

billboard

JULY 17, 2021 • BILLBOARD.COM

**Music's Top
Moneymakers**

**Who's Leading
The Grammy Race?**

THE RETURN OF SWEDISH HOUSE MAFIA

**NEW LABEL. NEW MANAGER. NEW MUSIC.
CAN THEY LIGHT UP A POST-EDM WORLD?**

From left: Swedish House Mafia's
Sebastian Ingrosso, Steve Angello and Axwell.



FOR YOUR GRAMMY® CONSIDERATION

JUSTIN BIEBER JUSTICE

“With ‘Justice,’ Justin Bieber’s comeback is complete.” - *NEW YORK POST*

“Justin Bieber has delivered a definitive new era on ‘Justice.’” - ● *USATODAY*

“Unearths the charisma and agility that helped make Bieber a star.” - *Pitchfork*

“Peaches”

feat. Daniel Caesar & Giveon

“Peaches’ lands like a blast of sunlight...” - *billboard*

“Lonely” with benny blanco

“THIS SONG! The tune is one of the finest vocal performances in Bieber’s career... a complete story, one only he could tell.” - *Los Angeles Times*

“Anyone”

“Bieber’s best song in years...” - *VULTURE*



FOR YOUR GRAMMY® CONSIDERATION

BEARTOOTH

BELOW



NME

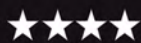
"'Below' is deliberately heavier than anything Beartooth have ever done"



NEW NOISE

CLASH

"Unapologetically heavy, with some spell-binding riffs and addictive hooks"



KERRANG!

KERRANG!

"Proof that Caleb Shomo is one of his generation's most remarkable songwriters"



LOUDER



Upset

Forbes

"From recording every instrument, writing, mixing and mastering all music, Caleb Shomo is Beartooth in the same way that Dave Grohl is Foo Fighters"

FOR YOUR GRAMMY® CONSIDERATION

Blxst



NO LOVE LOST DELUXE

featuring the hit singles

“OVERRATED”

“CHOSEN ft. Ty Dolla \$ign & Tyga”

*“His skill for
hitmaking shines”*

billboard

*“The multi-talented West Coast
troubadour is paving his own way”*

UPROXX

*“One of Los Angeles’s
most promising acts”*

COMPLEX

*“It’s a safe bet that Blxst will
be even bigger than he is now”*

BET★

*“An artist whose dynamic
vocals command the mic with ease”*

XXL

*“No Love Lost [feels] like reading through Blxst’s journal,
watching him maneuver through the pitfalls of friendship and love”*

Pitchfork

EYGLE®

**Red Bull
RECORDS**

It's time to love an album again.



When's the last time a new record became one of your all-time favorites? It's probably been a while. Hey, growing up happens. You can't keep up with everything new that comes your way. That's why you still listen those trusty old classics.

John Mayer kept listening to them too, until one day he had an idea: why not make a record that feels like those unforgettable albums we grew up loving? It's not easy to do. You'd basically have to be John Mayer to pull it off. But he is. And he did.

The result is 'Sob Rock,' a collection of instantly catchy and satisfying tunes, played by world-class musicians and painstakingly produced to make every note count. Just like they used to.

So whether you're mending a broken heart or hitting the open road, make John Mayer's new album the soundtrack to a new set of glory years: the ones that lay ahead. **AVAILABLE ON COLUMBIA RECORDS & TAPES**



billboard Hot 100®



Aaron Lewis Flies Flag For Country

AARON LEWIS, FOUNDING MEMBER AND LEAD VOCALIST OF Staind, bounds onto the Billboard Hot 100 at No. 14 — and scores his first No. 1 on the Hot Country Songs chart — with “Am I the Only One.” Released July 2, the song arrives with 4 million U.S. streams and 59,300 sold in the week ending July 8, according to MRC Data. Valory Music will begin promoting it to country radio on July 26.

Lewis adds his fourth Hot Country Songs entry, besting a prior No. 39 high with “Endless Summer” in 2012. He has two No. 1s among four total top 10s on Top Country Albums: his first country release, the EP *Town Line* in 2011, and *Sinner* in 2016.

Staind has hit a No. 5 best on the Hot 100, with “It’s Been Awhile,” in 2001. The band has notched three No. 1s on the all-genre Billboard 200, along with four leaders on Mainstream Rock Airplay. Previously as a soloist, Lewis charted two Hot 100 titles, reaching a No. 56 top peak with “Outside,” with Fred Durst, also in 2001.

Lewis’ new single, which includes lyrics such as “Am I the only one willing to fight/For my love of the red and white?,” built buzz around the July 4 holiday through outlets including Fox News and SiriusXM’s Patriot Radio, as well as social media platform Telegram.

—GARY TRUST and JIM ASKER

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	CERTIFICATION	PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	Artist	IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
1	1	1	#1 BUTTER	7 WKS	R. GRIMALDI, S. KIRK, R. PERRY (J. ANDREWS, R. GRIMALDI, S. KIRK, R.M.A. BILOWITZ, S. GARCIA, R. PERRY)	BTS	HYBE/BIGHIT MUSIC/COLUMBIA	1	7
2	2	2	AIR GOOD 4 U		D. NIGRO, ALEXANDER 23 (O. RODRIGO, D.L. NIGRO)	Olivia Rodrigo	GEFFEN/INTERSCOPE	1	8
3	4	3	LEVITATING		KOZ, S.D. PRICE (C. COFFEE JR., S. KOZMENIUK, S.T. HUDSON, D. LIPA, J.L. KIRK)	Dua Lipa Feat. DaBaby	WARNER	2	40
4	3	4	KISS ME MORE		YETI BEATS, R. CHAHAYED (A.Z. DLAMINLO, SPRECHER, R. CHAHAYED, G.A. POWELL II, C. LANG, L.S. GOTTFELD, S. IROWE, T. SHADDICK, S.A. KIPNER)	Doja Cat Feat. SZA	KEMOSABE/RCA	3	13
8	8	5	MONTERO (CALL ME BY YOUR NAME)		TAKE A DAY TRIP (O. FEDI), R. LENZO (M.L. HILL, D.M.A. BAPTISTE, D. BIRAL, O. FEDI, R. LENZO)	Lil Nas X	COLUMBIA	1	15
-	5	6	BAD HABITS		FRED AGAIN... J. MCDAID, E. SHEERAN (E.C. SHEERAN, F. GIBSON, J. MCDAID)	Ed Sheeran	ATLANTIC	5	2
6	6	7	LEAVE THE DOOR OPEN		BRUNO MARS, D. MILE (BRUNO MARS, B. ANDERSON, D. EMILE II, C.B. BROWN)	Silk Sonic (Bruno Mars & Anderson .Paak)	AFTERMATH/ATLANTIC	1	18
5	7	8	PEACHES		HARY SHNDO (J.D. BIEBER, A. WOTMAN, G.D. EVANS, B. HARVEY, L.M. MARTINEZ JR., L.B. BELL, F. KING, M.S. LEON, K. YAZDANI, A. SIMMONS)	Justin Bieber Feat. Daniel Caesar & Giveon	RAYMOND BRAUN/DEF JAM	1	16
7	9	9	SAVE YOUR TEARS		MAX MARTIN, O.T. HOLTER, THE WEEKND (A. TESFAYE, A. BALSHE, J. QUENNEVILLE, MAX MARTIN, O.T. HOLTER, A. GRANDE)	The Weeknd & Ariana Grande	XO/REPUBLIC	1	30
9	10	10	DE JA VU		D. NIGRO (D.L. NIGRO, O. RODRIGO, T. SWIFT, J.M. ANTONOFF, A.E. CLARK)	Olivia Rodrigo	GEFFEN/INTERSCOPE	3	14

The 41-year-old Mobile, Ala., native's second Hot 100 entry also reaches a new No. 3 high on Hot Country Songs.



20

WALKER HAYES
"Fancy Like"

What was the idea behind "Fancy Like"?

We [united] over the misconception that every artist drives a G Wagon and eats at The Palm five nights a week. I'm just like you; I just have a different job. When I'm on a road trip with my kids and wife, we always say, "Are we going to do something fancy?" That's always an Applebee's-ish restaurant. There's that fear that maybe it's corny because there are some crazy lyrics. [But] we all loved it.

How did the viral TikTok dance come together?

Honestly, TikTok is a bonding mechanism for me and my daughter, Lela. She's an advanced dancer. We started making them up to my own songs. My goal is that they're infectious. We had just released the *Country Stuff* EP, put that chorus on repeat and made it simple. We slapped it on TikTok, and I went for a run. That night, it surpassed 1 million views. It's insanity.

How do you plan to keep up the song's momentum?

We're [asking online], "What does fancy mean to your family?" We're going to collect the best [responses] and compile them in a video. And we're thinking, "What remixes can we do?" We're in talks [with Applebee's]. The Oreo shake came off the menu, and it's coming back because of the song. I can't wait until I have grandkids drinking the shake and I can say, "I saved it."
—MELINDA NEWMAN



1

BTS
"Butter"

BTS becomes the first South Korean act with multiple top 10s on Mainstream Top 40 as "Butter" rises to No. 10 on the radio ranking. "Dynamite" hit No. 5 in December 2020.

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	CERTIFICATION	PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	Artist	IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
10	12	11	ASTRONAUT IN THE OCEAN		T.HAPI (H.MICHAEL,T.HAPI)	Masked Wolf	TEAMWRK/ELEKTRA/EMG	6	21
11	13	12	RAPSTAR	▲	E.BANKZ,SYNCO (T.T.BARTLETT,E.BANKZ,A.WU,S.L.LINDSTROM)	Polo G	COLUMBIA	1	13
-	11	13	YOU RIGHT		DR. LUKE (A.Z.DLAMINI,L.S.GOTTWALD,A.TESFAYE)	Doja Cat & The Weeknd	KEMOSABE/RCA	11	2
HOT SHOT DEBUT		14	AM I THE ONLY ONE		A.LEWIS,I.DEAN (A.LEWIS,I.DEAN,JEFFREY STEELE)	Aaron Lewis	VALORY	14	1
15	18	15	BLINDING LIGHTS	▲	MAX.MARTIN,O.T.HOLTER,THE WEEKND (A.TESFAYE,A.BALSHE,J.QUENNEVILLE,MAX.MARTIN,O.T.HOLTER)	The Weeknd	XO/REPUBLIC	1	83
14	15	16	WITHOUT YOU	▲	O.FEDI,B.SLATKIN (C.K.J.HOWARD,B.WALSH,O.FEDI,B.SLATKIN)	The Kid LAROI	COLUMBIA	8	31
17	16	17	THOT SHIT		OG.PARKER,LIL JUU (M.J.PETE,J.I.PARKER,J.M.MASON)	Megan Thee Stallion	1501 CERTIFIED/300	16	4
12	19	18	FOREVER AFTER ALL		CHIP.MATTHEWS,J.D.SINGLETON,L.COMBS (L.COMBS,D.PARKER,R.WILLIFORD)	Luke Combs	RIVERHOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE	2	37
16	20	19	HEARTBREAK ANNIVERSARY	▲	S.THOMAS,M.BIDAYE (G.D.EVANS,V.WADE,S.THOMAS,M.BIDAYE)	Giveon	NOT SO FAST/EPIC	16	21
51	34	20	STM FANCY LIKE		W.HAYES,J.THIBODEAU,S.MCANALLY (W.HAYES,J.JENKINS,S.STEVENS,C.BARTOLINI)	Walker Hayes	MONUMENT	20	3

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	CERTIFICATION	PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	Artist	IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
30	28	21	EVERY CHANCE I GET	●	TAY KEITH,D.J.KHALED (K.M.KHALED,D.A.JONES,D.D.BANKS,B.L.CHAMBERS)	DJ Khaled Feat. Lil Baby & Lil Durk	WE THE BEST/EPIC	20	10
21	21	22	FAMOUS FRIENDS		C.YOUNG,C.CROWDER (C.YOUNG,C.R.BARLOWE,C.CROWDER)	Chris Young + Kane Brown	RCA NASHVILLE	21	15
13	17	23	BEAUTIFUL MISTAKES	●	A.M.GOLDSTEIN,B.LACKBEAR (A.N.LEVINE,M.T.MUSTO,A.M.GOLDSTEIN,J.KIRKLAND,J.K.HINDLIN,M.J.PETE)	Maroon 5 Feat. Megan Thee Stallion	222/INTERSCOPE	13	18
18	22	24	BEST FRIEND	▲	DR. LUKE,ROCCO DID IT AGAIN! (D.HARPER,A.Z.DLAMINI,T.THOMAS,R.VALDES,L.S.GOTTWALD,K.AINE,A.T.R.SMITH)	Saweetie Feat. Doja Cat	ICY/WARNER	14	26
24	23	25	LIL BIT	●	J.M.SCHMIDT (T.HUBBARD,J.M.SCHMIDT,B.REFERRIN,C.HAYNES, JR.)	Nelly & Florida Georgia Line	RECORDS/BMLG/COLUMBIA	23	16
50	53	26	SAL	●	M.R.CARTER (A.GORLEY,M.W.HARDY,M.L.HOLMAN)	Cole Swindell	WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN	26	10
19	25	27	HEAT WAVES	▲	D.BAYLEY (D.BAYLEY)	Glass Animals	WOLF TONE/POLYDOR/REPUBLIC	19	25
37	31	28	LEAVE BEFORE YOU LOVE ME		MARSHMELLO,DALESSO,HEAVY.MELLOW,N.GALE (MARSHMELLO,P.J.PLESTED,N.GALE,R.BARDMAN,P.BOWMAN,W.VAUGHANA,R.R.LINDBLAD,E.ROMANO,C.ARNOLD,G.MARROW,D.MARTIN)	Marshmello X Jonas Brothers	JOYTIME COLLECTIVE/REPUBLIC	28	7
20	26	29	WANTS AND NEEDS		CARDO ON THE BEAT,DEZ WASHINGTON,40 (A.GRAHAM,D.A.JONES,R.LATOUR,D.CLEARY-KRELL,N.J.SHEBIB)	Drake Feat. Lil Baby	OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	2	18
22	27	30	YONAGUNI		SMASH DAVID,FINESSE,BYRD,TAINY (B.A.MARTINEZ OCASIO,S.D.JIMINEZ,A.SINGH,BYRD,O.J.CEPEDA MATOS,M.E.MASIS FERNANDEZ,J.M.REYES DIAZ)	Bad Bunny	RIMAS	10	5
34	35	31	BLAME IT ON YOU		M.KNOX (K.M.ALLISON,J.EDWARDS,T.KENNEDY,M.TYLER,B.WHITE)	Jason Aldean	MACON/BROKEN BOW	31	11
32	33	32	LATE AT NIGHT		MUSTARD,GYLT TRYPP (R.W.MOORE, JR.,D.J.MCFARLANE,S.R.KHAN,ZAMAN KHAN)	Roddy Ricch	ATLANTIC	20	5
23	29	33	DRIVERS LICENSE	▲	D.NIGRO (O.RODRIGO,D.L.NIGRO)	Olivia Rodrigo	GEFFEN/INTERSCOPE	1	26
25	30	34	TELEPATIA	▲	TAINY,M.LARA,ALBERT HYPE (K.LOAIZA,CRIS CHIL,S.M.PRIMERA MUSSETT,M.LARA,A.C.MELENDEZ,M.E.MASIS FERNANDEZ)	Kali Uchis	EMI/RECORDS/INTERSCOPE	25	20
48	54	35	GLAD YOU EXIST		D.SMYERS (D.SMYERS,J.REYNOLDS,T.M.PARKS,S.MOONEY,R.L.TAYLOR)	Dan + Shay	WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WAR	35	22
29	37	36	MOOD	▲	O.FEDI,B.SLATKIN,KBEAZY (G.L.VON JONES,O.FEDI,B.SLATKIN,K.C.BACH,M.I.LOLMO)	24kGoldn Feat. iann dior	RECORDS/COLUMBIA	1	48
35	44	37	WOCKESHA		YU.REAL RED,J.ROCKAMORE (D.D.WHITE, JR.,E.B.JORDAN,M.DEBARGE,C.PEARSON,J.D.NELSON,J.ROCKAMORE)	Moneybagg Yo	CMG/N/LESS/INTERSCOPE	33	11
28	39	38	TRAITOR		D.NIGRO (O.RODRIGO,D.L.NIGRO)	Olivia Rodrigo	GEFFEN/INTERSCOPE	9	7
36	32	39	TODO DE TI		MR.NAISGAI,EL ZORRO (R.A.OCASIO RUIZ,L.J.GONZALEZ,R.E.PABON NAVEADO,J.M.COLLAZO,E.L.PEREZ ROVIRA)	Rauw Alejandro	DUARS/SONY MUSIC LATIN	32	6
64	50	40	DRINKIN' BEER, TALKIN' GOD, AMEN.		C.CROWDER,C.RICE,T.HUBBARD,B.KELLEY (C.RICE,C.CROWDER,H.PHELPS,C.DODDS)	Chase Rice Feat. Florida Georgia Line	BMLG/BROKEN BOW	40	6
-	24	41	AIN'T SHIT		TIZHIMSELF,R.CHAHAYED,K.MCKENZIE,YETI BEATS (A.Z.DLAMINI,G.A.POWELL II,R.CHAHAYED,D.SPRECHER,K.MCKENZIE)	Doja Cat	KEMOSABE/RCA	24	2
27	36	42	POV		TBHTS,MR.FRANKS,O.FRID (A.GRANDE,T.L.BROWN,S.FRANKS,O.FRID,T.M.PARKS)	Ariana Grande	REPUBLIC	27	18
33	43	43	MY EX'S BEST FRIEND	▲	T.L.BARKER (R.C.BAKER,T.L.BARKER,N.A.LONG,M.T.MUSTO)	Machine Gun Kelly X blackbear	EST19XX/BAD BOY/INTERSCOPE	20	47
-	14	44	WUSYANAME		TYLER,THE CREATOR (T.G.OKONMA,K.D.GAULDEN,T.W.GRIFFIN JR.,B.P.BURRELL SR.,D.K.CONNER,S.CONNER,D.L.JACKSON)	Tyler, The Creator Feat. YoungBoy Never Broke Again & Ty Dolla Sign	COLUMBIA	14	2
31	46	45	CALLING MY PHONE	▲	G.RY.BORDEAUX,NON NATIVE (LIL TJAY,R.V.VALENTINE JR.,R.A.MARTINEZ,L.CAMPOZANO,B.WALSH,H.SIYUUM)	Lil Tjay Feat. 6LACK	DACK JANI/LS/COLUMBIA	3	21
14	15	16	BEGGIN'		L.FABBRI (P.FARINA,B.GAUDIO)	Maneskin	RCA/SONY MUSIC ITALY/SONY MUSIC LATIN	46	2
39	56	47	BALL IF I WANT TO		D.A.GOT THAT DOPE (D.A.GOT THAT DOPE,J.L.KIRK,D.LEVIN)	DaBaby	SOUTHCOAST/INTERSCOPE	39	3
26	38	48	GONE		D.GARCIA (N.GALYON,B.JOHNSON,N.MOON)	Dierks Bentley	CAPITOL NASHVILLE	26	17
NEW		49	WASTING TIME		THE NEPTUNES (C.WOOD,P.L.WILLIAMS,C.HUGO,A.GRAHAM)	Brent Faiyaz Feat. Drake	LOST KIDS	49	1
-	51	50	RED LIGHT GREEN LIGHT		D.A.GOT THAT DOPE (D.A.GOT THAT DOPE,J.L.KIRK,D.LEVIN)	DaBaby	SOUTHCOAST/INTERSCOPE	50	2

SALES: ARIANA & BTS: COURTESY OF ARMY; WALKER HAYES: JEFFREY MAYER; DR. LUKE: JEFFREY MAYER; DJ KHALED: JEFFREY MAYER; MARSHMELLO: JEFFREY MAYER; MEGAN THEE STALLION: JEFFREY MAYER; MONEYBAGG YO: JEFFREY MAYER; POLO G: JEFFREY MAYER; RAY WALKER: JEFFREY MAYER; S&P: JEFFREY MAYER; TAY KEITH: JEFFREY MAYER; THE WEEKND: JEFFREY MAYER; TYLER, THE CREATOR: JEFFREY MAYER; YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN: JEFFREY MAYER; ZAY KAY: JEFFREY MAYER; ARTISTS: JEFFREY MAYER; LABELS: JEFFREY MAYER; PHOTOGRAPHERS: JEFFREY MAYER; STYLING: JEFFREY MAYER; HAIR: JEFFREY MAYER; MAKEUP: JEFFREY MAYER; VIDEO: JEFFREY MAYER; INFO: JEFFREY MAYER; SOCIAL: JEFFREY MAYER; CHARTS: JEFFREY MAYER; ADVERTISING: JEFFREY MAYER; PROMOTION: JEFFREY MAYER; MERCHANDISE: JEFFREY MAYER; TOURS: JEFFREY MAYER; MANAGEMENT: JEFFREY MAYER; AGENTS: JEFFREY MAYER; BOOKING: JEFFREY MAYER; LEGAL: JEFFREY MAYER; ACCOUNTS: JEFFREY MAYER; SALES: JEFFREY MAYER; MARKETING: JEFFREY MAYER; PUBLICITY: JEFFREY MAYER; COMMUNITY: JEFFREY MAYER; PARTNERSHIPS: JEFFREY MAYER; SPONSORS: JEFFREY MAYER; ENDORSEMENTS: JEFFREY MAYER; 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58	70	51	THINGS A MAN OUGHTA KNOW J. JOYCE (L. WILSON, J. D. SINGLETON, J. NIX)		Lainey Wilson BROKEN BOW	51	8
47	62	52	FAVORITE CRIME D. NIGRO (O. RODRIGO, D. L. NIGRO)		Olivia Rodrigo Geffen/Interscope	16	7
41	52	53	SETTLING DOWN J. JOYCE (M. LAMBERT, L. DICK, N. HEMBY)		Miranda Lambert VANNER/RCA NASHVILLE	41	17
59	64	54	WAY LESS SAD R. METZGER (R. METZGER, J. METZGER, A. METZGER, P. SIMON)		AJR AJR/BMG/S-CURVE	54	11
45	61	55	STRAIGHTENIN DJ DUREL, A. TAKE, S. LIME, CASTRO, S. LUZY, Y. NUKI, OSIRIS (D. K. MARSHALL, K. CEPHUS, K. K. BALL, T. D. TTINGER, C. N. TRIEU, L. KONSTANTINOS, K. MBELO, D. MOPHERSON, A. A. TRAN)		Migos QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	23	8
56	63	56	SKI W. HEZEY, B. BABY WAVE, O. T. TATOWN (J. L. WILLIAMS, S. G. KITCHENS, W. T. GLASS, T. DEKKER, BABY WAVE)		Young Thug & Gunna YOUNG STONER LIFE/300	18	12
-	41	57	AM FLOW, A. MOVIE, YOUNG BOITLOK, YAMA, MAKE THEM BOUNCE, GOLD, L. AQUINO, S. GARCIA, J. A. OSORIO, BALVIN, B. J. MARTINEZ, C. OSORIO, G. RIZZO, J. A. HERVANI, C. SOTO, M. A. WICK, A. RED, A. R. PALLA, M. O. A. R. PAREZ, J. I. DIAZ, M. E.		Nio Garcia X J Balvin X Bad Bunny FLOW LA MOVIE/GLAD EMPIRE	41	2
61	69	58	ARCADE W. HARDY, O. HOLLEMAN (D. LAURENCE, W. HARDY, J. S. JOO, W. KNOX)		Duncan Laurence SPARK RECORDS/CAPITOL	58	13
42	58	59	HAPPIER D. NIGRO (O. RODRIGO)		Olivia Rodrigo Geffen/Interscope	15	7
71	75	60	YOU REGARD (REGARD, T. S. MELLETT, T. MCRAE, F. C. EICHEN, T. G. MANN, K. ERIKSSON, I. S. QUINN)		Regard x Troye Sivan x Tate McRae MINISTRY OF SOUND/EPIC	60	4
52	65	61	MY LIFE JAKE ONE, J. L. COLE, E. (J. COLE, S. B. A. JOSEPH, L. DORELL, S. GLENN, T. D. JAMERSON, D. STYLES, M. RUFFIN)		J. Cole, 21 Savage & Morray DREAMVILLE/ROCK NATION/INTERSCOPE	2	8
78	77	62	CHASING AFTER YOU A. ESHUIS, T. REIMER (B. ADDINGTON, J. FLOWERS)		Ryan Hurd With Maren Morris ARISTA NASHVILLE	62	10
73	76	63	DRUNK (AND I DON'T WANNA GO HOME) M. JOHNSON, B. PADDOCK (ELLE KING, M. JOHNSON)		Elle King & Miranda Lambert RCA/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE	63	11
66	49	64	NEED TO KNOW DR. LUKE (A. Z. DLAMINI, L. S. GOTTWALD)		Doja Cat KEMOSABE/RCA	38	4
53	71	65	TRACK STAR WOODPECKER (D. HINTON, L. DE JONG)		Mooski WEALTHY 4 LIFE/CAPITOL	31	20
63	74	66	ONE TOO MANY K. URBAN, P. H. D. CUTT, FATHER (D. H. DAVIDSEN, P. WALLEVIK, M. H. HANSEN, J. NORTON, C. TIGHE)		Keith Urban Duet With P!nk HIT RED/CAPITOL NASHVILLE/CAPITOL	62	30
55	72	67	HATS OFF CHI CHI, YOUNG THUG (C. OSO, D. D. A. JONES, D. D. BANKS, TRAVIS SCOTT, T. PERIN PANESAN)		Lil Baby, Lil Durk & Travis Scott ALAMO/QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/INTERSCOPE/CAPITOL	16	5
54	73	68	BRUTAL D. NIGRO (O. RODRIGO, D. L. NIGRO)		Olivia Rodrigo Geffen/Interscope	12	7
57	67	69	BUILD A BITCH E. RIZK, SUB URBAN (BELLA POARCH, S. DAVERN, D. V. MAISONNEUVE, J. GAMMELLA, A. RIZK, D. BREADMORE ARKWRIGHT)		Bella Poarch WARNER	56	8
60	79	70	BREAKING UP WAS EASY IN THE 90'S Z. CROWELL (S. L. HUNT, C. LA CORTE, Z. CROWELL, E. K. SMITH, J. OSBORNE)		Sam Hunt MCA NASHVILLE	32	19
75	86	71	COUNTRY AGAIN D. HUFF, J. FRASURE (THOMAS RHETT, Z. CROWELL, A. GORLEY)		Thomas Rhett VALORY	71	10
62	81	72	FIEL LOS LEGENDARIOS, WISIN & JHAY CORTIZ (LOS LEGENDARIOS, HAZE, M. A. RAMIREZ, CARRASQUILLO, V. TORRES, BEATANCOURT, J. L. MORENO, ALUNA, J. DOTO, CARTAGENA, J. M. NEVES, CORTI, Z. E. ROSA, ONTRON, NYRA, LANER, A. M. QUINTERO, C. A.)		Los Legendarios, Wisin & Jhay Cortez LA BASE/WK	62	4
NEW	73	73	RENEGADE A. DESSNER (A. DESSNER, T. SWIFT)		Big Red Machine Feat. Taylor Swift 37D03D/JAGJAGUWAR/SECRETLY GROUP	73	1
90	94	74	WAVES J. STEVENS, J. STEVENS (Z. CROWELL, R. J. HURD, R. C. MCGILL)		Luke Bryan CAPITOL NASHVILLE	74	3
85	87	75	WE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH J. S. STOVER, S. BORCHETTA (P. DIGIOVANNI, R. MONTANA, J. S. STOVER)		Justin Moore VALORY	75	3
67	80	76	MINIMUM WAGE S. HENDRICKS (C. CROWDER, N. GALYON, J. FRASURE)		Blake Shelton WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN	67	9
81	90	77	FOLLOW YOU J. LITTLE (D. REYNOLDS, D. W. SERMON, B. MCKEE, D. PLATZMAN, J. LITTLE, E. DUHE, F. HALL)		Imagine Dragons KIDINAKORNER/INTERSCOPE	68	14
68	89	78	JEALOUSY, JEALOUSY D. NIGRO (O. RODRIGO, D. L. NIGRO, C. SMITH)		Olivia Rodrigo Geffen/Interscope	24	7
70	91	79	COME THROUGH CARDIAK, MIKE WILL, MADE IT, WUID (H. E. R. C. E. MCCORMICK, M. L. WILLIAMS, K. WOOTEN, T. THOMAS, C. M. BROWN)		H.E.R. Feat. Chris Brown MBK/RCA	64	5
96	96	80	TWERKULATOR MR. HANKY (A. BAKER, C. A. JONES, E. WILLIAMS, E. SCHULT, J. MILLER, J. ROBIE, A. BAMBATAA, L. TAYLOR, R. HUTTER, R. ALLEN)		City Girls QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	51	5



