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billboard



THE GREATEST HIT

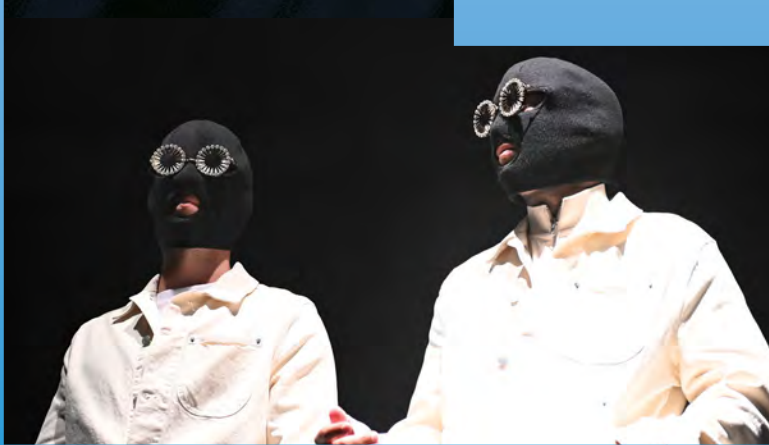
How **The Weeknd's**
"Blinding Lights"
dethroned "The Twist"
as the top Hot 100
song of all time

PLUS

**THE AFTERMATH
OF ASTROWORLD**

SPECIAL REPORT

(((SiriusXM)))



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pandora®



SMALL STAGE SERIES

Artists featured in order of appearance beginning at the top of the L:
Kane Brown, J. Balvin, Twenty One Pilots, Dave Matthews, Glass Animals, Shaggy, J. Cole, Brandi Carlile, Coldplay, Kenny Chesney

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The Weeknd photographed by Brian Ziff on Oct. 28 at Hubble Studios in Los Angeles.

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Billboard will publish its next issue on Dec. 11. For 24/7 music coverage, go to billboard.com.



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SING 2

BEST
ORIGINAL SCORE

Joby Talbot

BEST
ORIGINAL SONG

"Your Song Saved My Life"

Music By U2 Lyrics By Bono

Hannah Karp

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A promotional poster for the American Music Awards. Cardi B is the central figure, wearing a white, long-sleeved, open-front dress with a large bow at the waist. She has long, dark hair and is wearing a large, multi-strand diamond necklace. Her arms are raised, and she has long, white, claw-like gloves. She has several tattoos, including one on her right arm that says "Kenny" and another on her left thigh that is a peacock. The background is black with a grid pattern and is decorated with colorful paint splashes in shades of purple, blue, green, and pink. A large, white, circular graphic element is positioned behind the text.

AMERICAN MUSIC AWARDS

HOSTED BY
CARDI B

LIVE
SUN 11/21



NEXT DAY ON
hulu

charts

DATA FOR WEEK OF 11.20.2021



Summer Time: *Still Over It* Opens At No. 1

BILLBOARD 200

1

Still Over It
Summer Walker

LAST WEEK

-

PEAK POSITION

1

WEEKS ON CHART

1

SUMMER WALKER EARNS both her first No. 1 on the Billboard 200 and her highest-charting song on the Billboard Hot 100.

On the former, the 25-year-old Atlanta native's second studio album, *Still Over It*, arrives with 166,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States during the week ending Nov. 11, according to MRC Data. It marks the first R&B set by a woman to top the Billboard 200 since Solange's *A Seat at the Table* led the chart dated Oct. 22, 2016.

Of *Still Over It*'s starting sum, streaming-equivalent album units made up 153,000 of the total (equaling 201.1 million on-demand streams of the album's tracks — a record for an R&B set by a woman), while album sales account for 12,000 and track-equivalent album units make up the remaining 1,000.

The album follows Walker's 2020 EP, *Life on Earth* (No. 8 peak), and her 2019 studio debut, *Over It* (No. 2).

Walker also scores 18 songs on the Hot 100, all from *Still Over It*, as she ties Taylor Swift (Sept. 7, 2019, when *Lover* entered atop the Billboard 200) for the most simultaneously charting titles by a woman in the survey's 63-year history. "No Love," with SZA, leads at No. 13, debuting as Walker's highest-charting hit and besting her No. 16-peaking "Playing Games" in 2019.

Walker breaks her own record for the most simultaneous top 10s on Hot R&B Songs by a woman as seven of the new album's tracks appear in the tier, led by "No Love" at No. 2. She previously had as many as six top 10s together (Oct. 19, 2019), concurrent with the chart debut of *Over It*. —KEITH CAULFIELD

Hot 100

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
			PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL		
	1	1	#1 for 4 WEEKS AIR Easy On Me G.KURSTIN (A.L.B.ADKINS,G.KURSTIN)	Adele COLUMBIA	1	5
	2	2	Stay CASHMERE,CAT,O.FEDI,B.SLATKIN,C.PUTH (C.K.J.HOWARD,J.D.BIEBER,M.A.HOIBERG,O.FEDI,B.SLATKIN,C.PUTH,M.J.MULE,I.DEBONI,S.RAHMAN)	The Kid LAROI & Justin Bieber RAYMOND BRAUN/COLUMBIA/DEF JAM	1	18
	3	3	Industry Baby YE,TAKE A DAY TRIP,N.LEE (M.L.HILL,D.M.A.BAPTISTE,D.C.SNYDER,N.LEE,J.HARLOW,YE,M.WILLIAMS,R.CUBINA,R.LENZO)	Lil Nas X & Jack Harlow COLUMBIA	1	16
	5	4	Bad Habits FRED,J.MCDAID,E.SHEERAN (E.C.SHEERAN,F.GIBSON,J.MCDAID)	Ed Sheeran ATLANTIC	2	20
	7	6	Shivers E.SHEERAN,STEVE MAC,FRED (E.C.SHEERAN,J.MCDAID,STEVE MAC,K.LAVELLE)	Ed Sheeran ATLANTIC	5	9
HOT SHOT DEBUT		6	One Right Now L.BELL,B.D.LEE,A.BOLOOKI (A.R.POST,A.TESFAYE,L.B.BELL,B.D.LEE,A.BOLOOKI,B.WALSH,D.LONDON)	Post Malone & The Weeknd REPUBLIC	6	1
	4	5	Fancy Like W.HAYES,J.THIBODEAU,S.MCANALLY (W.HAYES,J.JENKINS,S.STEVENS,C.BARTOLINI)	Walker Hayes MONUMENT/RCA	3	21
NEW		8	Smokin Out The Window BRUNO MARS,D'MILE (BRUNO MARS,B.ANDERSON,D.EMILE II)	Silk Sonic (Bruno Mars & Anderson .Paak) AFTERMATH/ATLANTIC	8	1
	9	8	Need To Know DR. LUKE (A.Z.DLAMINI,L.S.GOTTWALD)	Doja Cat KEMOSABE/RCA	8	22
	13	10	Heat Waves D.BAYLEY (D.BAYLEY)	Glass Animals WOLF TONE/POLYDOR/REPUBLIC	10	43
NEW		11	Escape Plan OZ,NIK D (TRAVIS SCOTT,D.YILDRIM,N.FRASCONA)	Travis Scott CACTUS JACK/EPIC	11	1
	6	7	Way 2 Sexy TM88,TOO DOPE! (A.GRAHAM,N.D.WILBURN,J.L.WILLIAMS,B.L.SIMMONS,L.C.RAGLAND,R.FAIRBRASS,F.FAIRBRASS,R.MANZOLI)	Drake Featuring Future & Young Thug OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	1	10
NEW		13	No Love FORTHENIGHT,SONNI (S.M.WALKER,S.I.ROWE,S.A.DE SOUSA RAMOS,C.J.OCANSEY)	Summer Walker & SZA LVRN/INTERSCOPE	13	1
	15	14	Cold Heart (PNAU Remix) N.LITTLEMORE,P.MAYES,S.LITTLEMORE,C.THOMAS,G.DUDGEON (E.JOHN,B.J.P.TAUPIN,P.MAYES,N.LITTLEMORE,S.LITTLEMORE)	Elton John & Dua Lipa ROCKET/MERCURY/EMI/INTERSCOPE	14	10
	8	9	Good 4 U D.NIGRO,ALEXANDER 23 (D.RODRIGO,D.L.NIGRO,J.N.FARRO,H.WILLIAMS)	Olivia Rodrigo Geffen/INTERSCOPE	1	26
	11	12	Essence P2,J.LEGENDURY BEATZ (A.L.BALOGUN,R.J.SONG,O.E.ONIKO,U.E.ONIKO,T.OPENIYI,J.D.BIEBER)	Wizkid Featuring Justin Bieber & Tems STARBOY/RCA	9	19
	14	13	Beggin' L.FABBRI (P.FARINA,B.GAUDIO)	Maneskin SONY MUSIC LATIN/ARISTA	13	20
	10	11	Levitating KOZ,S.D.PRICE (C.COFFEE JR.,S.KOZMENIUK,S.T.HUDSON,D.LIPA,J.L.KIRK)	Dua Lipa WARNER	2	58
	16	16	You Right DR. LUKE (A.Z.DLAMINI,L.S.GOTTWALD,A.TESFAYE)	Doja Cat & The Weeknd KEMOSABE/RCA	11	20
	12	15	Kiss Me More YETI BEATS,R.CHAHAYED (A.Z.DLAMINI,D.SPRECHER,R.CHAHAYED,G.A.POWELL II,C.LANG,L.S.GOTTWALD,S.I.ROWE,T.SHADDICK,S.A.KIPNER)	Doja Cat Featuring SZA KEMOSABE/RCA	3	31

Go to the Chart Beat section of billboard.com for complete charts coverage.



HOT 100

86

Latto
Big Energy

The 22-year-old Atlanta native's second Hot 100 entry also reaches a new No. 9 high on the Rap Airplay chart.

How did "Big Energy" come together?

I flew to Los Angeles for a month and changed my scenery to bring out new inspiration. I went to the studio one day, and my A&R [reps] were like, "We have this beat, but I don't think you're

going to like it." They played it, and I loved it. It definitely took me out of my comfort zone. I tried it three different days before I was in pocket with it. You just have to be patient. Music is not always a mechanical math equation, where one plus one equals two. It's a matter of not giving up, with a little bit of fate.

Did you know right away that it'd be a hit?

I did. I'm young, and I wasn't aware of the ["Genius of Love" by Tom Tom Club] sample. I just knew it was a trap-pop blend and would bring a new audience to my career. It took months to get cleared before we could talk about a rollout, but I like to stay artistic and worry about my job. I'm not going to hold myself back musically because something on the business side might not work out.

What does having "Big Energy" mean to you?

I took this masculine, trendy "big dick energy" quote from Twitter and made it a thing where all genders can have "big energy" and take it deeper than just [something] sexual. I wanted it to be empowering — it's an aura that you carry and a confidence. It's just an overall vibe and when you walk in the room, you have "big energy," and no one can tell you otherwise. It's uplifting.

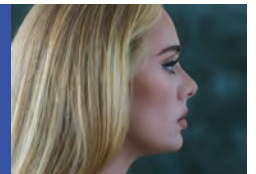
—RANIA ANIFTS

Biggest Airplay Gain

1

Easy On Me

Adele



Biggest Sales Gain

21

If I Didn't Love You

Jason Aldean & Carrie Underwood



Biggest Streaming Gain

46

Leave The Door Open

Silk Sonic (Bruno Mars & Anderson .Paak)



BILLBOARD 200

7



Key Glock *Yellow Tape 2*

The rapper scores his highest-charting album yet (and third top 10) as his latest release begins with 36,000 equivalent-album units earned in the United States in the week ending Nov. 11, according to MRC Data.

15



Luke Combs *What You See Is What You Get*

Two years after its release on Nov. 8, 2019, the album has earned 3.5 million equivalent-album units, hit No. 1 twice and has yet to depart the top 25.

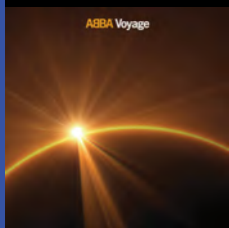
33



Chris Stapleton *Starting Over*

The album (17,000 units; up 29%) charges back up the list to its highest rank since the Feb. 13 chart (also No. 33) following its Country Music Association Award win for album of the year on Nov. 10.

2
ABBA
Voyage



The Album, which peaked at No. 14 on the chart dated July 22, 1978.

—KEITH CAULFIELD

Pop legends ABBA earn their highest-charting album ever on the Billboard 200 and first top 10 as *Voyage* debuts at No. 2. The set was released Nov. 5 and is the quartet's first new studio album since 1981's *The Visitors*.

Voyage starts with 82,000 equivalent-album units earned in the United States in the week ending Nov. 11, according to MRC Data. Of that sum, 78,000 are in album sales — the largest sales week for a set by a group in 2021. *Voyage* is the top-selling album of the week and arrives at No. 1 on both the Top Album Sales and Vinyl Albums charts (with 17,000 copies sold on wax).

Until *Voyage*'s arrival, ABBA's highest-charting album on the Billboard 200 was 1978's

2 WKS. AGO		LAST WEEK		THIS WEEK		Artist	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
						IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL			
						#1 for 1 WEEK			
						1 Summer Walker	Still Over It	1	1
						LVRN/INTERSCOPE/IGA			
						2 ABBA	Voyage	2	1
						CAPITOL			
1	2					3 Drake	Certified Lover Boy	1	10
						OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC			
-	1					4 Ed Sheeran	=	1	2
						ATLANTIC/AG			
2	3					5 Morgan Wallen	Dangerous: The Double Album	1	44
						BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC			
3	4					6 Doja Cat	Planet Her	2	20
						KEMOSABE/RCA			
						NEW 7 Key Glock	Yellow Tape 2	7	1
						PAPER ROUTE EMPIRE			
5	6					8 Olivia Rodrigo	Sour	1	25
						GEFFEN/IGA			
4	7					9 YoungBoy Never Broke Again	Sincerely, Kentrell	1	7
						NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ATLANTIC/AG			
9	8					10 Lil Nas X	Montero	2	8
						COLUMBIA			
11	9					11 The Kid LAROI	F*ck Love	1	68
						COLUMBIA			
						NEW 12 Radiohead	Kid A Mnesia	12	1
						XL			
12	11					13 Kanye West	Donda	1	11
						G.O.O.D./DEF JAM			
14	12					14 Billie Eilish	Happier Than Ever	1	15
						DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/IGA			
17	14					15 Luke Combs	What You See Is What You Get	1	105
						RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN			
6	10					16 Moneybagg Yo	A Gangsta's Pain	1	29
						CMG/N-LESS/INTERSCOPE/IGA			
16	16					17 Rod Wave	Soufly	1	33
						ALAMO			
20	18					18 Pop Smoke	Shoot For The Stars Aim For The Moon	1	71
						VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/REPUBLIC			
21	19					19 Lil Baby	My Turn	1	89
						QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL			
19	21					20 Justin Bieber	Justice	1	34
						RAYMOND BRAUN/DEF JAM			

THE BILLBOARD 200 RANKS THE MOST POPULAR ALBUMS OF THE WEEK, AS COMPILED BY MRC DATA. SALES DATA COMPILED BY MRC DATA. *INCLUDES SALES OF TRADITIONAL ALBUMS, SALES OF EQUIVALENT ALBUMS AND STREAMING EQUIVALENT ALBUMS.



CONGRATULATIONS JASON ISBELL AND THE 400 UNIT ON EIGHT SOLD-OUT NIGHTS!



SPECIAL THANKS TO
TRACI THOMAS, ANDREW COLVIN, WME AND OUTBACK PRESENTS

RYMAN





GLOBAL 200

9

One Right Now
Post Malone
& The Weeknd

TWO SONGS SOAR INTO THE TOP 10 of the Billboard Global 200, led by Post Malone (above) and The Weeknd's first-ever collaboration, "One Right Now." The single starts at No. 9 with 37.8 million streams and 16,700 downloads sold worldwide in the week ending Nov. 11, according to MRC Data, following its Nov. 5 release. Post

Malone earns his first Global 200 top 10 hit, dating back to the chart's September 2020 inception, and The Weeknd adds his sixth.

Travis Scott's "Escape Plan" debuts at No. 10 with 39.2 million streams and 9,400 sold globally, marking his third top 10 entry on the chart. He released the track on Nov. 5, just ahead of the opening night of his Astroworld festival in Houston, which ended in tragedy after crowd surges resulted in 10 deaths and hundreds of injuries (see story, page 25).

Meanwhile, for the second time — and second consecutive week — since the Global 200 launched, the chart's top five exclusively comprises artists from outside the United States. The acts' countries of origin: England (Adele, Ed Sheeran, Elton John and Dua Lipa), Australia (The Kid LAROI), Canada (Justin Bieber) and Nigeria (CKay).

"The beauty of British music over the years is that it has spanned so many genres," Martin Talbot, CEO of the London-based Official Charts Company, says of British artists' success on the upper reaches of the chart. "The multicultural nature of our society, with immigration from so many parts of the world, including the Caribbean, the Far East, Northern, Eastern and Southern Europe, Africa and even Ireland has always helped feed into the great richness of our culture and our music."

—GARY TRUST

Global 200							
2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART	
1	1	1	#1 for 4 WEEKS Easy On Me	Adele	1	5	
2	2	2	Stay	The Kid LAROI & Justin Bieber	1	18	
6	3	3	Shivers	Ed Sheeran	3	9	
5	7	4	Love Nwantiti (Ah Ah Ah)	CKay	2	9	
5	7	5	Cold Heart (PNAU Remix)	Elton John & Dua Lipa	5	13	
7	4	6	Bad Habits	Ed Sheeran	1	20	
4	6	7	Industry Baby	Lil Nas X & Jack Harlow	2	16	
8	8	8	Heat Waves	Glass Animals	6	45	
		HOT SHOT DEBUT	9	One Right Now	Post Malone & The Weeknd	9	1
		NEW	10	Escape Plan	Travis Scott	10	1
11	9	11	Pepas	Farruko	7	17	
		NEW	12	Smokin Out The Window	Silk Sonic (Bruno Mars & Anderson .Paak)	12	1
9	10	13	My Universe	Coldplay x BTS	1	7	
13	13	14	Happier Than Ever	Billie Eilish	6	15	
12	12	15	Money	Lisa	10	9	
15	16	16	Save Your Tears	The Weeknd & Ariana Grande	1	45	
		NEW	17	No Love	Summer Walker & SZA	17	1
14	14	18	Levitating	Dua Lipa	2	58	
		NEW	19	Mafia	Travis Scott	19	1
16	18	20	Woman	Doja Cat	11	17	

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 COMBINATION OF STREAMING AND SALES DATA. SEE CHARTS.LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2021 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND MRC DATA INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. COURTESY OF MRC RECORDS

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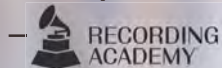
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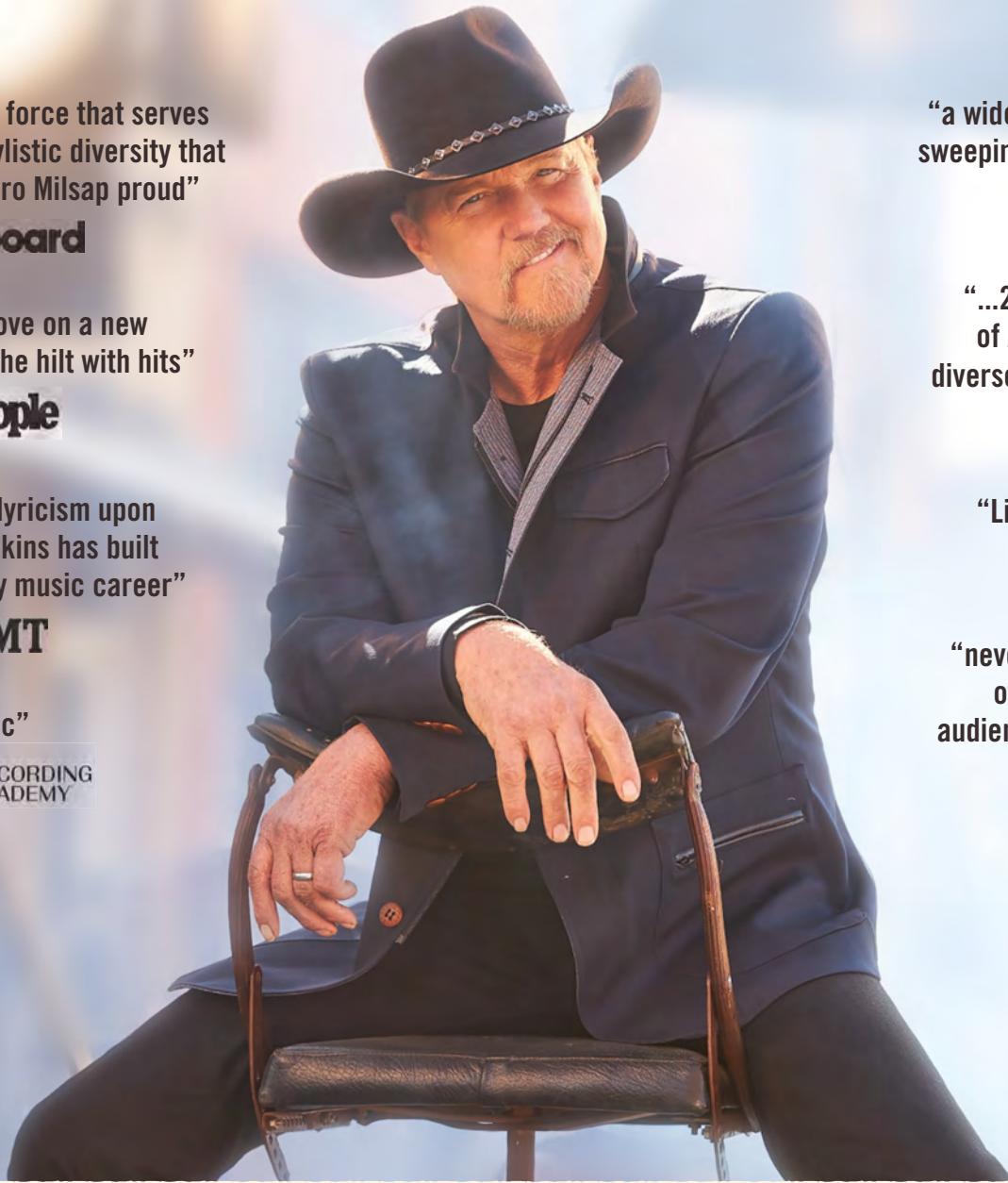
– **RollingStone**

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– **ET**



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ARTIST 100

20
RADIOHEAD

WEEKS ON CHART
10

Radiohead reenters the Billboard Artist 100 at No. 20, marking the group's highest placement since

2016, thanks to *Kid A Mnesia*, a combined reissue of its albums *Kid A* (originally released in 2000) and *Amnesiac* (2001) that also includes previously unreleased songs. The new collection debuts at No. 1 on Top Rock Albums.



NO. **11**

Swift's Red Roars

Taylor Swift rises 12-11 on the Artist 100, powered by eight albums on the Billboard 200, tying her personal best. *Red*, from 2012, leads her haul at No. 21, vaulting from No. 101 with a 94% gain to 19,000 equivalent-album units, according to MRC Data. The set surges amid the buzz of Swift's rerecorded *Red (Taylor's Version)*, released Nov. 12 and due to appear on the charts dated Nov. 27. The new album includes the 10-minute, 13-second "From the Vault" expansion of "All Too Well (Taylor's Version)," which is accompanied by a 14-minute, 56-second short-film video that also premiered Nov. 12.

-XANDER ZELLNER AND GARY TRUST



NO. **57**

Snail Mail Stamps Debut

Snail Mail debuts at No. 57 on the Artist 100 thanks to the act's second album, *Valentine*, which arrives at No. 3 on Vinyl Albums (7,000 copies sold on vinyl) and No. 7 on both Top Album Sales (10,000 sold overall) and Alternative Albums (12,000 equivalent-album units). The solo project of singer-songwriter Lindsey Jordan also tops the Emerging Artists chart for the first time, while *Valentine's* title track ranks at No. 27 on Adult Alternative Airplay, marking the act's first entry on a *Billboard* songs chart. Snail Mail's debut full-length, *Lush*, hit No. 8 on Vinyl Albums and No. 20 on Alternative Albums in 2018.

