

billboard

HOT SHOT

ERIC CHURCH IS ON A CRUSADE TO SAVE CONCERTS:
"YOU'VE GOT TO GET NEEDLES IN ARMS"

PLUS

**How Bandcamp
Turned Friday
Into Payday**

**Why Spotify's
Rich Are
Getting Richer**



Church photographed getting his second vaccine shot in Nashville on March 11.

CONGRATULATIONS

GRAMMY® Album of the Year

Taylor Swift

folklore



Aaron Dessner



Jack Antonoff

CONGRATULATIONS

THE
HIGHWOMEN



2021 GRAMMY® AWARD WINNER
BEST COUNTRY SONG
“CROWDED TABLE”

TO: AMANDA, BRANDI, MAREN & NATALIE,

LOVE,
YOUR LOW COUNTRY SOUND/ELEKTRA FAMILY





**CELEBRATES OUR
DISTRIBUTED ARTIST &
LABEL GRAMMY® WINNERS**

Best Latin Pop Or Urban Album

Bad Bunny *YHLQMDLG* (Rimas Entertainment)

Best Traditional Blues Album

Bobby Rush *Rawer Than Raw* (Deep Rush Records/Thirty Tigers)

Best Metal Performance

Body Count "Bum-Rush" (Century Media)

Best Contemporary Blues Album

Fantastic Negrito *Have You Lost Your Mind Yet?* (Cooking Vinyl)

Best Arrangement, Instrumental Or A Cappella

John Beasley "Donna Lee" (Mack Avenue)

Best American Roots Performance

John Prine "I Remember Everything" (Oh Boy Records/Thirty Tigers)

Best American Roots Song

John Prine "I Remember Everything" (Oh Boy Records/Thirty Tigers)

Best Jazz Vocal Album

Kurt Elling (feat. Danilo Pérez) "Secrets Are the Best Stories" (Edition Records)

Best Historical Album

Mister Rogers *IT'S SUCH A GOOD FEELING:
THE BEST OF MISTER ROGERS* (Omnivore Recordings)

Best Classical Instrumental Solo

Richard O'Neill, viola; David Alan Miller, conductor, Albany Symphony
*Theofanidis: Concerto for Violin and Orchestra
& Concerto for Viola and Chamber Orchestra* (Albany Records)

Best Contemporary Instrumental Album

Snarky Puppy *Live At The Royal Albert Hall* (GroundUP Music)

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
HOT SHOT DEBUT	1	#1 JUSTIN BIEBER RAYMOND BRAUN/DEF JAM		Justice	1	1
NEW	2	LANA DEL REY POLYDOR/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Chemtrails Over The Country Club	2	1
1	3	MORGAN WALLEN BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC		Dangerous: The Double Album	1	11
2	4	POP SMOKE VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/REPUBLIC		Shoot For The Stars Aim For The Moon	1	38
3	5	DUA LIPA WARNER		Future Nostalgia	3	51
6	6	POOH SHIESTY 1017 GLOBAL/ATLANTIC/AG		Shiesty Season	3	7
4	7	THE WEEKND XO/REPUBLIC		After Hours	1	53
7	8	LIL BABY QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL		My Turn	1	56
8	9	LIL DURK ALAMO/GEFFEN/IGA		The Voice	2	14
11	10	LUKE COMBS RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN		What You See Is What You Get	1	72
5	11	GIVEON NOT SO FAST/EPIC		When It's All Said And Done... Take Time	5	2
14	12	JUICE WRLD GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Legends Never Die	1	37
13	13	POST MALONE REPUBLIC		Hollywood's Bleeding	1	81
10	14	TAYLOR SWIFT REPUBLIC		Folklore	1	35
21	15	THE WEEKND XO/REPUBLIC		The Highlights	2	7
16	16	ARIANA GRANDE REPUBLIC		Positions	1	21
19	17	MEGAN THEE STALLION 1501 CERTIFIED/300/AG		Good News	2	18
15	18	HARRY STYLES ERSKINE/COLUMBIA		Fine Line	1	67
18	19	BILLIE EILISH DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/IGA		When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?	1	104
17	20	TAYLOR SWIFT REPUBLIC		Evermore	1	15
20	21	DO JA CAT KEMOSABE/RCA		Hot Pink	9	73
23	22	BAD BUNNY RIMAS		El Ultimo Tour del Mundo	1	17
24	23	THE KID LAROI COLUMBIA		F*ck Love	3	35
26	24	MACHINE GUN KELLY EST 198X/BAD BOY/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Tickets To My Downfall	1	26
27	25	QUEEN HOLLYWOOD		Greatest Hits	8	431
28	26	POLO G COLUMBIA		The GOAT	2	45
25	27	JUICE WRLD GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Goodbye & Good Riddance	4	149
RE	28	FLEET FOXES ANTI-/EPITAPH		Shore	28	3
30	29	ROD WAVE ALAMO/IGA		Pray 4 Love	2	51
31	30	LUKE COMBS RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN		This One's For You	4	199
29	31	ORIGINAL BROADWAY CAST HAMILTON UPTOWN/ATLANTIC/AG		Hamilton: An American Musical	2	287
32	32	BAD BUNNY RIMAS		YHLQMDLG	2	56
NEW	33	BENNY THE BUTCHER & HARRY FRAUD SRFSCHL/BLACK SOPRANO FAMILY		The Plugs I Met 2	33	1
34	34	FLEETWOOD MAC WARNER/RHINO		Rumours	1	417
33	35	JACK HARLOW GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		Thats What They All Say	5	15
39	36	BTS BIGHIT ENTERTAINMENT		BE	1	18
37	37	JUICE WRLD GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Death Race For Love	1	107
41	38	DABABY SOUTHCOST/INTERSCOPE/IGA		BLAME IT ON BABY	1	49
38	39	MORGAN WALLEN BIG LOUD		If I Know Me	10	130
36	40	EMINEM SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Curtain Call: The Hits=	1	521
43	41	TRAVIS SCOTT CACTUS JACK/GRAND HUSTLE/EPIC		ASTROWORLD	1	138
44	42	POST MALONE REPUBLIC		beerbongs & bentleys	1	152
40	43	LIL UZI VERT GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		Eternal Atake	1	55
45	44	CHRIS STAPLETON MERCURY NASHVILLE/UMGN		Starting Over	3	19
48	45	DRAKE YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC		Scorpion	1	143
50	46	CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL FANTASY/CONCORD		Chronicle The 20 Greatest Hits	18	516
46	47	ELTON JOHN ROCKET/ISLAND/UME		Diamonds	7	176
49	48	BILLIE EILISH DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Dont Smile At Me	14	170
47	49	KENDRICK LAMAR TOP DAWG/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA		good kid, m.A.A.d city	2	439
55	50	SZA TOP DAWG/RCA		Ctrl	3	198

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
42	51	EMINEM SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Music To Be Murdered By	1	61
54	52	BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS TUFF GONG/ISLAND/UME		Legend: The Best Of...	5	671
60	53	CHRIS STAPLETON MERCURY NASHVILLE/UMGN		Traveller	1	289
56	54	POST MALONE REPUBLIC		Stoney	4	224
35	55	VARIOUS ARTISTS ONLY THE FAMILY/EMPIRE		Only The Family Presents: Loyal Bros Compilation	12	3
52	56	LEWIS CAPALDI VERTIGO/CAPITOL		Divinely Uninspired To A Hellish Extent	20	97
53	57	RODDY RICCH BIRD VISION/ATLANTIC/AG		Please Excuse Me For Being Antisocial	1	68
51	58	SUMMER WALKER LVRN/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Over It	2	77
64	59	YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ARTIST PARTNER GROUP/ATLANTIC/AG		Top	1	28
57	60	TAYLOR SWIFT REPUBLIC		Lover	1	83
NEW	61	DDG X OG PARKER DDG/EPIC		Die 4 Respect	61	1
58	62	KALI UCHIS EM/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Sin Miedo (Del Amor y Otros Demonios)	52	5
59	63	J. COLE DREAMVILLE/ROC NATION/COLUMBIA/LEGACY		2014 Forest Hills Drive	1	329
65	64	FUTURE & LIL UZI VERT FREEBANDZ/EPIC/GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		Pluto x Baby Pluto	2	19
68	65	JOURNEY COLUMBIA/LEGACY		Journey's Greatest Hits	10	661
69	66	2PAC AMARU/DEATH ROW/INTERSCOPE/UME		Greatest Hits	3	363
62	67	FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE BMLG		Life Rolls On	21	6
71	68	LIL DURK ALAMO/GEFFEN/IGA		Just Cause Y'all Waited 2	2	46
61	69	JHENE AIKO 2 FISH/ART CLUB/ARTIUM/DEF JAM		Chilombo	2	55
70	70	AC/DC COLUMBIA/LEGACY		Back In Black	4	456
73	71	ED SHEERAN ATLANTIC/AG		÷ (Divide)	1	212
72	72	FUTURE FREEBANDZ/EPIC		High Off Life	1	45
67	73	DRAKE YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC		Take Care	1	421
66	74	THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G. BAD BOY/RHINO		Greatest Hits	1	267
79	75	GUNS N' ROSES GEFFEN/UME		Greatest Hits	3	522
78	76	KENDRICK LAMAR TOP DAWG/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA		DAMN.	1	206
76	77	KHALID RIGHT HAND/RCA		American Teen	4	212
NEW	78	CHRIS CORNELL UME		No One Sings Like You Anymore, Volume One	78	1
85	79	BRUNO MARS ELEKTRA/EMG		Doo-Wops & Hooligans	3	512
77	80	GABBY BARRETT WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN		Goldmine	27	40
80	81	THE BEATLES APPLE/CAPITOL/UME		1	1	465
75	82	21 SAVAGE & METRO BOOMIN BOOMINATI/SLAUGHTER BOOMIN/REPUBLIC/EPIC		Savage Mode II	1	25
NEW	83	LORETTA LYNN LEGACY		Still Woman Enough	83	1
84	84	TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS MCA/GEFFEN/UME		Greatest Hits	2	402
74	85	XXXTENTACION BAD VIBES FOREVER		?	1	158
NEW	86	JON BATISTE NAHT JONA/VERVE/VLG		We Are	86	1
81	87	GUNNA YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/AG		Wunna	1	44
82	88	LIL UZI VERT GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		Luv Is Rage 2	1	187
90	89	SPOTEMGOTTEM SPOTEMGOTTEM		Final Destination	83	8
87	90	DRAKE OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC		Dark Lane Demo Tapes	2	47
83	91	AVA MAX MAX CUT/ARTIST PARTNER GROUP/ATLANTIC/AG		Heaven & Hell	27	23
91	92	SOUNDTRACK WALT DISNEY		Moana	2	224
96	93	POP SMOKE VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/REPUBLIC		Meet The Woo, V.2	7	59
94	94	CARDI B THE KSR GROUP/ATLANTIC/AG		Invasion Of Privacy	1	155
89	95	HALSEY CAPITOL		Manic	2	62
88	96	TAYLOR SWIFT BIG MACHINE/BMLG		1989	1	328
RE	97	GEORGE STRAIT MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN		50 Number Ones	1	174
95	98	ARIANA GRANDE REPUBLIC		Thank U, Next	1	111
108	99	ROD WAVE ALAMO/IGA		Ghetto Gospel	10	72
98	100	MONEYBAGG YO N-LESS/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Time Served	3	63



Bieber's Eighth No. 1

Justin Bieber logs his eighth No. 1 album on the Billboard 200 as *Justice* debuts atop the tally with 154,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States in the week ending March 25, according to MRC Data.

Justice halts the chart-topping domination of Morgan Wallen's *Dangerous: The Double Album*, which spent 10 weeks in a row at No. 1 since its debut. It falls to No. 3.

Justice's units haul represents the second-biggest debut week for an album in 2021 following *Dangerous*' bow of 265,000 on the Jan. 23 chart.

Elsewhere on the Billboard 200: Fleet Foxes (No. 28; 19,000 units, up 2,014%) reenter and Chris Cornell (No. 78; 11,000, up 1,900%) debuts following their physical album releases on March 19. Both initially debuted in 2020 via streaming and digital retail only. Harry Styles' self-titled album nets the Greatest Gainer trophy (No. 116; 9,000 units, up 22%) after a surge in vinyl sales (2,000 sold; up 270%). CJ's *Loyalty Over Royalty* is the Pacesetter (No. 134; 8,000 units, up 15%), thanks in part to the activity generated by the new French Montana/Rowdy Rebel-assisted remix of the album's hit single "Whoopy."

—KEITH CAULFIELD



Citrin Cooperman congratulates our clients and all the GRAMMY winners!



The Strokes

Best Rock Album



Jack Antonoff

Album of the Year



Ledisi Young

Best Traditional R&B
Vocal Performance

40+ YEARS OF MUSIC EXPERIENCE

Citrin Cooperman was formed over 40 years ago with seed money from two iconic rock bands. A lot has changed over the past 40 years - we have grown and evolved considerably, but one thing is for certain, we have **legendary roots.**

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
99	101	METALLICA 16	BLACKENED	Metallica	1	600
97	102	KING VON	ONLY THE FAMILY/EMPIRE	Welcome To O'Block	5	21
101	103	KHALID 1	RIGHT HAND/RCA	Free Spirit	1	103
103	104	KID CUDI 1	DREAM ON/G.O.O.D./REPUBLIC	Man On The Moon: The End Of Day	4	167
111	105	POLO G 1	COLUMBIA	Die A Legend	6	93
105	106	LEE BRICE	CURB	Hey World	45	18
107	107	THE BEATLES 12	APPLE/CAPITOL/UMG	Abbey Road	1	405
113	108	GLASS ANIMALS	WOLF TONE/POLYDOR/REPUBLIC	Dreamland	7	20
92	109	MICHAEL JACKSON 33	EPIC/LEGACY	Thriller	1	463
100	110	BTS 1	BRIGHT ENTERTAINMENT	MAP OF THE SOUL : 7	1	57
102	111	DRAKE 6	YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC	Views	1	254
115	112	LIZZO 1	NICE LIFE/ATLANTIC/AG	Cuz I Love You	4	101
106	113	YUNG BLEU	VANDROSS/EMPIRE	Love Scars: The 5 Stages Of Emotions (EP)	82	12
118	114	FLEETWOOD MAC	WARNER/RHINO	50 Years: Don't Stop	65	3
12	115	NICK JONAS	ISLAND/REPUBLIC	Spaceman	12	2
165	116	GREATEST GAINER HARRY STYLES 1	ERSKINE/COLUMBIA	Harry Styles	1	78
104	117	JAZMINE SULLIVAN	RCA	Heaux Tales	4	11
139	118	DRAKE 1	YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC	Nothing Was The Same	1	367
123	119	LYNYRD SKYNYRD 1	MCA/GEFFEN/UMG	All Time Greatest Hits	56	119
124	120	BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND 10	HIDEOUT/CAPITOL/UMG	Greatest Hits	8	368
110	121	SOUNDTRACK 1	FOX/20TH CENTURY FOX/ATLANTIC/AG	The Greatest Showman	1	172
126	122	LIL TJAY 1	COLUMBIA	True 2 Myself	5	74
128	123	MAC MILLER 1	WARNER	Swimming	3	133
116	124	SOUNDTRACK	WALT DISNEY	Frozen II	1	71
109	125	NF 1	NF REAL MUSIC/CAROLINE	The Search	1	86
121	126	RIHANNA 3	WESTBURY ROAD/ROC NATION	ANTI	1	261
137	127	DABABY	SOUTHCOAST/INTERSCOPE/JGA	KIRK	1	77
117	128	TWENTY ONE PILOTS 1	FUELED BY RAMEY/EMG	Blurryface	1	296
130	129	NICKELBACK	ROADRUNNER/EMG	The Best Of Nickelback: Volume 1	21	40
136	130	THE BEACH BOYS 3	CAPITOL/UMG	Sounds Of Summer: The Very Best Of The Beach Boys	16	245
133	131	NIRVANA 10	SUB POP/DGC/GEFFEN/UMG	Nevermind	1	517
141	132	SAM HUNT	MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN	SOUTHSIDE	5	47
138	133	ZAC BROWN BAND	HOME GROWN/BMG	Greatest Hits So Far...	20	297
162	134	PACE SETTER CJ	CJ MUSIC GROUP/WARNER	Loyalty Over Royalty	56	5
129	135	DRAKE	YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC	More Life	1	202
134	136	IMAGINE DRAGONS 2	KIDINAKORNER/INTERSCOPE/JGA	Evolve	2	196
157	137	LANA DEL REY 1	POLYDOR/INTERSCOPE/JGA	Born To Die	2	386
112	138	BAD BUNNY	RIMAS	X100PRE	11	117
120	139	FRANK OCEAN 1	BOYS DON'T CRY	Blonde	1	222
NEW	140	PAUL STANLEY'S SOUL STATION	UMG	Now And Then	140	1
131	141	BRUNO MARS 3	ATLANTIC/AG	24K Magic	2	166
127	142	MILEY CYRUS	RCA	Plastic Hearts	2	17
140	143	EAGLES 26	ASYLUM/ELEKTRA/RHINO	Hotel California	1	127
135	144	INTERNET MONEY	INTERNET MONEY/TENTHUSAND PROJECTS	B4 The Storm	10	30
125	145	LUKE BRYAN 1	CAPITOL NASHVILLE/UMGN	Born Here Live Here Die Here	5	23
132	146	KANYE WEST 5	ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM	Graduation	1	164
144	147	TRAVIS SCOTT 1	GRAND HUSTLE/EPIC	Birds In The Trap Sing McKnight	1	234
122	148	PLAYBOI CARTI	AWGE/INTERSCOPE/JGA	Whole Lotta Red	1	13
143	149	H.E.R. 1	MBK/RCA	H.E.R.	23	168
147	150	YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN 1	NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ATLANTIC/AG	AI YoungBoy 2	1	74



2

LANA DEL REY
Chemtrails Over the Country Club

The set also launches at No. 1 on Top Album Sales with 58,000 copies sold in the week ending March 25, according to MRC Data. And with nearly 32,000 vinyl copies sold, it logs the fourth-biggest week for a vinyl album since MRC Data began tracking sales in 1991.



83

LORETTA LYNN
Still Woman Enough

The legend's 50th studio album also bows at No. 9 on Top Country Albums — her 42nd top 10. She now has the third-most top 10s on the list, surpassing George Strait's 41. Only Willie Nelson (53) and Dolly Parton (46) have more.



86

JON BATISTE
We Are

With contributions from PJ Morton, Trombone Shorty, Mavis Staples and others, Academy Award nominee Batiste earns his biggest week in equivalent album units (11,000) and album sales (9,500). It's also his first entry on Top R&B Albums (No. 10).

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART	
142	151	CHRIS BROWN 1	CBE/RCA	Indigo	1	89	
119	152	KEVIN GATES	BREAD WINNERS' ASSOCIATION/ATLANTIC/AG	Only the Generals, Part II	18	5	
149	153	BON JOVI 1	ISLAND/UMG	Greatest Hits: The Ultimate Collection	5	200	
RE	154	ELVIS PRESLEY 1	RCA/SONY STRATEGIC MARKETING GROUP/LEGACY	The Essential Elvis Presley	42	85	
146	155	RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS 2	WARNER	Greatest Hits	18	270	
158	156	XXXTENTACION 1	BAD VIBES FOREVER/EMPIRE		17	2	185
163	157	JACKBOYS	CACTUS JACK/EPIC	JACKBOYS	1	64	
154	158	YOUNG THUG 1	YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/ATLANTIC/AG	So Much Fun	1	82	
93	159	BILLY JOEL 3	COLUMBIA/LEGACY	The Essential Billy Joel	15	229	
148	160	BLACKPINK	YG/INTERSCOPE/JGA	The Album	2	25	
168	161	THE ROLLING STONES 12	ABKCO	Hot Rocks 1964-1971	4	351	
9	162	ROB ZOMBIE	NUCLEAR BLAST	The Lunar Injection Kool Aid Eclipse Conspiracy	9	2	
160	163	PITBULL	MR. 305/POLO GROUNDS/RCA	Greatest Hits	159	8	
167	164	LINKIN PARK 12	WARNER	[Hybrid Theory]	2	250	
156	165	ARCTIC MONKEYS 1	DOMINO	AM	6	140	
145	166	LADY GAGA 6	STREAMLINE/KONLIVE/CHERRY TREE/INTERSCOPE/JGA	The Fame	2	238	
159	167	TYLER CHILDERS 1	HICKMAN HOLLER/THIRTY TIGERS	Purgatory	106	44	
190	168	FUTURE 2	A-1/FREEBANDZ/EPIC	DS2	1	140	
169	169	LIL BABY 1	QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	Harder Than Ever	3	122	
155	170	TAYLOR SWIFT 3	BIG MACHINE/BMLG	reputation	1	137	
175	171	TYLER, THE CREATOR 1	COLUMBIA	IGOR	1	79	
171	172	A BOOGIE WIT DA HOODIE 1	HIGHBRIDGE THE LABEL/ATLANTIC/AG	Hoodie SZN	1	111	
161	173	VARIOUS ARTISTS 1	DREAMVILLE/INTERSCOPE/JGA	Dreamville & J. Cole: Revenge Of The Dreamers III	1	86	
173	174	DARYL HALL JOHN OATES 1	RCA/LEGACY	The Very Best Of Daryl Hall, John Oates	34	121	
RE	175	THE BLACK CROWES 5	DEF AMERICAN/AMERICAN/UMG	Shake Your Money Maker	4	167	
153	176	HOZIER 3	RUBYWORKS/COLUMBIA/LEGACY	Hozier	2	203	
172	177	MONEYBAGG YO & BLAC YOUNGSTA	HEAVY CAMP/CMG/EPIC/N-LESS/INTERSCOPE/JGA	Code Red	6	27	
RE	178	JUSTIN BIEBER	SCHOOLBOY/RAYMOND BRAUN/DEF JAM	Changes	1	49	
NEW	179	RINGO STARR	ROCCABELLA/UMG	Zoom In (EP)	179	1	
RE	180	GREEN DAY 2	REPRISE/WARNER	Insomniac	2	40	
192	181	LIL BABY & GUNNA 1	YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/AG/CAPITOL	Drip Harder	4	122	
150	182	KID CUDI	REPUBLIC	Man On The Moon III: The Chosen	2	15	
186	183	KANYE WEST 1	ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM	My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy	1	126	
182	184	ABBA 6	POLAR/POLYDOR/UMG	Gold: Greatest Hits	25	162	
114	185	KANE BROWN	RCA NASHVILLE/SMN	Mixtape, Vol. 1 (EP)	15	31	
178	186	TIM MCGRAW 1	CURB	Number One Hits	27	172	
166	187	BRYSON TILLER 3	TRAPSOUL/RCA	TRAPSOUL	8	241	
195	188	FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH	PROSPECT PARK	A Decade Of Destruction	29	140	
189	189	BLINK-182	GEFFEN/UMG	Greatest Hits	6	57	
174	190	NF 1	NF REAL MUSIC/CAPITOL/CAROLINE	Perception	1	174	
164	191	TRIPPIE REDD	1400/TENTHUSAND PROJECTS	Pegasus	2	15	
RE	192	GUCCI MANE & VARIOUS ARTISTS	GUWOP/ATLANTIC/AG	Gucci Mane Presents: SoLoy Summer	29	21	
RE	193	KANE BROWN 2	ZONE 4/RCA NASHVILLE/SMN	Kane Brown	5	209	
187	194	NIPSEY HUSSLE	ALL MONEY IN NO MONEY OUT/ATLANTIC/AG	Victory Lap	2	96	
RE	195	KEVIN GATES	BREAD WINNERS' ASSOCIATION/ATLANTIC/AG	Only The Generals Gon Understand (EP)	18	6	
188	196	WHITNEY HOUSTON 1	ARISTA/RCA/LEGACY	I Will Always Love You: The Best Of Whitney Houston	14	49	
170	197	ADELE 14	XL		21	1	507
183	198	SAM SMITH 5	CAPITOL	In The Lonely Hour	2	325	
22	199	SELENA GOMEZ	INTERSCOPE/JGA	Revelacion (EP)	22	2	
151	200	SAM SMITH	CAPITOL	Love Goes	5	21	



CONGRATS TO DAN + SHAY ON MAKING GRAMMY[®] HISTORY

THIRD CONSECUTIVE COUNTRY
DUO/GROUP PERFORMANCE
WIN FOR "10,000 HOURS"
(WITH JUSTIN BIEBER)

THE FIRST ARTIST TO DO SO
CONSECUTIVELY SINCE THE
CATEGORY'S INCEPTION



WARNER
MUSIC
NASHVILLE

BILLBOARD GLOBAL 200

billboard

APR. 3 2021

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
HOT SHOT DEBUT		1	#1 PEACHES Justin Bieber Feat. Daniel Caesar & Giveon		1	1
3	2	2	LEAVE THE DOOR OPEN Silk Sonic (Bruno Mars & Anderson .Paak)		2	3
6	4	3	SAVE YOUR TEARS The Weeknd		2	12
8	20	4	GG HOLD ON Justin Bieber		4	3
10	7	5	ASTRONAUT IN THE OCEAN Masked Wolf		5	9
5	3	6	DRIVERS LICENSE Olivia Rodrigo		1	11
16	8	7	LEVITATING Dua Lipa Feat. DaBaby		7	25
7	5	8	BLINDING LIGHTS The Weeknd		2	29
9	10	9	UP Cardi B		4	7
11	11	10	TELEPATIA Kali Uchis		10	5
			 The multilingual song, which has surged on TikTok with over 1.5 million user-created videos, reaches the top 10 of the Global 200 with 46.7 million streams and 2,600 sold in the week ending March 25, according to MRC Data.			
22	14	11	HEARTBREAK ANNIVERSARY Giveon		11	6
12	6	12	DYNAMITE BTS		1	29
NEW		13	AS I AM Justin Bieber Feat. Khalid		13	1
15	12	14	STREETS Doja Cat		8	11
18	19	15	THE BUSINESS Tiesto		12	20
19	16	16	WELLERMAN Nathan Evans		16	9
29	32	17	ANYONE Justin Bieber		3	12
17	15	18	DAKITI Bad Bunny & Jhay Cortez		1	21
14	17	19	MOOD 24kGoldn Feat. iann dior		2	29
1	9	20	WHAT'S NEXT Drake		1	3
13	18	21	CALLING MY PHONE Lil Tjay Feat. 6LACK		2	6
20	21	22	GOOSEBUMPS Travis Scott & HVME		15	13
76	91	23	HOLY Justin Bieber Feat. Chance The Rapper		3	27
23	22	24	WITHOUT YOU The Kid LAROI		12	18
-	1	25	ON THE GROUND ROSE		1	2
2	13	26	WANTS AND NEEDS Drake Feat. Lil Baby		2	3
21	23	27	BANDIDO Myke Towers & Juhn		11	13
NEW		28	UNSTABLE Justin Bieber Feat. The Kid LAROI		28	1
24	24	29	LA NOCHE DE ANOCHE Bad Bunny & Rosalia		7	17
27	34	30	WHOOPTY CJ		10	22
25	25	31	34+35 Ariana Grande		2	21
48	27	32	WATERMELON SUGAR Harry Styles		9	29
38	33	33	WE'RE GOOD Dua Lipa		21	6
NEW		34	OFF MY FACE Justin Bieber		34	1
91	124	35	LONELY Justin Bieber & benny blanco		5	23
26	26	36	GOOD DAYS SZA		7	13
28	31	37	DANCE MONKEY Tones And I		16	29
59	45	38	FRIDAY Riton X Nightcrawlers Feat. Mufasa & Hypeman		38	5
NEW		39	2 MUCH Justin Bieber		39	1
43	30	40	DON'T START NOW Dua Lipa		30	29
NEW		41	GHOST Justin Bieber		41	1
NEW		42	HEADSHOT Lil Tjay, Polo G & Fivio Foreign		42	1
NEW		43	DESERVE YOU Justin Bieber		43	1
32	36	44	MY HEAD AND MY HEART Ava Max		32	8

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
30	35	45	YOU BROKE ME FIRST. Tate McRae		16	29
33	37	46	SOMEONE YOU LOVED Lewis Capaldi		24	29
78	56	47	BEAUTIFUL MISTAKES Maroon 5 Feat. Megan Thee Stallion		47	3
34	39	48	BACK IN BLOOD Pooh Shiesty Feat. Lil Durk		29	10
36	43	49	BEST FRIEND Saweetie Feat. Doja Cat		36	11
31	38	50	POSITIONS Ariana Grande		1	22
NEW		51	LOVED BY YOU Justin Bieber Feat. Burna Boy		51	1
42	51	52	HEAT WAVES Glass Animals		42	12
52	48	53	ROCKSTAR DaBaby Feat. Roddy Ricch		8	29
50	53	54	ARCADE Duncan Laurence		49	8
39	44	55	ELLA NO ES TUYA Rochy Rd X Myke Towers X Nicki Nicole		39	6
35	41	56	HAWAI Maluma		3	29
NEW		57	DIE FOR YOU Justin Bieber Feat. Dominic Fike		57	1
NEW		58	LOVE YOU DIFFERENT Justin Bieber Feat. BEAM		58	1
55	52	59	PERFECT Ed Sheeran		30	29
4	28	60	LEMON PEPPER FREESTYLE Drake Feat. Rick Ross		4	3
61	63	61	YOUR LOVE (9PM) ATB x Topic x A7S		58	7
46	49	62	ROSES SAINT JHN		14	29
88	47	63	LUT GAYE Jubin Nautiyal Feat. Emraan Hashmi		47	4
53	50	64	WAP Cardi B Feat. Megan Thee Stallion		1	29
37	46	65	BICHOTA Karol G		7	22
41	55	66	WHAT YOU KNOW BOUT LOVE Pop Smoke		11	29
49	57	67	PARADISE Meduza & Dermot Kennedy		30	20
40	54	68	LEMONADE Internet Money & Gunna Feat. Don Toliver & NAV		4	29
45	58	69	HEAD & HEART Joel Corry X MNEK		17	29
60	62	70	BEAT BOX SpotemGottem Feat. Pooh Shiesty Or DaBaby		52	8
58	59	71	SAVAGE LOVE (LAXED - SIREN BEAT) Jawsh 685 x Jason Derulo		1	29
51	42	72	BAILA CONMIGO Selena Gomez With Rauw Alejandro		22	8
-	71	73	STREET RUNNER Rod Wave		71	2
NEW		74	SOMEBODY Justin Bieber		74	1
44	61	75	THEREFORE I AM Billie Eilish		2	19
47	60	76	GIRL LIKE ME Black Eyed Peas X Shakira		39	16
125	87	77	911 Sech		77	4
56	65	78	LIFE IS GOOD Future Feat. Drake		39	29
57	64	79	FOR THE NIGHT Pop Smoke Feat. Lil Baby & DaBaby		7	29
65	68	80	SUNFLOWER Post Malone & Swae Lee		47	29
-	95	81	BATOM DE CEREJA Israel & Rodolfo		81	2
-	119	82	FIEL Los Legendarios, Wisin & Jhay Cortez		82	2
62	67	83	YORU NI KAKERU YOASOBI		16	29
79	79	84	ON ME Lil Baby		53	16
71	74	85	BAD GUY Billie Eilish		54	29
82	72	86	NO MORE PARTIES Coi Leray Feat. Lil Durk		70	5
67	75	87	LA CURIOSIDAD DJ Nelson Presenta Jay Wheeler & Myke Towers		40	29
80	80	88	SHAPE OF YOU Ed Sheeran		68	29
74	69	89	WILLOW Taylor Swift		2	15
64	70	90	PRISONER Miley Cyrus Feat. Dua Lipa		12	18
83	73	91	YOU'RE MINES STILL Yung Bleu Feat. Drake		67	14
75	76	92	CIRCLES Post Malone		49	29
70	77	93	SHALLOW Lady Gaga & Bradley Cooper		59	29
73	81	94	BEFORE YOU GO Lewis Capaldi		32	29
94	85	95	AT MY WORST Pink Sweat\$ Feat. Kehlani		85	10
66	78	96	BABY SHARK Pinkfong		38	28

COURTESY OF KALI UCHIS
 THE BILLBOARD GLOBAL 200 CHART RANKS THE TOP SONGS BASED ON STREAMING AND/OR SALES ACTIVITY FROM OVER 200 TERRITORIES AROUND THE WORLD - INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES - AS TRACKED BY MRC DATA. THE RANKING IS BASED ON A WEIGHTED FORMULA INCORPORATING OFFICIAL ONLY STREAMS ON BOTH SUBSCRIPTION AND AD-SUPPORTED TITLES OF LEADING RADIO AND VIDEO MUSIC SERVICES, PLUS DOWNLOAD SALES FROM TOP MUSIC RETAILERS ACROSS THE GLOBE. SEE CHARTS. LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2021 BILLBOARD MEDIA, LLC AND MRC DATA, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



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38

RITON X NIGHTCRAWLERS FEAT. MUFASA & HYPEMAN "Friday"

With double-digit gains to 21.1 million streams and 5,400 sold, the track jumps to the top 40 of the Global 200. The song teams Riton (above) and Nightcrawlers (via a sample of the Scottish collective's 1992 single "Push the Feeling On") in lead roles, while its respective featured artists are American social media personalities. The single also hits a new No. 9 high on the U.S.-based Hot Dance/Electronic Songs chart.



81

ISRAEL & RODOLFFO "Batom de Cereja"

The Brazilian duo's song concurrently jumps 50-32 on the Global Excl. U.S. chart. The track, which shows a 36% increase to 26 million streams (almost all from outside the United States), is the highest-ranking of three entries on the Global 200 and five entries on the Global Excl. U.S. chart sung in Portuguese. Its title translates to "cherry lipstick."

—ERIC FRANKENBERG

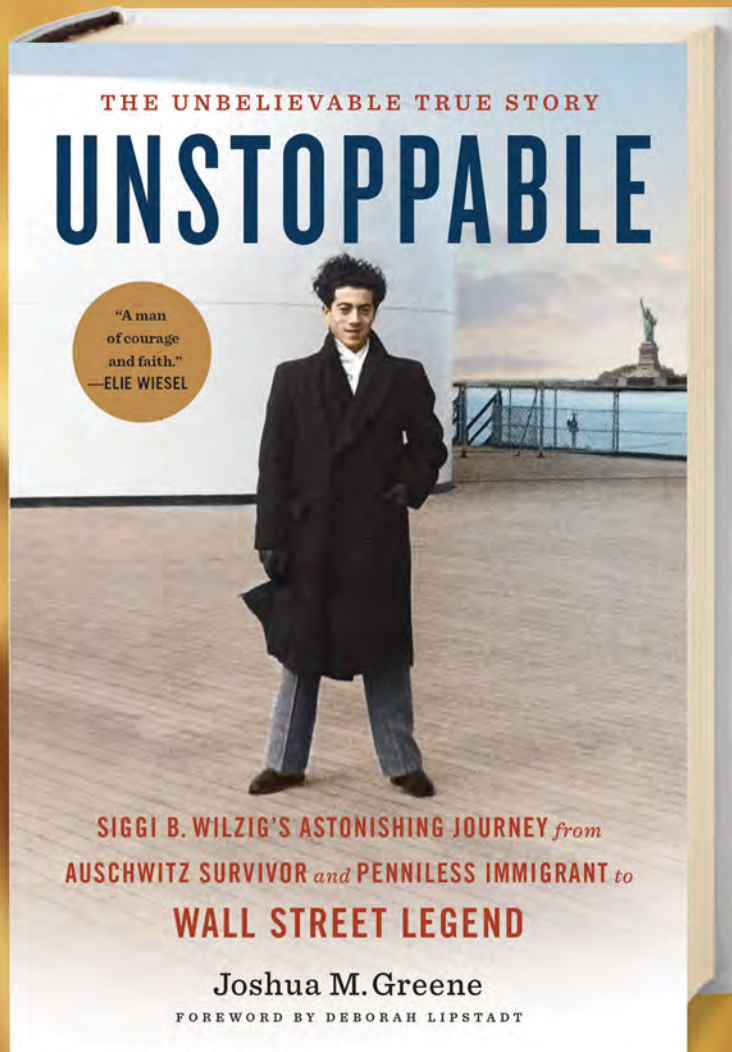
Table with 7 columns: 2 WKS. AGO, LAST WEEK, THIS WEEK, TITLE, Artist, PEAK POS., WKS. ON CHART. Contains 100 entries of music chart data.

