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OPINION

Behind Apple CEO's PR Move, Reason For Hope?

Steve Jobs offered his “Thoughts on Music” via his Jan. 26 post at apple.com, which might have been more aptly titled “Thoughts on What Would Make Apple Happy.” Make no mistake: when the CEO of a company valued at more than $70 billion claims his throat—ever if it’s a hip, tartly rendered threat—he’s taking care of business.

The timing was no coincidence. Legislative pressure is mounting (see report, page 13) for Apple to allow its digital rights management system, FairPlay, to be licensed by other digital music stores and players, so that consumers can buy their music anywhere they want and play it on any player they want. It’s odd, but I read and re-read Jobs’ essay, and never saw mention of the showdown brewing with Apple across Europe.

Jobs doesn’t want to acquiesce on this point. If Apple has anything, historically, it’s sharing its technology or taking an open-license approach (à la Windows, whose DRM essentially protects every digital song sold anywhere that isn’t iTunes). Jobs’ argument—a red herring—is that sharing such technology would result in FairPlay being hacked, cracked and rendered impotent.

For one, Apple’s DRM is not unrestrictive, most never bother with the various workarounds that are already in place—or the reality is that no album purchased from iTunes can be burned to CD and re-ripped as unprotected MP3s. Windows DRM has been hacked, but that doesn’t mean the business model of Napster, MTV’s Urge or Yahoo!—a few Microsoft clients—has fallen to ruins. As Ted Cohen, a now-digital media consultant but once a VP at EMI Music, always told me of DRM: “If someone is going to steal your car, you probably can’t stop them. But you can lock your garage.”

Jobs laid out three hypotheticals in his essay: continuing on the current course, which he never actually dismisses; licensing FairPlay, which he dismisses for the previously mentioned ideas; and the major label’s lumping DRM, which hasn’t worked to halt music piracy, Jobs says, and may never.

Staying the current course is a lose-lose for the music business, Apple and consumers, and probably not an option for much longer. Consumers are left with a confusing myriad of DRM roadblocks that keep digital music purchases from playing universally. Even if courts around the world don’t force Apple to open its DRM, digital sales growth is slowing, and the revenue it is generating is nowhere near what’s required to offset the losses of just the last year or two, let alone the losses that have been mounting, steadily since 2000. So what of letting go of DRM? Jobs makes some compelling points, particularly where he notes that the music business in 2006 sold some 2 billion protected songs via digital stores, but more than 20 billion songs “completely DRM-free,” via CDs. It’s a staggering truth, made all the more staggering when you add in DRM-free illegal downloads—more than 15 billion in 2006, according to peer-to-peer network tracking firm BigChampagne. As Jobs notes, less than 3% of the music on the average iPod is actually purchased from the iTunes store.

But Jobs’ numbers ultimately make as strong an argument for DRM as against.

Jobs presumably singled out the music business because music-related issues are forcing his hand in Europe, and the music business makes such an easy target in the court of public opinion. Where was Hollywood in Jobs’ “Thoughts”? Will the major movie studios be willing to offer their movies for sale online, free of any protection scheme? Warner Music Group Chairman/CEO Edgar Bronfman Jr. probably stated it best, at the most recent WMA earnings call: “The notion that music does not deserve the same protections as software, television, films, videogames or other intellectual property, simply because there is an unprotected legacy product available in the physical world, is completely without logic.”

The music business has an opportunity to take action on the DRM front, but that window of opportunity isn’t getting any wider. This week’s magazine sees the biz still lagging 13% from last year, and with all the closings and layoffs of just the past six months, and with artists like Norah Jones selling less than half of what she sold with previous first-week sales, it’s hard not to wonder just how much blood is left in that stone.

The biz has two challenges to solve—one with technology and one with public perception. As to the latter, it was great to see Billboard speaking out on these issues in a public forum. Sadly, the exec in the piece was it only because of the timing of his conference call. Do you know how many other major label sources, at any level, spoke out on the record about Jobs’ comments? Give yourself a stomach of your guessed audience.

Particularly in the blogosphere, the core of the crucial, behavior-shaping public opinion is staffed with those often more interested in sticking it to the Man than in sticking to the facts. Music execs need to keep providing salient arguments, and letting the public decide. I spoke with key label execs from across the biz in the day or two following Jobs’ essay, and the arguments are out there. The debate is raging online, and that’s a fact the biz can no longer afford to stay above.

When it comes to tech, Jobs is right. DRM isn’t working. It’s confusing, clumsy and haphazardly applied. The music business and all of its partners need to agree on an umbrella, simple DRM standard and implement it. Stop the bleeding with future generations of music. Lock the garage. Get it on CDs, get it on digital music, and make it one DRM that all systems can use. We’ve all heard the reasons why this would be difficult, but really, at this point, what options does the music business have? Keep hemming and hawing—there goes another percentage point or two off your bottom line.

The beauty and the irony here is that the makings of that system already exist. It’s called a ‘free market’ you guessed it.

Apple must license its DRM. Yes, it will take money and time to work out our contracts and cross-platform glitches. And yes, there’s a ‘gulf’ between jobs’ whims and the reality of an entire copyright industry. Those, I hope, are issues that the business can start resolving with Apple when this discussion moves from the headlines to the negotiating table.

When he launched iTunes, Jobs pulled the music business kicking and screaming into a smart digital world. Perhaps turning back this time, will be FairPlay.

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When you think of New York, you may think of Times Square, the Empire State Building or Central Park. But there’s so much more to New York than these iconic landmarks.

New York offers a diverse array of options for visitors, from world-renowned museums and galleries toockey rides and Statue of Liberty tours. Whether you’re interested in art and culture or outdoor activities, there’s something for everyone.

Some of the most popular attractions in New York City include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art and the American Museum of Natural History. These museums are just a few blocks away from each other in Manhattan’s Upper East Side.

For a unique experience, you can visit the Empire State Building Observation Deck, which provides breathtaking views of the city skyline. You can also take a tour of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, which are both located in New York Harbor.

If you’re looking for something more active, there are plenty of options to choose from. You can take a boat ride around Manhattan, go on a helicopter tour or even rent a bike and explore Central Park.

New York City is also home to some of the most famous Broadway shows and cultural events in the world. From plays and musicals to concerts and live music venues, there’s always something going on.

In conclusion, New York City offers something for everyone. Whether you’re interested in art and culture or outdoor activities, this city has it all. So if you’re planning a trip to New York, be sure to check out some of these attractions and events. You won’t be disappointed!
TIMBERLAKE GOES MOBILE

Justin Timberlake is taking his image mobile. Timberlake unveiled a mobile video channel Feb. 9 on Verizon Wireless' VCast video service called JTV. The move will make Timberlake the first artist to have his own branded channel on the VCast service, with content developed exclusively for the service. The JTV service will begin airing in March with fashion and music programming, followed by movie and lifestyle content added in May or June.

WHO REVEALS TOUR PLANS

Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey announced the Who's 2007 European tour plans Feb. 8 in London. The itinerary begins May 16 in Lisbon, Portugal, the first of 29 dates extending to July 9, confirmed by promoter CPI. The rock legend will also play the Glastonbury Festival June 24.

MAKING WAVES

Music Cruises A Win-Win For Artists, Fans

Rocking the boat: **LYNYRD SKYNYRD** on the Gimmie 3 Days cruise, top and above right; **SAMMY HAGAR** on his Are We Having Any Fun Yet? cruise, left.

The latest news from Insider

AEG INKS DEAL FOR PRU CENTER

Anschutz Entertainment Group has nailed down the contract with the National Hockey League's New Jersey Devils to manage the new Prudential Center in Newark, N.J. Additionally, AEG's national concert touring division, AEG Live, will book concerts and other special events for the 19,500-seat arena, which will also be the home of the Devils. The $375 million Prudential Center, slated to open in October, will be the first major sports and entertainment venue to open in the nation's top media market in more than 25 years.

LATEST NEWS

Glastonbury Festival added entertainment to Portugal, the European DEAL NEWS

TO TOUR PLANS

THE

DEAL

and on

Portugal, the

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DEAL

NEWS

to July

2007

Are

Web

We are having any fun

yet?

the

Gimmie 3 Days
cruise, and it's about

a good vacation at the

same time.

along with three live
performances from Skynyrd during the three-day cruise, 2,200 fans who bought tickets ranging between $999 and $1,999 for a two-person cabin were treated to additional concerts from 38 Special and a number of other acts.

Unlike Hagar's cruise, Gimmie 3 Days was a full-ship charter, meaning it wasn't part of a larger, nonmusical cruise. Sixthman co-founder Tod Elmore says the company rents boats from Carnival Cruise Lines and pays headliners a flat guarantee with a potential for additional revenue. "The model doesn't support paying a band for four days' worth of concerts," Elmore says. "Headliners typically get a performance guarantee plus back-end depending on the success of the event. Any of the other bands are getting a fee to come and play."

One challenge in orchestrating a music cruise is getting acts to commit in advance, which is why Sixthman scheduled Gimmie 3 Days, the Rock Boat and Spanish Days early in the year when touring is generally slow. "We need a 12- to 14-month lead time," he says. "It's hard for an artist to commit that much time in advance unless they know that the don't have much else going on."

The cruise line has seen an increased interest in music-themed cruises during the last four years. But Weinstein cautions artists who are entertaining the idea of chartering ships for live performances. "It is a large financial commitment," she says. "You're not just putting a concert in a venue. You can't build the venue, it will come at great cost. You've got to market, market, market and push, push, push."

The cost of renting a Carnival ship depends on the size of the boat, time of the year and number of days, but Weinstein declines to give a price range, saying only that "it's very, very large dollars."

That said, Schilling says the Gimmie 3 Days cruise grossed $1.5 million in cabin sales alone; a number that excludes alcohol and merchandise sales.

If there's a company that knows a thing or two about full-ship charter music cruises, it's Jazz Cruises, which currently hosts six on Holland America Line and Carnival. "Every single one has been a sellout," executive director Michael Lazaroff says.

This year's Latin Music Cruise, which sailed in late January, was hosted by Arturo Sandoval, and last in the year: Marcus Miller will host the North Sea Jazz Cruise.

Prices are about $4,000-$5,000 for a double-occupancy cabin. The past six Jazz Cruises have each grossed approximately $4.5 million in cabin sales, and the success of the concept is backed by the company's high customer return rate. "We have a 60% business repeat level," Lazaroff says. "When it's a full-ship charter, everyone is there for the same reason and there's a tremendous camaraderie."

Touring by Mitchell Peters
UPFRONT

R&B
BY HILLARY CROSLEY

URBAN RENEWAL
Mark Pitts Named Urban Music President At Jive

Mark Pitts has been promoted to president of urban music at Jive, Billboard has learned.

Pitts has had his finger on the pulse of urban music since 1993 when he co-founded Bad Boy Records with Sean Combs. In addition to managing the Notorious B.I.G. and Nas, he has nurtured Usher's smash hit "Confessions" album while serving as Jive's senior VP of A&R. Of late, he has reared Chris Brown, who was the best new artist at the 2006 Billboard Music Awards.

In an exclusive interview with Billboard, Pitts discusses his accomplishments and the challenges that lie ahead.

What's your favorite accomplishment at Jive?
I never really got a chance to have success that was mine. Even with Usher's "Confessions" success, where Usher and I basically lived together for five months to finish that record, the credit ultimately goes to L.A. Reid because he found Usher. But that's why I'm so proud of Chris Brown, because he's mine.

What are some of Jive's strengths and weaknesses that you plan on addressing?
Our presence in rap is garbage, and the crazy thing is we started out as a rap label with UGK and Souls of Mississippi. We're not as strong from "A," introducing an artist, to "B," making their single buzzworthy. Unfortunately, hip-hop is a lifestyle and it's making people understand that. Sometimes when you're dealing with corporate people you can't always explain it. You just have to do it. I also want to improve the morale because everyone has been here for 10-15 years. It demonstrates how they stand by their team, so they just need new energy. I want to have "president's night" every month where the staff bowls and has drinks. You'll learn more from the assistants and directors than the top-heavy people.

How has Jive changed since you've been in A&R?
Before when you thought of Jive, it was Britney, 'N Sync and Backstreet Boys, and now 70% of Jive's business is black music. We're an R&B label and I don't have to go anywhere to find new acts—people are finding me. At Jive, I'll break Chris Brown and Natasha, my new female artist, because pop is what we do best. Then I can focus on one artist at a piano that takes time to break like Raheem DeVaughn.

Why do you think the Clipse project missed commercial success?
Their album wasn't a single-driven album, but it was hot. They have their own lane and we realized our mistakes afterwards. The energy I saw at their shows wasn't translated correctly. And they also came at a time where the South is on fire and the East Coast is still trying to get it back. We thought Jay and Nas were going to save us.

Who are you adding in the publicity department?
Wendy Washington's here now, so we'll be stronger on the urban side. We're already strong on the pop side, so it'll balance itself.

What albums do you have slated for 2007?
Chris Brown and Usher, he's coming in the fourth quarter, Raheem DeVaughn, UGK, Joe. R. Kelly will probably drop in the third quarter. And my newest signee, Natasha, will drop this year, God-willing. Natasha's between Ciara and Beyoncé, but she's closer to Beyoncé. She's 17 years old, beautiful, and I think she's going to be like a black Britney. I've never met an artist that has no fear the way she does. She's a natural.

COLUMBIA PARTNERS WITH NETWORKING SITE
Gather.com, a social networking community designed for adults, has formed a partnership with Columbia Records to provide content for a new music channel on the site. Columbia will develop the channel to promote its acts, new releases and other original content. Artists signed to the label will participate in online chat sessions with Gather members. The deal is part of a larger Gather content initiative consisting of multiple new content channels, including books, food, health, money and movies.

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THE BEATLES' "LOVE" (APPLE/CAPITOL)
While some merchants cite "Love" as not living up to expectations due to a weak setup, others argue the album should have come out for the holiday and say they would have been angry if it didn't. Nonetheless, there is a consensus that the buying public was left in the dark about Beatles producer George Martin having reworked the material. "A lot of our customers are unaware of the connection, that it was done by George Martin and it was born out of the Cirque du Soleil show in Vegas," Rigby says. Retailers agree that lack of customer awareness resulted in weaker than expected sales, even though the album has sold 1.2 million units. Others say the Beatles delivered the album too late to execute a proper setup. EMI didn't return a call for comment, but sources within the company point out the album was originally scheduled for a November release, but moved to January and then whisked back to Dec. 29. Newbury's Melo says, "That just killed the record."

But sources within Universal Music Group say the Geffen album was rush-released due to a leak in the second week of December. "Piracy may not be an issue to retailers," one source says. "But it certainly is to us."
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Relocating Rick Rubin
Moving The Producer To Columbia Could Be A Challenge

Columbia Records is wooing star producer Rick Rubin to take the role of co-chairman of the label. But landing the Def Jam Records co-founder, best-known in recent years for his work with the Red Hot Chili Peppers, System of a Down and Johnny Cash, comes with its own set of cultural, strategic and logistical challenges.

For starters, Rubin is based in Los Angeles and often works out of his home. A move to Columbia would require joining the button-up executive ranks (where facial hair choices are usually more conservative) and likely relocating to New York where he would be in demand in the office. What's more, as chairman he would be embroiled in day-to-day marketing and promotion issues—areas in which his experience is limited.

Columbia also will have to make concessions in its working relationship with Rubin. Sources say he will still be free to produce projects for other labels. He currently is at work on a pair of major 2007 releases for Warner Music Group's Linkin Park and Metallica.

"The track record of producers running record labels isn't great," says one major label executive at a rival label familiar with the situation. "What you want is for Rick to do what he does."

Of course, those issues are moot unless he can first free himself of an existing deal with WMG, which still has three years left on it. Rubin just moved his American Records imprint to Warner a year ago. The imprint—home to Cash, Neil Diamond and Tom Petty—is distributed under the Warner Bros. Records umbrella. There's no word yet as to whether Warner will attempt to block a Rubin move to Columbia or if American will come with him or stay put. Representatives for Sony BMG, WMG and Rubin all declined comment.

Assuming a settlement with Warner can be reached, sources say Sony BMG executives see a big upside in adding Rubin—even if it means shaking up a creative executive team that finished 2006 at No. 1 in the U.S. market share among major label imprints. Current Columbia chairman Steve Barnett also guided the label to the top spot last year on the back of hits from Beyoncé, Dixie Chicks and John Mayer, reportedly would get a title bump but lose at least some creative control.

To be sure, Rubin already has an established track record of delivering hits for Columbia. And his arrival would give a jolt of executive star power to the label's already glittering roster. (No one else there is doing cameos in Jay-Z videos.)

Rubin produced the Dixie Chicks' Grammy-award-nominated Columbia release "Taking the Long Way," which ranked as the No. 9 top-selling album last year with more than 1.8 million copies sold, according to Nielsen SoundScan. He's also produced a string of hits from rock act System of a Down—most recently 2005's dual release "Hypnotize," "Mezmerize," which has sold more than 3 million units combined. The label is distributed under a joint deal between Columbia and American.

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DEBATING DRM

A Steve Jobs Statement Steps Up The Digital Rights Discussion

The pig-iron of technology companies and consumer-advocacy groups pressuring the major labels to abandon support for digital rights management-protected downloads just got a lot heavier. Apple CEO Steve Jobs jumped on top of the stack with a Feb. 6 open letter to the industry stating that "DRMs haven't worked, and may never work, to halt music piracy," and later adding that "convincing the labels to license their music to Apple and others DRM-free will create a truly interoperable music marketplace."

Private invited label executives polled by Billboard say that the move is a way for Apple to sidestep hear the company is getting in Europe to make its iTunes/iPod ecosystem compatible with third parties (see story, below). And they are quick to note that the film and TV industries were not cited in Jobs' letter. To be sure, the surprise statement sets up a contentious tone for upcoming content-licensing negotiations between Apple and the labels. As Warner Music Group CEO Edgar Bronfman Jr. said in a Feb. 8 investor conference call, "Frankly, manifestos in advance of those discussions are counterproductive."

"We advocate the continued use of DRM in the protection of our and our artists' intellectual property," Bronfman said. "The notion that music does not deserve the same protections as software, television, films, videogames or other intellectual property, simply because there is an unprotected legacy product available in the physical world, is completely without logic or merit."

The following is a survey of other leading responses to the Jobs statement.

THE INDUSTRY WEIGHS IN

"It's one of the greatest deflections I've ever seen. He's trying to get rid of his class action suit over being anti-competitive by blaming it all on the record labels. As if they get rid of everything that protects their assets, everything will be fine... It's like when we wanted variable pricing—he called the record companies greedy. It wasn't about raising prices. It was about different tiers of pricing. He's great at it."

