Music industry executives hoped that the coronavirus quarantines might buoy music streaming activity with so much of the population isolated indoors. So far, the opposite has occurred. In the last two full weeks as the Covid-19 pandemic was spreading across the world, the U.S. industry has had a moderate downturn in streaming, with even bigger drops in physical.

Two weeks ago, in the week ended March 12, the industry saw a dip in music streaming — down by 1% to 25.3 billion streams from 25.55 billion streams. But it would appear that the longer people stayed out of the office, the less music they consumed.

In the week ending March 19, album consumption units were down 1.6% to 14.6 million units from 14.8 million units. The decline worsened the following week, ending March 19, with overall album consumption units down a whopping 12.3% to 12.76 million units, and total streams fell to 24.45 billion streams (3.5% from the 25.3 billion tallied in the week ending March 12).

Within that, all sales formats, as summarized by albums plus track equivalent albums, fell a whopping 25.6% last week to 1.94 million from the prior week total of 2.61 million units.

Before Covid-19 took hold in the U.S., streaming was soaring: the week ending March 5 marked 2020’s highest streaming week, with 25.55 billion plays.

But there is a bigger cloud on the horizon: as millions of people lose their jobs due to the vast economic shutdowns, some music executives fear that they will get rid of fixed expenses — namely, music streaming subscriptions — which would starve the overall revenue pie.

For now, people who are streaming music seem to be taking comfort in listening to songs they already know. Catalog (music that is older than 18 months) trumped current (music released within the last 18 months) over the last two weeks. The week ending March 19, current streams dropped 5%, whereas cata-
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log only fell 2.5%. So far this year, catalog streams are up 21.6% to 171.29 billion from 140.88 billion in the same corresponding period last year; while current streams are up 16.4% to 96.46 billion versus 82.85 billion in the year earlier period.

A different scenario played out for audio and video. In the week ending March 12, video was only down 0.7%, faring slightly better than both overall streams (down 0.9%) and audio (down 1%). The following week, ending March 19, video streams surged — up 6.9% — thanks to millions of people stuck at home, while overall streams were down 3.5% and audio streams dropped 9%.

Video streams continued to soar throughout the week. The video streams for Friday, March 13, were 2% stronger than the average preceding nine Fridays; while Saturday was 2.7% stronger and Sunday was 6.5% better. Monday through Thursday, video streaming was going strong with double-digit increases each day. Overall, the week ending March 19 was the strongest week of the year for video on demand with a total of 9.43 billion streams, the most so far accumulated in one week in 2020.

All of that video streaming benefited one particular genre — children’s music, which saw overall consumption units (including video) up 9.8% last week to 236,000, up from 215,000 in the prior week. Within that, on-demand streaming grew 16.7% to 363.4 million streams, up from 311.35 million for the week ending March 12.

In terms of the large genres, pop was streamed the most up 0.6% to 3.615 billion, while overall consumption units fell 5.3% to 2.11 million units for the week ending March 19 compared to the prior week. The biggest drops were felt by R&B/hip-hop, down to 12.2% with streams down 6.9%; and rock was down 13.5% with streams down 4.5%.

The genres declining slower than the overall industry are classical, which fell 2.4% in the week ended March 19, but on-demand streaming rose 4% to 184.4 million streams, versus 177.3 million streams in the prior week. And while comedy was down 8.2% in overall consumption units, on-demand streaming only fell 1.4% to 46.5 million streams. But within that genre, video streaming grew 7.9% to 18.4 million streams for the week ended March 19.

Looking at the other genres, the big loser was Latin — down 16.2% overall with streaming down 13.7%. — followed by country, down 11.1% overall with streaming down 6.1%. Dance/electronic fared slightly better, down 7.5% overall, but its streaming rate was barely hit (down 0.9%). Other genres such as Christian/gospel, blues, jazz, and new age all saw declines.

This article has been updated.

Paradigm’s Coronavirus Layoffs Panned by Music Industry: ‘This Is Really Just Greed’

BY DAVE BROOKS

As details of Paradigm’s temporary layoffs of agents, assistants and float staff on Friday have dripped out, anger over the cuts’ timing — just one week into the widespread coronavirus quarantine — and the terms some agents were forced to accept is heating up.

“In times like these you find out who has loyalty,” said Jarred Arfa, Artist Group International GM. “What’s the point of being in a company if you don’t have job security in times of crisis?”

Paradigm is home to superstar artists including Shawn Mendes, Ed Sheeran, Billie Eilish and Coldplay and has spent significant money on acquisitions in recent years. In 2019, the company took full control of European agency Coda and bought Tom
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LA Clippers Owner Reaches $400M Deal to Purchase The Forum From MSG

BY CHRIS EGGERTSEN

CAPSS LLC, a new company formed by L.A. Clippers chairman Steve Ballmer and vice chairman Dennis Wong, has reached an agreement with the Madison Square Garden Company to purchase The Forum arena in Inglewood, California, for $400 million in cash, it was announced Tuesday (March 24).

In addition to the acquisition, the agreement will resolve three separate lawsuits filed by Madison Square Garden Company chairman James Dolan against Ballmer and the City of Inglewood over Ballmer’s plans to build a new 18,000 seat basketball arena for the Clippers less than two miles from The Forum. That project, which is currently undergoing an environmental review by the city, is expected to break ground next year and be complete in time for the 2024-2025 NBA season.

Tuesday’s deal, which remains subject to review by the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice, is expected to close during in the second quarter of this year. As part of the agreement, all current Forum employees will receive employment offers from the new owner.

“This is an unprecedented time, but we believe in our collective future,” said Ballmer in a statement. “We are committed to our investment in the City of Inglewood, which will be good for the community, the Clippers, and our fans.”

In a release announcing the deal, The Forum’s new owners state that having it and the still-to-be-built second Inglewood arena under the same ownership will allow for coordinated programming between the two venues and improve traffic congestion in the area.

“We know traffic is something that many Inglewood residents worry about,” said Chris Meany, principal of Wilson Meany, which is overseeing development of the new arena project. “While we have gone to great lengths to provide an unprecedented traffic-management plan for the new basketball arena, this acquisition provides a much greater ability to coordinate and avoid scheduling events at the same time at both venues.”

According to Tuesday’s release, the new arena project is expected to create an estimated 7,500 construction jobs and 1,500 permanent jobs once it opens, while the Clippers have proposed a $100 million package of community benefits.

Previous reporting by Billboard found that the purchase agreement was endorsed by all five major stakeholders in The Forum, including Dolan, Inglewood mayor James Butts, promoter Live Nation, Los Angeles Rams owner Stan Kroenke and music manager and former Forum executive Irving Azoff. Sources told Billboard that at the time the agreement would create a united front against AEG owner Philip Anschutz, allowing his rivals to join together and build an alternative to the AEG-managed LA Live, an entertainment complex abutting the Staples Center and the Los Angeles Convention Center in downtown Los Angeles.

Dolan purchased The Forum in 2012 and, in a joint venture with Azoff, helped turn the venue into one of the U.S.’s top-selling arenas. It reopened in 2014 after undergoing gressive cost-cutting measures, this includes asking our colleagues at every level to take pay reductions, structured so our most senior colleagues make the largest financial sacrifice.”

UTA was in talks to merge with Paradigm last year but ultimately the deal never materialized.

Billboard reached out to Paradigm for comment for this story but did not receive a response. Previous reporting by The Hollywood Reporter indicated that after the crisis subsides and as business picks up again, Paradigm hopes to rehire the employees it has dismissed and will continue offering them health insurance through May.

LA Clippers Owner Reaches $400M Deal to Purchase The Forum From MSG

IN BRIEF

Windish’s eponymous agency in 2017, along with Paul Morris’ AM Only that same year and Marty Diamond’s Little Big Man.

On Friday, chief executive Sam Gores told staffers on an agency-wide call that temporary layoffs would be enacted in the coming days. Sources estimate that more than 200 agents, assistants and staffers would be cut as the live events business feels the impact of the spread of coronavirus.

Laid off employees were not given any severance payouts, were told their clients would remain with the agency and weren’t paid outstanding commissions, sources tell Billboard — although many of the agents at Paradigm operate on salaries and not commissions. Paradigm also laid off contract employees and suggested a force majeure clause allowed for termination. Several sources tell Billboard that the force majeure provision requires a 90-day notice, indicating legal action for breach of contract is likely. Staff that remained at the company was required to take a pay cut.

Even worse, many agents were told their non-competes were still in place and they would not be allowed to take their artists with them, even if they signed them and brought them to the agency. Several sources tell people Billboard they doubt the artist provision is enforceable and was done to ensure the agencies were paid outstanding commissions.

“This isn’t about protecting cash flow, this was about protecting profits,” said one former employee who did not want to share their name. “This is really just greed.”

The move stands in contrast to how UTA is handling the financial crisis created by the spreading COVID-19 pandemic. There, CEO Jeremy Zimmer and co-presidents David Kramer and Jay Sures will forgo the remainder of their 2020 salaries from now through the end of the year and the rest of the staff will see proportionate reductions to its pay, with higher earners taking larger cuts in order to avoid layoffs.

“Like companies across the industry and our country, UTA is taking some immediate and painful steps to ensure we get through the current public health and economic crisis as strong as possible,” the agency said Monday in a statement. “In addition to ag-
The State Of Radio

Who says radio’s dead? Although broadcast ad revenue is creeping downward, audiences are aging and streaming has surpassed the medium as a vehicle for music discovery. In its inaugural Deep Dive report, Billboard assesses the radio industry today and provides a glimpse of its future by comparing streaming and radio users, automobile audio usage, the growth rates of programming formats — and by looking at why labels and artists still need airtime even in a streaming world.

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a $100 million renovation.

The change in ownership isn’t expected to impact the number of shows Live Nation brings to The Forum, which has grossed $477 million in sales, sold 5.3 million tickets and hosted nearly 500 shows since its grand re-opening in 2014, according to Billboard Boxscore.

Radio Stations Adjust to Social-Distancing, Work-From-Home Studios Amid Coronavirus

BY STEVE KNOPPER

In Casper, Wyoming, My Country 95.5 morning-show hosts Cathy “The Prairie Wife” Holman and Jeff “Doc” Holliday are introducing Kane Brown singles and talking about their many children, like they do every day. But there are subtle differences in the broadcast: Holman’s voice sounds distant and there are brief, barely perceptible pauses in the conversation, as she is self-distancing and calling Holliday via Skype rather than commuting 30 miles to the station.

“Today my daughter dropped something — she was standing right next to me — so there was a huge thump. Another day, I swear people thought I was going to the bathroom, because my 7-year-old was getting a drink of water,” says Holman, who is homeschooling her five kids, ages 5 to 14. “We’ve made the conscious decision to keep that. Who right now cannot relate?”

Like every business, radio stations in the coronavirus era must suddenly figure out how to manage a staff of work-at-home employees, which creates technical complications: Morning-show crews thrive on personal banter and studios are loaded with state-of-the-art microphones and soundboards that are difficult to reproduce at home. But at Townsquare Media’s more than 320, including My Country 95.5, sales and marketing staffs are working off-site; DJs are isolated in spacious, constantly cleaned studios; on-air producers work in separate rooms; and engineers are able to operate transmitters and other equipment remotely.

“If this had happened 20, 25 years ago, it would be extremely difficult, because we didn’t have the technology we have now,” says Kurt Johnson, the company’s senior vp programming. “What local radio does best is relate to the local audience — if the dog barks in the background, fine.”

Every station is dealing with the same problem — and doing it under the stress of an unprecedented advertising slowdown, as closed local bars, restaurants, shops and concert promoters abruptly slash advertising budgets. A rep for iHeartMedia, the world’s biggest broadcaster, said in a statement that its teams “have all the technology resources … to deliver the important information our communities depend on us to provide.”

Tim Clarke, vp content and audience for Atlanta broadcaster Cox Media Group, adds that his stations have rolled out strict hygiene and social-distancing policies, but, he says, “We still have a lot of teams that have to be in place in our buildings,” including on-air personalities, producers and reporters.

“It’s not easy stuff to figure out,” Clarke says. “We’re staggering shifts, we’re staggering schedules, so we don’t have as many people exposed to each other at the same time.”