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18 years after Siggie passed away, his historic and heroic story is brought back to life.

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18 electronic dance music songs celebrating love, peace, and the "spirit of the 60's".

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STICK THAT IN YOUR COUNTRY SONG

When **Eric Church** says he lives for the road, he means it. With a triple album and a fall arena tour planned, he's asking his fans to consider a COVID-19 vaccination their way back to his shows: "You've got to get needles in arms."

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BACK TO LIVE

With music fans and industry pros rightfully confused about when — and how — concerts will return, *Billboard* answers your burning questions about how to protect your health (and bank account) as the end of the pandemic draws near.

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DOLLARS AND SENSE

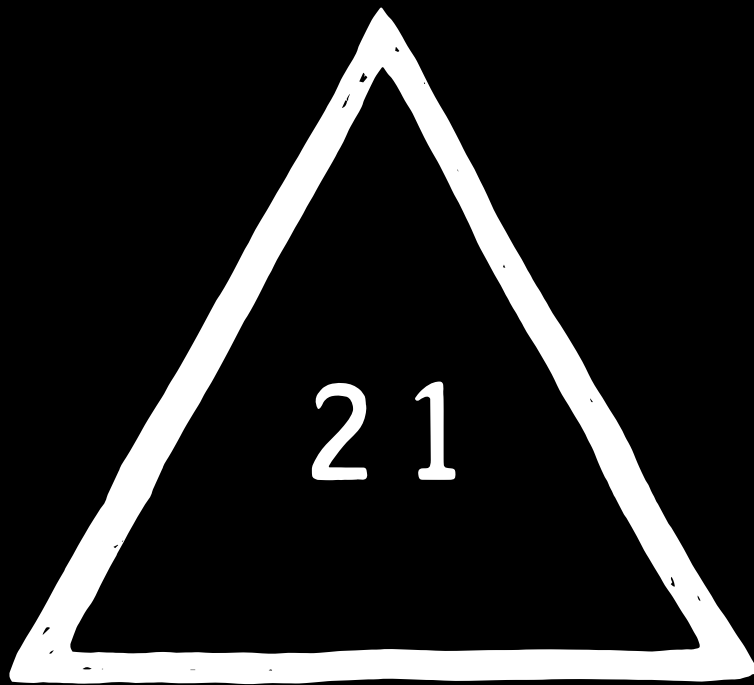
Without advertisers or major outside investors, Bandcamp has turned a profit helping musicians at all levels make a living. As streaming payment models are scrutinized, will its influence grow?

ON THE COVER

Eric Church photographed by Robby Klein on March 11 at Taylor House Studio in Nashville.

TO OUR READERS

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



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Justin Bieber is the first male soloist to debut atop the Hot 100 and Billboard 200 simultaneously.

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The global recording business grows 7.4% — its sixth increase in a row — driven by streaming in Latin America, subscriptions in China and CDs in South Korea.

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Spotify recently released data that shows how it pays artists — and just how much money goes to a small number of superstars.

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2021 Oscar Music Preview
From Q&As with every best original song and score nominee to changing campaign strategies, here's all you need to know before the 93rd Academy Awards ceremony on April 25.

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Top Music Lawyers 2021
The top legal minds in the business were tested in the past year by a land rush of negotiations, new business models from livestreaming to NFTs and the ongoing need to advocate for their clients — and social justice.

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Masked Wolf's "Astronaut in the Ocean" has lifted off thanks to TikTok.

Masked Wolf photographed by Tim Lo on March 16 in Sydney.



HOW HIGH?

The value of publishing catalogs keeps rising, fueled by a combination of low interest rates, the search for countercyclical investments and optimism about the streaming-focused future of the music business. But how high can multiples get — and what time horizon should investors consider? The Raine Group's Fred Davis, peermusic's Mary Megan Peer and Round Hill Music's Joshua Gruss discuss. Billboard Pro subscribers can access the Music and Money Spotlight at billboard.com/spotlight.

WHAT BUYERS WANT

In the same Music and Money Spotlight, presented by Sound Royalties, *Billboard* editorial director Hannah Karp leads a panel that asks who today's investors are and what they're looking to buy. Vine Alternative Investments' Rob Amir, Truist Securities' C.J. Johnson and Michelman & Robinson's Michael Poster reveal what investors are looking for — and where their money will drive the market from here. To sign up for a Billboard Pro subscription, go to billboard.com/offer.



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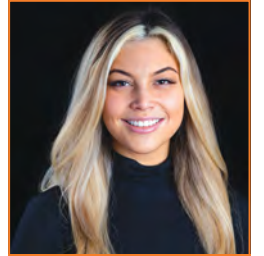
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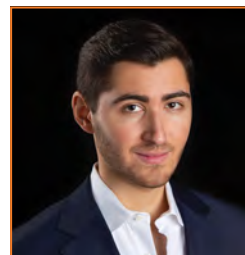
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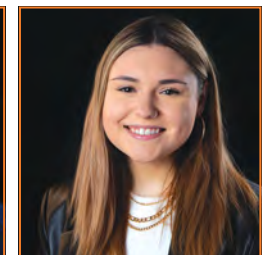
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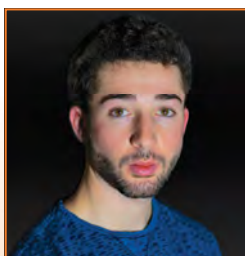
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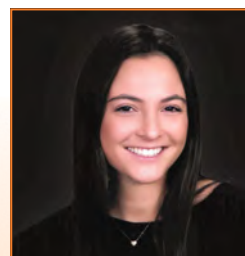
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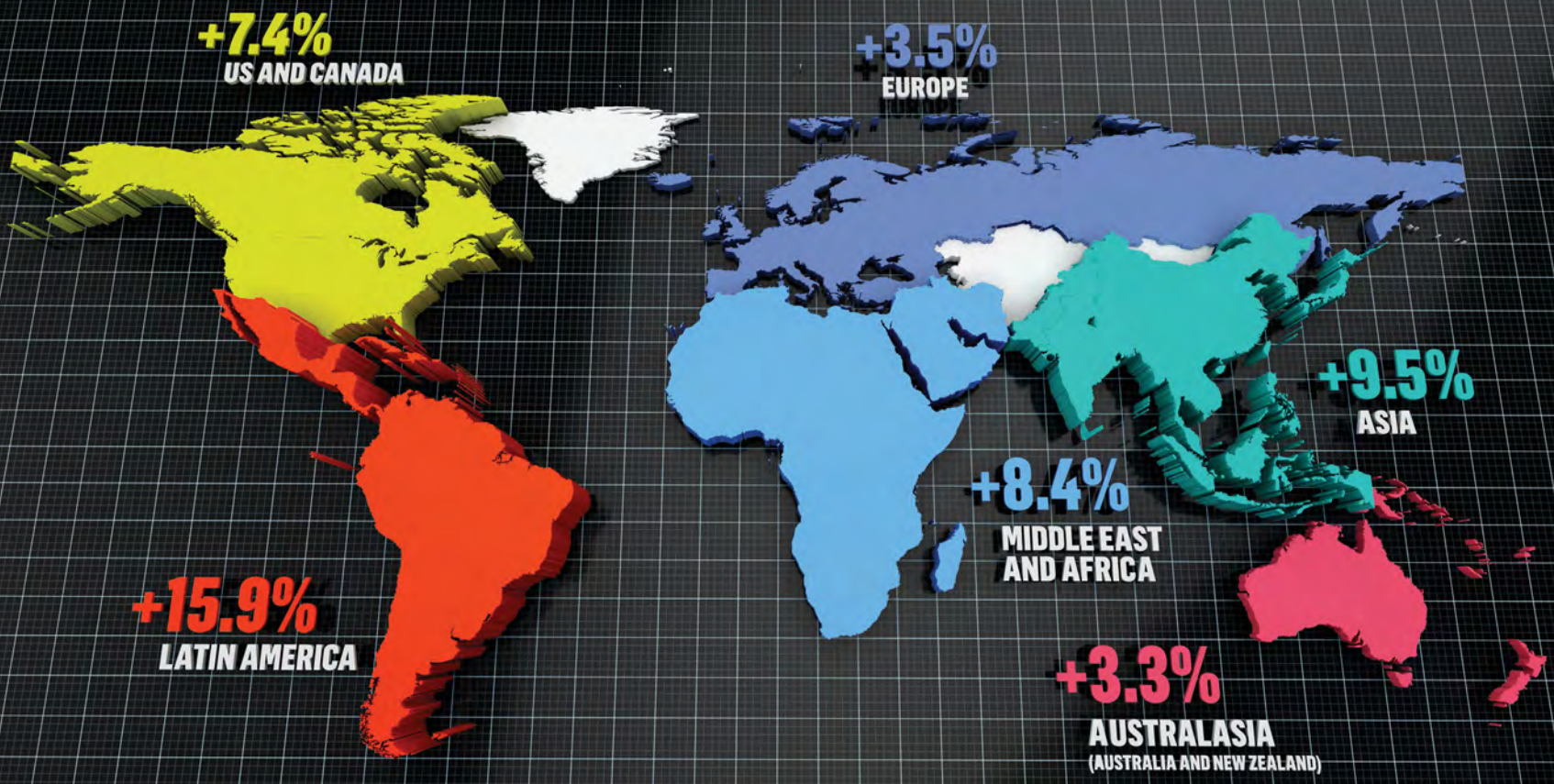
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The Market

PG. 28 "THE REPUBLIC OF SPOTIFY" * PG. 30 JAPAN'S CD SALES FALL * PG. 32 THE MLC CHIEF



World Music

The worldwide recording business grows 7.4% — its sixth increase in a row — driven by streaming in Latin America, subscriptions in China and CDs in South Korea

BY COLIN STUTZ and GLENN PEOPLES

A MID A DEVASTATING global pandemic that put the world on pause and shut down entire industries, the recorded-music business didn't just survive — it thrived, up 7.4% to \$21.6 billion in its sixth consecutive year of growth. As usual, that increase was driven by gains in streaming — up 19.9%, as measured by record-label revenue, according to IFPI's 2021 Global Music Report. That more than compensated for declines in downloads, mobile and other digital products (down 15.7%) and physical music (4.7%) — plus pandemic-fueled falloffs in revenue from performance rights (10.1%) and synchronization (9.4%).

The top five countries, as measured by revenue, stayed the same, with relatively modest changes: The United States grew 7.3%; Japan declined 2.1%; the United Kingdom

grew 2.2%; Germany grew 5.1%; and France declined 1.2%. Outside the top five, though, developing regions pushed up global revenue more, continuing to become more important to the international music business.

Asia Booms, Latin America Stays Hot

K-pop is becoming a more significant global force, to the point that BTS won IFPI's global recording artist of the year award as the world's top-selling act. Although much of those sales and streams came from outside South Korea, that country also grew faster than any other major market — maintaining its No. 6 market ranking — thanks to streaming and physical growth driven by collectible CDs. That, plus considerable gains in China, driven by subscription streaming, fueled significant growth in Asia. Were it not for declining revenue in Japan (see story, page 30), the region would

have been the fastest-growing in the world, with revenue up 29.9%.

Instead, that distinction goes to Latin America, for the sixth straight year. Revenue there rose 15.9%, as streaming shot up 30.2%, accounting for 84.1% of the region's revenue, thanks to growing internet access and gains in top market Brazil (up 37.1%). Overall, Latin America now accounts for 3.6% of the global business — up from 3.3% in 2019.

Streaming Grows Stronger

Worldwide, streaming is the most important growth driver, increasing to 62.1% of global revenue in 2020, with revenue hitting \$13.4 billion, up \$2.23 billion from the previous year. Even over a half-decade into the streaming boom, that's the format's second-highest revenue jump. Streaming is now the dominant source of revenue in 48 markets, including

France and Germany — a dozen more than last year. Subscription streaming revenue grew 18.5% to \$9.9 billion, but the absolute revenue growth of \$1.55 billion was slightly under last year's \$1.58 billion. More gains came from ad-supported streaming and video streaming, which combined represented 26.1% of streaming revenue — the highest share since 2014.

Even though paid subscribers grew 28.3% to 443 million, global expansion has decreased their individual value: Subscriber growth from developing markets, which have lower prices than Europe and North America, helped contribute to a 9.9% drop in average revenue per subscriber, from \$2.35 to \$2.11, based on *Billboard* calculations. That's not surprising, but the results can be dramatic. In India, for example, streaming is expanding fast, but a price war among competing services has led to only minor revenue growth. **E**

● BMG AND KKR REUNITED ON A PARTNERSHIP TO PURSUE MUSIC RIGHTS ACQUISITIONS. ● SONY MUSIC PUBLISHING BOUGHT PAUL SIMON'S SONG CATALOG.

Streaming Model Under Scrutiny In U.K. Hearings

Major-label market power emerges as subject in Parliament probe

BY RICHARD SMIRKE

► **LONDON — THE U.K. PARLIAMENTARY** Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee opened hearings on the economic impact of streaming last fall. Now that the first stage of the inquiry is complete, the major labels' power in the streaming market has emerged as a significant subject, with digital and culture minister Caroline Dinenage saying — when pressed — that she would support a referral to the Competition and Markets Authority, the U.K. competition enforcer.

"The inquiry has shown that there is strong support for reform to keep the dominant multinational labels in check, provide transparency where there is little and provide our musicians with sustainable incomes," said Ivors Academy CEO Graham Davies after the final hearing on March 22. The academy, which is an association of songwriters, has advocated for services to pay more publishing-side royalties.

British music-creators groups pushed for streaming to be classified as akin to broadcasting. That means it would be subject to the principle of equitable remuneration, which guarantees royalties to performers on recordings. U.K. TV and radio already split royalties between labels and artists. But the labels said that any earnings loss under that model would reduce their ability to invest in new artists.

The inquiry also adds what's known as the user-centric model for royalty distribution where revenue generated by individual subscribers is divided

among the artists they listen to. (SoundCloud recently started paying some artists according to this model.) Spotify head of global affairs/chief legal officer Horacio Gutierrez said the company is open to this, but also warned that changing the royalty structure would require agreement among rights holders around the world — plus a significant investment to make the change. Universal Music, in a written submission, said it would welcome "any proposal that maximizes fairness and transparency and supports market growth." In its submission, Sony Music said that changing reporting methodology "will just shift money from some artists to other artists," while Warner said it would be "far more complex and administratively burdensome for digital services to implement."

The committee expects to publish its report before Parliament breaks for summer recess in July. **b**



The Houses of Parliament in London.



Customers at London's Sister Ray Records in 2020.

Sonic Youth

YOUNG FANS FUEL DEMAND FOR POP RECORDS: 'THE VINYL BUYER IS NOT JUST A 55-YEAR-OLD WHITE GUY'

BY STEVE KNOPPER

EARLY LAST YEAR, executives at the New England music chain Newbury Comics were discussing pulling back on vinyl, thinking the format's comeback might have run its course. Then, during the pandemic, sales picked up, thanks to a new kind of customer: young people.

"The pandemic totally remade who the vinyl customer was," says Carl Mello, Newbury's brand engagement director. "Teenagers who haven't had to move yet don't know the pain of moving vinyl, so they're the perfect people to collect it." Increasingly, they seem to be collecting the kind of music they also listen to on streaming services: Last year's best-selling vinyl albums were Harry Styles' *Fine Line* (231,553 copies) and Billie Eilish's *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* (195,679), according to MRC Data.

Overall, U.S. vinyl unit sales jumped 46.2% in 2020 — the format's biggest year in three decades. (Vinyl now accounts for 5.2% of U.S. recorded-music revenue, according to the RIAA.) There's no authoritative data on how many of these sales come from younger consumers, but there are clues: The number of 18- to 24-year-old music listeners who used a turntable increased from 12.4% in 2018 to 18.6% last year, according to a MusicWatch consumer survey, and the online marketplace Discogs reported that its percentage of users who are between 25 and 34 increased from 23% in May/June 2019 to 29% in the same period last year.

Vinyl is no longer just an audiophile market, says Lyn Koppe, executive vp global catalog for Legacy Recordings, a division of Sony Music. "It's much more mass-market."

Matt Harmon, president of the independent Beggars Group U.S., says the trend started before the pandemic, and there's some evidence that's true: MusicWatch data finds that turntable use actually decreased this year among the 13- to 17-year-old and 25- to 34-year-old demographics, and Eilish's *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* did nearly as well in 2019, when it was the second-best-selling album, behind The Beatles' *Abbey Road*. Harmon notes that his label's artist Snail Mail has a "very female and very young" fan base and sells a "ton of vinyl." He adds: "The vinyl buyer is not just a 55-year-old white guy. You've got a 27-year-old female also listening to records — and that's a good thing for us and the industry."

Some of the enthusiasm for the format could evaporate once the pandemic ends and young people start spending more money on movies and concerts. "But I really see this trend continuing to grow," says Terry Currier, owner of the 52-year-old Music Millennium in Portland, Ore. And at least some of it is the inevitable result of labels manufacturing vinyl for a wider variety of artists.

"Halsey, Maggie Rogers, Troye Sivan — we know those fans want vinyl," says Arjun Pulijal, Capitol Records' senior vp marketing. "We see a huge opportunity for vinyl there." **b**

MARKET WATCH

21.8B

↑ 1.5%

TOTAL ON-DEMAND STREAMS WEEK OVER WEEK

Number of audio and video on-demand streams for the week ending March 25.

16.22M

↑ 2.1%

ALBUM CONSUMPTION UNITS WEEK OVER WEEK

Album sales plus track-equivalent albums plus streaming-equivalent albums for the week ending March 25.

248.3B

↑ 6.7%

TOTAL ON-DEMAND STREAMS YEAR OVER YEAR TO DATE

Number of audio and video streams for 2021 so far over the same period in 2020.



Em

Say What You Mean

The Debut Single on Billboard Adult Contemporary Top 30 That Has Everybody Listening



New Jersey-native Em (short for Emily) elucidates, "Music is a very spiritual experience for me. 'Say What You Mean' is a universal message and represents the ethereal, emotional side of my writing. I'm a huge romantic and 100% 'in' when I'm in a relationship. 'Say What You Mean' is about wanting someone to love me with every fiber of their being...to be as sure of our love as I am."



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ORGANIZED MUSIC

SECRETLY GROUP EMPLOYEES ARE UNIONIZING. WILL OTHERS FOLLOW?

► Independent label company Secretly Group announced March 25 it plans to recognize a newly formed employees union, the first such organization in recent years that involves workers at a label, as opposed to musicians. The nascent union told *Billboard* that it hopes to inspire employees at other labels to follow its example.

How this goes could depend on what happens in the technology business, where in January employees at Google's parent company formed the Alphabet Workers Union, and on March 29, workers at a Bessemer, Ala., Amazon warehouse voted on whether to unionize at a company that has aggressively resisted organized labor. "If we see a win on Amazon or whether it's close, you're going to see workers

get inspired across industries," says Kate Bronfenbrenner, director of labor education research for Cornell University. "You can have a ripple effect."

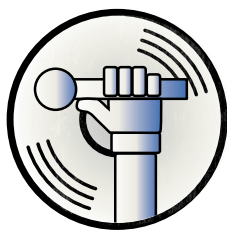
Unions are more common for musicians, many of whom belong to long-standing groups like the American Federation of Musicians or SAG-AFTRA. Two years ago, a group of creators formed the Music Workers Alliance to push for better conditions for independent musicians.

A Secretly Group union representative says that it wants to "make Secretly Group a more equitable, inclusive and healthy workplace." The company — which includes the labels Jagjaguwar, Secretly Canadian and Dead Oceans, as well as acts like Phoebe Bridgers, Bon Iver and The War on Drugs — said in a statement that recognition of the union was "an extension of our mission and core values."

In the past, union efforts have generally trickled down from larger companies to smaller ones. In this case, however, other companies' employees could follow Secretly, says Robert Bruno, a University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign labor and employment relations professor. "Could it have an effect?" he asks. "It depends on how expansive and how successful this would be."

"For many of us, [a union] didn't seem like an option, so hopefully, we showed the wider independent industry that it's possible," says the Secretly Union representative. "You don't need to start one when things hit rock bottom."

—STEVE KNOPPER



Hey, Big Spenders!

Over the last month, musicians have sold millions of dollars' worth of NFTs. Who's buying?

BY MARK YARM

TIM KANG, A 28-YEAR-OLD software engineer from Los Angeles, became wealthy by investing early in the cryptocurrency Ethereum. But he sees more potential in blockchain, the digital-ledger technology that enables the existence of cryptocurrencies. "I've been waiting so long," he says, "for something that communicates to the world that it's about more than just cryptocurrency."

Kang found that something in NFTs, the non-fungible tokens that use blockchain as authentication and have become digital collectibles — as well as a booming new business for musicians. And he's putting his digital money where his mouth is: So far, he estimates that he has spent about \$2 million on art and music NFTs, which he does not intend to sell. His collection includes one of the 33 NFTs that mark the third anniversary of electronic musician 3LAU's *Ultraviolet* album, which he bought for \$333,333. (3LAU earned a staggering \$11.7 million on the drop.)

Over the past few months, dozens of musicians have entered the NFT fray, such as Grimes, who in February sold some \$6 million worth of digital artworks in one auction, and the more mainstream Kings of Leon. From Feb. 27 to March 29, the top 10 crypto collectible markets by sales volume accounted for over \$338 million, according to industry tracking site CryptoSlam. Since purchasers are usually anonymous, however, it's hard to tell who's buying these NFTs. Based on *Billboard's* interviews with collectors, however, it would appear that buyers run the gamut — from the crypto-rich to fans looking for new ways to engage with artists they love to flippers hoping to turn a profit.

There's also a nagging question about whether all buyers are legitimate, as opposed to investors or members of the artists' camps involved in ploys to boost NFT prices. "That *could* happen," says Jimi Frew, co-founder of Blockchain Music, whose NFT brand RAREZ delivered deadmau5's first digital collectibles. "Has something like that happened? Highly

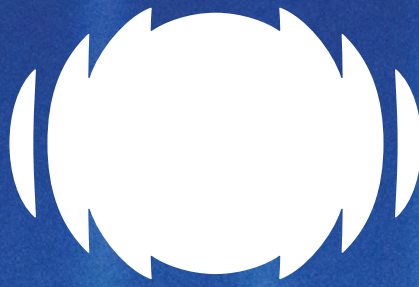
likely. Can we point fingers? Not without solid proof."

So far, the sweet spot audience for NFTs seems to be music fans who are also crypto evangelists, like Kang or Cooper Turley, a 25-year-old Angeleno who handles crypto strategy at music streaming/sharing platform Audius. (Kang and Turley happen to be friends.) He has purchased NFTs that include works by Mike Shinoda and Grimes with the intent to keep them, because "these NFTs really resonate with me on an emotional level," says Turley.

"Ninety percent of them are very wealthy crypto holders," says Frew of NFT buyers. Even when tokens are relatively affordable — such as the Kings of Leon NFTs, which cost around \$50, plus substantial fees — purchasing them isn't always easy. (Most NFT platforms require that purchases be made with a form of cryptocurrency.) Longtime Kings of Leon fan Nathan Sanchez, a 29-year-old architectural engineer from Austin who considers himself a crypto novice, says his NFT purchase took him a couple of hours due to the complicated, multistep process of setting up a crypto wallet and dealing with unexpected marketplace fees — and he might have given up if it didn't come with a vinyl record. "I'm not sure an average person can do it," says Sanchez.

That will change as the market expands. "The whole goal of blockchain is global accessibility and open access for everyone," says Kang. He has become friendly with 3LAU, with whom he talks or texts almost daily. "He has been advocating for NFTs since 2017," says Kang, "and just seeing his leadership in the space is why I dropped a large sum of money."

The lines between fandom and investment aren't always clear. Alexander Labanon, a 25-year-old rental-car branch manager and crypto newcomer from Richmond, Texas, recently spent about \$800 on an NFT of a previously unreleased track by rapper Tory Lanez. He hopes to buy more Lanez NFTs and sell them as a package. "I'm a fan of Tory Lanez," says Labanon, "but if there's money to be made, I'm going to take my money." ■



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ON SPOTIFY, WINNERS TAKE ALL

DATA RELEASED BY THE STREAMING SERVICE SHOWS THE MUSIC BUSINESS IS AS HIT-DRIVEN AS EVER



If Spotify were a country, its population of 4.47 million acts with at least one monthly listener would rank just above Panama as the 128th largest in the world. Economic power is highly concentrated, though. In Spotify's home country of Sweden, those in the 80th percentile of income make 4.1 times as much as those in the 20th percentile, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, while in South Africa — the OECD-tracked country with the highest inequality — income in the 80th percentile is 37.6 times larger than that of the 20th. In Spotify, as measured by monthly listeners, that

multiple is 78. The median act, in the streaming service's 50th percentile, has just 16 monthly listeners. The power is all at the top: Acts in the 90th percentile have 7,100 monthly listeners, while acts in the 99th percentile still have just 99,000.

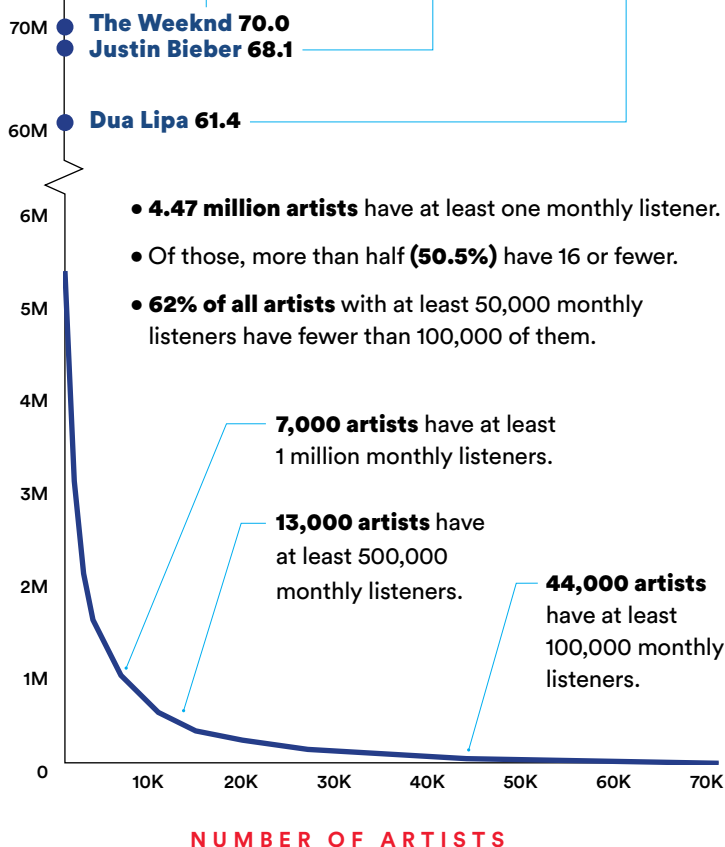
On March 18, amid a U.K. Parliament inquiry into the fairness of streaming royalties, Spotify released a trove of data on the online microsite Loud & Clear "to increase transparency and shed light on the complicated economics of music streaming," according to CEO Daniel Ek. Those economics can be unforgiving. Spotify, and the streaming model it helped popularize, turned the industry

around, and last year, the service paid out \$5 billion — 20% of all global recorded-music revenue. While equality is improving, however, only 7,800 artists — 0.17% of that 4.47 million — earned over \$100,000 in recording and publishing royalties in 2020.

The business of popular music has always been driven by a relatively small number of superstars, for better and for worse. And although some executives expected that the "long tail" of digital availability would even out popularity, this hasn't been much help to most working musicians. It's still a long way to the top if you want to rock'n'roll. —GLENN PEOPLES

WHERE THE STREAMS FLOW

Of the 4.47 million artists on Spotify with at least one monthly listener, just 71,000 have over 50,000 listeners a month — the bottom vertical limit of the graph below, which shows how many artists reach how many listeners each month. Only about 1,000 artists have over 5 million monthly listeners, and audience numbers narrow more from there.



Note "Professional musician" determined by artists on Spotify with at least 50,000 monthly listeners

THE GREAT DIVIDE

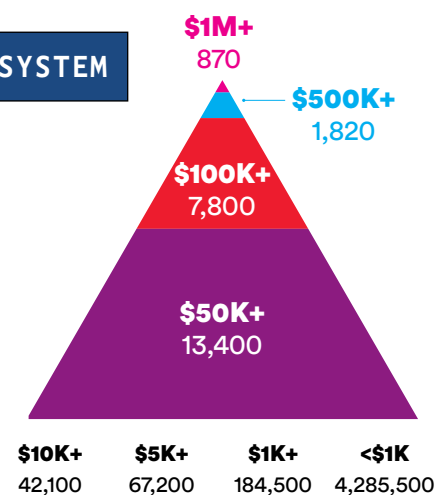
A streaming service isn't a real-world economy, but comparing popularity to income distribution in different countries shows how much "wealth" goes to the top. In the "Republic of Spotify," the 90th percentile of artists, as measured by monthly listeners, gets 91 times the monthly listeners of the 50th percentile, while the 80th percentile gets 78 times that of the 20th percentile.

	P90/P50	P80/P20
SPOTIFY	91.1	78.0
COUNTRIES' INCOME DISPARITIES		
SOUTH AFRICA	5.3	37.6
INDIA	3.2	13.4
MEXICO	2.7	10.3
UNITED STATES	2.3	8.4
UNITED KINGDOM	2.1	6.5
RUSSIA	2.1	5.5
JAPAN	2.0	6.2
SWEDEN	1.7	4.1

Sources Spotify, OECD

TOP OF THE CLASS SYSTEM

While Spotify is paying more musicians more money every year, those at the top get more still. Spotify had 4.47 million artists with more than one monthly listener in December. During the entire year, 13,400 made over \$50,000, and just 870 exceeded \$1 million.



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Tower Records in Tokyo's Shibuya district in 2019.

Physical Attraction

Japan has had an enduring love affair with CDs, and labels love the profits ensured by the country's "saihan" system. But streaming is finally taking off

BY STEVE McCLURE

TOKYO — Near the iconic scramble crossing in Tokyo's Shibuya district stands Tower Records Japan's nine-story flagship store — a hulking, gray colossus proudly defying the local music market's slow drift toward streaming. Emblazoned in red letters above the entrance is the chain's slogan: "No Music, No Life." Despite the pandemic, there's ample evidence of both.

The store is a vivid reminder that music fans here still haven't given up on physical formats like CDs, vinyl and even cassettes. While much of the world moves further into streaming as the dominant form of music consumption, Japan still has a physical fixation.

That is hampering the overall market, which declined for the second straight year in 2020, falling 9% from 2019 to 272.6 billion yen (\$2.64 billion), according to the Recording Industry Association of Japan.

But there are signs that the world's biggest physical market — and No. 2 market overall — may finally be reaching a tipping point, with global streaming services Amazon Music, Spotify and Apple Music leading the charge. Japanese labels' streaming

revenue rose 27% last year to 58.9 billion yen (\$542.2 million) in wholesale value, while physical sales fell 15% to 194.4 billion yen (\$1.8 billion), according to the RIAJ.

In a sign of the shift underway, a streaming-only single — "Yoru ni Kakeru" by pop duo YOASOBI — topped the Billboard Japan Hot 100 year-end chart for the first time in 2020. Male vocal group Arashi released its first digital single, "Turning Up," in November 2019, and then three months later digitally released all 16 of its previously released studio albums. Other major acts made streaming debuts last year, including singer-songwriters Masaharu Fukuyama and Kenshi Yonezu, and rock band Southern All Stars.

Japanese labels are also increasingly using YouTube and music-focused streaming services to promote new music before CDs hit stores. "It has taken us a while to shift, and it was very hard, but it is happening now," says Iichiro Noda, CEO of digital music distributor TuneCore Japan, noting that since 2019, streaming releases have accounted for most of the top songs on the Japan Hot 100. Japan was Amazon Music's fastest-growing inter-

national territory last year, says Amazon Music Japan director René Fasco. "With greatly improved streaming catalogs and better-informed customers, streaming adoption will continue to accelerate," he says. (The company doesn't disclose subscriber data.)

Yet the latest sales results still show physical product (including music videos) comprising 71% of Japanese record companies' revenue in 2020 — down from 76% in 2019 and 79% in 2018, according to the RIAJ.

Japan — along with South Korea — now dominates global CD sales, accounting for \$1.26 billion, or 45.8% of global CD revenue in 2020. South Korean music consumers, driven by the global popularity of K-pop collectibles for groups like BTS, recorded a \$189.1 million increase (up 85.9%) in physical sales in 2020 to \$409.4 million, according to IFPI.

One reason Japan has been slow to streaming is "saihan," a government system that allows labels to set retail prices for CDs and other physical products. Introduced in 1953 as an anti-monopoly law exception, saihan (meaning "resale") ensures copyrighted material's availability by reducing

price competition among retail outlets.

As a result, most CD albums sell for 2,000 to 3,000 yen (\$18.32 to \$27.51) — up to 80% higher than in the United States. That guarantees a 25% to 30% per-unit profit margin for Japanese labels, while streaming services' monthly subscription fees average about 1,000 yen (\$10), say industry sources. "As long as there is physical demand, it is natural for a profit-seeking company like a label not to abandon it," says Masanori Otori, executive officer of Tokyo-based label Toy's Factory. For that reason, Japan's powerful talent agencies have also kept their acts off streaming services, but even longtime holdouts like Johnny & Associates, which represents Arashi, are now overcoming those concerns.

The biggest reason for Japan's enduring physical obsession is consumer loyalty. Music fans show their commitment to artists by buying and collecting tangible products like CDs, while "idol" acts cater to that demand with multiple CD versions of new releases.

Still, the shift to streaming is changing Japan's retail landscape. CD rental outlets — popular in Japan since the mid-1980s where labels collect royalties when a CD is checked out — fell by one-third from 2,803 in 2010 to 1,844 in 2019, according to the RIAJ. And some big-name music retailers like Virgin Megastores Japan have closed for good. Tower Records Japan still operates 80 stores nationwide, down from 87 a decade ago. (In 2002, it broke away from the U.S.-based retail chain, which went out of business in 2006 as the U.S. CD market crashed with the rise of downloads and piracy.) The Japanese chain says its sales have stayed above 50 billion yen (\$459 million) for the past decade, recording revenue of 53.2 billion yen (\$488 million) in the year ending February 2020.

Tower expects to announce that sales fell last year, due to the pandemic. Physical sales slipped precipitously during the state of emergency in April and May when retail stores closed, but recovered in July. Meanwhile, Tower's online sales have jumped 30%, says Tower spokesman Tatsuro Yagawa.

Japanese music executives say there's enough room for both physical and digital — for now — but the long-term question is when, and even whether, streaming gains can make up for the decline in CDs. "The relationship between digital music and physical in Japan will change slowly," says Yagawa. "We don't think physical sales will drop [all] at once like in the U.S." **D**



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Ahrend photographed March 11 at the MLC's future office space in Nashville.

FROM THE DESK OF

KRIS AHREND

CEO, Mechanical Licensing Collective

BY ED CHRISTMAN PHOTOGRAPHED BY EMILY DORIO

EVERY CEO IN THE WORLD HAS A story about how his or her company has handled the pandemic. But how many of them were first-time CEOs just two months into building a brand-new company when the crisis hit? And not just any new company, but one charged with solving what may be the most vexing problem in the music industry: making sure creators receive their mechanical royalties when their songs are streamed.

That's the situation Kris Ahrend — CEO of the Mechanical Licensing Collective — found himself in last year. The organization was created under the 2018 Music Modernization Act (MMA) to administer a blanket mechanical license for on-demand streaming and digital download services. Though a board was installed in 2019, Ahrend did not start until January 2020. Due to the pandemic, he hired most of the MLC's 65 employees via Zoom.

