executive vp specials, music programming and music strategy, BET Networks

Amid the pandemic, Orlando and her team staged a remarkable BET Awards in June, tapping stars like Megan Thee Stallion, Nas and Public Enemy for inventive, remotely shot performances. The event drew over 3.7 million viewers in its first-ever simulcast with CBS, with over 30 million viewers tuning in online. "Our focus is the celebration of Black culture every year, but this year we pulled out all the stops. We stood strong in our message and the world listened," says Orlando. "Somehow, we created a show that was a true testament to the times, the culture and the people."

THE WORD THAT DEFINES R&B/HIP-HOP CULTURE

“Appreciation. Whenever I step back and think about the lives this culture has changed, it never ceases to amaze me. The culture has opened doors, providing opportunities to a collage of the most creative minds the entertainment industry has seen.”

Kashon Powell

Vp programming, Radio One

This year Powell and her Radio One team produced two virtual events “to address the issues we have faced,” she says. “We Are One: More Than a Hashtag was a virtual town hall that focused on the political and racial climate plaguing the African American community.” Feedback “was so positive,” she says, “that we later aired it on our TV network, TV One.” The second program, *We Are One: A Night of Prayer, Unity and Healing*, offered five hours of continuous prayers “for healing and unity,” says Powell, featuring nationally known faith-based leaders.

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

“Finding talent that can maintain relevance without being gimmicky or unauthentic. Finding one’s niche and fan base can be challenging and maintaining it even more so.”

Isabel Quinteros

Senior manager of music partnerships and artist relations, TikTok

In August, Quinteros spearheaded TikTok’s *The Weeknd Experience* in-app cross-reality concert (mixing real and virtual experiences), which drew over 2 million unique viewers and raised \$350,000 for the Equal Justice Initiative. The project “cemented TikTok as a desirable partner to the music industry,” says Quinteros, who has also onboarded over 500 artists to the platform and launched campaigns helping to drive three Hot 100 No. 1s: Megan Thee Stallion’s “Savage” remix with Beyoncé (31 million TikTok creations), Doja Cat’s “Say So” (21 million) and *The Weeknd*’s “Blinding Lights” (2 million).

Reggie Rouse

Vp programming Atlanta; urban format captain, Entercom; brand manager, WVEE-FM (V-103) Atlanta

Former urban format captain Rouse rose to vp in August, and his role now spans programming and brand management for 10 regional stations, including his home base, Atlanta’s V-103. His goal there is to be the No. 1 station among adults 25-54, 18-49 and 18-34 in the city’s ultracompetitive R&B/hip-hop radio market, he says: “Anything else is unacceptable.” Rouse has used his platform to educate listeners about voter registration, the U.S. Census and the presidential election. “We’re committed to educating Americans on the role we all play in sustaining our democracy,” he says.

IN THE BOARDS ROOM

Superproducers **HIT-BOY** and **WONDAGURL** are stepping up their roles in the studio — and in their own publishing deals

THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC may have forced much of the music industry to pause, but it hasn’t stopped WondaGurl and Hit-Boy — two of hip-hop’s most prolific and inventive producers — from working nonstop. “I’ve been

having a hard time completely focusing,” admits WondaGurl, 23, who has crafted hits for Rihanna and Travis Scott. “But I’m doing what I have to do at the same time.” That has included producing tracks on two of the year’s biggest debuts, Don Toliver’s *Heaven or Hell* and Pop Smoke’s *Shoot for the Stars, Aim for the Moon* — as well as inking a new co-publishing deal with Sony/ATV in partnership with Scott’s Cactus Jack imprint. For his part, Hit-Boy, 33, who took home his second Grammy earlier this year (for Nipsey Hussle’s “Racks in the Middle”), expanded into executive-producing, on Nas’ *King’s Disease*, Big Sean’s *Detroit 2* and Benny the Butcher’s *Burden of Proof* — all while working to resolve a contract dispute with Universal Music Publishing Group and juggling the demands of new fatherhood. “My son was born right at the beginning of the quarantine,” he says. “That allowed me to just really zone in and put the things that matter in the forefront.”

You’ve both created massive hits for the better part of a decade. How do you balance what sounds timely now with what will, say, two years from now?