73

BIG RED MACHINE
FEAT. TAYLOR SWIFT
"Renegade"

Big Red Machine — the duo of Aaron Dessner and Justin Vernon — hits the Hot 100 for the first time with its Swift team-up after the trio collaborated on her 2020 albums, *folklore* and *evermore*. The song earned 4.1 million U.S. streams and 3.9 million in airplay audience and sold 9,000 in its first week, according to MRC Data. Swift's 137th entry on the Hot 100, which extends her record for the most among women, introduces Big Red Machine's second album, *How Long Do You Think It's Gonna Last?*, due Aug. 27. —G.T.

WKS. ADO.	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	CERTIFICATION	Artist IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
NEW	81	81	CRY NO MORE NOT LISTED (H. R. WRIGHT, R. OREGEL)		G Herbo Feat. Polo G & Lil Tjay MACHINE ENTERTAINMENT/REPUBLIC	81	1
NEW	82	82	ESSENCE P. J. LEGENDURY BEATZ (A. I. BALOGUN, R. ISONG, O. E. OKIEMUTE, O. E. UZEZI, T. OPENIYI)		Wizkid Feat. Tems STARBOY/RCA	82	1
NEW	83	83	A-O-K A. FRIEDMAN (T. J. COLON, A. FRIEDMAN, M. T. KONIJNENBURG, B. W. BRUNDAGE)		Tai Verdes ARISTA	83	1
89	92	84	4 DA GANG TAY TAYMADELT (D. M. HAYES, R. W. MOORE, JR., T. D. CARTER, R. SCHENKER, K. MEINE)		42 Dugg & Roddy Ricch 4PF/CMG/INTERSCOPE	67	13
83	97	85	TOMBSTONE EIGHTY8, SAUCII, JAI BEATS (R. M. GREEN, E. FOLEY JR., J. HOWARD, J. HULLUM)		Rod Wave ALAMO	11	15
65	83	86	MADE FOR YOU J. MOI (B. DAVIS, J. HYDE, N. A. MEDLEY)		Jake Owen BIG LOUD	32	20
49	82	87	HAVING OUR WAY AZUL WYNTER, P. REME, WALLIS LANE, J. LOMASTRO (D. K. MARSHALL, K. CEPHUS, K. K. BALL, A. GRAHAM, AMIR, STIVIE B. J. PLOMASTRO, N. JAHANBIN, P. JAHANBIN, T. THOMPSON)		Migos Feat. Drake QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	15	4
RE-ENTRY	88	88	MY BOY O. CHARLES (E. SHANE, R. SUTTON, N. COLUMBIA, L. STARR)		Elvie Shane WHEELHOUSE	88	2
76	85	89	TRANSPARENTSOUL T. COLE (W. SMITH, T. COLE, T. L. BARKER)		Willow Feat. Travis Barker MSFTSMUSIC/ROCK NATION	76	4
NEW	90	90	YOU SHOULD PROBABLY LEAVE D. COBB, C. STAPLETON (C. STAPLETON, A. GORLEY, C. DUBOIS)		Chris Stapleton MERCURY NASHVILLE	90	1
NEW	91	91	I WAS ON A BOAT THAT DAY S. MCANALLY, OLD DOMINION (M. RAMSEY, T. ROSEN, W. SELLERS, G. SPRUNG, B. F. TURSI, S. MCANALLY, J. OSBORNE)		Old Dominion ARISTA NASHVILLE	91	1
RE-ENTRY	92	92	OUTSIDE DEEMARC (M. NOBLE, S. LAWRENCE, JR.)		M03 X OG Bobby Billions HSM/EMPIRE	92	3
94	100	93	WORKING J. LITTLE (T. MCRAE, J. LITTLE, S. AARONS, K. D. ROBINSON)		Tate McRae X Khalid RCA	93	3
82	98	94	MISS THE RAGE I. MAMET (TRIPPIE REDD, J. T. CARTER, C. VAN DER HUIDEN)		Trippie Redd & Playboi Carti 1400/TENTHousand PROJECTS/CAPITOL	11	9
NEW	95	95	COLD BEER CALLING MY NAME C. P. FAREN, J. D. MITCHELL (J. RODGERS, H. PHELPS, BRETT TYLER, A. VANDERHEYM)		Jameson Rodgers Feat. Luke Combs RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE	95	1
RE-ENTRY	96	96	ALL I KNOW SO FAR G. KURSTIN, B. PASEK, J. PAUL, PINK (PINK, B. PASEK, J. PAUL)		P!nk RCA	74	4
RE-ENTRY	97	97	WHAT'S NEXT SUPAH MARIO (A. GRAHAM, J. D. PRIESTER, M. BIDAYE)		Drake OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	1	16
RE-ENTRY	98	98	ENOUGH FOR YOU D. NIGRO, O. RODRIGO (O. RODRIGO)		Olivia Rodrigo Geffen/Interscope	14	6
-	40	99	JUGGERNAUT TYLER, THE CREATOR (T. G. OKONMA, S. WOODS, P. L. WILLIAMS)		Tyler, The Creator Feat. Lil Uzi Vert & Pharrell Williams COLUMBIA	40	2
RE-ENTRY	100	100	TELL EM J. OOTSU (T. COX, C. PITTS, E. EDUARD)		Cochise & \$NOT COLUMBIA	64	4



5

LIL NAS X
"Montero (Call Me by Your Name)"

The track leads Mainstream Top 40 after it opened atop the April 10 Hot 100. Lil Nas X lands his first No. 1 on the airplay chart as it hits a new weekly best of 65.6 million all-format audience impressions.



83

TAI VERDES
"A-O-K"

As his debut album, *TV*, premieres at No. 1 on Heatseekers Albums with 6,000 equivalent album units, the Southern California native's first Hot 100 hit arrives with 6 million in radio reach and 5.5 million streams.

SWIFT, TAYLOR'S MANAGEMENT 2021 (GETTY IMAGES, LIL NAS X, CHARLOTTE RUTHERFORD, VERDES, ANGELO KRITIKOS).

THE WEEKS MOST POPULAR CURRENT SONGS ACROSS ALL GENRES, RANKED BY RADIO AIRPLAY, AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS AS MEASURED BY MRC DATA, AND STREAMING ACTIVITY DATA BY ONLINE MUSIC SOURCES TRACKED BY MRC DATA. SONGS ARE RATED AS CURRENT IF THEY ARE NEWLY RELEASED TITLES OR SONGS RECEIVING WIDESPREAD AIRPLAY AND/OR SALES ACTIVITY FOR THE FIRST TIME. SEE CHARTS. LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2021 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND MRC DATA INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
3	1	#1 3 WKS OLIVIA RODRIGO ▲ Geffen/IGA		Sour	1	7
2	2	DOJA CAT Kemosabe/RCA		Planet Her	2	2
4	3	LIL BABY & LIL DURK ALAMO/QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/IGA/CAPITOL		The Voice Of The Heroes	1	5
6	4	MORGAN WALLEN BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC		Dangerous: The Double Album	1	26
	5	HOT SHOT DEBUT G HERBO MACHINE ENTERTAINMENT/IMPERIAL/REPUBLIC		25	5	1
1	6	TYLER, THE CREATOR COLUMBIA		Call Me If You Get Lost	1	2
5	7	POLO G COLUMBIA		Hall Of Fame	1	4
9	8	DUA LIPA ▲ WARNER		Future Nostalgia	3	66
7	9	MIGOS QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL		Culture III	2	4
11	10	MONEYBAGG YO CMG/N-LESS/INTERSCOPE/IGA		A Gangsta's Pain	1	11
8	11	BO BURNHAM BO BURNHAM/IMPERIAL/REPUBLIC		Inside (The Songs)	7	5
15	12	POP SMOKE ▲ VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/REPUBLIC		Shoot For The Stars Aim For The Moon	1	53
13	13	LUKE COMBS ▲ RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN		What You See Is What You Get	1	87
10	14	JUSTIN BIEBER ▲ RAYMOND BRAUN/DEF JAM		Justice	1	16
14	15	THE WEEKND ▲ XO/REPUBLIC		After Hours	1	64
21	16	QUEEN ▲ HOLLYWOOD		Greatest Hits	8	446
12	17	J. COLE DREAMWILLE/ROC NATION/INTERSCOPE/IGA		The Off-Season	1	8
16	18	LIL BABY ▲ QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL		My Turn	1	71
19	19	POST MALONE ▲ REPUBLIC		Hollywood's Bleeding	1	96
22	20	JUICE WRLD GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Legends Never Die	1	52
23	21	JUICE WRLD GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Goodbye & Good Riddance	4	164
26	22	DJ KHALED WE THE BEST/EPIC		Khaled Khaled	1	10
25	23	LUKE COMBS ▲ RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN		This One's For You	4	214
20	24	MACHINE GUN KELLY EST19XX/BAD BOY/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Tickets To My Downfall	1	41
64	25	PACE SETTER THE WEEKND XO/REPUBLIC		The Highlights	2	22
27	26	FLEETWOOD MAC ▲ WARNER/RHINO		Rumours	1	432
24	27	ROD WAVE ALAMO/GEFFEN/IGA		SoulFly	1	15
18	28	H.E.R. MBK/RCA		Back Of My Mind	6	3
32	29	CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL ▲ FANTASY/CONCORD		Chronicle The 20 Greatest Hits	18	531
17	30	RAUW ALEJANDRO DUARS/SONY MUSIC LATIN		Vice Versa	17	2
37	31	ORIGINAL BROADWAY CAST HAMILTON UPTOWN/ATLANTIC/AG		Hamilton: An American Musical	2	302
31	32	HARRY STYLES ▲ ERSKINE/COLUMBIA		Fine Line	1	82
33	33	POOH SHIESTY 1017 GLOBAL/ATLANTIC/AG		Shiesty Season	3	22
38	34	MORGAN WALLEN ▲ BIG LOUD		If I Know Me	10	145
36	35	GIVEON NOT SO FAST/EPIC		When It's All Said And Done... Take Time	5	17
34	36	ARIANA GRANDE ▲ REPUBLIC		Positions	1	36
35	37	THE KID LAROI COLUMBIA		F*ck Love	3	50
29	38	TAYLOR SWIFT REPUBLIC		Evermore	1	30
41	39	ELTON JOHN ▲ ROCKET/ISLAND/UME		Diamonds	7	191
43	40	BAD BUNNY RIMAS		YHLQMDLG	2	71
40	41	POLO G ▲ COLUMBIA		The GOAT	2	60
28	42	MAROON 5 222/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Jordi	8	4
42	43	TRAVIS SCOTT ▲ CACTUS JACK/GRAND HUSTLE/EPIC		ASTROWORLD	1	153
45	44	BAD BUNNY RIMAS		El Ultimo Tour del Mundo	1	32
44	45	MEGAN THEE STALLION 1501 CERTIFIED/300/AG		Good News	2	33
66	46	JOURNEY ▲ COLUMBIA/LEGACY		Journey's Greatest Hits	10	676
72	47	SZA ▲ TOP DAWG/RCA		Ctrl	3	213
48	48	EMINEM ▲ SHADY/AF TERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Curtain Call: The Hits	1	536
52	49	BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS ▲ TUFF GONG/ISLAND/UME		Legend: The Best Of...	5	686
50	50	DRAKE ▲ YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC		Scorpion	1	158

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
46	51	YOUNG THUG & VARIOUS ARTISTS YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/AG		Young Stoner Life: Slime Language 2	1	12
158	52	GREATEST GAINER TOBY KEITH ▲ SHOW DOG-UNIVERSAL/UME		35 Biggest Hits	2	97
63	53	CHRIS STAPLETON ▲ MERCURY NASHVILLE/UMGN		Traveller	1	304
49	54	BILLIE EILISH ▲ DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/IGA		When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?	1	119
47	55	42 DUGG 4PF/CMG		Free Dem Boyz	8	7
68	56	AC/DC COLUMBIA/LEGACY		Back In Black	4	471
57	57	POST MALONE ▲ REPUBLIC		beerbongs & bentleys	1	167
89	58	ZAC BROWN BAND HOME GROWN/BMG		Greatest Hits So Far...	20	312
58	59	TAYLOR SWIFT ▲ REPUBLIC		Lover	1	98
61	60	FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE BMLG		Life Rolls On	21	21
54	61	LIL TJAY COLUMBIA		Destined 2 Win	5	14
51	62	DOJA CAT KEMOSABE/RCA		Hot Pink	9	88
80	63	TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS ▲ MCA/GEFFEN/UME		Greatest Hits	2	417
55	64	KENDRICK LAMAR ▲ TOP DAWG/AF TERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA		good kid, m.A.A.d city	2	454
67	65	CHRIS STAPLETON MERCURY NASHVILLE/UMGN		Starting Over	3	34
60	66	LIL DURK ALAMO/GEFFEN/IGA		The Voice	2	29
65	67	JUICE WRLD GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Death Race For Love	1	122
62	68	TAYLOR SWIFT ▲ REPUBLIC		Folklore	1	50
78	69	ROD WAVE ▲ ALAMO/IGA		Pray 4 Love	2	66
124	70	WALKER HAYES MONUMENT		Country Stuff (EP)	70	3
70	71	GLASS ANIMALS WOLF TONE/POLYDOR/REPUBLIC		Dreamland	7	35
77	72	2PAC ▲ AMARU/DEATH ROW/INTERSCOPE/UME		Greatest Hits	3	378
88	73	GUNS N' ROSES ▲ GEFFEN/UME		Greatest Hits	3	537
71	74	J. COLE ▲ DREAMWILLE/ROC NATION/COLUMBIA/LEGACY		2014 Forest Hills Drive	1	344
73	75	MICHAEL JACKSON ▲ EPIC/LEGACY		Thriller	1	478
69	76	ED SHEERAN ▲ ATLANTIC/AG		÷ (Divide)	1	227
100	77	LYNYRD SKYNYRD ▲ MCA/GEFFEN/UME		All Time Greatest Hits	56	134
74	78	SUMMER WALKER ▲ LVRN/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Over It	2	92
76	79	JACK HARLOW GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		That's What They All Say	5	30
79	80	POST MALONE ▲ REPUBLIC		Stoney	4	239
91	81	BILLY JOEL ▲ COLUMBIA/LEGACY		The Essential Billy Joel	15	244
116	82	THE BEACH BOYS ▲ CAPITOL/UME		Sounds Of Summer: The Very Best Of The Beach Boys	16	260
85	83	DABABY ▲ SOUTHCOAST/INTERSCOPE/IGA		BLAME IT ON BABY	1	64
82	84	LIL UZI VERT ▲ GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		Eternal Atake	1	70
RE	85	GEORGE STRAIT ▲ MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN		50 Number Ones	1	180
84	86	YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ARTIST PARTNER GROUP/ATLANTIC/AG		Top	1	43
83	87	EMINEM SHADY/AF TERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Music To Be Murdered By	1	76
93	88	BRUNO MARS ▲ ELEKTRA/EMG		Doo-Wops & Hooligans	3	527
94	89	RODDY RICCH ▲ BIRD VISION/ATLANTIC/AG		Please Excuse Me For Being Antisocial	1	83
102	90	LUKE BRYAN CAPITOL NASHVILLE/UMGN		Born Here Live Here Die Here	5	37
96	91	LIL UZI VERT ▲ GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		Luv Is Rage 2	1	202
81	92	TYLER, THE CREATOR COLUMBIA		IGOR	1	94
99	93	DRAKE ▲ YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC		Take Care	1	436
112	94	GABBY BARRETT WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN		Goldmine	27	55
NEW	95	JXDN DTA/ELEKTRA/EMG		Tell Me About Tomorrow	95	1
127	96	THE BEATLES ▲ APPLE/CAPITOL/UME		1	1	480
110	97	THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G. ▲ BAD BOY/RHINO		Greatest Hits	1	282
117	98	MAC MILLER ▲ WARNER		Swimming	3	148
RE	99	TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS Angel Dream: Songs And Music From The Motion Picture 'She's The One' TOM PETTY LEGACY/WARNER		1	74	2
97	100	LEWIS CAPALDI VERTIGO/CAPITOL		Divinely Uninspired To A Hellish Extent	20	112



Sour Still Sizzling

Olivia Rodrigo's *Sour* is back at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 for a third nonconsecutive week, as the set lifts 3-1 with 88,000 equivalent album units earned in the week ending July 8 (down 6%), according to MRC Data. The album debuted at No. 1 on the June 5 chart, led again on the July 3 tally and has yet to leave the top three in its seven weeks on the list. Only one other album in 2021 has spent its first seven weeks in the top three: Morgan Wallen's chart-topping *Dangerous: The Double Album*, which held in the top three for 11 straight weeks. The last album by a woman to hang in the top three for its first seven frames was Ariana Grande's No. 1-debuting *thank u, next*, which in 2019 spent eight weeks in the top three on the charts dated Feb. 23 through April 13.

—KEITH CAULFIELD

THE BILLBOARD 200 CHART RANKS THE MOST POPULAR ALBUMS OF THE WEEK, AS COMPILED BY MRC DATA, BASED ON MULTIMETRIC CONSUMPTION (BLENDING TRADITIONAL ALBUM SALES, TRACK-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS AND STREAMING-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS). SALES DATA COMPILED BY MRC DATA.

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART	
92	101	TAYLOR SWIFT REPUBLIC		Fearless (Taylor's Version)	1	13	
109	102	DRAKE YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC	▲6	Views	1	269	
105	103	XXXTENTACION BAD VIBES FOREVER	▲3	?	1	173	
98	104	SLEEPY HOLLOW WINNERS CIRCLE/RCA		Still Sleep?	38	6	
123	105	THE BEATLES APPLE/CAPITOL/UME	▲12	Abbey Road	1	418	
111	106	BTS BIGHIT MUSIC	▲	MAP OF THE SOUL : 7	1	72	
125	107	ABBA POLAR/POLYDOR/UME	▲6	Gold: Greatest Hits	25	177	
159	108	NICKI MINAJ YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC		Beam Me Up Scotty	2	8	
114	109	KHALID RIGHT HAND/RCA	▲3	American Teen	4	227	
107	110	TOMORROW X TOGETHER HYBE/BIGHIT MUSIC/REPUBLIC		The Chaos Chapter : FREEZE	5	5	
121	111	SAM HUNT MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN		SOUTHSIDE	5	62	
108	112	NICKELBACK ROADRUNNER/EMG		The Best Of Nickelback: Volume 1	21	49	
106	113	SOUNDTRACK WALT DISNEY	▲2	Moana	2	239	
131	114	JASON ALDEAN MACON/BROKEN BOW/BMG/BMG			9	2	60
115	115	TAYLOR SWIFT BIG MACHINE/BMLG	▲9	1989	1	343	
113	116	KENDRICK LAMAR TOP DAWG/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/JGA	▲3	DAMN.	1	221	
120	117	KAROL G UNIVERSAL MUSIC LATINO/UMLE		KG0516	20	15	
152	118	EAGLES ASYLUM/ELEKTRA/RHINO	▲26	Hotel California	1	138	
NEW	119	YUNGEN ACE ATK/CINEMATIC		Life Of Betrayal 2x	119	1	
135	120	PITBULL MR. 305/POLO GROUNDS/RCA		Greatest Hits	120	23	
RE	121	BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN COLUMBIA/LEGACY	▲	Greatest Hits	1	47	
NEW	122	RILEY GREEN BMLG		Behind The Bar	122	1	
137	123	BON JOVI ISLAND/UME	▲	Greatest Hits: The Ultimate Collection	5	215	
148	124	BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND HIDEOUT/CAPITOL/UME	▲10	Greatest Hits	8	383	
133	125	CARDI B THE KSR GROUP/ATLANTIC/AG	▲9	Invasion Of Privacy	1	170	
118	126	NIRVANA SUB POP/DGC/GEFFEN/UME	▲10	Nevermind	1	532	
130	127	LIL DURK ALAMO/GEFFEN/JGA	●	Just Cause Y'all Waited 2	2	61	
129	128	FUTURE & LIL UZI VERT FREEBANDZ/EPIC/GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		Pluto x Baby Pluto	2	34	
134	129	JHENE AIKO 2 FISH/ART CLUB/ARTIUM/DEF JAM	▲	Chilombo	2	70	
136	130	RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS WARNER	▲2	Greatest Hits	18	282	
147	131	AJR AJR/BMG		OK Orchestra	10	15	
NEW	132	MANESKIN RCA/SONY MUSIC ITALY/SONY MUSIC LATIN		Chosen	132	1	
101	133	SOUNDTRACK WATERTOWER/ATLANTIC/AG		In The Heights	45	4	
162	134	KID CUDI DREAM ON/G.O.O.D./REPUBLIC	●	Man On The Moon: The End Of Day	4	182	
145	135	BILLIE EILISH DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/JGA	▲	Dont Smile At Me	14	185	
138	136	KHALID RIGHT HAND/RCA	▲2	Free Spirit	1	118	
169	137	DARYL HALL JOHN OATES RCA/LEGACY	▲	The Very Best Of Daryl Hall John Oates	34	136	
RE	138	KATY PERRY CAPITOL	▲8	Teenage Dream	1	244	
122	139	TYLER, THE CREATOR COLUMBIA	▲	Flower Boy	2	81	
144	140	HALSEY CAPITOL	▲	Manic	2	77	
143	141	ARCTIC MONKEYS DOMINO	▲	AM	6	155	
150	142	DRAKE YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC		More Life	1	217	
151	143	IMAGINE DRAGONS KIDINA KORNER/INTERSCOPE/JGA	▲2	Evolve	2	211	
75	144	POP SMOKE VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/REPUBLIC	●	Meet The Woo, V.2	7	74	
149	145	FUTURE FREEBANDZ/EPIC	▲	High Off Life	1	60	
128	146	BILLIE EILISH DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Prime Day Show X Billie Eilish (EP)	87	3	
RE	147	WIZKID STARBOY/RCA		Made In Lagos	80	2	
154	148	KANYE WEST ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM	▲5	Graduation	1	179	
153	149	GUNNA YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/AG	●	Wunna	1	59	
183	150	TIM MCGRAW CURB	▲	Number One Hits	27	187	



5

G HERBO
25

G Herbo's fourth studio album, 25, enters at No. 5 with 46,000 equivalent album units earned in the week ending July 8, garnering the rapper his highest-charting release yet and second top 10, following the No. 7-peaking *PTSD* in 2020 (March 14 chart).



