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Polo G's 'Rapstar' Spends Second Week at No. 1 on Hot 100, Dua Lipa's 'Levitating' Returns to Top Five

BY [Gary Trust](#)

Polo G's "Rapstar" spends a second week at No. 1 on the [Billboard Hot 100](#) songs chart, a week after it [debuted](#) at the top spot.

Plus, [Dua Lipa](#)'s "Levitating," featuring [DaBaby](#), returns to its No. 5 Hot 100 high (rising from No. 6), first reached two months earlier, thanks in part to momentum for its profile on TikTok.

The Hot 100 blends all-genre U.S. streaming (official audio and official video), radio airplay and sales data. All charts (dated May 1) will update on Billboard.com tomorrow (April 27). For all chart news, you can follow [@billboard](#) and [@billboardcharts](#) on both Twitter and Instagram.

"Rapstar," released on Columbia Records, drew 40.3 million U.S. streams (down 25%) and sold 2,400 downloads (down 55%) in the week ending April 22, according to MRC Data. It also attracted 3 million radio airplay audience impressions (up 254%) in the week ending April 25.

The track adds a second week atop the [Streaming Songs](#) chart, as it becomes the second song in 2021 to tally at least 40 million streams in multiple frames,

after it started with 53.6 million a week earlier. Olivia Rodrigo's "Drivers License" debuted with 76.1 million streams in its first week (as reflected on charts dated Jan. 23) and followed with 59.7 million (Jan. 30) and 42.6 million (Feb. 6).

Meanwhile, "Rapstar" is the 22nd title to debut at No. 1 on the Hot 100 and log a second consecutive week on top, among [52 total](#) No. 1 arrivals (a second-week success rate of 42%). It's the second among five such songs this year, after "Drivers License" spent its first eight weeks at No. 1 (encompassing its entire reign).

"Rapstar" concurrently claims a second week at No. 1 on the multi-metric [Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs](#) and [Hot Rap Songs](#) charts, which use the same methodology as the Hot 100.

Silk Sonic's "Leave the Door Open" rebounds 3-2 on the Hot 100, two weeks after [reaching No. 1](#). It adds a second week at No. 1 on [Radio Songs](#) (71.3 million, up 9%), as it tops the multi-metric [Hot R&B Songs](#) chart for a fifth frame.

(continued)



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Justin Bieber's "Peaches," featuring Daniel Caesar and Giveon, rises 4-3 on the Hot 100, four weeks after it **debuted** at No. 1. The song posts its first week in the Radio Songs top 10, charging 12-5 (51 million, up 23%). It becomes Bieber's 18th Radio Songs top 10, breaking him out of a 10-way tie for the fifth-most in the chart's 30-year history, after Rihanna (29), Drake (24), Mariah Carey (23) and Lil Wayne (20). Caesar and Giveon each earn their first Radio Songs top 10.

"Peaches" wins the Hot 100's top Airplay Gainer award for a fourth consecutive week (marking Bieber's longest such streak in a lead role since "Love Yourself" achieved the honor for four straight weeks in January-February 2016).

Lil Nas X's "Montero (Call Me by Your Name)" dips 2-4 on the Hot 100, three weeks after it **launched at No. 1**.

Dua Lipa's "Levitating," featuring DaBaby, returns to its No. 5 Hot 100 high, first reached two months ago, on the charts dated Feb. 6 and 13. It has ranked in the top 10 each week except for one frame since, returning to the tier (13-7) on the chart dated March 27 after Lipa and DaBaby performed it during the Grammy Awards March 14 as part of a medley with Lipa's "Don't Start Now" (which reached No. 2 in March 2020). Further sustaining it, it has soundtracked numerous **TikTok clips** since mid-April.

"Levitating" ascends 9-6 on Streaming

Songs (20.7 million, up 13%), a new best rank, and 13-6 on **Digital Song Sales** (9,600, up 34%, aided by 69-cent sale-pricing in the iTunes Store between April 20 and 22) and holds at No. 14 on Radio Songs (37.3 million, up 7%), where it reached No. 6 in January.

(Plus, "We're Good," Lipa's follow-up single to "Levitating," hits the Hot 100's top 40 for the first time, pushing 45-38, up 4% to 23.3 million in airplay audience and 12% to 7.7 million streams.)

The Weeknd's "Save Your Tears" backtracks 5-6 on the Hot 100, after reaching No. 4. Its **remix** with Ariana Grande was released Friday, April 23, and streaming and sales increases for the song overall in the tracking week ending April 29 will be reflected on next week's Hot 100 (dated May 8).

Rounding out the Hot 100's top 10, Masked Wolf's first entry on the chart, "Astronaut in the Ocean," jumps 10-7 for a new high; Doja Cat's "Kiss Me More," featuring SZA, drops to No. 8 a week after it debuted at No. 7; Cardi B's "Up" descends 8-9, four weeks after **reaching** No. 1; and Olivia Rodrigo's former **eight-week** No. 1 "Drivers License" shifts 9-10 in reverse.

Again, for all chart news, you can follow @billboard and @billboardcharts on both Twitter and Instagram and all charts (dated May 1), including the Hot 100 in its entirety, will refresh on Billboard.com tomorrow (April 27). 📺

'Slime Language 2' Debuts at No. 1 on Billboard 200 Albums Chart

BY KEITH CAULFIELD

The star-studded *Slime Language 2* project from **Young Thug's** Young Stoner Life Records debuts at No. 1 on the **Billboard 200** albums chart, earning 113,000 equivalent album units in the U.S. in the week ending April 22, according to MRC Data. The vast majority of that sum was driven by streaming activity.

Slime Language 2 was released on April 16 via Young Stoner Life/300. It's the third No. 1 for the Young Stoner Life label, following **Gunna's** *Wunna* in 2020 and label chief Young Thug's *So Much Fun* in 2019.

The Billboard 200 chart ranks the most popular 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). Each unit equals one album sale, or 10 individual tracks sold from an album, or 3,750 ad-supported or 1,250 paid/subscription

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on-demand official audio and video streams generated by songs from an album. The new May 1, 2021-dated chart (where *Slime Language 2* debuts at No. 1) will be posted in full on *Billboard's* website on April 27. For all chart news, follow @billboard and @billboardcharts on both Twitter and Instagram.

Of *Slime Language 2's* 113,000 equivalent album units earned in the tracking week ending April 22, SEA units comprise 106,000 (equaling 142.68 million on-demand streams of the album's tracks), album sales comprise 6,000 and TEA units comprise 1,000.

The 23-track *Slime Language 2* project showcases Young Stoner Life's family of artists such as Gunna, Yak Gotti, Lil Duke, T-Shyne and Lil Keed, as well as acts from outside the Young Stoner Life camp, including Drake, Lil Uzi Vert, Big Sean, NAV and Future. Young Thug himself performs on more than half of the album (13 of the 23 tracks), and, in turn, the set is billed on the chart to Young Thug & Various Artists. *Slime Language 2* marks Young Thug's second No. 1 album, following *So Much Fun*.

Slime Language 2 is the second R&B/hip-hop album released in 2021 to lead the Billboard 200, following **Rod Wave's** *SoulFly* (April 10-dated chart).

Taylor Swift's *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* falls 1-2 in its second week on the Billboard 200 with 57,000 equivalent album units earned (down 80%). The album debuted with 2021's biggest week yet, 291,000

units earned.

Morgan Wallen's former No. 1 *Dangerous: The Double Album* rises one spot to No. 3 with 56,000 equivalent album units earned (down 4%), and **Justin Bieber's** previous leader *Justice* dips 3-4 in its fifth week with 54,000 units (down 10%).

Eric Church's *Heart* debuts at No. 5 with 49,000 equivalent album units earned, marking his sixth top 10 (and sixth top five). Of *Heart's* starting sum, 40,000 comprise album sales (making it the top-selling album of the week), 8,000 comprise SEA units (equaling 10.54 million on-demand streams of the album's songs) and 1,000 comprise TEA units. *Heart* was released on April 16 and is one of three new albums from Church, collectively referred to as *Heart & Soul*. The *&* album is available only to members of the artist's Church Choir fan club, and *Soul* was released on April 23.

With *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*, *Dangerous: The Double Album* and *Heart* at Nos. 2, 3 and 5, it's the first time three country albums are in the top five together in over five years. It last **happened** on the Nov. 28, 2015-dated chart, when **Chris Stapleton's** *Traveller* was at No. 1, followed by Church's *Mr. Misunderstood* at No. 2 and **Tim McGraw's** *Damn Country Music* at No. 5. That week, the chart was still basking in the glow of that year's Country Music Association Awards (held on Nov. 4), where Stapleton and Church both performed. (Country albums are defined as

those that have charted on *Billboard's* **Top Country Albums** chart.)

Rod Wave's former No. 1 *SoulFly* falls 5-6 on the new Billboard 200 with 46,000 equivalent album units earned (down 16%).

Rock band **Greta Van Fleet** scores its second Billboard 200 top 10, as *The Battle at Garden's Gate* debuts at No. 7 with 44,000 equivalent album units earned. Of *Battle's* starting sum, 39,000 comprise album sales, 5,000 comprise SEA units (equaling 6.28 million on-demand streams of the album's songs) and less than 1,000 comprise TEA units.

The new album was preceded by the single "My Way, Soon," which marked the group's fifth No. 1 on the **Mainstream Rock Airplay** chart (dated Jan. 30). A second track, "Heat Above," climbed 15-14 (a new peak) on the most recently published chart (dated April 24).

The Weeknd's *The Highlights* falls 7-8 on the Billboard 200 with 40,000 equivalent album units earned (down 2%), **Dua Lipa's** *Future Nostalgia* rises 10-9 with 35,000 units (up 6%) and **Pop Smoke's** former leader *Shoot for the Stars Aim for the Moon* dips 9-10 with 34,000 units (down 5%).

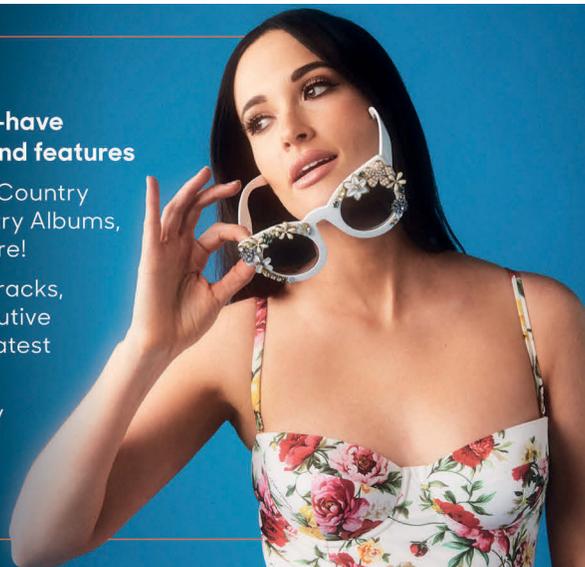
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industry for his dedication, passion and love
of the business and our brand.

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Revealed: Billboard's 2021 International Power Players

BY BILLBOARD STAFF

Some 63% of the world's music, by value, is consumed outside the United States, according to IFPI.

Billboard's *International Power Players* recognizes industry leaders — nominated by their companies and peers and selected by our editors — with primary responsibility outside the United States. Honorees include label executives, music publishers, independent entrepreneurs, artist managers and concert promoters.

The late Michael Gudinski of Australia, who died March 2 at the age of 68, achieved success in all of those roles and more. A music industry pioneer whose Mushroom Group would become a template for independent companies, Gudinski, with his exuberant personality, became the face of his country's music scene.

In recognition of his incomparable five-decade music career, Billboard posthumously honors Gudinski as our *International Power Players Executive of the Year*.

"The touring side is decimated. It's frustrating. I really can't see [international tours] happening before the end of the year," Gudinski told *Billboard* over the phone during an interview on Feb. 11. "But it's a great time for Australian acts to shine."

Gudinski loved music, his birthplace of Melbourne and his homeland. He loved family more than anything — a brood that, to him, included the more than 250 employees across Mushroom Group, the independent music powerhouse he built from scratch.

In that final interview, Gudinski talked about the many things he cherished: Bruce Springsteen and Foo Fighters, great songs, cricket and good food. (He shed 17 pounds during the pandemic, which he attributed to eating grilled fish and removing French fries from his diet.) And, of course, he mentioned

his immediate family: his wife, Sue, and his grown children, Kate and Matt.

Gudinski died in his sleep on March 2. His impact on Australia's music industry is immeasurable, highlighted by the state memorial held March 24 in his honor at Melbourne's Rod Laver Arena.

The careers of countless artists and music industry figures moved forward thanks to the 24-strong companies that form Mushroom Group. Gudinski established the company in 1973 and led as chairman until his death.

Today, the group includes Mushroom Music Publishing, the country's leading independent publisher; The Harbour Agency; labels I Oh You, Liberation and Bloodlines; and the concert promotion juggernaut Frontier Touring, which ranked as the third-largest promoter in the world in 2018, according to Billboard Boxscore, with gross ticket sales of \$245.1 million and over 2.7 million tickets sold to 440 reported shows.

During the tribute in Melbourne, held in the city's largest indoor arena, those closest to Gudinski appeared onstage or in the audience, including Kylie Minogue, Jimmy Barnes and Ed Sheeran, who made the long haul from the United Kingdom to pay tribute to "this titan of a man." Sheeran performed a new song in celebration of Gudinski, "Visiting Hours," which he wrote during his stay in quarantine, a hurdle for every visitor entering Australia.

Those who couldn't make the trip to Melbourne opened their hearts in other ways. On March 3, Springsteen unveiled his video for "I'll See You in My Dreams" with a dedication to Gudinski and earlier stated he had "never met a better promoter." Rock stars from Dave Grohl and Elton John to Billy Joel, Sting and many others remembered his infectious, larger-than-life spirit in video tributes.

Archie Roach, the iconic Indigenous artist who was inducted into the Australian Recording Industry Association Hall of Fame in 2020, recounted Gudinski's tireless championing of First Nations artists, including Troy Cassar-Daley, Christine Anu and Dan Sultan, and for his support of Yothu Yindi and its breakthrough hit, "Treaty."

"He gave us a chance," said Roach. "If it

wasn't for Michael Gudinski, I wouldn't have been working or been a recording artist."

Gudinski always found a way. In 2020, at the height of the pandemic, he recalibrated his company and focused on a string of new projects, which included the launch of a new label, Reclusive Records, with Yorta Yorta singer-songwriter Scott Darlow as its first signing.

With touring grounded, Gudinski's considerable live-entertainment assets were mothballed. He threw himself into content production through his company's Mushroom Vision division. He spearheaded the April 25 Anzac Day special *Music From the Home Front*, which was a ratings hit (capturing 1.4 million TV viewers, according to OzTAM data), as well as a spinoff multidisc fundraising album that reached No. 1 on the ARIA albums chart.

He then orchestrated a six-part virtual concert series, *State of Music*, through an alliance with Victoria Together, the online platform of the Victoria state government. A third project was realized when season one of *The Sound* premiered in July on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. A second season wrapped in December, while *Music From the Home Front* is confirmed to return on April 24, this time with a live, all-star concert at Melbourne's Sidney Myer Music Bowl.

Gudinski shaped the landscape of Australian music, and he also introduced the world's biggest acts to Australian audiences through Frontier Touring. Prior to the pandemic, the company had enjoyed a strong run that included stadium tours for Paul McCartney, Justin Bieber, Foo Fighters and Taylor Swift.

When asked to describe himself for a *Billboard* feature published in 2010, Gudinski said, "I'm a man of my word. I'm persistent, and I'm loyal."

Those qualities paid off when Frontier Touring produced Sheeran's ÷ (*Divide*) tour of Australia and New Zealand in 2018 that sold over 1.1 million tickets, shattering the all-time record for a single tour that had stood since Dire Straits set the mark in 1986.

Gudinski's son, Matt, will now lead Mushroom Group as CEO. During his speech at the state memorial, the younger



2021

NOEL SCHAJRIS 20TH ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE

Latin Grammy winner, singer, songwriter and pianist Noel Schajris, has sold more than 25 million records and 1 million tickets since his first solo album 20 years ago, some of his songs and albums had been appeared at the Billboard's top ten charts. He has earned international success with the legendary duet Sin Bandera where he and Leonel Garcia created some of the biggest hits in Spanish music history.

His music videos have more than 700 million views and his social media includes 9.5 million followers from more than 15 countries. As a recording artist, he has sung duets with John Legend, Brian Mcknight, Luis Fonsi, and Reik, just to name a few.

In 2020 he released the unique web www.NoelSchajris.fan which includes an online store, a fan subscription service and online shows. Mr. Schajris is considered to be one of the most important and celebrated artists in Latin music.

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Gudinski hinted at big things to come. Mushroom Group, he said, is in its “strongest position ever,” and with its 50th year approaching, “I know that our incredibly talented Mushroom family will help me deliver the vision Dad and I had for the next 50 years of our business.”

Dominique Casimir

Executive vp global repertoire and marketing, Continental Europe, Asia Pacific and Latin America, BMG

Justus Haerder

Executive vp group strategy and M&A, BMG

Sebastian Hentzschel

Chief information officer, BMG

Casimir’s role — signing, promoting and working with artists and songwriters across continental Europe — expanded to Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region in November. She also helped lead BMG’s new partnership with independent German live-music promoter Undercover as “the logical extension of BMG’s plan to integrate all the services an artist could need under one roof.” Responsibility for BMG’s global technology infrastructure falls under Hentzschel, who saw the company’s workforce dispersed last year to over 900 locations. The instant-messaging app myBMG allowed artists and songwriters to track royalty payouts and also collaborate during the lockdown. Under Haerder, BMG continued its run of music-rights deals in 2020, including the Undercover partnership, the COVID-19-fighting charity single “cOMbat quotidien” released with the French football club Olympique de Marseille and a deal for the recording catalog royalties of Mick Fleetwood. This spring, BMG’s film and TV business, under Haerder, plans a multimedia release of Fleetwood’s tribute to Peter Green, the guitarist who originally co-founded Fleetwood Mac.

Adam Granite

Executive vp market development, Universal Music Group

Dickon Stainer

President/CEO, global classics and jazz and Verve Label Group, Universal Music Group

For the world’s largest music company, Granite guides strategy for some of the globe’s fastest-growing markets. He has overseen UMG’s expansion within China,

Hong Kong and Taiwan and the launches of Universal Music Nigeria, headquarters for Universal Music Southeast Asia in Singapore and new operations in Israel, Morocco and Vietnam. UMG has launched labels including Def Jam Africa & South East Asia, Astralwerks Asia and Island Records Philippines. Stainer guides the strategic direction of UMG’s market-leading classical and jazz labels including Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, Mercury KX, the distributed label ECM and Capitol Music Group’s Blue Note, as well as Verve Label Group, including Verve, Impulse! and Decca U.S. In the past year, Stainer has overseen major campaigns for artists including Lang Lang, Melody Gardot, Ludovico Einaudi, John Williams, Gregory Porter, Max Richter and Andrea Bocelli — whose performance from the Duomo Cathedral in Milan on Easter Sunday 2020 reached over 2.8 million peak concurrent viewers worldwide, according to UMG.

Wouter Jansen

VP streaming and digital marketing strategy, Sony Music Entertainment

Monica Cornia

Senior vp international marketing, RCA Records and Arista Records, Sony Music Entertainment

Melissa Thomas

Senior vp international marketing, Columbia Records and Epic Records, Sony Music Entertainment

Jansen oversees streaming and digital marketing strategy for Sony Music’s U.S. labels across more than 50 markets. With his colleagues, he helped Columbia Records achieve four concurrent top 10 hits on the Spotify Global chart with Harry Styles’ “Watermelon Sugar,” Jawsh 685’s “Savage Love (Laxed — Siren Beat),” Powfu’s “death bed” and StaySolidRocky’s “Party Girl.” As co-heads of Sony’s international marketing group, Cornia and Thomas are responsible for global campaigns for artists from RCA and Arista (Cornia), and Columbia and Epic (Thomas). For Doja Cat, Cornia helped drive her single “Say So” to chart peaks in multiple markets and 2.52 billion global on-demand streams, according to MRC Data. She also guided Sony Nashville on Kane Brown’s debut tour in Europe. Thomas has

helped lead campaigns for Camila Cabello, DJ Khaled, French Montana, Travis Scott and others while also leading Sony Music’s international urban team.

Donny Novakovic

VP international marketing, Disney Music Group

The soundtracks for some of the biggest movie franchises in the world — from Disney, Marvel Studios, Lucasfilm and Pixar — are marketed outside the United States with campaigns overseen by Novakovic. The soundtrack for *Frozen II* has been released in 26 languages, resulting in 4.6 billion streams and 3 million albums sold outside the United States, according to Disney. Novakovic guided the launch of Disney Spotify hubs in Germany, Japan, Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Middle East and North Africa, adding to the existing hubs in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

Simon Robson

President, international, Warner Recorded Music, Warner Music Group

Eric Wong

President/chief marketing officer, Warner Recorded Music, Warner Music Group

Jess Keeley-Carter

Senior vp global marketing, Warner Recorded Music, Warner Music Group

Since November, Robson has led WMG’s recorded-music operations outside the United States and United Kingdom. He has been president of Warner Music Asia since 2015 and expanded WMG’s presence in markets including China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia and Vietnam. WMG has a new joint-label venture in China with Tencent Music Group. It has also invested in Africori, the largest music distributor in sub-Saharan Africa, and Rotana Music, the Arab world’s leading independent label. Wong, who joined WMG in July 2020, guides worldwide marketing while also overseeing Warner’s international A&R function in collaboration with the company’s local repertoire centers around the globe. Keeley-Carter, who reports to Wong, played a key role in one of the company’s biggest campaigns of 2020, for Dua Lipa’s *Future Nostalgia*. Setting up marketing best practices for Warner

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2021

PRIDE ISSUE

On June 5th, *Billboard* will publish its 3rd annual Pride issue honoring culturally moving and influential people who have contributed to the community's history and its current landscape. Year-round *Billboard* and *Rolling Stone* celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community through the lens of music, amplifying the culture of the proud LGBTQIA+ community across our editorial channels, including *Billboard* Pride.

Building on this platform, *Billboard* and *Rolling Stone* will be joining together for the entire month of June to celebrate love, acceptance, diversity and what it means to be queer in music. All month long, *Billboard* and *Rolling Stone* will be the go-to destination for music and entertainment Pride content. Leveraging our iconic voices within music and culture, *Billboard* and *Rolling Stone* will curate a mix of engaging video and social content featuring thought-provoking panels, heartfelt performances, and glam tutorials – all fostering a community of consumers and influencers in celebration of LGBTQIA+.

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worldwide, she has also guided campaigns for artists including Bebe Rexha, Burna Boy, Cardi B, David Guetta, Jason Derulo, Lizzo, Roddy Rich and Sia.

Fred Gillham

Managing director, Concord Recorded Music U.K.

Vivien Goodwin

Senior vp, Concord Theatricals (U.K. and Europe)

During the past year, Gillham set up Concord's first recorded-music division outside the United States, recruiting a London-based team to build a footprint for the company in the United Kingdom and continental Europe. Concord enjoyed U.K. success across genres. Gillham is no stranger to Concord's roster. He is a former vp of international for Universal Music Group, which has a global distribution deal with Concord. During the pandemic, Goodwin and her teams in the United Kingdom and Germany worked with theaters and theater companies to think creatively in staging outdoor performances and creating musicals with smaller casts, supporting streaming initiatives and, overall, to offer audiences new ways to engage with performers and productions.

Tony Harlow

CEO, Warner Music U.K.

Bernd Dopp

Chairman/CEO, Warner Music Central Europe

Mark Fry

President, Warner Music Nordics

Alfonso Perez Soto

President of emerging markets, Warner Music

Victor Aroldoss

Senior vp international marketing, Warner Music U.K.

Harlow, along with Aroldoss and the Warner Music U.K. team, guided the launch during lockdown of *Future Nostalgia* from Britain's Dua Lipa. The album spent four weeks at No. 1 in the United Kingdom, where Warner's team also celebrated chart-topping releases from Biffy Clyro, Liam Gallagher, Nines and Stormzy. Leading Central Europe, Dopp is a five-decade veteran of WMG and the company's longest-serving CEO. He has continued to deliver hits with international artists and domestic talent, the

latter ranging from German rap to the repertoire of children's label Kiddinx to the leading schlager label Telamo. Fry was named head of Warner Music Nordics last year and has enjoyed success with stars including Antti Tuisku, Emma Gaala and Miriam Bryant. Perez Soto has been expanding WMG's presence in new markets including Africa, where the company invested in Africori, a company that manages distribution, rights and artists development. That deal gives Warner access to a range of African artists through Africori's roster of 6,500 artists and 700 labels.

Jason Iley

Chairman/CEO, Sony Music U.K. and Ireland

Nicola Tuer

COO, Sony Music U.K. and Ireland

Daniel Lieberberg

President, Sony Music Entertainment Continental Europe and Africa

Patrick Mushatsi-Kareba

CEO, Sony Music Entertainment Germany, Switzerland, Austria

Sean Watson

Managing director, Sony Music Entertainment South Africa

Iley, who was named a Member of the Order of the British Empire at the Queen's Birthday Honours in October 2020 for his services to charity and music, has worked with Tuer and the Sony U.K. team to achieve success for Sony's international stars (from Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan to Doja Cat, Powfu and Tate McRae) and its strong domestic roster (Little Mix, J Hus, Headie One, Sam Fischer and Regard). Under Lieberberg, Sony opened a new German and European headquarters in Berlin housing recording and publishing teams along with an in-house studio. Responsible for Germany, Switzerland and Austria, Mushatsi-Kareba saw an increase in chart shares via hits from artists like Jawsh 685, Imanbek and Apache 207, the most streamed German-speaking artist in the region, according to Sony. Watson, a 30-year veteran of the African music industry, guides a roster that includes AKA, Shekinah, Mlindo, Sha Sha, Black Motion, KDDO and Dice Ailes. He's a member of the board of the South African Music Performance Rights Association and its nonprofit division supporting the growth

of the South African music industry.

