

# billboard

AUGUST 28, 2021 • BILLBOARD.COM

FALL  
MUSIC  
PREVIEW



40 UNDER 40

MEET THE EXECS  
REWRITING THE RULES

CONCERT CRISIS 2.0

A REBOUND ON  
THE ROCKS



# BTS INC.

THE BUSINESS  
BEHIND THE WORLD'S  
HOTTEST GROUP

Clockwise from top left: RM, Jin, J-Hope, Suga, Jungkook, V and Jimin of BTS.

# BILLY JOEL

IN CONCERT

**SOLD OUT**  
AUGUST 4, 2021

ANOTHER HOME RUN AT FENWAY PARK

35,346 SOLD • \$4,798,694.00 GROSS

FENWAY'S FIRST EVER STADIUM RESIDENCY CONTINUES  
WITH 7 CONSECUTIVE SELLOUTS

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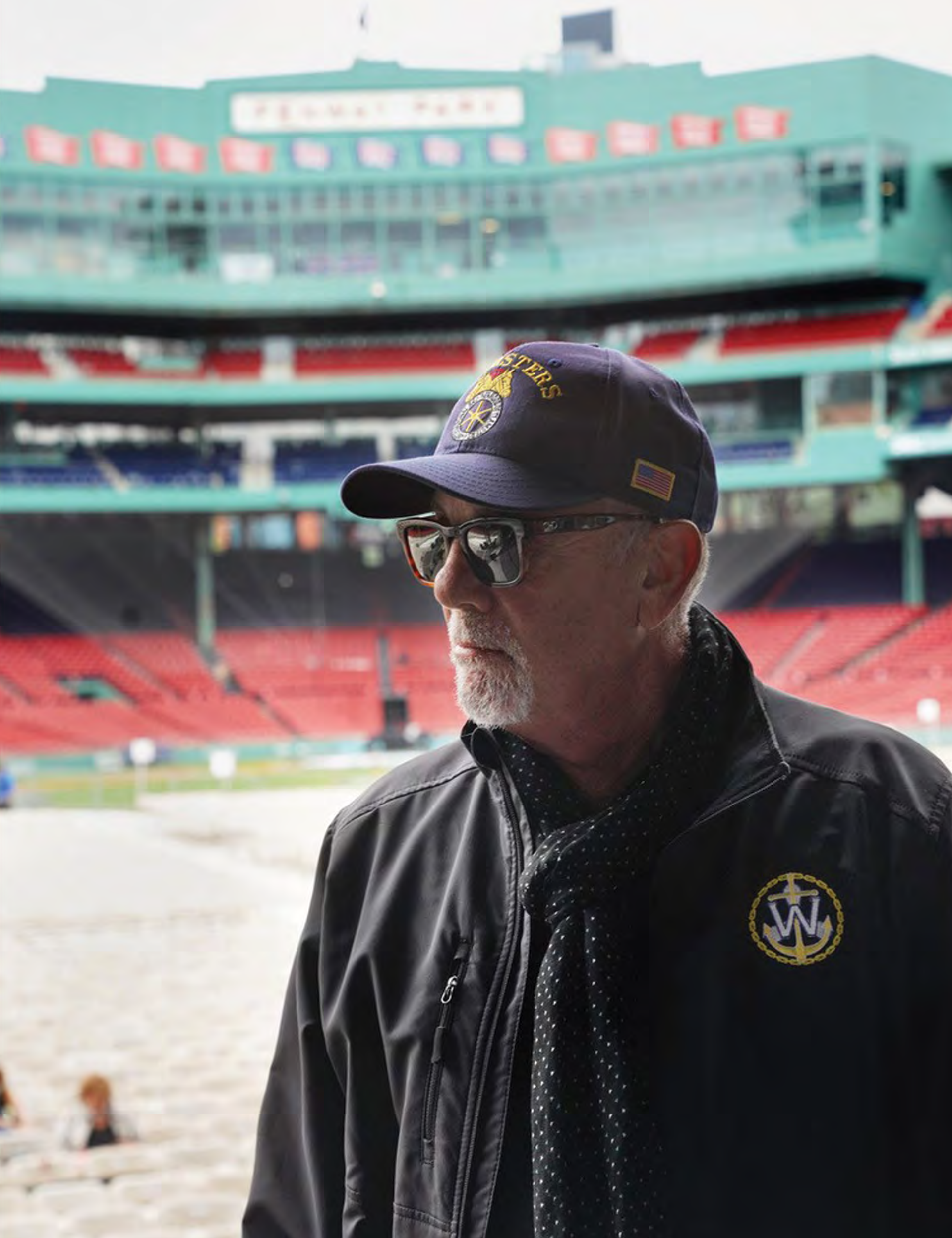
THANK YOU

BILLY JOEL

THE BILLY JOEL STAFF AND CREW

DENNIS ARFA

FROM ALL OF US AT **BOSTON  
RED SOX**



UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP  
**CONGRATULATES**  
**ROCK & ROLL**  
**HALL OF FAME**  
INDUCTEES

**JAY-Z**

**LL COOL J**

**BILLY  
PRESTON**

**THE GO-GO'S**

**TINA  
TURNER**

AHMET ERTEGUN AWARD RECIPIENT:  
**CLARENCE AVANT**

AND THE ENTIRE CLASS OF 2021



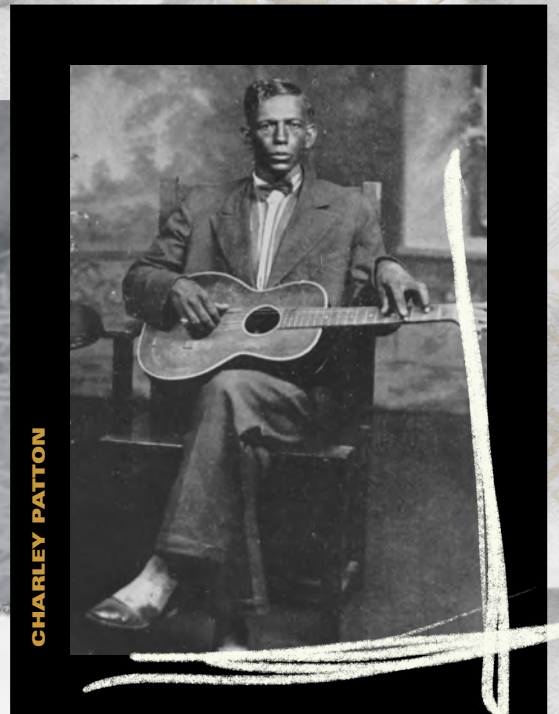
UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP







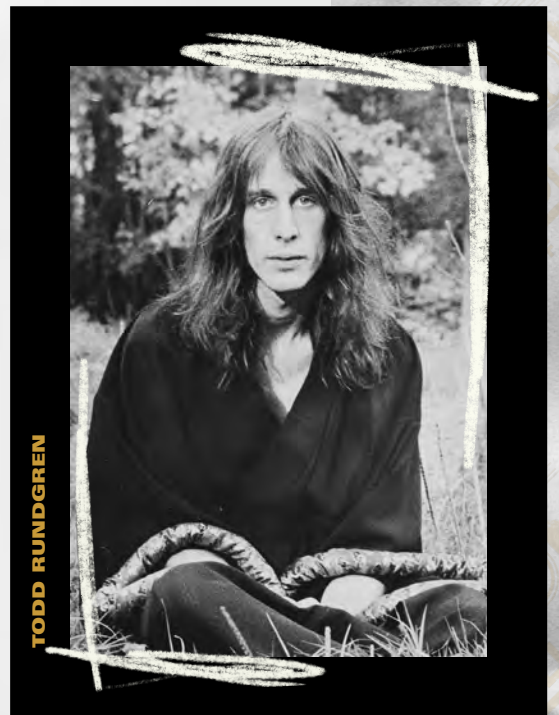
CAROLE KING



CHARLEY PATTON



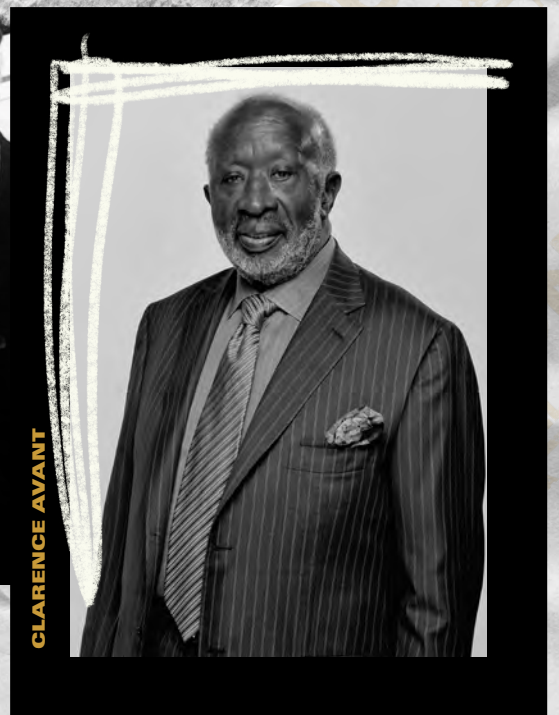
JAY-Z



TODD RUNDGREN



KRAFTWERK (RALF HÜTTER / FLORIAN SCHNEIDER)



CLARENCE AVANT

**CONGRATULATIONS CAROLE KING, JAY-Z, TODD RUNDGREN, CHARLEY PATTON, KRAFTWERK (RALF HÜTTER/ FLORIAN SCHNEIDER), CLARENCE AVANT, AND ALL THE 2021 ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES**



**SONY MUSIC PUBLISHING**

Table with 10 columns: 7 WKS. AGO, LAST WEEK, THIS WEEK, TITLE, CERTIFICATION, PRODUCER (SONGWRITER), Artist, IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL, PEAK POS., WKS. ON CHART. Includes songs like '2055', 'SINGLE SATURDAY NIGHT', 'MOTLEY CREW', etc.



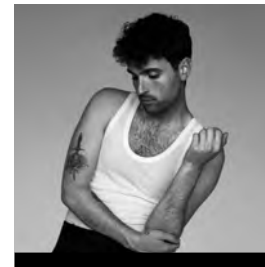
81

ELTON JOHN & DUA LIPA

“Cold Heart (PNAU Remix)”

John appears on the Hot 100 for the first time since 2000 with the song's No. 81 debut. The collaboration — John's 68th entry, dating to his first, "Border Song," in 1970 — opens with 3.8 million in airplay audience, 3.5 million streams and 8,600 sold, according to MRC Data.

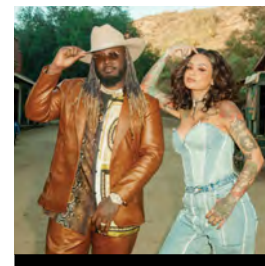
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38 DUNCAN LAURENCE

“Arcade”

The 2019 Eurovision Song Contest champion reaches the Hot 100's top 40, the Radio Songs chart's top 10 (12-10; 40.6 million, up 13%) and the Adult Top 40 chart's top five (8-5).



97

T-PAIN & KEHLANI

“I Like Dat”

Following 31 Hot 100 entries in the 2000s and 16 in the 2010s, T-Pain adds his first of the 2020s, as this duet with Kehlani enters with 14.5 million in radio reach and 2.4 million streams.



# WE ALL MADE IT!

WHEN ONE WINS, WE ALL WIN

We at **MBK ENTERTAINMENT/RCA Records** want to give a very special public appreciation for H.E.R., Tiara Thomas, & our entire team for **creating history** with

*“I Can’t Breathe”*

**GRAMMY® WINNER:**

**Song of The Year**

*Produced by D’mile*



*“Fight For Us”*

**OSCAR® WINNER:**

**Best Song**

*Produced by D’mile*

**Thank you to the great team that helped make this all happen:**

**MBK Entertainment:** Jeff Robinson, Jeanine McLean, Misha Hedman Mayes, Walter Jones, Shanese Nixon

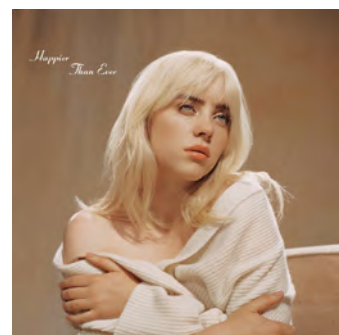
**RCA Records:** Peter Edge, Archie Davis, Carolyn Williams, Theola Borden, John Fleckenstein

**Warner Brothers Pictures:** Niija Kuykendall, Stephanie Phillips, Brian Lambert,  
Joe Dickey, Niki Sherrod Terra Potts, John Stanford, Carson Horvath, Paul Broucek, Shaka King,  
Ryan Coogler, Charles King and Macro, Child the Director



LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
	1	#1 3 WKS <b>BILLIE EILISH</b> DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/IGA		Happier Than Ever	1	3
5	2	<b>DOJA CAT</b> KEMOSABE/RCA		Planet Her	2	8
2	3	<b>OLIVIA RODRIGO</b> Geffen/IGA		Sour	1	13
4	4	<b>THE KID LAROI</b> Columbia		F*ck Love	1	56
6	5	<b>MORGAN WALLLEN</b> Big Loud/Republic		Dangerous: The Double Album	1	32
HOT SHOT DEBUT	6	<b>DAN + SHAY</b> Warner Music Nashville/WMN		Good Things	6	1
NEW	7	<b>§UICIDEBOYS</b> G*59		Long Term Effects Of Suffering	7	1
8	8	<b>LIL BABY &amp; LIL DURK</b> Alamo/Quality Control/Motown/IGA/Capitol		The Voice Of The Heroes	1	11
NEW	9	<b>THE KILLERS</b> Island/Republic		Pressure Machine	9	1
9	10	<b>DUA LIPA</b> Warner		Future Nostalgia	3	72
NEW	11	<b>YNW MELLY</b> YNW Melly/300/AG		Just A Matter Of Slime	11	1
11	12	<b>POP SMOKE</b> Victor Victor Worldwide/Republic		Shoot For The Stars Aim For The Moon	1	59
10	13	<b>POLO G</b> Columbia		Hall Of Fame	1	10
12	14	<b>LUKE COMBS</b> River House/Columbia Nashville/SMN		What You See Is What You Get	1	93
14	15	<b>THE WEEKND</b> XO/Republic		After Hours	1	70
17	16	<b>LIL BABY</b> Quality Control/Motown/Capitol		My Turn	1	77
16	17	<b>MONEYBAGG YO</b> CMG/N-Less/Interscope/IGA		A Gangsta's Pain	1	17
20	18	<b>POST MALONE</b> Republic		Hollywood's Bleeding	1	102
22	19	<b>JUICE WRLD</b> Grade A/Interscope/IGA		Legends Never Die	1	58
23	20	<b>JUSTIN BIEBER</b> Raymond Braun/Def Jam		Justice	1	22
25	21	<b>QUEEN</b> Hollywood		Greatest Hits	8	452
28	22	<b>JUICE WRLD</b> Grade A/Interscope/IGA		Goodbye & Good Riddance	4	170
24	23	<b>FLEETWOOD MAC</b> Warner/Rhino		Rumours	1	438
27	24	<b>J. COLE</b> Dreamville/Roc-A-Fella/Interscope/IGA		The Off-Season	1	14
21	25	<b>POP SMOKE</b> Victor Victor Worldwide/Republic		Faith	1	5
3	26	<b>NAS</b> Mass Appeal		King's Disease II	3	2
26	27	<b>TAYLOR SWIFT</b> Republic		Folklore	1	56
30	28	<b>LUKE COMBS</b> River House/Columbia Nashville/SMN		This One's For You	4	220
36	29	<b>MACHINE GUN KELLY</b> EST19XX/BAD BOY/Interscope/IGA		Tickets To My Downfall	1	47
29	30	<b>BO BURNHAM</b> Bo Burnham/Imperial/Republic		Inside (The Songs)	7	11
32	31	<b>ARIANA GRANDE</b> Republic		Positions	1	42
33	32	<b>MIGOS</b> Quality Control/Motown/Capitol		Culture III	2	10
34	33	<b>HARRY STYLES</b> Erskine/Columbia		Fine Line	1	88
37	34	<b>MORGAN WALLLEN</b> Big Loud		If I Know Me	10	151
40	35	<b>TRAVIS SCOTT</b> Cactus Jack/Grand Hustle/Epic		ASTROWORLD	1	159
41	36	<b>CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL</b> Fantasy/Concord		Chronicle The 20 Greatest Hits	18	537
38	37	<b>EST GEE</b> Warlike/CMG/Interscope/IGA		Bigger Than Life Or Death	7	5
35	38	<b>ROD WAVE</b> Alamo/Geffen/IGA		SoulFly	1	21
31	39	<b>TYLER, THE CREATOR</b> Columbia		Call Me If You Get Lost	1	8
43	40	<b>ELTON JOHN</b> Rocket/Island/UMe		Diamonds	7	197
42	41	<b>ORIGINAL BROADWAY CAST</b> Hamilton Uptown/Atlantic/AG		Hamilton: An American Musical	2	308
39	42	<b>BILLIE EILISH</b> Darkroom/Interscope/IGA		When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?	1	125
46	43	<b>EMINEM</b> Shady/Af Termath/Interscope/IGA		Curtain Call: The Hits	1	542
45	44	<b>POLO G</b> Columbia		The GOAT	2	66
49	45	<b>BAD BUNNY</b> Rimas		YHLQMDLG	2	77
44	46	<b>DJ KHALED</b> We The Best/Epic		Khaled Khaled	1	16
51	47	<b>SLEEPY HALLOW</b> Winners Circle/RCA		Still Sleep?	38	12
48	48	<b>GIVEON</b> Not So Fast/Epic		When It's All Said And Done... Take Time	5	23
50	49	<b>POOH SHIESTY</b> 1017 Global/Atlantic/AG		Shiesty Season	3	28
53	50	<b>CHRIS STAPLETON</b> Mercury Nashville/UMGN		Traveller	1	310

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
57	51	<b>J. COLE</b> Dreamville/Roc Nation/Columbia/Legacy		2014 Forest Hills Drive	1	350
56	52	<b>DRAKE</b> Young Money/Cash Money/Republic		Scorpion	1	164
58	53	<b>CHRIS STAPLETON</b> Mercury Nashville/UMGN		Starting Over	3	40
52	54	<b>POST MALONE</b> Republic		beerbongs & bentleys	1	173
61	55	<b>JUICE WRLD</b> Grade A/Interscope/IGA		Death Race For Love	1	128
54	56	<b>THE WEEKND</b> XO/Republic		The Highlights	2	28
64	57	<b>RAUW ALEJANDRO</b> Duars/Sony Music Latin		Vice Versa	17	8
145	58	<b>GREATEST GAINER</b> <b>WIZKID</b> Starboy/RCA		Made In Lagos	58	8
47	59	<b>TAYLOR SWIFT</b> Republic		Evermore	1	36
60	60	<b>WALKER HAYES</b> Monument		Country Stuff (EP)	60	9
65	61	<b>KENDRICK LAMAR</b> Top Dawg/Af Termath/Interscope/IGA		good kid, m.A.A.d city	2	460
62	62	<b>BAD BUNNY</b> Rimas		El Ultimo Tour del Mundo	1	38
63	63	<b>JOURNEY</b> Columbia/Legacy		Journey's Greatest Hits	10	682
59	64	<b>TAYLOR SWIFT</b> Republic		Lover	1	104
67	65	<b>AC/DC</b> Columbia/Legacy		Back In Black	4	477
73	66	<b>H.E.R.</b> MBK/RCA		Back Of My Mind	6	9
66	67	<b>MEGAN THEE STALLION</b> 1501 Certified/300/AG		Good News	2	39
69	68	<b>DOJA CAT</b> Kemosabe/RCA		Hot Pink	9	94
18	69	<b>ISAIAH RASHAD</b> Top Dawg/Warner		The House Is Burning	7	3
74	70	<b>BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS</b> Tuff Gong/Island/UMe		Legend: The Best Of...	5	692
80	71	<b>SUMMER WALKER</b> LVRN/Interscope/IGA		Over It	2	98
82	72	<b>2PAC</b> Amaru/Death Row/Interscope/UMe		Greatest Hits	3	384
72	73	<b>MAROON 5</b> 222/Interscope/IGA		Jordi	8	10
55	74	<b>SZA</b> Top Dawg/RCA		Ctrl	3	219
91	75	<b>YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN</b> Never Broke Again/Artist Partner Group/Atlantic/AG		Top	1	49
RE	76	<b>GUNS N' ROSES</b> Geffen/UMe		Greatest Hits	3	540
70	77	<b>GLASS ANIMALS</b> Wolf Tone/Polydor/Republic		Dreamland	7	41
78	78	<b>LUKE BRYAN</b> Capitol Nashville/UMGN		Born Here Live Here Die Here	5	43
76	79	<b>JACK HARLOW</b> Generation Now/Atlantic/AG		That's What They All Say	5	36
77	80	<b>POST MALONE</b> Republic		Stoney	4	245
85	81	<b>LIL UZI VERT</b> Generation Now/Atlantic/AG		Eternal Atake	1	76
84	82	<b>LIL DURK</b> Alamo/Geffen/IGA		The Voice	2	35
81	83	<b>ED SHEERAN</b> Atlantic/AG		+ (Divide)	1	233
NEW	84	<b>BEN PLATT</b> Atlantic/AG		Reverie	84	1
7	85	<b>GEORGE HARRISON</b> Gnome/Claderstone/Capitol/UMe		All Things Must Pass	1	40
93	86	<b>DRAKE</b> Young Money/Cash Money/Republic		Take Care	1	442
71	87	<b>YUNG BLEU</b> Vandross/Empire		Moon Boy	12	4
86	88	<b>THE WEEKND</b> XO/Republic		Starboy	1	231
88	89	<b>LIL TJAY</b> Columbia		Destined 2 Win	5	20
87	90	<b>TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS</b> MCA/Geffen/UMe		Greatest Hits	2	423
79	91	<b>KANYE WEST</b> Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam		Graduation	1	185
75	92	<b>FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE</b> BMLG		Life Rolls On	21	27
94	93	<b>42 DUGG</b> 4PF/CMG		Free Dem Boyz	8	13
96	94	<b>LIL UZI VERT</b> Generation Now/Atlantic/AG		Luv Is Rage 2	1	208
19	95	<b>BTS</b> Virgin		BTS, The Best	19	2
90	96	<b>YOUNG THUG &amp; VARIOUS ARTISTS</b> Young Stoner Life/300/AG		Young Stoner Life: Slime Language 2	1	18
83	97	<b>KANYE WEST</b> Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam		My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy	1	147
92	98	<b>ROD WAVE</b> Alamo/IGA		Pray 4 Love	2	72
95	99	<b>BRUNO MARS</b> Elektra/EMG		Doo-Wops & Hooligans	3	533
99	100	<b>LEWIS CAPALDI</b> Vertigo/Capitol		Divinely Uninspired To A Hellish Extent	20	118



## Women Rule The Top 3

For the first time in over 10 years, the top three albums on the weekly Billboard 200 are all by solo women.

Billie Eilish's *Happier Than Ever* is steady at No. 1 for a third straight week (60,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States during the week ending Aug. 19, down 29%, according to MRC Data), while Doja Cat's *Planet Her* rises 5-2 (matching its debut and peak) and Olivia Rodrigo's former No. 1 *Sour* falls 2-3.

The last time that the top three were albums credited to solo women was on the Dec. 18, 2010-dated chart, when Susan Boyle's *The Gift* was tops, followed by Taylor Swift's *Speak Now* and Jackie Evancho's *O Holy Night*.

Honorable mention goes to the July 23, 2011, chart, when Beyoncé's 4, Adele's *21* and Selena Gomez & The Scene's *When the Sun Goes Down* were Nos. 1-3. (The Scene was Gomez's all-male backing band. Her first solo-billed album was *Stars Dance* in 2013.)