99

TOM PETTY
& THE HEARTBREAKERS
Angel Dream

The archival album re-enters (9,000 units; up 3,050%) after its wide release on CD, download and black vinyl on July 2. The set spent one previous week on the chart, at No. 74 on June 26, following its initial blue-vinyl release for Record Store Day (June 12).



183

JOHN MELLENCAMP
The Best That I Could Do 1978-1988

The heartland rocker's hits set appropriately re-enters (7,000 units; up 46%) alongside Independence Day festivities. The album's biggest-selling song of the week was, fittingly, "R.O.C.K. in the U.S.A." (1,000 sold; up 83%), sparking a No. 21 re-entry on Rock Digital Song Sales.

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
161	151	BTS BIGHIT MUSIC		BE	1	33
146	152	LIZZO NICE LIFE/ATLANTIC/AG	▲	Cuz I Love You	4	116
160	153	METALLICA BLACKENED	▲16	Metallica	1	615
163	154	TRAVIS SCOTT GRAND HUSTLE/EPIC	▲	Birds In The Trap Sing McKnight	1	249
157	155	SELENA CAPITOL LATIN/UMLE	●	Ones	42	24
142	156	FLEETWOOD MAC WARNER/RHINO	▲8	Greatest Hits	14	196
168	157	BAD BUNNY RIMAS		X100PRE	11	132
140	158	TWENTY ONE PILOTS FUELED BY RAMEN/EMG		Scaled And Icy	3	7
195	159	BROOKS & DUNN ARISTA NASHVILLE/LEGACY	▲4	The Greatest Hits Collection	4	103
156	160	ARIANA GRANDE REPUBLIC	▲2	Thank U, Next	1	126
174	161	LANA DEL REY POLYDOR/INTERSCOPE/JGA	▲	Born To Die	2	401
166	162	MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE REPRISE/WARNER	●	Three Cheers For Sweet Revenge	28	89
126	163	TYLER CHILDERS HICKMAN HOLLER/THIRTY TIGERS	●	Purgatory	106	57
171	164	MOTLEY CRUE MOTLEY/ELEVEN SEVEN/BETTER NOISE	▲	Greatest Hits	90	75
RE	165	BLAKE SHELTON WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN		Reloaded: 20 #1 Hits	5	210
RE	166	JOHNNY CASH COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/LEGACY	▲3	The Essential Johnny Cash	35	36
165	167	POLO G COLUMBIA	▲	Die A Legend	6	108
172	168	RIHANNA WESTBURY ROAD/ROC NATION	▲3	ANTI	1	276
175	169	DRAKE OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC		Dark Lane Demo Tapes	2	62
RE	170	KID ROCK TOP DOG/WARNER		Greatest Hits: You Never Saw Coming	51	9
181	171	DRAKE YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC	▲	Nothing Was The Same	1	382
184	172	CHRIS BROWN CBE/RCA	▲	Indigo	1	104
177	173	YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ATLANTIC/AG	▲	AI YoungBoy 2	1	88
182	174	FUTURE A-1/FREEBANDZ/EPIC	▲2	DS2	1	155
155	175	LEE BRICE CURB		Hey World	45	33
178	176	PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION NPG/WARNER/RHINO	▲13	Purple Rain (Soundtrack)	1	150
198	177	SUBLIME GASOLINE ALLEY/MCA/GEFFEN/UME	▲5	Sublime	13	179
RE	178	RASCAL FLATTS LYRIC STREET/BIG MACHINE/BMLG		Twenty Years Of Rascal Flatts: The Greatest Hits	87	10
173	179	BLINK-182 GEFFEN/UME		Greatest Hits	6	62
194	180	MO3 HSM/EMPIRE		Shottaz-14Eva	36	13
196	181	T-PAIN KONVICT/NAPPY BOY/RCA		T-Pain Presents Happy Hour: The Greatest Hits	181	9
179	182	21 SAVAGE & METRO BOOMIN BOOMINATI/SLAUGHTER BOOMIN/REPUBLIC/EPIC	●	Savage Mode II	1	40
RE	183	JOHN MELLENCAMP MERCURY/UME		The Best That I Could Do 1978-1988	33	65
RE	184	WHITNEY HOUSTON ARISTA/RCA/LEGACY	●	I Will Always Love You: The Best Of Whitney Houston	14	60
170	185	TAYLOR SWIFT BIG MACHINE/BMLG	▲3	reputation	1	147
RE	186	JON PARDI CAPITOL NASHVILLE/UMGN	▲	California Sunrise	11	189
193	187	THOMAS RHETT VALORY/BMLG	▲	Country Again (Side A)	10	10
RE	188	DESTINY'S CHILD COLUMBIA/LEGACY	▲	#1's	1	35
RE	189	STEVIE WONDER MOTOWN/UTV/UME	▲	The Definitive Collection	35	107
188	190	H.E.R. MBK/RCA	▲	H.E.R.	23	178
185	191	SOUNDTRACK FOX/20TH CENTURY FOX/ATLANTIC/AG	▲3	The Greatest Showman	1	186
197	192	TWENTY ONE PILOTS FUELED BY RAMEN/EMG	▲4	Blurryface	1	311
192	193	LIL TJAY COLUMBIA	▲	True 2 Myself	5	89
191	194	DABABY SOUTHCOST/INTERSCOPE/JGA	▲	KIRK	1	92
187	195	24KGOLDN RECORDS/COLUMBIA		El Dorado	22	15
RE	196	CARRIE UNDERWOOD 19/ARISTA NASHVILLE/SMN	▲	Greatest Hits: Decade #1	4	146
RE	197	BLAKE SHELTON WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN	●	Fully Loaded: God's Country	2	59
186	198	KANYE WEST ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM	▲3	My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy	1	141
RE	199	FRANK OCEAN BOYS DON'T CRY	▲	Blonde	1	236
190	200	PLAYBOI CARTI AWGE/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Whole Lotta Red	1	24

BILLBOARD GLOBAL 200

billboard

JULY 17 2021

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART	
1	1	1	#1 GOOD 4 U	Olivia Rodrigo	1	8	
-	2	2	BAD HABITS	Ed Sheeran	2	2	
12	5	3	GG BEGGIN'	Måneskin	3	5	
				The winning act in the 2021 Eurovision Song Contest reaches a Global 200 high as the Italian quartet's cover of The Four Seasons' 1967 hit surges by 17% to 77.8 million streams.			
2	3	4	BUTTER	BTS	1	7	
3	6	5	SAVE YOUR TEARS	The Weeknd	1	27	
4	7	6	LEVITATING	Dua Lipa Feat. DaBaby	2	40	
5	4	7	KISS ME MORE	Doja Cat Feat. SZA	3	13	
8	9	8	MONTERO (CALL ME BY YOUR NAME)	Lil Nas X	1	15	
6	8	9	TUDO DE TI	Rauw Alejandro	3	7	
7	11	10	YONAGUNI	Bad Bunny	3	5	
9	13	11	PEACHES	Justin Bieber Feat. Daniel Caesar & Giveon	1	16	
40	10	12	AM	Nio Garcia X J Balvin X Bad Bunny	10	13	
15	16	13	I WANNA BE YOUR SLAVE	Maneskin	13	7	
-	12	14	YOU RIGHT	Doja Cat & The Weeknd	12	2	
11	14	15	ASTRONAUT IN THE OCEAN	Masked Wolf	3	24	
10	15	16	DEJA VU	Olivia Rodrigo	3	14	
21	18	17	QUE MAS PUES?	J Balvin & Maria Becerra	17	6	
14	17	18	LEAVE THE DOOR OPEN	Silk Sonic (Bruno Mars & Anderson .Paak)	2	18	
16	22	19	TRAITOR	Olivia Rodrigo	7	7	
17	21	20	BLINDING LIGHTS	The Weeknd	2	44	
13	20	21	FIEL	Los Legendarios, Wisin & Jhay Cortez	13	17	
20	23	22	DYNAMITE	BTS	1	44	
18	24	23	DRIVERS LICENSE	Olivia Rodrigo	1	26	
19	25	24	HAPPIER	Olivia Rodrigo	14	7	
23	33	25	FAVORITE CRIME	Olivia Rodrigo	14	7	
HOT SHOT DEBUT			26	BZRP MUSIC SESSIONS, VOL. 41	Bizarrap & Nicky Jam	26	1
30	29	27	THOT SHIT	Megan Thee Stallion	27	4	
22	26	28	RAPSTAR	Polo G	3	13	
28	31	29	HEAT WAVES	Glass Animals	28	27	
24	28	30	FRIDAY	Riton X Nightcrawlers Feat. Mufasa & Hypeman	18	20	
NEW			31	RGB	YOASOBI	31	1
32	36	32	WATERMELON SUGAR	Harry Styles	9	44	
25	30	33	BEAUTIFUL MISTAKES	Maroon 5 Feat. Megan Thee Stallion	24	18	
26	32	34	BUILD A BITCH	Bella Poarch	20	8	
-	27	35	AIN'T SHIT	Doja Cat	27	2	
35	42	36	DAKITI	Bad Bunny & Jhay Cortez	1	36	
27	34	37	WANTS AND NEEDS	Drake Feat. Lil Baby	2	18	
29	35	38	PAREJA DEL AÑO	Sebastian Yatra X Myke Towers	16	12	
33	43	39	THE BUSINESS	Tiesto	12	35	
31	37	40	WITHOUT YOU	The Kid LAROI	10	33	
37	55	41	JEALOUSY, JEALOUSY	Olivia Rodrigo	19	7	
137	83	42	FANCY LIKE	Walker Hayes	42	3	
36	45	43	MOOD	24kGoldn Feat. iann dior	2	44	
44	51	44	DANCE MONKEY	Tones And I	16	44	

56	53	45	LEAVE BEFORE YOU LOVE ME	Marshmello X Jonas Brothers	45	7	
127	146	46	YORU NI KAKERU	YOASOBI	16	44	
50	49	47	POBLADO (REMIX)	J Balvin x Karol G x Nicky Jam	47	3	
-	19	48	WUSYANAME	Tyler, The Creator Feat. YoungBoy Never Broke Again & Ty Dolla Sign	19	2	
38	47	49	HEARTBREAK ANNIVERSARY	Giveon	10	21	
34	50	50	BRUTAL	Olivia Rodrigo	11	7	
NEW			51	AM I THE ONLY ONE	Aaron Lewis	51	1
53	57	52	PERFECT	Ed Sheeran	30	44	
NEW			53	WASTING TIME	Brent Faiyaz Feat. Drake	53	1
43	52	54	2/CATORCE	Rauw Alejandro X Mr. Naisgai	43	9	
42	48	55	GOOSEBUMPS	Travis Scott & HVME	15	28	
39	56	56	ZITTI E BUONI	Maneskin	22	7	
73	68	57	HEARTBREAK ANTHEM	Galantis, David Guetta & Little Mix	57	7	
55	64	58	SOMEONE YOU LOVED	Lewis Capaldi	24	44	
108	98	59	EVERY CHANCE I GET	DJ Khaled Feat. Lil Baby & Lil Durk	27	10	
70	66	60	SHAPE OF YOU	Ed Sheeran	60	44	
51	59	61	DON'T START NOW	Dua Lipa	30	44	
46	58	62	DINERO	Trinidad Cardona	46	4	
52	61	63	LATE AT NIGHT	Roddy Ricch	27	5	
47	63	64	EL MAKINON	Karol G & Mariah Angeliq	39	15	
58	39	65	NEED TO KNOW	Doja Cat	29	4	
59	65	66	RAM PAM PAM	Natti Natasha & Becky G	52	8	
45	67	67	BOTELLA TRAS BOTELLA	Gera MX + Christian Nodal	9	11	
90	88	68	IKO IKO (MY BESTIE)	Justin Wellington Feat. Small Jam	68	5	
69	73	69	RASPUTIN	Majestic X Boney M.	69	11	
62	70	70	WELLERMAN	Nathan Evans	16	24	
71	81	71	ROSES	SAINT JHN	14	44	
64	71	72	YOUR LOVE (9PM)	ATB x Topic x A7S	37	22	
54	75	73	BODY	Tion Wayne X Russ Millions	11	11	
74	85	74	SUNFLOWER	Post Malone & Swae Lee	47	44	
63	76	75	BEST FRIEND	Saweetie Feat. Doja Cat	31	26	
86	79	76	LIL BIT	Nelly & Florida Georgia Line	76	10	
65	78	77	UP	Cardi B	4	22	
67	82	78	COVER ME IN SUNSHINE	Pink + Willow Sage Hart	49	18	
78	84	79	BABY SHARK	Pinkfong	38	43	
41	69	80	ALCOHOL-FREE	TWICE	41	5	
60	97	81	BALL IF I WANT TO	DaBaby	60	3	
85	96	82	MIENTEME	TINI X Maria Becerra	80	10	
72	87	83	ARCADE	Duncan Laurence	36	23	
91	103	84	CIRCLES	Post Malone	49	44	
99	94	85	RUN	OneRepublic	85	9	
61	80	86	TELEPATIA	Kali Uchis	10	20	
80	95	87	BELIEVER	Imagine Dragons	70	44	
75	86	88	STREETS	Doja Cat	8	26	
-	74	89	RED LIGHT GREEN LIGHT	DaBaby	74	2	
NEW			90	WRECKED	Imagine Dragons	90	1
68	90	91	BED	Joel Corry X RAYE X David Guetta	48	18	
-	183	92	LOVE TONIGHT	Shouse	92	2	
57	91	93	ENOUGH FOR YOU	Olivia Rodrigo	13	7	
83	102	94	WOCKESHA	Moneybagg Yo	58	11	
97	110	95	DREAMS	Fleetwood Mac	10	41	
NEW			96	RENEGADE	Big Red Machine Feat. Taylor Swift	96	1

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 TIERS OF LEADING AUDIO AND VIDEO MUSIC SERVICES, PLUS DOWNLOAD SALES FROM TOP MUSIC RETAILERS ACROSS THE GLOBE. SEE CHART'S LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2021 BILLBOARD MEDIA, LLC AND MRC DATA, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.





26

BIZARRAP AND NICKY JAM "Bzrp Music Sessions, Vol. 41"

Argentine producer Bizarrap (above) scores his highest-charting Global 200 hit with the latest installment of his *Music Sessions* series. Volumes 36, 38 and 40 paired him with Nathy Peluso (No. 121 peak, January), L-Gante (No. 171, March) and Eladio Carrión (No. 162, June), respectively. His new entry scored 37.5 million global streams in its first full tracking week. It blasts 146-18 (also a new best for him) on the Billboard Global Excl. U.S. chart.



181

BADDIEL, SKINNER AND THE LIGHTNING SEEDS "Three Lions"

This pairing of U.K. comics David Baddiel and Frank Skinner with the Ian Broudie-fronted alt/pop act The Lightning Seeds debuts with 8.2 million streams (up 100%) and 5,800 sold (up 111%). The fight song, originally released in 1996 — and which topped The Official UK Singles chart with versions that year, in 1998 and 2018 — kicks up its latest revival thanks to England's run in the continental UEFA European Football Championship.

—ERIC FRANKENBERG

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
	NEW	97	MEU PEDACO DE PECADO	Joao Gomes	97	1
125	119	98	BY YOUR SIDE	Calvin Harris Feat. Tom Grennan	89	5
77	100	99	CALLING MY PHONE	Lil Tjay Feat. 6LACK	2	21
88	104	100	HEAD & HEART	Joel Corry X MNEK	17	44
96	107	101	BAD GUY	Billie Eilish	54	44
92	101	102	ROCKSTAR	DaBaby Feat. Roddy Ricch	8	44
89	99	103	SAVAGE LOVE (LAXED - SIREN BEAT)	Jawsh 685 x Jason Derulo	1	44
94	106	104	HOLD ON	Justin Bieber	4	18
115	130	105	BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY	Queen	105	40
66	112	106	FOREVER AFTER ALL	Luke Combs	4	29
84	93	107	TRANSPARENTSOUL	Willow Feat. Travis Barker	84	5
81	115	108	HIGHER POWER	Coldplay	24	9
109	125	109	FOLLOW YOU	Imagine Dragons	66	17
107	122	110	SWEATER WEATHER	The Neighbourhood	62	41
101	118	111	LA NOCHE DE ANOCHE	Bad Bunny & Rosalia	7	32
105	121	112	SHALLOW	Lady Gaga & Bradley Cooper	59	44
49	89	113	LOST CAUSE	Billie Eilish	15	6
103	123	114	HAWAI	Maluma	3	44
100	117	115	POSITIONS	Ariana Grande	1	37
113	105	116	RAMENEZ LA COUPE A LA MAISON	VegeDreem	105	3
93	111	117	34+35	Ariana Grande	2	36
128	132	118	SENRITA	Shawn Mendes & Camila Cabello	67	44
	NEW	119	IN DA GETTO	J Balvin & Skrillex	119	1
	NEW	120	TIROTEO	Marc Segui & Pol Granch & Rauw Alejandro	120	1
76	124	121	1 STEP FORWARD, 3 STEPS BACK	Olivia Rodrigo	17	7
126	127	122	OLD TOWN ROAD	Lil Nas X Feat. Billy Ray Cyrus	70	44
	NEW	123	DE MUSEO	Bad Bunny	123	1
102	113	124	WE'RE GOOD	Dua Lipa	21	21
157	164	125	DON'T STOP BELIEVIN'	Journey	125	38
129	140	126	MONSTER	YOASOBI	87	25
121	134	127	TALKING TO THE MOON	Bruno Mars	57	15
134	137	128	CLOSER	The Chainsmokers Feat. Halsey	100	40
111	128	129	LEMONADE	Internet Money & Gunna Feat. Don Toliver & NAV	4	44
82	120	130	HATS OFF	Lil Baby, Lil Durk & Travis Scott	23	5
124	129	131	DESPACITO	Luis Fonsi & Daddy Yankee Feat. Justin Bieber	120	40
-	178	132	ALL EYES ON ME	Bo Burnham	132	2
112	135	133	BEFORE YOU GO	Lewis Capaldi	32	44
130	149	134	MEMORIES	Maroon 5	71	44
132	138	135	FOR THE NIGHT	Pop Smoke Feat. Lil Baby & DaBaby	7	44
-	152	136	2:50	Duki x TINI x MYA	136	2
98	126	137	BANDIDO	Myke Towers & Juhn	11	28
-	199	138	PAANI PAANI	Badshah & Aastha Gill	138	2
140	143	139	YOU	Regard x Troye Sivan x Tate McRae	113	11
116	133	140	YOU BROKE ME FIRST.	Tate McRae	16	44
122	142	141	WAP	Cardi B Feat. Megan Thee Stallion	1	44
-	44	142	I DON'T DO DRUGS	Doja Cat Feat. Ariana Grande	44	2
152	141	143	LITTLE BIT OF LOVE	Tom Grennan	123	10
133	154	144	LOVELY	Billie Eilish & Khalid	70	44
136	151	145	WHATS POPPIN	Jack Harlow Feat. DaBaby, Tory Lanez & Lil Wayne	17	44
139	136	146	OUR SONG	Anne-Marie & Niall Horan	93	7
142	159	147	RIDE IT.	Regard	86	43
165	180	148	HOTEL CALIFORNIA	Eagles	148	38

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART	
154	166	149	COUNTING STARS	OneRepublic	143	22	
170	155	150	I DON'T CARE	Ed Sheeran & Justin Bieber	105	40	
135	156	151	ANOTHER LOVE	Tom Odell	99	13	
		RE-ENTRY	152	GLAD YOU EXIST	Dan + Shay	144	2
164	172	153	FREAKS	Surf Curse	153	3	
161	184	154	SWEET CHILD O' MINE	Guns N' Roses	154	27	
		RE-ENTRY	155	CRY BABY	Official HIGE DANdism	115	2
131	144	156	SMELLS LIKE TEEN SPIRIT	Nirvana	131	27	
160	173	157	FAMOUS FRIENDS	Chris Young + Kane Brown	157	3	
156	167	158	SOMETHING JUST LIKE THIS	The Chainsmokers & Coldplay	133	31	
		RE-ENTRY	159	DRY FLOWER	Yuuri	48	22
110	153	160	RUNAWAY	AURORA	22	14	
148	158	161	SAL Y PERREA	Sech	113	7	
		RE-ENTRY	162	BABY ME ATENDE	Matheus Fernandes E Dilsonho	162	2
185	179	163	LOVE AGAIN	Dua Lipa	159	5	
		RE-ENTRY	164	ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST	Queen	159	16
159	175	165	TAKE ME TO CHURCH	Hozier	129	26	
		NEW	166	NAO, NAO VOU	Mari Fernandez	166	1
173	189	167	THUNDERSTRUCK	AC/DC	167	16	
143	162	168	RAIN ON ME	Lady Gaga & Ariana Grande	22	44	
151	169	169	WHAT YOU KNOW BOUT LOVE	Pop Smoke	11	44	
179	194	170	RIPTIDE	Vance Joy	170	6	
194	168	171	THINKING OUT LOUD	Ed Sheeran	103	35	
155	174	172	GOOSEBUMPS	Travis Scott	102	41	
138	170	173	GOOD DAYS	SZA	7	28	
162	161	174	SAY SO	Doja Cat	50	43	
		RE-ENTRY	175	TENNESSEE WHISKEY	Chris Stapleton	175	6
172	190	176	ALL OF ME	John Legend	97	42	
-	147	177	SOMMERGEWITTER	Pashanim	147	2	
		NEW	178	PARTY IN THE U.S.A.	Miley Cyrus	178	1
		RE-ENTRY	179	UPTOWN FUNK!	Mark Ronson Feat. Bruno Mars	179	4
48	116	180	HAVING OUR WAY	Migos Feat. Drake	17	4	
		NEW	181	THREE LIONS	Baddiel, Skinner & The Lightning Seeds	181	1
104	171	182	NEXT LEVEL	aespa	65	8	
		RE-ENTRY	183	WAKE ME UP!	Avicii	181	7
		NEW	184	NO ME CONOCEN	Rei, Duki, Bandido & Tiago pzk	184	1
		NEW	185	FILHAAL 2: MOHABBAT	BPraak	185	1
144	182	186	MISS THE RAGE	Trippie Redd & Playboi Carti	13	9	
		RE-ENTRY	187	YELLOW	Coldplay	134	18
183	195	188	DIOR	Pop Smoke	61	43	
145	181	189	MY EX'S BEST FRIEND	Machine Gun Kelly X blackbear	25	44	
119	191	190	HOPE UR OK	Olivia Rodrigo	22	7	
-	200	191	INTENTIONS	Justin Bieber Feat. Quavo	65	42	
		RE-ENTRY	192	BACK IN BLACK	AC/DC	191	5
158	176	193	MR. BRIGHTSIDE	The Killers	158	9	
-	38	194	JUGGERNAUT	Tyler, The Creator Feat. Lil Uzi Vert & Pharrell Williams	38	2	
		RE-ENTRY	195	MY HEAD AND MY HEART	Ava Max	32	22
175	197	196	SAY YOU WON'T LET GO	James Arthur	96	40	
176	188	197	HIS & HERS	Internet Money, Don Toliver & Lil Uzi Vert Feat. Gunna	74	5	
95	160	198	STRAIGHTENIN	Migos	42	8	
		RE-ENTRY	199	GANGSTA'S PARADISE	Coolio Feat. L.V.	178	5
141	187	200	BEAT BOX	SpotemGottem Feat. Pooh Shiesty Or DaBaby	38	23	

THE BILLBOARD GLOBAL 200 CHART RANKS THE TOP SONGS BASED ON STREAMING AND/OR SALES ACTIVITY FROM OVER 100 TERRITORIES AROUND THE WORLD — INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES — AS TRACKED BY MRC DATA. THE RANKING IS BASED ON A WEIGHTED FORMULA AND OPERATING OFFICIAL ONLY STREAMS ON BOTH SUBSCRIPTION AND AD-SUPPORTED TIERS OF LEADING AUDIO AND VIDEO MUSIC SERVICES, PLUS DOWNLOAD SALES FROM TOP MUSIC RETAILERS ACROSS THE GLOBE. SEE CHARTS.LEGENDON.BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2021 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND MRC DATA INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

STREAMING & SALES DATA COMPILED BY MRC DATA

Contents

JULY 17, 2021 • VOLUME 133 / NO. 10



BILLBOARD HOT 100

5
Aaron Lewis' "Am I the Only One" debuts on the Hot 100 at No. 14 — and at No. 1 on Hot Country Songs.

THE MARKET

17
Queen are the champions of the world when it comes to 2020 earnings, according to *Billboard's* first Global Money Makers list.

