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UMG's Valuation Is Rising Fast Ahead of Public Listing — Here's Why

BY GLENN PEOPLES

In 2013, when the Japanese technology company Softbank offered to buy Universal Music Group for \$8.5 billion, some analysts were surprised that UMG parent company Vivendi declined what was characterized as a generous offer. That was before the streaming boom. In late 2019, Chinese company Tencent Holdings agreed to buy up to 20% of UMG at a price that valued the music company at \$33 billion, which seemed optimistic.

But based on current analyst sentiment about UMG, which is preparing for a Sept. 21 spinoff from Vivendi, Tencent may have scored a bargain. In August, Bill Ackman's Pershing Square Holdings hedge fund bought a 10% stake in UMG for \$3.95 billion, which implies a valuation for the music company of almost \$40 billion. And a dozen equities analysts have valued the company at between \$35.2 billion and \$62 billion. By any measure, that's quite a rally — especially for an industry that was “fated to disappear,” as Vivendi CEO Arnaud de Puyfontaine said during the company's July 27 earnings call.

The question of what UMG is really worth will only be answered starting Sept. 21, when its shares begin to

trade on the Euronext Amsterdam exchange. (Vivendi will distribute 60% of UMG's equity to current shareholders and keep the 10% that remains after the Tencent and Pershing Square sales.) Analysts' average valuation was \$47.5 billion, and most exceeded \$45 billion. JP Morgan, which valued UMG at \$62 billion, called the company “one of the best assets in the European market” and predicted that its estimate — higher by far than all but BofA Securities' \$59.1 billion — “will ultimately prove conservative.”

Analysts arrive at corporate valuations by applying a multiple to a company's forecasted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) that reflects its potential for future profit. (In this case, analysts calculated valuations using their forecasts of UMG's 2022 EBITDA.) The more growth that analysts expect, the higher that multiple. So while a utility company like Edison International trades at 13.4 times EBITDA, fast-growing technology startup Roku has a multiple of 138.

Analysts give UMG multiples of between 19.1 (Citi) and 28.7 (JP Morgan), with most coming at about 24

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or so. That reflects common forecasts of about 10% annual growth for the company. That's why the multiple that the market ultimately gives UMG will not only reflect how investors see that organization — it will also affect the value of other businesses in the sector. If shares rise and remain high, that could convince investors that recorded-music catalogs and publishing rights are actually underpriced. If UMG stock disappoints — which seems unlikely, given analyst sentiment — investors might reconsider whether music rights and public companies that own them are worth the historically high prices they've been trading for recently. The stock that will be most affected is that of Warner Music Group, and it could fall — or, more likely, rise — based on UMG's performance.

The multiple at which UMG trades will ultimately depend on two factors. One is the growth potential of music rights — mostly for recordings, which bring in about five times as much revenue as publishing rights for the company. The other is how much of a premium, if any, investors will be willing to pay for UMG over WMG, the other publicly traded major label. (Sony Music is owned by Sony Corp., which is public but includes a variety of other businesses.) In many sectors, investors are willing to pay a higher multiple for a company with more market share, with the idea that it has more negotiating leverage or other competitive

advantages.

WMG, which went public in 2020, is currently valued at roughly \$23.8 billion, a 21.6 multiple of analysts' forecast for 2022 EBITDA and 621% above the \$3.3 billion that Access Industries paid for it in 2011. The company benefits from steady growth, improving margins and strategic investments in, among others, gaming giant Roblox and NFT pioneer Dapper Labs. Some analysts assign UMG a premium, however, although the amount varies: Alliance Bernstein gives WMG a multiple of 18.8, lower than where it currently trades, and UMG 20.7, while JP Morgan gives WMG 22 and UMG 28.7.

The explanations as to why UMG might command a premium vary, but it has better margins and is growing faster. It also has more of the most successful artists: 17 of the top 20 in the United States for the year ending Sept. 13, according to MRC Data. "That allows you to extract a higher royalty rate and 'nonallocable' income" from online platforms, says Jason Peterson, chairman of music technology and distribution company GoDigital Media Group. Morgan Stanley, which gives UMG a 15% to 20% premium over WMG, says the company is "the most important negotiation" for digital services, while Pershing Square and Alliance Bernstein think its market share gives it a negotiating advantage with companies like TikTok and Peloton. That advantage could be worldwide: The fact that Tencent owns

20% of UMG could boost the company in China, "a very unique place to operate a business," according to another executive.

Amid all the speculation about UMG's value, the company's results have been strong: In late July, it announced second-quarter results, with revenue of \$2.37 billion, up 23% from the prior year. (First-half revenue — a better basis for comparison, given that the pandemic began in the second quarter of 2020 — grew 11% to \$4.52 billion.) Several analysts increased their valuations as a result. And despite concerns about a bubble, music-asset prices keep climbing.

However UMG ultimately fares, its spinoff marks the beginning of a new chapter for the music business. The last time two major labels were publicly traded — WMG and EMI Music, in the mid-2000s — cratering revenue had investors speculating about how low they could go or what entities could take them private in order to restructure them. Now, 15 years later, it seems the sky's the limit. **B**

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Inside Pop Radio's Rock Revival: 'The Industry Is Looking More Toward Guitars'

BY JASON LIPSHUTZ

Måneskin's "Beggin'" has been one of the most unlikely hit singles of the year, a rock cover of The Four Seasons' 1966 soul-pop smash that the Italian quartet recorded in 2017 and watched go viral on TikTok years later. After crossing over to streaming platforms, the cover has taken off around the globe in recent months, peaking at No. 3 on the [Global 200](#) and No. 29 on the [Hot 100](#) so far.

Yet a funny thing has happened to the hard-charging, guitar-heavy streaming smash during its TikTok crossover and unexpected chart rise: It was also embraced by U.S. pop radio. This week, as it hits the [Alternative Airplay](#) top 10 (jumping 14-9 on the chart dated Sept. 18), "Beggin'" also climbs three spots to No. 14 on the [Pop Airplay](#) chart, while bumping up one spot to No. 33 on [Adult Pop Airplay](#).

Nick Petropoulos, head of promotion at Arista Records, says in an email that, while the label has been focused on growing the song at alternative radio, early signs for the song at pop radio were "undeniable" — and a multi-format strategy was adopted.

"I have to give pop programmers credit for listening to the audience," says Petropoulos. "By design, it doesn't fit the Top 40 model. But the audience response has been deafening."

It's not just "Beggin'" that Top 40 listeners want in their daily mixes — recently, pop program directors have noticed a growing appetite for rock and guitar-based singles over rhythmic pop tracks, with power potations slowly reflecting that demand. As Måneskin has crossed over at pop formats, so has [Machine Gun Kelly](#), who's helped lead a pop-punk revival: his [black-bear](#) team-up "My Ex's Best Friend" led the Alternative Airplay chart for three weeks in March and April, then peaked at No. 3 on Pop Airplay in May at No. 6 on Adult Pop Airplay last month.

Meanwhile, [Olivia Rodrigo](#)'s uptempo and guitar-heavy "Good 4 U" translated that sound to both the top of the Hot 100, where it debuted in May — as well as the top of Pop Airplay, where the *Sour* single held for six weeks beginning in July, besting the five-week reign of Rodrigo's "Drivers License" earlier this year. Unlike "Beggin'" and "My Ex's Best Friend," "Good 4 U" wasn't being

played at alternative radio prior to its top 40 domination, but its massive success with a new-school pop-punk sound — [Paramore](#)'s "Misery Business" was [retroactively credited](#) as an inspiration last month — suggests an increased predilection for rock-based singles at modern pop radio.

"I'm happy that the industry is looking a bit more toward the guitars, and with the breakout of Olivia Rodrigo," says [Alex Tear](#), vp pop music & programming at Sirius XM/Pandora. Although Tear says that "Good 4 U" is strong enough that it could have still been a radio smash a few years ago when top 40 was leaning toward more rhythmic singles, he admits that now there are "definitely some more open minds, when it comes to accepting and integrating the more rock-driven music into their stations."

Guitars haven't been completely absent from pop radio prior to 2021: Last year, [Harry Styles](#) scored radio smashes with his shimmery pop-rock tracks "Adore You" and "Watermelon Sugar," while [Post Malone](#)'s alternative-baiting "Circles" and [24kGoldn](#) and [Iann Dior](#)'s "Mood" became two of the most enduring radio hits at the turn of the '20s. In the context of 2021's pop radio offerings, however, those hits could be viewed as precursors to this year's more guitar-heavy slate — hinting at the rock streak that would help define pop radio in 2021, and potentially grow in 2022.

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guitar-based music at pop radio: the right stars are leaning into the sound. “Artists like The Kid LAROI and Olivia Rodrigo, they’re the new kings and queens of pop radio right now,” points out **Will Calder**, director of branding & programming at WPOI Tampa & WPYO Orlando.

Like Rodrigo, **The Kid LAROI** has been one of the breakout stars of 2021 — and prior to topping the Hot 100 alongside **Justin Bieber** with their synth-based pop-rock smash “Stay,” his teenage voice was all over rock radio thanks to the acoustic sing-along “Without You,” which peaked at No. 9 on the Alternative Airplay chart and eventually No. 8 on the Hot 100. “Once you really dug into ‘Without You,’ that one really stood on its own,” says Calder, “and we’re still playing it today.” (The guitarist on “Without You,” writer/producer Omer Fedi, has been literally instrumental in the six-string’s return to top 40, also playing on “Mood” and MGK’s *Tickets to My Downfall* album.)

For pop programmers, part of the appeal of these rock-adjacent hits is that they help achieve the sonic variety that’s long been crucial to the format. Plenty of current radio hits, from **Dua Lipa**’s “Levitating” to **The Weeknd**’s “Take My Breath,” aren’t built around guitar sounds, so songs like “Good 4 U” and “Beggin” can naturally diversify a top 40 radio block.

“It’s always been an initiative to make sure that we’re well-balanced with all genres,” says Tear. “It’s an exciting time, because now it seems like we don’t have to dig as deep to find [that balance], and that it’s more at the forefront of people’s attention.”

Tear believes that there are more rock crossover songs on the way: he’s keeping a close eye on Sueco’s anthemic scream-pop single “Paralyzed,” as well as genre-straddling artists like Role Model and Almost Monday. Lil Huddy and YUNGBLUD — both Machine Gun Kelly collaborators that have found success at alternative formats — may also be primed for their own pop moments, and Willow “is also coming onto the scene” with her recent pivot to rock, says Tear. Huddy, YUNGBLUD, Willow and MGK have all worked recently with **Blink-182**’s Travis Barker — an increasingly large presence in modern rock as a producer and collaborator,

whose influence will likely expand within pop music as well.

Regardless of the specific songs and artists that continue the trend, pop program directors likely won’t hesitate incorporating more rock-based songs into their rotations, if the past few months have been any indication. Calder says that, in the streaming age, no listeners place their favorite new songs into “format boxes” — and neither should radio programmers.

“The beauty of pop radio, in my opinion, is that we’re designed to wobble back and forth with the music cycle,” says Calder. “When things get more rhythmic, we go more rhythmic. When things go more pop-rock, we go more pop-rock. We’ve got to be where the people are.”

Drake’s ‘Certified Lover Boy’ Credits R. Kelly, *NSYNC & The Beatles — But Who Gets What?

BY KRISTIN ROBINSON

When **Drake**’s highly-anticipated sixth studio album *Certified Lover Boy* arrived Sept. 3, it came with a laundry list of features, interpolations and samples in its credits. Those included longtime collaborators like producer and engineer **Noah “40” Shebib** and OVO signee **PARTYNEXTDOOR**, as well as reappearances by old friends like former Young Money labelmates **Lil Wayne** and **Nicki Minaj**.

But the album also included some more surprising guests. Due to a sample of **Masego**’s “Navajo” on the album opener “Champagne Poetry,” Drake shares writing and production credit with **The Beatles’ John Lennon** and **Paul McCartney**. (“Navajo” samples a cover of

the Beatles song “Michelle.”) **Right Said Fred** is on there too, with the band’s iconic “I’m Too Sexy” sampled and flipped into the album’s Billboard **Hot 100**-topping, cheeky focus track “Way 2 Sexy,” as well were ***NSYNC** and **R. Kelly**, who are both sampled in the song “TSU.” (Shebib clarified in an Instagram post that R. Kelly is not a lyricist on “TSU” but that they “**were forced to license**” his song “Half on a Baby” in order to use a clip of OG Ron C talking as a sample in which an R. Kelly song plays faintly in the background.)

But even after Drake’s album was released, a source close to the situation told Billboard the writing credit splits — meaning which collaborators get what share of a song — were not yet finalized. In fact, releasing songs and projects prior to determining official splits for each songwriter is normal in the music business, especially for albums with significant money to be made and many writers’ interests to reconcile.

“Late splits after release are commonplace,” says Kelley Fox, head of publishing and records at Unknown Music, an independent label and publishing company founded by songwriter Ross Golan. The process can be complicated, and it can get especially hairy for sample-heavy genres like hip-hop, due to the complex nature of determining percentages of ownership between writers in the room and sampled or interpolated writers who were not present.

“At the end of the day, creatives have different ideas of what they contributed in the room,” says Fox. “There is no rule that says that because you came up with the concept, you definitely deserve 5%. That’s really why it’s so hard to figure out.”

Additionally, songs are often written months or even years before they are released, so when writers have to argue for their piece of the publishing royalty pie after the release of a song, they are often working off of old, uncertain memories of the session. And greener songwriters are left to fight for their fair share with their more seasoned, well-known counterparts.

The stakes for these negotiations are high, especially when the song is attached to a hit-making artist like Drake. This week, songs from the *Certified Lover Boy* make up nine

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of the top 10 slots on the Hot 100, while all of the album's 21 tracks are in the top 40 of the chart, as it **racked up** 743.67 million on-demand streams, second all-time behind his 2018 album *Scorpion*.

And that can mean big money. For Drake's 2016 mega-hit "One Dance" feat. **Wiz-kid** and **Kyla**, for example, the publishing revenue accrued so far totals at least \$4 million, not including synch and general licensing, i.e. royalties from when it's played in stores, elevators, or hotels, *Billboard* estimates. And that's just in the U.S. — the **IFPI** **named** "One Dance" the biggest song in the world in 2016. In that case, the difference between securing 15% songwriting credit and 25% on a song — even one with nine credited writers — can be, as Fox puts it, "As big as you buying a house or not buying a house."

Additional reporting by Ed Christman. ■

Country Tour Bus Biz Recovering From Pandemic With One Eye On the Long Haul

BY TOM ROLAND

The website for Hemphill Brothers Coach in Nashville has an odd feature this fall: a blatant "Now hiring!" advertisement.

The tour bus company — which lists Dolly Parton, Dierks Bentley and Gary Allan among its clients — had almost all of its fleet grounded for the last year and a half. During the downtime, many of its freelance drivers retired, segued into the trucking business or changed careers. And with many workers reluctant to put themselves in social situations amid a raging pandemic, restocking the pool is a challenge.