-X. Z.

Artist 100

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Artist	IMPRINT/LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
RE-ENTRY	1	#1 for 1 WEEK	Summer Walker	LVRN/INTERSCOPE/IGA	1	40
RE-ENTRY	2	2	ABBA	CAPITOL	2	10
4	1	3	Ed Sheeran	ATLANTIC/AG	1	378
1	4	3	Adele	XL/XL/COLUMBIA	1	259
2	2	5	Drake	DVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	1	385
5	6	6	The Weeknd	XO/REPUBLIC	1	331
6	4	7	Doja Cat	KEMOSABE/RCA	3	95
3	5	8	Olivia Rodrigo	GEFFEN/IGA	1	44
9	7	9	Luke Combs	RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN	1	245
56	48	10	Travis Scott	CACTUS JACK/GRAND HUSTLE/EPIC	1	288
13	12	11	Taylor Swift	REPUBLIC	1	381
23	16	12	Chris Stapleton	MERCURY NASHVILLE/UMGN	1	316
11	9	13	Justin Bieber	RAYMOND BRAUN/DEF JAM	1	351
8	8	14	Dua Lipa	WARNER	1	184
12	10	15	Lil Nas X	COLUMBIA	2	99
14	11	16	Billie Eilish	DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/IGA	1	168
16	13	17	Morgan Wallen	BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC	1	140
28	25	18	Post Malone	REPUBLIC	1	281
38	41	19	Bruno Mars	ATLANTIC/AG	1	363
RE-ENTRY	20	20	Radiohead	XL	4	10

RADIOHEAD: JOHN SPINKS; SWIFT: FLETCHER ROBERTSON; SNAIL MAIL: JUNA TYRRELL

THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR ARTISTS ACROSS ALL GENRES, RANKED BY ALBUM AND TRACK SALES AS MEASURED BY MRC DATA. RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS AS MEASURED BY MRC DATA. STREAMING ACTIVITY DATA FROM ONLINE MUSIC SOURCES TRACKED BY MRC DATA. SEE CHARTS. LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2021 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND MRC DATA, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



APPLYING STREAMING AND SALES DATA COMPILED BY MRC DATA

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HOT R&B SONGS



NO. 1

Silk Sonic's 'Smokin' Start

Silk Sonic blazes a trail straight to No. 1 on the Hot R&B Songs chart as "Smokin Out the Window" debuts in the top slot. The track, from the duo of Anderson .Paak and Bruno Mars (above, from left), traces its chart-topping entrance to a No. 1 start on R&B Digital Song Sales (9,000 sold, according to MRC Data, in the week ending Nov. 11) and a No. 2 entry on R&B Streaming Songs (21 million). Radio airplay, too, has quickly shored up, with "Smokin" detected at No. 25 in its first week on R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay (4.4 million in audience, the week ending Nov. 14).

The new single is Silk Sonic's second Hot R&B Songs leader after "Leave the Door Open" dominated for 14 weeks between March and August. Both No. 1 hits, along with the pair's second single, "Skate" (No. 3), appear on the duo's album, *An Evening With Silk Sonic*. The nine-track set, released Nov. 12, is due to appear on the Nov. 27 charts.

—TREVOR ANDERSON

Hot R&B Songs				
LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title	Artist	WKS. ON CHART
		<small>IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL</small>		
NEW	1	#1 for 1 WEEK Smokin Out The Window Silk Sonic (Bruno Mars & Anderson .Paak) <small>AFTERMATH/ATLANTIC</small>		1
NEW	2	No Love <small>LVRN/INTERSCOPE</small>	Summer Walker & SZA	1
1	3	Essence <small>STARBOY/RCA</small>	Wizkid Feat. Justin Bieber & Tems	25
2	4	You Right <small>KEMOSABE/RCA</small>	Doja Cat & The Weeknd	20
NEW	5	Bitter <small>LVRN/INTERSCOPE</small>	Summer Walker & Cardi B	1
9	6	Ex For A Reason <small>LVRN/INTERSCOPE</small>	Summer Walker & JT	4
NEW	7	Throw It Away <small>LVRN/INTERSCOPE</small>	Summer Walker	1
NEW	8	Reciprocate <small>LVRN/INTERSCOPE</small>	Summer Walker	1
NEW	9	Toxic <small>LVRN/INTERSCOPE</small>	Summer Walker Feat. Lil Durk	1
NEW	10	Unloyal <small>LVRN/INTERSCOPE</small>	Summer Walker & Ari Lennox	1

HOT HARD ROCK SONGS



NO. 1

Slipknot Rages With 'Rag'

Slipknot's new single, "The Chapeltown Rag," debuts atop Hot Hard Rock Songs, marking the metal veterans' first entry and No. 1 on the chart (which began in June 2020).

"Rag" arrives with 1.7 million streams and 4,100 downloads sold in the week ending Nov. 11, according to MRC Data, following its Nov. 5 release. The latter metric sparks the track's entrance atop Hard Rock Digital Song Sales, where it is the band's fifth chart-topper and first since "Unsainted" in 2019.

The new song also starts at No. 35 on the Mainstream Rock Airplay chart. It's the group's 19th entry, dating to its first in 2000.

"Rag" is the lead single from Slipknot's forthcoming seventh studio album. The band's last release, *We Are Not Your Kind*, debuted as its third No. 1 on the Billboard 200 in August 2019 and has earned 503,000 equivalent album units.

—KEVIN RUTHERFORD

Hot Hard Rock Songs				
LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title	Artist	WKS. ON CHART
		<small>IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL</small>		
NEW	1	#1 for 1 WEEK The Chapeltown Rag <small>ROADRUNNER/EMG</small>	Slipknot	1
1	2	I Wanna Be Your Slave <small>SONY MUSIC LATIN/ARISTA</small>	Maneskin	24
4	3	Kill The Noise <small>NEW NOIZE/ADA</small>	Papa Roach	9
5	4	Heat Above <small>LAVA/REPUBLIC</small>	Greta Van Fleet	39
3	5	Making A Fire <small>ROSWELL/RCA</small>	Foo Fighters	24
8	6	Back From The Dead <small>ATLANTIC</small>	Halestorm	13
11	7	Alone Again <small>BETTER NOISE</small>	Asking Alexandria	12
19	8	The Thunder Rolls <small>NOISE MACHINE</small>	State Of Mine Feat. No Resolve	13
2	9	Mammamia <small>SONY MUSIC LATIN/ARISTA</small>	Maneskin	5
12	10	Light My Love <small>LAVA/REPUBLIC</small>	Greta Van Fleet	12



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TOP HOLIDAY ALBUMS



NO. 4

The 'Season' For Charting

Michael Bublé's ever-popular, former Billboard 200 No. 1 *Christmas* spends its 29th nonconsecutive week leading the Top Holiday Albums chart as the list livens up with the march toward Dec. 25 beginning in earnest. The set scored 17,000 equivalent-album units in the United States during the week ending Nov. 11 (up 70%), according to MRC Data. The top nine albums on the list also appear on the all-genre Billboard 200 — a mere tease of what's soon to come. At the end of the 2020 season, on the Jan. 2, 2021-dated chart, a whopping 47 holiday albums dotted the Billboard 200, with a record-tying six in the top 10.

Meanwhile, on the new Top Holiday Albums chart, former Journey frontman Steve Perry (above) sees his first holiday album, *The Season*, debut at No. 4 with 11,000 units. It also arrives at No. 80 on the Billboard 200 — his fourth solo entry on the list.

—KEITH CAULFIELD

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Artist	Title	WKS. ON CHART
		IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL		
2	1	#1 for 29 WEEKS GG Michael Bublé 143/REPRISE/WARNER	Christmas	131
4	2	Vince Guaraldi Trio FANTASY/CONCORD	A Charlie Brown Christmas (Soundtrack)	297
5	3	Mariah Carey COLUMBIA/LEGACY	Merry Christmas	288
HOT SHOT DEBUT	4	Steve Perry OMT/FANTASY/CONCORD	The Season	1
6	5	Pentatonix RCA	The Best Of Pentatonix Christmas	31
9	6	Nat King Cole CAPITOL/UME	The Christmas Song	242
10	7	Carrie Underwood CAPITOL NASHVILLE/UMGN	My Gift	21
8	8	Bing Crosby CAPITOL/UME	Christmas Classics	63
7	9	Kelly Clarkson ATLANTIC/AG	When Christmas Comes Around...	4
3	10	Pentatonix RCA	Evergreen	2

REGIONAL MEXICAN AIRPLAY



NO. 1

'Rico' Runs To No. 1

Los Dos Carnales' "Yo Soy Rico" takes over atop Regional Mexican Airplay as it rises 3-1, gifting the Quezada brothers (above) their second leader. The song reaches No. 1 with 9.6 million in audience impressions, up 49%, earned in the United States during the week ending Nov. 14, according to MRC Data. "Yo Soy Rico" has a special space in our repertoire," says Imanol Quezada. "It's a song that speaks about human prosperity, of how fortunate we are to have our family."

"Rico" concurrently jumps 10-2 on the overall Latin Airplay chart — the first top 10 there for the duo.

Elsewhere on the Latin charts: On Tropical Airplay, Marc Anthony's "Mala" debuts at No. 5 with only three days of airplay (3.5 million audience impressions) after its release on Nov. 12. The arrival is his 53rd career top 10, the second-most after Victor Manuelle's 62.

—PAMELA BUSTIOS

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title	Artist	WKS. ON CHART
		IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL		
3	1	#1 for 1 WEEKS GG Yo Soy Rico AFINARTE	Los Dos Carnales	6
1	2	Ya Superame (En Vivo Desde Culiacan, Sinaloa) MUSIC VIP	Grupo Firme	10
4	3	La Sinvergüenza PRODUCCIONES LADON/BAJO/SONY MUSIC LATIN	Christian Nodal & Banda MS	7
5	4	Como Te Olvido DISA/UMLE	La Arrolladora Banda el Limón de René Camacho	9
2	5	Apoco REMEX	Edwin Luna y La Trakalosa de Monterrey	12
6	6	Llorando En Un Carro Del Año EL RECODO/FONOVISIA/UMLE	Banda Los Recoditos	13
8	7	Ya Solo Eres Mi Ex ANVAL	La Adictiva	7
7	8	Tus Desprecios EQUINOCCIO	Pepe Aguilar & El Fantasma	15
10	9	Tranquilito BAD SIN/SONY MUSIC LATIN	Gerardo Ortiz	15
9	10	Positivo LIZOS	Banda MS	8

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From left: Kelly Clarkson, Bruce Springsteen, Mariah Carey, Nat "King" Cole and Brenda Lee.

Greatest of All Time Holiday 100 Songs

Greatest Of All Time

HOLIDAY CHARTS

Mariah Carey and the Vince Guaraldi Trio — as well as Charlie Brown — are the respective leaders of *Billboard's* historical seasonal surveys

WE'VE MADE TWO LISTS and checked them twice (actually more than that): *Billboard's* Greatest of All Time Holiday 100 Songs and Top Holiday Albums charts, dating to the 2011 start of the Holiday 100 and to 1985 for Top Holiday Albums (see legend on page 22).

Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas Is You" hangs atop the highest bough on Greatest of All Time Holiday 100 Songs. The track has topped the weekly Holiday 100 for all but five of the chart's 50 weeks so far, including the last 30 in a row since December 2015.

"When I wrote [it], I had absolutely no idea the impact the song would eventually have worldwide," Carey tells *Billboard* of the carol, released on her 1994 album, *Merry Christmas*. "I was tapping into a bittersweet mixture of longing and festiveness. I had grown up wishing I could have a functional family Christmas like the ones I saw on TV or in the movies. So, I wrote the song for the little girl in me filled with holiday spirit. I'm so full of gratitude that so many people enjoy it with me every year."

Meanwhile, the Vince Guaraldi Trio's *A Charlie Brown Christmas* soundtrack ranks at No. 1 on Greatest of All Time Top Holiday Albums (marking an atypical win, and a holiday present, for the beleaguered but good-natured title character). The set, released in 1965 alongside the classic TV special of the same name, has logged a record 297 frames on the weekly Top Holiday Albums chart. It includes "Christmas Time Is Here," which places at No. 28 on the Greatest of All Time Holiday 100 Songs chart.

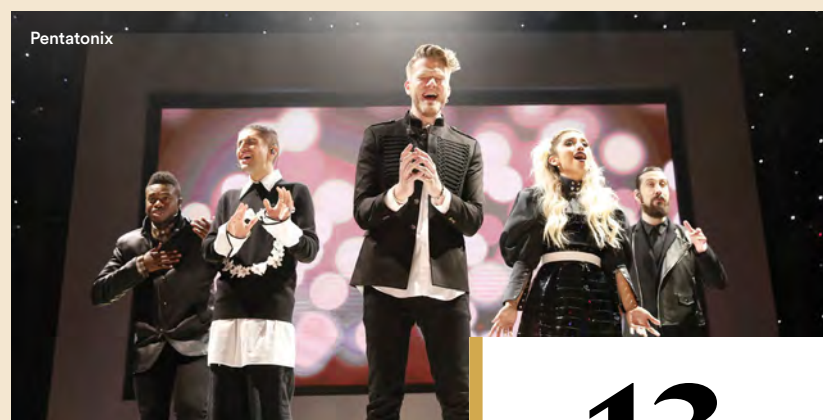
—GARY TRUST

RANK	Title	Artist
1	All I Want For Christmas Is You	Mariah Carey
2	Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree	Brenda Lee
3	Jingle Bell Rock	Bobby Helms
4	The Christmas Song (Merry Christmas To You)	Nat "King" Cole
5	A Holly Jolly Christmas	Burl Ives
6	Feliz Navidad	Jose Feliciano
7	It's The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year	Andy Williams
8	Last Christmas	Wham!
9	White Christmas	Bing Crosby
10	Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow	Dean Martin
11	Christmas Eve (Sarajevo 12/24)	Trans-Siberian Orchestra
12	Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer	Gene Autry
13	Mary, Did You Know?	Pentatonix
14	It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas	Michael Bublé
15	Sleigh Ride	The Ronettes
16	Happy Xmas (War Is Over)	John & Yoko/The Plastic Ono Band With The Harlem Community Choir
17	Mistletoe	Justin Bieber
18	Blue Christmas	Elvis Presley
19	Christmas Canon	Trans-Siberian Orchestra
20	Wonderful Christmastime	Paul McCartney
21	Santa Tell Me	Ariana Grande
22	You're A Mean One, Mr. Grinch	Thurl Ravenscroft
23	Happy Holiday/The Holiday Season	Andy Williams
24	Underneath The Tree	Kelly Clarkson
25	Here Comes Santa Claus (Right Down Santa Claus Lane)	Gene Autry
26	Hallelujah	Pentatonix
27	Please Come Home For Christmas	Eagles
28	Christmas Time Is Here	Vince Guaraldi Trio
29	It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas	Johnny Mathis
30	Do They Know It's Christmas?	Band-Aid

ILLUSTRATION BY MARK HARRIS

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RANK	Title	Artist
31	Santa Baby	Eartha Kitt With Henri Rene And His Orchestra
32	It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas	Bing Crosby
33	Linus & Lucy	Vince Guaraldi Trio
34	Where Are You Christmas?	Faith Hill
35	Santa Claus Is Comin' To Town	Bruce Springsteen
36	Little Drummer Boy	Pentatonix
37	Little Saint Nick	The Beach Boys
38	It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas	Perry Como And The Fontane Sisters With Mitchell Ayres And His Orchestra
39	Jingle Bells	Frank Sinatra
40	Run Rudolph Run	Chuck Berry
41	Holly Jolly Christmas	Michael Bublé
42	(There's No Place Like) Home For The Holidays	Perry Como
43	Santa Claus Is Comin' To Town	Jackson 5
44	Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)	Darlene Love
45	Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)	Mariah Carey
46	Frosty The Snowman	Jimmy Durante
47	Do You Want To Build A Snowman?	Kristen Bell, Agatha Lee Monn & Katie Lopez
48	Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas	Frank Sinatra
49	Merry Christmas Darling	Carpenters
50	This Christmas	Donny Hathaway
51	Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas	Michael Bublé
52	All I Want For Christmas Is You	Michael Bublé
53	Sleigh Ride	Leroy Anderson
54	Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer	Burl Ives
55	Here Comes Santa Claus (Right Down Santa Claus Lane)	Elvis Presley
56	Last Christmas	Taylor Swift
57	I Want A Hippopotamus For Christmas	Gayla Peevey
58	The Little Drummer Boy	The Harry Simeone Chorale
59	Baby It's Cold Outside	Idina Menzel Duet With Michael Bublé
60	White Christmas	The Drifters feat. Clyde McPhatter And Bill Pinkney



Elvis Presley

RANK	Title	Artist
61	Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow	Frank Sinatra With The B. Swanson Quartet
62	Baby It's Cold Outside	Dean Martin
63	Jingle Bell Rock	Daryl Hall & John Oates
64	White Christmas	Michael Bublé Duet With Shania Twain
65	I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus	Jackson 5
66	Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)	Michael Bublé
67	O Tannenbaum	Vince Guaraldi Trio
68	Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays	*NSYNC
69	Deck The Halls	Nat "King" Cole
70	The Chipmunk Song (Christmas Don't Be Late)	David Seville & The Chipmunks
71	Silent Night	The Temptations
72	Mele Kalikimaka (Merry Christmas)	Bing Crosby & The Andrews Sisters
73	I'll Be Home For Christmas	Bing Crosby
74	That's Christmas To Me	Pentatonix
75	Santa Claus Is Coming To Town	Michael Bublé
76	Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas	Sam Smith
77	Carol Of The Bells	David Foster
78	Do You Hear What I Hear?	Whitney Houston
79	Cozy Little Christmas	Katy Perry
80	The Christmas Shoes	NewSong
81	O Come All Ye Faithful	Nat "King" Cole
82	Like It's Christmas	Jonas Brothers
83	All I Want For Christmas Is You	Vince Vance & The Valiants
84	Do You Hear What I Hear?	Bing Crosby With Ralph Carmichael Orchestra & Chorus
85	Home For The Holidays	Carpenters
86	Carol Of The Bells	John Williams
87	Mary Did You Know	Jordan Smith
88	This Christmas	Chris Brown
89	What Christmas Means To Me	John Legend feat. Stevie Wonder
90	O Holy Night	Josh Groban
91	Christmas In Hollis	Run-D.M.C.
92	Winter Wonderland/Don't Worry Be Happy	Pentatonix feat. Tori Kelly
93	I'll Be Home For Christmas	Michael Bublé
94	Do You Hear What I Hear?	Andy Williams
95	Jingle Bells	Michael Bublé feat. The Puppini Sisters
96	White Winter Hymnal	Pentatonix
97	Silver Bells	Andy Williams
98	Winter Wonderland	Amy Grant
99	All I Want For Christmas Is You (SuperFestive!)	Justin Bieber Duet With Mariah Carey
100	Drummer Boy	Justin Bieber feat. Busta Rhymes

Vocal quintet Pentatonix is the only act with multiple No. 1s on the weekly Holiday 100 chart. Its "Little Drummer Boy" led for a week in 2013 and "Mary, Did You Know?" logged two weeks on top in 2014. The songs rank at Nos. 36 and 13, respectively, on the Greatest of All Time Holiday 100 Songs chart.

The only other weekly Holiday 100 No. 1s: Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas Is You," with a runaway best of 45 out of 50 weeks to date, as it tops Greatest of All Time Holiday 100 Songs; Justin Bieber's "Mistletoe" (one week, 2021; No. 17 on the all-time chart); and Ariana Grande's "Santa Tell Me" (one week, 2015; No. 21 all-time).

Pentatonix — whose members since 2017 are Mitch Grassi, Scott Hoying, Kirstin Maldonado, Kevin Olusola and Matt Sallee — has added *Evergreen* to its Christmas canon. The set debuted at No. 3 on the Nov. 13 Top Holiday Albums chart.

—G. T.

13

"Mary, Did You Know?"
Pentatonix

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Greatest Of All Time Top Holiday Albums

RANK	Artist	Title
1	Vince Guaraldi Trio	A Charlie Brown Christmas (Soundtrack)
2	Michael Bublé	Christmas
3	Mariah Carey	Merry Christmas
4	Mannheim Steamroller	A Fresh Aire Christmas
5	Mannheim Steamroller	Christmas
6	Nat "King" Cole	The Christmas Song
7	Josh Groban	Noel
8	Celíné Dion	These Are Special Times
9	Various Artists	A Very Special Christmas
10	Kenny G	Miracles: The Holiday Album
11	Trans-Siberian Orchestra	Christmas Eve And Other Stories
12	Trans-Siberian Orchestra	The Lost Christmas Eve
13	Soundtrack	Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas
14	George Winston	December
15	Pentatonix	That's Christmas To Me
16	Barbra Streisand	A Christmas Album
17	Elvis Presley	It's Christmas Time
18	Carpenters	Christmas Portrait
19	Various Artists	NOW That's What I Call Christmas!
20	Harry Connick Jr.	When My Heart Finds Christmas
21	Mannheim Steamroller	Christmas Extraordinaire
22	Mannheim Steamroller	Christmas In The Aire
23	Pentatonix	A Pentatonix Christmas
24	Bing Crosby	White Christmas
25	Amy Grant	Home For Christmas

2

Christmas
Michael Bublé

Michael Bublé's 2011 collection ranks at No. 2 on *Billboard's* Greatest of All Time Top Holiday Albums, having posted a record 28 weeks atop the weekly Top Holiday Albums chart (through the chart dated Nov. 20). Bublé also boasts nine tracks on the Greatest of All Time Holiday 100 Songs chart, the most among all artists, led by the album's "Holly Jolly Christmas" (No. 41). He celebrated the set's first decade with the Nov. 19 release of a deluxe 10th-anniversary edition. Bublé additionally ranks at No. 46 on the all-time chart with *Let It Snow!*, from 2003.

—G. T.



Bublé



A still from the 1965 TV special *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

RANK	Artist	Title
26	Andrea Bocelli	My Christmas
27	*NSYNC	Home For Christmas
28	Burl Ives	Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer
29	Trans-Siberian Orchestra	The Christmas Attic
30	Martina McBride	White Christmas
31	Il Divo	The Christmas Collection
32	Casting Crowns	Peace On Earth
33	Bing Crosby	The Best Of Bing Crosby: 20th Century Masters: The Christmas Collection
34	Kelly Clarkson	Wrapped In Red
35	Kenny G	Faith: A Holiday Album
36	Chris Tomlin	Glory In The Highest: Christmas Songs Of Worship
37	Various Artists	NOW That's What I Call Christmas! 2: The Signature Collection
38	Vince Gill	Let There Be Peace On Earth
39	Boyz II Men	Christmas Interpretations
40	Mannheim Steamroller	Christmas Celebration
41	Harry Connick Jr.	Harry For The Holidays
42	Various Artists	A Very Special Christmas 2
43	Charlotte Church	Dream A Dream
44	Garth Brooks	Beyond The Season
45	Kenny Rogers & Dolly Parton	Once Upon A Christmas
46	Michael Bublé	Let It Snow!
47	Justin Bieber	Under The Mistletoe
48	Susan Boyle	The Gift
49	Taylor Swift	The Taylor Swift Holiday Collection
50	Pentatonix	The Best Of Pentatonix Christmas

The Greatest of All Time Holiday 100 Songs and Top Holiday Albums charts are based on actual performance on *Billboard's* weekly Holiday 100 and Top Holiday Albums charts from the former's inception on Dec. 10, 2011, through the ranking dated Jan. 2, 2021, and the latter's history dating to Dec. 21, 1985, through the ranking dated Oct. 30, 2021. Songs are ranked based on an inverse point system, with weeks at No. 1 earning the greatest value and weeks at lower ranks earning less. Due to changes in chart methodology over the years, eras are weighted to account for different chart turnover rates during various periods.

BROWN: COURTESY OF THE EVERETT COLLECTION; BUBLÉ: VIVIAN ZHANG/GETTY IMAGES; SNOOPY: EVERETT COLLECTION

RAQUEL KIARAA

© Andrea Hunter Photography

RAQUEL KIARAA EMPOWERS WOMEN BY GRACEFULLY “DEFYING ODDS”

Singer-songwriter Raquel Kiaraa embraces her power, enjoying the beauty of not just giving birth to a child but also bringing light to herself, her strength, and her musical ambitions. The title of her new album, "Defying Odds," is provocative, as it alludes to women's ability to bend the status quo. Raquel has gained worldwide press attention from renowned outlets such as Clash, iHeartRadio, Exclaim, Virgin Radio, Wonderland and Earmilk, to mention a few, since her mesmerizing album's release.

