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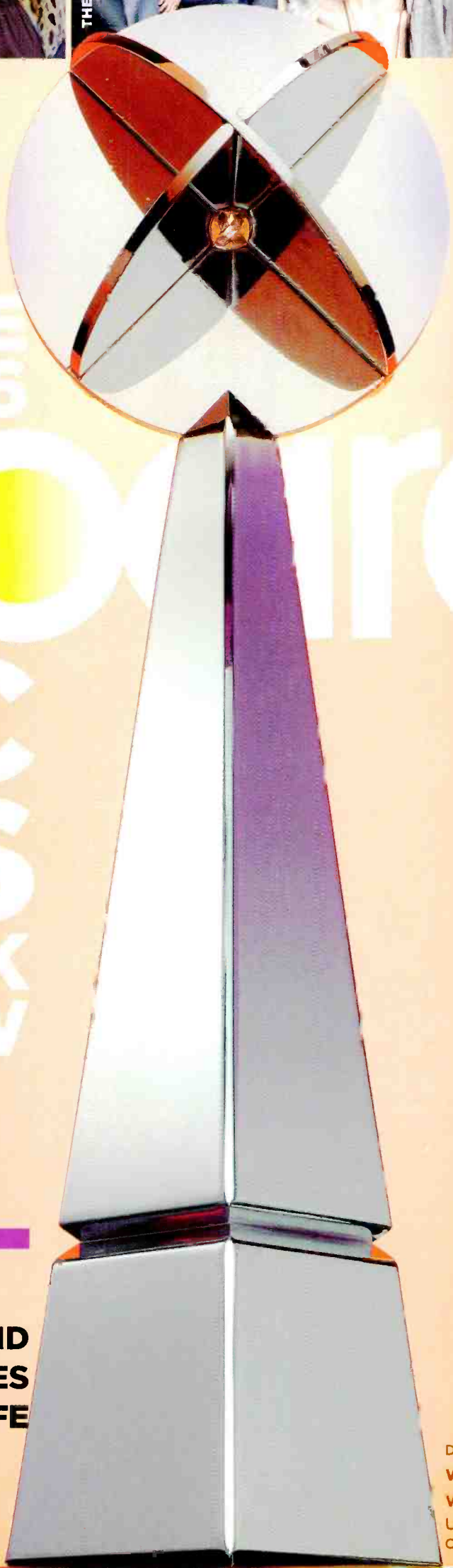


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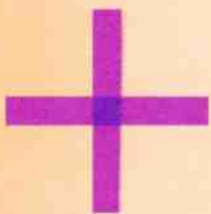


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THE 2006 Billboard MUSIC AWARDS SNEAK PREVIEW



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PAULINA RUBIO // HOLIDAY SALES UPDATES
NASHVILLE'S INDIE SCENE // SECOND LIFE**

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No. 1

ON THE CHARTS

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360 DEGREES OF BILLBOARD

HOME FRONT

Conferences

MIDEM
Nearly 10,000 music professionals from almost 100 countries will meet to do deals, network, learn and check out hot new talent at **MIDEM 2007**, taking place Jan. 21-25 at the Palais des Festivals in Cannes. More information at midem.com.

MUSIC & MONEY
Billboard's 2007 **Music & Money Conference**, set for March 1 at the St. Regis Hotel in New York, is the premier event for the music industry's decision-makers, entrepreneurs and companies. For more information, go to billboardevents.com.

Television

CHART-TOPPERS
Don't miss the 2006 **Billboard Music Awards** airing Dec. 4 on Fox, featuring performances by the year's chart-topping artists as determined by Billboard's weekly charts. For more information, go to billboardevents.com.

Blogging

THE JADED INSIDER
Citizen Cope busking on the subway? Queens of the Stone Age slumming it in a small club? EMF in a cheese commercial? Unbelievable! Get those scoops and much more on the Billboard blog, only at jadedinsider.com.

ON THE COVER: FERGIE: ELLEN VON UNWERTH; JANET JACKSON: JAMES WHITE; THE KILLERS: ANTON CORBIN; MARY J. BLIGE: DIAMILLA ROSA COCHRAN/WIREIMAGE.COM; THE FRAY: TIM JACKSON/WIREIMAGE.COM; GWEN STEFANI: MARK SQUIRES; LUDACRIS: PAUL ARESU; THIS PAGE: WATTS; MINCHIN III

TAMARA CONNIFF
Executive Editor/Associate Publisher
Billboard



The Crack Connection

Why Criminals Sell Pirated CDs

Dealing pirated CDs on street corners is more lucrative than selling crack. No, really. Preparing cocaine for distribution costs dealers between \$1 and \$2, depending on the amount and the cocaine base, according to law enforcement officials. Preparing CDs costs only 45 cents. Between the cost of production and the cost of being caught, it's no wonder so many criminals opt for piracy.

People often assume, "Oh, they aren't really criminals, they're just burning and selling CDs." But think again. In Los Angeles, gang members and drug dealers are now setting up shop to sell CDs. And why not? Selling cocaine is a felony. In California, if you are caught with fewer than 1,000 pirated CDs, it's only a misdemeanor. (Thankfully, as of Jan. 1, 2007, the law will be changed to 100 CDs).

Rudy Giuliani had a good fix for this when he was mayor of New York. Under his no-tolerance policy, the New York Police Department was mandated to bust anyone for committing even such "minor" crimes as subway turnstile jumping or graffiti. Giuliani's theory was that minor crimes turn into big crimes. Since drug sales and CD piracy are clearly linked in Los Angeles, zero

tolerance could be the answer there, too.

The RIAA and the Motion Picture Assn. of America have been working closely with law officials to clamp down on piracy through raids and busts. In fact, the key players spoke at an anti-piracy panel during the Hollywood Reporter/Billboard Film & TV Music Conference in November. Panelists included Univision Music Group president José Behar; Marcus Cohen, RIAA regional counsel for anti-piracy; Wendy Greuel, Los Angeles city council member, second district; detective Rick Ishitani, Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) anti-piracy unit; and MPAA VP of U.S. anti-piracy operations Mike Robinson. Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who could not attend the panel, even prepared a written statement expressing support for his city's anti-piracy efforts.

What's interesting is that Los Angeles, the capital of the entertainment business, has only five detectives and one police officer in the anti-piracy section of its narcotics vice division. Piracy operations, working out of storage units all over Los Angeles, far outnumber the cops.

To deal with what has essentially become organized crime, the anti-piracy division

needs a bigger force. It also needs more money for such costs as rental cars, so detectives aren't seen in the same vehicles staking out locations, and for overtime, so other detectives in vice can opt to work with the anti-piracy unit if they choose to do so.

As of Nov. 22, the anti-piracy unit has served 58 search warrants, made 190 arrests and recovered more than \$10.7 million in contraband for 2006. Imagine what it could do with more manpower.

Why is it important? Behar said it best: "It's killing the music business." Not just the artists—it's killing the songwriters, the engineers, the recording studios, the record stores, the graphic designers who do album art, photographers, mixers, producers and the mailroom clerk at a record label.

According to a study done in New York, which has yet to be released, counterfeit goods overall have cost the city and its residents \$1 billion in tax revenue. Imagine what it's doing to Los Angeles.

So, to all of us affected by these illegal round discs, let's support the LAPD and other city law enforcement efforts. If we make enough noise, maybe, just maybe more funds will get approved. To make a difference, go to riaa.com.

LEILA COBO
Executive Director of Content and Programming for
Latin Music and Entertainment
Billboard



RBD's 'Celestial' Success

Latin Teens And Tweens, Served At Last

RBD's "Celestial" bows at No. 1 on Billboard's Top Latin Albums chart this issue, scanning 117,000 copies, more than five times that of its closest competitor. In sheer sales, it's the highest debut for a Latin album this year and historically, second only to Shakira's "Fijación Oral, Vol. 1," which scanned 157,000 in its first week in 2005.

However, "Celestial" notches its 100,000-plus sales not in a week but in just three days, as label EMI Televisa took the unusual route of releasing the album the Friday after Thanksgiving. The risky strategy paid off by zeroing in on Latin teens and tweens, a hugely underserved audience.

The majority of the album's sales, more than 90%, came from mass merchants. And among those, the bulk came from Wal-Mart, which sponsored an RBD Thanksgiving special that aired on Univision and packaged the CD with a DVD of the first season of "Rebelde," the TV show that spawned RBD. At \$16.98, this was a good deal.

But RBD's sales aren't about price. The group's fans are die-hards, and they want to get as close as they can to it. No wonder RBD has three other titles on the chart, and all of them rose in sales this issue, including first album "Rebelde," which has been on the chart 90 weeks.

In contrast, although RBD has a massive online following—the group's Web site has more than 2 million unique visitors per month—online sales were less than 1%. It goes back to the physical need of owning a tangible product when you are a fan in this age bracket.

Given its success, why aren't there more acts like RBD?

Because it's been years since the Latin

music industry has seriously looked at this consumer. Most albums purportedly made for teens either feature older singers (30-year-olds are routinely pitched as tween-appealing) or heavy-duty romantic material that makes kids roll their eyes. This applies to other, pre-RBD TV-made groups as well.

Instead, RBD's repertoire is sweet and simple, but its members have just the right amount of edge to be cool. The group has also torn down stereotypes of who watches Spanish-language TV or listens to Spanish-language radio. Clearly, there was an appetite for the new that wasn't being fed.

Or rather, it was being fed homogeneous, preconceived fare that doesn't cut it anymore.

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School Field Trip
‘High School Musical’ takes to the road



The Sony Shuffle
Urban division faces restructuring



Lifting Waits
New three-disc set flying off shelves



Respect For Rubio
Paulina’s international marketing push



Virtual Venue
Labels hook up with Second Life site

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>>>UMG MAY PUSH APPLE FOR ROYALTY DEAL

On Nov. 28, Universal Music Group chief executive Doug Morris said he may try to fashion an iPod royalty fee with Apple Computer in the next round of negotiations in early 2007. UMG was the first major label to strike an agreement with Microsoft to receive a fee for every Zune digital media player sold. “It would be a nice idea. We have a negotiation coming up not too far. I don’t see why we wouldn’t do that... but maybe not in the same way,” Morris told the Reuters Media Summit, when asked if UMG would negotiate a royalty fee for the iPod similar to its one for the Zune.

>>>EMI TARGET OF TAKEOVER

EMI Group confirmed in a Nov. 28 statement to the London Stock Exchange that it has “received a preliminary approach for the company which may or may not lead to an offer being made for the company.” Published reports have since linked London-based Permira with the move, but representatives of Permira are staying silent on the subject. Private equity firms Goldman Sachs Group and Kohlberg Kravis Roberts were also being touted in press reports as potential suitors, as was Apollo Management.

>>>JAMBA, EMI SIGN EURO DEAL

According to published reports, mobile music company Jamba has signed an agreement with EMI Music to make content available to Jamba’s customers throughout Europe. The deal covers master ringtones, music videos and over-the-air downloads.

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UpFront

DECEMBER 9, 2006

RETAIL BY ED CHRISTMAN

Welcome To The Music Department

CD Sales At Nordstrom And Sears Could Add Up To Big Business For Labels

With music specialty stores dying by the hundreds this year between the liquidation of Tower and Musicland, Nordstrom and Sears may be picking up some of the slack as they add an entertainment cache to their own stores by carrying CDs.

Nordstrom has been testing music in 29 stores in Seattle and will roll out the category to all 157 stores in the chain by mid-December, says Michael Barber, who heads up Barber Entertainment and assists Nordstrom in the selection.

In Chicago, the Sears holding company began carrying video and videogames almost two years ago, and in November began testing music in its 789 stores, according to Sears Holding entertainment divisional merchandise manager Jim Stella.

At Nordstrom, the chain sees music as an extension of its presence as the leading fashion department store in the United States. “The key for Nordstrom is it is first and foremost a fashion retailer and we believe there are parallels between fashion and music,” says Barber, who points out that a number of artists have their own clothing lines; Gwen Stefani’s brand is carried by Nordstrom.

“We are bringing in titles that are timely and that are right for Nordstrom’s customers,” Barber says. In fact, Nordstrom is buying all kinds of titles: from new releases to select catalog titles, compilations and custom-designed artist compilations carrying the Nordstrom logo.

In stocking music, Nordstrom is placing a rack with four titles at most cash registers in the store, which in some outlets number as many as 56. What’s more, each rack is stocked with titles appropriate to the department where it is located. The only departments not carrying music are those with crowded point-of-sale merchandising displays like cosmetics.

In total, each store may carry about 50 titles, “from current hits to older titles that are somewhat timeless, but are important to highlight to our customers,” Barber says.

For example, titles featured in its young men’s section are the Killers’ “Sam’s Town,” John Mayer’s “Continuum,” Wolfmother’s self-titled debut and the Beastie

Boys’ 1989 release “Paul’s Boutique.” Meanwhile, its young women’s designer department features Beck’s “The Information,” Justin Timberlake’s “FutureSex/LoveSounds” and Feist’s “Open Season.”

“A person at the register is only seeing four titles to choose from so it is not an overwhelming impression to the customer,” Barber notes.

But it could eventually mean big business for the labels. Sources say Nordstrom is buying direct from the majors, on a one-way basis, with Barber acting as the exclusive consultant choosing titles. What’s more, they say orders range from 1,200 up to 15,000 copies per title, with the latter number usually applying to the stores’ own custom albums. So far it has licensed custom compilations of Jamie Cullum and Marvin Gaye, with a Chet Baker title coming in 2007.

Beyond, that, “we are making great efforts to provide customization within the stores,” Barber says. “And we can track sales on a daily and hourly basis and react to those sales.”

Nordstrom makes CDs shelf-ready in its own distribution center, Barber says. So far, the chain has dealt only with majors, but Barber expects to expand into the independent label community as he seeks the right titles for the chain.

Other merchants will be heartened to know that Nordstrom isn’t employing the loss-leader pricing typically used by big-box merchants, as sources say prices range from \$12 to \$24.

Meanwhile, Sears Holding is taking a different approach in carrying music. Since Sears merged with Kmart at the end of 2004, the music industry has been expecting the parent to add music to Sears stores.

In the States, Sears runs 926 full-line department stores, while its Kmart division operates about 1,400 stores. The latter chain has carried music for decades, largely racked by the Handleman Co., but in recent years Alliance Entertainment Corp. picked up about 400 of those stores.

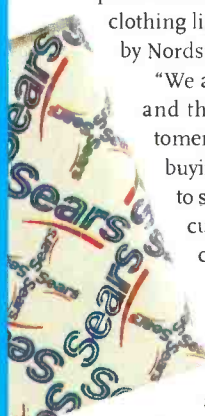
At Sears, the company initially brought in movies

and DVD games, and only began experimenting with music in November. Sources say Sears is supplied by AEC.

Sears has put racks of midline CDs, each carrying about 120 titles, in about 875 of its mall stores. The racks are located around center-aisle cashiers, says Stella, who has been with Sears for 18 months but was previously a buyer at Trans World Entertainment. Also, each electronics department carries three full-line CDs at the register.

In addition, about 75 Sears Grand stores, which were converted from Kmart free-standing locations, continue to carry full music departments like Kmart does. All Sears stores occasionally run special in-and-out music promotions as well, Stella says.

“What we are up to,” Stella says, “is trying to see how entertainment can play a role in Sears stores.”



TOURING BY MITCHELL PETERS

SCHOOL'S IN SESSION

Disney Phenomenon 'High School Musical' Hits The Road



The Disney Channel's "High School Musical" has already conquered TV and music, and now it is expanding to yet another medium. The film's cast kicked off a full-scale North American tour Nov. 29 at San Diego's ipayOne Center, and nearly every show has sold out in advance, according to AEG Live senior VP Debra Rathwell, whose company is producing the 40-city trek.

The "High School Musical" soundtrack has been the top seller of 2006 so far, having shifted 3.3 million copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. As such, it was no surprise the ipayOne Center was "staffing up opening night as big as we've ever staffed for merchandise," GM Ernie Hahn says.

High School Musical: The Concert was booked by Creative Artist Agency's Jeff Frasco, who also booked fellow Disney act the Cheetah Girls' current arena jaunt. He says Disney has recently found a

profitable synergy among its TV network, record company and radio station.

Those tools will all be used to promote the High School Musical tour, says Chip McLean, senior VP of business development/business affairs at Buena Vista Music Group. The company teamed with the Disney Channel to produce a "Disney 365" promotional program featuring the cast rehearsing for the tour, which will air in early December. "It's a program largely based on letting people know we've got the tour coming to their town," he says.

The Disney Channel is working with TV affiliates in local markets for tour contests and promos, he adds.

AEG Live is also tapping into Disney's promotional arms to market the tour, for which tickets range from \$35 to \$55. And while the target audience is 6- to 14-year-olds, newspaper ads are being utilized to draw in parents who could also potentially attend, Rathwell says. ...



Mastering engineer MARK SANTANGELO at Sony Music Studios.

INDIES BY BRIAN GARRITY

Indie Acts, Mastered Like Superstars

Sony Studios Initiative Reaches Out To Young Artists

Vitamin D, a 24-year-old Brooklyn-based DJ and independent electronic artist, was recently looking to have a song mastered for vinyl release. Normally he would turn to a company that specializes in budget postproduction services for unsigned musicians—for instance, Disc Makers. Instead he gave the job to an unlikely suitor for his business: Sony Music Studios.

In a bid to tap into an expanding universe of musicians in the independent sector, Sony Music Studios is opening itself to all comers with a new, low-cost Web-based service called Sony Music Studios Mastering Online (SIM).

For a \$99 fee, Vitamin D's song was mastered at Sony Studios by Vic Anesini, whose credits include Ozzy Osbourne, Santana, Elvis Presley, Judas Priest, Uncle Tupelo, Aerosmith, Kelis and Sly & the Family Stone.

The pairing of a mastering engineer who has helped shape the sound on hit singles including Kelis' "Milkshake" with an artist who claims 1,100 MySpace friends seems improbable at first blush.

BILLBOARD EXCLUSIVE

and the rise in home recording.

Major labels are releasing fewer albums amid a prolonged downturn in CD sales, meaning less work for studios.

And with indie artists and labels increasingly forgoing professional services in the age of Pro Tools and other computer software programs that turn any bedroom PC into a recording studio, Sony Studio executives view the SIM program as tool to build longer-term relationships with a new generation of artists.

"This is a strategic initiative on our part to grow the busi-

ness over the long haul," says Andy Kadison, executive VP at Sony Music Studios. "SIM gives us an opportunity to give up-and-coming musicians an initial introduction to what an extraordinary facility like Sony Music Studios can offer to the creative process."

The Sony BMG-owned recording arts complex is one of the top facilities in the United States and caters to superstar clientele like Britney Spears, Jennifer Lopez, Marc Anthony, Elton John and Celine Dion. Mastering fees can typically run into the thousands of dollars.

"Mastering by engineers of Sony Music Studios' caliber normally don't take on indie projects," says Kori King, GM of Empire City Records, an indie label that is also working with Sony Music Studios. "Doors to such services are normally blocked off by two main factors: exclusivity and high pricing."

But Sony Music Studios executives say SIM has been specifically tailored for artists who use popular social networking sites for promotion, such as MySpace, PureVolume and GarageBand.

SIM users can submit up to four tracks online at sonymusic-sim.com for similar mastering services enjoyed by star musicians at a rate less than \$150 per song. Jobs are handled by Sony Music Studios' team of more than a dozen mastering engineers, the majority by its staff of junior mastering engineers, and are typically turned around within 48 hours.

Brian McKenna, chief of audio operations for Sony Music Studios, says one of the program's goals is that it will lead to indie artists ultimately booking full-album mastering jobs with the studio after trying a handful of songs at an introductory rate through SIM.

Kadison adds, "We see this new service as a great way to extend the studios' reach." ...

HOME FRONT

360 DEGREES OF BILLBOARD

RINGMASTERS CHART DEBUTS

This issue marks the debut of the new Hot RingMasters chart (page 20), measuring weekly sales of the top 20 master ringtones in the United States. The chart replaces the Hot RingTones chart, which had tracked

only polyphonic ringtone sales.

Data for the Hot RingMasters chart comes from the new Nielsen RingScan monitoring program, which measures all ringtone formats—polyphonic, master and voicetones. Sales figures are collected directly from wireless oper-

ators participating in the RingScan program, as well as ringtone aggregators and other sources.

The Hot RingMasters chart will run every other week in the print edition of Billboard and weekly at billboard.biz. The Hot RingTones chart will only be accessible online.

The first No. 1 on Hot RingMasters belongs to Akon. His "Smack That," with Eminem, one of two singles that Akon has in the top five of The Bill-

board Hot 100 and Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs, leads all masters with 164,000 sold. That's 54,000 more than the units sold for this week's top-selling download, Akon and Snoop Dogg's "I Wanna Love You." The latter Akon track is No. 3 on Hot RingMasters, trailing the runner-up title, Beyoncé's "Irreplaceable."

WHAT MEN WANT

Ludacris will be the subject

of the keynote Q&A address at the second Marketing to Men Executive Summit, to be held Dec. 5 at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas. The event is hosted by Adweek, Mediaweek, Brandweek and Billboard and unites more than 200 executives in the brand marketing, entertainment and media industries to rethink traditional marketing strategies and discuss how to better capture the male consumer. ...

>>>DISNEY EYES YOUTUBE

A senior Walt Disney executive said Nov. 29 she sees limits to how long her company will tolerate copyright infringement of its programming by users of Google's online video-sharing site YouTube. Anne Sweeney, head of Disney's entertainment and news TV properties, said YouTube needed to do more than enforce its take-down policy in response to complaints about video piracy from media owners like Disney.

>>>V FEST LAUNCHES DOWN UNDER

Richard Branson's V Festival will arrive in Australia in early 2007, six months after it launched in the United States and Canada. The Australian version is a 50/50 partnership between U.K.-based Virgin Group and Melbourne-based promoter Michael Coppel Presents. Coppel has just finished the U2 tour, which shifted 600,000 tickets. The Australian event will take in two shows only—at Centennial Park in Sydney (March 31) and the Avica Resort on the Gold Coast (April 1). Among the first 12 acts unveiled are the Pixies, Pet Shop Boys, Gnarl Barkley, Groove Armada, Bumblebeez and 2 Many DJs.

continued on >>p10

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LATIN GRAMMY AWARDS

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2006 WINNERS



SHAKIRA

SONS OF THE YEAR - "LA TORERA"
RECORD OF THE YEAR
ALBUM OF THE YEAR
BEST FEMALE POP VOCAL ALBUM



CALLE 13

BEST NEW ARTIST
BEST URBAN MUSIC ALBUM
BEST SHORT FORM MUSIC VIDEO



GUSTAVO CELIS

RECORD OF THE YEAR
ALBUM OF THE YEAR
BEST ENGINEERED ALBUM



MAURICIO GUERRERO

ALBUM OF THE YEAR
BEST ENGINEERED ALBUM



LUIS FERNANDO OCHOA

ALBUM OF THE YEAR
SONG OF THE YEAR



BEBO VALDÉS

BEST INSTRUMENTAL ALBUM
BEST LONG FORM MUSIC VIDEO



**A.B. QUINTANILLA III Y
LOS KUMBIA KINGS**

BEST TROPICAL REGIONAL MEXICAN ALBUM



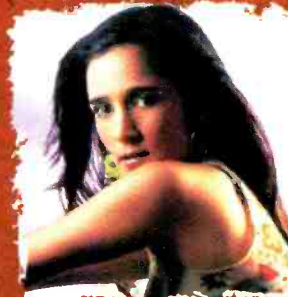
MARCOS WITT

BEST CHRISTIAN ALBUM
(SPANISH LANGUAGE)



**GUSTAVO
SANTOLALLA**

BEST TANGO ALBUM



**JULIETA
VENEGAS (SGAE)**

BEST ALTERNATIVE
MUSIC ALBUM



CACHORRO LÓPEZ

PRODUCER OF THE YEAR



LESTER MENDEZ

ALBUM OF THE YEAR



LOS TIGRES DEL NORTE

BEST NORTEÑO ALBUM



PEPE AGUILAR

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RICKY MARTIN

LATIN RECORDING ACADEMY®
PERSON OF THE YEAR



MICHEL CAMILO

BEST CLASSICAL ALBUM



ERNESTO CORTAZAR

BEST REGIONAL MEXICAN SONG
"¿QUÉ SIGUES SIENDO MIA?"



EDGAR CORTAZAR

BEST REGIONAL MEXICAN SONG
"¿QUÉ SIGUES SIENDO MIA?"



CAFÉ TACUBA

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DEMMX Zeroes In On User Interaction

Companies Explore Aggregating Customer Content

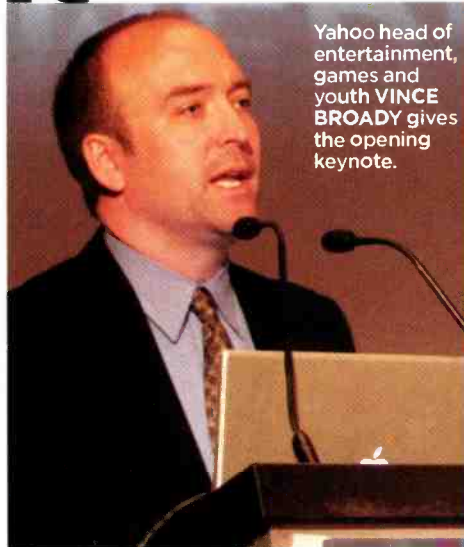
To date, the entertainment industry has used the Internet as either a promotional tool or a distribution platform. The former use is fairly common and widespread, while the latter is still struggling to gain traction amid clunky digital rights management (DRM) technology and relatively low consumer awareness.

At the DEMMX conference, held Nov. 29-30 in Los Angeles and hosted by Billboard, The Hollywood Reporter and Adweek, attendees identified a third area of opportunity—user interaction.

It will be some time before the Internet becomes the primary channel for watching full-length TV shows or acquiring music, but it already plays host to a large number of fan sites, message boards, user-generated spoofs and originally produced exclusive content that entertainment brands and Internet portals are working to aggregate into sites accessible 24/7.

Following the lead of YouTube and MySpace, Internet bellwethers like Yahoo, entertainment brands like NBC Universal and old-media elite like The New York Times are revamping their online content to give customers much more hands-on control over how they interact with the content and brands.

"One of the things in short supply these days is relevance," Yahoo head of entertainment, games and youth Vince Broady said in his opening keynote address. "It's something promised but rarely delivered on."



Yahoo head of entertainment, games and youth VINCE BROADY gives the opening keynote.

Illustrating how a simple online service that lets users do whatever they want with content can be a successful strategy. YouTube walked away with the most awards at the third annual DEMMX Awards, including visionary and brand of the year.

Other award winners included Sonos 2.0 and Rhapsody for digital music innovation of the year, Rhapsody for best download or subscription music service, MySpace for best digital music community, the Barenaked Ladies for best use of technology by an artist and Motorola's iRadio for best radio service.

For a full list of winners go to demmx.com.

Among other news surfacing at the event:

■ **Murmurs on the sidelines that one of the major record labels will start selling its entire music catalog in unprotected MP3 format early next year with an as-yet-unnamed service.**

■ **Sony is developing a DRM solution for the PlayStation Portable that would lock content stored on the device's removable memory stick to a particular unit. The aim is to prevent users from downloading music to the PSP, then sharing it with others who haven't paid for it.**

■ **Verizon Wireless on Nov. 29 expanded its user-generated video-content lineup through a deal with Revver, an online videoclip-sharing service that, unlike YouTube, splits its profits with contributors 50/50. Verizon announced a similar content deal with YouTube the day before.**

GLOBAL BY LARS BRANDLE

Label Gets Visual

Warner Music International Expands Its Video Arm

Warner Music International is thinking inside the box. The TV box, that is.

WMI has acquired London-based specialist DVD and digital production business the Rights Co. in a move that fortifies its ambitions in the video content field.

The deal, unveiled Nov. 28, will see TRC incorporated with Warner Vision, WMI's existing commercial video division, to form a division in London called Warner Music Entertainment.

The new unit will be responsible for creating new music-related programming formats,

acquiring content rights from third-party producers and generating program opportunities around WMI's catalog. TRC's existing library of assets will also transfer to the new venture. TRC produces, markets and manages the distribution of a broad scope of music, comedy, sport and special-interest properties, including "Ibiza Rocks" (aired on U.K. national broadcaster Channel 4), BBC comedy panel game show "Q.I." and Paul Weller's "Studio 150 Live" DVD.

"Video-based content [is] an increasingly important creative opportunity for us and for our

artists," WMI CEO Patrick Vien says. "When we look at the digital transformation of WMI, which continues to be our obsession, there's no doubt that video content—not just music videos—is something that we want to invest in and grow. Not in any way at the expense of recorded music, but as an enhancement." Vien declined to disclose financial terms of the new deal.

"It's a smart move on [WMI's] part," says Les Ottolenghi, CEO and co-founder of Intent MediaWorks, a U.S.-based provider of technology for the distribution. "It gives

them the ability to do a direct-connect to the consumer. They have a window of opportunity which may last 36 months to 60 months, before cable and satellite guys buy up in order to reintermediate themselves."

WMI is not the first major music company to expand into visual content. Earlier this year, Universal Music U.K. pressed the button on Globe, a U.K. production arm dedicated to creating TV programming and innovative visual platforms for that company's artists (Billboard, July 15). Rival Sony BMG had earlier launched its

Fever Media joint-venture TV production company in the United Kingdom.

But critically, WMI has been particularly aggressive in recent months in the development of its digital footprint and has struck a string of strategic partnerships in international markets.

With the digital pipes, and now content in place, Vien says WMI has sown the seeds for a video-rich future with monetizing the digital medium a priority. "The broader industrial world hasn't figured it all out yet," he says, "but we have to produce for that growth curve. That's how this deal is really justified." ...

SHAKEUP AT SONY URBAN

Part Of Larger Sony BMG Restructuring

Word is filtering out that more restructuring is imminent at Sony BMG Music Entertainment. Published reports state the 70-member Sony Urban Music division will be dismantled around Dec. 1, with some employees being reassigned to other Sony BMG labels and the artist roster split among the Epic and Columbia labels.

An inside source, however, says the word "dismantle" is inaccurate and that artists under the Sony Urban umbrella have always been designated as

being on Epic or Columbia and never strictly on Sony Urban. Acknowledging that restructuring discussions are under way, the source characterizes those talks as part of a companywide initiative to better prepare for the future. Representatives from Sony Urban could not be reached for comment.

Launched in 2003 as a shared-services unit merging the Epic and Columbia R&B departments, Sony Urban consists of A&R, artist development, urban promotion and marketing. The label's December schedule remains intact. The "Dreamgirls" soundtrack is due Dec. 5, followed by albums from Bow Wow (Dec. 19) and Omarion (Dec. 26).

A signal that changes were afoot occurred in early November with a re-evaluation of Sony Music Label Group U.S.'s relationship with Kanye West's Getting Out Our Dreams imprint. Legend and fellow G.O.O.D. act Consequence remain with Sony. The fate of other G.O.O.D. acts, including GLC, was being discussed.

Other Sony BMG cutbacks took place the week before Thanksgiving (Billboard, Dec. 2). Six staffers at Sony BMG Masterworks were let go, including president Gilbert Hetherwick. Also downsized were Sony BMG's Legacy unit and Customer Marketing Group. ...



OMARION'S new Sony Urban album is still due to hit the streets Dec. 26.

>>> **SONY BMG, PANDORA STRIKE U.K. LICENSE**
Sony BMG Music Entertainment U.K. & Ireland has licensed its works to Pandora Media ahead of the U.K. launch of the California-based company's free Internet radio service, due to go live in spring 2007. The label said Nov. 29 it would make its entire catalog available for audio streaming in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Sony BMG will receive an undisclosed share of Pandora's ad revenue. Pandora has spent six years developing its song-recommendation database. The company says it has been working since May to obtain the relevant licenses to operate in the United Kingdom.

>>> **STACEY KENT SIGNS WITH BLUE NOTE**
Blue Note in Paris has signed U.S. jazz singer Stacey Kent to a worldwide recording deal. Kent previously recorded six albums on U.K. label Candid Records. She also appeared on "The Lyric" (Token), an album released in 2005 by her husband, British tenor saxophonist Jim Tomlinson. Kent's new album will be recorded next spring in London and is due in September 2007. She will play five dates in the United States in December and across Europe in 2007.

>>> **DAUGHTRY SIGNS WITH BMG**
BMG Songs has signed a worldwide co-publishing agreement with "American Idol" rocker Chris Daughtry. The fourth-place finalist from the fifth season of the show is frontman and songwriter of the band named after himself. He wrote or co-wrote 10 of the album's songs, including the current single "It's Not Over." The album has sold about 303,600 units in the United States since its release, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Compiled by Chris M. Walsh. Reporting by Lars Brandle, Susan Butler, Leila Cobo, Christie Eliezer, Aymeric Pichevin and Reuters.

30 SHOWS... 350,000 TICKETS SOLD... ONE SUPERSTAR...

SHAKIRA

2006 ORAL FIXATION TOUR



Tus Amigos de

LIVE NATION

EMI Cranks Up AMP

New Web Portal Helps Artist Managers Access Information

EMI Music says it will revolutionize the label-artist management relationship with a new Web portal that gives managers easy access to all the figures the record company holds on its artists.

Billboard was given an exclusive preview of the Artist Management Portal (AMP), which allows managers to log on to a secure Web site and access information ranging from daily sales figures to unit shipments, from press updates to international chart positions. The system also stores an artist's publicity photos, videos, digital downloads, CD artwork and other assets for easy access and distribution to third parties.

Tony Wadsworth, chairman/CEO of EMI Music U.K. and Ireland, says the new system—which 10-15 managers on both sides of the Atlantic started trying out in July, and which is due to go live in the United Kingdom in late January or early February 2007—has been designed to cut down on “unproductive communication” between EMI and artist managers.

“A lot of our interaction tends to be ad hoc, with people on the phone to international saying, ‘What’s the chart position in Poland?’ and then another call to press and so on.” Wadsworth hopes that, with such information now readily available, those conversations will be replaced by “productive” discussions revolving around brainstorming and problem-solving.

EMI U.K. took six months to build the portal, after years of developing the idea through its regular market presentations to artist managers, who have been consulted about AMP's content at every stage of its development.

“Being a successful record company in the future is about providing a service to artists and this is core to that,” Wadsworth says. “Being in partnership with artists means there’s got to be that trust and transparency.”

The system is also being given a trial run by a small number of internal employees. New York-based EMI Music chief information officer James Anderson says it could ultimately be used by 5,000 managers, lawyers and staff, servicing a global roster of 1,500 artists.

Managers involved in the trial have given the initiative a warm welcome. Chris Morrison of London-based CMO Management has been testing AMP for his Parlophone-signed act Gorillaz. He calls the portal “an enormous timesaver.”

“When I started as a manager, you couldn’t get sales figures out of record companies, so it’s definitely a step in the right direction. You can make judgments quicker and respond to problems quicker.”

Morrison sees the scheme as indicative of a power shift between labels and artists, with record companies now having to work harder to maintain their relationships with artists and their representatives.

“They aren’t as in control as they were. I don’t think anybody changes by choice, they are forced into change. But EMI are doing it with a good will, so I don’t knock it.”

Brian Message of London-based ATC Management and Oxford, England-based Court-yard Management has tried out AMP for his Parlophone-signed acts Radiohead and Supergrass. He is also a fan of the system, while less sure of its significance.

“It would be easy for me to say [there’s a power shift], but I don’t think so. It’s just indicative of everybody trying to pull together at a time when there’s a lot of distrust and paranoia between the artist community and labels. Putting this information up there is only going to help the relationship.”

Message wants AMP to be used for direct communication between management and label as well, and EMI’s Anderson pledges enhancements to the system’s capabilities early next year. They include adding royalty statements and bulletin boards and using the portal for digital and synch-rights clearances. Multilingual versions for Japan, Germany, France and Latin America are also in the pipeline.

Deb Klein, manager with the Firm and GM of the management company’s new EMI-distributed label Firm Music, is one of the early users of AMP in the United States, trying it for her Capitol-signed rock act Yellowcard.

Yellowcard is at the end of the cycle for its “Lights and Sounds” album, so she used the system primarily to find historical data. But she expects the tool to be “a big help” on future EMI-distributed releases from Firm acts, including the next Korn album.

Due to confidentiality issues, other labels could not be contacted for their views on the new system, but no other record company is believed to be developing a similar system.

Klein was noncommittal as to whether all labels should be offering similar technology, but Morrison and Message both hope to see AMP become an industry standard tool.

“I think everybody should do this,” Morrison says. “And I don’t see any reason why they can’t.”



GORILLAZ

>>>EMI STRIKES PSP DEAL

EMI Music U.K. has struck an agreement with London-based digital solutions agency HiFi Entertainment, allowing gamers in Britain to download its music videos to Sony PlayStation Portable players.

EMI is the first music major to agree to terms with HiFi Entertainment, which operates the PSP online platform psp-playlist.com. The deal means music promos from EMI's catalog are being made available for download via the site at prices ranging from £1.89 (\$3.61) to £2.19 (\$4.19) per video. Eventually, electronic press kits and long-format videos of EMI acts will also be made available. “There’s a massive gap in the market for PSP content,” HiFi Entertainment managing director Bela Molnar says, “and these users are content-hungry.” According to HiFi Entertainment, 1.5 million PSP players are registered in the United Kingdom. —Lars Brandle

>>>MOBILE MUSIC RISES IN JAPAN

PC-based music downloads in Japan increased by 144% to 5.7 million units in the July-September quarter compared with the same period in 2005, according to the Recording Industry Assn. of Japan. PC downloads rose 173% in trade value to 1.2 billion yen (\$10.3 million).

However, downloads—including all ringtones—over wireless networks to mobile phones far outpaced the PC figures. Mobile sales (on either per-track or subscription basis) rose 20% to 86.2 million units, with value up 36% to 12.4 billion yen (\$106.8 million).

The RIAJ counts singles and albums sold over wired networks as single units regardless of the number of tracks they contain, but says single tracks account for the overwhelming majority of downloads. —Steve McClure

>>>CENTRAL STATION TRAVELS TO DESTRA

Australian digital media and music company Destra has acquired dance label Central Station Records and distributor MRA Entertainment from Mansfield, Queensland-based holding company Home Leisure for \$14 million Australian (\$10.6 million).

Sydney-based CSR's current artist roster includes Dannii Minogue, Roger Sanchez, Freeform Five and Infernal. Queensland-based MRA Entertainment has a licensed catalog of 3,500 music CD titles and a 1,000-title DVD catalog focusing on children's entertainment, TV series and extreme sports. Destra's Melbourne-based CEO Domenic Carosa says the company intends to exploit CSR's repertoire through streaming, music downloads, merchandising and online advertising opportunities. MRA's licensed DVD and CD content offer lucrative opportunities for online distribution, Carosa says. —Christie Eliezer

>>>SELLAR EXITING MMF

London-based Music Managers Forum general secretary James Sellar is quitting the trade body, effective Dec. 11, to join London-based rights organization Compact Collections, which collects revenue from the film and TV markets.

Compact collects revenue internationally on behalf of TV and film production companies for various broadcast rights—including cable retransmission—and blank tape levies. Its clients include FremantleMedia Enterprises, Granada International and Capitol Films.

Sellar will take on the new role of director of operations for performer services. He had been MMF general secretary since 2002. A statement from the MMF said a replacement will be named in due course. —Lars Brandle

>>>ICELAND CUTS VAT

The Icelandic government has pledged to cut the rate of value-added tax (sales tax) it levies on recorded music from 24.5% to 7%, effective in March 2007.

Iceland is not a member of the European Union, although it did sign the European Economic Area agreement with the EU in 1992, allowing it to trade on equal terms with EU states. The music industry has long unsuccessfully lobbied the EU to have recorded music classed as “cultural goods” with a lower rate of VAT than the standard rate it currently attracts. VAT on sound recordings within the EU currently ranges from 15% to 25%.

The Iceland initiative follows a 20-year campaign by the local national group of the IFPI, supported by local authors' and performers' organizations. —Lars Brandle

FLYLEAF = GOLD

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT BREAKTHROUGH

- OVER 525,000 SHIPPED. 450,000 SCANDSCAN. 40 WEEKS AND COUNTING ON **Billboard** TOP 200. AND JUST THE BEGINNING...
- TWO SMASH ROCK SINGLES: "I'M SO SICK" AND "FULLY ALIVE" AT ACTIVE AND ALTERNATIVE RADIO OVER 60,000 SPINS TO DATE
- **TV** DISCOVER AND DOWNLOAD **102** "ALL THINGS ROCK" NOMINATION "BREAKOUT ARTIST" SPINNING AT **102** & **fuse**
- RELENTLESS TOURING OVER TWO YEARS WITH KORN, DEFTONES, DISTURBED, STONE SOUR, BREAKING BENJAMIN, THREE DOORS DOWN, P.O.D. AND MORE
- NATIONAL TV APPEARANCES ON JIMMY KIMMEL & CARSON DALY. PRESS RAVES FROM REVOLVER, KERRANG, BLENDER & METAL HAMMER.
- ENORMOUS **myspace.com** NUMBERS OVER 350,000 FRIENDS. TOP 10 ARTIST ON **myspace.com** ALTERNATIVE AND ROCK ARTISTS CHARTS
- UNWAVERING SUPPORT FROM RETAIL **Music Monitor Network** & **Y! Music** AND BEYOND



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NAOYA MORI records for the Ark label, one of three indies that have signed with Music Posca.

GLOBAL BY JULIANA KORANTENG

TRACKS BY E-MAIL

U.K. Startup Offers Virtual Listening Posts

LONDON—U.K. startup eListeningPost is a digital viral marketing service with a difference: It promises to earn music rights owners income before a note is downloaded.

Launching Dec. 5, eListeningPost is an act-centered, advertising-funded venture distributing digitally protected full-length tracks via standard e-mail for consumers to preview before making a purchase.

The format has already caught the attention of the U.K. arms of EMI Music, Warner Music and Sony BMG. Although they have not yet committed acts to the service, Keith Harris, co-founder of eListeningPost developer G&K Digital, says the majors have agreed to trials with the system. Talks with Universal Music are scheduled, he adds.

A pilot, which kicked off Nov. 14, involved some 15 developing acts from the United Kingdom and United States brought in by Harris and his business partner Greg Holloway, formerly international controller at digital entertainment developer RealNetworks.

Harris, recently named director of performer affairs at U.K. rights body Phonographic Performance Ltd., is a record company veteran and former chairman of the United Kingdom's Music Managers Forum. He also formed his own artist management company in the early 1980s.

The service promises users a low-cost opportunity via existing e-mail technology to reach fans in any part of the world. Rights owners also

have the option to place advertising space within the e-mails, collecting 60% of the ad revenue generated.

Harris says that opportunity means "artists can get paid from the first play [of the track] by using the biggest social network there is—the e-mail."

G&K encodes tracks into a digital rights management (DRM) protected music file for the rights owner. That file is then embedded into an e-mail

terms "word-of-mouse."

EMI Music U.K. digital media manager Eric Winbolt describes the initiative as "a nice aggregation of technology into a package which gives us another opportunity to interact with consumers."

The ad service, Harris says, means labels and acts can earn income even if the e-mail recipient does not buy any downloads. The labels/acts collect 100% of any download sales, which they then distribute among all participating rights owners. G&K earns its income from a one-off fee starting at £30 (\$57) for encoding each track, a monthly £5-£10 (\$9.50-\$19) tariff to host it on its server and a 40% share of ad revenue. For a further fee, eListeningPost will handle database administration for smaller acts using the service.

Holloway declined to disclose the initial results of the pilot. However, the concept has been praised by the acts involved in the trial. Unsigned London-based folk-rock singer Claire Nicolson says the low fee could be a boon for developing acts. "I'll pay a small setup fee and even smaller monthly fee," she says. "To me, that's a very good deal."

Vanessa Redd is lead vocalist with U.K. alternative rock act Rubicks, which released its debut album "In Miniature" (Sharp Attack/Fulfill Distribution) in August. She says that eListeningPost "deals with the nuts and bolts of actually sending things out to people—which means I've got more time to write songs. Perfect." ■■■

100%
Amount labels/acts collect from eListeningPost download sales

GLOBAL BY STEVE McCLURE

Postcards From Posca

Japanese Company Cuts CD Costs With Stripped-Down Packaging

TOKYO—A Japanese company claims it can help local labels counter declining physical sales by offering consumers stripped-down, low-cost versions of CDs.

The new Music Posca service provided by Tokyo-based Inter Asia has drawn mixed reactions from the Japanese industry. It sells CDs by domestic acts at roughly half the regular price by pressing them under license in China and packaging them without booklets in postcard-thin card cases.

"The jewel case is old," Inter Asia CEO Atsuo Takada says. "This is a new way of packaging music, and it's cheaper than downloading."

Takada founded Inter Asia in 2000 as a music production company, enjoying some local success with independent label Avex's pop vocalist/actress Vivian Hsu. Inter Asia exited music production in 2004 to act as an agent for Japanese companies pressing optical discs in China.

More recently, Takada has concentrated on setting up the Music Posca service, whereby customers in Japan can order discs online from musicposca.jp, which mails them directly from an office in Hong Kong.

With physical sales declining, Takada says the service is aimed at middle-aged music fans who no longer visit music stores. Local labels group the Recording Industry Assn. of Japan says shipments in January-October fell 2% from the corresponding period in 2005 to 240.5 million units, with trade value down 4% to 278 billion yen (\$2.4 billion).

New-release CD albums by domestic acts retail for between 2,500 yen (\$21.18) and 3,000 yen (\$25.42) in Japan; the corresponding average price on the Japanese version of the iTunes Music Store is 2,000 yen (\$16.94).

However, albums handled by Music Posca sell for between 1,600 yen (\$13.55) and 1,800 yen (\$15.25), including postage and packing costs. They will still be available in Japanese music stores at full price in jewel-box packaging.

Both versions of the album appear on the original label and are subject to Japan's government-backed saihan system, under which labels set

domestically pressed product's retail price for a specified period from release date.

"We will have a contract with each label to sell the [Posca] CDs," Inter Asia VP Hiromi Suzuki says. "We recommend a low retail price to each label and then they decide the retail price." Royalty payments are handled by the original record company, he adds.

The first Music Posca album was the Sept. 21 release "Ima Bokutachi Aruku Michi" by punk band the Stand Up on Tokyo-based label Heaven's Rock. Suzuki says Music Posca has not yet approached major labels for repertoire, and to date just three other independent labels—Tokyo-based Highway, Ark and Green Door—have signed up, with only nine albums currently available on the Web site. Inter Asia declines to release sales figures, but Suzuki says it is negotiating with local labels Tokuma Japan, Crown, Teichiku and Columbia Music Entertainment.

"This kind of service is good for new, unknown acts, because a limited amount of CDs can be pressed at a low cost," Ark president Koichi Mizoe says. Ark's stable includes male pop vocalist Naoya Mori, best-known in Japan for his 2000 single "Yuzora no Kami Hikoki" on previous label VAP.

While Music Posca initially targets customers in Japan, the company hopes to eventually sell Japanese CDs to overseas clients. Inter Asia is promoting the service online, but is planning to run consumer ads in broadcast and print media once it has a 100-strong catalog.