On March 11, The Current, a Minnesota Public Radio station, reduced its onsite St. Paul staff from 350 to 50, streamlining from four or five people to just one in each of its two studios. “There are some things we wouldn’t have done on a normal week, but it’s not a normal week right now,” says managing director David Safar. “People are not concerned about whether [DJs] are connecting over the phone or an ISDN or a tape sync. It’s just about making the connection.”

In College Station, Texas, 11-station Bryan Broadcasting is using more voice-tracking, so DJs on staggered shifts can show up alone and pre-record conversational “breaks” between music and advertising. And others are calling in via Skype, which causes technical challenges. “It’s really difficult when you’ve got a control board that has three different people coming in on it, plus, Skype, plus news,” says Ben Downs, the company’s GM.

Advertising is the more pressing issue for Downs’ stations — nearby Texas A&M University is on an extended hiatus, students aren’t around to spend money in nonessential bars and shops, and local advertisers are in financial trouble. “There’s a lot of rent that’s going to go unpaid, and there’s a lot of advertising bills that are going to be unpaid, too, I’m afraid,” he says. Borrell Associates, a radio analyst, has suggested local advertising will drop 20-25% this year. “The real story here is just the absolute devastation of the advertising economy in the last week or so — then you couple that with trying to work remotely as well, it’s super-challenging,” says Dennis Wharton, communications executive vp for the National Association of Broadcasters.

Even without being present in the stations themselves, radio is falling back on its core mission — to inform and soothe the public. In Minnesota, a DJ working at home declared to her audience, “You can’t cancel rock ‘n’ roll,” in Casper, Holman, who has an early-education degree, gives listeners resources about how to home-school their kids. And the NAB’s coronavirus public-awareness campaign has aired 36,000 public service announcements on TV and radio.

“Even if [radio employees] are not physically at the station, the message is getting out,” Wharton says. “They’re able to use whatever means is necessary to get the broadcast out to the masses.”
As Dow Jones Scores Single-Day Record, Live Nation & MSG Stocks Post Big Gains

BY GLENN PEOPLES

Investors’ optimism that a federal stimulus package gets passed gave the Dow stock index its best single-day point increase in its 135-year history. Beleaguered investors and retirement account holders received good news Tuesday (March 24) as President Donald Trump and leaders in Congress made progress on an aid bill, leading stocks higher even though the legislation isn’t expected to get the President’s signature before Thursday.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average — an index of 30 blue-chip companies such as Caterpillar and Pfizer — rose 2,112.98 points to 20,704.91, still far from its pre-bear market high of 29,568.57 set Feb. 12. The S&P 500 rose 9.4%, it’s third-biggest percentage gain since World War II. The Nasdaq composite climbed 8.1%.

News of the stimulus also led some music stocks to huge rebounds on Tuesday. Concert promoter Live Nation leapt 15% to $42.94, its highest closing price since March 11. Two other promoters, The Madison Square Garden Company and CTS Eventim, improved 9.6% and 24.6%, respectively, to their highest closing prices since March 11.

Live event promoters have plenty to cheer about — within reason. Citi analyst Jason Bazinet upgraded Live Nation’s stock from “sell” to “neutral” while keeping a $35 price target that’s 22.7% below Tuesday’s closing price (yet only 6.7% below Monday’s closing price before the note was issued to investors). But liquidity might not be a problem: both Bazinet and Lightshed Partners analysts have argued Live Nation has enough cash and credit to meet short-term obligations.

Entertainment companies could benefit from a federal bailout of the U.S. airline industry that aids tourism to destination festivals like Coachella and Bonnaroo; the hotel industry also asked President Trump for help. But the deciding factor in live event promoters’ valuation is the COVID-19’s duration and effect on North America and Europe’s economies. McKinsey had forecasted new cases in Europe and the U.S. to peak in mid-April and that their economies will recover in the fourth quarter.

Goldman Sachs forecasted a 25% decline in the U.S. gross domestic product in the second quarter. Deutsche Bank puts GDP contractions at 24% and 13% for Europe and the U.S., respectively.

But the stimulus package is the deciding factor here. On Tuesday, investors felt better about the future global economy than last week. The trillion-dollar question is how the federal government carries the country out of a recession.

Spotify Pledges Up to $10M To Support Artists Amid Coronavirus, With In-App Fundraising Feature to Come

BY TATIANA CIRISANO

Spotify is rolling out a suite of new features and projects today (March 25) intended to help artists who are struggling financially due to the coronavirus crisis.

“Though streaming continues to play a key role in connecting creators with their fans, numerous other sources of revenue have been interrupted or stopped altogether by this crisis,” the platform notes in a new blog post about its efforts.

First up is Spotify’s new COVID-19

Music Relief project, which helps connect musicians and other music professionals in need of funding to grant-giving organizations, in addition to helping raise funds. To start, Spotify is donating money to the project’s first partners: Nonprofits PRS Foundation, Help Musicians and MusiCares, and will match donations made via the project’s webpage dollar-for-dollar for up to a total Spotify contribution of $10 million.

Next, Spotify is working to add a new feature to its Spotify For Artists platform that will enable artists to fundraise directly from fans, and Spotify will not take any cut of the contributions. This will give artists on Spotify the ability to link out to a verified funding page for themselves, another artist in need, or any other initiative. Spotify For Artists users who wish to use the feature can sign up to receive updates here.

Finally, Spotify is making temporary changes to several of the tools it owns to better serve creators during the crisis: Music talent marketplace SoundBetter is waiving its revenue share, audio recording platform Soundtrap is offering extended free trials for educators, and podcast firm Anchor is waiving fees on its Listener Support feature.

IMPALA Launches 10-Point Coronavirus Crisis Plan to Support Indie Artists & Labels

BY RICHARD SMIRKE

LONDON – Digital music services like Spotify, Deezer and Apple Music are being called upon to make faster royalty payments and hand over a higher percentage of revenues to artists and rightsholders to help them survive the coronavirus crisis.

The recommendation is one of 10 propos-
As made by European indie labels trade body IMPALA in its COVID-19 Crisis Plan. Other recommendations include increased promotion of local music by European radio stations and the establishment of emergency funds by collecting societies (where they don’t already exist), making advances available for all members, as well as interest free loans.

At the heart of the plan is a call for an urgent and co-ordinated response across Europe to minimize the impact of the pandemic on the independent music sector, which has been particularly hit hard by the global crisis.

To support the thousands of micro-businesses and self-employed workers most affected IMPALA wants to see all countries take clear decisions on event cancellations and lockdowns to ensure people can claim on their insurance and access compensation schemes.

In some European touring markets this has already happened, but others have suffered from unclear messaging from national governments. In the United Kingdom, there was a five day lag between Prime Minister Boris Johnson advising people not to go to pubs, clubs and music venues and him officially ordering them to close. The week-long delay meant many U.K. venues were forced to stay open with no customers, yet unable to claim on their business interruption insurance.

IMPA’s crisis plan also recommends comprehensive economic measures for all European countries, including increased EU funding, unemployment relief for self-employed workers, fiscal incentives to boost recovery and the suspension of VAT (value-added tax, also known as goods and services tax) on all cultural goods and services, like music.

As well as making faster royalty payments and increasing payments to artists and labels, digital music services are being urged to provide advances to all rightsholders who need them and increase their support of local music through dedicated playlists.

The roll-out of IMPALA’s plan, which can be seen in full here, will be accompanied by a survey of its 5,000 members measuring losses and promoting best practice.

According to IMPALA, 99% of Europe’s music companies are micro, small or medium-sized independent enterprises and self-releasing artists. Collectively they produce more than 80% of all new releases and account for 80% of the sector’s jobs.

“This is a call for urgent action,” IMPALA executive chair Helen Smith tells Billboard. “Small and emerging companies in countries like Italy are saying they are on their knees, being much further into the crisis than other markets.”

She likens the coronavirus crisis to an iceberg, where the most visible consequences like cancelled tours and festivals have profound knock-on effects that are not immediately apparent.

“A cancelled tour will have ongoing damage as release schedules are mostly on hold till later in the year [creating] a saturated market,” says Smith. “In the meantime, income for labels is down as it’s linked to new releases... Add the problem of what is happening with traditional retail and also online retail of physical product, which has plummeted, and the decline in digital streams and advertising revenue and it gets tough. Meanwhile the bills continue to come in.”

“Most small companies can’t survive that for any length of time,” she says. “If that happens, fewer artists will have partners to work with, particularly independent and local.”

Steve Earle Drops His Claims Against Universal Music Over 2008 Backlot Fire

By Claudia Rosenbaum

Steve Earle is the latest artist to drop his claims against Universal Music Group regarding the 2008 fire on the backlot of Universal Studios Hollywood. Earle filed a voluntary request with the court on Monday (March 23) to dismiss his claims “without prejudice,” thereby reserving his right to litigate those claims in the future.

With Earle exiting, Tom Petty’s widow Jane Petty remains the sole plaintiff in the lawsuit against UMG regarding losses due to the fire. On March 13, Soundgarden and Tupac Shakur’s estate also filed voluntary motions to drop their claims against UMG. Hole dropped out of the suit last August. The putative class action lawsuit was initially filed in June 2019.

These revelations follow the March 5 release of an internal memo from UMG senior vp recording studios and archive management Pat Kraus to staff providing an exhaustive update on the label’s exhaustive, ongoing inventory survey efforts. In the memo, which was obtained by Billboard, he wrote that, contrary to reporting by The New York Times Magazine that first broke news of the fire’s destruction in June 2019, “less than 0.1 percent” of the more than 150,000 assets he and his team have reviewed so far were “original recordings” destroyed by the fire.

“For the very few original recordings we believe were impacted, almost all had previously been commercially released and we have located safeties, copies or digital alternatives for every single album,” he wrote.

“In the one instance where an unreleased album was affected, we have located multiple copies and we could still release the album if the artist wishes. We are also currently working with a few artists and estates to locate masters and copies that may exist in their archives.”

According to the memo, a team of more than 70 specialists have been undertaking the “exhaustive work” of reviewing assets, with Kraus noting that it can take “as long as several weeks” to analyze assets for a single artist. He added that they are prioritizing their work based on direct requests from artists or their representatives, with a total of 392 requests having been received and 209 responded to since the New York Times Magazine stories were published.

The memo continually downplays the scope of the losses suggested in the New York Times Magazine stories, which included a list of 830 artists whose original
TuneCore CEO Scott Ackerman Announces Departure

BY BILLBOARD STAFF

Indie distributor TuneCore announced today that longtime CEO Scott Ackerman has decided to step down, effective April 15. He’ll stay on in an advisory role reporting to Denis Ladegaillerie, CEO of owner Believe Group, the company said.

A search for a new CEO is underway. Ackerman joined TuneCore in 2010 as COO and has run the company since 2012, when then-CEO/president Jeff Price and COO and has run the company since 2012, when then-CEO/president Jeff Price and COO and has run the company since 2012, when then-CEO/president Jeff Price and COO and has run the company since 2012, when then-CEO/president Jeff Price and COO and has run the company since 2012, when then-CEO/president Jeff Price and COO and has run the company since 2012, when then-CEO/president Jeff Price and COO and has run the company since 2012, when then-CEO/president Jeff Price and COO and has run the company since 2012, when then-CEO/president Jeff Price and COO and has run the company since 2012, when then-CEO/president Jeff Price and COO and has run the company since 2012, when then-CEO/president Jeff Price and COO and has run the company since 2012, when then-CEO/president Jeff Price and COO and has run the company since 2012, when then-CEO/president Jeff Price and COO and has run 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They went on to live together for four years, during which time Albee would write and bring to the stage *The American Dream* and *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

After graduation in 1960, McNally worked as a stage manager at the Actors Studio, then accepted an offer from John Steinbeck in 1961 to travel with the author around the world for a year as a tutor for his two teenage sons. Steinbeck would become a valued mentor.

McNally’s first produced full-length play, *The Side of the Door*, ran at the Actors Studio Workshop in 1962, starred a young Estelle Parsons and followed a young boy in a power struggle with his father. His first original play on Broadway, *And Things That Go Bump in the Night*, also about a dysfunctional family, opened in 1965 to brutal reviews and lasted less than two weeks.