Virgin Radio puts Canada on notice : "Have we found the next artist set to put our country on the map?" when talking about Raquel's future role in music.

Her new album 'Defying Odds' is rapidly on its way to 1 million streams, with Hattie Pearson of the (Coop edit) spinning 'Try' as part of her 'off the shelf' artist slot in 4,000 stores across the UK. In only three weeks, her smash single from the album, "Love Got Me Sick," has close to 200K+ views on YouTube, with the press dubbing her Hamilton's Britney Spears. Furthermore, her track "Love to the Moon" obtained in-store placements with the following brands: Natan, McDonald's, Shakeaway, and Helly Hansen.

"We are women – Defying Odds.
I am a woman – Defying Odds."



Raquel maintains a life of defying odds, as her album states, learning to sing and play the piano at the age of 32, writing all of her songs, releasing her debut album, and becoming a mother, and running her businesses all at the same time. Raquel was inspired and dedicated by 2019 to making her dreams a reality. Raquel Kiaraa's artistry maintains her purpose to lift others to realize the impossible. A contemporary voice, a tour de force smashing odds in the world of music.



Frankie Moreno

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Produced by: Frankie Moreno • Mixed & Mastered by: Christos Gatzimos • Co-written with: Gianna Adams
 Additional writers: Lacey Schwimmer, Tony Moreno & Bahia Brunelle • Special thanks to Phil Reynolds, Kathy Cornelius and the FM Army®

market

MUSIC AND MONEY

PG. 26 WILL ATTORNEYS PROVE ASTROWORLD LIABILITY?

PG. 28 THE SCIENCE OF CROWD MANAGEMENT

PG. 30 WHAT HAPPENS TO TRAVIS SCOTT NOW?



A Preventable Tragedy?

Astroworld had a setup ill-suited for a raucous crowd and little if any oversight from Live Nation's most experienced festival executives

BY DAVE BROOKS // ILLUSTRATION BY BARBARA GIBSON

TRAVIS SCOTT ENCOURAGES his concert audiences to “rage,” so his Astroworld festival, which this year drew 50,000 fans on Nov. 5 to NRG Park in Houston, needs to be organized in a way that keeps attendees safe. But ScoreMore Shows, which produces and promotes the event, set it up in a way that several concert business sources say may have inadvertently contributed to the crowd surge that resulted in 10 deaths and hundreds of injuries, and that parent company Live Nation rarely exercises the kind of oversight over events organized by its subsidiaries that

might have flagged these problems before it was too late.

That is by design. Live Nation CEO Michael Rapino runs the company with a decentralized management strategy that encourages promoters it acquires, such as ScoreMore, to run as independent units, each responsible for its own revenue and expenses. That encourages the kind of aggressive booking strategies that keep Live Nation's event pipeline full of shows that generate Ticketmaster fees, sponsorships and other revenue. But it also means that the expertise of its most experienced personnel isn't always shared internally.

Rapino “views promoters as entrepreneurs and doesn't see any net gain in forcing a one-size-fits-all approach,” explained a former Live Nation executive. “The dozens of regional and independent promoters purchased by Live Nation operate more like a federation than a corporation with its strength drawn from its alignment.”

In the wake of the Nov. 5 tragedy, Live Nation and ScoreMore — an Austin-based company that the mega-promoter acquired in 2018 and now essentially operates as a subsidiary — have been criticized for allegedly cutting corners on Astroworld, but they don't actually appear to have cut costs. In fact, the stage created just for Scott's performance at the festival cost \$5 million, according to ScoreMore. The promoter also hired over 500 police officers, plus another 700 security guards for the festival — more than is typical for an event of that size. At least some of the fault lies in the setup of the event, however, and though Live Nation has a wealth of experts in its ranks who might have spotted potential problems, the company's various

Britney Spears' 13-year legal conservatorship was formally terminated.

Facebook changed its corporate name to Meta, sparking increased interest in the metaverse.

divisions operate with considerable independence.

Sometimes that leaves them on their own. On the night of Nov. 5, ScoreMore co-founder/CEO Sascha Stone Gutfreund was home sick, according to numerous sources, and as Astroworld descended into chaos, the responsibility for whether to stop the show fell to Brad Wavra, a veteran touring executive who industry sources say doesn't have much experience running festivals. (Wavra and ScoreMore didn't respond to multiple requests for comment, and Live Nation declined to comment on the events at Astroworld, beyond public statements of sympathy.)

Astroworld presented acts on two stages: one for the other artists on the lineup and one for Scott, with the viewing area in front of Scott's divided into four sections by four barricades. One ran perpendicular to the stage, bisecting the audience; the others were set up parallel to the stage: one just in front of it, one about halfway through the main viewing area and one in front of the video cameras at the end of that area. Such setups, which are common at general admission festivals, are meant to protect fans close to the stage by limiting the number of people who can push forward into them.

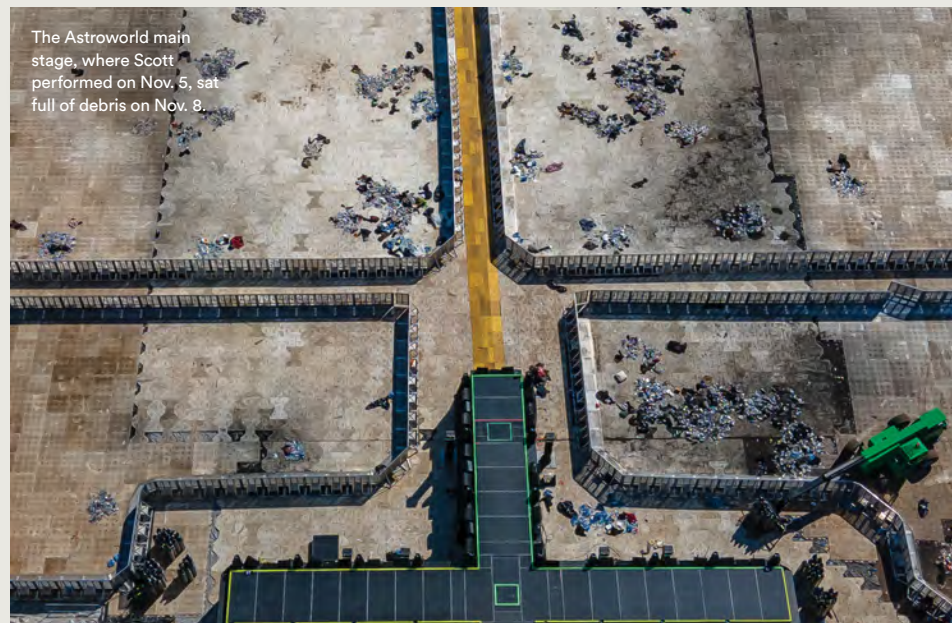
Unlike most festivals with potentially aggressive crowds, however, the area in front of Scott's stage didn't have barriers on its left and right sides. His stage was 200 feet long — over three times the length of the main stage at Coachella — and since almost all of the action took place in the center, concertgoers swarmed into the main viewing area from both sides, then pushed toward the middle, according to numerous accounts. As the crowd surge worsened, fans ended up surrounded on three sides by barriers intended to protect them. Even before Scott got onstage, the crowd was so tightly packed that some fans began jumping over the barricades to escape a situation some said already felt dangerous.

Then it got worse. Most festivals schedule performances by major artists to overlap in order to spread out the audience, but Scott was scheduled to perform after all the other acts had finished. And as an onscreen countdown clock ticked off the minutes until his set began at 9:06 p.m., what should have been a steady move toward the viewing areas in front of his stage became a rush. Fans poured in from the open sides of the four main viewing areas, and the barriers on the other sides left no way out. Some fans were lifted into the photo pit to escape the crush. By 9:30 p.m., the Houston Fire Department heard radio calls about CPR being administered to concertgoers who had been caught in the surge, and an ambulance was driving through the crowd. Scott paused his performance, then told the crowd he wanted to “hear the ground shake.” Seven minutes later, Houston Fire Chief Samuel Peña declared a “mass casualty incident.”

It's possible that an experienced concert business executive

“The dozens of regional and independent promoters purchased by Live Nation operate more like a federation than a corporation with its strength drawn from its alignment.”

— A FORMER LIVE NATION EXECUTIVE



The Astroworld main stage, where Scott performed on Nov. 5, sat full of debris on Nov. 8.

Concerts And Courtrooms

Lawsuits are mounting against Astroworld organizers.

What will the attorneys need to prove? **BY BILL DONAHUE**

A **S OF NOV. 17**, more than 400 people had sued Travis Scott, Live Nation and other entities behind Astroworld, accusing them of legal negligence in planning and executing a festival that left 10 dead and hundreds injured. Experts predict that litigation could take years, with hundreds of millions of dollars at stake.

In this case, “negligence” means organizers had a responsibility to keep concertgoers reasonably safe but failed to do so. In one lawsuit, a victim said Live Nation and others “egregiously failed in their duty to protect the health, safety and lives of those in attendance at the concert.” To prove such a failure, attorneys will scrutinize the decisions made that night, but experts say the lawsuits will ultimately turn more on how the event was planned. “These cases,” says Rutgers Law School professor Adam Scales, “will be won or lost on whether there was a reasonable plan in place.”

Did Scott's Past Raise Red Flags?

To prove negligence, victims' attorneys must show that Astroworld should have seen a deadly crowd surge coming. To do that, they'll likely point to Scott's punk-rock persona and history of legal troubles at concerts, including arrests in 2015 and 2017 for urging fans to storm the stage.

“If Astroworld was on notice that Scott's concerts tend to be more chaotic than other performers' concerts,” says John Goldberg, deputy dean at Harvard Law School, “it would be required by negligence law to take the extra degree of danger or risk into account in deciding what sort of security measures to put into place.”

Could This Have Been Prevented?

If victims' attorneys can show that Astroworld's organizers should have foreseen such a tragedy, they will then need to prove that enough wasn't done to prevent it. And they can't be vague; they have to show that specific steps should have been taken and — crucially — that those measures would have prevented their clients' injuries and deaths.

“Those pursuing claims are not going to be able to just speculate that their injuries would not have occurred based on a vague theory that ‘more should have been done,’” says Deedee R. Gasch, attorney at Cranfill Sumner. “Concert organizers are not required to account for every single possibility or even an unruly crowd — injury alone does not automatically equate to negligence.”

Did Fans Know The Risk?

Like almost any other live-event producer, Live Nation requires attendees to agree to a waiver of liability when they purchase tickets. But experts say waivers are not a magic wand, and courts are sometimes hesitant to apply them in cases of outright negligence.

Astroworld organizers might argue more generally that Scott fans should have assumed that there was a risk of injury in attending one of his action-packed shows, but Goldberg says that argument would be “quite weak.”

“Concertgoers might appreciate that Travis Scott concerts are very rowdy,” he says, “yet also reasonably believe that the organizers have taken steps to ensure that the situation does not go from rowdy to deadly.” **E**

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with a background in crowd management would have flagged that Astroworld's setup had the potential to exacerbate crowding problems. It's not clear whether such a person ever saw the design plans, however. The festival's plan for backup medical care could have been flagged as well. Astroworld hired Paradocs, a private company that handles medical care at many festivals and big events, and the company had a plan to get backup from the fire department if it encountered a situation for which it didn't have enough Paradocs staffers or supplies. But the company gave the fire department a list of staffers' mobile phone numbers instead of one of its radios, and Peña said at a press conference that staffers were left trying to call for backup with mobile phones — which can be notoriously unreliable amid festival crowds.

How did that happen? With a value that exceeds \$26 billion, Live Nation has a wealth of resources, as well as access to considerable expertise from promoters at other companies it has bought over the years, including Insomniac and C3 Presents, two of the leading festival promoters in the world. Like ScoreMore, C3 is based in Austin, and it produces and promotes Lollapalooza, Austin City Limits and, as of 2020, Bonnaroo. Under Live Nation's normal operating procedure, though, sources say, ScoreMore would not have had to speak to anyone at C3 about its plans for Astroworld.

"It's very decentralized," Rapino said about the company during a 2017 interview at Canadian Music Week. "What I love about what we do is the Insomniac guys or the festival guys or the artist-management division have all these different businesses that we're

partners in." On Live Nation's website, one of its pitches to prospective employees is, "We live for decentralization." "We don't believe in bureaucracy, and we don't mandate synergy," the site reads. "We keep our corporate teams small because we trust that our decentralized divisions know how to make the best decisions for their businesses in real time."

With Stone Gutfreund sick, on-the-ground responsibility fell to Wavra, whom Stone Gutfreund helped sign Scott to a touring and festival deal with Live Nation in 2018, just after the company bought ScoreMore. That meant the decision to stop the concert if it became unsafe would fall to him, whether Scott wanted that or not. This had the potential to put Wavra in a tough position because part of his job involves retaining Scott as a touring artist for Live Nation.

Wavra was the only full-time Live Nation

MANAGING THE MASSES

At general admission festivals, "crowd control is what happens when crowd management fails"

THE INVESTIGATION into the tragedy at Travis Scott's Astroworld festival will inevitably end up focusing largely on crowd control — when the area in front of Scott's stage got too packed, what could have been done to relieve that pressure and when or if the show should have been stopped sooner. But the fact that those kinds of questions even arise might suggest that the venue wasn't set up effectively enough to avoid them in the first place.

"Crowd control is what happens when crowd management fails," says Dr. Gil Fried, a professor of sport management at the University of Florida. That, he says, is "the process of planning and testing strategies to make events safer."

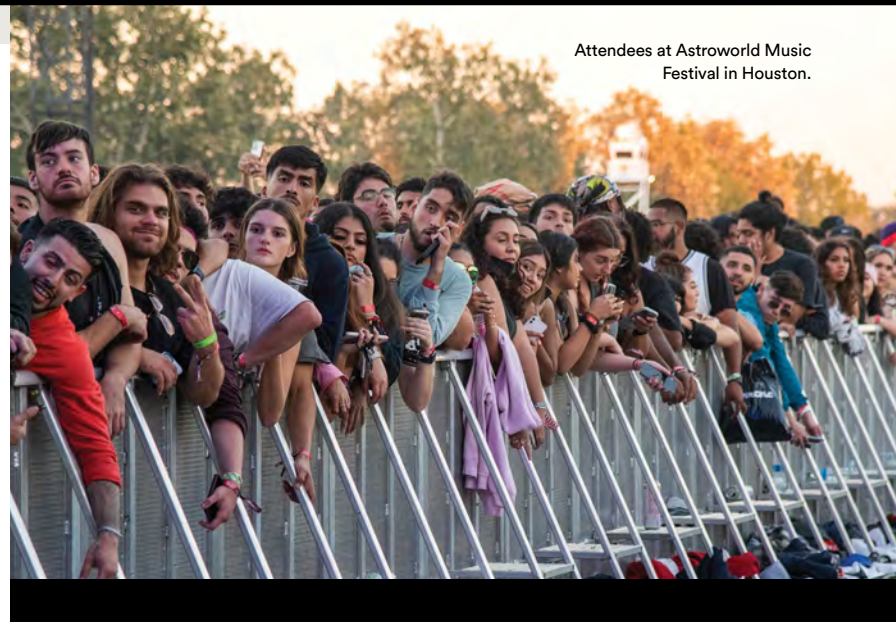
Most festivals now stagger artists' set times to avoid a scenario where the entire audience wants to be in the same place at once, and Coachella, for example, sometimes presents an act on another stage that performs after the headliner to spread out the crowd. But the essence of most crowd management strategies hasn't changed much since the 1960s, when scientists and psychologists began to examine the

subject in a methodical way.

Amid the increased popularity of general admission concert festivals, crowd management experts are now thinking more about how safety barriers and other equipment will perform in emergencies, according to Event Safety Alliance vp Steve Adelman. Through testing and modeling, groups like his want to develop standards for using equipment to direct crowds and prevent a crush of spectators. Amid a nationwide shortage of people willing to take low-wage, part-time security gigs, Adelman says that smart planning and the use of physical barriers will become increasingly important.

"We're going to have to get creative in how we use our resources to protect more people, whether that's using technology like virtual reality or augmented reality to build and safely test locations for large, multiperson gatherings or making a concerted effort to hire and train more people at a community level to understand crowd management," he says. "Ultimately, it will be how can we best protect life safety with the resources we have."

Sometimes that simply involves offering fans cues on safe behavior. Before Slayer's 1986 *Reign in Blood* tour, media reports generated public



Attendees at Astroworld Music Festival in Houston.

concern about "moshing" — which was relatively new at the time — and promoters were worried about how to address the potential danger. "This wasn't rhythmic dancing. This was male-on-male aggression, and it terrified some of the roughest, toughest bar owners and bouncers in rock'n'roll," says Fried. "Most people would look at a mosh pit and think these guys were going to kill each other."

No critical injuries made news at Slayer's concerts that year, though, or at the thousands of shows the band played until it retired in 2019. Keeping Slayer and its fans safe, says Fried, was a series of unspoken rules: create enough space for others to enjoy the show, don't dance aggressively against the flow of the crowd, and watch out for others who might need help.

"They essentially developed a safety

and oversight system with two key tenets of crowd management — social and situational awareness," says Fried, adding that veteran fans, aware of the crowd dynamic and alert for potential problems in the mosh pit, would model behavior for new ones. It helps when an artist encourages that, of course. Scott has incited fans in the past to rush onstage and break through barricades, and although he did not do so on the night of Nov. 5, some fans may have taken his attitude as a general invitation to aggressively crush in.

"You don't need a degree in occupational safety to understand the importance of telling people to stop crowding and take a step back," continues Fried. "Music performances create a unique set of challenges, but nearly all of those challenges have been solved by the music community." —D. B.

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LIVE NATION

What's Next For Travis Scott?

THROUGHOUT HIS career, Travis Scott has relied on brand deals to build his popularity and boost his earnings. And while he started with small fashion designers, his partners now include Nike, McDonald's, Epic Games, Dior and Anheuser-Busch. However, their interest in marketing around Scott's persona has been shaken by his connection to the tragedy at Astroworld — and some consumers' beliefs that he could have done more to prevent the 10 deaths and hundreds of injuries that occurred. Now, part of his future depends on these companies' next moves.

"Over the last couple of years, Travis Scott has become one of music's biggest brand ambassadors," says one hip-hop marketing expert. "This tragedy will affect Travis' image and brand deals moving forward."

On Nov. 15, Nike announced it was "postponing" its next sneaker release

in an ongoing partnership — a highly anticipated Air Max 1 designed by Scott that was set to launch Dec. 16 — "out of respect for everyone impacted by the tragic events at the Astroworld Festival." Soon, Dior will need to decide how to handle its summer menswear line, the entirety of which has been planned as a Scott collaboration under his Cactus Jack banner.

These arrangements were supposed to coincide with a new release for Scott, whose fourth album, *Utopia*, was scheduled to come out before the end of the year, a source previously told *Billboard*. Representatives for Scott and his label, Epic Records, did not respond to requests for comment, but that timeline now seems unlikely. Waiting may prove prudent, though, based on the performance of Scott's new single, "Escape Plan," which was released Nov. 5, the opening day for Astroworld. From its



release through Nov. 15, "Escape Plan" registered 24.6 million U.S. on-demand streams and received 742 radio spins from the slate of stations that report to *Billboard*'s all-format Radio Songs chart, according to MRC Data. By comparison, 2019's "Highest in the Room," Scott's last single as a solo artist, earned 81.1 million U.S. on-demand streams and 3,000 airplay spins in its first 11 days.

When Scott does return, the question for brands will be, how much will his persona resemble the one that he has become so widely known for?

"Travis Scott has built a brand off being a rager," says the marketing expert. "He creates high-energy music and has high-energy shows... There is no way to truly tell if his image or brand will take a hit, but the rager side must evolve." —CARL LAMARRE

executive at Astroworld listed on the "event operation plan." The festival management team on the ground consisted almost entirely of contractors. The Columbus, Ohio, company B3 Risk Solutions, often hired by Live Nation promoter Insomniac to work on EDM events including Electric Daisy Carnival, did event and strategy planning. (B3 founder Seyth Boardman often works with Live Nation, but he was listed in the event plan as a contractor.) Veteran Houston concert promoter Brent Silberstein was hired as a freelance operations manager, and Joe Stallone, who has done legal work for ScoreMore, is listed in the plan as one of the event's seven managers.

BWG Live, a Southern California production company co-founded by former Goldenoice producers Leo Nitzberg and Meg Dieters, handled the production work, designing the stage and managing the technical aspects of the performance. According to the event plan, a BWG employee, Emily Ockenden, was listed as the first person to be contacted by emergency officials. (Ockenden would not comment.) There is no evidence that any of these managers did anything wrong. But several executives at Live Nation have more experience running general admission festivals.

Moments after Astroworld was declared a mass-casualty incident, Houston Police Chief Troy Finner spoke with Wavra at the event, and Finner said at a Nov. 8 press conference that they agreed that the show would continue for another half hour, then end at 10:10 p.m. Later on Nov. 8, a Houston police representative told *Billboard* that the decision of when to stop the show was made by Finner, who chose not to end it earlier out of concern that this might lead to a riot.

Then, at a Nov. 10 press conference — after images emerged of Houston police officers standing in the photo pit taking pictures of Scott performing with Drake — Finner said his previous comments had been misunderstood and that he had told the promoters to shut down the show. He said that they, not he, had the power to end the concert because the festival was held on county property. Finner added that he didn't think the matter warranted an independent investigation.

Neither Wavra nor anyone else from ScoreMore or Live Nation have said anything about how the conversation with Finner went, and it's still unclear who made the decision to keep the show going after it was declared a mass-casualty incident, or the decision on when to stop it. That information, when it emerges, will serve to frame a more important question: whether letting the show continue may have worsened the tragedy.

The other question, which can only be answered in court, in one of the more than 170 lawsuits filed against various entities involved in organizing Astroworld, is who has legal responsibility for what happened. And regardless of the way Live Nation is set up to operate, one of the most likely answers points to the company. **b**

WILL ASTROWORLD WORSEN THE RAP AGAINST HIP-HOP CONCERTS?

► **FOR DECADES, BIAS** against hip-hop and fear that such concerts are more likely to bring violence from the streets into venues has manifested as higher costs for event insurance that covers a range of potential outcomes, from cancellation to property damage and audience injuries. One former promoter in the Pacific Northwest says he was asked to pay up to five times more for insurance coverage on hip-hop shows in the 2010s, and when he brought a complaint to the local insurance commissioner, he was told that, as a private company, the insurer could charge whatever it wanted. Now some touring executives worry that, even as the genre's popularity is at an all-time high, the 10 deaths and hundreds of injuries at Astroworld could further warp insurers' perceptions — despite the fact that the culture of raging is arguably more common at hard-rock shows and has no intrinsic link to hip-hop.

"There is a real risk that this is going to be seen as a Black issue and that Black shows are particularly violent," says one music manager. "The reality is, it's not actually that common that you see something like this at a Black show."

Smaller hip-hop acts and promoters are likely to get hit the worst, while major touring artists, promoters and venues tend to have blanket insurance policies that cover all their shows regardless of genre. It's also potentially bad for outdoor festivals with temporary staging, as these events typically require separate insurance underwriting in the form of an isolated policy or an additional premium on an existing one. If the costs become prohibitive, expect higher ticket prices — or even fewer of these kinds of events.

"Hip-hop shows were exceedingly hard to get covered before this happened," says one insurance specialist. "So it can't get any easier."

—TAYLOR HIMS

Festivalgoers at Miami's Rolling Loud in July.



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Security at the Wireless Festival in London in September.



SHORT ON SECURITY

Nearly one-third of U.K. security staffers have left the live industry in the past 18 months, putting concertgoers at greater risk as touring ramps up in 2022

BY RICHARD SMIRKE



LONDON — When organizers of the U.K. music festival Parklife recruited the 1,000 security staffers needed for the September event in Manchester, England, they had to go to extreme lengths to get them. To meet their quota for the festival, which was headlined by Megan Thee Stallion and British rappers Dave and Skepta, they bused in workers from Devon, 250 miles away, and from northern Scotland.

