

## INSIDE

- **'Catastrophic': For Artists on Visas, Unemployment Claims Come With Severe Risk**
- **Play It Again, Fan: Songwriters Seek 'Repeat' Customers In Streaming Age**
- **Drake Is Billboard's Artist of the Decade, Will Receive Honor at 2021 Billboard Music Awards**
- **UMG Hires Former eBay Exec Richelle Parham to Lead Global D2C Efforts**
- **'Hamilton,' 'Lion King' and 'Wicked' Set Broadway Returns**
- **Lil Nas X's 'Montero' Tops Both Billboard Global Charts, Billie Eilish's 'Your Power' Debuts in Top 10**

## Shuttered Venue Operators Grant Payments Will Start Arriving Next Week

BY TAYLOR MIMS

Two weeks after the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (SVOG) portal [successfully reopened](#), officials at the Small Business Administration say that the first round of awards will be distributed next week.

There are three distinct 14-day periods during which SVOG funds will be awarded. Priority One applicants that lost 90% or more of their revenue from April to December of 2020 are scheduled to receive funds of up to \$10 million in the first 14 days of disbursement. Following that, Priority Two establishments that lost 70% or more of their revenue in the same time period will receive funds over the next 14 days. And last in line are businesses that lost 25% or more of their revenue in 2020, which will receive funds in the 14 days after the second round of funding closes.

The amount of funding for the second and third tiers, along with any supplemental funding, will be based on what remains after the SBA awards grants to the first priority group.

"This emergency relief can't come soon enough for those on the precipice of going under. We'll be very

grateful when the money is distributed as Congress intended," says National Independent Venue Association board member **Audrey Fix Schaefer**. "It's been very hard to hold on, but even tougher to plan for reopening without the money to hire back staff, rent venues and secure acts with deposits. It will be incredible when the \$16 billion Congress earmarked to save our stages becomes a reality."

As of today, 11,500 SVOG applications have been submitted to the SBA. Of the 11,500 applications, nearly 4,750 of those are from independent live venue operators or promoters. Another 2,678 applications are from performing arts organizations, while 1,308 are from talent representatives.

The fund disbursement will be welcome news for venue owners who have been desperately awaiting relief since the SVOG was passed in December. The grant provides a total of more than \$16 billion in federal relief to independent music venues, promoters, talent agencies, museums and movie theaters that were forced to shutter during the global pandemic.

(continued)



**CANADA'S LARGEST MUSIC CONFERENCE** MAY 18-21 | 2021

**250 SPEAKERS FREE FESTIVAL REGISTER TODAY**

ONTARIO ONTARIO Ontario  Global Affairs Canada  FACTOR Canada 



**TIMBALAND**  
Award-Winning Record Producer, Rapper, DJ, Singer, and Songwriter



**MERCK MERCURIADIS**  
CEO/Founder Hipgnosis Songs Ltd.



**NILE RODGERS**  
GRAMMY®-Winning Composer, Producer, Arranger and Guitarist



**CHRIS BLACKWELL**  
Founder, Island Records



**BUFFY SAINTE-MARIE**  
Singer, Songwriter Oscar®-Winning Composer



**DEBRA RATHWELL**  
EVP, Global Touring & Talent, AEG Presents

# 20 million reasons to get to know Yousician



Welcome to the world's leading platform to learn and play music. With 20 million users and counting, Yousician delivers new fans—and new opportunities—to everyone in music.

[yousician.com](https://yousician.com)

 **yousician**

## ▶ IN BRIEF

According to [federal grant award](#) policies, the SBA will reach out to award recipients as soon as the final decisions are made. The SBA will then send a notice of award, which serves as a legally binding issuance of the grant. Once venues sign the agreement and accept the funds, they are obligated to carry out the full terms and conditions of the agreement. Venues will need to keep documentation regarding how they used the funds, retain employment records for four years following their receipt of a grant and retain all other records for three years. **B**

## ‘Catastrophic’: For Artists on Visas, Unemployment Claims Come With Severe Risk

BY CHRIS EGGERTSEN

**W**hen the CARES Act gave freelancers access to unemployment benefits for the first time in U.S. history late last March, New York-based drummer and band leader **Philippe Lemm** (frontman

for the Philippe Lemm Trio) wasn’t certain if he qualified as the holder of an O-1B visa, which is granted to individuals “with an extraordinary ability in the arts.”

The website for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) wasn’t much help. “It said they would be lenient,” says Lemm, a citizen of The Netherlands who came to the U.S. on an F-1 student visa in 2011 before being granted his first O-1B visa in 2013. “But that’s a very stretchable term.”

To see if he was actually eligible, Lemm applied for unemployment in New York state. But he opted against making an actual claim for benefits after his lawyers said it would risk his ability to renew his visa, which was due to expire in June.

“The overall feeling is, ‘Am I taking a risk that if I apply for something, I might lose my possibility to stay in this country?’” Lemm says.

The pandemic has put a magnifying glass on a host of issues affecting vulnerable groups in the music industry. But its effects on the lives of individuals who reside in the U.S. on “O” and “P” work visas — broad categories that encompass internationally recognized individuals and groups in the arts, sciences, education, business and athletics — have been largely overlooked.

In music, unemployment is arguably the biggest issue facing O and P visa holders during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the touring shutdown has devastated liveli-

hoods. That’s because O and P visa holders are required to work during their stay, making a claim for unemployment benefits a potential red flag that could jeopardize future renewals.

It is unlikely that an O and P visa holder who receives unemployment aid will be caught in the short term, as there is typically no communication between state unemployment systems and USCIS, which monitors visa holders currently residing in the country, says **Pierre Hachar**, an entertainment attorney who owns Hachar Entertainment Group in Miami and works with Latin artists including [Chayanne](#), [Elvis Crespo](#) and [Leo Dan](#).

Problems are likely to arise, however, during the visa renewal period, when questions about employment status during the previous visa term often come up. This happened to Lemm, who filed for a visa renewal in April but couldn’t leave the country to complete his visa interview due to COVID-19. In May, he filed an extension, a step that would allow him to remain in the U.S. temporarily without undergoing the formal renewal process. The following month, his attorneys received a form known as a request for evidence (RFE) that asked for documentation that Lemm had been working between April and June.

“It was a very particular request which was not explained,” Lemm says. He now believes it may have been triggered by his

**TOTAL  
IMMERSION**

**billboard  
DEEP  
DIVE**

**SUBSCRIBE TO BILLBOARD PRO FOR  
ACCESS TO NEW REPORTS  
AND THE ARCHIVE**

**ESSENTIAL ANALYSIS** of the latest business topics and trends formulated to give industry players the competitive advantage in a rapidly changing market.

**EXCLUSIVE QUARTERLY REPORTS** that deliver in-depth, holistic reporting; case studies; and custom data designed to serve the industry.

**A DEEP DIVE LIBRARY** stocked with intelligence on fan data, song catalog sales, TV synchs, Africa’s burgeoning music business and the gaming industry’s embrace of artists.

# BMI

# POP

## AWARDS 2021

### SONG OF THE YEAR

#### GOOD AS HELL

LIZZO  
RICKY REED  
ANTHEM BOARDWALK MUSIC PUBLISHING  
FREDERIC AND AED MUSIC / LIZZO MUSIC PUBLISHING  
SONY/ATV SONGS LLC / WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

#### GOOD THINGS FALL APART

JAMES "JHART" ABRAHART  
JASON EVIGAN  
ILLENIUM  
ART IN THE FODDER MUSIC / ARTIST 101 PUBLISHING GROUP  
BAD ROBOT / BMG BUMBLEBEE / BMG PLATINUM SONGS US  
ILLENIUM PUBLISHING / LET'S GET BRUNCH PUBLISHING  
RESERVOIR 416 / SONGS OF A BEAUTIFUL MIND  
SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING / SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.

#### GRAVEYARD

HALSEY  
JORDAN JOHNSON  
MARK "OII" WILLIAMS  
17 BLACK MUSIC / ART IN THE FODDER MUSIC  
BMG BUMBLEBEE / BMG PLATINUM SONGS US  
ROO MUSIC PUBLISHING / SONGS OF A BEAUTIFUL MIND  
SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.  
SUPERREAL PUBLISHING / WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

#### HEARTLESS

METRO BOOMIN  
CARLO "ILLANGELO" MONTAGNESE (SOCAN)  
SONGS OF HEAR THE ART / SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.  
SONY/ATV BALLAD

#### HOT GIRL BUMMER

ANDREW GOLDSTEIN  
MATTHEW MUSTO  
BEAR TRAP PUBLISHING / FREDONZE MUSIC  
SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING / SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.

#### HOW DO YOU SLEEP?

SAM SMITH (PRS)  
EMI-BLACKWOOD MUSIC, INC.  
SONY/ATV SONGS LLC / STELLAR SONGS LIMITED

#### I HOPE

GABBY BARRETT  
ZACH KALE  
CHARLIE PUTH  
CHARLIE PUTH MUSIC PUBLISHING  
REVNYLA HOUSE / SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING  
SONY/ATV COUNTRY/SIDE / SONY/ATV TREE

#### IF THE WORLD WAS ENDING

JULIA MICHAELS  
JP SAYS (SOCAN)  
I'VE GOT ISSUES MUSIC / MODERN ARTS SONGS  
MUSIC BY WORK OF ART  
SONGS OF STARKER-SAYE / SONY/ATV SONGS LLC  
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

#### INTENTIONS

DOMINIC JORDAN  
PEERMUSIC III, LTD. / SONGS OF ANONYMOUS

#### JULY

NOAH CYRUS  
PJ HARDING (APRA)  
SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING  
UNIVERSAL-SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC.