TED COHEN, TAG Strategic managing partner

"No matter how this is presented this is a reversal of the strategy that they have employed over the last four years. They've never made DRM or interoperability a public issue and we've never heard about it as a private issue... Jobs cannot be happy that he has to open. It’s not been part of the plan. But we think it's great. We welcome the pressure on the majors. We think they have to go this way. We've felt this way for a long time. They have no other options. We think it's the right move for them. We think it will make consumers happy and grow the digital music industry faster and help offset more dramatically the CD decline."

JON POTTER, Digital Media Azon, executive director

"We like the opportunities DRM gives innovators. You can't have a subscription service without DRM. You can't enforce a monthly rental contract without it. So this is not an anti-DRM thing. Steve Jobs isn't anti-DRM. He built a DRM. What he is saying to the labels is: 'Don't keep pointing the fingers at everybody else. You have to make a choice. You can either have DRM-free music and great user experience, or you can have an Apple environment and a great user experience, but you can't have both.'"

DAVID PAKMAN, eMusic president/CEO

"I think the timing of Apple's industry paper on this subject is a direct reaction to the massive Windows Media DRMmusic-enabled cell phone ecosystem that is fast developing around Apple. Apple will be seriously marginalized by the huge cell phone manufacturers carrying WM DRM so, naturally, Apple now thinks it's a great time to drop DRM."

TERRY McBRIEDE, Netwerk CEO

"It's not just about DRM. It's about Apple's attempt to control the ecosystem. This is about a drop in iTunes sales, which Apple's been trying to fix for a while. And it's about Apple's strategy to expand into other areas."

CHRIS GOROG, mp3classic CEO

EUROPE VS. APPLE

Consumer Groups Across The Continent Follow Norway's Fight For iTunes Interoperability

Across Europe, consumer groups have been confronting iTunes, attempting to enforce interoperability. Most significantly, in Norway, Apple CEO Steve Jobs' new stance on digital rights management (DRM) comes only a few weeks after a Jan. 19 ruling by the Consumer Ombudsman that the company's FairPlay system contravened the country's Marketing Control Act.

The ruling determined that, by restricting consumers' use of music, Apple's FairPlay DRM technology broke contract law in Norway. Apple has until March 1 to outline its plans to resolve the various issues raised by the Ombudsman and has to implement those—or prove it is substantially on the way to implementing them—by Oct. 1.

Actions in other European countries have yet to result in legal rulings either for or against Apple. A country-by-country rundown:

SWEDEN

On March 6, 2006, the issue of iTunes interoperability was raised by the independent Swedish Consumer Council, a government consumer association representative confims, but no ruling has been made yet.

FINLAND

On Aug. 21, 2006, the government's Consumer Agency and Ombudsman office raised the issue of interoperability with Apple, suggesting that the iTunes terms and conditions contravened the country's Consumer Protection Act.

"Right now," the agency's legal adviser Juha Erkkiläinen says, "we are waiting for the company's reply to us about how they are going to [make] some changes in their contract terms."

DENMARK

Billboard understands that although no complaints have officially been lodged with the body, the Danish Consumer Ombudsman has opened a dialogue with Luxembourg-based Apple iTunes SARL, the umbrella organization for the various European iTunes online services.

GERMANY

In July 2006, Berlin-based, government-financed, politically independent consumer organization umbrella group Verbraucherzentralen (VZBZ) began lobbying for more user-friendly DRM systems, targeting the German parliament and the public. In January, a VZBZ spokesman said, "We expect Apple to make appreciable progress towards interoperability by September 2007."

THE NETHERLANDS

On Jan. 25, independent Dutch consumer rights organization Consumentenbond filed a formal complaint against Apple with the Dutch government's Netherlands Competition Authority (NMa). No date for the NMa hearing has yet been set.

FRANCE

On Aug. 3, 2006, the Information Society act (also known as the DADVSI bill) became law. It made interoperability mandatory, although the independent regulator that is supposed to rule on interoperability issues has yet to be created. Consumers body UFC Que Choisir had lobbied for the legislation. In a statement issued Feb. 7, UFC Que Choisir called on the minister of culture and communication, Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, to take a stance to ensure that the four major labels sell their music in DRM-free form. UFC Que Choisir public affairs director Julien Bourgon says that if iTunes sells its songs without DRM, UFC Que Choisir will drop ongoing legal action against Apple to force interoperability. The action was launched in February 2005 in the Court of First Instance in Paris.

- Tom Ferguson
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NEW DEALS FOR NEW ACTS

Latin Labels Revising Contracts, Management Relationships

In an effort to offset declining record sales, Latin labels in and out of the United States have been quietly revising the contracts they offer new and up-and-coming acts. Increasingly the contracts stipulate that a percentage of ancillary revenue generated by the artist, such as concerts and sponsorships, stays with the label. While such deals have progressed to the point that several indie labels actually have management branches in place, most major labels currently do not. The big exception is Sony BMG, which in January opened a talent development division for Latin America that includes management services for some, but not all, Sony BMG acts. Little information has been released, but already signed to the division are rock act Vicentico; new Mexican act Pambo and Chile’s Barbara Muñoz, among others. Beyond Sony BMG, different labels have different deals, which in turn vary with each artist and within each territory. The agreements are mostly applied to developing acts that require heavy label investment, and they don’t take a cut from individual management contracts that artists may have.

“At this point all the contracts we’re signing have a percentage of rights that includes revenue outside of record sales,” Warner Music Latin America chairman Igigo Zabala says, noting that Warner has had such deals in place for the past two years.

Jesús López, chairman of Universal Music Latin America/Universal Music Venezuela, says his labels get a percentage of shows and sponsorships for some acts.However, he adds, “We are not going to create a management company that competes with managers. In fact, some managers welcome these new arrangements. “Just by virtue of what the label does for a developing act, I think it’s fair that they get a percentage of the artists’ career,” says Amir Aga, a partner at management company Setrak International, whose client list includes up-and-coming acts Jeremias (signed to Universal Music Latino) and Motel (Warner Mexico). Both give a percentage of revenue to their labels.

Still, having such deals in place doesn’t necessarily mean a label does more for an act. “If the label brings something to the table I think it’s fair to commission it,” says Rebecca Leon of Lonfiish Management, who handles JD Natasha. “But, if the only incentive is they're marketing the album or putting it on the radio, well, there has to be a little bit more incentive than that.”

While many acts enter these revenue-sharing contracts willingly, some have been known to turn them down and try their luck with other labels. “It’s fair in the long run if the labels did a great job with these sorts of things [tours and sponsorships],” says one manager whose client declined a contract with a major label. “But I don’t think many labels are prepared for this.”

Yet as it turns out, the practice of a label taking a percentage of an artist’s gains beyond record sales is neither new nor confined to Latin America. In many for East markets, like Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, it is common practice.

High-profile companies with such arrangements include Terry McBride’s Netwerk operation in Canada, which functions as a management company and label. In Europe, the biggest example is Sanctuary, which some five years ago expanded its management base to include a full-blown record operation with label, publishing and management, among other operations, under one roof. The company has had a troubled last 18 months and is scaling down its model.

In the Latin realm, J&N Records, which specializes in tropical music, is one of many labels that have long had publishing, management and booking under one roof. “My issue is many managers did nothing for their artists,” J&N president Juan Hidalgo said, although he does work with some outside managers. “They don’t invest, they don’t bring deals to the table.”

“The way the business stands now,” he says, “we need to be in the management arena to be profitable.”

Just take a look around, and you’ll find Americans becoming more accepting of the idea of going green, turning organic and cutting out the trans fats. Been to a Whole Foods Market recently? Shoppers pack the aisles. Even McDonald’s is offering more healthful fare. And music is being used to promote this healthier lifestyle. Kellogg’s Special K campaign, featuring Collective Soul’s “Better Now,” still resonates after nearly two years.

A Healthy Hit

Jenny Craig Deal Helps Kimberley Locke Help You

Days later, they received a call from a "Celebrity Fit Club" and signed that deal and then Jenny Craig came along. It was like a chain reaction," Locke recalls.

Sharell adds that his client was being offered deals from other plus-size companies at the time. "But Kimberley said, 'I want to lose weight and get in shape and live a healthier life.' So, no plus-size deals." When it came time to negotiate Locke’s "Fit Club" deal, Sharell remained cautious. It was important that Locke be profiled on the show as a working entertainer, he explains. "We arranged for the show’s cameras to be at the video shoot for ‘Change.’” Fans of the show can expect to see footage from this shoot on an upcoming episode.

And since each "Celebrity Fit Club" contestant chooses his/her own nutritional food program, Locke will have the opportunity, on camera, to give props to Jenny Craig. This is the type of synergy that makes for a perfect arrangement, Piffer says. "You have Kimberley’s album ["Based on a True Story"], the single, VH1 and Jenny Craig all coming together at the same time.”

Curb Records VP of marketing Jeff Tuffeer agrees. "Our goal is to foster a true partnership that allows greater awareness and exposure to Jenny Craig’s brand and its product line as well as enhances [our] ability to expose and sell Kimberley’s music.”

Assessing her current situation, Locke says, "Everyone wants the big bang. But if one element is missing—say, we don’t get support from radio—the other stuff won’t go unnoticed, I’ll remain very visible. Trust.”

Or, as current Jenny Craig spokeswoman Kirstie Alley says in the company’s new TV spot, “Snap!”

For 24/7 branding news and analysis, see billboard.com/branding.
French Connection
Quebec Bands Tour United States sans Translation

TORONTO—After the Fire, sparks are flying again in Montreal.

Slightly more than two years ago, Montreal-based Arcade Fire (Merge Records) emerged onto the global stage and a media focus fell upon the city's music scene. But while fellow English-language acts Stars (EMI Music Canada) and the Dears (MapleMusic/Universal) drew international attention, Montreal's French-language alternative acts were largely overlooked.

That could be changing, with key indie bands from the city heading out to engage with U.S. audiences—while still singing in French. Montreal's most prominent francophone alternative band, punk/pop quintet Malajube, began a 26-date American tour Feb. 17 in New York, booked by New York-based Dave Kaplan at the Agency Group.

"After Arcade Fire made its breakthrough, a lot of Montreal bands got the idea that they, too, could make it big outside Quebec," Malajube singer/guitarist Jules Mineau says. "But thought the only way of doing it was by singing in English. That's lame."

"It's tricky to make French [lyrics] rock," he adds, "but it would also be tricky not singing in our own language."

Quebeckers, excepting Celine Dion, have not attempted to scale the U.S. market. "Previously, rock bands from Montreal were only Quebecois and very pop," says Gourmet Delice, director of Montreal-based management/booking firm Bonsound. "That doesn't cross borders."

Malajube attracted domestic media and retail attention in July 2006 as the only French-language act shortlisted for Canada's inaugural Polaris Music Prize (based on the United Kingdom's Mercury Prize).

"I adore Malajube," says Toronto-based Tim Baker, buyer with Sunrise Records, which operates 28 stores in Ontario. "They were my favorite Polaris act—there's a complete surprise that the French can play rock'n'roll."

Malajube has since picked up enthusiastic coverage from U.S. media, including Pitchfork, Wired, Penthouse and Spin—which devoted a full page to the band in January.

Malajube is signed to Montreal's Dare to Care Records. Mineau says its debut, "Le Compteur Complet" (2004), has sold 15,000 units domestically, mainly in Quebec through non-Nielsen SoundScan outlets. "Trompe'Oeil" (2006) has sold 25,562 units nationally, according to SoundScan. After initial U.S. availability as an import, it was released via local/regional distributors Oct. 31 and has sold 1,717 units to date.

Another Montreal French-language alternative rock act, Les Breastfeeders, has toured the United States twice since the August 2006 Canadian release of its second album, "Les Matins de Grandes Sors," on Blow the Fuse/Potion 3.

"Singing in French is exotic to Americans," guitarist Sunny Duval says. "Initially, we were scared, but when we played garage and punk venues, audiences liked us."

Nielsen SoundScan reports "Les Matins" has sold 3,493 units in Canada. It will be released Feb. 13 in the States through distributors Re- volver U.S.A. and Carrot Top.

Malajube and Les Breastfeeders are managed by Bonsound, which books the latter's U.S. shows.

Both bands emerged from a mid-'90s indie francophone scene based around performances by such punk/hardcore names as Vulgaires Machins (on Montreal indie Indica) and the now-defunct Such la Marde in local lofts and clubs.

Malajube, Les Breastfeeders, French/English-language electro-pop act Call Me Popsy (Semprini Records) and unsigned punk rock band Les Fumants have added college radio airplay and Internet exposure to their live base. Now airplay from Quebec's commercial radio stations is helping spread the word.

"We're playing Malajube," says Guy Brouillard, music director of French-language top-40 station CKOI Montreal. Although, he adds, "the rougher stuff like that [only] gets played after 8 p.m."

Malajube and Les Breastfeeders have also been supported by Montreal-based video channels Missique Plus. PD Patrick Binette says both bands' music is more accessible than that of previous Quebec acts that primarily listened to French repertoire. "Young musicians today in Quebec have listened to Canadian, British and American rock bands," he says. "Their music reflects that."

"And the language isn't a barrier," Sunrise's Baker says. "The music is the most important thing. Do people complain about listening to the Gipsy Kings or Ricky Martin in Spanish? French? Big friggin' deal."

"Going to Iraq was a hard-hitting, ground-breaking, intense rock-'n'-roll ride. The audiences were awesome, totally appreciative of our efforts and they loved rocking out to our tunes. It was great to bring the troops some homemade, American rock-'n'-roll. Touring with Armed Forces Entertainment was a life-changing experience; unlike anything we've ever done. We can't wait to co it again."

Ethan Isaac, lead singer
U.K. labels are beefing up last year's inaugural British Music Week promotion and taking it back to Germany.

"Last year was a mini-test—this year we're scaling it up," BMI director of communications and development Steve Redmond says. If BMW 2007 proves successful, a rollout to other territories is possible, Redmond adds.

Aiming to raise consumer awareness of British talent in the world's fourth-biggest music market, BMW 2007 takes place April 20-28 in three German cities. The BPI says Nielsen Music Control figures credit U.K. repertoire with 12% of music sales in Germany during 2006. According to the IFPI, the German market was worth £1.77 billion ($2.29 billion) in 2006, figures are not yet available for 2007. Berlin, Hamburg and Cologne have been confirmed as BMW 2007 host cities. Lineups are not yet finalized but the four majors and key independent labels—including Domino Records and Sanctuary—are planning showcases.

"This is a great way to draw attention to some great British talent," EMI Music U.K. & Ireland senior VP of international marketing Mike Allen says. "If there's a message going out, saying 'British,' then why not?" Allen says EMI is committed to a strong presence this year, having had no artists at BMW 2006. Last year's 18-show, 40-act program in Berlin (May 19-26) drew total audiences of 8,000. Participating acts included Belle & Sebastian, the Feeling, the Rifles, Mohair and Boy Kill Boy.

Alt-rock band Mohair used BMW 2006 as a foundation-laying exercise in Germany, says its London-based manager Will Williams of Transmission Management. "We won a lot of fans at press and radio," he reports, "and we've had labels sniffing around as a result. Everything is set up and we will hit the ground running in Germany when we do release there."

"We also got to showcase to [leading promoter] Peter Riegel, Concerts," he adds, "which took us. If we hadn't have gone [to BMW], we'd be starting from scratch."

Mohair released its debut album April 2006 in the United Kingdom on the Earcandy label, followed by a September U.S. release on New York-based Gruenion Records. On Feb. 25, the band kicks off U.S. dates with pop/rock act Razorlight, which also performed to a German audience for the first time at BMW.

A spokesman for the band's Blackbook Management says BMW offered an "excellent opportunity" to kick-start the German campaign for its self-titled sophomore set on Vertigo/Universal. However, despite topping the U.K. chart, the album peaked at No. 43 on Germany's Music Control listing after its August release.

Universal Music Germany president/CEO Frank Briegmann insists BMW 2006 was "an important promotion facet and very successful in terms of marketing." But several German retailers describe the sales effect as minimal.

"In terms of advertising, British Music Week was 'sold well, but we didn't notice any increase in our sales," says Albert Wagner, owner of Berlin single-store independent L+P.

Stefan Schmidt, buyer at Berlin music merchant Dussmann, also reports little effect. "We advertised British Music Week in-store at short notice," he says. "But I think their [targeted] clientele tends to download music rather than buy it in the shops."

Redmond concedes that garnering German press coverage for BMW 2006 presented "an uphill battle," despite the involvement of such media partners as public broadcaster Radio Eins and lifestyle magazine Intro. Along with Berlin promoter Karerra Klub, both have signed up again for 2007.

Redmond says BMW 2007 is being assembled on a "surprisingly low budget" with cooperation from promoters FKP Scorpio (Hamburg) and Peter Riegert Concerts (Cologne), Berlin-based ticketing agency Trinity Concerts and music retail chain Saturn.

The British Embassy in Berlin will host a BMW launch event, and overseas trade body British Council will organize a three-night U.K. music video retrospective in the city.

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**MORE THAN 99 LUFTBALLONS**

**Initiative: Musik Seeks To Spread German Music Beyond Country’s Borders**

BERLIN—The German government is refusing to give up on its music export office, despite the failure of its GermanSounds project, which closed at the end of 2006.

In April, a new public/private body, Initiative: Musik, will launch, backed by the record industry, authors body GEMA—and a greatly increased budget.

Initiative: Musik's exact structure and staffing have yet to be decided. But while GermanSounds existed on an annual budget of just €100,000 ($234,000), the new body will receive annual government funding of €1 million ($1.3 million) for projects, with the music industry chipping in a further €500,000 ($651,000) per year to run the office.

German minister for culture and media Bernd Neumann pledges to "join forces with the music industry to develop an effective promotion model for pop music."

German Sounds was exclusively an export office, aimed at promoting German talent overseas. During the next few weeks, German politicians and music industry representatives will thrash out the priority level for the new body's wider brief, which adds supporting new talent in Germany and promoting music education in schools to the role of exporting music from Germany's independent sector.

"GermanSounds failed to fulfil the expectations and hopes of the music industry," Neumann says. "By working with the music industry, we hope to be able to combine economic and cultural aspects to optimum effect." In its 2003-2006 existence, GermanSounds did arrange international tours for more than 80 independent German artists. But some in the industry remain highly critical of the export office concept.

Michael Karnstedt, Hamburg-based European president of publisher peermusic, says: "I haven't seen any successes of GermanSounds and do not believe that such an office is capable of launching artists abroad."

Others—like Hamburg-based Jens-Markus Wegener, managing director of publishing and production company AMV Talpa Music—welcome the idea of a beefed-up replacement. "The old export office failed because in a changing market we need a new structure for selling domestic repertoire," he says. "But it's time to help German music get the worldwide recognition it deserves."

