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ON THE COVER: Fall Out Boy by Pamela Littky.
Last summer, Phonographic Performance Ltd. (PPL) announced the impending voluntary merger of the two British performers' collecting societies: the Asuc and Recording Artists and the Performing Artists' Media Rights Assn. This fundamental development in the company's 73-year history, now ratified, comes at a time when the increasingly ubiquitous public use of music, developing technology, shifting media and globalization make the role—and revenue—of performers of primary importance. In addition, their new shared "home" with record companies gives added strengths.

The ecological infrastructure of the music industry is, in many sectors, extremely fragile; thus, perversely, at a time when more music is "consumed" by a global public than ever before. Thus it is critical at this delicate moment that the primary performing around the world is recognizing this intertwined inadequacy. Ubiquity enhances—must not be devalued.

Against the backdrop in the United Kingdom of last month's Gowers review, which recommended that the copyright term for sound recordings be held at 50 years, despite the pleads of many in the music industry (for term extension), governments must start to look beyond music as "mere" copyright—important though legal frameworks are. Governments must understand that music's impact at so many levels is invaluable—socially, culturally, economically, medically. When "measured" against the other rights in a CD—artwork, design, photography, composition, lyric, etc.—all of which enable life plus 70 years, it becomes a form of "copyright discrimination" to them, maintaining only 50 years in sound recordings. Such an anomaly is unsupportable and unjust, and all use of sound recordings must be paid for fairly—both for duration and in rate. To suggest that performers in their old age should support themselves by selling T-shirts is irresponsible and demeaning. "PPL-type income" will become fundamentally important for everyone.

Music is priceless and PPL will aggressively promote its value. Jointly with our industry counterparts, we will continue dialogue with governments in London and across Europe. We will step up our engagement and communication with the new performer community we now represent. Through events, meetings, presentations, advertising, fairs and more, we will bring together all parties to focus on this critical issue.

The merger brings many benefits as the need for holistic and international service companies in today's marketplace has never been greater. The implications of efficient, professional and creative one-stop shops serving both performers and producers are immense. As "owners" of music seek to divide and rule to their advantage, it is this sort of nexus that will strengthen the industry's collective voice and regrow market value.

Our United Kingdom, as a net exporter of music, overseas income collections become one of the industry's priorities. This natural process must be "two-way traffic" between PPL and the 28 overseas producer and performer societies with whom it has signed reciprocal agreements. Cooperation and dialogue are prerequisites in the new global music village. Recently mandated to collect over seas income for record companies, PPL is thus perfectly equipped to carry out the same service for performers. Digital media is no respecter of boundaries and borders, and as radio and TV spread and mutate—and in the process acquire new licenses—a sharply international focus becomes a prerequisite. This all comes at a time when the move toward copyright harmonization is creating an increasingly global industry.

The merger also enables the company to centralize all performer services under one roof for the first time and this streamlining will effectively speed up those services and reduce costs. In addition, by incorporating previous databases into CatCo (the company's universally recognized database holding the metadata for 9 million tracks globally), PPL has already managed to reduce substantially the services held in relation to "old" sound recordings—and this process will continue. Enhanced systems too are a prerequisite— as are passionate and dedicated staff.

PPL's overall attributes, enhanced in fresh documentation, has the main board consisting of 17 board directors: four respectively from the major companies and the independents, four senior performers and four senior PPL executives as well as Lord Smith of Finlith, former Secretary of State at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. Now, in addition there is a six-person performer board with five "performer guardians" and three attendees in addition to the appointment of a new director of performer affairs, Keith Harris, last year, im-

By Fran Nevrka

Return To A New Age For Performers And Record Companies

* OPINION

**LETTERS**
Hello Cherry

Santino Deal With Publishing Company Carries Band-Brand Alliances To The Next Phase

In coming months, Hello Kitty and other globally branded characters in parent company Sanrio's product line will be singing a new tune. Billboard has learned that Sanrio has entered a multiyear, joint-venture deal with Cherry Lane Music Publishing.

Hello Kitty and other important U.S. properties, including Chococat and My Melody. The publishing company will also administer the joint venture, which will be announced Jan. 23 at the New York Palace Hotel during a Sanrio-hosted breakfast.

This business arrangement follows on the heels of other artists who have delivered newly recorded jams to specific brands. In recent months, Bo Bice updated "Time Has Come Today," for Hasbro's Monopoly Here and Now board game, while the Black Eyed Peas concocted fresh tunes for Snickers' online destination, insta-taste.com.

The union between Sanrio and Cherry Lane bypasses one-of-a-kind deals like these in favor of a longer-lasting relationship. Tina Wells, CEO of Buzz Marketing Group, a youths and teens marketing and communications agency in New York, believes this is the next phase in alliances between band and brand. Sanrio will look to Cherry Lane and its songwriters to create and produce songs, songs and themes for their main characters. Though the deal is still being fine-tuned, with no commitments from anyone yet, Cherry Lane acts like it's a new relationship. "If you look at all the deals we've had in the past, you'd be surprised at the number of deals we've had that have gone nowhere," says Cherry Lane's Alain Imai.

The music has the potential to be heard in various mediums, including physical CDs, digital tracks, ringtones, TV shows and premium with other licenses (Hello Kitty dolls with music, perhaps).

Camille Hackney, senior VP of brand partnerships and commercial licensing at Atlantic Records, calls it a "bold, smart and aggressive move for Cherry Lane, because they're working for their writers—in a very focused way.

For Sanrio president/COO Mas Imai, the partnership is a way for brands like Hello Kitty to strengthen and deepen their connections with consumers—with the help of music. "Having a musical relationship with Cherry Lane is ideal for us," Imai says. "They understand our brand essence."

Cherry Lane also understands the music industry, which was key for Sanrio, Imai notes. And Sanrio offers Cherry Lane a worldwide billion-dollar presence, encompassing products, retail shops and more than 120 U.S. licensors.

While Cherry Lane will tap its own artist/songwriter roster first, outside writers will not be ruled out. "Fergie could be a good representation of Hello Kitty," Cherry Lane VP of advertising and catalog development Dan Rosenthal says. "Gwen Stefani also comes to mind."

Cherry Lane's senior VP of creative services and marketing Richard Stumpf adds, "We're considering all options. In those instances where an outside writer is used, it will be on a work-for-hire basis. Either way, Cherry Lane and Sanrio will own the music. Which makes one wonder if participating artists' labels would help promote and market music they don't own.

If the artist is signed to Atlantic, Hackney says there would be "some sort of financial remuneration for us, because Cherry Lane would be asking one of our artists to break out of a contract for Sanrio." But it could all be worked out by a string down with all parties involved, Hackney adds. "Our final decision would rest on the creative, the artist cycle—will the artist between albums?—the media buy and other marketing elements surrounding the project.

Cherry Lane's deal with Sanrio is similar to its business arrangement with NASCAR in that the music publisher is responsible for creating music for the organization and the music assets are the drivers' joint venture. Cherry Lane has solid business relationships with other brands, including NFL Films and World Wrestling Entertainment. In these arrangements, the music publisher administer promotions and helps orchestrate music.

Whether Cherry Lane connects Sanrio with one of its other basic partners remains to be seen—but the door is there, Imai says. This appeal to Imai, who is considering all options to best- leverage Sanrio's properties.

"Brands are looking for an experience to come to life," Wells says. "Artist like Fergie and Will.I.am are cool characters with larger-than-life personas. Still, they caution, "How do you infuse a Fergie or Will.I.am into a brand? How do you make this a true partnership? Because, ultimately you must capitalize on the strength of all brands involved."

ILLUSTRATION BY JUSTIN DEGARMO

continued on >>
The high-profile police raid of the Aphilliates Music Group office in Atlanta that resulted in the arrest of DJ Drama and the confiscation of $81,000 mixtape CDs has ignited a firestorm in the hip-hop music industry.

Drama is arguably the top mixtape DJ working today, having created buzz-generating, prerelease mixes for top stars including TI, Young Jeezy and Lil Wayne. According to at least a few sources with direct knowledge of such deals, mixtape DJs have been paid by record labels to include up-and-coming artists and upcoming releases on such mixes.

Because the RIAA was involved in the arrest of Drama, retailers and sources involved in hip-hop marketing are now left wondering about the future of the crucial marketing tool, and angered about the perception that the RIAA is working selectively when it comes to enforcement.

DJ Drama (aka Tyree Simmons) and his partner DJ Don (Donald Cannon) have been released on signature bond, after being arrested on felony charges under the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act. The raid, conducted by the Marrow County Sheriff's joint vice task force and the Clayton County Police, resulted in the reported seizure of mixtape CDs, office computers, recording equipment and four cars. The company's assets were also frozen.

Within 24 hours of the Jan. 16 late afternoon raid, some online sites, brick-and-mortar stores and even chains hurried to pull questionable products from bins, as DJs and mixtape distributors expressed fears that they too could soon be arrested.

Mixtapes have been around from the earliest days of hip-hop, ranging from a playlist of top 40 songs from a party to a collection of hot tracks that an MC might use for freestyling. As CD replicating technology spread earlier this decade, the mixtape practice grew to include manufacturing CDs and selling them to record stores, and eventually to one-stops and distributors. This widened circulation caught the attention of the record business, and also elevated certain mixtape practitioners to national levels of status.

While some mixtape auteurs simply drop the rap of up-and-coming MCs over existing hit tracks, Drama and his in-house production partner Cannon built on this practice, mixing in new, original beats with freestyles and tracks recorded for major labels.

The rise within the hip-hop industry of a successful mixtape can move as many as 20,000 units. "Young Jeezy put out tapes of original material and all his tapes are platinum in the streets," Drama told Billboard last November. "Platinum in the streets," according to the manager of one prominent mixtape DJ, equals roughly 10,000 copies.

"I was getting booked for shows in Detroit, D.C., places I'd never been because of these tapes," Young Jeezy told Billboard in November.

For years, labels have turned a blind eye to the fact that mixtapes were featuring the tracks from their unlicensed hit songs. Drama and other top mixtape DJs get paid as much as $15,000 by labels to create artist-specific mixes, according to sources involved in such deals; the labels separately pay manufacturing companies to manufacture such recordings. This money generally comes from labels' marketing or promotion budgets.

"The major labels encourage me to get our artists on mixed tapes," says a lawyer with more than a decade of experience in the rap industry, including the representation of platinum and gold artists.

The manager of one prominent mixtape DJ adds, "Record labels send us music and ask us to put it on the tapes, saying, 'I'll give you x amount of dollars to make a tape and you can make your own money, we don't care. I don't understand how they can use the DJ's mixtapes and say 'make your own money if you like,' and then not protect us on the flip side.'"

Time will tell if the pirated product in question in the Drama arrest is the same pirated product that labels have been paying Drama and other DJs to create.

"The Drama situation is all about an old-fashioned organization like the RIAA not keeping up with new technology and marketing methods," says DJ Irie, a mixer on hip-hop station WEDR (99 Jamz) Miami. "Mixtapes help record labels and artists. Record sales are already declining and without mixtapes they would be even worse. The artists and some labels get it, and that's why they support and oftentimes fund mixtapes."

RIAA executive VP of anti-piracy Bradley Buckles says that his organization doesn't "have any position on mixtapes," and simply looks for pirated product being sold.

"If there's a mixtape out there that [DJ Drama] is being paid to produce, that doesn't translate to 'everything he's producing is at the behest of the record industry,'" Buckles says. "He could have two titles that are somehow authorized and 50 that aren't."

"We didn't have DJ Drama in our cross hairs and we don't have mixtapes, in the purest sense, in our cross hairs," Buckles adds. "But a cop never knows who they will pull over when they pull over a speeding vehicle, and we don't know who we'll run into when we follow pirated product back to its source... There's been a lot of anti-piracy activity in Atlanta and when we search for illegal CDs, much of what was picked up was traced back to this operation."

According to Chief Jeffrey Baker of the Morrow Police Department, "We found an outlet in Morrow for the criminal sale of recorded material, breaking the OCMA, Official Code of Georgia Annotated, No. 16-8-66, which specifies that CDs must list the true name and address of their office, which these CDs didn't, nor did they [list] copyright permission. People were able to manufacture and sell the pirated discs for profit."

Meanwhile, there is no licensing scheme on the horizon that would enable the streamlined, legal creation of mixtapes as they are known today. The DJ Drama arrest comes a few months after the RIAA issued a memo to the majors on mixed tapes, proposing a solution to what the organization says is a problem that now accounts for sales of 30 million-50 million units a year in the United States alone. The paper concluded that an "ideal solution would involve the labels providing a legal alternative to retailers that can compete with, and meet the demand that exists for mixtapes."

Last September, Warner Music Group's Asylum Records announced a multifaceted agreement with Aphilliates Music Group, which was started in 2003 by Drama, Cannon and DJ Sense. Drama has an artist deal with Atlantic Records to release "Gangsta Grillz: The Album" this year. Atlantic did not return calls seeking comment.

Before Drama's arrest, independent retailers had been hit hardest by the RIAA's recent mixtape-related investigations. While Buckles contends that the RIAA's standard practice is to send a cease-and-desist letter before proceeding with other enforcement options, "I never got a cease-and-desist letter in my life," says Marc Seigel, owner of Rhode Island Records in Pawtucket, who was hit with five years of probation and fines, federal fees and restitution totaling $45,000, after the police found 6,500 mixtape CDs in a raid, he reports. Billboard also found two other merchants that combined will be out $45,000, when they are done paying fines, restitution and legal fees.

Meanwhile, such drastic enforcement measures have yet to be taken against Best Buy, one of the largest accounts for major labels. Buckles confirmed that Best Buy had received a cease-and-desist in response to the selling of mixtapes—"I've bought them in Best Buy," Buckles says—but declined to comment further on what he called an ongoing issue. In mid-December, Billboard acquired five such CDs in a Best Buy store on Broadway and Houston Street in Manhattan. Best Buy declined comment.

Representatives at every major hip-hop label, as well as the largest independent hip-hop labels, declined to comment on the affect of the Drama arrest on hip-hop marketing efforts via mixtapes. But it seems clear that the major story behind the future of Drama, retailers who sell mixtapes and, indeed, the entire promotional practice in question.

Additional reporting by Gail Mitchell.
the hardest working man in heaven...
Making The Leap
Which Acts Will Jump Into Larger Venues in 2007?

Having jumped from support slots in sweaty clubs to headlining for thousands in theaters and arenas, bands like the Killers, Fall Out Boy and Panic at the Disco know a thing or two about paying their dues before becoming box-office sellouts. While factors like airplay, record sales, media buzz and Internet and TV exposure contributed to the leap, there was one common thread each band shared. "They all did their time in the club before going solo," says Lars McTwy, PAOLO NUTINI's agent.

Here's a look at four touring acts that could jump into larger venues in 2007. The list was compiled based on the predictions of several talent buyers across the United States.

**GYM CLASS HEROES**
Label: Decaydayce/Fueled by Ramen
Agent: Nick Storch, the Agency Group

With the MySpace-inspired track "New Friend Request," New York's Gym Class Heroes are reaching out to more than 250,000 "friends" to make the jump into bigger venues in 2007. And if record sales are any indicator, GCH shouldn't have anything to worry about. The band's latest effort, "As Cruel As School Children," which dropped in July 2006, has sold 98,000 units in the United States—40,000 more than 2005's "The Papercut Chronicles," according to Nielsen SoundScan. Since day one, the band's formula for success has been simple. "It's basically Internet and touring," says Scott Nagelberg, who manages the group with McMynn. "We were the first band to tour the U.S. in a 2,000-seat club, and we've done it in a 1,000-seat club," Nagelberg says. "We've been in 1,000-seater clubs, and when we were playing 1,000-seater, it could've been 2,000-seaters," says James Ferguson, Michael Pialetta, Deborah Evans Driscoll and Chris M. Walsh, who have worked with the band for three years. "But [bands] need time to mature in the proper environment. You can't do too much too soon." Staying put in smaller venues can also create more buzz, which could lead to higher demand. This was the case with Fall Out Boy, Bob McNichols of Crush Management says. "We realized with Fall Out Boy that we could sometimes have sometimes played smaller venues, but the goal was to keep playing these markets for years to come." McNichols says. "Our shows always sold out in advance and made it a hotter ticket next time the band came to town to a different, larger venue."

"Bands are developing really fast now," says Rich Best, VP of booking for Southern California at Live Nation. "Panic! At the Disco is a great example. Here's a band that was an opening act for Fall Out Boy on their theater tour. But when they came into it, they already had an underground following. Now, a year later, we sold out 12,000 tickets at the Long Beach Arena on Dec. 6."

Another crucial factor that could potentially carry an act into larger venues is a slot on a major festival. Vans Warped tour and Taste of Chaos founder Kevin Lyman says, "Any band that has been on the Warped tour has become worth more tickets. And a lot of them will step up to the mid-level," he says.

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**MUTE MATH**
Label: Teleprompt/Warner Bros.
Agents: Bryan Myers and Tim Beeding, Creative Artists Agency

Since its first club tour in 2005, New Orleans electro-rock outfit Mute Math has seen steady growth in all territories it visits, time for phase two. In mid-Febuary through early April, the band—which melds rap, punk and R&B—will play up to 1,200-capacity venues. "If they tour correctly, they can cross over and play for hip-hop, punk or rock audiences," Lyman says. "They played on the Warped tour and totalled won over the punk kids." Nagelberg says the band already has its fair share of hip-hop fans, along with an interesting combination of "15-year-old girls who weigh 70 pounds and six-foot-five, 300-pound guys."

"Mute Math is supporting the Fray through the end of January before visiting Europe for a headlining tour. In March and April, the band returns to the States for another headlining tour, which includes a stop at Austin's South by Southwest. A new album can be expected in second-quarter '08, according to Kookogey."

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**JOANNA NEWSOM**
Label: Drag City
Agent: Ali Giampino, the Billions Corp

"We're in a nice spot where we don't have to bullshit anyone," Luba says. "If we just let people find out about it organically, it will be OK."
THE SPANISH IMPOSITION
France’s Fnac Bucks Retail Trends In Spain

MADRID—French entertainment retailer Fnac has launched a bold five-year expansion plan in Spain.

The merchant is investing €60 million ($79 million) in 16 new stores by 2012 to bring its number of Spanish outlets to 30.

The chain launched in 1993 in Spain and opened its 14th store there last December in Bilbao. It plans to open three more locations in 2007.

According to Fnac, music represented 14% of its Spanish sales in 2006. The company also sells DVDs; consumer electronics (including digital players); books and computer games; and software.

Although final figures were not available at press time, Fnac Spain managing director Christophe Deshayes says the chain’s music sales held up in 2006. "In 2005," he recalls, "physical sales fell 6% in Spain, but in Fnac stores we increased music sales by 2%.

Fnac has 118 stores across eight European countries, plus one apiece in Brazil and Taiwan. At the Bilbao opening, company president Denis Olivier said Spain was Fnac’s most profitable market and its second-biggest after France. Olivier predicted 2006 sales in Spain would top €400 million ($526 million), up 15% on 2005.

Fnac’s expansion comes during tough times for Spain’s traditional music merchants.
HUNGRY FOR INDIES

Canadian Major Labels Seek Out Independents To Boost Distribution

TORONTO—As physical sales slide, three of Canada’s major labels are attempting to bolster their distribution businesses by aggressively courting domestic independent labels.

While Sony BMG Canada largely focuses on its roster, insiders describe the competition among Universal, EMI and Warner for Canada’s Indies as fiercer than at any time in recent memory.

“The majors are hungry for indie labels,” says Dominion Zgarka, president of distributor Koch Entertainment (Canada). “They’re going after everything.”

“There’s a lot of talent we want to participate in,” adds Tony Tarlton, EMI Music Canada director of associated labels. “We’re getting introduced to (indie) people I never thought we’d have conversations with.”

According to Nielsen SoundScan, in the year ending Dec. 17, 2006, Canada’s independent distributors took 18.3% of retail sales. Universal had 15.6%, Sony BMG 21.4%, Warner 14.8% and EMI 9.9%. Overall, volume was down 6% compared with 2005. With less than 10% market share, EMI has been the most active “indie hunter” of late, signing Toronto-based electro-pop specialist Upper Class Recordings from Sonic Distribution in Hamilton, Ontario, and Hamilton-based startup Labwork Music. The major confirms a pressing and distribution deal with Vancouver-based jazz label Maximum Music—previously with Universal—is also imminent.

EMI is tying with Universal and Warner for distribution of Montreal-based Deja Musique, and fiercely independent Vancouver-based Mint Records is negotiating with EMI and Universal over distribution rights for the early 2007 fourth album by its biggest act, the New Pornographers. “I am interested in seeing new labels test the waters by committing our entire catalog,” Mint co-owner Kevin Beesly says.

Majors distribute the majority of independent product in English-speaking Canada but traditionally avoid Quebec labels’ French-language repertoire. No majors would comment on Deja, but insiders consider it one of Quebec’s strongest independents. Deja claims to have sold 1 million albums, mainly in Quebec—since its 1999 launch. Its roster includes French-speaking urban artist Corneille, singer/songwriter Dané Bédar, English-language rocker Jonas and bilingual R&B newcomer Jodie Resther.

Label owner Janie Duquette says lengthy distribution negotiations have delayed a national rollout of Jonas’s sophomore album “Suite Life,” which Nielsen SoundScan says has sold 22,000 units in Quebec since its Oct. 10 release. Duquette believes major-label expertise, infrastructure and funding can expand her business in English-speaking regions. “I believed those stories of the big bad majors until I knocked on doors in Toronto,” Duquette says. “But I was amazed by the great reception from each company.”

Duquette’s says Jonas, Resther and Bédar have international potential, however, some remain skeptical. “I don’t see any of the majors breaking these acts,” Zgarka says. “We’ve tried to break Quebec acts in English Canada and it’s a bitch, even with English-speaking acts.”

Although the majors declined to give specific examples—Warner did not return phone calls—sources suggest more wide-ranging P&D deals are on offer than in the past.

“There’s more flexibility today in the offer,” Universal Music Canada senior VP of A&R Allan Reit says. “We’re offering a lot more than just distribution records to retail stores.”

Sources claim such newfound flexibility extends to promotion, marketing and publicity services, digital or sync licensing, distribution and strategic alliances including joint ventures.

“Today, there’s the ability for us to tap into all of their resources,” Upper Class Recordings co-owner Garth Jones says. The majors, he suggests, are attracted by “the speed at which independent developers talent and change direction.” Maximum president Brian Watson adds that “what got us excited about EMI was the strategic attitude that Tony [Tarlton] has behind his label group.”

Despite the majors’ increased interest, Zgarka insists independent distribution remains healthy. “There are still people constantly knocking on our door,” he says.

Indeed, throughout her lengthy negotiations, Duquette insisted that Deja’s Quebec distribution remain with Distribution Select and Distribution Fusion III. “There could have been a big ‘no’ from everybody,” she says, “but all the majors went for it. Five years ago, they would have said ‘no’ and sent me back home.”

JAMIESON EXITS BPI

U.K. labels body the BPI has confirmed the departure of its chairman Peter Jamieson after a four-year term.

Jamieson, who had become the BPI’s first full-time executive chairman in October 2002, the organization has now opted to return to the type of configuration it had prior to his arrival, when the body was led by a part-time chairman and a full-time director general. EMI Music U.K. and Ireland chairman/CEO Tony Wadsworth becomes chairperson effective March 1. Current IFPI general counsel George Taylor will take the newly created full-time role of BPI CEO at the same time.

According to Wadsworth, “In the context of the rapidly changing music marketplace, we feel it is important that the BPI Council—representing all its members—should be more closely involved in directing and driving the organization and its policies.”

Jamieson is involved in ongoing talks to retain his services with the trade body on unspecified projects, the BPI said in a statement.

NEWS LTD BUYS MOSHTIX IN OZ

Universal, the Australian subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch’s media conglomerate News Corp., has purchased Moshtix, the country’s third-largest ticketing group for an unspecified amount. The acquisition was made through the Australian company’s News Digital Media affiliate. The Australian ticketing sector is dominated by two major players—Ticketek and Ticketmaster—both of which claim to sell 10 million tickets each year to music, sporting, movie and arts events.

Hamish Petrie, who set up Moshtix in 2003, found a niche in the market by targeting small music venues, cinemas and promoters, and using a more cost-effective paperless online model. He will remain with the company to oversee expansion plans, which will see the company increase the scope of its operations from Sydney and Melbourne to become a national operation. Moshtix’s online ticketing service will be offered as an add-on to local NDM Web sites, including MySpace.

