



# GRAMMY® FIRST LOOK

Arizona Zervas

Bob Dylan

BTS

Chloe x Halle

Diplo

Dixie Chicks

Dominic Fike

HAIM

Harry Styles

John Legend

Polo G





## THE DAY THE MUSIC PAUSED

HOW RISING EXECUTIVES  
**BRIANNA AGYEMANG** AND **JAMILA THOMAS**  
SPARKED AN INDUSTRY RECKONING  
—AND WHAT THEY'RE PLANNING NEXT







# billboard

JUNE 13, 2020 • BILLBOARD.COM



## PRIDE 2020

WHAT IT'S  
LIKE TO BE  
**TODRICK  
HALL**



**40 LGBTQ  
EXECUTIVES  
SHAPING  
THE INDUSTRY**



FOR YOUR GRAMMY® CONSIDERATION

# JUSTIN BIEBER

## CHANGES

#1 billboard 200

#1 billboard R&B ALBUM



“Bieber has dug deep within himself...it is the album that Bieber needed to make at this moment, a literal passion project from *one of pop's most fascinating superstars.*”

**billboard**



RAYMOND BRAUN MEDIA GROUP





FOR YOUR GRAMMY® CONSIDERATION

# JHENÉ AIKO

CHILOMBO

#1 billboard R&B ALBUM

“Jhené Aiko’s positive new album ‘Chilombo’ couldn’t have come at a time when it was more needed.”

People



Def  
Jam  
recordings





FOR YOUR GRAMMY® CONSIDERATION

# KANYE WEST

**JESUS IS KING**

**#1 billboard 200**

**#1 billboard RAP ALBUM**

**#1 billboard GOSPEL ALBUM**



“There comes a time, when musicians devote themselves to big questions, where the biggest question of them all comes calling, the question of what, if anything, orders the universe... ‘*Jesus Is King*’ is the man coming full circle.”

**VULTURE**



**Def  
Jam  
recordings**



# billboard Hot 100®

DaBaby



## DaBaby & Roddy Ricch's 'Rockstar' Rolls To No. 1

**D**ABABY ACHIEVES HIS FIRST BILLBOARD HOT 100 NO. 1 AS "Rockstar" rises from No. 3. Featured artist Roddy Ricch adds his second leader, after "The Box" dominated for 11 weeks beginning in January.

The track — from DaBaby's album *Blame It On Baby*, which bowed at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 in May — posts a third week atop the Streaming Songs chart, with 34.8 million U.S. streams in the tracking week, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data. It lifts 5-4 on Digital Song Sales with 11,000 sold and pushes 44-36 on Radio Songs with 20 million audience impressions.

As "Rockstar" supplants Lady Gaga and Ariana Grande's "Rain on Me," at No. 5 on the Hot 100 a week after debuting at the summit, Interscope Records banks back-to-back leaders for the first time since 2009, when it tallied three in a row, a streak also involving Gaga: her "Poker Face" (one week at No. 1) and The Black Eyed Peas' "Boom Boom Pow" (12 weeks) and "I Gotta Feeling" (14).

"Rockstar" concurrently hits the top of the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs and Hot Rap Songs charts. As on the Hot 100, DaBaby earns his first No. 1 on each list and Roddy Ricch scores his second, after "The Box."

—GARY TRUST

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	CERTIFICATION IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
4	3	1	<b>#1</b> <b>ROCKSTAR</b> SETH IN THE KITCHEN (J. L. KIRK, R. W. MOORE, JR., R. J. PARTARD IV)		DaBaby Feat. Roddy Ricch SOUTHCOST/INTERSCOPE	1	7
1	2	2	<b>SAVAGE</b> J. WHITE, DIDIT (M. J. PETE, J. WHITE, B. SESSION, JR., B. G. KNOWLES, CARTER, T. NASH, J. K. LANIER, THORPE, B. T. HAZZARD, DERRICK MILANO, S. C. CARTER)	1501 CERTIFIED/300	Megan Thee Stallion Feat. Beyoncé SOUTHCOAST/INTERSCOPE	1	12
3	4	3	<b>BLINDING LIGHTS</b> MAX MARTIN, O. T. HOLTER, THE WEEKND (A. TESFAYE, A. BALSHE, J. QUENNEVILLE, MAX MARTIN, O. T. HOLTER)		The Weeknd XO/REPUBLIC	1	27
2	5	4	<b>SAY SO</b> TYSON TRAX (A. Z. DLAMINI, L. GOTTFWALD, L. ASRAT, D. SPRECHER, O. T. MARAJ, J. PETTY)		Doja Cat KEMOSABE/RCA	1	22
-	1	5	<b>AIR</b> <b>RAIN ON ME</b> BLOODPOP, BURNS (S. G. GERMANO, T. M. TUCKER, BURNS, N. A. A. CHARLES, RYACOB, M. J. L. BRESSO, A. GRANDE, A. RIDHA, J. BURDE, N. L. WILLIAMS, B. WRIGHT)		Lady Gaga & Ariana Grande INTERSCOPE	1	2
5	6	6	<b>TOOSIE SLIDE</b> OZ (A. GRAHAM, D. YILDIRM)		Drake OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	1	9
8	7	7	<b>DON'T START NOW</b> I. KIRKPATRICK (C. AILIN, J. KIRKPATRICK, E. W. SCHWARTZ, D. LIPA)		Dua Lipa WARNER	2	31
9	9	8	<b>INTENTIONS</b> POO BEAR, THE AUDIBLES (J. D. BIEBER, J. BOYD, Q. K. MARSHALL, D. JORDAN, J. GIANNOS)		Justin Bieber Feat. Quavo QUALITY CONTROL/SCHOOLBOY/MOTOWN/RAYMOND BRAUN/CAPITOL/DEF JAM	8	17
7	8	9	<b>THE BOX</b> 3DR0C (R. W. MOORE, JR., S. GLOADE, A. MORAGNE, A. Q. TATE)		Roddy Ricch BIRD VISION/ATLANTIC	1	26
15	14	10	<b>ROSES</b> F. A. L. L. E. N (C. ST. JOHN, L. STASHENKO)		SAINT JHN GODD COMPLEX/HITCO	10	11

PERIODICITY: WEEKLY. THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR CURRENT SONGS ACROSS ALL GENRES, RANKED BY RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS AS MEASURED BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA AND STREAMING ACTIVITY DATA BY ONLINE MUSIC SOURCES TRACKED BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA. SONGS ARE DEFINED AS CURRENT IF THEY ARE NEWLY RELEASED TITLES, OR SONGS RECEIVING WIDESPREAD AIRPLAY AND/OR SALES ACTIVITY FOR THE FIRST TIME. SEE CHARTS. LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM/BIZ FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2020, PROMETHEUS GLOBAL MEDIA, LLC AND NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

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**20**  
SURFACES  
"Sunday Best"

The first Hot 100 entry for the Texas-based pop duo of Colin Padalecki, 23 (left), and Forrest Frank, 25, also hits the top 10 on Mainstream Top 40.

**How did you two come together to form Surfaces?**

**FRANK** I saw this song that Colin posted on SoundCloud and I DM'd him — neither of us knew anybody that was making music. We found out that we were going to colleges close to each other and met up in 2017.

**PADALECKI** We both aspired to make the same kind of music and had a very similar knack for songwriting. We always got along in that aspect. We really never hit any road bumps.

**What did you expect upon releasing "Sunday Best" in January 2019?**

**PADALECKI** We had no idea that song was going to be what it is today. Forrest was recording vocals in my closet, setting aside clothes and using a headphone cable that barely reached the closet. We made it in two hours.  
**FRANK** It [originally] wasn't a single. Your typical person would be like, "This is the hit," but we reserved it [for the album]. Our goal was to make good music.

**What was it like to collaborate with Elton John on your new song "Learn To Fly"?**

**PADALECKI** Collaborating with Elton felt like winning a Grammy. He brought no ego to the table. You could easily feel how invested he was in the song, even over Zoom.  
**FRANK** We wanted to put it out during [the pandemic] because we felt like people could use it. It's this idea [that] we all have brokenness in us. We are not perfect people.  
—JOSH GLICKSMAN



**10**  
SAINT JHN  
"Roses"

The Brooklyn rapper-singer (born Carlos St. John) scores his first Hot 100 top 10. The track was released in 2016, and its remix by Kazakh DJ-producer Imanbek arrived last September, spurring its global chart surge.

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	CERTIFICATION	PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	Artist	IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
10	11	11	<b>CIRCLES</b>		POST MALONE, FRANK DUKES, L. BELL (L. B. BELL, A. R. POST, A. FEENY, W. T. WALSH, K. GUNESBERK)	Post Malone	REPUBLIC	1	40
12	12	12	<b>ADORE YOU</b> ▲		KID HARPOON, T. JOHNSON (H. STYLES, T. HULL, A. R. ALLEN, T. JOHNSON)	Harry Styles	ERSKINE/COLUMBIA	6	26
6	10	13	<b>LIFE IS GOOD</b> ▲		OZ, D. HILL (N. D. WILBURN, A. GRAHAM, D. HILL, O. YILDRIM, M. D. LIYEW)	Future Feat. Drake	FREEBANDZ/EPIC	2	21
14	13	14	<b>THE BONES</b> ▲		G. KURSTIN (M. MORRIS, J. M. ROBBINS, L. J. VELTZ)	Maren Morris	COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/COLUMBIA	12	37
17	16	15	<b>BLUEBERRY FAYGO</b> ▲		CALLAN (L. ECHOLS, C. WONG, BABYFACE, L. A. REID, D. SIMMONS, J. GILL)	Lil Mosey	MOGUL VISION/INTERSCOPE	15	17
18	18	16	<b>CHASIN' YOU</b> ●		J. MOI (J. MOORE, M. WALLE, C. WISEMAN)	Morgan Wallen	BIG LOUD	16	19
13	15	17	<b>STUCK WITH U</b>		G. M. STONE (A. GRANDE, J. D. BIBER, F. WEXLER, G. M. STONE, S. STONES STREET, W. PHILLIPS, S. BRAUN)	Ariana Grande & Justin Bieber	SBPROJECTS/REPUBLIC/DEF JAM	1	4
21	21	18	<b>FALLING</b> ▲		KC SUPREME, CHARLIE HANDSOME, TAZ TAYLOR (T. NEILL, T. NORTON, M. KOTTMEIER, TAZ TAYLOR, CHARLIE HANDSOME, K. CANDILORA II)	Trevor Daniel	ALAMO/INTERSCOPE	18	29
19	19	19	<b>I HOPE</b> ▲		R. COPPERMAN (Z. KALE, J. M. NITE, G. BARRETT)	Gabby Barrett	WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WAR	16	23
26	24	20	<b>SUNDAY BEST</b> ●		F. FRANK, C. PADALECKI (C. PADALECKI, F. FRANK)	Surfaces	SURFACES/TENTHousand PROJECTS/CAPITOL	20	14

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	CERTIFICATION	PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	Artist	IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
28	25	21	<b>WHATS POPPIN</b> ●		JETS ON MADE, PDDH BEATZ (J. HARLOW, T. MORGAN, D. CLEMONS, J. W. LUCAS)	Jack Harlow	GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC	21	17
16	17	22	<b>THE SCOTTS</b>		TAKE A DAY TRIP/DOT DA GENIUS, PLAIN PAT (TRAVIS SCOTT, S. R. S. MESCUD, D. BIRAL, D. M. A. BAPTISTE, O. OMISHORE, PREYNOLDS, M. G. DEAN)	The Scotts, Travis Scott & Kid Cudi	WICKED AWESOME/CACTUS JACK/EPIC	1	6
24	23	23	<b>HIGH FASHION</b> ▲		MUSTARD, GYLTRYPP (R. W. MOORE, JR., D. I. MCFARLANE, S. R. KHAN ZAMAN KHAN)	Roddy Ricch Feat. Mustard	BIRD VISION/ATLANTIC	20	23
29	26	24	<b>DEATH BED</b> ●		OTTERPOP (I. FABER, B. LAUS, O. LANG)	Powfu Feat. beabadoobee	ROBOTS AND HUMANS/COLUMBIA	24	12
22	20	25	<b>DOES TO ME</b>		S. MOFFATT (L. COMBS, R. M. L. FULCHER, T. M. REEVE)	Luke Combs Feat. Eric Church	RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE	20	12
38	27	26	<b>PARTY GIRL</b>		NASHI (D. FIGUEROA, E. BUSTOS)	StaySolidRocky	COLUMBIA	26	6
35	29	27	<b>I HOPE YOU'RE HAPPY NOW</b> ●		BUSBEE (C. PEARCE, L. COMBS, R. MONTANA, J. SINGLETON)	Carly Pearce & Lee Brice	CURB/BIG MACHINE	27	22
36	30	28	<b>BEFORE YOU GO</b>		TMS (L. CAPALDI, T. BARNES, P. KELLEHER, B. KOHN, P. J. PLESTED)	Lewis Capaldi	VERTIGO/CAPITOL	28	18
39	34	29	<b>BREAK MY HEART</b>		ANDREW WATT, THE MONSTERS & STRANGERZ (A. TAMPOSI, S. JOHNSON, M. HUTCHENCE, J. K. JOHNSON, D. LIPA, A. WOTMAN, A. FARRISS)	Dua Lipa	WARNER	21	10
44	37	30	<b>HARD TO FORGET</b>		Z. CROWELL, L. LAIRD (S. L. HUNT, A. GORLEY, L. LAIRD, S. MCANALLY, J. OSBORNE, A. GRISHAM, M. J. SHURTZ, R. HULL)	Sam Hunt	MCA NASHVILLE	30	10
37	33	31	<b>AFTER A FEW</b>		J. S. STOVER (T. DENNING, K. ARCHER, J. WEAVER)	Travis Denning	MERCURY NASHVILLE	31	10
31	36	32	<b>MEMORIES</b>		A. LEVINE, THE MONSTERS & STRANGERZ (A. N. LEVINE, M. R. POLLACK, J. D. BELLION, J. K. JOHNSON, S. JOHNSON, J. K. HINDLIN)	Maroon 5	222/INTERSCOPE	2	37
<b>HOT SHOT DEBUT</b>		<b>33</b>	<b>SOUR CANDY</b>		BLOODPOP, BURNS (S. G. GERMANOTTA, M. TUCKER, BURNS, R. YACOB, M. E. LOVE, T. H. PARK)	Lady Gaga & BLACKPINK	INTERSCOPE	33	1
25	31	34	<b>MY OH MY</b> ▲		FRANK DUKES (K. C. CABELLO, A. FEENY, L. B. BELL, S. KOTECHA, A. CLEMONS JR., J. L. KIRK)	Camila Cabello Feat. DaBaby	SYCO/EPIC	12	26
23	28	35	<b>NOBODY BUT YOU</b> ●		S. HENDRICKS (T. L. JAMES, R. COPPERMAN, S. MCANALLY, J. OSBORNE)	Blake Shelton Duet With Gwen Stefani	WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN	18	21
43	39	36	<b>BE KIND</b>		MARSHMELLO (MARSHMELLO, G. M. STONE, A. FRANGIPANE, A. R. ALLEN, F. WEXLER)	Marshmello & Halsey	JOY TIME COLLECTIVE/ASTRALWERKS/CAPITOL	29	5
11	22	37	<b>GOOBA</b> ●		J. CLARKE, H. SOREBO (BIX9INE, A. GREEN, J. CLARKE, H. SOREBO)	6ix9ine	SCUMGANG	3	4
27	35	38	<b>EVERYTHING I WANTED</b>		FINNEAS (F. B. O'CONNELL, B. E. O'CONNELL)	Billie Eilish	DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE	8	30
50	53	39	<b>HEARTLESS</b> ▲		DIPLO, KING HENRY, CHARLIE HANDSOME, J. MOI (T. W. PENZ, H. A. ALLEN, M. WALLE, E. K. SMITH, R. J. HURD, CHARLIE HANDSOME)	Diplo Presents Thomas Wesley Feat. Morgan Wallen	MAD DECENT/COLUMBIA	39	19
64	45	40	<b>WATERMELON SUGAR</b> ▲		KID HARPOON, T. JOHNSON (H. STYLES, T. HULL, M. ROWLAND, T. JOHNSON)	Harry Styles	ERSKINE/COLUMBIA	40	11
<b>NEW</b>		<b>41</b>	<b>TELL ME U LUV ME</b>		N. MIRA, OK TANNER (J. A. HIGGINS, TRIPPIE REDD, N. MIRA, T. KATICH)	Juice WRLD & Trippie Redd	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/UNIVERSAL	41	1
<b>RE-ENTRY</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>STUPID LOVE</b>		BLOODPOP, TCHAMI, MAX MARTIN (S. G. GERMANOTTA, M. TUCKER, MAX MARTIN, M. J. L. BRESSO, E. RISE)	Lady Gaga	INTERSCOPE	5	10
45	44	43	<b>SUPALONELY</b>		J. M. FOUNTAIN (J. M. FOUNTAIN, B. P. RICE, S. R. BENNETT, J. ANDREWS)	BENEE Feat. Gus Dapperton	REPUBLIC	39	12
48	47	44	<b>ONE MARGARITA</b>		J. STEVENS, J. STEVENS (M. R. CARTER, M. DRAGSTREM, J. THOMPSON)	Luke Bryan	ROW CROP/CAPITOL NASHVILLE	44	5
52	46	45	<b>WALK EM DOWN</b>		CASHMONEY YAP, LOSHENDRIX (B. L. POTT, S. C. D. MUNOZ, A. PETIT, R. W. MOORE, JR.)	NLE Choppa Feat. Roddy Ricch	NLE CHOPPA/WARNER	45	11
55	51	46	<b>BLUEBIRD</b>		J. JOYCE (M. L. LAMBERT, T. DICK, N. HEMBY)	Miranda Lambert	VANNER/RCA NASHVILLE	46	9
46	43	47	<b>HOT GIRL BUMMER</b> ▲		A. M. GOLDSTEIN, BLACKBEAR (A. M. GOLDSTEIN, M. T. MUSTO)	blackbear	BEARTRAP/ALAMO/INTERSCOPE	11	38
77	69	48	<b>HERE AND NOW</b>		B. CANNON, K. CHESNEY (C. WISEMAN, D. L. MURPHY, D. A. GARCIA)	Kenny Chesney	BLUE CHAIR/WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WEA	48	9
47	48	49	<b>DANCE MONKEY</b> ▲		K. KERSTING (T. WATSON)	Tones And I	BAD BATCH/ELEKTRA/EMG	4	35
94	52	50	<b>GO CRAZY</b>		S. AZOUDJ, A. ZOU, J. J. JELLY, V. CASTANEDA, MURPHY (C. M. BROWN, J. L. WILLIAMS, S. AZOUDJ, A. ZOU, A. L. VIN, K. CASTANEDA, C. O. MURPHY, T. SAMUEL, T. SPMS, S. BENJELLOUN, N. S. AMEL, S. O. AKINLOLU, Z. HARBO, B. P. GIL, A. P. ODOJI)	Chris Brown & Young Thug	300/CBE/RCA	50	4

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THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR CURRENT SONGS ACROSS ALL GENRES, RANKED BY RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS AS MEASURED BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA, SALES DATA AS COMPILED BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA, AND/OR SALES ACTIVITY FOR THE FIRST TIME. SEE CHARTS. LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM/CHARTS FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2020. PROMOTED BY GLOBAL LABEL, LLC AND NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

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UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP





WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	CERTIFICATION	Artist IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
42	40	51	<b>BEER CAN'T FIX</b> D.HUFF, J.BUNETTA, THOMAS RHETT (THOMAS RHETT, J. BUNETTA, Z. SKELTON, R.B.TEDDER)		Thomas Rhett Feat. Jon Pardi VALORY	36	12
60	54	52	<b>EMOTIONALLY SCARRED</b> TWYSTED GENIUS (D.JONES, D.PORTIS)		Lil Baby QUALITY CONTROL/ MOTOWN/CAPITOL	31	14
58	32	53	<b>IN YOUR EYES</b> MAX MARTIN, O.T.HOLTER, THE WEEKND (A.TESFAYE, A.BALSHE, MAX MARTIN, O.T.HOLTER)		The Weeknd XO/REPUBLIC	16	11
59	56	54	<b>DIOR</b> 808MELOBEATS (A.LOBLACK, B.B.JACKSON)		Pop Smoke VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/ REPUBLIC	30	16
70	60	55	<b>WE PAID</b> SECTION 8 (D.JONES, R.WILLIAMS, D.M.HAYES)		Lil Baby & 42 Dugg QUALITY CONTROL/ MOTOWN/CAPITOL	55	5
30	49	56	<b>FLEX</b> HIT BOY, CORBETT (T.T.BARTLETT, C.A.HOLLIS, JR., J.A.HIGGINS, D.J.CORBETT)		Polo G Feat. Juice WRLD COLUMBIA	30	3
65	63	57	<b>AFTER PARTY</b> SONNY DIGITAL, M.G.DEAN (C.Z.TOLIVER, S.C.UWAEZUOKE, TRAVIS SCOTT, M.G.DEAN)		Don Toliver CACTUS JACK/ ATLANTIC	57	7
73	73	58	<b>IF THE WORLD WAS ENDING</b> FINNEAS (J.P.STARKER SAXE, JULIA MICHAELS)		JP Saxe Feat. Julia Michaels ARISTA	58	10
56	58	59	<b>CHICAGO FREESTYLE</b> NOEL (A.GRAHAM, NOEL, R.THOMAS, JR., G.EVANS, M.MATHERS III, J.BASS, S.KING)		Drake Feat. Giveon OVO SOUND/ REPUBLIC	14	5
100	89	60	<b>SAL BEALIGHT</b> D.HUFF (THOMAS RHETT, M.DRAGS, TREM, J.MILLER, J.THOMPSON)		Thomas Rhett Feat. Reba McEntire, Hillary Scott, Chris Tomlin & Keith Urban VALORY	60	9
80	71	61	<b>OUT WEST</b> BUDDAHBLESS, JABZ (TRAVIS SCOTT, T.B.DOUGLAS, SR., J.BAKER, J.L.WILLIAMS)		JACKBOYS Feat. Young Thug CACTUS JACK/EPIC	38	21
89	64	62	<b>I LOVE MY COUNTRY</b> C.CROWDER, T.HUBBARD, B.KELLEY (K.BROWN, C.CROWDER, R.C.MCGILL, E.K.SMITH, CHARLIE HANDSOME, W.WEATHERLY)		Florida Georgia Line BMLG	62	7
76	74	63	<b>BELIEVE IT</b> BIZNESS BOI, CARDIAK, NINETYFOUR (J.A.BRATHWAITE, R.FENTY, A.C.ROBERTSON, C.E.MCCORMICK, E.DUGAR)		PARTYNEXTDOOR & Rihanna OVO SOUND/ WARNER	23	10
66	61	64	<b>LEVEL OF CONCERN</b> T.JOSEPH, P.MEANY (T.JOSEPH)		twenty one pilots FUELED BY RAMEN/EMG	23	8
74	75	65	<b>RIDE IT.</b> REGARD (JAY SEAN, A.SAMPSON)		Regard MINISTRY OF SOUND/EPIC	62	8
NEW		66	<b>TKN</b> ROSALIA, ELCUINCHO, DJ NELSON, A.ARMES, TAINY, SKY ROMIENDO (R.VILA TOBELL, P.DIAZ, REIXA DIAZ, TRAVIS SCOTT, N.DIAZ, MARTINEZ, A.ARMES)		ROSALIA & Travis Scott COLUMBIA	66	1
72	68	67	<b>YO PERREO SOLA</b> TAINY, SUBELO, NEO, BADBUNNY (B.A.MARTINEZ, OCASIO, G.ROSSERRANO, M.E.MASIS, FERNANDEZ, J.C.CRUIZ, F.MONTALVO, ALICEA)		Bad Bunny RIMAS	53	12
78	77	68	<b>P*\$\$\$Y FAIRY (OTW)</b> LEJKEYS (J.A.E.CHILOMBO, J.Q.VIET LE, M.POWELL)		Jhene Aiko 2 FISH/ARTCLUB/ ARTIUM/DEF JAM	40	20
83	81	69	<b>IN BETWEEN</b> F.RODGERS (S.MCCREERY, F.RODGERS, J.L.ALEXANDER, J.SINGLETON)		Scotty McCreery TRIPLE TIGERS	69	8
87	82	70	<b>DIE FROM A BROKEN HEART</b> J.M.ROBBINS, D.WELLS (M.MARLOW, T.DYE, J.SINGLETON, D.RUTTAN)		Maddie & Tae MERCURY NASHVILLE	70	8
85	80	71	<b>GOD WHISPERED YOUR NAME</b> K.URBAN, D.MCCARRROLL (C.AUGUST, M.CARTER, SHY CARTER, J.T.SLATER)		Keith Urban HIT RED/CAPITOL NASHVILLE	71	7
33	66	72	<b>X</b> SHELLBACK (SHELLBACK, R.B.TEDDER, N.J.JONAS, KAROL G, A.TAMPOS)		Jonas Brothers Feat. Karol G REPUBLIC	33	3
-	38	73	<b>DOLLAZ ON MY HEAD</b> MIKE WILL MADE-IT (S.G.KITCHENS, M.L.WILLIAMS, J.L.WILLIAMS)		Gunna Feat. Young Thug YOUNG STONER LIFE/300	38	2
40	79	74	<b>DAISIES</b> THE MONSTERS & STRANGERZ (KATY PERRY, J.D.BELLION, J.K.HINDLIN, M.R.POLLACK, J.K.JOHNSON, S.JOHNSON)		Katy Perry CAPITOL	40	3
63	72	75	<b>RIGHTEOUS</b> N.MIRA, CHARLIE HANDSOME (N.MIRA, J.A.HIGGINS, CHARLIE HANDSOME)		Juice WRLD GRADE A/ INTERSCOPE	11	6
-	62	76	<b>NEED IT</b> BUDDAHBLESS (Q.K.MARSHALL, K.CEPHUS, K.K.BALL, T.B.DOUGLAS, SR., K.D GAULDEN, T.COTTRELL, C.J.JACKSON, JR.)		MigOS Feat. YoungBoy Never Broke Again QUALITY CONTROL/ MOTOWN/CAPITOL	62	2
99	87	77	<b>DRINKING ALONE</b> D.GARCIA, C.UNDERWOOD (C.UNDERWOOD, D.A.GARCIA, BRETT JAMES)		Carrie Underwood CAPITOL NASHVILLE	77	5
NEW		78	<b>GOT WHAT I GOT</b> M.KNOX (M.TYLER, A.PALMER, T.ARCHER)		Jason Aldean MACON/BROKEN BOW	78	1
-	92	79	<b>DON'T RUSH</b> GRADES (R.TUCKER, A.ADEWUYI, I.ADJEI)		Young T & Bugsey Feat. Headie One BLACK BUTTER/EPIC	79	4
90	88	80	<b>GODZILLA</b> D.A.DOMAN (M.MATHERS III, L.E.RESTO, D.L.DOMAN, J.A.HIGGINS, A.VILLASANA)		Eminem Feat. Juice WRLD SHADY/AT FERMATH/ INTERSCOPE	3	20

# 24

**POW FU FEAT. BEABADOOBEE**  
"Death Bed"

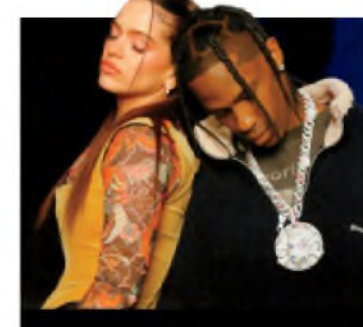
The track, which reaches the Hot 100's top 25, rules the overhauled Hot Rock & Alternative Songs chart, previously named Hot Rock Songs. The 50-position survey, which employs the same multimetric methodology as the Hot 100, will now include more songs considered alternative, and which receive alternative radio play. Concurrently, the multimetric Hot Alternative Songs and Hot Hard Rock Songs charts debut, each running 25 positions deep. "Death Bed" also tops the former, while Falling In Reverse's "Popular Monster" leads the latter. —G.T.



# 31

**TRAVIS DENNING**  
"After a Few"

The song completes a record 65-week run to No. 1 on Country Airplay, up 10% to 32.1 million in audience. "I think this is a testament that sometimes great things take time," says Denning.



# 66

**ROSALÍA & TRAVIS SCOTT**  
"TKN"

Rosalía earns her first Hot 100 hit. The collaboration launches at No. 1 on Latin Streaming Songs (7.3 million U.S. streams) and Latin Digital Song Sales (5,000 sold), while drawing 1.2 million in airplay audience.

WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	CERTIFICATION	Artist IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
-	41	81	<b>COOLER THAN A BITCH</b> TRE POUNDS (S.G.KITCHENS, J.LACROIX, R.W.MOORE, JR.)		Gunna Feat. Roddy Ricch YOUNG STONER LIFE/300	41	2
NEW		82	<b>ONE BIG COUNTRY SONG</b> 770 PRODUCTIONS (J.FRASURE, A.GORLEY, M.W.HARDY)		LOCASH WHEELHOUSE	82	1
NEW		83	<b>T.D</b> LIL YACHTY, 3OROC (LIL YACHTY, S.GLOADE, R.A.MAYERS, T.OKONMA, T.WHACK, P.L.WILLIAMS, S.KAMEYAMA, VERBAL, RYO, Z.ILMARI)		Lil Yachty & Tierra Whack Feat. ASAP Rocky & Tyler, The Creator QUALITY CONTROL/ MOTOWN/CAPITOL	83	1
NEW		84	<b>ALICE</b> BLOODPOP, AXWELL, KL AHR (AXWELL, J.KLAHR, J.D.TRANTR, M.TUCKER, S.G.GERMANOTTA)		Lady Gaga INTERSCOPE	84	1
-	97	85	<b>GRACE</b> BUDDAH BEATS (D.JONES, Z.THOMAS, D.M.HAYES)		Lil Baby & 42 Dugg QUALITY CONTROL/ MOTOWN/CAPITOL	48	11
NEW		86	<b>HASTA QUE DIOS DIGA</b> GABY MUSI, C CHRIS JEDAY (E.GAZMEY SANTIAGO, B.A.MARTINEZ OCASIO)		Anuel AA & Bad Bunny REAL HASTA LA MUERTE/ SONY MUSIC LATIN	86	1
NEW		87	<b>WHY WE DRINK</b> J.S.STOVER, S.BORCHETTA (J.MOORE, C.BEATHARD, D.L.MURPHY, J.S.STOVER)		Justin Moore VALORY	87	1
NEW		88	<b>LOSE SOMEBODY</b> KYGO, RISSI, A.DELICATA, A.VANDERHEYM (KYGO, R.B.TEDDER, MORTEN RISTORP, A.DELICATA, A.VANDERHEYM, J.TORREY, P.J.PLESTED)		Kygo & OneRepublic KYGO AS/RCA	88	1
91	90	89	<b>TURKS</b> WHEEZY (N.S.GORAYA, S.G.KITCHENS, W.T.GLASS, TRAVIS SCOTT, A.ESMAILIAN)		NAV, Gunna & Travis Scott XO/REPUBLIC	17	10
NEW		90	<b>ONE OF THEM GIRLS</b> B.GLIDVER, K.JACOB, S.L.BRICE (A.GORLEY, B.JOHNSON, D.DAVIDSON, L.BRICE)		Lee Brice CURB	90	1
RE-ENTRY		91	<b>GIRL OF MY DREAMS</b> ACE LEX (R.GREEN, A.MAXWELL)		Rod Wave ALAMO/GEFFEN/INTERSCOPE	91	3
NEW		92	<b>LIKE THAT</b> TYSON TRAX (A.Z.DLAMINI, L.GOTTWALD, T.THOMAS, L.ASRAT, D.SPRECHER, R.D.DAVIS)		Doja Cat Feat. Gucci Mane KEMOSABE/ RCA	92	1
RE-ENTRY		93	<b>SIGUES CON EL</b> DIMELLO, FLOW, KEYTIN, JUVY BOY (A.A.SANTOS, C.I.MORALES, WILLIAMS, O.MALDONADO RIVERA, J.C.VARGAS, J.J.MENDEZ)		Arcangel x Sech RIMAS	78	3
RE-ENTRY		94	<b>THAT WAY</b> SUPAH MARIO, FELIPE SPAIN, YUNGLAN (S.WOODS, J.D.PRIESTER, A.FESPANA, M.S.MODI, A.M.CARLSSON, MAX MARTIN)		Lil Uzi Vert GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC	20	11
34	85	95	<b>TRILLIONAIRE</b> TEEZYI (N.D.WILBURN, A.WRIGHT, K.D.GAULDEN)		Future Feat. YoungBoy Never Broke Again FREEBANDZ/EPIC	34	3
-	100	96	<b>ILY</b> SURF MESA (P.AGUIRRE, B.GAUDIO, B.CREWE)		surf mesa Feat. Emilee ASTRALWERKS/CAPITOL	96	2
NEW		97	<b>ONE BEER</b> J.MOI, D.WELLS (M.W.HARDY, H.LINDESEY, J.MITCHELL)		HARDY Feat. Lauren Alaina & Devin Dawson BIG LOUD	97	1
98	96	98	<b>JULY</b> M.SONIER (N.CYRUS, P.J.HARDING, M.SONIER)		Noah Cyrus & Leon Bridges RECORDS/COLUMBIA	85	13
-	99	99	<b>ALL IN</b> QUAY GLOBAL (D.JONES, C.ROSSER)		Lil Baby QUALITY CONTROL/ MOTOWN/CAPITOL	45	5
32	83	100	<b>SOLITAIRES</b> WHEEZY, M.G.DEAN (N.D.WILBURN, W.T.GLASS, TRAVIS SCOTT)		Future Feat. Travis Scott FREEBANDZ/ EPIC	32	3



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

# JESSIE REYEZ

BEFORE LOVE CAME TO KILL US

"JESSIE REYEZ'S DEBUT REVEALS  
AN INTENSE STAR"

The  
Guardian

"A DEFINING WORK FROM  
AN EXCITING NEW STAR"

VARIETY

"BY THE END..YOU WILL FEEL ALIVE"

COM  
PLEX

"[JESSIE] MAKES HERSELF UNFORGETTABLE  
PRETTY MUCH FROM THE WORD GO"

AP Associated Press

"A HEART-WRENCHING, FEROCIOUS  
AND UNFILTERED DEBUT"