The Initiative: Musik move comes as domestic repertoire is on a high in Germany. In 2006, German acts accounted for 53.24% of total singles retail value (up from 51.41% in 2005) and 38.09% of albums retail value (up from 35.29%), according to IFPI Germany. The share has risen every year since 2003, when the respective shares were 45.3% and 29.5%.

Traditionally, the most important markets for exporting German-language music have been Austria (where, according to the local IFPI), German acts accounted for 20% of singles and albums retail value last year) and Switzerland (12%).

Success outside of these regions has proved harder to come by, although hard rock band Rammstein has shipped more than 12 million units worldwide, according to its label Universal.

The new poster boy for German music abroad is Universal-signed boy Tokio Hotel. Marketed to a tween (8-14) demographic across Europe, its German-language album "Schrei!" has enjoyed almost unprecedented sales abroad, shifting 60,000 units in France and also breaking in the Netherlands and across eastern Europe.

Frank Briegmann, CEO of Universal Music Germany in Berlin, says he believes there are now increasing opportunities for German acts outside Germany, Switzerland and Austria. "But they have to reach the international level in music and presentation like Rammstein and Tokio Hotel," he notes.

German industry insiders predict such acts as soul singer Joy Denalane (Sony BMG), hip-hop band Seeded (Warner Music), pop group Wir Sind Helden (EMI), hard rock group Die Happy (Universal) and female singer La Fee (EMI) could also do well internationally.

First though, Initiative: Musik has to win over a cynical industry—and the initial signs are positive. Michael Haentjes, Hamburg-based CEO of leading indie label Edel and chairman of IFPI Germany, was a fierce critic of GermanSounds but welcomes the new body.

"[This is] because three important areas of the German music market are integrated there," he says. "We encourage new musical talent, hold special events in schools and give small labels the opportunity to obtain information on export business."

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GLOBAL NEWSLINE

>>> IMPALA APPLAUDS EC MOVE
Pan-European independent labels body Impala has welcomed the European Commission’s Feb. 1 opening of a re-examination of the Sony Music and BMG merger, hailing the move as an opportunity to resolve the issue once and for all. Impala president Patrick Zelnik, who also runs the Naïve indie label in Paris, said in a Feb. 2 statement that the two majors should work together with the EC and independents to find a solution to the structural and competitive problems facing the whole industry. “The challenge is to empower the independent sector and respond to the industry’s crisis through market access, innovation and diversity,” Zelnik said.

Impala had appealed the EC’s 2004 clearance of the deal that created Sony BMG. Last July, a European Union court subsequently annulled the EC’s decision, meaning that Sony and BMG would have to refile their merger plans for another EC investigation. The EC will decide by March 1 whether to clear the merger or launch a four-month in-depth probe into Sony BMG Music Entertainment.

—Leo Cendrowicz

>>> FOPP BUYS MUSIC ZONE SITES
British independent music retailer Fopp has bought the leases to 67 U.K. stores from the administrators of the defunct Music Zone chain. The outlets, Music Zone’s headquarters building and warehouse in Stockport, England, and a second warehouse in Denton, have been sold for an undisclosed sum, the company’s administrator Deloitte announced Feb. 5.

Music Zone was placed into administration on Jan. 3. On Jan. 25, Deloitte announced that it had been unable to find a buyer for the business and Music Zone ceased trading, with the loss of 800 jobs. Fopp started in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1981 and is headed by chairman and founder Gordon Montgomery.

It operated 31 stores prior to the deal and accounted for 1% of U.K. album expenditure in 2005 (figures for 2006 are not yet available), according to label’s body the BPI. U.K. market-leading music specialist HMV had 23.5% of all album expenditure in 2005 with 214 stores, while Virgin took second place with 117 stores and 9.7%.

—Lars Brandle

>>> SNOW PATROL SCOOPS METEORS
Scottish/Irish alternative-rock group Snow Patrol scooped four trophies at the Irish music industry’s annual Meteor Ireland Music Awards, held Feb. 1 at Dublin’s Point Depot venue.

The Scottish/Irish alternative rock group was named best Irish band and its Fiction/Polydor album “Eyes Open” was named best Irish album. The act also took awards for best live performance and most downloaded song (“Chasing Cars”).

Dublin’s Damien Dempsey (Attack/Sanctuary) was named best Irish male artist, while Wicklow’s Luan Parle took home the prize for best Irish female. Westlife (RCA) was named best Irish pop act, while Dublin guitar band Director (Atlantic) was best new Irish act. Scissor Sisters (Polydor) was best international band and Arctic Monkeys’ “Whatever People Say I Am, That’s What I’m Not” (Domino) was best international album. Six of the Meteors’ 17 categories were voted on by the public; the remainder were decided by an industry panel.

—Nick Kelly

>>> SELLABAND PREPS DOWNLOADS
Sellaband, the Amsterdam-based “virtual” home for unsigned acts, will launch a downloadable music portal in June. Currently, acts upload their recordings to its Web site sellaband.com. Consumers visiting the site are free to stream those tracks and select artists they believe have commercial potential, then invest a minimum of $10 in the act. Once acts bank the maximum investment of $50,000, they enter into an agreement with Sellaband that leads to professional recordings of their works (Billboard, Sept. 30, 2006). Sellaband launched in August 2006, and the first two acts to reach the target are Dutch rock outfit Nemesis and Utah-based singer/songwriter Cubworld. Nemesis will begin recording in March at Galaxy Studios in Mol, Belgium; Cubworld is likely to record his album in New York.

Sellaband expects another eight bands to hit the target in 2007. The new portal will offer free downloads of finished tracks, with acts, investors and Sellaband sharing profits from advertising sold there.

—Juliana Koranteng

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Focus On Digital And Mobile

New Revenue Streams Will Be Theme Of Latin Music Conference

When Latin label presidents were queried at the end of the year about which key factors affect their business, digital and mobile development was a common theme. And no wonder. After years of negligible results, the last 12 months have finally yielded tangible gains for Latin music, with labels, acts and publishers seeing real profit from digital and mobile sales, in the United States and the entire Latin region.

These and other new revenue streams will be the underlying theme of the 18th annual Billboard Latin Music Conference, taking place April 23-26 at the Intercontinental Hotel in Miami.

Anchored by our now traditional star Q&A, this year with Colombian superstar Juanes (see story, page 10), the 2007 panels will provide in-depth focus on the mobile arena, digital sales and the use of the Internet as a promotional and revenue-generating tool. A panel of music supervisors will give the 101 on getting music picked for film and TV, while other top-ranked panels—including ones focused on teens and rap and reggaetón—return for encore presentations, focusing on new trends and technologies.

We have seen the industry change at an accelerated pace in the past few years, with big success stories often defying the accepted parameters of exploitation and promotion long held sacred by labels. The top-selling album of 2006 was "Barrio Fino en Directo" by Daddy Yankee, an artist who recorded and released music on his own label after being turned down by every major.

The big breakthrough story of the year, saleswise, was that of Calle 13, a group that entered music consciousness via its videos and word-of-mouth. Major airplay eluded the act for months.

And, of course, the pop story of the past two years is RBD, a TV-created group that, outside of record sales, continues to generate merchandising, licensing and mobile revenue.

Even when a label is lucky to have a top seller at retail, things can get dire, with hefty returns almost an inevitable part of doing business.

In this environment, new business models are not just desirable—they are essential.

With a slew of major sponsors and partners, including Heineken, Target, Starbucks and Dodge, the Latin Music Conference aims to bring together all faces of the music industry in a way that is conducive to business but also to the creative aspect of making music.

Daily multiple show cases are at the core of what has come to be known as "Latin Music Week." Among these, the "We Hear the Future" competition offers new acts an opportunity to perform for a panel of celebrity and industry judges. The winner receives exposure in Billboard magazine and on TV show "Billboard Latino" and iTunes Latino, among other platforms.

The week kicks off with the Billboard Bash, the official pre-awards show on April 23, followed by the next day by the Latin Music Awards, airing live on the Telemundo network.

Finally for the awards will be announced Feb. 14 during the Telemundo show "Al Rojo Vivo" and on billboard.com.

For more information on the Latin Music Conference, panels and showcases, go to billboardevents.com. Early-bird registration ends March 2.

THE BILLBOARD Q&A?

JOAN SEBASTIAN
Still On Top After Three Decades

Even with a recording career that has spanned three decades, a variety of romantic and realistic Mexican styles and countless covers of his work, Joan Sebastian remains a prolific creator of new material. His latest album, "Mas Alla del Sol," is nominated for a Grammy Award in the banda album category this year. The title track has spent 55 weeks on Billboard's Hot Latin Songs chart, 26 of them in the top 10.—Ayala Ben-Yehuda

What was the story behind "Mas Alla del Sol"?

I don't like to explain my songs, because when people ask me to explain my songs it makes me feel like they aren't well-made. But what I can tell you is that it has impacted the public because most men, and sometimes women too, fail in love or let down their partners. It is that moment of regret and the search for re-conquest [from which] comes the phrase, "Beyond the sun and beyond my mistakes, I love you." It was my last song. I had already finished the album and I included this song afterwards, I went back into the studio to record it.

When an artist wants to record your song, do you have any say in the matter?

Most composers like our work to be performed. In my career there was one occasion in which I stopped a song because [the artist] had ruined it, they had made changes to the lyrics. I felt very offended because already before that, this group had done something similar. The second time they already had a big shipment ready to go on the market, but I stopped it.

You've stayed on the same indie, Balboa, for almost 30 years. Did the majors ever approach you?

Several labels have asked me to go with them, but with Balboa, beyond the artistic question, I have a very special loyalty. I don't rule out [leaving] completely, but I have 29 years with them already. On this label I enjoy complete freedom and authority over my product. I'm a rather strange, difficult guy. They don't impose things on me that I don't want to do.

RBDBARBIES

Mexican pop act RBD is expanding its brand with the launch of Barbie dolls modeled after RBD's three female singers. Mattel will unveil the new RBD/Rebelde Barbies Feb. 13 during the New York Toy Fair. The dolls will bear the names Mia, Roberta and Lupita, the characters played respectively by RBD members Anahi, Dulce Maria and Maite on the soap opera "Rebelde," and will sport plaid skirts and red jackets, the school uniforms made famous by the "Rebelde" cast.

RICKY ON THE ROAD
As promised several months ago when he recorded his "MTV Unplugged" set, Ricky Martin kicks off his new tour—Blanco y Negro—in his native Puerto Rico. Martin will play four dates at the Jose Miguel Angelotel Coliseum in San Juan and then perform 19 dates throughout Latin America, including stops in Mexico, Argentina and Guatemala. Although no dates have been announced for the continental United States, Martin is slated to begin that leg of the tour in April. The Blanco y Negro tour is sponsored by Sony Ericsson. A portion of the proceeds from the tour will go to the Ricky Martin Foundation.—Ayala Ben-Yehuda and Leila Cobo
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Behind Vista's Veil
The Pros And Cons Of Windows' New Operating System

At his annual keynote address during the Consumer Electronics Show Jan. 7 in Las Vegas, Microsoft chairman Bill Gates said we are now living in the "digital decade." Fast forward to Jan. 30, Microsoft unveils Vista—the first new Windows operating system in more than five years, which Microsoft spent $6 billion on developing in order to position it as the centerpiece of today's digital lifestyle.

A half-decade after the debut of the company's last operating system—Windows XP—the world of entertainment has changed as dramatically as the computer's role in it. Vista aims to address many of these changes and set up Microsoft as a key partner in the entertainment content industry.

Vista on the whole is more of an evolutionary step rather than a revolutionary innovation; and has several positives and negatives that are sure to set the digerati aflutter for months to come. While the blogosphere will obsess over how difficult it is to upgrade existing PCs or whether Microsoft just ripped off the best elements of Apple's OS X, here is what Vista means to the digital entertainment industry.

PROS:
- Vista's most noticeable impact on content is the way it strives to make finding and using files stored on the computer easier. Users can search for anything within a specific folder rather than wait for a full system scan.
- Microsoft Vista's user interface, called Aero, has been given a 3-D graphics, scrolling through files is similar to flipping through a Rolodex.

CONS:
- Users who have upgraded their PCs with the Vista OS have reported problems running their old software afterward. Software developers are asked to before upgrading, but how much of the problem is legitimate and how much is a PR stunt by Apple is unknown.
- Some users have tried to upload their PCs with the Vista OS have reported problems running their old software afterward. Software developers are asked to before upgrading, but how much of the problem is legitimate and how much is a PR stunt by Apple is unknown.

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  SVP, Mobile Media, MTV Networks

- **HANDSET HEAVEN:** The latest technologies & services and how they effect consumer electronics

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Sheet Music’s Digital Device

FreeHand Systems’ MusicPad Pro Could Drive Market

FreeHand Systems is touting its MusicPad Pro as the iPod for sheet music, a market with an estimated annual revenue of $1 billion worldwide. The comparison isn’t just hype. The company’s device appears to be the only portable, touchscreen unit that musicians, composers and students can use to display and work with digital sheet music. And with the tie-in to the company’s Web site offering nearly 90,000 compositions, FreeHand could help drive the digital market for sheet music.

The market for the digital delivery of sheet music, which typically requires the buyer to print the music to paper or view it on a computer, is still relatively small. For example, Musicnotes, which offers about 50,000 titles, reached 2 million total downloads last November—seven years after the site launched in 1999. FreeHand has not released figures for its downloads.

But the market will undoubtedly change as more musicians go digital. And FreeHand’s business model is set up to take advantage of that change. It is similar to that of Apple’s model. Like the iPod’s connection to iTunes, MusicPad Pro promotes sales from Freehandmusic.com.

This month, FreeHand closed its second institutional round of private funding from Vision Opportunity Master Fund (the sum was not disclosed). MusicPad Pro, which first shipped in September, competes among its early adopters Sting, Quincy Jones, Herbie Hancock, Andy Summers and Jon Anderson, a company spokesman says. It’s now in retail stores in Asia, Europe and North America, including Sam Ash. The company’s audited financial statements for 2005 and 2006 are expected soon from BDO Siedman.

MusicPad Pro is a computerized device with a portable stand so it can be set up like sheet music sitting on a music stand. It’s made of high-quality plastic and has a memory stick containing the digitized sheets, the music appears on the screen. The user can either work with the titles from freehandmusic.com or the user’s own music scanned into software and transferred to the device, which also works with a wireless network. But the pad does much more than simply display the music.

With a tap or slide of the finger, the professional musician or composer can make a variety of changes to the music on the screen. For example, just a few taps can change the key for the entire score, shifting every note within seconds. The user can type or write notations on the sheet, erase musical notes, highlight sections and preprogram an entire set list so songs appear sequentially for the performer while onstage. None of the manipulations actually change the original sheet of music. Changes are made on a digital layer above the original.

The unit is a bit pricey for the average musician, selling at $899. FreeHand CEO Kim Lorz says he expects the price to drop to about $199-$299 within a year. The company is finding new ways to reduce costs. For example, Lorz says that engraving a music stand could be set up like sheet music sitting on a music stand.

MUSCIPCAD PRO can be set up like sheet music sitting on a music stand.

Although we all know that the CD is on its downward spiral, the 15% drop in U.S. album sales in the first month of this year has even industry veterans startled. If the labels are ever going to step up to the plate and do something about physical product, now is the time.

For one, Warner Music Group (WMG) is readying to launch its DVD album, which is geared to give consumers more bang for their buck as well as features aimed at the digitally advanced music fan. Titles are expected before June.

It remains to be seen if consumers want the new configuration. But if the effort doesn’t get a worthwhile test in the market, we may never find out. To be sure, the retailers will all be on board. But if the DVD album is to be given a chance to resonate with the consumer, what it really needs is support from other major labels.

Unlike DVD audio, which allotted most space on the disc for 5.1 surround sound audio, the DVD album allocates only about 10% of the space for music, which is enough to fit a full album. The rest of the space can contain video (even high definition), whether music or artist interviews, along with computer-ready features. Depending on what the labels and artists want, such features might include, say, ringtones or digital booklets with artwork and lyrics that could be downloaded to the computer. Other possibilities include applications that could let users create their own mobile content from the music on the disc, or that could be used to unlock content from online locations or to open up fan sites.

While it won’t play in traditional CD players, the DVD album obviously will play in DVD players, as well as computers with CD-ROM drives or ones that can play DVDs. Although DVDs are usually copy-protected, the latter feature enables at least the music to be transferred off the disc to portable players or burned to CDs.

WMG has solicited support from the other majors on the DVD album, but those majors say they are waiting to see the final version of the configuration. And in case you haven’t noticed, a one-label effort will not save the physical goods side of the industry. In the last couple of years, Sony BMG Music Entertainment tried mightily hard with the DualDisc, putting out about 100 titles. While retailers wholeheartedly supported it, I don’t think the other majors that came out with titles in the format—WMG and Universal Music Group, which only issued about 30 titles combined—had their hearts behind it. EMi Music didn’t bother at all.

Likewise, when UMG launched JumpStart in an effort to combat the downturn in sales with lower CD prices, it was privately lambasted by competitors. Retail’s support was lukewarm, too, and that has shifted to where more merchants like it than not.

Since WEA didn’t zealously support its initiatives, some of those at the majors who have stepped out before, and found it lonely out there, may think now is the time for payback. But can the industry afford to let that happen when digital is still not making up for the physical decline—let alone the accelerated one we have so far this year?

MAKING TRACKS: Due to the layoffs at EMi Music Marketing, Susanne Fitzsimmons Elliott, who was a marketing director for major accounts, is seeking opportunities. She can be reached at susanne.elliott@hotmail.com or 201-575-0614. Likewise, Central regional director Dave Saunders, who can be reached at buffin847@yahoo.com or 312-523-1079, and Southeast regional director Jeff Ivan at 678-524-3715 are on the job hunt, as is Paul Lanning, an EMi sales rep with 30 years’ experience selling all types of accounts, at 203-981-6205 or mylanning@sigglobal.net.

Outside EMi, Jamie Galgano, formerly GM of music wholesaler Galgano Music Distributors, is seeking opportunities and can be reached at galganojg@yahoo.com or 847-571-5380.

For 24/7 retail news and analysis, see billboard.biz/retail.
On The Road
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No Thanks
Promoters Turning Down Live Nation Offer

Some promoters are saying "thanks, but no thanks" to a Live Nation initiative that would require non-Live Nation venues and promoters to list their events on livenation.com.

Live Nation is now offering venues, promoters and acts the ability to upload information directly to livenation.com (billboard.biz, Jan. 31). Until now Live Nation had listed many events from non-Live Nation venues and promoters without any additional information.