20
Streams rose 15% and vinyl sales doubled in the first half of 2021 as **Olivia Rodrigo's** "drivers license" and **Morgan Wallen's** *Dangerous: The Double Album* lead song and album charts, respectively.

THE SOUND

25
Grammy First Look
As the Grammy picture begins to take shape, *Billboard* predicts the six acts most likely to set new records and receive nominations in each of the Big Four categories. Plus: Why the Recording Academy is hopeful for long-awaited transparency behind Grammy nominations.

CHARTBREAKER

56
Thanks to "Track Star" — and an abundance of confidence — **Mooski** is at the start of what he hopes will be a "legendary" career.

ON THE COVER

From left: Sebastian Ingresso, Steve Angello and Axwell of Swedish House Mafia photographed by Therese Öhrvall on June 24 at Delight Studios in Stockholm.

DIGITAL COVERS

Omer Fedi photographed by Yuri Hasegawa on June 22 at Conway Recording Studios in Los Angeles.

Jack Antonoff photographed by Heather Hazzan on June 16 at Electric Lady Studios in New York.

Bad Bunny (left) and Tommy Torres photographed by Erika P. Rodríguez on June 17 at Cannon Club in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

TO OUR READERS

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

FEATURES

34

THREE OF A KIND

Swedish House Mafia were dance music kings — and then, at the height of their reign, called it quits. Finally together again in Stockholm, they have a new label, new music and a new outlook on reuniting "for life."

42

PRODUCERS NOW

There's no one way to become a hit producer, but creative guides **Jack Antonoff**, **Omer Fedi** and **Bad Bunny** have figured out a few different routes — acting as navigator, confidante, technical whiz, editor and jam buddy to the artists climbing the charts today. For *Billboard's* full Producers Now package, go to billboard.com beginning July 20.



“Martin Luther King’s goddaughter
continues his dream.”

—EVOKE

“‘The Listening’ uses the power of
choral music to reflect on the bigger
picture of discrimination and silent
racism. It is a vital project.”

—HARPER’S BAZAAR



“‘The Listening’ reminds this
generation of Dr. King’s legacy.”

—METRO UK

FEATURED IN PEOPLE, HARPER’S BAZAAR, EVOKE, LGBTQ+ NATION

“THE LISTENING, FEAT. DONZALEIGH ABERNATHY AND WES FELTON”

by The Listening Choir. Composed by Cheryl B. Engelhardt. Conducted by Dr. Christopher L. Clark.
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AND, OF COURSE, THEIR POSITIVE ENERGY."
- GOOD MORNING AMERICA -



The Market

PG. 19 MRC DATA MIDYEAR STATS ✦ PG. 20 CONSUMER CONCERT DEMAND

PG. 22 LIVE AND LOUD CEO NELSON ALBAREDA



Queen

Global Money Makers

Queen are the champions of the world when it comes to 2020 earnings, according to *Billboard's* first ranking of the top five acts' international income. It is joined by three U.S. artists and — surprise — K-pop phenomenon BTS

BY ED CHRISTMAN

ALTHOUGH THE MUSIC BUSINESS IS an increasingly global enterprise, reliably measuring the income of artists who are popular on an international scale remains an inexact science. The September 2020 launch of *Billboard's* global charts, which are based on digital track sales and streaming reports from over 200 territories, has made the process more accurate, but many key metrics, such as authoritative physical and digital album sales, are currently not obtainable.

In order to determine sound estimates of music's top global artists for 2020, *Billboard* employed a multistep calculation process. To estimate global sales, we compared the RIAA's physical and digital revenue report for last year with IFPI's global revenue statistics and found that domestic physical sales made up 30.6% of total global sales (physical music video sales were not counted), while domestic digital sales accounted for 56% of global digital sales. Using these percentages, we extrapolated global sales for 22 artists, based on their high rankings in the top sales and international touring categories used to determine the 2020 U.S. Money Makers list (which *Billboard Pro* will publish July 19). Likewise, without hard

sales numbers, we used U.S. formulas to estimate publishing revenue. Industry sources say international publishing payouts are slightly higher, but they differ among territories. Calculating royalties from master-recording performance rights was also not possible because those rights do not exist for most uses in the United States.

To accommodate label holdbacks for international sales, *Billboard* deducted 30% of royalties from all non-U.S. sales and streaming revenue. All estimates are before contractual recoupments, such as recording costs, which vary by artist and would be impossible to calculate. Livestreams, such as BTS' June 2020 Bang Bang Con, were also not included in our calculations because of reporting issues. Given this methodology, the results for the following five acts are most likely conservative.

Except for 2020's No. 1 Global Money Maker, Queen, the remaining four are contemporary pop acts, three of which are American: Taylor Swift, Billie Eilish and Post Malone. Although K-pop group BTS ranks No. 4 on this list, its massive global popularity had the most impact on its standing when compared with the U.S. Money Makers ranking: The other four acts landed in the top 10 of that list, while BTS ranked at No. 19.

Queen

Total income \$48.7 million
Box-office take home \$15.1 million
Streaming royalty estimate \$15.2 million
Global stream count 7 billion

1

The British rock superstars — once led by the late Freddie Mercury and now touring with Adam Lambert — top this ranking for two reasons: \$44.1 million in pre-pandemic 2020 touring revenue, which was distilled down to a \$15.1 million payday, and its original members own their master recordings, which enables them to keep most of their royalties after distribution and marketing fees are deducted. Queen is also one of the few heritage rock bands with strong streaming numbers — 7 billion globally in 2020, which translated to \$15.2 million. With no new studio album to promote (since 1995), no 2020 U.S. concert dates and (a still-strong) \$5.5 million in domestic streaming earnings, the act is No. 7 on the 2020 U.S. Money Makers list with earnings of \$13.2 million.

● SONY MUSIC PUBLISHING TEAMED WITH ALBERTS TO GLOBALLY ADMINISTER AC/DC'S CATALOG. ● WARNER CHAPPELL SIGNED A GLOBAL ADMINISTRATION DEAL WITH CAB CALLOWAY'S ESTATE.



2

Taylor Swift

Total income \$41.4 million
Box-office take home \$0
Streaming royalty estimate \$19.8 million
Global stream count 11.6 billion

Swift ranks No. 2 globally for the same reason that she's No. 1 on the 2020 U.S. Money Makers list: She owns the masters to the two post-Big Machine albums she released last year, *folklore* and *evermore*, which helped give her one of the year's strongest performances. *Billboard* estimates that, in the United States at least, she takes home 46% of her sales and streaming revenue. The \$19.8 million she earned from 11.6 billion global streams played the largest role in boosting her income to \$41.4 million — 75% more than her domestic take of \$23.8 million.

3

Billie Eilish

Total income \$32.8 million
Box-office take home \$1 million
Streaming royalty estimate \$13.6 million
Global stream count 13.7 billion

Eilish is the sole American artist who ranks higher on this list than she does on U.S. Money Makers, where she is No. 5. That has much to do with her streaming strength. She has the second-highest global numbers in the category: 13.7 billion, which translates to a \$13.6 million payday — \$6 million more than her domestic take alone. Her extrapolated global sales and publishing are also strong and were a significant factor in boosting her \$14.7 million in U.S. earnings by \$18.1 million internationally.



4

BTS

Total income \$31.5 million
Box-office take home \$0
Streaming royalty estimate \$14.6 million
Global stream count 17.3 billion

BTS is the only act on this list that doesn't also appear in the top 10 of U.S. Money Makers. The K-pop group ranks No. 19 on the latter list, and its No. 4 finish here indicates the group's tremendous global impact. Its \$8.9 million in U.S. earnings was slightly more than 25% of its global take. That total was fueled by 17.3 billion global streams (9.8 billion in video, 7.4 billion in audio), which made BTS the world's top streaming act in 2020. The "Butter" boys' extrapolated global digital track and physical album sales were big, too, based on their U.S. totals, which were the highest in those revenue categories.

5

Post Malone

Total income \$29.7 million
Box-office take home \$13.2 million
Streaming royalty estimate \$12 million
Global stream count 10 billion

Post Malone managed to have a "Wow." year despite the pandemic. He was one of the few artists able to make substantial touring money — finishing 2020 with the fourth-highest global Billboard Boxscore, the equivalent of a \$13.2 million paycheck — and ranks at No. 2 on the U.S. Money Makers list. His fifth-place showing here is partially the result of a sales volume that did not approach the levels of the other four acts. And though he racked up 5.6 billion in overall streams domestically, he added just 4.6 billion more outside the United States.



MARKET WATCH

21.3B

TOTAL ON-DEMAND STREAMS WEEK OVER WEEK

↓ 1.1%

Number of audio and video on-demand streams for the week ending July 8.

15.89M

ALBUM CONSUMPTION UNITS WEEK OVER WEEK

↓ 2.5%

Album sales plus track-equivalent albums plus streaming-equivalent albums for the week ending July 8.

576.6B

TOTAL ON-DEMAND STREAMS YEAR OVER YEAR TO DATE

↑ 10.7%

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

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OUTSTANDING SOUNDTRACK/COMPILATION ALBUM

MRC DATA YEAR-TO-DATE REPORT

Streams Up 11%, Vinyl Sales Double In First Half

Olivia Rodrigo's "drivers license" is the top song, while Morgan Wallen's *Dangerous* leads the album chart

AS THE PANDEMIC ENDS, THE recorded-music business has continued to thrive: Overall, on-demand streams in the United States grew 10.8%, to 555.3 billion, in the first half of 2021 compared with the same period of 2020, according to MRC Data, with audio-only streams increasing 15% to nearly 483 billion. Globally, audio streams jumped 27.3% to 1.3 trillion.

Not all the good news is digital. Vinyl sales, which have grown for the past decade, more than doubled between January and June, up 108.2% to 19.2 million from 9.2 million in the first six months of last year. Even CD sales, which have

been steadily declining, posted a modest 2.2% gain, to 18.9 million units. The only serious loss was in digital sales: Album downloads fell 26.8%, to 12.9 million, while track sales dropped 20.3%, to 101.8 million. But physical sales rose so much that, for the first time in years, total album sales increased, by 12.6% to 51.3 million.

So far, the top song of 2021 is Olivia Rodrigo's "drivers license," with 582.8 million streams. (By comparison, Roddy Ricch's "The Box" had been streamed 1.1 billion times during the first half of 2020.) The top album is Morgan Wallen's *Dangerous: The Double Album*, with 2.1 million album consumption units.

Overall, U.S. album audio consumption units are up 14.4%, to 413.3 million, while overall consumption units (including video streams) are up 13.5% to 434.7 million.

Universal Music Group improved upon its industry-leading market share, as measured by distribution ownership, to 38.55% from 38.16% in the same period of 2020. The total market share of independent distributors, as measured by label ownership, also

rose, to 36.46% from 35.85%, according to *Billboard* estimates.

R&B/hip-hop remained the top genre, with a 28.25% market share, down slightly from 28.44% in the first half of 2020, while rock rose by 1.1 percentage points to a 20.36% market share. Latin grew to a 5.28% market share, from 4.36%, and country and dance each rose slightly: the former to 8.21%, from 8.02%, and the latter to 3.39%, from 3.18%.

The only major genre that declined was pop, which dipped slightly to 12.89%, from 13.28%.

—ED CHRISTMAN



Rodrigo

ALBUMS BY CONSUMPTION (Year To Date)

RANK	ARTIST	TITLE	YTD TOTAL ACTIVITY
1	Morgan Wallen	<i>Dangerous: The Double Album</i>	2.1 million
2	Olivia Rodrigo	<i>Sour</i>	1.4 million
3	Justin Bieber	<i>Justice</i>	962,000
4	Pop Smoke	<i>Shoot for the Stars Aim for the Moon</i>	948,000
5	The Weeknd	<i>After Hours</i>	832,000
6	Dua Lipa	<i>Future Nostalgia</i>	829,000
7	Taylor Swift	<i>evermore</i>	818,000
8	Luke Combs	<i>What You See Is What You Get</i>	740,000
9	Lil Durk	<i>The Voice</i>	735,000
10	Ariana Grande	<i>Positions</i>	707,000

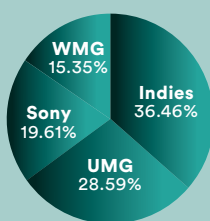
ON-DEMAND OVERALL STREAMING (Year To Date)

RANK	ARTIST	TITLE	YTD OVERALL
1	Olivia Rodrigo	"drivers license"	582.8 million
2	Dua Lipa Feat. DaBaby	"Levitating"	438 million
3	The Weeknd	"Save Your Tears"	410.8 million
4	Cardi B	"Up"	375.9 million
5	Pooh Shiesty Feat. Lil Durk	"Back in Blood"	369.9 million
6	SpotemGottem	"Beatbox"	368.5 million
7	Lil Nas X	"Montero (Call Me by Your Name)"	365.5 million
8	Masked Wolf	"Astronaut in the Ocean"	341.1 million
9	Lil Tjay Feat. 6LACK	"Calling My Phone"	339 million
10	Polo G	"Rapstar"	337.3 million

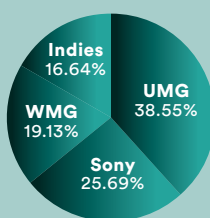


Lipa

OWNERSHIP BY LABEL



OWNERSHIP BY DISTRIBUTION



Source MRC Data, except for WMG's and the Indies' shares, which are *Billboard* estimates based on information from MRC Data. Figures do not total 100% due to rounding.

VINYL ALBUM SALES (Year To Date)

RANK	ARTIST	TITLE	YTD SALES
1	Taylor Swift	<i>evermore</i>	143,000
2	Harry Styles	<i>Fine Line</i>	125,000
3	Kendrick Lamar	<i>good kid, m.A.A.d city</i>	99,000
4	Billie Eilish	<i>When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?</i>	89,000
5	Prince	<i>Purple Rain</i>	86,000
6	Michael Jackson	<i>Thriller</i>	86,000
7	Billie Eilish	<i>dont smile at me</i>	83,000
8	Taylor Swift	<i>folklore</i>	82,000
9	Queen	<i>Greatest Hits</i>	75,000
10	Fleetwood Mac	<i>Rumours</i>	73,000

Source MRC Data



A silent disco at California's BottleRock Napa Valley in 2019.

That's The Ticket

Demand for concerts is rising — including among fans who haven't attended one in a while. Here's what the data says about touring's post-pandemic comeback

BY DAVE BROOKS

C OVID-19 HAS DEVASTATED THE concert business for over a year, but all signs point to enough pent-up demand that the touring industry could soon see a post-pandemic boom.

Consumers who attended shows regularly before the pandemic seem eager to return to concert venues: Less than 15% of ticketholders requested refunds to events that weren't canceled, according to Ticketmaster. And research shows that a significant percentage of fans who bought tickets to some of the first shows amid lifted pandemic restrictions — including tours by Bad Bunny and The Weeknd, as well as Rolling Loud festivals in Miami and New York — will be attending either their first concert ever or their first show in two years.

New data compiled by *Billboard* reveal that new fans are entering or re-entering the market for concert tickets, because either they're buying tickets for the first time or are eager to participate in a communal experience after a year in lockdown. If they continue to buy tickets after the initial demand wanes, they represent an opportunity to expand the live-music business for years to come.

Historically, it has been difficult to predict trends in touring because most ticket sales data comes from shows that have already taken place. But forward-looking data suggests the concert business has a bright future in the short term — and perhaps long after that as well.

One encouraging sign is a growing interest in festival tickets on the secondary market. Before the pandemic, festivals weren't a major category, aside from big-name events like Coachella and Lollapalooza — mostly because they don't typically sell out. That has changed this year, as fans are eager to get out but still mitigating any

COVID-19 risk that indoor shows might present.

"We're seeing a 300% increase in inventory and fan searches on our site for festivals," says Jesse Lawrence, founder of FanIQ, a ticket resale marketing and data firm. Much of this increase comes from a surge in first-time ticket buyers, adds Lawrence.

Two events that are attracting a considerable number of buyers who haven't been to a concert in a while are Atlanta's hip-hop- and R&B-focused ONE Musicfest and the wine/gourmet food-themed BottleRock Napa Valley in California. These are the kinds of "higher end, aspirational events that [customers] planned to attend in the past and aren't going to miss this year," says Lawrence. "They also have to feel safe — meaning they're outdoors and spread out."

One trend that took off during the pandemic was the virtual concerts that fans could watch online during lockdown — and there has been considerable debate about whether demand for livestreams will drop once touring returns. So far, according to a recent study by UTA, consumers plan to continue to livestream events and attend concerts, in the same way that sports fans watch games on TV and also see them in arenas and stadiums.

"The pandemic forced us to use new technologies that facilitate livestreaming and video calls," says Joseph Kesler, global head of UTA IQ. "Once we grew comfortable

comparisons suggest demand is still behind supply for now. By the end of June, the number of concert listings on the site was at 59% of its 2019 level, while the number of clicks that indicate an interest in purchasing tickets was at 46%. (The clicks, however, are dependent on the website's active users — while event listings are automatically updated to the site by Ticketmaster and other ticketing services.)

For now, the number of shows that fans can attend

seems to be growing even faster than the demand to see them, which — if it continues — could mean more options for concertgoers but a tough situation for some acts and promoters. It's hard to know how this will affect fans, who tend to react in the moment — they can weigh shows against one another, or even change their plans to attend one in order to see another. But, over time, demand could catch up to supply, and concert promoters, who think long term about when to put tickets on sale and how much to charge, will have to consider these variables when

shaping their strategies. This is easier said than done: It's tempting to put tickets on sale soon, and for a relatively high price, to capitalize on pent-up demand. But competition will be fierce — and it's changing so quickly that anticipating market conditions several months from now is harder than it has ever been. **B**

"WE'RE SEEING A 300% INCREASE IN INVENTORY AND FAN SEARCHES ON OUR SITE FOR FESTIVALS."

— JESSE LAWRENCE, FANIQ

FROM THE DESK OF

NELSON ALBAREDA

CEO, Loud and Live

BY LEILA COBO

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
MARY BETH KOETH

AT THE BEGINNING of 2020, Loud and Live — the Miami-based agency that combines independent promotion, brand marketing and content development — was poised for expansion. In addition to readying an in-house production studio, the company had launched a joint venture with Move Concerts, one of Latin America’s largest promoters, to expand its reach across North and South America. And Loud and Live’s slate of Latin tours — expected to net over \$20 million in ticket sales — included Soda Stereo, Ricardo Montaner and Gilberto Santa Rosa.

When the pandemic shut down touring, “we had all this money out on the street in artist deposits, marketing, venues,” says CEO Nelson Albareda, 45. “We went into crisis mode. ‘How do we reschedule? How do we make amends with all these artists and these venues?’”

As crisis mode extended throughout last year until this spring, Albareda moved from retrenchment to reinvention. He reduced salaries to keep his team of 60 employees intact. With tours on hold, he focused on marketing, branding and content development. Eighteen months later, Loud and Live is a stronger company that has grown to 100 employees and is slated to produce and promote 400 shows between October 2021 and December 2022. That includes tours from arena artists Ricardo Arjona, Juan Luis Guerra and Carlos Vives, as well as newcomers such as Camilo at the theater level. This is in addition to producing a series of music specials for HBO Max and negotiating J Balvin’s McDonald’s deal, which, like the fast-food chain’s Travis Scott partnership, introduced a branded Balvin meal.

Born in Miami Beach to Cuban parents, Albareda got his start working for tropical music label RMM over 20 years ago, then shifted to radio,

launching the annual concert today known as Univision Radio’s Amor a la Música. He launched his first promotion and marketing company in 2002, sold his second in 2013 and launched Loud and Live in 2016.

“Latin is capturing the global imagination in the same way rock did in the ’80s and hip-hop did in the ’90s,” says Albareda. And as Latin expands its reach, so does he. “What I’ve been very careful to do with Loud and Live versus my previous companies is not pigeonhole it only into Latin. Many people think because we work in the Latin world, we cannot work in the mainstream, but that’s just not true.”

How did you stay afloat over the past 18 months?

First, we focused on creating a lot of content — both for entertainment, like HBO, but also for brands. We did over 200 hours of original content for Walmart in Puerto Rico and the U.S., stuff we had never really done before. We also created content

for Nestlé and Pepsi for the U.S. and Latin America. We turned a program of live concerts that usually take place in Central America into livestreams. We did some livestreams for McDonald’s with Farruko and Mau & Ricky. And in February, we launched Loud and Live Studios — a full in-house team for content, which we didn’t have before.

So you grew during the pandemic?

Pre-pandemic, Loud and Live was doing maybe 100 shows a year, but we signed many artists during the pandemic, like Carlos Vives and Silvestre Dangond. Between October of this year and December 2022, we are projecting to do 400 shows. The pandemic [let us] focus on laying the systems to handle the growth. We weren’t planning to launch the content division until 2023. But we hired about seven or eight people during the pandemic for the studio piece, and in the last 60 days, we’ve hired another 30. We had to hire because of the growth across all divisions, and we were gearing up to start touring.



Albareda photographed March 10, 2020, at Loud and Live in Miami.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH LEDECK AT ZENOBIA



“MANY PEOPLE THINK BECAUSE WE WORK IN THE LATIN WORLD, WE CANNOT WORK IN THE MAINSTREAM, BUT THAT’S JUST NOT TRUE.”

How do you convince Vives, an artist who has sold out U.S. arenas for years, to sign with a small outfit like yours?

A company that produces 400 shows isn't small. And we are no longer just a branding company. We're a touring company. We're at the level of Cárdenas Marketing Network and Live Nation. Our success has been our commitment to understanding the artist's needs, including marketing. Every artist requires a different approach. We build a team for each artist, and on the road, we cater to every detail. Juan Luis Guerra, for example, is a Beatles fan, so we purchased a collection of Beatles albums and we have them in every dressing room during his tour. Every artist requires big advances. The money is not the difference. The difference is who will give you the best service — who will pick up the phone, be your partner and be there for you.

J Balvin's deal with McDonald's was a multimillion-dollar partnership that included mainstream and Hispanic media campaigns. How did that develop?

We are McDonald's cultural engagement agency of record, and we help them engage specifically with Hispanic customers through experiential marketing. During the pandemic, we were tasked with changing the way we went to market because we physically couldn't activate the brand on the ground with events. Then, McDonald's launched what it called its "Trays" campaign and came to us and asked who would be the right Latin artist to do this. Balvin was perfect, and he embraced it. Many artists want to grab the money and not work with the brand. Balvin overdelivered. If we're going to grow the market, the brands need to step up — because Latin music is mainstream.

The deal was not only big for Loud and Live but

the entire industry. McDonald's decided to use multicultural talent, including Travis Scott, before Balvin. It shows you can lead with a multicultural artist and have success. Not many brands make these bold moves. Close to 100% of Balvin's lyrics are in Spanish. McDonald's has been a partner of Latin music for 20 years, and they'll continue to support Latin artists. But overall, this really stepped up the landscape for Latin artists. Other brands are missing out.

You've had a couple of bumps in the road: Balvin's management canceled delivery of his McDonald's merchandise line, and in April, a Marc Anthony livestream you produced fell apart when the streaming service you had hired collapsed. How did these affect you?

While we led the negotiation and partnership with Balvin, we were not directly involved in the merchandise component and are not privy to the details. And I do not feel the Marc Anthony stream was a black eye. I'm proud of what we did, what the artist did, and we learned a ton. We trusted the technology partner, and the technology partner failed us. So, we should have vetted that partner further. Yes, we lost money, and then we refunded every single dollar to the fans. But we have to get up and keep on going. The pandemic has made us stronger, with different capabilities and a better team.

As you said, you're no longer small. What if Live Nation made an offer to buy you?