NME



LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
	1	<b>#1</b> LADY GAGA INTERSCOPE/JGA		Chromatica	1	1
NEW	2	JIMMY BUFFETT MAILBOAT		Life On The Flip Side	2	1
2	3	LIL BABY QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL		My Turn	1	14
1	4	GUNNA YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/AG		Wunna	1	2
3	5	FUTURE FREEBANDZ/EPIC		High Off Life	1	3
6	6	DRAKE OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC		Dark Lane Demo Tapes	2	5
5	7	POLO G COLUMBIA		The GOAT	2	3
NEW	8	ANUEL AA REAL HASTA LA MUERTE/SONY MUSIC LATIN		Emmanuel	8	1
7	9	DABABY SOUTHCOST/INTERSCOPE/JGA		BLAME IT ON BABY	1	7
NEW	10	RUN THE JEWELS JEWEL RUNNERS/BMG		RTJ4	10	1
8	11	THE WEEKND XO/REPUBLIC		After Hours	1	11
10	12	POST MALONE REPUBLIC		Hollywood's Bleeding	1	39
9	13	LIL UZI VERT GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		Eternal Atake	1	13
NEW	14	LIL YACHTY QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL		Lil Boat 3	14	1
NEW	15	FREDDIE GIBBS & THE ALCHEMIST ALC/ESGN/EMPIRE		Alfredo	15	1
12	16	BAD BUNNY RIMAS		YHLQMDLG	2	14
13	17	RODDY RICCH BIRD VISION/ATLANTIC/AG		Please Excuse Me For Being Antisocial	1	26
NEW	18	KYGO KYGO AS/RCA		Golden Hour	18	1
143	19	<b>GG</b> G HERBO EPIC/MACHINE ENTERTAINMENT GROUP		PTSD	7	14
14	20	LUKE COMBS RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN		What You See Is What You Get	1	30
15	21	HARRY STYLES ERSKINE/COLUMBIA		Fine Line	1	25
136	22	<b>PS</b> MAC MILLER WARNER		Circles	3	20
16	23	MEGAN THEE STALLION 1501 CERTIFIED/300/AG		Suga	7	13
18	24	BILLIE EILISH DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/JGA		When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?	1	62
19	25	MORGAN WALLEN BIG LOUD		If I Know Me	18	88
20	26	LUKE COMBS RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN		This One's For You	4	157
22	27	DUA LIPA WARNER		Future Nostalgia	4	10
17	28	DOJA CAT KEMOSABE/RCA		Hot Pink	9	31
31	29	JUICE WRLD GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Goodbye & Good Riddance	4	107
27	30	LEWIS CAPALDI VERTIGO/CAPITOL		Divinely Uninspired To A Hellish Extent	20	55
26	31	TRAVIS SCOTT CACTUS JACK/GRAND HUSTLE/EPIC		ASTROWORLD	1	96
34	32	POST MALONE REPUBLIC		beerbongs & bentleys	1	110
29	33	QUEEN HOLLYWOOD		Greatest Hits	11	389
30	34	ROD WAVE ALAMO/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Pray 4 Love	2	9
21	35	LIL DURK ALAMO/GEFFEN/JGA		Just Cause Y'all Waited 2	5	4
NEW	36	KIP MOORE MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN		Wild World	36	1
24	37	TAYLOR SWIFT REPUBLIC		Lover	1	41
28	38	MONEYBAGG YO N-LESS/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Time Served	3	21
36	39	POP SMOKE VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/REPUBLIC		Meet The Woo, V.2	7	17
32	40	JHENE AIKO 2 FISH/ART CLUB/ARTIUM/DEF JAM		Chilombo	2	13
39	41	ELTON JOHN ROCKE T/ISLAND/UMI		Diamonds	7	134
35	42	JUSTIN BIEBER SCHOOLBOY/RAYMOND BRAUN/DEF JAM		Changes	1	16
38	43	SUMMER WALKER LVRN/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Over It	2	35
41	44	SAM HUNT MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN		SOUTHSIDE	5	9
42	45	BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS TUFF GONG/ISLAND/UMI		Legend: The Best Of...	5	629
23	46	KEHLANI TSUNAMI MOB/ATLANTIC/AG		It Was Good Until It Wasn't	2	4
40	47	SOUNDTRACK WALT DISNEY		Frozen II	1	29
25	48	NAV XO/REPUBLIC		Good Intentions	1	4
44	49	JUICE WRLD GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Death Race For Love	1	65
NEW	50	DIPLO PRESENTS THOMAS WESLEY MAD DECENT/COLUMBIA		Chapter I: Snake Oil	50	1

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	CERTIFICATION	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
46	51	POST MALONE REPUBLIC		Stoney	4	182
43	52	DRAKE YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC		Scorpion	1	101
48	53	DABABY SOUTHCOST/INTERSCOPE/JGA		KIRK	1	36
49	54	ROD WAVE ALAMO/JGA		Ghetto Gospel	10	31
33	55	BAD BUNNY RIMAS		Las Que No Iban A Salir	7	4
45	56	YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ATLANTIC/AG		38 Baby 2	1	6
85	57	2PAC AMARU/DEATH ROW/INTERSCOPE/UMI		Greatest Hits	3	327
47	58	CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL FANTASY/CONCORD		Chronicle The 20 Greatest Hits	22	474
51	59	JACKBOYS CACTUS JACK/EPIC		JACKBOYS	1	23
69	60	SAINT JHN GODD COMPLEX/HITCO		Collection One	60	11
52	61	DON TOLIVER CACTUS JACK/ATLANTIC/AG		Heaven Or Hell	7	12
56	62	BILLIE EILISH DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Dont Smile At Me	14	128
60	63	YOUNG THUG YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/ATLANTIC/AG		So Much Fun	1	42
59	64	LIL MOSEY MOGUL VISION/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Certified Hitmaker	12	27
55	65	BLAKE SHELTON WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN		Fully Loaded: God's Country	2	25
57	66	HALSEY CAPITOL		Manic	2	20
68	67	XXXTENTACION BAD VIBES FOREVER		?	1	116
62	68	EMINEM SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/JGA		Music To Be Murdered By	1	20
64	69	YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ATLANTIC/AG		AI YoungBoy 2	1	34
63	70	LIZZO NICE LIFE/ATLANTIC/AG		Cuz I Love You	4	59
RE	71	LIL WAYNE YOUNG MONEY/REPUBLIC		Funeral	1	14
61	72	JOURNEY COLUMBIA/LEGACY		Journey's Greatest Hits	10	619
67	73	KHALID RIGHT HAND/RCA		Free Spirit	1	61
54	74	BTS BIG HIT ENTERTAINMENT		MAP OF THE SOUL : 7	1	15
NEW	75	ALEC BENJAMIN ARTIST PARTNERS GROUP/ATLANTIC/AG		These Two Windows	75	1
53	76	CHRIS BROWN & YOUNG THUG 300/CBE/RCA		Slime & B	24	5
106	77	KENDRICK LAMAR TOP DAWG/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/JGA		DAMN.	1	164
65	78	CHRIS STAPLETON MERCURY NASHVILLE/UMGN		Traveller	1	247
74	79	KHALID RIGHT HAND/RCA		American Teen	4	170
71	80	SOUNDTRACK WALT DISNEY		Moana	2	184
66	81	FLEETWOOD MAC WARNER BROS./RHINO		Rumours	1	375
76	82	ED SHEERAN ATLANTIC/AG		÷ (Divide)	1	170
73	83	A BOOGIE WIT DA HOODIE HIGHBRIDGE THE LABEL/ATLANTIC/AG		Artist 2.0	2	16
70	84	ARIANA GRANDE REPUBLIC		Thank U, Next	1	69
79	85	CAMILA CABELLO SYCO/EPIC		Romance	3	26
78	86	ORIGINAL BROADWAY CAST HAMILTON UPTOWN/ATLANTIC/AG		Hamilton: An American Musical	3	245
72	87	TRIPPIE REDD TENTHOUSAND PROJECTS		A Love Letter To You 4	1	28
77	88	CHRIS BROWN CBE/RCA		Indigo	1	49
82	89	MAREN MORRIS COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN		GIRL	4	65
75	90	TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS MCA/GEFFEN/UMI		Greatest Hits	2	360
87	91	LIL UZI VERT GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		Luv Is Rage 2	1	145
84	92	JACK HARLOW GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC/AG		Sweet Action	36	12
80	93	THE BEATLES APPLE/CAPITOL/UMI		1	1	423
83	94	BILLY JOEL COLUMBIA/LEGACY		The Essential Billy Joel	15	194
101	95	NF NF REAL MUSIC/CAROLINE		The Search	1	45
86	96	CARDI B THE KSR GROUP/ATLANTIC/AG		Invasion Of Privacy	1	113
97	97	KENDRICK LAMAR TOP DAWG/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/JGA		good kid, m.A.A.d city	2	397
107	98	THE BEACH BOYS CAPITOL/UMI		Sounds Of Summer: The Very Best Of The Beach Boys	16	213
81	99	TORY LANEZ INTERSCOPE/JGA		The New Toronto 3	2	8
93	100	ED SHEERAN ATLANTIC/AG		No.6 Collaborations Project	1	47



## Gaga's Sixth No. 1

Lady Gaga notches her sixth No. 1 album on the Billboard 200 with the chart-topping debut of *Chromatica*. The set starts with 274,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States during the week ending June 4, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data — the biggest week for any album by a woman in 2020. In addition, *Chromatica* is just the second title by a woman to hit No. 1 in 2020, following Selena Gomez's *Rare* in January.

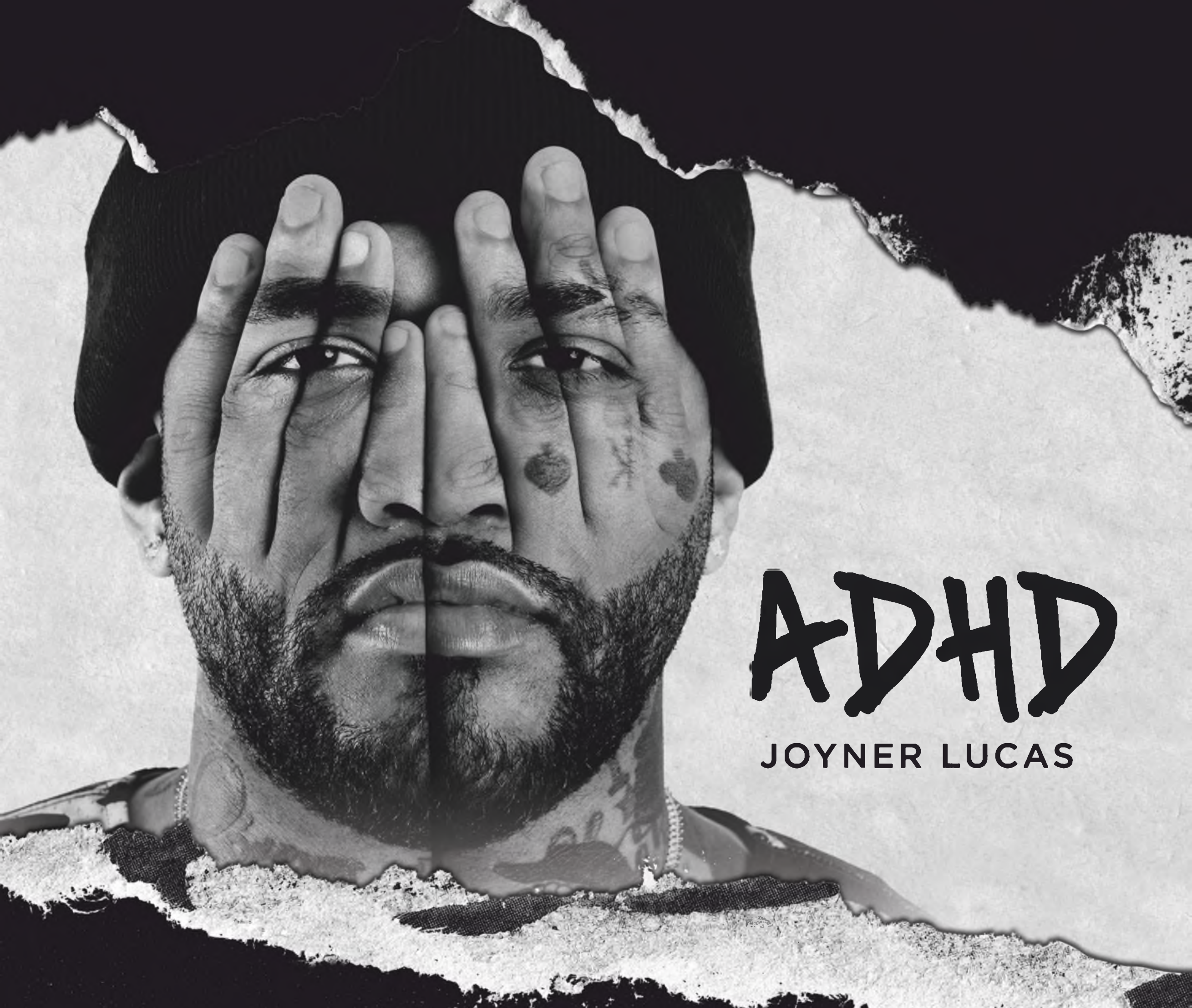
Notably, 65,000 of *Chromatica*'s first-week units are streaming-equivalent album units. That sum equals 87.2 million on-demand streams of the set's songs — the biggest streaming week for a non-R&B/hip-hop or Latin album in 2020.

Elsewhere on the Billboard 200, G Herbo's *PTSD* flies 143-19 (27,000 units; up 260%) after it was reissued with bonus tracks on May 20, while Mac Miller's *Circles* zooms 136-22 (23,000; up 195%) after its vinyl debut (May 29).

—KEITH CAULFIELD

THE BILLBOARD 200 CHART RANKS THE MOST POPULAR ALBUMS OF THE WEEK, AS COMPILED BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA, BASED ON MULTI-METRIC CONSUMPTION (BLENDING TRADITIONAL ALBUM SALES, TRACK-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS, AND STREAMING-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS). SALES DATA COMPILED BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA.





# ADHD

JOYNER LUCAS

FOR YOUR GRAMMY® CONSIDERATION

#10

**BILLBOARD**

200 ALBUMS

#4

**TOP RAP**

**ALBUMS**

#2

**INDEPENDENT**

**ALBUMS**



LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST	CERTIFICATION	IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
103	101	VARIOUS ARTISTS	▲	DREAMVILLE/INTERSCOPE/JGA	Dreamville & J. Cole: Revenge Of The Dreamers III	1	48
120	102	KENNY CHESNEY		BLUE CHAIR/WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN	Here And Now	1	5
91	103	AC/DC	25	COLUMBIA/LEGACY	Back In Black	4	414
92	104	GUNS N' ROSES	18	GEFFEN/UME	Appetite For Destruction	1	230
94	105	THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G.	▲	BAD BOY/RHINO	Greatest Hits	1	225
88	106	THE BEATLES	12	APPLE/CAPITOL/UME	Abbey Road	1	364
96	107	TRAVIS SCOTT	▲	GRAND HUSTLE/EPIC	Birds In The Trap Sing McKnight	1	195
95	108	YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN		NEVER BROKE AGAIN/ATLANTIC/AG	Still Flexin, Still Steppin	2	15
98	109	MUSTARD	●	10 SUMMERS/INTERSCOPE/JGA	Perfect Ten	8	49
111	110	SURFACES		SURFACES/TENTHOUSAND PROJECTS	Where The Light Is	105	15
90	111	ZAC BROWN BAND		ROAR/SOUTHERN GROUND/ATLANTIC/AG	Greatest Hits So Far...	20	260
105	112	LIL NAS X	▲	COLUMBIA	7 (EP)	2	50
RE	113	RUSH		ANTHEM/MERCURY/UME	Permanent Waves	4	37
89	114	THOMAS RHETT	●	VALORY/BMG	Center Point Road	1	52
104	115	SOUNDTRACK	3	FOX/20TH CENTURY FOX/ATLANTIC/AG	The Greatest Showman	1	130
108	116	KANE BROWN	▲	ZONE 4/RCA NASHVILLE/SMN	Experiment	1	82
102	117	DRAKE	6	YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC	Take Care	1	379
128	118	J. COLE	3	DREAMVILLE/ROC NATION/COLUMBIA	2014 Forest Hills Drive	1	287
99	119	LYNYRD SKYNYRD	▲	MCA/GEFFEN/UME	All Time Greatest Hits	56	83
113	120	DRAKE	6	YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC	Views	1	214
110	121	DAN + SHAY	▲	WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN	Dan + Shay	6	102
109	122	MELANIE MARTINEZ	▲	ATLANTIC/AG	Cry Baby	6	123
115	123	SHAWN MENDES	▲	ISLAND/REPUBLIC	Shawn Mendes	1	106
118	124	LAUREN DAIGLE	●	CENTRICITY/12TONE	Look Up Child	3	91
117	125	A BOOGIE WIT DA HOODIE	▲	HIGHBRIDGE THE LABEL/ATLANTIC/AG	Hoodie SZN	1	76
119	126	THE WEEKND	4	XO/REPUBLIC	Beauty Behind The Madness	1	248
125	127	MICHAEL JACKSON	4	EPIC/LEGACY	The Essential Michael Jackson	31	327
121	128	THE WEEKND	3	XO/REPUBLIC	Starboy	1	184
100	129	SOUNDTRACK		VILLA 40/DREAMWORKS/RCA	TROLLS: World Tour	15	9
58	130	RUSS		DIEMON/RUSS MY WAY/COLUMBIA	SHAKE THE SNOW GLOBE	4	12
112	131	EAGLES	38	ASYLUM/ELEKTRA/RHINO	Their Greatest Hits 1971-1975	1	329
126	132	LIL TJAY	●	COLUMBIA	True 2 Myself	5	34
122	133	TAYLOR SWIFT	9	BIG MACHINE/BMG	1989	1	286
123	134	OLD DOMINION		RCA NASHVILLE/SMN	Old Dominion	9	32
131	135	EMINEM	10	WEB/AF TERMATH/INTERSCOPE/UME	The Eminem Show	1	380
135	136	XXXTENTACION	▲	BAD VIBES FOREVER/EMPIRE	17	2	145
4	137	THE 1975		DIRTY HIT/INTERSCOPE/JGA	Notes On A Conditional Form	4	2
NEW	138	POWFU		ROBOTS AND HUMANS/COLUMBIA	Poems Of The Past (EP)	138	1
116	139	JOYNER LUCAS		TWENTY NINE/TULLY	ADHD	10	10
130	140	IMAGINE DRAGONS	2	KIDINAKORNER/INTERSCOPE/JGA	Evolve	2	154
129	141	KANE BROWN	2	ZONE 4/RCA NASHVILLE/SMN	Kane Brown	5	183
134	142	DABABY	●	SOUTHCOAST/INTERSCOPE/JGA	Baby On Baby	7	66
151	143	NIPSEY HUSSLE		ALL MONEY IN NO MONEY OUT/ATLANTIC/AG	Victory Lap	2	71
144	144	POLO G	●	COLUMBIA	Die A Legend	6	52
137	145	LADY GAGA & BRADLEY COOPER	2	INTERSCOPE/JGA	A Star Is Born (Soundtrack)	1	87
133	146	TONES AND I		BAD BATCH/ELEKTRA/EMG	The Kids Are Coming (EP)	30	35
174	147	SUBLIME	5	GASOLINE ALLEY/MCA/GEFFEN/UME	Sublime	13	162
127	148	PARTYNEXTDOOR		OVD SOUND/WARNER	PARTYMOBILE	8	10
138	149	BRUNO MARS	5	ELEKTRA/EMG	Doo-Wops & Hooligans	3	473
140	150	RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS	2	WARNER	Greatest Hits	18	242



2

**JIMMY BUFFETT**  
*Life on the Flip Side*

It's Buffett's highest-charting album since 2004's *License To Chill* marked his first No. 1. The new set starts with 75,000 equivalent album units earned in the week ending June 4, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data.



8

**ANUEL AA**  
*Emmanuel*

Anuel AA's first top 10 is also the Latin genre's third top 10 of 2020, following a pair of Bad Bunny releases. *Emmanuel* debuts with 39,000 units (nearly all driven by streaming) and is Anuel's second No. 1 on Top Latin Albums.



10

**RUN THE JEWELS**  
*RTJ4*

After just 48 hours of activity (the set arrived two days earlier than anticipated, on June 3), *RTJ4* bows with 38,000 units (30,000 in album sales) and garners the hip-hop duo its first top 10.

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	ARTIST	CERTIFICATION	IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
141	151	YNW MELLY		YNW MELLY/300/AG	Melly vs. Melvin	8	28
147	152	DRAKE		YOUNG MONEY/CASH MONEY/REPUBLIC	More Life	1	167
RE	153	KENDRICK LAMAR	▲	TOP DAWG/AF TERMATH/INTERSCOPE/JGA	To Pimp A Butterfly	1	126
153	154	MEEK MILL	▲	MAYBACH/ATLANTIC/AG	Championships	1	79
139	155	THE ROLLING STONES	12	ABKCO	Hot Rocks 1964-1971	4	335
142	156	BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND	10	HIDEOUT/CAPITOL/UME	Greatest Hits	8	332
150	157	MICHAEL JACKSON	33	EPIC/LEGACY	Thriller	1	421
155	158	LIL BABY & GUNNA	▲	YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/AG/CAPITOL	Drip Harder	4	87
132	159	SELENA GOMEZ		INTERSCOPE/JGA	Rare	1	21
148	160	JONAS BROTHERS		REPUBLIC	Happiness Begins	1	52
146	161	BAD BUNNY		RIMAS	X 100PRE	11	76
RE	162	JASON ALDEAN		MACON/BROKEN BOW/BMG/BBMG		9	21
166	163	LIL TECCA	●	GALACTIC/REPUBLIC	We Love You Tecca	4	40
156	164	SOUNDTRACK	4	WALT DISNEY	Frozen	1	153
RE	165	TIM MCGRAW	▲	CURB	Number One Hits	27	152
145	166	KID CUDI		DREAM ON/G O O D/REPUBLIC	Man On The Moon: The End Of Day	4	127
157	167	TWENTY ONE PILOTS	4	FUELED BY RAMEN/EMG	Blurryface	1	264
152	168	SZA	▲	TOP DAWG/RCA	Ctrl	3	156
170	169	LADY GAGA	6	STREAMLINE/KONLIVE/CHERRY TREE/INTERSCOPE/JGA	The Fame	2	225
158	170	ELVIS PRESLEY	▲	RCA/SONY STRATEGIC MARKETING GROUP/LEGACY	The Essential Elvis Presley	42	49
154	171	GEORGE STRAIT	7	MCA NASHVILLE/UMGN	50 Number Ones	1	142
160	172	NF	▲	NF REAL MUSIC/CAPITOL/CAROLINE	Perception	1	139
RE	173	EMINEM	7	SHADY/AF TERMATH/INTERSCOPE/JGA	Curtain Call: The Hits	1	493
RE	174	RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE	3	EPIC/LEGACY	Rage Against The Machine	45	96
163	175	BLAKE SHELTON		WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN	Reloaded: 20 #1 Hits	5	188
164	176	BON JOVI	▲	ISLAND/UME	Greatest Hits: The Ultimate Collection	5	167
171	177	STEVIE WONDER	▲	MOTOWN/UTV/UME	The Definitive Collection	35	95
161	178	DARYL HALL JOHN OATES	▲	RCA/LEGACY	The Very Best Of Daryl Hall John Oates	34	88
177	179	KELSEA BALLERINI		BLACK RIVER	kelsea	12	11
185	180	FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH		PROSPECT PARK	A Decade Of Destruction	29	118
167	181	FRANK OCEAN	▲	BOYS DON'T CRY	Blonde	1	181
192	182	KEVIN GATES		BREAD WINNERS ASSOCIATION/ATLANTIC/AG	I'm Him	4	36
184	183	TYLER, THE CREATOR	●	COLUMBIA	IGOR	1	55
37	184	KEY GLOCK		PAPER ROUTE EMPIRE	Son Of A Gun	37	2
RE	185	TREVOR DANIEL		ALAMO/JGA	Homesick (EP)	64	23
50	186	FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE		BMG	6-Pack (EP)	50	2
182	187	MIRANDA LAMBERT		VANNER/RCA NASHVILLE/SMN	Wildcard	4	15
175	188	ADELE	14	XL/COLUMBIA	21	1	468
165	189	METALLICA	16	BLACKENED/RHINO	Metallica	1	575
176	190	JON PARDI	▲	CAPITOL NASHVILLE/UMGN	California Sunrise	11	183
194	191	VARIOUS ARTISTS		QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	Quality Control: Control The Streets, Volume 2	3	42
NEW	192	PALAYE ROYALE		SUMERIAN	The Bastards	192	1
180	193	NIRVANA	10	SUB POP/DGC/GEFFEN/UME	Nevermind	1	476
172	194	MAC MILLER	●	WARNER	Swimming	3	96
186	195	IMAGINE DRAGONS	2	KIDINAKORNER/INTERSCOPE/JGA	Night Visions	2	397
NEW	196	TOOSII		SOUTHCOAST	Platinum Heart	196	1
RE	197	BAZZI	●	ZZZ/IAMCOSMIC/ATLANTIC/AG	Cosmic	14	108
179	198	LAUV		LAUV/AWAL-KOBALT	-how i'm feeling-	16	13
193	199	JASON ALDEAN	●	MACON/BROKEN BOW/BMG/BBMG	Rearview Town	1	106
NEW	200	TWICE		JYP	More & More: The Ninth Mini Album (EP)	200	1

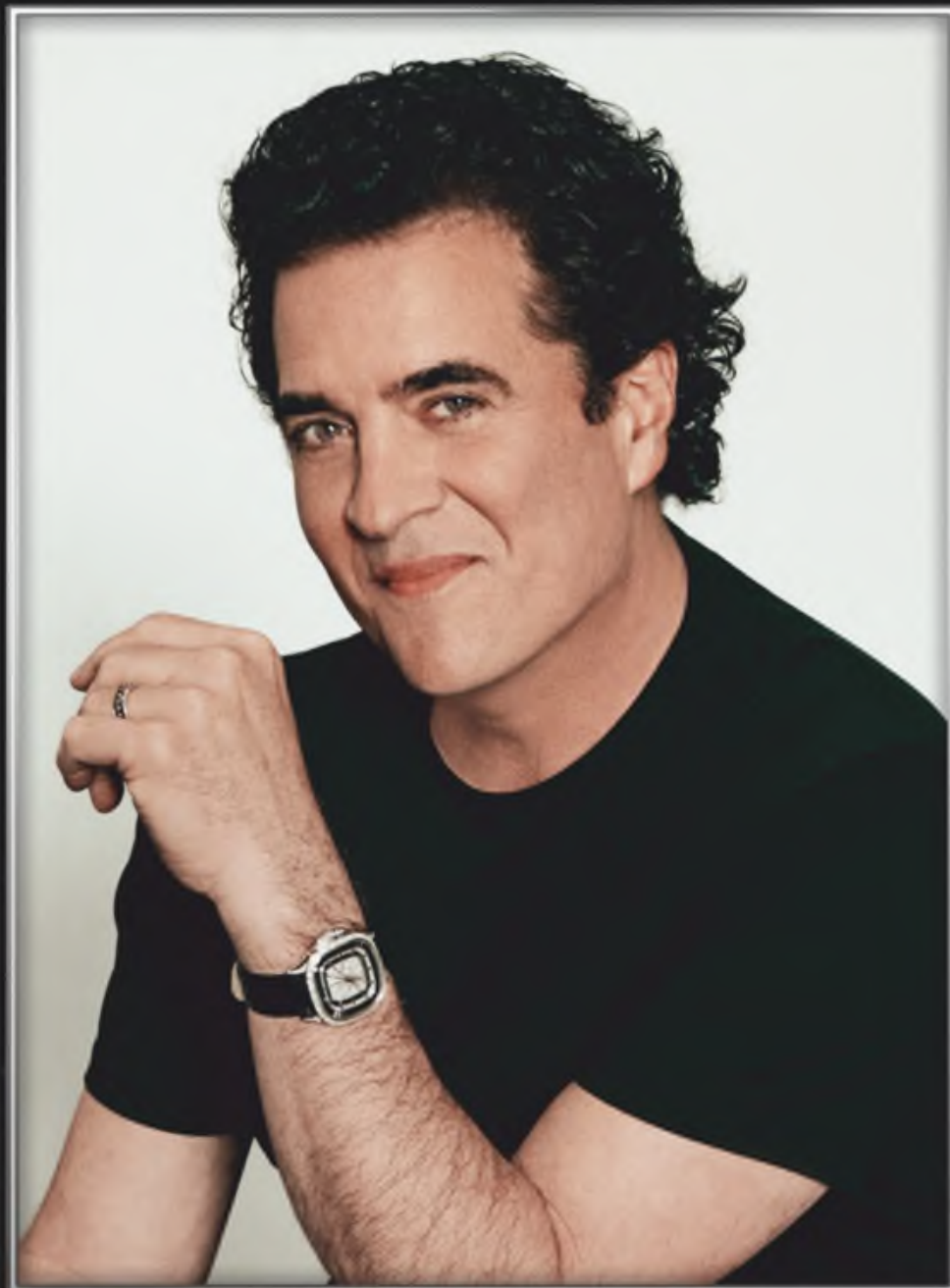


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FROM YOUR



FAMILY



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JUNE 13, 2020 • VOLUME 132 / NO. 10

## ON THE COVER

Brianna Agyemang (left) and Jamila Thomas photographed by Flo Ngala on June 7 in Brooklyn.

Agyemang styling by Kiki Cleveland  
Diet Starts Monday T-shirt, Aliette skirt,  
Brother Vellies shoes, Indj\_studio earrings.

Thomas styling by Sinceré Armani  
J. Bailey T-shirt and skirt.

## FEATURES

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#### THE REVOLUTION WILL BE LIVE

The mavericks behind #TheShowMustBePaused called for a day of reckoning — and the industry listened. Here's how music's fearless new leaders plan to flex their power next — and push the business forward.

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### 3

**DaBaby** bounds to his first Hot 100 No. 1 with "Rockstar," featuring **Roddy Ricch**.

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A major-label executive details systemic inequalities within the music business — and the path toward change.

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In a season of turmoil, the executives at these 75 independent music companies are driving artists to chart-topping success outside the major-label machinery.

### 89

Unstoppable even during a pandemic, A2IM's Libera Awards will conclude the first online Indie Week.

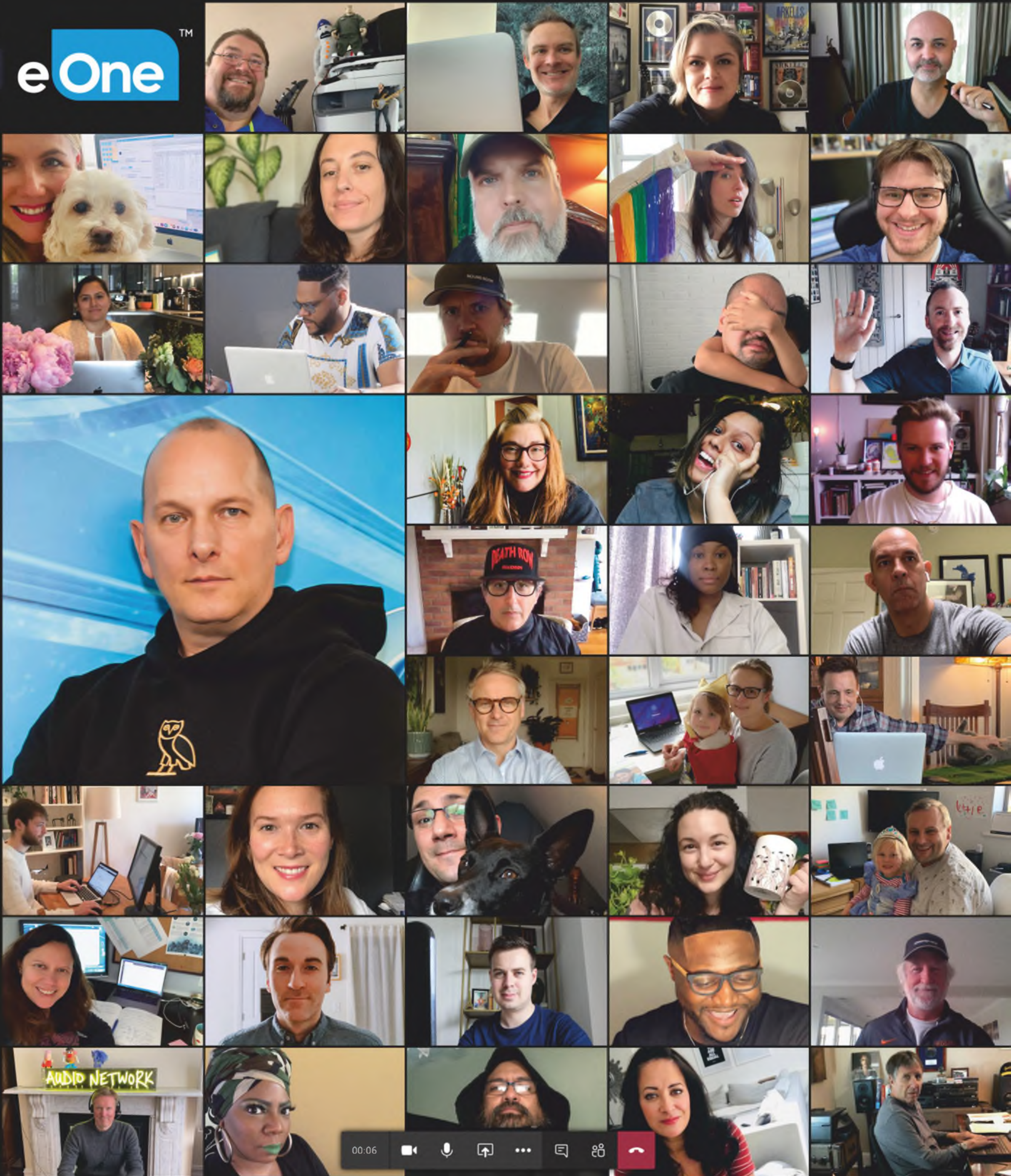
Thomas (left) and Agyemang

#### TO OUR READERS

Billboard will publish its next issue on July 25. For 24/7 music coverage, go to [billboard.com](http://billboard.com).



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#### LIGHTS, CAMERA, TODRICK

He has appeared on Broadway, gone viral with dazzling music videos and sashayed all over reality competition shows. But **Todrick Hall** is still fighting for his place in the industry, where he says racism and homophobia linger — while owning up to his past “mistakes.”

### 56

#### THE 2020 PRIDE LIST

For *Billboard*'s second Pride List, 40 executives from across the music business share their biggest victories — and the actions they're taking to cope with the pandemic and reaffirm the Black Lives Matter movement.

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Influential drag queens from *RuPaul's Drag Race* and beyond share selfies of original looks from self-isolation.

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Why classic country artist **Orville Peck** might just be the unconventional best new artist nominee the academy needs.

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The 2021 ceremony will indeed take place — but what exactly will it look like? Plus, a very early look at the potential Big Four contenders.

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**Tegan Quin** — of **Tegan and Sara** — discusses the Tegan and Sara Foundation, which established a series of grants to meet the immediate needs of the LGBTQ community amid the coronavirus crisis, and is now funding another round to benefit black-led organizations.

#### ON THE COVER

Todrick Hall photographed by Vijat Mohindra on June 1 in Los Angeles.

Left: Full look by Marco Marco.  
Right: Full look by Ashton Michael.

Peck photographed by Ramona Rosales on May 29 in Los Angeles.



