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Miguel Bosé, Joan Sebastian, David Bisbal, Rakim & Ken-Y and many more are confirmed to perform at the Billboard Latin Music Conference & Awards. April 23-26 in Miami. More at billboardevents.com.

R&B/HIP-HOP

Returning to Atlanta Sept. 5-7, the Billboard R&B/Hip-Hop Conference & Awards features savvy speakers, networking opportunities, educational sessions and exciting performances. More at billboardevents.com.

VIDEO

GO UNDERGROUND

Artist interviews, performances and out-takes. Billboard helps you discover the next hot stars of all genres.

Billboard Underground welcomes Carla Duren, billboard.com/underground
Fans First
Music Companies Have It in Their Power To Expand The Digital Music Industry

BY ERIC NICOLI

“Come May, I’ll be voting my dollars via buying up as many EMIs premium music tracks on iTunes as I can afford.”

This was just one of the hundreds of e-mails from fans that EMI received this week following our announcement that we will begin selling new digital rights management-free, higher-quality premium downloads.

The majority of global recorded music sales—about 90%—come in the form of CDs, but clearly, this traditional business model is declining. Given today’s challenging market conditions, I think we’re all agreed that transitioning our business to digital and putting the consumer first are both top priorities for the music industry.

In four years, we went from zero to a true digital retail business with real and rapidly growing digital revenue. We also have great artists and great repertoire; we simply need to be sure—we or our digital partners—are packaging, presenting, and delivering music to consumers in a way that inspires them. Inspired consumers drive higher sales.

The digital business we’re all admirably contributing to creating is facing too many barriers, however. The primary one is the lack of interoperability among digital music services and devices has created confusion and frustration for consumers. In a perfect world, the hardware, software and content companies would see eye-to-eye and cooperate to fix this issue. But change hasn’t come fast enough. At EMI, we took the view that we could either allow the interoperability stalemate to continue, or we could take action (see story, page 5). We did the latter, because we believe that content companies really do have the power to change the game. By providing DRM-free downloads and raising their audio quality, we believe we have come up with a new product proposition that adds real value and greater choice. Ultimately, we think it will expand the digital music market to the benefit of everyone to the value chain: consumers, artists and those who support them, digital partners, device makers, employees and all other interested parties.

EMI is not turning its lock on DRM. We will continue to use DRM as appropriate to enable innovative digital business models such as subscription, superdistribution and time-limited downloads.

Protecting the intellectual property of EMI and our artists is as important as ever. We will continue to work hard to combat piracy in all its forms and to educate consumers. The music industry has in its grasp a massive opportunity to realize growth in our business through digital, but we only have a fighting chance of achieving it if we attend to consumers. That means music companies must fundamentally change the way they do business.

The status quo is not an option if we are to succeed.

Eric Nolli is chairman of EMI Group.

FEEDBACK

THE LEGAL MATTERS column titled “On the Hot Seat” in the April 7 issue contains some unfortunate misstatements about ASCAP’s position, and it is important to set the record straight.

ASCAP has always taken the position that, in the words of both congressional committees dealing with music on the Internet, “the transmission to the public of a copyrighted musical work constitutes a public performance of that work.”

That the transmission may also constitute a digital phonorecord delivery is irrelevant—it just means that for these uses, like many others, both mechanical and performing rights are involved.

The impetus for presenting the question of the performing right in downloads to the rate court came from the Internet services, not ASCAP. ASCAP has not “shifted” its position since our 2001 joint statement with BMI and the National Music Publishers’ Assn. We said then, and continue to say, that although performing rights exist in “pure” audio downloads—those without any conditions whatsoever attached to them—we will not seek payment for such uses; the value of the performing right in other forms of transmission, including conditional downloads, is for the court to decide in the pending rate proceedings.

It is well to remember that the future livelihoods of songwriters and composers, and the publishers who support them, are at stake here.

John LoFrumento
CEO, ASCAP
The DRM Scorecard

EMI and Apple sent shockwaves through the music industry with their announcement that they would begin offering commercial downloads without digital rights management. As the dust begins to settle, Billboard breaks down the winners and losers in the latest round in the fight over DRM.

WINNERS

Consumers. People who actually pay for digital music finally are free to playback purchased tracks wherever they want, however they want. And they’re getting better audio quality to boot. But improved usage rights and sound performance don’t come for free: EMI is charging a higher wholesale rate for DRM-free tracks, a cost that is being passed on to the customer. iTunes will charge $1.29 for DRM-free downloads.

Apple. The market leader in digital music grabs the moral high ground in the debate over interoperability and DRM. "The right thing for the customer going forward is to tear down the walls that prevent interoperability by going DRM-free," says Apple CEO Steve Jobs. It also avoids having to license its FairPlay DRM to rival technology companies, something it was loathe to do. As a bonus, a move to higher-quality audio files will drive the need for iPods with greater storage capacity (at likely higher prices). And the company benefits from timing its announcement to overshadow word of an European antitrust probe into iTunes pricing.

Device manufacturers. Makers of MP3 players and music phones not built by Apple now have the ability to support tracks purchased through market leader iTunes. "It will eventually move the issue of iTunes lock-in," says Jupiter Research analyst Michael Gartenberg. "But if [other vendors'] sales don't take off, it will be clear that it wasn't a lock-in that prevented their success."

Independent labels. Never sticklers for DRM, indie labels will see a spike in iPod-friendly retailers of their content.

LOSES

Rival majors. Universal Music Group, Sony BMG and Warner Music Group now face increased pressure to follow EMI in adopting DRM-free downloads despite reservations about the uncertain impact on digital profitability and piracy. Rival label executives are privately complaining that EMI has recklessly embraced its new strategy without adequate testing. Some label sources estimate that less than 10% of music devices support the AAC format. But with Apple choosing to support unprotected AAC over MP3, device manufacturers are expected to ramp support for the format. Microsoft’s Zune, SanDisk’s Sansa and Sony’s PlayStation 3 are among the select devices that already do play AAC files.

Publishers. Songwriters and publishers are also expressing dismay that EMI’s effort undercuts the industry’s ability to correct the security problems that have plagued the CD format by creating a completely secure commercial environment for digital music.

ON THE FENCE

EMI. EMI chairman Eric Nicioli wins points in the short run for aggressive thinking on DRM by making the first move to break the interoperability log jam. But the company is taking big risks on its long-term digital profitability and stock price. If the move does not increase digital consumption, the results could be disastrous. EMI execs are adamant they are making the right move. "This is about creating more opportunity in personalized music by providing the right product to people who are prepared to pay for it," digital chief Barney Wragg says. "We think it’s going to significantly increase the size of the market."

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<head>http://www.billboard.biz/biz/</head>
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Long, Cold Winter

Digital Growth Couldn’t Stem CD, Rap And Country Q1 Drops

It will come as no shock to the dedicated Billboard reader that first-quarter results show the CD in continued freefall. What may be more surprising is who and what are leading that decline.

First things first: Overall album sales for the Jan. 1-April 2 period are down 16.6% to 117.1 million units, led—or perhaps misled—by a 20.5% decrease in the country category. Industry executives attribute the decline to a weak release schedule, the consumer’s loss of confidence in the CD and a reduction in stores promoting the product.

Certainly, the last point is documentable. Between first-quarter 2006 and now, several key retailers have disappeared. FYE shuttered 131 stores in January, and Tower Records liquidated 89 superstores in December. Musicland also closed 500 stores beginning in January 2006, so many of those outlets—and their going-out-of-business sales—contributed to first quarter 2006.

“We are seeing a customer dislocation,” Newbury Comics CEO Mike Dresce says. “A lot of people are confused about where they shop, and it’s changing their habits ... it takes a while for people to find new stores.”

Digital track sales, though they are still growing, could not pick up the slack. More than 280 million digital tracks were sold, outpacing album sales by more than 100 million units, according to Nielsen SoundScan. When those digital tracks are converted to track equivalents (10 tracks counting as one album sale), unit album sales were still down 10.3%.

Digital sales growth is slowing from last year, when tracks were up 87% and digital albums were up 144% at the end of 2006’s first quarter. At the end of first-quarter 2007, digital track sales were up 51.9%, digital album sales, which total 11.5 million units, were up 56%. But as a percentage of album sales, digital album sales are nearly 10% now, versus the 5.2% they were at the end of first-quarter 2006.

Meanwhile, two tracks topped the million-unit milestone: Fall Out Boy’s “This Ain’t a Scene, It’s an Arms Race” and Gwen Stefani’s “The Sweet Escape.” The top-selling digital download at the end of first-quarter 2006 was James Blunt’s “You’re Beautiful,” which stood at 714,000 scans.

Despite worries about the reduction in store space devoted to CDs, catalog sales, down 14.6% to 47.5 million units, continue to show more strength than current album sales, which are down 18.9% to 69.6 million.

The top-selling album so far this year is Norah Jones’ ‘Not Too Late,’ with nearly 1.2 million scans, the only album to top the million-unit market. Last year at the end of the first quarter three albums had hit 1 million units—Mary J. Blige’s ‘The Breakthrough,’ the ‘High School Musical’ soundtrack and Blunt’s ‘Back to Bedlam.’

Within genres sales, rock, which includes alternative and hard rock and is responsible for nearly 30% of all U.S. album sales, showed resilience to the sales downturn, with the genre and both subgenres down in the 10%-12% range.

The country and rap genres appeared to be the big losers. Rap, which SoundScan also counts within R&B, had the largest genre decline. Sales fell 33.6% to 10.9 million scans from the 16.5 million units the genre tallied in first-quarter 2006 sales.

R&B, the second-largest genre with scans of 24.7 million units, was down only 17.6% for the year. If rap’s decline is removed from the equation, then R&B albums actually showed a 1.9% increase in sales for the year, making that category the only genre to grow.

Country sales were the second-biggest loser of the large genres, with a 30.7% decline to 12.1 million units. ‘Country hasn’t had sizzle in the new-release category so far this year,’ says Ben Kline, executive VP of sales, marketing and new media at Universal Music Group (UMG) Nashville, who also notes that carryover sales are not as strong either.

Indeed, last year, Carrie Underwood’s 2005 release ‘Some Hearts’ sold more than 900,000 units in the first quarter; there were two Johnny Cash–related albums that reached over 1 million units; and Rascal Flatts. Trace Adkins and Keith Urban each had albums that, combined, generated another 1.25 million in sales.

In contrast, this year the three best-selling country albums were Rascal Flatts’ 2006 release ‘Me and My Gang,’ the Dixie Chicks’ ‘Taking the Long Way’ and Tim McGraw’s ‘Let It Go,’ which just sneaked in with 125,000 units sold in the quarter’s final week. Combined, the three have eeked out 1 million units.

Fortunately, Kline says the country release schedule for the rest of the year “looks pretty stout.”

In the market-share race (see chart), UMG held steady in the top spot, racking up a 30.6% slice of the pie in total album market share and 33.6% in current market share. But because of the overall sales decline, UMG’s album scans were down 1 million units to 86 million. Sony BMG Music Entertainment had a 7.5 million-unit drop in sales.

The industry remains generally stymied by the freefall.

“I don’t know what’s going on,” the head of sales at a major record label says. “Except it’s scary out there and changing every week.”

Q1: INSIDE THE NUMBERS

Sales and Share Trends For The Year’s First Three Months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market Share</th>
<th>Units Sold (In Millions)</th>
<th>Sales by Store Type (In Millions)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quarter 1</td>
<td>Q1 2006</td>
<td>Q1 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rap</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Nontraditional Indies | 8.2% | 9.4%
| Nontraditional Hard Rock | 6.7% | 4.4%
| Nontraditional Pop | 30.0% | 37.1%
| Nontraditional Country | 27.9% | 35.7%
| Nontraditional Rap | 45.4% | 44.3%
| Nontraditional Rock | 34.4% | 32.8%
| Nontraditional Country | 27.9% | 35.7%
| Nontraditional Rap | 45.4% | 44.3%
| Nontraditional Rock | 34.4% | 32.8%
| Nontraditional Country | 27.9% | 35.7%
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| Nontraditional Rap | 45.4% | 44.3%
| Nontraditional Rock | 34.4% | 32.8%
| Nontraditional Country | 27.9% | 35.7%

Source: Nielsen SoundScan

Tracks vs. Albums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Track Sales</th>
<th>Album Sales</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>2007</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>2019</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Nielsen SoundScan

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James ‘Jim’ Aiken
1932 - 2007

a great man who truly made a difference

Much loved
Greatly missed
Never forgotten

From your many Friends and Admirers around the world
Long may the legacy continue

Marshall Arts

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**UPFRONT**

**GLOBAL NEWS LINE**

**>> GERMAN SALES DOWN**

The German music market dropped 2.4% in value during 2006, continuing the downward trend that has seen it fall by 50% since 1998, according to the German arm of the IFPI.

Value at retail—including 16% VAT (sales tax)—of downloads and physical formats fell 2.4% to €17.1 billion ($22.7 billion). In volume terms, physical sales fell to 186 million units, down 1.5% from 2005. The fall is primarily attributed to losses in CD singles and the outdated vinyl, cassette and VHS formats. Sales of CD singles dropped 11% to 15.9 million units.

Sales of digital tracks (including mobile music) rose 28% to 25.2 million units, while digital albums leapt 36% to 1.9 million. Digital formats generated revenue of €4.2 million ($5.6 million), up 40% from 2005. The figures collated data reported by IFPI Germany's national members—representing 86% of German sales—plus, for the first time, sales data from market research company GfK.

—Wolfgang Spähr

**>> BBC HONORS FARKA TOURE**

The late Malian singer/guitarist Ali Farka Touré's World Circuit set "Savane" was named album of the year at the annual BBC Radio 3 Awards for World Music, held March 31 in London. In the regional category, best artist winners were New York-based gypsy punk act Gogol Bordello (Americas), virtual Indian guitarist Debashish Bhattacharya (Asia/Pacific), French folk-influenced vocalist Camille (Europe), Lebanese singer Ghade Shbier (Middle East/North Africa) and veteran Ethiopian vocalist Mahmoud Ahmed (Africa). Somalian hip-hop artist K'naan was named best newcomer and French tango/fusion act Gotan Project collected the club global award, while Jewish-Algerian pianist Maurice El Medioni and Cuban percussionist Roberto Rodríguez won the culture crossing award with their album "Descarga Oriental" (Piranha).

The winners were picked by a jury of 12 drawn from the media, musicians and academics, based on nominations made by 2,000 delegates to last October's world music trade fair WOMEX in Seville, Spain. The ceremony was broadcast nationally March 31 by Radio 3, which is the BBC's specialist classical channel. —Nigel Williamson

**>> RICALL ADDS SONY BMG**

London-based online music licensing firm Ricall has sealed a major deal with Sony BMG Music Entertainment, under which it will add more than 1 million tracks from the major's catalog to its music library. The agreement will see recordings by Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, Groove Armada and Justin Timberlake, among other Sony BMG acts, made available for commercial use internationally by broadcasters, advertising agencies, computer game developers and multimedia content companies. Ricall's library comprises works from more than 150 independent and specialist labels from around the world. The Sony BMG deal will boost its library to more than 4 million. Ricall customers search ricall.com to select tracks, using its proprietary music search engine for specific needs. —Juliana Koranteng

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**GLOBAL BY LEO CENDROWICZ**

**Reaction Mixed For Piracy Crackdown**

Legislation Sets Definitions, Aligns Penalties Across The Continent

BRUSSELS—New anti-piracy measures could see pirates across the European Union facing greatly increased sentences.

The European Parliament is due to vote April 27 on a proposed European Commission (EC) directive, which for the first time would harmonize criminal penalties for a specific range of intellectual-property (IP) crimes in all 27 EU countries. The legislation, which is widely expected to be adopted, would replace individual domestic legislation across the region, where pirates currently face wildly differing penalties depending on where they are prosecuted.

The new penalties would introduce a maximum four-year prison sentence for IP crime, and fines of up to €91,050 ($121,430, rising to €273,160 ($364,290)) if organized crime involvement is proved—a substantial increase on most current penalties. The law is designed to target commercial pirates, both online and physical, but is not intended to be used against individual, private copiers, who will still be subject to the law in their individual territory.

Italian socialist member of the European Parliament Nicola Zingaretti drafted the current proposal, which was approved March 20 by the Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee.

The next step is the Parliament vote, after which the directive will be sent to EU member governments for approval before this summer.

Zingaretti argues that national law is no longer enough to fight international piracy. EU-wide adoption of the new directive, he says, means that "criminal enterprises gaining millions on the shoulders of authors and distributors will have to cope with stricter European legislation."

—NICOLA ZINGARETTI, EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

However, while European labels might be expected to welcome the prospect of increased penalties for piracy, IFPI regional director for Europe Frances Moore claims the measures are neither far enough-reaching nor appropriate.

Moore says the IFPI is concerned that the proposed directive's attempts to strictly define copyright crime could actually allow infringers to escape punishment if their offenses do not precisely meet its criteria.

"The problem is," she says, "that some amendments would start interfering with substantive criminal law at in its global top 10 of "priority countries for action." According to the IFPI, pirated products in Greece accounts for 50% of all music sales. The labels body complained that an overemphasized judicial system and ineffectual policing was hampering the fight against piracy. In its report, the IFPI also particularly criticized a lack of meaningful deterrent sentencing in Italy, where the piracy rate is 26%. The piracy rate in Spain is 12%. Another EU member, Bulgaria, was named one of four "special focus" countries, partly because the country's criminal code "does not outlaw the possession of pirated materials for commercial purposes."

Zingaretti's proposal is based on an April 2006 EC draft aimed at combating piracy on a commercial scale. But his version seeks to clearly define such key terms as "commercial scale," "counterfeiting," "piracy" and "intentional infringement," which was not the case in the original draft.

Moore says that the original EC draft did not include strict definitions, thus keeping it in line with current World Trade Organization practice and ensuring a degree of discretion for judges at a national level. But Zingaretti claims that his amendments to that draft are intended to make quite clear what constitutes commercial piracy thereby ensuring that individual consumers "violating a copyright shouldn't be threatened as common criminals."

Other IP trade bodies, including independent labels body Impala, the Motion Picture Assn., the International Video Federation and the Business Software Alliance, have also indicated they are uncomfortable with the proposed directive.

One concern, Impala secretary general Philippe Kern says, is that the proposal does not address the responsibilities of Internet service providers with respect to online piracy.

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A Bodycare Brand Cleans Up

Compilation Helps Pangea Organics Present A Fresh Face

When we think of companies that produce natural and/or organic bodycare products, we think cleansers, toners, creams and soaps. Music is not necessarily front of mind, but—as at least one company is now realizing—it doesn’t have to be that way.

While natural bodycare companies like Alba, EO and Kiss My Face have created lifestyle brands that basically scream “music, please,” they have yet to recognize how the power of music could be used to complement the lifestyle they present. This may change with the release of “Natural Selection,” the inaugural multi-artist compilation from Boulder, Colo.-based Pangea Organics, known for its line of “ecocentric” bodycare products.

“As brands move into the future, it’s important for companies to remember that consumers are looking for more than the main dish,” Pangea founder and CEO Joshua Onysko says. “They want to know that the companies they support have a face, and they want to know more about them. This CD is Pangea’s way of communicating to our customers that there are people behind this brand.”

“Too quite honest, I'm surprised that this hasn't been done before,” says Jeremiah McElwee, associate whole body coordinator of giant retailer Whole Foods. “It definitely adds a face and increases the identity of a brand. It's like a MySpace page.”

Like MySpace, “Natural Selection” gives people the opportunity to discover and learn more about artists—and, in this case, the Pangea Organics brand itself. Onysko views the compilation as a way for his customers to get to know the people behind the brand.

“Music goes beyond soaps and toners,” Onysko says. “It’s another way for us to connect with our customers on an emotional level.”

Words like these are more in line with a generation of younger people getting involved in the natural/organic bodycare space, McElwee believes. “They have a different way of thinking compared to the older, staid brands,” he explains. “Younger people are more in tune with and accustomed to more interactive ways of doing business.”

On a personal level, McElwee says he likes to know more about the products that Whole Foods sells. “Pangea's CD adds color and personality to the brand and those behind it,” he says. “If Pangea released a country-roc compilation, the brand would be seen as something completely different.”

Available for $16 at pangea-organics.com, as well as at Whole Foods locations on the West Coast, “Natural Selection” (Black Bridge Records) boasts 14 electronic-spangled, lounge-pruned tracks. The disc includes licensed music by DJ Harry ("Theaursa"); Bassnectar with Michael Kang of String Cheese Incident ("Dubuasaka") and Cosmic Rocker ("Glocoen").

“Natural Selection” is released via Black Bridge Records, also based in Boulder, and helmed by Josh "DJ Ivy" Ivy and Benjamin Bussard. Ivy “moonlights” as a graphic designer at Pangea. And Black Bridge, the recording duo, has a track on “Natural Selection.”

Ivy and Bussard met Onysko in 2001 when the Pangea mastermind was making soap in his garage. Onysko, a world traveler, then sold the different soaps (out of a basket) at parties and events he hosted and promoted—with Black Bridge behind the turntables. Pangea Organics is now sold in 18 countries.

Onysko says he first got the idea for a music compilation a couple of years ago. “But I had no clue how to put together an album,” he adds. So, conversations with Ivy and Bussard followed. Now, talk is turning to the next volume in the series. The possibility of a Pangea Organics music and lifestyle festival is also being discussed.
Success Without Sales

Labels Seek Alternatives As Market Keeps Dipping

Labels have long lived and died by sales and radio.

But with CD sales in decline, and even the most earnest radio promotion failing to pump them up, it is increasingly evident that measuring an act's success by what it scans alone is a mistake.

"The business is becoming very transaction-oriented," says Kevin Lawrie, president of Sony BMG Music Entertainment for the Latin region. "And certainly, in Latin America if you're highly dependent on CD sales for your existence, you're going to have a very, very short existence. We are increasingly looking to sign artists and concepts that are not reliant on CD sales.

For example, a recent Sony BMG signing in Argentina is Dolli Irigoyen, a chef.

Irigoyen's deal, negotiated through Day One, Sony BMG's new talent development company, will include selling cooking shows, cooking tours, compatible music and a broad range of other revenue streams. In the mobile arena, for example, fans will be able to get recipes—as opposed to songs—via cell phones.

"Imagine the structure of a multinational music company at the service of a chef," says Afo Verde, president of Sony BMG Sur. "It opens up a wonderful world for us in terms of sponsors and marketing."

Verde is developing the Irigoyen line and expects to have product in the market within the next six months. "Ten years ago, I would have said, 'We signed an act, and we've started recording the album,'" he says with a laugh. "Searching for new revenue streams is no longer new. As reported in Billboard (Feb. 17), Latin labels are signing new and established acts to deals that include a percentage of ancillary revenue, ranging from licenses to tours.

Sales and radio, naturally, always help in generating business. But some artists produce a lot of business without strong sales.

Mexican rock act Kinky, for example, has sold only 6,000 copies of its most recent album, "Reina," according to Nielsen SoundScan. The group's biggest-selling album is 2002's "Kinky," which scanned 41,000. But Kinky's music may well be the most utilized Latin music in mainstream American TV (see story, below), in what amounts to a constant revenue stream.

At indie Nacional Records, where acts are often signed to label, publishing and management deals, the approach is holistic, and artists are actively working on all fronts. "Sales are important, but when we are licensing as much as we do, record sales can sometimes be just 30% of the picture," National president Tomas Cookman says.

Nacional's acts, which include Aterciopelados, Nortec Collective and the Pinker Tones, see revenue roughly split evenly among sales, touring, licensing and other streams.

Some acts sell very little, but bring in money for other reasons. Argentine group Intoxicado, Cookman says, didn't sell "anything" here. "But we did one license to 'CSI Miami' and boom, it's $25,000. You have a record like [the self-titled album from] Andrea Echeverri, which sold 10,000 copies, but we do one commercial with Volvo and the P&E changes tremendously." At one time, major labels looked down their noses at such deals. Now, developing such opportunities often makes far more sense than huge advances against diminishing sales.

"There's so many beautiful niche markets out there, that the pennies, dimes and nickels add up, and next thing you know, you have a multimillion-dollar business," Cookman says.

For 24/7 Latin news and analysis, see billboard.biz/latin.

KINKY KICKS

Eclectic Mexican Rock Act Lands Sweet Soccer Spots

Genre-busting Mexican band Kinky has earned critical acclaim and a following among hipsters on both sides of the border.

Now that base stands to gain millions of soccer fans from the United States to the tip of South America.

The group's rock anthem "Solo un Paso" is the theme song for Fox Sports en Español's 2007 broadcasts of Major League Soccer (MLS).

As the start of every match, a montage will mix the song, clips of the band playing and footage of the teams set to compete.

The band's video for the song will premiere during the Chivas USA-Toronto FC match on the season's kickoff on April 7.

Kinky has also recorded match-specific promos and teaser spots leading up to the premiere.

"What is really appealing is that film and TV licensing have a dual benefit that can be equally valuable— one is revenue-generating and one is promotional opportunities," says J.T. Griffith, film/TV music director at Nettwerk Music Group.

Nettwerk, which is Kinky's label and management team, licensed the song to Fox under the latter formula. It is pursuing revenue streams for the song in the FIFA 2008 video-game and with official MLS brands such as Adidas.

Kinky will also play gigs at MLS games, starting June 2 with the Los Angeles Galaxy home match. The Galaxy relationship also extends to in-game uses of "Solo un Paso" and appearances with the team on local Spanish-language TV.

Kinky's music has been widely used on TV, from "Nip/Tuck" to MTV's "DanceLife," and three different Ponytail campaigns.

But with Fox Sports en Español, the band will reach 33 million homes in the United States and Latin America. "The music of Kinky is going to be attracting people from their teens to the 25-30 [age range], which is the market we're looking to position Major League Soccer here in the U.S.", says Fausto Ceballos, VP of creative services for Fox Sports en Español.

Kinky keyboardist Ulises Lozano attributes the band's synch-happy approach to two factors. "Our music has an energy that can express in a visual way what directors are looking for," Lozano says, adding, "It's important to view your music environment as a whole . . . it's not that I am going to change my job because album sales are going down. It's not because people are not listening. We are adapting."

—Ayala Ben-Yehuda

EN LA RED: For 24/7 coverage of the Latin music world, Billboard has partnered with MSN. For a complete roundup in Spanish, go to Billboard.Latino.MSN.com.

THE BILLBOARD Q&A

Pioneering producer DJ Nelson (aka Nelson Diaz Martinez) has always had his eye on what's next. The beatmaker on early tracks from Tego Calderon and Daddy Yankee is shopping his clothing line, Flow Wear, to big-box retailers, has owned four nightclubs and even founded a radio station. He released "Flow La Discoteka 2" in March under a new joint venture with Universal Latino called Urban Music System.

Your single with Arcangel, "Chica Virtual," is getting a lot of attention for its distinct sound. How do clubs inspire you? I think the dancefloor should never be empty. When I make an album, I mix whatever element, be it salsa, merengue, techno, pop, house, reggae, hip-hop to entertain people and make them dance. It's turned into something urban, where anything can happen. It's a new sound of youth. The Latin audience is looking for its own generation inside of this new language.

Do you test new tracks in front of a club audience? When I had Flow [the nightclub], I released an album the way Studio 54 did. When I prepare a mix, before doing a master, I take it to the club and listen to it. I can tell if the mix needs anything, if I need to raise or lower anything. I go to the studio [and] bring it back and play it in the club until I'm sure that even if a person has never heard the track, the first time you play it, it'll get an incredible reaction.

—Ayala Ben-Yehuda
Life At The Margins
How The Price War Hurts Sales

I am always astounded by how record-label and distribution executives can be "in the know" about issues that affect their business and yet still not have a clue. But more on this later.

One thing execs do know is that the decline of physical sales is driven mainly by the dynamics of the music retail environment. Without realizing all the other physical factors behind the decline, the retail price war results in reduced profit margins that force music specialty stores to close and causes surviving stores to reduce music space.

Whether or not the Bertelsmann Direct site that prices CDs at $5.99 or iTunes selling albums at $9.99 and all the big box circulars advertising that price, the $18.98 list-price CD is gone. But the major record labels don't appear to get that.