President/CEO Trent Hemphill is optimistic that the team will return to full strength, but anticipates other challenges even farther down the road. As climate

change accelerates, the transportation industry faces greater pressure to switch to cleaner technologies: electricity or fuel cells that convert other fuels, such as hydrogen, to battery power. And with numerous companies testing autonomous vehicles, it's possible that a bus in the 2030s could rely — in part, at least — on driverless travel.

"I'm not trying to limit the future in my thinking about what could come down the road," says Hemphill, though he expects any changes will evolve slowly.

Since its start with two buses in 1980, the Hemphills' Nashville-based business has expanded to 110 buses that, in non-COVID-19 times, rack up as much as 7 million miles a year.

Transport is a major consideration for country artists. They can expect to fork over \$17,000-\$20,000 a month to lease a bus, according to Fusion Management founder Daniel Miller, who handles Riley Green, Martina McBride and Cassadee Pope. Miller projects \$1 per mile in fuel costs for each tour run, as well as additional expenses for drivers, cleaning, engine service and linens. And since artists can easily spend as much time in the bus as in their homes, leasing companies want the pricey experience to be enjoyable.

Thus, buses have grown increasingly sophisticated, with slide-outs that allow the vehicle to expand its living space once it's parked, taller construction that accommodates more sleeping bunks and quieter generators. As the buses age out, the company typically purchases a new bus shell each month.

"We buy the new model every year of what's out there," says Hemphill. "So we see the technology moving, and we're buying that technology as it's available."

Availability of new technologies is a chicken-and-egg proposition throughout the industry. Prevost, one of the most prominent coach manufacturers, is a Volvo subsidiary, and country tour buses are a small fraction of the parent company's overall business, which includes passenger vehicles, trucks, city buses and construction machinery. Traveling into the future is important to its success — Volvo hopes to be fossil-fuel-free by 2040 — and it broke ground on a new ve-

hicle propulsion lab in Hagerstown, Md., in June that will improve its ability to advance electric and fuel-cell performance. Volvo also announced on Sept. 1 that the Maersk shipping company had ordered 16 electric semi-trucks, purportedly the largest commercial order to date of a no-emission truck.

But the feasibility of no-gas vehicles relies on the ability to recharge the system. The infrastructure bills being debated in Washington, D.C., hold the promise of more electric refueling stations — particularly for local trucks and buses in large cities, according to Prevost executives — and if those outlets come to fruition, they would likely lead to more electric vehicles. That would, in turn, encourage additional recharging stations in smaller cities and interstate corridors, thus increasing pressure to advance the electric bus.

"We see a lot of momentum when it comes to automobiles," says Prevost director of business operations and shell sales Ryan Piercy. "Obviously, the weight of an automobile versus the weight of a bus and everything that's on it makes a big, big difference when you want to get that range from the batteries with the technology that exists today."

But the interest is there. The fuel costs of a tour bus, which gets seven to eight miles per gallon, are a constant reminder to artists and their teams of the amount of diesel they're burning. Increasing cancellations from extreme weather events likewise bring focus to the growing wave of climate change, and the acts recognize live industry's contribution to that issue.

"They're conscientious," says Prevost bus shell division director Steven Zeigler. "They think about their clients and who's coming to see them, and so we do have those discussions. We've had guys that put solar panels on the top, and so they're putting batteries in there that'll charge from the [panels]."

While the shift to new fuel sources seems inevitable, the advent of driverless vehicles raises some eyebrows. CBS' 60 Minutes recently rebroadcast a segment on Starsky Robotics' advances with automated eighteen-wheelers. The technology looks impressive, and Miller notes that it holds the potential to make some tours a tad less expensive.

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“We can’t let [drivers] drive more than 10 hours” without an eight-hour break, he says, noting government restrictions. “So if and when that technology existed, it would let us travel longer distances without having to bring a second driver out.”

Of course, while freight trucks might be delivering washing machines to a home store, a bus carrying McBride has a more fragile — and more valuable — payload.

“I don’t trust the driverless truck just yet,” says Miller. “But hopefully, if the Jetsons’ premonitions come true, we’ll be there in our lifetime.”

Though if it were to happen, it would mean a drastic change in job descriptions. The bus driver serves, as Piercy says, as a “conciierge” for a band and crew.

“There’s so many other things that the driver does other than just drive the bus,” affirms Hemphill. “Think of it almost as an RV or a motor home, which has showers on the bus. There’s water-supply situations that have to be taken care of, dumping toilets and systems like that, all types of service checks and routing changes due to weather.”

Which suggests that coachmen will mostly remain in the driver’s seat, even if gas is eventually removed from the tank. Either way, as the most forward-thinking Americans ponder the conditions that are being created for future generations, the touring business has wheels turning on the very same issue.

From top to bottom, says Volvo director of marketing and communications Michael Power, the business is “actively working on solutions for the long haul.”

This article first appeared in the Billboard Country Update newsletter, which features the latest airplay, sales and streaming charts along with compelling analysis of market trends and conditions. All for free. Click [here](#) to subscribe. 📧

Tems Signs to Since '93/RCA, Named Apple Music 'Up Next' Artist

BY DAN RYS

The story behind the new single from Nigerian singer-songwriter [Tems](#), “Crazy Tings,” off her newly-released EP *If Orange Was a Place*, is pretty straightforward. “It’s a song about my life and the things that are happening right now — everything’s crazy,” she tells *Billboard*. “A lot of my songs are from my struggle and a lot of things that I go through, and right now this is exactly what’s happening. Especially coming from Nigeria, it’s something that they can relate to because that’s what life in Nigeria is — madness.”

It’s been a whirlwind time for Tems, one year since releasing her debut EP, *For Broken Ears*, last fall. In the past month alone, she’s seen her collaboration with [Wizkid](#), “Essence,” get remixed by [Justin Bieber](#) and fly to No. 1 on the R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay chart (where it has been for three weeks) and reach the top of Hot R&B Songs, and she appeared on [Drake](#)’s blockbuster new album *Certified Lover Boy* on the song “Fountains,” which debuted at No. 26 on the Hot 100 this week.

Now, Tems is adding a few new wins to the list: following yesterday’s release of her new five-song EP, she has officially signed to Since '93/RCA Records, and has been named as part of Apple Music’s ‘Up Next’ program for rising artists, which in the past has featured the likes of [Billie Eilish](#), [Bad Bunny](#), [Burna Boy](#) and [Megan Thee Stallion](#), among others. That includes a new mini-documentary, available now via Apple Music, which she says allows her to “tell my story in a different way.

“I think it’s a huge opportunity to really allow people to get to know me a bit more

and see a bit more into my life and get a bit more perspective on who I am and where I’m from and what my life is about and where the music comes from,” she says. “Everything that comes with it is an opportunity to be seen and to be maybe understood a bit more.”

That opportunity will now be amplified by her new record deal, with RCA chairman/CEO [Peter Edge](#) calling her “immensely talented” and an “incredible artist” whose “style and vocal abilities know no bounds” in a statement to *Billboard*. “There’s no doubt she’ll accomplish great things and we can’t wait to see Tems flourish.” Added Since '93 co-president [Glyn Aikins](#), “[Tems is] a once in a generation artist whose originality and style is second to none.”

“My team and I have been working really hard over the years, now we’re in a new season and on a higher level and things can only get better as we reach more people all over the world,” Tems said in her own statement about the deal. “I’m looking forward to this new partnership with Since '93/RCA and working with their talented teams as we enter in this next chapter.”

Tems’ debut, *For Broken Ears*, was a stunning R&B record that showcased the rising singer’s voice and melodic nuance in a way that was both catchy and deep, and her new EP finds her both doubling down on that foundation while simultaneously stretching the boundaries of style and genre, showing glimpses of what’s to come — after all, she has still released only a few handful of songs in her career so far. “Most of the songs on *For Broken Ears* are actually four or five years old, so I think this would be an evolution in the eyes of my fans, or in the eyes of anyone,” she tells *Billboard*. “But really it’s who I’ve been — I just haven’t shared it with the world, and that’s what I’m doing now. And there are other sides to me that I haven’t shared that are still going to come out. But I’m always evolving.”

“Tems once told me that ‘being yourself actually takes more courage than people would imagine,’” Apple Music 1 host Nadeska told *Billboard* in a statement. “In her career that has meant ignoring opinions and pressure to compromise her music, while constantly defying expectations. Her debut

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EP was raw and addictive, leaving fans hungry for her next release. And no matter how her songwriting evolves, her captivating vocal tone will bring her the spotlight on any original or feature record she touches.”

Up next is a string of U.S. tour dates and a few festival appearances, as she looks to get out in front of fans again after breaking out amidst the pandemic which has restricted live opportunities. And there’s also an album on the way, tentatively scheduled for next year, that she hopes will establish even more of her story.

“I think music is storytelling through song in many different kinds of ways, and I think the album when it comes out will really reflect the more in-depth part of what’s happening now,” she says. “Music is a form of expression, and I understand I’m on a bigger level now, but in terms of who I am or in terms of what music is to me, that’s never going to change. And there’s going to be much more, much more, and I’m just very excited to continue sharing my life, because that’s what this is all about.”

HYBE America CEO Lenzo Yoon Talks US Launch, Pacts With UMG & Scooter Braun

BY JEFF BENJAMIN

Since **Lenzo Yoon** took over as Big Hit Entertainment’s global CEO in 2020, the Korean agency behind K-pop superstars **BTS** has been scaling beyond music through new partnerships and acquisitions. Now Yoon is heading to Los Angeles to help lead the company’s growth in the U.S.

In February, Big Hit announced a strategic partnership with Universal Music Group focused around music and technology. A month later, the company rebranded Big Hit as **HYBE** to encompass its system of music labels, tech platforms, and edu-

cational, video and gaming services. Then in April **HYBE acquired Scooter Braun’s** Ithaca Holdings for \$1.05 billion, which was **celebrated** by the likes of BTS, Justin Bieber, and J Balvin.

In May, the company received approval from South Korean regulators to merge its fan-community platform Weverse with the popular V-Live streaming service after acquiring it from Korean tech giant Naver.

The moves all helped HYBE improve its second quarter revenue by nearly 80% to 278.6 billion KRW (\$244.1 million), **according to HYBE’s earnings report released last month.**

In an email interview with *Billboard*, Yoon says he feels “great responsibility” as the company continues to move and think more globally. He says his new role as CEO of HYBE America is part of a company restructuring in July that led to a “localized CEO system” with hubs in Korea, Japan, and the U.S., to be led by Yoon and Braun.

Yoon, a **2021 International Power Player**, won’t disclose details of larger-scale projects like the stateside boy-band show with Universal (he says a global audition is planned and that “a lot of ideas are being exchanged” with a target timeline to air next year) or if HYBE and the SB Projects roster are planning collaborations. But he is locked in on corporate acceleration.

The growth continues this month with the first HYBE release from new signing **fromis_9** under HYBE Labels’ Pledis Entertainment, with international distribution help from UMG-owned Ingrooves. (The act is HYBE’s only active girl group.)

“I try my best to respond promptly to pace and change while maintaining balance to not lose direction and stability,” he says.

In his *Billboard* interview, Yoon discusses HYBE’s recent partnerships, how his goals align with Braun and how his view on the future of live-streamed concerts.

Let’s start with the Universal Music partnership that was announced earlier this year. What have been the first steps in the new venture?

We are now planning out the details for what’s being called a “global artist debut project” based on the roadmap that we drew together.

You and your partners shared that a new project “will apply Big Hit’s ‘success formula’ established over the past 16 years to the U.S.” Some may be hesitant to say the “formula” will not work in the U.S. What do you say to skeptics?

It’s difficult for a lot of people to understand and appreciate from the beginning since this “novelty” is something no one has experienced before. It’s the mission of a company to challenge and prove it — and if HYBE doesn’t do it, who will? We believe in our own winning formula and the experiences we’ve gained from BTS’ global success but we also don’t think that’s going to lead this project to success. This is why we decided to cooperate with UMG, the leading local company in the market. We will find the most effective way to be successful in this project based on the know-how of the two companies, as well as thinking flexibly in order for all the elements that make up this project — talent, passion, HYBE’s system, local culture, and environment — to harmonize and create synergies. The goal is to present our ideal global boy band to the world.

HYBE is not only training and preparing artists based in the U.S. but in Japan as well. Can you expand on the larger vision with regionally focused artists?

K-pop is a culture that has evolved over the last 30 years. Today, the whole world is enjoying K-pop and a lot of people want to participate in it. At this point, the birth of new artists and content that combine with — and go beyond — the boundaries of nationality and culture could be seen as another evolution of K-pop. In particular, HYBE America’s project to showcase K-pop artists based in the U.S. itself is an unprecedented attempt in which we will be delivering new experiences to fans and presenting the industry’s new paradigm through both process and outcome.

Big Hit’s relationship with U.S. labels began with BTS and The Orchard, and eventually Columbia Records as well. What is the status of this relationship and do you foresee any changes here?

Regarding U.S. promotions, BTS is working with Columbia Records, under Sony Music Entertainment, and **Tomorrow X**

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Together with Republic Records, under Universal Music Group. But nothing has been decided what changes will occur in this relationship and I just believe HYBE America will be able to further support the functions of this relationship in the future.

Can you share your personal vision of how livestream concerts and experiences will evolve in the future?

The format of concerts will be unlikely to return to what it once was in the past even after the pandemic ends. Online services with newly added values will continue to emerge which will be consumed through platforms such as live streaming. These live streaming environments will constantly discover new markets. HYBE is constantly researching “how to enjoy” and focusing on technology for that reason.

When it comes to HYBE Solutions, specifically WeVerse platforms, what do you think these platforms offer that Twitter, Instagram and TikTok do not for artists?

This platform, in particular, is specialized in fan activities: There are no language barriers thanks to the 10-language translation service ... it's a platform that is possible to grow and expand infinitely as more artists use it as a communication channel with fans as well as constantly upgrading convenient services available for the users to use.

What has the HYBE-Ithaca merger done for you and the company so far?

HYBE and Ithaca Holdings will respectively prove what each is good at and increase the values as a team. In so doing, it's natural that the resources of HYBE are used for Ithaca Holdings and vice versa. We intend to cooperate in the most efficient way without overlapping in terms of structure. In addition, Korean artists' promotion activities in the U.S. can be carried out more systematically and vice versa. We have gained a lot more business opportunities with the merger of Ithaca Holdings.

You've shared how HYBE America will operate under two branches with you as a CEO as well as Braun as a new CEO of HYBE America. What have you learned from conversations with Braun and his team?

HYBE and Ithaca Holdings have some things in common, one of which is put-

ting efforts into transforming the business structure of the music industry. There are business models that each has developed and there will be positive effects if they are integrated and linked together.

How are plans for the U.S. location developing? Are you actively hiring?