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# The Market

PG. 14 UMG'S TASK FORCE ✦ PG. 18 LETTER TO WHITE MUSIC EXECUTIVES ✦ PG. 24 MANAGING THROUGH CRISIS



From left: Cardi B, Bruno Mars, Ed Sheeran, Blavatnik, Lizzo and Robert Plant.

## WVG + IPO = OMG!

Warner's stock offering previews a hot new sound for the industry: *Cha-ching!*?

BY ED CHRISTMAN and GLENN PEOPLES

**ON JUNE 3, WARNER** Music Group went public in the year's biggest stock offering, and its share price rose 39% over the next two days. The company itself didn't raise any money — the shares were sold by Len Blavatnik's conglomerate, Access Industries — but it's now worth \$15.8 billion based on its \$31 per share closing price on June 8. After selling \$1.86 billion in stock and adding dividends and management fees, Access has taken out \$3.34 billion from Warner — slightly more than the \$3.3 billion Blavatnik bought the company for in 2011.

More important, WVG's initial public offering marks the music industry's triumphant return to Wall Street after years spent searching for a sustainable

business model. The last recorded-music company to be publicly traded was also Warner Music, which Edgar Bronfman Jr. and a group of investors bought from Time Warner in 2004 for \$2.6 billion and floated on the New York Stock Exchange the following year, in a bell-ringing ceremony that featured Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page playing the riff from "Whole Lotta Love."

At the time, the hot new technology was ringtones, and global recorded-music revenue was still plummeting — it declined 27.8% from \$20.5 billion in 2004 to \$14.8 billion in 2011, when Blavatnik's Access bought Warner. Since then, global recorded-music revenue has risen 36.5% to \$20.3 billion, while Warner's value has risen 379%. The biggest change may have been op-

timism about the future of streaming.

That optimism is radically reshaping assumptions about the value of music assets. Six months ago, industry observers questioned whether Chinese technology giant Tencent had overspent by committing to buy a 10% stake in Universal Music Group for \$3.3 billion in a deal that valued the entire company at an eye-popping \$33 billion. When the deal closed, that valuation was 24.9 times UMG's 2019 earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization.

Judging by Warner's value after its first four days of trading, however, one could make the case that Tencent might actually have underpaid. War-

ner's enterprise value peaked at 26.8 times its trailing 12-month EBITDA of \$755 million (\$34.76 per share on June 5), which could set a tone for future deals that a major music company can be worth 20 to 25 times EBITDA — on par with most public entertainment companies, according to data gathered by New York University finance professor Aswath Damodaran. (It was reported that Tencent planned

to be an anchor investor in Warner, with a 10% stake in the IPO.)

In the bleak days, when Access bought Warner at a price-to-EBITDA ratio of 9.6 — and even when Warner bought Parlophone Records at a ratio of 7.4

**\$15.8B**

**WARNER MUSIC GROUP'S WORTH, BASED ON ITS \$31 PER SHARE CLOSING PRICE ON JUNE 8.**

● FORMER BMI EXECUTIVE **JODY WILLIAMS** FORMED PUBLISHER JODY WILLIAMS SONGS, A JOINT VENTURE WITH WARNER CHAPPELL NASHVILLE. ● THE BBC NAMED **TIM DAVIE** DIRECTOR GENERAL.



in 2013 — investors had little interest in recorded music and publishing. Now, with Goldman Sachs predicting recorded-music revenue will be worth \$75 billion in 2030 — a 12% compound annual growth rate — investors want in.

Other investors might feel Warner's potential is limited because it's so tightly controlled (Blavatnik still owns 81% if the underwriters exercise their option of the publicly traded Class B shares, which have 99% of the voting rights), and some institutional investors aren't interested in companies where they can't influence management. While Access cashed out 15% of its equity and the IPO didn't raise money for Warner, "that might be a minor quibble," not a red flag, says Hal Vogel, a longtime music industry analyst who runs Vogel Capital Management. Over the long term, he says, "the industry has turned upward, and I don't see any real problems for the business model going forward."

Warner's stock offering comes as outrage mounts over police brutality and social injustice — on June 2, a day before the IPO, Warner canceled business as usual to support #TheShow-MustBePaused (see page 24), whose founders note the recorded-music industry was built largely by black artists. (Many of those artists were ripped off by labels, and there have been calls to pay them or their families back royalties as reparations.) On June 3, Warner and Blavatnik's foundation announced they would donate \$100 million to support social justice and fight racism.

Warner could also be hurt by the

continuing pandemic. In May, the company said its revenue in April fell nearly 12% to \$294 million from \$335 million in the prior year. During financial roadshows for potential investors leading up to the IPO, Warner didn't project economic performance for 2020 and instead forecast the company will produce \$1 billion in EBITDA in 2021, according to sources.

So far, at least, Warner's immediate future looks secure. As of March 31, it had \$484 million in cash and cash equivalents and \$300 million in an untapped revolving credit facility. Its EBITDA is high enough to make Warner one of the few public companies that plans to continue paying out dividends during the financial downturn.

During Warner's roadshow, management also told investors it plans to focus on profit margin, according to a Wall Street analyst familiar with Warner. While the company's operating income before depreciation and amortization was \$625 million in the year ended Sept. 30, 2019 — which gives it a margin of 13.9% — it plans to become more circumspect about making investments. However, its next quarterly earnings report — expected in July — will show a one-time, \$400 million expense related to a change in accounting for share-based compensation.

Given the enthusiasm for music stocks, investors are likely to shrug off such a paper loss, according to the analyst. "These investors will want to hold for long term — some of them feel it is at least a \$40 stock," says the analyst. "They are betting on a secular growth story from the industry." **B**

**379%**

**THE RISE IN WARNER'S VALUE SINCE BLAVATNIK'S ACCESS INDUSTRIES BOUGHT THE COMPANY IN 2011.**

**MARKET WATCH**

**19.52B**

↓ 0.2%

**TOTAL ON-DEMAND STREAMS WEEK OVER WEEK**

Number of audio and video on-demand streams for the week ending June 4.

**14.11M**

↓ 0.6%

**ALBUM CONSUMPTION UNITS WEEK OVER WEEK**

Album sales plus track-equivalent albums plus streaming-equivalent albums for the week ending June 4.

**402.7B**

↓ 8.7%

**TOTAL ON-DEMAND STREAMS YEAR OVER YEAR TO DATE**

Number of audio and video streams for 2020 so far over the same period in 2019.



Habtemariam (left) and Harleston

**'A REAL OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE'**

**UMG SOCIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE CO-CHAIRS ETHIOPIA HABTEMARIAM AND JEFF HARLESTON TALK ABOUT HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN TAKE ON RACISM**

BY GAIL MITCHELL

**T**HE WEEK AFTER George Floyd's killing on May 25 and the protests that followed, Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment and Warner Music Group all launched multimillion-dollar initiatives to fight racism and support social justice, with pledges to curb bias endured by black artists, executives and staffers. It's not the first time the business has tried to tackle these problems. But UMG executive vp/general counsel and Def Jam interim chairman/CEO Jeff Harleston believes that this effort will lead to real, sustained change.

"The particular ingredients that have gone into where we are now have created more opportunity," says Harleston, who UMG just announced will co-chair the company's Task Force for Meaningful Change with Motown Records president and Capitol Music Group executive vp Ethiopia Habtemariam. "Certainly, the black community is saying this has gone way too far — but now others are also saying this is enough. I believe in long-term sustained change, but I [also] respect and understand the need to act immediately. That combination is very potent in creating this current opportunity."

UMG was the first major label to offer details about its social justice initiative, and Habtemariam hopes that puts it in a position to "lead the change" across the industry. As she and Harleston said in a June 4 company memo: "We are charged with reviewing the company's commitment to addressing and promoting tolerance, equality and elimination of bias within UMG, the music community and the world at large."

One important part of the task force's plan is holding UMG itself accountable to recruit, retain and promote a diverse workforce. "We're not above looking at ourselves," says Harleston. "How can we improve in providing more opportunities for black executives to grow into leadership positions? How can we create the best version of Universal with respect to equality, diversity and inclusion?"

The plan's first phase also involves further donations and action, facilitated by a \$25 million fund with a focus on immediate- and long-term goals for charitable giving; encouraging equality, bias and inclusion efforts in UMG offices worldwide; affecting public policy; working with business partners on these issues; and developing educational and creative programming on racial equality. The work will involve a 30-member team of employees from across the company's labels and international offices, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Latin America and Africa.

As they helped create UMG's strategy, Habtemariam says it was imperative to "lock arms" with everyone from top executives down, challenging task force members to get perspectives from artists, business partners and junior staffers. "We walked into this knowing we had to allow every voice to be heard," she says. "We're not taking this lightly; the experiences of the last several months have been traumatic for everyone."

"Over the years, there have been a number of conversations about what the music business can do," says Habtemariam. "Now we're doing a lot of listening and recognizing that this is a real opportunity for change." **B**



leadership is essential.

Margi Cheske



Andy Serrao



Sig Sigworth



John Strohm







# Dear White Music Executives

We've seen all the texts and posts asking, "Dear black friends, what can we do?" Well, this would be a start

You want to know what it's like to be a black executive in the music business? Here's the first major lesson you're taught: You have to work twice as hard for half the accolades of your white counterparts. Fifteen years ago, when I was starting out in the industry, this was rationalized because the overwhelming share of music industry revenue was generated from pop projects and white artists. But it was foolish of us to assume the playing field would be leveled now that Black Music dominates the streaming platforms that saved the business.

For the one or two of us who do prove to be successful time and time again, there's a head of Black Music title waiting for us. In that role, we will have to report to a white executive about our own culture. Our boss is only there to make sure we do our jobs "right." We have never had the ability to make sure they handle *their* jobs right. Later on, it may dawn on you there has never been a head of white music title given to any executive. Just imagine if there was a head of white music and that guy was black — it may sound ludicrous, but that's a much longer conversation.

Nashville has long had its own culture and infrastructure, and no one from outside the country community attempts to dictate what's culturally relevant or how to develop its talent. The same is true for Latin artists and their divisions at each major record company. But when it comes to black music, that same respect is not given. White executives with titles like head of urban music sit at the head of the table (more often than alongside us) and dictate to black executives what needs to happen in *our* music. If you can't call us the N-word in conversations, don't play us music with the N-word in it and then ask us what we think. I always cringe when a white executive plays a song with the N-word. I can't help but to ask my-

self: "Do they say it when we're not around?"

The racism we experience at a record company can be the worst we experience anywhere. Very seldom has anyone ever blatantly been racist, but that's why it hits deeper. We have to constantly check our culture at the door. Sometimes being black isn't professionally appropriate, but it sure as hell is good for the bottom line. We already know the bad qualities of the black executives who came before us are a dark cloud. We're fighting just to prove we're not like them, while knowing if we do "well," another person who looks like us will have a shot based on how we behaved. White executives don't have to pay for the sins of their predecessors. And when we realize there is a ceiling and begin to build alternative creative opportunities and businesses, we're considered shady or are flat-out shut down and labeled as "one of those guys you have to watch." In the meantime, our white counterparts are celebrated for being executives *and* managers, publishers, producers and entrepreneurs.

A powerful man in the record business recently wrote a letter saying the industry needs to spend more money on black music. We would rather give \$3 million to a new artist with no proven track record than invest in the next great black executive. This attitude has led to disproportionate investment in us. It's like you want our talent, but you don't want someone who looks like the talent to have a real voice. As soon as you are trying to sign a hot black artist, you call all the black employees into the room to act like we're friends, to show the artist you are "down." If only that artist knew you won't speak to us again till the next time a new hot act shows up. So we're left with no choice but to go out and create our own companies and break several artists before we can be seen as a worthy investment. Will the next

person to run Def Jam be black? Who is being groomed to sit in that seat? It should be someone who is of the culture and doesn't have a different agenda.

We're having these conversations with one another on a daily basis. The issue is that most of us haven't had the professional success that would afford us the opportunity to speak honestly with our white counterparts. We don't want to be punished for being honest. Hell, I don't want to be punished for what I'm saying right now; I wouldn't have said anything if the question wasn't asked. But if we want to change the systematic racism in any field, we need to first change the system and make it equal and allow us to run the culture we create the same way country music and Latin music do.

This letter is asking for nothing more than a permission slip. We're asking for permission to lead our culture. We're hoping someone white gives us a chance to be leaders in a community we have to live within. Nothing will make us feel safer than seeing someone who looks like us, understands us and speaks our language at the top of a company. Someone who realizes that the true power is the transference of that power to the culture creators. Someone who wants to develop the next batch of people that looks like them and who wants to leave black culture and music in a better place than it was left before them. That's something we all dream of.

If this letter offends anyone, I respectfully ask you to attempt to remove your privilege and read it again. We've seen all the texts and posts asking, "Dear black friends, what can we do?" Well, this is a start. ■

*This letter, written by a major-label executive who has worked at all three major record companies, has been circulating through the industry.*



From one EMPIRE to another



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CEO  
PAPER ROUTE EMPIRE





Mawson (left) and Millett photographed June 2 at TaP Music in London.

FROM THE DESK OF

# BEN MAWSON & ED MILLETT

Co-Founders/Co-CEOs,  
TaP Music

BY LYNDSEY HAVENS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY BEX DAY

**A**T THE END OF MARCH, THE TAP Music team gathered virtually — calling in from New York, Los Angeles, London and elsewhere — to celebrate the release of Dua Lipa’s highly anticipated second album, *Future Nostalgia*. The album debuted and peaked at No. 4 on the Billboard 200 (dated April 11) — and set an early precedent for how to successfully promote a project under a pandemic lockdown, including late-night performances in front of green screens and at-home photo shoots.

Two months later, on June 2 — when the industry honored #TheShowMustBePaused, an initiative to recognize and take action against police brutality following the murder of George Floyd — the team’s companywide Zoom had a far more somber tone.

Artist managers and TaP Music co-founders/co-CEOs Ben Mawson, 42, and Ed Millett, 41, held a meeting in which most of its writer and artist roster — which also includes Lana Del Rey, Ellie Goulding and Hailee Steinfeld — joined to discuss what they

all could and should do, from making donations to formulating a longer-term plan. “It’s a listening process, initially,” says Mawson from TaP’s London office. “Our next step is to equip and empower our artists to campaign where it’s appropriate and where they want to.”

Blackout Tuesday held extra significance for Mawson, a native of Perth, Australia, who worked as a lawyer before he went into management. In 2000, he spent four months working in Columbia, S.C., with death penalty defense lawyers (while on break from legal training in the United Kingdom). “That gave me a sense of the deep-rooted problems with racial injustice in America and also the criminal justice system generally,” he says.

By the late 2000s, Mawson had become a music lawyer at the London firm SSB Solicitors and was starting to negotiate Lana Del Rey out of her contract with the New York independent label 5 Points Records, as well as helping with her management. “I started thinking I needed a co-manager,” he

recalls. Around 2008, he met Millett, then at Connected Artists (managing The Kinks’ Ray Davies, among others), at the Great Escape festival in Brighton, England. By 2010, the pair launched TaP Music with Del Rey as its first client.

Within two years, Del Rey appeared as a musical guest on *Saturday Night Live* to promote her major-label debut, *Born To Die*, which peaked at No. 2 on the Billboard 200. “Lana really helped us crystallize what we wanted to do and how we wanted to approach artist development,” says Millett. “This was a time when a lot of 360 deals were starting to appear, so there was this tension of artists having to give up everything just to get a record deal. That was the kernel of [TaP] — both of us have a strong belief in artists being in control of their own career and not giving away rights easily.”

Even as TaP expands — in 2018 the company rebranded as TaP Music to better convey its scope as a global company that includes recording and publishing divisions — its emphasis on artist control remains. With 45 employees across offices in London, Los Angeles, Australia, Germany, New York, and soon to be France, Mawson assures that “the only thing we don’t want to do is become so big that we start to lose [our connectedness].”

“There are management companies out there that have a huge conglomerate of individuals, but there’s not much interplay or sharing of resources,” he adds. “We’re the right balance between big enough to be powerful and set up in enough countries to be properly global — but not so big that people don’t know who each other are.”

**Ben, you started out as a lawyer. How does that help you negotiate on behalf of artists?**

**MAWSON** As much as I hated legal training, it really helps. You don’t have to be a lawyer to be a good negotiator or understand contract law, but I definitely think it’s a strength for us as a company. We get very good deals for our clients. If you ask label lawyers who they least like talking to on the deal negotiations, I think we’re going to be quite high up that list.

**Both Lana Del Rey and Dua Lipa are signed to different labels in different regions, and some of your other artists have similar deals. Why is that?**

**MAWSON** We really believe in an international focus. With Lana, the first record deal we did for her was in Germany [with Polydor]. There are lots of important territories, and they’re all unique: France is very different from Germany, Germany is very different from Australia, and then you’ve got emerging territories like India and China. For us, true success is global success. And one of the problems with a worldwide deal is that you get a team that’s invested in that





*CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR PARTNER AND FRIEND*

***RAMON VILLA***

***PRIDE***

*/prīd/*

*noun*

a feeling or deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired.

**BILLBOARD'S PRIDE LIST**

**2020**

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home territory [where the artist signed] — but the more people that you can get directly involved in that signing, the better it is for the artist.

It can make for difficult politics, because people naturally want possession of their projects. I think we've done five or six direct deals with German labels just for that territory, because it's an important one but it's very specific. Having a team that's signed an international artist directly, as opposed to having inherited them because you signed to their parent company in America or London, we believe leads to a different approach and level of commitment from that label. Lana is the first person we did that with, and she sold more than a million of her first album in Germany alone.

**TaP Records formed as a joint venture with Universal Music Group, with TaP Publishing administered by Universal Music Publishing Group. What's next for those businesses?**

**MAWSON** [We're going to make] the record label and the publishing company as big and as successful as the management company. Me and Ed have always been so passionate about electronic music, so when we first made money from Lana, we signed two of our heroes — Chicago house pioneers Larry Heard and Robert Owens — as our first publishing clients. We're now in the process of signing a lot more writers, both on the pop and the electronic front.

**How do you know when new artists you're starting to work with are ready to talk to labels?**

**MILLETT** It's tricky to be a new artist now. It's a four-year grind with 20 to 30 strategic releases, which all have to be done as efficiently as possible.

**“IF YOU ASK LABEL LAWYERS WHO THEY LEAST LIKE TALKING TO ON DEAL NEGOTIATIONS, WE'RE GOING TO BE QUITE HIGH UP THAT LIST.”** —MAWSON

If an artist signs to a label before they know who they are and they've got to build an audience, it can almost kill their career before it starts. It's important with our team that [a new artist] can head into that system with both traction and confidence.

**How do you develop new artists right now if they can't perform live?**

**MAWSON** Certainly we can forget about intimate shows for media contacts. It's going to be about coming out with a clever online strategy. Our digital team is more important than ever — we've got five people in-house and we're always talking to new, outside entities about ways we can engage in the likes of TikTok at the moment. There's a whole range of new social media that artists need to participate in as much as they can, within the realms of



1

who they are, to help get them off the ground.

**What do you tell your artists about using TikTok?**

**MAWSON** We try to encourage, gently. It's very popular for a younger generation who are the audience for the artists, which is why it's so important.

**MILLETT** Any new artist coming through really has to be part of that.

**Has it helped you discover new talent?**

**MILLETT** We have an artist in development who came from TikTok.

**MAWSON** We actually have two. Georgia Twinn started off miming on TikTok when she was 16 and is now signed to Virgin Records in the U.K., but we also have another who is even more extraordinary in terms of numbers. Inoxia is a dancer and busker in Australia, managed out of our Sydney office. She was busking [Tones and I's] “Dance Monkey” and it went viral. She's got tons of label interest across the globe — she was flown to L.A. for a meeting. It's a whole new breed of artists.

**Some artists have had run-ins with “cancel culture.”**

**What do you tell clients about how to talk to fans?**

**MAWSON** Our artists have their own voices and autonomy to post what they want on social media, but we do provide a support network if they want to talk about something complex or sensitive. I also think it's important to recognize the mental health support they might need. Some of what goes on on social media is repulsive, and the bigger you get the harder it becomes... Dua has had a rapid rise on social media, and it has been tough at points for her to handle the trolls. Twitter is particularly brutal. Lana — it was a very different time pre-Instagram; it was blogs when she launched. And of course they're all independent, opinionated, strong-willed individuals, but we give them that freedom and help where they need it. **E**



2



3



4

1. Del Rey's Ivor Novello Award for “Video Games.” Says Mawson: “This song kicked off everything for us, and Lana, of course. We were always blown away by her multilayered talent: songwriting, singing and ideas for videos,” adding that she filmed and edited the music video herself. 2. “I remember joking with Lana's dad, Rob, that ‘Pimps Run Free’ was our company name,” recalls Mawson. “With his help, we settled on TaP, a jokey reference to the ‘thieves and pimps’ that Hunter S. Thompson references as the worst side of the music business.” 3. TaP Music sign. 4. Del Rey gifted Mawson and Millett with signed posters from this gig.





## **CONGRATULATIONS**

TO RIAA SVP, ARTIST &  
INDUSTRY RELATIONS AND  
CHIEF, WEST COAST OPERATIONS

# **JOEL FLATOW**

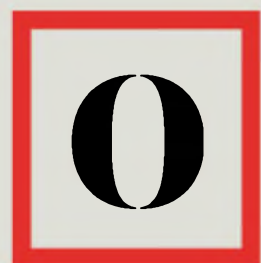
ON BEING NAMED TO BILLBOARD'S  
PRESTIGIOUS 2020 PRIDE LIST



# THE REVOLUTION WILL BE LIVE

THE MAVERICKS BEHIND #THESHOWMUSTBEPAUSED CALLED FOR A DAY OF RECKONING — AND THE INDUSTRY LISTENED. HERE'S HOW MUSIC'S FEARLESS NEW LEADERS PLAN TO FLEX THEIR POWER NEXT — AND PUSH THE BUSINESS FORWARD

BY GAIL MITCHELL // PHOTOGRAPHED BY FLO NGALA



**O**n Tuesday, June 2, two young black women pushed the pause button on the multibillion-dollar music industry — and remarkably, it ground to a halt.

Tired of the racial injustice they saw both on the streets and in the halls of companies profiting from black music, former colleagues and rising music executives Brianna Agyemang, 32, and Jamila Thomas, 35, had been on the phone with each other the Friday before (May 29) in their New York apartments, contemplating taking a day off from work to process it all. Outside their windows, protests were growing as public outrage mounted over the latest tragedy — the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer. And as the two women mulled over their own personal plans, they started thinking bigger — much bigger — deciding before they hung up that a day of reflection and conversation was urgent not just for themselves but for the entire music industry.

So Brooklyn native Agyemang and her Bronx-bred neighbor Thomas quickly designed a graphic and cobbled together a website that they launched that Sunday (May 31) for their new movement, which they dubbed #TheShowMustBePaused. Their message, printed in stark white letters against a black background: “Our mission is to hold the industry at large, including major corporations + their partners who benefit from the efforts, struggles and successes of Black people accountable ... It is the obligation of these

entities to protect and empower the Black communities that have made them disproportionately wealthy in ways that are measurable and transparent.”

Agyemang and Thomas then enlisted their network of colleagues and friends to spread the word on social media, spurring a flurry of plans both inside the music business and out to observe what some supporters began calling “Blackout Tuesday” and sending many companies scrambling to figure out how to participate. While Agyemang and Thomas hosted their own virtual summit, drawing 1,500 attendees, the three major record labels — Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment and Warner Music Group — called off their normal operations and organized workshops and discussions for their employees instead. Streaming services, radio stations and artists lent support as well. Apple Music canceled its Beats 1 schedule and offered a radio stream featuring the best in black music; Spotify added an eight-minute, 46-second track of silence in select playlists and podcasts in remembrance of how long Floyd was suffocated.

In an insular industry where white men still occupy most of the top corporate jobs, Thomas and Agyemang’s bold and wildly successful call to action suggests that up-and-coming executives like them have more power to change the business than their job titles might imply — and they say they’re prepared to keep using it. Steadfastly declaring they’ll be fighting for racial equity alongside the black music community for the long haul, the friends are now focused on what they’re calling phase two

of their effort to “hold the music industry accountable and transparent in its practices across representation, social responsibility and holistic compensation as it pertains to its black artists, partners and staff,” as they explain in their new mission statement, which they updated June 11.

“We’re taking it one day at a time,” says Thomas, who is senior director of marketing at Atlantic Records. “No one thought they could black out the industry, but they couldn’t keep Brianna and me from trying.”

Adds Agyemang, senior artist campaign manager at Apple’s artist-services division, Platoon: “We’re the least expected, but we’re here for a reason — and we’re not going away.”

They talked to *Billboard* about what went right, what went wrong and what’s next.

#### How did the idea for #TheShowMustBePaused come about?

**BRIANNA AGYEMANG** We had found out about George Floyd’s killing, after those of Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery, at the hands of police. It was just a really heavy week for the black community. And people still had to work. It didn’t seem like anyone had a chance to really take in what was happening in the middle of the coronavirus, which was also attacking the black community disproportionately. It was just a lot while trying to keep the show moving. So I called Jamila that Friday and said we should take the day off, that it’s not business as usual. Then we came up with the tagline #TheShowMustBePaused and some graphics.

**JAMILA THOMAS** Brianna was saying, “No, I’m serious. I’m really tired.” And



Agyemang (left) and Thomas photographed June 7 at Ode to Babel in Brooklyn.

I said, “I am too.” I felt it was OK if we took a break to reset. And it was super important that we did it together. Then we started hitting up friends who were asking if they should share this privately or publicly. So we decided as friends to share it publicly, like, “What are we hiding for? We’re going to stand up for a day off to regroup and reset.”

**AGYEMANG** As our friends began posting, it spread like wildfire. Then people started reaching out, asking, “OK, where and when do we want to pause?” It just kind of centered ourselves as a community. We wanted to make sure that if people were willing to take that pause along with





us that we — if they were asking what they could do on Tuesday — would help provide them with things to do. So we went into planning mode.

**THOMAS** We immediately realized that we had to step up to the plate, because now we had called everyone to the carpet and they wanted to know what was next.

**Was it your idea for participants to post the solid black box on Blackout Tuesday?**

**AGYEMANG** No. Our graphic copy explained the reason for the music business blackout. And at the bottom was the hashtag #TheShowMustBePaused.

That was always our hashtag. But it was like the game of telephone: Things get muddled in the communication. People started calling it Blackout Tuesday and also #TheShowMustBePaused. Others would use the Pause tag but also include #BlackLivesMatter. At some point between Monday night and Tuesday morning, people thought that a plain black box was supposed to be posted with the Black Lives Matter tag. That caused confusion because it was also pushing down vital information for the Black Lives Matter movement. That was never our intent, never any part of our directives. The goal was not to mute ourselves. The goal was to take a break

from your daily nine-to-five duties to refocus and recenter. And that meant that you could take a pause and just breathe. Or take a moment to think or use that time to focus on what you could do within your community to make a change and help make progress as well.

**Such high-profile artists as Lizzo and Lil Nas X were among the critics. How did that feel?**

**THOMAS** It was a little frustrating because our intent was pure, coming from a place of concern for the black community. People were sending me screenshots of things like people adding another D to the

end of the word “paused.” People move so fast online. So we quickly took action to tell people about things they could do on Tuesday to help. We had to double down and tell our friends that we wanted them to communicate where people could donate, where they could march, pray or speak to a therapist. We had put together information for the summit we were holding that day. We wanted to let people know that now that we have you here, we want to talk to you all. That this wasn’t a date to be silent.

**AGYEMANG** It was also the primary voting day for various cities, so we made sure to message that. We couldn’t control the black box going crazy, but we knew we



could control our messaging. So we doubled down on that. As for the negative responses to the blackout, we kept our focus on the positive. We literally stopped major companies for a day to come up with plans on how to help the black community and move forward. It has been a success thus far, and it has only been a week.

We're just going to continue to move in a positive direction.

### What happened at the summit you organized?

**THOMAS** We held three different discussions during that one day. We reached out to people directly, sending them invitations to join us for a community conversation.

The turnout was overwhelming, with nearly 1,500 people joining overall, from top-level executives, artists and lawyers to interns. The idea was to talk to everyone about developing a realistic plan for moving forward.

**AGYEMANG** There was a great group of women that came to us at the beginning and went right into helping mode. We now have a core committee because of those women as well. We're talking the whole nine, with representatives from the major labels, [digital service providers], agencies, managers, songwriters, producers, coordinators and assistants ... everyone who is a partner in this music space.

### Who are some of the women working on your core committee?

**AGYEMANG** There's Karlie Hustle, who handles artist relations at Apple Music. Kristen Fraser founded her own agency called PVT. Kristen was actually the first one to reach out to us. There's also Rachelle Jean-Louis, a music supervisor [*The Lovebirds*] and artist manager for Victoria Monét and others. We also have Tanece Moore, an Atlantic staff member. She's one of the youngest voices on the team, as we're making sure to include the next generation coming in at the entry level.

### What did the summit conversations address?

**THOMAS** Urban artists occupy most of the music charts, and we celebrate the genres [R&B/hip-hop] at industry events and the Grammys. But when that community takes a hit, it seems like it's every man for himself. You can post something if you want. Or you can donate. But there's never a united front. Progress is needed in the work space, and progress is needed in the streets. There's no better time to do it than now, because the country is literally in a moment of transition. And music has to be at the forefront of that because of its influence. It starts



Agyemang

with us working together. All those partners coming together on that call and blacking out on Tuesday was the first time that has ever happened. If we can just keep that same spirit going, then change will come.

### Do you think top-level music executives will move beyond lip service this time?

**AGYEMANG** The conversations were done in a safe space because we wanted to make sure people felt comfortable talking, being vulnerable and sharing their feelings or providing solutions and ideas. I wished we had had more time to talk that day. What I loved most is that it felt very positive. While we do have things that need to change, it didn't feel like it was impossible based on those conversations. It definitely feels more like a whole music community now than I will say it felt in the past.

**THOMAS** After the summit, there were so many announcements from labels and other companies. I felt inspired from this. I didn't think people would be so open and honest on Zoom, because you don't know if it's safe on the internet to talk about how you're dealing with racism in the workplace. You would want to know that you wouldn't get your hands slapped tomorrow after the blackout for joining the summit. So it was important that there was no sharing on Instagram of who was on, no posts of photos. You want them to come back to the table. The goal was to welcome people into the house the first time and let them know the door is always open. This was just the baseline. We can't wait to see what happens. So many people want to jump into what's next. They're ready.

### Did anything surprising come out of the discussions?

**THOMAS** Some of the men were kind of skeptical. They didn't know if this was a label plan or what. But afterward, several of them — including a label head and a top-level [digital service provider] executive — let us know that they want us to be able to fight this wholeheartedly. That they're protecting us at all costs, so don't feel distracted or worried about backlash; that we should go into this with a clear conscience and be leaders. That was surprising, because not everybody's willing

to put themselves on the line. Brianna and I stepped forward first as the faces, and as people become more comfortable, we have no problem in sharing the moment because we're not doing any of this alone. For them to say, "We're going to protect you, sisters," warmed my heart.

**AGYEMANG** It's a different level of confidence when a black man tells you that you are protected — that touches our core. It's also great to have these companies reaching out to ask how they can help make sure our efforts are aligned throughout the process, because I think everyone's realizing that some things need to happen now. But these heads are also very aware that it is a long-term plan. It's going to take years, and transparency is vital. We're just happy that they're open to the conversation because I know that we're the least expected [to be here], but we're here for a reason — and we're not going away.

### So what does phase two look like?

**THOMAS** We're formalizing various committees as we divide the organization into two branches. One branch will focus on social justice and systemic racism ... from the boardroom to the boulevard. The other branch has to do with restructuring the organization within music industry companies



Thomas

to gain more room for growth opportunities for black people.

**AGYEMANG** Someone recently told me, "Don't try to boil the ocean." So that's part of the reason why we wanted to split everything into committees. We can't fix everything, and we're also new to this activism life. (*Laughs.*) But we also want to make sure that we use the talents and strengths within our community to be effective.

### What's the time frame for the phase two rollout?

**THOMAS** ASAP. There are some immediate, concrete actions that we would like to have happen sooner rather than later. This is an election year, and it's so important to address voting.

### As part of the long-term plan, were retroactive royalties to compensate black artists discussed?

**THOMAS** That was one of the proposals that artists mentioned during the summit. It's at the top of their list. A lot of them have also reached out to work directly on that committee with us.

### Was Republic's announcement to eliminate the term "urban music" discussed at the summit?

**AGYEMANG** That's definitely not something we anticipated coming out of the forum. But it seems like a great step toward progress. We would love to also know a little more about what the change means, like how it will actually affect the day-to-day in the building. How does it affect the artists? Will it now be "hip-hop and R&B," or just "black music"? I would just like to know what that means for them as a company and how they see that being defined moving forward. It's just one word, but it's a strong word in the music industry.

### What's the one thing you want the industry to know about #TheShowMustBePaused?

**AGYEMANG** I want people to know this came from pure emotion, anger and sadness at what was happening in the world. This was not thought out in advance at all. (*Laughs.*) It was not a march. It was not a rollout. When George Floyd died, it was like, "Here's another thing after Ahmaud Arbery, after Breonna Taylor, after COVID-19." It was a way for people to release and pause, because in the end we have to fix it and we

have to heal as a society. And we can do this by changing the future.

**THOMAS** And this isn't an ego thing. We didn't put our names on the original graphic because it's not about us. It's about a movement for all of us. We're humbled by all the support but we're also not afraid. We're assuming this leadership role, honored that people trust us to lead them to the next steps, working together as a community. 📺



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**TOMAS COOKMAN** / INDUSTRIA WORKS / NACIONAL RECORDS



## MEET THE QUARAN-QUEENS

In celebration of *Billboard's* third annual Pride Issue, several of the most influential drag queens in the industry share selfies of original looks from self-isolation, loosely inspired by Andy Warhol portraits from the 1970s and '80s. With their photos, the queens not only show how they've adapted to crafting powerful looks from home, but also offer messages of hope and calls to action amid nationwide protests over police brutality and racial inequality.



▲ *RuPaul's Drag Race* season 12 runner-up Gigi Goode shows off her look from the season's virtual finale in Los Angeles on June 1. "[Moschino creative director] Jeremy Scott was kind enough to allow me to be the first to wear this look straight off the runway," she says.



▲ Self-isolating in Paris, Texas, Shangela refers to her look on June 4 as "Pandemic Pro." "As a drag entertainer, you learn to function as a one-stop production shop," says the star of HBO's *We're Here*. "I'm the makeup artist, the hair stylist, the lighting team and the photographer."

