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TALENT

AND
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SPEAK
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from everyone at Universal Music Group.



UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

billboard Hot 100®



Juice WRLD

Juice WRLD Joins Drake And The Beatles In Top 10 History

JUICE WRLD LANDS FIVE SONGS IN THE BILLBOARD HOT 100 TOP 10, joining Drake and The Beatles as the only acts ever to claim at least half of the top spots at once.

All five tracks are from the rapper-singer's posthumous set *Legends Never Die*, which launches at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 with the biggest week, in terms of equivalent album units, of 2020 (see page 8). The album arrives just over seven months after Juice WRLD died of an accidental drug overdose at age 21 on Dec. 8, 2019.

"Come & Go," with Marshmello, bounds onto the Hot 100 at No. 2, with 36.4 million U.S. streams, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data, along with "Wishing Well" (No. 5); "Conversations" (No. 7); "Life's a Mess," with Halsey (No. 9); and "Hate the Other Side," also with Marshmello and featuring Polo G and The Kid LAROI (No. 10).

Juice WRLD follows Drake, who charted a record seven songs on the Hot 100 dated July 14, 2018, and The Beatles, who posted five each on April 4 and 11, 1964; on the former list, they monopolized the top five, a feat that has yet to be repeated.

Plus, Juice WRLD ties the record for the most concurrent top 10 Hot 100 debuts — four — equaling Drake's sum, also on July 14, 2018, and Lil Wayne's that Oct. 13. — GARY TRUST

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	CERTIFICATION	Artist IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
1	1	1	#1 ROCKSTAR SETH IN THE KITCHEN (J. L. KIRK, R. W. MOORE, JR., R. J. PARTARO IV)	6 WKS	DaBaby Feat. Roddy Ricch SOUTH COAST / INTERSCOPE	1	13
			HOT SHOT DEBUT 2 COME & GO MARSHMELLO (MARSHMELLO, J. A. HIGGINS)		Juice WRLD x Marshmello GRADE A / INTERSCOPE	2	1
2	3	3	3 WHATS POPPIN ▲ JETSON MADE, POOH BEATZ, LOST THE PRODUCER (J. HARLOW, T. MORGAN, D. CLEMONS, J. W. LUCAS, N. WARD II, C. GOODWIN, J. L. KIRK, D. PETERSON, D. M. CARTER, JR.)		Jack Harlow Feat. DaBaby, Tory Lanez & Lil Wayne GENERATION NOW / ATLANTIC	2	23
3	2	4	4 BLINDING LIGHTS ▲ MAX MARTIN, O. T. HOLTER, THE WEEKND (A. TESFAYE, A. BALSHE, J. QUENNEVILLE, MAX MARTIN, O. T. HOLTER)		The Weeknd XO / REPUBLIC	1	33
			NEW 5 WISHING WELL DR. LUKE, CHOPSQUAD DJ (D. JACKSON, J. A. HIGGINS, L. S. GOTTFWALD)		Juice WRLD GRADE A / INTERSCOPE	5	1
4	4	6	6 SAVAGE ▲ J. WHITE DID IT (M. J. PETE, J. WHITE, B. SESSION JR., B. G. KNOWLES CARTER, T. NASH, J. K. LANIER, THORPE, B. T. HAZZARD, DERRICK MILANO, S. C. CARTER)		Megan Thee Stallion Feat. Beyoncé 1501 CERTIFIED / 300	1	18
			NEW 7 CONVERSATIONS RONNY J. SCHEME (G. GUERRA, J. A. HIGGINS, R. SPENCE JR.)		Juice WRLD GRADE A / INTERSCOPE	7	1
5	5	8	8 ROSES ▲ F. A. L. L. E. N (C. ST. JOHN, L. STASHENKO)		SAINT JHN GOOD COMPLEX / HITCO	4	17
	74	9	SAL STM 9 LIFE'S A MESS CHARLIE HANDSOME, R. M. KUDD (A. FRANGIPANE, J. A. HIGGINS, R. M. KUDD, CHARLIE HANDSOME)		Juice WRLD X Halsey GRADE A / INTERSCOPE	9	2
			NEW 10 HATE THE OTHER SIDE MARSHMELLO (C. HOWARD, D. L. MOODY, J. A. HIGGINS, MARSHMELLO, N. HOLLOWELL-DHAR, T. T. BARTLETT)		Juice WRLD & Marshmello Feat. Polo G & The Kid LAROI GRADE A / INTERSCOPE	10	1

OLIVIA BEE
SALES, AIRPLAY & STREAMING DATA AS MEASURED BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA AND STREAMING ACTIVITY DATA BY ONLINE MUSIC SOURCES TRACKED BY NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA. SONGS ARE DEFINED AS CURRENT IF THEY ARE NEWLY RELEASED TITLES, OR SONGS RECEIVING WIDESPREAD AIRPLAY AND/OR SALES ACTIVITY FOR THE FIRST TIME. SEE CHARTS. LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM/BIZ FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2020, PROMETHEUS GLOBAL MEDIA, LLC AND NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
nielsen
MRC



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ROD WAVE
"Rags2Riches"

The 12th Hot 100 entry from the 20-year-old native of St. Petersburg, Fla., also reaches a new No. 29 peak on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs.

What was the recording process like for "Rags2Riches"?

We were on the tour bus to Atlanta [in 2019], and I was listening to beats. When we got to the hotel in the morning, my engineer set up and I recorded the song. I like the hotel better because it's just me and the engineer. I've never been able to open up around people. My first time in the studio, I wasted six hours. I was too shy — the music is so personal for me.

Why was Sony/ATV a good fit for the global co-publishing deal you signed in May?

A lot of people were reaching out, but Sony was perfect for me because eventually I want to venture off into movies and scripts. I love movies because it's the same thing with music: It's me telling my story. That's why I really fuck with Sony: I feel like they're giving me the opportunity and freedom to express that.

You've teased another album coming in late August. Can you share an update?

I got the green light. [Alamo Records] told me to do it earlier than that because a lot of people are waiting on it. I have a deluxe coming for *Pray 4 Love* either July 31 or Aug. 7. I ain't got a No. 1 album yet, so that's what I'm trying to do. Music is my life — there's no telling where it'll take me next. I really went from rags to riches. —CARL LAMARRE

22
KID CUDI & EMINEM
"The Adventures of Moon Man & Slim Shady"

The collaboration launches at No. 1 on Digital Song Sales with 26,000 sold. Kid Cudi collects his second leader, while Eminem adds his 11th.

WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	CERTIFICATION	PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	Artist	IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
8	7	11	AIR WATERMELON SUGAR	▲	KID HARPOON, T. JOHNSON (H. STYLES, T. HULL, M. ROWLAND, T. JOHNSON)	Harry Styles	ERSKINE/COLUMBIA	7	17
NEW	12	12	BLOOD ON MY JEANS		GEZIN, M. LORD, STRAPAZOOT (A. Z. VUICA, F. GEZIN, J. A. HIGGINS, M. LORD)	Juice WRLD	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE	12	1
9	8	13	BLUEBERRY FAYGO	▲	CALLAN (L. ECHOLS, C. WONG, BABYFACE, L. A. REID, D. SIMMONS, J. GILL)	Lil Mosey	MOGUL VISION/INTERSCOPE	8	23
NEW	14	14	TITANIC		R. M. KUDO, DY KRAZY (J. A. HIGGINS, R. M. KUDO, D. L. J. AVERY)	Juice WRLD	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE	14	1
RE-ENTRY	15	15	RIGHTEOUS		N. MIRA, CHARLIE HANDSOME (N. MIRA, J. A. HIGGINS, CHARLIE HANDSOME)	Juice WRLD	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE	11	11
NEW	16	16	BAD ENERGY		B. SLATKIN, TAKE A DAY TRIP (J. A. HIGGINS, B. SLATKIN, D. BIRAL, D. M. A. BAPTISTE)	Juice WRLD	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE	16	1
11	12	17	ADORE YOU	▲	KID HARPOON, T. JOHNSON (H. STYLES, T. HULL, A. R. ALLEN, T. JOHNSON)	Harry Styles	ERSKINE/COLUMBIA	6	32
6	9	18	SAY SO	▲	TYSON TRAX (A. Z. DLAMINI, L. S. GOTTWALD, L. ASRAT, D. SPRECHER, D. T. MARAJ, J. PETTY)	Doja Cat Feat. Nicki Minaj	KEMOSABE/RCA	1	28
31	29	19	SAVAGE LOVE (LAXED - SIREN BEAT)		JAWSH 685, JASON DERULO (J. NANAI, J. J. DESROULEAUX, J. K. HINDLIN, P. GREISS)	Jawsh 685 x Jason Derulo	COLUMBIA	19	5
13	13	20	CIRCLES		POST MALONE, FRANK DUKES, L. BELL (L. B. BELL, A. R. POST, A. FEENEY, W. T. WALSH, K. GUNESBERK)	Post Malone	REPUBLIC	1	46

WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	TITLE	CERTIFICATION	PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	Artist	IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
7	10	21	INTENTIONS	▲	POD BEAR, THE AUDIBLES (J. D. BIBER, J. BOYD, Q. K. MARSHALL, D. JORDAN, J. GIANNOS)	Justin Bieber Feat. Quavo	MOTOWN/RAYMOND BRAUN/CAPITOL/DEF JAM	5	23
NEW	22	22	THE ADVENTURES OF MOON MAN & SLIM SHADY		DOT DA GENIUS, J. GRAMM, EMINEM (S. R. S. MESCIUDI, M. MATHERS III, J. GRAMMA, D. OMISHORE, L. E. RESTO)	Kid Cudi & Eminem	REPUBLIC	22	1
21	23	23	I HOPE	▲	R. COPPERMAN, Z. KALE (Z. KALE, J. M. NITE, G. BARRETT)	Gabby Barrett	WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WAR	16	29
20	17	24	BREAK MY HEART		ANDREW WATT, THE MONSTERS & STRANGERZ (A. TAMPOSI, S. JOHNSON, M. HUTCHENCE, J. K. JOHNSON, D. LIPA, A. WOTMAN, A. FARRISS)	Dua Lipa	WARNER	17	16
29	36	25	PARTY GIRL	●	NASHI (D. FIGUEROA, E. BUSTOS)	StaySolidRocky	COLUMBIA	21	12
10	14	26	WE PAID		SECTION 8 (D. JONES, R. WILLIAMS, D. M. HAYES)	Lil Baby & 42 Dugg	QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	10	11
15	15	27	DON'T START NOW	▲	I. KIRKPATRICK (C. AILIN, I. KIRKPATRICK, E. W. SCHWARTZ, D. LIPA)	Dua Lipa	WARNER	2	37
12	16	28	RAIN ON ME		BLOODPOP, BURNS (S. G. GERMANOTTA, M. TUCKER, BURNS, N. A. A. CHARLES, RYACOB, M. J. L. BRESSO, A. GRANDE, A. RIDHA, J. BURDEN, A. L. WILLIAMS, B. WRIGHT)	Lady Gaga & Ariana Grande	STREAMLINE/INTERSCOPE	1	8
30	28	29	GO CRAZY		S. AZNOUJ, A. ZNOUJ, K. LEVIN, K. CASTANEDA, MURPHY, M. C. M. BROWN, J. L. WILLIAMS, S. AZNOUJ, K. LEVIN, K. CASTANEDA, C. D. MURPHY, S. AMEELS, S. BENJELLOUN, W. SAMUELS, D. ANNIDOU, Z. KHARBOUJ, P. LOUJAO, C. D. H.	Chris Brown & Young Thug	300/CBE/RCA	28	10
25	26	30	BEFORE YOU GO	▲	TMS (L. CAPALDI, T. BARNES, P. KELLEHER, B. KOHN, P. J. PLESTED)	Lewis Capaldi	VERTIGO/CAPITOL	25	24
22	19	31	ONE MARGARITA		J. STEVENS, J. STEVENS (M. R. CARTER, M. DRAGSTREM, J. THOMPSON)	Luke Bryan	ROW CROP/CAPITOL NASHVILLE	19	11
-	6	32	FOR THE NIGHT		CASHIMONEY, PAL AZE (B. B. JACKSON, A. PETIT, C. B. MARCUSSEN, D. M. RAAB, D. JONES, J. L. KIRK)	Pop Smoke Feat. Lil Baby & DaBaby	VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/REPUBLIC	6	2
19	25	33	FALLING	▲	KC SUPREME, CHARLIE HANDSOME, TAZ TAYLOR (T. NEILL, T. NORTON, M. KOTTMEIER, TAZ TAYLOR, CHARLIE HANDSOME, K. CANDILORA II)	Trevor Daniel	ALAMO/INTERSCOPE	17	35
NEW	34	34	STAY HIGH		Z. FLY, ILL EVEN (J. A. HIGGINS, L. MIZELL, K. ROHAIM)	Juice WRLD	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE	34	1
NEW	35	35	FIGHTING DEMONS		N. MIRA, SIDEPCE (D. MARCHAND, J. A. HIGGINS, N. MIRA)	Juice WRLD	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE	35	1
17	18	36	THE BONES	▲	G. KURSTIN (M. MORRIS, J. M. ROBBINS, L. J. VOLTZ)	Maren Morris	COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/COLUMBIA	12	43
27	27	37	HARD TO FORGET		Z. CROWELL, L. LAIRD (S. L. HUNT, A. GORLEY, L. LAIRD, S. MCANALLY, J. OSBORNE, A. GRISHAM, M. J. SHURTZ, R. HULL)	Sam Hunt	MCA NASHVILLE	26	16
RE-ENTRY	38	38	TELL ME U LUV ME		N. MIRA, OK TANNER (J. A. HIGGINS, TRIPIE REDD, N. MIRA, T. KATICH)	Juice WRLD & Trippie Redd	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE/UNIVERSAL	38	3
18	24	39	LIFE IS GOOD	▲	OZ, D. HILL (N. D. WILBURN, A. GRAHAM, D. HILL, O. YILDIRIM, M. D. LIYEW)	Future Feat. Drake	FREEBANDZ/EPIC	2	27
16	21	40	THE BOX	▲	3OROC (R. W. MOORE, JR., S. GLOADE, A. MORAGNE, A. Q. TATE)	Roddy Ricch	BIRDVISION/ATLANTIC	1	32
24	32	41	DEATH BED	▲	OTTERPOP (I. FABER, B. LAUS, D. LANG)	Powfu Feat. beabadoobee	ROBOTS AND HUMANS/COLUMBIA	23	18
NEW	42	42	UP UP AND AWAY		R. M. KUDO (J. A. HIGGINS, R. M. KUDO, CHARLIE HANDSOME)	Juice WRLD	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE	42	1
14	20	43	THE BIGGER PICTURE		SECTION 8, NOAH (D. JONES, R. WILLIAMS, N. PETTIGREW)	Lil Baby	QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN/CAPITOL	3	5
35	33	44	BLUEBIRD		J. JOYCE (M. LAMBERT, L. DICK, N. HEMBY)	Miranda Lambert	VANNER/RCA NASHVILLE	33	15
23	30	45	SUNDAY BEST	▲	F. FRANK, C. PADALECKI (C. PADALECKI, F. FRANK)	Surfaces	SURFACES/TENTHOUSAND PROJECTS/CAPITOL	19	20
NEW	46	46	SCREW JUICE		N. MIRA (J. A. HIGGINS, N. MIRA)	Juice WRLD	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE	46	1
NEW	47	47	I WANT IT		IMINO, DRE MOON, TYLER (A. E. PROCTOR, J. A. HIGGINS, S. LOPEZ, T. TURNER)	Juice WRLD	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE	47	1
-	11	48	THE WOO		BOBMELOBEATS (B. B. JACKSON, A. LOBLACK, A. LOFFA, B. JONES, K. MACK, J. JACKSON, C. J. JACKSON, JR., R. W. MOORE, JR.)	Pop Smoke Feat. 50 Cent & Roddy Ricch	VICTOR VICTOR WORLDWIDE/REPUBLIC	11	2
32	35	49	CHASIN' YOU	▲	J. MOI (J. MOORE, M. WALLEN, C. WISEMAN)	Morgan Wallen	BIG LOUD	16	25
NEW	50	50	CAN'T DIE		DY KRAZY, M. D'CONNOR (D. L. J. AVERY, J. A. HIGGINS, M. D'CONNOR)	Juice WRLD	GRADE A/INTERSCOPE	50	1

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to Julie Swidler, Jeff Walker,
Stu Bondell, Susan Meisel, Wade Leak,
and our entire legal team.



SONY MUSIC

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especially our own colleagues,

**Jay Cooper, Joel A. Katz, Jess Rosen,
Bobby Rosenbloum, and Paul Schindler**

Billboard's 2020 Top Music Lawyers.



Jay Cooper



Joel Katz



Jess Rosen



Bobby Rosenbloum



Paul Schindler

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Fourteen years after their last album — and 17 years after their infamous controversy — **The Chicks** are returning to a radically different industry. But as they navigate promoting new music in the COVID-19 era (and with a brand-new name), they’re not interested in being vindicated: “We gave up caring about any of that.”

BILLBOARD HOT 100

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Juice WRLD joins **Drake** and **The Beatles** with a historic top 10 achievement.

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The Nottingham, England-based rap duo **Young T & Bugsey** is celebrating its first global hit, “Don’t Rush,” thanks to a viral trend that emerged during lockdown.

From left: Emily Strayer, Natalie Maines and Martie Maguire of The Chicks photographed by Kwaku Alston on March 9 at Smashbox Studios in Culver City, Calif.

Strayer wears a Saint Laurent top, Dolce & Gabbana vest, Jonathan Simkhai pants, STÉFÈRE earrings and ring, EF Collection earrings, Lillian Shalom ring, Jelena Behrend bracelets.

Maines wears a rag & bone T-shirt, R13 jacket, DALMATA and EF Collection earrings, Jennifer Fisher ring, Wax & Wane by Dean Bryant bracelets.

Maguire wears a RE/DONE top, Vivienne Westwood jacket, IRO pants and belt, Dana Rebecca and Nancy Newberg earrings, Lillian Shalom ring, Jennifer Fisher bracelet, Graziela ring and bracelet.

ON THE COVER

Illustration by hitandrun

TO OUR READERS

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to **Peter Brodsky**
and **Nicole Giacco**
for being named
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your many contributions to
Sony/ATV and our songwriters.



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congratulates our EVP & GC*

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on being a 2020 Power Lawyer



NMPA is the leading voice for promoting and advancing the interests of music publishers and their songwriting partners.



The Market

PG. 14 NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA'S MIDYEAR REPORT ✦ PG. 16 FROM THE DESK OF: RICHARD BUSCH ✦ PG. 18 MIDYEAR TOURING REPORT



'We All Must Speak From One United Voice'

The debate over the word "urban" heats up, underscoring the need for companies to recognize the diversity of viewpoints within the Black music community — and understand history — as they race to tackle systemic bias

BY GAIL MITCHELL

WHAT'S IN A NAME? A lot more than many music executives realize. Since the nationwide protests following the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, record labels, prompted by organizations like #TheShowMustBePaused, have been tackling racism and systemic bias within the music business. At a time when the importance of Black culture keeps growing, both in terms of the rising market share of R&B/hip-hop (28.51% of audio album consumption units in the first half of 2020, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data) and the influence of those genres on pop, these renewed efforts are raising questions about what to call these genres, and — more importantly — how to ensure that the artists and executives who make them so successful are treated more fairly.

On June 5, Republic Records announced that it was dropping the word "urban" from in-house use — including department names and employee titles — as an umbrella term for hip-hop and R&B. "We encourage the rest of the music industry to follow suit," the label said, "as it is important to shape the future of what we want it to look like and not adhere to the outdated structures of the past."

Other companies are doing the same — including Spotify U.K. and iHeartMedia — with the goal of changing a term they believe unfairly marginalizes Black artists and executives. But not all Black executives agree. "URBAN = BLACK, PERIOD!!!" Columbia senior vp/head of urban promotion Azim Rashid declared on Instagram. "Current BLACK executives in the #musicbusiness stand on the shoul-

ders of #Legendary #Icons who fought in the 70's and 80's for fair and equal treatment INSIDE of these buildings." On July 20, in the announcement of his promotion at Warner Records, executive vp urban music and marketing Chris Atlas said that the word was important because "it remains present and continues to evolve."

Most of the Black music community agrees that terminology shouldn't get in the way of larger issues: Diversity and salary parity, as well as contractual issues that affect artists and songwriters, are among the top priorities. Encouraged by in-house, employee-led task forces, as well as outreach to the broader Black community, many Black executives are cautiously optimistic about the possibility of real reform.

Part of that reform will almost certainly involve addressing the way both Black artists and executives have been marginalized by the way the overall industry has operated since the word "urban" was used to define a genre. The term, short for "urban contemporary," was coined in the mid-1970s by the influential New York radio DJ Frankie Crocker to describe the diverse tastes of Black music fans. For mainstream advertisers, it became a more acceptable name for

what were then called "Black" radio stations. Over 40 years later though, as the lines between R&B and hip-hop and pop continue to blur — and the audiences for different radio formats flock to streaming services — some artists and

28.51%

MARKET SHARE OF R&B/HIP-HOP AUDIO ALBUM CONSUMPTION UNITS IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2020

● SIRIUSXM ACQUIRED PODCAST PLATFORM STITCHER FOR \$265 MILLION. ● GAMER LIVESTREAMING PLATFORM TWITCH SIGNED LOGIC TO AN EXCLUSIVE CONTENT DEAL, ITS FIRST WITH A MUSICIAN.

executives alike are wondering whether the term has become restrictive.

“We create so many different genres, but we’re put in one box,” says now-independent Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter Arlissa, a 27-year-old artist categorized as “urban” by two major labels that signed her in the past, even though her music leans more toward soulful pop/rock. “You can replace a word and it will still mean the same thing in terms of putting an artist in a category because of his or her skin color.”

The issue isn’t so much with the word “urban” itself, according to Chad Wes, a manager in the L.A. office of the management firm Milk & Honey, which announced it would “formally eliminate” the term, “but how business is constructed and done with the word.”

Live Nation Urban, for example, a joint venture with touring giant Live Nation Entertainment, has kept the term in its title. In a July 9 open letter to Live Nation employees around the world, president/CEO Michael Rapino pledged to increase diversity from its board of directors to leadership representation, aiming for at least 30% Black and other underrepresented groups by 2025.

Still leading the push for systemic change are the founders of the movement #TheShowMustBePaused, Platoon senior artist campaign manager Brianna Agyemang and Atlantic senior director of marketing Jamila Thomas. Since calling on the music industry to halt normal business for a day of reflection on June 2 — a day dubbed Blackout Tuesday — they tell *Billboard* that their fledgling organization has been meeting online weekly and has narrowed its focus to three overarching goals: representation, social responsibility and holistic compensation.

The new Black Music Action Coalition, launched June 22 by a group of high-profile artist managers, is now working with them. “BMAC will ensure things will not return to business as usual,” says BMAC board member Prophet.

On July 15, yet another formidable organization based in Atlanta was launched by Michael Mauldin, who served as president of Columbia’s Black music division in the 1990s. The new Black American Music Association — a 21st century incarnation of the Black Music Association, established in 1979 when Black Music Month became an annual celebration — is open to music executives, creators and industry professionals.

Says BAM co-founder/CEO Mauldin: “We all must speak from one united voice.”

NIELSEN MUSIC/MRC DATA YEAR-TO-DATE REPORT

2020 So Far: Streaming Up; Lil Baby Rules

The pandemic has hurt physical sales, but vinyl’s still growing

HALFWAY THROUGH 2020, U.S. music fans have consumed 361.2 million album units of music — 9.4% more than they did during the first six months of last year. Physical sales have taken a 20.3% hit during the pandemic, but audio streaming growth remains robust: up 16.2% to 419.82 billion streams from 361.14 billion at the same time in 2019.

The top album so far in 2020 is Lil Baby’s *My Turn*, which racked up 1.467 million consumption units, while Roddy Ricch’s “The Box” is the top song, with nearly 1.07 billion streams. Five albums have surpassed the 1 million album consumption-unit

milestone, compared with three during the first half of 2019.

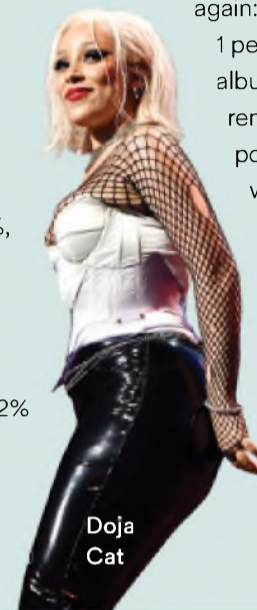
Universal Music Group’s U.S. market share dominance grew slightly, up to 38.16%, as measured by distributor ownership. Sony Music followed with 25.63%, also up slightly; Warner Music Group dropped a percentage point to 19.8%; and independents collectively distributed 16.4%. By label ownership, UMG has a 28.52% share, Sony 19.46%, WMG 16.16% and indies 35.85%.

In terms of genres, R&B/hip-hop was the biggest gainer yet

again: Its market share rose by nearly 1 percentage point to 28.51% of audio album consumption units. Rock remains at No. 2, dropping to 20%; pop, at third, fell slightly to 13.44%; while country and Latin followed with boosts to their respective shares of 8.34% and 4.08%.

The pandemic has accelerated the decline in CD sales, which fell a whopping 30.2% to 18.5 million copies, but vinyl sales still grew 11.2% to 9.2 million units. Digital sales fell 14.3% to 17.66 million album units.

— ED CHRISTMAN



ALBUMS BY CONSUMPTION (Year To Date)

RANK	ARTIST	TITLE	YTD TOTAL ACTIVITY
1	Lil Baby	<i>My Turn</i>	1,467,000
2	The Weeknd	<i>After Hours</i>	1,423,000
3	Lil Uzi Vert	<i>Eternal Atake</i>	1,374,000
4	Roddy Ricch	<i>Please Excuse Me for Being Antisocial</i>	1,352,000
5	Post Malone	<i>Hollywood’s Bleeding</i>	1,140,000
6	Bad Bunny	<i>YHLQMDLG</i>	927,000
7	Eminem	<i>Music To Be Murdered By</i>	855,000
8	Justin Bieber	<i>Changes</i>	854,000
9	BTS	<i>Map of the Soul: 7</i>	842,000
10	Billie Eilish	<i>When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?</i>	798,000

VINYL ALBUM SALES (Year To Date)

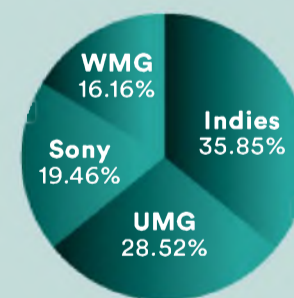
RANK	ARTIST	TITLE	YTD SALES
1	Billie Eilish	<i>When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?</i>	85,000
2	Harry Styles	<i>Fine Line</i>	61,000
3	Guardians of the Galaxy	<i>Guardians of the Galaxy: Awesome Mix Vol. 1</i>	56,000
4	Queen	<i>Greatest Hits 1</i>	56,000
5	The Beatles	<i>Abbey Road</i>	54,000
6	Tame Impala	<i>The Slow Rush</i>	50,000
7	Bob Marley & The Wailers	<i>Legend</i>	47,000
8	Pink Floyd	<i>Dark Side of the Moon</i>	44,000
9	Billie Eilish	<i>Don’t Smile at Me</i>	44,000
10	Michael Jackson	<i>Thriller</i>	42,000

Source Nielsen Music/MRC Data

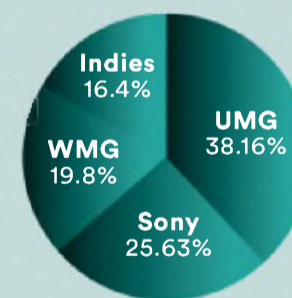
ON-DEMAND OVERALL STREAMING (Year To Date)

RANK	ARTIST	TITLE	YTD OVERALL
1	Roddy Ricch	“The Box”	1,067,436,000
2	Future feat. Drake	“Life Is Good”	702,798,000
3	The Weeknd	“Blinding Lights”	500,283,000
4	Doja Cat	“Say So”	396,073,000
5	Tones and I	“Dance Monkey”	382,574,000
6	Roddy Ricch feat. Mustard	“High Fashion”	380,093,000
7	Arizona Zervas	“Roxanne”	375,830,000
8	Megan Thee Stallion feat. Beyoncé	“Savage” (remix)	371,900,000
9	DaBaby feat. Roddy Ricch	“Rockstar”	360,378,000
10	Eminem feat. Juice WRLD	“Godzilla”	357,865,000

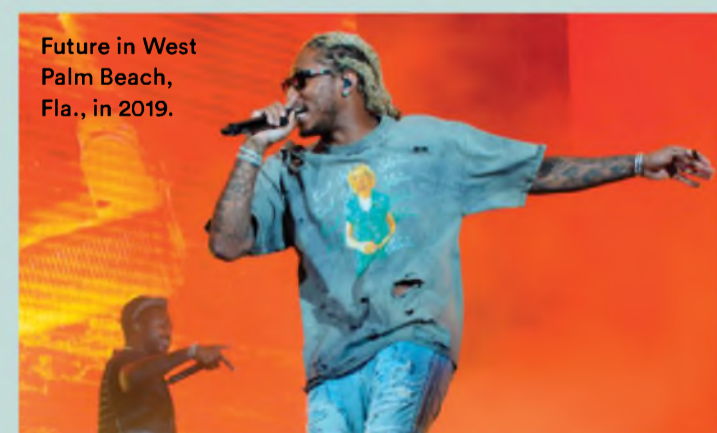
OWNERSHIP BY LABEL



OWNERSHIP BY DISTRIBUTION



Source Nielsen Music/MRC Data, except for WMG’s and the indies’ shares, which are *Billboard* estimates based on information from Nielsen Music/MRC Data. Figures do not total 100% due to rounding.