On Feb. 15, the MLC received \$424 million in historical unmatched black-box royalties — past royalties that could not be matched to the

copyright holders — from digital service providers (DSPs). In order to distribute that money, the MLC has built a database — accessible to anyone — that music publishing administrators can use to claim ownership stakes in unmatched songs and collect those royalties. To say there's a lot riding on its success is an understatement: That \$424 million payment is only the beginning of billions of dollars that will flow through the MLC.

Ahrend has spent his career inside and outside the label system, starting as an intellectual property lawyer in 1996 and later holding key positions in the legal affairs departments of Sony BMG and Warner Music Group's Rhino before becoming head of WMG shared services in 2013. Prior to all of that, he played music, from age 5 through his law school band. "I really wanted to do that for a living, but I didn't have the talent or the fortitude," he says. "I have extraordinary respect for people who do creative things, because I know how hard it is to make a living. That's one reason I am so passionate about making sure that we pay creators properly."

The MLC was created two years ago. How far along is it in realizing the mandates?

The MLC was designated in the summer of 2019, so we are not yet two years in. [Chief technology officer] Richard [Thompson] and [head of rights management] Maurice [Russell] were engaged by the board as consultants around that time. I joined at the beginning of 2020, and that is when we really began to build the organization.

In terms of where we are now: We built and launched the portal that our members use to interact with the data and submit their registration. We launched the data-quality initiative, which members can use to compare their data with ours and then receive a discrepancy report so that they can home in on what needs to be corrected. We have launched the public database for anyone to access on our website, and the bulk data subscription program that allows anyone to download a weekly snapshot of all the music works in our database — two incredibly important steps in delivering the transparency that we promised to the industry.

Where does the regulatory process stand? Has the U.S. Copyright Office thrown you any curve balls?

They were responsive to the needs we asserted. The MLC is not able to advocate when it comes to rates and rights, but we can advocate for things we think we need operationally. So we were able to get a set of regulations that now provide us with more data than rights holders ever had access to before. For example, we will be able to create links that will let our members listen to the music that corresponds with the data in the report. That's a huge innovation.

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Is that for the pending and unmatched activity and royalties?

That was the primary motivator. Where there is unmatched activity, we will be able to provide our members a way they can listen to the music that corresponds to the data. But it could potentially be for all the data, depending on how we are able to build it.

How much transparency can we expect?

Our goal is to be as transparent as we can in every aspect of the operation, other than where we are prevented from doing so by law or where there are issues of competition or confidentiality based on the regulations issued by the Copyright Office. I'll give you one example: We have had people search the database and say they see data that seems wrong. That is transparency. We didn't just release the data that we had a chance to scrub, clean and check. We released all the data that has been registered by rights holders. People need to see the data in whatever condition it is in. That way, songwriters can help improve it, which will help them get paid properly.

But songwriters who use a company like CD Baby to administer their publishing can't fix the data themselves, right?

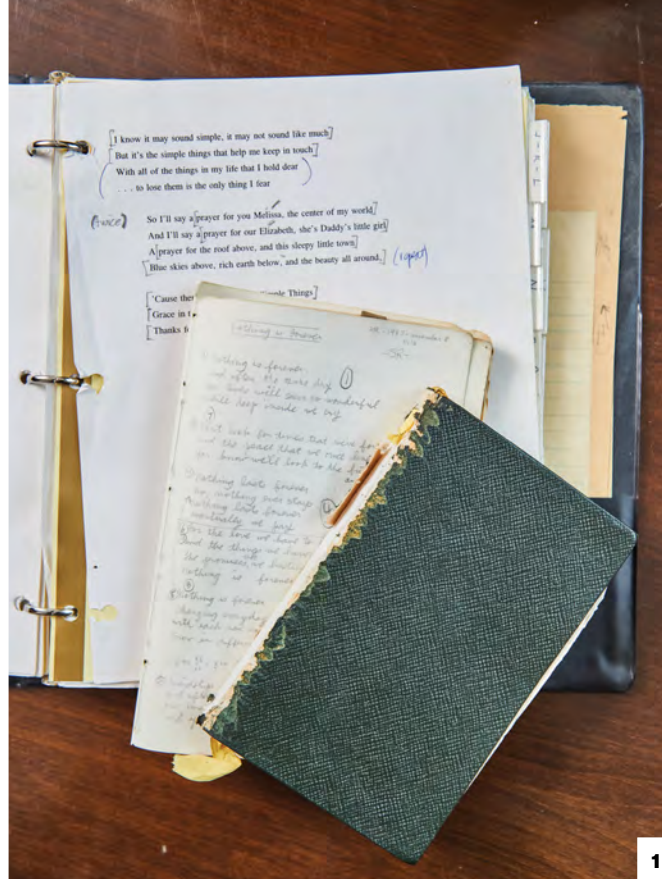
That is correct. If you have chosen to work with a partner, whether that be a publisher, an administrator or a society outside of the U.S., you will have to go through them. But you will see the exact same data that they do. Even though you rely on that partner to collect your royalty and interact with us, you still get to see the data that we use for those payments. There is not another example of that transparency on the level that we provide.

The DSPs that started operating under blanket licenses on Jan. 1 were also set to deliver reports and payments on March 17. Have they?

On Feb. 15, the day we received the historical unmatched payments and the first tranche of usage data for those royalties, we also received the first usage files of blanket royalties for the January period from DSPs that opted to front load what we call the early pass so that we could provide them with an invoice of the royalties that were due March 17. We are now actively involved in receiving and reviewing data for the historical unmatched royalties and the blanket royalties.

Where does the building of the claiming portal and the revenue statement portals stand?

In order to build these platforms, we needed the data, but we did not receive any before Feb. 15. Now that we have the data, we can finish building out the platform. We will have the statement module for royalties ready to launch in the next 30 days in time for the first distribution. We will launch the claiming portal following that in the next two or three months, and that will allow people to see the unmatched money first from the blanket money and then in the second half of the year from the historical unmatched. We still have to receive the rest of the data for the historical unmatched and then go through the matching process there, too.



1



2



3



4

How much black-box money do you expect to match on the first pass?

Every month, we will do better at matching because every month we will look at the data and see where we were successful and where we were not. We will see if we are doing better with certain types of repertoire than others. And that will allow us to change our approach for the next month to do better.

What have you found so far?

It's way too early to say, but it runs the gamut. We were able to do incredibly well for some services and not so well for others. We have to be aware there may be gaps in the data. I think we will see where data from certain countries is missing and where we think the number of works represented is light compared with the works that are here. Having seen usage data from some 60 DSPs, we are seeing immediate opportunities for improvement simply by looking at how some of the DSPs are presenting their data. DSPs have the freedom to change the titles of the sound recordings they receive to meet their own business needs. And the naming convention they use can be a contributing factor to the difficulty of matching. We now have the ability to say, "Hey, you need to change the way you deliver the data to us."

The data provided for the \$424 million in black-box royalties shows that Spotify sent in \$152 million of \$182 million in unmatched royalties. Does the difference represent what Spotify paid out through settlements and private agreements made so publishers wouldn't sue for copyright infringement?

Yes, Spotify was one of the DSPs that exercised its right under regulations the Copyright Office issued to withhold certain royalties that they believe they do not owe to rights holders because of private settlements they had entered before the MMA was passed. In the coming weeks, we will be notifying rights holders if Spotify listed them as having entered a private settlement. Those rights holders will then have the ability to dispute that by notifying the MLC. At that moment, the MLC will step aside, and it will be up to rights holders and the DSPs to work out a resolution. **D**

1. "These are journals and notebooks where I kept lyrics for songs I wrote and others I performed in bands I was in in high school and college," says Ahrend. "They remind me of how difficult it is to be a creator." 2. A poster commemorating the 1985 Live Aid concerts. "I have hung it in every office I've had to remind me of the power the music industry has to address social issues." 3. "Mugs my two sons made for me when they were in preschool." 4. "I've played piano since I was 5, and I dreamed of having one of my own. When I was based in New York, I never had room for a piano. I purchased this one when I moved to Los Angeles around the time I turned 40."



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Diane Warren

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The Sound

PG. 38 INSIDE JESSE COLLINS' BIG YEAR * PG. 40 Q&As WITH EVERY SONG AND SCORE NOMINEE

2021
OSCAR
MUSIC
PREVIEW

Clockwise from top:
H.E.R., Tiara Thomas,
D'Mile, Leslie Odom Jr.,
Trent Reznor and
Atticus Ross.



ONE NIGHT IN HISTORY

How six of this year's Oscar music nominees won before the show even started

BY PAUL GREIN // ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID DESPAU

ILLUSTRATION: REFERENCE PHOTOS: H.E.R.—MEDIAPUNCH/SHUTTERSTOCK; THOMAS, KOVACH/GETTY IMAGES; D'MILE, GREGG DEGUIRE/GETTY IMAGES; ODOM, ROBBIN MARSHALL/GETTY IMAGES; REZNOR, RICH FURY/GETTY IMAGES; ROSS, JEFF KOWATZ/ELMAGAC.

WHILE ALL OF THE NOMINEES FOR BEST original song and best original score at the 93rd annual Academy Awards — set for April 25 — have reason to celebrate their achievements, the following six contenders should feel particularly proud as their nominations made history. Leslie Odom Jr., who is the fourth actor in four years to receive Oscar nods for acting and songwriting in the same year, believes it's easier to shatter ceilings because “there's less boundaries in the industry than there used to be.”

“There really is an opportunity right now to bring all that you are to projects,” he continues. “It used to be that if you were a television star, you were a television star. If you made music, you only made music. It was a lot harder to just come and say, ‘I’m a creative person, and I’d like to be creative in these different areas.’”

LESLIE ODOM JR.



Odom scored two nominations for his work in *One Night in Miami...* He is nominated for best original song for “Speak Now” (which he co-wrote with songwriter Sam Ashworth) and best supporting actor for his portrayal of R&B great Sam Cooke.

From 1934, when the Oscars introduced the best original song category, through 2016, no one received nominations for songwriting and acting in the same year (partly because, years ago, singing actors didn't usually write their own material and relied more on songwriters instead).

Times have changed. For *Mudbound* (2017), Mary J. Blige was nominated for best song for “Mighty River” and best supporting actress. For *A Star Is Born* (2018), Lady Gaga won best song for “Shallow” and was nominated for best actress. For *Harriet* (2019), Cynthia Erivo was nominated for best song for “Stand Up” and best actress for her role as famed abolitionist Harriet Tubman. Odom now joins Erivo as the second double-nominee to be recognized for a film in which he or she played a real-life character.

H.E.R., D'MILE and TIARA THOMAS



In the span of 12 hours in early March, H.E.R., D'Mile (Dernst Emile II) and Tiara Thomas achieved two career milestones. On the evening of March 14, they won a Grammy for song of the year for “I Can't Breathe,” which

became an anthem of the Black Lives Matter movement upon its June release. And before the sun came up the following morning, they received an Oscar nomination for best original song for “Fight for You” from *Judas and the Black Messiah*.

It's the first time in 35 years that a songwriter or songwriting team has received an Oscar nod in the same awards season that they won a Grammy for song of the year for a different song.

Lionel Richie was nominated for an Oscar on Feb. 5, 1986, for “Say You, Say Me” from *White Nights*. (The ballad went on to win the Oscar.) Later, on Feb. 25, he won a Grammy for song of the year for “We Are the World,” the iconic humanitarian anthem that he co-wrote with Michael Jackson.

On one other occasion, a songwriter or songwriting team received an Oscar nod in the same awards season that they won a Grammy for song of the year for a different song.

Henry Mancini and Johnny Mercer were nominated for an Oscar in February 1964, for writing the title song from *Charade*. In May of that year, they won a Grammy for song of the year for the title song from *Days of Wine and Roses*, which had won an Oscar the previous year.

TRENT REZNOR and ATTICUS ROSS



The rockers-turned-A-list composers have two nominations for best original score — *Mank* and *Soul* (they teamed with Jon Batiste on the latter). They are the first composer or composing team to have two scores nominated in the same

year since Alexandre Desplat accomplished the feat six years ago with *The Grand Budapest Hotel* and *The Imitation Game*.

John Williams had two scores nominated for best original score in the same year an impressive eight times between 1972 and 2011, while Johnny Green competed against himself in the now-defunct category scoring of a musical picture in 1951 and 1956. No one else has had two nods in a scoring category more than once since 1946, when the number of nominees in scoring categories dropped to the current five (from a whopping 21 the previous year). Other composers who have had two nominees in a scoring category in one year are James Horner (1995), Thomas Newman (1994), Bernard Herrmann (1976), Hugo Friedhofer (1957) and Alex North (1951).

The nomination for *Soul* is the first time that three composers have shared a nomination in a scoring category since 1998, when Matthew Wilder, David Zippel and Jerry Goldsmith were nominated for *Mulan* in the defunct best original musical or comedy score category.

If *Soul* wins, this will be the first time that three composers have shared a scoring award since 1987, when David Byrne, Ryuichi Sakamoto and Cong Su took best original score for *The Last Emperor*.

Q & A

ON WITH THE SHOW

JESSE COLLINS IS REIMAGINING the modern awards show. In 2020, the Emmy-nominated producer's work on the BET Awards set the standard for what large-scale virtual events could accomplish during a pandemic. This year, the 50-year-old CEO of Jesse Collins Entertainment worked on his 17th Grammy Awards (his first as co-executive producer) and became the first Black executive producer of the Super Bowl halftime show. Now, thanks to a personal recommendation from Oprah Winfrey, Collins is gearing up for his first Oscars stint as co-producer alongside Stacey Sher and Steven Soderbergh of the 93rd Academy Awards.

How has working on the Oscars differed from your usual music-specific programming?

It has been very different from what I'm used to, but it's still an awards show. There will be some people that win, there'll be some people that lose, and we've got to create some memorable moments in between.

What piece of advice has stuck with you throughout these opportunities in your career?

The mantra we've been working under is, “There's no excuses.” You can't put something on television and say, “This would have been great, but COVID-19 made it hard.” I think people are forgiving with certain things, and for a while they were accepting things on Zoom. But even when you did something on Zoom,

it still had to have something that made it worth watching.

What have you learned while working on these shows that you'll apply to future events?

This pandemic has proved that if you've got a good idea, a strong song, whatever that is, people will respond to it. People expect a high level of entertainment. These types of situations force you to push your creativity to create a better product. So even going forward, when we're in a space where these awards shows are the new normal, whatever that is, and people are back together, we still will push forward that level of creativity that we established in 2020.

What would you tell your younger self with the perspective you have now?



Oh, man. I wish I had got the inside of my nose a little tougher. I've been taking COVID tests about three or four times a week and the tears still come down my face. They say, “Oh, after the first two, you're fine.” Well, I'm on COVID test No. 293, and it's not full-blown tears anymore, but definitely a trickle — kind of like that Denzel Washington *Glory* tear.

—LARISHA PAUL

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Jamie Foxx voiced the character Joe Gardner in *Soul*.



MUSIC THAT DEFINED US

Breaking down this year's Oscar best original song and score nominees and why, in their own words, a nod means more to them than ever after a trying 2020

SONGS

Of the 12 songwriters who are vying for best original song this year, 11 are first-time Academy Award nominees. The 12th is category perennial Diane Warren, who lands her 12th nod. This is the only Oscar nomination for *Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga* and *The Life Ahead (La Vita Davanti a Se)*, which delivered two prime candidates, "Husavik" and "Io Sì (Seen)," respectively. The other three films represented here all have multiple nominations.

"FIGHT FOR YOU"

Judas and the Black Messiah, Warner Music: H.E.R., Dernst Emile II
Lyric: H.E.R., Tiara Thomas

Less than 12 hours after winning a Grammy Award for song of the year, H.E.R. arose at 6:30 a.m. to a stream of congratulatory texts — but they were for an entirely different nomination. Someone sent a screenshot of the Oscar nominations, which is how she learned she was up for best original song.

What is the group chat with Dernst and Tiara like?

H.E.R. Oh, man. We are going crazy. There's a long thread of congratulations and fireworks and GIFs and all that.

Why do you three work so well together?

We weren't trying to be a voice for anybody but ourselves. Because we are Black people, we represent the people who are suffering and struggling right now. That's a feeling you can't understand unless you're in it and you're seeing these videos of people who look like your family. So I think God is using us as a vessel, and we're using our gifts and our responsibility to make songs that reflect how we feel, because it helps other people get to know how they feel.

How have you been safely celebrating your award season so far?

I've just been coming down from it. I've been tired, but in a good way. Like, "Wow, this is happening. [Now] let's put in the work." I feel like I'm on my way to an EGOT one day with everything going on. I need to make space for my new Grammys and hopefully, maybe, an Oscar. And it's just the beginning, that's the crazy part.

"HEAR MY VOICE"

The Trial of the Chicago 7, Netflix
Music: Daniel Pemberton

Lyric: Daniel Pemberton, Celeste Waite
In Aaron Sorkin's *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, set during the Vietnam War, Waite's soulful "Hear My Voice" scores the final scene in the period drama. According to the British singer, the song was "written in the spirit of protest," mirroring not only the film's portrayal of the anti-war riots of the 1960s but also the off-screen protests of today.

Given the way 2020 went, why might this nomination carry more weight?

WAITE Recently in England, there were women protesting gender-based violence where they were wrestled to the ground by policemen. It's horrible. And last year, we had the Black Lives Matter protests running in parallel to the ones in America. It was powerful to see different groups coming together for the Black community during a year when we had all been living in isolation. As this song has reached more people, it gives me and many others the platform to talk about things that are important, especially in this moment in time. This piece of music can grow, and that excites me.

How did you react to hearing you were nominated for an Oscar?

I wrote the song in my bedroom during lockdown, so it was surreal to know that it led to something much more tangible. Though I was born in America, I haven't been able to go back for fear of being stuck during COVID-19, so I'm glad that my music was able to travel to the states without me being there in person.

And how did your mother react?

Like she had some psychic ability. She just went, "I knew it!"

"HUSAVIK"

Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga, Netflix

Music/lyric: Savan Kotecha, Fat Max Gsus, Rickard Göransson

Sweden is to thank for this subtle send-up of Eurovision power ballads — a perfect fit for a film that thoughtfully parodies the annual international song competition. Gsus (pronounced "Jesus") and Göransson were both born there, while Kotecha (a go-to collaborator of Ariana Grande) lived there for 15 years.

How did you balance parody with meaning on this song?

KOTECHA The trick was this, and it's something [director] Dave Dobkin talked about a lot: We didn't want to make fun of Eurovision.

Who came up with the line, "Where the whales can live/'Cause they're gentle people in my hometown"?

GSUS That would be me. I wrote it with the meaning that the people of Husavik are so gentle that the whales can live there [without being killed]. But how it is perceived is like the whales are gentle people.

KOTECHA As an American, when I was living in Sweden that was part of the charm of Eurovision. Some of the songs feel like they were translated into English. You know what they mean, but you don't want to correct it.

Did you listen to past Eurovision songs as research for the film?

GÖRANSSON For those of us who are from Sweden, it has been a part of our lives since we grew up. Every year you watch it. Subconsciously you kind of know the tone.

"IO SÌ (SEEN)"

The Life Ahead (La Vita Davanti a Se), Netflix

Music: Diane Warren
Lyric: Diane Warren, Laura Pausini

Warren is one of only nine songwriters in

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BEST SONG "SPEAK NOW"

MUSIC & LYRICS BY **LESLIE ODOM JR. & SAM ASHWORTH**



"LESLIE ODOM JR. IS ASTONISHING"
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STUDIOS

Oscar history to amass 12 or more nominations in this category. But unlike the other writers on that list, Warren has never won. Meanwhile, Italian star Laura Pausini is looking at her first nomination thanks to *The Life Ahead*, which tells the story of the unlikely bond between a former prostitute (played by Sofia Loren) and a 12-year-old orphaned Senegalese immigrant.

You've said the phrase "you're seen" came to you when you read the script.

WARREN That simple phrase, "I want you to know that you're seen," is really powerful. That message is so compelling, because we're living in a time when a lot of us don't feel seen, and with COVID-19, people were alone and literally weren't seen.

Why was it important to record versions in Italian, Portuguese, French and Spanish?

PAUSINI I knew the power of this song and this profound and important message linked to family values and integration. My daughter and I saw the film and discussed its meaning, even though she is only 8 years old. In the video clip of "Io Sì," [director] Edoardo Ponti left the images of me crying because I was really moved, and this is the reflection of my sincere emotion.

How special is it to represent Italy at the Oscars?

PAUSINI That has been my mission since I started my career 28 years ago. Everything I do is for my country.

What do you think of this year's field of nominees?

WARREN I'll be honest: I hope to win. I'm like a sports team that has lost the World Series for decades. This is 33 years since my first nomination. The cool thing is April 25 [the Oscars' rescheduled date] would have been my dad's 105th birthday. He was the first person to ever believe in me, and I have a feeling he is with me.

"SPEAK NOW"

One Night in Miami..., Amazon Music/Lyric: Leslie Odom Jr., Sam Ashworth

Odom has already won a Tony and a Grammy for *Hamilton*, and with an Oscar win would be just an Emmy away from EGOT status. Ashworth, who has collaborated with Odom before, has also been nominated for a Grammy, earning two nods in 2019 for H.E.R.'s *I Used To Know Her* (album of the year) and "Hard Place" (song of the year).

Four songs vied to close the film. Leslie, were you a co-writer on all of them?



Actor Daniel Kaluuya (left) and director Shaka King on the set of *Judas and the Black Messiah*.

ODOM I was. I came into the soundstage and played all four demos for Regina [King, the film's director]. "Speak Now" and one other song made it to the next round. We went and developed those songs a little further, and "Speak Now" was chosen.

What was the main challenge in writing this song?

ASHWORTH There is so much conversation in the film. The script [by Kemp Powers] is just so rich. The challenge was, how do we narrow down some of these ideas into a three- or four-minute song? What I had in the verses was a lot more poetry. We went through and created more of a story. Each verse came out of a conversation between us about what it's meant to be.

Why weren't you attempting to write a song that reflected the period, 1964, or sounded like Sam Cooke?

ODOM We definitely didn't want it to be something that Sam would record; we wanted it to come from me. In the film I got as close to Sam as I could get. After my final day [of shooting] in New Orleans, I went about the process of letting that go. I was happy we were recording the song three months after filming, because I would have been tempted to try to do a Sam Cooke thing. We wanted the song to hopefully be impactful on a modern audience. We didn't want to do something that was about yesterday.

SCORE

Emile Mosseri and Jon Batiste both land their first Academy Award nominations, but all other nominees in this category have been nominated

before. This is the seventh nod in the category for James Newton Howard, the second and third for the pair of Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross, and the second for frequent Spike Lee collaborator Terence Blanchard. This is the only Oscar nod for the film Blanchard scored, Lee's *Da 5 Bloods*. The other four films represented here all had multiple nominations.

DA 5 BLOODS

Terence Blanchard (Netflix)

Blanchard planned to take a break after scoring his first Oscar nod in 2019 for *BlacKkKlansman*, but longtime collaborator Lee had other plans. Sure enough, scoring *Da 5 Bloods* landed Blanchard another nomination that he never expected. As he says: "If my hair could turn another shade of gray, it would."

What was it like to watch the film's final cut for the first time?

The score doesn't have anything to do if there's not a great performance on the screen, and when I watched it I felt like I needed to measure up to what was already done. I tell people all the time: We were at the Oscars [in 2019] and [Spike] said, "I'm getting on a plane to shoot the next one," and I'm like, "Dude, you're nuts. Why don't you take a break?" When he showed me this film I was like, "Oh, shit. He did it again."

How does it feel to be nominated this year, considering current events?

[You look at] what our brother [Chadwick Boseman] was going through when he was shooting this movie and nobody had a clue he was sick. It's a testament to his character, and to think that somebody

could look at him as being less than just because of the color of his skin or because he may look different was an incredible thought to have — and it's sickening and tiresome that we're still living in this age. With all of these films being nominated, I'm glad to see there's a plethora of diversity, because I was worried about that after the Golden Globes. Jon Batiste is like my little brother, and to think me and him are making history because we're the first two Black people to be nominated in this category [for separate films in the same year]? That's a crime. We all need to do better.

MANK

Trent Reznor, Atticus Ross (Netflix)

The longtime Nine Inch Nail bandmates and award-winning duo of Reznor and Ross are up for both *Mank* and *Soul* this year. The two first won an Oscar for best original score 10 years ago for *The Social Network*. If they win again this year, they'll become the fourth two-time winners in the category in the past 20 years, following Howard Shore, Gustavo Santaolalla and Alexandre Desplat.

How does it feel to achieve the rare double nomination?

REZNOR We haven't had time to fully process what's happening. When we work on a project, much like when we're sitting down to write a song for Nine Inch Nails, we aren't thinking about writing something we hope charts. We're just trying to make the best song we can. When we're working on a film, we put a lot of thought into trying to make the right choice as to what we should pursue. We try to find camps that we can learn from and be inspired from. Then you get into the world, you immerse yourself in it and lose track of time.

You've developed a shorthand with director David Fincher after multiple projects. What keeps you coming back?

ROSS To my mind, he's one of the greatest living directors. When I first met David, I was incredibly intimidated by him partly because his vocabulary is so wide-ranging. But every experience has been a journey I will always remember — and I can't stress enough how rewarding each has been.

MINARI

Emile Mosseri (A24)

Mosseri woke up at 4:45 a.m. the day the Oscar nominations were revealed, but decided that he and his wife would put their phones away. "I Googled 'Oscar

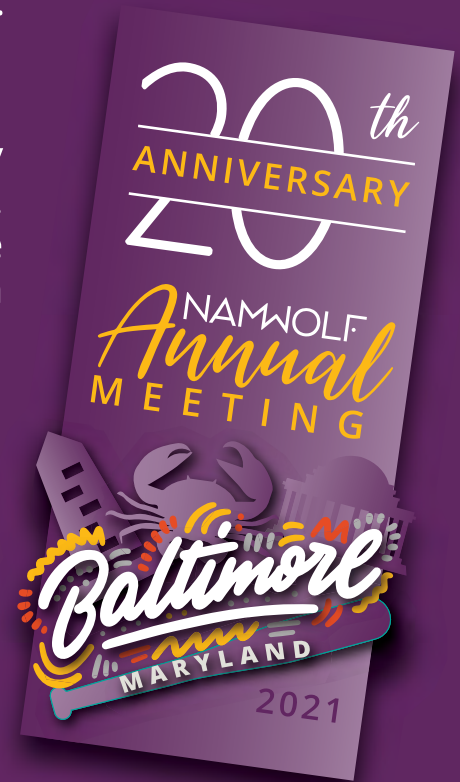
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nominations' and kept scrolling down the list," he recalls. "The score category didn't say my name, but it said '*Minari*.' I remember asking my wife: 'That means me, right?'"

This is your first Oscar nomination. What does it mean to now be an Academy Award-nominated composer?

It's hard to put it into words. There are certain types of acknowledgement that are universally understood. The Academy [of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences] is one of those things that you don't have to explain to people. I've been playing shows, writing music and putting out records for almost 20 years now, and I always find myself trying to explain to my family why something is important. There's something nice about this in that regard. I grew up watching the Oscars, as so many people did, so there's an added level of surrealness to being a part of it that is a total dream.

***Minari* scored five other nominations, including best picture and best director. Is that extra gratifying?**

One hundred percent. The best picture [nod] is a big one, because everybody who worked on it is nominated. It has now been almost two years since I started working on it, so there's a real family around this film. For this movie to connect in this way and get this kind of recognition, we're still all beside ourselves.

How did you react the first time you saw the film in full?

I watched the first cut on a couch with [director Lee] Isaac [Chung], and even though I knew what was going to happen in the film, I wasn't prepared for how hard it was going to hit me emotionally. Especially toward the end of the film, I was just crying and snorting out of my nose. I remember thinking, "Do I try to hide this from him, or should I lean into it?" I felt so unprofessional, but it was a profound experience.

NEWS OF THE WORLD

James Newton Howard (Universal)

The nine-time Oscar-nominated composer says starting his day at sunrise with the good news has been a "lovely tradition" that continued this year. He believes scoring a Western is "every composer's dream" and with *News of the World*, which stars Tom Hanks, that dream came true.

This was your first film with director Paul Greengrass. What was that like?

I always feel like it's a first date with a girl.



Amanda Seyfried in *Mank*.



From left: Alan S. Kim, Steven Yeun, Noel Cho and Yeri Han in *Minari*.



Will Ferrell and Rachel McAdams in *Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga*.

You don't want to say anything stupid, you don't want to write something bad — I'm always a little bit nervous. But at [a certain] point, the process is very much the same with everybody: trying to make sure that you're telling the same story as the director. Paul was very interested in a distinctive, subtle quality to the music. We did a lot of trial and error, and that is necessary.

You've scored many different genres — comedies, thrillers, major action-adventure franchises and now a Western. What's left that you'd like to try?

I never feel like I've done one of everything, because you could do four submarine movies and they're all going to be different tonally. My biggest concern is just to do the next movie, whatever it is, because I still love it so much.

SOUL

Trent Reznor, Atticus Ross, Jon Batiste (Disney/Pixar)

Reznor and Ross were especially humbled by their double Oscar nomination in the best original score category after 2020. "It's another thing that kind of doesn't seem real in a year when everything starts to blur together," says Reznor.

What was it like to work on a Pixar movie with someone like Jon Batiste?

REZNOR As we got a little more confident over the years, the idea was, "What would be interesting to try?" and Pixar was on that list of dream collaborators. We thought if the right thing came along, hell yeah we'd like to see how those guys work. There's a humanity and a greatness to them that's several notches above. When we got in the studio [with Jon], it became crystal clear that he's not just a great player, but he has that thing great musicians have ... he understands without words.

What would a win mean to you all?

REZNOR We've had a pretty spectacular awards-oriented year: the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, the Emmys. But all of it feels like a dream. There have been Zoom calls, emails, a couple phone calls, but there weren't any weird tuxedo pictures.

ROSS To find oneself here is pretty psychedelic, especially after this year. The whole year has felt like an acid trip, some very bad bits and some very good bits, and if we won that would be the peak of the trip, as it were.

BATISTE Over two years of working on this film, we didn't know how the world would respond, given that it's essentially about death and the origin of the soul and jazz — and it's animation. We were just happy with what we created. All of this is beyond our wildest dreams. **B**

Contributors: Leila Cobo, Gab Ginsberg, Josh Glicksman, Paul Grein, Lyndsey Havens, Gil Kaufman, Mia Nazareno

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Pulling Double Duty

A few major Oscar contenders got their standout songs from unexpected contributors — including the stars of the film

BY NADIA NEOPHYTOU



Han (left)
and Mosseri

A HEAD OF THE OSCARS ON April 25, three films have more in common than just competing for top honors. *Sound of Metal* and *Minari*, which both have six nominations, and *One Night in Miami...*, which has three, highlight how much more collaborative composers have become in the filmmaking process, whether working closely with actors on select songs or even doubling as a screenwriter.

For Abraham Marder, working with his brother, director Darius Marder, on the *Sound of Metal* script — about heavy metal drummer Ruben (played by first-ever Muslim best actor nominee Riz Ahmed) — also guided how he made the film's music. As co-screenwriter, Abraham identified how the film, which also earned a best original screenplay nod, could best express the experience of Ahmed's character going deaf by amplifying the sound design more than creating a traditional score that drew viewers into his world. "The film succeeds [by sitting] with Ruben in the toughest moments of quiet and havoc," says Abraham. "A score often seeks to smooth and remove these rough edges from films, but I felt this would have defeated the purpose of the story."

Though writer-directors like John Carpenter and Robert Rodriguez have also composed music for their movies, it's not often a screenwriter will compose a film's closing track — as Marder did with "Green," which was short-listed for best original song. He began working on the minimal and downtempo track when

Sound of Metal was first conceived, but didn't finish the lyrics until the last week of the movie's final sound mix, once he fully understood the depth of Ruben's experience.

From a musical perspective, understanding a film's characters is key — which is why, at the suggestion of director Lee Isaac Chung, *Minari* composer Emile Mosseri (who landed a best original score nomination) enlisted actress Yeri Han, who plays Monica in the film, for "Rain Song." Mosseri had already written the track when Chung tipped him off to Han's vocal skills. Working with her and Korean lyricist Stephanie Kong gave him the opportunity to add a deeper layer of emotion to the lullaby that helps close out Chung's tender immigrant story, which is also up for best picture.

Similarly, songwriter Sam Ashworth believes best original song nominee "Speak Now" wouldn't have become what it needed to be without drawing on Leslie Odom Jr.'s experience portraying Sam Cooke in *One Night in Miami...* Before they wrote the song over FaceTime, Ashworth, who previously worked with the Oscar-nominated actor on his 2019 album, *Mr.*, had the verses and melody for the tune, but knew the lyrics didn't feel right. "The song needed a real sense of urgency, hence the 'listen, listen, listen' and 'speak now,' but Leslie came with a strong conviction for the direction of the verses," says Ashworth. "Leslie's perspective from having played Sam Cooke was imperative. [He] had to live that character to be able to come out of it and process what it meant — and how it changed him." **B**

THROUGH THE YEARS

Since the first scoring category was introduced in 1934, it took nearly 30 years for a Black composer to be nominated. Now, for the first time, two Black composers are in the running



1961

Duke Ellington becomes the first Black composer nominated for best original score, for the romantic drama *Paris Blues*

1978

Quincy Jones becomes first Black composer to receive two career nods in scoring categories thanks to *The Wiz* (best original song score) and his previous nomination for 1967's *In Cold Blood* (best original score)



1984

Prince becomes first Black composer to win in a scoring category when *Purple Rain* takes home the award for best original song score

1985

Quincy Jones becomes first Black composer to receive three career nods in scoring categories with the addition of a best original score nomination for *The Color Purple*. Jones shares the nod with 11 other composers, including two other Black composers



1986

Herbie Hancock becomes first Black composer to win for best original score with French musical drama *Round Midnight*

2020

Terence Blanchard (*Da 5 Bloods*) and **Jon Batiste** (*Soul*) are both nominated for best original score, marking the first year that more than one film scored by a Black composer has been nominated in a scoring category

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Oscar Campaigning... On Clubhouse?

How an unusual awards season has prompted studios and distributors to test new methods for connecting with voters and fans alike

BY LYNDSEY HAVENS

MIKE KNOBLOCH, president of global film music and music publishing at Universal Pictures, has been reminiscing a lot lately about how the studio pulled off its first project under COVID-19 restraints. While recording the Academy Award-nominated orchestral score for the Tom Hanks Western *News of the World*, Knobloch says composer James

Newton Howard did the “unimaginable” by recording and executing his work from another country. While musicians safely gathered at London’s Abbey Road Studios, Howard remained at home in Los Angeles. “He had to come to terms with not being able to get on a plane and be in a small control room at a recording studio for any of the sessions,” says Knobloch, “and that was a tough adjustment.”

Although the pandemic has altered

the way in which all films, including Oscar contenders, are produced, an unexpected silver lining for *News of the World* is that such a successful pivot made for a compelling campaign narrative. While Knobloch stresses that a score’s ability to elevate the viewing experience should come first for award consideration, within industry circles, “being able to tell that story of innovation and the first-ever, never-been-done-before techniques that went into making it happen adds some depth and dimension to the final product,” he says. “Not that it should be graded on a curve, so to speak, but there is a pretty incredible story behind the making of the score under some more-challenging-than-ever constraints.”

Amy Dunning, vp music at Netflix — which is behind half of the films with best original song and/or score nominations — agrees that while this year’s nominees are all “very different” in scale, they “share an intimate sensibility” largely as a result of being crafted under similar COVID-19 restrictions. (*Da 5 Bloods* and *Mank* are vying for best original score, while *The*

Trial of the Chicago 7, *Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga* and *The Life Ahead* all have songs competing for a trophy.)

In terms of campaign strategy, rather than continuing its Netflix Soundcheck event that the platform hosted in 2019, the team switched to a virtual version called Netflix Playlist, which still allowed contenders to engage with the film-music community through performances and panel discussions. “Even without in-person events, the craftsmanship and work that talent invested in creating these songs and scores was celebrated,” says Dunning.