If you look at the RIAA midyear numbers for 2006 (full-year numbers are due soon), the average list price of CDs shipped to retail was $16.11. That is still surprisingly high when you take into account lower pricing for new artists and budget ($9.98 list price), mid-line ($11.98) and super mid-line ($13.98) titles.

Given that CDs are wholesaled to merchants can realize about a 35% gross profit margin off list price, calculations show that the average wholesale price sold at $10.47. While the labels' cooperative advertising dollars allocations depend on the new release and the merchant, on average they try to keep co-op and buy-in deals and other promotional discounts at 15% of total revenue (or $1.57), which brings the average cost for CDs to retail down to $8.90.

Meanwhile, NPD reports that the average price paid for a full-length CD in the United States was $13.02. With CDs' average cost at $8.90, that means the average profit margin for CDs last year was 31.6%.

On the other hand, publicly traded music retailers Hastings Entertainment and Trans World Entertainment recently reported their financial results, and those results show their net (i.e., selling, general and administrative expenses) at about 32.6% of revenue.

Get the picture? Music profits: 31.6%, expenses 32.6%. Sure, that's for music specialty chains, but we all know the big boxes have different expense structures and ways of looking at profit.

Let's look at Best Buy. According to its year-end numbers, Best Buy's overall profit margin was 28% and its expenses were 19.7%. I'm not so sure of Best Buy's profit statements by product line, but I can do a little extrapolating to show that its music expenses exceed 19.7% just analyzing retail, last year.

If you are willing to concede I can make the case that all retailers lose money by selling CDs, it's no wonder the industry is in the shitter. But it's also why I get passed off when I hear clueless label executives complain that their competitors win retail awards because they give away margin. I also get angry when I hear execs complain about high prices they see their records selling for in a store.

For example, I recently spoke to a major-label head of sales, who is one of the industry's more knowledgeable executives. He became outraged when I told him I bought one of his developing artists' CDs at a certain chain store for $12.99, because that merchant had paid only $7.50 for that album.

I didn't see any problem. I didn't know the album had developed, at least pricing and was happy to get it for $12.99. What's more, I pointed out that the merchant was realizing only a 42.3% profit margin. Executives who remember their history realize that 42% was the profit margin built into cassette and vinyl pricing, which was the cost incidentally was back when the industry was healthy.

I realize that retail likely will never achieve those types of overall profit margins on music again, but in the instances when it does, why do label executives have to begrudge it that profit?
### BOXSCORE Concert Grosses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist(s)</th>
<th>Venue, Date</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Promoter</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROGER WATERS</td>
<td>Foro Sol, Mexico, March 5</td>
<td>54,344</td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>OCESA Presents</td>
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<td>JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE</td>
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<td>Madison Square Garden, New York, March 14</td>
<td>26,447</td>
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<td>ABIGAIL</td>
<td>Allstate Arena, Rosemont, IL, March 30, 2010</td>
<td>25,959</td>
<td>Special</td>
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<td>29,016</td>
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<td>VAN MORRISON</td>
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<td>12,834</td>
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<td>ROD STEWART</td>
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<td>Estadio Alfonso Lopez, Guadalajara, Mexico, March 4, 2012</td>
<td>21,707</td>
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<td>OCESA Presents</td>
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<td>JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE</td>
<td>Estadio Alfonso Lopez, Guadalajara, Mexico, March 4, 2012</td>
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<td>JOSH GROBAN, ANGELIQUE KIDJO</td>
<td>Philips Arena, Atlanta, March 24, 2012</td>
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<td>Live Nation</td>
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<td>RICKY MARTIN</td>
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<td>ERIC CLAPTON, ROBERT CRAY BAND</td>
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<td>COLDPLAY</td>
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<td>EL CONCIERTO DEL AMOR</td>
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<td>21,027</td>
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<td>Ralph Mercado Presents</td>
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<td>43,549</td>
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<td>CHAYANNE</td>
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<td>JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE</td>
<td>Helio Areia, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, March 25, 2012</td>
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<td>JOSH GROBAN, ANGELIQUE KIDJO</td>
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<td>12,569</td>
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<td>IL DIVO</td>
<td>Auditorio Nacional, Mexico City, March 21, 2012</td>
<td>19,187</td>
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<td>JOSH GROBAN, ANGELIQUE KIDJO</td>
<td>American Airlines Center, Dallas, March 18, 2012</td>
<td>12,015</td>
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<td>Live Nation</td>
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<tr>
<td>RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS, QARNSL BARKLEY</td>
<td>AT&amp;T Center, San Antonio, March 23, 2012</td>
<td>14,885</td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>The Messina Group/AEG Live</td>
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<td>JOSH GROBAN, ANGELIQUE KIDJO</td>
<td>Shoreline Amphitheatre, Mountain View, CA, March 15, 2012</td>
<td>11,583</td>
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<td>Live Nation</td>
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<td>KATT WILLIAMS</td>
<td>Garden State Plaza, East Rutherford, NJ, March 10, 2012</td>
<td>9,719</td>
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<td>VAN MORRISON</td>
<td>Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, MI, March 10, 2012</td>
<td>9,719</td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>Live Nation</td>
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<td>JOSH GROBAN, ANGELIQUE KIDJO</td>
<td>Blue Cross Arena, Columbus, OH, March 9, 2012</td>
<td>12,000</td>
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<td>Live Nation</td>
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<td>JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE</td>
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<td>Special</td>
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<td>JOSH GROBAN, ANGELIQUE KIDJO</td>
<td>U.S. Bank Arena, Cincinnati, March 15, 2012</td>
<td>14,045</td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>Concerts West/AEG Live</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### **On The Road**

**RAY WADDELL rwaddell@billboard.com**

### **Nederlander Bulks Up**

Alex Hodges joining the Nederlander Concerts crew seems to herald a new seriousness for the venerable concert promoter to compete against AEG Live and Live Nation.

After all, Nederlander has been in the game a lot longer than any of the top two big dogs. They're both staffed with seasoned professionals, but AEG Live and Live Nation are basically products of the new millennium. Nederlander's roots go back to 1912.

Hodges has been around that long, but he has been named CEO of Nederlander Concerts, effective April 15. He most recently was executive VP at Live Nation, a position he inherited in the wake of Live Nation's acquisition of House of Blues Entertainment last year. Hodges came to HOB in 1994 and left there's a choice," Friedman adds. "And we're ready to roll. We're well-funded, we're privately held, we don't have any distractions with Wall Street, we're a promotion firm."

According to Friedman, Hodges is the guy to make it happen. "I've only got one guy who can do that, who has experience on every side of the business, who has experience competing against the gorillas and has succeeded, who knows how to put it all together and make it happen and drive the strategy every day, and I had the benefit of working with him for over 10 years as a partner," he says. "That's Alex." In Friedman's eyes, these multicity tours are a viable alternative to national tours under one promoter's banner. Nederlander is also interested in co-promoting some dates. "Not everybody's a national touring act, and it seems to us that there's a missed opportunity to go into markets that are either overlooked or underserved, and nobody's putting it all together," he says. Just don't call it "block booking," which Friedman believes has a bad connotation. "Unlike the block booking concept, which was sort of 'take it or leave it' and more of a national touring concept, we hope we are able to express why the agent and manager and artist should accept an offer from us that has multiple cities, but they don't have to accept all of it," he says. "We think we can put something on the table that will incentivize them to take the whole, but we'll be happy to continue booking as many dates as we can." Initially, the Nederlander team will focus on the western United States. "My view of the world is you want to do the things you do well. You want to be able to service the artist, put on a great promotional campaign, and the only way you can do that is to have people who are attentive to the shows," Friedman says. "What we're going to do best is leverage our core assets along the West Coast and grow into markets that are logical extensions of that." To date, Nederlander has not really been competing with Live Nation or AEG Live. Nederlander finished eighth among all promoters in gross dollars last year, behind such independents as Jam and Outback.

"Unless we as a promotion firm come up with a strategy that offers something that is attractive, competition is not going to happen," Friedman says. "We're going to do everything we have to maximize it and build regional scale first. If ultimately that means we can move on to other markets beyond the region, we'll do it, but we'll do it opportunistically and smartly."
TOURING

BY MITCHELL PETERS

School Of Rock
Diverse Spring Tours Target College Students

Stress runs rampant among college kids this time of year, but the Madpackers.com Door to Dorm tour, the Virgin College Mega tour and mtvU's Campus Invasion Music Festival are aiming to give students some springtime musical relief.

Hinder will headline the Door to Dorm outing, which hits 17 colleges and three music festivals starting April 13 at the University of Pittsburgh in Johnstown, Pa. Drummer Cody Hanson jokingly admits that nonstop worldwide touring behind Hinder's 2005 album "Extreme Behavior" has made the quintet "severe alcoholics," but that won't prevent the Oklahoma City act from throwing a party for its hardcore college fan base. "Whenever we get too tired we just have another drink and continue on," he says.

"We're having a good time, and that's what we're about."

For Madpackers.com, a new company that picks up students' packed belongings and drops them off at dorms before school starts, linking with Hinder to launch its brand was a no-brainer, says Dave Licursi, a tour producer with Concerts 101. Licursi launched the company after spending 20-plus years as a tour manager and accountant for such college favorites as Staind, Kid Rock, Matchbox Twenty and Sugar Ray. "The energy these guys have onstage is perfect for a college audience."

About 75% of college-focused tours run during the spring, when nine out of 10 colleges are looking to buy talent for year-end blowout events. In most cases, student-run committees seek high-energy acts to place outdoors in festival-type settings, gyms, auditoriums, ballrooms, theaters or arenas. Adam Tobey, VP of Concert Ideas (which serves as a middle man between schools and artists), says that 99.5% of schools have facilities. "The other half a percent rents facilities off campus.

Like the fourth annual Virgin College Mega tour, which features a diverse lineup of rap-rapper Talib Kweli, pop/punk act Sugarhill and former Something Corporate guitarist William Tell, Door to Dorm will beef up concert dates by leading with all-day on-campus activities like obstacle courses, giveaways, games and artist meet-and-greets. "Those things help," Tobey says. On-campus festivals "entice people who may be sitting on the fence to attend the concert. The added values are incredibly important, because people have so many options these days to see and hear things."

For this year's 18-market Virgin College Mega tour, which starts April 7 at the House of Blues in Las Vegas and wraps May 5 at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, R.I., tickets will cost up to $20 in some markets and will be given away for free in others, depending on the school. Most university students pay between $25 and $200 in student activity fees, Tobey says, which offset the cost of programming. "Some schools can't charge for events because of activities fees," he says.

Door to Dorm features support from Papa Roach and Puddle of Mudd on select dates. It is charging $20-$25. For Door to Dorm gigs that don't visit campus venues, efforts will be made to tie-in marketing with surrounding universities to offer a limited number of discounted tickets to students, says the Agency Group's Ken Fermaglich, who books Hinder worldwide with Steve Kauf.

Also serving a diverse college-targeted roster is this year's first mtvU Campus Invasion Music Festival, which boasts the Shins, Dashboard Confessional and Fabolous as headliners for all-day festivals in Austin, Atlanta and Philadelphia. Other acts include Gym Class Heroes, the Academy Is ..., K-OS, Augustana, the Rapture and Shiny Toy Guns.

The event follows in the footsteps of the decade-old MTV Campus Invasion tour, which brought exposure to such acts as Muse, Moby, Wyclef Jean and Hoobastank. The decision to abandon the old touring model was part of an effort to bring mixed acts to the table and home in on specific territories, according to Chris McCarthy, VP of strategic development and marketing at mtvU. "Rather than have 20 dates on college campuses throughout the country, we chose to invade college towns," McCarthy says. "In each of these markets, you're talking 100,000-500,000 college students."

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The final nine of what will be the Big 86 begins.

And on June 10, when HBO eighty-sizes "The Sopranos" forever, it will be remembered as the series that had the best music in the history of TV.

There are a few directors as musically savvy as David Chase, but not many. You have to begin with Martin Scorsese, the King of Rock in Movieland. George Lucas would have given him a run for the throne—"American Graffiti" came out around the same time as "Mean Streets" and was wall-to-wall cool songs, but he abdicated when he blazed into space.

Chris Columbus has a great ear, as does Jonathan Demme. Michael Mann is more a score guy these days, although he's usually not too far away from his sweet home Chicago blue. And let's not forget, "Miami Vice" brought rock songs to TV. But the scores for "Thief" and "The Last of the Mohicans" are as important as the script and are as good as it gets.

Before 1973 there was Jack Nitzsche's classic soundtrack to "Performance." Roger Corman was hip enough to use the Electric Flag for "The Trip," and there was always a fabulous Davie Allan & the Arrows instrumental for things like the super cool "Wild Angels" or Dick Dale for beach movies.

But before that Alan Freed's flocks carried the good news, and the Rock Messiah brought his best missionaries with him. Most notably Little Richard, who explained quite eloquently why "Jayne Mansfield Couldn't Help It."

Richard Brooks started it all in 1955 with Bill Haley & the Comets' "Rock Around the Clock" opening "Blackboard Jungle." The kids didn't rip the seats out of theaters because it was the first time they heard rock'n'roll. They went berserk because it was the first time in history they heard it at the correct volume. Like, loud, Daddy-O.

Well, Chase has carried on this proud tradition and taken it to TV, where he had 86 hours to let his imagination work instead of a movie's 90-120 minutes.

Here's a taste of Chase's School of Rock on "The Sopranos".

**British Invasion: The Rolling Stones (five times), the Kinks, the Animals, the Hollies, Cream, Them, Doo-wop: Dion & the Belmonts, the Legends, the Cadillacs, the Drifters, The Pioneers: Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Buddy Holly, Roy Orbinson, The Americans: Bob Dylan, the Rascals, the Four Seasons, Bruce Springsteen, Soul and R&B: The Miracles, Otis Redding, Irma Thomas, Marvin Gaye, Funk and new wave: The Clash, Johnny Thunders, Elvis Costello, Blondie.

Of course there were the popular standards with Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Tony Bennett and Jerry Vale. And just cool choices like "Sally Go Round the Rosies" by the Jaynetts. Quite a range of coolness, and that's only scratching the surface.

There's one more critically important fact that proves indisputably former drummer Chase's dedication to music. Without it, me and Frankie Valli would have never been on the show. So on behalf of all those drooling degenerate denizens of the Bada Bing, thank you, David.

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**COOLEST GARAGE SONGS**

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<tr>
<th>TITLE/LABEL</th>
<th>ARTIST</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> CIRCUIT BOARD - MY HEART IS BEATING</td>
<td>MARY WEISS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong> FREE AND FREAKY</td>
<td>THE STOOGES</td>
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<td><strong>3</strong> DANCING ON THE LIP OF A VOLCANO</td>
<td>NEW YORK DOLLS</td>
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<td><strong>4</strong> INTERVENTION</td>
<td>ARCADE FIRE</td>
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<td><strong>5</strong> IN THE MODERN WORLD</td>
<td>JESSE MALIN</td>
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<td><strong>6</strong> OPEN EYES</td>
<td>THE APPLES IN STEREO</td>
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<td><strong>7</strong> BECAUSE I'M AWESOME</td>
<td>THE DOLLYROTS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong> RUBY</td>
<td>KAISER CHIEFS</td>
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<td><strong>9</strong> BROKEN HEART</td>
<td>THE CHARMS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>10</strong> GOODBYE ROCK AND ROLL BAND</td>
<td>THE NOVAKS</td>
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**THE TWILIGHT SAD**

Not Trimming The Fat

U.K. Label Ramping Up Roster With Online Discoveries

So what's a string of shows and positive press at March's South by Southwest music conference in Austin worth to a small indie with a budding act? For FatCat newcomers the Twilight Sad, it's a little more than 1,000 CDs.

Post-SXSW, the Caroline-distributed, U.K.-based indie-the one-time home to Sigur Rós and the Animal Collective-saw the four-figure jump in retail orders for the April 3 release of the Twilight Sad's "Fourteen Autumns and Fifteen Winters." But Adam Pierce, who heads the U.S. office of FatCat, isn't getting too excited. That brings the total initial ship-out for the relatively unknown act to somewhere above 3,000 units.

"Caroline keeps worrying about the retail climate, so I think everyone—from the stores to the distributor—are conservative enough for me," Pierce says. "So I'm trying to squeeze everything I can for this one, and people are reordering already."

Anchored by the piercing vocals of James Graham, the songs of the Glasgow, Scotland-based Twilight Sad are high drama, where quaking guitars build to hailstorms of romantic tension. The quartet takes seemingly simple pop structures and gradually dresses them up, building until the melodies turn into something a bit more hypnotic.

Pierce, also the man behind electronic-tinged rock act Mice Parade, has spent the past year-and-a-half or so shutting down his own Bubble Core Records & Distribution to helm FatCat U.S. The London-based label, which is celebrating its 10th year, had previously been distributed in the United States by Bubble Core and was looking to establish its own base on these shores.

Pierce, meanwhile, had seen Bubble Core grow into a distributor that was handling dozens of import releases per month, and he wanted out of the company he founded. "I wanted to deal with 15 records per year rather than 15 records per month," he says. "I missed the work of sinking my teeth into a project rather than keeping track of new releases for each week."

FatCat's biggest group, art rock aggregation the Animal Collective, recently left for a larger indie in Domino. "It wasn't a kick in the teeth, but we're a small label in comparison to Domino, who have had remarkable success," Pierce says. "We're not in a position to compete financially with the resources they have at hand. It was tough to lose them, but we knew it might happen. We did put in a counteroffer, but I'm not sure it wielded any real consideration."

By making more permanent inroads in the United States, Knight is hoping FatCat can continue to build upon the attention brought to it via its association with Sigur Rós and the Animal Collective. The label still has the rights—in the United Kingdom—to Sigur Rós' early singles and the band's album "()"

"It's a good little earner," Knight says. "Yet even as it grows, FatCat is still firmly rooted in DIY culture. Knight insists the label listens to everyday demo it receives and has started featuring the best of them on its Web site. So far, Knight says, seven acts have been signed via his label's site.

"A record label only has so much time and energy to commit to physical products and working a release, and we get an awful lot of good music," he says. "Other indie labels are now using that as an A&R tool."

And FatCat has also been building an extensive DIY resource guide on its site, featuring contacts and information on companies that provide distribution, mastering and manufacturing in multiple countries.

"I think the industry at large to the people outside of it is something that people don't quite know what to make of," Knight says. "In our day and age people are still in awe of a record company. We're trying to demystify the process of putting a record out."

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Not Just The Tax Law
Songwriters Now Have More Than One Reason To Sell Their Catalogs

Despite predictions last fall that an onslaught of songwriters would sell their catalogs when a new tax law came into effect this year, there really haven’t been many offerings. But as word leaked that Molly Knight was selling an interest in her copyrights, including Tina Turner’s “The Best” and Pat Benatar’s “Love Is A Battlefield,” I figured the new law must have played a part in her decision to sell to Primary Wave Music Publishing. It did. But as Knight and her business manager reveal, there are more reasons than just the law for songwriters to sell an interest in their copyrights right now.

“For the most part, I have always advocated fervently to hold on to your copyrights,” says Tina Fasbender, Knight’s longtime business manager. But now she’s had a change of heart.

One reason is the new tax law. Before January, a copyrighted song owned by an individual songwriter had no value for tax purposes. When a songwriter sold a copyright interest, the full selling price was taxable income. When publishing companies sold copyrighted songs, publishers were taxed only on the profit, and at a lower capital gains tax rate available to companies.

Under the new law, songwriters are treated like publishers when they sell a copyright interest. Songwriters now pay taxes on the sale at the lower capital gains rate rather than the income tax rate.

“This new tax law opened a window,” Fasbender says. “Before, some of the big money offered to songwriters wouldn’t be worth it at a 40% or 50% tax hit.”

But the tax savings really wasn’t the primary motivation for Knight to sell a piece of her copyright interests. Other factors came into play.

Times have changed for songwriters, with the supply of bands that perform other writers’ songs dwindling since the late ‘80s. For established songwriters, it takes a strategic partner to really work their catalog in a competitive market. More and more, indie publishers are the answer.

Fasbender has noticed that many experienced executives from major companies are now running indie publishers, like Primary Wave, Dimensional Music Publishing, Spirit Music Group and Evergreen Copyrights. This experience in a small company makes them particularly attractive to songwriters like Knight.

“I’ve always been attracted to boutique operations as opposed to big companies where you get lost in the shuffle,” Knight says. “I thought it was great that Primary bought some of the Nirvana and Hall & Oates catalog. It’s a good group of people and a good association for me.”

Primary Wave is even tweaking the traditional publishing model to become a real player in the publishing field.

Before launching Primary Wave with some partners, CEO Larry Mestel was a label guy. He held executive posts with Virgin Records, Arista Records and Island Entertainment Group. So it’s really no surprise that he carried the label model—bankrolling and marketing artists—to the publishing arena.

For the unbeknownst, Plainfield Asset Management and Credit Suisse are backing the company. For marketing, the publisher built a substantial staff that focuses on promoting and exploiting the compositions. Then Primary Wave simply farmed out the traditional publishing administration to Wixen Music Publishing.

Fasbender says that Knight, who typically co-writes songs, landed a seven-figure sum for a 50% share of her interest in copyrights. Her songs have been recorded by Heart, Meat Loaf, Patti Smith, Rod Stewart, Aerosmith and others.

Some publishers have complained in the past that Mestel is overpaying for copyrights and driving up prices for everyone. But then again, a lot of people with a lot of money want to build publishing catalogs right now.

“My office is bombarded by companies asking if my clients are interested in selling,” Fasbender says. “Not only publishers, but companies with big money who want to get their finger in the entertainment industry.”

And Primary Wave is right in there competing with major publishers for some juicy catalogs.

“Even for songwriters who would never sell all of a copyright, they might sell some portion of the publisher’s share or of the entire catalog,” Fasbender says. “They really don’t know where the industry is going, so they can take on a partner [now] for some long-term security.”

Knight is currently writing with Universal-signed band Porcelain, among other projects.

SUSAN BUTLER sbutler@billboard.com
MOBILE TO THE MAX
New Broadband Technology Foreshadows Content Evolution

If you've never heard the term "WiMAX" before, don't sweat it. You're probably not alone. But in the hyper-w0rk, tech-speak jargon of the wireless industry, WiMAX is the latest thing making its way through the byzantine maze of acronyms and buzzwords used to remind the rest of the world (with all apologies to Chevy Chase) "We're wireless, and you're not."

But WiMAX sometime soon is likely to be one of those terms that the music industry, and others in the content world, will need to know all too well as wireless technologies become an increasingly important distribution channel.

Simply put, WiMAX (also known as 4G, or "fourth generation") is a wireless Internet broadband technology similar to Wi-Fi, but with a much greater range. While Wi-Fi access points have a range of about 100 feet, WiMAX base stations can cover an area roughly the same as existing cellular networks, making it relatively easy to blanket an entire metropolitan area with just one provider.

However, unlike Wi-Fi, WiMAX networks require dedicated, licensed wireless spectrum to use—in the expensive 2.5GHz band. Many operators are willing to pay for this spectrum as it is available now, while the international standard bodies are dragging their feet in offering more high-bandwidth wireless spectrum.

Second, WiMAX networks can transfer high-bandwidth content much faster and in bigger packets. That means faster download times for not only single tracks but also full albums and video content.

The wireless operator most bullish on WiMAX's potential is Sprint. The company says it will spend $1 billion this year alone, and another $2 billion next year, to build a WiMAX network in 19 cities by April 2009, covering more than 100 million people. It plans to test mobile WiMAX networks in Chicago and the Baltimore/Washington, D.C., area by the end of this year.

"ViMAX will connect to the Internet, and its range is greater than Wi-Fi, which is only good for one building. WiMAX is something that can be used as a last resort and as a way to bridge the gap," said senior VP of digital strategy/business development Michael Nash said at a panel discussion at the recent CTIA Wireless conference.

With this on the horizon, content producers are already rolling out more sophisticated fare. Mobile TV, a producer of mobile video programming, in January began demonstrating high-definition-quality programming on a WiMAX demo network at the Consumer Electronics Show.

And according to MobileVideo CEO Phillip Alvela, WiMAX has the added benefit of supporting multiple delivery functions, not just mobile. So, a service provider can broadcast content over a WiMAX network, which consumers can then access on a mobile phone, home computer or eventually a set-top box at one price through one service.

"We are changing the economics of the mobile and broadband market," Alvela says. "You'll see a tremendous reduction in cost and [better] access to your fans."

But WiMAX is no slumber. Overlaying existing wireless networks with new technology is not cheap, and building a whole new network is even more costly. For wireless networks in general, it can cover an area the size of a city block. But WiMAX is so powerful that it can be pay to deliver a FIOS IPTV network, WiMAX's "fourth generation" technology.

Another challenge will be the process of enrolling potential customers with new devices that can access WiMAX networks. Reaching the market with new devices takes about 18-24 months. For content providers, the plus side is that operators will be relying on more sophisticated content to drive this migration—much like entertainment services have spurred people to buying new 3G phones.

However, it's not limited to mobile phones. WiMAX enthusiasts, including some Sprint executives, see video players, digital cameras and even automobiles connecting to the WiMAX network.

For these reasons and others, Ericsson believes WiMAX revenue will account for only about 5%-10% of global broadband wireless revenue by 2010, and as such has opted to focus its efforts on traditional 3G services. But make no mistake: WiMAX is coming, and coming soon.

POLLY WANT A BOOMBOX?

So, have you got a sleek new music phone, you rock out on the subway and on the sidewalk, but now you want to impress your friends at parties. What do you do? Parrot has tried to make that dilemma a bit easier with its new Bluetooth portable stereo speaker, the Parrot Boombox. The speaker is compatible with any Bluetooth-enabled music source—including computers and MP3 players—but Parrot is targeting the music phone crowd with this one, seeing as it unveiled the device last month at the CTIA Wireless conference in Orlando, Fla.

The compact device packs 60 watts of high-fidelity sound, two wideband drivers and a subwoofer. Oh, and if you're not interested in Bluetooth, you can just plug your favorite device with a bored wire, too.

The Boombox will start shipping in third-quarter 2007 for $270.
—Antony Bruno

BITS & BRIEFS

WHAT'S IN YOUR PHONE?

MMI Metrics launched a tracking service that uses metering technology for the first time to track how consumers use mobile content. Rather than utilizing survey data, the MeterDirect technology is embedded in the phones of participating users—similar to Nielsen rating boxes—to continuously monitor their messaging, browsing, application and media usage. Initial findings are limited to whether Web sites mobile users visit most and when.

CONTENT CRAZE

Research firmisuppi says the market for MP3 players and other portable media devices will double to 268.6 million units by 2011, from 128.7 million in 2005. The growth is predicted to occur at a 13% compounded annual growth rate. Unit shipments are expected to reach 216.9 million by the end of this year, a 21.8% jump from 2006. Part of the growth is attributed to the increasing amount of digital content being made available to fans through new online services, as well as falling prices.

RHAPSY ON THE MOVE

RealNetworks has teamed with Nokia to make the Rhapsody subscription music service mobile. Rhapsody is currently being added to Nokia's N800 Internet Tablet. The device is not a mobile phone, but a Wi-Fi and Bluetooth-enabled handheld computer that can access the Internet in a Wi-Fi hotspot or via a connection to a Bluetooth mobile phone. Once the software is downloaded to the device, users can stream their personalized music libraries, listen to Internet radio or access playlists, as long as they are already a Rhapsody subscriber.

HOT RINGTONES—APRIL 2007

For 24/7 digital news and analysis, see billboard.biz/digital.
Henry Juszkiewicz

With a new showroom in Miami, Gibson Guitar is looking for continued growth in the Latin market. The company’s chief business architect discusses this and much more.

Selling music may be tough these days, but there’s no shortage of people who want to make music. The latest figures from the National Association of Music Merchandisers, the trade group for the international music products industry, show sales of instruments and gear hit a record value of nearly $8 billion in 2005.

But to Gibson Guitar chairman/CEO Henry Juszkiewicz, instrument sales are about more than juicing up Les Pauls. Since he and fellow Harvard Business School alums Douglas Topper (Gibson’s president) and Gary Zebrowski took over the company in 1998, Gibson has expanded aggressively. The company now owns Baldwin, Wurlitzer, Slingerland, Epiphone and several other music brands. It has also invested in research and development, particularly in the digital jukebox and digital guitar. Gibson has beefed up artist relations as well, and in 2005 bought the naming rights to Los Angeles’ former Universal Amphitheatre.