● SONY MUSIC GROUP NAMED **TOWALAME AUSTIN** ITS FIRST EXECUTIVE VP PHILANTHROPY AND SOCIAL IMPACT. ● ATLANTIC RECORDS NAMED **KEITH “KEEFA” PARKER** VP A&R.



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friendship.**

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PRESENTS



Busch photographed
March 17 at King &
Ballow in Los Angeles.

FROM THE DESK OF

RICHARD BUSCH

Partner, King & Ballow

BY CLAUDIA ROSENBAUM PHOTOGRAPHED BY DAMON CASAREZ

I COME FROM A FIRM THAT doesn't have connections at the record labels," says King & Ballow partner Richard Busch, whose law firm specializes in entertainment business litigation. "When people come to me, they know they have 100% of my loyalty because I have no loyalty to anyone but my client."

That attitude often pits Busch, 53, against what he sees as the industry establishment, in the form of major labels, publishers and household-name performers. He's best known for representing two of Marvin Gaye's children in securing a ruling that Pharrell Williams and Robin Thicke's song "Blurred Lines" infringed the copyright of Gaye's 1977 hit "Got To Give It Up" and jury-awarded damages of \$7.4 million. (That amount was reduced to about \$5 million by a judge, then the ruling was essentially upheld by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.) The decision sent shock waves through the music business, and some creators be-

lieve the precedent-setting appellate court decision could hinder creativity.

In March, when Megan Thee Stallion's label tried to stop her from releasing *Suga*, Busch made the unusual decision to file an emergency temporary restraining order against the label — which ultimately allowed the project to come out as scheduled. In another case — which could potentially shake up the music business by challenging the constitutionality of the Music Modernization Act — he's representing one of Eminem's publishers in a lawsuit against Spotify for willfully infringing the mechanical rights to 250 of the rapper's songs. The stakes: potentially over \$1 billion in damages, as well as the stability of the new legal structure for publishing in the streaming era.

Busch didn't set out to become a disruptive force in the music business — or even a copyright lawyer at all. On one of his first assignments as a King & Ballow associate, he went to New York to handle a civil racketeering case involving New York's

Daily News. When the case ended, he caught a taxi to Midtown in a snowstorm and wound up trading business cards with a man with whom he shared a ride. Months later, his phone rang with a call from the man, whose wife was the copyright administrator for Bridgeport Music. The Detroit-based music publishing company — which owns the rights to George Clinton compositions including "Atomic Dog" and "One Nation Under a Groove" — had just discovered that hundreds of its songs had been used in hip-hop recordings without licenses.

"I told her I didn't really know music law or copyright, but she said, 'You can learn,'" remembers Busch. "Eight months later, I filed what is now world-famous litigation against the entire rap music industry for copyright infringement — 478 cases." One case, which held that even the two-second sample of Funkadelic's "Get Off Your Ass and Jam" used in N.W.A.'s "100 Miles and Runnin'" constituted infringement, set an important copyright precedent that changed hip-hop.

While Busch's office isn't officially closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, he's now advocating for his clients from his Los Angeles home. In June, he filed a lawsuit against Travis Scott on behalf of three songwriters who allege that the rapper used their distinctive guitar melody in his hit "Highest in the Room." He also added the Harry Fox Agency to his lawsuit against Spotify, alleging that the two companies conspired to conceal copyright infringement by backdating paperwork to obtain compulsory mechanical licenses.

“I COME FROM A FIRM THAT DOESN’T HAVE CONNECTIONS AT THE RECORD LABELS. WHEN PEOPLE COME TO ME, THEY KNOW THEY HAVE 100% OF MY LOYALTY.”

What is it like being a litigator in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic?

It’s a challenge. Hearings are either being ruled on based on the submitted papers or after a telephonic hearing. I like to think my papers are pretty persuasive, but clients want you in the room, in person. When you go to a courtroom, you can read the room and take signals from the judge’s questions.

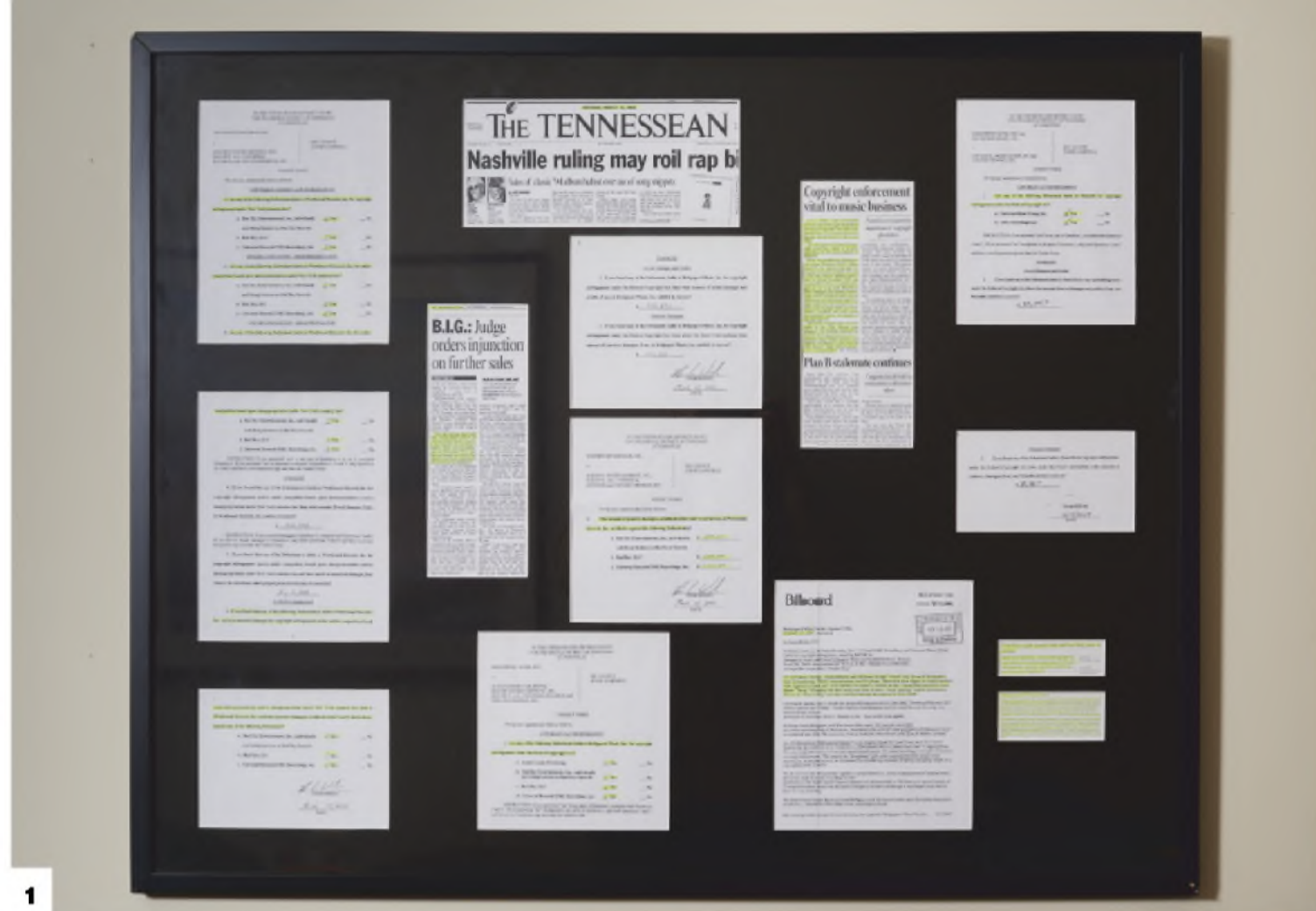
Depositions over Zoom create their own obstacles. Part of the purpose of a deposition is to be right there with the witness. Now you don’t know what’s going on behind the scenes, what’s going on during the breaks. It’s just not an effective process. Unfortunately, I think this is going to continue for most of 2020, and when we get back into the courtrooms there is going to be a bottleneck of cases.

The pandemic has hit the music industry hard, especially the live business. Are you expecting to see a flood of cases related to that?

I don’t want to mention any names, but I have someone who’s an actor and had a movie in Mexico set to begin production. He didn’t feel comfortable going, and the studio threatened him. I don’t know if that will result in any kind of claim, but that’s the kind of thing you’re going to see. I think most people will be reasonable: That’s why there are force majeure provisions in contracts. I can’t imagine that courts will be very sympathetic to claims that someone didn’t risk their life to appear at an event and that this constitutes a breach of contract. But I’m advising my clients to protect themselves and to document everything — any unreasonable requests — and take whatever action they believe is appropriate to secure their own safety.

You won the “Blurred Lines” copyright infringement case without the judge allowing you to play Marvin Gaye’s “Got To Give It Up” in its entirety. Instead, the decision was based on the sheet music that was filed with the U.S. Copyright Office. You won, but you’ve said you don’t like that ruling. Why?

The purpose of submitting a deposit copy with a copyright registration is archival — to identify the work, not to define the scope of it. Now the Ninth Circuit, in the “Stairway to Heaven” case, has ruled essentially that the copyright registration defines the scope of the work — which is in conflict with the law of many other circuits. In my view, that ruling is ridiculous because Marvin Gaye and the plaintiff in the Led Zeppelin case [Spirit guitarist Randy Wolfe, whose estate filed the case] created their music in the studio. They didn’t sit there and write out sheet music. The publishing company would hire somebody to do a sketch of the composition, called a



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lead sheet, to get it on file with the Copyright Office. What they are saying by that decision is that Marvin Gaye is no longer the composer of “Got To Give It Up” — that rather some unknown person hired to do a lead sheet to get a copyright registration is the author. It’s absurd! I believe the Supreme Court, if it looked at the issue, would conclude that the Ninth Circuit was absolutely wrong.

In your lawsuit against Spotify brought by Eminem’s publisher Eight Mile Style, you have called the Music Modernization Act “unconstitutional.” Why do you think so — and why are you so determined to have it overturned?

The law is very clear and well established that copyright infringement is a property right that vests at the moment of infringement. The Music Modernization Act, which became law in October 2018, contains a provision that retroactively holds that a plaintiff bringing a case for copyright infringement against DSPs [digital service providers] like Spotify cannot get statutory damages or attorney’s fees if the lawsuit wasn’t filed by Jan. 1, 2018. This gives retroactive immunity to DSPs. So publishers and songwriters whose work had been infringed lose the majority, if not all, of the remedies that have any teeth to them if they haven’t filed a lawsuit by Jan. 1, 2018 — before the act had even passed. You’re stripping them of their rights and giving the DSPs a “get out of jail free” card for years of copyright infringement. That’s not fair. No less authority than Laurence Tribe, a scholar at Harvard Law School, remarked that our constitutional claims are “substantial.”

One of your clients, the pop-punk band Yellowcard, took some heat when it said it would proceed with its infringement case involving Juice WRLD’s “Lucid Dreams” after his death of a drug overdose. How do you navigate the sensitivities surrounding a lawsuit in a case like that?

It’s important to remember that, No. 1, the lawsuit was filed before Juice WRLD passed away and, No. 2, that there are other co-writers, production companies, music publishers, record labels and distributors who are all profiting off of what we believe is an infringing work. While my clients certainly are sensitive and aware of these issues, the question is whether it is fair for all of these parties to continue to financially benefit. **B**



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1. “When we filed the Bridgeport litigation in 2001, I was young and going up against basically every top entertainment law firm in the country,” says Busch. “The Bad Boy case involved a sample in Notorious B.I.G.’s ‘Ready To Die’; it was the first case to go to trial, and we won big. These are the articles that were written following that victory.” 2. A copy of Donald Trump’s tweet saying that “Blurred Lines” sounds nothing like “Got To Give It Up” and that Williams and Thicke should “get new lawyers fast.” 3. “Anytime you are on the front page of *The New York Times*, so long as it’s for a good reason, is incredible,” says Busch. “I also really appreciated the fact that other lawyers are quoted in the article who say I’m a tough adversary.”



Brace For Impact

Billboard's midyear touring charts don't show the full toll of COVID-19 — but the year-end picture will certainly be grim

BY DAVE BROOKS



HERE'S ONE WORD THAT BEST SUMMARIZES the 2020 midyear touring charts: zero.

That's how much money the concert industry has generated since mid-March, when the world's two largest concert promoters halted touring. It's also how much promoters, venues and artists are forecast to make through the end of the year.

Three quarters with zero revenue will be devastating for the live-music business, but the impact isn't fully visible on the current midyear charts due to the delayed reporting window — *Billboard's* midyear period covers Nov. 1, 2019, to April 30, 2020. Nearly all touring shows were pulled off the road on March 14 because of the coronavirus, meaning the midyear charts include six weeks with zero ticket sales, with most venues showing a year-over-year drop around 20% to 25%. If these charts had been calculated according to calendar year, it would have been far worse.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. 2020 was on track to be the best touring year in history, one that would have beat 2019, which itself was a record year. Early ticket-buying data shows consumer

TOP TOURS

	ARTIST	TOTAL GROSS All Promotions	TOTAL ATTENDEES	NO. OF SHOWS
1	ELTON JOHN	\$114,084,311	790,727	47
2	CÉLINE DION	\$84,618,706	497,957	40
3	U2	\$73,787,641	566,576	15
4	TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA	\$66,827,877	1,016,353	109
5	POST MALONE	\$54,854,152	413,659	32
6	QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT	\$44,363,189	376,477	10
7	JONAS BROTHERS	\$43,075,985	491,335	39
8	TOOL	\$39,271,274	367,102	29
9	MADONNA	\$36,385,935	124,655	52
10	DEAD & COMPANY	\$33,623,620	118,602	13

● ALTERNATIVE SINGER-RAPPER **CONTRADASH** SIGNED TO INTERSCOPE RECORDS. ● **LUKE COMBS** SIGNED A GLOBAL PUBLISHING DEAL WITH UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING GROUP.



TOP PROMOTERS

PROMOTER	TOTAL GROSS All Promotions	TOTAL ATTENDEES	NO. OF SHOWS
1 LIVENATION	\$763,206,954	7,791,856	1,299
2 AEGPRESENTS	\$517,484,715	6,839,740	2,948
3 MSG ENTERTAINMENT	\$131,064,374	1,468,651	295
4 OCESA-CIE	\$94,003,501	1,825,989	147
5 TEG DAINTY/TEG LIVE/TEG MJR	\$72,824,762	706,472	85
6 SEMMELE CONCERTS	\$46,191,000	898,251	362
7 CÁRDENAS MARKETING NETWORK	\$42,137,910	431,010	49
8 CAESARS ENTERTAINMENT	\$39,542,591	312,245	177
9 MGM RESORTS INTERNATIONAL	\$33,838,729	146,216	29
10 SJM CONCERTS	\$30,116,613	507,652	58

spending was on track to hit an all-time high, with more bands and artists than ever competing for fans' dollars. In fact, the top five tours at the mid-point — Elton John's Farewell Yellow Brick Road Tour, Céline Dion's Courage Tour and jaunts by U2, Trans-Siberian Orchestra and Post Malone — were outperforming last year's top five tours at midpoint by over \$10 million combined, even though 2020's midyear reporting period was shorter than 2019's.

The last six weeks of the midyear report are generally much more profitable than the winter months, when there are fewer shows on the road due to the holidays and inclement weather. But April marks the transition between spring and summer, as well as when two of the largest festivals in North America — Coachella and Stagecoach — usually take place; the media attention they drum up generally corresponds to an increase in ticket sales for shows later in the summer.

"April is a momentum month — the weather is starting to improve, and a lot of artists schedule some of their big stadium shows in the spring," says Louis Messina of Messina Touring Group, which promoted Kenny Chesney's rescheduled stadium tour. Instead, the biggest concerts are in a state of suspended animation. John had another six weeks of touring scheduled in North America, along with six weeks in the United Kingdom and Ireland that had originally been slated for September but have now been moved to October 2021. Dion pushed 28 of her European shows — about 40% of her tour, with an estimated gross of \$30 million to

\$35 million — to the following year.

Meanwhile, Tool postponed nearly half of its 2020 tour, which was on track to generate \$33 million, and the Jonas Brothers canceled their Las Vegas residency. The Eagles, Dead & Company, Ariana Grande, Maroon 5 and Backstreet Boys all canceled the remaining dates of their tours. Others — like reunion outings from Rage Against the Machine and My Chemical Romance; big arena runs for Billie Eilish, Harry Styles and Sturgill Simpson; and a series of one-off special engagements by Taylor Swift — were estimated to gross \$1.3 million to \$1.5 million per show.

"There was definitely a sense of optimism going into 2020 that ticket sales would push incrementally higher one more time," says agent Jarred Arfa of Artist Group International, whose clients include Billy Joel, Metallica and Rod Stewart. While most growth in the concert market now occurs overseas, he says there was the expectation "that with the economy going strong and ticket prices increasing, the business would push a little harder and we'd all have another record year. But now it's clear that is not going to happen."

Arfa knows the impact of COVID-19 all too well: He contracted the virus earlier this year and self-isolated for weeks away from his family while recovering. He said he's worried about the financial toll of the pandemic, which will take years to repair — and lead to an unprecedented default on the billions of dollars spent designing, constructing and financing venues built over the last decade. Even worse, of course, is the human toll, which is already being felt: 75%

TOP BOXSCORES

	ARTIST(S) Venue Date(s)	GROSS Ticket Prices	TOTAL ATTENDEES No. of Shows	PROMOTER(S)
1	DEAD & COMPANY Moon Palace, Riviera Cancun, Mexico Jan. 16-19	\$18,691,827 \$60,000/\$3,849	6,127 4	CID Entertainment
2	U2 National Stadium, Singapore Nov. 30-Dec. 1, 2019	\$12,433,310 \$269.21/\$71.69	82,557 2	Live Nation
3	ELECTRIC DAISY CARNIVAL Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez, Mexico City Feb. 28-March 1	\$12,151,755 \$40.91	296,981 3	OCESA-CIE
4	CORONA CAPITAL Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez, Mexico City Nov. 16-17, 2019	\$12,051,408 \$66.94	180,012 2	OCESA-CIE
5	EAGLES Madison Square Garden, New York Feb. 14-15, 18	\$10,707,033 \$750/\$299/\$189/\$129	41,058 3	Live Nation
6	U2 Saitama Super Arena, Saitama, Japan Dec. 4-5, 2019	\$10,343,858 \$356.41/\$71.65	43,225 2	Live Nation
7	MADONNA The London Palladium, London Jan. 29-30, Feb. 1-2, 5-6, 8-9, 12-13, 15-16	\$9,816,383 \$625.11/\$78.14	26,002 12	Live Nation
8	U2 Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney Nov. 22-23, 2019	\$9,596,903 \$233.74/\$32.45	85,654 2	Live Nation
9	ELTON JOHN Rod Laver Arena, Melbourne, Australia Dec. 10-11, 14-15, 2019	\$8,880,361 \$192.88/\$58.83	49,983 4	AEG Presents/ Frontier Touring/Chugg Entertainment
10	EAGLES State Farm Arena, Atlanta Feb. 7-8, 11	\$8,871,615 \$753/\$132	39,375 3	Live Nation

TOP VENUES

15,001 Or More Capacity

	VENUE Location	TOTAL GROSS	TOTAL ATTENDEES	NO. OF SHOWS
1	Madison Square Garden New York	\$69,894,865	621,893	47
2	O2 Arena London	\$67,468,512	968,114	91
3	The Forum Inglewood, Calif.	\$52,798,233	513,886	43
4	T-Mobile Arena Las Vegas	\$37,655,419	196,371	15
5	Barclays Center Brooklyn	\$36,625,212	445,642	52

10,001-15,000 Capacity

	VENUE Location	TOTAL GROSS	TOTAL ATTENDEES	NO. OF SHOWS
1	MGM Grand Garden Las Vegas	\$33,644,023	67,767	6
2	Hallenstadion Zurich	\$22,391,039	262,729	37
3	SSE Hydro Glasgow	\$22,261,906	385,707	53
4	Barclaycard Arena Hamburg, Germany	\$21,217,837	381,276	63
5	NYCB Live, Home of Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum Uniondale, N.Y.	\$16,819,087	231,986	48

5,001-10,000 Capacity

	VENUE Location	TOTAL GROSS	TOTAL ATTENDEES	NO. OF SHOWS
1	Radio City Music Hall New York	\$105,051,017	1,139,802	214
2	Park Theater Las Vegas	\$34,946,630	164,083	33
3	Auditorio Nacional Mexico City	\$23,001,565	470,593	58
4	Hulu Theater at Madison Square Garden New York	\$18,349,744	250,234	64
5	Mohegan Sun Arena Uncasville, Conn.	\$15,974,108	256,648	45

5,000 Or Less Capacity

	VENUE Location	TOTAL GROSS	TOTAL ATTENDEES	NO. OF SHOWS
1	The Colosseum at Caesars Palace Las Vegas	\$25,040,844	136,362	39
2	Fox Theatre Atlanta	\$19,082,576	226,408	69
3	Eventim Apollo London	\$15,178,603	253,238	88
4	Chicago Theatre Chicago	\$14,717,282	228,393	76
5	Beacon Theatre New York	\$14,114,353	168,677	66



Dion in Miami on Jan. 17.



U2 in Saitama, Japan, on Dec. 4, 2019.



Post Malone in Uniondale, N.Y., on Feb. 19.



The Jonas Brothers in Inglewood, Calif., on Dec. 14, 2019.

to 90% of the staff of most touring companies is either furloughed or facing layoffs. Many older, higher-paid touring executives and small business owners are facing the prospect of never returning to the workforce.

“Our survival as independent operators is at stake,” says Nadia Prescher of Madison House, a Colorado boutique booking agency that has signed on as a founding member of the National Independent Talent Organization, one of several independent advocacy groups and 501(c)(6) nonprofit associations lobbying Congress for federal aid. One of its most immediate goals is securing the passage of the RESTART Act, which would cover six months of payroll, benefits and fixed operating expenses for businesses that have taken a substantial revenue hit during the pandemic.

That would help most businesses get through the end of the year, although it’s unclear when concerts and live events will be able to return. Most live-entertainment executives believe a large portion of the population will need to be vaccinated before there’s a return to normalcy. When vaccine producer Moderna announced on July 15 that phase-one clinical trials of its mRNA vaccine had succeeded, several live-entertainment stocks, including Live Nation’s, surged by nearly 20%.

But until that time, venues and festival sites will sit dormant. There’s a very high likelihood that the numbers reported now at midyear will look the same on the year-end charts, especially for venues that will experience little to no activity from much smaller events like drive-in concerts. One silver lining: The majority of tickets sold for postponed shows have not been refunded, and many shows that were set for 2020 will happen one day. But they won’t count toward this year’s charts. **B**

**WE THANK BILLBOARD FOR INCLUDING OUR LAWYERS IN THIS YEAR'S LIST
AND FOR ALLOWING US TO USE OUR AD SPACE FOR ANOTHER IMPORTANT LIST:**

Jonathan Ferrell - Eric Garner - Michael Brown - John Crawford II - Ezell Ford - Dante Parker - Michelle Cusseaux - Laquan McDonald - George Mann - Tanisha Anderson - Akai Gurley - Tamir Rice - Romain Brisbon - Jerame Reid - Matthew Ajibede - Frank Smart - Natasha McKenna - Tony Robinson - Anthony Hill - Mya Hall - Phillip White - Eric Harris - Walter Scott - William Chapman II - Alexia Christian - Brendon Glenn - Victor Manuel LaRosa - Jonathan Sanders - Freddie Blue - Joseph Mann - Salvado Elliswood - Sandra Bland - Albert Joseph Davis - Freddie Gray - Darrius Stewart - Billy Ray Davis - Samuel Dubose - Asshams Pharoah Manley - Felix Kumi - Keith Harrison McLeod - Junior Prosper - Lamontez Jones - Paterson Brown - Dominic Hutchinson - Anthony Ashford - Alonzo Smith - Tyree Crawford - India Kager - La'Vante Biggs - Michael Lee Marshal - Jamar Clark - Richard Perkins - Nathaniel Harris Pickett - Benni Lee Tignor - Miguel Espial - Michael Noel - Kevin Matthews - Bettie Jones - Quintonio Legrier - Keith Childress Jr. - Janet Wilson - Randy Nelson - Antronie Scott - Wendell Celestine - David Joseph - Calin Roquemore - Dyzhawn Perkins - Christopher Davis - Marco Loud - Peter Gaines - Torrey Robinson - Darius Robinson - Terrill Thomas - Sylville Smith - Kevin Hicks - Mary Truxillo - Demarcus Semer - Willie Tillman - Alton Sterling - Philando Castile - Terence Crutcher - Paul O'Neal - Alteria Woods - Jordan Edwards - Aaron Bailey - Ronell Foster - Stephon Clark - Antwon Rose II - Botham Jean - Pamela Turner - Dominique Clayton - Atatiana Jefferson - Christopher Whitfield - Christopher McCorvey - Eric Reason - Michael Lorenzo Dean - Ahmaud Arbery - Breonna Taylor - George Floyd - David McAtee

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A promotional image for U2's 'X-RADIO' project. The background is a solid dark blue. In the upper left, there is a large, stylized white 'U2' logo. Below it, the word 'X-RADIO' is written in a white, spaced-out, sans-serif font, with a thin white horizontal line above the letters. Two large, bright blue lightning bolts are positioned behind the text, one above and one below, crossing each other. In the lower right, two men are shown from the waist up. They are both wearing dark clothing. The man on the left is wearing sunglasses and looking towards the camera. The man on the right is wearing round glasses and has his right arm raised, making a peace sign. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting their faces and clothing against the dark background.

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The Sound

PG. 28 RANCHO HUMILDE ✕ PG. 30 BRETT ELDREDGE ✕ PG. 32 THE MUSIC OF I MAY DESTROY YOU

THE TIPPING POINT

How the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement has led to an unparalleled release of protest music — and why it's not just a passing phase

BY JASON LIPSHUTZ

Clockwise from top left:
Leon Bridges, DaBaby,
H.E.R., Keedron Bryant,
Roddy Ricch, Queen Naija
and Lil Baby.



DURING THE FIRST week of June, as thousands of Americans across the country marched against racial injustice following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, the first wave of new protest songs reached streaming services. That week, YG returned with “FTP,” a spiritual sequel to his 2016 anti-Donald Trump anthem “FDT,” aimed at the police; Detroit rapper Tee Grizzley teamed with rising R&B singer Queen Naija and members of the Detroit Youth Choir for the poignant “Mr. Officer”; country singer-songwriter Mickey Guyton released “Black Like Me,” a reflection on her experiences with systemic racism; and Leon Bridges unveiled “Sweeter,” a collaboration with Terrace Martin told from the perspective of a Black man taking his last breath before dying.

“A song like ‘Sweeter,’ I wrote that last year, and it’s a perpetual narrative,” says Bridges, who returned to the Black community where he grew up, the Southside of Fort Worth, Texas, to film the track’s music video. “In the past, I’ve been numb to those things, but seeing Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd was a tipping point for me. That fired me up.”

In the weeks that followed, popular music transformed in conjunction with the global Black Lives Matter movement, resulting in the most pronounced period of protest songs in multiple generations. Artists across genres and demographics have commented on the murders of Arbery, Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and the music industry has responded in kind — with protest songs dominating playlists like Spotify’s New Music Friday and

Apple Music’s New Music Daily. Following June 2, when the industry shut down for #TheShowMustBePaused, a handful of protest songs skyrocketed in streams, with Killer Mike’s 2012 track “Don’t Die” increasing by 36,254%.

“People are responding to that kind of music — it’s what they want to hear,” says Carl Chery, head of urban music at Spotify, which filled its June 19 New Music Friday playlist exclusively with songs from Black artists in observation of the Juneteenth holiday.

As national protests continued throughout June, higher-profile hip-hop and R&B artists, including many not known for addressing social issues in their music, released songs that did just that. DaBaby released a “Black Lives Matter remix” of his Roddy Ricch collaboration “Rockstar” as the song remained at the top of the Billboard Hot 100 chart, while Lil Baby’s

“There’s no better feeling than feeling like your art is necessary.”

—H.E.R.

“The Bigger Picture,” on which the Atlanta superstar empathizes with protestors and demands prolonged action, debuted at No. 3 on the tally, becoming his highest-charting hit. T.I. and South African rapper Nasty C teamed up for “They Don’t,” which sends love to the “innocent mothers” whose children are taken away as a result of police



A mural of George Floyd by artist Kenny Altidor in Brooklyn.

killings, and H.E.R. issued “I Can’t Breathe,” a searing indictment of a society that refuses to change.

These songs “originate very organically, straight from the artist,” says Carolyn Williams, executive vp marketing at RCA Records, which released “I Can’t Breathe” on Juneteenth and Usher’s empowering single “I Cry” one week later. “Artists are thinking more about what they want to say and what kind of music they want to put out — no different from Marvin Gaye or Stevie Wonder or Gil Scott-Heron from past civil rights movements.”