After Albee, McNally dated *Bump in the Night* actor Robert Drivas, and he wrote many plays featuring him, including 1968’s *Witness* (also starring Coco), 1971’s *Where Has Tommy Flowers Gone* (also starring Abraham) and 1974’s *Bad Habits* (featuring Abraham and Roberts).

Drivas also directed the Broadway production of *The Ritz*, the broad 1975 comedy set in a gay Turkish bath house that earned McNally his first Drama Desk Award nomination. The playwright then adapted his work for Richard Lester’s 1976 film, which had Tony winner Rita Moreno, Abraham, Jack Weston and Jerry Stiller reprising their stage roles.

Drivas and McNally broke up but remained close until Drivas died of AIDS-related complications in 1986 at age 50. The AIDS epidemic would fundamentally change McNally.

He wrote and won an Emmy for the American Playhouse 1990 production of *Andre’s Mother*, revolving around a woman (Sada Thompson) who can’t come to grips with the death of her son (Richard Thomas) from AIDS; *Lips Together*, about two straight couples who spend a weekend in the gay community of Fire Island; and *Mothers and Sons*, a 2014 Broadway play that expanded on *Andre’s Mother* and starred Daly as the same character played by Thompson.

McNally, though, rejected the label of “gay playwright.”

“Gay theater doesn’t exist anymore,” he wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1996.

“There is good theater and there is bad theater. Gay playwrights either write a play as worthy of your interest as Mr. Arthur Miller or they don’t. You can’t get away with a bad gay play any more than you can with serving up lousy food in a gay restaurant.”

His first break into the mainstream came in 1987 with his off-Broadway hit *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*, a play about a one-night stand starring Abraham and Kathy Bates. (A longtime drunk, McNally said it was the first play he had written sober.) He also did the screenplay for Garry Marshall’s 1991 film adaptation that starred Al Pacino and Michelle Pfeiffer. The play was revived on Broadway in 2002 with Eddie Falco and Stanley Tucci, and again in 2019 starring McDonald and Michael Shannon in what would be the final Broadway production of McNally’s work in his lifetime.

McNally’s first Broadway musical was 1984’s *The Rink*, starring Rivera and Liza Minnelli, which he wrote after John Kander and Fred Ebb came up with the score. He also used the legendary songwriting team’s music on *Kiss of the Spider-Woman* and for *The Visit* in 2015.

Rivera starred in both *Spider-Woman* and *The Visit*, and McNally, alongside collaborators Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, wrote *Chita Rivera: The Dancer’s Life* for the star in 2005. (He had previously collaborated with Ahrens and Flaherty on *Ragtime* and would work with them again on *Anastasia* in 2016.)

Opera remained a passion of McNally’s throughout his life. He wrote libretti for four operas between 1999 and 2015, three with composer and pianist Jake Heggie. *Master Class*, which bowed on Broadway in 1995 and starred Caldwell and McDonald, is a character study of famed soprano Maria Callas.

He insisted the untested Mantello, who was an established actor, direct *Love! Valour! Compassion!* in its original Broadway production, and Mantello also helmed McNally’s screenplay adaptation for the 1997 movie.

McNally had an artistic home at the Man-
hhattan Theatre Club, but controversy struck surrounding a 1998 production of his play *Corpus Christi*, which depicted Jesus and his disciples as gay men in contemporary Texas. The theater was going to cancel the production until other playwrights from the season threatened to pull their works if it were not produced.

Despite the firestorm, “as an artistic experience, it’s one of the things I most treasure,” he said, and he partnered with the theater again for a 2011 revival of *Master Class*, starring Daly.

McNally met future husband Tom Kirdahy in 2001 when the public interest attorney organized a panel called “Theatre From a Gay Perspective” that featured McNally, Albee and Lanford Wilson. They formed a civil union in 2003 and married in 2010. Kirdahy served as McNally’s producer on every revival or new show since *Some Men*, a sprawling chronicle of a century of evolution in gay culture, politics and relationships in America that was produced off-Broadway in 2007.

McNally is also survived by his brother Peter and nephew Stephen, among other family members. Donations in his memory can be made to Broadway Cares/Equity Fights Aids and the Dramatist Guild Foundation.

The playwright leaves a legacy, as he *put it*, of “slowly changing people’s minds by changing their hearts first.”

“To me, the most significant thing a writer can do is reach someone emotionally,” said McNally. “Theater is an emotional medium, and [through it] we’ve expanded people’s acceptance of our fellow man. And this is what you write for, to reach other people.”

*This article was originally published by The Hollywood Reporter.*

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**Twelve Months of Boxscore: A Look Back at The First Year of Billboard’s Monthly Touring Chart**

**BY ERIC FRANKENBERG**

On March 21, 2019, *Billboard* launched a monthly series of Boxscore charts, ranking the top-earning tours, boxscores, venues, and promoters around the world within the scope of each calendar month.

The timing of Boxscore reporting had historically been inconsistent to an extent – some tours are reported on a show-by-show basis, some after a full week, some once the tour has wrapped.

The new monthly charts were the first look for the industry at such a zoomed in period of time.

On Thursday, *Billboard* will post the newest monthly charts looking at February 2020 but before we do, let’s look back on the best of the first year of the series.

**TOP TOURS CHART**

149: Number of unique artists to hit the Top Tours chart from February 2019 through January 2020.

85: Number of solo artists to hit the chart.

64: Number of duo/groups to hit the chart.

26: Number of female artists on the chart.

118: Number of male artists on the chart. In terms of combined months, male acts took up 80% of the chart.

*All-male and all-female groups were included in these figures. Blackpink, Little Mix, and the Spice Girls were counted as female artists, while BTS and The Rolling Stones were counted as male artists. Acts like Fleetwood Mac and Pentatonix were not included in either group.

**Most Months at No. 1**


2: P!nk (March 2019; July 2019)

1: Ed Sheeran; BTS; Spice Girls; The Rolling Stones; Post Malone; Trans-Siberian Orchestra

**Most Months in the Top 10**

9: Elton John

6: Ed Sheeran

5: Ariana Grande; Cher; Jonas Brothers; KISS; P!nk

4: BTS; Celine Dion

3: Justin Timberlake; Metallica; Michael Bublé; Paul McCartney; Post Malone; Shawn Mendes; The Rolling Stones

**Most Months on the Chart**

10: Elton John

9: andre Rieu; Ariana Grande; Billy Joel; Shawn Mendes

8: Michael Bublé

7: Aerosmith; Celine Dion; Ed Sheeran; Eric Church; Post Malone

6: Backstreet Boys; Cher; George Strait; KISS; Twenty One Pilots

5: Chayanne; John Mayer; Jonas Brothers; Lady Gaga; Metallica; P!nk; Rod Stewart

**Highest-Grossing Month (Per Artist)**

$90 Million+ (The Rolling Stones - $95 million – August 2019)

$60 Million+ (P!nk - $61.5 million – July 2019; The Rolling Stones - $61.1 million – July 2019)

$50 Million+ (Spice Girls - $54.6 million – June 2019; BTS - $51.7 million – May 2019)


**Highest Grossing Month (Top 30 Tours Combined)**

July 2019 - $451.7 million

August 2019 - $441.7 million

June 2019 - $426.3 million

March 2019 - $398.7 million

May 2019 - $371.8 million

*All grosses are based on reported earnings published in *Billboard* each month. Extra data may have been reported after the fact.

**TOP BOXSCORES CHART**

*Artists to Hit No. 1: George Strait; BTS; Spice Girls; P!nk; Bruno Mars; BTS; U2; Elton John*
Michael Jackson Estate Donates to MusiCares, Broadway Amid Coronavirus Outbreak

**By Associated Press**

The Michael Jackson estate is donating $300,000 to help entertainment industry workers on Broadway, the music business and in Las Vegas who have been hurt by the coronavirus pandemic.

The estate announced Wednesday that it will give $100,000 apiece to Broadway Cares, the food bank Three Square in Nevada and MusiCares, because all three areas have been good to the estate and to Jackson.

“This virus, this pandemic affects all of us obviously, so we wanted to start in our own communities,” John Branca, the estate’s co-executor, told The Associated Press. “This is personal for us.”

A Jackson-themed Broadway show, “MJ The Musical” is scheduled to start previews in July, though like the rest of Broadway it is currently on hold amid the coronavirus shutdown. No announcements have been made on postponing the show, and the estate and producers are taking a wait-and-see approach, Branca said.

“Michael Jackson ONE,” the long-running Jackson-based Cirque du Soleil show at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, where Jackson lived late in his life, is also on hold indefinitely.

“Las Vegas has been very good to Michael,” Branca said.

The estate’s donation there will provide 300,000 meals to the needy, and help to maintain the supplies of the food bank Three Square, the estate said.

In New York, the estate says it is donating to Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS’ COVID-19 Emergency Assistance Fund, and will give the rest to MusiCares, the charitable branch of the Recording Academy that helps those in the music industry who are economically struggling.

The estate says the donations are inspired by the constant charitable work of Jackson himself.

“Michael was extremely generous both of his time and his money in his life, and it’s in his music too,” Branca said. “We look to Michael for leadership and inspiration. We’re doing what Michael would have been doing.”

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death.

Elton John Hosting Virtual All-Star Benefit Special: See the Performers

**By Gil Kaufman**

Elton John will host an all-star benefit special aimed at providing some relief and entertainment for Americans locked down in their homes during the coronavirus pandemic.

Fox Presents the iHeart Living Room Concert For America, a one-hour, commercial-free special celebrating the nation’s resilience in fighting the COVID-19 virus will feature music from the Backstreet Boys, Billie Eilish, Alicia Keys, Green Day’s Billie Joe Armstrong, Mariah Carey, Tim McGraw and a number of other stars beaming in from their homes.

The performances will be filmed on the singer’s personal cell phones, cameras and audio equipment in order to ensure the health and safety of the participants in this period of social isolation. It will air on Fox in the original slot for the canceled 2020 iHeart Radio Music Awards — March 29 from 9-10 p.m. EST — and on iHeartMedia radio stations nationwide, as well as on the IHeartRadio app.

The concert will also pay tribute to the front line health professionals, first responders and local heroes who are putting themselves in harm’s way to help others, encouraging viewers to support two of the many charitable organizations helping victims and first responders during the pandemic: Feeding America and First Responders Children’s Foundation.

Fox will offer the event across all its linear and digital platforms, with additional details and performers to be announced soon; check here for updates. Executive producers of the event include John Sykes and Tom Poleman, for iHeartMedia and Joel Gallen, For Tenth Planet Productions — who
produced the multi-network telethons immediately following 9/11, Hurricane Katrina and the Haiti Earthquake.

Spanish Pop Stars & Soccer Astros Join For ‘First Benefit Festival With Global Impact’ of Coronavirus Crisis

BY JUDY CANTOR-NAVAS

Players from premier Spanish soccer league La Liga and pop stars including David Bisbal, Sebastian Yatra, Aitana and Alejandro Sanz will come together virtually each from their own homes—for “the first benefit festival with global impact” of the current coronavirus crisis.

The “charity macroconcert” will take place on Saturday (March 28) at 6 p.m. (CET), according to an announcement from LaLiga, whose competing clubs include FC Barcelona and Real Madrid. The telethon will be broadcast on LaLiga channels and online at LaLigaSportsTV. Globally, LaLiga “will offer its signal to all international broadcasters.”

The purpose of the LaLigaSantander Fest, presented by LaLiga, name sponsor Banco Santander and other league supporters, and Universal Music, is to raise funds to support hospitals and health workers with necessary supplies in Spain, where over 40,000 people have been diagnosed with the virus, and nearly 3,000 have died. The supplies will be acquired and distributed according to government priorities, the league specified. Hospitals are nearing collapse in Madrid and other cities in Spain, where the country’s population has been under mandatory confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic since March 13.

“From LaLiga we want to give support to people who will be dealing with the third weekend of quarantine and at the same time raise funds to acquire medical supplies,” Óscar Mayo, the league’s director of business international development, said in the statement.

The full line up of artist and players who will be virtually participating in the event will be announced in the coming days on LaLiga’s social media channels.