"The idea is to allow any third-party venue or promoter to control their page and populate it with custom content, so they can market their building and all its attributes, and make sure their event data is correct," Live Nation president of digital Bryan Perez says.

"We recognize that if the venue has significant brand equity or a third-party promoter has significant brand equity, that has value to the consumer," Perez continues. "All we want to do is allow the fan [to] get the best information from the most authoritative source."

Some promoters have a hard time believing that Live Nation's primary objective is so altruistic. "Does Chrysler promote GM products on its site? Does Universal promote Disney's movies on its site?" asks Jerry Mickelson, co-president of Chicago-based independent promoter Jam Productions.

So why would Live Nation promote a competitor's event? "Because that's what the fan wants," Perez says. "Right now, there is no one place a fan can go to get the information they need on live music."

Mickelson says Jam more than adequately serves consumers in its markets with the Jam digital initiatives like jamsonlive.com, Web site and "jammall" e-mail alerts.

"We have a very active database and attract many millions of page views to our Web site. Why would we want to lose our identity or our brand?" Mickelson says. "I've asked them not to list our shows or venues."

Florida-based promoter Jon Stoll, president of Fantasmas, says he's "not crazy" about the concept. "It makes it look like they're doing our shows," he says. "I've told them I don't like it... and to this point they have been unable to take 100% of my shows off their site..."

John Scher, co-CEO of Metropolitan Talent, is taking a "wait and see" attitude toward the initiative. "One of the things I've learned in the last couple of years is that you don't say 'no' to the top of your head for spit," Scher says. "If they've got a way to help sell more tickets and to publicize our events or my clients' events, you want to listen to them."

Even so, Scher admits, "My inclination is I don't want them usurping our brand... or being a one-stop shop for live entertainment..."

Perez says Live Nation isn't trying to usurp anything. "We go to great lengths to make clear on the site that third-party events and venues are not affiliated with Live Nation," he says.

The goal may indeed be for livenation.com to be the premier source of concert information, "but it's not all about our brand," Perez says. "You have to believe that people go to shows because they want to, not because Live Nation did or determined them about it."

Live Nation's sites combined are already the second-largest event site in the United States, Ticketmaster being No. 1 by a wide margin.

Venues can now upload information directly onto LIVENATION.COM.

But Ticketmaster only lists its own events. Perez says. "If there's a live music event we want to make sure the fan finds it. Sometimes it's our event, sometimes somebody else's..."

Competing with Ticketmaster as the 'go to' live entertainment site for fans may be the endgame here. It's well-known that Live Nation's ticketing deal with Ticketmaster expires by the end of 2008, and whether Live Nation works out a new deal with the ticketing giant or takes that part of its business in-house will either way have a profound impact on the concert industry. With a broad venue and event database in place, Live Nation will at the very least have made significant inroads toward the broad digital infrastructure required to compete on that level.

And to those who say "no thanks," Perez says, "Nobody has to utilize the service if they don't feel it's a good fit for them."
A Level Playing Field?
Indie Labels Are Of Two Minds About YouTube

When the news broke last week that a select group of independent labels were unhappy with the progress of negotiations with YouTube, an A&R executive with a California-based rock indie immediately reached out to Billboard. His reaction: “Why? We love YouTube.”

YouTube has already announced deals with Universal, Sony BMG and Warner Bros., and those in the independent community are eagerly awaiting their own agreement with the video-sharing site. Yet a number of U.K. label sources told Billboard that they believed the licensing rates for individual videos were not on par with those offered to majors, at least in the early rounds of discussion. The apparent discrepancy prompted Simon Wheeler, head of licensing and digital at the United Kingdom’s Beggars Group, to comment: “If the company were willing to take legal measures to ensure an equal deal, although unclear, what kind of action would be taken or when?”

In the United Kingdom, indie labels are used to rallying behind such labels as Beggars as well as the AIM for indie causes. But conversations with a number of top U.S. labels during the past few days indicate they are not as quick to react to the legal rhetoric against YouTube. And while media giant Viacom ordered YouTube to remove more than 100,000 videos when licensing talks broke down, indie labels aren’t yet displaying such aggressiveness.

YouTube has become absolutely vital to the independent community. There is no other site with YouTube’s traffic numbers that allows hundreds of thousands of people to view, archive, and discuss Of Montreal and Cat Power videos. Besides, poorly shot cell phone clips of Live Spooon shows, or YouTube’s ability to get an instant audience for a relatively young rock act such as the Ponds, certainly isn’t hurting the sales numbers for indie labels. Perhaps that’s why the indie community is reticent to speak out against a site beloved by the people buying its music, and—at least in the short term—seems content to reap such sites’ promo benefits.

“The major labels are still going to make a lot of these decisions,” the head of one notable indie says. “We’re sort of at the mercy of the brilliant long-term planning of the big industry players. Until they figure it out, and get their acts off their heads, I might be inclined to just go along and get as much promotional value out of these things as I can. We need to keep our hands at the front of the places where people find out about new music.”

EMI is merging Capitol and Virgin to form the Capitol Music Group, and we’re happy to see Jason Flom got the gig running it. We’re not happy about Andy Slater leaving, however, since he was responsible for the only good thing Capet ever did for the Beatles, which was releasing their first eight American albums in mono, the way God intended them to be heard. Let’s hope Flom continues to release the rest and finds a way to include their essential third album “A Hard Day’s Night,” which Capitol never owned.

Meanwhile, I think it was an old Robert Klein bit that went, “And now for a limited time only—and not available in stores—every record ever made.” And that’s basically what Microsoft has in mind with its new operating system Windows Vista. Problem is, your songs will work on any MP3 player—not even an iPod, of course.

As much as I love this high-tech professional wrestling, isn’t it time for all software to work with any hardware? I know Apple started it, but come on, guys—give the consumers a break. When it comes to pricing content, however, consumers may soon be getting too much of a break. If the cost of a song goes any lower, we may lose an entire art form. Sanity Music, Microsoft’s Australian partner and an oxymoron if there ever was one, is predicting pricing somewhere around a $40-$60 subscription fee per month for 300 songs. In U.S. dollars, that’s about $31-$47. A dollar a song is dangerously low, but 10 cents? Split among the artist, writer, record company and distribution?

I said it before, I’ll keep saying it, but I hate this subscription thing. It’s the songwriters and new acts who are going to get screwed first. See you on the radio.

\[COOLEST GARAGE SONGS\]

1. BROKEN HEART
   THE CHARMS

2. STEPHEN, STEPHEN
   APPLIES IN STEREO

3. GOODBYE ROCK AND ROLL BAND
   The Novaks

4. TEENAGE HEAD
   The Morlocks

5. WITHIN YOU WITHOUT YOU
   The Beatles

6. AIN’T NO KING OF ROCK AND ROLL
   The Nomads

7. LONG LIVE THE WEEKEND
   The Living End

8. FAVORITE SON
   CBGB Forever

9. RUNNIN’ AROUND
   Green Day

10. LOVE LETTER
    The Paybacks

\[COOLEST GARAGE ALBUMS\]

1. BROKEN BOY SOLDIERS
   The Raconteurs

2. CBGB FOREVER
   Various Artists

3. STATE OF EMERGENCY
   Arctic

4. STRANGE MAGIC
   Various Artists

5. ONE DAY IT WILL PLEASE US TO REMEMBER EVEN THIS
   New York Dolls

6. LAST MAN STANDING
   JERRY LEE LEWIS

7. SHINE ON
   JET

8. ROCK AND ROLL BACKLASH
   The Woggles

9. SINNER
   Blackheart

10. LOVE, NOT REASON
    The Paybacks

LITTLE STEVEN’S UNDERGROUND GARAGE column is produced exclusively for Billboard. For more information go to UNDERGROUNDGARAGE.COM
After five Academy Award best original score nominations, few could begrudge Ennio Morricone as the honorary “lifetime achievement” Oscar he will receive Feb. 25 in front of a global TV audience during the Academy Awards at Hollywood’s Kodak Theater.

The composer was born in 1928 in Rome, the year before the first Oscar ceremony. In elementary school there, he befriended a child named Sergio Leone. In 1964, the adult Leone would repay that friendship, asking Morricone to write the music for his cowboy movie “A Fistful of Dollars”—an offer that set Morricone on the road to international renown.

Morricone has composed more than 400 TV and film scores through a variety of publishers, in addition to his own more abstract compositions, through the Italy-based Sugar group.

A few days before the Oscars, musicians from several different generations pay tribute to the Italian’s five-decade career on the Sony Classical album “We All Love Morricone.” The set rolls out internationally beginning Feb. 16 and appears Feb. 20 in the United States. Its lineup ranges from Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli to U.S. metal act Metallica, as well as Bruce Springsteen, Roger Waters, Celine Dion, Quincy Jones and Herbie Hancock, all of whom offer their own takes on such Morricone themes as “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly.” “Once Upon a Time in the West” and “Malena.”

Shortly before he left Rome for his North American concert debut Feb. 3 at New York’s Radio City Music Hall, Morricone spoke to Billboard about his career and—as the Oscar citation puts it—his “magnificent and multifaceted contributions to the art of film music.”

**What does this award mean to you?**

It means a great deal—but, let’s say that if it hadn’t happened, then I wouldn’t have been too upset. This was because, after the “Mission” (1986) nomination, I was resigned to the fact that I would never win an Oscar.

“The Mission” had been particularly painful for me. Everybody said I was going to win, but that wasn’t how things went. The atmosphere was rooting for me and there were even protests when I didn’t win. On other occasions I could have won or lost, it didn’t really matter, but for “The Mission” the academy members voted in a way that went against everybody else’s expectations.

**How did “We All Love Morricone” come about?**

It was the brainchild of [Italian record] producer Luigi Ciocola, who had first the idea five years ago. At the time I told him that it was pure utopia, as there would be too many contractual and royalty complications with both the record labels and the artists. Experience had taught me that a project like this would be impossible, but he managed to pull it off—and hats off to him.

**Did you work directly with the other artists involved?**

No, they simply recorded their versions of my compositions. I wanted them to have as much artistic freedom as possible. Celine Dion, for example, chose her own arranger, I liked this idea that they could do what they wanted, in their own musical environment.

Your stated fans also include Led Zeppelin and the Mars Volta.

**What’s the relationship between your work and rock music?**

There is one in that, if rock music is required in a film, then I’ll write it—but, apart from that, I don’t have an actual relationship with rock acts. They take my music and reproduce it in a simple and easy way.

**Is it true that you compose directly on paper, not on an instrument?**

Absolutely. All composers should do that. Those who don’t have problems. Music is something you imagine; you can’t isolate it. The orchestra is an instrument in its own right and it has to be in the mind of the composer. If you write on the piano, what you write will be conditioned and falsified by that instrument.

**Is it frustrating that your name is synonymous with Sergio Leone’s so-called “spaghetti westerns,” which form a tiny part of your output?**

Let me say I really object to the term “spaghetti westerns,” which I find disrespectful—spaghetti is a thing you eat. It would be better to call them “Italian westerns.”

But I have no objection to being associated with Leone. What I do object to is the fact that I did six films with him, including “Once Upon a Time in America” (1984). Six scores out of a total of 400! That comes to 1.5%, and people seem to forget about all the others. I’d also like to be associated with Giuseppe Tornatore, Giorgio Morricone, Mauro Bolognini and the dozens of other great directors I worked with.

People who just see me as “the Sergio Leone guy” are ill-informed and need to be told as much.

And yet Leone’s films launched your career, not to mention Clint Eastwood’s.

I guess that’s right. The music I wrote for Leone enjoyed great success and it still sells, so working with him was wonderful for my career. Nevertheless after that I did everything possible to get away from being branded as a western film composer. I turned down loads of offers to score other westerns— I mean dozens—often at the same time. I preferred to concentrate on every other genre imaginable. I trained to be a composer and not just a composer of westerns. I wanted to be able to compose for every type of film—thrillers, love stories, historical dramas, you name it.

**How do you feel about soundtrack albums that are more compilation albums than scores?**

If they try and do that with me, then I tend to abandon the project. I do accept, however, that a famous song can be necessary if you need to evoke a particular period, but that is more preferably done with the addition of a subtitle with the place and the year. If there are too many songs like that in a movie I’m working on, then I can’t leave my own mark.

**Does Europe or the United States have the better system for paying film score composers?**

It really depends on the success of the film. In Europe you receive a cut from the film’s takings and so, if the film does really badly at the box office, then you’re virtually worked for free. In the U.S.A., on the other hand, the film score composer doesn’t get any of that, as the producers can sell your work to whoever they want. In that way they have to pay your cut of the film’s expected takings upfront.

You’re 78. Any plans to retire? I could retire, but I keep getting phone calls, and I have to admit I enjoy doing this. I like music, I like working with great directors and with friends. What better way is there for me to express myself?

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**Let me say, I really object to the term “spaghetti western,” which I find disrespectful. Spaghetti is a thing you eat.**
On the evening of Jan. 20, amidst the riot of networking that is the Sundance Film Festival, a pretty young singer named Mandy Moore took to a makeshift stage at a private Park City, Utah, home and performed a set of low-key confessional songs for a small audience of attentive listeners. Buzzed on promotional booze, the crowd swayed to the stories of love lost and confidence regained, and wondered perhaps why this impressive new talent had not been discovered by the world.

The answer, as anyone with a pop-cultural memory that stretches back farther than “Newlyweds” and K-Fed can tell you. She’s been busy being Mandy Moore, the teen-pop tart who rode to stardom astride the sugar-high groove of “Candy,” one of the genre’s biggest hits singles. Never quite an equal of such jaded glamazons as Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera, Moore nonetheless carved out a sizable niche for herself in the early-'00s teen-pop firmament by emphasizing her fresh-faced kid-sister qualities—a job made easier by acting in feel-good fluff like “The Princess Diaries” and “A Walk to Remember.” In those days of dime-a-dozen mini-divas, you didn’t really mind having Moore around, but you did not really take her seriously, either.

Eight years after the release of her debut, people—and not only the ones at Sundance—are doing just that. As the majority of her teen-pop peers have drifted into creative irrelevance (or worse), Moore, 22, has improbably become one of the more credible singer/actors of her generation, slowly building a film resume peppered with quirky art-house flicks and making records more about singer-songwriter craft than high-gloss production flash.

This year Moore will release “Wild Hope,” her first album of self-penned material, and she’s got a handful of films on the way that pair her with capital-A actors such as Billy Crudup and Diane Keaton.

“She’s a tough, smart kid,” says Paul Theroux, the “Six Feet Under” star who directed Moore in the upcoming romantic comedy “Dedication.” “Even though she’s beautiful and has this sort of angelic look, she’s got some calloused shoulders.”

So how did this former teen-pop B-list star make it out of the land of lip gloss and double-entendres?

“I don’t know,” Moore says with a laugh over breakfast at a cozy organic-foods joint in West Hollywood. Stylishly casual in jeans and a loose blouse, Moore exudes the easy charm you’d expect of someone who’s had a hard time making good friends since junior high. She listens with intensity, yet often says the first thing that pops into her head. “I feel really lucky. It’s so cliche, but I just wanna enjoy my life and have fun. And I’ve made the choices of doing what I thought would be fun and what I thought would be challenging.”

Moore’s longtime manager Jon Leshay of the Firm says her client might be more forward-thinking than she admits. “When I first met Mandy, I thought the most exciting thing about her was that she had this sense of not knowing if ‘Candy’ was her world,” says Leshay, who also manages “American Idol” winner Taylor Hicks. “It wasn’t so much that she felt that it
wasn’t for her as she was thinking that maybe there’s something else out there—that this was going to be a long road. So we paced ourselves. It was like we were on the diet where you have a bunch of small meals rather than three huge meals. I didn’t.

“I look back to that phase with really fond memories,” Moore says of her teenage years. “But it also seems like a blur. I signed a record deal [with Epic] when I was 15, and I didn’t really get a chance to stop and absorb it until a couple of years later.”

When she finally got the chance, Moore says, she discovered she wasn’t just a pretty face; they were watching videos on YouTube. “I think feel that people wasted their money on such trite, blah pop music,” she recently told Jane magazine.

Her solution—and the first step in Moore’s overall rebound effort—was 2001’s “Coverage,” on which she offered her versions of tunes by respected songwriters such as Carole King, Joni Mitchell and Todd Rundgren. “I just decided, ’OK, I understand the position I’m in, and I’m not going to necessarily get to do the type of record I want to make, so I have to sort of do it on my own.’ So I found a producer, I found the repertoire, and I kind of paid for it by myself and just did it on my own time. I think Epic found out halfway through the recording process that that’s what I was doing, and I guess they were OK with it. Then they heard it and they were like, ‘Uh, we’ll put it out.’”

“Coverage” didn’t sell well: Topping out just below 300,000, the album marked Moore’s fourth consecutive sales dip (see chart, right), and the singer says it didn’t exactly convince Epic that its relationship with her was one worth continuing. “Which was a-OK in my book,” she says.

Around the time of the release of “Coverage,” Moore began taking a series of film roles that skewed her goody-goody image. In “Sweet!” (2004) she played a holier-than-thou church-camp harridan, while in last year’s “American Dreamz” she portrayed an ambitious pop-star wannabe willing to do anything to win an “Idol”-like singing competition.

“I never felt like it was a risky move,” Moore says of the change in direction. “I was just shocked that the filmmakers wanted me to do roles like that with all these great people. I didn’t really think about what people’s reactions were going to be.”

Part of the reaction was a short-lived deal with Sire, the Warner Music Group imprint known for its early history as home to punk acts Talking Heads and the Ramones. Moore says she explained to the execs there exactly what sort of record she wanted to make: “I was very adamant about working with one producer who understood me and the music and that I wanted it to be very organic and live-sounding. I was adamant about wanting to get onstage with a band and just sing, without any gimmicks.”

Still, conflicted. “I thought we were absolutely on the same page,” Leshay says. “But where we felt that we had accelerated as Mandy’s songwriting became more natural, we felt like they had stopped and wanted to pull us back and take the safe route.”

In Moore’s view, that safe route meant working with “obvious” songwriters instead of the collaborators she had chosen, including smaller names like Lori McKenna and Rachael Yamagata.

“It got to the point of a standstill with Warner,” Leshay says. “They weren’t going to budge—no money for recording or songwriting.”

“Finally it was like, ‘Let’s call a spade a spade,’ ” Moore says. “You want a very different pop record than I want to make. So let’s just go our two ways amicably and be done with it. And they agreed.”