Indeed, previous generations of popular music included protest anthems — some of which have become touchstones of the pop canon after being borne of social change, from Sam Cooke’s “A Change Is Gonna Come” to John Lennon’s “Give Peace a Chance” to Bob Marley’s “Get Up, Stand Up.” This century, songs have been written to protest the Iraq War, the federal response to Hurricane Katrina and the killings of young Black men like Michael Brown Jr. and Trayvon Martin. Beyoncé, Kendrick Lamar and J. Cole have become superstars while keeping the fight for social justice front and center, and Childish Gambino earned multiple Grammy Awards with his emotionally charged 2018 single “This Is America.”

Yet this flood of new protest songs

represents an unparalleled moment in mainstream music — one that may have been expedited by the concurrent coronavirus pandemic affecting the nation’s collective focus. “With the pandemic,” says H.E.R., “we weren’t trying to listen to songs that were just a vibe, where we didn’t care about the lyrics and we just cared about the beat... people were looking for substance.”

In the near future, labels could be taking more chances on socially conscious artists. In June, Warner Records signed 12-year-old Keedron Bryant, who went viral with his powerful track “I Just Wanna Live,” and officially released the song as his debut single on Juneteenth. And if the amount of protest songs being released each week has slowed down in July, Williams thinks it could pick back up in the fall.

“We’re in an election year,” she says, “so I think that’s going to spark a lot of this type of music and conversations around it.” A benefit of the modern streaming industry, she points out, is that artists can rapidly issue meditations on current events; that’s what happened with H.E.R.’s “I Can’t Breathe,” recorded in the wake of Floyd’s death and released to streaming services in time for Juneteenth.

“A lot of people have said, ‘This was needed,’” says H.E.R. of the song, “and there’s no better feeling than feeling like your art is necessary.” **B**



YG onstage in January.

21st Century Protest Songs: A Brief History

2003: THE IRAQ WAR The George W. Bush administration became the subject of scathing releases from rock legends like Neil Young (“Let’s Impeach the President”) and R.E.M. (“The Final Straw”) following the year’s U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, while Green Day’s 2004 anti-war rock opera, *American Idiot*, became one of the best-selling albums of the decade. The Chicks, meanwhile, were harangued by the conservative-leaning country community for their criticism of Bush.

2005: HURRICANE KATRINA The music world’s response to the government’s mismanagement of the devastating New Orleans hurricane was defined by these seven words, spoken by Kanye West during a relief telethon: “George Bush doesn’t care about Black people.” Artists ranging from Lil Wayne (“Georgia... Bush”) to Elvis Costello (“The River in Reverse”) also admonished the Bush administration’s inaction in song.

2014: FERGUSON PROTESTS Six years before Black Lives Matter became the largest civil rights movement in U.S. history, the 2014 police killing of Michael Brown Jr. in Ferguson, Mo., led to weeks of protests and passionate

responses from the Black music community, including J. Cole’s “Be Free” and Lauryn Hill’s “Black Rage.” The protests came following the murders of Eric Garner by police less than a month prior and Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman in 2012, among others.

2016: DONALD TRUMP In March 2016, prior to Trump securing the Republican presidential nomination, YG and Nipsey Hussle released “FDT,” a G-funk rebuke of everything the celebrity-turned-politician stood for. The song has endured throughout Trump’s administration, as artists across genres, from Death Cab for Cutie to A Tribe Called Quest to CocoRosie, have also released tracks decrying the president. —J.L.



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THE SOUND



From left: Venegas, Humilde and Becerra.

LABEL LOOK

RANCHO HUMILDE

In 1993, when Jimmy Humilde was 14, he organized his first neighborhood party in Los Angeles — and nearly 400 people showed up as local DJ G-Minor performed. Humilde continued to host parties throughout high school, booking rising regional Mexican artists Gerardo Ortiz and Alfredo Olivas, but was eager to expand his presence in the music industry. In 2008, he launched his own independent label, Rancho Humilde, along with business partner José Becerra. (Roque Venegas later joined as CFO.) Now Humilde, 41, is leading the regional urban music scene with chart-topping marquee signee Natanael Cano — who released his first trap album, *Trap Tumbado*, in alliance with Republic Records in June — and other urban *corrido* artists like Junior H and Ovi. Humilde, who in 2019 signed a global distribution deal with Cinq Music, cites his nontraditional marketing strategies as key to the label's success. “We’ve advertised on Myspace, YouTube and Facebook, and never used radio or television to become who we are,” he says. “I want to deliver something real — and I can do that on the internet.”

—GRISelda FLORES

BACKGROUND

Before launching his label, Humilde worked as a street vendor and cellphone salesman, but music, he says, “kept pulling me back.” Born and raised in L.A. to Mexican parents, Humilde told his father at age 7 that he wanted to be a famous singer, “but I wasn’t any good.” After a short-lived artist career, Humilde focused on helping local talent find their sound and, in 2011, signed Rancho Humilde’s first two acts: Komando Negro and Los Hijos de Barrón. He appreciated their fresh, guitar-led take on *corridos*.

THE ARTISTS

After bolstering Rancho Humilde’s roster with regional Mexican urban acts Legado 7, Arsenal Efectivo and Fuerza Regida, the label signed Cano in 2019 — and within months secured his collaboration with Bad Bunny on “Soy El Diablo.” (It hit No. 16 on *Billboard*’s Hot Latin Songs chart.) To help push Cano into the mainstream, Humilde then partnered with Republic for Cano’s *Trap Tumbado*. “I knew Nata was a rapper,” says Humilde, “but I wanted him to focus on *corridos* first. He’s an innovator. People will take notice.”

KEY STATS

Cano’s *Trap Tumbado* peaked at No. 11 on *Billboard*’s Latin Rhythm Albums chart (dated July 11), becoming Rancho Humilde’s debut entry on the list. Elsewhere, Junior H scored his first entry on Top Latin Albums with *Atrapado En Un Sueño* in April, the second regional Mexican album to debut in the tally’s top five this year. Rancho Humilde has also logged seven other titles on the Hot Latin Songs chart: Five are by Cano, while Junior H is behind the other two.

WHAT’S NEXT

Cano was ranked the third top Latin artist, behind only Bad Bunny and Ozuna, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data’s 2020 midyear report — but Humilde isn’t settling. He plans to push his 40 label acts forward with more *corridos* and trap fusions in the near future from Junior H (like Cano, he was making trap music before *corridos*, according to Humilde), Ovi and Fuerza Regida. “We’ll keep working hard and if we grow more, cool — but if we don’t, that’s fine too,” says Humilde. “I’ll let God decide.”



Cano

RULING TIKTOK

▶ IN MARCH, RIGHT BEFORE CALIFORNIA enforced its first lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic, Jason Derulo met with TikTok at his Los Angeles home to discuss best practices. According to Isabel Quinteros, TikTok U.S. senior manager of artist relations and music partnerships, the meeting spanned two hours. “When Jason commits to something, he commits 100%,” she says. “Once he decided this was going to be his platform, he told me, ‘I want to be No. 1.’”

Since he started posting on the platform regularly at the end of 2019, his follower count has skyrocketed from 6 million — a number that carried over from Musical.ly, which TikTok absorbed in August 2018 — to over 28 million, making him one of its top 15 creators along with Will Smith and the app’s top user, Charli D’Amelio. Derulo says he posts “whatever appeals to him in the moment,” from viral dance challenges to gourmet “milli meals” — which he makes when he gains 1 million new followers — or special effects-assisted visuals, including one where he’s levitating and another where he “accidentally” power-drills off his front teeth. “On other platforms, there’s a format, whereas TikTok is like, ‘Take me as I am,’” says Derulo. “It’s an even playing field.”

Derulo adds that “never in a million years” would he have been able to devote so much time and energy to the app if not for the lockdown. Plus, he has managed to turn it into a significant revenue-maker in the absence of touring; Derulo says the \$75,000 per-post rumor that surfaced on Twitter in July is “way, way below” his payday per clip.

His massive new following has translated to musical success, too. After parting ways with Warner Records this spring after 12 years, Derulo released four new singles this summer — each on a different label. But it’s the bouncy “Savage Love,” co-starring Jawsh 685 and out on Columbia, that became his highest-charting hit on the *Billboard* Hot 100, at No. 19, since “Want To Want Me” in 2015. It’s boosted by his very own TikTok dance, of course, and has soundtracked over 2.8 million videos on the app. “Jason is the TikTok king,” says Quinteros. “Anyone who wants to get to his level is going to have big shoes to fill.” —JOSH GLICKSMAN

Dixie D’Amelio (left) — Charli D’Amelio’s older sister and fellow influencer — danced with Derulo in a TikTok clip posted in June.



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Eldredge (left) and Peets at the Q Prime office “garage” in April.

Q&A

Brett's New Blueprint

Why country star Eldredge had to unplug and reboot his career, with the help of manager John Peets

BY MELINDA NEWMAN

AFTER THE RELEASE OF Brett Eldredge's self-titled 2017 album, the country singer — who already had five No. 1s on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart — should have been enjoying a career peak: *Brett Eldredge* became his highest-charting Billboard 200 album to date, hitting No. 2. But Eldredge had become wracked with anxiety, feeling frustrated that he wasn't reaching his professional or personal potential. He decided to disengage from social media, saying that he became aware of how it distracted him “from the real stuff in my life,” and to switch managers, partnering with Q Prime South's John Peets (Eric Church, The Black Keys, Ashley McBryde). Peets' first piece of advice was to take some time off, so Eldredge grabbed a flip phone,

guitar, Polaroid camera and notebook and traveled to California to write with a clear mind. With a new manager, new environment and new production team — Eldredge enlisted producer-songwriters Daniel Tashian and Ian Fitchuk, best known for Kacey Musgraves' *Golden Hour* — he emerged with his fifth studio album, *Sunday Drive*, which arrived July 10 and hit No. 5 on *Billboard's* Top Country Albums chart.

What struck you about each other when you first met?

Eldredge [John] had such a different way of looking at this whole music business thing. He wants you to be the artist that you want to create; you don't have to follow any kind of formula. He said if I've got to take a year or two off [touring] and just focus on the music, that was fine.

Peets His openness. [Brett] was willing to take a risk and allow himself to be open for that journey, knowing it was going to be a long time. We really did walk in the woods for a year to figure out [his next steps].

Most artists are constantly in “go” mode. How did you convince Eldredge to slow down?

Peets A lot of confidence stems from permission: “No one little element is going to throw you off your game... It's OK to let social media cool down... You're not on the hamster wheel, come on off.” It's about believing in what they're out to do and the possibilities.

How did getting off social media influence the album?

Eldredge It was very important to quit staring at a screen and get the flip phone

— get a Polaroid camera to capture moments, but not take a hundred photos of one thing. Taking one photo, and maybe it's not perfect, but [appreciating] those imperfections, that moved into my music and recording.

How creatively involved was Peets?

Eldredge I would send him every song. It was really he and I deep in the woods trying to hone in on this sound. Once we had that map, I felt like I was becoming my own artist for the first time because I had the freedom to say and do whatever I like.

How do you hope this album propels Eldredge's career?

Peets The next level is the establishment of Brett Eldredge from the gazillion white male singers in country music. The goal is to find his own lane. **B**



ONE TO WATCH

Tkay Maida

FROM Adelaide, Australia

AGE 23

LABEL 4AD

FOUNDATION Growing up in Zimbabwe, singer-rapper Tkay Maida's musician father kept plenty of studio gear in the house. It wasn't until her family moved to Australia — and she started watching MTV every Saturday morning — that she began using his equipment to remix rap songs at age 15. She posted a few on Face-

book (and has since deleted them all), including remixes of “Power” by Kanye West and “Roman's Revenge” by Nicki Minaj. Citing Major Lazer, M.I.A. and Santigold as influences, Maida has always had global stardom as her goal, though her parents encouraged her to attend university first. She studied architecture but deferred in her second year once she started booking local club shows.

DISCOVERY In 2013, Maida uploaded her debut single, “Bron-tosaurus,” to radio station Triple J's Unearthed platform. “I had a lot

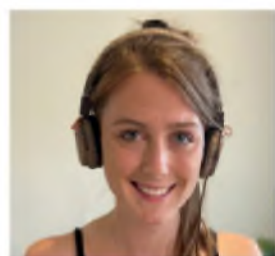
of A&Rs emailing me,” she recalls, and was referred to an Adelaide-based manager who helped her sign a recording contract with Universal Australia in 2014, partnering in 2016 with Downtown for North America. “It has always been about a small team with a big engine,” says Maida, who signed a new global deal with 4AD in April. A&R executive Briana Cheng, who met Maida at Downtown five years ago and is now at 4AD (where she founded sister label b4), says that “historically, [4AD] hasn't had many rappers,” but Maida “seeks out growth as an artist every day.”

FUTURE Maida always knew that her 2018 EP, *Last Year Was Weird, Vol. 1*, would be a three-part project: “It's a good exercise. You have the chance to really delve in, explore and experiment,” she says. *Vol. 2*, out Aug. 7 and previewed by the fierce single “Shook,” is nearly done, save for three tracks, which Maida says are the project's most introspective. And now, even though “with everything happening in the world, nothing seems worth talking about,” she's finding that “there's a lot I need to say.”

—LYNDSEY HAVENS

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IN DEMAND

CIARA ELWIS

MUSIC SUPERVISOR

Ciara Elvis grew up in Scotland, singing along in the car to The Beatles and obsessing over Disney's *Fantasia*. "I used to watch it three times a week," she says of her earliest memory putting music to picture. As a teen, she discovered American indie bands on *One Tree Hill* and *Gossip Girl*, later studying music at university in Edinburgh. In her final year, she worked as a brand manager at Spotify, making event and genre-specific playlists, and soon after took an office assistant job at London-based music company Air-Edel. "I was reading how music supervision is one of the things they did and was like, 'I cannot believe this is a real job,'" recalls Elvis, 27. "I started bothering Matt Biffa, the supervisor I worked with on [Netflix dramedy] *Sex Education*, and helped more and more until I got my own [assignments]." Recently, Elvis landed her buzziest project to date, BBC One/HBO's acclaimed *I May Destroy You*, and is now finishing Katherine Ryan's upcoming Netflix sitcom, *The Duchess* ("There's a lot of BFE: big female energy"). Elvis says notoriously tight budgets compared with the U.S. industry force creativity: "Who's this person, but newer — and going to be big in five years?" —LYNDSEY HAVENS

Coel as Arabella in *I May Destroy You*.



I MAY DESTROY YOU



A producer on *I May Destroy You* approached Air-Edel in 2019 while show creator/star Michaela Coel (left) was still writing the script, based on real events, for the affecting series about a young woman's sexual assault. "We met with Michaela on set in

East London; she was literally running to see us between takes," recalls Elvis. They initially discussed Coel's taste in music — she's a fan of *Soulection Radio*, which highlights lesser-known talent and now airs on Apple Music — and bonded over U.K. R&B/hip-hop acts like Shakka, Kojey Radical and Little Simz. "We discussed not wanting the music to lead people to feel anything in particular about a certain sequence," says Elvis. "It's a powerful approach."

AFTER LIFE



Before *After Life* producer Charlie Hanson tapped Air-Edel for the show, Elvis first met its star and creator, Ricky Gervais (left), in 2016 while manning Air-Edel's reception desk. She says Gervais is "superinvolved with the music to the point where

he essentially just tells us what he wants," she says. "And our main task is making it happen." As a result, two career wins came from season two of the Netflix dark dramedy: landing The Carpenters' "Top of the World," which she says Richard Carpenter cleared himself (after reviewing its use in the show), and placing David Bowie's "Can You Hear Me" in a later episode. "I've never cleared a Bowie track before — and I don't know if I will again."

I'M WITH THE BAND: NASTY CHERRY



Elvis says serving as music supervisor for this 2019 Netflix reality show, spearheaded by Charli XCX (left) and focused on an emerging pop quartet, was "quite scary" considering she was not only pitching artists to another artist — but

to one with great taste. "She was obviously so involved with the music side, but was very happy for me to just pitch tracks for her to pick," says Elvis, adding that they had cleared a Lizzo song, though that scene was unfortunately cut. Plus, says Elvis: "I remember Charli saying, 'I think she'll be massive by the time this comes out,' and she was absolutely right. Lizzo was literally everywhere when the show ran."

INSIDE LOOK

A SURPRISE ENCORE

In 1999 at the Berkeley (Calif.) Community Theatre, Metallica performed 21 songs alongside the San Francisco Symphony, a mix of reimagined material plus two new tracks. The subsequent live album, *S&M*, reached No. 2 on the Billboard 200, while the song "The Call of Ktulu" won a Grammy Award for best rock instrumental performance.

Last September, the rockers reunited with the symphony 20 years later for two concerts to commemorate the opening of San Francisco's Chase Center, the new home of the NBA's Golden State Warriors. Now, on Aug. 28, those shows will arrive as a new live album and film, *Metallica & San Francisco Symphony: S&M2*.

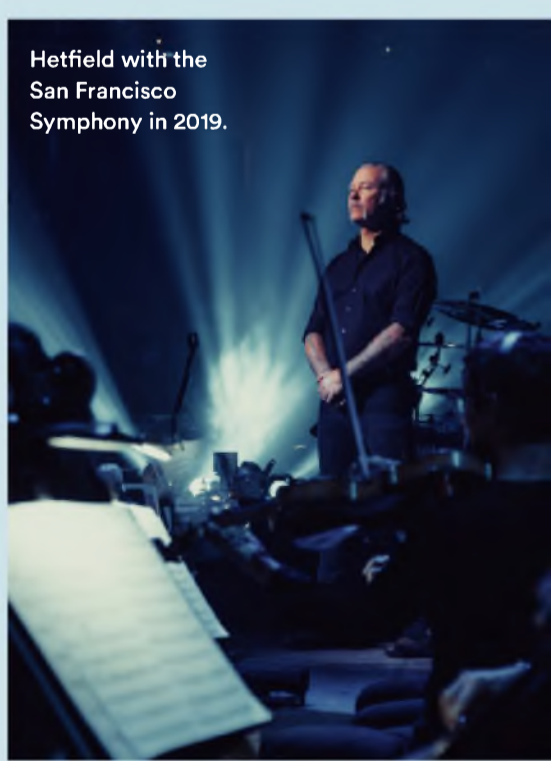
While the original concerts were the idea of late composer-arranger Michael Kamen, who conducted them and died in 2003, this time Metallica requested that the orchestra's music director, Michael Tilson Thomas, bring the project to fruition. "We wanted to revisit [Kamen's] idea," says Greg Fidelman, co-producer of the *S&M2* album along with Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich and frontman James Hetfield and mixer of the album/film's audio, "and take it to another level."

Fidelman explains that in order to do that, he and Metallica had to break down "the perceived wall between orchestra and rock band, having them interact as one large group of musicians." He says the stage design was guided by this — for instance, there weren't any amplifiers onstage, which allowed the symphony to sit adjacent to the band and gave Metallica

"the ability to walk up to the different sections of the orchestra and play with them."

Still, Metallica had to adjust to losing the flexibility that its relaxed approach to live shows affords. "With the symphony, you have to rehearse starts and stops. You can't all of a sudden extend the guitar solo by four bars or do a different ending," says Ulrich. "That doesn't fly."

During the shows, Fidelman recalls being in the recording truck, "nervously listening, hoping for nothing to go wrong." But on day two, he stopped worrying. "I remember during the extended singalong after 'The Memory Remains,' thinking to myself, 'This is going to be f'ing great,'" he says. "These guys are not afraid to challenge themselves. They have more fun when the idea of things falling apart is in the air." —CHRISTA TITUS



Hetfield with the San Francisco Symphony in 2019.

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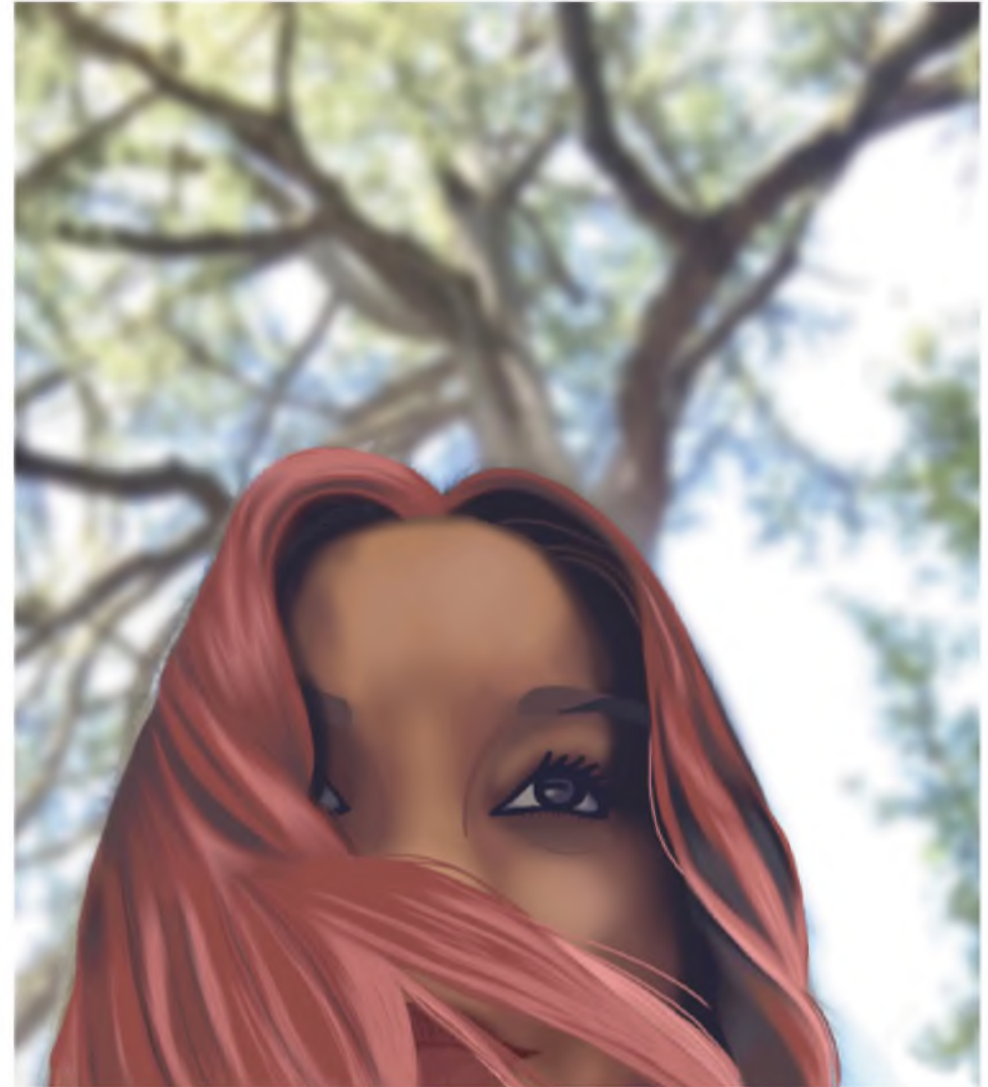
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GETTING IN



Scott photographed by
Nabil Elderkin on July 11 at
Milk Studios in Los Angeles.

Styling by Alexandra and
Mackenzie Grandquist
Nike hoodie, Sacai jacket, Bottega
Veneta belt, KAPITAL jeans.

THE GAME



An otherworldly Scott in his *Fortnite* "Astronomical" event in April.

With his record-setting (and eye-popping) performance in *Fortnite*, **Travis Scott** proved that limitless creative potential — and a captive, merch-mad audience — could make video games the most lucrative new frontier for the live-music business

BY TATIANA CIRISANO

SOMEBODY FUCKING SMOKED ME?!" It's the evening of April 23, and Travis Scott is addressing roughly 230,000 viewers over Instagram Live. He's about to perform the biggest concert of his career — maybe the biggest concert of anyone's.

The 28-year-old rapper is streaming from home in Los Angeles while tuning in through his gaming console to the premiere of "Astronomical" — his pre-taped performance as an avatar within the massively popular multiplayer video game *Fortnite Battle Royale*, in which groups of 100 players battle on a deserted island until only one of them remains. That means he gets to join the fun as a player, and unfortunately, sometimes lose (or in gamer-speak, get smoked). "I'll let y'all know when I re-spawn" (come back to life), he says with a chuckle. Moments later he's back in the game, fumbling with his joystick and gulping shots of Don Julio 1942. "Turn that shit up!" he barks to someone offscreen, and the volume jumps.

Back in the game, players have parachuted down from a flying bus (just go with it) to cluster around a virtual stage, where their avatars head-bang and pump flaming mic stands in the air. Suddenly, the balmy opening bars of Scott's signature hit, "Sicko Mode,"

hail the arrival of a colossal purple asteroid that crashes into the stage, sending players flying with the force of its explosion. Out of it rises an equally colossal avatar of Scott — silver chain, maze of tattoos, custom Air Jordans and all — stomping over palm trees as if they were weeds and igniting sparkly meteor showers with a thunderous clap of his hands. As avatar Scott mouths the words to a greatest-hits collection of his songs from "Goosebumps" to "Highest in the Room," the spectacle whisks players through a flaming amusement park, underwater and finally, into outer space, where Scott debuts "The Scotts," his brand-new track with Kid Cudi, while riding a glowing planet into oblivion.

The entire performance lasted under 10 minutes, but by the end, it had made history as *Fortnite*'s largest-ever in-game gathering. The initial event drew 12.3 million concurrent players at its peak, and a staggering 27.7 million unique players from around the globe joined across five total airings of "Astronomical," over the course of three days and multiple time zones. Including repeat viewers, fans showed up for the event a total of 45.8 million times — and that may not count another 73 million views logged by

the official YouTube version, and millions more on gaming-focused livestreaming platform Twitch, where Nielsen SuperData estimates the premiere's official stream reached a peak average-minute audience of 2.3 million viewers. (Twitch does not release exact viewer numbers.)

No other artist could have been better positioned to put on a virtual event this mind-blowing. Scott is renowned for pushing creative boundaries — from announcing his blockbuster 2018 album, *Astroworld*, by constructing enormous, gold-colored sculptures of his own head across the country, to riding an actual roller coaster high over his fans' heads inside arenas during the album's tour. When even that wasn't enough to satisfy his free-wheeling imagination, the virtual world became his new obsession.

"I could go from being myself to underwater, the stage could go underwater without anybody getting hurt — all of the things I would want to do in real life," Scott tells *Billboard*. "We can fly; we can do all of these things. That's what gets me amped, you know what I'm saying? The fantasies I would think of, to see it all come alive, so people can see and experience it, too."

Scott isn't the only creator eyeing video games as a new, interactive — and massive — stage. Before "Astronomical," electronic DJ Marshmello performed a first-of-its-kind live set inside *Fortnite* in February 2019 (attracting 10.7 million concurrent players, a record that "Astronomical" beat by 1.6 million). Less elaborate live sets have followed, from artists like Diplo, Steve Aoki and deadmau5 inside *Fortnite*'s new, weapons-free Party Royale mode. And outside of *Fortnite*, over the past few months, artists have performed inside games from *Minecraft* (Charli XCX, 100 geecs, Phoebe Bridgers and more) to action game *World of Tanks* (The Offspring) and even a spinoff of Disney's *Club Penguin* (Soccer Mommy).

And while the lack of live concerts during the coronavirus pandemic no doubt aided Scott's (truly) astronomical numbers, in-game shows existed for years before the current crisis, and will only continue to blow up in the future. In fact, many music industry executives and analysts consider "Astronomical" to be further confirmation of a shift they've seen coming, one as inevitable and potentially explosive



as Scott's asteroid: that games — which offer a built-in, enormous, youthful audience eager to pony up real cash for virtual merchandise — are the future of the live-music business.

"Games are the new venues of tomorrow," says MIDiA Research co-founder/tech and music analyst Mark Mulligan. "Each one is a different venue, the same way you choose between which stadium, theater or arena to play. Travis Scott performing in *Fortnite* was the gaming equivalent of having a stadium-sized setup, with amazing lighting and backdrops, and everything else."

In-game concerts eliminate the barriers and expense of physical shows, while retaining the same community aspect that makes them so special. There are "zero limitations from a production and capacity standpoint," says David Stromberg, Scott's manager and GM of his record label/merchandise company Cactus Jack. A near-limitless number of fans from around the world can tune in simultaneously, including many, adds Stromberg, "that may have never been to a concert." Overhead costs are typically minimal compared with physical shows, and the financial potential is huge.

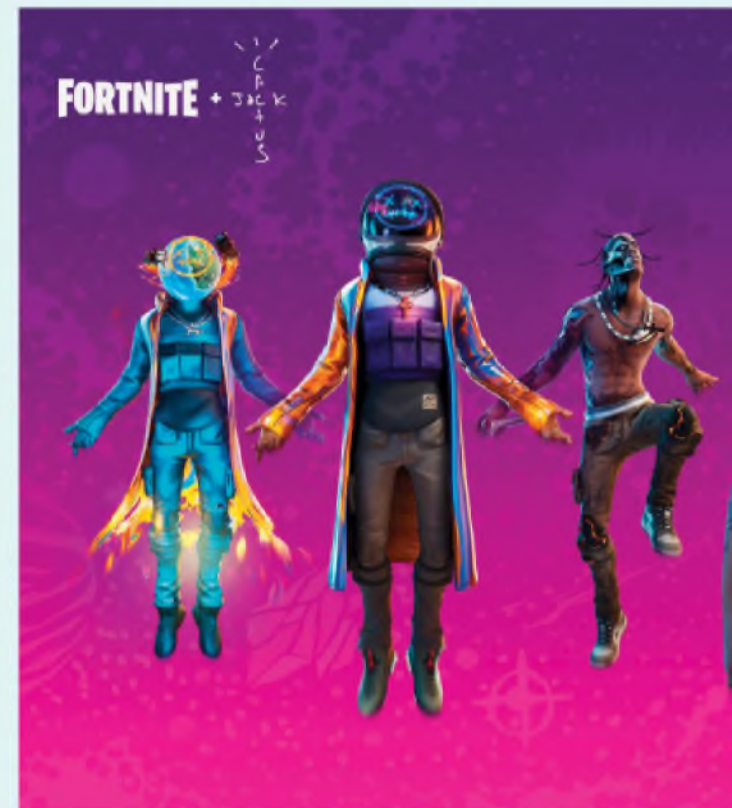
Thanks in no small part to the gaming community's normalized practice of purchasing in-game items like avatar skins and gear — one that Scott profited from immensely thanks to an extensive "Astronomical" line — the global video game sales market is expected to generate revenue of \$159.3 billion in 2020, a year-on-year growth spurt of 9.3%, according to esports analytics firm Newzoo. That's almost eight times the \$20.2 billion

that the global recorded-music industry generated in 2019, according to IFPI.