—KEITH CAULFIELD

FOR YOUR GRAMMY® CONSIDERATION BEST CHILDREN'S ALBUM

# Sunshine In My Pocket



LISTEN

[ZoomyTunes.com](http://ZoomyTunes.com)

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
13	101	<b>CHRIS YOUNG</b> RCA NASHVILLE/SMN		Famous Friends	13	2
NEW	102	<b>BLACKBEAR</b> BEAR TRAP/ALAMO/COLUMBIA		Misery Lake (EP)	102	1
98	103	<b>MICHAEL JACKSON</b> 33 EPIC/LEGACY		Thriller	1	484
104	104	<b>DRAKE</b> 6 YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC		Views	1	275
109	105	<b>MICHAEL JACKSON</b> 4 EPIC/LEGACY		The Essential Michael Jackson	31	362
106	106	<b>THE BEATLES</b> 11 APPLE/CAPITOL/UME		1	1	486
105	107	<b>EMINEM</b> 9 SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Music To Be Murdered By	1	82
112	108	<b>TAYLOR SWIFT</b> 6 BIG MACHINE/BMLG		1989	1	349
101	109	<b>MAC MILLER</b> 3 WARNER		Swimming	3	154
111	110	<b>XXXTENTACION</b> 3 BAD VIBES FOREVER		?	1	179
108	111	<b>THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G.</b> 3 BAD BOY/RHINO		Greatest Hits	1	288
102	112	<b>ZAC BROWN BAND</b> HOME GROWN/BMG		Greatest Hits So Far...	20	318
114	113	<b>NICKELBACK</b> ROADRUNNER/EMG		The Best Of Nickelback: Volume 1	21	55
110	114	<b>RODDY RICCH</b> 2 BIRD VISION/ATLANTIC/AG		Please Excuse Me For Being Antisocial	1	89
116	115	<b>SOUNDTRACK</b> 2 WALT DISNEY		Moana	2	245
119	116	<b>KENDRICK LAMAR</b> 3 TOP DAWG/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/JGA		DAMN.	1	227
166	117	<b>PACE SETTER</b> 1 <b>LIZZO</b> 1 NICE LIFE/ATLANTIC/AG		Cuz I Love You	4	122
100	118	<b>G HERBO</b> MACHINE ENTERTAINMENT/IMPERIAL/REPUBLIC		?	5	7
RE	119	<b>NIRVANA</b> 10 SUB POP/DGC/GEFFEN/UME		Nevermind	1	537
125	120	<b>THE BEATLES</b> 12 APPLE/CAPITOL/UME		Abbey Road	1	424
124	121	<b>BTS</b> 1 BIGHIT MUSIC		MAP OF THE SOUL : 7	1	78
NEW	122	<b>K CAMP</b> RARE SOUND/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Float	122	1
122	123	<b>KANYE WEST</b> 4 ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM		The College Dropout	2	83
NEW	124	<b>LUKE HEMMINGS</b> ARISTA		When Facing The Things We Turn Away From	124	1
115	125	<b>BOB SEGER &amp; THE SILVER BULLET BAND</b> 10 HIDEOUT/CAPITOL/UME		Greatest Hits	8	389
126	126	<b>KHALID</b> 3 RIGHT HAND/RCA		American Teen	4	233
120	127	<b>DABABY</b> 1 SOUTHCOST/INTERSCOPE/JGA		BLAME IT ON BABY	1	70
121	128	<b>LYNYRD SKYNYRD</b> 1 MCA/GEFFEN/UME		All Time Greatest Hits	56	140
117	129	<b>KID CUDI</b> 1 DREAM/GOOD/REPUBLIC		Man On The Moon: The End Of Day	4	188
118	130	<b>BILLIE EILISH</b> 1 DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Dont Smile At Me	14	191
138	131	<b>NICKI MINAJ</b> 1 YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC		Beam Me Up Scotty	2	12
68	132	<b>KANYE WEST</b> 2 G.O.O.D./DEF JAM		The Life Of Pablo	1	162
127	133	<b>THE BEACH BOYS</b> 3 CAPITOL/UME		Sounds Of Summer: The Very Best Of The Beach Boys	16	266
128	134	<b>ABBA</b> 6 POLAR/POLYDOR/UME		Gold: Greatest Hits	25	183
144	135	<b>IMAGINE DRAGONS</b> 2 KID INAKORNER/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Evolve	2	217
RE	136	<b>KID ROCK</b> 1 TOP DOG/WARNER		Greatest Hits: You Never Saw Coming	51	10
133	137	<b>AEROSMITH</b> 1 DEVIL'S GOT A NEW DISGUISE: THE VERY BEST OF AEROSMITH GEFFEN/COLUMBIA/LEGACY		?	33	13
130	138	<b>PITBULL</b> 1 MR. 305/POLO GROUNDS/RCA		Greatest Hits	120	29
131	139	<b>KHALID</b> 2 RIGHT HAND/RCA		Free Spirit	1	124
139	140	<b>LIL DURK</b> 1 ALAMO/GEFFEN/JGA		Just Cause Y'all Waited 2	2	67
152	141	<b>TRAVIS SCOTT</b> 1 GRAND HUSTLE/EPIC		Birds In The Trap Sing McKnight	1	255
141	142	<b>DRAKE</b> 1 YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC		More Life	1	223
135	143	<b>EAGLES</b> 26 ASYLUM/ELEKTRA/RHINO		Hotel California	1	142
143	144	<b>JHENE AIKO</b> 1 2 FISH/ART CLUB/ARTIUM/DEF JAM		Chilombo	2	76
129	145	<b>TYLER, THE CREATOR</b> 1 COLUMBIA		IGOR	1	100
142	146	<b>GABBY BARRETT</b> 1 WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN		Goldmine	27	61
148	147	<b>BON JOVI</b> 1 ISLAND/UME		Greatest Hits: The Ultimate Collection	5	221
151	148	<b>BILLY JOEL</b> 3 COLUMBIA/LEGACY		The Essential Billy Joel	15	250
107	149	<b>JOHN MAYER</b> 1 COLUMBIA		Sob Rock	2	5
NEW	150	<b>STILL WOODY</b> 1 IF THIS ISN'T NICE, I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS STILL WOODY/INTERSCOPE/JGA		?	150	1



7

**SUICIDEBOYS**

*Long Term Effects of Suffering*

The rap duo scores its highest-charting album yet, and second top 10, entering with 32,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States during the week ending Aug. 19, according to MRC Data. It also bows at No. 1 on Independent Albums — the pair's third straight leader.



9

**THE KILLERS**

*Pressure Machine*

All seven of their studio albums have now reached the top 10 as *Pressure Machine* starts at No. 9. It also debuts at No. 1 on Top Rock Albums and Americana/Folk Albums. The set comes just under a year after the band's last studio release, *Imploding the Mirage*, debuted and peaked at No. 8 (Sept. 5, 2020).



151

**JENNIFER HUDSON**

*Respect (Soundtrack)*

Hudson's companion album to the film of the same name in which she portrays Aretha Franklin debuts with 8,000 units and also launches at No. 2 on Soundtracks. The set contains mostly covers of Franklin favorites but includes one new song, "Here I Am (Singing My Way Home)."

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
NEW	151	<b>JENNIFER HUDSON</b> MGM/EPIC		Respect (Soundtrack)	151	1
RE	152	<b>THE ROLLING STONES</b> 12 LONDON/ABKCO		Hot Rocks 1964-1971	4	360
160	153	<b>POP SMOKE</b> 1 VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/REPUBLIC		Meet The Woo, V.2	7	80
150	154	<b>CARDI B</b> 3 THE KSR GROUP/ATLANTIC/AG		Invasion Of Privacy	1	176
137	155	<b>METALLICA</b> 16 BLACKENED		Metallica	1	621
136	156	<b>ARIANA GRANDE</b> 2 REPUBLIC		Thank U, Next	1	132
134	157	<b>TAYLOR SWIFT</b> REPUBLIC		Fearless (Taylor's Version)	1	19
146	158	<b>RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS</b> 2 WARNER		Greatest Hits	18	288
NEW	159	<b>JUNGLE</b> CAIOLA/AWAL-KOBALT		Loving In Stereo	159	1
170	160	<b>YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN</b> 1 NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ATLANTIC/AG		AI YoungBoy 2	1	94
163	161	<b>RIHANNA</b> 3 WESTBURY ROAD/ROC NATION		ANTI	1	282
165	162	<b>MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE</b> 1 REPRISE/WARNER		Three Cheers For Sweet Revenge	28	94
161	163	<b>FALL OUT BOY</b> DECAY/DANCE/FUELED BY RAMEN/ISLAND/UME		Believers Never Die: Greatest Hits	77	5
156	164	<b>FUTURE</b> 1 FREEBANDZ/EPIC		High Off Life	1	66
155	165	<b>FUTURE &amp; LIL UZI VERT</b> FREEBANDZ/EPIC/GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		Pluto x Baby Pluto	2	40
140	166	<b>ARCTIC MONKEYS</b> 1 DOMINO		AM	6	161
159	167	<b>GUNNA</b> 1 YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/AG		Wunna	1	65
147	168	<b>KAROL G</b> UNIVERSAL MUSIC LATIN/UMLE		KG0516	20	21
167	169	<b>FUTURE</b> 2 A-1/FREEBANDZ/EPIC		DS2	1	161
157	170	<b>DARYL HALL JOHN OATES</b> 1 RCA/LEGACY		The Very Best Of Daryl Hall, John Oates	34	142
RE	171	<b>GEORGE STRAIT</b> 8 MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN		Strait Out Of The Box	43	55
154	172	<b>HALSEY</b> 1 CAPITOL		Manic	2	83
168	173	<b>TAI VERDES</b> ARISTA		TV	168	3
162	174	<b>THOMAS RHETT</b> VALORY/BMLG		Country Again (Side A)	10	14
158	175	<b>KING VON</b> ONLY THE FAMILY/EMPIRE		Welcome To O'Block	5	38
164	176	<b>FLEETWOOD MAC</b> 8 WARNER/RHINO		Greatest Hits	14	202
173	177	<b>FRANK OCEAN</b> 1 BOYS DON'T CRY		Blonde	1	241
194	178	<b>BAD BUNNY</b> RIMAS		X100PRE	11	138
RE	179	<b>SAM SMITH</b> 5 CAPITOL		In The Lonely Hour	2	329
169	180	<b>WHITNEY HOUSTON</b> 1 ARISTA/RCA/LEGACY		I Will Always Love You: The Best Of Whitney Houston	14	65
153	181	<b>TYLER CHILDERS</b> 1 HICKMAN HOLLER/THIRTY TIGERS		Purgatory	106	63
183	182	<b>HARRY STYLES</b> 1 ERSKINE/COLUMBIA		Harry Styles	1	94
174	183	<b>LEE BRICE</b> CURB		Hey World	45	39
177	184	<b>DRAKE</b> 4 YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC		Nothing Was The Same	1	388
171	185	<b>PLAYBOI CARTI</b> AWGE/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Whole Lotta Red	1	28
178	186	<b>TOBY KEITH</b> 1 SHOW DOG-UNIVERSAL/UME		35 Biggest Hits	2	103
179	187	<b>POLO G</b> 1 COLUMBIA		Die A Legend	6	114
149	188	<b>TAYLOR SWIFT</b> 7 BIG MACHINE/BMLG		Red	1	172
180	189	<b>DRAKE</b> 1 OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC		Dark Lane Demo Tapes	2	68
172	190	<b>TIM MCGRAW</b> 1 CURB		Number One Hits	27	193
198	191	<b>DRAKE</b> 2 YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC		If You're Reading This It's Too Late	1	199
189	192	<b>J. COLE</b> 2 ROC NATION/COLUMBIA		Born Sinner	1	107
176	193	<b>SAM HUNT</b> MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN		SOUTHSIDE	5	68
RE	194	<b>XXXTENTACION</b> 1 BAD VIBES FOREVER/EMPIRE		?	17	195
182	195	<b>TAYLOR SWIFT</b> 3 BIG MACHINE/BMLG		reputation	1	153
184	196	<b>NF</b> 1 NF REAL MUSIC/CAROLINE		The Search	1	103
192	197	<b>LIL TJAY</b> 1 COLUMBIA		True 2 Myself	5	94
193	198	<b>CHRIS BROWN</b> 1 CBE/RCA		Indigo	1	110
RE	199	<b>LINKIN PARK</b> 12 WARNER		[Hybrid Theory]	2	266
195	200	<b>KATY PERRY</b> 8 CAPITOL		Teenage Dream	1	249

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# BILLBOARD GLOBAL 200

billboard

AUG. 28 2021

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
1	1	1	<b>#1</b> <b>STAY</b>	The Kid LAROI & Justin Bieber	1	6
2	2	2	<b>BAD HABITS</b>	Ed Sheeran	1	8
4	3	3	<b>INDUSTRY BABY</b>	Lil Nas X & Jack Harlow	3	4
3	4	4	<b>BEGGIN'</b>	Maneskin	3	11
5	6	5	<b>GOOD 4 U</b>	Olivia Rodrigo	1	14
6	7	6	<b>HAPPIER THAN EVER</b>	Billie Eilish	6	3
9	9	7	<b>SAVE YOUR TEARS</b>	The Weeknd & Ariana Grande	1	33
19	16	8	<b>PEPAS</b>	Farruko	8	5
 <p>The track hits the top 10 of the Global 200 with 58 million streams (up 8%) and 3,700 sold (up 10%) worldwide. It also becomes the Puerto Rico native's first No. 1 on the U.S.-based Hot Latin Songs chart.</p>						
7	8	9	<b>LEVITATING</b>	Dua Lipa	2	46
16	12	10	<b>NEED TO KNOW</b>	Doja Cat	10	10
10	10	11	<b>KISS ME MORE</b>	Doja Cat Feat. SZA	3	19
		12	<b>RUMORS</b>	Lizzo & Cardi B	12	1
	5	13	<b>TAKE MY BREATH</b>	The Weeknd	5	2
12	13	14	<b>MONTERO (CALL ME BY YOUR NAME)</b>	Lil Nas X	1	21
11	14	15	<b>BUTTER</b>	BTS	1	13
8	15	16	<b>PERMISSION TO DANCE</b>	BTS	1	6
27	11	17	<b>VOLVI</b>	Aventura x Bad Bunny	11	3
13	17	18	<b>TODO DE TI</b>	Rauw Alejandro	3	13
15	19	19	<b>PEACHES</b>	Justin Bieber Feat. Daniel Caesar & Giveon	1	22
60	32	20	<b>WOMAN</b>	Doja Cat	20	5
17	18	21	<b>I WANNA BE YOUR SLAVE</b>	Maneskin	13	13
14	20	22	<b>YONAGUNI</b>	Bad Bunny	3	11
31	24	23	<b>LOVE TONIGHT</b>	Shouse	23	8
22	22	24	<b>BLINDING LIGHTS</b>	The Weeknd	2	50
24	21	25	<b>TRAITOR</b>	Olivia Rodrigo	7	13
21	23	26	<b>AM</b>	Nio Garcia X J Balvin X Bad Bunny	10	19
23	25	27	<b>ASTRONAUT IN THE OCEAN</b>	Masked Wolf	3	30
104	87	28	<b>GG ESSENCE</b>	Wizkid Feat. Justin Bieber & Tems	28	6
26	28	29	<b>HEAT WAVES</b>	Glass Animals	23	33
25	26	30	<b>QUE MAS PUES?</b>	J Balvin & Maria Becerra	17	12
20	27	31	<b>LEAVE THE DOOR OPEN</b>	Silk Sonic (Bruno Mars & Anderson .Paak)	2	24
28	30	32	<b>DE JA VU</b>	Olivia Rodrigo	3	20
29	29	33	<b>DYNAMITE</b>	BTS	1	50
34	33	34	<b>FANCY LIKE</b>	Walker Hayes	33	9
30	31	35	<b>AIN'T SHIT</b>	Doja Cat	24	8
32	34	36	<b>DRIVERS LICENSE</b>	Olivia Rodrigo	1	32
53	42	37	<b>2055</b>	Sleepy Hollow	37	5
44	37	38	<b>FRIDAY</b>	Riton X Nightcrawlers Feat. Mufasa & Hypeman	18	26
37	35	39	<b>YOU RIGHT</b>	Doja Cat & The Weeknd	12	8
43	36	40	<b>WATERMELON SUGAR</b>	Harry Styles	9	50
38	39	41	<b>VOLANDO</b>	Mora, Bad Bunny & Sech	27	6
36	38	42	<b>FIEL</b>	Los Legendarios, Wisin & Jhay Cortez	13	23
48	43	43	<b>911</b>	Sech & Jhay Cortez	43	23
NEW		44	<b>COLD HEART (PNAU REMIX)</b>	Elton John & Dua Lipa	44	1

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
52	46	45	<b>DANCE MONKEY</b>	Tones And I	16	50
56	45	46	<b>PERFECT</b>	Ed Sheeran	30	50
42	44	47	<b>DON'T GO YET</b>	Camila Cabello	28	4
55	47	48	<b>MOOD</b>	24kGoldn Feat. iann dior	2	50
46	40	49	<b>LEAVE BEFORE YOU LOVE ME</b>	Marshmello X Jonas Brothers	40	13
50	48	50	<b>WITHOUT YOU</b>	The Kid LAROI	10	39
57	51	51	<b>DAKITI</b>	Bad Bunny & Jhay Cortez	1	42
80	58	52	<b>SOBRIO</b>	Maluma	52	6
49	49	53	<b>RAPSTAR</b>	Polo G	3	19
58	54	54	<b>THE BUSINESS</b>	Tiesto	12	41
40	50	55	<b>MOTLEY CREW</b>	Post Malone	13	6
18	41	56	<b>SKATE</b>	Silk Sonic (Bruno Mars & Anderson .Paak)	18	3
85	73	57	<b>BELIEVER</b>	Imagine Dragons	57	50
54	53	58	<b>BEAUTIFUL MISTAKES</b>	Maroon 5 Feat. Megan Thee Stallion	24	24
51	52	59	<b>HAPPIER</b>	Olivia Rodrigo	14	13
72	59	60	<b>SHAPE OF YOU</b>	Ed Sheeran	59	50
65	57	61	<b>DON'T START NOW</b>	Dua Lipa	30	50
66	55	62	<b>ENTRE NOSOTROS</b>	Tiago pzk & Lit Killah	55	5
83	66	63	<b>LOVE AGAIN</b>	Dua Lipa	63	11
69	60	64	<b>SOMEONE YOU LOVED</b>	Lewis Capaldi	24	50
-	108	65	<b>GET INTO IT (YUH)</b>	Doja Cat	65	3
73	63	66	<b>TIROTEO</b>	Marc Segui & Pol Granch & Rauw Alejandro	63	7
71	62	67	<b>JEALOUSY, JEALOUSY</b>	Olivia Rodrigo	19	13
74	71	68	<b>MIENTEME</b>	TINI X Maria Becerra	65	16
79	70	69	<b>GOOSEBUMPS</b>	Travis Scott & HVME	15	34
64	61	70	<b>PAREJA DEL AÑO</b>	Sebastian Yatra X Myke Towers	16	18
61	67	71	<b>THOT SHIT</b>	Megan Thee Stallion	27	10
82	68	72	<b>BABY SHARK</b>	Pinkfong	38	49
59	56	73	<b>FAVORITE CRIME</b>	Olivia Rodrigo	14	13
76	72	74	<b>HEARTBREAK ANNIVERSARY</b>	Giveon	10	27
158	142	75	<b>PARIS</b>	Ingratax	75	4
NEW		76	<b>DON'T BE SHY</b>	Tiesto & Karol G	76	1
70	69	77	<b>WANTS AND NEEDS</b>	Drake Feat. Lil Baby	2	24
86	76	78	<b>SUNFLOWER</b>	Post Malone & Swae Lee	47	50
75	64	79	<b>HEARTBREAK ANTHEM</b>	Galantis, David Guetta & Little Mix	52	13
-	145	80	<b>CURAME</b>	Rauw Alejandro	80	2
87	75	81	<b>IKO IKO (MY BESTIE)</b>	Justin Wellington Feat. Small Jam	68	11
NEW		82	<b>BILMEM MI?</b>	Sefo	82	1
89	78	83	<b>ROSES</b>	SAINT JHN	14	50
84	79	84	<b>POBLADO (REMIX)</b>	J Balvin x Karol G x Nicky Jam	47	9
91	80	85	<b>CIRCLES</b>	Post Malone	49	50
143	106	86	<b>IN DA GETTO</b>	J Balvin & Skrillex	86	7
92	77	87	<b>LIL BIT</b>	Nelly & Florida Georgia Line	76	16
NEW		88	<b>BACHPAN KA PYAAR</b>	Sahdev Dirdo, Badshah, Aastha Gill & Rico	88	1
191	166	89	<b>REMEMBER</b>	Becky Hill & David Guetta	89	4
103	88	90	<b>SWEATER WEATHER</b>	The Neighbourhood	62	47
97	82	91	<b>MEU PEDACO DE PECADO</b>	Joao Gomes	74	7
164	111	92	<b>A-O-K</b>	Tai Verdes	92	4
95	86	93	<b>BAD GUY</b>	Billie Eilish	54	50
94	84	94	<b>RUN</b>	OneRepublic	67	15
99	85	95	<b>ARCADE</b>	Duncan Laurence	36	29
NEW		96	<b>QUEENDOM</b>	Red Velvet	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 TITLES OF LEADING AUDIO AND VIDEO MUSIC SERVICES, PLUS DOWNLOAD SALES FROM TOP MUSIC RETAILERS ACROSS THE GLOBE. SEE CHARTS.LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2021 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND MRC DATA, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



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96

RED VELVET  
"Queendom"

The South Korean quintet makes its global chart debut as "Queendom" enters at Nos. 63 and 96 on the Global Excl. U.S. chart and Global 200, respectively. The song serves as the title/opening track of the act's EP released Aug. 16. In the week ending Aug. 19, the song scored 19.4 million streams and sold 2,700 downloads worldwide, according to MRC Data, with over 90% of its streams and 80% of its sales from outside the United States.



109

SUECO  
"Paralyzed"

Los Angeles' Sueco, who drew early attention on TikTok and signed to Atlantic Records in 2019, records his first Global 200 appearance. In its debut frame, the track scored 8.5 million streams and sold 8,600 copies worldwide, capitalizing on anticipation spurred by a TikTok campaign in which Sueco previewed the song in a series of clips. The single also enters the U.S.-based Hot Rock & Alternative Songs chart at No. 8 and the Billboard Hot 100 at No. 65.