Warner, like Epic, her previous label, declined to comment. “Bummed but not surprised” by her label dealings, Moore was open to an idea Leshay brought her that she sign to the Firm Music, the new record company run by the star’s Beverly Hills management company. “We use EMI to manufacture and put our records in stores and online,” Leshay explains. “Mandy owns half the record, and the Firm owns the other half, and with that has 100% creative freedom. But we’re also 100% responsible for marketing, promotion, publicity—every element that goes into setting up and working an artist’s career, not just a record.”

“It’s basically becoming a partner with a music company,” Firm CEO Jeff Kwatinetz says. “We’re merging the functions of management and record companies, and taking away the adversarial relationship between the artist and the label. Why does the new boss differ from the old boss? Because her music company has the same agenda she does,” Kwatinetz says. “In the old model of the music business, a record company that spends the majority of the dollars to market an artist’s career only gets paid on records. So the label is going to gear its spending to maximize record sales. But that’s not always the right thing for every artist. Labels make money selling records; artists can make a lot more money elsewhere.”

Both Kwatinetz and Leshay claim that Moore’s dual-platform career makes her a perfect fit for the Firm Music’s new model, which Leshay says puts them in an ideal position to pursue cross-marketing openings with an almost record label isn’t willing to underwrite. “That could be music placement” on a soundtrack to a Moore film, he says, “or it could be a number of things. We’ll know what those opportunities are when they come up.”

In addition, the deal streamlines certain logistical matters, Leshay says. “We’re looking at April for a release date, but Mandy’s got four movies coming out. So if we need to, we can say, ‘You know what? Let’s push it back.’”

Though he acknowledges that it’s “a very vulnerable time in retail,” Leshay is optimistic about Moore’s re-entry into record-making, saying he expects that “Wild Hope” will do “considerably better than “Coverage.”

“Whether it’s overnight or 12-18 months from now, we’re committed to making this a big-selling record,” he says, “and we’ve never been more certain that she has more of the responsibility for promoting her records.” “I don’t know if the significance of having an actual label behind you really means anything to people anymore,” she says. “People are discovering artists through YouTube. I don’t think you need that whole big machine behind you. And in this day and age, I’m happy to be a bit of a guinea pig.”

Released under the name of some unknown singer/songwriter, “Wild Hope” would hardly seem likely the object of such experimentation: Warm and tuneful, it’s an appealing folk-pop confection likely to appeal to fans of Norah Jones or Michelle Branch or Corinne Bailey Rae. But it is a surprise coming from Moore, who says her goal for the record was creating “something that’s completely relatable to as many people as possible, but also really organic.”

“She definitely knew what she didn’t want,” says John Alagia, who produced the record at upstate New York’s Allaire Studios (where Jones tracked “Come Away With Me”). “She didn’t want some little premanufactured teen-pop thing that’s here today and gone tomorrow. She wanted to make a statement. And some of the writing is really mature. She’s a woman now, and the music reflects that.”

It also seemly reflects the record’s long road to completion. “Now I’m ready to be extraordinary,” Moore says, with audible relief in one cut, over strumming acoustic guitar and vintage soul electric piano. In another, the Aimee Mannish “All Good Things,” she celebrates the fact that she’s “got so much space now.” “Gar- denia,” a dramatic ballad Moore wrote with Canadian superstar Chantal Kreviazuk is, perhaps the album’s most mature cut: “I’m the one who lets gardens die,” she sings over unadorned piano, “I’m the one who likes to make love on the floor.”

“Mandy has a really young sensibility, but also a gravitas that’s really surprising,” says Steve Tannen of the Weepies, a Los Angeles duo with whom Moore wrote songs for “Wild Hope.”

“There’s all sorts of challenges coming from where she came from. In a way, her creativity works against her. I wouldn’t want the world to have seen what I was doing when I was 15.”

Leshay says Moore works best when challenged, which really describes her current situation. After all, the widespread music-industry changes Moore cites as reason to ally with the Firm Music aren’t changes she’s immune to: “Even if listeners are willing to take seriously a singer/songwriter record from a former teen-pop moppet, they still have to buy the thing to prove the model works.

Moore seems untroubled by the demands. “Not to sound bad, but I don’t necessarily have to make a record,” she says, scrunching up her face to offset her brass-tacks honesty. “Now out there, I’m totally about writing the great stuff. I hope I get so much fun doing film stuff, and I feel really fulfilled creatively doing that now right. So I have to do the music my way. It means too much to me. I can’t just go into the studio and make a crappy pop record to please somebody else. Why bother?”

Additional reporting by Mairead Case.
WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Story by RAY WADDELL
Illustration by EDDIE GUY
It’s 11:30 p.m. at the Air Canada Centre in Toronto and the natives are restless for some Guns N’ freakin’ Roses.  

The show is sold out, and while fans have been entertained by Sebastian Bach and alt-porn stars the Suicide Girls, it’s W. Axl Rose and his GNR mates that have come to see.  

Some of those involved in producing the show are nervous. It’s understandable, given the GNR track record. It is not unheard-of for a delay to turn into an Axl no-show that results in a melee of thrown chairs and a trashed arena.  

But minutes later, when, indeed, all hell breaks loose, it isn’t a riot born of frustration—it’s the pandemonium that accompanies the pulsing guitar intro to “Welcome to the Jungle,” followed by Rose’s familiar wildcat wail, “Do you know where you are?”  

On this night, all was well in Toronto. And by GNR standards—and much to the relief of many people behind the scenes—all was relatively well for the entirety of the 2006 GNR world tour, which spanned from May to December, playing close to 70 dates in nearly 60 cities. There were 28 North American dates reported to Billboard Boxscore, totalling slightly more than $12 million in gross and 203,012 in attendance, for a healthy average of $435,216 and 7,250 per night.  

“No gaps!” says Riley O’Connor, senior VP at Live Nation in Toronto and promoter of the GNR Canadian tour. “Axl is still a great entertainer and a Guns N’ Roses show is still a lot of fun.”  

Perhaps the best gauge of GNR success is that the tour was not a train wreck. Reviews were generally good. The band came on past 11 p.m. on many nights, but everyone involved in the shows, including the fans, was pretty much aware that would be the case.  

Sure, there were a few cancellations, the Eagles of Death Metal were asked to leave the opening slot of the tour (newly christened, from the stage, as the “Pigeons of Shit Metal” by Rose), and there was even a bit of insanity in Stockholm. But no riots, no destruction and, perhaps most significantly to those with a financial stake in the gigs, no last-minute no-shows.  

This was no foregone conclusion last summer when then-manager Merck Mercuriadis, with Creative Artists Agency, set about booking the tour.  

After all, in 2002, the band’s first tour in nine years started off bad and ended worse. Set up as a 34-date arena trek that was to begin Nov. 7 at the GM Place in Vancouver, the Chinese Democracy tour staggered out of the gate when the opening date was canceled because Rose, the lone original GNR member, never left Los Angeles.  

Several shows did come off in ’02, however, and nine shows reported to Billboard Boxscore grossed $33.3 million and sold 70,086 tickets out of a possible 70,086 capacity. But the tour ended in chaos on Dec. 6 at the First Union (now Wachovia) Center in Philadelphia when the scheduled show was canceled after 11 p.m., the band apparently unable to make the short jump from a Dec. 5 concert at Madison Square Garden in New York (Billboard, Dec. 21, 2002).  

The fans, as they say, went wild. No arrests or major injuries were reported in Philly, but the arena suffered significant damage. The plug was pulled on the tour with 15 dates remaining. And in the wake of that debacle, promoters weren’t exactly clamoring to pony up big bucks for the next GNR tour, least of all 2002 tour producer TNA. The GNR reputation in the touring industry at that time was one of unpredictability and huge risk, even if the band’s enduring popularity and fiery live shows made the upside considerable.  

But promoters have notoriously short memories and did come to the table in 2006. And GNR pulled off scores of successful shows all over the world, though notably did not play Philadelphia or Vancouver. The tour began in earnest with a triumphant, sold-out four-night stand at Hammerstein Ballroom in New York, followed by a run of European and South American rock festivals and headlining dates during the summer before returning for more North American shows in the fall.  

LATE AND LOUD  

Alex Hodges, former executive VP at Live Nation in Los Angeles, says his three December sellouts at Gibson Amphitheatre went very well. “[Rose] and his band put on one great rock’n’roll performance,” Hodges says. “He was scheduled to go on between 11:40 and 11:50 (p.m.), and was there, onstage, rockin’.”  

The late start time may be a hassle, but Hodges says it’s doable “if you plan for the opening acts and the length of time properly. Yes, it costs a bit more money, not due to the time on the clock, but the total show length of time. We planned correctly and all went according to the plan and the budget.”  

The Suicide Girls helped fill in the gaps, booked for 19 dates on the tour in a deal that came together in less than four days, according to their agent, Marc Bauer at the Agency Group. It seems the Girls were a welcome addition for GNR fans. “They went over great with the crowd,” Bauer says. “And the girls enjoyed it.”  

Things were a little dicey in some markets. A Nov. 6 show in Portland, Maine, at the Cumberland County Civic Center was canceled, according to a statement posted on the official GNR Web site (gunsroses.com), due to “limitations imposed by local fire marshals [that] made it impossible for the band to perform their show to usual high standards that their fans deserve.” Other reports said the fact that band members would not be allowed to drink onstage was a contributing factor to the cancellation.  

The Nov. 15 show at Air Canada Centre in Toronto went “smoothly,” according to Patti-Ann Tarlton, director of live entertainment at the ACC, but the Alcohol & Gaming Commission of Ontario was “interested in the specifics of the event due to the media attention surrounding the date in Maine,” Tarlton says. But despite the concern, Tarlton adds, “Considering this was a six-hour, sold-out show, we did not have a significant number of fan incidents.”  

Tarlton says communication during the advance of the show among promoter House of Blues/Live Nation, the commission, the venue and touring personnel helped make the date work. “The entertainment was constant, leaving no gaps in the evening for fans to get bored, and by just after 11:30 the boys stepped onstage and played until almost 2 a.m.,” Tarlton says, adding, “They can’t all be cakewalks.”
Live Nation's O'Connor says he was "never worried" about whether that show or any show would come off or not. "We scheduled everything knowing [Rose] was going to be on stage anywhere between 11 and 11:30," he says. "The Guns N' Roses tour in Canada at the end of 2006 was a highlight show for every market."

THE SPECTRE OF AN ALBUM

The tour may not have been a train wreck, but by year's end it seemed someone had been thrown under the bus. In December, Rose publicly fired manager Mercuriadis amid allegations of mismanagement—much of it related to the tour—that further delayed the release of "Chinese Democracy," the decade-plus-in-the-making Interscope GNR "release."

If the tour went smoothly by GNR standards, behind the scenes there seems to have been tension aplenty. Both Rose and Mercuriadis implied publicly, the former in Rolling Stone magazine and from the stage at the MTV Video Music Awards, and the latter also in Rolling Stone, before the tour started that "Chinese Democracy" would come in 2006. But as the tour wound down the album was seldom mentioned, and on Dec. 14 Rose issued a statement on the official GNR site that four January live dates in San Diego, Sacramento, Calif.; Bakersfield, Calif.; and Reno, Nev., were canceled to allow for the "proper setup and release of the album 'Chinese Democracy.'"

The Rose statement said that when he agreed to do the North American tour, it was with the "understanding" that he and Mercuriadis shared similar strategies and priorities around getting the GNR album out by Dec. 26. The letter went on to express regret that the release date would not be met, and pointed a finger at Mercuriadis for the handling of the tour: "Though many things went extremely well and were very exciting, there were ... unnecessary and avoidable complications on our tour having to do with the tour routing, scheduling and album and video plans that played hell on all involved especially our crew," the post read. "This was compounded by an overall sense of a lack of respect by management for the band and crew... . That has resulted unfortunately in the end of both Guns N' and my relationship in having a management or sense of band involvement with Merck Mercuriadis."

In other words, Merck was fired. The statement went on to provide a tentative release date of March 6 for the album.

Mercuriadis soon followed with his own Internet posting, on a variety of unauthorized GNR Web sites: "The reality is all of this year's touring was planned and agreed between Axl and myself, with a view to the album being in the stores before the 31st of December '06. This was confirmed by Axl in numerous interviews—most famously at the MTV Video Music Awards. We planned the tour in February 2006, just after Axl's birthday, and we were supposed to finish the album in May, before it started."

Mercuriadis wrote of unproductive sessions in New York and Los Angeles waiting "for the muse to come." He stated that the start of the North American tour was delayed by a month at Rose's request and "finally, early in that period after the euphoria of the Inland invasion (KROQ Los Angeles) radio concert held Sept. 23 in Vore, Calif.), Axl made a breakthrough and got too or three very productive days under his belt."

Mercuriadis said he felt they were just a few days from completion of the record three weeks out from the start of the North American tour. "Unfortunately, the muse disappeared just as fast as she came and the tour started with no single at radio to support it and the album still needing two or three days of work."

Mercuriadis said he was seriously considered further postponing the start of the tour, but that the reality was that our historic track record left us with very little good will with you, the fans, and we needed the money to be able to complete the album and keep the band alive. We scheduled sessions in New York and once again sent the engineers there for the first two weeks of November while the tour was based there—but the hectic touring schedule meant nothing got done."

Mercuriadis concluded by saying that while some of Rose's letter was disappointing, "I know I sleep well at night in the knowledge that when 'Chinese Democracy' hits the streets in March that it is in large part down to my efforts over the last almost five years. I found the money and the motivation to keep Axl and the band alive and get the record made when everyone else had given up and walked away."

One additional area of contention between Rose and Mercuriadis was whether the tour was booked and sold to promote the promise of a 2006 album delivery. Rose seems to think it might have been, but that does not appear to be the case. "There was never a promise that the record would be out," says Larry Vallon, senior VP of national booking at AEG Live, which promoted nine GNR dates. "We were hopeful, of course, but I had made calls to friends at the label and they could never tell me that they had a firm release date."

Rose and his attorney Howard Weitzman could not be reached for comment. Interscope and Mercuriadis declined to comment, as did Rose's reps at Creative Artists Agency.

In the end, the 2006 chapter of the ongoing GNR saga reads like the tale of a manager caught between the rock of a myopic album and the hard place of a media-friendly GNR tour. If nothing else, however, the band did re-establish itself as a touring entity with box-office clout and a frontman who cares about delivering the goods onstage. Now more GNR live dates are on tap, as the band is booked to play the My Coke Fest in Johannesburg and Cape Town in South Africa, April 27 and May 1, respectively.

Promoters who spoke with Billboard for this story say and large look forward to promoting future GNR shows. "You know when you're dealing with Axl it's like dealing with a true believer. 'I do believe the record will be out,'" Vallon says. "And, yes, we would want to promote more Guns N' Roses dates... ."
Billboard's annual all-inclusive coverage of SXSW gives a VIP tour of this year's event, including the top acts to watch and conference highlights. Our special feature will also report on the critical part SXSW plays in launching and building artists for independent labels and distributors, and a look at the indie labels experiencing chart success. Don't miss your opportunity to be a part of Billboard's annual SXSW special feature and showcase yourself at one of the most important industry events of the year!

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Down The Freeway Of Fame
Grass-Roots Campaign Making A Star Out Of Striemer

Naomi Striemer was never supposed to become a singer. Raised in the tiny Canadian community of Malagash, Nova Scotia, population 774, by a former band manager (dad) and booking agent (mom) who later shunned the business, the artist grew up under strict religious rule. Young Striemer was so sheltered that she knew nothing of radio or TV until she was 10.

At 7, Striemer was allowed to sing in her local church choir, where the director acknowledged her gifts: “She told me I had the power of Whitney and Mariah. I had no idea who they were.”

Today, the 21-year-old singer/songwriter is being heralded as the next Celine Dion, thanks to the album “Images,” released Dec. 19 in Canada and due Feb. 20 in the United States (with liner notes that this journalist wrote, free of charge). She is signed to indie label S Records, launched by hedge fund operator Steven Nowack with the sole intention of propelling the blonde beauty down the freeway of fame.

In early 2005, he happened to step into Chapters’ flagship bookstore in Toronto where Striemer was performing—and decided on the spot to make a career change. “I walked up to her, parents by her side, and said, ‘What are you doing for the rest of your life? If you let me, I will make you one of the biggest stars in the world.’ She was taken aback, and I’m sure her parents thought I was an unsavory character hitting on their daughter. But I was torn apart. She stunned me.”

Hawking his initial signing on a grass-roots level—and sans the avail of radio play—Nowack generated Striemer’s first North American press last September via a spotlight review in Billboard for debut single “Cats,” featuring production by three-time Grammy Award winner Narada Michael Walden and a guitar solo from Carlos Santana. A page-one piece in Canada’s national newspaper National Post followed, then features on the CTV national news, the CBC and “Entertainment Tonight.”

In December, S Records offered “Cats” as a free download via simpatico.msn.ca, helping “Images” rank as the most downloaded album in Canada for the final two weeks of the year. That feat was repeated the week of Jan. 15, after the free download expired.

“Steven took such a different approach from the major labels; they usually give away a fringe track—not the lead single and certainly not one with the cachet of Carlos Santana,” says Sean Fernie, associate director of broadband music for simpatico.msn.ca.

It’s all the culmination of a long and winding career path for Striemer, whose chance meeting with Nowack came after nearly a decade of almost-famous fortune.

Her journey began at 14 when a demo she sold in regional churches spurred interest from Christian label Sparrow Nashville. Striemer said no; she was more interested in the secular world. That led to a family move to Florida, which put her in the center of the pop explosion commanded by Orlando-based Transcontinental Records, home to Backstreet Boys and ‘N Sync. Founder Lou Pearlman wanted to place the singer in a girl group, but Striemer again turned down the offer. “I didn’t have a good feeling about it,” she says. “I guess I became the black sheep of the Orlando music scene.”

At 18, she scored a deal with Epic after performing a cappella for then-president Polly Anthony. An album was recorded with A-list producers and writers, a video shoot was being lined up and the radio department was contemplating the launch single. Then, two weeks before scheduled release, Anthony and a number of other key execs were pink-slipped—leaving Striemer without an advocate. She was released from her contract, but the label refused to surrender the masters. Defeated, she returned to Canada, lamenting for two years before she felt ready to give it another go.

“Pain is good, because it forces you to explore what’s inside. A lot of my voice didn’t come out until the anger of the Sony situation,” she says. “I began singing out of hurt instead of trying to be technically perfect.”

She recorded a new album and with little money; each song merited no more than two takes. Striemer hit the road on a modest scale, performing at bookstores. And with a list of North American radio stations obtained from Epic, she sent out the record herself, which led to a modicum of radio play for the sweeping, Evanscence-akin “Fall Behind,” fostering enough of a fan base to populate her live appearances.