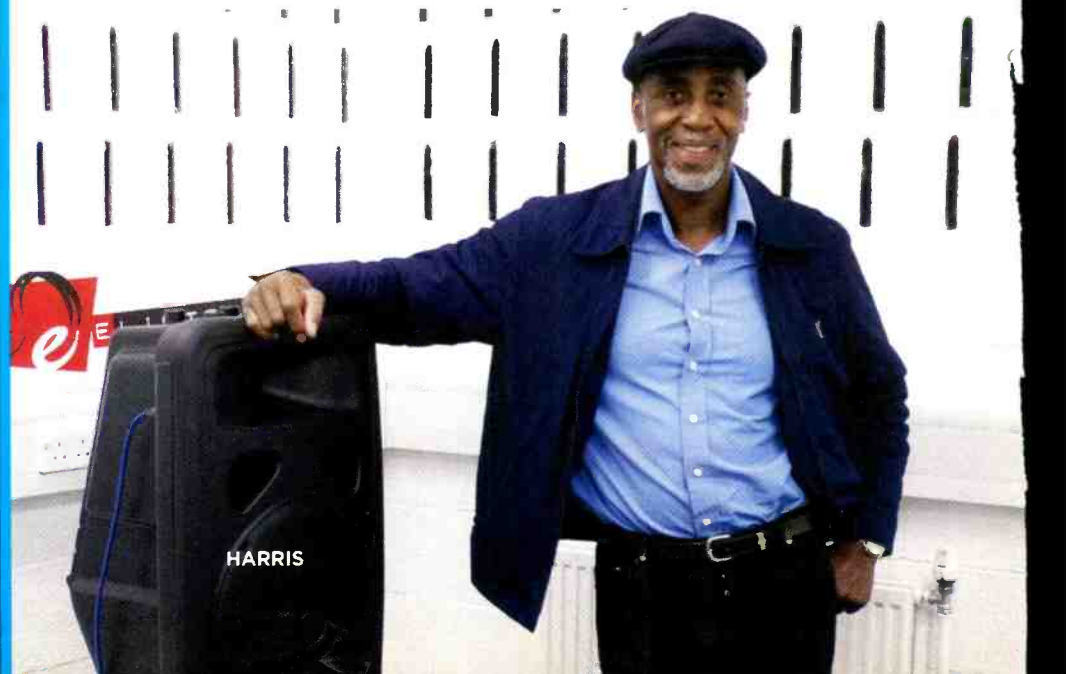
Although music merchants are taking a wait-and-see attitude toward Music Posca, at least one retail source doesn't buy the concept. "I think this is a moronic idea," he says. "There are many difficulties involved with selling physical CDs these days, but pressing cost is not one of them."

"Also," he continues, "historically Japanese customers do not like cheap shit, so postcard-style packaging does not sound like a great idea."

Nonetheless, Suzuki says Music Posca aims to have a catalog of 500 titles within the next six months, including major-label repertoire. ■■■



TAKADA



HARRIS



The Indies

TODD MARTENS tmartens@billboard.com

Tom Waits For No One

Supply Of Waits, Sufjan Boxes
Does Its Best To Meet Demand



Nevermind the Nintendo Wii and Sony's PlayStation 3: The in-demand, sold-out item at indie retailers this holiday season might end up being the three-disc Tom Waits set, "Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers & Bastards" (Anti-).

The album finished its first week with U.S. sales of 21,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Yet on its Nov. 21 release date, retailers told Billboard that Epitaph/Anti-distributor the Alternative Distribution

Alliance reported it had sold out of the disc by about 1:38 p.m.

Larry Mansdorf, buyer for Brighton, Mass.-based Newbury Comics, says he brought in about 1,500 units chain-wide for the album's release, and ordered another 340 once ADA reported that it had only 410 left in stock. Mansdorf says the album was on pace at the chain to outsell Waits' 2004 set "Real Gone" in its first week. That album moved a total of 34,000 units when it was released.

Anti- issued the album as a limited-edition boxed set, and

Epitaph/Anti- founder Brett Gurewitz says the label printed up about 60,000 units for North America. The box's suggested retail price is \$49.98.

"We didn't know how many to make," Gurewitz says. "It's three hours of music, and it's selling for a lot of money. We tried to figure out how many to make so we wouldn't run out before Christmas."

Word is that Best Buy had brought in only about 1,500 copies to start, but suddenly doubled its order after strong first-day sales. Multiple indie

retailers tell Billboard that ADA contacted them about 12:30 p.m. on Nov. 21, urging them to get in any follow-up orders for the album.

Eric Levin at Criminal Records in Atlanta says he brought in about 60 copies for week of release and hopes that will carry him through most of the holiday season. As of now, most indie retailers should be stocked, but Gurewitz says the label will reassess the situation if it appears the album will sell out.

"We don't want the record

not in stores during Christmas," he says.

INDIES GET FESTIVE: Sufjan Stevens looks to have a key seller at indie retail with his five-disc "Songs for Christmas." The box, which comes with stickers, an essay from Rick Moody and a songbook, carries a suggested retail price of \$19, and sold 13,000 units in its first week.

"It's a pretty expensive package to put together, but he wanted it to be something of a Christmas gift," Asthmatic Kitty head Lowell Brams says. "But I think we'll do better than break even."

Brams notes that the label is running a few days behind in fulfilling orders for the set as it didn't anticipate a high demand for a specialized, seasonal item. He won't give exact numbers, but says the label has sold multiple thousands of units direct from its site, which means it's selling faster after week one than Stevens' two previous records, "Illinois" and "The Avalanche."

"I knew a lot of people would want it," he says, "but I just wasn't prepared to be getting

this many orders."

The set collects songs recorded during the past six years, and Stevens' songs gradually become more heavily orchestrated with each disc. "At the beginning, there's definitely a feel of recording in the living room with friends," Brams says. "But as you listen chronologically, you can hear the arrangements becoming more sophisticated."

Perhaps not as widely available, but still worth seeking out, is "Christmas Time Again," conceived by dB leader and power-pop aficionado Chris Stamey. Now in its third edition, the album collects 23 tracks from the likes of the dB's, Big Star, Marshall Crenshaw and Whiskeytown, among others. The Whiskeytown cut is one of the newest added tracks.

"I recorded [Whiskeytown] so much," Stamey says. "I have three unreleased records of them in the can that just got caught up in record-label politics. That's just one of the tracks that had been sitting around."

The album is available via mail-order company Collector's Choice Music. ...

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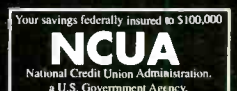
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Premier Money Market 3.75%^{APY} \$25,000 minimum balance	0.40% \$25,000 minimum balance	1.55% \$10,000 minimum balance	2.33% \$25,000 minimum balance	1.90% \$25,000 minimum balance
Titanium Money Market 4.35%^{APY} \$100,000 minimum balance	0.40% \$100,000 minimum balance	No comparable product	2.84% \$100,000 minimum balance	No comparable product
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3-Year Term Savings Certificate 5.10%^{APY} \$1,000 minimum balance	3.15% \$1,000 minimum balance	3.48% \$2,500 minimum balance	4.75% \$1,000 minimum balance	4.45% \$500 minimum balance

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Latin Notas

LEILA COBO lcobo@billboard.com

Paulina's Panregional Plan

Rubio's 'Reconfirmation Album' A Success By Committee

With more than 200,000 copies of her last studio set, 2004's "Pau-Latina," sold in the United States alone, according to Nielsen SoundScan, **Paulina Rubio** is—after **Shakira**—the top-selling Latin female pop artist in the market.

She is also a panregional star, who surprisingly has never been fully worked with a panregional strategy.

But Rubio's new set, "Ananda," released in September, was conceived and marketed as a breakthrough album designed to lift Rubio's profile and set up a 2007 English-language disc.

"Prior to this, we simply dropped an English-language album, and it was a mistake [to do it that way]," says **Jesús López**, chairman of Universal Music Latin America/Iberian Peninsula. López was referring to Rubio's 2003 English-language debut "Border Girl," which has sold 282,000 copies in the United States.

Although that is a respectable number, López is setting his sights higher with a different, highly synchronized strategy that seeks to establish

Rubio in multiple other territories before she ventures again into English.

Prior to recording her own album, last year Rubio joined pop/alternative chanteuse **Julieta Venegas** in a trio with respected singer/songwriter **Coti**. Their track hit No. 1 in Spain, a key market, and gave a credibility boost to Rubio, who sings light, airy pop.

That set off a panregional A&R plan for Rubio's new album. Instead of coordinat-

ing A&R from a single Universal office in a specific country, for the first time ever, López had a committee with input from Argentina, Spain, Mexico and U.S. labels. (The strategy was later repeated with **David Bisbal**'s new album.) "With this type of artist, it gives us the possibility of having tracks better suited for particular territories," López says.

Unlike other Rubio albums, which had tiered releases in different countries sometimes separated by months, "Ananda" was released simultaneously in Latin America, Spain and the United

States, and debuted at No. 1 in multiple territories. The single "Ni Una Sola Palabra," written by Spaniard **Xabi San Javier** (of Spanish pop group **La Oreja de Van Gogh**), topped radio charts everywhere (including Billboard's Hot Latin Songs chart) except Argentina, where it peaked at No. 3.

Rubio initially concentrated on promoting and performing only in her top markets—Mexico, Spain and the United States. Visits to the rest of Latin America only began in November, and in February, plans call for visits to France, Holland,

Italy and Germany. Rubio is slated to record duets with local acts in these markets as a prelude to her English disc at the end of 2007.

At press time, less than two months after its release, "Ananda" had sold half a million copies worldwide, according to Universal, and nearly 80,000 in the United States alone, according to SoundScan, making this Rubio's fastest-selling album to date.

Essential to the album's acceptance, López says, was a digital and mobile strategy in which Universal cut different deals with carriers in each country, for a total calculated promotional value of more than \$1.5 million.

To date, there have been more than 500,000 downloads of Rubio tracks—Spain has the most—including ringtones, ringbacks and digital tracks. Most activity comes not from digital sales—which are still incipient in Latin America—but from mobile product.

"This is a reconfirmation album," López says. "This is an artist who, in certain circles, doesn't get the respect she merits. We wanted to show this is not a one-hit act but a woman who systematically makes hits." ...



RUBIO

EN BREVE

CHAYANNE HITS THE ROAD

Puerto Rican pop star **Chayanne** has launched his 2007 tour early, with a series of concerts in Mexico. The nine dates, which kicked off Nov. 22 in Nuevo León, are the prelude to his official 2007 tour that starts Jan. 27 in Santiago, Chile.

The 2007 trek, which includes some 100 confirmed dates, will coincide with the release of his new album, set to street in March on Sony BMG.

Chayanne's Mexican dates are sponsored by Mexican bank **Bancomer**. The U.S. 2007 shows will be presented by **Cárdenas Marketing Network**.

CUBAN SONGS CASE SETTLED

A six-year, transcontinental legal battle involving 13 songs written by Cuban composers between 1930 and 1945 has been resolved. The ruling stemmed from a 2000 proceeding by **Peer International**, which sought a declaration that it was the copyright owner of the songs. In turn, **Editora Musical de Cuba (EMC)**, the music publishing arm of the Cuban government, had fought to void peermusic's composer contracts and also accused **Peer** of fraud and misconduct in obtaining those contracts.

The 13 songs in question are part of a broad catalog of some 600 works acquired by peermusic prior to the Cuban revolution.

In his Nov. 16 judgment, Justice **Lindsay** said **Peer** could still have some rights to some of the songs, but dismissed **Peer's** wide declaration of ownership. But he also cleared peermusic of EMC's charges. In a statement, a **Peer** representative said **Lindsay's** ruling "vindicated our conduct and our reputation." Peermusic founder **Ralph Peer** spent much time in Cuba—as he did throughout Latin America between 1930 and 1950—and built up a broad and valuable catalog of Latin music. The success of **Buena Vista Social Club** in 1997 revived interest in the catalogs and sparked the case. ...

RUBIO: LIONEL DELUY

LATIN BY AYALA BEN-YEHUDA

Old Movies, New Soundtracks

Univision Repackages Regional Mexican Catalog Music With Film DVDs

Univision Music Group has found a new way to move its regional Mexican catalog: get people to stay for the movie.

The company is reissuing films along with "soundtracks" that didn't exist at the time the movies were made but have been compiled for a CD/DVD package.

The 1978 Mexican gangster flick "La Banda del Carro Rojo," which featured a guest appearance and title track by **Los Tigres del Norte**, was released on DVD Aug. 1 by Fonovisa. It has sold 44,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

The accompanying CD contains 15 songs by the band, which has appeared in more than a dozen movies.

The songs were chosen based on their relevance to the movie's subject

and their popularity at the time the movie was released, Fonovisa marketing VP **Alberto del Castillo** says.

The movies/soundtracks are "a result of the search of new ways to exploit catalog," Castillo says. "There isn't sufficient room on store shelves anymore for all the [Tigres] CDs."

The timing was also right given the high ratings that classic crime dramas achieve when they're shown on TV, as well as the critical mass of older DVD buyers, Castillo says.

Fonovisa plans to secure the rights

to all 13 **Los Tigres del Norte** movies for similar CD/DVD reissue and eventual boxed sets.

The band's "La Muerte del Soplon" (1977) movie/soundtrack debuted at No. 11 on Billboard's Top Latin Albums chart, with 6,000 copies sold since its Nov. 7 release.

Los Huracanes del Norte's "Grandes Corridos ... De Película" debuted the same day on Univision Records. It includes the 2000 film "El Clavo," which starred two members of the band, and 12 corridos by the group. **Jose Sanchez**, West Coast buyer for

the **Ritmo Latino**

chain, says a **Juan Gabriel** movie combined with a tribute CD from **Disa** sold poorly several years ago. But he says the current crop of movies/soundtracks is faring better due to a TV and radio campaign from Univision.

As for who is buying, "Only adults know the movies. The young people who were born here aren't so familiar with Mexican films," Sanchez says.

The combo is available in a jewel case or a DVD case. But "people tend to shop for the bands still," says **Rick Banales**, Latin and world music product manager for **Virgin Megastore**. "If you were to separate them, the CD would do much better than the DVD." ...



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License Rate Debate

Publishers, Labels, Digital Media Make Their Cases

A crucial music publishing proceeding is about to hit full swing. Publishers, labels and digital media companies have filed their cases with the Copyright Royalty Board, which will determine compulsory license rates for compositions previously recorded and released in the United States.

The rates for compulsory mechanical and digital phonorecord delivery (DPD) licenses (section 115 of the Copyright Act) will include a full range of uses, from CDs and multisession discs to digital downloads and ringtones.

Written arguments and documents, due to be filed Nov. 30, were not completed at press time. But sources close to the parties provided some of their arguments on the condition that they not be communicated or published prior to that date.

The National Music Publishers' Assn. is expected to urge keeping a penny rate for mechanical licenses, though significantly higher than the current 9.1 cents per song. The NMPA will argue that a rate based on a penny amount, rather than a rate based on a percentage of some amount like wholesale price, is the model that has been used for about 100 years.

Business expectations, the sources say, have been based on this model, which ensures some guaranteed value for copyrights. If rates were a percentage, publishers would not be able to control the amount on which that percentage would be based.

Publishers are expected to urge keeping a penny rate for DPDs as well since the royalty is easy to calculate for individual sales, like permanent download sales. But they want a DPD rate higher than the mechanical rate since, they argue, producing a digital delivery costs less than producing a physical product.

For reproductions not based on individual sales (e.g., subscriptions services and

streams), publishers are open to accepting some variation of the penny rate. They are expected to propose three tiers, with the rate equal to the greater of a micropenny minimum based on activity (e.g., number of streams); a percentage of revenue (depending on how revenue is defined); or a percentage of the content cost (example: the amount a third party like Apple Computer pays for all the music—recording and composition).



FAIRES

The RIAA is expected to argue that all rates be based on an aggregate percentage of the labels' price (e.g., wholesale price) per product, rather than a penny rate per song. Compulsory rates would then not exceed some total percentage per product, such as a percentage per CD price or a percentage of a multidisc or multisession product that includes video. Sources say this would allow greater flexibility for companies to offer newer formats.

Labels are also expected to argue that the current rates are too high since compulsory rates have increased during the past several years even though CD prices have dropped and digital piracy has resulted in a drastic decline in sales.

The Digital Media Assn. is expected to focus only on DPD rates, arguing for a percentage rate based on retail price without a minimum royalty.

The specific percentage and penny amounts that the

parties will request were undecided at press time.

THE LION ROARS: Top indie film company Lionsgate is now set up internationally and digitally as a music publisher and is looking for catalog acquisitions.

Jay Faires, Lionsgate president of music and publishing, says the company is attracting composers and artist/songwriters for its films and TV shows, buying rights in songs and finding ways to exploit the music beyond the programs.

The company recently sealed a deal with Fintage Music to subpublish Lionsgate outside the United States. "I don't want 13 different sub-publisher deals," Faires says. He believes Fintage has "the next generation" of collection systems, offering a transparent process with a quicker pay-through process than other companies.

The deal follows one that Lionsgate made with the Orchard to distribute soundtracks digitally and, depending on the outcome of current talks, pitch songs for other synch opportunities.

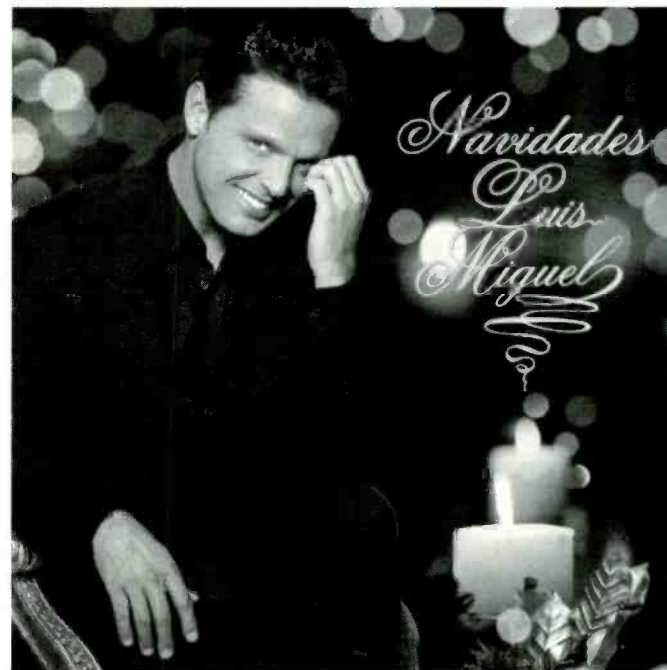
The Lionsgate publishing deals seem pretty straightforward. Although some songwriters are signed to the publisher, the company is not necessarily tying up rights in all the artist/songwriters' catalogs. Many deals are for single-song rights, offering marketing exposure that could help build that artist's music career, Faires says. Not only will they release score soundtracks on CD, but they may remix the score to find alternative sources of revenue. And the company has many opportunities for the right writers.

"I have a thousand synch features I have to fill, and we're going to 12 TV shows next year," Faires says.

Lionsgate TV shows include "The Dead Zone" (USA Network), "Wildfire" (ABC Family) and "Weeds" (Showtime). Past films and scores include "Crash," "Monster's Ball" and "Requiem for a Dream." ...

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The new Christmas album by Luis Miguel contains the 2 new hit singles "Santa Claus Llego A La Ciudad" & "Mi Humilde Oración" The combination of holiday feeling and the emotional voice of Luis Miguel will captivate listeners.

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	GROSS/ TICKET PRICE(s)	ARTIST(S) Venue, Date	Attendance Capacity	Promoter
1	\$4,764,390 (\$6,206,300 Australian) \$237.36/\$62.87	BILLY JOEL Rod Laver Arena, Melbourne, Australia, Nov. 10, 12	30,988 two sellouts	Frontier Touring
2	\$2,758,242 \$225/\$175/ \$127.50/\$87.50	CELINE DION Colosseum at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas, Nov. 22-26	20,234 20,740 five shows four sellouts	Concerts West/AEG Live
3	\$1,630,768 (\$2,117,578 Australian) \$238.12/\$63.07	BILLY JOEL Burswood Dome, Perth, Australia, Nov. 7	16,254 sellout	Frontier Touring
4	\$1,227,164 (\u20ac955,378) \$85.05/ \$66.79/\$57.80	GEORGE MICHAEL Sportpaleis, Antwerp, Belgium, Nov. 14	16,231 16,235	Live Nation
5	\$1,148,286 \$150/\$62.50	AEROSMITH Coliseo de Puerto Rico, Hato Rey, Puerto Rico, Nov. 26	11,000 13,340	Jose Due\u00f1o Presents
6	\$835,331 \$65/\$39.50	DIXIE CHICKS, BOB SCHNEIDER Tacoma Dome, Tacoma, Wash., Nov. 11	15,585 sellout	Concerts West, The Messina Group, Moore Entertainment/AEG Live
7	\$785,863 \$125/\$60	DEF LEPPARD, JOURNEY Coliseo de Puerto Rico, Hato Rey, Puerto Rico, Nov. 19	9,428 13,833	Jose Due\u00f1o Presents
8	\$734,133 \$117/\$42	VICENTE FERN\u00c1NDEZ, PAQUITA LA DEL BARRIO Toyota Center, Houston, Oct. 29	9,099 9,851	Hauser Entertainment
9	\$605,448 \$109.75/\$54.75	VICENTE FERN\u00c1NDEZ, PAQUITA LA DEL BARRIO Smirnoff Music Centre, Dallas, Oct. 28	6,687 9,910	Hauser Entertainment, House of Blues Concerts
10	\$590,348 \$125/\$25	LUNY TUNES & LOS BEN JAMINS Coliseo de Puerto Rico, Hato Rey, Puerto Rico, Nov. 22	12,233 12,553	Yolanda Diaz Sanabria
11	\$521,499 \$70.10/\$49.50	DIXIE CHICKS, BOB SCHNEIDER Jobing.com Arena, Glendale, Ariz., Nov. 19	8,995 sellout	Concerts West, The Messina Group, Moore Entertainment/AEG Live
12	\$478,572 (\$542,273 Canadian) \$48.54/\$37.51	JAMES BLUNT, STARSAILOR Pengrowth Saddledome, Calgary, Alberta, Nov. 3	10,688 10,920	House of Blues Canada
13	\$446,055 \$65/\$40/\$25/ \$15	BOO BOMB: E-40, LUDACRIS, MISTAH F.A.B. & OTHERS HP Pavilion, San Jose, Calif., Oct. 30	14,691 sellout	The Big Productions
14	\$437,778 (\$501,820 Canadian) \$60.63/\$47.54	GUNS N' ROSES, SUICIDE GIRLS, THE TREWS, DIE MANNEQUIN Halifax Metro Centre, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Nov. 20	7,880 8,500	Gillett Entertainment Group, House of Blues Canada
15	\$437,180 \$45/\$35	THE KILLERS, RED ROMANCE Theatre at Madison Square Garden, New York, Oct. 24-25	11,144 14,444 two sellouts	Live Nation
16	\$435,080 \$50/\$37.50/\$25	JAMES BLUNT, FAVOURITE SONS Radio City Music Hall, New York, Oct. 10-11	11,901 two sellouts	MSG Entertainment
17	\$432,746 \$45/\$28.50	THE CHEETAH GIRLS Arena at Gwinnett Center, Duluth, Ga., Oct. 13	10,940 sellout	AEG Live
18	\$432,270 \$33.33	BAMBOOZLE FESTIVAL: DASHBOARD CONFSSIONAL & OTHERS Cal Poly Athletic Field, Pomona, Calif., Oct. 14-15	13,519 16,000 two shows	Goldenvoice/AEG Live
19	\$432,194 \$58/\$43	DIRTY SOUTH INVASION: T.I., LIL' WAYNE, YOUNG DRO & OTHERS Verizon Center, Washington, D.C., Nov. 26	7,798 15,930	Darryl Brooks & Carol Kirkendall
20	\$430,841 (\$486,584 Canadian) \$75.26/\$61.54/\$40.29	BOB DYLAN, FOO FIGHTERS Scotiabank Place, Ottawa, Nov. 5	6,976 sellout	House of Blues Canada
21	\$429,753 (\$485,355 Canadian) \$48.70/\$37.63	JAMES BLUNT, STARSAILOR General Motors Place, Vancouver, Nov. 5	9,474 10,120	House of Blues Canada
22	\$427,120 \$100/\$90/\$70/ \$55	ANA GABRIEL Gibson Amphitheatre, Universal City, Calif., Oct. 21	5,965 sellout	House of Blues Concerts, Cardenas Marketing Network
23	\$420,924 \$95/\$25	FET SHOP BOYS Radio City Music Hall, New York, Oct. 14	5,961 sellout	Live Nation, MSG Entertainment
24	\$418,395 \$62/\$26.50	JOHN MAYER, SHERYL CROW, MARJORIE FAIR Sound Advice Amphitheatre, West Palm Beach, Fla., Oct. 11	9,950 19,100	Live Nation
25	\$415,581 \$49.50/\$39.50	IRON MAIDEN, BULLET FOR MY VALENTINE Allstate Arena, Rosemont, Ill., Oct. 18	8,863 12,901	Live Nation
26	\$412,497 \$75/\$39.50	DEF LEPPARD, JOURNEY, STOLL VAUGHAN Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Mich., Oct. 24	7,546 9,697	Live Nation
27	\$412,320 \$85/\$45	JUAN GABRIEL Frank Erwin Center, Austin, Nov. 8	5,332 6,931	In-house
28	\$402,563 \$81.50/\$26	DEF LEPPARD, JOURNEY, STOLL VAUGHAN Journal Pavilion, Albuquerque, N.M., Oct. 16	10,465 12,621	Live Nation
29	\$397,617 \$85/\$45	JUAN GABRIEL Santa Ana Star Center, Rio Rancho, N.M., Nov. 4	6,329 7,217	Live Nation
30	\$396,308 \$134/\$10	JOHN MAYER, SHERYL CROW, MARJORIE FAIR Starwood Amphitheatre, Antioch, Tenn., Oct. 8	14,066 17,401	Live Nation
31	\$395,356 \$66.75/\$49.50	DIXIE CHICKS, BOB SCHNEIDER Save Mart Center, Fresno, Calif., Nov. 15	7,148 sellout	Concerts West, The Messina Group, Moore Entertainment/AEG Live
32	\$394,640 \$51	COUNTRY BASH: GRETCHEN WILSON, PHIL VASSAR & OTHERS Verizon Wireless Amphitheater, Irvine, Calif., Oct. 14	12,782 16,001	Live Nation
33	\$394,260 \$95/\$45	JAMES TAYLOR Tower Theatre, Upper Darby, Pa., Oct. 17-18	5,604 6,128 two shows	Live Nation
34	\$392,932 \$75.25/\$51.25	JOAN SEBASTIAN U.S. Airways Center, Phoenix, Oct. 8	6,283 6,712	Elias Entertainment Group
35	\$392,233 (\$56,613 Australian) \$92.98	LIVE, SHANNON NOLL Entertainment Centre, Brisbane, Australia, Oct. 21	6,228 6,474	Michael Coppel Presents



On The Road

RAY WADDELL rwaddell@billboard.com

And The Beacon Makes Four

New York's 2,800-Seater Added To MSGE Portfolio

New York's Beacon Theatre is now the fourth venue in the Madison Square Garden Entertainment (MSGE) portfolio, which includes Madison Square Garden, Radio City Music Hall and the Theater at Madison Square Garden.

The 2,800-seat Beacon has become one of New York's busiest rock halls, hosting approximately 70 concerts annually, as well as family shows and other special events. Fifty-two events reported to Billboard Boxscore this year by the Beacon had a combined gross of more than \$8 million and drew more than 136,000 patrons.

Under MSGE's management, the Beacon plans to host more than 100 events, concerts and family shows in 2007. For MSGE, the venue is a nice fit. "We are now uniquely positioned within the industry to help agents and managers groom young artists," MSGE president Jay Marciano says. "Adding the 2,800-seat Beacon Theatre to our profile of venues gives us the flexibility to offer artists a broader choice of various-sized venues to play, from the more intimate Beacon, to Radio City Music Hall [6,013 capacity] and the Theater at MSG [5,605 capacity], to Madison Square Garden."

The Beacon has been an "open shop" in working with a variety of promoters, but Live Nation has been the primary presenter in the hall. Under the MSGE banner, the Beacon will continue to work with a variety of promoters, as well as promote events in-house.

In January 2008, the Beacon will be closed for a seven to nine-month restoration, in which MSGE has committed to spend a minimum of \$10 million for initial renovations of the building. The restoration will extend from the front of house to the back of the loading docks. MSGE, then operating as Radio City Entertainment, orchestrated a \$70 million restoration of Radio City Music Hall in 1999.



From left, MSGE president: **JAY MARCIANO**, MSG Cablevision Systems vice chairman **HANK RATNER** and Cirque du Soleil founder **GUY LALIBERTE**.

The Beacon is located at Broadway and 74th street in Manhattan, and was built in 1928 and designed in the art deco styling of the day by architect Walter Ahlschlager.

Meanwhile, these are heady times for the Garden. After weighing several options, Garden owner Cablevision Systems decided earlier this year to move the celebrated New York arena from its current location to a new site across the street as part of the James A. Farley Post Office project (billboard.biz, March 8).

The new Garden is targeted to be completed by 2011, at a cost expected to be in the \$800 million range. Since 1879, the Garden has had four incarnations, moving to its current site atop Penn Station in 1968. The new deal would include the demolition of the current arena. MSGE owner Cablevision had been considering possible renovation plans that would have cost about \$350 million (Billboard, Dec. 17, 2005).

The Garden is the top-grossing arena in the world. **Elton John**, who called the venue "near and dear to his heart" when accepting the Legend of Live award at the Billboard Touring Conference last month, has played the venue more than any other artist, and said he will notch his 60th sellout at the arena on his 60th birthday, March 25. The Garden took in more than \$118 million at the box office in 2006, according to Billboard Boxscore.

MSGE also has revealed plans for a joint partnership with Cirque du Soleil to present New York's first theater production of Cirque at the Theater at Madison Square Garden, beginning in 2007. The as-yet-unnamed production is being created specifically for that theater, and will run for 10 weeks each winter for the next four years.

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Reunion Blues



Second Life's Sony Music Media Island went live Oct. 19, with a live chat and album preview by BEN FOLDS.

ONLINE BY ANTONY BRUNO

Year Of The Avatar

The Music Biz Banks On Second Life's Virtual Boom For 2007

Every year, a new online service seems to creep out of nowhere to capture the public's imagination, causing at once havoc and opportunity for the entertainment industry.

Two years ago it was MySpace. This year it was YouTube.

For next year, the music biz seems to be betting on Second Life.

Simply put, Second Life—created by San Francisco tech company Linden Labs—is a virtual world where members navigate through 3D environments using digital replicas of themselves called avatars. Members chat, play various types of virtual games and spend real money to buy fake goods such as clothes, weapons and houses.

Its popularity is skyrocketing—growing from 100,000 members at the beginning of 2005 to 400,000 earlier this year to more than 1.5 million members now, with an average of 10,000 members online at any given time. The growth rate now stands at 10%-12% a month, but analysts predict Second Life could explode to 9 million members by next June.

And then there is the virtual economy. Second Life members spend an average of \$350,000 a day buying and selling goods and services using a virtual currency known as Linden Dollars, which can be exchanged for

real cash at the rate of about 271 Linden dollars to one U.S. dollar. In the month of October, \$9 million of real money was spent within the game.

Put it all together and Second Life holds great potential to become the next evolution of the social networking/user-generated content. Brands like Adidas, American Apparel, Dell Computer, Toyota and others already have established a presence within the virtual world, and the music industry is close behind—creating branded destinations, live concerts, merchandise stores and even recording facilities.

"Second Life's combination of social networking, strong sense of community and creativity makes it a very appealing destination," an EMI spokesman says. "If we're smart about it, we can help residents of Second Life connect with their favorite artists and discover new ones."

Buying a presence in Second Life is like registering a Web domain. Interested companies can either rent space on an existing island or simply buy their own. It costs about \$5,000 to buy the largest island the world has to offer, with about \$300 a month in maintenance fees.

Then there's development costs needed to "build" whatever 3D environment the brand wants on its "land," which can cost more than

\$10,000 depending on the sophistication of the experience, in addition to monthly maintenance fees.

Sony BMG has planted the biggest flag to date, buying an entire island within the Second Life world called the Sony Music Media Island. It features several "artist's lounges" that fans can visit to stream tracks and watch video from acts like Audioslave, DMX, OutKast and Justin Timberlake. Lounges also include a photo gallery, artist bio and links to each artist's Web site.

There is also a virtual shop, where members can buy label-branded clothing for their avatars and tracks that they can play and broadcast to others only in the Second Life world. Additional links in the store direct users to various Sony Music Web sites to buy real-world items, such as albums, merchandise and mobile content.

The Media Island went live Oct. 19 with a live chat and album preview by Ben Folds. During the event, Folds appeared in avatar form, answered questions and streamed tracks from the new album before chugging a can of Duff beer and attacking the audience with a light saber and laser beams shooting out of his eyes.

The Media Island is still in somewhat of a "quiet" mode, with Sony doing little to promote the location as it continues developing the complex with additional content and features. Still, the location has received about 3,000 visitors since going live.

Other labels have experimented on a much smaller scale. Warner Bros. Records built individual brownstone lofts on rented land for artists Talib Kweli and Regina Spektor. Fans can play pool and chat there while listening to their respective tracks.

On Aug. 3, Suzanne Vega became the first major recording artist to perform live in avatar form as part of a simulcast on the public radio station Infinite Mind. Duran Duran is preparing a live Second Life concert as well.

Like MySpace, Second Life is also a haven for unsigned bands and indie artists. Several virtual nightclubs, bars and other venues book live performances and stream recorded music from acts hungry to gain an audience. Second Life even has a dedicated "live music" category in its live event directory, with several performances scheduled daily.

Currently, this activity is strictly promotional. Like Web sites, popular Second Life destinations can sell advertising space for other Second Life services as well as for real-world Web sites in the form of virtual posters or billboards, and organizers could conceivably charge for live events.

However, performing in Second Life does have its limitations. Too many members in one spot can cause a lag in the time it takes for the graphics to load, which commonly results in avatars walking around with no clothes. As such, live events are restricted to only a few hundred members at a time.

Today the biggest benefit of holding events in Second Life is the press they receive. Once that buzz factor wears off, there will need to be more concrete results to justify further activity in the space, and no one has determined how to measure that just yet.

Ultimately, Second Life could wind up being yet another overhyped online phenomenon that never gets past its geek-chic status. But it also could just be the future of the Internet.

BITS & BRIEFS

CHINGULAR AND CINGULAR RINGULARS

The ringtone craze shows no signs of slowing down as Cingular Wireless and Sprint each introduce new innovations to the format. Sprint has partnered with Capitol Records to develop a host of personalized ringtones and call tones from hip-hop artist Chingy, all based on the cut "Dem Jeans." Chingy recorded 123 different versions of the ringtone, inserting various female names into the clip.

Meanwhile Cingular hopes to increase ringtone sales by introducing Tone Cards—gift cards that can be purchased in stores and redeemed for ringtones. They come in increments of \$10 for four ringtones or \$20 for eight.

DIGITAL'S HEAVY MISSION

Digital music revenue will have to carry more weight during the next few years if it is to recoup the losses of

still-declining CD sales, according to analyst group Pali Research. The firm forecasts that while digital download sales will increase 40% in 2007 and 25% in 2008, total music industry unit sales will still fall 1% in each of the next two years. For 2006, the group expects overall digital and physical sales to finish the year down 1%, compared with the 4% slide of 2005.

THE WINNER GETS BARENAKED

eMusic is close to crossing the 100 million download mark and has tapped the Barenaked Ladies to write and record a personalized song about the eMusic subscriber who downloads the milestone track. eMusic will offer the track as a free download, and the Barenaked Ladies will add it to their new album "The Barenaked Ladies Are Men," due Feb. 6. eMusic started counting downloads on Nov. 1, 2003.

HOT RINGMASTERS™ DEC 9 2006 Billboard

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WEEKS ON CHIT	TITLE	ORIGINAL ARTIST
1	1	2	#1 SMACK THAT	AKON FEATURING EMINEM
2	2	2	IRREPLACEABLE	BEYONCE
3	34	2	I WANNA LOVE YOU	AKON FEATURING SNOOP DOGG
4	3	2	WE FLY HIGH	JIM JONES
5	5	2	SHORTIE LIKE MINE	BOW WOW FEATURING CHRIS BROWN & JOHN TA AUSTIN
6	6	2	LIPS OF AN ANGEL	HINDER
7	4	2	MY LOVE	JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE FEATURING TL
8	8	2	FERGALICIOUS	FERGIE
9	7	2	STUNTIN' LIKE MY DADDY	BIRDMAN & LIL WAYNE
10	11	2	WALK IT OUT	UNK
11	9	2	MONEY IN THE BANK	LIL SCRAPPY FEATURING YOUNG BUCK
12	30	2	MAKE IT RAIN	FAT JOE FEATURING LIL WAYNE
13	15	2	PROMISE	CIARA
14	13	2	SEXYBACK	JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE
15	12	2	MONEY MAKER	LUDACRIS FEATURING PHARRELL
16	10	2	CHAIN HANG LOW	JIBBS
17	14	2	FAR AWAY	NICKELBACK
18	16	2	ZOOM	LIL BOOSIE FEATURING YUNG JOC
19	17	2	BEFORE HE CHEATS	CARRIE UNDERWOOD
20	18	2	HOW TO SAVE A LIFE	THE FRAY

Based on master ringtones sales data reported by Nielsen RingScan, a service of Nielsen Mobile. Chart endorsed by CTIA - The Wireless Association and Mobile Entertainment Forum.



UNWIRE YOUR EARS

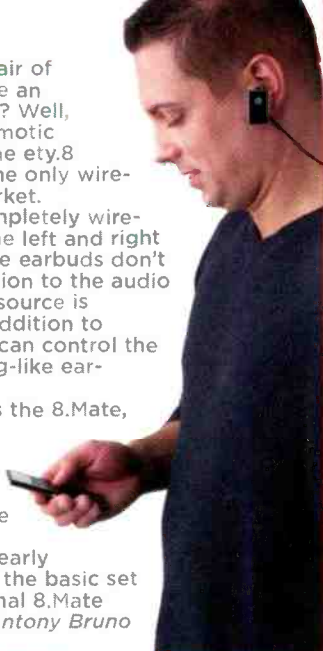
Ever wanted to buy a pair of headphones that require an instruction video to use? Well, here's your chance. Etymotic Research has created the ety.8 Bluetooth earphones, the only wireless earbuds on the market.

While they're not completely wireless—a wire connects the left and right earphones together—the earbuds don't require a wired connection to the audio source, so long as that source is Bluetooth-enabled. In addition to streaming music, users can control the music playback via Borg-like earphones as well.

An optional add-on is the 8.Mate, a Bluetooth transceiver designed specifically for the iPod. Without it the earphones would not work with the popular device.

The ety.8 will ship in early December for \$200 for the basic set and \$300 for the optional 8.Mate adapter.

—Antony Bruno



Retail Track

ED CHRISTMAN echristman@billboard.com



Indies For Adults

Music Experience And Museo Del Disco Score With Older Consumers

Two independent stores that appeal to the older consumer are doing well for themselves. In Chicago, Dedry Jones has started a high-profile marketing event that keeps his Music Experience store top of mind with local customers; in Miami, wholesaler Hinsul Lazo is attracting customers to his 5-year-old store, Museo Del Disco, the old-fashioned way—with deep inventory.

At the Music Experience, Jones says that although he carries hip-hop, rap and pop—“what the young people want”—the main focus is on the older demographics, 28 and up. “The record companies seem to have forgotten that the older customers exist,” he says, which is why his store specializes in having a deep selection in each genre of soul, jazz and blues. Also, he adds, in this day and age you have to focus on what the big-box stores don’t carry.

Beyond that, Jones has found a marketing vehicle to benefit his store, while reminding the labels that the older customers still care about music. He started a series called the Experience, in which he features an artist with a new album in an interview setting, sometimes followed by a performance, and usually a CD signing. Depending on the artist, the performance takes different forms, either singing to track, acoustic or with a band.

The first one was at the end of 2002 with Will Downing in an art gallery, he says, followed by Al Jarreau at a bigger gallery and then George Duke at a Jaguar dealership. He has since settled on putting most of the events at the DuSable Museum of African-American History, when it is available. The museum, which its Web site describes as the oldest of its type in the country, contains a 450-seat theater where the Experience events take place. People get in for the price of the new CD, although it’s described as a ticket sale in which attendees get the CD for free on the day of the event.

So far, Jones has put on about 20 events, including appearances by Patti LaBelle, Lyfe Jennings, Natalie Cole, Ruben Studdard, John Legend, Israel & New Breed, Jarreau and Andraé Crouch. “Sony BMG Music Entertainment Sales have been my biggest supporter for the Experience series; so has Verve as a label, and now other suppliers are stepping up,” Jones says. In fact, Brian McKnight will be the next artist appearing in the series, on Dec. 6 at the International House in Chicago, with a mini-acoustic performance, an onstage interview and CD signing for his new “10” album out Dec. 5 on Warner Bros.

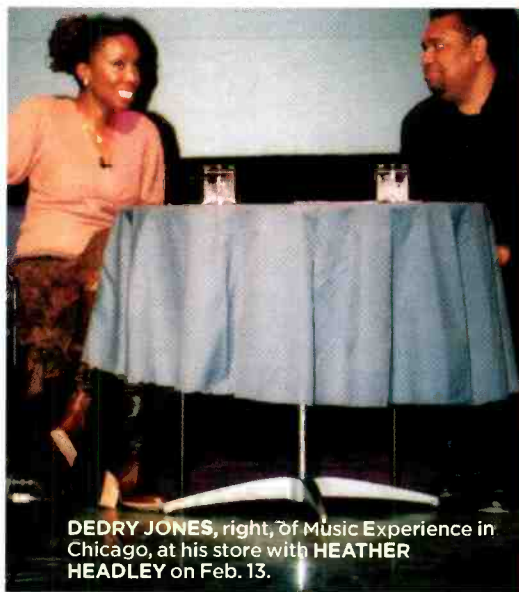
“Dedry has created a marketing vehicle that is viable in the marketplace,” Sony BMG Music Entertainment Sales VP of urban and gospel marketing Anthony Ellis says. In fact, Sony BMG recorded two of the events, Jennings’ and Studdard’s, with the former coming out as a limited edition CD given away as a premium when customers bought the artist’s “Phoenix” album in independent stores. The latter performance may

be used in the same way.

Meanwhile, in Miami, Lazo found a way to survive the wholesale wars—by opening up a record store, after feeling the squeeze at his wholesale operation, H.L. Distributors.

“I am in the middle of two giants: Reyes, which specializes in Latin, and Alliance Entertainment Corp., the biggest one-stop in the country,” Lazo says. So he decided to try opening a record store and in doing so broke all the rules. For one, he put Museo Del Disco in a building he owns in the warehouse district of Miami; customers have to drive through a trailer park to get to it. He did this out of desperation, after seeing his wholesale business getting squeezed and his building left with empty space when a factory tenant went out of business.

But one rule he followed well was stocking the store deeply, with \$2 million worth of inventory, all targeting the older demos. “We have all kinds of music, except rap,” Lazo says. The 10,000-square-foot store stocks about



DEDRY JONES, right, of Music Experience in Chicago, at his store with HEATHER HEADLEY on Feb. 13.

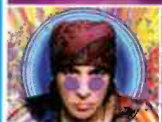
50,000 SKUs, of which 42,000 are CDs and 8,000 are DVDs.

Within the music, about 20,000 are in English while the majority is Latin from all over the world. Of the DVDs, about 3,000 are movies—Spanish theatrical and foreign releases—and 5,000 are music-based, including what Lazo calls the biggest selection of opera and jazz DVDs in the city. The store also has about 100 listening stations and three plasma TVs where videos are constantly played.

Billboards, TV and radio advertising, good customer service and word-of-mouth drive traffic to the location, where there is a parking lot that can accommodate about 100 cars. “Our clientele is 35 and up, and a cultured client,” Lazo says.

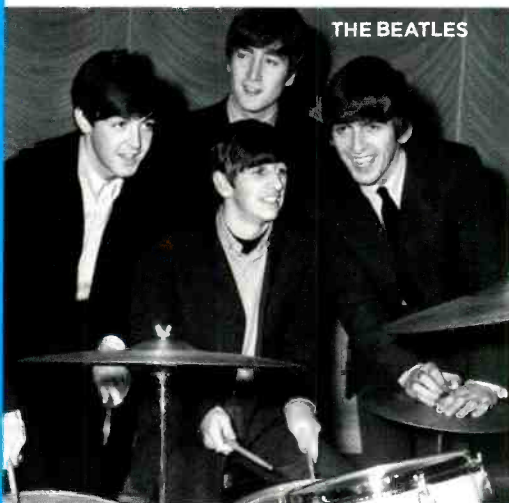
“One more reason for our success—we are next door to H.L. Distributors so we hardly ever run out of product in the retail store,” he says. ...

LITTLE STEVEN'S UNDERGROUND GARAGE



GARAGE ROCK

... the trip begins with the naked voices of “Because” ... exquisite ... mysterious ... spiritual ... sexual ... perfectly setting the mood, then ... is it the obelisk from “2001” or the ending piano chord from “A Day in the Life”? ... backwards, of course ... harkening the breaking of dawn with the “A Hard Day’s Night” chord and suddenly into the “Abbey Road” drum solo and the howl begins ... an eerie sound that will return from time to time, a whistling wind echoing with



THE BEATLES

voices from the past? The future? Is it tortured angels or the evil dead receiving redemption at last? “Get Back!” Get back before you run out of time! ... my God—that voice ... we’re looking through a “Glass Onion” that twists and turns ... “Hello Goodbye,” a “Magical Mystery Tour” indeed! The howl has returned ... the overture begins ... the magnificent strings ... and the wind becomes the Aah of “Eleanor Rigby” ... that voice again ... it’s right—there, you can touch it ... “Julia” ... quiet ... desperate ... tragic ... taken away in the European ambulance ... her son’s catharsis reaches its genius peak with “I

Am the Walrus” ... it can’t be, but it is ... another extraordinary voice ... different but somehow ... we’re back at the beginning ... so long ago ... was it all a dream? ... each single gaining strength until the fifth could not be denied even by the dimwitted Americans ... “I Want to Hold Your Hand” ... incredible power even now hiding behind those innocent words ... hold my hand today, and tomorrow you can “Drive My Car” ... but ... with the “Taxman” solo ... “What You’re Doing” ... “The Word” ... all expertly blended and disappeared and you’re down the rabbit hole riding a droning tamboura and the “Sun King” is speaking ... backwards, of course ... a magical transition to ... “Something” ... really something ... yet another impossibly beautiful voice ... follow the yellow brick road, or better yet “Blue Jay Way” ... the “Nowhere Man” will lead you ... to the psychedelic circus ... “Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite” ... and inevitably to the house of horrors ... “I Want You” ... soooo bad! ... “Help!” ... follow the “Blackbird” to ... “Yesterday” ... “Strawberry Fields” ... forever ... but with the brass bridge of “Sgt. Pepper,” the harpsichord of “In My Life,” the piccolo trumpet of “Penny Lane” ... any “Piggies” in there? ... “Hello Goodbye” again ... it’s all ... “Within You Without You” ... “Tomorrow Never Knows” ... how beautifully they mix ... and the demonic birds are set free by “Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds” ... as the gorgeous strings of “Goodnight” provide the unlikely high of the highest moment ... an invitation from ... Ringo? ... it’s the melody with different chords ... it shouldn’t work this brilliantly ... it’s breathtaking ... come with us, he says, if we all dream the same dream it will become real ... and the dream ... is ... Love ... and the trip continues ...

The Beatles have a new album. You’ve got to love that. See you on the radio. ...