—ERIC FRANKENBERG

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
93	89	97	<b>DREAMS</b>	Fleetwood Mac	10	47
100	90	98	<b>EVERY CHANCE I GET</b>	DJ Khaled Feat. Lil Baby & Lil Durk	27	16
<b>NEW</b>		99	<b>PAPERCUTS</b>	Machine Gun Kelly	99	1
118	83	100	<b>POSITIONS</b>	Ariana Grande	1	43
112	93	101	<b>LOCO</b>	Justin Quiles, Chimbala X Zion & Lennox	93	6
113	94	102	<b>SHALLOW</b>	Lady Gaga & Bradley Cooper	59	50
<b>NEW</b>		103	<b>INFERNO</b>	Sub Urban & Bella Poarch	103	1
96	96	104	<b>WILD SIDE</b>	Normani Feat. Cardi B	27	5
162	143	105	<b>GLAD YOU EXIST</b>	Dan + Shay	105	7
114	92	106	<b>2/CATORCE</b>	Rauw Alejandro X Mr. Naisgai	43	15
110	98	107	<b>HEAD &amp; HEART</b>	Joel Corry X MNEK	17	50
120	101	108	<b>BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY</b>	Queen	101	46
<b>NEW</b>		109	<b>PARALYZED</b>	Sueco	109	1
105	91	110	<b>STREETS</b>	Doja Cat	8	32
107	97	111	<b>RASPUTIN</b>	Majestic X Boney M.	69	17
117	99	112	<b>OLD TOWN ROAD</b>	Lil Nas X Feat. Billy Ray Cyrus	70	50
124	103	113	<b>LOVELY</b>	Billie Eilish & Khalid	70	50
119	102	114	<b>WELLERMAN</b>	Nathan Evans	16	30
129	116	115	<b>HAWAI</b>	Maluma	3	50
134	110	116	<b>SMELLS LIKE TEEN SPIRIT</b>	Nirvana	110	33
128	114	117	<b>DESPACITO</b>	Luis Fonsi & Daddy Yankee Feat. Justin Bieber	114	46
88	100	118	<b>BUILD A BITCH</b>	Bella Poarch	20	14
130	117	119	<b>CLOSER</b>	The Chainsmokers Feat. Halsey	100	46
132	112	120	<b>BEFORE YOU GO</b>	Lewis Capaldi	32	50
154	132	121	<b>CRY BABY</b>	Official HIGE DANdism	115	8
136	128	122	<b>COUNTING STARS</b>	OneRepublic	122	28
<b>NEW</b>		123	<b>SUIHEISEN</b>	back number	123	1
<b>NEW</b>		124	<b>CHOSEN</b>	Blxst & Tyga Feat. Ty Dolla Sign	124	1
140	123	125	<b>MEMORY</b>	Kane Brown X blackbear	69	6
121	109	126	<b>LATE AT NIGHT</b>	Roddy Ricch	27	11
141	133	127	<b>FOR THE NIGHT</b>	Pop Smoke Feat. Lil Baby & DaBaby	7	50
142	113	128	<b>34+35</b>	Ariana Grande	2	42
131	127	129	<b>SENIORITA</b>	Shawn Mendes & Camila Cabello	67	50
108	122	130	<b>BEST FRIEND</b>	Saweetie Feat. Doja Cat	31	32
135	131	131	<b>SAVAGE LOVE (LAXED - SIREN BEAT)</b>	Jawsh 685 X Jason Derulo	1	50
33	65	132	<b>NDA</b>	Billie Eilish	20	6
102	107	133	<b>WHOLE LOTTA MONEY</b>	BIA Feat. Nicki Minaj	32	6
106	104	134	<b>BOTELLA TRAS BOTELLA</b>	Gera MX + Christian Nodal	9	17
127	115	135	<b>YORU NI KAKERU</b>	YOASOBI	16	50
150	136	136	<b>FREAKS</b>	Surf Curse	136	9
126	126	137	<b>ROCKSTAR</b>	DaBaby Feat. Roddy Ricch	8	50
115	121	138	<b>EL MAKINON</b>	Karol G & Mariah Angeliq	39	21
<b>NEW</b>		139	<b>QUER VOAR</b>	Matue	139	1
139	137	140	<b>WHATS POPPIN</b>	Jack Harlow Feat. DaBaby, Tory Lanez & Lil Wayne	17	50
<b>NEW</b>		141	<b>LOVE ME NOW</b>	Kygo Feat. Zoe Wees	141	1
133	124	142	<b>TELEPATIA</b>	Kali Uchis	10	26
175	154	143	<b>GOOSEBUMPS</b>	Travis Scott	102	47
109	119	144	<b>BRUTAL</b>	Olivia Rodrigo	11	13
<b>NEW</b>		145	<b>DARK RED</b>	Steve Lacy	145	1
148	139	146	<b>FOREVER AFTER ALL</b>	Luke Combs	4	35
161	150	147	<b>DON'T STOP BELIEVIN'</b>	Journey	125	44
146	146	148	<b>TALKING TO THE MOON</b>	Bruno Mars	57	21

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
163	152	149	<b>MEMORIES</b>	Maroon 5	71	50
152	147	150	<b>LEMONADE</b>	Internet Money & Gunna Feat. Don Toliver & NAV	4	50
155	148	151	<b>TAKE ME TO CHURCH</b>	Hozier	129	32
166	155	152	<b>WAP</b>	Cardi B Feat. Megan Thee Stallion	1	50
123	138	153	<b>YOUR LOVE (9PM)</b>	ATB x Topic x ATS	37	28
77	95	154	<b>NOT SOBER</b>	The Kid LAROI Feat. Polo G & Stunna Gambino	31	4
116	105	155	<b>BY YOUR SIDE</b>	Calvin Harris Feat. Tom Grennan	70	11
122	135	156	<b>RAM PAM PAM</b>	Natti Natasha & Becky G	52	14
168	158	157	<b>HOTEL CALIFORNIA</b>	Eagles	148	44
178	161	158	<b>SE FOR AMOR</b>	Joao Gomes E Vitor Fernandes	156	5
149	153	159	<b>YOU BROKE ME FIRST.</b>	Tate McRae	16	50
165	160	160	<b>RIPTIDE</b>	Vance Joy	160	12
176	163	161	<b>RIDE IT.</b>	Regard	86	49
170	165	162	<b>SWEET CHILD O' MINE</b>	Guns N' Roses	154	33
145	140	163	<b>FULANITO</b>	Becky G & El Alfa	140	4
138	141	164	<b>BED</b>	Joel Corry X RAYE X David Guetta	48	24
-	183	165	<b>NO ROLE MODELZ</b>	J. Cole	128	14
101	134	166	<b>MONSTER</b>	YOASOBI	87	31
198	187	167	<b>MR. BRIGHTSIDE</b>	The Killers	158	14
180	172	168	<b>THINKING OUT LOUD</b>	Ed Sheeran	103	41
177	168	169	<b>ALL OF ME</b>	John Legend	97	48
153	164	170	<b>CALLING MY PHONE</b>	Lil Tjay Feat. 6LACK	2	27
157	178	171	<b>CHASING AFTER YOU</b>	Ryan Hurd With Maren Morris	147	4
167	171	172	<b>HOLD ON</b>	Justin Bieber	4	24
<b>NEW</b>		173	<b>RAATAAN LAMBIYAN</b>	Tanishk Bagchi, Jubin Nautiyal & Asees Kaur	173	1
-	81	174	<b>SUVS (BLACK ON BLACK)</b>	Jack Harlow & Pooh Shiesty	81	2
186	181	175	<b>THUNDERSTRUCK</b>	AC/DC	167	22
182	173	176	<b>ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST</b>	Queen	159	22
200	185	177	<b>SAY YOU WON'T LET GO</b>	James Arthur	96	46
147	167	178	<b>JALEBI BABY</b>	Teshler X Jason Derulo	80	7
194	179	179	<b>WAKE ME UP!</b>	Avicii	179	13
<b>RE-ENTRY</b>		180	<b>MY EX'S BEST FRIEND</b>	Machine Gun Kelly X blackbear	25	46
-	176	181	<b>AQUELAS COISAS</b>	Joao Gomes	158	3
189	180	182	<b>I DON'T CARE</b>	Ed Sheeran & Justin Bieber	105	46
188	177	183	<b>THE NIGHTS</b>	Avicii	177	4
-	144	184	<b>7 RINGS</b>	Ariana Grande	126	27
90	157	185	<b>OVER THE TOP</b>	Smiley Feat. Drake	53	4
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HOLLYWOOD EXPERIENCE

# Broadway Debut

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Armanino is excited to expand our established L.A. Business Management practice with the opening of our New York office, bringing coverage to the two largest entertainment capitals in the world. This announcement is bolstered through the addition of Craig Manzano and Marc Rosen's team adding to a comprehensive portfolio of theatre, television, film, social media and music expertise. Our commitment to serving our clients and communities remains steadfast. Learn more at [armaninollp.com](http://armaninollp.com).

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Clockwise from top left: RM, Jin, J-Hope, Suga, Jungkook, V and Jimin of BTS photographed by Sunhye Shin on Aug. 10 at Bieber House in Seoul.

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## CORRECTION

Due to editing errors, incorrect information on the following individuals appeared in the 2021 R&B/Hip-Hop Power Players list: Lil Baby is a Quality Control artist. Selim Bouab is senior vp/head of A&R at 300 Entertainment. Az Cohen is vp A&R and research at 300 Entertainment. Wardell Malloy is assistant vp creative, Los Angeles for BMI. Mark Pitts is president of RCA Records and CEO of ByStorm Entertainment. Tunji Balogun was at the time of publication executive vp A&R for RCA Records and co-founder of Keep Cool; he has since been named CEO of Def Jam Recordings.

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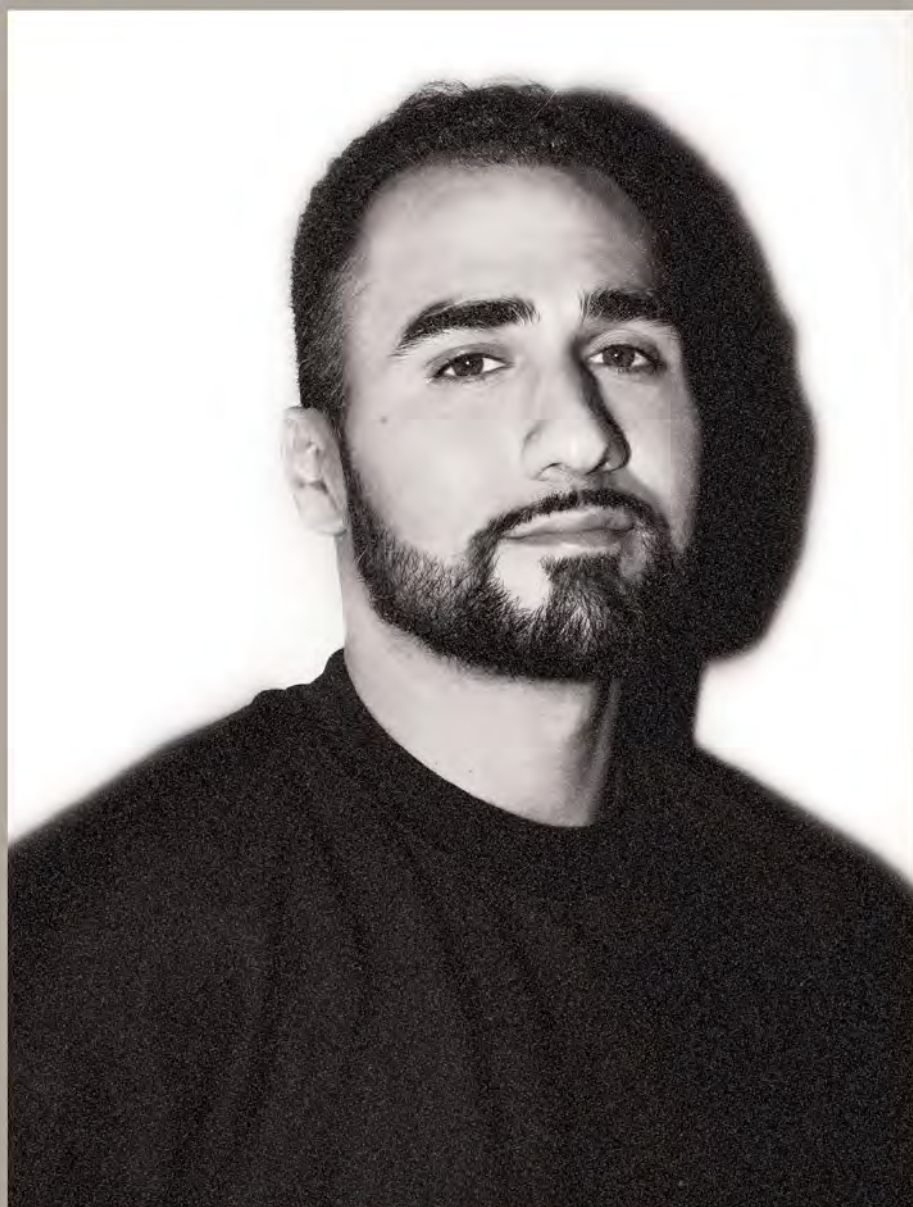
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# The Market

PG. 22 KANYE'S SLOW-ROLL STRATEGY \* PG. 24 R. KELLY'S PUBLISHING \* PG. 26 ROBLOX'S MUSIC PLAY



## Fear And Loathing In The Concert Business

As this season goes from “hot vax” to hot mess summer, promoters consider venue safety — and how to make the shows go on

BY DAVE BROOKS

**B**ACK IN MARCH, veteran country concert promoter Louis Messina was thrilled when George Strait sold out his Aug. 13 and 14 comeback shows at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas. On the nights of the concerts, however, Messina noticed that the no-show rate was a staggering 20%, far higher than the 1% to 2% he says is typical for the venue. And no-shows don't only mean less revenue from food and merchandise — they make promoters nervous about future ticket sales.

For over a year, Messina, who partners with AEG, had kept tours off the road, paying his staff \$9 million in salary without any revenue coming in (money he later recouped from the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant program). Now the concert business is back to work, but a significant number of fans aren't ready to show up.

“People's fears haven't subsided as much as we had hoped,” says Messina, “and they're walking away from events.” Breakthrough cases are driving concern about contracting COVID-19, even among the vaccinated, and concerts where attendees aren't required to wear masks or prove they've been vaccinated pose even greater risks. (T-Mobile Arena doesn't currently require either.)

Since April, when Bad Bunny sold out an arena tour in record time, promoters, artists and fans alike were expecting the concert business to return this summer, get back to normal by 2022 and thrive on pent-up demand. Instead, uncertainty is back: COVID-19 cases are rising, vaccines don't provide perfect protection, and parents of children under 12 may be worried about catching the virus at a show and spreading the delta variant at home. That uncertainty seems to

be affecting demand: There's growing evidence that ticket sales are slowing for indoor arena concerts.

Messina's suggested solution: Require fans, artists and crew members who enter concert venues to show they've been vaccinated. “If we don't do something about this slowdown in the business,” he says, “we're no longer going to have a business.” But that's easier said than done, since there's still plenty of pushback against vaccine and mask mandates, which have been highly politicized. Requiring vaccines is now banned by executive order or legislation in 20 states.

Still, hundreds of U.S. venues have already enacted such mandates and thousands more are on the way. In August, promotion giants Live Nation and AEG Presents

said they would require fans to show proof of vaccination to attend shows at venues they own, as well as at concerts and festivals they produce. And most of the more than 7,000 independent venues that received government assistance under the Shuttered Venue Operator Grants program have joined regional groups that mandate vaccine requirements for concerts.

That still leaves most arenas and stadiums, though. In the United States, about 100 to 200 arenas and 30 to 50 stadiums host the vast majority of the tours that play venues of that size, and without a national mandate, promoters that want to book them face an array of state and regional regulations. New York and California currently require events of 5,000 or more to check the

**20%**

**NO-SHOW RATE AT  
GEORGE STRAIT'S  
SOLD-OUT  
AUG. 13-14 CONCERTS  
AT T-MOBILE ARENA  
IN LAS VEGAS**

● ROLLING STONES DRUMMER CHARLIE WATT DIED AT AGE 80. ● AEROSMITH WILL BRING ITS ENTIRE RECORDED-MUSIC CATALOG TO UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP IN 2022.

vaccine status of attendees, for example, while the governors of Texas and Florida have issued executive orders that ban such mandates. The touring industry can't resume at full scale without these venues, which account for up to \$10 billion in ticket sales each year, *Billboard* estimates.

"I can skip Texas and Florida if they don't change their laws, but I cannot skip much more than that," says Messina. "This issue has been so politicized that it's impossible for some artists to take a side." That's especially true in genres like country, where some artists have significant conservative fan bases.

Part of the problem is that no one wants to play the heavy — especially to fans who have already purchased tickets. "It's even more difficult when the concert was announced without a vaccine requirement and we're trying to implement them after the fact," says Red Light Management founder Coran Capshaw. "There has to be a cultural moment when most people in the business overwhelmingly support this idea."

Since most arenas and stadiums are owned and operated by sports teams or city governments, they can only move so fast. "The arenas are all getting their heads around our suggestions," says Jay Marciano, chief executive at AEG, which manages over 300 venues worldwide. "They aren't as able to move on the dime as our concert venues."

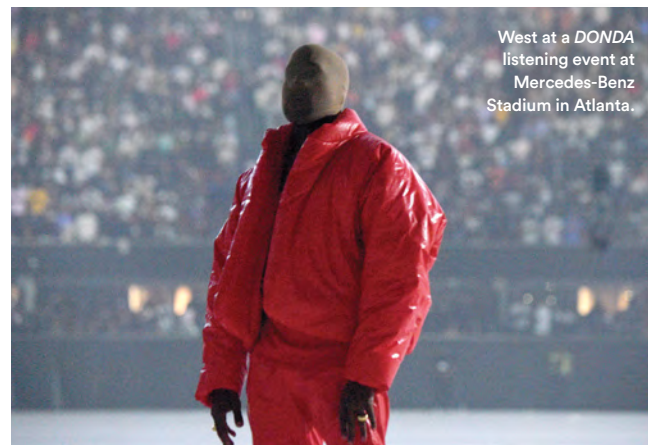
A concert-business vaccine mandate would significantly decrease the chances of fans contracting COVID-19 at shows, and potentially make ticket buyers more confident. But even that wouldn't provide the kind of 100% protection that some promoters were hoping would bring the pandemic to a definitive end. While vaccines provide significant protection against the kinds of serious COVID-19 cases that can lead to hospitalization or death, they don't of-

fer complete immunity from contracting or spreading the virus. That means going to a concert still comes with some risk, which is affecting consumer confidence. Demand on the secondary market for Dead & Company's highly anticipated 29-date amphitheater/stadium tour that started Aug. 23 has plummeted as cases of the delta variant spike, according to concert data site TicketIQ, with prices for many shows dropping by 40%. The Eagles, who can typically sell out a tour in days, took several weeks to fully sell their 21-date *Hotel California* tour.

A vaccine mandate is still a worthy goal — it could have significant public health benefits and reassure fans that promoters are doing everything they can to keep events safe. But there's an increasing acknowledgement that the idea the pandemic would end swiftly and definitively may have been wishful thinking.

"We're going to get to a point where we learn to live with the virus," says Capshaw, who thinks promoters will be able to incentivize fans to get vaccinated and use data to minimize viral spread. "We're having really good business out there." Capshaw believes that some of the tour cancellations attributed to COVID-19 may have less to do with caution than with soft sales in a crowded market. In some cases, when too many shows went on sale at once or there wasn't enough time to sell enough tickets to make the tour profitable, "tying it to COVID isn't appropriate. It's bullshit. We have enough challenges in this business; we don't need to do that."

The roaring comeback that some industry executives envisioned may not come to pass, but Capshaw says that "early, well-attended shows" give him hope that a recovery is beginning. "I'm optimistic that the full picture will show we're making progress." **B**



West at a *DONDA* listening event at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta.

## Kanye's Profitable Odd Twisted Promo Strategy

¿DÓNDE ESTÀ DONDA? WHILE FANS WAIT, THE RAPPER HAS BEEN RAKING IT IN

BY DAN RYS

**T**O MOST KANYE WEST fans, the prolonged rollout for his 10th solo album, *DONDA*, is yet another example of how the artist's legendary perfectionism can complicate his career. As West continues to tinker in the studio, however, the ticketed in-person and livestreamed listening parties he has been hosting have been raking in the dough.

On July 22, West filled Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium with 42,000 fans who paid \$25 to \$100 a ticket for a *DONDA* listening party, supervised by Balenciaga creative director Demna Gvasalia. (Days before, a new Beats by Dre ad that aired during the NBA Finals had teased the *DONDA* track "No Child Left Behind.") The party was livestreamed for free by Apple Music with the idea that West's album would drop the next day — which it didn't. Instead, two weeks later, West held another event that featured an updated version of the album, broke Apple Music livestream records with 5.4 million viewers and drove about \$7 million in in-person merchandise sales, sources close to West say. Still no album. Now, West is planning to hold what he says is the last listening party on Aug. 26 at Chicago's Soldier Field.

It's hard to say for sure when *DONDA* will come out, or how different it will be from the music West played at these parties. In the meantime, however, West's decisions — or rather his

indecisions — are paying off. The listening parties in Atlanta grossed between \$1.5 million and \$2.7 million for the rapper, *Billboard* estimates. (The shows did not report sales to Billboard Boxscore.) Meanwhile, all of the attention has driven interest in West's catalog: In the 22-day period between July 19 and Aug. 9, on-demand U.S. streams of his music rose 37% over the previous 22-day period, according to MRC Data, generating an additional \$350,000 in income, *Billboard* estimates.

West also has a deal with Apple Music that will let the company stream the listening events again once *DONDA* comes out, a source close to the situation says. The company has a history of investing in partnerships with artists, including a reported \$25 million deal that included the rights to a documentary about Billie Eilish and a reported \$19 million deal for Drake that included commercials and a film project. In West's case, it's possible that a significant portion of Apple's investment went to marketing, including the high-profile Beats commercial, rather than a direct payment.

"An A-level artist like Kanye could demand a multimillion-dollar deal or a guaranteed marketing spend to promote the spot," says a brand marketing executive. "It's not always about the dollar, it's about the promotion."

West, however, seems to have figured out a way to make it about both. **B**

### MARKET WATCH

21.98B

↑ 3%

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

Number of audio and video on-demand streams for the week ending Aug. 19.

16.09M

↑ 1%

**ALBUM CONSUMPTION UNITS WEEK OVER WEEK**

Album sales plus track-equivalent albums plus streaming-equivalent albums for the week ending Aug. 19.

705.6B

↑ 9.6%

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

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

● **CARDI B** SIGNED A PUBLISHING DEAL WITH WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC. ● FORMER CBS RECORDS PRESIDENT AND INDUSTRY TITAN **WALTER YETNIKOFF** DIED AT AGE 87.



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# For Sale: Distressed Assets

R. Kelly appears to be short on money. Will he sell his catalog? And what's it worth, considering the allegations against him?

BY ED CHRISTMAN

**A**S R. KELLY FACES A trial in New York on federal racketeering and sex trafficking charges, with another trial for similar charges to follow in Chicago, the singer's lawyer says that he's running out of money. "His funds are depleted," said attorney Deveraux Cannick at an Aug. 3 court hearing, requesting free trial transcripts for his client.

In jail since July 2019, Kelly hasn't been able to tour or release new music. His existing recordings still generate plenty of revenue that flows to former label RCA Records — about \$1.7 million in the United States so far this year, *Billboard* estimates — but the resulting royalties don't go into Kelly's pockets because the money has been claimed by both his former recording studio landlord and a woman who won a \$4 million judgment against him for allegedly sexually abusing her when she was 16.

Kelly's financial problems aren't new: He has owed millions of dollars in federal and state taxes for over a decade. In 2019, two months after the explosive *Surviving R. Kelly* put the abuse allegations against Kelly back in the public eye, Kelly told interviewer Gayle King that he couldn't

afford to pay the \$161,000 he owed in child support and only had \$350,000 in the bank because business associates had been cheating him for years.

In the past few years, both RCA and Universal Music Publishing Group have dropped Kelly, although both still own rights to his work, and he scuttled a planned tour outside the United States. So, in order to raise money, Kelly has been quietly shopping his publishing catalog, according to two music asset buyers who were approached about a possible purchase. Although the catalog includes over a dozen top 10 *Billboard* Hot 100 hits recorded by Kelly, as well as Aaliyah, Michael Jackson and others, a buyer hasn't been found. A representative for Kelly declined to comment.