She also cites a successful virtual Q&A with best original song nominees Celeste and Daniel Pemberton (for “Hear My Voice” from *The Trial of the Chicago 7*), moderated by last year’s winner in the category, Elton John, who has been a vocal fan of the track. Dunning says another contender, “Husavik” from *Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga*, has “taken on a life of its own” thanks to a grassroots campaign, Óskar for Húsavík, started by residents of the real Icelandic town, which typically relies on tourism that has been all but absent the past year. As the Óskar for Húsavík website states: “When we learned that the song, that has become a sort of an anthem for our people, had a chance of an Oscar nomination, we sprung into action.”

The campaign trail doesn’t end with a nomination: Knobloch and his team are looking at ways to keep Howard top of mind before voting closes April 20. He says that, more than changing strategy, he has kept tabs on changing consumer habits through the pandemic, and adds that knowing how to best engage with fans in a direct (but safe) way is a top priority. “It’s pretty clear that people have been at home and haven’t been traveling or outdoors as much,” he says, citing Clubhouse as an effective online platform for connection and promotion.

“Obviously you can’t fill a concert hall with musicians and an audience, but I think it’d be pretty easy for everyone to grab their phones and get on Clubhouse and have James sit next to a piano and field questions about working with [director] Paul Greengrass and the challenges of recording remotely from L.A. to Abbey Road,” he says. “It’s a new platform that can be used to further that direct, organic connection with people and a way for James to interact with fans. Whether it’s during awards season or any other time.”

► COMPOSER **JOHN WILLIAMS** HAS THE MOST NOMINATIONS IN SCORING CATEGORIES (47) AND ALSO HAS RECEIVED FIVE NODS FOR BEST ORIGINAL SONG.

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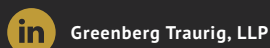


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Church photographed March 11 at Taylor House Studio in Nashville.

Styling by Katy Robbins
Karcher jacket, Thread Co. T-shirt, Diesel jeans, Lucchese boots, Ray-Ban sunglasses.

Stick That In Your Country Song



When **ERIC CHURCH** says he lives for the road, he means it. With a triple album and a fall arena tour planned, he's asking his fans across the political spectrum to consider a COVID-19 vaccination their way back to his shows: "You've got to get needles in arms"

BY MELINDA NEWMAN

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROBBY KLEIN



LAST FALL, ERIC

Church was standing in his office, perusing the concert photos hanging on the wall, when one caught his eye. It captures the defiant country superstar standing amid a throng of fans packed tightly around him, their arms raised and waving like a many-tentacled creature. Church looks up at the camera from behind his omnipresent Ray-Bans, a sly smile on his face.

Today, he has another perspective on the scene. “It looks so strange to see me in the middle of this pit, hugging everybody and taking shots of Jack Daniel’s,” says Church. “It’s like, ‘What universe...?’ It just seems so far away. All I’ve ever done is play live shows. That’s my whole gig.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the concert industry, it robbed Church — and every other artist — of the act that gives his fans unalloyed joy, fulfills his own sense of purpose and offers everyone a temporary respite from the outside world. “That has been the hardest thing about COVID: It takes what you do,” says Church. “I used the music and the stage to get me through some of those darker things that were more personal,” including a near-fatal blood clot in his chest in 2017 and the death of his younger brother in 2018. “Take that away, and you’ve got to deal with some of the stuff you maybe haven’t dealt with.”

To avoid spiraling, Church took a somewhat different tack from his fellow artists. He didn’t plan some elaborate livestreaming event; he didn’t envision clever new merchandise. Diving down his own rabbit hole, Church met with epidemiologists, venue managers and industry vets within his own circle, determined to figure out how to get back onstage safely. At first, his personal team of experts said touring wouldn’t return until spring 2023 at the earliest. Then, with unprecedented speed, pharmaceutical companies developed vaccines. “I view it as a godsent miracle,” he says. “It became very clear to me that the only way to really get back to normal is through vaccinations. You’ve got to get needles in arms.”

That Church would take a strong stance on what has become a politically divisive issue comes as little surprise to anyone familiar with him. From the start, he has followed his internal compass more than the demands of country radio — early singles “Two Pink Lines” and “Smoke a Little Smoke” glorified, respectively, the joys of seeing a negative pregnancy test and getting high — focused instead

on building his audience at concerts rather than on the airwaves.

In 2017, he crusaded against ticket scalping (“the bane of my existence”) and, with his team, developed a proprietary system that canceled over 25,000 price-inflated tickets for his Holding My Own tour. After the massacre at that year’s Route 91 Harvest festival in Las Vegas, Church — who had taken the stage two nights before the mass shooting and says he’s still haunted by it — spoke out in favor of common-sense gun reform; although he pointed out that he’s a gun owner and Second Amendment supporter, plenty of fans threatened to boycott him, and the National Rifle Association saw fit to remind him that its members have “a long memory — just ask the Dixie Chicks.”

But Church isn’t a throw-all-caution-to-the-wind renegade: He knows the value of being a symbol and the power that comes with a platform like his. That was obvious in February at the Super Bowl, where he performed the national anthem with R&B powerhouse Jazmine Sullivan. Church recalls Roc Nation, which produces the game’s entertainment, approaching him: “[They said] ‘Listen, we want a Caucasian country artist, and we want an African American female R&B artist.’” After a year that “was so divisive,” says Church, “I just liked what they were trying to do.”

He can also speak to his fans, not at them, in a way that has allowed him to lead with his actions while keeping audiences that can fill arenas. When asked about the incident earlier this

year when Morgan Wallen was caught on video saying the N-word, his response is one both Wallen devotees and those calling for his expulsion from the industry would have trouble finding fault with. Though Church (whom Wallen calls his musical hero) sent him a note telling him he was praying for him and to keep “hanging in there,” he’s resolute in addressing Wallen’s actions: “That was indefensible. I was heartbroken when it happened. I think Morgan’s trying to work on that and on himself. And I hope he does.”

That ability to speak to both sides of an issue without pandering or seeming insincere is, in part, what drove Church to approach *Billboard* with the idea of completing his vaccination on our cover. There’s also the small matter of his own plans for the coming





All Saints jacket, Thread Co.
T-shirt, Diesel jeans, Lucchese
boots, Ray-Ban sunglasses.

months: releasing a three-part album package, *Heart & Soul*, and setting out on a soon-to-be-announced fall arena tour to support it — one he only wants to happen at 100% capacity, with fans standing shoulder to shoulder, just like in that picture on his office wall.

That means he needs as many of those fans as possible to get vaccinated. In a CBS News poll published in March, 33% of Republican voters surveyed said they had no intention of getting a shot, compared with 10% of Democrats. Church's fans fall across the political spectrum — and he feels he's uniquely positioned to convince fence-sitters to hop over to his side, not browbeat anti-vaxxers into compliance. "If you believe you shouldn't, I don't have a problem with it. I'm a liberty guy, too. I get it," he says.

"But I view this a little differently than most other things. We've never encountered this."

ERIC CHURCH hardly seemed destined to become an ambassador for country music. From the earliest days of his career, he has never particularly cared for satisfying industry expectations. In 2010, unhappy with Universal Music Group Nashville's choices for the first singles from his second album, *Carolina*, he demanded "Smoke a Little Smoke" come next.

"I would look at me now and go, 'No fucking way we're doing that,'"

recalls Church with a laugh. At the time, though, it was his Alamo: He threatened to walk if the label didn't agree. UMG Nashville blinked — and, later, came to trust Church's instincts: "Smoke" became huge with his live audience, setting up 2011's *Chief*, the album that made him a bona fide arena headliner.

A couple of years earlier, on the heels of his debut, *Sinners Like Me*, Church's demands didn't meet quite so patient a response. He was opening for Rascal Flatts, an act as mainstream as he was edgy, and he wasn't too keen on abiding by certain tour restrictions. At Madison Square Garden in New York, he deliberately (and egregiously) exceeded his allotted stage time. Rascal Flatts fired him — and gave his spot to a 16-year-old Taylor Swift.

"It sucked that we lost the chance for those large audiences to experience him so early in the career, but when I heard the reason he was fired, I laughed and applauded," says UMG Nashville chairman/CEO Mike Dungan. "It was Eric being a badass, and I was proud of him." The label funded Church's next move: playing local clubs at every remaining tour stop on the group's own show nights. He called it the Me and Myself outing — a play on Rascal Flatts' "Me and My Gang" title.

"That was a real jerk move in a way," John Peets, Church's longtime manager at Q Prime South, says with a laugh. But it was also a career-defining one. "You can roll over, or you can stand up knowing you're going to live with a hurricane wind in your face and this might be the end," he continues. "Which guy are you going to be? I think that was one of the first kind of big, public things that set that tone."

Another came on Nov. 11, 2020, the night Church won entertainer of the year at the Country Music Association Awards after coming up short three previous times. He and Peets both saw the win as a directive to lead the best way Church knew how: by setting an example for a sensible return to touring. "I feel some responsibility now," says Church. As Peets adds: "You're going to wear the sash for a year, you're the leading entertainer. Maybe there are some things that we do a little differently because of that. That kind of led into helping forge a responsible way to come back to work."

Plenty of artists say they live for the road, but for Church it's not hyperbole. He calls playing his high-octane, three-hour-plus concerts his "whole gig." Today, the 43-year-old is speaking over Zoom from the wood-paneled writer's cabin he has used as an office for the past year, 20 minutes from the Nashville home he shares with wife Katherine and sons Boone, 9, and Hawk, 6. "I make music. I play music. I'm a dad and a husband," he says. "I like that part of my life."

He has never made a morning TV appearance, and he last played late night in 2016. He's an admitted social media Luddite. ("I have no passwords.") And though he has sold over 8 million albums, it's his Billboard Boxscore stats that really tell his story: He has raked in \$204.4 million and sold over 3.74 million tickets since 2012, and his 2019 Double Down tour — *Billboard's* highest-grossing country outing of that year — drew 56,521 people to Nashville's Nissan Stadium, breaking Swift's attendance record there.

Returning to that level of touring is easier said than done. Peets estimates

Church adopted his police chief grandfather's nickname and made it the title of the 2011 album that cemented his mammoth live audience.



that, in the (hopefully) waning days of the pandemic, it's still at least five times the usual work to figure out how a tour could work. Even the most basic tasks — ticketing, staffing, meet-and-greets, load-in and load-out — require deep reexamination, and there's no national standard: Counties and venues will, at least at first, each have their own safety protocols based on local vaccination rates. (See story, page 56.)

But Church's team has some ground rules in place. If new protocols incur extra expense, Peets says they hope "to try and keep as much as possible off the consumer and absorb the additional costs on our side." Since it's not yet clear if ticket buyers will be required to show proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test upon venue entry, Peets says tickets will go on sale much closer to show dates (likely around six weeks beforehand) instead of the usual several months prior.

Messina Touring Group CEO Louis Messina, who has been promoting Church's tours for nearly a decade, has spent the last few months working with Church's WME agent, Jay Williams, and venues, weaving and reweaving potential tour routings and start dates as buildings open and move toward operating at capacity. "We have planted our flag in the sand, but it's not in concrete," says Messina. The ground beneath them shifts almost daily.

LONG BEFORE IT entered the pandemic lexicon, Church was embracing the idea of forming a pod.

In January, wanting to shake up his recording process for *Heart & Soul*, he, his longtime producer Jay Joyce and his band took over Artisanal, a restaurant in the mountains of Banner Elk, N.C. (Church hails from Granite Falls, about an hour south), and turned it into a recording studio. Every few days, a rotating cast of songwriters and musicians came through to write and then immediately record in the evening. They churned out 24 songs in 28 days.

"Disruption works well with him," says Peets of Church. "He likes to make that three-point shot." After 2018's *Desperate Man*, which debuted at No. 1 on *Billboard's* Top Country Albums chart, Church felt like he needed a major change of pace; he loved the album, but "it felt entitled. It felt stagnant. It felt like we just showed up in the studio after playing an arena tour, and we just were supposed to make an album. There was no urgency, hunger, and I kind of wanted that back."

He came out of the mountain sessions with three albums: The rock-leaning *Heart*, out April 16; *&* (pronounced "ampersand"), available on vinyl or streaming only to members of the official Church Choir fan club starting April 20; and the groove-driven *Soul*, out April 23, with songs reflecting the Muscle Shoals and Motown influences on his sound.

Peets immediately loved the triple-album idea, though he admits to one concern at the time: "If he walks out of the situation with no record or one record, it'd be the most expensive record known in country music, probably." (UMG Nashville provided a budget, and Church covered the overage the ambitious project required.) And while Dungan says the label "completely understood the mission" for the project, it "didn't love the idea" of Church releasing some music that would be available only to his fan club.

They have been here before: In 2015, Church surprised 2,500 of his premium fan club members (the first of three levels of membership) with white vinyl copies of his album *Mr. Misunderstood* before his label had even heard it. Q Prime had purchased a press on the floor of a vinyl plant in Diepholz, Germany, to facilitate the order, plus an additional 12,500 copies for independent record stores. (Church is still a stakeholder in the press.) All told, 80,000 Choir members got the music for free (whether from vinyl, digital album download or early stream) and Dungan, understandably, was none too pleased. Like most matters between Church and his label, "we worked it out," says Dungan today. (According to Peets, they'll likely press 15,000 copies of *&* domestically.)

Church says he has reached an understanding with country radio, too. "There are a lot of people [who just want] to put something out that's going to go to No. 1 every time. And that's fine," he says. "That's just not my goal. I'm trying to push the narrative a bit for the whole industry, for the whole format." (It probably helps that he has managed to earn six solo Country Airplay No. 1s and another three as a collaborator.)

Still, he can't help occasionally poking a stick in the eye of the country establishment. Church didn't write the withering "Stick That in Your Country Song" (from *Heart*), but as soon as he heard it, he knew he had to record it: With its demands for hits to confront the real hardships people face, it's a not-so-subtle dig at radio stations, labels and fellow artists who place fluff over substance. Jeffrey Steele, the song's co-writer, declared it would be "suicide" for someone to cut

it — which was really all the incentive Church needed.

He made it the first *Heart & Soul* single. "There's no chance I'm not putting this out," Church recalls thinking. "I love how in your face it is. I love how honest it is. I love how Jeffrey thought no one in their right mind would record it and send it to radio."

WRITING AND recording one song nearly every day had a profound effect on Church. "It made me work harder as a writer — 'bout killed me," he says. "From a sleep standpoint, I've never really been that unhealthy. No matter what that night was, I had to go right back on the clock for the next day. It was almost manic. I could



not shut it off." By the end, he says, he had somehow begun writing songs in his dreams: "That was wild."

On *Heart & Soul*, Church's gift for storytelling shines. His cinematic details tell the listener everything they need to know about a character, often in one line: "The only pack I ever ran with were the cigarettes in my pocket," he sings on "Lone Wolf"; he sums up a torched romance on "Look Good and You Know It" with "I'm just choking on the smoke of a bridge I burned."

"I know these are big names to be throwing around, but Eric has always been a cross between Merle Haggard and Kris Kristofferson to me," says Grammy Award-winning songwriter Luke Laird, a frequent collaborator who co-wrote three songs on the new project. "Eric can take the simplest phrases and the same three chords we all know and turn it into brilliance. I've seen him throw away lines and even

entire songs that a lot of writers would kill to write."

Joyce says the immediacy of the project allowed Church to thrive. Singing songs that had been finished literally minutes earlier rather than months before, his voice has a newly commanding vitality, easily running from a bass growl to a falsetto. "He has always had that thing where he can sing a line and people just pay attention," says Joyce. "It's not like he's some fantastic opera singer. He's just a great communicator."

Nowhere is that skill more evident than on "Through My Ray-Bans," a love letter to his fans inspired by his experience at the Route 91 festival. "I'm not sure you get past something like that," he says of the tragedy. "That broke me in a lot of ways because that was my safe place — on that stage, around those people. A lot of fans had our T-shirt on that night when they died. That was a really, really, really tough thing to get through."

For Church, returning to the road is the only thing that could help repair those broken places. That's why he registered on waiting lists in multiple counties around Nashville as soon as he became vaccine-eligible — using his first name, Kenneth, so he wouldn't get a celebrity skip-the-line offer. It's also why, starting the night of the Academy of Country Music Awards (April 18), he'll appear in public service announcements for ACM Lifting Lives' vaccine education initiative, a partnership

with the Ad Council that will run at least through summer. By then, he'll hopefully be safe to "strap a guitar on" again: He's slated to play over a half dozen summer festivals, including Carolina Country Music Fest in Myrtle Beach, S.C.; Cheyenne Frontier Days in Wyoming; and Big Valley Jamboree in Camrose, Alberta.

"I just want to play shows," says Church. "Politics' job is to divide — that's how you win elections. Those things that unite us are music and sports. The times when, whether you're a Democrat or Republican or whatever, you throw your arm around the person next to you." And when his own tour comes to pass, that's what he's looking forward to most. He'll play the song "Holdin' My Own," during which, as always, he'll see his fans all put their arms around one another. "We become one," says Church. "We need that. I need that." **B**



Back To Live

With the constant rescheduling of tours and a tangled web of conflicting state laws, music fans and industry pros would be rightfully confused about when — and how — concerts will return. Look no further: Your burning questions about how to protect your health (and bank account) as the pandemic's end draws near are answered here

BY DAVE BROOKS

► When can I go to a concert?

That depends on where you live. The return of shows will be decided largely on a state-by-state basis by both governors and city leaders, not federal officials, although many states and private businesses will build their reopening strategies around guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Florida and Texas have already allowed concerts to resume, though not without some issues: Steve Aoki and Diplo each got warnings from local police and reproof from the mayor of Tampa, Fla., for performing in front of maskless crowds during Super Bowl weekend in February.

More restrictive states like New York and California have announced that outdoor concerts could resume as soon as April 1 if capacity is capped at 25%. Bright Eyes is moving forward with a rescheduled show on July 31 at Forest Hills Stadium in Queens, while Outside Lands organizers have put tickets on sale even as they moved the 60,000-attendees-per-day San Francisco festival from August to October.

► Does that mean my favorite big artist could still play this year?

Chances are low. While audiences may not mind being capped at 20% capacity, most acts still need 100% of their audience to play a show. "There's just not enough money at 20% to sustain a touring band and their crew," says tour manager Christian Coffey, who works with acts like A\$AP Rocky and Run the Jewels. Coffey says that most artists need to draw 70% to 80% capacity each night to break even. "And they still need their manager and driver and roadies and guitar techs to help the group look and sound their best. That's not possible if they're only earning 20% of the revenue they used to make."

► When will shows reach 100% capacity again?

So far, there's no definite answer. Experts like the National Independent Talent Organization's Nadia Prescher say most of their peers anticipate that two conditions must be met in order for touring to resume: Cities looking to host concerts must have 70% to 80% of their citizens vaccinated, and at least 70% of U.S. cities must have reached this goal for national touring to be economically viable.

It also depends on what kind of artist you're hoping to see. For artists who play large theaters or amphitheaters with capacities in the 2,000- to 10,000-seat range, there must be sufficient connectivity between tour route stops allowing an act to play a show every 300 to 400 miles and thus sustain the costs of playing big venues. But those artists could also choose to play smaller venues in a set geographic area — say, the Southwest trio of New Mexico, Arizona and Texas — much as smaller, independent artists do in order to build a following. They could also opt for underplays and special engagements, especially in Los Angeles and New York, in which major artists play intimate venues and a label or sponsor picks up part of the cost. Those exceptions aside, says Prescher, the return of large-scale touring — which generates the bulk of live business revenue

— will really need most states open at the same time to truly work.

► Could I at least see my favorite indie act sooner?

Maybe. Smaller clubs are expected to reopen before arenas, and some artists have tour dates mapped already — like the Grammy Award-nominated Black Pumas, who have 13 shows scheduled through late April and May in locales like Chicago, Pittsburgh, Brooklyn and Austin.

► How long will all of this take?

As of mid-March, the United States was vaccinating about 2.5 million Americans per day, according to Bloomberg's COVID-19 tracker, which measures the speed of the rollout. At that pace, vaccinating 70% to 85% of the population would take until the end of the year, according to leading government infectious-disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci.

► What do promoters risk if they book a band and then the show gets pushed back or canceled due to COVID-19?

Losing the deposit they paid the band, which in many cases can be 50% to 100% of the total fee the artist was set to earn at the show. Prior to the pandemic, promoters were able to rely on force majeure or "act of God" contract provisions, which protected show organizers from cancellations caused by events beyond their control. But savvy agents are demanding changes to those provisions so that their artists don't risk having half of their tour canceled because of an overzealous promoter.

► Will I have to prove I'm vaccinated to attend a concert?

Ticketmaster says it has technology to allow fans to digitally verify their vaccine status after they purchase a ticket, but it hasn't provided many details on how it will work, and president Mark Yovich says that the company would only use that if local and state health officials mandated it. "Ticketmaster's goal is to provide enough flexibility and options so that venues and fans have multiple paths to return to events," says Yovich, adding that the company's development strategy is based on "what's greenlit by local officials and desired by clients."

In New York, at least, starting April 1, fans must provide evidence they've been vaccinated or tested negative for COVID-19 to attend reduced-capacity events. Proof can be as easy as producing a copy of your inoculation card at the venue door.

► Will I still have to wear a mask?

Most public health officials, including Fauci, believe that vaccinated adults will be required to wear masks in public buildings through the end of 2021 to prevent the spread of COVID-19 variants.

► I'm not vaccinated. Is it dangerous for me to go to an indoor venue?

Initially, public health officials believed concerts — especially indoor shows with fans tightly packed together — posed a significant risk for the spread of COVID-19. But a recent German study found that indoor concerts may pose a low risk of viral spread if the venue is properly ventilated. Researchers from the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg in Saxony-Anhalt conducted an experiment in which 1,200 volunteers attended an August concert by singer Tim Bendzko at a Leipzig arena. Participants were armed with digital movement tracers and fluorescent-dyed hand disinfectant that allowed measurement of physical interaction during the show; the researchers even used a fog machine to simulate the spread of aerosolized droplets that could cause infections. Their analysis found that the risk of COVID-19 infection was reduced by 90% if the air inside the venue was constantly recirculated with outside air.

In a recent address to the Association of Performing Arts Professionals, Fauci expressed support for the findings, noting that “if the indoor venue is well-ventilated and maybe has some HEPA filters, I think you could then start getting back to almost full capacity of seating.”

That said, the study also found that periods of prolonged contact were highest when participants lined up to enter the venue at showtime, as well as during breaks, when they used the bathroom and bought beverages. They were safest when they remained in their seats for the duration of the show — so for now, experts say fans who aren't vaccinated should do the same.

► What kind of technology is being developed to

minimize viral spread at concerts?

In October, Ticketmaster rolled out its SmartEvent platform, which repurposes some of the smartphone technology it had developed to fight ticket scalping into a platform for facilitating contactless visits to concert venues. Ticketmaster's main technological innovation — the digital ticket — was designed to phase out print-at-home tickets. Mobile tickets can't be duplicated by scalpers, but they can be easily transferred from the box office to the fan, eliminating lines at will call. Ticketmaster has also outlined plans to create applications allowing fans to order food on their phones, form a digital bathroom line and use GPS to assist with contact tracing if infections at a show are reported.

► Will artists continue livestreaming concerts once in-person shows come back?

Livestreaming won't just stick around — many believe it will continue to grow, not as a replacement for live events but as a new fan offering that coexists with an album or tour cycle. “It's one more tentpole moment you can create around an artist's career,” says Underoath manager Randy Nichols — much like a comedian's TV special or the DVDs of the “final show of the tour” concerts of yore. High-production value livestreams have proved profitable, with some sales in the seven figures: Dua Lipa's *Studio 2054* took in over \$5.3 million in ticket sales (moving 284,000 units) according to her management company, TaP Music, and over 5 million people tuned in, thanks in part to agreements to stream the performance for free in India and China. Niall Horan sold over 125,000 tickets for his livestream concert at London's Royal Albert Hall, netting \$2.5 million.

“Because of the pandemic, we've taught fans to embrace this new platform they weren't comfortable with before,” says Nichols. “It will live on after the pandemic, even if the application is applied differently.”

Save The Date

As COVID-19 cases continue to decline, a full-scale recovery for the live business looks ever more possible in the near future. Watch these dates to track the comeback of concerts in the United States

April 24

With under a month to go, dance festival Ubbi Dubbi — a 25,000-person camping event near Dallas with major artists like Kaskade and Illenium — will be an early test for vaccine-era events. Two days later, Moon Crush, a socially distanced concert vacation in Miramar Beach, Fla., is set to begin.

May 1

President Joe Biden has instructed states to make all Americans eligible for vaccination by this date; how close the country comes will determine when concerts resume.

June 4

Florida has hardly been a leader when it comes to pandemic safety precautions, but if Gulf Coast Jam in Panama City happens, it will still be a welcome indicator of progress — particularly for Nashville and its country headliners.

Aug. 7

Lady Gaga's rescheduled Chromatica Ball stadium shows touch down stateside after a planned kickoff in Europe in July; it's one of the first big superstar treks on the calendar.

Aug. 28

High-priced residencies have fueled billions of dollars of spending in Las Vegas; if Morrissey's at the Colosseum at Caesar's Palace goes off as planned, it'll bode well for the revival of that business.

Oct. 29

Outside Lands, which typically takes place during August in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, will certainly be colder this year — but attendees probably won't mind if one of the biggest music festivals in the country proceeds according to plan.

—D.B.

The End Times Aren't Nigh!

LAST MARCH, IN THE wake of the first pandemic-induced lockdowns worldwide, touring professionals descended into doomsday thinking. But thanks to a \$15 billion aid package passed in the final days of the Trump administration, the Biden government's \$1.9 trillion capital intervention and revenue generated by the rapid growth of livestreaming, the live space is intact and preparing to open — at reduced capacity, at first — this spring. Here are three of the scariest

predictions for what would happen — and why, thankfully, they didn't come true.

A REQUIEM FOR INDIE VENUES

Bleeding cash and reeling from years of lopsided corporate competition, over 3,000 U.S. indie promoters came together in June to form the National Independent Venue Association, sounding the alarm that without government aid, 90% of U.S. venues would close by the end of 2020. Following the extensive Save Our Stages campaign, however, \$15 billion in entertainment industry relief was approved in December, allowing many indie venue owners (along with cinemas, museums and other cultural institutions)

to stay afloat as they awaited the funds. The Small Business Administration says those funds will become available in May.

LEVERAGE, LOST

After a Live Nation memo that leaked in June detailed plans to renegotiate artist contracts due to the pandemic, many of those performers (and their agents) feared the company would limit access to major festivals and available concert dates unless they agreed to accept less money and more financial risk. Live Nation quickly retracted the key points of the memo, however, after it went public. A high-ranking source at the company told *Billboard* an internal analysis at Live Nation concluded

that the plan would backfire, opening the door for a new, well-capitalized competitor to enter the space.

BYE BYE, AGENTS

With a liquidity crisis at Paradigm, poorly timed acquisitions at Endeavor and layoffs at APA, UTA and Creative Artists Agency, a major meltdown looked likely, with agencies either crushed by mounting debts or spun off by their new private equity partners, paving the way for managers to take over their duties. For better or worse, though, agents stayed busy as the pandemic dragged on — cancelling and rebooking dates for their clients ad nauseam.

—D.B.

DOLLARS AND SENSE

Without advertisers or major investors, Bandcamp turned a profit helping musicians at all levels make a living. Now, as payment models in the streaming era come under scrutiny, will its influence grow?

BY TATIANA CIRISANO
PHOTOGRAPHED BY JESSICA CHOU

Ethan Diamond
(left) and Josh Kim
photographed March 15
in San Francisco.



D

DYLAN BALDI, THE FRONTMAN OF THE CULT

favorite garage-rock band Cloud Nothings, has a new favorite holiday. “I don’t care about Christmas anymore,” he jokes over the phone from his home in Philadelphia. “In a way, this feels like ‘Music Day.’”

He’s talking about Bandcamp Fridays, when the online music marketplace Bandcamp waives its cut of sales — 15% of digital, 10% of physical — and passes along all revenue to artists and their closest stakeholders (like labels and managers). Originally launched as a single-day effort on March 20, 2020, to help artists at the start of the COVID-19 crisis, the event stuck around as it became clear the pandemic wasn’t going anywhere either. So far, the platform has held 11 Bandcamp Fridays, directing \$48.3 million toward artists and labels from over 800,000 customers — and that’s on top of the \$148 million it has paid out from normal sales during that time frame.

With touring off the table for now, Baldi speaks for countless other acts when he says that Bandcamp is “honestly the only way” that his band currently makes money. Last July, Cloud Nothings launched a subscrip-

tion offering fans a monthly EP available exclusively on Bandcamp at two price tiers (\$5 and \$9 per month). With around 600 current subscribers, the program brings in between \$3,000 and \$5,400 monthly. The band, which in February released its seventh album, *The Shadow I Remember*, makes an additional \$50 to \$100 per day from Bandcamp sales, which jump to about \$600 on Bandcamp Fridays. (The money is split among Cloud Nothings’ four members and their management, Monster Artist Management, which waived its cut during the early stages of the pandemic to aid the group’s financial stability.)

Bandcamp Fridays have also been a lifeline for independent labels, like Philadelphia-based Get Better Records, which brings in four figures each time around. “Losing out on that, where would you be?” says founder Alex Lichtenauer, who started Get Better in 2009 to promote LGBTQ artists and also performs in post-punk trio Control Top. “If you’re a label like us, that’s how you’ve been surviving this past year.” Even so, Get Better is one of many labels (including ANTI- and Merge Records) that have followed Bandcamp’s lead by waiving their own earnings on some Bandcamp

Fridays or donating them to a charity.

In a time of great isolation and fewer communal music experiences, however, the tradition hasn’t only benefited creators — it has become a beacon for fans, too. Twitter and Instagram are alight with cheery announcements of new merchandise and music, while the jokey webpage IsItBandcampFriday.com broadcasts a resounding yes. “It’s nice to have this thing people can all share on one day,” says Baldi, “like a TV show everyone’s watching.”

The now-monthly event, which will continue through at least May, has also sparked more serious conversations. The loss of touring laid bare the shaky economics of most music careers and forced the industry to grapple with an uncomfortable truth: Although music streaming has revived the business as a whole, artists are often the last to earn a profit. Over the past year, artists and executives have increasingly called out streaming services like Spotify for its paltry royalty rate (approximately 0.0038 cents per stream) and pro rata payment model, which pools subscriber revenue and doles out earnings based on rights holders’ share of total streams — a system critics say unfairly benefits superstars over smaller artists.

Comparing the two companies may be too simplistic, but many of those same critics point to Bandcamp, often in the same breath, as proof that — yes! — paying artists what they’re worth and making money needn’t be mutually exclusive. Dreamed up by tech entrepreneur Ethan Diamond in 2007, Bandcamp says it has been profitable since 2012, a milestone it achieved without running ads and with taking only one small initial investment from True Ventures. The company says it earns 80% of its revenue through the cut it takes from sales, with the remaining 20% coming from services like Bandcamp Pro (\$10 per month) and Bandcamp for Labels (\$20 or \$50 per month, depending on roster size), which offer additional tools and analytics. To date, it has paid out over \$702 million to hundreds of thousands of artists and more than 9,000 labels that can receive the money relatively quickly: Bandcamp payments are delivered through PayPal within 48 hours.

In achieving all this, Bandcamp has perhaps become the tech world’s biggest ally of working- and middle-class musicians. Acts of all levels use Bandcamp, but it has particularly suited those artists with few resources simply looking to make a decent living off their work, filling a void that has become more pronounced as the music industry has gone digital. The company’s biggest cheerleaders speak of their love for Bandcamp as if it were a band itself or an institution of a bygone era.

“Bandcamp, to me, is that great indie record store,” says Matt Pollack, GM of Monotone, a management company whose roster includes Jack White and Margo Price. “It’s like in [the movie] *High Fidelity*, where you walk in and there’s other like-minded people. It’s not, ‘I got here because of an algorithm.’”

Bandcamp, in fact, had already opened its own record store and headquarters in Oakland, Calif., in 2019. But it has recently strived to be much more than that. Last year, the company expanded its vinyl pressing service, added a livestream tool and grew its head count by 40% to 80 staffers — the company’s biggest hiring year yet. So far, Bandcamp has been particularly successful at upending conventional industry wisdom about



Baldi (left) and Dupuis

“HELPING ARTISTS GET PAID IS A CONVERSATION I WANT HAPPENING ACROSS ALL BUSINESSES IN THE MUSIC SPACE.”

— DIAMOND

what fans will pay for and why. Now, as the company balances its ambitions with the values that have shaped its slow and steady path to profitability, Bandcamp will find out just how far good intentions can take it.



IN 2007, ETHAN DIAMOND WAS TRYING TO BUY

a download of an indie band's album when he ran into some issues. First, the band's webpage wouldn't load. Then, the download failed. Finally, Diamond sent a message to the band's general information email address. The lead singer wrote back with an apology and a zip file of the album — one filled with mislabeled, low-quality MP3s.

“This was like all bands in 2007 of a certain level,” recalls Diamond, chatting over video from his home in San Francisco; he's wearing a T-shirt for local funk-rock band The Bluchunks. “I thought, ‘This band should be really successful,’” he continues, looking a little peeved at the memory. “The idea that something was preventing that from happening really bothered me.”

He had a hopeful thought: Maybe fans had turned to piracy not because of the cost of music but the method of buying it. “The real problem was that people were so distanced from the creators,” says Diamond, who sold his first company, the email service Oddpost, to Yahoo in 2004 for reportedly close to \$30 million. “You go to iTunes to buy a record, and you're buying it from Apple, and maybe your money eventually gets to the person you want to support. With streaming, it has gotten even more abstract. You're not even having that moment of, ‘I am buying this record.’”

He envisioned a better, cleaner version of Myspace geared toward musicians who could personalize their pages and sell music directly to fans — all without having to “completely give your identity over” to the platform, he says. Diamond took the idea to his former Oddpost colleague Shawn Grunberger (co-founder and current chief technology officer); they hired Joe Holt and Neal Tucker as founding engineers, and together the four launched the website in 2008. “It was like, ‘OK, let's do this,’” recalls Diamond. “‘Let's make this thing that I really want to exist.’”

Musicians have good reason to be skeptical of the many businesses that brand themselves as “artist first.” But with his earnest enthusiasm and habit of talking about the music business in conceptual, almost philosophical terms, Diamond, 49, does not come across as the average Bay Area tech bro. At one point in the conversation, he refers to an anecdote from a years-old *New Yorker* article about Prince, in which the artist



Diamond

instructed the co-writer of his memoir to write down the phrase “music is healing” before anything else. “I love that story,” says Diamond, who grew up playing saxophone in a jazz band. “That's the first thing that came out of his mouth!”

Bandcamp's commitment to ethical business is what attracted Josh Kim to sign on as COO six years ago. “I was like, ‘Let me see if these people are for real,’” says Kim. A friendly, polite 35-year-old who joins our first call with a bandanna tied around his forehead and a mic stand in the corner of his room, he had been disillusioned by the music business as an indie-folk artist himself. “Within five minutes of talking with Ethan and Sean, it was clear.”

At first, though, Bandcamp did not look like a game-changing startup. In its earliest days, it was a haven for niche subgenres like video game soundtracks (still popular on the platform today), field recordings from faraway places (like *The Golden Flowers of Channel Island* by Dolphins Into the Future) and music for subcultures like “furrries” (people who dress as animals) and “bronies” (male *My Little Pony* enthusiasts). Diamond remembers a week when a student-produced college

musical was among the top sellers.

Bandcamp also wasn't making money, having launched as a site that was free to use. But as its community grew, Diamond began to view profitability as a bigger issue. “If we're presenting ourselves as an important way for artists to build careers and make money,” he says, “for us not to be operating as a company that is going to be here for the foreseeable future — how can you have those two things next to each other?”

So in 2010, Diamond introduced the revenue-share model that Bandcamp uses today, explaining in a lengthy, candid blog post his company's motivations. Diamond calls this “the hardest part in Bandcamp's history” because he feared disappointing the community, and indeed, some disgruntled artists left the platform. But the switch was widely met with support, and within two years, the company processed enough sales to become profitable. “If you're making money from fans and advertisers, and then out of that money you're having to pay the artists, music is actually your cost — and you want that cost to go down,” says Kim. “But we want our artists to sell more music and make more

money because that's the only way we do."