Hit-Boy It’s almost like a subconscious thing. You’re listening to what’s out and what’s going on, but you also might listen to classic stuff. A few of the Benny the Butcher beats were made over 10 years ago, and there’s people hitting me like, “This shit some of the illest stuff for the year!” And I’m like, “Man, this is my old bag.”

Producers are increasingly treated as artists in their own right. Does that change how you collaborate?

WondaGurl Before, I didn’t really want to have any of my own music out. It has been a long time of having people release my stuff the way *they* want to release it. I’m someone who doesn’t really like attention, but I also [wasn’t always able to] have songs drop the way I wanted them to drop. Now, I’m kind of wanting to put my own music out. So whether I do [beat/verse] swaps, that has kind of changed.

Hit-Boy That’s good that you get into that. If I wouldn’t have had my name on “Racks in the Middle” [as a featured artist], I wouldn’t have even got a trophy. For my name to be on the Grammy, and I got to go up onstage to get it, I feel like I deserved that. A lot of people in the camp wasn’t even tripping on getting the song out — I was pushing, Nipsey was pushing. We should be getting a lot more credit. *Detroit 2*, the Nas album, Benny the Butcher — if

Hit-Boy (top) and WondaGurl



you look at each tracklist, even though I’m the executive producer, my name is still featured on at least one song.

How have you found executive-producing so far?

Hit-Boy It’s a lot more brain power. You’re up talking to these artists at 8, 9 in the morning, brainstorming. On *Detroit 2*, I didn’t do every beat, so I was talking to Big Sean about songs that other people produced and how we can make those better. That’s just a whole different level from something that you really crafted from the beginning, but it also helps you grow.

WondaGurl, what does your new publishing deal mean for you?

WondaGurl It means a lot to me. I’ve always wanted to get to the position where I’m like an executive and I’m able to sign my own producers and writers. Doing that and helping them come up has been really, really good for me. And working with Cactus Jack and Sony/ATV has been really good as well. I’ve definitely been the only woman in a lot of rooms, unless I was working with another woman, but it didn’t really matter to me. I’m hoping that I can inspire more women to become executives.

Hit-Boy, you’ve said multiple lawyers called your own publishing contract one of the “worst” they’d ever seen. How are you working to improve it?

Hit-Boy That’s part of my motivation to be doing as much work as I’m doing right now. Even though I’ve been showing and proving since day one, I really had to put my foot on the gas. It definitely was a point to prove: “Y’all got to understand, I’m not just piecing little quick beats together — this is next-level shit.” But it’s opening doors. Since that conversation, I’m being taken seriously on the business front. It’s moving in the right direction.

In a perfect world, what does an equitable deal for producers look like?

Hit-Boy Just the proper percentages, proper credits. Talking about publishing, any terms that hold you back from exiting your deal or progressing through your deal — things that can hold you in your first or second [contract] period for however many years — some of that stuff is just way out of line.

WondaGurl I totally agree. I’m just a fair person, so with everybody that I signed, it’s all very fair — something that I would sign myself to. —BRIANA YOUNGER



Rihanna

Kenny Smoov

Vp urban formats, Cumulus Media; program director/morning host, WQQK (92Q) Nashville

Cumulus promoted Smoov in 2019 to oversee 37 urban-format stations in 25 U.S. markets. He created an 8-minute, 46-second vignette that was played on all Cumulus stations coinciding with the timing of George Floyd's funeral. It was an honor, says Smoov, "to give some final words on the day Floyd was laid to rest." Even during the pandemic, Smoov's team at 92Q reached the top five among listeners 25-54, with an overall 15% increase in streaming numbers for WQQK.

WE'LL KNOW CHANGE IS REALLY HAPPENING WHEN

"More artists like Lil Baby can make a song like 'The Bigger Picture' and it becomes a No. 1 smash, growing their fan base and reaching their audience in a meaningful way."

Dion Summers

Vp urban programming, SiriusXM

Ronnie Triana

Program director, urban music, SiriusXM

Sway Calloway

On-air personality/host, Sway in the Morning, SiriusXM

Over the past year, SiriusXM has created "some of the most compelling programming I've ever been involved with," says Summers, a 15-year veteran of the satellite broadcaster, citing limited-run channels for Prince, Michael Jackson and Bob Marley, as well as extended deals with channel partners LL Cool J, Kirk Franklin and Eminem. Most of all, Summers is proud of his team's resilience during the pandemic and what he describes as a "racial reckoning" in the United States in the form of the Black Lives Matter movement. "Many artists, industry professionals and listeners alike are all going through the same psychological stress, which affects our livelihoods greatly," he says. "The goal is to respect their needs as we deal with our own company directives."