Harry Styles’ Pan-European Tour Delayed Due to Coronavirus Crisis

BY LARS BRANDLE

Harry Styles’ extensive tour of the U.K. and Europe will be rescheduled to 2021 due to the uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus pandemic.

With several European states entering lockdown and closing their borders to fellow EU states, there was simply no way Styles could take his show on the road in the coming months.

“Anyone who knows me, knows that performing has always been my favorite part of working in music,” Styles explains in a post on his socials. “However, during times like these, the safety and protection of touring crew, fans, and everyone else around the world is an immediate priority.”

The former One Direction star also took the opportunity to remind fans to self-isolate during the health crisis. “We’re all in this together,” he explains. “I can’t wait to see you out on the road as soon as it’s safe to do so. Until then, treat people with kindness.”

New dates in support of his chart-topping sophomore solo album Fine Line are set to begin from Feb. 12, 2021 in Bologna, Italy.

The Brit’s Love On Love trek was originally set to kickoff in his homeland this April with a run of arena dates, followed by a pan-European jaunt running through June.

There’s no announcement yet on Styles’ North American dates, which are scheduled to start in late June.

Styles’ change of plans come just days after the U.K.’s prime minister Boris Johnson announced a nationwide lockdown to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. All social events have been banned in Britain, including weddings, and new restrictions are in place on public gatherings of more than two people.

Bill Rieflin, Drummer For Ministry, R.E.M. and More, Dies at 59

BY GIL KAUFMAN

Bill Rieflin, a multi-talented drummer and percussionist who played with a wide variety of rock and industrial bands over a three-decade career, has died at age 59. In a statement to Billboard his family confirmed that Rieflin died after an eight-year battle with cancer, passing a year after the cancer-related death of his wife of 27 years, master painter Francesca Sundsten.

“Seattle native and life-long resident, Bill was a world-class musician who was at home on the drums, guitar, bass, and keyboards,” reads the family statement. “He was also an accomplished composer and producer who possessed a sophisticated ear, a depth of rare talent and complete dedication to his craft. Known for much of his career as an extraordinary drummer, Bill performed with a wide range of artists and bands from Swans and Ministry to R.E.M. and King Crimson and many more.

“His refined manner, brilliant mind, eye for the ironic and legendary sense of humor defined him as a man of discerning taste, palate, and company. We will miss him terribly.”
The news was announced by King Crimson’s Robert Fripp, who wrote in a Facebook post, “A call from Tracy Rieflin in Seattle. Bill Rieflin flew from this world c. 18.50 Pacific, 18.50 UK. Tracy [Rieflin’s sister] told Toyah and me that the day was grey, and as Bill flew away the clouds opened, and the skies were blue for about fifteen minutes. Fly well, Brother Bill! My life is immeasurably richer for knowing you.”

Rieflin worked with everyone from R.E.M. and Crimson to a number of industrial metal/dance bands over the years, including Ministry, Revolting Cocks, Lard, KMFMD and Pigface, as well as experimental act Swans and Nine Inch Nails. He helped fill in for departed drummer Bill Berry after the R.E.M. time keeper retired in 1998 and performed with prog rock icons King Crimson from 2013 until shortly before his passing.

Born William Frederick Rieflin on Sept. 29, 1960, in Seattle, the drummer played with a variety of local bands before teaming up with industrial standard bearer Al Jourgensen in Revolting Cocks, and appearing on the landmark third album from Jourgensen’s Ministry, 1988’s The Land of Rape and Honey.

He recorded a number of albums and singles with German industrial/techno band KMFDM from the mid-1990s until the early 2000s, providing percussion as well as vocals and keyboards.

His versatile nature made him a frequent go-to studio and touring staple in a number of all-star acts in his Seattle hometown, including Scott McCaughey’s The Minus 5 — which included R.E.M. guitarist Peter Buck from time to time — in addition to multi-instrument contributions to albums by Swans leader Michael Gira, Robyn Hitchcock and The Humans, which featured Fripp’s and his wife singer Toyal Willcox. He later served as R.E.M.’s touring drummer for several years beginning in 2003 and played on their albums until the group called it quits in 2011.

Willcox wrote in a post that Rieflin died in Seattle from an undisclosed cancer. “He wasn’t alone but the virus meant no one other than patients where allowed to enter the hospital,” she said. “Bill’s sister, Tracy, determined that Bill would not pass away without his family by his side stood outside on the pavement till the hospital allowed her in. The wonderful staff at the Oncology unit gave access to Bill’s mother Olive and young brother Fritz to be at his side. The pain this extraordinary man has endured in the past 9 years has been unbearable to witness, not only was his body being destroyed by cancer but he also had to bare the cruellest twist of them all, the loss of his beautiful wife Frankie on the 9th March 2019.”

A number of Rieflin’s bandmates posted loving tributes, including R.E.M. bassist/vocalist Mike Mills, who wrote, “Bill Rieflin was a gentleman and a gentle man, but he could beat the shit out of a set of drums. A musical polymath, deeply intelligent and very funny. I’ll miss sharing his darkness and his laughter. Words really don’t suffice. R.I.P., Spill Brieflin.”

Hitchcock wrote: “The great Bill Rieflin has changed hotel rooms for the last time - after a long battle with cancer he checked out and left us today. Musical genius and bleak perfectionist, Bill graced me with his drumming, harmonies and laser-sharp insight between 2005 and 2013.”

See some of the tributes to Rieflin below.

Watch Rieflin play Led Zeppelin’s “Kashmir” at Seattle Celebration Day in 2013.

**IN BRIEF**

**Lil Uzi Vert Logs Second Week Atop Artist 100 Chart**

**BY XANDER ZELLNER**

Lil Uzi Vert tallies his second consecutive week atop the Billboard Artist 100 chart (dated March 28), continuing his reign as the top musical act in the U.S., thanks to another massive week on the Billboard 200 and Billboard Hot 100 charts.

The rapper’s new LP Eternal Atake logs its second week atop the Billboard 200 with 247,000 equivalent album units, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data, fueled by the arrival of its deluxe edition.

Lil Uzi Vert concurrently lands 22 songs on the Hot 100, including all 14 from the deluxe version. (He charted 20 titles last week.) Drake and Lil Wayne are the only other acts to have posted as many as 22 songs chart on the Hot 100 simultaneously.

Niall Horan re-enters the Artist 100 at No. 2, as his sophomore solo LP, Heartbreak Weather, debuts at No. 4 on the Billboard 200 with 59,000 units.

The Artist 100, which launched in 2014, measures artist activity across key metrics of music consumption, blending album and track sales, radio airplay, streaming and social media fan interaction to provide a weekly multi-dimensional ranking of artist popularity.

Check out this week's full Artist 100 chart here.

**Diplo’s Mad Decent Label Launches New Imprint With Creative Agency Pizzaslime**

**BY KATIE BAIN**

Diplo's longstanding label Mad Decent has announced a collaborative imprint with Los Angeles-based creative agency and streetwear brand Pizzaslime. The first release from Pizzaslime Records is “Marlboro Nights” from Baltimore artist Lonely God.

Written, recorded and released from Lonely God’s bedroom, “Marlboro Nights” first went viral on TikTok, landing in the Top 10 of Spotify’s Viral 50 chart with over 33 million streams. The song’s video, out Tuesday (March 24) was directed by Kylie Jenner’s personal photographer Amber.
Asaly. Watch the clip for the indie track below. Pizzaslime Records will release the forthcoming Lonely God EP later this year.

Mad Decent, Diplo and Pizzaslime — known for products like their “Drake Tears” coffee mug and pillowcases decorated with tweets by the Kardashians, Kanye West and more, have had a longtime working relationship. Diplo also grammed himself in a pair of Pizzaslime sweatpants back in January.

“Pizzaslime is a movement — they are ruthless, cutting edge and crazy on top of culture,” Diplo said in a press release. “Mad Decent is teaming with them to help figure out what the music side is — the sound of the Pizzaslime brand — and bringing our two worlds, audio and visual, together.”

Pizzaslime, which takes inspiration from internet culture, plans to use their understanding of the internet, branding and marketing, along with their creative network, to develop ideas and campaigns for its roster of artists. “As Pizzaslime, we have a direct relationship with our consumers/fans and creative network which gives us an advantage over traditional labels which sit behind their artists’ fanbase,” says brand cofounder Nicholas “Stoveman” Santiago.

“This record label is an extension of our brand and we want it to work and flow in a similar way; for us it’s all about speed and the ability to identify, adapt and create at the speed of the internet,” Santiago continues. “We pitched Mad Decent on the idea of signing a bologna sandwich and they said yes without any hesitation — I don’t think Pizzaslime Records could exist anywhere else. Mad Decent and Diplo have always been forward thinking and at the frontline of culture. Them betting on us is something we are super grateful and excited for.”

R.E.M.’s ‘It’s the End of the World,’ Fifth Harmony’s ‘Work From Home’ & More Keep Surging Amid Coronavirus

BY XANDER ZELLNER

According to Billboard reported last week, the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted many songs whose lyrics tie in to the coronavirus to surge in sales and streams, from R.E.M.’s “It’s the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine)” to Gloria Gaynor’s “I Will Survive” and more.

The trend has continued in the latest tracking week (ending March 19), with some titles scaling Billboard charts decades after their original releases.

R.E.M.’s “World,” which hit No. 16 on Mainstream Rock Songs in 1987, and No. 69 on the Billboard Hot 100 in 1988, debuts on the all-genre Digital Song Sales chart at No. 22, up 482% to 5,000 downloads sold, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data. The bump, and a 169% gain to 1.7 million U.S. streams, also sparks the track’s No. 4 debut on the Hot Rock Songs chart (which launched in 2009).

“World” additionally places at No. 2 on LyricFind’s U.S. ranking. (The LyricFind U.S. and LyricFind Global charts, whose latest tracking week ran March 16-22, rank the fastest-momentum-gaining tracks in lyric-search queries and usages in the U.S. and globally, respectively, provided by LyricFind.)

Gloria Gaynor’s “I Will Survive,” which spent three weeks at No. 1 on the Hot 100 in 1979, bounds by 81% to 1,000 sold and rises 9-4 on the Dance/Electronic Digital Song Sales chart. It also rises by 5% to 3.4 million on-demand U.S. streams.

Lee Brice & Rob Hatch Launch Pump House Records: Exclusive

BY ANNIE REUTER

Country singer Lee Brice has teamed up with longtime co-writer Rob Hatch, producer/engineer/songwriter Elisha Hoffman and veteran industry executives Derek and Kristi Hutchins to launch Pump House Records, Billboard has learned exclusively. The artist development collective will offer A&R, promotion and other label services to its roster.

The announcement comes with the reveal of Pump House Records signing its flagship artist, singer-songwriter Nick Norman. His debut album is expected later this year.
“Nick has always been a special singer,” Brice tells Billboard of the collective’s first signing and his childhood friend. “He’s always 100 percent devoted to whatever he loves. To me, he’s one the best singers I’ve ever heard. He practices singing, playing guitar, writing, playing drums, playing basically anything with strings every day. He has never stopped growing since the day I met him, and now, he has grown into a beast.”

Hatch says plans for the label have been in the works over the past six months. Norman was the main reason he and Brice joined forces on Pump House Records, as both songwriters saw the talent he possessed. They hope the new venture will help get Norman’s career off the ground. While radio isn’t the main focus at the label currently, Hatch explains that the digital market is where they will place most of their focus when it comes to promoting Norman’s music.

“Something about Nick’s voice, passion and songwriting ability, mixed with his honesty and original point of view, really got our attention. The music felt real and organic and it came from a place that is distinctly Nick,” Hatch says. “Maybe some of the insight we’ve gained over the years can help, but we’re basically just here to help Nick create the vision he already sees.”

The label is currently negotiating distribution and doesn’t intend to only sign country acts. Plans are also in the works to team up with soul singer Rebecca Lynn Howard. “We are solely dedicated to being open-minded. Allowing artists to have their team specifically built for them and their music style. That may end up being a country act or it may not,” Hatch explains.

Adds Brice, “We love all music. But this model is all about the artist and who they are. If it’s country, then it will be country. If it’s pop, or blues or soul, or whatever else, it would be exactly that. If we love the music, that’s what we would want to bring into the family.”