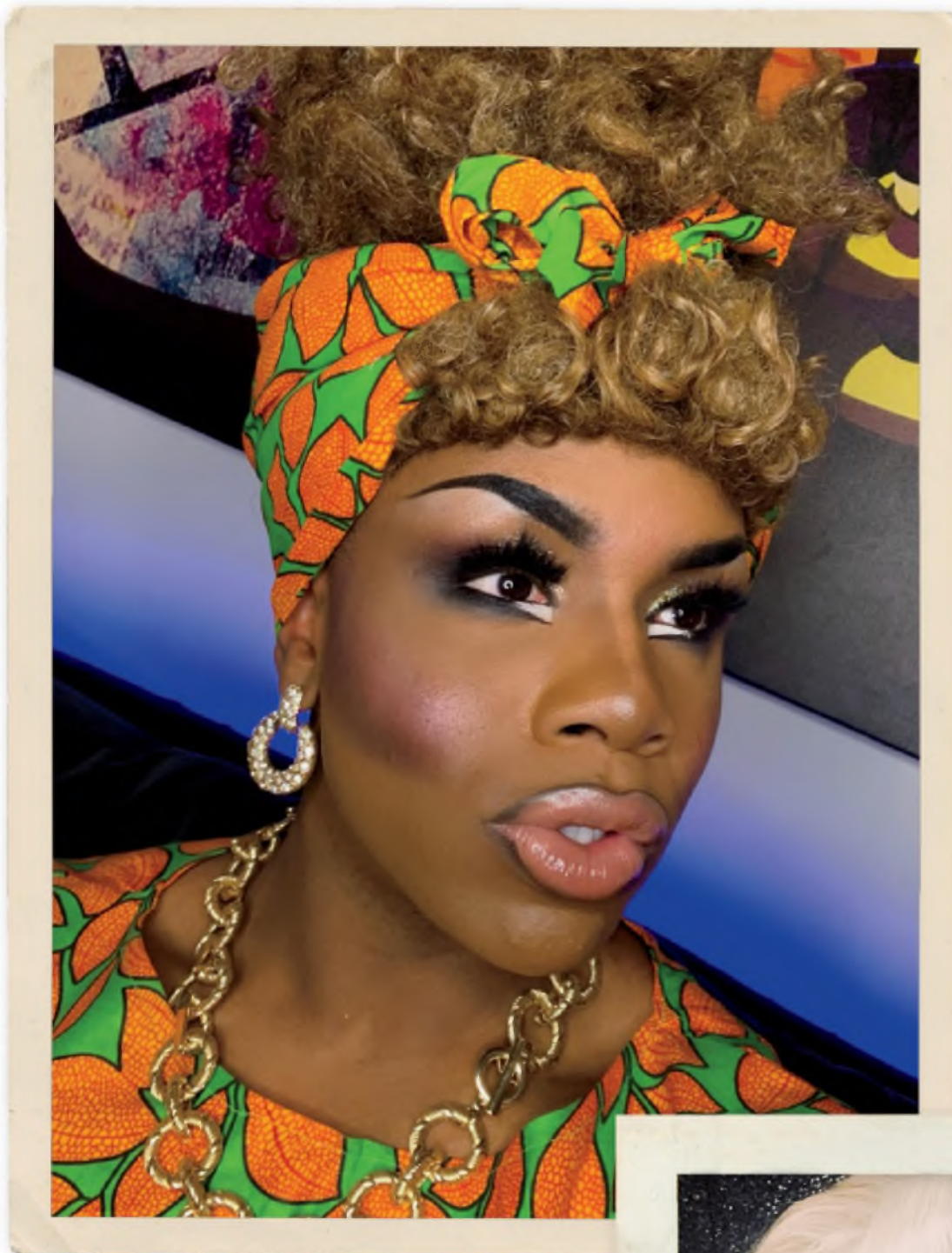


▲ "These are horrifying times," says Miz Cracker, a contestant in season five of *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars*, which premiered June 5. For her Marilyn Monroe silkscreen-inspired look, photographed in New York on June 2, she says, "I wanted to create a look full of the brightness and intimacy that we are all missing right now."





▼ Inspired by “the joy and passion of black people,” *All Stars* season four winner Monét X Change shares a vibrant look from self-isolation in Harlem on May 31. “I always have, and I always will be ‘unapologetically black,’” she says. “Full stop. Period.”



▲ *All Stars* alumna BenDeLaCreme chose a loose-fitting robe by drag fashion designer Dallas Coulter because “when our trans black siblings were tearing shit up at Stonewall, they had to dress for comfort and mobility,” she says in L.A. on June 2, adding that she’s focused “on listening, advocating and helping amplify the voices of black people.”

▼ Pictured in Brazil on June 4, Brazilian singer-songwriter and drag icon Pablo Vittar says the main inspiration for her look “was that you can play with how you look and have fun with it,” she says. “If you want to have whichever eyebrow, eyes, hair or anything, just do it! Be yourself!”



◀ *She’s Living for This* comedy series host Sherry Vine, pictured in L.A. on May 30, says that in self-isolation, “I’ve learned how to be a light technician, sound operator *and* get in touch with my inner grandma. Hence the all-natural, age-appropriate hair!”



▲ “I was having a pretty rough day emotionally,” admits *All Stars* veteran Latrice Royale from L.A. on June 4. “I poured my heart out and pleaded that we start trying to come from a place of love and empathy! Let the healing begin.”



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# The Sound

PG. 10 WHAT A COVID-19-PROOF GRAMMYS COULD LOOK LIKE ✕ PG. 12 EARLY PICKS FOR BIG FOUR CONTENDERS

## GOLDEN BOY

Why classic country artist Orville Peck might just be the unconventional best new artist nominee the academy needs

BY JOE LYNCH

PHOTOGRAPHED BY RAMONA ROSALES

Peck photographed  
May 29 in Los Angeles



**I**N JANUARY, ORVILLE PECK WAS SEATED at his first Grammy Awards after walking the red carpet with his friend Diplo. Peck recalls sitting “five rows from the front having the time of my life when I hear someone calling my name during the commercial break. I turn around, and Shania Twain is running down the aisle.”

By mid-March, the queer troubadour was recording a duet with Twain at her Las Vegas ranch just before the pandemic forced a lockdown. The session yielded the rollicking track “Legends Never Die” from Peck’s upcoming EP, *Show Pony*, out this summer on Columbia. “I’ve been the biggest Shania fan my whole life, and she was literally the last person I got to hang out with before [self-isolating],” he says over Zoom, calling from his sunny Los Angeles apartment. Even in the comfort of his own home, he’s wearing his ever-present Lone Ranger disguise that shields his identity; today, it’s in the form of black tassels dangling down from his mask. (Peck keeps his real name, age and most other personal details private.)

Earning co-signs from Diplo and Twain speaks to the wide-ranging appeal of Peck, whose sonorous voice has garnered comparisons to Johnny Cash’s baritone and whose lyrics evoke the widescreen Westerns of old Hollywood. Peck’s self-produced debut album, *Pony*, arrived in March 2019 on Sub Pop, but by that December, he signed a new recording contract with Columbia. Since, he has performed the album’s breakout track, “Dead of Night,” on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*; was booked for first-time slots at Coachella and Stagecoach (both of which are postponed); and is slated to open for labelmate Harry Styles’ Harryween shows this October.

Now, following a buzzy career launch and while gearing up for the release of his major-label debut, which should arrive before the Grammys’ eligibility period ends, Peck could be a dark horse contender for best new artist at the 2021 ceremony. His team submitted him in two Americana categories last

year to no avail, but with backing from Columbia this time — which at the 2020 ceremony had Lil Nas X and Rosalía up for best new artist — there could be a similar push for Peck. “Having some recognition on a level like that?” he says. “Anybody would be lying to say they would not be thrilled.”

Peck always knew he wanted to perform, feeling “drawn to the theatricality of country stars” from the 1970s. “Gram Parsons used to wear the most incredible Nudie suits — Liberace could never,” he says. “Porter Wagoner came off fairly conservative [but wore] crazy bedazzled outfits ... while singing about holding back tears and heartbreak. The combination of all those things to me is a gay person’s dream. It’s drama. It’s bold.” And though he says he has been “making music practically my whole life,” it wasn’t until the late-2010s birth of his Peck persona in Toronto that he went all-in on country. “I had it ingrained that I had to work toward something that was employable or acceptable,” he says. “It’s the opposite of what you need to do as an artist.”

Peck started creating his own brand of queer camp for the Wild West. *Show Pony* continues the narrative, but with added “dark flair” best heard on his gender-bending reinvention of “Fancy,” the 1969 feminist anthem by Bobbie Gentry. The EP’s visuals are similarly theatrical: In the clip for lead single “Summertime,” he trades his leather jacket for a flower-laden shirt after getting pinned down by vines with a mind of their own; meanwhile, “No Glory in the West” depicts Peck as a solitary cowboy dancing around a bonfire in the snow-covered mountains. It’s a sublime mixture of the heartfelt and the ridiculous that could only arrive through a distinctly queer lens. (As novelist Christopher Isherwood wrote about camp in 1954: “You can’t camp about something



you don’t take seriously. You’re not making fun of it, you’re making fun out of it.”) Peck is so committed that he even caked his wall with old-timey “Wanted” and “Reward” posters ahead of a virtual Oculus gig.

“Without sounding cliché and pretentious, I genuinely try to make music that is important to me,” he says. “As long as the sincerity is there, it gives you the freedom to play it any way you want. It allows you to take it to a world of camp or theatricality.”

It has paid off so far, as his 35 million total U.S. streams (according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data) prove, but will it translate to a Grammy nod? A country act hasn’t won best new artist since Zac Brown Band in 2010, but Peck’s appreciation for and commitment to the genre’s traditional roots might get him there — or at least help round out those in the running. Either way, it’s nothing Peck is too hung up about. As he says, creating his persona “was the first step toward being the artist I always wanted to be.” **B**

## COMING UP NEXT...

THE EXPANSION OF THE BEST NEW ARTIST CATEGORY FROM FIVE NOMINEES TO EIGHT IN 2018 HAS ALLOWED FOR LESS-PREDICTABLE PICKS TO SNEAK IN. LAST YEAR, CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED AND NOT EASILY RADIO-FORMATTED ACTS LIKE BLACK PUMAS, TANK & THE BANGAS AND YOLA SCORED A NOD, AND THIS DECEMBER, THESE FIVE LEFT-FIELD CANDIDATES COULD, TOO



**CHIKA**

The Alabama rapper’s major-label debut EP, *Industry Games* (Warner), focuses on her refusal to kowtow to commercial expectations and landed her a slot on NPR’s *Tiny Desk* series.



**LIDO PIMIENTA**

A Polaris Music Prize winner, the Colombian-Canadian’s second album, *Miss Colombia* (ANTI-), brought her Spanish-language electro-pop to American audiences.



**MOSES SUMNEY**

After this experimental indie artist promoted his 2020 double album, *græ* (Jagjaguwar), with a U.S. TV debut on *Late Night With Stephen Colbert*, it hit No. 28 on *Billboard*’s Album Sales chart.



**RINA SAWAYAMA**

The Japanese-British alt-pop sensation released one of 2020’s most exciting debuts, the retro-leaning and future-looking *Sawayama* (Dirty Hit) — and increased her passionate internet following.



**PHOEBE BRIDGERS**

Before releasing her highly anticipated second solo album, *Punisher* (Dead Oceans), the indie-rock collaborator on full-length projects with Conor Oberst, Lucy Dacus and Julien Baker.

—ANDREW UNTERBERGER



Frank Sinatra became the first artist to win album of the year in consecutive years, for *September of My Years* (1965) and *A Man and His Music* (1966).





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# PANDEMIC-PROOFING THE GRAMMY AWARDS

The 2021 ceremony will indeed take place — but what exactly will it look like?

BY MELINDA NEWMAN

**T**HE SHOW WILL GO ON. That's the word from Recording Academy chair and interim president/CEO Harvey Mason Jr. about the 63rd annual Grammy Awards, slated to take place Jan. 31, 2021. Less certain, in the age of the coronavirus, are all of the other particulars, including whether the ceremony will air live from Los Angeles' Staples Center as planned.

Mason says he is in "constant communication" with Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti's office, medical advisers, network

partner CBS, the venue and executive producer Ben Winston regarding the latest updates that inform the reopening process. California is currently in stage two — and concert venues in the state do not reopen until stage four.

"Our current plan is to hold [Jan. 31] as our date for the show," says Mason. "We'll make a determination as we get closer as to what type of show we'll have, whether it's a traditional live show with an audience or minus an audience, or maybe there's a third or fourth option. We are developing all of them simultaneously so that when we

have to make a decision, we are not behind in our planning." Mason says a final decision must be made in October to allow for time for designing the show.


Winston, who is taking the helm for the first time following Ken Ehrlich's 40-year run, has "an energy that has been really exciting to work with," says Mason. "He's also being very flexible and creative around how this show might look based on the different possibilities."

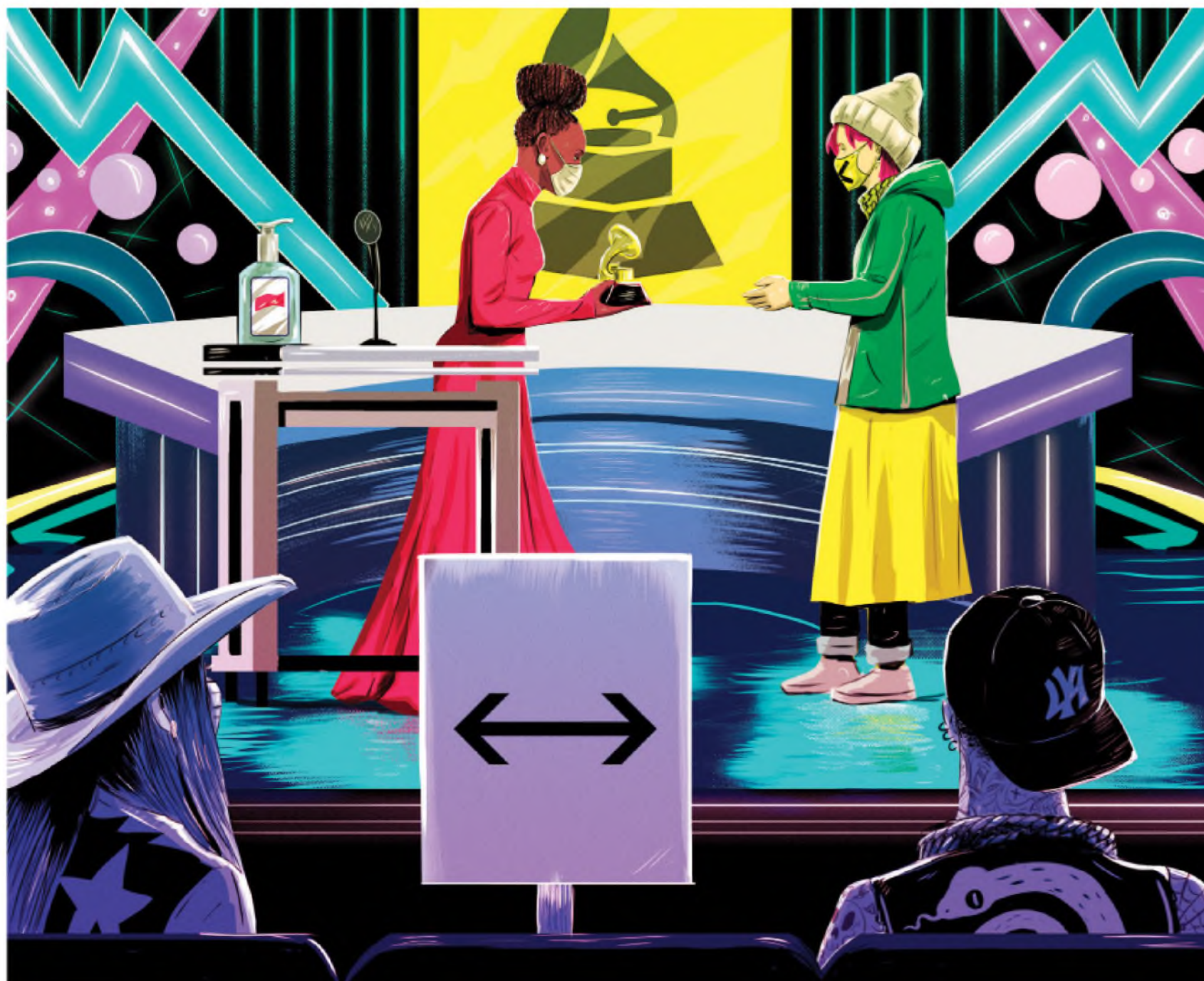
Mason says that when unconfirmed reports surfaced that the Academy Awards (which are slated for Feb. 28, 2021) may be

postponed, it gave him pause. "It gave me a second to think, 'Is a [delay] something that we should be doing?' But I realized it's a different situation," he says. "I had also already spent a lot of time talking to heads of labels, managers, artists, attorneys and the streaming companies, and there was definitely more music being released because artists aren't touring and they want to put product out. I had a good feeling that we weren't going to delay." (The Grammy eligibility period is for projects released between Sept. 1, 2019, and Aug. 31, 2020.)

Come December, when the nominations are revealed, they may reflect the efforts of the Recording Academy to diversify voting membership by actively soliciting younger voters, female voters and voters of color. "The more diverse our membership is, the more diverse our nominees are," says Mason. "And the more diverse our nominees are, the more diverse our winners are. It is definitely a trickle-down system that we're aware of. It's very, very important to me."

Already, the Grammys will feature changes in a number of categories, including best new artist, where the track maximum has been eliminated (previously, an artist who had released 30 tracks or more was not eligible). In other key changes, the academy has renamed or redefined categories in the R&B, rap and Latin fields to better reflect the musical landscape.

"These latest changes to our rules [are] part of a new chapter of inclusion and transparency for the academy," says Mason. "Because the Grammy Awards reflect what's happening in music, we work to evolve the awards process every year to meet the growing needs of all music-makers." As the academy enters a new chapter — which Mason has helmed since January, when the organization's then-new president/CEO, Deborah Dugan, was placed on administrative leave before her official dismissal on March 2 — he says, "We look forward to continuing to work with the music industry to drive positive change." 



**Bobbie Gentry** became the first act to receive nominations in each of the Big Four categories in one year, sweeping the 1968 ceremony.



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# THE EARLY BIG FOUR BUZZ

When the nominations for the 63rd annual Grammy Awards — slated for Jan. 31, 2021 — are announced later this year, Post Malone, The Weeknd, Harry Styles, Dua Lipa, Roddy Ricch and Maren Morris all have a good chance of appearing in both of the highest-profile categories: album and record of the year. Now, with less than three months left in the eligibility period (which began Sept. 1, 2019, and will end Aug. 31), *Billboard* takes a look at the potential Big Four nominees, listed in descending order of their likelihood **BY PAUL GREIN**



From left: Apple, Styles, Lipa, The Weeknd, Post Malone, Ricch and Combs.

## ALBUM OF THE YEAR

No country albums were nominated in this category last year, but that's likely to change this time around. In fact, it's possible that more than one country release will receive nods for the first time in Grammy history

### BEST BETS

#### Post Malone

##### *Hollywood's Bleeding*

The genre-blurring star's previous album, *beerbongs & bentleys*, was an album of the year nominee in 2018. This LP, Post Malone's third, topped the Billboard 200 for five nonconsecutive weeks, longer than any other album in this eligibility year so far.

#### The Weeknd

##### *After Hours*

The R&B artist's 2015 album, *Beauty Behind the Madness*, was nominated for album of the year — but two years later, his follow-up, *Starboy*, was passed over. Now, The Weeknd has another shot with his fourth LP, *After Hours*, which spent its first four weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard 200.

#### Fiona Apple

##### *Fetch the Bolt Cutters*

Apple's fifth album reached No. 4 on the Billboard 200 (just one spot below her 2012 album, *The Idler Wheel...*). Apple, who released her first album in 1996, was nominated for best new artist at the 1998 ceremony, but hasn't been recognized in any of the other general-field categories since.

#### Harry Styles

##### *Fine Line*

Styles has yet to receive a Grammy nomination as a solo artist or as a member of One Direction. But *Fine Line*, his second solo release, not only spent its first two weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 but also prompted Stevie Nicks to tweet: "Way to go H~ it is your *Rumours*." (That Fleetwood Mac classic won album of the year in 1978.)

### GOOD CHANCE

#### Dua Lipa

##### *Future Nostalgia*

The British singer won two Grammys, including best new artist, at the 2019 ceremony. This album, her second, reached No. 4 on the Billboard 200 — Lipa's best showing to date — and was praised for its smooth rollout despite arriving in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic.

#### Luke Combs

##### *What You See Is What You Get*

Combs' second full-length album topped the Billboard 200 for one week and the Top Country Albums chart for 20 nonconsecutive weeks and counting. Combs has previously received two Grammy nominations, including best new artist, which he lost to Lipa.

#### Roddy Ricch

##### *Please Excuse Me for Being Antisocial*

Roddy Ricch's debut album — which boasted featured artists such as Gunna, Meek Mill and Ty Dolla \$ign — topped the Billboard 200 for four nonconsecutive weeks, confirming his status as a rap star in the making.

#### The Highwomen

##### *The Highwomen*

All members of this supergroup — Brandi Carlile, Natalie Hemby, Maren Morris and Amanda Shires — have won Grammys on their own. If nominated as The Highwomen, they would be the second all-female collaboration to earn an AOTY nod; 33 years ago, Dolly Parton, Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris' *Trio* became the first. *The Highwomen* reached No. 1 on Top Country Albums and No. 10 on the Billboard 200.

### WITHIN REACH

Lady Gaga and Dixie Chicks are both three-time nominees in this category, and either or both acts could easily receive nods with their latest albums. Gaga's *Chromatica* is her first proper album in four years, since *A Star Is Born* heightened and broadened her stardom, while Dixie Chicks' *Gaslighter*, expected this summer, is the country trio's first album in 14 years. Additional hip-hop contenders include Lil Uzi Vert's *Eternal Atake*, DaBaby's *Kirk*, Megan Thee Stallion's *Suga* and Mac Miller's posthumous *Circles*, while Miranda Lambert's *Wildcard* and Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit's *Reunions* are other potential country contenders.

In 1969, Glen Campbell's *By the Time I Get To Phoenix*, became the first country LP to win album of the year.





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“...quickly becoming a force  
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From left: Beyoncé, Megan Thee Stallion, Morris and Eilish.

## RECORD OF THE YEAR

Though two of the 2019 nominees — Bon Iver’s “Hey, Ma” and H.E.R.’s “Hard Place” — didn’t crack the Hot 100, the other six were all top three hits. Of this year’s likely nominees, four have reached No. 1 so far

### BEST BETS

#### The Weeknd “Blinding Lights”

This would be The Weeknd’s second record of the year nod after he was nominated in 2015 for “Can’t Feel My Face.” “Lights” logged four nonconsecutive weeks atop the Billboard Hot 100.

#### Post Malone “Circles”

Post Malone was nominated two years ago for “rockstar” (featuring 21 Savage) and this past year for “Sunflower” with Swae Lee. If nominated again, he would become the fourth artist in Grammy history — following Frank Sinatra, Roberta Flack and Steve Winwood — to make it into this category three years running.

#### Billie Eilish “everything i wanted”

This was Eilish’s second top 10 hit on the Hot 100 (it peaked at No. 8) and would be her second record of the year nod in a row after winning in January for “bad guy.” Now, Eilish could become the first artist to be nominated in this category the year after winning since U2 nearly two decades ago.

#### Maren Morris “The Bones”

This would be Morris’ second record of the year nod, but the first on her own. (She was nominated in 2018 for “The Middle,” her dance-pop hit with Zedd and Grey.) With “The Bones,” which has logged 14 weeks at No. 1 on Hot Country Songs, Morris could join Taylor Swift on the short list of artists who have received ROTY nominations for both pop and country records.

### WITHIN REACH

Drake, who has been nominated twice in this category, has two strong candidates with his track “Toosie Slide” and a feature on Future’s “Life Is Good”; Lady Gaga, who is also a two-time nominee in this category, could be back in the running with “Stupid Love” or her new Ariana Grande collaboration, “Rain on Me”; Travis Scott’s “Highest in the Room,” which entered the Hot 100 at No. 1, is also a top contender; as is Doja Cat’s “Say So,” which reached No. 1 on the Hot 100 thanks to a remix featuring Nicki Minaj.

### GOOD CHANCE

#### Harry Styles “Adore You”

This was Styles’ second top 10 solo hit on the Billboard Hot 100, peaking at No. 6, following his solo debut single, “Sign of the Times.”

#### Roddy Ricch “The Box”

This hip-hop smash remained at No. 1 on the Hot 100 for 11 consecutive weeks, the longest reign atop the chart so far this year.

#### Megan Thee Stallion feat. Beyoncé “Savage Remix”

This collaboration also hit No. 1 on the Hot 100. If nominated, it would be the third all-female collab to receive a record of the year nomination following Brandy & Monica’s “The Boy Is Mine” (1998) and the Iggy Azalea-Charli XCX team-up “Fancy” (2014). This would be Beyoncé’s sixth nomination in this category, surpassing Barbra Streisand as the female artist with the most career nods.

#### Dua Lipa “Don’t Start Now”

This disco-inspired pop single reached No. 2 on the Hot 100, becoming Lipa’s highest-charting hit on the chart to date.

## SONG OF THE YEAR

There’s often overlap between nominees for record of the year (which awards artists, producers, recording engineers, mastering engineers and remixer) and song of the year (which awards songwriters) — and now, there could be plenty

### BEST BETS

#### Post Malone “Circles”

Post Malone co-wrote this Hot 100 hit with longtime collaborators Adam Feeney (who works under the moniker Frank Dukes), Billy Walsh and Louis Bell, all of whom are credited on Post Malone’s debut album, *Stoney*.

#### Billie Eilish “everything i wanted”

Eilish co-wrote this dreamlike ballad with her brother and collaborator, FINNEAS; at the 2020 ceremony, the pair won in this category for “bad guy.” Should “everything I wanted”

win, they would become the first songwriters to score back-to-back awards in this category.

#### Maren Morris “The Bones”

Morris co-wrote this country slow jam with Jimmy Robbins and Laura Veltz, both of whom she worked with on her 2016 major-label debut album, *Hero*.

#### Harry Styles “Adore You”

Styles co-wrote this smash with Amy Allen, Tyler Johnson and Thomas Hull (aka Kid Harpoon). The latter two also co-wrote and co-produced a handful of tracks on Styles’ self-titled solo debut album.

### GOOD CHANCE

#### The Weeknd “Blinding Lights”

The Weeknd co-wrote this hit with Ahmad Balshe (aka Belly), Jason Quenneville (Da-Heala), Max Martin and Oscar Holter. Martin, who also co-wrote Lady Gaga’s “Stupid Love,” is a four-time nominee in this category.

#### Selena Gomez “Lose You To Love Me”

Gomez co-wrote this ballad with Julia Michaels and Justin Tranter, along with Mattias Larsson and Robin Fredriksson (Mattman & Robin).

Michaels and Tranter were nominated in this category three years ago for co-writing Michaels’ hit “Issues.”

#### Alicia Keys “Underdog”

Keys — who won in this category in 2001 for “Fallin’” — co-wrote “Underdog” with Johnny McDaid, Ed Sheeran, Amy Wadge, Jonny Coffey and Foy Vance.

#### Dixie Chicks “Gaslighter”

The trio, who co-wrote this track with Jack Antonoff, won in this category at the 2007 ceremony for co-writing “Not Ready To Make Nice.”

### WITHIN REACH

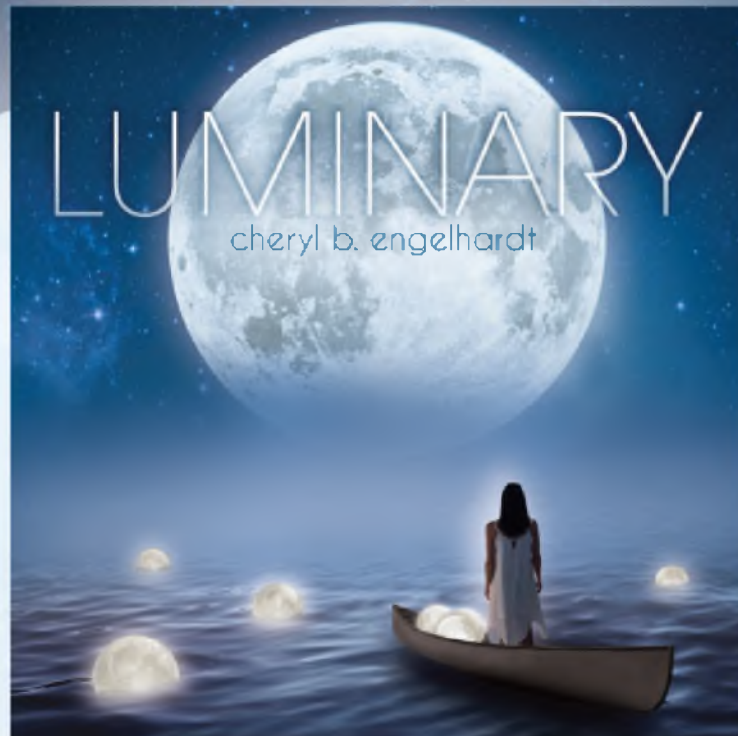
Bob Dylan may be in the conversation for “Murder Most Foul,” his nearly 17-minute song about President John F. Kennedy’s assassination, which would be Dylan’s first nomination in this category. Ozan Yildirim (aka OZ) has two strong candidates with Travis Scott’s “Highest in the Room” (OZ and Scott co-wrote the song with Nik Frascona and Mike Dean) and Future featuring Drake’s “Life Is Good” (co-written with the artists, plus Darius Hill and Mathias Liyew). Meanwhile, Beyoncé and Terius Nash (aka The-Dream), who won in this category 11 years ago for co-writing “Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It),” could make it back to the finals with “Savage Remix” (co-written with Megan Pete [aka Megan Thee Stallion], Anthony White [J. White], Bobby Session Jr., Derrick Milano, Jordan Kyle Lanier Thorpe [Pardison Fontaine], Shawn Carter [JAY-Z] and Brittany Hazzard [Starrh]).

Roberta Flack became the first artist to win record of the year consecutively, for “The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face” (1972) and “Killing Me Softly With His Song” (1973).





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From left: Rex Orange County, Doja Cat, Tones and I, Walker, Address and Gray.

## BEST NEW ARTIST

Though breakout stars including Roddy Ricch, DaBaby, The Highwomen and The Scotts are all ineligible for various reasons, many contenders remain

### BEST BETS

#### Megan Thee Stallion

The Houston rapper achieved a measure of prominence in 2019 with her *Fever* mixtape and rose to Hot 100-topping stardom in 2020. Under the old rules, she would have been ineligible (she had released over 30 tracks prior to the start of the current eligibility year), but now it will be up to the screening committee to determine if her 2019 inroads should preclude a shot here this year.

#### Summer Walker

The R&B singer's debut album, *Over It*, reached No. 2 on the Billboard 200 and boasted collaborations with Drake (a 2010 best new artist nominee), Bryson Tiller and Usher — all of which landed on the Hot 100. Last November, Walker won best new artist at the Soul Train Music Awards.

#### Doja Cat

The 24-year-old singer-rapper's second album, *Hot Pink*, reached No. 9 on the Billboard 200, while its breakout single, "Say So," which later featured Nicki Minaj (a 2011 best new artist nominee) on a remix, hit No. 1 on the Hot 100.

#### Tones and I

The Australian singer's breakout hit, the quirky alt-pop "Dance Monkey," reached No. 4 on the Hot 100 (and No. 1 in many regions around the world), while her debut EP, *The Kids Are Coming*, climbed to No. 30 on the Billboard 200.

### GOOD CHANCE

#### Ingrid Andress

Following the release of Andress' debut album, *Lady Like*, which reached No. 9 on *Billboard's* Top Country Albums chart, the country singer-songwriter's debut single, "More Hearts Than Mine," reached No. 3 on Country Airplay and No. 30 on the Hot 100.

#### Gabby Barrett

Two years ago, this up-and-coming country singer finished third on *American Idol*. This April, her breakout single, "I Hope," which previews her debut album, *Goldmine* (June 19), became the first debut track by a woman to top *Billboard's* Country Streaming Songs chart.

#### Rex Orange County

Following the singer-songwriter's two self-released albums and a feature on Tyler, The Creator's 2017 album, *Flower Boy*, the English musician's third album, *Pony*, became his major-label debut on RCA and climbed to No. 3 on the Billboard 200.

#### Conan Gray

After developing a devoted following on YouTube in his early teens, Gray released his debut album, *Kid Krow*, this March. It reached No. 5 on the Billboard 200 and earned praise from Taylor Swift (a 2007 best new artist nominee) on Instagram.

### WITHIN REACH

SuperM has a chance of becoming the first K-pop group to be nominated in this category with its self-titled EP, which debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200. And, there are several strong hip-hop candidates in addition to Doja Cat, including Polo G, Saweetie, NLE Choppa and Lil Mosey — the latter two of whom are still in their teens. Several rookie hitmakers are also in the running, including hip-hop artist Arizona Zervas, whose "Roxanne" reached No. 4 on the Billboard Hot 100; Surfaces, the Texas electro-pop duo that has a current hit with "Sunday Best"; SHAED, the Washington, D.C.-based pop trio whose 2018 single "Trampoline" was a sleeper hit this year; Trevor Daniel, the Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter behind "Falling"; and Bence, a 20-year-old New Zealand singer who delivered the unintentional quarantine anthem "Supalonely" (featuring Gus Dapperton).

Lauryn Hill's 1998 LP, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, became the first hip-hop release to win album of the year.





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PRIDE 2020

# LIGHTS, CAMERA, TODRICK

HE HAS APPEARED ON BROADWAY, GONE VIRAL WITH DAZZLING MUSIC VIDEOS AND SASHAYED ALL OVER REALITY COMPETITION SHOWS. BUT TODRICK HALL IS STILL FIGHTING FOR HIS PLACE IN THE INDUSTRY, WHERE HE SAYS RACISM AND HOMOPHOBIA LINGER — WHILE OWNING UP TO HIS PAST “MISTAKES”

BY TAYLOR MIMS // PHOTOGRAPHED BY VIJAT MOHINDRA



**W**HEN THE COVID-19 pandemic brought the music industry to a near halt this spring, Todrick Hall had some ideas about how he would spend his time social distancing. He was in the process of transforming his bedroom into a scene from *The Wizard of Oz* — a favorite movie he has paid tribute to in songs and videos — and hired an artist to paint a tornado on the ceiling. He planned to turn his bed into a replica of Dorothy's house, complete with the ruby-slipped heels of the Wicked Witch of the East poking out. But in early June, as protests against police brutality and killings of unarmed black people erupted across the nation, Hall decided his energy would be better spent in the eye of the storm instead of in his own fantasy land.

He drove to downtown Los Angeles to take part in one of the many peaceful protests demanding justice for the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and others. When he got out of the car, the first thing he did was cry. "There were so many white people there with shirts that said, 'Black lives matter,'" recalls Hall, still sounding astonished a few days later. "I expected there to be a ton of black people, but I was not expecting to feel so supported by so many people who live so many different lives and represented so many colors of the rainbow."

Hall, who has built a multifaceted career as an actor, singer, choreographer and TV personality since his breakout run on *American Idol* in 2010, describes marching outside of city hall — a mask on his face, a simple "Black Lives Matter" sign in his hand — as a transformative moment. "I have traveled the world and done several Broadway shows and gotten hundreds of millions of views on YouTube, but I never felt more important in my life than I did sitting in that crowd where nobody knew who I was," says Hall, 35. "I think a lot of people are looking with stars in their eyes like, 'Oh, my gosh, this might be the moment when people will actually give me a chance at winning and surviving and being able to create a family and a legacy for myself.'"