In addition to Korea and Japan, HYBE America is one of the hubs that connect and expands HYBE's business globally. Members of HYBE America must be well-aware of the local culture and markets along with being able to communicate smoothly between HYBE's base and another base or market. Our staff is currently working in Korea and Japan, and we plan to continue hiring more talented people also in the U.S.

You're planning to lead U.S. operations stateside. How are you preparing for your move here?

I'm currently residing in Korea and taking care of businesses here. I'll most likely head over to the U.S. sometime in the second half of this year.

All the HYBE artists answered “What do you believe in?” in your **brand presentation**. What does Lenzo Yoon believe in?

K-pop is an attractive content that combines music, performance, fashion, music video, communication with fans, artists' efforts, teamwork, and messages altogether. The development of digital environments has led many people to come across this attractive content, and as a result, the world has responded enthusiastically. As long as technology and platform services, which allow artists to communicate with fans in both ways, continue to emerge and develop, K-pop will meet fans in constantly evolving forms and ways. I believe in the value of K-pop as an industry and its infinite possibilities. What's special about HYBE is that it moves based on the love of music and the mission to innovate the music industry. Our business areas will continue to expand and diversify accordingly. 📌

The Big Boss Talks: Daddy Yankee Is Teaching Reggaetón's Stars How to Own Their Careers

BY LEILA COBO

The following story is one of Billboard's two 2021 Latin issue covers, dated Sept. 18, 2021. The other cover of the same issue will run online Thursday, Sept. 16

Daddy Yankee sat in the tiny apartment he shared with his wife and three children in Villa Kennedy, a housing project in San Juan, Puerto Rico, listening to the sounds of the streets.

“*Cómo le gusta la gasolina!*,” shouted the voices beneath his window, taunting the pretty girls who got rides from guys with flashy cars.

“*A mí me gusta la gasolina, dame más gasolina,*” Yankee chanted to himself — a refrain he couldn't get out of his head.

It was 2004, and Yankee (born Raymond Ayala), then 28, was the leader of a burgeoning underground musical movement known as reggaetón. He knew the music was too big to be confined to the streets where he lived — and that it would need a megahit to bust out beyond his island home.

He took the chorus and flow to his friend Luny, of production duo Lunytunes, then the leading producers on the scene. Together with rapper and lyricist Eddie Dee, they fleshed out a track, adding the sound of gunning motors in the introduction along with Yankee's rapid-fire verses and, atop Luny's thumping, aggressive beat, that earworm of a refrain that sounded like a schoolyard taunt.

“The verse was so simple and easy to remember,” recalls Yankee today. He's sit-

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ting in the library of the Palacio Provincial, a newly opened hotel in a 19th-century building in the heart of trendy Old San Juan — a 10-minute drive but a lifetime away from that old Villa Kennedy apartment. “People looked for a hidden meaning: Was I talking about alcohol, about drugs? But that track is completely literal.”

However his audience interpreted it, “Gasolina” turned out to be the fuel that reggaetón, and Yankee, needed to explode. The track became the second single from 2004’s *Barrio Fino*, Yankee’s third album on El Cartel Records, the label he’d created three years before. Distributed by Universal Music Group (UMG) imprint Machete, it debuted at No. 1 on *Billboard*’s [Top Latin Albums](#) chart — the first-ever reggaetón album to hit that spot — and stayed there for 24 weeks, ultimately becoming the top Latin album of the 2000s.

With it, Yankee irrevocably altered the sound and business of Latin music, not only propelling the rise of a genre that today is a global phenomenon, but quite literally building it from the ground up. He set the standards for everything from how reggaetoneros dressed to how their music was created to the way the genre’s biggest artists negotiated collaborations and song splits. Along the way, he introduced a DIY, independent business model — in which he financed his own recording, marketing and promotion; licensed out only distribution; and, most significantly, kept ownership of his masters — that has become a blueprint adopted by many of today’s top-selling Latin acts.

“[Daddy Yankee] was, and is, an inspiration for me, not just musically, but also as a visionary of the entertainment industry and a great advocate of our genre,” says Ozuna. Anuel AA matter-of-factly calls him “a legend” who “paved the way for many of us. We all started from the bottom, but he started from zero, when the genre didn’t even exist. That’s something only the greats can do.”

And Yankee hasn’t just stayed relevant; he has stayed on top, with six No. 1s on *Top Latin Albums*; a record 73 entries on [Latin Airplay](#) and 84 [Hot Latin Songs](#) hits since “Gasolina,” including the record-shattering, paradigm-shifting “Despacito” alongside

Luis Fonsi. “He was at the forefront of the two most important shifts in Latin music,” says Jorge Mejía, president/CEO of Sony Music Publishing Latin America and U.S. Latin, of those two tracks. (Sony just renewed Yankee’s global publishing deal.) “Before ‘Despacito,’ the notion that Latin songwriters could collaborate on a world stage was not commonplace.”

Karol G says that partnering with rising acts is something she learned directly from Yankee. “You never perceive the guy as old because he collaborates with the hottest acts but also with the hottest *new* acts,” she says. “It’s something new artists are grateful for.”

Yet even as his reach has expanded to a global stage, much has stayed the same for Daddy Yankee. Over the years, he has continued to release his music on El Cartel through distribution deals with different labels. His 2007 bilingual album, *El Cartel: The Big Boss*, was distributed by Interscope because “they gave me the best deal,” he told *Billboard* at the time. It debuted at No. 1 on *Top Latin Albums* and a respectable No. 9 on the all-genre [Billboard 200](#) chart, yet for his next studio album, 2010’s *Mundial*, he chose Sony Music Latin as distributor, and then Capitol Latin for 2012’s *Prestige* — again citing “the best deal” as his main reason for the switches.

At 46, he is still boyishly handsome, his buzz cut accentuating smooth skin and chiseled features. He’s lean from working out during the pandemic, wearing a white T-shirt, track pants and just the right amount of bling — chain, bracelet, ring and watch in matching platinum and diamonds — to exude self-confidence, not pretense.

He still lives in Puerto Rico, not just because it’s his home, but because it allows him to “stay in touch with the streets.” He still works with much of his day one crew, including publicist Mayna Nevarez and producer Luny. And he’s still married to high school sweetheart Mireddys González — who’s also his manager, CEO of El Cartel and an entrepreneur in her own right with over a million Instagram followers.

González (who declined to be interviewed) is widely known to wield broad influence over her husband’s career — which Yankee freely admits. “She’s the boss.

She has always been the boss,” he says with a smile. (Later, I’ll catch the two of them chatting on the hotel balcony, Yankee whispering in her ear as her hands encircle his waist, as if they’re still teenagers.)

But final say on everything comes down to Yankee himself. “His attention to detail is unmatched,” says Simran Singh, his attorney for the past five years. “He looks at everything. He studies music today as he did 20 years ago — the numbers and the metrics, and he’s thinking about everything from the marketing side way before he releases a song.”

Video director and graphic designer Carlos Pérez witnessed that first-hand back in 2004, when Yankee tapped him to design the marketing and visual strategy for *Barrio Fino*. “It took us like three days, him going line by line and asking, ‘What is this?’” recalls Pérez, who also still works with Yankee. “Finally, he said, ‘I want it all.’ Everything cost about \$30,000 — not including the video. It wasn’t cheap for the time or for an independent artist. But he just said, ‘Can you break it down into three payments?’ He wanted marketing and the identity at the level of any of the top hip-hop artists.”

That strategic savvy is still evolving as Yankee prepares to release his 10th studio album, and his first since 2012, this fall on El Cartel but under a revamped global distribution deal with UMG — one that falls directly under the purview of CEO Lucian Grainge and UMG executive vp Michele Anthony, with Republic Records providing marketing and promotion. The deal — which Singh describes as “astronomical,” though neither he nor Yankee will disclose its value — also includes a partnership on a documentary about the history of reggaetón, executive-produced by Yankee and funded and produced by UMG, which will soon begin shopping it to streaming platforms and studios.

“Daddy Yankee is that rare artist who actually shapes culture and changes the world through his music and ideas,” says Anthony. “By elevating reggaetón into a global phenomenon, he helped fuel the explosive crossover popularity of Latin music. Through his music and entrepreneurship, he has created new business models and a platform that has launched the careers of

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many of today's new artists."

The agreement was crafted last year amid the height of the pandemic. Yankee, distributed by UMG since the 2012 Capitol Latin deal, still owed the company several singles. But rather than simply delivering those, he proposed a full album under a new deal — with UMG rather than Universal Music Latino.

"Fans are finally ready to listen to a full album on streaming platforms," says Yankee. "We need to create a moment, and what better people than Sir Lucian and Michele Anthony to do so? Republic has a sense of [Latin] culture, and they have a lot of Latinos in their teams. [Universal Music Latino] was my distributor, but everything else, I did on my own. Now, UMG, they're my partners."

Though the album's tracklist is still a work in progress, it includes the single "[Métele Al Perreo](#)" (released Sept. 2), a fast-paced vintage reggaetón track with a video paying homage to the Puerto Rican town of Bayamón, where Yankee trains daily at a boxing gym. And it will also include, as usual, collaborations with big names and up-and-comers alike. Yankee's always on the lookout for the next ready-to-break star, as he once was — like hardcore rapper Eladio Carrion, with whom he recently paired up on a track.

"I'm supporting him and I'm embracing what he's doing because I recognize the importance and cred of the artist that comes from the streets," says Yankee. "My goal always was to create an urban culture, in Spanish, that would get recognition. And thank God, I'm approaching my fourth musical decade, and I'm seeing the results."

When did you decide to make music your career?

I had no other options. I had a daughter, so I thought, "I have to sing, otherwise how am I going to support this child?" The issue was, I was kicking off a career in a genre that didn't exist yet. It was reggae, and it was rap, but it wasn't reggaetón. Reggaetón culture started with us, in 1990, 1991. We started to release music and play in all the housing projects. And they started to pay us, little by little. We had a DJ and a turntable, and we used the same mic as the DJ, and

they'd pay us \$20, \$50, \$100.

What convinced you it could work?

We got our start singing in *fiestas patronales* [patron-saint celebrations common in Puerto Rico] at the housing projects. We had zero support or marketing and we were always the hit of the party. That's when I realized we had something powerful in our hands. Plus, people were coming by to buy my cassettes. We were hot in the streets. Other people didn't get it, but I did, because I'd been a big fan of '80s rap — Run-D.M.C., LL Cool J — since I was a kid, and the same thing that had happened with rap was happening here, with us.

The new crop of reggaetón artists all say you are their inspiration, both musically and businesswise. The fact that you own your masters is always mentioned. Why did you take that route?

No one wanted to sign me. I tried. Honestly, no one believed in the music, period. They thought [reggaetón] was a fad. They've been telling me I'm a fad since 1990. They've been telling me to retire since 1990. I took *Barrio Fino* to EMI and Universal but they weren't interested in that kind of music. Their offer was they'd pay me \$10,000 or \$15,000 to release it but they'd keep the masters. By then, I'd already released *Elcangri.com* [in 2002] and I had personally paid to manufacture 50,000 copies that I distributed on my own. If I'm getting \$5 per album, and I sell 50,000 albums — \$10,000 doesn't add up. I knew, from the moment I started to manufacture the albums, that I wanted to grow, but I didn't have the distribution system to reach everyone.

Were you doing this entirely on your own?

Yes. So when I went in to negotiate, I said, "I'm willing to be your partner. I need you to distribute my product and put me everywhere." And they said no: "We don't only distribute. We sign artists, and your music doesn't sell." That's the mistake people make when they sit behind their desks and they're not in the streets. That taught me to always stay in touch with the streets. Circumstances change when you grow as an artist and lose that anonymity and you're not able to go out and connect with your environment. But here in Puerto Rico, I mingle

with people, I go to the beach, I see how they consume music, I pay attention, and it allows me to create.

Early in your career, before you made your own albums, you recorded mixtapes and compilations. Did you cede those masters?

Yes. At that point I did, because we had no sense of the music industry. I didn't know what a master was. When I put out *Elcangri.com*, I didn't have to concern myself with anything because I was my own boss and it was my songs and my lyrics. I would pay for the beats, and that's it. I made the investment, and everything else was for me. I didn't even have ASCAP. We didn't know we got royalties from airplay. Prior to [*Barrio Fino*], everything was verbal agreements, handshakes, song exchanges. Now, everything requires a contract [and monetary compensation]. *Barrio Fino* changed not only the culture, but the business model.

When you talk about the "business model," you mean that on the one hand, the business was professionalized with contracts and agreements. But on the other, it was a new model in which you kept your master recordings — correct?

It was adopted not only by reggaetón acts — I have rockers, *salseros* come to me and ask: "How did you become your own boss?" Dude, because I had no choice. If no one wants to sign a talented kid today, he records himself, produces himself, writes the songs and engineers the album. He creates his own opportunities. I had to create my own opportunities and it became part of my DNA.

You built your career performing. Today, some new acts have hundreds of millions of streams before they ever perform live...

That's what I mean: Right now we have elevators, not stairs. And in music, you have to take the stairs to navigate the highs and the lows. Most of these kids talk to me, and what I see is they can't deal with failures. They worked, they learned how to use Pro Tools and they exploded. They haven't gone through a process. So when they hit that hard patch, which happens to all of us, how will they work through that? This generation doesn't have the tools that are vital

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for longevity.

What advice do you give them?

Man, what I've always learned through the years: Go to the studio and do your best work. Music is what will speak for you and what will really connect with your audience. Social media is incredible but it doesn't bring you revenue. Instagram doesn't bring me revenue. If I owned Instagram, I'd post all my content there. But Instagram doesn't pay me for my content. Neither does Facebook, Twitter or TikTok. YouTube pays me. And Spotify and Apple. Those are my allies. I release music, I give you content and your platform grows — but so does mine.

I've heard that when you work on a collaboration you have a fixed percentage you ask for, regardless of who it's with or the number of artists involved. Is that true?

Yes. This is a hard topic to broach with artists, because they often know so little about the music business. The way I explain it is, "Papi, I'm not asking for more than I'm worth. Now, you want me on your album, I like to collaborate, but I don't like to give away what's mine. So, is the master yours? No? Then, from the onset I'm working for someone other than yourself. I'm not working for you, my colleague, but for whoever owns you, your boss. I'm a boss, I'm not an employee. You can't ask a boss to work for another boss. You want to collaborate with me? I'm happy to do it, but remember I don't need to do it." I do it because I like the artist, or I really like the song.

Have you ever paid someone upfront to record with you?

Yes. When I've had to pay someone for the respect, I've done so. "I'm worth so much" — OK. I've always understood an artist's value. If we collaborate and you charge me X, that's fine. Most of my collabs are exchanges, but remember, there's a very fine line there. What if my song works, but yours doesn't? Hopefully both tracks work, but that's not always the case, and I get that. I get that you have a value that you need me to cover so that in the end, we're all in a good place.