The tradeoff of this approach, they say, was the speed at which Bandcamp could — or couldn't — evolve. Unwilling to give up control of the company in exchange for more investment capital, the team had to tick off milestones slowly: the ability to sell merchandise in 2012; user accounts for fans in 2013; similar accounts for labels in 2014. ("I think there was an assumption among labels that Bandcamp was anti-label," adds Diamond, "when really, four of us were working on the site, and we didn't have a chance to make [label pages].") In 2016, the company launched its editorial division, Bandcamp Daily, which features artist interviews and covers such far-flung topics as the disco-flavored "bubblegum music" of 1980s South Africa.

Human curation is not unique to Bandcamp, but it is behind one of its most notable success stories. In 2011, Austin-based folk musician Alejandro Rose-Garcia, who records as Shakey Graves, released his debut album, *Roll the Bones*, exclusively to Bandcamp with a pay-what-you-want system and zero promotion. A Bandcamp staffer added it to the website's homepage rotation anyway, though. "I wanted to take

a more anti-capitalistic and DIY approach," says Rose-Garcia. "Bandcamp just stumbled into my vision."

Over the past decade, *Roll the Bones* has sold more than 100,000 copies exclusively through Bandcamp at the same flexible price point, with fans paying an average of \$5.94 for it. To date, Bandcamp sales of his albums (not including merch) have made up about a quarter of his income from music sales. For the album's 10th anniversary in April, Rose-Garcia put it on streaming services, but he still makes his entire catalog available at Bandcamp on a pay-what-you-want basis for 72 hours starting every Feb. 9, which Austin's mayor declared Shakey Graves Day in 2012. "This is the organic way that I really did want my music to bleed out onto the internet," says Rose-Garcia. "Bandcamp sort of has that in its code."

The site's community culture, which includes reviews and public profiles with wish lists and purchase history, translates to hard dollars. "Bandcamp is very much a fandom platform," says MIDiA Research managing director Mark Mulligan. "Fans go there to express their support for artists." Those interviewed for this story all say the majority of fans pay the suggested prices or

more for pay-what-you-want items. Sadie Dupuis, of the rock band Speedy Ortiz and the solo project Sad13, marvels that fans often calculate credit card processing fees and pay extra to cover them. "I've had people tell me they wish there was a check box to cover the fees for the artist," she says. "Those are the kinds of fans that Bandcamp is attracting."

It also attracts like-minded employees, to whom the company's emphasis on transparency, accessibility and corporate responsibility also appeals. Although Bandcamp has an office, it has always been the norm for employees to work remotely from across the globe, and about three-quarters of them do, signing on from locales like Paris, Tokyo and Nairobi, Kenya. Its "careers" page has an unusually detailed breakdown of its hiring process and the timeline on which candidates can expect to hear back about an application. Each year, Bandcamp invites employees, artists and labels to meetups where they can discuss ideas for future projects, plus do karaoke. The company also makes its politics clear: In addition to organizing other fundraisers, it now allocates \$30,000 annually to partner with racial justice organizations.

And although Bandcamp has staffed up significantly, Kim says its revenue-share model serves as a kind of compass since Bandcamp's income is directly tied to that of its artist and label users. "Our goal is generally to prioritize the things that are going to have the biggest impact on the overall sales for each artist," says Kim.

Half of Bandcamp's revenue-share dollars come from physical sales, so in 2019, the company began testing a vinyl pressing service that would make it easier for artists to cash in on the ongoing vinyl resurgence. U.S. vinyl sales grew 46.2% between 2019 and 2020, to a record 27.54 million records sold, according to MRC Data — and Bandcamp alone sold 2 million records globally, nearly doubling its count from the year before. The service allows artists to crowdfund vinyl projects, after which Bandcamp coordinates production, shipping and customer support. After testing the offering with 50 pilot vinyl projects, Bandcamp sent invites to 10,000 more artists this past January.

Two months earlier, as the industry was still learning the best ways to monetize digital concerts, Bandcamp launched Bandcamp Live, a ticketed livestreaming platform that also lets artists sell music and merch during streams. Growing that tool, along with duplicating the vinyl pressing service for other physical goods, are among Diamond's next priorities.

"Being at a point now where [Bandcamp] is working, and all we have to do is expand the ways for fans to directly support artists, it's just a pleasure," he says. "We're at a point where it's really, really fun."



ON ELECTION DAY THIS PAST NOVEMBER,

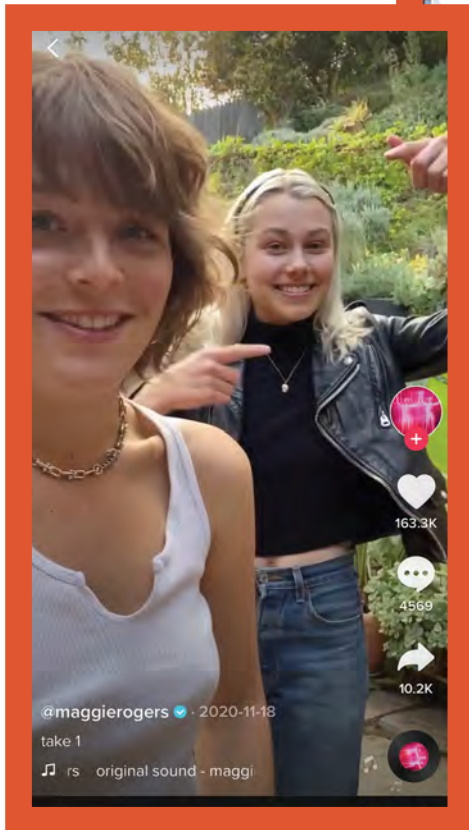
Grammy Award-nominated singer-songwriter Phoebe Bridgers blurted out a semi-serious promise on Twitter: "if trump loses I will cover iris by the goo goo dolls."

What seemed like a joke got real after Maggie Rogers offered background vocals, the Goo Goo Dolls gave their blessing, and Joe Biden, of course, won. But rather than release the cover widely on streaming services, Bridgers and Rogers put it on Bandcamp, where it was available as a pay-what-you-want exclusive for just 24 hours on Nov. 13.

If that already felt like a music fan's pandemic-time



From left: Rogers and Bridgers on TikTok celebrated the success of their "Iris" cover in November; Rose-Garcia (center) onstage in Austin in 2020.



fever dream, what happened next was even wilder: Despite its limited availability, the cover sold more than 46,900 downloads and earned over \$173,000, all of which went to Fair Fight Action, voting activist Stacey Abrams' organization fighting voter suppression. The track also debuted on the Billboard Hot 100 at an impressive No. 57 (just behind a Travis Scott song), marking Bridgers' and Rogers' debut entries on the chart and the first Hot 100 success exclusively driven by Band-

Dupuis, who lives with Baldi (they're a longtime couple), tweeted that she made 500% more money in November from Bandcamp than she did that month from Spotify. She sees sharing that information as central to her work as a member of the Union of Musicians and Allied Workers (UMAW), which last fall launched a Justice at Spotify campaign to raise the service's per-stream rate to a penny. "The more we talk about this stuff, a couple more people find out and maybe buy [music in] a different way that compensates people more adequately," she says.

On a "really good" Bandcamp Friday, Dupuis can bring in \$5,000, but she says she still struggles to make up for lost touring income. (For artists with several band-

music business, SoundCloud in March became the first major streaming service to implement a so-called "user-centric" payment system for some artists, who will be paid based on the revenue generated by individual fans, not how many streams the artist accrues compared with the overall pie. Even Spotify seems to be feeling some pressure. On March 18 — days after UMW held an international protest at Spotify offices in 31 cities — the company launched a "Loud & Clear" website breaking down its payment process.

In the meantime, Bandcamp's influence is being felt in smaller but no less significant ways, says Monotone's Pollack. In January, singer-songwriter client Pete Yorn independently released the covers album *Pete Yorn Sings the Classics* on Bandcamp ahead of it hitting streaming services — a move Pollack believed would better monetize the album as well as give fans a moment to gather around. "That changes the whole outlook from how we were doing music a year ago," he says. "All of a sudden, we're radically rethinking the release schedule. I do think Bandcamp is going to change things going forward, and it already has."

For all the talk of how much Bandcamp could reshape various corners of the music industry, Diamond is surprisingly modest about the company's future. He is not interested in replacing labels, making flashy acquisitions or becoming an alternative streaming service — all the things one could imagine the company reaching for. Of course there are more features he would like to add. But the most powerful thing Bandcamp can do, in Diamond's eyes, is not much at all. "The vision for the future of the company is really not that different from what it has been all along," he says. Stray too far, and it risks losing what makes it work.

And for many of the artists who rely on it, that is more than enough. "Having Bandcamp around is peace of mind, in a way," says Rose-Garcia. "It's comforting to know that it works, and it's there." **b**

"WE WANT OUR ARTISTS TO SELL MORE MUSIC AND MAKE MORE MONEY BECAUSE THAT'S THE ONLY WAY WE DO."

— KIM

camp. "When given the chance," says Kim, "fans will go above and beyond and support artists all the time."

With wins like the "Iris" cover, many artists hope the increased attention on Bandcamp will force a shift in the way the music industry compensates them. That's why in December, as Spotify rolled out its annual Wrapped campaign summing up users' listening habits for the past year, some artists and fans used the occasion to call attention to its payment model. "Your spotify wrapped is basically just a list of artists you owe money to lol," Baldi wrote in a semi-viral tweet from the @CloudNothings account. The music blog aggregator Hype Machine even has a tool that analyzes users' Wrapped playlists — and generates links to buy the music on Bandcamp.

mates or large teams, that money can be spread even thinner.) She is optimistic yet frank about how much the company can potentially change the industry around it. "It's not like Bandcamp has made it so that things are normal," she says. "But it has made it so things are a bit less hard."

Diamond noticed the Wrapped chatter too, though he chooses his words carefully and talks about the debate more broadly. "I was happy to see artists talking about this," he says. "Bandcamp's mission of helping artists get paid is a conversation I want happening across all businesses in the music space, and any business that's looking at how to do that better, that's fantastic."

Some appear to be. In a watershed moment for the



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SHAWN TRELL

ON THIS WELL DESERVED RECOGNITION.

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talent, integrity, loyalty and
friendship.**

AEG
PRESENTS

The Players

From left: Shakira; 50 Cent; Bob Dylan; an unidentified protestor in St. Paul, Minn., in March; and Stevie Nicks.



Top Music Lawyers 2021

THE BEST LEGAL MINDS IN THE BUSINESS WERE TESTED IN THE PAST YEAR BY
A LAND RUSH OF NEGOTIATIONS, NEW BUSINESS MODELS FROM LIVESTREAMING TO NFTs
AND THE ONGOING NEED TO ADVOCATE FOR THEIR CLIENTS — AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

THROUGH IT ALL, THE DEALS DID NOT STOP. NOR DID CALLS for greater fairness and equality, both within and beyond the music business.

Over the past tumultuous year, the leading music attorneys chosen for the 2021 edition of *Billboard's* Top Music Lawyers — nominated by their firms and peers and chosen by our editors — have played an essential role.

Those helping clients to buy and sell recording and publishing catalogs were busier than ever. Among the headline-grabbing transactions were Universal Music Publishing Group's acquisition of Bob Dylan's iconic catalog, Primary Wave's creation of a joint venture with Stevie Nicks after acquiring a majority share of her publishing copyrights and the buying spree of Hipgnosis Songs Fund, which brought the catalogs of creators from 50 Cent to Shakira under its wide umbrella.

Lawyers involved in the live-touring sector came to the aid of their clients by diving into an alphabet soup of pandemic relief packages: PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) and EIDL (Economic Injury Disaster Loan) administered by the SBA (Small Business Administration). That federal agency will open applications on April 8 for the \$15 billion SVOG (Shuttered Venue Operators Grant) program.

In Washington, D.C., one of the longest-running legal dramas in the music business came to a surprising end when a U.S. Department of Justice official revealed in January that the DOJ had concluded its review of the decades-old

consent decrees guiding the operation of ASCAP and BMI — without recommending change. The outgoing assistant attorney general for the antitrust division, Makan Delrahim, urged a fresh DOJ review of the consent decrees every five years.

Other concerns will not wait. The calls for racial and social justice heard across the nation, in the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020 and the recent condemnations of anti-Asian violence, have resonated within the music business legal community as well. On this year's list are firms that have shaken up their ranks to become more diverse while acknowledging more needs to be done.

"We have all been forced to reassess racism and social injustice," says Adam Van Straten of Van Straten Solicitors. "Stakeholders at all levels started taking the extremely necessary and overdue steps to support changes within the industry."

Perhaps the greatest support that the top music lawyers can offer to bring about change is to advocate for creators and clients as they speak out through their work.

"Use your platform to raise awareness of the causes you care about," says anti-discrimination litigator Doug Wigdor. "Whether it be politics, racial justice, women's rights, the environment, corporate malfeasance or some other issue, artists should embrace using the tools they have to fight for what they believe in."

—THOM DUFFY

MAJOR MUSIC GROUPS

Jeffrey Harleston

GENERAL COUNSEL/EXECUTIVE VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Universal Music Group

Adam Barker

DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS

Universal Music U.K.

Saheli Datta

EXECUTIVE VP/CHIEF COMPLIANCE OFFICER AND EMPLOYMENT COUNSEL

Universal Music Group

Steve Gawley

EXECUTIVE VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Universal Music Group

Nicola Levy

EXECUTIVE VP DIGITAL BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Universal Music Group

Alasdair McMullan

EXECUTIVE VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS/GLOBAL HEAD OF LITIGATION

Universal Music Group

Michael Seltzer

EXECUTIVE VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS/HEAD OF COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS

Universal Music Group

Magda Vives

SENIOR VP LEGAL AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS, LATIN AMERICA

Universal Music Latin America Entertainment

Reflecting on the past year, Harleston says he takes pride in how the UMG team — its labels, its publishing company and more — came together while working remotely “to not only respond to the impact of the pandemic on our artists and our staff, but also to embrace uncomfortable conversations and lead meaningful initiatives to address systemic issues around racial inequality and social justice in our own company, our industry and the world at large.” In response to calls for racial justice, UMG last June announced its Task Force for Meaningful Change, connecting 40 executives from its different labels and business units around the world, co-chaired by Harleston and Motown Records chairman/CEO Ethiopia Habtemariam. “We have much more work to do,” says Harleston. “But it was rewarding to see Universal Music come together in a way I hadn’t experienced in my almost 30 years.”

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“Our resilience. While the world was in quarantine and lockdown, artists found the most innovative ways to continue to create and share their voice with the world. From Andrea Bocelli’s inspiring Easter concert to Billie Eilish’s inspiring Easter concert to Justin Bieber’s Valentine’s Day livestream, artists continue to persevere in a time when we need them the most.” —Harleston

Paul Robinson

EXECUTIVE VP/GENERAL COUNSEL

Warner Music Group

Brad Cohen

SENIOR VP/HEAD OF LITIGATION

Warner Music Group

Jon Glass

SENIOR VP/HEAD OF DIGITAL LEGAL AFFAIRS

Warner Music Group

Maryrose Maness

SENIOR VP/DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL

Warner Music Group

Trent Tappe

SENIOR VP/DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL/CHIEF COMPLIANCE OFFICER

Warner Music Group

“In 2020, during the absolute worst of times,” says Robinson, 62, “we managed to go public, to grow our business — both organically and by doing more [mergers and acquisitions] and also by doing innovative licensing deals with emerging digital platforms — and to do our part for social justice and diversity, equity and inclusion. I’m proud of these successes and the efforts of our legal and business affairs team in supporting them.” **MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE** “A reminder to us to expect the unexpected. It would have been easy to think, given the growth our industry experienced from 2015 to 2019, that nothing could go wrong. This was a wakeup call. But having experienced 15 years of digital disruption and come out the other side, our industry is very adaptable.” —Robinson

Julie Swidler

EXECUTIVE VP BUSINESS AFFAIRS/GENERAL COUNSEL

Sony Music Entertainment

Stu Bondell

EXECUTIVE VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL

Sony Music Entertainment

Jeff Walker

EXECUTIVE VP/HEAD OF BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS, GLOBAL DIGITAL BUSINESS

Sony Music Entertainment

Wade Leak

EXECUTIVE VP/DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL/CHIEF COMPLIANCE, ETHICS AND PRIVACY OFFICER

Sony Music Entertainment

Susan Meisel

SENIOR VP/CORPORATE DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL

Sony Music Entertainment

During the pandemic, while ensuring that Sony was “doing everything as a company to protect the health and safety of our people,” says Swidler, the company’s legal team was also working “to protect our artists’ works.” Sony took part in a multicompany industry action against internet service provider Cox Communications, and in January, a federal judge upheld a \$1 billion ruling against Cox for infringing 10,000 musical works. In the past year, says Swidler, Sony



Aiko

has closed “several new podcasting joint ventures, partnerships and content deals,” and, in February, Sony’s attorneys worked on the company’s purchase of Kobalt’s recorded-music divisions, including AWAL, offering “another level of service to the independent music community,” says Meisel. At a time of social and racial reckoning, the legal team also was involved in creating what Walker calls “internal programming that responds to the needs of various populations in a year of tremendous challenge.”

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “They need to seek a lot of answers from their lawyers, especially around how they are making money. The [record-company] business affairs team should be able to explain every detail around a contract so that every artist understands how they are getting paid.” —Swidler

STREAMING

Gabe Fleet

EXECUTIVE VP BUSINESS AFFAIRS/CHIEF MUSIC LICENSING COUNSEL

iHeartMedia

Fleet, 40, helped iHeartRadio transition from in-person events, such as its annual music festival, to virtual programming and TV/streaming specials like *SeeHer*, *Hear Her* for International Women’s Day and *Living Black!* for Black History Month, featuring 21 Savage, **JHENÉ AIKO**, Kirk Franklin and Roddy Ricch. He also guided iHeartMedia’s investment in podcasts and expects streaming events to survive past 2020. “The most successful artists and companies,” says Fleet, “will be the ones who understand that things will never be the same as they were before.”

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“Fewer cross-country flights for one 45-minute meeting and, hopefully, also more humility and empathy. This year was a good reminder that we’re all humans, with families and pets and messy offices and spotty Wi-Fi, and it was nice to see a change, where in addition to negotiating with each other, we also learned a little more about each other as people.”

Horacio Gutierrez

HEAD OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS/CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER

Spotify

Eve Konstan

GENERAL COUNSEL

Spotify

Kevan Choset

ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL/HEAD OF LEGAL STRATEGY

Spotify

Sofia Sheppard

ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL/GLOBAL HEAD OF LICENSING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Spotify

Spotify’s lawyers had an eventful year as the streaming platform dramatically expanded its global reach, making its service available to 93 new countries since mid-2020, a move that “more than doubled the number of markets where Spotify is live,” says Shepard, 45. “That work will continue as Spotify expands its available catalog globally throughout 2021.”

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

“With shows being canceled due to the pandemic, finding ways for artists and fans to connect online is more important than ever. It is essential that platform providers and rights holders continue to collaborate [to create] such opportunities and enable new revenue opportunities for artists, songwriters and composers so that they can earn a living off their art.” —Sheppard

Antonious Porch

GENERAL COUNSEL/HEAD OF PEOPLE AND CULTURE

SoundCloud

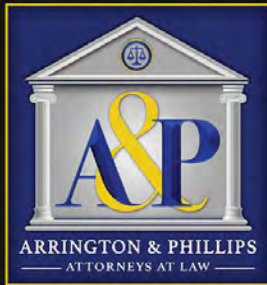
Anne-Marie Chirema

DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

SoundCloud

On April 1, SoundCloud became the first streaming company to adopt a user-centric royalty system, which will allow musicians to get paid based on how individual listeners divide their attention, rather than on aggregate streams. Since performers have lost touring income during the pandemic, says Porch, 49, “there is an urgency now to help more artists,” especially those who are independent and developing

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JOINS IN HONORING THE
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2021 TOP MUSIC LAWYERS



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VINCE PHILLIPS
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AURIELLE BROOKS
ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY

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a career, in a more equitable manner. Establishing and maintaining an income, especially in the wake of the pandemic and general economic downturn, is critically important.”

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“The explosive growth of creator-to-fan engagement across SoundCloud and many other social sharing platforms, propelled by the physical isolation during the pandemic.” —Porch

Robert Windom

CHIEF COUNSEL, CONTENT AND SERVICES
Apple

Adam Blankenheimer

SENIOR COUNSEL, CONTENT AND INTERNET SERVICES
Apple

Elizabeth Miles

DIRECTOR, ITUNES AND APPLE MUSIC LEGAL
Apple

Brahim Ait Ben Larbi

PRINCIPAL LEGAL COUNSEL, MUSIC PUBLISHING
Apple

Label and publishing colleagues contacted by *Billboard* endorsed the work in the past year of Windom, Blankenheimer, Miles and the London-based Ait Ben Larbi. (Apple has chosen to not participate in *Billboard* executive list features.) As the pandemic set in last spring, Windom reported that he and his team worked across divisions at Apple to create a \$50 million advance royalty fund to help independent labels weather the COVID-19 crisis. The action provided a one-time advance payment on future royalties for labels and distributors that earn over \$10,000 in quarterly revenue from Apple Music and have a direct-distribution deal with the streaming service.

Stephen Worth

HEAD OF LEGAL/ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL
Amazon Music

Cyrus Afshar

SENIOR CORPORATE COUNSEL
Amazon Music

Khoury Cooper

SENIOR CORPORATE COUNSEL
Amazon Music

Nicolas Gauss

SENIOR CORPORATE COUNSEL
Amazon Music

Amazon Music embarked on a new endeavor in 2020: establishing a podcast division as the music industry embraced the format. The streaming platform is well-versed in launching new products after rolling out a high-fidelity service in 2019, but the podcast operation provided new challenges for Amazon Music’s lawyers as it “touched on legal issues that were entirely separate from our music streaming business,” says Afshar. “We worked diligently to make sure that Amazon Music’s podcast experience exceeded [customers’] expectations.”

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

This past year “drove adoption of livestreaming in a way no other year could have. That’s why we partnered with Twitch to introduce livestreaming to the Amazon Music app. Twitch has long been at the forefront of connecting creators and fans through livestreaming experiences, and Amazon Music saw early on that this technology represented a new frontier for artists looking to combine live with on-demand streaming experiences. Even after the pandemic, we expect to see livestreaming play a significant role in the industry and are excited to see what creators do in this space.” —Afshar

LIVE

Michael Rowles

EXECUTIVE VP/GENERAL COUNSEL
Live Nation Entertainment

One of Live Nation’s most urgent priorities as the pandemic struck, along with supporting its own employees, “was to create a vehicle to help sustain the countless individual contractors who work behind the scenes to make our industry

possible,” says Rowles, 55. To meet that need, Live Nation president/CEO Michael Rapino launched Crew Nation, with Live Nation contributing an initial \$5 million and matching the next \$5 million given by artists, partners and employees. “Our legal team was involved throughout that process, helping our affiliated non-profit, Music Forward Foundation, work through issues as diverse as international tax consequences to the mechanics of screening applicants. That work was tremendously satisfying for all of us, and we’re proud to be a leader in supporting the broader industry.”

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

“‘I Won’t Back Down’ by Tom Petty. I’ve always been a big Petty fan and was fortunate to catch him in one of his final performances at the Hollywood Bowl before he passed away. The title probably speaks for itself, but that sense of resilience in the face of adversity really resonates with me as we’re all trying to get through to the other side of this pandemic.”

Shawn Trell

EXECUTIVE VP/COO/GENERAL COUNSEL
AEG Presents

The pandemic had AEG “essentially in neutral for the last year,” says Trell. That left some tough decisions to make, and the company was forced to furlough numerous employees and reduce salaries for others after keeping many on staff for months during the pandemic. (AEG began rehiring staff in March.) “What I have appreciated the most in how we have handled this situation is the human element and care for the employee base, which has been the most significant part of each major decision,” he says.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“The havoc and hurt — financial and emotional — it has caused artists, employees and related third parties. The loss of jobs, work, connection and purpose has been monumental. Some will emerge better and smarter for having gone through it. But the scars will always be there.”

MUSIC PUBLISHING

Danielle Aguirre

EXECUTIVE VP/GENERAL COUNSEL
National Music Publishers’ Association

Even without the pandemic, it was going to be a challenging year for Aguirre, 43, as she led the NMPA’s efforts in building the Mechanical Licensing Collective, which opened for business on Jan. 1 and will begin administering \$424 million in unmatched royalties that were turned over to it under the Music Modernization Act. The NMPA also continues to defend a 44% rate increase for songwriters that was approved by the Copyright Royalty

Board but which is now under review, while Aguirre and her team are keeping abreast of new technology platforms like Twitch, Snap and TikTok that use music and need the appropriate licenses. “COVID-19 has energized new entrants to the market,” she says, “and they must understand that if they utilize music, they must pay music creators.”

THE SONGS THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

“I have been listening to the music podcast *Rivals*, and it has led me to relisten to many classics I hadn’t focused on for a while. It has been fun and a great diversion to listen to the likes of Fleetwood Mac, Billy Joel, Guns N’ Roses, N.W.A, The Beach Boys, Neil Young, Oasis, Nicki Minaj, Pearl Jam and more in the context of their music rivalries.”

Peter Brodsky

EXECUTIVE VP BUSINESS AFFAIRS/GENERAL COUNSEL
Sony Music Publishing

Michael Abitbol

SENIOR VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS, DIGITAL
Sony Music Publishing

Jonas Kant

SENIOR VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS
Sony Music Publishing

Nicole Giacco

SENIOR VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS
Sony Music Publishing

For Sony/ATV Music Publishing, it was a year capped by rebranding as Sony Music Publishing, including a new logo and mission statement: “Every voice matters.” In step with that mission, the company partnered with Atlanta-based Silence the Shame to launch The Soundtrack of Mental Health. The initiative will provide mental health training and services to better support its songwriters and employees. “I’m proud to be a part of a team that takes these issues seriously and understands that actions speak louder than words,” says Giacco.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“The resilience and commitment of creators and those in the industry pushing forward, pivoting and adjusting to continue making and delivering music.” —Giacco

David Kokakis

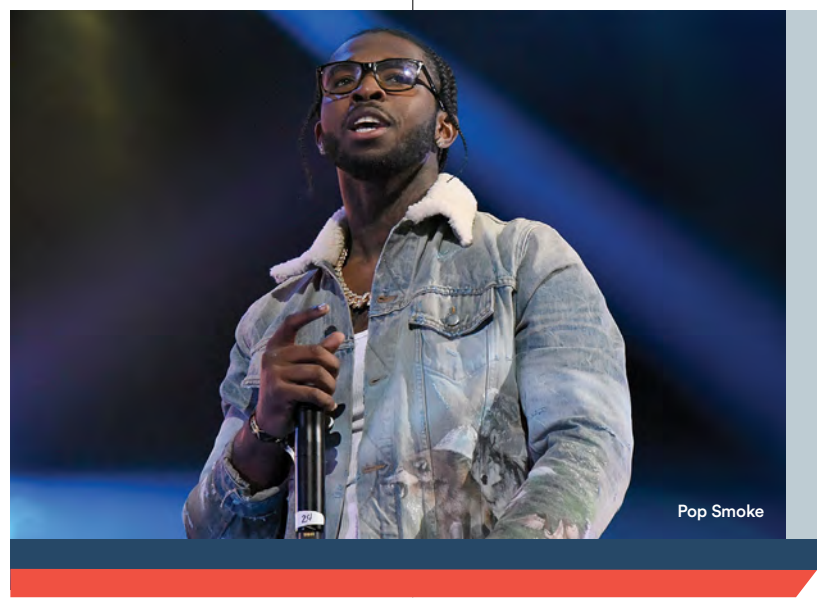
CHIEF COUNSEL, BUSINESS AFFAIRS,
UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING GROUP/
DIGITAL RIGHTS MANAGEMENT

Universal Music Group

Michael Petersen

SENIOR VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS
Universal Music Publishing Group

UMPG’s acquisition of Bob Dylan’s iconic catalog of over 600 copyrights — including “Blowin’ in the Wind,” “Lay Lady Lay” and “Like a Rolling Stone” — marked a historic moment for the company. But Petersen, 59, also points to the ability of songwriters and artists



Pop Smoke

Fox Rothschild is proud of this recognition of our
Top Music Lawyers 2021

ATLANTA



Leron Rogers



John Rose



Heidi Vaquerano

LOS ANGELES

MINNEAPOLIS



Ken Abdo

NEW YORK



Michael Reinert



Tim Mandelbaum

The honorees recognize these and other organizations with whom we share a commitment to work for diversity, equity and inclusion within the entertainment industry:

**Black American
Music Association**

**Black Entertainment and
Sports Lawyers Association**

**Hispanic National
Bar Association**

Women In Music



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to “create amazing music remotely” as a 2020 legacy that will also have lasting impact. “This had been an ongoing trend,” he says, “but the pandemic made it the new normal.”

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE PANDEMIC “Break My Heart” by Dua Lipa. It makes you want to dance every time you hear it.” —Petersen

Scott McDowell

EXECUTIVE VP/HEAD OF LEGAL AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS

Warner Chappell Music

In addition to helping bring back Quincy Jones to the storied publisher’s roster and representing the late rapper **POP SMOKE** to “advance his legacy,” McDowell’s team has mostly focused on how to deal with data: “Managing it and harnessing it for good.” This philosophy also applies to young artists’ own budgets, as McDowell suggests they break down every dollar of their personal income and figure out “how many others take a piece of it along the way.”

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE “Racial justice reckoning and the drive for diversity, equity and inclusion.”

PERFORMING RIGHTS

Christos Badavas

EXECUTIVE VP/GENERAL COUNSEL
SESAC

Over the past year, Badavas, 51, oversaw his organization’s efforts to implement the performing rights organization’s shift to an entirely remote work environment during the pandemic. That move included ensuring licenses were signed and fees were collected from major licensees through channels that were not affected too significantly by the global disruption. SESAC also helped spearhead the music industry’s efforts to support the CARES Act, which offered assistance for songwriters and composers whose livelihoods disappeared due to the coronavirus outbreak. “Ultimately, these efforts ensure that royalty payments to our affiliates are not interrupted and governmental aid is forthcoming during this unprecedented time,” he says.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE “The recognition of the responsibility the music industry has to ensure increased opportunity and, ultimately, full participation of Black Americans in the music industry. In other words, the responsibility to recruit and make room for new voices on the business side of music.”

Clara Kim

EXECUTIVE VP/GENERAL COUNSEL
ASCAP

Negotiations and signings of multiyear licensing agreements continued apace in 2020 between ASCAP and traditional

media companies, major music streaming services and over-the-top media services. (OTT services provide audiovisual content through the internet instead of cable or satellite, such as Netflix or Hulu.) All of those deals were essential “to drive revenue and help secure the livelihoods and future for our members, especially in light of the pandemic,” says Kim. ASCAP also retained or acquired membership of scores of artists including Jackson Browne, Mariah Carey, DaBaby, Billie Eilish, FINNEAS, Madonna, John Mellencamp and Bernie Taupin.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE “There’s no doubt there is pent-up demand for live music experiences. But livestreaming and virtual events will be with us in some way for a long time.”

Stuart Rosen

SENIOR VP/GENERAL COUNSEL
BMI

In January it was revealed that the Department of Justice had ended its protracted review of the consent decrees that govern how ASCAP and BMI operate, without taking action or revising those decades-old agreements. Yet BMI’s engagement with the DOJ “should be considered a success,” says Rosen, 61, “in that we avoided not only an expansion of the decree but congressional intervention in the form of compulsory licensing, both of which could easily have occurred.” Rosen praises BMI’s legal team during the pandemic for going “the extra mile in meeting the urgent needs of our affiliates and in addressing the concerns of our licensees.”

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE PANDEMIC “Donny Hathaway’s [live] cover of Carole King’s ‘You’ve Got a Friend.’ The audience’s thrilling and complete takeover of the chorus reminds me of the community of live performance and what we’ve lost over this long, long year.”

Colin Rushing

CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER
SoundExchange

In the past year, SoundExchange maintained business as usual, “never missing a distribution at a time when our royalties are more critical than ever,” says Rushing, 41. “We moved to fully remote work basically overnight; thanks to our extraordinary team, we did so seamlessly. And because of the royalty rates and structures we’ve achieved in past rate settings, as well as the ongoing vitality of digital radio, our collections and distributions have remained basically steady.”

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE “The rapid acceleration toward streaming and away from old-school broadcast FM radio — a platform that still pays artists nothing.”

TALENT AND LITIGATION

Kenneth Abdo

PARTNER

Fox Rothschild

Tim Mandelbaum

PARTNER

Fox Rothschild

Michael Reinert

PARTNER

Fox Rothschild

Leron Rogers

PARTNER

Fox Rothschild

Heidy Vaquerano

PARTNER

Fox Rothschild

John Rose

ASSOCIATE

Fox Rothschild

Over the past year, the music department at Fox Rothschild has doubled in size. “We have become one of the most diverse such groups among our peers,” says Mandelbaum. The firm has welcomed Rogers, Rose and Vaquerano to its ranks since *Billboard*’s 2020 Top Music Lawyers report. Among the artists and companies that Fox Rothschild has represented are 10K Projects, Trace Adkins, Blondie, Cash Money Records, Roberta Flack, Berry Gordy, Hanson, Hipgnosis Songs Fund, Kobalt, Kool & The Gang, Rick Ross, Toto, Universal Music Group, Kanye West, Stevie Wonder and Wu-Tang Clan.

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

“The ability of nonmainstream artists to survive in a streaming world dominated by a handful of top-charting artists.” —Mandelbaum

Jenny Afia

HEAD OF ENTERTAINMENT AND LEGAL
Schillings International

Clients like Adele, Elton John and Madonna count on Afia, 42, to protect their reputations from media intrusion, with privacy a core concern of her practice. While that means she generally doesn’t share information about her clients, she recently won a high-profile case on behalf of Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, against U.K. tabloid *Mail on Sunday*, which speaks to her acumen, and has taken on social media as the next frontier in privacy battles. “It takes extraordinary bravery to stand up for your rights so publicly,” she says, “and I love helping empower people to do this.”

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR LAWYER

“What are you going to do now to keep me safe in the future?” If you want to have a successful career and a private life, taking control of your privacy and reputation at the start is an absolute must.



Fordham Law School

Leading Law Schools Of The Top Music Lawyers

THE MOST FREQUENTLY CITED ALMA MATERS OF THE 2021 CLASS OF HONOREES

Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University
New York
Enrollment: 925

Columbia Law School, Columbia University
New York
Enrollment: 1,244

Fordham University School of Law
New York
Enrollment: 1,093

Harvard Law School, Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.
Enrollment: 1,740

New York Law School
New York
Enrollment: 872

New York University School of Law
New York
Enrollment: 1,379

Southwestern Law School
Los Angeles
Enrollment: 611

University of California, Berkeley, School of Law
Berkeley, Calif.
Enrollment: 986

University of California, Los Angeles, School of Law
Los Angeles
Enrollment: 975

University of Southern California Gould School of Law
Los Angeles
Enrollment: 590

Enrollments source: U.S. News & World Reports

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ON BEING NAMED A

2021 Billboard Top Music Lawyer

Lisa Alter

PARTNER
Alter Kendrick & Baron
Katie Baron
PARTNER
Alter Kendrick & Baron

In the past year, Alter Kendrick & Baron has represented multiple clients in complex music acquisition deals. They include Primary Wave, for the various interests in the catalogs of Olivia Newton-John, Stevie Nicks and The Four Seasons; Reservoir Media Management, for over 16,000 compositions from legendary music publisher Shapiro Bernstein; Nicky Chinn of the duo Chinn and Chapman in the sale of his copyrights; and Tempo Music Investments “in significant eight-figure deals,” says Alter. Among the firm’s clients are Chinn, Ray Davies, Foreigner, Kenny Gamble & Leon Huff, David Gilmour, Steve Miller and the estates of Ira Gershwin, Ben E. King, Anthony Newley, Billy Strayhorn and Jule Styne.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR LAWYER “How can I advance my career while still maintaining control over my work from both an artistic and legal perspective?” —Alter

Peter Anderson

PARTNER
Davis Wright Tremaine

For Anderson, a litigator whose firm has successfully handled copyright-related suits for The Weeknd, Lil Nas X and Kendrick Lamar — and, with Helene Freeman (see page 80), achieved a victory in the “Stairway to Heaven” infringement case for his clients Jimmy Page and Robert Plant — the pandemic has been a time of “teaching old dogs new tricks” as the action shifted from courtrooms to Zoom screens. “It has been a busy year,” he says. “Any kind of remote deposition before was a fairly rare thing. But the pandemic forced me and other lawyers to understand the technology and the procedures and actually use them. And I don’t think we’ll stop once it’s over.”