While both Brice and Hatch understand the roadblocks in front of them within the music business, Brice says they have adopted an “all in” mentality. “There are roadblocks happening on a daily basis. So going into this venture is, again, exciting for us. All we can do is all we can do,” he reasons. “We feel that if we all put in all the talents of everyone involved, Nick will have an opportunity to shine.”

Brice is far from the first country artist to venture into starting a label to support acts he believes in. Last year, Florida Georgia Line launched Round Here Records with flagship artist and frequent co-writer Canaan Smith. In 2018, Smith signed to Tree Vibez Music – the duo’s publishing arm founded in 2015.

“I have every expectation for the world to hear Nick and the best music of his life. We know this isn’t an easy feat, but we hope, and are going all in on a belief in the music, the team, and the artist,” Brice adds.

Verizon to Launch Streaming Entertainment Series, Sets Dave Matthews Performance

Verizon has found a way to marry digital entertainment and philanthropy while honoring social distancing guidelines via Pay it Forward Live, a new weekly streaming series that will include music, gaming, comedy and other categories all to support small businesses that have been affected during the coronavirus pandemic. The series launches Thursday (March 26) at 8 p.m. EST with an exclusive performance from veteran rocker Dave Matthews.

He’ll do a 30-minute set from home that will be streamed on Twitter @verizon and on Yahoo Entertainment. Additional partners and artists, who will follow his lead with intimate home-based performances, will be announced at a later date. As part of Pay it Forward Live, Verizon will donate $2.5 million to Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), a national nonprofit that has invested $20 billion since 1979 to boost economic opportunity for people and communities across the U.S. During the series run, viewers will be encouraged to tag local businesses and make a purchase in advance for when the crisis is over and the businesses reopen.

Following engagement, Verizon will commit $2.5 million more, for a potential donation of $5 million. LISC will dole out grants of up to $10,000 to businesses in dire need because of the pandemic, which has forced closures across the country as leaders have attempted to stop the growing spread of the novel coronavirus. Restaurants, cafes, bars, sports venues, gyms, wellness business and live events spaces have all been impacted and there’s been no definitive date of when some may reopen. As part of Verizon’s commitment, LISC will prioritize entrepreneurs of color, women-owned businesses and other enterprises that “don’t have access to flexible, affordable capital in historically underserved communities,” per today’s announcement.

LISC will launch an online application process, after which candidates will be reviewed and then entered into a lottery. “Small businesses are being impacted in extraordinary ways as we all fight against the spread of COVID-19,” said Verizon’s chairman and CEO Hans Vestberg. “These companies provide employment opportunities, goods, services, and gathering places that are the soul of local communities. Pay it Forward Live will give all Americans an opportunity to help their favorite small businesses survive this unprecedented hardship.”

“The funds allocated to Pay it Forward Live are in addition to Verizon’s combined $13 million donation to nonprofits including No Kid Hungry, the American Red Cross, the Center for Disaster Philanthropy COVID-19 Response Fund, Direct Relief, and the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund in support of the World Health Organization’s global response. More information can be found here. The shut downs and social distancing guidelines have forced many entertainers to rethink how they reach their fans.

At-home concerts and performances have
Moon Taxi Unveils Nostalgic ‘Hometown Heroes,’ Signs With BMG: Exclusive

BY GLENN ROWLEY

Moon Taxi has signed with BMG, Billboard can exclusively announce. They also returned with the nostalgia-fueled “Hometown Heroes” on Wednesday (March 25).

On the single, the quintet take a rosy look back on their longstanding bond as both a band and as friends. “We go way back/Where we started from/We were hometown heroes/High enough for everyone/We go way back/Where we started from/Oh, we used to say it’s/One for all and all for one,” frontman Trevor Terndrup croons on the track’s folksy chorus.

“Hometown Heroes” serves as the lead single for the Nashville-based alt-rockers’ upcoming sixth full-length album, Silver Dream. “Memories, especially good ones, have a soft, lustrous shine in our mind,” Terndrup tells Billboard. “We called the album Silver Dream to honor those memories. Was it as beautiful as you remember or was it all a dream?”

The new single, Terndrup adds, “explores that notion of looking back. It’s hard not to idealize the past when change is inevitable. So we decided to celebrate what was and cherish what is. We are celebrating the endurance of our relationships.”

“Hometown Heroes” also marks a new chapter in a re-upped partnership with BMG for the band; they last worked together in 2015 when Moon Taxi released their fourth album, Daybreaker, via the major label on their 12th South Records imprint.

“We are thrilled to work with BMG again,” Terndrup adds. “It feels great to have them back as a part of our team. They have truly been some of our greatest champions. Nothing better than new beginnings with old friends.”

“Everyone at BMG is excited to be back working with the band, Don, Dawson and the team at Red Light Management,” BMG svp of global repertoire Jason Hradil also tells Billboard. “Over the last few years, they’ve continued to build upon the foundation we helped establish early on and are primed to have a big impact with ‘Hometown Heroes’ and the forthcoming album.”

Listen to ‘Hometown Heroes’ below.

Kenny Rogers Music Streams Increase 1,686% as Fans Mourn Country Star’s Death

BY XANDER ZELLNER

Following the death of country music icon Kenny Rogers on Friday, March 20, fans flocked to various streaming and sales outlets to pay tribute to the singer.

On-demand U.S. streams of Rogers’ catalog of songs, which spans nearly eight decades, surged 1,687% on March 21 and 22 (versus the two previous days), according to initial reports to Nielsen Music/MRC Data. News of Rogers’ death was announced March 21.

Rogers’ music logged 18 million streams on March 21 and 22, up from 1 million on March 19 and 20 — a gain of 1,687%.

Rogers’ albums and songs catalog also saw significant gains. Sales of Rogers’ albums surged 7,709% to 15,000 copies sold, according to initial reports. The singer sold 15,000 copies on March 21, 22 and 23, up from a negligible figure on March 18, 19 and 20.

Concurrently, Rogers saw an 11,163% increase for digital downloads of his songs from March 18, 19 and 20 to March 21, 22 and 23 with 82,000 downloads sold (up from 1,000).

Rogers’ single “The Gambler” specifically saw a sizable gains. The track gained 12,671% in digital song sales to 13,000 sold (up from a negligible figure) and gained 1,377% in total on-demand U.S. streams to 3.7 million (up from 253,000).

His former Billboard Hot 100 No. 1 song “Islands In the Stream,” with Dolly Parton, also saw notable gains. The song gained 9,769% in digital song sales to 12,000 sold (up from a negligible figure) and gained 720% in total on-demand U.S. streams to 1.6 million (up from 200,000).

The gains are sure to translate into movement for Rogers’ catalog on the Billboard charts dated April 4. Industry forecasters even suggest that Rogers’ 2018 greatest hits album The Best of Kenny Rogers: Through the Years could earn over 25,000 equivalent album units in the U.S. in the week ending March 26, which could be enough to debut at No. 1 on Top Country Albums, marking Rogers’ first No. 1 on the list since 1985’s The Heart of the Matter. So far, Rogers has tallied 12 No. 1s on the list to date.

The set could also bow in the top 20 of the all-genre Billboard 200 albums chart. Rogers was last in the top 20 with 2006’s Water & Bridges (peaking at No. 14). If Through the Years opens in the top 10, it would mark Rogers’ first top 10 effort since 1983’s No. 6-peaking Eyes That See in the Dark.

Rogers died on March 20 under hospice care in his Sandy Springs, Georgia home of natural causes.
Lil Uzi Vert
Becomes Third Act With at Least 50 Streaming Songs Chart Hits

BY KEVIN RUTHERFORD

Prior to Billboard’s Streaming Songs chart dated March 28, just two artists — Drake and Future — had landed at least 50 entries on the tally in its seven-year history.

Now, make that three, courtesy of Lil Uzi Vert.

The rapper lands 12 debuts on the Streaming Songs survey dated March 28 from the newly-released deluxe version of his new album Eternal Atake, giving him 51 entries on the list.

His 12-song onslaught comes one week after he debuted 16 additional songs on the list upon the release of the standard version of Eternal Atake, as well as two weeks after Eternal Atake bonus track “That Way” and Lil Baby’s “Commercial,” on which Uzi is featured, debuted — meaning Uzi’s overall Streaming Songs count has risen by 30 over the past three Streaming Songs charts.

**Most Entries, Streaming Songs**
139, Drake
58, Future
51, Lil Uzi Vert
46, Nicki Minaj
44, The Weeknd
43, Kanye West
42, Lil Wayne
41, Post Malone
41, Travis Scott
35, Lil Baby

The March 28 ranking sees Uzi’s new appearances paced by “Myron,” which bows at No. 2 with 25.6 million U.S. streams in its first week (tracking frame ending March 19), according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data. “Bean (Kobe),” with 20.9 million streams, also debuts within the top 10 (No. 4), as does “Yessirskiii,” with 21 Savage (No. 7, 17.2 million).

Uzi now has 18 Streaming Songs top 10s, a mark that also puts him third all time, behind Drake and Post Malone. 12 of those 18 have come via the last three Streaming Songs charts.

**Most Top 10s, Streaming Songs**
40, Drake
19, Post Malone
18, Lil Uzi Vert
16, Ariana Grande
15, Justin Bieber
15, Kanye West

**As previously reported,** Eternal Atake spends a second week at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 dated March 28, with 247,000 equivalent album units earned in its second frame.

International Jazz Day 2020 Shifts to Virtual Celebration Owing to Coronavirus

BY GAIL MITCHELL

International Jazz Day—including its All-Star Global Concert on April 30—is the latest music event changing course in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. The ninth annual worldwide celebration was slated to take place in Cape Town and other cities across South Africa during the last week of April.

However, partners and organizers of International Jazz Day are still planning to celebrate the occasion on April 30. They are issuing a call for artists and fans around the world to self-create video messages that will be featured in a free live stream worldwide as part of virtual programming that’s currently being planned.

Further details about the live stream and additional programming that day, which will include a forum with acclaimed artists and webcasts of exclusive content, will be announced in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, organizers in 195 countries around the world who had registered events for International Jazz Day 2020 are being asked to participate virtually.

**Herbie Hancock**—UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Intercultural Dialogue and co-chair of International Jazz Day—stated in a press release, “These are unprecedented times for world citizens and we are most grateful for the support, understanding, and partnership of our Jazz Day community. Armed with optimism, patience and grace, we’ll work through these challenges as families, communities, countries and as a stronger united world. Now more than ever before, let’s band together and spread the ethics of Jazz Day’s global movement around the planet and use this as a golden opportunity for humankind to reconnect especially in the midst of all this isolation and uncertainty.”

The release also notes that many partners of International Jazz Day have already rescheduled their programs for a later date that will depend on the abatement of the pandemic. When these postponed events do take place, they will be acknowledged as official celebrations of International Jazz Day.

In addition to the Hancock Institute of Jazz, support for 2020 International Jazz Day also involves the following parties: South African Department of Sports, Arts and Culture; South African Tourism; the South African National Commission for UNESCO; the City of Cape Town, the SPIN Foundation; local partners and community leaders in South Africa; and the worldwide International Jazz Day community.
Monsta X Earn First No. 1 on World Digital Song Sales Chart With 2017 Track After Fan-Led Initiative

BY JEFF BENJAMIN

Monsta X and their fans have yet another reason to celebrate this week.

The K-pop boy band earns their first No. 1 on Billboard’s World Digital Song Sales chart as “From Zero” leaps onto the chart to debut at No. 1 more than two years after its release. The tropically-tinged pop cut sold 2,000 copies in the week ending March 19, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data. “From Zero” has now shifted 3,000 copies in America to date.

Originally, “From Zero” was included on Monsta X’s 2017 EP The Code, considered by many to be a breakthrough release for the band as it marked their first No. 1 album on Korea’s domestic charts with lead single “Dramarama” landing them their first No. 1 win on K-pop charts. To date, The Code has earned 27,000 equivalent album units to date in America (counting album sales, track-equivalent albums and streaming-equivalent albums).

But there’s a deeper reason for this track just finding its way to the charts this week.