COOLEST GARAGE SONGS

TITLE/LABEL	ARTIST
1 DRIVE MY CAR/THE WORD/WHAT YOU’RE DOING Capitol	THE BEATLES
2 POD Epic	TENACIOUS D
3 FAVORITE SON CBGB Forever	GREEN DAY
4 SO ROMANTIC Wicked Cool	THE CHARMS
5 DANCE LIKE A MONKEY Roadrunner	NEW YORK DOLLS
6 RIDIN’ THE HOOK Nick Records	SPONGEBOB & THE HI-SEAS
7 WRECK THIS HEART Capitol	BOB SEGER
8 STRANGER IN THE HOUSE Savage Jams	THE PAYBACKS
9 WANNA Acid Jazz	THE STABILISERS
10 NEVER GONNA DIE Sire	THE SHYS

Little Steven’s Underground Garage column is produced exclusively for Billboard. For more information go to UNDERGROUNDGARAGE.COM.

CEO
CZAR
ENTERTAINMENT

Jimmy Rosemond

Czar Entertainment CEO explains how he successfully managed to overcome perceptions of the Game, and how the artist and the company can grow from here.



Jimmy Rosemond, CEO of New York-based Czar Entertainment, has had quite a year. Few managers can say that they've steered an artist through one of hip-hop's most storied beefs (the Game's public squabble with 50 Cent), and emerged with a successful album and a renewed career. But that's exactly what happened, after the Game's "Doctor's Advocate" sold 358,000 copies in its first week, according to Nielsen SoundScan, without collaboration or production help from Dr. Dre and 50 Cent.

Hatching and enacting a marketing plan to keep the public interested, Rosemond has been playing chess all year. It's been a learning experience, and he's grateful for it all.

Founding Czar Entertainment, formerly Henchmen Entertainment, 10 years ago, Rosemond began assembling the Henchmen G's, the songwriting and production team that created Bad Boy's first string of hits: among them Deric "D-Dot" Angeletti ("The Benjamins" by Puff Daddy featuring Lil' Kim & the Lox), Ron "Amen Ra" Lawrence ("Hypnotize" by the Notorious B.I.G.) and D-Moet ("Hate Me Now" by Nas featuring Puff Daddy).

Stretching into film and TV by executive-producing "Romeo Must Die" and Vibe magazine's awards show, Rosemond now produces the nationally syndicated cable game show "Hip Hop Hold 'Em," pitting artists and DJs against each other for charity. For him, it all comes down to innovation, which is one thing that Rosemond isn't afraid of.

What's next in your plan to push the Game's "Doctor's Advocate"?

We're still working the second single "Let's Ride," but the third single is "Wouldn't Get Far" featuring Kanye West. It's getting a lot of radio spins right now. So we're going to shoot the video soon. We're actually going to have a few of the young ladies mentioned in the song in the video as well.

"Wouldn't Get Far" isn't so nice to the models it mentions. How'd you get them to appear in the video?

Well, the song "Wouldn't Get Far" is really about what you see isn't always what you get, both in terms of rappers and models. For example, people may say they've got a certain amount of money but that's not the case. It's all entertainment and in good fun.

What's it like managing a media magnet like the Game?

Everything is really spontaneous. My biggest job is really clarifying people's misunderstandings about him. Because he raps about what he does, people assume he's going to be this violent guy. But it's all entertainment. For example, I got a call

from the NBA, and they want him to perform but they're afraid of his image. So they're asking me, "What is he going to do onstage? [Is] there going to be any violence?" So sometimes I have to defuse the fear about who Game is and remind people that this ain't reality TV.

How so?

For example, just seeing how security reacts when we go to the mall shows you that people view him in this certain way [as a gang member]. They wouldn't act like that if it was another artist.

With so much controversy leading up to "Doctor's Advocate" do you feel vindicated now that the album's been so successful?

I think we all feel relieved that the sophomore jinx didn't descend upon us. We were able to break some of the barriers and we were able to get through it. It's an accomplishment.

What kind of barriers?

There were a lot of people that didn't believe that Game could overcome what he has. But we always knew that if we made great records, we would be fine. We understood

where we stood in the hip-hop community. Guys want to hear something with a story and we always knew that Game is intriguing enough, that people would want to hear what he had to say. And if they have kids, they'll most likely want to hear Game as well. Also, people with the vision knew, from the publishers to the label executives, that Game is a talented rapper.

Have you secured a distribution deal for the Game's Black Wall Street label yet?

We wanted to get past the first-week sales initially. And now that he's done what he has, we've got bragging rights, so we'll be starting the distribution conversations again.

What management decisions did Czar make leading up to the project?

Just making sure that he remained relevant. The 310 [Motors] commercial [for Game's Hurricane 2 shoe brand] and being very open with the rap community worked well. We had to know when to let that cat out of the bag, that Dre wasn't a part of the project. I think about a month out, we told people, "Hey, Dre's not on

the album.' Fortunately, Game's always relevant, and we've done well to keep his alliances right with the right rappers. But I think the most strategic thing we did was let certain key people—different rappers, label folks, MTV, radio DJs—hear the record early. People we knew would hit the rumor mill, they would talk about how hot this album was.

Any touring plans for the Game after his MTV \$2 Bill concert in November?

That \$2 Bill show was crazy. Nas came out and killed it. He and Game ended the show with Marsha from Floetry and performed. We're actually talking about a Game, [Jay-Z] and Nas tour, and I'd love to add Snoop [Dogg]. That'd be a super tour. That bill would cover all the marketplaces they'd go with that tour.

What's up with rapper Smitty, who you also manage? He released "Lil Haiti" and then disappeared.

J Records happened with him. They're not really into rappers over there, so we put him on hiatus instead of keep trying to work within

a flawed system. J Records wants to get another chance with Smitty and that's one thing you don't hear in the business very often. Most times, they'll just give up on an artist, so the fact that they want to try is respectable. So we're trying again.

And with Akon, whom you're consulting?

We're just helping with tour stuff with him. Touring is just as important as setting up records as far as sales are concerned. There's so many other ancillary ways of getting an artist paid besides record sales, if done right.

And singer/producer Mario Winans?

He's coming out second quarter and he's signed to Warner Brothers/Bad Boy. He gave some of his hits to Puffy, like the Puffy and Keyshia Cole record, "Last Night," that was supposed to be for his album. So he did about three songs on Puffy's "Press Play," took some time off, and now he's working on his own project.

In what other ways are you planning to expand Czar? Will there be other TV shows after your poker game show, "Hip Hop Hold 'Em"?

We're willing to try anything that's entertaining to the consumer. We don't have any problem with taking any chances. "Hip Hop Hold 'Em" has been very successful and has been renewed for a second season. They're probably going to be a lot of other poker shows after ours, and that's fine. On our show we have the players choose from a list of charities, or bring their own. We're actually educating a lot of these rappers on how to give. They don't know about the tax write-offs. They'll have a sister with cancer, but they won't know what kind or what charity speaks to their specific need, so it's been a good thing.

My biggest job is really clarifying people's misunderstandings about him. People assume he's going to be this violent guy.



THE BILLBOARD MUSIC AWARDS PREVIEW

BY JONATHAN COHEN

The past 12 months have been particularly good for one Canadian rock band, three Nashville upstarts, a once-imprisoned Southern rapper and an R&B diva in the throes of a major comeback. Now, Nickelback, Rascal Flatts, T.I. and Mary J. Blige are being recognized for their achievements as finalists in a leading five categories each for the 2006 Billboard Music Awards. ●●● The 17th annual honors will boast performances by Janet Jackson, the Killers, Gwen Stefani, Fergie, the Fray, Mary J. Blige, and Ludacris featuring Pharrell and Young Jeezy. Bowling for Soup, Carrie Underwood, Carmen Electra, Dave Navarro, Flavor Flav, Three 6 Mafia, the cast of "High School Musical," Rihanna, Chris Brown and "American Idol" alums Katharine McPhee and Chris Daughtry will make appearances. ●●● The hard-touring Nickelback is up for artist, rock artist and duo/group of the year. Its 2005 Roadrunner release "All the Right Reasons" will vie for album and rock album of the year. The set has sold 4 million copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. >>>

Rascal Flatts, which owns the second-highest-selling album of 2006 with the Lyric Street/Hollywood set "Me and My Gang," is a finalist for artist, duo/group and country artist of the year. "Gang" is up for country album of the year.

Thanks to his Grand Hustle/Atlantic set "King," rapper T.I. is up for R&B/hip-hop artist, male R&B/hip-hop artist, rap artist, R&B/hip-hop album and rap album of the year.

Blige, meanwhile, earned finalist nods in the female artist, R&B/hip-hop artist, female R&B/hip-hop artist, R&B/hip-hop album and R&B/hip-hop single categories. Her 2005 album "The Breakthrough" has been one of this year's most consistent sellers, having shifted 2.6 million copies.

The diversity of the top awards finalists will be matched by the performers on the MGM Grand Garden stage. "We've got everything from Janet, Fergie and Gwen and their very stylized, theatrical performances, to the Fray, which will be a full-on rock'n'roll moment without all the props and colors," the show's talent producer Bruce Gillmer says.

"Some of the more intense performances definitely will take on a Las Vegas vibe, just because there's so much happening," he adds. "The venue brings out a lot of that, too, because there are so many possibilities in terms of rigging and staging."

Gillmer is especially proud of the Jackson and Fray performance segments, which are unique to this year's telecast. "It is a challenge because we're at the end of a year crowded with award shows," he admits. "But this is Janet's only big awards show appearance. Same with the Fray. There are performers who have done some of the other shows, but we're working really hard to differentiate their performances so they'll stand out."

In addition, Tony Bennett will receive the Century Award, Billboard's highest honor for creative achievement. "It will be a nice, genuine, heartfelt moment, celebrating his amazing career and the fact he's still as vital now as ever," Gillmer says. "We've also created a video package with some pretty diverse artists and friends of Tony."

Among the other multiple award finalists are Brown, Ne-Yo, Jamie Foxx, Kenny Chesney, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Sean Paul, Nelly Furtado featuring Timbaland, "High School Musical," Beyoncé, Yung Joc, Dem Franchize Boyz, Shinedown and Three Days Grace.

Billboard Music Award winners are determined by performance on Billboard's weekly charts. ●●●



YOUNG JEEZY

While the "drug rap" era has been captivating the hip-hop world, Young Jeezy remains one of its main purveyors with his gruff voice and grimy street-corner rhymes. The charismatic Atlanta rapper and self-proclaimed "Snowman" first gained recognition as one-fourth of Bad Boy's Southern collective Boyz n Da Hood, but eventually distinguished himself as a solo star with his 2005 debut "Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101" (Corporate Thugz Entertainment/Def Jam).

The disc bowed at No. 2 on The Billboard 200 and has sold 1.7 million copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, while spawning the singles "Go Crazy" and "Soul Survivor" featuring Akon. Jeezy told Billboard last March, "You're going to feel me. You're going to feel sad with me, you're going to go through the struggle with me, you're going to hang out with me, you're going to hit the trap with me. You're going to see the 'hood through a young man's eyes who has really seen it, really felt it, really touched it, really tasted it." And that he has done.

Amid Def Jam's high-profile fourth-quarter release schedule is Jeezy's follow-up "The Inspiration: Thug Motivation 102," led by the single "I Luv It." Due Dec. 12, the album features guest appearances from Ludacris, T.I., Keyshia Cole, Three 6 Mafia, Young Buck and Timbaland, among others. Jeezy also won best new R&B/hip-hop artist at Billboard's R&B/Hip-Hop Awards in September in Atlanta.

GWEN STEFANI

A decade ago, Gwen Stefani was all over pop radio as the frontwoman of No Doubt. Today, it's Stefani the solo artist that rules the airwaves. Her 2004 Interscope solo debut, "Love. Angel. Music. Baby.," has sold more than 3.8 million copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, and spawned a host of hits, including "Hollaback Girl," which spent four weeks at No. 1 on The Billboard Hot 100.

Originally from Fullerton, Calif., Stefani joined No Doubt in her late teens. The group signed to Interscope in 1991 but didn't break into the mainstream until 1995's "Tragic Kingdom," which featured mega hits "Just a Girl" and "Don't Speak." After an eight-year run, Stefani took a break from the band to focus on her solo career.

Recruiting such collaborators as Linda Perry, André 3000, Dr. Dre and the Neptunes, Stefani created "Love. Angel. Music. Baby."—named for each member of her

four-woman entourage the Harajuku Girls. Ever fashion-forward, Stefani also launched clothing line L.A.M.B.

After taking a break this year to raise her son with rocker Gavin Rossdale, Stefani is now back in the spotlight with her second solo set, "The Sweet Escape." Due Dec. 5 via Interscope, the album is led by the single "Wind Up" and features Akon, Stefani's No Doubt bandmate Tony Kanal, Keane's Tim Rice-Oxley, Nellee Hooper, Sean Garrett, Swizz Beatz and Dave Stewart.

LUDACRIS

A former radio jock-turned-rapper, Ludacris has made a lasting impression in the last few years not only with his music but via substantial roles in Academy Award-winning films "Crash" and "Hustle & Flow." This year the Atlanta native also earned his third No. 1 album when "Release Therapy" (Disturbing Tha Peace/Def Jam) bowed atop The Billboard 200, selling 309,000 copies in its first week, according to Nielsen SoundScan. Lead single "Money Maker" featuring Pharrell topped The Billboard Hot 100 for two weeks.

Having played the jokester in many of his rhymes ("Ho," "Area Codes"), Ludacris finally turned serious on "Release Therapy"—at least half of it, anyway. The "Release" portion of the album finds the rapper exposing a more personal side of himself, with rhymes about child abuse ("Runaway Love"), among other subjects, while the "Therapy" portion features the humorous club tracks for which Luda has become renowned.

"It was also time for me to release," Ludacris told Billboard in September. "I'm really getting a lot of stuff off my chest [on this album]; something my career has been leading up to. You get to a phase where you want to try new things."

And while the rapper-turned-actor phenomenon continues to run its course, Ludacris has been critically praised for his natural talent and charisma, earning roles on TV's "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit," among other opportunities. Next, he will play an angry elf in the Warner Bros. holiday comedy "Fred Claus," starring with Vince Vaughn, Paul Giamatti and Kevin Spacey. Ludacris is also planning a tour featuring his Disturbing Tha Peace roster, which is home to Shawna, Bobby Valentino, Shareefa and Field Mob.

MARY J. BLIGE

With her seventh studio effort, "The Breakthrough," Mary J. Blige proved once again that R&B divas can make stunning comebacks (see Mariah Carey). The Geffen disc

THE ENVELOPE PLEASE... Finalists for the 2006 Billboard

ARTIST OF THE YEAR:

CHRIS BROWN
NICKELBACK
RASCAL FLATTS

ALBUM OF THE YEAR:

"Some Hearts,"
CARRIE UNDERWOOD
"High School Musical,"
VARIOUS ARTISTS
"All the Right Reasons,"
NICKELBACK

FEMALE ARTIST:

RIHANNA
MARY J. BLIGE
BEYONCÉ

R&B/HIP-HOP ARTIST:

MARY J. BLIGE
T.I.
JAMIE FOXX



BLIGE



THE KILLERS

STEFANI

LUDACRIS

bowed atop The Billboard 200 (her third such achievement) in December 2005 with 727,000 first-week sales—the biggest opening week by a solo R&B female artist in Nielsen SoundScan history. The set has sold 2.6 million copies thus far.

At the top of the year, lead single “Be Without You” crowned the R&B/hip-hop chart for 15 straight weeks and this summer, Blige embarked on the Breakthrough Experience tour. As the Queen of Hip-Hop Soul noted on the album cut “Hate It or Love It,” the album marked “a point in my life where I can finally call myself a Queen.”

“My goal was to make my fans happy, and I knew that [2003’s] ‘Love & Life’ was something that disappointed them,” Blige told Billboard in January. “None of us were in a good place. Too many cooks spoiled the soup. You had [Diddy] saying, ‘Do this, do that,’ and I wanted something else. I have to give the glory to God [for] giving me the strength and guidance to do this.”

In addition to an upcoming album of duets, Blige will release a greatest-hits album, “Reflections: The Journey,” on Dec. 12. The set will feature a mix of old favorites such as “Real Love” and “Family Affair” and previously unreleased tracks including new song “We Ride” produced by Bryan-Michael Cox.

Next, Blige will make her film-starring debut in a biopic about jazz great Nina Simone. The artist has also continued her charitable efforts with her involvement in HIV/AIDS campaigns, anti-drug public service announcements and outreach groups.

THE FRAY

The Fray may be only one album into its career, but that hasn’t stopped the group from having a major impact on the Billboard charts in 2006. After debuting modestly at No. 156 on The Billboard 200 in the fall of 2005, the Fray’s Epic debut, “How to Save a Life,” clawed its way to a peak of No. 14 almost exactly a year later, thanks to its ubiquitous title track and fellow single “Over My Head (Cable Car).”

The Denver-based band was formed when vocalist/pianist Isaac Slade happened upon an old schoolmate, guitarist Joe King, at a local music shop. The pair added drummer Ben Wysocki and guitarist Dave Welsh and began hitting the local scene with a piano-driven sound in the vein of Keane and Coldplay. Epic signed the band in 2004 and sent it to Bloomington, Ind., to record its debut at the famed Echo Park Studios.

Thanks to relentless touring and some key licensing tie-ins with “Grey’s Anatomy” and HBO, the title track got as high as No. 3 on The Billboard Hot 100, while “Over My Head” reached No. 8. According to Epic, “How to

Save a Life” is the No. 3 best-selling album in iTunes history; it has now sold 1.1 million copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

For King and his bandmates, one way to keep the swirling success in perspective is to think locally. As he told Billboard in April, “We got a video from this guy and girl at a [Denver high school] assembly, and they started singing ‘How to Save a Life.’ I [got] goose bumps at this point. That was me 10 years back; I was learning the songs of the artists that inspired me, and [now] these kids are learning me. That’s more gratifying than any licensing or radio play.”

JANET JACKSON

When it comes to the term “diva,” Janet Jackson has always fit the bill. Ever since her breakthrough album “Control” hit shelves in 1986, the youngest Jackson offspring has released hit after hit marked by her sexy style of R&B and pop. Her new Virgin set, “20 Y.O.,” recently debuted at No. 2 on The Billboard 200 and spawned the single “Call On Me” featuring Nelly, which hit No. 1 on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart.

“This album takes me to a place where I haven’t been in a while: R&B and dance,” Jackson recently told Billboard. “The album also features samples from music that inspired me 20, 25 years ago. There are also some midtempo songs and some of what everyone calls my ‘baby-making songs.’ Basically, the album is everything that’s always been a part of me, but with freshness to it.”

Having watched as her older brothers rose to worldwide superstardom in the Jackson 5, Jackson set off on a solo career in 1982 with her self-titled debut. With “Control,” she cemented herself as a major pop figure in her own right, following it up in 1989 with “Rhythm Nation 1814,” which yielded seven top five hits including “Escapade,” “Come Back to Me” and “Black Cat.”

Jackson has remained perched near the top of the charts for the past decade, thanks to such albums as “janet.” in 1993, “The Velvet Rope” in 1997, “All for You” in 2001 and “Damita Jo” in 2004. Overall, she has racked up eight top 10 albums, five of which reached No. 1.

FERGIE

With her sometimes raunchy, sometimes sensual brand of hip-hop and pop, Stacy “Fergie” Ferguson finally came into her own this year. The Black Eyed Peas frontwoman broke from the pod with her solo debut “The Dutchess” (Will.i.am/A&M), which bowed in October at No. 3 on The Billboard 200 and has sold 655,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

The suggestive chants of lead single “London Bridge”

This year’s BMAs mark the only awards show gigs for Jackson and the Fray.

(“How come every time you come around/my London, London Bridge wanna go down”) drove the song to the top of The Billboard Hot 100 for three straight weeks. On second single “Fergalicious,” the singer emulates ‘80s female rap trio J.J. Fad.

A former child actor (she performed voice-overs for “Charlie Brown” cartoons) and member of ‘90s girl group Wild Orchid, Fergie battled drug addiction and self-esteem issues before lucking into a meeting with Peas frontman Will.i.am. Once in the group, the Hacienda Heights, Calif.-raised singer helped the trio-turned-foursome achieve global stardom.

But with “The Dutchess,” Fergie looked to explore subjects that were virtually off limits to her as a member of the Peas. “There are a lot more ballads and more intimacy between me and the listener because sometimes when you’re in a group you don’t have space to air out your dirty laundry,” she told Billboard recently. “For me, this [album] is a complete thought. It’s not just a verse or a sentence. It’s my complete feeling and emotion.”

THE KILLERS

Just how meteoric was the Killers’ rise? About three months after they released their Island debut, “Hot Fuss,” in June 2004, the Las Vegas-based band played the 1,200-capacity 9:30 Club in Washington, D.C., and just eight months later, it was rocking the 16,000-plus-capacity Merriweather Post Pavilion in nearby Columbia, Md. It was par for the course for a band that went from blogosphere darlings to retail domination in short order.

“Hot Fuss” sold more than 3 million copies in the United States, was nominated for five Grammy Awards and spent 53 weeks in the top 50 of The Billboard 200. “Mr. Brightside” spent more than 40 weeks on the charts and reached No. 10 on The Billboard Hot 100, while “Somebody Told Me” spent 30 weeks on the charts and hit No. 3 on the Modern Rock tally.

The Killers (lead singer Brandon Flowers, guitarist David Keuning, bassist Mark Stoermer and drummer Ronnie Vannucci) were arguably the biggest artist development story last year. Striking while the iron is hot, the group recently released its second album, “Sam’s Town,” which debuted at No. 2 on The Billboard 200. First single “When You Were Young” reached No. 14 on the Hot 100.

“We’re not cocky,” Flowers recently told Billboard. “And I don’t mean to sound cocky. We’re just proud of this record. At the end of the day, it’s all in the ear of the beholders. We don’t believe the hype. We believe it’s a good piece of work. I never said we were trying to reinvent the wheel. We just want to keep it rolling.”

Music Awards categories that will be presented during the telecast:

POP SINGLE:

“Promiscuous.”
NELLY FURTADO
FEATURING TIMBALAND
“Temperature.”
SEAN PAUL
“Hips Don’t Lie.” SHAKIRA
FEATURING WYCLEF JEAN

RAP SINGLES ARTIST:

T.I.
YUNG JOC
SEAN PAUL

COUNTRY ARTIST:

RASCAL FLATTS
CARRIE UNDERWOOD
KENNY CHESNEY

MALE COUNTRY ARTIST:

KENNY CHESNEY
TOBY KEITH
TIM MCGRAW

ROCK SINGLE:

“Animal I Have Become.”
THREE DAYS GRACE
“Speak.” GODSMACK
“Dani California.”
RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

ROCK ALBUM:

“All the Right Reasons.”
NICKELBACK
“Back to Bedlam.”
JAMES BLUNT
“Stadium Arcadium.”
RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

SOUNDTRACK ALBUM:

“High School Musical”
“Walk the Line”
“Get Rich or Die Tryin’”

INDEPENDENT

It was not that long ago that the words “independent label” were generally construed to mean “a quick way for an aspiring artist to be bilked out of their life savings by disreputable operators.” ★ Times have changed.

Independent labels in today's Nashville represent something else entirely: legitimate businesses that compete with major labels for radio and video airplay, media exposure and, most importantly, sales.

During a recent week in November, a full third of the songs listed on Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart were from independent labels: unheard of 10 or even five years ago.

So while consolidation has reduced the number of major label groups to four, the number of independent labels on Music Row has grown steadily during the last few years. In fact, it is that same major label consolidation that has provided both the staff and the artist roster for many independents.

Five years ago, Broken Bow, Dualtone and Curb were pretty much it when it came to Nashville indies. Today's lineup includes at least a dozen companies that have placed, or are likely to place, songs on Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart. Among others, Toby Keith's Show Dog Nashville and Category 5 (home to Travis Tritt) have launched in the last year.

“The thing that had hampered independent labels in the past was lack of quality distribution and a lack of talent on both sides of the spectrum: the artistic talent and the executive talent to run a company and staff a [label],” 903 Music VP of promotion Bill Mayne says. Veteran artist Neal McCoy founded 903 two years ago. It is also home to Darryl Worley and popular touring act the Drew Davis Band.

“In a consolidation era, it's like squeezing a balloon, the air's got to go somewhere,” Mayne adds.

The label most often cited in industry circles as the forebearer of the modern independent movement is Broken Bow, which was started in the late '90s by California car dealer Benny

Brown. After owning a Nashville studio and financially backing various new artists, Brown decided to open his own label. It took a few years, but it eventually succeeded with Craig Morgan, who had previously recorded for Atlantic Records Nashville. Since joining Broken Bow in 2001, Morgan has scored three top 10 singles, including a No. 1, “That's What I Love About Sunday.”

“Broken Bow was the first to re-create the major label model in terms of personnel and staffing,” says Equity Music Group partner and president Mike Kraski, who spent 27 years at CBS Records, which later became Sony. “They were willing to make that commitment and ultimately you saw the results.”

Eventually, Broken Bow also had success with a new artist, Jason Aldean, which forever changed the way independents—by design heavily reliant on artists with a major label track record—were viewed. Aldean's debut album has sold 755,000 copies and has spawned two top 10 singles, including the No. 1 “Why,” which peaked in May.

Equity, launched in 2003, is another label that has found

success with an act other than the tried and true. Although the label counts veteran artist Clint Black as one of its founding partners, and also has on its roster ex-major label performers Mark Wills and Carolyn Dawn Johnson, it has had its biggest success with Little Big Town, a band that has scored on both the airplay and sales charts. The band has sold 807,000 albums to date, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

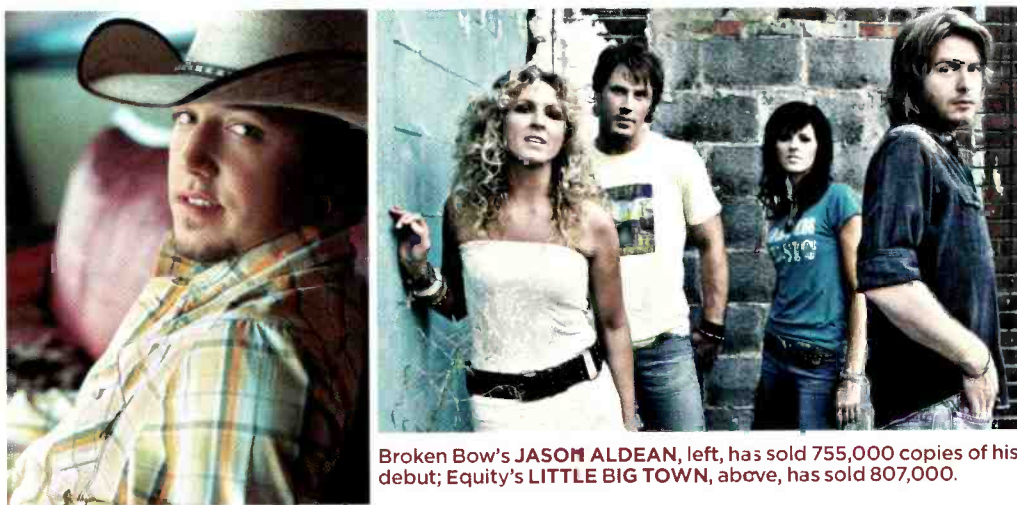
Certainly, lots of ex-major label talent is fueling the indie world. Hitmaker Tracy Lawrence started his own label, Rocky Comfort Records, with a different plan than what he experienced during his years at major labels such as Atlantic and DreamWorks. “The ultimate goal here is not to hang No. 1 plaques on the wall, it's to sell records,” he says. “You can be more efficient with how you spend your money and how you advertise and market your artist. There's just way too much waste in this business.”

Big Machine president, CEO Scott Borchetta leans heavily on past experience, including executive stints at MCA and DreamWorks. “We're taking a lot of our own personal research and development . . . about how to compete out-of-the-box at the highest level,” says Borchetta, who counts Jack Ingram and Taylor Swift among his signees.

Indeed, indies have found ways to tweak the major label model to their advantage. While almost all of them rely, like the majors, on radio airplay as their primary means of exposure to consumers, there are a few that are exploring other means.

Ken Cooper, who moved his Rust Records operation to Nashville from Cleveland, says that the label has a traditional promotion and marketing staff, but also has placed a strong emphasis on new media. “In the country world, 94% of sales are coming from the traditional model and 6% from the digital model. We believe that in the next 36-60 months that's . . . eventually a 50-50 model.”

Cooper says Rust, which is home to BlackHawk, Aaron Tippin and Poverty-Neck Hillbillies, is creating country lifestyle online communities. Even though country consumers are historically behind the tech curve, “when they go to convert, we will be there for them



Broken Bow's **JASON ALDEAN**, left, has sold 755,000 copies of his debut; Equity's **LITTLE BIG TOWN**, above, has sold 807,000.

LITTLE BIG TOWN: KRISTIN BARLOWE

INDEPENDENT AIRPLAY

IN AN AGE OF MAJOR-LABEL CONSOLIDATION, NASHVILLE'S INDIES COMPETE FOR AIRPLAY, MEDIA EXPOSURE AND SALES. AND THEY'RE FINDING ALL OF THE ABOVE.

BY KEN TUCKER

Borchetta says one way that his label remains cost-effective is that "we're not top-heavy with executives. It was more important to me to have great people who could get the job done than bring in experienced high level executives. That's for an aggressive reason—a desire and a hunger—and for a financial reason."

The Big Machine honcho says the decision-making process is quicker at his label as well. "I don't have to check with New York or L.A.," he says. "My crew walks in, we talk about something and either we do it or we don't. There's not a long, drawn-out process."

Major label consolidation has meant more than an injection of top executive and artist talent into the indie realm. It's also meant better, easier distribution. There was a time when independents couldn't get their product in every retail chain, but consolidation has limited the number of clients needed to carry it.

In addition, consolidation at retail, and subsequently on the distribution side, made "a lot of very talented distribution executives available for the independent world to absorb," according to Kraski. "That's what you see at places like RED and Navarre—they are full of ex-major label distribution folks."

Sales and marketing veteran Bob Freese, VP/GM of Navarre Corp., which distributes a half dozen country independents, says country is discovering what other genres, most notably rock and hip-hop have known for years—there's a business in "niche." "In other genres, there's always been an acceptable world for independents," he says, noting that "our biggest-selling titles this year are without a doubt country records."

Broken Bow's Howell doesn't believe the independent label boom has peaked. "I still believe that anybody can have a hit on any given day," he says. "With the right song, the right artist and the right people working it, regardless of the record label, you can have a hit." Lofton Creek's success with Heartland (see story, next page) is an example of that principle, Howell says.

Brian Smith, VP of store operations for Value Music Concepts, agrees. "If you have a hit song you will get played," Smith says. "Fans don't care what label is involved."

As solid a reputation as country independents are currently enjoying, Kraski says that they still have to fight the bias—sometimes seeded by majors—that they might be gone tomorrow. "We have to overcome it again every time an independent label shows up on the radar screen and then fails," he says, noting that there is an answer to the bias. "Success brings credibility."

to use," Cooper says.

At Equity, artists maintain ownership of their masters. "Our belief began with 'the artists should own their own art,'" Kraski says. "We felt it was wrong for artists never to earn royalties on their CD sales because of recoupability. Artists earn income from the very first and subsequent SoundScan sale. It's not a royalty system, it's a dollars per unit SoundScan system. It's very transparent and it's very immediate."

Montage Music Group, launched in late July and headed by former Sony Music Nashville president/CEO Allen Butler, is one of the newer independents on the scene. Montage is home to former major label acts Little Texas, Andy Griggs and new-

comer Minnie Murphy. Montage has a management and publishing arm for artists that are looking for one-stop shopping. Butler sees the model as a plus for artist development. "We would like to share as much in their career as we possibly can," he says.

Many of these ex-major label execs say they enjoy distinct advantages in the indie label space. Butler says his label can move faster and more cost-effectively. "If we identified an artist that we didn't think was going to fit into mainstream radio parameters, we can go directly to digital with that project and, because of our lower costs of doing business, make money at a much lower level than a major can," Butler says. And for a label like Montage, he says, "it can keep the lights on."



HEARTLAND'S 'I Loved Her First' reached No. 1 in its 17th week on Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart.

It's tempting to describe

Heartland's emergence on the national country scene as an overnight success. The Huntsville, Ala.-based band signed a recording contract with Nashville independent Lofton Creek in May, and less than six months later it had a No. 1 Billboard chart single—"I Loved Her First"—and a top-selling album by the same name. But, as with most acts, Heartland's success is anything but overnight. "It took us 12 years to be an 'overnight success,'" lead singer Jason Albert says wryly.

There are thousands of bar bands and church choir singers across America that have as much, if not more, talent than what regularly pours out of your car radio. The difference between those folks and today's stars, in many cases, is the right connection, the right break, the right set of ears to hear their talent. A few years ago, that might have exclusively meant a major label. In Heartland's case, it meant crossing paths with songwriter/producer Walt Aldridge, DJ Dan Hollander and veteran record executive Mike Borchetta.

The band, made up of Albert, Craig Anderson (rhythm guitar), Keith West (bass guitar, background vocals), Chuck Crawford (fiddle, background vocals), Todd Anderson (drums) and Mike Myerson (lead guitar), kicked around the Southeast playing clubs, hoping for something bigger for at least a decade. "The core of the band was me, Craig and Todd starting out," Albert says. "Then we added Mike and Keith." Crawford joined the band after he answered an ad on a local Internet site. "He just fits like a glove," Albert says.

In addition to regional gigs, the band made its share of trips up I-65 to Nashville, where, like countless other acts, it hoped to find fame and fortune but instead found rejection. "We've had our share of doors slammed in our face," and hearing "thanks, but no thanks," Albert says.

But the seeds of Heartland's current success were planted a little closer to home. Looking

for songs that it could record and pitch to labels, the band went to a songwriter showcase. It was there that it first heard "I Loved Her First," a look at love through the eyes of a father at his daughter's wedding ("I prayed that she'd find you someday, but it's still hard to give her away"). The singer that night was Aldridge, who had written the song with Elliott Park. "Our eyes just welled up with tears," Albert says. "Whether you have kids or not, that song is special."

After the show the group asked Aldridge to send it material. He agreed. "When we got a CD in the mail, that song was on it," Albert says. "We couldn't believe that nobody had recorded it. Come to find out, they'd pitched it around [Nashville] for several years. Everybody passed on it because they didn't want anybody to think that they were old enough to have a child who was getting married. But we thought, 'A good song's a good song. You're just telling a story when you do it.'"

The group eventually went into the studio with Aldridge producing a four-song demo. One of the demos ended up in the hands of Hollander, who works at WLLX in Lawrenceburg,

Tenn. After listening, Hollander called Borchetta. "I've known Dan for 25 years," Borchetta says. "He has never called me up and said, 'You got to hear this.'"

"Why don't these guys have a major label deal? They're incredible," Borchetta recalls thinking when he first heard the demo. The wheels were set in motion. "He listened on Friday and met with us on Monday," Albert says. Soon after the act was signed to Lofton Creek.

A veteran promotion man whose career dates back to the '60s, Borchetta was confident that "I Loved Her First" was a hit. "I've worked enough No. 1 records over the years, going back to the Beach Boys, that I know what one feels like," he says. "I knew what I had."

Interestingly, what Borchetta had was a demo cut for roughly \$500. Based on his experience with '60s records like "Chick-A-Boom" by Daddy Dewdrop, Borchetta resisted going back into the studio to rerecord the song. "Like

the old days, you can cut a record for a few hundred dollars and have a hit," he says.

Lofton Creek took the song to radio. A cadre of veteran promoters that Borchetta dubbed "the Over the Hill Gang," began mining their longstanding relationships at radio. Instead of a hard sell, they simply asked programmers to give the song some airplay and see what happened. The single sold itself; as overwhelming listener reaction grew, so did the band's story. "We built it block by block by block," Borchetta says.

DJ/music director Shadow of WWKA in Orlando, Fla., says the potential was evident from the start as calls for the song came from every demographic. "It wasn't so much the requests, but that so many of the callers wanted to know where they could buy it," Shadow says. "That's pretty good passion."

The single reached No. 1 in its 17th week on Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart, which by today's slow-climb standards is impressive. That same week, the group's album, also titled "I Loved Her First," sold 61,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan, which was good for a No. 3 debut on the Hot Country Albums chart and a No. 1 slot on the Top Independent Albums chart. Since its release in October, the band has sold 170,000 units.

"Heartland came out of the box extremely strong for us," says Brian Smith, VP of store operations for Value Music Concepts. "I was concerned that some of the enthusiasm might have died off due to the fact that it took a while to get the album to the street, but the first month's sales proved me wrong."

Lofton Creek didn't discount Heartland's album at retail. "We didn't put it out at \$7.99 or \$9.99," Borchetta says. "This is a have-to-have record. They just don't come around that often."

Now Heartland is touring nonstop while juggling national TV appearances and other media opportunities. "We're just trying to hang on to the wave," the band's Albert says, noting that the group has gone from two to three shows a month to four or five shows a week for increasingly larger crowds.

The band's next single "Built to Last," also written by Park, will ship to radio in January.

"We're just happy to have a record deal," Albert says. "All we ever wanted was a chance."

—Ken Tucker

★★★★
**NASHVILLE'S
 INDIE
 SUCCESS
 STORY OF
 2006 DIDN'T
 HAPPEN
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 YEARS TO
 CLIMB TO
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2006

Winners & Losers



For the music industry, another year brings another roller coaster ride.

The Winners and Losers of 2006 captures the best of times and the worst of times for key players in our business.

Atlantic Record execs Craig Kallman and Julie Greenwald presided over the comeback of that esteemed label in the past year after concerns two years earlier that A&R cutbacks would hamper its success.

Viacom, parent company of MTV, was in the unfamiliar situation of watching other media companies grab young audiences with the increasing popularity of MySpace, owned by News Corp., and Google's headline-making deal for YouTube.

And who could have guessed last January that the year would see Viacom president/CEO Tom Freston and Sony Music Label Group chairman Don Ienner leave their posts?

Our Winners and Losers report is organized by business sector and was written by Billboard's editorial team: Lars Brandle, Antony Bruno, Susan Butler, Ed Christman, Leila Cobo, Brian Garrity, Clover Hope, Gail Mitchell, Craig Rosen, Ken Tucker and Ray Waddell.

BUSINESS

Atlantic Records



Under chairman/CEO **Craig Kallman** and president **Julie Greenwald**, Atlantic delivered a diverse mix of hits during the last year, including T.I., James Blunt, Gnarls Barkley, Panic! at the Disco, Rob Thomas, Staind and Death Cab for Cutie.

In the process, Atlantic has vaulted into ranks of the top labels in the industry with more than 5.9% in market share in 2006.

The label, which critics worried two years ago cut too deep into its A&R capabilities, is on track to break six new acts this year beyond gold certification: Panic! at the Disco, Gnarls Barkley, Yung Joc, Cassie, Young Dro and Cassie.

Particularly notable is its urban music turnaround, which is outpacing the R&B and rap market shares of pre-merger Atlantic and Elektra Records combined.

Viacom



Following a January split from CBS Corp., the company's stock stumbled amid concerns about its Web strategy.

While News Corp. and Google were busy gobbling up the likes of MySpace and YouTube, Viacom stood pat.

Meanwhile, its own online sites, most notably mtv.com, have floundered by drawing a fraction of the traffic claimed by those social networking sensations, as well as by other destinations offering music videos like AOL and Yahoo.

Adding to MTV's online woes: a shift in Microsoft's digital music strategy. MTV and Microsoft in January announced an alliance to make MTV's new Urge digital music service the preferred retailer for the Windows Media Player. But shortly after the service launched in the summer, Microsoft announced plans to roll out its own rival offering, Zune, by year's end.

In September, company chairman **Sumner Redstone** sacked CEO Tom Freston, and the Viacom board replaced him with Philippe Dauman. The board also named Thomas W. Dooley senior executive VP/chief administrative officer.

Redstone has previously worked with both men and praised them as "two of the most extraordinary executives I have ever known."



DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT

YouTube

This clearly was YouTube's year. The online video-sharing site, founded by **Chad Hurley** and **Steve Chen**, went from relative geek obscurity to new-media powerhouse in months, cumulating in daily video streams of 100 million, 72 million users and a \$1.65 billion acquisition by Internet bellwether Google.

YouTube's success is strange. The site is poorly organized, difficult to browse and primarily consists of lousy videos in terms of quality and content. What's more, it faces the ire of content owners who find their copyrighted material posted by YouTube members. Media mogul Mark Cuban, prior to the acquisition, notably said whoever ultimately buys YouTube would be a "moron."

But the company fits squarely between the two sweet spots of tomorrow's Internet—user-generated content and video.

By focusing on the individual user YouTube found success. The challenge for YouTube and Google is to concentrate on the needs of the content providers without losing their loyal users.

Napster



In a perfect world, Napster would be a great success. It has a globally recognizable brand, a creative leadership team willing to innovate and, at one point, millions of dollars at its disposal.

But alas, a perfect world it is not. To be fair, Napster this year debuted a new ad-revenue-supported free music service that marked a major evolution of its business model. It launched a mobile music service with regional carrier SunComm and Japanese powerhouse NTT DoCoMo.

Its stock price even rose from a low of \$2.55 to \$4.37 at press time.

But as the only pure-play digital music service on the market, going it alone against a market leader like Apple has proved too great a challenge. In September, the company retained UBS Investment Bank to help it weigh potential buyout offers, which have been rumored for months.

Depending on the terms of any resulting deal, if any, a Napster acquisition could be seen as a successful bargain for whoever snatches it up. But it will also be viewed as Napster's failure to survive as an independent.

TOURING

Michael Cohl



As producer of every Rolling Stones tour since 1989, **Michael Cohl**, chairman of Concert Productions International (CPI), has had a lot of big years. But 2006 has been remarkable by even his standards.

First, Cohl is producing another Stones global trek—A Bigger Bang—that is now the top-grossing concert tour ever.

But that's not all for the big MC. He also helms the Who's hugely successful world tour and, to top it off, Cohl helped coax the mighty Barbra Streisand back on the road for a tour that shatters gross records in almost every building she played.

Amid these undoubtedly complex tour negotiations, Cohl found time to work out a deal whereby Live Nation acquired a controlling interest in the touring division of Toronto-based CPI and a 50% interest in CPI's Grand Entertainment.

Given that Cohl sold Grand Adventure's predecessor, TNA, to Live Nation's predecessor, SFX, in 1999, one might say that he indirectly sold his company twice to the same buyer. That's satisfaction.

Jack Utsick Presents



It's tough to kick a man when he's down, particularly after he has clawed his way to the top. But 2006 saw the rapid descent of **Jack Utsick's** concert promotion companies amid explosive Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) charges in connection with an allegedly fraudulent offering that raised \$300 million from more than 3,300 investors.

In 2005, Utsick was involved in 821 concerts that grossed \$15 million, ranking fourth among all promotion companies, according to Billboard Boxscore. The growth of Jack Utsick Presents was explosive, up from \$23 million reported in 2002.

Utsick says he built the business through hard work, but the SEC says the growth came via defrauded investors. The SEC filed and settled a civil injunctive action April 17 in the U.S. District Court in Miami.

Utsick and other defendants, without admitting to or denying the allegations, consented to a permanent injunction, an asset freeze, repatriation order and repayment of amounts they received and penalties.

RETAIL

Big boxes



David Porter swings the biggest bat in the business with Wal-Mart's 23%-25% market share, but Best Buy's Gary Arnold is practically the father of modern retail marketing, having invented most of the bag of tricks being wielded today by big-box merchants.

Every week the list of titles with exclusives in the consumer electronic chain's circular is the envy of retail, and Arnold's big-picture marketing abilities should be enhanced by the execution skills of the returning Jennifer "J.J." Schaidler, the former GM of music. For the past 18 months, Schaidler has been overseeing mobile technology products, a responsibility she also retains.

Meanwhile, Porter continues to bust a move, taking the game Arnold began to the next level with the Garth Brooks coup last year and the Eagles deal this year.

Labels hate the way Porter forgoes fancy footwork to blow right by them to get to artists and their managers, prompting one senior label executive to refer to him as "the Antichrist."

Still, another senior label executive says that for all people complain about Wal-Mart, the discounter doesn't get enough credit for all it does for the music industry. And if Wal-Mart ever started using media to promote music and video the way Target does, it would become completely unbeatable. Collectively, the titan trio comprise about 55% in U.S. market share.

Specialty retail chains



While there have been tumultuous years in this sector—1996 comes to mind when financial difficulties at something like 12 chains led to either Chapter 11 filings, liquidations or sales to other chains—2006 was a defining moment for music retail.

This was the year when two of the industry's best-known, most widely spread and longest-running brands bit the dust.

The year began with the demise of Musicland. The Heilichers started the chain in 1955 and at its peak had 1,400 stores, including its well-known Sam Goody brand. It ended with the liquidation of the industry's most beloved merchant, Tower Records.

Who failed? At both chains, there's certainly enough blame to go around.

POP

Ron Fair



Following his success with the Black Eyed Peas and the Pussycat Dolls, A&M Records president Ron Fair was elevated to chairman of Gef-

fen Records in March, and the hits kept coming.

With his finger firmly planted on the pulse of the pop landscape, Fair enjoyed two more hit singles this year from the Pussycat Dolls' 2005 debut, "PCD," which has eclipsed the 2 million sales mark.

Under his watch, Nelly Furtado recovered from a sophomore slump by being recast as a hip-hop crossover artist. The makeover resulted in the chart-topping single "Promiscuous" and album "Loose," which is closing in on sales of 1 million copies.

The icing on his cake, Fergie—the one-time Wild Orchid singer that Fair drafted for the Black Eyed Peas—spun off a successful solo effort with the No. 1 single "London Bridge." Her album, "The Dutchess," debuted at No. 3.

Don Ienner



The dramatic exit of Sony Music Label Group chairman/CEO Don Ienner and president/COO Michele Anthony in June played out

as one wag put it, like a Shakespearean drama.

Both executives were 18-year Sony veterans, but in the end that may have helped seal their fate as the post-merger culture clash between Sony and BMG reached a fever pitch.

Not helping matters was the fact that at the time of their exit, Sony's year-to-date market share was 10.4%, down from 13.4% a year ago. Ironically, in the week of Ienner's departure, the Dixie Chicks' "Taking the Long Way" debuted atop The Billboard 200 with sales of 526,000, but it was too little, too late.

As the Chicks famously sang, Ienner and Sony BMG Music Entertainment CEO Rolf Schmidt-Holtz were "Not Ready to Make Nice."

Sony BMG Music U.K. chairman/CEO Rob Stringer, the younger brother of Sony Corp. chairman Howard Stringer, filled the void.

"Artists love Rob, employees love him; he's a real music man," IFPI chairman/CEO John Kennedy says.

As for Ienner, he says he will announce plans to go into business "by himself and for himself" in the near future.

COUNTRY

Independent country labels

The number of independent labels on Music Row has grown steadily in the last few years, and the trend shows no signs of stopping.

Lofton Creek, a label run by veteran promoter Mike Borchetta, is the most recent indie to score. The label's band Heartland landed a No. 1 on the Hot Country Songs chart the same week in October that its debut album sold 61,000 units, which took it to the No. 1 spot on the Top Independent Albums tally.

Category 5 (Sammy Kershaw, Travis Tritt), Montage Music Group (Little Texas, Andy Griggs), Rust Nashville (BlackHawk, Aaron Tippin) and Midas Records Nashville (Steve Azar, Emerson Drive) are among the independents hoping to build on the equity of acts that have appeared on the country charts.

But the real standouts among Nashville's independent labels this year are Equity and Broken Bow.

Equity act Little Big Town has scored one of the top independent albums of the year, regardless of genre, with "The Road to Here." The album's success has been driven by the hit single "Boondocks."

Likewise, indie Broken Bow has broken through with Jason Aldean's self-titled album, boosted by Aldean's hit "Why."

Los Angeles country radio listeners

"I don't relish pissing off a half a million people in Southern California, but the problem was we needed a million people. It's really that simple." That's how Emmis Communications radio president Rick Cummings explained the decision to flip country KZLA to a rhythmic AC format in August.