In addition to increasing the reach of the 113-year-old brand, Gibson has been involved in many charitable efforts. Music Rising, a fund Juszkiewicz co-founded with U2’s The Edge and producer Bob Ezrin, has helped more than 2,400 musicians (and more than 20,000 students and parishioners) replace instruments destroyed in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Music Rising received the Humanitarian Award at Billboard’s third annual Touring Conference in New York last summer.

Gibson opened its newest showroom in Miami last month. Juszkiewicz—who supported himself in college by playing a Gibson at weddings—speak to Billboard shortly after a trip to China.

What took you to China?
It is simply a question of time when China emerges as the world’s largest consumer market. It has a population roughly four to five times the size of the United States, which is the world’s current largest consumer market. It is going from underdeveloped to a developing—and with time, will be a developed—economy. As people [in China] translate into the middle class, the numbers speak for themselves.

How has Gibson adapted to the influx of cheap instruments from Asia?
All Gibson brand guitars are made in the U.S. At the same time, we are expanding our factories overseas and the relationships we’ve had overseas. The ability for a young player to get an instrument that’s really good for not a lot of money has improved. When I was young, the low-end guitars were really not that great. You really had to have a Gibson to get a great guitar. Today, consumers in all product categories, including guitars, can get a much better instrument for a very affordable price. This means a young player who is struggling to get their chops together now has a great instrument to do that, and it makes it so much easier to get involved in guitar, both from a standpoint of price and a standpoint of quality.

Looking at the low end, we have several brands aimed at mass-merchandising channels. We have a specific brand at Target, Circuit City; it’s very low-cost. It meets the requirements of the merchant as well as being a superb value for typically a young player.

Gibson sponsors many high-profile Latin music artists and events, including providing instruments for the Latin Grammy Awards. Why is it going to such lengths to connect with this audience?
In the short term, the Latin market is a much bigger deal. The number of albums being sold by Latin artists is mind-boggling. Additionally, the Latin market is driven by a quality concern. [It’s] not as affluent as some other markets might be, but the Latin consumer is very, very driven by getting the best. It means more to them, and consequently, they’ve become a very good customer of Gibson brand products. We don’t have statistics on who specifically buys a product in many cases, but we are getting anecdotal information that it’s a substantial part of our purchases.

What else are you doing to corner those consumers?
We’ve put an office in Miami that is an entertainment relations office aimed primarily at the Latin market. We’ve been doing a lot of work in San Antonio, Austin, Los Angeles, New York. And we’ve been hiring staff that’s dedicated to the Latin market in terms of promotions and sponsorships.

What are the showrooms used for?
The showroom is as an embassy to the entertainment and media communities. They’re not commercial ventures. We don’t sell products through them, we don’t have sales agents. It’s about relationships and supporting people in the communities. That might be artists or charities that we’re very supportive of, or it might be community events.

Are your branding efforts generating income?
We’ve been financially successful for a while. We’re actually gaining market share. I would say the reason is that we’ve been very aggressive in marketing and branding. So is the fact that we are building really great instruments. You can promote all you want, but if you have a bad product at the end of the day, the consumer is going to throw up.

How are your digital products developing?
When you’re investing in high-risk, high-potential growth activity, you win some and you lose some. One of the areas we are extremely interested in is the whole area of consumer electronics. A lot of the technology we’ve been developing is specifically aimed at that market—platforms. There’s a digital jukebox that’s an evidence of that. In June, we bought the [manufacturer] of a commercial jukebox product, Deutsche Wurlitzer. I’m a little frustrated because we had hoped to release [the digital jukebox] in time for Christmas sales. We continue to have development issues in that product line.

Your digital guitar has finally shipped to retail. How are you introducing this new product to consumers? 
One of the things we’re doing at the store level is putting up demos. Because it’s such a radically new product, we have to be able to demonstrate it and have the equipment available for people to fully check out. There is an enormous amount of technology that hasn’t been tapped for the player and the creator. The guitar hasn’t really changed much since the ’50s, so it’s kind of like progress has been on hold.

What is the place of traditional instruments when music can be made on a computer?
It all starts with the input device. It will be some time before the creation process is anything but human and anything but inspired [by] people. It starts with the tools they have to create musically relevant content, whether it be voice or guitar or whatever. So our new guitar, which starts with a digital signal—it’s not just the fact that it’s digital—is a much better guitar as a result of that technology. It gives you a lot more to work with in terms of making music.

You can promote all you want, but if you have a bad product at the end of the day, the consumer is going to throw up.

www.americanradiohistory.com
The video for Big & Rich’s “Comin’ to Your City” features extraterrestrials, scantily clad women, a rapping black cowboy and a character named Two Foot Fred—as well as the band—partying on a rocket ship shaped like a Gibson flying V guitar (“If ya wanna little bang in your ying yang, come along”). It’s not meant to be a documentary, but it isn’t that far from the truth either. From start to finish, a Big & Rich concert is a visual and aural experience hard to forget. Whether it’s John Rich bedecked in his cowboy finest and playing a flying V, or Big Kenny in one of his trademark toppers, highstepping around the stage like a deranged drum major, you ain’t seen nothing like this. Big & Rich shows have enough pyrotechnics to do a rock band proud. Then there’s the unpredictability factor. In a set that contrasts the raucous “Save a Horse (Ride a Cowboy)” with the contemplative “8th of November,” one might also hear songs as diverse as the B-52’s “Rock Lobster” and the gospel standard “I’ll Fly Away.” A Big & Rich show is also part tent revival. “Brothers and sisters, we are here for one reason and one reason only alone—to share our love of music. I present to you, country music without prejudice,” Big Kenny’s voice booms out as he channels a Southern fundamentalist preacher on the spoken intro for “Rollin’ (The Ballad of Big & Rich).” The message must be shared. “The Mafia is really about the expandalism of music without prejudice,” Kenny says. “We started a ball rolling that has grown in Nashville and across this country like no one could have imagined.”
And the ball continues to roll. Forthcoming album "Between Heli and Amazing Gracie" hits stores June 5. While the final track listing wasn’t available at press time, it’s an amazing collection of widely divergent songs. On one hand, there's the bare-boned, Texas shuffle version of AC/DC's "You Shook Me All Night Long"—"Every country boy or girl has jammed to AC/DC," Rich says—and on the other, there’s Wyclef Jean’s reggae rap mixed with steel guitar in "Please Man." The new record has definite spiritual leanings—R&B’s John Legend even performs a cappella on a song called “Eternity”—but there’s also the hilarious tale of lost love “WWJD (What Would Jesus Drink?).”

It’s the sort of audacious melding of genres with which Big & Rich first hit. Nashville and country radio—like a ton of bricks is an understatement. The unprecedented hybrid old-school rap, hard rock and dual country harmonies that the duo delivered on their first two albums was not only unprecedented, but delivered with a cocky swagger that country had rarely seen, give or take from a few veteran outlaws.

And that’s just the music. Perhaps nowhere else in music history can you find a group that so closely mirrors a carnivalesque show. From the actually 3-foot-2-inch Two Foot Fred, who dances at Big & Rich shows and appears in videos, to country-rapping former shoe salesmain Cowboy Troy, to Rachel Rice, a self-described "painter of fine music," who paints on stage during shows, the world has never seen anything like the Muzik Mafia.

And the Muzik Mafia is . . . what, exactly? A family, a fellowship guided by the mission statement "music without prejudice," a clan of fun-loving musicians who love to party and make music together, an organization that counts good deeds and charitable contributions among its core beliefs? The Mafa (Musically Artistic Friends in Alliance) is all those things and more.

And whatever the Mafia is, it seems to work. The group was founded in 2001 by Kenny, Rich, fellow musician Jon Nicholson and music publisher Cory Giemman, who are known as the Godfathers. After the success of their first album in 2004, Gretchen Wilson (see story, below) was named a Godmother. More than half a decade down the line, the organization continues to grow and flourish. Wilson has sold more than 5.6 million albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, while Big & Rich have sold roughly 3.9 million. And this year, five Mafia members will release albums—not just Big & Rich, but Wilson, Cowboy Troy, James Otto and the clan’s newest and historically most successful member, John Anderson (see story, page 23). And there are more projects in development.

What began as a few people jamming together in 2001 at Nashville’s Pub of Love has exploded beyond Music City’s wildest expectations. Once word of the jam sessions spread, for the 76 straight Tuesdays Mafia members performed to progressively larger crowds, it forced the group to move to larger venues. Guests ranging from Kid Rock and John Williams Jr. to Jewel and Three Doors Down frequently dropped by to help out. And not only were the shows a hit with fans, they also attracted the attention of Nashville’s A&R community. Interestingly, Warner Bros. Nashville chief creative officer Paul Worley, who signed Big & Rich to Warner Bros., remembers hearing about the shows from his daughter. "She would tell me about this Mafa thing and how great it was and I paid attention, but I didn’t act on anything," he says now. Luckily the duo came to him and were quickly signed.

When Big & Rich joined Tim McGraw’s tour in 2004, they took the Mafia on the road, something that still happens today occasionally. After the McGraw shows, the duo—along with cohorts Cowboy Troy, Shannon Lawson, Otto and whoever else was available—continued to do shows at local clubs after the concerts. And the weekly jam sessions still crop up. Earlier this year, for instance, members performed together in Muscle Shoals, Ala.

Meanwhile, the Muzik Mafia’s definition has expanded as well. "It’s still the musical community that they had, but there is a marketing arm, too," says Marc Oswald, who manages Big & Rich, Wilson and Cowboy Troy and is consigliere in the organization. He cites MuzikMafia.com, Muzik-Mafia TV, which aired on CMT Loaded, a broadband offering, and Muzik Mafia Radio, which streams on the group’s Web site. There’s also the Mafia Soldiers street team and an actual Mafia headquarters, where three full-time employees and four interns work on new media, tour sponsorships, public relations and the Web site, among other things. Oh, and there’s a full video production facility, too.

BLUE-COLLAR DOWNSIZING
GRETCHEN WILSON TAKES CONTROL AND ROLLS BACK HER GOALS

It's taken a while, but Gretchen Wilson has come to realize that she will never top the first album. "It was a phenomenon," she says. "It was an 'Achy Breaky Heart.' I think the girls, the blue-collar women in America, had just been waiting for ["Redneck Woman"] for so long. It was just perfect timing."

The Muzik Mafia’s Godmother exploded on the country scene in 2004 when her anthemic debut single, "Redneck Woman," spent five weeks at No. 1 on Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart and her album, "Here for the Party," debuted at No. 1 on the Top Country Albums tally. The set has gone on to sell 4.4 million copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Her next three singles all reached the top five, and Wilson took home awards from the Country Music Assn., the Academy of Country Music (ACM) and the Recording Academy.

But there was no follow-up album, 2005’s "All Jacked Up," also started off with a bang, its 1.2 million copies sold were a big drop from the debut.

"I beat out pop artists and rap artists, but it’s still a loser in most people’s eyes," Wilson says now. "I will always say that the ‘All Jacked Up’ record sonically, musically, lyrically beats the first record all to hell."

Fast forward to 2007 and Wilson will release her third album, "One of the Boys," May 15 on Columbia. (Her former label, Epic Nashville, closed after the consolidation of Sony and BMG’s Nashville operations last year.) As with her first two releases, Wilson co-produced the record with Mark Wright and Muzik Mafia mate John Rich, but she has taken on a more dominant role. "I got Mark’s help on a couple of things and I got John’s help on a couple of things, but other than that I’ve pretty much produced it myself," she says.

"I’ve always wanted full ownership," Wilson adds. "I’ve been like that from the beginning."

Wilson, who co-wrote all but two cuts, says she opened up a bit, too. "Lyrically, I think I reached a little further inside for a few of these songs," she says. "But there is still a lot of ass-kicking country on it."

The label anticipates a heavy media schedule around the album, which hits stores the day of the ACM Awards—Wilson is nominated for three. "We’ve been able to identify who a Gretchen Wilson consumer is and where they reside, not only geographically, but lifestyle-wise," Columbia Nashville director of marketing and artist development Tanya Welch says. "Gretchen speaks to middle America, so while New York and L.A. and larger markets are important to us, we don’t ever overlook what’s in the middle."

While she will hit a wide variety of venues in 2007, her Back to the Bars tour has Wilson playing smaller clubs. "It’s cool for me because it’s taken me back to the early days where the people are just sandwiched up to the stage and you are crunched on the stage together," she says. "There’s no room really for theatrics. It’s just about the music and the sweat."

—KT
‘THE NURTURING BOSOM OF THE MUZIK MAFIA ALLOWS EVERY ARTIST THAT’S A MEMBER TO CULTIVATE THEIR CRAFT.’

Cowboy Troy

Oswald says the ideologically minded Big Kenny in particular was reluctant when the idea of forming a marketing arm was first suggested. "They wanted to keep the music the only focus, which is really respectable," Oswald says. "We really had to debate it heavily, because I told him it wasn’t about making money. You guys can make all the great music in the world, but we have to have some media marketing muscle ourself that we can control." The two sides eventually agreed, with the caveat that no member of the Mafia hierarchy would make a dime from the Mafia organization itself. Mafia members earn money via the usual means—touring and album sales, for example. But funded by jam sessions, tour sponsorships—Chevy has been a big supporter—licensing deals and, as needed, by the Godfathers and Godmother, the marketing arm is self-supporting.

"It has definitely evolved," Oswald says of the Mafia. "Strategically it is the same thing, but tactically it has changed a lot. In the beginning it was a source of brotherhood and sisterhood for a small group of people who felt collectively that they had some strength."

For Warner Bros. Nashville’s Worley, who co-produced its first two records and is also a consigliere, says he’s a fan of the Mafia for just that reason. "They were all supporting each other as a tribe. Every artist that got ahead would reach back and pull their brothers or sisters forward."

Not only do Rich and Kenny work with the up-and-comers (see story, right), they also fund their projects. Rich reportedly spent six figures on a Jon Nicholson live concert video and he is also spending his own money on Shanna Crooks’ album. Kenny has done the same with Damien Horne and other artists have similarly been supported. "Nicholson, Shanna, Damien, Shannon Lawson are all in an A&R process that in the past only labels could afford to do," Oswald says.

What the Mafia offers a potential partner label is more than just the artist’s talent. "When we make our label deals, we don’t walk in with some demos looking for some dough to try and develop the music," Oswald says. "We are walking in with complete packages, including EPKs and photo shoots."

Mafia members also go on the road with Big & Rich and perform as part of shows at night, write songs during the day and generally learn the business. "It’s boot camp, and by the time they hit, they should be ready to go," Oswald says.

Cowboy Troy says the Mafia is a great sounding board. "If we like something we will tell you we like it, if not, we will tell you. ‘Hey, this needs to be improved here or there.’ I think that the nurturing bosom of the MuZik MAFIA allows every artist that’s a member to cultivate their craft, their songwriting, their musicianship.

Cowboy Troy’s own new album, “Black in the Saddle,” which he worked on with Rich, will also be released June 5 on Raybaw/Warner Bros. With very little radio play, his first album, “Loco Motion,” has sold more than 342,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. His unique “hick-hop” blend was a little much for mainstream radio to digest. "There’s only one station in country that played him where people heard it,” Rich says. "That was [KTYS] in Dallas. Wouldn’t it be great if 10% of them could play [his music]? Imagine what he’d sell.

But the new album will likely meet resistance as well.

"It’s one of those kinds of records that will—I would dare say—push the envelope a little farther than people thought we could and probably a little farther than some thought we should. It’s a lot of fun," Cowboy Troy says. "Parts of it sound like Motörhead on horseback, parts of it sound like maybe a reissuing of some Beatles stuff, and some is more orchestral kind of stuff."

While his music wasn’t made for radio, Cowboy Troy wouldn’t mind some airplay. "I think it would give them an opportunity to realize that their listening public is a lot more advanced than they think.

Despite the Mafia’s sales success, radio programmers as a group have been a tough nut to crack for the clan. Wilson has had the most success at radio, but that airplay largely came from her first album, “Here for the Party." Cowboy Troy reached only the lower tiers of the airplay chart with “I Play Chicken With the Train,” which featured Big & Rich, in 2005.

As for Big & Rich themselves, for all the success the pair have had as songwriters—Rich wrote Jason Aldean’s breakthrough “Hicktown” and Faith Hill’s return to the top of the charts, “Mississippi Girl,” while Kenny has Tim McGraw’s current hit “Last Dollar (Fly Away)—a run-away radio smash has eluded them. Their biggest chart hit to date is “Save a Horse (Ride a Cowboy),” which peaked at No. 11 on Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart in 2004.

But they may finally have a chart hit in “Lost in the Moment,” the first single from “Between Raising Hell and Amazing Grace.” Their fastest-climbing single to date, the song was written by Rich, Rodney Clawson and Keith Anderson. It is No. 23 this issue on Hot Country Songs.

“Most radio has been behind us, but that last 15%-20% who never figured out what we were trying to do never came onboard,” Rich says. “This may be the one where radio actually figures out what we are doing.

But radio isn’t the be-all and end-all for these guys either. From LoveEverybody.org, which assists victims of domestic abuse, to their passion about ending ethnic conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan, where the pair plan travel later this year, Big & Rich walk the walk when it comes to social consciousness.

“Our music, though, gives us a platform to do that, to talk about things we are just as passionate about as music,” Kenny says. "It’s really just an issue of awareness. And there ain’t no difference between a kid living across the street and a kid living across the ocean."

"If you don’t dream it, you can’t walk into it," he continues. "That’s what brought us all together in the first place—we all had dreams that there was something bigger than ourselves."

And even as they move on to bigger and bigger things, Big & Rich and the MuZik Mafia clearly don’t stop dreaming. ❄️
BIG & RICH’S MUZIK MAFIA
The Story Behind Their New Album And
The Nashville Movement They Lead

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AND
JOHN ANDERSON,
BACK WITH
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THE ROCK
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360 DEGREES OF BILLBOARD

HOME FRONT

EVENTS
LATIN
Miguel Bosé, Joan Sebastian, David Bisbal, Rakim & Ken-Y and many more are confirmed to perform at the Billboard Latin Music Conference & Awards April 23-26 in Miami. More at billboardevents.com.

R&B/HIP-HOP
Returning to Atlanta Sept. 5-7, the Billboard R&B/HIP-HOP Conference & Awards features savvy speakers, networking opportunities, educational sessions and exciting performances. More at billboardevents.com.

VIDEO
GO UNDERGROUND
Artist interviews, performances and out-takes. Billboard helps you discover the next hot stars of all genres. Billboard Underground welcomes Carla Duren, billboard.com/underground.
Fans First

Music Companies Have It in Their Power To Expand The Digital Music Industry

BY ERIC NICOLI

"Come May, I'll be voting with my dollars via buying up as many EMIs premium music tracks on iTunes as I can afford."

This was just one of the hundreds of e-mails from fans that BMI received this week following our announcement that we will be selling new digital rights management-free, higher-quality premium downloads.

The majority of global recorded music sales—roughly 90%—will come in the form of CDs, but clearly, this traditional business model is declining. Given today's challenging market conditions, I think we're all agreed that transitioning our business to digital and putting the consumer first are both top priorities for the music industry.

In four years, we went from zero to a true digital retail business with real and rapidly growing digital revenue. We also have great artists and great repertoire; we simply need to be sure—we and our digital partners—are packaging, presenting, and delivering music to consumers in a way that inspires them. Inspired consumers drive higher sales.

The digital business we've all admirably contributed to creating is facing too many barriers, however. The primary one is the lack of interoperability among digital music services and devices. It has created confusion and frustration for consumers. In a perfect world, the hardware, software and content companies would see eye-to-eye and cooperate to fix this issue. But change hasn't come fast enough. At BMI, we took the view that we could either allow the interoperability stalemate to continue, or we could take action (see story, page 5). We did the latter, because we believe that content companies really do have the power to change the game. By providing DRM-free downloads and raising their audio quality, we believe we have come up with a new product proposition that adds real value and greater choice. Ultimately, we think it will expand the digital music market to the benefit of everyone in the value chain: consumers, artists and those who support them, digital partners, device makers, employees and all other interested parties.

EMI is not turning its luck on DRM. We will continue to use DRM as appropriate to enable innovative digital business models such as subscription, superdistribution and time-limited downloads. Protecting the intellectual property of EMI and our artists is as important as ever. We will continue to work hard to combat piracy in all its forms and to educate consumers. The music industry has in its grasp a massive opportunity to realize growth in our business through digital, but we'll only have a fighting chance of achieving that if we attend to consumers. That means music companies must fundamentally change the way they do business.

The status quo is not an option if we are to succeed.

Eric Nast is chairman of EMI Group.

FEEDBACK

As of a copyrighted musical work constitutes a public performance of that work. That the transmission may also constitute a digital phonorecord delivery is irrelevant—it just means that for these uses, like many others, both mechanical and performing rights are involved.

The impetus for presenting the question of the performing right in downloads to the rate court came from the Internet services, not ASCAP. And ASCAP has not "shifted" its position since our 2001 joint statement with BMI and the National Music Publishers’ Assn. We said then, and continue to say, that although performing rights exist in "pure" audio downloads—those without any conditions whatsoever attached to them—we will not seek payment for such uses; the value of the performing right in other forms of transmission, including conditional downloads, is for the court to decide in the pending rate proceedings. It is well to remember that the future livelihoods of songwriters and composers, and the publishers who support them, are at stake here.

John LaFrumette
CEO, ASCAP

FOR THE RECORD

In the April 7 feature story "Arrested Development," it should have stated that the Missouri County Sheriff's Joint Vice Task Force and the Clayton County Police executed a January raid on DJ Drama's Atlanta-area production studio, and not the RIAA. The RIAA assisted in the investigation.
The DRM Scorecard

EMI and Apple sent shockwaves through the music industry with their announcement that they would begin offering commercial downloads without digital rights management. As the dust begins to settle, Billboard breaks down the winners and losers in the latest round in the fight over DRM.

WINNERS

Consumers. People who actually pay for digital music finally are free to playback purchased tracks wherever they want, however they want. And they’re getting better audio quality to boot. But improved usage rights and sound performance don’t come for free: EMI is charging a higher wholesale rate for DRM-free tracks, a cost that is being passed on to the customer.

iTunes will charge $1.29 for DRM-free downloads.

Apple. The market leader in digital music grabs the moral high ground in the debate over interoperability and DRM. “The right thing for the customer going forward is to tear down the walls that preclude interoperability by going DRM-free,” Apple CEO Steve Jobs says. It also avoids having to license its FairPlay DRM to rival technology companies. Performing as a bonus, a move to higher-quality audio files will drive the need for iPods with greater storage capacities (at likely higher price tags). And the company benefits from timing its announcement to overlaid word of an European antitrust probe into iTunes pricing.

Device manufacturers. Makers of MP3 players and music phones not built by Apple now have the ability to support tracks purchased through market leader iTunes. “It will eventually remove the move of iTunes lock-in,” Jupiter Research analyst Michael Gartenberg says. “But if [other vendors’] sales don’t take off, it will be clear that it wasn’t lock-in that prevented their success.”

Variable pricing proponents. In pricing DRM-free downloads at $1.29, Apple has effectively endorsed variable prices for iTunes, something the company has previously resisted. The shift to two pricing tiers opens the door for labels to push harder for a more dynamic pricing environment.

AAC. Retail sources estimate that less than 10% of music devices support the AAC format. But with Apple choosing to support unprotected AAC over MP3, device manufacturers are expected to ramp support for the format. Microsoft's Zune, SanDisk's Sansa and Sony's PlayStation 3 are among the select devices that already do play AAC files.

Independent labels. Never sticklers for DRM, indie labels will see a spike in iPod-friendly retailers of their content.

LOSERS

Rival majors. Universal Music Group, Sony BMG and Warner Music Group now face increased pressure to follow EMI in adopting DRM-free downloads despite reservations about the uncertain impact on digital profitability and piracy. Rival label executives are privately complaining that EMI has recklessly embraced its new strategy without adequate testing. Some label sources are also expressing dismay that EMI’s effort undercuts the industry's ability to correct the security problems that have plagued the CD format by creating a completely secure commercial environment for digital music.

DRM patent holders. While still a must for subscription services and by-before-you-buy ad-supported offerings, DRM is fading in the biggest part of the market.

Microsoft. A move to DRM-free music is another nail in the coffin for third-party device and retail support for its WMA standard. The company also loses on capitolizing to EMI demands of content owners when designing the Microsoft Zone and Windows Vista—moves that have been unpopular with consumers.

Publishers. Songwriters and publishers are dragged into a DRM-free environment with little to say in the matter.

ON THE FENCE

EMI. EMI Chairman Eric Nicoli wins points in the short run for progressive thinking on DRM by making the first move to break the interoperability log jam. But the company is taking risks on its long-term digital profitability and stock price. If the move does not increase digital consumption, the results could be disastrous. EMI execs are adamant they are making the right move. "This is about creating more opportunity in commercialized music by providing the right product to people who are prepared to pay for it," digital chief Barney Wragg says. "We think it's going to significantly increase the size of the market."
UPFRONT

RETAIL BY ED CHRISTMAN

Long, Cold Winter

Digital Growth Couldn’t Stem CD, Rap And Country Q1 Drops

It will come as no shock to the dedicated Billboard reader that first-quarter results show the CD in continued freefall. What may be more surprising is who and what are leading that decline.

First things first: Overall album sales for the Jan. 1-April 2 period are down 16.6% to 117.1 million units, led—or perhaps misled—by a 20.5% decrease.

Industry executives attribute the decline to a weak release schedule, the consumer’s loss of confidence in the CD and a reduction in store scan rates.

Certainly, the last point is documentable. Between first-quarter 2006 and now, several key retailers have disappeared. FYE shuttered 131 stores in January, and Tower Records liquidated 89 superstores in December. Musicland also closed 500 stores beginning in January 2006, so many of those outliers—and their going-out-of-business sales—contributed to first-quarter 2006.

“We are seeing a customer dislocation,” Newbury Comics CEO Mike Dresce says. “A lot of people are confused about where they shop, and it’s changing their habits.”

Digital track sales, although they are still growing, could not pick up the slack. More than 380 million digital tracks were sold, outpacing album sales by more than 100 million units, according to Nielsen SoundScan. When those digital tracks are converted to track equivalents (10 tracks counting as one album sale), unit album sales were still down 10.5%.

Digital sales growth is slowing from last year, when tracks were up 87% and digital albums up 144% at the end of 2005’s first quarter. At the end of first-quarter 2007, digital track sales were up 51.9%, digital album sales, which total 11.5 million units, were up 56%. But as a percentage of album sales, digital albums are nearly 10% now, versus the 5.2% they were at the end of first-quarter 2006.

Meanwhile, two tracks topped the million-unit milestone: Fall Out Boy’s “Thnks fr Th Mmrs” and the Black Eyed Peas’ “My Hump.”

It’s ROUGH TO BE A WAL-MART IN NASHVILLE

For the first time since the early days of the industry, such merchants as Wal-Mart, Target and KMart have surpassed chains, which include such retailers as Trans World, Best Buy, Barnes & Noble, Newbury Comics and Gallery of Sound.

The discount department stores scanned 44.8 million album copies versus the 44.5 million units that chains sold.

But in a subtle change, for the first time in recent years, mass merchants, with a 17.8% decline, didn’t turn in a better performance than the overall U.S. market’s 16.6% decline.

“Certainly, the last point is documentable. Between first-quarter 2006 and now, several key retailers have disappeared.”

Country sales were the second-biggest loser of the large genres, with a 30.7% decline to 12.1 million units.

“Country hasn’t had sizzle in the new-release category so far this year,” says Ben Kline, executive VP of sales, marketing and new media at Universal Music Group (UMG) Nashville, who also notes that carryover sales are not as strong either.

Indeed, last year, Carrie Underwood’s 2005 release “Some Hearts” sold more than 900,000 units in the first quarter; there were two Johnny Cash-related albums that were more than 1 million units; and Rascal Flatts. Trace Adkins and Keith Urban each had albums that, combined, generated another 1.2 million units.