#### LEVEL OF CONCERN

TYLER JOSEPH  
TRIELED BY MUSIC / STRYKER JOSEPH MUSIC  
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

#### LIKE THAT

LYDIA ASRAT  
MIKE CROOK  
DOJA CAT  
CROOK AND CROOK LLC / DESTA MELODIES  
SONY/ATV MUSIC / LIZZO AND FOUNDED GROUP PUBLISHING  
SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING /  
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.  
WHERE DA KASZ AT?

#### THE BONES

Maren Morris  
Laura Veltz  
Big Music Machine  
International Dog Music  
Purple Hayes Publishing Worldwide  
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.

### SONGWRITER OF THE YEAR

#### HALSEY

Be Kind / Graveyard  
Nightmare / You Should Be Sad

### PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR

#### SONY MUSIC PUBLISHING

### CELEBRATE WITH US

[bmi.com/pop2021](http://bmi.com/pop2021)

#### ONLY HUMAN

JOE JONAS  
KEVIN JONAS  
NICK JONAS  
JOSEPH JONAS PUBLISHING / NICK JONAS PUBLISHING  
PAUL KEVIN JONAS PUBLISHING  
SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.  
SONY/ATV SONGS LLC

#### RAIN ON ME

BLOODPOP  
JEREMIAH BURDEN  
BURNS  
NIJA CHARLES  
LADY GAGA  
TCHAMI  
VERNETTA LYNN WILLIAMS  
RAMI YACCOUB  
BMG PLATINUM SONGS US / EMI-BLACKWOOD MUSIC, INC.  
EMI-LONGTIDE MUSIC CO. / ISG SONGS WORLDWIDE  
SONGS BY AMALIA / SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING  
SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. / SONY/ATV SONGS LLC

#### RIDE IT

ALAN MARK SAMPSON (PRS)  
JAY SEAN (PRS)  
DAVID PLATZ MUSIC, INC. / TENVOR MUSIC

#### RITMO (BAD BOYS FOR LIFE)

APL.DE.AP  
J BALVIN  
MIKE GAFFEY (PRS)  
ANN LEE (SIAE)  
LEE MARROW (SIAE)  
GIORGIO SPAGNA (SIAE)  
WILL.I.AM  
APL.DE.AP PUBLISHING LLC / PEERMUSIC III, LTD.  
RIGHTSONG MUSIC, INC. / SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING  
UNIVERSAL-MUSICA UNICA PUBLISHING  
WILL2MANIFEST MUSIC

#### ROCKSTAR

RODDY RICCH  
SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING

#### ROSES

WAYNE COVINE  
STEVEN ORZIO  
MICHAEL IVINS  
SAINT JHN  
LEE "FALLEN" STASHENKO  
BMG PLATINUM SONGS US / EMI-BLACKWOOD MUSIC, INC.  
LOVEY SORTS OF DEATH MUSIC / STELLAR SONGS LIMITED  
THE ST. JOHN PORTFOLIO

#### ROXANNE

JAGREEN  
MUSIC BY IG PUBLISHING / SONY/ATV SONGS LLC

#### SAVAGE LOVE (LAXED - SIREN BEAT)

JASON DERULO  
JAWSH 685 (APRA)  
HYVING MUSIC / JASON DERULO PUBLISHING  
SONY/ATV SONGS LLC

#### SAVO

LYDIA ASRAT  
DOJA CAT  
DESTA MELODIES / DOJA CAT MUSIC  
LIZZO AND FOUNDED GROUP PUBLISHING  
SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING /  
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.  
WHERE DA KASZ AT?

#### SOUTH OF THE BORDER

CAMILA CABELLO  
ED SHEERAN (PRS)  
JORDEN "PADDISON FONTAINE" THORPE  
MILANMOON SONGS / SONY/ATV BALLAD / SONY/ATV SONGS LLC

#### STUCK WITH U

WHITNEY PHILLIPS  
SKYLAR STONESTREET  
FREDDY WEXLER  
SONY/ATV SONGS LLC / STONESTREET WORKS  
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.  
WEXLER MUSIC GROUP

#### STUPID LOVE

BLOODPOP  
LADY GAGA  
TCHAMI  
BMG PLATINUM SONGS US / HOUSE OF GAGA PUBLISHING, INC.  
SONY/ATV SONGS LLC

#### SUNDAY BEST

FORREST FRANK  
SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.

#### SUPALONELY

BENEÉ (APRA)  
JOSHUA FOUNTAIN (APRA)  
SONY/ATV SONGS LLC  
UNIVERSAL-SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC.

#### TAKE WHAT YOU WANT

ANDREW WATT  
SONGS OF KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING  
SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.

#### THE BONES

MAREN MORRIS  
LAURA VELTZ  
BIG MUSIC MACHINE / INTERNATIONAL DOG MUSIC  
PURPLE HAYES PUBLISHING WORLDWIDE  
WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.

#### THE MAN

JOEL LITTLE (APRA)  
TAYLOR SWIFT  
EMI-BLACKWOOD MUSIC, INC.  
SONY/ATV TREE / TAYLOR SWIFT MUSIC

#### TIME

NF  
CAPITOL CMG PUBLISHING / NF REAL PUBLISHING

#### WATERMELON SUGAR

TYLER JOHNSON  
MITCH ROWLAND  
CONCORD / CREATIVE PULSE MUSIC  
ONE YEAR YESTERDAY PUBLISHING / SONGS BY CABIN MOBILE  
SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. / THESE ARE PULSE SONGS

#### WHAT A MAN GOTTA DO

JESSICA AGOMBAR  
JOE JONAS  
KEVIN JONAS  
NICK JONAS  
ANTO STEWART  
EMI-BLACKWOOD MUSIC, INC. / JOSEPH JONAS PUBLISHING  
NICK JONAS PUBLISHING / PAUL KEVIN JONAS PUBLISHING  
SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. / SONY/ATV SONGS LLC  
STELLAR SONGS LIMITED

#### YOU SHOULD BE SAD

HALSEY  
17 BLACK MUSIC / SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC.

MUSIC MOVES  
OUR WORLD

## ▶ IN BRIEF

prior unemployment application.

Lemm ultimately got lucky — his extension was approved in June with the help of his attorneys — but the situation could have been much worse. If immigration services discovers an unemployment claim during the process of a renewal or extension, “it could be catastrophic,” says Hachar. “Once you’re unlawfully present, not only do they revoke all your visas, you can get barred from entering the United States for a period of time” that could last up to 10 years.

Unfortunately, O and P visas are tailored to a specific field, meaning out-of-work musicians who hold them aren’t eligible to take on other types of work while residing in the U.S. As a result, many of these individuals have been left with difficult choices: apply for unemployment benefits and risk having their visas terminated or otherwise rejected for renewal; attempt to scrape by on whatever music-related work they’re able to pick up in the U.S.; or return to their home countries, where they could work in other fields.

(Notably, O and P visa holders are eligible to receive stimulus checks under the three relief bills that have passed since the beginning of the pandemic.)

The fraught situation has led many international musicians currently living in the U.S. to seek out the help of attorneys to determine their best course of action.

“Our advice to all of our clients right now

who are in the U.S. is maintain some work and document it,” says **Will Spitz**, a partner at New York-based immigration firm Covey Law who leads its performing arts division and has represented Lemm.

That said, some O-1B and P-1B visas (the latter category applies to members of musical groups as opposed to individuals) tie a musician to a particular job — rendering freelance work a violation. That presents a problem for musicians who have lost their jobs with, say, a choir or an orchestra and are disallowed from doing music-related work outside of that.

President **Joe Biden** will be more supportive of O and P visa holders than **Donald Trump** in a few concrete ways, says **Matthew Covey**, principal partner at Covey Law and executive director of the affiliated nonprofit Tamizdat, which advocates for international cultural exchange. For one thing, Covey says, it appears likely the new administration will be less aggressive in increasing the fees charged for visa applications. Under Trump, those had been due to skyrocket more than 50% before a federal judge struck down that attempt in September 2020.

Hachar is also hopeful the Biden administration will view immigration through the lens of “a global economy” — which would be a distinct pivot from the “America First” slant of the Trump regime.

Biden’s Secretary of Homeland Security, **Alejandro Mayorkas**, for his part, “has

been known to be generally open to rethinking how the immigration system works and has historically been aware of the problems that the immigration system causes for the arts,” says Covey.

### **Despite New President, Unemployment Concerns Linger**

Still, it is not yet known how the Biden administration will deal with the issue of unemployment payments, which have been denied to O and P visa holders since the government first established the categories in 1990. There’s no indication the new president is willing to change the status quo even amid the pandemic, which means that many musicians will continue to face the same agonizing choices until widespread touring can resume.

The risk of making the wrong choice is great, which is why attorneys have been steering their clients away from making unemployment claims. In Hachar’s estimation, unless an alternative can be worked out, returning to one’s home country is generally preferable to risking a potential 10-year ban. “Just because you go back, you [can] still maintain [your] visa,” he says. “When the work commences, you can come back [to the U.S.]”

For clients in a stronger financial position, there are ways around the unemployment issue. Hachar says he has successfully helped clients remain in the U.S. by filing for a different category of visa — including a B-1

AUTHORITATIVE INTELLIGENCE.  
DELIVERED DIGITALLY.

billboard

DIGITAL NEWSLETTERS

CLICK HERE  
FOR FREE  
DELIVERY

# billboard

---

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+.