Craig Averill
Jeff Worob

PARTNERS
Serling Rooks Hunter McKoy
Worob & Averill

Worob counts among his clients Leon Bridges, Maroon 5 and Maggie Rogers, while Averill advises, among others, the FADER Label and artist-producer RAC, a pioneer in the lucrative realm of non-fungible tokens. “Throughout the wreckage of 2020,” says Worob, “it has been fun to help our clients develop new and interesting ways to earn while we’re all stuck at home, including with new technology like NFTs, as well as figuring out how to make more traditional income streams — like live shows — translate virtually.” As the firm closed

deals for the recording and publishing catalogs of its clients, he adds, “it’s exciting to see so many nontraditional players come into the [music] space and appreciate the value.”

Andrew Bart

PARTNER/CO-CHAIR OF THE CONTENT, MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT PRACTICE
Jenner & Block

As counsel for each of the three major labels, as well as SoundExchange, Roc Nation and the RIAA, Bart, 66, has played a leading role in protecting the copyrights of creators in the digital world. One highlight was the victory in November for the RIAA and record labels in its copyright infringement case against hip-hop streaming platform Spinrilla, which resulted in a summary judgment that Bart calls “a significant victory for content owners against an unlicensed music site.”

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS “Finding an economic path that permits them to create. Part of it is the pandemic, but part of it is that for 20 years, our legal system has facilitated a massive transfer of wealth from the creative community to the owners of distribution platforms.”

Richard Baskind

PARTNER
Simons Muirhead & Burton

The London-based firm services a client roster that includes Nick Cave, Grace Jones, Alan Walker and First Access Entertainment and has advised on asset transactions like ICM Partners’ acquisition of Primary Talent International. Muirhead & Burton was named law firm of the year at the 2020 Music Week Awards. “We started the music practice when I joined the firm 10 years ago, so receiving this award from our industry peers was a great acknowledgment of the work we’ve done since then and the support we’ve had,” says Baskind.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR LAWYER “About their rights, their intellectual property, their career and the business. It is really important that they have a clear understanding of the essentials. At the end of the day, it is the artist’s business.”

David Beame
Brian Mencher

FOUNDING PARTNERS
Beame & Mencher

When the pandemic shut down the world last March, Beame, 46, and Mencher, 43, helped lead philanthropic client Global Citizen to one of its biggest years yet, including its pivot from in-person festivals to televised music events. Among those were April’s *One World: Together at Home* concert curated by **LADY GAGA** in support of front-line workers and October’s *Every Vote Counts*, promoting the get-out-the-



Gaga

vote campaign during the 2020 election. Their work touched upon many aspects of the music industry, including artist contracts and publishing clearances.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR LAWYER “What does it mean to be the CEO of my career? A successful artist will lead with their creative vision and will back it up with smart business savvy. A good CEO is always bringing in and trying new opportunities and pushing the boundaries of themselves and the team around them.” —Beame

Jeffrey Becker

PARTNER/CHAIR, ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA LAW PRACTICE
Swanson Martin & Bell

Last November, the hip-hop community mourned the loss of fast-rising Chicago rapper King Von, whose estate Becker, 41, now represents and has seen grow, with an uptick in streams and Billboard Hot 100 hits. Among his firm’s clients are a diverse roster of producers, such as BTS collaborator Vincent Nantes, Lil Pump beatmaker Fizzle and Kim Petras producer Vaughn. Recent deals include the signing of singer-rapper Miles to Elektra Records and SoundCloud star Yung Divide to Epic Records.

Jill Berliner

PARTNER
Rimon Law

Berliner, 63, whose firm represents Beck, The Chicks, Foo Fighters, Nirvana and The Smashing Pumpkins, was well prepared to weather the pandemic professionally, having long served her clients remotely. “We have been a cutting-edge virtual firm since Rimon was founded in 2008,” she says. Of late, she has reflected on the impact of this year’s loss of live events. “Once we have recovered from the pandemic,” she says, “the live-music landscape will have radically changed, but fans will be ecstatic to be able to see live shows.”

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS “Songwriters, producers and recording

artists must find a sophisticated collection arrangement to capitalize on their work. Streaming is still evolving, rules are changing, and arrangements for collection of the fractions of pennies that fall between the cracks if a creator isn’t well-represented can amount to real losses.”

Audrey Benoualid

PARTNER
Myman Greenspan Fox Rosenberg
Mobasser Younger & Light

Josh Karp

PARTNER
Myman Greenspan Fox Rosenberg
Mobasser Younger & Light

Tamara Milagros-Butler

PARTNER
Myman Greenspan Fox Rosenberg
Mobasser Younger & Light

Robert Minzner

PARTNER
Myman Greenspan Fox Rosenberg
Mobasser Younger & Light

Oren Agman

ASSOCIATE
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Mobasser Younger & Light

Steven Arnst

ASSOCIATE
Myman Greenspan Fox Rosenberg
Mobasser Younger & Light

Andranise Baxter

ASSOCIATE
Myman Greenspan Fox Rosenberg
Mobasser Younger & Light

Haley Golding

ASSOCIATE
Myman Greenspan Fox Rosenberg
Mobasser Younger & Light

Lulu Pantin

ASSOCIATE
Myman Greenspan Fox Rosenberg
Mobasser Younger & Light

Andrew Paster

ASSOCIATE
Myman Greenspan Fox Rosenberg
Mobasser Younger & Light

Senior attorneys of Myman Greenspan Fox Rosenberg Mobasser Younger & Light, who previously have been



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Covington's global music practice offers integrated transactional, intellectual property, litigation, regulatory, and public policy expertise. Our team includes trial lawyers who have been involved in some of the most significant music industry disputes of the digital era, deal lawyers with decades of technology and content transactions experience, and lawyers with in-house experience at record labels across business affairs and A&R.

We congratulate our colleagues Jonathan Sperling, Neema Sahni, and Adrian Perry for being recognized by *Billboard* as Top Music Lawyers.



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recognized on the Top Music Lawyers list, collectively chose to step out of the spotlight for 2021 to nominate their rising colleagues — a decision *Billboard* endorsed by giving the firm the largest representation in this year's report. The firm represents some of the industry's hottest stars — Justin Bieber, Dead & Co., Ariana Grande, Jennifer Lopez, Brockhampton and Red Hot Chili Peppers, among others — as well as rising talent like CHIKA and Verzache, and its attorneys have guided deals such as Concord's acquisition of Pulse Music Group, Primary Wave's purchase of music assets from Disturbed and Godsmack and the sale of songwriter Sean Douglas' hit-filled publishing catalog to Vine Alternative Investments.

Charles "Jeff" Biederman

PARTNER, MANATT ENTERTAINMENT

Manatt Phelps & Phillips

Jordan Bromley

PARTNER/LEADER, ENTERTAINMENT

TRANSACTIONS AND FINANCE PRACTICE

Manatt Phelps & Phillips

Eric Custer

PARTNER, MANATT ENTERTAINMENT

Manatt Phelps & Phillips

Gary Gilbert

SENIOR PARTNER, MANATT ENTERTAINMENT

Manatt Phelps & Phillips

Robert Jacobs

PARTNER/LEADER, ENTERTAINMENT

LITIGATION PRACTICE

Manatt Phelps & Phillips

Lee Phillips

SENIOR PARTNER, MANATT ENTERTAINMENT

Manatt Phelps & Phillips

Monika Tashman

PARTNER, MANATT ENTERTAINMENT

Manatt Phelps & Phillips

Echoing a common theme, Bromley says the biggest takeaway from 2020 is how "we came together to beat back a pandemic, show resilience and achieve meaningful and lasting change inside and outside our industry." At Manatt, that meant representing "buyers and sellers in more than \$1 billion in catalog transactions. We advocated for, achieved and delivered guidance," says Bromley, in connection with multiple federal pandemic relief channels including PPP, Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation, Mixed Earners Unemployment Compensation and the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant. "We have worked hand in hand with our artist partners in demanding social justice" through legislative efforts, he adds. The firm's partners represent a deep client roster that includes Pepe Aguilar, Paul Anka, Burt Bacharach, Dierks Bentley, Jackson Browne, Tracy Chapman, Death Cab for Cutie, Diplo, Dirty Projectors, The Drums, Eagles, John Lee Hooker, Major Lazer, Migos, ODESZA, Steve Perry, Sturgill Simpson, Thievery

Corporation, Trap Nation, Brian Wilson, Neil Young and the estates of Rick James and Pop Smoke.

Joshua Binder

Jeremy Mohr

Paul Rothenberg

PARTNERS/CO-FOUNDERS

Rothenberg Mohr & Binder

Representing acts such as Chloe x Halle, Gunna, Kehlani and Marshmello, Rothenberg Mohr & Binder needed to figure out ways for their clients to push through the pandemic without live events. By shifting the focus to "more long-term strategies and working with clients and managers on catalog sales, virtual appearances and brand partnerships," says Mohr, the firm found its sweet spot, while also expanding the practice. "Music has been and will always be an incredible tool for emotional healing and bringing people together to effectuate social and other important change," he says.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE

PANDEMIC "Bob Marley's 'Three Little Birds.' Impossible to listen to that song and not feel uplifted." —Mohr

Jason Boyarski

PARTNER

Boyarski Fritz

Boyarski's firm, which marks its 10th anniversary this year, represents artists like Marc Anthony and Joan Jett, producers from Louis Bell to Tainy and companies including BMG, Disney Music and the fast-growing Create Music Group. His work as lead entertainment counsel for the Prince estate led to deals to bring his music catalog to TikTok and Peloton, and the distribution of the Grammy-nominated *1999 Super Deluxe Edition* through Warner Music. Boyarski,

46, also negotiated the sale of Bell's publishing catalog to Universal Music Publishing Group and the publishing/recording catalog owned by the estate of Donny Hathaway to Primary Wave.

Scott Bradford

OF COUNSEL

DLA Piper

Bradford recently negotiated client Round Hill's high-level purchase of Triple Crown Records, which gave it over 150 titles. Representing clients like All Time Low, Fetty Wap and Panic! at the Disco, Bradford notes that artists and managers have been "super resourceful in figuring out solutions to the live-event restrictions" during the pandemic. "I have artists who are performing to thousands of fans via websites — they perform to way more fans through this method than they'd reach by touring for two months," he says. "Overhead is minimal, and they go home after each show. This will just provide a new delivery system for artists moving forward."

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE

PANDEMIC "R.E.M.'s 'It's the End of the World As We Know It.' Michael Stipe was just about 30 years ahead of his time on that one."

John Branca

PARTNER/HEAD OF THE MUSIC DEPARTMENT

Ziffren Brittenham

David Lande

PARTNER

Ziffren Brittenham

David Byrnes

PARTNER

Ziffren Brittenham

Among the highlights of a busy year, Branca notes the firm's "sales and acquisitions of some of the industry's most

acclaimed and profitable music publishing rights," and Lande adds the sale of Shakira's publishing catalog to Hipgnosis. Lande also worked on the agreements for two **BEYONCÉ** projects that combined business and culture: her musical film and visual album *Black Is King*, which brought Afrofuturism to Disney+, and a multilayered partnership between Beyoncé and Peloton that highlights her music on the platform and includes Peloton's commitment to recruit interns and staff from 10 historically Black colleges or universities. Lande and Byrnes worked together on Travis Scott's deal with Anheuser-Busch InBev to launch an agave-infused hard seltzer, Cacti, this spring. "A lot of activity," says Lande.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER "Are you 100% on my side, or are your relationships so intimate with record labels that my needs will be sacrificed in the service of your relationship with the label?" —Branca

William Briggs

Alex Weingarten

PARTNERS

Venable

"It feels important to highlight the work I did in representing the talented singer Kristina Buch in a sexual harassment case against Grammy Award-winning producer Noel 'Detail' Fisher," says Briggs. A Los Angeles Superior Court in late 2019 entered a \$15 million judgment against Fisher, whose credits, according to AllMusic, include work for Beyoncé, Drake and Jennifer Lopez. "In May 2018, Buch and another musician, Peyton Ackley, both made public the assaults by Fisher and obtained restraining orders against him," says Briggs. "Since those original complaints were filed in 2018, Buch and Ackley paved the way for numerous other artists to come forward. I am so proud to help my clients close this awful chapter in [their lives] and applaud [their] bravery in speaking out." According to court documents, Fisher is appealing the judgment. Venable's clients also include Steve Angello, Selena Gomez, Wiz Khalifa, Gucci Mane, Mandy Moore, 5 Seconds of Summer, Snoop Dogg, Spotify, Robin Thicke, Pharrell Williams, Stevie Wonder, Vevo and the estate of Tom Petty.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

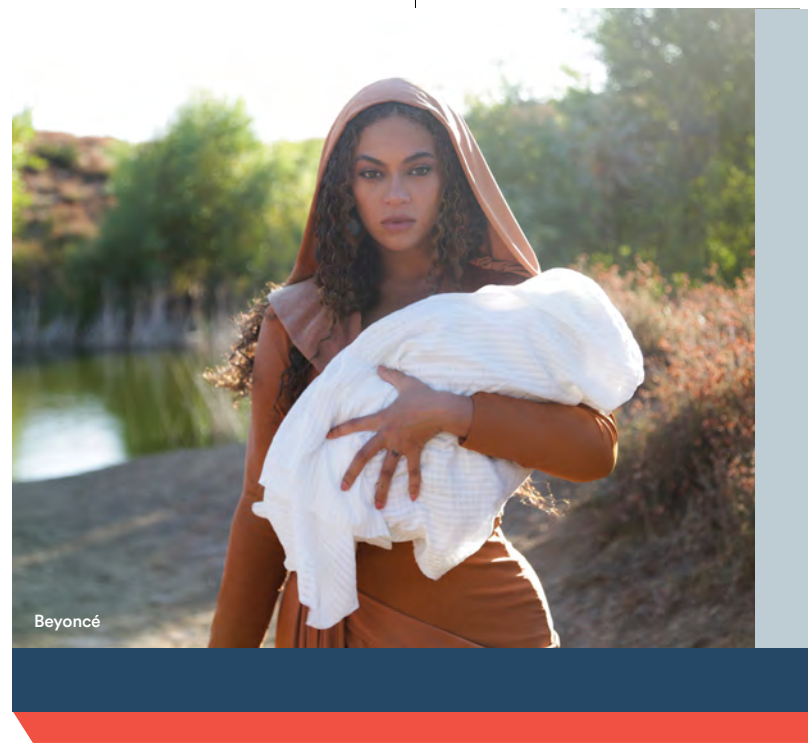
"The ability of artists to show creativity in how they monetize their content despite the halt to touring." —Briggs

Vernon Brown

PRESIDENT/CEO

V. Brown & Company

In a year filled with strife, Brown set out to offer some relief. In 2020, he worked on the deal between longtime clients Bryan "Birdman" Williams and Ronald "Slim" Williams, founders of Cash Money, and the city of New Orleans, in



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Rosemary, Michael, Elliot, Rob, Gillian & Renee

would like to take this opportunity to thank
our partners, associates & everyone at the firm
for their dedication during this most extraordinary year

Paul Gutman, Esq. (Partner)

Ira Friedman, Esq. (Partner)

Leah Seymour, Esq.

Dave Keady, Esq.

Jenna Akemi Kon, Esq.

Celine Hollenbeck, Esq.

Carla Webb, Esq.

Matthew Sereno, Esq.

Rawan Ezzo, Esq.

Matthew Regan, Esq.

Riad deFreitas, Esq.

Jared Leon, Esq.*

Lily D'Olimpio, Esq.*

Christine Ballenger

Karen Pals

Ryan Martin

Chris Brown

Sherry Katopodes

John Arak

Patricia Sweet

Susie Marroquin

Mark Walcott

Valerie Cuevas Romero

Zack Blinder

Michael Luevanos

Laura Walker

David Garcia

Melanie Rousselet

Ayan Hotchkiss

Chris Reynolds

Jason Holt

Sofia Perez

Robert Workman

Alberto Reynoso

Kajol Seecharan

Kay Goldberg

which the brothers donated \$225,000 to cover rent last June for the residents living in the city's subsidized housing program. Brown has continued his work in providing aid for important causes, all while brokering deals like a joint venture between electronic label Reckless Republic and Island Records.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE PANDEMIC " 'Life' by Ludovico Einaudi. It's a beautiful, calming song. He's one of my favorite artists to listen to while I'm working or thinking."

Ed Buggé

PARTNER
Hertz Lichtenstein Young & Polk Carron Joan Mitchell

PARTNER
Hertz Lichtenstein Young & Polk Oswaldo M. Rossi

PARTNER
Hertz Lichtenstein Young & Polk Jamie Young

NAMED PARTNER
Hertz Lichtenstein Young & Polk Marquis "Quest" Malloy

ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY
Hertz Lichtenstein Young & Polk

With a client roster that includes Céline Dion, Keith Richards, Will Smith, Steely Dan and Gwen Stefani, along with Juan Luis Guerra, Nicky Jam and Will.i.am, the firm focused on campaigns and releases "that lifted people in lockdown," says Buggé, 34. Young represented the estate of Tom Petty in establishing an "operating structure and team to move forward" with posthumous projects, as well as representing Stevie Nicks in her partnership with Primary Wave. Buggé also cites the firm's work on MAG's production of Bad Bunny's album *El Último Tour del Mundo* and the partnership of Ari Lennox and Crown Royal to support struggling bars and clubs during the pandemic.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR LAWYER " 'How can I best maximize my chance of success, and what pitfalls shall I look out for on that path?' " —Young

Richard Busch

PARTNER IN THE LITIGATION SECTION/
HEAD OF THE ENTERTAINMENT AND
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY SECTIONS
King & Ballou

Busch, 54, is regarded as a tough litigator who has scored high-profile wins in the past for Marvin Gaye's family, Bob Gaudio, Bluewater Music and the Songwriters Guild of America. This year, he turned his focus to securing termination rights for country star Dwight Yoakam, who is seeking to reclaim his rights to recordings "Honky Tonk Man" and "Miner's Prayer," among others. These "very important termination-of-rights cases," says Busch, become an even more pressing concern as more artists near the statutory period for reclaiming their copyrights.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR LAWYER " 'How do I ensure that my work is properly licensed, and how do I ensure not only that I am paid properly but also that I do not give away rights unnecessarily or in a way I will later regret?' "

Candace Carlo
ATTORNEY/PARTNER
Kleinberg Lange Cuddy & Carlo

"Our firm has remained cohesive and strong throughout the pandemic," says Carlo. While working remotely, she and her partners "continue to provide a full spectrum of services" to musician clients, including Peter Dinklage, Toby Keith, KISS, Gene Simmons and Hans Zimmer. The firm's film and TV clients include Mark Hamill, Glen Keane, George R.R. Martin, J.K. Rowling and Sylvester Stallone.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE PANDEMIC "I like the Billie Eilish-Hans Zimmer track 'No Time To Die' [the title theme of the upcoming James Bond film]. It's a fantastic pairing of talent and, given the pandemic, it's great advice — stay healthy and strong."

Rosemary Carroll
Michael Guido
Elliot Groffman
Gillian Bar
Rob Cohen
Ira Friedman
Renee Karalian

PARTNERS
Carroll Guido Groffman Cohen Bar & Karalian

In the year leading up to **PHOEBE BRIDGERS'** nomination as best new artist at the Grammy Awards, Carroll renegotiated the singer's administration agreement with Kobalt and set up her new label, Saddest Factory, through Secretly Canadian. Her client The Strokes won the Grammy for best rock album. In the past year, Guido helped guide agreements for Megan Thee Stallion, negotiated catalog deals for Mark Ronson and Richie Sambora, and spearheaded a label deal for Lee Daniels with Warner Music that includes the soundtrack to his film *The United States vs. Billie Holiday*. Groffman, with strong assists from partner Paul Gutman, worked on several publishing and master catalog deals, including the sale of Big Deal Music to Hipgnosis. His client Brandi Carlile won the Grammy for best country song for "Crowded Table," and ATO Records, another longtime client, celebrated the Grammy win for Brittany Howard for best rock song. Friedman worked with Guido on deals for 12 Tone, including Dolly Parton's *A Holly Dolly Christmas* album and, with Groffman, on a new deal for Tiësto with Atlantic Records. For both Olivia Culpo and Demi Lovato, Cohen supervised the negotiation of new cosmetic ventures and also



Bridgers

oversaw legal work for the documentary *Demi Lovato: Dancing With the Devil*. Bar "had a blast" working on deals for Jack Antonoff and Aaron Dessner, collaborators with Taylor Swift on her albums *evermore* and *folklore*, the latter of which won the album of the year Grammy. Bar also guided rising young client Rosie ("Never the 1") to her deal with Arista Records. For Julia Michaels, Karalian struck a new deal with Universal Music Publishing Group. She oversaw agreements for Playboi Carti and guided new projects for Kid Cudi, including album, film and sponsorship deals. The firm's deep roster of superstar clients also includes Arcade Fire, Sara Bareilles, David Byrne, Dave Matthews Band, Jonas Brothers, The National, Pearl Jam, Phish and Patti Smith.

Jacqueline Charlesworth
PRINCIPAL
Charlesworth Law

Previously serving as a staunch advocate for songwriters as a partner at Alter Kendrick & Baron and playing a key role in the passage of the Music Modernization Act, Charlesworth set out on her own with her eponymous firm, which officially opened its doors on Jan. 1, representing a cross-section of songwriters, artists, publishers and record labels. The firm has already added two new attorneys to its practice in its first two months of operation, and Charlesworth says she's "thrilled and deeply honored by the response" so far.

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS "For songwriters, it's the fact that the federal government controls their income through the Copyright Royalty Board and rate-setting processes. In the mechanical area, I know songwriters are hoping for some improvement under the new MMA standard in this next CRB proceeding. We shall see."

David Chidekel
PARTNER
Early Sullivan Wright Gizer & McRae
Chidekel recently has been working with

SKUxchange to create new revenue streams for producers, promoters and performers of live and virtual events in music and sports. The platform uses "digital incentives embedded in augmented reality and virtual reality advertising provided by brands, and sponsors of such events, to attendees and viewers," he says. Among the acts that Chidekel represents are The Click Five, The D.O.C., Fall Out Boy, Cee Lo Green, Panic! at the Disco, Kevin Rudolf, Tool and members of Filter, Train and Wu-Tang Clan. He also works with independent labels such as Trustkill Records, Ferret Records, Good Fight Entertainment and Rise Records, and management companies such as Crush Music and Uppercut Management.

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS "How to most effectively and efficiently increase direct artist-to-fan engagement and activation — that is, to incentivize fans to interact with artists and purchase content, products and tickets to live performances and events — without the interference of unnecessary intermediaries."

Jay Cohen
PARTNER
Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison

Cohen started the year with a big win, brokering a settlement with Peloton on behalf of dozens of independent music publishers that accused the interactive fitness platform of playing their members' works without securing mechanical licenses. "After getting an antitrust counterclaim against the publishers and the National Music Publishers' Association dismissed, we achieved a significant settlement of the publishers' copyright claims," says Cohen — and in February, Peloton and the NMPA announced they had reached a joint collaboration agreement to work together.

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS "Monetization for use of their works in the proliferating digital space."



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—
congratulates Carlos Rodríguez-Feliz
on being named one of Billboard's
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Sandra Crawshaw-Sparks

PARTNER/CHAIR OF ENTERTAINMENT, COPYRIGHT AND MEDIA PRACTICE GROUP

Proskauer

Anthony Oncidi

PARTNER/HEAD OF WEST COAST LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE

Proskauer

Proskauer's clients range from the Recording Academy, the RIAA and Live Nation to Madonna and U2, but Crawshaw-Sparks, 57, cites the firm's work with the Universal Hip-Hop Museum, which broke ground this year in the Bronx, as a recent highlight. Slated to open in 2023, the cultural center has been a pro bono client since 2016. "This — currently virtual — institution teaches the world about the key elements of hip-hop culture and documents the rise of hip-hop from its creation on the streets of the Bronx to becoming one of the world's most popular music genres," she says.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

"The ability to find revenue streams for creative output despite the global pandemic." —Crawshaw-Sparks

Sy Damle

Andrew Gass

Alli Stillman

Jonathan West

Joe Wetzel

PARTNERS

Latham & Watkins

Latham & Watkins represent some of the biggest brands in music, including Spotify, Pandora, Live Nation, SoundCloud, iHeartMedia, Twitch and Triller. This year, the firm conducted "an entire trial before the Copyright Royalty Board by video conference to determine the statutory royalty rate for webcasting," says Stillman. "We're also proud of our work on behalf of the Digital Licensee Coordinator and its member digital music providers in the rule-making process to implement the Music Modernization Act," which became effective on Jan. 1.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER "What is going on with NFTs?" And, more generally, how best to take advantage of all the available outlets and platforms for gaining exposure and monetizing their works." —Stillman

Doug Davis

FOUNDER/PRINCIPAL

The Davis Firm

Kim Youngberg

PARTNER

The Davis Firm

The Davis Firm — whose clients include executives and artists DJ Cassidy (and his *Pass the Mic* series on BET), Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis, Academy Award-nominated songwriter-producer Savan Kotecha, LL Cool J, DJ Snake, **SWIZZ BEATZ** and *Verzuz* — made a

key hire in November when Youngberg came aboard as a partner. For the past nine years, she had been general counsel at Screenvision Media. "Kim's addition bolsters the growing film and TV practice, [which] experienced incredible growth in 2020," says Davis. "Kim will be the seasoned pro with the experience to lead this division to be among the best in the business."

MOST LASTING LEGACY

OF 2020 WILL BE "A large portion of the industry will never forget the lessons they have had to learn about diversifying their streams as a measure of income insurance." —Davis

Lawrence Engel

HEAD OF MUSIC GROUP

Lee & Thompson

The London firm, whose notable clients include Craig David, Jessie J, Little Mix, Liam Payne, Harry Styles and Louis Tomlinson, focused in 2020 on becoming a more inclusive and representative place to work, says Engel, adding, "We're really pleased with the young talent we have coming through the firm." The pandemic year proved that "remote communication can work globally; it's easier than ever for us to deal with our U.S. and international contacts."

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

"How to get heard above the noise. Connecting their journey as an individual with their music and fans."

Tim Epstein

PARTNER

Duggan Bertsch

Epstein is a key attorney in the live-music industry, representing major festivals such as Pitchfork, Riot Fest, Life Is Beautiful and Baja Beach Fest, among many others. And when live music stopped, his efforts escalated. "We are proud to have counseled our clients through this most difficult of years providing guidance and support on reconfiguring venues for new purposes, securing financing [from government and private sources], conducting livestreams, setting up drive-in shows and renegotiating existing contracts to meet the moment," he says.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER "The overwhelming majority of promoters and venues use friends and family and real estate and liquor license counsel for contracts in live performance. You should ask your lawyer: What other promoters, venues or buyers do you represent in this space, and what value add can you bring to my business?"



Simon Esplen

MANAGING PARTNER

Russells

Jo Brittain

Chris Gossage

Gavin Maude

John Reid

Steven Tregear

PARTNERS

Russells

"Fair remuneration for writers and performing artists on streaming income" is the most pressing issue facing creators today, says Esplen, 57, whose firm represented Kobalt in its sale of 42 catalogs — including works by 50 Cent, Lindsey Buckingham and Steve Winwood — to Hipgnosis for \$323 million in November. The Russells music team also provides business and legal advice to a wide range of new and established acts, including Coldplay, Dua Lipa and Roger Waters, in addition to representing the estates of George Michael, Prince and Amy Winehouse.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE

PANDEMIC "The Tracks of My Tears' by Smokey Robinson & The Miracles, because it's one of the greatest songs ever written." —Esplen

Ilene Farkas

PARTNER/EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER/ CO-CHAIR OF THE MUSIC LITIGATION PRACTICE

Pryor Cashman

James G. Sammataro

PARTNER/CO-CHAIR OF MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

Pryor Cashman

Benjamin K. Semel

PARTNER

Pryor Cashman

Frank P. Scibilia

PARTNER/CO-CHAIR OF COPYRIGHT, MUSIC AND DIGITAL MEDIA PRACTICE GROUPS

Pryor Cashman

Donald Zakarin

CO-CHAIRMAN OF LITIGATION DEPARTMENT

Pryor Cashman

Pryor Cashman, as an adviser to the National Music Publishers' Association, helped set up and now represents the Mechanical Licensing Collective, cre-

ated under the Music Modernization Act to collect digital mechanical royalties in the United States. The firm is engaged in the latest legal rounds before the Copyright Royalty Board to establish rates that Spotify, Amazon, Google and Pandora pay publishers and, through them, songwriters. "Securing fair compensation [for creators] as the marketplace continues to move to an access model from the long-existing ownership model" is crucial, says Zakarin, 70. For litigation, Pryor Cashman represents Luis Fonsi, Ariana Grande, Ed Sheeran, the estate of Chris Cornell and the three major record companies and their publishing divisions.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE

PANDEMIC "A Change Is Gonna Come" by Sam Cooke, because we so needed a change in how we treat one another." —Zakarin

Sid Fohrman

PARTNER/HEAD OF MUSIC INDUSTRY TEAM

Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton

Fohrman has worked with high-profile clients like Spotify, Peloton and Vevo. But the recent accomplishment he is most proud of is the pro bono representation of American Song Archives: The Bob Dylan Center and Woody Guthrie Center in connection with the *Fire in Little Africa* project. The multimedia hip-hop collaboration commemorates the 1921 massacre in Tulsa, Okla.'s Greenwood neighborhood known as Little Africa that "included an exclusive license agreement with Capitol Music Group for release on Motown Records," says Fohrman.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

"The year live concert streaming broke through — juxtaposed with the reminder that the in-person live concert experience can never be replaced."

Russell Frackman

PARTNER

Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp

Christine Lepera

CO-CHAIR, ENTERTAINMENT/IP LITIGATION GROUP; MEMBER OF THE GOVERNING BOARD COMMITTEE

Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp

Eleanor Lackman

PARTNER

Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp

Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp in the past year focused on bolstering its diversity and inclusion efforts. The goal, says Lepera, is "positive firm culture with social connection, designed to create safe places for our citizens to share their experiences and feelings during this time of crisis. In times of challenge we can rise to be better, and that is a good place to be." Among the firm's clients are Post Malone, Drake, Timbaland, JAY-Z, Eminem, Dr. Luke, Dark Horse songwriters, Warner Music Group, Universal Music Group, Kobalt, Prescription Songs, Tresona Music,

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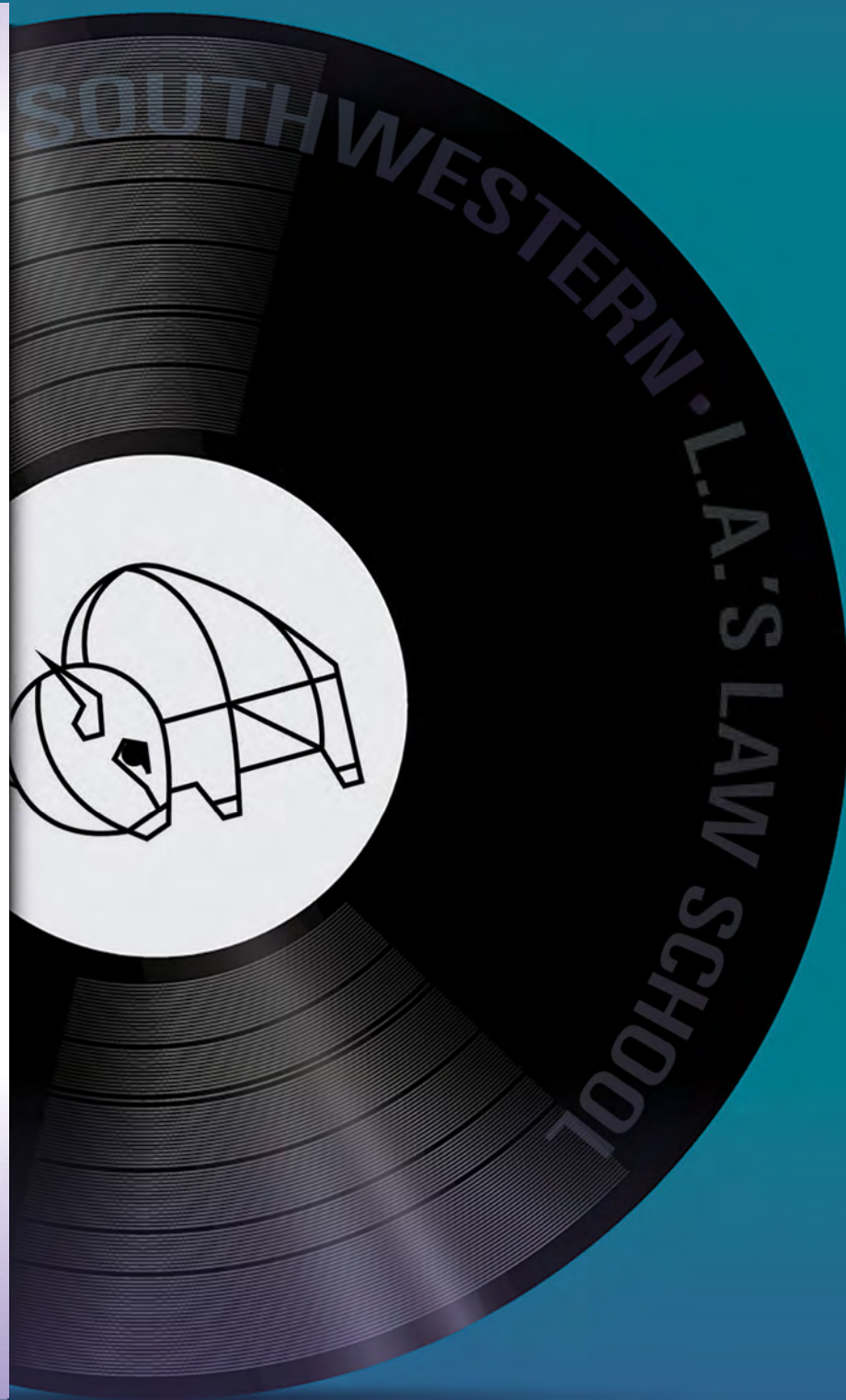
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- Tamara Milagros-Butler '01



- Southwestern, a *Billboard* Top Music Law School

Advanced Alternative Media, Fitz & The Tantrums and multiple other artists, songwriters and music companies.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE PANDEMIC “Whipping Post” by the Allman Brothers. Sometimes that is how it feels during the pandemic — being tied to a whipping post — but it is the best groove ever.” —Lepera

Leslie Frank

PARTNER

King Holmes Paterno & Soriano

Marjorie Garcia

PARTNER

King Holmes Paterno & Soriano

Howard King

PARTNER

King Holmes Paterno & Soriano

Jacqueline Sabec

PARTNER

King Holmes Paterno & Soriano

Laurie Soriano

PARTNER

King Holmes Paterno & Soriano

Peter Paterno

PARTNER

King Holmes Paterno & Soriano

Henry Gradstein

OF COUNSEL

King Holmes Paterno & Soriano

“We had one of our busiest years ever in 2020,” says Soriano, who handled the sale of Calvin Harris’ song catalog to Vine Alternative Investments for a reported \$90 million to \$110 million. Paterno oversaw two song catalog sales to Round Hill Music, for Goo Goo Dolls frontman Johnny Rzeznik and Bryan Adams’ songwriting partner Jim Vallance. As popular as these deals have become, says Soriano, artists need to ask “whether it is worth it to give up ownership in their music because of the benefits they get back in each offered deal.” The firm represents, among others, Dr. Dre, Metallica, Sia, Van

Morrison, Calvin Harris, Carole King, Bon Iver, Frank Ocean, Steve Aoki, Zedd, Skrillex, Ghostmane, Juanes, Los Tigres del Norte, Gloria Trevi, Jesse & Joy, Jason “Poo Bear” Boyd, The Audibles, Alanis Morissette and Jerry Garcia Music Arts.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE PANDEMIC “Level of Concern” by twenty one pilots. It exemplifies the creativity that sprung up all over while artists were in their basements trying to stay safe.” —Soriano

John T. Frankenheimer

PARTNER/CHAIR OF MUSIC INDUSTRY PRACTICE GROUP/CHAIRMAN EMERITUS

Loeb & Loeb

Debbie White

VICE CHAIR, MUSIC INDUSTRY PRACTICE GROUP

Loeb & Loeb

Derek Crownover

CO-MANAGER, NASHVILLE

Loeb & Loeb

Tiffany Dunn

OFFICE ADMINISTRATIVE PARTNER, NASHVILLE

Loeb & Loeb

Loeb & Loeb had a busy year across genres and industry sectors. The firm represented Primary Wave in the acquisition of the Nicky Chinn and Mason Levy catalogs, guided Duran Duran’s agreements with S Curve/BMG, landed deals for Cannons with Columbia Records and Mills with Keep Cool/RCA Records, and renegotiated Melanie Martinez’s contract with Atlantic Records. In Nashville — where its clients include Luke Combs, Carrie Underwood, the estate of Otis Redding Jr. and the Grand Ole Opry — the firm advised Hillary Lindsey in the sale of her catalog and worldwide co-publishing deal with Concord and helped songwriter-producer Jeremy Stover and RED Creative Group close a catalog sale and co-publishing deal extension with Anthem Entertainment. On the inter-

national stage, White remains counsel to **BTS** and Big Hit Entertainment, and Loeb & Loeb continues to serve as outside counsel to China’s largest media company, Tencent, in ongoing music, film, TV and gaming matters.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“The unprecedented influx of sophisticated financial support throughout the industry, the maturation of financial models that not only enabled the largest companies to achieve astronomical valuations but also provided much needed capital for independent entrepreneurs and creatives to build new, forward-thinking models reflective of a more diversified music industry.” —Frankenheimer

Helene Freeman

PARTNER

Phillips Nizer

While its role in achieving a copyright-dispute victory for Led Zeppelin (along with co-counsel Peter Anderson) has drawn headlines, Phillips Nizer has a long history of representing music industry clients in litigation. It has offered advice to other music attorneys in the areas of contract interpretation, trademark and copyright ownership, and termination rights, says Freeman. In March 2020, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Led Zeppelin’s “Stairway to Heaven” did not infringe on the copyright of the Spirit instrumental “Taurus.” One year later, Freeman says that the case “appears to have had a significant impact on music copyright-infringement litigation.”