THE WORD THAT DEFINES R&B/HIP-HOP CULTURE

Summers "Omnipresent. We move the world."

AGENCIES

Cindy Agi

Partner, WME

James Rubin

Partner, WME

Kevin Shivers

Partner, WME

Justin Nabors

Music agent, WME

While the artists on WME's impressive R&B/hip-hop roster were off the road, the year presented opportunities for virtual showcases. Parent company Endeavor

worked with Rihanna on her Savage X Fenty fashion show that premiered on Amazon Prime, with talent booked by WME. Agi, 34, called it a highlight of the year to book appearances for the spectacle by Miguel, Rosalía, Travis Scott, Lizzo, Normani and Bad Bunny. WME signings continued apace, says Agi, with Demi Lovato, Snoh Aalegra, Cordae and Andra Day among her additions to the roster. Day will have the starring role in the biographical drama *The United States Vs. Billie Holiday*, due next year from director Lee Daniels.

Anthony DiStasio

Agent, brand partnerships, Paradigm Talent Agency

Fred Zahedinia

Agent, Paradigm Talent Agency

DiStasio, who focuses on R&B/hip-hop artists for Paradigm's brand partnership team, secured over 65 unique endorsement and sponsorship opportunities for those clients during the past two years. Zahedinia had a front-row seat to Don Toliver's rise in early 2020, watching the rapper hit No. 7 on the Billboard 200 with his debut album, *Heaven or Hell*, and go from playing colleges to securing a slot on The Weeknd's summer tour. With shows postponed until next year due to the pandemic, Zahedinia has helped his acts find other sources of revenue through branding deals and livestream performances. "It has been rewarding to pivot artists into streaming acts," says Zahedinia, who adds that he's now just as "interested in making streams into a unique experience for fans."

Robert Gibbs

Partner/head of contemporary music, ICM Partners

Mari Davies

Agent, concerts, ICM Partners

Yves C. Pierre

Agent, concerts, ICM Partners

Jacqueline Reynolds-Drumm

Agent, concerts, ICM Partners

ICM Partners broke a barrier in August, when partner Gibbs rose to become the first Black music department head of a major agency. "It's something I'm very proud of," he says. Joining the company's music leadership team, he hopes the move will inspire "other young people of color to want to learn more about this business and strive to be leaders." He also seeks "more diversity in leadership roles in the live business" for clients including J. Cole, Rapsody, PartyNextDoor and Migos.

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

Gibbs "Create great music with a point of view — now more than ever people are tuned in — and you can build a loyal fan base that cares as much about the artist as they do about the music."

Joe Hadley

Caroline Yim

Zach Iser

Ryan Thomson

Music agents, Creative Artists Agency

Before touring shut down, CAA client A\$AP Rocky sold out arenas from Barclays Center in Brooklyn to The Forum in Inglewood, Calif., the agency reports. In late 2019, the CAA team booked Jorja Smith for sold-out shows at the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles and Madison Square Garden in New York. The team is continuing to grow its portfolio during the pandemic, adding Latin rapper Anuel AA and expanding the agency's reach into Africa by bringing both developing and established artists to the continent. In June, CAA hosted the Amplify Town Hall to address systemic racism in the industry. "The discussions provided critical action steps for real and permanent change," says Hadley, 32.

WE'LL KNOW CHANGE IS REALLY HAPPENING WHEN

Yim "Artists start to feel more empowered in their businesses and the [companies] that they work with properly represent who they are."

Cara Lewis

Founder/CEO, Cara Lewis Group

In the few months of concerts before the pandemic hit, Lewis launched tours including Jill Scott's 20th-anniversary trek and a limited run for Sheck Wes and DaBaby, while Trippie Redd performed 37 sold-out headline shows on the Love Me More Tour, she says. Lewis also secured the Travis Scott and McDonald's collaboration, the iconic brand's first celebrity meal since Michael Jordan's in the 1990s. "Even though it was out of my touring wheelhouse, it was an amazing opportunity that I was able to deliver and that I knew would be a huge success," says Lewis. She's now focused on rerouting and setting tours for 2021/2022 for Eminem, Chance the Rapper, Khalid and others.

