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### TOURING

The Billboard Touring Conference & Awards will feature panels networking opportunities and an awards reception targeting promoters, agents, venues, managers, spc-mors and pr production professionals. See billboardevents.com.

### REGIONAL MEXICAN


### AEG LIVE PACT

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### IN EVERY ISSUE

- Opinion
- Over The Counter
- Market Watch
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## 360 DEGREES OF BILLBOARD

### HOME FRONT

#### EVENTS

**TOURING**

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#### BLOGGING

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Here Comes The Fun
Macc, Beatles Catalog Going Online Marks A Crucial Junction

Sometimes I wonder what John Lennon would have thought of the digital revolution. Would he have sided with Internet anarchists who say all culture should be free? Or stayed above the fray? After all, “bed-in for determining that digital delivery of a phonorecord should also trigger performance royalties” doesn’t exactly roll off the tongue like “bed-in for peace.”

We’ll never know, sadly. But at least we have clarity, for the first time, from his most famous songwriting partner. In our exclusive Q&A (page 22) we finally break the news that Paul McCartney’s new solo album will be sold via iTunes—a first—and that the Beatles catalog will be hot on its heels.

Far be it from me to bemoan what is one of the music news scoops of the year. The mainstream press has been waiting breathlessly for this development—for only I had a nickel each time a newspaper or Web outlet jumped the gun and announced its imminence—so it’s a little ironic that one of the few publications that understands this isn’t all that big a deal gets the first big word.

Don’t get me wrong. I love the Beatles, my MP3 player and our story. It’s just that, I’ve listened to the Beatles digitally for so long, it’s hard to believe that their catalog going online is going to make much of a difference to the biz. Has any digitally minded fan of the Fab Four not already ripped “Revolver” or “Rubber Soul?” (And yet ZeroToOne, a compilation, “Ten Years Gone” sounds great in our buds.)

And yet, symbolically, culturally, the Beatles news is very important. The Fab Four held on—some would say too long—to the world of shiny, plastic discs. And so did the music biz: They were both coming around now, and that’s the best.

Look around this issue, and it’s almost uncanny how much news—good, bad, and, yes, sometimes painful—is happening on the digital front, all at one time. Major labels are shrinking the departments that service physical stores (page 11) and creating new configurations (page 7) that roll ring tones and other hot digital properties—and profit margins—into physical singles. Mobile ticketing, already used in markets overseas, will get its biggest trial run yet stateside thanks to a Fergie/Verizon deal (page 8). Digital business models may even be establishing a precedent that could lead to radio paying the “performance royalty” for sound recordings (page 12).

So while the Beatles may not change any economics of the biz, they will now once again provide a soundtrack to a watershed moment, as they have so many times before. With album sales still driving the biz’s revenue and still down some 17%, that soundtrack isn’t “Here Comes the Sun.” But maybe it’s sounding a little more “We Can Work It Out” than it did, even a few days ago.

FOR THE LOVE OF EMUSIC

In response to the “Fleet Music” story in the May 12 issue: As a successful independent music distributor, we at Redeye realize that the digital music marketplace and the way consumers are using it, or would like to use it, is not yet completely known. EMusic is exploring the market within its user base to find the subscription models that make the most sense. We encourage that exploration now so that our partnership can continue to flourish in the future for the sake of both our businesses.

Although we would certainly welcome the extra money per download, our relationship with EMusic is not defined by dollars alone. Yes, we did enjoy a 50% increase in revenue from EMusic this past quarter, and we attribute that to a strong partnership that enables us to create new channels and promotional opportunities that bring Redeye-distributed labels to EMusic’s rabid, music-loving customers. Our labels have enjoyed a wealth of success and exposure thanks to our friends at EMusic. Opportunities such as our labels being featured on download cards, in store promotions with Urban Outfitters, support at events such as the CMJ and South by Southwest conferences, and online music partnerships and features with companies like Fossil and Rolling Stone have all come courtesy of EMusic. All of these valuable extras have helped expose Redeye artists and labels to more fans, climb the Music Power Charts and ultimately allow us to collect more revenue. Redeye is proud to stand behind EMusic and we look forward to bigger and better things in the future.

Jim Logrande, digital sales and marketing
Tor Hansen, founder and co-owner
Josh Wittman, group marketing director, Redeye

ALL THAT (ATLANTIC) JAZZ?
One would never know from PBS’ “Atlantic Records: The House That Ahmet Built” that, besides its impressive pop-music roster, the label also released some of the most important jazz recordings of the 1950s and 60s by Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Charles Mingus and the Modern Jazz Quartet, among many others. Was there no room in a two-hour program—one that stressed Ahmet Ertegun’s love of jazz—for even one sentence acknowledging this achievement?

Scott Isler
Brooklyn, NY

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New Wrinkles And Ringles

Fresh Formats Seek to Stimulate Sales By Marrying Physical To Digital

In an attempt to stem declining CD sales, Sony BMG Music Entertainment and Warner Music Group are on the verge of launching new hybrid configurations to tie in physical goods with digital offerings, according to retailers who attended private one-on-one meetings with the majors at the NARM annual convention. WMG will issue what it is now calling the Music Video Interactive (MVI). The first one will arrive May 15 in the form of Linkin Park’s new album, “Minutes to Midnight.”

Meanwhile, Sony BMG Music Entertainment U.S. Sales discussed several product initiatives it is planning, all designed to stimulate physical/digital interaction and increase product flow, retail sources say. Instead of marquee artists releasing one album every two or three years, Sony BMG will try to return to the way the music business used to operate: offering singles, EPs and mini-albums in between formal album releases, except they now will contain a hybrid digital component, retailers say.

At NARM, Sony BMG Music Entertainment Global Digital Business president Thomas Hesse noted that with Linkin Park’s latest album, “FutureSex/LoveSounds,” the company had 71 distinct offerings, of which only one was the physical album. The rest included the digital album, plus ringtone, wallpaper, and individual tracks.

“They are all great ideas, all the new product configurations, or if you will, bundles, that they talked about at NARM,” says Thy Ngo, VP of purchasing at Irvine, Calif.-based one-stop Super D, about WMG’s and Sony BMG’s plans. “But I am still in wait-and-see mode because in all the discussions they didn’t roll out price points, which will be a huge factor in whether any of this is successful.”

What’s coming out?

With JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE’S “FutureSex/LoveSounds,” Sony BMG presented 71 distinct offerings, only one of which was the physical album itself.

MVI: In addition to the usual $18.98 version, Linkin Park’s new album will be released as an MVI with a $27.98 list price. That configuration contains a 32-page hardbound book with a linen-wrapped cover, a DVD version of the album that includes a video of lead single “What I’ve Done” as well as a making-of-the-video feature, wallpaper, the ability to make a ringtone using Utrone software and a PDF booklet. The DVD also has an MPI 3 version of the album that can be downloaded and burned to CD. Initial releases in the format will include a traditional CD version of the album as well. Sources say list price may vary depending on what is included in the package.

RINGLES: In the day and age where tracks are king on the Internet, Sony BMG plans on restructuring the physical single in a new configuration called the “ingle”: an A-side of the track is worked to radio with a B-side and a ringtone, and perhaps digital wallpaper. List price is expected to be in the $4.99-$5.99 range.

DIGITAL DELUXE: For a $19.98 list, this package includes a ringtone on hit Sony BMG albums. The offering would also feature a digital redemption bonus that would provide incentives for the customer to go online for bonus material.

MI-NI-ALBUMS OR EPS: Sony BMG labels will now have the choice of issuing a five-to-seven-track mini-album, including a focus track at a low list price of $4.99-$9.99 to encourage customers to take a chance on a developing artist. If an EP clicks with customers, the labels can opt to roll out an entire EP or release a full album, one that might even come as part of Sony’s Choice program, which includes putting out a low-end “paperback” version, a regular version and the deluxe package.

For heritage artists like Bob Dylan, the company plans on picking one strong track each from five albums, again at a low price of about $5.99-$6.99, as a way to introduce the artists to younger listeners. This mini-album would contain a digital offer that would enable buyers to visit an Internet site where they can learn more about the artist and have the opportunity to buy other albums by the artist.

Sources say Walmart is also testing the strategy to label cut-up albums into groupings of two or three EPs or mini-albums, each to come out with a radio focus track.

“Some of Sony’s ideas still need work, but overall I like their suggestions,” Alliance Entertainment Corp. senior VP Robert DeFretas says. “It makes sense to give consumers a [pricing] choice.”

By ED CHRISTMAN
Phoning In Fergie

Mobile Ticketing Takes A Leap Forward With Artist’s U.S. Tour

Aching to see Fergie in concert? Don’t expect to buy a paper ticket. Verizon Wireless is sponsoring the 20-city U.S. tour—which kicked off May 8 in Seattle—and in an unprecedented move is controlling the entire ticket distribution process. By doing so, Verizon is conducting what is perhaps the biggest mobile ticketing experiment in the United States to date. Still, certain hurdles will need to be overcome before mobile ticketing becomes widespread.

Verizon Wireless subscribers can get a ticket to Fergie’s show via any of the following mobile ties-in: by downloading any of Fergie’s songs from the V Cast Music full-song download service or any of the new Fergie TV content on V Cast; by buying any Verizon-enabled Motorola phone; or by attending any of several planned in-store events at either Verizon Wireless or Kohl’s stores.

Local radio stations will mail tickets available via various promotional activities. Those not subscribing to Verizon will be able to acquire tickets only through the in-store events and radio promotions.

Verizon will then send each fan a unique barcode that will then be scanned by a special reader at each venue for entry. Fans without phones who receive the “ticket,” as well as non-Verizon subscribers, will have to pick up a ticket at the venue.

This isn’t Verizon’s first mobile ticketing move. It sponsored a one-time show by the Fugees last year and has experimented with it on a few Justin Timberlake concerts, among others.

“This is a scaled-up version of what we’ve done in the past,” Verizon associate director of music content Ed Rush says. “We’ve been perfecting the technology over time, and... working closely with Live Nation to build in the operational side of it within the venues.

One problem in the past, such as the Fugees concert, was that the barcode readers equipped by the venue could not scan the barcode displayed on the phone. Verizon has worked closely with Live Nation venues to properly outfit them with the right type of scanner.

Still, all involved in making mobile ticketing a reality say many steps need to be taken for it to gain more traction—other venues would need to invest in scanning equipment; ticket brokers like Ticketmaster would need to work more closely with wireless operators on billing and delivery standards, and wireless operators themselves would need to work together to ensure cross-carrier interoperability.

Verizon is keen to do the heavy lifting on the mobile ticketing front because it is trying to revamp its image as more of a media and entertainment company instead of a provider of simple phone calls, Rush says.

“Phones historically have been used for voice and text messaging,” he says. “As we get into the content era, we want people to get access to the things they want and need.”

Fergie features a number of other mobile-related activities as well. At each stop, a number of ‘green screens’ similar to those used in motion picture special effects will allow fans to dance to Fergie songs and have their image inserted into the show footage. The resulting video will be sent to fans’ mobile phones, and fans creating the best videos will have the chance to join Fergie onstage during each show’s finale.

... For more on all of Fergie’s digital initiatives with Verizon Wireless, visit billboard.biz/digital.
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Is Verizon Leaving Akon’s Tour A Sign That The Tide Has Turned?

Verizon Wireless unplugging its presenting sponsorship of the Gwen Stefani Sweet Escape tour due to the actions of support artist Akon probably would not have happened as recently as six weeks ago, many in the touring and branding sectors believe.

“It is a sign of the times,” says Jim Guerinot, Stefani’s manager at Rebel Waltz. “The 50s.”

The controversy stems from an Akon concert last month in Trinidad, where the artist danced provocatively with a underage fan. When footage of the incident found its way online and controversy followed, Verizon backed out of the Stefani tour sponsorship (billboard.biz, May 7), even though Akon’s show was unrelated to and not part of the Sweet Escape tour, which commenced April 21 in Phoenix.

Regardless, a Verizon Wireless representative says the decision to back out of the tour was “based on a number of things,” but would not publicly specify a connection to the incident in Trinidad. At press time, Akon ringtones and music were still available on Verizon phones.

A source close to the situation, however, attributes Verizon’s decision to increased sensitivity in the wake of Don Imus’ firing from CBS Radio and the subsequent scrutiny of urban music. Verizon received a lot of calls from Laura Ingraham fans and Verizon caved,” the source says, referring to talk radio host Ingraham, whose syndicated show seemed to add fuel to the fire.

“This is directly related to Imus. No question about it,” the source says. “We are seeing a new climate of scrutiny.”

Music sponsorship veteran and Fearless Entertainment CEO Brian J. Murphy agrees that the Imus situation and "cordial fallout" afterward changed the business and "the tenor of the times." "That incident was like a lighting rod that exploded out in many unintended ways," Murphy says. "There is a much more heightened awareness and sensitivity in the marketplace."

But an executive at an entertainment marketing company, who chose not to be identified, sees things differently. "Verizon is being very cautious," he says. "For corporations, hip-hop is riskier than other types of music when it comes to brand/artist alliances. But I don’t feel that what Verizon has done is indicative of the current Don Imus climate. The problem here is that what [Akon] did happened to be with a minor."

Representatives from other wireless companies who spoke to Billboard attribute Verizon’s decision to “growing pains” that the historically conservative wireless industry is going through as it enters the media and entertainment space.

Since 2005, Verizon has sponsored more complete tours than any other wireless operator—including treks by Maroon 5, Green Day, Shakira, Justin Timberlake and Fergie. Verizon also often works closely with artists on multiplatform wireless initiatives beyond the tour. Meanwhile, Stefani is out a presenting sponsor for her tour and the inherent marketing clout that brings. Industry sources put the cash value of a tour sponsorship package like the one between Stefani and Verizon in the $1.5 million-$2 million range, but marketing value can go much, much higher than that. However, through sources say Verizon intends to pay Stefani in full, her manager Guerinot declines to discuss the financial terms, but does say that "we’re just in the beginning stages of evaluating" the impact of Verizon’s move. "We’re surprised and shocked they’ve backed out of the sponsorship," Guerinot says.

Most sponsorship agreements include some sort of morals clause, though the language historically has been ambiguous, those in the industry tell Billboard. However, there seems to be a trend toward more specific language regarding which behavior is unacceptable. Guerinot says Akon’s performance on the Stefani tour "has been at best a PC show. Children of all ages have been attending. We have no complaints." To this point, no dates have been canceled and Akon remains on tour, which also features Lady Sovereign.

"It was never my intention to embarrass the management of my family in any way, especially those under the age of 18," Akon said in a public statement of apology for the Trinidad debacle. "I pledge to all that we will strive to make sure this type of incident does not happen again."

Additional reporting by Antony Bruno in Denver.
Taking Stock

Layoffs At WMG, Def Jam Don't Shock The Market

Noise about cutbacks at the majors isn’t having much impact on the stock markets.

The 400-person layoff at Warner Music Group, announced May 8 (billboard.biz, May 7), failed to move the needle on stock price as company shares closed at $17.03 on May 10, down only slightly from the $17.30 price the stock closed at on May 7.

Meanwhile, Universal Music Group is in the process of quietly letting go 40 staffers at Island Def Jam Music Group (IDJMG), sources say. Vivendi’s stock price dipped to $30.87 on May 10 from the previous day’s close of $30.98. But one analyst says that even if UMG’s actions were being publicized as WMG’s were, he doubts that would have played any role in the price because the cuts are so small in the context of the parent’s overall business.

WMG’s second-quarter financial results - in which it reported a net loss of $27 million, or 19 cents per share, compared with a loss of $7 million, or 5 cents per share, a year earlier - were announced early May 8.

While the company expects to take a $65 million-$90 million write-off for the realignment, the layoffs are not expected to yield annual savings because the company plans on reinvesting in higher-priced digital staff and digital initiatives. WMG executive VP/CFO Michael Fleisher said, according to a transcript of a company conference call with Wall Street analysts, "There are two roads to value, earnings and events, and securities respond much more dramatically to events."

The Wall Street analyst says, "I think the market is more concerned about top-line issues than cutbacks."

While WMG revenue has declined 2% to $784 million in the quarter ended March 31, the company’s share of the U.S. album market stood at 19.3% as of May 6, compared with 18.1% in the same period last year. But most of that gain came because of acquisitions. In the latter half of last year, WMG acquired Ryko and Roadrunner Records, which between them account for 1.4% in market share. On a unit basis, in first-quarter 2006, WMG generated 34.8 million U.S. album scans versus 30.9 million units this year.

The decline in physical album sales was partially offset by $111 million in digital revenue, or 14% of company revenue for the quarter.

Within WMG, its U.S. distribution arm WEA so far appears to be the most heavily affected by the realignment. The company let go 70 staffers serving brick-and-mortar merchants as part of the company’s overall move to become more digitally focused.

As part of the restructuring, WEA will start servicing smaller accounts through telemarketing rather than personal sales calls. Nonetheless, the company’s sales representatives will still regularly visit 165 accounts.

Meanwhile, a similar realignment appears to be going on at UMG. During the last three months, UMG Distribution has let go about 15 field staff, even as it began hiring a 23-person staff to handle digital sales and marketing, a responsibility it recently inherited.

The IDJMG layoffs, however, do appear to be related to a drop in market share. As of May 6, the label’s U.S. market share year to date was 4.4%, down from 5.7% in the corresponding period in 2006. In terms of scans, so far in 2007 the label has shifted 7.04 million album units versus 10.9 million units in the corresponding period last year.

But sources within UMG say the IDJMG moves are unrelated to the distribution layoffs and there is not a big downsizing plan on the table at the moment.

"As any fiscally responsible company, we are always looking at our business," a company spokesman said in a statement. "This includes shifting resources to meet the demands of the marketplace."

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Broadcast Battle

Debate Over Performance Royalties Back On

Battle lines are forming in what promises to be a historical fight for a change in copyright law. Record label and artist groups are readying themselves to lobby Congress for a right to receive performance royalties from traditional broadcasters. But the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) is moving rapidly to gain the higher ground, already sending a letter urging senators and representatives to oppose any attempt to levy a "performance tax" on local radio broadcasters.

While songwriters and publishers have long held a public performance right in their compositions, the same is not true for musicians, vocalists and record companies for their sound recordings. TV and radio broadcasters and jukebox operators successfully opposed past efforts to secure a sound recording performance right for analog transmission (e.g., terrestrial radio). Congress only granted this right for digital performances.

"The law requires satellite, cable and Internet radio to pay performers a royalty, but not terrestrial radio," says Hal Pon- ter, director of government relations for musicians' union AFM. "This integrity should end, especially now when terrestrial radio, with HD, can compete more effectively." Rates paid by satellite radio are confidential; radio carried on cable and satellite TV has been paying 7.25% of net revenue. A pending Copyright Royalty Board proceeding will set new rates for all these services. Meanwhile, webcasters with noninteractive services are challenging new rates set recently by the CRB (see story, page 17). Webcasters with interactive services negotiate rates directly with each label.

Outside the United States, nearly every country requires broadcasters to pay labels and performers. Across Europe, broadcasters pay about 4%-5% of their net revenue for sound recordings and pay a similar amount for compositions, IFPI consultant Lauri Rechtschaid says.

On one side of the fight are the RIAA, the American Assn. of Independent Music, the Recording Academy, the Academy of Composers, Authors and Publishers, the Recording Academy, musicians' and vocalists' unions AFM and AFTRA, and SoundExchange. On the other side of the NAB, which represents about half the 14,000 U.S. radio stations, 1,100 of the 1,750 local TV stations and five broadcast networks.

Timing may be on the side of those supporting the performance royalty. RIAA chairman/CEO Mitch Bainwol points out that lawmakers now understand more about music copyrights. Members of the Judiciary Committee, where a bill would begin, have been hearing testimony about portable digital devices in connection with the Perform Act (Billboard, May 13, 2006) during the last year. They've also been learning more about radio during committee hearings over the proposed merger of satellite broadcasters XM and Sirius.

Public opinion may help the NAB, which paints the record industry as trying to tax broadcasters for a couple of years of dismal record sales. NAB spokesman Dennis Wharton argues that radio stations already generate enormous revenue for labels and artists through the promotional value of airplay.

KIDS 'N PLAY

Mathew Knowles, Planet Toys Partner On Hip-Hop Toy Line

Music World Entertainment founder/CEO Mathew Knowles, a proud grandfather who appreciates hip-hop, is now expanding his company's footprint into the children's market. Knowles has entered into a 50/50 joint venture with Planet Toys to create the hip-hop-inspired toy line Baby Jamz, Billboard has learned.

A Baby Jamz CD series will accompany the toy line, which arrives in late July and will be sold exclusively at Wal-Mart. The initial Baby Jamz collection comprises five toys, including the Mixmaster Chair and one CD, "Baby Jamz Nursery Rhymes, Vol. 1.

Price points range from $6.99 to $24.99. Six additional Baby Jamz-branded CDs are scheduled to arrive by year's end.

Knowles' daughter Solange is a featured singer on the CD series, and her son Juelz is the face of Baby Jamz. His image appears on all packaging and in all TV and print ads.

Baby Jamz is the first music-intensive partnership for Planet Toys, which has licensing deals with

General Motors, Harley-Davidson, Scholastic and other brands. Discussions between Knowles and Planet Toys president/CEO David Caner began nearly a year ago. Knowles points to a lack of children's toys that reflect urban society as the main impetus. "There is a real opportunity for us to make a benchmark here, with Planet Toys making the toys and Music World making the music," Knowles says.

Cannon concurs, adding, "Toy companies rarely think outside the box. With Baby Jamz, we're going after that hip-hop mom."

According to Cannon, the second Baby Jamz toy collection will arrive next spring. It will include a "drum machine" that attaches to a car seat.

Looking ahead, Knowles says his other daughter, Beyoncé, will be involved musically on upcoming Baby Jamz CDs. He also has plans to evolve Baby Jamz into a kids clothing line, linking it to House of Dereon, the high-end fashion line launched by his wife Tina and Beyoncé, and its sister line, Dereon, helmed by Beyoncé and Solange.

20%-50%

Percentage of net revenue that broadcasters across Europe pay for sound recordings

Big Audio Dynamite

L.A. Bubble-Gum Act Exploding On Airwaves

Radio and the Web aren't sleeping on the Audio Club. "Sumthin' Serious," released on New York-based indie Ultra, is scoring adds nationwide, and has sold 9,000 downloads since its March 19 release, according to Nielsen SoundScan. The song continues to rack up weekly digital sales in the 1,000-1,500 range.

"I found myself reciting 'Sumthin' Serious' word for word on one listen," says Romeo, music director and night jock for mainstream top 40 WHTZ (Z100) New York, the first major station to add it. "It was easy because it's all hook. The song has been in the station's top five phones since its first late-February spin.

The crafty three-minute track adapts to a number of popular trends—a rolled Dirty South "r" in rapper Brooks Buford's "sirrrio," his Randy interplay with blonde teen bombshell vocalist Ashley Alan Lee—into a bubble-gum package well-suited for teens and tweens.

"It's so valuable for someone at radio to make a decision for themselves about a piece of music not force-fed by a major label," Ultra president Patrick Moxey says. "We hand-delivered it to Romeo. He loved it and embraced it. That's true A&R, and it's very rare." The act is dance-focused Ultra's first pure pop signing in its 12 years of existence. In addition to Z100, Music Choice; WWYB Daytona, Fla.; KHTT Tulsa, Okla.; WEZB New Orleans, and 10 other geographically diverse pop stations have added the track. The Audio Club is the creation of Los Angeles producer Tommy Henrikson, who worked with Buford while he was in Atlanta rap group Rehab, and has been grooming Lee—who has that Jessica Simpson je ne sais quoi and an even better voice for pop—since she was 15.

Ultra is also set to release a club remix by Jason Nevins, which uses an Arthur Baker-approved "Planet Rock" sample, and the group will perform at Z100's Zootopia, during a free preshow with Gym Class Heroes.

"They're in the biggest top 40 [market] in the country and are already playing Zootopia During a free preshow with Gym Class Heroes.

"They're in the biggest top 40 [market] in the country and are already playing Zootopia," Moxey says. "That's unheard-of."

A full album is ready for a September release and contains two more potential singles: "Hot Bangin' Super Sexy," which "will be a summer banger," Romeo predicts, and "My Liv," an interpolation of Pete Townshend's "Let My Love Open the Door" that would make even an emo kid smile. The radio guys are salivating. "I can't wait to play it for everyone," Romeo says.

Teen vocalist ASHLEY ALAN LEE adds a Jessic Simpson factor to the Audio Club's appeal.
SHOW THEM THE MONEY

Ingenious Investment Paying Off For Travis

LONDON—The global release of the fifth album by Scottish band Travis was a significant event for the band and its label—but a milestone for London-based media investment firm Ingenious.