"It has been offered to me a number of times by his team, and of course, I've said no for the obvious reasons," says Merck Mercuriadis, Hipgnosis Songs Fund founder and CEO of The Family (Music) Ltd., adding that the last discussion took place about six months ago. Kelly himself sang most of his biggest hits, and Mercuriadis believes that listeners will have an even harder time separating the man from



Kelly (center) at a status hearing in Chicago in 2019.

his music if he's found guilty. "There are incredible songs in that catalog," he says, "but why would you take that kind of risk?" Another music asset buyer who passed on a purchase two years ago was even more blunt: "We wouldn't go near it with a 10-foot pole."

Other asset buyers *Billboard* spoke with say they haven't been approached but could potentially be interested, although they would try to make a deal quietly in order to avoid attention.

What could be for sale? Kelly's songs released before 2007 — including "Bump N' Grind," "I Believe I Can Fly" and "Ignition (Remix)" — appear to be covered under a publishing deal that Kelly signed with Zomba, which Universal Music Group acquired in 2006, along with the rest of BMG Music Publishing. Some of his post-2007 songs appear to be covered under a co-publishing deal with UMG, which would give him a bigger split of songs like "Number One" and "Good Sex." So Kelly could sell his 50% songwriter share from earlier compositions and both the writer's share and co-publishing rights to the later material.

It's hard to say what these songs are worth now, though. R&B song catalogs

typically sell for a 12-times multiple of net publisher's share of gross profit, but such

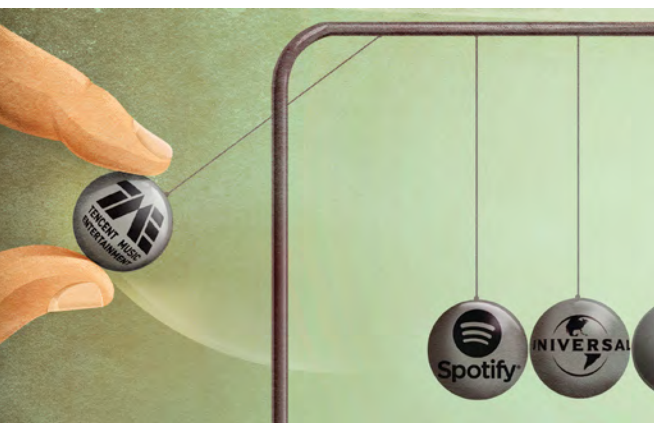
a successful sole writer could potentially get 20-times NPS, which *Billboard* estimates to be at least \$1.05 million, and implies that Kelly's songs could have been worth up to \$21 million.

The allegations against Kelly would almost certainly reduce that price significantly. Few movies and advertisements will presumably want to license synch rights to his songs. His radio airplay has diminished 98% since *Surviving R. Kelly* came out, and his popularity on on-demand streaming fell 13.5% the year after the documentary (according to MRC Data), with his streams now growing slower than streaming overall. Given the accusations and charges against him, and because he appears to be a motivated seller, one music asset trader tells *Billboard* that Kelly's catalog would likely only sell at an eight- to 10-times multiple, or between \$8.4 million and \$10.5 million. And "if he is guilty," says a music publishing executive, "then it is a fire sale." **B**

Additional reporting by Cathy Applefeld Olson and Dan Rys.

## Downstreaming Effects

CHINESE EFFORTS TO REIN IN TENCENT MUSIC COULD AFFECT BUSINESS WORLDWIDE



**W**HEN CHINESE ANTITRUST REGULATORS sneeze, the music business catches a cold. Beijing has been cracking down on technology companies, and on July 24, the government gave Tencent Music, the country's largest audio-streaming company, 30 days to end the exclusive licensing deals that allow it to offer songs that competitors can't. Months before, another regulator announced an effort to curb online tipping, a major source of revenue for Tencent Music, which takes a percentage of the money that fans send to performers.

These days, however, what happens in China echoes from Stockholm to Los Angeles. Tencent Music's share price, which hit an all-time high on March 23, fell a whopping 74.6% as of Aug. 23, wiping out \$40.1 billion of market capitalization. Among its major shareholders is Spotify, which in December 2017 acquired an 8.4% stake in the company that has dropped in value by \$3.6 billion in roughly five months. (Since Spotify co-founder/CEO Daniel Ek owns 16.8% of Spotify's outstanding ordinary shares, according to the company's 2020 annual report, that means his indirect stake in Tencent Music has fallen \$597 million since March 23.) And among Spotify's

shareholders are Universal Music Group and Sony Music Entertainment. Separately, Sony/ATV Music Publishing owns a direct stake in Tencent Music as well, and the latter company's majority shareholder is Tencent Holdings, which leads a consortium that owns 20% of UMG.

Tencent Holdings, a Chinese internet giant that was worth almost \$1 trillion at its peak, had a merger blocked by regulators in July, and in August, a state-run publication referred to games like the company's flagship *Honor of Kings* as "spiritual opium." (Tencent immediately announced that it would limit children's playing time.) Since Feb. 18, Tencent Holdings has lost 45.1% of its value — a staggering \$431 billion.

The good news for Tencent Music is that it's not the only Chinese company to face these issues: Beijing also went after the ride-hailing firm Didi over online security violations just two days after it had raised \$4.4 million on the New York Stock Exchange. In fact, Beijing's broad crackdown may even have a silver lining for Tencent since it seems to have caused Netease to pause its plan to do a Hong Kong spinoff of China's second-biggest streaming company, Netease Cloud Music.

— GLENN PEOPLES

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FROM THE DESK OF

# JON VLASSOPOULOS

Global head of music, Roblox

BY TATIANA CIRISANO PHOTOGRAPHED BY DIANA KING



**ON AUG. 13, MORE THAN 422,000** concurrent players gathered in a London-themed virtual world within the Roblox gaming platform to watch British rapper KSI perform songs from his July album, *All Over the Place*. The artist himself appeared on a video screen onstage while the players in the crowd bounced on floating discs, direct-messaged one another and showed off virtual merchandise like a KSI-branded backpack. The experience reaired throughout the weekend and received 11 million total visits, according to Roblox, while KSI's virtual merch line has reached six figures in sales.

It was just the latest music event within the free gaming platform, where a community of 42 million daily active users create and play their own games (there are now over 40 million) and spend real money on virtual currency called "Robux" to buy accessories for their avatars. Over the last nine months, Roblox has partnered with Zara Larsson, Royal Blood, Ava Max, Why Don't We and Lil Nas X on music experiences such as virtual concerts (where artists perform as avatars) and new-release launch parties (where, like KSI's performance, the artist beams in on a video screen), all spearheaded

by Roblox global head of music Jon Vlassopoulos.

A DJ in his college years, Vlassopoulos got his start helping the music business adapt to the digital era: He led business development at BMG in the late 1990s, then managed entertainment partnerships at AT&T Wireless when ringtones were the rage. He joined Roblox in August 2019 with a plan to socialize the music-listening experience through games. "We had gotten stuck in a bit of a box with [digital service providers], and it felt like there was more opportunity to have a [listening] experience that was hyper-social," he says.

For Roblox's first-ever virtual concert in November, Lil Nas X wore a motion-capture suit to live-debut his single "Holiday" as an avatar in a winter wonderland, attracting 33 million total views across four airings. Since then, Roblox has only deepened its musical footprint. Warner Music Group joined the platform's \$520 million series H investment round in January, and over the summer, Sony Music Entertainment and BMG each formed partnerships to bring their artists into the game. Roblox, which went public in March with a \$41 billion valuation, reported \$454 million in revenue in the second quarter of 2021, a 127% year-over-year increase.

Along the way, Roblox has faced criticism from

the National Music Publishers' Association, which, on behalf of more than a dozen publishers, alleged in a \$200 million copyright infringement lawsuit filed in June that the platform is hosting a "massive" library of unlicensed songs uploaded by users. Vlassopoulos says Roblox is discussing the plaintiffs' claims with the NMPA, which declined to comment, although both sides are hopeful for a resolution. He also points out that the platform has agreements with three of the four top publishers.

The company is also up against stiff competition from gaming platforms like *Fortnite*, which has put on musical spectacles with Travis Scott and Ariana Grande. But as Roblox racks up partnerships with fashion brands and TV shows — including Gucci and *Stranger Things* — alongside labels, Vlassopoulos is optimistic about his vision: turning Roblox into an experiential hub akin to Las Vegas.

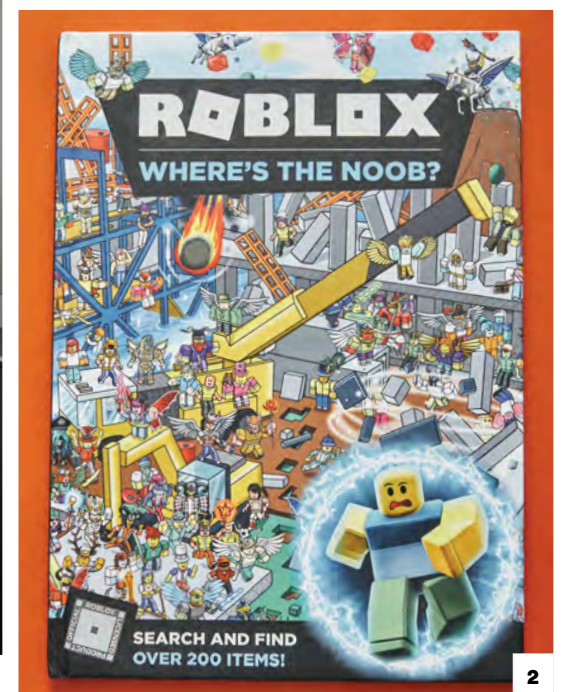
"It's our responsibility to have a place where if you are a music fan, you should have all different types of experiences that fit your interests," he says. "There should be hundreds of shows every day."

**What sets Roblox apart from other virtual spaces?**

Roblox is social media for the next generation. We're a real-time, daily social experience. The objective is not to compete in a game for 100 hours. You're there to meet friends, hang out, shop, unlock things.

**How do your music events build on the traditional live experience?**

Virtual fans can be piped in to watch a physical event, and physical fans are piped into the virtual world. It's extending both what's happening with [streaming] — which is a very antisocial, individual-



istic consumption experience — and the live experience. And there are no limits. Artists don't have to spend 18 months reaching 2 million people on a world tour. They can do it on a Friday night.

**How does Roblox collaborate with artists and labels on set and virtual merch design?**

We'll look at physical merch they've done, talk about the aesthetics of the album or song that's coming out and draw things from that. KSI is a boxer, so we have a boxing belt. The aesthetic of the virtual world is similar: There's a boxing ring where the performance happens.

**What makes virtual merch such a lucrative opportunity?**

We're a microtransaction platform. The community is used to spending 100 Robux, 200 Robux, 500 Robux — [about] \$1, \$2, \$5. Lil Nas X is on a path to eight figures for an annual run rate [for his Roblox merch collection]. And there's no inventory or manufacturing. We can all go on holiday for a month, come back, and the community has been buying every day. For the artist, that's almost like catalog sales.

**How are artists and labels compensated for virtual events and merch? Are you paying artists to perform?**

It's almost the other way around, where they'll cover the cost of activating and often also spend media dollars to support it. Think of us more like the executive producers. We haven't done that many [virtual merch] deals, but 24.5 cents on the dollar is our general platform revenue share.

**Roblox users are predominantly between the ages of 8 and 18. Does this affect what artists and songs you're able to work with?**

We need to be protective of the community. The artists and labels are flexible. If there is a word [in the lyrics] that's not appropriate, they can choose another word. With Lil Nas X, certain lyrics went above my head, like, "Lean all in my bladder." But we don't want to be doing *Kidz Bop*, which is what people were pitching in the beginning. So there are things coming that will offer more of an older demo opportunity. There will be [age confirmation and ratings] where, if you are older, you can experience things that are more suitable for your demographic.

**What else is in the future?**

We have an opportunity to bring a radio-type experience to the platform. If you go to a city, you hear music in a shop. We have this metaverse parallel. Right now, it's a quiet experience. But why shouldn't there be music in the background? That would be a great way to promote music to tens of millions of people every day.

**That would require the proper licenses, and Roblox has been criticized for its approach to music licensing. You've said that the NMPA doesn't understand how Roblox uses music. What don't they get?**

You've got some platforms where music is essential. Think TikTok. Roblox has functioned for 15 years quite happily without music. We're presenting the industry with a new opportunity, which is now almost universally understood. I think it's about working out, collectively, what those new creative and commercial opportunities are, and then getting licensing models that support those. We're optimistic about resolving any disputes in the short term.

**Users were once able to buy a boombox for their avatars, fill it with clips of unlicensed Ariana Grande songs and broadcast them in games. What are you doing about that?**

We cannot comment on the back-end operations of our platform, but we do have a policy against unlicensed music being uploaded onto the platform. And we have deals with Sony, the biggest publisher, and deals with Warner, the third-biggest publisher, and BMG, the fourth-biggest publisher. There's one missing. So it's not an industry thing; it was more of a specific publisher. Watch that space.

**Dance label Monstercat independently launched a Roblox game in July, drawing over 1.2 million visits in its first 24 hours. Why are you encouraging artists and labels to leverage Roblox on their own?**

The more we turn the keys over to our partners, we train them to understand the platform, so the community can have one [concert] a week and then 10 a week and then 100 a week, and we can have much more of a variety of music choices. You'll see more and more labels having launch parties as part of their general marketing schedule. 📺



1. "Hands down, my favorite David Bowie live recording," says Vlassopoulos. "I listen to it as much as I can." 2. "A great book that gives insight into the magical, colorful world of Roblox lore." 3. "After the big success of our first virtual concert with Lil Nas X, our [motion-capture] production partner got these amazing statues done. This was his avatar from Roblox." 4. "Between meetings, I often take five and throw some arrows. I'm slowly getting better."



ON SALE | SEPT. 18, 2021

2021

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# The Sound

PG. 34 TURNSTILE'S BIG BREAK \* PG. 35

INSIDE CHLÖE BAILEY'S SOLO DEBUT

Yebba photographed Aug. 8  
at Candy Studio in New York.  
Onitsuka Tiger dress



2021 FALL  
PREVIEW

## DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN

Yebba's debut album was delayed by loss and lockdown — but now,  
the soulful singer is even more eager to begin in earnest

BY LINDSEY HAVENS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY LIA CLAY MILLER

**B**EFORE YEBBA EVER took a label meeting, she made a promise to herself. “I made sure I had at least five songs I had written by myself that were truth-based,” she says, “so that nobody could tell me who I was once I walked in there.”

Growing up in West Memphis, Ark., the artist born Abbey Smith started singing in church at the age of 7. Citing the communal and choral components, she aspired to be a background singer and later contributed vocals to A Tribe Called Quest’s *We got it from Here... Thank You 4 Your service* and Chance the Rapper’s *Coloring Book*, among other projects. But one day, while on a run, she had an epiphany: “God spoke to me and said: ‘I want you to be an artist,’” she recalls.

In late 2016, Yebba took a major step toward turning that message into a reality when she delivered a captivating Sofar Sounds performance in New York. The buzz surrounding the newcomer’s larger-than-life voice was palpable — but weeks later, the momentum came to a screeching halt when her mother committed suicide. “That completely derailed the excitement and the hope of [being an artist] ever coming around,” says the singer, now 26.

But just before 2016 ended, Yebba agreed to perform alongside Chance the Rapper for his *Saturday Night Live* appearance — and ended up stealing the show. She and her team, then a bare-bones operation led by co-manager Ross Michaels and his Park Avenue Artists team, decided to capitalize on the moment and uploaded a clip from the Sofar set of Yebba singing her first original song, “My Mind.” It went viral, raking in over 17 million YouTube views. “It was like a one-two punch,” says Michaels.

That kind of start-stop trajectory has hampered Yebba’s promising launch for nearly five years, with her fans patiently begging for her debut album online. “There has never been a moment where I was like, ‘Man, we really lost out,’ because when she puts out a song, it’s amazing,” says Michaels. “It has this earthquake effect.”

In 2017, Yebba independently released her debut single, the stunning midtempo soul-pop track “Evergreen.” A publishing deal with Pulse followed, through which she met Mark Ronson, as did a succession of high-profile collaborations with PJ Morton (for which she earned her first Grammy Award nod), Robert Glasper, Ed Sheeran and Ronson as well. And while her early experiences with Chance the Rapper did make



## “When she puts out a song, it has this earthquake effect.”

—ROSS MICHAELS, CO-MANAGER

her consider the independent route, by the end of 2018, Yebba signed a recording contract with RCA. “I made sure I did two-and-a-half years of self-homework, of digesting a trauma before I could make a commitment to an entire company,” she says.

With a record deal in hand, Yebba buckled down on her debut album, *Dawn*, named after her late mother. She recorded the project — which features A\$AP Rocky, Smino and Questlove on drums — at Electric Lady Studios in New York with Ronson, who produced and affectionately called it a “death playlist” throughout the process. Full of powerfully performed and lushly arranged songs that center on grief, acceptance and forgiveness — with a bit of Yebba’s Southern sass sprinkled throughout — the album was designed to signify an end and a beginning. “You can never put a lid on grief,” she said last year ahead of its scheduled release on June 27, her mother’s birthday, “but I think that it’ll bring some closure to those years where I feel like I was just sleepwalking straight through them.”

But as the release date neared and the pandemic worsened, something wasn’t right. “I knew she wanted to get this record out on her mother’s birthday, but you started to see the pressure of getting a record out so quickly and all the things that she had

to do,” says RCA senior vp A&R Adonis Sutherlin, who was instrumental in signing Yebba to the label. “She went home for one week, then lockdown happened, and she’s there for two months in the same house where it all happened. I’m watching her every day on Zooms telling her story to people, and she’s sitting in the same spot that she found her mother. You started to see that this isn’t good. I went to her and said, ‘You need time.’”

Yebba says that she “disappeared” for those first few months of lockdown: She saw a few therapists, rewatched *Everybody Hates Chris* and started to read Louise Hay’s book of affirmations, *You Can Heal Your Life*. When she returned to the city, she reworked *Dawn* — now due Sept. 10 — scrapping interludes, adjusting the track list and making production tweaks. “What comes off, I’m sure, are very tiny changes,” she says. “It doesn’t take anything for a label to get a different playlist or one new master. But for me, it was like changing my world. I felt like I cleaned out my closet, and that’s a really liberating feeling. I needed every single second of this extra time to do it.”

She now wonders if songs that she created years ago have evolved with her and are less clouded, resulting in a more vital project than the one she nearly released last year, with tracks like the twisty, ominous “Boomer-

ang” now arriving with a firmer shock to the system. Sutherlin recalls driving back from the “Boomerang” music video shoot with Yebba when she played him new music she’s already making progress on — and is eager to share.

He says Yebba told him early on that *Dawn* “doesn’t tell the true story of Abbey, it doesn’t represent exactly who Abbey is.” As a result, its follow-up may be a more accurate introduction to her mainstream potential. Sutherlin expects *Dawn* and its eventual sequel to function similarly to Adele’s promising 2008 debut, *19*, and its blockbuster follow-up, 2011’s *21*. “Some people would say Adele’s best record was *19*, and some say *21* — I go with *21* because of the commerciality and musicality of it; everything was there,” he says. “I think that *Dawn* will be some of [Yebba’s] fans’ favorite, and then the next one will be the album that people say, ‘Holy fuck.’”

Likely because “life is starting to feel good again,” as Yebba puts it. “I was walking to Electric Lady the other day — first of all, I’m not an active bitch — but I felt the sun, I felt the breeze, and I just had a moment where I looked up off of the asphalt and started to tear up,” she says. “I think I never thought that I would be happy again, and to have a moment to be like, ‘I’m OK?’ I’m fucking OK.”



ON SALE  
OCTOBER  
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INSIDE LOOK

# All Hail

The latest women-powered, music-centric show gets its edge thanks to executive music producer Swizz Beatz

BY GAIL MITCHELL

**A**FTER A 20-YEAR estrangement owing to personal travails and jealousies, can four women in their 40s reclaim the '90s fame and swagger they achieved as R&B and hip-hop stars? That one-line pitch is the premise behind *Queens*, which, ahead of the ABC drama series' premiere on Oct. 19, is already picking up must-watch buzz.

The hype is thanks in part to the cast, which brings together three popular '90s hitmakers as members of the fictional group Nasty Bitches: Brandy (who plays Naomi, aka Xplicit Lyrics), Eve (Brianna, aka Professor Sex) and 3LW founding member Naturi Naughton (Jill Da Thrill). Rounding out the quartet is actress Nadine Velazquez (Valeria, better known as Butter Pecan).

Also driving viewer anticipation is the promise of original songs inspired by the fertile '90s era of R&B/hip-hop. Swizz Beatz, who has recently been mining nostalgia as the co-founder of *Verzuz*, was tapped as executive music producer to ensure the authenticity of the Nasty Bitches'

onscreen repertoire. "Eve is my sister," says Swizz, who broke through alongside the rapper as the in-house producer for Ruff Ryders Entertainment in the late '90s, later producing for JAY-Z, Beyoncé, Nicki Minaj and many others. "So the idea of being able to sonically revisit the '90s where we started and create a strong sound was a win-win."

Swizz and a support team that includes six writers began crafting the show's music six months ago. Writing a lot of songs on demand, so to speak, for a weekly series is a feat where "you definitely have to catch your flow and move like clockwork," says Swizz.

The music for *Queens* captures R&B/hip-hop's '90s boundary-pushing evolution, with artists embracing everything from new jack swing and neo-soul to hip-hop's empowering battle-rap attitude. As Eve's character Brianna declares against a hypnotic drum beat during the group's comeback performance, "I used to be a nasty bitch, but tonight, I'm a queen!"

The line nods to a central theme of *Queens*: artists of a certain age still being able to compete in the contemporary



From left: Eve, Brandy, Naughton and Velazquez.

music scene, as evidenced offscreen by catalog streaming spikes sparked by *Verzuz* battles. For instance, Brandy's own match-up with Monica in August 2020 drove a 444.6% day-over-day catalog streaming gain, according to MRC Data. Now, in the wake of *Verzuz*, Swizz is pushing for new platforms like *Queens* that can provide more opportunities for veteran voices to keep climbing.

"A lot of people like to put an age limit on our culture's music; if you're 30, you're old and it's over," he says. "This is while many non-African American acts are still making albums and doing tours. *Verzuz* has

shown that it's not about age. That great, timeless music is about what you bring as a creative — and the access you have to get out in front of people's faces."

When it comes to winning over viewers, Swizz believes the shared experience of the show's stars — having worked in the music industry in the '90s — will give *Queens* an edge. "These ladies may be acting," says Swizz, "but they know exactly what this time period feels like." Adds Eve: "I try to make sure things from my side are as authentic as possible, because people who know me and my music from that time will definitely know if it isn't." **B**

Q & A

## THE ROCK HALL'S WINNING PLAY

"CLEVELAND IS A FOOTBALL town," says Nwaka Onwusa, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame's chief curator/vp curatorial affairs. It's why, she says, the museum decided to open its latest exhibit, "The Biggest Show on Turf: 55 Years of Halftime Shows," when the city hosted the 86th NFL draft

in April. Ahead of the 36th annual Rock Hall induction ceremony on Oct. 30, Onwusa reveals the reasons for extending the exhibit through the fall — and which new inductee she would like to see play a future halftime show.

**Why do you think the exhibit has done well enough to extend its run?**

It's really an opportunity to relive some of those memorable Super Bowl moments that are cultural moments that make a huge impact. You get an in-depth look at what it takes to make this 13-and-a-half-minute show come to life.

**What are your favorite halftime shows?**

The list really goes on, but the two most significant ones for me are U2 in 2002, a moment of healing for the country five months after 9/11, and Prince — may he rest in peace — in 2007 when it rained purple rain. That was an unforgettable moment.