But the business is flexible, and I'm flexible in many areas. I understand that sometimes, we're talking about cultural moments

rather than simply chart position. "China" [Anuel's hit featuring Karol G, J Balvin, Ozuna and Yankee] is a good example. I saw it as a song that was important for the genre. When we do these collabs with many artists, there are times when [I've agreed to divide splits] in equal parts, because it's important for the genre. Cultural vision is what has allowed me to take a big-picture approach versus simply focusing on the hit.

You've never had a traditional manager. Why?

In the past few years, Raphy Pina has stepped in as a partner. He helps Mireddys with the management, but I never had a manager per se. I had management offers and agency offers but back then, they didn't understand Latin urban culture [Yankee is now represented by WME]. Agencies didn't even have Latin divisions. Now they do. I got invited to Coachella [years ago], for example, and the pay was ridiculous. They kept saying, "It's Coachella." My reply was: "Get educated on what my value is, and who my fan is." I was already playing [arenas like] Madison Square Garden and Staples Center, you get me?

Well, it took many years for reggaetón to be accepted not only in the mainstream U.S. market but also in countries like Mexico and Argentina. What role did you play in that?

I like to say I took the bullets. I wanted people to understand my essence, where I come from, what I represent. But at the same time, I wanted to take my culture to the very top. I can't tell you there was a formula. Reggaetón was initially only known on the East Coast. When I released *Barrio Fino*, the West Coast didn't get it. I'd go to Los Angeles or Mexico and people knew Daddy Yankee, but they didn't know what reggaetón was. I had to take the culture with me everywhere so it became permanent instead of fizzling out like other genres where artists simply promote themselves. When I did promotion, I talked about all the artists in my album: "This is me. But this album also features Zion & Lennox, Plan B, Ivy Queen." I had to play their music and say, "This is them. This is reggaetón."

Your current album falls under your longtime Universal distribution deal.

What would you have done if you weren't under that contract?

Right now, being an indie is great, but if you don't have a long-term major partner, you'll be eaten up alive, because each platform is out for their own interest. But personally, if I didn't have the former distribution contract, I would release my music independently on all platforms.

Don't get me wrong: Major labels aren't going anywhere. They have the power of their catalog, of hundreds of artists, and platforms need that content. A person like myself, who has leverage, can close deals directly with all the platforms and make more money. But, definitely someone indie will explode, or they'll negotiate a release directly with Spotify and Apple, for example.

What new acts do you like?

All of them. I'm 100% pro Bad Bunny. I think what he's doing is really important, and I support him to the millionth degree. Ozuna is a hard worker. [Anuel] brings the street and street swag with him. I really admire Balvin's dedication, and he has been a pillar in bringing a new wave of music from South America. I like what Rauw [Alejandro] and Sech are doing. Maluma has extraordinary branding, and he's underestimated. I love what Karol is doing.

It's an exciting — and profitable — time for Latin music right now. What challenges still need to be overcome?

Paradoxically, the advantage and disadvantage is the same: We have the opportunity to be on one-on-one terms with fans, but fans consume you. They demand so much that the challenge artists have today is: How long can I last? I believe there's a fan base that truly listens to and enjoys the music, and there's a disposable fan base that's simply looking for the next new thing and doesn't allow the music to create experiences in their lives.

We [older acts] had the opportunity to create lifelong fans — not only me, but rock bands, balladeers and *salseros* who fill stadiums. They don't have the same streams the younger generation has, but they sell more tickets. These younger artists have amazing numbers because they have amazing tools at their disposal, but I'd have done the same. I can't be a resentful OG.

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Now that it has become so big, is there any danger of the genre becoming disposable?

No, no. That's why I never left Puerto Rico. I understand global music, but our roots are really important. That's our identity, and we can never lose that identity. And I don't think we've lost it. There are a lot of kids doing it, but they're flying under the radar. That's why you see so many of us recording with them, because we recognize the importance of the culture, even if the streaming numbers are not there yet. Right now, there are so many colors to choose from in our music. From reggaetón to trap, tropical, urban tropical, everything is working. It's just about doing it right.

Daddy Yankee will appear at Billboard's 2021 Latin Music Week, presented by Samsung Galaxy and taking place live in Miami Sept. 20-25. For more event info, go to billboardlatinmusicweek.com.

This story originally appeared in the Sept. 18, 2021, issue of [Billboard](#). 

Merlin Renews Licensing Deal With India's JioSaavn

BY ALEXEI BARRIONUEVO

Digital rights organization Merlin has renewed a one-year deal with JioSaavn, a leading Indian streaming platform, to license its content primarily in India, a country whose music consumers are largely focused on streaming domestic repertoire, the companies tell Billboard.

The new one-year deal gives JioSaavn's more than 100 million monthly average users access to Merlin's catalog, which represents about 15% of the global digital recorded-music market.

For London-based Merlin, which has distributed more than \$2 billion to its almost 900 members since launching in 2008, the deal solidifies a relationship it has had with

Saavn since 2014. The renewal is the first since the streaming service merged with Reliance Industries' JioMusic in 2018, creating JioSaavn, in a deal that valued the combined company at \$1 billion. (JioSaavn now comes pre-installed on Jio's own JioPhone and is also available for web, Android, and iOS users.)

"We recognize that India is an important market and is only going to become more important," says **Charlie Lexton**, Merlin's chief operating officer. "We want to give our members the opportunity to have their music as widely available on licensed services as possible."

India, a market dominated by movie soundtracks, saw its recorded music revenues grow 4.9% to \$180 million last year, lagging overall global growth of 7.4%, according to the IFPI's Global Music Report. About 75% of the content consumed on JioSaavn is domestic Indian repertoire, with about 25% being international, says Keshav Bhola, JioSaavn's vp of content partnerships.

"Merlin has a vast international catalog from their music labels' point of view," says Bhola. "And they're also working with so many independent artists to provide content to platforms like us."

Lexton says Merlin is in discussions with other Indian streaming platforms about potential licensing deals. The increasingly crowded field includes Gaana, Wynk Music, ByteDance's Resso and international players like Spotify and Apple Music.

Merlin's membership includes leading independents such as Armada Music, Beggars Group, Dim Mak and Ultra Records. The rights organization also has global licensing agreements with Alibaba, Deezer, Spotify, Tencent Music Entertainment and YouTube Music. 

BTS Announce 'Permission to Dance' Livestream Concert

BY GIL KAUFMAN

Like so many artists, **BTS** have been cooling their heels during the COVID-19 pandemic, unable to perform in person for their beloved ARMY due to the global outbreak. But on Wednesday (Sept. 15), the K-pop superstars brought a ray of hope to all those fans thirsting to see them live with the announcement of the upcoming Oct. 24 "BTS Permission to Dance On Stage" livestream.

The group revealed the event in a video in which they promised, "we're going to meet ARMY through online streaming... our stage is where you are. Please enjoy the concert with us that day!" The news was accompanied by a poster featuring the color scheme from the "Butter" CD single, which is backed by the b-side hit "Permission to Dance." It's their first concert in nearly a year, following-up on the "BTS Map of the Soul On:e" event from Oct. 2020. According to the release, that show was viewed in 191 countries/regions and used AR and XR tech that allowed the septet to interact with their followers via the "ARMY on Air" fan event.

At press time no additional information was available on the concert, though the poster for the event indicates that it will air at 5:30 a.m. ET. BTS had planned to kick off the "BTS Map of the Soul" tour in April 2020, but were forced to cancel the dates due to pandemic travel restrictions.

Check out the announcement below. 

YouTube Is ‘Now the Largest Content Licensor in the World,’ Says Exec

BY GEORG SZALAI

Don't ignore [YouTube](#) when looking at streaming video success stories, such as Netflix, a top executive of the [Alphabet](#)-owned giant told a media and entertainment industry conference in Cambridge, England on Wednesday.

Robert Kyncl, YouTube's chief business officer, shared some data and stats about the video streamer during the Royal Television Society Cambridge Convention, saying it has become a diversified platform after starting with “grainy home videos” and the like. “Now, media companies present about 25 percent of YouTube watch time globally, another 25 percent is music, and 50 percent is YouTube creators,” he explained.

Addressing financial trends, including revenue, the executive said: “We are roughly neck-and-neck with Netflix on revenue, actually we are slightly larger and growing faster.”

Second-quarter advertising revenue at YouTube was reported at \$7 billion, up 83 percent from the year-ago period, after \$6 billion in the first quarter, up 49 percent. That don't include subscription revenue generated by [YouTube Music](#) and YouTube Premium. Netflix recorded \$7.3 billion in the latest quarter, up 19 percent, after \$7.2 billion in the first quarter, up 24 percent.

The executive also discussed content spending. “When you think about our payouts, we are now the largest content licensor in the world,” Kyncl said. He mentioned that YouTube's partner program covers about 2 million creators, with the company paying out \$30 billion to them over the past three years.

Kyncl said to ensure diversity, companies

must focus on it, including in hiring and creative relationships. “Unless you always take the extra step ..., you just take the easy way out and never change anything,” he said.

Before his appearance, **Ben McOwen Wilson**, YouTube's managing director, U.K. and Ireland, had said in opening remarks that no company, including YouTube, was doing enough for inclusion yet. “None of us ... is delivering the audience that represents our country, none of us is doing well on any dimension of diversity,” he said. “Collectively, we must shift that ... for our audiences, the talent we have behind the cameras and in front of the cameras.”

With talent able to build an audience on YouTube that can rival that of many TV channels, “we must ensure that representation and equality opportunity is baked in for all, or we will miss the opportunity to work with that talent,” he said. “It cannot be sprinkled on top as diversity dressing. It must be in the cake mix.”

he theme of the Royal Television Society Cambridge Convention is “Broadcast Britain: Reshaping Britishness on the Global Stage.”

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

Universal Music Japan President/CEO Naoshi Fujikura Talks Streaming, Learning From K-Pop & More

BY BILLBOARD JAPAN

Earlier this year, Universal Music Japan's President/CEO Naoshi Fujikura was named one of the global industry leaders driving the success of music business outside the U.S. on [Billboard's International Power Play-](#)

[ers](#) list. Fujikura was recognized for shifting his company's focus toward streaming in a market known for its weight on physical music sales, while also expanding its “services offered to artists, such as merchandising, live events and fan clubs.”

Fujikura sat down with [Billboard Japan](#) to share his thoughts on Universal Music Japan's measures to increase streaming revenue, its strategies for overseas markets — including but not limited to Asia — and the company's vision going forward.

You were recognized in [Billboard's International Power Players](#) list for increasing UMJ's revenues in streaming and other sources of income. Could you tell us what your company did in 2020 to achieve such growth, especially in streaming?

Some of the long-term goals toward which we'd been strategically working for some years — in terms of both streaming development as well as A&R, marketing, creative and innovation — finally started to bear fruit during the last few years. Ever since becoming the president/CEO in 2014, I've focused on finding the best ways of uniquely delivering the music of each artist; how best to reach their individual audience in terms of consumption; and how to develop and create the best possible music and market it accordingly. We didn't put all our energy into streaming only; we have been very carefully to operate as if we have two businesses that are seamlessly intertwined so that we can maximize our artists' talents to meet the demands of both the physical and digital worlds.

Recently, I've been telling our staff in meetings to “lean into it, get out in front, be creative.” We've worked hard to gain deeper understanding of how the platform side sees some additional items that enhance our A&R capabilities.

In order to increase streaming revenue, gaining listeners outside of Japan is crucial. Looking at the [Billboard](#) charts in the U.S., numerous K-pop acts such as BTS have been hitting the charts, but J-pop hasn't enjoyed the same level of success since Kyu Saka-moto [in 1963]. What do you think is needed for Japan's artists to accomplish this kind of success in the States?

Having watched how [K-pop artists]

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work, one area where there's room for J-pop artists to improve is social media. BTS built an overwhelming number of followers from around the world and can now utilize that fan loyalty as part of their strategy when releasing songs and music videos. This instant engagement can affect streaming results also immediately, helping new music reach a wider, global audience. Social media is a foundation that can help deliver works abroad, so we have to refine and learn and create best practices, in order for Japanese talent to benefit from it.

Also, K-pop music cleverly incorporates musical trends that appear on the global charts. The lyrics might be in Korean, but the finished product sounds very familiar to fans everywhere.

Another aspect of that success is that the Japanese music market is predominantly J-pop. When comparing sales for Japanese and Western music in Japan, domestic Japanese music is becoming the overwhelming majority on the charts. The pandemic shut down music festivals and events, and international artists haven't been able to come to our country, which has exacerbated this disparity.

I do think it's meaningful to have music that uniquely embodies Japanese culture like Kyu Sakamoto's "Sukiyaki" and the vocaloid, Miku Hatsune, that have achieved global popularity. On the other hand, we are seeing that the infusion of various countries' cultures and trends into original music makes it easier for that music to be widely accepted in different cultural zones, thanks to streaming and the accessibility of music discovery. We have seen music from Latin countries and South Korea accomplish this globally, so hopefully it will be possible for Japanese artists and music to achieve it, too in the future.

What are your thoughts on strategies in the Asian region?

The Asian market is crucial to our success with fans around the globe. Where, in the past, piracy and accessibility prevented music's commercial success, today streaming is increasing in markets like China, South Asia, and the Middle East. People who live in countries that used to be flooded with pirated CDs, or where CD players weren't wide-

spread, have now moved past CDs and are starting to listen to music on smartphones. And unlike Japan – where the birthrate is declining and the population is aging – the average age in Southeast Asian countries is very young, so the market is bursting with possibilities for future generations in that sense, as well. The Asian market has also been integral to the global rise in popularity of short-form video content, thanks to both innovation and investment in technology and content platforms within the region, but also thanks to the popularity and virality of fan engagement and user-generated content. This has helped drive the increased global interest in Asian culture, K-pop, fashion, and discovery around the world.

The Asian region can be the next base for a new wave of global hits and artists to be born.

The Grammy Awards and the Billboard Music Awards draw a lot of attention from all over, don't they?

I've attended the Grammys a number of times and have been impressed how even the many artists who weren't nominated for awards participate in the events – applauding their fellow artists onstage who win awards or who are performing. I think it would be great if we could create that kind of environment in Asia too.

What future endeavors does your company have planned?

Ever since I became president/CEO, I've been telling our employees here in Japan that I want the world to be a place where "music by artists from around the globe, is listened to around the globe." Of course, I'd love to see J-pop artists enjoy success in other countries and hit the top of the charts abroad, but I also hope that the same will happen to artists from other countries as well. Back in 2014 when I took up this position, that goal almost felt like a dream! But now we see the global success of acts like BTS and J Balvin, who show us that it is now very possible to attain that dream.

Another point we are focusing on, is the deep connection with fans which I mentioned earlier. An artist has the ability to do many things on their own today, without belonging to management or record company, something that would have been impossible

a few years ago. This might sound very basic, but in order for us to be the kind of partner that artists choose to work with, we have to be able to provide a higher level of opportunities and occasions for those artists to connect with fans.