“We had to beg, borrow and steal from the whole of the U.K.,” says Parklife founder Sacha Lord. “Forty people from here, 20 people from there. It was a real battle.”

A growing shortage of security staff in Europe, especially in the United Kingdom, is causing headaches for concert promoters desperate to return to business after being closed for over a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since live music resumed in the United Kingdom on July 19, concerns have mounted that concert- and clubgoers are being put at risk by

a lack of qualified and experienced stewards and security supervisors. The Nov. 5 tragedy in Houston — where 10 people died and hundreds more were injured in crowd surges at Travis Scott’s Astroworld festival — has only intensified those fears.

U.K. trade organization the Night Time Industries Association estimates around 30% of U.K. security staff working in the nighttime economy has left the industry in the last 18 months. In September, 1 in 5 U.K. nightlife/hospitality businesses closed or reduced operating hours due to a shortage of security staff, says NTIA CEO Michael Kill. The situation has worsened since then, he adds.

“Our front line of defense in terms of safeguarding our customers, counterterrorism and general public safety, is weakened by the fact that we haven’t got the required level of [security] resources to access,” says Kill.

The United Kingdom has struggled with a shortage of security personnel for years, but the pandemic has exacerbated the situation. Heightened

demand for security at hospitals and COVID-19 testing centers has would-be concert workers employed elsewhere with steadier, better-paying jobs. Brexit and the exodus of thousands of European Union (EU) citizens from the United Kingdom back to their home countries has further depleted the temporary work force that music security suppliers rely upon.

With next year’s concert calendar already packed, live-music executives worry there won’t be enough security staff to go around. “We are an industry in crisis, and there’s simply not the numbers of qualified, experienced staff available to keep all these events safe,” says Reg Walker, director of ISG Security, which provides staff for U.K. music concerts and events. He has had to increase wages, in some cases doubling them from pre-pandemic levels up to 30 pounds (\$40) an hour for specialist staff — internal security that deals with everything from public order to evacuations. The increased demand has meant that security work-

ers are now signing up for multiple jobs on the same day and going with the highest bidder, says Walker, leaving some jobs understaffed. That has led to security firms overbooking staff by 20% to 30%.

Shortages are also causing concerns in continental Europe, where COVID-19 restrictions have meant that live music has been generally slower to return than in the United Kingdom.

In the United Kingdom, Walker says he has witnessed “worrying” lapses in security protocols as firms hire unqualified staff to make up for the shortfall. Door supervisors have shown him they didn’t know what a laminate pass was (but allowed him entry anyway), and some security staff are not able to speak English. “How are they going to evacuate an arena, understand a safety briefing or deal with a critical incident?” he asks. (The leading U.K. security firms — Showsec, SES Group and A.P. Security — all declined to comment for this story.)

Filling the void the past several months, executives say, are ad-hoc, unlicensed security firms that have started operating in the United Kingdom to cash in on the heightened demand — a troubling situation because there is no way to track their numbers, licenses and training. Meanwhile, past tragedies at European music events, such as the 2015 terror attack at the Bataclan concert hall in Paris, where 90 people were killed, and a suicide bombing at a 2017 Ariana Grande concert at Manchester Arena, where 22 people died, remain stark reminders of the need for strong security when staging mass-audience events.

Lord, who also serves as the nighttime economy adviser for Greater Manchester, is looking to lure workers who have left the sector back with better working terms, job security and rates of pay. And the NTIA is calling on the U.K. government to introduce temporary visas for EU workers and to fund new training initiatives.

“If a solution isn’t found to this problem,” says Kill, “my fear is that it may lead to a tragedy.” **b**

Additional reporting by Steve Knopper.

Six years after the deadly terror attack on Paris’ Bataclan nightclub, a French music executive who survived recalls the horror and aftermath of an event that shocked the global concert industry.

READ MORE AT [BILLBOARD.COM/BATACLAN-SIX-YEARS](https://www.billboard.com/bataclan-six-years)

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SONY'S QUARTER IS SWEET WITH SOUR

Company leads both publisher rankings with songs performed by Olivia Rodrigo, Doja Cat, and Justin Bieber and The Kid LAROI BY ED CHRISTMAN

FOR THE SECOND STRAIGHT QUARTER, Sony Music Publishing ruled both the Top Radio Airplay and the Hot 100 Songs charts. The period from July 1 to Sept. 30 marked the company's eighth time topping both tallies at once since *Billboard* instituted the Hot 100 Songs chart in 2019.

Stakes in the No. 1 songs on both charts — Doja Cat's "Kiss Me More" featuring SZA on Top Radio Airplay and The Kid LAROI and Justin Bieber's "Stay" on Hot 100 Songs — helped Sony earn dominant market shares: 29.53% on Top Radio Airplay, with 59 songs; and 28.86% on Hot 100 Songs, with 63 songs. (Warner Chappell Music,



The Kid LAROI

Universal Music Publishing Group and Kobalt all held shares in those top tracks, too.) Sony has led Hot 100 Songs for nine of the 11 quarters the chart has existed, plus Top Radio Airplay for 15 of the past 16 quarters. Last quarter, Sony earned a 23.48% share with 56 songs on Top Radio Airplay and 32.58% with 60 songs on Hot 100 Songs.

Olivia Rodrigo and her *Sour* collaborator Daniel "Dan" Leonard Nigro — both of whom are represented by Sony — tied as Top Radio Airplay's leading songwriters with four songs, including "good 4 u" (No. 2). Amala Zandile Dlamini, aka Doja Cat — represented by Kobalt — led Hot 100 Songwriters with six credits, including "Kiss Me More" at No. 5.

Warner Chappell edged out Universal to hit No. 2 on Top Radio Airplay with a 19.22% market share and 58 songs (from 17.44% and 48). On Hot 100 Songs, it ranked third with a 17.90% market share and 52 songs (from 16.95% and 47). The publisher has also ruled the top 100 Country Airplay songs for a 19th consecutive quarter, with a 29.35% share.

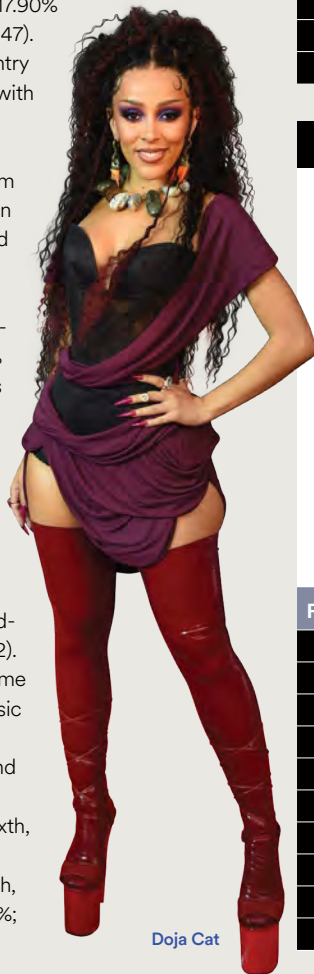
Universal fell to No. 3 on Top Radio Airplay with a 17.56% market share and 45 songs (from 21.05% and 49), while ranking second again on Hot 100 Songs with a 19.81% market share and 57 songs (from 18.02% and 47).

Kobalt ranked fourth on both charts with a 14.45% market share and 38 songs on Top Radio Airplay (from 14.71% and 34), and a 14.78% market share and 33 songs on Hot 100 Songs (from 12.82% and 47).

BMG held onto the No. 5 spot on both charts. It earned a 6.33% market share and 26 songs on Top Radio Airplay (from 9.41% and 24), including Justin Bieber's "Peaches" featuring Daniel Caesar and Giveon (No. 9). On Hot 100 Songs, it scored a 4.68% market share and 17 songs (from 7.40% and 21), including Silk Sonic's "Leave the Door Open" (No. 12).

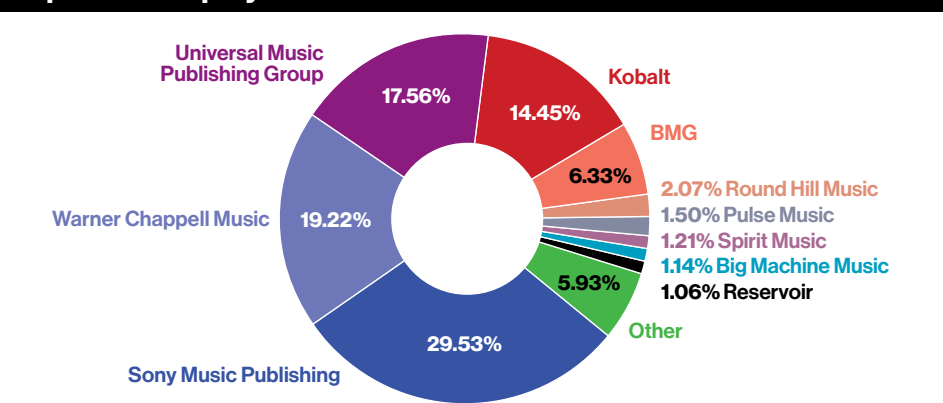
On Top Radio Airplay, Round Hill Music came in sixth, with a 2.07% market share; Pulse Music seventh, with 1.50%; Spirit Music eighth, with 1.21%; Big Machine Music ninth, with 1.14%; and Reservoir 10th, with 1.06%.

On Hot 100 Songs, Pulse Music came in sixth, with a 2.06% market share; Hipgnosis Songs Group seventh, with 1.39%; Spirit Music eighth, with 1.22%; Round Hill Music ninth, with 0.88%; and Reservoir 10th, with 0.81%. **B**



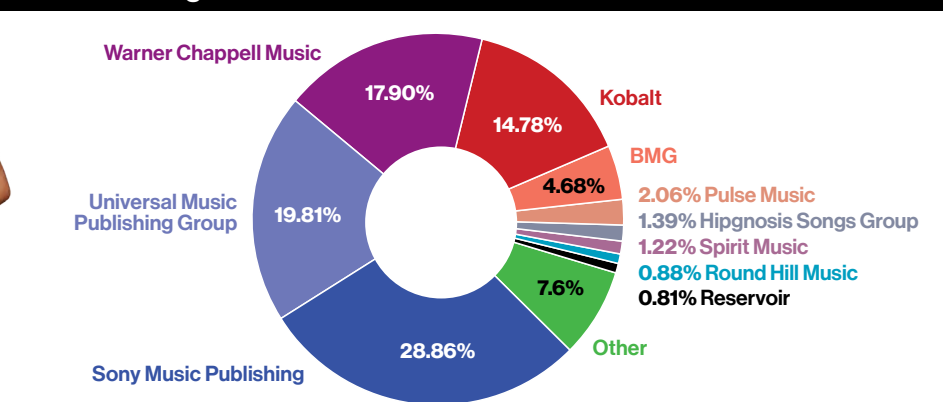
Doja Cat

Top Radio Airplay: Publishers*



Rank	Title	Artist	Label
1	Kiss Me More	Doja Cat feat. SZA	Kemosabe/RCA
2	good 4 u	Olivia Rodrigo	Geffen/Interscope
3	Bad Habits	Ed Sheeran	Atlantic
4	Levitating	Dua Lipa feat. DaBaby	Warner Records
5	deja vu	Olivia Rodrigo	Geffen/Interscope
6	Montero (Call Me by Your Name)	Lil Nas X	Columbia
7	Stay	The Kid LAROI & Justin Bieber	Raymond Braun/Def Jam/Columbia
8	Save Your Tears	The Weeknd	XO/Republic
9	Peaches	Justin Bieber feat. Daniel Caesar & Giveon	Raymond Braun/Def Jam
10	You Right	Doja Cat & The Weeknd	Kemosabe/RCA

Hot 100 Songs: Publishers*



Rank	Title	Artist	Label
1	Stay	The Kid LAROI & Justin Bieber	Raymond Braun/Columbia/Def Jam
2	good 4 u	Olivia Rodrigo	Geffen/Interscope
3	Butter	BTS	HYBE/BigHit Music/Columbia
4	Bad Habits	Ed Sheeran	Atlantic
5	Kiss Me More	Doja Cat feat. SZA	Kemosabe/RCA
6	Levitating	Dua Lipa	Warner
7	Montero (Call Me by Your Name)	Lil Nas X	Columbia
8	Save Your Tears	The Weeknd & Ariana Grande	XO/Republic
9	Industry Baby	Lil Nas X & Jack Harlow	Columbia
10	deja vu	Olivia Rodrigo	Geffen/Interscope

*For the Top 10 Publishers Top Radio Airplay chart, percentage calculations were based upon the overall top 100 detecting songs from 1,998 U.S. radio stations electronically monitored by MRC Data 24 hours a day, seven days a week during the period of July 1 to Sept. 30. For Top 10 Publishers Hot 100 Songs, percentage calculations were based upon the top 100 songs as ranked by *Billboard* Hot 100 points calculated from digital sales, streaming and MRC Data-tracked radio airplay detections during the period of July 2 to Sept. 30, reflecting the issue dates of July 17 through Oct. 9. Publisher information for musical works on both charts has been identified by the Harry Fox Agency. A "publisher" is defined as an administrator, copyright owner and/or controlling party.

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Loba photographed Oct. 28 at BMG in Nashville.

From The Desk Of... Jon Loba

**PRESIDENT OF RECORDED MUSIC
BMG NASHVILLE**

BY MELINDA NEWMAN

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DIANA KING

WHEN JON LOBA graduated from Central Michigan University in 1996 with a degree in finance, he planned to move to New York for an investment banking training program. Then a visit to Nashville left him longing to pursue a career in Music City. "My heart said, 'Nashville'; my head said, 'New York,'" recalls the president of recorded

music for BMG Nashville. "I was mowing our yard on the family farm in Michigan, and I said, 'Lord, I know I haven't been in church much and I'm not always the best, but could you help me with this decision and make it a strong signal?' " Within seconds, "The River," Garth Brooks' ode to following one's dreams, starting playing through his headphones. "I looked up and said, 'That's pretty good. Got it.' "

Loba moved to Nashville with \$500 in his pocket and started out working for BMI, then did radio promotion at Warner Bros. and Atlantic. Then in 2001, he joined Broken Bow Records, a scrappy independent imprint founded by Benny Brown, where Loba helped sign Jason Aldean in 2005. "A couple of labels had already dropped him. I went to the showcase at the Wildhorse Saloon with my arms folded, ready to shoot holes in everything," says Loba. "By the third song, I said to Benny, 'I think we better run back there and sign him before everybody realizes what they're missing.' "

In 2017, BMG purchased BBR Music Group, which by then included the Broken Bow, Stoney Creek and Wheelhouse imprints, for over \$100 million. In February, Loba, 52, was promoted to his current title, reporting to BMG CEO Hartwig Masuch.

It has been a powerful year for BMG Nashville, with six No. 1s on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart. The success from its 34-act roster has been across the board: Superstar Aldean

landed his 24th airplay No. 1 in October; Elvie Shane's chart-topping "My Boy" made the label one of the few to break a new artist during the pandemic; Chase Rice, Lainey Wilson, Parmalee and Blanco Brown have also topped the ranking; and reliable hitmakers Dustin Lynch and Jimmie Allen, who was named best new artist at the Country Music Association Awards on Nov. 10, have had strong years. Loba talked with *Billboard* over Zoom while in Los Angeles for Wilson's late-night TV debut on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* and Allen's appearance on *Dancing With the Stars*.

When the pandemic put a halt to in-person radio tours, BMG funded a high-tech studio that enabled Elvie Shane to perform virtually for over 120 individual stations. How did that work?

I thought that while everyone was zigging, I want to zag. I'd seen enough Zoom performances. I didn't want to present our artists that way. Leadership in Berlin said, "We will give you

the resources to do this right." [Producer] Ron Fair had a wonderful studio set up with video capabilities, and then we tricked it out. It was about getting the streaming tech right. We brought in Jason Aldean's team, and they were able to do all the camera switching and helped us with the lighting. There was some discussion about "Let's invite an entire [radio] chain," and we said, "No, we want what makes those radio tours so special," which is that one-on-one interaction with the station personnel. Costwise, it rivaled taking an artist out on a physical radio tour, but it was worth every penny.

Will it take the place of in-person radio tours?

We can do both, but [the country radio] format is based on that personal relationship, so we will continue doing in-person tours.

Lainey Wilson is the only female country artist to reach No. 1 this year with her first chart entry. How hard is it to get women up the chart?

It's getting better. For sure not

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TU FAMILIA

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This photo was taken to commemorate Wilson's signing to BMG. She sent an autographed copy to everyone in the shot. Loba says that's when he "realized fully that she had the heart, work ethic and attention to detail necessary for a special career."



Rice "was incredibly hesitant to sign a label deal," says Loba, who explains that this plaque for the artist's No. 1 Country Airplay hit "Eyes on You" represents "the trust Chase put in us at the urging of the team around him. He gave us a chance, and I'm proud to say our team delivered on its promises."



BBR Music Group swag and a model of the former company jet. "We are spending that money more effectively now with BMG," he says.



A fidget spinner that Loba compares to "Tom Cruise's baseball bat in *A Few Good Men*. It helps me think," he says. "I fiddle with it and, once in a while, have a revelation."

enough, but it's trending in the right way. Even the toughest gatekeepers — those who in the past would point to metrics on females — seem to want a balance. As I listen to various playlists on radio and streaming, the female voice doesn't sound like such an anomaly anymore.

What does Jason Aldean mean to the label, and what percentage of your overall sales comes from him?

He is the one who broke the door down for us, and he has paid the bills for many years. We are so thankful and fortunate that both times his contract expired, he stayed with us and — I know for a fact — stayed with us for less than he could have gotten

elsewhere. He does have a [joint-venture] agreement with us now. I can't give you that percentage, but there was a time where if Jason coughed or got a cold, you worried. If anything had happened to him, we would have been in deep trouble.

The first half of Aldean's new album, *Macon, Georgia*, arrived Nov. 12 with 15 tracks. The second half, another 15 tracks, will be released by April 22, 2022. Why are we seeing so many supersize country albums now?

Streaming companies have changed the game a bit. We live in a world where attention spans are shorter, where there is a voracious appetite to binge,

and there is the ability in a very economically feasible way to give core consumers more of what they want.

Aldean was criticized recently for declaring it the "coolest thing" that no one was masked at one of his shows and for defending his wife's Instagram photos of their children wearing anti-President Biden shirts. Do you ever talk to artists about the pitfalls of polarizing behavior?

As with any business situation, you evaluate what the ramifications of that could be so you're not surprised by anything. As a capitalist, would I rather have 100% of the audience? Sure. But

he has every right to express his opinions, and we will stand by those rights as long as they are not hateful or promoting something illegal.

BMG is known for artist-forward deals where acts license their masters to the company but retain ownership. Does Nashville operate the same way, and how does that give you an advantage?

It's an advantage, [but] it's never what we lead with necessarily when talking to artists, because I think they have to have faith in the machine that is going to bring their music to the marketplace. It's a nice bonus to say, "Hey, we believe in fairness. We believe in artists owning their masters." And I think you'll see even within BMG in Nashville, we're moving toward that same model.

You recently partnered with Warner Records in Los Angeles to take Parmalee and Blanco Brown's No. 1 country hit, "Just the Way," to pop radio. Does that partnership come from Warner Music Group's Alternative Distribution Alliance distributing BMG's releases, and are you obligated to use BMG's pop promo team?

It's another beautiful construct of BMG. We are really allowed to line up with whatever partner

we think will be the best for that piece of music or that artist. I could go to Universal; I could go to Sony — I have the freedom to make the deal with whoever is best at that moment. Warner's pop promotion had been involved with [Brown's] "The Git Up" at [top 40 radio], and I felt like they did a good job, so I wanted to give them another opportunity with the Parmalee-Blanco song.

Country music has been experiencing an overdue reckoning on race following George Floyd's death and Morgan Wallen using a racial slur. You have Brown on your roster and launched Jimmie Allen in 2018 with consecutive No. 1s. Does it bother you that some people still consider country a racist format?

It absolutely bothers me, and it's something that I've been very purposeful in trying to change — not just because it's the right thing to do from a moral standpoint. I'm a capitalist, and it's the right thing to do from a profitability standpoint. I want 100% of the population to feel like there's something there for them. It's the thing I'm most proud about since BMG has acquired us. [Before], we had a very narrow roster. We had no international presence. BMG immediately said, "We believe this is worldwide music, and we want you and your team to bring that music to the world."

As soon as I was officially leading the company, I wanted to do something that signaled things were different with us. Thankfully, at that time, Jimmie Allen came into my life. No. 1, he's an amazing artist and individual, but No. 2, I wanted him to be my first signing to say, "I believe in this. This is important. We are changing, and this genre will accept a more diverse artistry."

When I'm retired, I want to look back and say, "I did right by my company financially," but hopefully we also helped broaden this genre and let others dream that they could have a place in this genre and touch an audience that maybe thought there were no themes or stories here that related to them. ■

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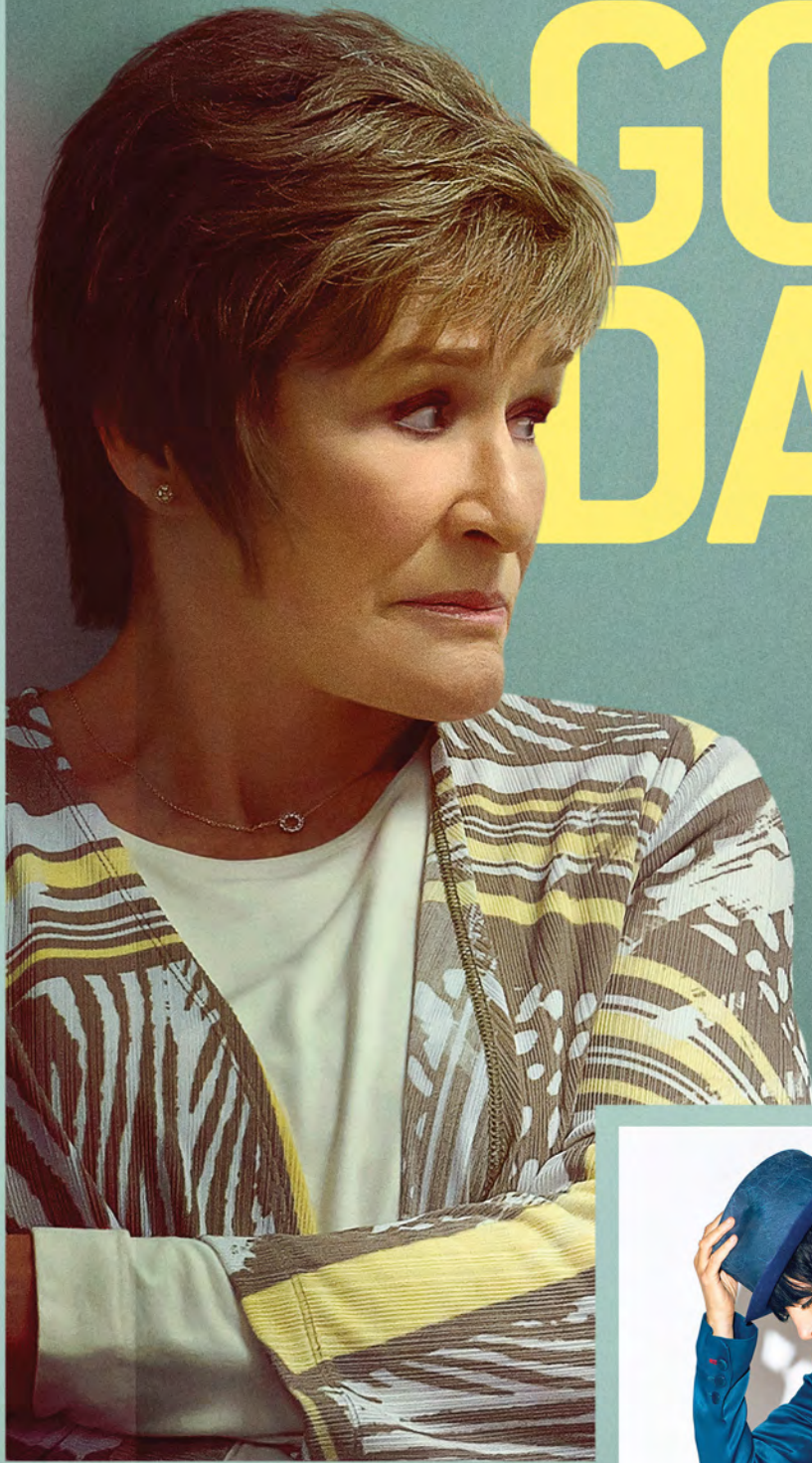
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From left: Zendaya in *Dune*, Jennifer Hudson in *Respect*, Bill Murray in *The French Dispatch* and Mirabel (voiced by Stephanie Beatriz) in *Encanto*.