HMV’S KNOTT STANDS DOWN

U.K. and Ireland managing director Steve Knott is standing down from the U.K. market-leading music merchant business by “mutual consent!” at the end of January. HMV Group CEO Simon Fox will assume Knott’s duties until a permanent successor is hired. Fox succeeded longtime group CEO Alan Giles in September 2006.

Company veteran Knott was managing director of HMV’s U.K. bookselling chain Waterstone’s before taking his current role in April 2003. News of his departure, which an informed source stressed was “entirely amicable,” came as HMV Group reported an operating loss of £2.45 million (£47.3 million) for the 26 weeks ending Oct. 28, 2006, compared with a profit of £2.8 million (£5.4 million) in the corresponding period in 2005. The figures included an after-cost of £4.2 million (£8.3 million) for “key strategic initiatives,” including relaunching HMV’s download services.

BAKISH MOVES TO MTVNI

Bob Bakish has been named president of MTV Networks International.

Bakish, a U.S.-based 10-year veteran of MTV and its parent Viacom, will relocate to London shortly to take over his new role. He reports to MTV Networks’ London-based vice chairman Bill Roedy. Until now, Roedy has also held the position of MTVN president. Bakish’s new duties include day-to-day management responsibility for the network’s international subsidiaries, including local and regional operations across Europe, Latin America and Asia/Pacific. Managing directors of key regions and MTVN COO Alex Fernandes report to Bakish.

No start date has yet been confirmed for Bakish. He moves from Viacom—where he was appointed in January 2006 as executive VP of operations and Viacom Enterprises. He was previously executive VP/COO of MTV Networks Ad Sales.
Want To Crack China? Get Sponsored
Insiders Say Ticket Revenue Alone Isn’t Enough

BEIJING—No sponsor, no show. That’s the reality facing international acts looking to tour mainland China.

“There are two serious challenges (in staging) a successful show in China,” says Robb Spitzer, a partner at Shanghai promoter China West Entertainment.

“First,” Spitzer says, “because China’s live entertainment industry is immature and heavily regulated, the use of venues, equipment and services is more time-consuming and expensive than elsewhere.

Second, the local audience earns less money than their Western counterparts.

As a result of those factors, insiders say ticket revenue is essential. “It ain’t going to happen here without sponsorship,” Shanghai promoter Split Works’ founder Archie Hamilton says. “We need sponsors just to be able to bring in the Maximo Parks of the world.”

In December 2006, Split Works launched a Bacardi-sponsored series of monthly shows featuring international acts in Beijing and Shanghai, running to July. The inaugural act was U.K.-based rock quintet Maximo Park, which played to a 1,200-strong crowd.

Dec. 9 gig in Shanghai, Schaverien says Bacardi “basically took over the venues’ bars.”

Tickets were $12, and although he admits the act lost money, Schaverien says the sponsorship ensured the loss was “negligible.”

The highest-profile 2006 show by an international act was the Rolling Stones’ April 8 performance at the 8,000-capacity Shanghai Grand Stage, through local promoter Emma Entertainment. Tickets ranged from $37 to $370. The Stones show was sponsored by Deutsche Bank and Swatch Group’s Rado brand.

Emma president Jonathan Krane says corporate sponsors will pay seven-figure dollar sums for linkage with a particular performer and event in China “to get to their niche demographic and get above the advertising saturation here.”

In most cases, local promoters pitch events to sponsors. “Sponsorship and touring is all up to promoters,” Hong Kong-based EMI Southeast Asia executive director Hans Ebert says, “though we might be able to help if we have the contacts.”

Whiskey brand Chivas Regal (owned by international drinks firm Pernod Ricard) has sponsored several shows, including July 2006 Beijing and Shanghai dates by the Black Eyed Peas.

According to Shanghai-based Pernod Ricard China brand director Han Zantingh, “Chivas’ association with music is [key to] the brand’s marketing strategies in China.”

Sponsorship was also prominent at the second annual Beijing Pop Festival Sept. 9-10 in Chaoyang Park in northwest Beijing. The event, organized by Beijing promoter Rock for China Entertainment, featured local acts and U.K.-based alternative bands Placebo and Supergrass, plus U.S. hard-rockers Dio and Sebastian Bach.

The event drew a crowd of 30,000. Sponsors included MasterCard, Motorola, print company RR Donnelley and Burton Snowboards.

James Chen, MasterCard International’s Beijing-based VP of account management for China, says that what attracted the company to the festival was its target audience—young people who are current or potential cardholders.

Placebo is managed by London-based Riverman management, whose co-founder Dave McLean runs its Southeast Asia office in Bangkok. He claims the band played the festival—its first Chinese show—“for 20% of the normal fee.”

Mclean says Placebo would certainly return to the People’s Republic. “If we had a sponsor,” he says, “we’d do 10 shows in China—we’d do 20.”

Additional reporting by Mark Sutherland in London.
Two high-profile, primarily country music multi-artist events announced their lineup at week's end. One, the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, is in its 75th year. The other, the Stagecoach festival at the Empire Polo Field in Indio, Calif. (site of the Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival), is making its debut. The two shows share exactly five acts: George Strait, Jason, Brooks & Dunn, Sugarland, and Pat Green.

The entertainment lineup for the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, set for Feb. 27-March 18 at Reliant Stadium, bolsters its traditional country lineup with Latin, pop, rock and R&B acts.

The Rodeo opens with its perennial favorite, Strait (Feb. 27), followed by Los Lonely Boys (Feb. 28), Reba McEntire (March 1), Natalie Cole and KEM (2), Clay Walker (3), the Cheetah Girls and “Hannah Montana” (4), Josh Turner (5), Gretchen Wilson (6), Sheryl Crow (7), Jackson, Green (8), Green (9), Martina McBride (10), Posado and Emilio (11), Sugarland (12), Toby Keith (13), Beyoncé (14), Dierks Bentley (15), Brooks & Dunn (16) and Rodeo closer ZZ Top (18).

Leery Shaffer, VP/COO of RodeoHouston, says the lineup reflects what ticket buyers want to see, determined through extensive research. “The percentage of noncountry performances this year is 35%,” Shaffer says. “That number, give or take five percentage points, has remained the same for several years.”

Shaffer says the Rodeo “went all out” in putting together the 75th-anniversary lineup. “Like every year, there are a few entertainers that we did not get, he says. “When you are filling 30 straight performances, you will never get every entertainer that you want. When you get them all, like we did this year, you have to be pleased.”

Shaffer declines to reveal the Rodeo talent budget, but says it has been hacia in the last three years. “We increased the budget more than 20% this year because of our 75th-anniversary celebration and signed more top-end entertainers than we have in several years, he adds.

Tickets, ranging from $16 to $100, went on sale Jan. 13. The event manifests nearly 1,300 talent for rodeo concert performances at Reliant Stadium, and last year sold 73% of those for more than 1.1 million in paid attendance.

“Attendance averaged 37,561 paid attendance for each of our performances,” he says. The event had four complete sellouts in 2006: Strait, Ramon Ayala and Jay Perez, Hillary Duff and Brooks & Dunn. The Brooks & Dunn show set an all-time paid-attendance record at 72,783.

Meanwhile, luck at the Stagecoach ranch, the line-up is headed by Strait, Kenny Chesney, Brooks & Dunn, Jackson, Sugarland, Lucinda Williams and Willie Nelson. Stagecoach hosts four performance stages: the main stage, an alt-country stage, a bluegrass stage and a storytelling area, the last of which will feature appearances by “Prairie Home Companion” creator Garrison Keillor and Texas poet laureate Red Steagall. The fest was booked by Coachelela producer Paul Tollett, Messina of TMG/AEG Live and Steve Moore of AEG Live Nashville. “Kenny and George committed immediately and they love the idea,” Messina told On The Road in November. “This is the first year, and I think this is something that’s going to be around for a long time and grow into something really special. This is Paul’s dream, and I’m just happy to lend a hand.”

When digging deeper in the Stagecoach lineup, it’s interesting to note some acts that will be at Coachella that would likely never show up at the Rodeo. Along with mainstream country names like Sara Evans and Jason Aldean, Stagecoach gets much more “alt” than most country events, with acts like Williams, Neko Case, Drive-By Truckers, the Flattlanders and Junior Brown—likely to grace the Bonnaroo or Austin City Limits Festival stages. Stagecoach artists like Robert Earl Keen and Green and can do go over well at the Rodeo, but Stagecoach brings in some serious “gras” and acoustic-based stuff with Earl Scruggs, Nickel Creek, Yonder Mountain String Band, the Grascals, Marty Stuart and others.

In fact, when have Strait and Chesney been on the same bill with the Truckers and Case? Not often enough. The Rodeo is a monster concert lineup attached to a mega event, but Stagecoach will bring in a truly diverse “country” audience together, possibly for the first time, and may break down some invisible barriers in the process.
The Witching Hour
Christmas Product Payments Less Worrisome This Year

We've reached the point in the year that old-time distribution credit managers used to refer to as the witching hour. It is the time period that generally runs Jan. 10-25 when the first batch of Christmas product payments come due.

While product payments are normally due on the 25th of the month, standard industry practice provides retail and wholesale accounts a 1.5%-2% discount—depending on the label—if payments come in on the 10th of the month. Most majors, though, customarily allow a five-day grace period.

In January, this is normally a time of tension, as distribution credit managers hold their breath while waiting to see if accounts on their "watch list" take advantage of early-payment discounts. And with history as their guide, managers are also wary that some account no-body suspected is in trouble will suddenly miss the discount.

If accounts do not take advantage of the early-payment discount, it generally means a Chapter 11 filing is imminent. Most troubled companies wait until they are flush with cash before filing, and that's always right after Christmas. However, for the first January in years, credit managers say they are, if not care-free, then at least without worry. Un-fortunately, that's because Tower and Musicland—the big accounts that had people nervous for the last five years—finally bit the dust in 2006.

After those two liquidations, it is unlikely any account will come out of the blue to present a January surprise. The big accounts still standing are all publicly traded companies, with enough transparent financial information to allow credit managers to accurately assess their financial health. If any privately owned accounts are suddenly found to be a problem, relatively speaking, it is likely that company has received all its payment and distributors took last year. And, in early indications suggest things are moving along smoothly, and one major label distribution executive says his company has received all its payments—from accounts large and small—on time.

Meanwhile, issues like early-payment discounts and 60-days dating to make product payments are a moot point in the digital distribution world. Currently, download stores are treated like consignment vendors. Online stores report to labels what they have sold during the previous month, and send payment accordingly at the same time—so for sales made during December, they pay sometime between Jan. 10 and Jan. 20. While that allows a few days lagging, some major label executives say they expect that online accounts will eventually begin reporting sales and payments on a weekly or maybe even daily basis. While the concept of daily payments might be wishful thinking, if the weekly basis ever happens, large payment due balances will become a thing of the past—as will the need to put potential losses reserves on the balance sheets.

Unlike in the physical world, digital accounts are either all 800-pound gorillas like Apple, Microsoft and the cell phone suppliers—which means you will know ahead of time if they are headed for trouble—or they are too small to worry about, if they run into trouble. So far when small accounts have gotten into trouble and missed payments, labels have pulled the account to sell product. That's much quicker and cleaner than the way they deal with troubled accounts in the physical world—and it certainly involves less worries too.

THE DIGITAL SHARE: An article I wrote in the Jan. 15 issue listed the top 10 selling albums of 2006, as counted by Nielsen SoundScan. And the list of top-selling digital tracks is suited with Nielsen SoundScan's other year-end data has received plenty of ink in the mainstream press. But the top 10 selling digital albums of 2006 are still worth zeroing in on. Leading the list, the Fray's "How to Save a Life" sold slightly more than 218,000 copies last year, followed by John Mayer's "Continuum," which garnered 176,000 album downloads, and Justin Timberlake's "FutureSex/LoveSounds" with 142,000 downloads.

While digital albums, as noted above, may have comprised 5.5% of total album sales, it's always interesting to note albums that gain larger-than-average footholds in the digital world. That didn't occur as much as you would expect among the top 10 digital albums, but it did happen with three of the top four. The Fray's digital sales comprised 11.8% of the album's overall sales of 1.7 million; Mayer's digital sales translates into 14.8% of its total sales of 1.2 million units; and Jack Johnson and Friends' "Sings-A-Longs & Lullabies for the Film Curious George" (No. 4) was downloaded nearly 115,000 times last year, good enough to comprise 11.9% of its total album sales of 1.3 million scans. But the rest of the top 10 selling digital albums wound up below the 8% share mark—more or less falling into line with the 5.5% average.

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Guessing The Grammys

Predicting Winners You Won't See On Your Screen

It's Grammy Award time again, and with it come our annual predictions on who will take the spoils in the Latin categories.

Of course, it's unlikely you'll see any of these nominees on your TV screen come Feb. 11. Of late, the Latin categories have become something of an ugly stepchild, usually hidden from sight. Not even legen-dary Shakira managed to get a shot at the screen last year (not to mention a nomination in the English-language categories), we can safely assume there will be nothing Latin to look at this time around.

Yet recognizing what the Grammys signify, here is our take on the possible winners.

For those new to this column, our predictions are educated guesses, based on past voting behavior. They should not sway voters, as ballots have already been counted (What, you didn't vote?) Finally, these are predictions, meaning they won't necessarily come true. Write down your own and enjoy.

**BEST LATIN POP ALBUM:** Velvety-voiced crooner Marco Antonio Solís has yet to be recognized in the pop category, but he faces stiff competition from Ricardo Arjona, whose "Adentro" blends intimacy with a touch of social conscience ("Mojado," the duet with Inocible). Bolstered by a major U.S. and Latin-American tour, Arjona should best even megaseller Solís. However, don't discount Julieta Venegas, a Grammy favorite who may be the dark horse with her delightful "Linton y Sol," appropriately competing in the pop category after being sloted as alternative in the Latin Grammys.

**BEST LATIN ROCK, ALTERNATIVE OR URBAN ALBUM:** Yes, this is a hodgepodge category, but critics of its content should be aware that there is always a lack of material to choose from, particularly on the alternative side. That said, the fight should be between Mana's "Amor Es Combatir" and Calle 13's self-titled debut. Maná will win out of sheer sen-sivity and name recognition, though Tego Calderón will also carry votes thanks to being under the Atlantic umbrella and thus, the radar of mainstream voters.

**BEST TROPICAL LATIN ALBUM:** Dilberto Santa Rosa is a perennial favorite and will probably lead in this lackluster group. But we'll give special mention to Andy Montañez's "Salvador," a fresh take on a fusion of rhythms that still managed to sound uncontrived.

**BEST MEXICAN/MEXICO-AMERICAN ALBUM:** Pepe Aguilar's "Historias de Mi Tierra" is really the only album with the heft and name recognition required to win.

**BEST MORTENeo ALBUM:** This is, without a doubt, the most contested category of this bunch, with a group of mostly respected veterans. Including Conjunto Primavera, Pesado and Los Huracanes del Norte, all standout. Still, Los Tigres del Norte have been so fed and publicized this year it's hard to imagine they could not win. Doesn't hurt that their album, "Historias Que Contar," is the musical equivalent of a thriller novel.

**BEST BANDA ALBUM:** While Banda el Recodo continues to have name and weight, 2006 was the year of Juan Sebastián. "Mas Allá del Sol" benefits from Sebastián's own finely crafted songs, impeccable arrangements that stretch the boundaries of banda and a hot single, "Mas Allá del Sol," that topped Billboard's radio charts for weeks. For a complete list of nominees go to grammy.com.

**EN BREVÉ**

Piracy Goes Tech in Argentina

As music sales begin to shift from physical to digital in Argentina, so has piracy. A recent study by local chamber of video and record producers CAPIF and APDIF, its right-hand man in legal and political action against piracy, shows that sales of illegal CDs in the streets of Buenos Aires—the leading music market in Argentina—diminished by 24%.

APDIF president Javier Delupi explains that 77 street vendors with major catalogs of illegal CDs were detected in 2005. Last year, there were 59. But the number of illegal vendors outside Buenos Aires increased. As a result, the illegal physical market seems to be identical to 2005, accounting for 60% of the legal market, or roughly 10 million units.

On the other hand, a total of 969 cybercafes were found throughout Buenos Aires, allowing users to download music illegally and burn CDs. The proliferation of Internet cafés has been directly associated with the growth of online piracy in Latin America, with many recent anti-piracy operations targeting such businesses. "There is a new pattern in the way music is pirated," Delupi says.

Another study commissioned by CAPIF and executed by private consulting firm Knack indicates that 62% of consumers who illegally download music have begun to do so only in the past year. Lower-income bracket "intermittent pirates," as the Knack study calls them, download an average of five songs per week at cybercafes. Upper-income users, dubbed "permanent downloadders" by Knack, download an average of 28 songs per week from their homes via their broadband connections. All told, the study estimates there were 608.5 million illegal downloads in 2006, up from 412 in 2005.

The study also found that the genre of choice for Internet users was Argentine rock or rock en español.

—Marcelo Fernandez Bizar, Buenos Aires

**Tropical Merger**

**MP's Link With J&N Reflects Market Hardships**

Tropical indie MP, known for its hard-hitting, Puerto Rican salsa acts, has merged its operations with indie powerhouse J&N, best-known for its merengue and bachata releases.

The move is a reflection of the hardships faced by tropical music labels, which have seen radio stations switch formats and sales decline in the past decade.

Tropical music, which in the 1980s and 1990s was a bastion of Latin music and identity, now accounts for less than 10% of all Latin music sales, according to RIAA numbers.

By joining their respective areas of expertise, MP and J&N are hoping for more sales and clout at radio and retail.

"We felt indie labels have been buffered in the distribution and promotion areas, and that a merger could work well for both of us," MP owner Tony Moreno says.

MP was at one point distributed via Sony BMG but had been self-distributed in the past two years, a fact that hindered its entry into mass merchant accounts. J&N has a distribution agreement with Sony BMG that will now also cover MP releases.

Effectively immediate, MP will be housed in J&N's Miami offices. Both labels will continue to function independently of each other, with Moreno as VP of MP and Juan Hidalgo continuing as president of J&N, the label he owns with his brother, Nelson Estévez. Both labels will share distribution, marketing, promotion and A&R resources, as well as revenue from record sales and publishing.

A major focal point, Moreno says, is sales of digital and mobile tracks, which J&N will soon begin to offer via its online store, musicalatina.com.

MP, whose roster includes Tito Rojas, Anthony Cruz and Eddie Santiago, was founded nearly 20 years ago, when salsa was in its heyday.

"In Puerto Rico, they were like another Fania [Records]," says Enrique Reyes of Reyes Distributors. But as salsa's popularity took a downturn, MP saw sales slip.

On its end, J&N maintained a solid foothold in the tropical market thanks to its inroads with other tropical genres, including bachata, merengue and now, reggaeton—all genres that have overpowered salsa in sales. J&N has also leveraged its catalog with several compilations like the "Hits" series, which includes "Salshitos" and "Merehitos."

The merger is widely seen as beneficial to both parties. "They are two complementing labels," says Eddie Fernandez, senior VP of Universal Music Publishing Latin America. "Tropical music is not buoyant right now, but it's a market that exists and has its audience."
U.S. Labels Target Russian Music Site

Suit Marks Shift In Legal Strategy

Major labels call alloffmp3.com the “most notorious” of the Russian enterprises “that traffic in pirated music, film and software.” Yet unlike their rush to court against peer-to-peer operators of Napster, Grokster and Kazaa soon after those sites launched, U.S. labels waited until December 2006 to sue MediaSweet—a six-year delay that company launched alloffmp3.com. In a shift in strategy from earlier cases, labels have been working behind the scenes to build a network of supporters, including governments, foreign courts and financial services.

Alloffmp3.com looks like a legitimate American music store, claims to be legal and sells downloads of hit albums for slightly more than $2. Major record companies didn’t authorize these sales; MediaSweet claims it doesn’t need permission to license music from anyone other than Russian collecting societies—even if they don’t pay labels.

In November, U.S. and Russian governments reached a market access agreement requiring Russia to take action to address piracy, among other things, before the United States would consent to Russia joining the World Trade Organization; alloffmp3.com is specifically named as an example of an illegal operation.

In May 2005, a German court issued an injunction against MediaSweet, prohibiting the company from making the major labels’ recordings available in Germany. In September 2006, Russian copyright law amendments went into effect granting copyright holders and performers—for the first time—exclusive rights to control digital distribution and performances of their works. The following month, a Danish court ordered Tele2, an Internet service provider, to block its subscribers’ access to alloffmp3.com. PayPal, Visa and MasterCard cut off services to the site. And a suit filed by U.K. labels is pending.

Despite this, alloffmp3.com launched a free streaming service in October to attract advertisers plus an international press campaign to promote its sites. Then its related site sued banks in Moscow, insisting that Visa and MasterCard services be reinstated. That was the last straw for U.S. labels.

“We felt we had to make it clear that they’re an illegal site—that they couldn’t make these claims,” says a record industry executive, who asked not to be identified due to the pending litigation. “We had been waiting to see what the [Russian] government would do. We really thought it would likely be resolved diplomatically. Once it became clear that the government wasn’t taking sufficient action, we had to step up and be counted.”

COMING TO TERMS: The termination right under the current U.S. Copyright Act, which gives authors the right to terminate grants in a copyrighted work 35-40 years after the grants were executed, is anything but clear. One of the confusing issues arises from the provision that states: “Termination of the grant may be effected notwithstanding any agreement to the contrary, including an agreement to make a will or to make any future grant.”

But what is an “agreement to the contrary”? Does this mean that the author cannot threaten to terminate the grant to gain bargaining power and then re-grant rights to the same person on better deal terms?

In 2005, the federal Court of Appeals in Denver held that an agreement to terminate the initial grant and simultaneously granting future rights could be affected (Milne v. Stephen Slesinger Inc.). But last June, a District Court in New York held that an agreement not to terminate the initial grant would be affected (by novelist John Steinbeck, which regranted certain rights in novels, could not prevent other heirs from terminating the grants. The case is on appeal.

During a panel discussion for the Copyright Society in New York this month, Susan Kohlmann, a partner with Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman who represents one of the Steinbeck parties, said that she does not believe that termination rights trump all other contracts entered into after 1978, the effective date of the current act. The law was meant to protect authors early in their careers when they don’t know the value of their work—not to preclude new grants in the works.

Patrick Perkins, a sole practitioner, said that ultimately each state’s contract law should guide the interpretation of a contract to decide whether a subsequent agreement is really a grant of rights (which should be enforced) or simply an amendment to the initial grant (which would be an “agreement to the contrary” not affecting the termination right).

Michael Landau, a professor at Georgia State University College of Law, noted that sometimes an author will sign an agreement lessening the initial grant, agreeing that the initial work was work for hire. He believes this type of agreement should not be enforced to prevent termination.

David Donahue, a partner with Fross Zeichlin Lehman Zissu, moderated the panel.

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Can MP3 Players Help Revive The Auto Industry?

Struggling U.S. auto manufacturers are hoping music will do for them what it did for Apple after the introduction of the iPod—make them cool. And in doing so, they're looking to attract a new generation of car buyers who expect digital entertainment at all times.

Two-thirds of 2007-model cars will allow users to connect MP3 players to factory-installed stereos. Leading the charge is Ford Motor, which at the Detroit Auto Show Jan. 9 introduced a new factory-installed, in-car communications and entertainment system called Sync, developed in partnership with Microsoft. While auto manufacturers have offered iPod integration kits as a dealer-installed option for some time, Sync revolutionizes the way consumers connect MP3 players and mobile phones to the vehicle's central nervous system. Using either a USB port—a standard feature on personal computers—or Bluetooth wireless technology, Sync lets users operate and control any MP3 player through voice commands, the car's steering wheel, or the dashboard stereo. It supports not only the iPod, but also files purchased from iTunes as well as subscription tracks on the PlaysForSure service.

Users can stream Internet radio feeds from mobile phones throughout the vehicle's audio system. And Sync isn't limited to high-end models. It will be factory-installed in option 12 different Ford, Lincoln and Mercury vehicles introduced this year—including the Focus and Explorer—and eventually become a standard option throughout its entire fleet.

According to Kevin Reale, an automotive industry analyst with AMR Research, Sync is symptomatic of a broader effort by car makers to offer a kind of second brain on wheels. Since the average U.S. citizen spends 1.5 hours a day in his or her car, music is a key ingredient. Manufacturers are "becoming more customer-centered," Reale says. "They're really trying to understand what customers want in their vehicles. Up until the last few years it was 'build it and they will come,' but it's not like that anymore." According to a fall 2006 Harris Interactive poll, the least-preferred methods for linking an MP3 player to a car stereo—the FM transmitter and the cassette-tape adapter—are also the most common. More than half of those polled said they would consider a more sophisticated interface.