In contrast, this year the three best-selling country albums were Rascal Flatts’ 2006 release “Me And My Gang,” the Dixie Chicks’ “Taking the Long Way” and Tim McGraw’s “Let It Go,” which just sneaked into the $20 million units sold in the quarter’s final week. Combined, the three have eeked out 1 million units.

Fortunately, Kline says the country release schedule for the rest of the year “looks pretty stout.”

In the market-share race (see chart), UMG held steady in the top spot, racking up a 30.6% slice of the pie in total album market share and 33.6% in current market share. But because of the overall sales decline, UMG’s album scans were down 1 million units to 38 million. Sony BMG Music Entertainment had a 7.5 million-unit drop in sales.

The industry remains generally stymied by the freefall.

“I don’t know what’s going on,” the head of sales at a major record label says. “Except it’s scary out there and changing every week.”

NORAH JONES offered one of the first quarter’s few bright spots.

Q1: INSIDE THE NUMBERS

Sales and Share Trends For The Year’s First Three Months

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Tracks vs. Albums

![Graph showing track sales vs. album sales from 2005 to 2007](image-url)

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Tracks vs. Albums

![Graph showing track sales vs. album sales from 2005 to 2007](image-url)
James ‘Jim’ Aiken
1932 - 2007

a great man who truly made a difference

Much loved
Greatly missed
Never forgotten

From your many Friends and Admirers around the world
Long may the legacy continue
GERMAN SALES DOWN
The German music market dropped 2.4% in value during 2006, continuing the downward trend that has seen it fall by 50% since 1998, according to the German arm of the IFPI.

Value at retail—including 16% VAT (sales tax)—of downloads and physical formats fell 2.4% to €71 billion ($22.7 billion). In volume terms, physical sales fell to 186 million units, down 1.5% from 2005. The fall is primarily attributed to losses in CD singles and the outmoded vinyl, cassette and VHS formats. Sales of CD singles dropped 11% to 15.9 million units.

Sales of digital tracks (including mobile music) rose 28% to 25.2 million units, while digital albums leapt 56% to 1.9 million. Digital formats generated revenue of €42 million ($56 million), up 40% from 2005.

The figures collated data reported by IFPI Germany’s national members—representing 86% of German sales—plus, for the first time, sales data from market research company GfK. —Wolfgang Spahr

BBC HONORS FARKA TOURE
The late Malian singer/guitarist Ali Farka Touré’s World Circuit set “Savane” was named album of the year at the annual BBC Radio 2 Awards for World Music, held March 31 in London. In the regional category, best artist winners were New York-based gypsy punk act Gogol Bordello (America) and veteran Ethiopian vocalist Mahmoud Ahmed (Africa). Somalian hip-hop artist K’naan was named best newcomer and French tango/fusion act Gotan Project collected the club global award, while Jewish-

Ghanaian pianist Maurice El Medioni and Cuban percussionist Roberto Rodríguez won the culture crossing award with their album “Descarga Oriental” (Pirhana). The winners were picked by a jury of 12 drawn from the media, musicians and academics, based on nominations made by 2,000 delegates to last October’s world music trade fair Womex in Seville, Spain. The ceremony was broadcast nationally March 31 by Radio 3, which is the BBC’s specialist classical channel. —Nigel Williamson

RICALL ADDS SONY BMG
London-based online music licensing firm Ricall has secured a major deal with Sony BMG Music Entertainment under which it will add more than 1 million tracks from the major’s catalog to its music library. The agreement will see recordings by Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, Groove Armada and Justin Timberlake, among other Sony BMG acts, made available for commercial use internationally by broadcasters, advertising agencies, computer game developers and multimedia content owners.

Ricall’s library comprises works from more than 150 independent and specialist labels from around the world. The Sony BMG deal will boost its library to more than 4 million. Ricall customers search ricall.com to select tracks, using its proprietary music search engine for specific needs.

—Juliana Koranteng

Reaction Mixed For Piracy Crackdown
Legislation Sets Definitions, Aligns Penalties Across The Continent

BRUSSELS—New anti-piracy measures could see pirates across the European Union facing greatly increased sentences.

The European Parliament is due to vote April 27 on a proposed European Commission (EC) directive, which for the first time would harmonize criminal penalties for a specific range of intellectual-property (IP) crimes in all 27 EU countries.

The legislation, which is widely expected to be adopted, would replace individual domestic legislation across the region, where pirates currently face wildly differing penalties depending on where they are prosecuted.

The new penalties would introduce a maximum four-year prison sentence for IP crime, and fines of up to €91,050 ($121,430, rising to €273,160 ($364,200) if organized crime involvement is proved—a substantial increase on most current penalties. The law is designed to target commercial pirates, both online and physical, but is not intended to be used against individual, private copiers, who will still be subject to the law in their individual territory.

Italian socialist member of the European Parliament Nicola Zingaretti drafted the current proposal, which was approved March 20 by the Parliament’s Legal Affairs Committee.

The next step is the Parliament vote, after which the directive will be sent to EU member governments for approval before this summer.

Zingaretti argues that national law is no longer enough to fight international piracy. EU-wide adoption of the new directive, he says, means that “criminal enterprises gaining millions on the shoulders of authors and distributors will have to cope with stricter European legislation.”

‘Criminal enterprises gaining millions on the shoulders of authors and distributors will have to cope with stricter European legislation.’

—NICOlia ZINGARETTI, EuROPeAN PARLIAMENT

However, while European labels might be expected to welcome the prospect of increased penalties for piracy, IFPI regional director for Europe Frances Moore claims the measures are neither far enough reaching nor appropriate.

Moore says the IFPI is concerned that the proposed directive’s attempts to strictly define copyright crime could actually allow infringers to escape punishment if their offenses do not precisely meet its criteria.

The problem is, she says, “that some amendments would start interfering in substantive criminal law at a national level, which was never the intention of the [initial] proposal. “Rights holders in Europe need a reliable legal framework where intellectual property rights are effectively enforced,” she adds.

Although the IFPI does not publish Europe-wide statistics on piracy, its July 2006 piracy report identified EU member states Greece, Italy and Spain countries, partly because the country’s criminal code “does not outlaw the possession of pirated materials for commercial purposes.”

Zingaretti’s proposal is based on an April 2006 EC draft aimed at combating piracy on a commercial scale. But his version seeks to clearly define such key terms as “commercial scale,” “counterfeiting,” “piracy” and “intentional infringement,” which was not the case in the original draft.

Moore says that the original EC draft did not include strict definitions, thus keeping it in line with current World Trade Organization practice and ensuring a degree of discretion for judges at a national level. But Zingaretti claims that his amendments to that draft are intended to make quite clear what constitutes commercial piracy thereby ensuring that individual consumers “violating a copyright shouldn’t be threatened as common criminals.”

Other IP trade bodies, including independent labels body Impala, the Motion Picture Assn., the International Video Federation and the Business Software Alliance, have also indicated they are uncomfortable with the proposed directive.

One concern, Impala secretary general Philippe Kern says, is that the proposal does not address the responsibilities of Internet service providers with respect to online piracy.
A Bodycare Brand Cleans Up

Compilation Helps Pangea Organics Present A Fresh Face

When we think of companies that produce natural and/or organic bodycare products, we think cleansers, toners, creams and soaps. Music is not necessarily front of mind, but—as at least one company is now realizing—it doesn’t have to be that way.

While natural bodycare companies like Alba, EO and Kiss My Face have created lifestyle brands that basically scream “music, please,” they have yet to recognize how the power of music could be used to complement the lifestyle they present. This may change with the release of “Natural Selection,” the inaugural multi-artist compilation from Boulder, Colo.-based Pangea Organics, known for its line of “ecocentric” bodycare products.

“As brands move into the future, it’s important for companies to remember that consumers are looking for more than the main dish,” Pangea founder and CEO Joshua Onysko says. “They want to know that the companies they support have a face, and they want to know more about them. This CD is Pangea’s way of communicating to our customers that there are people behind this brand.”

“Too be quite honest, I’m surprised that this hasn’t been done before,” says Jeremiah McElwee, associate whole body coordinator of giant retailer Whole Foods. “It definitely adds a face and increases the identity of a brand. It’s like a MySpace page.”

Like MySpace, “Natural Selection” gives people the opportunity to discover and learn more about artists—and, in this case, the Pangea Organics brand itself. Onysko views the compilation as a way for his customers to get to know the people behind the brand.

“Music goes beyond soaps and toners,” Onysko says. “It’s another way for us to connect with our customers on an emotional level.”

Words like these are more a testament to a generation of younger people getting involved in the natural/organic bodycare space, McElwee believes. “They have a different way of thinking compared to the older, staid brands,” he explains. “Younger people are more in-tune with and accustomed to more interactive ways of doing business.”

On a personal level, McElwee says he likes to know more about the products that Whole Foods sells. “Pangea’s CD adds color and personality to the brand and those behind it,” he says. “If Pangea released a country-rock compilation, the brand would be seen as something completely different.”

Available for $16 at pangea-organics.com, as well as at Whole Foods locations on the West Coast. “Natural Selection” (Black Bridge Records) boosts 14 electronic-sparkled, lounge-pruned tracks. The disc includes licensed music by DJ Harry (“Theaurus”), Bassnectar with Michael Kang of String Cheese Incident (“Dubiusaca”) and Cosmic Rocker (“Glocon”).

“Natural Selection” is released via Black Bridge Records, also based in Boulder, and helmed by Josh “DJ Ivy” Ivy and Benjamin Bussard. Ivy “moonlights” as a graphic designer at Pangea. And Black Bridge, the recording duo, has a track on “Natural Selection.”

Ivy and Bussard met Onysko in 2001 when the Pangea mastermind was making soup in his garage. Onysko, a world traveler, then sold the different soups (out of a basket) at parties and events he hosted and promoted—with Black Bridge behind the turntables. Pangea Organics is now sold in 18 countries.

Onysko says he first got the idea for a music compilation a couple of years ago. “But I had no clue how to put together how to release an album,” he adds. “So, conversations with Ivy and Bussard followed. Now, talk is turning to the next volume in the series. The possibility of a Pangea Organics music and lifestyle festival is also being discussed.”
Labels have long lived and died by sales and radio. But with CD sales in decline, and even the most recent CD-radio promotion failing to pump them up, it is increasingly evident that making an artist’s success by what it scans alone is a mistake.

“The business is becoming very transaction-oriented,” says Kevin Lawrie, president of Sony BMG Music Entertainment for the Latin region. “And certainly, in Latin America if you’re highly dependent on CD sales for your existence, you’re going to have a very, very short existence. We are increasingly looking to sign artists and concepts that are not reliant on CD sales.

For example, a recent Sony BMG signing in Argentina is Dolli-Irigoyen, a chef. Irigoyen’s deal, negotiated through Day One, Sony BMG’s new talent development company, will include selling cooking shows, cooking tours, compatible music and a broad range of other revenue streams. In the mobile arena, for example, fans will be able to get recipes—as opposed to songs—with a click.

“Imagine the structure of a multinational music company at the service of a chef,” says Afo Verde, president of Sony BMG Sur. “It opens up a wonderful world for us in terms of sponsors and marketing.”

Verde is developing the Irigoyen line and expects to have product in the market within the next six months. “Ten years ago, I would have said, ‘We signed an act, and we’ve started recording the album,’” he says with a laugh.

Searching for new revenue streams is no longer new. As reported in Billboard (Feb. 17), Latin labels are signing new and established acts to deals that include a percentage of ancillary revenue, ranging from licenses to tours. Sales and radio, naturally, always help in generating business. But some artists produce a lot of business without strong sales.

Mexican rock act Kinky, for example, has sold only 6,000 copies of its most recent album, “Reina,” according to Nielsen SoundScan. The group’s biggest-selling album is 2002’s “Kinky,” which scanned 41,000. But Kinky’s music may well be the most utilized Latin music in mainstream American TV (see story, below), in what amounts to a constant revenue stream.

At indie Nacional Records, where acts are often signed to label, publishing and management deals, the approach is holistic, and artists are actively working on all fronts. “Sales are important, but when we are licensing as much as we do, record sales can sometimes be just 30% of the picture,” Nacional president Tomas Cookman says.

Nacional’s acts, which include Aterciopelados, Nort Collective and the Pinker Tones, see revenue roughly split evenly among sales, touring, licensing and other streams.

Some acts sell very little, but bring in money for other reasons. Argentine group Intoxicado, Cookman says, didn’t sell “anything” here. “But we did one license to CSI Miami and boom, it’s $25,000.”

You have a record like [the self-titled album from] Andrea Echeverri, which sold 10,000 copies; but we do one commercial with Volvo and the P&E changes tremendously.”

At one time, major labels looked down their noses at such deals. Now, developing such opportunities often makes far more sense than huge advances against diminishing sales.

“There’s so many beautiful niche markets out there, that the pennies, dimes and nickels add up, and next thing you know, you have a multimillion-dollar business,” Cookman says.

For 24/7 Latin news and analysis, see billboard.biz/latin.

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KINKY KICKS
Eclectic Mexican Rock Act Lands Sweet Soccer Spots

Genre-busting Mexican band Kinky has earned critical acclaim and a following among hipsters on both sides of the border.

Now that base stands to gain millions of soccer fans from the United States to the tip of South America.

The group’s rock anthem “Solo un Paso” is the theme song for Fox Sports en Español’s 2007 broadcasts of Major League Soccer (MLS).

At the start of every match, a montage will mix the song, clips of the band playing and footage of the teams set to compete.

The band’s video for the song will premiere during the Chivas USA-Toronto FC match on the season’s kickoff on April 7.

Kinky has also recorded match-specific promos and teaser spots leading up to the premiere.

“What is really appealing is that film and TV licensing have a dual benefit that can be equally valuable—

one is revenue-generating and one is promotional opportunities,” says J.T. Griffith, film/TV music director at Nettwerk Music Group.

Nettwerk, which is Kinky’s label and management team, licensed the song to Fox under the latter formula. It is pursuing revenue streams for the song in the FIFA 2008 video game and with official MLS brands such as Adidas.

Kinky will also play gigs at MLS games, starting June 2 with the Los Angeles Galaxy home match. The Galaxy relationship also extends to in-game uses of “Solo un Paso” and appearances with the team on local Spanish-language TV.

Kinky’s music has been widely used on TV, from “Nip/Tuck” to MTV’s “Dancelife,” and three different Pon- tic campaigns.

But with Fox Sports en Español, the band will reach 33 million homes in the United States and Latin America.

“The music of Kinky is going to be attracting people from their teens to the 25-30 age range, which is the market where we’re looking to position Major League Soccer here in the U.S.,” says Fausto Ceballos, VP of creative services for Fox Sports en Español.

Kinky keyboardist Ulises Lozano attributes the band’s synch-happy approach to two factors.

“Our music . . . has an energy that can express in a visual way what directors are looking for,” Lozano says, adding, “It’s important to view your music environment as a whole . . . it’s not that I am going to change my job because album sales are going down. It’s not because people are not listening. We are adapting.”

—Ayala Ben-Yehuda

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THE BILLBOARD Q&A

Pioneering producer DJ Nelson (aka Nelson Diaz Martinez) has always had his eye on what’s next. The beatmaker on early tracks from Tego Calderon and Daddy Yankee is shopping his clothing line, Flow Wear, to big-box retailers, has owned four nightclubs and even founded a radio station.

He released “Flow la Discoteca” 2 in March under a new joint venture with Universal Latino called Urban Music System.

Your single with Arcángel, “Chica Virtual,” is getting a lot of attention for its distinct sound.

I made an album by which people realize that things can be done in the Latin market on the level of the American market. All the instrumentation you hear in that rhythm, from the kick to the last keyboard, are from the ’80s.

How do clubs inspire you?

I think the dancefloor should never be empty. When I make an album, I mix whatever element, be it salsa, merengue, techno, pop, house, reggaeton, hip-hop . . . to entertain people and make them dance. It’s turned into something urban, where anything can happen. It’s a new sound of youth. The Latin audience is looking for its own generation inside of this new language.

Do you test new tracks in front of a club audience?

When I had Flow [the nightclub], I released an album the way Studio 54 did. When I prepare a mix, before doing a master, I take it to the club and listen to it. I can tell if the mix needs anything, if I need to raise or lower anything. I go to the studio [and] bring it back and play it in the club until I’m sure . . . that even if a person has never heard the track, the first time you play it, it’ll get an incredible reaction.

—Ayala Ben-Yehuda
I am always astounded by how record-label and distribution executives can be "in the know" about issues that affect their business and yet still not have a clue. But more on this later.

One thing execs do know is that the decline of physical sales is driven mainly by the dynamics of the music retail environment. With the growth and the other the physical factors behind the decline, the retail price war results in reduced profit margins that force music specialty stores to close and causes surviving stores to reduce music space.

Whether it's because of the Bertelsmann Direct site that prices CDs at $5.99 or iTunes selling albums at $9.99 and all the big box circulars advertising that price, the $18.98 list price CD is gone. But the major record labels don't appear to get that.

If you look at the RIAA midyear numbers for 2006 (full year numbers are due soon), the average list price of CDs shipped to retail was $16.11. That is still surprisingly high when you take into account lower pricing for new artists and budget ($9.98 list price), mid-line ($11.98) and super mid-line ($13.98) titles.

Given that CDs are wholesaled to merchants, calculations show, that the average wholesale price was $10.47. While the labels' cooperative advertising dollar allotments depend on the release date and the merchant, on average they try to keep co-op and buy-in deals and other promotional discounts at 15% of total revenue (or $1.57), that brings the average cost for CDs to retail down to $8.90.

Meanwhile, NPD reports that the average price paid for a full-length CD in the United States was $13.02. With CDs' average cost at $8.90, that means the average profit margin for CDs last year was 31.6%.

On the other hand, publicly traded music retailers Hastings Entertainment and Trans World Entertainment recently reported their financial results, and the numbers show that music specialty stores and even online sites that sell CDs at a fixed price of $9.99 or less are reporting declining sales even as the average retail price of CDs is as high as $16.11.

Let's look at Best Buy. According to its year-end numbers, Best Buy's overall profit margin is 25% and its expenses are 19.7%. I'm not sure of Best Buy's profit statements by product line, but I can do a little extrapolating to show that its music expenses exceed 19.7%.

Just analyzing retail, last year the cost the chain’s $552 million, according to its most recent year-end numbers. (This year's results are due April 4.) So while that equals 1.7% of revenue, music's rent is more than double at 3.6%.

If Best Buy currently sells at $11.98 and operates 10% of floor space, its rent was $55 million, or 3.6% of music sales.

You might as well research if Best Buy ever sells for $12.99, because that merchant had paid only $7.50 for that album.

I didn't see any problem. I didn't know the album had development-artist pricing and was happy to get it for $12.99. What's more, I pointed out that the merchant was realizing only a 23% profit margin. Executives who remember their history must realize that 42% was the profit margin built into a record of music pricing, which was not coincidently was back when the industry was healthy.

I realize that retail likely will never achieve those types of overall profit margins on music again, but in the instances where it does, why do label executives have to begrudge it that profit?
Nederlander Bulks Up

Alex Hodges joining the Nederlander Concerts crew seems to herald a new seriousness for the venerable concert promoter to compete against AEG Live and Live Nation.

After all, Nederlander has been in this game a lot longer than either of the top two dogs. They're both staffed with seasoned professionals, but AEG Live and Live Nation are basically products of the new millennium. Nederlander's roots go back to 1911. Hodges hasn't been around that long, but he has been named COO of Nederlander Concerts, effective April 15. He most recently was executive VP at Live Nation, a position he inherited in the wake of Live Nation's acquisition of House of Blues Entertainment last year. Hodges came to HOB in 1994 and left it as Live Nation last January (billboard.biz, Jan. 31).

The move to Nederlander reunites Hodges with Nederlander CEO Adam Friedman. The pair worked together for 10 years at HOB and its predecessor, Universal Concerts, until Friedman moved to Nederlander last year. Hodges also worked for Nederlander before moving to Universal/HOB.

Friedman says Hodges will execute a Nederlander Concerts growth strategy.

“The strategy is a simple one: we need more inventory in the markets we currently operate in, and we want to take that experience into those markets and reach out to other markets that are logical extensions of what we already do,” says Friedman, who adds that the goal is to give agents and managers another choice beyond national touring.

Friedman says that growth can come from putting together strings of dates for artists. “Instead of looking at our venues as one-offs, or silos if you will, making single offers for single markets, we're strategizing them all together and creating multiple, multivenue packages,” he says.

“We want agents and managers to know there's a choice,” Friedman adds. “And we're really ready to roll. We're well-funded, we're privately held, we don't have any distractions with Wall Street, we're a promotion firm.”

According to Friedman, Hodges is the guy to make it happen. “I've only got one guy who can do that, who has experience on every side of the business, who has experience competing against the gorillas and has succeeded. Those are the criteria to put it all together and make it happen and drive the strategy every day, and I had the benefit of working with him for over 10 years as a partner,” he says. “That’s Alex.”

In Friedman's eyes, these multi-city tours are a viable alternative to national tours under one promoter's banner. Nederlander is also interested in co-promoting some dates. “Not everybody’s a national touring act, and it seems to us that there's a missed opportunity to go into markets that are either overlooked or underserviced, and nobody’s putting it all together,” he says.

Just don't call it "block booking," which Friedman believes has a bad connotation. "Unlike the block-booking concept, which was sort of 'take it or leave it' and more of a national touring concept, we hope we’re able to express why the agent and manager and artist should accept an offer from us that has multiple cities, but they don’t have to accept all of it," he says. "We think we can put something on the table that will incentivize them to take the whole, but we’ll be happy to continue booking as many dates as we can."

Initially, the Nederlander team will focus on the western United States. "My view of the world is you want to do the things you do well. You want to be able to service the artist, put on a great promotional campaign, and the only way you can do that is to have people who are attentive to the shows," Friedman says. "What we're going to do best is leverage our core assets along the West Coast and grow into markets that are logical extensions of that.”

To date, Nederlander has not really been competing with Live Nation or AEG Live. Nederlander finished eighth among all promoters in gross dollars last year, behind such independents as Jam and Outback.

Unless we as a promotion firm can come up with a strategy that offers something that is attractive, competition is not going to happen," Friedman says. "We're going to take everything we have and maximize it and build regional scale first. If ultimately that means we can move on to other markets beyond the region, we'll do it, but we'll do it opportunistically and smartly."
School Of Rock

Diverse Spring Tours Target College Students

Stress runs rampant among college kids this time of year, but the Madpackers.com Door to Dorm tour, the Virgin College Mega tour and mtvU’s Campus Invasion Music Festival are aiming to give students some springtime musical relief.

Hinder will headline the Door to Dorm outing, which hits 17 colleges and three music festivals starting April 13 at the University of Pittsburgh in Johnstown, Pa. Drummer Cody Hanson jokingly admits that nonstop worldwide touring behind Hinder’s 2005 album “Extreme Behavior” has made the quintet “severe alcoholics,” but that won’t prevent the Oklahoma City act from throwing a party for its hardcore college fan base. “Whenever we get too tired we just have another drink and continue on,” he says.

“We're having a good time, and that's what we're about.”

For Madpackers.com, a new company that picks up students' packed belongings and drops them off at dorms before school starts, linking with Hinder to launch its brand was a no-brainer, says Dave Licursi, a tour producer with Concerts 101. Licursi launched the company after spending 20-plus years as a tour manager and accountant for such college favorites as Staind, Kid Rock, Matchbox Twenty and Sugar Ray. "The energy these guys have onstage is perfect for a college audience."

About 75% of college-focused tours run during the spring, when nine out of 10 colleges are looking to buy talent for year-end blowout events. In most cases, student-run committees seek high-energy acts to place outdoors in festival-type settings, gyms, auditoriums, ballrooms, theaters or arenas. Adam Tobey, VP of Concert Ideas (which serves as a middle man between schools and artists), says that 99.5% of schools have facilities. “The other half a percent rent facilities off campus.”

Like the fourth annual Virgin College Mega tour, which features a diverse lineup of rapper Talib Kweli, pop/punk act SugarCult and former Something Corporate guitarist William Teyl, Door to Dorm will beef up concert dates by leading with all-day on-campus activities like obstacle courses, giveaways, games and artist meet-and-greets. “Those things help,” Tobey says. On-campus festivals “entice people who may be sitting on the fence to attend the concert. The added values are incredibly important, because people have so many options these days to see and hear things.’’

For this year’s 18-market Virgin College Mega tour, which starts April 7 at the House of Blues in Las Vegas and wraps May 5 at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, R.I., tickets will cost up to $20 in some markets and will be given away for free in others, depending on the school. Most university students pay between $25 and $200 in student activity fees, Tobey says, which offset the cost of programming. “Some schools can't charge for events because of activities fees,” he says.

Door to Dorm features support from Papa Roach and Puddle of Mudd on select dates. It is charging $20-$25. For Door to Dorm gigs that don't visit campus venues, efforts will be made to tie in marketing with surrounding universities to offer a limited number of discounted tickets to students, says the Agency Group’s Ken Fermaglich, who books Hinder worldwide with Steve Kaul.

Also serving a diverse college-targeted roster is this year’s first mtvU Campus Invasion Music Festival, which boasts the Shins, Dashboard Confessional and Fabolous as headliners for all-day festivals in Austin, Atlanta and Philadelphia. Other acts include Gym Class Heroes, the Academy Is., K-OS, Augustana, the Rapture and Shiny Toy Guns.

The event follows in the footsteps of the decade-old MTV Campus Invasion tour, which brought exposure to such acts as Muse, Moby, Wyclef Jean and Hoobastank. The decision to abandon the old touring model was part of an effort to bring mixed acts to the table and home in on specific territories, according to Chris McCarthy, VP of strategic development and marketing at mtvU. "Rather than have 20 dates on college campuses throughout the country, we chose to invade college towns,” McCarthy says. "In each of these markets, you're talking 100,000-500,000 college students.”

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The final nine of what will be the Big 86 begins.
And on June 10, when HBO eighty-sixes "The Sopranos" forever, it will be remembered as the series that had the best music in the history of TV.
There are a few directors as musically savvy as David Chase, but not many. You have to begin with Martin Scorsese, the King of Rock in Movieland. George Lucas would have given him a run for the throne—"American Graffiti" came out around the same time as "Mean Streets" and was wall-to-wall cool songs, but he abdicated when he blew into space.

Chris Columbus has a great ear, as does Jonathan Demme. Michael Mann is more a score guy these days, although he's usually not too far away from his sweet home Chicago blue. And let's not forget, "Miami Vice" brought rock songs to TV. But the scores for "Thief" and "The Last of the Mohicans" are as important as the script and are as good as it gets.

Before 1973 there was Jack Nitzsche's classic soundtrack to "Performance." As Roger Cornman was hip enough to use the Electric Flag for "The Trip," and there was always a fabulous Davie Allan & the Arrows instrumental for things like the super cool "Wild Angels" or Dick Dale for beach movies. Before that Alan Freed's fliers carried the good news, and the Rock Messiah brought his best missionaries with him. Most notably Little Richard, who explained quite eloquently why "Jayne Mansfield Couldn't Help It."

Richard Brooks started it all in 1955 with Bill Haley & the Comets' "Rock Around the Clock" opening "Blackboard Jungle." The kids didn't rip the seats out of theaters because it was the first time they heard rock 'n' roll. They went berserk because it was the first time in history they heard it at the correct volume. Like, loud, Daddy-O.

Well, Chase has carried on this proud tradition and taken it to TV, where he had 86 hours to let his imagination work instead of a movie's 90-120 minutes.

Here's a taste of Chase's School of Rock on "The Sopranos"-

British Invasion: The Rolling Stones (five times), the Kinks, The Animals, The Hollies, Cream, Them, The Ventures, Dion & the Belmonts, the Eagles, the Cadillac's, the Drifters, The Pioneers: Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Buddy Holly, Roy Orbison, The Americans: Bob Dylan, the Rascals, the Four Seasons, Bruce Springsteen and R&B: The Miracles, Otis Redding, Irma Thomas, Marvin Gaye Punk and new wave: The Clash, Johnny Thunders, Elvis Costello, Blondie

Of course there were the popular standards with Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Tony Bennett and Jerry Vale. And just cool choices like "Sally Go Round the Roses" by the Jaynetts. Quite a range of coolness, and that's only scratching the surface.