One example of this is our own Universal Music Store, our direct-to consumer platform, which has been growing at a fast rate. Not only does it enable us to deliver products directly, but it also gives us a better understanding of what the fans want from their artist of choice.

In many countries outside of Japan, streaming has expanded its reach and has been increasing revenue to make up for declining sales of CDs and other physical packages. But what's incredible about the development of Japanese artists, is that they're holding out on physical sales whilst also increasing streaming revenue at the same time. The pandemic forced many CD shops to close temporarily in 2020. Physical sales went down as a result, but it still held out at 86% of the year before. That also shows the fundamental strength of CD sales in the Japanese music market.

The market for CDs took a massive hit at one point in South Korea as well, but we have seen artists that have the ability to sell over a million CDs, are coming back. There is definitely more than one solution to the evolving global music market, and likewise, I hope that there will be numerous ways for Japan's artists to step out onto the global stage in the future.

Previously, the common way for J-pop artists to gain global popularity was to aim for the American market, by way of Asia. But now, new ways of marketing music on a global scale could spring up from frameworks that we'd never considered before. I personally feel the need to always continue learning, experimenting, and innovating wherever possible, in order to tread new pathways towards achieving global success and new exciting opportunities for Japanese music, artists and culture. **B**

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Jamillah 'JAM' Muhammad, Veteran Radio Executive, Dies at 51

BY GAIL MITCHELL

Radio industry veteran Jamillah "JAM" Muhammad died on Sept. 12 following a battle with cancer. She was 51.

Most recently vp at marketing and management firm The Lewis-Kortez Group, Muhammad previously served as operations manager at Stevie Wonder-owned Los Angeles radio station KJLH. Her estimable radio career also included similar executive posts with various other urban-formatted outlets across the country, including Beasley-owned WPEG and WBAV, Charlotte; Radio One's WMMJ-FM (Majic 102.3), Washington, D.C.; Clear Channel's WMXD-FM, Detroit; WKKV-FM (V100), Milwaukee and WVAZ-FM, Chicago. A Detroit native, Muhammad was born Aug. 7, 1970.

"Among the assets of being in the radio and the music industry are the unique people you meet along the way," says **Sheila Eldridge**, CEO of Miles Ahead Entertainment & Broadcasting. "Affectionately known as 'JAM,' Jamillah was one of those special people who was always there with her infectious smile and sisterly love. She was a pioneer for women in radio, understanding both local and syndication, and always open to share her knowledge. RIP 'Radio Baby,' you will be missed."

"Jamillah was a consummate professional and the nicest person you'd want to meet," adds **David C. Linton**, chairman of the Living Legends Foundation and program director-host of jazz station WCLK, Atlanta. "She took care of business, though she had a nice way of telling you 'no' and you couldn't get upset. No matter how bright her star rose as her career blossomed, she remained down to earth as she dealt with highs and

lows of this business. The one thing about angels is that they have to return to God, so I know JAM is in a great place."

Muhammad is survived by her life partner Kortez Harris, her mother Ernestine Pope, sisters Stephanie Rochelle and Ernestine Key, and brother Earl Muhammad. **■**

R. Kelly Threatens Accusers on Audio Recordings, Prosecutors Say

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

Prosecutors want a New York City jury at the **R. Kelly** sex-trafficking trial to hear profane video and audio recordings they say demonstrate how he threatened his victims with violence.

On one of the 2008 tapes, an enraged Kelly can be heard accusing an unidentified woman of lying to him before beginning to assault her, according to a court document filed on Tuesday (Sept. 14) in federal court in Brooklyn.

"If you lie to me, I'm going to f--- you up," Kelly says.

The star R&B singer is captured on another recording berating a second woman from Florida, identified as a "Jane Doe" he accused of stealing a Rolex watch from him, the filing says.

"You better not ever ... take from me again or I will be in Florida and something will happen to you," he says. "You understand what I'm telling you?"

Prosecutors had planned to call the second woman as a witness. But they decided against it after she "started to have panic attacks and appeared to have an emotional breakdown" while listening to the tape in preparation for her testimony, the filing says.

The defendant bragged about having "cameras everywhere" in his Chicago studio and other locations he used to keep an eye on his victims, it adds.

Kelly, now 54, has pleaded not guilty to racketeering and other charges accusing him of sexually abusing several women, girls and boys during the course of his 30-year singing career. He has vehemently denied the charges, claiming that the women were groupies who wanted to take advantage of his fame and fortune achieved through hits like "I Believe Can Fly."

The judge indicated on Tuesday that she would grant the government's request to use the tapes as evidence at the trial that began on Aug. 18. There was no immediate response to a message seeking comment from Kelly's defense team.

The request came a day after another witness testified she saw Kelly in a "sexual situation" with R&B phenom Aaliyah around 1993, when she was only 13 or 14. The woman also told the jury that Kelly had sex with her when she was 15 — the latest in a series of accusers who say he sexually exploited them when they were underage.

The woman — a former backup performer for Kelly who testified not using her real name — described opening a door on Kelly's tour bus to find him kneeling in front of Aaliyah and appearing to perform oral sex on the girl. She said she immediately shut the door and left without ever speaking to Kelly about the encounter.

The jury had previously heard a former Kelly employee testify how two fake IDs were used to clear the way for Kelly to marry Aaliyah after he began a sexual relationship with her and believed she had become pregnant. A marriage license that was put into evidence falsely listed her age as 18; Kelly was 27 at the time.

Prosecutors say Kelly wanted to use the marriage, which was later annulled, to shield himself from criminal charges related to having sex with a minor and to prevent her from testifying against him.

Aaliyah, whose full name was Aaliyah Dana Haughton, worked with Kelly, who wrote and produced her 1994 debut album, "Age Ain't Nothing But A Number." She died in a plane crash in 2001 at age 22. **■**

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Kanye West's 'Donda' Features Piano Interlude From New York Sixth Grader Named Zen

BY GIL KAUFMAN

Kanye West's dense *Donda* album features a ton of samples from artists famous and not-so, from solo star and Fugees member Lauryn Hill to KRS-One, to no-wave dance band Liquid Liquid, Briana Babineaux and the 20th Century Steel Band, in addition to verses from Fivio Foreign, Playboi Carti, Lil Baby, the Weeknd, Travis Scott and his late mother, Donda West.

But did you notice that Zen Micheline Hung is also featured on the album? Probably not. But on Monday (Sept. 13), New York's Kaufman Music Center revealed that the sixth grade student at the city's public K-12 school is the source of the haunting piano solo on the album's 22nd song "Come to Life."

"How cool is this? 6th grader Zen Micheline Hung (far right), a student at [#SpecialMusicSchool](#), our K-12 NYC public school that teaches music as a core subject, plays piano on a song called 'Come to Life' on [@kanyewest](#)'s new album, *Donda!*," the school tweeted along with a picture of West — dressed all in black and wearing green leather gloves — standing with a group of four students including Zen.

Hung's haunting piano solo comes in about halfway through the song and repeats hypnotically through the end of the 5:10 track. An [Instagram post](#) noted that Zen "played piano during a live performance of a song called 'Come to Life' at one of the listening events for Kanye West's new album, 'Donda!'"

Listen to "Come to Life" below (Hung appears around the 2:15 mark), see Kanye's

pic with Hung and watch her play a Bach prelude/fugue below. [▶](#)

G-Eazy Arrested & Charged After Allegedly Assaulting Two Men in New York

BY HERAN MAMO

G-Eazy was arrested on Monday (Sept. 13) for allegedly assaulting two men outside of a hotel in New York, *Billboard* can confirm.

The 32-year-old rapper (real name Gerald Earl Gillum) was charged with assault after he allegedly "punched" both men in their faces around 1 a.m. outside The Standard, High Line hotel in Manhattan Friday, the New York Police Department tells *Billboard*. The 29-year-old and 31-year-old men were not hospitalized at the time of the incident.

G-Eazy attended the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards on Sunday evening at Brooklyn's Barclays Center, two days after the alleged physical altercation, and was arrested the following day on misdemeanor charges. Law enforcement told [NBC News](#) he was released and received a ticket to appear in court at a later date.

He was [previously arrested](#) at a Swedish nightclub in May 2018 on charges of assault, drug possession and resisting arrest. G-Eazy pleaded guilty to all three charges; he received a probationary sentence and a \$10,000 fine, and made a payment to the bouncer, who was the victim in the nightclub assault.

The Bay Area rapper announced earlier in September that he will be [releasing a new album](#), *These Things Happen Too*, on Sept. 24 via BPG/RVG/RCA Records. It will serve as the sequel to his 2014 album *These Things Happen*, which peaked at No. 3 on the [Billboard 200](#).

Billboard has reached out to G-Eazy's team for comment. [▶](#)

Here Are the Artists Receiving Special Honors at the 2021 Billboard Latin Music Awards

BY GRISELDA FLORES

Paquita la del Barrio, Maná and Daddy Yankee will receive special honors at the 2021 Billboard Latin Music Awards, set to take place Thursday, Sept. 23, in Miami.

The Mexican songstress — known for her female-empowerment anthems — will be awarded with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Meanwhile, the iconic *rock en español* band will become the first artist to ever receive the Icon Award at the Billboard Latin Music Awards, and the Puerto Rican hitmaker will be honored with the Hall of Fame Award. All three chart-topping artists will also perform during the awards ceremony.

The Billboard Latin Music Awards will be broadcast live on Telemundo, kicking off at 7 p.m. ET with the traditional red carpet special, followed by the awards show at 8 p.m. The event will also be simulcast on Hispanic entertainment cable channel Universo and throughout Latin America and the Caribbean on Telemundo Internacional.

The awards will coincide with Billboard Latin Music Week, which returns to Miami from Sept. 20-25 and will host live conversations and performances with superstars like Karol G, Daddy Yankee, Nicky Jam, Rauw Alejandro, Natti Natasha and many more. For more information on Billboard Latin Music Week and to register now, visit [billboardlatinmusicweek.com](#).

Below, a breakdown of the artists receiving special honors at the 2021 Billboard Latin Music Awards:

Paquita la del Barrio - Known for her fe-

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male-empowerment anthems such as “Rata de dos Patas,” “Me Saludas a la Tuya” and “Tres Veces Te Engañé” — which denounce macho culture and attitude — Paquita la del Barrio boasts 50 years in the industry. Early days in her career included singing at school festivals and forming the duo Las Golondrinas, with her sister Viola in the ‘70s. In 1984, she released her first album titled *El Barrio de los Faroles*. To date, she’s recorded more than 30 albums and is currently working on an LP to celebrate her 50-year anniversary.

Award: Lifetime Achievement Award

What it honors: The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes artists for an enduring and exceptional career, encompassing artistic and personal contributions that have had a major impact on Latin music worldwide.

Past recipients: Flaco Jiménez, Jorge Pinos, Los Lobos, Armando Manzanero, Miguel Bosé, Conjunto Primavera, Santana, Los Temerarios, Emmanuel, Intocable, José José, Andrea Bocelli, Roberto Carlos, Marco Antonio Solís, Ricardo Arjona and Maná.

Maná - Over 40 million albums sold worldwide and having sold out venues internationally, Maná has placed over 30 songs on Billboard’s [Hot Latin Songs](#) including rock en español anthems such as “Labios Compartidos” and “Lluvia al Corazón,” which spent eight consecutive weeks at No. 1 on the tally.

Award: Icon Award

What it honors: The Icon Award recognizes outstanding artists who have achieved excellence on the Billboard charts and have made an indelible mark on music itself.

Past recipients: The Mexican rock band will be the first artist to ever receive the Icon Award at the Billboard Latin Music Awards.

Daddy Yankee - The chart-topping, global star — known for reggaeton anthems such as “Gasolina” and “Dura” — has sold more than 17 million albums and placed 84 entries on the [Hot Latin Songs](#) chart, with seven of those hitting No. 1 and 36 landing in the top 10. On the [Latin Airplay](#) chart, he has logged a total of 73 titles, including 24 No. 1s and 42 top 10s.

Award: Hall of Fame

What it honors: The Hall of Fame Award is given to artists who have achieved worldwide recognition for their work, transcending musical genres and languages.

Past recipients: José José, Vicente Fernández, Rocío Durcal, Marco Antonio Solís, Mongo Santamaría, El Gran Combo de Puerto Rico, Banda El Recodo, Joan Sebastian, Marc Anthony, Franco de Vita and Alejandro Fernández. 📺

Marilyn Manson Lawyer Claims Videographer Consented to Bodily Fluid Exposure

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

A videographer who accuses [Marilyn Manson](#) of spitting and blowing his nose on her during a concert in New Hampshire consented to being exposed to bodily fluids, according to an attorney for the musical artist. Manson, whose legal name is Brian Warner, is charged with two misdemeanor counts of simple assault stemming from the encounter at the Bank of New Hampshire Pavilion in Gilford on Aug. 19, 2019.

According to police, Manson approached videographer Susan Fountain in the venue’s stage pit area, put his face close to her camera and spit at her. He also is accused of blowing his nose on her arm and hands. In court documents made public Tuesday (Sept. 14), Manson’s attorney Kent Barker argues that type of filming Fountain was doing commonly exposes videographers to “incidental contact” with bodily fluids.

“The defendant’s performance for the past twenty years are well known to include shocking and evocative antics similar to those that occurred here,” Barker wrote. “The alleged victim consented to exposing herself to potential contact with sweat,

saliva and phlegm in close quarters.” Barker also said Manson plans to argue that any contact related to spitting or sneezing was unintentional. Manson has pleaded not guilty to the charges, which each could result in a jail sentence of less than a year and a \$2,000 fine if convicted.

Manson is currently being [sued by four women](#) who claim he sexually, physically and emotionally abused them; Manson has denied the charges. 📺

9 Burning Questions That Will Be Answered at the 2021 Emmy Awards

BY PAUL GREIN

The Grammys have yet to win an Emmy for outstanding variety special (live), but this year’s telecast — delayed to March because of the pandemic — was warmly received. Could the Grammys finally take home an Emmy in a program category? We’ll find out Sunday when the 73rd annual Primetime Emmy Awards air on CBS.

The other nominees for outstanding variety special (live) are The Oscars (ABC), The Pepsi Super Bowl LV Halftime Show Starring The Weeknd (CBS), Stephen Colbert’s Election Night 2020: Democracy’s Last Stand Building Back America Great Again Better 2020 (Showtime) and Celebrating America — An Inauguration Night Special (multiple platforms).

As the Super Bowl halftime headliner, The Weeknd stands to win an Emmy if that show wins. There might be some satisfaction for him in beating the Grammys, after the Grammys failed to give him a single nomination last year. The Weeknd’s megahit “Blinding Lights” was widely expected to be a leading contender.

Remarkably, Jesse Collins has three chances to win in this category. He was one

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of the top producers of the Grammys, the Oscars and the Super Bowl halftime show.

Here are eight more burning questions that will be answered Sunday night.