**The exhibit goes back to the early years of halftime shows, which were very different from what we have come to know.**

It has not always been star-studded moments with Prince and [2017 performer] Lady Gaga. We have to pay homage

and credit to [1993 performer] Michael Jackson, who really set the tone for what a Super Bowl halftime show could be.

**What are the most popular attractions with museumgoers?**

It's definitely Prince. We recently added Tom Petty's performance outfit and guitar [from his 2008 performance with The Heartbreakers]. And we can't forget about Left Shark and Katy Perry's [2015] performance. Having Left Shark in the exhibit has been a huge, huge win for us.

**Of the upcoming class of inductees — including**



Left Shark on display at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

**The Go-Go's, JAY-Z, Foo Fighters and LL Cool J — whom are you most looking forward to seeing at a future halftime show?**

LL is such a dynamic performer. It would be really cool to see him take the stage. —PAUL GREIN



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From left: McCrory, Fang,  
Yates, Ebert and Lyons.

# 'Glow' Your Own Way

Turnstile's bold new album could deliver the group's singular brand of hard rock to the masses

BY JASON LIPSHUTZ

**C**AN A HARDCORE punk band impact the U.S. mainstream in 2021? Turnstile may soon provide an answer: Ahead of its third album, *Glow On* (out Aug. 27 on Roadrunner Records), the Baltimore quintet has been steadily gaining buzz beyond the hard-rock community, thanks in part to enviable live bookings, new collaborations with Blood Orange mastermind Dev Hynes and recent social media shoutouts from Blink-182's Tom DeLonge and Paramore's Hayley Williams. ("This band has always been so cool and the

new music smackssss me," Williams tweeted in July.)

The major cosigns coincide with an album that is both more ambitious and accessible than Turnstile's 2018 Roadrunner debut, *Time & Space*, which peaked atop *Billboard's* Heatseekers Albums chart and has earned 36,000 equivalent album units, according to MRC Data. "We've never been this happy with how everything has turned out," says drummer Daniel Fang. "I feel like a teenager putting out my first demo." Elektra Music Group senior vp Chris Brown adds that there's a palpable excitement around the band

within Warner Music Group. "People are coming out of the woodwork just talking about the record, wanting to see this band win."

Turnstile didn't have grand aspirations when childhood friends Brendan Yates (frontman) and Brady Ebert (lead guitarist) formed the band in Burtonsville, Md., in 2010, with Fang, bassist Franz Lyons and guitarist Pat McCrory soon joining the fold. The group dominated Baltimore's hardcore scene in the early 2010s and issued debut album *Nonstop Feeling* on Reaper Records in 2015, then jumped to Roadrunner for *Time & Space*, all the

while refining its groove-laden brand of metalcore. Now the band's crossover potential rests on that expansive sound: *Glow On* combines mosh-ready riffs and Yates' caustic vocal jabs with disparate elements including piano lines ("Don't Play") and Mustard-esque beats ("Holiday").

Turnstile made gestures outside of its genre prior to the album: After Diplo was corralled to co-produce a song on *Time & Space*, Turnstile released *Share a View*, a dance-infused collaborative EP with Australian producer Mall Grab, last year. For *Glow On*, the act brought in Hynes to contribute to three songs, including psychedelic singalong "Alien Love Call."

Yates, who co-produced the album with Mike Elizondo (Gary Clark Jr., Fiona Apple), says the band wanted to inject "more imagination into these songs" and didn't shy away from instruments or production

techniques not necessarily associated with heavy rock.

“It’s allowing your gut instinct to come out in the music, whether it’s with percussion stuff, pianos or different sounds,” he says. “Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t. But if it pops up in your mind, it’s for a reason, and we always try to capture that.” To ensure each detail popped, a painstaking mixing and mastering process lasted nearly a year after the album was recorded in summer 2020.

The release of *Glow On*, which was previewed by the four-song *Turnstile Love Connection* EP in June, coincides with the group’s return to the stage. Headlining gigs will take place between appearances at festivals like Firefly and Slipknot’s Knotfest, as well as dates in support of hip-hop duo \$uicideboy\$, in the fall.

“The intersection of shows coming back and this album coming out around the same time is so revitalizing,” says Fang. Meanwhile, Brown says Turnstile’s team wants to energize its hardcore base while also courting new listeners who may latch on to *Glow On*’s immediate hooks.

“One of our big goals has been building a streaming fan base,” says Brown, “because coming from a niche genre like hardcore, there’s not a ton of streams coming out of that space. So we knew that we needed work to be done there, and we’ve seen great results and some strong support from the [digital service providers].” Turnstile has been featured prominently on current rock, punk and alternative playlists on Spotify, while Brown notes that the band’s first real rock radio push is “something that we may look at doing a little bit after the record comes out.”

Whether or not *Glow On* is the album to facilitate Turnstile’s breakthrough, Brown sees an undeniable opportunity for the act to serve as a natural interloper between hard-rock purists and the sonic melting pot of the mainstream. “They can be a face for where music is today, as far as being genre-agnostic,” he says. “Rock is, unfortunately, segmented in a lot of ways, but we see hip-hop artists wearing metal T-shirts. I think we’ve been waiting for an artist who can really bring different sounds together, update the genre and change the game.”

For the members of Turnstile, the commercial viability of *Glow On* is less of a focus than unveiling the project that required the band’s longest start-to-finish recording process to date. “It feels... not scary, but vulnerable, in a way,” says Yates. “You never really know what will happen when someone finally hears what you’ve been doing for so long.” **B**



Q&A

## PARTY FOR ONE

Chlöe Bailey gets ready to step out with her solo debut

BY DARLENE ADEROJU

**I**’M WRAPPING IT UP with such bad-bitch energy,” says Chlöe Bailey of her upcoming solo debut album. Although the 23-year-old R&B singer has already scored millions of followers and four Grammy Award nominations alongside her best friend and sister, Halle Bailey, as the duo Chloë x Halle, she says that working on the project (of which she’s yet to reveal the name) on her own has been “the most liberated and happy that I have felt.” (She does, however, tease more new music from the duo as well.)

It’s the latest step in Bailey’s path to individuality, following recurring appearances on *Grown-ish* and a leading role in the upcoming thriller *Jane*. As for her album — on which she confidently showcases her skills as a singer, songwriter and producer — Bailey says it will be here sooner than fans think. “It’s

90% done,” she says of the project, out on Parkwood Entertainment/Columbia, adding that she’s narrowing down the tracklist from about 50 songs. And while she says this project is “definitely more pop” — as heard in the upbeat lead single, “Have Mercy” — she asserts: “I’m creating my own lane, as well as paying homage to the ones who have inspired me. It has been fun finding my voice.”

**How has going solo changed your creative process?**

When my sister and I create, we don’t try to dim the other’s light, so the creative process for me has been exactly the same. Now it’s just me in my bedroom. But it was a little scary in the beginning, because [I was used to] having Halle be there to ask, “Is this sounding good?” Having her sign of approval meant so much to me. Now I have to be my own voice

and be proud and confident in what I bring to the table.

**Do you feel more pressure to succeed?**

I don’t feel pressure when it comes to awards and accolades — I feel pressure with making myself proud and making sure that I’m saying and singing the things that I want to say and sing. I’m not going to lie [and say] that it doesn’t go through my mind, like, “I hope people like this sound from me, because it’s different from what me and my sister do together.” Other than that, as long as I’m walking in my light and my purpose, I’m OK.

**Why now for a solo debut?**

My sister went to London to film her movie [the upcoming live-action version of *The Little Mermaid*] for seven or eight months, and it was so hard being without her. That is when I started creating my project. I found my confidence — like, “OK, you can do this now.” I always have my sister’s support, and she will always have mine, no matter what we do together or individually.

**You and your sister were signed by Beyoncé’s Parkwood Entertainment for your label and management. Do you want to follow in her footsteps?**

It would be a dream to be able to have certain accolades that she has and go to some of the places that she has been and create a long-standing career with such longevity. I admire that, and it inspires me every day. That’s my greatest dream, but I also want to do it in my way with my voice and how I want to say it. Any time people want to compare, that puts a huge smile on my face, because that’s the biggest compliment anyone can give me. I have always been inspired by her, ever since I was a little girl. I’m happy and I’m grateful — and I hope to make my name shine in my own way.

**What do you hope to inspire with this album?**

That when people look at me, they look at themselves and they’re like, “I can be myself completely and unapologetically, no matter what the world says.” No matter if people are saying I’m doing too much, it’s OK, because that’s who I am. I’m not forcing it or being anyone different. If I listened to what people said or what they told me and I dumbled it down, that’s when I’m not being myself. **B**

## A GLOBAL FIGHT CONTINUES

On Sept. 25, an eclectic roster of A-listers will perform across six continents during the 24-hour Global Citizen Live, rallying to fight climate change and extreme poverty, and aiming to help the 41 million people on the brink of famine. These are issues that have only been compounded by the pandemic, notes Global Citizen CEO Hugh Evans.

“We’re going bigger than ever to reflect the scale and severity of the crisis,” he says. “This is not a celebration — it’s a moment of unity to rally the world, to petition world leaders, CEOs, philanthropists to commit to solutions that only governments and those with billions of dollars can bring about.”

Musicians and industry power players have been integral to the organization’s success since its inaugural concert in 2012, addressing world leaders on social media and behind the scenes to secure donations. After the deadly Beirut explosion in August 2020, superstar manager Wassim “Sal” Slaiby teamed with Global Citizen to help raise \$1.2 million, which helped provide 7,600 people with food packages that could feed a family of five for one month. “We’ve become a crucial partner to government leaders, key [nongovernmental organizations] and private sector change-makers to harness our collective power to affect meaningful, lasting progress,” says Universal Music Group executive vp Michele Anthony, who sits on the organization’s executive management board and recalls hosting the first festival meeting in her living room.

Coldplay, BTS, Billie Eilish, Ed Sheeran, Metallica and Jennifer Lopez are among the acts due to appear at this year’s event, which the organization admits was a logistical roller coaster “as the pandemic continues to spread and schedules and tour routing continue to shift as a result,” says Katie Hill, senior vp music, entertainment and artist relations at Global Citizen.

Evans believes artists keep returning to support the movement, and to perform for free, because they can see the tangible actions taking place as a result. Usher — who will perform for a vaccinated, masked audience — agrees: “When the lights go down and the performers have left the stage, Global Citizen is continuing its work, day in and day out, to defeat poverty and protect our planet.”

But, as Evans adds, the performers are making an impact, too. “Artists are activists. Their platform just happens to be an awfully lot bigger than [yours or mine].” —JOE LYNCH



Lopez onstage at Global Citizen VAX LIVE in May.



GEEKING OUT WITH...

## Poppy

After establishing herself as a purveyor of bright and bouncy pop songs on her 2017 debut album, Poppy has consistently reinvented herself, embracing everything from electronica to metal — even earning a Grammy Award nomination for the latter — and all the while expanding her fan base. Poppy pivots again on *Flux*, her fourth album (out Sept. 24 on Sumerian Records), on which she teamed with producer Justin Meldal-Johnsen (Paramore, M83, St. Vincent) for an alt-rock romp. “It’s about being in flux, of feeling in between or ever-changing,” says Poppy, 26. The bridge of the title track is particularly important to her, as she screams over crunching guitars, “I won’t fear what I don’t know ... You gotta flux and flow, flow, flow.” It’s a motto Poppy lives by, and one that she reminded herself of often through the pandemic. Another result of her time spent at home? “I just fell more in love with things that I’ve always loved.” —MIKE WASS

### '90s MUSIC

While recording *Flux*, Poppy felt most drawn to female alt-rockers from the 1990s like Jack Off Jill, citing the band’s *Clear Hearts Grey Flowers* album as a favorite. Another go-to was Veruca Salt, which Poppy recalls discovering after picking up a copy of *American Thighs* at Newbury Comics. (She was so young at the time, still living in Boston, her sister had to drive her.) “I only bought it because of the artwork,” she says now, “but it became one of my favorite albums.” She more recently discovered Buffalo Daughter, an act she found “by doing some musical research online. I love everything about them sonically.”

### CLAUSTROPHOBIA

“Listening back, a lot of the underlying currents on the album remind me of the feeling of walls shrinking,” says Poppy, noting that she has suffered from the fearful sensation since childhood. Some of those same feelings ended up influencing the project’s overall tone. “Listening to the album isn’t stressful, but certain lines remind me of feeling suffocated,” she continues. “[As] I read more about it, things in my past started to pop up in my head as triggers.”

### HOUSEPLANTS

Like so many others during the pandemic, Poppy ended up with “a forest growing in my home,” she says of her many houseplants, from herbs and vegetables to her favorite, the Pachira Aquatica, a tropical tree that grows in swamps and is currently 8 feet tall. Not only did the plants help turn her attention away from music at times, she says, but “honestly, they lighten up the room,” which is pink. “The pink and the green look so nice together.”

### THAT THING YOU DO!

A huge fan of the Tom Hanks-directed film — a 1996 musical comedy about a 1960s pop band — Poppy has long loved its title track recorded by the fictional, Beatles-inspired band The Wonders. “I wanted to write a song inspired by that,” says Poppy, noting how catchy it is. Now, on *Flux*, she finally has, as the album’s latest single, “So Mean,” is perhaps the most pop-leaning track on the set.

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# BET

BTS photographed Aug. 10 at Bieber House in Seoul. Back row: Jungkook (left) and RM. Center row, from left: V, Suga and Jimin. Front row: J-Hope (left) and Jin.

Styling by Kim Young Jin

Jungkook wears a Dries Van Noten jacket, shirt and pants; Tom Ford belt; and Carmina boots. RM wears a Berluti jacket, turtleneck and pants, and Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello shoes. V wears a Munn jacket, shirt and pants; Prada shoes; and Coldframe necklace. Suga wears a Fendi shirt and pants, and Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello boots. Jimin wears a Munn jacket and shirt, and Gucci pants. J-Hope wears a Fendi shirt and pants, Crockett & Jones shoes and Jiye Shin necklace and ring. Jin wears a Tom Ford jacket, shirt, pants, scarf, belt and boots.





# BTS

Seven guys from South Korea never imagined they'd become the world's biggest boy band — or their country's major cultural export. Now, impending military service, their agency's business and their intense fan base could make their future even more complicated

BY JEYUP S. KWAAK

PHOTOGRAPHED BY SUNHYE SHIN



**F**

**FROM FAR DOWN A HALLWAY** in the new Seoul headquarters of HYBE Corp., a crystal-clear falsetto rings above distant footsteps and murmurs, singing the refrain to the blockbuster K-pop group BTS' summer jam "Butter" — the longest-reigning

No. 1 single on the Billboard Hot 100 this year. As the sounds come closer, a dozen-strong posse, all wearing face masks, passes by.

Until the world's biggest boy band reappears minutes later, it is hard to connect the dots and realize that the hallway dozen was BTS, flanked by

five members of their management team. Each BTS member is so dressed down in a strikingly regular-guy wardrobe (oversize T-shirts and pants, bare feet in sandals) that they appear more like college kids en route to their dorm. They exchange banter about terrible hangovers from the previous night and the effect alcohol has on their skin — a common topic among young people here.

When the seven members — Jin and Suga, 28; J-Hope, 27; RM, 26; V and Jimin, 25; and Jungkook, the mystery hallway singer, is 23 — sit down and begin answering questions, however, they look and sound like the veteran pop stars they are. Seated in foldaway chairs on a stage — where the white sur-

faces bear shoe prints and other marks from a recent livestreamed appearance on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* — they speak politely, eloquently and with conviction, emanating the humble charisma that has charmed millions of fans into supporting them with an almost religious fervor.

"We are not exceptional people — our plate is small," says rapper Suga, the group's bookworm, using the Korean expression for lack of ability or small-mindedness. "We're these rice-bowl-size guys getting so much poured into it. It's overflowing." V chimes in: "The pressure has been overwhelming."

"We've been avoiding blowing our own horn since 2017 because we're afraid of payback someday," adds RM, the rapper who usually acts as the de facto spokesman-leader. "We constantly think about karma."

That kind of self-deprecation is, says RM, at least somewhat just part of BTS' "Korean DNA." But it's also the product of a stratospheric rise to global stardom and unusual staying power that, the group itself is first to admit, has come as a surprise. Following the viral success of PSY's dance anthem "Gangnam Style" in 2012, multiple K-pop acts from the early 2010s gained some traction overseas, but none came close to penetrating mainstream pop the way that song did. That a boy band from a cash-strapped agency like BigHit Entertainment — recently rebranded as HYBE, which went public in October — could conquer the global music industry a few years later was unthinkable. "We made our debut through such a small company, and it's been tough from day one," says Suga. "My dream was never huge."

In 2014, BTS was handing out free tickets on the streets of Los Angeles to perform to a crowd of about 200 at West Hollywood's Troubadour. Three years later, at the 2017 Billboard Music Awards — the first time the group says it witnessed the power of U.S. fandom — it won top social artist, breaking Justin Bieber's six-year streak. By the following year, BTS was selling out

stadiums around the world (including in the United States) and regularly breaking records: five No. 1 albums on the Billboard 200 since 2018, the fastest accumulation by a group since The Beatles in 1966-68; five No. 1 hits on the Hot 100 in under a year, the quickest run of five since Michael Jackson in 1987-88; several music videos garnering over 1 billion views each on YouTube. It's the first K-pop act to be nominated for a Grammy, and earlier this year the band won four BBMAS. According to IFPI, its album *Map of the Soul: 7* was the world's best-selling last year; follow-up *BE* was ranked fourth despite being released in late November.

Alongside BTS' international explosion, HYBE



v



Jungkook



Jimin

has likewise transformed. A month after rebranding in March, the company paid \$1.05 billion to buy uber-manager Scooter Braun's Ithaca Holdings — and went from being a small agency with a valuation of 10 billion South Korean won (at the time about \$9.3 million) in 2011 to an industry juggernaut worth over 1,000 times more (about \$9.5 billion). In turn, BTS' members, who own shares in HYBE, have become multimillionaires, each holding equity worth about 20 billion won (\$17 million).

"As we've gotten older, our perspective has become wider," says Jin, the vocalist who often introduces himself as "worldwide handsome" to deafening screams from fans. "You can't ignore experience," adds J-Hope, the group's lead dancer and most cheerful member. "When we were 20, we had the guts. We charged forward without looking. Now we're more prudent." "I've become calmer," says Jimin. "There are more things to consider in my head."

The seven men all have a lot more weighing on their minds these days. Their importance as cultural ambassadors for South Korea has become so great that this past December, in an unprecedented move, the country's government changed a law, allowing the group to wait until age 30 to enlist in the military. (Previously, it had been 28.) But with Jin turning 30 at the end of 2022, BTS faces a lengthy period with at least one member missing — and should they all choose to serve at the same time, as some stock analysts in South Korea have predicted, a group hiatus could last about 18 months (the minimum length of service).

That's bad news for HYBE. BTS is the dominant

## **"We are not exceptional people — our plate is small. We're these rice-bowl-size guys getting so much poured into it."**

—SUGA

engine behind the company's income, bringing in about 85% of its 796.3 billion won (\$680 million) in total 2020 revenue. Though HYBE has begun diversifying its portfolio of talent — signing new K-pop acts and, starting next year, partnering with Universal Music Group (UMG) on a U.S.-based boy band talent show — it remains unclear whether anything could replace BTS on the company's balance sheet.

On top of these pressures, both the group and the agency are coming under scrutiny for BTS' recent chart successes, which fans of some competing acts say are achieved through concerted "manipulation" antithetical to the charts' purpose of accurately highlighting the world's most popular acts. After "Butter" and the Ed Sheeran co-write "Permission To Dance" debuted atop the Hot 100, where "Butter" ruled for nine nonconsecutive weeks, some noted how the group's fans, known as ARMY, organize themselves on social media, using tactics like bulk purchases of physical albums and coordinated digital buying to influence chart performance.

Both HYBE and BTS reject accusations that chart manipulation accounts for the group's success. BTS'

members say that they accept that their fame will peak and, at some point, evaporate — after all, BTS has already outlasted the industry-standard seven-year life span of a K-pop group. In the meantime, though, their runaway success has caused a reckoning in the industry. And whether BTS' mobilization of fandom on a global scale can be sustained — and possibly be replicated for other acts — will not only decide the future of BTS and HYBE, but also define their legacy.

HYBE was "very smart in understanding that the future of music needs to look at the present — that music is what people use to identify themselves," says Mark Mulligan, a music-industry analyst at the consultancy MIDiA Research. The rise of streaming in recent years, he adds, has loosened the emotional bond between artists and consumers. "Outside of Korea, in the U.S. and the U.K., at a time when BTS was still singing mostly in Korean, there was a whole generation of teenagers who just knew that there was a hole in their musical soul. They knew something was missing, but they didn't know what it was. And then, suddenly, [BTS] comes along, and they

say, 'This makes sense. I can say who I am through being a fan of this band.'

What the future of BTS looks like, and what it will be most remembered for, remains more of an unknown — especially to the group itself. "When our history is over, it'll be clearer. When the dust settles and we come down from our pedestal, we'll be able to tell," says RM. "At the moment, we're standing in the eye of the cyclone. I don't think we or anyone else can accurately say anything."

**W** HETHER IT'S performing live or in one of its technicolor music videos, BTS has always projected a kind of debonair effortlessness: flawless dancing, smooth live vocals, perfectly calibrated harmonies. But as its members tell it, being BTS has not been easy for a few years now.

To anyone paying attention, this isn't a shock. Back in 2018, after winning the top prize at the year-end Mnet Asia Music Awards ceremony, most of BTS broke down in tears at the podium, and Jin confessed that they had considered breaking up earlier that year due to emotional hardship. Recalling that moment today, the band insists quitting was never seriously on the table but admits its members have suffered from burnout.

"We used to get the monthly calendar with work scheduled on 28.5 days," says Jin — a grueling though not unheard of schedule for K-pop groups. During their contract renewal negotiations in the same year as their Mnet appearance, they received a month-long vacation, their first real break since they had joined the company as trainees. "The road up to here has been arduous. It's taken a toll on my health, and I think we've put in every bit of our youth and more," says lead vocalist Jungkook.

Here in South Korea — a patriotic nation that sees itself as a small state squeezed by superpowers like the United States, China and Russia — the idea of victory on an international stage has always carried tremendous weight. So the fact that a Korean act performing songs in the Korean language has moved so many people beyond its own borders has become an enormous source of national pride — and placed a degree of pressure on BTS far beyond that of any usual cultural export.

The South Korean defense ministry's December announcement that it would allow pop stars to delay their military draft and continue their careers — with strict qualifications that, so far, only BTS meets — was historic. The law currently exempts only certain elite athletes, classical musicians and dancers, and while BTS isn't fully exempt, the decision is a clear indication of how pivotal to the country's soft power BTS has become. In late July, President Moon Jae-in appointed BTS the Special

Presidential Envoy for Future Generations and Culture, giving the group diplomatic passports. That status pushed it to the front of the line for COVID-19 vaccinations — a real privilege in a country that has struggled with shortages — and in September, the group is set to make its third appearance at the United Nations General Assembly. "We expect BTS to make great contributions to raising our country's prestige as a leading nation in the post-COVID age,"

the president's office, known as Blue House, said in a statement at the time.

HYBE has its own set of expectations for BTS. Since 2019 — when, according to HYBE's latest prospectus, BTS accounted for 84.7% of its revenue — the company has been growing revenue streams that don't directly involve BTS' active participation (fan merchandise, video games). Per the prospectus, in preparation for BTS' contract run-



RM

ning out in 2024, HYBE has plans to debut at least six new groups starting around 2022. Still, HYBE executives (along with BTS itself) say there are no fixed plans yet for how to deal with the band's forthcoming military service.

That could add up to a financial punch in the gut — and BTS seems well aware of how its continued success helps stave off that possibility. “When you watch the Olympics, you can see how hard every athlete worked to get there. But then what the public wants are the medals, isn't it?” says Suga. “It's not something that will change even if we talk about it one way or another. We just want to be good to the people who love us. That's what lasts in the long run.”