Hall has thought a lot about that legacy he wants to build — and the obstacles he faces — not just lately, but throughout his career. As a black gay man in the entertainment industry, he is used to paving his own yellow brick road. During a FaceTime tour of his house in late May, he showed off the memorabilia that decorates his hallways: His schoolboy costume from his 2016 visual album, *Straight Outta Oz*; the thigh-high red boots from his starring role as Lola in Broadway's *Kinky Boots*; the MTV Video Music Award he accepted in 2019 alongside good friend and collaborator Taylor Swift for her star-studded "You Need To Calm Down" music video. But despite all that — plus regular appearances on competition shows like *RuPaul's Drag Race* and an enviable contact list in his phone — Hall still feels like an outsider in the industry.

"People have put me up on a pedestal and think that I am signed to a label and that I have management. I am blown away by their ignorance of how the industry works," says Hall, who is repped by Creative Artists Agency but has no music manager and releases music independently. "In the next

breath, I am flattered that my team and I have been able to make people believe that we are on that same level." It doesn't feel like so long ago that he was staging unauthorized pop-up performances around town, trying to get a break: "No one was bothering me when I was singing at the drive-through at McDonald's and when I was dancing at Target."

Hall is an unconventional celebrity: He's part old-school theater showman, part new-school internet personality, part drag queen, with a sound that draws equally from club-ready dance music and contemporary hip-hop. That makes him hard to categorize — even easy to dismiss — for those used to more traditional résumés and less openly ambitious performers. With songs like "Fag" and "I Like Boys," he's also pushing the boundaries of LGBTQ representation in a business that has historically been unwelcoming to queer people of color and bristled at out stars who came across as too showy or too sexual. "The thing that moves me the most about Todrick is that he represents the thing that my generation fought for, which is a black man who could be gay and out in the music industry," says Hall's friend Billy Porter, a Broadway veteran who has

**"WHEN THE REPRESENTATION IS THERE AND IT DOESN'T COME IN THE EXACT PACKAGE WE WISHED IT HAD BEEN IN, WE BASH THAT AS WELL."**

—HALL

garnered recent attention for his role on FX's *Pose* and his extravagant red-carpet looks. "They laughed my gay ass out of the business in the mid-'90s."

That confidence is treasured by Swift, who has publicly credited Hall with inspiring her to be more vocal about her stance on LGBTQ equality. "From day one, Todrick has always been very honest with me about his life and his experiences as a gay man of color," Swift tells *Billboard* over email. "He never holds back or smooths over conversations or topics. It's always something I've been grateful for, that he never felt the need to edit who he is around me or be a different version of himself. I think that unapologetic sense of self is also what people connect to in his work. He's just Todrick. He's never EVER going to even attempt to be anyone else."

Yet as Hall carves out his own unconventional

path through the business, sorting out what's systemic or coded bias and what's just a bumpy road can be tricky. Earlier this year, he called out German beauty brand Douglas Cosmetics for seemingly copying his thunderous house anthem "Nails, Hair, Hips, Heels" in an advertisement he called "shady"; in a statement, the company said "it was never our intention to upset him," but the slight evoked the long history of corporations profiting off the creativity of queer and black entertainers, often without credit or compensation.

At other times, he has been more direct in highlighting perceived wrongdoing. In 2019, Hall defended Swift during her public battle with music manager Scooter Braun, whom Hall accused of being "evil" based on his time as one of Braun's clients — only for one of Braun's employees to say on social media that his company had dropped Hall for allegedly stealing from and exploiting his own fans and collaborators; the back-and-forth prompted others to share or resurface allegations of nonpayment and misconduct by Hall. All the while, he has received some of his harshest criticism from members of black and queer audiences, who think he represents those communities in stereotypical or unflattering ways.

Hall still has room to develop in the music industry: Though he has toured predominantly theaters and scored hits in the dance/electronic genre, his biggest splash on *Billboard's* flagship charts was reaching No. 142 on the Billboard 200 with *Straight Outta Oz*. But as "Nails, Hair, Hips, Heels" becomes his biggest viral hit to date — it has almost 30 million YouTube views, aided by his own timely remix, "Mask, Gloves, Soap, Scrubs" — Hall is figuring out how to grow his career in an industry with no shortage of voices telling him exactly how to be.

"When I did what everybody else told me I was supposed to do, when I did it the way the homophobes told me I was supposed to do it, when I tried to be masculine enough for the world to love me, I was broke, bankrupt and unemployed," says Porter. "I'm not doing that anymore. We need to learn to love ourselves first so that we can teach the rest of the world how to treat us. That's what I did. That's what Todrick does."

**B**EFORE IT SEEMED LIKE HALL was everywhere, he felt like he belonged nowhere. He grew up in the relatively small city of Plainview, Texas, where he was often the only person of color in his dance classes or musical theater productions, and he struggled to find himself in pop culture during his formative years in the 1990s and early 2000s. "I didn't grow up around a lot of black people other than my church and my family, and so the things that I saw that were representing my race on television, I would always be like, 'I love this, but I don't identify with this because that's not me,'" says Hall. "I'm not Ne-Yo. I'm not Usher."

He describes his 2007 stint in the original Broadway production of *The Color Purple* as a kind of a crash course in being black: "I'm sure I had been proud to be black before, but being in *The Color Purple* was the first time I remember being like, 'I am so proud to be an African American performer



Full look by Marco Marco.





because only African American performers could have told a story like this.’” Yet his relationship with black culture and other black creatives has occasionally been strained. Early on in his career, a black artistic director he was working with approached him and said, “‘The worst thing you could ever be in this world is a black gay man,’” recalls Hall — an unhelpful warning about the uphill battles he might face in entertainment. “He was projecting a lot of things from his own experience onto me, but words are so powerful. It made me question if I had made the right decision by coming out and being so open.”

In recent years, critics and fellow content creators also have accused Hall of “not being black enough,” alleging that his early YouTube videos featured negative caricatures of black people and suggesting that Hall prefers to surround himself with white celebrities, due to his close ties with stars like Swift. Multiple black YouTube personalities have publicly called Hall racial slurs and accused him of “tap dancing,” a reference that suggests he is putting on an act and toning down his blackness in order to appeal to white audiences.

“I feel like oftentimes if we don’t sound like what a black person ‘should’ sound like by other people’s standards, we do start to feel like we’re not black enough,” admits Hall. “I’m on a roller coaster where sometimes I try to overcompensate and prove my blackness, and then sometimes I’m like, ‘But I don’t feel supported by my black community, so I don’t need to try to sell to them.’ I’ll just sell to whoever wants to buy my music.”

It’s not necessarily the queer community that’s buying it. Though the “Nails, Hair, Hips, Heels” video has the same cocktail of attitude, intense choreography and snappy catchphrases many pop divas are celebrated for, Hall’s peers have suggested that racism and internalized homophobia within the LGBTQ community still pose obstacles for artists like him trying to sell those same things back to them. Last year, during a panel at the *Billboard-The Hollywood Reporter* Pride Summit in West Hollywood, *RuPaul’s Drag Race* alum and musician Trixie Mattel said, “If a white blond woman was doing what Todrick Hall did, gays would fall the fuck out” — be really impressed — and Hall says he can’t disagree.

2019 was in many ways a banner year for Hall: He returned to Broadway to play the comic lead of Ogie in *Waitress* and appeared in Swift’s “You Need To Calm Down” video, a colorful call for LGBTQ equality that directed viewers to a petition urging the Senate to pass the Equality Act, an anti-discrimination bill. (It’s still with the Senate.) Yet Hall remembers the year as a difficult one personally, due to what he describes as a near-constant stream of vitriol and criticism from internet “trolls.”

Even though he co-executive-produced the “You Need To Calm Down” video, which included rounding up celebrity cameos from the likes of Laverne Cox and the cast of *Queer Eye*, there was no shortage of social media posts dismissing Hall for being “thirsty” for the A-list and allowing himself to be the “token gay black friend” for other celebrities. Those comments didn’t surprise him — “I feel like there’s a group of people who wake up every day, they yawn, and then they say, ‘What can I be upset about?’” — but the remarks bothered Hall



Jacket, shorts and boots by Marco Marco.

for a number of reasons. He thinks more pop stars should take the kind of concrete steps that Swift has to spotlight and support members of the queer community. “We have taught them how to walk in heels, we have helped them with the slang they end up using in their songs, but when they go onstage, what do they do?” asks Hall. “The people who taught them how to do it and who can really kill it on a different level are in the wings watching them, giving them a towel to dry their face off when they get offstage. That, to me, is a travesty.”

Yet those comments also stung because, even when it seems like he’s winning on his own terms — when “You Need To Calm Down” won Best Video for Good at the 2019 VMAs, Swift handed the award to Hall and let him give the acceptance speech — he often feels like he’s still doing it wrong. “It’s really hard for me sometimes because I feel that the hate I receive on the internet comes mostly from people of color and people who are part of the LGBTQ+ community,” says Hall. “It’s almost like we like

complaining about the fact that there isn’t enough representation, but then when the representation is there and it doesn’t come in the exact package or the exact size that we wished it had been in, we bash that as well.”

**W**HEN HALL MOVED TO L.A. in 2011, he made a vision board with everything he hoped to accomplish. He wanted to meet Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. He wanted to reach 1 million subscribers on YouTube. He wanted to find a manager like SB Projects founder Scooter Braun, who has made Justin Bieber and Ariana Grande household names. Hall got his wish: After his run on *American Idol*, he says Braun called him about taking him on as a client.

Hall says he was part of the SB Projects roster for the next six years, until they parted ways roughly three years ago. It did not end amicably: Last sum-



mer, Braun acquired Big Machine Label Group in a \$300 million deal that gave him ownership of most of Swift's master recordings. Swift wrote open letters in which she expressed her disapproval of the sale and claimed that Braun had belittled and bullied her throughout her career, which Braun disputed. Hall jumped to her defense and, in a tweet that SB Projects employees would immediately and vehemently refute, wrote that he had left the company "a long time ago" and believed Braun was "homophobic" and "an evil person [whose] only concern is his wealth." (SB Projects did not respond to *Billboard's* request for comment.)

Nearly a year later, Hall says he would characterize his experience with Braun differently. "I don't think that Scooter is a horrible villain the way that it may have been painted in the past — the way *I* have helped paint it in the past," he says. Hall explains that throughout his time at SB Projects he felt neglected by Braun and excluded from opportunities to connect with industry power players. He says he was asked to prove himself as a songwriter first, while other SB Projects artists, he claims, were put in sessions with hit writers and producers without similar trial periods.

"I kept being like, 'Why do I have to do this when that person doesn't? Why is my picture not up in the office? Why am I not on your Instagram? I have a lot of really cool things happening, and they're not being promoted,'" recalls Hall. "I genuinely attempted several times to talk to him from a place of love, but with my wounds from being black and gay in America, and his ego, it was difficult to get through. So I resorted to having a few Regina George moments I'm not necessarily proud of."

There are all kinds of reasons why artists might receive different attention at labels and management firms, and Hall's career was not stagnant during this time: He starred in a 2015 MTV reality show, *Todrick*, which Braun executive-produced, and he appeared on the *Billboard* charts for the first time. But like many minorities in the industry, he wonders how much of his career has been shaped by unconscious bias, and he encourages all music executives to take critical looks at their practices. "If you represent a gay artist and don't give them the same amount of attention and resources as you do your other non-gay artists," says Hall, "you and your team should take a moment and consider the reasons why."

Braun's employees have a different story about why Hall is no longer their client. In response to Hall's initial tweet about Braun, SB Projects partner Allison Kaye Scarinzi replied that his statement was "disgusting," and said SB Projects had dropped Hall as a client; the two exchanged several more tweets

about who owed money to whom — including one in which Scarinzi claimed Hall had not paid cast members from his video projects.

Scarinzi is not the only one to make such a claim. In interviews and on social media, a handful of former collaborators and crew members have accused Hall of not paying them for work on videos and shows as recently as last year. A 2018 lawsuit from a former tour manager also alleged nonpayment in addition to other claims, including sexual harassment and wrongful termination; the lawsuit was settled last year.

say that there were people that it took me a while to pay," says Hall, who adds that he has since hired a business-management team to make sure he "dotted every *i* and crossed every *t*."

"I'm so proud of the fact that I made those mistakes because they've helped me grow, and they helped me realize how I have to operate in the future," he says. "I'm not a child anymore, and people aren't going to give me passes. People are looking at me on a certain level that I have to step up to, so I don't allow those things to happen anymore."



**L**IKE EVERYONE ELSE, Hall thought the rest of his 2020 was going to look a little differently. Before the pandemic forced Pride celebrations in the United States and abroad to cancel or postpone, Hall says he was booked for 16 pride festivals around the world — opportunities he cherishes, given how few LGBTQ artists get top billing at such events. "I realized that [the queer community] has been carefully groomed to like what we like, and people have shoved the type of artists that they want us to idolize down our throats for years and years," he says. "That's not to say that those artists are not worthy of being adored. But I hope that one day we have queer artists that reach that level so we don't have to hire people to headline our Prides that don't identify as part of the queer community."

As Hall gets back to building his own Land of Oz, he's thinking about how to get to that level. In addition to readying the third installment of his *Haus Party* EP series, he's working on writing a book and a TV show. But that's just the start of his to-do list. He wants to write his own Broadway show. He wants to have a queer love song on top 40 radio. Most of all, he wants to reach EGOT status. "EGOT-ing is my ultimate goal because it would be validation: I came from a small town in Texas and, with a lot of odds stacked against me, was able to accomplish so much," he says. "But I will still feel that way as long as I am getting my work out there."

He knows those goals might seem outlandish to a lot of people. But then he thinks about his 2011 vision board,

the one with Scooter Braun on it, and remembers that almost everything else he hoped for came true, too. He did meet Mariah Carey. He did meet Beyoncé. (He has since gotten a "What Would Beyoncé Do?" tattoo on his wrist.) He did get 1 million YouTube subscribers. (Now he has 3.5 million.)

"A lot of the things that I wanted, I truly felt were impossible," says Hall. "[Many talented people I know] don't believe that they can do something because they've never seen anybody that looks like them do it before — when that's the reason why they should be doing it." □

Hall did not comment directly on the suit to *Billboard* by deadline — earlier this year, he told *Attitude* magazine, "[My fans] know that I would never intentionally do ... any of these things that are being said about me" — but he says that anyone who was not being paid was notified ahead of time about the lack of compensation. ("It was a free thing they were doing for an experience and for their résumé and connections.") He does admit, however, to being reckless with finances at times. "When I first started, there were a lot of balls dropped — never intentionally — and I will totally put my hand up and



THE  
2020

# PRIDE

LIST

For *Billboard's* second Pride List, 40 executives from across the music business share their biggest victories — and the actions they're taking to cope with the pandemic and reaffirm the Black Lives Matter movement







Carter Gregory (left) and John Geraghty, who work with pop singer Fletcher, photographed by Lindsey Byrnes on May 29 in Los Angeles.

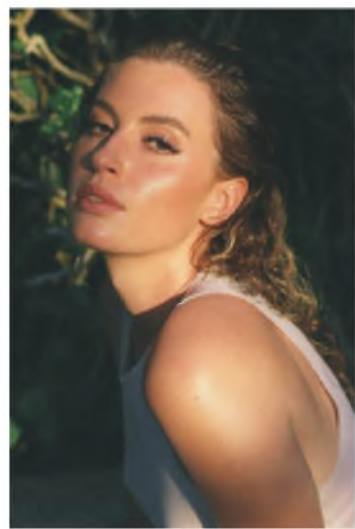


**John Geraghty**  
**Founder/artist manager**  
 JPG PROJECTS

**Carter Gregory**  
**Director of A&R**  
 CAPITOL RECORDS

When John Geraghty was 14, he entered a local singing competition called New Jersey Teen Idol. He won, but he remembers being awestruck by runner-up Cari Fletcher. “I had no idea if I had a crush on her, if I wanted to be her, or if I wanted to work with her,” he recalls. They stayed in touch over the next few years, and Geraghty watched closely as Fletcher competed on *The X Factor* in 2011 (as part of a short-lived girl group). Following her elimination on the show, Geraghty, then a college freshman, made his pitch: “I have no experience but a lot of passion, and you have a lot of potential. We should work together.”

Today, Fletcher, 26, who records under her last name, has become one of the buzziest queer pop stars, thanks to last year’s *Billboard* Hot 100-charting “Undrunk,” and Geraghty manages her with help from his “co-pilot,” Carter Gregory, who signed Fletcher to Capitol in 2018. Together, the two executives (who are both 26) are uplifting the kind of out-and-proud artist they wished they had seen growing up — and are doing so in jobs they never imagined they’d have. “I thought there were certain roles that existed for women and gay men, like being a publicist or starting as an assistant,” says Geraghty, a former *Billboard* intern. “After a while, I realized I couldn’t wait around.” Adds Gregory: “I want to open the door for other young queer kids and people of color.” Geraghty and Fletcher’s success together began even before they graduated college: Her song “War Paint” topped Spotify’s viral charts in 2015, while she was attending New York University. Yet instead of accepting the first label offer they got, they chose



Fletcher

to grow her career independently to give themselves more leverage later. Geraghty and Gregory, who met at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, made their way to Los Angeles, where Gregory managed songwriters and producers at Milk and Honey and helped arrange sessions for Fletcher. “What makes them the best team is that they’re my family first,” says Fletcher. “We’ve supported each other through a lot of crazy life transitions, from leaving home to finding ourselves — John and I came out to our parents the same week — to trying to break into the industry.”

When Gregory landed his job at Capitol, he knew it was time for Fletcher to level up. Weeks before his start date, he recalls, “I was calling in like, ‘Yes, she’s one of my best friends, but we need to sign her!’” Other labels were interested, so Fletcher, emboldened by her independent success, secured ownership of her masters as part of the deal. It also helped that Capitol is “the gayest label ever,” jokes Geraghty, with a handful of out artists

(Sam Smith, Troye Sivan, Halsey) and a staff that includes many women and queer people in leadership roles. At other labels, says Geraghty, “Fletcher was looking around the office and seeing all straight white men.”

With its sticky melody and ultra-candid lyrics, “Undrunk” quickly won over radio programmers in early 2019. Now, the trio is figuring out how to keep that momentum going: Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, Fletcher was set for an arena tour with labelmates Niall Horan and Lewis Capaldi. But thanks to its years working independently, the team isn’t afraid of the DIY approach — Fletcher filmed the video for her new single, “Bitter,” at her parents’ house — and Geraghty knows that building something from the ground up takes time: “Team Fletcher has always [said], ‘We’d rather take five years than one year if we get to be who we are and say what we want to say.’” —NOLAN FEENEY



Acerno



Aceto



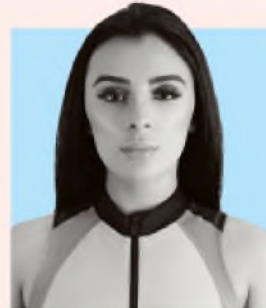
Atkins



Bontusa



Braines



Calhoun

**PJ Acerno**  
**Manager, festival talent**  
 GOLDENVOICE

All year, Acerno, 37, works with marquee and boutique festivals alike to ensure the right artists are paired with the right events, supporting queer acts along the way: A nine-year veteran of the concert promotion giant, he was a particular champion of King Princess, who in the past year graduated from clubs and theaters to main stages at Coachella, Hangout and Mo Pop.

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**Ryan Aceto**  
**Head of A&R**  
 PEG RECORDS

**Talent manager**  
 PRODUCER ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

The drag world and the music industry have never been more aligned, thanks in part to Aceto, 36, who shepherded a partnership between PEG and Warner Music Group’s Alternative Distribution Alliance in 2019. In addition to co-managing PEG’s roster of queer talent, Aceto helped PEG launch Digital Drag Fest during the pandemic, boosting clients and “helping as many LGBTQ artists and allies as possible.”

**HOW WE’RE FIGHTING RACIAL INJUSTICE**  
 “We’ve offered paid time off to peacefully protest. We’ve spoken with every client and are letting them tell us how they’d most like our help.”

**Aileen Atkins**  
**Director/associate general counsel, global head of music**  
 FACEBOOK

“Each time somebody sends a message [on] social media, there’s an opportunity to enhance that message and demonstrate how that user is feeling with music,” says Napster alum Atkins, 51, who leads the legal team that oversees music-related relationships and licensing agreements for the platform and its sister apps.

**ADVICE FOR YOUNG QUEER PROFESSIONALS**  
 “Find people and groups that can be supportive. Younger people have a completely different opportunity to share their experiences.”

**Jen Bontusa**  
**VP label and artist partnerships, Nashville**  
 INGROOVES MUSIC

After a previous decade-plus stint at In-grooves in California, Bontusa, 41, returned to the Universal-owned distribution/marketing company in a newly created role last August to launch its first Nashville outpost. “Nashville is a smaller music community than L.A. or New York,” she says, “but I’ve been blown away by the collaborative spirit.”

**IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19, THE INDUSTRY WILL**  
 “Have to diversify. Touring was such a big driver.”



## Steven Braines

Co-founder

HE.SHE.THEY./THE WEIRD & THE WONDERFUL

Braines, 38, and business partner Sophia Kearney co-founded both management company The Weird & The Wonderful (which joined forces with TaP Music in 2019) and event series, record label and fashion label He.She.They., which “queers up” venues from Ibiza to India. “In dance music, it’s harder to get booked if you’re black, trans, gay or a woman,” he says, “even though [those] people originated the genre. Our thing is to redress that balance.”

**IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19, THE INDUSTRY WILL**

“See the deals for DJs and live shows changing in the way that they’re constructed.”

## Ashley Calhoun

Senior vp/head of creative

PULSE MUSIC GROUP

“I came out a year and a half ago, so I’m new to the community,” says Calhoun, whose first Pulse signing was out hitmaker Starrak. The 29-year-old describes her job as playing “matchmaker,” which includes connecting artists, songwriters and producers in sessions; placing beats; and scouting talent. Drake’s “Toosie Slide,” produced by her client OZ, debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 in April.

**HOW WE’RE FIGHTING RACIAL INJUSTICE**

“Pulse [donated] \$100,000 to black organizations. We’ll be organizing initiatives including town halls, fundraising and voter action.”

## Michael Cariglio

Senior director of marketing

REPUBLIC RECORDS

Tiësto sent a handwritten thank-you letter to Cariglio, 28, whose campaigns helped the DJ-producer score his biggest mainstream hit to date with “Jackie Chan” (with Dzeko, Preme and Post Malone). “I like to think [I’m] the switchboard operator plugging in different pieces to make sure we’re going in the same direction,” says Cariglio, who this year is launching Out in Music, an LGBTQ networking group.

**A CAUSE I SUPPORT** “The Ali Forney Center. Homelessness in the LGBTQ community is more prevalent than you’d think.”

## Sam Carlin

U.S. head of publishing

BEGGARS MUSIC

As brands change the tone of ads amid the pandemic, Carlin, 33, has found new opportunities to place Beggars music as more serious songs enter high demand. “Before, it was a much longer process,” says Carlin, who also signed his first artist, Gia Margaret, in 2019 and is a long-time music supervisor for MTV’s *Catfish*, which he calls “the most unexpected, rewarding thing.”

**HOW WE’RE FIGHTING RACIAL INJUSTICE**

“There’s been so much internal discussion, led

by our company heads, of ways to make lasting impacts, not just surface-level change.”

## Jeff Consoletti

Founder/CEO

JJ|LA

In 2009, Consoletti was a volunteer for the LA Pride Parade and Festival. Ten years later, his company produced the sold-out event, which annually raises seven figures to support LGBTQ organizations, as well as WorldPride NYC’s Pride Island concert, headlined by Madonna and Grace Jones. Prior to South by Southwest’s cancellation this year, the 38-year-old was helping plan its first queer artist showcase.

**A CAUSE I SUPPORT** “The Point Foundation, a national organization that supports LGBTQ people going to college.”

## Tony Corey

VP marketing

ISLAND RECORDS

Corey, 38, has overseen product management

— “essentially being an artist manager, but inside a company” — for acts like Demi Lovato, Skip Marley and Jessie Reyez, whose long-awaited debut album, *Before Love Came To Kill Us*, arrived in March. Says Corey: “I can’t wait to continue the journey with her.”

**IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19, THE INDUSTRY WILL**

“Find other ways to get things done. It’s pushing everyone to not check the boxes you would normally check.”

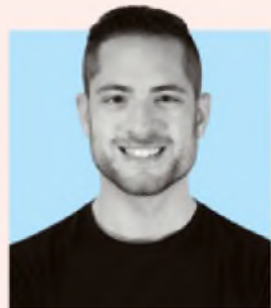
## Shane Cosme

VP marketing and global repertoire

BMG

Though Cosme, 46, develops global marketing strategies for all of BMG’s U.S.-signed artists, he’s especially proud of helping out rock star LP break big in Mexico and South America, where her 2015 song “Lost on You” recently gained immense traction: “We were able to capitalize on a viral video and turn it into a radio hit.”

**A CAUSE I SUPPORT** “Rainbow Railroad. They help our gay brothers and sisters flee countries where they are being persecuted.”



Cariglio



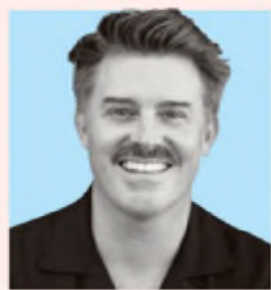
Carlin



Consoletti



Corey



Cosme

## What It’s Like To Be Out In...

# DANCEHALL

**SHUZZR**, a publicist and founder of Shuzr PR, on getting death threats and rethinking his business after coming out

**D**ancehall is from a country where the culture of homophobia is praised and embedded in its fabric. It has evolved in the past few years, but there is still violence against us. I didn’t publicly come out as bisexual until 2014, and several friends told me, “Don’t do it. You’re in a good space.” But I was like, “No, I have to find comfort within myself to move forward.”

I made the decision to write an article on my website, and it made the front page of Jamaica’s No. 1 tabloid, *The Jamaica Star*. I got a lot of support, but for two years after that, I had no clients. Nobody wanted to work with me, nobody wanted to touch me. There were death threats, online

harassment, bullying — you name it, I got it. People still refer back to that article and say, “I’d love to work with you, but the fans I have won’t tolerate me bringing you onto the team.”

Still, being out has allowed me to find more creative ways to survive in this industry. I’ve paired myself with clients who were probably not the kind of artist I would typically work with but are more tolerant. It’s easier for us to relate to each other. And whether people in Jamaica want to accept it, there is a community of LGBTQ professionals in dancehall that support each other.

You also have people who aren’t even in the community who are allies. There are people who have shown me



nothing but love. I think it’s time for them to bring out even more support — I don’t want you to just be allies for me right now; I want you to be allies for all of us, all year-round. Let’s speak on the issues. Let’s call this stuff out.

—AS TOLD TO STEPHEN DAW



# ASK A GAY ICON!

How can you better support LGBTQ people in the industry?

**Easy:** Share your networks and make introductions — so *Billboard* is pairing young queer artists with allies they admire to ask for career advice



Here, indie rock darling **JAY SOM** gets studio tips from pop favorite **CARLY RAE JEPSEN**



How much freedom do you have when working with producers and co-writers? How do you know if a collaborator is right for you?



I'm lucky that I'm able to take full rein of my creative process. I have a team to help suggest like-minded collaborators, and I [scout] different talents as well. I travel a lot when I'm writing, and it's very important to me that a friendship is established before we dive in. Good music comes from enjoying the process of making it.

How has the pandemic impacted your work style?

I've been working on tunes from Zoom parties with my longtime collaborator Tavish Crowe. It's a much slower process, but the time and the space allow for some cool breakthroughs.

**Nick D'Angiolillo**  
VP nontraditional licensing  
CONCORD

D'Angiolillo's job is to find Concord opportunities "that may otherwise be overlooked" — from getting Isaac Hayes' music on the Univoice language-learning app to a Denzel Curry concert streamed via MelodyVR. "In my career history, I have, maybe unfairly, given more weight to LGBTQ projects that didn't have the budget of a major Hollywood studio," says the 33-year-old. "It was important to support their art."

**A CAUSE I SUPPORT** "The Gay Men's Chorus of Tampa Bay [Fla.]. It provides an outlet for all gay men to socialize without prejudice [toward] age, class or social status."



D'Angiolillo



Davidman

**Amy Davidman**  
Booking agent

Bay Area-based Davidman, 42, has been shaping the careers of a range of emerging electronic and Latin artists as an agent for over a decade. For queer producer Madame Gandhi, Davidman booked a tour exclusively with female-identifying promoters and venue owners. "Concertgoers specifically mentioned that they could feel a difference," she says.

**ADVICE FOR YOUNG QUEER PROFESSIONALS** "Find a mentor who occupies a space you identify with and who represents where you want to see yourself in the future."



Farrey



Flatow

**John Farrey**  
Label relations manager  
AMAZON MUSIC

Farrey, 30, led the team behind Amazon Music HD, the streaming service's high-quality audio tier, and unveiled PROUD, a playlist that spotlights LGBTQ talent and has exclusive originals from stars like Years & Years. As a founding member and current co-lead of Amazon Music's Diversity Action Team, he stresses the business value of inclusion: "Our industry benefits from a diversity of voices."

**A CAUSE I SUPPORT** "TeenTix. I'm on the board of directors. In high school, it gave me the opportunity to explore art on my own terms."



Flott



Furman

**Joel Flatow**  
Senior vp artist and industry relations/chief of West Coast operations  
RIAA

Flatow "takes the awe that people and policymakers feel for music" and turns it into laws that protect its creators. This year, he helped amend California's AB5 gig-economy law to protect music professionals and worked with industry leaders and California politicians to ensure that coronavirus relief funds get into musicians' hands.

**A CAUSE I SUPPORT** "The Ally Coalition, [which] addresses the immediate needs of LGBTQ youth, particularly in this current climate."



Hardy



Henderson

**Jasmine Flott**  
Creative licensing director  
TERRORBIRD MEDIA

In 2019, Terrorbird had one of its "strongest years in synch licensing" yet, says Flott, 37, but the work that's especially important to her is what's happening amid the pandemic: "It's rewarding to be able to tell indie artists that they have money coming in when a lot of money sources aren't available."

**IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19, THE INDUSTRY WILL** "Push through. How many times before have we heard the line, 'This is the end of the industry as we know it'? The same innovative spirit has carried us through before and will again."

**Jess Furman**  
VP sync strategy  
BIG NOISE MUSIC GROUP  
Co-founder/president  
MOTION CREATIVE

After joining Big Noise last year, Furman, 37, built up the artist-development firm's synch division and co-founded Out Sessions, a writing camp for LGBTQ songwriters that's now a part of Motion Creative, a nonprofit that empowers underrepresented communities in the industry. "Being able to be who I am makes me fearless," she says.

**HOW WE'RE FIGHTING RACIAL INJUSTICE** "I participated in a call with over 200 synch licensing professionals [to assemble] directives aimed at holding local municipalities accountable."

**Murdoc Hardy**  
Digital marketing manager  
INTERSCOPE GEFGEN A&M

Hardy, 26, "grew up on stan Twitter" and now guides the social media presence of acts like Ari Lennox and Mustard, whose Instagram (2.4 million followers) Hardy helped transform from "photos of Ferraris" to video-heavy posts that highlighted the producer's personality. "To fully grow your brand and get these Nike deals and water sponsorships," says Hardy, "you have to show there's someone worth investing in."

**MY SIDE HUSTLE** "I'm a classically trained fine artist — oil paintings, drawing, charcoal sketches."

**Kei Henderson**  
Co-founder/head of marketing  
SINCETHE80S

With six Grammy Award nods for clients this year, Henderson, 35, is studiously shaping the label, management and publishing firm into a next-generation powerhouse. Rappers Earth-Gang and J.I.D contributed to Dreamville's platinum *Revenge of the Dreamers III* compilation, while songwriter NJOMZA worked on Ariana Grande's *thank u, next*.

**HOW WE'RE FIGHTING RACIAL INJUSTICE** "We've always been very focused on honoring



# MUSIC IS UNIVERSAL



UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP



ASK A GAY ICON!

Pop-punk phenom **MADDIE ROSS** — whose debut LP, *Never Have I Ever*, was named one of the best rock albums of 2019 by *Billboard* — gets relationship wisdom from **ALANIS MORISSETTE**



I recently experienced an earth-shattering breakup for the first time. What have you learned from writing about heartbreak?



[It has] been super cathartic for me. I noticed that I was leaning on songwriting to purge and move the energy, and it certainly did. But it didn't afford any real healing. And that was because if I was wounded in a relationship, I could see that I would have to heal *in* a relationship, not just run to a studio every time to write about it, hoping I could "write it away" somehow.

How do you stay in touch with friends and family on tour?

I am a texter, through and through. Sometimes I write long catch-up texts, a la *War and Peace*, other times it's pure comedic back-and-forths. But nothing is better than sitting right across from my loved ones, so there is a lot of time spent figuring out when they can visit.



Hernández



Hershorn



Heyliger

the past while paving our future and investing quite a bit into mentorship — which the generations after us truly need.”

**Lázaro Hernández**  
VP A&R, U.S. Latin and Latin America  
WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC

Last year, the Miami native, 37, signed reggaetón upstarts Jhay Cortez and Lunay to the publishing titan, whose Latin LGBTQ roster includes Brazilian drag star Pablo Vittar, Chilean pop singer Javiera Mena and Dominican singer-songwriter Rita Indiana. “I didn’t want to lose any opportunities because of anybody’s biases,” he says of being out professionally, “but [being different] taught me to see different angles early on.”

**A CAUSE I SUPPORT** “The UN Refugee Agency. It’s a cause close to me because my mom is Cuban and a Marielita [someone who fled Cuba during the 1980 mass emigration].”

**Preston Hershorn**  
Creator product marketing lead  
INSTAGRAM

Before COVID-19 made livestreaming from home common, Hershorn, 32, led the business and marketing strategies around tools like Instagram Live and IGTV, giving stars such as

Billie Eilish and Selena Gomez new outlets to connect with fans. “Now artists are using the platform as a tool to bring levity during [the pandemic],” he says.

**MY SIDE HUSTLE** “Last year I launched a series of concerts in the Bay Area, Queer Beats, [to bring] queer artists into queer spaces.”

**Mike Heyliger**  
Director of national sales  
THE ORCHARD

Heyliger, who co-ran The Orchard’s first Pride event last June, managed physical sales for such titles as BTS’ gold-certified *Map of the Soul: Persona* and Kelsea Ballerini’s recent self-titled album. “I’m a queer black guy working K-pop, metal, Latin, country,” says Heyliger, 44. “I wouldn’t want someone to think, ‘Since you’re queer, you should only be working with dance music.’”

**MY SIDE HUSTLE** “I started a podcast, *Detoxicity*, talking to people about communication, empathy and rewriting the code for what’s considered masculine.”

**Sean Hill**  
Director of tour marketing, music  
UTA

Tasked with promoting clients across all

What It’s Like To Be Out In...