David Joseph

Chairman/CEO, Universal Music U.K. and Ireland

Frank Briegmann

Chairman/president, Universal Music Central Europe and Deutsche Grammophon

Olivier Nusse

CEO, Universal Music France

Sipho Dlamini

CEO, Universal Music South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa

Franck Kacou

Managing director, Universal Music Africa

Chindedu Okeke

Managing director, Universal Music Nigeria

Under Joseph, Universal Music U.K. claimed the No. 1 album of 2020 in the United Kingdom with Lewis Capaldi's *Divinely Uninspired to a Hellish Extent* and boasted four of the market's top five streaming artists (Capaldi, Drake, Eminem and Billie Eilish), while the company launched the 0207 Def Jam label and relaunched EMI Records (with Motown U.K. as one of its imprints). Briegmann saw Universal lead the market in Germany on the strength of both international repertoire and local stars including Capital Bra, Bonez MC, Die Ärzte and Kerstin Ott. Universal Music France, under Nusse, likewise celebrated chart success with *Versus* by Vitaa/Slimane and *Les Derniers Salopards* by Maes, the country's two top albums of 2020. Nusse's team also shared in the achievements of local artists Angèle, Niska, Nekfeu, Damso and Dadju — and posthumous success for French legend Johnny Hallyday. In 2019, Kacou took on responsibility for UMG operations in Ivory Coast and across 27 French-speaking markets within Africa. Dlamini was promoted last December to oversee all of UMG's operations within English-speaking Africa, working with colleagues on the continent including Okeke, based in Lagos, who is leading the growth of UMG's Nigeria operations and other English-speaking markets in West Africa.

Jesús López

Chairman/CEO, Universal Music Latin America and Iberian Peninsula

Luis Estrada

President, Universal Music Southern Cone

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Victor Gonzalez

President, Universal Music Latin Entertainment

Paulo Lima

President, Universal Music Brazil

After J Balvin released his latest album, *Colores*, in March 2020, it debuted at No. 1 in 14 markets on Apple Music/iTunes rankings and earned gold certifications in its first week in 15 countries, according to Universal Music Group. The achievement is just one of the success stories of the past year for the team that reports to Lopez, who leads UMG's operations in all Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking territories around the world, as well as the U.S. Latin market. To launch new songs by Balvin, Luis Fonsi, Chino & Nacho and others during the lockdown, UMG held virtual press conferences with journalists from all over Latin America, organized streaming concerts and struck brand sponsorship deals, while also supporting charitable initiatives by the artists themselves. A 40-year veteran of the Latin music industry, López has been an innovator, from anticipating the reggaetón boom with the creation of the Machete Music label to launching the management and artist services division GTS (Global Talent Services). He has played an essential role in the international success of Latin superstars including Balvin, Juanes, Paulina Rubio, Gloria Trevi, Enrique Iglesias, David Bisbal, Luis Fonsi and Wisin & Yandel.

Afo Verde

Chairman/CEO, Latin-Iberia region, Sony Music Entertainment

Maria Fernandez

Executive vp/COO, Sony Music Entertainment Latin-Iberia

José María Barbat

President, Sony Music Iberia

Stars like Maluma, Ozuna, Anuel, Nicky Jam, Camilo and Rauw Alejandro have thrived internationally under the leadership of Verde, who oversees Sony's operations in Latin America, Spain, Portugal and the U.S. Latin market, and whose purview includes superstars like Enrique Iglesias, Shakira and Jennifer Lopez's Spanish-language releases. Verde also worked closely on Sony's recent acquisition of leading Brazilian indie label Som Livre, a deal that further cements Sony's

leadership in the biggest market in Latin America. He and his team have nurtured the rise of Nathy Peluso, Boza, Nicki Nicole and Trueno, and he has made the expansion of Latin music in European and Asian markets a priority. Fernandez has been involved with the growth of artists including Maluma, Camilo, Carlos Vives, Lali, Dvicio, Carlos Rivera and Reik. She has also overseen strategic moves like Sony's joint venture with the concert promotion company Eventim in Brazil. Under Barbat, Sony Music Iberia has seen the breakout of Rosalía, C. Tangana, Nathy Peluso and María José Llergo. Peirats celebrated the Grammy Awards' recognition this year of Costa Rican singer-songwriter Debi Nova, who was nominated for best Latin pop or urban album, and The Wailers, the legendary Jamaican band nominated for best reggae album.

Iñigo Zabala

President, Warner Music Latin America & Iberia

Sergio Affonso

President, Warner Music Brazil

Tomas Rodriguez

President, Warner Music Mexico

As in-person performances became unsafe, Zabala supported Rodriguez's team in Mexico to deliver *Mi Casa, Tu Casa*, one of the earliest online showcases featuring artists at home, including music from Piso21, Sofia Reyes and Zion & Lennox. Over the past year, Warner Music's hits from its Latin roster have included Piso21 and Maluma's "Más de la Una," Karol G and Danny Ocean's "Midedito o Qué?," Zion & Lennox's "Gota Gota" (featuring El Alfa) and Justin Quiles' "Jeans," according to the company. Zabala and his team have made a priority of developing local talent for international audiences. Over two decades, he has supported the global rise of other Warner artists including Alejandro Sanz, Anitta, Danny Ocean, Jesse & Joy, Laura Pausini, Luis Miguel, Maná, Miguel Bose, Pablo Alborán and Ricardo Arjona. In early April, Zabala announced he will step down from his position at the end of this year but will remain a consultant through 2022.

George Ash

President, Universal Music Asia Pacific

Naoshi Fujikura

President/CEO, Universal Music Japan

Devraj Sanyal

Managing director/CEO, Universal Music Group and EMI Music, India and South Asia; managing director, Universal Music Publishing Group, India and South Asia

Calvin Wong

Senior vp Asia/CEO, Universal Music Southeast Asia

Ash has been Universal Music Group's top Asia-Pacific executive since 2013. In the past year, he has shared in the success of his Australian team and their domestic artists including Tame Impala, Indigenous singer Miiesha and Hilltop Hoods, the most streamed Australian act of 2020. In Japan, a stronghold for physical music sales, Fujikura has moved his company's focus toward streaming and expanded services offered to artists, such as merchandising, live events and fan clubs. In July, the Japanese-language version of BTS's *Map of the Soul: 7 - The Journey* generated record sales for an international act in Japan, according to UMG. Sanyal's initiatives in India have included a global distribution deal, announced in July, with Desi Melodies, a leader in Punjabi music. Wong has overseen UMG's expansion in Vietnam and the launch of Def Jam South East Asia, Island Records Philippines, Astralwerks Asia, Spinnup and the regional expansion of Ingrooves.

Andrew Hajgato

Label manager, Australia, Concord Recorded Music

Skeggs hit No. 1 on the Australian Recording Industry Association's albums chart with their second release, *Rehearsal*, while domestic star George Alice gained two airplay hits on the nation's influential Triple J radio outlet and Florida rapper Denzel Curry earned his second ARIA-certified gold single with "Ricky." All benefited from campaigns driven by Hajgato, who is boosting Concord's status as an indie label with clout Down Under.

Denis Handlin

Chairman/CEO, Australia & New Zealand, Sony Music Entertainment

Andrew Chan

Managing director, China, Sony Music Entertainment

Joseph Chang

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Managing director, Korea, Sony Music Entertainment

Shridhar Subramaniam

President, strategy and market development, Asia and Middle East, Sony Music Entertainment

Handlin, Sony Music's longest-serving global executive, leads the team that launched Tones and I and The Kid LAROI in Australia, setting up their international success. Sony Australia saw No. 1 albums from Harry Styles, Guy Sebastian, Midnight Oil and AC/DC, and celebrated Amy Shark winning best pop release at the ARIA Awards — for a third time. Handlin has been recognized with the Order of Australia for his philanthropy and “distinguished service to the Australian recording industry.” Chan guides operations across China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, achieving success with regional artists like G.E.M., Karen Mok and Eric Chou as well as international releases by Sasha Sloan, NYK and Doja Cat. Chang has overseen the growth of Sony's international repertoire across Korea while also helping K-pop acts such as Kang Daniel, Oh My Girl, ATEEZ and Momoland find a global audience. Since January 2020, Subramaniam has overseen all of Sony's strategic acquisitions, joint ventures, investments and partnerships in a region that is expected to grow at an average of 20% annually, according to the company.

Dan Rosen

President, Warner Music Australasia

Jonathan Serbin

CEO, Warner Music Greater China

Rosen, who for the past decade has served as CEO of ARIA, was named president of Warner Music Australasia effective Feb. 1. Rosen concurrently had held the post of CEO of the Phonographic Performance Company of Australia. With advanced degrees in business and law, Rosen has been praised as an advocate for the rights of musical creators (and in the early 2000s he was the founder and frontman for the indie band Second Dan). Serbin was named to his regional role in November and will run the newly launched, Pan-Asian dance label Whet Records.

Pawan Agarwal

Head of music partnerships, India and South

Asia, and business development, Asia Pacific, YouTube

Dan Chalmers

Director, YouTube Music, Europe, the Middle East and Africa, YouTube

Sandra Jimenez

Director, YouTube Music partnerships, Latin America, YouTube

Sun Lee

Head of music partnerships, Korea and Greater China, and artist relations, Asia Pacific, YouTube

Ruuben van den Heuvel

Director, YouTube Music partnerships, Australia, New Zealand and Southeast Asia, and label relations, Asia Pacific, YouTube

At YouTube India, under Agarwal, the T-Series channel (an offshoot of the country's largest music label) became the platform's biggest channel worldwide, with over 178 million subscribers. Earlier in April, T-Series agreed to license its music through the Indian Performing Rights Society, which IPRS called a “game-changing” boost for creators in the market. Chalmers last year launched a new version of YouTube Analytics for Artists, giving acts a complete picture of how their YouTube content is reaching music fans. Jimenez in August congratulated Daddy Yankee as his collaboration with Snow, “Con Calma,” surpassed 2 billion YouTube views. Lee partnered with YG Entertainment for Blackpink's first livestream concert in January from Seoul. Van den Heuvel has played a key role in the launch of YouTube Music and YouTube Music Premium in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

Hans-Holger Albrecht

CEO, Deezer

Under Albrecht, Deezer is a rival to the big three streaming services (Amazon Music, Apple, Spotify) with a distinctly international perspective. “I'm proud of what we accomplished in a challenging year,” he says. “We delivered over 40 product initiatives, updates and launches to improve the service for our subscribers.” Among those moves: a feature that allows users to explore the music and podcasts of different countries without searching for specific content. Deezer, which has been growing in Mexico,

via a partnership with TV Azteca, and in other Latin American markets, also has been seeking a more fair streaming payment system that will allow performers to get paid based on how individual listeners divide their attention rather than by their share of aggregate streams.

Raoul Chatterjee

VP/head of content partnerships, SoundCloud

Josh Nicoll

VP independent label services, SoundCloud

Chatterjee and Nicoll oversee music industry partnerships at SoundCloud. Amid the pandemic, Chatterjee renewed multiple deals with major and indie labels, distributors, publishers, performing rights organizations and other collection societies. His team set up the launch of SoundCloud's subscription and advertising business in the Nordic territories. In Australia, leveraging a partnership with Southern Cross Austereo, he helped launch SoundCloud Radio, which showcases emerging artists. Nicoll has strengthened SoundCloud's relationships with over 500 new and existing independent rights-holder partners. His work yielded a year-over-year increase of more than 40% in on-platform content from indie labels and an all-time-high market share of indie rights-holders on the platform, according to SoundCloud.

Paul Firth

Director, Amazon Music International

Rene Fasco

Director, Amazon Music Japan

Jillian Gerngross

Director, Amazon Music Europe

Sahas Malhotra

Director, Amazon Music India

Federico Pedersen

Head of music, Latin America, Amazon Music

Firth was named to his new role in October and oversees Amazon Music in markets outside the United States. He helped secure a partnership with Twitch to bring livestreams to Amazon Music's mobile app in over 40 territories. In Japan, Fasco saw J-pop stars Sekai no Owari and Aimeyon stage Amazon Music-exclusive livestreams. Gerngross oversees industry relations, editorial, programming and marketing across

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the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy and Spain. In the past year, Malhotra has expanded Alexa functionality for Amazon Music in India, allowing customers to create or add to existing playlists just by using their voice. Pedersen has led the addition of Amazon Original podcasts to Amazon Music in Mexico and Brazil.

Mathieu Jatou

CEO, Montreux Jazz Festival

When the Montreux Jazz Festival was canceled in 2020 for the first time in its 55-year history, Jatou moved from live music to event streaming. The festival and its partner, Eagle Rock, teamed up with Qello Concerts by Stingray to make over 50 classic festival performances available online — driving 100,000 new Qello registrations. In March, the festival announced a global deal with BMG to launch a series of previously unreleased recordings from the archives of the festival's late founder Claude Nobs, along with a three-part documentary on Montreux's history and impact.

Khee Lee

Chief monetization officer, Kiswe

In July, Guinness World Records certified that BTS had set a new record for the most viewers for a concert livestream when 756,000 fans from 100 countries tuned in for a June 14 show carried live from Seoul. The technology platform behind the event? Kiswe — which under Lee struck a partnership with BTS' home label, HYBE (formerly Big Hit Entertainment). Lee also has led Kiswe's partnership deals for livestream events as varied as a live U.K. performance by Culture Club and the 43rd Dresden Music Festival in Germany. Kiswe has hosted 13 livestream pay-per-view concerts, most from outside the United States, reaching nearly 200 countries, according to the company.

Rishi Malhotra

Co-founder/CEO, JioSaavn

"For us, last year was a master class in humanity, global leadership and ultimately invention," says Malhotra, leader of India's streaming service JioSaavn, which also operates a label, management company, podcasting service and more. "Global conditions accelerated our business as more people turned to streaming." In 2019 JioSaavn worked on U2's historic tour of India

and last summer it announced a partnership with Triller, designed to drive local usage and subscription growth for both services. (The move came in the wake of India's ban of TikTok and other Chinese-owned apps over data privacy concerns.) During the pandemic and under Malhotra's leadership, JioSaavn teams have worked with Habitat for Humanity and the health-care nonprofit Ketto through corporate responsibility partnerships.

Robb McDaniels

CEO, Beatport

Under McDaniels, the online EDM-focused retailer Beatport reports that 75% of its business comes from outside the United States. As touring and festivals shut down in the past year, the company supported moves by DJs to livestream. In April, Beatport organized the 24-hour ReConnect livestream that featured 33 DJs from around the globe and raised \$185,000 for COVID-19-related charities. "People can still dance," said McDaniels at the time. "You can dance anywhere; you can dance alone; you can dance in groups — but dancing is going to make you feel better."

Mia Nygren

Managing director, Latin America, Spotify

Federica Tremolada

Managing director, Southern and Eastern Europe, Spotify

Nygren oversees the region with one of the fastest growth rates in the world for Spotify. "Superstars are now coming from all corners of Latin America," she told *Billboard* last year when she was chosen for the Latin Power Players list. "Smaller artists are charting globally, and it's not just limited to Puerto Rico and Colombia anymore." Tremolada has responsibility for 26 markets in her region, with a specific focus on content, marketing and partnerships. Last year, she launched Spotify's new podcast strategy in Spain and Italy, including the *XRey* podcast that received a Premios Ondas, the equivalent of an Emmy Award, as Spain's best podcast of the year.

Ola Sars

CEO, Soundtrack Your Brand

From its base in Stockholm, Soundtrack Your Brand operates in 73 countries offering background music with a streaming service.

Sars struck a global licensing deal in August with Universal Music Group to use its music catalog on the platform. "Now, when the world of music is about to hit 'play' again, we stand ready to contribute to the industry by adding [business-to-business] streaming to the market," says Sars, "bringing transparency and a usage-centric royalty flow." Sars says his company's model will yield "eight to 10 times more in royalties to music creators" than consumer-focused streaming services.

Jen Walsh

Senior director of Apple content and services, international, Apple

Walsh is a veteran international executive at Apple, which last spring reported that its Apple Music service is available in 167 countries and regions, offering 60 million songs as well as thousands of playlists and the global radio station Beats 1. In April 2020, Apple announced that new Apple Music subscribers in 52 recently added countries could receive a six-month free trial of the service. This includes playlists created by local music experts such as Africa Now, Afrobeats Hits and Ghana Bounce.

Jay Winship

CEO, Asia, GoDigital Media Group

AdShare, which is GoDigital Media Group's social media rights manager for music and video, has achieved a 40% market share in South Korea under Winship's guidance, according to the company. That's the result of rights management deals with the artist PSY and companies including YG Entertainment, the record label Kakao M and Times Music in India. Winship, who is based in Seoul, spent the past year in Singapore, citing "5G connectivity, [which] has been overwhelmingly stable, making working from home, in all frankness, very pleasant."

Bang Si-Hyuk

Chairman/CEO, HYBE

Lenzo Yoon

Global CEO, HYBE

Bang's South Korean entertainment company HYBE (formerly known as Big Hit Entertainment), the home of BTS, announced in March that it's acquiring Scooter Braun's Ithaca Holdings. The deal brings under common ownership K-pop groups BTS, TXT and Seventeen, and U.S. pop stars Jus-

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tin Bieber, Ariana Grande and Demi Lovato, among others. Yoon moved to the United States last year to focus on his global CEO role and plans to bring HYBE's successful business model to new markets.

Rob Cowling

GM, Gallo Music Group

Cowling guides South Africa's Gallo Music Group, which includes one of the continent's largest and oldest labels and publishing companies. Last May, Flightmode Digital, the investment holding company owned by DJ Black Coffee, acquired a significant stake in Gallo Music Investments, says Cowling. And in March, Gallo Music Publishers signed a worldwide agreement (excluding Africa) with Sony Music Publishing that will help promote Gallo's songs around the globe. "In a year plagued by challenges, despite piracy and work-from-home connectivity issues, creativity was rife," says Cowling. "Gallo still managed to grow digital streaming numbers and maintain our market share."

André de Raaff

CEO, CTM Entertainment

De Raaff leads the multifaceted Dutch music company CTM Entertainment, which last August acquired the catalog of CNR/Arcade, described as the largest independent record label in the Benelux region (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) and the home to acts such as Twenty 4 Seven, Alan Parsons and Doop. In 2019, de Raaff oversaw the extension of CTM's worldwide publishing agreement with Scott Storch, who has written for Ariana Grande, The Kid LAROI, Jack Harlow, Chloe x Halle, Marshmello, Russ and Trippie Redd. A partnership struck with producers Juan "Play" Salinas and Oscar "Skillz" Salinas has boosted CTM's activity in Latin music.

Colin Gayle

Founder/CEO, Africa Creative Agency

Gayle manages and produces South African rapper Nasty C, who signed last year to Def Jam Recordings through a joint venture with Universal Music Group in Africa. His album *Zulu Man With Some Power* was released before the pandemic. Gayle executive-produced the Netflix documentary *Zulu Man in Japan*, exploring connections between the music and culture of South Africa

and Japan. He also has been expanding the publishing division of his agency, and he curated and produced Essence Festival of Culture for Africa as a virtual event.

Jeremy Lascelles

Co-founder/CEO, Blue Raincoat Music

Robin Millar

Co-founder/chairman, Blue Raincoat Music

Lascelles, the former CEO of Chrysalis Records, teamed up with record producer Millar to launch Blue Raincoat Music in 2014 to offer artist management services, music publishing and recorded-music operations through Chrysalis, which is now a subsidiary label. Blue Raincoat represents a roster that includes Cigarettes After Sex, J.S. Ondara and Phoebe Bridgers. Lascelles says the process of signing and recording artists is his "first love," and it reflects how he and Millar run their company. Reservoir acquired Blue Raincoat in 2019, but its founders remain at the helm.

Suhel Nafar

VP strategy and marketing development, West Asia, North Africa and the diaspora, EMPIRE

Nafar, a former hip-hop artist, joined EMPIRE early this year after previously helping Spotify launch programming in West Asia and North Africa. He developed the streaming service's Arab Culture Hub and curated over 120 playlists, including Yalla Today's Top Hits, Arab X, Shisha Lounge, Global X and Women O Bas, which spotlights female Arab artists. He also contributed to Spotify's Sawtik campaign to boost the visibility of emerging Arab women in music. "If you look at artists who are top tier in the Arab world," says Nafar, "they're being streamed in the United States, Brazil, Mexico and Germany."

Bose Ogulu

Co-founder, Spaceship Collective

Amid the pandemic, Ogulu co-executive-produced, released and promoted the *Twice As Tall* album from Nigeria's breakout global star Burna Boy (aka her son, Damini Ogulu). He is signed to Bad Habit/Atlantic in the United States and Warner Music International for territories outside of Africa. *Twice As Tall* won best global music album at this year's Grammy Awards. Bose has set up a publishing company through Spaceship Collective to enable Africans to own their

own catalogs "so that the authenticity of our stories, our glory, our culture is sustained," she says, "and we are empowered."

Cussion Kar Shun Pang

Executive chairman, board of directors, Tencent Music Entertainment Group

Tencent Music Entertainment Group and Warner Music Group announced in March that the companies will expand a multiyear licensing agreement and launch a joint record label. Under Pang, Tencent will continue to make Warner's repertoire available across all of its online platforms in mainland China, including QQ Music, Kugou Music and Kuwo Music, as well as its livestreaming platforms and WeSing, an online karaoke platform. Warner in 2014 became the first major label to license its repertoire to an internet provider on mainland China.

Phil Sales

Partner, Three Six Zero

Pete Tong

President, Three Six Zero Recordings; Partner, WME

Sales leads the U.K. and European operations for Three Six Zero, the international management and entertainment company that represents Calvin Harris, Tiësto and the entire Smith family (Will, Jada Pinkett, Jaden and Willow), among others. He also maintains his own roster of management clients, including Fraser T. Smith, Disciples and Franky Wah. In 2019, Tong, the influential BBC DJ and partner at WME, took on the additional role of president of Three Six Zero Recordings, a joint venture with Sony Music.

Peter Coquillard

Head of international, Milk & Honey Music + Sports + Ventures

For Milk & Honey, which manages writers, producers and, most recently, athletes, Coquillard has built relationships abroad with artists who need great songs. Amid the pandemic, he has overseen the opening of new offices in London and Amsterdam. One example of his networking savvy: a Mandarin version of "Just My Luck," which brought together Chinese singer Tia Ray and American R&B singer Kehlani on a track produced by Milk & Honey client Oak Felder. Pre-pandemic, producers and writers (including Demi Lovato, Nick Jonas,

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Kesha and Noah Cyrus) have taken part in Coquillard's annual songwriting camp in Bali, which for five years has included a fundraising evening to benefit orphanages on the Indonesian island.

Eshy Gazit

Partner, Maverick Management; CEO, Gramophone Media

Gazit was one of the first K-pop advocates in the United States. "Early on, many people in the industry mocked my attempts to break BTS," he told *Billboard* in 2017. "They thought that it was never going to happen in the United States." Along with BTS, he has worked with Monsta X and that group's former singer, Wonho, who launched a solo career last year. Gazit has also guided Western artists like Steve Aoki, Halsey, The Chainsmokers and French Montana in their collaborations with K-pop stars.

Walter Kolm

President/CEO, Walter Kolm Entertainment

The leading Latin music manager — whose clients include Maluma, Carlos Vives, CNCO, Wisin, Emilia Mernes and Rombai — launched WK Records in June. Distributed by The Orchard, the label's first signings include Puerto Rican R&B singer Alex Rose, Argentine trap artist Seven Kayne and Colombian freestyle rapper Cheo Gallego. Initial success has come in Spain, Mexico, Colombia and Chile, as well as airplay hits in those markets, according to the label. "Launching a label is tough in normal circumstances, but launching it during a global pandemic was extremely challenging, to say the least," says Kolm. "But I'm proud of my team for not only making it happen but also making it an immediate success."

Ben Mawson**Ed Millett**

Co-founders/co-CEOs, TaP Music

Dua Lipa's *Future Nostalgia*, released in March 2020, reached No. 3 on the [Billboard 200](#) and was one of the delights of the early days of the pandemic, earning the British star a Grammy Award for best pop vocal album. Mawson and Millett last year celebrated the 10th anniversary of their firm, which also represents Lana Del Rey, Ellie Goulding, Hailee Steinfeld and one-time Dublin street busker Dermot Kennedy. With 45 employees across offices in the

United States, Europe and Australia, says Mawson, "we really believe in an international focus."

Polo Molina

Artist manager, Grassroots Music

Over the past 12 months, Molina has guided international success for management clients in two different genres: The Black Eyed Peas' *Translation* album became a hit in European markets including Spain, France and Italy, while regional Mexican star Gerardo Ortiz's *Más Caro, Que Ayer* made an impact in Mexico. Molina's management roster — which covers pop, Latin and hip-hop — also includes Paulo Londra, Luis Coronel, Shoreline Mafia's Ohgeesy, Adriel Favela, Vice Menta, Sweet Taboo and YG. Says Molina: "We continue to go above and beyond for our clientele despite what is going on around us, which I am very proud of."

James Sandom

U.K. managing director, Red Light Management

The past year offered time "to focus on where we can improve, culturally, commercially and creatively," says Sandom. He handles established acts including Interpol, Kaiser Chiefs, Belle & Sebastian, Radiohead's Ed O'Brien and The Strokes (managed by Red Light founder Coran Capshaw), as well as rising talents such as Alfie Templeman, Amy Michelle, Phoebe Green, Sinead O'Brien (each signed to Chess Club), Delilah Montagu and Cole LC (Columbia Records), Punctual (Polydor), Mysie (70Hz) and Luz (Platoon). Writer-producers including Flood, ShiftK3Y, Violet Skies/sheWrites, Karma Kid and Ben Matravers also benefit from guidance from Sandom, who credits Capshaw for "encouraging calm, entrepreneurial thought and a culture with patience for artist development during these times."