We still see a lot of runway for Loud and Live, and our team is fully focused on delivering on those opportunities. Our plan is to continue to focus on growth and expansion into other markets. That said, we are always open to strategic partnerships that will continue to fuel our growth.

1. Albaréda's Grammy and Latin Grammy awards for producing Cachao's 2011 album, *The Last Mambo*. "Cachao taught me a lot about being a true gentleman," he says of the late iconic bassist. "And that to make it in music, you need to be professional." 2. A photo of Albaréda's great-grandfather and grandfather in New York in the 1940s. The family immigrated there from Spain in the late 1800s. 3. A painting of Cuba's capitol in Havana next to photos of three legends that Albaréda worked with: Celia Cruz, Tito Puente and Johnny Pacheco. 4. His library includes the *Little Red Book of Selling*, a favorite because, he says, "it's always about the hunt and about sales. Money solves problems." 5. Albaréda with Cruz at her 70th birthday party in Miami in 1995. "I worked for Celia as her publicist, as her promoter and representing her estate. I consider her my godmother."



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PG. 28 EARLY BETS FOR BIG FOUR CONTENDERS * PG. 32 IMAGINING A TRANSPARENT ACADEMY



GRAMMYS FIRST LOOK

Clockwise from top left: Eilish, Mars, Swift, Rodrigo, BTS and H.E.R.

THE SOUND OF (HISTORY-MAKING) MUSIC

As the Grammy picture begins to take shape, these six acts are most likely to set new records

BY PAUL GREIN ILLUSTRATION BY JAYA NICELY

WHEN THE NOMINATIONS for the 63rd annual Grammy Awards were announced last November, Beyoncé became just the second artist in Grammy history, following Pharrell Williams, to receive two record of the year nods in the same year. And Post Malone became the first artist since Steve Winwood in the '80s to receive a record of the year nod three years running.

Who's likely to make history when the 64th annual Grammy nominations are revealed later in 2021? From Olivia Rodrigo to BTS, here's a closer look at the potential record-setters.



BRUNO MARS

Mars could land his sixth record of the year nomination for "Leave the Door Open," his homage to '70s soul that he recorded with Anderson .Paak as Silk Sonic. Mars would become just the third artist in Grammy history to land six or more record of the year nods. Frank Sinatra and Beyoncé are the other two artists to achieve the feat, with seven nods each.

HIS GRAMMY HISTORY Mars won three of the Big Four awards four years ago. His album *24K Magic* earned the top prize, the title track took record of the year, and "That's What I Like" was named song of the year. The record of the year win was Mars' second in that category. He first snagged it at the 2016 ceremony as a featured artist on Mark Ronson's "Uptown Funk!" Mars is an 11-time Grammy winner.



TAYLOR SWIFT

Swift could land her sixth song of the year nod with "Willow." That would tie her with Paul McCartney and Lionel Richie as the songwriters with the most nods in the category's history; they have each won the award once, while Swift has yet to triumph in the category. She could also land her fifth album of the year nod, putting her one behind Barbra Streisand as the female artist with the most nominations in this category as a lead artist. Both *evermore* and *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* are eligible.

HER GRAMMY HISTORY At the 2010 Grammy ceremony, Swift became the youngest artist to win album of the year — a distinction that the artist held for a decade. At the 2016 event, Swift became the first woman to win that category for a second time as a lead artist. At this year's ceremony, she became the first woman to take home the title a third time. Like Mars, Swift has 11 Grammys.



BILLIE EILISH

Eilish, who won record of the year at the last two Grammys with "bad guy" and "everything i wanted," respectively, could be back in contention with "Therefore I Am" or "Your Power." Only once in Grammy history has an artist won record of the year two years running and then been nominated again the next year. After winning for "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" and "Killing Me Softly With His Song," Roberta Flack lost to Olivia Newton-John at the 1975 ceremony.

HER GRAMMY HISTORY Two years ago, Eilish became the second artist to sweep the Big Four in one year. The first was Christopher Cross at the 1981 awards. Eilish also set new records as the youngest winner in history for album and record of the year. At the ceremony in March, she became the third act in Grammy history (following Flack and U2) to win back-to-back awards for record of the year. Eilish is a seven-time Grammy winner.



H.E.R.

H.E.R. could land her third album of the year nomination for her debut studio album, *Back of My Mind*. She was previously nominated for a pair of compilation albums, *H.E.R.* and *I Used To Know Her*. H.E.R., 24, would become the youngest artist to receive three album of the year nods since Streisand, who was just 23 when she earned her third nod for 1965's *My Name Is Barbra*.

HER GRAMMY HISTORY H.E.R. won two Grammys in March, which upped her career total to four. She has been nominated in all of the Big Four categories before, collecting two nominations each for both album and song of the year, winning the latter in March with "I Can't Breathe."



BTS

BTS could become the first K-pop act to land a record of the year nod. The septet's "Butter" spent its first seven weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100. Pop groups with younger audiences rarely rate such acknowledgment, but the Backstreet Boys' "I Want It That Way"

and *N SYNC's "Bye Bye Bye" were nominated in 1999 and 2000, respectively.

ITS GRAMMY HISTORY Last year, BTS became the first K-pop act to be nominated in any category when "Dynamite" received a nod for best pop duo/group performance.



OLIVIA RODRIGO

Rodrigo, 18, is vying to become the second-youngest artist in Grammy history to receive nominations in each of the Big Four categories in one year. Eilish was just 17 when she was nominated in the four categories two years ago — and claimed the statuettes for all of them.

HER GRAMMY HISTORY "All I Want," which Rodrigo wrote for *High School Musical: The Musical: The Series*, was entered for best song written for visual media last year but wasn't nominated. She'll likely make up for that in 2021.

► Glen Campbell's *By the Time I Get to Phoenix* took the award for album of the year at the 1969 ceremony, making him the first country artist to win in that category.

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BEST BETS FOR THE BIG FOUR

The Recording Academy's bombshell announcement in April that it's disbanding its nominations review committees means that, for the first time in 27 years, voting members will have the final say on the nominations in the Big Four categories. The change makes the Grammy nominations even harder to predict than usual. That's because the committee's patterns — striving for gender, genre and racial diversity and generally steering clear of legacy, deceased and controversial artists in the Big Four categories — had become somewhat predictable. Still, early predictions remain an annual tradition. Here are the likely nominees in each of the four categories, followed by a handful of other Grammy hopefuls. **BY PAUL GREIN**

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

In 2020, 1,225 albums were entered in this category. The top 20 vote-getters went to the committee, which picked the eight nominees. This year, the top eight vote-getters will *become* the nominees. Here are the best bets, listed alphabetically

Billie Eilish

Happier Than Ever

Eilish's sophomore album won't be released until July 30, but considering her Grammy history, it seems a safe bet for a nomination. Eilish would be the first artist to have both of his or her first two proper studio albums nominated in this category since Lady Gaga a decade ago.

Ariana Grande

Positions

This would be the pop superstar's second nod in this category in three years. She was nominated two years ago for *thank u, next*. Both albums spent their first two weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard 200.

H.E.R.

Back of My Mind

H.E.R. has already made awards show history this year. She and collaborators Tiara Thomas and D'Mile won the Grammy for song of the year for "I Can't Breathe" and the Academy Award for best original song for "Fight for You." They were the first songwriters to win both honors in the same year with different songs since Lionel Richie in 1986. This album reached No. 6 on the Billboard 200, H.E.R.'s best showing to date.

Lil Nas X

Montero

As with H.E.R., the rapper was nominated in this category even before the release of his first official studio album. The debut, which is titled after his birth name, is due this summer. Lil Nas X's EP 7 was nominated here two years ago.

Olivia Rodrigo

Sour

This album has logged three weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 and became the first debut release to include two singles that entered the Hot 100 at No. 1: the classic ballad "drivers license" and the pop-punk smash "good 4 u." The fact that the singles are so completely different may work to Rodrigo's advantage.

Jazmine Sullivan

Heaux Tales

This album reached No. 4 on the Billboard 200, Sullivan's best showing to date. It won album of the year at the BET Awards in June. While Sullivan has gone 0-12 at the Grammys over the years, this may well be her time to finally bring one (or more) home.

Taylor Swift

evermore or *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*

If *evermore* is nominated, it would mark a first for Swift, who has never been nominated in this category with her follow-up to an album of the year winner. (In other words, *Speak Now* and *reputation*, which followed *Fearless* and *1989*, respectively, fell short.)

Tyler, The Creator

Call Me If You Get Lost

The artist won his first Grammy in March with *IGOR* (best rap album). This would be the rapper-singer's first album of the year nod as a lead artist, though he was nominated as a featured artist nine years ago on Frank Ocean's *Channel Orange*.



Clockwise from top left: Eilish, Grande, Tyler, The Creator, Swift, Rodrigo and Sullivan.

WITHIN REACH

Megan Thee Stallion's *Good News*, Chris Stapleton's *Starting Over*, Justin Bieber's *Justice*, Lorde's *Solar Power* (due Aug. 20), Eric Church's *Heart & Soul*, Brothers Osborne's *Skeletons*, Giveon's *When It's All Said And Done... Take Time*, Doja Cat's *Planet Her*, Foo Fighters' *Medicine at Midnight*, Bruce Springsteen's *Letter to You*

EILISH: KEILA ANNE MACCLUSKEY; GRANDE: SEVIN MARI ZURBETT; IMAGES: TYLER: MICHAEL BUCKNER FOR PNC; SWIFT: BETH GARBARANT; RODRIGO: ERICA HERNANDEZ; SULLIVAN: AYESHA VON GARDNER.

► *Saturday Night Fever* became the first film soundtrack to take album of the year when the Bee Gees-paced set won at the 1979 ceremony.

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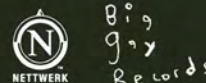
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Clockwise from top left: Lil Nas X, Lipa, Giveon, Uchis and Mars and .Paak of Silk Sonic.

RECORD OF THE YEAR

After getting shut out of the 2020 nominations, The Weeknd said he won't allow his recordings to be entered in the Grammy process going forward, but artists have been known to change their minds. "Save Your Tears," which received a smash remix with Ariana Grande, would be a strong contender here. The song topped the Billboard Hot 100 for two weeks in May. Last year, 1,463 songs were entered in this category — here is this year's shortlist of likely candidates.

BTS "Butter"

Fans worldwide were hoping "Dynamite" would be nominated in this category last year. Although it wasn't, the group has an even longer-running No. 1 hit now vying for a nod with its snazzy smash that is, as the song suggests, "smooth like butter" and features a co-writing/co-production credit from Columbia Records chairman/CEO Ron Perry.

Billie Eilish "Therefore I Am" or "Your Power"

This would be Eilish's third consecutive nod in this category. "Therefore I Am" (boosted by a video of Eilish running through a deserted mall, a defining image of 2020) reached No. 2 on the Hot 100; the cinematic ballad "Your Power" hit No. 10.

Giveon "Heartbreak Anniversary"

The sleeper hit, released in February 2020 but not entered in this category last year, has climbed as high as No. 16 on the Hot 100. Giveon could also be nominated in this category as a featured artist on Justin Bieber's pop/R&B smash "Peaches," which also features Daniel Caesar.

Lil Nas X "Montero (Call Me by Your Name)"

This would be the rapper's second nod in this category. "Old Town Road (Remix)," his megahit pairing with Billy Ray Cyrus, was nominated two years ago. "Montero" debuted atop the Hot 100, boosted by shock value and a buzzy video, and has stayed near the top of the chart since its release.

Dua Lipa Featuring DaBaby "Levitating (Remix)"

This would be the second year in a row that both of these artists were nominated in this category: Lipa was nominated last year for "Don't Start Now," and DaBaby got the nod for "Rockstar" (featuring Roddy Ricch). "Levitating" reached No. 2 on the Hot 100, which ties "Don't Start Now" as Lipa's highest-charting hit.

Olivia Rodrigo "drivers license"

This well-observed, deeply personal ballad is a good bet to get Rodrigo her first record of the year nod. The song topped the Hot 100 for eight weeks, longer than any other single released in this eligibility period — though "Butter" is catching up fast.

Silk Sonic "Leave the Door Open"

This swanky ballad, an affectionate homage to the Philadelphia soul sound that was in its heyday before Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak (aka Silk Sonic) were born, would constitute Mars' sixth nod in this category and .Paak's first. "Leave the Door Open" topped the Hot 100 for two weeks.

Kali Uchis "Telepatía"

This gorgeous, bilingual single took the scenic route to crossover success: It cracked the top 30 on the Hot 100 in its 17th week. Uchis, a guest on songs by Tyler, The Creator and Daniel Caesar, scored her biggest solo hit once "Telepatía" took off on TikTok in early 2021.

WITHIN REACH

Ariana Grande's "Positions," Justin Bieber's "Peaches" featuring Daniel Caesar & Giveon, Ed Sheeran's "Bad Habits," Jazmine Sullivan's "Pick Up Your Feelings," Cardi B's "Up," Taylor Swift's "Willow," Coldplay's "Higher Power," Pop Smoke's "What You Know Bout Love," Doja Cat's "Kiss Me More" featuring SZA, SZA's "Good Days"

SONG OF THE YEAR

Some years, there's a lot of overlap between the record of the year and song of the year nominees. Other years, not so much. Last year, four works were nominated in both categories, with three the year prior and six before that. Last year, 1,443 songs were entered in this category.

Olivia Rodrigo, Dan Nigro "drivers license"

This would be the first nomination in this category for both writers. Nigro, who produced or co-produced all of the tracks on *Sour* (and co-wrote all but three of them), is the former lead singer and guitarist of the indie rock band As Tall As Lions.

SZA, Carlos Muñoz, Carter Lang, Christopher Ruelas, Jacob Collier "Good Days"

This mesmerizing neo-soul ballad reached No. 9 on the Billboard Hot 100, SZA's highest-charting noncollaborative single. This would be the second nod in this category for SZA, who was nominated three years ago for co-writing the *Black Panther* smash "All the Stars." Collier was a surprise album of the year candidate last year.

Giveon, Sevn Thomas, Maneesh Bidaye, Varren Wade "Heartbreak Anniversary"

This would be the first nod in this category for all of these writers. Thomas was nominated for album of the year five years ago for his work on Drake's *Views*.

Bruno Mars, Anderson .Paak, D'Mile, Christopher Brody Brown "Leave the Door Open"

This would be Mars' fifth nod in this category, Brown's fourth, the second for D'Mile and the first for .Paak. Mars and Brown shared nominations for co-writing Cee Lo Green's "F*** You" and Mars' "Grenade" and "That's What I Like."

Dua Lipa, DaBaby, Clarence Coffee Jr., Sarah Hudson, Koz "Levitating (Remix)"

Lipa was nominated in this category last year for "Don't Start Now" (she performed a medley of the hit with this remix at the ceremony in March). DaBaby's six Grammy nods include two for best rap song for "Suge" (2019) and "Rockstar" (2020).

Lil Nas X, Denzel Baptiste, David Biral, Omer Fedi, Rosario Lenzo "Montero (Call Me By Your Name)"

This would be the first nod in this category for all of these writers. Lil Nas X was nominated in three of the Big Four categories two years ago, but missed out on a song of the year nod.

Billie Eilish, FINNEAS "Therefore I Am" or "Your Power"

This would be the third year in a row the siblings have been nominated in this category. They are vying to become the first writers with three consecutive song of the year nominations since Max Martin in 2013-15. (H.E.R. could also achieve the feat if she is nominated in this category this year.)

Taylor Swift, Aaron Dessner "Willow"

The ballad entered the Hot 100 at No. 1 in December. This would be Swift's record-tying sixth nomination in this category and Dessner's second. (They shared a nod last year for "Cardigan.")

WITHIN REACH

"Pick Up Your Feelings" (Jazmine Sullivan), "Higher Power" (Coldplay), "Peaches" (Justin Bieber featuring Daniel Caesar & Giveon), "Positions" (Ariana Grande), "Bad Habits" (Ed Sheeran), "Save Your Tears" (The Weeknd & Ariana Grande), "Butter" (BTS), "Telepatía" (Kali Uchis), "Up" (Cardi B), "What You Know Bout Love" (Pop Smoke), "Kiss Me More" (Doja Cat featuring SZA), "Fight for You" (H.E.R.)

► **Arrested Development** was named best new artist at the 1993 ceremony, becoming the first hip-hop act to win any Big Four category.

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Clockwise from top left: Parks, The Kid LAROI, girl in red and Saweetie.

BEST NEW ARTIST

This year's best new artist class may feature a handful of teen pop stars with Olivia Rodrigo, The Kid LAROI and Tate McRae as possible contenders. Polo G, who had top 10 albums on the Billboard 200 in 2019 and 2020, may be deemed ineligible, though if the Grammys let him compete, he'll be a formidable candidate. And while Giveon won best new artist at the BET Awards in June, he isn't eligible here, considering he was Grammy-nominated for best R&B album in 2020 for *Take Time*. Last year, 343 artists were entered in the category.

girl in red

If *I Could Make It Go Quiet*, the debut set from the Norwegian singer-songwriter and record producer, reached No. 67 on the Billboard 200. Standout single "Serotonin," co-produced by FINNEAS, made the top 20 on Hot Rock & Alternative Songs.

Glass Animals

The British electronic/pop band's third studio album, *Dreamland*, hit No. 7 on the Billboard 200 in 2020. "Heat Waves" reached the top 20 on the Billboard Hot 100.

The Kid LAROI

The Australian rapper-singer reached No. 3 on the Billboard 200 in 2020 with his mixtape *F*ck Love*. The single "Without You" received a remix with Miley Cyrus in April, which helped the song crack the top 10 on the Hot 100 the following month. He previously hit the top 10 of the chart as a featured artist on Juice WRLD and Marshmello's "Hate the Other Side."

Coi Leray

The rapper's platinum-certified "No More Parties" (featuring Lil Durk) hit a No. 26 high on the Hot 100. Leray was nominated for best new artist at the BET Awards.

Tate McRae

The Canadian artist's second EP, *Too Young To Be Sad*, reached No. 94 on the Billboard 200. "You Broke Me First," a single from the EP, hit No. 17 on the Hot 100 and No. 2 on Mainstream Top 40 Airplay. Follow-up hits include a collaboration with DJ Regard and Troye Sivan and another with Khalid, both of which reached the latter chart's top 25.

Arlo Parks

Parks' debut studio album, *Collapsed in Sunbeams*, reached No. 4 on the Heatseekers Albums chart. She performed her single "Hope" and won breakthrough artist at the BRIT Awards in May.

Olivia Rodrigo

Rodrigo is vying to become the third-youngest winner in this category, trailing LeAnn Rimes, who was 14 when she won in 1997, and Eilish, who was 17 when she won two years ago.

Saweetie

The rapper has notched three top 30 hits on the Hot 100: "My Type," "Tap In" and "Best Friend" (featuring Doja Cat). Her EP *Icy* reached No. 85 on the Billboard 200, while her highly anticipated debut studio album, *Pretty B*tch Music*, is due this summer.

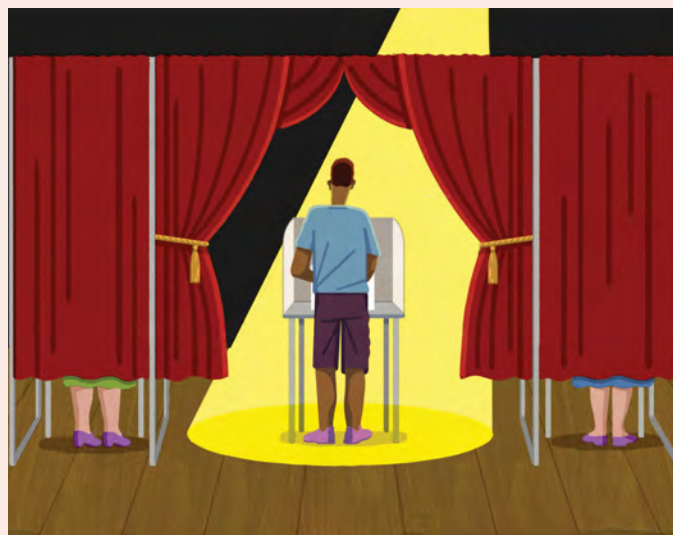
WITHIN REACH

Pooh Shiesty, Lucy Dacus, Masked Wolf, Rina Sawayama, Duncan Laurence, Rauw Alejandro, Anitta, Latto, Flo Milli, Japanese Breakfast

NEW AND IMPROVED?

With its latest slate of changes, the Recording Academy — and some first-time voters — is more hopeful than ever for long-awaited transparency behind Grammy nominations

BY MELINDA NEWMAN



When voters for the 64th annual Grammy Awards fill out their ballots in October, their selections will count more than ever, following significant recent changes by the Recording Academy — including disbanding its controversial nominations review committees.

The committees, first adopted in 1989, over time spread to the point that their secret members determined the final nominees in 59 of the 84 categories presented in March. Now, nominations in the general and genre fields will be determined solely by the voters, a move that academy CEO Harvey Mason Jr. says was made to "make sure the [voting] process was completely transparent and completely unassailable."

Artists like The Weeknd, angered after receiving no nominations for the 63rd annual awards, had publicly questioned the committees' value, leaving the academy with the need to mend some fences even beyond abandoning the practice. Regaining that trust, says Mason, comes from "making sure we're doing the outreach and that the artist community understands the changes taking place," he says. "If they think it's the same old community, there's going to be frustration."

Nashville-based rapper Daisha McBride is one of the 2,710 potential new voting and nonvoting members invited to join the academy in June. "As hip-hop artists, we definitely have this idea about the Grammys because of what JAY-Z and The Weeknd have said [about], 'Hey, the Grammys aren't fair,'" she says. "But I think as long as the Grammys [acknowledge] 'We haven't done the greatest job' and make an attempt, we can, as a genre, at least try to meet them halfway."

While the academy has aimed to further diversify and contemporize membership with similar outreaches in 2019 and 2020, now existing voters also have to requalify, proving that they have earned credits within the last five years. New, informed lifeblood is key, says S-Curve Records founder and two-time Grammy winner Steve Greenberg.

"The problem the committee system was created to solve was how to keep irrelevant releases by the most famous veteran superstars from dominating the nominations," he says. "The best solution is to continually refresh the voting membership with voters from diverse backgrounds who are currently active in the fields in which they vote." And, of course, make sure they vote. Mason stresses that with the changes, "we are even more reliant on getting our voting body to turn out and pay attention to their ballot."

Count McBride as ready to cast hers. "Maybe my one vote will [help] an artist who might not get a vote from someone who's older," she says. "I want to give [the academy] a chance and help make things better."

► Beyoncé became the first woman to win six Grammys in one night at the 2010 ceremony following the release of *I Am... Sasha Fierce*.

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THREE

OF



From left: Axwell, Steve Angello and Sebastian Ingrosso of Swedish House Mafia photographed June 24 at Delight Studios in Stockholm.

A man with short dark hair and a beard, wearing a black leather jacket over a black turtleneck, stands on the left side of the frame. He is looking slightly to his left. The background is a vast, cloudy sky with soft, white clouds against a pale blue backdrop. The overall mood is contemplative and cinematic.

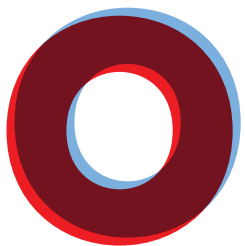
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KIND

SWEDISH HOUSE MAFIA were dance music kings —
and then, at the height of their reign, called it quits.
Finally together again in Stockholm, they have a new label,
new music and a new outlook on reuniting “for life”

BY KATIE BAIN and ALEXEI BARRIONUEVO

PHOTOGRAPHED BY THERESE ÖHRVALL



ON A PLACID INLET OF THE BALTIC

Sea, where swans glide by the European sports cars parked across the road, the Djursholm Country Club looms behind a red brick wall with a black iron gate. Built in 1907 with a fortune tied to the Nobel Prize, this villa was originally a private residence, and later a convent where Pope John Paul II stayed. About

five years ago, a group of locals transformed it into a private oasis for the wealthy and well-connected in and around Djursholm — a district in the most affluent municipality in Sweden, where Spotify founder Daniel Ek and ABBA's Björn Ulvaeus are neighbors.

On this humid evening just before Sweden's Midsommar, the clean-cut members and their guests socialize on the outdoor patio, their small children sitting politely at a separate table. But amid this sanctuary of Nordic gentility, in a corner of the patio closest to the designated smoking section, sits a trio of men instantly recognizable in Sweden and, once upon a time, to any dance music fan around the world: the game-changing threesome Swedish House Mafia.

Axwell (born Axel Hedfors), 43, is the fine-featured one with the dry sense of humor; wearing a striped shirt and shorts and sipping a beer, he blends in easily enough. His tattooed cohorts look more like off-duty rock stars: Sebastian Ingrosso, 38, has a booming laugh and wears stylish athleisure (black sweatpants, black T-shirt, gold neck chain), and Steve Angello, 38, the group's sober member, drinks a ginger ale, occasionally pulling back his mane of graying hair to reveal the ink on his arms. Twice during a dinner of burrata, French fries, mushrooms, fish tacos and garlic shrimp, Angello and Ingrosso go off to smoke thin Vogue cigarettes. Axwell vapes at the table.