Nowack has signed independent distribution deals so far with Barnes & Noble, Borders Books & Music, Virgin Music and Target for the album’s U.S. release. “I’m ready to get out there and work harder than ever in my life,” Striemer says. “Honestly, it’s a beautiful new beginning.”
Home Brew

Low Stars: Starbucks' First Previously Unreleased Act

With a self-titled album to be released Feb. 15 via the Starbucks Hear Music Debuts CD series, Los Angeles-based band Low Stars have been deemed an act of note by the curators of coffeehouse cool. But Low Stars have only a handful of live shows under their belt, no major tours and, at press time, just 1,046 MySpace friends. The band’s signing marks the first time the Starbucks music development series has tackled a previously unreleased musical act.

Previous Hear Music act Antigone Rising had flown under the radar for more than a decade before its 2005 release "From the Ground Up." And 17-year-old singer/songwriter Sonya Kitchell had distributed nearly 10,000 copies of her 2005 Velour Recordings EP "Cold Days" prior to her first album with Starbucks, according to Jeff Krausno, Velour co-founder and Kitchell’s manager.

Low Stars will co-release their album through manager David Sonnenberg’s label, DAS. Kitchell had a similar deal. Velour co-released "Words Came Back to Me" with Starbucks on its Velour Recordings label last April. The CD sold about 47,000 through the Starbucks stores, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Overall, the album has shifted 76,000 copies in the United States, Krasno says.

For Kitchell and Low Stars, the real windfall was the estimated 60,000-100,000 CDs that Starbucks ordered to stock its shelves. The result was an advance payment to the artists of anywhere between $500,000 and $1 million, depending on the wholesale price and quantity ordered, according to Krausno. Neither Krasno nor Sonnenberg would disclose the specific amount of CDs that Kitchell or Low Stars have sold to Starbucks, or the amount of their advances.

At the same time, Krausno notes that with the Starbucks deals there is a profit split on CDs sold inside and outside of Starbucks. When asked about profit sharing, Sonnenberg would not give specific details, but notes it is "very equitable." "If things go well," Sonnenberg says, "Starbucks is going to do better than they would do by just loading in a record by somebody, and we’re going to do significantly better too." "It is a true collaboration, and goes beyond the typical retail approach," Starbucks Entertainment president Ken Lombard says. "Our overall approach is through airplay at record stores, point of purchase displays. We offer something no other retailer can deliver, especially considering our customers’ daily routine of visiting a Starbucks.

Promotions for the Low Stars CD include an exclusive six to eight-week placement at the checkout counter at more than 6,000 Starbucks in the United States and Canada, in-store airplay and signage, and programming on Starbucks’ XM Satellite Radio channel, plus a small, yet-to-be-planned Starbucks tour. Other benefits include Starbucks partners personalizing the future of their music. Sonnenberg points out that as one of the largest sellers of The New York Times worldwide, Starbucks receives substantially discounted, full-page, full-color advertising — worth about $100,000 per page — some of which was used to promote Kitchell. "Beyond that," he says, "The 40 million unique customers a week — to have those impressions, especially with a new artist, it’s hard to place a value number on that."

While the Hear Music Debuts CD series appears to function less like a traditional retail program and more like a record label — although it does not provide tour support — both Low Stars and Kitchell retained ownership of their masters.

Since signing with Starbucks, Low Stars members Jeff Russo, Chris Seefried, Jude and Dave Gibbs — all of whom sing and play acoustic guitar — have already hit one milestone. The band’s CSM-style four-part harmonies caught the ear of producers from ABC’s "What About Brian," who have chosen the group’s "Calling All Friends" as the sitcom’s theme song. The band is also scheduled to appear this month on NBC’s "Last Call With Carson Daly."

Visiting New York recently, Russo talked primarily about fatherhood (his girlfriend Nina Gordon, formerly of Veruca Salt, had a baby last November). But, professionally, his most recent interest is in Chris Anderson’s economics theory book, "The Long Tail: Why the Future of Music, Movies, Books, Software, and Just About Everything Else Is Selling Less of More." — particularly as it pertains to the music industry and the Low Stars.

Russo, a New York native in his mid-30s who is also in the band Tonic, says doing business with a coffee conglomerate has proved easier than the band’s experience working with a major label. But the real relief for Low Stars was when the Starbucks deal was completed, three-quarters through recording the album. "It flooded us with so much creative freedom as we wanted," Russo says. "There was no one saying, ‘We need a single and we don’t hear one.’ "

Universal Appeal

Starbucks Dips Into Latin Music With CéU

Starbucks’ Hear Music Debuts CD series will release its first international act this spring.

New Brazilian singer/songwriter CéU, who gained notoriety last year after scoring a Latin Grammy Award nomination for best new artist, will join the small group of acts — Antigone Rising, Sonya Kitchell and Low Stars — that have debuted via the Hear Music series. Her self-titled debut album, which was previously released in Brazil, will be co-released by Starbucks Hear Music and Six Degrees Records on April 3.

Although Starbucks is actively looking for Latin acts to feature in their stores, CéU, who sings in Portuguese, is not aimed at a Latin buyer. "From our perspective, CéU fits into more of a category of an artist that has a universal appeal," Starbucks Entertainment president Ken Lombard says. "And we feel all our customers want that." While Starbucks carries many titles in its stores, established and up-and-coming acts from major and indie labels, its Hear Music Debuts series is a proprietary CD series designed to introduce customers to new and developing artists.

In CéU’s case, Six Degrees Records took early copies of her music to Starbucks, hoping the company would take a chance on something with more of an international flavor, according to Six Degrees president/co-founder Bob Dukis.

"The CéU project is perfect for Starbucks because they have a proven track record of exposing new talent to an open-minded adult audience," Dukis adds. Beyond CéU, Lombard says Starbucks is working "very hard" to find Latin acts to feature in its stores. However, he adds, the company is not just looking into Latin as a niche.

"We’re very thorough in terms of how we approach this in terms of a marketing and merchandising perspective," Lombard says. "The customer has come to trust that we’re doing their work, and going much deeper than top 40." —Leila Cobo

CéU was nominated for a Latin Grammy for best new artist last year.
Divine Inspiration
Bluegrass Duo Revisits Gospel Roots On New Album

In the past year, several country and bluegrass artists have released gospel albums that have done exceptionally well. Among the most high profile were projects by Alan Jackson, the Del McCoury Band and Alabama. It’s proved to be a good time for artists to get in touch with their gospel roots. Audiences seem hungry for such music, and “Tell Someone,” the new Rebel Records release from the Kenny & Amanda Smith Band, is a musical feast sure to appeal to the group’s bluegrass base as well as country and Southern gospel music fans.

The group won the International Bluegrass Music Assn.’s emerging artist of the year award in 2003 and has rapidly become one of the hottest acts on the bluegrass circuit. “Ever since we met 11 years ago, we’ve always dreamed of recording a gospel CD,” Amanda Smith says. “A lot of these songs were tunes that I sang when I was a little girl in church.”

Smith began singing in churches when she was 8 years old, while Kenny Smith spent five years performing with his cousin’s gospel group, the Homeward Bound Quartet. “It was on a local level, but it was good to get experience,” says Kenny, a two-time winner of the IBMA’s guitarist of the year award. “We did mostly homecomings and revivals and we had a big following in the church.”

Kenny later spent six years in the Lonesome River Band, then released an acclaimed solo album, “Studebaker,” on Sugar Hill Records before he and Amanda formed their band in 2001. “Tell Someone” is the Smiths’ third album for Rebel. It features a mix of such Southern gospel favorites as “Stepping on the Clouds” and the Hoppers’ signature tune “Shoutin’ Time,” as well as potent originals like “Till I Get Home,” penned by Kenny’s cousin Richard Gulley. “I feel someone How Precious He Is” is a song Kenny used to perform with the Homeward Bound Quartet. “That song has a real special message,” he says. “It became the theme for the whole album.”

“Tell Someone” arrived Jan. 30 for the general market through Ryko Distribution and is going to Christian retail Feb. 20 through Crossroads. Kyle Cantrell recently debuted the entire CD on “Gospel Grass,” a show he hosts on XM Satellite Radio’s bluegrass channel. The band also stopped by the studio recently and performed a few tracks for Cantrell’s “Studio Special” series, slated to air Feb. 16. Fan are also able to hear the entire album on cmt.com, and the label is hopeful that securing major live performances at Borders Books & Music and other key retailers.

“We try to put out one or two gospel releases a year,” Rebel GM Mark Freeman says, noting there is a new release coming from Paul Williams & the Victory Trio as well as a compilation from Ralph Stanley featuring the best of three gospel projects he recorded in the 1980s. “Just about all of our artists would like to do a gospel recording at some time, and we have no objections. We love gospel music. Our gospel releases are consistent sellers.”

FAREWELL: On Jan. 8, the gospel music community lost one of its most passionate, young executives and I lost a dear friend. Vital Gospel A&R director Craig Minor, 38, died after battling lymphoma. He was instrumental in the careers of Amy McCoy, Wess Morgan, Rod McGaha and New Harvest, among others. I met Minor serving as a judge for the nationally televised “Exciting Him” talent competition. I have probably never laughed as much as I did on those coast-to-coast trips judging the regional contests. I cherish those memories. Shortly before he passed away, he had been singing. He asked his wife Diane if she heard the music. When she replied that he was the only one singing, Minor looked up and said, “They’re not singing it here.” That choir of angels gained a special voice, but those of us down here will miss him.

Old Reliable
Relient K Still Building In Christian, Mainstream Markets

Relient K’s burgeoning career illustrates that sometimes the least calculated of efforts reap the most rewards. After treading away for seven years and building a rabid fan base in the Christian market, the band broke through to mainstream success with the 2004 release “Mmhmm.”

Relient K’s fifth album, “Five Score and Seven Years Ago,” arrives March 6 via Gotee Records/Capitol. Originally signed to Gotee by the label co-owner and ForeFront artist tobyMac, Relient K will continue to be marketed to Christian retail via Gotee while Capitol, which came onboard with “Mmhmm,” will handle the band’s mainstream thrust.

Capitol Records senior director of marketing Tom Osborn describes Relient K as “the little engine that could. They have that perception of being a smaller band. I can’t tell you how many people I talk to who are truly startled when I tell them what the band is able to do saleswise and tourwise. People really gasp at the numbers this band is able to produce. They are the constant underdog and I think there’s something really beautiful and charming about that.”

Relient K’s 2003 breakdusk, “Two Lefts Don’t Make a Right... But Three Do,” has sold 518,000 units in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. “Mmhmm,” which spawned the singles “Be My Escape” and “Who I Am: Hates Who I’ve Been,” is at 796,000.

“Our band’s philosophy is we do what we do and whatever happens around us, happens around us,” lead vocalist/songwriter Matt Thiessen says. “We write the songs we want to write and try to have fun with the band. It’s not like we went into the record saying, ‘This will be a great radio song,’ it’s just being us.”

Produced by Howard Benson, “Five Score” is the first full-length studio record with new members John Warne and Jonathan Schneck, who joined original members Thiessen, Matthew Hoopes and David Douglas when bassist Brian Pittman exited. “It’s not the same as what we’ve done, but I feel it’s a continuation of where we’ve been heading,” Thiessen says of the album’s energetic pop sound. “I feel like people will get that.”

In addition to the standard CD release, there will be a deluxe package with a DVD featuring a six-song performance in Capitol’s historic L.A. studio.

The first mainstream single from the new album is “Must I Have Done Something Right.” Fans got an early taste when it debuted on MySpace last November.

“Forgiven” is being worked to Christian radio. “I love working with Gotee,” Osborn says. “They really know their market and how to take care of the band. I know they are holding down the fort and taking care of the Christian market.”

Unlike some Christian bands that cross over to the mainstream and try to dissociate themselves from their roots, Relient K doesn’t hide from its past. “Relient K knows who they are and I don’t think it’s ever been a problem,” Osborn says. “They are a Christian band and they’ll acknowledge it.”

Thiessen says the band doesn’t see differences in its audience. “We view Christian music and the general market all as the same thing. It’s funny to have a genre just based on lyrics. If I was Jewish and I was writing songs about Judaism, you wouldn’t tell me only in Jewish bookstores. I feel like Christian music gets segregated,” he says, wryly noting, “Green Day isn’t in the Democratic section at Wal-Mart.”

Relient K will promote the new record with a series of in-store appearances during street week and visits to “Late Night With Conan O’Brien” and “The Tonight Show With Jay Leno.” The band will headline a tour this spring featuring Mac and Sherwood.
RHYTHM & BLUES

GAIL MITCHELL gmitchell@billboard.com

**Much O-Bliged**
Top Nominee Likely For Big Success On Grammy Night

I feel pretty certain the upcoming Grammy Awards will be a big night for two acts on the R&B/hip-hop beat: Mary J. Blige and Gnarls Barkley.

Of the eight awards that Blige is up for, I predict she will take home at least four: best female R&B vocal performance, best R&B song, best R&B album and best R&B performance by a duo or group with vocals ("Love Changes" with Jamie Foxx). If she rabs a fifth, it should be for song of the year ("Be Without You"). In my humble opinion, it’s the strongest song in that bunch, although I’m also a big fan of Corinne Bailey Rae’s "Put Your Records On."

Blige’s other R&B category nod, best traditional R&B vocal performance ("I Found My Everything" with Raphael Saadiq), will go to Sam Moore ("You Are So Beautiful"). A close second here is George Benson and Al Jarreau’s teaming with Jill Scott on "God Bless the Child." Nominated as well for best pop collaboration with vocals for "One" with 12, Blige will be edged out by Tony Bennett and Stevie Wonder’s take on "For Once in My Life."

After that is where Gnarls Barkley comes in. The colorful duo no doubt has a lock on best urban/alternative performance. And despite stiff competition from Blige and new-media darling Bailey Rae, the pair will also claim kudos for record of the year with "Crazy." That song registered with a wide swath of listeners, across all ethnic and demo categories.

For the adventurousness that courses throughout Gnarls Barkley’s "St. Elsewhere," the pair deserves album of the year. However, close on their heels in that category is Justin Timberlake with "FutureSex/LoveSounds." And the eclectic Rick Rubin will get the producer of the year nod over Gnarls Barkley’s equally talented Danger Mouse.

The last marquee category, best new artist, presents its own challenge. My pick is Chris Brown, who personifies the promise on which the category was established. But the same argument can be made for the other nominees, especially Bailey Rae and Carrie Underwood.

As for the remaining R&B and rap categories, here’s my scorecard:

**For Best Male R&B Vocal**

- Lionel Richie made a nice comeback with "I Call It Love." But my scale tips in favor of Ne-Yo ("So Sick").

**For Best Contemporary R&B Album**

- This will be a tight race between Brown’s self-titled debut and Beyoncé’s "B-Day." My thinking is that Beyoncé may squeak past Brown on this one.

**For Best Rap Solo Performance**

- T.I. with "What You Know."

- Best rap performance by a duo or group: Chamillionaire featuring Krayzie Bone ("Ridin’") will get the Grammy. "Georgia" by Ludacris with Field Mob and Fox will get a run for the honor. The Roots’ "Don’t Feel Right" is a worthy contender, but their Def Jam debut album unjustly fell under the radar.

- Best rap/sung collaboration: It hinges between Akon with Eminem ("Smack That") and Timberlake with T.I. ("My Love"). I predict the latter will get the nod.

The best rap song: Critically acclaimed newcomer Lupe Fiasco ("Kick, Push") is a deservedly strong contender but T.I.’s "What You Know" will rule."
Bucky Covington Is Latest 'American Idol' Entrant Into The Country Market

With the "American Idol" finals just getting under way, it’s too early to tell if there are any budding country stars in the field, but the last two seasons have provided a bumper crop.

The story of country’s most famous "Idol" alum, Carrie Underwood, has been well-documented (Billboard, Jan. 12). The winner of season five, Underwood has made her mark with two No. 1 records (as well as a No. 2); 4.8 million copies sold of her debut album "Some Hearts" (Arista/Arista Nashville), according to Nielsen SoundScan; and numerous industry awards, including a surprise win at November’s Country Music Assn. Awards for female vocalist of the year.

Her latest single, "Wasted," is climbing Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart, where it’s No. 14 this week.

Kellie Pickler, now signed to Sony BMG’s BNA Records, finished sixth in season five. Her debut single, "Red High Heels," peaked at No. 15 and her 2006 album "Small Town Girl" has sold extraordinarily well—400,000 units, according to SoundScan—for a new artist with a top 15 hit. A nod to the power of "Idol," Metheney says. Pickler’s second single, "I Wonder," has just been released.

Josh Gracin is the granddaddy of Nashville’s "Idol" group, having finished fourth in season two. The former U.S. Marine’s self-titled Lyric Street debut has sold 684,000 copies and spawned three top five singles, including the No. 1 "Nothin’ to Lose." His sophomore effort, "All About Y’All," is tentatively scheduled for a summer release. The second single from that album, "I Keep Coming Back," is No. 30 and climbing.

Meanwhile, Bucky Covington, who finished eighth last year, is the latest "Idol" finalist to get a Nashville record deal. Like Pickler, Covington is a North Carolina native and, like Gracin, he’s signed to Lyric Street. His debut single, "A Different World," is No. 31 and climbing. The frontman, Mark Miller, producing.

Country rocker Covington, who was playing in a band while working at his father’s body shop, decided to take a shot at the big time when his sister-in-law told him about a nearby "Idol" audition. "I don’t want to wake up when I’m 40 years old wondering, 'What if?'" Covington remembers thinking.

And while he admits considering chasing his dream to Nashville and "trying out the old-fashioned way," he never made the move. "That’s a tough step to make," he says. "When I get here, what do I do?"

"Idol" was the answer. "It puts you in the eye of the people that need to be watching—producers, managers and record labels. The hardest thing about trying to make it is, how do you get in front of these people?"

Covington says he learned a lot from the "Idol" experience. "It’s amazing how much you think you learn in the bars and playing with bands—you think you’re ready, and then you realize how far away from ready you were. It’s a boot camp for singers, and they whipped me into shape," he says.

Covington owes his introduction to Miller to Miller’s young son, Gunner, who was a fan of Covington’s "Idol" performances. After Miller tracked him down through Covington’s hometown newspaper, the two met and forged a friendship. Covington says Miller, who also produces Christian band Casting Crowns, is a "blessing to work with. He knows me better than I do."

Between appearances on the "Idol" tour last summer, Covington recorded a demo, which Miller pitched to Nashville labels. There was interest from several, but Lyric Street won out.

While he’s a songwriter, Covington anticipates that only two of his songs will make his debut album "Idol"-for Christmas. His solo work features, "I’m not going to not sing a song just because I didn’t write it."