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

“Whether the changes made by the Music Modernization Act will afford them a fair share of the revenue generated by digital exploitation of their music.”

Kenneth Freundlich

FOUNDING PRINCIPAL

Freundlich Law

Freundlich represented a group of 15 musicologists who filed amicus briefs in such high-profile copyright cases as those involving Led Zeppelin’s “Stairway to Heaven,” Katy Perry’s “Dark Horse” and Pharrell Williams’ “Blurred Lines.” In the lattermost action, his brief warned of curtailing creativity “in the field of popular music, inhibiting songwriters by the threat of far-fetched claims of infringement.” The litigation firm also won dismissals for Pandora in a copyright infringement case brought by Wixen Music Publishing and for LyricFind in a lawsuit filed by Genius, both involving lyrics shared online.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “How do I organize my ownership of content with co-creators, register and protect my content at all points of distribution and ensure proper payment for its use?”

Sasha Frid
Louis “Skip” Miller

PARTNERS

Miller Barondess

The firm’s founders stepped up “through the challenges of the pandemic,” says Frid, 44, on behalf of clients including Five Finger Death Punch, Journey, Mötley Crüe, Smokey Robinson, Nile Rodgers, Trey Songz and Rod Stewart. The experienced trial lawyers took on tasks including securing government loans, assessing tour cancellations and negotiating payment obligations. The firm is representing Robinson in a suit brought by the Motown legend’s former manager seeking past commissions and is representing Neal Schon in a suit over rights to Journey’s name.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE

PANDEMIC “I Will Survive” by Gloria Gaynor, because no matter how bad it gets, the human spirit always prevails and overcomes.” —Frid

Leah Godesky
David Marroso

PARTNERS

O’Melveny & Myers

Dan Petrocelli

PARTNER/TRIAL PRACTICE COMMITTEE

CHAIR/VICE CHAIR

O’Melveny & Myers

O’Melveny & Myers represents Global Music Rights — the performing rights organization for acts including The Beatles, Bon Jovi, Drake, Eagles, Post Malone, Bruno Mars, Ava Max, Shawn Mendes, Metallica, Nicki Minaj, Travis Scott, Bruce Springsteen, Harry Styles and Pharrell Williams. In ongoing litigation against the Radio Music Licensing Committee, says Petrocelli, the firm has defeated a motion to dismiss, “winning the argument that performing rights organizations are not per se antitrust violations and convincing the Department of Justice to weigh in on the artists’ side on [market-based] price fixing.” Godesky also continues to represent Kesha as the defendant in the suit brought against the singer by Lukas “Dr. Luke” Gottwald for defamation, with the trial set for fall.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “Put it in writing!” —Petrocelli

Damien Granderson

PARTNER

Granderson Des Rochers

Guy Blake

MANAGING PARTNER

Granderson Des Rochers

Elizabeth Moody

PARTNER, CHAIR OF NEW MEDIA PRACTICE

Granderson Des Rochers

Colin Morrissey

PARTNER

Granderson Des Rochers

Launched in 2019, Granderson Des Rochers identifies itself as “one of the





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Helping music industry clients rise to the top. Barnes & Thornburg applauds our own Jason Karlov, Entertainment, Media and Sports Practice Group Chair, for being recognized in Billboard's 2021 Top Music Lawyers Edition. Congratulations to you and all the honorees!

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most diverse transactional entertainment law firms in the country,” says Blake. “We built the firm to service the needs of a clientele as diverse as our partnership, associates and staff.” Those clients include A\$AP Rocky, J Balvin, blackbear, J. Cole, H.E.R., Lil Baby, Ne-Yo, Paramore, Shaggy, Bernie Taupin, Hayley Williams and Young Thug, as well as Quality Control Music, Sessions, Live Triller and Wave XR. They are served by practice groups in the areas of music, film/TV, comedy, new media and technology, fashion, branding and entertainment finance. “Our mission is to continue to champion diversity and advance our professional and social objectives,” says Blake.

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

“Lack of control and ownership in their creations and lack of transparency as to the economics of how their content is monetized.” —Blake

Gary Greenstein

MEMBER

Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati

Greenstein, 55, counts among his clients tech giants such as Google, as well as streaming service Pandora and artist-friendly music marketplace Bandcamp, which pays artists 80% to 85% of revenue from sales when fans buy music and merchandise through its site. Bandcamp in particular stood out during the pandemic, waiving its revenue share in favor of artists for all sales on the first Friday of each month, acknowledging the hardships brought about by the lack of touring opportunities. Greenstein also represents Feed Media Group, which aims to help businesses improve user experiences with music.

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

“The ability to grab a greater share of the amounts already paid by licensees for the use of music. If 70% of revenue is being paid for the use of music by streaming services, why is more of that not flowing down to creators?”

Allen Grubman

SENIOR PARTNER

Grubman Shire Meiselas & Sacks

David Jacobs

PARTNER

Grubman Shire Meiselas & Sacks

Kenny Meiselas

NAMED PARTNER

Grubman Shire Meiselas & Sacks

The tens of millions of fans who watched **THE WEEKND**'s Super Bowl LV performance on Feb. 7 saw Grubman Shire's work in action: The firm negotiated the singer's Pepsi halftime show agreement as well as his Mercedes-Benz endorsement deal that launched his single “After Hours” to a historic run of over a year spent in the top 10 of the Hot 100. “The Weeknd and his team

showed not only could new music be released successfully during the pandemic but that great music could serve as an inspiration to everyone suffering through the scary and uncertain days of COVID-19,” says Meiselas. Other power deals that the firm brokered include Bruce Springsteen's Super Bowl Jeep commercial and Lady Gaga's endorsement deals with Valentino and Oreo, as well as her starring role in Ridley Scott's *House of Gucci*.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “The best way to protect their intellectual property and their creative works in a crowded marketplace where over 100,000 albums and singles are released per year.” —Meiselas

Pierre Hachar

FOUNDING ATTORNEY

The Hachar Law Firm

With an international roster that includes Chayanne, Elvis Crespo, Leo Dan, Deorro, Gente de Zona and Saga WhiteBlack, as well as entertainment companies Loud & Live and 300 Entertainment, Hachar, 41, has spent the pandemic resolving immigration and touring cancellation issues resulting from travel restrictions and embassy shutdowns. The Miami-based litigator also launched Redcarpetlaw, a free online resource with legal information for underserved creative communities.

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

“Keeping up with technology, in particular as it relates to rights management through concepts such as non-fungible tokens and blockchain.”

David Hecht

FOUNDING/MANAGING PARTNER

Hecht Partners

In its first year, Hecht's firm achieved a milestone by assisting JaQuel Knight in copyrighting his iconic dance routine in the music video for Beyoncé's “Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It).” He is believed to be the first commercial choreographer in pop music to obtain copyright registration for his work. “Choreography is not only entitled to strong copyright protection, but creators of choreography should be more fairly compensated for their contributions to music videos and live performances,” says Hecht, whose team specializes in intellectual property and represents other clients including dancer Aisha Francis and musicians 2 Milly and Leo P.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “How can I protect my creative expression and enhance its value?”

Jonas Herbsman

MANAGING PARTNER

Herbsman Hafer Weber & Frisch

Michael Frisch

PARTNER

Herbsman Hafer Weber & Frisch

Elliot Resnik

SENIOR COUNSEL

Herbsman Hafer Weber & Frisch

Herbsman Hafer's longtime client Terence Blanchard, the renowned trumpeter and Academy Award-nominated composer, in collaboration with librettist Kasi Lemmons, has adapted *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, the memoir of *New York Times* columnist Charles M. Blow, as an opera that will open the 2021-22 season of the Metropolitan Opera this fall. “It is the first opera by a Black composer to be presented in the 137-year history of the Metropolitan Opera,” says Herbsman, 56. “As a firm, we are proud to be involved with this ground-breaking production. My father, who is 92, has had season tickets to the Met for close to 60 years, and I was the youngest member of the audience on a number of occasions growing up. I'm looking forward to attending with him.” Resnik helped another client, the National Independent Venue Association, to organize the Save Our Stages Festival with Foo Fighters as headliners. The event raised nearly \$2 million and brought “greater attention to NIVA's Capitol Hill advocacy efforts,” he says, which led to \$15 billion in federal pandemic relief for venues.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER Explain what they are signing. “Young artists need to understand their rights, their obligations and where their income comes from. It isn't enough to simply rely on your advisers. As the saying goes, knowledge is power.” —Herbsman

John Ingram

HEAD OF MUSIC

Goodman Genow Schenkman

Smelkinson & Christopher

Korean label JYP Entertainment, home to

the girl group TWICE (which struck a strategic partnership in February 2020 with Republic Records), has engaged Goodman Genow to advise on “its music and entertainment affairs in North America,” says Ingram. The firm — which represents Virgil Abloh, Daniel Caesar, JID, JoJo Siwa, Bryson Tiller and Don Toliver — also secured record deals in the past year for Claire Rosinkranz with Republic and Sara Kays with Atlantic Records.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“Never taking the ability to see a show for granted again.”

Lawrence Iser

MANAGING PARTNER

Kinsella Weitzman Iser Kump

Howard Weitzman

PARTNER

Kinsella Weitzman Iser Kump

In December, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the estate of Michael Jackson, represented by Kinsella Weitzman, stating that its dispute with HBO must be arbitrated. A 1992 agreement granted a license to the cable network to broadcast Jackson's performance. The deal included confidentiality provisions that contained a nondisparagement clause. The estate claims HBO violated that deal by producing the documentary *Leaving Neverland*. The federal appellate court found that the contract's arbitration provision is still valid, 28 years after it was agreed upon. In addition to Jackson's estate, the firm's clients include Jackson Browne, Del Records, Nicki Minaj, Justin and Jeremiah Raisen, Reach Music Publishing, Roland Corporation and Third Side Music.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “How can I protect my creations when collaborating with others?” —Iser



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USC Gould

School of Law

Erin M. Jacobson

ATTORNEY/CEO

Erin M. Jacobson

Jacobson does not disclose her client list but works with a variety of award-winning artists, estates, publishers and other music companies, including recent matters “involving Elvis Presley, Sam Cooke, Gene Vincent, The Crusaders, Ray Gilbert, Perry Botkin Jr., Frank Sinatra, Prince, The Ronettes and Johnny Burnette,” she says. In November, Jacobson published *Don’t Get Screwed! How To Protect Yourself As an Independent Musician* to help indie artists protect their intellectual property and maximize their revenue, especially in the absence of touring income.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “What am I signing?” A lot of young artists come to me without a decent understanding of the contracts they’ve previously signed, despite being represented by other counsel for those deals.”

Neville Johnson

FOUNDING PARTNER

Johnson & Johnson

Johnson claimed a recent win in settling a class action suit for the Rick Nelson Company — the estate of the 1950s teen idol — against Sony Music Entertainment over deductions on foreign streaming royalties. A court filing in September put the amount of the settlement at \$12.7 million. And Johnson has found strength in numbers with other class action suits. “This has been a tremendous boon to the music industry as the clients could not afford individually to vindicate the rights at issue,” he says. “As a result, tens of thousands of musicians have been helped.”

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“The dominance of social media and new methods of promotion.”

Russell A. Jones

ATTORNEY

Law Offices of Russell A. Jones Jr. and Associates

As the country looks forward to emerging from the pandemic, Jones sees 2020 as the year people learned “the importance of music in maintaining public morale.” Jones represents country stars **GARTH BROOKS**, Toby Keith, Tim McGraw and **TRISHA YEARWOOD**, and those artists have been among those lifting the public mood by continuing to entertain: Brooks and Yearwood took requests on their CBS TV specials; McGraw served up a musical call for unity in “Undivided,” a duet with Florida Georgia Line’s Tyler Hubbard; and Keith has kept up fan morale with his Furniture Store Guitar Sessions, selfie videos where he covers a variety of well-known tunes.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “What doesn’t the contract say?”

Wale Kalejaiye

ASSOCIATE

Sheridans

Since joining Sheridans in 2018, Kalejaiye, 30, has overseen global deals for trail-blazing talent, including next-generation creators from Africa. Among the agreements he has guided: an international partnership between Universal Music Publishing Group and Spaceship Publishing for Nigerian Afrobeats megastar Burna Boy; a joint venture between Cruel Santino, another African superstar, and Interscope Records; and the appointment of London-based Nigerian fashion maven Mowalola Ogunlesi as design director at Yeezy GAP, Kanye West’s joint venture with the retail behemoth. His tip: an “obscene focus on treating each artist that I represent as a business.”

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE

PANDEMIC “Bank On It” by Burna Boy. The song is very spiritual and has a multitude of deep, meaningful messages about survival.”

Joshua A. Kamen

FOUNDER/OWNER

The Law Offices of Joshua A. Kamen

Kamen, 42, takes pride in the deals his firm has struck on behalf of the next generation of talent. Besides helping close Arizona Zervas’ “monumental deal with Columbia Records,” Kamen also secured a licensing deal between 23-year-old

songwriter Nija and Capitol Records.

After “penning hit records for everyone from Ariana Grande to Cardi B to ZAYN, I’m proud to have helped her negotiate a partnership that will allow the world to hear her voice,” he says.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“The renewed interest across the business in social issues, racial justice and politics. I’ve also noticed that many younger creatives are incredibly forward-thinking and becoming more actively involved in their business, which has encouraged established companies to consider unique deal structures and more artist-friendly arrangements.”

Jason Karlov

PARTNER/CHAIR OF ENTERTAINMENT, MEDIA AND SPORTS PRACTICE GROUP

Joel Katz

SENIOR COUNSEL

Barnes & Thornburg

Barnes & Thornburg, which marks its 10th anniversary this year, has built “a multidisciplinary approach to practicing music law,” says Karlov, “whether you have needs regarding publishing, recording, merchandise, copyrights ... However you want to make money in this business of music, we have experience that caters to that topic. That’s hard to build across the board and something about which we are very proud and happy for our clients” — a

roster that includes Michael Bolton, T Bone Burnett, Bob Dylan, John Fogerty, the Grateful Dead catalog, the NFL and Rufus Wainwright. Katz, the founding chairman of Greenberg Traurig’s global entertainment and media practice, joined Barnes & Thornburg in March. He reports that he continues to work with long-term clients including acts Little Big Town and Why Don’t We, industry organizations from the Recording Academy to the Country Music Association and Big Machine Records, and a number of executives including Sony Nashville’s Randy Goodman and Universal Music Group Nashville’s Mike Dungan.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE

PANDEMIC “Blowin’ in the Wind” by Bob Dylan. The concept of universal change so aptly described by the lyric and the concept that life goes on eternally, even with abrupt change. The answer is just blowin’ in the wind.” —Katz

Lauren Kilgore

PARTNER

Shackelford Bowen McKinley & Norton

Kilgore, 39, whose firm’s clients include Dan + Shay, Tanya Tucker and Steve Winwood, says that throughout the pandemic, labels and publishers have been “aggressively” signing new talent. Her firm has been just as active in obtaining, negotiating and closing such deals, with an eye on helping young artists retain as much ownership as possible. “It is rewarding to facilitate that process and collaborate with clients on ways to maximize artist and writer exposure,” she says.

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

“The missing revenue generated and the fallout from live performances are continuing to mount, with a devastating impact on large swaths of the business, artist branding and music consumption. The sooner we can safely bring back live music, the better.”

Christiane Kinney

PRESIDENT

Kinney Law

After closing \$36 million in catalog sales in late 2018 and early 2019 at a previous firm, Kinney went solo in 2020 just as the pandemic struck. She dove into the world of virtual reality and built the legal infrastructure for BRCvr, an official virtual Burning Man experience on behalf of client Big Rock Creative. She represents legacy artists in renegotiations triggered by rights terminations and heirs of legacy artists in seeking money they’re due. She has also represented LGBTQ+ business enterprise-certified public benefit corporations to help struggling LGBTQ+ artists during the pandemic.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE

PANDEMIC “Lean on Me” by Bill Withers. So many people have been crippled by this pandemic — mentally, spiritually and



Yearwood (left) and Brooks



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financially. For me, some of that melts away whenever I hear that song.”

Mark Kraiss

PARTNER

Bray & Kraiss Solicitors

“Earth shattering” is how Kraiss describes the pandemic’s impact on the live-music business. But the shutdown also forced the industry to rapidly adjust how “it delivers live content, most notably by shifting to livestreaming,” he says. The livestreaming platform Driift, a Bray & Kraiss client, grew its business in 2020. The firm also represents a who’s who of the British music community, from The Rolling Stones to Ed Sheeran, Gorillaz, Elton John, Skepta and more. In a challenging year, says Kraiss, one positive note was in “continuing to provide business and legal support to our emerging young artists and writer clients as they continue to find ways of recording and releasing music during the pandemic.” **WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR LAWYER** “Should I be aiming to self-release music or sign a longer-term deal with an established label? And in either case, which manager would best look after my interests?”

Simon Rust Lamb

COO

Bulldog Digital Media

CO-FOUNDING PARTNER

Curiosity Preservation Society

Lamb counseled promoters of independent festivals on strategies for cancellations, ticket refunds, insurance and force majeure, the conditions that prevented parties from fulfilling contracts. He also worked with longtime festival promoter James “Disco Donnie” Estopinal Jr. to acquire his company Disco Donnie Presents back from dance conglomerate LiveStyle, making DDP the first promoter to return to indie status following the consolidation of the sector in the early 2010s. Lamb also completed a five-year goal of raising \$1 million for the nonprofits Film2Future and Pablove.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE

PANDEMIC “The Sierra Nevada alpine wilderness symphony: heavy, wall-shaking wind solos balanced with moments of deep silence.”

Greg Lapidus

MANAGING PARTNER

Lapidus Root & Sacharow

Henry Root

PARTNER

Lapidus Root & Sacharow

Jeff Sacharow

PARTNER

Lapidus Root & Sacharow

Lynn Quarterman

SENIOR ASSOCIATE

Lapidus Root & Sacharow

Jerry Butler

OF COUNSEL

Lapidus Root & Sacharow

Leigh Zeichick

ASSOCIATE

Lapidus Root & Sacharow

The firm represents entertainment and media companies, executives, creators, technology companies, live-event producers and more, and during the recent boom in music-asset acquisitions, it has represented both buyers and sellers of high-profile music publishing and master recording catalogs, says Lapidus. “We’re proud of our work with the Disney Music Group that has helped bring some joy into our homes at a time when the world outside can seem bleak and whose work has helped us remember that we can still come together in some way to make magical moments for our families and friends,” he says. The firm is also the longtime representative for Special Olympics in connection with entertainment initiatives like its *A Very Special Christmas* album series, launched by producer Jimmy Iovine in 1987. Since its debut, the releases have raised over \$130 million for the organization and its programs helping people with intellectual disabilities.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “Do I need legal advice before signing this document?” —Lapidus

Dina LaPolt

FOUNDER/OWNER

LaPolt Law

LaPolt, 54, worked with Rep. Ted Deutch, D-Fla., to ensure songwriters, artists and other music industry professionals were eligible for unemployment benefits under the CARES Act during the early days of the pandemic. “By the time the bill passed, my voice was hoarse because I had been on the phone so much,” says LaPolt, who celebrated 23 years sober in March. “We’ve moved the [Alcoholics Anonymous] meetings to Zoom, and I’m attending meetings taking place all over the world. It’s great for me, but folks new to sobriety have really struggled with the isolation.”

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

“NFTs. I represent deadmau5, who was an early pioneer, and we’ve identified so many important legal issues, from the [intellectual property] embodied in the tokens to the regulatory issues of selling the coins on securities markets.”

Todd Larson

Benjamin Marks

PARTNERS

Weil Gotshal & Manges

Last summer, Marks and Lawson represented SiriusXM and Pandora in the six-week Copyright Royalty Board trial — held entirely online — to set per-stream royalty rates for programmed music web-



Young

casters for 2021-25. While the CRB continues to deliberate, Marks and Lawson also represent clients including AEG Live, Entercom, iHeartMedia, SoundCloud, Facebook and Twitter in music licensing and other copyright-related matters.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“For all our advances in online and virtual communication, live music — people packed in a dark, sweaty room dancing and singing along to their favorite band — remains the beating heart of the music business. We didn’t how much we missed it until it was gone.” —Larson

Shay M. Lawson

MANAGING ATTORNEY

Lawson McKinley

Lawson, 36, is an adviser for top hip-hop clients, brokering recent deals including Offset’s apparel collaboration with New Era and the recent credit for producer Sheldon Ferguson (Travis Scott, Lil Baby) on Lil Wayne’s Billboard 200 No. 1 album, *Funeral*. And as advocacy chair for the Recording Academy’s Atlanta chapter — her second consecutive term — Lawson led local efforts for legislative COVID-19 relief for artists as well as the passage of the HITS Act with members of Congress. Additionally, Lawson is a partner of the Black Music Action Coalition and was recently elected to the board of Songwriters of North America.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “For an easy-to-understand written breakdown of the terms of any deal. Most are so allured by the opportunity, they skip over critical details and terms that can impact the life span of their artistry.”

Bill Leibowitz

FOUNDER/PARTNER

The William R. Leibowitz Law Group

In a year that brought a surge of song-catalog royalties rights sales, Leibowitz did a number of big deals with big stars — and with the highest-profile acquisition fund of them all. “As the lawyer for Hipgnosis Songs Fund Limited, I closed some major acquisitions during 2020,” he says. Those included the catalogs of Blondie, Lindsey Buckingham, Jimmy Iovine, Rick James, Journey, Barry Manilow, Nelly, Mark Ronson, RZA, Richie Sambora and **NEIL YOUNG**. But the biggest issue, he says, is songwriters’ share of streaming revenue: “Without songwriters, there are no hit records, and it is terribly inequitable that they are the lowest on the totem pole when it comes to compensation.”

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “How do I structure my deals so I am building equity for the long term? And, in this regard, how do I maintain ownership of my intellectual property?”

Jeff Levy

PARTNER

Ritholz Levy Fields

Chip Petree

MANAGING PARTNER


Ritholz Levy Fields

Matt Greenberg

OF COUNSEL

Ritholz Levy Fields

For Levy, his firm’s most significant accomplishment in 2020 was internal: holding weekly “all hands” Zoom meetings with each member of the staff. “It got us through the ups and downs everyone experienced due to



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ROGERS LAW GROUP



*“Won’t you please welcome Edwin Nells—accompanied,
as always, by his attorney.”*

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WE PROUDLY CONGRATULATE OUR BRILLIANT COLLEAGUES,

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ED BUGGÉ AND MARQUIS “QUEST” MALLOY,

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HERTZ LICHTENSTEIN YOUNG & POLK, LLP

the pandemic and political crises, and strengthened our firm's interpersonal relationships," says Levy, whose firm reps Brothers Osbourne, Chris Stapleton and Downtown Music Publishing, among others. "Happy lawyers and happy staff create better experiences for our clients."

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE PANDEMIC "The New York Mets' cable channel theme song. Baseball's return gave me hope that one day things would go back to normal." —Levy

**Robert Lieberman
Michael Perlstein**

PARTNERS
Fischbach Perlstein Lieberman & Almond
Lieberman and Perlstein successfully negotiated the biggest songwriter music publishing catalog deal in the history of the music industry — selling the Bob Dylan song catalog to Universal Music Group — bringing in upwards of a reported \$400 million for the legendary singer-songwriter. But that's not all they did in the past year: They also guided the estates of Mac Rebennack (aka Dr. John) and Peggy Lee; corporate clients like GoDigital Media Group, Cinq Music, Strange Music and Wise Music Group; and artist-songwriters like Edie Brickell & The New Bohemians, Eddie Holland and Tech N9ne.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR LAWYER "How do you make any money in this business?" Because if they are counting on streaming income, they should look elsewhere. The young artist needs to build a social base and do everything possible on a daily basis to build that social base." —Lieberman

Simon Long

PARTNER
Trainer Shepherd Phillips Melvin Haynes & Collins Long
Long and his colleagues advised the Indian film production company and record label Tips Industries on the licensing of its entire catalog to Warner Music, "forming an alliance to better represent this repertoire of mainly Bollywood hits from the last four decades outside India," he says, describing the deal as "a strategic partnership with Warner Music for global exploitation of [the company's] music assets." The firm counts among its clients famed India film composer A.R. Rahman, as well as Eric Bibb, David Guetta and Wang Chung, and producers Marius de Vries and Mike Spencer.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE "Learning how to be optimistic, especially for British artists [post-Brexit] facing the loss of freedom of movement in Europe and crippling visa fees for touring in the U.S."

**Kent Marcus
Jeff Colvin**

PARTNERS
Marcus & Colvin
Marcus & Colvin navigated a turbulent year on behalf of clients including Jason Aldean, **BLACK PUMAS** and Kings of Leon. The lattermost act has "been on the forefront of the developing NFT world and how this will shape the future of distribution of art," says Marcus, 51. But he adds that his firm's most important accomplishment was rallying behind partner Colvin after he and his 3-year-old son sustained serious injuries during the tornado that swept through Nashville

in March 2020, leaving 25 dead and \$2.5 billion in damage. "Watching Jeff and his son fight like champions was an achievement far more important than any plaque," says Marcus.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR LAWYER "The simple but loaded, 'Do I sign this?' But more so, 'Is this step back worth the potential of five steps forward?'" —Marcus

Doug Mark

FOUNDER/PARTNER
Mark Music & Media Law
David Ferreria

PARTNER
Mark Music & Media Law
Mark Music & Media Law represents Billie Eilish, who has just released the Apple TV+ documentary *The World's a Little Blurry*, and Mötley Crüe, which has announced an upcoming stadium tour. Its client roster also includes Benny Blanco, Danny Elfman, Epitaph Records, FINNEAS, Loma Vista Records, Rhiannon Giddens, Guns N' Roses, Public Enemy, Tegan and Sara, and Tool. "The music business is, fundamentally, based on the exploitation of intangible property rights," says Ferreria, "and one of our main duties as counselors and stewards of clients' business is to help them understand the ecosystem that has been built around their creative endeavors."

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR LAWYER "How their legal rights correlate to the monies they earn." —Ferreria

Angela N. Martinez

ATTORNEY AT LAW
Angela N. Martinez
After spending months doing legal work on livestream concerts for her clients including Luis Fonsi and Pitbull, Martinez, 44, took the virtual stage in November to receive one of the Latin Recording Academy's Leading Ladies of Entertainment honors alongside Selena Gomez and Gloria "Goyo" Martinez. Marquee client Ozuna presented her with the award. "I was flattered to be honored alongside women I highly respect," she says. "I shared the moment with family and friends in my living room."

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR LAWYER "[Can they] really dig in from the beginning to ensure that they have corporate planning, tax planning and family planning to ensure that [artists] properly protect their assets?'"

James E. McMillan

MANAGING PARTNER
James E. McMillan
McMillan's hip-hop-heavy client roster has included acts from 8Ball & MJG to Machine Gun Kelly, but the attorney put most of his efforts in 2020 toward his Art@War music label, which partnered with Atlantic Records in 2019. McMil-

lan signed new talent, including Lebra Jolie, Prince Tae and Traetwothree, and focused not only on promoting his artists but also on "managing their personal challenges caused by the pandemic," he says. In order to offset touring losses, he found new revenue streams for his acts by linking with brands like Coca-Cola, LiveXLive and Fashion Nova.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR LAWYER "What is the best way to create a sustainable career?'"

Ed McPherson

FOUNDING PARTNER
McPherson
In the past year, McPherson's firm has represented its clients in multiple high-profile cases, including a class action suit against Universal Music Group over the 2008 fire that destroyed up to 500,000 master recordings; a suit by Dr. Dre's estranged wife, who claims she co-owns his stage names; and a multimillion-dollar copyright infringement action over Travis Scott's single "Highest in the Room," which debuted at No. 1 on the Hot 100 in 2019. "Getting sued for copyright infringement is inevitable these days if you have a hit song," says McPherson. "We recently won a motion for bifurcation in the case, staying all discovery on damages until liability is established."

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR LAWYER "How do I become an old artist?'"

Mike Milom

PARTNER
Milom Horsnell Crow Kelley Beckett Shehan
With a roster that includes Alabama, Russell Dickerson, Mickey Guyton, Emmylou Harris, Rascal Flatts, Keith Urban, the estate of Hank Williams Sr. and the Country Music Hall of Fame, business is brisk for Milom. "Our greatest achievement of the past year may have been helping our clients and their team identify and implement innovative ways to remain in the public eye and create new income streams as a temporary replacement for touring revenue. It's usually not sexy or publicist-worthy, but it is essential," says Milom. "Currently, we are helping several clients analyze and manage the new risks of post-COVID-19 touring."

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE "While in-person appearances will return, the virtual performance and cyber connection with fans will continue to provide an important option, particularly for beginning and midlevel performers where travel expense renders many in-person gigs unprofitable."

Zia F. Modabber

MANAGING PARTNER, CALIFORNIA/MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT PRACTICE GROUP CHAIR
Katten
As chair of Katten's media and enter-



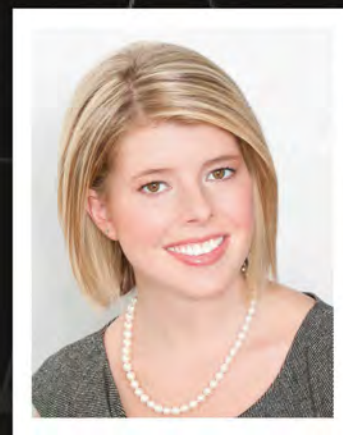
Black Pumas

KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES

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tainment practice, with clients including André 3000, Céline Dion, the Michael Jackson estate, Lil Nas X, Trent Reznor and Usher, Modabber says he spent the past year addressing the challenges touring clients faced “to create the live experience in the post-COVID-19 world.” Meanwhile, he protected Reznor’s legal interests on projects such as the Golden Globe-winning score to Pixar’s *Soul* and Nine Inch Nails’ intellectual property.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “I strongly believe that young artists must know how to pay attention to their business so that if/when the fun stops, they won’t be left wishing they had paid more attention.”

Martin Ochs

PARTNER/HEAD OF MUSIC
Hamblins

Navigating the licensing challenges created by the boom in livestream concerts has kept Ochs, 38, busy throughout the pandemic. Two of his long-term clients are the leading British collection societies PPL and PRS for Music, which launched a joint-venture company to administer public performance royalties in 2018. That partnership plays a “crucial” role in ensuring “the continued recognition and protection of creative rights,” he says. Other clients include Northern Irish instrument maker Lowden Guitars and Universal Music Group’s merchandise division, Bravado.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE

PANDEMIC “‘Only You’ by Yazoo, because it was meant to be played at my wedding, which has been canceled twice during the pandemic.”

Matt Oppenheim

MANAGING PARTNER
Oppenheim + Zebrak

Scott Zebrak

FOUNDING PARTNER

Oppenheim + Zebrak

Launched in Washington, D.C., a decade ago, Oppenheim + Zebrak represent major labels and their publishing companies in copyright infringement cases against internet service providers. In January, a federal district judge upheld the \$1 billion jury verdict for copyright infringement that the firm helped obtain for its clients against Cox Communications. Along with co-counsel at Covington & Burling, the firm is leading similar cases against two other ISPs, Charter Communications and Bright House, “that could further shape the landscape when it comes to ISPs turning a blind eye to subscribers’ repeated infringement of copyrighted music,” says Zebrak, 50. They are also representing major labels in actions against FLVTO.biz and 2conv.com, two



of the world’s most popular stream-ripping services.

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

“There are many important issues, but the impact of online infringement remains at the top.” —Zebrak

Ed Pagano

PARTNER, PUBLIC LAW AND POLICY PRACTICE
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld

Casey Higgins

SENIOR POLICY ADVISER, PUBLIC LAW AND POLICY PRACTICE

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld

Akin Gump worked tirelessly amid the pandemic to support the newly formed National Independent Venue Association. NIVA’s advocacy work led Congress to pass the bipartisan Save Our Stages Act in December, which provided \$15 billion in grants to live-entertainment venues, performing arts centers and movie theaters to survive the live-entertainment shutdown. “Live-music venues were the first to close and will be the last to reopen,” says Higgins. “Without this support, venues in cities and small towns across America would have closed permanently.”