The Swedes, as they're known in the dance music industry, aren't actu-

ally that unusual a sight here: Axwell and Ingrosso are both members of the country club and live nearby with their wives and children; Angello and his family aren't far away in central Stockholm. But their presence out in the open as a trio, sharing a friendly meal with two journalists, is far more unexpected. It has been eight years since they broke up with significant fanfare; about that long since they sat down for an interview as a group; and 20 months since they shut down their group social media accounts and essentially disappeared. Now they're finally ready to talk about where they've been, what they've been working on and why, after one major false start, their real comeback is imminent.

"When we came back together again, it was like we had to rediscover



From left: Angello, Ingrosso and Axwell.

what this was,” says Angello, sweeping his hand across the table. “We all have our different likings, obviously. [But then] Seb shows me something, or Ax shows me something I have never seen or heard, and it becomes this magic again that we had when we were young.”

More than any other act in modern dance music, Swedish House Mafia set the tone for the EDM boom of the early 2010s, taking the massive “big room” house sound cultivated in Europe to the United States. Here, they set new standards for what success could look like for dance acts, selling out Madison Square Garden twice (the first time, in December 2011, in nine minutes), gaining mass popularity as the first generation of digital natives flocked to mega-festivals like

Ultra and Electric Daisy Carnival.

The scene was bright and loud, and between the music, confetti, pyro (and the drugs) at the Swedes’ shows, often euphoric. Almost from day one, Swedish House Mafia created a live experience “with even more swagger, more panache and more production” than had been attempted before by other DJs, says Pete Tong, the long-standing BBC Radio 1 host and dance scene legend. “The Swedes really aligned with the emergence and explosion of EDM in America. They were kind of the leading protagonists of what became the next big global wave in terms of the impact of DJs and what they could achieve.”

Incredibly, the group created all that on the strength of only a six-track, two-compilation catalog — with its last release, 2012’s “Don’t You Worry Child,” becoming its biggest hit by far when it spent three weeks at No. 6 on the Billboard Hot 100. And then, at the height of its success in 2013, the trio broke up, devastating and shocking dance fans worldwide.

Five years later, it seemed like the group might reunite when it closed out Ultra’s 20th anniversary in Miami. But, as the members now say, behind-the-scenes problems at that show underscored just how much of a change a true reunion would have necessitated. Over the next three years, they made attempts at new music but were derailed at every turn — fighting their own well-known perfectionism, changing managers twice and ultimately leaving the label, Columbia Records, that signed them when they had only bits and pieces of new music.

Now they’re returning to an industry that has changed considerably since their days in the Hot 100’s top 10. House, techno and tech house are the genres of choice within the dance scene — not the bombastic, often anthemic, larger-than-life “main stage” sound with which the Swedes made their name. Although initially all successful underground DJs in their own right, they “almost got hampered by their own success” as a vastly more mainstream supergroup, says Tong. “They defined a genre in such a specific way.” The marquee acts of their era — Calvin Harris, David Guetta, Skrillex and deadmau5 — survived by evolving their sounds and thus, well, never really going away.

Dance music, too, isn’t the U.S. market juggernaut it was in the early and mid-2010s. In 2016, the global dance music industry was valued at \$7.1 billion — a historic high amid the U.S. scene’s heyday — and that same year, the genre accounted for a record 4% market share of U.S. recorded

music. That number dipped to 3.6% before the pandemic, according to the IMS Business Report, and a 2021 IMS analysis of Spotify’s top 200 indicates that dance music is declining almost everywhere.

Still, while its popularity may have leveled off in the United States, it’s surging in developing countries like India and China, as well as in parts of Latin America, where the EDM boom arrived later and where streaming consumption is rising rapidly. And it’s amid these changing consumption patterns that Swedish House Mafia is starting fresh: a new team, a global tour backed by Live Nation, new music and, more crucially, a new sound — one the group insists will frame it as anything but a nostalgia act.

“It was just like, ‘What the fuck do we do? How do we come back? Do we just give them another [version of] what we’ve done before?’ ” Ingrosso recalls the group thinking as it mulled a comeback. “I was like, ‘Fuck that; it’s depressing to go back. It’s disgusting to go back.’ ” And its first new single, “It Gets Better,” certainly doesn’t sound retro: A sleek, imposing amalgamation of punchy beats, walls of synth and quick 180s into drops composed of what appears to be cowbell, it is, the group promises, just the start of more

into the studio and call the guys and be like, ‘Yo, numbers are cold on the playlist.’ We don’t give a fuck.”

“We have no idea if people are going to like [the new music],” adds Ingrosso. “But we are just really proud of what we have done.”

SWEDISH HOUSE MAFIA has never done anything less than full throttle, and even its last goodbye was outsized. In April 2012, two months after becoming the first EDM act to get top Coachella billing, the trio announced it was breaking up — but first, it would embark upon a 52-date, five-continent-spanning trek called One Last Tour, which ended up grossing an average of \$1.18 million per show, according to Billboard Boxscore, and was chronicled in the 2014 documentary *Leave the World Behind*.

For fans, the doc was a kind of EDM Rosetta stone, offering some insights into why a group at the peak of its powers would just walk away. It positioned the Swedes as best friends who, while thrilled by their jobs, were often discontented with life on the road and, on occasion, with one another. In one scene, during a 2011 writing trip to Australia (where they plan to hole up in the studio and finish “Don’t You

“WHEN WE CAME BACK TOGETHER

AGAIN, IT WAS LIKE WE HAD TO

REDISCOVER WHAT THIS WAS.” —Angello

new music leading up to Swedish House Mafia’s debut album, *Paradise Again*, planned for a late-2021 release.

It’s a make-or-break moment, one that will decide if the most successful act of the dance music boom — and part of the genre’s “first generation to get old,” as Tong puts it — can exist beyond that era. But the Swedes — who these days live quite comfortably in a country where their celebrity status is cemented — say they aren’t seeking massive streaming numbers or a big album payday. As they put it, they’re simply three restless, creative guys who want to finally get their music out, regardless of how it’s received, and to prove they can chart a new course away from mainstream dance music, which, laments Ingrosso, has of late all “sounded the same.”

“I’m not trying to like, satisfy the digital market,” says Angello. “My big play here is making an album we love and putting it out. I’m not going to go

Worry Child”), Angello leaves a session to go get a neck tattoo — a move Axwell calls “retarded” once Angello has left the room.

“That was three hours,” says Angello today in his defense, the infamous angel tat peering out from the collar of his T-shirt. “The song took two years to make.”

Still, the moment underlined a recurring idea in the film: The guys pulled the plug because none of them could totally commit. “The problem was that Swedish House Mafia grew really fast, and we had our individual careers as well,” says Axwell. “Swedish House Mafia took over, and so we were like, ‘What are we doing? Are we focusing on this? But I have this other thing also.’ We were not good at balancing that, and we were also not ready to fully ditch our individual careers and commit to Swedish House Mafia, which it felt like it needed.”

The film also hinted at deeper



From left: Angello,
Axwell and Ingrosso.

problems, with the Swedes dropping vague references to “the elephant in the room,” “conversations that might never be had” and “the issue” throughout. Whether it’s the maturation years bring or collective revisionist history, they won’t get into the specifics of their squabbles, other than to say they weren’t masking any salacious infighting. “There were not really any issues,” insists Ingrosso. “There were just three guys that had been touring together for 10-plus years and needed to take a break. Now when I’m older and thinking back on it, it was just like, we were all tired. It’s a huge machine to carry.”

Ego may have accounted for some tensions. One summer night in 2011, Amy Thomson, the group’s then-manager, got a call around 4 a.m. after a show in Ibiza, Spain, from an incensed Ingrosso. “Steve’s got black

2017, when Thomson, who managed Axwell & Ingrosso, was in town. The group — still so famous in Sweden that a public appearance together would generate TMZ-level hysteria — didn’t want to fuel speculation, so they met in Thomson’s suite at the hip Lydmar Hotel. “I remember when I got there, you guys were already there,” recalls Angello, “and the girl I know that works in Lydmar reception lost it. She was like, ‘What the fuck is going on?’”

Up in the room, the vibe was similarly charged. “I think maybe it was a little bit emotional, you know?” says Axwell of seeing Angello again. “It’s weird when you hang out with somebody every day, like we did in those last months of the tour, and then just... poof.”

“We just started to laugh,” continues Ingrosso. “One memory after the other, and then wine, and then meat,

tens of thousands of fans gathered at the main stage. (Presciently, Angello had requested a police escort from the members’ hotels to the site. “I knew it was going to be so emotional,” he says. “We just need to get to the stage as fast as possible.”)

When the lights came up, a huge rotating mirror flipped open like a garage door to reveal the trio, kicking off a nearly hourlong spectacle of fire and glowing LED panels. But it didn’t quite go as the Swedes had meticulously planned. “We had shit tons of issues,” says Angello. Lights didn’t come on at their designated cues, visual effects timing was off, and at one point, a wall of fire torched some LED tiles, according to Angello’s recollection — though others present dispute that account.

Incensed, Angello fired the entire tour production team — despite its extensive experience successfully

producing shows for acts like Radiohead and Massive Attack, and the fact that there were other issues that contributed to hiccups, sources say. “If I spend two weeks and a shit ton of money doing something, I’m expecting somebody to do their job,” he says. The Swedes insist

they spent every dollar of their fee on the production — “I don’t know the exact amount, but I paid from my pocket to play there,” says Ingrosso. “It was a fucking mess, but we’re like, ‘We’ll do it for our fans.’” (Angello says the Swedes also lost money on One Last Tour: “We grossed, what, \$200 million? I think we spent \$210 million.”)

Still, in the waning moments of the Ultra show, Axwell made an impromptu promise to the crowd: “It’s Swedish House Mafia for life, this time.” Backstage afterward, “There were a few DJs crying, literally crying,” says Ingrosso. “Adam was crying. I cried a little bit.” Fans worldwide began to wonder whether Swedish House Mafia was reuniting for the long haul. The Swedes were trying to figure that out, too.

A loose plan emerged to get back in the studio and tour, but the months after Ultra proved messy. Thomson, who had steered the act since its inception, sensed that Angello might want Braun to co-manage the reunited group, according to a source familiar with the matter. She spent about \$25,000 to fly herself and a team of four from the United Kingdom to Los Angeles and rented a home in Malibu for a meeting in Los Angeles that Braun’s team had requested, though Braun himself turned out to be out of town when Thomson and her team

arrived at his offices for the scheduled meeting, and the proposed co-management deal soured.

Later that spring, Thomson and the group began to pursue a label deal — and while the Swedes say many executives were eager to meet them, some were skeptical. In May, Thomson talked to Zach Katz, then BMG’s U.S. president, and Thomas Scherer, then BMG’s executive vp U.S. publishing. Scherer describes a group trying to leverage its past glory into a multimillion-dollar advance, which he called “unrealistic,” given its lack of new music. “They wanted to say, ‘We were there [in terms of] chart position and are still there,’” says Scherer. “But the music had moved on.”

That summer of 2018, Thomson resigned, and she and the Swedes amicably parted ways. “Somehow the flow that we used to have wasn’t really there,” says Axwell. “We are all still friends.” “I’ll always remember my time with them, but it’s time for the future for all of us and I wish the band all the very best,” says Thomson, now chief catalog officer at Hipgnosis Songs. Later that year, the band signed on with Patriot Management’s Ron Laffitte, who works with the likes of Usher, Ryan Tedder and Pharrell Williams but had no experience managing a dance music act.

Nonetheless, Laffitte — who Angello says “brought peace” to the group — continued the hunt for a label deal. That December, the Swedes met up with Universal Music Group executives for a lunch at Stockholm’s Ett Hem hotel. As one attendee recalls, one UMG executive there was shocked when (again) the Swedes asked for a multimillion-dollar advance but had no music to play. (Astralwerks Records GM Toby Andrews, who also attended the meeting, says he was aware of “bits and pieces” of new music.)

Still, UMG made an offer — ultimately losing out later to Columbia Records. (Two sources familiar with the deal say Columbia offered significantly more; Angello insists the offers “were all pretty even.”) “I think UMG dodged a bullet,” says the attendee. “The lack of new music and their [slow] release history made it rather risky.”

In early 2019, Swedish House Mafia signed with Columbia. At first, the group liked label boss Ron Perry’s way of thinking: “One idea that was great was to put up a record [on digital service providers] and then take it down,” says Axwell. “We love the untraditional ideas.” But soon, says Angello, they came to feel the label was too interested in “flirting with the past. And we’re not there,” he continues. “I think

“SWEDISH HOUSE MAFIA GREW REALLY FAST, AND WE HAD OUR INDIVIDUAL CAREERS AS WELL. WE WERE NOT GOOD AT BALANCING THAT.” —Axwell

leather seats on the plane, and mine’s brown — I knew this would happen,” he told her, according to Soraya Sobh, a former member of Thomson’s team who now works in esports. (Ingrosso says he doesn’t recall the incident, while Angello chuckles at the story: “I never heard that, but if it’s true, it’s fucking rock star.”)

Regardless of the reason, after its final show at Ultra in Miami in 2013, the group certainly looked like it had divided into factions. Angello was living in Los Angeles and forging a solo career managed by Scooter Braun, while the other two — again living in Stockholm after brief moves to L.A. — formed Axwell & Ingrosso. Intended, says Axwell, as “a smaller thing,” the duo played most of the world’s major dance music festivals and scored a global hit with 2017’s “More Than You Know.” Still, when asked if it felt the same as performing with Swedish House Mafia, Ingrosso offers a succinct reply: “No.”

The wheels of a reunion started turning in the fall of 2016. Angello, spooked by Donald Trump’s election, moved his family back to Stockholm. After a year without seeing one another — Angello chalks it up to touring, “finding a place to live, finding a school and daycare for the kids, restructuring companies and life” — the trio reconnected in December

and then cigarettes, and then more wine. I think we came home at two in the morning.”

By the time the guys left that evening, Swedish House Mafia was back together.

THE REUNION WAS ONLY supposed to be one show.

Ultra co-founder Adam Russakoff had approached the Swedes numerous times, and at 2017’s Ultra Singapore, he broached an idea to Angello: Why not get together for the 20th-anniversary event in Miami? A month later, Russakoff walked into the dressing room at Ultra Europe in Croatia and made the same pitch to Axwell and Ingrosso: “It’s time.”

After more back-and-forth, say sources close to the festival, a deal was struck: Ultra would pay the Swedes about \$1 million for an hourlong appearance — and for keeping it secret. “I guess that was the biggest curveball we could throw,” says Angello. “Let’s come together and do a show.” They spent three months in early 2018 preparing, leading up to a final week of rehearsals in a Miami warehouse space.

“We were staying in different hotels because we truly thought we were being clever,” says Axwell. But by March 25, the final day of Ultra 2018, rumors of a reunion were flying, and

we scrapped like 12 ‘Don’t You Worry Childs’ [while making the new album.]”

After a few months in the studio, the group produced a handful of rough tracks, some of which it tested on the road during a 14-date spring/summer tour in 2019. Around May, says a source close to the trio, Laffitte’s team delivered five to eight songs to Columbia. “They were thrilled with them,” says Angello. “They wanted to put them out.” (Columbia declined to comment for this story.)

And the group was still hard at work on more new music: In June 2019, the members were in the studio with A\$AP Rocky the day before he turned himself in to Swedish police following an alleged street brawl (and was subsequently held in detention for two months). Still, the group dragged its feet on releasing singles — it still felt the album was unfinished.

Then, everything stopped. The COVID-19 pandemic struck — and the Swedes, in a way, got what they wanted: much more time to work on the music. “Now we laugh about the early ideas,” says Angello. “We’re like, ‘Holy shit — we were supposed to put that out?’”

THE PANDEMIC MAY HAVE had some silver linings for artists, but the Swedes weren’t immune to its many downsides. Sweden never fully locked down and only recommended wearing masks in December — a controversial approach that has led to a death rate three times higher than its Nordic neighbors, though still lower than many other European countries — and in late March 2020, Ingrosso caught the coronavirus. He was sick for three months. “I had fever for 100 days,” he says, and wore a pulse oximeter “like all the time.”

In a world gone totally virtual, the trio’s nascent relationship with Columbia suffered, too. “We want to be in the room,” says Angello. “We’re on these FaceTime calls once in a while, and for us that means zero, you know?” Swedish House Mafia returned its advance — about \$5 million, according to one person familiar with the deal — after the split, which a Columbia representative calls “mutual and very amicable.” In November 2020, the group parted ways with Laffitte as well. “The relationships all got disrupted by the inability to gather together,” says Laffitte, adding that everything was positive “until the world stopped.”

Swedish House Mafia’s bonds, on the other hand, slowly strengthened. The members gathered most days in

either Axwell and Ingrosso’s studio in downtown Stockholm or Angello’s in the wooded outskirts of town. They made mood boards. (Quoth one: “If you want different results, try something different.”) Angello tinkered with his collection of custom synthesizers. (“The creative process is a little longer because we’re not super keen on software and presets of sounds,” he explains.) And sometimes, they just sat together, listening to music, including their collection of white labels dating back to when they started out. “We were going back in time, like, ‘Where did we come from? Who are we?’” says Ingrosso. “And just started to dig deep.”

The process involved its fair share of “anxiety, also,” continues Ingrosso. “It was tough — we’re getting older, obviously, and the whole EDM bubble for me has come to a point where nobody is taking risks, to be honest, including me.” The group’s famed perfectionism, he admits,

“kills us also sometimes. But for us, it needs to be a certain way. And that’s why it takes time.” He recalls spending a year trying to find the right drum sound for one song — then deciding to mute the drums altogether. “And now, listening back to it, I’m like, ‘Wow, I’m so happy we did that.’ Sometimes, it’s like killing your biggest darlings is what makes the thing move forward.”

After many 18-hour days in the studio in early 2021, the Swedes came up with “It Gets Better,” which to them sounded like Swedish House Mafia 2.0. “When we did that record,” says Ingrosso, “I was just jumping up and down in here. It was like, ‘Fuck, yeah, it’s happening.’” Then last summer, two well-connected friends — Spotify’s Ek and Ash Pournouri, Avicii’s former manager — made a timely recommendation: Both told the Swedes to talk to Wassim “Sal” Slaiby, the larger-than-life founder of management company SALXCO, best known for guiding The Weeknd’s rise.

“When Daniel Ek hit me up,” says Slaiby, “I was like, ‘Yeah, bro, but you know I don’t know much about dance music as a manager.’” Still, the group’s strong touring history, lucrative past sponsorship deals (the video for its 2012 single “Greyhound” was also an ad for Absolut Vodka, and it had teamed up with Volvo for a video of the single “Leave the World Behind”) and overall cachet, convinced him to take the call. The four men spent three hours on Zoom getting to know one another (“We

didn’t talk about business one time,” says Slaiby), and though Slaiby initially thought he might refer the Swedes to another manager, by the end of the meeting, “I was like, ‘Fuck no, these guys are mine.’”

He then connected Swedish House Mafia with a new label, Republic Records. “Swedish House Mafia are one of the most creative forces in electronic music history,” says Republic founder/CEO Monte Lipman. “The new body of work is nothing short of spectacular and will only add to their legacy.”

At Republic, says SALXCO’s Dina Rahim (who co-manages the group

“demand [for Swedish House Mafia] is very high, so risk is very low.”

Three years after Axwell declared it from the Ultra stage, the Swedes seem to finally be thinking about what “Swedish House Mafia, for life” really means. “Even if it’s not an album-driven genre, now I think we are an album act,” says Ingrosso. They each also have sizable individual solo catalogs, as well as their own labels: Angello’s SIZE Records has about 250 releases between his own and those of a few other artists; Axwell’s Axtone has about 200; and Ingrosso’s Refune has released the hit collaboration “Reload.”

“IT WAS TOUGH — WE’RE GETTING OLDER, OBVIOUSLY, AND THE WHOLE EDM BUBBLE FOR ME HAS COME TO A POINT WHERE NOBODY IS TAKING RISKS, TO BE HONEST, INCLUDING ME.” —Ingrosso

with Slaiby), the trio has “their freedom. They are the leaders of the music.” Adds Slaiby: “Republic is very chill. That’s what I like about them.” The label is also home to The Weeknd, and, continues Slaiby, “that partnership is so great because they give [The Weeknd] that space. To me, Swedish House Mafia is like that. I feel like the more advice you give them, the worse it is for them. Let them do their thing. They’re going to figure it out.”

So far, SALXCO seems to offer the Swedes the attention they require. “With [Slaiby] always being available and his team always chasing us, it works really well,” says Axwell. “Sal’s on the phone from when he wakes up until he goes to bed. It’s kind of attached to his face.” The company’s experience with large-scale touring should help, too, with a planned 2022 global outing that will mostly hit Live Nation-affiliated or -aligned arenas and stadiums.

Slaiby is well-aware of the Swedes’ tendency to spend heftily on tour. “I don’t want them to change that,” he insists. “I love their attitude of wanting to do the best show and not losing anything from the creative.” So with his team, he’s figuring out ways to tighten the ship, raising funds through two sponsorships, among other ways “to trim the fat.” As for Live Nation (which declined to comment for this story), any worries regarding overspending are, says a source familiar with the group’s touring plans, likely offset by the promoter’s sense that

Angello in particular says he has noted his peers’ recent entry into the booming catalog market — Calvin Harris’ sale of his publishing assets to Vine Investments for an estimated \$90 million to \$110 million and David Guetta’s sale in June of his entire recording catalog to Warner Music Group for about \$100 million. “The idea has hit me, and I’ve thought about it since it seems to be a smart thing to do,” he says. “There’s a win-win for both parties. The buyer has an opportunity to work the catalog in new countries opening up for streaming and synchs.”

As dinner draws to a close, Angello and Ingrosso return from their second smoking break. *Paradise Again*, says Angello, is “just the beginning,” adding that they have enough music for a couple more albums yet. “You always want people to like your music, otherwise you wouldn’t play it to them,” says Ingrosso. “But the vision of the album, for me, it’s not really important if it sells 400 million [copies] or 10.” As Angello points out, they’ve already achieved something that, for so long, was more elusive.

“We’re together. We’re making music. We’re having fun,” he says. “The only thing that matters is that we are going to look at each other in a couple of weeks’ time. We’re going to have a barbecue and laugh, and we’re going to say, ‘Look at this fucking album.’” **B**

Additional reporting by Dave Brooks, Sven Grundberg, Henrik Huldshiner and Melinda Newman.

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PRODUCERS NOW

The Navigator

Whether he's crafting whole albums with pop stars like Taylor Swift and Lorde or making his own as Bleachers, **JACK ANTONOFF** has one goal in the studio: helping everyone find their "North Star"

BY JASON LIPSHUTZ

THERE'S NO ONE WAY TO BECOME A HIT PRODUCER — just ask Jack Antonoff. A decade ago, he was a guitarist in Fun., trying to convince other artists to let him produce their records after years of playing in his own bands. Now he's one of the most in-demand producers in pop, known less for a signature sound than for his intensely collaborative nature, which has resulted in prolific partnerships with the likes of Taylor Swift, Lorde and St. Vincent. "If you meet someone whom you believe you could do something valuable with — which is why I end up doing more than one record with some people, because it's very rare to find those connections — how dare you not explore that?" he says, sitting on a couch inside his studio at New York's famed Electric Lady.

The walls are decorated with framed doodles, scribbled notes and other artifacts that tell the story of his career — like a handwrit-

ten tracklist for Lana Del Rey's recent album, *Chemtrails Over the Country Club*, the bulk of which he co-wrote and produced. He often works in his Brooklyn home studio, but he has made many records here, including the upcoming *Take the Sadness Out of Saturday Night* (out July 30 on RCA), from his solo project, Bleachers.

There aren't that many differences between the way Antonoff, 37, talks about his own work and the albums he makes with other artists: Producing, at its core, is about the pursuit of a bigger story — a practice that requires him to be a confidant, sounding board and editor as much as the guy who knows which synth will evoke which feeling. Though his collaborators praise how he can translate the sounds in their head to real-life recordings, Antonoff describes the work of making music in terms far more philosophical than technical. He explains his approach to creativity — how he manages it, how he cultivates it and how, at the end of the day, he's at the mercy of it.



Antonoff photographed by
Heather Hazzan on June 16 at
Electric Lady Studios in New York.

You Find Time For The Important Things

In the past year, Antonoff has contributed to three Taylor Swift albums, multiple Lana Del Rey projects and new releases from The Chicks and St. Vincent. He also helmed upcoming albums from Lorde and Clairo, due later this year, and will embark on a 33-date Bleachers tour in September. It's a head-spinning amount of work, but Antonoff gets by with a little help from his friends — and cooking videos.