#### CONTACTS

**Joe Maimone**

201.301.5933 | [joe.maimone@billboard.com](mailto:joe.maimone@billboard.com)

**Lee Ann Photoglo**

615.376.7931 | [laphotoglo@gmail.com](mailto:laphotoglo@gmail.com)

**Cynthia Mellow**

615.352.0265 | [cmellow.billboard@gmail.com](mailto:cmellow.billboard@gmail.com)

**Marcia Olival**

786.586.4901 | [marciaolival29@gmail.com](mailto:marciaolival29@gmail.com)

**Ryan O'Donnell**

+447843437176 | [rodonnell@pmc.com](mailto:rodonnell@pmc.com)

---

**ISSUE DATE 6/5 | AD CLOSE 5/26 | MATERIALS DUE 5/27**

## ▶ IN BRIEF

or B-2 visitor visa — in order to buy themselves time. However, a visitor visa doesn't allow a person to work in the U.S., making it an option only for relatively privileged musicians who can afford to go for a period of time without income.

For those who can't, like Lemm, navigating the system during COVID-19 amounts to a considerably bigger challenge. For those individuals, a sense of disillusionment is liable to set in. "I've been paying taxes here for a long time," says Lemm. "I paid a crazy amount of tuition to go to school here, and now we're being excluded from unemployment. It makes you feel like you're still really an outsider." ■

## Play It Again, Fan: Songwriters Seek 'Repeat' Customers In Streaming Age

BY TOM ROLAND

“Always leave ‘em wanting more.”  
The entertainment maxim of 18th-century

circus icon P.T. Barnum still applies in the 21st century's digital environment as country songwriters are increasingly focused on enticing music listeners to hit the Repeat button, alternately labeled Replay on some platforms.

The concept of playing a song over and over is, of course, nothing new — dashing home from the store to slap a single on the turntable and listen multiple times was one of the joys of the physical record-buying experience in another era. But the artists and writers in that time didn't receive credit when a fan wore out their song. In the data-driven age of streaming, every play gets counted, so an enthusiastic response can generate meaningful business, hyper-illustrated by the success of Pinkfong's "Baby Shark" after kids racked up nearly 8.5 billion plays on YouTube alone, thanks in part to the Replay button.

For most songs, even substantial repeat business doesn't result in a direct financial increase in revenue because the platform pays out in micropennies.

"A fraction of a fraction of a fraction," songwriter Jimmy Robbins ("The Bones," "Half of My Hometown") laments.

But streaming performance has a heavy influence on which songs get worked to AM/FM stations as singles, and a hit in that platform can potentially lead to six-figure payouts.

"You want to rack up those plays so that

radio teams and all those different decision-makers pick your song," says songwriter Ben Johnson ("Give Heaven Some Hell," "One of Them Girls") of the Broken Bow act Track45.

To that end, country writers are increasingly looking at subtle tricks that might entice a listener to hit Replay when a song reaches its conclusion. The best way to do that is to make the track feel inconclusive or unresolved — i.e., leave 'em wanting more.

"There's something subconscious about the human brain that when something is unfinished, you kind of want to listen to it again," songwriter Jordan Reynolds ("10,000 Hours," "Tequila") observes. "I don't know what it is about our brain, but it definitely works."

Dan + Shay member Dan Smyers is a key force in the movement. He frequently mentions songs' "replay value" when he breaks them down, and many of his associates — including co-writers Reynolds and Laura Veltz ("Speechless," "I Could Use a Love Song") and video director Patrick Tracy ("10,000 Hours," "I Should Probably Go to Bed") — apply the same concepts to their work.

"I just wrote a song where we only have two choruses," songwriter Laura Veltz ("Speechless," "I Could Use a Love Song") notes. "The motive there was that chorus is a real highlight of the song, and if they hear it three times, are they less likely

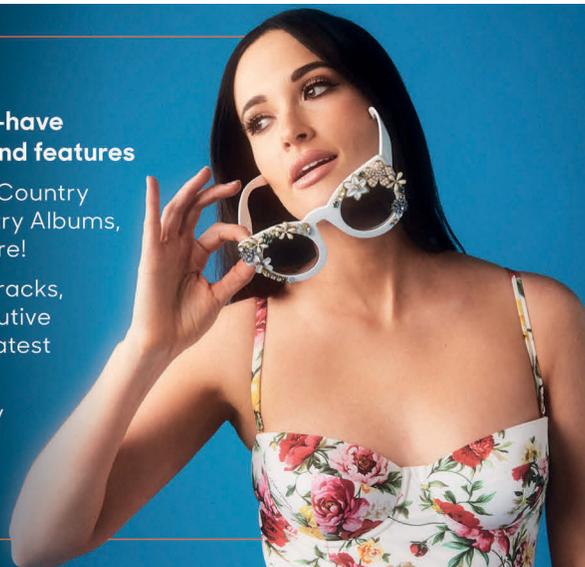
SUBSCRIBE TO

billboard  
COUNTRY  
UPDATE

The country music industry's must-have source for news, charts, analysis and features

- EXCLUSIVE CHARTS including Hot Country Songs, Country Airplay, Top Country Albums, Country Streaming Songs and more!
- Weekly content including Makin' Tracks, On The Charts, a roundup of executive moves and timely analysis of the latest country news and trends
- Expert insight and commentary by Tom Roland and Jim Asker

SIGN UP FOR FREE  
DELIVERY EVERY MONDAY  
BILLBOARD.COM/NEWSLETTERS



# billboard

---

2021

---

# INDIE

## LABEL POWER PLAYERS

---

On June 5th, *Billboard* will publish its fourth annual Indie Label Power Players List. This special feature in advance of Indie Week (6/14-6/17) and the 10th Anniversary Libera Awards will profile leading executives at top independent record labels, publishing companies and distribution companies. Positioning themselves as the driving force behind the success of independent music, these executives contribute to the independent music sector and to the world of music at large.

**Take this opportunity to advertise and congratulate this year's 2020 Indie Label Power Players.**

### CONTACTS

**Joe Maimone**

201.301.5933 | joe.maimone@billboard.com

**Lee Ann Photoglo**

615.376.7931 | laphotoglo@gmail.com

**Cynthia Mellow**

615.352.0265 | cmellow.billboard@gmail.com

**Marcia Olival**

786.586.4901 | marciaolival29@gmail.com

**Ryan O'Donnell**

+447843437176 | rodonnell@pmc.com

---

**ISSUE DATE 6/5 | AD CLOSE 5/26 | MATERIALS DUE 5/27**

## ▶ IN BRIEF

to want to play it again? Or are they more likely if they only hear it twice? We veer off into this cool bridge thing that sort of makes you think about the chorus, but it's not the chorus. And we did that on purpose, just to see if it leaves people wanting more."

Smyers and his co-writers made a similar move with "I Should Probably Go to Bed," though, he says, it was unintentional. In the duo's current single, however, he very purposely used a pitch-shift technique to turn a Shay Mooney ad-lib into a short, melodic embellishment that sounds like a Mariah Carey-in-the-stratosphere phrase. It occurs only twice, working as a sort of tease.

"It was just another little layer," says Smyers. "When you think you've heard it all, here's one little piece of ear candy that doesn't happen again for about another 45-50 seconds. 'What was that?' You know, you got to keep listening or you got to go back and listen again. We always like to throw little Easter eggs in like that."

The entire music industry is, of course, built on the Replay concept. Popular radio stations operate under a system that aims to play the songs listeners want to hear most at just the right level of repetition. Earworms — the hooky riffs and melodies that play over and over in a listener's head — are a form of currency that songwriters have tried to generate for decades. Singer-songwriter HARDY says composer Chris Tompkins ("Before He Cheats," "Drunk on a Plane") believed that every hit single contained some addictive element that made the listener want to hear it more than once. The digital age has simply heightened writers' awareness of replay value and the techniques that can improve it.

"Maybe this TikTok era has brought that to life because these TikTok songs are only like 10 seconds, and they play that magic part, which is the part that you want to discover," says HARDY. "A lot of people are becoming conscious of that, and they should be. I think that's what makes a hit."

The desire for "Repeat" customers has led songwriters on some occasion to bring their songs to an abrupt, incomplete halt at the end, says songwriter Hunter Phelps ("I Don't Know About You," "Drinkin' Beer. Talkin' God. Amen"). And it has inspired

some to write their songs shorter, thinking listeners may be led to extend their engagement.

"Whenever 'Old Town Road' came out, it wasn't a very long song," says Phelps. "I definitely listened to that like three times in a row right when it first came out, and it might have something to do with how short it was and how smashes the melody was."

One other trick is to withhold melodic resolution, best understood perhaps through the Rodgers & Hammerstein song "Do-Re-Mi" from *The Sound of Music*. Near its climax, Julie Andrews sings "ti" — the seventh note in the scale — for an extended amount of time. Viewers sometimes lean forward in their seats at that moment, itching for the song's resolution on "do." But what if the writer never brings us back to "do"?

"I have always been a big fan of ending on [a] chord that doesn't say the song is done," says Robbins. "I do think people are subconsciously affected when they don't feel like it's over, and they might be more likely to start it again."