Ford research shows that among buyers and potential buyers age 14-26—who represent 20% of the market—80% expressed a desire to link MP3 players to their car's stereos, and the capability is in the top five of overall desired features. So not only do car manufacturers have an opportunity to better meet a growing need, but advanced in-car systems like Sync, or similar products like Chrysler's MyGig, might even be the winning factor when deciding what car to buy.

"Everyone recognizes the importance of digital music," Ford marketing strategist Reale says. "It's very important for people to take their personal music with them." As such, car manufacturers are demanding that those providing them with factory-installed stereos include MP3-player connectivity. A spokesman for Clarion, a car stereo manufacturer that primarily supplies factory-installed units for the automotive industry, says 50% of its products this year feature some kind of MP3-player link—up from 20% last year. He expects that number to grow to 100% within the next three years.

Fortunately, it's a relatively easy function to add. According to Andrew Poliak of car stereo software developer QNX, a stereo unit just needs a basic operating system and compatible software. On the horizon are more advanced options like multifunctional listening, in which one track plays through the main speakers while another plays through rear seat speakers or headphone jacks.

The relatively slow process of integrating MP3 player connectivity can be blamed in part on the long product development cycle of the automotive industry. While innovations in consumer electronics generally take about 18 months from concept to consumer availability, the automotive cycle is closer to three to seven years.

That Ford was able to turn around in Sync in 15 months is unheard of in the automotive world. "That's warp speed for us," Lelong says. Motivating Ford and other manufacturers is that a generation of car buyers just around the bend will expect an MP3-player link in their cars just like today's generation expected a CD player.

And connecting with young music listeners doesn't stop with in-car entertainment systems. The auto industry is leaning heavily on music in its marketing to potential buyers—some of whom aren't old enough to drive. Chrysler, for instance, sponsored Warner Music Group's YouTube concert video initiative on New Year's Eve. In 2005, Ford sponsored a series of "Flash Concerts" advertised through mobile operator Circular. "They're trying to connect to the consumer at a much earlier stage," Reale says. "It's just a matter of time before this capability becomes a standard mechanism in all vehicles."
The death of V2 Records would be an interesting cautionary tale if it wasn't so depressing.

The problem from the beginning was that Sheridan Square forced V2 to absorb Arteris, which it had already purchased, saddling a new would-be indie with somebody else's— is baggage, unknown—all right, choices.

In this case, the chosen choice seems to have come in the form of the tragically innocent Sugar Cult. But as everybody needs to learn the hard way these days, loyalty and longevity can no longer be taken for granted.

The real tragedy will be if the failure of V2 is somehow blamed on Andy Gerston's visionary approach to our failing business. It was Gerston's artist-friendly attitude and impeccable taste that brought the White Stripes, the Raconteurs, the Greenhornes, Ray Davies and the Mooney Suzuki to V2, and his hands-on approach that helped sell the "I Am Sam" soundtrack.

For the most part, the artists will be fine. Jack White and his friends will have no problems, and the Mooney Suzuki's imminent new album will find a home.

It's the Josh Ritters we worry about—those unclassifiable artists who have nothing going for them but talent. Let's hope Ritter finds a family as hardworking and caring as the V2 team.

The lesson learned seems to be that an indie's chances for survival are enhanced by three things: a patient parent company (deep pockets somewhere); a catalog to live off of while new acts develop, or starting out clean and small, free of mainstream expectations (and someone else's artists) and staying fast and flexible in this speed-of-light changing world. See you on the radio. . . .

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**COOLEST GARAGE SONGS**

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**Dear Prudence**

Caution Pays Off For Barsuk Band

Seattle-based Barsuk Records courted adventurous indie rock act Menomena for more than a year. But after signing any deal, though, the trio turned into amateurs, meticulously going over every contact point and viewing its tour with a healthy dose of skepticism.

For its part, the label will demonstrate its commitment with the Jan. 23 release of the group's "Friend & Foe." The album marks the first major front-line release from Barsuk to carry a lower retail list price—down to $11.98 from $13.98—and does so despite carrying a slightly higher manufacturing cost than the standard CD.

With an intricately designed, multilayered, die-cut heavy package—courtesy of graphic novelist/artist Craig Thompson ("Blankets")—Barsuk founder Josh Rosenfeld estimates the label is spending an extra 10-15 cents per unit. "It's not huge, but over the course of many thousands of records, it is a lot," Rosenfeld says. "You shouldn't be packaging great music in crap packaging. I still think of pop music as art, and this is better art with this package than if we decide to save money and crank it out. It's a scarier environment to be investing money in art these days, but I am excited to be doing it."

And he should be. "Friend & Foe" is a collection of enticingly oddball arrangements, brimming with melodies drawn from a wild assortment of noises and tape loops. "MuscleCN Flop" takes a scatterbrain rhythm and builds to a lifting, gospel- and gospel-inflicted crescendo, whereas myriad instruments dart in and out of the forlorn keyboard sounds. "Eth" is a cut that positions Menomena as a younger Flaming Lips.

"We have all attention-deficit disorder, and we don't like predictable music," band member Brent Knopf says. "We tend to write kind of backwards. We start with the most crazy sounds, and then try to come up with ways to shape those crazy sounds into a pop song. We generate these loops and piece them together like a quilt. A song is the last thing that happens with us." Menomena's Barsuk debut adds to an already exciting Jan. 23 release date for indie fans and retailers alike. Aside from indie superstars the Shins, the day will see new albums from vets Deerhoof and Of Montreal, as well as Wilco-inspired newcomer the Broken West on Merge.

With Barsuk aiming for an initial ship-out of about 4,000 units, according to Jo Lenardi, who oversees retail marketing for the label, Menomena is clearly a long-term project—but one the label hopes a lower list price and eye-catching packaging will help land it some love from retailers.

"It's a big experiment for us," Lenardi says. "Retailers are always telling us people want cheaper records, so we're giving them a cheaper record. Hopefully they'll appreciate it and help us out. Every penny counts to every single one of us these days."

The risk is hinging on an act Rosenfeld campaigned hard to sign. Initially linked with one man, Oregon-based operation FILMguerreo, whose releases and catalog will now be distributed via Barsuk, Menomena had concerns about signing to a larger label, even though the act saw it as necessary. Its FILMguerreo debut, "I Am the Fun Blame Monster," has sold 6,000 units in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Knopf says he and Barsuk haggled over the length of the contract term, a debate Barsuk won. The label wanted one album and two options, whereas the band was hesitant to sign for more than one option.

"We were coming at it from the attitude that if everything is working and everyone is happy, we're not going to leave," Knopf says. "It took some time to learn Barsuk's reasons on insisting upon two options. But a total of three albums is 10 years of our lives. That's a career. When you sign something that gives someone an exclusive license for that length of time, it would have been stupid for us not to be cautious."

Few bands exercise that kind of prudence. It endeared Menomena even more to Rosenfeld.

"In the same way of a Modest Mouse or an Arcade Fire, I think Menomena doesn't at first seem like it would appeal to hundreds of thousands of people," Rosenfeld says. "But there's something so good about them that there are days when they can make me feel optimistic about the tastes of the people who are out there."
In 1977, when Martin Mills and his then-business partner Nick Austin launched U.K. independent Beggars Banquet from their London record shop, it was one of the first in a new wave of labels inspired by the "do it yourself" ethic of the punk-rock explosion.

Some 30 years later, upstart Indies are still taking on the major labels, and Mills has been at the forefront of the sector's development—most notably in 2006 when Impala, the Pan-European independent labels body he chairs, played a prominent part in having European Commission approval of the Sony-BMG merger annulled.

Mills was a founding member of Impala in May 2000, having previously been a leading light in launching U.K. trade body AIM in 1998. As chairman of Beggars Group, he now presides over a string of labels including XL, Mo Wax, 4AD, Matador, Too Pure, Mantra and Wiiija. This year, he celebrates the 30th anniversary of the very first Beggars Banquet release (the "Shadow" single by London punk band the Lurkers, on Aug. 17, 1977). Since then, he has nurtured talents as diverse as Gary Numan, the Pixies, the Cocteau Twins, Basement Jaxx, the Prodigy, Badly Drawn Boy and the White Stripes.

Are Independents better at nurturing emerging talents than majors? Yes, it's almost a truism. The priority for majors is to make quick bucks for their shareholders. I'm not saying that the majors don't release good music; James Blunt has been a great success. But when you're trying to ensure you hit the top of the charts, then you tend to be more formulaic. Independents tend to take a longer-term view, and see themselves as providing a cultural service rather than running a business.

You also tend to see that with the artists; those who sign with independent labels tend to do so because they want credibility, they want to achieve something, and they know that it is the only place where their art will flourish. The real music industry, the one that is about art and creativity, is the independent sector.

Is it tougher for Indies now than when you started?

It's harder now. It takes more investment, and it's not such a "bedroom" business. You've got to find music that inspires people and always look out for something that sounds different. Not that the independents are necessarily better than majors; there are many great artists— anyone can look at what's on offer on MySpace. But there is also a kind of synergy with majors and independents: They want you to find new talent, which they can try and buy out. The majors need this food chain.

What sort of discrimination do independents face?

We suffer when it comes to licensing music for films and television, where we are often offered an "indie rate," which is lower than that given to majors. Happily, however, that practice is disappearing now. And the majors also have more clout in dealing with the big names like Microsoft and iTunes.

Can you appreciate the business rationale for mergers like Sony-BMG?

I certainly do. I'm not being a Luddite here—I'm not objecting to this for the sake of it. But we need to ensure that the majors do not impose the market. We need a situation where the big guy does not squeeze out the small guy. And it's not easy to say how this can be done—it's not easy to legislate.

What would happen to the music market if the Sony-BMG merger is confirmed?

I definitely expect their market share to rise to a point where Sony BMG and Universal will [jointly] claim a solid 70% of the market. We're talking about them wanting to dominate and control the entire retail market.

It has taken some time, and there was initially a decline in their market share, which was partly due to them getting to know each other and work out the chinks. But now Sony BMG are batting at the same rate as Universal. The other week, 83.5% of the top 50 albums in the U.K. chart were by Sony BMG and Universal.

Once you have leverage in the music market, it is disproportionate to your actual size. Once you're big enough, no one can touch you. This has to be unhealthy. It's like Coca-Cola and Pepsi in the drinks market, but we're talking about art here.

The obvious consequence of the [European Union] court ruling is that Sony and BMG need to revert to their previous status. If you build an extension to your house without planning permission, you have to pull it down.

Do you have similar concerns about Universal's purchase of BMG Music Publishing?

No, because the nature of music publishing is very different. Publishers are not competing for space and the market structure is different. But if you have one company that is the biggest music label and at the same time the biggest publisher, then you have a problem. So our specific objection to the publishing merger is more about vertical integration.

Will new technologies help independents?

Independents have an advance on majors in the online world thanks to the delays in [digital rights management]. We've been making use of MySpace to really get our artists known, and it shows how nimble and flexible we are. But the future is in our own hands. We have to act fast as the online world has fewer gatekeepers than the physical world. And now, with MySpace selling MP3s, we have another way.

Has online piracy flourished because CDs are priced too high?

There is a certain amount of truth in that. This is a semimonopolistic business, and it doesn't cost much to physically make the CDs. People obviously wonder why they should pay £10 for a CD that they could buy on street corner for £1, or get for nothing on the Internet. But I'm afraid it always existed. It's just that we have to deal with it. As independents, we want a system that allows legitimate private copying, and sends the revenue to the artists in question. We'd prefer that to the [existing European] system of copyright levies, which we see as a very blunt instrument.

Beggars emerged at the time of punk. Was that a once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon?

I'm not sure it could be replicated today. The rave scene about 10 years ago came close, but nowadays the media moves too fast and you don't get things that just keep up. Punk was overwhelming at the time—it was like a hurricane. Overnight, people were abandoning the Grateful Dead for the Clash. There was this absolutely dramatic switch from musical virtuosity for something completely simplistic.

What advice would you give to a young Martin Mills trying to launch a new label?

Don't do it to make money. Creativity and business do not mix easily. You should only do it if you enjoy it, love it, have fun with it. And if it makes money, all the better.

For me, it is the business is a by-product. When I look back, my highlights are always musical ones. I could talk about the successes with the Prodigy and the White Stripes, but the best moments were watching performances and recordings. It was being there at the beginning, and knowing that I was seeing something special.
WITH GUILE, SINCERITY AND SOME GREAT NEW POP TUNES, MAJOR LABEL STAR FALL OUT BOY PROVES PERCEPTION IS NINE-TENTHS OF INDIE CRED LAW

There's a telling moment that occurs early in the video for Fall Out Boy's new single "This Ain't a Scene, It's an Arm's Race."

In the studio with a famed hip-hop producer, vocalist Patrick Stump is stretching his soft voice—and his hands skyward—like he's the newest member of Boyz II Men. Every awkward, rhythmless shake of his arm is mocked by the urban crowd, and he producer shakes his head in disbelief as Stump strains his vocal chords. When the guitars kick in, a bottle is broken, and Fall Out Boy is "thrown out the hood," to quote one of the tabloids flashed on the screen.

The moment might just be whimsical fun—some punk kids commenting on the way bands might change their approach once they've attained some success. Except that Fall Out Boy has attained plenty of success and has started to change its approach.

On the band's forthcoming album, "Infinity on High," due Feb. 6 from Island, the first voice one hears is that of hip-hop impresario Jay-Z. And when it came time to shop for a producer, Fall Out Boy turned to R&B hitmaker Babyface, among others—the R&B veteran helmed two of the album's tracks.

Welcome to the world of Fall Out Boy, where the line between schtick and reality has been blurred to the tune of more than 3 million albums sold since the act's 2003 debut for indie Fueled by Ramen. As Fall Out Boy drifts further from its hardcore punk roots to write increasingly accessible pop tunes, the band never stops taking a swipe at its own pedestal, constantly laughing at the absurdity of its own actions. With no intent to hide its bid for mainstream acceptance, Fall Out Boy maintains a level of indie credibility, allowing fans to believe they're in on the joke.

The "This Ain't a Scene" video is revealed to be nothing but a bad dream. But not before bassist-turned-songwriter-turned-teen-heartthrob Pete Wentz is lured into stripping naked for a photographer with a camera phone, a playful nod to the fact that his nude pics hit the Internet last year.

"If I don't address these things and have fun with them, then I don't know the point of being in this band," Wentz says.

At a time when mainstream punk is all about style, Fall Out Boy has learned perception is king. The video for "This Ain't a Scene" illustrates the band's ability to market a sense of ironic detachment. It has allowed the group to dive head first into pop music with a constant mix of self-referentialism and self-deprecation (as evidence, see the following song titles: "I Slept With Someone in Fall Out Boy and All I Got Was This Stupid Song Written About Me," or new song, "Don't You Know Who I Think I Am?").

The approach has generated steady success. The band's 2003 effort, "Take This to Your Grave," has sold 553,000 units in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. That album was recorded with a $40,000 investment from Island but worked by Fueled by Ramen. The follow-up, "From Under the Cork Tree," has sold 2.5 million and was promoted by the major from day one.

Responding to such a megaseller can be daunting. One Fall Out Boy contemporary, Reprise Records act My Chemical Romance, reacted to selling millions by getting

BY TODD MARTENS
PHOTOGRAPH BY PAMELA LITTKY
IS BELIEVING
weird, its "The Black Parade" a theatrical concept album about death. "Infinity on High," however, plays out like a celebration of life, full of over-the-top and irresistibly cheesy hooks. From the hip-hop beats of "This Ain't a Scene" to the hand-clap rhythm of "The Take Over, the Break Up, the Collapse," to the bombastic, gospel-choir of "Hymn for the Weekend," the album is designed to be shouted from skycrapers. The Babyface songs were not on the press advance, but Stump says he drafted Babyface for the sugar coated pop he crafted for the "Josie and the Pussycats" soundtrack.

"Your natural inclination as a band or an artist is to write yourself out of this situation," Wenz says of the band's success and opportunity. "I would compare it to someone like Brad Pitt. He's such a leading man and so good looking, but at times he takes on roles that specifically go against [expectations]. We did that at first, but then we decided to embrace it."

In fact, according to the band's songwriter, Stump, sometimes he had to stop himself from embracing it too much. "I had to resist the temptation to use a lot of strings," says Stump, who adds that he fought the urge to overproduce the album.

"A lot of bands get really big and start to overthink things and do things to make themselves look good to other musicians." Stump says. "A friend of mine said, 'But aren't you dumbing it down?' This is going to sound like I'm joking, but you're not dumbing it down if you're not that smart to begin with."

You Say You Aren't Very Smart But That Only Shows How Smart You Are

If Stump is the band's philosopher, then Wenz is the resident strategist. Listen to him talk about his past headline-generating sites New Found Glory. "From a pulled-back panoramic view, a band had a hit, and then they didn't," he says. "Next band. But when you go in closer, you can see where something was building, and where the record label should have crossed them over to top 40."

New Found Glory once enjoyed Next Big Thing status but has seen a steady decline in record sales since 2002's MCA breakthrough "Sticks and Stones." The band is supporting Fall Out Boy on their pre-album release tour of clubs. "There are very specific reasons things happen," Wenz says. "That band has written a lot of hits, if you ask me, but when you kick the door in, people sometimes trample over you. New Found Glory kicked the door in for us."

Fueled by Ramen co-owner John Janick recognized that kind of insight in Wenz. The Tampa, Florida-based label signed Fall Out Boy in 2002, and reached an agreement with Island in which the label had the rights to option the act. In 2004, Janick gave Wentz a label to tour and named it by the band's previous acoustic EP "Nineteen Hundred and Decadence," an imprint that has found such emo/punk stars as Panic! at the Disco, which has sold 1.5 million albums so far, and the Academy Is!, which has sold 211,000 albums.

"Pete's not in La-La Land wanting to be some famous dude," Janick says. "He wants to be involved with artists, and he understands where people went wrong and right. I want bands that are level-headed and understand how things work. Our bands are mini-entrepreneurs." Or not-so-nice in the case of Fall Out Boy, which is steadily building an empire that now includes Decadence and the Wentz-designed and managed Stump Industries clothing line. An integral part of Island's marketing campaign for "Infinity on High" centers on fashion.

"We want to model after what Jay-Z does with Roc-A-Fella and his Rocawear fashion," says band manager Bob Mc Lynn of Crush Management. Clandestine has sold largely on the Internet, but design house DKNY will roll out Clandestine products this summer, adding selling off Jeff Straughn says, which will be key to marketing the album through the 2007 holidays.

And for the large segment of Fall Out Boy's fan base unlikely to be shopping at high-end fashion retailers, Island Def Jam president Steve Bartels says that, beginning in early February, mall retailer Aeropostale will market "Infinity on High" on its 730 stores.

There will also be a tie in with Verizon, which will use the dance-punk single "This Ain't a Scene" in its commercials beginning Feb. 17. On a smaller level, Island has dubbed Feb. 9 "Fall Out Boy Day," and the band will visit with 300 high schools to stage listening parties.

Bartels says: "It's a matter of making sure everybody is superserved to know the record is coming."

This Band Took Corporate Sponsorships and All It Got Was This Heat Wave

Discussing the ethics of corporate sponsorships is as much of a punk cliché as a whale chain, but it is still very much on the minds of many in the scene. Earlier this year, Wenz conducted two interviews with AbsolutePunk.net about the band's practices. Not one to shy away, Wentz discussed the band's major label ties and reasons behind the release of 2005's "From Under the Cork Tree" with added songs, a business tactic that fans despise. Wentz said the deal was based on "the label's best interest."

The response on the site was overwhelmingly positive. One converged poster wrote, "It felt like they were so mainstream, and I prided myself on loving bands so under the radar. Once I started reading Pete's online journals and interviews I fell in love."

There's a lesson here for the music business. Labels universally grasp the importance to market in the digital space, but too often forget that what sells on blogs and social networking sites isn't the same as what works in glossy magazines or music videos. Fans are looking for honest connections and real access, and if Fall Out Boy has succeeded in one aspect of its career more than any other, it's the group's mastery of the digital space and communicating to its denizens. The '90s alt-rock bands wrote tortured songs about the agony of success. Today's up-and-comers wear their hearts on their sleeves and a snark on their faces. It's no accident that the band has more "friends" (1 million-plus on MySpace than any other act we've been able to find, or that Wentz discovered Panic! at the Disco through a blog post. By exposing itself to fans and reaching out in an honest way, Fall Out Boy articulates its own strategies in ways that simply increase the band's reliability. The group's members come across as sincere, because they are upfront about the fact that they are marketing sincerity. Wentz and Fueled by Ramen later leaked new song "Cerpal Tunnel of Love" to AbsolutePunk.net (see story, this page), and the artist is known to appear on the occasional message board. Fueled by Ramen still maintains the act's MySpace page and speakshead much of its online marketing.

In an age when the Warped tour lists 67 corporate underwriters, Fall Out Boy has a firm understanding of where its fans shop. Clandestine markets $84.95 hoodie sweatshirts, and Fall Out Boy has partnered with Honda, which shared the band to headline the seventh edition of the Honda Civic arena tour. If anything, Fall Out Boy may be the first pop-punk band to successfully grasp that a large segment of the scene is less about rebellion than it is individualistic branding.

"It's cool, go for it." Wenz says of its product. "There's none of it's cool, with how much gas we burn on tour."

The tour consists of close to 50 dates, beginning April 18 in Charlotte, N.C. McMynn says the tour has a good rep with kids. Citing Dashboard Confessional, Blink-182 and The Black Eyed Peas as previous headliners, McMynn believes that fans have no problem with the concept "because they've seen it before and with bands they respect."

During the course of two years, the band, booked by Andrew Simmon at Creative Artists Agency, moved from clubs to headlining arenas, grossing more than $10 million from 45 shows reported to Billboard Boxscore in 2006. Despite the big numbers, Fall Out Boy has plenty of practical concerns, as Wentz says the band does not have much support from Island.

"If people understood how this business works, they'd be more inclined to buy records," he says. "If you're in a band, you essentially pay to make a record, and you're taking a bet against yourself. With tour support, you take it all, or you don't take any. We wanted to be a band that would actually recoup our records, and we've recouped every record we've ever made, and we recoup fast."

Tour support is not as prevalent as it was a decade ago, and McMynn says that the band has always been self-sufficient on the road. "All of our bands start out in vans and slog it out," he says. "It's always better to not take support. You're spending your own money."

And, McMynn says, $100,000 in tour support—a fairly typical figure for a new major label act—is "probably an extra 80,000 records you need to sell to recoup."

And Stump says the band is dumb.

You're My Favorite Band Ever, But Only Until You Sell 20,000 Records

When now the bands tour, it jumbles complaints and family-friendly MTV hits like "Dashboard Confessional" and "Sugar, We're Going Down" with old-timers who hang on every word the band says. "It's bizarre," Wentz says. "The best way you can try to deal as an artist is to bridge those two worlds... It's a fine line to try and navigate."

Fall Out Boy went straight to the masses to premiere "This Ain't a Scene," debuting the song at the American Music Awards in November. It's one pop-star gambit not mocked in the song's video. The clip ends with Fall Out Boy performing in a VFW hall in Iowa, and the quartet is, once again, four unassuming punk kids from Midwest America. The sound is bigger, the video is more expensive, but the members of Fall Out Boy have changed little in their rise from headlining DIY shows to Honda Civic-sponsored stadium tours. Or so that's the idea.

"I just think it's strange to see the kids next door go through this," Wentz says. "We've just met every kid, and that's what's interesting about our band. If anything, we sound like other bands, and we've done the same thing. It's just an observation of what's happening, I guess, and I'm trying to unpack it a little."

Additional reporting by Ray Wakell.  

PHOTO BY JOHN GALLAGHER/REX Features
The smell of tater tots hung over the crowded quad at San Fernando (Calif.) High School on a recent afternoon as the stage was being set for a lunchtime performance. But before Wind-up Records rock band Stefy could perform, there was an opening act. An MC from Dispatch magazine, a health and entertainment publication distributed in Southern California high schools, brought a student named Wilmer onstage to quiz him: “Is meth bad for you?” “It’s not OK, man,” Wilmer replied. “Make some noise for this guy right here,” said the MC, who handed Wilmer a Converse T-shirt as a prize. After students were asked to name some of the dangers of smoking, Stefy took the stage and launched into its song “Pretty Little Nightmare.” Most students looked on curiously as others milled around a nearby booth stocked with Stefy posters, sampler CDs from the Militia Group and brochures on everything from quitting smoking to hepatitis B.