Wassim "Sal" Slaiby

Co-manager, The Weeknd; founder/CEO, SALXCO and XO Records; board adviser, Global Citizen; head of international partnerships, Anghami; board member, HXOUSE

Amir "Cash" Esmailian

Co-manager, The Weeknd; co-founder, XO Records; founder, YCFU

La Mar C. Taylor

Creative director, The Weeknd; co-founder,

XO records and HXOUSE

This power trio's work led to The Weeknd receiving the IFPI global digital single award for 2020 for "Blinding Lights," the most popular single of the past year across all digital formats. The song's parent album, *After Hours*, amassed 2.5 billion on-demand audio streams in the United States, according to MRC Data, and hit No. 1 in over 30 countries including the United States. Slaiby, a refugee from the Lebanese Civil War who immigrated to Canada at 15, also struck a deal to launch Universal Arabic Music and also recently signed on as manager for Swedish House Mafia.

Kaz Aida

Head, ADA Japan

Alassane Konaté

Head, ADA France

Juan Paz

Head, ADA Latin

Sander Stijnen

Head, ADA Benelux

Chee Meng Tan

Head, ADA Asia

Alternative Distribution Alliance's global heads worked through the past year to build their teams, artist rosters and local partnerships while launching their respective operations during the pandemic. Aida joined ADA from Universal Music Japan, where he had worked with local stars such as Kiyoshiro Imawano and the rock group PassCode. Before launching ADA France, Konaté had spent the last 15 years running his own independent label, Din Records. From Miami, Paz oversees ADA's activity in Latin America, Spain, Portugal and the U.S. Latin market. Guiding ADA expansion in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, Stijnen has already signed a host of new deals and partnerships with multiple Belgian and Dutch labels and artists. Tan, who came from Spotify's operation in Asia, will expand ADA into China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea and Southeast Asia.

Rebecca Allen

President, EMI Records

Last June, Universal Music U.K. relaunched EMI Music (rebranded from Virgin EMI) and named Allen to lead the label, which is the home of Elton John, Paul McCartney, Mark Knopfler, Florence + The

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Machine and Bastille, and releases international repertoire from Justin Bieber, Lewis Capaldi, The Killers, Metallica, Katy Perry, Lionel Richie and Taylor Swift, among others. When announcing her new role, Universal Music Group chairman/CEO Lucian Grainge said Allen “is such a strong leader — creatively and commercially — and has the values, dedication and acumen to keep EMI as the unquestioned home for some of the U.K.’s greatest talent.”

Stacey Bedford

CEO, Bandzoogle

At Canadian web services and direct-to-fan e-commerce platform Bandzoogle, Bedford leads the company’s efforts to help artists amid the pandemic, including commission-free livestream ticket sales, a digital “tip jar” for virtual performances, pay-what-you-want subscription pricing and expanded integrations with Twitch and Crowcast. Bandzoogle reports that artists have earned over \$13 million through their websites since the pandemic began. Bandzoogle has also been raising funds for the Emergency Mental Health for Music Community campaign led by Unison Benevolent Fund, Canada’s leading music industry charity.

Alec Boateng**Alex Boateng**

Co-presidents, 0207 Def Jam, Universal Music U.K.

Marisa Lauro-Norris

Senior vp international marketing, Def Jam Recordings

Since November, London-born Ghanaian twin brothers Alec and Alex Boateng have led the newly launched 0207 Def Jam label. Their first signing, British rapper Stormzy, topped the charts while with Warner Music U.K., won best worldwide act at the 2017 MTV Europe Music Awards and collaborated with acts such as Ed Sheeran and Linkin Park. Meanwhile, for Def Jam Recordings in New York, Lauro-Norris oversaw the global campaign for Justin Bieber and his *Changes* album, which, according to the label, debuted at No. 1 on Apple Music and iTunes in over 85 countries.

Chris Cannon

Head of international strategy, Secretly Distribution

Irene Lydon

Head of project management, Secretly Distribution

London-based Cannon and Lydon are key players abroad for Secretly Distribution, a division of Secretly Group, one of the largest independent label companies, and home to artists such as Bon Iver, Angel Olsen, Sharon Van Etten, Whitney, Jamila Woods and Phoebe Bridgers. Cannon launched a neighboring rights division for the distribution company, while Lydon built and manages INTL Project Management, which works with over 75 independent label and artist clients.

Priya Dewan

VP South Korea and Southeast Asia, The Orchard

Laura Tesoriero

VP Latin, The Orchard

Albert Torres

VP Latin, The Orchard

For The Orchard, the digital distributor for independent artists and labels in 45 territories, these three colleagues have responsibility for some of the world’s fastest-growing markets. Based in Singapore, Dewan oversees Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Korea. She has worked with The Orchard’s Asian catalog, which includes artists like ITZY, GOT7, Kiana Valenciano, Inigo Pascal, DPR Live — and BTS, from early in its career. When The Orchard acquired Argentina label EPSA Music, the deal also brought into the fold Tesoriero, now vp Latin America. In Spain and Mexico, Torres and his team have grown The Orchard’s digital and overall market share to double digits, according to the company.

Arthur Fitzgibbon

Managing director, Brazil, ONErpm

With livestreams driving consumption, digital music distributor ONErpm reports over 70 sales certification awards for its artists in Brazil in 2020 under Fitzgibbon’s leadership. A former artist, producer and manager, Fitzgibbon invested in adding staff — and personally called members of his team to check on them during the pandemic. “It has been an unbelievable and a challenging year full of livestream performances and awards,” he says. “Our years of commitment

resulted in a solid strategy for thousands of artists that we love.”

Andrea Gleeson

Co-head/chief revenue officer, TuneCore

Gleeson has made international expansion a priority for TuneCore during the past year. Previously operating in eight countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, Australia, Canada, Germany and Italy), the digital distributor is now in 43 countries, including Russia, South Africa and markets in Southeast Asia and Latin America. Through a partnership with the artificial intelligence-driven translation service Unbabel, TuneCore now offers artist support in 29 languages. The company reports partnerships with over 150 digital streaming and online store partners, and independent artists on the platform can be heard in more than 200 countries.

Jurgen Grebner

Executive vp international, Interscope Geffen A&M

Interscope Geffen A&M closed 2020 as *Billboard*’s top label, and Grebner made sure that success was not limited to the United States. With the 15-year label veteran overseeing global campaigns, IGA reports that Billie Eilish sold over 10 million albums outside the United States and reached No. 1 in more than 20 markets worldwide, Lady Gaga’s *Chromatica* debuted at No. 1 in 15 countries, DaBaby’s *Rockstar* had nearly 314 million on-demand streams outside the United States, according to MRC Data, and Olivia Rodrigo’s “drivers license” reached No. 1 in over 30 territories on Spotify and 40 on Apple Music. Benny Blanco, Selena Gomez, Juice WRLD, Machine Gun Kelly and Lil Mosey also benefited from Grebner’s marketing savvy abroad.

Cindy Gu

Head of Astralwerks Asia, Astralwerks

Gu was named head of Astralwerks Asia in August. Based in Singapore, she leads the label’s operations across Southeast Asia, Korea and China and works closely with Astralwerks GM Toby Andrews. Universal Music Group executive vp market development Adam Granite, in announcing the move, described Gu as “a true dance music enthusiast” with “a proven history of executing successful artist campaigns ...

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vital to establishing Astralwerks Asia as the trusted home for the genre in Asia.”

Drew Hill

Managing director, Proper Music Group

At Proper Music Group, which says it's the United Kingdom's leading physical distributor with 10% of the physical music market, Hill made certain the company navigated the pandemic to keep serving its clients, from independent music retailers to supermarkets. Representing more than 1,000 indie labels and handling over 1 million titles, Proper was the first distributor to work with Amazon to directly fill physical orders for the online retailer, according to the company. While physical music sales fell nearly 40% as the pandemic began, Proper contributed to the chart-topping success of Gerry Cinnamon's *The Bonny*, released on AWAL in April 2020. Proper won Music Week's Diversity in the Workplace Award in 2017, and the distributor reports that equality and diversity remain top priorities.

Ben Larsen

Senior vp international, Warner Records

Since taking on leadership of the international department of Warner Records two years ago, Larsen has racked up wins for the label's roster outside the United States. In less than three months since the artist CJ signed to Warner, Larsen and his team have helped the New York-bred rapper achieve 200 million streams on Spotify and TikTok, plus 140 million views on YouTube, according to the label. Saweetie has been featured on six U.K. magazine covers, while her single "Best Friend" (featuring Doja Cat) has become a hit in the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. Larsen has boosted other developing acts abroad, including Cavetown, IDK, Ali Gatie and Sub Urban.

Fede Lauría

Founder, Dale Play Records

Lauría launched Argentina's Dale Play Records in 2018 with a focus on the country's rising trap scene. "We saw a real movement happening here, and all these artists were coming from the streets, winning freestyle battles," Lauría told *Billboard* in October after Dale Play struck an exclusive partnership with Sony Music. The label's roster has grown to include several of Argentina's top trap artists and producers, such as Nicki Ni-

cole, who was nominated for best new artist at the 2020 Latin Grammy Awards.

Nando Luaces

Founder/CEO, Altafonte

Luaces' digital distribution company, Altafonte, is headquartered in Spain; has offices in Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Argentina and Chile; and plans new outposts this year in Ecuador, Paraguay and Bolivia. Not surprisingly, the company has emerged as a force in Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries. Altafonte reports signings in the past year of Brazilian DJ Alok; the 547 label from Colombia, guided by DJ Pope (a partner of J Balvin); and the Argentine group Babasonicos, among others.

Torsten Luth

Executive vp international marketing, Atlantic Records

Artists signed to Atlantic Records in the United States benefit from the marketing and promotion efforts abroad led by Luth, who has been in his role for 12 years. With experience working in Germany and the United Kingdom and now based in New York, Luth and his team work with Warner Music Group companies around the globe. While the pandemic halted international promotional trips by artists, Luth and his colleagues guided campaigns for acts including Jack Harlow, Roddy Ricch, Why Don't We, Ava Max, Pink Sweat\$, Melanie Martinez, Sia, Burna Boy and Cardi B, whose "WAP" duet with Megan Thee Stallion was a worldwide smash.

Scott Macrae

Marketing manager, Glassnote Music

From London, Macrae has helped the career growth of international Glassnote artists including Jade Bird, Dylan Cartlidge, Half Moon Run, Mosa Wild and William Prince. He has contributed to Bird's rise since her 2019 self-titled debut album, which topped the Official Americana Album chart in the United Kingdom and helped her 2020 singles "Headstart" and "Houdini" gain airplay throughout Europe and Australia. Macrae laid the base for Cartlidge's EP released in Brazil, Australia and Mexico. For Canada's Half Moon Run, he helped market the indie rockers' videos, filmed during the pandemic, that have yielded a half-million views and 5 million streams, according to

Glassnote.

Gary Mandel

VP creative, Entertainment One U.K.

Ted May

Managing director, U.K./head of international, music, Entertainment One

Mandel, a veteran music attorney whose clients included Lana Del Rey, joined eOne in 2019 to recruit a roster of writers and artist-producers. He introduced brothers Marco and Giampaolo "Jack" Parisi to producer Fred Again and they collaborated on Ed Sheeran's year-end single, "Afterglow." May has been guiding eOne's evolution from a U.S.-oriented distributor to a front-line alternative to the major labels in the United Kingdom while recruiting a team to expand eOne to other territories.

Victoria Needs

VP international, AWAL

Needs brought 23 years of major-label experience, including international marketing roles at Sony, EMI and Warner, when she joined the independent label/distribution company AWAL in January 2020. In the past year, with the support of Needs and her team, AWAL reports that the debut album *How I'm Feeling* from American singer-songwriter Lauv became the most streamed album on Spotify in the Philippines and Singapore; Norway's Girl in Red used TikTok to close in on 1 billion global streams; Australia's Blake Rose gained airplay in Germany; and FINNEAS (brother of Billie Eilish) has been building his own fan base worldwide following AWAL's 2019 release of his album *Blood Harmony*.

Maykel Piron

Co-founder/CEO, Armada Music

With offices in Amsterdam, New York and London, Armada Music is one of the world's leading independent dance labels, founded in 2003 by DJ Armin Van Buuren, Piron and David Lewis (who combined their names to create the company's moniker). Along with Van Buuren, Armada's roster includes dance artists such as Andrew Rayel, ARTY, Erick Morillo, Ferry Corsten, Kevin Saunderson, Lost Frequencies, Loud Luxury, Morgan Page and W&W, with repertoire heard on dance music stations worldwide.

Ilich Rausa

Founder, Rude Records

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Rude, which this year marks its 20th anniversary, has signed alt-rock singer-songwriter Sydney Sprague and the rock quartet A Will Away and finalized a crowdfunding campaign that allows fans to own equity in the label. “And we launched RudeCares, Rude’s charity branch,” says Rausa. In October, Rude Records signed a worldwide agreement with The Orchard for digital distribution and a deal with Sony Music Publishing for management of its publishing assets.

Bob Roback

CEO, Ingrooves Music Group

Ingrooves Music Group, under Roback, has opened new offices in Brazil, Mexico, Spain, Korea, Japan, Singapore, Korea, Turkey and South Africa, while also boosting its presence in Sweden, Norway and Australia. The distributor signed deals with leading local labels like GR6 in Brazil and Mushroom Pillow in Spain and, in South Africa, acquired one of the market’s leading independent distributors, Electromode. As a competitive edge, Ingrooves points to its proprietary, privacy-focused marketing methods that use artificial intelligence and machine learning. The company’s technology gives its label and artist partners the ability to identify and target prime music audiences anywhere in the world, according to Ingrooves.

Adriana Sein

VP international, Columbia Records

For artists across the Columbia Records roster, Sein guides the international teams who execute campaigns in over 50 countries. She has helped AC/DC, Bruce Springsteen and Harry Styles achieve chart-topping success while contributing to the development of rising talents, including 24kGoldn, Jawsh 685, Powfu and The Kid LAROI. She also worked on what Columbia calls the biggest global launch to date for Rosalía with “TKN” (featuring Travis Scott), which has reached the top 10 in markets in Europe, Latin America and the United States since its release last May.

Marcelo Soares

CEO, Som Livre

On April 1, it was announced that Sony Music Entertainment had agreed to acquire Som Livre, Brazil’s largest independent

label, for about \$255 million, securing Sony’s leadership in Latin America’s largest market. Soares, who has run Som Livre since 2007, will remain as CEO. Under Soares, Som Livre has become home to over 80 artists, including sertanejo superstars Jorge & Mateus, forró artist Wesley Safadão and Latin Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter Maria Gadú.

Jonathan Strauss

Co-founder/CEO, Create Music Group

Alexandre Williams

Co-founder/COO, Create Music Group

Create Music Group, which acts as a digital distributor and allows artists to monetize content across multiple digital platforms, was founded by high school friends Strauss and Williams and generated over \$100 million in revenue in 2020 — almost half of that outside the United States, according to the company. Last year, Create acquired Mumbai-based Nirvana Digital in the first of \$30 million worth of deals the company plans in Asia.

Brian Sutnick

Senior vp global marketing, Republic Records

Pop Smoke’s posthumous hit album *Shoot for the Stars, Aim for the Moon* has set records in the United States (spending 21 total weeks at No. 1 on *Billboard*’s [Top Rap Albums](#) chart), but Republic reports it has also led album charts in 12 other countries through the work of Sutnick and his Universal Music colleagues worldwide. Sutnick helped Ariana Grande’s “Positions” hit No. 1 in the United Kingdom and five other markets and has also handled global marketing for The Weeknd, whose single “Blinding Lights” won IFPI’s global digital single award for 2020.

Mez Tara

VP international, Epic Records

“Heartbreak Anniversary” by Giveon has risen to No. 14 on the [Billboard Global Excl. U.S.](#) chart — just one example of Tara’s work on international strategy for Epic’s biggest artist campaigns. The song broke out of Southeast Asia, hitting No. 1 in markets including the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, according to Epic. Among other artists and projects for which Tara has guided international marketing: Future’s *High Off Life*, Travis Scott’s collabo-

ration with Kid Cudi on “The Scotts,” Fiona Apple’s *Fetch the Bolt Cutters*, DJ Khaled’s duets with Drake on “Popstar” and “Greece,” and The Black Eyed Peas’ *Translation*.

Frances Moore

CEO, IFPI

Jenny Wong

Asia regional director, IFPI

For IFPI, the global trade organization of the recording industry, Moore has advanced the interests of record companies around the world, from offices in London, Brussels, Miami, Hong Kong, Beijing and Nairobi, Kenya. Wong’s appointment in 2019 has strengthened IFPI’s presence in Asia. Moore fought for the passage by the European Union two years ago of the Copyright Directive, which compels platforms that use user-uploaded content, like YouTube, to license music they make available to the public. She’s now leading the organization’s efforts to ensure the directive is implemented into national law in all of the EU countries.

Jeremy Sirota

CEO, Merlin

In early 2020, as Sirota arrived as the new CEO of Merlin, the worldwide digital licensing organization for independents, he focused on closing deals and expanding partnerships to diminish the impact of the pandemic. “We’ve been inspired by our members’ resilience,” says Sirota. In 2020, he reports, Merlin welcomed 81 new members from across the globe “including first-time members from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Peru, Singapore, Slovakia and the United Arab Emirates,” he says. “As we move forward, Merlin is excited to find new ways to enable our members and celebrate the thing that brings us all together — the music.”

Leslie Ahrens

Senior vp creative, Kobalt Music, Latin America

Johan Ekelund

Managing director, Kobalt Music, Scandinavia

Simon Moor

Managing director, Kobalt Music, Asia Pacific

Kobalt continues to expand its roster worldwide. Among Ahrens’ recent signings are El Alfa from the Dominican Republic, Alex Campos from Columbia and Jesús Adrián Romero from Mexico. Ekelund

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signed Victor Leksell, whose Sony Music single “Svag” has hit No. 1 in both Sweden and Norway and received over 136 million streams on Spotify. Among the writers and artists Simon has worked with is Tones and I, who is signed to Kobalt for Australia and New Zealand and for a global neighboring rights deal for repertoire including the artist’s worldwide hit “Dance Monkey.”

David Alexander

Founder/managing director, Sheer Publishing Africa

Alexander, founder of Sheer Publishing Africa, which describes itself as the largest independent music publisher on the continent, struck a deal with Downtown, which acquired the company in May 2020. Downtown gets access to the African market, and Sheer Publishing benefits from Downtown’s global reach. (Terms of the acquisition were not disclosed.) Alexander remains at the helm of Sheer Publishing, whose copyrights were featured last year in the Netflix series *Blood & Water*.

Jackie Alway

Executive vp international legal and industry affairs, Universal Music Publishing Group

Bertil David

Managing director, Universal Music Publishing France

Joe Fang

Managing director, Universal Music Publishing Beijing

Tom Foster

European head of film and TV, Universal Music Publishing Group

Alexandra Lioutikoff

President, Universal Music Publishing Group, Latin America

Alway, who was awarded an Order of the British Empire at the Queen’s Birthday Honours in 2019 for her efforts on behalf of creators and rights holders, has been an advocate for copyright reform in the United Kingdom and Europe. Developing UMPG’s French roster, David has signed Burna Boy producer Kel-p and struck a co-publishing deal with the Nigerian-based Aristokrat Group. In the past 18 months, Fang and the UMPG team in China have worked with MCSC, the Chinese performing rights organization, to strengthen recognition for copyright owners under Chinese law. Foster

leads the European synch team with wins that include newcomer Griff, who recorded a song for Disney’s 2020 Christmas commercial; the placement of *Frozen* anthem “Let It Go” in Audi’s 2020 Super Bowl spot; and songs from U.K. stars featured in Netflix’s *The Crown*. In 2019, Lioutikoff became the first woman to hold the role of president of Latin America and United States. She is the only woman to hold the position of president for a multinational Latin music company.

Ichiro Asatsuma

Chairman, FujiPacific Music

A major figure in the Japanese music industry for over five decades, Asatsuma has been chairman of FujiPacific Music since 2005 and was chairman of Japan’s Music Publishers Association from 2004 to 2010. In 2020, Concord acquired FujiPacific’s global stake in Pulse Music Group, the publisher of hits written by Starrah, Ty Dolla \$ign and others, in a deal credited to Asatsuma’s long-term vision and financial savvy.

Mandy Aubry

Director of business development, Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia Pacific, Songtrust

Lara Baker

Director of business development, U.K. and Ireland, Songtrust

In their respective regions, Aubry and Baker work with Songtrust clients to access the company’s global publishing administration network and collect their royalties. In 2020, they achieved year-over-year client growth of 225% in the United Kingdom and Ireland, according to Songtrust. Aubry brought over 60 new music creators and companies from across Africa to Songtrust. One new client, Ghanaian music distributor Highvibes, estimates that 95% of songwriters in Africa are not signed with publishers to administer their rights.

Annette Barrett

Managing director/global strategic liaison, Reservoir

Hussain “Spek” Yoosuf

Founder/president, PopArabia; executive vp international and emerging markets, Reservoir

From London, Barrett pursues interna-

tional opportunities for Reservoir writers like Jamie Hartman, Cutfather and Ivor Lifetime Achievement Award winner Nitin Sawhney. She’s a co-founder of the International Music Publishers Forum and in 2020 was named both president and chair of the organization’s board. Following a joint-venture deal struck in February 2020 between Reservoir and PopArabia, Yoosuf, based in Dubai, oversees strategy, signing and development of talent for both companies across Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.

Laura Bedikian

Senior creative manager, Downtown Music Publishing

Charles Braud

Head of sync, France, Downtown Music Publishing

Dean Francis

GM, Downtown Neighbouring Rights

Bedikian and Braud jointly run Downtown Music Publishing’s operation in France. Bedikian represents artist-composers ranging from Israeli-born, Paris-based singer Keren Ann to rising rappers Luidji and Green Montana. Braud’s deals with brands such as Lancôme, Jimmy Choo and others drove a “double-digit percentage” of Downtown’s synch revenue for 2019-2020, according to the company. Francis’ success leading neighboring rights collections for Downtown’s music publishing division led the company in June to announce a new stand-alone business unit dedicated to performance royalties with Francis at the helm.

Benjamin Budde

President, Budde Music

Budde has carried on the music publishing legacy of his father, Dr. Rolf Budde, who died in 2018 after a lifetime of building the family’s independent Berlin-based company. During the pandemic, Budde struck a deal to acquire the London-based independent publisher Phrased Differently, “a strategic creative merger,” he says, “as it grows our U.K. office and studios tremendously.” Meanwhile, sister company BTA launched a brand partnership and acting department that, says Budde, “opens up new paths in these fields.”

Justin Dowling

GM, Blue Mountain Music; executive vp, Primary Wave U.K. and Europe

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After Primary Wave acquired Chris Blackwell's share of both Blue Mountain Music and Bob Marley's song catalog in 2018 for an estimated \$50 million, Dowling took on responsibility for both catalogs and, from his base in London, has guided the publisher's expansion into Europe. He oversaw a record year of synch deals for the Marley catalog in 2020, according to Primary Wave. Dowling secured sampling usage for Marley's "Could You Be Loved" for the hit "Safaera" from Anuel and Bad Bunny, one of the most streamed songs of the past year. He has also taken the lead on Primary Wave acquisitions in the United Kingdom and Europe, including the publisher's deal for the catalog of KT Tunstall announced in January.

Gustavo Menendez

President, Warner Chappell Latin America

Shani Gonzales

Managing director, Warner Chappell U.K.; head of international A&R, Warner Chappell Music

Santiago Menéndez-Pidal

Managing director, Warner Chappell Music Spain

Matthieu Tessier

Managing director, Warner Chappell Music France

Under Menendez, Warner Chappell Latin America in the past year has inked agreements with the Mexican grupero band Bronco and Latin Grammy-winning producer Tony Succar, among others. Gonzales' international A&R role has her working with writers across borders, such as Ari Pensmith and MNEK from the United Kingdom, Capital Bra from Germany and El Guincho from Spain. In October, Menéndez-Pidal renewed Warner Chappell's publishing agreement with Spanish superstar Pablo Alborán (who also re-upped his recording deal with Warner Music Spain). Tessier and his team have been working with Aya Nakamura, whose remixed hit "Djadja" (featuring Maluma) has spent 13 weeks on *Billboard's* Global Excl. U.S. chart, peaking at No. 32.

Jorge Mejia

President/CEO, Latin America and U.S. Latin, Sony Music Publishing

Sharon Boyse

Senior vp international operations and society relations, Sony Music Publishing

Sarah Lockhart

Head of A&R, U.K., Sony Music Publishing

Johnny Tennander

Managing director, Scandinavia/senior vp A&R, Europe, Sony Music Publishing

Miami-based Mejia is responsible for Sony Music Publishing operations in the U.S. Latin market and throughout Latin America, with offices in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Mexico. In 2020, the company was named Latin publisher of the year by both BMI and SESAC for the fifth consecutive time. Boyse's global expertise has allowed Sony to become the first publisher to introduce real-time processing for foreign earnings, according to the company, along with royalty and copyright administration across multiple digital platforms. Lockhart, who joined the company just over a year ago, signed British rap duo Young T & Bugsey, whose "Don't Rush" reached No. 5 on the [Rhythmic Airplay](#) chart. Boosting the presence of Sony's Scandinavia roster on the global charts, Tennander has signed writers including Benjamin Lasnier, who has co-written with Megan Thee Stallion, among others.

Merck Mercuriadis

Founder/CEO, Hipgnosis Songs Fund

Under the guidance of Mercuriadis, the 4-year-old Hipgnosis Songs Fund, based in London, has reshaped the music rights business, spending over \$2 billion so far acquiring some 140 publishing catalogs including the works of Blondie, Lindsey Buckingham, Rick James, Journey, Barry Manilow, Nelly, Mark Ronson, RZA, Richie Sambora and Neil Young. Profits were up 917% in its fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, 2020, and the company now has a market capitalization of almost \$2 billion, according to Hipgnosis.