Especially when those people make up an ARMY.

**V**IRTUALLY ALL MAJOR POP stars rely on a loyal fandom that will unite to buy and stream their latest release. But ARMY has taken that new norm to a whole other level.

“This is a result of a struggle, and I don't want to overlook that,” says RM of his group's success — referring not to its own hours of toiling behind the scenes, but to the amount of work ARMY exerts to ensure its object of adulation stays on top of the world *and* the charts.

Shin Cho, head of K-pop and J-pop at Warner Music Group, says this stems from a particular fan

culture in K-pop that pulls out all the stops to ensure whomever they're supporting will get mainstream attention. “Fans will do whatever they can to create the success story,” says Cho.

But just how much they'll do has recently come into question. Through above-board means, ARMY has long exploited loopholes in music chart rules (including those of *Billboard*) to propel BTS singles' performance. *Billboard's* rules, for example, allow people to buy a certain number of versions of songs or albums per week, and any sales per version exceeding that cap do not contribute to the artist's weekly sales total or chart placement. For a K-pop group like BTS that typically releases multiple versions of a particular single — including both digital and physical — that can add up to multiple sales per consumer. (“Butter,” for instance, had six digital versions plus two physical singles.) On Twitter, where BTS has over 38 million followers, fans acting on behalf of ARMY will call out for assistance in pushing certain singles on days when they can have the most effect on chart performance.

So while other singles on the Hot 100 typically rely on streaming for the majority of their weighted points (followed by airplay and then sales), the chart-topping performance of BTS' “Butter” in July, for example, was propelled mostly by sales, the bulk of which flowed directly through BTS' own webstore, say sources familiar with the matter. That webstore, those sources say, does not recognize prior

purchases or limit how many copies a fan can buy, unlike iTunes, which notes when someone already owns a copy.

While other artists' fan cohorts also prefer direct-to-consumer purchasing for sustained sales runs and have tried tactics similar to ARMY's, none have done so as effectively or with as much apparent coordination, those sources say. And this summer, when “Butter” and “Permission to Dance” reigned atop the Hot 100 for 10 straight weeks total, fans of artists like Olivia Rodrigo and Dua Lipa — whose own singles were shut out from the No. 1 spot during that time — began calling ARMY's work akin to cheating.

On the July 24 chart, “Permission to Dance” debuted at No. 1 with 140,100 total sales, according to MRC Data, with “Butter” falling six spots to No. 7 and Rodrigo's “good 4 u” holding at No. 2. But then, something highly unusual happened: The next week, “Butter” returned to No. 1 (leapfrogging Rodrigo and others) and switched places with “Permission,” which slipped to No. 7.

Rodrigo's fans claimed that it wasn't a coincidence. @scrappyseal, noting the reversal, tweeted that BTS had “0 GP [general public] support. A real smash is sustained by the GP support.” Another fan of both Rodrigo and Lipa's, @lipaanostalgia, described BTS as having “fraudulent ways” and its fans as “involved in chart manipulation” and “mass buying.”

Suga





Jin

ARMY's crowdfunding efforts are certainly near legendary at this point. As screen grabs of account balances and bulk purchase receipts on Twitter reviewed by *Billboard* show, BTS fans use PayPal to pool money from ARMY around the globe and make the purchases that will count toward U.S. sales. "ARMY WHERE ARE YOU??" @borakore52 asked in an Aug. 5 tweet. "I have enough for 448 sets of 16 PTD plus 24 Butter!! Even if you cannot buy until later, please get your requests in ASAP!!"

Some ARMY organizers then offer to reimburse other fans for purchases. The source of those funds remains unclear, and some BTS fans have expressed

concern about revealing more about their methods. "Feeling the need to be a bit more discreet on the timeline about what we do and how we do it," @RafranzDavis wrote during a funding run in early August. "It's annoying but thnx to everyone that just gets it." (MRC Data has a standard process for examining any suspicious chart activity; *Billboard* would not allow sales funded by an act or its label/management to count toward chart performance.)

These efforts have buoyed the group's singles, as they have sailed to the top of the charts despite BTS' weaker streaming numbers and radio airplay than some of its pop contemporaries. "It's a fair question,"

says RM of allegations that ARMY's work amounts to chart manipulation. "But if there is a conversation inside *Billboard* about what being No. 1 should represent, then it's up to them to change the rules and make streaming weigh more on the ranking. Slamming us or our fans for getting to No. 1 with physical sales and downloads, I don't know if that's right ... It just feels like we're easy targets because we're a boy band, a K-pop act, and we have this high fan loyalty."

When asked if HYBE itself organizes fans in any chart manipulation, Shin Young-Jae — president of BTS' label, BigHit Music (a HYBE subsidiary) — answers with a chuckle. "Wouldn't it be nice if we actually had the ability to mastermind such a thing?" he says. "I get that there are market developments [related to BTS] that are head-scratchers for some people. But I don't believe the U.S. market is one that can be handily topped by downloads alone. We think the songs' impact was shown in many ways, and we are proud of that achievement."

Still, HYBE appears to be doing its best to keep the BTS fandom close. In recent years, the company has promoted its platform Weverse, where stars and fans upload text and video updates, as well as other exclusive content, without the need for YouTube or Twitter. In its earnings report for the first half of 2021, HYBE says Weverse "not only consolidates and solidifies fandom, it also supports fandom's longevity by fostering community activity between fans," adding that HYBE itself generates direct revenue through merch and content purchases.

HYBE has also become a major investor in Fave, a new superfan-engagement platform that on Aug. 18 onboarded ARMY. According to CEO/founder Jacquelle Amankonah Horton, HYBE is especially interested in Fave's marketplace feature, which allows fans to create and sell unique artist merch. "They realize that fans are interested in each other, want to

hang out with each other, and there's a way to make money from fans [making] things," says Amankonah Horton. "I thought I would be learning from them because they've nailed this fandom world in the East. And they were saying, 'No, you extend our business model because you're tapping into fan-to-fan.'"

Though still in its nascent stage, HYBE's involvement with the likes of Weverse and Fave could set a new template for fan engagement in the industry. A strategic partnership between HYBE and UMG has already led to young artists such as Gracie Abrams and Jeremy Zucker opening Weverse accounts. K-pop artists from rival



Clockwise from left: J-Hope, RM, Suga, Jin, Jimin, V and Jungkook.

J-Hope wears a Bode shirt and pants, and Gucci shoes. RM wears a Hermes sweatshirt, T-shirt and pants, Suga wears a Gucci shirt, pants, socks and necklace, and Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello shoes. Jin wears a Bode jacket and pants, Gucci shirt and Prada shoes. Jimin wears a Wales Bonner cardigan and Gucci shirt and pants. V wears a Bode jacket, Wales Bonner shirt and pants, and Prada shoes. Jungkook wears a Louis Vuitton shirt, sweater, jeans, sneakers and necklace.





**“Slamming us or our fans for getting to No. 1 with physical sales and downloads, I don’t know if that’s right ... It just feels like we’re easy targets because we’re a boy band, a K-pop act, and we have this high fan loyalty.”**

—RM

agencies, like Blackpink, have also signed on.

Finding artists who are willing to hold up their end of the fan relationship the way BTS does, on the other hand, may be a challenge. The band says it has never attended an awards-show afterparty in the United States. Instead, it has always been back to a hotel to jump on V-Live, a livestreaming app now merged with Weverse, to celebrate with ARMY. “It’s like a ritual for us,” says RM. BTS has used livestreaming to connect with fans since even before its 2013 debut, at a time when people were buying their first 4G LTE-enabled smartphones, says Lenzo Yoon, co-CEO of HYBE America, the company’s U.S. division. Yoon first proposed the video engagement idea and managed the operation from early on.

Today, the moments BTS shares with ARMY several times a week — whether career-defining or mundane — garner millions of views each. After live performances, fans tell *Billboard*, they receive an email asking what they liked and disliked about them, too.

**L**AST YEAR, BTS FOUND ITSELF forced to do something that the members hadn’t considered could happen in years: playing to an empty house.

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, the group offered a livestreamed pay-per-view concert series, which ended up drawing over 2 million people from around 190 countries and regions. But the lack of a live audience came as a shock. “It was nerve-wracking when we were waiting for the curtain to rise, but when we went onstage, there were just a lot of video cameras in the place the audience was supposed to be,” says Jimin. “I know I should be grateful for the chance to perform at all, but it was painful.”

Suddenly, the most exceptional group in pop music was just like every artist with indefinitely waylaid plans. The members were lonely, taken aback by the sudden change to their usual rhythm. “It sapped our energy and killed our morale,” says RM. “I’ve been getting very pensive lately,” admits Suga. “You know, we haven’t been able to perform in a year and a half, not being able to do the work we do.” “These days, my thoughts are more scattered than they usually are,” says J-Hope. “Sometimes, I just feel like taking some time off. Other times, I feel like I need to keep moving.” V, who calls himself emotional and says he experiences mood swings, recalls that the band has been planning a tour for two years now — yet the wait drags on: “Letting these emotions hurt me, torment me and scream inside me was upsetting.” (He adds that he wrote the track “Blue & Grey” last year as an outlet.)

In lieu of its planned world tour in 2020, BTS pivoted to something more unexpected: singing completely in English. It put out three singles in the language (“Dynamite,” “Butter” and “Permission to Dance”), all of which reached No. 1, with “Dynamite”

and “Butter” receiving mainstream airplay — the band’s first true crossover pop success, marking the first time songs by an all-Korean group hit the top 10 of *Billboard*’s Mainstream Top 40 Airplay chart. But the members say they didn’t all agree that English was a good idea. Both BTS and HYBE executives decline to elaborate, and BigHit Music’s Shin says all discussions were amicable. “I think it’s a testament to the band’s strengths, the way they can come to a friendly resolution and be mindful of the company’s needs,” he says.

RM’s memory differs. “There was no alternative,” he says. And Jin admits that singing in English felt, at first, totally unnatural, saying he learned to mimic the guide track’s pronunciations by writing them down in Korean characters. “The English I learned in class was so different from the English in the song,” he explains. “I had to erase everything in my head first.”

For now — with live performances suspended in Korea and its world tour recently canceled due to pandemic-related logistical difficulties — BTS says it has settled into a familiar routine: spending almost every single day together. But there’s one twist that’s more relaxing than usual — a “9-to-7” schedule. “For the first time in maybe 10 years, we kind of have a clear line between work and life,” says RM. “That’s probably the only good part,” replies Jimin. “It’s still COVID times.” Jungkook says he has been reading critical feedback online to motivate himself; he still practices singing “all the time, even to a pillow pulled up to my face when I’m in a hotel room or at home.”

Whatever music comes out of this time, the band members have little to say about it right now. Only RM articulates what BTS’ top objectives might be — and industry-altering domination outside its home country actually isn’t one. He reiterates a point he has made for a few years now: that the group needs to maintain “the outlier” position and keep its lyrics predominantly in Korean. “I don’t think we could ever be part of the mainstream in the U.S., and I don’t want that either,” he says. “Our ultimate goal is to do a massive stadium tour there. That’s it.”

The seven men’s eyes light up with unmistakable hunger, just as they do every time a tour is mentioned. Nothing else, good or bad, seems to matter. “We’re always ready,” says Jungkook. Jin remembers the difficult talks back in 2018 around BTS’ contract renewal and what has happened since. “We were promised by the agency that they would pull out all the stops for supporting our passion for performing. I think they did keep that promise,” he says. “We ended up telling each other that because we worked so hard up to that point, let’s see how far we can go. I don’t know if I should say this, but [we said], ‘Screw the agency, screw everything. Let’s just put our faith in the members and the fans and start again.’” **B**

Additional reporting by Tatiana Cirisano and Dan Rys.



# 440 UNDER 440

From left, Capella Grey, Toosii, Jeff Vaughn, Queen Naija and Surf Mesa photographed by Christopher Patey on Aug. 5 at Capitol Records in Los Angeles.

Capitol Music Group chairman/CEO Jeff Vaughn, who kicks off *Billboard's* annual list of trailblazing young executives, is writing a new chapter for his label — and “assisting the vibe” for all of his artists

**W**hen his breakout hit, “Love Cycle,” took off in 2020, rapper Toosii started getting calls from major labels interested in signing him. One of the last meetings he went to was with Capitol Records. “When I walked in and saw Jeff [Vaughn], I was like, ‘This is the label,’” recalls Toosii. The two had met years earlier under very different circumstances — Vaughn was head of A&R for another label, while Toosii, unbeknownst to Vaughn, was homeless — and the rapper remembered the kindness Vaughn had showed him. “He’s one of the most humble dudes you’ll ever meet, showing up to work in Vans and a flannel shirt,” says Toosii. “As an artist, he treats me like I’m precious. Shout-out to the new Capitol.”

As the company approaches its 80th anniversary next year, Vaughn, 36, is indeed molding a “new” Capitol. Recruited by Universal Music Group chairman/CEO Lucian Grainge as Capitol Records president in 2020, Vaughn was promoted to chairman/CEO of Capitol Music Group earlier this year and faces the daunting tasks of reinvigorating the roster and more significantly investing in R&B and hip-hop. “Our goal is to be the preeminent popular music label,” he says, “and reimagine what the next 80 years of Capitol looks like.”

The job hasn’t been without challenges: Vaughn started at Capitol just two months before the pandemic upended the

industry. He’s also not the only label head eager to invest more in hip-hop. Capitol’s current biggest names are largely pop and rock artists, and its rap roster shrunk earlier this year when Motown became a stand-alone UMG label outside the CMG umbrella. Vaughn isn’t worried about competing for new talent, though. “The Capitol legacy speaks equally to artists of all backgrounds and genres — everyone knows The Beatles, Halsey, Katy [Perry], Lewis [Capaldi], Sam [Smith],” he says. “But it’s important that Capitol is in the game. We can’t afford not to be because hip-hop culture, for which I have deep love and respect, is pop culture.”

His efforts are already starting to pay off. He didn’t sign R&B singer Queen Naija, but he played a key A&R role with her *missunderstood* album, which last year summited *Billboard’s* Top R&B Albums chart — the label’s first No. 1 there in a decade. “He pushed me to do better because he knew I could,” says Naija. Meanwhile, recent signing Capella Grey just cracked the *Billboard* Hot 100 for the first time with “Gyalis.” “He understands the culture and isn’t trying to change me,” the rapper says. “He’s just assisting the vibe to make the vision come to life.”

It’s the same quality that drew electronic musician Surf Mesa to the company (he’s signed to CMG label Astralwerks) after going viral on TikTok last year. “They saw me not only for the song that was popping off, but for the artist I was,” he says.

Vaughn has been essentially preparing for this role his whole

life. Born in Virginia, he grew up on Motown (from his mother) and alternative rock (from his dad). As a teen, he became a “credits freak” — studying liner notes, dabbling in DJ’ing and even managing producers while in high school. “After getting his start in the industry working in the mailroom at UTA, the Duke University grad joined the newly launched Artist Partner Group in 2013, eventually rising to vp A&R (for both the label and its sister company, Artist Publishing Group).”

During his tenure there, Vaughn signed or worked closely with R&B/hip-hop powerhouses such as Kehlani, Kevin Gates, NLE Choppa and Don Toliver. He credits the all-hands-on-deck approach with his leadership style today. “What I gained was the experience of working at a smaller company where your job title may be one thing,” he says, “but you’re also handling other responsibilities involving marketing, digital and more.”

Talent scout, A&R rep, support system, vibe assistant — Vaughn is happy to wear whatever hat is required to support his artists. “My strength is my work ethic,” he says. “People I’ve been in business with and had success with recognize that my passion for what we do is different.” And right now, he’s ready to write the next chapter in CMG history. “We want to make sure that we reflect art as it is now, not necessarily what it was,” he says. “Hip-hop, R&B, country, Latin — you name it, we want to be involved in it.” —GAIL MITCHELL

Additional reporting by Darlene Aderaju.



AL-HAMDOUNI



ARFA

**My favorite piece of artist merch** “The night my son was born, Billy Joel had a residency show at [Madison Square Garden] — I have a signed setlist from him welcoming my son to the world.”

## Warda Baig

talent buyer  
Live Nation

In the past few months, Baig, 32, has jumped right into getting bands back on the road, booking over 60 concerts at The Pavilion at Toyota Music Factory in Dallas and lining up the first shows for a new Houston ballroom slated to open in November. Outside of music, says Baig, “I spent the past year reflecting on my multiple identities and how I can use my platform at Live Nation to start change within the organization,” including helping the company take part in #StopAsianHateDay.

**What I’ve missed most about office life** “Doing the daily walk and talk to get our steps in — and catch up on our favorite TV shows.”

## Rayna Bass

senior vp marketing  
300 Entertainment

Megan Thee Stallion’s three Grammy Award wins in March marked a “full circle” moment for Bass, 35, whose campaigns for the rapper as well as label-mates like Young Thug and Gunna have won multiple marketing awards and helped *Slime Language 2* — a compilation project from Thug’s Young Stoner Life Records roster — top the *Billboard* 200. “I am a creative sociologist,” says Bass. “I make it my business to understand where my artists’ brand and music fit within [the cultural] landscape.”

**If I didn’t work in music, I would** “Work in the hospitality business. I’m the hostess with the mostess.”

## Stacy Blythe

senior vp promotion  
Big Loud

In 2020, the label home to country stars like Morgan Wallen, Jake Owen and Chris Lane marked its fifth anniversary, and Blythe, 37, celebrated accordingly: Her now-10-person promotions team took five singles to No. 1 on *Billboard’s* Country Airplay chart in the 2020 calendar year — “the most of any imprint in Nashville,” she says, and nearly half of the label’s 11 total chart-toppers to date. Her next goal: taking Big Loud’s chart share from No. 3 to No. 1.

**If I didn’t work in music, I would** “Run a meatball food truck. I grew up in an Italian family and often find it difficult to locate authentic Italian food in the South.”

## Tarek Al-Hamdouni

senior vp digital marketing  
RCA Records

Tasked with helping break artists like Doja Cat, Tate McRae, Fousheé and Flo Milli, the 37-year-old describes his work as twofold: “Find people who aren’t clicking ‘play,’” he says, and inspire current fans so they’re “pressing ‘play’ more often.” For Doja’s *Planet Her* rollout, that meant enticing listeners, new and old, with Spotify activations and a sumptuous VEO performance series — anything to build out “the bridge between artist and fan.”

**Before I turn 40, I want to** “See the Arctic.”

## Jarred Arfa

COO  
Artist Group International

Promoted from GM/executive vp in April, Arfa, 37, guided the company through major deals during the pandemic, including adding boy band Why Don’t We to its icon-filled roster; teaming up with London-based K2 Agency through its joint venture with private equity firm (and AGI parent company) Yucaipa Companies; and signing with sponsorship/branding agency BrandMark. Still, he sees the cautious return of live music as the most exciting development.



BAIG



BASS



BLYTHE



COSLOV



DILLARD



DRABBLE



ETMINAN

### Alex Coslov

vp marketing strategy  
Republic Records

"If Republic is Congress," says Coslov, 31, "then I am the artists' senator, representing them internally and building for the future." Responsible for award-winning campaigns for acts such as Pearl Jam and Greta Van Fleet, Coslov also noticed the gaming community's response to Glass Animals' "Heat Waves" and worked to make it a single as the track blew up on TikTok. It's one of many ways user-generated content has "recalibrated the industry across all departments," he says.

**If I didn't work in music, I would** "Be finding different ways to disappoint my parents after dropping out of law school. In all seriousness, probably writing my second novel."

### Gordan Dillard

artist manager  
SALXCO

Doja Cat spent 18 months working on her June release,

*Planet Her*, and Dillard, 34, was with the artist every step of the way, helping the rapper/pop star welcome her space-themed third studio album into the world with events such as a futuristic Grammys performance in March and a mesmerizing drone light show in Los Angeles in June (created in partnership with Amazon Music). Says Dillard: "The last year has forced everyone to think outside the box."

**What I've missed most about office life** "The loud music and the water dispenser — random, I know."

### Catrin Drabble

executive vp corporate development and finance  
Kobalt

Amid the disruption of COVID-19, London-based Drabble, 32, played a key role in helping Kobalt achieve profitability for the first time in 2021. It's one of many hats she wears: When she and her global investments/deals team aren't strategizing new signings and renewals, they're busy with merger-and-acquisition activity, like the May sale of AWAL and Kobalt Neighbouring Rights to Sony. "As we think about revenue going

forward," she says, "we are having to predict how social media, fitness apps [and more] will change the publishing landscape."

**Before I turn 40, I want to** "Produce a rosé from my family's fledging vineyard that I am not embarrassed to give to my friends."

### Nima Etminan

COO  
EMPIRE

It has been a busy few years for the distributor/label/publisher, and Etminan, 33, has had a hand in some of the San Francisco-based company's most notable moves, including working with Blackground Records to bring Aaliyah's catalog online; partnering with labels such as Lil Durk's OTF and Nigerian rapper Olamide's YBNL Nation; and helping artists like Young Dolph, Key Glock and Yung Bleu score top 20 albums on the Billboard 200.

**Ten years ago, I was** "Just arriving in San Francisco from Germany and bringing Top Dawg Entertainment to EMPIRE to release Kendrick Lamar's first mixtape."

## Ileana Diez

marketing executive

**AFTER LEAVING A CAREER** in label publicity to join the management side, the 30-year-old former head of marketing for Roc Nation is embarking on a new chapter with a familiar mission: "Empowering women of color and building next-generation brands that are going to shift cultures."

### What inspired you to switch fields after starting in publicity?

There has been a shift from record labels having a lot of say in the construction of campaigns to management really taking it upon themselves, making all the creative and going back to the label with a finished product. I felt limited being just a part of an artist's career, because the only aspect I worked on was music.

### What drew you to the marketing side of management?

When I joined Roc Nation in 2019, they were getting ready to launch Fenty Maison, Rihanna's company under the LVMH umbrella [which has since closed]. One of the first things I did was conceptualize and produce its first out-of-home campaign, which ended up winning an OBIE Award. That was the moment I realized the power of what I can do. It's thinking about each client as an individual brand, with Rihanna being an incredible example — the essence of Rihanna has allowed [her to expand into] the makeup industry, the lingerie industry. Of course, the artist is the vehicle, but the ideas can be so much larger than music.

### How do you build a brand for a newer artist?

First, getting to know them. What do they want to represent? How do they want to speak to their audience? With philanthropy, what's their personal passion? Because if you're not building from authenticity, you're

going to have a really hard time continuing. With someone like [Roc Nation's] Kaash Paige, for instance, she loves cartoons, so from day one, I was like, "Let's start building things in that direction, let's start working toward a Cartoon Network show. Who's to say what we could do?"

### During Mariah Carey's time at Roc Nation — she moved to Range Media Partners for management earlier this year — you oversaw her 2020 merchandise and grew sales roughly 500% over the previous year, according to the company. What's the key to a good merch business?

For Mariah, we had a lot of campaigns running last year: the 30th anniversary [of her debut], the memoir [*The Meaning of Mariah Carey*], Christmas. It was about frequently putting out fresh merch that tapped into tentpole moments — it wasn't just general Mariah merch. And we released all her titles on vinyl, some of which had never been released on vinyl before. Artists need to be sensitive to the



fact that you're constantly asking fans to buy things, so merch needs to feel special, collaborative and inclusive of them. I would never want to push products for the sake of pushing a product.