There's one more critically important fact that proves indisputably forever drummer Chase's dedication to music: Without it, we may have never been on the show. So on behalf of all those drooling degenerate denizens of the Bada Bing, thank you, David.

COOLEST GARAGE SONGS

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<td>FREE AND FREAKY</td>
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"It's a good little earner," Knight says. Yet even as it grows, FatCat is still firmly rooted in DIY culture. Knight insists the label listens to every demo it receives and has started featuring the best of them on its Web site. So far, Knight says, seven acts have been signed via his label's site.

"A record label only has so much time and energy to commit to physical products and working a release, and we get an awful lot of good music," he says. "Other indie labels are now using that as an A&R tool."

And FatCat has also been building an extensive DIY resource guide on its site, featuring contacts and information on companies that provide distribution, mastering and manufacturing in multiple countries.

"I think the industry at large to the people outside of it is something that people don't quite know what to make of," Knight says. "In our day and age people are still in awe of a record company. We're trying to demystify the process of putting a record out."

For 24/7 indies news and analysis, see billboard.biz/indices.
Not Just The Tax Law

Songwriters Now Have More Than One Reason To Sell Their Catalogs

Despite predictions last fall that an onslaught of songwriters would sell their catalogs when a new tax law came into effect this year, there really haven't been many offerings. But as word leaked that Molly Knight was selling an interest in her copyrights, including Tina Turner's "The Best" and Pat Benatar's "Love Is A Battlefield," I figured the new law must have played a part in her decision to sell to Primary Wave Music Publishing. It did. But as Knight and her business manager reveal, there are more reasons than just the law for songwriters to sell an interest in their copyrights right now.

"For the most part, I have always advocated fervently to hold on to your copyrights," says Tina Fasbender, Knight's longtime business manager. But now she's had a change of heart.

One reason is the new tax law. Before January, a copyrighted song owned by an individual songwriting had no value for tax purposes. When a songwriter sold a copyright interest, the full selling price was taxable income. When publishing companies sold copyrighted songs, publishers were taxed only on the profit and at a lower capital gains tax rate available to companies.

Under the new law, songwriters are treated like publishers when they sell a copyright interest. Songwriters now pay taxes on the sale at the lower capital gains rate rather than the income tax rate.

"This new tax law opened a window," Fasbender says. "Before, none of the big money [offered to songwriters] would be worth it at a 40% or 50% tax hit."

But the tax savings really wasn't the primary motivation for Knight to sell a piece of her copyright interests. Other factors came into play.

"Times have changed for songwriters, with the supply of songs that perform other songs dwindling since the late '80s. For established songwriters, it takes a strategic partner to really work their catalog in a competitive market. More and more, indie publishers are the answer.

Fasbender has noticed that many experienced executives from major companies are now running indie publishers, like Primary Wave, Dimensional Music Publishing, Spirit Music Group and Evergreen Copyrights. This experience in small company makes them particularly attractive to songwriters like Knight.

"I've always been attracted to boutique operations as opposed to big companies where you get lost in the shuffle," Knight says. "I thought it was great that Primary bought some of the Nirvana and Hall & Oates catalog. It's a good group of people and a good association for me."

Primary Wave is even tweaking the traditional publishing model to become a real player in the publishing field.

"Before launching Primary Wave with some partners, CEO Larry Mestel was a label guy. He held executive posts with Virgin Records, Arista Records and Island Entertainment Group. So it's really no surprise that he carried the label model—bankrolling and marketing artists—to the publishing arena.

For the bankroll, Plainfield Asset Management and Credit Suisse are backing the company. For marketing, the publisher built a substantial staff that focuses on promoting and exploiting the compositions. Then Primary Wave simply farmed out the traditional publishing administration to Wixen Music Publishing.

Fasbender says that Knight, who typically co-writes songs, landed a seven-figure sum for a 50% share of her interest in copyrights. Her songs have been recorded by Heart, Meat Loaf, Patti Smith, Rod Stewart, Aerosmith and others. Some publishers have complained in the past that Mestel is overpaying for copyrights and driving up prices for everyone. But then again, a lot of people with a lot of money want to build publishing catalogs right now.

"My office is bombarded by companies asking if my clients are interested in selling," Fasbender says. "Not only publishers, but companies with big money who want to get their finger in the entertainment industry."

Primary Wave is right in there competing with major publishers for some juicy catalogs.

"Even for songwriters who would never sell all of a copyright, they might sell some portion of the publisher's slate or of the entire catalog," Fasbender says. "They really don't know where the industry is going, so they can take on a partner [now] for some long-term security."

Knight is currently writing with Universal-signed band Porcelain, among other projects.

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MOBILE TO THE MAX

New Broadband Technology Foreshadows Content Evolution

If you’ve never heard the term “WiMAX” before, don’t swear it. You’re probably not alone. But in the hyper-wonk, tech-speak jargon of the wireless industry, WiMAX is the latest thing making its way through the byzantine maze of acronyms and buzzwords used to remind the rest of the world (with all apologies to Chevy Chase), “We’re wireless, and you’re not.”

But WiMAX sometime soon is likely to be one of those terms that the music industry, and others in the content world, will need to know all too well as wireless technologies become an increasingly important distribution channel.

Simply put, WiMAX (also known as 4G, or “fourth generation”) is a wireless internet broadband technology similar to Wi-Fi, but with a much greater range. While Wi-Fi access points have a range of about 100 feet, WiMAX base stations can cover an area roughly the same as existing cellular networks, making it relatively easy to blanket an entire metropolitan area with just one provider.

However, unlike Wi-Fi, WiMAX networks require dedicated, licensed wireless spectrum to use—in the expensive 2.5GHz band. Many operators are willing to pay for this spectrum as it is available now, while the international standard bodies are dragging their feet in offering more high-bandwidth wireless spectrum.

Second, WiMAX networks can transfer high-bandwidth content much faster and in bigger packets. That means faster download times for not only single tracks but also full albums and video content.

The wireless operator most bullish on WiMAX’s potential is Sprint. The company says it will spend $1 billion this year alone, and another $2 billion next year, to build a WiMAX network in 19 cities by April 2008, covering more than 100 million people. It plans to test mobile WiMAX networks in Chicago and the Baltimore/Washington, D.C., area by the end of the year.

First, virtually every wireless network infrastructure provider is actively producing equipment for these new services. Samsung, Nortel, Alcatel, Nokia and Motorola are all involved in deploying the technology on a global scale.

With this on the horizon, content producers are already planning to create more sophisticated fare. MobiTV, a producer of mobile video programming, in January began demonstrating high-definition-quality programming on a WiMAX demo network at the Consumer Electronics Show.

And according to MobiTV CEO Phillip Alvelda, WiMAX has the added benefit of supporting multiple delivery functions, not just mobile. So, a service provider can broadcast content over a WiMAX network, which consumers can then access on a mobile phone, home computer or eventually a set-top box at one price through one service.

“WiMAX networks can transfer high-bandwidth content much faster and in bigger packets. That means faster download times for not only single tracks but also full albums and video content.”

So what does all this mean to the music industry? This broadband currency has the potential to solve several problems that have plagued the evolution of mobile entertainment. First, it costs much less to transmit data over a WiMAX connection than a traditional cellular network. Cheaper distribution means cheaper prices, which in turn likely means more people buying mobile music. Taken together, the result would be a greater slice of the revenue pie for wireless operators and record labels to share.

Then we’re negotiating over a much larger number, rather than the tight margins we have today, says Warner Music Group senior VP of digital strategy/business development Michael Nash said at a panel discussion at the recent CTIA Wireless conference.

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“We’re changing the economics of the mobile and broadband market,” Alvelda says. “You’ll see a tremendous reduction in cost [and] better access to your fans.”

But WiMAX is no slam dunk. Overlaying existing wireless networks with new technology is not cheap, and building a whole new network is even more costly. For wireless operators this means having to pay off their existing third-generation (3G) networks. This is a headache many don’t need.

To be fair, WiMAX networks are much cheaper. Compared with the approximately $40 billion that Verizon is expected to pay to build its FiOS IPTV network, WiMAX seems like a steal.

Another challenge will be the process of outfitting potential customers with new devices that can access WiMAX networks. Reeducing the market with new devices takes about 18-24 months. For content providers, the plus is that operators will be relying on more sophisticated content to drive this migration—much like entertainment services have说服ed people to buying new 3G phones.

However, it’s not limited to mobile phones. WiMAX enthusiasts, including several Sprint executives, see video players, digital cameras and even automobiles connecting to the WiMAX network.

For these reasons and others, Ericsson believes WiMAX will account for only about 5-10% of global broadband wireless revenue by 2010, and as such has opted to focus its efforts on traditional 3G services.

But make no mistake: WiMAX is coming, and coming it will. It would not be accurate to call 2007 the year of mobile WiMAX,” says Tammy Parker, an analyst with Informa Telecoms & Media. “But it’s clear that the future of this technology in the U.S. will be built upon the foundation being created this year.”

POLLY WANT A BOOMBOX?

So you’ve got a sleek new music phone, you rock out on the subway and on the sidewalk, but now you want to impress your friends at parties. What do you do?

Parrot has tried to make that dilemma a bit easier with its new Bluetooth portable stereo speaker, the Parrot Bluetooth Boombox. The speaker is compatible with any Bluetooth-enabled music source—including computers and MP3 players—but Parrot is targeting the music-phone crowd with this one, seeing as it unveiled the device last month at the CTIA Wireless conference in Orlando, Fla.

The compact device packs 60 watts of high-fidelity sound, two wideband drivers and a subwoofer. Oh, and if you’re not interested in Bluetooth, you can just plug your favorite device with a boring old wire, too.

The Boombox will start shipping in third-quarter 2007 for $270.

—Antony Bruno
Selling music may be tough these days, but there is no shortage of people who want to make music. The latest figures from the National Assn. of Music Merchandisers, the trade group for the international music products industry, show sales of instruments and gear hit a record value of nearly $8 billion in 2005.

But at Gibson Guitar chairman/CEO Henry Juszkiewicz, instrument sales are about more than just cranking out Les Pauls. Since he and fellow Harvard Business School alums Dhanunjayan (Gibson’s president) and Gary Zebrowski took over the company in 1986, Gibson has expanded aggressively. The company now owns Baldwin, Wurlitzer, Slingerland, Epiphone and several other music brands. It has also invested in research and development, particularly in the digital jukebox and digital guitar. Gibson has beefed up artist relations as well, and in 2005 bought the naming rights to Los Angeles’ former Universal Amphitheatre.

In addition to increasing the reach of the 113-year-old brand, Gibson has been involved in many charitable efforts. Music Rising, a fund Juszkiewicz co-founded with U2’s The Edge and producer Bob Ezrin, has helped more than 2,400 musicians (and more than 20,000 students and parishioners) replace instruments destroyed in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Music Rising received the Humanitarian Award at Billboard’s third annual Touring Conference in New York last summer.

Gibson opened its newest showroom in Miami last month. Juszkiewicz—who supported himself in college by playing a Gibson at weddings—spoke to Billboard shortly after a trip to China.

What took you to China?
It is simply a question of time when China emerges as the world’s largest consumer market. It has a population roughly four to five times the size of the United States, which is the world’s current largest consumer market. It is going from underdeveloped to a developing—and with time, will be a developed—economy. As people [in China] translate into the middle class, the numbers speak for themselves.

How has Gibson adapted to the influx of cheap instruments from Asia?
All Gibson brand guitars are made in the U.S. At the same time, we are expanding our factories overseas and the relationships we’ve had overseas. The ability for a young player to get an instrument that’s really good for not a lot of money has improved. When I was young, the low-end guitars were really not that great. You really had to have a Gibson to get a great guitar. Today, consumers in all product categories, including guitars, can get much better instruments for a very affordable price. This means a young player who is struggling to get their chops together now has a great instrument to do that, and it makes it so much easier to get involved in guitar, both from a standpoint of price and a standpoint of quality.

Looking at the low end, we have several brands aimed at mass-merchandising channels. We have a specific brand at Target, Circuit City; it’s very low-cost. It meets the requirements of the merchant as well as being a superb value for typically a young player.

Gibson sponsors many high-profile Latin music artists and events, including providing instruments for the Latin Grammy Awards. Why is it going to such lengths to connect with this audience?
In the short term, the Latin market is a much bigger deal. The number of albums being sold by Latin artists is mind-boggling. Additionally, the Latin market is driven by a quality concern. [It’s] not as affluent as some other markets might be, but the Latin consumer is very, very driven by getting the best. It means more to them, and consequently, they’ve become a very good customer of Gibson brand product.

What are the showrooms used for?
You can promote all you want, but if you have a bad product at the end of the day, the consumer is going to throw up.

The showrooms are an embassies to the entertainment and media communities. They’re not commercial ventures. We don’t sell products through them, we don’t have sales agents. It’s about relationships and supporting people in the communities. That might be artists or charities that we’re very supportive of, or it might be community events.

Are your branding efforts generating income?
We’ve been financially successful for a while. We’re actually gaining market share. I would say the reason is that we’ve been very aggressive in marketing and branding. So is the fact that we are building really great instruments. You could promote all you want, but if you have a bad product at the end of the day, the consumer is going to throw up.

How are your digital products developing?
When you’re investing in high-risk, high-growth activity, you win some and you lose some. One of the areas we are extremely interested in is the whole area of consumer electronics. A lot of the technology we’ve been developing is specifically aimed at that marketplace. We have a digital jukebox and evidence of that. In June, we bought the [manufacturer] of a commercial jukebox product, Deutsche Wurlitzer. I’m a little frustrated because we had hoped to release the [digital jukebox] in time for Christmas sales. We continue to have development issues in that product line.

Your digital guitar has finally shipped to retail. How are you introducing this new product to consumers?
One of the things we’re doing at the store level is putting up demos. Because it’s such a radically new product, we have to be able to demonstrate it and have the equipment available for people to fully check out. There is an enormous amount of technology that hasn’t been tapped for the player and the creator. The guitar hasn’t really changed much since the ’50s, so it’s kind of like progress has been on hold.

What is the place of traditional instruments when music can be made on a computer?
It all starts with the input device. It will be some time before the creation process is anything but human and anything but inspired by people. It starts with the tools they have to create musically relevant content, whether it be voice or guitar or whatever. So our new guitar, which starts with a digital signal—it’s not just the fact that it’s digital—is a much better guitar as a result of that technology. It gives you a lot more to work with in terms of making music.

“...
BIGGER AND RICHER
HAVING COOKED UP A NEW RECIPE FOR COUNTRY MUSIC, THE MUZIK MAFIA FINDS NEW WAYS TO DO BUSINESS

BY KEN TUCKER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID McCLISTER

The video for Big & Rich's “Comin' to Your City” features extraterrestrials, scantily clad women, a rapping black cowboy and a character named Two Foot Fred—as well as the band—partying on a rocket ship shaped like a Gibson flying V guitar (“If ya wanna little bang in your ying yang, come along”). It's not meant to be a documentary, but it isn't that far from the truth either. From start to finish, a Big & Rich concert is a visual and aural experience hard to forget. Whether it's John Rich bedecked in his cowboy finest and playing a flying V, or Big Kenny in one of his trademark toppers, highstepping around the stage like a deranged drum major, you ain't seen nothing like this. Big & Rich shows have enough pyrotechnics to do a rock band proud. Then there’s the unpredictability factor. In a set that contrasts the raucous “Save a Horse (Ride a Cowboy)” with the contemplative “8th of November,” one might also hear songs as diverse as the B-52's “Rock Lobster” and the gospel standard “I'll Fly Away.” A Big & Rich show is also part tent revival. “Brothers and sisters, we are here for one reason and one reason only alone—to share our love of music. I present to you, country music without prejudice,” Big Kenny's voice booms out as he channels a Southern fundamentalist preacher on the spoken intro for “Rollin' (The Ballad of Big & Rich).” The message must be shared. “The Mafia is really about the expandalism of music without prejudice,” Kenny says. “We started a ball rolling that has grown in Nashville and across this country like no one could have imagined.”
And the ball continues to roll. Forthcoming album "Between Hell and Amazing Grace" hits stores June 5. While the final track listing wasn't available at press time, it's an amazing collection of widely divergent songs. On one hand, there's the bare-boned, Texas shuffle version of AC/DC's "You Shook Me All Night Long." "Every country boy or girl has jammed to AC/DC," Rich says—and on the other, there's Wyclef Jean's reggae rap mixed with steel guitar in "Please Man." The new record has definite spiritual leanings—R&B's John Legend even performs a cappella on a song called "Eternity"—but there's also the hilarious tale of lost love "WWJD (What Would Jesus Drink?)."

"It's the sort of audacious melding of genres with which Big & Rich first hit Nashville and country radio—like a ton of bricks is an understatement. The unprecendented hybrid old-school rap, hard rock and dual country harmonies that the duo delivered on their first two albums was not only unprecedented, but delivered with a cocky swagger that country had rarely seen, give or take from a few veteran outliers.

And that's just the music. Perhaps nowhere else in music history can you find a group that so closely mirrors a carnival sideshow. From the actually 3-foot-2-inch Two Foot Fred, who dances at Big & Rich shows and appears in videos, to country-rapping former shoe salesman Cowboy Troy, to Rochel Rice, a self-described "painter of fine music," who paints on stage during shows, the world has never seen anything like the Muzik Mafia.

And the Muzik Mafia is... what, exactly? A family, a fellowship guided by the mission statement "music without prejudice," a clan of fun-loving musicians who love to party and make music together, an organization that counts good deeds and charitable contributions among its core beliefs? The Maf - (Musi -ically Artistic Friends in Alliance) is all those things and more.

And whatever the Mafia is, it seems to work. The group was founded in 2001 by Kenny, Rich, fellow musician Jon Nicholson and music publisher Cory Gierman, who are known as the Godfathers. After the success of their first album in 2004, Gretchen Wilson (see story, below) was named a Godmother. More than half a decade down the line, the organization continues to grow and flourish. Wilson has sold more than 5.6 million albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan, while Big & Rich have sold roughly 3.9 million. And this year, five Mafia members will release albums—not just Big & Rich, but Wilson, Cowboy Troy, James Otto and the clan's newest and historically most successful member, John Anderson (see story, page 23). And there are more projects in development.

What began as a few people jamming together in 2001 at Nashville's Pub of Luv has exploded beyond Music City's wildest expectations. Once word of the jam sessions spread, for the 76 straight Tuesdays Mafia members played to progressively larger crowds, it forced the group to move to larger venues. Guests ranging from Kid Rock and Missy Elliott to Williams Jr. to Jewel and Three Doors Down frequently dropped by to help out. And not only were the shows a hit with fans, they also attracted the attention of Nashville's A&R community. Interestingly, Warner Bros. Nashville chief creative officer Paul Worley, who signed Big & Rich to Warner Bros., remembers hearing about the shows from his daughter. "She would tell me about this Mafia thing and how great it was and I paid attention, but I didn't act on anything," he says now. Luckily the duo came to him and were quickly signed.

When Big & Rich joined Tim McGraw's tour in 2004, they took the Mafia on the road, something that still happens today occasionally. After the McGraw shows, the duo—along with cohorts Cowboy Troy, Shannon Lawson, Otto and whoever else was available—continued to do shows at local clubs after concert. And the weekly jam sessions still crop up. Earlier this year, for instance, members performed together in Muscle Shoals, Ala.

Meanwhile, the Muzik Mafia's definition has expanded as well. "It's still the musical community that they had, but there is a marketing arm, too," says Marc Oswald, who manages Big & Rich, Wilson and Cowboy Troy and is consigliere in the organization. He cites MuzikMafia.com, MuzikMafia TV, which aired on CMT Loaded, a broadband offering, and Muzik Mafia Radio, which streams on the group's Web site. There's also the Mafia Soldiers street team and an actual Mafia headquarters, where three full-time employees and four interns work on new media, tour sponsorships, public relations and the Web site, among other things. Oh, and there's a full video production facility, too.

BLUE-COLLAR DOWNSIZING
GRETCHEN WILSON TAKES CONTROL AND ROLLS BACK HER GOALS

It's taken a while, but Gretchen Wilson has come to realize that she will never top the first album. "It was a phenomenon," she says. "It was an 'Achy Breaky Heart.' I think the girls, the blue-collar women in America, had just been waiting for ["Redneck Woman"] for so long. It was just perfect timing." The Muzik Mafia's Godmother exploded on the country scene in 2004 when her anthemic debut single, "Redneck Woman," spent five weeks at No. 1 on Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart and her album, "Here for the Party," debuted at No. 1 on the Top Country Albums tally. The set has gone on to sell 4.4 million copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Her next three singles all reached the top five, and Wilson took home awards from the Country Music Assn., the Academy of Country Music (ACM) and the Recording Academy.

But she had her follow-up album, 2005's "All Jacked Up," also started off with a bang, its 1.2 million copies sold were a big drop from the debut.

"I beat out pop artists and rap artists, but it's still a loser in most people's eyes," Wilson says now. "I will always say that the 'All Jacked Up' record sonically, musically, lyrically beats the first record all to hell.

"Fast forward to 2007 and Wilson will release her third album, "One of the Boys," May 15 on Columbia. (Her former label, Epic Nashville, closed after the consolidation of Sony and BMG's Nashville operations last year.) As with her first two releases, Wilson co-produced the record with Mark Wright and Muzik Mafia mate John Rich, but she has taken on a more dominant role. "I got Mark's help on a couple of things and I got John's help on a couple of things, but other than that I've pretty much produced it myself," she says.

"I've always wanted full ownership," Wilson adds. "I've been like that from the beginning.

"Wilson, who co-wrote all but two cuts, says she opened up a bit, too. "Lyrically, I think I reached a little further inside for a few of these songs," she says. "But there is still a lot of ass-kicking country on it."

The label anticipates a heavy media schedule around the album, which hits stores the day of the ACM Awards—Wilson is nominated for three. "We've been able to identify who a Gretchen Wilson consumer is and where they reside, not only geographically, but lifestyle-wise," Columbia Nashville director of marketing and artist development Tanya Welch says. "Gretchen speaks to middle America, so while New York and L.A. and larger markets are important to us, we don't ever over look what's in the middle." While she will hit a wide variety of venues in 2007, her Back to the Bars tour has Wilson playing smaller clubs. "It's cool for me because it's taken me back to the early days where the people are just sandwiched up to the stage and you are crunched on the stage together," she says. "There's no room really for theatrics. It's just about the music and the sweat."
THE NURTURING BOSOM OF THE MUZIK MAFIA ALLOWS EVERY ARTIST THAT'S A MEMBER TO CULTIVATE THEIR CRAFT.

COWBOY TROY

Oswald says the ideologically minded Big Kenny in particular was reluctant when the idea of forming a marketing arm was first suggested. "They wanted to keep the music the only focus, which is really respectable," Oswald says. "We really had to debate it heavily, because I told them it wasn't about making money. You guys can make all the great music in the world, but we have to have some media marketing music ourselves that we can control." The two sides eventually agreed, with the caveat that no member of the Mafia hierarchy would make a dime from the Mafia organization itself. Mafia members earn money via the usual means—touring and album sales, for example. But funded by jam sessions, tour sponsorships—Chevy has been a big supporter—licensing deals, and, as needed, by the Godfathers and Godmother, the marketing arm is self-supporting.

"It has definitely evolved," Oswald says of the Mafia. "Strategically it is the same thing, but tactically it has changed a lot. In the beginning it was a source of brotherhood and sisterhood for a small group of people who felt collectively that they had some strength.

Warner Bros. Nashville’s Worthey, who co-produced, its first two records and is also a consigliere, says he’s a fan of the Mafia for just that reason. "They were all supporting each other as a tribe. Every artist that got ahead would reach back and pull their brothers or sisters forward.

Not only do Rich and Kenny work with the up-and-com- ing members (see story, right), they also fund their projects. Rich reportedly spent six figures on a Jon Nicholson live concert video and he is also spending his own money on Shanna Crooks’ album. Kenny has done the same with Damien Horne and other artists have similarly been supported. "Nicholson, Shanna, Damien, Shannon Lawson are all in an A&R process that in the past only labels could afford to do," Oswald says.

What the Mafia offers a potential partner label is more than just the artist’s talent. "When we make our label deals, we don’t walk in with some demos looking for some dough to try and develop the music," Oswald says. "We are walking in with complete packages, including EPKs and photo shoots.

Mafia members also go on the road with Big & Rich and perform as part of shows at night, write songs during the day and generally learn the business. "It’s boot camp, and by the time they hit, they should be ready to go," Oswald says.

Cowboy Troy says the Mafia is a great sounding board. "If we like something we will tell you we like it, if not, we will tell you, ‘Hey, this needs to be improved here or there,’ I think that the nurturing bosom of the Muzik Mafia allows every artist that’s a member to cultivate their craft, their songwriting, their musicianship.

Cowboy Troy’s own new album, “Black in the Saddle,” which he worked on with Rich, will also be released June 5 on Raybaw/Warner Bros. With very little radio play, his first album, “Loco Motion,” has sold more than 342,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. His unique “hick-hop” blend was a little much for mainstream radio to digest. "There’s only one station in country that played him where people heard it," Rich says. "That was [KYTS] in Dallas. Wouldn’t it be great if 10% of them could play [his music]? Imagine what he’d sell.

But the new album will likely meet resistance as well. "It’s one of those kinds of records that will—I would dare say—push the envelope a little further than people thought we could and probably a little further than some thought we should," Troy says. "A lot of fun," Cowboy Troy says. "Parts of it sound like Motörhead on horseback, parts of it sound like maybe a revisiting of some Beatles stuff, and some is more orchestral kind of stuff.

While his music wasn’t made for radio, Cowboy Troy wouldn’t mind some airplay. "I think it would give them an opportunity to realize that their listening public is a lot more advanced than they think."

Despite the Mafia’s sales success, radio programmers as a group have been a tough nut to crack for the clan. Wilson has had the most success at radio, but that airplay largely came from her first album, “Here for the Party.” Cowboy Troy reached only the lower tiers of the airplay chart with “I Play Chicken With the Train,” which featured Big & Rich, in 2005.

As for Big & Rich themselves, for all the success the pair have had as songwriters—Rich wrote Jason Aldean’s breakthrough “Hicktown” and Faith Hill’s “Cowboy Troy says. While his music has definitely evolved, the Mafia continues to cultivate them.

RAINBOW COALITION

MUZIK MAFIA NURTURING ARTISTS WHILE RUNNING RAYBAY

Raybay (Red and Yellow, Black and White) Records is the Warner Bros.-affiliated label run by Godfathers John Rich, Big Kenny, Jon Nicholson and Cory Gieman. Cowboy Troy’s debut, “Loco Motion,” was the first Raybay release. John Anderson and James Otto are also Raybay artists. (Big & Rich’s and Nicholson’s records are released on Warner Bros.)

Warner Bros. Nashville executive VP Bill Bennett calls Raybay “an A&R source. They go out, they find projects, they cultivate it, they do demos, they write songs.” While Raybay does rely on Warner’s A&R staff to an extent, “It’s not for signing. It’s really more for feedback,” Bennett says. Bennett says the arrangement is “a very cooperative effort. We have marketing meetings [and] partners meetings with them to go over the most minute details of a project.

"We pretty much agree most of the time,” Bennett adds. "We have our differences—they are generally stylistic rather than substantial issues—but we never fail to come to an agreement.

"Much to Warner Bros.’ chagrin,” the Godfathers wouldn’t allow Raybay to be called Muzik Mafia Records. “They really wanted us to call it [that] because that’s what they were buying into," Gieman says. "But it didn’t happen. We didn’t want corporate hands to be attached to the main Muzik Mafia. We don’t want to lose that name and license.

"Since they’re not all recording artists, not all Mafia mem- bers will necessarily find a home on Raybay. And for some, another label just might be the right fit, as in the case of Gretchen Wilson, who is signed to Columbia Nashville. Either way, up-and-coming members benefit from those who have gone before them.

Here’s a look at the rest of the Mafia crew:

SHANNA CROOKS

Influenced by artists ranging from Areosmith to Aretha Franklin, this South Florida native who answers to the nicknames "the Soulful Belter" and "the Diva With the Boots and the Brain," she joined the Mafia in 2005.