John Minch

President, international publishing, Concord

Kim Frankiewicz

Executive vp worldwide A&R, Concord Music Publishing

Kent Hoskins

CFO, Concord

Concord's Boosey & Hawkes division has become an international partner under Minch for classical publishers including Oxford University Press in the United Kingdom, Germany's Schott Music and Austria's

Universal Edition. Frankiewicz leads Concord's A&R teams worldwide and has done so in the past year "all from her kitchen table in London," she says. Concord writers Biff Stannard and Fiona Bevan contributed to Kylie Minogue's album *Disco*, which hit No. 1 last year in the United Kingdom. When the pandemic struck, Hoskins and senior executives followed a "European business continuity and resilience strategy" — covering relocation, remote working and more — that he had prepared in 2013.

Ralph Peer II

Executive chair, peermusic

Mary Megan Peer

CEO, peermusic

The international pedigree of peermusic goes back to 1928, when visionary founder Ralph S. Peer recognized the potential of the Latin market after a visit to Mexico City. Today, peermusic operates in 31 countries with a global network developed by Ralph Peer II and his daughter Mary Megan Peer. In October 2020, peermusic Neighbouring Rights was formed after the acquisition of Premier Muzik (Canada), All Right Music (France) and Global Master Rights (the Netherlands). Mary Megan, promoted to CEO in December and now based in Amsterdam, has worked alongside her father to advance her grandfather's legacy, with peermusic ranking at No. 8 on *Billboard's* year-end Hot 100 Publishing Corporations chart in 2020.

Robert Wise

Chairman, Wise Music Group

In January 2020, Music Sales Group rebranded itself as Wise Music Group, recognizing that the firm is "very much a family business," says Wise. One of the world's leading publishers, the company owns and manages over 200,000 popular and classical copyrights, including the catalog of G. Schirmer Inc., the American classical publisher that was founded in 1861. Earlier this year, Wise oversaw the acquisition of a company that owns the music publishing rights to hit songs by The Zombies.

Marcos Araújo

CEO, Villa Mix

Brazilian promoter Araújo has helped popularize Brazil's country music genre sertanejo, discovering and initially managing talents like Jorge & Mateus and Gusttavo

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Lima. He also helped propel the international success of dance music DJ-producer Alok, whose global rise came thanks to his 2016 song “Hear Me Now,” recorded with Bruno Martini and Zeeba; it became the first track from Brazil to break 100 million streams on Spotify. The song and Villa Mix exposure helped push Alok’s performance fee in Brazil to between \$100,000 and \$150,000, says Araújo.

Henry Cárdenas

Founder/CEO, CMN

Cárdenas was recognized as *Billboard’s* 2019 Latin Power Players Executive of the Year as the promoter behind tours by Marc Anthony, Maluma and Bad Bunny. Based in Chicago, he has spent much of the past year leading the multimillion-dollar development of Arena Bogota, which will include a 20,000-seat venue in his native country of Colombia. Along with Marc Anthony, Cárdenas is co-founder of the Maestro Cares Foundation, which provides housing, community centers, outreach programs, and educational and medical initiatives to children in 13 countries.

Denis Desmond

Chairman, Live Nation U.K. and Ireland

John Reid

President, Live Nation Europe, the Middle East and Africa

Roger Field

President, Live Nation Asia Pacific

Selina Emeny

International group counsel, Live Nation

Desmond spent the last year devoting himself to steadying the Live Nation ship abroad, which he says “is easy when you have a great team.” Reid, a veteran of the European live- and recorded-music businesses, expanded his responsibility to include the Middle East, Africa and India, in addition to Europe, with a focus on drive-in shows, streaming and socially distanced events. (In Madrid, he oversaw a series of socially distanced Crew Nation Presents shows to provide employment and raise money for concert workers.) Along with other Australian industry leaders, Field co-founded the Live Entertainment Industry Forum to support the safe return of live events, producing state-of-the-art protocols and working to create risk management plans that met the

needs of fans, governments, artists and the industry. Emeny, celebrating her 22nd year with Live Nation Entertainment, has an expansive role that includes international group counsel, liaison between the company’s U.S. headquarters and its international operations, government affairs and envoy for Live Nation with regulatory authorities across global markets.

Steve Homer**Toby Leighton-Pope**

Co-CEOs, U.K., AEG Presents

Alex Hill

President/CEO, AEG Europe

Adam Wilkes

President/CEO, AEG Asia

Jim King

CEO of European festivals, AEG Presents U.K.

Simon Jones

Senior vp international touring, AEG Presents

Homer and Leighton-Pope guided the team behind marquee festivals like Country to Country, which brought Nashville stars to London, Glasgow, Dublin, Berlin and Amsterdam before the pandemic. When live shows ceased, the two helped livestream shows from AEG venues — and donated food and beverages from the Hammersmith Apollo to a local London hospital. Under Wilkes, AEG in Asia entered a joint venture with South Korea’s CJ Group to build a new arena in Seoul. King helped confirm the extension of AEG’s agreement to promote the BST Hyde Park festival in London through 2027. Amid the many concerts and tours that Jones saw canceled in 2020, he helped pull off Justin Bieber’s acoustic show in London in February 2020 to promote his *Changes* album.

Harvey Lister

Chairman/CEO, Asia Pacific, ASM Global

John Sharkey

Executive vp, ASM Global

Tim Worton

Group director, Australia arenas, ASM Global

Marie Lindqvist

Senior vp Europe, ASM Global

Dana DuFine

VP global booking, content and development, ASM Global

In late 2019, the merger of venue manage-

ment companies SMG and AEG Facilities brought together 112 arenas and 24 stadiums worldwide, including in the Asia-Pacific region, overseen by Lister; Australia, where Worton guides arenas; and Europe, where Sharkey and Lindqvist work with venue clients and promoters. DuFine, whose role involves bringing concerts and other events to all those venues, is working at rescheduling shows across the globe. “I have no doubt we’re coming back strong,” she says. “But it’s going to take everything we got.”

Alejandro Soberon Kuri

President/CEO, Ocesa/CIE

Before COVID-19 shut down the touring industry, Soberon Kuri’s OCESA/CIE ranked at No. 4 — just behind Live Nation, AEG Presents and MSG Entertainment — among the world’s most successful concert promotion companies, according to *Billboard* Boxscore rankings for November 2019 to January 2021. Since founding OCESA (CIE is its holding company) in 1990, Soberon Kuri has made Mexico a must-play for international artists. Although a planned acquisition by Live Nation was scuttled by the pandemic, Soberon Kuri pivoted to livestreaming. “Live experiences will return with a lot of power,” he says, “and we’ll be able to amplify these experiences in a much better way with the digital world. That’s the growth opportunity.”

Emma Banks**Chris Dalston****Mike Greek****Marlene Tsuchii**

Co-heads, international touring, Creative Artists Agency

Maria May

Music agent, Creative Artists Agency

With Banks and Greek based in London and Dalston and Tsuchii in Los Angeles, CAA has a powerhouse quartet of top agents focused on international markets bolstered by May, who is also based in London. The agency boasts a star-studded roster that included Harry Styles, Ariana Grande, Justin Bieber, Katy Perry, Bon Jovi, Foo Fighters, Queen, Adam Lambert, AC/DC, Sting, Ricky Martin and the Eagles. May, with her roots in electronic and dance music, represents David Guetta, The Black Eyed Peas and The Chainsmokers, among others. CAA reports

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that in 2019 the agency booked over 8,000 shows in 98 countries. During the pandemic, its agents found new creative and commercial channels for clients — not only virtual shows but endorsement deals, books and podcasts. CAA's international roster has continued to grow with new signings that include Chvrches, Playboi Carti, Bauhaus, Todrick Hall, Declan McKenna, Claire Rosinkranz, Phantogram, Bree Runway, Gok Wan, Gracie Abrams, BENEE, Celeste and Tomfoolery.

Amy Davidman**Devin Landau**

Co-founders/partners/agents, TBA Agency

Davidman and Landau are the internationally focused co-founders, along with three other former Paradigm agents, of TBA Agency. For over a decade Davidman has been an advocate for bringing Latin artists to the mainstream and international artists to Latin markets. Landau represents (outside the European Union) Brazil's Luísa Sonza, whose engagement on BeApp led to a monthlong focus by the social media platform on the Brazilian market.

Lucy Dickins

Co-head, music, WME

Tony Goldring

Partner/head of international music department, WME

Brett Murrhiy

Partner/head of Asia Pacific, music, WME

James Rubin

Partner/co-head of hip-hop department, WME

Ashley Gonzalez

Music agent, WME

In early 2020, Dickins was promoted to co-head of WME's music division while continuing to represent clients including Adele, James Blake, Bryan Ferry and Mumford & Sons. Her client Mabel won a 2020 BRIT Award for best female solo artist. Goldring oversees tours outside the United States for WME artists including Rihanna, Justin Timberlake and John Legend and last year signed Shakira to the agency. Murrhiy oversaw the most successful quarter on record for WME's Sydney office in early 2020 before touring halted. Rubin's hip-hop and R&B roster includes Tyler, The Creator, Solange, Killer Mike, Travis Scott, Goldlink and

Run the Jewels, as well as R&B singer Summer Walker. Gonzalez developed strategy to book hundreds of WME clients in Latin markets and coordinated global tours for her own roster, including St. Vincent, Kali Uchis and Jenny Lewis. She recently signed Camilo, one of the most followed artists on TikTok.

Peter Elliott

Managing director, Primary Talent International

Matt Bates

ICM Partners, head of international/head of Europe and director, Primary Talent International

Ben Winchester

Director, Primary Talent International

Craig D'Souza

Agent, Primary Talent International

In March 2020, Elliott played a key role in the sale of Primary Talent International to ICM Partners, which strengthened both agencies during the pandemic. He represents artists such as Lana Del Rey, Dizzee Rascal and Sofi Tukker. After the two agencies joined forces, Bates became a Primary Talent International partner and worked alongside ICM's then-head of concerts Rob Prinz to grow ICM's international department. Winchester books tours outside the United States and Canada for acts including Noel Gallagher, Slowdive and Ride. (One highlight of his three-decade career: booking Oasis' legendary 1996 concert in Knebworth, England, which drew a quarter of a million fans.) D'Souza, whose client Stormzy headlined the 2019 Glastonbury festival, received Music Week's 2020 award for live music agent of the year.

Alex Hardee**Tom Schroeder****James Whitting**

Partners, Paradigm Agency

Hardee's client Lewis Capaldi finished his first arena tour of the United Kingdom and Ireland in March 2020, days before the pandemic halted in-person concerts, then did an Amazon Prime Day livestream in October to raise funds for shuttered venues. Schroeder worked with clients like FKA twigs, Disclosure and slowthai to donate memorabilia for the #ILoveLive campaign, which raised a half-million pounds for out-of-work

touring crews and technicians. Whitting's client Ellie Goulding unveiled her new album *Brightest Blue* in July and played a global pay-per-view livestream from London's Victoria and Albert Museum.

John Jackson

President, K2 Agency

In August, the private equity firm Yucaipa Companies entered into a joint venture with Jackson's K2 Agency, bringing the renowned London-based booking firm under the same umbrella as Yucaipa-owned Artist Group International. Jackson, who represents Metallica, Iron Maiden and Slayer for European touring, says that the highlight of 2020 was "joining forces with Dennis Arfa and his colleagues at AGI and, consequently, K2 becoming a Yucaipa company. The lowlight is the realization that I have not seen a K2 artist play live for over a year and a half and counting."

Scott Mantell

Co-head of international, ICM Partners

Ari Bernstein

Agent, ICM Partners

In March 2020, ICM Partners acquired U.K. talent agency Primary Talent International, expanding its reach and roster by over 600 music clients. Mantell oversees ICM's entire international roster and during the pandemic built relationships with streaming platforms not only for musicians but also ICM clients in the podcast, unscripted talent and comedy sectors. From New York, Bernstein has managed touring abroad for Kendrick Lamar, Khalid, Migos and others. During the touring shutdown, he has focused on diversifying income streams for his clients.

Steve Strange

Director/agent, X-ray Touring

Beckie Sugden

Senior agent, X-ray Touring

Coldplay, Eminem, Snow Patrol, Queens of the Stone Age and Jimmy Eat World are among the clients booked by Strange at London-based X-ray Touring, all awaiting the full-scale return of tours. Sugden helped bring Anderson .Paak and Russ abroad; represents Jhené Aiko, Gucci Mane and Ghostemane; and is one of the first agents to book many shows in emerging markets in the Middle East, according to the agency.

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Neil Warnock**Obi Asika**

Co-heads of U.K. office, UTA

Jules De Lattre

Agent, music, UTA

Sean Hill

Director of tour marketing, music, UTA

Cleo Thompson

Executive, music brand partnerships, UTA

UTA in March announced the acquisition of Echo Location Talent Agency, founded by Asika, who personally represents Alesso, Marshmello, Chase & Status and Trippie Redd, among others, while UTA will also book former Echo clients Diplo and Major Lazer. Warnock, a five-decade veteran in live booking, played a key role in guiding UTA clients and supporting U.K. music venues during the pandemic. De Lattre and his colleagues booked hundreds of virtual shows viewed by fans worldwide while generating “substantial revenue,” according to UTA. Hill developed artist marketing strategies for over 30 virtual concerts, including a 360-degree livestream from London in November for Burna Boy. Thompson guides UTA’s European brand-partnerships business and has helped the team close over 300 deals globally since the pandemic began.

Contributors: *International Power Players* was written by Thom Duffy with reporting from Katie Bain, Alexei Barrionuevo, Lars Brandle, Dave Brooks, Patrick Brzeski, Keith Caulfield, Ed Christman, Tatiana Cirisano, Leila Cobo, Frank DiGiacomo, Chris Eggersen, Griselda Flores, Tim Ingham, Glenn Peoples, Dan Rys, Marc Schneider and Rebecca Sun.

Methodology: *Nominations for Billboard power lists open not less than 120 days in advance of publication. (For a contact for our editorial calendar listing publication dates, please email thom.duffy@billboard.com.) The online nomination link is sent to press representatives and/or honorees of companies previously featured on any Billboard power list, as well as those who send a request to thom.duffy@billboard.com. Nominations close and lists are locked not less than 90 days before publication. Billboard’s 2021 International Power Players were chosen by editors based on factors including, but not limited to, nominations by peers, col-*

leagues and superiors, limited to the industry sectors shown. Consideration was given to geographic diversity and the industry impact of honorees and/or their companies. That impact is measured by metrics including, but not limited to, chart, sales and streaming performance as measured by MRC Data and social media impressions using data available as of March 15.

Where Royalties Flow

Artists worldwide create music to delight and inspire their fans. But they also need to get paid, whether through performance royalties (for songwriters and music publishers), mechanical royalties (for owners of sound-recording copyrights), digital performance royalties (paid in the United States by noninteractive digital streaming services) or neighboring rights royalties (earned outside the United States from the public performance of a master recording). Who can keep track? In the world’s top 10 markets as ranked by IFPI, these are the leading rights-collection organizations. Most are commonly identified by the widely used acronyms for their full names.

The Latin Boom

When IFPI released its 2021 Global Music Report in March, it confirmed that only one region in the world experienced a double-digit rate of revenue growth in the preceding year — Latin America, where revenue increased by 15.9%.

That growth boosted the region’s share of the global recorded-music market to 3.6%, up from 3.3% in 2019. (Music consumption in the region outpaces that market share. Were it not for currency devaluation, the region would account for a higher share of global revenue.)

Streaming revenue grew by 30.2% and accounted for 84.1% of Latin America’s total revenue. The growth is driven by the strength of the region’s artists, including multiple performers who are global superstars.

For a snapshot of that talent, *Billboard* highlights some of the most influential talents in Spain, which, bound by language with Latin America, as both a source and a destination for music in Spanish; Portuguese-speaking Brazil, which is the largest Latin American territory (by music revenue); and the Latin markets of Mexico,

Argentina and Colombia.

This article originally appeared in the April 24, 2021, issue of [Billboard](#). 

Concord Buys Downtown Music’s Publishing Copyrights

BY ED CHRISTMAN

Concord has acquired Downtown Music’s 145,000-song publishing copyrights, the companies announced Monday (April 26), including shares in “Dancing in the Streets,” “Moves Like Jagger,” “Green Onions,” “Halo,” “Stay With Me” and “Shallow.” Concord also gets the contracts of Downtown Music’s existing songwriter roster.

Terms of the acquisitions were not disclosed, but *Billboard* estimates the assets being sold carry a \$350 million valuation based on an 18–20 times multiple.

Downtown is only selling the portion of its publishing catalog that it has an ownership stake in and not the songs and catalogs where it serves as administrator. *Billboard* estimates that the owned portion of the Downtown catalog has a net publisher share, or gross profit, of \$18 million to \$20 million, and revenues of about \$25 million to \$30 million. At an NPS multiple in the range of 17–19 times, that works out to \$306 million to \$380 million, with other sources putting the valuation at about \$350 million.

Concord now owns or controls music assets for over 600,000 songs, establishing it firmly as the sixth biggest music publisher. And after 2017’s acquisition of Image Music and last year’s deal for a majority stake in PULSE Music Group — each at about \$550 million and \$150 million valuations, respectively — the company has invested nearly \$1 billion in acquiring and signing music assets over the last four years.

“The incredible catalog of songs is an excellent complement to the timeless and

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valuable copyrights upon which Concord has built a successful business,” said **Jim Selby**, Concord’s chief publishing executive, in a statement. “Our global publishing team is honored to now represent these songwriters and their works to the world.”

While Concord already has a diverse music publishing catalog that includes iconic songs from the 1940s to more recent rock hits, the deal helps strengthen the company’s contemporary songwriter portfolio with such acts and songwriters as the 1975. The Downtown deal also boosts Concord’s ‘80s rock portfolio with songs from Mötley Crüe’s Nikki Sixx.

In 2015, Concord Music Group merged with Bicycle Music Company, establishing itself as a leading independent music company. Over the past decade, Concord has acquired such catalogs and brands as Rounder Records, Vee-Jay Records, Razor & Tie, KIDZ BOP, Wind-Up, Fearless Records, Rodgers & Hammerstein, Boosey & Hawkes, Sikorski Music Publishing, Savoy, Varèse Sarabande, Fania, Independiente, Musart, Victory Records and Publishing, the publishing catalogs of Imagine Dragons and Spirit B-Unique, theatrical licensors Samuel French and Tams-Witmar. The company has also partnered with **Andrew Lloyd Webber** and has done the previously mentioned joint venture with the PULSE Music Group.

This deal appears to help bring Concord’s music publishing operation to parity with its record label operations. Last year a Moody’s Investor Services report on Alchemy Copyrights (the investment vehicle that Concord uses to own copyrights that serve as collateral for the company’s debt) noted that Concord’s operations had almost \$450 million in revenue. That broke out to about \$200 million for the label, \$170 million for the publishing operation and \$77 million for the theatrical arm. The Downtown deal brings in about \$30 million in revenue, so the music publishing operation might also now stand at about \$200 million in revenue.

Selby says that Concord will add some staffing in order to support the copyrights coming over from Downtown. “We will add some A&R, synch and royalty staffers to make sure we are effectively servicing” the

acquired assets. Downtown will continue to manage global royalty collections for the copyrights sold to Concord through the end of 2021.

For Downtown, which sources say was up for sale in its entirety at one point last year but then pulled back to only shopping the owned-publishing catalog, the deal shows the company transforming its mission from being a copyright owner that also provides services to a full-fledged, multi-faceted service organization for established and D-I-Y indie unsigned artists and songwriters. (Downtown denies the entire company was up for sale.) Downtown will continue to serve as publishing administrator for the song catalogs of John Lennon and Yoko Ono, Miles Davis, John Prine, the Wu-Tang Clan and others, but it’s pledged an increased focus on its CD Baby, Songtrust, Fuga, Downtown Neighboring Rights, and DashGo business operations — into which it says it will reinvest profits from the copyright sale. In the first phase of the company’s realignment, DashGo and Downtown Music Publishing will be rebranded Downtown Music Services.

Downtown says that all its operations will generate over \$600 million in revenue and collections for 2021. A large component of that revenue base is generated by its operations servicing independent artists and songwriters through CD Baby and Songtrust — and its the part of the operation that is growing at the fastest pace, sources suggest. But these and other components of Downtown’s operation, including its administration services, also support established songwriters and artists as well as some labels and publishers. In all, the company says it serves 1 million creators and 2,500 enterprise clients, which combined have more than 23 million music assets.

“Our strategic review confirmed a clear opportunity in the market for a truly neutral provider to meet the changing needs of creators and their partners,” said **Justin Kalifowitz**, Downtown founder and CEO, in a statement. “The idea of serving creators has been core to Downtown’s ethos since our founding in 2007. Divesting our owned IP enables us to advance our position as the world’s leading music service provider, em-

power a rapidly expanding global creative class and, ultimately, is the most expedient way to help realize our vision of a more equitable music industry.”

In closing the deal, the Raine Group acted as the financial advisor to Downtown on the transaction, with legal counsel coming from Wilson Chu, Joanna Lin, and Thaddeus Chase, Jr. of McDermott Will & Emery LLP, and Jeff Biederman and Beau Stapleton of Manatt, Phelps & Phillips LLP. Concord and its affiliates were advised by Steve Sessa and Chris Sheaffer of Reed Smith and Rob Sherman of DLA Piper, while Lisbeth R. Barron and the team at Barron International Group acted as the financial advisor on the transaction, the transaction announcement states. **B**

UK Primed to Resume Live Shows While Rest of Europe Struggles

BY RICHARD SMIRKE

LONDON — In February, when the United Kingdom suffered its third national lockdown, Prime Minister **Boris Johnson** told the beleaguered live sector that concerts could resume after June 21 — without restrictions — if certain virus-related health conditions are met. Within days, two of the United Kingdom’s biggest festivals — the 185,000-capacity dual-site Reading and Leeds festivals headlined by **Liam Gallagher**, **Stormzy** and **Post Malone**, and the 70,000-capacity Creamfields — sold out their late-August dates. Since then, nearly two-thirds of British adults have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine shot, and U.K. shows scheduled for July and beyond are reporting strong ticket sales, fueling optimism that Europe’s largest touring market will at least partially reopen by mid-summer.

In the rest of Europe, however, where vaccination programs have faced delays

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and infection rates are on the rise, industry executives are less optimistic. France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and Italy have either extended or introduced new restrictions as governments battle a third wave of infections. That has led to cancellations of Germany's Rock am Ring and Hurricane festivals, France's Hellfest and Spain's Primavera Sound, among other events. "Large-scale touring or major festivals are going to be compromised this summer in the majority of European markets," says **Mike Greek**, the co-head of Creative Artists Agency in London.

While the United Kingdom appears poised to resume full-capacity outdoor shows this summer, many other European markets will be forced to wait until at least the fall. Greek doesn't expect indoor shows to resume in continental Europe before the end of the year, but he does expect them in the United Kingdom by September. And with most U.S. artists choosing not to tour Europe due to a paucity of tour dates and the possibility of new virus restrictions, local U.K. and European acts will take center stage as headliners.

Dieter Semmelman, CEO of Berlin-based Semmel Concerts, sees "no chance" of a return to live music events in Germany this summer and, instead, is focused on saving about 300 concerts scheduled for October through December. "It's not a good feeling" that other markets are ahead of continental Europe, he says. "The only advantage we see in this situation is that all these full-capacity show tests will be made in the U.S., the U.K. and Israel, so our authorities will have some examples to study."

Still, not everyone is giving up. A small number of marquee European festivals are pressing ahead with plans for July and August, including the Mad Cool Festival in Madrid, Exit in Serbia and Tomorrowland in Belgium. "We're in full-force programming," says **Eric Van Eerdenburg**, director of Lowlands Festival, which sold out its 60,000 tickets for the August event in the Dutch village of Biddinghuizen, about an hour from Amsterdam.

On Tuesday (April 20), **Miloš Vučević**, the Mayor of Novi Sad, Serbia, confirmed that EXIT's 20th anniversary edition could

go forward on July 8-11 — **David Guetta**, **DJ Snake** and **Tyga** are among the headliners — because of Serbia's vaccination efforts. The country has fully vaccinated about 19% of its population. The festival "will be a symbol of Serbia's victory over the pandemic," Vučević said in a press release.

Van Eerdenburg says he was able to proceed with Lowlands due to the Dutch government's 380 million euros (\$457 million) insurance fund, which covers 80% of the costs of cultural events canceled as a result of the pandemic. "With that backing, I have the courage," he says. "Without it, it would have been too big a risk."

Even with the prospect of a summer free from virus restrictions in the United Kingdom, organizers there are reluctant to risk their businesses without insurance covering the cost of potential cancellations, says **Paul Reed**, chief executive of the Association of Independent Festivals.

U.K. touring executives fear that without insurance policies like those in the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria and Denmark, more promoters will be forced to cancel events in the months ahead after having already paid upfront costs to suppliers. "As it stands," says Reed, "the majority of our members are not going to be able to go ahead in 2021 without government intervention."

Already, some major U.K. events, including Glastonbury, Download and BST Hyde Park, have postponed to 2022, while other festivals that traditionally run between May and July, such as Isle of Wight, All Points East and Neighbourhood Weekender, have rescheduled to later in the summer.

German promoters have yet to see payments from a €2.5 billion event **cancelation fund** the government announced in December. While a German law allows ticket holders to seek refunds for cancelled 2020 and 2021 shows starting next January, promoters need clarity about insurance protection for cancellations by no later than June — or they might have to scrap shows in the fourth quarter as well, Semmelman says. "We need three to four months of preparation time for a restart, so we need this signal from the [government] in the next few weeks," he says.

With a spike in new virus cases over the

past month, "everything is still on hold and the insecurity has lately increased," says **Stephan Thanscheidt**, CEO of Hamburg, Germany-based promoter FKP Scorpio. (On Friday a federal "emergency brake" order set in that prohibits Germans from leaving their homes after 10 p.m. in districts and cities that exceed 100 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants for three days in a row within seven days.)