While Emmis was "very proud" of KZLA, the reality was that its Arbitron ratings were not what the company needed them to be. KZLA regularly performed well among adult women—its target audience—in Orange County, but it did not in Los Angeles County, which is a much bigger influence on ratings.

So for the first time in 26 years the market is without an FM country outlet, although two AM stations recently signed on for disenfranchised listeners. While there are rumors that an FM station is in the works, for now L.A. country fans will have to rely on other means to get their fix.

HIP-HOP

Bad Boy Records

Bad Boy suffered a major loss with the 1997 death of the Notorious B.I.G., followed by the departure of thriving acts like Mase, 112 and Faith Evans. Sean "Diddy" Combs tried hard to recapture that magic, but the mogul who at one point could not, would not stop—did.

This year, however, saw the rejuvenation of Bad Boy as it shifted from Universal to Atlantic.

Diddy's solo effort "Press Play" bowed atop The Billboard 200, selling 170,000 copies its first week, and his girl group Danity Kane's self-titled debut bowed at No. 1 and has sold 663,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

This summer, Bad Boy newcomers Yung Joc and Cassie scored with their respective hits "It's Goin' Down" and "Me & U."

"We're heating up, but we don't get overexcited," VP/GM Harve Pierre told Billboard in July. "We just have to stay focused, try to break new artists and keep the momentum going."

G-Unit



After taking over the rap world with their street-savvy tunes, 50 Cent's G-Unit imprint/crew has simmered down, with sales dipping considerably this year. 50 Cent's 2003 debut, "Get Rich or Die Tryin'," sold 872,000 its first week (and 7.6 million overall), and 2005's "The Massacre" has shifted 5 million units. But recent efforts by Lloyd Banks and Tony Yayo have not fared so well.

Banks' sophomore set, "Rotten

Apple," bowed at No. 3 on The Billboard 200 in October but sold only 143,000 copies its first week—down from 2004's "Hunger for More," which debuted atop the chart with 434,000. (It sold 1.5 million overall.)

Meanwhile, Yayo's "Thoughts of a Predicate Felon" has shifted 509,000 since its August 2005 release. Mobb Deep's "Blood Money" sold 257,000, if anyone is interested. G-Unit used to be the go-to crew for hits, but its latest singles have become sonically repetitive. Upcoming releases by Lil Scrappy and Young Buck could redeem the label.

R&B

Stargate



Eighteen months after relocating from their native Norway, Tor Erik Hermansen and Mikkel S. Eriksen can claim in-demand status. Under the

Stargate moniker, the producers scored R&B/pop hits for Ne-Yo ("So Sick" and "Sexy Love") and Rihanna ("Unfaithful"), and gave Lionel Richie his first urban hit in 10 years.

Stargate also collaborated with Beyoncé, Mario, JoJo, Ruben Studdard, Jeannie Ortega and Jessica Simpson during 2006. Looking ahead to 2007, the duo is already ensconced in New York's Battery Studio, huddling with Ne-Yo for his sophomore set, plus a new album by former Destiny's Child member Michelle Williams.

Joining forces nine years ago, Hermansen and Eriksen—avowed lovers of R&B/hip-hop—migrated stateside after multiplatinum success in the United Kingdom with such acts as Blue and S Club 7.

As Hermansen remarked in a recent Billboard interview, the challenge of coming to America "has given us more confidence to do what comes natural to us."

R&B/hip-hop sales



R&B/hip-hop may command the most radio airplay, but don't look now—its sales slip is showing. R&B album sales (including rap) rang up

93.3 million as of Nov. 19, or 19.9% of overall album sales (468.5 million).

While 19.9% is a strong showing, it is a downshift from the 24% share R&B/hip-hop logged last year at the same time (118.1 million units) and down from the 24.4% posted through Nov. 21, 2004 (106.5 million). This year benefited from sales bonanzas reaped by Mariah Carey and 50 Cent.

However, comparable numbers were not achieved in 2006 despite some bright spots (T.I., Beyoncé, Ludacris). And hopes pinned on other anticipated albums (e.g., Janet Jackson, Chingy) weren't realized.

It's certainly not time to wave the white flag for the genre. Album sales overall are down 4.8% (468.7 million), due to downloading and other factors.

Late November/December releases by Jay-Z and other high-profile artists may ultimately strengthen the bottom line, 2006's disappointing sales sound a somber note as 2007 approaches.

INTERNATIONAL

Impala

Impala may well fancy itself as the mouse that roared. The voice of the Brussels-based independent music industry trade group echoed in the halls of Europe's regulatory and legal authorities this year and no doubt rang in the ears of the major music companies.

Just days into the reign of its new president Patrick Zelnik, Impala scored a massive coup when it effectively prompted a rethink of the Sony-BMG merger. In light of complaints submitted by Impala, the European Court of First Instance in Luxembourg on July 13 annulled the European Commission's original 2004 ruling authorizing the Sony-BMG amalgamation.

Soon after, EMI and Warner Music's courtship came to an end, while Impala further flexed its newfound muscle by threatening to derail Vivendi's proposed purchase of BMG Music Publishing.

It's proof that what Zelnik calls "Impala's fight for a well-regulated and balanced market between majors and independents" will continue for years.

The BBC's 'Top of the Pops'



As Britain's TV and musical institutions go, the "Top of the Pops" brand has ranked somewhere on or near the top for more than 40 years.

But in 2006, the BBC pulled the plug on its once-flagship, now-flagging music-chart show. Ever since the first "TOTP" debuted in 1964, it played a pivotal role in documenting Britain's fast-moving, trend-conscious music scene. It pulled in a weekly audience of 15 million viewers in its mid-'70s heyday.

But lately, dwindling viewer figures forced the BBC to continually revamp its format and change the time slot. Viewing figures ultimately dipped to around 1 million, and the show's lights went out for the final time July 30.

"The time has come to bring the show to its natural conclusion," BBC director of TV Jana Bennett said in statement about the move.

The name lives on as a magazine and in archive programming, but a unique part of Britain's music scene has died. Speculation that the BPI would lead a salvage operation for the brand has, to date, amounted to nothing.

LATIN

Latin pop

After years of misses, light Latin pop was the surprising hero of 2006. Most visible was Shakira and Wyclef Jean's hit "Hips Don't Lie," conceived as a vehicle to revive Shakira's flailing albums "Fijación Oral Vol. 1" and "Oral Fixation Vol. 2."

Heavy marketing and promotion, new verses and yes, Shakira's swiveling hips, made the track a digital download hit. Of course, puffy pop continues to be RBD's realm, the phenomenon that refuses to quiet down.

Other successes: Maná's first album in three years, notching the highest-selling debut of the year so far on the Latin Albums chart, and Paulina Rubio's No. 1 debut in multiple countries, including the United States.

All these acts boasted a cohesive marketing, sales and promotion strategy that left little to chance. Unfortunately, this level of teamwork remains the exception, and not the rule, in Latin music.



Regional Mexican music sales

Latin music suffered in 2006 at the hands of the usual suspects: the continued need to pay to get played on radio, the lack of artist development and big budgets for artists who no longer deliver.

But there are several issues unique to 2006. Chief among them is a rising tide of anti-immigration sentiment and actions that resulted in a decline in album sales, particularly for regional Mexican music.

Regional Mexican music sales fell in 2006 for the first time since 2003, the year when the RIAA began tracking the genre's sales. Anti-immigrant displays affected concert attendance as well.

Not enough voices in the industry were raised to deplore this sad state of affairs. And that's a shame, as regional Mexican sales are a primary source of income for all labels. When the regional Mexican genre loses, we all lose.

LEGAL

The RIAA



The RIAA can really anger some people with its litigation strategies related to peer-to-peer networks and individual file sharers. But the law has been on its side, including the Department of Justice and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Under chairman/CEO Mitch Bainwol, the RIAA's persistence in pursuing major-labels' suits against P2P operators helped force sites to settle copyright infringement actions and promise to filter unauthorized music files.

RIAA member labels went to the mat against Morpheus operator StreamCast, which finally lost its case this year in MGM Studios vs. Grokster.

In its efforts to stop individuals from downloading unauthorized files, the RIAA has withstood horrible press because of misinformation from lawyers trying to get their names in print. Whether these suits are good or bad, consumers today know more about music copyrights than they did in 2000 when Napster was in full swing.

Finally, RIAA investigators continue to quietly lead the fight against CD piracy nationwide.

Kazaa



Australia-based Sharman Networks, led by CEO Nikki Hemming, owner of the infamous Kazaa peer-to-peer network, finally settled worldwide copyright infringement claims made by film and music companies. The service even promised to go legit.

The company has been fighting lawsuits since it launched in 2001, just months before the original Napster shut down.

But a maze of corporate maneuvers hid information that would reveal who really operated and held ownership rights in Kazaa. Sharman was set up in tax-shelter haven Vanuatu where such information is legally protected from disclosure.

It took a judgment in Australia, a U.S. Supreme Court decision clarifying infringement rules and persistent legal action by the entertainment industry before the company finally settled this year. Music publishers entered a tentative agreement late in the year. And while it seems that Kazaa is a big loser, no one knows how much ad revenue has been set aside in inaccessible bank accounts for . . . someone.

PUBLISHING

TIE: Universal Music Group AND Bertelsmann



Whether Vivendi's Universal Music Group or Bertelsmann AG, parent of BMG Music Publishing, is the real winner is a tossup. It will depend in part on the outcome of reviews by antitrust regulators in the European Union and elsewhere.

In its bid to buy BMG's publishing unit, UMG beat out some of the most savvy venture capitalists and publishers in the world who were salivating over the major publisher. The selling price in the invitation-only auction was the largest ever made for a music publishing company.

By the end of the year, Bertelsmann will reportedly pocket €1.63 billion (\$2.05 billion) even if the European Commission doesn't approve the sale.

But if regulators approve the acquisition in some shape or form, Universal Music Publishing Group will become the largest or the second-largest publisher in the world, depending on how one measures market share. And UMPG chairman/CEO David Renzer will be sitting pretty.

Anonymous letter writers

The anonymous writers of a letter circulated among artists, songwriters and indie publishers condemning the Copyright Reform Act of 2006 are real losers.

By working outside the process and refusing to identify themselves—so that those in the know could educate them or so readers could judge their credentials and agendas—they may have put creators at even greater risk.

The writers disseminated misinformation and naively expected that a bill should and could solve complaints over certain record deals. By attempting to divide the music industry, seemingly against major publishers, they played into the hands of powerful groups on Capitol Hill who want to pay little or no royalties for music.

While the writers may be patting themselves on the back for helping to derail the Copyright Reform Act, they provided groups like the National Assn. of Broadcasters and the Consumer Electronics Assn. more time to fully develop strategies to limit creators' rights next year.

From the roads of his native Brooklyn, NEIL DIAMOND has taken on the world.

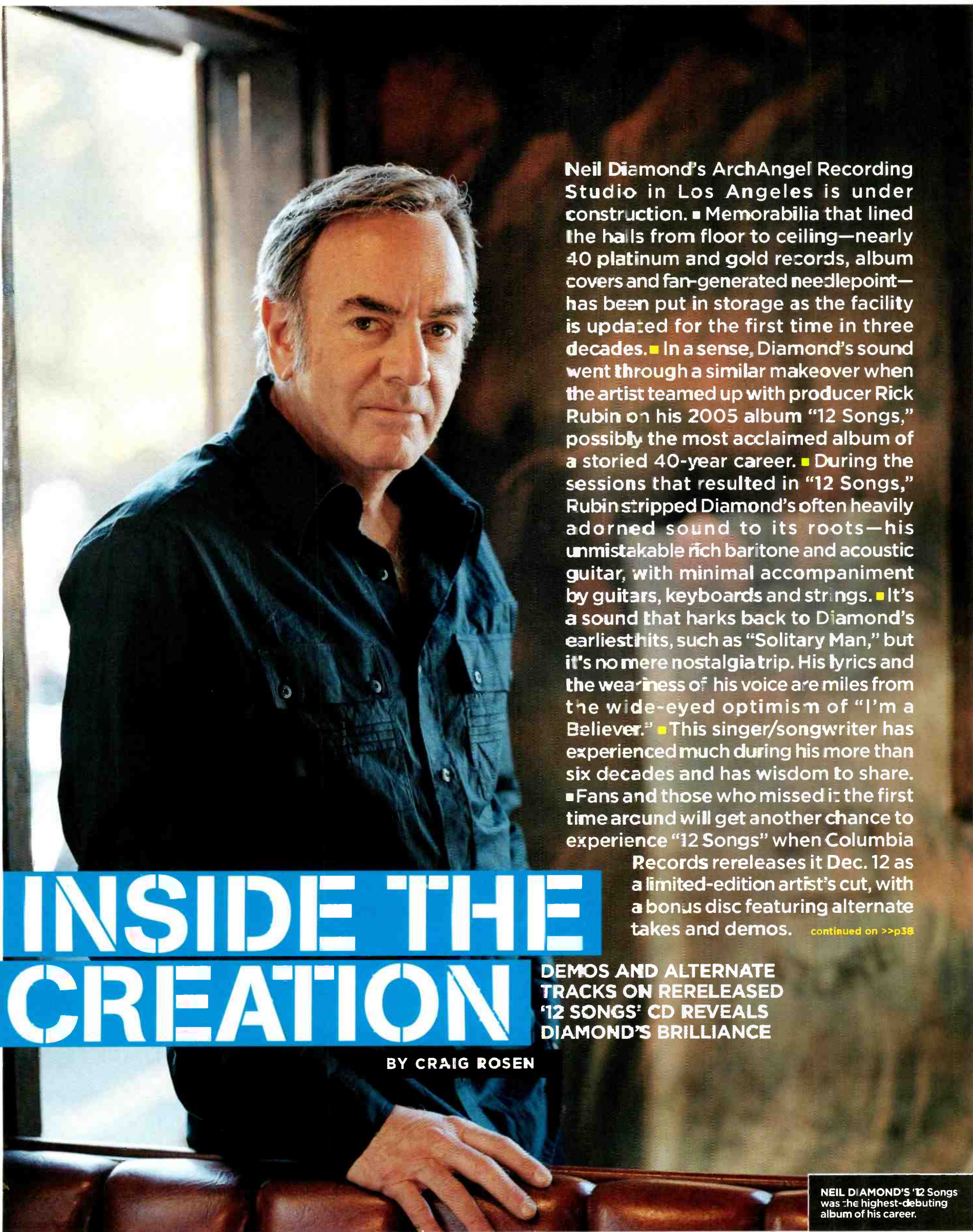
STARS

NEIL DIAMOND

ACCLAIMED '12 SONGS' ALBUM
RETURNS IN A TRIUMPH FOR
VETERAN SINGER/SONGWRITER
AFTER FOUR DECADES OF HITS

SPECIAL FEATURE

© 2006 DIAMOND PHOTO ARCHIVES, PHOTOGRAPH BY LEN RAPOPORT



Neil Diamond's ArchAngel Recording Studio in Los Angeles is under construction. ■ Memorabilia that lined the halls from floor to ceiling—nearly 40 platinum and gold records, album covers and fan-generated needlepoint—has been put in storage as the facility is updated for the first time in three decades. ■ In a sense, Diamond's sound went through a similar makeover when the artist teamed up with producer Rick Rubin on his 2005 album "12 Songs," possibly the most acclaimed album of a storied 40-year career. ■ During the sessions that resulted in "12 Songs," Rubin stripped Diamond's often heavily adorned sound to its roots—his unmistakable rich baritone and acoustic guitar, with minimal accompaniment by guitars, keyboards and strings. ■ It's a sound that harks back to Diamond's earliest hits, such as "Solitary Man," but it's no mere nostalgia trip. His lyrics and the weariness of his voice are miles from the wide-eyed optimism of "I'm a Believer." ■ This singer/songwriter has experienced much during his more than six decades and has wisdom to share. ■ Fans and those who missed it the first time around will get another chance to experience "12 Songs" when Columbia Records rereleases it Dec. 12 as a limited-edition artist's cut, with a bonus disc featuring alternate takes and demos. [continued on >>p38](#)

INSIDE THE CREATION

DEMOS AND ALTERNATE TRACKS ON RERELEASED '12 SONGS' CD REVEALS DIAMOND'S BRILLIANCE

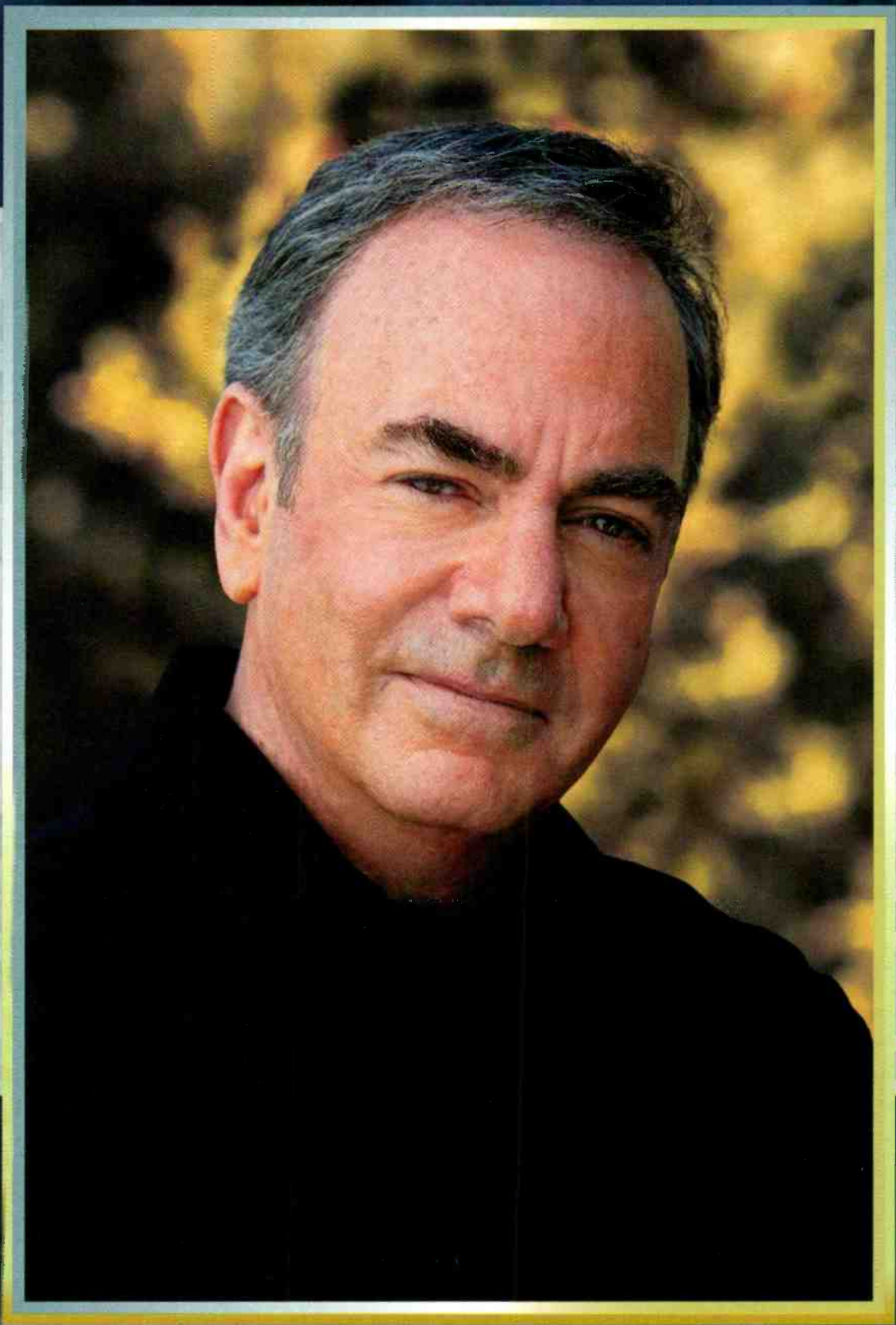
BY CRAIG ROSEN

NEIL DIAMOND'S '12 Songs' was the highest-debating album of his career.

SESAC

IS PROUD TO REPRESENT
THE EXTRAORDINARY SONGS OF

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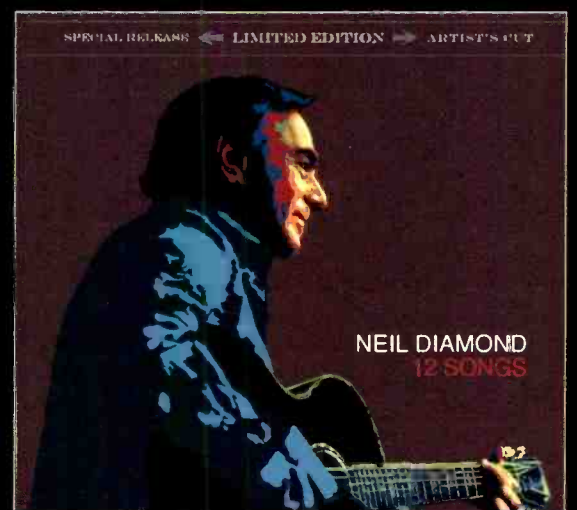


40 YEARS OF HITS.

TIMELESS AS EVER.

We are proud to congratulate
Neil Diamond on his 40th anniversary,
and on the forthcoming 2 disc limited edition
release of his acclaimed album

12 SONGS



words and music by Neil Diamond
produced by Rick Rubin



*Columbia,™™ "Legacy" and ■, Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. Marca Registrada. © 2006 SONY BMG MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

from >>p34

Upon its initial release, "12 Songs" became the highest-debating album of Diamond's career. Fueled by a stack of positive reviews, it debuted at No. 4 on The Billboard 200 with sales of 92,700 copies.

Yet Diamond's joy and triumph with the album's debut was soon replaced by frustration and depression.

Soon after its release, consumers discovered that "12 Songs" was one of 20 Sony BMG titles to include XCP, short for extended copy protection, a controversial digital rights management system that automatically installed potentially malicious "rootkit" anti-piracy software on any computer attempting to play it.

Following a groundswell of negative publicity, including the filing of several class-action lawsuits, Sony BMG recalled the affected CDs, effectively taking "12 Songs" out of the marketplace during much of the crucial holiday shopping season. Still, the album managed to sell more than 517,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

When asked what prompted the "12 Songs" rerelease, Diamond cites the XCP disc. "Columbia Records decided for a rerelease based on what happened last year," he says.

He could have been referring to the album's critical acclaim, but that wasn't the case when asked if he was happy about it.

"Not [about] what happened last year," he says, "but the rerelease."

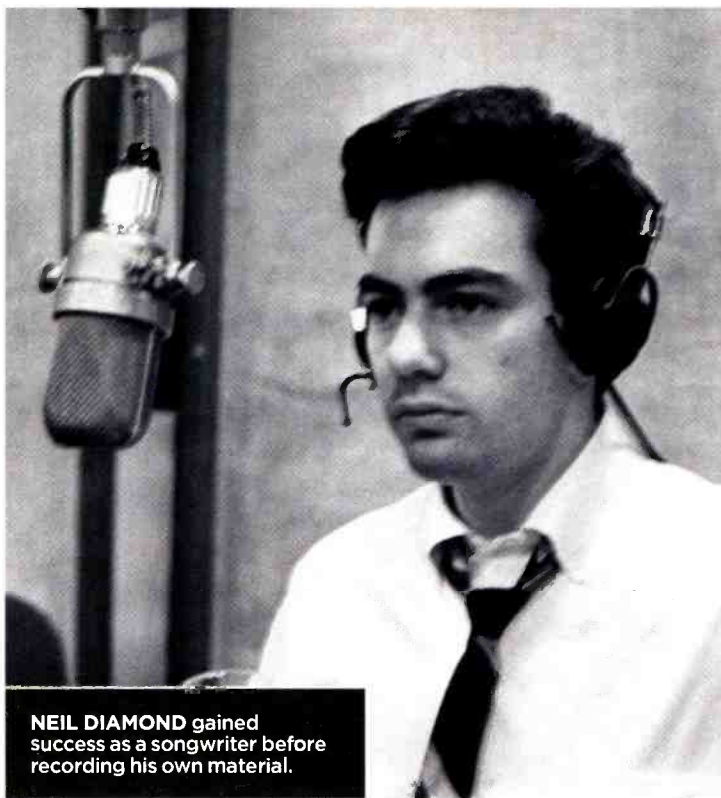
The new executive team at Columbia declined to comment on the XCP issue, but says that "12 Songs" deserves to be revisited.

Columbia Records Group chairman Steve Barnett says that he and Sony Music Label Group chairman Rob Stringer met with Diamond and Rubin. "We were not involved with the original campaign, but we just felt that this record, which is an incredible record, could benefit from rerelease. . . . We just thought it was the right thing to do for Neil Diamond and for this particular record."

Barnett, formerly president of Epic Records, became Columbia Records Group chairman in December 2005 after Will Botwin stepped down from that post. Stringer assumed his new role with Sony after Don Ienner abruptly resigned from that position in June 2006 after apparent conflicts with Sony BMG Music Entertainment CEO Rolf Schmidt-Holtz.

Columbia senior VP of adult marketing Jay Krugman concurs with Barnett's view of "12 Songs."

"It's certainly one of the most critically acclaimed records of the



NEIL DIAMOND gained success as a songwriter before recording his own material.

year, and it's the perfect time to revisit it," he says.

Columbia will market the rerelease with a full-court press of print advertising, TV appearances and online marketing.

Krugman adds that the second disc "showcases a rare look into Neil's creative process" with its mix of alternate takes and previously unreleased demos.

It was about a week-and-a-half after the initial release of "12 Songs" that Diamond found out about the XCP problem.

"I didn't know about it. I wasn't asked about it," he says. "I had to ask my son who is a tech nerd what it meant. He told me, I fainted."

"When I came to, I went into a deep depression for a couple of weeks, and then I started working on our next album," says Diamond, sitting a few feet from the work space where he has been recording demos of new material for Rubin, who will again serve as producer.

It's that dedication to work and singular focus **continued on >>p40**

PLAYING FAVORITES

Billboard asked friends and colleagues of Neil Diamond to cite their favorite song from the singer across his 40-year career.

Quotes compiled by Debbie Galante Block.

"You Don't Bring Me Flowers" is one of the most emotionally moving songs I've ever heard. Neil's melody is achingly beautiful, and [Alan and Marilyn] Bergman's lyrics are equally heartfelt. It was a joy singing it with him too. Neil's songs have touched millions, and this one in particular touched me deeply."

—BARBRA STREISAND

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we love you!
marjorie, elyn, jesse, micah

SONGS THAT MAKE MILLIONS OF FANS HAPPY.
AND THOUSANDS OF SONGWRITERS JEALOUS.

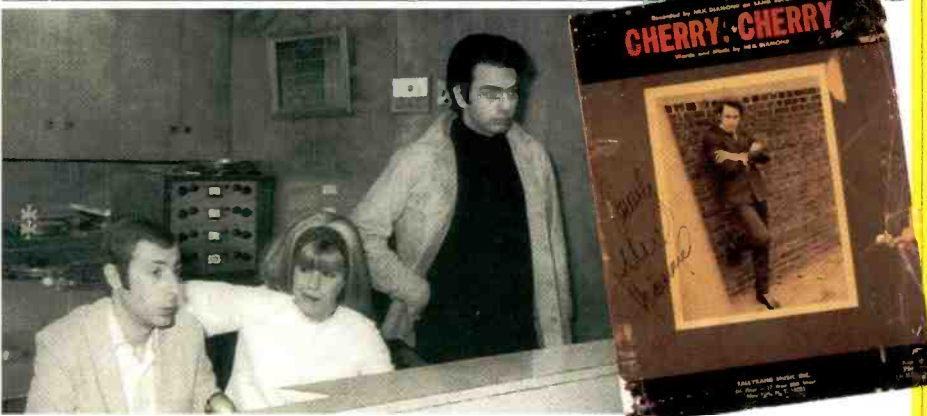
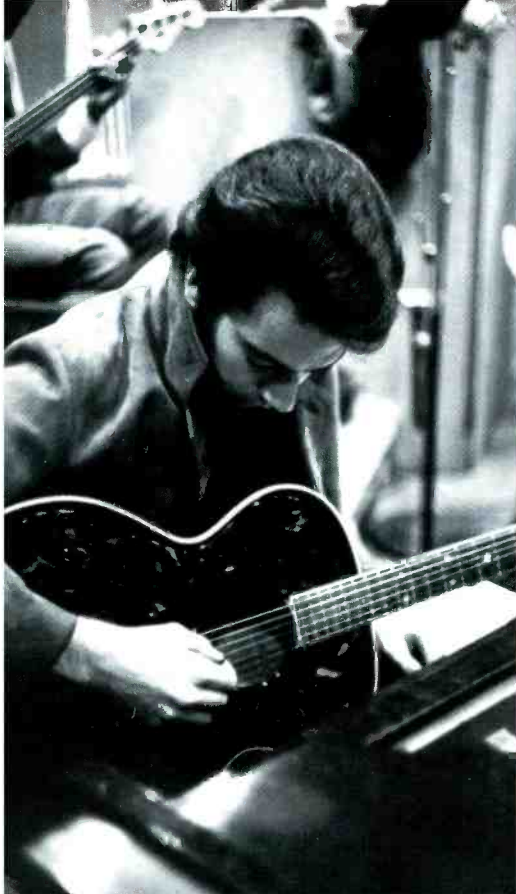


*Congratulations on your 40th anniversary, Neil.
We can't wait to hear what the next 40 will bring.*

Sony/ATV Music Publishing

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www.americanradiohistory.com



Sixties memories, clockwise from above: NEIL DIAMOND at New York's Brill Building; in concert; and with producers JEFF BARRY and ELLIE GREENWICH. Inset: Sheet music for 'Cherry, Cherry.'

from >>p38

that has made Diamond one of the most successful recording and touring artists in the history of popular music.

By his own admission, the Brooklyn, N.Y.-born son of Akeeba and Rose Diamond had little success during his first eight years in the music business. It was the path he chose after dropping out of his premed studies at New York University just six months shy of graduation.

"Originally, it was pure songwriting, and I didn't do it very well," he says, referring to his days on Tin Pan Alley as a staff songwriter for Sunbeam Music. He earned \$50 per week.

Nonetheless, Diamond "not once" thought of giving up his dream.

The dream began one summer at Surprise Lake Camp in Cold Spring, N.Y., which offered Jewish children refuge from the heat of New York. "The joke was, 'Surprise, no lake,'" Diamond quips.

Yet whatever the camp lacked in aquatic adventure, it more than made up for with a healthy dose of musical inspiration. "I got to know about Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger and folk music," Diamond recalls.

"It was a very liberal-oriented camp, so the songs were pointed in that direction aside from the usual camp songs," he says. "That opened me up, and I decided to take some lessons. My parents liked the idea of keeping me off the streets. I got myself a \$9 guitar, paid it off \$1 a week and haven't put it down since."

He had some chance meetings along the way. While a student at Brooklyn's Erasmus Hall High School, Diamond sang in the same chorus as a 15-year-old Barbra Streisand. Years later, in 1978, the pair would reunite in the duet ballad "You Don't Bring Me Flowers," which topped The Billboard Hot 100. The song ranks as the most successful single of Diamond's career.

Between the encounters with Streisand, Diamond met another Brooklyn-born woman who would have a dramatic effect on his career: Ellie Greenwich, who with her then-husband Jeff Barry and producer Phil Spector composed a string of unforgettable hits, including the Ronettes' "Be My Baby," the Crystals' "Da Doo Ron Ron" and Darlene Love's "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)."

It was a chance meeting in the office of a music publisher. "I went

up to the office and there was this guy sitting there with his guitar, and he played me a couple of songs, one song was 'Call Me His,'" Greenwich recalls. "It was very interesting and very different from a lot of the songs I had been doing demos on."

After that meeting, Greenwich invited Diamond to meet with Barry. "Jeff really loved the way Neil sang. He thought Neil had a very interesting voice," she says. "I loved his writing and Jeff loved his voice, so we both knew there was something there."

Initially, Diamond was signed by songwriter/producers Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, who also had Greenwich and Barry under contract.

But eventually Greenwich, Barry and Diamond launched Tallyrand Music to publish Diamond's songs. It was Greenwich and Barry who brought Diamond to the attention of Bert Berns, who signed Diamond to his Bang Records.

"Bert gave us, like, \$5,000 and said, 'Go in the studio and cut a couple of things.' The two things we cut were 'Cherry, Cherry' and 'Solitary Man,'" Greenwich says.

Diamond went on to tremendous success, scoring a string of platinum-selling albums from the early '70s through the early '80s, including such multiplatinum smashes as "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" (1973), "I'm Glad You're Here With Me Tonight" (1977) and "The Jazz Singer" (1980).

But it was those earliest, late-'60s recordings that Diamond and Rubin revisited prior to starting the sessions for "12 Songs."

The producer—whose credits include such diverse acts as Red Hot Chili Peppers, Shakira, Dixie Chicks, Slayer and Jay-Z—initially reached out to Diamond more than a decade ago. But it took a while before Diamond responded and agreed to meet with him.

"I was really excited to meet him, having always been a fan," Rubin says. "We started meeting on a pretty regular basis for a long time before we started any work. We just became friends and listened to a lot of music, talked about songs, what we liked and why and compared notes."

During that time, Rubin had Diamond revisit some of his earliest recordings.

"Over the years, typically when artists play **continued on >>p42**

"I Am, I Said" is one of my fave Neil Diamond songs, because it is written by a man entering the midlife of his career. It is filled with soul-searching questions: "Why am I here?" "Where should I be?" "Where do I belong?" No other songwriter has captured that spirit and encased it in such a rousing chorus. It still sends chills up my spine.'

—MELISSA ETHERIDGE

'I love a lot of his songs, but "Song Sung Blue" is my favorite. Many times I would hear the songs after they were completed, but this one, I heard in its infancy, and I knew it could be a No. 1 record. So we put it out, and it was a smash hit. Neil Diamond is an incredible artist, and I love him. Beyond talent, it takes a lot of intelligence to sustain in this industry, and Neil has sustained.'

—RUSS REGAN, VELOCITY ENTERTAINMENT PRESIDENT (REGAN SIGNED DIAMOND TO UNI RECORDS IN THE LATE '60s.)

DIAMOND DATES

This chronology of Neil Diamond's life appears on his official Sony BMG Web site, with additions from 2001 through 2006 adapted from allmusic.com.

1941

Neil Leslie Diamond is born Jan. 24 in Brooklyn, N.Y., to Akeeba and Rose Diamond.

1942-1945

Diamond's father is stationed in Cheyenne, Wyo. during World War II.

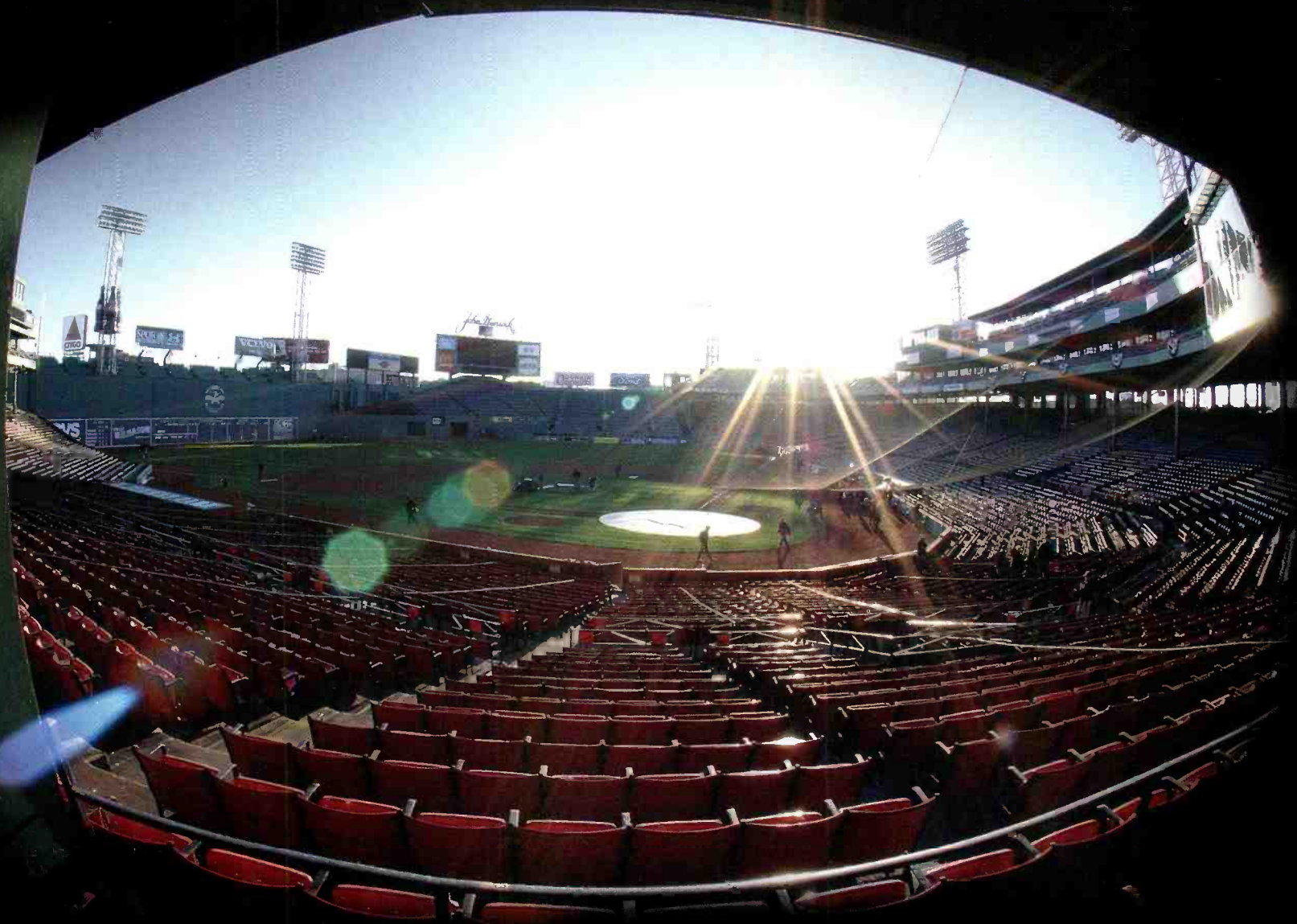
1955-1958

Diamond attends both Erasmus Hall High School and Lincoln High School in Brooklyn, N.Y. While at Erasmus, Diamond sings in the same chorus as a young 15-year-old singer named Barbra Streisand.

1956

While attending a reunion of his childhood summer camp, Surprise Lake Camp in Cold Spring, N.Y., Diamond encounters the great folk singer Pete Seeger, who inspires him to **continued on >>p42**

**FOR ADDING TO THE
STORIED TRADITION OF THIS
LEGENDARY DIAMOND,
THE FANS OF
RED SOX NATION
SALUTE ANOTHER
LEGENDARY DIAMOND...**



**SO GOOD! SO GOOD! SO GOOD!
THANK YOU, MR. NEIL DIAMOND, FOR EVERYTHING.**

**JOHN HENRY, TOM WERNER,
LARRY LUCCHINO,
THE BOSTON RED SOX
AND
RED SOX NATION**



from >>p40

songs live, they kind of evolve and change," Rubin says. "I wanted him to hear what the songs sounded like when they initially had the impact that they did, just to see how they changed over the years and talk about the content of the song, what was going on musically in the songs and what the arrangements were.

"Not even necessarily to go back to them," Rubin adds, "but as a learning experience to see what we could learn about who Neil Diamond the artist was through listening to the music that made him who he was."

One thing that had changed through the years was that in the studio Diamond no longer accompanied himself on guitar. Rubin insisted on it.

"He was insecure about his guitar playing," Rubin recalls. "But I found, for one, it informed the other musicians what to do. He would kind of set a rhythmic tone for the song, and all the other players were playing off of what he was doing."

Aside from directing the group of ace session players—including guitarist Mike Campbell and keyboardist Benmont Tench from Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers and guitarist Smokey Hormel, known for his work with Beck and Tom Waits—Rubin noticed that the quality of Diamond's vocal changed when he played guitar.

"It was harder for it to become too much of a vocal performance, it was much more just getting the song over, because he was focused on playing guitar," Rubin says. "It also gave it a more natural feeling."

FACT FILE

Label: Columbia Records

Management: self-managed

Publishers: Diamond-Songs (SESAC); Stonebridge Music (SESAC), a subsidiary of Sony/ATV Sounds; Prophet Music (SESAC), administered by Sony/ATV Sounds; Tal yrand Music (SESAC), administered by Sony/ATV Sounds

Latest Release: "12 Songs" (Artist's Cut)

Those who have witnessed the unlikely pair of Diamond and Rubin in the studio are impressed with the way they work together.

"It's a balanced collaboration," Hormel says. "No one is more powerful than the other. They both listen to each other's opinions and weigh them. It's beautiful, actually. It's like their egos are set aside, and they're really focused on finding the right song and the right vibe."

With "12 Songs," Diamond and Rubin found that vibe, as the album generated some of the most positive reviews of Diamond's career.

"It wasn't sloughed off like any of the albums in the past years," Diamond says. "It got some serious looks, and some of the reviews were unexpectedly positive."

The new material also helped reinvigorate Diamond's famed stage show, which included cuts off "12 Songs" alongside his classic material. "It's the difference between a nostalgia act and an act that's still productive, so it's important for me to have new material," he says.

As Diamond and Rubin continue to work on the follow-up to "12 Songs," the songwriter doesn't foresee hanging up his guitar anytime soon.

"It's programmed into my genes at this point," he says. "I write consistently. I love writing. There's always that unknown factor in writing. You don't know what you're going to come up with. You don't know if it's going to be the usual or if it's going to be something unusual." ♦♦♦

'My favorite Neil Diamond songs are many but, with that said, the lyrics of "All I Really Need Is You" touched me immediately when I first heard it on the radio. It still resonates within me, as this coming March I will be married to the same woman for 44 years. Yet, with all of my life's experiences, all I really needed was her.'

—STEPHEN SWID, SESAC CHAIRMAN/CEO

'"Play Me" is my favorite song, because it is sexy.'

—NANCY SINATRA

from >>p40

start writing songs.

1959

Diamond attends New York University as a premed student on a fencing scholarship.

1962

Diamond leaves NYU to join Sunbeam Music as a staff songwriter at \$50 a week.

1963

Columbia Records signs Diamond as a recording artist for a one-off single release, featuring the songs "At Night" and "Clown Town."

1964

Diamond sets up an office in a small storeroom above the famous Birdland jazz club.

1966

Diamond plays his upcoming album version of "I'm a Believer" for Don Kirshner, who buys it immediately for his new phenomenon the Monkees. "I'm a Believer" became the No. 1-selling single of the year, establishing Diamond as one of the industry's hottest young writers.

1967

Amid creative strains with his first label, Bang Records, Diamond signs with Uni (later MCA) Records for a record-setting contract of \$250,000.

1971

Diamond receives a gold record from the RIAA for "Taproot Manuscript." **continued on >>p46**

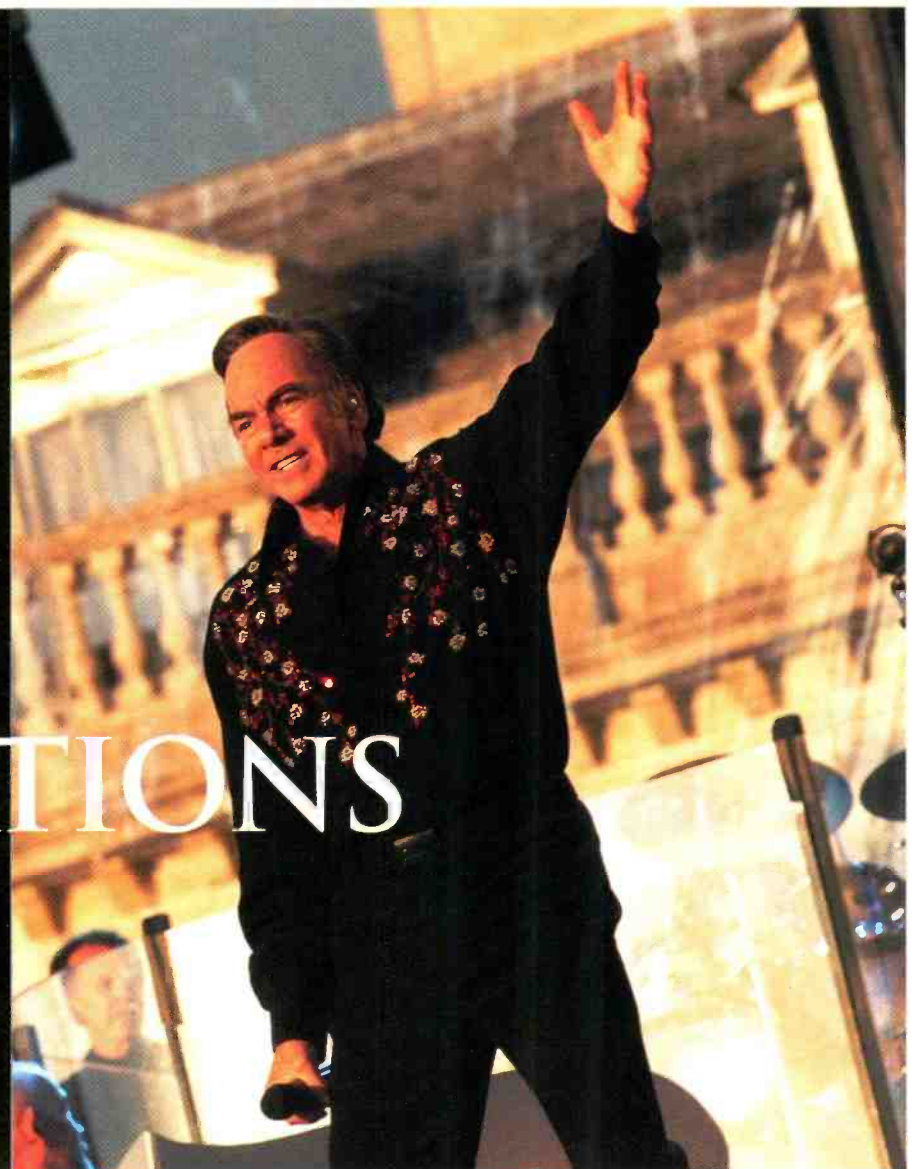


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RECOUNTS
THE PATH TO
'12 SONGS'

INTIMACY

By his own admission, most people don't recognize Neil Diamond on the street. The man seated on a stool in his own ArchAngel Recording Studio—sporting glasses, a Harley-Davidson sweatshirt, a pair of crisply pressed chinos and some stylish slip-on shoes—doesn't look much like the performer known for his sequined shirts and his perfectly coifed hair. ■ Yet the voice is a dead giveaway. Even when he speaks, Diamond's words are soulful and measured. ■ As for the sweatshirt, it dates back a decade to the time when the singer, his staff and crew formed a motorcycle gang of sorts called the Mild Ones. ■ "I put about 20,000 miles on a couple of bikes I had," he says. "I took a couple of falls. I decided my career would last longer if I put it away, so that's what I did." ■ Diamond's instincts were right on target, as he has been experiencing a career renaissance thanks to "12 Songs," his acclaimed 2005 studio effort produced by Rick Rubin. ■ On the eve of the album's rerelease as a two-CD limited-edition artist's cut, Diamond sat down with Billboard to discuss the road from "Solitary Man" to "12 Songs."

"12 Songs" was very well-received. People were very happy to hear you in that kind of stripped-down setting. What are your thoughts on the album a year later?

I love the intimacy of it. I love the simplicity of it. And I also loved having to make it work without embellishments for the most part. I got to love playing the guitar on these things. Let's not say "love," let's say "accept."

Talk about first meeting Rick Rubin. How did it happen?