“For a high school tour like this, there is some degree of undivided attention, though not absolute,” Wind-up executive VP of marketing Andy Schneider says. But with multitasking kids discovering music online, on their cell phones and in videogames, “playing at a high school is a great way to cut through the clutter.”
Though on-campus music marketing isn’t new, we’re starting to see more and more interest coming from labels and corporations,” says Samantha Skey, VP of marketing at Alloy Media & Marketing, which combines concerts, a school-centered social networking site and backlit media boards at more than 30,000 middle and high schools.

Though some activists and parents oppose advertising in schools (see story, next page), the music business can’t resist the young demographic—and marketers and even some school personnel say that packaging music with positive messaging is a win-win.

Shrinking arts education budgets mean schools have had to be more creative in finding funding for music programs. Skey says. She adds that since educators generally perceive music as a good thing, the barriers to access by labels and brands interested in a music-related promotion are relatively low.

“It’s about captive audience,” says Richard Ellis, president of 12 to 20, which partnered with Dispatch on a six-campus Stefy school tour.

Ellis’ firm has coordinated at least eight of its own school tours in the last 15 months, many of them in the form of educational assemblies, “[in] the mall tours, they don’t have to sit there. In schools they have to sit there.”

Key to campus entree are careful screening of content and what Skey calls a “give back” component: for example, a donation to a school’s music or sports programs, a contest to raise money for charity or a health and safety message.

At San Fernando High, guidance counselor Carol Montes de Oca says kids are generally receptive “if they see these cool hip people promoting that.”

As communities where kids influence each other all day, schools are “a petri dish of music for us in terms of growing a fan base,” Epic Records senior VP of marketing Lee Stummel says.

But Stummel says his company generally markets itself on technology that students take with them everywhere, like cell phones. More expensive initiatives like artist tours are few and far between, but Epic worked with 12 to 20 last year on a school tour that combined presentations on Internet safety with a performance and meet-and-greet with Cheyenne Kimball.

At left, a media board owned by Alloy Media & Marketing in a high school hallway. Above and right, high school marketing of a STEFY concert.

12 to 20’s Ellis, who began booking bands in school cafeterias in 1999, says he has built relationships with about 5,000 elementary, middle and high schools, many of them based on what he calls the “music/youth empowerment” formula.

“It’s not like a hustle,” Ellis says. “We want to talk about important things with kids, because it’s smart marketing and it’s the right thing to do.

“They’re not foolish in the schools,” he adds. “They know that even though this might be fun, there has to be a reason.”

Though school tours target an attractive demographic, Ellis says they don’t appeal to all labels, given the expense and logistics involved—and “when you can throw something up on the Internet for $2,500.”

To get more buzz for the buck, Ellis is developing a high school satellite press tour in which student newspaper editors are invited to watch a live concert online and ask questions of the artist.

Another company taking a multifaceted approach is Alloy Media & Marketing. Its media boards, which are seen by 8 million students, are programmed with a school calendar, a scrolling LED message and an advertisement, often for music or movies.

Contract terms vary by school, but Alloy’s Skey says they often involve funding a specific need, such as sports team uniforms.

Unlike Channel One, which drew criticism because it beam educational programs with ads into classrooms, Alloy’s boards “are in the background,” says Skey, who also consults with consumer groups. “They’re not busting into the academic day.”

Last year, Alloy acquired Stonex, a niche networking site that connects students according to the high schools they attend. The company sends new music to active members called “influencers” in hopes of creating buzz at schools within a demographic region. In addition, Alloy can cross-promote concert on the site and its media boards.

But students’ ability to discover music on their own has made it easier for them to ignore a glut of online marketing initiatives, including ones on MySpace. says Teresa Ensenat, owner of Mixte. Her firm distributes music and posters to 1,000 subscriber high schools for listening parties, newspaper write-ups and giveaways from student organizations.

“It’s much more effective to actually physically send music,” says Ensenat, who also organizes artist visits and interviews with school media.

That’s entry into schools is faculty, especially in journalism classes. “The labels are doing this to promote the artists, and we’re pretty upfront about that,” she says. “But we’re also saying, ‘It’s a good opportunity for your kids to critically analyze popular culture.’ ”

Knowing that teens respond poorly to being told what to like, “we don’t promote—we present,” says Ensenat, who doesn’t require coverage of her clients as a condition of service. Mixte supplies music for airplay on more than 80 high school radio stations, most of which are FM and broadcast at least 12 hours per day, Ensenat says.

Far from being seen only as a competitor for kids’ attention, technology is marketed in tandem with music for the school audience. In December, San Francisco high school students were supplied tickets to a private concert in the city by Mexican pop group RBD courtesy of Verizon Wireless. The company encouraged attendees to record the show on their V Cast phones for broadcast over the network and on YouTube.

Even though school audiences are small, labels say it’s about building a relationship with fans that isn’t based on a single—and giving new acts concert experience. “Even if it didn’t sell us one record, we still would have done it because it helped get her out there,” Epic marketing VP Scott Carter says of Cheyenne Kimball’s tour.

Interscope marketing director Dyana Kass says it’s hard to quantify the results of school campaigns, because she layers them in the same market with promotions online, at radio and in local press. But “if a stop your Web traffic flows up, then you know it moved the needle,” says Kass, who also looks at how much merchandise was distributed and whether there were requests for the band at local retail and radio. “Even if it didn’t hit sales yet, that’s just one step closer.”

Kass credits school buzz with building early word-of-mouth for the All-American Rejects. The band played a Cingular-sponsored show at a high school in Sunnyvale, Calif., and its logo was featured on a book cover passed out in homerooms.

Schools “want holiday concerts, they want home-
coming concerts, they want something tied to a book drive," says Kass, who has also arranged for artists to speak to music classes about breaking into the business. "As long as there is no profanity and it's not so salesy, you don't really have an issue."

EMI Music Marketing regional director Stephanie Payne says educational messaging is a plus, but not always required for school access. In one case, she says a local parent who owned a music store requested giveaway samplers to increase attendance at football games.

"We've been mobbed," Payne says. "Our little booth is almost overrun because the kids are so excited. Not a lot of them have expendable cash, so we're turning them on to good music for free.

"I'm not running around campus chasing after kids," Payne adds. "If they don't want it, they don't come up to the booth."

Back at San Fernando High, Stefy's eponymous lead singer sat at a table offset to sign autographs. Meanwhile, a DJ put on some merengue, and an impromptu dance party erupted on the quad.

A pair of boys in school football team shirts asked to take their picture with Stefy. "Are you on MySpace?" one of them asked.

Dispatch publisher Shaie Trunk began organizing high school music events like the Stefy show starting in September. His 2-year-old magazine has a circulation of 120,000 in Los Angeles and Orange County schools. In addition to major-label music profiles, the October issue had a story about suicide prevention and an article comparing the health drawbacks of diet versus regular soda.

When Trunk is not promoting a band, a movie or a videogame, he'll bring a new release from a label to spin at lunchtime. The magazine recently gave out an R&B/hip-hop compilation from EMI featuring Janet Jackson, Ice Cube and other artists.

Trunk says he has brought three times as many music releases to schools this year as he did last year. He says the district relies on him to keep out inappropriate content, such as a poster for the movie "John Tucker Must Die" that he didn't bring to schools because it showed a scantily clad woman.

"You have to keep the kids happy and the district happy," Trunk says. "They trusted us in developing this on-campus thing, and it worked."

**An Idea With Wheels**

A NEW RADIO SERVICE TARGETING SCHOOL BUS LISTENERS IS NOT WITHOUT DETRACTORS

Public service announcements are plentiful on Bus Radio, a network that began broadcasting entertainment programs to school buses this year.

Needham, Mass.-based Bus Radio, which currently reaches 100,000 students, expects to reach 1 million kids in 11 states by the end of the 2006-2007 school year. With the push of a button, bus drivers can air separate broadcasts for elementary, middle and high school students at no cost to the districts.

Each hourlong block, taped separately for the morning and afternoon commutes, contains 44 minutes of music, talk and interviews. The remainder is divided between national advertisers and messages about bus safety, healthy eating and other issues.

Bus Radio pays school districts according to how much they use the broadcasts and how many students ride the buses. The company won't name its advertisers or the labels whose content it has licensed. A demonstration broadcast featured songs by acts including Christina Aguilera and Gnarls Barkley. A promo by Avril Lavigne advised students to "stay in your seats, stay in school and stay tuned to Bus Radio."

Lavigne's manager, Terry McClirand, arranged for the promo because "any chance to be anywhere our audience hangs out is where we should be."

PD Ed Moloney has also sought out unsigned acts and "artists that labels are having a tough time getting to FM radio."

"What Moloney is not looking for is risqué content. "If there's a parental advisory sticker (on the CD), that's a red flag for us," says Moloney, who prints out lyrics and screens songs for cursing and innuendo.

Still, Bus Radio has raised the hackles of activists who oppose commercial activity in schools.

Anna Weselak, president of the National PTA, says her organization signed a letter opposing Bus Radio because "students have no choice."

Weselak, who had not heard the broadcasts when she spoke with Billboard, added that schools in need of money "can partner with businesses and organizations in their communities that do not exploit children."

Alex Molnar, professor of education policy at Arizona State University and head of its Commercialism in Education Research Unit, adds to Weselak's notion. "Advertising to kids is inherently manipulative in a way in which it's not manipulative to adults, who presumably have distance, judgment and so on," he says.

But unlike the child obesity epidemic, which galvanized parents to oppose junk food in schools, Molnar admits the arguments against Bus Radio "seem to some parents to be rather abstract ... this becomes something that they don't necessarily support, but on the other hand, don't have the energy to oppose."

If a district objects to a specific ad, the company says it can delete it from the local feed—a level of control that appeals to Brian Forget, business administrator for the Triton Regional School District in northeastern Massachusetts.

Forget received a letter signed by the National PTA and dozens of advocacy groups, as well as a few complaints from parents, "that we're throwing [kids] in a mall can and forcing them to listen to advertisements." But since bus drivers often use FM radio anyway as a reward for good behavior, "they're already listening to them," Forget says. "This allows us to control both the content and the advertisements."

Holly Janvrin, a bus driver and PTA president at Salisbury Elementary in Salisbury, Mass., calls Bus Radio a "long overdue" alternative to crude shock-jock content and alcohol ads. "I find my bus singing a lot," Janvrin says, citing "Hannah Montana" as a particular favorite. "And I find they are staying in their seats more."

---

In schools they have to sit there.

-RICHARD ELLIS, PRESIDENT OF 12 TO 20

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MOBILE ENTERTAINMENT LIVE (FORMERLY MECCA) - This one-day event at CTIA WIRELESS 2007 encompasses the current state of mobile entertainment and what the future might hold. Guided by Billboard’s global editorial team, CTIA and an Advisory Board of industry experts, attendees will discover how they can participate in, and profit from, the mobile entertainment revolution. Learn from and network with the visionaries defining the mobile space today, and gain development, marketing and consumer insights from leading analysts and end users.

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- **State of the Industry:** Current state of mobile convergence activities in music, film and gaming industries
- **Surprise Celebrity Guests:** Artists most heavily engaged in wireless content—hear their side of the story

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AFTER HIT-MAKING SUCCESS AS PRODUCERS AND SONGWRITERS, MASON AND THOMAS STEP UP WITH THEIR OWN LABEL
Melodic. True musicianship. Grace under fire.

Those qualities constitute the essence of songwriter/producers Harvey Mason Jr. and Damon Thomas, aka the Underdogs.

Drawing on that essence, the two have amassed an extensive and diverse list of credits in six short years that stretches from Tyrese ("I Like Them Girls") to their first solo track project, the Golden Globe–winning musical "Dreamgirls." The album hit No. 1 last week on The Billboard 200.

"The most unique and compelling aspect of the Underdogs is that they are lyric-driven," says another hitmaking authority, RCA Music Group chairman/CEO Clive Davis.

"Today, the thing that people focus on is how hot the track is," he adds. "They've never forgotten that ultimately it's the lyric and melody, which are the most important elements of a long-lasting hit." Davis' J Records now provides marketing, promotion, sales and distribution for acts Mason and Thomas sign to their own label, Underdog Entertainment. The duo will continue producing projects for other record labels as well.

Mason's and Thomas' innate sense of lyrics and melody dates back to childhood.

Midwesterner Thomas was a 5-year-old piano prodigy whose mom fed him a voracious appetite for music by supplying him with a keyboard and sound equipment to imitate his own mini-home studio. "I knew then, at 13, that I wanted to be a record producer," Thomas says.

Mason grew up with his own in-house producer, dad Harvey Mason Sr. The well-regarded studio musician/drummer worked with such jazz greats as Evett Carter, George Shearing, Herbie Hancock and Grover Washington Jr. in addition to releasing two solo albums on Arista.

"My dad was the first producer I knew, however I didn't know what producers did," Mason says. "But I ended up going to work with him from the time I was 7 or 8. Growing up around the studio and what he did, I knew that was what I wanted to do.

Thomas' production quest brought him to Los Angeles. Under the tutelage of Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds, Thomas helped write top 10 hits for Pink, Dru Hill, Faith Evans and Brandy.

Mason, meanwhile, was sharpening his penmanship skills as a writer for Rodney Jerkins' Darkchild Entertainment. In addition to co-writing Toni Braxton's No. 1 single "He Wasn't Man Enough," Mason penned songs for Brandy and Brian McKnight.

After interviewing with the Darkchild camp and meeting Mason at Darkchild, Thomas later suggested the two join forces. Mason says the first hour they worked together sealed the Underdog Entertainment partnership for him.

"The first song we wrote did really well," Mason says of the pair's initial songwriting foray in 2001. "But besides that, it came naturally. It was fun working together, a total collaboration. That first day we had a track, lyric, melody and then recorded the demo. The next thing we knew, three people wanted the record.

The song in question was Tyrese's "I Like Them Girls." Among the three people who wanted the record was Clive Davis.

"I had wanted the song for [jinger] R.I. of the group Next," Davis says. "Ironically, I began working with the Underdogs right after that, and we had our first No. 1 together with Tyrese's "How You Gonna Act Like That.""

That talent has lured a "cast of artists into the Underdogs' world, notes Mason. Brandy, Faith Evans, Majo, Cmarion, Chris Brown, Stacie Orrico, Mario, Chris and three "American Idol" winners: J.R. Smith, Kelly Clarkson and Fantasia.

Those collaborations and others have resulted in a string of hits and a 2004 Grammy Award nomination for Justin Timberlake's "Justified" album.

Brown and Studdard are among the artists who have made repeat visits to the Underdogs' eight-room Underlab facility, which occupies two floors in the Edmonds Building in the heart of Hollywood.

Studdard first worked with the duo on the song that became the first single of his career, "Flying Without Wings." A second collaboration, "Sorry 2004," scored him his first No. 1 record. The trio has since reunited on Studdard's current album, "The Return."

"Although I was a brand new artist, they treated me as an equal," Studdard says. "Working with them is like working with a well-oiled machine. They have a gift for knowing exactly what your talents and abilities are. Then they use that gift to bring out the best in you as an artist."

Brown, a current Grammy nominee for best new artist, says the Underdogs were the second producers he recorded with on his debut album. The Mason/Thomas song on that album, "Your Man Ain't Me," stands alongside "Take U Down" (from his 2007 sophomore set) as his two favorite Underdogs-produced tracks.

"Harvey has pushed me more than any other vocal producer," Brown says. "He and Damon work fast and stay focused."

Mason and Thomas eat, drink and breathe music at Underlab. What started out as the home of the Underdogs and one engineer has morphed into a full-fledged music factory with three studios, four composing rooms, four full-time engineers and a stable of 10 songwriter/producers.

The last group consists of veteran and emerging talent from Los Angeles and Atlanta. That mix includes six-year Underdogs associate Steve Russell, a former frontman for R&B group Troop, such fresh faces as Los Angeles' Rob Knox (aka Egyptian Lover), production duo the Cartel and Atlanta's St. Nick.

Ask Mason and Thomas if they ever go home, they answer in unison.
CONGRATULATIONS ON
YEARS OF HITMAKING

BMG
MUSIC PUBLISHING
UNITED STATES

Harvey Maoz Jr. of The Underdogs/BMG Sargs

CONGRATULATIONS
to the UNDERDOGS

ON THEIR INCREDIBLE SUCCESS

From: Fred Davis, Guy Blake
and everyone at
Davis Shapiro Lewit & Hayes, LLP.
"We try for Sunday."

Both note that their production camp operates with no less than three projects going on at all times. It was that dedication—plus the grand piano and drum set he saw in the studio—that convinced "Dreamgirls" co-music supervisor/ Paramount VP of music Randy Spedlove that he had found the right producers to update the 25-year-old Broadway musical for today's theater-going audience. Armed with a who's who list of every producer in R&B and hip-hop, Spedlove says he was looking for true musicianship.

"There were instruments everywhere," Spedlove says, "making it clear that these guys could approach this music from a real organic place. It's not about sampling; it had to be real and soulful, respecting the roots of the film's Broadway origins while bringing the music into contemporary production values and sounds."

Having spent every day with the pair for almost a year on the "Dreamgirls" soundtrack, Spedlove singles out Mason's vocal production skills and Thomas' colorful chord construction as the key ingredients in the Underdogs' formula.

"Harvey works the way a college basketball coach works with a player," Spedlove says, "alluding to Mason's stint as a basketball player for the University of Arizona. "It's based on support and expertise."

It was the "magic-making calm patina in their control room" that caught the attention of original "Dreamgirls" composer Henry Krieger.

During a 14-month period, the pair had the whole building going as it called and produced more than 40 tracks (including Beyoncé's Golden Globe-nominated "Listen" and three more new songs) from more than 200 hours of music, dealing with veteran and first-time singers, musicians, union contracts, budgets and shifting schedules.

"Dreamgirls" director Bill Condon cites the pair's brilliancy in "keeping within the story as they reshaped the music dramatically. It was fun to watch the actor/performers—some of whom hadn't done this before—in their gentle hands."

Accepting the "Dreamgirls" challenge led to a second soundtrack venture last year: "Bobby," whose central theme revolves around the assassination of Sen. Robert Kennedy.

The film was written and directed by Emilio Estevez and features the original song "Never Gonna Break My Faith." Sung by Aretha Franklin and Mary J. Blige and backed by the Harlem Boys Choir, the inspirational anthem was co-written by Bryan Adams, who co-produced the song with the Underdogs. It's also the lead song on a Golden Globe best song award.

"From the moment Harvey heard the song, his vision was always a contemporary gospel anthem," recounts Rachel Levy, VP of music for the Weinstein Co. and Dimension Films.

"The Underdogs took Adams' vision and brought it to life, turning it into a monster of a song."

Their soundtrack projects aren't the only new ventures on the Underdogs' docket.

The launch of Underdog Entertainment follows a proposal four years ago from Davis, who suggested the duo has its own record-label distributed label.

Hip-hop-tinged R&B singers Luke & Q are due to release an album this year. The New Orleans duo's first single is the club jam "Tell It Around" featuring Young Dro. Additional acts on the roster include girl group Girlfriend, former Epic R&B singer Glenn Lewis and a female vocalist whose name remains under wraps for now.

Soon after announcing their label venture, Mason and Thomas established their own publishing company through Universal Music Publishing.

During the next couple of months the pair's production dance card is filling up thanks to upcoming sessions with the aforementioned Brown, "Dreamgirls" breakout Jennifer Hudson, Interscope act N.I.P., Heather Headley and Whitney Houston.

Between overseeing those two divisions, the duo still juggles various production projects. Recent collaborations include songs on current releases by Donnell Jones and Tyrese.

Ask Mason and Thomas what the future holds during the next five years, their answer is accompanied by big smiles and few details in keeping with their close-to-the-vest Underdogs persona. "We know where we'd like to see ourselves in five years," Mason says. "We have goals and high aspirations. But we're not sure what we want to advertise those are.

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from >>p30

Catching time to talk those days with the Underdogs, aka Harvey Mason Jr. and Damon Thomas, isn't easy.

When Billboard first spoke with the hitmaking producers last year, the duo was holed up at its Hollywood studio, knee-deep in a recording session with Chris Brown, who is now nominated for a best new artist Grammy Award. It was about the night before the Dec. 5 release of the pair's first soundtrack effort, "Dreamgirls," and just a few days shy of the release of the pair's second film-related project, "Bobby." That soundtrack is fronted by Aretha Franklin and Mary J. Blige on "Never Gonna Break My Faith," co-produced by the Underdogs and the song's co-writer, Bryan Adams.

The next encounter came on the day the Golden Globe nominations were announced. "Listen," co-produced by Beyonce and the Underdogs (it's the singer's signature song in "Dreamgirls"), picked up a best song nod. It was one of five nominations the film garnered. Also vying for best song: "Never Gonna Break My Faith." Asked if they were going to celebrate that evening, Mason and Thomas answered almost in unison with an emphatic no. "It's time for us to work harder than we've ever worked."

What was the hardest thing about producing the "Dreamgirls" soundtrack?

Thomas: Just trying to get to know what director Bill Condon wanted. He's a great director and knows exactly what he wants. He knew every lyric to every song, knew where a handicap [sic] was. We ultimately had to go through different versions of songs to find out what he wanted. But he was very helpful in explaining to us what direction he wanted to go in.

Mason: Music supervisors Randy Spedlove and Matt Sullivan worked with us every day, making sure we accomplished what Bill wanted. We were searching all over the place to find exactly how to achieve the balance between respecting the original songs and the time period from whence they came and updating the material for today's theater audience. We were walking a fine line.

What is it about your production style that you think helped seal the deal for your first soundtrack?

Thomas: We're not just R&B guys. We can do pop, rock, blues... a wide variety. Both of us are musicians and play several instruments. We understand how to record things live and work with an orchestra. We can also program with a drum machine and work with all the other computerized components that are current today.

Mason: We're pretty diversified as producers. I think the music supervisors saw that initially and took that to Gefen. In our studio we have a grand piano, drums, an organ and actual recording rooms with microphones—things you're not seeing in a lot of young producers' studios. We like to incorporate a lot of live material in our productions, including string arrangements.

This project dovetailed with a second soundtrack opportunity, another story set in the '60s: "Bobby."

Mason: The head of music for the Weinstein Co. heard the material we'd done for "Dreamgirls" and came to the studio. She wanted help on the end-title song, written by Bryan Adams. But beyond creatively working with Aretha, Mary and the Harlem Boys Choir, they needed someone to deal with the business and administrative aspects of putting this together.

Like with "Dreamgirls," We were dealing with musicians, the director, the music super. continued on >>p34

THE UNDERDOGS ON TOP

MASON AND THOMAS ON THE ART OF MAKING HITS

BY GAIL MITCHELL

Catching time to talk those days with the Underdogs, aka Harvey Mason Jr. and Damon Thomas, isn't easy. When Billboard first spoke with the hitmaking producers last year, the duo was holed up at its Hollywood studio, knee-deep in a recording session with Chris Brown, who is now nominated for a best new artist Grammy Award. It was about the night before the Dec. 5 release of the pair's first soundtrack effort, "Dreamgirls," and just a few days shy of the release of the pair's second film-related project, "Bobby." That soundtrack is fronted by Aretha Franklin and Mary J. Blige on "Never Gonna Break My Faith," co-produced by the Underdogs and the song's co-writer, Bryan Adams. The next encounter came on the day the Golden Globe nominations were announced. "Listen," co-produced by Beyonce and the Underdogs (it's the singer's signature song in "Dreamgirls"), picked up a best song nod. It was one of five nominations the film garnered. Also vying for best song: "Never Gonna Break My Faith." Asked if they were going to celebrate that evening, Mason and Thomas answered almost in unison with an emphatic no. "It's time for us to work harder than we've ever worked."

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Like with "Dreamgirls," We were dealing with musicians, the director, the music super. continued on >>p34

"We're not just R&B guys," DAMON THOMAS says of his partnership with HARVEY MASON JR.
HARVEY & DAMON…
U GUYS ARE THE REAL DEAL.

THANKS FOR YOUR FRIENDSHIP AND UNIQUE TALENTS!

WARMEST CONGRATULATIONS FROM EVERYONE AT RCA MUSIC GROUP & ZOMBA LABEL GROUP
from >>p32

visors, special-effects people, union contracts, studio budgets, engineers, contractors. It's more than just D and I sitting at the piano and playing different chords. It's very challenging organizationally.

Thomas: [laughs] It's intense. Film people don't care if you might have Aretha or anyone else in the studio. If they need something, they need it then and it's got to be done.

How do you approach working with an established artist versus a newcomer?