### Rihanna, Mariah — are you the diva whisperer?

(Laughs.) Listen, I come from strong women, I have strong women ancestors — that is not lost on me. I am the best me because of the strong women tribe I come from, and [the artists] continue to bring the best out of me. —NOLAN FEENEY

## Jules Ferree

executive vp brands  
SB Projects

Finding partnerships for the management company's artists to advance their careers and connect with fans requires Ferree, 39, to be "part translator, part air traffic controller, part salesperson, part matchmaker and part mind reader," she says. Thanks to projects including Justin Bieber's New Year's Eve concert with T-Mobile and J Balvin's multiple McDonald's team-ups, she and her team have brought in nine figures' worth of deals to the company during her tenure.

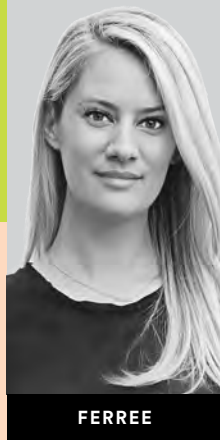
**Ten years ago, I was** "Writing Twitter copy for Justin Bieber when I was handling digital marketing at Def Jam."

## Tim Glover

senior vp A&R  
Interscope Records

"I'm always on the daily search for the next artist to sign," says Glover, 37, who has had a hand in developing artists like R&B star Summer Walker and "Blueberry Faygo" rapper Lil Mosey. Working across a roster of over 20 artists, Glover also played an instrumental role in the making of J. Cole's *The Off-Season*, which became the rapper's sixth Billboard 200-topping album and had the largest streaming week of any album this year.

**If I didn't work in music, I would** "Be doing real estate. Buying property is important, ownership is important."



FERREE



GLOVER



GOFORTH



HELLMAN



JADEJA

## Lee Goforth

music agent  
Creative Artists Agency

A CAA veteran who started in the mailroom 15 years ago, Goforth, 38, spent the pandemic helping rising stars Tate McRae and Conan Gray turn a "pause into an even bigger moment for them" by mapping out 2022 tours and brainstorming unconventional opportunities — "books, podcasts, brands, virtual shows" — to support his roster. He also leads the agency's festival group, working with roughly a dozen agents to take clients from afternoon acts to headliners.

**My favorite piece of artist merch** "I am a lifelong Willie Nelson fan. I have over 60 of his records on vinyl and numerous Willie Nelson T-shirts, and I've been on [his tour] bus."

## Charlie Hellman

vp/head of marketplace  
Spotify

Leading the team that develops services to help creators and rights holders "grow their audience

and grow their earnings," Hellman, 35, has had a hand in some of Spotify's most important features, including Spotify for Artists (now used by over 1 million musicians monthly), the recently improved playlist-pitching tool (which helped 76,000 artists get added to editorial playlists for the first time in 2020) and other educational and promotional tools. "Fifty-seven thousand artists make up the top 90% of streams on Spotify — quadruple the amount there were in 2017," says Hellman. "[We're giving] artists agency over their careers."

**What I've missed most about office life** "High fives."

## Raj Jadeja

vp creative A&R  
BMG

The 39-year-old has grown the publisher's hip-hop presence by playing a major role in the signings of 21 Savage, DJ Khaled and the late Juice WRLD, with whom he also traveled on tour. Today, Jadeja is focused on keeping the momentum going for writer-producer D'Mile, whose collaborations with H.E.R. have already won both Grammy and Academy Awards. Says Jadeja: "We are just getting started."

## SK Sharma

chief analytics officer  
Ingrooves Music Group

**A**T 23, SK SHARMA graduated from Caltech with a Ph.D. in chemical physics and physical chemistry. Sixteen years later, he's far from the lab — but using the same skills leading the Universal Music Group-owned distributor's insights and analytics team. Since joining the company in 2016, he has used artificial intelligence to create its Smart Audience tool, which analyzes streaming behavior to identify listeners who are more likely to become fans of, and stick with, an artist. (The technology is patented — a landmark achievement in the music industry.) Sharma, 39, explains his unusual career path.

**Your career has taken you from lab research to consulting to intellectual property venture capital. How does that inform what you do at Ingrooves?**

My research emphasis was in therapeutic drug design, and a lot of the analytical reasoning and rigor that we bring to the work we do today stems from my early experiences as a scientist. We want to ensure that we provide every opportunity possible for [our artists] to be effectively heard, and to me, that draws from aspects of portfolio optimization — not in a clinical, corporate finance way, but how you drive engagement. It just so happens that you can drive engagement these days with techniques that come from quantitative physical sciences.

### Can you walk me through an example of what that work looks like?

We have tons of data points [from digital service providers], but data by itself doesn't really mean anything. It's about what you do with it. Well, you could start to build these listening clusters to get a sense of how people's [listening behavior changes over] time. You can start to understand the decay process of a new release, you can understand the growth profile. You can understand how consumption and engagement shift as social signals change, or with

a Netflix synch. You can do all this really cool math and put together something that is predictive based on information learned, but also based on the principles of causality: Did this cause this? Did this move the needle? With the Smart Audience platform, we're looking to optimize marketing spend in ways that return high-value audiences, and in ways we can measure — as opposed to saying, "I threw a bunch of money at this, this is what I *think* I got."

### What was the biggest culture shift as you entered the music industry?

One of the things I noticed about the industry was that, historically, people were judged by their success. There was this element of, "I did *this*, therefore I have credibility." But in the scientific process, you accept failure as a natural part of growth. You have to be obsessed with the culture of hypothesis testing — of being comfortable with being wrong so that you can learn how to be right more often.

### What role did music play in your life before Ingrooves?

I grew up dirt poor in Compton [Calif.] —



Eazy-E was my eighth-grade commencement speaker! Music gave me hope that one day I'd end up away from that day-to-day negativity. Growing up in the beautiful diversity that's Los Angeles, you turn on the radio like, "I'm going to listen to [hip-hop station] 92.3, but I'm also going to slide the scale to listen to KLOS, classic rock — what the heck is that?" And then you take it further to KROQ: "Oh, The Offspring and Nirvana, they're pretty cool." It really was a broad education through the radio and the culture of living there. Music has been transformative in my life.

—REBECCA MILZOFF



Congratulations on  
15 years of amazing artist  
development.



# 40 UNDER 40

**Ten years ago, I was** “Getting fired from my first A&R job. Best thing that could have happened.”

## Grace James

senior vp/head of marketing  
Atlantic Records

“Marketing is a form of storytelling, using the tools I have to convince people why an artist is worth their time, money, like and follow,” says James, 37, whose pop/rock roster includes Coldplay, Lizzo and the *In the Heights* movie soundtrack. But James — a key member of Atlantic’s racial justice employee resource group, Off-Color — says it’s about being a good listener, too: “Whether it’s social media commentary or streaming analytics, fans talk back and tell us what they like.”

**Before I turn 40, I want to** “Host a TED Talk about how running changed my life. This November, I’ll be running my ninth marathon.”

## Monica Jordan

Director of creative, U.S. Latin  
Sony Music Publishing

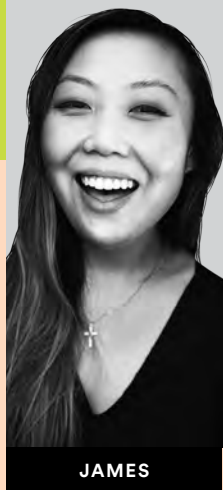
“I truly enjoy that moment when I come across a songwriter or artist who is just getting started and my gut yells, ‘Star power!’” says the Miami-based Jordan, 38. And she has been feeling that a lot lately, having signed breakout rapper-singer Myke Towers and rising hitmaker Elena Rose (who has written for Selena Gomez and Jennifer Lopez). Jordan also helped organize the publisher’s first Pan-Latin Zoom camp, bringing together over 80 songwriters from around the world for three days last year.

**If I didn’t work in music, I would** “Be involved in musical therapy — specifically with patients suffering from Alzheimer’s and dementia.”

## Lisa Kasha

vp digital marketing and social media  
Epic Records

After working on Travis Scott’s *Fortnite* concert, “Astronomical,” Kasha, 39, continues to push Epic’s roster to the forefront of gaming and tech, spearhead-



JAMES



JORDAN



KASHA



LAURIA



LAURO-NORRIS



MARSHALL

ing Zara Larsson’s Roblox dance party (which drew 1.6 million unique visitors in its premiere weekend) and bringing Madison Beer to TikTok with an “immersive reality” concert experience. “Moving forward, I don’t see how digital won’t be at the center of every marketing plan,” says Kasha.

**My favorite piece of artist merch** “I was a massive \*NSYNC fan, and one of my older co-workers who worked in lighting surprised me with an \*NSYNC crew shirt.”

## Federico Lauria

founder/CEO  
Dale Play Records/Lauria Entertainment

No one has done more to put Argentine hip-hop on the map than Lauria, 39, whose Dale Play roster achieved major milestones in the past year: Nicki Nicole became the first Argentine artist to perform on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, Duki launched a major European tour and producer Bizarrap became the country’s most-streamed artist globally on Spotify in 2020. “It’s very exciting to feel that this is only the beginning,” says Lauria, who also opened new international offices (in the United States and Spain) and produces the annual Buenos Aires Trap Festival.

**Before I turn 40, I want to** “Get my whole family together for a big trip.”

## Marisa Lauro-Norris

senior vp international marketing  
Def Jam Recordings

With approximately 70% of Justin Bieber music consumption coming from outside the United States, the recently promoted Lauro-Norris, 38, had plenty to do in the last year and a half: The pop star’s March album, *Justice* — released only 13 months after 2020’s *Changes* — hit No. 1 in 117 countries on Apple Music, while smash single “Peaches” (with Giveon and Daniel Caesar) spent five weeks atop the Billboard Global Excl. U.S. chart. “I’m big on setting goals,” says the 17-year veteran of the label, “and every day we work to smash them.”

**What I’ve missed most about office life** “The moving around and face-to-face dialogue.”

## Rakiyah Marshall

founder/CEO  
Back Blocks Music

After three years at BMG, Marshall, 29, launched her own artist development, publishing and management company last November — and quickly saw results. She scored label and publishing deals for rising star Lily Rose, helped songwriter Blake Pendergrass land cuts with Morgan Wallen and Chris Lane, and signed Ashley Cooke, a viral TikTok success story. “It’s exciting to me

to watch these songs come to life in as quickly as 24 hours,” she says of how songwriters can use the app to take fans inside the creative process.

**My favorite piece of artist merch** “My autographed Sam Smith vinyl of *In the Lonely Hour*. It has made it through many apartments and job changes.”

## Steve Martocci

co-founder/CEO  
Splice

“It has been a huge year for us,” says Martocci, 39. In 2020, samples from the music creation platform were heard in Billboard Hot 100 hits like Doja Cat’s “Say So” and Bad Bunny’s “Dákiti,” while overall sample downloads spiked 50% during the first month of the pandemic as young producers flocked to the service. To help them, Splice recently launched new education tools, Splice Skills, among other features. Says Martocci: “Continuing to evolve our platform for these next-generation creators is really exciting to me.”

**Ten years ago, I was** “[Selling] my first company, GroupMe, to Skype — it was born from my friend talking about how hard it was to find each other at concerts.”

## Claire McAuley

senior vp global administration  
Warner Chappell Music

The admin department is Warner Chappell Music’s “engine room,” according to the London-based McAuley, 38, who in the past two years has overseen upgrades to the publisher’s proprietary copyright/royalty platform, Tango, and its in-house royalties app to make it easier for creators to track the success of their songs. Keeping songwriters paid during the pandemic wasn’t easy, but McAuley — a board member of the recently launched Mechanical Licensing Collective — credits her team with “leaving no stone unturned or source untapped.”

**Before I turn 40, I want to** “Go to as many live shows as possible.”

## Matt Meyer

agent, music  
UTA

Representing artists such as Halsey, Machine Gun Kelly, Tinashe and Lil Dicky, 31-year-old Meyer has been plotting his clients’ return to the road and, he says, “doing anything and everything to proactively push my clients’ and their managers’ visions forward” — including brokering the deals for Halsey’s recent non-fungible token series and her concert with livestreaming platform Moment House. He also organized the digital launch event for her 2020 poetry book, *I Would Leave Me If I Could*. **If I didn’t work in music, I would** “Likely work in the art space.”



MARTOCCI

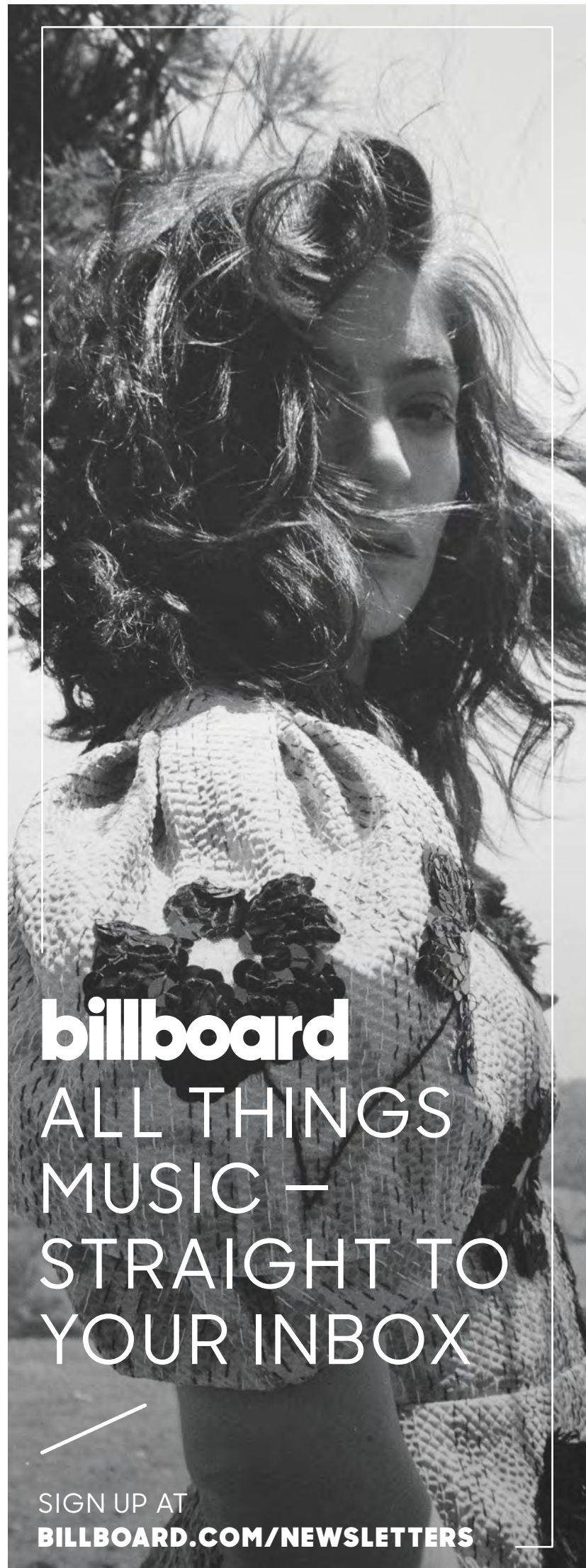


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LILY ROSE, RECORDING ARTIST  
ASHLEY COOKE, RECORDING ARTIST  
BLAKE PENDERGRASS, HIT SONGWRITER**



## Johnny Minardi

vp A&R  
Elektra Music Group

Since the Elektra brand relaunched in 2018, Minardi, 38, has signed and developed new talents like Tones and I, Meet Me @ the Altar and jxdn (signed to Travis Barker's DTA Records, a joint venture with Elektra). He also works closely with alt-rock veterans All Time Low, who hit an all-time high when "Monsters" topped *Billboard's* Alternative Airplay chart for 18 weeks and crossed over to top 40 radio. "I've been friends with them for over 15 years," he says, "so I can't help but get a little sentimental seeing them finally enjoy this level of success."

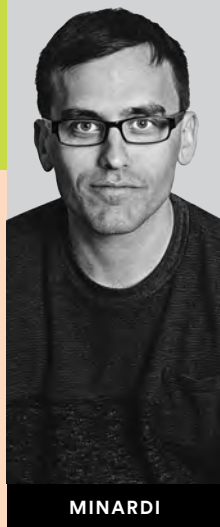
**My favorite piece of artist merch** "A Less Than Jake Halloween 7-inch. [Seeing them] play the Metro in Chicago on Halloween in 1998 changed my life."

## Andrea Minze

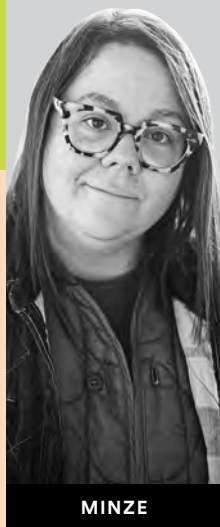
vp music for advertising  
Universal Music Publishing Group

"I am a crate-digger — I love the thrill of the hunt," says Minze, 38, which comes in handy when overseeing synch licensing of the publisher's catalog for brands like Orbit, Dell and Volvo. After discovering Ural Thomas' 1967 song "Can You Dig It," written by Russ Regan and Jerry Goldstein, she got a brief from Google last year looking for cool funk music and knew she had "the one." Regan's widow even reached out, thanking the team for helping his work live on. "Her note really moved me," recalls Minze. "It's why I pursued this career in the first place."

**Before I turn 40, I want to** "Master the art of from-scratch tortilla-making."



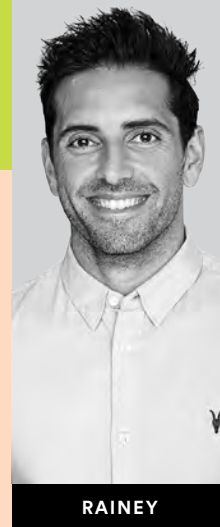
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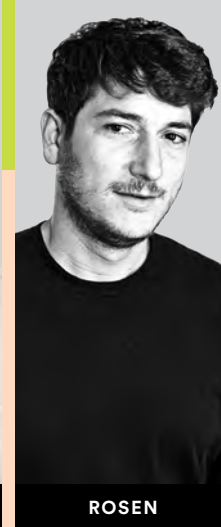
MINZE



MITZELL FAGAN



RAINEY



ROSEN

## Katie Mitzell Fagan

head of A&R, Nashville  
Prescription Songs

A 10-year veteran of the Dr. Luke-founded publishing company, Fagan, 33, opened its Nashville office in 2016 and has enjoyed showcasing both the "melting pot" of noncountry talent in the city — including folk-pop stunner Joy Oladokun — as well as Prescription's growing roster of women behind the boards, such as Lo Lind and carobae. Says Fagan: "I look forward to the day when we will no longer specify someone as a 'female' producer."

**What I've missed most about office life** "Hugging my writers and staff every day!"

## Bradley Rainey

head of music for visual media  
WME

With a roster that includes Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross (*Soul*, with Jon Batiste), Ludwig Göransson (*Tenet*) and Emile Mosseri (*Minari*), Rainey saw clients make up over half the nominees in the best original score fields at the 2021 Academy Awards, Golden Globes and BAFTAs. (*Soul* won all three.) "[There's] an appetite

for artistry like I haven't seen before," says Rainey, 36. "Artists are getting involved in film/TV and mainstream, and composers who work in one medium — TV or video games, for example — are crossing over into films and vice versa."

**My favorite piece of artist merch** "A Radiohead poster I got at a Haiti benefit concert in 2010."

## Austin Rosen

founder/CEO  
Electric Feel Entertainment

When 24kGoldn and iann dior's "Mood" topped the Hot 100 for eight weeks in 2020 and 2021, it was a special kind of victory, says Rosen, 33: In addition to managing the two artists, Electric Feel also counts co-writers/producers Blake Slatkin and Omer Fedi as members of its roster (which spans management, label and publishing divisions). Meanwhile, star client Post Malone continues to score new accolades as both "Rockstar" (featuring 21 Savage) and "Sunflower" (with Swae Lee) received diamond certification last year.

**My favorite piece of artist merch** "The first pair of Post Malone Crocs we made."

## Alex Wilhelm

co-owner  
48 Hours Entertainment

**T**HE MUSIC BUSINESS MOVES fast, but Alex Wilhelm moves faster. At 22, Wilhelm founded the music blog *Crazed Hits* out of his bedroom in a small town in Germany, showcasing then-unknown artists like Drake, Nicki Minaj and The Weeknd well before they signed record deals. The blog became a go-to source for labels to sniff out new talent, helping Wilhelm relocate to Los Angeles and get senior A&R roles at Warner Records, Capitol Records, Atlantic Records and Artist Partner Group (APG), signing acts such as Bebe Rexha and Calum Scott.

During that time, Wilhelm noticed that new artists — especially those with

a viral hit — often lacked the resources to understand recording and publishing deals, landing them in agreements that undervalued them or simply weren't the right fit. "In some cases, artists wait too long" to sign a deal, he says, missing "a small window of opportunity" to secure the best terms.

Now, Wilhelm, 35, wants to help those artists connect the dots. He left his roles at Atlantic and APG and joined Steve Moir, who manages executives, to launch 48 Hours, an "artist support" company — as Wilhelm describes it — that discovers emerging talent, matches them with labels, publishers and other partners, and then negotiates competitive deals for them. 48 Hours quietly opened for business in April, and while Wilhelm won't reveal clients, he says it has already brokered deals with every major label group and has



seen its artists crack top 40 radio.

"The business model plays to our strengths: identifying and helping advise future superstars, sometimes earlier than it makes sense for the major labels and publishing companies to get involved," he says. But when interest is high and bidding wars are on the horizon, Wilhelm

promises that 48 Hours can help artists find label homes "within hours."

Wilhelm insists that the company doesn't intend to replace the traditional roles of managers, lawyers or A&R reps. "We see ourselves as augmenting all those positions and adding value where we can," he says. For now, 48 Hours takes a small cut of the profits from the deals it negotiates, ensuring that the company's interests are always directly aligned with the artist's. "The demand is forcing us to expand more quickly than anticipated," says Wilhelm, adding that he hopes to spend the next few months continuing to build a "global proof of concept."

As for the company name, it's a reference to the thrilling pace of the business. Says Wilhelm: "In the music industry, your life can change in 48 hours."

—TATIANA CIRISANO

# PSBM salutes Photo Finish Records on an amazing 15-year run.

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## Veronica Sanjines

vp marketing  
Warner Records

It takes more than millions of followers to launch a music career. That's where Sanjines, 39, comes in, helping artists like Bella Poarch and Nessa Barrett "evolve from TikTok influencers to respected artists," she says, through blockbuster launches (like Poarch's "Build a Bitch" video) and fan-engagement plans (she has mapped out "a ton of Easter eggs" teasing Barrett's upcoming EP). "My job is to protect the artist's vision," says Sanjines, who also works closely with genre-hopping rapper Ashnikko and Brazilian powerhouse Anitta. **What I've missed most about office life** "Getting dressed for work. I treat the office like my personal runway."

## Shara Senderoff

partner/president  
Raised in Space

Working at the forefront of music and new technology, Senderoff, 36, has led the charge on some of the venture capital firm's buzziest investments — including data platform Audigent (for which she serves on the board), celebrity texting app Community and virtual concert company Wave — and has helped them keep growing during the pandemic. To Senderoff, the field has never been more exciting: "The explosive growth in blockchain technology, crypto and [non-fungible tokens] has created an influx of incredible founders and new startups."

**What I've missed most about office life** "Listening to podcasts and music while driving to meetings."

## Moe Shalizi

founder/CEO  
The Shalizi Group

After playing a key role in longtime client Marshmello's groundbreaking *Fortnite* concert in 2019, Shalizi was well-equipped to help the DJ-producer thrive in a year with no touring. Last year, Marshmello launched the children's entertainment platform Mellodees and delivered a splashy virtual performance at the UEFA Champions League Final opening ceremony in May.



SANJINES



SENDEROFF



SHALIZI



SHIN



SILVERSTEIN

"We do whatever we can to provide as much value and growth for our clients," says Shalizi, 31, who also launched new label Pick Six Records in 2020.