That becomes even more significant if the song's lyric fails to be resolved. In the 1960s, Stax songwriter David Porter ("Soul Man," "Hold On, I'm Comin' ") noticed that most Motown recordings left their storylines open-ended, and he became a successful writer by employing that same approach. Underscoring the point, uncertainty is a key component in classics from that period, such as Bobbie Gentry's "Ode To Billie Joe" and Otis Redding's "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay," but it's also intrinsic in current titles such as Chris Stapleton's "Starting Over" and Miranda Lambert's "Settling Down."

"At a philosophical level, when you're writing a song about life, most stuff in our life is not resolved," says Robbins. "It's hard to put a period on things just because it's not very realistic."

Ultimately, while it's beneficial to have songs with high replay value, the devices that create that may not be realistic for many copyrights. So while the techniques are being batted around more frequently in Nashville writing rooms, they also get batted down a bunch, too.

"I don't want it to affect the art too much,"

says Robbins. "Because it is such a special thing. When I take a step back and I'm like, 'Whoa, we just made something up that didn't exist five hours ago,' that's actually kind of amazing. I feel like if I really peeked behind the curtain too far, I might never come back."

This article first appeared in the weekly *Billboard Country Update* newsletter. Click [here](#) to subscribe for free. **B**

## Drake Is Billboard's Artist of the Decade, Will Receive Honor at 2021 Billboard Music Awards

BY GARY TRUST

**D**rake rules Billboard's Top Artists of the 2010s chart and will receive the Artist of the Decade Award at the 2021 Billboard Music Awards on May 23. Billboard [previously revealed](#), among [multiple decade-end charts](#), the overall [top artists](#) from Nos. 6 through 100 for the 2010s, along with the decade's top artists for country, rock, R&B/hip-hop, Latin, Christian, gospel, dance/electronic and all-genre touring.

Drake's dominance during the 2010s wins him top honors in the overall top artist category, which ranks the best-performing artists based on activity on the Billboard Hot 100 songs chart and the Billboard 200 albums tally, as well as social media data and touring revenue from Billboard Boxscore, during the decade (see full methodology below).

After first appearing on Billboard charts in 2009, Drake banked nine Billboard 200 No. 1s in the 2010s, first leading with his debut 2010 studio LP, *Thank Me Later*, and most recently reigning with 2019's *Care*



2021

## GERARDO ORTIZ 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

Gerardo Ortiz is one of Latin music's most defining artists of the last decade, scoring a total of ten No. 1s on the Billboard Regional Mexican Airplay chart, over 22.3 Million followers on social media, and an astounding ONE BILLION and counting views on VEVO. The two-time GRAMMY® nominee and one-time Latin GRAMMY®, is one of the architects of the alternative corrido movement and one of the most award-winning singers of Regional Mexican music in the past years.

In recent years, Ortiz has winning a number of awards including twenty seven Billboard Latin Music Awards, twelve Premios Lo Nuestro, earning four Platinum records and five Gold records as certified by the RIAA, and selling out festivals, dance halls, and arenas across the United States and Mexico.

He breaks schemes with each production, after his successful 9th studio album, "Más Caro Que Ayer" was released in February 2020 he placed at #1 on Apple Music's "Mexican Music" chart. His first single titled popular charts followed by the hit single "Otra Borrachera", the band version that reached #1 on México's Monitor Latino "Popular" chart, and #1 on the Billboard's "Regional Mexican Airplay" chart. Starting a new decade and commemorating his 10th career anniversary, Gerardo Ortiz celebrates with the debut of his production "Décimo Aniversario" (10th studio album.)

Join Billboard in congratulating Gerardo Ortiz on his remarkable career over the past 10 years.

### CONTACTS

**Marcia Olival**  
786.586.4901 | marciaolival29@gmail.com

**Joe Maimone**  
201.301.5933 | joe.maimone@billboard.com

**Lee Ann Photoglo**  
615.376.7931 | laphotoglo@gmail.com

**Cynthia Mellow**  
615.352.0265 | cmellow.billboard@gmail.com

**Ryan O'Donnell**  
+447843437176 | rodonnell@pmc.com

## ▶ IN BRIEF

Package. He also scored six Hot 100 No. 1s in that span. Since his debut, he has obliterated numerous chart records, including the most Hot 100 top 10s (45, to-date) and overall entries (232).

At the [2021 Billboard Music Awards](#), Drake — who holds the title for most BBMAs with 27 after taking home 12 prizes in 2019 — will receive the Artist of the Decade Award. Drake is a finalist in seven categories at this year's show, including top artist. The Nick Jonas-hosted event will air live Sunday, May 23, on NBC at 8 p.m. ET/5 p.m. PT.

Below, Billboard also reveals for the first time the Nos. 2 through 5 top artists, among all genres, of the 2010s.

Billboard's Top Artists of the 2010s:

- 1, Drake
- 2, Taylor Swift
- 3, Bruno Mars
- 4, Rihanna
- 5, Adele
- 6, Ed Sheeran
- 7, Justin Bieber
- 8, Katy Perry
- 9, Maroon 5
- 10, Post Malone

View the 100-position [Top Artists of the 2010s chart here](#).

At No. 2 on Billboard's Top Artists of the 2010s chart, Taylor Swift tallied five No. 1s apiece on the Hot 100 and Billboard 200 during the decade. Bruno Mars ranks at No. 3 (seven Hot 100 No. 1s and one Billboard 200 leader in the 2010s), followed by Rihanna at No. 4 (nine and two No. 1s, respectively) and Adele at No. 5 (four and two No. 1s, respectively).

Drake's victory on Billboard's Top Artists of the 2010s chart follows Eminem, who won for the [2000s](#), and Mariah Carey, the champion for the [1990s](#). Eminem ruled the Billboard 200 with five albums and the Hot 100 with two songs in the 2000s, while Carey collected 14 Hot 100 No. 1s and four Billboard 200 leaders in the '90s (the first decade for which the achievement was awarded).

As Drake presides over the Top Artists of the 2010s chart encompassing all genres, he joins the [previously announced](#) winners

for specific genres: Luke Bryan ([country](#)), Imagine Dragons ([rock](#)), Romeo Santos ([Latin](#)), The Chainsmokers ([dance/electronic](#)), MercyMe ([Christian](#)) and Tasha Cobbs Leonard ([gospel](#)). Additionally, U2 boasts top honors for [touring](#), while Drake was [previously announced](#) as the winner in the [R&B/hip-hop](#) category.

Plus, Mark Ronson's "Uptown Funk!," featuring Bruno Mars, reigns as the Hot 100's [No. 1 song](#) of the 2010s and Adele's 21 rules as the Billboard 200's [No. 1 album](#) of the decade.

Click on the following links for deeper dives into Billboard's 2010s decade-end charts covering [country](#), [rock](#), [R&B/hip-hop](#), [Latin](#), [Christian](#), [gospel](#), [dance/electronic](#), [social activity](#) and all-genre [touring](#).

How We Charted the Decade: Billboard's [2010s decade-end recaps](#) encompass chart performance from Dec. 5, 2009, through Sept. 28, 2019 (except for those for the Social 50, which began on Dec. 11, 2010, and Hot Dance/Electronic Songs and Streaming Songs, each of which launched on Jan. 26, 2013).

On decade-end Hot Songs and Top Albums recaps, titles are ranked based on an inverse point system, with weeks at No. 1 on weekly charts earning the greatest value and weeks at lower positions earning the least. Due to changes in chart methodology and title turnover rates over the decade, certain periods were weighted differently.

Top Artists recaps are ranked based on a formula blending performance, as outlined above, of all their chart entries. Specifically, the overall Top Artists category ranks the best-performing artists based on activity on the Billboard Hot 100 songs chart and the Billboard 200 albums tally, as well as social media data and touring revenue from Billboard Boxscore, while genre-focused Top Artists rankings blend acts' decade-spanning performance on each genre's main song and album charts (such as, for country, Hot Country Songs and Top Country Albums).

Billboard's decade-end touring charts are based on Billboard Boxscore data for performances between Dec. 1, 2009, and Sept. 30, 2019.

The 2021 Billboard Music Awards are

produced by dick clark productions, which is owned by MRC; MRC and Penske Media are co-parent companies of Billboard. **B**

## UMG Hires Former eBay Exec Richelle Parham to Lead Global D2C Efforts

BY BILLBOARD STAFF

**F**ormer eBay executive Richelle Parham enters the music industry with Universal Music Group, where she will advance the company's direct-to-consumer strategy.

As UMG's president of global e-commerce & business development, Parham will oversee the music major's global e-commerce strategy and business development across its labels, music publishing, operating units and territories, with effect from June 2.

In this newly-created position, Parham is based in Santa Monica and will report to UMG chairman and CEO Lucian Grainge. "We are very pleased to have Richelle join our stellar leadership team, where she will play a key role in advancing our global strategy," Grainge comments. "Richelle's proven leadership and expertise in consumer marketing, audience growth, business development and direct-to-consumer initiatives will be a valuable resource for our artists and drive our vision of a holistic fan-centric program that complements our partner platforms."

Parham's appointment is considered significant in several ways. As the ex-CMO of eBay, she has a deep knowledge of the platforms and methods that are facilitating online sales. In recent years, she has worked with private equity firms investing in e-commerce start-ups.

Parham joins UMG from WestRiver Group, where she was managing director, leading investments in the consumer experience economy, and she has served on the

## ▶ IN BRIEF

board of Best Buy, e.l.f. Beauty, LabCorp and, until recently, Scripps Network Interactive.