Swift



My version of time management is, when I'm doing the things I love, they somehow create time for me, so I only do things I love. In this line of work, you are either being given life or sucked of life, and I don't love being in the studio enough to be doing something I don't want to do.

Sometimes I look back and think, "That was a pretty intense period of work," but my family hasn't disowned me. My friends haven't gotten together

and said, "You're a piece of shit." People still take my calls. I'm definitely really ambitious, but it hasn't gotten to the point where my life is completely falling apart around me. When you live very intensely praying at this thing, you want to make sure you haven't taken it too far. When I hear stories about people never going home or sleeping in a studio, that doesn't sound romantic to me.

I use everything outside of my work to turn my brain off, like my YouTube life — I watch a lot of food things. When I get home or if I want to take a break, I get into a loop of people making pasta, people frying things. I like videos of meat: seasoning, barbecuing videos. But these aren't things I do! Never! And that's why it's relaxing to me. I think the definition of relaxation is to enjoy something that fascinates you but does not inspire you.



TECHNICAL EXPERTISE ONLY GETS YOU SO FAR

Jeff Lynne and Brian Eno are among Antonoff's musical idols for their shared ability to write, produce and perform in equal measure. Antonoff, too, prides himself on being something of a technical whiz — but he has also learned that no amount of studio mastery can substitute for the unpredictable, sometimes grueling work of good songwriting.

I've finally figured out this huge separation between craft and process. Craft is like, "I know how all these

things work." I know how to make that Mellotron [keyboard] sound how I want it to sound. I know how to put it through that tape echo. If something needs to feel like a dream or like a nightmare, I can do it. That's great. But none of that helps you get to the core of an idea. Those are all the clothing you put some [ideas] in.

The craft is something you can work on and grow, but it's just a tool. And the act of writing, having ideas of value and making albums, is truly something from the heart and the

mind that mostly happens outside the studio. You get thoughts in the shower or walking or doing things, and that's a really frustrating reality. The mystery of where it comes from and how it comes? There's no answer to that.

You're always learning from everyone around you. Lana [Del Rey] taught me that sometimes that thing that just comes out of thin air is *the* thing, and you don't even touch it. Ella [Yelich-O'Connor, aka Lorde], on the other hand, teaches me

what can happen if you keep chipping away at something over and over. The idea of the process is these big egos and big attitudes [colliding], but once you get into that very vulnerable place of working and writing, everyone's just a half-broken sponge. There's so much being passed around, there's so much information and so much emotion, and that's why I love it so much. It's really this rarefied space.

Del Rey (left) and Lorde





You Can't Create In A Vacuum

Compared with the ornate pop anthems of the first two Bleachers albums, the songs on Take the Sadness Out of Saturday Night are shaggier and more dizzying. Antonoff and co-producer Patrik Berger (Robyn, Charli XCX) recorded the tracks in 2020 with a five-piece band while the pandemic had halted touring, and Antonoff says the sessions' euphoric energy changed the context of the songs — and, ultimately, made them better.

The pandemic had a massive effect on the music. Not because it was necessarily written about the time period, but because you write, record and produce differently based on the pace of your life, based on what's going on in the world. The pandemic felt like a culmination of a lot of things. We've all been talking so much about human experience, what it means, the conversation about the end of our planet. It leads me and the people I know to the most honest, tactile things. Vinyl sales had been going through the roof way before the pandemic. There was a reaction to where we were headed, and I think the pandemic lit that on fire.

This album was always about breaking out, knocking at the door of the next phase of your life. What I didn't realize is how much the quarantine would cause me to want to be with the band in a room. At first it was like, "I can't play, so I want to have my guys around." And now it's like, "Oh, they became



Bleachers played *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* in May.

the characters pushing me *through* that door." We played like we might not play again — that's not something I have ever done before. The pandemic was so on fire, and the sound of the band was so joyous and so driving that it felt like the songs were cleansed of cynicism. That's the thing about albums and writing — you're always working from a place that's at least a little bit beyond what you can fully understand, which is why you do it, because if you can fully understand it, then it's not really interesting to you.



KNOW YOUR VALUE

In late 2019, Antonoff sold a catalog of nearly 200 songs to Hipgnosis, striking a deal with Merck Mercuriadis' music investment company while maintaining an interest in and management responsibilities of the catalog. (A representative for Antonoff declined to specify the value of the deal.) The move nods toward what Antonoff describes as a coming "reckoning" within the industry, in which institutions will have to change as creators gain a greater understanding of how much their work is really worth.

I did a deal with Hipgnosis, which was a really positive thing. The funny thing about "selling the catalog" is you don't sell your whole catalog — you retain control! And unless you develop computer software, you need a partner to go collect your money [anyway]. I think it's always interesting, the huge valuation of how much songs are worth. Look at who's upset about it. It's like, "Cool, you guys do you, but in the meantime, there are some motherfuckers out there who are saying all of our songs are worth about 20 times more as you've been telling us, and I can still control all of them. What's the problem?"

Artists are very easy to take advantage of for three reasons. No. 1: We're indoctrinated to think that we're just lucky to be here. No. 2: There's all these anecdotal stories that are designed to shut you down — you've been told a million times by the biggest artists in the world, from TLC to Pearl Jam to Mariah Carey, that you're not going to beat [the system], so don't even try. And No. 3: Artists don't have time. If you're a real artist, you would sooner foreclose on your house and live in a van than you would take away from the time of you making your work.

There's a couple of really good people out there trying to shift that. Someone comes along and says, "Hey, I think these songs are worth 15 to 20 times as much," it really blows things up. And it can be a really beautiful thing for artists who once again, just like all these different outlets, now have another option where they can retain control.



Good Albums Don't Necessarily Take A Village

Whether it's Lorde's Melodrama or Lana Del Rey's Norman Fucking Rockwell!, Antonoff isn't a hired gun for pop stars — he often makes entire albums with them, and he's not alone. Some of the biggest and brightest pop titles from recent years have also largely been made by one artist and one producer, including Billie Eilish's When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go? (with her brother, FINNEAS) and Olivia Rodrigo's Sour (with Daniel Nigro).

I have this North Star theory: Good records are made if everyone is looking at the same thing, whether that's two people, three people, four people. Obviously, the more people you add, the harder it is to have that vision completely align. The cohesion is more important than anything. Brilliant people can be together, but if they're looking at different things, what do you have? It's like peanut butter and fish.

A lot of that happens because a label perspective can some-

times push that narrative: "Oh, we don't have it, let's get this person in!" What I don't believe in — and have had some rough experiences with — is letting people in who are going to act like they have "the sauce" and put things down. There's no cynicism in the studio. It's a very fragile place, as it should be. There's nothing easier in the world than making an artist feel like they're shit and that you have the answers. I've seen so many people do it, and it's horrible. And it's always some fucking character who is dealing with their own insecurity.

The goal isn't to "do your thing" on someone else's music — the goal is to make the best, most alive version of this vision. Some people might have more of a signature sound, and that's cool. I feel really intent on my goal, which is to make great records, and the only way that I've been able to get close to figuring that out is just immersing myself and not drawing at anything that feels known or safe to me.

Fantastic Beats And Where To Find Them

Hobbyists and hitmakers alike are turning to Splice to find the building blocks for their songs. And with 4 million users and a \$500 million valuation, the company is at the forefront of the red-hot creator economy

BY ROB TANNENBAUM

WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL,” says Kara Madden, “I thought I could be bigger than Britney Spears.” This didn’t make Madden, who grew up on the New Jersey shore, unique — in the late 1990s, lots of girls had the same idea. But Madden, who’s 28, worked toward pop stardom with a diligence that most other kids didn’t have. She studied singing with her mother, a voice teacher; taught herself to use GarageBand; learned to play the clarinet, piano and trombone; and performed in school musicals as well as the marching band.

While studying for a music business degree at Belmont University in Nashville, she interned with the EDM booking agency AM Only, then for John Esposito, CEO of Warner Music Nashville. After graduating in 2014, she moved to Los Angeles, sang on demos and took every co-writing session she could find. Madden did everything right. And she got nowhere.

A few years after college, Madden was managing a Jersey Mike’s sandwich shop and making under \$10,000 a year from music, singing on commercial sessions for My Little Pony and adding vocal toplines to EDM songs. In EDM, male producers often have considerable power over female singers. Madden felt disrespected, and she has said that she was sexually assaulted by one of her collaborators. “I lost that fire along the way,” she recalls. Especially if you’re young and female, “the music industry chews you up and spits you out.”

Madden noticed that many of the producers she knew were using Splice, a cloud-based music creation platform that sells “sample packs” — downloadable collections of vocal hooks, drum sounds, instrumental riffs and other sounds creators can use to build songs. A sample pack doesn’t contain an excerpt from a well-known track, like James Brown’s “Funky Drummer,” but rather snippets, from a snare or bass drum hit as short as a tenth of a second to an eight-bar loop of a guitar lick. They’re like Legos, or individual ingredients for a recipe. For convenience, samples are tagged with a BPM tempo and the key they’re in and have elaborate file names like “PVLACE_MELODY_LOOP_DI-

ENACHT_130_GMIN.WAV” and “MELODIC_LOOP_RIOT_02_145_D#MIN.WAV.”

Splice subscriptions start at \$9.99 a month and let users access over 2 million riffs, beats and sounds — all royalty-free, so creators who use them own their work. Most of the platform’s 4 million users are amateurs, but Splice samples have also been used in songs by Justin Timberlake, Justin Bieber, BTS, The Weeknd and Bad Bunny, among others.

In 2017, Madden put together a vocal pack of brief sounds, wordless melodies and concise vocal hooks, like “don’t wanna wake up,” “second chances never work” and “loving you,” and released it on Splice under the name KARRA. She figured she might make a few hundred dollars.

A few months later, a friend texted Madden to ask if she knew that her samples were used in “Back and Forth,” a song from star DJ David Guetta’s new album. “That was the first ‘this is insane’ moment,” she recalls. Later that year, at the Electric Daisy Carnival festival, she heard a few DJs using her samples. Then, in early 2019, the British hard-rock group Bring Me the Horizon used her samples on its album *Amo*, which was nominated for a best rock album Grammy Award.

So far, says Madden, she has grossed “about \$300,000” from her KARRA Vocal Sample Pack Vol. 1 and its follow-up, Vol. 2. Just as important, she says, “I took my power back. For so long I had to do what other people said and had no control over my own voice.” Now, in the small but

rapidly growing sample pack business, the former Jersey Mike’s manager has become a star.

THE NEW STUDIO SYSTEM

“The music business never would’ve found Kara in a million years,” says Matt Pincus, a member of Splice’s board and the founder and former CEO of SONGS Music Publishing, which he sold to Kobalt Capital in 2017 for a reported \$160 million. Pincus first heard of Splice at SONGS during a discussion about the publishing split for rapper XXXTentacion’s Billboard Hot 100 hit “whoa (mind in awe).” When he asked about the song’s unusual keyboard hook, a SONGS staffer told him it came from Splice. “I said, ‘What the fuck is Splice?’” recalls Pincus. Then he discovered that nearly every young writer and producer he knew was using the platform “and loved it.”

Pincus has a significant interest in Splice’s success, since he has invested “tens of millions of dollars” in the platform. “In music creation, the next generation of music companies will be about ingredients

for collaborations, not finished songs,” he says. At the time of his first investment, during Splice’s 2019 series C funding round, the platform had 250,000 subscribers. By its next major round of investment two years later, that number had more than doubled, and Pincus says the company is approaching \$100 million in annual recurring revenue.

Splice’s growth reflects, and is enabling, a massive shift in how songs are written and recorded. The kind of professional music production that once took place in \$2,500-a-day recording studios filled with electronics, instruments and session musicians now happens in front of a laptop running Pro Tools, Ableton Live or other digital audio workstation software. For better or worse, Splice can also help eliminate the need for musicians, who can be moody and unreliable, as well as expensive. With a DAW and some sample packs, anyone can be as self-reliant as Prince.

The market for beats and sounds is part of a larger “creator economy” that’s now being recognized as the hot new music business investment. Beatport bought the sample store Loopmasters, investment firm Francisco Partners acquired Native Instruments earlier this year, and Goldman Sachs invested in Splice in February. Splice has plenty of competition, including Loopmasters, BeatStars (where Lil Nas X bought his “Old Town Road” beat for \$30) and Airbit. But the financial potential of the



Madden



Martocci



Oliver





sector is so significant that MIDiA Research managing director Mark Mulligan wrote in April that “the music industry now has an additional gravitational force at its core” — besides labels.

So far, says Mulligan, “Splice has managed to establish a market-shaping identity — it’s synonymous with the creator tools space, the same way Hoover is synonymous with vacuum cleaners.” Splice is also moving its part of the industry from a retail model, where creators would pay for particular sounds, to a subscription model, which can draw in more users. “That’s the most important underlying business shift the space is going through — the move from sales to subscriptions,” he says. “Sound familiar? It’s the exact same thing Spotify did to iTunes.”

The sample pack business is lucrative enough that Splice has been able to attract name creators, including Boi-1da, SOPHIE, Just Blaze, Scott Storch and Travis Barker. But the most popular packs are from less famous musicians like Madden, or Vaughn Oliver, a Canadian DJ whose Power Tools kits, released under the name Oliver, have been used in Doja Cat’s “Say So” and Dua Lipa’s “Don’t Start Now.” Ian Kirkpatrick, who produced and co-wrote “Don’t Start Now,” suggests that pop music’s recent disco resurgence can be traced to Oliver. “I wonder how much the direction of pop music is dictated by sample sites like Splice,” he says.

“It opens the doors for literally anyone to become a producer,” says Madden, and that’s only slightly hyperbolic. Rodney Jerkins, a songwriter-producer who has worked with Whitney Houston, Destiny’s Child and Michael Jackson, said during a recent appearance on Clubhouse that his

11-year-old daughter uses Splice to make four to seven songs a day. “In the next few years,” he says, “there will be stories in *Billboard* like, ‘This kid who had a top 10 smash, he’s 12, and it was because he used Splice.’”

Splice isn’t limited to pop and hip-hop. Luke Laird, a producer who has written 24 No. 1 country hits, uses Splice and created his own twangy sample pack. “You can literally find any type of sound,” he says. “I love saying, ‘I wonder what it would be like to get an Afro-Cuban beat and then write something really country over it.’”

Some artists dislike Splice because it has become ubiquitous. “I’m probably in the minority at this point,” says Topaz Jones, a 27-year-old rapper-singer, “but I’m turned off by the idea of someone else having the exact same loop as me.” Instead, Jones buys samples directly from producers or from the Polyphonic Music Library.

So far, detractors seem to be in the minority. “This is part of the fabric of pop music now,” says Oliver, whose popular Power Tools packs have been sampled in styles ranging from K-pop to reggaetón. “Every month, I hear my drum beats on a couple of new songs. It’s really cool to be the guy that made the drum loop that went on a bunch of records.”

THE MAN BEHIND THE MUSIC

Splice CEO Steve Martocci describes himself as a “jam-band freak and pretty bad guitarist” who has seen Phish and The Disco Biscuits over 400 times. Martocci, who has an almost goofy level of enthusiasm for helping musicians, grew up on Long Island, graduated from Carnegie Mellon University in 2004 with a degree in

information systems and started a career in software engineering. Frustrated by how difficult it was to find his friends at concerts, he teamed up with Jared Hecht, who worked in business development at Tumblr, and created the GroupMe group messaging app. They sold it to Skype in 2011 for \$85 million.

Martocci founded Splice in 2013 with sound engineer Matt Aimonetti as a tool for musicians to collaborate remotely, until they realized what their users really needed was high-quality sounds. At the time, “there were a bunch of mom-and-pop sites” selling sample packs, says Martocci, and in 2015 he started to turn Splice into a supermarket of sounds.

Finding content was harder than he expected. “Producers said, ‘There’s no way in hell I’m giving away my secret sauce,’” recalls Martocci. Gradually, he was able to wear down that resistance by showing them how much money they could make. (Artists get advance payments from Splice, as well as quarterly royalty statements.) Splice initially had trouble finding funding, since venture capitalists were looking for companies that were disrupting the major-label music business. “It was a space no investors would touch,” he says. But his experience with GroupMe gave him credibility, and Union Square Ventures and True Ventures signed on as early investors.

According to Martocci, Splice’s steady growth spiked during the pandemic: Daily downloads increased almost 50% amid “a pretty extreme explosion in new users.” Money has been easier to come by, too. In February, Splice raised \$55 million in series D funding led by Goldman Sachs, on a valuation of close to \$500 million.

Eventually, “we think we can build the most iconic company in music history,” says Martocci. In June 2020, he hired Maria Egan from Pulse Music Group, where she was president. Egan isn’t a tech executive; her experience is in management, A&R and publishing. She heard about Splice from Pulse client Whethan, who has worked with Charli XCX and Dua Lipa. Soon she was scouting for new talent by listening to the creators at the top of the Splice download charts.

By joining Splice, Egan bet against the traditional music business infrastructure she had been part of. The old star-making system — young artist moves to L.A., seeks a publishing deal and tries to get a foothold — “just felt so antiquated,” she says. “I could see the decentralization of the creative process, and it wasn’t going to be about these 10 producers in L.A. that everybody went to.”

What Egan and Martocci want to build is a kind of operating system for all styles of music creation, which, as the success of K-pop and reggaetón prove, is already becoming decentralized. One of Egan’s goals is to find more Latin, Brazilian and African creators for the platform. One of its

most downloaded packs of 2020, Senegal Sessions, was recorded by local musicians in the city of Dakar, and its 2020 producer of the year award went to OZ, a Turkish creator based in Switzerland who has worked with Travis Scott and Drake.

To make the site stickier for novice users, Splice developed the education platform Skills, which offers instructional videos on recording and mixing. Another tool, Studio, helps users find collaborators in the cloud. “When you’re in your flow state and you’re creating music, that’s the most beautiful bliss there is,” says Martocci. “With all our products going forward, it’s about keeping you in that creative flow. The vision of the company is a world of more transcendent musical highs.” He chuckles self-consciously. “It’s kind of hippie-ish, sure.”

The potential for growth is there: There are 4.6 million digital music creators worldwide, according to MIDiA Research, and that number is likely to grow — especially as platforms like TikTok provide a place for amateurs to compete for views and attention and, ultimately, professional careers. “Every day there’s a new 13-year-old ready to create,” says Martocci. (When I mention my 9-year-old son, Egan exclaims: “Get him a Splice account!”)

Martocci says he would consider an initial public offering if it “makes the most amount of sense to hit the next level. But I’m not really interested in selling. I’m setting this up so that a really restless guy like me can stay super entertained.”

By the end of 2020, Splice had paid out over \$40 million to artists, a small amount of money in terms of the music business, but a significant amount to creators like Oliver and Madden. “As Splice brings more kids into careers in music,” says Pincus, “I expect the network effect to accelerate from robust to exponential and the payouts to follow suit.”

For Splice’s top creators, the site is a way station en route to broader stardom. Oliver is working on a third Power Tools pack while also collaborating with Mayer Hawthorne, Chromeo and Yelle. Madden has decided not to make more vocal packs, although Splice gave her an imprint, KARRA Presents, to market other singers. With the untrammelled confidence of a millennial, she talks about building “my own little empire,” which includes an independent label and the website iamkarra.com, where she sells instructional videos about singing, music management and creating vocal sample packs.

“I never felt a pull to do things the old-fashioned way, like playing in bars. I’m an innovator,” she says. Ultimately, she wants to turn her Splice success into a major-label record deal, because “they are the ones who have the big money to push you to the masses. I want to be a top 40 artist. That has been my dream since I was a little girl, so it’s time to make that happen.” **B**

‘We’re The Thread, But Each Suit Is Custom-Tailored’

Over the 40 years that songwriter-producers **JIMMY JAM & TERRY LEWIS** have crafted hits for Janet Jackson, Mariah Carey and Boyz II Men, the duo has learned that tapping into an artist’s individuality — and powerful vocals — is key to making great records

BY GAIL MITCHELL

WHEN MARY J. BLIGE listened to her recording of “Spinnin” for Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis’ new album, *Jam & Lewis Volume One*, she asked Jam (birth name: James Harris) to convey a message to his partner: “You tell Terry that he killed me on that vocal, but it’s amazing,” he recalls her saying.

Blige was referring to the number of takes Lewis had her do for “Spinnin” to get a performance that packs a lasting emotional wallop. While some producers use Auto-Tune to tweak vocals, Lewis says, “Tuning instead of takes is blasphemy. I’ll do that with any artist because you’ve got to move me.” The version of “Spinnin” on *Volume One*, which BMG released July 9, does that. “Whenever I play Mary’s song now, I always run the bridge back two, three times because I can feel what she’s singing.”

As writers and producers, Jam & Lewis have built a 40-year career helping an enviable roster of acts find their best selves, including The S.O.S. Band, New Edition, Boyz II Men, Janet Jackson and Mariah Carey. In the process, they have scored 16 Billboard Hot 100 No. 1s and 41 top 10 hits, five Grammy Awards and induction into the Songwriters Hall of Fame. Their influence still resonates: H.E.R. sampled the 1987 Herb Alpert track “Making Love in the Rain,” which the duo wrote and produced, on her 2021 platinum single “Damage.”

Volume One is the first Jam & Lewis studio project in which their names appear in the album title instead of just the credits. A starry lineup of vocalists performs on the 10-track recording, which has already yielded singles by Babyface (“He Don’t Know Nothin’ Bout It”) and Carey (“Somewhat Loved [There You Go Breakin’ My Heart]”).

Instead of their trademark black suits, shades, fedoras and ties, Jam & Lewis wore casual all-black attire, including ball caps bearing their “JL” insignia in white, on a recent day at the Four Seasons Hotel in Beverly Hills, Calif. There, they discussed the lessons and creative insights gleaned from their 50-50 partnership, which began with a handshake in 1982.

▶ Tuning In

TERRY LEWIS True production comes when you relate to an artist’s individuality as you blend their performance and the

musicians’ performance into one piece of art. It’s like molding clay, although on a real level, it’s much more complex.

JIMMY JAM It’s communicating to figure out how they like to work. Day or night?

Do they like an entourage around them or to be by themselves? Do you bring the artist along slowly or jump in right away? Can they sing for long stretches or a short time? You need to recognize what makes them feel comfortable. The most intimate relationship you can have is with an artist. They’re telling you their secrets. They’re trusting you to help interpret their song.

LEWIS You’re the brain trust of the situation: therapist, problem-solver, mentor, parent, confidante, ego handler, friend. You must enable them to let go and show their strengths and weaknesses. That’s when you find out things about artists that you didn’t know. A little crack [in a vocal] can take you somewhere unexpected and good. That’s when you get your best take.

▶ Crafting A Signature Sound

JAM When we were coming up, we were sensitive to the frequent “You sound like Prince” comparisons. [Jam & Lewis were original members of The Time.] Of course we did, because Prince was us. He made those early Time records. The S.O.S. Band’s “Just Be Good to Me” was our first big hit. After that, people would come to us and say, “Give us something that sounds like The S.O.S. Band.” And we would be like, “That’s their sound. We’ll give you something different.” So we established Janet

[Jackson]’s sound, New Edition’s sound and so forth. It has never really been about a Jam & Lewis sound. We’re the thread, but each suit is custom-tailored.

LEWIS Cultivating a talent pool of different musicians is important. We’ve done R&B, gospel, pop, soft pop, rock, an Olympics theme, NBA broadcast music. Having people around that understand the different genres and different gears that you have to shift can add another color or flavor to what you’re working on.

▶ Lasting Lessons

JAM Under Prince, we learned spontaneity — getting it on the first take. Then we worked with Leon Sylvers III. On one record we did with him, we got only a rhythm arrangement credit, not producer. When Leon redid the vocals on the track, we said, “How did you get those amazing vocals out of those guys?” And he told us, “You’re not a producer until you can produce vocals.”

LEWIS Clarence Avant [former head of The S.O.S. Band’s label, Tabu Records, and behind-the-scenes mentor known as “The Black Godfather”] taught us about knowing our value. His whole thing was always, “You MFs need to learn how to count.” He would say, “So-and-so wants to sign you to this deal, but you’ve already made that [level of] money. Why would you sign with him for the [same pay]?” And by the way, we did learn how to count. *(Laughs.)*

JAM During our second meeting, Clarence was already asking what we were going to be doing seven years from then

— beyond trying to make hits. He was [asking], “Who’s going to be the next Berry Gordy? Who’s going to be on the boards of companies or become involved with charities?” He planted those seeds in us.

LEWIS When we first came to Los Angeles, Clarence told us not to look at the Hollywood sign when we drove around. He was saying we needed to pay attention to what we’re doing and not to what Hollywood is doing — or we would crash. Which is why we ended up moving back to Minneapolis [for 15 years. They returned to L.A. in 2003.] There were too many distractions for a young man — girls, cars, girls and the perception of having some money. Since then, we’ve stayed focused.