METAL

Judas Priest frontman **ROB HALFORD** on “hiding” among hard rockers and the homophobia behind the anti-disco movement



Obviously there have been gay metalheads since metal was invented, but [back in the 1970s and '80s] we were invisible. After a Priest show, a lot of us went back to working at the Ford plant or a Walgreens or working as a schoolteacher, but we were all gay. We had to hide, basically.

There was a time when disco music was huge, and for a lot of gay people and minorities, that was our music. We embraced it and danced to it, and we expressed ourselves with joy. But then there was a rock DJ who had [Disco Demolition Night in 1979 in Chicago] where you

went to a stadium and burned disco music. The vast majority of the people who burned that music were rockers and metalheads, and I remember that was really upsetting. It was all wrapped up in the psychosis of “disco music is for gays, disco music is for black people.”

I did receive some very moving letters [when I came out publicly in 1998 on MTV]: “Because of you, I was able to tell my mom and dad.” And that hits you in the heart. It was tremendously powerful, cathartic and uplifting. Those are the wonderful psychological effects of coming out as a gay man. I did get some

pushback letters too: “I’m never going to buy a Priest record again,” like it was the band’s fault that I’m gay — that Trump-ist mentality of attack, attack, attack! I’d like to feel that younger gay metalheads hopefully have it a little bit better than I did as a teenager growing up, when people like me were treated like pariahs. The journey is still a very long one and miles away from completion, but we’re not hiding anymore.

—AS TOLD TO JOE LYNCH



territories outside of North and South America, Hill, 34, has helped build buzz around some of the world's biggest live shows, including the Jonas Brothers' *Happiness Begins* trek, which sold over 180,000 tickets in Europe.

"How we presented the tour creatively was something I was really proud of," he says.

**HOW WE'RE FIGHTING RACIAL INJUSTICE** "My colleagues and I marched in Parliament Square in London in support of Black Lives Matter. We'll continue to be a part of that conversation."

### Tammy Hurt

Vice chair, board of trustees

RECORDING ACADEMY

Managing partner

PLACEMENT MUSIC

Atlanta-based Hurt, 44, who owns boutique production/licensing company Placement Music, feels it's her duty to ensure the LGBTQ community is well represented in the industry. At the Recording Academy, that means co-chairing its membership committee and "creating a more diverse and inclusive" group of voters.

**MY SIDE HUSTLE** "Behind the drum kit! Sonic Rebel's *We Made This With Our Hands* is an instrumental EP mashing up electronic, rock and hip-hop elements, scheduled for fall 2020."

### Kenneth Jarvis III

A&R manager

REPUBLIC RECORDS

Jarvis, 26, is constantly "connecting the dots" between artists and Republic's A&R team by identifying emerging talent and coordinating A-list projects like Ariana Grande's *thank u, next*. He also aims to empower LGBTQ people professionally: "I wasn't sure if [my sexuality] was something I should be open about, but when you're walking into rooms with creatives, they can see when you're not comfortable."

**HOW WE'RE FIGHTING RACIAL INJUSTICE** "The Republic Records Action Committee [launched] to support various social justice issues. We also took a step back and self-audited our company's culture through town halls."

### Clara Kim

Executive vp/general counsel

ASCAP

Kim oversaw all of the contracts that helped ASCAP bring in a record \$1.27 billion in revenue in 2019, including agreements with companies like Spotify, NBC and Pandora. Amid the chaos of the pandemic — "Everything has to be rethought," she says — she also helped ASCAP form a coalition with performing rights organizations and other groups to ensure Congress' relief efforts benefited songwriters.

**ADVICE FOR YOUNG QUEER PROFESSIONALS**

"Figure out ways to help your bosses, and stand out in the contributions you make. Turn them into your advocates."



Hill



Hurt



Jarvis



Kim



Ayadi (left) and Moya

### Elissa Ayadi

Senior vp fan engagement and digital marketing

WARNER RECORDS

### Spencer Moya

Senior director, digital marketing

INTERSCOPE GEFLEN A&M

Growing up queer in the small town of Upton, Mass., Elissa Ayadi says, "I found my tribe online." Today, she and Spencer Moya help major-label artists find their own digital communities: With Ayadi's guidance and analytics, Dua Lipa has boosted her Instagram following exponentially since 2016, while Moya's best practices helped Billie Eilish amass an audience of over 76 million followers across platforms. Moya, 31, says the support he received from female friends as a gay teen in Albuquerque, N.M., inspired him to champion female artists at work: "I love helping them tell their stories."

Lately, the two Los Angeles-based digital gurus have become their labels' in-house experts on TikTok, the short-form video app owned by Chinese tech firm ByteDance that is increasingly fueling hits through memes and dance challenges — and shaping queer culture in unexpected ways.

Moya initially downloaded TikTok for fun, but he soon realized the app's easy song integration had the potential to break new tracks. "Music is really embedded into its DNA," he says, "and the dance aspect lends itself to content that's easily replicated." Ayadi, meanwhile, already had experience promoting Warner artists on Musical.ly, the lip-syncing video app that ByteDance acquired and merged with TikTok in 2018. "It was entertaining to watch kids create something wholly unique," she says.

In the wake of TikTok success stories like Lil Nas X and Lizzo, Moya says every

project he works on now includes a TikTok strategy, whether that means in-app advertising, partnering with creators to spark music-based trends — which multiple sources tell *Billboard* typically costs a label low to mid-five figures — or teaching artists to create eye-catching content themselves. Ayadi has worked with influencers to promote challenges with music from Saweetie and Ali Gatie, and she recently had success with the #full180 video trend, in which users acted out leaving awkward situations to Lipa's "Don't Start Now." Videos using the hashtag have generated over 3.1 billion views, undoubtedly helping the song reach No. 2 on the Billboard Hot 100 in March.

TikTok has had a bumpy relationship with the LGBTQ community: In multiple instances last year, users in the United States and abroad accused the app of taking down videos that were made by LGBTQ creators or featured pro-LGBTQ content; TikTok has said it was the unintended consequence of blanket measures to curb bullying content. Yet thanks to its free-flowing, anything-goes mentality, TikTok is fostering a supportive community for queer youth, who use the app to share coming-out experiences, explore gender expression in makeup tutorials and otherwise find themselves through dance and humor. "I wish I had something like this when I was a teenager," says Moya. "I might have come out much sooner."

One of Ayadi's favorite TikTok trends happened organically: Earlier this year, young women started posting videos set to Warner artist Jason Derulo's "Get Ugly," lip-syncing to the lyric "This girl straight and this girl not" as a way to come out to friends and loved ones — a method as heartfelt as it is refreshingly nonchalant. "It's empowering for it to be just a facet of who you are," says Ayadi. "That's something I've been waiting for since I was a kid."

—TATIANA CIRISANO



**ASK A GAY ICON!**

Self-described “spook-pop” songwriter-producer **GLASS BATTLES** gets a pep talk from **Garbage** frontwoman **SHIRLEY MANSON**



This industry can often be overwhelming. How do you maintain perspective and not sweat the small stuff?



Once you accept that anxiety is part and parcel of life and often just a trick your brain likes to play on you, it makes handling the anxiety a whole lot easier. My sister [told me to] ask myself, when experiencing a bout of anxiety, whether I believed I would be worrying about whatever I was worrying about in three months. If the answer was no, then I could afford not to worry about it. Works every time.

There's often pressure to sound or look a certain way in order to be well-liked. How do you shake that off?

There's enormous value in standing out in a crowd. If you make something that you value yourself, then it might be of value to someone else. The more you sound and look different from everybody else, the more unique you are.

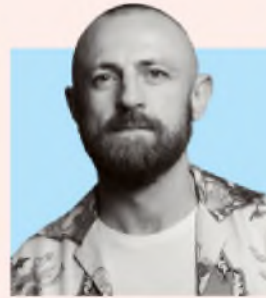
**Eric Mackay**  
Executive vp global digital strategy  
WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC

In two years, Mackay, 39, has grown the global strategy team from two to a five-person “small but mighty” squad in the United States and the United Kingdom (with frequent collaborators in Asia) — and contributed to a 17% boost in first-quarter digital revenue. “I’m really proud of building a forward-thinking and inclusive team,” says Mackay.

**MY SIDE HUSTLE** “My drag queen tarot-card-reading alter ego hasn’t made an appearance for a while, as I’ve been busy working on a tech project to change the face of the music industry. So, no biggie!”

**Brad Minor**  
Senior vp brand marketing, creative and communications  
PANDORA

Minor, 41, helped roll out Pandora’s revamped mobile experience last December with its “most ambitious marketing campaign ever,” including a livestreamed Halsey concert that accompanied a silent disco in New York’s Times Square. “When reviewing creative,” says



Mackay



Minor



Porch

Minor, “I always ask, ‘Would a human say this?’ We all want to be seen and heard — the best creative acknowledges that truth.”

**ADVICE FOR YOUNG QUEER PROFESSIONALS** “Fully embrace and express your full humanity. We are so fortunate to work in a field built on a foundation of expression and connection.”

**Antonious Porch**  
General counsel  
SOUNDCLOUD

Porch’s job comes down to three pillars: “Managing risk, protecting [intellectual property] and enhancing our brand,” says the Chicago native, who oversaw the acquisition of distribution company Repost Network in 2019, which gave SoundCloud’s 25 million-plus creators access to exclusive analytics and content-protection tools. “Giving artists the chance to shape their career and make money on SoundCloud is what the company has always been about,” he says.

**HOW WE’RE FIGHTING RACIAL INJUSTICE** “On Blackout Tuesday, we paused our promotional activities and [amplified] the message through our platform and social media. We’ll continue to do all we can to ensure all voices for change are heard.”

What It’s Like To Be Out In...

CLASSICAL

**MAGGIE HESKIN** — senior director of editorial at Boosey & Hawkes — on finding a community among LGBTQ trailblazers

In the past, classical music was very conservative. I got into this business in the ’90s, when it was the end of the old world. It was mostly older straight white men with white hair as far as I could tell. I started at [sheet-music publisher] Carl Fischer, and it was hard for someone like me to be out without getting a look or two, which did happen. I was very sensitive to that, so I wouldn’t go around tooting whom I was with. I wasn’t very brave.

You had people like Leonard Bernstein that were gay and were open, but that was not the norm. There were composers who really broke down some barriers, like David Del Tredici, who is very open and

always has been — sometimes, I think, to the detriment of his career. He’s definitely someone I look up to and speak to often. Ned Rorem is another I really admire: He’s 96 and has always been an out gay man. These names are real inspirations to me, and they are my community.

I was walking on Broadway a few months ago and bumped into [composer-performer] Meredith Monk, whose music I’ve worked on. She has been a mentor as an out lesbian in this crazy, conservative classical music world, and it was just so nice to tell her, “My partner and I finally got married a few years ago.”

It’s incredible how my life has changed completely in 20 years.



Compared with back in 2000, when I came out professionally, I’m so much more of a calm person in the workplace. I come in now talking about a movie I watched with my wife and think nothing of it because I’m surrounded by gay people, transgender people. It’s very refreshing how diverse the office gets within the LGBTQ world. I wish Bernstein was alive today to witness this.

—AS TOLD TO GLENN ROWLEY



**PROUD  
TO STAND  
TOGETHER**



**Eric Mackay**

**EVEN WHEN  
WE'RE APART**



**Elissa Ayadi**



**Laz Hernandez**

**WITH LOVE  
FROM WMG**





**ASK A GAY ICON!**

Electro-pop breakout **L DEVINE**, who also hosts the podcast *L Devine's Growing Pains*, gets self-care tips from Sporty Spice, aka **MELANIE C**



How do you think the industry's support for artists' mental health has changed? How do you take care of yourself in a demanding field?



I feel very relieved that as a society we are much more open, but there is a long way to go. In the '90s, we had zero help. I know some managements that have been around for a long time have never really changed the way they look after — or don't look after — their artists. There should be a responsibility to take care of young artists. They could end up not being well enough to work or have any longevity in their career. I've learned the importance of looking after my own health: I try to eat well, exercise, practice mindfulness and have regular therapy. That can be challenging when you're on the road, but I try where I can.

What would you say to your teenage self?

Try not to be influenced by the people around you and change too much. It's important to be influenced and inspired in a positive way, but [if you] follow your instincts, you should never really go too far wrong.

**Stephanie Ruyle**  
Executive vp/head of licensing  
ASCAP

For Ruyle, bringing in over \$900 million in domestic licensing revenue in 2019 involves more than closing deals with TV networks and streaming services — it means staying in touch with songwriters and publishing members at the heart of the organization. “My day-to-day is largely spent talking to licensees to identify issues,” she says. “It makes the work very rewarding.”

**HOW WE'RE FIGHTING RACIAL INJUSTICE**  
“Helping connect people with resources on [ascap.com/fightforchange](http://ascap.com/fightforchange) [and] matching donations to Color for Change and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.”



Ruyle

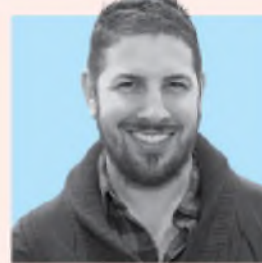


Shouneyia

**Alexa Shouneyia**  
Manager of digital marketing  
COLUMBIA RECORDS

In addition to developing campaigns for artists like the Dixie Chicks, HAIM and Hozier, *Billboard* alumna Shouneyia, 27, led the digital strategy for King Princess' debut album, *Cheap Queen*, which included helping the queer singer-songwriter become an “Artist To Follow” on Twitter last December.

**ADVICE FOR YOUNG QUEER PROFESSIONALS**  
“Don't be afraid to speak your mind. Sometimes you'll be in a room where you see something no one else sees. It can make all the difference.”



Suda

**Troy Suda**  
Chief product officer  
TICKETMASTER INTERNATIONAL

Over the past year, Suda, 41, has led the transformation of Ticketmaster's online fan marketplace across 21 countries and 17 languages. “It's not just changing aesthetics,” says the Australian-born, London-based executive. “People are not only finding what they want; they're actually buying tickets to more events because we're making it easier for them.”

**MY SIDE HUSTLE** “Vegan advocacy. I do things like talk to restaurant owners or chains about how they could [offer] more options.”



Swiatowy



Velasquez

**Jenny Swiatowy**  
VP/head of creative sync licensing  
CAPITOL MUSIC GROUP

Placing the right song in the right screen project is a “magic moment,” says Swiatowy, 37, who secured Sam Smith's cover of “I Feel Love” for Target's 2019 holiday campaign and calls co-producing the buzzy upcoming *Promising Young Woman* soundtrack — featuring seven Capitol artists, three of whom are LGBTQ — “the highlight of my career.”

**ADVICE FOR YOUNG QUEER PROFESSIONALS**  
“If you're in a place where you're not finding a seat, move to a different table. At a different company, there will be a seat for you.”



Villa



Walsh

**Theresa Velasquez**  
Senior vp strategic partnerships  
LIVE NATION

In her five years at the company, Velasquez, 35, has helped nurture relationships with such brands as Samsung and Hulu, while finding new ways to improve the fan experience through technology. “The proof is in our renewal rate and the multiyear commitments our clients have with us,” she says. “They go all-in.”

**MY SIDE HUSTLE** “DJ'ing. Occasionally for Pride month I'll do back-to-back gigs and remember afterward that I'm 35 and don't recover quite the same way.”

**Ramon Villa**  
COO  
PRIMARY WAVE

Managing almost \$1 billion worth of music rights, Primary Wave executives often say they're in the “legends business,” and Villa — whose close ties with Bob Marley's family made the 52-year-old instrumental in the 2018 Marley publishing deal — says he “keeps the trains running so passengers are happy getting where they want to go.”

**HOW WE'RE FIGHTING RACIAL INJUSTICE**  
“We've convened to hear experiences and ideas and are working on long and short plans that will be weaved into the ethos of the company.”

**Annika Walsh**  
Artist and label partnerships lead,  
U.K. & Ireland  
SPOTIFY

With thriving acts like Emily Burns, girl in red and Claud, Walsh, 35, says it's “an amazing moment in time” for LGBTQ visibility in music. She has also advocated for gender equity on Spotify playlists and was part of the team that helped launch RADAR, its global emerging-artist program, which has supported acts like Alaina Castillo in the United States and queer pop star Rina Sawayama in Japan.

**IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19, THE INDUSTRY WILL**  
“Be more supportive, on both a personal and professional level. We'll increase our empathy for artists and the workforce.”

**CONTRIBUTORS** Trevor Anderson, Katie Bain, Ed Christman, Leila Cobo, Stephen Daw, Nolan Feeney, Eric Frankenberg, Gab Ginsberg, Alim Kheraj, Steve Knopper, Jason Lipshutz, Joe Lynch, Taylor Mims, Gail Mitchell, Melinda Newman, Claudia Rosenbaum, Dan Rys, Avery Stone, Nick Williams

**Methodology** Executives who publicly self-identify as LGBTQ were chosen by editors based on factors including, but not limited to, nominations by peers, colleagues and superiors at selected music companies. In addition to nominations, editors consider timely career accomplishments, recent successes by artists and clients, inclusivity initiatives and overall impact on the music industry.



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Nick D'Angiolillo





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ROBERTS**



Matt Doherty

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KAREN LIEBERMAN AND CHIP MCLEAN  
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# The Players



Music stars on indie labels include (from left) Marshmello, Bad Bunny, Megan Thee Stallion, Thomas Rhett and Drake.

## 2020 Indie Power Players

IN A SEASON OF TURMOIL, THE EXECUTIVES AT THESE 75 COMPANIES — LABELS, DISTRIBUTORS AND ASSOCIATIONS — ARE DRIVING ARTISTS TO CHART-TOPPING SUCCESS OUTSIDE THE MAJOR-LABEL MACHINERY

ILLUSTRATION BY THE SPORTING PRESS

**D**URING THE PAST YEAR, INDEPENDENT music executives have faced chaos in physical sales channels, questions about how data flows from social media platforms, disappearing brick-and-mortar stores and other challenges. Then the coronavirus pandemic struck, followed by the worst social unrest the United States has seen in a generation.

In response, the indie music community has shown the strength of its autonomy. Music associations and companies profiled here stepped up to help amid the economic hit of the pandemic. On June 2, multiple labels and distributors participated in Blackout Tuesday to support the fight for racial justice.

Indie labels and artists account for nearly one-third of the global music market, and, according to research by MIDiA, they've achieved a faster rate of streaming growth on Spotify in 2019 than the majors.

For Indie Power Players, labels are defined as independent by their owner-

ship through entities other than the three major music groups. Distributors, regardless of their corporate ownership, qualify as independent through the repertoire they market.

Many in the indie music industry will convene online June 15-18 for the American Association of Independent Music's first virtual Indie Music Week and the Libera Awards, which will conclude A2IM's conference (see page 47). Ahead of Indie Music Week, *Billboard* recognizes the successes of those thriving on their own maverick terms.

—THOM DUFFY

### LABELS

#### Patrick Amory, 54

CO-OWNER/PRESIDENT, MATADOR RECORDS

#### Gerard Cosloy, 55

CO-FOUNDER/CO-OWNER, MATADOR RECORDS

#### Chris Lombardi, 53

CO-FOUNDER/CO-OWNER, MATADOR RECORDS

In the past year, Matador renewed deals with three of its signature acts — Pave-

ment, Spoon and Interpol — and expanded its relationships with each to include worldwide rights for their catalogs. "This was our primary mission for the year," says Lombardi, "and we accomplished it."

**HOW HE WORKS NOW (LOMBARDI)** ▶ "We're finding new ways to [market] albums from King Krule, Car Seat Headrest, Perfume Genius and Muzz without promo trips, TV appearances, etcetera. We're discussing ways to care for our bands that have lost income streams during this crisis."

#### Noah Assad, 30

CEO, RIMAS ENTERTAINMENT

Assad's marquee artist Bad Bunny made history when his *YHLQMDLG*, released on Rimas, scored the highest debut for an all-Spanish-language album on the Billboard 200, entering the chart at No. 2, just behind Lil Baby's *My Turn*. "Had we released it on Friday instead of [Saturday] Feb. 29, it would have been No. 1," says Assad. (Bad Bunny insisted on the leap day release.) Rimas now has over 100 artists, producers and songwriters, including

Arcangel, Lyanno and Tito El Bambino.

**HOW HE WORKS NOW** ▶ "You just have to figure out ways to keep releasing music. Now I'm home all the time. I get to play with my daughter every day. That's the bad and the good."

#### Bang Si-Hyuk, 47

CEO/EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, BIG HIT ENTERTAINMENT

Multiplatinum albums, a global stadium tour, an army of fans — BTS has achieved it all with Bang's independent Big Hit Entertainment. The K-pop supergroup's *Map of the Soul: 7* debuted atop the Billboard 200 in March, two months after BTS performed — in Korean — at the 62nd annual Grammy Awards, an evening Bang called "truly astonishing." Big Hit reports \$507.9 million in revenue in 2019, a 95% increase over its (as yet unaudited) 2018 numbers, and Bang is now expanding beyond music. Big Hit's global fan-community platform, WeVerse, services video content, merchandise and direct social media messaging with BTS members to over 5 million subscribers.

**INDEPENDENCE DEFINED** ▶ "We achieved such growth



without relying on preexisting systems. Solely focusing on content and fans and our vision — this is the 'independence' and driving force of Big Hit."

**Scott Borchetta, 57**

FOUNDER/PRESIDENT/CEO, BIG MACHINE LABEL GROUP

**Andrew Kautz, 50**

COO, BIG MACHINE LABEL GROUP

The big news in the past year for Big Machine Label Group was its acquisition by Scooter Braun's Ithaca Holdings for over \$300 million, but for Borchetta, retaining the company's autonomy was key. "We report to a board but remain independent creatively and operationally," he says. "Our results are our boss." Among the major results over the past year: Lady Antebellum scoring its first No. 1 in five-plus years on Country Airplay with the trio's debut release for the label, "What If I Never Get Over You"; Thomas Rhett earning his 15th No. 1 on that chart; and Tim McGraw reuniting with Big Machine Records.

**HOW THEY'RE WORKING NOW** ▶ After the pandemic started, the Big Machine Vodka distillery division converted its operations to make hand sanitizer, which the company donated to first responders.

**Ken Bunt**

PRESIDENT, DISNEY MUSIC GROUP

**David Abdo**

SENIOR VP GLOBAL BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND DISTRIBUTION, DISNEY MUSIC GROUP

**Karen Lieberman**

VP SALES AND DIGITAL, DISNEY MUSIC GROUP

**Chip McLean**

SENIOR VP/HEAD OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT/GM, DISNEY CONCERTS WORLDWIDE/DISNEY MUSIC GROUP

The record company that shows how non-major ownership, rather than size, defines independence (it's a division of the Walt Disney Company), Disney Music Group kept the music playing during the pandemic through such global branded playlists as Disney Hits, Disney Piano and Best of *Star Wars*. Among its artists, Sofia Carson did an Instagram takeover with pop radio stations, and ZZ Ward performed remotely on *Good Morning America*. Over the past year, the music group also launched the *For Scores* podcast, while its Walt Disney Records imprint continued to dominate *Billboard's* Kid Albums chart, with the *Frozen II* soundtrack topping the tally for 24 weeks.

**HOW HE WORKS NOW (BUNT)** ▶ "We have seen a substantial increase in the consumption of Disney music during this challenging time, and it's a great reminder of the power of music and its ability to help people during difficult times."

**Frabian Eli Carrión, 28**

PRESIDENT, REAL HASTA LA MUERTE

Carrión guided Latin trap superstar Anuel AA (aka Emmanuel Gazmey Santiago) to No. 1 on Top Latin Albums with his



Among the artists with indie-label affiliations are (clockwise from top) BTS, released through Big Hit Entertainment; McGraw, who returned to Big Machine Label Group; The Rolling Stones, whose early catalog is on ABKCO; and Tucker, whose comeback album, *While I'm Livin'*, arrived on Fantasy Records and won her two Grammys.

2018 debut, *Real Hasta la Muerte*, which gave Carrión and Anuel AA's label its name. "Topping the charts is something I dreamed of as a child, and it's what excites Emmanuel and me above all else," says Carrión. In May, Anuel AA's *Emmanuel*, featuring collaborations with Travis Barker, Lil Wayne, Enrique Iglesias and Tego Calderón, debuted at No. 8 on The Billboard 200.

**ADVICE FOR A YOUNG INDIE ARTIST** ▶ "Become good friends with lawyers and learn the law every day. In this business, you have to be half artist and half businessman."

**Margi Cheske**

PRESIDENT, FANTASY RECORDS/CONCORD

**John Strohm**

PRESIDENT, ROUNDER RECORDS/CONCORD

**Andy Serrao**

PRESIDENT/CHIEF TALENT OFFICER, FEARLESS RECORDS/CONCORD

**Sig Sigworth**

CHIEF CATALOG EXECUTIVE, CONCORD; PRESIDENT, CRAFT RECORDINGS/CONCORD

Tanya Tucker's double win at the 2020

Grammys for her Fantasy album, *While I'm Livin'*, as well as wins by another half-dozen Concord artists highlight the critical and commercial success of the company's recorded-music division. The results reflect Concord's "significant acquisitions and integrations across our recorded-music, publishing and theatrical companies," says Sigworth, plus its ability to develop new talent and support legacy artists. For Sigworth and his colleagues, independence equals integrity. "If we do what is right for the artist and we do what is right for the fan, success will come. It may take more time, but we're building careers and solidifying legacies."

**LOOKING FORWARD TO WHEN (SIGWORTH)** ▶ "I can bring my team together in one room and let them all know how much I appreciate their focus, support and effort over what has been the most challenging time of our personal and business lives."

**Alisa Coleman**

COO, ABKCO MUSIC & RECORDS

ABKCO is home to the catalogs of acts

including The Animals, Herman's Hermits, Bobby Womack, Sam Cooke and the early work of The Rolling Stones — and last year launched a 50th-anniversary box set of the Stones' landmark album *Let It Bleed*.

In 2019, the company also released the soundtrack to the second season of HBO's *Big Little Lies*. Coleman says the ABKCO team deserves "accolades [for] the ease with which the team was able to pivot and focus in the face of the pandemic. Being a small independent company, we are nimble enough to take advantage of systems and technology" to move business offsite.

**INDEPENDENCE DEFINED** ▶ "The opportunity to create unique business models and lead by example."

**Tomas Cookman**

CEO, INDUSTRIA WORKS/NACIONAL RECORDS

While concert cancellations have affected Cookman's Latin alternative music company during the pandemic, he reports that streaming revenue has doubled in the past 12 months (his company doesn't report figures) and that he started a "mood-music business" that syncs mood music from multiple creators. "You adapt," says Cookman, whose new signings include Los Amigos Invisibles founder Cheo and regional Mexican singer-songwriter Gera Demara. The Latin Alternative Music Conference, which Cookman founded, was moved online for June 9-13.

**LOOKING FORWARD TO WHEN** ▶ "I will have a full staff meeting with everyone in the company present, [then] celebrate by going to dinner with my family to one of our favorite neighborhood restaurants."

**Mike Curb, 75**

FOUNDER/CHAIRMAN, CURB RECORDS

Curb Records' Lee Brice was among the first Nashville artists to respond to the pandemic with his single "Hey World" in early April. "Everything I need's right here at home," he sang. "Hey, world/Leave me alone." In Curb's six decades as a music executive, he has nurtured numerous artists like current roster stars Brice, Mo Pitney and Sidewalk Prophets. A longtime philanthropist, Curb has advocated on behalf of the homeless, the LGBTQ community and those affected by this year's tornadoes in Nashville as well as the pandemic.

**INDIES STEPPING UP** ▶ "We've put together 25 different partners that deal with getting food to people during emergency circumstances — a program that will exceed \$10 million for food purchasing."

**Angel Del Villar, 39**

FOUNDER/CEO, DEL RECORDS

Del Records, which has fused regional Mexican and urban sounds with acts like T3r Elemento, is also at the cutting edge of revenue-generating technology. The label now controls its own YouTube content management system, "where we upload





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our own content and collect all our royalties,” says Del Villar. With over 8 million subscribers, that’s substantial income that goes directly to the label’s coffers. “The bulk of our business is in streaming,” he says. “I own my entire catalog, everything we do is in-house — we’re in great shape.” In March, he says, “my revenues were up 30%.”

**ADVICE FOR A YOUNG INDIE ARTIST** ▶ “Use all the digital platforms. They’re free.”

### Seth England, 34

CO-FOUNDER/CEO, BIG LOUD

### Patch Culbertson, 34

VP A&R, BIG LOUD

Hits from Morgan Wallen (“Chasing You”), Chris Lane (“I Don’t Know About You”), Jake Owen (“Homemade”) and HARDY (“Redneck”) helped Big Loud achieve 2.2 billion global streams in 2019, according to the company, which includes a label, publishing, management and an investment division under its Nashville roof. Of Big Loud’s success last year, England says, “Don’t be surprised, because we can do it again.” Culbertson has led the label’s data-driven A&R strategy for artists like Canada’s MacKenzie Porter, whom Big Loud aims to break stateside.

**HOW HE WORKS NOW (ENGLAND)** ▶ “Instinctively, I want to be the person that’s going out immediately. But I think I’ve learned that the smarter move is to *not* be that person.”

### Matt Galle

CEO/PARTNER, PHOTO FINISH RECORDS; MUSIC EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP GROUP, PARADIGM TALENT AGENCY

### Mike Marquis

COO/PARTNER, PHOTO FINISH RECORDS; AGENT, MUSIC, PARADIGM TALENT AGENCY

Photo Finish scored the “biggest alternative crossover hit of 2019” with SHAED’s “Trampoline,” says Galle. The track topped the Alternative chart for two weeks before leaping to No. 4 on the Mainstream Top 40 airplay list and then peaking at No. 13 on the Billboard Hot 100 last November. Zayn also cut a remix of the song, which picked up a synch in an Apple iPhone commercial. “You never see those coming,” says Galle. “But streaming blew up, radio followed, and it was just a windfall. It caught fire.”

**HOW HE WORKS NOW (GALLE)** ▶ “Feeding our artists ideas to engage their audience is key, not only for their business but also to help their fans personally.”

### Kris Gillespie

GM, DOMINO RECORDING COMPANY

Last year, due to the physical supply chain breakdown at Direct Shot Distribution, Gillespie started having Redeye handle Domino’s physical U.S. product. (The issue affected multiple labels and brick-and-mortar retailers.) He credits “the agility and dedication of our staff” for the London-based label emerging “more resilient and self-reliant” from the

experience. During the pandemic, he says, “those qualities have come into even greater focus now in a way we couldn’t have imagined a year ago.”

**HOW HE WORKS NOW** ▶ “Checking in with our artists and co-workers on their own wellness in this trying time, working to keep everyone feeling connected and informed, and maintaining a sense of purpose.”

### Daniel Glass, 63

FOUNDER/PRESIDENT, GLASSNOTE

### Chris Scully, 53

GM/CFO, GLASSNOTE

“Grammys, Oscars, stadiums,” says Glass, summing up his artists’ achievements in the past year. Aurora performed the *Frozen II* hit “Into the Unknown” with Idina Menzel at the Academy Awards; The Teskey Brothers’ *Run Home Slow* earned a Grammy nomination for best engineered album, non-classical; and Mumford & Sons opened the North American leg of their *Delta* tour with stadium dates in Los Angeles and Vancouver (before the pandemic halted the tour). Glass considers live performance key to the development of younger artists like Jade Bird and Taylor Janzen. “It’s very hard to get their personality, their DNA, without it,” he says. So during lockdown, “we’re doing extra-special visuals.” One example: With Chvrches’ “Forever” breaking thanks to a synch in Netflix’s *Elite*, the trio made a “separate but together” video in the members’ respective home studios. “That hit is galvanizing us,” says Glass. “That’s the morale-changer.”

**HOW HE WORKS NOW (GLASS)** ▶ “You have to be there for your people. I’m on the phone, on Zoom, on Webex seven days a week. It’s like *Hollywood Squares* when you look at Zoom. It takes a lot of energy.”

### Michael Goldstone

FOUNDER/CO-OWNER, MOM + POP MUSIC

### Thaddeus Rudd, 47

CO-OWNER, MOM + POP MUSIC

“We’re fortunate and proud to be working with such dynamic and diverse artistry,” says Goldstone. Mom + Pop’s roster boasts Ashe, whose “Moral of the Story” was co-written and co-produced by FINNEAS; Caamp, whose “Peach Fuzz” hit No. 1 on the Triple A chart; Alina Baraz, who collaborated with Khalid on her debut album, *It Was Divine*; and Sleater-Kinney, whose most recent release, *The Center Won’t Hold*, was produced by St. Vincent. The label’s talent pipeline is also full. The past 12 months have brought the signings of Porter Robinson, Beach Bunny, Orion Sun and, most recently, 16-year-old Evann McIntosh of Kansas, who already has 12 million streams in the United States.

**HOW HE WORKS NOW (GOLDSTONE)** ▶ “It’s imperative more than ever to be a resource, connection and asset to your artists. We need to overdeliver wherever we can.”



Glass (right) and Bird at the 2019 Americanafest in Nashville.

### Elliot Grainge, 26

FOUNDER/CEO, 10K PROJECTS

Last August, Grainge’s bold hip-hop label invested in the Generation Z-oriented digital marketing firm Homemade Projects, a move that has already paid off: The two companies worked with TikTok influencers to break Surfaces’ single “Sunday Best,” helping propel it to No. 24 on the Hot 100. “We’re brainstorming nontraditional ways of keeping our artists visible,” says Grainge of marketing amid the pandemic. Other recent strides include a joint-venture label with creative collective Internet Money and flagship signee Trippie Redd’s first-ever No. 1 debut on the Billboard 200 last December for his album *A Love Letter to You 4*.

**INDEPENDENCE DEFINED** ▶ “Giving artists complete creative freedom to develop over time and then working tirelessly with my team to make the artists’ ideas come to life.”

### Brett Gurewitz

OWNER, EPITAPH RECORDS

### Matt McGreevey

GM, EPITAPH RECORDS/ANTI-

Founded four decades ago by Bad Religion guitarist Gurewitz, Epitaph is home to punk veterans like Offspring as well as current acts like Joyce Manor, Greer and The Ghost Inside. Epitaph’s staff hasn’t “skipped a beat” during the pandemic, says McGreevey. But forces besides the coronavirus are shaping the business of Epitaph, sister label ANTI- and other indies, he says. “The continuation of streaming’s growth and the decline of other formats has changed marketing. We always worked around albums, and now we are back to a singles-driven business, the way things were in the 1950s.”

**ADVICE FOR A YOUNG INDIE ARTIST (MCGREEVEY)** ▶ “Anytime I see an artist worried about how their music will be received, [I say] they should continue to create — and not let any success or failure trip you up.”

### Simon Halliday

PRESIDENT, 4AD RECORDS

### Nabil Ayers, 48

LABEL MANAGER, 4AD RECORDS

During a four-week streak in the spring of 2019, 4AD released Aldous Harding’s *Designer*, Big Thief’s *U.F.O.F.*, Holly Herndon’s *PROTO* and The National’s *I Am Easy to Find*. Each gained airplay and acclaim, including Big Thief’s Grammy Award nomination for best alternative music album. Each title also affirmed 4AD’s ability to challenge music-marketing pigeonholes. “Who needs genres?” says Ayers, who has been working on new releases from Becky & The Birds and Dry Cleaning.