DAMIEH HORN

Making R&B, pop, soul and dance artist, singer-song- writer-Home moved from North Carolina to Nashville before being discovered by Mafia members while playing on a street corner.

RACHEL KICE

Kice brings a different art to the Mafia stage by painting on spinning canvases, adding strokes inspired by the music of Rodgers & Hammerstein. A Nashville native, her paintings are found in the private collections of Bob Dole, Tim McGraw, King Al- bert of Monaco and Willie Nelson.

SHANNON LAWSON

The Kentucky native describes his music as country/rock/ soul on his My- Space page. Before joining Muzik Mafia in 2004, he released "Chase the Sun" on MCA Nashville, which produced one top 30 single and sold 70,000 copies, and "Big Boy Here" on Equity Music Group, which begat the chart-climbing single "Smokin' Grass." Also responsible for the self-released "Acoustic Living Room Sessions," he is currently looking for a deal and touring with Big & Rich.

JCH NICHOLSON

Nicholson is one of the Mafia’s founders. The Madison, Wis.-born artist released “A Little Stump ‘n Sump ’n’” in 2005 on Warner Bros. Nashville, which has sold only 4,000 units. His latest project—featuring the same players who recorded his first album with him—finds him billed as JCh & the NuTation. "We’re kind of like a year 2000 update on Sly & the Family Stone," he says of the band, "mixed with Leon Russell and some plain singing songwriter stuff!"

JAMES OTTO

Otto, who is signed to Raybay/Warner Bros., will have his album out this summer. “Sunset & Vine” is produced by his brother-in-law, Jay DeMarcus of Rascal Flatts, and John Rich. His 2004 Mercury Nashville release, “Days of Our Lives,” has sold 10,000 units according to Nielsen SoundScan. Its title cut peaked at No. 33 on Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart.

TWO FOOT FRED

Fred Gill, the stage host at Big & Rich’s shows, has appeared as "Two Foot Fred," the band’s signature character, in music videos and as a backstage reporter on USA Network’s “Nashville Star.” The Indiana native is also known as “60 Cent” (two feet is 60 centimeters) and hosts his own podcast, “Smalltalk Wit Two Foot Fred.”

—Ken Tucker, with additional reporting by Katy Harley

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"Let 'er fly, boys. Anywhere," John Anderson says, his favored Remington .20 gauge shotgun at the ready on a windy, unseasonably warm February day at Timberline, the singer/songwriter's backwoods retreat. ¶ Seconds earlier, Anderson's longtime manager/agent Bobby Roberts had meticulously placed two clay targets on the skeet shooter. As he triggered the release, one skeet soared into the distance while the other careened toward Anderson, thudding into his shoulder. ¶ The veteran singer shrugged off the impact, stayed focused and expertly disintegrated the solo target. ¶ The scene serves as an apt metaphor for Anderson's 30-year career on the fringe of Music Row, and as a performer who demonstrates a remarkable ability to deflect misses and absolutely nail opportunities. The Apopka, Fla., native first came to Nashville in the late '70s with little more than a dream and a voice that Mark Knopfler described as sounding "like he's singing through a volume pedal."

¶ "Actually, when I first came to Nashville, I just wanted to sing and play for a living," Anderson says over the country ham special at Smithville's Rose Garden diner. "I always said if I could just pay rent, anything above that would be a bonus.

Within two weeks of arriving in Nashville, Anderson was singing and playing at the city's Lower Broadway honky-tonks, developing one of country's most distinct vocal deliveries. He signed with Warner Bros. in 1979, where a lengthy string of hits (20 Billboard top 10 singles) followed, beginning with "1959" in 1981; dating back to the pre-Nielson SoundScan era, Anderson's handlers estimate he's sold more than 10 million records. Anderson became one of country's premier hitmakers of the '80s with such staples as "Your Lyin' Blue Eyes," the gold-certified "Wild and Blue" (his first chart-topper in 1982) and the 1983 mega-hit "Swingin'," recently named No. 30 on the list of top jukebox hits of all time by the American Society of Music Engineers. After a dry spell, Anderson stormed back to the airwaves in the early '90s with hits like "Straight Tequila Night," "I Wish I Could Have Been There" and the Florida Everglades anthem "Seminole Wind." the album of the same name has sold double-platinum.

Along the way, Anderson has made the major-label rounds, with stops on Warner, MCA, Capitol, BNA, Mercury, Sony and now Warner Bros., again for a new release that many feel will give the artist an improbable third run at mainstream success.

"Easy Money" is a brand new album, counting repackages, and his first since "Nobody's Got It All" on Sony in 2000, a brilliantly constructed album that Roberts describes as "barely released" by the label. Anderson admits his frustration at such an artistic effort not reaching its commercial potential.

"Yeah, it's going to be frustrating when you cut a record like that, put your heart and soul into it, then it seems to go over like a lead balloon. You feel like it's good, but I don't guess a person will ever know because it never got the chance to prove itself, really," he says. "Not enough people heard it to say whether it was good or bad."

Still, Anderson absorbed the frustration much as he did that clay target back in Smithville. "You can get as frustrated as you want, and you can rant and rave and stomp around the living room in front of your wife and kids and make them miserable."

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Or you can cuss everybody down on Music Row all you want to, it still don’t do any good,” he says.

Now, it seems, the Row is appreciating Anderson again, much of it inspired by Rich and his Big & Rich partner Big Kenny, who together last November inducted Anderson into their Muzik Mafia, a wild-eyed collective of artists that also includes Gretchen Wilson and “hick-hop” rapper Cowboy Troy (see story, page 19).

Asked what makes Anderson a Muzik Mafia type guy, Rich says, “To be a member of the Muzik Mafia, you have to share in the belief of music without prejudice.” Rich says, “[Anderson] is a free thinker when it comes to his music, always has been. He is an original in every way, and that’s what it takes to be a part of the Mafia. You cannot be a follower, you must have your own sound. We refer to him as ‘Uncle John.’”

Anderson says he’s “proud” to be involved in the Muzik Mafia.

“So far, I’m really impressed,” he says. “I know this—it’s a lot of young fresh talent right now in the Muzik Mafia, a whole lot. And that’s always refreshing to me to see these young people working so hard, with the ability and the energy to keep up that good work. It’s an inspiration to me.”

That inspiration becomes evident on “Easy Money,” where Rich taps into Anderson’s roadhouse rocker side on the title cut, “Funky Country,” “Brown Liquor” and “If Her Lovin’ Don’t Kill Me.” Such sounds have rarely been heard on Anderson albums, but Anderson says he started his musical journey as a Florida rocker, distorted guitars and all. When I first heard country music I thought, ‘Aw, that’d be easy to play,” he says. “Man, I learned that country stuff wasn’t nearly as easy as I thought it was. I learned it quick, about the time I was 15 or 16, which was a good time to learn it because, it being the challenge that it was, I got completely turned around. I went straight from playing Steppenwolf and Jimi Hendrix to ‘Lonesome Lowdown Blues.’ I moved to Nashville when Lynyrd Skynyrd broke, and I was pretty much determined to be a hillbilly by that time.”

As stone country as his vocal is, Anderson has never seen many barriers in music, having confidently covered acts ranging from Bruce Springsteen to the Georgia Satellites. “I always said I can sing ‘Thriller’ just as good as Michael Jackson can sing ‘Lynn’s Blue Eyes,’” he says with a grin.

His audience has been as varied as “Even back in the old days, in the early 1980s, we’d play places on the West Coast, we’d have a great mix,” Anderson says. “Everything from punk rockers to bluegrass hippies.”

Anderson says his livelier tunes have always rocked pretty hard, even after he defined himself as a “country” artist. "The band, when we played ‘Black Sheep’ and ‘Chicken Truck,’ we were rocking that hard anyway, we just didn’t get away with it a lot in the studio,” he says.

For “Easy Money” there were no such restrictions with Rich at the board, and though Anderson has co-produced most of his albums, he felt comfortable handling the wheel over to Rich.

“At first I thought it would probably be a co-produced project. But when I got in the studio with him, well within the first hour of just hearing what was happening in the headphones and seeing him work, as well as noting the energy and all the positive things that were going on, I said to myself, ‘John, you don’t have to prove to anybody you can produce a John Anderson record. This young man is doing such a good job, it would be a good time to turn it over to him and give him full production credit.”

Anderson says after that decision, “I hardly said or did anything that had much to do with the production and the arrangements of the album. Whether it was a guitar part or a fiddle part or a keyboard part, John seemed to be locked right in to these great players, and they were locked right in to him, so there wasn’t a lot for me to be concerned about other than singing.”

Rich considers working with Anderson a career milestone. “When I started listening to country radio as a kid in Amarillo, Texas, Jones and Haggard were pretty much off the radio, but John Anderson was hotter than a match,” he says. “I catch myself sometimes emulating his voice when I’m writing a new song. His voice has been in my head since I started listening to music. He is the George Jones of my generation. Period.”

Rich’s influence is undeniable on the record, but it’s still pure Anderson, and the country ballads and signature vocal would have fit nicely in any J.A. era. “One good thing about John Rich, he wasn’t trying to change that part of it,” Anderson says. “In fact, he was going for some of the reminiscent John Anderson sounds, but also to have some of the tracks updated, hopefully enough to be played on current radio day.”

Ah, radio … that medium that manager Roberts calls “our biggest hurdle.” Country radio’s barriers are another source of frustration as Anderson struggles to gain traction amid tight playlists and stingy gatekeepers who seem reluctant to add any one over 40 unless their name is Reba or Strait. Anderson last cracked the top 10 in 1995 with “Bend It Until It Breaks.”

The Warner promotional staff targeted secondary radio markers first, servicing them with a vinyl record and CDs not only of “Easy Money” but Anderson’s Warner hits. “Our approach was primarily to work the secondary radio stations and get awareness and a story built up with John Anderson,” says Virginia Davis, director of operations for Rayburn. “There are lower barriers to entry there, and we’ve had great success, with 40 adds right out of the box.”

Mike Thomas, PD at KPAW Warrenton, Mo., says the single “A Woman Knows” is “traditional enough to be old-school but hip enough to be played anywhere, as evidenced by the requests from our listeners, young and old. This voice and this song is what country music is all about.”

On the retail front, “We’re reaching out to specialty retailers for promotional support,” Davis says. “Bass Pro Shops is giving a sneak-peek sampler to their preferred customer base and will advertise the album in its 100,000 circulars.”

Mainstream music retailers will be offered two products, an “express pack” of just the music and a deluxe edition that includes a highly entertaining “making of” video.

“We’re also doing a promotional campaign with GAC where winners get a chance to win ‘Easy money,’ $1 million, from John Anderson,” Davis says, clarifying that the label will pick up the tab if someone wins. “The culmination of that will be a trip to Las Vegas for the Academy of Country Music Awards and a chance to roll the dice for easy money. What this will ultimately do is brand John Anderson and the new record with a fun concept a lot of people can identify with.”

Whether “Easy Money” blows up or not, though, Anderson will continue to work the touring circuit, as he has from the beginning. This unrepentant road dog has missed only two shows (due to a heart attack and a kidney stone) of thousands booked through the years.

“A big part of the last six years that’s about all we had to go on, touring and writing new songs,” Anderson says. “What keeps us going and always will keep us going is getting out on the road. That ‘o’ bus window and me are real good friends after 30 years.”

Asked what his best hopes would be for “Easy Money,” Anderson says, “My best hopes for it would be to sell at least 20 million. If it didn’t do anything else other than that, that’d be fine.”

Perhaps more important, he wants his fans to know he has new music, and that’s he’s still very much around. “And we haven’t gone anywhere, by the way, to come back from. Even through all these comebacks I never did go anywhere. A new record always helps lay all that to rest.”

“Easy Money” manages to capture the John Anderson essence and inject it with a fresh sense of urgency that radio should find hard to ignore. But if the record doesn’t blow up, Anderson still has his bus—and Smithville. If it makes him a Music Row outsider to live out in the hinterlands, so be it.

“Tell the honest, the hardest and biggest decision ever made in this whole career was the first decision about leaving central Florida and moving to Tennessee. I didn’t know how much I’d like Tennessee, but I already knew how much I liked it down in Florida,” Anderson says.

Being 70 miles outside of Nashville and Music Row does have its advantages, he says, “It keeps me from being in town too much. I always said, ‘Can’t stay in town having all that fun, you know what happens when you too much fun in Nashville.” The last time I was there I was dancing calypso, so what does that tell you?”

Hits, misses or otherwise, Anderson is a man with few career regrets. “I’m proud just to look back at the work we’ve done, the records we’ve made, the accomplishments, the assets we have,” he says. “Being able to bring my buddies up here to the farm and all hang out in the woods, lock the gate behind us, that’s a pretty big privilege.”

And Anderson has Muzik Mafia intentions of parking the bus. “Hell, I’m going to keep making music, period, until I get the ultimate signal to not anymore from the Lord, who gave me the desire and the talent to do it in the first place. But the music, I don’t even have a faraway thought about even slowing down,” he says. “Like Big John told me, ‘How do you retire from being Johnny Cash?’ There ain’t but one way, and you don’t want that.”
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CALEDONIA DREAMIN'

Since Franz Ferdinand burst onto the international scene three years ago, Scotland has become the United Kingdom’s leading hotbed of new talent. In the past 12 months alone, Paolo Nutini, the Fratellis and the View have all stormed the U.K. charts, while Snow Patrol—which relocated to Glasgow from its native Northern Ireland—scored 2006’s best-selling U.K. album with “Eyes Open” (Fiction), racking up more than 1.5 million sales, according to the BPI.

“More Scottish artists are achieving success than have done in the past 20 years,” says Geoff Ellis, CEO of Scotland’s largest live promoter, Glasgow-based DF Concerts.

“Franz Ferdinand started it all,” says Jon Lawlor, singer with Glasgow’s British breakthrough act and BRIT Award winners the Fratellis. “It was great to have a band from Glasgow that wasn’t Simple Minds or Texas—one that you could listen to and enjoy.”

Many industry experts believe that Scotland’s distance from the music and media industries in London enables artists to develop organically. Significantly, most of the acts to enjoy breakthrough success in the past five years—including Franz Ferdinand, KT Tunstall and Mylo—have chosen to remain based in Scotland.

Rising electronica star Calvin Harris learned the hard way about relocating to London. “I thought it would be easier to get signed,” he says about a spell spent in the U.K. capital before a return to his native Dumfries saw him land deals with EMI Publishing and Sony BMG. “It was just easier to throw my money away.”

“The last band I recall recommending that acts move to London was Travis,” influential BBC Radio 1 and BBC Radio Scotland DJ Vic Galloway says. “I’m glad more people are staying in Scotland, they are bringing the industry to them.”

Local execs are quick to point out that the most successful new Scottish acts are all signed to London labels. But there is optimism that a local label could soon break an act across the United Kingdom and have international success via licensing.

“The talent is here; the business brains are here, and I’m sure we will see it,” Glasgow-based music lawyer Murray Buchanan says.

Edinburgh-based label the Music Kitchen, co-owned by Gordon Campbell and former Bay City Rollers guitarist Stuart “Woody” Wood, is gearing up to achieve such home-grown success.

From Pop To Alternative, Scotland’s Music Is Taking On The World BY OLAF FURNISS

TOP SELLING SCOTTISH ACTS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, 2006

1 Snow Patrol, “Eyes Open” (Fiction; 1.5 million units)
2 The Fratellis, “Costello Music” (Fallout; 550,000)
3 Paolo Nutini, “These Streets” (Atlantic; 550,000)
4 KT Tunstall, “Eye to the Telescope” (Relentless; 460,000)
5 Sandi Thom, “Smile ... It Confuses People” (RCA, 310,000)

MEDIA FACTS

KEY RADIO STATIONS

BBC RADIO SCOTLAND: AC/news, state broadcaster; 11 million average weekly listeners
REAL RADIO (SCOTLAND): AC/modern rock, commercial broadcaster; 762,000 average weekly listeners
CLYDE FM: AC/news, commercial broadcaster; 595,000 average weekly listeners
XFM SCOTLAND: modern rock/alternative, commercial broadcaster; 294,000 average weekly listeners
FORTHONE: AC/news, commercial broadcaster; 259,000 average weekly listeners

KEY NEWSPAPERS

SUNDAY MAIL circulation 509,000
THE SUNDAY POST circulation 431,000
DAILY RECORD circulation 408,000
PRESS & JOURNAL circulation 289,000*
GLASGOW EVENING TIMES circulation 78,000*

MOBILE PHONE PENETRATION

BASED ON SIM CARDS: 77% of population
INTERNET PENETRATION (BASED ON HOUSEHOLDS): 81% of population

RETAIL FACTS

KEY RETAILERS CHAINS: HMV, FOPP, Virgin Megastores, Woolworths, Avalanche, Borders
SUPERMARKETS: ASDA, Tesco, Sainsbury’s, Morrisons

SALES OF CD'S - 157 MILLION in 2006
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They aim to use Scotland as a launch pad for the MacDonald Brothers, former contestants on TV talent show "The X Factor." The band—which remained on the show for many weeks thanks to a loyal Scottish block vote, despite negative comments from judge Simon Cowell—says it turned down deals with London majors to sign with the indie.

With a focus on TV advertising in Scotland and local retail partnerships with HMV and ASDA, Campbell hopes the brothers' self-titled debut album will enter the Scottish charts at No. 1 after its April 2 release. He then plans to licent the act abroad.

"The marketing value of a Scottish No. 1 is hugely important for us," he says.

While Scottish acts invariably chart higher in the unpublished Scottish charts than in the U.K.-wide survey, CD album sales in Scotland are in line with the rest of the United Kingdom. In 2006, Scots accounted for 9% of total U.K. album sales, according to the BPI, approximately reflecting the country's proportion of the British population.

Such retailers as Fopp founder Gordon Montgomery—who chain started life as a Glasgow record stall—and HMV specialist}

**BIG MACS**

**BIFFY CLYRO**

Hometown: Glasgow

Most recent/recent release: "Puzzle," out May 21 in Europe

Label: 14th Floor Records (worldwide)

Management: Dee Bah, 1554 Management

Biffy Clyro has carved out a strong reputation as a live act, having toured extensively around three previous albums on Beggars Banquet. Now signed to Warner imprint 14th Floor Records, the hard-rocking band stands on the verge of breakthrough success. After headlining a tour put together by the United Kingdom's top selling weekly music magazine, Kerrang, the band scored a No. 1 single on the Official U.K. Charts Co.'s Scottish tally with "Saturday Superhouse." That single peaked at No. 13 in the United Kingdom-wide survey, the act's biggest hit to date. The band tours Europe through April and May, opening for Bloc Party in advance of the pan-European releases of another single, "Folding Stars" (May 14), and the album "Puzzle" (May 21). The band also plays the Vans Warped tour from July 28 to Aug. 14, by when a U.S. release date should be finalized.

**THE VIEW**

Hometown: Dundee

Most recent/recent release: "Hats Off to the Buskers," out now

Label: 1965 Records (United Kingdom), Red Ink (Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg), Sony BMG (rest of world)

Management: Grant Dickson, 2 Thumbs Management

The View got its first break after lobbying Babyshambles frontman Pete Doherty for a support slot. After being suitably impressed by the band's indie-rock sound, he recommended the four-piece to 1965 label boss Iain McDonald. In February, a year after signing to the label, the four teenagers hit No. 1 on the Official U.K. Chart with albums survey with their debut "Hats Off to the Buskers." It is now certified gold (100,000 units) in the United Kingdom and has sold another 50,000 units in Japan, according to Sony BMG. Tickets for the week's April British tour sold out in less than an hour, but the band was forced to cancel scheduled U.S. dates in April and May due to ongoing visa issues caused by singer Kyle Falconer's recent conviction for cocaine possession. The band had already canceled February U.S. shows over the same issue.

**CALVIN HARRIS**

Hometown: Dumfries

Most recent/recent release: "1 Created Disco," out June in the United Kingdom

Label: Columbia Records (worldwide)

Management: Mark Gillespie, 365 Management

Hailing from the small town of Dumfries, Harris signed a deal with EMI Publishing in May 2006, and during a clandestine meeting at London's Victoria Station, was lured away from the clutches of another label by Columbia A&R VP and dance music legend Mike Pickering. In March, Harris' quirky electro-pop track "Acceptable in the 80's" hit No. 10 in the U.K. charts, after being championed by BBC Radio 1's influential Jo Whiley. In the past six months, Harris has also written for Kylie Minogue and done remixes for Groove Armada, CSS and All Saints. Harris' headline dates begin in late May, ahead of the release of a much-anticipated debut album. Other territories are expected to schedule release dates shortly.

**AEREOGRAMME**

Hometown: Glasgow

Most recent/recent release: "My Heart Has a Wish That You Would Not Go," out now

Label: Sonic Unyon (United States, Canada), Underworld (rest of world)

Management: Bruce Craige, World of Bruce

"My Heart Has a Wish That You Would Not Go" sees this Glasgow three-piece adopt a more mellow, Scottish folk-tinted sound, while still retaining some of the heavy guitar work of two previous albums. An animated video accompanying the single "Barriers" has received play on the British MTV2, while the band received additional publicity thanks to its participation in Chemical Underground's "Ballads of the Book" compilation of literary and musical collaborations, which has been widely covered in the Scottish media. The band headlines club dates in North America throughout April.

**CAMER OBSCURA**

Hometown: Glasgow

Most recent/recent release: "Let's Get Out of This Country," out now

Label: Elefant (Europe), Merge (United States, Canada), Noiseland (Mexico)

Management: Francis MacDonald, Shoeshine Management

Camera Obscura has spent the past eight months extending its international fan base with tours of Europe, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Australia and two trips to the United States, resulting in worldwide sales of 35,000 units for its third album, according to manager Francis MacDonald. The live dates have coincided with Sony BMG Publishing—with whom the band's frontwoman Traceyanne Campbell signed in 2005—securing a diverse range of synch deals. Tracks from "Let's Get Out of This Country" have appeared on "Grey's Anatomy" and MTV's "Laguna Beach." The band tours throughout Europe in April and May.
FESTIVALS GO FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

T In The Park Anchors A Blossoming Array Of Events
BY JULIANA KORANTENG

Despite the notoriously wet Scottish weather, the sun is shining on the country's outdoor festival business.

Demand is so high that Glasgow-based DF Concerts, promoter of the region's flagship T in the Park (July 6-8), is expanding the 2007 event to three days. Acts including Arctic Monkeys, Foo Fighters and the Killers will entertain 100,000 ticket buyers in Balado near Kinross, with all tickets—top-priced at £140 ($275)—selling out within 40 minutes of going on sale.

Now DF Concerts is introducing the 20,000-capacity Connect Festival (Aug. 31-Sept. 2) at Inveraray Castle, north of Glasgow, with headliners including the Beastie Boys, Primal Scream and Björk. The festival is targeting a 25- to 35-year-old crowd. T in the Park caters largely to an 18- to 25 demographic.

"The success of T in the Park has allowed other festivals to thrive," DF Concerts promoter Geoff Ellis says. "When we sell out, it means many people will be looking for other festivals to go to."

This year, people have a wider choice than ever. Events range from the 33,000-capacity electronics festival Rock Ness (June 9-10 on the shores of Loch Ness, co-promoted by Liverpool-based Loudsound and Ulapool-based Slingshot) to the new, folk-based Outsider Festival (June 22-24 in Carrbridge National Park, promoted by Edinburgh-based Regular Music), while goNorth (June 2-10 in Inverness) showcases new artists to the music industry, media and public.

Scottish crowds have always been renowned for their enthusiasm. They are willing to discover new acts and new music."

—ROBERT HICKS, SLINGSHOT

"Scottish crowds have always been renowned for their sheer enthusiasm," Slingshot's Robert Hicks says. "They are willing to listen to not only their favorite bands, but also discover new acts and new music."

Meanwhile, Ellis cites a recent survey by the Performing Rights Society that showed Scotland accounted for 11.5% of the United Kingdom's live music ticket sales in 2005, despite containing only 10% of the U.K. population.

"Scotland punches above its weight in this business," he says."

STRONG A&R THE KEY TO SCOTTISH SUCCESS

London Talent Scouts Scope Country For Next Big Thing

Scotland has a history of hit acts—from the Bay City Rollers in the '70s to Annie Lennox in the '80s. But in recent years, the trickle of breakout successes has turned into a torrent.

Consequently, the London-based majors, and many large independents, have hired A&R scouts to cover Scotland, resulting in deals for the likes of Snow Patrol, KT Tunstall and Sandi Thom.

Dundee-based Rik Smercini was Polydor and Fiction Records' Scottish scout from 2000 to 2006, playing a pivotal role in bringing Snow Patrol to the label. Now a freelance A&R consultant, he says there has been an explosion in Scottish talents in the last five years. "The [London] labels have seen it's worth having somebody in Scotland," he says, "to make sure they know what is happening at a grass-roots level."

While the English majors snap up many comedians, there are plenty of other outlets for new talent. In fact, the words that best sum up the spirit of the Scottish music scene are "do it yourself."

A&R-owned labels are the rule rather than the exception. They include Glasgow-based Chemikal Underground (the Delagados), Shoesline (Teenage Fanclub's Francis Macdonald) and Rock Action (Mogwai), plus Anstruther-based Fence Records (King Creosote, Pictish Trail).

"The best talent scouts are usually other artists," says Mike Smith, managing director of Columbia U.K. and former EMI Publishing U.K. VP of A&R, who has worked with such Scottish acts as Idlewild and Primal Scream. "There is a definite 'can do' spirit among Scottish artists."

Domino founder Laurence Bell, whose roster includes Scotts Franz Ferdinand and James Yorkston, relies on an informal network of musicians and friends to keep him abreast of new acts. "Scottish people have such an amazing energy about music," he says, "and they love to talk about it."

The independent attitude remains strong, even among acts that hit big.

"We didn't get into the band to make money—most bands lose money," Franz Ferdinand frontman Alex Kapranos says. "And there's one über-indie outfit worth keeping an eye on. Glasgow Stew College's Electric Honey label setup has students work through all aspects of putting out a single by a new artist. Featured acts have included Snow Patrol, Biffy Clyro and Belle & Sebastian—a strike rate any major-label A&R man would be proud of."

—Olaf Furniss
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Linkin Park's new mid-tempo rocker "What I've Done" may sound familiar when you hear it blaring from radios. The track, which hit multiple rock formats April 2, boasts the impassioned singing and thick wall of guitars that marked the group's past hits. But an awful lot has changed since the last time Linkin Park graced the aircaves.

Indeed, it has been four years since "Minutes to Midnight" dominated Billboard's Modern Rock chart. The 5 million-selling monster's track list now reads like an 'idiot's Guide to Programming a Rock Radio Station, with such No. 1s as "Somewhere I Belong," "Faint," "Numb," "Lying From You" and "Breaking the Habit." Meanwhile, the band's debut, "Hybrid Theory," has sold more than 9 million copies in the United States since its 2000 release, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Now, Linkin Park is releasing "Minutes to Midnight" (May 15, Warner Bros.) into a world that has decidedly turned away from the dominant rap-metal sound of the early part of the decade.

And between the lengthy layoff, an epic recording schedule ("We've essentially been in a bomb shelter for 14 months," MC Mike Shinoda says), a very public contract dispute, the changing marketplace and the involvement of a guy named Rick Rubin, a great many eyes will be watching to see how Linkin Park steps up to the challenge.

NÜ-METAL NO MORE
It should be noted that no one has turned away from rap-metal more than Linkin Park singer Chester Bennington.

"There's still a hip-hop element to us, and there'll always be," he says. "But we've really moved away from anything that sounds like nu-metal. I know that we kind of helped create it. I guess the sound of that genre, but I hate that genre. I'm not going to speak for everyone, but I can personally tell you that I am not a big fan of almost everybody in that category. There are a few bands that I don't really believe belong in there, and we're one of those bands."

"The last many people heard from the band was when it put a self-imposed stop-work order on recording during a very public 2005 dust-up with Warner Bros. With four albums left on its deal, Linkin Park took the unusual step of publicly demanding a release from its contract during renegotiation talks and on the eve of the company's initial public offering, saying, among other things, that it was concerned that Warner Music Group wouldn't be able to keep up its "fiduciary responsibility" in promoting its new material.