"The Boy With No Name," issued May 7 by Independiente in the United Kingdom and internationally through its licensing deal with Sony BMG, is the first album release to benefit from Ingenious' investment. Since January 2006, its two Venture Capital Trusts for music have invested "in the order of £16 million ($31.9 million)," in 12 projects, Ingenious commercial director Duncan Reid says. "That sum will "almost double" this summer, he adds. The VCTs, funded by individual investors, are listed on the London Stock Exchange. Projects backed to date include forthcoming albums by Peter Gabriel and the Prodigy—both, Reid says, for "seven-figure sum,—in pounds."

Formed in 1998 by Patrick McKenna, former CEO of Andrew Lloyd Webber's Really Useful Group, Ingenious has also funded film and TV productions. Music-related firms backed include artist manager Simon Fuller's 19 Entertainment and, through a private equity fund, former Chrysalis Group music division CEO Steve Lewis' 2003 startup, publisher Stage Three Music.

"Ingenious clearly understand media in the broadest sense," Lewis says. "They are brilliant strategic thinkers and great partners." Independiente founder Andy Macdonald also found the Ingenious effect "an extremely positive experience." Although neither company would reveal figures, Macdonald says the investment covers "every element" of the Travis album, from recording to marketing. "With the extra financial support," he says, "we can now really deeply into the marketing campaigns at every level."

Independiente's roster also includes singer/songwriters Martina Topley-Bird and David Ford, alternative rock act Embrace and Malian "desert blues" band Tinariwen.

Although declining to name sales targets, Macdonald admits to "high expectations" for "The Boy With No Name." Travis has ground to make up after previous studio album "12 Memories" failed to match the chart feats of its two predecessors, "The Man Who..." (1999) and "The Invisible Band" (2001). Both were U.K. No. 12 Memories" peaked at No. 3.

Macdonald says "The Man Who..." is the band's biggest seller to date, with global sales around 4.4 million, including 2.8 million U.K. sales.

U.K. retail has been keenly anticipating the album, claims Mel Armstrong, product manager at market leader HMV. "Travis retain tremendous loyalty from fans and enthusiasm from the media," Armstrong says. "Even where a previous album may not quite have caught the prevailing mood, they always have a chance of getting the next one away, particularly if there's a great single."

Lead single "Closer" was released April 23 in the United Kingdom and hit No. 10 on the May 5 Official U.K. Charts Co. list. Reid says Independiente's track record with Travis was key to its choice for investment. "We're not A&R people," he says.

Macdonald approached Ingenious on his accountant's recommendation and says he was hooked by its "phenomennally accurate, insightful overview of the business."

Each VCT-funded project is a joint venture, with investment recouped through profit-sharing on all label revenue connected with the record. "If the record company is earning money," Reid says, "we expect that to go into the pot."

Ingenious' other current projects include albums by singer/songwriter Indiana, Gregg, alternative rock quintet Vatican DC and U.K. pop/rock quintet Passenger. It also has two "live event" VCTs, funding music-based events and exhibitions such as this year's inaugural Knowsley Hall Music Festival (June 23-24) in Liverpool, headlined by the Who and Kneale. Although Ingenious' list of potential projects is increasing, Reid doesn't expect many other companies to copy its model just yet. "Raising the money and running VCTs is incredibly hard work," he says. "Blowing our own trumpet a bit, it takes a company with a brand like Ingenious to give investors the confidence to go in."

Additional reporting by Steve Adams.
HOME-GROWN DOWN UNDER
Local Talent Dominating Australian Charts Like Never Before

SYDNEY—Australian music is on a roll at home and ready to rock on abroad.

Recently published data from the Australian Recording Industry Assn. shows seven domestic acts in its list of the top-selling albums of 2006—“an all-time record,” ARIA chief executive Stephen Peach says. In 2005, the year-end top 10 contained only one local act, and in 2004 only one made the list as well.

ARIA has no overall market-share figure for domestic repertoire, but says it accounted for 37% of sales on the 100 albums in its full year-end chart, up from 27% in 2005.

A surge of confidence generated by that performance is encouraging labels and acts to push harder in global markets. However, domestic talent’s rise comes at a time when the value of the Australian market is shrinking.

The ARIA reports retail value down 3.1% to S511.7 million Australian ($422.1 million)—although that compares favorably with a 9.3% fall in 2005. Total volume was up 27.1% to 80.3 million units.

Denis Handlin, Sydney-based chairman/CEO of Sony BMG Music Entertainment Australia (SMEA), attributes the state of the market to “strong new releases, great back-catalog marketing and heavy discounting by [mass merchants].”

The ARIA figures were boosted by digital sales: 320% rise to 20.9 million units, with value up 250% to S27.8 million Australian ($22.9 million). However, physical CD sales value fell 5.1% to S421.9 million Australian ($348 million) despite a 7.9% volume rise to 49.8 million units.

“Discounts and releases increased in 2006 versus 2005, which meant that we sold more units for less money,” Sydney-based Warner Music Australia president Ed St. John says. “The relative movement of these two indicators tends to indicate that the profitability of the industry suffered more than the drop in sales value would indicate.”

Industry sources say that an average new release retails at around S30 ($24.70), but mass merchants have been ruthlessly price-cutting. By selling new releases at cost price of $17.99 ($14.80), mass merchant Big W has doubled its share in the recorded music market to 10% during the past two years, according to label/retail estimates. Other multiples are also racking at similar prices, increasing pressure on traditional music retailers.

Industry sources say domestic repertoire has stayed strong, however, because the majors have maintained A&R and marketing spending—although Sony BMG, EMI, and Warner all cut staff during the year.

“Like any other business, it’s about adjusting all aspects to the economic reality,” Sydney-based Universal Music Australia managing director George Ash says. “On the ARIA’s year-end chart, the biggest-selling local act of 2006 was SMEA pop act Human Nature, with its Motown tribute albums ‘Reach Out’ and ‘Dancing In the Street’ selling a combined 630,000 copies. Human Nature was followed by rock trio Wolfmother, with 500,000 units of its self-titled Modular/Universal debut, then ‘Australian Idol’ winner Damien Leith, with 300,000 copies of ‘The Winner’s Journey’ (SMEA).”

The other Australian acts in the 2006 top 10 were electro-rockers Rogue Traders (Sony BMG), rock trio Eskimo Joe (Mushroom/Warner), comedian the 12th Man (Virgin/EMI) and pop duo the Veronicas (Warner).

St. John attributes the local talent boon to “music that is relevant to people here, an extremely buoyant live-touring market and positive support for Australian music at radio and other media.”

The next challenge facing Australian labels is proving those artists’ credentials by positioning them on a global stage (see sidebar).

“Breaking our acts here and abroad is still paramount,” Ash says. “But it is very difficult and expensive, and an act has to be prepared to put in two years to break the overseas market.”

“In an increasingly fragmented media,” Sydney-based artist manager John Watson says, “it’s [local acts] who have time to cover all bases to make multiple impressions in Australia and not international acts. The challenge is whether they can [cover those bases] abroad.”

The first quarter of 2007 saw continued chart success by domestic acts, with major albums from Silverchair (Eleven the Music Co./EMI), Thirsty Merc (Warner), John Butler Trio (Jarrah/MGM) and Kate Ceberano (Universal) all scoring highly. Upcoming releases by Missy Higgins (EMI) and Powderfinger (Universal) are expected to debut at No. 1.

Such domestic chart achievements clearly help trigger overseas interest. But equally important, Eskimo Joe’s Melbourne-based manager Catherine Hardy says, “it gives our acts, which are already business- and technology-savvy, greater confidence to tackle the global market. Eskimo Joe are now ready to give America their best shot.”

GOING GLOBAL
Five Australian Acts Looking To Make International Inroads In ’07

ESKIMO JOE
Domestic label: Mushroom Records/Warner Music Australia
Genre: Rock
Albums released to date: 3
Total albums shipped: 445,000
Background: This Perth guitar trio’s second album “A Song Is a City” deburred at No. 2 on the Australian Recording Industry Assn. (ARIA) chart in 2004. Its next album, the more arena rock “Black Fingernails Red Wine,” entered the chart at No. 1 last year.

Background: Formed in 1991 while at school, the first successful hip-hoppers to rap in Aussie accents released their debut album “A Matter of Time” in 1999. Fourth album “The Hard Road” debuted on the ARIA chart at No. 1 in April 2006. On May 12, it released a “restring” version of the album with contributions by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.

Overseas plans: Currently playing U.K. dates, followed in June/July by shows in Europe and South Africa. Label reports overseas label and booking agency interest.

HUMAN NATURE
Domestic label: Sony BMG
Genre: Pop
Albums released to date: 7
Total albums shipped: 2 million
Background: Sydney R&B vocal act started doing Motown covers at school in 1989. Act has had 17 top 40 hits, while each of its seven albums since 1997 have gone multiplatinum.

The two chart-topping Motown tribute albums allowed act to take its slick live show to arenas.

Overseas plans: New Zealand dates in May, Las Vegas shows in June, U.S. booking agent to be confirmed. Sony BMG considering U.S. release of the act’s two most recent albums.

ROGUE TRADERS
Domestic label: Peppermint Blue/Sony BMG
Genre: Pop/dance
Albums released to date: 1
Total albums shipped: 100,000
Background: An early version of the band formed in 2003 had minimal success until the 2005 arrival of soap actress/singer Natalie Bassingthwaighte saw “Voodoo Child” become a top five hit in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. Debut album “Here Come the Drums” (2006) peaked at No. 2 in Australia and No. 47 in the United Kingdom.


SILVERCHAIR
Domestic label: Eleven the Music Co./EMI Music Australia
Genre: Rock
Albums released to date: 5
Total albums shipped: 6 million
Background: In 1995, when the band’s members were still teenagers, Silverchair’s grunge-by-numbers “Tomorrow” single was No. 1 for six weeks in Australia and was the most-played track of the year on U.S. modern rock radio.

Debut album “Frogstomp” peaked at No. 9 in the States. Experimentation on subsequent albums saw the band become the sole Aussie act to have five chart-topping albums in Australia.


HILLTOP HOODS
Domestic label: Obese Records
Genre: Hip-hop
Albums released to date: 5
Total albums shipped: 250,000

Background: This Perth guitar trio’s second album “A Song Is a City” deburred at No. 2 on the Australian Recording Industry Assn. (ARIA) chart in 2004. Its next album, the more arena rock “Black Fingernails Red Wine,” entered the chart at No. 1 last year.

Brick-And-Mortar Brainstorming

When packaging is one of the main topics at the NARM annual convention, it is usually considered an uneventful meeting ("It's Not Easy Being Green," Billboard, May 12). But at the gathering held April 29-May 2 in Chicago, packaging innovations represented just one idea of many floating around about how to reinvigorate CD sales.

Beyond the value equation surrounding packaging, Sony BMG Music Entertainment U.S. Sales reportedly proposed a slate of hybrid configurations that sliced, diced and cemented physical and digital (see story, page 7). Meanwhile, Warner Music Group previewed its forthcoming Music Video Interactive format, formerly called the DVD Album. Finally, sources say there was a lot of discussion from all majors about how to achieve lower pricing for catalog titles.

All in all, some merchants said it was the convention that the U.S. industry should have had three years ago, when it was apparent that the downturn in CD sales was here to stay.

Of course, not everyone felt that way. The digital players, even though they've yet to pull their own weight, spent a good amount of time standing around smirking at the brick-and-mortar attempts to reinvigorate CD sales.

Besides the digital guys, "everyone has a realistic view of the industry and is engaged in discussion about how digital fits with the brick-and-mortar marketplace," Value Music president Rob Perkins says. "It's in everyone's interest to make sure we manage the channel change properly. Even if it eventually goes away, physical will be around for a long time, and we have to work" so that the slide of CDs is gradual.

Meanwhile, some independent merchants apparently aren't feeling the slide. Dimple Records has taken on another Tower location, a 5,000-square-foot store in Davis, Calif. This marks the second location that the now six-unit Sacramento, Calif.-based Dimple scooped up in the wake of the liquidation of the superstore chain. In February, Dimple opened a 10,000-square-foot store in Citrus Heights, in a former Tower location. Likewise, Phoenix-based Zia is looking to open a second store in Las Vegas, which will give the chain nine stores.

Speaking of independents, Dedry Jones, the owner of local outlet the Music Experience, held a 90-minute event called "The Experience." Since 2002, Jones has staged more than 20 in which he features an older-demo R&B artist with a new album in an interview setting, sometimes followed by a performance and usually a CD signing. For this installment, Jones interviewed hometown-born Chaka Khan, who talked about growing up in Chicago and closed with a performance to track of "Angel," a song from her new album to be released on Bungandy Records in August. About 50 Music Experience customers attended, as did 100 or so conventiongoers. Too bad more of the latter didn't make it—few marketing events speak so well to the independent community's reputation for innovation.

Due to deadline pressures, Retail Track did not get to see all the artists playing in and around the NARM convention, but the few I did see were great. Sony BMG Music Entertainment U.S. Sales president Jordan Katz even joined 12 Stones member Eric Weaver for two blues standards to wind up a Wind-up dinner, where 12 Stones had just delivered five songs to the Music Monitor Network. Right after that dinner, Retail Track ventured off campus to attend Victory's showcase and enjoyed a high-energy set delivered by Bayside.

During the convention, I met with Virgin Entertainment Group CEO Simon Wright, who was annoyed that his chain, which is one of the strongest performers in the U.S. market, hadn't been nominated for a retailer of the year award. In its own inimitable way, the Virgin Megastore chain playfully presented its case for the award in a video specially made for the convention. We'll have to wait until next year to see if his appeal was heard by labels.

I'll close with two ideas heard at the convention. During the keynote panel, Universal Records senior VP of marketing Kim Garner suggested that every store in America should have an endcap featuring music heard in the last week on TV shows. And Criminal Records owner Eric Levin says his store is selling more vinyl than ever. "We thought we lost the younger demos, but they want to buy vinyl and CDs with extra value," he said. "We have to find someway to combine vinyl with a digital component."
To push through the piles of new releases and get noticed, an act might need a bit of assistance these days—the U.S. music industry issued 75,774 album titles in 2006, 15,000 more than the previous year, Billboard reported in last week’s issue. So you’ve got to make yourself stand out from the pack. But no one said that’s always going to make for a smooth ride.

The guys of Cartel understood when they signed on the dotted line with Dr Pepper that they would likely encounter a few bumps along the way. And they have.

“We knew there would be as much opposition as there is understanding to what we’re doing,” Cartel frontman Will Pugh says. “The same Web sites that have praised us in the past now see us as doing a very stupid thing.”

The “stupid thing” Pugh is referring to is this: On May 24, the Atlanta-based band will enter a glass house—a glass house, if you will—on Pier 54 in New York. The five bandmates will eat, sleep, entertain friends and record their sophomore album for Epic Records. On June 12, they’ll emerge from the bubble, and treat fans to a concert on the pier.

Oh, yeah. The project is called Dr Pepper Band in a Bubble. Live streams will be offered, 24/7, at drpepperbubble.com. MTV will be on board, too, filming footage for a four-part reality TV series, which will also be available on-demand at mtv.com.

Figuring into the Bubble branding mix are KFC and Circle K stores. Epic senior VP of marketing Lee Stimmell is taking criticism of the “band in the bubble” with a grain of salt. “There’s the trade—the world we live in—and the consumers,” he says. “The consumers win out in terms of numbers—and they don’t feel what the trade feels.”

Without question, Cartel is receiving more media coverage for this upcoming promotion than it has ever received before. The band’s manager Chris Black says he’d rather take a risk like this than see if the major label machine works. “This guaranteed a second Cartel album coming out sooner rather than later,” he says.

While in the bubble, the band recorded its sixth album. “Mosh Mash!” When released later this year, the album failed to crack the top 50, making it the band’s only album not to reach the top 10 of Australia’s album chart.

Nevertheless, Band in a Bubble is destined to expose Cartel to millions of consumers nation-wide via online and offline platforms. Those purchasing Dr Pepper product will have access to free Cartel ringtones and wallpaper. A Dr Pepper sweepstakes will give fans the chance to win numerous prizes, including all-expenses-paid trips to experience the band’s live concert June 12. Additionally, Dr Pepper point-of-purchase displays in supermarkets and big-box chains will feature Cartel.

KFC and Circle K, meanwhile, will have displays for Band in a Bubble in 5,000 and 400 locations nationwide, respectively. The Bubble and band’s logos will appear on 13 million KFC bags, which include a code for a free music download. Those purchasing Dr Pepper at Circle K will have access to free music downloads.

For this promotion, Dr Pepper worked closely with Medi-edge, which planned and put together the entire concept, and TV production company True Entertainment.

It is clear that Cartel and Dr Pepper expect to raise awareness of their respective brands and sell more music and soda. But Dr Pepper VP of marketing Andrew Springate says it’s also about connecting to the brand’s core consumers: 20- to 30-year-olds. “We’re always looking for additional ways to bring more to consumers. This is one such way.”

Indeed, Noah Kerner, CEO of New York-based agency Noise Marketing, says every brand needs to change it up and be playful to keep consumers engaged. “Why does Google need to redesign the logo on their home page?” he says. “The question is: Why don’t more brands take themselves less seriously?”

Cartel’s second album drops July 24.

BINGO, says Robert Passikoff, president of brand consulting firm Brand Keys, adding, “Epic benefits because Dr Pepper is putting lots of money into this—something the label would never do in today’s market.”

This is not lost on Pugh. “We’re in a gray zone. We’ve sold a couple hundred thousand copies of [album debut] ‘Chroma’. We’re content where we are. We’ve accomplished something we never thought we would, playing to 800-1,500 fans each night.”

“We could’ve easily not done the bubble and hope that our next single gains traction,” he adds. “But to be fair, a lot of people don’t know about Cartel. This will help with that.”

But how much it will help remains to be seen. In 2004, Australian band Regurgitator participated in a similar Band in a Bubble concept for a reality TV series in its homeland.

Paul McCartney’s 2006 chess recording “Ecce cor Meum” (EMI Classics) took the best album award at the U.K. record industry’s Classical Brit Awards May 3 in London. The album features the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, conducted by Gavin Greenway, plus boys’ choirs from King’s College, Cambridge and Magdalen College, Oxford.

McCartney won in a category voted by listeners to national commercial radio station Classic FM. A panel of classical reviewers from the U.K. media chose the critics’ award, which was won by Freiberg Baroque Orchestra, RIAS Kammerchor and Rene Jacobs for “Mozart—La Clemenza di Tito” (Harmonia Mundi).

The remaining six core categories were determined by an industry academy. The winners included Deutsche Gramophon-signed soprano Anna Netrebko, who was named singer of the year, while the Berliner Philharmoniker and conductor Simon Rattle took classical recording of the year for “Holst: The Planets” (EMI Classics).

The gala is organized by the BPI and sponsored by state-owned bank National Savings & Investment.—Lars Brandle

For 2/4/7 branding news and analysis, see billboard.biz/branding.
Rates Up For Grabs
Digital Services Catch Artist Groups Off Guard

Internet radio will shut down July 15. All small webcasters and most large webcasters will go broke, and it's because the Copyright Royalty Board set new royalty rates that webcasters must pay to labels and musicians to stream their recordings. This is the message a new coalition called SaveNetRadio shared with musicians at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival this month to gain support for a federal bill that would throw out the new rates.

Is it true that webcasters will go out of business when 2006 royalties are due in July? Are musicians or giant digital media companies the real beneficiaries of the Internet Radio Equality Act, which would "nullify" the CRB decision? How much of the information that webcasters and other groups share with others is fact and how much is one-sided advocacy? At the root of these issues is an even more pressing question: Who's informing indie labels, producers and musicians about decisions that affect their livelihoods?

The most striking—and impressive—aspect of the SaveNetRadio movement is how quickly and effectively a digital media trade group and webcasters got their message out to thousands of influential consumers, artists, decision-makers and legislators after the CRB rejected webcasters' proposed royalty rates (Billboard, March 24)—and how groups formed to represent professional artists were caught off guard.

As of May 1, more than 5,000 artists sent letters through the SaveNetRadio Web site to their congressional representatives, says Jake Ward, a spokesman for the coalition. That was before the group hit New Orleans and before presenting their positions to nearly 100 legislative staff members. Webcasters like Live365 have prominently posted messages on their sites urging their listeners—nearly a million—to oppose the royalty rates by clicking on a link.

By May 4, co-sponsors for the bill (H.R. 2060), introduced by Reps. Jay Inslee, D-Wash., and Donald Manzullo, R-Ill., reached 42.

The decision on new royalty rates "was a win to celebrate," says one source, who represents professional artists. "Who would expect artists to go to the other side? We didn't have a PR campaign ready."

Musicians' union AFM has directly contacted its members about the issue. As of May 4, more than 1,600 AFM members have written Congress in support of the decision, the union reports. At press time, SoundExchange and vocalists' union AFTRA posted support for the CRB decision on their Web sites; the Recording Academy was considering writing a letter to members; and the Record Industry Association of America Coalition was in the process of preparing letters for its members. A couple of trade groups are quietly beginning to lobby against the bill.

So who is SaveNetRadio? It doesn't exactly say on the site: "Instead of relying on legally filing appeals in the CRB and the courts, the SaveNetRadio Coalition has been formed to represent every webcaster, every Net Radio listener, and every artist who enjoys and benefits from this medium." And it doesn't state whether the artists are professional, who depend on royalties to pay for their basic needs, or artists who enjoy creating music but work in other professions.

The domain name registration shows that the savcntradio.org domain name was created March 3, less than 24 hours after the CRB decision on March 2. It is registered to the Digital Media Assn.

SaveNetRadio's Ward confirms that DIA, one of 24 parties in the CRB proceeding representing webcasters, initiated the grass-roots campaign and paid the seed money for it. DIA's board of directors is AOL, Apple, Live 365, RealNetworks and Yahoo.

SoundExchange, the sole party in the CRB proceeding representing copyright owners, musicians and vocalists, doesn't have a paid lobbyist. Its executive director meets with congressional staff. Its 18-member board of directors are six representatives for the major labels and the RIAA; two for indie labels; two for indie music trade groups; two artist managers; five from artist organizations, their trade groups and their unions; and one business manager. Indie music and/or artist representatives combine to control two-thirds of the board votes.

Lobbying for legislation, like representing a party in litigation, is all about advocating for one side of an issue. After all, millions of dollars and livelihoods are often at stake. Watching the legal and political advocacy campaigns over webcaster royalty rates is watching democracy in action. ....

Messages on Live365's Web site urged listeners to oppose the new royalty rates by clicking on a link.

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Please email cover letter and resume to dmoser@billboard.com, with job code “BBH 17” in the subject line. No calls, please.

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In the latest example of the rock world doing more for humanity than any other industry ever has, Amnesty International’s “Instant Karma: The Campaign to Save Darfur” will be released May 25. Ever heard of an oil company doing anything for anybody?

The idea in a good one, having acts cover songs written by John Lennon to bring attention to the Sudanese government-backed genocide going on in its western province of Darfur. This will greatly assist the good work already being done by George Clooney and others trying to focus a distracted planet on its latest nightmare.

Green Day’s version of “Working Class Hero” was released last week and has some of Lennon’s original vocal on it. Also participating are R.E.M., Corinne Bailey Rae, U2, the Black Eyed Peas, Christina Aguilera, Jack Johnson, Snow Patrol and Aerosmith. Obviously the project has been endorsed by Yoko Ono Lennon andSean Lennon, and they will donate their publishing royalties as well.

In other news, the Zombies will perform the classic 1968 album “Odyssey and Oracle” in its entirety next March (let’s not rush into anything) at London’s Shepherd’s Bush Empire. Only their great guitar player, Paul Atkinson, who died in 2004, will be missing. It will be the first time they’ve ever played it live since the album and their biggest hit “Time of the Season” came out after they broke up. Luckily for all of us, Al Kooper happened to be working at CBS for a brief time as a troubleshooter/producer, and he forced the company to release it even though the band had broken up, knowing how exceptional the work was.

Thank you, Al.

And file under I Get Around. The White Stripes will tour every province and territory in Canada no matter how small or out of the way. Like the Rolling Stones finally playing Montana last year, this is a very cool thing to do. I cannot imagine growing up in an area where the big rock bands never come. Absolutely horrifying.

So, we salute you, White Stripes, and hopefully the idea will catch on.

See you on the radio.