**HOW HE WORKS NOW (AYERS)** ▶ “Continuing to release great music by important artists despite less than optimum conditions.”

### Jimmy Jeong

CEO, JYP ENTERTAINMENT

While JYP has artists based in Korea, China and Japan, the company’s distribution partnership with The Orchard has given it a global reach. Since early 2019, The Orchard has handled worldwide distribution for JYP’s roster of boy bands and girl groups including Got7, Day6, TWICE, Stray Kids and Itzy. Meanwhile, Jeong struck a strategic alliance with Republic Records for the female K-pop group TWICE, announced in February, which follows the troupe’s arena-filling U.S. tour in 2019.

### Gordon Kerr, 52

PRESIDENT/CEO, BLACK RIVER ENTERTAINMENT

Under Kerr’s leadership, Black River in March moved forward with the release of *Kelsea*, the third album from the label’s superstar singer Kelsea Ballerini, just as the pandemic shut down touring and in-person promotion. The move paid off, as the album reached No. 2 on the Top Country Albums chart — affirming Kerr’s



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decision to sign Ballerini some seven years ago. The second single from *Kelsea* is “The Other Girl,” a country/pop duet with Halsey, which the two artists debuted on *CMT Crossroads* in March.

**ADVICE FOR A YOUNG INDIE ARTIST** ▶ “Always try to be optimistic because the alternative just isn’t going to be helpful.”

### Allen Kovac, 65

CEO, BETTER NOISE MUSIC

While Kovac’s Eleven Seven Label Group was rebranded as Better Noise Music in 2019, the company still follows his guiding principle of long-term career growth — not short-term profits — working with veteran acts like Five Finger Death Punch and Papa Roach, and such new signings as AWOLNation and Atlas Genius. The company’s Nashville office is developing country-edged rocker Cory Marks. “I don’t hire people from the music business anymore,” says Kovac of his search for fresh perspectives. “It has really changed my company dramatically.”

**HOW HE WORKS NOW** ▶ “If you’re an artist manager, you’ve got no tours, and 80% of your income comes from that; the rest from publishing and royalties. That’s a tough one. When I started the record company, the management company helped float the record company, and now the record company’s going to help the management company. I’m very lucky.”

### Kevin Liles, 52

CO-FOUNDER/CEO, 300 ENTERTAINMENT

### Roger Gold, 50

CO-FOUNDER, 300 ENTERTAINMENT

### Rayna Bass, 33

SENIOR VP MARKETING, 300 ENTERTAINMENT

### Selim Bouab

HEAD OF A&R, 300 ENTERTAINMENT

Liles led the 300 Entertainment team in driving the success of Megan Thee Stallion, Young Thug, Gunna and others. Megan Thee Stallion’s “Savage” (featuring Beyoncé) hit No. 1 on the Hot 100 in May. Young Thug’s guest star-laden *So Much Fun* arrived atop the Billboard 200 last August, and Gunna’s latest, *Wunna*, debuted at No. 1 on the chart in June. “But I’m most proud of how we’re responding right now in this crisis,” says Liles. “Crisis doesn’t create character — it reveals it. Our team is showing resilience and passion in serving our partners, audience and each other, and we’re all stepping up to support our artists.”

**INDEPENDENCE DEFINED (GOLD)** ▶ “Freedom. The freedom to do what I want, when I want and with whom I want.”

### Sergio Lizárraga, 45

CEO, LIZOS MUSIC

Lizos Music is the home of Banda Sinaloense MS de Sergio Lizárraga (aka Banda MS), which ended 2019 as *Billboard*’s

top regional Mexican albums act of the year and at No. 10 on the Top Latin Artists recap. For founder Lizárraga, the experience of Banda MS selling out two shows at Los Angeles’ Staples Center and playing New York’s Madison Square Garden were highlights of the past year, and in May, the group’s collaboration with Snoop Dogg, “Que Maldición” (“What a Curse”), debuted at No. 4 on Hot Latin Songs. Working with new acts like Los 2 de la S also opens new territory for Lizos Music, says Lizárraga.

**ADVICE FOR A YOUNG INDIE ARTIST** ▶ “Look at the data. If it shows you doing something right, don’t stop.”

### Jon Loba

EXECUTIVE VP, BBR MUSIC GROUP/BMG

### John Loeffler

EXECUTIVE VP REPERTOIRE AND MARKETING, NEW YORK, BMG

### Thomas Scherer

EXECUTIVE VP REPERTOIRE AND MARKETING, LOS ANGELES, BMG

Jason Aldean, John Fogerty, Akon, Jason Mraz, Run the Jewels, Rufus Wainwright, Huey Lewis, Avril Lavigne, Diane Warren, George Harrison’s Dark Horse Records — these are just a few of the names from BMG’s impressive recording roster. Three years after BMG’s acquisition of BBR Music Group, Loba oversees the company’s new, 36,000-square-foot Nashville office. Loeffler, a songwriter himself (“Pokémon”), manages BMG’s East Coast presence in New York, including S-Curve Records. Scherer, a former drummer, has driven the company’s rock-focused artist-development surge in Los Angeles. “You must maintain a startup mentality and that ‘indie feeling,’” says Scherer. “You have to extend to everyone in the company an invitation to innovate. And you have to mean it. No red tape.”

**HOW HE WORKS NOW (LOEFFLER)** ▶ Live-at-home shows “may not change once things begin to normalize. This intimate and immediate connection between fan and artist is here to stay.”

### David Macias, 55

PRESIDENT, THIRTY TIGERS

### Nancy Quinn, 49

EXECUTIVE VP/GM, THIRTY TIGERS

For two decades under Macias, Thirty Tigers has nurtured rising and veteran indie artists alike, releasing music from John Prine, Lupe Fiasco, Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit, Dr. Dog, Colter Wall and CeCe Winans, among others. Quinn is responsible for all of the company’s agreements and business developments with new artists as well as negotiating the best terms with its distribution partners. Macias, who has invested in such independent films as *Fruitvale Station*, last year released *Once Upon a River* through his company’s film division.

**ADVICE FOR A YOUNG INDIE ARTIST (MACIAS)** ▶ “If at all possible, keep ownership of the content you create.”

### Franklin Martinez, 38

PRESIDENT/CEO, CARBON FIBER MUSIC

While guiding the career of his management client Farruko, Martinez has also been steadily growing the Carbon Fiber Music label (where Farruko is his partner). “We just signed a distribution deal with In-grooves, and in the past eight months, I’ve signed five new artists,” including Lary Over and Ankhal, says Martinez. Carbon Fiber now has a staff of nearly 50, including in-house designers and booking agents. While the pandemic has meant leaving “literally millions on the table” from lost Farruko tour earnings, says Martinez, “we’ve had more time to strategize creatively.”

**ADVICE FOR A YOUNG INDIE ARTIST** ▶ “Set aside your friends who are managers. They are the best weapon to destroy a new artist because they create doubts, they don’t know. New artists have to have a good structure, believe in their art and develop it with someone who really manages.”

### Josh Méndez, 31

PRESIDENT/COO, RICH MUSIC

Rich Music surged during the past 12 months with the success of Latin urban artists like Sech, Dalex and Justin Quiles. The label’s YouTube channel, a major source of revenue, has nearly 900,000 subscribers—Sech’s channel alone has drawn 5.7 million. “We’ve doubled streams and signed key business deals,” says Méndez, citing Sech’s touring deal with Cárdenas Marketing Network and a distribution pact with Ingrooves. “We’re a one-stop shop.”

**HOW HE WORKS NOW** ▶ “My role has changed because of COVID-19 and also because my dad is now serving a sentence. [Rich Méndez began serving in a federal prison in January on a wire fraud conviction related to timeshare sales.] I’ve always dealt with the artists, but now I’m dealing with a lot of the business, quarterbacking everything from home.”

### Martin Mills, 70

FOUNDER/CHAIRMAN, BEGGARS GROUP

### Matt Harmon, 48

PRESIDENT, BEGGARS GROUP

### Rusty Clarke

VP SALES, BEGGARS GROUP

### Miwa Okumura

SENIOR VP WEST COAST OPERATIONS AND LICENSING, BEGGARS GROUP

### Risa Matsuki, 48

VP PROMOTIONS, BEGGARS GROUP

Beggars Group — which consists of 4AD, Matador, XL, Rough Trade Records and Young Turks — reshuffled its deck in the past year. The company restructured divisions, created the role of head of streaming, increased emphasis on content teams and supply chain support, and bolstered staff to deal with metadata and digital service providers. It also switched from its longtime physical distributor, Alternative Distribution Alliance, to Redeye



From top: Ballerini, Sana of TWICE and Lewis are respectively signed to indie music companies Black River Entertainment, JYP Entertainment and BMG.

following widespread supply issues with ADA’s fulfillment partner, Direct Shot. Says Harmon: “We’ve really transformed the Beggars team, both in the U.S. and globally, to deal with the digital marketplace.”

**HOW HE WORKS NOW (MILLS)** ▶ “I’m proud that I’ve built a company that technologically and resourcewise can survive this [pandemic] without cutting any staff and paying everyone full wages, and be pretty confident of coming out on the other side in pretty good shape.”

### Doug Morris, 81

FOUNDER/OWNER, 12TONE MUSIC GROUP

### Steve Bartels

12TONE MUSIC GROUP

Bartels calls 12Tone “a nimble, modern” new company able to “anticipate music trends, pivot and support our artists with bespoke and specific campaigns.” That meant working with Warner Records to break Lauren Daigle at pop radio and drive her song “You Say” to the top of *Billboard*’s Adult Contemporary chart. It also meant



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helping rappers like Rich Brian and Joji turn YouTube virality into lasting music careers — and working closely with Aftermath and Full Stop Management to secure Anderson .Paak's two victories at the 2020 Grammys.

**HOW HE WORKS NOW (BARTELS)** ▶ "I am able to engage the staff with mobile conferencing, WhatsApp, video comms, etcetera, so we all feel united. The goals remain the same: More than ever, artists and the music we bring to the world can help lift spirits."

### Lonny Olinick, 38

CEO, AWAL

#### Paul Hitchman

PRESIDENT, AWAL

#### Ron Cerrito

PRESIDENT, AWAL NORTH AMERICA

Revenue for AWAL, the independent distribution and label services division of Kobalt Music Group, grew 86% to \$106.2 million in its fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, according to Kobalt's financial results announced in March. Behind the numbers are the successes of artists like Lauv (5 billion global streams, according to AWAL), Rex Orange County and Lil Peep (1 billion streams each), Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds and Frank Carter & The Rattlesnakes, and rising stars FINNEAS and Kim Petras. For the strong fiscal results, Olinick credits AWAL's artists and a business model that "allows them to reach their full potential while getting a fair deal." Cerrito points to upcoming releases from Gus Dapperton, Alaina Castillo, Blake Rose, Boy in Space, Quadecca, Yeek and deadmau5. "Having proven ourselves against the majors," says Hitchman, "we are now seeing some of the most exciting new talent come to us."

**INDEPENDENCE DEFINED (OLINICK)** ▶ "Never accepting the status quo and always pushing for better, bigger, faster."

### Maykel Piron, 45

CO-OWNER/CEO, ARMADA MUSIC

Under Piron, Armada Music thrives as one of the world's leading dance music labels, with headquarters in Amsterdam and offices in New York and London. The company has a catalog of over 15,000 titles and scored myriad hits in 2019. Its artist roster includes Andrew Rayel, whose recent track "Stars Collide" appears on Armin van Buuren's annual compilation album, *A State of Trance*, which arrived in April. Piron, van Buuren and David Lewis co-founded Armada Music — combining the first two letters of their first names for the label's moniker.

**LOOKING FORWARD TO WHEN** ▶ "I may just throw a big office party in our own club for the entire team as a thank-you. The way they're handling this situation is amazing, and I'm super proud to be standing alongside them through it all."

### Louis Posen, 49

FOUNDER/PRESIDENT, HOPELESS RECORDS

The punk label that launched from Posen's garage in 1993 continued to break new ground in the past year, "setting up big campaigns for Sum 41 and Waterparks, and developing new artists Stand Atlantic, Point North and Fame on Fire," says Posen. He praises his worldwide team for adapting marketing campaigns to online-only during the pandemic. "I tend to lean into tough times," says Posen. "That's part of my personality."

**INDIES STEPPING UP** ▶ "The signature initiative of our nonprofit organization Sub City is called Songs That Saved My Life, where artists cover a song that got them through a tough time, and proceeds from that project go to mental health and suicide prevention charities. This project has been going on these past two years. Along with our other Sub City initiatives, [we've raised] more than \$3 million."

### Scott Robinson, 57

CO-FOUNDER/CEO, DUALTONE MUSIC GROUP

Robinson says fostering a "community of camaraderie" among his acts is one of his proudest accomplishments at Dualtone, a division of Entertainment One. The Lumineers, for example, tapped three up-and-coming labelmates — Shakey Graves, Gregory Alan Isakov and Mt. Joy — to open their arena shows through March. (The pandemic cut the tour short.) "We're very selective, and when we sign an artist we end up working records much longer, with a record cycle sometimes lasting two years," says Robinson, noting that Mt. Joy has earned "130,000-plus consumed units" of its debut self-titled album released in 2018.

**INDIES STEPPING UP** ▶ "When the Dualtone office in Nashville took a direct hit from the tornadoes [in early March], my staff didn't miss a beat. We were able to get back online together virtually and continue our daily operations. Our Dualtone family raised resources for local charities affected by the Nashville tornadoes and the coronavirus."

### Jake Round, 37

FOUNDER/PRESIDENT, PURE NOISE RECORDS

The hardcore punk band Knocked Loose released its second album, *A Different Shade of Blue*, on Pure Noise last August and surpassed expectations "by leaps and bounds," says Round. After the label successfully placed the title in big-box retailer Target, Knocked Loose debuted atop *Billboard's* Emerging Artists chart while the album reached No. 26 on the *Billboard* 200.

**INDEPENDENCE DEFINED** ▶ "I've never been more grateful to be small in my life and also to have complete control of my own destiny. I'm making the decisions, and I don't have to run anything up the flagpole. I am the flagpole."

### Vicente Saavedra, 37

FOUNDER, DIMELO VI

At Dimelo Vi, Saavedra celebrated as Ozuna (whose music was co-released with VP Records before he signed with Sony and The Orchard) came in at No. 2 on *Billboard's* 2019 year-end Top Latin Artists recap, bested only by Bad Bunny. Earlier in the year, at the *Billboard* Latin Music Awards, Ozuna made history by taking home 11 honors, the most by any artist in a single year. Saavedra, who formerly managed Ozuna, says that "as an indie label, competing with major labels is one of my greatest accomplishments."

**HOW HE WORKS NOW** ▶ "Aside from being a manager and producer, I am also now a psychologist. It has been a moment in which I also have to deal with artists' anxiety and their preoccupations."

### Jon Salter, 48

GM, ATO RECORDS

"Brand-new band, debut album, boom!" is how Salter describes the breakout of Black Pumas, whose self-titled 2019 release led

to a best new artist nomination at the 2020 Grammys. That was one of a remarkable seven nods for ATO Records, with Brittany Howard, Emily King and Altin Gün also being recognized, while Rodrigo Y Gabriela won the best contemporary instrumental album award for *Mettavolution*. The label's new in-house film/TV department, which placed Black Pumas' "The Power to Be Me" in a Bank of America campaign, "equips us to control our own destiny," says Salter.

**HOW HE WORKS NOW** ▶ "We're staying the course with all our spring releases — Chicano Batman, Margaret Glaspy, a King Gizzard [& The Lizard Wizard] live album. You can't go to [Austin's] Waterloo Records to buy an album," says Salter of his local retailer. "But you can mail-order it or order curbside pickup, and we're going to make [releases] available."

### Luis Sánchez, 42

CEO, AFINARTE MUSIC

Sánchez says revenue for his Mexican music label has increased by 40% compared with the previous year. (Afinarte does not report specific revenue figures.) That growth comes thanks to the success of artists like Kanales, Los Dos Carnales and El Fantasma, who nabbed his eighth top 10 entry on the Regional Mexican Airplay chart with "Palabra de Hombre" ("A Man's Word") in March. "We had 10 artists signed last year. Now we have 19, and I'm very proud of our expansion toward Mexico," says Sánchez of his roster, which is focused on young and developing acts. "We are self-driven, self-motivated, self-sufficient and willing to take a risk."

**ADVICE FOR A YOUNG INDIE ARTIST** ▶ "Be patient and follow your dream. Many people will say no. But one man's trash is another man's treasure. I lived that firsthand with El Fantasma."

### Huib Schippers

DIRECTOR/CURATOR, SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS RECORDINGS

It would be easy for Schippers to point to Smithsonian Folkways Recordings' two 2020 Grammy wins earlier this year as a marker of success. Pete Seeger: *The Smithsonian Folkways Collection* won best historical album, and Mariachi los Camperos' *De Ayer Para Siempre* was named best regional Mexican music album [including tejano].) But Schippers defines success differently, with a broader vision of the cultural role of the Washington, D.C.-based label that goes beyond industry accolades. To that end, Schippers is also proud of *Songs of Our Native Daughters*, a critically acclaimed Folkways release featuring Rhiannon Giddens that "beautifully and fearlessly chronicles the history and position of African-American women at the crossroads of misogyny and racism."

**ADVICE FOR A YOUNG INDIE ARTIST** ▶ "Make amazing music that you believe in. Then go to people you trust and ask for brutally honest feedback. Swallow your pride and listen. Make it better. Then find a label that gets you."



From right: Young Dolph, Ghazi, Jim Jones and Capone at EMPIRE's Grammy party in January.



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Prine (right) and Whelan Prine at the Grammys in January.

### Melanie Sheehan

U.S. LABEL MANAGER, ROUGH TRADE RECORDS

In the past year at Rough Trade, Sheehan has helped the London band black midi launch its debut album, *Schlagenheim*; promoted new releases from Lankum and Pinegrove; gained the first U.S. TV slot for SOAK on *Late Night With Seth Meyers*; and “now, after a lifetime of fandom,” she says, she’s working on Jarvis Cocker’s first new album in a decade, titled *JARVIS*...

**HOW SHE WORKS NOW** ▶ “So. Many. Video. Conferences!”

### Jonny Shipes, 40

CEO, CINEMATIC MUSIC GROUP

From Joey Bada\$\$ to Nipsey Hussle, Cinematic CEO Shipes has a keen ear for discovering rap stars. Even with a diverse roster that includes such artists as veterans Cam’ron and T-Pain to breakthrough acts including Flipp Dinero and Luh Kel, Shipes emphasizes he isn’t solely responsible for his label’s success. “Without a dope team,” he says, “I could never have built Cinematic from where it was a few years ago to where it is today.”

**INDIES STEPPING UP** ▶ “I have been giving out \$50,000 singles deals to artists with one catch: They have to donate \$50 to submit their music for consideration. After sifting through hundreds of songs, I pick a winner. We are donating all the [submission] money to charities that are helping kids, the elderly and those creating [personal

protective equipment] for the essential medical people. It’s a priority for us.”

### Paul Sizelove, 50

PRESIDENT, GAITHER MUSIC GROUP

Under Sizelove, Gaither in 2019 finalized a partnership with Primary Wave Music Publishing, which gives the gospel and Christian music company access to Primary Wave’s marketing, branding and digital teams, plus additional departments for help with licensing and synchs. Sizelove also expanded Gaither’s agreement with Universal Music Group’s Capitol Christian Music Group for worldwide digital and physical distribution, and has overseen the expansion of Gaither’s team, with new roles focused on streaming and social media marketing. One measure of the impact of those moves? Gaither reached 348 million streams in 2019, a 30% increase over the previous year, according to the company.

**INDEPENDENCE DEFINED** ▶ “There is something about independence that gives you a sense of urgency and ownership. You have to be on your game always, as it takes hard work to blaze a trail. But the reward is fulfilling, and the lines of character developed from it run deep.”

### Adolph “Young Dolph” Thornton Jr.

CO-FOUNDER, PAPER ROUTE EMPIRE

### Jeremel “Daddy O” Moore, 34

FOUNDER, PAPER ROUTE EMPIRE

To his fans, he is rapper Young Dolph, whose collaboration with labelmate Key Glock on *Dum & Dummer* sent the album to No. 8 on the Billboard 200. But as an entrepreneur, Thornton is the founder, with Moore, of Paper Route Empire, home also to artists Kenny Muney, Big Moochie Grape and Jay Fizzle. “I’ve been preaching the benefits of being independent since day one,” says Thornton. “The best thing about the position I’m in is, I can drop music how I want to drop and when I want to drop. There is no one else telling me how to run my business.”

**LOOKING FORWARD TO WHEN (THORNTON)** ▶ “As life and business return to normal, the first thing I plan to do is go see my grandma. She’s 94 years old.”

### Fiona Whelan Prine, 58

PRESIDENT, OH BOY RECORDS

### Jody Whelan, 39

MANAGING PARTNER, OH BOY RECORDS

The death of John Prine on April 7 at age 73 due to complications from the coronavirus shattered his fans and the music industry. But apart from the extraordinary legacy of his songwriting, Prine also was an indie music business pioneer, co-founding Oh Boy Records with his late manager Al Bunetta in 1981. It is now run by his widow, Fiona Whelan Prine, and son Jody Whelan. Oh Boy in 2016 struck a deal with Thirty Tigers to exclusively handle its physical and digital distribution worldwide. “It was a big deal for me when Oh Boy decided to work with us,” says Thirty Tigers co-founder/president David Macias. “Like many others, I revere John as an artist, but John was equally heroic to me for the business decision he and Al Bunetta made in running their own label.” In the days after Prine’s death, his songs and albums returned to the charts amid the emerging pandemic. “We wanted to give Fiona and Jody all the space that they needed,” says Macias. “They lost a husband and a father. It was difficult given that pressing plants were closed and indie retailers were closed for the most part, but we did everything that we possibly could.” Macias says the entire Oh Boy staff is “the embodiment of John in label form. His vibe permeates the company, which is a really, really good thing.” He adds: “If I had a nickel for every time I name-checked John and Oh Boy as an example of how artists can and should own their own work, I could buy a full meal at Arnold’s Country Kitchen — and that includes banana pudding.”

### Bryan “Birdman” Williams, 51

CO-FOUNDER/CO-CEO, CASH MONEY RECORDS

### Ronald “Slim” Williams, 55

CO-FOUNDER/CO-CEO, CASH MONEY RECORDS

Consistency. That’s the accomplishment of the past year that the Williams brothers are most proud of, as Slim relates: “From

the quality of [our artists’] music to some becoming entrepreneurs themselves; something we’ve preached since back in the day.” And that philosophy continued to drive their success in 2019. Between Drake’s *Scorpion* and Blueface’s “Thotiana” (No. 8 on the Hot 100), Cash Money helped its partner Republic Records close out 2019 as the year’s top label. The onset of the pandemic didn’t slow Drake’s pace, as his *Dark Lane Demo Tapes* (released through OVO Sound/Republic) debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard 200 on May 1.

**INDEPENDENCE DEFINED (SLIM)** ▶ “Being in control of your destiny. We have a great situation and are able to do what we want to do, and nobody questions or gets in the way of that. We’ve been with [Republic/Universal Music Group] a lot of years. They trust our judgment in music and what we do.”

## ASSOCIATIONS

### Richard James Burgess

PRESIDENT/CEO, AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT MUSIC

A2IM, which has 800 members, worked throughout the fall of 2019 to ensure California’s AB5 “gig economy” legislation would protect indie musicians. Burgess, along with heads of the RIAA and the Music Artists Coalition, explained to legislators that the law would, among other effects, force music groups to become employers if they collaborated with freelance musicians. Burgess says the law’s sponsor, Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, had “good intentions” to protect gig workers, but music reps had to hammer out an amendment before the law passed in April. “It was unbelievably challenging,” he says.

**ADVICE FOR A YOUNG INDIE ARTIST** ▶ “Never give up. Persistence is everything. You have to buy the time to get lucky.”

### Charlie Phillips, 46

COO, WORLDWIDE INDEPENDENT NETWORK

Phillips was named in February 2019 to run Worldwide Independent Network, reporting to chairman Justin West. Last October, he unveiled an initiative that WIN and IFPI have been working on for some five years, the Repertoire Data Exchange (RDx), a “single point of entry for data relating to management of performance rights internationally,” as he puts it. The RDx, which is still in its early stages, will roll out widely in the months ahead. “Most indie labels are based in one territory, or two if they’re pretty big,” he says. “But they’ve got to manage these rights in 50 or 60 countries, and that means that a lot of money gets left on the table or paid to the wrong people. The whole industry, majors and indies together, has come together to plug that one gap.”

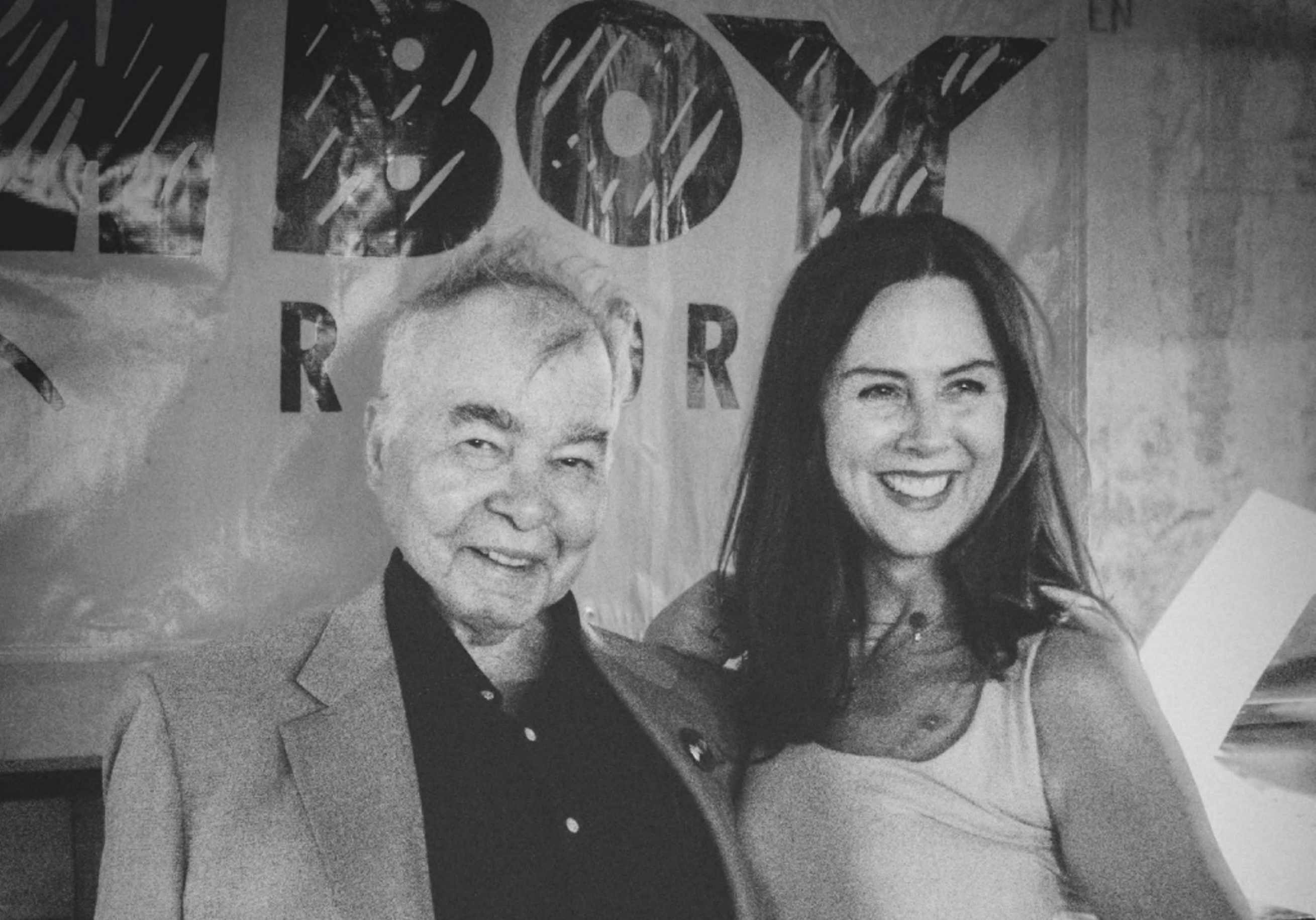
**INDEPENDENCE DEFINED** ▶ “Generally, a company [is independent] where over 50% is owned by the founders, or people who have taken over that share — but not the





**FIONA WHELAN PRINE, JODY WHELAN,  
& THE OH BOY RECORDS TEAM THANK  
THE INDEPEDENT COMMUNITY FOR THEIR  
SUPPORT FOR THE PAST 40 YEARS**







major labels. But there's a much wider question when it comes to data ownership and digital asset control, like who owns your metadata, can you get it back off a distributor, what happens to your track counts — are we really independent if we don't have any control over that?"

**Jeremy Sirota, 43**

CEO, MERLIN

Joining Merlin as its new CEO in January, Sirota came on board at the worldwide digital rights agency just as the coronavirus pandemic shut down the global economy. "When I wrote my first 90-day plan, this wasn't on my list," he says. But it allowed him to see how well the Merlin team he had inherited is handling the crisis, while also operating during a management transition. "Folks here are driven by the mission to help our members and partners, and want to do even more than what we are doing already," says Sirota. "In some ways it has helped me to get close to our partners, members and our team in a way that might not have happened so quickly."

**MOST URGENT INDIE ISSUES** ▶ "[The control of] data coming from Facebook and TikTok, more access to capital for the indie sector and the growth of user-generated content and social platforms into the music space. All of this really flattens and democratizes the [music marketplace], which allows indies to thrive, and that allows more room for diversity. The more healthy, diversified and democratized the space, the better for independents."

**LABELS/DISTRIBUTORS**

**Jorge Brea, 36**

CEO, SYMPHONIC DISTRIBUTION

"Today's major record labels operate differently," says Brea. "They rely on throwing money at projects with the goal of being more successful than the other major record label. In the process, they forget about the art behind what we do." Symphonic Distribution, based in Tampa, Fla., has grown over the past year "without large budgets like the ones you typically see in this industry," says Brea. His company has new partnerships in China, expanded its video distribution through Vida Primo in Colombia and opened a new synch licensing division with Bodega Sync in Brooklyn.

**HOW HE WORKS NOW** ▶ "With less travel, we've had more time to hunker down and be productive. It's made me push myself to think of new creative ways to help out as many artists and record labels as possible, especially with the decline of touring revenue during the pandemic."

**Paris Cabezas, 41**

MANAGING DIRECTOR/CEO, INNERCAT MUSIC GROUP

**Ana Gonzalez, 38**

MANAGING DIRECTOR, INNERCAT MUSIC GROUP

**Garrett Schaefer, 58**

GM, INNERCAT MUSIC GROUP

The Miami-based InnerCat has reported 300% growth between 2016 and 2019 (the company does not specify revenue figures) by providing digital services to indie artists

on an international scale. CEO Cabezas, a classically trained pianist and Grammy-nominated producer (with a master's in applied mathematics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology), credits his "dream team" of company collaborators. "Without them, InnerCat would not have evolved as it did," he says. The company's latest move: "a smart digital tool, Play & Follow, capable of enhancing music marketing campaigns exponentially," says Cabezas.

**ADVICE TO A YOUNG INDIE ARTIST** ▶ "Slow down, take time to understand your audience, try to amplify your connection with fans — especially now that we are all at home."

**Ethan Diamond, 48**

CO-FOUNDER/CEO, BANDCAMP

**Joshua Kim, 34**

COO, BANDCAMP

On March 20, in the early days of the pandemic shutdown, Bandcamp waived its share of profits from sales made through the platform (10% to 15% of gross revenue), returning that money to artists' pockets. Fans responded by buying \$4.3 million of merchandise and albums — both physical and digital — that day. On May 1, Bandcamp waived its fees for a second time and will do so again on June 19 to benefit the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Even when not forgoing its fees, Bandcamp has long proved to be a reliable partner for indie acts. "By early this summer," says Diamond, "fans will have paid artists half a billion dollars on the site."

**INDIES STEPPING UP (DIAMOND)** ▶ "We're seeing artists and labels donating some or all of their earnings, or participating in compilations, to benefit relief organizations ranging from local food banks to the World Health Organization."

**Ghazi**

FOUNDER/CEO, EMPIRE

**Nima Etminan, 32**

VP OPERATIONS, EMPIRE

Under Ghazi (who solely uses his first name professionally), EMPIRE has been ruling the charts through its role in the success of artists including XXXTentacion, Young Dolph &



Van Etten is signed to the Secretly Group label Jagjaguwar.



South Korean boy band SuperM, whose self-titled hit album is distributed by Caroline.

Key Glock, Money Man, Robin Thicke and Tyga. While EMPIRE recently opened a 10,000-square-foot studio in downtown San Francisco, "we've [also] acquired a couple of companies," says Ghazi. While declining to identify the acquisitions, he says they will further expand EMPIRE's footprint. The Iran-born Etminan — who was raised in Germany and learned English from hip-hop music and pop culture — began his EMPIRE career as an intern. He rose to a level where he signed Kendrick Lamar to his first EMPIRE deal in 2011. In the past year, "a big step forward that we took was expanding into international territories," he says. "We'd been active in Latin and South America for a few years already. But we set up shop in Europe, Asia and Africa" — specifically with a presence in London; Amsterdam; Jakarta, Indonesia; Shanghai; and Lagos, Nigeria.

**Nando Luaces, 53**

CEO, ALTAFONTE

Since launching his Madrid-based digital distribution company, Altafonte, in 2011, working with artists like Argentine singer-songwriter Noel Schajris and Mexican cumbia singer-songwriter Amanditita, Luaces says he has "established our global digital marketing team [to] offer a comprehensive service with top-notch creativity." Reporting revenue growth of 55% in the past year (Altafonte does not specify revenue numbers), Luaces says he has also sharpened his company's focus. "We work with fewer artists but with larger profiles, [who are] at the top of their game in terms of quality and artistic interest."

**PANDEMIC LESSONS** ▶ "In this crisis, we can see the real leaders; most of the time they're ordinary people. We also see powerful people who are completely useless."

**Jason Peterson, 38**

CHAIRMAN/CEO, GODIGITAL MEDIA GROUP

When GoDigital's AdShare division started managing Daddy Yankee's YouTube rights in 2010, "we began to realize the power of Latin music and Hispanic artists," says Peterson. The company continued its push into the Latin music business over the past year, with its divisions partnering with corrido-focused label Rancho Humilde on a distribution deal and buying Latinx digital media company Mitú.

**INDEPENDENCE DEFINED** ▶ "I like to keep it simple: not controlled by Warner, Universal Music Group or Sony. You can be distributed by them but not be controlled by them."