2. Will RuPaul become the first person of color to win 11 career Emmys?

[RuPaul](#) may become the first person of color to win 11 Emmys. He's currently in a tie with Donald A. Morgan, a cinematographer and lighting director, with 10 Emmys each. RuPaul won two awards at last weekend's Creative Arts Emmys for his work on *RuPaul's Drag Race* and its spinoff *RuPaul's Drag Race: Untucked*. He's also nominated for outstanding competition program as an executive producer of the original VH1 show.

This would be that show's fourth consecutive win for outstanding competition program. That would put it in a tie with *The Voice* (NBC) for second place on the all-time winners list in this category, behind only *The Amazing Race* (CBS), which won 10 times. Both of those shows are nominated again this year, as are *Nailed It!* (Netflix) and *Top Chef* (Bravo).

3. Will Cynthia Erivo win an Emmy for her portrayal of Aretha Franklin?

[Cynthia Erivo](#) is nominated for outstanding lead actress in a limited or anthology series or movie for playing the Queen of Soul in *Genius: Aretha* (National Geographic). This would be Erivo's first primetime Emmy. Her previous Emmy was for outstanding musical performance in a daytime program for a talk-show appearance promoting *The Color Purple*. She also won a Tony and a Grammy for that show and its cast album.

Erivo would be the fourth actress to win in this category in the 2000s for playing a real-life entertainer. The first three were Halle Berry as Dorothy Dandridge in *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge* (2000), Judy Davis as Judy Garland in *Life with Judy Garland: Me and My Shadows* (2001) and Michelle Williams as Gwen Verdon in *Fosse/Verdon* (2019).

Another portrayal of Lady Soul is also likely to get some awards show love. Jennifer Hudson has a good shot at an Oscar nomination for playing Franklin in *Respect*.

4. Will Leslie Odom Jr. beat Lin

Manuel-Miranda at the Emmys, as he did at the Tonys, for their leading roles in *Hamilton*?

Odom won a Tony for best performance by lead actor in a musical five years ago for his role as Aaron Burr in *Hamilton*, beating out Lin-Manuel Miranda, who played the title role. The actors are competing again, this time for outstanding lead actor in a limited or anthology series or movie for their performances in the Disney+ filmed version of the theatrical blockbuster. This would be Odom's first Emmy, following his Tony and Grammy wins for *Hamilton*. Miranda has already won all three of those awards and is just waiting on an Oscar to become an EGOT.

Daveed Diggs and Renée Elise Goldsberry, who won Tonys for their featured roles in *Hamilton*, are also nominated for Emmys in supporting categories.

5. Will Tracee Ellis Ross follow Isabel Sanford into the Emmy history book?

Ross is nominated for outstanding performance by a lead actress in a comedy series for the fifth time. Ross is vying to become just the second Black actress to win in the category, following Isabel Sanford of *The Jeffersons* (1981). Incidentally, Ross' legendary mother, Diana Ross, has never even been nominated for an Emmy, despite many TV appearances over the decades.

6. Will *Ted Lasso* make Emmy history?

Ted Lasso won three Creative Arts Emmys and is nominated in six categories on Sunday, including outstanding comedy series. If it wins them all, upping its total for the season to nine, the series will tie two major Emmy records – most Emmys won by a comedy series in single season (*Schitt's Creek* set the mark just last year) and most Emmys won by a series in its first season (*The West Wing* set the mark in 2000). If *Lasso* falls short in one category and winds up with eight Emmys, it would still tie *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (2018) for the most Emmys won by a comedy in its first season.

7. Will *Last Week Tonight With John Oliver* win outstanding variety (talk) series for the sixth year?

That would put the HBO series in a tie with *Late Show With David Letterman* (CBS)

for second place on the all-time winners list in this category, behind only *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* (Comedy Central), which won an astonishing 11 times. Both of those franchises are nominated again this year, with their current hosts – Stephen Colbert and Trevor Noah, respectively.

The other nominees in the category are *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* (ABC) and *Conan* (TBS). This is the 10th nomination in the category for Kimmel's program; it has yet to win. It's the second nod in the category for *Conan*, which concluded an 11-season run in June. It too has yet to win.

8. Will *Saturday Night Live* win outstanding variety sketch series for the fifth straight year?

There is only one other nominee in the category – the buzzy *A Black Lady Sketch Show*. *SNL* won seven Creative Arts Emmys this year, bringing its Emmy total to 84, more than any other series in TV history. Five cast members are competing for Emmys Sunday night – Kenan Thompson, Bowen Yang, Aidy Bryant, Kate McKinnon and Cecily Strong. All are nominated for outstanding supporting actor or actress in a comedy series.

9. Will Bo Burnham become just the fourth person in Emmy history to win four Emmys in one year?

Comedian [Bo Burnham](#) won three awards at the Creative Arts Emmys for his work on his Netflix special, *Bo Burnham: Inside*. He took outstanding music direction and both outstanding directing and writing for a variety special. If Burnham also wins on Sunday for outstanding variety special (pre-recorded), he will become just the fourth individual to win four Emmys in one year. The first three were Moira Demos (*Making a Murderer*, 2016), Amy Sherman-Palladino (*The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, 2018) and Dan Levy (*Schitt's Creek*, 2020).

But the competition in the variety special category is fierce. Dave Chappelle, who has won in this category in two of the last three years, is back with *8:46* (also on Netflix). The competition also includes *Hamilton* (Disney+), *David Byrne's American Utopia* (HBO), *Friends: The Reunion* (HBO Max) and *A West Wing Special to Benefit When We All Vote* (HBO Max).

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Several of these entries have proven awards appeal. *Hamilton* won a near-record 11 Tony Awards. Its cast album won a Grammy. *David Byrne's American Utopia* is set to receive a special Tony at the long-delayed Tony Awards on Sept. 26. Its cast album was nominated for a Grammy. *The West Wing* won four consecutive Emmys for outstanding drama series. *Friends* won an Emmy for outstanding comedy series.

The first stand-up special to win in this category was *Chris Rock: Bring the Pain* (HBO) in 1997. The next two were *Dave Chappelle: Equanimity* (2018) and *Dave Chappelle: Sticks & Stones* (2020).

Burnham's album, *Inside: The Songs*, reached No. 7 on the Billboard 200. **B**

Drake Takes Top 14 Spots in Record Week on Streaming Songs Chart

BY GARY TRUST

Drake's historic week on *Billboard's* charts (dated Sept. 18) is especially highlighted on the [Streaming Songs](#) survey, where he boasts the top 14 titles.

Previously, the most songs that an artist had placed from No. 1 on down on Streaming Songs in a week was eight, by Drake himself, on July 14, 2018, concurrent with the chart arrival of his LP *Scorpion*.

Looking at the entire Streaming Songs top 10, Drake's clean sweep is the first after he charted nine on the July 14, 2018, ranking (Nos. 1-8 and No. 10) and J. Cole did the same on the chart dated May 29 this year (Nos. 2-10).

Drake stakes claim to the top 14 spots on the latest Streaming Songs chart all thanks to his new album *Certified Lover Boy*, which [soars in at No. 1](#) on the [Billboard 200](#) with 613,000 equivalent album units, according to MRC Data, the biggest week

for an album in 2021.

Meanwhile, all 21 tracks on the new album infuse the 50-position Streaming Songs chart in the upper half, as Drake sports all but three of the top 24 titles. Here's a run-down of their ranks and their streams in the Sept. 3-9 tracking week.

Rank, Title, Billing (if other than Drake), Streams Sept. 3-9:

- No. 1, "Way 2 Sexy," feat. Future & Young Thug, 67.3 million
- No. 2, "Girls Wants Girls," feat. Lil Baby, 57.4 million
- No. 3, "Fair Trade," feat. Travis Scott, 53.8 million
- No. 4, "Champagne Poetry," 48.3 million
- No. 5, "Knife Talk," feat. 21 Savage & Project Pat, 45.9 million
- No. 6, "In the Bible," feat. Lil Durk & Giveon, 41.4 million
- No. 7, "Papi's Home," 39.9 million
- No. 8, "TSU," 39.8 million
- No. 9, "Love All," feat. JAY-Z, 39.1 million
- No. 10, "No Friends in the Industry," 38.1 million
- No. 11, "N 2 Deep," feat. Future, 36.4 million
- No. 12, "Pipe Down," 30.5 million
- No. 13, "7am on Bridle Path," 29.6 million
- No. 14, "Race My Mind," 28.5 million
- No. 16, "Yebba's Heartbreak," with Yebba, 24.5 million
- No. 17, "IMY2," feat. Kid Cudi, 24.5 million
- No. 18, "You Only Live Twice," feat. Lil Wayne & Rick Ross, 24.1 million
- No. 19, "Fountains," feat. Tems, 21.7 million
- No. 20, "Get Along Better," feat. Ty Dolla \$ign, 21.3 million
- No. 23, "Fucking Fans," 18.6 million
- No. 24, "The Remorse," 17.7 million

As previously reported, all 21 songs on *Certified Lover Boy* debut [in the top 40](#) of the [Billboard Hot 100](#), including a record [nine in the top 10](#). "Way 2 Sexy," featuring Future and Young Thug, leads at No. 1, with its 67.3 million first-week streams the second-best weekly sum this year, after the opening frame of Olivia Rodrigo's "Drivers License" (76.1 million, Jan. 23).

On Streaming Songs, "Way 2 Sexy" bows as Drake's record-extending 11th No. 1, Young Thug's second and Future's first leader. **B**

Apple's New iPhone Features 'Cinematic Mode' for Filming Videos

BY J. CLARA CHAN

Apple's [iPhone 13](#) includes a new camera feature called "cinematic mode" that's designed to help filmmakers and amateurs shoot and edit better footage from their device, the company said on Tuesday during its annual September event.

Marketed with a *Knives Out*-inspired whodunnit short movie, the camera feature — which records in Dolby Vision HDR — can track where the video's subject is looking and adjust the camera's focus accordingly. Video editors will also be able to manually edit the depth of field and bokeh levels in their footage after capture.

iPhone 13 Pro users, who have an extra lens on their devices, will also get to record and edit footage in ProRes — a feature that will help creators looking to use their work in a professional setting.

"That's really bringing it up to the professional film cameras," cinematographer Greig Fraser, who was joined in a promotional video with the director Kathryn Bigelow, said during Apple's Tuesday event. "We're going to very, very soon see filmmakers make films in a different way."

Earlier in the event, Apple executives revealed new models of the iPad and Apple Watch. Apple CEO **Tim Cook** also opened the event with a sizzle reel of upcoming fall releases on Apple TV+, including [Season 2 of *The Morning Show*](#), which returns this Friday; the [Tom Hanks-starring film *Finch*](#), which releases on Nov. 5; and the new series *The Problem With Jon Stewart*, which premieres on Sept. 30.

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

▶ IN BRIEF

Alanis Morissette Criticizes HBO's 'Jagged' Doc: 'This Was Not the Story I Agreed to Tell'

BY MIA GALUPPO

Alanis Morissette says she will not be supporting *Jagged*, the HBO documentary that documents her rise to fame and the release of her seminal album "Jagged Little Pill."

In the statement provided to *THR*, Morissette says, "I was lulled into a false sense of security and their salacious agenda became apparent immediately upon my seeing the first cut of the film. This is when I knew our visions were in fact painfully diverged. This was not the story I agreed to tell."

She says she will not be attending any events surrounding the release of the feature, which made its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival on Sept. 13. "Not unlike many 'stories' and unauthorized biographies out there over the years, this one includes implications and facts that are simply not true," says the musician. In the statement, Morissette does not disclose which elements of the movie are untrue.

In the doc, the singer-songwriter discusses her personal experiences with sexual assault and statutory rape. During a sit-down interview seen in the film, Morissette says, "I would always say I was consenting, and then I'd be reminded like, 'Hey, you were 15, you're not consenting at 15.' Now I'm like, 'Oh yeah, they're all pedophiles. It's all statutory rape.'" Morissette does not identify her alleged assaulters.

Reports about Morissette's displeasure began ahead of *Jagged*'s festival premiere, with the Washington Post first reporting that the singer would not be attending the TIFF premiere.

Jagged is a part of the Bill Simmons-produced Music Box series, an anthology of music-focused documentary features, which also includes TIFF title *Listening to Kenny G* and the already debuted *Woodstock 99: Peace, Love, and Rage*. (*Jagged* does not yet have a premiere date on HBO.) *THR* has reached out the HBO for comment.

See the full statement from Morissette below:

I agreed to participate in a piece about the celebration of *Jagged Little Pill*'s 25th anniversary and was interviewed during a very vulnerable time (while in the midst of my third postpartum depression during lockdown). I was lulled into a false sense of security and their salacious agenda became apparent immediately upon my seeing the first cut of the film. This is when I knew our visions were in fact painfully diverged. This was not the story I agreed to tell. I sit here now experiencing the full impact of having trusted someone who did not warrant being trusted. I have chosen not to attend any event around this movie for two reasons: one is that I am on tour right now. The other is that, not unlike many "stories" and unauthorized biographies out there over the years, this one includes implications and facts that are simply not true. While there is beauty and some elements of accuracy in this/my story to be sure — I ultimately won't be supporting someone else's reductive take on a story much too nuanced for them to ever grasp or tell.

This story was originally published by The Hollywood Reporter. 

JoJo Siwa Claims Nickelodeon Won't Allow Her to Perform 'The J Team' Songs on Tour: 'Does This Seem Fair?'

BY STEPHEN DAW

With her [new movie](#) officially out, her participation on [Dancing With the Stars](#) confirmed, and a tour set to begin in January, [JoJo Siwa](#) is set to have an excellent few months. But in a recent post, the star said that there is at least one thing that's not going to plan.

In a series of [tweets](#) posted on Tuesday evening (Sept. 14), Siwa claimed that Nickelodeon — the network behind the singer's new musical film *The J Team* — is not allowing her to use any of the original songs from the movie in her upcoming tour. "I go out on tour in January. My movie musical was just released (with 6 new original songs)... Nickelodeon told me today that I'm not allowed to perform/add any of the songs from the film into my show," she wrote. "These are MY songs, MY voice, MY writing. Does this seem fair???"

The star [continued](#) to voice her frustration with the ViacomCBS-owned company. "There is no reason that this music should not be included," she wrote. "Working for a company as a real human being treated as only a brand is fun until it's not."

Siwa's upcoming tour, Nickelodeon's *JoJo Siwa D.R.E.A.M. The Tour*, is officially produced by Nickelodeon and AEG Presents, according to the tour's [website](#). The tour originally started back in [May 2019](#), when Siwa performed around North America and Europe, until the second U.S. leg of the tour was postponed due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The original U.S. and

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European legs of the tour featured Siwa promoting and performing songs from her two Viacom-produced EPs, *D.R.E.A.M. The Music* and *Celebrate*.