Mason: It's fairly similar. The only difference is you have a history to draw information from with an established artist. We know what Aretha sounds like, what her range is. The same goes for Mary. You can go back to past vocal performances and gauge what you're doing from there and try to improve upon that. With new artists, you really don't have anything to reference. You're helping to develop their sound, define who they are vocally. That's the only difference.

Technically, we approach it the same way. We try to get them to give their best performance by making them feel comfortable and giving them the confidence as a producer that we're there to look out for them and make them sound great. Then it's a collaboration at that point. They're putting their ideas out, we're putting our ideas out, going back and forth until we get that great performance.


Mason: Our goal was always to have a music factory. And it's really gotten to that point, as we oversee 10 writers/producers. These people work with us and independent of us on their own projects. Our label has signed three artists: Luke & Q, female act Girlfriend and former Epic artist Glenn Lewis.

Thomas: Among our writers is Steve Russell. Formerly a lead singer with the group Troop, he's been with us six years. All of our writers are talented musicians who don't just program drums. The musicianship is sick up here. If we wanted to go out and play as a live band behind someone, we'd kill. We also have four full-time engineers.

How do you juggle devoting time to your label versus other Underdog concerns?

Mason: Because we're both involved in all aspects of the label and the production company, it is difficult to budget time. It's been a learning curve for the last two years, picking up the ins and outs about the business side of making records. We feel pretty comfortable making music, but beyond that there have been other things to take into account, including promotion, marketing, airplay.

Luke & Q bowed last year through Underdog Entertainment.

continued on >>p36

Harvey and Damon - Congratulations and thanks for giving Dreamgirls its voice!

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5
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Rondor Music celebrates its publishing relationship with
Harvey Mason Jr. and Damon Thomas
&
Underdog Entertainment

Rondor Music International
A Universal Music Group Company
from >>p34

Mason: Now we have [their] official first single, "Turn It Around" featuring Young Dro.

Thomas: We wanted to have a record that represented where these two kids are from, New Orleans. Once we had that record, we reshaped the album around that and came up with the whole sound for them.

Is it still a producer-driven industry, or has that evened out?

Mason: It's more songwriter-driven than anything. The premium right now is being placed on the song, as it should be. There was a time when certain producers could produce just about anything and the label execs would say, "That's a smash and such record. Let's put that out as the first single."

The way radio is working right now, you can't put anything just based on the producer's name. The general public and radio are so selective and focused on a certain genre that you have to have a great song to crack through at all.

Then is there an Underdog sound?

Thomas: Yes, it has to do with our chord progressions, melodies, vocal production, drums. It's all those things put together.

Mason: When we do R&B midtempo or ballads, there's an Underdogs sound. Like "Days," it starts with our music. The drums have a certain sound; the basslines and bridges are distinctive. It's the way we sonically mix our records. The way we stack and arrange our vocals.

People are now catching on to that and catching up. But we constantly try to change and stay fresh.

The only confusing part of that answer is we've done a lot of different styles of music: R&B, hip-hop, rock, orchestral. So when people hear us doing a rock 'n' roll record or a movie like "Dreamgirls," they'll say, "Hey, that doesn't sound like an Underdogs sound."

Can you name a couple of songs that quintessentially capture the Underdogs sound?


What one characteristic about each other was proof that this partnership would work?

Mason: It was D's sheer talent musically and his winner's energy. The first song we wrote "Tyrese's "I Like Them Girls," came naturally. The next thing we knew, three people wanted the song. So it was a quick transition to a partnership. But even before people liked the song, it was fun collaborating with someone on equal footing.

D is also a motivator with big goals and dreams: he thinks on a winner's scale. I have a sports background and tend to pick up on that from people pretty quickly. I remember when we first got together, he talked to me about having a nice studio.

Thomas: As far as musical talent is concerned, we both bring our A-game. But other than that, Harvey is the general of our camp. I'll be the one who gets everybody pumped up. But Harvey is the one who's going to make sure everything is done and our business is handled correctly. Where I can go crazy (laughs), he can always bring that balance to our partnership.

THE UNDERDOGS' TOP HITS

Which of the hits produced by the Underdogs production duo of Harvey Mason Jr. and Damon Thomas has been their biggest single on the charts?


The titles on this chart are ordered by peak position on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart through the issue dated Jan. 13.

If more than one title peaked at the same position, ties were broken by the number of weeks spent at the peak.

If ties still remained, they were broken by the number of weeks on the chart, and then in the top 10 and/or the top 40, depending on where the title peaked.

Chart data compiled by Keith Caulfield.

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Spend a little time with Brett Gurewitz, guitarist for Bad Religion and founder of Epitaph Records, and it becomes clear that there are two distinct eras in his label's 25-year history.

Founded in 1981, Epitaph's breakthrough came with the phenomenal success of such California-bred, neo-punk bands as the Offspring and Rancid in the mid-'90s. But with the 1995 signing of Tom Waits to Epitaph's sister label Anti-, it became clear that Gurewitz and his team could grow beyond punk as Anti—emerged as one of the most adventurous imprints in independent music.

"A turning point for Epitaph is when I began talking to Tom Waits," Gurewitz says. "I knew that I didn't want the label to only be for punk rock. I listened to more punk rock, and more and more, I had wanted to diversify the sound of the label, particularly if the label was going to continue to work. That was a major milestone. A label that started as a punk-rock label in a garage had the audacity to sit down with Tom Waits. He's the Bob Dylan of my generation."

Today Epitaph is a worldwide company with offices in Amsterdam and Toronto, and a presence in Melbourne, Australia. At the 41st annual MIDEM music marketplace Jan. 21-25 in Cannes, the company will be well-represented by executives including European managing director Hein Van der Ree.

The Epitaph label roster boasts notable acts including Motion City Soundtrack, Matchbook Romance, I Am Ghost, Bouncing Souls, Escape the Fate, the Matches and Youth Group.

On the Anti-label, Waits' three-CD set "Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers & Eastards" was one of the hottest-selling titles at independent retailers this holiday season. The title sold so quickly that Epitaph's distributor, Alternative Distribut on Alliance, ran out of its limited-edition hardbound version of the set within four days of its November street date.

**BY TODD MARTENS**

**SPECIAL FEATURE** BEYOND 'CALI-PUNK,' AN INDIE LEADER BOASTS DIVERSE ACTS AND GLOBAL PRESENCE

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from p39

Such an extensive release would have been unthinkable a quarter of a century ago. In the early '80s, Epitaph was a place for 415.

So you’re to release music by his own hardcore band and his punk-rock friends. The label exploded and became a house- hold name in 1994 when the Offspring’s pop-punk breakout “Smash” dominated MTV and radio airwaves, and Epitaph followed that release with Rancid’s career-defining “And Out Come the Wolves.”

When punk rock was no longer trendy, Epitaph had relationships with blues label Fat Possum, Sweden’s garage-rock label Burning Heart, ska/street punk offshoot Hellcat Records and a budding adult-leaning imprint in Anti-.

Anti-, no longer home to just Waits, won a Grammy Award for Solomon Burke’s acclaimed 2002 soul album. “Don’t Give Up On Me,” has since released albums from alt-country’s Neko Case, country hero Merle Haggard and political rap act the Coup, among many others.

But even as Anti- has expanded Epitaph’s catalog into blues, soul, R&B, hip-hop and country, it hasn’t altered the rebellious, anything-goes, punk aesthetic upon which Epitaph was founded.

Andy Kaulkin, who oversees the Anti- imprint, says, “The label is for artists who are not trying to do something that’s trendy. They’re following their own path, and they have an understanding of music history without being beholden to it. It doesn’t matter what genre it is. You can do that in any genre, and you can do that at any age.”

Kaulkin’s comment could almost serve as a mission statement for the entire label.

‘THAT RECORD PUT US ON THE MAP’

Epitaph’s story may begin with Bad Religion, but the Offspring is most certainly its first major plot point. The latter’s 1994 single “Come Out and Play” could have been a barely heard anti- gun rant if it weren’t for its still unforgettable chorus hook, the simple, spoken-word refrain of “You gotta keep ‘em separated.”

Influential modern rock radio station KROQ Los Angeles took to playing the song, and the rest of the country soon followed suit. The Offspring and Epitaph would eventually split in a bitter divorce, but not before the band’s overnight success turned Epitaph into one of the largest independent labels in the world.

“That record — and thank you very much, Offspring — put us on the map,” Gurewitz says. “It opened doors. I could get a meeting with whoever. Up until that time, we had to scratch and claw our way into whatever nooks and crannies we could. It wasn’t easy for an indie to get a record into a chain store. Indies were second-class citizens back then, but from that day forward we could sell any of our titles in any chain in the country. Everything changed.”

And Gurewitz went from rocking in his punk band to declining interview requests with Forbes magazine.

“But he’s always going to be the Bad Religion guy,” Rancid leader Tim Armstrong says. “He was punk before us. He toured in a van before us. He’s the one guy we all really listen to.”

While the name Epitaph dates back to 1981, it didn’t become a fully functioning label until around 1987, when Gurewitz ran Epitaph out of a recording studio he had opened. Key releases in that period were Bad Religion’s “Suffer,” long regarded as one of hardcore’s finest moments, and rock band L7.

Yet it was the relationship that Gurewitz struck with Armstrong that would become one of the longest and most pivotal in the label’s history.

Rancid was a local band. Operation Ivy, released only one album, “Energy,” which was a blistering mix of ska and punk recorded in 1990 for Berkeley, Calif.-based Lookout Records. Gurewitz was a fan and set his sights on bringing Armstrong into the Epitaph fold.

“When I heard Operation Ivy broke up, I called Tim and said, ‘Whatever your next band is that you do, I don’t have to hear them.’ I wanted to know what you sound like, but I will sign you,” Gurewitz recalls.

The story is true, Armstrong says, but it didn’t happen quite so romantically. Looking back, Armstrong remembers Gurewitz having to send him a bit of a wake-up call before he was actually able to get Rancid together.

“I don’t know if Brett remembers this, but I was having a hard time getting sober, and I told him a few times I was getting a new band together,” Armstrong says. “I remember him telling me, ‘Send me your new tape, and I’m not going to hold your breath.’ It hurt my feelings, but I needed to hear that. I’ll never forget that, and now I’ve used it on people.”

The album cover for Rancid’s “Let’s Go!” is tattooed on Gurewitz’s shoulder, and the set was released two months before the Offspring’s “Smash.” If no one could predict that the two albums would suddenly turn Epitaph into the hottest label in America, Gurewitz knew they would at least be Epitaph’s biggest releases.

“We had sent a few things to radio before with no success,” he says. “I thought it was going to explode by being bigger than Fugazi and Bad Religion. Those were the big bands in my world.”

The label made some efforts to expand before “Smash” came out, and Kaulkin, a professional blues pianist who had worked at record stores and Caroline Distribution, was hired in 1993. He says he took the Epitaph gig so he could buy a new guitar and planned to quit a few months later. Instead, he helped define the company’s retail and marketing campaign for the Offspring.

“I always had this philosophy of the retailer being your best tool for selling records, more than any kind of airplay or advertising,” Kaulkin says. “If you have retail on your side, you’re going to win. That’s the philosophy I had from working at a record shop.”

Dave Hansen, who is now Epitaph’s GM, started at the label in 1994. He and Kaulkin oversaw teams of young staffers — many interns who worked the phones from open to close. “We had eight people who did nothing but call record stores all day,” Hansen remembers. “There were three or four people just to call distributors. The company’s backbone was in marketing.”

The Offspring would leave Epitaph a couple of years after the release of “Smash.” The two sides aired out their differences in the media, and more than once during a three-hour interview Gurewitz says he regrets the time period and the public airing of his opinions.

But as the relationship with the Offspring disintegrated, Gurewitz and Armstrong would eventually split in a bitter divorce, but not before the band’s overnight success turned Epitaph into one of the largest independent labels in the world.

“Whatever you do, you have to be relevant,” Gurewitz says. “Influential modern rock radio station KROQ Los Angeles took to playing the song, and the rest of the country soon followed suit. The Offspring and Epitaph would eventually split in a bitter divorce, but not before the band’s overnight success turned Epitaph into one of the largest independent labels in the world.

“Whatever, he responds. “They can start their own label.”

I wanted to diversify the sound of the label.

— BRETT GUREWITZ
CONGRATULATIONS ON 25 YEARS!
WE'RE PROUD TO BE YOUR DISTRIBUTOR
LESSONS IN Independence

Marking the 25th anniversary of Epitaph records, label founder Brett Gurewitz recently reflected on the past, present and future of his indie success story.

You were a teenager, still living with your parents, when you started the label. What do you remember of your parent's early reactions?

I think they thought it was cute. My dad's a self-made man, an entrepreneur, so I think the burgeoning entrepreneurship in his living room was thought of very kindly. They're still around, so it's been nice to come full circle. I was taking advice from my father on running a business and now my father comes to me for advice.

Dad's advice?

He told me that the most important thing is honesty and integrity, and having character in your business relationships. If you do that and have a good reputation, no money can ever buy that, and it sticks with you forever. I'm not going to say I haven't done some shitty things in my life, but I've always been a clean-dealing businessman between my customers, my competitors and my recording artists.

The obvious follow-up: The "shitty things"?

Well, I regret all the bad things I said about the Offspring in the press when they left. We were kind of airing our dirty laundry and speaking out emotionally. I should have kept that all to myself. That's the main thing.

How has being an independent label changed in the past two decades?

We won a Grammy for Solomon Burke a couple years ago. We have Motion City Soundtrack, who are one of the best pop-punk/indie emo bands out there. We've released hip-hop artists [Atmosphere, Sage Francis]. All of that was unthinkable when we first started.

We truly had a niche then. We were Southern California hardcore. That's what we called it.

The way to be an indie back then was to have a sound and a niche. That's what we had to do. Nowadays, sounds and niches are like an automatic shuffle in Vegas. A new niche is new every three weeks, so we have to stay on top of everything.

And the Internet.

From an A&R standpoint, I no longer have a world of underground bands to myself and a few other indies. Majors are looking at the same bands. In that sense, the competition is much stiffer. When I see a band, I'll see another indie label and two other major labels. We're all fighting for the same bands.

 Didn't that happen in 1994 and 1995, when every label wanted its own Offspring or Green Day?

No, not really. It was still kind of proprietary, even then. The majors would say, "Wow, how do you do that?" They still didn't know where we were finding those bands. Now, they have little crews of 16-year-olds scouring MySpace. And I may be looking at a band a major may be looking at, but I'm not going against them. Once it turns into a bidding war, I'm throwing in the towel.

Has Epitaph ever had a mission statement?

Yes, but I have never formalized it by writing it in a pithy little way. When I first started the company and it was just me, my goal was to be friendly with my artists, no matter what. I wanted it to be a family. At the time, the culture I came from, every band was getting ripped off by their labels. Indies weren't thought of as a place you could get a fair shake. I like to think that image changed in part because of our influence. That's one of the things I'm proud of. I eventually became a little bit more sophisticated, and I realized that record companies don't make records.

If you get caught up in it, you can start believing that you make records. Your bands make the records. If you have a coffee mug company, you can make coffee mugs. But if you're a record company, you sign artists, and they make records.

With Tower closing and so many indie retailers closing, shelf space at existing retailers is becoming only more expensive. How do you break a new band in that climate?

I guess it depends on your definition of breaking a band. My definition is getting them to the 100,000-unit mark. I'm not saying that's a huge hit, but that's my world. If I do that, I've broken them. And it's much easier to get to 100,000 units today. It's so much easier to get the word out, and it's easier to get the word out fast. If it connects with the audience, you can get it on their hands in lighting speed. The real power today is that the Internet has become radio on demand.

continued on >>p44
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GOING GLOBAL
HOW EPITAPH TOOK ON THE WORLD
BY STEVE ADAMS

While the younger acts are finding their feet, a veteran is showing them the way. Tom Waits’ new three-CD set “Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers & Bastards” has been a “huge success all over Europe,” Vander Ree says. The album debuted in the top 10 in a number of the region’s national markets.

Waits’ is on Epitaph’s sister label Anti-. Epitaph also boasts a relationship with Sweden’s Burning Heart Records, home to the Hives, the International Noise Conspiracy, Millencolin, Refused and Turbonegro, all of which have a strong following in Europe.

Developing that support, pushing newer acts and “developing a reasonable amount of A&R” (the label recently signed German act Team Blender) are all priorities for Van der Ree. But he also acknowledges there is an expanding catalog to work as well.

European licensing deals form part of this mix, and the label has been enjoying considerable success licensing Green Day’s first two albums, “1039/Smoothed Out Slapp Happy Hours” (1990) and “Kerplunk” (1992) and Tricky’s last two albums, “Blowback” (2001) and “Vulnerable” (2005).

“Green Day is a good fit with our original style of music, but we’re expanding and the variety of acts makes for a good mix,” Van der Ree says. Epitaph’s distributors in Europe include Pinnacle (for the United Kingdom and Ireland), Play It Again Sam (Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Spain), Bonnier (Scandinavia), SPV (Germany), Edel (Australia, Switzerland, Portugal), Self (Italy) and Soyuz (Russia).

I never thought we’d hit it that big. I mean, we were doing well. We were selling more than 1 million records per year before the Offspring hit. We had maybe 10 groups, and Bad Religion was selling about 100,000 records. We were making good living. What happened when the Offspring started blowing up was that a bunch of majors started coming around to buy my company.

They said, “An independent cannot do this.” They told us they could make it on a multiplatinum, and we’d have to sell half our business for that to happen. But N.W.A had just had a multiplatinum record with “Straight Outta Compton.” That was an indie, Priority. So if a rap act can do it, so can a rock band. I was going to try it, and I turned down $25 million for one-quarter of my company—just one-quarter.

Did you take it personally when the Offspring left Epitaph for Columbia?

No, I don’t think I was. But I think we got with it fast enough, and I realized that we did need to become more diverse. We had an Atmosphere record, we had the Offspring, we had ownership in Burning Heart, and we had Hellcat. I diversified enough that when I was a little slow on the uptake, it didn’t hurt us too bad.

There are some really great indies out there who have done some really great A&R. There’s Victory and Fuel’d by Ramen and Drive-Thru, to name a few. They kind of picked up where I left off, and now I’ve taken their nod, and I think we’re right there with all of them. We missed a half of a step, but it wasn’t too bad for an old guy.

Prior to that you must have had dreams or designs on things you’d change if you hit it big.

Let’s discuss the label’s defining moment, the Offspring’s “Smash.” Talk about your reaction when you first heard the album. Did you feel you were sitting on something?

I can remember when I first got the finished masters. Epitaph at the time had maybe five employees. I was driving home from work, listening to the masters, and I circled around my block. I didn’t go in my house. I kept circling the neighborhood, listening to the record over and over. I listened to it at least five times in a row. I pulled in my driveway, and I don’t know what made me say this, but I said to myself, “Honey, we’re going to be rich.” I shit you not.

I don’t believe I’ve ever told that story. I had this feeling deep down in my gut that “Self-Esteem” and “Come Out and Play” were huge hits. I felt it. I didn’t know what that meant, but I knew it was by far the biggest record a band had submitted to me.

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CURRENT EPITAPH ACTS

MOTION CITY SOUNDTRACK

The biggest act on Epitaph proper (sophomore album “Commit This to Memory” has sold 253,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan), Motion City Soundtrack is one of the company’s most pop-friendly acts.

“They’re just fantastic songwriters, and I think they have a real melodic gift,” Epitaph VP of sales Jon Strickland says. “They’re amazing live performers, and they’re also one of those bands in the classic pop tradition that have very defined band members who all have slightly different personalities. And that comes across live. They’re a band that connects with their audience in that way.”

Strickland adds that frontman Justin Pierre’s lyrics are smart, “and he has some of the emo concerns in his lyrics, but manages to put them across in a very pop way that really connect with people who may not necessarily be looking for the emo lyrical experience but just like a sing-along chorus.”

While the band has snagged video play with “Everything Is Alright” and “Hold Me Down,” it has also built its following through touring (with the All-American Rejects, Vans Warped tour, Epitaph tour), connecting with fans after shows and generating strong buzz on the Internet.

I AM GHOST

With its melodic swirl of goth, emo and metal sounds, complete with strings and three-part male/female vocal harmonies, I Am Ghost is possibly the most diverse and original band on Epitaph.

Formed in 2004, the group snagged a deal with the label with only a six-song demo and some live shows under its belt. The demo was released with additional songs as “We Are Always Searching” in October 2005, and its full-length debut, “Lover’s Requiem,” released last October, debuted at No. 39 on Billboard’s Heatseekers chart and has sold 9,000 copies.

I Am Ghost is one of four bands on Epitaph’s 2007 tour, which also includes the Matches, Escape the Fate and the Higher. The label is initially exposing the band to the public through the Internet, then hopes to build it through Hot Topic, MTV and Fuse. A video was recently shot for “Our Friend Lazarus Sleeps.”

“We hope to have them on the Warped tour next summer,” Epitaph GM Dave Hansen says. “They have a great live show. They just finished touring with A Static Lullaby, and that was a good match for them.”

THE MATCHES

Are they pop punk? New wave? Funk rock? Electronics? The Matches are all that and more, fusing together seemingly disparate genres into a musical mélange that is far ahead of peers like LIt., Yellowcard and various Warped tour bands with whom it has shared the stage.

Just listen to its sophomore album, “Decomposer,” which debuted at No. 13 on Billboard’s Heatseekers chart, and you’ll get the idea.

“I think they have some of the power-pop influences that Motion City Soundtrack does,” Strickland says. “To my ears there are little bits of Cheap Trick in there, but they grew up listening to metal and hardcore. There’s also a weird electronics influence on the last record.”

While Epitaph is giving all four bands on its 2007 tour equal billing, Hansen admits that the Matches “will close almost all the shows. They’ve been out longer and have more touring history than the other bands. They look great and they sound great.”

Epitaph Records marks its 25th anniversary with a deep and diverse roster. Here is a sample of noteworthy talent under the Epitaph umbrella, including current Epitaph acts, artists signed to its Anti-label and Epitaph’s legacy bands.
YOUTH GROUP
This folksy Australian rock band certainly stands out from the Epitaph roster. Lead singer Toby Martin "has an amazing, lilting voice, and a lot of people really connect with their songs," Strickland says. Youth Group is also being marketed more like an Anti-act, Hansen says, adding, "It's more of an indie-rock vibe.

While the group's 2005 debut, "Skeleton Jar," has sold more than 17,000 copies, its big break actually came through TV when it placed two songs on "The OC" last year and another song recently. Its cover of Alphaville's "Forever Young" was played on the show, and has generated nearly 90,000 downloads.

Youth Group's new album "Casino Twilight Dogs" drops Jan. 30.

LEGACY ARTISTS
BAD RELIGION
They say you can't go home again, but after nine years with Atlantic Records, seminal punk band Bad Religion triumphantly returned a few years ago to Epitaph, the label founded by guitarist/songwriter Brett Gurewitz.

The band's 2002 release "Process of Belief" sold more than 220,000 units, doubling its last Atlantic effort, while 2004's "Empire Strikes First" moved more than 140,000 copies. "They're working on a new record," Strickland says. "They still have an amazing fan base. We put out a DVD last year of them live at the Palladium. You also see all of these young bands that are totally influenced by Bad Religion. They've just held on to the quality of the music."

OFFSPRING
The long-running punk band (22 years and counting) whose international success helped pave the way for the pop-punk revolution of the last few years is no longer on Epitaph, but its 1994 release and third album "Smash"—with 6.2 million units sold domestically and an additional 6 million sold worldwide—is not only the biggest-selling title in Epitaph's history but also, Strickland says, the best-selling independent release of all time.

Since then the group ventured to Columbia Records and has now amassed more than 30 million in total sales globally. But it left its mark on the label in more ways than one. In fact, Offspring's success on an indie level encouraged Tom Waits to contact Epitaph.

RANCID
One of the bands that built Epitaph, Rancid went platinum with its 1995 release "And Out Come the Wolves." After five albums with Epitaph, the punk band went to Warner Bros. in 2002 but will return to Epitaph/Hellcat with a new studio album this year.

The 15-year-old group recently toured and has a compilation DVD in the works featuring 31 music videos. Frontman Tim Armstrong "is very into film and makes a lot of videos for each record himself," Strickland says.

Armstrong also has another surprise in store for fans: He's giving away his solo album. "It's something Tim wants to do for the fans," Hansen says. "We're putting MP3s up, and eventually the record will be available as a free download. There might be a physical component to it at some point, but that music is going to be available and accessible to people."

ANTI-ARTISTS
TOM WAITS
The gravelly voiced performer with a passion for quirky songwriting and eclectic instrumentation is one of the most original American singer/songwriters of our time.