WE'LL KNOW CHANGE IS REALLY HAPPENING WHEN

"Companies truly recognize and foster the importance of investing in culture and diversity."

Cheryl Paglierani

Partner/agent, music, UTA

Mike G

Agent, music, UTA

Chris Jordan

Agent, music, UTA

UTA represents Post Malone, and Paglierani scored a win in booking the second leg of the artist's Runaway Tour, which sold 286,000 tickets and grossed \$38.9 million over 22 shows in February and March. When the pandemic brought the tour to

a halt, she booked Post Malone's April Nirvana livestream tribute, which raised over \$500,000 for the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund for the World Health Organization. Paglierani and her colleagues also helped 21 Savage launch his free online financial literacy program for at-risk youth and booked Dominic Fike to perform in the *Fortnite Party Royale* concert series. Meanwhile, Mike G helped Young Thug develop into a headlining superstar while putting Burna Boy on a similar path. For Offset, Jordan booked Young Thug for the Offset and Friends charity livestream with Oculus and Facebook.

LIVE

Tariq Cherif

Matt Zingler

Co-founders, Rolling Loud

The co-founders of the touring hip-hop festival planned to celebrate the event's sixth year with their biggest show to date, with 255,000 tickets sold for Rolling Loud Miami in May, before the pandemic forced a delay until 2021. "But we didn't let that hold us back," says Cherif. The Rolling Loud Twitch channel launched Aug. 31 with weekly programming, and two weeks later, it debuted *Loud Stream*, a free livestream festival series whose two-day debut, headlined by Swae Lee and Ski Mask the Slump God, drew over 4.4 million viewers.

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

Cherif "The lack of touring and music festival money has put a magnifying glass on other aspects of the current music industry model. Artists and labels need to come together to create more equitable terms for record, co-publishing and merch deals."

Shawn Gee

President, Live Nation Urban; manager, The Roots, Jill Scott

Brandon Pankey

Vp business development and operations, Live Nation Urban

Live Nation Urban kicked off 2020 by co-producing the Bud Light Super Bowl Music Fest, held in Miami in early February with DJ Khaled, DaBaby, Megan Thee Stallion and others. But the company pivoted quickly during the pandemic, shifting the annual Roots Picnic to a vir-

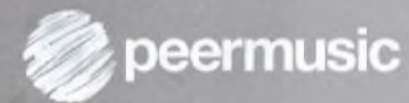
R&B HIP-HOP POWER PLAYER



CONGRATULATIONS UNCLE TUFF

YOU MAKE US ALL SO PROUD!

RALPH, MARY MEGAN, KATHY, YVONNE
AND YOUR WHOLE PEERMUSIC FAMILY



CONGRATULATIONS



Timeless Music Entertainment congratulates "Daniel Birdman Zoe" Desir on being named one of Billboard's R&B Hip-Hop Power Players for 2020



www.BirdmanZoe.com

  @Birdmanzoe

tual event in partnership with the Michelle Obama co-founded organization When We All Vote and YouTube, airing an online version of Lift Every Voice: Juneteenth Special and creating a homecoming special for historically Black colleges and universities that was distributed on YouTube on Oct. 24. Live Nation Urban has produced several shows for Instagram Live, including a *Meet the Execs* series, for which Pankey, 36, has overseen interviews with Motown's Ethiopia Habtemariam and Atlantic's Juliette Jones. Meanwhile, Gee's management clients The Roots signed a multiyear film/TV development deal with NBCUniversal TV.

Colin Lewis

Vp touring, U.S. concerts, Live Nation

Heather Lowery

President/CEO, Femme It Forward

Lesley Olenik

Vp touring, U.S. concerts, Live Nation

Live Nation's R&B/hip-hop team was having a banner year before the coronavirus hit, with Lewis, 45, working on a 30-date Post Malone tour and Olenik, 40, continuing to build out the brand for Pharrell Williams' Something in the Water festival in Virginia Beach, Va. Lowery in December was tapped to head the Live Nation joint venture Femme It Forward, a female-led music and entertainment platform. Despite the year's challenges, the Live Nation executives affirm the importance of their genre in this moment. "There are so many strong messages that the R&B and hip-hop industry bring to our culture," says Lewis. "It's important that we get back on the road and share those in person by finding new and creative ways to perform new music and stay connected to fans."