UMG possesses “an incredibly talented leadership team, a global footprint, iconic labels and publishing company, as well as other music businesses,” she explains in a statement. “Together these elements form an unparalleled opportunity for a consumer-demand-driven e-commerce business that goes far beyond traditional distribution channels to create important revenue streams, while forging meaningful and impactful bonds between artists and fans.”

Parham has spoken extensively about the importance of diversity for business and has been honored for her executive talents in such titles as *Black Enterprise*, *Fast Company*, *Forbes* and elsewhere. 

## ‘Hamilton,’ ‘Lion King’ and ‘Wicked’ Set Broadway Returns

BY JACKIE STRAUSE

**T**he cast of *Hamilton* is telling their story on Broadway again.

The Lin-Manuel Miranda-created hit production announced on Tuesday (May 11) that it will return to Manhattan’s Richard Rodgers Theatre when Broadway reopens Sept. 14. Also on Wednesday, fellow Tony Award-winning musicals *The Lion King* and *Wicked* announced they will return to their respective stages, at the Minskoff Theatre and at the Gershwin Theatre, on the same day. Tickets for all three shows are now on sale at [ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com).

“This rare alliance between three of Broadway’s fan-favorites sends a message that Broadway is united in its commitment to ending a devastating period of hardship for the tens of thousands who make their living directly on Broadway shows and the tens of thousands in dependent industries,” reads the joint press release. Cast members from each production — Alexandra Billings

from *Wicked*, Krystal Joy Brown from *Hamilton* and L. Steven Taylor from *The Lion King* — appeared on ABC’s *Good Morning America* on Tuesday to announce the news.

*Hamilton*, *The Lion King*, and *Wicked* have consistently been the best-attended shows since they opened; *Hamilton* six years ago, *Wicked* 17 years ago and *The Lion King* 23 years ago. Combined, the three musicals have played to 176 million audience members in dozens of countries. On Broadway, the three productions combined have employed nearly 1,000 performers during their runs, per theater owners the Nederlander Organization.

The trio of long-running hits top a running list of on- and off-Broadway shows to have announced reopening dates following last week’s joint announcement from New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and the Broadway League that theater will turn the lights back on in the fall. Hard-hit from the coronavirus pandemic, Broadway has been shut down since March 12, 2020. At that time, 31 productions were running, including eight shows in previews and another eight in rehearsals.

“Broadway is a major part of our state’s identity and economy, and we are thrilled that the curtains will rise again,” Cuomo said when announcing that the NYC theaters will open at 100 percent capacity starting Sept. 14. The Broadway League followed the news by directing theatergoers to [Broadway.org](https://www.broadway.org) to track developing information on ticket sales, as productions will be announcing their return dates in coming weeks on a show-by-show basis.

“Nothing beats Broadway,” said Broadway League president Charlotte St. Martin last week of restarting an industry that has been dormant for over a year. “The theater owners, producers, and other League members will continue to work with the N.Y. State Department of Health and the governor to coordinate the industry’s return and the related health and safety protocols required to do so. We remain cautiously optimistic about Broadway’s ability to resume performances this fall and are happy that fans can start buying tickets again.”

Broadway shows with return or opening dates set and [tickets available](#), as of Tues-

day, include *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Chicago*, *Come From Away*, *Tina — The Tina Turner Musical*, *Ain’t Too Proud — The Life and Times of the Temptations*, *Jagged Little Pill*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, *Company*, *Six* and *Diana: A True Musical Story*.

This story was originally published in [The Hollywood Reporter](#). 

## Lil Nas X’s ‘Montero’ Tops Both Billboard Global Charts, Billie Eilish’s ‘Your Power’ Debuts in Top 10

BY GARY TRUST

**L**il Nas X’s “Montero (Call Me by Your Name)” is the biggest song in the world, as it rebounds from No. 2 to No. 1 for its fourth week atop the [Billboard Global 200](#) chart and scores its second week atop the [Billboard Global Excl. U.S.](#) survey.

Plus, [Billie Eilish](#)’s “Your Power” debuts in the top 10 of both global charts; The Kid LAROI and Miley Cyrus’ “Without You” zooms 30-10 on the Global 200 following the release of its [remix](#) with Cyrus; and Sebastián Yatra and Myke Towers’ “Pareja del Año” reaches the Global Excl. U.S. top 10, bounding 17-9.

*Billboard*’s two global charts (the latest of which are dated May 15) [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

## ▶ IN BRIEF

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' Back to No. 1 on Global 200

Lil Nas X's "Montero (Call Me by Your Name)" lifts 2-1 for its fourth total week atop the Billboard Global 200 with 84.2 million streams (down 14%) and 6,300 sold (down 24%) worldwide in the April 30-May 6 tracking week.

Justin Bieber's "Peaches," featuring Daniel Caesar and Giveon, rises 3-2 on the Global 200 following its two-week reign; The Weeknd and Ariana Grande's "Save Your Tears" drops to No. 3 after topping the chart a [week earlier](#), following the April 23 release of its remix with Grande; Dua Lipa's "Levitating," featuring DaBaby, holds at its No. 4 high; and Doja Cat's "Kiss Me More," featuring SZA, repeats at its No. 5 best.

Elsewhere in the Global 200's top 10, Billie Eilish's "Your Power" debuts on the chart at No. 6 with 64.2 million streams and 8,600 sold worldwide in the April 30-May 6 tracking week, following its April 29 release. Eilish adds her second top 10 since the list launched, after "Therefore I Am" debuted and peaked at No. 2 in November. Both songs are from her album *Happier Than Ever*, [due July 30](#).

Plus, The Kid LAROI and Miley Cyrus' "Without You" blasts 30-10 on the Global 200. Following the April 30 release of its remix with Cyrus, the song surges with 36.9 million streams (up 85%) and 12,900 sold (up 176%) globally in the week ending May 6. The Kid LAROI, from Australia, and Cyrus (credited on the chart on "Without You" for the first time, as the remix accounted for the majority of the title's overall activity in the tracking week) each make their first appearance in the top 10.

### 'Montero' Also No. 1 Outside U.S.

Lil Nas X's "Montero (Call Me by Your Name)" adds its second week at No. 1 on the Global Excl. U.S. chart, with 62.2 million streams (down 13%) and 3,000 sold (down 7%) in territories outside the U.S. in the April 30-May 6 tracking week.

Justin Bieber's "Peaches," featuring

Daniel Caesar and Giveon, rebounds 3-2 after five weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard Global Excl. U.S. chart; The Weeknd and Ariana Grande's "Save Your Tears" slips to No. 3 from its No. 2 high; and Dua Lipa's "Levitating," featuring DaBaby, lifts 5-4 after reaching No. 3.

Billie Eilish's "Your Power" debuts at No. 5 on the Global Excl. U.S. chart with 42.7 million streams and 4,000 sold outside the U.S. As on the Global 200, she scores her second Global Excl. U.S. top 10, after "Therefore I Am" reached No. 2 in November.

Additionally in the Global Excl. U.S. top 10, Sebastián Yatra and Myke Towers' "Pareja del Año" reaches the region, jumping 17-9 (42.7 million streams, up 27%). The former, from Colombia, achieves his first Global Excl. U.S. top 10, while the latter, from Puerto Rico, adds his third, following "Caramelo," with Ozuna and Karol G (No. 10, September), and "Bandido," with Juhn (No. 6, February).

The Billboard Global 200 and Billboard Global Excl. U.S. charts (dated May 15) will update on Billboard.com tomorrow (May 11). 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 @billboard-charts on both Twitter and Instagram.

**UPDATE:** *The Billboard Global 200 and Billboard Global Excl. U.S. charts dated May 15 have been updated with new numbers.* 📦

## Wondery to Join Apple Podcast Subscriptions

BY ALEX WEPRIN

Amazon's podcast studio Wondery and [Apple](#) will partner up as part of a new premium podcast push. Wondery, which produces [podcasts](#) like Dr. Death, Business Wars and The Shrink Next Door, will bring

its Wondery+ subscription service to Apple Podcast Subscriptions, which is set to launch later this month. Wondery+ offers ad-free podcasts, with early access and exclusive episodes for subscribers.

The deal is good news for Apple users, some of whom were left wondering whether Wondery would continue to invest in the Apple ecosystem after being acquired by fellow tech giant Amazon earlier this year.

Apple reportedly was also in conversations with the podcast studio about an acquisition last year, with an expectation that the acquirer would use Wondery's stable of podcast to bolster its own ecosystem (Amazon is in the middle of its own podcast push via Amazon Music).

The deal with Apple suggests that Amazon has no intention of restricting Wondery's reach in the near future, and is instead getting the company's podcasts in front of as many potential listeners as possible.

The launch of Wondery+ on Apple Podcast Subscriptions comes as the company releases another exclusive podcast on the service: The Vaping Fix, which chronicles the rise of vaping and Juul.

"We're excited to join with Apple on the next chapter of podcasting and are encouraged by the opportunities this subscription offering opens up for the podcast industry as a whole," said **Jen Sargent**, Wondery CEO. "Through this opportunity, we'll be offering our listeners on Apple Podcasts easy access to Wondery+ while bringing them the same immersive listening experience they've grown to know and love."

Wondery+ pricing will be the same on Apple Podcast subscriptions as it is elsewhere, at \$4.99 per month or \$34.99 per year. Wondery's free, ad-supported podcasts also remain available.

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

## ▶ IN BRIEF

# Event Designer Bobby Garza In Austin, In a Pandemic: Recovery Will Be ‘Slow, Painful Thing’

BY STEVE KNOPPER

**W**hen 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](#).)

Vaccinations are kicking in, people are willing to do more “normal” stuff and I went to a packed indoor restaurant the other night. Is it just me, or are things starting to open up?