▶ Preparing For Success

JAM People frequently tell us they’re waiting for their break. And we always tell them to substitute the word “preparing” for “waiting.” If there’s an artist you want to record, you should know everything about that artist: the key he sings in, the engineers he likes, the studios where he prefers to record, producers, writers and A&Rs he has worked with. Then when you see that artist and he asks what songs you have, you’ll be ready to say, “I know you like to sing in the key of E, and I have a song in that key that reminds me of you.”

LEWIS Networking and relationships can come out of studio rattin’. We were hanging out like flies on the walls at every studio while trying to figure everything out. You also have to understand the business. It’s like playing chess: You need to know what the players do, why they do what they do and what you’re bringing to the table. The toughest part is understanding your value. I don’t know how many contracts I threw behind the bed because I wasn’t willing to sign to anybody.

JAM After [Jackson’s 1986 album] *Control* happened, we told the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* that we didn’t want to be the hottest producers. We want to be warm for a long time. The decisions we’ve made were never for the quick buck or hit. It was all about the big picture. **b**



Jam (left) and Lewis at their California studio in June.

MARSELLE WASHINGTON

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The Guitar Hero

With his punky riffs and amiable vibes, 21-year-old writer-producer-ax man **OMER FEDI** has become hitmakers' new best friend

BY ANDREW UNTERBERGER

EVEN AMONG THE TREES AND THICK shrubberies lining the pathways outside Conway Recording Studios in Hollywood, it's easy to find Omer Fedi. His hair, dyed a siren red last year, makes for a blinding follicular flash that, combined with his rainbow manicure and heavy chain necklace that jangles loudly when he gets animated — which is often — immediately announces his presence.

Ensnared behind the sound board at Conway's Studio C, Fedi gives a one-word explanation for his hair inspiration: "Kurt" — as in grunge icon Kurt Cobain, who went rouge in 1992 and whose style Fedi is also invoking today, despite the 75-degree weather, in a brown and yellow cable-knit sweater. He elaborates: "I was looking around, like, 'Nope! No one else has red hair. *Might as well be me!*'"

It's becoming an increasingly unavoidable sight. You might have seen it in photos alongside Machine Gun

Kelly and Travis Barker. Or maybe on *Ellen* last November, when Fedi played the ubiquitous guitar riff to 24kGoldn and iann dior's "Mood," the Billboard Hot 100-topping smash he co-wrote and produced. Or on *Saturday Night Live* in May, when he strapped on an acoustic to back The Kid LAROI and Miley Cyrus on their collaborative version of the former's breakout ballad, "Without You." But Fedi isn't just the new sideman of choice for all of these artists; he has quite literally played an instrumental role in creating all of their most recent hits, writing, producing and/or performing on each.

Now that the world is reopening following the COVID-19 shutdown, Fedi is even getting recognized in public — like on a recent trip to Chipotle with Keegan "KBeaZy" Bach, his best friend, roommate and most frequent collaborator. "We were just sitting outside, talking probably about nothing," recalls Fedi. "And some kid came up to us and was like, 'Producers have to get

the recognition! KBeaZy and Omer!' " KBeaZy says it has happened multiple times: "I was telling him the other day, 'Yo, the red hair's like a crazy branding advantage.'"

More important than the hair, of course, is that the 21-year-old Israeli-American's sound — piercing, melodic, muscular-but-melancholy riffs laid over super-charged rock and/or trap beats — has become just as distinctive a presence in modern pop. As much as any artist whose name appears on his or her cover art, Fedi has been responsible for dragging the guitar back to the forefront of top 40, helping to revitalize alt-rock and pop-punk in the mainstream.

That sound is cultivated from a wide range of influences — including rock guitar heroes like Jimi Hendrix and John Frusciante of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, as well as hip-hop and jazz — much of which he absorbed from his father, Asher, a studio and session musician whom Fedi refers to as "the biggest drummer ever in Israel." Fedi also started on



Fedi photographed by Yuri Hasegawa on June 22 at Conway Recording Studios in Los Angeles.

the drums but switched to guitar after seeing an episode of Nickelodeon's *Drake & Josh* in which Drake slings a six-string. (Later, he gives a different explanation: "Guitar players get more girls than drummers.")

Fedi credits his father not only with expanding his musical universe, but instilling a freelancer's work ethic and competitive drive in him as well. "When we were jamming, he would always be like, 'Oh, you have to practice this, and you have to do this...' He would never be like, 'Nice,'" says Fedi. "Which I appreciated! Because then I would be like, 'Oh, have to practice, have to make sure I'm better than everybody.'"

Asher moved his family to Los Angeles when his son was 16 to give the apparent prodigy the greatest opportunities possible. It was an adjustment for Fedi, but he says he always trusted that "I'm going to meet a musician somehow, and we'll figure it out." (He turned 21 in March but still has a preteen's excess of energy — constantly

climbing up and spinning on his stool and later politely denying a photo shoot request for a "slower, quieter" pose with a matter-of-fact "I'm really a pretty intense guy.")

Fedi's innate ability to find his people has led to most of the important relationships in his career. He met Machine Gun Kelly when he went out to eat with MGK's alt-rock buddy Yungblud and tagged along when Machine Gun Kelly summoned the latter to come by the studio. He linked up with 24kGoldn at a University of Southern California party, and then with KBeaZy at a 24kGoldn record release gathering. Even manager Conor Ambrose, then working at Interscope, was first drawn to Fedi because he kept coming by the label offices to meet people and jam. "I think he's probably the best networker I've ever met," says Ambrose.

In just a short few years, Fedi has translated that ability into a string of friendships that then became close collaborations. When presented with opportunities to work

with the likes of Lil Nas X and Cyrus, he makes sure to hang out with them at length first. (Both social experiments were successes: He's executive-producing Nas' upcoming *Montero* alongside co-producer Take a Daytrip, and he's currently in the studio with Cyrus.)

"A lot of people who meet [Fedi] are kind of just like, 'I don't know what it is, but there's something about this kid,'" says Blake Slatkin, a frequent writer-producer collaborator. "You just want to be around him."

Over the course of the pandemic, so did seemingly every artist in Los Angeles. Today, Fedi is at his base in Studio C, but Studio B is reserved for Kid LAROI, while Charlie Puth, another recent newcomer into Fedi's fold, is occupying Studio A. "I was like, 'Wow, my whole friend group is here!'" he raves about the setup. (Just a few weeks after we meet, the Kid LAROI/Justin Bieber collaboration "Stay" is released — which Fedi and Puth co-wrote/produced.) It's almost like a college campus, with Fedi able to dorm-hop at his leisure.

It's hard to argue with Fedi's methods. He currently has credits on four songs that have spent nearly the entire past three months in the top 40 of the Hot 100 — "Mood," "Montero," "Without You," and MGK and blackbear's "My Ex's Best Friend" — and industry sources say he's commanding \$50,000 per track, not including points or royalties, as a fee on par with those commanded by music's top veteran producers. But Fedi himself defers on all business matters to Ambrose. "When Omer's like, 'I need to get these deals done for these songs,' Conor is just kind of the guy who comes in and makes sure that everything gets done," says Lillia Parsa, Fedi's publisher at Universal Music Publishing Group.

All that success has even impressed Fedi's toughest critic: his dad. "When 'Mood' hit No. 1, he was like, 'Proud of you,'" recalls Fedi. "And I was like, 'Whoa. That was hard.'" His own reaction to the No. 1, on the other hand: "I was like, 'Oh. That's cool,'" he recalls, a smile creeping across his face. "I have 40 more to go now." But while he hopes he inspires kids to pick up the guitar, he doesn't care if they know he's the ax man behind their favorite hits. "I'm not really thinking about the recognition thing," he says. "I like to be behind the scenes."

Still, he's competitive enough to look askance at his own hits that merely peak in the top 10. ("If it's not No. 1, I have nothing right now," he seethes through a grin.) It's conceivable that Fedi might approach the heights of the uber-producers he looks up to, like Max Martin — a previous Studio C inhabitant and oft-invoked spirit — and Benny Blanco. "Omer has the *thing*," says Blanco. "A way of making you feel comfortable, making you want to tell him your life story, making you want to do everything with him. If he has the keys to the car, you're getting in and you don't care where you're going."

Blanco also recently offered Fedi some grounding post-COVID-19 perspective. "He would go, 'You know, it's insane, because [while] you guys started popping, all the artists were in L.A. all the time,'" recalls Fedi. "Most of the time, the artists leave and go on tour, and it's way different." He acknowledges it's going to be a challenge adapting to a world in which his crew may no longer reside cozily in his orbit. "It's going to be interesting to see while my friends go on tour what's going to happen," he says, sounding hopeful but also a little sad, like a rising undergrad bummed that the school year's over and everyone is going home for the summer.

Then he reconsiders: "Maybe we're going to be lonely in L.A. — and me and KBeaZy will just go and eat Chipotle every day." His energy revs up again at the idea of going back to basics with his best friend. "We'll just be eating our tacos and burritos, and vibe and listen to music." **b**

These Women's Work

A growing group is making major strides with star artists — and pushing for equity in a field that can look like a boys club

BY LYNDSEY HAVENS

TRAKGIRL HAS PRODUCED and written for Vic Mensa, Jhené Aiko and Dawn Richard, among others, and her vision board has even higher goals — from having a Barbie made in her likeness to seeing a woman finally take home a Grammy Award for producer of the year. “We’re trying to do things that are ‘impossible’ because it’s all possible,” she says with a contagious sense of positivity.

Trakgirl is one of a handful of women — including Alex Kline, Suzy Shinn, Jenn Decilveo and mastering engineer Emily Lazar — who are not only more in-demand than ever but are also fighting for equality in the field.

Growing up in Virginia, Trakgirl (born Shakari Boles) was inspired by local heroes like Pharrell Williams, Missy Elliott and Timbaland, and studied footage of them at work in the studio. “There are no producers in my family, no music industry people,” she says, “so I wanted to build something for myself legacywise.”

She’s well on her way, and is building something for others, too. In 2018, she and her manager, Ashley Kershaw, co-founded The 7, an empowerment initiative named to represent the less than 7% of engineers and producers who are female, to encourage women to seek both creative and business roles in music.

An even bleaker stat arrived in March on International Women’s Day, when the fourth annual “Inclusion in the Recording Studio?” study, conducted by Stacy L. Smith and the University of Southern California’s Annenberg Inclusion Initiative with funding from Spotify, revealed that of the songs to chart on the Billboard Hot 100 in 2020, just 2% were produced by women.

“The numbers are definitely disheartening,” says Trakgirl. “I don’t try to think about the elephant in the room because once you start thinking about that, it distracts you from your purpose. Of course, when I first started getting into these rooms, it wasn’t like I always had that armor. It took some time for me to build that.”

On the same day the USC study arrived, Grammy-winning engineer Lazar, who

has worked in the industry for 25 years, launched the nonprofit We Are Moving the Needle to prioritize representation and inclusivity across all technical fields within the recording industry.

“I hit this place where it was like, ‘Enough is enough. Not enough is changing,’” she says. “No more benchwarming.”

Lazar — founder of New York mastering facility The Lodge, with credits on thousands of albums from Foo Fighters and Garbage to new immersive-audio reissues for The Beatles and The Rolling Stones — was shocked when John McBride, owner of Nashville’s Blackbird Studios and director of its Blackbird Academy, told her in January that he hadn’t had a female applicant in two years. “I just lost my mind,” she says. McBride suggested creating a scholarship for women to encourage more applications, but Lazar pushed for two scholarships a quarter. As she told McBride: “I’m not sending women down there by themselves to be the only woman in the room.”

Within days, hundreds of applications poured in. With We Are Moving the Needle, Lazar hopes to drive more applications with other scholarship opportunities — not only for women but also underrepresented people of any gender identity. (She cites the importance of male allies in the field, praising her co-mastering engineer of a decade, Chris Allgood.) The nonprofit is offering scholarships to the online program She Knows Tech; in under 30 hours, it had 75 applicants. Lazar says the response confirms “what I felt in my heart was actually true: that the numbers were going down, but that the people are out there with the desire to learn, and currently, for whatever reason, they’re simply not comfortable enough to engage.”

Shinn can understand why. She has carved out a niche in alternative rock, most recently producing Weezer’s *Van Weezer*, which debuted at No. 1 on *Billboard*’s Top Rock Albums chart in May. And yet, while studying music production and engineering at Berklee College of Music years ago, she was discouraged by her own professor — and the only one who was a



Clockwise from top: Lazar, Kline, Shinn, Trakgirl and Decilveo.

woman. “I was so excited to work and learn from her, and she pulled me out of class to be like, ‘Hey, it looks like you’re not getting it. Maybe you should drop out,’” recalls Shinn. “It really fueled the fucking flame of, like, ‘All right, you want to tell me to drop out?’ I know how I look. I know that at the time I was bleach blond wearing pink — I know how it was.”

She now says a goal of hers is to make producing “seem awesome for a girl. You don’t have to hide in a dark room and not wear makeup and your hair is never done — that’s not the life that I live, and that’s the life that I thought I *had* to live.”

Decilveo — who co-wrote and co-produced Andra Day’s 2015 smash, “Rise Up,” and co-produced Marina’s new album, *Ancient Dreams in a Modern Land* — says that she, too, has been “overlooked and discounted” as a woman. “It fucking sucks,” she says. “It makes me feel like I want to quit.” Three years ago, Decilveo started the boutique publisher Manzanita Lane in hopes of ensuring that other artists, songwriters and producers never feel that way.

Hit country songwriter-producer Kline says that being able to offer a woman’s perspective shouldn’t limit her to *only* working with other women. “Even though there are all of these barriers being broken, it’s still like, ‘I’ve got this girl, and the girls should get together.’ I’m happy there are tons of talented women in town, but I also want to be like, ‘Let’s just make sure that we’re not having the boys over here and the girls over here.’”

Kline — who recently scored her first major hit as a sole producer for Tenille Arts’ “Somebody Like That,” which peaked at No. 3 on the Country Airplay chart — is

part of a growing wave of producers making strides, and history. In June, WondaGurl — the Toronto native who has worked with Rihanna, Travis Scott, Drake and numerous others — became the first Black woman to win producer of the year in the 50-year history of Canada’s Juno Awards. She followed that up with a partnership deal with Red Bull Records for her label, Wonderchild. Lazar, for her part, says she has had “quite a few ceiling-breaking moments” — from becoming the first woman mastering engineer nominated for record of the year (Sia’s “Chandelier”) to the first woman to win best engineered album, non-classical (Beck’s *Colors*). But, she adds, whenever someone described those feats in terms of gender, “it ended up oddly discounting the achievement.” Which is why this year, when three projects that she worked on all scored nominations for the album of the year Grammy (Coldplay’s *Everyday Life*, Jacob Collier’s *Djesse Vol. 3* and HAIM’s *Women in Music Pt. III*) — a first for any mastering engineer — she could only describe the feeling as “boggling.” “It wasn’t about gender anymore; it wasn’t about male or female,” she says. “I was the first *person*.”

And ultimately, for these top producers, that is what it all comes down to: unbiased respect. “What we’re pursuing,” says Trakgirl, “is bigger than me and my career.” It’s a sentiment echoed by Lazar, who says, “We’ve been able to help create pathways and a support network and avenues for people to fight their way through this — and I couldn’t ask for more.”

Although, she adds, she actually could: “more money, more support, more employment opportunities. More and more and more. We need it.” **B**

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The Odd Couple

For his latest album, veteran singer-songwriter **TOMMY TORRES** brought in an unlikely co-producer to add “rock star attitude”: **BAD BUNNY**

BY GRISELDA FLORES

THE FIRST TIME BAD BUNNY MET TOMMY TORRES, it was backstage at the Coliseo de Puerto Rico. The inventive, prolific artist was on his 2019 *X 100PRE* tour, and Torres — a successful singer-songwriter in his own right and a go-to producer for the likes of Ricky Martin,

Ednita Nazario and Ricardo Arjona — was at the arena to play piano on the ballad “Amorfoda.” “It all happened so fast, we didn’t have time to talk,” recalls Bad Bunny. “And we didn’t see each other again or keep in touch.”

Since then, Bad Bunny, 27, has become a global superstar, scoring back-to-back No. 1s on *Billboard*’s Top Latin Albums chart last year with *YHLQMDLG*, *Las Que No Iban a Salir* and *El Último Tour del Mundo*, the first all-Spanish album to top the Billboard 200. And after 11 years with Warner Music Latina, Torres, 49, released a handful of singles under the independent Rimas Entertainment, where CEO Noah Assad — who also happens to be Bad Bunny’s manager — signed him earlier this year.

It wasn’t until mid-January that Bad Bunny (real name: Benito Martínez) and Torres would meet again — this time at an Airbnb in West Hollywood, where they spent two weeks writing and producing nine songs together for Torres’ forthcoming fifth studio album (and his first in nearly a decade), *El Playlist de Anoche*.

Though Bad Bunny executive-produced Jowell & Randy’s 2020 comeback, *Viva el Perreo* (which peaked at No. 5 on Top Latin Albums), it’s his first run at producing outside the *urbano* realm. But the artist known for seamlessly veering among trap, pop-punk and alternative isn’t exactly known for staying in a lane. *El Playlist de Anoche* has Torres’ signature alt rock-tinged, sentimental pop but integrates an approach to phrasing best described as, “How would Bad Bunny say this?”

“Benito is a new influence, and he has no limits when it comes to creativity,” says Torres. “And that’s how it has to be. If not, we’d be doing mathematics, not art.”

How did this partnership kick off?

BAD BUNNY One day last year, I was at the Rimas office, and I said that I had written a song that I thought would be perfect for Tommy to sing. I had never told anyone or made an approach until that moment because I thought, “Why would Tommy, who writes *canciones cabronas* [badass songs], want me to write a song for him?” But one of his team members was there and said, “I think Tommy would really like that idea.” So they called him right then and there, and he said yes.

TOMMY TORRES I’ve been producing for other artists many years now, but this is the first time that an artist-producer tells me, “I want to do something for you.” To have someone like Benito, who has been surfing across a wave of creativity and really gets this generation — well, it doesn’t get any better than that. But I thought, “What are we going to do? Reggaetón? A ballad version of ‘Safaera?’ ” I had no idea. At the same time, that feeling of nervousness made me realize why this is going to be amazing.

What were the conversations like leading up to your meeting in Los Angeles?

BAD BUNNY We didn’t talk about a strategy, what we wanted it to sound like, nothing. We just showed up and started making music.

TORRES Not having any expectations was liberating. We didn’t have to stick to one musical style. We didn’t have a label dictating anything to us. We didn’t even know if we were going to write just a few songs or an entire album.

BAD BUNNY The behind-the-scenes photos seem like it was a session between a psychologist and a patient. I was the patient

lying down on the couch, and Tommy was the psychologist taking notes with a guitar and a computer. Going in, I had two songs written, and since we didn’t have a definitive style, Tommy would just pick up the guitar and play the sound I was making with my mouth. Communication wasn’t an issue, even though he’s a [trained] musician and I’m not.

TORRES I would ask Benito to sing the references because the way he phrases parts of the song is completely different to how I phrase things. The way he would sing it made the song sound so much cooler. I had to learn that language; it was like learning a new instrument. Benito sings with a rock star attitude, and I thought, “That’s the attitude I must have, too.”

How honest could you be with each other in the studio?

BAD BUNNY That was key, and we built that trust quickly. It’s as if we had already made seven albums together and we had known each other for years. We just clicked.

TORRES Benito would sometimes stop me from adding more to a song that was ready to go. He would say, “We’re losing the magic that the original song had. Take this part and that part out.” For example, in “Demasiado Amor,” we end with a piano solo that’s a minute and a half long. I would never dare to put in a piano solo that long because I would question whether radio stations would play it or if we would lose people toward the end, but he would tell me, “Just keep playing. Trust me.” When you have someone like Benito giving you that confidence, that side of the brain that questions things doesn’t kick in. That’s the role of a real producer: He’s objective and doesn’t care about anything but the result.

What does it mean to be a producer today?

TORRES Nowadays, producers have a leading role. It wasn’t like that before. I’ve produced so many albums, but a lot of people don’t even know which ones I produced. Now fans are interested in knowing who the person behind these hits is. Ten years ago, producing meant you would bring me a song and I would produce it in whatever style the singer would want. But now the producer will be part of the songwriting process, bring their own idea and vibe, which makes it “fairer” when it comes to figuring out how you split producing/songwriting credits.

How do you approach splits?

BAD BUNNY Well, I made this album and haven’t even asked how much I’m getting. That’s how I work. I’m not on top of numbers or how much money I’m getting. I made this album because I wanted to do it and because it fulfilled me.

TORRES It’s good to have those conversations, but it depends on whom you’re working with, and sometimes it’s best to just not talk about it. You [end up] just thinking about numbers and percentages. Instead of doing art, you’re negotiating.

Did this collaboration feel like a risk?

BAD BUNNY Everything in life is a risk. I’m feeling very confident about this album. Maybe there will be some fans of Tommy who won’t like the idea of him collaborating with me, but at the end of the day, it still has Tommy’s essence. If we wouldn’t have announced that I’m part of this album, no one would have noticed it.

TORRES It’s a win-win situation for everyone in the industry. Many people who didn’t believe collaborations like this could happen will see it’s possible.

BAD BUNNY We didn’t do this because one of us needed to. And no one is doing a favor for anyone. It just happened. We wanted this, and it felt right. **B**

Torres (left) and Bad Bunny photographed by Erika P. Rodríguez on June 17 at Cannon Club in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Chartbreaker

Vaughn (left) and Mooski photographed by Raen Badua on June 22 at Capitol Records in Los Angeles.

No. 3

PEAK ON *BILLBOARD'S*
R&B/HIP-HOP AIRPLAY CHART

Mooski

Thanks to “Track Star” — and an abundance of confidence — the rising singer is at the start of what he hopes will be a “legendary” career

One night in February 2020, following a high-level security shift as an officer in the Marines, Mooski went home and wrote a would-be hit in under three hours. He posted the result, titled “Track Star,” on YouTube and soon after noticed celebrities such as La La Anthony and Halle Berry playing and promoting the song on social media. By the end of the year, he started to receive calls from nearly every major label, but a six-month-long courtship by Capitol Records helped make his decision an easy one. “I’ve been counted out my whole life, and I’ve always been successful because I work hard,” he says. “I didn’t need anybody in my corner — I wanted them in my corner.” Capitol Records CEO Jeff Vaughn adds: “It was a long pursuit that got incredibly competitive,” noting that the first time A&R manager Elizabeth Jones played “Track Star” for him, he knew the song would have a long life span.

After signing Mooski in February, the team at Capitol — which includes Capitol Music Group executive vp/president of promotion Greg Marella and Capitol

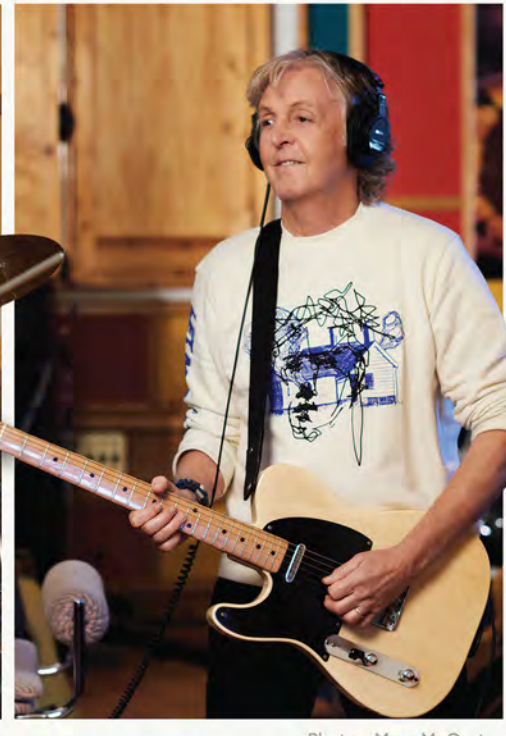
Records executive vp urban promotion Bill Evans — immediately got to work on maintaining the song’s momentum one year after its initial independent release. Senior director of digital marketing Dante Smith headed the TikTok strategy, in which fans were encouraged to show off their speed to the song’s chorus, which starts with the line, “She’s a runner, she’s a track star.” Capitol also heavily promoted Mooski in Atlanta during NBA All-Star weekend in March, with him giving multiple performances in one day.

That same month, “Track Star” debuted at No. 99 on the Billboard Hot 100, and by May, it entered the chart’s top 40, peaking at No. 31. Already in July, following his performance of the hit to open the BET Awards preshow, the singer scored the top spot on *Billboard’s* Emerging Artists chart. Describing himself as “a singer that sings at a rapper’s pace,” Mooski, 24, was confident the vulnerability of the woozy hip-hop song would connect, calling it “melodic therapy.” And now, he’s well aware of the weight of his success. “Where I come from,” he says, “it’s unheard of.” —DARLENE ADEROJU

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Photos: Mary McCartney

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I

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