With International Acts Staying Home, Domestic Artists Ready to Shine

Meanwhile, the majority of U.S. and international acts are choosing to stay home this summer rather than risk being quarantined abroad, European organizers say. "We got quite a few no's from American acts saying, 'We're probably not going to make it,'" says Van Eerdenburg.

The concern over future restrictions on travel from the United States has allowed European artists to dominate this year's Lowlands lineup, including British acts Stormzy and **The Chemical Brothers**, and Dutch rap group **The Opposites**, who are headlining the event for the first time.

In the United Kingdom, where unresolved travel issues resulting from Brexit have contributed to a higher reliance on homegrown talent, Red Light Management has lined up U.K. summer shows for British acts including **Corinne Bailey Rae**, **The Cribs** and **Kaiser Chiefs**, says **James Sandom**, the company's U.K. managing director. While some of Red Light's international acts will suffer, he says, "we also have British acts that do really good business in the U.K. and we will be looking to make the most of what's possible."

The shrinking European touring map has led some artists to charge more because they can only do a few shows. "For a number of acts we had lined up, it wasn't viable to book them anymore unless we [tripled] the fee," says **Keith Miller**, who books London's Wide Awake festival in September and the new South Facing Festival.

To compensate for the scarcity of shows in neighboring markets, Lowlands is guaranteeing some acts extra travel and production expenses, which the performers have agreed to pay back if additional European shows get booked. Other acts have accepted a

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discounted fee in recognition of promoters' financial challenges, says Van Eerdenburg. "There is a greater understanding between agents and promoters and artists that we're all in this sh-t together," he says.

In the United Kingdom, progress on vaccinations — the country is on pace to administer at least one dose to all its adults by the end of July — has given some promoters the confidence to try launching new events, like South Facing Festival, which is scheduled for Aug. 5-29 in London's Crystal Palace Park with a capacity of up to 8,500 people. The concert series will feature [Dizze Rascal](#), [Supergrass](#) and [The Streets](#). "If everything stays on course," says Miller, "we'll be in good shape."

While plans are in place for South Facing to run at a reduced capacity if required, Miller says, "Our aim is that we'll be able to go ahead without any social distancing restrictions."

Additional reporting by Alexei Barrionuevo 

Inside Primary Wave's \$1.5 Billion Hit Factory

BY TATIANA CIRISANO

In March, Primary Wave Music founder/CEO Larry Mestel visited his office at the independent publishing company's headquarters in New York's Gramercy Park neighborhood for the first time in nearly a year. The Brooklyn native had been waiting out the pandemic at his vacation home in Vermont, but he had good reason for making the 200-plus-mile trek. Mestel was meeting the manager of an iconic singer-songwriter and Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee to discuss a catalog acquisition — one of 33 deals he currently has in motion.

In the 15 years since Mestel founded Primary Wave, it has amassed a 20,000-song catalog that contains the copyrights to works by [Smokey Robinson](#), [Aerosmith](#), [Bob Marley](#), [Whitney Houston](#), [Burt Bacharach](#), [Paul](#)

[Anka](#), [Prince](#) and [Hall & Oates](#). With outposts in Los Angeles, London, Nashville and Austin, the company also houses divisions for marketing and branding in partnership with Brand Synergy Group, as well as film/TV production and talent management. It advises 18 artists including [Melissa Etheridge](#), [Fantasia](#) and [Cypress Hill](#).

Unlike traditional publishers, Mestel says Primary Wave specializes in using innovative marketing and branding campaigns to revitalize the songs of music icons. That mission began in 2006 when he acquired a 50% interest in [Kurt Cobain's](#) sought-after music publishing catalog from the late artist's widow, Courtney Love. (*Billboard* reported the sum to be in excess of \$50 million, according to a source close to the deal.) Only later did Mestel discover that Primary Wave was the only publisher to offer Love a marketing plan for the catalog that would eventually include a partnership with Converse to print some of Cobain's lyrics on special-edition sneakers.

"I don't understand how you can be in a business and just write checks and not create value, which is why we have 70-plus people focused on generating new ideas for partnerships with these artists," says Mestel. "Most of our competitors put their songs in a drawer."

A former executive at Virgin Records, Arista Records and Island Entertainment Group, Mestel says he modeled Primary Wave's creative drive after Chris Blackwell's 61-year-old Island Records — which guided the careers of Marley, [U2](#) and [Cat Stevens](#) — by leveraging innovative distribution deals, imprints and subsidiaries. "[Blackwell] taught me how to be artistically sensitive and why it's important to partner with artists," he says. That relationship led to Primary Wave's purchase of 80% of Blackwell's share of Marley's publishing catalog for \$50 million in 2018.

The following year, Primary Wave struck further landmark agreements, such as a partnership with the Whitney Houston estate that gave the publisher a 50% stake in the estate's assets and is developing a rescheduled hologram tour, as well as multimillion-dollar deals with the rock band [Disturbed](#) (which included publishing

and master income) and Paul Anka (which spanned publishing, master recordings and his name and likeness). Other recent deals: a decadelong administration and marketing agreement with [The Four Seasons'](#) surviving members, Frankie Valli and Bob Gaudio; a majority stake in [Fleetwood Mac](#) member [Stevie Nicks'](#) copyrights and publishing; and a 50% stake in [KT Tunstall's](#) publishing and master recording royalties. It has also purchased the iconic Sun Records label including the company's trademark, as well as recordings by [Johnny Cash](#) and [Jerry Lee Lewis](#) among 6,000 masters, for a reported \$30 million.

Backed by institutional investors, the company now has \$1.5 billion in cash and assets under management and is preparing for a third fundraising round — the better to capitalize on the current hot market for song catalogs. The company's marketing and branding plays include a Houston biopic, *I Wanna Dance With Somebody*, which is set for a 2022 release, and a soon-to-be-announced Las Vegas residency based on Marley's music.

To mark the company's 15th anniversary, Mestel discussed running Primary Wave like a record label and why he's not worried about competition from companies like Merck Mercuriadis' Hipgnosis Songs Fund and Irving Azoff's Iconic Artists Group.

How is Primary Wave run like a label?

When we started in 2006, I did not want to be a normal publisher, which provided no value. Music publishers put their feet up on their desks, waited for the phone to ring — when they licensed a song because somebody called them — they gave each other high-fives and thought they'd done a great job of marketing. That's not marketing. Because I came from the record-label side of the business, I understood that to break artists, you have to generate opportunity.

Which of Primary Wave's branding and marketing deals stand out for you?

One of my all-time favorites was creating a holiday for Smokey Robinson in 2017. The second Sunday in every October is now Smokey Robinson's Father-Daughter Day. I love it for two reasons. One, my marketing team was able to convince American Greetings to create a holiday. Nobody else

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has done that. When Smokey goes out to play golf with his buddies on the weekend, he's the only one of his friends who has a holiday, and he's so excited. We put lyrics on the side of Kurt Cobain Converse sneakers [in 2008]. I get a kick out of it when I'm on the street and I see somebody wearing those sneakers. It was a fantastic brand opportunity for Kurt [who was known to wear Converse]. It was organic to who he was.

What are the keystones of introducing an icon to a newer generation?

When you look at an artist who may not be on the mind of a 16-year-old or an 18-year-old, you've got to go where they are. For Whitney Houston, we went into the vault the day after we bought into the partnership and found this [cover of [Steve Winwood's](#)] "Higher Love" that she had recorded in 1990. It sounded like a hit song, just dated. So our team got [Kygo](#) on board to remix the record, RCA did a great job of putting it on the radio, and it was a major hit around the world. Kids who were big Kygo fans got a chance to experience Whitney and stream her other music. Stevie Nicks and the Ocean Spray TikTok — what better way for teens and young kids to find Stevie's music? Look at Surf Mesa with "ily (i love you baby)" [which uses a sample of [Valli's](#) 1967 song "Can't Take My Eyes Off You"]. That brings them into the new youth culture. That's how you do it. Films, too, are huge.

What are Primary Wave's film plans? Could a Nicks biopic be in the future?

Stevie has so much going on right now. It's something that I'm sure will be part of her future, but it may not be part of her near future. We're developing and producing a biographical film on Glenn Gould, who is one of the greatest classical pianists of all time, but not many people in America have heard of him. We want to reintroduce him. We're producing a Whitney Houston biographical film with [screenwriter] Anthony McCarten. I'm so excited about how we've raised the bar on Whitney's brand. We've got a Burt Bacharach project — it's not a biopic, but it uses all of his music.

Why did Primary Wave's business thrive during the pandemic?

The music we've bought tends to be

comfort music, and people tend to want comfort music in hard times. From a streaming perspective, we've seen the earnings of these legends go up, and from a synchronization perspective, we had a great year with Bob Marley and Burt Bacharach. We made "What the World Needs Now Is Love" [a Bacharach co-write] almost the theme song to uplift people during the pandemic, with the Red Cross and all these advertising campaigns. It has also been very good for us from an acquisition perspective, because artists can't make money on the road. We've been able to provide capital to artists. Melissa Etheridge is a great example of how our team got very creative in helping our artists make money in a tough time via her subscription livestream series, *Etheridge TV*. Livestreaming is certainly one thing, [and] brand alliances are another opportunity. We created a major brand tie-in with [Alice Cooper](#) and Cooper tires. That's an obvious thing, but if you don't pick up the phone and call ...

The pandemic forced you to cancel the Houston hologram tour. What's next there?

We started in Europe, got five or six shows in, and it was really building nicely. It's a shame we had to cancel, but it has been rebooked. We're going to try to go back in early spring of next year. But I also think we're going to have a Vegas hologram show in a residency setting by the end of this year.

Will the boom in song-catalog sales last?

I would say we're only at the beginning, for a number of reasons. One, interest rates are still historically very low, so these assets are very good investments. And artists are not getting younger. Back in 2006, I was trying to convince artists who were 60 and 70 years old to sell us a partnership interest in their works. Those artists are now in their mid-70s to mid-80s, and they want to set up an estate plan for their families. Until interest rates shoot up dramatically or somebody finds a cure for the Fountain of Youth, and while tax rates are still relatively low on capital gains, the boom is going to continue.

Over the past year, younger artists like [OneRepublic's Ryan Tedder](#) and [Calvin Harris](#) have sold portions of their

catalogs. Does it ever make sense for you to acquire a newer artist's work?

Those are the ones we typically stay away from. Everybody seems like they want to sell right now. You've got to be careful what you buy because you don't want to buy a declining asset, and new artists are not as predictable. When their songs come off the radio and they stream less, they earn less. I enjoy seeing my competitors buying newer music. I root for them to be successful, but I also like that they're spending money where I don't want to spend money.

What about newer songwriters?

Between 5% to 10% of our business is new and developing songwriters and producers. We've had a lot of success over the years with bands like [Blue October](#), [Airborne](#), [Toxic Event](#) and [Anberlin](#). LP is signed to us for publishing; [so is] [Kiiara](#), who is on Atlantic Records; [Foy Vance](#), who wrote a lot of [Ed Sheeran](#) songs; and recently, [The Interrupters](#). So we do sign a fair share of new and developing artists, but we don't buy new artists' catalogs.

What factors do you weigh when you consider obtaining rights to the work of more contemporary acts such as [Disturbed](#) and [KT Tunstall](#)?

It has to be iconic or legendary. Disturbed may be one of the biggest hard-rock bands in the world, and I view them as very iconic in their genre. KT Tunstall is a spectacular artist. When I was running Virgin Records, she was signed at Virgin in the U.K., and we had the chance to work with her in America. I thought she was the next Melissa Etheridge. She'll have a resurgence. She's a great songwriter, storyteller and person.

Do you sign and represent songwriters to administration deals, even if the company doesn't have a stake in the songwriter's publishing?

We have in the past. We do it in special circumstances with incredible artists who don't want to sell a piece of their music to us, but do want our marketing and our partnership. So we'll do an admin deal. We have maybe 10 to 12 admin deals that we work, including [Kenny Loggins](#) and Alice Cooper.

Do you have a network of subpublishers to administer globally?

When we bought Frankie Valli & The

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Four Seasons, we gave it to Universal worldwide. Smokey Robinson is at Sony. Different catalogs that we buy are at different places. Stevie Nicks is at Kobalt; Bob Marley, we moved over to Universal. We use different administrators, depending on what's in place when we buy and who we think will do the best job with a particular catalog. And we're agnostic — we have nonexclusive deals with everybody. But Universal is the best worldwide administrator in the business, so we give a lot of our business to them.

Unlike your competitors, you prefer not to buy 100% of an artist's catalog. Why?

We have acquired about 80 catalogs in the last three years, and I would venture to say 80% of those were partnerships with the artists or the estates. We tell an artist in advance: "We don't want to buy 100%. We want to buy 50% or 60% or 70%. We want to leave you with a significant piece," so that they can participate in the earnings and help us market their work when they are part of the marketing plan. It's more organic, and frankly, it always turns out better. So we want to partner. Every once in a while, an artist will say, "I'm selling 100%, and if you don't buy it, I'll sell it to somebody else." Then we'll buy 100%, but we don't like to do that.

What's your take on Hipgnosis, which has spent almost \$2 billion to date on catalogs?

They have a model for themselves, and it's not our vision. I'm not saying their vision isn't as good as ours. It's just different. Hipgnosis came in late, they started throwing around a lot of money, and it has benefited me dramatically that they started stirring up the pot. Artists who may not have thought about [selling their catalogs] are now thinking about it. That's a positive thing, but time will tell whether their strategy is successful.

What about Irving Azoff's Iconic Artists Group, which also focuses on reintroducing legends?

Irving is a formidable competitor, but we've gotten a very big head start. People have a long way to go to catch us, and more importantly, when you're able to talk about partnering with artists and delivering on

reserves, it helps. There are a lot of formidable competitors out there, but there always have been. We've been up against the majors in the past, and the majors went away, and then the majors came back. We've been up against other competitors who have sold, and new ones pop up all the time.

More and more, you're also buying master recording rights along with publishing. Why?

I like to buy masters when it's associated with publishing so that you have both sides. We did that with the War catalog; we've done that on the Gaither Music side. When we bought Sun Records, we bought some publishing, mostly masters. There's a lot of upside in masters if you buy the right type. It really needs to be very iconic. Sun Records is an example. Sun is a bonanza. It's not just the masters: It's the name. It's the logo. It's the diner. We're going to hopefully put a diner in every music city in America. And we're not doing that just because we want to franchise the diners, but because we want to reinvigorate the Sun name and the masters and the earnings. So if you go with your kids to the Sun diner because you're a Sun music fan, your kids are going to experience the music. They'll buy the merch. It's a way to market the music.

What catalogs are you dying to get your hands on?

AC/DC and **Guns N' Roses**. First, I love the music, and in this business, it's important to work the music you love. I would love that opportunity. More practically speaking, there's enormous opportunity with those bands. Even though they're iconic and enormous, they're still underserved in terms of what our team does well, which is take these incredible artists and help their brands grow.

Meet the Team

A closer look at the leaders who built Primary Wave into a powerhouse and are steering its future.

Ramon Villa

Partner, COO

When Primary Wave partnered with the Bob Marley estate in 2018, it wasn't just a full-circle moment for Mestel. It was also one for Villa, who worked with Blackwell and Mestel in the '90s, joined Primary Wave

shortly after the company's founding and was instrumental in the Marley negotiations as Primary Wave's then-CFO and COO. "Every day we're coming up with big ideas for the catalog," he says, from a slate of 75th birthday celebrations over 2020, including a Grammys Week event and live-streamed tribute concert, to the upcoming Vegas show.

Villa hired Jane Reisman as CFO in April 2019, retaining the COO role, but he's still involved in nearly all facets of the business — even helping design the New York headquarters as the company's unofficial "chief aesthetic officer." "It's raising money one day, helping to build a liquor brand for an artist the next day, to designing the office," Villa says. "I like being in an entrepreneurial company, where you can wear many hats."

It keeps him busy. Primary Wave closed seven acquisitions between Christmas and New Year's, including the Nicks partnership, and Villa says his team is now in "fund three mode." (His dream catalog acquisitions? Madonna, Janet Jackson and Björk.) He is also spearheading the development process of the Glenn Gould biopic. "When companies grow, we're used to seeing the personal touch start to wane away," he says. "But because of the way we've kept to the mantra of building the staff mostly on the creative end, the marketing initiatives have become bigger and more creative and more interesting."

Natalia Nastaskin

Partner/Chief Content Officer

As a former lawyer who rose to become GM of the global music group at UTA, Nastaskin never planned to make the jump to publishing. But when Larry Mestel was looking for a chief content officer last year — and secretly hoping she would be interested in the role — Nastaskin saw an opportunity to leverage her network and further tap into her creative skills. "It really enables me to ideate, create and execute deals around legendary [intellectual property], but with contemporary players," says Nastaskin, who took on the newly created position in February.

In her role, she will create content around Primary Wave's catalog in areas such as TV, film and podcasts. "There's nothing we're

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not looking at right now,” she says, including non-fungible tokens and international markets. “With my Russian background, Russia is the first one that we’re analyzing very deeply,” she says, “and we have a couple of proposals out to collaborators in that market.” She’s also tasked with overseeing and expanding Primary Wave’s management roster, which she hopes to invigorate with additional genres and contemporary players.

As the highest-ranking female executive on the creative team, Nastaskin sits on the executive committee of She Is the Music, a nonprofit focused on equality, inclusivity and opportunity for women in the music industry, and she helped launch UTA’s all-female networking series La Femme Majeure.

Justin Shukat

Founding Partner/President, Primary Wave Music Publishing

Anyone who knows Shukat knows that he loves to talk. Thankfully, it’s a skill crucial to his work at Primary Wave, where he is responsible for new writer signings, content acquisitions and facilitating recordings. “It all comes down to communication,” says Shukat, a former marketing executive at Arista Records and Epic Records. “It’s not sending an email or a text. It’s getting on the phone and having conversations. Every Monday morning, we go through our roster [and ask], ‘Who needs to be communicated to?’”

Among the first songwriters Shukat signed was LP, who penned Rihanna’s [Billboard Hot 100](#) top 10 “Cheers (I’ll Drink to That)” in 2011. The roster is now home to hit writers [Jeremih](#), Anthony “Tone” Jones, Teddy Sinclair, [PVRIS](#) and Kiiara. Recent Hot 100 entries include [Justin Bieber](#)’s “Holy” (featuring [Chance the Rapper](#)) and [Ariana Grande](#) and Social House’s “boyfriend,” both co-written by Jones; Ritt Momney’s cover of [Corinne Bailey Rae](#)’s “Put Your Records On” (Primary Wave owns the publishing rights); and Surf Mesa’s “ily (i love you baby)” (featuring Emilee), which samples Franki Valli, who has a marketing/administration deal with Primary Wave. Meanwhile [Doja Cat](#)’s “Freak,” which samples Paul Anka’s “Put Your Head on My Shoulder,” reached No. 6 on [Hot R&B Songs](#).

And after he challenged his team to comb through writers’ catalogs for untapped gems during the pandemic, a song by Primary Wave signee Livvi Franc attracted interest from [Selena Gomez](#)’s team. “I don’t know if it’s going to make the album or turn into a hit, but that song was sitting in my catalog and now it’s in the mix with Selena,” says Shukat. “We’re not going to wait for the phone to ring. You’ve got to present ideas.”

Adam Lowenberg

Partner/Chief Marketing Officer

A former marketing executive at Island Def Jam, Virgin Records and Arista Records, Lowenberg joined Primary Wave in 2008 and steers innovative marketing campaigns. He says he’s guided by one mantra: “We always want to be the first to do something.”

That stretches back to 2009, when Lowenberg brainstormed the first-ever artist-branded scratch-off lottery tickets for Aerosmith’s [Steven Tyler](#), which were promoted with a national commercial using the band’s hit “Dream On.” Fans could win prizes like free concert tickets, backstage passes and even a private performance by the group. “The [Kurt Cobain] Converse deal that Justin Shukat did and this Aerosmith deal enabled us to have two major proofs of concept,” says Lowenberg.

When the first four weeks of the pandemic fueled a 23% rise in global streams of Bob Marley’s soulful, comforting catalog, according to MRC Data, it gave Lowenberg the ammunition to strike a deal with SiriusXM for Tuff Gong Radio — an exclusive, year-round channel dedicated to the Marley legacy that launched in December. He also recently worked with the mayor of Akron, Ohio, to declare April 1 DEVO Day in a bid to push for the Akron-based band’s induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame later this year. “A publisher doesn’t do that,” says Lowenberg. “But we don’t think of ourselves as a publisher.”

A version of this story originally appeared in the April 24, 2021, issue of [Billboard](#). [B](#)

Spotify Stock Soars 8% Ahead of First-Quarter Earnings

BY GLENN PEOPLES

Spotify shares jumped 8% on Friday (April 23) following an analyst’s buy rating at a \$360 price target — a 26.7% premium over the \$284.11 closing price.

Ahead of Spotify releases first-quarter earnings on Wednesday, Jeffries analyst **Andrew Uerkwitz** predicted the streaming giant would become “the primary audio platform for creators” and has “substantial” long-term opportunity in his initial report on the company.

This vote of confidence helps buttress Spotify’s share price, which has lost 26.7% since hitting \$387.44 on Feb. 22, valuing the company at \$73 billion. That fall was perhaps a sign that investors were too enthusiastic about exclusive podcast deals and that spoken word will help improve Spotify’s margins.

Analysts tend to agree that Spotify is the leader in the streaming market, a sentiment CEO Daniel Ek communicated during Spotify’s Feb. 3rd earnings call, calling the shift from linear (one-way) to on-demand (interactive) music a “massive multi-billion user opportunity” accelerated by COVID-19 and that was reachable by “only a handful of companies” in audio.

Spotify’s first-quarter numbers probably won’t disappoint, although they might not impress, either. Universal Music Group’s first-quarter streaming revenues — of which Spotify is the largest contributor — were 1.9% lower than the previous quarter, its parent company Vivendi revealed in its earnings release Thursday. That’s no cause for concern given Universal’s streaming business shrank by the same amount a year earlier.

Spotify certainly isn’t predicting big numbers: Its first-quarter guidance is 1.99

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billion euros to 2.19 billion euros of revenue — a modest range compared to €2.17 billion of revenue it posted in the fourth quarter of 2020.

The company also expects to have 155 million to 158 million subscribers after finishing 2020 with 155 million, and 354 million to 364 million monthly average listeners compared to 345 million to close out 2020. **B**

Motown's Ethiopia Habtemariam Is Ready to Fully Execute Her Vision: 'Stay Tuned'

BY GAIL MITCHELL

When **Ethiopia Habtemariam** was appointed chairman/CEO of Motown Records in March, she became the third woman — and only the second one of color — ever to hold the title at a major label. Her ground-breaking appointment also signaled a full-circle moment for Motown: It is once again a stand-alone label, with Habtemariam reporting directly to Universal Music Group (UMG) chairman/CEO **Lucian Grainge**. (Previously, she reported to Capitol Music Group chairman/CEO **Steve Barnett**, who retired at the end of 2020.)

Founded by **Berry Gordy** in 1959, Motown achieved unprecedented mainstream success through standard-bearers such as Smokey Robinson, The Supremes, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder and The Temptations. Over the years, its roster evolved to include The Jackson 5, Lionel Richie, The Commodores, Rick James, Boyz II Men, Erykah Badu and India.Arie.

Since overseeing Motown's move from New York to Los Angeles as the label's president in 2014, Habtemariam, 41, has led entrepreneurial ventures such as the label's

2015 alliance with Atlanta-based **Quality Control**, which has yielded hits by Lil Baby, Lil Yachty, Migos, City Girls and Layton Greene. Motown is also home to Blacksmith Recordings (Ted When, Vince Staples) and since the 1980s (Asiahn, Njomza) as well as Erykah Badu, Kem, Tiana Major9 and Nigerian star Tiwa Savage.

During Habtemariam's almost seven years at the label, Motown has logged 28 top 40 songs on the Billboard Hot 100 from Lil Baby, Migos, Ne-Yo and others, as well as 28 top 40 albums on the Billboard 200, including projects from Erykah Badu, Kem, Lil Yachty, City Girls and Migos.

Motown's market share has risen, too, growing from 0.4% in 2017 to 0.59% in 2020 to 0.85% so far this year, thanks to the success of Lil Baby's *My Turn*. The Grammy Award-nominated rapper's second album closed out 2020 as the most popular album of the year in the United States, with 2.63 million equivalent album units, according to MRC Data.

What's significant about the label's market-share growth in 2020 and 2021 is that it is largely attributable to recent releases. In the past, catalog has driven Motown's performance, while current market share — essentially the performance of music released in the 18 months prior to the measurement period — averaged 0.14% from 2015 to 2019, according to *Billboard* calculations based on MRC data. In 2020, however, Motown more than doubled that number to 0.32%, and as of mid-April 2021, its current market share was just shy of 1%.

Before joining Motown, Habtemariam began pushing against the glass ceiling in music publishing. She took her first full-time job in the industry in 2001 at Edmonds Publishing, where she worked as a creative manager. She moved to Universal Music Publishing Group in 2003, where she signed Justin Bieber, J. Cole and Chris Brown, and rose to president of urban music and co-head of creative.

She kept her publishing gig when she took on the additional challenge of relaunching Motown, initially as senior vp of the label, in 2011. She continued doing double duty after she was promoted to label president in 2014 and departed UMPG in 2016.

Habtemariam says she's ready to use her newfound autonomy to fully execute the vision she had for Motown when she arrived. She has spent the last several months staffing up, and, she says, "creating a blueprint" for the label's future as a global force in recorded music. Last September, Motown opened its first U.K. branch, headed by managing director Rob Pascoe, and in February revived its **Black Forum** label by reissuing Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1971 Grammy-winning album for best spoken word, *Why I Oppose the War in Vietnam*. On the music side, Motown's 2021 release slate includes Migos' long-awaited *Culture III* album as well as projects by two new signees, singer Bree Runway and hip-hop artist Elhae.

Moving forward, Habtemariam says Motown's approach to A&R will be "signing talent that we think can be the next generation of superstars." She adds that the label is looking for "career artists. It's not just about one song or a couple of tracks here and there. There is so much music out there that you must find talent that you believe will cut through."