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**COOLEST GARAGE SONGS**

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**COOLEST GARAGE ALBUMS**

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The Indies

**TODD MARTENS**
tmartens@billboard.com

**The Indies**

**Left Of The Dial**

**Indies Build Coalition To Advance Mainstream Airplay**

Since helping to persuade the four major radio broadcast companies to promise to devote more time to independent music, the American Assn. of Independent Music has been staffing a radio committee to ensure such a pledge does not go unfulfilled. The U.S. indie trade group has lined up a 10-label team to build relationships with the broadcast groups—Clear Channel Communications, CBS Radio, Entercom Communications and Citadel Broadcasting—and to monitor the implantation of more indie programming.

A.B.B. Records, Concord Music, Dualtone, Equity Music Group, Kill Rock Stars, Koch Records, Robbins Entertainment, Sunnyside Records, Touch & Go and Ultra Records will comprise the committee. The goal, AAIM president Richard Bengloff says, is “to be a resource” in which the broadcast groups “feel good about calling up.”

Earlier this year, it was announced that the broadcast groups had agreed to a radio accord in which indie label content would be showcased on stations in 4,400 30-minute segments between the hours of 6 p.m. and midnight (Billboard, March 17). Bengloff then solicited member labels to volunteer for a radio committee that will be chaired by former Armatex president Touch & Go head of radio/TV promotion Sara Tobiert says that “the goal was getting a coalition of people that are working together to help promote an independent music community that is really exciting. It’s also a complex puzzle to solve, and there are many question marks and challenges that will require careful thought and collaboration between all involved parties.”

Indeed, it remains unclear when such indie blocks will begin airing. “This is not a race,” Bengloff writes in the latest AAIM newsletter, which he shared with us at the recent NARM convention in Chicago. “It’s also to be determined as to how each corporation will implement the time slots. It will be up to the broadcast groups to determine whether the periods will be syndicated or chosen by local programmers. Here’s hoping for the latter, as it would likely result in more unsigned and regional programming.”

We’ve heard a number of indie labels deride such blocks as an “indie ghetto,” and cynicism is to be expected, and even warranted, when dealing with mainstream radio. In fighting for the 30-minute time periods, the hope was ultimately that it would prevent stations from claiming that the commitment had been fulfilled by presenting music from one or two indie acts during the course of a week.

Bengloff urges patience. “We want to take our time and foster an atmosphere of cooperation so that the station groups will want to work with the independent music community as a resource,” he writes.

Tobiert adds that sales of indie music are significantly higher than its representation on radio implies. Even with the aid of the Internet, she’s confident that indie music—even the rare and daring sounds of the likes of CocoaRosie—have a large, untapped audience.

“I’m honored to have the opportunity to be involved and will be doing my best to help make this a success for everyone,” Tobiert says. “I really believe that increasing the amount of independent music on commercial airwaves will be received positively by the listening audience . . . I’d like to think that a few years from now, the term ‘top 40′ could be perceived as something far different from what it seems today.”
MONICA Giraldo didn't realize the showcase she had just performed at the Billboard Latin Music Conference in Miami was a competition. Until she won.

"I felt very comfortable, and suddenly I realized at the end when everybody had done their showcase that they wanted us back onstage," the Colombian singer/songwriter says. "Suddenly my name came up, and I was like, 'What?'"

But her victory at the Heineken-sponsored "We Hear the Future" contest came after a concerted effort by Giraldo and her Colombian indie label, Watts Us/Codiscos, to expose her music internationally.

After minoring in music at Bogota's Universidad de Los Andes, Giraldo studied songwriting and performance at Boston's Berklee College of Music. Colombia "is a country full of rhythms and cultural influences," says Giraldo, who plays guitar and percussion, including the traditional alegría drum. "But Berklee offered the possibility of getting me in touch with popular music from around the world.

Giraldo's sound, which she describes as "acoustic and contemporary" with Colombian influences, recalls the mellow artistry of Sade, Marisa Monte and Bebel Gilberto. After recording and performing with her fellow Berklee alums in Boston, Giraldo came on her own, establishing ongoing relationships with talent bookers and scoring gigs in Puerto Rico and Miami and at Bogota's International Jazz Festival and Mexico City's Spring Festival.

She also had a weekly residency for a year and a half at now-defunct Bogota club Distrito.

"You can make a statement with your music without being a part of a label," says Giraldo, who self-released her first two albums and was a winner of the annual Billboard World Song Contest. But "you have to be active... [and] you have to find the right team that works for you in terms of making things happen."

For Giraldo, that team is now Watts Up, whose rock act the Monas won last year's "We Hear the Future" contest. Head of international A&R Dennis Murcia says Giraldo fits "perfectly into the label's goal of developing Colombian acts with international potential. Murcia is looking into bringing Giraldo to showcases at the Latin Alternative Music Conference, MIDEM and Hear Music locations, 'where people can see her talent in a minimalistic setting.'"

Giraldo's still-untitled new album will be released simultaneously this summer in Colombia and the United States, Murcia says.

Most important, Giraldo says, "The first thing is to have the desire, then you'll find a way."

—Ayala Ben-Yehuda

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


colombian surprise
Latin Music Conference Winner Monica Giraldo Gets In Touch With The World

LATIN UPFRONT

EN BREVE

FARM FOUNDATION

Venezuelan star Ricardo Montaner has inaugurated the new facilities at La Ventana de los Ciegos, the farm in Southwest Miami where he houses his Ventana de los Ciegos foundation. Montaner was presented with Billboard's Spirit of Hope Award at the 2007 Billboard Latin Music Awards for his work to benefit children. This includes the work he and wife Marlene do through La Ventana, which provides several forms of therapy and counseling, including musical therapy, for children with Down syndrome, autism and cerebral palsy. La Ventana is a working farm that houses an array of animals, including horses and cattle.

—LC

CERATI CAPS ALT FEST

Mexico's monumental alternative music fest, ViveLatino, took place May 5-6 at Mexico City's Foro Sol. More than 60 bands—a veritable who's who of Latin-alternative—performed at the eighth annual edition of the festival, including Calle 13, Café Tacuba, Cuarteto de Nos, Rata Blanca, Lucybel, Ozomatli, Sargento Garcia, Chetes and Eli Guerra. The two-day fest ended with a performance by Argentine rocker Gustavo Cerati, playing the last stop of his Latin-American tour. Organizers estimate some 150,000 people attended the fest, which was presented by concert promoter Ocesa, with sponsorships from telephone company Movistar, among others. The success of Vive Latino has spawned sister festivals in other countries, including Ecuador and Chile.

—LC

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

The latest celebrity child to enter the Latin music scene, Alexander Acha, son of pop icon Emmanuel, and a Berklee College of Music graduate, has been signed to Warner Music Mexico. His debut album, expected in the fall, will include his own songs as well as some written by his father.

—Teresa Aguilera

www.americanradiohistory.com

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From left, WALTER KOLM, JORGE PINO and JORGE MEJIA judge the "We Hear the Future" contest at the Billboard Latin Music Conference.

Latin Notas

LEILA COBO icobo@billboard.com

What It Takes

Label Execs Pinpoint What They Look For in New Acts

A couple of years ago, Venevision international VP Jorge Pino had an idea for a talent contest, a la "American Idol," to be included as part of the programming for the Billboard Latin Music Conference.

The notion was to place unsigned or up-and-coming acts before a panel of industry judges that they might otherwise not have access to.

The "We Hear the Future" showcase and contest, inaugurated in 2006 at the Latin Music Conference, was so successful it has since been replicated at other Billboard events.

This year in its encore presentation, the competition resulted in a tie, with two diametrically opposite artists sharing first place. Monica Giraldo is a Berklee College of Music graduate from Colombia who plays world-tined music (see profile, above), and Johnny Sigal is a Venezuelan pop singer with a look and sound reminiscent of David Bisbal.

The contrast between these two artists underscores the different approaches and criteria executives take when scouting and signing new artists. Talent, artistry and commitment were a given for our panel, which included Pino. Universal Music Latino senior VP of marketing and A&R Walter Kolm and Sony/ATV Music Publishing VP of Latin America/U.S. Latin Jorge Mejia. But so were other qualities.

Pino says he primarily looks for "complete" artists—especially those who also write their own material.

For Kolm, strong management is always appreciated. But, like Pino, he looks at the whole package. "Nowadays, it is about creating artists and long-lasting brands, not just selling records," he says.

Mejia cites "honesty, integrity and belief in his/her work, coupled with freshness" as the prime ingredients, even above artistic talent.

The "We Hear the Future" scenario was atypical for these executives. Their talent, they say, comes from a variety of sources, primarily referrals from other artists or others in the industry.

However, scouting is still alive and well. Kolm has staff nationwide seeking talent from different regions.

Once faced with talent, there is no formula in deciding who to finally sign or not. This was most evident when we asked our panel what they would do if confronted with the artists they loved, but who seemed to have limited market appeal.

Colm sees this as a time of opportunity for such acts. "The changes in the industry have made record companies seek revenue in other areas not limited to recorded sales," he says. "Within that new business model you can take more risks with artists with limited market possibilities who can nevertheless deliver that kind of wider revenue streams."

But Pino, who has signed all kinds of acts in his career, takes a more measured stance.

"Unfortunately, with the state of today's market, it would be irresponsible of me as a record executive to invest the vast resources of our company on a product that has a limited return," he says.

Mejia, though, was optimistic. "No one has a crystal ball, and it takes a collection of many small miracles for an artist to become successful. "I think a project has guts in it, if only that, and you believe in it, then you should do it. Many of the greatest things that happened to music were not viable—at first."
Promotion Not Profit

Physical Stores Go Digital, But More For Marketing Than Sales

From the big-box retailer to the indie corner store, CD retailers are flailing—if not outright sleeping—with what they once considered the enemy: digital music services.

Wal-Mart, Circuit City and Best Buy have all launched various digital music strategies, and independent retailers like New York’s Other Music are slowly entering the market, too. Do they really think they can take on the likes of iTunes just because they have a history of selling CDs? Well... no, actually. While the retailers dabbling in digital music have all taken somewhat different tacks, for now they seem more about promotion than profit.

Take the Music Monitor Network, a marketing company that launched a digital music store called Monitor This. The service sells only unprotected MP3 tracks made available by Redeye Distribution.

“We’re not delusional enough to say we can play that game,” executive director Michael Kurtz says. “It’s about marketing, not about sales,” joking that the service passed the $800 sales mark this spring. Kurtz says the goal is to create an online environment that ultimately drives traffic to the 86 physical stores operated by his 11 clients. The strategy, if not the tactics and scope, is similar to that of Wal-Mart’s digital music service, and for good reason.

Billboard estimates the massive retailer is responsible for 22% of physical CD sales, but its online digital music store is the very definition of a also-ran. Since opening the service with technology partner Liquid Audio Labs in December 2003, Wal-Mart today has a less than 2% market share among music services despite undercutting the competition on price by 11 cents per track.

But so what? Wal-Mart is using digital music in the same way it uses physical CDs—as a loss leader to lure customers. While in no way due to its music service Wal-Mart’s sales are increasing, the store will promote the Napster service in stores, it only recently launched a one-time commission for each customer sent to Napster’s site.

Best Buy has a little more skin in the game. The subscription music initiative it launched last fall with RealNetworks resembles the Rhapsody service’s look and feel, but Best Buy has branding, programming and editorial control over the homepage. As such, it seems far more toward the mainstream pop, rock and rap music so prevalent in its stores than the more obscure fare often promoted via Rhapsody proper. Best Buy also receives an ongoing revenue split for both subscribers and a la carte sales, rather than a one-off bounty, but the company isn’t counting its checks just yet.

“Although this is a more marketing effort right now,” Best Buy VP of music Jennifer "JJ" Schaibn says. "We’ll figure the money out later.”

All this focus on marketing over actual sales begs the question of whether these retailers, Amoeba Records hinged at such a plan last year, but has yet to put forth anything concrete. Other Music recently unveiled a digital store, but it hardly matches the physical store’s unique reputation.

While developing such on-demand music experiences can be expensive, analysts say doing so is essential to retailers’ future. Already, the status of record stores as a place for music discovery is in danger. According to a recent NPD Group survey, only 16% of respondents named record stores as their primary source for discovering new music, behind radio (32%), family/friends (21%), online services (20%) and TV (19%).

“If you’re not supplying customers with the selection and experience that they want, they’re going to migrate to online quicker,” NPD Group’s Russ Crupnick said during a presentation at the recent NARM conference in Chicago. “You have to embrace online options. It’s compelling from both a commerce and an educational standpoint.”

Wal-Mart is currently promoting the Bobby Brown Jukebox, which, for $24.99, includes four weeks of unlimited music access to more than 2,000 songs. The $19.99 Jukebox Plus subscription allows service to the mobile phone. Artists include Jadakiss, Lil’ Flip, Dr. Dre, AKIN, and others.

For 24/7 digital news and analysis, see billboard.biz/digital.
Dr. Cornel West

The outspoken college professor shares his thoughts on hip-hop, the n-word and Don Imus. He also discusses his new album, for new imprint Hidden Beach Forum.

Talk about timing.
Dr. Cornel West's upcoming album, "Never Forget: A Journey of Revelations," touches down at a time when renewed debate over hip-hop lyrics and video imaging is still swirling post-Don Imus. Now, add to that mix Verizon's recent termination of its ties with Akon over the singer's sexually suggestive dance onstage with a female minor during a recent concert.

Due in stores June 19 (which is also Black Music Month), West's "Never Forget" will be the first release on Hidden Beach's new Hidden Beach Forum label. Tapping into R&B/hip-hop's historical role as a social force, the recording is the brainchild of Black Men Who Mean Business, an organization established by West, his brother Clifton and songwriter/producer Mike Dailey. Prince, Talib Kweli, André 3000, KRS-One, Rhymefest, the late Gerald Levert and Killer Mike are just some of the R&B/hip-hop artists featured on the disc who musically tackle such subjects as the events of Sept. 11, 2001, racial profiling, the Bush administration and the n-word.

West's discography includes 2000's "Sketches of My Culture." The author of "Race Matters" and other books, West has also taught American and African-American studies at Harvard and Yale and helped develop the storyline for the "Matrix" movie trilogy. He is currently professor of religion at Princeton University.

What is your take on the Don Imus-sparked hip-hop debate? He was willing to say some very ugly things in order to be successful. But, as a Christian, I don't believe in hating anyone. I'm more concerned about being great in terms of serving others than being successful in terms of being on the top of some financial hierarchy.

Is that hip-hop's dilemma: its original message has become overridden by its financial gains? The white brothers and sisters in the vanilla suburbs became the major consumers of this [commercial] hip-hop. And to sell well, you need a kind of vacuous living through black rebellion. I'm not putting white brothers and sisters down. I just recognize it's going to be very hard for empathetic hip-hop artists to really sell because they [consumers] tend to be more interested in some of the stereotypes, for example, male conquest of women and posturing at being bad. I think the industry pushed it to the margins, and some of these artists simply haven't been courageous enough to engage in truth-telling.

Do you agree with the movement to clean up rap lyrics? Some of these brothers deserve some serious criticism because misogyny is real. A woman's dignity, integrity and humanity need to be affirmed. But this just can't be a displacement of Don Imus for Snoop Dogg.

If you really want to reach Snoop Dogg and other rappers, you've got to make them understand that you are part of a community that they're a part of. You can criticize the ugliness and vulgarity of the Imus situation. But from there you say, "Brother, you know your mother has dignity, so when you're talking about these other sisters you can't be including all black women. Recognize that those sisters are somebody's mother, too."

That kind of criticism ends up being more effective. The only way you are going to be successful is if you engage these rappers from the inside. You don't throw rocks from the outside.

What was the impetus behind your new album?
It isn't a commentary on hip-hop. And I'm not coming in as a hip-hop scholar or critic. This is an attempt to go back to hip-hop's prophetic roots, which are about truth-telling, exposing lies and having fun. It's what I call a danceable education or a singing paideia, the Greek word for deep education. If there is one person whose spirit I try to embody on this CD, it's Curtis Mayfield. His music is about love and freedom and really informs.

This is a very political album that doesn't pull any punches. There are critiques of the Bush administration as well as of unaccountable corporate power, unaccountable police power and homophobia. We're trying to get young people to wake up and recognize they're part of a great tradition of struggle, to become organized and fight for freedom and justice.

One of the more intriguing tracks is "N-Word, Part II." Is it accurate to call it the sequel to the track that appeared on your 2001 album, "Sketches of My Culture?" Yes, Dr. Michael Eric Dyson justifies it as a term of endearment. I call for a mortatorium on the word and the resurrection of black self-repect through other words like companion, partner, friend. Tavis Smiley is the MC/referee going back and forth with a funny beat in the background. I think young folks will see what the stake is in the N-word dialogue. And it will help some of the older generation—who tend to be a little too arrogant at times—understand what's going on in young folks' minds.

Do you listen to contemporary R&B and hip-hop? I am unabashedly of the Motown, Philly Sound, Mayfield generation, so I am not feeling myself. I just love young people enough to be a part of their artistic process and try to bring in some of the older generation's insights. But I'm also open to young folks' insights because I've got to learn, too.

I've never met Lupe Fiasco, but I like that brother. Oh, lord, he's a free, young brother who honestly speaks his mind. That brother hits American terrorism, the American empire and his culture. And he talks about his skateboard. I love that kind of freedom because, in the end, we've all got to be ourselves and that takes courage.

Do you think the downturn in hip-hop sales reflects consumer dissatisfaction?
It's important to keep in mind that a decline in sales doesn't mean a decline in popularity. Hip-hop is here to stay. The question is what kind. What we're trying to say with this album is we need a rebirth of hip-hop. When it becomes hip to be in hip-hop connected to the struggle for freedom and justice, then that popularity will have a positive impact on the larger society.

In fact, myself and community activist Jeffrey Canada of Harlem's the Children's Zone [interviewed on the "60 Minutes" Anderson Cooper "Don't Snitch" segment] met with Jay-Z about 18 months ago and talked about these issues. We had a wonderful dialogue with Jay-Z, and he was very receptive.

Is there a chance you'll be working with Jay-Z and other rappers in the future as a result of that talk? Sister Oprah was kind enough to invite me on her show. She had never invited me before. But I decided not to do it because I felt it was much more important that the young artists themselves be a part of that. Once this CD comes out, however, we will see how best to proceed with this dialogue. But I am open to furthering the conversation.

So, what's next for hip-hop? 50 Cent may be another Malcolm X and turn out to be a serious progressive. You just don't know. That's why I'm not giving up on him, the Game and other rappers. I'm just trying to respectfully challenge them and make them accountable.
Paul McCartney's new album "Memory Almost Full" will be released June 5 in North America (one day earlier internationally) as the first release on Hear Music, the new label formed by Starbucks Entertainment and Concord Music Group. This ends his near 45-year association with Capitol/EMI, and thus begins a new dawn for the former Beatle.

McCartney's 21st solo album is a spirited set with occasional echoes of his '70s work with Wings. It's also his first to be available digitally—and, as he reveals exclusively in a Q&A with Billboard, there are signs of a settlement in the long-running digital-distribution saga involving EMI, Apple and his former band.

"Memory" was recorded "as long ago as October 2003," but the project on hold to complete 2005's "Chaos and Creation in the Backyard." In North America the lead song from the new set, which was recorded at various studios including Abbey Road and Rak in London, is the upbeat "Ever Present Past."

"The international emphasis track is the album's opening song, "Dance Tonight," on which McCartney plays his own discovery, the mandolin. He says, "I'm searching the instrument to try and find chords, which I did with the guitar when I was 14, probably, that freshness was brought back. It stops you getting jaded, and I'm a born-againist."

"Ever Present Past" is one of several tracks with an autobiographical, sometimes retrospective lyrical flavor. "It's quite personal," McCartney says, "but that often happens unless you've got a way to write an album's length album which barely ever worked."

Hear Music is distributed worldwide by Universal Music Group—the label has grown from the existing relationship with Universal has with Concord. UMG has distributed Concord in North America since July 2004, while a worldwide international distribution and licensing agreement was put in place at the end of 2005.

"Chaos and Creation," which earned three Grammy Award nominations and a spot for Nigel Godrich in the producer category, has worldwide sales of more than 1 million, according to EMI, of which Nielsen SoundScan reports 534,000 in the United States. That's up on his studio predecessor, 2005's "Driving Rain," at 399,000 in the States and 650,000 globally. But 1997's "Flaming Pie" has sold 676,000 units in the States and a worldwide total of $3.5 million.

"Memory" arrives only 21 months after the release of "Chaos" and a mere nine since McCartney's classical piece "Eccle Correum." That set won the best album award at the Classical BRIT Awards May 5 in London (see Global Newswire, page 16).

Conversations between Starbucks and McCartney heated up two-and-a-half months ago, after the company learned that the former Beatle's existing deal with Capitol had expired. At that time, McCartney was talking with Concord about launching Hear Music. While the roo of McCartney signing to a label from a coffee retailer might have seemed implausible to others, that didn't occur to Starbucks executives.

"We didn't consider ourselves a long shot," Starbucks Entertainment president Ken Lombard says. "Starbucks has always been in a unique position to help artists like Paul McCartney in putting their music in front of the consumer in a way that no other retailer can."

Starbucks Entertainment VP of content development Alan Mintz was dispatched to London to pitch the McCartney camp on becoming the first artist signed to Hear Music.

"It was a very thorough discussion of Paul's thoughts on the record [and] what he was looking for in terms of a partner," Lombard says. "Our job was to make sure he walked away with a true sense of not only our commitment as a company to providing our Starbucks customers with a music experience, but our commitment to the music industry as a whole."

Indeed in establishing itself as a full-service label, Starbucks and Hear Music had to ensure that it would be focused on not just distribution through its own retail locations but across all retail outlets. The company pointed to its previous "venture" with Concord which included marketing, radio and digital distributions, "Fragile" Grammy-winning "Genius Loves Company" and more.

Macca on the Making of "Memory Almost Full," His (Very) Digital Future and Working for Starbucks

By Paul Sexton
Photograph by Bill Bernstein
You must be aware that in current circumstances you're under greater scrutiny than ever with the lyrics on this album.

McCartney SPOKE to BILLBOARD in LONDON.

You started "Memory Almost Full" in 2003, so was there a period when you had three albums in the works, including your classical piece "Ecce Cor Meum"?

McCartney SPOKE to BILLBOARD in LONDON. You started "Memory Almost Full" in 2003, so was there a period when you had three albums in the works, including your classical piece "Ecce Cor Meum"?

Yes. I've always got a few things on the go. I like to be able to work that way, because if you suddenly produced your product when available, or whatever, it's nice to be able to pick up another thread. Now, even though I've got all this happening, I've got a guitar piece in the works—an orchestral guitar concerto. I never know what to think about it, but I've got a whole project I've been working on for a while. It's nice to have a bit of variety.

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A NEW CROP OF RELEASES RAISES THE QUESTION: IS HOUSTON STILL A HIP-HOP HOTBED? BY GAIL MITCHELL ILLUSTRATION BY GARY NEILL

From left: SLIM THUG, MIKE JONES and LIL' FLIP

HOUSTON AT A CROSSROADS
Houston hip-hop ruled from 20-year regional sales staple to mainstream success story in 2005, thanks to major-label breakthroughs by Paul Wall, Mike Jones, Slim Thug and Chamillionaire. At the time, Chamillionaire told Billboard, "People want something new. Timing is everything and it's up to us to take advantage while it's hot."

It's two years later and follow-up releases by Chamillionaire, Slim Thug and Mike Jones are being loaded into 2007's spring/summer pipeline. Which prompts a follow-up question: Is Houston still a mainstream hip-hop hotbed?

"This spring is Houston's big test," Houston Chronicle pop culture writer Ryder Peralta says. "Was it a flash in the pan? Or can Houston, like Atlanta, create superstars who can continue to stay on the mainstream rap scene?"

Houston still has its distinct hip-hop culture going for it. It's a sound signified by laid-back, melodic tracks and local pioneers DJ Screw's slowed-down "chopped and screwed" mix technique coupled with a lucrative indie/mixtape scene and a prediction for cars with decorative spoke rims and custom grills.

But early signs indicate that the next wave of Houston releases may have lost some heat. New releases from two of Houston's biggest hip-hop names—Lil' Flip and Paul Wall—are set to set the charts on fire. Lil' Flip's Asylum/Warner Bros. March 27 debut, "I Need Mine Ss," checked in at No. 15 on the Billboard 200 with 43,000 units in the April 14 issue. It plummeted to No. 57 the second week and now stands at No. 192. That's in contrast to his 2004 Sony release "U Gotta Feel Me," which debuted at No. 4 on the Billboard 200 at 198,000 units and has sold 1.1 million, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Paul Wall's April 3 sophomore set on Swishahouse/Asylum/Atlantic, "Get Money—Stay True," came in at No. 8 with 92,000 units in the April 21 issue and now holds No. 45 on the Billboard 200. Wall's 2006 outing, "The Peoples Champ," claimed a No. 1 first-week debut on the Billboard 200 with 176,000 units and has thus far tallied sales of $842,000.