THE WORD THAT DEFINES R&B/HIP-HOP CULTURE

Lewis "Power. The power to change minds, society, politics and life for those that are struggling."

Dominick Prieto

Talent buyer, Goldenvoice

Last November, Prieto helped book the Day N Vegas Festival, one of Goldenvoice's biggest hip-hop events, working alongside festival creator Jeffrey Shuman. It sold out in 24 hours. Prieto also put together YoungBoy Never Broke Again's 7,000-capacity sold-out concert at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles, the budding star's biggest show to date. Prieto has also become a key player for rising hip-hop acts as the talent buyer for The Novo, where, he says, "JAY-Z came and watched the whole show as Westside [Gunn], Conway the Machine and Benny [the Butcher] performed for three hours" in early March.

Jonny Shuman

Director of touring, AEG Presents

Before the pandemic, Shuman promoted sold-out North American tours for DaBaby and also promoted Juice WRLD before his passing. The year was filled with "the highest highs" of his career as well as "the absolute low when we lost Juice," he says. Shuman oversees a roster that includes Summer Walker and Ski Mask the Slump God. The loss of one of his most promising young stars helped him see "how important it is to be of service to talent on and off [the tour] cycle," he says.

CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING R&B/HIP-HOP MUSIC

"As uncertain as the live space feels right now, there is still a lot of important work happening every day. The industry is working diligently, preparing to bring artists and fans back safely, efficiently and successfully when conditions allow."

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Michelle Richburg

President/CEO, Richburg Enterprises

Despite the uncertainty of the pandemic, Richburg says that, since 2019, business has doubled at her firm, which provides business management services to clients including SAINT JHN and A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie, among others. She obtained nearly a million dollars total in COVID-19 financial relief for clients through the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loans, as well as various other grants, while also helping clients navigate charitable spending to pandemic relief organizations.

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

"Create the right infrastructure and a diverse team that grows—and wins—with you."

Lou Taylor

Founder/CEO, Tri Star Sports & Entertainment Group

Deedra Carroll

Director of touring, Tri Star Sports & Entertainment Group

Taylor's business management firm, Tri Star — which counts Mary J. Blige, Travis Scott, Chris Brown and the Prince estate among its clients — was one of the early partners in the Black Music Action Coalition, created in June to address racial inequities in the music business. "We need to speak up and hold each other accountable," says Carroll, "to bring about much-needed change in our industry."

THE SONG THAT INSPIRES ME **Carroll** "Mary J. Blige's 'Keep Your Head.' This song



Brandy

speaks to my core belief of perseverance, keeping perspective, keeping your cool and doing what is right."

PERFORMING RIGHTS

Catherine Brewton

Vp creative, Atlanta, BMI

In June, BMI tapped Brewton to lead its diversity, equity and inclusion task force, which "established a paid volunteer program for all employees and pledged \$275,000 for organizations dedicated to advancing racial justice," she says. Other high points of her year include re-signing acts including Future, Brandy, J. Cole and Lil Wayne to the performing rights organization and the 20th anniversary of BMI's R&B/Hip-Hop Awards, a production initiated by Brewton in 2000.

THE SONG THAT INSPIRES ME " 'He Is' by

Brandy really speaks to me during this time of such uncertainty in the world. God is in control."

Nicole George-Middleton

Senior vp membership, ASCAP

George-Middleton helped launch a paid internship program for students enrolled in historically Black colleges and universities in June. ASCAP — which offered five paid internships to students at Howard University, Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College and Bennett College — committed to the program in response to "the need for more diversity in the industry and as an effort to help cultivate the next generation of Black executives," says George-Middleton. "We provided them with real-world work experience while building their industry connections and mentor base."

THE SONG THAT INSPIRES ME "Mary J. Blige's

'Just Fine' because she talks about believing in yourself no matter what, staying positive and productive, and making the very best out of life at all times."