The J Team, Siwa's new movie musical in question, officially premiered on Paramount+ on Sept. 3. The soundtrack for the film, also released by Viacom International Inc., features six original songs written for the film ("Dance Through the Day," "One Chance," "Outta the Park," "U-N-I," "Back to That Girl" and "Nobody Can Change Me!"), along with two new covers of songs Siwa previously released ("Only Getting Better" and "D.R.E.A.M.").

Billboard has reached out to Siwa and Nickelodeon for comment. 📧

2021 ARIA Awards Scrap Gender Categories, Sets Digital Event

BY LARS BRANDLE

BRISBANE, Australia — The times, they are a-changing. And the [ARIA Awards](#) are changing too.

The 35th edition of the ARIAs will be an all-digital spectacular, held Wednesday, Nov. 24 and pumped out live to a global audience on [YouTube](#).

The changes keep coming with the trade body announcing today (Sept. 15) that it would scrap the gender-based categories, a progressive move that has been welcomed by the ARIA Voting Academy.

Right now, more than half the population of Australia is experiencing lockdown, including the residents of Sydney, the home and birthplace of the ARIAs.

Any member of the jet set in these parts has first-hand knowledge of the letdown from lockdowns ruining their travel plans.

For organizers, a waiting game wouldn't work. And nor would a hybrid show.

"Unfortunately," notes ARIA CEO Anabelle Herd, "we are still living through

a pandemic. As much as we wish it were different, it is just not possible to come together for an in-person event."

The entire show will stream on YouTube and other platforms, including the free-to-air Channel 9 network's 9Now digital channel.

"There are some cool things you can do on YouTube and we are going to take advantage of those," Herd tells *Billboard*. "We'll try some different things that we haven't tried before."

Necessity, she adds, is "the mother of invention."

Reinvention could be the catchphrase for the 2021 ceremony, the first to be guided by Herd and ARIA Chair [Natalie Waller](#).

The categories of best female and best male artist will be replaced with the ARIA Award for best artist, a change designed to ensure that the awards "reflect and embrace equality and the true diversity of the music industry in 2021," a statement reads. "It will guarantee that all artists have the opportunity to achieve the recognition they deserve for their work on an equal platform."

The development is just one step in the journey of reassessment, progression and, ultimately, evolution of the ceremony, explains Herd.

"The time for separating artists based on gendered categories that exclude non-binary artists altogether has passed," she notes. "The music industry is demanding a more equal, inclusive, safe and supportive space for everyone and ARIA is working hard to achieve that across the ARIA Awards and everything we do."

As part of this evolution, the shortlist for the new category will be expanded from five to ten.

Additionally, the ARIAs category of engineer and producer of the year has been amended to allow nominees to be recognized for a body of work.

Nominations for the 2021 event will be announced Wednesday, Oct. 6, and streamed via ARIA's partnership with YouTube Music, now in its third year.

"Australia has an outsized weight in the global music scene," comments Lyor Cohen, Global Head of Music, YouTube, "and we will continue to empower and help local art-

ists grow their audiences, connect with fans in meaningful ways and break songs around the world. I'm excited to see what will come out of Australia this year."

The ARIA Awards are supported by the New South Wales government through Destination NSW. 📧

Drake Dominates With Top 14 Songs on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs Chart

BY TREVOR ANDERSON

As has become a tradition of sorts in recent years, it's another history-making week for [Drake](#) on *Billboard*'s R&B/hip-hop charts. This time around, the superstar monopolizes the entire top 14 positions of the [Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs](#) chart (dated Sept. 18) as tracks from his new *Certified Lover Boy* album flood the list. The project itself, meanwhile, begins with [the year's best weekly performance](#), nearly doubling the previous leader's starting sum.

Drake captures Nos. 1-14 on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs, easily a new mark for the largest top-down domination by any artist. The previous best occupation was Nos. 1-3, set first by Lil Wayne through a combination of lead and featured appearances on the [chart dated Sept. 10, 2011](#), and later matched by Drake — as the lead performer on the entire trio — on [this year's March 20 chart](#).

"Way 2 Sexy," featuring [Future](#) and [Young Thug](#), heads the pack as it debuts at No. 1. The track, the project's first official single, traces its commanding start to 67.3 million U.S. streams in the week ending Sept. 9, according to MRC Data, making it the top-streamed track of the week. Thus, it debuts at No. 1 on the [R&B/Hip-Hop Streaming Songs](#) chart and [Rap Streaming Songs](#) chart; on the latter, Drake runs the table — owning all 15 slots on the rap streaming survey.

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Back on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs, the “Sexy” start gives Drake a record-extending 23rd No. 1 on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs, distancing himself further from Aretha Franklin and Stevie Wonder, who share second place thanks to 20 champs each.

Future, meanwhile, collects his first No. 1 after two previous runner-up finishes with “Turn on the Lights” in 2012 and “Life Is Good,” featuring Drake, in 2020.

Young Thug checks into the chart penthouse for the third time, all of which have happened in the past year. His first No. 1 came through a featured turn on Travis Scott’s “Franchise,” also featuring M.I.A. in October 2020, and he returned to the top slot in December with “Go Crazy,” a collaboration with Chris Brown.

Plus, with 10 new top 10s in his account, Drake improves his career total to 96 top 10s on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs, extending his lead far ahead of second-place James Brown, with 57. Among living artists, Lil Wayne is his closest competitor, though with a distant 50.

Here’s a look at the entire *Certified Lover Boy* impact on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs, including the top 14 shutout:

- No. 1, “Way 2 Sexy,” featuring Future and Young Thug
- No. 2, “Girls Want Girls,” featuring Lil Baby
- No. 3, “Fair Trade,” featuring Travis Scott
- No. 4, “Champagne Poetry”
- No. 5, “Knife Talk,” featuring 21 Savage and Project Pat
- No. 6, “In the Bible,” featuring Lil Durk and Giveon
- No. 7, “Papi’s Home”
- No. 8, “TSU”
- No. 9, “Love All,” featuring Jay-Z
- No. 10, “No Friends in the Industry”
- No. 11, “N 2 Deep,” featuring Future
- No. 12, “Pipe Down”
- No. 13, “7am on Bridle Path”
- No. 14, “Race My Mind”
- No. 16, “IMY2,” featuring Kid Cudi
- No. 17, “You Only Live Twice,” featuring Lil Wayne and Rick Ross
- No. 18, “Fountains,” featuring Tems
- No. 19, “Get Along Better,” featuring Ty Dolla \$ign
- No. 21, “F**king Fans”
- No. 23, “The Remorse”

Plus, besides conquering the overall R&B/hip-hop genre’s top spot, Drake also rules both individual divisions as “Way 2 Sexy” opens at No. 1 on **Hot Rap Songs**, while “Race My Mind” begins atop the **Hot R&B Songs** chart. With the dual domination, Drake achieves the feat for the fifth time, dating to the Hot R&B Songs’ launch in October 2012. Previously, he posted twin chart-toppers with the following four combinations:

R&B No. 1, Rap No. 1; Chart Date
 “Tuesday” (IloveMakonnen featuring Drake) and “Only” (Nicki Minaj featuring Drake, Lil Wayne and Chris Brown); Dec. 27, 2014
 “Work” (Rihanna featuring Drake) and “Summer Sixteen”; Feb. 20, 2016
 “One Dance” (featuring WizKid and Kyla) and “Too Good” (featuring Rihanna); Sept. 3-Sept. 17, 2016
 “Don’t Matter to Me” (featuring Michael Jackson) and “Nice for What”; July 14, 2018

In addition to Drake, two other acts have also accomplished the R&B-rap double. DJ Khaled reigned with the R&B leader “Wild Thoughts,” featuring Rihanna and Bryson Tiller alongside the rap champ “I’m the One,” featuring Justin Bieber, Quavo, Chance the Rapper and Lil Wayne for four weeks in 2017. Two years later, Lizzo also joined the club thanks to the R&B No. 1 “Good as Hell” and rap No. 1 “Truth Hurts,” which combined for a four-week stretch in November 2019. 📺

BTS’ ‘Idol’ Is Now Their Sixth Video to Surpass One Billion Views on YouTube

BY STARR BOWENBANK

BTS is on a roll, and they have their extremely dedicated ARMY to thank for that. On Wednesday (Sept 15), YouTube announced

that the video for BTS’ smash hit single “Idol” — which was released in 2018 — has become the global superstars’ sixth visual to enter the one billion views club on the video streaming platform.

The news of BTS’ newest milestone comes one week after YouTube revealed that “**Fake Love**,” also released in 2018, hit the one billion view mark. In addition to “Fake Love,” the group’s “Idol” now joins “Dynamite,” “Boy With Luv” featuring Halsey, “DNA,” and “MIC Drop (Steve Aoki Remix)” in achieving the impressive feat.

When BTS released the “Idol” video in 2018, fans streamed the visual more than **45.9 million times**, breaking the record at the time for the highest amount of views for a video debut in 24 hours. **Taylor Swift** had previously held the record with her debut of the “Look What You Made Me Do” video, which racked up 43.2 million views within the first 24 hours of its release in 2017.

“Idol” was also a major hit for BTS — **Nicki Minaj featured** on the official remix for the song. It debuted and peaked at the No. 11 spot on the **Billboard Hot 100** chart, where it would later stay for three weeks. The corresponding album for “Idol,” *Love Yourself: Answer*, charted at No. 1 the **Billboard 200** after its release, and remained on the chart for a whopping 100 weeks.

Revisit the video for BTS’ “Idol” below. 📺

Miranda Lambert, Darius Rucker & Luke Combs to Headline Europe’s C2C Festival 2022

BY JESSICA NICHOLSON

After two years of pandemic postponement, the C2C: Country to Country festival will return March 11-13, 2022, in London, Glasgow and Dublin, with headlining

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sets from [Luke Combs](#), [Miranda Lambert](#) and [Darius Rucker](#).

Other artists taking part in the three-day festival include Callista Clark, Russell Dickerson, Flatland Cavalry, Ashley McBryde, Scotty McCreery, Kip Moore, Runaway June, Tenille Townes, Hailey Whitters, Brett Young and more.

"We're delighted to announce our lineup for C2C 2022!" the festival's organizers said via social media. "It's been a long time in the making and we're so thankful for all of you who have kept hold of your tickets. We can't wait to finally celebrate the return of live country music to UK and Ireland together at C2C!"

The festival had to be postponed in 2020 and 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Combs and Rucker were previously slated to headline C2C's 2021 festival. As part of the 2022 lineup announcement, the festival's organizers stated that tickets for the festival's 2020 dates will also be honored for next year's event. Tickets will go on sale Friday at [ticketmaster.com](#).

Lambert announced her headlining slot by [sharing](#) several throwback photos of her previous trips to Europe. Meanwhile, Combs [said](#) via Twitter, "Alright, @c2cfestival...let's try this again! Can't wait to get back over the pond & play with the band." Rucker [added](#), "Can't wait to be back on the other side of the pond for @c2cfestival in 2022!"

C2C: Country to Country is Europe's largest country music festival and was [created](#) by AEG Europe and SJM Concerts, in association with the Country Music Association. The festival launched in 2013 at London's O2 arena as a two-day event and featured performances from Carrie Underwood and Tim McGraw. By 2016, the event had expanded to three days, and in 2018, C2C welcomed more than 50,000 fans and featured artists including Kelsea Ballerini, Sugarland, Margo Price, Emmylou Harris and more. **B**

DJ Snake and Justin Bieber's 'Let Me Love You' Hits One Billion YouTube Views

BY GIL KAUFMAN

Justin Bieber has yet another video in the YouTube one billion club. The singer's collab with [DJ Snake](#) on the French DJ-producer's 2016 single from his debut studio album, *Encore*, has crossed over the landmark mark, the video streaming service announced Wednesday (Sept. 15).

The clip became the latest billion-view visual for both artists, thanks to the thrilling James Lees-directed young lovers *Bonnie & Clyde*-style heist drama that mixes sexy rolling-on-piles-of-money shots with punch-ups and car chases leading up to a surprise twist ending. The [lyric video](#) for the track has also rolled up more than 970 million views to date.

Bieber already has a handful of other videos over the billion mark, including his breakthrough 2010 hit "Baby," which became the second video to pass that musical milestone in June 2015 on the heels of Psy's "Gangnam Style" breaking the seven-figure seal. Other Bieber videos with the billion bump include "What Do You Mean?," "Sorry" and "Love Yourself." DJ Snake's collab with Ozuna, Selena Gomez and Cardi B, "Taki Taki," has more than 2.1 billion views, and his 2015 hit "Lean On" with Major Lazer has over three billion.

"Let Me Love You" peaked at No. 4 on the [Billboard Hot 100](#) in October 2016, and spent 33 weeks on the singles chart.

And while Bieber is still one of the biggest billion ballers on YouTube, last week, K-pop superstars [BLACKPINK](#) squeaked by him to become the most-subscribed artist on the video streaming platform with a whopping 66.6 million subscribers to JB's 65.2 million. **B**

Lauren Daigle, CeCe Winans & Zach Williams to Perform at GMA Dove Awards

BY JESSICA NICHOLSON

L Lauren Daigle, [Elevation Worship](#), [KB](#), [CeCe Winans](#) and [Zach Williams](#) are the first performers revealed for this year's GMA Dove Awards. The in-person ceremony is set for Oct. 19 at Lipscomb University's Allen Arena in Nashville.

Elevation Worship, Winans and Williams are among the most-nominated artists heading into this year's ceremony, with Elevation Worship earning seven nominations and Winans and Williams earning five nods apiece.

Daigle, Elevation Worship and Williams are each nominated in the artist of the year category, alongside for King & Country and Phil Wickham. Winans is nominated in the gospel artist of the year category, alongside Kirk Franklin, Tasha Cobbs Leonard, Jonathan McReynolds and Travis Greene. KB's album *His Glory Alone* is nominated for rap/hip hop album of the year.

Natalie Grant and McReynolds will co-host this year's ceremony, marking McReynolds' first time hosting the GMA Dove Awards, while Grant previously hosted in 2010.

Voted on by the GMA's membership, this year's nominees were chosen from over 4,600 submitted entries. The GMA Dove Awards will air on TBN on Oct. 22 at 8 p.m. ET.

Last year's GMA Dove Awards [winners](#) included for King & Country (artist of the year), Tasha Cobbs Leonard (gospel artist of the year), We The Kingdom (new artist of the year), Tauren Wells (contemporary christian artist of the year), Williams (songwriter of the year-artist) and more. **B**

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Foo Fighters Set New Personal Record as 'Making a Fire' Tops Mainstream Rock Airplay Chart

BY XANDER ZELLNER

Foo Fighters add their 11th No. 1 on *Billboard's* [Mainstream Rock Airplay](#) chart as "Making a Fire" tops the list dated Sept. 18.

The coronation of "Fire" sparks a first in the Dave Grohl-fronted band's history: Parent LP *Medicine at Midnight* becomes the group's first album to spin off three No. 1 singles on Mainstream Rock Airplay, as the song follows the reigns of "Shame Shame" and "Waiting on a War." The band previously released three albums each with two leaders on the survey.