I knew his name. That was about it. I knew he was a producer. I started to pick up on rumors that he wanted to talk to me, and I finally responded. We liked each other. His first question was, "How do you take criticism?" I told him that I hadn't had any in a long time, but lay it out, give it to me; if I start to cry ease back a little.

Then you went back and listened to your old recordings with Rubin?

We did, I'm not exactly sure why. I think he wanted to know why the music changed after a certain period, after the Jeff Barry productions. I wasn't too sure. I probably wanted to experiment because half the recording budget was being paid by MCA. Mostly I wanted to experiment from "Kentucky Woman" and "Cherry, Cherry" and see what else I could do.

Did the Beatles and what they were doing with large productions influence you?

Well, not so much large productions, but that they kept moving on. I liked that a lot. It was not part of the music business at that time. If you had a hit, the next record was supposed to be pretty much a copy of the record before that. You'd change the title, but it had the same groove, same concept, you'd change a couple of names. It was something I wanted to get out of.

When Rubin wanted to go back to the approach you used at the beginning of your career, what was your response?

I was weary until we started cutting and I picked up on the intimacy of the whole thing. I think I got it and got what he was talking about. Although we stayed away from electric, it was still going back to the original roots, if I can ever use that word again.

Had you listened to his other productions? Of course, he produced Johnny Cash's cover of "Solitary Man."

I listened to some of his things, a couple of artists, Tom Petty and Johnny Cash.

continued on >>p46

ROBBIE ROBERTSON, right, produced NEIL DIAMOND'S 1976 album 'Beautiful Noise.'



'My favorite Neil Diamond song would have to be "Hello Again" from our film, "The Jazz Singer," because Neil sang the entire song live right into my eyes, and the day we shot that scene, I had just found out that I was pregnant with my first child. At the time, only Neil and I and the father, Larry Luckinbill, knew the real reason I had that heavenly look in my eyes.'

—LUCIE ARNAZ

'The thing about Neil is he sings as well as he writes. Most people think his songs and his vocals are joined at the hip. I think some of his best vocal performances were [covering classic movie songs] on the "Movie Album." He got a Grammy nomination for it.'

—BOB GAUDIO,
PRODUCER/SINGER

'My all-time favorite song, of many favorites, is "Cracklin' Rosie." It always gets the audience on their feet, dancing in the aisles and makes the whole show rock.'

—BARRY CLAYMAN,
LIVE NATION U.K. CHAIRMAN

Neil ...

**Congratulations on this amazing
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40 years of fantastic shows

Here's to many more!

Sal Bonafede & Jeff Apregan



from >>p44

And you liked what you heard?

He proved he could handle both ends.

Talk about your relationship with Rubín. You share some common bonds in your background. You both grew up in New York and went to New York University.

They were only very superficially common bonds. Not once in the 2 1/2 years that we worked on the album did we discuss NYU or New York City. It had no relation to what we were doing now. He was the producer. I was an artist and songwriter. We had to work with what we had now. I don't think when he was going to NYU he was like he is now.

He's gone through a number of changes, as I have. I think he's in a good spiritual place, and he's super talented and one of the easiest people I've had a chance to get along with in the studio.

He's an intimidating man. I had to get used to his penchant for hugging. He's a big man. I finally did and embraced it myself, and now I hug him back just as enthusiastically. He's super talented.

The mind is working, the heart is working, [and] the spirit is working. [There's] never an argument [and] always a laugh when there should be an argument. It's a tremendous relationship we have. I have the utmost respect for the guy.

Because of iTunes, we're returning to the days of the single, and people making their own albums. How do you feel about it?

I think it's good. The best thing about it is that it proves to me that peo-

ple are still interested in music. They can go the computer route but they still have to be interested in it. That's what struck me first.

It was doing damage to an industry at the beginning, because nobody seemed to know what to do about it. I didn't know it had any effect on singles, but I like that people still want to hear music.

Do you own an MP3 player?

I have an iPod. I love it.

Talk about the rerelease of "12 Songs." What's on the second disc?

It has a variety of things. Not songs that didn't make the album, but various versions, some alternative versions and some demos. It's good. I like it as much as I like the original.

When you were recording the album, Rubín brought in some session players, including Smokey Hormel, and Mike Campbell and Benmont Tench from Tom Petty's Heartbreakers. Is it true that you felt self-conscious about your guitar playing?

It was great. First of all, the musicians were encouraging. There was no laughter in the room, which is always encouraging. Second of all, they're all great musicians. They helped take the songs and flesh out the songs. It was a great experience for me.

I heard they left you with some CDs by other musicians. Is that true?

We talked about other artists, but Smokey in particular put together a couple of CDs for me. I asked some ques- **continued on >>p48**

'I have worked with Neil now for over 30 years and have a special friendship with him. He is an amazing person and an outstanding artist. A true legend. My favorite Neil Diamond song is "I Am . . . I Said." It speaks of the humble frog within us all. [It is] his profound message of abiding love, interconnection and deep communication.'

—DENIS HANDLIN, SONY BMG MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND CHAIRMAN/CEO

from >>p42

1972

Diamond is awarded a gold album for "Stones," "Moods," "Hot August Night" and "Jonathan Livingston Seagull."

1973

Diamond wins a Golden Globe Award, best original musical score

in a motion picture, for "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" and subsequently wins a Grammy Award in the same category.

1974

"His 12 Greatest Hits" is awarded a gold record. In 1993, "His 12 Greatest Hits" was designated four-times platinum for

shipments exceeding 4 million. "Serenade" goes gold. In 1986, it turns platinum.

1976

"Beautiful Noise" is awarded a gold record. Three months later, it became his quickest album to go platinum.

1977

"Love at the Greek" is awarded a gold, then quickly goes platinum. Diamond's TV special "I'm Glad You're Here With Me Tonight," a studio production that included highlights from the European portion of his tour, receives an Emmy nomination. **continued on >>p48**



Dear Neil,
Congratulations on your
40th Anniversary
in the business!

Love,
Ellie Greenwich
xoxo

Real Talent Lasts...
A Diamond Shines Forever!

Congratulations
NEIL

From a couple of
JERSEY BOYS

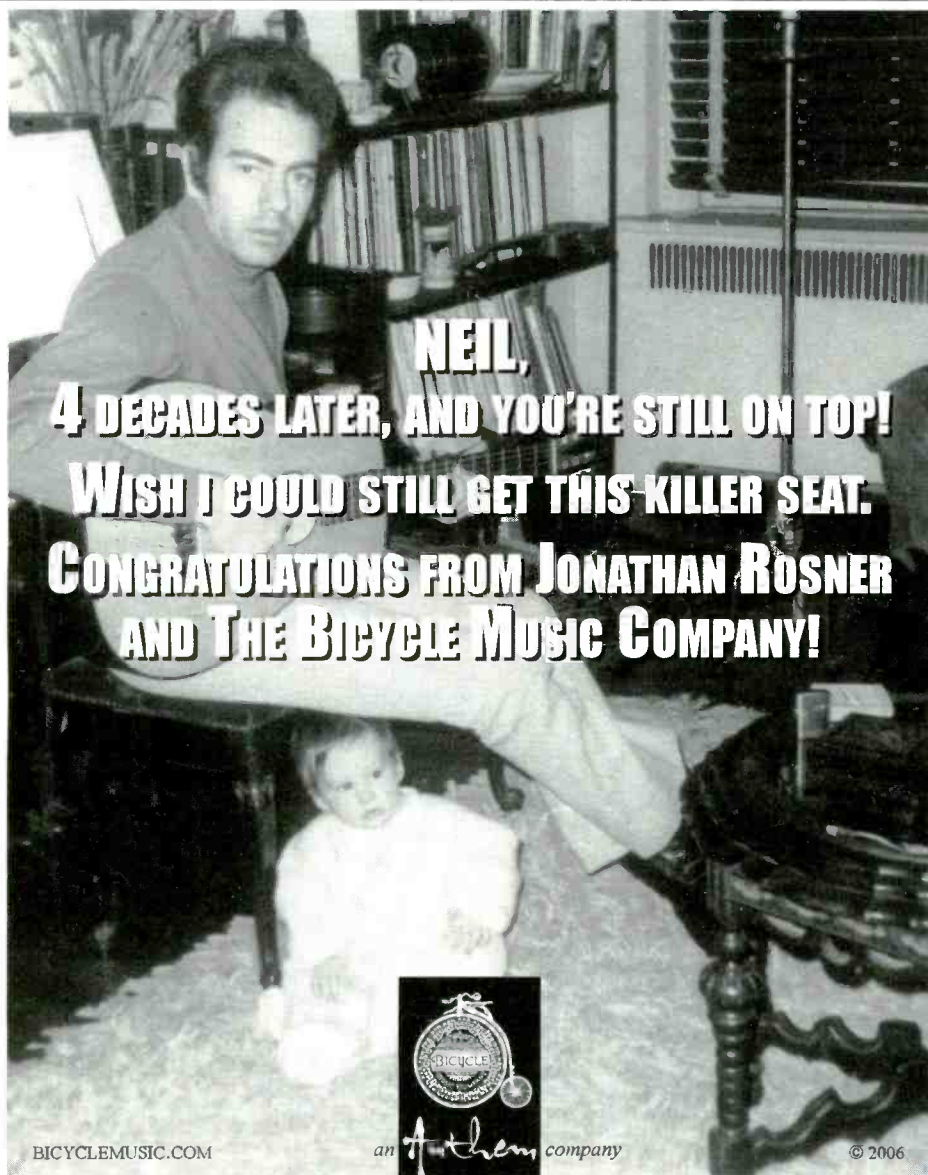
BOB & FRANKIE

Congratulations, Neil!

Having been there before the beginning, I've always taken great pride in your accomplishments and success - and spent a terrific 33 years with the catalogs.

David Rosner

darville music, llc



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from >>p46

tions and tried to educate myself and got the right answers.

Was there anything that you enjoyed?

I got the latest Beck, which I liked. It seemed experimental. Tom Waits, which I really liked. Smokey also put together an entire CD of Brazilian guitar music [by the band Forro in the Dark], which is well beyond what I can do, but still awesome.

Through the years a variety of acts have covered your songs, everyone from Smash Mouth and UB40 to Johnny Cash and Urge Overkill. Who am I missing?

Sinatra.

How do you feel about this whole cottage industry of tribute acts that have sprouted up around you?

I saw Super Diamond and did a song with them at the House of Blues. They'd been fans for a long time. They were out there while I wasn't out there. I felt they covered for me and kept my name out there and the songs out there, so I stopped by to catch them. They asked and I said yes.

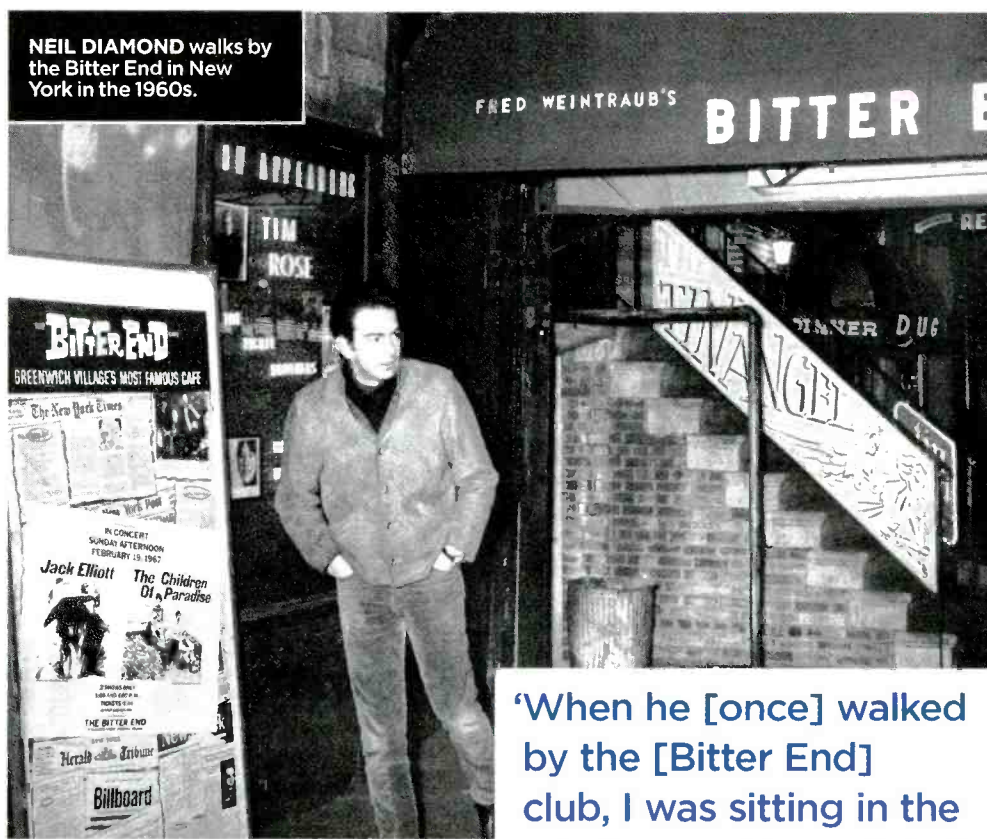
When you were recording "12 Songs" you ran into Mick Jagger.

He was working in one of the other rooms at this studio.

What transpired in the conversation?

We exchanged pleas- **continued on >>p50**

NEIL DIAMOND walks by the Bitter End in New York in the 1960s.



Do you have a favorite?

I liked Sinatra's version of "Sweet Caroline." It was very different than what I had. Of course it was Sinatra's voice. Excuse the pun, but he did it his way with a swing band.

UB40 did things a little differently with "Red Red Wine." What did you think of it?

I loved it. It wasn't a hit here at first. Then suddenly like six months or a year later it caught on here and became huge. I loved it because it was different than the way I'd written that song. Not intentionally, but it was a little country song and hearing this reggae thing was a revelation to me.

It must be rewarding for you to see that these songs still have life 30 and 40 years later.

The songs themselves seem to have evolved. The newer versions of the older songs are usually different, and I like that a lot. Probably the simplicity of the songs opens them up to new interpretations. I like that, too, a lot.

'When he [once] walked by the [Bitter End] club, I was sitting in the window and he pointed to me and said, "There's the guy that hired me more times than I deserved." The club brings back fond memories. It's where he started. "Sweet Caroline" is the song I will always remember. It's Neil's label.'

—PAUL COLBY, OWNER OF NEW YORK CLUB THE BITTER END

from >>p46

1978

Diamond receives gold and platinum records simultaneously for "You Don't Bring Me Flowers," an album that went multiplatinum five years later.

1980

"September Morn" goes platinum. Diamond stars in "The Jazz Singer" opposite Sir Lawrence Olivier. He receives a Golden Globe nomination for his performance.

1981

On its way to becoming Diamond's highest-selling album, "The Jazz Singer" is awarded a gold record. It has since gone platinum five times and become one of the highest-selling soundtracks of all time. "Rainbow" is awarded a gold record.

continued on >>p54



**40 YEARS
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THE SOLITARY MAN IN THE STUDIO

**A SINGLE-MINDED FOCUS IS
A HALLMARK OF DIAMOND'S
CREATIVE STYLE**

From his earliest days as a songwriter in Tin Pan Alley through his current work on a follow-up to acclaimed 2005 album "12 Songs," Neil Diamond has demonstrated an unstoppable drive and dedication to his craft, his colleagues say. ■ Songwriter/producer Ellie Greenwich, who along with then-husband Jeff Barry, formed the production company Tallyrand Music with Diamond and co-produced his early hits.

From the beginning, Greenwich says Diamond's work ethic stood out.

"Aside from his talent, I found him very determined and centered," she says. "He knew what he wanted to accomplish and, not that he would kill anyone to get where he wanted to get, he just looked straight ahead. There was something very professional about him even at that young age."

That professionalism continues to this day.

"I was extremely impressed with his work ethic in the studio," says Mike Campbell, the Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers guitarist who played on the "12 Songs" sessions.

"He really puts his heart into each take," Campbell says. "He was very meticulous about wanting the tracks to feel a certain way and to have a certain energy. I was real impressed with that."

Noted session guitarist Smokey Hormel, who played on "12 Songs," concurs.

"He is really interested in song craft. It's really hard to write a simple catchy song and so many," Hormel says. "That takes a lot of work, and he's dedicated, he's really willing to put in the hours. That's what impressed me, he'd be there when we got there, and when we left, he was still there working on them. Every day. That's pretty rare for an artist of his stature. He's really committed. If there's one word bugging him, he's going to sit there and try to fix it. It pays off definitely."

Diamond's perfectionism even shocked producer Rick Rubin. "He's a very diligent songwriter," he says. "When he and the band would do a performance, and then we'd come in and listen to it, he'd very rarely talk about the performance or whatever anyone else played. He'd sit there in the corner and make notes and the next time, he'd do it differently or change a couple of words, very subtle things. He was always in this kind of perpetual upgrading mode. He was always focused on the little details."

The process continued to the end of the project. "It got to the point where we had finished mixing the album, and we were really happy with it, and I remember getting a call from Neil saying, 'I want to go in tomorrow. There are things I want to change on six of the songs.' I thought the album was done," Rubin says with a laugh. "Until it came out, it was a work in progress." ■■■

—Craig Rosen



NEIL DIAMOND plays Woburn Abbey on his 1977 U.K. tour.

from >>p48

antries. I asked if they were rocking and rolling. And Jagger said, "Actually, we're mixing." I told him his business office had made a real big mistake, and he was interested and asked, "How?" [I replied], "They booked your tour at the same time as my tour." I thought it would hurt them. I thought it was a giggle.

How did Jagger react?

Nothing at first. Maybe he took me seriously, I don't think so. He went along with the joke.

There's also a rumor that you had words with Bob Dylan when you came off the stage during "The Last Waltz." Is that true?

I said, "That's my audience, Bob." It couldn't have been further from my audience at all. He gave me a questioning look as though I was serious, and then he continued to tune up his guitar and went out and knocked them dead.

It seems like you enjoy joking about it, but are you competitive with your peers in terms of record sales or boxscores?

It's hard to be competitive, because most of the time you don't start at the same starting line. You have an album coming out three months after they do, or they have an album six months after you do. So it's hard to be competitive.

I suppose everyone has a little bit in them. You want to do as well as your peers. If you do better than your peers, that's even better.

When did you come to the realization that "Solitary Man" was autobiographical?

It was almost immediately. You get a song on the charts, and you start doing interviews here and there. One of the common questions was, "Are you a solitary man?" At first I thought, "What's the relevance of that? It's just a song, how do the two relate?" Up until then I never considered that. There were good songs I liked and terrible songs I hated, but I never really connected with the idea the songs really represented the writer.

How many tracks on "12 Songs" are autobiographical?

Most of them I wouldn't say are about myself.

but most of them relate to me and what kind of person I am without being specific. There are lots of hints.

How did Brian Wilson get involved with "Delirious Love"?

Rick and I were listening to "Delirious Love," and we wanted something for the instrumental part and I immediately suggested Brian Wilson. Don't ask why, I just heard his voice there.

Are you a big Beach Boys fan?

[I have] always [been] a big Beach Boys fan. Everyone is a big Beach Boys fan. Rick surprised me and said he'd call him and see what he thinks. He sent the record over to Brian and he said, "I'll do it." And he did it.

What did you think of it?

I fell down on the floor and cried. It was so beautiful. I called Brian and I went on and on and told him whatever he wanted me to do anytime, I'll do it. I'll clean your house. I think he was a little surprised by my overreaction. It was an exquisite addition to the record. To hear his voice, doing his harmonies, on my record was a real honor.

Is it frustrating for you to still make vital work and have terrestrial radio ignore it, because there's no format for you?

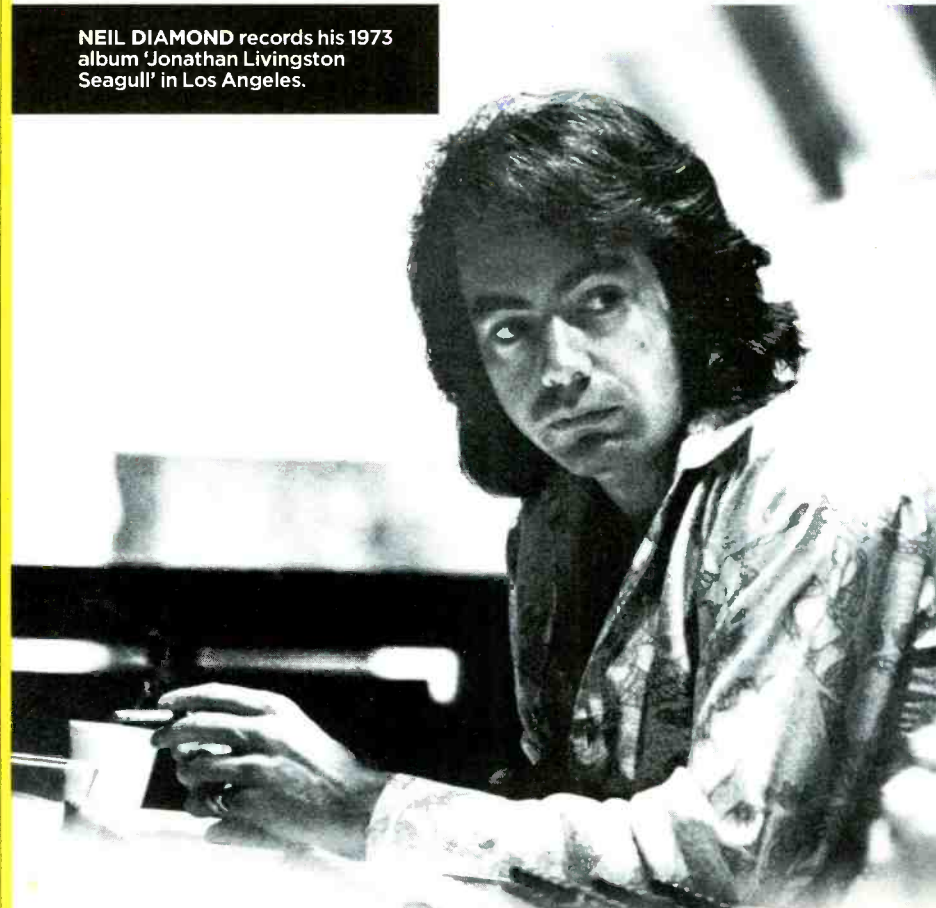
It's been that way for 25 years, so I've kind of come to terms with it. It took a while for me to not concentrate on singles. I spent 10 years trying to figure out how I can do albums that would get [that] kind of attention. It was a tough period, kind of jumping around from here to there trying to find my place again.

There aren't that many artists around that are 40 years into their career and still successful. What do you attribute your longevity to both as a performer and an artist?

I'm not sure what I attribute it to. If anything it's just that I kept working and slogging through trying to find myself and trying to find great songs in me. Also, there was nothing I wanted to do more and probably nothing I could do other than that. So when you're looking at it like that, that's what you do, aside from absolutely loving it. ■■■

—Craig Rosen

NEIL DIAMOND records his 1973 album 'Jonathan Livingston Seagull' in Los Angeles.



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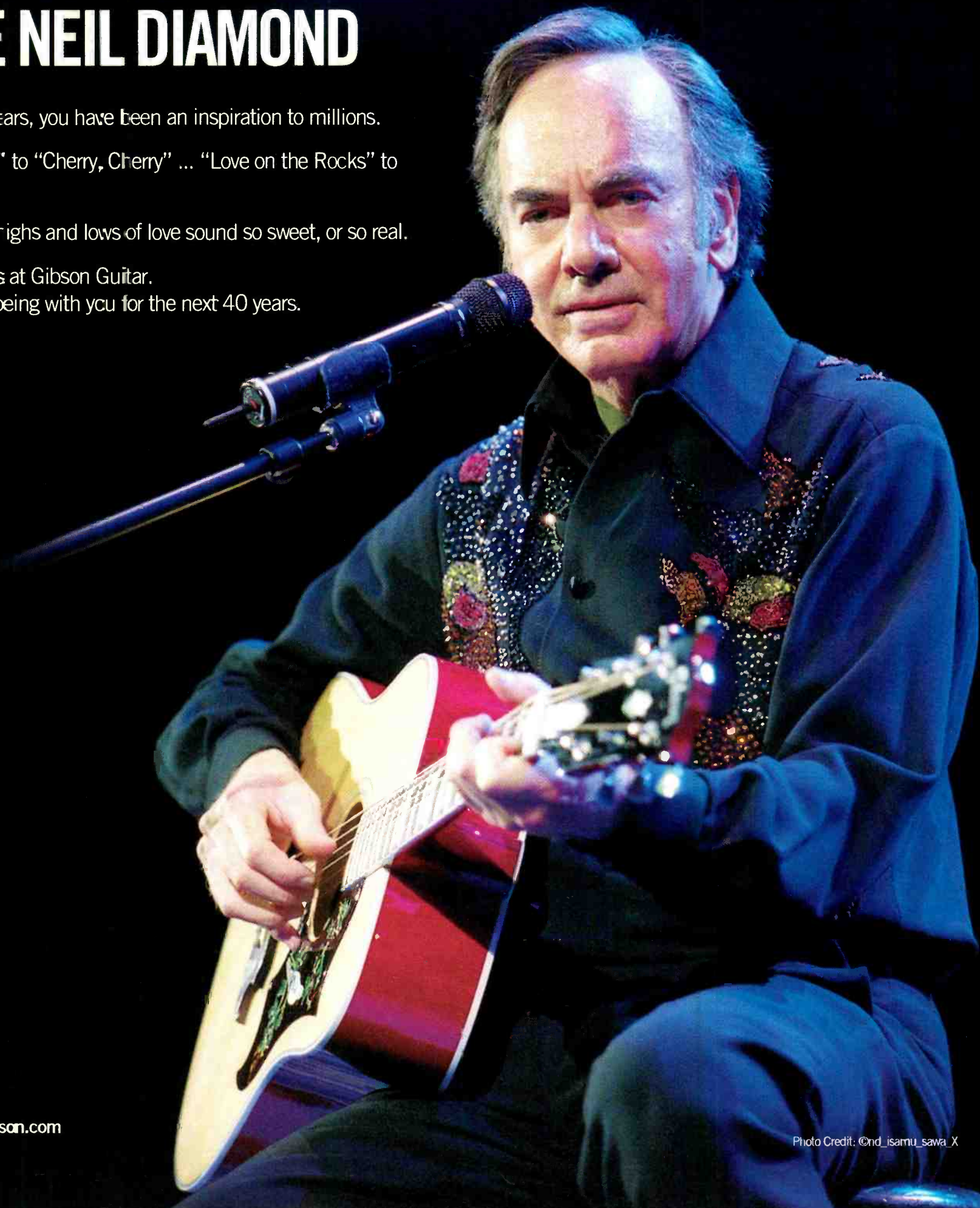
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DIAMOND'S SCREEN GEMS

FILM AND TV
HAVE BROUGHT
CAREER PEAKS

The big and small screens have been an integral part of Neil Diamond's career, from the Monkees' chart-topping cover of his "I'm a Believer" in 1966 to Smash Mouth's hit interpretation of the same song in 2001 on the "Shrek" soundtrack.

In between, Diamond scored his own monster smash in 1980 with "The Jazz Singer," the second remake of Al Jolson's 1927 classic.

His long association with the screen began thanks, in part, to record/TV mogul Don Kirshner, Diamond recalls.

Kirshner "fell in love with 'Cherry, Cherry' and wanted something like it for the Monkees, but I couldn't get close," Diamond recalls. "I'm not that good. I made substantial variations so it's not the same song. He heard the album and picked out 'I'm a Believer' and went with that."

"Look Out (Here Comes Tomorrow)," written by Diamond, was also plucked for inclusion on the chart-topping "More of The Monkees" album. For Diamond, there was no downside to being involved with the Monkees' phenomenon.

"I was thrilled," he says. "They were the hottest thing going, maybe second only to the Beatles, and I needed the money. I made a few dollars, and it was the first decent royalty check I received.

"It came at a time when you had to have one hit after another or there was no play," Diamond says. "If you had a bomb, it was like starting over again.

"And I did have a bomb called 'I Got the Feelin',' but it came out at about the same time as 'I'm a Believer,' so [that] was another Neil Diamond hit and it kind of skipped over the re-

sults of 'I Got the Feelin'' and kept me in the public's eye and the radio's ear."

Diamond's first album for Columbia Records was the soundtrack to "Jonathan Livingston Seagull." Although the film bombed, the soundtrack became Diamond's biggest hit to date, peaking at No. 2 on the album chart. It was eventually certified double-platinum.

Similarly, "The Jazz Singer" peaked at No. 3 in 1980 and racked up triple-platinum sales.

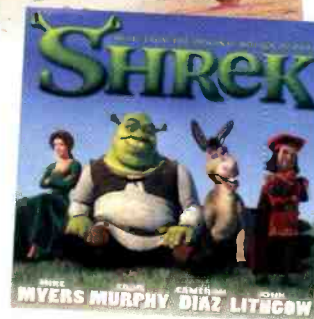
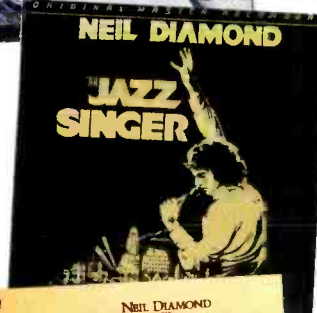
A cover of one of Diamond's early tunes, "Girl, You'll Be a Woman Soon," by Urge Overkill was featured in Quentin Tarantino's acclaimed 1994 film "Pulp Fiction." Initially, Diamond wasn't sold on the idea.

"Quentin Tarantino sent me some script pages, and I passed on it," he says. "Dave Rosner, who was handling my publishing at the time, made his point that this director was not a sensationalist, exploitative kind of guy and was a serious kind of director and I should reconsider, which I did, and I OK'd it."

Diamond was a bit surprised that the recording by Chicago indie band Urge Overkill was so close to his original.

"I guess there was the hip factor involved as the reason for not using mine," he says. "It worked for sure."

More recently, the animated blockbuster "Shrek" breathed new life into "I'm a Believer."



Diamond says, "I liked it a lot, because it was an animated feature and I'd never been included in anything like that. I thought this would be interesting, especially with Eddie Murphy doing [one version of] it. I had no idea what it would be like. I hadn't heard it until I saw the movie. I did like what they did with it."

In recent years, Diamond has showed his sense of humor by making comedic cameos in 2001's "Saving Silverman" and 2006's "Keeping Up With the Steins."

The former film centered on a pair of buddies, who happen to be Diamond fanatics, trying to save their friend from marrying the wrong woman.

"I read the script, and the whole point was that they were devotees to the extreme and had the dream some day of singing with me," Diamond says. "After reading the script I felt, 'Yeah, these people should have the chance to sing with me in the mix.' The movie was crazy. I only worked a couple of weeks on it. It was one of those wacky movies that either come off great or fall on their face... It sounded like fun. I didn't know what they would do with the songs, but I think it wasn't too embarrassing. I should have been in the movie, that's why I was in it."

In "Keeping Up With the Steins," families battle over who can throw the best bar mitzvah; one clan plans to have Diamond sing the national anthem at a bar mitzvah at Dodger Stadium. In the end, Diamond sings another standard. "Hava Naglia" was something I always wanted to do," he says. "I've never played a bar mitzvah, so it's the closest I'll get."

—Craig Rosen

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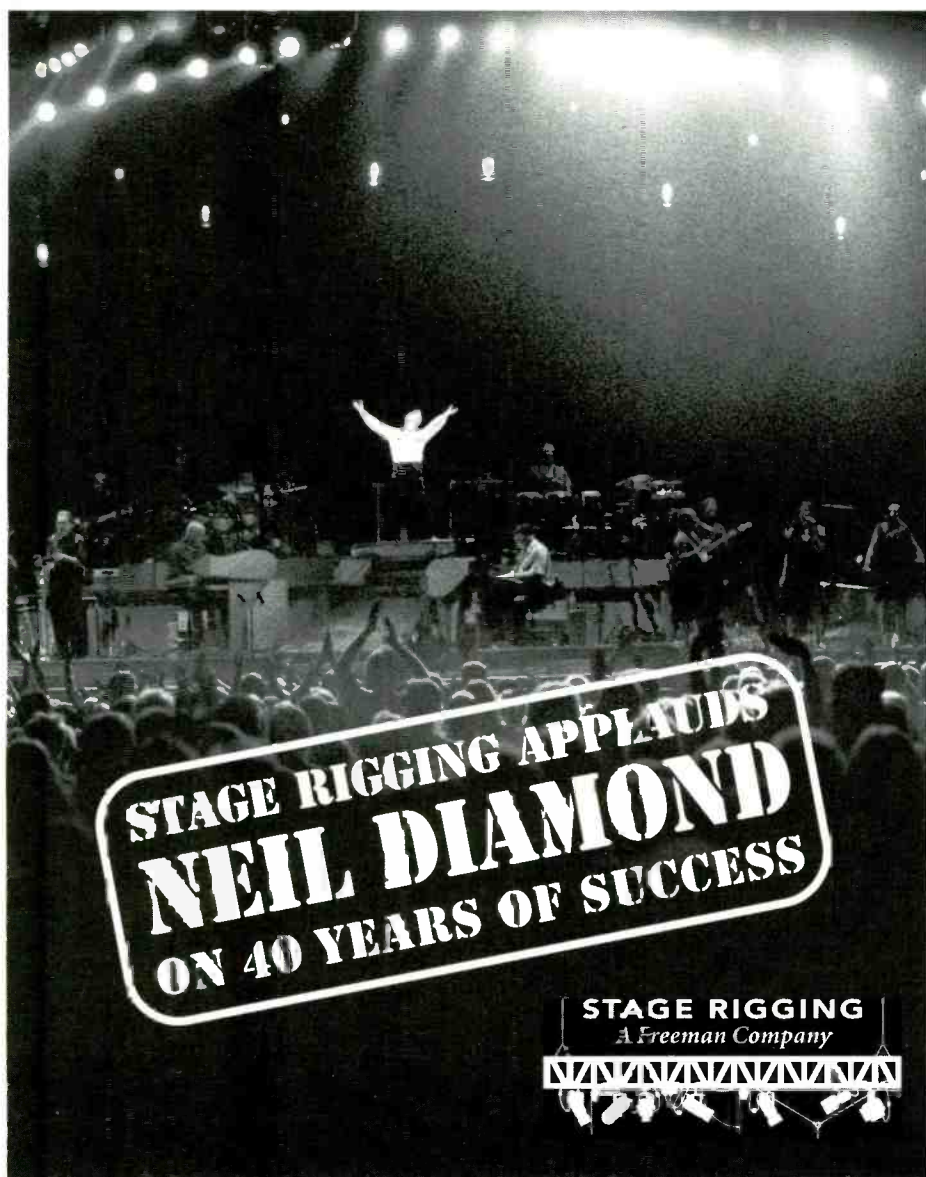
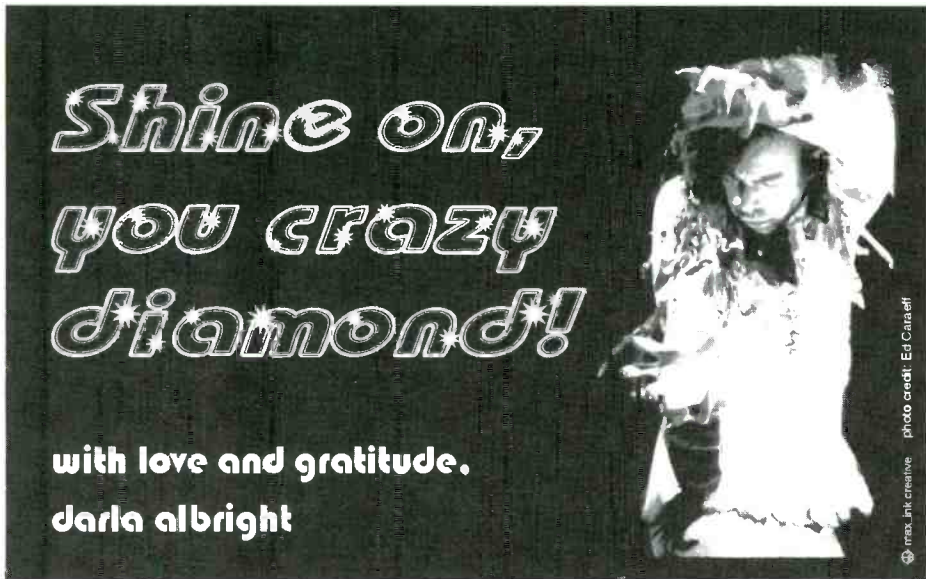
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ROLLING WITH CHANGES

DIAMOND HAS THRIVED THROUGH SHIFTS OF LABEL EXECUTIVES

During Neil Diamond's 30-year-plus tenure with Columbia Records, by his count, he has seen the president of the label change nine times. ■ The singer/songwriter has weathered the turbulence due in part to his own staff that he's had in place for 30 years. ■ Diamond approves of the label's current executive team. "I've spoken to [Columbia Records president] Steve Barnett and [Sony Music Label Group chairman] Rob Stringer a number of times, and I like them a lot," he says. "They are really passionate people and want to show what they can do. So far, they've come up to it and exceeded. I'm very hopeful. I have a very good vibe and very good feeling about the future with them."

It was Clive Davis who originally signed Diamond to Columbia in the early '70s.

"He was self-contained and very successful," Davis says of Diamond. "Not only was he a great songwriter, but the uniqueness was that he was an incredible entertainer, so the combination of the two made him very special."

At the time, Davis wasn't into bidding wars, but he wanted Diamond.

"It was a case of an artist at the top of his form," Davis says. The bidding for Diamond's services was narrowed down to Davis at Columbia and the artist-friendly environs of Warner Bros. Columbia won.

"He and I forged a personal relationship, and we matched what Warner was offering, which was \$400,000 an album, including recording costs," Davis says. "Obviously, in this day and age, that's a small deal. [At the time], it wasn't a deal to break the bank, so to speak, but it did show that faith that this was an artist that would become a platinum seller and a major artist."

As fate would have it, Davis left Columbia

before Diamond delivered his first album for the label.

"If it had to happen, it was probably a good time to happen because [Davis] didn't want me doing 'Jonathan Livingston Seagull,'" Diamond says. "He wanted a Neil Diamond album, but I

had no idea what a Neil Diamond album was supposed to be. I kind of liked the [uniqueness] of 'Jonathan Seagull,' but I had no idea what I was going to do. I couldn't figure out who the character was. I had a Hare Krishna guy move in for a year. I ate their food, read their books, listened to their tapes and found the key, the word, the idea, to the first song. I thanked him and sent him off to India where he wanted to go to get closer to who he was,

and I began to write this album."

The album went on to become one of Diamond's biggest hits, reaching No. 2 on the album chart and hitting the double-platinum mark for sales of 2 million.

—Craig Rosen

'For me, [the answer] is easy. My favorite song has been "Solitary Man" since I first heard it at a tender age. Case closed.'

—LINDA PRESS, DIAMOND'S BACKUP SINGER FOR 30 YEARS

from >>p48

1982

"On the Way to the Sky" is certified gold as is "12 Greatest Hits Volume II." In 1994, "12 Greatest Hits, Volume II" earns multi-platinum certification for shipments of 3 million. "Heartlight" goes platinum.

1984

"Primitive" is awarded a gold record. Diamond is elected to the Songwriters' Hall of Fame.

1986

"Headed for the Future" goes gold. Billboard magazine's (now defunct) sister publica-

tion, Amusement Business, names Diamond the industry's top-grossing solo performer.

1989

"The Best Years of Our Lives" goes gold. "Classics, the Early Years" receives gold certification and two

The Man in Black and Neil Diamond may be forever connected. Johnny Cash covered and used Diamond's "Solitary Man" as the subtitle to his 2000 "American III" set. ■ The connection continued when producer Rick Rubin revived Diamond's career after performing similar magic with Cash and his "American Recordings" series. ■ In "Hell Yeah," a track on "12 Songs," Diamond appears to give a nod to Cash with the lyrics, "He saw it all/He walked the line/Never had to crawl." ■ It's not the first time the pair have been linked. ■ They appeared together on "The Johnny Cash Show" on Feb. 11, 1970. In the clip available on YouTube as of this writing, the duo chatted before Diamond performed a bit of his own "New York Boy." Cash countered with his interpretation of Jimmie Davis' "Where the Old Red River Flows."

NEIL AND THE MAN IN BLACK

CASH'S COVER OF 'SOLITARY MAN' SHOWS LINK BETWEEN ARTISTS

As for Cash's cover of "Solitary Man," Diamond approves. "I thought it was raw," he says. "He plays on it, and although it was basically the same song, he also was very intimate about it. There's not self-consciousness about it, and I like that a lot." In spite of the obvious links, Rubin says Diamond and Cash are very different artists, although they do share some common bonds. "They're really different types of singers and songwriters," Rubin says. "Johnny was more of a storyteller, and Neil is more of a melodic

singer. Neil is a much more prolific writer than Johnny was at the time I was working with him, so it was a very different kind of thing. The intention with Johnny wasn't to do a stripped-down record either. It just turned out that way. The same thing happened with Neil."

Smokey Hormel, the ace session guitarist who played on Cash's "American" series and reprised his role on "12 Songs," says there are a few commonalities.

"Both are lovers of songwriting," he says. "To them it's all about the song. They are both very original. They're true to their own personalities. They're not trying to be someone else. They're just being honest. It's real sincere. And they both have such great voices."

Mike Campbell, guitarist for Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers and another session player on "12 Songs" and the "American" albums, says Diamond shares an honest and authentic approach with Cash and Petty.

"They each write songs that are honest and true to their own character," he says. "Johnny, when he sings a song it's as real as he is, same with Tom and Neil, too. When he gets a song he believes in, he does it his way with truthfulness. There's nothing phony about him. They all have that in common."

Another plus for Campbell: "Neil always has the best cigars, and he's very generous with those as well."

—Craig Rosen

years later goes platinum.

1990
Diamond receives an "Award of Merit" at the American Music Awards.

1991
"Hot August Night II" receives gold certification.

1992
"The Greatest Hits 1966-1992" is awarded a gold record. In 2000, it goes triple-platinum.

1993
"The Christmas Album," "Love Goes Gold" and "Up on the Roof (Songs From the Brill Building)" each go gold.

1994
"Lovescape" goes gold.

1996
"The Christmas Album, Volume II" and "Tennessee Moon" receive gold awards.

1997
"In My Lifetime" and "Live in America" earn gold awards.

2000
Diamond receives the Sammy Cahn Lifetime Achievement Award from the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

2001
The film "Saving Silverman" opens in February, featuring

Diamond in a self-spoofing role. In July, Diamond releases "Three Chord Opera," the first album he wrote entirely by himself since "Serenade" in 1974. The album peaks at No. 15 on The Billboard 200.

continued on >>p62

Congratulations to a living legend on 40 years of hits.

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Photo: Wireimage.com

Neil Diamond and Barbra Streisand teamed up in 1978 and recorded the duet "You Don't Bring Me Flowers." The song debuted on The Billboard Hot 100 on Oct. 28, 1978, and spent two weeks at No. 1. In this recap of Diamond's top-charting hits, the duet stands at No. 1.

The titles on this chart are ordered by peak position they achieved on the Hot 100. If more than one title peaked at the same position, ties were broken by the number of weeks spent at the peak. If ties still remained, they were broken by the number of weeks on the chart. —Keith Caulfield

NEIL DIAMOND and BARBRA STREISAND record 'You Don't Bring Me Flowers' on Jan. 1, 1977, in Los Angeles.



NEIL DIAMOND'S TOP SINGLES

Rank	Title	Peak Position	Debut Date	Label
1	You Don't Bring Me Flowers*	1 (2 weeks)	Oct. 28, 1978	Columbia
2	Cracklin' Rosie	1	Aug. 22, 1970	Uni
3	Song Sung Blue	3	May 5, 1972	Uni
4	Love On The Rocks	2	Nov. 1, 1980	Capitol
5	Sweet Caroline (Good Times Never Seemed So Good)	4	June 28, 1969	Uni
6	I Am . . . I Said	4	March 21, 1971	Uni
7	Heartlight	5	Sept. 11, 1982	Columbia
8	Longfellow Serenade	5	Oct. 5, 1974	Columbia
9	Hello Again	6	Jan. 31, 1981	Capitol
10	Holly Holy	6	Nov. 1, 1969	Uni
11	Cherry, Cherry	6	Aug. 20, 1966	Bang
12	America	8	April 25, 1981	Capitol
13	Girl, You'll Be A Woman Soon	10	April 8, 1967	Bang
14	Yesterday's Songs	11	Nov. 7, 1981	Columbia
15	Play Me	11	May 6, 1972	Uni
16	If You Know What I Mean	11	June 19, 1976	Columbia
17	I Thank The Lord For The Night Time	13	July 15, 1967	Bang
18	Stones/Crunchy Granola Suite	14	Nov. 13, 1971	Uni
19	I Got The Feelin' (Oh No No)	16	Nov. 12, 1966	Bang
20	Desirée	16	Dec. 3, 1977	Columbia

* Barbra Streisand & Neil Diamond

Dear Neil,
 Congratulations on 40 great years!
 - Melissa Etheridge

W. F. Leopold Management, Inc

Three decades after Neil Diamond's hit "Sweet Caroline (Good Times Never Seemed So Good)," debuted on The Billboard Hot 100, it is Diamond's most played hit of the past year.

Also in the top five: "Cherry, Cherry" from 1966, "Cracklin' Rosie" from 1970, "Solitary Man" from 1970 and the seasonal favorite "You Make It Feel Like Christmas."

The following chart ranks, by detections, Diamond's 20 most-played songs during the past year (Nov. 6, 2005, through Nov. 5, 2006). The chart, compiled by Nielsen BDS—surveyed all formats of U.S. radio (including classic rock, college and oldies stations), video channels (like MTV and VH1), satellite radio (Sirius and XM) and cable music service Music Choice. —Keith Caulfield

NEIL DIAMOND'S MOST-PLAYED HITS

Rank	Title	Label
1	Sweet Caroline (Good Times Never Seemed So Good)	Uni
2	Cherry, Cherry	Bang
3	Cracklin' Rosie	Uni
4	Solitary Man	Bang
5	You Make It Feel Like Christmas	Columbia
6	America	Capitol
7	I Thank The Lord For The Night Time	Bang
8	Delirious Love	Columbia
9	Brother Love's Traveling Salvation Show	Uni
10	Forever In Blue Jeans	Columbia
11	Kentucky Woman	Bang
12	You Got To Me	Bang
13	Song Sung Blue	Uni
14	Jingle Bell Rock	Columbia
15	I Am . . . I Said	Uni
16	Girl, You'll Be A Woman Soon	Bang
17	Hello Again	Capitol
18	Shilo	Bang
19	Holly Holy	Uni
20	The Story Of My Life	Columbia

After Neil Diamond signed with Columbia Records in the early 1970s, he threw the label a bit of a curve ball by choosing to release, as his first Columbia album, a soundtrack to the film "Jonathan Livingston Seagull."

The film was forgettable. But Diamond hit that curve ball out of the park.

The soundtrack to "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" ranks as the most successful album

of Diamond's 40-year career. It debuted on The Billboard 200 on Nov. 3, 1973, and peaked at No. 2.