So enticing is the gaming industry's growth that in early July, PlayStation maker Sony Corp. — the parent of Sony Music Group, home to Epic Records, where Scott is signed — took a 1.4% minority stake in *Fortnite* publisher Epic Games for \$250 million (valuing Epic at just shy of \$18 billion), joining Chinese tech/music firm Tencent Holdings, which acquired 40% of Epic Games for \$330 million in 2012. Projects to come out of the deal will build on the existing "One Sony" campaign, which encourages collaborations across the company's portfolio, focusing "mainly in the area of Sony's entertainment business," says a Sony Corp. representative, with the opportunity to provide "new value creation in areas such as virtual platforms for live content."

Meanwhile, online job postings show that Sony Music is hiring its own team of game developers, and Epic Records is partnering with professional esports organization FaZe Clan to create a soundtrack to the upcoming film *The FaZe Clan Universe*, among a growing list of other music industry players making moves in the gaming space. And if an artist as forward-thinking and influential as Scott has given the in-game performance his seal of approval, it's a sign that those companies are on the right track.

"Whether it was the gaming community or people that don't even play games, there was definitely a sense of, 'People around the world right now are locked in and focused,'" Scott says of his performance. "I watched it, and I raged out till I passed out."



ASTRONOMICAL" LASTED just 10 minutes, but the event took over a year to come together, and the idea behind it had been brewing in Scott's imagination for much longer. "I've been having these ideas since *Rodeo* [his 2015 debut album]," says Scott, speaking over the phone from Los Angeles. "I'm just now being able to get it going."

The Houston native grew up playing video games in the *God of War* and *Grand Theft Auto* series and has been a committed gamer ever since; he started playing *Fortnite* when the game was released in 2017. The following year, Drake made headlines for participating in a *Fortnite* session with professional gamer Tyler "Ninja" Blevins, which drew a record-breaking peak 628,000 concurrent viewers when it was broadcast on Twitch. Scott, who was then five months away from releasing *Astroworld* and catapulting to superstardom, played in that session, too.

"I think people gravitate toward the experience," he says of *Fortnite*'s popularity. "There are multiple things you can do; you can have these different [out]fits; you can shoot. It's a different combination of things, which is why I think people fuck with it."

Fortnite is free to play, although gamers can purchase "V-bucks" to exchange for virtual goods like skins (avatar outfits), gear (for fighting) and emotes (which lend the ability to act out expressions, including

NEXT LEVEL

HOW THE MUSIC AND GAMING INDUSTRIES BECAME FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS

BY JOSH GLICKSMAN

1978

Taito's *Space Invaders*, with its simple bum-bum-bum-bum bassline, becomes the first video game to feature a continuous backing soundtrack.



1981

Konami's *Frogger* breaks from the linear music mold, adding game-over and level-start themes, and employing 11 tracks that often change throughout gameplay.



1983

In Midway's arcade game *Journey*, the user must retrieve the band's instruments from different planets, then act as bouncer at a concert, during which "Separate Ways (Worlds Apart)" plays. The song peaks at No. 8 on the Hot 100 the month of its release.

1985

Nintendo's *Super Mario Bros.* arrives with an iconic theme song by Koji Kondo. It will spend over 100 consecutive weeks on *Billboard*'s now-defunct Hot Ringtones chart and spawn countless remixes.



Opposite page, from left: Marshmello kicked off *Fortnite*'s star in-game performances in February 2019; virtual outfits created for Scott's "Astronomical" event; Diplo's Major Lazer performed in Party Royale mode in May. Right: real-life Diplo (right, with guest Young Thug) behind the scenes of his Party Royale set promoting his *Thomas Wesley* album in June.



dance moves). It's available on various consoles, as well as computers and mobile devices, and users on one platform can play with those on others, a rarity in gaming. All of these factors have helped *Fortnite* accumulate 350 million registered users globally in just three years, making it one of the most popular games ever.

"We reached out to Epic Games over a year ago about doing a collaboration," says Stromberg. (Epic Games declined to comment for this story.) Scott immediately had a vision for what his in-game performance could look like, but it took some time for the technology to catch up to it. "I was like, 'Yo, if we just stay down and figure this out, it's going to come together,'" recalls Scott. "I commend those guys for pushing and pushing to try to make the idea that I had come to life." The performance's high-gloss production quality comes courtesy of Epic Games' pioneering development tool Unreal Engine, which has powered the *Mortal Kombat* series, PlayerUnknown's *Battlegrounds* and even the digitally rendered sets for the Disney+ *Star Wars* TV series *The Mandalorian*.

Neither Epic division — Games nor Records — would disclose the terms of their

deal. But industry sources say that artists can bring in \$50,000 to \$350,000 upfront for in-game performances (with Scott's fee potentially closer to half a million), and deals can include a back-end bonus once the event reaches certain viewership metrics — and that's to say nothing of the millions an artist like Scott can rake in from both virtual and physical merch.

Under his agreement, Scott says he and his Cactus Jack team helped shape every aspect of "Astronomical." "Every piece, every inch, we put our heads in on to get it right," says Scott, drawing inspiration from the outer space-meets-amusement park themes of *Astroworld* along with some pipe dreams he could never quite execute in the real world. He says that his asteroid entrance in "Astronomical," for example, was a more advanced version of his 2019 Super Bowl LIII halftime performance, when he blazed onto the stage encircled by fire after a comet graphic was

screened over the crowd.

Bringing those ideas to life required meticulous behind-the-scenes planning. As with any streamed music, in-game performances like Scott's require the proper music licenses, which can cost upwards of \$100,000 for a single song — a license to use a recording (usually from a label) as well as a public performance license from a collecting society like ASCAP or BMI. Any video of the performance that's available on-demand afterward

(such as on Twitch) also requires a synch license and a mechanical license, the latter of which might also be required for a live performance. DJ sets that include remixes or samples also require licenses to sample or interpolate songs.

Scott's performance only used music from his own catalog. While some artists' contracts stipulate that they will only play music they have written or co-written to keep licensing costs low, Seven20 co-founder/CEO Dean Wilson, who manages deadmau5 (a performer at the live Party Royale premiere on May 8), says, "We give [Epic Games] a setlist, tell them who owns what recordings and who owns the publishing, and then it's up to them to clear."

From there, promoting an in-game concert often means doing the opposite of what one would do for a physical show. "On the concert side, you have to announce 90 days out to consider the fact that people have to take off work

or get a babysitter," says TMWRK co-founder Andrew McInnes, who helped put together longtime management client Diplo's Party Royale residency. "We are 15 years into that being drilled into our heads, and that is not a concept that applies to gaming." Instead, *Fortnite* performances draw the most attention when they're announced mere days before the event — in Scott's case, three. And while live shows can last hours, the most effective in-game performances assume that attendees have a much shorter attention span — especially in *Fortnite*, which shut down the entire game during Scott's and Marshmello's performances.

"If you shut a game down for an hour, I can't imagine the amount of backlash that you would get," says Marshmello's manager, Shalizi Group CEO Moe Shalizi, "versus just doing a quick concert that's 10 minutes. It was a snack — something to keep people engaged, to have fun with, and then back to [gaming] they go."

All of that adds up to performances that are far more cost-effective than traditional ones. While Cactus Jack would not comment on the budget for "Astronomical," Wilson notes that such events are "nowhere near as expensive as going on a 50-day tour that costs you \$8 million to \$10 million." And while many tours depend on selling out venues in order to make a profit, "virtually, it doesn't matter."

So far, the lucrative part of in-game performances isn't ticket sales but virtual merch. For years that has been a central revenue stream for the music business in Asia, where Tencent Music Entertainment, which owns three major streaming services in China, makes around 70% of its revenue from virtual tipping and virtual gifts bought by fans. And while those businesses have been slower to take off in the West, gaming offers a promising avenue for them.

For "Astronomical," *Fortnite* pulled out all the stops, adding Scott to its Icon Series of "cosmetics" celebrating influential gamers, with two skins for sale: a replica of Scott's performance avatar (for the equivalent of about \$15) and an astronaut version (\$20). Players could also purchase a Diamond Jack harvesting tool (\$8), a Goosebumps wrap (essentially a skin for weapons, \$5), a Head Banger emote (\$3) or various bundles of those items. *Fortnite* does not release virtual merch

1987

The first installment of *Final Fantasy* has a soundtrack by Japanese composer **Nobuo Uematsu**, who'll go on to sell out concert halls around the globe.

1990

The King of Pop comes to Sega Genesis: **Michael Jackson's Moonwalker** finds the singer fighting villains to rescue kidnapped children, all while dancing to hits like "Beat It," "Smooth Criminal" and "Bad."

1996

Nine Inch Nails co-founders — and future Academy Award winners — **Trent Reznor** and Atticus Ross score the first-person shooter game **Quake** (and Reznor voices the protagonist).

October 1997

Grand Theft Auto debuts with a key innovation: seven radio stations (playing music created in-house) that gamers can toggle between. That number's now up to 20 for the most recent installment in 2013, with channels hosted by Frank Ocean and Flying Lotus.

sales figures, and Scott's team declined to disclose their share of the revenue, but the numbers speak for themselves: Even if the least expensive skin was the only item for sale, at a 3% engagement rate across all five airings, sales would add up to a gross of over \$12.5 million — so at a traditional 20% revenue share, Scott would rake in \$2.5 million from virtual merch alone.

To boost demand, *Fortnite* often releases limited numbers of cosmetics, which can be rereleased later to hype related events. For Diplo's June 25 Party Royale set celebrating the release of his country album, *Diplo Presents Thomas Wesley, Chapter 1: Snake Oil*, *Fortnite* brought back a retired set of Western-themed skins. "They were like, 'It will probably bring people into Party Royale that maybe wouldn't have come in the first place, because of this throwback skin,'" says TMWRK executive vp Renee Brodeur. "Epic [Games] knows exactly what works for their user base."

Meanwhile, the branding around "Astronomical" extended right down to the Scott avatar's shoes, from the artist's long-running collaboration with Nike and Air Jordan. A report from Nielsen Esports estimates that the top five YouTube videos related to the event generated a brand exposure value for Nike of at least \$518,000 (meaning that Nike would have had to spend that amount on 30-second ad placements to have the same effect).

Back on Earth, Scott — who, an industry source estimates, sells upwards of half a million dollars in physical merch per arena tour stop — released multiple limited-edition collections of Cactus Jack x *Fortnite* merch priced in the \$40-\$95 range, including gamer-themed clothing items, gaming accessories, a Scott action figure and even a branded NERF Elite Dart Blaster. "Things that I love, things that I want," says Scott. "It's just the kid in me." The merch also included a set of physical media for "The Scotts," including a CD, cassette, 12-inch picture disc, 7-inch vinyl and 12-inch vinyl, with cover art by the graffiti artist/designer KAWS. Every item sold out.

"Our goal with the merchandising aspect was to create synergy between the digital and real world," says Stromberg. "In-game downloads were based on Travis' iconic branding, and our *Fortnite* merch collection was inspired by tour



From top: Charli XCX's set at *Minecraft*'s Square Garden festival in April; the Rave Mom Warehouse created within the Rave Family Block Fest in *Minecraft* planned for July (but ultimately postponed). Opposite page: Fans showed their love for Soccer Mommy during her *Club Penguin: Rewritten* show in April.

merch, allowing fans to bring home collectibles from a virtual universe."

In-game performances are most successful, though, when the artist has an authentic connection to the gaming community. "The best way of all to make these things work is when the artist actually enjoys playing the game, too," says Mulligan. "They're going to know what sort of clothes they should be wearing; what tools they should be carrying; all those sorts of things that will make it click that much more with the audience."

As a *Fortnite* player himself, Scott says he understood how to cater to the gamer experience and thought of "Astronomical" as a new level or season. "When I play a game, the next level always gets me, like, 'Oh, man, what's about to happen?'" he says. "I think it's just being able to supply people with the frequency that they're on. Knowing not to mess up, for all the people who love this — their everyday, natural love of the experience."

So "Astronomical" intentionally included free, new player experiences that aren't possible in the regular gaming mode, like the abilities to fly and swim underwater, for the duration of the performance. Those details helped create scarcity, an element crucial to the live-events industry that is difficult to replicate virtually: Fans purchase concert tickets to participate in a singular, shared moment in time that won't happen again — and to create similar "FOMO" within games, artists must offer players something both new and fleeting.

"I don't think Travis could have done anything different," says pro gamer Blevins, who plays with Scott often. "At one point you walk out of the water, at another point you're falling through gravity during a drop and then floating through space — so many different things that you



"Games are the new venues of tomorrow. Travis Scott performing in *Fortnite* was the gaming equivalent of having a stadium-sized setup."

—MARK MULLIGAN, MIDIA RESEARCH

can't do in the actual game."

That helps drive listening spikes for an artist's music. Marshmello saw massive streaming and sales gains on the day of his *Fortnite* set, including a nearly 24,000% increase in on-demand video streams of his song "Check This Out," according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data. Marshmello's *Fortnite Extended Set (DJ Mix)* is the top performing DJ mix of all-time on Apple Music and debuted at No. 1 on *Billboard*'s Top Dance/Electronic Albums chart, where it reigned for 16 weeks.

"The Scotts" broke Spotify's 2020 record for the most streamed track on the first day of its release, with 7.45 million streams. The final proof of concept for

"Astronomical" arrived just over a week after the event premiere, when the song debuted at No. 1 on the *Billboard* Hot 100.

"I just really care about the fans and cater to what we want," says Scott. "Because I'm also just a fan."

ASTRONOMICAL" MAY HAVE been some viewers' introduction to the alchemy of music and gaming partnerships, but the industries have been on a collision course for two decades — and Steve Schnur, the worldwide executive/president of music for Elec-



November 1997

The first rhythm game, *PaRappa the Rapper*, comes to North America with a title character who moves through six stages by rapping music composed by Masaya Matsuura.

May 1999

The Recording Academy introduces three new awards for the 2000 Grammys: best soundtrack album, best song and best instrumental composition for a motion picture, television or other visual media — including video games.



August 1999

The first installment of *Tony Hawk Pro Skater* arrives and becomes a touchstone for millennial music fans. Acts like Rage Against the Machine, Red Hot Chili Peppers and OutKast all surface on the franchise's soundtracks.

Early 2000s

A string of artist-focused video games — action game *50 Cent: Bulletproof*; Britney Spears' dance competition *Britney's Dance Beat*; a trio of Def Jam-branded wrestling games incorporating DJ Funkmaster Flex and then-label president Kevin Liles — debut, though none have huge success.



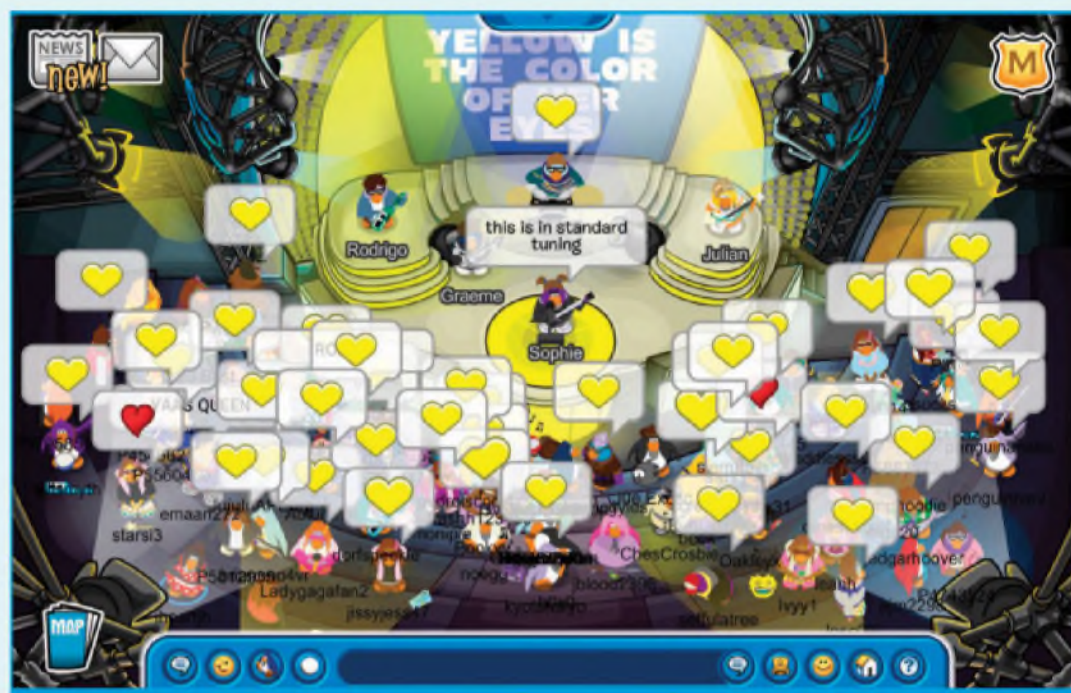
tronic Arts (which publishes titles like *The Sims*, *FIFA* and *Madden NFL*) has seen it all.

Schnur left his career in the recording industry, where he held executive roles at labels including Elektra and Arista, to join EA in 2001. At the time, video games were moving from a cartridge format to CD-ROM, which had enough storage for more sophisticated audio than the chip-tune beats of *Pac-Man* and *Donkey Kong*. Even so, “the record business and publishing business didn’t really understand the game business,” recalls Schnur. “I think they looked at it as no more than toys.”

Artists, on the other hand, “have gotten it from day one,” says Schnur, partly because so many are gamers themselves. One of the first calls he received after joining EA came from Snoop Dogg, who pitched Schnur the song “Get Live,” which the rapper wrote specifically for the *NBA Live* series. And some of music’s most progressive icons saw even bigger opportunities early on: David Bowie scored the action game *Omikron, The Nomad Soul* in 1999, and five years later, Nile Rodgers produced the critically acclaimed soundtrack to *HALO 2*, the first video game soundtrack to enter the Billboard 200. Meanwhile, since joining EA, Schnur has placed music from notoriously hard-to-license acts like Radiohead and Jack White in games like *FIFA* and *Battlefield 1*.

The same year Schnur joined EA, Rockstar Games’ *Grand Theft Auto III* popularized in-game radio stations, with music from buzzy hip-hop artists like Royce Da 5’9” and Black Rob. Rockstar — where many top executives have a music industry background — has since turned the game into a hub for music discovery. A 2018 update to *Grand Theft Auto Online*, *After Hours*, allowed players to run a virtual nightclub and integrated underground DJs like The Blessed Madonna and Solomun as characters essential to the narrative. The company hosted a real-life club night inside a motion capture studio in Long Island, N.Y., to capture their sets, where everyone — from the DJs and their entourages to the attendees and barbacks — partied while wearing motion-capture suits to log their movements.

The last time a game received a *Fortnite*-level of music industry hype was circa 2006, when a *Billboard* headline at the



time declared “The Year of the Avatar.” The game: *Second Life*, a multiplayer online universe owned by Linden Lab (which still exists today), where users socialize, shop, trade in-game property and participate in a virtual economy dependent upon real money. The music industry was quick to pounce on *Second Life*’s popularity, creating branded destinations, merch stores, recording facilities and — yes — live concerts inside it. Users could purchase virtual band shirts at the Sony Music Media Island store; OutKast and Justin Timberlake invited fans to stream music at their in-game artist lounges; Chamillionaire conducted a virtual meet-and-greet; and Warner Records (then Warner Bros. Records) constructed brownstone lofts where Talib Kweli and Regina Spektor held virtual listening parties. That year, Suzanne Vega and Duran Duran, respectively, became the first two major recording acts to perform live concerts inside *Second Life*, which at the time had around 400,000 members.

In the tech world, *Second Life* reignited excitement about the idea of a “Metaverse” (central to sci-fi author Neal Stephenson’s 1992 book, *Snow Crash*) — a shared, 3D virtual space where humans will be able to interact as avatars. Adam Arrigo, a tech veteran and founder of the music performance livestreaming platform Wave, has spent much of his career trying to pinpoint when and how the Metaverse will emerge. “We thought it would start in virtual reality,” he says. “But I think we’ve seen over the last few years that the Metaverse is really being born in gaming.”

Founded in 2016 as a virtual reality startup for concerts, dependent on the adoption of VR headsets, Wave has since

pivoted to helping artists like John Legend and Tinashe perform live online sets as avatar versions of themselves inside virtual worlds of their own design. Now — with investors including manager Scooter Braun, Superfly co-founder Rick Farman and Twitch co-founder Kevin Lin — Arrigo says the company is securing partnerships to bring those avatars into games, too.

“Culture is built around games, and they’ve become the social spaces of the future,” he says. “No longer is it a singular escapist medium, where you’re just consuming content. Especially post-coronavirus, you can see the true power of these games as social spaces.”

Nowhere is that more apparent today than in *Fortnite*. A June 2019 report from the entertainment/technology insights firm National Research Group estimates that among its audience of teens (ages 10-17) who play at least once a week, *Fortnite* consumes 25% of their free time. The amount of time those teens spent on *Fortnite* grew faster year over year than that spent on YouTube, Netflix or Facebook, “and audiences cite its social elements as the primary motivators for playing,” the report reads, with players agreeing that “it’s the best place to be my authentic self and to connect to what everyone is talking about, making me feel like I’m not alone.” With the introduction of Party Royale — where the point isn’t gaming so much as socializing through entertainment — *Fortnite* appears to be leaning into this.

Now, Schnur says he’s having discussions about ways to integrate music performances into EA games like *FIFA* and *Madden*, although he clarifies that “we’re not going to do it just as a knee-jerk reac-

tion because Travis Scott did 10 minutes in *Fortnite*.” Unlike *Fortnite*, he says many popular EA titles are only available on consoles and cost money, so to congregate tens of millions of fans at once would be challenging. But since the pandemic limits the options for real-life performance, the potential is hard to ignore.

“Could virtual festivals and events — think Coachella, Glastonbury or even Super Bowl week — with none of the logistical challenges and all of the cultural and economic benefits, be the next step?” asks Schnur. “EA thinks so.”

DOJA CAT IS PERFORMING

Her bubbly Hot 100 No. 1 hit “Say So,” but something sounds a little different about the chorus. “Didn’t even notice the creeper in the forest,” she sings, “I’ve got to stay on focus/I blew up, oh no.”

The pop singer is a guest at a festival inside the Microsoft-owned video game *Minecraft*, where 126 million monthly active users build virtual worlds by mining a forest for wood blocks, keeping an eye out for hostile “creepers” who sneak up on players and then explode. The festival, called Nether Meant, took place April 11 inside a virtual replica of the Brooklyn music venue Elsewhere that festival organizers spent hours building.

It was just one of several *Minecraft* music festivals recently hosted by the volunteer-run virtual events firm Open Pit, which views the charming, 8-bit-style video game as a way to bring global audiences together during the pandemic and beyond. The festivals “fill a different space than live shows,” says organizer Robin Boehlen. “There’s still a barrier to entry, which is the cost of *Minecraft*, internet and having a computer. But [not] other barriers typically found in live shows, like age restrictions, geographical restrictions or even if you’re just not comfortable attending a show for various reasons.”

Performers send in prerecorded sets for each in-game festival, which takes 12 to 50 volunteers between a few hundred and a few thousand hours to build, depending on the size (the biggest events draw over 100,000 attendees). Users can purchase general-admission tickets or a VIP pass to unlock perks like exclusive viewing areas.

2005

Guitar Hero makes waves thanks to a guitar-shaped controller that adds to the player’s interactive experience; specialized versions for Aerosmith and Metallica come down the line.



November 2009

Six years after its release, *Call of Duty* becomes the world’s biggest first-person shooter franchise, and music star power follows: Hans Zimmer creates the theme for 2009’s *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*, and barely a year later, Eminem’s Pink-assisted “Won’t Back Down” leads the trailer for *Call of Duty: Black Ops* and is buried as an Easter egg track in the popular Zombies mode.



October 2012

JAY-Z is executive producer and soundtrack curator for *NBA 2K*’s 2013 edition, released in the fall of 2012. His own tracks show up, along with cuts from collaborators like Kanye West and Coldplay.

November 2012

The fourth release in the *Halo* series becomes the highest-charting video game soundtrack in Billboard 200 history thanks to a No. 50 debut.

On the day of, users join the *Minecraft* event server to watch avatar versions of artists mime performances onstage, while streaming audio simultaneously in a separate window. Just two weeks after Nether Meant, Open Pit teamed with electronic duo 100 gecs to host another festival, Square Garden, which featured sets from Charli XCX and Benny Blanco, and raised over \$50,000 for Feeding America.

Organizers say that *Minecraft*'s open-world format makes it ideal for festivals, and their only real expense — aside from time — is renting enough server space, which costs between \$200 and \$300 per event. And while Open Pit performers play for free — the events raise money for charity, and Boehlen says it would be “difficult to pay fairly” anyway — other organizers hope to use *Minecraft* festivals to turn a profit. Tech industry veteran Jackie McGuire's Rave Family Block Fest had the ambitious plan to host over 900 artists across 65 stages within *Minecraft* July 9-13, but had sold roughly \$30,000 in tickets after a chaotic first two days, and the event was postponed indefinitely due to functionality issues.

Even so, the proliferation of *Minecraft* festivals shows there's potential for a wide range of artists — across genres and levels of popularity — to enter the gaming space way beyond *Fortnite*. “I hate gatekeeping — most music festivals are run by one of three companies, and they book all of the same people,” says McGuire, which is why Rave Family Block Fest booked more underground acts like German-Italian producer Sacha Robotti and rapper-producer UNiiQU3 alongside names like A-Trak and ZHU. And few would have expected late-'90s rock band American Football to perform at Nether Meant, but “even though they don't play *Minecraft*, they were very excited about the idea,” says organizer Umru Rothenberg. “Their kids played as them in the game. They were very responsive and interested in doing it.” Last year, Korn performed inside the fantasy game *AdventureQuest*, while The Offspring performed inside the military warfare game *World of Tanks*.

In April, indie artist Sophie Allison, aka Soccer Mommy, played her new album *Color Theory* as a penguin avatar of herself inside *Club Penguin: Rewritten*, a remake of the now-defunct online multiplayer game *Club Penguin*. After fans overloaded servers at the initial planned event, over



Avatar Scott inside his *Fortnite* “Astronomical” event on April 23.

10,000 people showed up virtually to the rescheduled date, and many stuck around afterward for a Q&A hosted through the game's chat feature. “It's a game that everyone remembers from being a kid,” says Allison, “and I feel like a lot of people were also doing the same thing I was doing: logging back on when we were all stuck inside, and playing a little bit, just for fun.” Her manager, Mac Cregan of Brilliant Corners, says the event drove social media spikes for Soccer Mommy: In the 20 days between the March 30 announcement and April 18 (two days after the event itself), her Twitter growth rate was 2.5 times that of the previous three months, and her Instagram growth was double that of the same time period.

Yet some of the biggest opportunities for in-game music partnerships still remain untapped. For the fourth quarter of 2019, according to MIDiA Research's Music Brand Tracker, which tracks which games artists' fans play, Travis Scott fans are 2.3 times more likely to play *Fortnite* than overall consumers; still, 80 other artist fan bases are more likely to play *Fortnite* than Scott's, including those of acts as different as Jessie Reyez and Kamasi Washington. In that sense, Epic Records chairman/CEO Sylvia Rhone saw opportunity for Scott: *Fortnite* “exposed him to new audiences globally,” she says, and as a result his fan base “expanded to include the entire family demographic.” Meanwhile, the fan bases for Jorja Smith, Skepta and Gunna are among the top 10 most likely to play *Call of Duty*; those of J Balvin, Slowthai and Koffee are within the top 10 most likely to play *FIFA*.

As gamer Blevins explains, even music fans who aren't gamers might download a game — especially if it's free — in order to watch their favorite artist. “Name any band

that you would think somebody wouldn't download *Fortnite* for,” he says. “If they provide some sort of new, cool moment, song or announcement, and you're a die-hard fan of this band or artist, are you telling me that you're not going to download a free game and attend a concert live?”

Scott — as committed to his vision as ever — insists that the avatar in “Astronomical” was actually him. “I was in the game. That was me,” he says, pausing dramatically before he bursts into laughter. “No, I'm telling you — it's this new thing I'm working on.”

Considering how fast gaming technology is advancing, his jokes may not be too far off. Mulligan and other analysts predict that in the not-so-distant future, game publishers — and potentially music companies — will simply create their own entirely virtual music artists. Already, the avatar influencer Lil Miquela, a creation of the media studio Brud, has accumulated 2.5 million Instagram followers and released a string of singles — the most popular of which, “Sims (Miquela Remix)” (a remix of pop singer Lauv's song about wanting to live in the game *The Sims*) has over 42.8 million streams on Spotify. And in January 2019, Epic Games acquired 3Lateral, an avatar developer known for its hyper-realistic creations of humans.