And when Waits came to Epitaph in 1997, he not only got to work with a label that admired his artistic integrity, but he also opened the door for it to experiment with new music styles. "We created the Anti-label for Tom," Strickland says. "It turned out we were able to connect him with an audience who rediscovered Tom Waits after he had been quiet for a while."

Waits did four studio albums for the label before he released the new three-CD set "Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers & Bastards," which features new songs and rarities, and he toured this past summer, which is rare. "It's been a great story for us this year," Hansen says. "It's a collection of great songs."

Waits' Epitaph debut, "Mule Variations," is his best seller for the label (more than 440,000 units sold), while "Orphans" recently debuted at No. 74 on The Billboard 200.

NEKO CASE
Singer/songwriter Neko Case has had quite a varied career. She mostly played drums in Vancou-
ver punk bands in the mid-’90s before delving into country-ish music with her group Neko Case & Her Boyfriends.

They released two albums before Case went solo in 2001 with the "Canadian Amp" EP of cover songs and "Black Acre" in 2002.

Her first Epitaph release was the 2004 live album "The Tigers Have Spoken." Case's 2006 release "Fox Confessor Brings the Flood," with its '60s-style orchestral pop feel, debuted at No. 54 on The Billboard 200 and has sold more than 147,000 copies, making it her best seller.

"There was a certain portion of people out there that thought of her as alt-country, and I think musically she's been moving beyond that, certainly with "Fox Confessor,"" Strickland says. "The idea was to introduce her to a wider audience in the same way that Wilco did with their last few records, to move her beyond the people who read No Depression and so forth and introduce her to people who listen to NPR and shop at Starbucks and people who are interested in hearing a new musical voice."

TIM FITE
What to do with a man who likes to blend folk, country and hip-hop, as Tim Fite does on his debut release, "Gone Ain't Gone?" Anti-execs may not be sure either, but they love what he does.

"He's basically bringing old music to life," says Hansen. "There's a lot of passion for Tim here. We're trying to get him in front of people and to get his music heard."

Of "Gone Ain't Gone," Splendid magazine's Matthew Pollasek wrote, "It's not just that Fite jumps between styles from song to song; the thing that makes Fite so perfectly suited to an era of iPods, playlists and file sharing is the fact that he makes his stylistic leaps several times in the course of one song—often splitting off, asokoa-like, in several different directions at once."
SHAKIRA
2006 Oral Fixation Tour

THANK YOU FOR A RECORD SETTING 5 SOLD-OUT SHOWS IN MIAMI.

WITH SINCERE APPRECIATION TO OUR FRIENDS AT LIVE NATION, CREATIVE ARTISTS AGENCY AND THE ENTIRE SHAKIRA TEAM.
Global

By Mark Sutherland

Pictures Of Lily

U.K. Starlet Allen Set To Charm U.S. With Brash Tunes, Videos And MySpace Presence

Lily Allen knows precisely where she was when she first realized her “Smile” single was taking off in the United Kingdom, where she was for most of the landmarks in her pop career on the Internet.

“I was in America and Jo Whiley played it on Radio 1 back home,” Allen says. “My MySpace [page] just went insane. It was first thing in the morning where I was but there were hundreds of comments and I thought, ‘This is it now.’”

Since that moment, 21-year-old Allen has become the poster girl for social networking sites in the United Kingdom, reaching platinum status (300,000 units) for her Regal/Parlophone album, “Alright, Still,” on the back of a hugely innovative digital campaign. And, with more than 97,000 MySpace friends, small wonder that the biggest cheer of the night on her last U.K. tour always came when she inquired: “Anyone here off MySpace?”

“Never mind the claims of Arctic Monkeys and Sandi Thom, Lily is the United Kingdom’s first natural born digital superstar,” says Jo Whiley.

“MySpace A&R’d my record,” she says. “I’d do songs, put them straight up and if people liked them they went on the album. The record company didn’t think my musical direction was right at all until I set up the site.”

In fact, the album’s snapshot of British urban life stands as a rare pop record to attract heavyweight critical acclaim and across-the-board sales appeal.

“It’s very unusual to have that appeal across the generations and the sexes, but Lily definitely does,” EMI Music U.K. chairman/CEO Tony Wadsworth says. “She has a real sense of musical heritage as well as being fresh and brand-new.”

While Allen’s ska and reggae influences attract older consumers, the U.K. marketing campaign focused firmly on youth, with many digital firsts clocked up since the July 2006 release, including ground-breaking tie-ins with MSN and online media player Nabla.

“[But] the core of the whole digital campaign has been
A Regional Mexican First
Four Major Releases In Genre To Coincide Jan. 30

In a sign of the continuing maturation of the Latin music market, four major regional Mexican releases are slated to street on a single date.

Conjunto Primavera (Fonovisa), Los Creadores (Dias), Diana Reyes (Universal) and the late Valentín Elizalde (Universal) will all release new studio albums Jan. 30. The date precedes (by two weeks) Valentine’s Day, traditionally a strong sales landmark for Latin. But having all four arrive simultaneously is rare, and perhaps unprecedented, for artists of this caliber and in the same genre.

Labels are hoping the timing will draw buyers to stores and positively jump-start the year for Latin sales in general and for regional Mexican sales in particular.

"Psychologically and emotionally for the business, we have to see that we can come back after a very difficult and challenging 2006," says Jeff Young, VP of sales for Univision Music Group, which owns Diasa and Fonovisa.

Target music buyer Jessica Phillips says the scheduling is consistent with the store’s overall message to labels of having major releases spread out during the year as opposed to concentrating on the fourth quarter. "So, we're thrilled, but of course, there is some cannibalization," Phillips says. "In past years we've had big, simultaneous releases, but with a bigger diversity of genres. This time we have four artists with potentially the same audience." Young admits that targeting a similar consumer base for the same dollars is a challenge, and some of the four releases may not initially sell as strongly as they would if they were alone in the market. But, he adds, the sales should spread out longer over time.

"If there's a lot of hits, they will buy the hits," he says. All four acts are being worked heavily in radio. Universal Music Group Distribution, which distributes all the albums, has designed a carefully coordinated schedule of retail events, including many in-store planned for the first two weeks of release, with no overlapping markets.

The most unusual release is that of Elizalde, the banda singer who was gunned down late last year in Mexico. The album, "Primavera," was only beginning to see his popularity rise in the United States, finished recording "Lolo Domestico" prior to his death, and had expressed his desire to release it by his Valentine's Day birthday.

The date was moved up to curtail illegal imports from Mexico, where, sources say, pirated copies of the album are already circulating.

Because of Elizalde’s death, there is "true hunger" for his new album, says Eddie Laca. Universal Music Latino VP of sales. As of mid-January, shipments stood at 100,000 copies, the RIAA’s standard for Latin gold. Elizalde’s 2006 release "Vencedor" has sold 56,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. But, Laca says, his sales are strongest at one stops not monitored by SoundScan.

Reyes, on the other hand, will benefit from a series of in-store nationwide as well as radio spots via "Target" s "Sounds Good" program. A rising star, Reyes sales have increased steadily album to album, with her latest release, "La Reina Del Pasito Duranguesante," hitting 96,000 copies, according to SoundScan. Her new album has also shipped gold.

Reyes’ biggest competition will be Los Creadores, another act that performs Duranguesante music, a fast-clipped hybrid of banda and electronic instruments.

Los Creadores will also be part of Target’s "Sounds Good" campaign, slated to run after the album’s release and following nationwide TV and radio spots campaigns on Univision’s TV and radio networks.

Originally slated for release in fourth quarter 2006, Los Creadores’ album was held back to build more exposure in the first quarter, traditionally a strong sales period for Diasa.

Last, but not least, is Conjunto Primavera, a group that historically sells gold in the Latin market. Its romantic sound plays on regional Mexican stations but has also crossed over to Latin pop radio, already ongoing in a national TV campaign on Univision that will run for another four weeks following the release of the group’s new album.

Are you interested in learning more about the different Latin music genres? This article highlights four major regional Mexican releases that coincided in January 2007. The releases from Conjunto Primavera, Los Creadores, Diana Reyes, and late Valentín Elizalde were all highly anticipated and strategically placed around Valentine’s Day to boost sales. Each group has its own unique style, with Conjunto Primavera focusing on norteño music, Los Creadores on Duranguesante, Diana Reyes on Regional Mexican, and Elizalde bringing a banda influence to the market. The article also points out the challenges in targeting similar consumer bases and the strategies used by labels to spread out the releases and increase their impact.
The Rebirth Of Q
Rapper Readies New Album, Reissue Of Lost Jazz Set

Having toured last year with his A Tribe Called Quest mates for the first time since 2000, Q-Tip is back on the solo beat. The Universal Motown artist is gearing up for the spring release of "The Renaissance."

During a free-wheeling and frank conversation touching on everything from his musical hero Miles Davis to the late J-Dilla, Q-Tip acknowledged it's been a minute between albums. In that time, he has been embracing the reinvention legacy forged by Davis and other iconic artists.

"Miles was a pure artist in a very Van Gogh type of way, always looking for new shit," the quietly intense Q-Tip says. "Jim, David Bowie, Madonna... they've been able to sustain, reinvent and stay relevant. In hip-hop you have people who have been able to sustain long careers. But very few have been able to come up with a whole new thing. Serious artists able to reinvent themselves... that's some real shit."

Thankfully, underling the philosophy that live musicianship is vital to the growth of music, Q-Tip put together a hip-hop band for "The Renaissance." But, according to the New York-based rapper, it's not a band simply in the sense of everyone just playing an instrument.

"I wanted a hip-hop sonic feel, something pure to the sound of hip-hop with real drums, real emotion and people taking solos," he says. "In that sense this record feels like we're moving in a new direction. Something hip-hop should do."

Q-Tip is steering clear of too many guest collaborations. ("Sometimes guests don't really warrant an appearance.") But thus far, he has lined up an intriguing threesome: D'Angelo, Common and André 3000. Among the new material Q-Tip has recently put up on his Web site is a song called "Move," one of the last things he did with hip-hop pioneer J-Dilla. The song is slated to appear on the soundtrack to the film "Freedom Writers."

Asked about performing again as part of A Tribe Called Quest, Q-Tip says the group's tour run last fall felt "good, like old times. We got a great response, and I was surprised to see so many kids out." Will they do it again? "I don't want to say never," Q-Tip replies after a pause. "But at this point, I think we're done for now."

He's also immersed in helping the Davis estate reimagine the prolific jazz trumpeter's catalog (Rhythm & Blues, Billboard, July 22, 2006). "I'm there to make sure none of the integrity is lost as we interweave things happening now in a Miles kind of way," Q-Tip says. "I want what we do with his music to be the benchmark on how to do projects like this. This won't feel like some rehash."

Q-Tip's penchant for jazz was the cornerstone of his 2001 album, "Kamaal the Abstract." Memorable for its no-holds-barred creativity, the critically acclaimed album is well-known for another reason: Arista never released it. In the ensuing years, it has become a collector's item.

With the original recording back in his hands, Q-Tip is ready to alter that scenario. He will perform various tracks from the album when he hits the road on behalf of "The Renaissance." Then he wants to release "Kamaal" with bonus tracks plus the original art and liner notes.

"You can hear we were having fun without recording for anything," he says. "It's that spirit people picked up on." It's a spirit he likens to OutKast's "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below," released two years later.

"It was of the same ilk and spirit," Q-Tip says, "and I was like 'Damn, why couldn't my stuff come out?'"

"But you don't harbor any ill will," he adds. "It's just the way everything worked out. Here it is now, and I own it -- a good thing."

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Real Talk
HILLARY CROSLEY hcrosley@billboard.com

Down The Road
Lil Jon And Kanye West Have New Albums Planned But Not Just Yet

Welcome back to another dry first quarter for hip-hop, where new music is as few and far between as Sade L.P.s. Fortunately, though, some good projects for further down the road are bubbling in the studio.

I caught up with Lil Jon recently, who has his first solo album in the works. It's pretty clear that he's unsure of when he'd like to release the thing, though he suggested the second quarter. And while his hit "Snap Yo Fingers" featuring E-40 and Sean Paul of the YoungBloodz topped the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart in August 2006, it was a little confusing when an album didn't follow the hype.

"I dropped 'Snap Yo Fingers' because I was going through the drama with TVT Records and I wanted to show people that I didn't go anywhere," Lil Jon says. "TVT and I eventually settled our differences. So I was caught between a rock and a hard place, because it was really the first single for 'Crunk Rock.' So it was either promote the record for a nice look in the marketplace, or we don't do anything and start from scratch when I do put my record out."

Lil Jon looked into ending his TVT contract in late 2005. However TVT met his demands, which he won't discuss, by spring of 2006 and he remains signed to the indie imprint. Choosing the marketplace option, Jon promoted "Snap," and is now back in the studio prepping "Crunk Rock." For real this time.

"It's not a compilation," Jon says. "But it'll have a lot of appearances, like how Dr. Dre does his records. There'll be a hip-hop side and a rock side. It's a mixture of all the shit I've done. Like Bun B.M.C. rapping over a hard rock track. I'm going to go back to some of those hard guitars over hip-hop beats. I won't do a Metallica song, but I'll take a Metallica riff and put it over a gangsta beat."

A few tracks that have already been recorded are "Lil Wayne and Ciara on a song together called 'Roll Call.' me and Three 6 Mafia [on a song] called 'Act a Fool,' me and R. Kelly on a song called "My Space," and Nate Dogg has a song too but I don't know what that's called yet," Jon says.

Utilizing MySpace as a free marketing tool, Jon's already attracted more than 500,000 downloads of "Act a Fool" on his personal page.

"'Act a Fool' is just some shit I debuted on MySpace," Jon says. "It had almost 500,000-600,000 hits in like 24 hours and the song is building in the clubs."

MR. WEST? I also managed to hunt down Kanye West, and asked him a few questions about his tentatively slated fourth-quarter release, "Graduation." In the midst of producing such tracks as the Game's "Wouldn't Get Far," and "Dreaming," my favorite track on "Nas" 'Hip Hop Is Dead,' West says that he never stopped recording for his upcoming project. And like Jay-Z and Timbaland, he's hopped on the Coldplay bandwagon.

"The first single is probably still 'Homecoming' featuring Chris Martin," West says. 

And with John Mayer designing signature New Era baseball hats, perhaps hip-hop's work with him is already done, and it's time to move on. But erstwhile Fiona Apple producer Jon Brion will be adding to West's "Graduation" as he did with "Late Registration."

"We'll be working together again on the new project," West says. "Jon wasn't just a producer, he was such a good friend and a great person to bounce ideas off of in the studio. It was the whole experience."
Up The Wazoo

DJ Dennis Ferrer Leads Heavy Spate Of Early ’07 Club Full-Lengths

He had helped create some of the most memorable dance cuts of the past two years, but things still weren't going New Jersey-based DJ/producer Dennis Ferrer's way. "I’ve done singles and remixes up the wazoo," he says. "But no matter what I did, no matter what big records I made, it didn’t elevate me to where I wanted to be—profile-wise, career-wise." So Ferrer decided to make an album. Out Feb. 20, "The World As I See It" (King Street) delivers on the promises of his hits 2005’s ’ “Sandcastles” (produced with Jerome Sydenham), a rare male vocal that galvanized the international DJ community, and his 2006 remixes of "Cure and the Cause" (by Fish Go Deep) and "Most Precious Love" (by Blaze), which became world-wide singalongs. The album combines vintage soul and modern thump in true-blue house music that satisfies finicky lifelong fans and flat-pumping new initiates. "I just wanted to make a quality dance album; I don’t portray it to be anything other than what it is," Ferrer says. "I’m making seven-minute songs. I’m not hiding the fact that it’s club music.

But club music that’s this, well, musical, is rare. "Church Lady," with a droll, been-there-done-that vocal by Danil Wright, offers a groovier, less frenetic take on gospel than dance usually puts forth. "Underground Is My Home"—the best house-appreciation tracks cut ever (and there have been many). The last dance producer to unite classic styling with modern sounds this effectively was Danny Tenaglia, on 1998’s classic "Tourism."

TIME TO RELEASE: A dive-verse slate of marquee dance artists are prepping full-lengths for release in March. LCD Soundsystem will let loose "March of Silver" (DFA/Capitol), the follow-up to its self-titled Grammy Award-nominated 2005 debut. James Murphy again punk-ifies oft-looked-over early dance influence into a hipster party soundtrack. Closing cut: "New York I Love You But You're Bringing Me Down," a gentification protest song masked as a lost love ballad, could start a downtown revolution.

Unmistakable Everything but the Girl vocalist Tracey Thorn—fresh off a surprising Grammy nomination for "Damage," a collab with Buick Project and remixer Tiefschwarz—will release "Out of the Woods" (Astralwerks), her first solo effort since 1982’s "A Distant Shore." West Coast producer DJ Miguel Migs, known for his good looks and equally seductive Latin-tinged house, is set to release "Those Things" (Omi). And evergreen sexy boy duo Air combined Japanese instruments, vocals from Pulp’s Jarvis Cocker and Divine Comedy’s Neil Hannon, and their usual ethereal ambiance for "Pocket Symphony" (Astralwerks).

HUDDSON'S RIVETER: In summer 2006, well before Jennifer Hudson was lightly compared to a young Aretha Franklin and her performance in "Dreamgirls" was heralded as the best musical theater debut since Barbara Streisand’s Academy Award-winning turn in "Funny Girl," New York club promoter Stephen Pevenr was savvy enough to book the 22-year-old power singer. "I was in competition with a nonprofit theater company in California who wanted her to perform at a benefit," Pevenr says. "They balked, so I bit."

Hudson’s performance at her Dec. 30 Saint-at-Large event, a regular party for gay men, could have been a typical club act. But Pevenr booked the Hammerstein Ballroom rather than a night-club slot. Hudson before rather than during headlining DJ Junior Vasquez’s set, giving her appearance a more concert-like feel; and invited her to perform a full set of songs—one of which were tacky remixes—surrounded by voguers, drag queens and go-go dancers. The result was one of the more memorable—and significant—performances in the history of club events: a display of vocal prowess by Hudson, matched only by her unaffected between-song sars and honest appreciation for her hosts. An icon is born.

WALKING THE WALK

Teenager DeAnda Making Top 40 Inroads With Debut Album

Christina Aguilera put her clothes back on. Britney Spears bottomed out. The family-friendly “High School Musical” is in more than 4 million earbuds. If the Lolita era is over, then the time is right for Paula DeAnda.

The 17-year-old Mexican-American is in the middle of a fairy-tale shot to success that started with a radio showcase in her native Texas, and peaked with a private performance in New York for Clive Davis, who immediately signed her to a seven-album deal with Arista.

“I never thought it would move this quickly,” DeAnda says. “I’m trying to take everything in.”

The teen has a voice strong enough to survive a choreapella and an ability to write frank, feeling lyrics. But what sets her apart from other R&B-inflected poppers is her relatibility, poise and relative wholesomeness—not unlike the icon she closely resembles, Selena.

“She’s a sweet young girl, not overly stylized,” Arista senior VP of marketing/artist development Scott Scevour says. “The sweet spot is tween, but you pick up an audience on either end. She’s perfect for Nick, Disney and also edgy enough for MTV.”

In March 2006, DeAnda pricked up the ears of the majors when her single “Doing Too Much”—a basic hip-pop track about a girl second-guessing her attempts to get a boy’s attention—hit No. 26 Radio & Records’ Rhythm chart without the benefit of a label.

The record resulted from the stewardship of Ed Ocanas, PD of KZFM-FM Corpus Christi, Texas. After watching the young singer perform a Michelle Branch cover at one of his station’s showcases, he sent her into the studio with producer Happy Perez. Ocanas is now her manager.

DeAnda showcased for five labels in March 2006, but Arista bit first. Her self-titled debut album was released just six months later and has sold more than 100,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Instead of a traditional promotional approach, “we had to play catch-up,” Scevour says. “She already had a single on radio, so we continued pushing there and went on hyper-drive with artist development, so people would connect the song to her face and her likeness.”

The video for "Doing Too Much" went into rotation on "TRL" a month before the album dropped, helping propel the song to top 10 on R&B’s Rhythm chart and top 20 on the Top 40 list.

Meanwhile, Scevour parlayed DeAnda’s real-girl appeal and her ethnicity—"She works for Hispanic teens, looking for their next role model," he says—into promotional partnerships with Proctor & Gamble (she’s a featured artist on beinggirl.com, the company’s tween-lifestyle Web site), Maybelline, as well as the combined force of Univision and Garnier. DeAnda will be one of four emerging Latin artists on a CD packaged with 60,000 hair-care products, distributed in CVS, Wal-Mart, Target and Rite Aid.

“Doing Too Much” obviously did its job, but DeAnda’s follow-up single, “Walk Away,” is opening the floodgates. The wistful ballad is “even better” [than “Doing Too Much”],” according to Chris Edge, PD at WNOU (Radio Now) Indianapolis. “It’s hookier, it flows better, it’s easier to get into.”

The single hit No. 9 on R&B’s Top 40 chart in December, and the video—an appealling clip with the right balance of teen hormones, street style and girl power—hit No. 9 on "TRL," buoyed by the loyalty of DeAnda’s nearly quarter-million MySpace friends. She was invited to perform live on Jan. 9.

“The crowd was amazing," DeAnda said the next day. “We did a part where we cut off the music, and they actually were singing along.”

To Scevour that sounds like success. “We’re reaping the rewards of our artist-development efforts finally connecting,” he says. “She will hopefully be the big artist of 2007.”
Deerhoof, Out Of The Woods
Rising San Francisco Noise- Pop Trio Shoots For The Mainstream

S an Francisco experimental noise-pop trio Deerhoof didn’t feel the need to upgrade to a fancy tour bus after being handcuffed to open for Radiohead on a string of California shows last June, which included a stop at Berkeley’s Greek Theatre. Erik Carter, Deerhoof’s North American agent at the Kork Agency, arrived early to that day’s show. While observing the massive semi-trucks used to load in Radiohead’s equipment and stage props, the agent burst into laughter.

“Deerhoof rolls up in a rented Honda with the three of them and all their gear,” Carter fondly recalls, noting the band has also opened for the Flaming Lips, Wilco and Sonic Youth.

“It was so funny. It was a comical picture of the three of them getting out of this little clown car.”

But that’s the simple charm of Deerhoof, which drops its eighth album, “Friend Opportunity,” via Kill Rock Stars on Jan. 23. It will be the Olympia, Wash.-based indie’s first release since the departure of founder Slim Moon, who recently became a senior director of A&R at Warner Music Group imprint Nonesuch Records (Billboard, Oct. 14, 2006). Maggie Vail, VP of A&R/director of West Coast operations at Kill Rock Stars, says the move won’t interfere with the upcoming release.

“He didn’t play an active role anymore with Deerhoof,” Vail says, noting that Portia Sabin, Moon’s wife, will now run the indie from New York.

Since Deerhoof’s full-length debut in 1997, the act has steadily increased its visibility among critics and fans, combining John Dieterich’s distinct noise-guitar melodies and Greg Saunier’s spastic drumming with the playful, childlike crooning of Japan native singer/bassist Satomi Matsuzaki (who is married to Saunier). The act’s first few releases on Kill Rock Stars scanned no more than 3,000 copies each in the United States, but things took a positive turn in 2002 with “Reveille,” which moved 11,000 units.

After shifting 16,000 with 2004’s “Milk Man,” the band experienced a breakthrough with 2005’s “The Runners Four.” The 20-song album debuted on Billboard’s Top Indie and Top Heatseekers charts and has scanned 20,000 copies—and Vail says that album’s number shoots up to at least 25,000 if you count sales on tour, where in the past the band hasn’t used Nielsen SoundScan forms.

“There has never been a record that was lesser than the one before in terms of sales,” Vail says, noting that Deerhoof is the top-selling active band on the label. “It continues to build and grow.”

Dieterich has a simple explanation for Deerhoof’s slow and steady rise.

“I think what works is playing concerts,” he says. “Physically being in a room with people and playing music and talking with them after shows.”

In that same vein, worldwide festival appearances and touring with well-known acts have exposed Deerhoof to a broader audience, but the three-piece—which saw the departure last year of guitarist/bassist Chris Cohen—has also found other creative outlets to spread the word. In October 2006, “Milk Man” was performed as an elementary school ballet at North Haven Community School in Maine. Deerhoof’s music will also be featured in the 2007 film “Dedication,” featuring Mandy Moore and Billy Crudup.