A second soundtrack, "The Jazz Singer," ranks second on this tally. It debuted on the chart on Nov. 29, 1980, and peaked at No. 3. Notably, none of Diamond's most-successful albums have peaked at No. 1 on the Billboard 200. —Keith Caulfield

NEIL DIAMOND'S TOP ALBUMS

Rank	Title	Peak Position	Debut Date	Label
1	Jonathan Livingston Seagull	2	Nov. 3, 1973	Columbia
2	The Jazz Singer	3	Nov. 29, 1980	Capitol
3	Serenade	3	Oct. 26, 1974	Columbia
4	Beautiful Noise	4	July 4, 1976	Columbia
5	You Don't Bring Me Flowers	4	Dec. 16, 1978	Columbia
6	12 Songs	4	Nov. 26, 2005	American
7	Moods	5	July 15, 1972	Uni
8	Hot August Night	5	Dec. 9, 1972	MCA
9	I'm Glad You're Here With Me Tonight	6	Dec. 3, 1977	Columbia
10	Love At The Greek	8	Feb. 26, 1977	Columbia
11	The Christmas Album	8	Oct. 24, 1992	Columbia
12	Heartlight	9	Oct. 16, 1982	Columbia
13	September Morn	10	Jan. 12, 1980	Columbia
14	Neil Diamond/Gold	10	Aug. 22, 1970	Uni
15	Stones	11	Nov. 13, 1971	Uni
16	Tap Root Manuscript	13	Nov. 21, 1970	Uni
17	Tennessee Moon	14	Feb. 24, 1996	Columbia
18	Three Chord Opera	15	Aug. 11, 2001	Columbia
19	On The Way To The Sky	17	Nov. 28, 1981	Columbia
20	Headed For The Future	20	May 24, 1986	Columbia

Mr. Diamond.
Congratulations on a brilliant career!

Happy 40th to
"cherry cherry"

Sincerely,
Scott Scott
&
Garry Garry
Marshall Marshall

The songs of NEIL
DIAMOND have become
part of pop culture.

FROM 'PULP FICTION' TO
'SHREK,' CLASSIC HITS ARE
WIDELY COVERED

MINING DIAMOND'S CATALOG

BY JIM BESSMAN

Neil Diamond

Your Loyal Fans
are a testament
to your Artistry.

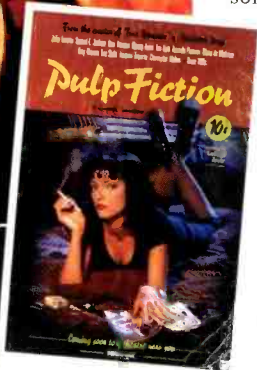
Thanks for the magic.

concerts west





Acts that have covered NEIL DIAMOND songs include Urge Overkill, whose version of 'Girl, You'll Be a Woman Soon' appeared in the film 'Pulp Fiction.'



Neil Diamond's songs have always stood apart, and the exploitation of his catalog has been appropriately respectful. ■ "Philosophically, we've always been careful and protective of the music," music publisher David Rosner says. ■ Rosner handled Diamond's publishing interests for 33 years through his Bicycle Music prior to selling the company a year ago to a co-venture involving Clear Channel for an undisclosed amount. ■ "Sometimes this created tension internally," Rosner says. He points to Urge Overkill's version of Diamond's 1967 classic "Girl, You'll Be a Woman Soon" in Quentin Tarantino's cinema landmark "Pulp Fiction." ■ "They explained to us the scene where a woman would be puking to it, so internally Neil resisted at first, until he said to me, 'Use your best judgment,'" Rosner says.

"But over the years he's got a sense of the fact that when something becomes so ingrained in the culture, you have to respect that and let go of it. That kind of thinking led to the use in 'Pulp Fiction,' where something like that may have been rejected earlier."

While this "balance between protectiveness and exploitation" was always maintained, Rosner still actively promoted Diamond's songs as cover material throughout his tenure.

"Of course, it used to be a lot easier before record companies deemed that artists aren't artists unless they write what they record, though this had less to do with Neil than the industry as a whole," Rosner says.

Artists from Frank Sinatra to Elvis Presley have covered Diamond's songs, with his 1968 hit "Red Red Wine" probably the most notable thanks to English reggae group UB40's chart-topping 1984 cover.


"They knew the earlier [Jamaican] reggae version by Tony Tribe—who was a hero of theirs—and included it on their reggae tribute album 'Labour of Love,'" Rosner says.

"But Roy Drusky charted with a coun- **continued on >>p62**

'It's not easy to elevate one of a vast number of songs above all others. Neil has so many wonderful songs; many seem to me to go into hiding too early in life. So with that acknowledged, I must say that . . . the one which I consistently connect to is "I Am . . . I Said." When it's brought to life in a concert, it seems to draw an extra-special caress from us all, performers and audience alike.'

**—REINIE PRESS,
DIAMOND'S BASSIST**





With more than
120 million records sold and
53 albums, you have earned
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We congratulate and thank you,

Neil,

for 40 incredible years
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from >>p60

try version around the time that Neil did it, and country artists like Waylon Jennings, Ronnie Milsap and Elvis have also recorded Neil's songs."

Rosner recalls the time "when anyone had a hit, all kinds of people—Andy Williams, Percy Faith, Glen Campbell," for example, would record the song.

Hence, Diamond's 1969 hit "Sweet Caroline (Good Times Never Seemed So Good)" and 1972 hit "Song Sung Blue" became "enormous copyrights, probably his two most-recorded songs."

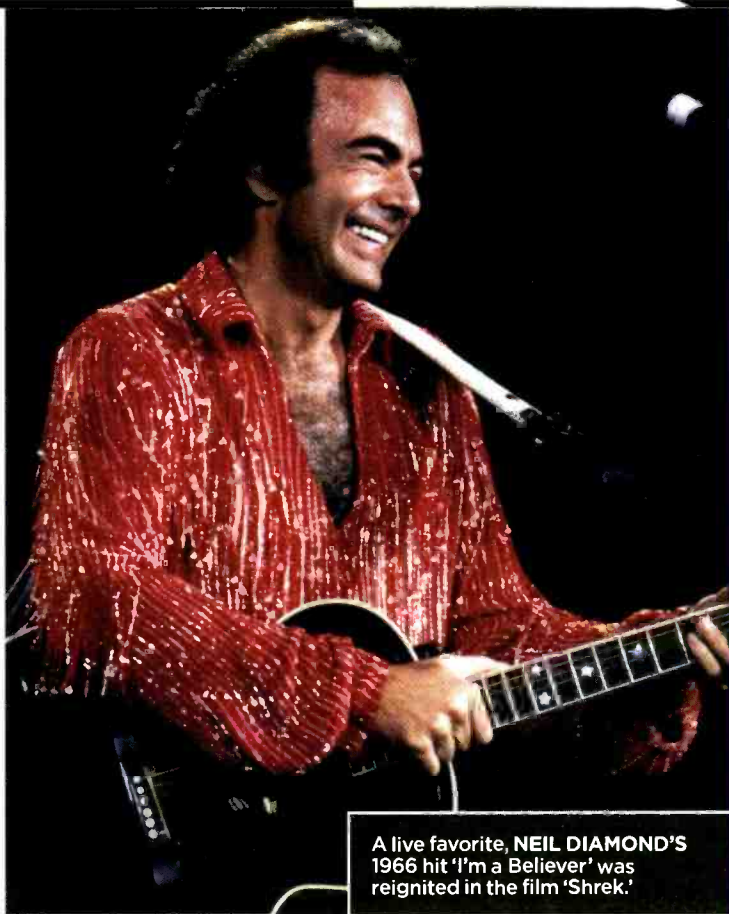
Bobby Womack's 1972 version of "Sweet Caroline," in fact, is a personal favorite of Rosner's, as is Jose Feliciano's version of Diamond's 1972 hit "Play Me."

Noteworthy covers of more recent vintage that Rosner cites are the Chris Isaak and Johnny Cash versions of "Solitary Man." The 1966 hit also served as title of Cash's 2000 album "American III: Solitary Man."

The 2001 animated movie "Shrek" had two versions of Diamond's "I'm a Believer," originally a 1966 chart-topper for the Monkees: Smash Mouth's and Eddie Murphy's (his was in the Donkey character's voice).

Rosner says one of his favorite usages was "the final scene in Cheech Marin's 'Born in East L.A.,' where these Mexicans were all [gathered] at the border to make a mass entrance into the U.S. and did it to the tune of Neil singing 'America.'"

After saying that "copyrights are living things, and you can kill them," Rosner notes that "attitudes of late **continued on >>p64**



A live favorite, NEIL DIAMOND'S 1966 hit 'I'm a Believer' was reignited in the film 'Shrek.'

'I love Neil's hits, but "The Pot Smoker's Song" just struck me when I heard it. It sounds like a happy pop song, but it is a crazy mixture of pop and hardcore street stories. It's poignant, and was written as an anti-drug song in the early '70s when everyone was doing drugs. I've never heard anything else like it.'

**—SCOTT MARSHALL,
MOVIE DIRECTOR**

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from >>p55

2003

"Stages: Performances 1970-2002," a boxed set containing five CDs and a DVD, is released, and Diamond hits the road to tour.

2004

Diamond starts working with Rick Rubin, producer of Johnny Cash's comeback albums.

2005

"12 Songs," the result of Diamond's collaboration with Rubin, is released and enters the charts at No. 4, Diamond's highest debut in 25 years.

2006

"12 Songs" is rereleased as a limited-edition artist's cut, with a bonus disc featuring alternate takes and demos.

Compiled by Cathy Applefeld Olson.

NEIL DIAMOND

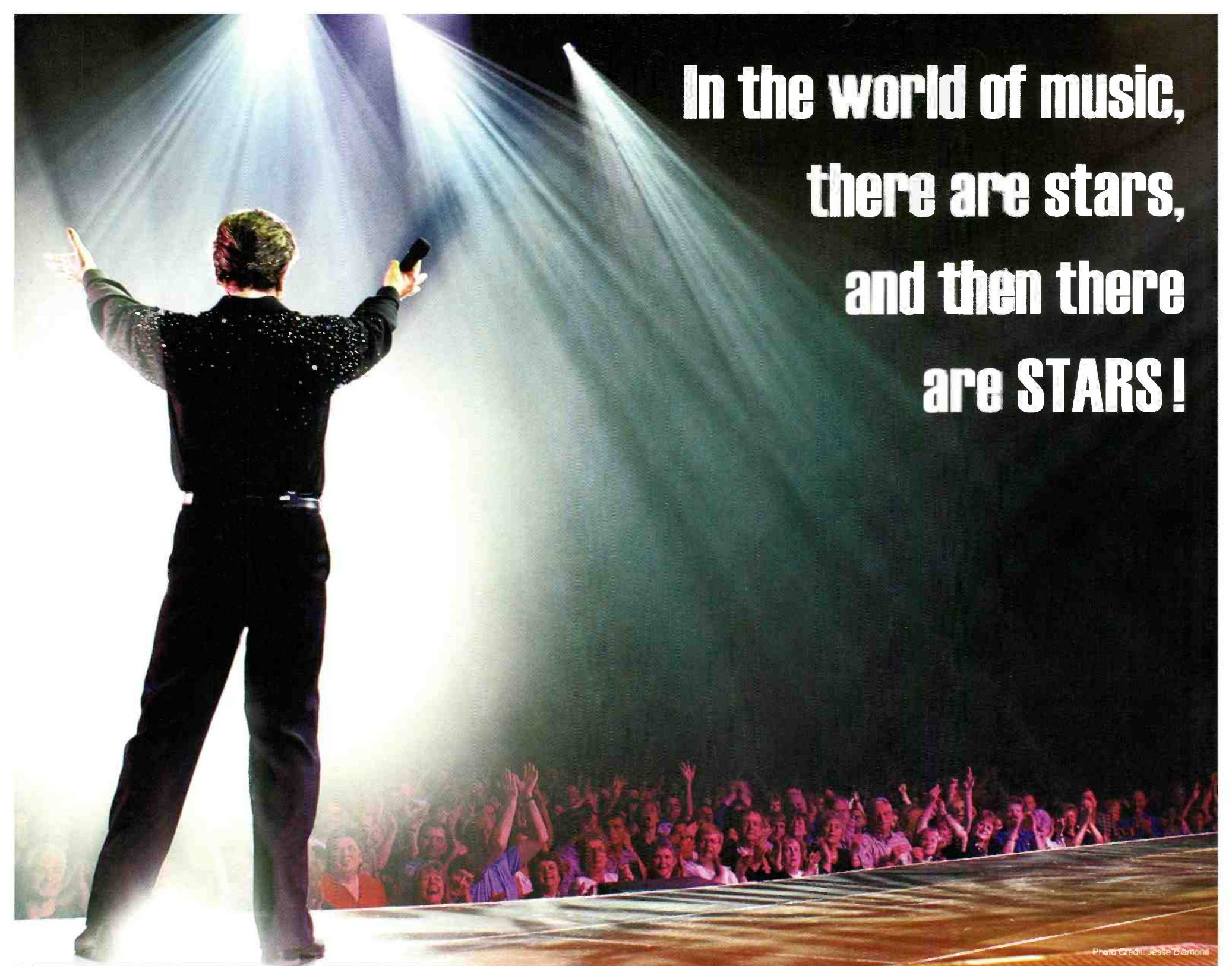
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Photo Credit: Jesse Diamond

Neil,
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Thank you for letting us share the last thirty-eight years of this journey with you. It's been an exciting adventure and we are all so proud to be on your team.

GELFAND, RENNETT & FELDMAN, LLP



Los Angeles  New York

from >>p62

have been looser to commercial usage as well” when it comes to Diamond songs.

“We let Burger King use ‘I’m a Believer’ in connection with a tie-in with DreamWorks and ‘Shrek,’ ” he says. “We’d done others, but nothing that was as highly exposed.”

Theatrical uses of Diamond’s catalog have included Bob Fosse’s 1978 Broadway musical “Dancin’,” which featured “Crunchy Granola Suite.”

“That one keeps cropping up,” Rosner says, adding that the 1999 Broadway revue “Fosse” also included the song.

In print, “Neil’s music is active in many types of publications, including the typical piano/voice sheets and books, guitar, band and choral.” Print publication of Diamond’s catalog is mostly handled by the Hal Leonard Corp.

“America” is my favorite song. It really moved me the first time I heard it. It’s so patriotic and reminded me of my own Greek roots.’

**—CONSTANTINE MAROULIS,
ACTOR/SINGER**

These companies, and Diamond himself, are SESAC affiliates. He also has an ASCAP company, Sweet Sixteen Music, and a BMI company, Mild Ones Music, both of which publish songs that he has co-written or songs that his band members have written without his help.

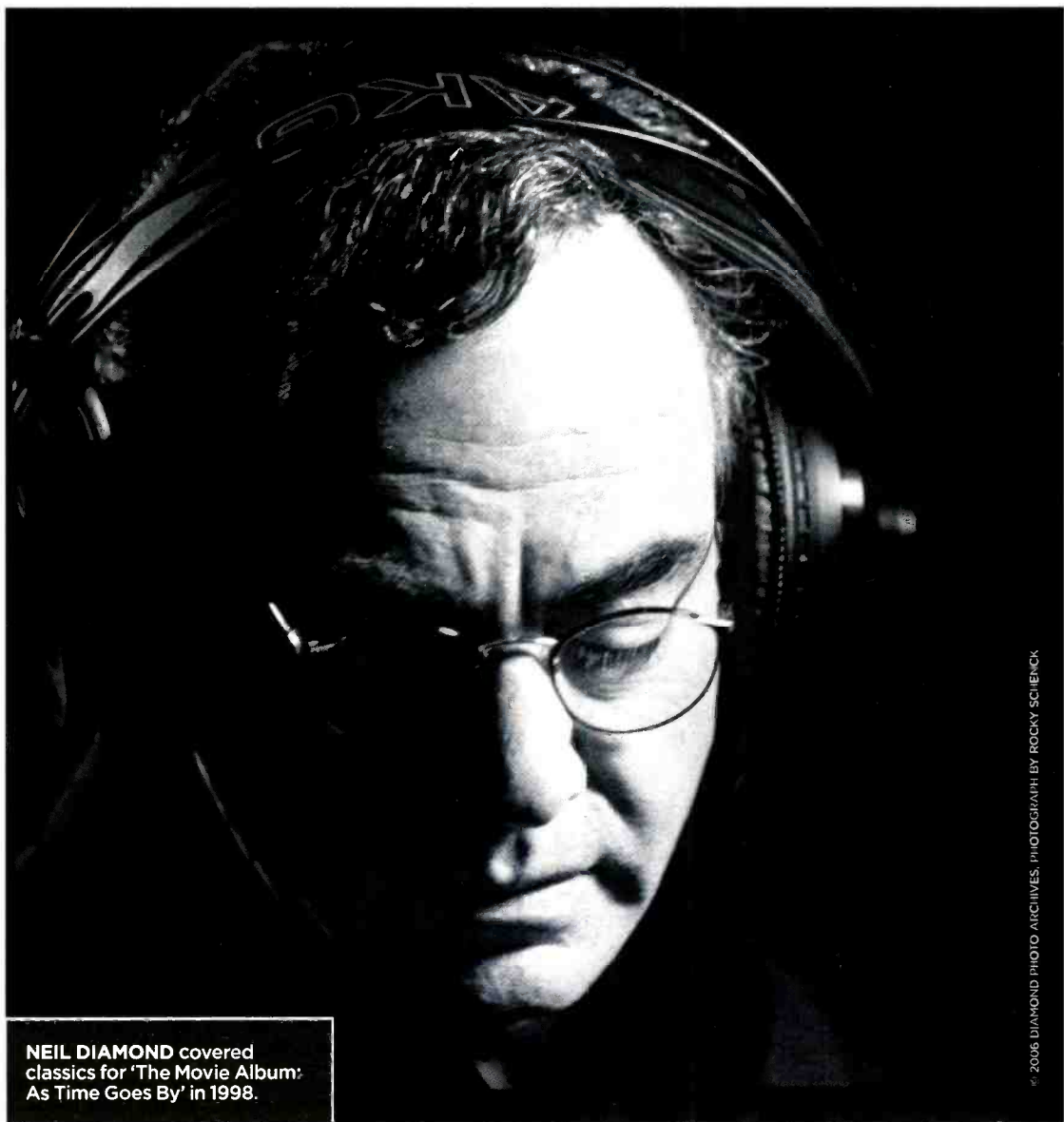
“And speaking of collaborations,” Rosner says, “he’s famously written with Marilyn and Alan Bergman [“You Don’t Bring Me Flowers”] and Gilbert Becaud [“Love on the Rocks,” “September Morn”], among others.”

Rosner’s son Jonathan is now co-president of Bicycle Music and exploits Diamond’s catalog on a worldwide basis. David Rosner now runs the Darville Music publishing company that he launched after selling Bicycle.

Internationally, there are versions of Diamond songs “probably in any language you can think of,” Rosner says, highlighting a 1971 Italian hit adaptation of “I Am . . . I Said” (“La Casa Degli Angeli”) by Caterina Caselli.

“Neil’s music is very active internationally but concentrated, I think, only on recorded versions,” he says. “The catalogs are also very active in the media, i.e., TV, film, commercials, and are administered by Marsha Gleeman in conjunction with Sony/ATV Music Publishing.”

Diamond’s publishing is now split among the artist’s Stonebridge Music and Prophet Music companies, which he started in 1968 after acquiring control of his earlier copyrights, and his DiamondSongs, which publishes his most recent music.




NEIL DIAMOND covered classics for ‘The Movie Album: As Time Goes By’ in 1998.

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“Congratulations, Neil!”

-Sherrie Levy



‘So many great songs to choose from. “Solitary Man” is one of the great melodies in pop; “Sweet Caroline” [has] probably the best singalong chorus ever. I loved a newer ballad Neil and I recorded together called “I Believe in Happy Endings.”

In the end, though, I have to go back and **vote for “Cherry, Cherry” as my all-time favorite.** It was the first tune I remember in which the instrumental hook was as strong as the vocal one—and the musical structure was unconventionally brilliant. Part of the genius of Neil’s writing lies in not always following any of the traditional pop structures and it has always been so. **His best songs have a structure which is organic** rather than mathematical, inspired rather than devised, and yet the various parts fit together perfectly and make a beautiful noise.’

—PETER ASHER, PETER ASHER MANAGEMENT

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DIAMOND'S

WORLD

BY PAUL SEXTON

'12 SONGS' CONTINUES SINGER'S RECORD OF INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS

In many markets around the world, as in North America, Neil Diamond's 2005 album "12 Songs" achieved his strongest sales in recent memory. ■ The acclaimed album has sold 200,000 units in the United Kingdom, according to Columbia Records, Diamond's best sales in the territory with a studio release since the 1980s. ■ When the album charted at No. 5 in that market in late February, it was Diamond's highest debut for a new, non-soundtrack studio album, with first-week U.K. sales of 40,000. ■ "We did quite a lot of press advertising, an extensive outdoor campaign and TV advertising," says Johanna Headland, marketing director for Sony BMG U.K. "We hadn't TV advertised [Diamond's releases] for a while, because the business hadn't really been there. ■ "But we got the [support of] the music press, plus really strong support in the broadsheets and the tabloids, so I do think it was quite a press-driven album."

In Australia, "12 Songs" has been certified gold with sales of 50,000, and in Germany the album achieved sales of 45,000 units.

Sales of the album have been strong from Holland to Hong Kong, according to Diamond's label.

In a marketplace where veteran artists compete with hit-producing newcomers, "it really does come down to the [veteran's album] concept, and whether people buy into the artistic statement



NEIL DIAMOND'S collaboration on '12 Songs' with RICK RUBIN, right, also was an international hit.

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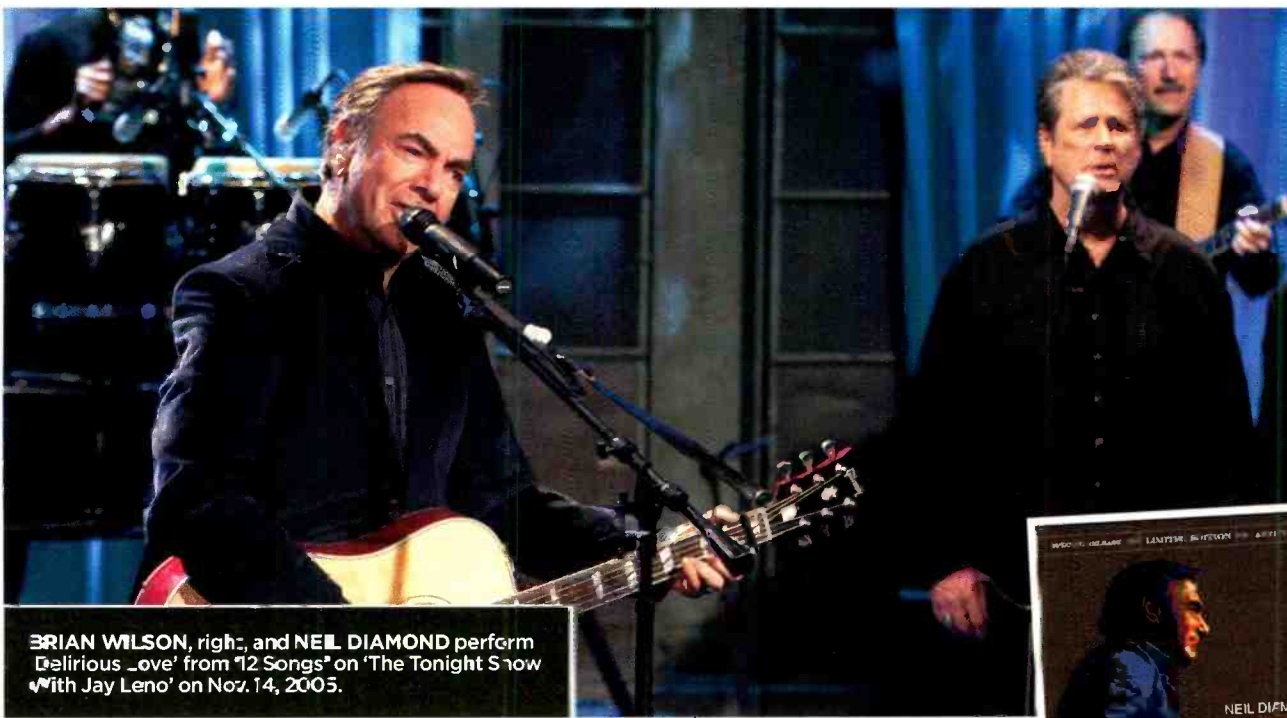
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BRIAN WILSON, right, and NEIL DIAMOND perform 'Delirious Love' from '12 Songs' on 'The Tonight Show with Jay Leno' on Nov. 14, 2005.

PHOTO BY PAUL DRINKWATER/WIREIMAGE.COM; INSET © AND ARCHIVES

they're making," Columbia Records senior VP of international Jim Sabej says.

"'12 Songs' was such a brilliant idea that Neil and [producer] Rick Rubin came up with, it just stuck."

This all bodes well for the international rerelease of "12 Songs" as a limited-edition double disc, with a bonus CD featuring alternate takes and demos. The international release is scheduled for 2007.

In preparation for the original release of "12 Songs," which arrived in international markets in February 2006, three months after its U.S. release, Diamond visited some key markets for in-person promotion.

Additionally, key members of the media were flown in to interview Diamond, as expectation for the record grew, driven by spectacular reviews.

Diamond's ethos of professional loyalty, evidenced by long-term relationships with key colleagues, is reflected in his international touring business. British concert promotion veteran Barry Clay-

man, chairman of Live Nation U.K., has worked with Diamond for more than 25 years.

"You've got a very disciplined artist who cares about his sound, his lights, his production," Clayman says, "and an awful lot of his people [were] with him all those years back. The members of the band and most of his entourage are the same people."

Before the creation of Live Nation, its predecessor company, Clear Channel, oversaw Diamond's British concert activity.

"All our shows with him have been in the U.K.," Clayman says, "[although] we've agented certain European dates in the past. It kind of works on a three-year cycle; we've done [venues] from Woburn Abbey to Earls Court to Wembley Arena."

Clayman worked with Diamond on his U.K. shows in the summer of 2005. That world tour began with sellout dates in Australia and New Zealand promoted by Paul Dainty.

As Billboard reported at the time, those 15 **continued on >>p68**

'My favorite . . . is "Men Are So Easy" because it saves me a lot of explanation with my wife. All I have to do is put on that song and she understands exactly where I'm coming from. He says it all right there in that elegant and beautiful song. Also, I love "Cherry, Cherry" and "The Boat That I Row" for their simplicity, the bare bones production and Neil's powerful performance. When I hear them on the radio I can't help but rock out and sing along.'

—SMOKEY HORMEL, GUITARIST ON '12 SONGS'



*with our admiration
and affection,
dear friend...*

*Jane, Michael,
Dreck, Eric & Anders Esner*

PHOTO BY JIM BRISQ/REUTERS



RICK RUBIN, left insisted that **NEIL DIAMOND** resume guitar playing on the '12 Songs' album.

from >>p67

dates drew 212,710 people and grossed \$14.6 million.

Clayman agrees that Diamond's fan base has lately had a healthy influx of young newcomers thanks to the critical praise for "12 Songs." He observes that young staffers in his office who went to see Diamond last time were unaware of his remarkable heritage in rock and pop. They shared great enthusiasm for the event when they reconvened in the office the following day.

But Clayman also says that interest in Diamond's concerts is not subject to the whims of musical fashion.

"I'm pleased to say that demand for him has always been extremely strong," he notes. "From

a promoter's point of view, this is a fantastic artist to work with because he's such a good performer and gives the audience everything they want.

"You're not relying [for ticket sales] on the latest album like you are with an awful lot of acts," Clayman adds.

Sony BMG's Headland says: "Barry's worked with him for years and we have a good relationship with [Clayman]. Neil's always done tremendous ticket sales, whatever his albums have been."

Commenting on Diamond's international touring appeal, Clayman adds: "He's got very big markets in Holland, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and a huge market in Ireland, I would say one of his biggest. He can go in there and play to 60,000 people. If Neil wanted to come back every year, I'd be happy to promote him."

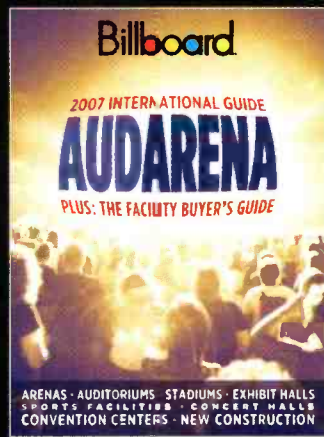
'Neil knew my mom, Judy, who passed away from Alzheimer's disease two years ago. The Judy Fund was established in her honor before she died . . . Neil has been an enormous supporter. My favorite song is "Stones," because it was my mother's favorite song. My mother was a pianist and she appreciated beautiful melody. She loved Neil Diamond music. A lot of the music he wrote spoke to her and touched her. It is music that is about love and relationships and compassion.'

—ELIZABETH GELFAND, JUDY FUND

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GOLD ON THE ROAD

BY RAY WADDELL

DIAMOND, A CONSISTENT
BOXSCORE CHAMPION

When it comes to touring, Neil Diamond is solid gold. ■ Hit albums, radio singles, TV exposure and any of the other elements that add much-needed juice to the touring efforts of other artists are just gravy for Diamond. ■ He can and does do big business on the road any time, regardless of what else is going on in his career. ■ Sal Bonafede, who first began working with Diamond's tours more than 30 years ago, credits the artist's enduring success to always delivering the goods. ■ "People know they're going to get a fantastic show and an evening full of huge hits," Bonafede says. "His music spans generations, and he consistently delivers." ■ Jeff Apregan, who has worked in conjunction with Bonafede on Diamond's tours since 1982, adds, "Neil has always been a dynamic live performer, and he delivers an amazing show night after night. The fans that come to the shows, they come back year after year." ■ A combination of instantly recognizable hits, an undeniable onstage charisma and a rare warmth he exudes toward fans, gives Diamond a perennial perch near the top of the Billboard Boxscore charts every time he tours.

Bonafede says Diamond's touring formula is simple: "Neil has consistently focused on delivering a high-quality show at an affordable price."

This seems to be a Diamond touring machine blueprint, as Apregan describes Diamond's touring philosophy as, "Deliver an amazing show at a price fans can afford. There is such an emphasis on delivering a quality production. He is genuinely concerned about his fans, and it shows."

The numbers tell the tale.

Although Diamond has been a touring artist since the mid-1960s (his landmark album "Hot August Night," recorded live in 1972 at the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles, is regarded by many as one of the greatest live albums ever), he has never been more successful as a touring artist than in this decade.

The combined gross of Diamond's 2001, 2002

and 2005 world tours is a staggering \$168,010,354, according to numbers reported to Billboard Boxscore.

The attendance for the 203 shows on those tours was 2,726,480.

Impressive as those numbers are, for many the true testament of touring power is consistency, what an artist can be expected to do night after night, show after show.

And Diamond shines brightly in this regard.

A workhorse on the road for years (he was the top solo touring artist of the 1990s, grossing \$182 million from 461 shows), Diamond clearly has not peaked.

Since 2001, he has averaged \$827,637 per night at the box office, with average paid attendance of 13,430. That's called knocking it out of the park every night. **continued on >>p72**

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NEIL DIAMOND'S tours in 2001, 2002 and 2005 have together grossed \$168 million.

from >>p70

"Neil Diamond touring America is good for the arenas, it's good for his fans and it's good for the touring industry," says AEG Live CEO Randy Phillips, who worked with Bonafede and Apregan in producing Diamond's last two North American tours.

Diamond's massive 2005 tour followed the lengthy Three Chord Opera tour of 2001-2002, which, at an endurance-testing 117 shows, grossed \$88.6 million and drew more than 1.5 million people.

That particular tour, as Diamond told *Billboard* at the time, was "special, in the sense that it really became more than a tour after the 9-11

tragedy. I got a sense that people were really in need of not so much entertainment, but to get on with their lives. It started as a tour and ended as a mission."

Diamond initially didn't intend to work so much on the Three Chord Opera outing.

"Once I realized what was going on out there, I called Sal Bonafede and Jeff Apregan and told them to fill up my dance card," he said. "I don't know if I could do it again, but I felt it was necessary."

That tour surely provided comfort to many Americans in the wake of Sept. 11, 2001. But Diamond is not just an American phenomenon. Live Nation London promoter Barry Clay-

man has worked with Diamond in producing tours in Europe and the United Kingdom for more than 25 years. He says Diamond is "huge" in the United Kingdom, Holland, Ireland, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland.

Diamond's touring team is "the best in the world," according to Clayman. "He always puts on a fantastic show, [with] great sound, great lights," he says. "He cares about his fans, and they appreciate it."

Bonafede agrees that the team gets its direction straight from the artist.

"He is genuinely concerned about the fans, the band, crew and entourage," Bonafede says. "Tours are never thrown together. Every as-

pect of the show and tour is thoroughly planned and executed."

Not only is Diamond consistent at the box office, he's consistent onstage, Clayman says.

"He always gives his fans all the songs they want to hear, and makes them feel he is singing to each of them," Clayman says.

Diamond is also a superstar touring artist Down Under, as evidenced by a sold-out tour of Australia and New Zealand in March 2005 promoted by Paul Dainty.

That trek was nothing short of a box-office monster: Fifteen dates drew 212,710 people and grossed \$14.6 million.

Another testament to consistency is Diamond's touring duo of Apregan and Bonafede, in whom Diamond completely trusts his touring interests. "We've all been doing this together for a long time," Bonafede says. "We have a great working relationship and we know what it takes to get the job done."

Apregan adds, "I have always been extremely proud of my association with Neil. There are very few artists that have had the kind of career he has. I feel fortunate to be a part of his touring family."

As Diamond has been loyal to his touring team, the team is loyal to other promoters and buildings.

"We have a history of working with Barry Clayman in Europe and with Paul Dainty in Australia and, in recent tours, Randy Phillips in the U.S.," Bonafede says. "They know their markets well and have done an excellent job for us."

Phillips says the feeling is mutual.

"We have a great relationship with Neil, and Sal and Jeff," Phillips says. "Basically, we are the promoters of the event, market by market. And, in conjunction with Sal and Jeff, we do the building deals and the routing." •••

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YOU ARE A GREAT ARTIST AND A GREAT HUMANITARIAN.
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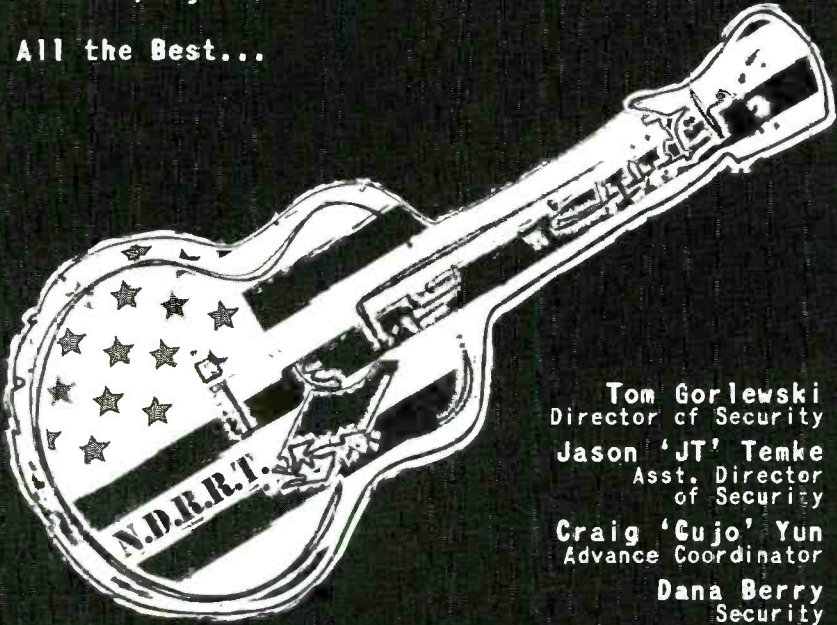
DAINTY
CONSOLIDATED ENTERTAINMENT

Photo: Courtesy of Onlinefotos Ltd Westpac Stadium, Wellington, Saturday 5th March 2005

Neil,

As you celebrate the 40th Anniversary of your debut on the Billboard album charts, the touring security staff extends our heartfelt congratulations to you on another exceptional milestone in your illustrious career! We wish you continued success in all of your future projects.

All the Best...



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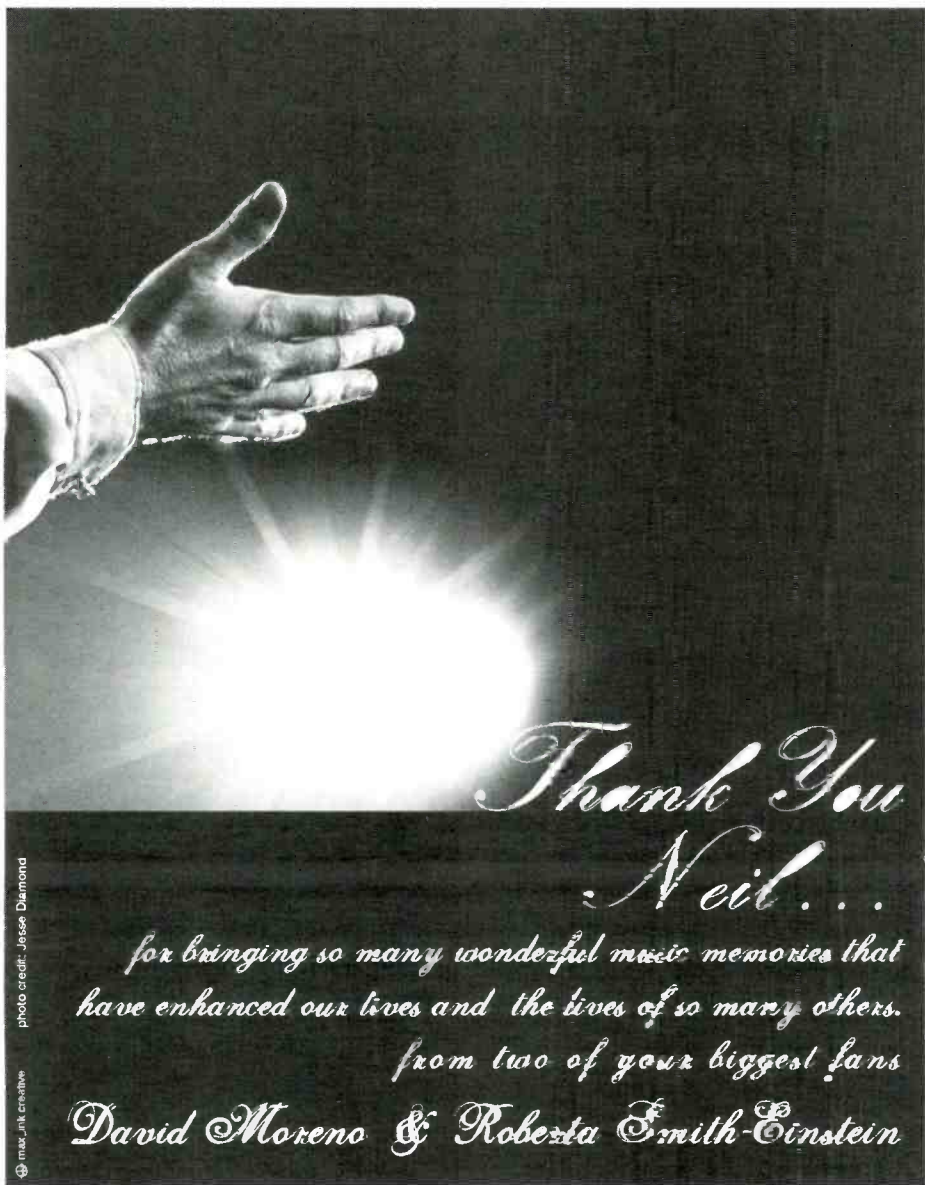
NEIL DIAMOND: TOP BOOKINGS 1990-2005

	GROSS SALES/ Ticket Scale	VENUE Location, Date(s)	Attendance, Capacity No. of Shows, Sellouts	Promoter(s)
1	\$4,366,245 \$85/\$55	STAPLES CENTER Los Angeles Sept. 29-Oct. 2, 2005	63,656 four sellouts	Goldenvoice/AEG Live, Nederlander, Sal Bonafede, Apregan Group
2	\$4,060,744 (\$2,14,971) \$45.12	WEMBLEY ARENA London July 16-25, 1992	90,506 eight sellouts	Barry Clayman Concerts
3	\$3,910,828 (\$3,991,659) \$65.17	LANDSDOWNE ROAD Dublin July 5-6, 2002	64,000 two sellouts	Clear Channel Entertainment
4	\$3,682,208 (\$4,842,273 Australian) \$43	SYDNEY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE Sydney April 13-May 8, 1992	113,588 10 sellouts	Paul Dainty Corp.
5	\$3,536,990 \$95/\$65	MADISON SQUARE GARDEN New York Aug. 18-20, 2005	45,749 three sellouts	Concerts West/AEG Live, Sal Bonafede, Apregan Group
6	\$3,401,050 \$200/\$50	MGM GRAND GARDEN Las Vegas Dec. 27-29, 1996	31,335 50,529 three shows	Fey Concert
7	\$3,281,923 \$25/\$19.50	GREAT WESTERN FORUM Inglewood, Calif. March 11-23, 1992	142,570 eight sellouts	Ogden Presents, Avalon Attractions
8	\$3,209,995 (\$4,085,003 Australian) \$78.19/\$47.15	ROD LAVER ARENA Melbourne March 22-28, 2005	45,873 four sellouts	Dainty Consolidated Entertainment, Sal Bonafede
9	\$3,190,000 (1,685,915 punts) \$46/\$30	CROKE PARK Dublin June 27-28, 1992	74,000 two sellouts	Aiken Promotions
10	\$3,105,766 (\$3,920,432 Australian) \$78.82/\$47.53	SYDNEY SUPERDOME Sydney March 11-13, 2005	43,780 three sellouts	Dainty Consolidated Entertainment, Sal Bonafede
11	\$2,988,934 (\$1,886,358) \$71.30	EARLS COURT London July 26-28, 2002	51,204 51,309 three shows	Clear Channel Entertainment
12	\$2,851,350 \$25	MADISON SQUARE GARDEN New York Aug. 13-21, 1992	114,054 six sellouts	Ron Delsener Enterprises
13	\$2,790,000 (\$1,735,101) \$48.22/\$44.20	WEMBLEY ARENA London March 8-14, 1999	45,996 four sellouts	Barry Clayman Concerts, BCC Limited
14	\$2,766,513 (\$1,440,892) \$45.12	NATIONAL EXHIBITION CENTRE Birmingham, England July 7-12, 1992	61,925 five sellouts	Barry Clayman Concerts
15	\$2,593,020 \$78.50/\$58.50	MADISON SQUARE GARDEN New York Oct. 11-12, 2001	34,930 two sellouts	Sal Bonafede, Apregan Entertainment Group
16	\$2,560,854 \$200/\$150/\$100/\$75	MGM GRAND GARDEN Las Vegas Dec. 31-Jan. 1, 1998	24,159 two shows, 26,238 one sellout	Fey Concert
17	\$2,462,488 \$28	GREAT WESTERN FORUM Inglewood, Calif. Dec. 16-21, 1993	87,946 90,240 five shows	Avalon Attractions, MCA Concerts
18	\$2,459,932 (\$1,356,605) \$82.16	WOBURN ABBEY Bedfordshire, England June 4, 2005	29,939 sellout	Clear Channel Entertainment-U.K.
19	\$2,380,942 \$67.50/\$37.50	THE FORUM Inglewood, Calif. Dec. 19-22, 2001	39,715 three sellouts	Sal Bonafede, Apregan Entertainment Group, Nederlander
20	\$2,291,296 (\$2,909,324 Australian) \$78.36/\$47.25	BRISBANE ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE Brisbane March 15-30, 2005	34,521 three sellouts	Dainty Consolidated Entertainment, Sal Bonafede
21	\$2,267,800 \$85/\$42.50	TD BANKNORTH GARDEN Boston Aug. 15-16, 2005	29,752 two sellouts	Concerts West/AEG Live, Sal Bonafede, Apregan Group
22	\$2,248,948 (\$1,221,458) \$76.56	MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS ARENA Manchester, England May 19-20, 2005	29,375 two sellouts	Clear Channel Entertainment-U.K.
23	\$2,232,496 (\$1,224,359) \$71.38	EARLS COURT London May 31-June 1, 2005	31,277 two sellouts	Clear Channel Entertainment-U.K.
24	\$2,220,117 (\$3,028,808 New Zealand) \$72.93/\$43.98	WESTPAC STADIUM Wellington, New Zealand March 5, 2005	32,226 sellout	Dainty Consolidated Entertainment, Sal Bonafede
25	\$2,198,858 \$67.50/\$37.50	XCEL ENERGY CENTER St. Paul, Minn. Oct. 26-27, 2001	33,841 two sellouts	Sal Bonafede, Apregan Entertainment Group

Note: Boxscore ranking shows top-grossing concerts by Neil Diamond reported to Billboard between 1990 and 2005.

CONGRATULATIONS NEIL

-MARSHA GLEEMAN



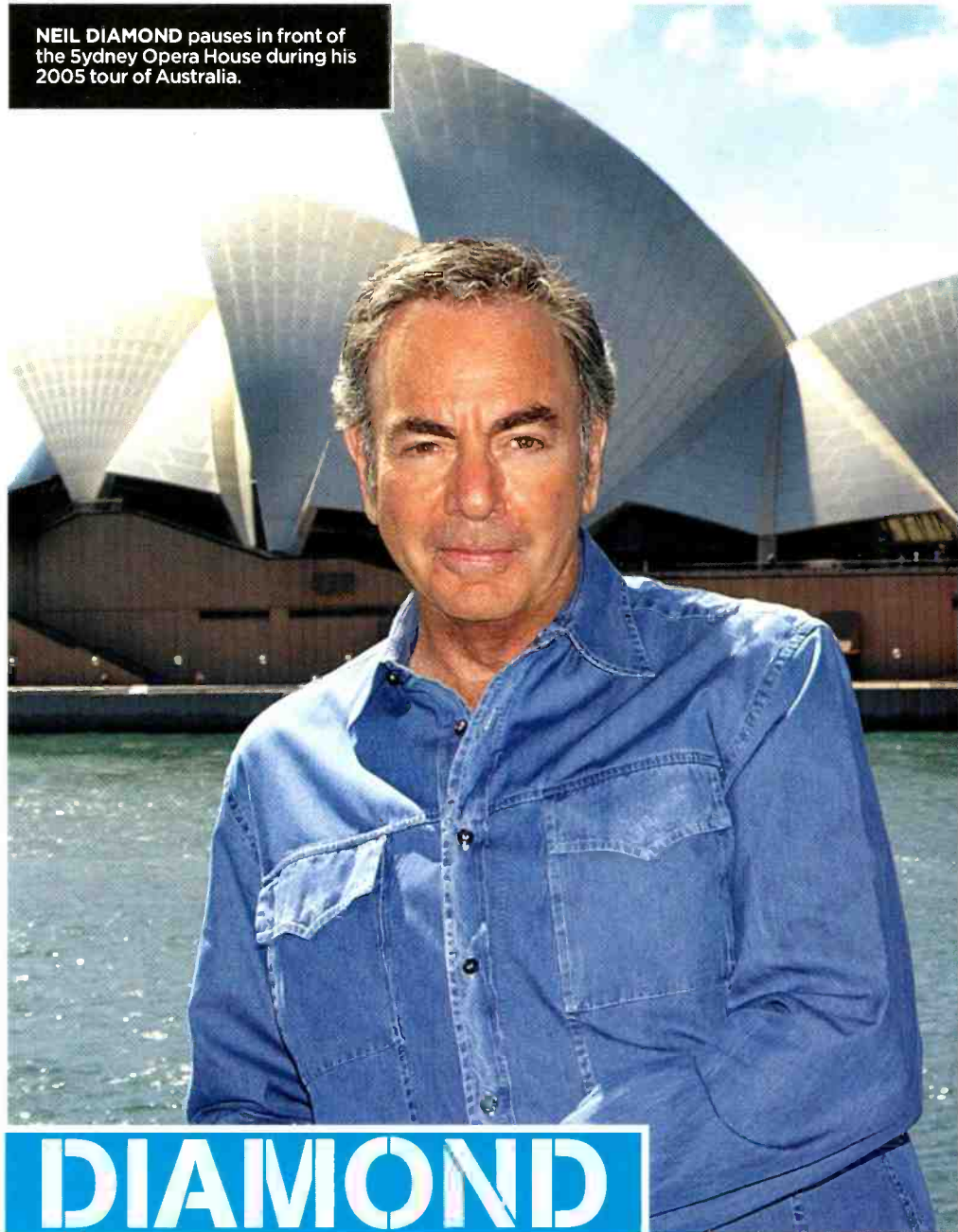
*Thank You
Neil...*

*for bringing so many wonderful music memories that
have enhanced our lives and the lives of so many others.
from two of your biggest fans*

David Moreno & Roberta Smith-Einstein

photo credit: Jesse Diamond

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NEIL DIAMOND pauses in front of the Sydney Opera House during his 2005 tour of Australia.