“It's not beyond the realm of possibility that Epic Games will get to the stage of saying, ‘Why do we need the real deal anymore? Let's just go and create our own set of virtual characters,’” says Mulligan. “We've always had these conversations about how long before machines replace humans. There's no reason at all

why Epic Games couldn't create a roster of *Fortnite* artists.”

Artists, too, might create new avatars as alter egos of themselves, to test out new concepts — the next iteration of a DJ performing under a different name. And in a keynote speech at the video game D.I.C.E. Summit in Las Vegas in February, Epic Games CEO Tim Sweeney said that “where this is ultimately headed is games becoming more open platforms for creators to build their own stuff... in the future, we'd like for any musician to hold their concert of that sort without having to coordinate with us.”

Before gaming can reach that level though, today's in-game performances face challenges of their own. Most important, they're not yet scalable: “It takes months, not just to prepare and get the motion-capture and visuals all done, but to actually build in some genuinely unique gameplay and gaming characteristics,” says Mulligan. And even if gaming companies manage to slash production time, how will performers keep things fresh? “I fully expect Epic Games to have full shows like that more regularly into the future,” he adds, “but they may become less and less unique.”

For the moment, Scott's team doesn't seem fazed. “We are already working on building out something even bigger,” says Stromberg. “The music business clearly took notice of our work and is looking to create more opportunities for artists in gaming. We will definitely be at the forefront of navigating the industry's future in the [gaming] space.”

And while Scott agrees that virtual performances will never replace the thrill of a live show (“It's not like that; I miss that so, so much”), the point is to do things that aren't possible in the real world. He's already dreaming up his next virtual adventure.

“I'd do it again for sure,” he says. “That was just level one.”

HEAD TO BILLBOARD PRO to read more about the intersection of music and gaming in our latest *Deep Dive: “Gaming: Music's Next Big Play,”* with stories on the industry's investment in FaZe Clan, why artists are migrating to Twitch, Nashville's rise as a center for recording gaming scores, key synch players, and Nielsen and MRC Data analyses of music fans' gaming habits.

December 2012

Composer **Austin Wintory** gets a Grammy nom in the best score soundtrack for visual media category for his work on 2012 indie adventure game *Journey* — the first time a video game soundtrack is recognized at the ceremony.



November 2018

League of Legends virtual pop group **K/DA** — which comprises Madison Beer, Jaira Burns and (G)I-dle members Miyeon and Soyeon — reaches No. 1 on *Billboard*'s World Digital Song Sales chart with “POP/STARS.”



January 2019

The long-awaited *Kingdom Hearts III* — part of a beloved Disney-Square Enix collaborative series — boasts an opening theme by pop singer-songwriter **Hikaru Utada**. The Skrillex-assisted track “Face My Fears” breaks into the Hot 100.

February 2019

Marshmello headlines the first in-game concert for *Fortnite*, and nearly 11 million users tune in, with millions more following on Twitch and watching the YouTube recap. The game goes on to host other huge acts like Diplo and Travis Scott, the latter of whom breaks Marshmello's live-audience record.

“A unique department that produces compositions and scores including multiple *Star Wars* titles, in addition to curating two of the most listened-to playlists in the world: the *Madden* and *FIFA* soundtracks.”

Rolling Stone, 4/17/20



**When It Comes To Soundtracks,
We Are The Game Changers.**

Long Time Gone

Fourteen years after their last album — and 17 years after their infamous controversy — **THE CHICKS** are returning to a radically different industry. But as they navigate promoting new music in the COVID-19 era (and with a brand-new name), they're not interested in being vindicated: "We gave up caring about any of that"

BY MELINDA NEWMAN
PHOTOGRAPHED BY KWAKU ALSTON

From left: Natalie Maines, Emily Strayer and Martie Maguire of The Chicks photographed March 9 at Smashbox Studios in Culver City, Calif.

Styling by Marjan Malakpour

Maines wears an Alexander McQueen corset, Dolce & Gabbana jacket, Greg Lauren pants, Saint Laurent belt, Stuart Weitzman shoes, EF Collection earrings, Jennifer Fisher ring, Wax & Wane by Dean Bryant bracelets, Jelena Behrend earrings, ring and bracelet.

Strayer wears a Greg Lauren jacket, Commando pants, Alexander McQueen belt, Gianvito Rossi shoes, Meredith Kahn earrings, Misho ring, DALMATA necklace.

Maguire wears a Marc Jacobs top, pants and jacket; Charlotte Olympia shoes; Palace Costume pins; EFFY and Nouvel Heritage rings; Maya Brenner earrings.



A

AT ONE POINT DURING THE making of *Gaslighter*, the new album from the artists formerly known as The Dixie Chicks, co-writer/producer Jack Antonoff wasn't sure he would survive. Antonoff was working with the trio — frontwoman Natalie Maines and multi-instrumentalist sisters Martie Maguire and Emily Strayer — at Maines' house in Kauai, Hawaii, when Maines suggested a boat trip to see a favorite waterfall.

"Natalie's like, 'I'm going to take you to this place; it's very dangerous,'" remembers Strayer. "You have to jump off the boat and make it to the shore within a certain amount of time or you will drown because the tide is so rough." Maines starts laughing as she defends herself: "I've swam to that beach in way rougher seas. It wasn't dangerous!"

Antonoff was not exactly eager to participate. "It became very apparent to me that we were like sitting ducks under these potentially falling rocks as Natalie's diving into this waterfall," he says. "I'm [thinking], 'This is how a person like me dies.'" Looking back on the moment, Antonoff adds, "This is part of what makes [Maines] a great artist. She wants to push you to the edge of yourself."

Since making their major-label debut in 1998, The Chicks, as they now call themselves (more on that later), have never played it safe. This is true of their music, with its colorful storytelling, unmistakable harmonies and mix of country, bluegrass, rock and pop that have helped them sell 27.9 million albums in the United States, according to Nielsen Music/MRC Data — the most of any female group since it began tracking sales electronically in 1991. And, most famously, it's also true of the way they speak their minds, like when Maines said on the eve of the Iraq War in 2003 that the band was "ashamed" that President George W. Bush was from their home state of Texas. Country radio stations, citing listener pressure, turned on them immediately, and the women endured boycotts and death threats that

made them both heroic legends and cautionary tales.

"Ever since we first signed with Sony, my dad's only advice was, 'Don't let them change you,'" says Maines, 46. She's flanked by Maguire, 50, and Strayer, 47, during a wine-fueled, laughter-filled dinner in Santa Monica, Calif., in early March, a week before COVID-19 upended the world (and halted the band's summer touring plans). As they excitedly discuss the menu and who will order what, it is clear that the women, who live in different cities, relish the chance to spend time together. In conversation, they display a bond of deep reverence and rarely interrupt each other, but they're also still delightfully capable of surprising one another. ("What?!" exclaims Maines when Strayer casually mentions her dream of starting a buffalo ranch.)

Gaslighter, which came out July 17, is The Chicks' first studio album since 2006's *Taking the Long Way* — a project that pointedly addressed the backlash they had faced and won five Grammy Awards, including album of the year. (The 2003 incident was also the subject of a 2006 documentary, *Dixie Chicks: Shut Up and Sing*.) Over the years, the band has toured arenas and amphitheaters, with a 2016-17 world tour grossing over \$58 million, based on data reported to Billboard Boxscore for 67 out of 82 shows. Yet *Gaslighter* is more than just a long-awaited comeback — it's a victory lap of sorts. As much as the music business has changed with social media and streaming, it has in many ways caught up to the band — and experienced its own reckoning with how it has discarded women artists in the past.

Gaslighter is undeniably personal: Its songs cover the dissolution of all three band members' marriages, including Maines' divorce from actor Adrian Pasdar, with ultra-specific, did-she-just-say-that lyrics like "My husband's girlfriend's husband just called me up," as Maines sings on "Sleep at Night." Yet the album's messages about standing up to deceitful men are resonating deeply at a time when women, thanks to movements like #MeToo and the Women's March, are more comfortable than ever with embracing their anger — something The Chicks have never shied away from.

"Early in my life, these three women showed me that female artists can play their own instruments while also putting on a flamboyant spectacle of a live show," Taylor Swift tells *Billboard* over email. "They taught me that creativity, eccentricity, unapologetic boldness and kitsch can all go together authentically. Most importantly, they showed an entire generation of girls that female rage can be a bonding experience

between us all the very second we first heard Natalie Maines bellow ‘that Earl had to DIE.’ ”

Originally planned for a May 1 release but postponed due to the pandemic, *Gaslighter* arrived at an unprecedented time in American history. COVID-19 cases are still surging in many states, and civil unrest following the police killing of George Floyd on May 25 is at a boiling point. The Chicks appear ready to meet the moment: In June, they released the foot-stomping anthem “March March,” inspired by their experiences attending the 2018 March for Our Lives demonstration against gun violence; the video splices together footage of various protests and features names of Black Americans killed by police violence. “We felt that the song could speak [to] and hopefully continue to empower all of these issues facing our nation and more,” says Maguire several weeks after our initial dinner.

“March March” also marked the band’s debut as The Chicks. They had been contemplating changing their name for a while, even though their original moniker was meant

to pay homage to the classic Little Feat song “Dixie Chicken.” Yet as the recent protests inspired widespread reflection about systemic racism and, in particular, celebrations of the Confederacy that exist to this day, they felt it was time. “Early on, people always asked us whether we thought the word ‘Chicks’ was degrading to women but never mentioned the ‘Dixie’ in our name,” says Maguire. “However, over the last several years, our feelings have changed, and we felt like ‘Dixie’ is a word that does hold a lot of negative connotations and harkens back to a time in our country that brought pain to so many people. We are relieved to have a new name and shed the ‘Dixie’ once and for all.”

The name isn’t the only big change. For *Gaslighter*, they assembled the most sonically diverse team of co-writers in their career, including pop hitmakers Justin Tranter, Julia Michaels and Teddy Geiger, as well as alt-rock star St. Vincent. When asked if they deliberately avoided Nashville writers, Maguire shakes her head no, while Maines nods yes. “Not that there’s not great

writers in Nashville,” says Maines, “but a lot of times people think they know who we are or what we want. And a lot of times, they’re wrong.”

The Chicks’ candor in the studio surprised many of their collaborators. “I got chills every other minute while creating with them,” says Tranter. “Especially during our first session, where we got so deep about our personal lives. They push boundaries as a profession.”

The Chicks’ pop-friendly approach is likely why their fraught relationship with country radio remains a little complicated. Though country stations supplied 80% of radio plays for the new album’s title track, the song peaked at a modest No. 36 on *Billboard*’s Country Airplay chart. While Nate Deaton, GM of KRTY San Jose, Calif., says the station still plays “a lot” of The Chicks’ catalog, he adds that “Gaslighter” never made it to regular rotation because “it just didn’t fit the sound we were looking for.”

It’s hard to know how much of that chart performance might owe to country radio’s well-documented gender bias and how much of it might just be

genre lines. Yet the group’s current label, Columbia Records, isn’t fixated on country stations, having already serviced “March March” to triple A radio. (Columbia works the band out of its New York office, not Nashville.) “The beauty of The Chicks is that they don’t belong in just one place or one space,” says Erika Alfredson, Columbia Records’ senior vp/head of West Coast marketing. And The Chicks themselves are unconcerned with how they do or don’t fit in with the industry. “It takes a long time for a woman to not be editing herself,” says Strayer. “We are at that point in our lives where we don’t need to. This is like, ‘What do you have to lose?’ We already lost X amount of fans for being who we are. Why not say what’s real?”

Was there a specific moment when you realized you were getting back together?

Natalie Maines We never felt like we broke up. We were just taking a break! (*Laughs.*) A lot of what helped push [a new album] was that it was going to be our last to deliver to Sony. We originally were going to make a



covers album just to turn something in — I wanted to make an entire Patty Griffin covers album — and then we learned it's in the contract that it can't be a covers album. We just started writing and saw that we had stuff to write about. We wrote with Jack, and that experience was like, "OK, he needs to be our producer."

Emily Strayer He makes everything sound different. That's his genius. He takes us and makes us sound like us, but better.

Emily and Martie, you released two albums as Court Yard Hounds, and Natalie put out a solo album in 2013. Were you two ever concerned you would never make new music with her again?

Martie Maguire I didn't think we *wouldn't* make music again. Natalie's whole reason was wanting to be at home when her kids got home from school, and the mommy stuff trumps the career stuff. It has to. Her husband at the time, he had a kind of career where he had to take work as it came. My ex-husband was home, so I could go do that.

Maines I didn't want my kids to live in our shadows. Also, we had succeeded beyond my wildest dreams.

Why release "Gaslighter" as your comeback statement?

Maguire I felt like it was us in a nutshell, starting with the three-part harmony. I think for the fans, they don't want us to go down too different a path musically. That first 30 seconds of "Gaslighter" is like, "They're back!" It just felt so quintessentially *us*.

A lot of people interpreted the song as another political statement and have been tweeting it at Donald Trump.

Maines That's good. Listen — he is our mutual gaslighter. People are just so aware of the definition of that word, and we realize that we have these people in our lives outside of Trump.

When you look back at the controversy in 2003, do you think your words would spark the same backlash now?

Maguire No! *Nooo!*

Maines People are saying this shit every day.

Maguire I look back at one interview

with Diane Sawyer and wish in that moment I had said, "Diane, let's wait 10 years and see if you still want to have this interview. The fact that this is causing all this turmoil is absolutely crazy to me." I wish some mentor, somebody [had helped]. The closest thing we had was Bruce Springsteen, who put [a statement defending the trio] on his website. I remember reading that and going, "We're OK. The Boss thinks we're justified."

Does getting played on country radio now mean anything to you anymore?

Maines We gave up caring about any of that. It's like, "Well, that's nice." We don't hold grudges. It just is meaningless to us now. That does not speak to what makes me feel successful in any way. Like we're supposed to be so impressed: "Ooooh, such-and-such hasn't played you in 15 years!" It's like, "Fuck them. We're supposed to be excited to hear that?" They should've been playing us this whole time. I don't pay attention to that. I don't suddenly feel successful because WKRP in Cincinnati is playing "Gaslighter."

In Taylor Swift's Netflix documentary, *Miss Americana*, she talks about being told, "Don't be like the Dixie Chicks." She has also cited you as an inspiration. What has that meant to you?

Maguire I went to her concert in New Jersey with my twins [about a decade ago]. She starts in [talking about the Chicks song] "Cowboy, Take Me Away" and how this song made her want to play country music. I was feeling over the hill, like, "Are we ever going to have a career again?" Everybody starts singing not only the chorus but the verses, and I just started [sobbing]. It was the most amazing moment probably in my entire life. It felt like passing the torch in a way.

From left: Maguire, Maines and Strayer.

Maguire wears a Dolce & Gabbana top, shorts and duster; Alexander McQueen belt; Charlotte Olympia shoes; Jelena Behrend necklace and ring; Nancy Newberg ring; DALMATA and EF Collection earrings. Maines wears a Dolce & Gabbana dress, Alexander McQueen belt, Wolford tights, DALMATA necklaces, Jennifer Fisher earrings and ring, Jelena Behrend ring and bracelet, Mounser and Wax & Wane by Dean Bryant bracelets. Strayer wears a Dolce & Gabbana bra and jacket, L'AGENCE shirt, Alexander McQueen belt, Giuseppe Zanotti shoes, Anna Sheffield earrings, Established necklace and ring, Jennifer Fisher ring, DALMATA, Mounser and Zoë Chicco necklaces.

Maines She's helping so many girls for the future [with the documentary], just showing that vulnerable place of figuring this shit out for herself.

Strayer The power she has right now to change things is way beyond any power we ever had. She's in a different position than we ever were.

Several *Gaslighter* songs are about reclaiming your voice and standing up for yourself, including "Julianna Calm Down," which you wrote as a pep talk for your daughters and nieces.

Maines Julia Michaels and Jack had written half a song called "Julia Calm Down" for her. He was playing us a couple of things he thought we could build on. That was one of them. I was like, "Oh my God, that's our song." I went home, and I've never been more inspired. I wrote new verses, new bridges, all in one night. And Jack was like, "Well, we have to see if she'll let you have it." We invited her over and just explained our passion for it. She was like, "I love that you've made it yours." She let us do it.

The pandemic led you to postpone a summer tour. How have you been adjusting?

Maguire We've all been pretty hunkered down with our kids during this time, and that's a real positive for us. I spend most of my time cooking and keeping my 11-year-old off TikTok!

Maines Really, the biggest mindset shift was, "Now what are we going to do with our kids all summer?"

Maguire The fact that touring isn't possible right now was certainly disappointing, but there are so many other important things for us to focus on. Watching how other people's entire livelihoods have been taken away from them because of the pandemic has been nothing short of heartbreaking. We're pretty lucky that we had already recorded the album and have a way of promoting and getting our music out to our fans from our homes.

Will it be another 14 years before another new album, or are we seeing a new era of *The Chicks*?

Strayer I think [the latter]. Jack makes it easy to want to get back in the studio. It doesn't have to be [a] full album — it could just be like, "Let's just fart around and have fun."

Maguire We will all just have to wait and see! ☑



Making A New MODEL

Before Deborah Dugan's shocking exit, **BINTA BROWN** was on track to shake up the Recording Academy. Now she's making a different kind of change as co-chair of the Black Music Action Coalition

BY TAYLOR MIMS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY NOLIS ANDERSON



IN EARLY JUNE, music lawyer and manager Binta Brown received a text message from her friend and Full Stop Management founder Jeffrey Azoff. Outrage over the police killings of George Floyd and other unarmed Black Americans was erupting across the nation, and Azoff wanted to know if Brown was interested in joining a group of executives — music lawyer Doug Davis, Columbia Records' Shawn Holiday and Full Stop's Damien

Smith — as they figured out what they could do to fight for racial justice following the industrywide #TheShowMustBePaused initiative on June 2. Her answer was immediate: “Yes, I want to be part of the discussion,” Brown recalls saying. “Let's make our industry better.”

Over the next week, the conversation grew into what Brown describes as a much-needed forum for Black creatives and executives to share their struggles. Brown has worked in a number of industries: as a corporate lawyer for top firms like Cravath

Swaine & Moore and Kirkland & Ellis, as an adviser to the Obama administration on criminal justice issues and most recently as a manager at Chance the Rapper's Nice Work label; in a late-July email to friends and colleagues, she announced that she is leaving the company for an as-yet-undisclosed role at a label to begin in early 2021. Yet those stories were unlike anything she had encountered in her career. “It was the first time where I felt like I didn't have to hide a substantial portion of who I am as a Black woman,” she says.

From those conversations, Brown and over 30 other preeminent artist managers, attorneys, business managers, agents and other professionals decided to form the Black Music Action Coalition, which officially announced its launch on June 22. In collaboration with CEOs and senior management from the industry's biggest companies — including Universal Music Group, BMG, YouTube and Apple — the organization aims to dismantle deeply rooted systemic racism in the music industry.

Brown is one of BMAC's co-chairs,

Brown photographed
July 16 in Chicago.



though it's not the first time she has been in a position to make meaningful change in the music business. She says that in late 2019 and early 2020, she was in close talks with former Recording Academy president/CEO Deborah Dugan to become the academy's in-house general counsel. "She wanted to use my skill set as somebody who had been a successful corporate governance expert to bring the Recording Academy forward," says Brown. The job would have been a major change at the academy — but it never materialized. Just over a week before the 2020 Grammy

Awards, the academy placed Dugan on administrative leave over what it said were "serious concerns" and claims of workplace bullying. In response, Dugan filed an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission complaint alleging sexual harassment and financial impropriety. In March, the academy terminated Dugan's employment without any settlement payout, a decision her attorneys called "despicable" in a statement that vowed to hold the academy "accountable under the law."

"Every single thing that has been said about Deb Dugan by the Re-

ording Academy could not be more wrong," says Brown. "The wrongness of what they've said is what compels me to be suspicious about the stuff that they're defending themselves against. I saw the care that [Dugan] was taking. She wasn't trying to force anything on anybody."

Here, publicly for the first time, Brown discusses how she would have modernized the Recording Academy — and how BMAC plans to make real, lasting change going forward.

Many people in the business didn't realize you were in talks with the academy. Why were you hesitant to share that until now?

I was scared by some of the people who are very powerful in the Recording Academy. I didn't want them to interfere with my career. I am aware that I'm a Black woman and these are really powerful people who want to remain in power.

What preparations had you made to take the general counsel role?

I reactivated my bar membership in New York since I was technically a retired lawyer for most of the last five years. I read the bylaws for the Recording Academy, and I was like, "Wow, this doesn't measure up to what we consider to be good governance." [In the bylaws] the executive committee is accountable solely to itself [and] is allowed to investigate itself. The bylaws also permit the executive committee to take unilateral, unchecked control of the day-to-day operations of the Recording Academy. That is extremely unusual. Day-to-day administration and operations should be the purview of the president/CEO.

I started looking at it through the lens of [being] a trustee of the American Theatre Wing, which [created] the Tony Awards. I think about how clear we are, how we have removed every trace of a conflict in terms of how productions and artists are nominated. When I started looking at the Recording Academy, I was like, "Maybe people aren't being corrupt, but the possibility for corruption because of the way this is structured is rife."

One of Dugan's main criticisms of the academy was how much the nonprofit was paying for legal work. Would hiring an in-house counsel have saved the organization money?

When you look at what some of these law firms were earning, it's like, "Whoa!" I was just beginning to talk to them about what I thought I should be paid and the amount of money that they were offering me versus what

they've paid in legal fees. There would have been substantial savings for them. [According to tax filings reviewed by Billboard, the academy paid over \$7.1 million and \$2.6 million to law firms in 2017 and 2018, respectively. Brown says her compensation would have been in the mid- to high six figures.]

How will BMAC serve the music industry?

There are fundamental problems in the music model. I understand that fixing the model is scary to some people because it's what they've known and generated wealth from. But it's problematic when you have a major artist who generated value for rights holders and their descendants today are living on welfare or in poverty and don't have access to vital services. A concern of ours is when an artist loses his or her life prematurely, there [should] be a vehicle that can help take care of their families.

Another big problem I see is a lack of transparency in deal-making. Some people will say, "We need to be opaque so that we can be competitive," but it just works for one side. I'd like to think that if I spent three years of my life working on a project, I would have some equity stake in it. I literally saw an executive say to an artist, "Oh, we own you now. You're ours." That should not ever come out of anybody's mouth. If your approach is "Now [I] own this person," check yourself, because that's actually called slavery.

What is BMAC's relationship with #TheShowMustBePaused?

Brianna [Agyemang] and Jamila [Thomas], who are partners of ours, really inspired the whole movement. They're heroes and should be heralded as such. We're working very closely to make sure it's a united front because one of the things we can't allow is for us to become divided. We also know that we can help amplify all of their efforts because we have the artists, songwriters and producers and their fan bases, whereas they're very industry-oriented.

Do you envision BMAC sticking around for the long term?

We're going to keep the conversation going for as long as it's necessary. Even when it's no longer necessary for us to have the acute conversation that we're having, we have an obligation going forward to make sure we remember so we can be better and never ever have the injustices that have been perpetrated. BMAC will be around for a while. We have an extraordinary amount of work to do. ■

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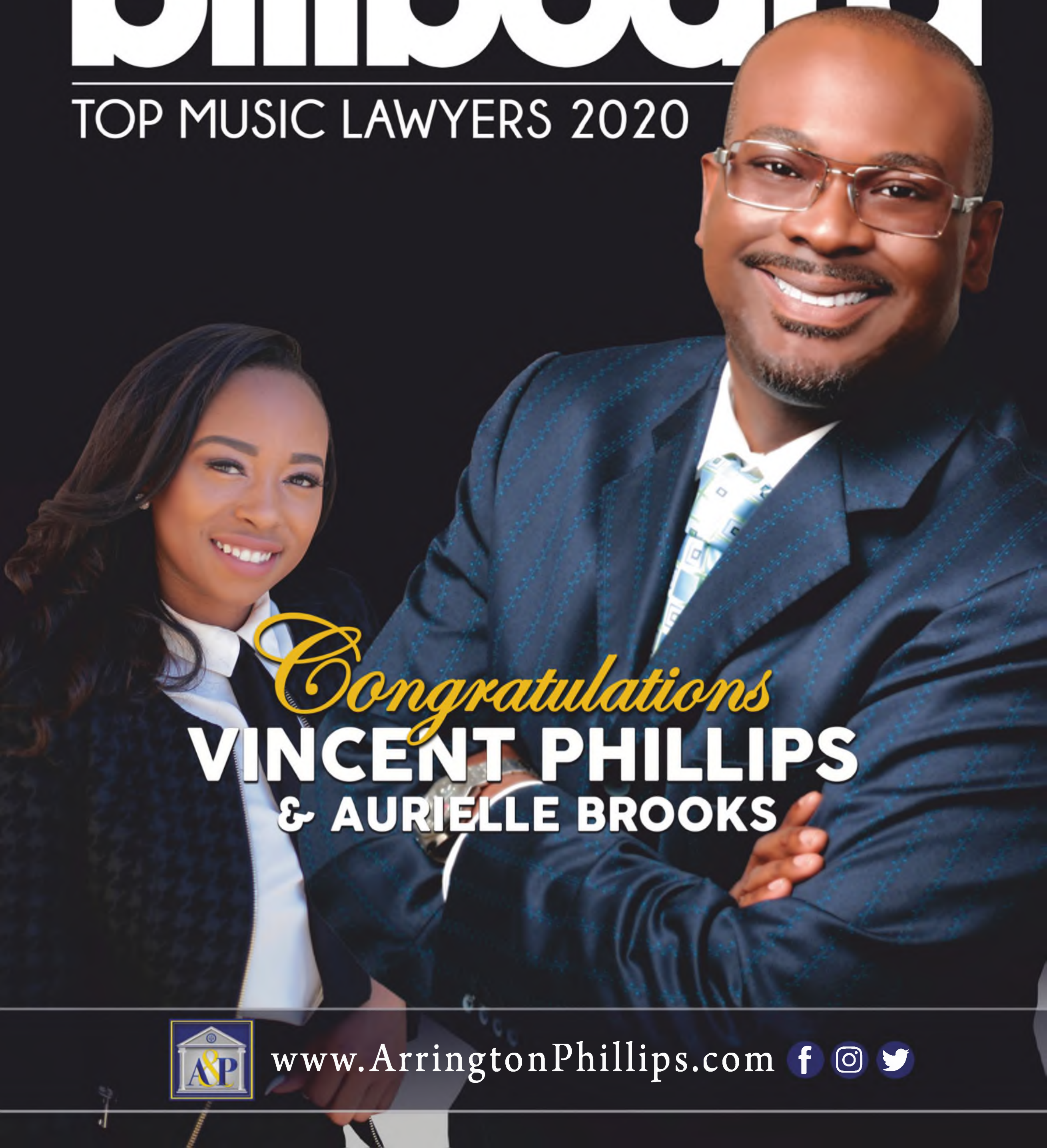
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2020 TOP MUSIC LAWYERS.**



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Attorneys responded to the pandemic, which closed concert venues like Brooklyn's Barclays Center, then counseled clients during protests that followed the death of George Floyd.

Top Music Lawyers 2020

IN A TIME OF UNPRECEDENTED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL UPHEAVAL, ATTORNEYS THROUGHOUT THE MUSIC INDUSTRY HAVE KEPT BUSINESS ON COURSE, HELPED CLIENTS COPE WITH THE PANDEMIC — AND VIGOROUSLY JOINED THE CALL FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

BY CLAUDIA ROSENBAUM and THOM DUFFY

TIMOTHY EPSTEIN WAS IN the Florida Keys. Dina LaPolt was in West Hollywood, and Berkeley Reinhold was in Los Angeles. Casey Higgins was in Washington, D.C., and Jay Cohen was in New York. All of the attorneys remember exactly where they were when they, and their associates, responded to the call in March to help artists and companies navigate the economic crisis created by the coronavirus.

Two months later, attorneys Vincent P. Phillips and his legal associate Aurielle Brooks were in Atlanta, and Ron Sweeney was at his home in Malibu, Calif., all guiding clients through the pandemic, when they learned of the death of George Floyd on May 25. His suffocation beneath the knee of a Minneapolis police officer — captured on cellphone video — ignited weeks of protests and a long-overdue reckoning with systemic racism.

"It brought up terrible memories," says Sweeney, "of myself, as a 12-year-old [living in South Central L.A.], on my way to church — a white cop forcing me to the ground and putting a shotgun to my head and telling me, 'You n—s better stay in your place or else.' I thought about my 2-year-old grandson and how I would not be able to protect him from racist cops no matter how much money I had. For me as a Black man, it was nothing new, just another day in America. We just happen to have cellphones now. I'm 66 years old and still when I see a police car I keep it in my sight until it disappears."

Phillips has talked to clients, "especially my African American male clients, about how they feel about what is happening — and has been happening for so long — and I talk to them about being responsible if they do choose to lend their voice," he says. "I do not push, but I do support. I let them know that when I was their age dur-

ing the 1992 Rodney King protests, I was a participant. Change is slow, but we have to push for change and growth."

Pushing for change, first through the economic turmoil of the pandemic and subsequently through the protests for racial justice, has consumed many in the legal profession in recent months. Instead of highlighting the work of one Lawyer of the Year for this annual feature, *Billboard* is focusing on how eight of the attorneys from our Top Music Lawyers 2020 list have stepped forward at this unprecedented time.