Following the news that Monsta X’s member Wonho was cleared of all charges after an investigation over allegations of past drug use, fans celebrated by purchasing and streaming “From Zero” as a way to show their excitement over the news. The song is considered a special track to Monsta X and particularly Wonho for his heavy involvement in the track’s songwriting and production credits, as well as for its message. The track’s lyrics speak about apologizing and wanting to start over “from zero” even if there’s been pain and hurt in the past—a timely message for MX fans as they responded to the singer’s departure with both online and in-person protests.

Along with the statement from Monsta X’s Korean label home Starship Entertainment that the singer had been cleared of his charges, the agency added that they “will continue to fully support Wonho for developing his own career in the future.”

Monsta X performed “From Zero” on several television, award shows and tour dates around their promotions for The Code. Take a look at the full, seven-member group’s performance from Korean chart show Music Bank.

Songs From Glen Campbell, Dr. Dre, Fred Rogers, Tina Turner Enter National Recording Registry

BY MIKE BARNES

With the coronavirus going around, it’s not the best idea to stay at the Y.M.C.A., but that didn’t prevent the Library of Congress from inducting the signature tune from Village People into the National Recording Registry. Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden has named “Y.M.C.A.” and 24 other aural treasures as worthy of preservation this year, picked because of their cultural, historical and aesthetic importance to the USA’s recorded sound heritage, it was announced Wednesday (March 25).

Also making the playlist are such albums as Cheap Trick at Budokan, a classic live import; Tina Turner’s liberating Private Dancer; The Chronic, the seminal hip-hop effort from Dr. Dre; the original Broadway cast recording of Fiddler on the Roof; Dusty in Memphis, from Dusty Springfield; Selena’s Tejano breakthrough Ven Conmigo; Concert in the Garden, from jazz composer Maria Schneider; and Colin Currie’s kinetic Percussion Concerto, the newest recording named.

Song selections include Glen Campbell’s “Wichita Lineman”; Whitney Houston’s rendition of Dolly Parton’s “I Will Always Love You”; “Me and My Chauffeur Blues,” from country blues icon Memphis Minnie; “Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh,” the sleepaway-camp song from comedian Allan Sherman; 21 tunes performed by that great warbler, Mister Rogers; and a tune whose title seems to have particular relevance today, Eddy Arnold’s “Make the World Go Away.”

But wait, there’s more: Russ Hodges’ call of Bobby Thomson’s “Shot Heard ‘Round the World,” which gave the New York Giants the 1951 National League Pennant with one swing of the bat; Puccini’s Tosca, performed by opera great Maria Callas; “Whispering,” a huge hit from Paul White man and his Orchestra in 1920; songs written in the 12th century; hours of traditional Afghan music; a 1939 horror radio program; and the announcement of the assassination of President Kennedy made by a Boston Symphony Orchestra conductor during a live performance.

Under the terms of the National Recording Preservation Act of 2000, the Librarian, with advice from the Library of Congress’ National Recording Preservation Board, is tasked each year with selecting 25 titles that are “culturally, historically or aesthetically significant” and at least 10 years old. “The National Recording Registry is the evolving playlist of the American soundscape. It reflects moments in history captured through the voices and sounds of the time,” Hayden said in a statement. “We received over 800 nominations ... to add to the registry. As genres and formats continue to expand, the Library of Congress is committed to working with our many partners to preserve the sounds that have touched our hearts and shaped our culture.” Here’s a chronological list of the 22nd year of selections, with...
descriptions provided by the Library of Congress:

“Whispering.” Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra (1920) Whiteman’s blockbuster hit was the first in a long series of popular recordings that sharply defined a new style and direction in instrumental dance music — one that would have long-lasting effects. Though rather quaint to modern ears, “Whispering” was made at the pinnacle of up-to-date dance music and directly led to the big band era. Among its attributes were bold, clean lines with the melody clearly in front. Gone was the old fashioned-ness of the lead being handed off to different voices mid-chorus. Also, harmonic and rhythmic support was pared to a sleek, tasteful profile, one that encouraged the smart-looking updated fox trot of 1920. With pianist-arranger Ferde Grofé and ace trumpet man Henry Busse, Whiteman would codify a type of jazz and be popularly considered its king.

“Protesta per Sacco e Vanzetti;” Compagnia Columbia; “Sacco e Vanzetti,” Raoul Romito (1927)
This release combines a spoken, dramatic set piece on its “A” side with a protest song on the “B” side. Both decry the impending execution of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian American immigrants convicted of murder in 1920 but believed by many to have been railroaded because of their anarchist political beliefs. The recording was made by Compagnia Columbia, a group of actors who recorded this and other scenes for the Columbia label. “Protesta per Sacco e Vanzetti” presents a scene at a rally for the two men, with actors, representing different regions of Italy, speaking on their behalf as well as others wrongly accused: “Friends, you already know what has brought us together here, and I am happy to see in this solemn moment a crowd made up not just of Italians but of people of all nationalities: Italians, Americans, Jews, English, Japanese.

At this fatal hour we have come together to form a single race: the human race! With no differences based on age, on class or on party.” The scene was written by Frank Amadio, who specialized in dramatic and comedic sketches aimed at Italian Americans. Side B features Romito, a popular Neapolitan tenor residing in the U.S., performing a song written by Renzo Vampo and F. Penisero, of whom little is known, though they wrote at least one other song in defense of Sacco and Vanzetti.

“La Chicharronera,” Narciso Martinez and Santiago Almeida (1936)
Martinez and Almeida, pioneers of Tex-Mex conjunto music, introduced the classic accordion (Martinez) and bajo sexto (Almeida) combination on this, their first recording for Bluebird Records. Martinez was known as the “Father of Conjunto Music” and had a long career in Texas, performing from a huge repertoire of regionally popular dance tunes and styles including polkas, redovas, schottisches, waltzes, mazurkas, boleros, danzones and huapangos. Almeida developed the bajo sexto guitar as the distinctive accompanying instrument in the classic conjunto style.

Their music exemplified the blending of Central European instruments and dance genres with those of Mexican Texas that had been going on for at least a generation before they made their first recordings. This conjunto sound remains popular in Tex-Mex music in an expanded and amplified form. Martinez and Almeida were honored with the NEA’s National Heritage Fellowship artist award in 1983 and 1993, respectively.

“Arch Oboler’s Plays” Episode of The Bathysphere (Nov. 18, 1939)
Oboler was one of radio’s great suspense writers, known for the terrifying and beloved Lights Out! radio program. Before that, he helmed this eponymous series and one of his best-known plays, The Bathysphere. It concerns the descent of a diving bell to a depth of 3,200 feet with an unlikely two-man crew: a scientist and a dictator, one of whom may not be entirely trustworthy. After taking over Lights Out!, Oboler restaged this radio play, in 1943, with new actors but with the same spine-tingling suspense. Years later, Rod Serling would acknowledge Oboler as one of his greatest influences.

“Me and My Chauffeur Blues,” Memphis Minnie (1941)
Lizzie Douglas, better known as Memphis Minnie, was born circa 1897 in Algiers, Louisiana. She took up guitar as a child after her family moved to the Memphis, Tennessee, area in 1904 and was singing and playing on Beale Street by age 13. She started recording as Memphis Minnie for the Columbia label in 1929 and went on to record more than 200 songs, more than any other female country blues artist. “Me and My Chauffeur Blues” showcases her aggressive and uncompromising vocal delivery and sting- ing guitar work. It also is her best-known song, thanks in part to covers by Big Mama Thornton, Nina Simone and Jefferson Airplane.

In 1951, the Giants won 37 of their final 44 games to catch their crosstown rival Dodgers, forcing a three-game playoff for the National League pennant. The teams split the first two games, setting up the tiebreaker at the Polo Grounds. With the Dodgers leading 4-2 in the bottom of the ninth, the Giants had runners at second and third with one out when Bobby Thomson stepped to the plate. Ralph Branca’s first pitch was a called strike. As he released his next pitch, Giants announcer Hodges said, “Branca throws …” and then shouted, “There’s a long drive. It’s gonna be, I believe — the Giants win the pennant!”

The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant!” The game was covered by other legendary announcers, including Ernie Harwell (Giants TV), Red Barber (Dodgers radio) and Gordon McLendon (the national broadcast), but it is Hodges’ call that is most remembered. It so vividly captures not only the action on the field but also the excitement of the moment — truly the thrill of victory and one of the greatest calls in all of sportscasting.

Puccini’s Tosca, Maria Callas, Giuseppe di Stefano, Angelo Mercuriali, Tito Gobbi, Melchiorre Luise, Dario Caselli, Victor de Sabata (1953)
In 1951, Christian Science Monitor critic Thor Eckert Jr. wrote a critique of the recording history of Puccini’s Tosca and said, “In 1953, Maria Callas, Giuseppe di Stefano, Tito Gobbi and maestro Victor de Sabata along with the forces of La Scala Opera
gathered to make recording history — the finest Tosca of all time and one of the greatest recordings of an opera on records.” No other Tosca has equaled this performance. Produced by Walter Legge, the recording captured one of Callas’ greatest triumphs. The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians would state, “Among her contemporaries she had the deepest comprehension of the Classical Italian style, the most musical instincts and the most intelligent approach,” while Leonard Bernstein would call her “the Bible of opera.”

“Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh,” Allan Sherman (1963)

This is a comic novelty song with lyrics written by Sherman and Lou Busch (to the tune of Ponchielli’s “Dance of the Hours”) in which a boy describes his summer camp experiences at the fictional Camp Granada. At the time of the recording, Sherman was an intermittently successful TV writer and producer specializing in game shows, while Busch was best known as ragtime pianist Joe “Fingers” Carr. Sherman lived in the Brentwood section of Los Angeles and occasionally performed his song parodies for neighbors like Harpo Marx and George Burns. Burns brought him to the attention of Warner Bros. Records. Sherman’s first two albums, released in 1962 and 1963, toppped the charts, but it would be this single from his third album, My Son, the Nut, that immortalized him. The lyrics were based on letters of complaint Sherman received from his son, Robert, while the boy was attending summer camp in Westport, New York. The opening lines are remembered fondly by three (or more) generations of Americans: “Hello Muddah, hello Fadduh / Here I am at Camp Granada.” “It would have amazed my father, 50-plus years since he wrote it. It’s still something that people care, sing about,” Robert Sherman said.

WGBH Broadcast on the Day of JFK’s Assassination, Boston Symphony Orchestra (1963)

The ageless adage of “drawing comfort through music” had never been more thoroughly tested than on the scheduled afternoon broadcast of the Boston Symphony, with conductor Erich Leinsdorf, on Nov. 22, 1963. Just after concluding Handel’s Concerto Grosso in B flat major and a second short piece, Leinsdorf stoically addressed the large audience with a change of program and to share the tragic news of President Kennedy having been killed in Dallas. For those in the audience and thousands more listening over the radio, it was their first news of the assassination.

In the hall, gasps could be heard. As everyone — including the musicians — processed the news, the sheet music for the “Funeral March” from Beethoven’s Symphony No. 3 was distributed to the orchestra, which bravely performed. The next day, Margo Miller of the Boston Globe reported, “The Eroica marcia funebre is one of the great moments in music. The dread beat of the march cannot be disguised. Yet there is a middle section of the movement, a time of incredible energy and involvement, somehow, or so it seemed Friday, expressing eternal hope.”

Fiddler on the Roof, Original Broadway Cast (1964)

The character of Tevye the Dairyman was created by Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem and is an orthodox Russian-Jew who attempts to raise his daughters and lead a humble life under the oppressive reign of the tsar. While the Aleichem tales had been adapted various times before, Tevye’s true entry into the greater public consciousness came with Fiddler on the Roof, the musical adaptation of Aleichem’s stories. Librettist Joe Stein had become a fan of Aleichem’s writing and enlisted the help of composer Jerry Bock and lyricist Sheldon Harnick to create a show that incorporated traditional Jewish music — like klezmer — into a modern musical theater framework in service of a story about traditions in conflict with the modern world.

In the process, the show brought Jewish audiences closer to part of their heritage (especially sobering in a post-World War II world) while presenting gentle audiences with a story built on universal themes and a central protagonist both conflicting and admirable. With direction from Jerome Robbins and opening with Zero Mostel as a riveting Tevye, Fiddler became a massive Broadway success, running a record-setting 3,242 performances. This RCA Victor cast recording features the original versions of songs that have now become standards, including “Matchmaker,” “Tradition,” “If I Were a Rich Man” and “Sunrise, Sunset.”