How has your job changed now that you are chairman/CEO and reporting to Lucian Grainge?

When I was first approached about Motown, my vision was to return it to operating like a full-fledged stand-alone label and to honor the legacy of the talent that was on the label in the 1960s through the early 2000s. Lucian agreed with me, but at the time we were a team of just four people attempting to accomplish a very ambitious goal. We were part of Island Def Jam, and it wasn't the right structure, focus and support.

What's the size of your staff now, and do you still share services with Capitol Music Group and UMG?

I have a team of about 25. Everything is Los Angeles-based, aside from the U.K. office, and an A&R person in Atlanta. And we do share some services through Universal and are still using Capitol's radio promotions team.

You've come a long way.

I now have autonomy and authority over our budgets, how we are developing our artists and building out the Motown team. I'm

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also thinking more holistically about global strategy for the company.

What is your vision for the Motown of today? You have a very diverse lineup of artists.

It's about signing talent that we think can be the next generation of superstars — people we think will be career artists. It's not just about one song or a couple of tracks here and there. And they can be at different stages in their careers. We now have a roster of talent, like Lil Baby with Quality Control, that we want to grow in a certain direction, and we want to build up the next new artists in the same way. There are a few signings that we're working on now that are exciting, from established acts to artists in the early phases of their careers, like a Tiana Major9. There is so much music out there that you must find talent that you believe will cut through. And then you have to work alongside them to build out their vision, their brand, the story they want to tell and then make great records to support that.

Given Motown's legacy, would you say that it is still a genre label?

I don't think it's about one genre specifically. Youth culture today loves things that were happening 20 years ago. So, you're seeing a real mix of sounds and genres — diverse styles of hip-hop, R&B and pop.

What are you telling your A&R executives to look and listen for when they're considering signing an artist?

We just had an all-day meeting in a studio — all COVID precautions in place, of course — where we talked about artists and music that we think are going to cut through. And I recently met with some kids that go to Spelman and Morehouse to get a vibe for where they are musically. We also have some young A&R consultants that tap in with us. When it comes to what we're looking for in artists, in addition to great songs and music, work ethic is key as is their understanding of who they are and what they want to say in the world.

You've had great success with Lil Baby. Is pop success topmost in your mind as you sign and work artists?

We're not pushing our acts to be something they're not. In the case of Lil Baby, as he's attained more success, he wants more. His

goal is not necessarily to go pop but to be an international superstar. And he understands what he needs to do to get there.

Did you feel stifled by the constraints placed on you before you became CEO?

I wouldn't say I was stifled. I was challenged, and I've always liked challenging myself. Joining Motown was a real learning curve for me because, for one thing, I was coming from music publishing. A&R at a label is very different from A&R on the publishing side. Also, there were a lot of changes happening structurally within UMG, so there was a learning curve across the board. I don't have any regrets, though, because I learned more about the way labels work and artist development.

Climbing the corporate ladder as a Black woman, did you have more issues dealing with pushback from male or female executives?

Both, unfortunately, and it's disappointing. I remember being a young intern and discovering that people who I wanted to be my mentors were not necessarily supportive. I resolved that I was never going to be like that. When you go through tough, challenging scenarios, it's important to break that cycle. What I've experienced as I've moved up the corporate ladder is an old-guard mentality. And the new guard understands that in order to have real success, you have to support and uplift your people. If you have confidence in who you are and what you bring to the table, you aren't afraid of someone else being great, especially when your job is to grow a company. I do think a shift will come to that way of operating. Part of what I'm proud of is that on my journey to getting this seat, I've always shown up as myself.

Clarence Avant, *The Black Godfather of the acclaimed Netflix documentary*, has been a mentor and a champion. He was Motown's chairman of the board back in the day. What did you learn from him during this transition?

I remember meeting him for breakfast in 2014, 2015 and talking through all of the things that were happening. One day, he said, "They tell you about the hits. They tell you about the successes. But they don't tell you about the losses." And he said to keep

going forward, keep putting records out. He reminded me of how much music Motown had put out before it had real success. That was valuable at the time, because the reality then was, we were in the middle of the story.

With your promotion, there are now just four women running labels: Sylvia Rhone at Epic; Desiree Perez at Roc Nation and Julie Greenwald at Atlantic. What does that say about the recording industry?

The music industry still has a lot of work to do. I don't want this to be about me, but me being able to get this seat was necessary for a lot of reasons. It's about the shift that women can make. I remember when Sylvia was the chairman/CEO of Elektra Entertainment Group when I was 16 years old, and it's extremely disappointing that we didn't see another woman of color get to that level in their career for a long time. And there were a lot of incredible female executives, Black female executives that I looked up to that I feel like should have been able to grow in that way in their careers. There are so many incredible women that contribute significantly to the stars and the artists that we see today. The industry would not work without them.

Are you feeling pressure that you have broken a particularly significant glass ceiling and now have to prove yourself?

Of course. But that pressure motivates me. I understand that this is a huge opportunity, and that it's important I succeed so that others who look like me can achieve this as well. And there will be.

You've been adamant about hiring more women in A&R. Where else does the business need to be more inclusive of women?

There should be more women across the entire industry. We see a lot of women in marketing and publicity roles. From a business affairs standpoint, there should be more female representation. We should be supporting more female managers. I've had conversations about how we make sure that A&R research teams are more diverse. If you look at the major labels, you don't see that many people of color and women on those A&R research teams. We, as an industry, are accountable for making those changes.

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Do you miss publishing?

Yeah. To some degree I'm always going to be looking for new writers and producers to team with our artists. It's a completely different job though.

You held both jobs commendably for a while, which was difficult. What prompted you to leave publishing?

It was about having to focus 100% on the label in order to make a change. I never walked away from publishing. There's still a publisher inside of me.

In May, Black Forum will drop *Fire in Little Africa*, which commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre through the work of a collective of emerging Oklahoma hip-hop artists. How did that project come together?

Larry Jenkins [a longtime public relations consultant to Motown and who also handles publicity for Capitol Records] sits on the board of The Bob Dylan Center, and he brought the opportunity to us. It was an immediate yes. Black Forum feels like the perfect platform for *Fire in Little Africa*. Tulsa has a strong music community, and 60 artists came together to make music and honor the history of the town, and to highlight what they are experiencing today. What they created is profound, and we absolutely wanted to be a part of it.

Tory Lanez recently was charged with felonies tied to his alleged shooting of Megan Thee Stallion, and video footage surfaced of a physical altercation between Migos' Quavo and Saweetie. What responsibility does a label have when it comes to incidents like these?

It's our responsibility to be there for the artists, no matter what they're going through. It affects the music they create, and we all do our due diligence to help guide artists in the right direction by educating them about their responsibilities and how their actions can affect their careers and their lives.

This is a question that everyone was asking when the documentary about Michael Jackson's alleged sexual abuse of minors, *Leaving Neverland*, was released. Is it possible to separate the art from the artist?

It depends on the individual. I know people that can still listen to R. Kelly's music and

separate his art from what he's done. And there are many others who will never listen to an R. Kelly record again. The same thing happened with Michael. We don't have any say in whether people are willing to make that separation.

In the case of Quavo, there was no formal statement from Motown or Quality Control.

There was no formal Motown statement, and there were no formal charges against Quavo. There was no clarity on what exactly happened. We would never react to something in that way unless what was insinuated happened.

What's your response to those who say Motown's current success is largely tied to its alliance with Quality Control?

It's important to highlight where Black music was at the time I did the QC deal in 2015. We were going through a transition from iTunes to streaming, and with hip-hop and R&B, you could have a No. 1 record at urban radio, but it didn't equate to sales. We were investing in talent and not seeing a return. It was a tough scenario.

I had known [Quality Control COO] Coach K for a long time and seen what they had done with Migos. But because of where the industry was then, it was easier to develop things externally. In 2016, when QC discovered Lil Yachty, we signed him together. That coincided with the time when the major music companies made their deals with Spotify and we began to get data that showed how prominent R&B and hip-hop were. That's when we started to see a real shift in our industry as it pertains to Black music. So, what do I say? Stay tuned.

[A version of this story originally appeared in the April 24, 2021 issue of *Billboard*.](#)

Here Are All the Winners From the 2021 Oscars

BY DENISE WARNER

It's time for the 93rd annual Academy Awards — even if the ceremony is a bit later than usual.

Who won big at the show? *Nomadland* took home best picture, best director and best actress. Jon Batiste, Atticus Ross and Trent Reznor won best original score for *Soul*, and H.E.R., Dernst Emile II and Tiara Thomas won best song for "Fight For You" from *Judas and the Black Messiah*.

See a full list of winners below:

Best Picture

The Father
Judas and the Black Messiah
Mank
Minari
Nomadland — **WINNER**
Promising Young Woman
Sound of Metal
The Trial of the Chicago 7

Best Director

Thomas Vinterberg, *Another Round*
 David Fincher, *Mank*
 Lee Isaac Chung, *Minari*

Chloé Zhao, *Nomadland* — WINNER

Emerald Fennell, *Promising Young Woman*

Best Actor in a Leading Role

Riz Ahmed, *Sound of Metal*
 Chadwick Boseman, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*

Anthony Hopkins, *The Father* — WINNER

Gary Oldman, *Mank*
 Steven Yeun, *Minari*

Best Actress in a Leading Role

Viola Davis, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*
 Andra Day, *The United States Vs. Billie Holiday*

Vanessa Kirby, *Pieces of a Woman*

Frances McDormand, *Nomadland* — WINNER

Carey Mulligan, *Promising Young Woman*

Best Actress in a Supporting Role

Maria Bakalova, *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm*
 Glenn Close, *Hillbilly Elegy*

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Olivia Colman, *The Father*

Amanda Seyfried, *Mank*

Yuh-Jung Youn, *Minari* — WINNER

Best Actor in a Supporting Role

Sacha Baron Cohen, *The Trial of the Chicago 7*

Daniel Kaluuya, *Judas and the Black Messiah* — WINNER

Leslie Odom, Jr., *One Night in Miami...*

Paul Raci, *Sound of Metal*

Lakeith Stanfield, *Judas and the Black Messiah*

Best Original Song

“Fight For You,” *Judas and the Black Messiah* — music by H.E.R. and Dernst Emile II, lyric by H.E.R. and Tiara Thomas — WINNER

“Hear My Voice,” *The Trial of the Chicago 7* — music by Daniel Pemberton, lyric by Daniel Pemberton and Celeste Waite

“Husavik,” *Eurovision Contest: The Story of Fire Saga* — music and lyric by Savan Kotecha, Fat Max Gsus and Rickard Goransson

“Io Si (Seen),” *The Life Ahead (La Vita Davanti A Se)* — music by Diane Warren, lyric by Diane Warren and Laura Pausini

“Speak Now,” *One Night in Miami...* — music and lyric by Leslie Odom, Jr. and Sam Ashworth

Best Original Score

Terence Blanchard, *Da 5 Bloods*

Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross, *Mank*

Emile Mosseri, *Minari*

James Newton Howard, *News of the World*

Trent Reznor, Atticus Ross and Jon Batiste, *Soul* — WINNER

Best Adapted Screenplay

Borat Subsequent Moviefilm

The Father — **WINNER**

Nomadland

One Night in Miami...

The White Tiger

Best Original Screenplay

Judas and the Black Messiah

Minari

Promising Young Woman — **WINNER**

Sound of Metal

The Trial of the Chicago 7

Best Cinematography

Sean Bobbitt, *Judas and the Black Messiah*,

Erik Messerschmidt, *Mank* — WINNER

Dariusz Wolski, *News of the World*

Joshua James Richards, *Nomadland*

Phedon Papamichael, *The Trial of the Chicago 7*

Best Animated Short Film

Burrow

Genius Loci

If Anything Happens I Love You — **WINNER**

Opera

Yes-People

Best Live Action Short Film

Feeling Through

The Letter Room

The Present

Two Distant Strangers — **WINNER**

White Eye

Best Animated Feature Film

Onward

Over the Moon

A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon

Soul — **WINNER**

Wolfwalkers

Best Documentary Feature

Collective

Crip Camp

The Mole Agent

My Octopus Teacher — **WINNER**

Time

Best Documentary Short Subject

Colette — **WINNER**

A Concerto is a Conversation

Do Not Split

Hunger Ward

A Love Song for Latasha

Best International Feature Film

Another Round, Denmark — **WINNER**

Better Days, Hong Kong

Collective, Romania

The Man Who Sold His Skin, Tunisia

Quo Vadis, Aida?, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Best Achievement in Sound

Greyhound

Mank

News of the World

Soul

Sound of Metal — **WINNER**

Best Film Editing

Yorgos Lamprinos, *The Father*

Chloé Zhao, *Nomadland*

Frederic Thoraval, *Promising Young Woman*

Mikkel E.G. Nielsen, *Sound of Metal* —

WINNER

Alan Baumgarten, *The Trial of the Chicago 7*

Best Visual Effects

Love and Monsters

The Midnight Sky

Mulan

The One and Only Ivan

Tenet — **WINNER**

Best Makeup and Hairstyling

Emma

Hillbilly Elegy

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom — **WINNER**

Mank

Pinocchio

Best Production Design

The Father

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom

Mank — **WINNER**

News of the World

Tenet

Best Costume Design

Emma

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom — **WINNER**

Mank

Mulan

Pinocchio 

H.E.R., Jon Batiste and All the Record- Setters From the 2021 Oscars

BY PAUL GREIN

By now you probably know that [H.E.R.](#), D'Mile and [Tiara Thomas](#) won the Oscar for best original song at the 93rd annual Academy Awards, which were presented on Sunday (April 25). They took the prize for “Fight For You” from *Judas and the Black Messiah* in what was seen as a major upset. [Trent Reznor](#), [Atticus Ross](#) and [Jon Batiste](#) won best original score for *Soul*, as was widely expected.

But you probably don't know all the records that they – and the night's other key winners – set. You've come to the right place. We've put it all together for you.

Nomadland won best picture, and its director, Chloé Zhao, became the first woman of

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color to win for best director. We'll get to that, but let's start with the music categories.

The Oscar win for H.E.R., D'Mile and Thomas comes just six weeks after they won a Grammy for song of the year for "I Can't Breathe." This is the first time in 35 years that a songwriter or songwriting team has won an Oscar in the same awards season that they won a Grammy for song of the year for a different song. Lionel Richie won both awards in 1986. He and Michael Jackson shared the Grammy for song of the year on Feb. 25, 1986 for "We Are The World." On March 24 of that year, he won the Oscar for "Say You, Say Me" from *White Nights*.

With the win for "Fight For You," fellow nominee Diane Warren's Oscar track record stands at 0-12. She is one of just seven people in Oscar history – [across all categories](#) – to amass as many as 12 nominations without a win. (Let's hope nomination No. 13 will be lucky for her.)

Reznor, Ross and Batiste are the first three-member composing team in 33 years to win for best original score. The last three-member team to win in this category was the team of Ryuichi Sakamoto, David Byrne and Cong Su, who took the 1987 award for *The Last Emperor*.

Reznor and Ross won in this same category 10 years ago for *The Social Network*. Only three other composers – Howard Shore, Gustavo Santaolalla and Alexandre Desplat – have won twice in this category since 1999, when the Academy consolidated two score awards into one.

Batiste is only the third Black composer to win in a scoring category. Prince won the 1984 award for best musical score for *Purple Rain*. Herbie Hancock won the 1986 award for best original score for *'Round Midnight*.

This is just the second time in Oscar history that Black musicians have won in both song and score categories in the same year. At the 1984 Oscars, when Prince won for best original song score, Stevie Wonder won best original song for "I Just Called to Say I Love You" from *The Woman in Red*.

Soul also won for best animated feature film. It is the second film to win for both animated feature film and original score. The first was *Up* (2009). Pete Docter direct-

ed both of these films. Michael Giacchino scored *Up*.

Nomadland is the first best picture winner with three female producers – Zhao, Frances McDormand and Mollye Asher. (The other producers on the film were Peter Spears and Dan Janvey.)

McDormand also won best actress for the third time. She previously won for *Fargo* and *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*. McDormand is just the third actor or actress to win three lead acting Oscars. Katharine Hepburn leads with four best actress wins. Daniel Day-Lewis has won best actor three times.

McDormand also becomes just the second person to win an Oscar in a lead acting category and also win for producing or co-producing a best picture (not necessarily in the same year). The first was Michael Douglas, who co-produced the 1975 best picture winner, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and 12 years later won best actor for *Wall Street*. (Two other actors – George Clooney and Brad Pitt – have won for supporting roles and also for best picture.)

Besides becoming the first woman of color to win for best director, Zhao becomes just the second female winner in that category, following Kathryn Bigelow (*The Hurt Locker*, 2009).

Anthony Hopkins, 83, became the oldest winner of an acting Oscar. He won his second best actor Oscar for *The Father*, 29 years after he first won in the category for *The Silence of the Lambs*. Hopkins' win was an upset. The late Chadwick Boseman was expected to prevail for *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*.

Three of the four acting winners were born outside the U.S. Hopkins was born in Wales, Youn Yuh-jung (best supporting actress for *Minari*) was born in Korea and Daniel Kaluuya (best supporting actor for *Judas and the Black Messiah*) was born in England.

Glenn Close, nominated for best supporting actress for *Hillbilly Elegy*, lost again, bringing her track record to 0-8. Close thus ties the late Peter O'Toole as the actor with the most Oscar losses without a win. (May she, like Warren, win one day.)

Emerald Fennell won best original screen-

play for *Promising Young Woman*. She's the first female screenwriter to win an Oscar since Diablo Cody won in the category 13 years ago for *Juno*.

Scott R. Fisher shared the award for best visual effects for *Tenet* with Andrew Jackson, David Lee and Andrew Lockley. Fisher's father, Thomas L. Fisher, won in the same category 23 years ago for his work on *Titanic*. 📺

Michael Jackson Estate Gets Judge to Toss Wade Robson's Abuse Suit

BY ASHLEY CULLINS

Michael Jackson's estate has again convinced an L.A. judge that the late performer's businesses can't be sued by Wade Robson over alleged childhood sexual abuse – but the long-running fight may not be over as the choreographer's lawyer has already said they'll appealing the decision.

Robson sued in 2013 claiming Jackson sexually abused him for nearly a decade and his companies MJJ Productions and MJJ Ventures [facilitated the conduct](#). The estate, which controls the entities, argued it's entitled to summary judgment because the companies owed Robson no legal duty and had no ability to control Jackson's behavior.

In a tentative ruling, which was later adopted, L.A. County Superior Court judge Mark A. Young agreed with the estate that it had no relationship with Robson that would create a legal duty for it to protect him from the alleged molestation.

"There is no evidence supporting Plaintiff's contention that Defendants exercised control over Jackson," writes Young. "The evidence further demonstrates that Defendants had no legal ability to control Jackson, because Jackson had complete and total ownership of the corporate defendants.

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Without control, there is no special relationship or duty that exists between Defendants and Plaintiff. In addition, there is no evidence of misfeasance by Defendants.”

Judge Mitchell Beckloff [had previously dismissed](#) Robson’s suit in December 2017, finding that it was filed outside the statute of limitations. It was [revived by an appeals court](#) in early 2020 after California enacted a law that extended the age by which people must file sexual assault claims against third parties from 26 to 40.

Michael Jackson’s estate has been represented in the matter by the late Howard Weitzman and Jonathan Steinsapir, who on Monday sent *The Hollywood Reporter* a statement in response to the decision.

“As of today, a summary judgment AGAINST Wade Robson has been granted three different times by two different judges of the Superior Court,” says Steinsapir. “Wade Robson has spent the last 8 years pursuing frivolous claims in different lawsuits against Michael Jackson’s estate and companies associated with it. Robson has taken nearly three dozen depositions and inspected and presented hundreds of thousands of documents trying to prove his claims, yet a Judge has once again ruled that Robson’s claims have no merit whatsoever, that no trial is necessary and that his latest case is dismissed.”

Robson’s attorney Vince Finaldi on Monday also sent *THR* a statement. “This decision of Judge Mark A. Young suffers from the same fatal flaws as the prior decision of prior Judge Mitchell Beckloff, which we were able to overturn on appeal,” says Finaldi. “For this reason, we will be appealing it to the Court of Appeal, and to the Supreme Court if necessary. If allowed to stand, the decision would set a dangerous precedent that would leave thousands of children working in the entertainment industry vulnerable to sexual abuse by persons in places of power. The children of our state deserve protection, and we will not stop fighting until we insure that every child is safe.”

This article was originally published by [The Hollywood Reporter](#). **B**

Red Rocks Amphitheatre Resumes Concerts With High Hopes, Smaller Crowds

BY STEVE KNOPPER

In some respects, Thursday looked and sounded like a typical spring night at Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Morrison, Colo., outside Denver. Women with spangled backpacks held hands and twirled to local act [Lotus](#), a sunny instrumental jam band whose guitarists blew repeatedly on their fingers due to the bracing cold winds. A man in a tie-dyed jumpsuit stumbled up the venue’s steps to his seat. But much was different: The 2,500 fans were seated at 25% capacity, with every other row kept empty and patrolled by security. Guests were allowed to move around in the crowd if they wore masks, which were also required in restrooms and concessions areas.

“This is the beginning of the end to this bullsh—, and we’re going to celebrate that,” says [Eric Pirritt](#), president of Live Nation Colorado and the Rocky Mountains, promoter of Lotus’ four-night run starting Thursday. “We’re going to get better at this and continue to grow.”

The [last major concert](#) in the Denver area before the pandemic shut down the live industry was Post Malone at the Pepsi Center on March 12, 2020. Red Rocks was no different — although it reopened briefly in September for shows by Denver heroes Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats and a capacity crowd of just 175 — but now that vaccinations against COVID-19 are widely available and an increasing amount of research indicates that outdoor gatherings are relatively low risk when masking and social distancing are employed, local public-health officials signed off on reduced-capacity Red Rocks shows.

“All of those things taken into account, we feel comfortable letting this move forward,”

says [Bob McDonald](#), director of the Denver Department of Public Health and Environment. “We’ve been discussing what can be allowed for many weeks with other venues.”

Live Nation initially scheduled two Lotus dates at \$45 and \$70 per ticket. When both sold out in minutes on April 2, promoters added two more dates, and those sold out quickly as well.

The demand for tickets and the return of open-air shows in Denver are encouraging signs for promoters, venues and ticket sellers that wrote off the previous four quarters. Live Nation reported losses totaling more than \$10 billion in the first nine months of the pandemic, and [Brian Kitts](#), spokesman for the city-run venue, says Red Rocks lost more than \$50 million in 2020.

While it’s more cost-efficient to sell 9,500 tickets every night, Kitts says Lotus’ four gigs, which were attended by 10,000 fans total, enabled Red Rocks to gain financial ground again.

“It’s a tremendous relief,” he says. “For 175 people, nobody’s making money. But with 2,500, you’re starting to sell some beers and tickets and putting people back to work.”

The rest of Red Rocks’ schedule is slowly filling up. Diplo is doing two nights in May, Ben Harper plays Memorial Day and local heroes Big Head Todd and the Monsters are slated for June.

Promoters say they’ve deliberately focused on booking individual performers (as opposed to large bands) and locally based who can drive to the venue, in part to mitigate the cumbersome safety precautions that artists need to follow when rehearsing and traveling to gigs. (Lotus’ bassist and sampler Jesse Miller says most of the band’s members are vaccinated but still rehearsed in masks after out-of-town members came in for the shows.)

As of April 23, 28.4% of [Colorado](#)’s population had been fully vaccinated, according to *The Washington Post*, ranking it 29th in the nation. But Live Nation’s Pirritt says he’s bullish about the local live industry ramping up, given the pace of vaccinations in the United States. (According to *The Washington Post*, 27.5% of the country has been fully vaccinated, while 41.3% has received at least

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one shot.) “We’re going to roll quickly back to normalcy. Quick,” he says. “Red Rocks is going to have a very robust calendar, to say the least.”

Others are more cautious, however. **Alex Huffman**, an aerosol scientist and Denver University chemistry professor, says masks and social distancing are “pieces of the puzzle” that make Red Rocks safer, but he adds, “I’d be happier if we could wait a little longer and push vaccination rates up as high as we possibly can.”

Don Strasburg, co-president of AEG Presents Rocky Mountains, has booked several Red Rocks shows for the coming months, he’s personally more cautious than his Live Nation rival. “We’re doing everything we can to prepare for a multitude of scenarios,” he says. “It’s important to be as patient as we can be.”

At Red Rocks on April 22, the fans sounded no less enthusiastic than they were before the pandemic. They cheered, screamed and danced face-to-face — most without masks — during Lotus’ two sets. There were just fewer of them. To organize crowd control, Live Nation divided the amphitheater into 625-person quadrants, each with its own restroom and concessions stand, and fans were mostly diligent about masking up when they wandered away from their areas. “It’s nice to be around a lot of happy people,” said Kelly Sylvain, a 33-year-old home-care worker who bought tickets for all four shows and flew in from Michigan.

At the end of Lotus’ first set, in which the five members of the instrumental band stood 10 feet apart from each other, guitarist Mike Rempel told the crowd: “It was a long year, but we’re bringing it back.” **B**

Not So Fast: Shuttered Venue Grant Application Relaunch Moves Dates Again

BY DAVE BROOKS

The Small Business Administration has moved the reopening of its application portal for the Shuttered Venue Operator Grants program to Monday at 12 p.m. EST after a number of applicants complained about a decision to reopen the portal on Saturday.

The SBA made the announcement via Twitter, writing, “We heard you and we are taking action. In response to stakeholder feedback about reopening the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant application this weekend, the application portal will now reopen on Monday, April 26 at 12pm ET.”

They followed up with additional tweets stating, “It is our top priority to deliver on the promise and commitment to provide economic lifelines to these hardest-hit venues ASAP,” and, “Yet, we understand the challenges a weekend opening would bring and to ensure the greatest number of businesses can apply for these funds, we decided to reschedule. We remain committed to delivering economic aid to this hard-hit sector quickly and efficiently.”