Terry Currier, owner of Portland, Ore.-based Music Millennium, says the band’s sound has grown more accessible through the years and notes that “The Runners Four” sold 150 copies at his store—double the number of “Milk Man.”

The Bay Area trio is also known for consistently delivering new music to fans, whether through physical product or free Internet-only downloads.

“They’ve been pretty prolific with that,” Currier says. “Some bands just take too long in between recordings, and when you’re a real fan, you want more.”

With “Friend Opportunity,” the marketing approach will expand. Kill Rock Stars has hired New York-based Girle Action to carry out a lifestyle marketing campaign that will aim for airplay in a broad range of nonmusic retailers, including American Apparel, Urban Outfitters and American Eagle, as well as hip nightclubs, bars, restaurants and cafes.

“We think they’ve gotten enough press that people know their name, but we want to make sure people have actually heard the band,” Vail explains. “They want to get into mainstream America.”

Jazz Notes

Matt Wilson’s Arts & Crafts Get Creative, Hit The Road

When he was a kid, Matt Wilson loved working on arts and crafts projects that his mother supervised, creating something from nothing with material such as pipe cleaners, glue and construction paper. “It’s artwork, but not as prescribed as something like certain kinds of painting,” he says. “It’s like cooking without a recipe where you put a lot of ingredients together. It’s freeing.”

So when he came to naming one of his working bands, the drummer opted for Arts & Crafts to encapsulate the improvisational spirit of play. Nowadays, his quartet includes trumpeter Terrell Stafford, keyboardist Gary Versace and bassist Dennis Irwin. Formed in 2000, the band will release its third spiritual CD, “The Scenic Route,” on Palmetto Records Jan. 23. Like its earlier outings, the group serves up a variety of jazz stylings, from swinging to open. “We touch on a lot of worlds in honest ways,” Wilson says. “It’s like driving through different landscapes, which is also why I called the new album ‘The Scenic Route.’”

The album opens with the title track, which sets the tone for the rest of the sightseeing tour with its upbeat, bouncy drive that steers into the breakdown lane at the end with a humorous snatch of avant-fare sputtering. Further down the road, there’s the hip Arts & Crafts version of swing. “Feel the Swag,” complete with background vocalist that Wilson dubs the Swayettes. The band covers Ornette Coleman, Pat Metheny, Duke Ellington, Bobby Hutcherson, Thelonious Monk and even John Lennon [his anthem “Give Peace a Chance” ends the disc as an addendum to a sublime take on Donald Ayler’s tune “Out Pray’ed.”]

The CD also features an original journey called “In Touch With Dewey,” written by Wilson as a tribute to saxophonist Dewey Redman, who died shortly before the album was recorded. “Dewey was the scenic route,” says Wilson, who had performed in Redman’s band for 12 years. “He played all kinds of music, from standards to blues, from free to funk. He was universal.”

Tapped on the end of the tune is a voice-over that Redman recorded on Wilson’s very first album as a leader. “As Wave Follows Wave.”

While Arts & Crafts is embarking on a national tour, with stopovers in New York (Feb. 7-11) and Los Angeles (May 2-6), Wilson jokes that he’d love to score a gig on “Oprah.” “Hey, we’re a band for the people,” he says. “We play American music. I’m a father. I love spreading love. ‘The Scenic Route’ could be Oprah’s book of the month.”

He takes a comic pause, then adds, “If I could get a chance to speak, I know I’d charm her.”

OUTLOOK 2007: Topping the pack of artists launching solo recording careers in drummer Kendrick Scott’s band Kendrick Scott Oracle will release its inspired first outing, “The Source,” on World Culture Music in the second quarter. A member of the Terence Blanchard Group, Scott delivers a batch of imaginative originals with support from Lionel Loueke, Robert Glasper and Seamus Blake, among others.

Vocalist Sachal Vasandani bridges the jazz and pop worlds with “Eyes Wide Open,” his superb debut of distinctive originals and intelligent makeovers that teem with freshness. Co-produced by John Clayton and featuring guest appearances by Stefan Harris, Marcus Printup and Doug Wamble, the CD will be released April 3 on Mack Avenue Records.

 Alto saxophonist Benny Reid makes his noteworthy premiere with “Findings” Feb. 27 on Concord Jazz. His set, with nods to the soundscapes of the Pat Metheny Group, features fine originals with such bandmates as Aaron Goldberg and Reuben Rogers.

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R&B/HIP- HOP 

BY GAIL MITCHELL

BACK IN THE GAME

Lloyd Returns To The Airwaves With Hit Single

Up until this point, Lloyd's career hasn't gone quite as planned. "I came to play ball but was sitting on the sidelines," the R&B singer recalls of watching friends like Bobby Valentino score hit singles. "I kept thinking I could change the game if I had some time on the court."

The newly minted 21-year-old isn't sitting on the sidelines now. The singer/songwriter is jump-starting interest in his sophomore set, "Street Love," thanks to the top five R&B (and top 30 pop) single "You." Featuring rapper Lil' Wayne, the radio-friendly R&B/hip-hop love song is the first single from Lloyd's March 20 album—whose release will inaugurate the joint venture established last September between Izr Gott's the Inc. Records (formerly Murder Inc.) and Universal Motown. The departure from former distributor Def Jam occurred after Inc. principal Gott and his brother Chris were found not guilty of drug money-laundering charges.

Pumping up "You" is the song's bouncy beat, which incorporates a sample of "True" by Spandau Ballet (formerly utilized in the P.M. Dawn smash "Set Adrift on Memory Bliss"). Not to be discounted is the vocal interplay between Lloyd and Lil' Wayne, both of whom hail from New Orleans.

"Our fathers were both murdered when we were kids," says Lloyd, who was born in New Orleans and grew up in Atlanta. "Music is our refuge, our distraction from destruction."

It's that rapport, as well as the song's skillful blend of R&B and hip-hop, that has helped it click at radio. "This particular song has attracted both our older and younger listeners," WEDR Miami midday personality Shelby Rushin says. "Lloyd is a great R&B singer and good R&B is always a plus for the ladies, while Lil' Wayne brings in the hip-hop factor."

Describing his first album, 2004's "Southside," as "mellow and laid-back," Lloyd says he wanted to speed up the tempo this time. Helping him step on the gas were such productions as Big Reese, Jasper Cameron and Usher's younger brother J-Lack, plus vets like Gotti, 7 and Jazze Pha.

With "You" as the focal point, the Inc. VP of marketing Dan Cooper says the target market is wide for Lloyd's return. "He's a breath of fresh air; a young man who can attract females from 13 to 40," Cooper says.

Lloyd has already made several promotional stops, including BET and MTV, and the Inc. will take a more aggressive stance in another month in terms of radio/TV cross-marketing to reintroduce the artist to the marketplace.

The artist last landed on the singles charts three years ago when he climbed to No. 13 R&B and No. 24 pop with "Southside," featuring Inc. labelmate Ashanti. Prior to that, his career was marked by a series of ups and downs.

His first see-saw ride occurred in 2000 as a member of preteen group N-Toon. The Atlanta quartet, created by Klymaxx member Joyce Irby, made a minor dent with the DreamWorks single "Ready" but dissipated after its first album. Irving later secured a recording contract for the 14-year-old Lloyd with Magic Johnson's MCA-distributed MJM label. However, the label suspended operations before releasing his album.

Returning to Atlanta, Lloyd later signed with Gotti. In between working on his new album, Lloyd has stayed busy writing and recording with 8 Ball and MJS, Rick Ross, Young Jeezy and Lil Scrappy. He's also established his own company, Young Goldie Productions, and acquired new management under Jazze Pha's Shoo/Nuff umbrella.

Wrapping up recording of "Street Love" as of this writing, Lloyd says he's enjoying the moment but not taking anything for granted. "The persistence, hard work and patience are paying off," he says. "I feel I'm moving in the right direction musically."


The album is licensed worldwide to Naive from Bruno's own production company Teorama, which also handles her publishing. It was released Jan. 15 through Naive's continental Europe licensees, and rolls out internationally throughout April. Naive is discussing an American release with U.S. labels.

Naive international development director Thomas Lorain says its marketing strategy has always focused on Bruno's musical abilities. Despite her fame as a model, he notes, "It would have been a mistake to concentrate our efforts on lifestyle media."

Lorain acknowledges that English lyrics could curb French sales for "No Promises," but suggests that, internationally, they may bring wider radio access. He says "No Promises" shipped 120,000 units in France and the same amount in continental Europe; live shows are "under consideration."

NATURAL MAGIC: U.S. a cappella act Naturally 7 ended 2006 with a 20-date German tour promoting its fourth album, "Ready 2 Fly."

The septet is signed globally to former EMI Germany CEO Helmut Fett's Swiss-based production company Festplatte. Fest signed Naturally 7 in 2002 after seeing a live U.S. show, the band had previously released one album, "Non Fiction" (1999), through San Anselmo, Calif-based Primarily A Capella.


Most of the album is self-penned, published by Amator Music/EMI Music Publishing. But lead single "I Feel It"—already charting in Germany and France—in a version of Phil Collins' 1981 hit "In the Air Tonight."

Despite the novelty of the band's no-instruments approach, Fest says, "It was always clear to us we had to produce records with hit songs to compete on radio. That's what we're doing—the cappella aspect is added value."

Naturally 7 regularly plays U.S. colleges, and has Midwest shows planned for February and March. It does not have an exclusive U.S. agent; European dates are through Stuttgart, Germany-based Modern Web.

—Wolfgang Spahr

OUT OF AFRICA: During the past three years, South African singer/songwriter Simphiwe Dana has built a reputation as one of the country's leading new Afro-jazz artists.

The singer, published by Johannesburg-based Sheer Publishing, is becoming a fixture on Europe's world music circuit. After a busy 2006, dates in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain are already booked for 2007 through Stolpe, Germany-based agency Groot.

Dana released her second critically acclaimed album, "One Love Movement on Banzi Biko Street," domestically last November on Gallo Records. It features a range of collaborators that includes Japanese keyboard player Keiko Matsui and South African trumpeter Feya Faku.

Her 2004 debut for Gallo Records, "Zandisile," was released through a licensing deal with Warner Music International in global markets outside the United States during December 2006. (A U.S. release is not yet planned.)

Dana is "an artist of global stature," Gallo Music Group acting CEO Ivo Haarburger says. "Her release through WMI is a real step forward towards broadening the market for this really singular artist."

—Diane Coetzee
**REVIEWS**

**SPOTLIGHTS**

**ALBUMS**

**THE SHINS**

*Winning the Night Away*

Producers: James Mercer, Joe Chiccarelli
Sub Pop

**Release Date:** Jan. 23

The Shins' third album probably won't change your life, despite what Natalie Portman insists. But "Winc ng the Night Away" might actually be their best yet, a quietly ambitious effort that nudges the Shins' trademark indie pop into unexpected new directions. There's a drum machine beat, loping bass groove, strings and even flute on "Red Robbits," ghostly, reverb and noises on "Black Wave," and "Split Needles" drops the jangle in favor of a dark, moody and surreal lyric. More interesting is opener "Sleeping Lessons," which starts drumless and bubbly before flowing into a smile-inducing, major-key jam. Sweet, poppy tracks like the girl group-shifted "Turn on Me," "Phantom Limb" and "Australia" (with banjo) will give the devotees what they want and prove the Shins have few peers with those kind of things. A night well spent. —JC

**CAETANO VELOSO**

*Você* Producers: Pedro Sol, Moreno Veloso
NonSuch

**Release Date:** Jan. 23

Brazil's gift to popular music. Veloso has crossed many stylistic borders in his prolific career, from straight-up bossa to rule-breaking tropicila fusion. But on "Você," he shifts gears with robust novelty and delivers what he calls his "clandestine rock album." Conceived while he was preparing to record a collection of sambas, the disc spotlights Veloso blasting off with raw, beat-driven fuel in the company of gangsters who animate and invigorate him. He breaks out of the gate with the high-voltage "Outro/Otter," which opens with the lines, "I can't recognize me/Even when I go right by you." Recorded without postproduction Pro Tools fidgeting, "Você" features 12 originals (a first for Veloso) that run the gamut from cancy-razzy rockers to quirky new-wave soundscapes to lyrical slow songs, all sung in Portuguese. Highly recommended. —DO

**JOHN MELLENCAMP**

*Freedom's Road*

Producer: John Mellencamp
UMe/Universal Republic

**Release Date:** Jan. 23

For three decades plus, Mellencamp's music has represented Middle America and its blue-collar values. "Freedom's Road" is no different. That's not to say his latest release is stale. The garage band feel of the album—which was, in fact, recorded in a garage—breathes new life to Mellencamp's common-man themes. Irked, his first album of originals in five years shows he's as in touch with the working man as ever. The collection has a decidedly retro feel, but that doesn't mean it isn't relevant. And while some question the "Authority Song" singer's credibility for a lowing Chevy to use "Our Country" to advertise a sport utility vehicle, it doesn't diminish the song's insightful look into rural America. Other highlights include his duet with Joan Baez on "Jim Crow," the haunting "Rural Route" and the ultra Mellencamp-y "My Aeroplane." —KT

**CHRISTINE AND THE QUEENS**

*The Good, the Bad and the Queen*

Producers: Danger Mouse
Virgin

**Release Date:** Jan. 23

If Danger Mouse's last big project, Gnarls Barkley's "Sung TAther You," was his best work yet, "The Good, the Bad and the Queen" is his best music since. "Warbirds," he acknowledges that "my attitude is fundamentally off." Let's hope that's a bearable price for artistry that's so fundamentally on." —WR

**OF MONTREAL**

*Hissing Fauna, Are You the Destroyer?*

Producer: Kevin Barnes
Polyvinyl

**Release Date:** Jan. 23

Of Montreal's latest album finds frontman Kevin Barnes at his funkiest. The dance party that kicked off 2005's "The Sunlandic Twins" rolls on here with revamped synths, infectious hooks and disco beats. But on many songs, Barnes' lyrics take an introspective and emotional turn. "How can I explain to you here and not here too," he bemoans on the nearly 12-minute "The Past Is a Grotesque Anımal," which, with its unvarying momentum, grows a bit tiresome after the first five minutes. Barnes clearly has not lost his edge, though, as evidenced by the "boopy" restraint reference to "Labyrinth Pomp" and his hip hopish/rockish style vocals on the undeniably funky "Fobarge Fails for Shugge." Whatever his mood, Barnes is otherwise in fine form, as the kids up dancing and doing, really, what more could you ask for? —JM

**DEERHOOF**

*Friend Opportunity*

Producer: Deerhoof
Kill Rock Stars

**Release Date:** Jan. 23

Much like 2004's "Milk Man," Deerhoof's new set reinvents what it means to be "accessible" for the trio. Experimental elements like darting distortion chords in "The City" or the held-frowning formlessness on "Whither the Invisible Birds" rear their heads amid recognizable pop, rock and dance beats. But experience and musical growth have helped Deerhoof overcome issues more compelling. Throwing Muses drummer David Nancicio provides a driving backbone, while the cello and violin of Martin and KimberleeMcCarrick surge and ebb, enhancing the drama without softening the edges. The refusal, or inability, to embrace tranquility makes Hersh's best music so magnetic. In "VeRto," he acknowledges that "my attitude is fundamentally off." Let's hope that's a bearable price for artistry that's so fundamentally on." —WR

**KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD**

*10 Days Out (Blues From the Backroads)*

Producers: Steve Jordan, Reprise

**Release Date:** Jan. 23

Kenny Wayne Shepherd passed for an old blues soul when he was just 18 and released his first album, "Lerder's Blues." To be sure, at 29, he can hang convincingly with some real old blues souls on "10 Days Out (Blues From the Backroads)," a CD/DVD project resulting from a soujourn through the South with Steve Ray Vaughan's rhythm section, Double Trouble, in tow. The DVD documentary does a fine job of capturing stories and reflections from legends and lesser-known alike, and it's all the more moving because six of the performers died between the time they were filmed and this release. But the real celebration is found in the CD and its unexpurgated 15 performances, ranging from a fierce (is there any other?) rendition of "The Thrill is Gone" with B.B. King to a fiery Tina Marie with Bryan Lee on a hot "Born in Louisiana." —GG

**ERIC BIBB**

*Diamond Days*

Producer: Glen Scott

**Release Date:** Jan. 23

Eric Bibb has an engaging, earthy feel for blues, folk and gospel—it is so innate that every song he tracks nowadays is a seamless blend of genres. "Diamond Days" is Bibb's unique musical alchemy and quite possibly his most perfect expression of what he's about to do. —CONT roller

*Continued on p. 56*
from >>p55

musician. These dozen original tunes each move in their own way. The songwriting is superb, the production values are solid, and Brit’s performance is deep. Listen to a great-grandma’s advice on “Tail Cotton,” the sweet groove of “Shine On” and the shout-down gospel rock of “In My Father’s House.” Drop in on this disc anywhere you like. There’s no wrong place to start getting acquainted with this extraordinary piece of work.—PVV

SOUNDTRACK
VARIOUS ARTISTS
Jump In!
Producers: various
Walt Disney
Release Date: Jan. 9

The soundtrack to the Disney Channel’s latest musical gets repetitive, but even with all the frenetically paced pop-hop tunes about giving all you got. Then again, it is a movie about double dutch. Actress Keke Palmer (“Akeelah and the Bee”), who co-stars in the movie, doesn’t even with her vocals and neither does designated dreamboat Corbin Bleu (“High School Musical”). But there are some quirky gems, notably the dancehall-hip hop production on Jupiter Rising’s “Go! (Jump In Mix),” the mature voice of Jordan Pruitt on “Jump to the Rhythm” and the “I Love Rock”-inspired “Gotta Lotta” by Prima J. Other Mouse-bitten old-school tunes include T-Squad’s “Vertical,” which channels Cameo’s “Rs’hit Word Up,” and an inevitable House of Pain rehash, “Jump.”—ABY

GOSPEL
LASHUN PACE
Complete
Producers: LaShun Pace, Justin Gilbert

EMI Gospel
Release Date: Jan. 31

PACE’s latest offering is easily the strongest and most fully realized of her already estimable career. Having built a reputation as one of the most gifted purveyors of hand-clapping, foot-stomping gospel, Pace thankfully shows not the first inclination to tug at her deeply planted roots nor any need for concession to the contemporary R&B influences prevalent in much of the genre today. In fine, powerful voice, she pours herself into material (almost all original and self-produced) that runs from rafter-rattling romps (“All Things Working”), to blues-drenchedianne to pain and divine deliverance (“The Blood Completes It All”), and a high-voltage collection of traditional hymns. As musical modernity casts an ever-increasing influence over gospel, Pace’s natural, brilliant affinity to its origins is pure ecstasy.—GE

CHRISTIAN
PHIL KEAGGY
Dream Again
Producer: none listed
Strobie Records
Release Date: Jan. 30

Keaggy is an acclaimed guitarist (the late Chet Atkins was a fan) who usually lets his fingers do the talking. However, his singer/songwriter persona takes center stage on this highly personal acoustic effort. When it comes to vocal delivery, Keaggy definitely falls more in the stylistic category, but what he lacks in range, he makes up for in earnest charm and sincerity. The subjects here are close to his heart. “It’s You and Me” was written for his longtime wife Bernadette. “Kathy’s Song” is a loving tribute to his sister, and “There With You” was penned for daughter Olivia. On the other side of the creative coin, “Why” takes a long hard look at the turmoil in today’s world. Keaggy may be revered as one of the industry’s best guitarists, but this album reveals his pen is just as mighty as his ax.—DE

VITAL REISSUES
PLACEBO
Meds
Producer: Dimitri Tikovoi
Virgin
Release Date: Jan. 23

It’s been around for nearly a decade, but Placebo is a band of-the-moment. Next-generation goth (or is it emo?) kid faves like Panic! at the Disco and My Chemical Romance point to the British band’s influence. Singer Brian Molko does the nasal, androgynous thing but doesn’t quite cut the mustard. Most of all, the band is getting better. “Meds” is the tightest album in its catalog by far—that raw pop-rock collection that doesn’t lose intensity through its catchiness, with lyrics that upgrade teenage angst with adult experience. No wonder that Virgin opted to reissue it with three new tracks—including a suitably vampiric cover of Kate Bush’s “Running Up That Hill”—after AstraWalkers gave it a shot last year. Guest vocalists Alison Mosshart and Michael Stipe play well off of Molko’s adrenalized whine, which—like Billy Corgan’s, when the production was this good—never gets grating.—KM

SNOW Patrol
You’re All I See
Producer: Garrett “Jacknife” Lee
Writer: G. Lightbody
Polydor
Release Date: Jan. 13

This optimistic rocker is crafted from starry-eyed pop hit “Chasing Cars,” which jumped out of “Grey’s Anatomy” and peaked at No. 5 on the Billboard Hot 100, offering a catchy love letter to a girl who is “Cinematic razor sharp/ A welcome arrow through my heart.” Intoxicated by just two chords, nice-guy frontman Gary Lightbody unleashes another giant hook and manages to sound humble and sincere, almost embarrassingly. With its polished buzz-saw guitars and open-hearted chorus, “You’re All I Have” hews close to “Hands Open” the first single that name-dropped pop albums, but atones Del Amitri and the Goo Goo Dolls. There is nothing original here, only simplicity gridded to perfection, which sometimes is more than enough.—SP

POPPY
NICKELBACK If Everyone Cared
Producer: Nickelback, Joey Moi
Writer: Nickelback
Publishers: various
Roadrunner

The umpteenth release from Nickelback’s four-times platinum “All the Right Reasons” is no less potent than previous single “Far Away” or its predecessors. Chad Kroeger and team have hit-making down to a science—not to dismiss the art behind same—though, granted, there is certainly a feeling behind their output. In any case, the lyric of “If Everyone Cared” is keenly relatable. “I never dreamed you’d be mine/But here we are tonight/Singing amen, I’m as always, the music is front-loaded with guitars and driving percussion, making what is essentially a pure pop ballad. Nickelback isn’t pretending to be anything it’s not, and that’s fine. It continues to do and most of all, the band is getting better. “Meds” is the tightest album in its catalog by far—that raw pop-rock collection that doesn’t lose intensity through its catchiness, with lyrics that upgrade teenage angst with adult experience. No wonder that Virgin opted to reissue it with three new tracks—including a suitably vampiric cover of Kate Bush’s “Running Up That Hill”—after AstraWalkers gave it a shot last year. Guest vocalists Alison Mosshart and Michael Stipe play well off of Molko’s adrenalized whine, which—like Billy Corgan’s, when the production was this good—never gets grating.—KM

COUNTRY
BLAINE LARSEN Spoken Like a Man
Producer: Tim Johnson, Rony Lee Feek
WRITERS: D. Fraser, E. Hill, J. Kern
Publishers: various
BNA

This latest single, culled from Blaine Larsen’s “Rockin’ You Tonight,” is an immensely likeable uptempo number steeped in fiddle and steel guitar, and teeming with personality. Penned by David Fraser, Ed Hill and Josh Kern, the lyric paints a picture of a devoted married man, uninterested in any extracurricular barroom action. In the midst of this high buddies’ bragging, he has one of those warm, friendly voices that draws you instantly into a lyric and makes you want to hear the song again and again.—DEP

TRIPLE PLAY

LUCINDA WILLIAMS Are You Alright
Producers: Hal Willner, Lucinda Williams
Writer: L. Williams
Publisher: Warner/Chappell/Lucy, JMI
Lost Highway

The lead single from “West,” Lucinda Williams’ first studio album in four years, is a lonely slow dance mourning the loss of a loved one who suddenly disappeared without saying goodbye. Gently touching on country, blues and gospel, the rootsy Louisana singer/songwriter sings with her trademark wounded vocals, accompanied by sparse, tremelo-washed guitar leads that sneak gracefully across the bittersweet tune, honest and sad, soulful. “Are You Alright” echoes the naked confessions of “Essence,” released in 2001, and has the same intimacy of a postcard written in an empty bar after 2 a.m. It’s simple, achingly beautiful. Williams as a solo, unique and fearless artist aside.—SP

AC

SIMPLY RED So Not Over You
Producers: Andy Wright, Mick Hucknall, Mark James, Danny Saxon
Writer: Hucknall, Woodroffe, Grant, Osuji, Hood, Thompson
Publishers: EMI/Bluesky/Universal
Simplyred.com

Amid so many hits at various formats during the past two decades, Simply Red returns with an original song that exudes the intimate warmth that has always defined lead Mick Hucknall and maintains his relevancy at AC radio. “So Not Over You” is among the most innately organic releases of his career, instantly familiar and relaxed with its retro-soul production, melodic ease and grade-A vocal quality. Not about to let Red quack requires a hard sell; it’s simply a great song with an inherent hook that adds elegance to the airwaves. A practiced pro who has yet to let down the masses.—CT

www.americanradiohistory.com
‘Hannah Montana’ Led Fourth-Quarter Album Sales

Coincidence or sign of where the music business has gone? For the second year in a row, a compilation—rather than an artist’s album—acted as the market darling during the crucial fourth quarter.