Both Flip's and Wall's albums debuted in the top five on the Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart. But while Wall remains close to the top 10 on that chart, Flip has dropped out of the top 20.

To a large extent, these sales downturns reflect what's happening in the music industry overall—and rap especially. For first-quarter 2007, rap suffered the largest decline of any music genre, according to Nielsen SoundScan: 33.6% to 10.9 million from the 16.5 million units tabulated in first-quarter 2006. That was preceded by dismaying 2006 figures showing that rap's 59.5 million album sales represented a 20.7% drop from the 75 million units the genre sold in 2005.

Still, it's worth noting that Wall's first-week slip was close to 50%, and Flip's close to 80%.

"Other types of music are falling saleswise as well," rapper Wall says. "However, T.I. and Ludacris still came out and sold big numbers. Houston is still hot and once more new material comes out, it will get hotter."

Indeed, Flip's and Wall's early numbers may not be a reliable harbinger for Houston's next wave of releases. Sources close to the Flip release say the rapper has stacked on some of his promotional opportunities. Perhaps consequently, the rapper's "Ghetto Mindstate" is no longer on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart. And Wall's best chances may lie with his next single.

Wall's first single, "Break 'Em Off," only reached No. 58 on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs. Second single "I'm Thrown," with Jermaine Dupri, bowed at No. 94 on The Billboard Hot 100 and has climbed to No. 87. But it is middling along on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs where it is No. 52.

Prefacing the release of Wall's "Get Money—Stay True" were special tie-ins with AOL Music and a weekly YouTube series, "Get Money TV." A Michael "5000" Watts chopped and screwed version of Wall's album was issued April 17, and the rapper is making several chopped and screwed ringtones available exclusively via Virgin Mobile USA through May 11.

And that's the same day he will join Fall Out Boy, 44 and other acts on the Honda Civic Tour.

The importance of a rallying single cannot be underestimated. Houston hit the map in a big way two years ago when Jones' single "Still Tippin" assualted the airwaves. Catching Houston outsiders off guard with its fresh sound, the song (featuring guest turns by Slim Thug and Wall) became a BET- and MTV-primed megahit and catapulted Jones and other Houston rappers over the mainstream barrier.
Riding that wave, Jones' debut album, "Who Is Mike Jones?," debuted at No. 3 on The Billboard 200 with 181,000 units in April 2005. The album spent 38 weeks on that chart and has sold 1.4 million to date.

But absent the runaway provided by a hit single, it's doubly hard in this sales-challenged business environment to get a project off the ground. As proved by the response to the Flop and Wall albums, as well as to "Mr. Jones," the first single from Jones' July 10 follow-up "American Dream."

"Radio wasn't quite as strong this time around," says Violet Brown, director of urban music for Trans World in Carson, Calif. "Everyone expected Paul Wall to be huge. But he, Lil Flip and Mike Jones didn't have radio hits like they had in the past. When a regional area is hot and the release doesn't have a hit single, it can still be big in the region. But it won't sell as well in other parts of the country. People are into songs, and if they don't hear a big hit, they won't invest in an album."

Regionally, roughly one-third of the sales of Wall's and Flip's new albums have come in the South-Central region that includes Texas, Oklahoma and six other states. To date, sales of their first albums in that region were roughly 25%.

Some wonder: if the mainstream spotlight marginalized the Houston sound.

"What the national attention did was make the market more competitive," Perez says. "So many artists were picked up by the majors, it created a race. Some say that made for cookie-cutter music. I think it made artists more prolific and left Houston at a crossroads with its signature sound."

Capitalizing on the mainstream popularity that the Houston buzz afforded him, Slim Thug reaped prominent pop guest spots on Gwen Stefani's "Luxurious" and Beyoncé's "Check on It." However, he feels the core Houston sound has become a bit worn out.

"The popular kind of took away from the sound," Slim Thug says. "Since 'Still Tippin', popped the chopped and screwed hooks got old. I'm still going to do a few, but we'll just have to start another trend."

Lil' Flip says, 'I don't think the majors have run it in the ground. But what we need to do is drop albums more frequently. We've got to keep that rotation going, so we can keep this main-stream focus afoot.'

A flood of Houston releases is definitely on the way. Brown expects Jones' second single, "My 64," to "hit pretty hard."

"Paying homage to West Coast rap icon Eazy-E, the song also features Bun B and Snoop Dogg. Impacting radio May 1, the track received early airplay in Dallas, Houston, Memphis and Toledo, Ohio.

Adding to Jones' promotional spin is a DVD movie that will come packaged with the new album. The film, also titled "American Dream," was produced by (new and his Ice Age Entertainment along with Asylum/Warner Bros., TV Destined Films and Nexus Films. Set during the late '90s, the film parallels the emergence of Southern rap with Jones' own life. He has also opened Club Ice Age in Houston.

In addition to Jones, Slim Thug and Chamillionaire are slated to release new albums later this summer. And not to be denied are potential mainstream breakthroughs by such popular local faves as Devin the Dude, Lil Keke and Rob G (see sidebar).

"With all of these artists coming out, it's drawing a lot of attention once more to Houston," Asylum president Todd Moscowski says. His Warner Music Group-affiliated label was one of the first to make a major claim on the market via marketing and distribution pacts with local indie powerhouses Rap-A-Lot and Swishahouse.

Working it is what will keep the heat going, says George Daniels, owner of Chicago retail outlet George's Music Room. "It's not flying out the door like before, but Houston rap is still hot. We use to have to have a hit before we become a hit, and mon after that. As long they don't stay static, they can win. If they don't evolve, they'll be leaving money on the table."

"The trick," Moscowski says, "is whether the artists are able to develop their sound, show growth and still remain relevant in Houston. No more grills and candy paint. As long as they don't stay static, they can win. If they don't evolve, they'll be leaving money on the table."

Additional reporting by Ed Christman and Hillary Crosley.
John Lennon’s Legacy Continues...

COME TOGETHER
The John Lennon Educational Tour Bus Guide to Music and Video

Available Now!


Filled with photographs and featuring a companion DVD-Rom, Come Together is part how-to, part celebrity interviews, part technological showcase, and part travelogue. It’s truly an enlightening read for music aficionados, fans, students, songwriters, producers, engineers, teachers—anyone with an interest in music.

The non-profit John Lennon Educational Tour Bus is a professional mobile recording and multimedia studio outfitted with the latest in audio and video technological advances as well as traditional musical instruments. Since 1998, the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus has provided free hands-on programs to hundreds of thousands of people at high schools, colleges, Boys and Girls Clubs, music festivals, concerts, conventions and community organizations. Across America throughout the year, students work with the staff of onboard engineers to write an original song, record and mix the song, and create a music video of the song’s performance—all in one day! Many celebrity recording artists work with kids on the one-of-a-kind Bus, providing music and production expertise as well as guidance and encouragement. A portion of the proceeds from this book go toward supporting the non-profit John Lennon Educational Tour Bus.

The Lennon Bus is made possible by the following sponsors and contributors

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Learn more about the book at www.amazon.com/cometogether. While there, check out videos about the bus and read the exclusive blog written by bus engineers! The book is also available at Barnes and Noble Booksellers, Borders, and other fine retailers.
John Lennon Educational Tour Bus Celebrates 10 Years Of Musical Learning

BY DEBBIE GALANTE
ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN McCABE

ROLL UP!

MAY 19, 2007 | www.billboard.biz | 29
IMAGINE A “DREAM MACHINE” ON WHEELS.

It’s easy if you try. A state-of-the-art multimedia studio packed in a bus, bearing the name and “creative aura” of John Lennon. A vehicle for opening the minds of aspiring young musicians.

But the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus is no dream.

“Swing open the door, step inside, take three short steps into the main cabin and look around,” writes Mark Garvey in “Come Together,” a newly published history of the bus. “You’ve entered a different world. And whether you’re young or old, if you’re a person who harbors music, video-editing or any related technical aspirations, you know you’ve just walked into a candy shop.”

Garvey captures the essence of the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus, which has been exposing young people to opportunities within the recording industry for the past 10 years. The bus includes a 45-foot-long recording and multimedia studio as well as a 16-foot-long trailer carrying instruments and ancillary equipment. A complete list of the equipment aboard the bus is available at its Web site, lennonbus.org.

The bus was conceived by Brian Rothschild, a former songwriter and keyboard player for the band I Am Siam, and David Sonenberg, whose DAS Communications manages acts including the Spin Doctors, the Black Eyed Peas and John Legend.

In their work, the two men received a tremendous number of unsolicited cassette tapes. The two talked about creating a songwriting contest for young artists who don’t have the opportunity to meet music executives and decision-makers.

One day, Rothschild and Sonenberg had the opportunity to sit down with Yoko Ono about an unrelated project, and Rothschild blurted out, “What do you think about a John Lennon Songwriting Contest?”

The next day, she called and said she was interested.

A year after the contest began, it became clear that the bus used for promoting the contest was attracting an enormous amount of attention.

Rothschild and Sonenberg realized they might be able to use the bus to give something back to the community.

“As a parent, I was aware of just how many problems kids can have and how some kids can’t imagine ever changing their circumstances,” Sonenberg says.

Rothschild had the idea to turn the bus into a recording studio. It would be an active place for kids to learn about music and music technology, “like a dream machine that can stimulate a child’s imagination,” Sonenberg says.

They asked Yoko if she might consider making a contribution. “It’s a tribute to John Lennon’s genius and to Yoko’s generosity that the Lennon Bus exists today as a safe haven where young people of all ages can come together and be creative,” Sonenberg says.

The bus operates as a non-profit corporation whose primary sponsors include Apple, Maxell and the International Music Products Assn. (NAMM). Numerous other companies help support the bus.

Maxell marketing manager Cheryl Severini says, “The bus is developing new talent. It’s keeping music alive. Music and home entertainment is what Maxell is all about. It’s a really good fit for us. The spinoff of the bus teaches an even younger audience than the songwriting contest does and that just once again, keeps music education alive.”

“When we joined with them 10 years ago, we didn’t know where it would go,” she continues. “But it has really grown into something to worthwhile, and we are so glad to be a part of it.”

NAMM supported the bus early on, and began funding it about five years ago. “The ability of us to support this project locks in with our message and mission,” NAMM president/CEO Joe Lamond says.

“The bus encourages music and emphasizes the importance of music education. Our partnership also allows the local community music stores [NAMM’s members] to become partners with the bus during certain events. That helps drive traffic to the store, and it spawns a lot of customer loyalty.”

The bus is part of many community and nationwide events. In conjunction with one of the NAMM shows, Roland does a series of special concerts and promotions. One of those, Music Power, is presented at the Richard and Karen Carpenter Center for the Performing Arts on the campus of California State University in Long Beach.

Roland president and NAMM chairman Dennis Hoolihan asked the bus organizers if they could make a detour to the University on the way to the winter NAMM show. “We brought 800-900 high school students to the center for an hour-long presentation about the power of digital music making. The bus was a wonderful adjunct to the event surrounded by the creative aura of John Lennon.”

Another event the bus has been part of for several years is the Warped tour. Tour creator Kevin Lyman says, “I think Brian may have been a little skeptical when I first talked about doing the Warped tour, but he realized there were so many young, creative minds at the shows. It’s awesome to see the young people who have come out, who can relate more to a Warped tour setting.”

In addition to visiting schools, conventions, concerts and festivals, the bus has been an ambassador for the USO, stopping primarily at bases whose personnel has served or will serve tours in Iraq or Afghanistan. The bus and its engineers worked with the military men and women and their families, providing a positive outlet and distraction for young and old alike.

The bus, driven by Tony Spencer, boasts a crew of onboard engineers who sometimes work 20 hours per day. The engineers sign on for 10 months and live on the bus. Usually there are three engineers on the bus at one time, although there are four now: Steve Miller, Jesse Jensen, Jacob Voelzke and Tyler Winick. Most of the engineers are recruited from Full Sail Real World Education, a recording and production school in Orlando, Fla. In Yoko Ono and Mark Garvey’s book “Come Together: The Official John Lennon Educational Tour Bus Guide to Music and Video,” Miller is quoted as saying, “We’re audio engineers, we’re teachers, continued on >>p32
IMAGINE PEACE

SPRING 2007

YOKO ONO LENNON
from >>p30  we’re songwriters, we’re peacemakers, and we’re janitors.”

In a typical one-day session with middle school, high school or college-age students, the bus staff will help young people compose and record a song, shoot and edit a video, and burn both to Maxell CDs and DVDs.

“Visiting students spend the morning hours working with the engineers and coming up with ideas for lyrics and composing and recording an original song,” says Rothschild. “After lunch, the group shoots video footage and digital photos, all of which is edited into the finished music video project by around 6 p.m.”

In addition to the onboard engineers, a long list of artists have offered their time on the bus. In many cases, as with Fergie and the Black Eyed Peas, artists have used it to record their own music.

Songwriter/performer/producer Will.i.am says it’s inspirational for kids to see that a favorite song on the Black Eyed Peas’ album “Monkey Business” was recorded on the bus. It makes the message even more powerful, he says, “when that bus goes to their school, and they see their dreams can come true too.” While the bus is like the bookmobile, “you never really saw book authors on the bookmobile.”

However, on the Lennon Bus, “artists work on their current albums, and at some point in time, the bus may be at a school, and the kids may have the opportunity to see their favorite artists working on it,” Will.i.am says. “It’s very cool.”

“I love the Lennon Bus. It’s really cool and many of the songs from my album ‘The Dutchess’ were recorded onboard,” Fergie says. “It’s great to have the bus around when we are on tour as we can jump in there after a gig and work on new material. It’s also a special place where kids get the chance to be creative and record their own tracks. Plus, John Lennon’s vibes continue to inspire.”

The Bacon Brothers, Michael and Kevin, are also very enthusiastic about the bus.

“One of the things that is very close to my heart is music education for children,” Michael says. “Kevin and I grew up in Philadelphia and there was a wonderful program and our parents had the resources to get us music lessons, acting and dancing lessons.

“The Lennon Bus is a way of bringing music around to people directly . . . going to where the kids really are instead of trying to get the kids to come to them,” he adds. “Anytime there is an opportunity to compensate for dwindling music education, I’m all for it, and that’s what the Lennon Bus does.”

The bus is educational, but it’s even more than that, according to Kevin Bacon. “We did a show at one of the technology conventions. We went on with a bunch of kids from New Orleans who had lost their homes in Hurricane Katrina. They had very little experience with music, but had gotten there and used all of the tools and produced and recorded a song.

“It was great to see the involvement and the actual inner workings of the bus functioning so well,” he adds. “We went on and added a little guitar and percussion stuff. It was a lot of fun.”

Rothschild and Sonenberg have expressed a dream of expanding this program with more buses throughout the country, and even expanding worldwide.

“They try to serve as many communities as they can with careful planning.

“We certainly get more requests than we could possibly handle. That’s why we want to put another bus on the road,” Rothschild says, referring to a new bus purchased this past winter.

Chief engineer Jeff Sobel, who used to live on the bus, is now working on designs for the new vehicle. “It’s a special opportunity for us to build from the ground up. It’s going to have some extra bells and whistles, such as surround sound. It will also be a double slider, which means the axel walls slide out when you’re parked at a location. The studios, which are now rectangular, will be square, and we will have extra space.”

The new bus is expected to be on the road in January 2008, just in time for the NAMM show Jan. 17-20 in Anaheim, Calif. . . .

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FOR CELEBRATING

10 YEARS OF SUCCESS IN

EDUCATING

YOUNG ASPIRING MUSICIANS

ABOUT THE JOYS OF

CREATING MUSIC

You’re Truly A

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What do these artists have in common?

Black Eyed Peas
Wyclef Jean
Joan Osborne
will.i.am
John Legend
Fergie
Spin Doctors
The Bacon Brothers
The Veronicas

They've all recorded on board the
John Lennon Educational Tour Bus

Congratulations from
David Sonenberg and the
DAS family of artists
on the 10th Anniversary of the Lennon Bus.
A DREAM STUDIO ON WHEELS

Brian Rothschild Describes The Vision Behind The Lennon Educational Tour Bus

Brian Rothschild is executive director of the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus and the passion behind this vehicle for music education. Here Rothschild shares his thoughts on the beginnings of the bus and where he hopes the vision will lead.

How did you come up with the idea for a studio on wheels rather than just a stationary site?
I thought about the days of the bookmobile in school. It was something I looked forward to even though there were books in the school library. The bookmobile was something just a little more special because it came to us. I thought, if that was exciting back then, today, putting together an amazing dream studio on wheels could definitely inspire people about what kids can do with music.

Has the bus changed during its 10 years on the road?
The changes have been miraculous. As equipment has gotten smaller and simpler, there is a lot more open space than there ever was before. When Apple came on as a sponsor, we ripped everything out and rebuilt the room from scratch.

Has the new equipment influenced your message?
When we started out and put the first studio together, the equipment was still somewhat complicated for somebody to put together in their bedroom or to create a setup in their basement. Now, we can tell the kid, the teacher or the school superintendent they really can put a very professional rig together for not much money. In that way, we are not only inspiring kids with top-end equipment, but we’re showing them something they can actually make a part of their life. That’s particularly important for underserved communities where there may be no formal music program.

You target music students from middle school onward?
The real core work that we have been providing with the bus is the free hands-on opportunities for young people to make music, make videos and take photographs. We are encouraging them to create digital media content of all types that are reflective of their ideas and concerns. Kids that we are meeting are more and more comfortable working with all of those different mediums.

And you’ve recently added photography to the bus?
Yes. In fact, well-known photographers have agreed to work with students just as many music artists have done. First out on the road with the bus was New York Times Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Vincent Laforet.

We’ve found that a lot of kids are interested in taking digital photographs and we’ve realized that it’s a different kind of storytelling. Songs are stories, the

continued on >>p36
MAXELL CONGRATULATES

ON ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY.

MAXELL IS A FOUNDING AND PROUD SPONSOR OF THE JOHN LENNON EDUCATIONAL TOUR BUS.
What kinds of projects have the kids produced with their photography?
In a practical sense, we'll have a group of students who will document the day's activities in photographs, for example. Also, the photos will get included as stills in that day's music video.

What about the high school battles of the bands that are sponsored by the bus?
In the last four years, we had the idea to help local communities help high school students who are interested in playing music. We wanted to create something that is ongoing. So, we partner with a newspaper and a venue in a specific town. About seven or eight bands from the community will compete at a legendary music venue. Each band will win a prize package from the sponsors. The winning band gets to spend the following day abroad the bus. We actually record and create a music video of one of their songs. Out of all of the bands across the country, one is chosen to play at their local Warped tour date. Right now, we're in about 20 markets.

What is your connection with the Warped tour?
We go out on Warped tour every summer. Its creator, Kevin Lyman, was an early supporter of the tour bus. We've had Warped artists like Eminem, 311 and Bowling for Soup on the bus. Many times band members from various groups will jam on the bus. For us, joining with the Warped tour is a way to show our value to everybody who is around who might not ordinarily be exposed. Some of my best memories are of kids with a video camera being allowed onstage on a Warped tour date. Last year, we recorded and mixed 24 live tracks from Warped tour stages.

What have you learned from your Lennon Bus experiences?
It's all about being committed to fostering a music arts and education program in the U.S. Our friends over at the International Music Products Assn., who have been a tremendous sponsor and partner for us, have helped me understand the gravity of the situation in terms of the dwindling dollars that are being provided for arts education. More than ever, I really feel strongly that people have to realize that it is superfluous to have music in their lives.

What do students take with them when they walk away from the Lennon Bus?
In addition to giving kids the hands-on experience and sending them home with their completed project on a Maxell DVD, we're also giving them a glimpse into what professional production is like. It's about career inspiration. Kids may not realize that if they are interested in music production, it can provide them with a very nice life. These are the years when we need to inspire kids so they may see themselves doing things that are going to make them happy. For most people, if they follow their passion, they'll find a niche for themselves.

Aside from building more buses, do you have other plans to expand the scope of the Lennon Bus' education?
Aside from physical buses, another way I want to expand our scope is by creating a virtual Lennon Bus that exists online, so that students and teachers will have that as a resource to connect with us. Students would be able to take a virtual tour and to actually record on the virtual site.

Do you have an ultimate goal?
John Lennon's essence was about the global environment, people coming together. We'd like to roll out buses throughout the world.
We congratulate

The John Lennon
EDUCATIONAL TOUR BUS

for 10 successful years of bringing music, opportunity, creativity and learning to students across the nation.
Lennon Tour Bus Boasts Latest Gear

Sponsors of the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus have donated the musical instruments, computer hardware and software and recording devices that equip a front studio, rear studio, DJ station and student workstations.

Here is an abbreviated list of the bus' gear, as it appears on the organization's Web site at lennonbus.org, where a complete list of equipment also may be found.

Maxell DVDs, CD-Rs, MiniDVs and batteries
Apple 15-inch MacBook Pro workstations
Apple 17-inch MacBook Pro workstations
Apple Mac Mini Core Duo with a 20-inch display
Roland V-Drums, keyboards, monitors and amps
Sibelius Notation and G7 software
JVC video cameras
Elixir strings
Godin guitars

Stanton Final Scratch 2 software, turntables and mixers
Ableton Live 6 software
Edirol interfaces and controllers
Ableton Live 6 software
Digidesign Pro Tools and related equipment
Final Cut Studio software
Logic Pro 7 software
Aperture software
Propellerhead Reason 3 software
GarageBand 3 software
Audio plug-ins by Digidesign, Native Instruments, IK Multimedia, McDSP, Celemony, Waves, Spectrasonics
Apple Quad Mac Pro workstations with high-definition Cinema Displays
Glyph Hard Drives
Aphex Mic Pre preamps
Yamaha 02R96 and 01V96 digital mixers
Gretsch drums
Neutrik Patchbays
Disc Makers Reflex Pro 7 CD/DVD duplicators
Introducing NP2C-AU-SILENT - the new “silent plug” from Neutrik. With a built-in reed switch that mutes pops and squeals. The unique plug design resists dust and dirt, so the reed doesn’t corrode, there's no wear and tear on the contacts - and lifetime is virtually unlimited. Look for the distinctive red plug with “silent” on the shell. Make grandma happy.

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Sincerely,
The Sonicbids Team

YOKO ONO REMEMBERS

the day when David Sonenberg and Brian Rothschild met with her to discuss an idea they had for something called the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus. "Many people have ideas [regarding Lennon] and I don't usually meet with them—unless there is a good reason," Ono says. "The Lennon Bus sounded like a beautiful idea. So, I met them and had a very good impression of them and their concept."

Ono pauses, then adds, "I have to be very careful because this is John's name. And I'm very protective of his name."

For Ono, the concept presented to her by Sonenberg and Rothschild was in keeping with her late husband's spirit in the sense that "John came from a working class neighborhood—Liverpool—and was always concerned about working class kids. The tour bus offered an incredible, exciting opportunity for children. It's very different than having an ice cream man drive through your town."

Indeed, instead of an ice cream truck, children now have this bus that allows them to learn about making and creating their own music.

"It's a beautiful thing, really," says Ono, who has experienced a visit by the bus first-hand in New York.

"For kids living outside large cities like New York, those living in Middle America, there's no way they can even get the opportunity or the finances to go to the large cities and do something like this."

Ono continues, "The bus has really helped me to understand what is going on. It's not just happening in the big cities, but in Middle America, too. That is, as long as we allow it to happen."

With Ono's blessing and endorsement, the Lennon Bus will drive on. "It spreads love to the world through music and music-making," she says. "It also gives opportunities to children who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to make music."
Full Sail is a proud sponsor of the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus, powered by three graduates who help bring music to young artists across the nation.
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Huge Acts, Smart Pricing Bode Well For 2007 Summer Concert Season

BY RAY WADDELL

Saturation be damned—summertime is concert time. Consumers demand live music and promoters are hell-bent on providing compelling shows, and lots of them. • Much as some would like to spread the shows out across the year, the concert business makes it or breaks it between Memorial Day and Labor Day. • The industry is coming off its best year in more than a decade, with grosses up a staggering 35% from the previous year. Well more than half the 15,000 concerts reported to Billboard Boxscore in 2006 took place between May and September. • Whether the business can scale the same heights again in 2007 is impossible to gauge at this point, but early indicators are strong in terms of content and diversity.