The account applicants to visit this link to review a checklist of items they might need for the loans, which can be found [here](#).

The relaunch is a result of the SBA’s website crashing on April 8 as venues operators, talent agencies, cinema owners and managers of museums, cultural arts groups and zoos applied for \$15 billion in federal aid passed last year and signed into law on Dec. 27. **B**

Mezzo-Soprano Christa Ludwig Dies at 93

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

Christa Ludwig, a renowned interpreter of Wagner, Mozart and Strauss who starred on the world’s great stages for four decades, died at her home in Klosterneuburg, Austria. She was 93. Her death was announced Sunday (April 25) by the Vienna State Opera, which said she died Saturday. A mezzo-soprano who also succeeded in soprano roles, Ludwig made her Vienna State Opera debut as Cherubino in Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro* on April 14, 1955, when the company was temporarily in the Redoutensaele.

She was heard in the rebuilt opera house for the first time that Dec. 26 as Octavian in Strauss’ *Der Rosenkavalier*. She sang 769 performances of 42 roles in Vienna. “The words of the Marschallin often quoted by Christa Ludwig — ‘With a light heart and light hands, hold and take, hold and let’ — which she repeatedly referred to as a personal motto, were actual and true expressions of her way of life,” Vienna State opera director Bogdan Rosic said in a statement. “She took art as seriously as one can take it seriously, subordinated her life to it, but at her own request she said goodbye to the stage ‘with a light hand. Later she was able to talk about her decades almost without melancholy, always with a pinch of irony, self-knowledge, but also without false modesty.”

Ludwig made her debut at New York’s Metropolitan Opera on Dec. 10, 1959, as Cherubino, with Erich Leinsdorf conducting a cast that included Giorgio Tozzi as Figaro, Elisabeth Söderström as Susanna, Lucine Amara as the Countess, Regina Resnik as Marcellina and Teresa Stratas as Barbarina. “Her singing was precise and even, each tone clear and true, and her Italian rippled along like a second music,” critic Louis Biancolli wrote in *The New York World-Telegram*

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and Sun. “The ovation was fully deserved.”

She sang 119 performances of 15 roles at the Met. “Her debut season at the Met in 59/60 was the stuff of legends when she sang Octavian, the Marschallin, Brangane, and Amneris, all within a few months of each other,” Met general manager Peter Gelb recalled in an email. “Even if most of her career was centered in Europe, she was certainly regarded by Met audiences as one of the greatest mezzos of the second half of the 20th century.”

Ludwig was born in Berlin on March 16, 1928, to tenor Anton Ludwig and mezzo-soprano Eugenie Besalla-Ludwig. She grew up in Aachen, where her father was an opera administrator and as a young girl watched her mother sing with conductor Herbert Van Karajan. She debuted in 1946 at Oper Frankfurt as Prince Orlovsky in Johann Strauss II’s *Die Fledermaus* and went on to the Staatstheater Darmstadt and Staatsooper Hannover before her breakthrough in Vienna.

Just before her first appearance at the Met, she debuted at the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Dorabella in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte* in on Nov. 9, 1959, with conductor Joseph Krips, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf as Fiordiligi, Fernando Corena as Don Alfonso and Ludwig’s husband, bass-baritone Walter Berry, as Guglielmo. In Chicago she also sang Elena in Boito’s *Mefistofele* and Preziosilla in Verdi’s *La Forza del Destino*.

In the 1970s, her career was hampered when capillary veins in her throat burst. “It was an experience necessary for my art,” she told The Associated Press in 2001. “I like to climb over obstacles, otherwise life is so boring.” Ludwig sang her Met farewell as Fricka on April 3, 1993, and her Vienna State Opera farewell as Klytämnestra in Strauss’ *Elektra* on Dec. 14, 1994. She retired from singing while teaching occasional master classes. “I could no longer compete with myself,” she said. After her last performance she recalled it snowing and feeling relief. “I went through Vienna without a shawl around my neck, with an open neck — and I was so happy!” she said.

Ludwig was married to Berry from 1957-70 and in 1972 married French actor Paul-Emile Deiber. Her notable recordings

include Fricka in *Die Walküre* on conductor Georg Solti’s landmark Decca version of Wagner’s *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*) and Octavian in *Rosenkavalier* with Schwarzkopf, Stich-Randall, Otto Edelmann and Karajan conducting. She was a frequent collaborator with conductor Karl Böhm and with conductor Leonard Bernstein.

She sang at Bernstein’s New York Philharmonic memorial concert in 1990. Ludwig was made an Austrian Kammersängerin in 1972, made an honorary member of the Vienna State Opera in 1981 and awarded a knight French Legion of Honor in 1989 and a commander Legion of Honor in 2010. Berry died in 2000 and Deiber in 2011. Ludwig is survived by a son, Wolfgang Berry, and stepson Philippe Deiber. □

Milva, Beloved Italian Singer, Dies at 81

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

Milva, one of Italy’s most popular singers in the ‘60s and ‘70s who was also beloved by many fans abroad, died Saturday (April 24) at her home in Milan. She was 81.

In announcing her death, Italy’s Culture Minister Dario Franceschini said Milva’s versatile voice “stirred deep emotions in entire generations.” No cause of death was given.

Milva also starred as a stage actress, with a repertoire heavily based on the works of German playwright Bertolt Brecht. She often worked with Milan theater director Giorgio Strehler, who directed her in one of Brecht’s signature works, *The Threepenny Opera*, a musical drama.

Born in 1939 as Maria Ilva Biolcati in Goro, a Po River delta town, she adopted the one-word stage name Milva. Along with Italian singers Ornella Vanoni and Mina, another performer who used a first name only, Milva was considered one of the greatest Italian popular female singers.

Milva sold some 80 million records, the

LaPresse news agency said, and recorded 173 albums. She was nicknamed “Milva the Red,” for her voluminous red hair as well as “the Panther of Goro” for her vitality.

Germany, France and Italy all honored her with national awards. Milva also had a following of fans in Asia, particularly in South Korea. She appeared 15 times at the San Remo festival, the annual contest to promote Italian songs, joking after her 12th time that she never would win.

One of her hits was the song “Alexander Platz.” Composed by Italian songwriter Franco Battiato in 1982, it explored love in divided Berlin during Cold War times, with its name taken from the famous Berlin square Alexanderplatz.

Other top Italian songwriters whose works Milva sang included Luigi Tenco and Fabrizio De Andre.

Italian President Sergio Mattarella on Saturday praised Milva as a “cultured, sensitive and versatile interpreter, much appreciated abroad.” He extended his condolences to her family.

Milva, who announced her retirement in 2010 after more than a half-century of performing, lived in Milan with a daughter, Martina Corgnati. The singer’s former husband, Maurizio Corgnati, was a TV director who died in 1992.

Music critic Mario Luzzatto Fegiz wrote in *Corriere della Sera* that among Milva’s many talents was the uncanny ability to sing just about any kind of music in any language after listening to it just once.

“She worked by memory,” Luzzatto Fegiz recalled. “In German, she wasn’t even able to order breakfast.”

Milan’s Piccolo Theater Strehler said it would host a wake on Tuesday in its foyer and that Milva’s funeral to follow will be private. In a Facebook post, the theater paid tribute to her, saying she was an “indomitable, sensitive, passionate woman, an artist all heart and voice.” □

Clicking & Streaming: Spotify Debuts Facebook Miniplayer

BY TATIANA CIRISANO

Starting today (April 26), Spotify users can stream music while scrolling through Facebook through a new miniplayer baked into the social networking platform.

The expanded partnership between the world's largest streaming service and social networking platform is intended to help music fans share and discover music and podcasts more widely, without having to switch between platforms. Spotify has 155 million paying subscribers and 345 million total active users, while Facebook reported 2.8 billion monthly active users as of the fourth quarter of 2020.

With the miniplayer, both Spotify Premium and free users can experience full playback directly within the Facebook app on iOS and Android, although free users can take advantage of the miniplayer only in shuffle mode with ads.

The miniplayer also allows Facebook users to play Spotify songs included in Facebook posts by both friends and verified artists, and even from user-uploaded videos on Facebook that contain licensed music. The Spotify miniplayer will keep playing even when the Facebook user scrolls away.

The new integration is rolling out in the U.S., Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, South Africa, Thailand and Uruguay, with plans to expand to further markets in the coming months.

Read Spotify's full blog post announcement [here](#). 

Event Designer Bobby Garza In Austin, In a Pandemic: Fear of 2022 Many Tours

BY STEVE KNOPPER

When the concert business shut down in March 2020, Bobby Garza abruptly shifted from putting on live events to tearing them down — his company, Austin-based Forefront Networks, had to cancel the California food-and-music festival Yountville Live later that month. In early April, his life changed even more dramatically: Forefront furloughed 30 percent of its staff, including him.

As part of Billboard's efforts to best cover the coronavirus pandemic and its impacts on the music industry, we will be speaking with Garza, a 43-year-old former Forefront creative team leader who used to be general manager of festival producer Transmission Events, every other week to chronicle his experience throughout the crisis. As of early January, he is now vice president of programs and community outreach at the Long Center, a performing-arts facility in Austin, which, among other things is working on dispersing emergency SAVES grants worth tens of thousands of dollars to struggling local concert venues. (Read the latest installment [here](#) and see the full series [here](#).)

I went to an actual [concert at Red Rocks](#) last night. Does that kind of outdoor, 2,500-capacity, every-other-row, socially distanced show feel safe to you?

My thoughts have changed a lot. The science is getting better. There's not a documented case of somebody getting ill by passing movement outdoors. We were trying to negotiate that with the [Long Live Music](#) stuff we were doing: Come [to the show] in your own little pod, do what you feel, but if you're out and interacting with other people, and you come up to a bar, you've got

to wear a mask.

Are we going to see more and more of these events soon?

Our public-health environment is getting better, and the vaccination rates are getting better, and it's going to be a moving target for the next six months or so: "How comfortable are we this week? Walk-up bars might be OK, but if we do that, we're going to stock all our bars with KN95 masks. If somebody walks up and doesn't have a mask we're going to say, 'You have to put this on.'" I feel OK about outdoors in those types of responsible setups. If you're skipping rows, that's the same thing we're thinking about indoors in the fall.

Is Red Rocks one of those tentpole-type venues that could influence other venues around the country?

Yeah, I think so. The [amphitheatre](#) out at Circuit of the Americas [near Austin] is doing stuff in the near future — at the end of the month, they're doing the opera. They're trying it out because others have. Europe has demonstrated some smart, responsible ways to do stuff. We're all learning from each other.

Walk me through the next few months of what you think opening up the concert business is going to be like.

We're already having conversations about '22 and '23, which is normal for a performing-arts center. My fear, to be honest, is '22 is going to be where everyone feels fine and everybody wants to tour. The reality is there are only so many weekends in a year. You're playing against some other band that plays to the same market, and you're diluting the entire universe of ticket buyers. That's what scares me right now.

When we get back to more or less normal, and there aren't enough fans to support all the bands going back on the road, how does the industry deal with that? More package tours?

Probably. Selfishly, I worry about whether it's going to be way expensive to book the talent you're used to booking, whether it's a bidding war to get the right folks in the right places. And I also worry about venues and festivals and spaces saying, "We can't make it work." It's just a different hurdle to have to jump over.

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How's the family?

My oldest has started to go to high-school band camp and he got to wear a sousaphone for the first time, the result of which was him being sore for about four days — which makes me happy! And my youngest is going to be playing saxophone. So I've got to get a bigger car. And my youngest went back to school this week — in-person school! I can't express to you the amount of anxiety I continue to feel with that. Luckily, the school he goes to has been really good. The teacher met with Mauro's mom and I and showed us the room on Zoom and said, "Here's how the desks are set up" and "Here's what the cafeteria looks like." They were all very welcoming. 📍

Lil Mosey Wanted for Rape Charge After Missing Court Date

BY CLAUDIA ROSENBAUM

A bench warrant has been issued for rapper [Lil Mosey](#)'s arrest after he failed to appear for his court date Wednesday to answer for charges of second-degree rape.

Mosey, real name Lathan Moses Echols — best known for his top 10 [Billboard Hot 100](#) hit "Blueberry Faygo" — was charged April 2 in Washington state's Lewis County with rape in the second degree, accused of engaging in sexual intercourse with a person who was incapable of consent.

The investigation into Mosey, who burst on the scene at only 16 after releasing songs on SoundCloud, began Jan. 6 after a Lewis County detective was contacted about a house party where the alleged incident took place. According to court records, a woman said she attended the party with another girlfriend at a cabin in Randle, Washington, held by Mosey. When the woman arrived, there were other people there and they told detectives that they kept to themselves most of the night. At one point in the night,

someone brought out White Claw hard seltzers and champagne for the girls to drink, according to the affidavit of probable cause filed in the case.

The woman told police that she did not remember much after drinking the champagne but remembered walking up in an upstairs bedroom in her bra and underwear and someone telling her there was video of her having sex, according to the affidavit of probable cause filed against the 19-year-old rapper by the Lewis County Prosecuting Attorney's office. The victim recounted she grabbed her friend and they left the house. The next day, a detective contacted her, and she said that she had no specific memory of the rape taking place but that she remembered people saying she had sex.

On Jan. 9, detectives interviewed the other woman who said she remembered Mosey getting into their car and pulling his pants down. She admitted to having consensual sex with Mosey in the car. She says then her memory "gets fuzzy" and the next thing she remembers is being in the cabin with guys on her and a man later identified as Francisco "Cisco" Peter saying, "wake up, wake up, suck this di-, bi--," according to the affidavit for probable cause. She said she later received a message from one of the people at the party where the guys were talking about "training two girls." She told the detective that she had injuries that she could not explain including bruising on her arm, neck and inner knee. The alleged victim later told detectives that she remembered blacking out and walking up with Mosey having sex with her in an upstairs bedroom.

After reviewing the information from the detective, Lewis County Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Paul Masiello requested that Mosey be detained to face charges of second-degree rape.

Lewis County Prosecuting Attorney Jonathan Meyer tells *Billboard* that, if convicted, Mosey faces a minimum of 78 to 102 months in prison. "Any crime against a person is going to be taken very seriously by this office, especially when we have the time of actions that are alleged here," Meyer says.

Mosey's rep has not responded for a request for comment. 📍

Electric Forest Pushes Fest to 2022: 'Having To Postpone Again Is A Special Kind Of Heartache'

BY KATIE BAIN

Electric Forest is officially pushing its 2021 edition to next year. Today (April 23), the festival [announced](#) that "after a tumultuous year full of challenges, HQ has eagerly anticipated and worked towards our collective return to Electric Forest. However, as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have continued, it has become clear that we are not going to be able to gather in 2021 and that postponing to 2022 is our only course of action."

The Michigan festival — which focuses on a mix of electronic music, jam bands and other sound — is co-produced by the Colorado-based Madison House Presents and California-based Insomniac Events and typically happens in late June. Producers had been eyeing a return this fall before the pandemic made those plans untenable and noted that it's not entirely clear on when the 2022 event will take place.

"Given the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic," the statement continues, "Electric Forest 2022 dates will be announced when full clarity can be achieved with respect to all aspects of planning."

Current ticket holders have the option to roll their ticket over to the 2022 event or request a refund.

Read the complete statement below. *After a tumultuous year full of challenges, HQ has eagerly anticipated and worked towards our collective return to Electric Forest. However, as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have continued, it has become clear that we are not going to be able to gather in 2021 and that postponing to 2022 is our only*

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course of action.

While we all miss each other tremendously and can't wait to connect again, the safety of the Forest Family and the community that hosts us remains of utmost importance. This must be kept front of mind, along with the meticulous planning and coordination required to coordinate and produce our time together each summer in Rothbury. We must balance our optimism with realism – and we must respect the process in place, the efforts underway, and the sacrifices we've all made over the last year in an effort to keep each other safe.

We are eternally thankful to the entire Forest Family for the patience, planning, and determination shown over the last year. Having to postpone again is a special kind of heartache, and one which will only be healed when we are together again in 2022. 📺

Karol G, J Balvin & Myke Towers Lead Heat Latin Music Awards 2021 Nominations: See Full List

BY GRISELDA FLORES

Karol G, J Balvin and Myke Towers lead the Heat Latin Awards 2021 nominations with five nods each. The list continues with Bad Bunny and Farina, who are both up for four awards, followed by Anuel AA, Prince Royce, Anitta, Natti Natasha, El Alfa, Nathy Peluso and Nicki Nicole with three each.

For the sixth edition of the awards, a new category has been announced: best Dominican urban artist. In homage to the host country, up for this new category are El Alfa, Natti Natasha and Mozart La Para, among others.

The 2021 awards ceremony is set to take place in June with the exact date to be an-

nounced. Starting now, fans can vote for their favorite artists in each category once a day via the LosHeat.tv app.

See below for the full list of nominees.

Best Male Artist

Camilo
Maluma
J Balvin
Nicky Jam
Prince Royce
Farruko
Ozuna
Bad Bunny

Best Female Artist

Rosalía
Karol G
Grecicy
Farina
Kali Uchis
Natti Natasha
Anitta
Nathy Peluso
Danna Paola

Best Band Or Group

Cnco
Reik
Piso 21
Morat
Zion & Lennox
Gente De Zona
Mau Y Ricky

Best Rock Artist

Mon Laferte
Jorge Drexler
Morat
Juanes
Los Amigos Invisibles
Zoé
Fito Páez
Diamante Eléctrico

Best Pop Artist

Camilo
Luis Fonsi
Ricardo Montaner
Grecicy
Sebastián Yatra
Carlos Rivera
Aitana
Luis Figueroa

Best Urban Artist

Bad Bunny
J Balvin
Karol G

Nicky Jam
Arcangel
Ozuna
Farruko
Anuel Aa
Farina
Myke Towers
Rauw Alejandro

Best Tropical Artist

N'klabe
Kalimete
Víctor Manuelle
Carlos Vives
Romeo Santos
Gabriel Pagán
Marc Anthony
Prince Royce

Best Región Sur (Chile, Argentina, Brasil, Paraguay Y Uruguay, Perú) Artist

Nathy Peluso
Anitta
Nicki Nicole
Paloma Mami
Cazzu
Khea
Yahaira Plasencia

Best Región Andina (Colombia, Ecuador Y Venezuela) Artist

Mike Bahía
Sebastián Yatra
Nacho
Farina
Manuel Turizo
Danny Ocean
Evaluna Montaner
Micro Tdh

Best Región Norte (Centroamérica, México Y Caribe) Artist

Farruko
El Alfa
Danna Paola
Rauw Alejandro
Lunay
Sech
Milly
Justin Quiles

Best New Artist

Natanael Cano
Guaynaa
Boza
Jay Wheeler
Alex Rose
Jessi Uribe

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Nicki Nicole

Nathy Peluso

Most Promising Act

Juan De Dios Pantoja

Katie Angel

Emilia Mernes

Juhn

Amy Gutiérrez

Alejandro Santamaría

Jay Menez

Mora

Kenia Os

Best Video

"Location" (Karol G, Anuel Aa, J Balvin)

"Problema" (Daddy Yankee)

"Mi Niña Remix" (Wisn, Myke Towers, Maluma Ft. Anitta)

"Machu Picchu" (Camilo & Evaluna Montaner)

"La Luz" (J Balvin, Sech)

"Bichota" (Karol G)

"La Noche De Anoche" (Bad Bunny & Rosalía)

"Los Dioses" (Anuel Aa Y Ozuna)

"Rojo" (J Balvin)

Influencer Of The Year

Kimberly Loaiza

Kunno

Luisa Fernanda W

Mario Ruiz

El Chombo

Marko

Mr Zeo

Molusco

Best Regional Popular Artist

Christian Nodal

Paola Jara

Jessi Uribe

Pipe Bueno

Los Ángeles Azules

Yeison Jimenez

Carin Leon

Edwin Luna Y La Trakalosa De Monterrey

Best Urbano Dominican Artist

El Alfa

Natti Natasha

Rochy Rd

Quimico Ultra Mega

Mozart La Para

La Insuperable

Kiko El Crazy

Chimbala

Best Collaboration

"Bandido" (Myke Towers & Juhn)

"Dákiti" (Bad Bunny & Jhay Cortez)

"Ella No Es Tuya" (Rochy Rd, Myke Towers & Nicki Nicole)

"La Boca" (Arcangel & Farina)

"Víctimas Las Dos" (Víctor Manuelle / La India)

"Antes Que Salga El Sol" (Natti Natasha & Prince Royce)

"La Curiosidad" (Myke Towers, Jay Wheeler, Dj Nelson)

"De Vuelta Pa La Vuelta" (Daddy Yankee & Marc Anthony)

"Bebé" (Camilo, El Alfa)

"Se Te Nota" (Lele Pons Y Guaynaa)

"Miedito O Qué?" (Ovy On The Drums Ft Karol G, Danny Ocean) **B**

Chris Stapleton, Ashley McBryde, Kelsea Ballerini & More Nab Streaming Gains After 2021 ACMs

BY KEITH CAULFIELD

The 2021 Academy of Country Music Awards (which aired Sunday, April 18 on CBS) housed performances of more than 25 songs (heard in full or as part of medleys) from stars ranging from show co-host [Keith Urban](#) and [Carrie Underwood](#) to [Miranda Lambert](#) and [Chris Stapleton](#).

In terms of streaming activity, some of the performed songs with the strongest gains following the show include Stapleton's "Maggie's Song," [Ashley McBryde](#)'s "Martha Divine," [Kelsea Ballerini](#)'s "Half of My Hometown," [Brothers Osborne](#)'s "I'm Not for Everyone," [Ryan Hurd](#) and [Maren Morris](#)' "Chasing After You," [Jimmie Allen](#) and [Brad Paisley](#)'s "Freedom Was a Highway" and [Jack Ingram](#), [Miranda Lambert](#) and [Jon Randall](#)'s "In His Arms."

Looking only at streams of the performed

songs on the day of the show (April 18) and the two days afterwards (April 19-20), there were 10 songs (not counting new releases*) that were streamed at least 50,000 times with a gain of at least 10% (compared to the three days leading up to the show, April 15-17). They are:

Artist, Title – April 18-20 Streams - % Gain (April 15-17 Streams)

Keith Urban, "Tumbleweed" – 72,000 – 64% (44,000)

Carrie Underwood, "The Old Rugged Cross" – 65,000 – 54% (42,000)

Carrie Underwood, "Amazing Grace" – 69,000 – 51% (46,000)

Ashley McBryde, "Martha Divine" – 162,000 – 21% (134,000)

Chris Stapleton, "Maggie's Song" – 335,000 – 17% (286,000)

Ryan Hurd and Maren Morris, "Chasing After You" – 1.76 million – 15% (1.53 million)

Jimmie Allen and Brad Paisley, "Freedom Was a Highway" – 286,000 – 14% (250,000)

Jack Ingram, Miranda Lambert and Jon Randall, "In His Arms" – 157,000 – 14% (137,000)

Kelsea Ballerini, "Half of My Hometown" – 650,000 – 14% (572,000)

Brothers Osborne, "I'm Not for Everyone" – 359,000 – 13% (317,000)

Looking at the bigger picture, here's how many times the combined songs performed on the ACMs were streamed in the U.S. in the days leading up to the show (April 15-17), the day of the show (April 18), and the two days after the show (April 19-20), according to MRC Data.

Date – On-Demand U.S. Streams (Audio & Video Combined) of Songs Performed on ACMs*

Thursday, April 15 – 7.09 million

Friday, April 16 – 7.76 million

Saturday, April 17 – 7.67 million

Sunday, April 18 – 7.13 million (Day of ACMs)

Monday, April 19 – 7.83 million

Tuesday, April 20 – 7.80 million

* Not including new songs released in the days leading up to the ACMs (Thomas Rhett's "Country Again," Eric Church's "Bunch of Nothing" and Alan Jackson's "You'll Always Be My Baby"), as their initial streaming figures distort comparisons.

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Note that Sundays, in general, tend to be a low volume day for streaming activity for all songs. So, the Sunday-to-Monday gain is bit distorted. (The same Sunday dip was [seen in March](#) during Grammy Awards weekend, when the Grammys were also broadcast on a Sunday.)

Streams of the ACM tunes grew 9.8% on Monday, April 19 versus Sunday, April 18 (7.83 million vs. 7.13 million). Further, the combined streams of Sunday-Tuesday (April 18-20) grew 1.1% over their sum on Thursday-Saturday (April 15-17) (22.76 million vs. 22.52 million).

The ACM Awards are produced by Dick Clark Productions, which is owned by MRC. MRC and Penske Media are co-parent companies of Billboard. 

How Vinyl Got Its Groove Back: Its Dominance, Decline & Comeback

BY JOE LYNCH

The vinyl comeback isn't just spin. In 2020, records accounted for \$626 million in U.S. sales — exceeding those of CDs and contributing 5.2% of industry revenue, according to the [RIAA](#). And MRC Data shows vinyl sales have been rising for [15 years](#), to 27.5 million units last year, up a staggering 46.2% during the pandemic. “It’s the movie theater,” Jack White [told Billboard](#) about the format in a March 14, 2015, cover story, “compared [with] the iPhone.”

After World War II, a music-business format fight broke out when the then-dominant shellac 78 rpm records faced two challengers: Columbia Records’ 33 1/3 rpm vinyl LPs and RCA Victor’s shorter 45s. This “mark[ed] the beginning of a historic disk battle,” *Billboard* wrote in a Jan. 8, 1949, story, advising readers to “hold your hats, kids, and run for the storm cellars.” In the

Feb. 19 issue, Columbia’s chairman of the board called out RCA, predicting that its LP would win a “record war ... which Columbia Records has not initiated and in which it cannot be defeated.”

The 45 quickly eighty-sixed the 78 as the leading singles format, but LPs brought in more money. The June 3, 1950, *Billboard* reported that during a 12-month period, U.S. labels produced 7.3 million 45s and 3.3 million LPs — but those 45s had a retail value of \$5.6 million, compared with \$12.5 million for the LPs. By the end of the year, RCA started making LPs, too.