2007 is already proving to be a big year for superstar tenor Rolando Villazon. The Mexican singer has just released "Gitanos" (Virgin Classics, Feb. 6), a fascinating and colorful disc of 20th-century Spanish zarzuelas with Villazon’s typically clarion power and nuanced interpretation, and conducted by Placido Domingo himself a longtime champion of this unique musical form. Villazon is calling this album "my most intimate so far, as it brings together the music of my homeland, my mother country, my home language and the artist I most admire and from whom I have learned the most."

However, this isn’t Villazon’s only recording within the next year or so. His first solo album under his exclusive Deutsche Grammophon contract will be released at the start of 2008. Titled "Ciello e Mar," it will be a recital featuring Italian opera arias by Verdi, Donizetti, Ponchielli and Cilea, as well as rarities by Saverio Mercadante and Brazilian composer Carlos Gomes. And this September, DG will release another Villazon project: a duet album with now-omnipresent soprano Anna Netrebko that is poised to take advantage of the rave reviews and popular success the two have garnered together.

The Metropolitan Opera will also highlight the duo’s chemistry April 3, when the two singers perform at the Met’s 40th-anniversary gala in New York.

In other "Yellow Label" news, violinist Daniel Hope has a new exclusive recording deal with DG. His first DG album is scheduled to include the popular Mendelssohn violin concerto and the same composer’s gorgeous Octet for Strings. Peculiar release scheduling decisions leave Universal Classics championing three Mendelssohn violin concertos nearly simultaneously, however. Within the past few months alone, it has already released two competing sets of the same repertoire: Janine Jansen on Decca last month and Nicola Benedetti on DG last November. Hope has at least one old friend at his new label: Matthew Cosgrove, DG VP of A&R, is the former director of Warner Classics, for whom Hope used to record as a soloist as well as a member of the Beau Arts Trio.

PASSING THE BATON: Two prominent American orchestras have recently announced new music directors arriving at their podiums—and in both cases, the symphonies have chosen European maestros. The Dallas Symphony Orchestra named Jaap van Zweden, a Dutch conductor who is largely unknown to U.S. audiences, to a four-year contract beginning in September 2008 (although he will also lead two weeks of concerts in the fall as well). The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra appointed Austria’s Manfred Honeck to a three-year contract, also beginning in September next year.

The new Pittsburgh structure is quite a turnaround from an experiment begun just two years ago, in which PSO duties were split between Andrew Davis, Yan Pascal Tortelier and Marek Janowski, which the PSO leadership hailed at the time as a bold new initiative within the American orchestral community.

NOTES FROM ALL OVER: In Davos, Switzerland, violinist Joshua Bell was recently named one of this year’s Young Global Leaders by the World Economic Forum. Bell was the only American musician to be named to this group of 250 international figures, all under the age of 40. ...
Scottish Scooter Scandal
British Fans Enjoy The View; Hoteliers Disagree

Formed three years ago in Dundee, Scotland, alternative rock quartet the View is named after the hometown pub where it initially rehearsed—the Bayview Hotel. Sadly, the band’s been unwelcome there for some time, since singer Kyle Falconer rode a scooter along the bar. And it’s also barred from U.K. hotel chain Travelodge after causing £7,000 ($13,700) worth of damage at a Liverpool hotel in November 2006.

But the teenage outfit has found a safe home for its infectious, poppy rock in the hearts of U.K. record buyers, who sent its Jan. 22 debut “ Hats Off to the Buskers” (1965/Sony BMG) to No. 1 on the Official U.K. Chart Co. album listing.

The album was released Jan. 29 in Japan and Australia; a March 13 U.S. bow on Columbia coincides with an international rollout. “Japan, Australia and the U.S. are the three main territories for the View,” Sony BMG U.K. international marketing manager Philippe Demonte says. “But we had so many requests from radio elsewhere, the international release had to come forward.”

The View is on the four-band, 17-date Shockwaves NME Awards Indie Rock Tour in the United Kingdom (Jan. 29-Feb. 23) and will play its own March U.S. shows ahead of April U.K. shows. U.S. bookings are through Little Big Man; ITB handles international shows. Publishing is through Loog/Universal.

—Steve Adams

SAHARAN CLASH
Mainstream success for African bands is rare, but Mali’s Tinariwen—guitar-toting Tuareg tribesmen from the Sahara—could change that, judging by the ecstatic European and American reception for its third album, “Aman Iman (Water Is Life)” (Independent/Sony BMG).

The album was released Feb. 5 across Europe; a U.S. release on World Village follows March 23. Tinariwen joins U.K. guitar bands Travis, Embrace and Gomez on Independent’s roster and press coverage has emphasized the potential of its earthy rock sound to reach way beyond a “world music” audience. “We just call it guitar music,” says lead singer/songwriter Ibrahim Ag Alhabib, who counts Ali Farka Touré and Knobby among his influences.

The band formed in 1982, but it was a 2001 meeting at a festival in Mali with Robert Plant and his guitarist Justin Adams that spawned its 2003 debut, “The Radio Tidias Sessions.” Adams produced the album and released it on his own U.K. Indie, Wayward, a second label, “Amassakoul” (2004), appeared on London-based IRL. The band claims combined global sales of 80,000 for the two, released by World Village in the United States.

Tinariwen begins a 16-date U.K. tour March 19 before hitting Europe’s summer festivals. Booking is by London-based Sasa Music; Eve for Talent handles U.S. shows. The band is signed to EMI Music Publishing.

—Nigel Williamson
ALBUMS

POP
KATHARINE McPhee
Katharine McPhee
Producers: various
RCA
Release Date: Jan. 30
"The Simpsons"--once featured a Chuck E. Cheese-style kids’ restaurant with the slogan "We cram fun down your throat," which is more or less the "American Idol" machine's plan for Katharine McPhee on this debut record. The season five runner-up, a big-voiced Broadway wannabe on the show, is awkwardly painted as Gwen Stefani/Fergie by a surge of producers and writers on this anonymous-sounding pop album, covering over dance tracks like "Open Toes" (which, despite its lyrics, is not Kellie Pickler's), "Red High Heels," and "Love Story." McPhee is appealing, but lyrics like "From the first time I saw you! Well I thought that we'd be cool!" don't do much to reveal her true personality. As was the case with Taylor Hicks' debut in December, it's tough to imagine many fans listening to "Katharine McPhee" and recognizing the girl they voted for. JY

LATIN
KINTO SOL
Los Hijos del Mal
Producers: Javier "DJ" Playback García, Kinto Sol

GERALD LEVERT
In My Songs
Producers: Gerald Levert, Edwin "Eddy" Nicholas
Atlantic
Release Date: Feb. 13
Finished shortly before Gerald Levert's untimely death, this posthumous release carries special meaning, as his father Eddie Levert notes during a brief foreword. Beyond that, however, "In My Songs" fittingly showcases Levert's trademark brand of love-themed R&B/soul. Moving away from the socially conscious vibe of 2004's "Do I Speak for the World?" Levert gets back down to business. Revealing a more vulnerable side on the album's title track, he achingly shares his desire to find a love like those he sings about in his songs. Another torch-burner is the soaring "Deep As It Goes." His warm, sensual vocals will have females squirming as he croons, "That's the only way to be loved . . . way down deep." But it's not all slow going. Levert's party side erupts on the Steppin' Jam "DJ Don't" and the playful "Wanna Get Up With Me," Wrapping the 12-song set is the poignant—and ironically titled—ballad "Is This the Way to Heaven?"—GM

CLASSICAL
URAL CAINE
Ural Caine Plays Mozart
Producer: Stefan Winter
Winter & Winter
Release Date: Feb. 13
Jazz pianist Ural Caine has already re-envisioned the music of Bach, Mahler and Beethoven, among other illustrious classical composers. Now, it's Mozart's turn. Working with a group of excellent colleagues like trumpeter Ralph Alessi, electric guitarist Nguyen Le and turntablist DJ Olive, Caine brings the art of improvisation—so focal in Mozart's own time and today—back to center stage. These musicians are truly compelling when they harness and articulate the energy of Mozart's melodic, rhythmical and harmonic developments, such as in their version of the first movement of the Fortieth Symphony, rather than when they play the original themes with more four-square fidelity. Caine's solos built on excerpts from two Mozart piano sonatas are real standout, as is the group's take on the Turkish Rondo from the A Major Piano Sonata, a sinewy arabesque that morphs into an ecstatic klezmer stomping. —AT

RICKIE LEE JONES
Sermon on Exposition Boulevard
Producers: Lee Cantelon, Peter Stanisloff, Rob Schnapf
New West
Release Date: Feb. 6
A veteran, idiosyncratic troubadour takes the teachings of Christ and adopts them into song. Where have we heard that one before? But there's no "Slow Train Coming" for Rickie Lee Jones. "Sermon" is neither minstrel nor born-again treatise—and it's much more potent listen than most Sunday-morning addresses. Jones has taken tracts from the gospels, as cataloged by author Lee Cantelon in his book "The Words," and crafted songs that ruminate on faith and religious doctrine. The result is a collection of some of Jones's best material ever, a moving and inspiring effort that also stands as a testament to the power of songs in the modern world. They are as fresh and original today as when they were written, and it's impossible to listen to these songs without coming away with a new appreciation for the message of Jesus Christ. —AS

SOUNDTRACK
VARIOUS ARTISTS
Company (2006 Broadway Revival Cast)
Producer: Tommy Krasker
Nonesuch/PS Classics
Release Date: Feb. 13
Director John Doyle's revival of Stephen Sondheim's forever-timely 1970 musical not only strips the staging practically bare, it also does away with the orchestration, putting individual instruments in the hands of the actors instead. Think of it as Broadway unplugged. The blueprint worked for last year's revival of another Sondheim classic, "Sweeney Todd," and for its Grammy Award-nominated cast album. "Sweeney" producer Tommy Krasker returns for "Company," with similarly sparse yet intense results that question whether Sondheim's music, and his need for grandiose treatment to save, Raúl Esparza is a suave, big-voiced Bobby, the single New Yorker looking for inspiration to commit in the lives of his "good and crazy" married friends. When he sinks to the piano and alternately plunks and belts out closer "Being Alive," possibly the bitterest and sweetest cataloging of monogamy ever penned, the lean formula feels continued on p.40
even meater than the traditional alternative.—KM

**SINGLES**

**POP**

**PINK**
**U + Ur Hand** (3:34)
Producers: Max Martin, Paul Oakenfold
Writers: Pink, M. Martin, L. Gottwald, Rami
Publishers: various

Across Europe, Pink maintains superstar status, but here at home, current hit "I'm Not Dead" has hardly tended to truth in advertising. As "Stupid Girls" stalled at No. 32 at mainstream top 40 and Adult Contemporary, the singer sums it up, because as Pink states, "You're right. I do allude to my past, but I like to dream about what could have been."—CA

**GRATEFUL DEAD**
Live at the Cow Palace
Producers: David Lemieux, James Austin
Rhino

**SUN KIL MOON**
**Ghost of the Great Highway**
Producer: Mark Kozelek
Caldo Verde

**TEN**

**VITAL REBEL**

**SUN KIL MOON**
**Ghost of the Great Highway**
Producer: Mark Kozelek
Caldo Verde

**Release Date:** Feb. 20

While it's been nearly a decade since gospel great Armstrong graced the top 10, she long ago reached that rarefied place where numbers alone are insufficient to convey her significance. To her latest offers all the markings of both an artistic and commercial triumph. Heavy-duty hitmakers (among them Rodney Jerkins, Freddie Jerkins and Smokie Norful) capture Armstrong's grandeur on the best songs she's cut in ages. "I'll Be the Loving One" rocks with a relentless backbeat, while "Walking Miracle" mixes sparse hip-hop rhythm with straight, Sunday-morning grand piano. Armstrong whispers, shouts, soars and strains, in delirious, dazzling voice, on "So Good to Me," and the stel lar "It's Over Now," leaving no doubt she remains the most thoroughly thrilling singer in gospel today.—GE

**JENNIFER HUDSON**
**I Am Telling You I'm Not Going** (6:19)
Producers: Harvey Mason Jr., Damon Thomas, Randy Spendlove, Matt Sullivan
Writers: Various

**HILARY DUFF**
**With Love** (3:03)
Producers: Veda Nobles, Logic
Writers: H. Duff, K. Diao/Max

**NEW & NOTEWORTHY**

**JAMES MORRISON**
**You Give Me Something** (3:36)
Producer: E. White
Writers: J. Morrison, F. Egn
Publisher: not listed

The United Kingdom's James Morrison arrives in the United States with a boatload of kudos. "Wonderful World" reached the top 10 across much of Europe, followed by "You Give Me Something," which hit No. 5, as debut album "Undiscovered" debuted at No. 1 in the United Kingdom, fostering three BRT Award nods. Counting Al Green, Otis Redding and Cat Stevens as influences, Morrison's blue-eyed soul is instantly ingratiating with a superlative vocal prototype, slightly scatty and seemingly age-old, while retro production boasts the appreciable churn of horns alongside. Given massive 2006 hits from overseas imports James Blunt, Daniel Powter and Gnarls Barkley, here's hoping that stateside programmers recognize the appeal of this Brit artist, who, unlike each of those previous acts, has potential to develop a fully fledged career, judging the overall intoxicating appeal of "Undiscovered."—CT

**Montgomery Gentry**
**I'll Stand By You** (3:47)
Producers: Fred C. Sherry, Dana Wood
Writers: C. Sherry, D. Wood

**HILARY DUFF**
**With Love** (3:03)
Producers: Veda Nobles, Logic
Writers: H. Duff, K. Diao

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Keeping Up With Jones: Blue Note’s Hot Hand

A though overall album volume still lags, Norah Jones’ opening week adds a shine to The Billboard 200’s top 10. Like “Not Too Late” stunts with 416,000, a better number than chart watchers projected from “Chasing Cars” first-day sales, and one that more than doubles the chart-topping album from the same frame of 2006.

Thanks to Jones’ arrival, the big chart’s top 10 beat the same-week volume of the prior year for the first time in 2007 (up 3.7%). But the overall chart lags by 11.3%, while industrywide, it drops by 10.0%. The opening week’s 2,860,000, but every other title in that week’s top 10 outsold the same-ranked title on this issue’s list.

KEEPING UP: Norah Jones’ success is not confined to The Billboard 200. She’s also a big deal in cyberspace and globally, as she bows at No. 1 on Top Digital Albums, Top Internet Albums and Billboard 200’s Euro Albums chart. Last week this list keeps pace with its impeccable batting average on The Billboard 200 through No. 35 in 11 as many trips. The Euro chart standing reflects chart-topping starts in 10 of that country’s countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany and France.

Jones’ box on Top Digital Albums weights in at 50,000 downloads, the fourth-largest of a No. 1 on that chart, behind Justin Timberlake’s “Future

EXPLORE CDs

CREATORS, this week’s entry is a huge stumper, and now Pat Boone has made his Billboard chart debut almost 52 years ago, and now he finally makes his first appearance on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums, as he returns to the charts after an absence of exactly 10 years.

And Busted is busted up, but the UK band’s songs live on, as the Jonas Brothers have the highest-debuteating song on The Billboard Hot 100 with a track that went to No. 2 for Busted in the United Kingdom.
THE BILLBOARD 200

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTIST</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<th>Label 1</th>
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### HOT 100 AIRPLAY

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<tr>
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<td>RUNAWAY LOVE</td>
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<td>ON THE HOTLINE</td>
<td>pretty FAY</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>MAKE IT RAIN</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>LOST WITHOUT U</td>
<td>SHORTIE LIKE MINE</td>
<td>Jive</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>HOW TO SAVE A LIFE</td>
<td>THE PASS</td>
<td>Elektra</td>
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<td>WALK AWAY (REMEMBER ME)</td>
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<td>SMACK THAT</td>
<td>THE SNAPSHOT</td>
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<td>JOHN KYE</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>FAR AWAY</td>
<td>THE LONDON SAVAGES</td>
<td>Rhino</td>
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<td>TAYLOR SWIFT / LINDSAY HARRISON</td>
<td>Big Machine</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>PRETTY WOMEN</td>
<td>NICKI MINAJ</td>
<td>Young Money</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>CUPID’S CHOREHOLD</td>
<td>MELKA / RYAN</td>
<td>Sony/Atlantic</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>HERE (IN YOUR ARMS)</td>
<td>NELSON / TIM / TRIO</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>IRREPLACEABLE</td>
<td>LIL DELTA</td>
<td>Lava</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>FERGALICIOUS</td>
<td>ALESSIO DE LAPIS</td>
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<td>WALK IT OUT</td>
<td>LINDSEY LOHAN</td>
<td>Lava</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>RUNAWAY LOVE</td>
<td>LUXURY</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>MAKE IT RAIN</td>
<td>NINTENDO (“THE SAYI”)</td>
<td>Capitol</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>SNEAK THAT</td>
<td>OSGOOD / GRANT / KINGSTON JAMES</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>WELCOME TO THE BLACK PARADE</td>
<td>FREDERIC / MISTY</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>ON THE HOTLINE</td>
<td>CLAY / JORDAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>HOW TO SAVE A LIFE</td>
<td>JUSTIN BIEBER</td>
<td>Polydor</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>NIKKI CORMACK / MICHELLE WALKER</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>NOBODY TOLD ME</td>
<td>AMERICAN HEADACHE</td>
<td>Wounded Bird</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>DASHROCK</td>
<td>KELLY clarkstein</td>
<td>Universal</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>DEITY</td>
<td>MITCH MCCOY</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>HOW TO SAVE A LIFE</td>
<td>JASON MRAZ</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>SIMON’S GHOST</td>
<td>SCARLETT HOFFMAN</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>SKOW (HEY OH)</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>BOSTON</td>
<td>DANNY B. TEAGUE / JAZZ ABRAMS</td>
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### ADULT TOP 40

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<td>MATT &amp; KATHY</td>
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<td>LIPS OF AN ANGEL</td>
<td>NIKKI CORMACK / MICHELLE WALKER</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>IT’S NOT OVER</td>
<td>CLAY / JORDAN</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>BREAK IT OPEN</td>
<td>MØ / DAMIIO</td>
<td>bordeur recordings</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>SWEET ESCAPE</td>
<td>THOMAS BURTON</td>
<td>Interscope</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>KISS FROM THE ROCKER</td>
<td>NATASHA BEDINGFIELD</td>
<td>Warner Bros</td>
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<td>TI-E BLACK PARADE</td>
<td>WALE</td>
<td>Polydor</td>
</tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>CREATORS</td>
<td>AUTOMATIC STAR</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>LEAVE THE PIECES</td>
<td>JESSICA RAE</td>
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### MODERN ROCK