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“Strong bipartisan recognition now exists in Washington that concerts and live performing arts create vital economic activity not only in our big cities, but in our small towns as well. This new appreciation for the economic benefits the industry provides in communities across America, coupled with its cultural contributions, will serve as a springboard for future efforts in Washington to support and grow the industry.” —Higgins

Don Passman

PARTNER
Gang Tyre Ramer Brown & Passman

Gene Salomon

MANAGING PARTNER
Gang Tyre Ramer Brown & Passman

Ethan Schiffres

PARTNER
Gang Tyre Ramer Brown & Passman

The firm of Gang Tyre is said to represent superstars such as Adele, **TAYLOR SWIFT** and Stevie Wonder, and recently added Elton John to its client roster. Salomon has worked with Camila Cabello, Neil Diamond, Green Day, P!nk and R.E.M., among others, while Schiffres, who works with Anthony Ramos and Ludwig Göransson, negotiated Jeff Vaughn’s move to the position of chairman/CEO of Capitol Music Group. “It has been a good year,” says Passman, remarking that the pandemic “required artists to look inward and dig deeper emotionally” — much like Swift did with *folklore*, which won album of the year in March at the Grammy Awards. And although 2020 was not a year for book signings, Passman published the 10th edition of his must-read guide, *All You Need To Know About the Music Business*.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “‘Protect me from getting involved in long-term agreements that I can’t get out of if they don’t work out.’” —Passman

Adrian Perry

Neema Sahni
Jonathan Sperling
PARTNERS/CO-CHAIRS OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY GROUP
Covington & Burling

The firm works with all three of the major music groups and their respective publishing companies. Sahni, 37, says she’s most proud of the firm’s work in response to the pandemic in the past year, both within and beyond the music industry. “This has ranged from advising life-sciences companies in their efforts to develop and produce therapeutics, vaccines, diagnostics and [personal protective equipment] to assisting entertainment companies as they navigated thorny contractual and employment issues in resuming operations,” she says.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE

PANDEMIC “‘Lawyers, Guns and Money’ by Warren Zevon. A song about misadventure seemed pretty exotic in the midst of lockdown, where a trip to the gas station was exciting.” —Perry

Vince Phillips

MANAGING PARTNER
Arrington & Phillips

Aurielle Brooks

ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY
Arrington & Phillips

Phillips, 49; Brooks, 29; and their firm advocate for clients including Bow Wow, Fredo Bang, Kevin Gates, Lil Baby, Lil Keed, Mooski, Nard & B, Maaly Raw, RMR, Sukihana and YoungBoy Never Broke Again. In response to the pandemic and calls for social justice during 2020, says Phillips, “we orchestrated sending thousands of boxes of fresh produce to grocery-desert areas in Kentucky during the civil unrest taking place throughout the nation.”

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“Even when everything else in the world stops, music carries on. Although other industries may have sadly become crippled from the trying times that came with 2020, the music business actually thrived, finding new ways to stream, monetize and reach passionate fans.” —Brooks

Tabetha Plummer

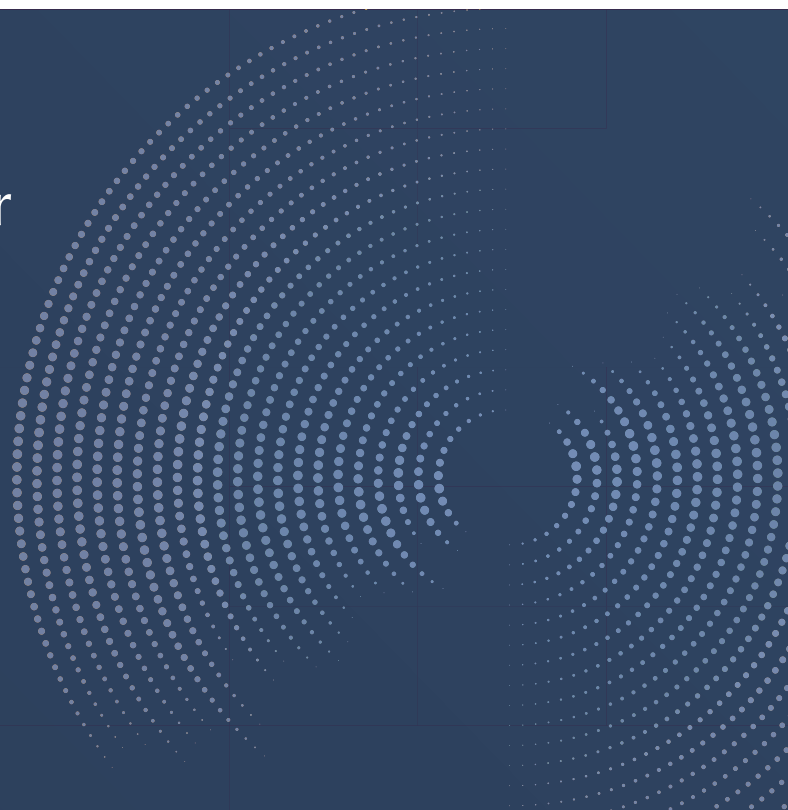
ATTORNEY
Plummer Law Group

Plummer’s client list includes a wide swath of hip-hop and R&B artists spanning multiple generations, from Snoop Dogg and India.Arie to BJ the Chicago Kid and JoJo. A highlight of her work in the past year, however, involved advising Dwayne Abernathy — better known as the producer Dem Jointz — in the signing of 13-year-old Keedron Bryant after the teen’s George Floyd protest anthem, “I Just Wanna Live,” went viral, leading to a recording contract with Warner Records.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“*Verzuz*, D-Nice and the emergence of TikTok. Reprioritization of how to create and monetize content while touring is suspended.”

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Congratulations to our partner

Michael Poster

on being named a Top Music Lawyer by
Billboard for the fourth consecutive year and for
always hitting the right notes on behalf of his
extraordinary clients

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Michael Poster

PARTNER

Michelman & Robinson

In October, Poster, 49, counseled Vine Alternative Investments in its acquisition of DJ **CALVIN HARRIS**' song catalog for a reported \$100 million.

However, the lawyer, who also represents music publishers Concord and Spirit Music Group, is especially proud of Michelman & Robinson's firmwide effort to provide its client base with "a daily flow of current, easily understandable information," free of charge, about economic relief programs and legal matters related to the pandemic. Says Poster: "We believe it is critical that they be well-informed about the pressing issues arising out of COVID-19."

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER "Before I enter into a deal, what are the likely short- and long-term impacts of the transaction, and what can I do to change my position if those impacts are not what I anticipated?"

**Gregor Pryor
Stephen Sessa**

PARTNERS/CO-CHAIRS, GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA INDUSTRY GROUP

Reed Smith

Edward Shapiro

PARTNER, GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA INDUSTRY GROUP

Reed Smith

Reed Smith reports adding over 200 clients during the pandemic — including Grammy winner Jacob Collier and MelodyVR — while developing new tools for clients, including a livestreaming guide published within two weeks of the national lockdown in the United States and a tracker that logged regulatory trends affecting digital platforms. "The tracker assists our clients in identifying the complex intertwining regulatory initiatives currently in play and proposed across the U.K. and European Union," says Pryor, 46.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER "In the words of Janet Jackson, 'What have you done for me lately?' The best clients also ask: 'Based on your experience, what would you do if you were me?'"

Rollin A. Ransom

PARTNER

Sidley Austin

Ransom, 51, is co-leader of the global commercial litigation and disputes practice of Sidley Austin and managing partner of the Los Angeles office, and offers guidance to the RIAA and major labels. During the pandemic, he continued to serve as outside counsel to The Music Center — the Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, the Ahmanson Theater and the Mark Taper Forum — as the L.A. venues moved to virtual events.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

"Continuing to call attention to and honor the critical contribution of artists, songwriters, producers and other professionals [who are Black, Indigenous and people of color] to the historical and ongoing evolution of the music industry."

Berkeley Reinhold

OWNER

Business and Law Office of Berkeley Reinhold

As a legal adviser to Live Nation, C3 Presents and music festivals like Lollapalooza, Reinhold saw her clients severely affected by the live-music shutdown of 2020. That's one reason why she takes particular pride in the TV and digital negotiations she worked on for Global Citizen — including the *One World: Together at Home* broadcast, which she says set two Guinness World Records: "the most musical acts to perform at a remote music festival, and the most money raised for charity by a remote music festival."

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

"More than ever, it's essential that creators be educated about their ownership rights and how these are licensed and conveyed. In addition to traditional deals, there are so many exciting new platforms and business models, and it is really important to understand how to best protect your rights when exploiting lucrative opportunities."

Jaimie Roberts

FOUNDING PARTNER

Roberts & Hafitz

Harry Roberts

ATTORNEY

Roberts & Hafitz

As boundaries between the entertainment sectors continue to blur, the father-and-son team are proud to foster the firm's growth with multihyphenate entertainers. "While music has always been our core, our clients — and our firm — are now active across all entertainment mediums," says Jaimie, pointing to Robin Thicke's spot as a judge on *The Masked Singer*, Donnie Wahlberg entering his 11th season on *Blue Bloods* and various upcoming projects for The Chainsmokers' production company Kick the Habit.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

"The continued growth of TikTok and its ability to catapult careers has sped up the shift of power away from major corporations and into the hands of creators." — Jaimie Roberts

Carlos Rodriguez-Feliz

FOUNDER/MANAGING PARTNER

RodFel Law

"A large part of our firm is dedicated to supporting and protecting emerging talent," says Rodriguez-Feliz, 31. For client Rapetón Networks, the firm negotiated a joint venture with Yandel to create a

platform "for increasing exposure for Latin artists from the start of their careers. I particularly enjoyed this opportunity to utilize my skills within the Latin music industry in the areas of technology, digital rights, music monetization and expanding artists' global reach," he says.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER "More questions. Emerging talent needs to learn how the music industry works and know the key players that they need on their team to successfully work with record labels, publishers, booking agents and other industry professionals."

Angela Rogers

OWNER

Rogers Law Group

Rogers says her law group expanded during the pandemic. The firm — whose clients include P'erre Bourne, Lil Durk, Jay Electronica, EST Gee, Shy Glizzy, Havoc, Lil Skies and Nardo Wick — "recently opened a television practice," she says. "We now have an attorney specializing in television transactions so we can fully service our clients in both music and television." She tells young artists who want to stay focused on their creative output, "I'm here to help them make a living doing what they love."

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

"There are many distribution providers for independent artists that give access for them to upload their music directly. Therefore, it becomes highly competitive to stand out and get their music heard and marketed."

Nick Rosenberg

FOUNDER/PRINCIPAL

Rosenberg Law

In the past year, Rosenberg's successes have included working closely with independent concert promoter Move Forward Music to negotiate a deal with Twitch; watching the debut of YouTube

original series *Released*, hosted by Little Bacon Bear, after he encouraged her to audition for the role; and representing producers Rafeal "Audio Anthem" Brown and Anthony Killhoffer as they landed credits on new albums from Nas and Kid Cudi, respectively. Aside from assisting current clients — a list that also includes his brother, radio/TV personality Peter Rosenberg, and rapper IDK — he's helping educate the next generation of talent, talking with high school students over Zoom to discuss "some of the issues young creators need to think about as they begin their careers in entertainment."

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

"The playing field for creators remains uneven. There are many powerful stakeholders that play a role in the recorded-music business with interests that are frequently at odds with other stakeholders. This has resulted in a complex system that makes it hard for creators to understand how they are getting paid for their work."

Bobby Rosenblum

CHAIRMAN, GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA PRACTICE

Greenberg Traurig

Jay L. Cooper

FOUNDER, LOS ANGELES ENTERTAINMENT PRACTICE

Greenberg Traurig

Jess L. Rosen

SHAREHOLDER/CO-CHAIR, ATLANTA ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA PRACTICE

Greenberg Traurig

Paul D. Schindler

SHAREHOLDER/SENIOR CHAIR, NEW YORK ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA PRACTICE

Greenberg Traurig

Greenberg Traurig's global entertainment and media practice led by Rosenblum is one of the preeminent legal teams in the music industry, with a stacked client list that includes major corporations and

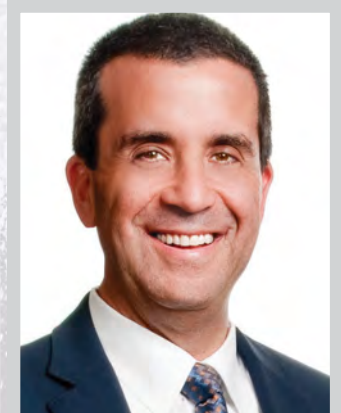


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Congratulations to
Howard Weitzman & Larry Iser
for again being named to
Billboard's annual **"Top Music Lawyers"** list.



HOWARD WEITZMAN



LARRY ISER

congratulates our colleagues and fellow honorees for their
recognition in *Billboard's* 2021 "Top Music Lawyers" list!



Christine Lepera

Russell Frackman

Eleanor M. Lackman

organizations like Spotify, TikTok, Live Nation and the Recording Academy, as well as artists ranging from Jennifer Lopez and Future to Kacey Musgraves and Miranda Lambert. The past year saw “the sale of many significant music publishing and sound recordings on behalf of artist clients as well as smaller companies, which has proved to be an important income stream, especially since touring income evaporated due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Rosenblum.

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

“Understanding the value of your work in new digital exploitations, particularly given the expanding use of music in innovative online media, such as social media, fitness applications and gaming.” —Rosenblum

Brian Schall

CHAIR, ENTERTAINMENT DEPARTMENT

Wolf Rifkin Shapiro Schulman & Rabkin

Schall, 55, advised Christopher Braide on the sale of his catalog to Downtown Music Publishing in December. The deal involved his work with Sia — which includes titles from her breakout solo album, *1000 Forms of Fear*, and the soundtrack to her film *Music* — as well as hits he co-wrote for Beyoncé (“God Made You Beautiful”), Lana Del Rey (“Million Dollar Man”), Selena Gomez (“Camouflage”), Halsey (“Trouble”) and Britney Spears (“Perfume”). The firm also represents acts such as Illenium, songwriter Dave Bassett and production-songwriting duo Rock Mafia.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE

PANDEMIC “‘Eat Sleep Rave Repeat’ by Fatboy Slim and Riva Starr. I changed the title to ‘Eat Sleep Work Repeat.’ Every day during the pandemic was the same, no matter what day of the week.”

John Seay

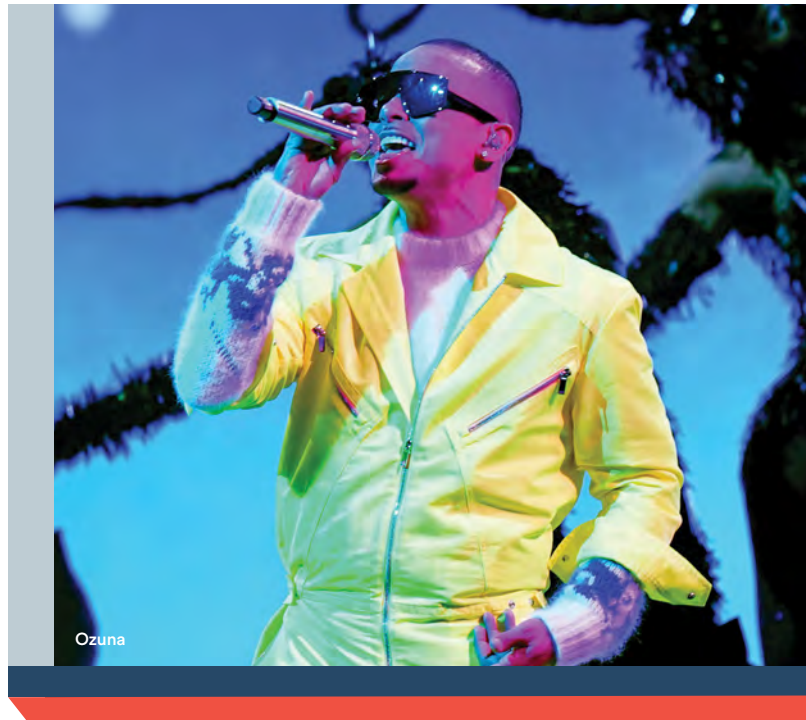
PARTNER

Carter + Woodard

Seay negotiated Priscilla Block’s recording and publishing agreements with Universal Music Group Nashville and Warner Chappell Music, respectively; Theophilus London’s recording agreement with Secretly Canadian; and of Montreal’s catalog agreement with Polyvinyl Records, among other deals. Seay, 41, says it’s more important than ever for artists to know their publishing and master rights, as “artists are aware of how valuable those assets are,” he says. “It’s not always practical to maintain ownership of those assets, but any transfer of rights should be entered into very carefully.”

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “Can you explain this agreement to me before I sign it? It’s easy to get caught up in the excitement of being offered a deal.”



Ozuna

Michael Selverne

MANAGING PARTNER

Selverne & Company

Selverne, 61, hit a professional high point when he helped Round Hill Music launch a publicly traded song-catalog royalty fund — Round Hill Music Royalty Fund — on the London Stock Exchange. The lawyer-musician also honed his artistic muscle by co-producing and mixing the album *Be Still Moses* by Steep Canyon Rangers & Asheville Symphony (featuring Boyz II Men), which reached No. 1 on *Billboard*’s Bluegrass Albums chart last April.

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

“Innovation and sustainability. So much music is now a soliloquy with a producer in a room with Ableton talking to themselves. What keeps music fluid is the conversation between artists in the writing and recording process.”

Nyanza Shaw

OWNER/MANAGING ATTORNEY

Shaw Esquire

Shaw cites two independent clients who she says “thrived” during the pandemic with her guidance. She helped negotiate a Lexus brand deal for singer-actor Trevor Jackson and secured a seven-figure deal for rapper-mailman Bfb Da Packman with The Lunch Crew Company after a label bidding war following his viral hit “Free Joe Exotic” (featuring Sada Baby), which reached over 33 million views on YouTube. “Bfb Da Packman is such a talented, smart and super-hardworking artist,” says Shaw. “It is a pleasure to see him win.”

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “There is no risk in an artist soliciting a music lawyer’s advice. Most lawyers will not charge for an initial consultation, and if they do, then you probably shouldn’t be working with that lawyer.”

Daniel Shulman

OWEN SLOANE

Andrew Tavel

PARTNERS

Eisner

Eisner helped its clients earn money in areas other than touring “to compensate for the loss of live revenue,” says Sloane. Tavel says the music community showed up during the pandemic “when the country needed them the most, whether raising significant dollars for charitable needs or performing virtually in many different configurations to lift everyone’s spirits.”

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

“How to turn two minutes of TikTok fame into a long-lasting career. Success and sustain should remain the goal, not just that initial seven-figure check.” —Tavel

Simran A. Singh

MANAGING PARTNER

Singh Singh & Trauben

Christopher R. Navarro

PARTNER

Singh Singh & Trauben

Singh Singh’s recent achievements include negotiating recording and publishing deals for clients such as Natti Natasha; Pina Records’ new album agreement with Sony Music Latin; **OZUNA**’s publishing deal with Kobalt and multi-album deal with Sony Entertainment; and Rauw Alejandro, Chris Jedi and Gaby Music’s publishing agreements with Warner Chappell. Singh, 42, also executive-produced the 2020 Netflix program *Selena: The Series*, which chronicled the life of the late Mexican American star Selena Quintanilla and “was No. 1 in multiple countries, including the United States,” he says.

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE

PANDEMIC “‘Baby Shark,’ because my son would make my wife and I dance to this every day during the lockdown.” —Navarro

Stanton “Larry” Stein

PARTNER/HEAD OF MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT

Russ August & Kabat

Diana Sanders

SENIOR ASSOCIATE, MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT

Russ August & Kabat

In September, Russ August & Kabat reached a settlement in an action brought against Vivendi, Universal Music Group and StudioCanal on behalf of *This Is Spinal Tap* co-creators Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, Rob Reiner and Harry Shearer. The suit related to “complicated copyright termination and accounting issues associated with the film’s sound recordings and soundtrack album,” says Stein. (The settlement amount was not disclosed.) The Los Angeles-based firm also represents Mary J. Blige, Simon Cowell, Drake, Post Malone and TikTok star Chase “Lil Huddy” Hudson.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “What could be the long-term effects from the early agreements they sign.” —Stein

Rachel Stilwell

FOUNDER

Stilwell Law

Stilwell — whose clients include songwriter-producer Darrell Brown, LeAnn Rimes and singer-songwriter Al B. Sure! — led advocacy meetings with members of Congress and representatives of the recording industry during the pandemic to argue for financial relief and fair pay for music creators. On behalf of the musicFIRST Coalition and the Future of Music Coalition, Stilwell offered comments to the Federal Communications Commission regarding discrepancies in music licensing between audio delivery platforms that were later cited in the FCC’s Communications Marketplace Report to Congress.

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“Audiences’ pent-up demand to see live concerts — and the start of the implementation of the Music Modernization Act.”

Michael Sukin

PRESIDENT

Sukin Law Group

Sukin Law Group has helped negotiate some of the largest sales in music publishing — including Universal Music Group’s \$2.2 billion acquisition of Bertelsmann/BMG Music in 2006 — and the coronavirus did not slow it down. Sukin cites the May 2020 sale of “iconic, world-famous music publishing company Shapiro Bernstein,” which included over 16,000 copyrights and titles by The Beatles, Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra, to Reservoir “for maximum price at the height of the pandemic and the bottom of the stock market.” The firm has represented

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2021

INTERNATIONAL POWER PLAYERS

On April 24th, *Billboard* will publish its annual International Power Players list. This issue will profile the leaders in the global music industry including the label executives, concert promoters, managers, talent agents and lawyers, and recognize their achievements. Advertise and congratulate this year's International Power Players to reach an influential audience of decision-makers worldwide.

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ISSUE DATE 4/24 | AD CLOSE 4/14 | MATERIALS DUE 4/15

Charles Aznavour, The Rolling Stones, the estate of George Gershwin and the creators and rights holders for classic American musicals from *Man of La Mancha* to *Porgy and Bess*.

THE SONGS THAT GOT ME THROUGH THE PANDEMIC “Harry Chapin’s ‘All My Life’s a Circle,’ because it is, and George Gershwin’s ‘Rhapsody in Blue.’ ”

Ron Sweeney

FOUNDER/OWNER

Ron Sweeney and Company/Digital Disruption Entertainment

Across four decades as a music attorney, Sweeney, 67, has represented Clarence Avant, James Brown, Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis, DMX and Lil Wayne/Young Money, among others. In 2020, he stepped up as an adviser to the Black Music Artists Coalition, commenting last spring that he had initiated talks with the chairmen of every music company “to hold them accountable for the meaningful and sustainable changes required to end the systemic racism that exists in our industry.” At his firm, during the year of the pandemic, he said recently, “We realized we should work to live and not live to work.”

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE “An artist must diversify so they are not dependent on touring income to support their lifestyles.”

Stephanie Taylor

ATTORNEY/OWNER

Taylor Guttman

Taylor’s firm reimagined the concert experience during the pandemic for The Caverns, a concert venue known for hosting *Bluegrass Underground* in a cave at the base of Tennessee’s Cumberland Mountains. “We worked as a team to create an above-ground, outdoor amphitheater adjacent to the cave venue,” says Taylor, who guided the legal protocols for the endeavor, which already has booked multiple sold-out concerts in 2021. “The Caverns was among the first venues in the country to launch a pod-based model with four sold-out Jason Isbell shows.”

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE “We will all forever cherish the live-music experience. I’m going to shed a tear or two next time I’m in a good bluegrass jam, sitting in a circle, fiddle in hand.”

Adam Van Straten

PRINCIPAL

Van Straten Solicitors

Amid last year’s publishing-rights sales frenzy, Van Straten’s firm advised KT Tunstall and Leo Sayer on partial catalog acquisitions by Primary Wave.

The firm “always finds time for emerging talent,” too, says Van Straten, and after Scottish singer Nathan Evans’ sea shanty renditions went viral on TikTok, the firm closed his record deal with Polydor in just 24 hours. “He was a postman one day and topping charts globally the next,” he says, adding of his firm: “Despite being small in size, we continue to punch above our weight and provide the key services that our clients require.”

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “All young artists need clear, impartial advice from their lawyers as to how the business works so that they are better able to manage their expectations.”

Doug Wigdor

FOUNDING PARTNER

Wigdor

Wigdor, 52, represents former Recording Academy president/CEO Deborah Dugan, whose suit against the organization over her 2020 dismissal remains in arbitration negotiations. Dugan’s case helped bring about “a renewed focus on diversity, equity and inclusion,” he says. “Her complaint shined a spotlight on how women and people of color are often completely excluded from rooms where important decisions are made.”

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“A renewed focus on diversity, equity and inclusion.”

Richard Wolfe

SENIOR PARTNER

Wolfe Law Miami

With what he describes as a “self-deprecating” courtroom demeanor that jurors “eat up,” Wolfe, 62, is a go-to litigator for top artists and executives when it comes to touchy cases. Recent achievements: He obtained a dismissal of claims against Yandel by his former manager and litigated complaints for Maluma, T-Pain, Wisin, independent label/management firm Big Ligas, catalog company Essential Media and Menudo’s trademark owner. Wolfe notes that his financial skills as a former certified public accountant come in handy for cases where “everything comes down to dollars and cents.”

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “The difference between net and gross, and explain all the deductions to my revenue stream.”

Andrea Yankovsky

FOUNDER

Yankovsky Law

Yankovsky helped launch the OutHouse Counsel program in 2020 to provide creatives with “the same kind of access

to legal counsel that the big labels and publishers have in-house,” she says. “With ongoing, consistent counsel, we can take a much more proactive approach to deal-making, strategic partnerships and positioning, and packaging intellectual property.” The firm also closed a number of deals for its clients including Sonicly’s launch of its fan-funding platform for music creators, Jane Ira Bloom’s deals with NativeDSD and Immersive Audio Album, and Jim Anderson and Ulrike Schwarz’s agreement for recording and mixing the *Judas and the Black Messiah* score.

WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS MUST ASK THEIR

LAWYER “All too often an artist or business only consults a lawyer when they think it really matters. Traditional hourly billing makes it even more difficult. Many law firms, including ours, are changing their billing practices so that starting out doesn’t mean second-rate legal.”

Helen Yu

PRINCIPAL

Yu Leseberg

Yu reports that her firm handled legal agreements for songs contained on 25% of the top 20 most-sold albums of 2020. The tracks included Ariana Grande’s “Safety Net” and Eminem’s “Favorite Bitch,” which featured her client Ty Dolla \$ign. Another client, Jess Jackson, produced four songs for the late rapper Pop Smoke, along with 32 tracks from his posthumous release *Shoot for the Stars, Aim for the Moon*, which she says “went No. 1 worldwide and dominated the charts for half the year.”

MOST LASTING LEGACY OF 2020 WILL BE

“How the music business became the voice of change in driving diversity and inclusion. It was always very male and white-dominated, but for real change to be implemented, we need to hire people of diverse ethnicities, gender, race and sexual orientation.”

Adam Zia

FOUNDER

The Zia Firm

Among the client achievements that Zia, 42, celebrated in the past year were Machine Gun Kelly’s first No. 1 album on the Billboard 200 with *Tickets to My Downfall*, Starrah’s sharing the Grammy Award for best rap song as co-writer of Megan Thee Stallion’s “Savage,” Tierra Whack’s creating and starring in her own Apple commercial and Polo G’s sophomore album, *The Goat*, going platinum. He has seen his firm expand from “a solo practice to a rapidly growing boutique with a diverse staff that is inclusionary of race, culture, gender and sexuality,”

which Zia says has allowed it to “break the barriers and stigmas of what a music lawyer ‘looks like.’ ”

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

“Ownership and what role that plays in the deals artists make — from record deals to publishing deals to even brand deals, where the artist is creating designs and coming up with ideas and products.”

Leslie Jose Zigel

PARTNER/CHAIR, ENTERTAINMENT, MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY GROUP

Greenspoon Marder

Zigel, whose firm represents a deep roster of Latin talent — including Ana Gabriel, Sergio George, Alejandra Guzmán, Arthur Hanlon, Maffio, Mario, Pitbull, Carlos Vives, The Wailers and Wisin — kept active in managing pandemic protocol for TV and festival clients. He has been involved in projects such as the documentary *Jimmy Carter: Rock and Roll President*; John Leguizamo’s directorial debut film, *Critical Thinking*; Univision’s top-rated show *Enamorándonos*; and the III Points Festival planned for October in Miami. “Adaptation must include novel strategies and partnership-building across the board, including with governmental agencies,” he says.

MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING CREATORS

“Survival. Lockdowns have forced artists to adapt [with] new avenues for creative expression. However, adaptation must include partnership-building across the board.”

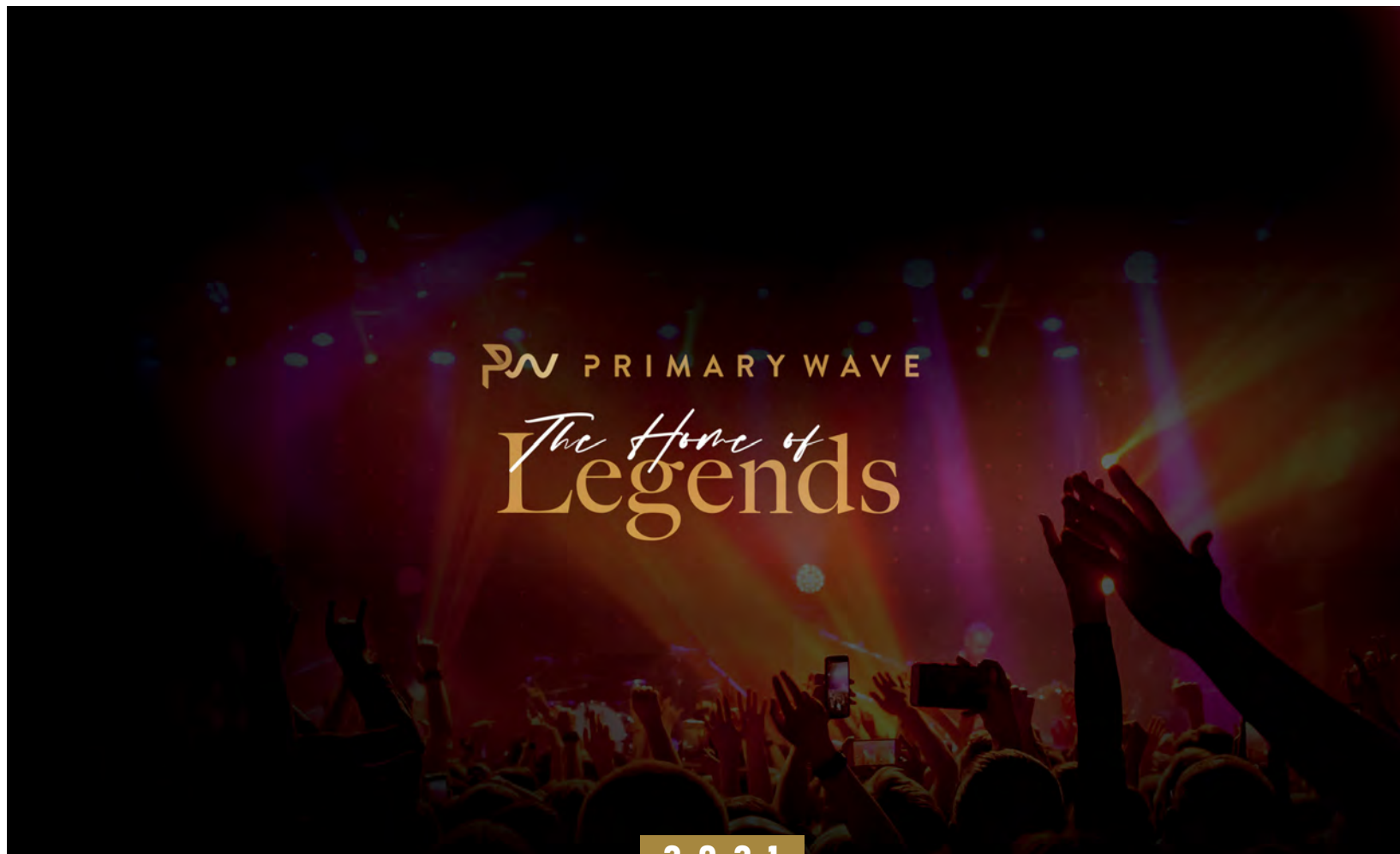
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METHODOLOGY

Nominations for *Billboard* power lists 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 to thom.duffy@billboard.com. Nominations close and lists are locked not less than 90 days before publication. *Billboard*’s Top Music Lawyers for 2020 were chosen by editors based on factors including, but not limited to, nominations by peers, colleagues and superiors. In-house counsel were limited to the companies shown. Otherwise, Top Music Lawyers focused on outside counsel. In addition to information requested with nominations, editors consider the attorneys’ representation of clients with notable music industry impact. That impact is measured by metrics including, but not limited to, chart, sales and streaming performance as measured by MRC Data and social media impressions using data available as of Feb. 15.

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2021

PRIMARY WAVE 15TH ANNIVERSARY

On April 24, *Billboard* will salute Primary Wave Music on its 15th anniversary.

Founded in 2006, Primary Wave Music is home to some of the most iconic songwriters and artists across the history of recorded music including Bob Marley, Stevie Nicks, Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons, Smokey Robinson, Whitney Houston, Burt Bacharach, Olivia Newton-John, and many more.

With offices in New York, Los Angeles, Austin, Nashville and London, Primary Wave Music has embraced an entrepreneurial spirit, offering and executing proactive one-of-a-kind ideas, unique services and marketing campaigns for our artists. Primary Wave has earned a stellar reputation for being forward thinking and re-introducing classic artists and their music into the modern marketplace as well as nurturing young talent to become legends themselves. This success is based upon their team of seasoned and creative executives collaboratively working together closely with our artists as partners. As a company, Primary Wave strives for excellence in the pursuit of iconic artists and catalogs that not only reflect great artistry, but moments of culture.

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We are delighted to recognize the great work of our colleagues, and thank them for their service to our clients and the entertainment community.



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MIKE MILOM

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Congratulations, Mike!



Chris Horsnell, David Crow, Page Kelley, Matthew Beckett, Molly Shehan

MILOM | **HORSNELL** | **CROW**
KELLEY | **BECKETT** | **SHEHAN** PLC

Chartbreaker

Masked Wolf

“Astronaut in the Ocean” has lifted off thanks to TikTok

Growing up in Sydney, Masked Wolf (born Harry Michael) felt inspired by American hip-hop acts like G-Unit, especially leader 50 Cent’s winner-take-all demeanor, as well as Eminem, whose songs “Stan” and “Lose Yourself” motivated him to write music that formed a narrative. That mindset helped Masked Wolf score his first charting hit with the electric, melancholy single “Astronaut in the Ocean,” which sits at No. 5 on the Billboard Global 200 and No. 17 on the Billboard Hot 100.

Masked Wolf first played the demo for his manager, Jae Butt, before its June 2019 release on Teamwrk Records. It initially failed to take off, but as the pandemic forced the world into isolation in 2020, the song erupted — and Elektra Records noticed the hit was making a major dent on global market data. It has now garnered 15 million on-demand streams, according to MRC Data, thanks to a TikTok craze in which users — 158,000 and counting — record feats of strength to the song’s intro.



BUTT

“We instantly leaned into that because TikTok is fickle and it’s short-lived,” says Jacob Fain, Elektra Records senior vp A&R. “So when you get that window, you really need to reposition and then capitalize on it for as long as TikTok will allow you to.” In December, Wolf signed a global recording contract with Elektra/Warner Music Group (excluding Australia and New Zealand), and by the start of 2021, the label rereleased the track.

Since Australia has eased its COVID-19 restrictions, becoming one of the first markets where musicians have been able to tour in 2021, Masked Wolf performed “Astronaut in the Ocean” and unreleased material for a crowd of 8,000 at the Gold Coast Lunar Electric Music Festival in March. The artist now has his sights set on a remix of the breakout song and is working on his major-label debut album. The follow-up to such a massive hit might seem daunting, but Masked Wolf says that if he could tell his younger self where he’s at now, he would understand the challenge ahead: “I would literally slap myself in the face and say, ‘Get up, it’s supposed to be this hard.’” —JORDAN ROSE



No. 7

PEAK ON BILLBOARD'S HOT RAP SONGS

Masked Wolf photographed by Tim Lo on March 16 in Sydney.

BUTT: COURTESY OF LUCKY ENT

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NOEL SCHAJRIS 20TH ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE

Latin Grammy winner, singer, songwriter and pianist Noel Schajris, has sold more than 25 million records and 1 million tickets since his first solo album 20 years ago, some of his songs and albums had been appeared at the Billboard's top ten charts. He has earned international success with the legendary duet Sin Bandera where he and Leonel Garcia created some of the biggest hits in Spanish music history.

His music videos have more than 700 million views and his social media includes 9.5 million followers from more than 15 countries. As a recording artist, he has sung duets with John Legend, Brian Mcknight, Luis Fonsi, and Reik, just to name a few.

In 2020 he released the unique web www.NoelSchajris.fan which includes an online store, a fan subscription service and online shows. Mr. Schajris is considered to be one of the most important and celebrated artists in Latin music.

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ISSUE DATE 5/15 | AD CLOSE 5/5 | MATERIALS DUE 5/6

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