Early predictions, a conversation with Hans Zimmer, diversity initiatives and more are included in this year's Oscar music preview ahead of the March 27 ceremony that returns home to the Dolby Theatre

ILLUSTRATION BY
CRISTIANA COUCEIRO

GOING FOR THE GOLD

Best Bets

B EYONCÉ AND JAY-Z ARE leading contenders for best original song at the 2022 Academy Awards — Beyoncé with a song from *King Richard*; JAY-Z with two from *The Harder They Fall*. If both stars are nominated, it will be the first time in Oscar history that a married couple has competed against one another in any category. Also, three pairs of siblings are vying for best original song nominations: Ron and Russell Mael, Aaron and Bryce Dessner, and Billie Eilish and FINNEAS. And, for the second year in a row, a rock star moonlighting as a successful film composer could dominate the best original score nominations. Jonny Greenwood, lead guitarist and keyboardist in Radiohead, could get two for *Spencer* and *The Power of the Dog*. Last year, Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross of Nine Inch Nails received two nods for *Soul* (a collaboration with Jon Batiste) and *Mank*.

Below are the top 15 prospects for best original song and best original score — listed alphabetically by film title — based on the contenders' Oscar history and the acclaim generated by their projects, *Billboard*'s predictions and those made by colleagues at outlets such as *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Gold Derby*, *Variety* and *IndieWire*.

—PAUL GREIN

SONGS

“So May We Start”

Ron Mael, Russell Mael
Annette AMAZON STUDIOS

The Mael brothers, who co-founded pop-rock group Sparks, scored this film and co-wrote the screenplay with the film's director, Leos Carax. The film's stars — Adam Driver, Marion Cotillard and Simon Helberg — perform this song.

“Down to Joy”

Van Morrison
Belfast FOCUS FEATURES

Morrison, who performs this song, was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2003 and received its top honor, the Johnny Mercer Award, in 2015. This is his only new song in *Belfast*, which also includes eight of his classics. Kenneth Branagh wrote, directed and co-produced *Belfast*, a leading best picture contender.

“Automatic Woman”

H.E.R., Van Hunt, Starrah
Bruised NETFLIX

H.E.R. won best original song in April for co-writing “Fight for You” from *Judas and the Black Messiah*. Collaborator Starrah has co-written three No. 1 singles on the Billboard Hot 100, while Van Hunt won a Grammy 15 years ago as a featured artist on a new version of the Sly & The Family Stone classic “Family Affair.”

“Beyond the Shore”

Nicholai Baxter, Matt Dahan, Sian Heder, Marius de Vries

CODA APPLE ORIGINAL FILMS

Heder wrote and directed *CODA*, a coming-of-age story that follows a hearing teenage girl who is a Child of Deaf Adults (CODA). Baxter and de Vries each won Grammys four years ago for the *La La Land* compilation soundtrack.

“Every Letter”

Matt Berninger, Carin Besser, Aaron Dessner, Bryce Dessner
Cyrano MGM/UA

The Dessner twins scored this film, which stars Peter Dinklage, who performs this song alongside co-stars Haley Bennett and Kelvin Harrison Jr. The Dessners and Berninger are members of The National, for which Besser (who is married to Berninger) has co-written and sung backup vocals.

“The Anonymous Ones”

Benj Pasek, Justin Paul, Amandla Stenberg
Dear Evan Hansen UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Pasek and Paul won a 2017 Tony for best original score for *Dear Evan Hansen*. This would be their fourth Academy Award nod for best original song. “City of Stars” from *La La Land* is their only win. Stenberg, 23, sings the song in her role as Alana.

“Just Look Up”

Nicholas Britell, Ariana Grande, Scott Mescudi (Kid Cudi), Taura Stinson
Don't Look Up NETFLIX

Stinson was nominated in this category four years ago for co-writing “Mighty River” from *Mudbound*. Britell, who also scored the film, co-wrote this song performed by Grande and Kid Cudi. It's nominated in two categories



Clockwise from top left: Taylor-Joy in *Last Night in Soho*, Smith in *King Richard* and Stewart in *Spencer*.

at the Hollywood Music in Media Awards: song, feature film and song, onscreen performance.

“Colombia, Mi Encanto”

Lin-Manuel Miranda
Encanto WALT DISNEY

Miranda, who only needs an Oscar to achieve EGOT status, was nominated five years ago for “How Far I’ll Go” from *Moana*. He has two more contenders this year: “Keep the Beat” from *Vivo* and “Home All Summer” from *In the Heights*, the film adaptation of his breakthrough Broadway hit.

“My Father’s Daughter”

Glen Hansard, Eddie Vedder
Flag Day UNITED ARTISTS RELEASING/MGM

Hansard won in this category 14 years ago for “Falling Slowly” from *Once*. Vedder has yet to be nominated for an Academy Award, but received a 2007 Grammy nod for “Guaranteed” from *Into the Wild*. That film and *Flag Day* were both directed by Sean Penn. Vedder's daughter Olivia sings this song.

“Somehow You Do”

Diane Warren
Four Good Days VERTICAL ENTERTAINMENT

Warren is a 12-time nominee in this category. If she is nominated again this

year, it would be her fifth time in a row. That would be the longest stretch of consecutive nods in this category for any songwriter since Marilyn and Alan Bergman were nominated six years in a row (1968-73). Reba McEntire performs this song.

“Guns Go Bang”

Jeymes Samuel, Scott Mescudi, Shawn Carter (JAY-Z)
The Harder They Fall NETFLIX

JAY-Z and Kid Cudi co-wrote and perform this song. The film is one of the few Westerns whose principal cast members (including Idris Elba and Regina King) are all Black. Samuel directed, co-produced, co-wrote and scored *The Harder They Fall*, with JAY-Z also co-producing.

“Be Alive”

Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, Dixson
King Richard WARNER BROS./HBO MAX

Beyoncé has won six Grammys for songwriting. And while she has performed best original song contenders at the Oscars multiple times, she has yet to be nominated for one. That could change with this song, which she co-wrote and co-produced with Dixson, and sings during the film's end credits.

+ “MONA LISA” was the first best original song winner that was performed in a language

other than English. It was sung in Spanish in *Captain Carey U.S.A.* (1950).

His 1938-50 streak included the classics *Gone With the Wind* and *Casablanca*.

“No Time To Die”

Billie Eilish, Finneas O'Connell

No Time To Die MGM/UA

“No Time To Die” is vying to become the fourth title song from a Bond film to receive an Academy Award nod, following “Live and Let Die,” “For Your Eyes Only” and “Skyfall.” In March, it won a Grammy for best song written for visual media.

“Here I Am (Singing My Way Home)”

Jamie Alexander Hartman, Jennifer Hudson, Carole King

Respect MGM/UA

Hudson, who won an Oscar 15 years ago for best supporting actress for *Dreamgirls*, performs this song in the Aretha Franklin biopic in which she starred. King has yet to be nominated for an Oscar but was nominated for a Grammy for writing “Now and Forever” from the 1992 film *A League of Their Own*. Hartman, an English songwriter and producer based in Nashville, has written songs for NBC's *Smash*.

“Your Song Saved My Life”

U2

Sing 2 UNIVERSAL PICTURES

U2 has received two nods for best original song for “The Hands That Built America” from *Gangs of New York* (2002) and “Ordinary Love” from *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013). Bono makes his animated film debut in *Sing 2*, voicing the rock star lion Clay Calloway.

SCORES

Annette AMAZON STUDIOS

Ron Mael, Russell Mael

The Mael brothers were involved in two films this year, *Annette* and *The Sparks Brothers*. The latter is an Edgar Wright-directed documentary about their career and includes the tagline: “Your favorite band’s favorite band.” Even so, Sparks has yet to receive a Grammy nomination or be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Cyrano UNITED ARTISTS RELEASING/MGM

Aaron Dessner, Bryce Dessner

Directed by Joe Wright and written by Erica Schmidt, *Cyrano* is based on Schmidt's 2018 stage musical of the same name (an adaptation of Edmond Rostand's 1897 play, *Cyrano de Bergerac*). The Dessners have a second score in contention with *C'mon C'mon* (A24).

Don't Look Up NETFLIX

Nicholas Britell



Clockwise from top left: King in *The Harder They Fall*, Clay Calloway (voiced by Bono) in *Sing 2*, and Kid Cudi and Grande in *Don't Look Up*.

Britell could get his third nod in six years following nominations for *Moonlight* (2016) and *If Beale Street Could Talk* (2018). Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Lawrence star in *Don't Look Up*, which also features Cate Blanchett and Meryl Streep. Britell has a second score in contention with *Cruella* (Walt Disney Pictures).

Dune WARNER BROS.

Hans Zimmer

Zimmer, who has received Oscar nominations in each of the last four decades, could extend that streak to five with this film. He has a second score in contention with *No Time To Die* (United Artists Releasing/MGM).

The French Dispatch

SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

Alexandre Desplat

Desplat has amassed 11 best original score nods since 2006, the second-most by any composer in this century (John Williams leads with 14 since 2000). Desplat won for *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014) and *The Shape of Water* (2017). Wes Anderson, director of *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, wrote, directed and co-produced this film.

The Harder They Fall NETFLIX

Jeymes Samuel

Samuel and JAY-Z both worked on the music to Baz Luhrmann's 2013 film, *The Great Gatsby*. Four years later, Samuel wrote, directed and produced *Jay-Z*:

Legacy, one of two short films he created before making his feature debut with *The Harder They Fall*. Samuel, a British singer-songwriter, producer and filmmaker, is the brother of four-time Grammy winner Seal.

King Richard WARNER BROS.

Kris Bowers

Bowers was nominated last year for documentary (short subject) for *A Concerto Is a Conversation* and now seeks his first scoring nod. He has another in contention with *Respect*. If nominated for both, it would be the first time a Black composer has two best original score nods in the same year.

The Last Duel WALT DISNEY STUDIOS

Harry Gregson-Williams

This would be the first Oscar nod for Gregson-Williams, who also scored *House of Gucci*. Ridley Scott directed *The Last Duel* from a screenplay by Nicole Holofcener, Ben Affleck and Matt Damon. The latter two also star in the film.

Last Night in Soho FOCUS FEATURES

Steven Price

Price won an Oscar for *Gravity* eight years ago and has since scored such films as *Suicide Squad* and *Baby Driver*. Directed and co-written by Edgar Wright, *Last Night in Soho* stars Anya Taylor-Joy and marks the final film appearances by actresses Diana Rigg and Margaret Nolan.

Nightmare Alley SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

Nathan Johnson

Directed and co-written by Guillermo del Toro, *Nightmare Alley* stars Bradley Cooper, Cate Blanchett and Toni Collette. This would be the first nod for Johnson, who, in addition to scoring films such as *Knives Out*, has directed music videos for Son Lux, Lucius and yMusic.

Parallel Mothers

SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

Alberto Iglesias

The Spanish composer has amassed three nods in this category for *The Constant Gardener* (2005), *The Kite Runner* (2007) and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2011). Pedro Almodóvar wrote and directed *Parallel Mothers*, which stars Penélope Cruz.

The Power of the Dog NETFLIX

Jonny Greenwood

Greenwood received his first Oscar nod for best original score for *Phantom Thread* four years ago. He received a 2008 Grammy nod for his score to *There Will Be Blood* and has won three Grammys for best alternative music album as part of Radiohead. Jane Campion wrote and directed this Western drama starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Kirsten Dunst.

Spencer NEON

Jonny Greenwood

If both of Greenwood's scores are nominated, he would become the first individual film scorer with two nods in the same year since Alexandre Desplat doubled up seven years ago with *The Grand Budapest Hotel* and *The Imitation Game*. *Spencer* stars Kristen Stewart as Diana, Princess of Wales.

Stillwater FOCUS FEATURES

Mychael Danna

Danna won in this category nine years ago for his score to *Life of Pi* and received a second nod that year for best original song for “Pi’s Lullaby.” Danna and his brother Jeff also wrote the music for *The Addams Family 2*. Tom McCarthy directed *Stillwater*, which stars Matt Damon and Abigail Breslin.

The Tragedy of Macbeth

A24/APPLE ORIGINAL FILMS

Carter Burwell

Burwell has received two nods in this category for *Carol* (2015) and *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* (2017). Joel Coen wrote and directed *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, which stars Oscar winners Denzel Washington and Frances McDormand and is based on the Shakespeare tragedy. **B**

Back To The Future

Oscar-winning composer Hans Zimmer reconnected with his teenage self to score *Dune*

BY MELINDA NEWMAN

A FEW YEARS AGO, director Denis Villeneuve had a query for Hans Zimmer, with whom he had worked on the 2017 film *Blade Runner 2049*. "He asked if I had ever heard of a book called *Dune*, and I sort of flipped out and got all carried away, and I think I scared him a bit," the composer recalls with a laugh.

It turns out that Zimmer — who won the Academy Award for best original score in 1995 for *The Lion King* and has been nominated 10 other times (and could also be nominated for scoring *No Time To Die*) — had read the book as a teenager, as had Villeneuve, and had been waiting for this moment for 50 years. So when it came to creating the dark, provocative score for the Warner Bros. movie, based on Frank Herbert's 1965 sci-fi novel, Zimmer, 64, returned to his adolescent self.

"Rather than approaching it with the wisdom and maturity that come with age, none of that happened," says Zimmer. "The book took us back in time.



Zimmer

The score is very much written with the recklessness and fearlessness that you have as a teenager."

A Brave New World

Recorded remotely by Zimmer and his colleagues in California, Australia, Berlin, Vienna, Brooklyn and London due to the pandemic, the score features haunting, often discordant sounds that included rendering instruments unrecognizable by running them through synthesizers and even inventing instruments to musically define the futuristic, dystopian world of *Dune*. "Isn't that the job?" asks Zimmer. "John Williams is one of my favorite composers and *Star Wars* is one of my favorite scores of all time,

but I remember when I was watching it for the first time and it says, 'In a galaxy far, far away,' and I'm hearing strings and trumpets. I'm going, 'Why do I hear contemporary music?'" That memory guided his thought process when it came to scoring *Dune*. "[I thought,] 'Let's not just use conventional instruments,'" says Zimmer. "Let's create a color palette that is completely custom-built for this movie."

Little Closet, Big Voice

Zimmer says that he and Villeneuve completed each other's sentences as they discussed the musical concepts. From the start, they agreed that even though the movie is about the character

Paul Atreides and his father's struggle to control the planet Arrakis, the women characters quietly carry the power. To give them a voice, a female choir underscores much of the film's most dramatic moments. The significance of the women "was something that was clear to us from when we read it as teenagers, so I think the score lives and dies on these amazing singers that I had," says Zimmer. Primarily, he relied on Loire Cotler, whose otherworldly vocals depicted the expansiveness of the desert as she recorded from the closet of her Brooklyn apartment. "There's this great picture of her sitting cross-legged on the floor of her closet, the microphone dangling in front of her. Her coats are basically hanging down on her head, and she's supposed to sing about the vastness of this landscape," recalls Zimmer. "She had the ability to transcend all those limitations."

Dune Not Disturb

So fierce is the hunger for music from the movie that WaterTower Music has released two companions in addition to the traditional score: the *Dune Sketchbook*, which includes the initial longer pieces Zimmer composed to work up his themes, and an album of ancillary music. In October, Warner Bros. greenlighted the film's anticipated sequel, and Zimmer is already off and running. "I have such an idea," he says with enthusiasm. "I haven't run it by Denis yet, but of course it's one of those impossible ideas that will create an enormous amount of work [with] no sleep and no weekends off. I can't wait." **B**

AT LONG LAST?

EVERYTHING POINTED TO A smooth launch for Billie Eilish's "No Time To Die," the title song to the latest James Bond film. Five days after the single version of the track arrived Feb. 13, 2020, Eilish performed it at the BRIT Awards with her brother, FINNEAS, with whom she wrote the song; Hans Zimmer, who composed the film's score; and English rock legend Johnny Marr. "No Time To Die" became Eilish's first No. 1 on the Official UK Singles chart on Feb. 27 (interrupting The Weeknd's run in the top

spot with "Blinding Lights") and debuted at No. 16 on the Billboard Hot 100 dated Feb. 29.

Academy Award speculation soon followed. Had the tune won best original song at the 93rd annual Oscars, originally planned for February 2021, Eilish — at 19 years and two months old — would have become the youngest winner ever in that category, surpassing Markéta Irglová, who was four days shy of turning 20 in February 2008 when she won for co-writing "Falling Slowly" from *Once*.

But COVID-19 hit and the Daniel Craig-starring film, first set for release in April 2020,

was postponed, finally opening in the United States in October. Now, even if "No Time To Die" wins at the 94th ceremony on March 27, 2022, Eilish will be too old to break the record — but she and FINNEAS could still make Oscar history. Should the song win, they would become the first American songwriters to win for a Bond theme. English songwriting pairs composed both Bond songs that have won to date: "Skyfall" from the film of the same name (Adele and Paul Epworth) and "Writing's on the Wall" from *Spectre* (Sam Smith and Jimmy Napes).

If "No Time To Die" is nomi-



FINNEAS (left) and Eilish at the *No Time To Die* world premiere in London in September.

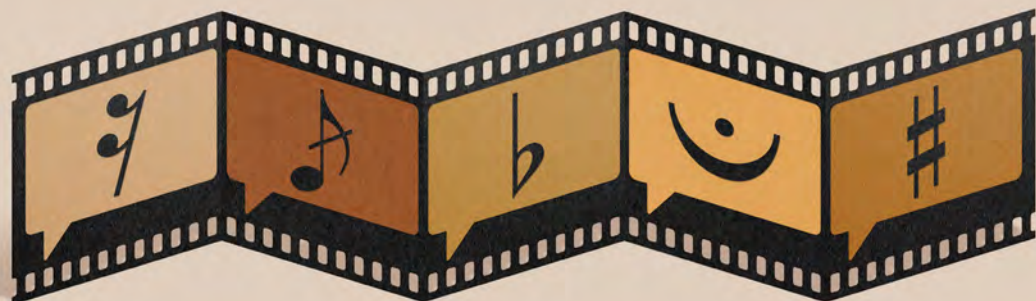
nated and performances of such songs return to the main telecast after being relegated to a preshow this year, Eilish and FINNEAS will appear on the Oscar stage for the second

time in three years. They performed The Beatles' "Yesterday" during the in memoriam spot at the 92nd awards in February 2020 — right before everything went south. —PAUL GREIN

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Come One, Come All

As Hollywood pushes for diversity in film scoring, these composers are helping pave the way

BY MIA NAZARENO

ILLUSTRATION BY MATT CHASE

BEFORE MICHAEL ABELS was tapped to score the 2017 film *Get Out*, he was a music teacher who wrote concert music, much of which was uploaded to YouTube. It only had “dozens” of views, he says, “but among those several dozen was [director] Jordan Peele.”

Abels’ discovery story came from a stroke of luck, but also spotlighted a struggle musicians and composers face all too often: access. It’s why, a year after scoring Peele’s hit horror film, Abels co-founded the Composers Diversity Collective, a networking space especially for composers of color. “What’s needed is for established composers to provide not just mentorship, but on-the-job training to young musicians who are not from the composers’ background,” he says.

Also in 2018, NBCUniversal launched its Universal Composers Initiative (with Abels as an adviser), offering professional mentorship for emerging composers from diverse backgrounds. The program, which facilitates direct connections between composers and studio executives, is in its early stages. Still, Universal president of global film music and publishing Mike Knobloch says all eight composers in its first class have earned scoring jobs since then, while the second batch included *Bridgerton* composer Kris Bowers’ assistant Pierre Charles.

Bowers — a possible contender for best original score at the 94th annual Academy Awards with *King Richard* — adds that investment in music education classes can also level out the disparity between composers of color and white ones. “My parents had to drive all over the city for me to be a part of the best music education institution because it wasn’t near where we lived,” he says. “They had to work hard to find that information, and I was always one of the only Black kids in the space.” Beyond that, a lack of existing representation can be a deterrent for “musically gifted Black and brown kids who think of being a rapper, singer or producer in musical genres they already see themselves in,” continues Bowers.

Both Bowers and Jeymes Samuel (*The Harder They Fall*) believe that diversifying Hollywood’s ranks of composers will not only demonstrate the strength of artists of color but also bring film scores into the future. Bowers cites how Jon Batiste’s jazz-inspired work on *Soul* made him “happy to hear how authentic and rooted in New York the sound was.” Sharing the award with Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross, Batiste became the third Black composer to win an Oscar in the scoring category after Prince and Herbie Hancock in the 1980s.

While scoring *Get Out*, which features African voices speaking in Swahili juxtaposed against the chilling rhythm of the main title, Abels and Peele coined the term “gospel horror.” And in the contemporary Western *The Harder They Fall*, director-composer-producer Samuel used African and Caribbean sounds, blending orchestral sounds with strong sub-basslines and dub echo guitar. The score is “modernized in a huge way because of the places I go culturally to bring everything into one sonic landscape,” he says.

Samuel hopes his work will compel more composers of color to be inspired by their cultural backgrounds when breaking into the industry. “When asking ourselves how to get into positions of power, we answer with: ‘We are the positions of power,’” he says. “Let’s use it.” **B**

Q & A



Bryce (left) and Aaron Dessner

Dynamic Duo

AS THE PANDEMIC KEPT Bryce and Aaron Dessner’s Grammy-winning band, The National, off the road for nearly two years, the twins also went 18 months without seeing one another. “We’ve never not been together for that long,” says Bryce, who lives in France while Aaron resides in upstate New York. Music became, as Bryce puts it, “a way of communicating with one another.” They contributed to Taylor Swift’s *folklore* and *evermore* albums last year and scored two films garnering Oscar buzz this year: the *Cyrano de Bergerac* retelling *Cyrano* and Mike Mills’ new drama *C’mon C’mon*.

What excited you about scoring a story like *Cyrano*?

BRYCE In this adaptation, the songs replace the letters and long monologues of 19th century poetry. We were at the heart of it because the music is the driving force.

AARON I haven’t seen a ton of musicals. So it was out of left field, but Bryce and I were really interested in growth and learning. It ended up making us better songwriters.

The National has worked with Mike Mills before on its 2019 album and short film, *I Am Easy To Find*. Why were you eager to work together again?

BRYCE Mike is very musical and collaborative, so [scoring his] film was almost like having a band with him. We were just constantly jamming and improvising.

AARON And we did that over Zoom. I’d have all these weird synthesizers out and Mike would be like, “What if you turn that knob?” And he’s in L.A. but as though he was in the room he’s like, “Can you squiggle it and then turn up the delay?” We all got used to working that way.

Sonically, what sets these two scores apart?

AARON *Cyrano* has this baroque-modern sound crafted with all the elaborate orchestration Bryce did. And then *C’mon C’mon* is very experimental and impressionistic. We were processing audio and using vocal samples and a lot of synthesizers. It was satisfying to have that range.

You’ve won Grammys and could soon win an Oscar. Does the term “EGOT” come up in conversations?

AARON We’re too superstitious.

What else are you two hoping to do together?

BRYCE Pixar would be the ultimate dream.

—LYNDESEY HAVENS

Key Oscar Dates To Know

- DEC. 10** Preliminary voting opens (through Dec. 15)
- DEC. 21** Shortlists of the top 15 contenders for best original song and best original score are announced
- JAN. 27, 2022** Voting in the nominations round opens (through Feb. 1)
- FEB. 8** Nominations are announced
- MARCH 17** Voting in the final round opens (through March 22)

DESSNERS: GRAHAM MACDONIE



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“Blinding Lights” is now the No. 1 Billboard Hot 100 song of all time. The Weeknd and his collaborators reveal just how they made history

WATCH THE THRONE

BY HERAN MAMO

PHOTOGRAPHED BY BRIAN ZIFF





The Weeknd photographed on Oct. 28
at Hubble Studios in Los Angeles.