By the late 1980s, CDs and cassettes were outselling records, and in 1989, *Billboard* tracked what an April 22 report called vinyl’s “inevitable phase-out.” That April issue also covered how the country’s largest independent record plant stopped making vinyl after “what was seen as a gradual decline in market demand turned into a ‘swift and precipitous tailspin.’” Vinyl’s extinction seemed inevitable. “It’s not a question of if,” said Tommy Boy chairman Tom Silverman in the May 27 issue. “It’s a question of when.”

Two decades later, a group of independent retailers organized the first Record Store Day on April 19, 2008. The *Billboard* that was published on that date asked, “Can Record Store Day Work?” The question was still open in the May 3 issue, when one record-store manager shrugged at a modest sales bump: “I don’t know if it’s because of the nice weather,” she said, “or Record Store Day.”

It was Record Store Day all along. After higher-profile annual events that included record store “Ambassadors” like Ozzy Osbourne, Chuck D and Metallica, an April 27, 2016, [headline](#) read, “Record Store Day Spurs 131 Percent Gain In Vinyl Album Sales In U.S.,” compared with the previous week. Many of those buyers wouldn’t remember the format’s decline. The April 3, 2021, *Billboard* [reported](#) that “during the pandemic, sales picked up, thanks to a new kind of customer: young people.”

This article originally appeared in the April 24, 2021, issue of [Billboard](#). 

Apple Music Will Now Rank the Top Tracks in 100 Cities Around the World

BY MICAH SINGLETON

Apple Music is introducing city charts for over 100 cities around the world, along with a series of updates that arrive with iOS 14.5, the latest update for Apple’s iPhone operating system.

The new city charts will rank music based on plays and “additional signs of local popularity” to gauge the top 25 songs in each locale every day.

Apple Music is also introducing record label searches and pages — which will allow users to find and track releases from specific labels — and a new lyric sharing feature that allows users to share specific snippets from songs through iMessage, Facebook, and Instagram Stories.

The city charts are the latest addition to Apple’s expanding list of location-based charts. In recent years, Apple has added country-specific charts for 116 nations — called Daily Top 100, which Apple says has become one of the most streamed playlist categories since it was introduced in 2018 — and its subsidiary Shazam maintains its own discovery charts for cities, countries, and genres.

Apple Music has also launched motion for artist detail pages, allowing artists to use their pages similar to how many acts have used moving album artwork over the past few years. The streaming service has made it easier to find personal mixes and playlists with a new Made For You shortcut in the library section of the app as well, which will house its replay playlists and customized mixes.

The full list of city charts is below:

Africa

Accra, Ghana; Nairobi, Kenya; Lagos, Nige-

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ria; Cape Town, South Africa; Durban, South Africa; and Johannesburg, South Africa

Asia-Pacific

Brisbane, Australia; Melbourne, Australia; Sydney, Australia; Guangzhou, China; Shanghai, China; Bengaluru, India; Delhi, India; Jakarta, Indonesia; Fukuoka, Japan; Nagoya, Japan; Osaka, Japan; Sapporo, Japan; Sendai, Japan; Tokyo, Japan; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Auckland, New Zealand; Manila, Philippines; Busan, South Korea; Seoul, South Korea; Taipei, Taiwan; and Bangkok, Thailand

Europe, Russia, and Central Asia

Vienna, Austria; Prague, Czech Republic; Copenhagen, Denmark; Lyon, France; Marseille, France; Paris, France; Bordeaux, France; Berlin, Germany; Frankfurt, Germany; Hamburg, Germany; Cologne, Germany; Munich, Germany; Budapest, Hungary; Dublin, Ireland; Milan, Italy; Naples, Italy; Rome, Italy; Almaty, Kazakhstan; Warsaw, Poland; Moscow, Russia; Saint Petersburg, Russia; Barcelona, Spain; Madrid, Spain; Zürich, Switzerland; Kiev, Ukraine; Birmingham, United Kingdom; Glasgow, United Kingdom; Liverpool, United Kingdom; London, United Kingdom; and Manchester, United Kingdom

Latin America and the Caribbean

Buenos Aires, Argentina; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; São Paulo, Brazil; Santiago, Chile; Bogotá, Colombia; Medellín, Colombia; San José, Costa Rica; Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Guatemala City, Guatemala; Guadalajara, Mexico; Mexico City; Monterrey, Mexico; and Lima, Peru

Middle East

Tel Aviv, Israel; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Istanbul, Turkey; and Dubai, United Arab Emirates

United States and Canada

Calgary, Canada; Edmonton, Canada; Montréal, Canada; Ottawa, Canada; Québec City, Canada; Toronto, Canada; Vancouver, Canada; Winnipeg, Canada; Atlanta, United States; Austin, United States; Chicago, United States; Dallas, United States; Denver, United States; Detroit, United States; Honolulu, United States; Houston, United States; Los Angeles, United States; Miami, United States; Nashville, United States; New York City, United States; Philadelphia, United

States; Phoenix, United States; San Diego, United States; San Francisco, United States; Seattle, United States; Washington, D.C. United States; and San Juan, Puerto Rico, United States. **■**

Lil Nas X's 'Montero' & Justin Bieber's 'Peaches' Keep at No. 1 on Billboard Global Charts

BY GARY TRUST

Lil Nas X and Justin Bieber again claim the biggest songs in the world, as the former's "Montero (Call Me by Your Name)" logs a third week at No. 1 on the [Billboard Global 200](#) and the latter's "Peaches," featuring Daniel Caesar and Giveon, adds a fifth week atop the [Billboard Global Excl. U.S.](#) chart.

Plus, Dua Lipa's "Levitating," featuring DaBaby, reaches both charts' top five for the first time and Riton and Nightcrawlers' "Friday," featuring Mufasa and Hypeman, hits the top 10 on the Global Excl. U.S. chart, rising 14-10.

Billboard's two global charts (the latest of which are dated May 1) [began](#) last September and rank songs based on streaming and sales activity culled from more than 200 territories around the world, as compiled by MRC Data. The [Billboard Global 200](#) is inclusive of worldwide data and the [Billboard Global Excl. U.S.](#) chart comprises data from territories excluding the U.S.

Chart rankings are based on a weighted formula incorporating official-only streams on both subscription and ad-supported tiers of audio and video music services, as well as download sales, the latter of which reflect purchases from full-service digital music retailers from around the world, with sales from direct-to-consumer (D2C) sites excluded from the charts' calculations.

'Montero' Makes It Three Weeks Atop Global 200

Lil Nas X's "Montero (Call Me by Your Name)" spends a third week at No. 1 on the [Billboard Global 200](#), with 96.8 million streams (down 10%), the week's top streaming sum, and 12,100 sold (down 53%) worldwide in the April 16-22 tracking week.

Justin Bieber's "Peaches," featuring Daniel Caesar and Giveon, keeps at No. 2 on the [Global 200](#), following its two-week reign, and Polo G's "Rapstar" is steady at No. 3, a week after it debuted at the same rank.

Dua Lipa's "Levitating," featuring DaBaby, ascends to the [Global 200's](#) top five for the first time, climbing 6-4 with 58 million streams (up 16%) and 12,700 sold (up 30%) globally. The song has soundtracked multiple [TikTok clips](#) in recent weeks, while, further aiding Lipa's profile in the tracking week, the English singer-songwriter [performed](#) a three-song set for BBC Radio 1's Live Lounge April 19, singing her own "We're Good" and "Hallucinate" and covering Arlo Parks' "Eugene." ("We're Good," the follow-up single to "Levitating," pushes 40-38 on the [Global 200](#), after it debuted at its No. 21 high in February, up 3% to 18.3 million streams and 2% to 5,900 sold globally.)

Rounding out the [Global 200's](#) top five, "Leave the Door Open" by Silk Sonic, the duo of Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak, dips 4-5, after reaching No. 2.

'Peaches' No. 1 for Fifth Week Outside U.S.

Justin Bieber's "Peaches," featuring Daniel Caesar and Giveon, notches a fifth week at No. 1 on the [Billboard Global Excl. U.S.](#) chart, with 64.6 million streams (down 4%) and 6,900 sold (down 10%) in territories outside the U.S. in the April 16-22 tracking week.

Lil Nas X's "Montero (Call Me by Your Name)" holds at its No. 2 high on the [Global Excl. U.S.](#) survey and, as on the [Global 200](#), Dua Lipa's "Levitating," featuring DaBaby, spends its first week in the [Global Excl. U.S.](#) top five, rising 6-3.

Silk Sonic's "Leave the Door Open" repeats at its No. 4 [Global Excl. U.S.](#) high and Masked Wolf's "Astronaut in the Ocean" slips 3-5, after reaching No. 2.

Further in the [Global Excl. U.S.](#) chart's

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top 10, Riton and Nightcrawlers' "Friday," featuring Mufasa and Hypeman, reaches the region, advancing 14-10. Up 6% to 23.8 million streams and 2% to 5,400 streams outside the U.S., the song teams British DJ Riton and Scottish collective Nightcrawlers (via a sample of the latter's 1992 single "Push the Feeling On") in lead roles, while its respective featured acts are American social media personalities.

The Billboard Global 200 and Billboard Global Excl. U.S. charts (dated May 1) will update on Billboard.com tomorrow (April 27). For both charts, the top 100 titles are available to all readers on Billboard.com, while the complete 200-title rankings are visible on Billboard Pro, *Billboard's* subscription-based service. For all chart news, you can follow @billboard and @billboardcharts on both Twitter and Instagram.

Additional reporting by Eric Frankenberg. 📧

Miley Cyrus Returning to 'SNL' as Musical Guest, With Host Elon Musk

BY MITCHELL PETERS

Miley Cyrus will soon be rocking out on *Saturday Night Live*. On Saturday (April 24), the long-running NBC sketch comedy show **announced** that Cyrus — who recently dropped her rock-flavored album, *Plastic Hearts* — will return as a musical guest on May 8.

The upcoming episode will also feature SpaceX and Tesla CEO Elon Musk, who will make his hosting debut. The announcement arrives on the heels of Musk's SpaceX Crew Dragon Endeavour **successfully docking** with the International Space Station.

The entrepreneur's *SNL* appearance will come just days after he and girlfriend **Grimes** celebrate their son X Æ A-Xii's first birthday on May 4.

Cyrus, a *Saturday Night Live* veteran, **last appeared** in April 2020 as a surprise musical guest during the show's second at-home episode amid the coronavirus pandemic. During the episode, the 28-year-old superstar performed **Pink Floyd's** classic "Wish You Were Here" alongside producer Andrew Watt on acoustic guitar.

Over the years, Cyrus has also hosted *SNL* on numerous occasions, starting in 2011 with musical guest **The Strokes**. She later pulled double-duty as both host and musical performer in 2013 and 2015.

In recent days, Cyrus has been **teasing** the April 30 release date of her remix of The Kid Laroi's "Without You."

Check out *SNL's* announcement below. 📧

Machine Gun Kelly Is Joining the Rebel Rock Lineup

BY TAYLOR MIMS

Rebel Rock festival in Orlando, Fla., has announced that **Machine Gun Kelly** will join the inaugural lineup. Machine Gun Kelly is slated to perform on Friday, Sept. 24. The debut festival will take place at the Orlando Amphitheater and Central Florida Fairgrounds.

Taking place Sept. 23 – 26, Rebel Rock is a rock and metal festival produced by Stage Left Entertainment and hosted by Sirius XM's Jose "Metal Ambassador" Mangin. The festival will take place over a span of four days, with four stages and 65 artists including Limp Bizkit, Rise Against, P.O.D., Five Finger Death Punch, The Used, Philip H. Anselmo and The Illegals performing A Vulgar Display of Pantera, Body Count feat. Ice-T, Underoath, Anti-Flag, Fit For a King, Bad Omens, Knocked Loose, Greyhaven and more.

"Where do I even begin. Last year was very trying for all industries, especially for live events, when our job is to promote mass gatherings. Being able to announce festivals

and lineups for this year has never felt so good," co-producer and president of Stage Left Entertainment Nick Abate said in a release. "We are ready to reunite as a community and have Rebel Rock be a successful inaugural event!"

Rebel Rock Fest will also feature live action from the Monster Energy BMX team, and will be home to Jose Mangin's Taco Metal Party for an opening night concert complete with taco trucks, Riazul tequila and specialty margarita cocktails.

This year will be the inaugural event after being delayed in 2020 due to COVID-19. Rebel Rock Fest patrons will be encouraged to wear masks when making purchases at food, beverage, merchandise and box office locations, as well as inside restroom facilities. Hand sanitizer stations will be located throughout the entire festival site. The festival will provide many additional safety measures closer to the date of the event.

"It's exciting to finally be able to bring live events and festivals back to the fans who have waited so long. We're proud to bring a solid lineup to market with Rebel Rock and look forward to creating the festival experience that fans love so much," said co-producer for Stage Left Entertainment/Rebel Rock Brandon Hinson in a release.

Single, two-day, three-day and four-day pass options are available. VIP options are also available at RebelRockFest.com. Ticket purchasers for the 2020 event can be rolled over to 2021. See Rebel Rock's MGK announcement, and check out the rest of the lineup below. 📧

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Voz da Verdade Leads Brazilian Charge on Top Facebook Live Videos Chart

BY KEVIN RUTHERFORD

Brazil's Voz da Verdade leads *Billboard's* Top Facebook Live Videos chart for the first time, crowning the March 2021 tally with a live concert.

The chart, the latest of which recaps March 2021 activity, is a monthly look at the widest-reaching and most-reacted-to videos posted by musicians on Facebook Live, as tracked by media analytics company Shareable. Rankings are determined by a formula that blends reactions, comments, shares and first-seven-days views.

Voz da Verdade, a contemporary Christian act founded in 1978, appeared on Facebook Live for an hour on March 26, led by founder Carlos Moyses.

The clip led all musician-uploaded Facebook Live videos in March 2021 in three of the four chart metrics, accruing 3.2 million views in its first seven days plus 130,000 comments and 31,000 shares, according to Shareable.

Brazilian artists hold the chart's entire top five, with Voz da Verdade followed by three uploads from Mauricio Manieri (Nos. 2, 4 and 5) and one from Cassiane (No. 3).

See the full top 10 below.

10. Mauricio Manieri

9. David Guetta

8. Douzi

No longer available; originally uploaded March 8 with the caption, «ويفاك و مكبحاه»

7. Grupo5

6. MC Davo

5. Mauricio Manieri

4. Mauricio Manieri

3. Cassiane

2. Mauricio Manieri

1. Voz da Verdade 

Bon Jovi Is About to Rock Their First Drive-In Concert

BY TAYLOR MIMS

Bon Jovi have announced a brand new drive-in experience slated for May 22. The band has teamed up with Encore Live for the production company's Encore Drive-In Nights 2021 concert series. The never-before-seen concert will be broadcast at venues around the world including approximately 300 drive-in and outdoor theaters across the United States, Canada and Ireland, and select indoor cinemas around the globe.

Bon Jovi's show follows the Encore Drive-In Nights 2020 series, which hosted global superstars Metallica, Blake Shelton, Gwen Stefani and Kane Brown and safely entertained nearly a million fans across North America.

"Bon Jovi is a global icon and we're so happy that the band will be launching our 2021 concert season!" Encore Drive-In Nights CEO said **Walter Kinzie** in a release. "The pandemic has taught us that there are new avenues for live entertainment and this model is one of the safest and most innovative options for world-class, fun events for the whole family. There are millions of fans who don't usually attend live shows, whether it's because they live far away from the big touring arenas or because of the cost. Artists can now connect with these fans in a completely new way."

The drive-in series was created as a way for fans to enjoy live performances during the pandemic, but Encore Live believes the events have a place in the post-COVID world as well. Encore Live hopes these shows will enable fans who live outside of traditional touring stops to enjoy concerts by their favorite acts in ways that were never before possible.

Encore Live has partnered with drive-in and outdoor theaters across the globe. Artists can broadcast their performance to a new global network of indoor theaters as

well, thanks to an exclusive distribution agreement between Encore Drive-In Nights and Trafalgar Releasing, allowing fans that do not have an outdoor venue nearby to have an amazing concert experience at their local cinema. International screening dates outside of the U.S. and Canada will be announced soon.

Tickets for the Bon Jovi show go on sale Friday at 12 p.m. ET. Head [here](#) for more information and check out the event trailer below. 

Kanye West's Nike Air Yeezy Sneakers That He Wore to the Grammys Just Sold For \$1.8 Million

BY HERAN MAMO

“Yeezy in the house and we just got appraised.” [Kanye West's](#) Nike Air Yeezy 1 prototypes have sold for \$1.8 million in a word record-setting private sale by Sotheby's.

Sotheby's announced on Monday (April 26) that sneaker investing platform RARES acquired West's Nike Air Yeezy sneakers — which he debuted at the 2008 Grammy Awards while performing “Hey Mama” and “Stronger” — in a private sale.

West, Nike creative director Mark Smith and Nike innovator Tiffany Beers designed the high-top black leather kicks at Nike's “Innovation Kitchen” lab in the company's Beaverton, Ore., headquarters. The shoes were officially released as the first edition of the rapper's Nike Air Yeezy sneakers in 2009. After releasing the Nike Air Yeezy II shoes in 2012, West officially left Nike a year later after he claimed the sportswear giant refused to pay him royalties, and went on

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to debut his Yeezy sneaker and apparel collection under Nike's competitor Adidas in February 2015.

Ryan Chang, renowned sneaker collector and @applied.arts.nyc curator, offered the shoes for the auction. "I loved having this pair in my collection, and have always admired its significance as a cultural artifact," he said in a press release. "I'm so grateful that this iconic piece is going into good hands courtesy of Sotheby's."

The sale shatters the world record for highest publicly recorded price for a pair of sneakers by almost three times; legendary basketball player Michael Jordan's autographed [Nike Air Jordan 1 sneakers](#) sold for \$560,000 at an online Sotheby's auction on May 17, 2020. West was right when he rapped in "Facts (Charlie Heat Version)," "Yeezy, Yeezy, Yeezy just jumped over Jumpman, ah!"

Ahead of Sotheby's private sale and public viewing at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre earlier in April, the auction house wrote [Nike originally sold the 2008 sample sneakers](#) in a charity auction benefiting the Doernbecher Children's Hospital.

With 'Ye's [sneaker empire boosting his billionaire status](#), it continues setting records with the Nike Air Yeezy 1 prototypes also becoming the first sneakers to top \$1 million.

"We are thrilled with the result, which has nearly tripled the highest price on record. The sale speaks volumes of Kanye's legacy as one of the most influential clothing and sneaker designers of our time, and of the Yeezy franchise he has built which has become an industry titan," Brahm Wachter, Sotheby's head of streetwear & modern collectables, said in the release. "Furthermore, it builds on the recent growth in Sotheby's sneakers, which is now offered across our Buy-Now marketplace, auction, and private sales."

The public can purchase a small share in the Nike Air Yeezy 1 prototypes starting on June 16, 2021, according to [RARES website](#), where interested parties can begin reserving their spots. 📍

Staind Talk Readying New Album & Dual Streaming Event After 'Everything Went Away'

BY GARY GRAFF

Staind is returning again in May — just not in the way its members originally envisioned.

Frontman [Aaron Lewis](#) tells *Billboard* that the heavy-rock quartet from Springfield, Mass., was expecting to break into a new cycle of activity in 2020, starting by touring with Disturbed and then recording an album. That was all scuttled twice by the global pandemic after Disturbed decided to pull the plug entirely again earlier this year.

Rather than staying on the outside looking in, however, Staind pivoted on its own. On May 7, the group, which has worked only intermittently since 2012, will release its first album in nine years. *Live: It's Been Awhile* (Yap'em/Alchemy Recordings) was recorded during an October 2019 reunion show at the Foxwoods Resort Casino in Mashantucket, Conn., and features hits such as "Outside," "It's Been Awhile," "Right Here" and "Not Again." The release will be bookended by *The Return of Staind: A Two-Part Global Streaming Series* that consists of *Live: It's Been Awhile (From Foxwoods)* on May 1 and the newly filmed *20th Anniversary of Break the Cycle, Performed in Its Entirety* on May 8 — exactly 20 years to the date of the release of Staind's sophomore albums. Tickets are available via [staindlive.com](#).

It's the most material the band has released in years. Lewis feels this is a reasonable Plan B after everything else fell through.

"Everything went away," he notes by phone before a solo concert in Corpus

Christi, Texas. "The Foxwood gig we had in the can already; that was just a matter of when it was going to come out. And then the [*Break the Cycle*] performance just came out of everybody trying to think of ideas of how we can do something else, especially after we had told people we'd be around."

The appetite for Staind is easy to understand. Between 1996-2011, the group — Lewis, guitarist Mike Mushok, bassist Johnny April and (since 2011) drummer Sal Giancarelli — released seven studio albums, four of which sold platinum or better. Its tuneful brand of sludge and angst lyricism also notched a dozen top 10 *Billboard* Mainstream Rock Songs chart hits, with four of those reaching No. 1. The five-times platinum *Break the Cycle* vaulted Staind to headline status, and the group was still going strong when it announced a hiatus to take a break — but, pointedly, did not break up — in 2012.

Staind has regrouped a few times since, mostly for festivals, and for a handful of shows during 2019. Lewis has focused on his solo career for the past 10 years, with all four of his releases (three albums and an EP) hitting the top 10 on the Top Country Albums chart. Mushok, meanwhile, co-founded the all-star group Saint Asonia and played in former Metallica bassist Jason Newsted's band.

Lewis says that reuniting Staind is not like hell freezing over. "No — I guess the comment is more that people didn't think it was going to happen," he explains. "It wasn't necessarily that it would be so impossible to put it back together. I've kind of gotten used to it, and I kind of like not having to answer to anybody creatively. With the whole solo thing, I'm kind of the master of my own universe. So to go from that to sharing the universe with three other people in a creative situation is different, but it'll be great."

The *Break the Cycle* show in particular is a double-dip blast from the past for Staind. The group filmed it at Mill 1 in Open Square in Holyoke, Mass., the same city where the act played its first-ever show. "What you get is what you get in the sense [that] it is live," says Lewis. "We've never been a band to mess with anything. We're not going to do that. But when you see it, you'll realize the

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production levels that we achieved could not be achieved in a regular live [show] where we walk out, start the set and when we're finished, we're finished. It wouldn't have the same impact if we did it that way."

According to Lewis, revisiting the album was "pretty cool, to be honest with you." In addition to the original 13 tracks, Staind added some B-sides he guesses that band has never played live. But performing *Break the Cycle* in its entirety didn't necessarily make the frontman sentimental about the set.

"I don't think as highly as everybody else, as fans might think of it," reveals Lewis. "I found myself not wanting to listen to it. It wasn't a 'Wow, man, I remember all of this!' kind of experience at all. It was 'Oh God, why did I sing it like that?' I'm my own worst critic. It's never good enough."

But he does appreciate the regard that the album is held in by fans. "I have been told over and over and over and over throughout my whole career since that record came out how important it is to people," he says. "That'll never get old. All I was really trying to do with that record and during that time was just get all of this stuff off my chest. I was just trying to help myself. I might not have felt that way if I knew so many other people felt the same way I did, y'know?"

Next on the agenda is new Staind music — the group's first studio set since 2011's self-titled release, if all goes according to plan. "There are definitely some ideas that have been shared with me that I focused on for a little bit," says Lewis. The group paused during the pandemic and is now making plans to get back to work, though Lewis notes, "We haven't really talked very much about producers and where and that type of stuff yet. We've all kind of got our thoughts and ideas, so we'll see."

In the meantime, Lewis is pushing ahead with his solo music. He recently raised eyebrows with a new song, "Am I the Only One," which he has been playing live. It takes a lyrical shot at Bruce Springsteen ("Am I the only one who quit singing along/ Every time they play a Springsteen song") and criticizes calls for the removal of Confederate statues. He's planning to release a new album this year, which he calls "very obviously country ... it's just going to be vocal

and acoustic instruments." No release date has been determined yet.

Lewis has also started work on another batch of material. It was written during the pandemic, and is quite different from what he has done to date. "It's like 30 ideas, but they don't fit with anything that's going on right now," he says. "They don't fit Staind. They don't fit with my country thing. It's somewhere between Pink Floyd, *Dark Side of the Moon* and Billie Eilish — very dreamscape-y, very ethereal. The musical landscape is quite simple and sparse; there's a lot of stuff going on without much stuff going on. It'll be much more focused around melody."

He plans to release his album and then record with Staind, but after that, Lewis says, "I'm very much looking forward to getting back to this other stuff. I can't wait to see where it goes." 📀

Gloria Estefan Joining Andy Garcia in 'Father of the Bride' Remake

BY THR STAFF

Gloria Estefan is joining the bridal party alongside Adria Arjona and Andy Garcia for Warner Bros.' remake of *Father of the Bride*.

"A resounding yes was my answer to the invitation to join my good friend, the incredibly talented Andy Garcia, for this new and wonderfully warm and funny incarnation of the classic, 'Father Of The Bride!'" Estefan said in a statement.

Gaz Alazraki, who helmed *Club de Cuervos*, has been tapped to direct the feature, which is being produced by Dede Gardner and Jeremy Kleiner of Plan B, the banner behind Oscar-nominated drama *Minari*.

"I've been a fan of director, Gaz Alazraki, since I saw his record breaking comedy, *Nosotros Los Nobles* and can't wait to experience how he brings this amazing script by

Matt Lopez to life," the Grammy-winning singer added.

Like previous iterations of *Bride*, which includes a Spencer Tracy-fronted 1950 movie and the Steve Martin-starring 1991 feature, the latest remake will center on the father of a soon-to-be bride (Garcia) coming to terms with his daughter's nuptials. The latest take, however, will be told through the relationships in a big, sprawling Cuban American family.

Arjona will play the bride. Kimberly Williams-Paisley played the part in the Martin version while Elizabeth Taylor played the role in the 1950 film.

Matt Lopez wrote the script for the Warner Bros. remake.

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