“Make the World Go Away,” Eddy Arnold (1965)

This song brought veteran country hitmaker Arnold to a new, younger audience and launched what he called his second career. The recording showcased songwriter Hank Cochran’s memorable melody and plaintive lyrics, Arnold’s mellow baritone vocal and the tasteful backing of such Nashville session stalwarts as guitarist Grady Martin, pianist Floyd Cramer and the Anita Kerr Singers, plus an eight-piece string section. “Make the World Go Away” was a prime example of the “Countrypolitan” style of country music and one of the high-water marks of the Nashville sound that producer Chet Atkins and others had pioneered. Released in the fall of 1965, it became an unexpected presence in the national top 10 alongside The Beatles, James Brown and Dean Martin when few other country songs were crossing over to the pop charts.


This collection of more than 50 hours of important and unique field recordings from Afghanistan came via ethnomusicologist Sakata. She first researched in Afghanistan in 1966–67 and captured 25 hours of recordings of singers and instrumentalists from the provinces of Kabul, Khandahar, Urozgan, Nangarhar, Herat, Balkh and Nuristan. Her second trip, from 1971–73, resulted in 26 additional hours of recordings from Herat, Kabul, Badakhshan, Hazarajat and Kandahar. As she wrote in her 2002 book, Music in the Mind: The Concepts of Music and Musician in Afghanistan, these recordings document a time and place that are now gone. Invasion, civil war and social upheaval have disrupted and, in some cases, destroyed the musical life she documented. Sakata, a well-known expert in the music of Afghanistan, taught at the University of Washington and UCLA for decades. These important recordings are now deposited at the Ethnomusicology Archives at the University of Washington.
“Wichita Lineman,” Glen Campbell (1968)
Campbell made a splash on both the country and pop charts and achieved enormous fame in the ‘60s and ‘70s with a singing style that matched a genial tone with introspective lyrics, emphasizing them in a way that made him ideal for modern country songwriters, most notably Jimmy Webb. Webb conceived the tale behind “Wichita Lineman” while driving through Washita County, Oklahoma, when counties had their own telephone company utilities and line-man employees. Among the endless lines of poles was a silhouetted lineman who struck Webb as “the picture of loneliness.” What was the man saying into the receiver?
Webb placed himself in the man’s head and, with lingering feelings from an affair with a married woman, crafted one of the most beautiful songs to ever climb the charts. With the location changed from Washita to the more euphonious Wichita (of Kansas), “Wichita Lineman” struck listeners with its poetic lyrics about a man attempting to make a romantic connection in the face of his crumbling loneliness. BBC Radio 2 recently described it as “one of those rare songs that seems somehow to exist in a world of its own — not just timeless but ultimately outside of modern music.” “I’m humbled and, at the same time for Glen, I am extremely proud,” said Webb, who wrote “Wichita Lineman.” “I wish there was some way I could say, ‘Glen, you know they’re doing this. They are putting this thing in a mountain.’”

Dusty in Memphis, Dusty Springfield (1969)
By 1968, London-born singer Springfield was already a success in the U.K. when she came to America to record what would become the defining album of her career. Even before Memphis, Springfield had strong ties to American music, having released hits written by Burt Bacharach and Hal David as well as Gerry Goffin and Carole King. Three legendary producers were involved in the sessions: Jerry Wexler, Arif Mardin and Tom Dowd. The instrumental tracks were recorded at legendary American Sound Studio in Memphis featuring the Memphis Cats and the backup vocalists the Sweet Inspirations (Whitney Houston’s mother, Cissy Houston, was a member).
Springfield initially recorded her vocals in the Tennessee city as well but, reportedly dissatisfied with the results, later rerecorded them at Atlantic Studios in New York. Though the single “Son of a Preacher Man” was a hit, early album sales proved modest. Over time, Dusty in Memphis grew in stature to become widely recognized as an important album by a woman in the rock era. Elvis Costello, who contributed the liner notes to a Memphis 2002 reissue, writes, “Dusty Springfield’s singing on this album is among the very best ever put on record by anyone.” Her voice, Costello wrote, was “recorded in the audio equivalent of ‘extreme close-up.’ Every breath and sigh is caught, and yet it can soar.”

Mister Rogers Sings 21 Favorite Songs From Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood, Fred Rogers (1973)
Almost two decades after the last broadcast of Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood in 2001, Fred Rogers remains an influential figure in American culture. As an enduring presence on national public television since 1968, he emphasized holistic child development through play, curiosity and human interaction while fostering emotional intelligence. Rogers held a bachelor’s degree in music composition and aptly leveraged the potential of music to influence emotion, memory and cognitive development by composing prolifically for his program.
Numerous musical guests and the consistent presence of an in-house jazz trio led by pianist Johnny Costa also exposed listeners to a wide range of high-quality music. Certain tunes became synonymous with the program, especially the opening and closing themes as well as “You Are Special” and “I’m Proud of You.” His recitation of his lyrics for “What Do You Do (With the Mad That You Feel)” was a high point of his 1969 testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Communications that helped save funding for public broadcasting.

Cheap Trick at Budokan, Cheap Trick (1978)
Though a handful of U.S. critics and devoted fans could have told you about their formidable live performances, Cheap Trick had, by the late 1970s, very little impact at home in the U.S. But they were already huge in Japan. In 1978, at the Budokan in Tokyo before 12,000 ardent fans, the band recorded this seminal live album, which was originally meant solely for sale in the Japanese market. But stoked by word-of-mouth and airplay on a few U.S. FM rock stations, high-priced imports of the album began to sell in unheard-of numbers for a Japanese release in the U.S. Further airplay and interest increased when Epic, the band’s record company, serviced radio stations with a promotional version of the album unavailable in stores before finally releasing Cheap Trick at Budokan domestically in February 1979. It proved to be the making of the band in its home country, as well as a loud and welcomed alternative to disco and soft rock and a decisive comeback for rock.

Holst: Suite No. 1 in E-Flat, Suite No. 2 in F / Handel: Music for the Royal Fireworks / Bach: Fantasia in G (Special Edition Audiophile Pressing), Frederick Fennell and the Cleveland Symphonic Winds (1978)
This was the first commercial digital recording of symphonic music in the U.S. and was captured on the Soundstream recorder, the first available commercial digital recorder, introduced by U.S. inventor Thomas Stockham. The original was released to vinyl in 1978 and then again in 1983 as the first CD release for the U.S.-based Telarc label. The recording was produced by Robert Woods and engineered by Jack Renner, co-founders of the Telarc label. Telarc and Soundstream worked together, increasing the capability of the Soundstream recorder, and the results had an immediate impact on audiences around the globe. The World Book Encyclopedia described this recording as having “the bass drum heard around the world.”

“Y.M.C.A.,” Village People (1978) In 1977, Village People emerged as a purposefully campy and extravagantly costumed vocal sextet of guys — the Native American, the cop, the biker, the soldier, the cowboy and the construction worker — singing upbeat dance floor anthems that often referenced gay pop culture. Now, more than four decades since it hit the streets and the dance floors, “Y.M.C.A.,” their biggest hit, is an
American cultural phenomenon — people from all walks of life do the “Y.M.C.A.” dance at weddings, bar mitzvahs or sporting events. It is as likely to be heard at a Midwestern prom as it is at New York City’s Gay Pride parade. In its heyday, “Y.M.C.A.” was a hit around the world, going to No. 1 on the charts in some 15 countries, and its ongoing popularity is evidence that, despite the naysayers, disco has never truly died. “I had no idea when we wrote ‘Y.M.C.A.’ that it would become one of the most iconic songs in the world,” singer Victor Willis said. “I am glad that the Village People has made the world smile for over 40 years with our music.”

A Feather on the Breath of God, Gothic Voices; Christopher Page, Conductor; Hildegard von Bingen, Composer (1982)

Twelfth-century Benedictine abbess von Bingen is the earliest known female composer whose works have survived to present day. She was a writer, philosopher, Christian mystic and visionary as well — the title of the album is a quote from one of her writings. Her repertoire had been ignored for decades until the release of this beautiful recording by the award-winning Gothic Voices, directed by Page and engineered by Tony Faulkner. This was Gothic Voices’ first recording; it also marked the beginning of Gothic Voices as a permanent group. The release helped heighten — albeit belatedly — von Bingen’s life story and remarkable achievements both inside and outside of music. “This album of Hildegarde von Bingen’s music brought the art of an amazing woman to an entirely new audience, and I feel most fortunate to have been part of the group that recorded it,” said soprano Emma Kirkby.


Turner survived a brutal marriage to reclaim fame and obtain recognition as a solo artist and a superstar in her own right with this timeless comeback album. After several solo projects she released following her divorce from Ike Turner failed to sell, Turner was without a recording contract when John Carter signed her to Capitol Records in 1983 and she began work on Private Dancer in England. Propelled by the lead single, “What’s Love Got to Do With It?” (later the title of the big-screen biopic about her), Private Dancer revealed Turner as a mature and versatile singer whose work transcended categories like rock and pop. Since then, the album and its song cycle have become a touchstone and a symbol for powerful womanhood. Private Dancer solidified her as a legend — a status she achieved on her own terms. “Tina’s innate ability to expand her reach deep into all this new material seems, to this very day, simply unbelievable. Never equaled,” said Rupert Hine, a musician, song writer and producer on the album. “These songs were populated in such a small handful of days at such high energy as to leave those left in the room thereafter spinning. Something very special was happening right under our feet.”

Ven Conmigo, Selena (1990)

This 1990 album by Selena Quintanilla was the first Tejano record by a female artist to achieve Gold status. The album also marks a turning point both in Selena’s career and within the Tejano music genre — as it brought the music to a wider American audience and upended the dominance of male-led acts within the genre. Selena’s biographer, Joe Nick Patoski, highlights the expanded stylistic scope of the album, which her versatility made possible. The selections pushed the boundaries of the Tejano genre at the time while keeping the beat at the heart of the music; as Patoski quoted Selena, “I don’t think you can really mess with the beat.” Hits like “Baila esta cumbia” helped establish Selena as “the reigning queen of the Tejano music world,” as her obituary in The New York Times called her just five years later.

The Chronic, Dr. Dre (1992)

The Chronic is the solo debut album of hip-hop artist and producer Dr. Dre, a former member of N.W.A. Along with exemplifying the “G Funk” style of hip-hop production, it solidified the West Coast’s dominance of the genre, and its influence would be heard for years to come. The Chronic also featured appearances by future superstar Snoop Dogg, who used the album as a launching pad for his own solo career. It is considered one of the most important and influential albums of the 1990s and regarded by many fans and peers to be the most well-produced hip-hop album of all time.


Inspired in part by the end of her musical partnership with Porter Wagoner, this song had been a big hit on the 1974 country charts for its writer, Dolly Parton. Later, it would become one of her signature compositions; over the years, she often concluded her concerts and TV variety shows with it. In the early ’90s, actor Kevin Costner suggested that pop diva Houston record it for the soundtrack of their forthcoming film, The Bodyguard. Already recognized as one the great voices of her generation, Houston took the song and made it her own. Her powerful, passionate performance drove her rendition to the top of the charts. It would eventually become Houston’s signature song and sell upward of 20 million copies.

Concert in the Garden, Maria Schneider Orchestra (2004)

Dance permeates Schneider’s album with titles such as “Dança Ilusória” and “Choro Dançado.” Listening to “Pas de Deux;” it is hard not to be reminded of the seminal Sketches of Spain album Miles Davis made with arranger Gil Evans, with whom Schneider worked closely in the 1980s. It is a testament to Schneider’s composing and arranging talents that her work can be seen not as a copy of Evans’ work, but an extension of it. And it is a tribute to her determination and leadership that the Maria Schneider Orchestra was some 15 years old at the time of this recording, with its 18-piece membership largely intact during that period.