Honestly, from last week to this week, the world is different. At least it feels that way. There are venues that are full-tilt going to start opening very, very soon in Aus-

tin. That’s indicative of the sheer desire and exhaustion of being cooped up in a pandemic that is wearing people thin. In certain cities, vaccination rates are a lot higher, and people feel a lot more comfortable. I definitely feel that way in Austin. For venues, a lot of them can’t afford to be closed any longer.

How do you feel about this transition from seclusion to reopening?

I went back and forth on this, in my mind and in my heart. Last Tuesday, the CDC came out with new guidance for people that have been vaccinated — you can gather in small groups. I was listening to this woman on NPR and she said the virus in an outdoor environment is like a drop of dye in the ocean. That really stuck with me. Every time you get a bit of leniency, it starts to feel like it’s not so terrible.

I’m planning a Memorial Day barbecue party in my backyard, and some people are excited about it and others are still scared. Do I require vaccines, social-distancing, masks? That’s a smaller version of what event promoters are asking, right?

Our governor has come out and said vaccine passports aren’t going to be a thing in Texas — so that throws that idea out the window. Quite frankly, I have some severe class-equity concerns about things like vaccine passports. For example, if that is an app-based smartphone situation, what happens to poor people who can’t afford a smartphone? For our events, we’ve made a determination: We’re still going to require some level of social distance, and some mask stuff, as we continue to do things outdoors. If you’re relatively well-spaced and not breathing on each other, you’re going to be just fine. The outdoors stuff feels like it’s 50 times better than it was last week.

So we’re entering a good phase — will it be good enough for venues to stay open?

It’s still treacherous. Whatever financial harm they incurred over the last 13-14 months doesn’t go away just because you’re able to open up. The financial economics for a lot of small venues was perilous before, and you take a big hit like this and I’m not necessarily sure how long it’s going to take for people to recover.

Are we seeing the light at the end of the

tunnel? And does that mean you and I have to stop talking every two weeks for a feature called “In a Pandemic”?

[Laughs.] I am incredibly hopeful that you and I can have a beer at some point. But the reality is recovery isn’t going to be a light switch that you flip. Recovery’s going to be this slow, painful thing, and I’m not necessarily sure people are going to be able to climb out of the hole that this pandemic has dumped them in. There’s going to be a lot of people that try and maybe aren’t going to make it, and there’s going to be some pretty awesome success stories.

I never asked earlier: Did you and your kids get to hug your mom after the vaccinations?

Oh, yeah, it was incredibly emotional. She got vaccinated right around spring break. The advice was, even if we weren’t [vaccinated], she was fine. Everybody kind of shed a tear. It’s helped her mental health. It’s helped our mental health — just being able to not have to be six feet away from her.

How is your youngest son doing on the sousaphone?

I have to get a new car, which is kind of awesome. He’s actually gone up to high school and done some spring band camp. The entire band is outside and he’s carrying around a 50-pound sousaphone and then proceeds to complain about the pain in his shoulder for the next four days. **B**

## ▶ IN BRIEF

# Here's How 'Fearless (Taylor's Version)' Performed in Its Fourth Week Compared to Taylor Swift's Original 'Fearless'

BY JASON LIPSHUTZ

**T**aylor Swift released *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*, her re-recording of her best-selling 2008 sophomore album, a little over a month ago, and scored a **No. 1 debut** on the **Billboard 200** chart. In the month since its release, we've been keeping track of how the unprecedented chart-topper — the first re-recorded version of another album to reach the peak of the Billboard 200 — has performed as compared to the original *Fearless*, in terms of weekly listenership.

In its fourth week on the Billboard 200, *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* slips out of the top 10, coming in at No. 15 after posting at No. 9 on last week's tally. The re-recorded *Fearless* earned 24,000 equivalent album units for the chart week dated May 15, according to MRC Data, down from 33,000 equivalent album units in the previous chart week.

Meanwhile, the original *Fearless* has held steady over the past three chart weeks, with 5,000 equivalent album units earned. Here's a visual comparison of how *Fearless* and *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* have performed over the four most recent chart weeks, in equivalent album units:

As **noted**, *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* has benefited from six previously unreleased "From The Vault" tracks that count toward its equivalent album unit numbers, as well as from fan interest over the first re-recorded full-length in a six-album project Swift

originally announced in 2019. That interest helped *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* **score the biggest debut** on the Billboard 200 so far this year, with 291,000 equivalent album units earned in its first chart frame last month.

As Swift **continues to work** on her next re-recorded album, she'll take a quick break to pick up the **Global Icon Award** at the 2021 BRIT Awards on Tuesday (May 11). Last March, *Folklore* became the third album of her career to win album of the year at the Grammys. **■**

## Halsey Is Songwriter of the Year at 2021 BMI Pop Awards

BY PAUL GREIN

**H**alsey was named songwriter of the year at the 2021 BMI Pop Awards. The singer/songwriter wrote four of the year's most performed songs: "Nightmare," "Graveyard," "Be Kind" and "You Should Be Sad." "Be Kind" is a collaboration with fellow BMI songwriter and hitmaker **Marshmello**. Halsey took song of the year at the 2020 BMI Pop Awards for "Without Me."

Song of the Year was awarded to "The Bones," co-written by BMI songwriters **Maren Morris** and Laura Veltz. This is the first BMI Pop Award for the pair, who have a combined total of 14 BMI Country Awards between them.

Sony Music Publishing took publisher of the year for the ninth time. Sony represented 24 of the top 50 award-winning BMI Pop songs including "3 Nights," "Boyfriend," "My Oh My," "Roses" and "The Man."

BMI also honored the songwriters, publishers and administrators of the 50 most-performed pop songs of the previous year. This year's class of recipients included a record 59 first-time Pop Award winners such as BENEÉ, Edgar Barrera, Doja Cat, Trevor Daniel, Metro Boomin, Noah Cyrus, Roddy

Ricch, SAINt JHN, JP Saxe and more.

"It is an honor and a privilege to represent some of the best pop music creators in the world," said Barbara Cane, vice president, worldwide creative. "Their songs are groundbreaking, dynamic and inspiring, and we celebrate their dedication to craft, discipline and success."

The winners of the 69th annual BMI Pop Awards were announced Monday (May 10) in an online celebration and on BMI's social channels.

Fans can view the complete list of winners, listen to their music, and watch exclusive content including first-hand accounts of the songwriting process behind some of the award-winning songs by visiting **BMI.com/pop2021**. **■**

## Megadeth React to Reports of Leaked Sexually Explicit Videos of Bassist David Ellefson

BY GIL KAUFMAN

**M**egadeth issued a statement on Monday night (May 10) acknowledging reports that sexually explicit videos featuring longtime bassist David Ellefson and a woman who is not his wife leaked online over the weekend. While *Billboard* has not viewed the videos and a spokesperson for the band had not returned requests for additional comment at press time, the band responded to the news in a statement in which they appeared to distance themselves from Ellefson's purported private activities.

"We are aware of the recent statements regarding David Ellefson, and are watching developments closely," said the band in a post. "As it relates to creativity and business, we are all familiar with one another. However, there are clearly aspects of David's

## ▶ IN BRIEF

private life that he has kept to himself. As this situation unfolds, it is important that all voices be heard clearly and respectfully. We look forward to the truth coming to light.”

Ellelson, 56, who has been married to wife Julie Foley since 1993, reportedly released a statement addressing the issue on his official Instagram page — which has since been made private. “As you may or not know, some private and personal conversations and interactions have surfaced online, released with ill intention by a third party who was not authorized to have them or share them,” he wrote, according to *Blabbermouth*.

“While certainly embarrassing, I want to address it as openly and honestly as possible. As much as it’s not something I’m proud of, these were private, adult interactions that were taken out of context and manipulated to inflict maximum damage to my reputation my career and family,” said Ellelson, who has two adult children with Foley. “The other party involved has made a statement which you can see below. I thank her for doing so and hope that this clarifies that the situation was not at all as presented.”

While the woman has not been named, Ellelson, who is also reportedly a Lutheran pastor, included a link to what he said was a statement from her in which she wrote, “I’m the girl people are talking about in the posts about David Ellelson right now and I just want to tell my side of the story because people are sharing misinformation and the situation is getting out of hand without the truth being out there”; the woman’s purported Instagram account, on which the statement appeared, appears to have been **made private** as well.

The woman confirmed that the video calls between them did take place, but that she was the one to initiate them and that she was never underage when they took place. “I was always a consenting adult,” she reportedly said. “Nothing inappropriate ever happened before that. It was all consensual, I’m not a victim and I have not been groomed in the slightest as I was the one to initiate it. I was just naive enough to record him and share it with a friend without his permission. In the end, it was all consensual and all online.”

She added that “a lot” of information about their relationship is being left out “by the people purposely trying to harm him. I would ask that anyone sharing these personal private videos or any misinformation about them to please stop.”

Megadeth is working on its 16th studio album and announced the dates for their rescheduled “Metal Tour of the Year” outing with Lamb of God, Trivium and In Flames last week. See the band’s statement below. **B**

## BTS to Perform New Single ‘Butter’ at 2021 Billboard Music Awards

BY HERAN MAMO

**B**TS has been added to the performer lineup at the 2021 Billboard Music Awards, where they will give the debut television performance of their upcoming English-language single “Butter” on May 23.