Sean Glover

Director of industry relations, SoundExchange

In a year "like no other," SoundExchange continued to make monthly and quarterly

payments on time without any glitches, says Glover. "The first quarter of 2020 was very scary for most performing artists as the global pandemic put an abrupt halt to touring and live shows," he says. SoundExchange paid out almost \$1 billion to rights holders last year, and half of its top 10 earners are hip-hop and R&B artists. "The pandemic will almost certainly have a lasting effect, so artists need to evolve and figure out creative ways to collaborate."

THE WORD THAT DEFINES R&B/HIP-HOP CULTURE

"Innovative. This culture sets the standard for the world as proven by how much it is copied, adored and stolen."

Mario Prins

Senior director of creative services, SESAC

Prins signed Burna Boy to SESAC for direct U.S. representation in August. The deal came less than a year after the Nigerian pop star secured his first Grammy nomination, for *African Giant*, and following recent collaborations with Beyoncé, Coldplay's Chris Martin and Sam Smith. Burna Boy earned his first No. 1 on *Billboard's* World Albums chart in August with follow-up album *Twice As Tall*. Prins also helped secure Robert Glasper's return to SESAC this year. "Both these artists have created their own lanes, and most importantly, they are doing it their way," says Prins.

ADVICE FOR A YOUNG R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST

"Be original. Chasing trends often leads to short careers."

Contributors Trevor Anderson, Chuck

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METHODOLOGY *Billboard* power lists are selective with honorees chosen by *Billboard* editors. Nominations for each power list open not less than 120 days in advance of publication. (For a contact for our editorial calendar listing publication dates, please email thom.duffy@billboard.com.) The online nomination link is sent to press representatives and/or honorees of companies previously featured on any *Billboard* power list, as well as those who send a request before the nomination period to thom.duffy@billboard.com. Nominations close and lists are locked not less than 90 days before publication. *Billboard's* R&B/Hip-Hop Power Players for 2020 were chosen by editors based on factors including, but not limited to, nominations by peers, colleagues and superiors. In addition to nominations, editors weigh the success of each executive's company or affiliated artists as measured by chart, sales and streaming performance. Career trajectory and industry impact are also considered. Unless otherwise noted, *Billboard* Boxscore and Nielsen Music/MRC Data are the sources for tour grosses and sales/streaming data, respectively. Nielsen is also the source for radio audience metrics. Unless otherwise noted, album streaming figures cited represent collective U.S. on-demand audio totals for an album's tracks, and song/artist streaming figures represent U.S. on-demand audio and video totals.



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For The Record

B-Beats Bombarding Bronx Mobile DJ Starts Something With Oldie R&B Disks

By ROBERT FORD JR.

NEW YORK—A funny thing has been happening at Downstairs records here.

The store, which is the city's leading disco product retailer, has been getting calls for obscure r&b tunes such as Dennis Coffey's "Son Of Scorpio," on Sussex, Jeanie Reynolds' "Fruit Song" on Sablana, and the Incredible Bongo Band's "Bongo Rock" on Sire.

The requests, for the most part, come from young black disco DJs in the Bronx who are buying the records just to play the 30 seconds or so of rhythm breaks that each disk contains.

The demand for these records, which the kids call B-beats, has gotten so great that Downstairs has had to hire a young Bronxite, Elroy Meighan, to handle it.

According to Meighan the man responsible for this strange phenomenon is a 26-year old mobile

DJ who is known in the Bronx as Cool Herc. It seems Herc rose to popularity by playing long sets of assorted rhythm breaks strung together.

Other Bronx DJs have picked up the practice and now B-beats are the rage all over the borough and the practice is spreading rapidly.

Herc, who has been spinning for five years, says that his unique playing style grew from his fascination with one record, "Bongo Rock." The tune has a really great rhythm break but it was too short so I had to look for other things to put with it," Herc relates.

Since Herc was not completely satisfied with the new disco product coming out at the time, he started looking in cutout bins for tunes with good rhythm breaks.

Herc's intensive searching for tunes has now even come up with a new remake of "Bongo Rock." The '73 tune has been covered by a

group called the Arawak All-Stars on an apparently Jamaican-based label, Atswal records.

Herc has also found that some of the rhythm breaks get better response when they are played at a faster speed. Herc plays tunes such as the Jeannie Reynolds record at 45 rather than the 33's at which it was recorded.