Meanwhile, in the Mainstream Rock Airplay chart's [40-year history](#), Foo Fighters are just the sixth act to notch as many as 11 No. 1s, tying the totals of Five Finger Death Punch and Godsmack. Shinedown leads with 16, followed by Three Days Grace (15) and Van Halen (13).

Here's a recap of all 11 of Foo Fighters' Mainstream Rock Airplay No. 1s:

- "Best of You," four weeks at No. 1, beginning July 30, 2005
 - "The Pretender," six, Oct. 6, 2007
 - "Rope," five, April 2, 2011
 - "Walk," four, Sept. 10, 2011
 - "Something From Nothing," 13, Nov. 8, 2014
 - "Congregation," three, April 4, 2015
 - "Run," four, July 29, 2017
 - "The Sky Is the Neighborhood," four, Dec. 9, 2018
 - "Shame Shame," six, Dec. 19, 2020
 - "Waiting on a War," two, April 10, 2021
 - "Making a Fire," one week to-date, Sept. 18, 2021
- Foo Fighters first hit Mainstream Rock

Airplay in July 1995 with "This Is a Call," which reached No. 6 that August. When "Fire" rose to the top 10 this July, it became Foo Fighters' 28th top 10, tying the band with Tom Petty (solo and with the Heartbreakers) for the most top 10s in the chart's archives.

"Fire" rules the Rock & Alternative Airplay chart for a fourth week, with 6.1 million audience impressions, up 5%, according to MRC Data; ranks at No. 4 on Adult Alternative Airplay (after reaching No. 3); and holds at its No. 12 high on Alternative Airplay.

Medicine at Midnight debuted at No. 1 on the Top Rock Albums chart in February and has earned 177,000 equivalent album units to-date. **■**

Here's the Date for the 2022 Juno Awards

BY MIA NAZARENO

The 2022 Juno Awards are set to take place on May 15, 2022, with a live broadcast from Budweiser Stage in Toronto.

For the 2022 event, three additional categories will be added to the lineup to reflect the diversifying Canadian music scene. Rap recording of the year will be divided into rap album/EP of the year and rap single of the year. Indigenous artist or group of the year will be split into contemporary Indigenous artist or group of the year and traditional Indigenous artist or group of the year. Lastly, within the dance genre, underground dance recording of the year will be added.

The awards show aims to recognize the year's best music by Canadian artists.

The Weeknd was the big winner at the 2021 awards show, taking home five awards — artist of the year, single of the year for "Blinding Lights," and songwriter of the year, and both album of the year and contemporary R&B recording of the year for *After Hours*. It marked the second time the superstar had swept the awards for artist, album, and songwriter of the year. He is the

only artist to achieve that sweep twice.

The Junos will open submissions for the 2022 ceremony on Oct. 4, with voting to take place from Dec. 3 to Dec. 16. Nominations are expected to be announced on March 1, 2022. **■**

Imagine Dragons Score Fifth Top 10 Album on Billboard 200 Chart With 'Mercury - Act 1'

BY KEITH CAULFIELD

Image Dragons claim their fifth top 10 album on the [Billboard 200](#) chart as the rock band's latest studio set, *Mercury - Act 1*, debuts at No. 9. All five of the quartet's major label full-length studio efforts have now reached the top 10, dating back to their first, *Night Visions*. It debuted and peaked at No. 2 nine years ago this month (Sept. 22, 2012-dated chart).

The new set was released on Sept. 3 and launches with 31,000 equivalent album units earned in the U.S. in the week ending Sept. 9. Of that sum, album sales comprise 17,000; streaming equivalent album (SEA) units comprise 13,000 (equaling 17.04 million on-demand streams of the set's tracks) and track equivalent album units (TEA) comprise 1,000.

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 on-demand official audio and video streams generated by songs from an album. For all chart news, follow @billboard and @bill-

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boardcharts on both Twitter and Instagram.

Mercury – Act 1 also makes a top five debut across a smattering of other *Billboard* charts: [Top Rock Albums](#) (No. 2), [Alternative Albums](#) (No. 2), [Top Album Sales](#) (No. 4) and [Top Current Album Sales](#) (No. 4).

Mercury – Act 1 was led by the single “Follow You,” which became the band’s sixth No. 1 on the [Alternative Airplay](#) chart (dated April 24) and spent five weeks atop the list. The set’s latest radio-promoted single, “Wrecked,” rises from No. 7 to No. 4 (a new peak) on the latest chart (dated Sept. 18). **■**

Jhay Cortez’s ‘Timelezz’ Arrives at No. 2 on Top Latin Albums Chart

BY PAMELA BUSTIOS

Jhay Cortez earns his highest ranking yet on *Billboard*’s [Top Latin Albums](#) chart as *Timelezz*, his sophomore effort, arrives at No. 2 on the Sept. 18-dated survey.

“Making this album was a yearlong process because I want my music to be *Timelezz* and have longevity atop the charts like *Famouz* did,” Cortez told *Billboard*. “I’m building my own sound which will change the game musically.”

Timelezz is a follow-up to *Famouz*, the Puerto Rican artist’s debut studio album, which peaked at No. 5 in 2019. The album has remained in the tally’s top 20 in all but one of its 120-week (and counting) run, holding strong at No. 16 on the current chart.

Timelezz starts with 11,000 equivalent album units earned in the U.S. in the week ending Sept. 9, according to MRC Data. 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 on-demand official audio and video streams generated by songs from an album.

Of the album’s opening-week total, 10,000 units derive from streaming activity. That represents 14.7 million on-demand U.S. streams of the set’s tracks.

A combination of reggaeton, trap and a nod to techno and EDM, the 17-track *Timelezz* was released Sept. 3 via Universal Music Latino/UMLE. While *Famouz* launched at No. 164 in May 2020 on the all-genre [Billboard 200](#), *Timelezz* marks a big leap for Cortez, bowing at No. 70 on the current chart.

As *Timelezz* arrives, one of its songs debuts on [Hot Latin Songs](#): “Ley Seca,” with Anuel AA, at No. 12. The album previously yielded four other tracks on the airplay-, digital sales-, and streaming-blended list, starting with “Kobe En L.A.” (No. 44 debut and peak, November), “Los Bo,” with Myke Towers, (No. 40 debut and peak, Jan. 21), “Christian Dior” (No. 28 peak, June 26) and “En Mi Cuarto,” with Skrillex (No. 22 high, Aug. 14).

Timelezz concurrently starts at No. 2 on [Latin Rhythm Albums](#). **■**

Tamela Mann Ties Kirk Franklin for Most Gospel Airplay Chart No. 1s

Tamela Mann notches her record-tying eighth No. 1 on *Billboard*’s [Gospel Airplay](#) chart, as “Help Me” tops the Sept. 10-dated survey, up 10% in weekly plays, according to MRC Data.

Mann matches [Kirk Franklin](#) for the most chart-toppers in the history of the ranking, which launched in 2005. Their chart connection is fitting, as she began her career singing with Franklin and the Family, providing lead vocals on multiple tracks.

Plus, Mann and Franklin share a Gospel Airplay No. 1: His “My World Needs You,” featuring Sarah Reeves, Tasha Cobbs and

Mann, reigned for two weeks in July 2017.

James Fortune & FIYA rank third with six Gospel Airplay leaders, followed by four artists with five No. 1s apiece: Jekalyn Carr, Travis Greene, Donald Lawrence and Marvin Sapp.

Meanwhile, “Help Me” reaches the Gospel Airplay penthouse in its 12th week on the chart, completing Mann’s quickest trip to the pinnacle. It bests her first No. 1, “Take Me to the King,” which passed the finish line in its 14th frame in September 2012.

Franklin scored his eighth Gospel Airplay No. 1 last December with “Strong God.” He first led with “Looking for You” in November 2005. **■**

Elevation Worship’s ‘Rattle!’ Rolls to No. 1 on Christian Airplay Chart

BY JIM ASKER

Elevation Worship scores its second No. 1 on *Billboard*’s [Christian Airplay](#) chart as “Rattle!” rises to the top of the Sept. 18-dated list.

In the week ending Sept. 12, the single gained by 1% to 9.8 million audience impressions, according to MRC Data.

Elevation Worship frontman Chris Brown wrote “Rattle!” with Steven Furtick and Brandon Lake.

“It feels quite providential that a song about resurrection and living and breathing again has resonated with so many throughout this COVID-19 pandemic,” Brown tells *Billboard*. “We hope it continues to inspire faith to believe God for even greater days ahead of us.”

The song is the third single and second Christian Airplay leader from the Charlotte, N.C.-based collective’s live LP *Graves Into Gardens*, which arrived at No. 1 on Top Christian Albums in May 2020, becoming the act’s fifth of six leading sets. This May,

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the act and Maverick City Music's collaborative Old Church Basement debuted atop the list, as well as Top Gospel Albums.

Graves Into Gardens lead single "The Blessing: Live," with Kari Jobe and Cody Carnes, reached No. 7 on Christian Airplay, followed by the title track, which dominated both Christian Airplay and the multi-metric Hot Christian Songs lists in February, granting Elevation Worship its first leader on each tally. **B**

Ozuna's 'La Funka' Slides Into Top 10 on Tropical Airplay Chart

BY PAMELA BUSTIOS

Ozuna captures his fifth straight top 10 on *Billboard's* **Tropical Airplay** chart, as "La Funka" debuts at No. 9 on the Sept.

18-dated ranking. The latest from the Puerto Rican arrives with only one day of airplay as the song was released Sept. 12, the final day of the chart's latest tracking week.

"La Funka," a Soca (soul of calypso) and Brazilian funk-tinged tune, logged 2 million in audience impressions in the U.S. in the week ending Sept. 12, according to MRC Data, the same date Ozuna premiered the song with a live performance at the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards at Brooklyn's Barclays Center.

"La Funka" is Ozuna's highest debut on the almost 27-year-old chart and follows the one-week ruler "Travesuras," with an all-star collaborative team. Here's a recap of his five top 10s:

Position, Title, Artist (if other than Ozuna), Date

No. 7, "Yo Soy," with Pirulo, January 2017

No. 7, "Dile Que Tú Me Quieres," January 2017

No. 1, "Sobredosis," with Romeo Santos, April 2018 (10-week ruler)

No. 1, "Travesuras," with Nio García, Casper Mágico, Wisin, Yandel, Myke Towers & Flow La Movie, March 6

No. 9, "La Funka," Sept. 18 **B**

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BILLBOARD 200

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST	CERTIFICATION IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
	#1	DRAKE	OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	Certified Lover Boy	1	1
	1	KANYE WEST	G.O.O.D./DEF JAM	Donda	1	2
NEW	3	IRON MAIDEN	IRON MAIDEN/SANCTUARY/BMG	Senjutsu	3	1
	4	OLIVIA RODRIGO	GEFFEN/IGA	Sour	1	16
	5	DOJA CAT	KEMOSABE/RCA	Planet Her	2	11
	6	MORGAN WALLEN	BIG LOGO/REPUBLIC	Dangerous: The Double Album	1	35
	7	BILLIE EILISH	DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Happier Than Ever	1	6
	8	THE KID LAROI	COLUMBIA	F*ck Love	1	59
NEW	9	IMAGINE DRAGONS	KIDINAKORNER/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Mercury - Act 1	9	1
	10	ROD WAVE	ALAMO	SoulFly	1	24
	11	HALSEY	CAPITOL	If I Can't Have Love, I Want Power	2	2
	12	LUKE COMBS	RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN	What You See Is What You Get	1	96
NEW	13	BIG30	BREAD GANG/N-LESS/IGA	King Of Killbranch	13	1
	14	TRIPPIE REDD	1400/TENTHousand PROJECTIONS	Trip At Knight	2	3
	15	DUA LIPA	WARNER	Future Nostalgia	3	75
	16	POP SMOKE	VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/REPUBLIC	Shoot For The Stars Aim For The Moon	1	62
	17	LIL BABY & LIL DURK	ALAMO/QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/IGA/CAPITOL	The Voice Of The Heroes	1	14
	18	THE WEEKND	XO/REPUBLIC	After Hours	1	73
	19	LIL BABY	QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	My Turn	1	80
	20	J. COLE	DREAMVILLE/ROC NATION/INTERSCOPE/IGA	The Off-Season	1	17
	21	POST MALONE	REPUBLIC	Hollywood's Bleeding	1	105
	22	QUEEN	HOLLYWOOD	Greatest Hits	8	455
	23	JUICE WRLD	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Legends Never Die	1	61
	24	POLO G	COLUMBIA	Hall Of Fame	1	13
	25	MONEYBAGG YO	CMG/N-LESS/INTERSCOPE/IGA	A Gangsta's Pain	1	20
	26	JUSTIN BIEBER	RAYMOND BRAUN/DEF JAM	Justice	1	25
	27	JUICE WRLD	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Goodbye & Good Riddance	4	173
	28	LUKE COMBS	RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN	This One's For You	4	223
	29	PACE SETTER	HARRY STYLES	Fine Line	1	91
	30	GLASS ANIMALS	WOLF TONE/POLYDOR/REPUBLIC	Dreamland	7	44
	31	TAYLOR SWIFT	REPUBLIC	Folklore	1	59
	32	LIL TECCA	GALACTIC/REPUBLIC	We Love You Tecca 2	10	2
	33	FLEETWOOD MAC	WARNER/BWWD	Rumours	1	441
	34	GREATEST GAINER	ABBA	Gold: Greatest Hits	25	186
	35	WALKER HAYES	MONUMENT	Country Stuff (EP)	35	12
	36	ORIGINAL BROADWAY CAST	HAMILTON UPTOWN/ATLANTIC/AG	Hamilton: An American Musical	2	311
	37	MORGAN WALLEN	BIG LOGO	If I Know Me	10	154
	38	CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL	FANTASY/CONCORD	Chronicle The 20 Greatest Hits	18	540
	39	ELTON JOHN	ROCKET/ISLAND/UME	Diamonds	7	200
	40	ARIANA GRANDE	REPUBLIC	Positions	1	45
	41	EMINEM	SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Curtain Call: The Hits	1	545
	42	MACHINE GUN KELLY	EST19XX/BAD BOY/INTERSCOPE/IGA	Tickets To My Downfall	1	50
	43	BILLIE EILISH	DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/IGA	When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?	1	128
	44	42 DUGG	4PF/CMG	Free Dem Boyz	8	16
	45	TRAVIS SCOTT	CACTUS JACK/GRAND HUSTLE/EPIC	ASTROWORLD	1	162
	46	DRAKE	YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC	Scorpion	1	167
	47	WIZKID	STARBOY/RCA	Made In Lagos	28	11
	48	CHRIS STAPLETON	MERCURY NASHVILLE/UMGN	Traveller	1	313
	49	POLO G	COLUMBIA	The GOAT	2	69
	50	KENDRICK LAMAR	TOP DAWG/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA	good kid, m.A.A.d city	2	463