Epstein, a partner at Duggan Bertsch, got an early hint of the impact of the coronavirus as the attorney for independent promoters of events including festivals such as Pitchfork Music, Riot, Life Is Beautiful and Baja Beach and the Pepsi Gulf Coast Jam. In early February, international clients began to reach out, concerned about potential postponements and cancellations.

Yet it wasn't until March 5, when Epstein flew to Key West, Fla., for what he thought would be a relaxing weekend with his wife when anxiety over the virus escalated stateside. He fielded nonstop phone calls and spent the entire time counseling his nervous clients. Epstein reviewed "the various implications of postponements, cancellations and refunds, and how those worked out. While a number of my clients have significant financial wherewithal," he says, "there are a number that do not, and when that ticketing money comes in, it's used to finance various events on the festival side. So obviously, some of that money has already been spent."

Epstein had hard conversations about postponing all fall events. He advised clients that even if the situation suddenly changed at a certain point, they didn't have enough financial strength to sell tickets. Besides risk-management assessment, he has been helping them navigate insurance claims, analyze contract terms and obligations in relation to force majeure (which waives liability for events beyond a party's control) and develop strategies for the short, medium and long term.

On March 16, LaPolt, founder-owner of LaPolt Law and counsel to Songwriters of North America, received an urgent call from Bart Herbison, executive director of the Nashville Songwriters Association International. Herbison had been privy to a draft of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and

Economic Security Act to address the economic fallout of COVID-19. As it stood, he told LaPolt and SONA executive director Michelle Lewis, the language in the legislation wouldn't cover the music community.

LaPolt had been sheltering at home with her wife, Wendy Goodman, and adjusting to the demands of home-schooling their twin 7-year-old boys. She immediately went to work — remotely.

"It was very clear that [the law] was not going to cover not only people in music, but it wouldn't cover anybody in TV or film or writers, where everybody's an independent contractor and self-employed," says LaPolt.

She was among those who helped launch an aggressive lobbying campaign that included everyone in the industry — labels, publishers, performing rights organizations, the Recording Academy, the RIAA — to create a broad music coalition to pressure legislators. (Jordan Bromley of the Music Artists Coalition is also credited with shaping the legislation to help independent contractors.) On March 27, when the bill passed the Senate with an amendment that expanded pandemic unemployment assistance to self-employed workers, independent contractors and sole proprietors, LaPolt said the feeling was "incredible."

LaPolt then helped create the website Music Covid Relief to streamline the process for freelancers and other self-employed musicians to apply for federal aid. She also helped establish an assistance fund through SONA that on March 15 began handing out \$1,000 emergency grants to songwriters facing economic hardship.

Along with independent contractors and promoters, indie venues quickly recognized they would be severely affected by canceled and postponed events.

Higgins, a senior policy adviser at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, took a call in early March from Gary Witt, CEO of the Pabst Theater Group in Milwaukee. The theater needed help navigating the intricacies of the newly launched Paycheck Protection Program. It became immediately clear during the call that without a lobbying presence in Washington, D.C., independent venues were at risk of missing out on desperately needed federal assistance. After a virtual town hall meeting on March 12, these venue operators created an association to make their case for help.

On April 22, the newly formed National Independent Venue Association (NIVA) tapped Higgins to be their voice in Washington, backed up by Akin Gump partners Ed Pagano and Brian Pomper (and at least seven others at the firm). Higgins oversaw an intensive lobbying campaign that sent hundreds of letters to congressional leaders introducing the new association and asking for their support for additional relief.

Higgins says she's focused on influencing the next phase of relief legislation, allowing flexible use of loan proceeds and loan forgiveness with no minimums

attached for rent and mortgage tax credits, as well as a ticket revenue tax credit that would give independent venues credit for refunded ticket revenue.

"It's going to be a long road for these venues, and they need a longer program," says Higgins, who adds that NIVA has been a passion project for her firm. "They were the first to close, and they will likely be the last to open."

Reinhold had already been doing work for Global Citizen when on April 7 she received a call from Brian Mencher, general counsel for the international anti-poverty organization, asking if she would help with a new project. The group was planning One World: Together at Home, a global TV broadcast/online concert to raise money for front-line health care workers and the World Health Organization. With 10 days to go before the event, Global Citizen asked Reinhold to take the lead on securing all of the artist agreements.

"I was honored to have them call me to be a part of it," says Reinhold, who is president of her own firm — the Law Office of Berkeley Reinhold in Beverly Hills, Calif. — specializing in music, concerts and entertainment. "I had seven days to clear and negotiate all of the rights from 72 artists."

She worked 18 hours a day, spurred on by the collaboration with all working for a great cause — artists, talent and business managers, lawyers, publicists and more. Besides the six-hour digital program, Reinhold had to negotiate rights for the two-hour TV network presentation, an international radio feed, a highlights program and video-on-demand. In all, she had 130 licenses to clear.

"The adrenaline rush kept you going," says Reinhold. One World: Together at Home ultimately set two milestones in the book of Guinness World Records — one for the most musical acts to perform at



Brooks



Epstein



LaPolt



Reinhold



Cohen



Higgins



Phillips



Sweeney

The Anthem in Washington, D.C., is one of scores of independent venues that have united to lobby for pandemic assistance.



a remote festival and one for the most money raised for a charity by a remote music festival: \$127.9 million. (Reinhold reprised her work for the Global Goal: United for Our Future concert from Global Citizen on June 27.)

Two weeks after the Global Citizen concert aired in April, Cohen was helping launch the COVID-19 Music Legal Aid initiative to provide free and expedited legal services to the music community affected by the pandemic.

Cohen, a partner at Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison, used his role as the chairman of Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts in New York to create a legal network of professionals, in collaboration with California Lawyers for the Arts and Volunteer Lawyers & Professionals for the Arts of the Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville, to assist musicians with any urgent legal issues due to the pandemic.

By April 30, Cohen had created a database of volunteer attorneys in New York, Nashville and California and launched the legal aid program for musicians. He saw to it that a team of attorneys could provide free legal services to assist in navigating the myriad legal issues from contract disputes due to cancellations, nonpayment and unemployment assistance, as well as how to apply for federal and state assistance funds for small businesses.

"We really are now the port of first call for people looking for help," he says. "The most satisfying thing about doing pro bono work is that people who think they won't have access to good lawyers and can't afford them get access to good lawyers. They tend to be extraordinarily wonderful clients to work with."

The pandemic demanded the full attention of the nation and the music industry — until the death of George Floyd.

Sweeney's fierce reaction as a Black man in America was shared by many. In four decades as a music attorney, his clients have included James Brown and Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis; in 2018, he negotiated the settlement of Lil Wayne's lawsuit with Cash Money Records.

As protests shook cities and small towns alike, Sweeney called on major labels to move beyond donations to the Black Lives Matter movement. "I initiated talks with the chairman of each of the music companies to hold them accountable for the meaningful and sustainable changes required to end the systemic racism that exists in our industry," he says.

Along with Clarence Avant, Quincy

Jones and Irving Azoff, Sweeney is a member of the advisory board of Black Music Action Coalition, an organization of over 30 preeminent industry figures seeking to advance racial justice. Attorneys Binta Brown (see story, page 48) and Damien Granderson are, respectively, an executive committee member and a founding member of the coalition. The group, says Sweeney, is "a beautiful group of wonderful young and energetic individuals who are on a mission to effect change in our industry. And they are going to make it happen."

Based in the Black music capital of Atlanta, Brooks and Phillips represent a significant number of hip-hop artists, including YoungBoy Never Broke Again, who had two No. 1 albums on the Billboard 200 within a seven-month period this year and an unprecedented three No. 2 albums on that chart in the same time frame. "As artists literally pump out music, we on the legal side have to keep up with a huge number of agreements" for producers, guest artists, writers and more, says Phillips. Among Brooks' numerous clients are Kevin Gates, Lil Baby and international producers for whom she has negotiated collaborations with artists like Timbaland, DaBaby, Chris Brown and Jason Derulo.

Business as usual, even during the pandemic, stopped May 25.

Brooks watched the video of the killing of George Floyd with her cousin and younger brother. "My cousin walked away because she couldn't bear to see another Black man being murdered by the police," she recalls. "I cried because death by cop could easily be my brother, my father or even me. We, as a people, have got to do better. Since then, here in Atlanta, we have suffered another tragic killing of a Black man [Rayshard Brooks] by the police. All I could think was, 'Enough is enough!'"

The pandemic and the racial unrest occurring at the same time "is a perfect storm," says Phillips. "The pandemic marked a major moment of reflection and change. This collided with what I call the 'police brutality pandemic.' The systemic racism that exists in the police forces are a microcosm of the systemic racism that exists in the United States and around the world, from the government to the corporate offices to the courtrooms and beyond.

"The moment of reflection, of frustration and the realization of the blatant systemic racism collided for many Americans," he continues. "Coupled with the abundant available time to protest, this moment is now. We are living through history."

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From

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Jeffrey Harleston

GENERAL COUNSEL/EXECUTIVE VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, SCHOOL OF LAW

Adam Barker

DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS, UNIVERSAL MUSIC U.K.

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER SCHOOL OF LAW AND INNS OF COURT SCHOOL OF LAW

Saheli Datta

HEAD OF GLOBAL COMPLIANCE/SENIOR VP EMPLOYMENT COUNSEL, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

Steve Gawley

EXECUTIVE VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

Nicola Levy

GLOBAL HEAD OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS, DIGITAL, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Alasdair McMullan

SENIOR VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS/GLOBAL HEAD OF LITIGATION, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

Michael Seltzer

SENIOR VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS/HEAD OF COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS TEAM, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

BENJAMIN N. CARDOZO SCHOOL OF LAW

Magda Vives

SENIOR VP LEGAL AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS, UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

In late March, Universal Music Group's parent company, Vivendi, finalized the agreement under which a consortium of investors, led by Chinese online giant Tencent, bought 10% of UMG for \$3.3 billion. The deal was "certainly the most significant thing that I did in the last year," says Harleston, who leads UMG's global legal team. "We're very excited to have Tencent as a shareholder and partner, particularly as our business is expanding in Asia and what they can bring with their expertise in the Chinese market and some of the related territories. It's a big deal for us, and we're excited about what it means for the future." As March gave way to late May and the nation rose up against systemic racism in the wake of the killing of George Floyd and others, Harleston was ready to lead UMG on another front: He and Motown Records president/Capitol Music Group executive vp Ethiopia Habtemariam became co-chairs of UMG's Task Force for Meaningful Change, formed by UMG chairman/CEO Lucian Grainge. UMG, Sony Music Entertainment and Warner Music Group each have launched multimillion-dollar initiatives to fight racism and support social justice, with pledges to curb bias endured by black artists, executives and staffers. At UMG, says Harleston, "the focus is on long-term sustained change. That's what we want to bring about. Internally, we've been focusing on dialogue: with our employees [and] our

artists, supporting our artists and everything they're doing. That's a lot of what we've done both in the name of COVID-19 and now in the name of social justice. We know that in the community of music, we need to be a leader and really step up."

Paul Robinson

EXECUTIVE VP/GENERAL COUNSEL, WARNER MUSIC GROUP

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Trent Tappe

SENIOR VP/DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL/CHIEF COMPLIANCE OFFICER, WARNER MUSIC GROUP

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

Maryrose Maness

SENIOR VP/DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL, WARNER MUSIC GROUP

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Brad Cohen

SENIOR VP/HEAD OF LITIGATION, WARNER MUSIC GROUP

BENJAMIN N. CARDOZO SCHOOL OF LAW

While Warner Music Group began trading on Nasdaq on June 3 following its initial public offering, "the whole IPO journey really kicked off last October," says Robinson, 62, with the filing of a confidential version of the company's Form S-1 registration statement with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. "Getting from there to the first public version of the S-1 filed with the SEC on Feb. 6 was a massive amount of work — a true collaboration among a small group in corporate finance, corporate legal and corporate communications," he says. Tappe, 53, a securities attorney by training, played a pivotal role. As the coronavirus upended work practices, Robinson says that WMG developed safety practices for eventually returning to its offices and resuming in-person music and video production, with Maness acting as point person for that planning. Meanwhile, during the past year, Cohen, 40, has led WMG's litigation, including Warner Chappell's now-settled suit against Spotify in India and the multicompany copyright infringement cases against Cox Communications and other internet service providers.

Julie Swidler

EXECUTIVE VP BUSINESS AFFAIRS/GENERAL COUNSEL, SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

BENJAMIN N. CARDOZO SCHOOL OF LAW

Stu Bondell

EXECUTIVE VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL, SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL

Wade Leak

EXECUTIVE VP/GENERAL COUNSEL/CHIEF COMPLIANCE, ETHICS AND PRIVACY OFFICER, SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

Susan Meisel

SENIOR VP/CORPORATE DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL, SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY LAW CENTER

Jeff Walker

EXECUTIVE VP/HEAD OF BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS, GLOBAL DIGITAL BUSINESS, SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

Swidler has modernized Sony's artist contracts to promote transparency and has managed the evolution of its royalty reporting systems to pay artists faster. As a member of the Recording Academy's Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, she has been an advocate for women throughout the music industry. Bondell has finalized over 20 key contract renewals with artists and management companies in Latin music markets, continental Europe, the United Kingdom and Asia. Leak was promoted to executive vp in the past year and led Sony's part in the music-piracy litigation against Cox Communications that brought a \$1 billion jury verdict against the internet service provider in December. In the past year, Meisel and her team have overseen Sony's investments worldwide in multiple sectors including the company's move into podcasting. With streaming continuing to drive global music business growth, Walker leads the team that negotiates hundreds of deals with digital service providers every year, helping to boost the presence of Sony Music artists around the globe.

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST (SWIDLER) → "If a company won't be transparent about how they're going to pay you, don't go with that company."

STREAMING

Horacio Gutierrez

HEAD OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS/CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER, SPOTIFY

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI SCHOOL OF LAW

Kevan Choset

ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL/HEAD OF LITIGATION AND LEGAL RISK, SPOTIFY

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

Sofia Sheppard

ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL/GLOBAL HEAD OF LICENSING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, SPOTIFY

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF LAW, UPPSALA UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF LAW

In late March, Spotify closed a global licensing deal with Warner Music Group. "I was amazed at how the teams at both Spotify and Warner worked tirelessly just as everyone was dealing with adjusting to new ways of working," says Gutierrez. In the year before the pandemic, he and his legal team helped Spotify achieve new milestones, including launching the streaming service in India. That expansion "also resulted in a couple of large lawsuits that we were able to resolve with constructive go-forward deals, thanks to a combination of smart lawyering and collaboration with our partners," he says. "We want Spotify to be ubiquitous, and we entered a number of new business development partnerships over the last year so that our users can listen to their favorite music or podcasts on their favorite gaming



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New York

Enrollment: 925

Brooklyn Law School

Brooklyn

Enrollment: 968

Columbia Law School, Columbia University

Manhattan

Enrollment: 1,244

Fordham University School of Law

New York

Enrollment: 1,093

Harvard Law School, Harvard University

Cambridge, Mass.

Enrollment: 1,740

Loyola Law School, Loyola Marymount University

Los Angeles

Enrollment: 857

New York University School of Law

New York

Enrollment: 1,379

Southwestern Law School

Los Angeles

Enrollment: 611

University of California, Los Angeles, School of Law

Los Angeles

Enrollment: 975

University of Southern California Gould School of Law

Los Angeles

Enrollment: 590

Enrollment source: U.S. News & World Report



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Your passion and dedication to music law leads us all in the right direction.
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- THE group



Williams (pictured) and his creative collective I Am OTHER put together a charity album with SoundCloud, a project organized by Porch and his colleagues.

consoles, in the car or virtually anywhere else they choose to listen. Spotify is now available on over 300 devices across 80 hardware brands.”

Antionius Porch

GENERAL COUNSEL, SOUNDCLOUD

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

Porch represented SoundCloud in discussions that led to a \$75 million investment from SiriusXM. He also oversaw SoundCloud’s acquisition of rights management/distribution company Repost Network, bringing new digital tools to the platform’s community of 25 million creators. During the pandemic, he joined his colleagues and Pharrell Williams’ creative collective I Am OTHER to put together a charity album that will benefit Sweet Relief in the United States and Help Musicians in the United Kingdom.

WHAT HE MISSES MOST → “An in-person meeting where you can read the room, body language, vibe and connection.”

Tres Williams

EXECUTIVE VP BUSINESS AFFAIRS, IHEARTMEDIA

BROOKLYN LAW SCHOOL

As iHeartMedia’s events shift online, “the focus on distribution through social media networks has presented new and unique [performing rights] licensing issues that we’ve been working creatively to navigate,” says Williams, 43. He also sits on the executive committee of the Radio Music License Committee, where he was lead negotiator for its recent rate case settlement with BMI (see page 60). Williams helps negotiate all podcast deals for iHeartMedia, which is the No. 1 commercial podcast

publisher, according to Podtrac (second only to noncommercial NPR).

Robert Windom

CHIEF COUNSEL, CONTENT AND SERVICES, APPLE

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GOULD SCHOOL OF LAW

Elizabeth Miles

DIRECTOR, ITUNES AND APPLE MUSIC LEGAL, APPLE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, SCHOOL OF LAW

Windom, 43, and his team worked with groups across Apple to create a \$50 million advance royalty fund to help independent labels weather the COVID-19 crisis. The initiative provided a one-time advance payment on future royalties for labels and distributors that earn over \$10,000 in quarterly revenue from Apple Music and have a direct distribution deal with the streaming service. Earlier, Apple Music struck renewed deals with labels and worked with music publishers to bring time-synced lyrics to the service. Those quickly became “one of the product features loved best by customers and songwriters alike,” says Windom.

WHAT HE MISSES MOST (WINDOM) → “My great co-workers and friends. FaceTime can’t always replace face time.”

Stephen Worth

HEAD OF LEGAL, AMAZON MUSIC

INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON MAURER SCHOOL OF LAW

Cyrus Afshar

SENIOR CORPORATE COUNSEL, AMAZON MUSIC

HUMBOLDT UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN

Nicolas Gauss

SENIOR CORPORATE COUNSEL, AMAZON MUSIC

HUMBOLDT UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN

In early March, Amazon Music joined with other streaming companies — Facebook,

SiriusXM, Pandora, Spotify, TIDAL and YouTube — to support the COVID-19 Relief Fund created by MusiCares and the Recording Academy. Before the end of the month, total industry donations had reached \$4 million. The company’s legal team also supported numerous livestreaming charity events like Twitch’s Stream Aid 2020, benefiting the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund for the World Health Organization; OurIdentity: Project Blue Marble, which raised money for United Way Worldwide; and Amazon Music Spain’s #AmazonEnCasaFest, which benefited the Spanish Red Cross. The year before the pandemic brought an “incredible expansion for Amazon Music,” says Worth, with the launch of Amazon Music HD and the streaming platform’s free, ad-supported service.

TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT (WORTH) → “I’ve enjoyed providing pro bono representation to songwriters, artists and authors through Amazon’s work with Washington Lawyers for the Arts.”

LIVE

Michael Rowles

EXECUTIVE VP/GENERAL COUNSEL,

LIVE NATION ENTERTAINMENT

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS COLLEGE OF LAW

During the past year, Rowles, 54, has helped Live Nation — the world’s largest concert promoter, which now operates in over 40 countries — with “navigating new governmental frameworks and mitigating key risks,” he says. When looking ahead beyond the pandemic, Rowles must ensure the live-entertainment giant can legally and safely reopen music venues when permitted by government agencies. “We know that there is a ton of pent-up demand among fans and artists are eager to get back out on the road, so it’s our job as a company to inspire that trust — without compromising any of the incomparable magic of the live concert experience,” he says.

Shawn Trell

EXECUTIVE VP/COO/GENERAL COUNSEL, AEG PRESENTS

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY LAW CENTER

When the pandemic shut down the live-music industry, Trell’s focus shifted to maintaining income for as many AEG employees as possible while the company brought in zero revenue. The concert promotion giant did not lay off a single employee for over three months before cuts were made. “I am proud of how our company responded to the dramatic, nearly immediate loss of business when it pertained to our employee base,” says Trell. “When we ultimately had to make some changes starting July 1, I believe those changes were implemented fairly, respectfully and meaningfully.”

MUSIC PUBLISHING

Danielle Aguirre

EXECUTIVE VP/GENERAL COUNSEL, NATIONAL MUSIC PUBLISHERS’ ASSOCIATION

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA CAREY LAW SCHOOL

The NMPA has pursued the interests of its members during “the new normal,” says Aguirre, who leads the association’s legal strategy. She points to the settlement earlier in the year of litigation between independent music publishers and fitness company Peloton over music licensing. Then, in early March, she says, “we appeared in the U.S. Court of Appeals [for the Washington, D.C., circuit] to argue against the efforts by the digital services to appeal a rate increase for songwriters and music publishers.” And she has led NMPA’s involvement in the launch of the new Mechanical Licensing Collective that officially begins work on Jan. 1, 2021.

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → “Understanding copyright — and why it is important in ensuring you are paid for your creativity — will make you an active participant in your career and success.”

Peter Brodsky

EXECUTIVE VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS,

SONY/ATV MUSIC PUBLISHING

BROOKLYN LAW SCHOOL

Nicole Giacco

SENIOR VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS,

SONY/ATV MUSIC PUBLISHING

BROOKLYN LAW SCHOOL

Brodsky, as a board member of the Mechanical Licensing Collective, is helping prepare for the launch of the MLC in 2021. “My No. 1 priority is to continue working with industry stakeholders to ensure fair pay for our songwriters,” he says. Giacco negotiated Sony/ATV’s contracts in the U.S. Latin market, including a worldwide administration deal with Maluma and a publishing agreement with Nicky Jam. As the coronavirus brought a surge in livestreams, says Brodsky, Sony/ATV was prepared to support all digital platforms. “We have to be flexible,” he says of the pandemic’s impact on legal work for music publishers. “The world has profoundly changed, and in many cases, the old way of doing things will not work.”

David Kokakis

CHIEF COUNSEL, BUSINESS AFFAIRS, UNIVERSAL MUSIC

PUBLISHING GROUP/DIGITAL RIGHTS MANAGEMENT,

UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Michael Petersen

SENIOR VP BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS, UNIVERSAL MUSIC

PUBLISHING GROUP

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Michael Reinert



Tim Mandelbaum



Ken Abdo



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team helped strike new administration deals covering the catalogs of HBO, MGM, Telepictures, Viacom and Vice Media. They also negotiated and finalized extensions of existing administration agreements with Jack White and Steven Van Zandt, while signing new administration deals with 10K Projects and Will Jennings. Even while its offices were closed, “we had many songwriters and other rights holders that were depending on us to finalize paperwork so that they could get paid,” says Peterson, 58. “We were very successful at accomplishing this.”

HOW SONGWRITERS WORK NOW (PETERSON) → “If our writers can no longer gather in a single place to create a new song together, can they still continue to create new music? From what I am seeing, the answer is a resounding yes.”



Alter Kendrick & Baron represented Primary Wave in its purchase of a majority stake of the pre-1964 publishing catalog of Charles (pictured).

Scott McDowell

EXECUTIVE VP/HEAD OF LEGAL AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS, WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC

CHICAGO-KENT COLLEGE OF LAW

McDowell praises the work of Warner Chappell’s outside counsel Peter Anderson (see page 62) and Helene Freeman (page 68) in affirming in March that Led Zeppelin’s classic “Stairway to Heaven” did not infringe the copyright of another work. “They are superstars and secured a great result for our writers and for the industry,” he says. In January, Warner Chappell entered a global administration deal with the Grateful Dead’s publishing company, Ice Nine, covering the band’s entire body of work of nearly 200 original songs, including the works of Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter. Last year, McDowell struck a subpublishing deal with Round Hill Music for works including hits like “All of Me” and “What a Wonderful World” for selected international markets.

WHAT HE MISSES MOST → “The Stumptown coffee in the [office] commissary.”

proactive ways to address these concerns, particularly since we’re in the music industry that is based on Black culture.”

Clara Kim

EXECUTIVE VP/GENERAL COUNSEL, ASCAP

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

During the past year, Kim and her team closed several multiyear licensing deals with music users, including major broadcast and cable networks and streaming services, that “provide long-term stability for ASCAP members,” she says. She has been involved in the ongoing review by the U.S. Department of Justice of the consent decrees that govern how ASCAP and BMI operate, urging the DOJ to modernize those decrees. Along with other rights organizations and songwriter groups, says Kim, ASCAP lobbied for federal help from the CARES Act and updated unemployment benefit guidelines. “It was gratifying to be able to influence that process,” she says.

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → “Read your contracts, and know your rights. That’s one thing that never changes, no matter how successful you become.”

gal team’s work in meeting this challenge.”

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → “Take a basic business class or read a book on contracts, transactions or copyright. Force yourself.”

Colin Rushing

CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER, SOUNDSEXCHANGE

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA SCHOOL OF LAW

Amid the coronavirus shutdown, says Rushing, “our [digital royalty] distributions went out the door as scheduled” while he and his team prepared for a Copyright Royalty Board trial that began in July to set master recording rates for Pandora, iHeartMedia and other programmed-music webcasters for 2021 to 2025. He has been working with the U.S. Copyright Office, which is adopting regulations for the new Mechanical Licensing Collective. And Rushing briefed Senate Judiciary Committee staff on the need for a performance right for musicians whose work is played on terrestrial radio. “All platforms should pay for the music they use,” he says, “at fair market rates.”

financial value,” he says. For songwriter-pianist Jim Brickman, Abdo negotiated the sale of his catalog to Primary Wave. “But he’s young enough [58] that they simultaneously offered him a going-forward publishing and going-forward recording agreement,” says Abdo.

TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT (ABDO) → “[Lawyers] will do something, within their practice and outside of their practice, to confirm their vocation as advocates for justice. They should do that. They need to do that.”

Jenny Afia

HEAD OF ENTERTAINMENT AND LEGAL, SCHILLINGS INTERNATIONAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF LAW (LONDON)

During the pandemic, “the media’s need to paint high-profile figures as heroes or villains — with nothing in between — has gotten even more out of control,” says the London-based Afia, 41. “My work entails protecting privacy and defending reputations, so we’ve been particularly busy.” Her firm has responded to attempts by the British press to “intrude into people’s personal finances” to argue that “wealthy individuals shouldn’t be using government schemes to cover employment costs.” She also has seen an increase in harassment by paparazzi while the media is “so starved of photos of celebrities,” she says.

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → “Have a clear plan for your privacy. The more information you put into the public domain, the harder it is to argue that the press should respect your boundaries.”

Lisa Alter

PARTNER, ALTER KENDRICK & BARON

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Katie Baron

PARTNER, ALTER KENDRICK & BARON

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Jacqueline Charlesworth

PARTNER, ALTER KENDRICK & BARON

YALE LAW SCHOOL

Alter Kendrick & Baron represented Reservoir Media in its acquisition of the Shapiro Bernstein publishing catalog for a price that sources put at \$50 million-plus, while also representing Primary Wave in its acquisition of a majority stake in Ray Charles’ pre-1964 publishing catalog. “The depth of our transactional work continues to expand as the boom in the buying and selling of music assets has continued at — or even beyond — the pace of pre-pandemic activities,” says Alter. Baron also represented Mojo Music & Media in its acquisition of Horipro Entertainment Group, in addition to representing clients such as George Clinton, Steve Miller, Ray Davies and the estates of McCoy Tyner, Ira Gershwin, Billy Strayhorn, Isaac Hayes, Jule Styne, Noel Coward and Leonard Bernstein. Charlesworth, through her position on the board of Songwriters of

PERFORMING RIGHTS

Christos Badavas

SENIOR VP/GENERAL COUNSEL, SESAC HOLDINGS

WILLIAM & MARY LAW SCHOOL

Badavas, 51, coordinated SESAC’s efforts to support passage of the CARES Act “and other legislation for songwriters and composers whose livelihoods have obviously been stripped away by the coronavirus pandemic,” he says. With music moving from live venues to streaming services, “we need to keep licensing [all of the] businesses that we can in order to make distributions to songwriters and composers and publishers,” he says.

TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT → “I started investigating [how] companies systemically address [racial justice] issues. For years, we’ve all had the standard anti-discrimination policies, but it seems like we need to start looking at more

Stuart Rosen

SENIOR VP/GENERAL COUNSEL, BMI

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA CAREY LAW SCHOOL

In January, BMI announced it had settled a dispute with the Radio Music License Committee over the radio royalties that the RMLC paid to the performing rights organization. Rosen, 61, oversaw the litigation for the past two years. The new agreement, which has received final approval by a federal judge, “recognized and compensated BMI [repertoire] for its dominant market share,” he says. As the COVID-19 shutdown began, Rosen’s focus shifted to addressing “every need of our songwriters, composers and music publishers, and to address the concerns of our licensees, despite the legal and operational obstacles created by the pandemic. I am incredibly proud of the le-

TALENT AND LITIGATION

Kenneth J. Abdo

PARTNER, FOX ROTHSCHILD

MITCHELL HAMLINE SCHOOL OF LAW

Tim Mandelbaum

PARTNER, FOX ROTHSCHILD

UNIVERSITY OF DENVER STURM COLLEGE OF LAW

Michael Reinert

PARTNER, FOX ROTHSCHILD

BENJAMIN N. CARDOZO SCHOOL OF LAW

Fox Rothschild’s attorneys specialize in working with legacy artists and their estates, taking inventory of their music-related intellectual property assets (recordings, publishing and name/likeness rights) and then “assessing ways to improve revenue from these sources,” says Abdo, 63. That includes estate planning to protect the artist’s legacy “to enhance future cultural and



JOHN T. ROSE

LERON E. ROGERS



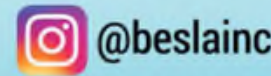
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~~ Rick Ross - Recording Artist, Author & Entrepreneur





Berliner is representing Soundgarden in a dispute with the widow of frontman Chris Cornell (pictured) over his final recordings.