Styling by Matthew Henson
Tom Ford shirt, Saint Laurent pants,
Our Legacy jacket and shoes.

C

HUBBY CHECKER ONCE described the steps of his 1960 chart-topping hit “The Twist” as someone swiveling their hips, swinging their arms in the opposite direction and twisting their feet as if they were putting out a cigarette. The song and dance were simple but irresistible: Thanks to

separate chart runs in 1960 and again in 1962, “The Twist” was named *Billboard’s* all-time Hot 100 No. 1 single in 2008, a designation that factors in total weeks on the chart as well as exact chart positions, with weeks at No. 1 earning the greatest value and weeks at No. 100 earning the least. (Due to changes in chart methodology over the years, eras are weighted differently to account for chart turnover rates during various periods.) To this day, Checker boasts on his website that it’s an achievement no one else will claim “until 2065.”

Then came The Weeknd. In early 2020, the singer born Abel Tesfaye released an ominous music video that saw him doing his own little shuffle, swaying his hips and gingerly tapping his feet to a song, “Blinding Lights,” that had debuted just two months before — and which would soon leave its own mark on pop history. Though Tesfaye, 31, had topped plenty of charts before, the adrenaline-pumping synth-pop track (created with help from legendary songwriter-producer Max Martin) marked the final stage of his evolution from enigmatic breakout of Toronto’s underground R&B scene to genre-busting icon. And with cinematic, high-concept visuals and performances that took him all the way to the Super Bowl halftime show — all starring a mysterious red-jacketed, increasingly bruised and bandaged character Tesfaye played throughout — “Blinding Lights” and the album that accompanied it, *After Hours*, also cemented Tesfaye as not just a radio fixture, but an auteur in his own right.

“I feel like I’ve been making that record for a decade,” Tesfaye says with a sigh today. “Blinding Lights” had a slow burn, reaching the top of the Hot 100 in March 2020, the same week *After Hours* debuted atop the Billboard 200. But once it took hold, listeners wouldn’t let it go: The four-week No. 1 smash shattered the record for most weeks spent in the top five (43 weeks), top 10 (57), top 40 (86) and on the Hot 100 (90) — enough to dethrone “The Twist” on *Billboard’s* Greatest of All Time Hot 100 chart by the end of its chart run in September.

“From the first time I met Abel, it was clear that he was destined for global

stardom,” says Republic Records co-founder/CEO Monte Lipman. “And it’s just one of those cases where the stars aligned. ‘Blinding Lights’ went into the zeitgeist and became one of those songs that just had this emotional impact on so many people around the world.”

From a fateful studio session to its high-concept rollout to its influence on his upcoming fifth album, Tesfaye, his closest collaborators and members of his team share how one of pop music’s most historic hits came to be.

“There Was Nothing We Had Heard Like That Before From Abel.”

After exorcising some personal demons with the 2018 EP My Dear Melancholy, — a dark, muted throwback to his early work — Tesfaye was ready to play pop star again on his fourth studio album. He convened an all-star crew — including Swedish superproducer Martin, who had helped him score his first Hot 100 No. 1 with “Can’t Feel My Face” — as well as longtime collaborators and co-writers like Jason “DaHeala” Quenneville and Ahmad “Belly” Balshe to channel his love of 1980s pop music and video-game soundtracks into radio-friendly anthems. The material came easily and quickly — he recorded After Hours tracks “Scared To Live” and “Save Your Tears” during the same session at New York’s Jungle City Studios as “Blinding Lights.”

ABEL “THE WEEKND” TESHAYE *My Dear Melancholy*, was one of those things I had to just get off my chest, and I didn’t really want anyone’s input. So I was excited to be in the studio again with collaborators I love. You can only imagine how quick those songs came.

MAX MARTIN *co-producer/writer* Abel came with the vision of what the song should be, which was a very different tempo and vibe than what is usually done. He took a risk, and that was very impressive to us. We all felt this song was very special even early on in the process.

TESFAYE *GTA: Vice City* really opened my eyes to a lot of ’80s music, so there was a nostalgia for when I was a kid playing video games and listening to Hall & Oates and Michael Jackson while driving through the city.

MARTIN My engineer Sam [Holland] had brought up equipment to project on the wall a computer-animated car driving through a futuristic city for inspiration. I hadn’t seen something like that before, and Abel came in and loved it.

TESFAYE Me and Max hadn’t worked together since the *Starboy* album, so we were excited to connect again. And it was the first time I worked with Oscar [Holter, a close Martin collaborator], and that was instantly kismet. And Belly and DaHeala are my guys — anything I do, I feel like I have to bounce ideas off them.

AHMAD “BELLY” BALSHE *co-writer* Getting to watch the great Max Martin and Abel create is a dream in itself, and I’m just beyond honored and proud to be a part of something this legendary.

MONTE LIPMAN *co-founder/CEO, Republic Records* During a playback of an early version of *After Hours* in the studio, I was like, “Whoa, what was that?” We actually made him play it a couple more times. There was nothing we had heard like that before from Abel.

“Abel came with the vision of what the song should be. He took a risk, and that was very impressive to us. We all felt this song was very special even early on in the process.”

— MAX MARTIN



Rick Owens jacket



TESFAYE I've always been tinkering with the [sounds of the] '80s. It was much more subtle before, but I've always wanted to completely dive into it. And 10 years in, I think I've earned it.

WASSIM "SAL" SLAIBY *manager; co-founder/CEO, XO Records* He's got that power to take something and make it cool, make it edgy, make it risky, make it kid-friendly.

LA MAR C. TAYLOR *creative director; co-founder, XO Records* He knows exactly what he wants. If you're a true Weeknd fan, then you understand sonically where he was going with his music. He was always headed in this direction. It was always building up to something like this. It was such an ambitious record for Abel at the time. It was either going to be the biggest song in the world — or go over people's heads.

"I Had Never Seen Someone Take On A Character Like That."

Making the song was only half the journey — Tesfaye also had to bring it to life visually. Just as he had shed the reform locks of his "Can't Feel My Face" days for a sharper look during his Starboy rollout in 2016, the singer sought a new look for After Hours, turning to renowned Hollywood tailor Fresh (who had previously worked on suits for his red-carpet appearances and other events) to transform him into a nameless character inspired by Las Vegas noir. With his signature red blazer, he became central to The Weeknd's "Blinding Lights" performances

and subsequent music videos, which followed the character on a disorienting, violent odyssey through the glitz and grit of Sin City — and inspired countless Reddit threads trying to unpack its meaning.

TAYLOR Abel can have those long-winded rollouts and just keep the audience engaged the whole time. This was like George Lucas, when he dropped the first *Star Wars* poster a year and a half out from the actual film day, and every six months, dropped another teaser leading up to it.

TESFAYE I toyed with the idea with *Starboy* and *Beauty Behind the Madness* — in the videos, I was telling a throughline story. So I feel like *After Hours* is me executing it at full potential, and me going full Method on it.

FRESH *tailor* He told me he had some ideas for his new album, and he wanted to try this suit concept out. He gave me some movies to watch.

TESFAYE From Jack Nicholson's character in *Chinatown* to the film *Possession* to Tim Robbins in *Jacob's Ladder*, it's just all of my favorite psychological thrillers and dramas in one universe.

TAYLOR There was a nod to Nicolas Cage in *Leaving Las Vegas*, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, *Casino* by Martin Scorsese — really iconic Las Vegas cinema. We were just trying to pay respect to those great actors and filmmakers that really created our world for us.

FRESH I put some things together, and that became the red suit. It really resonated with him, and he just kept reordering it. I think after the third reorder, I got it. I lost count after 15, 18. I saw the suit first come to life at the set of "Heartless" [*After Hours*' first single]. I went to Vegas to deliver it to him. It was fascinating watching him work, and then just seeing it come together when the video actually hit.

SLAIBY When you see the "Heartless" video, he's building that character for you. It

wouldn't make sense to just build the character where ["Blinding Lights"] starts. It feels like it's coming up before going into the story and into the vision.

FRESH When he did this, it wasn't just Abel anymore. He created a persona and took this guy through a whole experience. I had never seen someone take on a character like that for an entire year.

TESFAYE People were asking me if I was hurt physically, if I was mentally OK.

LIPMAN There really is no detail too small in every moment and every performance.

FRESH Abel is one of the biggest stars in the world, so to be the guy that's responsible for producing that look and having some creative input in the concept, it's pretty awesome. He did the best job since Michael Jackson did that red jacket.

"It Helped Us Get Through A Very, Very Difficult And Dark Period."

The rollout of "Blinding Lights" unfolded in blockbuster fashion, beginning with the song's debut in a Mercedes-Benz campaign starring Tesfaye in late 2019. "I'm so happy he got to make 'Blinding Lights' at the right time in his career, where he's able to not only give the song the biggest push, but have a company like Mercedes say, 'Wow, we want to be a part of this,'" says Slaiby. Yet fans gave the song a life of its own, too: Amid the pandemic's onset in early 2020, "Blinding Lights" soundtracked a joyful TikTok dance challenge that offered quarantining families and frontline health-care workers alike a little levity. After the song hit No. 1 on the Hot 100 chart dated April 4 (just as After Hours launched atop the Billboard 200), The Weeknd kept it alive with virtual concerts, awards show performances and remixes (Rosalía joined a new version in December 2020), culminating with his 2021 Super Bowl halftime show. "The day I said goodbye to the red jacket character was at the Super Bowl," says Tesfaye. "It kind of immortalized him." Still, the world wasn't quite ready to let go: His performance gave "Blinding

"It was such an ambitious record for Abel at the time. It was either going to be the biggest song in the world — or go over people's heads."

— LA MAR C. TAYLOR

Lights” a 45% weekly boost in streams and a 247% sales increase that kept the song going strong in its third calendar year, according to MRC Data.

TAYLOR That TikTok challenge was so massive because I feel like people had so much time to be at home with their families, their loved ones, doing these cute little quirky videos. I feel like the timing of it was really important to the success of the record. The pandemic was awful, but seeing happy videos going viral of people dancing in the midst of the madness was really inspiring to see.

SLAIBY People wanted a song that was emotional but at the same time made you get up and dance and just feel free. I think “Blinding Lights” has all these feelings.

LIPMAN It helped us get through a very, very difficult and dark period. The record brought so much joy and essentially brought people together, and it’s something that I’ve said to Abel, “You should be incredibly proud of.”

JON ZELLNER *president of programming operations, iHeartMedia* If you think about songs that [cross over and succeed at different radio formats], you have this evolution that sometimes fizzles out. And that wasn’t the case with this song because it’s so melodic, it’s so memorable, and there’s so much mass appeal.

LIPMAN With a song like this, you open the window and you hold on for dear life, because this record is going to take you to places you haven’t seen before and ultimately go into uncharted waters.

TAYLOR As a visual person, the pandemic had a silver lining in the sense of, “Yo, we can get really creative with this shit and push the envelope.” It was a real eureka moment when we had the late-night and Super Bowl performances, which gave us the flexibility of doing things how we wanted.

ZELLNER The appearance at the Super Bowl helped [the song’s trajectory], because that’s really when you get into middle America.

TESFAYE People can’t put a face to the song that they hear on the radio while they’re in the car or at parties. The Super Bowl puts a face to all those memories.

ZELLNER When a station has played a song thousands of times, what will happen in research is that, through the law of averages, you’ll start to see a lower score when a song gets burned, or people get tired of it. In the case of “Blinding Lights,” there was very little burn on that song — and still is to this day.

“He Has Always Been Different.”

“Blinding Lights” paved the way for even more Weeknd hits, including “Save Your Tears” — which topped the Hot 100 in May thanks in part to an Ariana Grande remix — and the disco-infused “Take My Breath,” the first taste of his next album, which he says will be out before his After Hours Til Dawn stadium tour begins next summer. “That’s a lot of ground to cover,” says Taylor of the tour. “And we want to put on a show that has never been seen before in a stadium space.” Yet even as the cinematic universe of After Hours marked a new level of artistry from the singer, Tefaye says the success of “Blinding Lights” helped give him the confidence to pull off his next, even more ambitious chapter.

TESFAYE I started writing the [next] album during the pandemic, which felt like we’re all in this scary, unknown territory. And I wanted to make music I thought sounded like going outside — I was obsessed with that feeling. I just felt like I didn’t know how to make this album until now. It probably would be too ambitious for me prior. I knew what I liked, but I felt like I didn’t have the skill sets to deliver that type of project until now.

TAYLOR As we did each body of work, it’s just getting more refined, more refined, more refined to the sound where he’s at now.

TESFAYE Picture the album being like the listener is dead. And they’re stuck in this purgatory state, which I always imagined would be like being stuck in traffic waiting to reach the light at the end of the tunnel. And while you’re stuck in traffic, they got a radio station playing in the car, with a radio host guiding you to the light and helping you transition to the other side. So it could feel celebratory, could feel bleak, however you want to make it feel, but that’s what *The Dawn* is for me.

LIPMAN When you think about The Weeknd now, it’s hard to just try and categorize him as any particular genre of music because he has reached that level of success. It’s also what makes him so exciting going forward, because you never know what’s next.

TESFAYE Who knows what the next one is going to sound like? When it comes to my albums, there is a cohesive sound going on, but I can’t really stick to one style. So you’ll hear EDM, hip-hop and three other types of sounds in one song — and somehow, we make it work.

TAYLOR To go from being the underground king to being where he is now, I don’t think it would’ve been received the way it is now if it wasn’t organic or if it didn’t happen naturally. I’ve seen a lot of artists in the past that have gone from underground to pop, but they compromised along the way. They sold themselves out and fell short in their offerings to their fans, the ones who put them in that position. But with Abel, there was none of that because of the progression and evolution. Everything felt true to his artist journey.

TESFAYE [There were] songs that transcended into pop culture, like “The Hills.” But by the time “Blinding Lights” happened, I was 10 years into my career and established as a music figure in the industry already. So I’m glad “Blinding Lights” happened when it happened as opposed to it being the first single I’ve ever dropped. That’d be scary for me.

SLAIBY He has always been different — his way of making a song, his way of developing a show, his way of thinking of his marketing and rollouts. I think he’s going to be that artist who will be remembered 20, 30, 40, 50, 100 years from now.

TESFAYE I don’t think [the success of “Blinding Lights”] has hit me yet. I try not to dwell on it too much. I just count my blessings, and I’m just grateful. 📺

“I’m glad ‘Blinding Lights’ happened when it happened as opposed to it being the first single I’ve ever dropped. That’d be scary for me.”

— THE WEEKND

Rick Owens jacket, Tom Ford
shirt, Saint Laurent pants,
Bottega Veneta shoes.



The Hot 100's GREATEST OF ALL TIME

1958-2021



The Weeknd photographed
by Brian Ziff on Oct. 28 at
Hubble Studios in Los Angeles.

THE WEEKND'S "BLINDING LIGHTS" shines brightest among the nearly 30,000 titles to ever appear on the Billboard Hot 100 over the chart's 63-year history.

The song, released in November 2019, is the newly crowned No. 1 on *Billboard's* Greatest of All Time Hot 100 recap, having logged a record-shattering run on the chart. After topping the Hot 100 for four weeks in April and May 2020, it went on to set new highs for the most weeks spent in the top five (43), top 10 (57), top 40 (86) and on the chart overall (90).

The single succeeds Chubby Checker's classic "The Twist" as the chart's No. 1 hit, with the latter having topped the Hot 100 for one week in September 1960 and again for two in January 1962.

"Blinding Lights" is one of three songs to peak in the 2020s on the Greatest of All Time Hot 100, with Dua Lipa's "Levitating" and 24kGoldn's "Mood" (featuring iann dior) at Nos. 32 and 49, respectively.

Meanwhile, thanks to hits in 2017-19 (at Nos. 19, 75 and 97), Post Malone joins the Bee Gees, Boyz II Men and Paul McCartney/Wings as the only acts with as many as three entries each on the chart.

—GARY TRUST

POSITION	Song	Artist	PEAK YEAR
1	Blinding Lights	The Weeknd	2020
2	The Twist	Chubby Checker	1960
3	Smooth	Santana feat. Rob Thomas	1999
4	Mack The Knife	Bobby Darin	1959
5	Uptown Funk!	Mark Ronson feat. Bruno Mars	2015
6	How Do I Live	LeAnn Rimes	1997
7	Party Rock Anthem	LMFAO feat. Lauren Bennett & GoonRock	2011
8	I Gotta Feeling	The Black Eyed Peas	2009
9	Macarena (Bayside Boys Mix)	Los Del Rio	1996
10	Shape Of You	Ed Sheeran	2017
11	Physical	Olivia Newton-John	1981
12	You Light Up My Life	Debby Boone	1977
13	Hey Jude	The Beatles	1968
14	Closer	The Chainsmokers feat. Halsey	2016
15	We Belong Together	Mariah Carey	2005
16	Un-Break My Heart	Toni Braxton	1996
17	Yeah!	Usher feat. Lil Jon & Ludacris	2004
18	Bette Davis Eyes	Kim Carnes	1981
19	Circles	Post Malone	2019
20	Endless Love	Diana Ross & Lionel Richie	1981
21	Tonight's The Night (Gonna Be Alright)	Rod Stewart	1976
22	You Were Meant For Me/Foolish Games	Jewel	1997
23	(Everything I Do) I Do It For You	Bryan Adams	1991
24	I'll Make Love To You	Boyz II Men	1994
25	The Theme From "A Summer Place"	Percy Faith And His Orchestra	1960
26	Le Freak	Chic	1978
27	How Deep Is Your Love	Bee Gees	1977
28	Eye Of The Tiger	Survivor	1982
29	We Found Love	Rihanna feat. Calvin Harris	2011
30	Girls Like You	Maroon 5 feat. Cardi B	2018
31	Low	Flo Rida feat. T-Pain	2008
32	Levitating	Dua Lipa	2021
33	I Just Want To Be Your Everything	Andy Gibb	1977
34	Too Close	Next	1998
35	Every Breath You Take	The Police	1983
36	Somebody That I Used To Know	Gotye feat. Kimbra	2012
37	Despacito	Luis Fonsi & Daddy Yankee feat. Justin Bieber	2017
38	Flashdance...What A Feeling	Irene Cara	1983
39	Rolling In The Deep	Adele	2011
40	Tossin' And Turnin'	Bobby Lewis	1961
41	Old Town Road	Lil Nas X feat. Billy Ray Cyrus	2019

POSITION	Song	Artist	PEAK YEAR
42	The Battle Of New Orleans	Johnny Horton	1959
43	One Sweet Day	Mariah Carey & Boyz II Men	1995
44	Truly Madly Deeply	Savage Garden	1998
45	Silly Love Songs	Wings	1976
46	Let's Get It On	Marvin Gaye	1973
47	Night Fever	Bee Gees	1978
48	Another One Bites The Dust	Queen	1980
49	Mood	24kGoldn feat. iann dior	2020
50	Say Say Say	Paul McCartney & Michael Jackson	1983
51	How You Remind Me	Nickelback	2001
52	Tie A Yellow Ribbon Round The Ole Oak Tree	Dawn feat. Tony Orlando	1973
53	It's All In The Game	Tommy Edwards	1958
54	I Want To Hold Your Hand	The Beatles	1964
55	Shadow Dancing	Andy Gibb	1978
56	Call Me Maybe	Carly Rae Jepsen	2012
57	Blurred Lines	Robin Thicke feat. T.I. + Pharrell	2013
58	Candle In The Wind 1997/Something About The Way You Look Tonight	Elton John	1997
59	No One	Alicia Keys	2007
60	I Will Always Love You	Whitney Houston	1992
61	End Of The Road	Boyz II Men	1992
62	Perfect	Ed Sheeran	2017
63	Boom Boom Pow	The Black Eyed Peas	2009
64	Call Me	Blondie	1980
65	Let Me Love You	Mario	2005
66	Stayin' Alive	Bee Gees	1978
67	Lady	Kenny Rogers	1980
68	TiK ToK	Ke\$ha	2010
69	I'm A Believer	The Monkees	1966
70	Gold Digger	Kanye West feat. Jamie Foxx	2005
71	Apologize	Timbaland feat. OneRepublic	2007
72	The Sign	Ace Of Base	1994
73	Centerfold	The J. Geils Band	1982
74	All About That Bass	Meghan Trainor	2014
75	Sunflower (Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse)	Post Malone & Swae Lee	2019
76	(Just Like) Starting Over	John Lennon	1980
77	Royals	Lorde	2013
78	The Boy Is Mine	Brandy & Monica	1998
79	Because I Love You (The Postman Song)	Stevie B	1990
80	I Love Rock 'N Roll	Joan Jett & The Blackhearts	1982
81	Aquarius/Let The Sunshine In	The 5th Dimension	1969
82	Whoop! (There It Is)	Tag Team	1993
83	God's Plan	Drake	2018
84	Moves Like Jagger	Maroon 5 feat. Christina Aguilera	2011
85	Ebony And Ivory	Paul McCartney & Stevie Wonder	1982
86	Rush Rush	Paula Abdul	1992
87	That's What Friends Are For	Dionne & Friends	1986
88	Happy	Pharrell Williams	2014
89	Upside Down	Diana Ross	1980
90	Sugar, Sugar	The Archies	1969
91	Just The Way You Are	Bruno Mars	2010
92	Dilemma	Nelly feat. Kelly Rowland	2002
93	I Heard It Through The Grapevine	Marvin Gaye	1968
94	You're Still The One	Shania Twain	1998
95	Billie Jean	Michael Jackson	1983
96	Hot Stuff	Donna Summer	1979
97	Rockstar	Post Malone feat. 21 Savage	2017
98	Gangsta's Paradise	Coolio feat. L.V.	1995
99	Abracadabra	The Steve Miller Band	1982
100	You're So Vain	Carly Simon	1973

Legend The Greatest of All Time Billboard Hot 100 songs chart is based on actual performance on the weekly Hot 100 from its Aug. 4, 1958, launch through the Nov. 6, 2021-dated chart. Songs are ranked based on an inverse point system, with weeks at No. 1 earning the greatest value and weeks at No. 100 earning the least. Due to changes in chart methodology over the years, eras are weighted differently to account for chart turnover rates during various periods.

EVERYONE WANTS ABLETON

Gerhard Behles and his partners wrote the code that makes modern pop sing — and makes investors drool. But they're not selling

BY STEVE KNOPPER

PHOTOGRAPHED BY URBAN ZINTEL





Behles photographed
Nov. 5 in Berlin.



GERHARD BEHLES, a founder of the music-production software company Ableton, had a polite answer to the venture capital power players on the Zoom: No.

It was July 2020, and Behles and another Ableton executive were on the call with an unlikely group of potential investors: Diplo, the DJ-producer; Scooter Braun, the entrepreneur who manages Justin Bieber and Ariana Grande, among others; and Joshua Kushner, brother of Jared, husband of model Karlie Kloss and head of Thrive Capital.

At one point, as Diplo recalls, one of the investors asked the two men from Ableton, “What do you guys think about us being part of you?” They proposed an investment that Diplo said would have been a “significant payday” for Ableton, which sells software that changed the way recordings are produced, then how DJs performed, and finally the sound of pop.

Behles didn’t budge. “We don’t have any investments in our company,” he replied.

“These tech investors never heard anything like that,” Diplo remembers. “Everybody was like, ‘What?’ It was very anarchic and punk.”

Ableton’s Berlin headquarters is in Prenzlauer Berg, a gentrified neighborhood in what was once East Berlin, and sitting in a ground-floor conference room today — across an outdoor courtyard from an entry area and a coffee bar — Behles, 52, looks anything but anarchic and punk. His straight hair is perfectly combed into a new wave curl, he’s wearing a suit — which he does every day to avoid thinking about how to dress — and he says his life is “probably very boring.” But he is the driving force behind Ableton’s refusal to sell at a time when the growth of the digital music business would make it a tempting, and very valuable, acquisition.

“We’re not into it,” he says. “It has popped up on the radar of Wall Street — huge valuations tossed around. We get a lot of inquiries, and we turn them all down.”

The company certainly has financial potential: “If Ableton was to put itself into the market, there would be a feeding frenzy,” says music industry analyst Mark Mulligan of MIDiA Research. Investors see possible synergies, but Ableton’s founders are happy where they are. Behles is an electronic musician — he still uses their company’s marquee product, Ableton Live — and his co-founder Bernd Roggendorf left the executive team years ago to “devote his whole life to altruism,” according to Behles. They want to give away Ableton Live to schools so students can learn to make music.