"I think we're looking at a very healthy marketplace," Live Nation North American music president Jason Garner says. "I think this season has gotten off to a very good start. There's a lot of amphitheater concert, a lot of arena content, the theaters and clubs look healthy."

Typical of springtime optimism, others agree. "The market seems bullish," Nederland/CEO Adam Friedman says. "It is not just a question of the level of content, but also is composition."

Friedman says that, like last year, there are some younger bands showing box-office clout. He cites the Fray, Snow Patrol, Rise Against and Arcade Fire as examples. "I think it's a great sign that the young alt-rock bands can do this level of business and a sign that we will continue to have content to present that bolsters the traditional inventory of perennial favorites out on the road."

Perhaps the healthiest part of the summer business right now is the festivals. "I think it is shaping up to be a terrific summer," says Charles Attal, Austin-based promoter/talent buyer for such events as Lollapalooza, the Austin City Limits Music Festival and the Big State country music fest.

In general, Attal says, "the touring business is relatively healthy right now. Bands are having to readjust their revenue model as record sales decline, and it is becoming more and more obvious that for the immediate future, the road is the place they can connect with their fans."

Attal sees this at all levels. "Our club business at Stubbs [in Austin] is off a record start, and while it seems less and less bands are capable of tackling arena gigs, there are exceptions like Tool who are doing fantastic numbers," he says. "Fans are pickier now, but if you deliver an amazing arena show, they will come. Tool exemplifies this."

Friedman has a similar feel for the market. "We are ahead of last year in confirmed bookings year-to-date," he says. "Our season subscription program at the Greek Theatre in L.A., for example, is up about 20% on both tickets and grosses."

According to Friedman, "Clubs and theaters—especially the midsize venues—will continue to thrive where the artist, agent and manager get the benefit of adding shows after the on-sale reflects bullish sales. Risk is mitigated and the artist gets to play in a more intimate setting. We do our share of arena shows, and for the right artist it's a great play."
But theater and club space provide a greater level of flexibility for most touring artists. One way to grow content is to offer diversity. "The key to ensure that we cover all genres and audiences in order to maximize the inventory," Friedman says. "For example, we do a lot of Latin and other multicultural events across our venues. There is also great demand for AC superstars like Norah Jones, Michael Bublé, Tony Bennett and Harry Connick, which happen to be perfect in the midsize space and can command multiplexes in many markets."

**RIGHT PRICING**
If promoters learned anything when the concert industry "hit the wall" in the summer of 2004, it's that fans would most definitely balk at unrealistic ticket prices. A revolt of sorts plainly demonstrated that every tour did not rate $100 tickets. Since then, even tickets for superstar acts have been tiered significantly, and outdoor shows now commonly consider value pricing.

"We are feeling very positive that this is going to be a big summer and a great summer of value for the fans," Live Nation's Garner says. He notes that a "four-pack" lawn promotion—four tickets for the price of three—was successfully test-marketed in 2006 with John Mayer. "Now we've rolled that out and created real scale for that program this year," Garner says. "What we found in our research is fans for the most part came in groups of two, and so we wanted to create a program to incentivize fans to bring new fans out to the amphitheater and come in larger groups and create that real community feel."

Of course, pricing is always a function of how much the acts are being paid, so all parties must buy into creating value. The problem is often not selling the best seats, but the least expensive. "As for pricing, I continue to be concerned that on the high-guarantee/high-ticket-price artists, once you get past the gold circle and the hardcore fan, that sales will be big in the big buildings," Friedman says. "The midsize venues are not quite as much at risk, with the worst seats in the house being less than a couple hundred feet from the stage."

Gwen Stefani is one artist who will implement Live Nation's four-pack promotion, and Stefani's manager Jim Guerinot obviously thinks it's the right move. "This is a price-sensitive market, and I think that thought sometimes gets lost," he says. "You have to be cognizant of this. You have to find the sweet spot."

Guerinot says the idea for Stefani was to price her show so "that we sell a lot of tickets."

**POTENTIAL PITFALLS**
Asked about potential pitfalls for the 2007 season, most agree success hinges on giving the fans what they want. "I think everybody has to keep their eye on creating value for the fan," Garner says. "That has been our obsession, it's Live Nation CEO Michael Rapino's mantra day in and day out: Our job is to connect the artist to the fan. Every day when we buy and promote shows and set the ticket prices, artists and managers need to be doing together with us to create the right ticket prices. The one thing we always need to watch is making sure we're putting ourselves in the place of that fan, the experience he or she has in buying a ticket and attending a show, and make sure we're all doing our part in creating real value for the fan."

Of course, so much of the success of a season, a tour or a single show is contingent upon intangibles. "Often it's about timing, what else is out there competing for sales, what's the ticket price, and there is a new release if it's not a perennial touring favorite," Friedman says. So can 2007 scale the heights of 2006? Friedman says that depends on how one gauges success.

"Can the Police and Genesis make up for the Stones and U2 in terms of pure sales? I don't know, and I'm not sure that's the best indicator anyway," he says. "In any case, it is clear that artists continue to look at the road as the key revenue source for their services, and I expect some great lineups and shows throughout the country."

Garners is confident 2007 can be just as good, if not better than 2006, based on early returns. "When we see the reunited Police selling out every venue across America, Genesis, Josh Groban has been a massive star selling out arenas, an amazing international star at 26," he says. "Bols Seger is on the road and put on great shows that sell out. Elton John's out, Billy Joel's out, Rush is coming. I know last year was a blockbuster and no doubt some of the greatest performers in the world were out, but when you start to look at 2007, it's hard to beat the Police and Genesis and Josh Groban and Bols Seger. So far it's shaping up to be a great year."

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**RIGHT PRICING**

**POTENTIAL PITFALLS**

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**SHED TOURS TO WATCH**

**As The Amphitheater Season Heats Up, Five Summer Tours Possess Explosive Potential**

The key to a successful amphitheater season may well be for programmers to cover all their bases. In other words, don't depend on just pop or pop may not be the hottest live thing going. **For a successful summer in the sheds, it's all about diversity.** "I think we've got a great amphitheater season coming up this year," says Jason Garner, president of North American music for Live Nation, the world's largest amphitheater owner/operator. "You've got the blockbuster artists like Dave Matthews Band and Jimmy Buffett and Kenny Chesney and Toby Keith all coming back and playing the amphitheaters," Garner says. "Def Leppard was such a huge success last year; they're back. The newer artists—Brad Paisley, Fall Out Boy, Rascal Flatts—we're thrilled to have, and Gwen Stefani is playing the amphitheaters."

Then the festival tours like Family Values, Projekt Revolution, Ozzfest. That's a pretty big, healthy amphitheater season, and we're feeling really good."

Here Billboard cites examples of summer shed tours in five categories: rock, classic rock, country, pop and festival.

**ROCK**

**Headliner:** Dave Matthews Band

**Support:** At various times, Xavier Rudd, Toots & the Maytals, Umphrey's McGee, Pete Yorn, the Roots, Robert Randolph, the Wallers, Robert Earl Keen and Stephen Marley

**Agent:** Chip Hooper, Monterey Peninsula Artists/Paradigm

**Prognosis:** Handicapping a Dave Matthews Band shed tour may be the easiest call in the touring world. During the past decade, DMB has been the most consistent band touring annually, generating more than $470 million at the box office on one of the most affordable ticket prices among superstar acts.

"I think what Dave Matthews Band has done is unprecedented," DMB agent Chip Hooper says. "And the secret to its success?" The reason people keep coming to see the Dave Matthews Band is because this is one of the greatest: American rock 'n roll bands ever," Hooper says. "This is a phenomenon level band. They deliver every time."

Armed with carefully chosen, value-driven support, expect DMB once again to be one of the top 10 tours in the world.

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LOOK WHO'S BANDING TOGETHER.

1. INTERIOR SAVINGS CENTRE
Kamloops, BC
2. CN CENTRE
Prince George, BC
3. GREATER VERNON MULTIPLEX
Vernon, BC
4. CRYSTAL CENTRE
Grande Prairie, AB
5. ENMAX CENTRE
Lethbridge, AB
6. BRANDT CENTRE (IPSCO PLACE)
Regina, SK
7. CREDIT UNION CENTRE
Saskatoon, SK
8. OTTAWA CIVIC CENTRE
Ottawa, ON
9. MTS CENTRE
Winnipeg, MB
10. WINGS STADIUM
Kalamazoo, MI
11. TYSON EVENTS CENTER
Sioux City, IA
12. YAKIMA VALLEY SUNDOME
Yakima, WA
13. RUSHMORE PLAZA
Rapid City, SD
14. US CELLULAR COLISEUM
Bloomington, IL
15. BRICK BREEDEN FIELDHOUSE
Bozeman, MT
16. WAR MEMORIAL COLISEUM
Fort Wayne, IN
17. UTEP - DON HASKINS CENTER
El Paso, TX
18. UNITED SPIRIT ARENA
Lubbock, TX
19. RUPP ARENA
Lexington, KY
20. HAMPTON COLISEUM
Hampton, VA
21. CROWN CENTER
Fayetteville, NC
22. MIDWEST WIRELESS CIVIC CENTER
Manitowoc, WI
23. FIRSTIER EVENT CENTER
Kearney, NE
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CLASSIC ROCK
Headliner: Rush
Support: None
Agent: Adam Kornfeld
Prognosis: Rush at outdoor venues is destined to be one of the top 25 tours of 2007. Produced by Live Nation through its TNA division, the band has been a consistent draw every time it hits the road, without relying on a multi-act package to move tickets.

"Rush has been together over 33 years, and their fan base is not only not eroding, but it seems that it may be growing," the band's agent Adam Kornfeld says. "Rush is another testament to what happens when great songwriting and musicianship come together. People recognize it.

Rush toured quite successfully in 2002 and 2004, but its box-office muscle in 2007 could very well eclipse those efforts. With new album "Snakes & Arrows" released May 1, Rush may be the sleeker tour of the year.

Live Nation North American music president Jason Garner says Rush "came roaring out of the box" on initial on-sales.

"Having Rush back after some off time is very exciting for us," Garner says. "We think it will be one of the blockbuster tours of the summer."

COUNTRY
Headliner: Brad Paisley
Support: At various times, Taylor Swift, Jack Ingram, Kellie Pickles and Rodney Atkins
Agent: Rob Beckham, William Morris Agency
Prognosis: Country has become one of live music's sturdiest genres, with more headliners joining the ranks. Brad Paisley's box-office clout has been growing steadily, and many feel 2007 is the year he will reach superstar status.

Last year was no slouch for Paisley. He cracked the top 25 tours for the first time at 23rd among all touring acts, with a gross of more than $27 million. With a wide variety of solid support, he could take a significant step up in 2007.

"I think the excitement of the new album and new tour, show, support and response to the first single has just taken him to another level," says Paisley's agent, Rob Beckham at the William Morris Agency. "Brad wants his show to rival the very best in rock, pop and country, while maintaining his traditional country feel."

POP
Headliner: Gwen Stefani
Support: Lady Sovereign, Akon
Agent: Mitch Okmin, MOB Agency
Prognosis: Gwen Stefani first toured as a solo artist in late 2005 and raked in some $12 million from 21 arenas reported to Billboard Boxscore. Her good-time attitude seems perfect for a warm summer night outdoors.

Stefani averaged 10,000 per night on the arena tour, and will surely top that number in the sheds. Garner says the package has synergy, and a Live Nation lawn ticket promotion—four tickets for the price of three—should provide juice.

"I don't know how you could have a better matchup now than Gwen and Akon," he says. "You marry a big superstar in Gwen Stefani, an up-and-coming star like Akon, a big single, a special lawn price—there's real value for the fans in that."

Stefani/No Doubt manager Jim Guerinot says playing outdoors offers Stefani's fans a new way to see her live. "We definitely made a decision for the late spring/early summer to try something different," Guerinot says. "We had given people a show in an arena experience, so where available we wanted to offer an outdoor experience. It should be a really fun time."

FESTIVAL
Headliner: Family Values Tour, Korn
Support: Evanescence, Atreyu, Flyleaf, Hellyeah, Trivium
Agent: Darryl Eaton/Rick Roskin
Prognosis: Last year Family Values, with Korn at the helm, blew away the expectations of many by selling out business at the amphitheaters. This year the package boasts a resurgent Evanescence, along with some of hard music's most popular bands.

"Family Values as a brand really roared back last year," Garner says. "We sold out nearly every amphitheater it played."

The 2006 Family Values trek was value-priced to the extreme with a $10 lawn ticket across the board. While the final ticket price had not been determined at press time, Garner says the tour will again be value-priced.

"We're really excited this year because we think the combination of Korn and Evanescence is really relevant right now to the young rock fan and gives us a blockbuster package that will provide real value for the fan," Garner says.

Not only has Family Values been a model of successful shed touring, the tour also bears the fruit of a unique business model that makes partners out of Korn; its management company, the Firm; the band's record label, EMI; and promoter Live Nation. All parties have a stake in the band's success across the board, sharing revenue from record sales, ticket sales, merchandising and other sources.

—Ray Waddell
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Toyota Park

CINCINNATI
Paul Brown Stadium

DENVER
Invesco Field at Mile High

DETROIT
Ford Field

HOUSTON
Reliant Stadium

LOS ANGELES
Home Depot Center

MIAMI
Dolphin Stadium

PHILADELPHIA
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PITTSBURGH
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Since the North American stadium show heyday of the early 1990s, when Billy Joel/Elton John, The Rolling Stones, The Grateful Dead, Pink Floyd, The Eagles and others routinely filled these venues, massive productions have become an increasingly dangerous specialty. Even the Stones, kings of the stadium show, don’t route a coast-to-coast U.S. tour of these largest of venues anymore, though they did play several stadium last year on their A Bigger Bang tour, particularly in Europe where stadiums shows are more common. Stadium productions can be cost-prohibitive, often hitting seven figures for a single show, and the huge capacity requires lower ticket prices for distant seats. Often, it is more lucrative for an act to split for three nights in a 70,000-seat arena than to play one night at a 60,000-seat stadium. The Gridiron Stadium Network, an affiliation of NFL and soccer stadium operators formed two years ago, is working to boost the number of stadium shows and has scheduled a strong lineup of events for 2007 as its member venues, according to Steve Eckerson, chairman of the GSN and director of events sales and operations for Qwest Field in Seattle.

The GSN includes the following facilities: Paul Brown Stadium in Cincinnati, Invesco Field at Mile High in Denver, Ford Field in Detroit, Reliant Stadium in Houston, Dolphins Stadium in Miami, Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia, Heinz Field in Pittsburgh, Qwest Field in Seattle, Toyota Park in Chicago and Home Depot Center in Los Angeles. Jeff Apregan, a 25-year touring business veteran, best known for his work in producing Neil Diamond tours, says that these modern stadiums are excellent venues for staging concerts, motor sports, festivals and other events.

"It’s my responsibility to go out and identify new business opportunities and help book shows that really tie up new business opportunities," he says, adding that he also has the latitude to promote or produce a GSN show, if the situation calls for it.

"Some of the GSN members are able to take on risk and buy shows, others aren’t," Apregan says. With the mix-and-match type booking we’re seeing on tours like Kenny Chesney’s and even the Police, GSN wants to assure members that stadiums are in the loop.

"We absolutely want to get on the radar screen and at least have a crack at those touring opportunities," Apregan says, adding that other variations on staging and events also exist, such as festivals in vast parking fields.

Costs notwithstanding, a mega act can sell 60,000 tickets in a market in only one play date instead of three at a shed or arena.

"If you have an artist that has that ability to sell that many tickets in a market, the obvious advantage to the artist is to play one day and walk out with the same or better money," Apregan says. "There are certainly more production costs in doing a stadium show, but there are certain situations where the advantages more than outweigh the disadvantages.

When ticket price and capacity reach critical mass, stadium gigs can be staggering. An April 1 Wrestlemania event at Ford Field sold 80,103 tickets, the all-time attendance record for the venue and the highest grossing one-day live event in World Wrestling Entertainment history at more than $5.38 million. Apregan says GSN members have a lot to offer. "We’ve got experienced personnel that know how to execute events, we’ve got the support and the power of the NFL to help drive ticket sales and supplement marketing plans, and those are key attributes. GSN venues will host some dates for Chesney’s Flip Flop Summer Tour (featuring Brooks & Dunn, Sugarland, Sara Evans and Pat Green), the NOPI Draft Series, the Police and Dave Matthews Band. Also in July: Eric Clapton’s Crossroads Guitar Festival at Toyota Park and the 2007 Macy’s Music Festival featuring Mary J. Blige, The O’Jays, Maze with Frankie Beverly, Brian McKnight, Boney James and Jonathan Butler at Paul Brown Stadium.

A mix of venues may be challenging to the artist and crew, Apregan says, "but it’s a great open mind-set for an artist to have because it allows them to capitalize on some enormous opportunities in the markets where they should be doing that."
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SPECIAL FEATURE

BREAKING BEYOND 'BARRIO FINO,' THE REGGAETON STAR RETURNS WITH A NEW ALBUM AIMED AT THE MAINSTREAM

DADDY YANKEE
08-31 Chicago, IL
09-02 Boston, MA
09-07 New York, NY
09-08 Washington, D.C.
09-09 Unicasville, CT
09-14 Miami, FL
09-15 Orlando, FL
09-21 Hidalgo, TX
09-22 Laredo, TX
09-23 San Antonio, TX
09-28 Phoenix, AZ
09-29 Las Vegas, NV
09-30 Fresno, CA
10-03 San Francisco, CA
10-05 Los Angeles, CA
10-07 Los Angeles, CA
10-13 Dallas, TX
10-14 Houston, TX
10-20 Tijuana, Mexico
10-25 Guadalajara, Mexico
10-26 Monterrey, Mexico
10-27 Mexico City, Mexico
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11-11 Costa Rica
11-16 Caracas, Venezuela
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11-20 Panama
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11-23 Cali, Colombia
11-25 Quito, Ecuador
11-28 Guayaquil, Ecuador
11-29 Cuenca, Ecuador
12-01 Lima, Peru
12-04 Santiago, Chile
12-06 Provincia, Chile
12-09 Bolivia

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Henry Cardenas & the CMN staff
In mid-July 2004, an album titled “Barrio Fino” jumped out of seemingly nowhere into the No. 1 spot of Billboard’s Top Latin Albums chart. The artist was Daddy Yankee, a Puerto Rican reggaetónero little-known outside the island at a time when reggaetón was just beginning to have commercial success. Thanks in part to that breakout, Daddy Yankee’s upcoming album “El Cartel: The Big Boss,” featuring English-language guests and a top production team, is poised to be a major crossover hit. However, even after “Barrio Fino” three years ago, Daddy Yankee’s ride to stardom was not instantaneous. At the time, the album was noted by the industry. After all, it was the first reggaetón album to debut at No. 1 on the chart. Moreover, Daddy Yankee was an independent artist, signed to his own label, although distributed by Universal Music Group Distribution (UMGD) via a deal with another indie, VI Records. But what happened next is the real twist.

In November, nearly five months after the release of “Barrio Fino,” the single “Gasolina” entered the Billboard Hot 100 and Top Latin Songs charts. Helped with remixes by Lil Jon and N.O.R.E., the track peaked at No. 32 on the Hot 100 in late January 2005. On the Latin charts it never got higher than No. 17.

But “Barrio Fino” would become the top-selling Latin album of 2005, scanning 1 million copies in the United States alone. And without becoming a major hit on Latin radio, “Gasolina” became the Latin song with arguably the most mainstream appeal since “Macarena,” played not only on U.S. mainstream radio, but also all over the world.

The question then in everyone’s mind was, “Who is this Daddy Yankee guy?”

This much was known: “Barrio Fino” was out on Daddy Yankee’s own label, El Cartel Records. Marketing and promotion of the album was done by independents hired by the artist himself, while his Puerto Rico-based company, run by his brother, Nomar, and wife, Mineddys Gonzalez, was in charge of booking and management. His songs were signed to his own publishing, Los Congri. And up until “Barrio Fino,” his third album, Daddy Yankee also distributed his own releases.

Not much has changed today. Daddy Yankee is still signed to El Cartel but now has a joint venture with Interscope Records, which markets and promotes his albums to the mainstream (Yankee is still in charge of promotion and marketing in the Spanish-speaking world). He is still distributed by UMGD via his Interscope deal. And his management is still run by his brother and wife, with help from business manager Edwin Prado.

But now, event-promotion firm CMN books his tours, and an army of 60 employees look after the many pieces of what has become a vast Daddy Yankee empire. The operation encompasses a production house; El Cartel Records (to which newcomer Miguelito is signed); his publishing; a footwear deal (with Reebok); a syndicated radio show (with ABC Radio); an upcoming film; a clothing line in the works; various sponsorships; and now, his newly created foundation, Corazón Guerrero (Warrior Heart).

Daddy Yankee created Corazón Guerrero to help former convicts, particularly young people, to prepare for the workplace after prison. All told, Daddy Yankee is the most important name in urban Latin music today and certainly one of the top Latin artists in the world.

“Things are run by my brother, my wife, my friends from the barrio,” Daddy Yankee says. “I’ve trained them myself. I learned early on in this business that you can’t trust anybody from the outside. You have to take care of your own affairs if you want to make money.”

The artist’s given name is Raymond Ayala, and for more than a decade, he plugged away in the streets of Puerto Rico, selling mixtapes from his car and improvising to the beats laid out by popular DJs.

Influenced by his neighborhood, Daddy Yankee soon turned to hip-hop in Spanish, taking his cues from the likes of Vico C, a rapper with a strong sense of social responsibility.

Ti-en, in the early ‘90s, he discovered reggaeton, as it was created in Puerto Rico.

“We would do hip-hop, and the DJs would play a vinyl with hip-hop on one side, and a vinyl with reggae and dancehall on the other,” he says. “They would play them together and do a remix. And we would rap over the beats.”

Daddy Yankee’s first foray into recorded reggaeton was as a guest artist on the albums of DJ Pa’ayero, broadly considered one of the genre’s pioneers. The recordings go as far back as “Pa’ayero 37,” released in 1992, with Daddy Yankee among the featured guests.

The Daddy Yankee moniker signaled his aspirations early on.

“Yankee” in Puerto Rico is the slang we use for someone tall, who is big in what he does,” the artist told Billboard in 2005. “So the name means ‘Big Daddy.’”

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Congratulations on all of your success.

We're proud you are part of our family!

But Daddy Yankee was little-known outside Puerto Rico while reggaetón stars at the time were signed to major distribution deals, including Tego Calderón, Lenny Tendión and Zion & Lennox. Daddy Yankee struck a distribution deal with VI. A Puerto Rican indie label known for its reggaetón roster. In turn, the VI deal allowed Daddy Yankee's albums to be distributed via UMGD.

Later, UMGD would also license "Barrio Fino" for distribution outside the United States. At the time, however, the distributor already had high expectations for Daddy Yankee and shipped the album to reflect that. The interest was compounded by the fact that Daddy Yankee was a featured artist on "Oye Mi Canto," the bilingual U.S. R.E. track that reached the top 10 of the Hot 100.

Despite all this, initially, "Barrio Fino" did not get national distribution. This was, after all, reggaetón, a genre widely regarded as an East Coast phenomenon. Yet, it managed to debut at No. 1 on the Top Latin Albums chart.

"Barrio Fino" is largely a socially conscious album that tells the gritty tales seen and heard in Daddy Yankee's neighborhood. But among such tracks, there was also "Gasolina," the ultimate party song, a track so catchy that with limited promotion, climbed the charts and propelled the album's sales.

By the end of 2005, "Barrio Fino" was the top-selling Latin album of the year and Daddy Yankee, the man that didn't want a sign with a major label, had been courted by all of them. He settled on Interscope because he liked the deal it offered and its president, Jimmy Iovine, who flew down to Puerto Rico to meet him.

"He wanted to get a feel for the company," Iovine says. "He had sold a million albums and I saw a great future for him. When you're going to spend that kind of money, you want to see what kinds of plans that person has."

In Daddy Yankee, Iovine saw someone who took his job and his position as a leader of the reggaetón movement seriously. "I respect him as a man," Iovine says. "He has a great head on his shoulders."

Iovine says he was not looking for a Latin artist (Interscope has Enrique Iglesias on its roster) or a reggaetón act. He was simply looking for a "great" artist, regardless of language.

Daddy Yankee delivered in late 2005 with "Barrio Fino En Directo," a live version of "Barrio Fino" that included a handful of new tracks, among them the bilingual single "Rompe." That track is Interscope's third-best selling ringtone in the label's history, selling 1.6 million downloads, Prado says. "Barrio Fino En Directo" became the top-selling Latin album of 2006.