**Jacqueline Saturn**

PRESIDENT, CAROLINE/HARVEST RECORDS

**Matt Sawin**

GM, CAROLINE

**Cindy James**

HEAD OF COMMERCIAL MARKETING, CAROLINE

**Adam Starr**

VP/HEAD OF MARKETING, CAROLINE

Caroline, the indie label services division of Capitol Music Group, extended its reach under Saturn into all corners of the globe, including a partnership with Korean powerhouse SM Entertainment, which resulted in a No. 1 debut on the Billboard 200 from Super M and a top five debut on that chart from NCT 127. Saturn also heralds "our growing presence in both Latin and Afropop spaces, with label partnerships including Sie7tr3, Duars Entertainment and Mavin Records."

**LOOKING FORWARD TO THE DAY WHEN (SATURN)** ▶ "[I can] hug my Caroline family. Even though we're using all of this wonderful technology to stay in touch on a minute-by-minute basis, I miss their physical presence terribly."

**Camille Soto Malavé, 38**

CEO, GLAD EMPIRE

Soto Malavé's GLAD Empire offers digital label and distribution services to artists like Latin trap star Anuel AA and Myke Towers (who scored his first No. 1 on Top Latin Albums with *Easy Baby Money*). Before the pandemic, the company had opened state-of-the-art recording facilities in Orlando, Fla., and San Juan, Puerto Rico. Now, Soto Malavé says, "my music producers are not working because we had to close the studios."

**ADVICE FOR A YOUNG INDIE ARTIST** ▶ "Don't choose a manager just because they're your friend."

**Ben Swanson, 42**

COO, SECRETLY GROUP

**Chris Swanson, 45**

CO-CEO/PRESIDENT OF A&R, SECRETLY GROUP

**Phil Waldorf, 45**

CO-FOUNDER/CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, SECRETLY GROUP

**Jon Coombs, 34**

VP A&R, SECRETLY GROUP

(COMPANY DECLINED TO PARTICIPATE)





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MORGAN PAGE AND MANY OTHERS



Secretly Group is one of the largest independent label companies in the world, with labels whose rosters include such critically acclaimed acts as Bon Iver, Angel Olsen, Sharon Van Etten, Whitney, Jamila Woods, Phoebe Bridgers, Moses Sumney and newcomer Porridge Radio, bringing the company both artistic and commercial success. Secretly executives state they have decided to decline comment “for any lists that do not reflect diversity and that are not fully transparent about their selection process.”

### Chris Taylor

GLOBAL PRESIDENT OF MUSIC, ENTERTAINMENT ONE

In a year where toy-making giant Hasbro acquired Entertainment One for \$4 billion in cash, Taylor cites his division’s integration of the music production company Audio Network as its 2019 high-water mark. The \$215 million investment “brought us valuable scale and enabled us to take our publishing administration in-house,” he says. “Now our synch and publishing teams are working closer together to feed our content producers.” The music library of London-based Audio Network is used for “50-plus unscripted shows,” says Taylor, adding that eOne’s union with Hasbro has also resulted in over 15 projects. “We are their go-to music department,” he says. The music division’s growth was reflected in its bottom line: eOne generated revenue of \$121 million in 2019 — up from \$69 million the previous year.

**HOW HE WORKS NOW** ▶ “Artists are still delivering. We have a real pipeline of content on the music side — I’m really excited about that. It really is still very busy. I haven’t sensed a letup at all.”

## DISTRIBUTORS

### Glenn Dicker, 54

CO-FOUNDER, REDEYE WORLDWIDE

### Aaron Freeman, 40

CEO, REDEYE WORLDWIDE

### Tor Hansen, 55

CO-FOUNDER, REDEYE WORLDWIDE

Redeye finished 2019 with the December acquisition of Swedish distributor Border Music. “The ability to establish a physical presence in Europe was very exciting and fit well with our long-term goals,” says Freeman. Coming into this year, Redeye established new distribution relationships with Beggars Group, Domino and Saddle Creek. “We have long admired these labels in terms of their releases and the way they run their businesses and champion their artists,” says Freeman.

**HOW THEY WORK NOW** ▶ “Within a week [of the pandemic lockdown], we had not only reshaped critical parts of our business but had spoken with over 100 of our distributed labels, artists and independent retail customers — the true heart of what we do — to tailor our planning based on their feedback and needs.”

### Diego Farias, 39

CO-FOUNDER/CEO, AMUSE

Amuse, the data-driven label that gives artists advance royalties in exchange for distribution rights, launched Amuse Pro in March. For \$5 per month, the service allows artists to sort out royalty splits among multiple contributors to a track and release their music more quickly to Instagram, TikTok and other platforms. “We knew if we could solve the pain points in a technological way” for indie artists, says Farias, “it would remove a lot of headache and hassle and help in their careers.”

**HOW HE WORKS NOW** ▶ “Providing digital tools that allow artists to create, collaborate and release music from home has proved more important than ever.”

### Wayne Hampton

CO-FOUNDER/CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICER, CREATE MUSIC GROUP

### Jonathan Strauss, 34

CEO, CREATE MUSIC GROUP

### Alexandre Williams, 32

CO-FOUNDER/COO, CREATE MUSIC GROUP

Create Music Group, which focuses on unsigned artists that self-release their music, reports that it surpassed \$100 million in revenue in 2019. Moreover, it says that it has 500 clients alone that generate \$3,000 per month in revenue. “We’re laser-focused on creating a middle class for the music industry,” says Strauss, “and we believe that over the next five years, as we expand globally, we will have over 10,000 artists that are able to support themselves entirely through streaming royalties — something that has never been possible in the industry traditionally dominated by a select few.”

**ADVICE FOR YOUNG INDIE ARTISTS (STRAUSS)** ▶ “Make quick decisions, release music, engage with fans and be authentic.”

### Drew Hill, 42

MANAGING DIRECTOR, PROPER MUSIC GROUP

Proper, the largest indie distributor in the United Kingdom with nearly 11% of the country’s physical recorded-music market, was on track in 2020 to boost year-on-year sales some 50%, says Hill. But the pandemic reversed that trend. Still, 2019 was a strong year for the company, which continues to grow through acquisitions of smaller players. Hill cites Proper’s purchase in October 2019 of Topic Records, with some 2,500 publishing copyrights and 12,000 master recordings. As the pandemic spread, Hill set in motion a plan for about half of Proper’s staff to work remotely, with only the company’s 60 pickers and packers remaining at the warehouse. With safe practices in place, they move about 100,000 units per week.

**WHEN BUSINESSES REOPEN** ▶ “I don’t think I’m ever going to moan again about having to go to three gigs in one night.”



Wesley Schultz of The Lumineers, who toured with labelmates on Dualtone Records.

### Philip Kaplan, 44

FOUNDER/CEO, DISTROKID

Under Kaplan, DistroKid has had a busy 18 months, first with Spotify acquiring a minority passive stake in the company and then becoming one of the first indie distributors specializing in DIY artists to cut a deal with TikTok. While the company says it distributes the music of over 2 million artists with 10 million-plus songs, Kaplan says he is most proud of DistroKid’s “culture of innovation, speed and fun,” with zero turnover of team members. He notes that DistroKid is on its way to revenue of \$200 million and that the company’s close relationships with digital service providers means that when they “have a new idea that can help artists, DistroKid is one of the first calls they make.”

**INDIES STEPPING UP** ▶ “Several of us at DistroKid have done volunteer engineering work in the community. In March, we gave every employee \$1,000 extra to help with any unforeseen issues — which many then donated to COVID-19-related causes.”

### Roy LaManna, 40

CEO, VYDIA

“We have our own version of what the future of music looks like,” says LaManna of Vydia, an end-to-end platform that manages digital distribution, data flow, rights management and payments to artists. A high-profile test for Vydia came with its role in the release of *Jesus Is Born*, the first album from Kanye West’s Sunday Service Choir. The company received less than 24 hours’ notice, on Christmas Eve, of West’s desire to deliver the project on Christmas Day. Vydia received the tracks at 5 a.m. the morning of Dec. 25, and the album and artwork reached major streaming services within the hour. Says LaManna: “I’m proud that we are blazing our own trail.”

**INDIES STEPPING UP** ▶ “The worst of times often brings out the best in people, and it has been amazing to see various independent organizations, artists, managers and labels sharing resources and opportunities to help everyone get through this.”

### Tracy Maddux

CEO, AVL DIGITAL GROUP

Maddux oversaw AVL’s sale in 2019 to Downtown Music Holdings. Early this year, AVL acquired the Dutch distributor FUGA, bringing “some exceptional music industry executives and technologists” into its fold, he says. With the combination of FUGA’s European presence and AVL’s U.S.-focused distribution flagship, CD Baby, the company’s independent artists released 30,000 titles in April — “an unprecedented pace,” says Maddux.

**HOW HE WORKS NOW** ▶ “I used to travel internationally all the time. I haven’t been out of the country since February. Working to communicate and lead a global music organization from Portland, Ore., is a new challenge. But since we’re all using the same technologies globally — Zoom, Slack — it really feels that we haven’t missed a beat.”

### Brad Navin, 49

CEO, THE ORCHARD

### Colleen Theis, 51

COO, THE ORCHARD

### Mary Ashley Johnson, 46

SENIOR VP NORTH AMERICA, LABEL MANAGEMENT AND SALES, THE ORCHARD

### Alan Becker, 66

SENIOR VP PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT, THE ORCHARD

In the past year, says Theis, The Orchard grew its global team by six new offices in Amsterdam; Beijing; Manila, the Philippines; Tokyo; Nairobi, Kenya; and Johannesburg. It also “had chart-topping releases from around the world and lifted our clients’ overall business by continuously launching products and driving strategy.” Navin says that on the homefront, such varied releases as the latest Billboard 200-topping albums from The Raconteurs and BTS “demonstrate diversity of genres, audiences and even formats — but validates the fact that all music matters.”

**HOW THEY WORK NOW (NAVIN)** ▶ “Time management has been the most dramatic change. Because of video chats, we have crisp and effective meetings both internally and externally, while still making it more personal than an audio call. The Orchard team and industry at large seem to be super engaged.”

### Ben Patterson, 42

FOUNDER/CEO, DASHGO

In March 2019, Downtown acquired AVL Digital Group, the parent company of



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distributor DashGo. (AVL had previously acquired the online indie distributor CD Baby in 2018.) The Downtown deal “really supercharged our ability to support” global growth, says Patterson. Shared assets now stretch from Brazil to Taiwan to complement DashGo’s 15-person staff in its Los Angeles headquarters. Under Patterson, the company has grown to the point where DashGo’s indie artists and labels average over 1 billion combined monthly streams, with its application programming interface powering two dozen platforms worldwide. He’s especially proud that DashGo-distributed regional Mexican group Los Tucanes de Tijuana made the main stage at Coachella in 2019.

**LOOKING FORWARD TO WHEN** ▶ He can “load the kids in the car and wander aimlessly around a big-box store.”

### Milana Rabkin Lewis

CEO, STEM

### Kristin Graziani

VP ARTIST AND LABEL RELATIONS, STEM

Building on STEM’s success in offering distribution and payment technology to independent artists, the company last year launched STEM Direct, a membership service that gives artists one-to-one access to specialists in their specific genre. Each STEM Direct specialist “not only supports the nuts and bolts of distribution and marketing and financial insights, but also ensures success around playlist and promotion strategy,” says Graziani. The company’s latest launch, Scale by STEM, is a flat-fee financing product for artist advances. It “affords the flexibility to access capital when needed and gives artists the latitude to assemble the right team around them,” says Graziani.

**HOW SHE WORKS NOW (GRAZIANI)** ▶ “I am fortunate to have a team that was able to have a smooth transition to remote working. That being said, nothing can replace a meal with an artist or handshake with a manager.”

### Bob Roback, 53

CEO, INGROOVES MUSIC GROUP

### Amy Dietz

GM/EXECUTIVE VP, INGROOVES MUSIC GROUP

Following the acquisition of Ingrooves by Universal Music Group in February 2019, the distributor — which offers indie labels artificial intelligence-based data insights and marketing tools — has opened offices in São Paulo, Madrid, Tokyo and Seoul, and increased its presence in Australia and the Nordic territories. The global expansion includes key deals with labels like Brazilian heavyweight GR6, the United Kingdom’s Dirty Hit (home to The 1975) and Carbon Fiber Music.

**INDEPENDENCE DEFINED (ROBACK)** ▶ “Content owners and creators acting as entrepreneurs who rent infrastructure and services.”

### Ed Seaman, 54

COO, MVD ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

In an industry increasingly focused on streaming, MVD stands out among a handful of distributors in the United States still focusing on shipping physical music and video releases to brick-and-mortar stores — with 2019 marking the strongest revenue year in the company’s 32-year history. MVD’s revenue is split almost equally between DVDs and Blu-ray versus music sales, with digital comprising about 22% of MVD’s music revenue. (The remainder comes from CDs and vinyl.)

“As streaming continues to grow in both music and video, many consumers recognize that they don’t own anything,” says Seaman. “So labels that make collectible products thrive in this environment. While there are less shelves to merchandise products, the demand is growing.”

### Elijah Seton, 38

PRESIDENT OF INDEPENDENT MUSIC AND CREATOR SERVICES, WARNER MUSIC GROUP

### John Franck

EXECUTIVE VP COMMERCIAL AND MARKETING, ALTERNATIVE DISTRIBUTION ALLIANCE WORLDWIDE

Warner Music Group’s independent distributor, ADA Worldwide — where Franck was named executive vp commercial and marketing last July — is demonstrating its “strong culture” through the pandemic, says Seton. One executive’s spouse has made branded face masks for the global team. Seton himself has been raising two infants while his husband has worked as a New York hospital doctor and self-isolated separately from the family. Among ADA’s recent notable wins was partnering with Incubus and Ciara, and distributing the original soundtrack to *Joker*, whose composer, Hildur Guðnadóttir, won an Academy Award in February for best original score.

**INDEPENDENCE DEFINED (FRANCK)** ▶ “A culture of trust. Empowering our team to experiment, create, question, innovate, debate and [share] ideas, while having the runway to fail without judgment.”

### Dean Tabaac

HEAD OF AMPED DISTRIBUTION

Proving the vitality of physical music in a market with fewer places to sell it is a challenge that keeps Tabaac motivated. “I’m most proud of the combined tenacity of our labels and us to keep physical releases relevant, knowing that other distributors, and the labels they represent, are deemphasizing those configurations,” he says. Tabaac cites the ability of AMPED’s distribution centers to “continually get product into retailers, offline and online, faster than anyone else.”

**URGENT INDIE ISSUE** ▶ To meet the demand for vinyl, says Tabaac, “where we used to have a 40-foot row that was highly automated for processing CD orders, we had to



Seton (right) with Live From Here host Chris Thile in New York in March.

build three mezzanines so our people could do manual LP picks more efficiently.”

### Darius Van Arman, 48

CO-CEO, SECRETLY DISTRIBUTION

### Christopher Welz, 39

MANAGING DIRECTOR, SECRETLY DISTRIBUTION (COMPANY DECLINED TO PARTICIPATE)

With its own physical distribution pipeline stateside and around the world, Secretly Distribution is thriving, scoring a record year with U.S. revenue in excess of \$50 million. The company has taken on new label partners while continuing to work with affiliated labels Secretly Canadian, Jagjaguwar and others. The distributor recently completed a systems integration to strengthen its repertoire management and digital supply chain capabilities. Early in 2020, the company celebrated the four Grammy Award nominations (including record and album of the year) earned by Bon Iver’s *i,i*, released by Jagjaguwar. Secretly executives state they have decided to decline comment “for any lists that do not reflect diversity and that are not fully transparent about their selection process.”

### Michael Weissman

PRESIDENT, SOUNDCLOUD

In February, Weissman helped close the deal through which SiriusXM took a \$75 million minority stake in SoundCloud. “I wasn’t expecting the timing to be perfect, but it essentially was,” he says. The timing was also perfect in April when SoundCloud CEO Kerry Trainor announced a plan worth \$15 million to support creators during the shutdown and bolster their careers long term. During the same month, Weissman helped lead the launch of Repost by SoundCloud, giving all SoundCloud creators — 25 million-plus, according to the company — access to professional marketing and monetization services and distribution features. Weissman says he was proud “to see the teams come together using Slack, email and various video tools to

release a product into the market [during the pandemic] and also have the customer reception to be unbelievable.”

**BEST ADVICE FOR A YOUNG INDIE ARTIST** ▶ “Learn the business side of music, how deals work, especially on rights. It’s a complex industry.”

### Emmanuel Zunz, 47

FOUNDER/CEO, ONERPM

Nashville-based OneRPM, an indie digital distribution company, continued to expand its international presence (with staff now in 20 locations worldwide) while creating a new content management system to improve the quality of service it provides to clients, says Zunz. “It’s a way for us to manage marketing globally, allowing us to create campaigns and [oversee] them across all our 20 offices. It enables us to be held accountable” with the ability to measure performance. Looking ahead, he adds, the new system “will allow us to scale our business without sacrificing quality of service to our clients.”

**URGENT INDIE ISSUE** ▶ “[With the] consolidation of indie distribution, the amount of money going for artist advances is absolutely insane.”

### CONTRIBUTORS

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### METHODOLOGY

The record companies featured on *Billboard*’s Indie Power Players list are defined as independent because they are not owned by one of the three major music groups: Sony, Warner and Universal. Distributors are defined as independent, regardless of ownership, based on the repertoire they market, largely from labels not under the majors’ umbrellas. *Billboard* editors and reporters weighed a variety of factors in determining the 2020 Indie Power Players list including, but not limited to, nominations by peers, colleagues and superiors at selected music companies, as well as recommendations by indie trade group AZIM. In addition to nominations, editors weigh the success of each executive’s label or distributor as measured by chart, sales and streaming performance. Career trajectory and industry impact were also considered. Unless otherwise noted, *Billboard* Boxscore and Nielsen Music/MRC Data are the sources for tour grosses and sales/streaming data, respectively. Nielsen is also the source for radio audience metrics. Unless otherwise noted, album streaming figures cited represent collective U.S. on-demand audio totals for an album’s tracks, and song/artist streaming figures represent U.S. on-demand audio and video totals



**MVD congratulates its entire team for being an Indie Power Player.**

We recognize the hard work of our team through the good and difficult times. We thank our retail customers, particularly the independents, along with our record labels, recording artists, and film labels for their support. **Without you, we are nothing.**

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P

THE PLAYERS



Angel Olsen, who performed on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* in 2019, has been nominated for album of the year.

# A2IM'S LIBERA AWARDS GO VIRTUAL

UNSTOPPABLE EVEN DURING A PANDEMIC, THE CELEBRATION OF ARTISTS ACROSS GENRES WILL CONCLUDE THE FIRST ONLINE INDIE WEEK

Indie artists, and the companies that bring their music to the world, have a reputation as fast, nimble and responsive to change. So it's no surprise that the American Association of Independent Music (A2IM), the trade group for the indie sector, acted quickly in March to reinvent its annual Indie Week conference scheduled for June 15-18 as an online event, with over 50 panels, talks and workshops.

"Because of the challenges being faced by the whole world, it was even more important to bring the family of independents together again this year," says Richard James Burgess, president/CEO of A2IM, which is marking its 15th anniversary of promoting education, advocacy and

community for the indie-music industry.

Burgess notes that the digital delivery of data, "the very technology that disrupted our industry two decades ago, is now enabling us to maintain some momentum through this pandemic. A2IM was formed to deal with a global crisis of change, and we continue to adapt so we can better champion the independent artists and labels whose diverse voices need to be heard."

The presentation on June 18 of the Libera Awards, which will recognize the best indie releases and feature live online performances, will be the high point of Indie Week. Following is a list of the 2020 nominees, as provided by A2IM.

—THOM DUFFY

## ALBUM OF THE YEAR

SPONSORED BY THE ORCHARD

**FKA TWIGS** *Magdalene* (Young Turks)  
**ANGEL OLSEN** *All Mirrors* (Jagjaguwar)  
**BRITTANY HOWARD** *Jaime* (ATO Records)  
**ORVILLE PECK** *Pony* (Sub Pop Records)  
**BIG THIEF** *U.F.O.F.* (4AD)

## BEST LIVE ACT

**FLYING LOTUS** (Warp Records)  
**COURTNEY BARNETT** (Mom + Pop Music)  
**MAVIS STAPLES** (ANTI-)  
**FONTAINES D.C.** (Partisan Records)  
**IDLES** (Partisan Records)

## BEST ALTERNATIVE ROCK ALBUM

**THE NATIONAL** *I Am Easy To Find* (4AD)  
**FONTAINES D.C.** *Dogrel* (Partisan Records)  
**BIG THIEF** *U.F.O.F.* (4AD)  
**SHARON VAN ETTEN** *Remind Me Tomorrow* (Jagjaguwar)  
**ANGEL OLSEN** *All Mirrors* (Jagjaguwar)

## BEST AMERICANA ALBUM

**THE LUMINEERS** *III* (Dualtone Music Group)  
**KEB' MO'** *Oklahoma* (Concord Records/Concord)  
**CALEXICO AND IRON & WINE** *Years To*

*Burn* (Sub Pop Records)  
**CASS McCOMBS** *Tip of the Sphere* (ANTI-)  
**STEVE GUNN** *The Unseen In Between* (Matador Records)

## BEST BLUES ALBUM

**CHRISTONE "KINGFISH" INGRAM** *Kingfish* (Alligator Records)  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Ann Arbor Blues Festival 1969 Vol. 1 & 2* (Third Man Records)  
**NORTH MISSISSIPPI ALLSTARS** *Up and Rolling* (New West Records)  
**DELBERT McCLINTON AND**

**SELF-MADE MEN** *Tall, Dark, and Handsome* (Thirty Tigers)  
**MAVIS STAPLES** *We Get By* (ANTI-)

## BEST CLASSICAL ALBUM

**PAUL CARDALL** *Peaceful Piano* (Stone Angel Music/CD Baby)  
**FLORENCE PRICE** *John Jeter/Fort Smith Symphony — Symphonies 1 & 4* (Naxos American Classics)  
**BETH GIBBONS** *Henryk Górecki: Symphony No. 3 (Symphony of Sorrowful Songs)* (Domino)  
**RACHEL FULLER** *Animal Requiem* (Wistler Records/Bob Frank Entertainment)  
**BENNY GEBERT** *Triptych* (Arts & Crafts)

## BEST COUNTRY ALBUM

**HAYES CARLL** *What It Is* (Dualtone Music Group)  
**ROBERT ELLIS** *Texas Piano Man* (New West Records)  
**ORVILLE PECK** *Pony* (Sub Pop Records)  
**KELSEY WALDON** *White Noise/White Lines* (Thirty Tigers)  
**JIM LAUDERDALE** *From Another World* (Yep Roc Records)

## BEST DANCE/ELECTRONIC ALBUM

**HOLLY HERNDON** *PROTO* (4AD)  
**THOM YORKE** *Anima* (XL Recordings)  
**TYCHO** *Weather* (Mom + Pop Music)  
**HOT CHIP** *A Bath Full of Ecstasy* (Domino)  
**FLYING LOTUS** *Flamagra* (Warp Records)

## BEST FOLK/BLUEGRASS ALBUM

**BEDOUINE** *Bird Songs of a Killjoy* (Spacebomb Records)  
**PATTY GRIFFIN** *Patty Griffin* (Thirty Tigers)  
**JULIA JACKLIN** *Crushing* (Polyvinyl Record Co.)  
**JAKE XERXES FUSSELL** *Out of Sight* (Paradise of Bachelors)  
**JESSICA PRATT** *Quiet Signs* (Mexican Summer)

## BEST HIP-HOP/RAP ALBUM

SPONSORED BY SONGTRUST

**CHANCE THE RAPPER** *The Big Day* (Chance the Rapper/Ditto Music)  
**DANNY BROWN** *uknowwhatimsayin* (Warp Records)  
**CLIPPING.** *There Existed an Addiction to Blood* (Sub Pop Records)  
**DENZEL CURRY** *ZUU* (Loma Vista Recordings)  
**MEGAN THEE STALLION** *Fever* (300 Entertainment/1501)

## BEST INDIE ROCK ALBUM

**CRUMB** *Jinx* (Crumb Records)  
**(SANDY) ALEX G** *House of Sugar* (Domino)



**JAY SOM** *Anak Ko*  
(Polyvinyl Record Co.)  
**WEYES BLOOD** *Titanic Rising*  
(Sub Pop Records)  
**CHARLY BLISS** *Young Enough*  
(Barsuk Records)

### BEST JAZZ ALBUM

SPONSORED BY QOBUZ  
**TERRI LYNE CARRINGTON AND SOCIAL SCIENCE** *Waiting Game* (Motéma Music)  
**HIROMI** *Spectrum* (Telarc/Concord)  
**NERIJA** *Blume* (Domino)  
**NAT "KING" COLE** *Hittin' the Ramp: The Early Years: 1936-1943*  
(Resonance Records)  
**ERIC DOLPHY** *Musical Prophet: The Expanded 1963 New York Studio Sessions*  
(Resonance Records)  
**BILL EVANS** *Evans in England*  
(Resonance Records)

### BEST LATIN ALBUM

**JUAN WAUTERS** *La Onda de Juan Pablo*  
(Captured Tracks)  
**RODRIGO Y GABRIELA** *Mettavolution*  
(ATO Records)  
**Y LA BAMBA** *Mujeres* (Tender Loving Empire Records)  
**PRESERVATION HALL JAZZ BAND** *A Tuba to Cuba* (Sub Pop Records)  
**SECH** *Sueños* (Rich Music)

### BEST MAINSTREAM ROCK ALBUM

**MELISSA ETHERIDGE** *The Medicine Show*  
(Concord Records/Concord)  
**THE RACONTEURS** *Help Us Stranger*  
(Third Man Records)  
**DESERT SESSIONS** *Volumes 11 & 12*  
(Matador Records)  
**REIGNWOLF** *Hear Me Out*  
(Reignwolf/Ditto Music)  
**CIGARETTES AFTER SEX** *Cry*  
(Partisan Records)

### BEST METAL ALBUM

**BORIS** *LOVE & EVOL* (Third Man Records)  
**CATTLE DECAPITATION** *Death Atlas*  
(Metal Blade)  
**KING GIZZARD & THE LIZARD WIZARD** *Infest the Rats' Nest* (ATO Records)  
**BABYMETAL** *Metal Galaxy* (Cooking Vinyl)  
**PERIPHERY** *Periphery IV: Hail Stan*  
(3DOT Recordings)

### BEST OUTLIER ALBUM

**CATE LE BON** *Reward* (Mexican Summer)  
**KING GIZZARD & THE LIZARD WIZARD** *Fishing for Fishies* (ATO Records)  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Thank You, Mister Rogers: Music & Memories* (BFD/Bob Frank Entertainment)  
**KIM GORDON** *No Home Record* (Matador Records)  
**ALEX CAMERON** *Miami Memory*  
(Secretly Canadian)



The musical diversity among the independent artists nominated for this year's Libera Awards is represented by (clockwise from top left) Melissa Etheridge, Sech, Clint Maedgen (left) and Charlie Gabriel of Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Justin Vernon of Bon Iver and Mavis Staples.

### BEST PUNK/EMO ALBUM

**AMYL AND THE SNIFFERS** *Amyl and the Sniffers* (ATO Records)  
**THE MENZINGERS** *Hello Exile*  
(Epitaph Records)  
**EMPATH** *Active Listening: Night on Earth*  
(Fat Possum Records/Get Better Records)  
**AMERICAN FOOTBALL** *American Football (LP3)* (Polyvinyl Record Co.)  
**BAD RELIGION** *Age of Unreason*  
(Epitaph Records)

### BEST R&B ALBUM

**SUDAN ARCHIVES** *Athena*  
(Stones Throw Records)  
**FKA TWIGS** *Magdalene* (Young Turks)  
**BLOOD ORANGE** *Angel's Pulse* (Domino)  
**JAMILA WOODS** *Legacy! Legacy!*  
(Jagjaguwar)  
**DURAND JONES & THE INDICATIONS** *American Love Call* (Dead Oceans)

### BEST RE-ISSUE

**VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Kankyō Ongaku: Japanese Ambient, Environmental & New Age Music 1980-1990*  
(Light in the Attic Records)  
**RAY CHARLES** *Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music, Volumes 1 & 2*  
(Concord Records/Concord)  
**SUPERCHUNK** *Acoustic Foolish*  
(Merge Records)  
**STEREOLAB** 2019 reissue campaign



**JULIA JACKLIN** (Polyvinyl Record Co.)

### CREATIVE PACKAGING

**VARIOUS ARTISTS** *VMP Anthology: The Story of Ghostly International*  
(Ghostly International)  
**FLYING LOTUS** *Flamagra* (Warp Records)  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** *WXAXRXP* box set  
(Warp Records)  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS** *Sub Pop Singles Club*  
(Sub Pop Records)  
**IDLES** *A Beautiful Thing: IDLES Live at Le Bataclan* (Partisan Records)

### INDEPENDENT CHAMPION

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### LABEL OF THE YEAR (LARGE)

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### LABEL OF THE YEAR (MEDIUM)

**4AD**  
**SADDLE CREEK**  
**ATO RECORDS**  
**SACRED BONES**  
**DRAG CITY**

### LABEL OF THE YEAR (SMALL)

**INNOVATIVE LEISURE**  
**FATHER/DAUGHTER RECORDS**  
**OH BOY RECORDS**  
**HARDLY ART**  
**WICHITA RECORDINGS**

### MARKETING GENIUS

**THOM YORKE** *Anima* (XL Recordings)  
**BLACK MIDI** *Schlagenheim*  
(Rough Trade Records)  
**MEGAN THEE STALLION** *Hot Girl Summer*  
(300 Entertainment)  
**FKA TWIGS** *Magdalene* (Young Turks)  
**BETTER OBLIVION COMMUNITY CENTER** *Better Oblivion Community Center*  
(Dead Oceans)

### VIDEO OF THE YEAR

**ALDOUS HARDING** "The Barrel" (4AD)  
**FLYING LOTUS** "More" (Warp Records)  
**FKA TWIGS** "Cellophane" (Young Turks)  
**ORVILLE PECK** "Dead of Night"  
(Sub Pop Records)  
**FONTAINES D.C.** "Big" (Partisan Records)

### BEST SYNC USAGE

**IDLES** *Peaky Blinders* (Partisan Records)  
**BON IVER** "Naeem" — Nike "Beginnings: LeBron" (Jagjaguwar)  
**KAMASI WASHINGTON** Apple  
(Young Turks)  
**PERFUME GENIUS** *The Goldfinch* trailer  
(Matador Records)  
**CIGARETTES AFTER SEX** "Opera House" — *Killing Eve* (Partisan Records)

### BEST WORLD ALBUM

**AFRO B** *Afrowave 3*  
(AfroWave Digital/EMPIRE)  
**MDOU MOCTAR** *Blue Stage Sessions*  
(Third Man Records)  
**ALTIN GÜN** *Gece* (ATO Records)  
**TINARIWEN** *Amadjar* (ANTI-)  
**SINKANE** *Dépaysé* (City Slang)

### BREAKTHROUGH ARTIST/RELEASE

SPONSORED BY INGROOVES  
**SUDAN ARCHIVES** *Athena*  
(Stones Throw Records)  
**BLACK PUMAS** (ATO Records)  
**FONTAINES D.C.** (Partisan Records)  
**ORVILLE PECK** (Sub Pop Records)



# UPCOMING SPECIAL FEATURES



This special Gaming issue will highlight how artists, labels and promoters are harnessing major gaming platforms to market their music to a larger - and more engaged - audience. The editorial package will also spotlight other pioneering companies, executives and innovation at the intersection of music and gaming.



Behind every artist, songwriter and music producer is a trusted group of advisers who provide guidance, advice and negotiate deals. Billboard's 6th annual Top Music Lawyers list will recognize the biggest names and most prominent legal minds in the world of music and entertainment law. They are the deal makers behind the major contracts and lawsuits in the music industry.

**ISSUE DATE:** 7/25  
**AD CLOSE:** 7/15  
**MATERIALS DUE:** 7/16

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# billboard



# Fight Song

STORIES OF ACTION DURING THE PANDEMIC



## TEGAN QUIN

CO-FOUNDER, TEGAN AND SARA FOUNDATION

Since their debut in 1998, twin sisters Tegan and Sara Quin have advocated for LGBTQ and gender equality amid a recording career that has sold over 1 million albums and earned three Juno Awards and one Grammy nomination. The Vancouver-based duo — who in 2019 released a memoir, *High School*, and a new album, *Hey, I'm Just Like You* — launched the Tegan and Sara Foundation in 2016 to improve the lives of fellow LGBTQ women and girls. In March, TSF established a series of community grants to meet the immediate needs created by the coronavirus pandemic among LGBTQ people, who are particularly vulnerable to the virus due to factors including

“compromised immune systems, higher rates of tobacco use and provider discrimination,” according to TSF. The program provided \$29,000 to grassroots organizations in North America through microgrants worth between \$500 and \$1,000 in its first round; the foundation is currently funding another round to benefit black-led organizations. Tegan explains why the work of TSF (which accepts donations at [teganandsarafoundation.org/donate-to-tsf](http://teganandsarafoundation.org/donate-to-tsf)) is so crucial.



### MY FIGHT SONG “BEDS ARE BURNING,” MIDNIGHT OIL

“It’s a standout protest song written on behalf of Aboriginal communities in Australia, which I took to mean we have to return what isn’t ours.”

For 23 years, Sara and I have been playing music and meeting fans, and a massive part of our audience is female or queer-identifying. But over the past few years, we started to hear stories that didn’t sound like ours anymore. Young queer people we talked to still felt an enormous amount of pressure and shame around their identity. Those stories sparked us to want to do more and fund programs to increase positive representation. There was

so much we didn’t know, and it has been so much harder to raise money than we thought. Corporations love to throw money behind Pride, but with [events] being shut down this year, all of the physical spaces and money dried up.

A lot of the organizations we were interested in helping didn’t have the power or staff to apply for grants, so we tried to make our process simple and easy. All of the organizations [selected in the first round] are small and doing necessary work. To have this foundation is incredibly satisfying, gratifying and empowering, but it also hurts a lot. We’ve raised over \$1 million, but it took three years. I wish more people cared about trans women of color. I wish that people didn’t think that because we got marriage equality, the fight is over. We’re growing and learning, and the social justice community has embraced us, but it can be hard to pull back the curtain and see how the hot dogs are made.—AS TOLD TO NICK WILLIAMS

1.-2. Self-quarantine selfies of Tegan (left) and Sara Quin taken in Vancouver on June 1. 3. From left: Imagine Dragons’ Dan Reynolds, activist Emma Gonzalez, Kesha and Tegan Quin at Reynolds’ LoveLoud Festival in West Valley City, Utah, in 2019. 4. Tegan and Sara at New York City Pride in 2017. 5. Tegan (left) and Sara participated in a panel moderated by *Billboard* vp Pride Alexis Fish at the *Billboard-The Hollywood Reporter* 2019 Pride Summit in West Hollywood. 6. The merchandise table at Our Night: The First Annual Tegan and Sara Foundation Celebration held at Warner Music Group in Los Angeles on Dec. 3, 2019.



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