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<td>Atlantic</td>
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<td>HONOR YOURSELF</td>
<td>BRAD PAISLEY</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>THE CRAZY CAR</td>
<td>BAND OF HONOR</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ALL I NEED IS YOU</td>
<td>JOSH ORABAN</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I’M IN LOVE</td>
<td>NELLY FURTADO</td>
<td>Capitol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>BLACK NIGHT</td>
<td>THE BLACK SKULL</td>
<td>Roadrunner</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ENDLESS LOVE</td>
<td>JOHN COUGAR</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>MY المعطم POSITIVE</td>
<td>JAY SEAN / TAYLOR SWIFT</td>
<td>Capitol</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>BREATHE</td>
<td>JOEY MATHIS</td>
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### MODERN COUNTRY

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<td>2</td>
<td>LONELY ROAD</td>
<td>SHELBY STANDS</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>IN DANGER</td>
<td>JOSH ORABAN</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>SUCH A NIGHT</td>
<td>NELLY FURTADO</td>
<td>Capitol</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>SAVING ME</td>
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### R&B/POP

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<td>THIS IS THE YEAR</td>
<td>KATIE ALBRIGHT / JON BON JOVI</td>
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<td>PRETTY WOMEN</td>
<td>NICKI MINAJ</td>
<td>Young Money</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>CUPID’S CHOREHOLD</td>
<td>MELKA / RYAN</td>
<td>Sony/Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>HERE (IN YOUR ARMS)</td>
<td>NELSON / TIM / TRIO</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>IRREPLACEABLE</td>
<td>LIL DELTA</td>
<td>Lava</td>
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### HIP HOP/R&B

<table>
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<th>Title</th>
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<td>THE CRAZY CAR</td>
<td>BAND OF HONOR</td>
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<td>ALL I NEED IS YOU</td>
<td>JOSH ORABAN</td>
<td>Atlantic</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I’M IN LOVE</td>
<td>NELLY FURTADO</td>
<td>Capitol</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>BLACK NIGHT</td>
<td>THE BLACK SKULL</td>
<td>Roadrunner</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>MY المعطم POSITIVE</td>
<td>JAY SEAN / TAYLOR SWIFT</td>
<td>Capitol</td>
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**TOP R&B/HIP-HOP ALBUMS**

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<tr>
<th>ARTIST</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>The Evolution Of Robin Thicke (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Dreamville Records Presents: J. Cole (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Young Doo (12.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>The Re-Up (12.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td>The Rest of My Life (12.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>I'm Not The Only One (12.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>The Re-Up (12.98)</td>
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<td><strong>8</strong></td>
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**TOP REGGAE ALBUMS**

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<th>ARTIST</th>
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<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>Forever Bob Marley (13.98)</td>
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<td>Welcome To Jamrock (13.98)</td>
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<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>No Place To Be (13.98)</td>
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<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Youth (13.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td>Live At Stubbs (13.98)</td>
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<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>Africa Unite: The Singles Collection (13.98)</td>
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<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>Too Bad (13.98)</td>
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<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td>Untitled (13.98)</td>
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<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td>Strictly The Best Vol. 26 (13.98)</td>
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**SCOTT NAILS HOT SHOT DEBUT**

Scott nails the help of friends to grab the Hot Shot debut on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums. "I'll Scott Collaborations" light up this chart at No. 3 and The Billboard Top 100 at No. 12 with 44,000 sales.

Scott’s fourth album is a collection of material that’s been recorded with heavyweights since her 2000 debut. The all-star guest list: includes Common, Chris Botts and Mos Def, plus “Daydreaming” from Lupe Fiasco’s Grammy Award-winning album.*

*Unlike Scott’s prior albums, this project is distributed by Fontana, after Hidden Beach ended its relationship with Sony Music last year. Two steps up the list, Robin Thicke hoists the Greatest Gainer award for the third straight week en route to his first No. 1 album.

---

American Radio History
### R&B/HIP-HOP Airplay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist/Label</th>
<th>Chart Rank</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 YOU</td>
<td>Chris Brown feat. Fergie (RCA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 PROMISE</td>
<td>Pussycat Dolls (Interscope)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 LOST WITHOUT U</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 RUNAWAY LOVE</td>
<td>Fantasia (Columbia)</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 IRREPLACEABLE</td>
<td>Flo Rida feat. Mariah Carey (Atlantic)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Poppin'</td>
<td>Chris Brown feat. JAY-Z (J-Def Records)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Ice Box</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 On The Hotline</td>
<td>Fantasia (Columbia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Throw Some D's</td>
<td>Jermaine Dupri feat. Bow Wow (Young Money)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Take Me As I Am</td>
<td>Jermaine Dupri feat. Bow Wow (Young Money)</td>
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<td>11 Go Getta</td>
<td>Mariah Carey (Atlantic)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 My Love</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<td>13 One Night Like Mine</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Top Back</td>
<td>Jermaine Dupri feat. Bow Wow (Young Money)</td>
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<td>15 I Wanna Love You</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 This Is Why I'm Hot</td>
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<td>17 We Fly High</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<td>18 And I'm Telling You I'm Not Going</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<td>19 Take Me As I Am</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<td>20 Go Getta</td>
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<td>21 My Love</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<td>23 Top Back</td>
<td>Jermaine Dupri feat. Bow Wow (Young Money)</td>
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<td>24 I Wanna Love You</td>
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<td>28 Take Me As I Am</td>
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### R&B Singles Sales

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<td>3 CALL ME ON MY PHONE</td>
<td>Mariah Carey (Atlantic)</td>
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<td>4 SECRET LOVE</td>
<td>Mariah Carey (Atlantic)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 BONE OUT</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 JAY-Z feat. The Game</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 ME AND MY BABY</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 THE WAY I LIVE</td>
<td>Mariah Carey (Atlantic)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 THE WAY I LIVE</td>
<td>Mariah Carey (Atlantic)</td>
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### Rhythm & Hip-Hop Airplay

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<td>5 WE Fly High</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<td>6 And I'm Telling You I'm Not Going</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Take Me As I Am</td>
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<td>9 My Love</td>
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<td>Mariah Carey (Atlantic)</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 My Love</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 One Night Like Mine</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 Top Back</td>
<td>Jermaine Dupri feat. Bow Wow (Young Money)</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 I Wanna Love You</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 This Is Why I'm Hot</td>
<td>Mariah Carey (Atlantic)</td>
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<td>23 We Fly High</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<td>24 And I'm Telling You I'm Not Going</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Take Me As I Am</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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### Adult R&B

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<tr>
<td>2 CHANGE ME</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<td>3 LAY ME ON YOU</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 PROMISE</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<td>5 USED TO BE MY GIRL</td>
<td>Ne-Yo (Star Trak/Interscope)</td>
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<td>6 CAN'T GET ENOUGH</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Can't Get Enough</td>
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Data for week of FEBRUARY 17, 2007 | CHARTS LEGEND on Page 56
Rodney Atkins logs a fourth week atop Hot Country Songs with “Watching You” (37.6 million audience impressions). He becomes only the second artist in the 17-year Nielsen BDS era to spend that many weeks at No. 1 with a first-airing chart-topper.

Atkins’ prior single, “If You’re Going Through Hell (Before the Devil Even Knows),” spent four weeks at No. 1 starting in the Aug. 12, 2006, issue. The only other artist during the monitored airplay-era to spend at least that long on top with two first No. 1s is Carrie Underwood, whose “Jesus, Take the Wheel” and “Before He Cheats” spent six weeks and five weeks at No. 1, respectively, last year.

The four-week reign by “Watching” is the chart’s longest No. 1 run since Underwood’s “Cheats” garnered those five weeks and the longest by a solo male artist since Atkins’ four-week stand with “Hell.” The last male to lead longer, five weeks last summer, was Kenny Chesney with “Summertime.” — Wade Jessen
## HOT LATIN SONGS

**February 17, 2007**

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<thead>
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<td>SHORTY</td>
<td>Conjunto Primavera</td>
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<td>PAMPA</td>
<td>Wisin &amp; Yandel</td>
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<td>Los Reieros Del Norte</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>BENDITA TU LUZ</td>
<td>Maná</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7*</td>
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<td>Beyoncé</td>
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<td>TE LO AGRADECZCO, PERO NO</td>
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<td>Yuridia</td>
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<td>A.B. Quintanilla III Presents Kumbia All Stars</td>
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<td>Los Tigres Del Norte</td>
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**Legend:**
- * : New to Chart
- * : Out from Chart

**The Latin Song chart**
- The latter week results from the top three Hot Latn Alums, as this is the first chart to track Hot Latin Songs.

**Previously: The Latin Song chart**
- The latter week results from the top three Hot Latin Alums, as this is the first chart to track Hot Latin Songs.

### HOT LATIN SONGS

**February 17, 2007**

**HOT LATIN SONGS**

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## LATIN AIRPLAY POP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SONG</th>
<th>ARTIST/SUPPLIED (PRODUCTION LABEL)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tu Recuerdo</td>
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<td>Muestra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Si No Estas</td>
<td>Daddy Yankee</td>
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<td>Bendita Tu Luz</td>
<td>Daddy Yankee</td>
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<td>Nada Puede Cambiarme</td>
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<td>Invierno</td>
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<td>De Que Te Vayas</td>
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<td>Como Se Quiere</td>
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<td>Tengo Una Serial</td>
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<td>A La Primera Persona</td>
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## LATIN AIRPLAY TROPICAL

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<td>Que Ayer</td>
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<td>Vamos a Toa</td>
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<td>Pasando</td>
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<td>Pegando</td>
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<td>Tus Palabras</td>
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<tr>
<td>De Rodillas Te Pido</td>
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<td>Si Yo Volvere A Hacer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Por Tu Amor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Se Me Domesticado</td>
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## LATIN HITS

Go to www.billboard.com for complete chart data. **53**
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<td>VIVERE</td>
<td>POLYDOR</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>A&amp;M</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>くちづけのマーズシャトル</td>
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<td>SEGA</td>
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<td>REFAL</td>
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CHARTS

LEGEND

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

- Albums with the greatest sales gains this week.
- Digital albums with the greatest sales gains this week.
- Where included, this award indicates the title with the chart's largest increase over last week.
- PRICING CONFIGURATION:
  - CD/Cassette prices are suggested list or equivalent prices, which are projected from weekly sales prices.
  - After price indicates album available at a discount.

ALBUM CHARTS

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

- Songs showing an increase in audience (or detections) over the previous week, regardless of chart movement.
- RECURRENT RULES:
  - Songs are removed from the Hot 100 and 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-Hip-Hop Airplay charts simultaneously if they have been on the Hot R&B/Pop-Hip-Hop Singles & Tracks for more than 20 weeks on the chart for more than 20 weeks and rank below 50 in detections or audience.

SINGLES CHARTS

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 existing sets of data with Arbitron listener data. The exceptions are the Rhythm & Top 40, Adult Top 40, Contemporary, Modern Rock and Adult R&B charts, which are ranked by total detections.

- Albums with the greatest sales gains this week.
- Digital albums with the greatest sales gains this week.
- Where included, this award indicates the title with the chart's largest increase over last week.
- PRICING CONFIGURATION:
  - CD/Cassette prices are suggested list or equivalent prices, which are projected from weekly sales prices.
  - After price indicates album available at a discount.

VIDEO MUSIC SALES CHARTS

- RIAA gold certification for net shipment of 500,000 units, singles, or albums (Platinum). Numerical equivalent to diamond symbol indicates album's multimillion unit level. For boxed sets, and double albums with a running time of 100 minutes or more, the RIAA multiplies shipments by the number of discs and/or tapes.
- Certification for net shipments of 10,000,000 units (Diamond).

DVD SALES/WIS SINGLES/WIS RENTALS

- RIAA gold certification for net shipment of 50,000 units for video singles.
- RIAA gold certification for net shipment of 50,000 units for video singles.
- RIAA gold certification for net shipment of 50,000 units for video singles.
- RIAA gold certification for net shipment of 100,000 units for video singles.
- RIAA platinum certification for sales of 100,000 units in 22 million sales at suggested retail prices.
- RIAA gold certification for net shipment of 100,000 units or more for video singles.
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## SINGLES & TRACKS

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Data for week of FEBRUARY 17, 2007

**CHARTS LEGEND** on Page 56

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The annual MIDEM convention was held in Cannes, France, and drew nearly 10,000 attendees from the global music industry, making it the largest international event in the sector.

RIGHTS:

Dominique Leguern, editor of Billboard, hosted a breakfast with ASCAP executive vice-president and CEO Michael Sandoval, and several other industry professionals.

ABOVE:

Spin magazine brought legendary singer-songwriter Glen Hansard of Irish rock band the Frames, and ASCAP assistant VP of special projects Lorraine Furst, center, to the ASCAP Music Café at the Star Bar in Park City, Utah, with legendary singer-songwriter Donovan, star of this year’s Sundance film Feels Like Home. The event, called the “ASCAP Music Café,” offered a variety of performances by up-and-coming acts and established favorites, all enjoyed in a lively and relaxed atmosphere.

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LIFE’S DELICATE BALANCE

For Darren Hayes, residency as lead of ‘90s smash duo Savage Garden feels like a lifetime ago. “The music industry then was in its heyday and we certainly enjoyed amazing success, but I do feel like an old man sometimes,” he tells Track. After selling 5 million copies of the duo’s two albums and topping singles charts with “Truly Madly Deeply” and “I Knew I Loved You,” Hayes decided to go the solo route. He recorded two solo albums: the pop-fabulous “Spin” in 2002 and the more brooding “The Tension and the Spark”—which then-label Columbia declined to release in America.

“Received the record and got lost in translation,” he says of the latter disc. “But rather than get down, I focused on writing songs. It seemed like a waste to not use that time creatively.” Hayes was again approached by major labels—but declined. “I got to that second- or third-date stage with a couple of record companies, but I had cold feet. I have the luxury of spending money to make the music I want with people I want.”

Hayes’ third solo project is a 25-song double opus, “This Delicate Thing We’ve Made.” Due in August, the collection, which will arrive by way of his own label Powdered Sugar, reflects the artist’s life changes, including coming out and his marriage to British animator Richard Cullen in a civil partnership ceremony at their home in London.

“This is absolutely the most personal thing I’ve written,” Hayes says. “I’ve looked at the world, met my soulmate, buried a friend who died from AIDS. I am constantly reminded that the older we get, relationships and our view of the world are full of contrast. I hope it’s something everyone can relate to.”

DOING IT HIS WAY

Veteran entertainer Paul Anka has inked a new deal with Decca for his next album, “My Way—Swings & Strings,” Track has learned. The set is due May 1 and features a blend of new recordings of Anka’s own hits and pop/Adult contemporary staples. Tracks include Joni Mitchell’s “Both Sides Now,” Billy Joel’s “I Go to Extremes” and a duet with the late Sammy Davis Jr. on “I Am Not Anyone,” which Anka originally penned for Davis in 1973. Other guests on the collection include Andrea Bocelli and Michael Bublé.

SCREAM MAKES MORE NOISE

Sources say veteran urban music exec Michael Mauldin, president of Mauldin Brand Agency, will take his Scream Tour brand and partner with Warner Music Group under the Scream Star Entertainment banner. The deal is supposed to encompass the Scream tour, now in its sixth year, a new record label and magazine and digital media initiatives—as well as TV, film and merchandising projects. Previous Scream Tour acts include Omarion, Pretty Ricky, Marques Houston, Bow Wow, Yung Joc and Mario. The multimillion-dollar deal is expected to close in the coming weeks.

Sources also say Mauldin, a former Columbus Records black music president and the father of Jermaine Dupri, will head up Scream Star Entertainment as its CEO, and will work closely with senior management at Warner Music Group and Atlantic Records.

DANCING WITH A STAR

Hilary Duff’s new Hollywood Records album, “Dignity,” sees the light of day April 3. In anticipation of the singer’s fourth album, “Welcome to My Life,” due in late April, if these five songs are any indication, Duff is in the mood to shake what her mama gave her. All five previewed songs (“With Love,” “Play With Fire,” “Strange,” “Danger” and “Burn”) find the singer/actress reveling in the beats and rhythms of clubland. (Talk about a metamorphosis.)

For this dancefloor-primed collection, Duff worked with top songwriters and producers, including Kari DioGuardi, Timbaland and Bob and William. Some of the new disc’s sounds are heard in the ad campaign for Duff’s new Elizabeth Arden Fragrance, With Love . . . Hilary Duff.

DREAMS CAN COME TRUE

Though Italian-born soprano Giorgia Fumanti’s sophomore album, “From My Heart,” does not arrive until March 6, the Manhattan Records artist has already had her spiritual wish come true. Despite being raised a Roman Catholic, Fumanti now follows Buddhism. So, imagine her surprise when a close friend of the Dalai Lama came to see her perform live in concert and offered to pass on a copy of her new CD—a pop/classical collection of songs in Italian and English—to the spiritual leader.

Fumanti, who was recently on tour with Jose Carreras, says she is moved by the gesture. “It is truly an unbelievable thing for me. I cannot say how moved and honored I am that my music will be heard by the Dalai Lama.”

GRADY’S RED LIGHT SPECIAL IN THE 615

Track has learned that former Sony Music Nashville chief John Grady—who co-founded the Columbia-distributed DMZ label with producer T-Bone Burnett—has resurfaced as a partner in Red Light Management. Red Light is Coran Capshaw’s Charlotettsville, Va.-based shop, which oversees such acts as Dave Matthews Band, Trey Anastasio, Gomez and country singer Rodney Atkins. Grady’s mandate for Red Light is to establish a beachhead for the management company in the 615 area code.

NICKELBACK CARES

Nickelback is doing its part to raise money and awareness for Amnesty International and International Children’s Awareness Canada. Starting Feb. 1, all proceeds from digital sales of the band’s new single and video, “If Everyone Cared,” are being donated to the two organizations. The music video, lensed by Dori Oskowitz, features band performance footage intercut with stories of individuals who have incited change for the betterment of the world.
For the past six years, the most influential decision-makers in the music industry have gathered at Digital Media Wire's annual Digital Music Forum in New York. They come to network, do deals and share ideas about the future of the music business. Participants have described the event as a "rolling pot of the best of the best in digital music" where ideas are shared and opinions don't go unchallenged. This year's event is hosted by DMW, Billboard and the Consumer Electronics Association.

Topics Include:
The State of the Digital Union; Mobile Music Revolution - Music Beyond Ringtones; Device & Format Wars: Who will be the Winners & the Losers?; Digital Copyrights: The Wild West All Over Again?; Social Music Discovery; The Future of Radio; A&R in the Digital Age; Digital Rights and Clearances for Music; The Evolution of Live Music Events through Digital Media

Confirmed speaker information is provided at www.digitalmusicforum.com

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