Now, as he prepares the release of his first all-studio album since "Barrio Fino," Daddy Yankee is looking at other ways to capitalize on his role as the best-known name in reggaetón. A capo and a Daddy Yankee line of products for cars are seen in the works, in addition to expanding his Carón Guerı́ero foundation to other countries.

"I have a lot of treas, but the most important thing is the music," Daddy Yankee says. "Everything else depends on that. I'm always thinking about releasing classic albums. Because the other businesses depend on the music you make."

Raymond Ayala travels with a black backpack slung over shoulders that are now muscledd from a regime of pumping iron. Inside the backpack: an iPod and half a dozen legal pads, page after page filled with neatly penciled lines of random thoughts, poems, phrases and songs. The meticulous penmanship, with nary a scribble to mar the calligraphy, are reminiscent of a good schoolboy, not a rapper from the hood. But, with his mix of street swagger and impish boy-next-door charm, Ayala, better-known as Daddy Yankee, is a little bit of both. As reggaetón's primary ambassador and best-known name, Daddy Yankee spearheaded a new wave of Latin music into the mainstream. Now, putting the finishing touches on "El Cartel: The Big Boss," his first full studio album to be released under his joint-venture deal with Interscope Records, Daddy Yankee sat down with Billboard on a late-night break from recording.

You are now signed to Interscope, but through a joint venture with your own label, El Cartel Records. Didn't you want to sign directly with it?

Honestly, no. Because I sold [my album] "Barrio Fino" independently. At the beginning of my career, when I didn't know the business, I wanted a major label. But no one believed in the genre or the artist. So many of us, forcibly, had to become businessman. We even had to distribute ourselves.

Once that happens, once you learn, there's need to sign with a label. I wanted to be famous and have my music heard everywhere. But at the same time I was realistic. I knew our niche wasn't that big. I knew if I signed with a label there was an audience but not a huge audience. And by manufacturing and distributing the music myself I was making more money.

Where did you get your musical streak?

My father. He was a salsa percussionist. A bongotero. When we had the salsa boom [in the '80s] my father would alternate with a bunch of bands. I didn't play percussion. I sang and I improvised. I sang all day, and I imitated people like [singer] Raúl Iglesias and Bobby Capó in the school talent shows. If they let the track run, I would simply improvise over it and people loved it. My mother's family was also full of musicians, who played traditional music. And every time there was a party, they'd say, "Have Raymond sing:" Because I would improvise about everybody.

You first performed hip-hop, not reggaetón. What were your songs about?

Social conscience. Messages from the street, what i lived. At the beginning there was a message in the songs. Now, there still is some of that, but everybody is into singles.

How did you get your business savvy?

I saw the DJs making money. But us, the singers, we made nothing. We couldn't charge for the lyrics. There were no royalties. It was pure street. I began by applying the street code of conduct to the music industry, which isn't compatible at all. In the street, you keep your word intact. That's what defines you as a man in life. In the industry, you give your word, and tomorrow things change.

First a good kid, and now you're an SOB? No [laughs]. I was always streetwise. But street deals aren't the same as music deals. In the street, a man's word is respected. Here, it isn't. I say there are three very corrupt worlds, and if you graduate from any one of them, you're a soldier. If you're in politics, entertainment or drugs, there is no bigger corruption. Honestly, there is more integrity in the street.

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Despite his massive success, DADDY YANKEE likes to remain as accessible as he was when he was just a guy named Raymond Ayala.
## Daddy Yankee Delivers Younger Demo in Major Markets

With over 60% US coverage, Daddy Yankee dominates top markets among the core Hispanic persons 12-34 and Hispanic women 12-34 demographics.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Days/Time</th>
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<tr>
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*Source: Arbitron Fall 2006, Metro Ash Based on Exact Times.

**Radio Networks en español**

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www.americanradiohistory.com
So, you start to release these albums. Once you gained some success, did you look for a major deal?
I didn't want to. They all sought me out when they saw the boom. But I had always manufactured my own things. I negotiated with the distribution contracts. When I first started, when I had nothing, I made $9 per album.

Then, I signed with [Puerto Rican label] V1. They distributed me so I didn't make as much per copy. I was making $6 per album. I was their only nonexclusive artist, and, of course, they pushed their own much more.

When I saw that, I thought, "Well, it's time to get major distribution. And I'm going to promote myself." Because I had money from my other album sales. I could do it.

Your team used to be your brother, Nomar—who still works with you—and yourself. Who is it now?
Now we have more than 60 people. They work in different teams, but the most important aspect is the music. Everything depends on that. I still work with my family. My wife, my brother, my friends from the neighborhood. I've trained them myself. Because I learned that in this business you can't trust anyone from outside. You have to handle your own affairs if you want to make money. And that's what I did.

Is it ironic that coming from a background of socially minded material, your big break came with "Gasolina," a party song?
Yes, but I always had a lot of faith in that song. Because it was an evolution. If you listen to the hooks, the interpretation and the beat, it was very different from what was being done then. After that everybody followed that pattern. I'll be honest. There have been other success stories, but there hasn't been a phenomenon as big as that one.

A lot of people take credit for "Gasolina."
What is the real story?
The hook is Daddy Yankee's. As for the writing, I've written three tracks with [producer] Eddie Dee. This was one of them. I was in [Puerto Rican neighborhood] Villa Kennedy. And I was thinking, "What can I record that hasn't been done before, that's fun?" And I heard someone shout, "Mami, cómo te gusta la gasolina!"

Gasoline. Everybody wants it. Everybody knows it. I went to my studio in Villa Kennedy to record it. Then I took it to Eddie, and he said, "It's good but it needs something more." We wrote the song, and then we took it to Luny Tunes and they did the beat and the tracks. And that's it.

Do you ever get fed up with "Gasolina"?
I'm very proud of what that song did, because, really, it opened the doors to reggaetón. It was more than just a hit. But if we go to the charts, what has most worked for me is "Romep." That went into the top 40. "Gasolina" never got into the top 40 because it was in Spanish.

Your new album has some English, but it's essentially in Spanish. You've always said you won't break with that.
No. That's who I am. That's my essence. I've told you I speak Tony Montana English. But I feel that's part of who I am. If I polish it too much, it won't be me.

Why did you go to Interscope and not to a Latin label?
They gave me the best deal. Very simple. In terms of money, Interscope gave me the right amount. Aside from that, everyone who approached me sent someone on their behalf. With Interscope, Jimmy Lovine came to me. He took a jet and flew to Puerto Rico. That action spoke more than all the words I heard. I say this because now I don't need go-between to speak with Jimmy.

We have an album coming out, and the marketing is designed by Jimmy Lovine and Daddy Yankee. Thank God I have a benefit a lot of people don't have. And I did that at the negotiating table. I'm not just an artist. I am the head of my label, and Jimmy is my partner.

A lot of people think intermediaries are essential to maintain good relationships. Some people need that. I don't. I come from the street. I can handle my business. I listen to opinions and advice, but I make my own decisions.

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Some keep asking, "Will reggaetón die?"
What are your thoughts?
The most sold [Latin] album in 2006 was "Barrio Fino En Directo." It's a reggaetón album. The thing is, reggaetón has never been supported by the industry. Now it is. But I would say it's out of pressure. Because it makes the numbers and gets ratings. They play it because people want it. But we broke the rules. A lot of people saw these kids, these punks, who didn't know what they were doing and thought they could run the business. But who are the ones that don't know what they're doing?

However, the reggaetón sound was stuck there for a moment.
Totally. There was a musical pattern that never changed. I try to never go back to what I've done before. For me, every hit has its moment. I never stick to a formula. If you're an artist and you like your art and you look for your hit in the same way, you'll go nuts, because it will never happen. If you try to do that, you'll be come a product. You'll become what the label wants you to be.

I like to create, innovate. I never repeat formulas. When people hear "El Cartel," they'll hear something totally different, and they'll want to follow that pattern.

A lot of rappers in Puerto Rico now are into "Tiradera," the custom of speaking out against each other in their songs. What do you think of that?
It's always been there. It's a game where you have to be smart. When you're in your position, I'm the one they lambaste the most. Because everybody wants my place. You have to pick your battles. Because sometimes, you don't dampen careers, you launch them.

Sometimes, I hear somebody lashing out against me, and I think, "This guy wants me to promote him. But this other guy, he's hot. I can fight with that one." I enjoy it.
It's a show, and some of them really don't like me. I don't care. I'll keep making millions. If you want to lash out at me, make some millions first.

You don't drink nor do you endorse liquor companies. Why are you so adamant about that?
Sometimes if an alcoholic beverage wants to do some kind of promotion for an event, we do it. But I can't be a spokesperson. Because in my personal life there were problems with drugs and alcohol. It really touches me because it goes back to when I was a kid.

Have you written about that?
No. Out of respect for my father, who I'm still very close to. I would like to talk about what I lived in my home, but it's so raw that I don't want to offend my father. Because I understand that, and we try to help. And now, he's been clean for over six months.

Tell me about your foundation.
It's called Corazón Guerrero (Warrior Heart). It will formally launch this fall. I created it to help people who've been in jail, mainly children. Through the program, I look for the kids when they're still in jail, so that when they come out they're prepared to get a job.

Why work with ex-cons?
We wanted to help people that no one else wants to help. We want to help young people, give them hope. We're building a center with computers, and six months before they're slated to be released, we start training them. I also bought a plot of land in the Dominican Republic, and we're building an orphanage there. I hope it will be up and running by 2008.

And obviously, the schools in Puerto Rico. I already gave a big donation to buy computers for kids in 16 schools. It's a project called Blin Bilinguiando las Escuelas [Putting Bling Bling Into Our School]. We've also helped with playgrounds, water fountains.

You're still as accessible as when we first met, is that important to you?
Honesty, that's important. I'm very close to the day-to-day. A lot of times, I don't use security. I go out with my posse, we go to baseball games, and I wear a hat so people won't recognize me. But somebody always does. If I'm traveling in first class, and everybody else is in the back, I get bored and go there, too. It's 25 years in the hood. You don't lose that so quickly.

—Leila Cabo
Thanks for letting us be a part of your success!

Tus amigos en Miami
**A HOUSEHOLD NAME**

**AGGRESSIVE MULTIMARKET PROMOTION PLANNED FOR NEW DADDY YANKEE ALBUM**

BY AYALA BEN-YEHUDA

With an all-star production roster and English-language guest stars, "El Cartel: The Big Boss" carries the biggest crossover potential of any Daddy Yankee album to date. So the artist's El Cartel Records and Interscope are partnering with major brands and marketing the album in English and Spanish. The campaign will make Daddy Yankee visible from the store to the street, the beach to the Internet, to Europe and Asia.

"Barrio Fino," Daddy Yankee's last album, "had a lot of success that surprised a lot of people," says, "It took a lot of people to keep up with him." Among the producers on "El Cartel" are Will.i.am and Scott Storch, whose work on the first single, "Impacó," includes a Spanish version with Fergie to be serviced to mainstream radio and video channels.

Wal-Mart will also sell an exclusive package, bearing the MTV Tr3s logo, that combines the new album with a DVD of a new interview, footage of five songs from his MTV "$2 Bill" concert and an offer for free audio downloads of those songs on walmart.com during June. Daddy Yankee is the bilingual video channel's "Artist of the Month" for May, with extra exposure on broadcast, wireless and online platforms.

Wal-Mart will feature Daddy Yankee in print, radio, in-store and TV ads, business manager Edwin Prado says.

In 14 Latin-American countries, "Impacó" will be used in a Pepsi TV campaign. Daddy Yankee's album will be teased with "underground videos" online, including day-in-the-life footage of the rapper, Clancy says.

Daddy Yankee's sponsorship with Reebok could also lead to cross-promotions, signage and possibly product at a major athletic shoe retailer, in addition to club nights and listening events in the Latin and non-Latin markets.

As for international markets, a plan was under discussion at press time for an extended promotional trip this summer to Spain. Prado says promotion in Asia will likely commence in the first quarter of 2006, to "lay the groundwork" for a possible tour there.

Meanwhile, Daddy Yankee has executive-produced and starred in "Talentos de Barrio," a feature film in which he plays Edgar, a drug dealer looking to make it as a reggaeton singer. The movie is in postproduction, and a soundtrack will be released, Prado says.

Daddy Yankee's breakthrough album "Barrio Fino" was "his ticket to the party," Prado says. "Now he's going to make sure everyone has a hell of a good time."

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**DADDY YANKEE: TOP SINGLES**

**Songs chart after its debut in November 2005.** The titles on this recap of Daddy Yankee's top singles are ordered by peak position on the Hot Latin Songs chart. If more than one title peaked at the same position, ties were broken by the number of weeks spent at the peak.

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

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**DADDY SINGER'S HEADLINING TOUR A FIRST FOR REGGAETÓN**

**BY MITCHELL PETERS**

When Daddy Yankee stepped into U.S. arenas for 2005's Who's Your Daddy tour, the reggaeton artist made history. In the months leading up to the 11-city stint, several multi-act reggaetón concerts had already taken place. But the Who's Your Daddy trek, which visited 10,000-seat venues at a top ticket price of $100, marked the first time a reggaeton artist headlined an arena tour in the United States.

"There have been other acts that have tried to do arenas, but they haven't sold tickets," says Cárdenas Marketing Network CEO Henry Cárdenes, who promotes Daddy Yankee's shows. "[He] appeals to Latinos and the general market, so it's a winning situation. Another advantage is that he appeals to kids. So it's a family event, which gives us a bigger market."

Prior to making the jump to arenas, Daddy Yankee was performing in nightclubs and discos throughout the United States, Puerto Rico and Latin America, according to Cárdenes. But after the single "Gasolina" took off at radio and on TV, Cárdenes made the play for arenas. "He was selling records left and right," he says. "We justify record sales with possible ticket sales."

Strategies used to market Daddy Yankee's tours are different from outings by Latin artists like Chayanne, Shakira, Luis Miguel or Ricky Martin. "We booked a lot of general-market advertising," Cárdenes says. "I bought at least 40% in general markets. I was trying to reach the second and third Latino generation. For instance, in Chicago, Miami and New York, we spent money at the Power stations. I had never done that for regular Latinos—performed and it worked."

In Latin-American markets, Daddy Yankee has played arenas and 30,000- to 40,000-capacity stadiums.

Since making his statewide debut, Daddy Yankee has toured every other year. "You have to think of the market, so I think he's doing the right thing," Cárdenes says. "And he's very busy with real estate and his record label [El Cartel Records]."

Following the June 5 release of his new album, "The Cartel: The Big Boss," Daddy Yankee will embark on the 40-city Da Big Boss world tour. The 18-city U.S. leg starts Aug. 31 at the Allstate Arena in Chicago, and wraps Oct. 14 at the Toyota Center in Houston. Beyond that, he'll tour Latin-American markets through December.

For the U.S. shows, Daddy Yankee is teaming with Ticketmaster and Apple's iTunes Music Store to give fans who preorder "The Cartel: The Big Boss" a chance to score tickets through an early presale, according to business manager Edwin Prado.

In 2008, Daddy Yankee will play select cities in the States and Latin America, along with dates throughout Europe and Asia, Prado says.
DADDY YANKEE FOR PRESIDENT

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EL CARTEL
THE BIG BOSS
DADDY YANKEE
"After we saw the spots and the creative for the campaign, it just made sense," says Joe Bellotti, managing director of Creative License, which introduced Anheuser-Busch and its advertising agencies, led by St. Louis-based Cannonsball, to "Galvanize."

"It had the right energy, Q-Tip's vocals fit the creative, the brand and the message. It blended the electronic with offbeat sounds and an urban element."

Once the spots hit the air, Bellotti reports consumers actually called Bud headquarters to inquire about the track. "That's a pretty good barometer, when the public picks up the phone," he says. Bud responded by creating more "Galvanize" spots, in addition to the original two.

And on the Astralwerks Web site, streams of the video in the "As Heard on TV" section, which identifies synched tracks by the label's artists, logged an exponential growth of unique visitors and 100,000 hits, according to Astralwerks GM Glenn Mendlinger.

"The distinctive, original and unique is what gets people excited now," says Errol Kolosine, U.S. consultant to the label and former Astralwerks head. "The consumer is telling us this. With "Galvanize," it was about having an agency and a client that had the open mind to not go with the safe and the obvious."

Kolosine, who left Astralwerks three months ago after 13 years with the label, is handling the Chems' licensing outreach, and helping get their tricky American tour (with its thick gear rider and video demands), scheduled to start in September. The act and its team call "We Are the Night" their best work yet. "They threw the rule book out," Mendlinger says. First single "Do It Again" is making an impact now in clubs. Rowlands and Sims pressed 12-inch vinyl copies and hand-distributed them to DJs early this year, and commissioned a remix from electro wunderkind Matthew Dear (under his Audion moniker).

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Solo, And Loving It

Modern Rock Vet Cornell Carries On With Suretone Debut

After devoting the bulk of the past 20 years to bands, former Soundgarden/Audioslave vocalist Chris Cornell is comfortably back on his own with "Carry On," due June 5 via Suretone/Interscope.

"I really prefer, if I'm in a band, to focus on the music of that band, but invarially what happens is, I'll start writing songs that just don't work or fit," Cornell says. "I'm sure I've been part of the process of writing someone else's favorable song off of a record, but that wasn't us. First indication that a solo album was looming—songs that I probably will put out on my own."

Indeed, Cornell says he is reveling in the artistic freedom being a solo artist provides and, having released four records in the last five and a half years, is intent on continuing at that breakneck pace. "Carry On," which was produced by Steve Lillywhite, was finished quickly after Audioslave dissolved earlier this year.

On cuts like "No Such Thing," "Poiyon Eye" and "Never Be Your Man," the album hints at Cornell's riff-rock-oriented past, unlike his first solo record, 1999's "Euphoria Morning," which was released right after Soundgarden broke up and intentionally avoided that band's more bombastic side. The single "Can't Change Me" earned a Grammy Award nomination for best male rock vocal performance. The album has sold 362,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Elsewhere, there are vulnerable, melancholic ballads like "Arms Around Your Love," which will be released as a single in the United Kingdom on the heels of Cornell's best top 10 European Hit, "You Know My Name," which also served as the theme song to the 2006 James Bond film "Casino Royale."

Soundgarden and Audioslave are titans of rock radio, but Cornell faces a challenging road establishing himself as a solo artist. Thus far, "No Such Thing" has stalled at No. 33 after five weeks on the Mainstream Rock chart, but has found support on stations like WRR Columbus, Oh. "It's doing fine with us. I'd say it's probably top 10 phones for our 'New at 11' show," PD/afternoon jock Chris Chaos says.

Dovetailing with Cornell's admission that he's "never been one that really cares much what song is the single," several tracks have been serviced to rock outlets simultaneously, including a slow-churning cover of Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" that has often appeared as part of the artist's live show. "Arms Around Your Love" is also headed to adult top 40 and mainstream top 40 stations.

"Referring to diversity, I think that's the main message before the record comes out," Cornell says. "Whatever anyone hears on the radio or as an MP3, it's just one little flavor of what's on the record. There's a lot going on there."

"I don't want to be precious with this music," Suretone president Jordan Schur says. "We really just want to expose him and expand this record for what it is."  

Suretone is trying to "cultivate a new profile" for Cornell, "introducing him to new generations of kids, as well as reaching other audiences, not depending on his past or his old fans to sell his records or introduce him," Schur says.

To that end, Cornell has been posting blog entries on the Suretone Web site, and has been meeting with fans at shows as part of contests set up by the label. That tour, which began in early April, is expected to run for 18 months. Cornell is pepperig his set lists with tracks from throughout his career, including the one-off Temple of the Dog project from the early '90s, which also featured members of the nascent Pearl Jam.

"It's a little more intimate when you're in touch with the people that are in front of you," he says. "It's not like you laminate a set list card, tattoo it on somebody and then that's it. There are bands that do that."

"I don't really care so much about the PA being good or if the power turns off in the middle of the show, because you're playing on the southern tip of Italy or somewhere in Southeast Asia," he says. "I just want to be in that environment."
And Starring... You!

Placebo Drafts Fans To Create Latest Video

Placebo, super-DJ Paul van Dyk’s favorite band, is matching the innovation on its fifth album, “Meds” (Virgin), with an adventurous new marketing outreach.

The band invited fans to submit footage of themselves singing next single “Running Up That Hill” (a worthy Kate Bush cover), for possible inclusion in the final video. Within two weeks, more than 1,000 Placebo followers joined and posted clips to startups’ sites Motionbox, Capital Music Group’s partner on the promotion and “YouTube on Red Bull” (according to one blogger). And 5,000 downloaded the track (for free).

It’s the first foray of an electronic-leaning act into the brave new world of consumer-generated media (CGM), a blanket term for blogs, social-networking sites and even person-to-person e-mails that has recently expanded to include advertising. Big brands like Doritos, Chevy and Dove have turned over all or part of their current campaigns to their customers, calling for submissions and picking the best home-baked spots for national airing.

While corporations with limitless resources are leading the charge, CGM-based initiatives are a particularly great option for canny outfits with tiny coffers, which typically can’t find room in the budget for things like videos and digital marketing.

“Fan participation carries far more benefit than downside,” says Syd Schwartz, senior VP of digital strategy for Capitol. “This type of promo provides fans with the opportunity to put their own spin on the visual, which strengthens the consumer’s relationship with the song and the artist.”

The final video will be posted May 16 on Motionbox. And for a greater primer on CGM, check out Nielsen Buzzmetrics’ online white paper.

DJ-producer Armand Van Heiden has done it again. He has created an album so unrelated to the dance zeitgeist it might go unheralded. “Ghettoblaster” (Ultra) is too much nerdy fun to let slip by, though, loaded with almost-sample references to the ‘80s tracks that turned on a lot of current fans—and industry-types—to dance music in the first place.

“It’s the most important to me,” Van Heiden says. “When I make music, I place it to a figure standing there in a time-frame. This one had a real loud urban soul kind of hook—high-tops, fades, new wave shades. I looked at the cover of a Big Daddy Kane or Kid ‘N’ Play or Stevie B record, and it put me in the right frame of mind.”

And unlike Van Heiden’s last effort, 2005’s rockier “Nympho,” which was released in September, “Ghettoblaster” comes just in time for summer.

Speaking of, Beatbox kicks off its annual summer song selection this week with a new one on King Street. “Piece of Meat” is a melodic slice of deep-yet-sunny house with an unusually emotive vocal from newcomer LeJuan. No wonder, he’s Byron Stingily’s cousin. Stingily co-produced the classic original, and Quentin Harris provided an additional remix in his usual thick, tech-inflected style. The gory title gets to the main lyrical credo: You can take my body, cruel mistress, but not my soul. The track’s more about triumph than angst, though, and kicks off the summer dance music season perfectly.

Global Pulse

No Brakes

Electric Soft Parade Turn It On Again

British brothers Tom and Alex White have put the pedal to the metal with Electric Soft Parade after two years with the Brakes on.


The Whites, who share writing, vocal and guitar duties, recorded two ESP albums for U.K. label DB Music—the Mercury Prize-nominated “Holes in the Wall” (2002) and “The American Adventure” (2003)—drawing comparisons to Teenage Fanclub and Super Furry Animals.

The latter BMG-distributed set made the U.K. top 50, but the duo put ESP on hold after forming Brakes with fellow Brighton alt-rockers. keyboard player Eamon Hamilton (from British Sea Power) and bassist Marc Beatty (from the Tenderfoot). Known as Brakes/Brakes/Brakes in the United States to avoid confusion with Philadelphia modern rock act The Brakes, the band’s Rough Trade albums “Give Blood” (2003) and “The Beatific Visions” (2006) garnered enthusiastic U.K. press.

“Brakes is a totally different band [from ESP],” Truck director Robin Bennett says. “It’s more punky, country and lo-fi.” He says stateside audiences will see ESP “in full schizophrene mode,” on 14 North American dates with Brakes through June, following headlining ESP shows (May 22-28) booked by Little Big Man. International shows are through London-based ITB.

Rough trade distribution is rolling out “No Need To Be Downhearted” across continental Europe. Publishing is through Mute Song Ltd./Windswept. —Steve Adams

JAZZ TIME: Multiple Grammy Award winner Thomas Quasthoff has made significant achievements in his 20-year musical career, conquering severe disability to become one of the world’s most highly rated bassbaritones.

Through May and June, Quasthoff will be performing the music of Brahms, Schubert and Haydn at concerts in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. However, it’s only recently that the 47-year-old says he finally achieved his childhood dream—being a jazz singer.