**Ten years ago, I was** "Still in college trying to figure out where I wanted to go in life."

## YJ Shin

president  
BigHit Music

Just when it seemed like BTS couldn't get any bigger in 2021, the K-pop group scored back-to-back Hot 100 No. 1s, setting streaming and chart records in the process. Helping plot the group's continued world domination is Shin, 38, who oversees operations for the label — a subsidiary of HYBE, which was previously known as BigHit Entertainment — and also supports the roster's other acts, including Tomorrow X Together. "The pandemic and the development of technology have allowed us to do a lot of experiments," he says, "to find new ways to expand and add immersiveness to the fan experience."

**Before I turn 40, I want to** "Write my own song."

## Brandon Silverstein

founder/CEO  
S10 Entertainment

Silverstein, 29, recently expanded with the launch of S10 Publishing — with artist HARV co-writing Justin Bieber's chart-topping "Peaches" — and a label entity (Artist Driven Records) with Ryan Tedder, whose first signing, JESSIA, broke out with the TikTok hit "I'm Not Pretty." He has also steered management clients to new heights: Anitta scored her first top 40 radio hit with "Girl From Rio," while Normani's "Wild Side" (featuring Cardi B) marked a career-best debut as a lead artist with a No. 14 bow on the Hot 100.

**Ten years ago, I was** "A freshman at Indiana University, but that year, I put together my first Bounce Music Festival on local farmland. We ended up drawing tens of thousands."

## David Stromberg

GM  
Cactus Jack

Travis Scott ruled 2020 with his *Fortnite* concert and a pair of Hot 100 No. 1s — and longtime manager Stromberg is keeping business booming. This year, the rapper unveiled a spiked seltzer brand with Anheuser-Busch and a film-project partnership with A24; meanwhile, his upcoming Astroworld Festival sold out in 30 minutes. "Somehow, we broke more records and set more precedents in a pandemic than we ever could have in a normal year," says Stromberg, 33. "I like to think we gave kids something to be excited about."

**If I didn't work in music, I would** "Produce classic movies. Seems like the movie business is somehow even more creatively bankrupt than music."

## Lexi Todd

director of business and legal affairs  
Primary Wave Music

As in-house counsel for the publishing/management company, Todd, 30, has a front-row seat to the booming catalog market, working with nearly every department to grow and secure opportunities for the company's library of legendary songs. In the past year, she ran point on over a dozen acquisitions totaling \$65 million. "You know you're a part of something big," she says, "when people completely outside of the music industry congratulate you on recent deal closings and want in on the action."

**Ten years ago, I was** "Working triple shifts in between college semesters: breakfast restaurant in the mornings, seafood restaurant in the evenings, then late-night gigs with my band."

## Ebonie Ward

partner  
Emagen Entertainment Group

"I wake up at 5 a.m. no matter the time zone to read, research and get to work," says Ward, 34, who splits her time between Atlanta and Los Angeles. In addition to managing rappers Gunna and Turbo, Ward signed Flo Milli as a client last year and watched as the breakout MC's *Ho, why is you here?* mixtape established her as one to watch. "After working with men for the last 10 years," says Ward, "I am excited to be part of developing a female artist leading the next generation."

**My favorite piece of artist merch** "My vintage Sade T-shirt and my original Lauryn Hill 'Ex-Factor' T-shirt."

## METHODOLOGY

*Billboard's* 40 Under 40 list was chosen by editors based on factors including but not limited to nominations by peers and colleagues, timely career accomplishments and overall impact on the music industry. Nominations for each *Billboard* power list open not less than 120 days in advance of publication. (For our editorial calendar, please email [thom.duffy@billboard.com](mailto:thom.duffy@billboard.com).) The nomination link is sent to press representatives and/or honorees of companies previously featured on any *Billboard* list, as well as those who send a request to [thom.duffy@billboard.com](mailto:thom.duffy@billboard.com). Nominations close and lists are locked not less than 90 days before publication. Unless otherwise noted, MRC Data is the source for tour grosses and sales/streaming data.



STROMBERG



TODD



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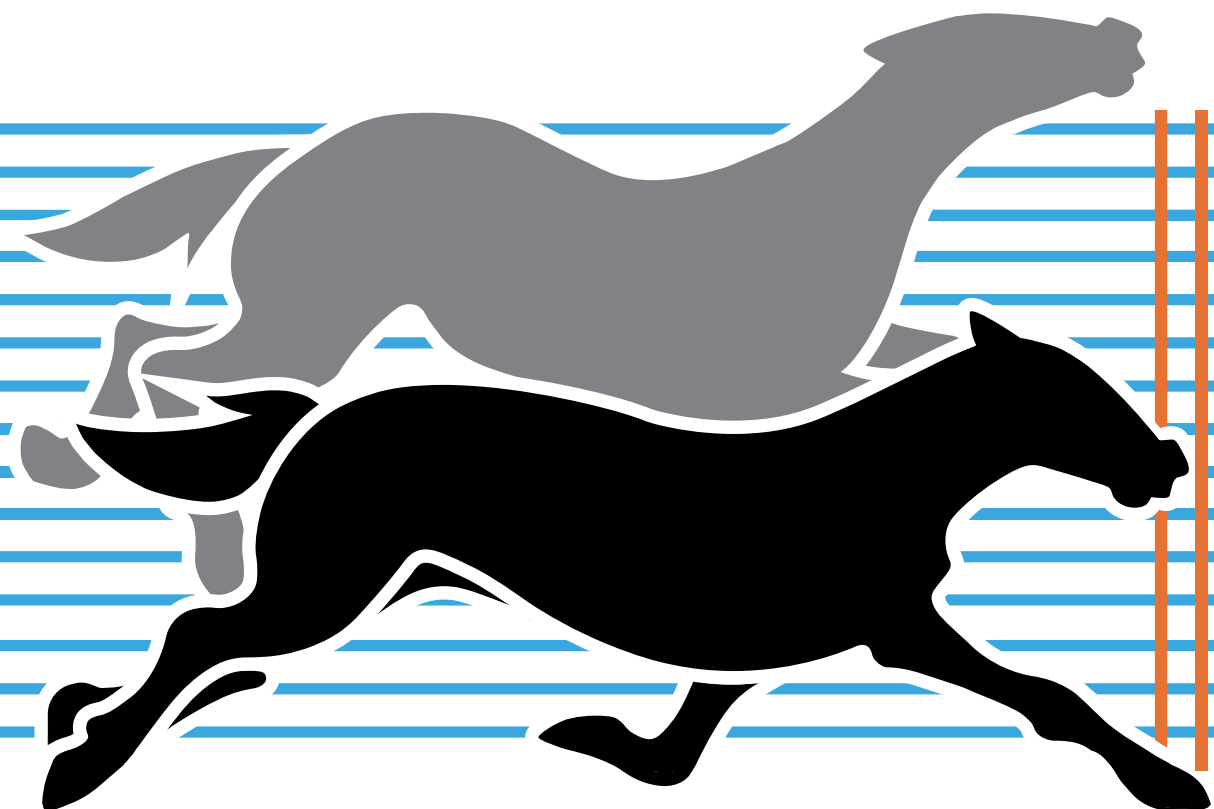


# CONGRATULATIONS

On 15 years of Photo Finish Records

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# The Players

## Leaping Off A 'Trampoline'

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS, PHOTO FINISH RECORDS' MATT GALLE AND MIKE MARQUIS DISCUSS THEIR 'EGOLESS' INDIE OPERATION AND DEVELOPING CAREER ACTS INCLUDING SHAED, 3OH!3 AND MARIAN HILL

BY TATIANA CIRISANO

I

**IN THE SPRING OF** 2018, Photo Finish Records badly needed a breakout. Inside its New York headquarters, founder/CEO

Matt Galle and CFO Mike Marquis held a sobering staff meeting to discuss the challenges the company was facing since it had gone independent after operating as a joint venture first with Warner Music Group through Atlantic, and then Universal Music Group through Def Jam and Republic.

In 2016, Photo Finish opted for a distribution deal with Virgin Music — formerly known as Caroline — that gave it independent ownership of its catalog moving forward. That meant parting company — at least for the moment — with past breakthrough acts like 3OH!3 and Marian Hill that had been released under the joint ventures. It was ultimately the right move, even if the company was stuck in what Galle describes as a “rough patch” in the years following. He recalls, “We sat together and said, ‘Look, we need a hit because we’re not getting funded by anybody.’”

By October of that year, however, the tide had turned: The label scored a bona fide multiformat hit in “Trampoline” from Washington, D.C.-based electro-pop group SHAED, which Galle and Marquis had signed in 2017. The slinking anthem featured in an Apple MacBook ad and landed former One Direction star Zayn Malik on a remix, which helped propel it to No. 13 on the Billboard Hot 100, No. 1 on the Alternative and Rock Airplay charts and No. 4 on Mainstream Top 40. It has since netted 502 million on-demand U.S. streams, according to MRC Data.

None of this was the result of serendipity, but rather the tireless work of Photo Finish’s seven-person staff, as well as a reflection of a commitment to long-term artist development that stems

from Galle’s and Marquis’ deep industry backgrounds. A Boston native, Galle grew up promoting local bands before founding Photo Finish in 2006 with Marquis to support rising acts in the early stages of their careers, in some cases before they had even signed with management or worked with a lawyer. The two executives run the label alongside their work as booking agents, previously with Paradigm and currently with Creative Artists Agency, where their long-term clients include Shawn Mendes, My Chemical Romance, Halsey and Bleachers.

Since signing its new distribution deal with Virgin Music, Photo Finish has re-signed 3OH!3 and Hill to the label and curated an 11-act roster that includes The Maine, Handsome Ghost, CAL, Lakeview, AVIV, Elliot Lee, Joan and singer-songwriter Ross Copperman, who has written hits for Kelsea Ballerini and Keith Urban. (Its alumni artists include MisterWives, ROZES, The Downtown Fiction and The Mowgli’s.)

As the label marks its 15th year, Galle wants to keep the roster small but ambitions large so Photo Finish can remain an indie with “major-label resources that can swing for the fences and hit home runs.”

**How did you make the decision to go independent, even when it meant leaving behind your catalog?**

**MIKE MARQUIS** A lot of it was noticing the changing landscapes of the major labels. Their attention and spends were associated with whatever was popping off at that moment, and there wasn’t a lot of attention to detail and career development. It seemed very singles- and data-driven. For us, it’s not the same value system. It’s the difference between falling in love with an apartment but you’re renting it, versus deciding to buy your first property that you can fully make your own.

**MATT GALLE** We had some red tape with



Galle

the majors. We were blocked from even putting songs on SoundCloud back then. We weren’t able to do a lot of those developing things that help grow artists, and that played into our decision.

**Knowing that you’re focused on long-term development, how did your approach having a viral hit with SHAED’s “Trampoline”?**

**GALLE** When it started to take off, I was like, “We need a calendar of things that are happening every single week for the next 24 weeks,” because we wanted to make sure we were improving our chart position as high as we could go. We did a bunch of remixes, and then [A&R representative/creative director] Drew [Kaklamanos] found the needle in a haystack: He got Zayn on a remix of it, and that really helped the song take off internationally.

**MARQUIS** I remember saying, “This is a multiformat hit if we can get it, so we have to charge for it on all things.” That’s what we did with Marian Hill, who had a similar synch with Apple [with

“Down” in 2017], so we learned a lot from that. The response was very much like, “Multiformat? It’s just a synch!” But eventually, we got there. We went hard with alternative radio first because we wanted the band to feel like there was more texture to it and that it wasn’t a pop hit. We were working so hard that we got to a moment where things happened that we didn’t plan, like [DJ-producer] JAUZ playing the song in his 2019 Coachella set. There’s nothing better.

**From The Maine’s recent hit “Sticky” to Galle’s part in planning My Chemical Romance’s reunion tour as an agent, where do you start in extending an older band’s life span?**

**MARQUIS** There’s this element of it which is like, “What’s the big picture, and how does this fit into an overall plan?” The Maine is a good example. We’ve gotten them on the radio to the [top 20 on Alternative Airplay] for the first time in their career, but they’ve been able to maintain that career because there was a team of

people trying to figure out how to make sure that their touring and all those things were always thoughtful.

**What do you think is driving the current alt-rock revival on the charts?**

**GALLE** Everything is cyclical. Different genres are going to be coming back around, or at least some elements of those genres with modern-day production and newer sounds.

**MARQUIS** I'm knocking on wood. (*Laughs.*) A lot of people are missing live music because of the pandemic, and nostalgia. People are listening to music that's giving them comfort right now.

**How do you juggle your dual roles as agents who also run a label, and do those two roles feed each other?**

**GALLE** I wouldn't have some of the artists I have as an agent if I wasn't at Atlantic those first six years. If I wasn't in the A&R meeting when [former Atlantic senior vp A&R] Aaron Bay-Schuck was playing Bruno Mars, who was unknown at the time, I wouldn't have been his agent. If I didn't meet manager Andrew Gertler hanging out around the building, he wouldn't have thought of me as an agent to call when he found Shawn Mendes. We know a lot of A&R people, and when they have new acts, they call us.

**MARQUIS** I'm a better agent because I understand the dynamics of how labels work and can speak to artists intelligently about things like radio. On the other hand, most people at labels have limited exposure to the inner workings of touring. The way we're able to play those things off each other benefits us in both. To be blunt, it's a tremendous amount of work. You have to trust your team.

**Even with a small roster, you're still a very small team. How would you describe the culture at Photo Finish?**

**GALLE** People have titles and roles, but everybody kind of works on everything together.

**MARQUIS** We try to remain egoless about who gets credit. Working within a major, we saw how much the staff's job was to work for their boss, not so much for the artists. There was a lot of jockeying for who's working on the highest-profile releases. Sometimes, that wasn't what was best for the artists. We have a little bit of a different mantra, and it's healthy for the artists because they have everyone thinking about them all the time.

**Marian Hill and The Maine are among the Photo Finish acts touring in 2021. How has it been navigating the return to live events?**

**MARQUIS** In general, it's just bananas.



From top: SHAED onstage at Lollapalooza in Chicago in 2019; 3OH!3 at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards in New York.

Everybody wants to work. Normally half of [our roster is] on cycle, requiring your time, and half of them are off making records. At the moment, everything is on everywhere. It's exciting and I miss the adrenaline, but it's a lot to manage. There's going to be tons of business and it's going to be an amazing year, and everybody might start to think that they're bigger than they are. Next year could be a little troublesome because everyone is trying to take the next step, but there's just not enough room in the market.

**GALLE** We have a lot of big on-sales coming up, and everybody is trying to get them up while people are buying tickets, with only so much money that somebody is going to spend. They'll spend more because they haven't seen anything in a while, but the following year, spending will bounce back to what it was.

**Looking ahead to the next 15 years, what are your goals?**

**GALLE** To continue to tick boxes of genres that we're not in. We have two acts in country right now, and we have never been in that world before. We have Lakeview, a developing artist for almost two years now. And then we have Ross Copperman, an amazing songwriter-producer. We believe in him, and we want to double down on him.

**More artists today are looking to own their masters. Have you had any recent**

**discussions about making deals fairer to talent moving forward?**

**GALLE** People come with terms where they want everything. Sometimes, it's hard for us to weigh out financially how that makes sense when you're putting six figures down on marketing at the minimum on these developing artists and they have zero going on. How do you weigh that out? It's harder for us to estimate when we don't have a Taylor Swift or Drake offsetting that.

**MARQUIS** The way that we deal with that with our artists is that we explain it thoughtfully and upfront. We are transparent about the economics of record deals and explain what it all means, but also why we're able to bend on some things but not on others. The one thing that's changing for us is that the terms, in general, are shorter. But even if we're doing a shorter-term deal, we believe they're going to want to continue with us.

**In today's red-hot market for catalog sales, are you ever tempted to build up your catalog and then sell it?**

**GALLE** People have reached out to us a lot in the past three years. It's flattering, but we've only been growing our catalog that we own 100% for six years, so we would have that conversation seriously five or 10 years from now. It's interesting to hear what kind of numbers they're throwing out, but nothing has wowed us yet. **b**

# 5 Key Albums

THE PHOTO FINISH RELEASES THAT HAVE HAD THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON THE CHARTS

**WANT (2008)**

**3OH!3**

Certified gold by the RIAA, 3OH!3's second album spawned the No. 7 Billboard Hot 100 hit "Don't Trust Me." *Want* reached No. 2 on the Top Dance/Electronic Albums chart and peaked at No. 44 on the Billboard 200, where it spent 51 weeks — the longest stay among all of Photo Finish's titles.

**STREETS OF GOLD (2010)**

**3OH!3**

*Streets of Gold* was Photo Finish's first and (so far) only top 10 album on the Billboard 200: It debuted at No. 7 in July 2010. The album's lead single, "My First Kiss" (featuring Kesha), reached No. 9 on the Hot 100 two months prior.

**ACT ONE (2017)**

**MARIAN HILL**

Hill's debut, *Act One*, included the top 10 Pop Airplay hit "Down," which was also RIAA-certified double-platinum. Released in March 2017, the set reached No. 5 on Top Rock Albums and No. 3 on Alternative Albums.

**MELT: DELUXE (2019)**

**SHAED**

In December 2019, SHAED released the deluxe edition of its breakout 2017 EP, *Melt*, which included the Zayn-assisted edit of its hit "Trampoline" and a remix by DJ-producer JAUZ. The rework hit No. 1 on the Heatseekers Albums chart for a week in January 2020.

**XOXO: FROM LOVE AND ANXIETY IN REAL TIME (2021)**

**THE MAINE**

In July, the Tempe, Ariz.-based pop-rock band's eighth studio release reached No. 22 on the Alternative Albums chart. The Maine will support All Time Low on the touring festival Sad Summer Fest, which is sponsored by Journeys. (Marquis is also a partner in the venture.)

SHAED: JOSH BRASSETTI/IMGAGE; 3OH!3: KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE



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jammin' 15 years.

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Love Tyler and the Forward Artist team



Lakeview and Nano wish to congratulate  
the Photo Finish Records staff on their  
15th anniversary. Onwards and upwards!



**HAPPY 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
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**FROM YOUR FRIENDS  
AT ALLEGiant STADIUM**

# For The Record



## Beatlemania Returns As 'Let It Be' Clicks

By IAN DOVE

NEW YORK—Beatlemania— is time in the form of increased productivity from the group and individual members. The Beatles' latest product— is still "letting it be" and "kicking." Beatles' business manager, Allan Klein, revealed that 3.2 million copies of the group's "Let It Be" album had been shipped in 13 days. At No. 2 on the Billboard album chart, this week, it jumped from 104. Another Apple album, "McCartney," by Paul McCartney, retains the top spot.

According to Klein, "Let It Be" is already the fourth best-selling Beatles album. The list is headed by "Abbey Road" (about 5 million, said Klein), followed by their first ever U.S. album, "Meet the Beatles" (4.3 million) and "Hey Jude" (3.3 million). In fifth place, behind "Let It Be," is "Sgt. Pepper," usually regarded as the biggest Beatles seller (2.7 million).

Pointing out that "Abbey Road," "Hey Jude" and "Let It Be" are all recent products, Klein sees this as justification for the present Apple method.

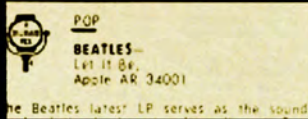
## UA, EMI to Handle Beatles' New LP; Clarify Act's Status

LONDON — The Beatles' new album, "Let It Be," which will be tied in with the release of the film of the same name, will be issued on the Apple label for distribution by United Artists Records in the U.S. and EMI for the rest of the world. The LP, produced by Phil Spector, will be released globally in May. The film, which is being distributed by United Artists, has been set for a simultaneous British premiere in London and Liverpool.

In explaining the future status of the Beatles, a spokesman for Apple Corps Ltd. said that any individual Beatle cannot offer his services, appear alone, or with any person

in any branch of the entertainment industry without the consent of Apple Corps Ltd., and the other Beatles. It was also pointed out that no person, firm or corporation can act or negotiate for the Beatles or for Apple product from companies other than ABKO Industries in New York.

In addition, Sal Iannucci, president of Capitol Records, issued a statement from Los Angeles in which he emphasized that Capitol's recording contract with the Beatles, through EMI, has six and a half years to run, and that it covers all recorded performances, not only by the group as a whole but by any of its individual members.



## Beatles Doing Own Things: Paul Quits

By PAUL ACKERMAN

NEW YORK—The Beatles, the symbol of the British influence on the global music industry and the catalyst of what came to be known as "the British Years," are no longer a group. Paul McCartney issued, through Apple in London, a statement saying he was leaving the Beatles for personal, musical and financial reasons—preferring home life. He also said he would not write again with John Lennon. McCartney's first solo album, titled "McCartney," wherein the artist sings and plays 14 of his own compositions, is scheduled for release Friday (17).

Increasingly, it is believed, the members of the act have grown apart artistically, with each showing an inclination to pursue his own creative path. Ringo Starr, for instance, has his own album out now, "Sentimental Journey." He is also featured in the film "The Magic Christian."

## GET BACK — AGAIN

**T**HE BEATLES BROKE UP FIVE DECADES ago — but they never went away. The group's 1 compilation was the bestselling album of the 2000s; last year, the band took in \$12.9 million, according to *Billboard*'s U.S. Money Makers list; and on Nov. 25, the *Get Back* documentary that director Peter Jackson assembled from footage of the *Let It Be* sessions will debut on Disney+. "Because it was so close to The Beatles' breakup, my impression of the [1970 *Let It Be*] film was of a sad moment," Paul McCartney told *Billboard* in a Nov. 16, 2019, cover story. Now "the overall impression is of friends working together."

### WE CAN'T WORK IT OUT

"The Beatles, the symbol of the British influence on the global music industry and the catalyst of what came to be known as 'the British Years,' are no longer a group," reported the April 18, 1970, *Billboard*, citing a McCartney statement issued by the band's Apple label. Below that front-page story ran an ad for Ike & Tina Turner's new single, a cover of "Come

Together," that testified to the breadth of The Beatles' influence.

### YOU BETTER GIVE ME YOUR MONEY

"A spokesman for Apple Corps Ltd. said that any individual Beatle cannot offer his services, appear alone, or with any person in any branch of the entertainment industry without the consent of Apple Corps Ltd., and the other Beatles," reported the April 25, 1970, *Billboard*. Capitol, the band's U.S. label, told *Billboard* that the group's contract covers "all recorded performances, not only by the group as a whole but by any of its individual members." Maybe love *isn't* all you need.

### BEATLES (STILL) FOR SALE

"Beatlemania is still alive and kicking," noted the June 6, 1970, issue, as *McCartney* topped the *Billboard* 200 and business manager Allan Klein said that the *Let It Be* album had shipped 3.2 million copies in less than two weeks and catalog sales were booming. This was true even among the kids: "Two teen-age girls admitted that

by bringing their Beatles tapes to the beach they could attract boys," the May 9, 1970, issue stated.

### TICKET TO SNIDE

*Billboard* praised *McCartney*'s "gentle, self-nourishing genius." But the May 23, 1970, edition put the group under a microscope: A review of the *Let It Be* documentary griped about George Harrison's "yellow teeth, caved across each other like fallen tombstones" and McCartney's "vanities," and concluded that the band had "ended in tragedy."

### HERE COMES THE SUM

Some "tragedy." Before the first Beatles albums arrived on CD, the manager of a Tampa, Fla., music store told *Billboard* that customers were "signing up for all four disks" in advance, according to the Feb. 21, 1987, issue. When they arrived, a March 14 *Billboard* headline declared that 1987 "Looks Like '64 In Beatles' CD Chart Surge," as the group's first four albums all scored top 10 debuts on the now-defunct Top Compact Disks chart. —JOE LYNCH

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# H A L S E Y

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