At the time, Warner Bros. dubbed the move a publicity stunt intended to beef up the band's position in contract negotiations, a tactic previously employed by such acts as the Dixie Chicks, Incubus and Beck.

But the separation was a short one. Less than eight months later, Linkin Park and Warner Bros. reached an agreement that furnished an estimated $15 million advance for "Minutes to Midnight" and gave the label an option for up to five more Linkin Park records. Sources say the band's royalty rate was also upped to an estimated 20%, a high number as such things go.

Not surprisingly, the topic isn't exactly a favorite for band or label. Warner Bros. senior VP of marketing Peter Stanulis had no comment, and Bennington would only say, "In some ways it worked out, in other ways it didn't."

Drummer Rob Bourdon adds, "As soon as we settled everything we went into the creative part and forgot about it. We never had any problems with the people we worked with at Warner on a day-to-day basis; they were all great. We wanted to make sure they were going to continue to be there for the promotion of this record."

Pins, Shinoda says the band feels that "all pistons are firing. (Warner is) working their butts off out there, and I know we all really appreciate that. Because obviously we're working our butts off as well."

Linkin Park spent 14 months working on its new album, following the resolution of a dispute with Warner Bros.
YANKEE DOODLE DANDY

Reggae star Daddy Yankee has Akon and the Black Eyed Peas Fergie and Will.I.am in his corner on "The Cartel: The Big Boss," due June 5 via El Cartel/Interscope. The first single is the Scott Storch-produced "Impacto," an English remix that will feature Fergie. Other guests on "The Cartel" include Jim Jones and the Pussycat Dolls' Nicole Scherzinger.

—Jonathan Cohen

LIPS ON BROADWAY

The Flaming Lips are known for outlandish stage shows, which can include fake blood, mock UFOs, giant bubbles and people jumping around in animal costumes. Now, the group is hoping to bring that sensibility to Broadway with a musical based on its 2002 album "Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots." The project will be directed by Des McAnuff ("Jersey Boys"), with a script penned by Aaron Sorkin ("The West Wing").

—Jonathan Cohen

ROAD TEST IN DUBLIN

R.E.M. will unveil material intended for its 14th studio album during a five-night run of shows this summer in Dublin. The shows, set for June 30, July 1 and July 3-5 at the Olympia Theatre, will mark the first time in a decade that the band has played new songs live before they appear on an album.

—Jonathan Cohen

THE HUMPT-TY DANCE

Fans of Alanis Morissette see a different side of the idiosyncratic singer/songwriter on her video cover of the Black Eyed Peas' "My Humps," which is turning into a YouTube sensation in recent days. The clip features her pensive take on Fergie's lowbow lyrics, as Morissette alternates between gving a group of gentleman callers and crying.

—Katie Hasty

MUSIC

from >>p3

Actually, the band has been for a while. "Minutes" was assembled during the past year in Rubin's Laurel Canyon, Calif., mansion; you may remember it as an extra track from such albums as the Red Hot Chili Peppers' "Blood Sugar Sex Magik.

"Rick said, right away, whatever we thought Linkin Park fans wanted to hear, whatever we thought we were labeled, whatever we thought we had to write, just to throw it all away. None of it mattered," Bennington recalls.

 Rubin also dialed down the band's tendency toward what Shinoda called "perfectionism," eschewing overdubs and polishing in favor of a rawer, more live sound. Bourdon says that after spending weeks tweaking the drum production on one track, he was stunned when Rubin told him to scrap it all and use the demo version instead. A handful of tracks played for Billboard are proof of the band's stylistic ambitions. "Leave Out All The Rest" has an arena-ready chorus accented by drum machine beats, while "Shadow of the Day" shoots for a "With or Without You"-level ballad sure to inspire plenty of lighter-when. Elsewhere, the six-minute-plus "The Little Things You Give Away" references a city "washed away as a nation simply starves." Multi-tracked a cappella voices fill the mix. Bennington gets prominent screen time on "What the F**k Is Wrong With Me," which flexes the band's more extreme sonic inklings.

Early indicators are that the band's legion of followers still has loyalty left in them. "We were thinking about that last summer—how we were going to reconnect," Bennington says. "And we went and did this show in Japan and sold like 50,000 tickets in one night. It felt like we still had that connection. As long as we continue making quality records, we'll always have that connection."

To stoke anticipation, ringtones of "What I've Done" were made available two weeks before the song went to radio, and Storch confirmed "some stations were taking the ringtones and airing them on the radio. I think that speaks to the question about their being away for so long."

"What I've Done" was spun more than 650 times in its first day at radio, according to Nielsen BDS. iTunes has also just begun selling eight-minute video episodes of "LPTV," comprising new and archival behind-the-scenes band footage.

"Obviously, the market being the way it is, you can't have the kind of expectations you had four years ago. You can't expect expectations to be going up when everything else is going down," Shinoda says. "It doesn't mean we put any less love into it. We feel like this record is really good, and we want people to hear it. What good is an important message if nobody hears it?"

Bennington adds, "Around Christmas of last year, I was getting impatient. Like, 'Man, is this thing ever going to end?' But it was definitely worth the time and effort we put into making the album."

A WATCHFUL EYE

Members Remain Fanatically Hands-On Behind The Scenes

"Imaging to this band is very important," Warner Bros. senior vp of marketing Peter Stashard says, and to that end, the men of Linkin Park are all fanatical in their hands-on approach to their careers.

Each member has a behind-the-scenes specialty. MC Mike Shinoda and DJ Joe Hahn hand the art direction on the print ads, packaging and merchandise (Hahn also directs many of the band's videos, including the clip for "What I've Done"). Guitarist Brad Delson and drummer Rob Bourdon oversee the financial aspects, marketing and the street team ("They don't mind reading long contracts," vocalist Chester Bennington says, with a touch of disbelief), while Bennington and bassist Dave "Phoenix" Farrell head up the tours, including a new edition of Projekt Revolution set for this summer.

Shinoda says keeping such responsibilities in-house helps the band keep an eye on the experience as a whole. "There's a subtlety of the vibe of the music that I don't think an outsider can really completely grasp without a lot of time and energy." Shinoda says. "And given the timelines and speed at which you've got to work, would you rather have somebody who worked on the record or some random person you just hired two weeks ago to come up with something based on listening to the album?"

Standish says the fruits of this labor are a major step forward for Linkin Park, one he likens in scope to U2's "The Joshua Tree." "That was a breakthrough in imaging for them as well as music, and I feel like that's happening with "Minutes.""

ROCK

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED

Rooney Wraps Second Album After Three Trials

The third time's a charm for Los Angeles rock act Rooney. Since releasing its self-titled debut via Geffen/Interscope in 2003, which has sold 393,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, the band struggled to craft a record that pleased both its members and the label.

At the end of 2004, the first attempt at a follow-up fell flat because both camps felt the production was too raw and organic. Another attempt in the fall of 2005 was quashed, this time because the production was deemed too shiny. But after yet again rewriting and re-recording as a new record last autumn, frontman Robert Schwartzman feels Rooney has finally made the record it intended to create in the first place.

"It was like, too hot, too cold, just right," Schwartzman says in retrospect. "I think that people are going to be happy we went with it."

"It" refers to "Calling the World," due early this summer via Geffen/Cherrytree. Beyond the recording difficulties, the quality of friends in southern California has also endured label drama while fighting to create music it was proud of.

First came the shift from Interscope (which released "Rooney") to Cherrytree last year, before "Calling the World" was completed. A&R representation from former Geffen president Jordan Schur (who vacated that role to start the Suretone label) to Martin Kierszenbaum, who launched Cherrytree in 2005.

When the band may have lost some of its fans to the recent unpredictable stops and starts, Schwartzman is confident Rooney will earn devotees back with a series of Web journals, featuring snippets of songs and monologues taped from his own bedroom. The group has already been confirmed as the opening act for Fergie's forthcoming national tour, is holding down a residency at the Roxy in Los Angeles and, according to Kierszenbaum, is "actively pursuing" synch licensing deals.

"It was important to be proud of the record, for the band and for us. And we're over the moon," he says. "We know something's right, now that Robert's got a little skip in his step."

—Katie Hasty

—Ava Kadinger

Rooney Website: www.americanradiohistory.com
The recent signing of "American Idol" finalist Carmen Rasmusen, from the Fox show's second season in 2003, to Nashville-based Lofton Creek Records means there are now at least seven "A.I." alumni affiliated with Nashville labels: Carrie Underwood (Arista/Nashville), Josh Gracin (Lyric Street), Kimberly Locke (Curb), Kellie Pickler (BNA), Bucky Covington (Lyric Street), Mandisa (Sparrow) and Rasmusen.

Three of the seven—Underwood, Pickler and Covington—have songs climbing Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart and a fourth, Locke, is on the AC chart.

Like many in the industry, Nashville A&R execs were hesitant to embrace the "Idol" concept. But as the show's success—and the bumper crop of potential stars—grew, so did decision-makers' confidence in the process.

Industry veteran and Lofton Creek president Mike Borchetta says "Idol" was definitely a reason why he considered working with Rasmusen. "She's very good, period," he says. "But the fact that she's so well-known was a very big factor. You walk into a restaurant with her and people know her."

Fox TV affiliates know her, too. Borchetta says that whenever Rasmusen visits a radio station on her current nationwide bus tour, the local affiliate sends a camera crew.

This year alone, Rasmusen has appeared on MSNBC's "Scarborough Country," a dozen times to talk about "Idol," the Dixie Chicks and other country-related topics. Curb VP of A&R Bryan Stewart, who works with Locke, says "Idol" has proved the importance of TV beyond just the video music channels. "Before, artists and labels were viewing radio as the main driver, with MTV and VH1, the video channels, being the other," he says. "Now with 'American Idol'—as well as shows like 'Grey's Anatomy' and 'One Tree Hill'—there's a focus on getting songs in commercials (and) on TV. I think 'American Idol' was one of the first where you really saw the purchasing power of TV.

"We used to see it years ago with shows like 'American Bandstand,' " Stewart adds. "But this has been huge."

Meanwhile, Lyric Street VP of A&R and Disney Music Publishing GM Doug Howard, who works with Gracin and Covington, says the boot camp nature of "American Idol" helps talent mature quickly. "These guys have been through the wringer pretty good," he says of Gracin and Covington. "They've been told in a real stark way, 'Either we like you or we don't.' It really matures somebody in a way that they can get up on a stage or walk into a room and say, 'Hey, I can do this.'"

Curb's Stewart says that "Idol" goes a long way in rapidly developing an artist's fan base. "A lot of times when we sign a new artist, you're starting from ground zero and trying to build up from that," he says. "You can't ask for more dedicated fans than what 'American Idol' can give an artist, because they're rooting for them through the show, and they really do stick with them over time."

Howard sees "Idol" as another potential avenue for success but not the only route. "Do I think it's the total future of A&R? No," he says. "But do I think some really talented people are found in the process? Yes. In some cases, in the big picture, I'm not so sure that those that don't win don't have as much of an opportunity as those that do."

Produced by Jason Deere (SheDaisy), Rasmusen's as-yet-untitled debut will be released this summer. First single "Nothin Like the Summer," written by hit songwriter Victoria Shaw with Rasmusen and Deere, will go to country radio soon.

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Are you keeping ahead of the competition 24/7?
Let's Hear It For The Girl
Veteran Vocalist Williams Returns To R&B Roots

Deniece Williams is not Jazze Pha's mom. While chatting about the pending release of her first R&B album in more than 10 years, the Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter wants to clear up a misconception she has been hearing and reading the past two years.

"I applaud him and his success," Williams says of Pha, who has produced hits by Ciara and others. "But he is not my son."

For the record—confirmed by Pha's dad, Bar-Kays member James Alexander—the confusion surfaced because his son's mother shares the same name as the singing Williams.

Now that her own four sons are older, Williams is returning to her R&B roots after a successful detour as an inspirational/gospel singer. "Love, Nicely Style," out April 24, marks her Shanachie Entertainment debut. The 10-song collection was produced by Philadelphia soul vet Bobby Eli (Sister Sledge, Atlantic Starr). Yes, the same Eli who knew Williams from recording sessions she did with fellow producer Thom Bell, yielding such '80s hits as "Silly" and "It's Gonna Take a Miracle."

"Bobby came to me about doing a covers project," says Williams, who hadn't thought about recording a new R&B album until she was approached by some songs by other artists that I began thinking about, then Shanachie had a couple of song ideas, and the project came together."

The result is not your typical covers album. That's due primarily to a diverse selection that ranges from Baby Washington's "That's How Heartaches Are Made" and Stevie Wonder's "If You Really Love Me" to the Gwen Guthrie composition "This Time I'll Be Sweeter" (an R&B hit for Angela Bofill) and Luther Vandross' "Never Too Much." Wonder's fervent harmonica provides the emotional linchpin on the Washington song, while Philip Bailey lends his vocal support on Williams' interpretation of the Earth, Wind & Fire (EWF) classic "Love's Holiday." Other players include George Duke.

Of all the songs, Williams says that Vandross' "Never Too Much" was the toughest to sing. "When I get to heaven and see Luther, I'm going to tell him about it," she says with a laugh. "Between the tempo of the song and all of the words, there's nowhere to breathe. That was the hardest part. It showed me how incredible he was vocally and in his writing."

The album also doubles as Williams' salute to several mentors and influences on a career that started when she flunked out of college on the way to becoming a nurse. A cousin arranged a background singer audition with Wonder. After three years as a member of Wonderlove, the former church choir member met EWF's Maurice White.

He shepherded a solo run that kicked off in 1976 with the Columbia album "This Is Nicey." First hit "Free" led to subsequent chart-toppers like "Too Much, Too Little, Too Late" (the R&B/pop duet with Johnny Mathis) and "Let's Hear It for the Boy" (from the "Footloose" soundtrack) as well as "Black Butterfly."

Planning to continue her trade-off between R&B/pop and gospel, Williams will tour this summer. "It's time for me to hit it," she says. She also wants to reissue her '80s children's CD, "Lullabies to Dreamland," followed by several more in a series. Her sons Kevin and Ken will produce their first film in the fall through Williams Entertainment. Younger siblings Forrest and Logan are recording demos to forge their own music careers.

As for which contemporary female artists possess the staying power of her generation, Williams cites Beyoncé, Alicia Keys, Norah Jones and Mary J. Blige. "Because most singers sound the same, there are fewer 30-year career artists than in the past," Williams says. "Depending on their future choices, these unique artists have that potential."

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WILLIAMS

Let's Hear It For The Girl

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P atience is a virtue—just ask 36-year-old rapper Redman. It has been six years since his last studio album, 2001's "Malpractice." But with his latest effort, "Red Gone Wild" (Def Jam), the artist will be the first to tell you there's no better time than now to make a comeback. "When white people are wondering, 'What's going on with hip-hop? It don't sound the same,' that's when you know we need an adjustment," he says.

The new album boasts production from Timbaland, Scott Storch and Pete Rock, plus collaborations with Method Man, Snoop Dogg, Keith Murray and Redman's Gilla House Crew. Below, the rapper weighs in on music, God and... women's feet.

You aren't a gangster rapper, and you aren't a playbo. So what do you talk about on "Red Gone Wild"? On the album, I talk about the do's and don'ts, girls, blunts, loving your mama and asking God for what you want and you will receive. I tell people to watch out for the snakes, too, and about how to do your business while keeping it street.

What's Gilla House all about? Gilla House Crew consists of six other members and myself, and it's about making good music. We want to be the people's artists, the blue collar's artists. Fuck all the jewelry and all that bullshit. We want to be the mechanics of music. We want to be there to supply you with the fix of music that you're missing.

Why did you wait so long to release a new album? Since I dropped my last album, the game done flipped and evolved. These days, you either get down or lay down, and I wasn't willing to sacrifice all my years of swinging out hard and providing that underground shit just to get into the new groove. Plus, my label was going through a shift, and there was no one behind the steering wheel that I was really comfortable with to let my project go. Now everybody's screaming [that] they want some hardcore hip-hop, so I'm here to give it to them. I'm coming at the right time.

Why did you go with the Timbaland-produced "Put It Down" as the first single? It had nothing to do with Timbaland being hot right now. It was just the only song that was standing out for me at the time. It's like a 2007 "Time for Some Action." So, we had to run with it.

What's next for you? I want to start directing movies. My thing is women's shoes, too. I'm probably the rapper with the biggest foot fetish. That's why I plan on dedicating some time to women's shoes. Plus I'm working on new projects with Method Man, "How High II" and "Black Out II," a new album. We're actually writing the movie now. The album is still in its infant stages, but those who are Redman and Method Man fans know we're gonna keep it smoky.

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6 QUESTIONS
with REDMAN
by MARIEL CONCEPCION

Yeah, I mean, all the new cats I need on my album are the ones that are in my crew. Everyone that's a Redman fan knows Redman isn't going to go get no new cat just to try to make him blow up. I don't need new cats just to sell records. I like to stick to my realm, my career group.
Nothing Like A Dame
Never The Bride Woos Bassey Back To The Studio

Two London-based writer-performers have sparked the recording return of 70-year-old Welsh vocal powerhouse Shirley Bassey.

The singer, who had her first U.K. hit in 1957, last released new studio recordings on 2003 compilation "Thank You for the Years" (Citrus/Sony Music). That changed after meeting Catherine Feeney and Nikki Lamborn, who are the core duo in rock act Never the Bride (briefly signed to Atlantic in the mid-'90s).

The Triniti/EMI Music-published pair encountered Bassey by chance in a Monte Carlo hotel's gym two years ago and left her a CD of their fourth album "Surprise" (Lock Stock & Barrel/Absolute), offering one track, "The Living Tree," for her consideration. "It was in her gym bag quite a while," Lamborn says with a laugh, "until her assistant said, "Are you going to listen to this or shall I throw it away?" Apparently she said, "Let's put it on now." Bassey immediately liked the song — so much so that she performance it on U.K. national TV and now recorded it for the duo's own Lock Stock & Barrel label. An April 16 U.K. single release will be followed two weeks later by an identically titled album featuring remixes of Bassey's self-owned catalog plus new recordings including "Save to the Rhythm" and "I Will Survive." The Lamborn/Feeney-produced album is available for international licensing.

Bassey appears June 24 at the Glastonbury Festival in southwest England. — Paul Sexton

AMADEUS ENCORE: Some 21 years after his international hit single "Rock Me Amadeus," and nine years following his death, Austrian singer Falco is back on European charts.

Since its Feb. 2 release, the double-CD best-of "Hoch Wie Nie" (Sony BMG) has been a chart fixture in German-speaking markets, peaking at No. 1 in Austria, No. 2 in Germany and No. 6 in Switzerland. It was issued to mark what would have been Falco's 50th birthday (Feb. 19). Sony BMG says German shipments are at 125,000 units, plus 50,000 in Austria and 13,000 in Switzerland.

In recent years, interest in Falco's songs, published by Munich-based FalkeRome Publishing, has been revived by the musical "Falco Meets Amadeus," seen by more than 1 million people in Germany and Austria since its September 2001 opening, according to Bayreuth-based promoter Semmel Concerts. "The album's success comes from the devotion of his old fans and new ones who saw the musical in Vienna and Berlin," Falkenhorst managing director Horst Bork says.

Sony BMG Germany is planning international releases for the compilation, including the United States, this fall. Other than "Rock Me Amadeus," which topped the Billboard Hot 100 in 1986, Falco's biggest international hit single was "Der Kommissar" in 1981. — Wolfgang Spahr

FEISTY NEIGHBOR: Melbourne-born Stephanie McIntosh is the latest artist to use long-running Australian soap opera "Neighbours" as a route to a pop career, following Kylie Minogue, Natalie Imbruglia, Delta Goodrem and McIntosh's half-brother Jason Donovan.

McIntosh first appeared in "Neighbours" in 2003 and left this March. The September 2006 domestic release of her debut album "Tightrope" (Universal Music) was prepped from July to September by reality TV series "The Steph Show" on national network Ten, documenting the set's recording. That helped propel "Tightrope" to No. 3 on the Australian Recording Industry Assn. chart. It is now ARIA-certified platinum (70,000 shipments) and has yielded four top 40 singles. Current hit "So Do I Say Sorry First" is one of 21-year-old McIntosh's four co-writes on "Tightrope," published through her Melbourne-based management company Talentworks.

This May, McIntosh follows Imbruglia's and Minogue's examples by relocating to London. Debut single "Mistake" gets a U.K. release May 28, and Talentworks managing director Glenn Wheatley says Universal U.K. is negotiating with a U.K. TV network to air a new series of "The Steph Show," documenting her attempts to break in Britain.

"She'll be marketed in the United Kingdom as "a feisty, outdoor, Australian, tanned, fun-loving girl," Wheatley says. — Christie Eliezer
Mass Appeal

Chanticleer Reimagines Tried-And-True Form With New Work

Contemporary composers are often recruited to write new music for celebrated San Francisco-based vocal ensemble Chanticleer. Since its founding in 1978, it has commissioned works from such notables as Mark Adamo, Chen Yi, Jake Heggie, Steven Stucky, John Tavener and Augusta Read Thomas.

In addition, the Grammy Award-winning group is well-known for venturing far outside the confines of the Western classical canon. Through the years, it has performed and recorded everything from jazz standards to Chinese folk tunes. The act’s newest commission, And on Earth, Peace, is titled ‘A Chanticleer Mass,’ melds those diverse interests together in an innovative way.

The piece is grounded in a fascinating premise. Led by director Joseph Jennings, Chanticleer invited five composers to write a Mass; each composer was assigned a different section of the piece. Working independently of one another, the composers were challenged to reimagine all assumptions about what a Mass should or could be, even as they wrote within the traditional five-movement contour.

American composer Douglas J. Cuomo (whose best-known work is probably the theme music for the HBO series “Sex and the City”) has penned the Kyrie. Turkish-American Kamran Ince contributed the Gloria, while Israel’s Shulamit Ran wrote the Credo. Ivan Moody from England composed the Sanctus, while Ireland’s Michael McGlynn wrote the Agnus Dei.

Warner Classics is releasing a recording of And on Earth, Peace on May 8, following the Mass’ world premiere April 26 in New York at the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Temple of Dendur.

“What we hoped,” Jennings says, “was to create a Mass that embraces many musical—and spiritual—impulses. As I envisioned it, it wouldn’t even just be limited to the Christian faith.” Indeed, two composers set texts from their own cultural and belief backgrounds. Incé drew upon words written by 13th-century poet Jalaluddin Rumi, whose ecstatic and mystical form of Islam called Sufism has inspired and influenced many Muslims around the world for generations.

In preparing her portion of And on Earth, Peace, Ran says, “I agreed to participate in this project if, and only if, I could bring my own religious perspective to the piece.” Her Credo begins with the same words as the traditional Christian prayer: “I believe in one God... maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible”—a belief shared by Jews and Christians.

“From there,” she continues, “I chose a few selections from a text written by the philosopher Maimonides, as well as the Sh’ma, perhaps the most central of all Jewish prayers, which says, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one.’ I also weaved in a number of spoken testaments, mostly from Holocaust survivors, but also one about Sept. 11 [2001].”

The composers who worked on this piece were as inspired by Chanticleer itself—a group known for tonal looseness—as much as for the interesting challenge the Mass’ nature and intention provided. “The combination of all these elements with the beautiful sound of Chanticleer is surely a project that every composer would wish to participate in,” McGlynn says. Moody adds, “Collaborative Masses have been written before in musical history, but when the idea comes from Chanticleer, it is impossible to resist.”

Building Bridges

New Signing Has Daywind Eyeing Country, AC Radio

With a roster that includes Karen Peck & New River, Hope’s Call, the Perrys, Kenny Bishop, Greater Vision and the Crab Family, Daywind Records has long dominated the Southern gospel field. But the latest addition to the roster, Austin’s Bridge, brings to the table a new sound that is prompting the label to explore options in country and AC.

Both Justin Rivers and Mike Kofahl come from very solid country backgrounds. Jason Baird says of his fellow Austin’s Bridge members, “I was brought up around the jazz ensemble kind of stuff. And we all love tight harmonies, so it’s part of what we do.”

The group is drawing comparisons to Rascal Flatts and Little Big Town. While flattered, the members say their sound is shaped more by early influences. “I grew up listening to a country singer named Bryan White,” Kofahl says. “He’s now doing Christian music and is an amazing songwriter and singer. I also grew up listening to the Oak Ridge Boys. My parents loved Southern gospel music and they would listen to the Gaither Vocal Band.”

Rivers is lead vocalist and a multi-instrumentalist who performed with the Crab Family before enlisting Kofahl and Baird to join Austin’s Bridge. “I’ve always listened to black gospel, anything with soul in it,” Rivers says. “I think that kind of adds a new little twist to the whole country Southern sound [by adding] some black gospel influences like Donny McClurkin and Kirk Franklin.”

The resulting CD is a hearty mix of those varied influences and the special chemistry the three talented musician share. Though their unique sound will attract audiences beyond the Southern gospel market, the album has plenty for die-hard Southern lovers. The project includes such toe-tapping up-tempo cuts as “Dry Bones” and “I See Daylight,” as well as poignant ballads such as “Life’s Too Short.” Daywind has plans to work “I See Daylight” to Christian AC radio and is testing singles to determine what to take to mainstream country radio.

Produced by talented industry veteran Bubba Smith, the trio’s self-titled release streeted March 20. It is distributed to Christian retail via New Day and Word Distribution and to the mainstream through WEA. Austin’s Bridge recently taped an episode of the Gospel Music Channel’s “Front Row Live.” The group’s career is also buoyed by tour dates with Mark Lowry at his Senior Trip conferences.

INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEY: Smokie Norful, Kierra “Kiki” Sheard and Vanessa Bell Armstrong have been on the road this spring with the McDonald’s Inspiration Celebration Gospel Tour. The trek includes stops in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Atlanta, Detroit, Houston and Richmond, Va.

“I’m just thrilled to be part of this opportunity along with McDonald’s and my labelmates to spread the good news and lift up the Lord’s name,” Armstrong says. “We’re having a ball out here. It’s truly been an Inspiration Celebration.”

McDonald’s partnered with EMI Gospel, Revolver Marketing Group and Urban Ministries to produce the outing. A portion of the proceeds in each city is donated to the local Ronald McDonald House. “The tour has been great so far,” EMI Gospel VP/GM Larry Blackwell says. “The first date at Nokia Theatre in Dallas drew 3,800 on a Wednesday night, and the second date in Richmond was completely full. We finish big in New Orleans at the Essence Music Fest.”

Though there aren’t any plans to extend the tour, Blackwell is hoping McDonald’s will partner with gospel artists again. “It remains to be seen what impact this will have in the gospel community,” she says. “I will say with the current sketchy tour climate, it’s wonderful to have such a major brand like McDonald’s step up to support our genre.”