The K-pop supergroup, who will perform remotely from Korea, is a finalist in four categories at the show: top duo/group, top song sales artist, top social artist and top selling song for their **Billboard Hot 100** No. 1 hit “Dynamite.” BTS could win their fifth consecutive award in the top social category, which is currently open for **fan voting**.

BTS last performed “Dynamite” at the 2020 BBMAs remotely from South Korea. Their performance of “Butter” — which is due out May 21 — will also be held remotely.

**The Weeknd** and **P!nk**, who will receive the **Icon Award** honoring record-breaking artists and their impact on music, will also take the stage as this year’s performers.

The Billboard Music Awards celebrate music’s greatest achievements, with finalists determined by performance on the *Billboard* charts. Finalists and winners are based on key fan interactions with music — album and digital song sales, streaming, ra-

dio airplay and social engagement — tracked by *Billboard* and its data partners, including MRC Data. This year’s awards are based on the chart period of March 21, 2020, through April 3, 2021.

The 2021 BBMAs are produced by Dick Clark Productions, which is owned by MRC; MRC and Penske Media are co-parent companies of *Billboard*. Barry Adelman and Robert Deaton are executive producers of the show.

The 2021 Billboard Music Awards will air live from the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles May 23 at 8 p.m. ET/5 p.m. PT on NBC, with **Nick Jonas** as the host. **B**

## ‘American Idol’ Top 5 to Perform Original Songs, Work With Iconic Producers in Semi-Final: Exclusive

BY GIL KAUFMAN

**B**y the time you reach the top five on *American Idol* you definitely deserve to work with the best of the best. That’s what Grace Kinstler, Casey Bishop, Chayce Beckham, Caleb Kennedy and Willie Spence will do on Sunday (May 16), when the season 19 semi-finalists team up with a trio of legendary producers to perform new original songs as they vie for the title, *Billboard* can exclusively reveal.

Among the writer-producers joining the team for the night are four-time Grammy winner Christopher “Tricky” Stewart, known for his work with Beyoncé (“Single Ladies”), Rihanna (“Umbrella”), Justin Bieber (“Baby”) and Mariah Carey (“Touch My Body”), as well as Katy Perry, Celine Dion, Whitney Houston, Britney Spears and Maroon 5, among many others.

## ▶ IN BRIEF

They'll also be working with two-time Grammy winner Ian Fitchuk, who has worked with everyone from Kacey Musgraves and Leon Bridges to Harry Styles and Little Big Town, and four-time BMI songwriter of the year Ross Copperman, known for writing and producing No. 1 hits for Darius Rucker, Florida Georgia Line, Blake Shelton, Luke Bryan, Dierks Bentley and many more.

A number of the contestants have performed originals this season, but Sunday night marks the first time in *Idol* history where the contestants have gone in to the studio to record songs that will appear on the show and be released while the competition is still going. Seven songs will be released, including ones recorded by last week's eliminated hopefuls Arthur Gunn and Hunter Metts, who will not appear or perform on Sunday's episode.

"When [Grace] sings, she really gives you a connectivity to the lyric. And it's been fun to just work with a singer that understands those things," Stewart tells *Billboard* about Kinstler. "Usually you only see [that] in really established artists, but she just seems to have that gift naturally." Stewart also praised Spence's song choice and said his voice "is bringing so much to the table, and when we got to the room we just really clicked. It was really, truly sparks."

Copperman marveled at the talent brought by 16-year-old Kennedy, praising the depth of his songwriting. "He really knows who he is as an artist," he says, while adding that Beckham is truly an "authentic artist" whose pain clearly comes through on the song he wrote, "23."

As for teen rock queen Bishop, Fitchuk said despite never spending time in the studio before, the 15-year-old Florida native had a blast. "That is such a fun experience ... to feed off of that creativity and energy," he shares. Fitchuk also had high marks for Metts' original, "20,000 Kisses," which came with a "decent amount" of production in place already.

As for Gunn, who has proven to be an excellent interpreter of song, Copperman said after surprising Coldplay singer Chris Martin on the May 9 show by dropping what he thought was the main melody from

his band's "In My Place," Gunn, of course, changed the time signature of the song they worked on. "At first I thought [it] was crazy, but then I realized, he just knows who he is," he says.

After performing their original songs, the top five will fight for a spot in the live May 23 finale.

*American Idol* airs live Sundays at 8 p.m. ET on ABC. 

## Thomas Rhett Spins 'Country Again (Side A)' Onto Top Country Albums Chart

BY JIM ASKER

**T**homas Rhett's fifth full-length studio album, *Country Again (Side A)*, debuts at No. 2 on Billboard's Top Country Albums chart dated May 15. In the tracking week ending May 6, the set, released April 30, earned 30,000 equivalent album units (14,000 in album sales), according to MRC Data.

Rhett lands his fifth top five entry on Top Country Albums. On the all-genre [Billboard 200](#), the LP arrives at No. 10, marking his fifth top 10.

*Country Again (Side A)* is the first half of a planned double album, with *Country Again (Side B)* due later this year.

Rhett, 31, from Valdosta, Ga., follows his last album *Center Point Road*, which launched atop both Top Country Albums and the [Billboard 200](#) in June 2019 (76,000 units; 45,000 sold), becoming his second leader on both lists. *Life Changes* debuted atop the tallies in September 2017 with 123,000 units and 94,000 sold, his biggest week to date.

*Tangled Up* arrived at No. 3 on Top Country Albums in October 2015 (76,000 units; 62,000 sold) and peaked at No. 2 that November and *It Goes Like This*, Rhett's first full-length, debuted and peaked at No. 2 in

November 2013 (36,000 sold). Rhett made his first of five appearances on the chart with his No. 24-peaking 2012 self-titled EP.

Rhett, who won the male vocalist of the year trophy at the Academy of Country Music Awards April 18, had a hand in writing all 11 tracks on *Country Again (Side A)*, which Jesse Frasure and Dann Huff produced.

The new set's current single, "Country Again," jumps 28-16 on [Hot Country Songs](#), up 28% to 5.4 million U.S. streams and 70% to 2,500 sold. On Country Airplay, it lifts 23-20, up 20% to 9 million impressions.

**No. 1 AGAIN 'AFTER' SIX MONTHS** [Luke Combs](#)' "Forever After All" returns to the Hot Country Songs summit for the first time since it spent its first week on the tally [at No. 1](#) on the chart dated Nov. 7, having been released as a new song on the deluxe edition of parent album *What You See Is What You Get*. It also soared in at No. 2 on the all-genre [Billboard Hot 100](#), marking the highest entrance ever for a country song by a male artist.

In its 28th frame on Hot Country Songs, "Forever" rules again, up from No. 3, as it rises 8-4 on Country Airplay (22.9 million, up 15%). It also drew 11.3 million streams (up 9%) and sold 5,800 (up 12%) in the tracking week, after its official video premiered April 28.

In between the two weeks atop Hot Country Songs for "Forever," Combs added his fourth No. 1 with "Better Together," also from *What You See Is What You Get*, for three weeks in February.

**'LIL BIT' BIGGER** Nelly and Florida Georgia Line's "Lil Bit" enters the Hot Country Songs top 10, rising 11-9, up 5% to 7.4 million streams, 6% to 6.6 million all-format airplay audience impressions and 32% to 5,500 sold.

Nelly notches his first Hot Country Songs top 10 in his second visit to the chart, after "Good Times Roll," with Jimmie Allen, reached No. 31 last July. Nelly has notched four No. 1s among 14 top 10s on the Hot 100, where he first reached the top 10 with "(Hot S—t) Country Grammar" in 2000 and first led with "Hot in Herre" in 2002.

In 2012, FGL's debut hit "Cruise" crowned Country Airplay; aided by pop crossover airplay for its remix with Nelly, it rose to No.

## ▶ IN BRIEF

4 on the Hot 100 in 2013. “Lil Bit” is the 18th Hot Country Songs top 10 for FGL, the duo of Tyler Hubbard and Brian Kelley.

**MORE NEW TOP 10s** Chris Young and Kane Brown’s “Famous Friends” pushes 11-9 on Country Airplay (17.6 million, up 12%). The duet grants Young his 16th top 10, after “Raised on Country” reached No. 5 last August. Brown adds his seventh song top 10 and first since “Cool Again,” which hit No. 3 last September.

Plus, Miranda Lambert earns her 14th Country Airplay top 10 as “Settling Down” rises 13-10 (17.1 million, up 11%). It follows “Bluebird,” which became her sixth No. 1 last August. **B**

## Liam & Noel Gallagher to Produce Oasis Doc About Famed 1996 Knebworth Concert

BY ALEX RITMAN

A quarter of a century after one of the most legendary concerts in British rock history, a documentary is in the works. Noel and Liam Gallagher are set to exec produce a feature film about Knebworth, the famed event that took place in August 1996, attracted some 250,000 fans over two nights, and saw Britpop icons **Oasis** — who the year before had released *What’s The Story (Morning Glory)* — at the peak of their powers.

Jake Scott — who has made music videos for Oasis, R.E.M., U2, The Verve and The Rolling Stones — will direct the film, which is set to be released theatrically in the U.K. later this year to celebrate the concert’s 25th anniversary.

“It’s a story driven entirely by the music, a rock and roll experience, told in the moment, like a visual stream of consciousness

that is built around the extensive archive footage from the event,” said Scott, who insisted there would be “no on-camera interviews or unnecessary celebrity recollections.” The film will be produced by RSA Film, with the Gallagher brothers exec producing.