DIAMOND DOWN UNDER

BY CHRISTIE ELIEZER

AUSTRALIANS' LOVE OF NEIL SHOWS IN BOXSCORES AND RECORD SALES

Among the top 20 multnight concert stands in Neil Diamond's career, as reported to Billboard Boxscore during the past two decades, four have taken place in Australia—three of which occurred during his 2005 world tour. ■ In 1992, from April 13 to May 8, Diamond played 10 sellouts at the Sydney Entertainment Centre, drawing 113,588 fans and grossing \$3,682,208. ■ In March 2005, Diamond performed three sellout shows for 43,780 fans at the Sydney Superdome and grossed \$3,105,766.

Diamond's tour moved on to staggered dates between Brisbane and Melbourne. At the Brisbane Entertainment Center From March 15 to March 30, Diamond played three sellouts for 34,521 ticket buyers, grossing \$2,291,296. At the Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne March 22 to March 28, he played four sellout shows before 45,873 fans and grossed \$3,209,995.

"It's not only just that he has successfully ap-

pealed to a broad demographic," says Michael Jacobsen, executive chairman/CEO of Sydney-based Arena Management, which operates the Sydney Entertainment Centre. "But he has maintained that broad demographic across a number of decades."

Paul Dainty of Paul Dainty Consolidated Entertainment has promoted four Diamond tours between 1991 and 2005. During one visit, Dainty presented the singer with a special plaque for selling more than 1 million tickets Down Under.

"What makes Neil so special is that he can return each time and consistently do the same numbers," Dainty says. "That is rare in a market [as small] as Australia. Only the Rolling Stones do that. After 40 years, Neil can still come back and do the business."

"The reason is that he's one of the premier performers ever. People know he'll deliver a brilliant show, the catalog of songs is amazing, and he does the entire **continued on >>p78**

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from >>p76

two-and-a-half to three hours. He's done a couple of in-the-round shows which were magic. The artist is 50% closer to the stage and it's intimate, but it's hard for an artist in that situation to keep all the 20,000 happy all the time. But Neil does."

Diamond is the godfather to Dainty's 10-year-old son Sam. But there's another emotional attachment.

In 1976, Diamond toured Australia for promoter Parradine Patterson behind "Hot August Night." (It is the third longest-charting album Down Under with 239 weeks on the list. It is estimated that one in eight Australian households has a copy.) A young Paul Dainty was in the audience at the Melbourne Myer Music Bowl. At the time, he had aspirations to be a tour promoter. Diamond's performance, particularly in the way he left the audience spellbound, solidified that desire.

Fifteen years later, Dainty was a major-league promoter and grabbed the opportunity to promote Diamond's tours.

"It was massive," Dainty says of Diamond's tour in 1992. "He did 10 shows at the Sydney Entertainment Centre, 10 at the Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne, six in Brisbane, one outdoors in Adelaide. An amazing achievement."

During one visit, Diamond met his partner Rae, who was handling merchandising on the tour. In an interview in August 2004 on "Enough Rope With Andrew Denton" on the Australian ABC-TV network, Diamond recalled that he normally makes it a point to tell those handling the merchandising what he thinks of the items.

"Well, she was tough," Diamond said. "She

'Having had the fortunate experience of performing and to some degree, forming so many wonderful songs for over 25 years now, the difficult task is to narrow it down to only one favorite. I'm partial to a "story" or "message" song containing an outstanding balance of melody, chords and lyrics—as well as instrumental lines or licks. [With] great musical dynamics and emotional impact. Some of [Neil's] great songs are "I've Been This Way Before," "I Am . . . I Said," "The Grass Don't Pay No Mind," "Morningside," "Brooklyn Roads"—all songs from the heart.'

—RON TUTT, DIAMOND'S DRUMMER

didn't like any of my ideas, and she let me know right upfront that I had some bad ideas and her ideas would be the one that prevailed and if I thought anything different, well, I just better think again because that's just the way it was."

What also makes Diamond a rarity among performers coming to Australia, Dainty says, "is that he does consistently good business at the box office and in record sales."

A major reason is that Denis Handlin, chairman/CEO of Sony BMG Music Entertainment Australia & New Zealand, is such a Diamond

fan that he takes personal responsibility for the marketing of his albums.

With every Diamond tour, Sony BMG heavily markets the back catalog. "The Essential Neil Diamond Australian Tour Edition," put together for the 2005 visit, reached No. 8 on the Motorola Australian Recording Industry Assn. chart.

The album was also marketed as part of Sony BMG's retail/TV "Essential" series campaign, while the "Neil Diamond Live" DVD was included in the label's "best seat in the house" DVD campaign.

NEIL DIAMOND has brought his American iconography to audiences worldwide.



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To market his 2005 album "12 Songs," Handlin says, "We ran a multilevel promo campaign, including television advertisements on the original release and then readvertised in our Mother's Day TV advertising campaign."

"We locked in Neil to do a great radio interview with John Laws, who is one of the legends of Australian [talk] radio with the largest audience nationally, which is syndicated to 60 stations throughout Australia."

"Oprah [Winfrey's] special [on Diamond] was also aired here in Australia during that

time. We also produced a TV special that was aired on [Australia's] Channel 9 at various times during the release."

For the rerelease of "12 Songs" with additional material, Sony BMG will look at radio and press advertising as well as interviews with key media outlets.

"Neil has a long history and a great connection with the Australian public," Handlin says, "and one of the best things we can do is to let music fans hear Neil talk about his music in his own words." ■■■

WHAT'S NEXT FROM NEIL

After he recovered from a bout of depression brought on by the Sony BMG rootkit fiasco, in which the company coded his acclaimed "12 Songs" album with potentially malicious anti-piracy software and then pulled the disc from retail, Neil Diamond went back to work writing songs for his next effort with producer Rick Rubin.

"To kind of get warmed up, we started recording a couple of cover songs and Neil has been writing, but I haven't heard any of the new stuff he's been writing yet," Rubin says. "But we still had a bunch of songs from the last sessions we did, so some of those might work their way into the next one."

While an album of covers or another album of originals have both been discussed, Rubin says it's too early in the process to know which way it will go.

"It depends on how long the writing process takes," he says. "I thought if it's going to take a while to write, it might be fun to do a covers album in between, but we'll see. The material is going to dictate everything."

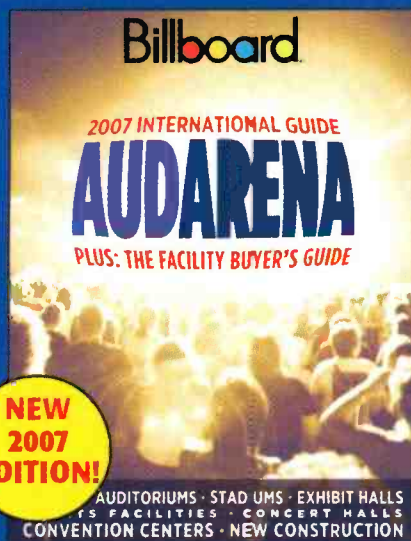
Still, even the session players, including ace guitarist Smokey Hormel, are optimistic about another Diamond-Rubin effort.

"We've had one session since '12 Songs.' I think it was just to try out some things," he says, "but it was really great." —Craig Rosen

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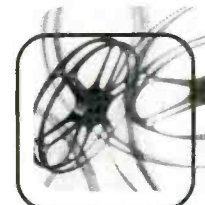
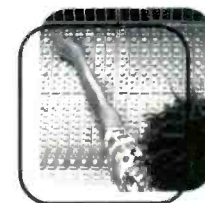
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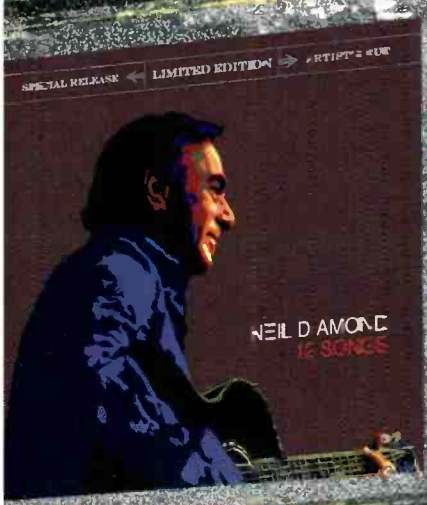


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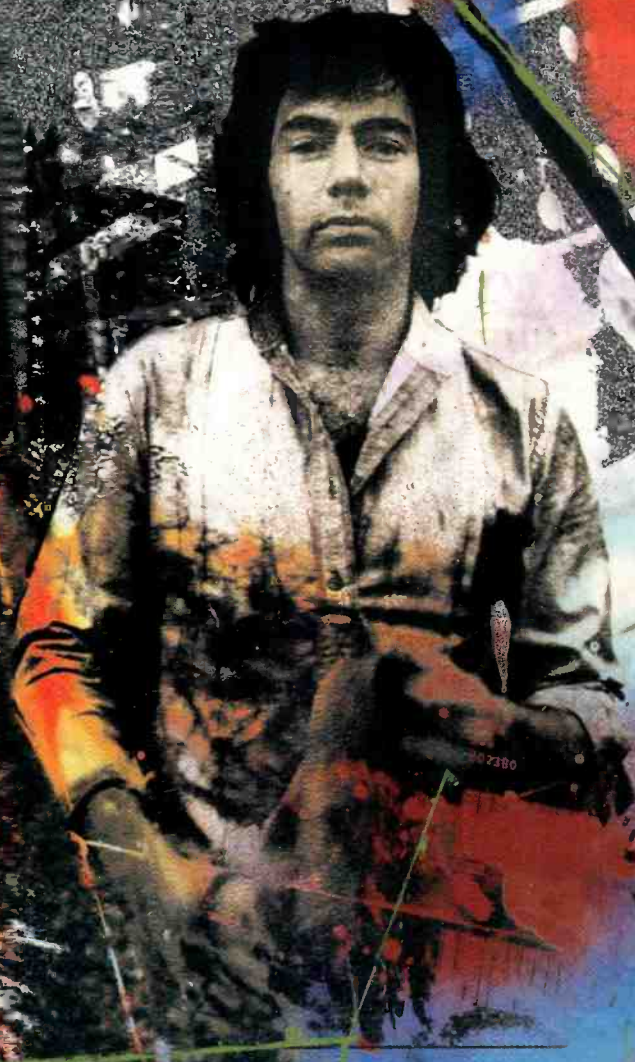
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DECEMBER 9, 2006

MUSIC

HIP-HOP BY GARY GRAFF

SHADY'S BACK

Eminem Promotes Up-And-Comers On His Label's New Sampler

Eminem planned to make "The Re-Up" a classic kind of hip-hop mixtape—an underground affair distributed hand to hand and by word-of-mouth rather than conventional label marketing and promotion.

Instead, as the superstar himself might say, he created a monster.

"The Re-Up," a collection designed to show off some new artists signed to his Shady Records imprint—Stat Quo and Bobby Creekwater from Atlanta and Chicago's Ca\$his—will be released Dec. 5 by Shady/Interscope. "Eminem Presents: The Re-Up" is a 22-track set with performances by established stars Eminem, 50 Cent, D12, Lloyd Banks and Obie Trice, as well as a special remix of the Akon/Eminem smash "Smack That."

"Basically, ["The Re-Up"] was taking a long time because, as Em does with everything, he is extremely meticulous and has high quality-control standards," Eminem's manager Paul Rosenberg says. "It just started turning out really great, so rather than just put it in the streets and not really control the distribution of it, we decided to make it official because of the quality and scope of the music."

The decision certainly changed the complexion of "The Re-Up." Eminem appears on seven tracks, including the single "You Don't Know" with Banks, Ca\$his and 50 Cent, who is on three other songs. Eminem also produced 11 of the tracks, while the Alchemist, who served as his DJ on the 2005 Anger Management tour, produced three songs.

Despite the superstar firepower, however, Rosenberg calls "The Re-Up" "a real back-to-basics thing. It's not a pop or extremely commercial-selling album. It's about the art form and flexing your muscles as a rapper."

And the album's primary mission is to introduce Shady's new artists to the public.

"We believe we have a really strong fan base," Rosenberg says, "and by putting this record out with Em and 50 and other artists they know, people get to check the new guys out."

Rosenberg says a Ca\$his EP and a Stat Quo album will probably drop in the first quarter of 2007, while Creekwater's debut will hit during the summer.

The "Re-Up" marketing campaign actually started during this year's World Series, which featured Em-



EMINEM, center, with members of D12.

inem's hometown team, the Detroit Tigers. The video for "You Don't Know" premiered during game two before an audience of millions, and Interscope marketing director Chris Clancy says the label is planning a number of promotions to make fans aware of "The Re-Up."

An Internet-based contest that began Nov. 28 involves a number of Web sites, including apparel, music and lifestyle portals, such as MySpace, Clancy says. Other plans include TV spots incorporating different tracks from the

album and listening parties that will be held around the country prior to release.

Eminem's Shade 45 Sirius Satellite Radio channel has regularly featured artist track-by-track commentaries on their new album, though there is no word yet if Eminem—who is developing his next film project, "Have Gun Will Travel," and recording the next D12 album—will do one for "The Re-Up." There are also rumors of some surprise personal appearances on the day of release.

"Compilation albums are tricky," Clancy says. "So what

we want to do is reaffirm this is not a typical compilation album and make sure they understand there are seven songs with Eminem and four songs with 50 on it."

Retailers will certainly appreciate that awareness. Mike Himes of the Record Time stores in suburban Detroit says anticipation for "The Re-Up" has been modest, mostly because buyers aren't certain about what it is.

"How much actual, true Eminem stuff is on there—that's the selling point," Himes says. "There are going to be Eminem fans who buy

whatever he does, but a lot of people will only buy it if they're exposed to it."

Still, Himes says he is optimistic that will be the case by the time "The Re-Up" rolls into stores.

"Shady and Interscope know what they're doing," he says. "And, of course, with Eminem's name on it and a few other bigger artists, people are going to look at it and pick it up and go, 'Hmm, what's this all about?' The key is to get them interested enough to be curious, and if that happens it'll do very well."

LATIN BY LEILA COBO

The Aterciopelados Alternative

Now On An Indie, Colombian Rock Act Try A Viral Approach

>>>IN THE HALL, WITH THE LEAD PIPE DJ Clue will drop his first official album in nearly six years, "The Professional, Part 3," Dec. 19 via Def Jam. First single "Like This" was co-written and produced by Kanye West and features him alongside recent Def Jam signing Fabolous. Other guests include Snoop Dogg, Young Jeezy, Jadakiss, Mike Jones, Paul Wall, Jagged Edge, Beanie Sigel and Fat Joe.

—Jonathan Cohen

>>>BYGONE BLUES Nearly three years ago, Kenny Wayne Shepherd spent 10 days collaborating with some of the greatest living bluesmen. On Jan. 16, he will release "Ten Days Out (Blues From the Backroads)" on CD/DVD via Warner Bros., chronicling collaborations with B.B. King, Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown and Honeyboy Edwards. The endeavor culminated with a historic gathering of the remaining members of Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters' bands.

—Katie Hasty

>>>WHAT ABOUT BOB? Bob Mould is eyeing a June release for his next solo album, which he has been recording with Fugazi drummer Brendan Canty. The artist is in talks with several labels to release the follow-up to 2005's "Body of Song." Also in the pipeline is the live DVD "Circle of Friends," which chronicles an October 2005 show at the 9:30 Club in Mould's Washington, D.C., home base.

—Jonathan Cohen

>>>ART ROCK Ozomatli's upcoming album is a work of art, literally. "Don't Mess With the Dragon," due March 27 via Concord, is the product of an interactive art exhibit in which the band exposed its creative process to the public. The album includes reggaeton and hip-hop-influenced dance tracks, as well as the Spanish-language ballad "Violeta" and an '80s-inflected rock/ska tune, "When I Close My Eyes."

—Evie Nagy

For a long time, Aterciopelados was a very alternative band signed to a traditional major label.

But after a lifetime on BMG, the critically acclaimed Colombian group has started its indie life with "Oye," its first studio album in five years, on U.S.-based Nacional Records.

"Now we have a direct contact with Tomás [Cookman, owner of Nacional]," Aterciopelados singer Andrea Echeverri says. "There's friendship and good communication. We are very happy to be on a small label."

A group that plays an enticing mix of folk, acoustic and electronica, Aterciopelados—founded and anchored by Echeverri and friend Hector Buitrago—have always played music that defies the mass-market mentality.

Even at the height of its popularity, when it released "Gozo Poderoso" in 2001, Echeverri says she considered Aterciopelados a niche band. Despite heavy promotion of "Gozo," including a performance on "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno," the album sold 40,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Now Nacional is using a more

targeted approach.

For "Oye," which streeted Oct. 24, Nacional had retail campaigns with Ritmo Latino on the indie end and Target on the mass-merchant end.

But a major component of the sales strategy has been pushing the album at a viral level, with heavy promotion and exposure on iTunes and eMusic, where the album reached No. 1 on the Latin sales lists.

Nacional also manages Aterciopelados via its management arm. Echeverri and Buitrago are in the process of signing for publishing with Canciones Nacionales, Nacional's joint publishing venture with Netwerk. This will allow for a 360-degree promotion of the group from one office.

As an indie, Cookman says, "One of the first things you can offer [the group] is the attention and the understanding."

But Cookman, who prior to launching his label had management and promotion offices, also offers an understanding of the U.S. Latin alternative market.

"We've had many years of experience of selling concert tickets and reaching out to the MTV TR3s, the mun2, the NPR

crowd," says Cookman, who also founded the Latin Alternative Music Conference. "Now we're selling them music."

Overseas, Cookman has licensed "Oye" to different labels, including EMI in Colombia.

Stateside, "Oye," has sold just 2,000 copies, according to SoundScan. But Cookman says that as an indie, he's in no rush.

"Whether we do it as a jack rabbit or as a turtle, it doesn't matter," he says. "I think this record in the U.S. alone should sell 80,000 copies."

As for the band, Aterciopelados is in no great rush to sell millions either.

In fact, the band members are so unmotivated by money that throughout their career they have refused offers to use their music in promotions or commercials. The exceptions were a Volvo campaign, which Echeverri agreed to because she heard Volvos were safe for kids, and a public service campaign advocating condom use.

"It's important to us to safeguard our image because it's cool to communicate valuable things," Echeverri says. "And if you say 'use a condom' and also say 'drink this soda,' well, it be-

comes banal."

Indeed, "Oye" includes a track titled "Don Dinero" (Mr. Money), which is a criticism of consumerism gone awry.

Overall, the album, which came after Echeverri and Buitrago released solo projects, is the band's first in eight years

to feature live drums instead of computer-generated percussion. This, Echeverri says, defined the arrangements and intent of the songs and lent more power to the live performances.

On Nov. 12, Aterciopelados finished a 14-city U.S. tour, booked by the Agency.



ATERCIOPELADOS



Global Pulse

EDITED BY TOM FERGUSON tferguson@eu.billboard.com

Doubly Skilled Jools Holland Adapts To Country Life

Hip-Hop Meets Bollywood In Mumbai, With Mobb Deep's Help

Pianist Jools Holland, once of British pop-rock act Squeeze, has long been known for his versatility as both a musician and broadcaster.

Holland presents the long-running live music TV show "Later"—coming up for its sixth and final show in its 28th series on national TV channel BBC2. As a performer, he released his 11th album for Warner Music, "Moving Out to the Country" (Radar/Warner Music International) Nov. 20 in the United Kingdom.

The album features myriad guest artists (KT Tunstall, Mark Knopfler, India.Arie, Brian Eno, Lulu) along with the Rhythm & Blues Orchestra, Holland's touring band. The country music-themed album mixes originals—Holland is published by Bug Music—with country standards.

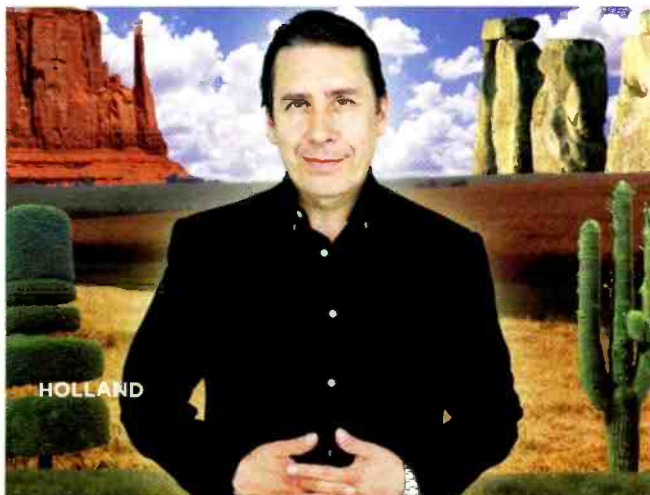
Holland says the album concept came through co-writing the title track with soul veteran Solomon Burke. "When Squeeze used to play in tiny pubs," he explains, "we did songs like 'House of Blue Lights.' The tunes in country are so perfect and clear, and Hank Williams was one of the greatest poets of all time."

Holland is out on his annual, extensive U.K. winter tour until Dec. 23, booked through Mir-

acle Artists in London. Warner plans worldwide release of the album in early 2007, when it hopes to take him into key European markets for promotion and live work.

—Paul Sexton

BOLLY-HOP: Hip-hop and Bollywood may seem strange bedfellows, but according to New York rapper Havoc of G-Unit/Interscope duo Mobb Deep, the relationship between the two genres "is going to be a long marriage."



HOLLAND

Havoc spoke to Pulse in Mumbai, during recent dates organized by VH1 India under the Hip Hop Hustle Tour banner. The channel broadcasts the weekly show "Hip Hop Hustle" and in November 2005 organized its first tour, headlined by Interscope act Flipsyde.

"With this tour, we wanted to further popularize the genre," Mumbai-based Universal Music India associate VP Sunil D'Sa says. The 2005 shows, he says, helped Flipsyde ship gold in India—10,000 units for international repertoire—"with most sales coming post-tour."

This November, Mobb Deep was to headline two club shows in Mumbai and Delhi as part of the tour—the other four dates were headlined by G-Unit's DJ Whoo Kid. But when his partner Prodigy fell ill, Havoc had to play the Mobb Deep shows accompanied by rapper 40 Glocc, signed to his Infamous Records imprint.

Mobb Deep's May 2006 album "Blood Money"—issued in India in September—features three samples from Indian "Bollywood" musical soundtracks. Bollywood "has a lot of good sounds," Havoc says, and "the way Bollywood songs are filmed also gives me a lot of ideas for videos."

—Nyay Bhushan

INDIES BY TODD MARTENS

Hello Top 40, Goodbye Obscurity

Indie Band On Drive-Thru Scores A Surprise Dance-Pop Hit

When Drive-Thru Records first signed synth-pop act Hellogoodbye in 2004, the label had to keep its new band on the down low. Drive-Thru's multiyear deal with MCA/Geffen was coming to an end, and Drive-Thru co-founder Stefanie Reines didn't want to offer the major label a peek at its latest signing.

Drive-Thru's relationship with the Universal subsidiary included an upstreaming component that saw such rock acts as Senses Fail, the Starting Line, New Found Glory and Something Corporate, among others, all land with the major label. Reines was determined that this would not be the fate of Hellogoodbye.

"They would catch wind that this band was good and take them from us," she says of Geffen. "So we decided we would just put an EP online for free. We figured we could kind of do it under the radar."

It would prove to be one of the last things Hellogoodbye would do that was "under the radar." Two years and one stint on MTV's "The Real World" later, Hellogoodbye is taking Drive-Thru somewhere it's never been—mainstream top 40 radio.

Hellogoodbye landed at No. 13

on The Billboard 200 in March with its debut, "Zombies! Aliens! Vampires! Dinosaurs!" The album has sold 150,000 units in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan, and single "Here (In Your Arms)"—a slice of retro dance that's emo's answer to Cher's "Believe"—is No. 62 on The Billboard Hot 100.

Singer Forrest Kline, who worked for the suburban Los Angeles-based Drive-Thru as a Web designer when he was 16, is not yet used to all the mainstream attention.

"We've gone into some radio stations and

done interviews on this tour," Kline says. "I thought they'd be college station things, like the local college ska show. Instead they were [L.A. top 40 powerhouse] KIIS-FM."

Drive-Thru, whose releases are handled by Sony BMG's RED Distribution via an agreement with Sanctuary Records, did receive some unsolicited help in launching Hellogoodbye's career. The band was chosen by the cast of MTV's "The Real World: Austin" to be followed during the South by Southwest music conference, and Reines acknowledges it was a turning point in the band's career.

"We'd be wearing Hellogoodbye T-shirts and go shopping, and a 40-something-year-old guy, or a mother, would say something to us," Reines says. "So it was definitely outside of the normal realm of people we can reach."

The label then took the act to the rock audience that typically follows Drive-Thru releases, and booked the band a slot on this year's Warped tour. Drive-Thru spent about \$20,000 upfront to market the album, and Reines notes that the label's deal with Sanctuary requires the latter to pay for retail pricing and positioning.

"We have to recoup it all, but that's the only way we can afford it," she says.

By the summer of 2006, Hellogoodbye had been touring long enough that the band was selling out 1,000-capacity venues. Reines ex-

pected a high chart debut, but even she was surprised when the set sold 41,000 first-week units. That persuaded her to start heavily pushing the band at top 40, and she credits the promotion departments at RED and Sanctuary in helping her get her foot in the door.

Rod Carrillo, program director at KNRJ Phoenix, says it's the fourth-most-requested song at his station. A club DJ at night, he put "Here (In Your Arms)" in rotation after witnessing crowds react to it on the dancefloor. For the week ending Nov. 26, the song received 23 spins at the station, according to Nielsen BDS.

"It's a breath of fresh air to see an indie making it," he says. "It's a rare record, and I first didn't know if it would work, but once I got some club mixes, and heard the vocals and the hook, I knew it would get a reaction."

Without the marketing budgets of major labels, Carrillo says it can be hard for indie labels to get the ears of program directors. Reines notes it has been a frustrating process at times, as more than one station has rebuffed her.

"Everyone loves to tell us they don't play Warped tour bands," she says. "If anyone thinks Hellogoodbye is a Warped tour band, they clearly never listened to the single."

For his part, Kline always thought there was one station that would latch onto his band. "I pictured some of our stuff on Radio Disney," he says. "I know a lot of toddlers that like us."



HELLOGOODBYE



Higher Ground

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The Caravans, 4 Decades Later

Influential Gospel Legends Make Return To Disc

As 2006 draws to a close, everyone starts to think back on the albums that have made an impact during the previous year. For sheer historical significance—as well as musical excellence—one of the most memorable releases of the year would have to be the Caravans' reunion record "Paved the Way," featuring the first new music from the legendary group in 40 years.

Released in September, the Malaco Music Group disc reunites Caravans founder Albertina Walker with Dorothy Norwood, Deloris Washington and Inez Andrews—each

of whom has gone on to have successful solo careers.

"Dorothy called me and said, 'Since both of us are still here, why don't we go back and do another album?'" Walker recalls. "So she contacted the rest of the girls and all of us consented."

"Paved the Way" features six new songs and seven gospel classics, among them the Caravans' hit "Mary Don't You Weep." The album was recorded at Chicago's West Point Baptist Church where Walker made her debut at age 4, singing in the children's choir. Among the new songs,

Walker takes lead on "He Fixed It," penned by Milton Biggiam, and Washington steps out on "(Lord, Let Your Will) Be Done." "We did what God gave us to do," Walker says of the new tunes. "The songs that we did were our kind of songs. That's the bottom line."

Since debuting in 1952, the Caravans are credited with launching more successful artists than any other gospel outfit. Among the group's many distinguished alumni are Shirley Caesar, Cassietta George, James Herndon, Josephine Howard and the

THE CARAVANS



late Rev. James Cleveland.

Walker, dubbed "the Queen of Gospel Music," and the Caravans paved the way for today's gospel artists. During their heyday, they were at the forefront of historical changes, not just in the music community, but in society at large.

"On the road, we couldn't go into white hotels or white restaurants," recalls Walker, now 77, and still residing in her beloved Chicago. "We couldn't

do none of that then. We had to go to the back door to get food. That's why [we recorded] that song 'Paved the Way.' We paved the way for these young folks to be eating and going to the front door of these restaurants and staying in these white hotels and being able to fly. We drove in cars during that time, six of us going all across the country. The Lord has really blessed us, and this is harvest time."

Walker says she and her friends got into gospel music not to become rich and famous but to serve God and "win souls for Christ." She says it's been a very rewarding journey.

"I feel good about the way things turned out because God blessed us with this talent," she says. "We didn't become millionaires or nothing like that, but what we need, the Lord has supplied."

HELLOGOODBYE: JEFF GROS; THE CARAVANS: DRE PHOTOGRAPHY



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Rhythm & Blues

GAIL MITCHELL gmitchell@billboard.com

Hazy Holiday

R&B Acts Celebrate The Season As Urban-Label Speculation Looms

Usually around this time of year, label halls are decked with rumors about who will or won't be around to usher in the new business year. This year is no exception.

As talk runs rampant about layoffs and restructuring at Lisa Ellis-helmed Sony Urban Music, folks are still pondering who will fill the Virgin vacancy left by urban division president Jermaine Dupri. And with Interscope's Kevin Black now ensconced at Warner Bros., others are speculating what the next move there will be to further boost its urban presence.

With all that happening, it's easy to forget that this is, indeed, the holiday season. You know, the time for good cheer. To help all of us get in the mood, I gave a listen to several first-time Christmas projects.

The most intriguing conceptwise—even before I played the disc—was Bootsy Collins' "Christmas Is 4-Ever." Best-known for such funk masterpieces as "Bootzilla" and "The Pinoc-

chio Theory," the bass player's legacy doesn't exactly scream Christmas.

But the spirited, tongue-in-cheek vibe he creates to get his funkified holiday groove going had me smiling. I defy you not to do the same after listening to "Boot-Off" (aka "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer"), "Sleigh Ride" (with a fiddling Charlie Daniels, no less) and new song "Happy Holiday" with the omnipresent Snoop Dogg. Collins also manages to squeeze in his 1976 hit "I'd Rather Be With You" on another new cut, "Be With You."

From Collins' take on holiday perennial "This Christmas" (titled "Dis-Christmas"), I segued into a cover of the same song on Jon B's "Holiday Wishes From Me to You." No offense to Collins, Jon B or, for that matter, the Whispers, but Donny Hathaway's version can't be beat.

That said, Jon B—a talented singer/songwriter who merits more attention—shines best on "Santa's on His Way" and the original ballad "Hold

You Down." This album is on Arsenal Records, headed by CEO Max Gousse, and distributed by Universal division Fontana.

The more traditional-minded will enjoy Gladys Knight's "A Christmas Celebration." The soulstress reunites with the Saints Unified Voices—the same 100-voice multicultural choir Knight teamed with on the Grammy Award-winning 2005 set "One Voice."

Knight arranged all the vocals and produced this Many Roads Records/Deseret Book Co. release. It features a mix of holiday standards ("We Three Kings," "The Christmas Song") and a stirring turn on "Jesus, Oh, What a Wonderful Child." Among other new Christmas albums by R&B/pop pioneers are "Lou Rawls Christmas" (Time Life) and "Johnny Mathis—A 50th Anniversary Christmas Celebration" (Sony Legacy/Columbia).

Contemporary gospel/R&B duo Mary Mary jumps into the yuletide crush with "A Mary Mary Christmas."

Obligatory numbers like "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" and "O Come All Ye Faithful" are here. But the pair sparkle brightest on two original tunes co-written by members/sisters Erica and Tina Campbell and producer Warryn Campbell. I'm talking about the '70s dance-leaning "Tis the Season" and foot-stomper "Call Him Jesus."

The 11-track My Block/Sony Urban Music/Columbia album includes a remix of another cut penned by the trio, "California Christmas," featuring Damani. For those not familiar with that name, he's a Los Angeles rapper who recently signed with My Block/SUM.

Which brings us right smack back to the year-end speculation opening this column. Damn. Think I'll hit the repeat button and take another spin on that sleigh ride with Bootsy. ...



Nashville Scene

KEN TUCKER ktucker@billboard.com

Tracy Lawrence Cooks Up Turkeys, New Album

Country Star Finds Rocky Comfort In Running His Own Label

Tracy Lawrence has a lot cookin'. Not only did he recently fry more than 200 turkeys for the homeless at the Nashville Rescue Mission, he has a new album and his own record label on his plate.

The turkey fry was more than a photo op; it was Lawrence's brainstorm to create awareness for the mission.

He actually spent all day cooking, shaking hands and bonding with the homeless the mission serves.

On the other hand, the new album and label grew out of Lawrence's desire to control his own destiny. Frustrated with getting bounced from label to label because of corporate restructuring, Lawrence decided to take

matters into his own hands. (After recording for Atlantic Records through most of the '90s, Lawrence briefly shifted to sister label Warner Bros. He later recorded for DreamWorks, but was shuttled to Mercury when that label folded.)

After a potential deal with Sony BMG went south due to management changes at the top, Lawrence had had enough. "It seemed like a healthy avenue for us to go down," he says of starting his own label, Rocky Comfort Records, with his brother Laney last summer. "It's absolutely impossible to establish any kind of momentum," he says of being moved from label to label. "You've got to start all over."

While Laney handles the business end of things, Tracy is focusing on the A&R side, at least for now. "I've got visions

of grandeur, but the reality is I've got a lot on my plate right now," he says, noting his roughly 120 concert appearances in 2006.

The first artist signed to Rocky Comfort is Lawrence's old friend Chad Brock, who had success at Warner Bros. in the late '90s and the early part of this century. "It's easier to reconnect an older artist that's had hits—because they're more savvy and they get the lay of the land—than it is to break a new artist from nothing," Lawrence says.

Lawrence's own "For the Love" is due Jan. 30 and is as solid a project as anything he's done on a major label. The album features a few special guests, too. While the first single, "Find Out Who Your Friends Are," has hovered near the bottom of Billboard's Hot

Country Songs chart since its debut in September, an alternate version featuring longtime friends Kenny Chesney and Tim McGraw is a bonus track on the album.

There's also a turn by Brad Arnold of 3 Doors Down on the title track. Lawrence and Arnold met a few years ago and have teamed up at various charity events. "Brad is really an avid country music fan and wanted to sing on a country record," Lawrence says. The song, which Lawrence had already recorded, was hand-selected for Arnold because "it seemed to have the most common ground for both of us," Lawrence says. "I wanted it to be a comfortable fit."

Lawrence's road band plays on two tracks—a first for the veteran crooner. "It's good for the camaraderie and it makes

everybody feel more a part of it," he says.

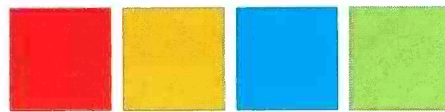
The album also features the first song that Lawrence wrote by himself, "Speed of Flight." "I've always been really critical of my own work," he says, "so it was really a big step for me to record something that came from me and nobody else."

Like most independent labels, Lawrence's Rocky Comfort is counting on a lower overhead to turn a quicker profit. "If we can sell a couple hundred thousand records, we've hit a grand slam," Lawrence says. To that end, Rocky Comfort will be distributed by A2M (Artist2Market), Handleman's independent distribution arm that has also handled releases by Tracy Byrd and Tommy Lee, among others. The album, like other A2M releases, will have a \$10 price point. ...



LAWRENCE

REVIEWS



SPOTLIGHTS

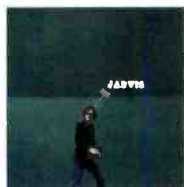
Releases deemed by the review editors to deserve special attention on the basis of musical merit and/or *Billboard* chart potential.

ALBUMS



CIARA
Ciara: The Evolution
Producers: *various*
LaFace/Zomba
Release Date: *Dec. 5*
With "The Evolution," Ciara aims to take the success of her 2005

debut "Goodies" to a new level musically and creatively. This "evolution" is evident with the slow-burning hit "Promise," which finds the 21-year-old dance queen exploring her sultry side. In addition to appearances by Pharrell, Will.i.am, 50 Cent and Chamillionaire, crunk king Lil Jon, who produced the title track on the debut, returns for two songs—the bass-heavy, dancefloor jam "That's Right" and the somewhat juvenile "C.R.U.S.H." Songs such as the Rodney Jerkins-produced "Make It Last Forever" and "Get Up," produced by Jazze Pha and also featured on the film soundtrack to "Step Up," are surefire club hits, although such ballads as "It's Over" tend to fall flat. Nonetheless, "The Evolution" should one, two-step Ciara even closer to superstardom.—JM



JARVIS COCKER
Jarvis
Producers: *Graham Sutton, Jarvis Cocker*
Rough Trade
Release Date: *Nov. 13*
(U.K.)

One of the messages written on former Pulp frontman Cocker's first solo CD reads: "Do not adjust your tone control—it's meant to sound like that." And, indeed, the 14 songs here are a long way from Pulp's high-gloss Britpop days, with lo-fi production and an endearingly

ramshackle approach to performance very much the order of the day. Yet Cocker's witty lyrics and pithy songwriting shine through as he tackles everything from Britain's obesity epidemic ("Fat Children") to Live 8 (the expletive-strewn hidden track "Running the World") with bleak black humor and borderline contempt. The sinister air and downbeat arrangements may ultimately stifle any commercial aspirations and prolong Cocker's self-imposed exile in France, but artistically this is an understated triumph, whatever your tone control might say. How's about a U.S. release, too?—MS



BRIAN MCKNIGHT
Ten
Producers: *various*
Warner Bros.
Release Date: *Dec. 5*
McKnight celebrates his 10th album and 15th year of recording

by largely doing what he's always done—mining smooth soul grooves and singing about who's done what wrong to who. But there are some new tricks: "Used to Be My Girl" slyly kisses off an ex with cautionary words to her current lover over a moody and spare but still rhythmic groove. McKnight also enters the realm of current events on "Red, White, and Blue," joining the country trio Rascal Flatts for a solemn, textured soldier's paean to his wife back home. The rest of "Ten" features standard McKnight fare, from booty ballads ("Comfortable," "What's My Name") to songs about being in ("I Do") and out of love ("Unhappy Without You"), on which McKnight is all too happy to take it on the chin for his own shortcomings.—GG

SINGLES



SHAKIRA FEATURING CARLOS SANTANA
Illegal (3:49)
Producers: *Shakira, Lester Mendez*
Writers: *Shakira, L. Mendez*
Publishers: *various*
Epic

Following up the biggest radio hit in history—"Hips Don't Lie" by Shakira with Wyclef Jean—is no doubt daunting, so Epic is doing soft-shoe with the Latin siren's "Illegal" from her tepidly received "Oral Fixation, Vol. 2." This gorgeous ballad mourns the loss of a lover in the singer/songwriter/producer's most understated performance to date, as Shakira laments, "It should be illegal to deceive a woman's heart." Santana effectively weaves a quiet electric guitar thread throughout, like tears accompanying the loss. It may take MTV/VH1 fuel to catapult "Illegal" and convince top 40 that there's room for two ballads, alongside Christina Aguilera's "Hurt"—but this forlorn masterpiece is as instantly reactive on the slow side as "Whenever, Wherever" was on the fast.—CT



JAY-Z Lost Ones (3:47)
Producers: *Dr. Dre, Mark Batson*
Writers: *S. Carter, A. Young, M. Batson, D. Parker, C. Payne*
Publishers: *not listed*
Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam

Jay-Z made his less-than-triumphant return with the trumpet-blaring single "Show Me What You Got," in which he musters dull metaphors, comparing his second coming to that of Michael Jordan. A much better depiction of the rapper is second "Kingdom Come" single "Lost Ones," featuring an eerily jazzy hook by Def Jam soulstress Crisette Michelle. In three succinct verses, Jay reflects, respectively, on his severed ties with Roc-A-Fella cofounders Damon Dash and Kareem Burke ("Hov had to get the shallow shit up off him"); a female companion (B?); and his nephew's death "in the car I bought." A few stale references linger, but for the most part this is the Jay we know and love.—CH

ALBUMS

LATIN

LUIS MIGUEL
Navidades
Producer: *Juan Carlos Calderón*
WEA Latina
Release Date: *Nov. 14*

▶ Mexican crooner Luis Miguel's first foray into holiday fare doesn't include a single "Latin" Christmas track, but instead consists fully of translated Christmas standards. The repertoire is consistent with the big-band arrangements of this set, although hearing these songs in Spanish may be disconcerting to some, particularly in the cases where the lyrics diverge completely from the originals. If that doesn't bug you, however, "Navidades" works. Miguel is a traditional balladeer and his traditional arrangements work well for uptempo numbers ("Santa Claus Llegó a la Ciudad") and string-laden, contemplative fare ("Estaré En Mi Casa Esta Navidad"). There are standouts, among them the closing "Noche de Paz" (Silent Night), which incorporates a gospel chorus and plenty of swing in the beat.—LC

ROCK

VARIOUS ARTISTS
The OC Mix 6—Covering Our Tracks
Producer: *none listed*
Warner Bros.
Release Date: *Dec. 5*

▶ Although Mischa Barton and original plot lines may be history on "The OC," the Fox teen drama continues to feature up-and-coming indie acts on its compilation CDs. This time the show's latest soundtrack is a covers-only disc. Most of the songs are stripped-down or tamer versions of the originals, such as Mates of State's delicate take on the show's theme song, Phantom Planet's "California," Rogue Wave's melodic rendition of Pixies' "Debaser" and John Paul White's tear-jerking cover of ELO's "Can't Get It Out of My Head," during which you can almost see Seth Cohen's eyes start to artificially well. Pinback extends Black Flag's "Wasted" to more than three minutes, starting out singsongy and shifting into a punk breakdown at the end. But the liveliest cover is Lady

Sovereign's take on the Sex Pistols' "Pretty Vacant," on which the British MC gives the punk classic a modern electronic punch.—JM

PJ HARVEY
The Peel Sessions 1991-2004

Producers: *various*
Island Def Jam
Release Date: *Nov. 7*
▶ PJ Harvey's "Peel Sessions" comes in at a slight—and slightly uneven—41 minutes, but flashes with moments of greatness. The raw charge of Harvey's early material is evident in her very first session with John Peel, which is offered unabridged and drips with the sweaty kiss-off sass that made her 1992 debut, "Dry," so memorable. A starkly intimate reading of the alternately scathing/terrified "Snake" and a positively sexy take on "Wang Dang Doodle" also leave their mark. But "You Come Through," taken not from a session with Peel, but from a tribute to him staged just weeks after his untimely death, lingers longest. The deep bond between Harvey and Peel is apparent in every aching note as her voice strains to proffer the fragile chorus: "You be well for me/You come through for me."—SV

POP

NORA YORK
What I Want
Producer: *Jamie Lawrence*
215 Records
Release Date: *Nov. 14*

▶ Since emerging from New York's Knitting Factory jazz scene in the late '90s, Nora York has ignored musical boundaries. Like sister in song Nellie McKay, she has no use for the words "musical genre." On her third album, the aurally delicious "What I Want," York stands tall and proud at the intersection of Joni Mitchell, Steely Dan, Jane Siberry and Norah Jones. York had a hand in writing the bulk of the songs here, such as the buoyant title track. "Artificial Paradise" manages to bridge the gap between Mitchell's "Hejira" and "Dog Eat Dog." No easy feat, for sure. In York's worldview, desire and redemption share the same stage. A cover of Tammy Wynette's "Stand by Your Man" lacks luster, but a

reading of the Rolling Stones' "Ruby Tuesday," stripped of any excess, is, in a word, beautiful.—MP

WORLD

BEBO VALDES
Bebo
Producer: *Fernando Trueba*
Union Records
Release Date: *Nov. 21*

▶ Bebo Valdes is one of the great Cuban pianists. He's been a revered artist since the 1940s and during the intervening decades has done a good deal of recording, yet this is his first solo album. The record is a reminiscence on popular Cuban tunes and styles, and Valdes' performance is fluid and nuanced. He plays a couple of typically brief contradanzas—"La Caridad" and "Tu Sonrisa"—as well as the 19th-century habanera-canción "La Bella Cubana." Another fine moment is the romantic bolero "Marta," beautifully phrased by Valdes. The original song "Oleaje," a fantasia for piano, is a dramatic piece Valdes wrote in 1946, performed here with great elegance. Another admirable track, "Consuélate," is a guanguancó that provides a rhythmically intricate challenge that Valdes meets with his inimitable mastery.—PVV

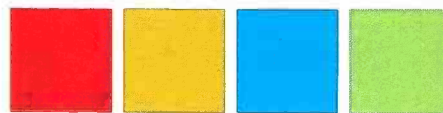
DVD

SLIPKNOT
Voliminal: Inside the Nine
Director: *M. Shawn Crahan*
Roadrunner
Release Date: *Dec. 5*

▶ "Voliminal: Inside the Nine" is being touted as a "brutally honest and visually unique art piece." Translation: "Art piece" means randomly stringing footage from concerts and the usual backstage antics with images of pigeons and overflowing toilets, then tossing in whatever visual effects struck M. Shawn Crahan's fancy while he edited it. "Brutally honest" refers to showing band personnel partying till they puke and closeups of percussionist Chris Fehn making obscene gestures. As for "visually unique," that's the jargon for a Slipknot guy strolling

continued on >>p88

REVIEWS



SINGLES

from >>p87

onstage during a set by As I Lay Dying, wearing nothing but a mask and hat. Save your cash for the band's next tour—if you want manufactured chaos, that's where you'll get your money's worth.—CLT

CHRISTIAN

KATHY TROCCOLI

The Story of Love

Producers: *Kathy Troccoli, Matt Baugher*
KT Records

Release Date: Nov. 14

▶ Next year Troccoli will celebrate her 25th anniversary as a recording artist, but the performances on this captivating CD sound as fresh and exuberant as if she were taking her first turn behind the mic. Troccoli unleashes her rich, warm alto on a mix of beautiful originals such as "Dancing Me Through This Life" and "Friend for Life" alongside pop standards like "Pick Yourself Up" and the oft-recorded "The Glory of Love." Her jazzy, breezy take on I Corinthians 13 in "I Cor 13" is among the album's highlights, as is the heartfelt ballad "Talk to Jesus," which she co-wrote with Tom Kimmel and Jeff Franzel. Troccoli has previously enjoyed success in the

contemporary Christian and mainstream pop markets, and this classy CD should serve as a reminder that the lady can sing anything and make it a moment to remember.—DEP

VITAL REISSUES

SUBLIME

Everything Under the Sun

Producers: *various*
Geffen/UMe/Gasoline Alley/Skunk

Release Date: Nov. 14

With just three proper albums to its name, and already having been the subject of a rarities collection, live album, acoustic live album, Deluxe Edition reissue, three greatest-hits comps and a tribute record, Sublime has officially stretched the definition of who ranks a boxed set to the snapping point. This three-CD/one-DVD set sounds literally like every CDR in the attic that still had the name Bradley Nowell, who succumbed to a drug overdose in 1996, scribbled on it. These sketches, jams, demos, sub-bootleg-quality live recordings and Bob Marley covers—many of which clock in at just about two minutes—range from the interestingly raw to the

unlistenable, especially when the band trades its slow-rolling, dub-style vibe for stabs at lo-fi punk. Completists will be tickled. Casual "What I Got" fans will more likely wonder what could possibly warrant this level of continued fuss.—JV

SOUNDTRACK

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Stereophonic Music

Listenings That Have Been

Origin In Moving Film

'Borat'

Producers: *Monica Levinson, Richard Henderson*

Downtown/Atlantic

Release Date: Oct. 24

★ This year's winner of the "Beavis and Butt-head Experience" award for Best Audio Component of an Absurdly Dominant Cultural Event in a landslide, the "Borat" soundtrack is a tempting enough impulse buy, if only so one can install "You Be My Wife" on his or her's next iPod party shuffle. All the great Borat hits are here—the hilarious, ghastly "In My Country There Is Problem," the ghastly, hilarious "Wife," etc.—punctuated by lively Eastern European club tracks and score samples by Sacha Baron Cohen's brother Erran, an actual composer (no, really). Even the liner notes stay in character: "Selling Piratings of this discs by any other than Government Officials will result punishment by crushing." Some acts don't even attend to that kind of detail in their songs.—JV

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ADDITIONAL REVIEWS:

- Dave Fischhoff, "The Crawl" (Secretly Canadian)
- The Oxford Collapse, "Remember the Night Parties" (Sub Pop)
- Imitation Electric Piano, "Blow It Up Burn It Down Kick It Til It Bleeds" (Drag City)

BANDCAMP

Wanna Dance?