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AUSTIN’S BRIDGE

CHANCELLOR
ROCK

HELLEYLEAH
Hellyeah
Producers: Sterling Winfield, Vinnie Paul
Epic
Release Date: April 10
Because so few are truly greater than the sum of their parts, we’ve learned to be wary of “supergroup” projects. But Hellyeah is one of the rare, and welcome, exceptions. Comprising Damageplan’s Vinnie Paul, Mudvayne’s Chad Gray and Gregg Tribbett, and Nothingface’s Tom Maxwell (who’s also part of Danzig), the quintet rocks with—big surprise—fearless headbanging fury. But it does more than just turn the amps up to 11 to unleash the beast. Tight, snappy grooves and gear-shifting dynamics fill most of these 12 tracks. “Alcohol” “Ass” offers some rootsy tongue-in-cheek, and “Thank You” is a ringing power ballad about absent friends. “One Thing,” “Goddamn Damn!” and uptempo fare. But the album is also a departure in its incorporation of reggae (“Jucita Final”) and samba (“Rio”). Indeed, this is a pop artist through and through who feels confident enough to navigate myriad influences without losing his basic sound. It’s hard to divorce Chayanne from his entrenched stage persona. When one hears tracks like the delicious “Lola,” it’s impossible not to picture them performed onstage with a cadre of dancers. But here, the most memorable songs are slow, particularly the pared-down, acoustic “Sin Palabras de Relleno” and the gorgeous “Indispensable,” which should be a single down the line. —LC

SHADOWS FALL
Threads of Life
Producer: Nick Raskulinecz
Atlantic
Release Date: April 3

BRIGHT EYES
Cassadaga
Producer: Mike Mogis
Saddle Creek
Release Date: April 10
“Cassadaga,” the sixth proper full-length from Conor Oberst under the Bright Eyes moniker, is—at its core—a road album. The travels the indie superstar undertakes on these 13 country-hued tunes are chronicled in his most oblique song-writing territory to date. Cities and states are name-checked, but the imagery is more dream-like. Religion and mysticism are hinted at in “Hot Knives,” where a multi-part guitar punch is softened by a lovely backing choir, and the violin-spiked “Four Winds.” The pedal steel-lined “I Must Belong Somewhere” spells out Oberst’s quest for contentment, and the orchestral flourish of “Clairaudients (Still on the Wire)” flirt with clarity, mirroring a lyrical landscape that abstractly alludes to fame, war and capitalism. It’s a pleasant enough, if uneven work. Indeed, “Cassadaga” takes a relatively subtle approach with its musical rudiments, arriving in a surprisingly quiet, inward-looking album. —TM

We didn’t think Shadows Fall would sound much different once it jumped ship from Century Media to Atlantic, but neither did we expect the majority of “Threads of Life” to sound exactly the same. You’re not sure if you’re moving along on the record until two ballads (“Another Hero Lost,” “The Great Collapse”) pop up like mile markers, polar opposites from the rest of the record. Track No. 8, “Dread Uprising,” is a change-up that comes too late. If Shadows Fall had thrown in rapid time changes, a frenetic pace, guerilla percussion and an unpredictable guitar solo on every song instead of just this one, we’d sing a whole different tune. The band gives good aggression, but aside from a few other cuts (“Burning the Live,” “Venomous”), it’s merely repetitive. The Metallica-influenced “Just Another Nightmare” doesn’t shake things up much either.—CLT

THE ROSEBUDS
Night of the Furies
Producers: The Rosebuds Merge
Release Date: April 10
“Night of the Furies” finds Merge’s The Rosebudshed in a new direction, one that eschews traditional indie rock for ’80s-era keyboards and bass-heavy dance pop. The vengeful, mythological creatures the album’s title references en-hance the dark, eerie undertone of the arrangements, which play well against the catchy melodies and hook-friendly choruses of husband/wife duo Ivan Howard and Kelly Crisp. “My Punish- ment for Fighting” and “Cemetery Lawns” could pose as New Order cuts, while the shimmering “Get Up Get Out” has a full-on disco groove and “I Better Run” approximates the Human League’s “Don’t You Want Me.” “Sila Line” starts out as an acoustic number, replete with hand-clapping and a “whoa-oh” chorus, and the title track puts a delightfully poppy finishing touch on a album unexpectedly packed with dance jams.—JM

CHAYANNE
Mi Tiempo
Producer: Estefanía
Sony BMG
Release Date: April 10
Chayanne has always been masterful at selecting just the right material to fit his voice and the tastes of the times. Here, as usual, he mixes big ballads like “Si Nos Quedara Poco Tiempo” with uptempo fare. But the album is also a departure in its incorporation of reggae (“Jucita Final”) and samba (“Rio”). Indeed, this is a pop artist through and through who feels confident enough to navigate myriad influences without losing his basic sound. It’s hard to divorce Chayanne from his entrenched stage persona. When one hears tracks like the delicious “Lola,” it’s impossible not to picture them performed onstage with a cadre of dancers. But here, the most memorable songs are slow, particularly the pared-down, acoustic “Sin Palabras de Relleno” and the gorgeous “Indispensable,” which should be a single down the line. —LC

ELECTRONIC
TIESTO
Elements of Life
Producer: Tiësto
Ultra
Release Date: April 10
It’s not as broad as its title suggests, but Dutch DJproducer Tiësto’s third album is one of dance’s savviest recent packages. First single “In the Dark” plays on the modern rock trend, with vocalist Christian Burns belting a Killers-ish chorus in a perfect emo-boy whine. Charlotte Martin sounds just like Tori Amos on “Sweet Things,” and Amos remixer himself BT lends his radio-ready voice to “Break My Fall,” another crossover possibility for the proud mascara-rock-fan. In between the vocals (including “Everything”), another ec- static performance by Motor- cycle singer JES) are jaw-dropping slabs of indelicate club brance, all wallowing bass and speedy staccato synths. Ten years after Fatboy Slim did it with breakbeats, Tiësto is blending trance with pop, with no apologies to dance music’s cognoscenti. Could he resp. similar rewards?—KM

JAZZ
E.S.T.
Tuesday Wonderland
Producers: Esbjörn Svensson, Don Berglund. Magnus Ostrom EmArcy
Release Date: April 10
While historically European jazz leaned to-ward a classical music sensi- bility or avant-improv excess, these days a pop-infused aesthetic is re-energizing the genre. Sweden’s e.s.t. (Esbjörn Svensson Trio) is prominent among the forward-forging groups, applying its collective genius to meld jazz’s lyrical tradition with a fetching sonic palette of electronica, rock and Bartokian chamber mu-sic. Opener “Fading Mad Pre-...
a mournful version of George Strait’s 1989 No. 1 “What’s Going On In Your World.” The lone new song, the Ballad- penned “Please Feed the Jukebox,” fits right into this stellar collection.—KT

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

GRINDERMAN
Grinderman
Producer: Nick Launay
Anti-
Release Date: April 10
While Grinderman is a side project of Nick Cave and three members of his band the Bad Seeds, those expecting more of the same are in for a rude awakening. For one, Cave plays electric guitar, despite the fact that he’s relatively new to the instrument, resulting in a raw, almost punk feel. The album being recorded in five days also contributes to its stripped-down sound. The ferocity of the opening two songs, “Get It On” and “No Pussy Blues,” set the tone for the rest of the record, with Cave’s desperate, profound and often hilarious lyrics backing up distorted washes of guitar, bass and violin. It may not pick up many new fans or even appeal to those beyond Cave’s core audience, but these guys sound like they’re having too much fun to care.—BT

SASHA & SHAWNA
Siren
Producers: Peter Asher, Frank Fitzpatrick
Manhattan
Release Date: April 3
The marketplace for adult-driven pop/rock has created high consumer demand in Europe, and that United States, with hit product from the likes of Divo and

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LEGEND & CREDIT

EDITED BY JONATHAN CONEN (ALBUMS) AND CHUCK TAYLOR (CALES)


PICK OF THE WEEK: A new release predicted to hit the top half of the chart in the corresponding format.

CRITICS’ CHOICE: A new release regardless of chart potential, highly recommended for musical merit.

All albums commercially available in the United States are eligible. Send album review copies to: Jonathan Conen and singles review copies to Chuck Taylor (both at Billboard, 770 Broadway, Sixth Floor; New York, NY 10003) or to the writers in the appropriate bureaus.

THE BILLBOARD REVIEWS

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SINGLES

COUNTRY

VINCE GILL WITH SHERYL CROW
What You Give Away
Producer: Vince Gill
Writers: V. Gill, A. Anderson
Publishers: Vinne Mce./Mommy A. Monson/Songs of Windswept Pacific, BMI
MCA
This stately ballad is the second single from “These Days.” Vince Gill’s four-disc, 43-song platinum collection. Previous single “The Reason Why” earned Gill a Grammy Award for best male country vocal, his 18th such honor. Needless to say, the gifted singer/songwriter/musician hasn’t lost his creative spark. The poignant “What You Give Away” is a challenge to how we love our lives and treat those around us: “You know there’s gonna be a judgment day, so what will you say? No matter what you make/All you can take is what you give away.” Gill’s eloquent vocal is complemented by guest Sheryl Crow, and when the choir joins, it’s heaven on earth.—DEP

JOHN MELLENCAMP
The Americans (3:52)
Producer: Tony Brown
John Brown, John Mellenkamp
Publisher: Belmont Mall, ASCAP
Universal/Republic
During the last decade, boundaries between country and rock have blurred, so it’s no surprise that veteran rockers are trying to connect with country. The Van Zant brothers took time off from gigs fronting 38 Special and Lynyrd Skynoryd to record a well-received country album, while Bon Jovi hit No. 1 with Sugarland’s Jennifer Nettles and has a forthcoming CD targeting the genre. Mellenkamp’s heartland roots rock perfectly fits the format, and in serving up a song about American pride and color line—“The Americans”—he speaks a language of this audience. The lyric is positive, thoughtful and while not as strident as some patriotic anthems, there’s enough meat to make Toby Keith proud. Working with Nashville super-producer Tony Brown, Mellenkamp crafts a solid single that will make him the newest member of the country club.—DEP

ROCK

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
Hump De Bump (3:33)
Producer: Rick Rubin
Writers: Flea, Frusciante, Kiedis, Smith
Publisher: Moebetoblame, BMI
Worner Bros.
Reminiscent of the Red Hot Chili Peppers’ earlier sound, “Hump De Bump” is a funky jam with retro flavor that should serve up many new fans. This fourth U.S. single off the band’s Grammy Award-lauded “Stadium Arcadium” blends humor and established genius, featuring percussing bass and an unexpected trumpet solo by Flea for added flair. Paired with a campy music video set at a block party in Brooklyn, NY, directed by Chris Rock, another RHCP classic is hatched. With modern rock at the helm, “Hump De Bump” will breathe new life into the Rick Rubin-produced.—KMT

DANCE

BILLIE MYERS
It’s Just Sex (3:14)
Producer: Roland Belmares
Writers: B. Myers, D. Tyson
Publisher: not listed
Fruitloop
Reprise
Reprise is treating AC staple Michael Bublé’s return as an event, with Warner Bros, publicist Liz Rosenberg defining his new effort as “swinging and smooth, passionate and joyful, authentic, a broader societal discussion of an inconvenient truth.” The album opened at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 club stateside. The way G/Prol Young Radio Edit is de- finitive, accompanied by the promo by Lake Benson’s Junkie Mix, Elder Baez and Belmares/Preve extended mixes, all of which expand the groove but unfortunately re- linquish Myers’ presence. Her welcome return has already garnered top 20 club stateside play. Here’s hoping that such notice garners a full-on release, with potential for another definitive mainstream hit.—CT

TRIPLE-A

MELISSA ETHERIDGE
I Need to Wake Up (3:33)
Producer: Melissa Etheridge
Writers: M. Etheridge
Publisher: not listed
Island
Melissa Etheridge’s performance of Academy Award- winning “I Need to Wake Up” from equally-Oscar-adorned documentary “An Inconvenient Truth” lent the cachet of the 25.5 million pairs of captivated eyes. With such exposure, could you not make a bid for radio play? Amid mountain-classing power chords and an inspirational chorus calling for change (“I am throwing off the callousness of untruths/Let me speak to an inconvenient truth/I need to move, to wake up, to speak out”), Etheridge sings with symbolic conviction. A triple-A full-house.—CT

MICHAEL BUBLÉ
Everything (3:30)
Producer: Bob Rock
Writers: M. Bublé, A. Chang, A. Foster-Giles
Publisher: various
143/Reprise
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MUSIC REVIEW
McGraw Rides Herd Again; Promis Joins Charts Team

Leave it to a country man to remind us of how big a No. 1 album can be. With an opening week of 115,400 copies, Tim McGraw flips the second-biggest sales frame of any album in 200-

In contrast to the dooms and gloom you've read about album sales, consider this: McGraw's start would have earned No. 1 on the big chart in all but 16 of the sales weeks of 2006, all but 18 frames of 200-

True, each of his last two studio albums had big per-weeks, but the real thing is that going around these days, McGraw's career best. "Greatest Hits,” clocked an amazing 602,000.

What's more, McGraw's album is the first country title to top the big chart since July, last accomplished by Johnny Cash's posthumous "American V: A Hundred Ways." Although 2006 was a growth year for country, only two other albums from the genre led the big chart last year, as Rascal Flatts' "Me & My Gang" and Dixie Chicks' "Taking the Long Way" each held No. 1 for multiple weeks. By comparison, The Billboard 200 saw five country titles reach No. 1 in 2005, while six did so in 2004.

SMALL WORLD AFTER ALL: "Disneymania 5" dents The Billboard 200 at No. 14. That marks the best debut rank in the series' five-year history, as well as the line's peak position.

The series' previous record was set by "Disneymania 4," which entered at No. 21, then peaked at No. 15. The new one begins with 44,000 sold, compared with 56,000 in the week: the fourth volume moved to its highest rank.

Combined, six "Disneymania" titles, including a remix package, have sold 2.5 million copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

NEW TO THE MASTHEAD: The charts department of Billboard, Radio & Records welcomes Joe Promis, who joins our Los Angeles bureau. He will manage our Latin and dance charts, replacing Ricardo Campanoni, who left in late October after a tenure of 13 years. Promis comes to Billboard Information Group from the American Federation of Musicians’ Fim Musicians Secondary Markets Fund, where he had been a research associate since 2000.

Prior to that, he wrote freelance for All Music Guide and Las Vegas magazine and was an assistant for three years in the talent acquisition/creative department at publisher permusic. This marks a return to Billboard for Promis, who interned for the L.A. charts department in 1997.

He holds a master's in media arts from the University of Arizona, where he completed his bachelor's in media arts with a minor in journalism. A native of Chile, Promis is bilingual.

Like many who have found their way to the charts department, Promis has an avid Billboard reader. "I've read Billboard religiously since childhood so I'm very honored to work at a magazine that I hold in high esteem," he says.

"I look forward to the experience and to becoming acquainted with the network of colleagues who work with Latin and dance music."

Promis reports to me and to R&R director of charts Silvio Pirotloong. "We are thrilled to have Joe join the charts department," Pirotloong says. "His enthusiasm and knowledge of and interest in multiple genres will be an asset to Billboard and Radio & Records."

Promis' contact details: 323-525-2287 or JPromis@billboard.com.
THE BILLBOARD 200

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**Saosin**

Saosin has been releasing albums since 1999, but this is his first to reach the top 40 (No. 40). Below are the top 14 contemporary acts.
# R&B/HIP-HOP ALBUMS

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# REGGAE ALBUMS

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**BETWEEN THE BULLETS**

Young Buck's second major-label release grants him his first No. 1 album, as "Buck The World" pockets the Hot Shot Debut on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums. The rapper's latest takes hold at No. 3 on The Billboard 200 with a respectable 140,000 units. However, it's off by 54% when compared with first-week receipts of his "Straight Outta Cashville" when it opened at the same mark in 2004.

On R&B/Hip-Hop Albums, R. Kelly's "Happy People/U Saved Me" blocked "Cashville" from No. 1. A year later, an album of pre-G Unit Material, "T.I.P. on indie label Mass Appeal, became his third entry on the chart, peaking at No. 11.

Noteworthy, too, is the return of Redman with "Red Gone Wild" at No. 4, his first album since "Malpractice" bowed at No. 1 on R&B/Hip-Hop in 2001. —Raphael George
## HOT R&B/ HIP-HOP AIRPLAY

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<td>&quot;We're All Friends&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Make Ya Feel Beautiful&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Take Me As I Am&quot;</td>
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## RHYTHMIC AIRPLAY

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<td>&quot;Nice Close&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Tonight (Tonight Is The Night)&quot;</td>
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| "Busca A Favor" | 2-31 | "Bussa Sound"

## HITPREDICTOR

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<td>&quot;I'm Not Going&quot;</td>
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**Note:** The table above represents a snapshot of songs popular on R&B/Hip-Hop radio stations as of April 14, 2007. For full details, visit the [Billboard chart](http://www.billboard.biz). The chart includes data on sales, downloads, streaming, and airplay metrics, providing a comprehensive view of the music landscape at that time.
### Hot Country Songs

**Artist**

1. Tim McGraw
2. Randy Houser
3. Kip Moore
4. Blake Shelton
5. Jason Aldean
6. Dierks Bentley
7. Brad Paisley
8. George Strait
9. Kenny Chesney
10. Luke Bryan

**Title**

1. *Last Dollar (Fly Away)*
2. *In This Moment (I Love You)*
3. *She Don't Know She's Beautiful*
4. *Drinkin' Problem*
5. *Til It's Gone*
6. *Come Back When You Grow Up*
7. *My Town*
8. *Ours*
9. *Drunk on Love*
10. *Love You Like I Used To*
HOT LATIN SONGS:

1. LA LLAVE DE MI CORAZON (Juan Luis Guerra Y 400)
2. EL ALMACEN (Dolce)
3. EL AMOR NO ES PARA NIOS (Les Nubes Presents)
4. MEN QUE NO (Caldas)
5. CONFESIONES (Luis Alberto)

LATIN SONGS:

1. DON OMAR
2. VALES DE MILAGROS
3. ARUZ
4. SHAKIRA
5. SIA

PROVINCIAL HISPANIC MUSIC

1. JUAN LUIS GUERRA
2. MARIA MULATO
3. OSVALDO BANDA
4. BACHATA ORCHID
5. LUIS RAMIREZ

TOP LATIN ALBUMS:

1. COMO AMAR
2. QUE VENIR
3. EL CORAZON
4. LA LLAVE
5. EL AMOR

 went up a notch on the Hot Latin Songs chart this week with a 27% audience gain.
## Latin Airplay

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## Tropical Airplay

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## Latin Albums

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## Regional Mexican

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Data for week of APRIL 14, 2007 | For chart reprints call 646.654.4633

Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data | 53
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For complete chart data, visit [www.billboard.biz](http://www.billboard.biz)
### EUROCHARTS

#### SINGLE CHARTS

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<td>Epic / Sony BMG Masterwork</td>
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<td>Fergie</td>
<td><em>Big Girls Don't Cry</em></td>
<td>Interscope / Universal Classics Group</td>
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<td>EMI / Fiction</td>
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<td><em>Feel</em></td>
<td>EMI / People Holding Hands</td>
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#### SONGS COME AROUND

- Justin Timberlake
- Prince
- Jennifer Lopez
- Fergie
- Cascada
- Robbie Williams
- Take That
- Ruby
- Various Artists
- Donna Noble

### ALBUMS

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<td><em>The Ultimate</em></td>
<td>Epic / Sony BMG Masterwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td><em>The Theme From Deep</em></td>
<td>Epic / Sony BMG Masterwork</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Various Artists</td>
<td><em>Cascada Andorfine</em></td>
<td>EMI / Fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Donna Noble</td>
<td><em>Timber</em></td>
<td>BMG / Universal Classics Group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### RADIO AIRPLAY

- Justin Timberlake
- Prince
- Jennifer Lopez
- Fergie
- Cascada
- Robbie Williams
- Take That
- Ruby
- Various Artists
- Donna Noble

Data for week of APRIL 14, 2007

Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data | 55
ALBUM CHARTS

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

GOLD Where included, this award indicates the title reached a million units sold.
PLATINUM Where included, this award indicates the title sold 500,000 units.

PRICING/FORMAT CONFIGURATION:
CD/CD prices are suggested list or equivalent prices, which are suggested from wholesale prices. CD/DVD prices are suggested list prices. CD/DVD combo prices are suggested list prices. CD/DVD combos available, if combo label available with CD/DVD combo. "-" indicates vinyl LP is available. Pricing and vinyl LP availability are not included on all charts.

SINGLE CHARTS

RADIO AIRPLAY SINGLE CHARTS

Compiled from national sample data by Nielsen Broadcast Data Systems. Charts are ranked by number of gross audience impressions, compiled through cross-referencing extensive sets of airplay with Arbitron listener data. The exceptions are the RhythmAir, Adult Top 40, Adult Contemporary, Modern Rock and Adult R&B charts, which are voted by the detectives.

Songs showing an increase in audience for detections

RECURRENT RULES

Songs are removed from the Billboard Hot 100 and Hot 100 Airplay charts simultaneously if they have been on the Hot 100 for more than 20 weeks and rank below No. 50. Songs are removed from the Hot 100 Airplay chart if they have been on the Hot 100 for more than 35 weeks and rank below No. 50. Titles are removed from the Country Singles if they have been on the chart for more than 20 weeks and rank below No. 50. Titles are removed from the R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay chart if they have been on the Hot 100 for more than 20 weeks and rank below No. 50. Titles are removed from the Country Singles if they have been on the chart for more than 20 weeks and rank below No. 15. If they have been on the chart for more than 28 weeks and rank below No. 10, or if they have been on the chart for more than 52 weeks and rank below No. 5, songs are removed from the Adult Contemporary chart. Adult Contemporary and Dance Airplay charts if they have been on the chart for more than 20 weeks and rank below No. 15. In the Adult R&B chart, sales and airplay are available. In the Hot 100 Airplay chart, sales and airplay are not available.

SONGS CHARTS

The top 100 songs compiled from a national sample of retail stores, radio stations, and Internet sites.

SINGLE SALES CHARTS

The top 100 singles compiled from a national sample of retail stores, radio stations, and Internet sites. Sales data is compiled from a national subset panel of core R&B/Hip-Hop stores.

GOLD Where included, this award indicates the title reached a million units sold. 
PLATINUM Where included, this award indicates the title sold 500,000 units.

CONFIGURATIONS:
- CD/DVD single available.
- CD single available.
- Vinyl Maxi-Single available.
- CD Maxi-Single available.

HITPREDICTOR:
- Indicates the artist's single performance status in its particular format based on research data provided by Promoscore. Songs are listed online by Promoscore using a formula that calculates listener data, a national sample of core retail store and Internet sales and radio station data collected, compiled, and provided by Nielsen SoundScan. For R&B/Hip-Hop Singles, sales data is compiled from a national subset panel of core R&B/Hip-Hop stores by Nielsen SoundScan.

DANCE CLUB PLAY:
Songs are compiled from national sample of reports from club DJs. Titles with the greatest club play increase over the previous week.

AWARD/CERTIFICATIONS
- Recording Industry Atlas of America (RIAA) certification for net shipment of 500,000 units (Platinum).
- RIAA certification for net shipment of 1 million units (Diamond).

SINGLES CHARTS
- RIAA certification for 500,000 paid-downloads (Gold).
- RIAA certification for 1 million paid-downloads (Platinum).

MUSIC VIDEO SALES CHARTS
- RIAA gold certification for net shipment of 25,000 units for video singles.
- RIAA gold certification for net shipment of 10,000 units for album videos.
- RIAA platinum certification for net shipment of 50,000 units for video singles.

DVDSales/VHS VIDEOS/VIDEO RENTALS
- RIAA gold certification for net shipment of 50,000 units or $5 million in sales at suggested retail price.
- RIAA gold certification for a minimum sale of $50,000 units in a dollar volume of $5 million at retail for theatrical reissue programs of or at least 25,000 units or $5 million at suggested retail price.
- RIAA platinum certification for sale of 50,000 units or a dollar volume of $10 million at retail for theatrical reissue programs of or at least 50,000 units or $10 million at suggested retail price.
- RIAA gold certification for a minimum sale of 50,000 units in a dollar volume of $10 million at retail for non-theatrical titles.
- RIAA platinum certification for a maximum sale of 50,000 units or a dollar volume of $18 million at retail for non-theatrical titles.

www.americanradiohistory.com
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SPEAKERS Rachel Williams: 646.654.4683 rachel.williams@nielsen.com | QUESTIONS Jaime Kobin: 646.654.5169 jaime.kobin@nielsen.com

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ASCAP LATIN MUSIC AWARDS

Latin America's rich songwriting tradition was celebrated at the 15th annual ASCAP Latin Music Awards March 21 at the Nokia Theatre in New York. The publisher of the year award went to Sony ATV, and songwriter of the year went to Mexico's Marco Antonio Solís. Publishers, record executives and artists including Anthony Santos, Camila, Sheila Durcal and Alejandro Lerner attended the black-tie event, hosted by Kamar de los Reyes of ABC's "One Life to Live" and Birmania Rios of Univision's "Despierta América."
LAY YOUR HANDS ON ME
Jon Bon Jovi and Richie Sambora are the latest musicians to join McFarlane Toys’ ever-expanding line of musician action figures. And guess who? Track is offering a first look at the figures (see below), which will hit stores in August and retail for $10-$12. We know, the likeness are simply uncanny. Just looking at the photos of the figures of the legendary musicians forces us to recall last night’s karaoke session, which included “Livin’ on a Prayer” and “Have a Nice Day.”

McFarlane Toys CEO Todd McFarlane—the creator of Spawn and founder of spawn.com—hails Jon Bon Jovi as one of the most consistent and recognizable rock bands of all time. To illustrate, he points to its success and popularity in the ’80s, ’90s and today. “We are looking forward to reproducing the likenesses of Jon and Richie and bringing them to the fans,” McFarlane says.

To be sure, the action figures are created out of a partnership between band and brand. In this case, McFarlane worked closely with Bon Jovi and Sambora to select the proper pose, accessories and facial expressions to best represent the artists to their fans.

In the past, Tempe, Ariz.-based McFarlane Toys has issued action figures of Kiss, Metallica, Jerry Garcia, Elvis Presley and others. Just don’t call them dolls.

ROCK’N’ROLL STAR
2007 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee Patti Smith could’ve simply stood there alone, on the intimate stage of the Star Lounge, and it would’ve been enough for we the people. Smith, though, had other plans. The stage of Star Lounge—housed in what is essentially the basement of New York’s storied Chelsea Hotel—is about the size of an international postage stamp. But there was Smith, on April 3, inviting her bandmates (Lenny Kaye, Jay Dee Daugherty, Tony Shanahan and her son Jackson) to join her onstage for a short, powerful set. The fact that Smith botched the lyrics to “Everybody Wants to Rule the World,” prompting her to smile apologetically, only added to the evening’s charm.

Smith was on hand to spread the word about her new Columbia album, “Twelve,” due April 17. The studio recording is Smith’s first collection of other people’s songs, and, in addition to the Tears for Fears gem, includes “Helpless” (Neil Young) and “Soul Kitchen” (the Doors), both of which she also performed. Smith rounded off the set by “covering” herself via a jaw-dropping rendition of “People Have the Power.”

NEW ADDITION
Lalah Hathaway is the latest daughter of the new Stax Records family. The daughter of the legendary Donny Hathaway joins a roster that includes Angie Stone, Isaac Hayes, Leon Ware and N’Dambi.

PITBULL GETS ALL ANIMATED
Rapper Pitbull, whose “Pitbull’s La Esquina” comedy/reality show premières May 9 on mtv2, is also developing a cartoon series. The normally outspoken Pit is mum on details, but describes the show as “The Simpsons”. meets “South Park”. meets “Family Guy.”

“I’m starting to animate it myself—me and my team,” Pitbull tells Track. “And then we’ll go in there and see what type of deals we can work on.” The rapper’s next TVT album, “Boatlift,” is scheduled to drop in June.

FROM THE HEART
Two veteran sellers who left the business are tapping the shoulders of their music industry friends on behalf of worthwhile causes. Longtime WEA executive VP Fran Aliberte is staging for a June 22 dinner in Manchester-by-the-Sea, Mass. The event will raise funds to support the Cardiomyopathy Foundation, which offers support and research to defeat a rare heart condition that affects about one million children in the United States.

Chris Hopson, who had a lengthy tenure overseeing Tower Records’ advertising department, is assembling the fifth annual Auction-4-Action. The June 16 fund-raiser, held in Sacramento, Calif., benefits the Parkinson Assn. of Northern California. Track hears that Hopson and his former partner in crime at Tower, Terri Ball Williams, are on the hunt for items to put up for bid.
We mourn the loss of an industry icon.

Robert L. Krakoff

1935 - 2007

Media industry veteran, consummate professional, valued advisor, and wonderful friend.

Bob touched so many of us both personally and professionally. He will be missed.
Nana Mouskouri
Capturing the Hearts of Fans around the World for 50 Years

The Farewell Tour

USA
April 12
April 15
April 17
April 20
Sarasota, FL // Van Wezel
West Palm Beach, FL // Kravis Center
New York // Lincoln Center / Avery Fisher Hall
Boston, MA // Symphony Hall

CANADA
June 3
June 6
June 8
June 10
Ottawa, Ontario // NAC
St. John's, Newfoundland // Mile One Centre
Halifax, Nova Scotia // Metro Centre
Toronto, Ontario // Roy Thomson Hall

UK
October 29
London // Royal Albert Hall

FRANCE
November 24
Opera de Paris / Palais Garnier

GREECE
July 2008
Athens // Herod Atticus Theatre

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