It will be financed and distributed by Sony Music Entertainment and released theatrically by Trafalgar Releasing. Producers claim that Knebworth deserves its place alongside the cinematic concert documentaries such as *Let It Be*, *Monterey Pop* and *Ladies and Gentlemen: The Rolling Stones*, the tragic Altamont film that documents the turning point that signified the end of the 1960s.

This article originally appeared on [The Hollywood Reporter](#). **B**

## Rag’n’Bone Man Is Charging to U.K. Chart Crown With ‘Life By Misadventure’

BY LARS BRANDLE

**R**ag’n’Bone Man has his eyes fixed firmly on the U.K. chart prize.

The British bluesman (real name Rory Graham) surges into the lead at the **halfway stage** in the chart race with *Life By Misadventure* (Columbia), which has already sold almost 30,000 units and is outselling the rest of the Top 5 combined, the OCC reports.

If it keeps its momentum, the singer and songwriter will have his second consecutive No. 1, following his 2017 debut *Human*.

It’s hard to see anyone but Rag’n’Bone Man claiming the title. He’ll enjoy a boost Tuesday night (May 11) when he appears at the 2021 Brit Awards to perform “Anywhere Away From Here,” his collaboration with **Pink**. “Anywhere” is blasting to the U.K. Top 20 of the national singles chart

this week and should be the frame’s highest climber.

*Life By Misadventure* leads an all-new Top 5 on the Official Chart Update. Indeed, it’s a Top 10 stacked with new releases, eight in total.

**Michael Ball** rolls in at No. 2 with his 27th album *We Are More Than One* (Decca), while YouTuber and recording artist **Dodie** is chasing her highest chart position with *Build A Problem* (Doddleodde), new at No. 3

Brighton post-punk group Squid are closing in on a Top 5 debut with *Bright Green Field* (Warp), new at No. 4 on the midweek chart, while veteran Northern Irish artist **Van Morrison** rounds out the Top 5 with *Latest Record Project, Volume 1* (BMG). If it holds its ground, *Latest Record Project* will give Morrison a 16th Top 10.

Meanwhile, **New Order** are homing in on an 11th Top 10 with their live album *Education Entertainment Recreation* (No. 7 via Rhino), while late British icon **Amy Winehouse** could score a sixth Top 10 with the collection *Amy at the BBC* (Island), new at No. 9.

U.S. rockers **Weezer** complete the Top 10 on the midweek chart with *Van Weezer* (Atlantic), their ode to the late Eddie Van Halen. Remarkably, Weezer have previously landed 12 albums on the U.K. albums chart, but none have cracked the Top 10.

Over on the **midweek singles chart**, **Tion Wayne** and Russ Millions’ “Body” (Atlantic) is on course for a second straight week at the summit, while **Coldplay** is on track for the hottest new release with “Higher Power” (Parlophone). It’s new at No. 8 on the chart blast.

The Official U.K. Singles and Albums Charts are published late Friday, local time. **B**

## Usher Set to Host 2021 iHeartRadio Music Awards

BY PAUL GREIN

**U**sher is set to host and perform on the 2021 iHeartRadio Music Awards, which will air Thursday, May 27, live on Fox. Other artists set to perform include [The Weeknd](#) with special guest [Ariana Grande](#), Silk Sonic ([Bruno Mars](#) & [Anderson .Paak](#)), [Dan + Shay](#) and [Doja Cat](#).

The show will also include appearances from Taylor Swift, Dua Lipa, Roddy Ricch, Twenty One Pilots, Megan Thee Stallion and more.

This will be Usher's first time hosting the show, which is in its eighth year. Previous hosts include Jamie Foxx, Jason Derulo, Ryan Seacrest, DJ Khaled & Hailey Baldwin, and T-Pain.

Chris Martin and Lil Nas X will present Elton John with the 2021 iHeartRadio icon award. The segment will include a special tribute performance. Bon Jovi received the icon award in 2018. John received the iHeartRadio Music Award for tour of the year last year for his Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour, which marks his retirement from touring after more than 50 years on the road.

The show will air May 27 live from The Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles at 8-10 p.m. ET live/PT tape-delayed) on Fox. The show also will be heard on iHeartMedia radio stations nationwide and on the iHeartRadio app.

This year's show marks a comeback for the iHeartRadio Music Awards, which, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, were delayed last year until September, when they aired as a virtual show and only on iHeartRadio stations. This year's show will be back on Fox, which first aired the show in 2019, back in a major venue and back in the late winter/early spring timeframe in which the first six shows took place.

The 2021 iHeartRadio Music Awards will

again give iHeartRadio listeners the opportunity to decide winners in several new and established categories. Fan voting will determine this year's best fan army, best lyrics, best cover song, best music video, the social star award, favorite music video choreography award and the first-ever TikTok bop of the year award.

Nominations are based on consumption data, including streaming, album sales, song sales and radio airplay. For a full list of categories, visit [iHeartRadio.com/awards](#). Social voting began April 7 and will close on May 19 at 11:59 p.m. ET for all categories. Fans can vote on Twitter using the appropriate category and nominee hashtags or by visiting [iHeartRadio.com/awards](#).

Executive producers for the iHeartRadio Music Awards are Joel Gallen for Tenth Planet and John Sykes, Tom Poleman and Bart Peters for iHeartMedia. 

## Lorde Is Crowned on The 1,000,000,000 List For 'Royals'

BY LARS BRANDLE

**L**orde's coronation is complete.

The Auckland singer and songwriter is crowned on The 1,000,000,000 List, for one billion streams of her 2013 hit "Royals".

An initiative of Australasian PRO APRA AMCOS, the 1,000,000,000 List recognizes streams from all major services including Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube, YouTube Music, Vevo, Amazon, and more.

Since her breakthrough with "Royals," Lorde (real name Ella Yellich-O'Connor) has won just about every award going. "Royals" ruled the Billboard Hot 100 for nine weeks, won two Grammy Awards (for song of the year and best pop solo performance) and, in 2018, was certified diamond by the RIAA.

Lorde was presented with her latest award at the APRA AMCOS NZ offices in her hometown by CEO Dean Ormston and

Anthony Healey, head of APRA AMCOS NZ operations, and her publisher, Kobalt Music Publishing, received an award for the song's milestone.

She's one of four New Zealand songwriters officially added to The 1,000,000,000 List in recent days.

[Joel Little](#) bagged his fourth 1,000,000,000 List award, this time for [Taylor Swift's](#) hit "ME!", from her hit *Lover* album.

Little, the in-demand songwriter and producer, has already snagged honors for "Young Dumb & Broke" by Khalid, "Whatever It Takes" by Imagine Dragons and Lorde's "Royals".

Little's collaboration with Swift was the product of a fortuitous moment backstage at a Broods concert, where the Kiwi's manager approached Swift's team with a proposal. They were both due to be in New Zealand at the same time, so a collaborative plan was hatched.

The pair caught up at Little's Titirangi studio while Swift's *Reputation* stadium tour passed through. They hit it off, and Little later visited Swift in New York, where they began shaping the songs that would feature on 2019's *Lover*.

Also, New Zealand songwriters Leroy Clampitt and Los Angeles-based James Wong were presented with their Billions Award for Justin Bieber's "Company" (from 2015's *Purpose*), co-written by international writers Andreas Shuller, Justin Bieber, James Abraham, Thomas Troelsen and Jason "Poo Bear" Boyd.

The 1,000,000,000 List is said to be the first award of its kind to acknowledge [a songwriter's achievement](#). Past recipients include [Kevin Parker](#) (for [Tame Impala's](#) "The Less I Know The Better"), [Dean Lewis](#) and [Jon Hume](#) (for "Be Alright"), [Flume](#) (for "Never Be Like You"), [Starley](#) and P-Money (for "Call On Me"), Vance Joy (for "Riptide"), [Gorty](#) (for "Somebody That I Used to Know"), and [Vassy](#) (for "Bad"). See the full list [here](#). 

# Demi Lovato Lands UFO Investigation TV Series 'Unidentified' at Peacock

Scott Manson, Allison Kaye, JD Roth,  
Adam Greener, Sara Hansemann and An-  
drew Nick. 

BY HERAN MAMO

**D**emi Lovato will investigate UFO reports in a new four-part limited series on Peacock titled *Unidentified With Demi Lovato*.

The Grammy-nominated pop star will star in the unscripted series alongside her best friend Matthew Scott Montgomery and sister Dallas, as the three attempt to uncover the truth about the out-of-this-world phenomena. They'll also "investigate recent eyewitness encounters, uncover secret government reports, and conduct tests at known UFO hot spots," according to a statement.

Through conducting interviews with scientists and "alien abductees" and her own experiments, Lovato hopes to "make peace with the aliens, and ultimately save ourselves."

"SURPRISEEEEE!!! I'm hitting the road for an out-of-this-world adventure for my new show *Unidentified* & I'm taking you guys along for the ride," the *Dancing With the Devil* artist shared on her socials Tuesday (May 11).

Her new Peacock series comes shortly after Lovato's *Hungry* comedy series about a group of people with eating disorders [got a pilot order](#) at NBC, which she is set to star in and executive produce. Her YouTube Originals docuseries *Demi Lovato: Dancing With the Devil*, which [opened this year's SXSW festival](#) in March, [received a nomination for best music documentary](#) at the 2021 MTV Movie & TV Awards.

*Unidentified With Demi Lovato* is executive produced by Lovato, Scooter Braun,