Yet even when discussing something he feels passionately about, Behles barely raises his voice above a cordial German monotone. Ableton’s future? “We have this oath that we will never talk about what we will do next.” Software? “Beautiful properties. Scales

well,” he says. “You could do a lot of positive work without putting things in the world — without worrying about the environmental impact.” His 11-year-old son? “Drummer,” he says. “A heavy metal drummer. Different. Different place.”

Behles created Ableton Live with Robert Henke, his partner since the 1990s in the ambient duo Monolake, whose music — then and now — sounds like keyboard players tinkering with didgeridoos in the jungle. They did it to solve a musician’s problem: Existing production programs like Pro Tools and Logic were designed to record and edit sounds after musicians had already played them. Behles and Henke wanted to write music in real time on laptops as they grew more portable. In Monolake (which signed to a German independent record label but never found a mass audience), they first used a music-focused programming language called Max, then began to write the software that became Ableton Live. Once

use the software to create live mixes onstage, eliminating the need for turntables and other cumbersome equipment. Überzone, a California electronica DJ, was an early adopter who used Ableton Live to perform full DJ sets, then spread the word to his contemporaries. Longtime DJ Gary Richards, who is known as Destructo and would go on to create popular dance events like HARD, was accustomed to DJ’ing with vinyl when Überzone told him about Ableton Live. He soon discovered that it was good for more than live sets. “I was like, ‘Wow, you could do all these other things with it’ — making beats, using different processors and presets,” he says. “It’s just having everything in one place.”

To spread the word, Ableton hired a salesperson who eventually asked the founders, “What is it that we’re actually making?” Behles compares Ableton’s cultural arc to that of Auto-Tune. “I’m sure they could give you a nice answer to ‘What is the product for?’” says

Behles. “It was made to correct an out-of-tune singer, but now you can’t imagine pop music without it, for reasons that have nothing to do with correction.”

Girl Talk used Ableton Live to edit familiar songs together into mashups and turned that into a career as a live DJ; David Guetta used Ableton Live to create “Titanium”

(which helped introduce pop star Sia to the world); as Jack Ü, Diplo and Skrillex used it to Ableton-ize their 2015 smash with Justin Bieber, “Where Are U Now”; Childish Gambino and producer Ludwig Goransson used it to layer and loop guitars and keyboards for their 2016 hit “Redbone.”

“Many massive artists, producers, songs and albums wouldn’t exist today if it wasn’t for this program,” says Adam Alpert, The Chainsmokers’ manager and CEO of Sony Music joint venture Disruptor Records. “I could safely say The Chainsmokers wouldn’t be The Chainsmokers without Ableton.”

Before Ableton Live, dance music pioneers like Richie Hawtin had to build up what Detroit electronic music festival promoter Jason Huvaere calls “a spaceship of gear,” from samplers to drum machines. After the software started to catch on, though, Huvaere recalls taking Hawtin to visit Skrillex, who blew his mind when he told him, “Yeah, I’m pretty much using Ableton.”

The software allowed DJs to use their laptops to load into Ableton Live samples, snippets of original music or effects, then manipulate them live while performing. They could speed up or slow down a track, or add buzzing effects or bass drops, all with a few clicks.

“It has popped up on the radar of Wall Street — huge valuations tossed around. We get a lot of inquiries, and we turn them all down.”

—BEHLES

they realized that it could be a viable product, they brought in Roggendorf, a more experienced programmer. (Henke is still involved in Ableton, but only Behles and Roggendorf are considered founders; Jan Bohl, the CFO and the company’s fourth partner, joined later.)

The first version of Ableton Live, released in 2001, presented users with an onscreen grid of sound waves, arranged like tiny swim lanes. Running on both Macs and PCs, the software made it easy for users without much recording know-how to manipulate snippets of music — changing pitches, transitioning between passages, cutting and pasting tracks, and even building beats, or for that matter entire songs, from scratch. Subsequent versions allowed users to hook up their instruments with MIDI to record their own sounds. “You could bring together all these different materials and make them play in time together without having to do a lot of handiwork,” says Behles.

OVER THE NEXT DECADE,

musicians gravitated to Ableton Live through word-of-mouth. DJs soon realized they could



This audio manipulation congealed into a new sound that Michaelangelo Matos described as “a crisp, computery flutter — the seemingly true voice of the tinny, bright machines making it,” in his 2015 history of electronic music, *The Underground Is Massive*. Matos says this latest generation of EDM stars, who improvise with Ableton Live, create “laptop music.”

By making it easier to manipulate music, Ableton Live also freed a new generation of DJs — Skrillex, deadmau5, Steve Aoki — from behind their decks to dance, jump and, in Aoki’s case, smash cakes into the faces of their fans. Skrillex emerged as the “fucking Herbie Hancock of Ableton,” as Diplo calls him, reimagining the potential of Ableton Live the way Jimi Hendrix reinvented the electric guitar. As with Auto-Tune, the impact of Ableton Live goes far beyond DJs and even electronic music.

“It created a completely new type of producer,” says Huvaere. “It gave access to a versatile tool that would do what people want without spending thousands and thousands of dollars and training.” In recent years, Ableton’s reach has grown beyond DJs and other electronic-music tinkerers to the entire community of artists and songwriters.

Seventeen years ago, Diplo was starting out as a producer, splicing beats and songs together using cumbersome samplers and struggling with Pro Tools and Logic. “It just wasn’t fun — it was like something you needed to learn in engineering class,” he says. “I couldn’t get it to make things I enjoyed. Going to produce music was like work.” Ableton Live was intuitive, and one of the first tracks Diplo made with it, M.I.A.’s 2007 hit “Paper Planes,” put both the Sri Lankan rapper and Diplo on the pop world’s radar.

“At the beginning, it was like working with a piece of clay you could mold or shape,” recalls Diplo. “It was like a guitar, as opposed to play-

ing piano — I was good at the instrument. That was why I gravitated toward it.”

Nic Offer, singer for !!!, discovered Ableton Live about seven years ago and used it to create the punk band’s 2015 album, *As If*. “People ask me what I play when I write — piano or guitar? I play Ableton,” says Offer. “When I work with someone who uses Pro Tools or Logic, it always stops me up. Pro Tools is like a regular recording studio; Ableton has taken the vision of Lee Perry and Brian Eno, where the studio is the instrument. There are no boundaries. It’s just kind of endless.”

BEHLES GREW UP IN

Munich, the son of an auto engineer father and homemaker mother. Like many Germans of their era, his parents were damaged by the fallout of World War II and the Nazi regime. He calls his relationship with them “conflicted.”

A self-described “shy teenager with skin problems,” Behles immersed himself in Germany’s ’80s electronic scene, then taught himself computer programming as a way of realizing his ideas. Henke has said he studied computer science and engineering to find “the gray zone between technology and art.” In early photos (of Monolake and then Ableton), Henke is the bald guy with earrings; Behles sports shoulder-length hair and, even then, a suit and tie.

By the ’90s, Behles and Henke landed in Berlin, where the Wall had come down and a techno scene was emerging amid the industrial landscape of the former East Berlin. The city was “dirt cheap,” and the empty buildings were full of possibility. “A lot of vacant buildings you could pop up a club in, without asking anybody for permission,” remembers Behles. “It was an extremely fruitful period for many artists.”

Ableton started doing business in 1999, and at first, the software was a niche product. In 2000, the founders presented a prerelease version of Ableton Live at a Los Angeles trade show. As Henke once recalled, people said, “A laptop onstage? You guys are insane!”

Now it’s hard to imagine pop music without it. The popularity of software like Ableton Live only grew during the pandemic, when most musicians worked remotely. It’s bridging the gap between professional musicians and hobbyists, and the ableton.com homepage name-checks prominent users (Imagine Dragons) but also includes a video of an unknown musician playing cello. “I can teach Ableton to anybody in five minutes,” says Diplo.

Years ago, when schools told Ableton that students enjoyed using the software to learn how to record their own tracks, Behles sat in on some music courses — which he remembers as a “pivotal moment.” In 2016, the company began giving away its software for

classroom use. Today, 350 Ableton trainers work with schools in 51 countries, including the New York electronic music education program 343 Labs.

“We’ve had a couple conversations about helping — if they wanted to connect with G-Eazy or E-40 in Oakland [Calif.], we could connect them with those guys,” says Andrew McInnes, CEO of TMWRK Management, who handles Diplo. “It’s rare you see people in that position do something that makes the world a better place rather than make themselves very rich.”

Ableton is so interesting to investors because music production software could be integrated with streaming services, allowing creators to make and distribute music with the same software. But Ableton’s focus lies in improving its software to stay current with music production technology, plus guarding its independence. “That feels very important to the culture of the place,” says Behles. “It’s not motivated by profit, basically.”

Ableton also has plenty of room to grow on its own. Worldwide, 500 million people either play an instrument or plan to learn, according to MIDiA Research; 50 million make or record music, and 25 million upload that music to streaming services. “It’s way bigger than what might be a couple of million DJs in the world,” says MIDiA’s Mulligan.

Ableton will be able to sell them other products: In addition to the latest version of its software, Live 11, which arrived in February, Ableton also sells add-on “packs” (like Big Band Sounds 2 or Drone Lab, ranging from \$50 to \$100).

The challenge for Ableton will be competing with Logic and Pro Tools while also contending with piracy, according to Matt Pincus, co-founder/CEO of MUSIC, an investment company that has a stake in the sample-pack company Splice. Ableton’s solution has been to release new updates and stay innovative. But it must do so without the financial backing of private equity money or a deep-pocketed parent company like Apple, which owns Logic.

“They’re telling everybody to fuck off — I think it’s great,” says Pincus, who, as a former hardcore rocker, appreciates the founders’ determination to stay independent. “It’s not a sleepy, lazy product — it’s arguably the most dynamic of the three of them.” Still, “it’s certainly not the easiest way to do it.”

For Behles, that independence isn’t just for now. Sitting in the Ableton office, he elaborates on the company’s vision to never sell out — even after he and the other partners are no longer with us. “The desire to preserve the company’s independence also makes us look for solutions that guarantee beyond our own tenured lifetime,” he says, then looks up with a smile, acknowledging his lapse into corporate speak.

Which means? “That’s going to have to be a cliffhanger.” ■

Behles (center, in suit) at Ableton’s NAMM booth in 2009.



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Grupo Firme At 10: 'We Are On Top Of The World'

Regional Mexican hitmakers Eduin and Jhonny Caz discuss emerging from the pandemic with a Billboard Hot 100 hit and record live crowds

BY GRISELDA FLORES

AS THE PANDEMIC reached North America in early 2020, the regional Mexican band Grupo Firme faced a watershed moment: "Innovate or die," says 27-year-old frontman Eduin Caz. To avoid getting upended by the ensuing lockdowns, the seven-piece act traveled to Caz's home in Mazatlán, Mexico; rented a studio that was accessible only to band members; and recorded a breakout album to "keep the momentum going," he says. "We couldn't let what we had worked so hard to build just fall apart."

That album, *Nos Divertimos Logrando Lo Imposible* ("We Enjoy Doing the Impossible") — Grupo Firme's latest — arrived in December, helping the band cross the 1 billion career streams threshold in the United States, according to MRC Data. And that's just one part of its success. Grupo Firme has now logged 11 entries on *Billboard*'s Hot Latin Songs chart and recently became the third-ever act to score an entry on the *Billboard* Hot 100 with a regional Mexican song, "Ya Supérame," in October. At the 2021 Premios de la Radio Awards on Nov. 10, the band earned top honors with five wins: artist, *norteño* group, *banda* song ("Ya Supérame") and collaboration of the year ("Yo Ya No Vuelvo Contigo" with Lenin Ramírez), as well as the Latin pride award. The septet also earned a nomination for best *banda* album at the Latin Grammy Awards.

Founded by Caz in Tijuana, Mexico, in 2013, the group, which straddles the genres of *banda* and *norteño*, comprises Eduin's brother Jhonny Caz, Abraham Hernández, Joaquín Ruiz, Christian Gutiérrez, José Rubio and Dylan Camacho. Initially known for performing *corridos* (narrative folk ballads), the group was catapulted into the mainstream in 2017 after signing a label and management deal with Isael Gutiérrez, CEO of independent regional Mexican label Music VIP.

Touring behind *Lo Imposible*, the band secured a historic booking at Los Angeles' 20,000-capacity Staples Center as the first Latin act to perform the

From left:
Grupo Firme's
Jhonny Caz,
Eduin Caz, Ruiz
and Camacho
at Los Angeles'
Staples Center
on July 30.

most shows in a single calendar year at the venue with seven sold-out concerts this summer. (The only other artist who has done more in one year is Adele, with eight performances in 2016.)

The band initially booked just one night at the 7,100-capacity Microsoft Theater for July 2020 before rescheduling due to demand. Prior to that, Grupo Firme had performed in the Los Angeles area just once before — in 2019 for 9,000 fans in Pico Rivera, a city approximately 11 miles southeast of downtown L.A.

The shows were Staples Center's first live events in over a year, and the act surpassed every expectation: It sold an average of 9,000 tickets in the first half hour; to date, it has grossed \$15.9 million and sold 177,000 tickets in 2021, according to figures reported to *Billboard* Boxscore. In lieu of a standard advertising strategy, the group leveraged its social media platforms to entice fans.

"All they needed to do to sell a show was to upload one or two posts on their social media, and that was it," says TuStreams booking agent Tony Larios, who worked with Isael and Nederlander Concerts Latin talent buyer Eddie Orjuela on securing the dates. "I've been doing this for 15 years," says Larios. "And it's something I've never seen happen before with a regional Mexican band."

To mark the group's 10th year together, Eduin and Jhonny reflect on Grupo Firme's U.S. cross-over success and how embracing social media during quarantine helped it reach new heights.



From left: Grupo Firme's Camacho, Ruiz, Jhonny Caz, Eduin Caz, Hernández, Gutiérrez and Rubio at Premios Juventud in Coral Gables, Fla., in July.

Your sound fuses traditional styles such as banda and norteño with contemporary rhythms, including an upcoming collaboration with Maluma, right?

EDUIN CAZ Yes, we are collaborating outside of that style. We also recorded songs with Reik and Río Roma, but I'm always scared to go into another genre. I'm scared of losing our core fan base. That's why sometimes I go onstage wearing an *urbano* outfit with sneakers, and other times, I'm wearing boots and a *tejana* [cowboy hat] so I can make everyone happy and they don't get caught off guard when we sing with an urban artist. We've been very careful with those types of collaborations, and I trust in Isael that we're doing the right thing. If he hadn't pushed us to perform at Staples Center, we wouldn't have done it. He's hungry to become one of the strongest executives, and we're hungry to become one of the biggest bands.

What was your vision for Grupo Firme when you founded it?

EDUIN We saw many of our friends doing big things locally, like selling out Las Pulgas, a nightclub that was open 24/7 in Tijuana. That was our biggest dream back then because it was considered the biggest venue. That's really all we wanted.

Did music play a big role in your childhood?

EDUIN One Christmas, I remember I asked for a stereo with a Los Tigres del Norte cassette. I sat for hours in front of the stereo and listened to my cassette. On one side it had songs by Los Tigres, and then, when you flipped it, it had songs by Los Tucanes de Tijuana. That's when I discovered my love for music, but I never thought I'd be a singer. One day in high school, when I was 16 years old, I started performing with my friend [and bandmate] Joaquín on buses and in San Ysidro [a border town between the United States and Mexico]. In two hours, we'd make \$100 each while performing for people who were waiting to cross the border. And we thought, "Wow, so you can actually make money with this." We took it more seriously from that day on.

Why did you choose to work with Isael Gutiérrez?

EDUIN Isael saw us perform at Las Pulgas at an event for a local radio station when he was manag-

ing Los Buitres de Culiacán Sinaloa. It was a dream of ours to sign with someone and be a part of something. For four years, we worked with Isael without a contract. We just signed our very first contract four months ago. Before that, we all signed a blank piece of paper and promised to work together honestly. I later added the Music VIP logo to the paper using Photoshop so that we could show off on social media that we were signed to a company.

Had you spoken to anyone else about a working relationship?

EDUIN Other executives promised so many things, but there was something about them that didn't convince me. I spoke to Isael in a one-on-one meeting the day we met. The first thing he told me was: "Money: I don't have any. But I can show you a side of the business a lot of others can't. From digital to touring, I can show you how everything works." For him, it was about becoming partners. And not just me and him, but all of the band members. We would all get a percentage of everything Grupo Firme made. That's what convinced me. To this day, we've been very happy with him.

What was his initial goal for you?

JHONNY CAZ Isael's vision has always been to grow the brand, and he has always wanted to take regional Mexican music to spaces it has never been in before. So not only were we recording new music and videos, but we also recorded content for vlogs, TikTok and YouTube. We needed to be everywhere because Grupo Firme is a little bit of everything. From cumbia, corridos and ballads to singing a cover of [Karol G and Nicki Minaj's] "Tusa," we're as diverse as it gets. And our fans should reflect that diversity.

You went from performing at nightclubs to seven back-to-back shows at Staples Center. How does an emerging act accomplish that?

EDUIN Regional Mexican music isn't regional anymore. We are reaching a wider audience. At our shows, we see flags from so many different Latin American countries. Latinos, not just Mexican fans, are enjoying our music. They see seven guys laughing, singing, having a beer or tequila shot, and people want to be part of this phenomenon. That's why we filled Staples Center seven times.

JHONNY It's something none of us ever imagined. And there really isn't any explanation. We're doing things right by taking care of our fans and making them a part of our experience. Really, the name of the album and tour says it all: We enjoy doing the impossible.

Jhonny, you came out as gay in December 2020. How did your fan base react, and how do you feel about their response?

JHONNY The fans have been nothing but supportive, and, as a band, we've created a safe space for the community in our concerts. After I

'IT WAS IN MY BLOOD'

Manager and label head Isael Gutiérrez reflects on making history with Grupo Firme

WHEN ISABEL GUTIÉRREZ signed Grupo Firme to his independent record label and management company, Music VIP, four years ago, his goal was to grow the band stylistically and geographically. Having managed and toured with acts such as Banda Rebeldía, Los Buitres de Culiacán Sinaloa and El Komander since 2007, Gutiérrez has now scaled back his roster to just two artists: El Mimoso and Grupo Firme. "I've never liked managing many artists at once," he says. "I could have 20 right now, but I want to focus all of my knowledge."

A trained graphic designer, Gutiérrez first worked in the music industry alongside his father, who opened a recording studio in Guerrero, Mexico, in the 1990s. The company couldn't survive the piracy boom of the early 2000s, however, and shut down, leaving Gutiérrez with limited options to continue working in music. "I thought, 'Maybe I should manage bands and help them book shows.' It seemed like a natural fit," he says.

Negotiating deals has always been "in my blood," says Gutiérrez, who adds that his deep industry knowledge was learned "*sobre la marcha*" ("on the job") while working with his family. "There's no school that teaches you how to be a manager. It's all lived experiences," he says, crediting other independent executives such as Room 28 founder and Banda MS manager Sergio Lizárraga, Rancho Humilde founder/CEO Jimmy Humilde and DEL Records founder/CEO Ángel del Villar with guiding his early career. "It was a small circle, and we all started from scratch. We learned from each other."

While Gutiérrez's vision for Grupo Firme is still evolving, it's clear that the band's "time is now," he says, especially after making history as the first Latin act with the most bookings in a single year at the Staples Center. The group is eyeing another large-scale trek for 2022, but this time "touring and selling out stadiums across the U.S.," he says. "We want to continue the party." —G.F.



Isael Gutiérrez (center) and Eduin Caz (right) at Staples Center in August.

came out as gay, Grupo Firme came to break that stigma. I hope our genre becomes more inclusive and accepting of LGBTQ+ fans and artists.

What do you want Grupo Firme's legacy to be?

EDUIN To be a global artist. I want to reach the level that Bad Bunny and Maluma have reached so that when you say our names in places outside of Mexico and the U.S., we are recognized. I want to tour Europe and South America. That's when I'll feel accomplished, but I'm also enjoying the now. We are on top of the world, where we want to be. **b**

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How Boyarski Fritz Rode Music's Tech Boom To Success

The entertainment law firm's founders, Jason Boyarski and David Fritz, talk their first decade in business — and steering deals for the Prince estate, Joan Jett and Marc Anthony

BY BILL DONAHUE

JASON BOYARSKI AND DAVID FRITZ launched their entertainment law practice, Boyarski Fritz, in December 2011, at a time when the music business was in “somewhat of a dark place,” says Boyarski. The industry was still recovering from the damage caused by Napster and other file-sharing services, physical and digital sales were in decline, and streaming had yet to reach critical mass.

Boyarski, who had worked at Universal Music Publishing Group (UMPG) and Warner Chappell Music, and Fritz, a veteran of entertainment law firm Grubman Shire Meiselas & Sacks, as well as Charles Koppelman's CAK Entertainment, joined what the former describes as “a lot of really smart, entrepreneurial people inside of the record and publishing companies and at outside law firms trying to figure out [the future], searching for the right solution.”

While they looked for answers, Fritz jokes that early on, he and Boyarski would sometimes employ creative solutions to impress new clients. “We had a whiteboard in the office where we would put up a fake transaction, some multibillion-dollar deal,” he recalls with a laugh. “People would come in and be like, ‘You guys are working on that?’ We’d say, ‘We can’t tell you what it is, but yeah.’”

Joan Jett, who became one of the firm's first clients in 2012, says Boyarski helped her Blackheart Group grow by “tens of millions” of dollars. In addition to inking publishing administration deals with BMG and UMPG and a distribution deal with Sony Music (which made her music available on streaming services for the first time), the attorney also enabled Jett to expand into fashion, merchandise, film and TV. Boyarski brokered the sale of Blackheart Films' 2018 documentary about the singer, *Bad Reputation*, and served as production counsel for its scripted film *Undateable John* in 2019.



Boyarski (left) and Fritz at their Park Avenue offices in New York in October.

Ten years later, Boyarski Fritz now uses its whiteboards to plan out publishing, catalog acquisition and master-use rights deals, talent agency and live tour agreements, mixing and engineering contracts, and joint-venture deals for a blue-chip client roster. The firm has represented the Prince estate since 2016 — with Boyarski serving as lead entertainment counsel — as well as the estates of Donny Hathaway and Antônio Carlos Jobim.

The firm's client list has also included recording artists such as Marc Anthony, Wu-Tang Clan's

Raekwon, DJ Paul Oakenfold, Lil Tecca, Wyclef Jean, Babyface and AlunaGeorge, as well as top songwriter-producers Louis Bell (Post Malone, Justin Bieber), Tainy (Bad Bunny, J Balvin), Frank Dukes (Camila Cabello, The Weeknd) and Cirkut (Katy Perry, Ava Max). It has also represented companies across the entertainment sector, such as technology (Create Music Group, Musix-match, Facebook), management and production (Electric Feel Music, Disruptor), event promotion (AEG, Dreamstage) and film/TV and podcasts (AudioUp, Triage/Levity).

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**SONY MUSIC
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To mark the firm's first decade, Boyarski and Fritz talk bringing the Prince catalog into the 21st century and generating \$125 million during the catalog sales boom, as well as the viability of non-fungible tokens (NFTs) as a revenue stream.

What changes in the music business have you seen over the last decade?

JASON BOYARSKI I have a chart, published by the RIAA, that I show our associates all the time. It starts in 2000, and it shows the total industry revenue, split between physical and digital. And they go down and down until they hit bottom in 2011, 2012, 2013. I've lived that graph, and our firm was launched dead smack in the center of it.

Did launching then benefit you?

BOYARSKI With the rebound of the music industry blossoming just a few years after we launched, the firm dove into the convergence of technology and music through the representations of evolving, new

Prince in 1985.



media platforms. We have advised and represented some of the leading technology-based music companies including the YouTube-oriented distribution company Create Music Group, the digital music lyric platform Musixmatch and many more. Jason advised Facebook for over a year in its early days of navigating the Wild West of music licensing. We also developed an expertise in the influencer celebrity world spawned by artist discovery apps such as TikTok and previously Vine. Our clients in that space have included TalentX, Jake Paul, Cameron Dallas and Homemade Projects. Today, we are also very involved in the music NFT deal-making frenzy, which we are excited to help pioneer.

Do you see NFTs as a viable revenue stream for artists over the long term?