For them, Schneider created an amalgam of big band, chamber music and improvisational jazz. Such improvisation can be seen in Donny McCaslin’s critically acclaimed solo in “Buleria, Solea y Rumba.” In addition, Concert in the Garden was the first album to win a Grammy without having been sold in stores, distributed digitally with no fixed format. Also, the album was funded and distributed by crowdfunding site ArtistShare to respond to fan-driven demand for styles of music not otherwise readily available while offering artists greater control over their work.

Percussion Concerto, Colin Currie (2008)

A drummer’s dream, Jennifer Higdon’s composition Percussion Concerto received
a Grammy in 2010. It began as a co-commission between the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. Tim Smith of The Baltimore Sun wrote that the one-movement work “unleashes a kinetic storm of urban beats, balanced by passages of Asian-influenced musings that exploit the most seductive qualities of the diverse percussion instruments assigned to the soloist.” And Marin Alsop, the conductor of this particular performance, said that the concerto “embraces the concept and explains that a major priority for her is to give listeners a sense of grounding and a feel for where they are in her compositions.” This recording by percussionist supreme Currie — indeed, the piece was written for him — captures his great virtuosity. The piece would go on to win the Grammy for best classical contemporary composition. 

*This article originally appeared on The Hollywood Reporter.*

**Sub Urban Rocks ‘Cradles’ to No. 1 on Alternative Songs Chart**

*BY KEVIN RUTHERFORD*

Sub Urban’s “Cradles” climb 3-1 on Billboard’s Alternative Songs airplay chart dated March 28. The song, serviced to radio by Warner, becomes the first No. 1 on a Billboard chart for the New Jersey native (born Danny Maisonaveu), achieved with his first entry on Alternative Songs.

The coronation also continues this year’s trend of newcomers topping the tally. In just the first three months of 2020, five artists (of six total No. 1s) have led Alternative Songs for the first time, including three in a first visit to the chart. Sub Urban follows The Unlikely Candidates (“Novocaine”), White Reaper (“Might Be Right”), Meg Myers (“Running Up That Hill”) and Absofacto “Dissolve,” and joins White Reaper and Absofacto in leading in a premiere appearance. Compare that to 2019, when five artists ruled for the first time the entire year: Lana Del Rey, Dominic Fike, Matt Maeson, SHAED and Billie Eilish; Fike, Maeson and SHAED reigned in their first chart appearances. In 2018, six No. 1 newcomers ruled (Marshmello, Two Feet, Panic! at the Disco, lovelytheband, AJR and Alice Merton), with five (all but Panic!) doing so on their first tries.

The only repeat leader this year? Eilish, who's still, of course, a fairly new artist in her own right (although she's already tied the mark for the most No. 1s among soloists in the chart’s three-decade history).

Sub Urban is also the fourth soloist to lead Alternative Songs in 2020, following Eilish, Myers and Absofacto. A record-tying five songs by solo artists ruled in 2019, by Del Rey, Fike, Maeson and Eilish (two).

On the all-rock-format Rock Airplay chart, “Cradles” ranks at No. 9 with 4.8 million audience impressions, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data. “Cradles” initially found its legs on TikTok before it was serviced to alternative radio and debuted on Alternative Songs in October 2019. Sub Urban’s debut EP, Thrill Seeker, was released March 13.

**Pi’erre Bourne Tops Hot 100 Producers Chart, Powered by Lil Uzi Vert’s ‘Eternal Atake’**

*BY XANDER ZELLNER*

Pi’erre Bourne (real name Jordan Timothy Jenks) debuts at No. 1 on Billboard’s Hot 100 Producers chart (dated March 28), thanks to four production credits on the latest Billboard Hot 100.

All four songs, which he solely produced, are on the deluxe edition of Lil Uzi Vert’s new LP Eternal Atake, which, sparked by the new version (featuring 14 new tracks), logs its second week atop the Billboard 200 with 247,000 equivalent album units, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data.

Here’s a look at all four of Bourne’s production credits on the Hot 100:

- **Rank, Artist Billing, Title**
  - No. 19, Lil Uzi Vert feat. Chief Keef, “Bean (Kobe)”
  - No. 26, Lil Uzi Vert & 21 Savage, “Yessirskiii”
  - No. 54, Lil Uzi Vert feat. Future, “Wassup”
  - No. 89, Lil Uzi Vert feat. Young Thug, “Money Spread”

Bourne dethrones Brandon Finessin (real name Brandon Veal), who ruled the Hot 100 Producers chart for one week (March 21), thanks to eight production credits that appeared on the Hot 100 a week earlier, also all from Eternal Atake.

Prior to Bourne’s four production credits on the current Hot 100, he had charted as a producer with eight songs, including tracks by 6ix9ine, Travis Scott, Kanye West and Young Thug.

As a solo artist, Bourne has charted two albums on the Billboard 200: Sli’merre, with Young Nudy, reached No. 63 in May 2019, and The Life of Pi’erre 4 peaked at No. 107 that July.

Bourne concurrently debuts at No. 6 on the Hot 100 Songwriters chart, as he also co-wrote the four tracks listed above.

Lil Uzi Vert (real name Symere Woods) logs his second week atop the Hot 100 Songwriters chart, powered by 22 songs on the Hot 100, all of which he co-wrote. Here’s a rundown:

- **Rank, Title (Songwriters in addition to Lil Uzi Vert)**
  - No. 13, “Myron” (Jonathan Priester, Jordan T. Ortiz)
  - No. 19, “Bean (Kobe)” (Chief Keef, Pi’erre Bourne)
  - No. 26, “Yessirskiii” (21 Savage, Pi’erre Bourne)
  - No. 27, “Baby Pluto” (Brandon Finessin, Bugz Ronin, Cousin Vinny, Ike Beatz)
  - No. 37, “P2” (TM88)
  - No. 41, “That Way” (Jonathan Priester, Felipe Spain, Milan Modi, Andreas Carlsson,
Dropkick Murphys’ Livestreamed St. Patrick’s Day Concert Drives Them Onto Social 50 Chart

BY KEVIN RUTHERFORD

Despite the global outbreak of COVID-19 putting a damper on St. Patrick’s Day’s celebrations, Celtic rockers Dropkick Murphys didn’t let that spoil their annual holiday concert.

Instead of doing a traditional concert with fans in person, the group opted to perform a livestreamed concert across multiple social media and video-streaming platforms, helping the act debut at No. 36 on Billboard’s Social 50 chart dated March 28.

The Social 50 is powered by data tracked by music analytics company Next Big Sound and ranks the most popular artists on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Wikipedia. The chart’s methodology blends weekly additions of friends/fans/followers with artist page views and engagement. The chart’s latest tracking week ended March 19.

The Boston-bred band saw gains in all social media categories, led by 41,000 new subscribers on YouTube (one of the places the concert was streamed) in the week ending March 19 (up 2,628%), according to Next Big Sound. The show was filmed Jan. 28, two days after the 62nd annual Grammy Awards — and before the novel coronavirus pandemic put such entertainment events on hold indefinitely.

Actress Maya Rudolph hosts the show, and also performs with her Prince cover band, Princess. The show also features performances by Beck, Gary Clark Jr., H.E.R., Common, Earth, Wind, & Fire, Foo Fighters, H.E.R., Janes, John Legend, Chris Martin, Miguel, Morris Day And The Time, Sheila E., St. Vincent, Mavis Staples, the Revolution, and Usher, with special appearances by Fred Armisen, Naomi Campbell, Misty Copeland, FKA Twigs and Jimmy Jam.

Ken Ehrlich, who wrapped up a 40-year career as the Grammy Awards’ producer or executive producer this year, served as executive producer of the special. In an interview with Billboard in the week preceding the Grammys, Ehrlich noted, “Prince is special. He probably did 12 TV appearances over his career. I did five of them. I think it’s going to do very well because the audience that has grown around him since his death is equal to or greater than the audience that currently re-enters the Rock Digital Song Sales chart at No. 6 with 2,000 downloads — a new high on the chart for the band, despite the song’s re-entry on Rock Digital Song Sales every year since the tally was created (2010) around St. Patrick’s Day.

‘Let’s Go Crazy: The Grammy Salute to Prince’ Set to Air on the 4th Anniversary of His Death

BY PAUL GREIN

CBS will air Let’s Go Crazy: The Grammy Salute to Prince on April 21, the fourth anniversary of the legendary musician’s death. The show was filmed Jan. 28, two days after the 62nd annual Grammy Awards — and before the novel coronavirus pandemic put such entertainment events on hold indefinitely.

The Grammy Salute to Prince — and before the novel coronavirus pandemic put such entertainment events on hold indefinitely.

Actress Maya Rudolph hosts the show, and also performs with her Prince cover band, Princess. The show also features performances by Beck, Gary Clark Jr., H.E.R., Common, Earth, Wind, & Fire, Foo Fighters, H.E.R., Janes, John Legend, Chris Martin, Miguel, Morris Day And The Time, Sheila E., St. Vincent, Mavis Staples, the Revolution, and Usher, with special appearances by Fred Armisen, Naomi Campbell, Misty Copeland, FKA Twigs and Jimmy Jam.

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loved him when he was alive. There’s no 15-year old who doesn’t know who Prince is.”

Ron Basile, Chantel Sausedo, Rac Clark and David Wild are producers of the special. Wild also wrote it. Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis and Sheila E. are the co-musical directors of the special. AEG Ehrlich Ventures, LLC produced the show with with the cooperation of The Prince Estate.

Let’s Go Crazy: The Grammy Salute to Prince is the latest in a long line of TV tributes that the Grammys have produced in recent years. Others have included Sinatra 100 — An All-Star Grammy Concert, Stevie Wonder: Songs In The Key Of Life — An All-Star Grammy Salute, The Beatles: The Night That Changed America — A Grammy Salute, Stayin’ Alive: A Grammy Salute To The Music Of The Bee Gees, Elton John: I’m Still Standing–A Grammy Salute and Motown 60: A Grammy Celebration.

Prince won seven Grammys over the course of his career, but he never won in a “Big Four” category (album, record and song of the year, plus best new artist). Purple Rain was nominated for album of the year for 1984, but controversially lost to Lionel Richie’s Can’t Slow Down. The double album Sign “O” the Times was nominated in that same category three years later, but lost to U2’s The Joshua Tree. Prince’s composition “Nothing Compares 2 U,” made famous by Sinéad O’Connor, was nominated for song of the year for 1990, but lost to Julie Gold’s “From a Distance,” a hit for Bette Midler.

Purple Rain and Sign “O” The Times have since been voted into the Grammy Hall of Fame, as has Prince’s 1982 double-album, 1999.

World Sleep Day Wakes Up Max Richter’s 2015 Set on Classical Albums Chart

BY KEITH CAULFIELD

The top of Billboard’s latest Classical Albums chart is a bit sleepy. Literally.

Max Richter’s concept album Sleep returns to No. 1 on the chart dated March 28 for the first time in four-and-a-half years, thanks to publicity and promotion for the composer’s set generated around World Sleep Day on March 13.

The project climbs from No. 3 to No. 1 with 3,000 equivalent album units in the U.S. in the week ending March 19, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data. That’s a 112% surge from the previous week (up from little more than 1,000 units). The album’s tracks generated 3.5 million on-demand streams during the tracking week (up 107% from 1.7 million the prior frame).

Billboard’s Classical Albums chart ranks the most popular classical albums of the week in the U.S. based on multi-metric consumption as measured in equivalent album units. Units comprise album sales, track equivalent albums (TEA) and streaming equivalent albums (SEA).

The eight-and-a-half hour long project was released in 2015 via Deutsche Grammophon and debuted at No. 1 on the Classical Albums chart dated Sept. 26, 2015. The album is available in two editions: a 31-track set, and a 204-track version – both containing the same eight-and-a-half hour long program.

Richter told NPR in 2015 that “Sleeping and being asleep is one of my favorite activities. Really, what I wanted to do is provide a landscape or a musical place where people could fall asleep.” The album’s length is designed to be a companion to a sleeping listener, who, hopefully, is getting a peace-
## Billboard 200

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<td>LAUV</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified Hitmaker</td>
<td>LIL MOSEY</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IN BRIEF**

The Billboard 200 chart ranks the most popular albums of the week, as compiled by Nielsen Music, based on multi-metric consumption (blending traditional album sales, track equivalent albums, and streaming equivalent albums).