Quasthoff’s “The Jazz Album: Watch What Happens” (Deutsche Grammophon) entered the top 20 of Germany’s Media Control charts one week after its March 2 global release, and has shipped more than 50,000 copies domestically, according to Universal Music Germany. Global shipments have passed 150,000 copies, making it Quasthoff’s biggest-selling album to date.

The release is the singer’s 15th DG recording. Its 12 tracks are mainly standards, including “My Funny Valentine” and “Accentuate the Positive.” Hamburg-based DG head of project management Harntut Bender calls it “a unique jazz album,” adding, “He didn’t imitate other jazz vocalists. In every note, you feel it’s Quasthoff.”

“When I sing jazz,” the singer says, “I want it to sound genuine, not like classical music cloaked in jazz.”

Quasthoff is managed and booked by Vienna-based Helga Machreich-Unterzaucher.

—Wolfgang Spahn
Jazz not only has long legs as a musical form, but it also offers a feast of youthful euphoria for those committed to struggling off the shackles of age with creative vigor. When Ron Carter turned 70 on May 4, he joined that elite coterie of jazz elder statesmen who are still striving, as he calls it, “to find the right note.”

Carter doesn’t bank on past triumphs, avoiding the pitfalls of repeating himself with his select crew of collaborators, including his trio with Russell Malone and Mulgrew Miller, his quartet with Stephen Scott, Payton Crossley and Rolando Morales-Matos; and his chamber nonet, featuring four cellists, which held forth May 7 in a rare performance at Merkin Concert Hall at New York’s Kaufman Center.

That show wrapped two months of nonstop action—sideman duties with first Migel Legrand and then Steve Kuhn two weeks in a row in March at Birdland, a two-week trio tour of Europe, a weeklong duo engagement with Jim Hall at New York’s Blue Note, followed by a triumphant five-night gig with his quartet at Yoshi’s in Oakland, Calif., then a two-week Japan tour with Hall.

The nonet date provided a ramp-up for Carter’s JVC Jazz Festival marquee extravaganza, “The Master at 70,” June 27 at New York’s Carnegie Hall with Hall, the trio, the quartet and an all-star quartet comprising Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter and Billy Cobham. Not bad for an acoustic bassist, who ranks as one of a handful of bandleaders fronting with an instrument most often relegated to stage shadows.

In an on-air conversation April 12 with DJ Melanie Berzon on KCSM, the San Francisco Bay Area jazz station at San Mateo College, Carter admitted that a bass player often goes unseen. “But I don’t get bent out of shape about that,” he said. “I try to show an audience how important the bass player is to an ensemble.”

He paused, then noted how he often gets requests from a diverse population of artists—from fellow jazzers to such pop acts as Paul Simon, Aretha Franklin, Roberta Flack and A Tribe Called Quest—for his sideman services, making him the most recorded bassist in history. “If it’s accepted that bass players are invisible,” Carter said, “then these people must have special glasses to see how important the bassist is to a successful project.”

“But Ron’s not just a bass player,” says Festival Productions artistic director/senior producer Dan Melnick, who booked Carter for Carnegie Hall. “He may have been an integral member of Miles Davis’ classic ‘60s quintet, but he’s a unique figure in the right. His show is a very important festival event this year. It’s a salute to a legendary jazz artist.”

On June 19, Blue Note Records will release Carter’s latest CD, “Dear Miles,” a quartet date issued last summer in Japan by Toshiba/EMI’s Somethin’ Else imprint. While understanding that some people may scoff at yet another homage to Davis, Carter says, “Until now, I wasn’t ready to do an album like this for fear of getting swallowed up by the Miles aura. But since this expresses my band’s personality, it’s as much a tribute to them as to Miles.”

As for his recording marketability, Carter’s past Blue Note albums have sold in the 5,000-15,000 range that’s typical for instrumental jazz (according to Nielsen SoundScan, 2003’s “The Golden Striker” has sold 7,000, 2001’s “Stardust” 6,000; and 2000’s “When Skies Are Grey” 5,000). However, Blue Note GM Zach Hochkeppel hastens to note that Carter’s CDs garner larger sales in Europe and Japan, where he enjoys considerable fan favor.

Still, Hochkeppel says, “Dear Miles” could well be Carter’s “most commercial record yet, given the hooks: The Miles tribute, Ron’s legendary status and his Carnegie Hall show. Plus, Ron is very press-worthy for nonjazz writers. He’s always been adept at getting coverage outside of the jazz world.”
can I hate a song called "Suga Duga?")

"I'm not on VH1, but I love New York," Cam'ron raps on that cut.


"Said you want a song, I'm not a Differentiated," says Cam'ron, who is now a member of the crew. The album, which was produced by The Neptunes, has been hailed as a return to form for Cam'ron, who has been struggling with drug-related issues in recent years.

"This is different for me," Cam'ron said in an interview. "I'm not just rapping about girls and money anymore. This is about my life, my struggles, my dreams. It's a different Cam'ron, and I'm proud to be able to have made this album."

However, not everyone is impressed with Cam'ron's new direction. Some fans have criticized the album for being too soft and not aggressive enough.

"I thought Cam'ron was a rapper, not a singer," one fan said. "He should stick to what he knows and not try to be something he's not."

"I agree," said another fan. "Cam'ron has always been about the street and the hustle. This album doesn't have that edge that made him a star."

But Cam'ron is confident in his new direction. He has said that he wants to "prove that I'm not just a one-trick pony."

"I've been through a lot in my life, and I want to share my story with the world," Cam'ron said. "I'm not going to let anyone tell me what I can or can't do. I'm going to do what I want, and that's why this album is so different."

And he's right. Cam'ron has always been about the street and the hustle. This album doesn't have that edge that made him a star. But it shows a different side of Cam'ron, and if he can keep it up, he could be a force to be reckoned with.

The album is available now, and fans are excited to see what Cam'ron has in store for them next. It's clear that he's not done surprising people yet.
Suicide Girls indie rock porn singer adorned seriously. the Suicide may be try ton’s “Pure” albums the same time, “I’ve never dubbed Friction like 2005’s & BS,” “This Can’t Be Good” is a rousing tale of what happens when you get caught with the sheriff’s daughter, and “The Worel’s” Closer, “The Last Country Song,” features appearances by George Jones and John Anderson. Shelton’s persistence to Nashville executive, “I’ve never had that ‘fuck me’ attitude, and not just his music, but his personality,” he says. “He is such a funny and likable and charismatic person.”

Warner Bros. hopes that a series of virally marketed YouTube videos and other initiatives will expose that personality. In one video, perhaps channeling “Jackass, Shelton rolls a hand mem- ber down a truck ramp in a barrel. He also added comic relief as a judge on USA Network’s “Nashville Star” talent competition. Richards is a believer. “He has all the makings of being one of those who in the next couple of years really launches to that super-star level,” he says.

After touring with Rascal Flatts and Toby Keith during the last couple of years, Shelton wants to go it alone, at least for the time being. And his goals have changed in other ways, too. “When I first moved to Nashville I wanted to be Garth Brooks, and now I’ve kind of shifted to reality,” he says. “I want to have a legitimate greatest-hits album that is 10 or 12 solid hits. If I get that, I’ll feel like I’ve made my mark. I’ve done something.”

There was a time when Minus the Bear wasn’t taken very se- riously. Albums and EPs were adorned with bizarre song ti- tles like “Monkey!!! Knife!!! Fight!!!” and “I’m Totally Not Down With Rob’s Alien.” Lead singer Jake Snider ran a pro- Suicide Girls indie rock porn site dubbed Friction USA.

Then the Seattle-based band released 2005’s “Menos el Oso,” and any doubts about its seriousness were laid to rest. What had been a sometimes lighthearted ap- proach to songwriting was replaced with a more thoughtful, inward-looking album, and its frenzied indie rock was given a heavier prog rock slant. The indie porn site was dismantled, and with a focus strictly on music, “Menos el Oso” would be- come the top-selling album in the 10-year history of indie Suicide Squeeze.

To date, the album has moved 45,000 units in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, and peaked at No. 20 on Bill- board’s Heatseekers chart. It was a gradual success story, and one in which the band was growing faster than the label. Suicide Squeeze founder David Dickenson had worked with Minus the Bear largely on handshake agreements and finally signed the band to a two-album deal before the release of “Menos el Oso.”

Even then, Dickenson gave the band an out-clause, should it have designs on something larger.

The respect has not gone unnoticed by Snider. “We had interest all along the way from various independent labels, and we get e-mails from in- terns at major labels or who- ever,” Snider says. “But there’s nothing that we’ve been jazzy about or enticed us at all. With the way the music in- dustry is going, we feel safe on the indie we’re on.”

Two of the four albums Suici- dize Squeeze will release in 2007 are Minus the Bear ef- forts. The first was a remix album, “Interpretaciones del Oso,” which the label gave a low-key release on Feb. 20. It’s saving up for the Aug. 21 re- lease of “Planet of Ice,” a Yes- inspired album clad with fanci- ful guitar textures, and one that Dickenson says would be fit for a “laser light show.”

The Touch & Go-distributed label is targeting about $75,000 on retail marketing, and the label and band will soon release a series of be- hind-the-scenes videos on YouTube. Suicide Squeeze is looking to ship approximately 30,000 units—its largest expenditure to date.

Touch & Go head of sales Leslie Ranson says the band’s mainstream appeal surprised even her, as nearly half of the last album’s sales were from large chains such as Best Buy. Dealing with such an anticipated title as “Planet of Ice” is new ground for the label, and Suicide Squeeze was willing to wa- termark advances, which would have cost an extra $4 per CD, Dickenson says.

The choice was up to the band, and it ultimately de- cided not to, preferring not to fight the Web. Snider points to the YouTube videos as new marketing ground for the band, and one it is com- fortable dealing with.

“I think these days in the music business, creativity and marketing are the only way that growth is going to con- tinue,” he says. “It’s easier to find the way with finding those guerrilla tactics.”
**ALBUMS**

**COUNTRY**

**JOHN ANDERSON**

EASY MONEY
Producer: John Rich
Warner Bros./RCA
Release Date: May 15

Anderson's honeyed drawl and wild-turkey wit have made him one of country's most reliable album makers for nearly three decades now, and backing from Warners & Big & Rich ensures "Easy Money" will be his most visible release in 15 years. Oddly, the rather routine craft of "If Her Lovin' Don't Kill Me" and "A Woman Knows" have been pegged as singles over tracks that actually make the set distinctive—not just the cradled and t-t-t-toungie-tied "Brown Liquor" and the touris-hard-work-raver "Easy Money," but lovely ballads like the dejected, almost cynical "Weeds," the marriage rallying "Drink About" and "Blue," six mysterious minutes revolving around race and the South. "Funky Country," a better idea than a song, isn't the funkiest cut here, and "Willie's Guitar" feels somewhat gratuitous beyond its Hawaiian lilt. In the end, though, almost every cut kicks in—even those two singles. —CE

**R&B**

**RICK JAMES**

DEEPER STILL
Producer: Rick James
Stone City Records
Release Date: May 15

A little salsa with your funk. That's one of the surprises on Rick James' latest studio album, recorded in the year before his fatal 2004 heart attack. Rather than rely on the tried-and-true formula that brought fame and misfortune, James channels an introspective muse while emphasizing his musical purview. An inventive infusion of Latin and African rhythms powers "Secrets" and the title track, a top 20 adult R&B hit. He pulls off a soulfully intriguing take on David Crosby's "Guin-nevere," then candidly reflects on his sex, drug and legal problems ("Taste") and ensuing self-realization ("Stroke") after a two-year stretch in prison. James also conjures his signature carnal/romantic side on "Do You Wanna Play?" and "Funk Wit Me." Overall, the album reveals a still rich-voiced singer and talented songwriter who was determined to mount another comeback.—GM

**WILCO**

SKY BLUE SKY
Producer: Wilco
Nonesuch
Release Date: May 15

With "Sky Blue Sky," Wilco eschews the sonic adventurousness of its last two records in favor of more subdued material. Gone are the electronic blips and blurs and 10-minute homages to Kraftwerk, replaced by roosty, often acoustic-driven songs that call to mind "70s light rock. One can hear traces of the Beatles' "Something" on opener "Either Way," while the rest of the album stews together the Band, Pink Floyd circa "Meddle" and the Allman Brothers. On first listen, it might seem too derivative, even dull, but Jeff Tweedy's intricate vocal melodies and Nels Cline's frenetic guitar work keep things interesting. Best of the bunch: the twin guitar soloing of "Impossible Germany," the head-nodding, twangry strut of "Walken" and the emotional crescendo of "On and On and On." What's most impressive is the band's ability to gracefully shift from one style to the next—from track to track, album after album—and continue to deliver quality songs.—BF

**IAN HUNTER**

SHRUNKEN HEADS
Producers: Ian Hunter, Andy York, Vos Roc
Release Date: May 15

Six years after his last set of new material, the former Mott the Hoople frontman has delivered another set of accomplished songcraft with intelligent and literate lyricism. "Shrunken Heads" mines Hunter's familiar set of sources—including Bob Dylan, David Bowie and American roots music—for a kind of "Highway 61 Revisited" meets "The Lonesome Jubilee," fortified by a forceful guitar attack, some tasty violin licks by Soozie Tyrell and backing vocals by Wilco's Jeff Tweedy on three tracks. Hunter makes plenty of rock 'n' roll noise on "Fuss About Nothin'," offers some pointed social commentary on the title track and "Braunwash," and turns genuinely soulful on "World Was Round" and "Guiding Light." Hunter offers a promise to change in "Words (Big Mouth)," but "Shrunken Heads" is proof that it's absolutely unnecessary.—GG

**RUFUS WAINWRIGHT**

RELEASE THE STARS
Producer: Rufus Wainwright
Geffen
Release Date: May 15

Wainwright's songwriting has always been brash, bold and beautiful, but perhaps never more so than on this lavishly orchestrated, adventurous effort. Out and proud from day one, Wainwright makes the most of the record yet, larger-than-life melodies wrapped in swelling strings and surging horns and buoyed by the singer's typical swoon-inducing, caramel-covered tenor. He pours his heart into everything from Broadway-worthy showstoppers like the naughty "Baboon My Leg" and the excellent title track, to more straightforward confessions like "Going to a Town," a wounding indictment that laments, "I'm so tired of you, America." Though the final third of the album drags a touch as Wainwright lets up on the heart-pounding melodrama, the highs here are exceptional. Wainwright once again paints classical and pop-in-good-hands—can be incredibly well-bedfellowed.—SV

**GRETCHEN WILSON**

ONE OF THE BOYS
Producer: Mark Wright, John Rich
Gretchen Wilson
Columbia Nashville
Release Date: May 15

As expected, there's plenty of ass-kicking country on Wilson's third album, but it's her softer side that sets it apart. "The Girl I Am" and "To Tell You the Truth," two songs that she co-wrote, expose a more vulnerable Wilson. "Heaven Help Me," another co-write, includes the lyrics "I have wounded those that love me and refuse to take the blame/I have hidden all my demons but I cannot hide my shame." The steamy "Come To Bed," which features John Rich and offers a pleasant alternative to a domestic argument, is perhaps the album's best cut, although the stone country "Pain Killer" is also strong. Elsewhere, the title track and recent single finds Wilson balancing her rough edges and tumble persona with her softer side ("I know I don't act much like a lady, but I still need to be somebody's baby.")—KT

**DOLORES O'RIORDAN**

ARE YOU LISTENING?
Producers: Youth, Dan Broadbeck
Sanctuary
Release Date: May 15

Everyone else is doing it, so why can't she? On the latest solo debut from a '90s alt-rocker, one-time Cranberry O'Riordan goes for a pleasingly safe route, sticking to her old playbook and end up sounding, well, not much unlike she did with her old bunch. It's hard to imagine anything else happening when you sound as singular as she does, though, and "Are You Listening?" rises and falls, about half of each, almost entirely on the lovely, lifting and occasionally sharp-toothed tunes of O'Riordan's voice. There are a few deviations: there's angry Dolores ("Loser," where she tears into a pinhead ex) and nostalgically pensive Dolores ("When We Were Young"). All justifying with the aftermath of a breakup. Still, there are plenty of sweet moments, like "Apple of My Eye," one of a number of cases in which more of the same is more.—JF

**TANK**

SEX, LOVE & PAIN
Producers: various
Background/Universal Music
Release Date: May 15

Since hitting us with his tender 2001 single "Maybe I Deserve," Tank (a former backup vocalist for Ginuwine and Aaliyah) has largely played the background, scribbling streamy tunes for Marques Houston ("Naked"), Jamie Foxx ("Unpredictable") and Omarion ("O'S"). To a name a few. The foreground has never been his forte. Though solid in some parts, third album "Sex, Love & Pain" is standard R&B fare. But while production is on the elementary side, the disc is boosted by Tank's grumpy vocals on occasional jewels like "I Hate You" and lead single "Please Don't Go," where the singer offers doses of vulnerability. On the other hand, concept tracks like "Wedding Song" feebly tread on T. Kelly-esque territory. The R&B

continued on >>>72

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scene is way too saturated with pleading vocalists, and Tank simply doesn't have enough...Richie Hawtin, tank to distinguish himself — CM

**BLUE**

**JAMES BLOOD ULMER**

Bad Blood in the City: The Piety Street Sessions

Producer: Vernon Reid

Hyena

Release Date: May 8

At the turn of the century, James Blood Ulmer—known for his free jazz guitar in the ’70s and ’80s—got a serious case of the blues. “Bad Blood in the City,” tracked in New Orleans, is Ulmer’s inspired meditation on the fate of the Big Easy in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Working with his Memphis Blood Blues Band, featuring guitarist/producer Vernon Reid, Ulmer grows his way through a set that includes tunes by Son House, Willie Dixon and John Lee Hooker, as well as several original numbers. The opener/title track is a wicked bit of funk- rich blues that gets right down to the issues in New Orleans, as does Ulmer’s slow blues “Katrina.” His splendid cover of Bessie Smith’s “Backwater Blues” is an uncanny evocation of the Ninth Ward under water. —PVW

**GOSPEL**

**THE ISAACS**

Big Sky

Producer: Mark Bright

Gaither Music Group

Release Date: April 24

Far from resting on their considerable laurels, the Isaacs have never sounded more spirited and engaging than on “Big Sky,” Sisters Sonya Isaacs and Becky Isaacs Bowman sing like angels, and the raft of musicianship displayed by brother Ben and the rest of the band showcase why this group has earned legions of fans in the Southern gospel, bluegrass and country communities. Working with producer Mark Bright, the Isaacs serve up poignant ballads such as “When a Broken Heart Heals” alongside high-energy bluegrass numbers like “Walk On With.” With a mixture of Isaacs at the helm, the group has again crafted an album filled with compelling songs about faith and family like “Love Is a Cross You Bear,” and “Barbie Band-Aids.”—DEP

**NEW & NOTEWORTHY**

**LAVENDER DIAMOND**

**Imagine Our Love**

Producer: Tham Monahan

Matalar

Release Date: May 15

Pop folk act Lavender Diamond has adopted an organic, back-to-basics approach on its debut full-length, “Imagine Our Love.” Frontwoman Becky Stark and her band craft 12 idyllic, heartfelt songs about peace and love set to simple piano, guitar and string arrangements. The real beauty here, though, is Stark’s flawless soprano, which at times manages improbable heights on such songs as “Dance Until Tomorrow.” Elsewhere, her vocals are playful and brittle on the handclapping backed “Open Your Heart” and the ’70s folkl-rlearn “Here Comes One” slower numbers such as the plaintive “I’ll Never Lie Again” and the gently lulling album closer “When You Wake for Certain.” Find the band exploring its softer side, which, much like the rest of the album, makes for a pleasing aural affair. —JM

**LEGEND & CREDITS**

**EDITED BY JONATHAN COHEN (ALBUMS) AND CHUCK TAYLOR (SINGLES)**

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Chuck Eddy, Gordon By, Ben French, Gary Graf, Clover Hope, Jill Menze, Gall Mitchell, Michael Paletta, Charles Perez, Sven Philipp, Deborah Evans Price, Chuck Taylor, Christa L. Tuis, Ken Tudor, Phil Van Vleck, Susan Visokay, Jeff Vrabel

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

**CRITIC’S 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 Cohen and singles review inquiries to Chuck Taylor (both at Billboard, 770 Broadway, Sixth Floor, New York, N.Y. 10003) or to the writers in the appropriate bureaus.

**SINGLES**

**POP**

**DOLORES O’RIORDAN**

Ordinary Day (3:40)

Producers: Dolores O’Riordan, Richard Chycki

Writer: D. O’Riordan

Publisher: not listed

Sanctuary

It’s been four years since ’90s modern rock darlings the Cranberries went on hiatus. It’s taken the years since for lead singer Dolores O’Riordan to record solo bow “Are You Listening?” due May 15. Launch single “Ordinary Day” showcases a tempo closer to pop classic “Linger” than detectable screamer “Zombie,” with its hypnotic harmonies and steady acoustic instrumentation. The lyric (“Always be yourself along the way/Living through the spirit of your dreams”) is a guidebook for O’Riordan’s third daughter, Dakota. Adult Top 40 has a proactive, here familiar voice, female-friendly message and opulent melody. An esteemed, handsome return. —CT

**ROCK**

**BJÖRK**

Earth Intruders (3:24)

Producers: Timbaland, Danja

Writers: T. Mosley, N. Hills, B. O’Riordan

Publishers: various

Elektra/Atlantic

While Björk tapped Timbaland to collaborate with her on a few tracks on new album “Volta,” her creations with the in-demand producer/ songwriter remain decidedly her own. On “Earth Intruders,” Timbaland’s percussion-fueled foundation sets the tone. Imagine, if you will, a high-school marching band from Nebraska uprooted and plodded in the middle of Rio during Carnival, and you’ll begin to understand the magic here. Then there’s that voice: it shatters, it quivers, it shrieks—a natural wonder of the world. A feisty track, “Earth Intruders” finds Björk singing of “torum” and “carnage” and of those “coming to end the doubt pouring over.” Björk for president. —MP

**Tori Amos**

Big Wheel (3:18)

Producer: Tori Amos

Writer: T. Amos

Publisher: not listed

Epic

Leave it to Tori Amos to turn a dirty acronym into a demand for respect. In the bridge of “Big Wheel” she declares, “I—I—I am an M—I—L—F, don’t you forget,” twisting the backward compliment into the definition of a woman you better think twice about messing with. We’re not sure which personality from Amos’ concept album “American Doll Posse” sings this song, but we suspect Santa, the Sally Krelman-ish vamp armed with martini glass in the CD artwork. That would fit the jaunty piano that’s kissing cousins with a honky-tonk up-right and hand-clap percussion. This is a gal who can hold her liquor with the big boys. Triple A’s inconsistent pushiness has some stations shying from “Big Wheel,” but the rollicking number still hit No. TK on that chart this issue.—CL

**DANCE**

**ULTRA NATE**

Automatic (3:16)

Producers: Jens Bergmark, S. Smith

Writers: B. Walsh, J. Goldenberg

Publishers: Universal, ASCAP, Fledelite, BMI

Silver Label/Tanning Boy

Already at the top of Billboard’s Hot Dance Club Play chart, long-lived dance diva Ultra Nate’s “Automatic”—a cover of the Pointer Sisters’ 1984 top five hit—is reinvented person. Cleverly opening with the line, “I’m so excited,” referencing another classic, Nate enchants with a lower-register vocal that conjures Ruth Pointer, before launching into an anal-retentive comedic swirl at the chorus. Radio edit is ideal for FM, but clipped versions of the Paul Jackson Excursion and Monkey Brothers Electro Lovely mixes are also worthy. The song stands on its own, but its double-entendre—internet sex—is eudaenically revealed in a steamy videoclip on YouTube, which features Nate in a myriad of tickling fantasy costumes, along with a willing male partner. The “peak scene” is enough to make a porn star blush.—CT

**TRIPLE-A**

**BEN GREEN**

Sheryl Crow (5:00)

Producers: Ben Green, B. Lewis

Writer: B. Green

Publisher: Hat Factory

ASCAP

American Standard

Green tempered the hand of solo greatness via a wayward publishing deal with EMI and recording contract with SBB— but achieved a modicum of songwriting success. He gives it another go on his own with “Sheryl Crow,” based on a dream he had where the two shared friendly philosophical musings at a Starbucks. Who can’t relate to the occasional celebrity fantasy that seems so real it’s worth storytelling? She tells him, “I’m here cause I need time to do an average thing.” And get back to the inspiration that makes me sing.” Green commands vocals, piano and acoustic guitar, which should earn trust at triple-A—not to mention a warm-up spot on Crow’s next tour eh? Not since “Better Days Eyes” has home- age been as spirited.—CT

**FOR THE RECORD**

Nichelock’s “Side of a Bullet” (Singles, May 5) is the sixth single release from current CD “All the Right Reasons.”

www.americanradiohistory.com
Ne-Yo Repeats As Bublé Bubbles; Akon's Course

The young ma& showed obvious star quality when he delivered two songs during Universal Music Group Distribution's presentation at NARM's 2005 convention. Now he's back with second No. 1 in as many tries on Billboard. 200.