North America, has helped the group deal with the pandemic's economic fallout by explaining the CARES Act to the organization and others in the music community and also helped SONA establish its Songwriter Assistance Fund that provides \$1,000 grants to songwriters.

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST (ALTER) → "Document in writing your arrangements with collaborators, music publishers, administrators, managers and record labels, and retain fully executed copies of those agreements in your files."

Peter Anderson

PARTNER, DAVIS WRIGHT TREMAINE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES, SCHOOL OF LAW

A litigator for artists such as Taylor Swift, Gwen Stefani and Led Zeppelin (see co-counsel Helene Freeman, page 68), Anderson notes that "litigation continues [during the pandemic] but is incredibly difficult. I've had four remote depositions just over the last week. I've had three hearings by telephone [conference], so you don't see the judge. Some judges have relaxed their schedules. Others insist that we march on, so we're marching on. You just weather it."

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → "Get solid professional representation. I see it all the time on both sides: Someone's uncle or mother or somebody [else] is their manager, and [the artist ends up] in a couple of years of litigation because of bad advice or bad contracts."

Craig Averill

PARTNER, SERLING ROOKS HUNTER MCKOY WOROB & AVERILL
NEW YORK LAW SCHOOL

J. Reid Hunter

PARTNER, SERLING ROOKS HUNTER MCKOY WOROB & AVERILL

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Jeffrey Worob

PARTNER, SERLING ROOKS HUNTER MCKOY WOROB & AVERILL

EMORY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

While the firm has been negotiating on behalf of artists with canceled tours, "we also represent several top booking agents and have been advising those individuals regarding their existing employment agreements, proposed salary reductions or employment terminations," says Averill. He and his colleagues have also been involved in "the complicated due diligence and related negotiations and legal work" that comes with securing artists' assets. In some cases, those deals will allow major artists to ride out the suspension of touring. "But," says Averill, "they also reflect a refreshing longer-term optimism regarding the music business" on the part of investors.

Andrew Bart

PARTNER/CO-CHAIR OF THE CONTENT, MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT PRACTICE, JENNER & BLOCK

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

Bart is a valued litigator for the RIAA, Sony Music Entertainment and Universal Music Group, among others. He's representing an array of music and entertainment companies — including Disney, Warner Chappell, Amazon, Apple, Fox and NBCUniversal — in a claim alleging that the theme to '90s cartoon *X-Men: The Animated Series* infringes upon the theme of a Hungarian TV show. During the pandemic, his firm has "devoted a lot of bandwidth to assisting music venues" in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, he says, guiding them with "licensing, employment and insurance issues."

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → "Understand what you are giving up for the money or services you are receiving from managers, agents and recording and publishing companies."

Richard Baskind

PARTNER/HEAD OF MUSIC, SIMONS MUIRHEAD & BURTON

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL LAW SCHOOL

Baskind and his colleagues advised Primary Talent — the booking agency that is home to over 900 acts including Daft Punk, Lana del Rey, The 1975 and The Cure — on the sale of its business to ICM Partners. The deal "didn't close until the end of March," says Baskind. "Everyone was aware of what was happening up to that point. I think what is really interesting is that both ICM and Primary together seem to be taking a much more positive and aggressive approach in terms of maintaining the business core than some of the other agencies who are laying off people left, right and center."

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → "I push super-hard [to make] sure there is capable and driven management onboard with the artist. Without that, everything you are doing as a young artist will be impossible."

Jeffrey Becker

PARTNER/CHAIR, ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA LAW PRACTICE, SWANSON MARTIN & BELL

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW

Becker, 40, helped client Curtis Roach turn his song "Bored in the House" into an anthem of the COVID-19 lockdown, including a collaboration on a remix with Tyga that was released through Columbia Records.

TikTok users have uploaded over 4.9 million videos using the track. Becker also represents the estate of house music pioneer Frankie Knuckles and has been working to secure Knuckles' creative legacy.

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → "Think about the long game and make decisions that will benefit your career beyond tomorrow."

Jill Berliner

PARTNER, RIMON LAW

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GOULD SCHOOL OF LAW

Berliner is representing Soundgarden in its dispute with Chris Cornell's widow, Vicky Cornell, over the singer's final recordings. Arguing that they worked jointly on the tracks with the late lead singer and describing the songs as the "final Soundgarden album," the band members say Cornell has no right to withhold the material. Meanwhile, Berliner continues to pursue copyright infringement claims on behalf of the estate of Kurt Cobain and others against Marc Jacobs International for the fashion designer's use of the smiley-face logo that Nirvana used on its merchandise.

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → "Make your art, work hard, and don't worry about commercial success. Find your own voice."

Charles "Jeff" Biederman

PARTNER, MANATT ENTERTAINMENT;

MANATT PHELPS & PHILLIPS

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL

Jordan Bromley

PARTNER/LEADER, MANATT ENTERTAINMENT'S TRANSACTIONS AND FINANCE PRACTICE; MANATT PHELPS & PHILLIPS

BROOKLYN LAW SCHOOL

Gary Gilbert

SENIOR PARTNER, MANATT ENTERTAINMENT;

MANATT PHELPS & PHILLIPS

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES, SCHOOL OF LAW

Robert Jacobs

PARTNER/LEADER, MANATT ENTERTAINMENT'S LITIGATION PRACTICE; MANATT PHELPS & PHILLIPS

SOUTHWESTERN LAW SCHOOL, LOS ANGELES

L. Lee Phillips

SENIOR PARTNER, MANATT ENTERTAINMENT;

MANATT PHELPS & PHILLIPS

Monika Tashman

PARTNER, MANATT ENTERTAINMENT;

MANATT PHELPS & PHILLIPS

BENJAMIN N. CARDOZO SCHOOL OF LAW

As the coronavirus shutdown began, Manatt Phelps & Phillips examined the business activities of the firm's numerous music industry clients, "predicted where there were threats and opportunities, and developed strategy around that," says Bromley. For touring clients, the attorneys examined force majeure clauses (which limit liability in unforeseen circumstances), sought to cut expenses and explored ways to help the employees of clients survive financially. Predicting that the live music



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business “will be the last to fully come back online,” says Bromley, “our job is to provide clear-headed advice and strategy with that reality in mind.”

TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT → In his work with the Music Artists Coalition, Bromley helped assure independent contractors could apply for unemployment insurance and federal relief loans. “And we are now working with a broad music coalition to help affect long-standing social justice reform in the wake of the recent murders and protests.”

Joshua Binder

PARTNER/CO-FOUNDER, ROTHENBERG MOHR & BINDER
UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO SCHOOL OF LAW

Paul Rothenberg

PARTNER/CO-FOUNDER, ROTHENBERG MOHR & BINDER
COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

At a time when touring has come to “a screeching halt,” says Binder, “the quality of an artist’s [nontouring] deals becomes even more pronounced. Clients with smart deals were protected, and those without were scrambling to find new sources of income.” In the year prior to the COVID-19 crisis, Binder shared in the success of his client Marshmello, from his groundbreaking virtual concert on *Fortnite* to his Las Vegas residency. “The cherry on top was launching our own brand of marshmallows, Stuffed Puffs, which have now become the No. 1-selling brand across 5,000 Walmart stores,” says Binder. “Yet today, he’s still unsigned and owns all of his masters and publishing.”

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → “Spend as much time as you can perfecting your craft and everything else will always follow.”

Jason Boyarski

PARTNER, BOYARSKI FRITZ
BENJAMIN N. CARDOZO SCHOOL OF LAW

Executives at SiriusXM approached Boyarski, lead counsel for Prince’s estate, and Troy Carter, the estate’s entertainment adviser, as part of their efforts to create a small number of new, limited-time channels for iconic artists. “I was incredibly proud that Prince was considered for the honor, especially being the lone African American among other iconic artists chosen [for the first shows], including The Rolling Stones, David Bowie, the Eagles and Led Zepelin. That is quite a group. This is a great example of how a silver lining was created from the pandemic and brought to fans.”

WHAT HE MISSES MOST → “Not being able to celebrate our talented clients. This year, Louis Bell won the ASCAP songwriter of the year [honor] for the second straight year — it would have been truly special to see him onstage accepting that award again.”

John Branca

PARTNER, ZIFFREN BRITTENHAM

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES, SCHOOL OF LAW
David Byrnes

PARTNER, ZIFFREN BRITTENHAM

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES, SCHOOL OF LAW
David Lande

SENIOR PARTNER, ZIFFREN BRITTENHAM

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA CAREY LAW SCHOOL

On behalf of Michael Jackson’s estate, Branca directed pandemic relief donations to charities including Broadway Cares, MusiCares, Los Angeles’ World Central Kitchen and a Las Vegas food bank. “We have been heartened to see that the public acknowledged how Michael’s music could both rally them [amid] historical anguish in songs and videos like ‘They Don’t Care About Us’ and unify them with inspiring anthems like ‘Heal the World,’ ‘We Are the World’ and more,” says Branca, whose deal-making also has continued apace. He has represented Haim Saban Music Group in forging a distribution and marketing partnership with Universal Music Group, while he also concluded a record/TV deal for Barry Gibb and completed a deal for a Bee Gees documentary. As executor of Mac Miller’s estate, Byrnes oversaw the posthumous January release of Miller’s *Circles* album. He also renegotiated the deal between Interscope Records and Justin Lubliner’s Darkroom Records, home to Billie Eilish. He and Lande negotiated deals for Beyoncé with adidas, Sony/ATV and Netflix, the lattermost for Beyoncé’s documentary/concert film *Homecoming*. Plus, Lande oversaw the agreement for Shakira to perform at Super Bowl LIV in Miami with Jennifer Lopez.

Vernon Brown

CEO, V. BROWN & COMPANY
PACE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Brown, the longtime attorney for Cash Money Records, reached out to clients and colleagues following the death of George Floyd. “During this period of unrest,” he says, “I have offered my services and participated in many video conference calls providing comments and insights. As an African American attorney who has been in this industry for a while, working closely with artists, executives and labels, I understand the long-standing grievances — the failures to listen and understand the voices you’re hearing now. I believe the music industry must do better to offer a real, true opportunity for African Americans, not just in senior roles but across the board in music and entertainment.”

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → “Like entrepreneurs, they must constantly think of ways to monetize and diversify their brand.”

Richard Busch

PARTNER/CHAIR, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND



From left: Brown, Cash Money co-CEO Bryan “Birdman” Williams, Republic Records CEO Monte Lipman, Cash Money co-CEO Ronald “Slim” Williams and Republic Records president Avery Lipman at the February premiere of mini-documentary *New Cash Order* in New York.

ENTERTAINMENT LITIGATION, KING & BALLOW
LOYOLA LAW SCHOOL

After winning a multimillion-dollar verdict in 2015 for the Marvin Gaye estate against the creators of “Blurred Lines” and defending the verdict last year on appeal, Busch has become a copyright infringement maverick for music’s top stars and companies. (See story, page 16.) This past year, he has represented Eight Mile Style (Eminem) in a case against Spotify, Megan Thee Stallion in an action against her record label 1501 Entertainment and ARTY in a suit against Marshmello and others related to their No. 2 Billboard Hot 100 hit “Happier.”

WHAT HE MISSES MOST → “Flying, believe it or not, and meeting with my clients face to face.”

Candace Carlo

PARTNER, KLEINBERG LANGE CUDDY & CARLO
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS, SCHOOL OF LAW

Carlo represents Hans Zimmer and has kept the composer’s projects on track during the pandemic. “I have completed agreements for *No Time To Die* [James Bond], *Top Gun: Maverick*, *Wonder Woman 2* and *Hillbilly Elegy*,” she says. She also negotiated composer Henry Jackman’s deal for the Russo brothers’ upcoming drama, *Cherry*. Carlo handles business and legal affairs for 14th Street Music, which provides songs for various projects by Apple, video games from Electronic Arts, TV shows including HBO’s *His Dark Materials* and documentaries like *Where’s My Roy Cohn?*

WHAT SHE MISSES MOST → “Live performance, including orchestral recording for film and television. That intangible, intimate interplay among artists that produces a magical performance is lost.”

Rosemary Carroll

PARTNER, CARROLL GUIDO GROFFMAN COHEN BAR & KARALIAN
STANFORD LAW SCHOOL

Elliot Groffman

PARTNER, CARROLL GUIDO GROFFMAN COHEN BAR & KARALIAN
SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Gillian Bar

PARTNER, CARROLL GUIDO GROFFMAN COHEN BAR & KARALIAN
GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL

Robert Cohen

PARTNER, CARROLL GUIDO GROFFMAN COHEN BAR & KARALIAN
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LAW SCHOOL

Renee Karalian

PARTNER, CARROLL GUIDO GROFFMAN COHEN BAR & KARALIAN
LOYOLA LAW SCHOOL

“As a lawyer immersed in the live-music world,” says Groffman, 66, “the impact of the pandemic was swift and brutal — and we were thrown into the chaos it precipitated.” The immediate challenges of rescheduled shows, insurance claims and financially sustaining road crews gave way to positive action as clients joined Global Citizen’s One World: Together at Home benefit. Before the touring shutdown, Cohen had negotiated the *Happiness Begins* outing for the Jonas Brothers. Karalian, 44, struck Playboi Carti’s co-publishing agreement with Sony/ATV and helped Emile Haynie sell his publishing catalog and producer royalties to Hipgnosis. Reflecting on how the killing of George Floyd shifted the nation’s attention from the pandemic to racial justice, Bar, 46, says that “as an attorney, it is my job to help my clients be heard. Now more than ever is a time for artists to use their voices to reach out. Systemic racism must end now.”

David Chidekel

PARTNER, EARLY SULLIVAN WRIGHT GIZER & MCRAE
MAURICE A. DEANE SCHOOL OF LAW AT HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY

Working with clients in music, film, TV and technology, Chidekel offers guidance on their financing, marketing and distribution efforts. Amid the COVID-19 lockdown, Chidekel created a new venture for SKUxchange to provide blockchain-supported offer-and-reward services for music distributors and retailers. He helped independent label HZR Club work with Ingrooves on the upcoming release of label owner Ant Beale’s first video and single. His artist clients have included Cee Lo Green, Tool, Fall Out Boy, Kevin Rudolf, Panic! at the Disco and members of Train, Wu-Tang Clan and Filter.

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → “In this streaming environment, it’s better to beg for forgiveness than ask for permission. In other words, get your music, videos and other content out to the public now through social media and other outlets and create some traction in the marketplace before worrying about whether your legal house is fully in order.”



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Jay Cohen

PARTNER, PAUL WEISS RIFKIND WHARTON & GARRISON;
CHAIR, VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LAW SCHOOL
(See story, page 53.)

Jay Cooper

FOUNDER, LOS ANGELES ENTERTAINMENT PRACTICE,
GREENBERG TRAURIG
DEPAUL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW

Joel Katz

FOUNDING CHAIRMAN, GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA
PRACTICE/FOUNDING SHAREHOLDER OF THE ATLANTA OFFICE,
GREENBERG TRAURIG
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF LAW

Jess Rosen

SHAREHOLDER/CO-CHAIR, ATLANTA ENTERTAINMENT AND
MEDIA PRACTICE, GREENBERG TRAURIG

Bobby Rosenbloum

CHAIRMAN, GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA PRACTICE,
GREENBERG TRAURIG
HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

Paul Schindler

SHAREHOLDER/SENIOR CHAIR, NEW YORK ENTERTAINMENT
AND MEDIA PRACTICE, GREENBERG TRAURIG
BROOKLYN LAW SCHOOL

In one of the highest-profile deals of the past year, Katz negotiated the sale of Big Machine Label Group to Ithaca Holdings and The Carlyle Group. In January, Rosenbloum was named chairman of the firm's global entertainment and media practice in recognition of his more than 26 years of advising businesses on their global digital media strategies, with some 250 clients. Schindler has handled licensing, publishing and record deals for clients including Jennifer Lopez, Alice Cooper, Maná and Gary Clark Jr., overseeing some \$200 million in total transactions over the past year. Cooper negotiated the agreements that led to Sheryl Crow's collaborative all-star

album, *Threads*, and Yo-Yo Ma's sequel to his 2011 bluegrass-inspired album, *The Great Rodeo Sessions*. Rosen notes that the firm worked with clients including TikTok, Facebook, Spotify and Equinox Media on deals "to help keep content flowing to people in their homes so that they can continue to enjoy their favorite music and interact with their favorite artists" during the pandemic. For Kenny Chesney, Rosen negotiated a stadium tour (now rescheduled for 2021) and a tour sponsorship deal with Marathon Oil, plus he renewed an agreement with SiriusXM for Chesney's No Shoes Radio channel.

Derek Crowover

PARTNER, LOEB & LOEB
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF LAW

John T. Frankenheimer

PARTNER/CHAIR, MUSIC INDUSTRY PRACTICE GROUP/
CHAIRMAN EMERITUS, LOEB & LOEB
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES, SCHOOL OF LAW

Debbie White

PARTNER/VICE CHAIR, MUSIC INDUSTRY PRACTICE GROUP,
LOEB & LOEB
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Loeb & Loeb represented Superfly Events, in partnership with Live Nation Entertainment, in a deal that gave Live Nation a controlling interest in the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival. As traditional tours shut down, the firm helped clients through "an unprecedented maze of legal and business issues" related to concert postponements and cancellations, says Frankenheimer. Adds Crowover: "We worked tirelessly to help quite a few business managers and music-related businesses file for government assistance. It has been a very tiring few months in the music/legal world." White, whom *Billboard* recognized as 2019's Lawyer of the Year, says, "On a posi-

tive note, new artist deals on the recording side and publishing side have not slowed down, and we are having new talks with record labels and distributors, major and independent, almost every day."

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST (WHITE) → "Now more than ever, you need to get creative not just musically but in the promotion of yourself as an artist."

Sarang (Sy) Damle

PARTNER, LATHAM & WATKINS
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA SCHOOL OF LAW

Andrew Gass

PARTNER, LATHAM & WATKINS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, SCHOOL OF LAW

Jonathan West

PARTNER, LATHAM & WATKINS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES, SCHOOL OF LAW

Joe Wetzel

PARTNER, LATHAM & WATKINS
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Damle, who joined Latham in 2018 from his prior role as general counsel of the U.S. Copyright Office, noticed that the pandemic was affecting the ability of streaming services to comply with aspects of the Copyright Act. He helped draft a provision of the CARES Act that allowed the Copyright Office to adopt emergency regulations suspending those requirements. "Latham attorneys in multiple domestic and international offices advised our pro bono client Global Citizen on licensing and broadcasting issues for the *One World: Together at Home* concert," says Wetzel.

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST (WETZEL) → "Be aware of all of the new opportunities to monetize your music and market yourself. New digital platforms are emerging every day."

Doug Davis

FOUNDER/OWNER, THE DAVIS FIRM
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Jodie Shihadeh

PARTNER, THE DAVIS FIRM
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Davis negotiated a new deal for DJ Snake with Interscope Records in the wake of his three top 10 hits on the Billboard Hot 100, including "Let Me Love You" featuring Justin Bieber. "He's a massive artist," says Davis, who also advised LL Cool J on his return to Def Jam. Davis guided executives in negotiations for new roles including Ryan Press as president of U.S. A&R at Warner Chappell Music, Jeanette Perez as chief experience officer at Kobalt and Jorge Mejia as president/CEO of Latin America at Sony/ATV.

TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT → Shihadeh reports that she's working on an initiative "to examine the history of recording agreements and racism in the industry — to identify changes we can make to better protect an artist's income from use of its catalog."

Lawrence Engel

PARTNER/HEAD OF MUSIC GROUP, LEE & THOMPSON
LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

While leading a music group that represents numerous successful artists, Engel's own clients include Harry Styles, Little Mix, Craig David, Liam Payne, Jessie J, Louis Tomlinson and artist-producer MNEK. "Nothing is more satisfying than seeing clients who started their careers with us progress to the next level and the next and the next," says Engel. "It's about being a part of the team and giving your all."

HOW HE'S WORKING NOW → "I've been speaking to my clients as often as possible and have found that my relationships with them have strengthened on a business and personal level. We've all needed support during these crazy times."

Tim Epstein

PARTNER/CHAIR OF LITIGATION GROUP, DUGGAN BERTSCH
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS COLLEGE OF LAW

(See story, page 53.)

Simon Esplen

MANAGING PARTNER, RUSSELLS
MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY LONDON SCHOOL OF LAW

Esplen and his colleagues are representing Prince's estate in a plagiarism dispute over the song "The Most Beautiful Girl in the World" related to a judgment by an Italian court in 1995 that, as updated in 2016, barred distribution of the track in Italy. "The plaintiffs in Italy won the case and they are now trying to enforce that judgment worldwide. So we are acting for the Prince estate in our attempts to stop that judgment." He's also acting on behalf of a major label in a dispute over ownership of master recordings made for the internationally syndicated TV show *Live From Abbey Road*.

TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT → Esplen's London-based firm "closed down [on Blackout Tuesday] and we spent that day giving some very deep and serious consideration to the issues in hand. It was quite a profound day, to be honest with you. A lot of soul-searching took place in our firm."

Ilene Farkas

PARTNER/CO-HEAD OF MUSIC LITIGATION PRACTICE,
PRYOR CASHMAN
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

James Sammataro

CO-CHAIR, MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT GROUP,
PRYOR CASHMAN
DUKE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Donald Zakarin

PARTNER/CO-HEAD OF LITIGATION GROUP, PRYOR CASHMAN
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Sammataro, 46, an in-demand litigator in Latin music, is representing Luis Fonsi and Universal Music Group in a copy-



Rosen negotiated Chesney's Chillaxification stadium tour, now postponed until 2021.

We congratulate our colleague
Alex Weingarten
on being named a
Billboard 2020 Top Music Lawyer



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right infringement claim related to the megahit “Despacito,” and he secured a dismissal of an infringement claim against Warner Music and Sony Latin involving the musical works of Tito El Bambino. He co-represents Chris Cornell’s estate and widow Vicky Cornell in a federal suit over the rights to the last audio recordings composed by Cornell, which members of Soundgarden claim are the band’s final album. Farkas and Zakarin are advising Ed Sheeran, Sony/ATV and Atlantic Records in the claim that Sheeran’s song “Thinking Out Loud” infringes on the copyright of Marvin Gaye’s “Let’s Get It On.” Pryor Cashman, led by Zakarin, represented the National Music Publishers’ Association and Nashville Songwriters Association International in their successful bid to have the Copyright Royalty Board boost mechanical royalty rates for the five-year period from 2018 to 2022. (Spotify and Amazon are still appealing the rate hikes.)

WHAT HE MISSES MOST (SAMMATARO) → “Collegiality. Law is not meant to be a solo enterprise. I really miss strategizing and collaboration.”

Sidney Fohrman

PARTNER, SHEPPARD MULLIN RICHTER & HAMPTON
PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Fohrman and his colleagues advised Spotify as the streaming service presented the first Spotify Awards in Mexico City in March. “We supported Spotify on all aspects of this broadcast,” he says, “from music rights, licensing and artist engagement to development and joint venture agreements with its international distribution partners.” As the COVID-19 lockdown began, Fohrman says his firm created a task force to assist music clients filing applications for help under the CARES Act and assisted touring clients with the fallout of postponements and cancellations.

Russell Frackman

PARTNER, MITCHELL SILBERBERG & KNUPP
COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

Christine Lepera
CO-CHAIR, ENTERTAINMENT/IP LITIGATION GROUP;
MEMBER OF THE GOVERNING BOARD COMMITTEE,
MITCHELL SILBERBERG & KNUPP
NEW YORK LAW SCHOOL

Two decades after representing the RIAA in its successful effort to halt peer-to-peer file sharing via Napster, Frackman, 74, continues his work to protect music copyrights. Over the past year, he pursued claims against Vimeo for unlicensed use of music on a user-generated content site. In January, Lepera won what she describes as a “seminal copyright infringement” judgment involving the fair use doctrine for clients Drake and Universal Music Group. In February, she won sum-

mary judgments in favor of client Lukasz “Dr. Luke” Gottwald in his ongoing defamation case against singer Kesha. (Other issues in the case will go to trial.) In March, Lepera notched another victory when a California federal judge overturned a \$2.8 million jury verdict and ruled that Gottwald, Katy Perry and other creators of the hit “Dark Horse” did not infringe the copyright of a Christian rapper’s song.

FREE ADVICE TO A YOUNG ARTIST (LEPERA) → “You have to love the art more than the business to stay sane.”

Leslie Frank

PARTNER, KING HOLMES PATERNO & SORIANO
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS, SCHOOL OF LAW

Marjorie Garcia
PARTNER, KING HOLMES PATERNO & SORIANO
UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO SCHOOL OF LAW

Henry Gradstein
PARTNER, KING HOLMES PATERNO & SORIANO
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GOULD SCHOOL OF LAW

Howard King

MANAGING PARTNER, KING HOLMES PATERNO & SORIANO
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES, SCHOOL OF LAW

Peter Paterno

PARTNER, KING HOLMES PATERNO & SORIANO
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES, SCHOOL OF LAW

Laurie Soriano

PARTNER, KING HOLMES PATERNO & SORIANO
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS, SCHOOL OF LAW

Soriano struck the deal for Travis Scott’s in-game *Fortnite* performance that drew a reported 12.3 million concurrent players. Garcia was promoted to partner at KHPS in June, expanding the firm’s Latin music department and representing Juanes, J Balvin, Los Tigres del Norte and others. In addition to guiding major artist publishing catalog sales, King notes the firm represented all three scheduled headliners at this year’s Coachella festival. “That didn’t turn out as expected,” he notes.

TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT (KING) → “The vast majority of our lawyers and paralegals went well beyond

disconnecting on Blackout Tuesday by making personal financial commitments to noteworthy charities and pledging their legal skills to aid victims of racism.”

Helene Freeman

PARTNER, PHILLIPS NIZER
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Freeman and her co-counsel, Peter Anderson of Davis Wright Tremaine (see page 62), successfully defended Led Zeppelin against the claim brought by a trustee of the estate of deceased Spirit songwriter Randy Wolfe that “Stairway to Heaven” infringed on the copyright of the Spirit instrumental “Taurus.” In March, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed a trial court’s earlier decision of no copyright infringement. Significantly, the appeals court rejected the “inverse ratio rule,” which declared that the higher the degree of access to a work, the lower the bar for proving substantial similarity. “As a practical matter, the concept of ‘access’ is increasingly diluted in our digitally interconnected world,” the court stated.

Sasha Frid

PARTNER, MILLER BARONDESS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, SCHOOL OF LAW

Louis “Skip” Miller

PARTNER, MILLER BARONDESS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES, SCHOOL OF LAW

Frid and Miller earlier this year began representing Neal Schon and Jonathan Cain, founding members of Journey, in a suit over the rights to the band’s name. The action also seeks \$10 million in damages in a claim of breach of fiduciary duty by former bandmates Steve Smith and Ross Valory. As a litigator, Miller has represented superstars including Rod Stewart, Elton John, Bob Dylan, Lionel Richie, Axl Rose, Donald Fagen and Don Felder. Recently,

he has represented Paula Abdul and her company in a dispute over the continuing use of her likeness to promote a popular anti-aging skin care product after Abdul had terminated her contract with the product’s makers.

Matt Greenberg

OF COUNSEL, RITHOLZ LEVY FIELDS
BENJAMIN N. CARDOZO SCHOOL OF LAW

Chip Petree
MANAGING PARTNER, RITHOLZ LEVY FIELDS
WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Greenberg led his firm’s moves into Latin music during the past decade, representing artists (Anuel AA, Sech, Wisin & Yandel), producers and writers (Tainy, Ovy on the Drums, The Rude Boyz, Keityn) and companies (GLAD Empire, Gerencia 360, Big Ligas). Petree has established his practice among country artists including Chris Stapleton, Tyler Childers, Brothers Osborne and Ashley McBryde. He’s also primary counsel to Spirit Music and has advised the company on several million dollars of acquisitions in the past 18 months, while assisting clients in over \$20 million in catalog deals in the past 12 months.

WHAT HE MISSES MOST (GREENBERG) → “The halal food cart on 19th Street and Park Avenue South in Manhattan. Shoutout to Rafiq.”

Leah Godesky

PARTNER, O’MELVENY & MYERS
COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

Dan Petrocelli
PARTNER/TRIAL PRACTICE COMMITTEE CHAIR,
O’MELVENY & MYERS
SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL

Godesky has been working with colleagues to prepare Kesha’s defense in the suit brought against the singer by Lukasz “Dr. Luke” Gottwald for defamation and breach of contract. The past year included “a fight through the summary judgment stage” of the case, says Godesky. For Global Music Rights, Petrocelli has continued to press an antitrust suit against the Radio Music License Committee, which represents 10,000 radio stations “to enforce the rights of songwriters to fair compensation when their music is played on AM/FM radio. As the pandemic has crippled other income streams, songwriters are even more dependent on performance royalties,” he adds.