The quarter—in which album sales were down 10% from the same period of 2005, according to Nielsen SoundScan—was also dominated by albums released no earlier than September, a trend seen for the past few years.

The soundtrack to “Hannah Montana,” released Oct. 24, was the biggest seller for the last three months of the year, followed by the “Now 23” compilation. “Hannah” sold slightly less than 2 million copies through the week ending Dec. 31, while the “Now” edition, released Nov. 7, totaled 1.8 million by the end of the year. Those were the only albums to top 1.5 million during the quarter, compared with five in the fourth quarter of 2005. “Hannah” was the best seller for the holiday window that extended from Thanksgiving week through Dec. 24, posting 1.2 million during that period. “Now 23” sold almost an identical quantity during those weeks, finishing just 3,000 units shy of the soundtrack’s total.

The 1.8 million that “Now 23” rang in from its release week through New Year’s Eve actually made it the top seller for the final two months of the year, almost 91,000 more than the “Hannah” soundtrack sold in those two months.

That echoed the prior Christmas season, when “Now 20” powered 2.06 million from its Nov. 1 release, through the end of the year, making it the dominant seller of both the last quarter and the last two months of the year.

Nickelback’s “All the Right Reasons” was the second best seller for the fourth quarter of 2005, posting just shy of 2 million copies from its Oct. 4 release through the end of the year.

The seventh best seller of 2005’s last quarter managed to be top dog during the period between Thanksgiving week and Christmas Day. Of the 1.4 million copies that Eminem’s hits set; “Curtain Call: The Hits” scanned between its Dec. 6, 2005, release date and the close of that month, 1.2 million happened before Christmas Day, making it the highest selling holiday period, despite the handicap of not having Thanksgiving week sales.

“Now 20” was the second best seller in that window, trailing “Curtain Call” by 7,000 copies.

Aside from “Now 26” and Nickelback, the other three albums that surpassed 1 million during the last quarter of 2005 were Kenny Chesney’s “The Road and the Radio” (1.8 million), Carrie Underwood’s “Some Hearts” (1.6 million) and Mariah Carey’s “The Emancipation of Mimi” (1.5 million). Among the five that beat that threshold, Carey’s “Mimi,” released April 12, was the only one that reached stores before October.

HOLIDAY TRAFFIC: The dominance of recent releases in the fourth quarter fits the rhythm of recent holiday seasons.

Only eight of the 20 best sellers in the last quarter of 2005 had been released earlier than September of that year. That number declined even more in 2006, when just five of the final quarter’s top 20—and none among the top six—arrived before September.

Carrie Underwood’s “Some Hearts” and Nickelback’s “Reasons” were the only albums that made the top 20 in the closing quarters of 2005 and 2006. In the quarter recently ended, Underwood’s ranked seventh (1.2 million) while Nickelback was 14th in that pack (966,000).

The only other 2005 release to place among the 20 best-selling albums in the last quarter of 2006 was Hinder’s “Extremely Common Behavior” (13th, 1.14 million sold). The top-selling across an album for the quarter just past was Evanescence’s “The Open Door,” posting 1.4 million from its Oct. 2 release through Dec. 31.

If you paid attention to Top Holiday Albums, you wouldn’t be surprised to learn that Sarah McLachlan had the best-selling seasonal title of 2006, scanning 759,000 from its Sept. 22 release through year’s end. That’s 39% more than the best-selling holiday set of the prior year.

McLachlan’s “Wintersong” led the Holiday list for eight weeks and peaked at No. 7 on Billboard 200. The biggest seasonal album of 2005, Il Divo’s “Christmas Collection,” rang 544,000 through year’s end, but hit stores a month later than McLachlan’s did in 2006.

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CHART WATCH

Market Watch

A Weekly National Music Sales Report

Weekly Unit Sales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Album</th>
<th>Digital Downloads</th>
<th>Total Tracks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This Week</td>
<td>8,019,000</td>
<td>691,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Week</td>
<td>9,417,000</td>
<td>1,040,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>-16.0%</td>
<td>-14.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>This Week Year</td>
<td>9,390,000</td>
<td>453,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>-13.8%</td>
<td>95.7%</td>
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*Note: Album units are also counted under album sales.

Weekly Album Sales (Million Units)

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>20.8 million</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>17.5 million</td>
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*Includes retail and online album sales (T&I) with 10 pence downloads, measurable to the album unit.

Year-To-Date Album Sales By Store Type

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year-To-Date Album Sales By Store Type</th>
<th>10 million units</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall Sales</td>
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<td>Digital Sales</td>
<td>39,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Store Sales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>570,000,000</td>
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</table>

*Includes retail and online album sales (T&I) with 10 pence downloads, measurable to the album unit.

For online, Jan. 14, 2007. Figures are rounded. Compiled from Nielsen SoundScan's retail sales and online sales reports for the period ended Dec. 31, 2006. Nielsen SoundScan is owned by RIAA and Mediametric.

Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data | 57

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<td>Dreamgirls</td>
<td>Move Along</td>
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<td>Foo Fighters</td>
<td>How to Save a Life</td>
<td>The Price of Love</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taylor Hicks</td>
<td>The Game</td>
<td>Taylor Hicks</td>
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<td>Doctor's Advocate</td>
<td>Jump In</td>
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<td>The Chantels 2</td>
<td>Face the Promise</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Hinder</td>
<td>Greatest Hits Vol. 2</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
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<td>Universal Music Group</td>
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<td>Truth Magic</td>
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<td>Tim McGraw</td>
<td>I Just Came Natural</td>
<td>Come What May</td>
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<td>RBD</td>
<td>(18.98)</td>
<td>From the Soundtrack</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.L. Cool J</td>
<td>You Never Gotta Look Back</td>
<td>A Fever You Can't Sweat Out</td>
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<tr>
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- **The Price of Love**: 18.98
- **Taylor Hicks**: 18.98
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**THE BILLBOARD 200**

- **Top 200**
  - **JANUARY 2007**
  - **CHARTS LEGEND** on Page 72

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**THE BILLBOARD 200**

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Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data
### R&B/HIP-HOP ALBUMS

| ARTIST | Title | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 4 | Week 5 | Week 6 | Week 7 | Week 8 | Week 9 | Week 10 | Week 11 | Week 12 | Week 13 | Week 14 | Week 15 | Week 16 | Week 17 | Week 18 | Week 19 | Week 20 | Week 21 | Week 22 | Week 23 | Week 24 | Week 25 | Week 26 | Week 27 | Week 28 | Week 29 | Week 30 | Week 31 | Week 32 | Week 33 | Week 34 | Week 35 | Week 36 | Week 37 | Week 38 | Week 39 | Week 40 | Week 41 | Week 42 | Week 43 | Week 44 | Week 45 | Week 46 | Week 47 | Week 48 | Week 49 | Week 50 | Week 51 | Week 52 |
|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
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Data for week of JANUARY 27, 2007 | CHARTS LEGEND on Page 72

Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data
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BETWEEN THE BULLETS: "WATCHING" ATKINS HIT THE TOP

With 37.3 million audience impressions, Rodney Atkins' second top five becomes his second No. 1 on Hot Country Songs. After two weeks in the runner-up slot, Atkins' "Watching You" steps 2-1. He first competed in Country's top five when "Honestly (Write Me a Lie)" peaked at No. 4 on the chart dated Jan. 3, 2004. Atkins' inaugural No. 1 came when "If You're Going Through Hell (Before the Devil Knows)" reigned for four weeks starting with the Aug. 12, 2006, issue. Atkins' new single reaches No. 1 in its 18th week, a much quicker climb than the 30 weeks it took "Going Through Hell" to reach the top. Following a 43-week chart run, that single finished the year as Billboard's most-heard country song of the year.

Three monitored stations each turn in more than 1 million listener impressions during the tracking week, led by 1.4 million impressions at WUSN Chicago. The others are KPLX Dallas (1.2 million) and KEEY Minneapolis (1.1 million). —Write Lesson
### Japan Singles

**January 15, 2007**

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<tr>
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<td>Go</td>
<td>Nippon Columbia</td>
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<tr>
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<td>GRACE BEKES</td>
<td>NEW MAN AND WOMAN (FIRST LTD EDITION)</td>
<td>EMI JAPAN</td>
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<td>NEW SIX DAY WOMAN</td>
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<td>EAGLE &amp; THE EAGLE</td>
<td>EMI JAPAN</td>
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<td>KUROE NAMIDA (CD+DVD)</td>
<td>JVC KAGAYA</td>
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### United Kingdom Singles

**January 14, 2007**

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<td>2</td>
<td>PROPER EDUCATION</td>
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<td>STAY IN THEIR EYES</td>
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### Germany Singles

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<td>KUROE NAMIDA (CD+DVD)</td>
<td>JVC KAGAYA</td>
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### Spain Singles

**January 17, 2007**

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<td>EAGLE &amp; THE EAGLE</td>
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### Italy Singles

**January 15, 2007**

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### Belgium/Dutch Singles

**January 17, 2007**

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### Swedish Singles

**January 15, 2007**

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### Ireland Singles

**January 17, 2007**

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<td>PROPER EDUCATION</td>
<td>LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL</td>
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<td>STAY IN THEIR EYES</td>
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### New Zealand Singles

**January 17, 2007**

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**January 15, 2007**

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<td>MY LOVE</td>
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ALBUMS

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TOP CHRISTIAN

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TOP GOSPEL

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RADIO AIRPLAY

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Data for week of JANUARY 27, 2007 | For chart reprints call 646-654-4632

Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data
## Albums

Sales data compiled from a comprehensive pool of U.S. music merchants by Nielsen SoundScan. Sales data for R&B/hip-hop albums charts is compiled by Nielsen SoundScan from a national subset of core stores that specialize in those genres.

- **At the top of the Hot 100 for at least 50,000 units.**
- A dollar volume of at least 25,000 units and $1 million in sales at suggested retail price.
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<tr>
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<th>Album Title</th>
<th>Certification</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Week</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOP INDEPENDENT ALBUMS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>George Jones and Merle Haggard</td>
<td><em>Kiss the Moon</em></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>BOP</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tom Waits</td>
<td><em>Bad as Me</em></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>BOP</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave Matthews Band</td>
<td><em>Come Together</em></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>BOP</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td><strong>TOP TASTEMAKERS</strong></td>
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<td>The Beatles</td>
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<td>Aaliyah</td>
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<td>The Flaming Lips</td>
<td><em>Concert For The Homeless</em></td>
<td>N/A</td>
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### Singles

Compiled from a national sample of data supplied by Nielsen Broadcast Data Systems. Charts are ranked by number of gross audience impressions, computed by cross-referencing exact times of airing with Arbitron listener data. The exceptions are the Rhythm & Top 40, Adult Top 40, Adult Contemporary, Modern Rock, and Adult R&B charts, which are ranked by local detections.

### Recurrent Rules

Songs are removed from the Hot 100 or Hot 100 Airplay charts simultaneously if they have been on the Hot 100 for more than 20 weeks and rank below 50. Songs are removed from the Hot R&B/Pop and Top 100 Airplay charts simultaneously if they have been on the Hot R&B/Pop or Top 100 charts for more than 20 weeks and rank below 50. Songs are removed from the Pop 100 and Top 100 Airplay charts simultaneously if they have been on the Pop 100 for more than 20 weeks and rank below 50. Titles are removed from Hot Country Songs if they have been on the chart for more than 20 weeks and rank below 10 in detections or audience, provided that they are not still getting enough audience to bullet. Songs are removed from the Adult Top 40, Adult Contemporary, Adult R&B, and Hot Dance/Club Play charts if they have been on the chart for more than 20 weeks and rank below 15 (for Modern Rock and Latin) or if they have been on the chart for more than 12 weeks and 10 weeks.

### Singles Sales Charts

The top selling singles compiled from a national representative sample of retail stores, music merchant, and Internet sales reports collected, compiled, and provided by Nielsen SoundScan. For R&B/Hip-Hop Singles, sales data is compiled from a national subset of core retail R&B/Hip-Hop stores by Nielsen SoundScan.

### Independent Sales

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### Recent Sales

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MUSIC VIDEO

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Music Video Monitor

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HELP WANTED

Display Advertising Account Exec
Billboard Magazine/VNU Business media

Billboard is looking for a Display Advertising Account Exec (magazine) person to work within our sales team and report to the VNU Marketing Services Team. This individual should have a passion for music and have some experience in media sales. Music industry experience a plus, but not necessary. Responsibilities include selling display advertising, working with our specials team and working with the Marketing Services Team under our parent company VNU Business Media. Excellent entry sales + growth opportunity.

Display Advertising Account Exec will:
- Track their daily sales activity using a CRM tool
- Focus on existing transferred business and develop new business
- Work with the outside sellers on Special Feature sales
- Report to the Marketing Services team and adhere to best practices for aggressive sales growth.

The job demands a self-starter with the ability to juggle multiple projects and deadlines, the flexibility to respond to the unexpected, and good humor under pressure.

To apply please email a cover letter and resume to classifieds@billboard.com, no calls please.
Please put “Display Sales Account Exec” in the subject line.

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OUTRAGEOUSLY BEAUTIFUL
Lakewest property on the crown jewel of Monroe lakes, 90 min. from NYC secluded estate to be built with pool, tennis, docks. Work directly with Architect and Builder. High end top quality. $2.9mil. Call 570-226-0100

WOODSTOCK, NY
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NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE OF ASSETS
THE SONGWRITER COLLECTIVE, LLC

Notice is hereby given that Fortress Credit Opportunities I LP, a Delaware limited partnership, as a lender and as agent on behalf of the lenders (the “Agent”) under that certain Loan Agreement, dated as of March 1, 2004, as amended (the “Loan Agreement”), among The Songwriter Collective, LLC, a Delaware limited liability company, as borrower (the “Debtor”), the Agent and the lenders, having postponed the public sales scheduled for November 4, 2005, December 14, 2005, January 31, 2006, March 14, 2006, April 25, 2006, June 6, 2006, July 18, 2006, August 29, 2006, October 17, 2006, November 29, 2006 and January 9, 2007, intends to sell at public sale in accordance with the provisions of the New York Uniform Commercial Code, certain personal property assets of the Debtor, generally described as all of the Debtor’s right, title and interest of every kind and nature in and to all accounts, chattel paper, deposit accounts, documents, electronic chattel paper, equipment, general intangibles, goods, instruments, inventory, investment property, payment intangibles and software belonging to the Debtor, in each case whether tangible or intangible, wherever located or situated, including all rights to a portfolio of musical compositions, including, in some instances, copyrights of the musical compositions, the right to and interest in any and all revenues and licenses derived from such musical compositions, and all claims and causes of action related to the musical compositions and at any time and all other rights of the Debtor of any nature whatsoever in the musical compositions (the “Collateral”). A more detailed description of the Collateral will be provided to you upon execution of a confidentiality agreement.

The public sale will take place at the office of Sidley Austin LLP at 787 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10019, on Tuesday, February 20, 2007 at 11:00 a.m., New York time. The Agent reserves the right to cancel the sale, without notice, in its entirety, or to adjourn the sale to a future date. The Agent may further adjourn the sale herein described to another date from time to time, before, during or after commencement of bidding, without written notice; be made at any time and place appointed for such auction, or any adjournment thereof, and without further notice, such auction may be made at the time and place to which the auction may have been so adjourned. Interested persons should take notice that the Collateral will be sold on the following terms and conditions:

1. All bids must be given orally at the public sale.
2. The Agent reserves the right to bid for and purchase the Collateral and to credit the purchase price against the expenses of sale and principal, interest and any and all other amounts due and payable to the Agent pursuant to the terms of any and all indebtedness secured by the security interest in the Collateral.
3. The Agent has sole discretion to determine which offer is the highest or best offer, and to reject any offer which it deems to be insufficient.
4. Concurrently with the acceptance of any bid, the prospective purchaser shall be required to execute and deliver to the Agent the Asset Purchase Agreement, a copy of which may be obtained by contacting one of the person’s identified in the final paragraph of this notice, containing terms of sale and conditions precedent to the Agent’s obligation to sell, in each case, in addition to those set forth herein, including, without limitation, the requirement that the sale of the Collateral pursuant to the Asset Purchase Agreement be consummated no earlier than 30 days following execution thereof.
5. Upon acceptance of any bid, the prospective purchaser shall be required to deposit (the “Deposit”) with the Agent earnest money in an amount equal to ten percent of the purchase price. Such Deposit shall only be refunded to such prospective purchaser as, and to the extent, provided in the Asset Purchase Agreement. In all other cases, the Agent shall have the right to retain such Deposit. If such sale of the Collateral is consummated with such prospective purchaser, the full amount of such Deposit shall be applied to the purchase price. If such sale is not consummated, the Agent shall have the right, but shall have no obligation, to reoffer the Collateral for sale, without further notice. The prospective purchaser shall not be entitled to any interest on the Deposit held by the Agent, whether or not the Deposit is required to be refunded to such prospective purchaser by the Agent pursuant to the Asset Purchase Agreement.
6. No bids may be withdrawn once made, but no sale is final until accepted by the Agent.
7. Only cash or cashier’s check or other immediately available funds will be accepted for the Deposit or for payment of the purchase price. The bid of any prospective purchaser who fails to tender proper payment may be rejected and the Agent may, subject to the other terms hereof, (i) accept any alternative bid made at the sale, in which case the Agent shall have no obligation to reoffer the sale, accept additional bids, or notify any other bidders of the acceptance of such bid, or (ii) reoffer the Collateral for sale without further notice, in each case, at the Agent’s option.
8. In the event the Agent is unable to consummate any sale and deliver the Collateral to a purchaser, then the sole liability of the Agent to such purchaser shall be to refund the purchase price, if any, previously paid to the Agent.
9. The Agent will announce at the outset of the public sale whether the Collateral will be sold in whole or in part, and whether the Collateral will be sold in one or more lots.
10. Subject to satisfaction of all of the conditions precedent to the Agent’s obligation to sell the Collateral pursuant to the Asset Purchase Agreement and as a condition thereto, consummation of the sale of the Collateral will be made immediately upon receipt by the Agent of the purchase price and shall be evidenced by delivery of the Collateral by the Agent to the purchaser, BUT WITHOUT DELIVERY OF A BILL OF SALE. WITHOUT GUARANTEE OF SIGNATURES, WITHOUT PAYMENT OF ANY TRANSFER OR OTHER TAX, AND WITHOUT REPRESENTATION OR WARRANTY BY THE_AGENT; AND SUBJECT TO ALL DEFENSES.
11. The above terms and conditions of sale may be subject to additional or amended terms and conditions to be announced at the time of sale.
12. In the event that any dispute arises between two or more bidders, the Agent may decide the same or put the Collateral up for sale again and resell to the purchaser submitting the best bid, as determined by the Agent. In all cases, the Agent’s decision shall be final.
13. All bidders and others persons attending this auction agree that they have full knowledge of the terms set forth above and contained in the Asset Purchase Agreement and agree to be bound by the terms hereof and thereof.
14. The Debtor shall have the right to redeem the Collateral in accordance with, and only to the extent provided for, under applicable law.

Persons desiring further information as to the public sale of the Collateral, and the terms and conditions relating thereto, and/or desiring to obtain copies of the confidentiality agreement or the Asset Purchase Agreement, may contact either Martin Jackson (212/839-6726) of Sidley Austin LLP, 787 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10019 or Colleen McDonald (415/772-1207) of Sidley Austin LLP, 555 California Street, San Francisco, California 94104, counsel for the Agent.

January 20, 2007
Everyone was all smiles following Little Big Town's recent performance of its hit single, "Good as Scars," on 'Late Night With Conan O'Brien.' Pictured from left, are WBBN's Jim Westbrook and Kimberly Roads, Conan O'Brien and Jet's Karen Fairchild and Phillip Sweet. (photo courtesy of kari westover)

Jennifer Holliday, center, Broadway's original "Dreamgirls," whose version of "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going" topped the Billboard R&B singles chart for four weeks in 1983, recently stopped by the Billboard offices in New York, where she chatted with R&B/hip-hop correspondent Hillary Croskey, left, and single reviews editor Chuck Taylor. (photo courtesy of ivan braidsford)

The "Dreamgirls" cast appeared at the 6th Annual Golden Globe Awards held Jan. 15 in Los Angeles. From left are Golden Globe nominee for best performance by a actress in a supporting role, Jennifer Hudson; Golden Globe nominees for best actress in a musical or comedy Beyoncé K. Knowles and Jamie Foxx. (photo courtesy of kari westover)

Hidden Beach Recordings' new artist, R&B singer Keke Young, center, shared a moment with label president Steve McKeever, right, and his uncle, NBA star basketball prostar Wayman Tisdale before taking the stage in Los Angeles recently. Keke's debut album, "The Rise and Fall of Keke Young," is set for release March 27. (photo courtesy of mark demulder)

Saw the stage in Los Angeles recently. Keke's debut album, "The Rise and Fall of Keke Young," is set for release March 27. (photo courtesy of mark demulder)

Hidden Beach Recordings' new artist, R&B singer Keke Young, center, shared a moment with label president Steve McKeever, right, and his uncle, NBA star basketball prostar Wayman Tisdale before taking the stage in Los Angeles recently. Keke's debut album, "The Rise and Fall of Keke Young," is set for release March 27. (photo courtesy of mark demulder)

Hidden Beach Recordings' new artist, R&B singer Keke Young, center, shared a moment with label president Steve McKeever, right, and his uncle, NBA star basketball prostar Wayman Tisdale before taking the stage in Los Angeles recently. Keke's debut album, "The Rise and Fall of Keke Young," is set for release March 27. (photo courtesy of mark demulder)
MUSIC SOUNDS BETTER WITH GOO

Twenty years since the release of their first album, the Goo Goo Dolls continue to evolve all cylinders. The band's latest tour in support of 10th album "Let Love In" launched Dec. 5 and wrapped the United States through March. Band leader Johnny Rzeznik tells Track that the trio—with Robby Takac and Mike Malinin—then heads to the United Kingdom and Ireland, followed by a shed tour in the States through the summer.

The Goos are also building a recording studio in their hometown of Buffalo, N.Y. "We're never going to make a dime out of it, but the city has never had a proper recording studio and it's something we want to do," Rzeznik says. "It's completely a not-for-profit thing for friends and family and some local talent that we want to help out. If we were trying to go into the studio business, we'd be killed and disillusioned."

In December, the group earned the distinction as the biggest act in the history of Billboard's Adult Top 40 chart, with 12 top 10 hits, including latest "Let Love In." Its first was "Name" in 1995, followed by No. 1s " Iris" and " Slide" in 1996.

On the road, Rzeznik says he is all about sharing those well-known titles with fans. "I've seen bands who almost get resentful of their hits; they look at success with contempt. It's a very artsy thing to do. Puck that," he says. "I say, be grateful that you have the hits, because most people would give their left nut to have even one. Play your ass off and prove yourself every night that you have the chance."

LEFTFIELD GOES CHEESE ROUTE

Currently doing the rounds on British TV is an unlikely ad sync. "Release the Pressure," the opening track from Leftfield's groundbreaking 1995 debut album "Leftism," is being used as the soundbed for a commercial campaign for—get this—a cheese product aimed at kids. Golden Valley's Cheese Strings, to be precise. Who would have thought Leftfield could "do" cheese?

RETURN OF THE BEEHIVE

Amy Winehouse is a superstar in her native United Kingdom, but she's just now testing the waters in the United States with her second album, "Back to Black," due March 20 via Universal Republic. Winehouse made her New York debut Jan. 16 with two sold-out shows at New York's tiny Joe's Pub in front of an industry-heavy crowd, which included Mark Ronson, who produced some tracks on the new album—and who received a major shout out from Winehouse.

With backing provided by Sharon Jones' ace Dad Kings, Winehouse played songs from both her records ("Frank" being her British debut); highlights included the reggae-grooving "Just Friends" and " Tears Dry On Their Own," which was re-released twice because the band came in too fast.

Throughout, Winehouse swilled Amaretto Sours purchased for her by the audience and came off wonderfully nutty onstage. Hits like " Rehab," " Back to Black" and "You Know I'm No Good" (how we pray, successfully, for an in-the-ﬂesh Ghostface cameo) proved Winehouse has the pipes for a prosperous entry into the 50 states.
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