Herc thinks the popularity of B-beats stems from the kids' dissatisfaction with much of today's disco product. "On most records, people have to wait through a lot of strings and singing to get to the good part of the record," Herc believes. "But I give it to them all up front."

Herc hopes that someday he will be able to produce an entire B-beat album featuring "Bongo Rock" and other obscure numbers. Till then he plans to keep packing them in at the clubs and dances he works in the Bronx.



Ford (left) in 1999 and Blow in 1986.

Jive Talking N.Y. DJs Rapping Away In Black Discos

By ROBERT FORD JR.

NEW YORK—Rapping DJs reminiscent of early r&b radio jocks such as Jocko and Dr. Jive are making an impressive comeback here—not in radio but in black discos where a jivey rap commands as much attention these days as the hottest new disk.

Young DJs like Eddie Cheeba, DJ Hollywood, DJ Starski and Kurtis Blow are attracting followings with their slick raps. All promote themselves with these snappy show business names.

Many black disco promoters now use the rapping DJs to attract young

fans to one-shot promotions and a combination of the more popular names have filled this city's largest hotel ballrooms.

The young man credited with reviving the rapping habit in this area is DJ Hollywood, who started gabbing along with records a few years ago while working his way through school as a disco DJ.

Hollywood is now so popular that he has played the Apollo with billing as a support act. It is not uncommon to hear Hollywood's voice coming from one of the countless portable

tape players carried through the city's streets. Tapes of Hollywood's raps are considered valuable commodities by young blacks, here.

A close friend and disciple of Hollywood's, Eddie Cheeba, has been working as a mobile jock for five years and talking over the records for the last two. He now travels with an entire show, which includes seven female dancers and another DJ, Easy Gee, who does most of the actual spinning. Cheeba and his Cheeba Crew are now booked two months in advance.

Cheeba says the rapping craze grew out of a need for something more than records.

"These people go to discos every week and they need more than music to motivate them," Cheeba observes. "I not only play records, but I rap to them and they answer me."

Though they often work before crowds in the thousands, Cheeba and most of the popular rapping DJs do not get records from labels or from pools. Most of them buy their own product and do so without complaining.

(Continued on page 54)

BREAKIN' NEWS FROM THE BRONX

WHEN OLD-SCHOOL hip-hop began, *Billboard* wasn't late to class. With the July 1, 1978, article "B-Beats Bombarding Bronx," former *Billboard* staffer Robert "Rocky" Ford Jr. — who died May 19 at age 70 — became the first journalist to write about the genre for a mainstream publication.

"He'd heard there was something going on in the Bronx and wanted to learn more about it," recalls his widow, Linda Medley. "He appreciated what this music meant to the Black community, and he could see it growing in popularity." Although Ford

soon left *Billboard* to become a music producer, writing was "his dream job in a lot of ways," she says. "He was proud to put that on his résumé."

HIT THE BREAKS

Ford's landmark July 1978 piece introduced readers to pioneer DJ Kool Herc and other "young Black disco DJs from the Bronx who are buying the records just to play the 30 seconds or so of rhythm breaks that each disk contains." Herc told Ford that his style "grew from his fascination" with the Incredible Bongo Band's "Bongo Rock."

MIC CHECK

By the following year, Ford had met a teenage Joey Simmons — who would later put the Run in Run-D.M.C. — while Simmons was slapping party stickers on a Queens bus. And in the May 5, 1979, *Billboard*, Ford reported that MCs were taking their place alongside DJs "in Black discos where a jivey rap commands as much attention as the hottest new disk." One of the rising stars he name-checked was Kurtis Blow, "the most popular rapping DJ in Queens." Within the year, Ford and his *Billboard* colleague J.B. Moore would leave the

magazine to produce Blow's "Christmas Rappin'," and then "The Breaks" — historic gold records from the first rapper with a major-label deal.

IN DA CLUB

In the May 25, 1979, issue, Ford covered a panel at the New York industry conference Disco Forum V, "Can Disco DJs Become the Record Producers of Tomorrow?" At the time, it was a bold question. "The answer from the panelists was a definite yes," reported Ford — which pointed to the future of hip-hop.

—JOE LYNCH

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