HIS SCOPHROUS ALBUM, "Because of You," opens with 321,000 copies. It's the fifth-biggest week among this year's No. 1 albums, a 50,000-copy week

'Still Red Hot

STILL RED HOT

>> Move over, Green Day. The Red Hot Chili Peppers become just the second act to nail at least four Modern Rock top 10

tracks to seven different albums as "Hump De Bump" from "Stadium Arcadium" moves to No. 1. The Peppers also pulled four top 10s from "Califonia Calling." 'I DID,' NOT IDLE

>> John Arrasbrading's first blues album since she made her first No. 1 album, as "Into the Blues" bows at No. 2 on Top Blues Albums. She first appeared on Billboard 200 in 1976. Her "Lovers Speak," spent two weeks at No. 1 on Independent Albums in 2003.

SOMETHING BLUE

>> John Arrasbrading's first blues album since she made her first No. 1 album, as "Into the Blues" bows at No. 2 on Top Blues Albums. She first appeared on Billboard 200 in 1976. Her "Lovers Speak," spent two weeks at No. 1 on Independent Albums in 2003.

His sophomore album, "Because of You," opens with 321,000 copies. It's the fifth-biggest week among this year's No. 1 albums, a 50,000-copy week debut set "At My Own Risk" in March 2006.

Aside from the slower pace of album sales that has unfolded in 2007, Ne-Yo's softer sound reflects radio's impact. At the print week "Words" hit stores last year, breakthrough hit "So Sick" had spent six straight weeks in the top three on Billboard 100. The title track and lead single from the new album has charted for only 12 weeks and appears to have peaked at No. 6.

From an industry perspective, more concerning than how Ne-Yo's start compares with that of his first album is where this stands next to the chart's leader at this point last year. In a week of 2006, Tool's "10,000 Days" led the big chart with the greatest sales week of the band's career. 564,000 copies, while the top of a self-titled Pearl Jam album added another 279,000 units of new business.

Thus, despite six debuts in this issue's top 10, volume in that part of the chart trails the top 10 of a year ago by 38%. Bright spots among this week's crop are career-best Billboard 200 ranking for Nielsen SoundScan weeks for Michael Bublé (No. 2, 212,000 copies) and Miranda Lambert (No. 5, 33,000).

A release-week stop on "Today," where Bublé credited the show for ramping up his career, helped more than double his album's sales. So did a value-added edition for $13.98 at Target and an ad placed during "Grey's Anatomy." His previous best sales week had been 93,000, when album "Time" bowed at No. 7. That album's sold a record 79 weeks at No. 1 on Top Jazz Albums.

RIDING THE STORM OUT: So, what if my daughter had been the minor witness? On a ride with a Trinidad club?

I expect she and I would have a tough talk about why she was at an 18- and-over event in the first place, and I think of her as the parent, so I would help her be accountable, too. But now that the cat is out of the bag, we'll see how this episode affects a career that had rolled out a promising trajectory.

Welcome to life after Don Imus.

Akon's first album, released in 2004, steadily built a fan base, rising to Billboard 200 peak of No. 18 on its way to selling 1.4 million copies. His sophomore album opened at No. 2 last year on the pop and Top R&B/Hi-Hop Albums, selling 2.3 million in its first week, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

He has chalked up eight appearances in the top 10 of The Billboard Hot 100 as either a lead or guest artist. And, with 2.1 million sold to date, his "Smack That" has been the best-selling monitor since Nielsen SoundScan launched late last year. Two of his other songs also rank among the top 10 sellers to date.

Regardless of whether Verizon stops selling his ringtones, the company's withdrawal from sponsorship of his tour with Gwen Stefani already affects the wallet (see story, page 10).

The ongoing success of R. Kelly, who scored some of his biggest radio hits and sales weeks in the wake of headlines more nefarious than Akon's, leads me to believe that the younger star's career will proceed largely unfazed.

Kelly was charged with multiple counts of child pornography in 2002 as a result of a video that allegedly showed the singer having sex with a minor. Court proceedings have sometimes limited his mobility, and he used to occasionally prove that some people are convinced of his guilt, no matter how his case resolves itself in court.

But, I also know that Kelly has scored a dozen top 10s on Hot R&B/Hi-Hop Songs since that story broke in the summer of 2002. Within that span he has also posted four top 10s on the Hot 100 and five top 10s on The Billboard 200, with three of those albums reaching No. 1.

The post-Imus era in radio and its focus on urban music lyrics creates a bumpy road for Akon's story to play out, but I suspect he has enough career momentum and genuine talent to weather the storm.
## HOT 100 AIRPLAY

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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Label</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>BUDDEE</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>RUDY</td>
<td>COMTESSE (X) CLICK / PRODUCTION LABEL</td>
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<td>PROINNER</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>FOR YOU</td>
<td>EMI SONGS</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>I DON'T CARE</td>
<td>JAY-Z / RAY DONELLY</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>LUCAS</td>
<td>COLUMBIA RECORDS</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>LATE NIGHT</td>
<td>EMINEM / ATLANTIC RECORDS</td>
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<td>EMINEM / ATLANTIC RECORDS</td>
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<td>DREW VEIN / RYKODISC</td>
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<td>U+ UR HAND</td>
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<td>LOST WITHOUT U</td>
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<td>UMBRELLA</td>
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## HOT DIGITAL SONGS

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<td>BECAUSE YOU LOVE ME</td>
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<td>LIKE A BOY</td>
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<td>IT'S NOT OVER</td>
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<td>MAKES ME WONDER</td>
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<td>SUMMER LOVE</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>LOVE (THAT'S WHAT I DO)</td>
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## ADULT TOP 40

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## ADULT CONTEMPORARY

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## MODERN ROCK

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Data for week of MAY 19, 2007 | For chart reprints call 646-654-4633 | Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data | 77
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## HOT R&B/HIP-HOP AIRPLAY

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<td>I'M A FLIRT</td>
<td>B. Slade ft. Shawty Snappin'</td>
<td>Jive/Zomba</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>LOST WITHOUT U</td>
<td>J. Holiday ft. Fantasia</td>
<td>Blue Note</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>TOP LOCK &amp; DROP IT</td>
<td>Akon ft. Foxx</td>
<td>Konvict</td>
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<td>Konvict</td>
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<td>Me Love</td>
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<td>Jive/Zomba</td>
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<td>J. Holiday ft. Fantasia</td>
<td>Blue Note</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>TOP LOCK &amp; DROP IT</td>
<td>Akon ft. Foxx</td>
<td>Konvict</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Me Love</td>
<td>Def Jam/RCA</td>
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## ADULT R&B

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Data for week of May 19, 2007

[www.americanradiohistory.com](http://www.americanradiohistory.com)
### HOT COUNTRY SONGS

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<td>That Kind of Day at 20 Station</td>
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### SUGARLAND EDGES FLATTS IN PHOTO FINISH

For the second time in five months, Sugarland replaces Rascal Flatts atop Hot Country Songs. But last week's leader didn't give up without a fight.

BETWEEN THE BULLETS

Sugarland's "Setsail" (Rascal Flatts) stands at No. 2. At 100,000, the song is the week's top sales title, passing Rascal Flatts' "Stand." Sugarland's "Settin'" each week 35 million digital sales figures. (Nielsen BDS audience figures are rounded to the nearest 100 impressions.)

Radio & Records Daily Update

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Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data.
### Latin Airplay

#### Pop

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<th>Title</th>
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<td>En El Barrio</td>
<td>Grupo Aventura</td>
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<td>Mi Corazon</td>
<td>Marc Anthony</td>
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<td>Me Voy A Regresar</td>
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<td>Contigo Contigo</td>
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### Latin Albums

#### Pop

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### Rhythm

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### Regional Mexican

#### Pop

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<td>Juan Gabriel</td>
<td>Fonovisa</td>
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<td>Cada Vez Que Pienso En Ti</td>
<td>Sacha</td>
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<td>Y Si Volviera a Nacer</td>
<td>Alejandro Fernandez</td>
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<td>Las Cuatro Aventuras</td>
<td>Various Artists</td>
<td>Fonovisa</td>
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<td>No Le Harás Mal</td>
<td>Various Artists</td>
<td>Fonovisa</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ese</td>
<td>Sacha</td>
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### Regional Latin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dime Quien Es</td>
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<td>Fonovisa</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Miscellaneous

- **Data for week of May 19, 2007**
- **For chart reprints call 846.654.4633**

Go to **www.billboard.biz** for complete chart data | 85
### JAPAN

**SINGLES**

2. We Can Make It! (First LD Version) - May 5, 2007
4. Make It! (First LD Version) - May 5, 2007
5. Brand New Song (First LD Version) - May 5, 2007

### UNITED KINGDOM

**SINGLES**

2. Casablanca - May 5, 2007
5. The Sweet Escape - May 5, 2007
9. La Paranza - May 5, 2007

### FRANCE

**SINGLES**

2. Beautiful Liar - May 5, 2007
4. Say It Right - May 5, 2007
5. Que Hiciste - May 5, 2007
9. La Paranza - May 5, 2007

### AUSTRALIA

**SINGLES**

2. Candyman - May 5, 2007
5. Steer - May 5, 2007

### ITALY

**SINGLES**

2. Grace Kelly - May 5, 2007
4. Que Hiciste - May 5, 2007
8. La Paranza - May 5, 2007

### SWITZERLAND

**SINGLES**

2. Grace Kelly - May 5, 2007
4. Que Hiciste - May 5, 2007
8. La Paranza - May 5, 2007

### FINLAND

**SINGLES**

1. Like A Superstar (Jalasukupirttaja) - May 5, 2007
2. Paid In Full (Lutestoremojo) - May 5, 2007
3. We Are Family (Lopus Ilmapiiri) - May 5, 2007
4. Let The Bass Kick (Lutestoremojo) - May 5, 2007
5. Unity (Frank-Tk-Ak & Broadway: duo) - May 5, 2007
7. Enhab & Williams (Lutestoremojo) - May 5, 2007
8. Avril Lavigne (The Best Damn Things) - May 5, 2007

### POLAND

**ALBUMS**

2. Nelly Furtado (Nelly Furtado) - April 27, 2007
3. Ayo (Ayo) - April 27, 2007
5. Avril Lavigne - April 27, 2007

### HUNGARY

**SINGLES**

1. Minden Most Kerdodik - April 27, 2007
2. I Don't Love You - April 27, 2007
3. I got A Fire For You - April 27, 2007
5. Stoppa Polka - April 27, 2007

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**Data for week of May 19, 2007**

[Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data]
### Billboard Album Charts (May 19, 2007)

#### Top Christian Albums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>#1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Aaron Shust</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>#2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Marco FM</strong></td>
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<td><strong>#3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Various Artists</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>#4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chris Tomlin</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>#5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Daniel O'Donnell</strong></td>
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#### Radio Airplay

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<td><strong>#1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Aaron Shust</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>#2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Danny Gokey</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>#3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>#4</strong></td>
<td><strong>NEWCASTLE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>#5</strong></td>
<td><strong>SOLO</strong></td>
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#### Billboard 200

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<tr>
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<td><strong>Adele</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>#2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Metallica</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>#3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Coldplay</strong></td>
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<td><strong>#4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Black Eyed Peas</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>#5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pink</strong></td>
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</table>

### Billboard Top Gospel Albums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>#1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Kirk Franklin</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>#2</strong></td>
<td><strong>CeCe Winans &amp; Deniece Williams</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>#3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Various Artists</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Billboard Top Christian Artists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>#1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Aaron Shust</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>#2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Willie Nelson</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td><strong>Various Artists</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Various Artists</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td><strong>Many Artists</strong></td>
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### Billboard Top Country Artists

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<tr>
<td><strong>#1</strong></td>
<td><strong>George Strait</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>#2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tim McGraw</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>#3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Various Artists</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>#4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Various Artists</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>#5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Various Artists</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Notes:**
- The chart data is compiled by Billboard and Nielsen SoundScan, covering the week ending May 19, 2007.
- For complete chart data, visit [www.billboard.biz](http://www.billboard.biz).
- The chart covers various genres including Christian, Gospel, and Country.
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MILEPOSTS

COMPILED BY KRISTINA TUNZI ktunz@billboard.com

Tommy Newson, 78

Tommy Newson, 78, jazz saxophonist and arranger who served as a member
of Johnny Carson’s “Tonight Show” band, died April 28 from bladder and
liver cancer in Portsmouth, Va.

Newson began his career as a musician in bands led by guitarist Charlie
Byrd, Benny Goodman and bandleader Vincent
Lopez. He later became a studio music-
ian and was working for Merv Griffin when “The Tonight Show” hired him in 1962.

He spent 30 years on the program with Carson, who nicknamed Newson “Mr. Excitement”
because of his expressionless demeanor and
by-the-book tastes.

He continued working as a composer/arranger and also did musical arranging for
such TV broadcasts as “Night of 100 Stars” (1962) and the 40th annual Tony Awards
(1986), receiving Emmy Awards for both productions.

He is survived by his wife, Pat Hernansky Newson, and daughter Can-
dace Liebmann.

BIRTHS

BOY: Brendan Brown West, April 10, to Alison Brown and Garry West.
Mother is a Grammy Award-winning
musician, and father is a bassist/producer. Both are co-founders of
Compass Records.

DEATHS

Lobby Loyde, 65, Australian rock gui-
tarist, songwriter and producer, died
April 21 in Box Hill, Melbourne, after
a long battle with lung cancer.

Loyde helped create the Australian
guitar sound. Long before Angus
Young, he inspired Australian bands
to step forward and play as loud and
aggressively as they could.

Loyde was a leading figure in the
1970s Australian pub rock scene, par-
icularly as a member of the bands Billy
Thorp & the Aztecs and the Coloured
Balls. Known for his plectrum guitar
style, he was also an influence on such artists as Kurt Cobain and Henry Rollins.

Bobby “Boris” Pickett, 69, whose
Halloween anthem “Monster Mash”
made him a hit wonder, died April
25 of leukemia in Los Angeles.

Pickett’s dead-on Boris Karloff im-
pression helped enable “Monster
Mash” to hit the Billboard charts three
times. It reached No. 1 in 1962, re-
entered the chart in 1970 and then
peaked a third time in 1973, reach-
ing No. 10.

He also charted with “Monster’s
Holiday,” which reached No. 30 in De-
cember 1962, and “Graduation Day,”
which reached No. 80 in June 1963.

Pickett is survived by a daughter,
sister and two grandchildren.

Mstislav Rostropovich, 80, Russian
cellist and conductor, died April 27 in
a Moscow cancer hospital. Rostro-
povich was recognized as one of the
great string players of the modern era.

He served as conductor of the National
Symphony Orchestra in Washington,
D.C., and guest-conducted through-
out the world. He performed the Bach
Cello Suites at the fall of the Berlin
wall in 1989, and he was present at
Moscow’s White House during an at-
tempted coup in 1991.

He is survived by his wife, two
daughters and several grandchildren.

J. Robert Bradley, 87, a gospel singer
who was a favorite of the late Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr., died May 3 in
Nashville from complications related
to diabetes. Bradley was most noted
for his deep, baritone voice and mag-
netic performances in churches and
gospel concerts.

Born in Memphis, Bradley first
sang as part of gospel great Lucie
Campbell’s Good Will Singers quartet.

After touring through most of the
1930s, he began studying classi-
cal music and later recorded his first
gospel single for Apollo Records and
then Decca Records. After Camp-
bell’s passing, he replaced her as
the director of music for the National
Baptist Convention.

Steve Pritchard, 59, executive VP/GM
of Fontana Distribution, died May 6
from cancer at his home in Los Ange-
les. Pritchard managed the operations
of Fontana, working directly with Uni-
versal Music Group Distribution pres-
ident Jim Urie to grow the company
as a specialized distributor for inde-
dependent music labels.

“Steve spent his life in the music
business, and was a fan, manager, pub-
lisher, international record executive
and finally, the heart and soul of
Fontana,” Urie says. “As its first em-
ployee, Steve built Fontana from scratch, one label and one employee at
a time.”

Before Fontana, Pritchard had been
senior VP/GM of Navaree Entertain-
ment Media, and also held positions
as senior VP of international for At-
lantic Records and VP of business de-
development and content acquisition
for CMR.

He is survived by his wife, Tina, and
mother, Jean.

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RECORD COMPANIES: Sony BMG Entertainment in Hong Kong promotes Kelvin Wadsorth to president of the Asian region. He was executive VP/COO of the region.

Walt Disney Records promotes Kelly Hugunin to executive director of marketing and Phil Guerin, to executive director of broadcast and alliance marketing. Hugunin was director of marketing, and Guerin was director of synergy.

Putumayo World Music names Yann Perrigault international promotion manager. He was a promotion manager at fashion, music and special events consulting company Novalys USA in New York.

Universal Music Group International in London appoints Andrew Daw marketing director of Universal Strategic Marketing. He was international TV marketing manager.

Sony BMG Entertainment in New York promotes Bob Garbarini to senior VP of national sales. He was VP of sales.

Universal Music Group promotes Rio Caraeff to executive VP of the label’s eLabs division. He will continue as GM of Universal Music Mobile.

Warner Music Group in New York names Peter Scherr VP of interactive marketing. He previously held the same title at JetBlue Airways.

SRC Records names Jason Kpana VP of operations and director of A&R. He was A&R coordinator.

PUBLISHING: Warner/Chappell Music elevates Brad Rosenberger to senior VP/head of strategic marketing and synchronization licensing. He was senior VP of the company’s film and TV catalog department in the United States.

DISTRIBUTION: Koch Entertainment Distribution promotes Jim Scileppi to manager of corporate publicity. He was coordinator.

TOURING: AEG Live in Los Angeles appoints Mike Krebs VP of booking for the company and its regional promotion division Goldenvoice. He was VP at Nederlander Concerts.

Olympia Entertainment in Detroit names Dana Wang president. He was senior VP of facilities at AEG.

—Edited by Mitchell Peters

GOOD WORKS

STONE IS (RED) ALL OVER
Joss Stone is extending her (RED) activities via her new music video “Tell Me What We’re Gonna Do.” Beginning June 6, the video will be available for download at iTunes—complete with behind-the-scenes footage. Stone is donating all her proceeds from the download directly to the Global Fund, a nonprofit organization that assists in the fight against AIDS in Africa. For more info, go to joined.com.

KIDS ROCK, TOO
Little Kids Rock, which is dedicated to keeping music programs in public schools, is the sole beneficiary of the Six-String Masterpieces memorial tribute, auction and benefit concert honoring late Pantera/Damageplan guitarist “Dimebag” Darrell Abbott. The May 17 Fund-raiser is held at the Hollywood House of Blues. On the auction block will be more than 60 electric guitars, designed and hand-painted by Ozzy Osbourne, Dave Navarro, Marilyn Manson, Slash and other artists. For more info, visit littlekidsrock.org.

GOSPEL MUSIC WEEK

Gospel Music Week ran April 22-25 in Nashville with an army of seminars, showcases and panels, concluding with the 38th annual Dove Awards April 25 at the Grand Ole Opry House.

ABOVE: From left, MercyMe’s Bart Millard, Mark Hall, and Phil Jamie & the Messengers’ Mark Sanders were honored at the Dove Awards.

BELOW: From left, EMI Christian Music Group’s John Foreman, Jonathan Nelson and EMI CMG president/CEO Bill Hearn were honored at the Dove Awards.

The Miles Davis estate recently signed with Universal Music Publishing Group. Celebrating at the company’s worldwide headquarters from left are UMPG Chairman/CEO David Becker, Sony/ATV chairman/CEO Martin Bandier, Davis estate GM Danny Porter, UMPG executive VP of acquisitions and strategic projects Linda Newmark and UMPG executive VP of creative affairs Tom Sturges.

INSIDE TRACK

ADAMS OPENS HER HEART TO COLUMBIA AND OTHERS

Her 3-month-old syndicated morning radio show isn’t the only thing keeping singer/songwriter ‘Yolanda Adams busy these days. The gospel crossover pioneer follows the May 6 release of her Atlantic “Greatest Hits” album with some big news: She tells Track that she is now a Columbia artist.

Currently in the studio with her Jam & Terry Lewis (“I Won’t Do Anything Without My Guy,” Adams says), she is recording a second Christmas album of original songs and classics scheduled for October. That will be followed by the three some collaborating on a new studio album slated for late first-quarter/second-quarter 2006.

The link is also drying on another contract Adams’ first studio album between her Jam Yo Music and Rondor Music. Since that album, she has been free to pursue any other releases. Adams adds, “It’s really amazing how 2007 so far has really changed my life.”
ASCAP and BMI CHRISTIAN MUSIC AWARDS
ASCAP and BMI honored the best in Christian music last week at their respective awards events.

RIGHT: BMI salute the writers and publishers of the past year’s most performed songs on Christian radio and TV during the April 21 BMI Christian Music Awards at the company’s Music Row offices in Nashville. Shown after the ceremony, from left, are BMI associate director of writers/publishers relations Beth Mason, Kirk Franklin, Casing Zee, Mark Hall, and BMI writer/publisher relations writer/producer Steven Curtis Chapman. BMI VP Tedy Williams and BMI senior VP of writers/publisher relations Phil Graham are seated in the rear.

LEFT: The 29th annual ASCAP Christian Music Awards were held April 23 in Nashville at Pinhook Country Club. From left are BMI Christian Music Group president Eddie Dreixler, whose company won for publisher of the year; and BMI’s Donna Herbert. ASCAP senior VP Connie Murphy is third from left, ASCAP president/CEO Christopher Stokes is fourth from left, and BMI VP Dan Koen is fifth from left. ASCAP gives special thanks to Brett James, Mike Lindsey, Mike celebrity songwriters Dave Bing and Don Schlitz special presentation during the 12 P.M. annual Key West Songwriters Festival. ASCAP and BMI announced the ASPCA Song of the Year West. From left are ASCAP VP Ralph Murphy, Jamie Cullum, Ben Berg, ASCAP president Mike Sistad, ASCAP president/CEO. BMI executive vice president of writers/publisher relations Phil Graham, BMI president OFFICE. Bob Ernest BMI manager Ray Romulus and Sutton.

INSIDE TRACK

THE OTHER SIDE OF PAUL
German DJ/producer Paul van Dyk is one busy man. When he’s not DJ’ing at events around the world, he is putting the finishing touches on his new studio album, “In Between,” due Aug. 14 from Mute. From what Track hears, the new recording is poised to expand van Dyk’s audience — thanks to some savvy collaborations. Though nobody close to the situation is talking, we wouldn’t be surprised if David Byrne finds his way onto the album. We also wouldn’t be surprised to discover a Pussyfoot Doll on a track or two. If Track is proved correct, imagine the possibilities if such artists joined van Dyk onstage during his Aug. 17-18 shows at Central Park in New York. Could be major, indeed. See you there.

NEW TRACKS FROM ENGLAND’S JAXX
Staying on the dance/electronic tip, British duo Basement Jaxx recently spent a couple of weeks in New York, laying down tracks for a new album. From the bits and pieces Track heard, it appears that Jaxx-sters Felix Buxton and Simon Ratcliffe are drawing mightily from their early Latin-flavored jams. While in the Big Apple, they worked with Yoko Ono, Lil’ Louis and Kudu, among others.

This has become a must-attend event for the concert business.

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www.americanradiohistory.com
All we are saying is give peace a chance.

John would have been proud of this album.

Proud that a new generation of artists is speaking and singing out for human rights. Proud that they’re singing his songs to rally global support for the desperate people of Darfur. And proud to be aligned with Amnesty International in this effort. I feel strongly that all people of the world are partners with Amnesty International which, with its activities, ideals and history of action, is effective and wise.

John wrote his songs with a very deep love for the human race and a concern for its future. He believed with his heart it was possible to create a better world. He also believed that each one of us plays a role in changing the world. I hope the Instant Karma campaign has the ability to not only save lives in Darfur, but to create the next generation of activists willing to stand up for the rights of others and the basic human rights we all share, now and in the future.

The challenge is daunting but these goals are achievable if we all put our hearts and minds to the task.

Imagine all of us living life in peace. It is too beautiful to just be a dream.

Yours,

[Signature]

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