Producers: *Dave McNair, Benji Madden*
bandcamp/EVLA

Release Date: Dec. 5

After releasing a regional DIY album and a follow-up EP, this Billboard Underground headliner is ready to grab listeners by the horns. Bandcamp proves its bull's-eye mainstream acumen with rocking guitar riffs and pop hooks primed for radio saturation. "Wanna Dance?" is packed with 12 melodic, wholly accessible tracks. Captivating hooks roller coaster through the journey of relationships and how they ultimately shape us. Best among the bunch are obvious single "Someone"; "Brightest Dark," a tale of seeing past people's differences; the '50s-flavored "The Fonzie Movement"; and "One Day," which reflects on the Peter Pan complex. It's rare that an album leaves you craving more. "Wanna Dance?" Yes, and then some.—AV



LEGEND & CREDITS

EDITED BY JONATHAN COHEN (ALBUMS) AND CHUCK TAYLOR (SINGLES)

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PICK ▶: A new release predicted to hit the top half of the chart in the corresponding format.

CRITICS' CHOICE ★: A new release, regardless of chart potential, highly recommended for musical merit.

All albums commercially available in the United States are eligible. Send album review copies to Jonathan Cohen and singles review copies to Chuck Taylor (both at Billboard, 770 Broadway, Sixth Floor, New York, N.Y. 10003) or to the writers in the appropriate bureaus.

POP

THE PUSSYCAT DOLLS

How Many Times, How Many Lies (3:56)

Producers: *Ron Fair, Tal Herzberg*

Writer: *D. Warren*

Publisher: *RealSongs, ASCAP*
A&M

▶ Who'd have imagined a year ago that the Pussycat Dolls—an image act with little more than T&A in its favor—would deliver the year's most memorable pop hooks? "Don't Cha" hit No. 2 on The Billboard Hot 100, "Stickwitu" No. 5, "Beep" No. 13 and "Buttons" No. 3. Fifth U.S. single "How Many Times, How Many Lies" returns songwriting great Diane Warren to the mainstream with a convincingly seductive downtempo number, thanks again to the on-par vocals of lead Nicole Scherzinger. There's little question that this ensemble owes all to the named singer—but amid so many horrendous top 40 mainstays that have made 2006's hit scene smell like a barnyard, we give a hearty thumbs up to any act whose hooks will give life to radio's catalog a year from now, and the 'Cats keep serving them up. Here's to nine lives.—CT

R&B

NAS Hip-Hop Is Dead

(3:48)

Producer: *Will.i.am*

Writers: *N. Jones, W. Adams, J. Lordan, D. Ingle*

Publisher: *not listed*
Def Jam

★ Fans have cried foul that Nas' Will.i.am-produced single "Hip-Hop Is Dead" uses the same "In-a-Gadda-Da-Vida" sample as 2004's "Thief's Theme." But the dynamic drums and guitar riffs are an apt backdrop for the Queens rapper's diatribe against hip-hop. In the opener, Nas prefaces, "I had to flip this track again, y'all." Ironically, this anti-mainstream cut has been popular on radio. In an age when many rappers simplify their lyrics for mass consumption, Nas persists with fresh imagery, cunning wordplay ("like my girl Foxy, the kid went Def") and insightful lyrics that require second and third listens. And fittingly, he is still rhyming as the song fades out.—CH

COUNTRY

JIMMY BUFFETT

Everybody's on the Phone (3:43)

Producers: *Mac McAnally, Michael Utley*

Writers: *J. Buffett, P. Mayer, R. Guth, W. Kimbrough*

Publishers: *various*
Mailboat/RCA Records

★ The second single from Jimmy Buffett's "Take the Weather With You" disc, released in October, is a delightful and satirical take on our nation's dependence on cell phones. The tune is cleverly written, filled with humorous observations that poke fun at our obsession and the cyber traffic jam that is snarling up the information superhighway. Each verse is packed with words that might twist the tongue of a lesser artist, but Buffett navigates the verbiage with sly smile and tongue planted firmly in cheek. He's a master at this witty type of tune and turns in a winner here. There's an insinuating guitar riff that helps plant the chorus in your memory. The only complaint would be the background vocals, which add a little too much cheesiness to the track. Otherwise, it's a fun, playful outing that should brighten country airwaves this holiday season.—DEP

ROCK

FLYLEAF Fully Alive

(2:46)

Producer: *Howard Benson*

Writers: *various*

Publisher: *BMG Songs, ASCAP*
Octone

▶ The second single from Flyleaf's debut is a ready-made winner that's as sticky as, well, flypaper. When it comes to shaping commercially viable music, producer Howard Benson (P.O.D., Papa Roach) keeps things snappy and tight, and for "Fully Alive," if you wink you'll miss it. It's less brooding than Flyleaf's first hit, "I'm So Sick," and sans the nü-metal background gurgles. Despite the fuzz tones on Sameer Bhattacharya's and Jared Hartmann's guitars, every note is crisply executed, even the sprawling solo at the bridge that sounds like it and James Culpepper's drums are coming from a distance. Flyleaf's

nonthreatening angst can appeal to Avril Lavigne followers who want to rock a little harder, as Lacey Mosley's nasal vocals are not far removed from the anti-pop princess.—CLT

AC

LEIGH NASH Ocean Size Love (3:16)

Producer: *Pierre Marchand*

Writers: *L. Nash, S. Cutler, A. Preven*

Publishers: *various*
One Son

Former Sixpence None the Richer lead singer Leigh Nash's stellar solo outing "My Idea of Heaven" failed to spur deserved interest from AC radio. Is it because of the usual big-name radio group's hands-off approach to indie releases? Shame, shame, but hopefully, with Clear Channel's recent sale to private partners, the wall will at last come down—especially given Nash's instant appeal and absolute familiarity. Second single "Ocean Size Love" is another sweet, accessible track, this time with an added chugging tempo and a guitar lick or two that infuses a cool factor to the format's ideal audience. Timing is off, as AC stations make the transition to all-holiday, but come 2007, this one is waiting in the wings and merits all consideration. "Heaven" should have been a hit... if this one misses, then the writing is on the wall: Any programmers out there really care about what the audience wants to hear?—CT

CHRISTMAS

ASHLEY TISDALE Last Christmas

Warner Bros.

WHITNEY WOLAIN Frosty the Snowman

Topnotch

LEIGH NASH Baby It's Cold Outside

One Son

DAVID YOUNG A Christmas I'll Remember

Universe/Allegro

JESSIE DANIELS Little Drummer Boy

Midas

THIRD DAY Born in Bethlehem

Essential/PLG

BRYAN LUBECK The First Noel

Earthscape

THE HOT BOX

A WEEKLY ROUNDUP OF NOTABLE CHART ACHIEVEMENTS



LOVE, LOVE, LOVE

>>The Beatles' "Love" debuts at No. 1 on the Euro Albums chart, though it's No. 1 only in one European country, France. Back in the United States, this keepsake from Cirque du Soleil's Fab Four tribute bows at No. 4 (272,000 copies), the band's 30th top 10 on The Billboard 200.

SARAH SMILE

>>Sarah McLachlan's new holiday set "Wintersong" produces three entries on the Adult Contemporary chart at billboard.biz. The only other artist in the Nielsen BDS era (since July 1993) to pull such a hat trick is Harry Connick Jr., also with Christmas songs.



HALLELUJAH

>>In her first entry on Top Gospel Albums, Patti LaBelle debuts at No. 1 with "The Gospel According to Patti LaBelle." It starts with 18,000 copies and also charts at No. 17 on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums. Her first ink on the R&B chart happened in 1966.

CHART BEAT

READ FRED BRONSON EVERY WEEK AT BILLBOARD.COM/FRED

>>Selling millions of albums and winning trophies at every awards show is fine, but let's not forget what's really important: Carrie Underwood continues to rewrite chart history. Her combined 11 weeks at No. 1 on Hot Country Songs with "Before He Cheats" and "Jesus, Take the Wheel" are the longest any female artist has spent in pole position with solo recordings in a calendar year in the 62-year history of Billboard's country singles tally.

>>Meanwhile, another "American Idol" finalist collects the 106th No. 1 for the franchise, as Chris Daughtry's band enters Top Rock Albums on top. Fred Bronson predicts who will earn the 107th and 108th chart-toppers for the TV series. Think "Jingle Bells" and "Breakaway."

Billboard

CHARTS



Over the Counter

GEOFF MAYFIELD gmayfield@billboard.com

Holiday Season, Jay-Z See Promising Starts

Not a bad start. That goes for both the holiday selling season and the return to duty by a certain recording artist.

A stronger release slate than we saw during Thanksgiving week 2005 makes for a busy top 20 on The Billboard 200. In all, overall album volume is essen-



JAY-Z

tially flat compared with last year's same week haul, down just 2,000 units, according to Nielsen SoundScan. In a year when album sales lag last year's pace by 4.6%, that represents a promising start to the always-key gift-shopping drive.

Thanks to the much ballyhooed return of Jay-Z and strong supporting cast, volume on the big chart actually beats the 2005 turkey-week tally by almost 7%.

The top 10 is particularly fruitful,

where seven titles sell more than their same-ranked counterparts of a year ago. The biggest shift resides at No. 1, as 680,000 copies for Jay-Z's "Kingdom Come" more than doubles the 320,000 that System of a Down's "Hypnotize" did when it entered the top slot last year.

Factor in Garth Brooks' Wal-Mart exclusive, "The Sessions," which the retail giant did not report to SoundScan, and overall volume would beat last year's frame. Wal-Mart offers the set for \$9.72.

Then again, considering the way sales funnel toward price leaders like Wal-Mart Target, Best Buy and Circuit City, the omission of Brooks' details might make for a more appropriate report card. Without his album factored in, mass merchants are down 3% from Thanksgiving 2005, but that's mild compared with the 12% dip by chain retailers and the 20% decline posted by independents.

So, if stores are down, how did business remain so close? SoundScan's non-traditional sector, which includes digital downloads, online sales, direct-to-consumer campaigns and limited-selection stores like Starbucks and JCPenney, tracked growth of 53% over Thanksgiving 2005. Album downloads alone more than doubled, from 362,000 a year ago to 791,000.

BACK IN BUSINESS: Fair warning. I will snap at the first person who shrugs shoulders and says, "I thought Jay-Z would have a bigger week."

Certainly the end of his short-lived retirement brought me more questions from the consumer press about "Kingdom Come" than any other album scheduled this quarter, and chart watchers projected an 800,000-plus start from chains' first-day sales. Still, 680,000 marks his best sales week ever.

For all his considerable chart success, Jay-Z has surpassed 500,000 copies only twice before, his previous best being 558,000 when "The Dynasty Roc La Familia" arrived in October 2000.

His first album since 2004 further secures his place in Billboard 200 history. It marks the ninth time he has bowed at No. 1, padding his all-time record. Garth Brooks is next with seven.

His nine No. 1s on the big chart also exceed any other rapper. DMX and 2Pac are tied for second with five each. Among acts from all genres, Jay-Z moves into the league of all-time greats, tied for third place with the Rolling Stones, trailing only the Beatles (19) and Elvis Presley (10).

WATCH WHAT HAPPENS: Prime-time music specials have become almost

as much a Thanksgiving tradition as turkey feasts and football games.

For the second year in a row, ABC carried the American Music Awards on the Tuesday before the holiday, the same night that NBC placed the excellent "Tony Bennett: An American Classic," sponsored by Target. Both programs generated handsome sales gains.

In a week when album sales are up by 36%, at least six of the acts that played the AMA show score spikes that beat the market's pace. The biggest rise among them belongs to show opener Beyoncé, whose sales more than doubled (9-6, up 155%), but she also appeared on "Oprah" and had a deep discount at Circuit City the day after Thanksgiving.

The next-largest percentage gain belongs to Nelly Furtado (52-63, up 77%). The big chart also posts AMA-related increases of 40% or more at Nos. 13, 23, 46 and 71.

Tony Bennett's latest, which had a value-added edition on sale at Target, garners the Pacesetter award as its sales almost triple (32-16, up 194%).

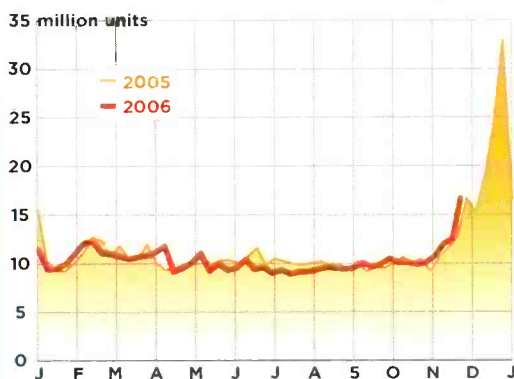
Among Bennett's guests, the first set by John Legend more than doubles (192-128, up 117%), and Diara Krall, No. 1 on Top Jazz Albums, sees her best gain since bowing 10 weeks ago (up 9%).

Market Watch A Weekly National Music Sales Report

Weekly Unit Sales

	ALBUMS	STORE SINGLES	DIGITAL TRACKS
This Week	17,027,000	64,000	11,631,000
Last Week	12,492,000	56,000	11,073,000
Change	36.3%	14.3%	5.0%
This Week Last Year	17,029,000	71,000	7,830,000
Change	0.0%	-9.9%	48.5%

Weekly Album Sales



Year-To-Date

	2005	2006	CHANGE
OVERALL UNIT SALES			
Albums	509,387,000	485,714,000	-4.6%
Digital Tracks	300,796,000	502,640,000	67.1%
Store Singles	4,630,000	3,384,000	-26.9%
Total	814,813,000	991,738,000	21.7%
Albums w/TEA*	539,466,600	535,978,000	-0.6%

*includes track equivalent album sales (TEA) with 10 track downloads equivalent to one album sale.

DIGITAL TRACKS SALES

'05	300.8 million
'06	502.6 million

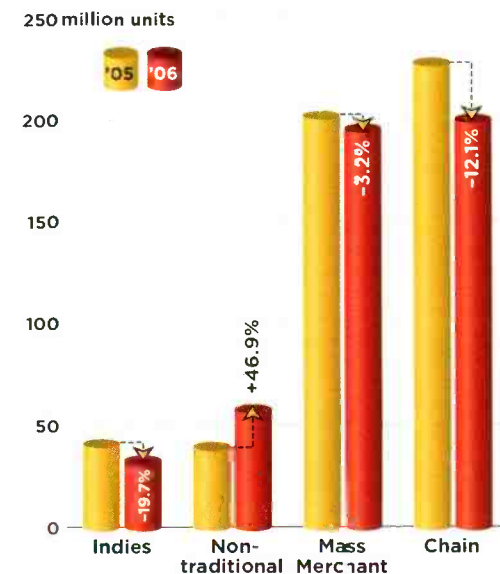
SALES BY ALBUM FORMAT

CD	492,401,000	455,683,000	-7.5%
Digital	13,667,000	28,176,000	106.2%
Cassette	2,333,000	1,033,000	-55.7%
Other	986,000	822,000	-16.6%

For week ending Nov. 26, 2006. Figures are rounded. Compiled from a national sample of retail store and rack sales reports collected and provided by

Nielsen SoundScan

Year-To-Date Album Sales By Store Type



Nielsen
Broadcast Data
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SoundScan

HOT COUNTRY SONGS

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WEEKS ON CHART	TITLE	Artist	CERT.	PEAK POSITION	THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WEEKS ON CHART	TITLE	Artist	CERT.	PEAK POSITION
1	1	39	#1 BEFORE HE CHEATS	Carrie Underwood	ARISTA/ARISTA NASHVILLE	1	31	30	18	THE REASON WHY	Vince Gill		30
2	2	16	MY WISH	Rascal Flatts	LYRIC STREET	2	32	31	10	INNOCENCE	Sarah Buxton		31
3	3	18	WANT TO	Sugarland	MERCURY	3	33	33	11	'FORE SHE WAS MAMA	Clay Walker		33
4	4	3	YOU SAVE ME	Kenny Chesney	BNA	3	34	37	4	HILLBILLY DELUXE	Brooks & Dunn		34
5	5	5	MY LITTLE GIRL	Tim McGraw	CURB	5	35	35	14	PODUNK	Keith Anderson		35
6	6	10	SHE'S EVERYTHING	Brad Paisley	ARISTA NASHVILLE	6	36	34	17	SOME PEOPLE	LeAnn Rimes		34
7	7	9	SOME PEOPLE CHANGE	Montgomery Gentry	COLUMBIA	7	37	39	4	GOOD DIRECTIONS	Billy Currington		37
8	9	11	IT JUST COMES NATURAL	George Strait	MCA NASHVILLE	8	38	36	9	STEALING KISSES	Faith Hill		36
9	13	16	WATCHING YOU	Rodney Atkins	CURB	9	39	42	-	LONG TRIP ALONE	Dierks Bentley		39
10	12	14	MOUNTAINS	Lonestar	BNA	10	40	40	12	I DON'T WANT TO	Ashley Monroe With Ronnie Dunn		40
11	11	13	TIM MCGRAW	Taylor Swift	BIG MACHINE	11	41	48	-	LIPS OF AN ANGEL	Jack Ingram		41
12	14	15	AMARILLO SKY	Jason Aldean	BROKEN BOW	12	42	44	5	ME AND GOD	Josh Turner		42
13	10	6	ONCE IN A LIFETIME	Keith Urban	CAPITOL NASHVILLE	13	43	47	3	OUR COUNTRY	John Mellencamp		43
14	16	17	LITTLE BIT OF LIFE	Craig Morgan	BROKEN BOW	14	44	50	13	FIND OUT WHO YOUR FRIENDS ARE	Tracy Lawrence		44
15	15	21	MY, OH MY	The Wreckers	MAVERICK/WARNER BROS./WRN	15	45	46	4	I KEEP COMING BACK	Josh Gracin		45
16	17	20	ONE WING IN THE FIRE	Trent Tomlinson	LYRIC STREET	16	46	45	6	STARTIN' WITH ME	Jake Owen		45
17	18	19	A GOOD MAN	Emerson Drive	MONTAGE/MIDAS/NEW REVOLUTION	17	47	52	5	DON'T MAKE ME	Blake Shelton		47
18	20	23	ALYSSA LIES	Jason Michael Carroll	ARISTA NASHVILLE	18	48	51	7	DIXIE LULLABY	Pat Green		48
19	15	17	CRASH HERE TONIGHT	Toby Keith	SHOW DOG NASHVILLE	19	49	43	15	DRINKIN' ME LOVELY	Chris Young		42
20	22	24	AIR POWER LADIES LOVE COUNTRY BOYS	Trace Adkins	CAPITOL NASHVILLE	20	50	53	7	THAT'S ALL I'LL EVER NEED	Jimmy Wayne		50
21	21	22	TWO PINK LINES	Eric Church	CAPITOL NASHVILLE	21	51	49	3	COME TO BED	Gretchen Wilson		49
22	23	25	I'LL WAIT FOR YOU	Joe Nichols	UNIVERSAL SOUTH	22	52	41	20	LIKE RED ON A ROSE	Alan Jackson		15
23	29	40	ANYWAY	Martina McBride	RCA	23	53	55	4	ISN'T THAT EVERYTHING	Danielle Peck		53
24	24	28	I JUST CAME BACK FROM A WAR	Darryl Worley	903 MUSIC	24	54	54	10	BROKEN	Lindsey Haun		50
25	25	33	RED HIGH HEELS	Kellie Pickler	BNA	25	55	57	-	MORE	Rockie Lynne		55
26	25	26	THE WOMAN IN MY LIFE	Phil Vassar	ARISTA NASHVILLE	26	56	59	-	MISSING MISSOURI	Sara Evans		56
27	27	27	YOU'LL ALWAYS BE MY BABY	Sara Evans	RCA	27	57	57	1	HOT SHOT DEBUT WASTED	Carrie Underwood		57
28	35	-	GREATEST GAINER STUPID BOY	Keith Urban	CAPITOL NASHVILLE	28	58	NEW	1	BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE	Dean Martin & Martina McBride		58
29	25	30	GOOD AS GONE	Little Big Town	EQUITY	29	59	NEW	1	SANTA LOOKED A LOT LIKE DADDY	Brad Paisley		59
30	32	36	A FEELIN' LIKE THAT	Gary Allan	MCA NASHVILLE	30	60	NEW	1	I CAN'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE	Gary Nichols		60



With its 18th top 10 act ranks third among groups, behind Alabama and Diamond Rio, for the most Nielsen BDS-era top 10s.



Rocker's third visit to his chart shows highest solo position so far. He reaches No. 21 on Travis Tritt duet in 2004.



While current single logs a fifth week atop chart, album track bows with 644,000 impressions at four monitored signals.

HITPREDICTOR

DATA PROVIDED BY

promosquad

See chart legend for rules and explanations. Yellow indicates recently tested title.

★ Indicates New Release.

ARTIST/Title/LABEL/(Score)	Chart Rank	ARTIST/Title/LABEL/(Score)	Chart Rank	ARTIST/Title/LABEL/(Score)	Chart Rank
COUNTRY		TAYLOR SWIFT Tim McGraw BIG MACHINE (75.1)	11	SARA EVANS You'll Always Be My Baby RCA (89.5)	27
SUGARLAND Want To MERCURY (93.2)	3	JASON ALDEAN Amarillo Sky BROKEN BOW (81.0)	12	GARY ALLAN A Feelin' Like That MCA NASHVILLE (81.8)	30
KENNY CHESNEY You Save Me BNA (92.5)	4	TRENT TOMLINSON One Wing In The Fire LYRIC STREET (89.4)	16	BILLY CURRINGTON Good Directions MERCURY (90.7)	37
TIM MCGRAW My Little Girl CURB (88.3)	5	JASON MICHAEL CARROLL Alyssa Lies ARISTA NASHVILLE (85.4)	18	FAITH HILL Stealing Kisses WARNER BROS. (75.6)	38
BRAD PAISLEY She's Everything ARISTA NASHVILLE (84.9)	6	TRACE ADKINS Ladies Love Country Boys CAPITOL (90.4)	20	JAKE OWEN Startin' With Me RCA (88.2)	46
MONTGOMERY GENTRY Some People Change COLUMBIA (83.7)	7	JOE NICHOLS I'll Wait For You UNIVERSAL (91.5)	22	GARY NICHOLS I Can't Love You Anymore MERCURY (81.6)	60
GEORGE STRAIT It Just Comes Natural MCA NASHVILLE (91.8)	8	DARYL WORLEY I Just Came Back From A War 903 MUSIC (84.2)	24		
RODNEY ATKINS Watching You CURB (93.0)	9	KELLIE PICKLER Red High Heels BNA (75.9)	25		
LONESTAR Mountains BNA (89.6)	10	PHIL VASSAR The Woman In My Life ARISTA NASHVILLE (94.4)	26		

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HOT COUNTRY SONGS: 144 country stations are electronically monitored by Nielsen Broadcast Data Systems, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Airplay awarded to songs appearing in the top 20 on both the BDS Airplay and Audience charts for the first time with increases in both detections and audience. © 2006 VNU Business Media, Inc. All rights reserved.

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BETWEEN THE BULLETS wjessen@billboard.com

McBRIDE BRINGS POP ICON TO COUNTRY LIST

Martina McBride brings the late Dean Martin back to Hot Country Songs for a second time as her newly minted duet with the Rat Pack icon, "Baby, It's Cold Outside," bows at No. 58.

Martin, who died on Christmas Day 1995, spent 12 weeks on the country chart in 1983 with "My First Country Song," which peaked at No. 35. Issued by Warner Bros., that single featured guest vocals by Conway Twitty, who was also signed to the label at that time.



MARTIN

Recorded at the storied Capitol studios in Hollywood, McBride's vocals were recently mixed with Martin's original version of "Baby," which was also cut at the Capitol tower. This version got added to new pressings of Martin's 2004 "Christmas With Dino" compilation. The duet version is being worked to country stations by Capitol Nashville in tandem with RCA's Nashville staff, and the two competitors will split recap points 50/50.

—Wade Jessen

DEC 9 2006 LATIN Billboard

HOT LATIN SONGS™

Table with columns: This Week, Last Week, 2 Weeks Ago, Weeks on Chart, Title, Producer (Songwriter), Artist, Imprint / Promotion Label, Peak Position. Songs include 'Ser o Parecer' by RBD, 'Bendita Tu Luz' by Mana, 'Tu Recuerdo' by Ricky Martin, etc.

At No. 9, Barba matches the longest run on the chart since April, when "Ella y Yo" by Aventura hit its 43rd week.

His "Bad Boy" album debuts at No. 2 on Top Latin Albums and No. 81 on The Billboard 200 (20,000 units).

The trio has its best debut sales week ever with new release (3,000). Starts at No. 12 on Latin Pop Albums.

Table with columns: This Week, Last Week, 2 Weeks Ago, Weeks on Chart, Title, Producer (Songwriter), Artist, Imprint / Promotion Label, Peak Position. Songs include 'Me Quiere Besar' by Alexis & Fido, 'Noche de Entierro' by Los Benjamins, etc.

TOP LATIN ALBUMS™

Table with columns: This Week, Last Week, 2 Weeks Ago, Weeks on Chart, Artist, Title, Cert., Peak Position. Albums include 'Celestial' by RBD, 'The Bad Boy' by Hector 'El Father', 'Navidades Luis Miguel' by Luis Miguel, etc.

Table with columns: This Week, Last Week, 2 Weeks Ago, Weeks on Chart, Artist, Title, Cert., Peak Position. Albums include 'La Muerte Del Soplon' by Los Tigres del Norte, 'Desatados' by Los Horoscopus de Durango, 'Los Cocorocos' by Los Cocorocos, etc.

Table with columns: This Week, Last Week, 2 Weeks Ago, Weeks on Chart, Artist, Title, Cert., Peak Position. Albums include 'Exitos' by Monchy & Alexandra, 'Linea De Oro' by Los Originales de San Juan, 'Soy Como Tu' by Olga Tanon, etc.

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LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE OF ASSETS OF THE SONGWRITER COLLECTIVE, LLC

Notice is hereby given that Fortress Credit Opportunities I LP, a Delaware limited partnership, as a lender and as agent on behalf of the lenders (the "Agent") under that certain Loan Agreement, dated as of March 1, 2004, as amended (the "Loan Agreement"), among The Songwriter Collective, LLC, a Delaware limited liability company, as borrower (the "Debtor"), the Agent and the lenders, having postponed the public sales scheduled for November 4, 2005, December 14, 2005, January 31, 2006, March 14, 2006, April 25, 2006, June 6, 2006, July 18, 2006, August 29, 2006, October 17, 2006 and November 29, 2006, intends to sell at public sale in accordance with the provisions of the New York Uniform Commercial Code, certain personal property assets of the Debtor, generally described as all of the Debtor's right, title and interest of every kind and nature in and to all accounts, chattel paper, deposit accounts, documents, electronic chattel paper, equipment, general intangibles, goods, instruments, inventory, investment property, payment intangibles and software belonging to the Debtor, in each case whether tangible or intangible, wherever located or situated, including all rights to a portfolio of musical compositions, including, in some instances, copyrights of the musical compositions, the right to and interest in any and all revenues and licenses derived from such musical compositions, and all claims and causes of action related to the musical compositions accruing at any time and all other rights of the Debtor of any nature whatsoever in the musical compositions (the "Collateral"). A more detailed description of the Collateral will be provided to you upon execution of a confidentiality agreement.

The public sale will take place at the office of Sidley Austin LLP at 787 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10019, on Tuesday, January 9, 2007 at 11:00 a.m., New York time. The Agent reserves the right to cancel the sale, without notice, in its entirety, or to adjourn the sale to a future date. The Agent may further adjourn the sale herein described to another date from time to time, before, during or after commencement of bidding, without written notice, by announcement at the time and place appointed for such auction, or any adjournment thereof, and, without further notice, such auction may be made at the time and place to which the auction may have been so adjourned.

Interested persons should take notice that the Collateral will be sold on the following terms and conditions:

1. All bids must be given orally at the public sale.
 2. The Agent reserves the right to bid for and purchase the Collateral and to credit the purchase price against the expenses of sale and principal, interest and any and all other amounts due and payable to the Agent pursuant to the terms of any and all indebtedness secured by the security interest in the Collateral.
 3. The Agent has sole discretion to determine which offer is the highest or best offer, and to reject any offer which it deems to be insufficient.
 4. Concurrently with the acceptance of any bid, the prospective purchaser shall be required to execute and deliver to the Agent the Asset Purchase Agreement, a copy of which may be obtained by contacting one of the person's identified in the final paragraph of this notice, containing terms of sale and conditions precedent to the Agent's obligation to sell, in each case, in addition to those set forth herein, including, without limitation, the requirement that the sale of the Collateral pursuant to the Asset Purchase Agreement be consummated no earlier than 30 days following execution thereof.
 5. Upon acceptance of any bid, the prospective purchaser shall be required to deposit (the "Deposit") with the Agent earnest money in an amount equal to ten percent of the purchase price. Such Deposit shall only be refunded to such prospective purchaser as, and to the extent, provided in the Asset Purchase Agreement. In all other cases, the Agent shall have the right to retain such Deposit. If such sale of the Collateral is consummated with such prospective purchaser, the full amount of such Deposit shall be applied to the purchase price. If such sale is not consummated, the Agent shall have the right, but shall have no obligation, to reoffer the Collateral for sale, without further notice. The prospective purchaser shall not be entitled to any interest on the Deposit held by the Agent, whether or not the Deposit is required to be refunded to such prospective purchaser by the Agent pursuant to the Asset Purchase Agreement.
 6. No bids may be withdrawn once made, but no sale is final until accepted by the Agent.
 7. Only cash or cashier's check or other immediately available funds will be accepted for the Deposit or for payment of the purchase price. The bid of any prospective purchaser who fails to tender proper payment may be rejected and the Agent may, subject to the other terms hereof, (i) accept any alternative bid made at the sale, in which case the Agent shall have no obligation to reconvene the sale, accept additional bids, or notify any other bidders of the acceptance of such bid, or (ii) reoffer the Collateral for sale without further notice, in each case, at the Agent's option. Notwithstanding anything contained herein to the contrary, the Agent shall not be obligated to make any sale of the Collateral pursuant to this notice.
 8. In the event the Agent is unable to consummate any sale and deliver the Collateral to a purchaser, then the sole liability of the Agent to such purchaser shall be to refund the purchase price, if any, previously paid to the Agent.
 9. The Collateral will only be sold in its entirety unless the Agent announces otherwise at the outset of the public sale.
 10. Subject to satisfaction of all of the conditions precedent to the Agent's obligation to sell the Collateral pursuant to the Asset Purchase Agreement and the terms and conditions hereof, consummation of the sale of the Collateral will be made immediately upon receipt by the Agent of the purchase price and shall be evidenced by delivery of the Collateral to the purchaser thereof, BUT WITHOUT DELIVERY OF A BILL OF SALE, WITHOUT GUARANTEE OF SIGNATURES, WITHOUT PAYMENT OF ANY TRANSFER OR OTHER TAX, AND WITHOUT REPRESENTATION OR WARRANTY BY THE AGENT, AND SUBJECT TO ALL DEFENSES.
 11. The above terms and conditions of sale may be subject to additional or amended terms and conditions to be announced at the time of sale.
 12. If any dispute arises between two or more bidders, the Agent may decide the same or put the Collateral up for sale again and resell to the purchaser submitting the best bid, as determined by the Agent. In all cases, the Agent's decision shall be final.
 13. All bidders and other persons attending this auction agree that they have full knowledge of the terms set forth above and contained in the Asset Purchase Agreement and agree to be bound by the terms hereof and thereof.
 14. The Debtor shall have the right to redeem the Collateral in accordance with, and only to the extent provided for, under applicable law.
- Persons desiring further information as to the public sale of the Collateral, and the terms and condition relating thereto, and/or desiring to obtain copies of the confidentiality agreement or the Asset Purchase Agreement, may contact either Martin Jackson (212/839-6726) of Sidley Austin LLP, 787 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10019 or Colleen McDonald (415/772-1207) of Sidley Austin LLP, 555 California Street, San Francisco, California 94104, counsel for the Agent.

December 2, 2006

HELP WANTED

Associate Editor, Special Features Billboard Magazine

A creative, keenly-organized, detail-driven associate editor is needed for Billboard special features. Billboard magazine, published by VNU Business Media, produces more than 80 special features annually, focusing on every aspect of the music business: artists & repertoire, marketing, media, promotion, branding, touring, financing, distribution, digital delivery and more.

Reporting to the special features editor, this individual must have a broad knowledge of these areas of coverage. He or she will have three to five years of editing experience and the ability to independently supervise selected special features, from conception to final proofs.

Billboard special features are coordinated with the magazine's sales, marketing, events and online efforts, and they drive a significant portion of the magazine's annual revenue. This is a great opportunity to create compelling editorial packages with a major business impact. This is a job for a business-oriented editor not a music critic. Custom publishing experience is a plus.

The associate editor of special features will:

- Liaise with senior editors, writers, designers, sales staff and advertising clients to conceive and outline each report;
- Assign stories and confirm delivery of outlines, copy and photos on deadline;
- Rewrite or reorganize copy as needed, and do first line edits;
- Plan layouts with designers;
- Write headlines and captions and fit editorial to designed layouts;
- Traffic proofs among the copy desk, designers, senior editors and production;
- Contribute to new editorial packages and strategies to drive new business.

This job requires superior people skills to manage a demanding workflow from staff and freelance writers, both in the United States and abroad. It also requires the ability to work closely with sales staff and advertising clients, balancing business demands with a mandate for editorial quality and integrity.

As special features frequently focus on the careers of major musical artists, an in-depth knowledge of pop music history is a must.

The job demands a self-starter with the ability to juggle multiple projects and deadlines, the flexibility to respond to the unexpected, and good humor under pressure.

Knowledge of Word, Quark, Outlook and Excel are required.

Applicants should send a résumé, cover letter and salary requirements to 100073.676@earthlink.net

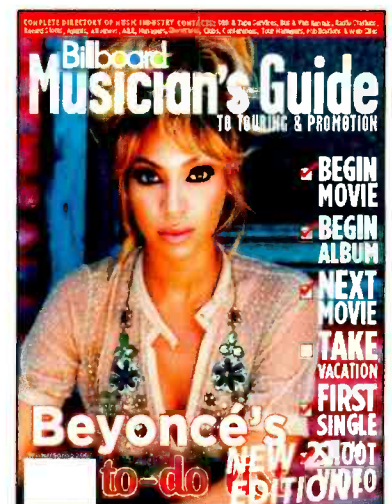
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A very touched AIM chairman/CEO and WIN president **Alison Wenham** receives her Top 20 Women in Music Award from Billboard London bureau chief **Mark Sutherland**.



The Living Legends Foundation honored three music industry stalwarts at its annual dinner held Nov. 16 at the Westin Hotel in New York's Times Square. The sold-out event "Recognized Island Def Jam Music Group chairman **Antonio "L.A." Reid**; BET executive VP **Stephen Hill** and **Skip Cheatham**, programming director for KKDA Dallas and host of the nationally syndicated "Hip-Hop Countdown" program. Celebrities as well as past and present executives from all major record labels came out to show support for the honorees. Pictured, from left, are Def Jam president/CEO **Shawn "Jay-Z" Carter**, Radio One founder and chairwoman **Cathy Hughes** and **Reid**. PHOTO: COURTESY OF ROSENA HUSBANDS/BLINK OF AN EYE PHOTOGRAPHY



15 YEARS OF BEING QUIET: "Quiet on the Set," ASCAP's popular and long-running singer/songwriter showcase, celebrates its 15th anniversary with "15 Years of Being Quiet," a three-night residency at Los Angeles' Hotel Cafe Nov. 6, Nov. 20 and Dec. 4.

ABOVE: From left are performers **Judith Owen** and **Jill Sobule** with ASCAP assistant VPs **Loretta Munoz** and **Brendan Okrent**. PHOTO: COURTESY OF LESTER COHEN/WIREIMAGE.COM

BELOW: **Desmond Child**, left, who opened the evening, poses with ASCAP's **Brendan Okrent**, center, and guest vocalist **Storm Lee**. PHOTO: COURTESY OF LESTER COHEN/WIREIMAGE.COM



Rod Stewart performed an intimate sold-out concert Oct. 9 at the Nokia Theatre in Times Square that was broadcast live by Control Room on msn.com and into 115 National CineMedia movie theaters nationwide. Stewart's No. 1 Billboard album—his first rock album in eight years—"Still the Same... Great Rock Classics of Our Time" is also his first rock set to top the Billboard charts since "Blondes Have More Fun" in 1979. Pictured, from left, are RCA Music Group executive VP of promotion **Richard Parnese**; BMG U.S. president/COO **Charles Goldtuck**; Stewart; BMG U.S. chairman/CEO **Clive Davis**; Stiefel Management's **Arnold Stiefel**; and J/Arista Records executive VP **Tom Corson**. PHOTO: COURTESY OF LARRY BUSACCA/WIREIMAGE.COM



BILLBOARD UNDERGROUND: BMI artist **Ehren Ebbage** was featured as part of TCC Billboard Underground Nov. 13 at the Core Club in New York.

ABOVE: From left are Core Club director of cultural content **Peter Galvin**, artist **Ehren Ebbage** and Billboard group editorial director **Scott McKenzie**. PHOTO: COURTESY OF GARY GERSHOFF/WIREIMAGE.COM

LEFT: Singer/songwriter **Ehren Ebbage** performs to a crowd of industry executives and influential tastemakers at the Core Club. PHOTO: COURTESY OF GARY GERSHOFF/WIREIMAGE.COM



"American Idol" season four second-runner up **Vonzell Solomon** teamed with producer **Ayhan Sahin** at Unity Gain Recording Studios in Fort Myers, Fla., to record "It's Gonna Be a Cold Cold Christmas" for the holiday collection "Breaking for the Holidays" on Breaking Records. The disc also includes new recordings from Chaka Khan, Sandra Bernhard, "Rockstar Supernova" finalist **Jill Gioia** and fellow "A.I." costar **Jon Peter Lewis**.



George Jones hangs backstage after headlining Carnegie Hall in New York Oct. 31. From left are Bandit Records president **Evelyn Striver**; Jones; Jones' wife, **Nancy**; Billboard VP/associate publisher **Brian Kennedy**; and Bandit Records executive VP **Susan Nadler**. PHOTO: COURTESY OF MARY MAGNAB



Nigara celebrated 46 years of independence with the first annual THISDAY Music Festival held Oct. 7-8 in Lagos, featuring an array of world-renowned stars including **Beyoncé**, **Jay-Z**, **Ciara**, **Missy Elliott**, **Busta Rhymes**, **Snoop Dogg**, **En Vogue**, **DJ Tony O** and local artists **D-Banj**, **Majek Fashek**, **Tuface** and **King Sunny Ade**. Pictured here is Def Jam president/CEO and recording artist **Shawn "Jay-Z" Carter**, left, with Hammond Entertainment president/CEO **Bill Hammond**, who produced the event in association with **La Roda Group**. PHOTO: COURTESY OF ARNOLD TURNER

INSIDE TRACK

EDITED BY MICHAEL PAOLETTA

For more INSIDE TRACK go to www.billboard.biz

WEILAND THE MOGUL

Velvet Revolver frontman Scott Weiland has launched Softdrive Records, in tandem with business partners Doug Grean and Dana Dufine, Track can exclusively reveal. The imprint will go through Sony's RED Distribution, with additional back-end support provided by New West Records.

Softdrive's first signing are Los Angeles rock band the Actual, whose debut album "In Stitches" is due early next year, and country singer/songwriter Tommy Joe Wilson, who Weiland discovered in a Nashville bar. In addition to co-producing the Actual's album, Weiland will release his second solo album on Softdrive in late 2007 or early 2008.

"We had a lot of opportunities early on to sort of sell ourselves out and just be a production imprint, but that's not really what Doug and I wanted to do," Weiland tells Track from a Los Angeles studio, where he's recording with Velvet Revolver. "But we also didn't fool ourselves to think we could creatively run the label like he and I are and also run the business side of things."

Enter RED and New West, which Weiland says is "an amazing model of a great independent record company."

As for Velvet Revolver, the group is working with producer Brendan O'Brien on its second RCA album, which Weiland says should be out in the spring.

MOBY MIXES IT UP

Having written more than 400 songs in a variety of styles, Moby tells Track that his new album, which he expects to finish in the spring and have out before the end of 2007, is "a little more experimental and subtle, less conventional song structures and more experimental arrangements. It doesn't necessarily have 'big blockbuster' written all over it."

This direction is in some ways a reaction to his last album, 2005's "Hotel," which he calls "probably the most conventional record I've ever made. Now I feel like I want to go in the other direction."

Moby is also awaiting word about whether a soundtrack album will be released for "Southland Tales," a new film he scored for "Donnie Darko" director Richard Kelly. The film—which stars Justin Timberlake, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Mandy Moore and the Rock—is about the end of the world and set in Southern California, but Moby says his music has "an odd, delicate counterpoint to it—very quiet and pastoral. It's all minimal electronic music. If a [soundtrack] came out and sold more than 100 copies, I'd be genuinely surprised."

RBD GIVES BACK

RBD is going philanthropic. Following the lead of other major stars like Shakira, Maná and Juanes, who all have charities aiding various causes, the Mexican pop sextet says it will announce the creation of a foundation called *Sálvame* (Save Me). *Sálvame* will help homeless children living on the streets of Mexico and Brazil, and will initially have support from Fundación Televisa. Group members tell Track the first event surrounding *Sálvame* will be a free concert in Brazil at the beginning of 2007, with proceeds from sponsorships all going to the endeavor.

A HAUTE COUTURE CHRISTMAS

Don't count on too many silent nights at Janice Dickinson's house this holiday season. The supermodel and star of reality series "The Janice Dickinson Modeling Agency" is hosting "Christmas With the Dickinsons," a one-hour special that premieres at 10 p.m. Dec. 13 on Oxygen.

Included in the celebration will be her music video for "The Twelve Days of Christmas," complete with new lyrics that she's made all her own (be very afraid). Also featured are her headlining appearance in the Hollywood Holiday parade, her modeling agency's male model auditions for the



DICKINSON



THE ACTUAL, with SCOTT WEILAND, right, and video director MARCOS SIEGA, second from left.

Beverly Hills "Hunky Santa" and an outrageous VIP Christmas party, complete with Dickinson's attempt to prepare a traditional meal.

Meanwhile, the second season of "The Janice Dickinson Modeling Agency" kicks off in January.

ALL WE NEED IS THE AIR THAT WE BREATHE

To Track's ears, French duo Air hasn't done much wrong musically since its 1998 debut, "Moon Safari," the soundtrack to late-night hipster trysts around the world.

After having collaborated on an album with actress Charlotte Gainsbourg and setting aside time for group member J.B. Dunckel to release a solo project, Air returns March 20 with "Pocket Symphony" on Astralwerks.

Track's favorites so far: the sexy instrumental opener "Space Maker" (we love that acoustic guitar riff), a guest turn by Pulp's Jarvis Cocker on the somber "Hell of a Party," the pulse-quickening electro-pop of "Mer du Japon" and the rainy-day ballad "Somewhere Between Walking and Sleeping," with vocals by the Divine Comedy's Neil Hannon.

ROUND AND ROUND AGAIN

Who among Track readers doesn't have a soft spot for Ratt's inescapable '80s hit "Round and Round"? Perhaps sensing a need to bring its music to the masses once again, Ratt's original lineup of drummer Bobby Blotzer, bassist Juan Croucier, guitarist Warren DeMartini and vocalist Stephen Pearcy is reuniting for a 2007 North American tour. Former Mötley Crüe member John Corabi will substitute for original guitarist Robbin Crosby, who died of AIDS-related complications in 2002.

Executive TURNTABLE

EDITED BY MITCHELL PETERS

RECORD COMPANIES: Sanctuary Records names **Jonathan Palmer** VP of licensing. He was founder of Jonathan Palmer Music.

Columbia Records names **Michael Caplan** VP of A&R. Additionally, he will serve as president of One Haven. He held the same A&R position at Sony Music Label Group.

Capitol Records Nashville promotes **Dixie Weathersby** to senior director of media and public relations. She was director.

Blue Note Label Group appoints **Josh Lerman** VP of international. He was VP of international product, development and new media at Atlantic Records Group.

PUBLISHING: ASCAP promotes **Joe Cocopardo** to VP of royalty and treasury services. He was assistant VP.

LEGAL: **Brian Pass** joins Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton in Century City, Calif., as a partner in the entertainment, media and communications and the intellectual property practice groups. He was with Brown Raysman.

MEDIA: MTV in New York elevates **Stephen Friedman** to executive VP of mtvU. He was GM.



RELATED FIELDS: The Songwriters Guild of America names **Janice Jackson** as head of its Catalog Administration Program. She was copyright administrator at Peer Music Publishing.

S.L. Feldman & Associates in Vancouver promotes **Sarah Webster** to national VP of its music supervision department. She was director of the company's Western division.

The Performing Right Society in the United Kingdom appoints **Andrew King** to deputy chairman (publisher), effective Jan. 1. He is also GM at Mute Song.

5W Public Relations in New York names **Akil Rucker** director of marketing. He was GM at Dirty Soho Productions.

Hyo Yeon joins digital consulting firm Bond Art and Science as a senior partner. She held different titles at FCBI.

Big Machine Media appoints **Brad Brock** account executive. He was VP of publicity at V2 Artemis.

Send submissions to exec@billboard.com.

GOODWORKS

GRAMMY GRAB BAG

Grammy Charity Online Auctions is offering a host of prizes from Josh Groban, Tom Petty, Kiss and Barry Manilow through Dec. 7 at ebay.com/grammys, with proceeds to benefit MusiCares. One fan will win a VIP package for the 49th annual Grammy Awards, including access to exclusive parties and rehearsal sessions.

HEALING HYMNS

On Dec. 5, GospoCentric/Zomba Gospel is issuing "Not in My Family: Songs of Healing and Inspiration." The CD is a companion piece to Gil Robertson's book "Not in My Family: AIDS in the African-American Community." Kirk Franklin, Yolanda Adams, Byron Cage, Natalie Wilson, Jon Gibson, Percy Bady, Papa San, Walter and Tramaine Hawkins, and New Direction are among those lending their voices to the project.

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