BOYARSKI Each time there is an industry boom, new methods of technology have determined how

record companies and artists profit or lose, as in the case of the Napster era. Technology has always been a driver for the music industry — from the phonograph to Walkmans, to CDs, to downloadable MP3s and then to cloud-based streaming platforms. We see NFTs as part of this historical progression. For now, they are being treated much as expensive collectors' items, but the technology allows for so much more, including fan funding and smart contracts. There are still some big open questions, including how, for example, music publishers will participate when an NFT synchronizes music with moving images.

What are some of your clients' important recent accomplishments?

BOYARSKI Our firm's clients have had something like 15 Billboard Hot 100 No. 1s in the last few years — “Butter” by BTS, “Sunflower” by Post Malone and Swae Lee, and “Despacito” by Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee featuring Justin Bieber, to “Havana” by Camila Cabello featuring Young Thug, “Without Me” by Halsey and more. They include Louis Bell, who is one of the most influential producer-songwriters of modern-day popular music, with more than a dozen top 10 Hot 100 hits including smashes by Post Malone, Halsey, Camila Cabello, Miley Cyrus, Taylor Swift and more. There's Tainy, one of the biggest producers in the music business and in the Latin music space. We also represent the estate of composer-songwriter Antônio Carlos Jobim, who wrote “The Girl From Ipanema.”

Compared with 1,000-attorney mega-firms, Boyarski Fritz's staff is lean at just 10 employees. Why?

DAVID FRITZ The big firms are amazing if you're doing a transaction that touches multiple areas, like a [mergers and acquisitions] deal, where you have employee issues, pension issues, tax issues and many other different pieces. But when you're doing record deals, publishing deals or catalog acquisitions, you don't need to roll into the room with such a staff of lawyers that your client ends up with an outsize bill that doesn't make sense relative to what they're doing.

What are the advantages of choosing a boutique firm like yours?

FRITZ We bring efficiency to the client. We're not really a cost center. We're more like a partner. We get the task done the best way possible because we're in it for the long haul.

How many catalog sales deals has your firm handled during the current boom?

BOYARSKI In the last two years, we've [brokered] over \$125 million in catalog sales, some of which have been announced, like Louis Bell's deal [with UMPG in January], and some which have not. We also helped the Donny Hathaway estate sell his masters and publishing, and we're in the middle of a bunch more.

How were catalog deals different when your firm was starting out?

BOYARSKI Prior to five years ago, catalog sales were limited to companies, songwriters or artists selling their catalogs usually to one buyer.

'THE WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE IS STAGGERING'

Boyarski Fritz's music executive and artist clients share what makes the entertainment law firm stand out most

Lalah Hathaway

“We as a family truly appreciate the support and care given by Boyarski Fritz. We feel lucky to work alongside Jason and to be aligned with people in this industry that are as passionate about our family legacy as we are.”



Massimo Ciociola

CEO, Musixmatch

“Jason and the team have been amazing partners to Musixmatch since we started. They've steered us through the U.S. music scene and opened many doors in the lyrics licensing space. We love working with them and look forward to working together in the future.”

Peter Brodsky

General counsel/executive vp business and legal affairs, Sony/ATV Music Publishing

“Congratulations to Jason, David and the whole Boyarski Fritz team. And to think I knew you when... It's always a pleasure to work with your firm, and we look forward to many more years working together.”



Troy Carter

Founder/CEO, Q&A

“Jason Boyarski is one of the most thorough attorneys I've worked with. He has an uncanny ability to remember the smallest details in a contract and makes sure the client understands exactly what they're entering into. The

complexity of managing an estate like Prince's goes well beyond entertainment law. Jason and his firm have done an impeccable job cleaning up the estate and negotiating very lucrative deals — all while making it an enjoyable experience for the team.”

Paul Oakenfold

“I've been working with Boyarski Fritz for years now. I find them highly professional and good at what they do.”

Jody Gerson

Chairman/CEO, Universal Music Publishing Group

“Jason Boyarski and David Fritz are terrific partners to UMPG. Their firm operates with integrity, fairness and a dedication to the talent they represent.”

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Jason,

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players

And that buyer was the home team already — either the co-publisher or the administrator or the record label. People were not buying streams of income in the way that we now see from Merck [Mercuriadis] and Primary Wave's Larry Mestel, Round Hill and the others that we now negotiate with. It was very uncommon.

How has that change affected your bottom line?

BOYARSKI It has created a new income transaction in the music business and a new way to shop deals. We've got a list of over 30 companies that we go to.

Some are private equity-backed, some are strategic players, some are majors or mini-majors or qualifying independents. It has accelerated the wealth of a lot of successful songwriters and artists, but the creative community must be very careful in choosing what to sell.

Why?

BOYARSKI We typically say that you want to see the value of a copyright mature so that it's no longer on the rise or in decline so that you can really see what the overall horizon is for it. And if you're going to sell something early, you must make sure the buyers don't put too big of a decay rate on it [the assumption built into the price of a catalog sale that aims to predict how revenue from the musical compositions acquired will shrink over time].

What kind of work have you done for the Prince estate?

BOYARSKI All of the entertainment transactions, including the full catalog music publishing agreement with Universal Music Publishing Group and the 35-album deal on the master side that went to Sony. We also did the performance rights agreement with Irving Azoff and Randy Grimmer at Global Music Rights because, prior to his death, Prince had resigned from ASCAP as a writer. Over the years, I've also partnered with Troy Carter, the estate's entertainment adviser, to cut a number of other deals, including bringing his music to TikTok and Peloton, and doing name, image and licensing deals with them. We created a channel with SiriusXM, and there are also a bunch of yet-to-be-announced projects.

Prince was fiercely protective of his legacy as an artist. Is it ever daunting to handle rights deals for someone known for maintaining such tight control over his works?

BOYARSKI It's a blessing to be involved with such an iconic artist's work, but it's also a huge weight on our shoulders because every decision that we make tells a new story about how his music is going to be heard and how Prince is going to be seen by a new generation. So there is a lot of time and energy



spent determining how his music is going to be put into the market.

What other clients are you prioritizing?

FRITZ Marc Anthony, certainly. I'm basically general counsel to everything he does. Marc is the Frank Sinatra of Spanish-language music. And in business, he's like JAY-Z [with Roc Nation]. Through his company Magnus Media, he's a registered sports agent and has a full sports agency with over 50 players; a talent agency, where they book acts around the world; and a label that has signed Gente de Zona, Enrique Santos and Calle y Poché. He's got a publishing joint venture with Sony and a label deal with Sony Latin. When you're an artist of that stature, people are coming at you from every which way to get involved in your companies, even if it has nothing to do with music. So every day is a new adventure.

What are your goals for the next decade?

BOYARSKI We're strong believers in utilizing technology to create efficiencies that help us grow. But we don't want to become one of the big firms that we mentioned earlier. We want to maintain a boutique atmosphere and personality for our clients. We are also particularly excited about the firm's future growth from within, especially the development of some of our rising-star lawyers, including our lead West Coast attorney, Avi Dahan, and our up-and-coming associates Francine Lewis, Marshall Amores and Dylan Reich. We are committed to investing in the future of our team and giving them the resources to be at the top of their game. We hold training sessions for them all the time.

FRITZ Outside of the practice, I'm building a company called Creative Intell, which you might call the Legal Zoom for the music business. It will offer software tools that help attorneys with the aid of artificial intelligence. It isn't just going to be limited to the music business. In all of lawyering, legal tech is an important category for growth. Lawyers and law firms that didn't otherwise have access to sophisticated software tools will gain that access at affordable prices, enabling work to be done faster and cheaper, and with fewer errors. **b**

Joan Jett

"I've known David and Jason for many years. I met each of them in separate universes in the entertainment industry, where each of them had illustrious achievements, and I was a beneficiary of their individual acumen.

I was so thrilled when David called to say the two had formed a practice. The wealth of experience is staggering. I was all in from the first day. They have been with me through many career milestones and have always given me exceptional counsel on our ever-expanding business, Blackheart. I love these guys."



Lex Borrero

CEO, NEON16

"There are attorneys, and then there is Jason Boyarski — a true black belt in deal-making."



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Austin Rosen

CEO, Electric Feel Entertainment

"There are few firms as trusted as Boyarski Fritz, and they

stand as a clear leader in putting their clients first. The partnership we've built working with the team since the inception of Electric Feel has been monumental in our continued success."

Jonathan Strauss

Founder/CEO, Create Music Group

"Jason has been a valuable member of the Create team for a number of years now. His insight and guidance have been so crucial to our overall growth."

Louis Bell

"Working with Jason allows me to fully focus on the creative. Having the trust and confidence that my attorney and the rest of my team are handling those important negotiations for everything from producer deals to catalog sales has been amazing for my career."



Tamar Braxton

"Jason has been a pleasure to work with. He came into my career at a very pivotable time, and I am thankful because he knows what he's doing. He is an industry leader, innovator and a first-class lawyer. And he gets me my coins ... thank you, Jason, for all you do."

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No. 9

PEAK ON BILLBOARD'S
STREAMING SONGS CHART

CKay

The Nigerian artist remixed his hit for different regions of Africa — and became a global star

▷ In 2019, then-rising Nigerian artist CKay sent his sultry, slow-tempo “Love Nwantiti (ah ah ah)” to his label, Chocolate City Music. “To be honest, it was overlooked,” he says. “No one took it seriously because it wasn’t a fast song.”

Nearly three years and five more versions of the song later, “Love Nwantiti (ah ah ah)” has become CKay’s first hit on the Billboard Hot 100, climbing into the top 40 and also landing on *Billboard*’s Global 200 and Global Excl. U.S. charts thanks in part to a viral TikTok challenge. The 26-year-old CKay, born Chukwuka Ekwuani, describes “Love Nwantiti” as “my own spin on Afrobeats,” and finds joy in creating what he calls “emo Afrobeats.” “Emo Afrobeats is a way to express myself, my emotions and my sound and still have a groove to it,” he says. “Plus, I’m a Cancer, so my energy is basically emotions.”

With the help of his manager, Ogbolu Favour, who first heard CKay’s music in 2016, the artist was signed in November 2020 to Warner Music South Africa, with Chocolate City Music licensing “Love Nwantiti” to the major label (his U.S. contract is with Atlantic). Favour says Warner Music South Africa in particular was instrumental in strategizing a global rollout plan for the hit.

“When it was licensed from Chocolate City Music, the Warner team wanted to release different products of the song, so we had different remixes in different regions,” says Favour. “We had the North African remix, East African remix, South African, Spanish and French [versions] featuring different people that speak different languages from different parts of the world. Afrobeats gave the song a wider reach and with that step, the song had wings.”

After “Love Nwantiti” appeared on CKay’s 2019 debut EP, *CKay the First*, he released his major-label debut EP, *Boyfriend*, in February. CKay says he hopes to release his first full-length album next year. As Favour sees it, the international success of “Love Nwantiti” is just the beginning for CKay. “I see [him] as an African global star.”

—DARLENE ADEROJU

Favour (left) and CKay
photographed by Manny Jefferson
on Oct. 24 in Lagos, Nigeria.

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Jason on 10 years!**



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MUSIC OF BIG FAMILY

BEERS AND SUNSHINE

ROSS COPPERMAN
EMI-BLACKWOOD MUSIC, INC. / IRIS IN THE SKY WITH DIAMONDS

BETTER TOGETHER

LUKE COMBS
DAN ISBELL
RANDY MONTANA
50 EGG MUSIC / BIG MUSIC MACHINE / SONY/ATV COUNTRYSIDE
STRAIGHT DIMES PUBLISHING / SULLIVAN'S GUNS MUSIC
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

BIG, BIG PLANS

JACOB DURRETT
CHRIS LANE
ERNEST KEITH SMITH
BIG, BIG PLANS PUBLISHING / BIG LOUD MOUNTAIN / ERN DOG MUSIC
MAGIC MUSTANGS MUSIC, INC. / ROUND HILL WORKS
SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. / WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

BLUEBIRD

LUKE DICK
NATALIE HEMBY
MIRANDA LAMBERT
EMILEON SONGS / LITTLE LOUDER SONGS / PINK DOG PUBLISHING
SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING / SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.
SONY/ATV TREE / WRUCKE FOR YOU PUBLISHING

CHAMPAGNE NIGHT

ESTER DEAN
CHARLES KELLEY
DAVE THOMSON (SOCAN)
DAT DAMN DEAN MUSIC / RADIOBULLETPUBLISHING
SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. / SONY/ATV SONGS LLC
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

CHASIN' YOU

MORGAN WALLEN
BIG LOUD MOUNTAIN / ROUND HILL WORKS

COOL AGAIN

KANE BROWN
LINDSAY RIMES (APRA)
EMI-BLACKWOOD MUSIC, INC.
KANE BROWN MUSIC / KOALA T TUNES / SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.

DIE FROM A BROKEN HEART

TAYLOR KERR (MADDIE & TAE)
BIG MUSIC MACHINE / JEHOVAH NISSI MUSIC

DOES TO ME

LUKE COMBS
RAY FULCHER
TYLER REEVE
50 EGG MUSIC / BIG MUSIC MACHINE
KIRBYFINDER'S MUCHO LOVE MUSIC / LARKIN HILL PUBLISHING
SONY/ATV TREE / STRAIGHT DIMES PUBLISHING

DONE

CHRIS JANSON
JAMIE PAULIN
MATT ROY
ANTHEM RED VINYL MUSIC / BMG PLATINUM SONGS US
ROUNDING THIRD PUBLISHING / SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.
SONGSFORATUM PUBLISHING

DOWN TO ONE

DALLAS DAVIDSON
KYLE FISHMAN
KYLE FISHMAN MUSIC / NATALIA'S MUSIC MONEY
PLAY IT AGAIN ENTERTAINMENT / ROUND HILL COMPOSITIONS

GOD WHISPERED YOUR NAME

MICAH CARTER
SHY CARTER
JAMES SLATER
BMG PLATINUM SONGS US / BRO 2 BRO PUBLISHING
PROTOSAIL PUBLISHING / SONY/ATV TREE
WORLDWIDE EMI MUSIC B
YOU WANT HOW MUCH OF WHAT PUBLISHING

GOOD TIME

JORDAN MINTON
HERE COMES THE BOOM MUSIC
SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING

GOT WHAT I GOT

THOMAS ARCHER
ALEXANDER PALMER
ALEXANDER PALMER SONGS / HITS LIKE HURRICANE
MUSIC OF MAM / MV2 MUSIC
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

HAPPY ANYWHERE

ROSS COPPERMAN
EMI-BLACKWOOD MUSIC, INC.
ENDURANCE ROMED CHARLIE / SMACK OF HAM SONGS

HAPPY DOES

BROCK BERRYHILL
BRAD CLAWSON
GREYLAN JAMES
JAMIE PAULIN
DON'T BE A GYPSY / FIVE MILES WEST SONGS
HOLD ON CAN I GET A NUMBER 1 MUSIC
MANDY'S FAVORITE SONGS / MORPHY THE WOLF MUSIC
SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. / SONGSFORATUM PUBLISHING
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

HARD TO FORGET

RUSS HULL
WEBB PIERCE
MARY JEAN SHURTZ
JAMIE MUSIC PUBLISHING CO. / UNICHAPPELL MUSIC, INC.

HEARTLESS

HENRY AGINCOURT ALLEN
CHARLIE HANDSOME
RYAN HURD
ERNEST KEITH SMITH
MORGAN WALLEN
BIG LOUD MOUNTAIN
BO WALLACE PUBLISHING / DUKE CITY MUSIC
ERN DOG MUSIC / HURDIAMZ / ROUND HILL WORKS
SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING
SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.

HOLE IN THE BOTTLE

JESSE FRASURE
SONGS OF ROC NATION MUSIC / TELEMETRY RHYTHM HOUSE MUSIC
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

I CALLED MAMA

MARV GREEN
JIMMY YEARY
ALL NIGHT LINDA MUSIC / CEDAR CHURCH MUSIC
SONY/ATV TREE / WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

I HOPE YOU'RE HAPPY NOW

LUKE COMBS
RANDY MONTANA
50 EGG MUSIC / BIG MUSIC MACHINE
STRAIGHT DIMES PUBLISHING / SULLIVAN'S GUNS MUSIC
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

I LOVE MY COUNTRY

KANE BROWN
CHARLIE HANDSOME
CHASE MCGILL
ERNEST KEITH SMITH
WILL WEATHERLY
BIG LOUD MOUNTAIN / BIG TREE VIBEZ MUSIC
ERN DOG MUSIC / KANE BROWN MUSIC
MANDY'S FAVORITE SONGS / SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.
TRACK HOUSE WORLDWIDE ENTERTAINMENT
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

I SHOULD PROBABLY GO TO BED

SEAN DOUGLAS
JASON EVIGAN
SHAY MOONEY
BAD ROBOT / BMG PLATINUM SONGS US
EASTMAN POND PUBLISHING / SHAY MOONEY MUSIC
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

IN BETWEEN

SCOTTY MCCREEHY
DAGUM MUSIC / SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.

JUST THE WAY

MATT THOMAS
JM THOMAS MUSIC / SONY/ATV COUNTRYSIDE

LADY

ROSS COPPERMAN
EMI-BLACKWOOD MUSIC, INC. / IRIS IN THE SKY WITH DIAMONDS

LONELY IF YOU ARE

CHASE RICE
LINDSAY RIMES (APRA)
BACK JANELS PUBLISHING
EMI-BLACKWOOD MUSIC, INC. / KOALA T TUNES
SONY/ATV COUNTRYSIDE

LONG LIVE

TYLER HUBBARD
BRIAN KELLEY
JOSH MILLER
BIG LOUD MOUNTAIN / JACK TO PUBLISHING / PRANCH RINGLE MUSIC
ROUND HILL WORKS / T HUBB PUBLISHING
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

LOVE YOU LIKE I USED TO

RUSSELL DICKERSON
PARKER WELLING
BMG PLATINUM SONGS US / KALEY'S DREAM
SONGS OF HOME TEAM MUSIC / TUNES BY TRAILERPARKER
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

LOVIN' ON YOU

THOMAS ARCHER
LUKE COMBS
RAY FULCHER
JAMES MCNAIR
50 EGG MUSIC / BIG MUSIC MACHINE
LARKIN HILL PUBLISHING / MUSIC OF MAM
MV2 MUSIC / SONY/ATV COUNTRYSIDE
SONY/ATV TREE / STRAIGHT DIMES PUBLISHING
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

MOMMA'S HOUSE

RODNEY CLAWSON
MICHAEL LOTTEN
DYLAN SCHNEIDER
ANTHEM MUSIC PUBLISHING / FORD DRIVES A CHEVY
LUCKY MIC PUBLISHING / MUSIC OF PARALLEL
ROUND HILL COMPOSITIONS / SHIRT AT WORK

MORE THAN MY HOMETOWN

CHARLIE HANDSOME
MICHAEL HARDY
ERNEST KEITH SMITH
MORGAN WALLEN
BIG LOUD MOUNTAIN / RELATIVE MUSIC GROUP
ROUND HILL WORKS / SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.
SONY/ATV COUNTRYSIDE / SONY/ATV TREE

NOBODY BUT YOU

ROSS COPPERMAN
TOMMY LEE JAMES
EMI-BLACKWOOD MUSIC, INC. / ENDURANCE ROMED CHARLIE
SMACK OF HAM SONGS / SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING
STILL WORKING FOR THE MAN MUSIC, INC.

ONE BEER

MICHAEL HARDY
JAKE MITCHELL
CLEARBOX BENEFIT / REDNECKER MUSIC
RELATIVE MUSIC GROUP / SEA GAYLE TAVERN HOUSE MUSIC
SONY/ATV TREE / WEST PASS MUSIC

ONE BIG COUNTRY SONG

JESSE FRASURE
MICHAEL HARDY
RELATIVE MUSIC GROUP / SONGS OF ROC NATION MUSIC
SONY/ATV TREE / TELEMETRY RHYTHM HOUSE MUSIC
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

ONE MARGARITA

JOSH THOMPSON
BIG MUSIC MACHINE / MUSIC OF MAM
MV2 MUSIC

ONE NIGHT STANDARDS

ASHLEY MCBRYDE
CANNED BISCUIT SONGS / SONGS OF HARPEETH VALLEY
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

ONE OF THEM GIRLS

DALLAS DAVIDSON
BEN JOHNSON
NATALIA'S MUSIC MONEY
ROUND HILL COMPOSITIONS

ONE THING RIGHT

KANE BROWN
JESSE FRASURE
MARSHMELLO
KANE BROWN MUSIC / MARSHMELLO MUSIC
BACK JANELS PUBLISHING / SULLIVAN'S GUNS MUSIC
SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. / TELEMETRY RHYTHM HOUSE MUSIC
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

PRETTY HEART

PARKER MCCOLLUM
RANDY MONTANA
PARKERMACK PUBLISHING / SULLIVAN'S GUNS MUSIC
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

SOME GIRLS

MICHAEL HARDY
JAKE MITCHELL
CLEARBOX BENEFIT / HARROING ROAD MUSIC
NEW WRITERS OF SEA GAYLE MUSIC / RELATIVE MUSIC GROUP
SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING / SONY/ATV TREE
WEST PASS MUSIC

SOMEBODY LIKE THAT

TENILLE ARTS (SOCAN)
OVEN MUSIC, INC.

STARTING OVER

MICHAEL HENDERSON
STRAIGHT SIX MUSIC / WIXEN MUSIC PUBLISHING, INC.

THE GOOD ONES

GABBY BARRETT
ZACH KALE
EMILY LANDIS
JIM MCCORMICK
BMG BLUE / BMG PLATINUM SONGS US
FOX LANDIS LYRICS / GBF MUSIC GLOBAL
REVINYL HOUSE / SONGS OF JIM MCCORMICK
SONY/ATV COUNTRYSIDE / SONY/ATV TREE

WHAT'S YOUR COUNTRY SONG

RHETT AKINS
JESSE FRASURE
THOMAS RHETT
PARKER WELLING
CRICKET ON THE LINE / EMI-BLACKWOOD MUSIC, INC.
WRITTEN BY RHETT / SONGS OF HOME TEAM MUSIC
SONGS OF ROC NATION MUSIC
TELEMETRY RHYTHM HOUSE MUSIC / TUNES BY TRAILERPARKER
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

WHY WE DRINK

CASEY BEATHARD
JUSTIN MOORE
BIG MUSIC MACHINE / DOUBLE BARREL ACE MUSIC
LITTLE LOUDER SONGS / SEVEN RING CIRCUS SONGS
SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING

SONGWRITER OF THE YEAR

JESSE FRASURE

Almost Maybes / hole in the bottle / One Big Country Song
One Thing Right / What's Your Country Song

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 33 YEARS, WE HAVE A TIE!

PUBLISHERS OF THE YEAR

SONY MUSIC PUBLISHING

BE A LIGHT
BEER CAN'T FIX
BEERS AND SUNSHINE
BETTER TOGETHER
BLUEBIRD
CHAMPAGNE NIGHT
COOL AGAIN
DOES TO ME
GOD WHISPERED YOUR NAME
HAPPY ANYWHERE
HAPPY DOES
I CALLED MAMA
JUST THE WAY
LADY
LONELY IF YOU ARE
LOVIN' ON YOU
MORE THAN MY HOMETOWN
NOBODY BUT YOU
ONE BEER
ONE BIG COUNTRY SONG
ONE NIGHT STANDARDS
ONE THING RIGHT
PRETTY HEART
THE GOOD ONES
WHAT'S YOUR COUNTRY SONG

WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

ALMOST MAYBES
BE A LIGHT
BETTER TOGETHER
BIG, BIG PLANS
CHAMPAGNE NIGHT
GOT WHAT I GOT
HAPPY DOES
HARD TO FORGET
HOLE IN THE BOTTLE
I CALLED MAMA
I HOPE YOU'RE HAPPY NOW
I LOVE MY COUNTRY
I SHOULD PROBABLY GO TO BED
LONG LIVE
LOVE YOU LIKE I USED TO
LOVIN' ON YOU
LOVE YOU LIKE I USED TO
LOVIN' ON YOU
ONE BIG COUNTRY SONG
ONE NIGHT STANDARDS
ONE THING RIGHT
PRETTY HEART
WHAT'S YOUR COUNTRY SONG

MUSIC MOVES OUR WORLD

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