WHAT SHE MISSES MOST (GODESKY) → “Dinners out—one of the best parts of New York City.”

Eric Greenspan

MANAGING PARTNER, MYMAN GREENSPAN FOX ROSENBERG
MOBASSER YOUNGER & LIGHT
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF LAW



Perry (right), represented by Lepera, had a \$2.8 million jury verdict for copyright infringement involving her hit “Dark Horse” overturned in March.

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The attorneys of Myman Greenspan Fox Rosenberg Mobasser Younger & Light negotiated Lopez's Super Bowl performance in February.

Jeffrey Light

PARTNER, MYMAN GREENSPAN FOX ROSENBERG MOBASSER YOUNGER & LIGHT
COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

Craig S. Marshall

PARTNER, MYMAN GREENSPAN FOX ROSENBERG MOBASSER YOUNGER & LIGHT
LOYOLA LAW SCHOOL

Francois Mobasser

PARTNER, MYMAN GREENSPAN FOX ROSENBERG MOBASSER YOUNGER & LIGHT
WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Aaron Rosenberg

PARTNER, MYMAN GREENSPAN FOX ROSENBERG MOBASSER YOUNGER & LIGHT
HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

The artists, producers and managers who are among Myman Greenspan's clients all have colleagues "seriously affected by the economic downturn," says Light. "We're incredibly proud of our work helping them figure out how to protect their employees, crew members and loyal staff who might not have been able to weather the storm." In the past year, the firm represented Pulse Music Publishing in its new partnership with Concord and negotiated the deal for Jennifer Lopez's Super Bowl LIV performance in February. With major touring artists including Dead & Company, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Guns N' Roses and Bon Jovi among its clients, the firm is navigating the landscape caused by the shutdown of conventionally staged concerts.

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST (LIGHT) → "Find

smart people who are as passionate as you are, listen to their advice, but follow your own artistic vision."

Gary Greenstein

MEMBER, WILSON SONSINI GOODRICH & ROSATI
GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL
Greenstein, 55, has represented clients before the Copyright Royalty Board, advised tech companies including Google on music-related issues and has included among his clients digital music services like Pandora, Spotify and Tencet. As important, in this moment, he sits on the board of the charitable foundation of his firm and says, "We have launched a substantial matching program for employees making contributions to numerous social justice organizations to ensure that all citizens are respected, honored and free to live a life free of fear and institutionalized and government-sponsored violence."

Allen Grubman

SENIOR PARTNER, GRUBMAN SHIRE MEISELAS & SACKS
BROOKLYN LAW SCHOOL

Kenny Meiselas

NAMED PARTNER, GRUBMAN SHIRE MEISELAS & SACKS
HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

David Jacobs

PARTNER, GRUBMAN SHIRE MEISELAS & SACKS
NEW YORK LAW SCHOOL

Grace Kim

PARTNER, GRUBMAN SHIRE MEISELAS & SACKS
BENJAMIN N. CARDOZO SCHOOL OF LAW

The firm represented the Robin Hood Foundation in connection with Rise Up New York! The Robin Hood Relief Benefit, an event on May 11 that raised \$125 million for New Yorkers affected by COVID-19. It also represents Lady Gaga, who curated Global Citizen's One World: Together at Home virtual concert on April 18 that raised \$127.9 million to support front-line health care workers and the World Health Organization. Those projects are consistent with the stature of Grubman Shire Meiselas & Sacks, founded in 1975 by Grubman, with clients including A-list executives, media companies and superstars like U2, Elton John and Madonna. Gaga and The Weeknd are among Meiselas' clients, while Kim, 42, co-represents Lizzo, and Jacobs, 38, guided Lil Nas X during his rapid rise. In May, the firm reported that it is working with law enforcement agencies in response to a ransomware attack on its confidential client files.

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST (MEISELAS) → "Follow your dreams, and be true to your art."

Pierre Hachar

FOUNDING ATTORNEY, THE HACHAR LAW FIRM
ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Hachar, 40, has been focused on helping developing artists and companies to adapt during both the COVID-19 crisis and the protests over racial injustice. "I started to put out information on music law on social media to help artists who don't have the ability to reach an attorney," he says. Hachar also negotiated publishing deals for producer Sky Rompiendo (with Sony/ATV) and Bryant Myers (with Kobalt), as well as J Balvin's deal between co-managers Fabio Acosta and Scooter Braun, which he calls "the true symbol of Latin music crossing over into the mainstream market."

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → "Stay persistent and authentic."

Casey Higgins

SENIOR POLICY ADVISER, AKIN GUMP STRAUSS HAUER & FELD
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA COLUMBUS SCHOOL OF LAW

Ed Pagano

PARTNER, AKIN GUMP STRAUSS HAUER & FELD
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Brian Pomper

PARTNER, AKIN GUMP STRAUSS HAUER & FELD
CORNELL LAW SCHOOL
(See story, page 53.)

John Ingram

HEAD OF MUSIC, GOODMAN GENOW SCHENKMAN SMELKINSON & CHRISTOPHER

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GOULD SCHOOL OF LAW

When fashion designer/entrepreneur Virgil Abloh and fashion model/TV personality Anwar Hadid made their respective moves into the music business, they turned to Ingram for guidance. Deal-making has continued apace for Ingram during the coronavirus shutdown as he renegotiated Don Toliver's recording agreement with Artist Partner Group, secured label deals for clients Contradash (with Interscope) and Junior Varsity (with Warner) and managed legal matters for canceled and rescheduled tour dates for all clients, including Jojo Siwa's 2020 D.R.E.A.M. arena tour.

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → "Don't be in a rush to sign away your rights."

Lawrence Iser

MANAGING PARTNER, KINSELLA WEITZMAN ISER KUMP & ALDISERT

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, HASTINGS, COLLEGE OF LAW

Howard Weitzman

PARTNER, KINSELLA WEITZMAN ISER KUMP & ALDISERT
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GOULD SCHOOL OF LAW

Weitzman, along with John Branca (see page 64), has represented the estate of Michael Jackson since the superstar's death in 2009 in matters including the case against HBO that claimed the documentary *Leaving Neverland* breached a nondisparagement clause in a 1992 contract. Weitzman's clients have also included Justin Bieber, Ivan Reitman and Chuck Lorre. Iser represents producer-songwriters Justin Raisen, Jeremiah Raisen and Justin "Yves" Rothman in their action against Lizzo over credit and royalties for her Hot 100 No. 1 hit, "Truth Hurts." In an action brought by Flavor Flav of Public Enemy, Iser obtained a dismissal of breach of contract and copyright infringement claims against Reach Music Publishing related to the influential group's publishing catalog.

Erin M. Jacobson

ATTORNEY, ERIN M. JACOBSON
SOUTHWESTERN LAW SCHOOL

With expertise in intellectual property rights and experience as a skilled negotiator, Jacobson in recent months has been involved in the sale of music catalogs that include hit songs recorded by Elvis Presley, Andy Williams, The Dave Clark Five and Quiet Riot. For one client, she protected ownership rights to a best-selling Christmas tune and several well-known Disney song classics. She has recaptured copyrights for hit songs recorded by Frank Sinatra, Prince, The Ronettes and Johnny Burnette, among others. She recently cut a deal for San Diego-based hip-hop artist Joey Trap with distribution and artist services company Pivtl Projects.

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AND ANDY TAVEL**

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Rusty Jones

ATTORNEY, LAW OFFICE OF RUSSELL A. JONES JR.
UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS CECIL C. HUMPHREYS SCHOOL OF LAW
“We should all be very proud of the many ways that the members of the music business family have stepped up [during the pandemic] to raise money and moral support,” says Jones, whose clients are known to include Trisha Yearwood, Garth Brooks, Tim McGraw and Toby Keith. His firm has been involved in several such projects. Amid the protests following the death of George Floyd, Jones brought a long view. “I graduated from high school in 1968 [and lived] through Vietnam and the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Kennedy. It was the most tumultuous period of that century aside from the world wars. But we got through it, and we will get through this. We’ll find a way for everyone to have a voice.”

Jason Karlov

PARTNER/CHAIR, ENTERTAINMENT, MEDIA AND SPORTS PRACTICE GROUP, BARNES & THORNBURG
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GOULD SCHOOL OF LAW
Karlov negotiated deals for Bob Dylan’s two world tours in 2019; struck a new administration agreement with Warner Chappell for the song catalog of the Grateful Dead, including the works of Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter; and secured film and merchandising opportunities for John Fogerty. Once the pandemic hit, he shifted gears to help individuals, startups and smaller companies stay solvent through CARES Act loans and other programs. Looking ahead to the reopening of the touring business, he says, “The law needs to both protect consumers and allow for the resurgence. How that plays out is integral to our success.”
FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → “Adopt the lifestyle of a musician and go all-in, otherwise you are competing against other artists that have made that level of commitment.”

Lauren Kilgore

PARTNER, SHACKELFORD BOWEN MCKINLEY & NORTON
VANDERBILT LAW SCHOOL
As the outside counsel for Black River Entertainment, Kilgore spent much of 2019 preparing for the March release of Kelsea Ballerini’s *kelsea* album on Black River just as the pandemic began. Since then, she has helped artists and companies figure out new business models to weather the COVID-19 crisis. “In the live space, [we’ve worked] to address the sudden lack of revenue, negotiate the termination of performance contracts ... and find new ways for artists and labels to promote new content and reach new fans.”
FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → “You are better off paying a little money upfront to have a lawyer review

your contract than paying a lot more money on the back end to litigate it.”

Christiane Kinney

FOUNDER/PRESIDENT, KINNEY LAW
PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY CARUSO SCHOOL OF LAW
Kinney, who recently launched her own firm, has been an advocate for major-label and independent artists alike. “What can we do to help artist clients stand out and to offset the loss of touring money during this time?” says Kinney. “Thinking outside the box has been key.” She has addressed issues with California’s gig-worker legislation that passed in April after revisions to avoid harming working musicians. The rise of virtual concerts “requires a revised licensing infrastructure,” she says.
TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT → Kinney is co-founder/CEO of the Hearts Giving Hope Foundation, which provides music and art programs for at-risk youth.

Mark Kraiss

PARTNER, BRAY AND KRAISS
THE UNIVERSITY OF LAW (LONDON)
With a client list that includes record and publishing companies, tech entrepreneurs, festival owners and stars like Elton John, Mumford & Sons and Ed Sheeran, Kraiss has gained a reputation for his work with major live events. He represented the Band Aid Charitable Trust in negotiating contracts for Live 8, the series of benefit concerts staged in 2005 to coincide with that summer’s G8 conference in Scotland and to mark the 20th anniversary of the transat-

lantic Live Aid concerts. (He continues to represent the intellectual property rights of the trust pro bono.) Since 1996, he has represented The Rolling Stones, who in June announced that their legal team would work with BMI to stop President Donald Trump from playing their music at his rallies after he used “You Can’t Always Get What You Want” in Tulsa, Okla., on June 20. BMI, in turn, notified the president’s campaign that the use of Stones songs is unauthorized and would “constitute a breach of its licensing agreement,” according to a statement from the band.

Dina LaPolt

FOUNDER/OWNER, LAPOLT LAW
JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF LAW
(See story, page 53.)

Bill Leibowitz

FOUNDER/PARTNER, THE WILLIAM R. LEIBOWITZ LAW GROUP
COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL
Representing Hipgnosis Songs during the past two years Leibowitz has been involved with “the acquisition of over \$1 billion worth of music copyrights and various types of music royalty streams, he says. Since its inception in July 2018, Hipgnosis, led by former music manager Merck Mercuriadis, “has been the game-changing leader and most active purchaser of this class of assets,” says Leibowitz. In some cases, he says, a single transaction with Hipgnosis has resulted in “life-changing wealth” for songwriters,

artists, producers or mixers.
FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → “Maintain ownership of [your] intellectual property whenever possible; do publishing administration deals and master license deals rather than making ownership grants.”

Simon Long

PARTNER, TRAINER SHEPHERD PHILLIPS MELIN HAYNES & COLLINS LONG
CITY OF LONDON AND COLLEGE OF LAW
Minneapolis may be 4,000 miles from London “but what happened there resonates strongly with people all over the world,” says U.K.-based Long, reflecting on the death of George Floyd. “We need to call out our neighbors and colleagues who turn a blind eye to inequality.” Long’s clients include composer-producer Matthew Ferraro, whose latest work, *La Forza Dell’ Amore*, sets the prayers of Pope Saint John Paul II to music, with contributions from Buddy Guy, Natasha Atlas, Seu George, Aaron Neville and others. Multiple Zoom calls have kept the project on track for a fall release in this centennial year of John Paul’s birth, says Long.
WHAT HE MISSES MOST → “Coffee with clients — usually at My Place in Soho’s Berwick Street Market.”

Doug Mark

PARTNER, MARK MUSIC & MEDIA LAW
UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO SCHOOL OF LAW
The firms with investment capital that are bullish on the future of the music industry “need to deploy their money regardless of whether people are staying home or not,” says Mark, 61, “so the catalog-buying business has become even busier.” He has been advising clients on those sales. “From the artist-writer’s viewpoint, when we have fear of the future at times like this, a nice check provides some real comfort.” Mark has also been involved in endorsement agreements and renegotiating touring and merchandising deals.
FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → “Have a strong element of hustle to accompany your excellent music.”

Angela N. Martinez

ATTORNEY AT LAW, LAW OFFICES OF ANGELA N. MARTINEZ
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW
Martinez has emerged as an adviser to the new generation of stars rising on *Billboard*’s Latin Rhythm chart and is the highest-profile female attorney working in the genre. The months of the pandemic have been filled with legal work on livestream concerts by her clients. “That entails social media posts, clearances and exclusivity provisions,” she says.
FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → “Know what you know — and what you don’t know. Surround yourself with people who know how to help you fill in the blanks. Pay-



The Rolling Stones, represented by Kraiss, are taking legal action to block use of their songs at Trump campaign rallies.

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Mike Milom

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Congratulations, Mike!

Chris Horsnell, David Crow, Page Kelley,
Matthew Beckett, Molly Shehan

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KELLEY | BECKETT | SHEHAN PLC

ment to a professional adviser is ultimately an investment in yourself."

James McMillan

MANAGING PARTNER, JAMES E. MCMILLAN

TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY, THURGOOD MARSHALL SCHOOL OF LAW

With a history of working with legacy clients such as New Edition and Floyd Mayweather and rising talents like Machine Gun Kelly, McMillan says that during the pandemic he has continued negotiating artist signings, label deals and entrepreneurial ventures. But, he adds, "I'm very often counseling clients about child support, real estate, bail bonds and other personal matters. The scope of my work with them extends to many aspects of their lives outside of their business interests."

WHAT HE MISSES MOST → "The sense of community and energy that comes from in-person contact."

Ed McPherson

FOUNDING PARTNER, MCPHERSON LLP

UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO LAW SCHOOL

"It is the case that makes me lose sleep at night," says McPherson of his representation of plaintiffs in a class action against Universal Music Group over the loss of original master tapes in a 2008 studio backlot blaze. "And it is the case we have to win for all of the artists whose life work was stored in a warehouse on a studio lot and ultimately destroyed by a fire." McPherson last year also filed an amicus brief in Led Zeppelin's precedent-setting bid to dismiss claims of copyright infringement against the band's classic "Stairway to Heaven."

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → "Make sure you figure out who owns your band name and document it properly at the earliest possible time."

Michael Milom

PARTNER, MILOM HORSNELL CROW KELLEY BECKETT SHEHAN

VANDERBILT LAW SCHOOL

Milom reviewed, pro bono, many agreements for his clients to appear in charitable virtual concerts during the pandemic, including Global Citizen's One World: Together at Home concert to support the World Health Organization. With a client roster said to include Luke Bryan, Alabama, Rascal Flatts, Keith Urban, Emmylou Harris, Hank Williams Jr. and Kelsea Ballerini, Milom says much of his legal work has carried on during these uncertain times. "The surprise was that, in spite of the cancellation of all tours, the negotiation of other common agreements — recording, nonconcert sponsorships, social media, recording producer agreements — continued at customary levels," he says.

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → "Build a team of experienced business and creative advisers you trust and whose advice you are willing to follow. But never forget that you are ultimately responsible for your career."

Zia F. Modabber

MANAGING PARTNER, CALIFORNIA/MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT PRACTICE GROUP CHAIR, KATTEN

LOYOLA LAW SCHOOL

Modabber, 58, watches out for Trent Reznor's legal interests "in the limitless ways his talent gets expressed, everything from agreements for him to create musical scores to protection of his Nine Inch Nails trademarks." Just before the pandemic closed courtrooms, Modabber argued on behalf of the Michael Jackson estate in the appeal of a \$9.4 million jury verdict in a claim for unpaid royalties brought by producer Quincy Jones "and then [received] word that the appeals court agreed with us."

WHAT HE MISSES MOST → "Entertainment of all sorts — and Tito's Tacos."

Martin Ochs

PARTNER/HEAD OF MUSIC, HAMLINS

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

Ochs, 37, has a core expertise in live-music and public-performance royalties. Advising collective management organizations that administer copyrights, like Britain's PPL and PRS for Music, during the pandemic "has been a challenge," he says. Balancing the needs of creators with the needs of venues and other music users is the goal, he adds. "This is an equilibrium that is very fine and difficult to achieve."

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → "Think of the law as there to help you, not restrict you. Try to understand the basics of copyright law and engage with how it can benefit you."

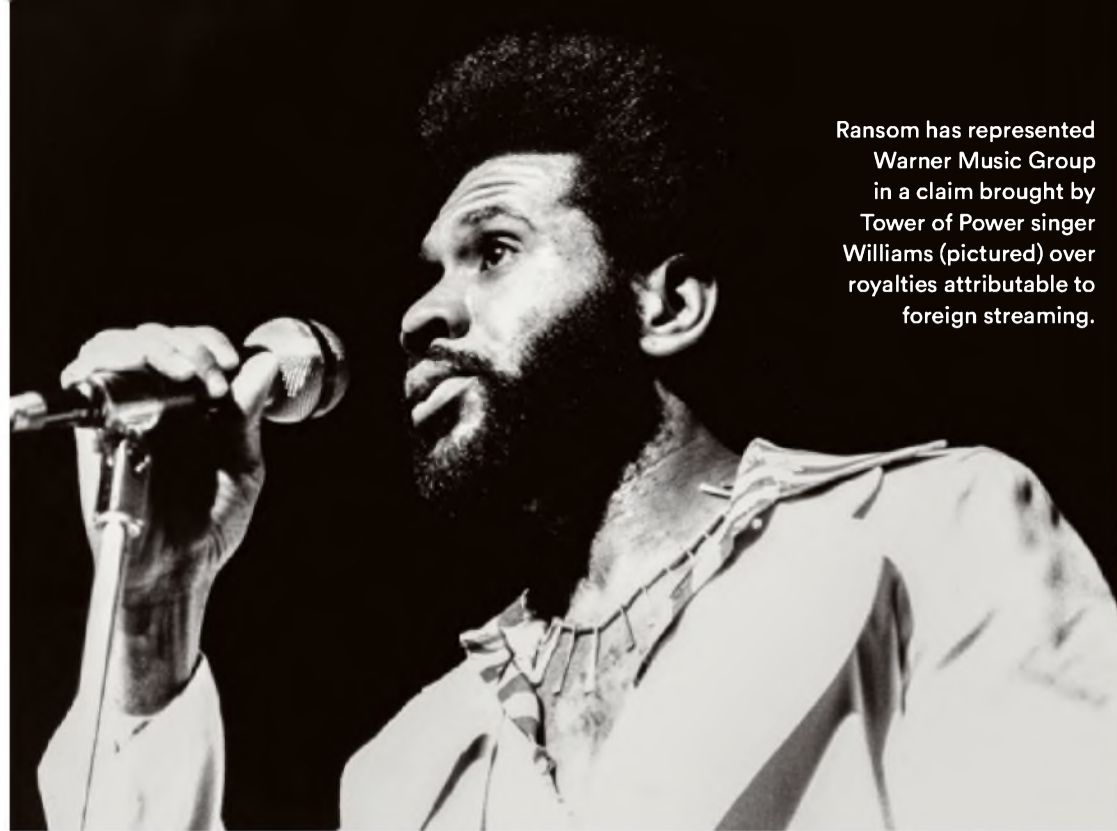
Anthony Oncidi

PARTNER/HEAD OF THE LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT LAW GROUP

IN THE LOS ANGELES OFFICE, PROSKAUER

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LAW SCHOOL

Oncidi offered guidance to the RIAA about the impact of California Assembly Bill 5, which was intended to ensure fair treatment for gig-economy workers but would have reclassified independent contractors in the music business as employees, complicating their ability to work. A revised version of the bill passed in April. Oncidi also represents the Recording Academy in its dispute with former president/CEO Deborah Dugan, both in Dugan's complaints to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and ongoing arbitration proceedings of the academy's counterclaims against her. "There has been no real progress made with those filings,"



Ransom has represented Warner Music Group in a claim brought by Tower of Power singer Williams (pictured) over royalties attributable to foreign streaming.

he says, "because all of those were [made] right before the world shut down."

WHAT HE MISSES MOST → "A haircut administered by competent personnel."

Matt Oppenheim

MANAGING PARTNER, OPPENHEIM + ZEBRAK

CORNELL LAW SCHOOL

Scott Zebak

FOUNDING PARTNER, OPPENHEIM + ZEBRAK

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF LAW

Oppenheim, Zebak and their colleagues were trial counsel to the major music groups and their publishing companies in obtaining a \$1 billion jury verdict against internet service provider Cox Communications for "massive copyright infringement on its network by its subscribers," says Oppenheim, 53. "We were gratified that the verdict vindicated artists, songwriters and music companies." The firm is also involved in similar claims pending against two other ISPs, Charter Communications and Bright House Networks.

TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT (OPPENHEIM) → "The tragedy of George Floyd and the systemic racism it reflects has affected us all. As a boutique firm, we work and collaborate more closely than most. The current national unrest has given our firm an opportunity to discuss these issues on the firmwide video calls we have been having every morning since the pandemic began."

Donald Passman

PARTNER, GANG TYRE RAMER BROWN & PASSMAN

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

Passman — who declines to discuss specific clients but has been said to represent Taylor Swift, Adele and Stevie Wonder, among others — says tour cancellations have fueled legal work during the pandemic and "deal-making is robust" with record labels and publishing companies. He also recently published the 10th edition of his must-read guide, *All You Need To Know About the Music Business*. In the streaming age, he says, "the industry has changed more profoundly than at any time in its history."

Adrian Perry

PARTNER, COVINGTON & BURLING

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY LAW CENTER

Jonathan Sperling

PARTNER, COVINGTON & BURLING

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

In the past year, Sperling, Perry and their firm advised the major labels and music publishers in copyright infringement litigation against internet service providers Charter Communications and Bright House Networks. "We're seeking statutory damages for infringement of more than 11,000 works," says Sperling, 48. During the pandemic, Perry, 39, says they've helped clients navigate live-performance cancellations, restructuring tour sponsorships "and helping keep the arrangements intact."

TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT (PERRY) → "Our firm has a long-standing commitment to seeking justice through [extensive pro bono] legal work, and many of those matters focus on fighting injustice and inequality in our communities."

Vincent P. Phillips

FOUNDING PARTNER, ARRINGTON & PHILLIPS

ATLANTA'S JOHN MARSHALL LAW SCHOOL

Aurielle Brooks

ATTORNEY, ARRINGTON & PHILLIPS

ATLANTA'S JOHN MARSHALL LAW SCHOOL

(See story, page 53.)

Michael Poster

PARTNER/HEAD OF CORPORATE AND SECURITIES GROUP,

MICHELMAN & ROBINSON

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Michelman & Robinson's work advising and representing the buyers and sellers of music assets has barely paused during the coronavirus shutdown — Poster, 48, cites the eight-figure sale of a film-music library to a European-based music assets fund. "The value of music copyrights as an asset class has not been adversely affected by the pandemic overall," he says, and deals keep getting made, "especially in light of low interest rates."

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → "Retain ownership of as much of your copyrights as possible."

Rollin Ransom, 50

PARTNER/CO-LEADER, GLOBAL COMMERCIAL LITIGATION AND DISPUTES PRACTICE, SIDLEY AUSTIN

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BILLBOARD'S 2020 TOP
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THE ZIA FIRM PLLC

From the team: Nate, Marc, Dan, Tom and Julia



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LAW SCHOOL

Ransom has represented Warner Music Group in a claim brought by Tower of Power singer Lenny Williams challenging the calculation of royalties attributable to foreign streaming. In February, a California federal district court judge denied class action certification in the suit, “a victory for Warner Music that [was appealed and] is now under review at the Ninth Circuit,” says Ransom. He has also been representing Universal Music Group in a putative class action involving Section 203 of the Copyright Act, under which artists can seek to reclaim ownership of their master recordings. Both cases are ongoing.

TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT → “I’ve been talking with other music industry lawyers about working with some of the fantastic legal services [such as California Lawyers for the Arts] to assist musicians and other artists affected by the pandemic.”

Berkeley Reinhold

PRESIDENT, BUSINESS AND LAW FIRM OF BERKELEY REINHOLD
WHITTIER LAW SCHOOL
(See story, page 53.)

Angela Rogers

ATTORNEY/OWNER, ROGERS LAW GROUP
UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE SCHOOL OF LAW
Rogers late last year negotiated a contract with Interscope Records for R&B singer Ann Marie in what she calls “one of the largest licensing deals for an R&B artist in decades.” (Terms of the deal were not disclosed.) During the pandemic, she says, “the rate with which I am having to clear records for artists and producers has substantially increased because more people seem to be consuming more music.”
TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT → “I try to be a resource for those seeking more information regarding police accountability and community empowerment. As a Black woman, remedying social injustice has been a lifelong passion.”

Leron Rogers

PARTNER/VICE CHAIR, ENTERTAINMENT, MEDIA AND SPORTS PRACTICE GROUP, LEWIS BRISBOIS BISGAARD & SMITH
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW

John Rose

ASSOCIATE, LEWIS BRISBOIS BISGAARD & SMITH
EMORY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW
Rogers and Rose helped Rick Ross prevail last year in a dispute with 50 Cent over Ross’ remix of “In Da Club.” A federal court judge ruled in February that 50 Cent could not make a right of publicity claim over the use of his voice in the remix because he had relinquished his copyright to the song. Rogers, who has negotiated deals in the past year for Ross, Kanye West and A&R executive Abou “Bu” Thiam, is also presi-

dent of the Black Entertainment and Sports Lawyers Association. Rose has advised French Montana and Lil Uzi Vert, among others, and, with his partners, obtained dismissal of a \$1 million breach of contract claim against K. Michelle last November.

Brian Schall

HEAD OF THE ENTERTAINMENT DEPARTMENT, WOLF RIFKIN SHAPIRO SCHULMAN & RABKIN
SOUTHWESTERN LAW SCHOOL

Heidy Vaquerano

SENIOR COUNSEL, WOLF RIFKIN SHAPIRO SCHULMAN & RABKIN
SOUTHWESTERN LAW SCHOOL

Schall, 54, and Vaquerano negotiated the sale of the song catalog of blink-182 founder and former member Tom DeLonge to Hipgnosis. Vaquerano also helped strike an agreement between the U.S. Army and DeLonge’s To the Stars Academy of Arts & Science, which conducts research into UFOs. Schall reports securing an eight-figure capital investment for independent festival promoter Danny Wimmer Presents from Ron Burkle’s The Yucaipa Companies.
FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST (SCHALL) → “Engage with your fans on a daily basis on all your social media platforms. Your fans are your lifeblood. Embrace them, cherish them and respect them.”

Rose H. Schwartz

PARTNER, FRANKLIN WEINRIB RUDELL & VASSALLO
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Kenneth Weinrib

PARTNER, FRANKLIN WEINRIB RUDELL & VASSALLO
BENJAMIN N. CARDOZO SCHOOL OF LAW
Schwartz, 64, advised New York’s Metropolitan Opera on its April 25 free stream of the four-hour At Home Gala, which incorporated some 40 artists singing live from their homes across the globe. Those performances “were so emotional and raw

that I found myself in tears on multiple occasions, as did viewers around the world,” she says. Weinrib helped clients obtain releases and waivers “to perform in support of critically important causes and issues” for organizations including the Robin Hood Foundation, he says.

WHAT SHE MISSES MOST (SCHWARTZ) → “The power of a hug or a handshake. Zoom is a lifesaver in many ways but can never replace eye contact.”

Michael Selverne

MANAGING PARTNER, SELVERNE & COMPANY
NEW YORK LAW SCHOOL

Among other clients, Selverne represents Round Hill Music and Kobalt Music. (He previously represented SONGS Music Publishing.) Through their deals and those for other clients, he has worked on transactions totaling over \$250 million in the last 18 months, he says. During the pandemic, his firm is working with and donating to Manna FoodBank and Homeward Bound, both in Asheville, N.C., to obtain housing and food for those in need. He is also working closely with the Asheville Symphony in developing new models for recording and presenting symphonic music during the lockdown.
TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT → “I continue to stand by and act with my friends, colleagues and clients in the African American community to end racist practices in America. We need to do better. This is a moral imperative for America to move forward.”

Edward Shapiro

PARTNER, SPORTS/MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT SUBSECTOR LEADER, REED SMITH
BROOKLYN LAW SCHOOL

Gregor Pryor

PARTNER/CO-CHAIR, ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA INDUSTRY GROUP, REED SMITH
CITY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON NOTTINGHAM LAW SCHOOL

Stephen Sessa

PARTNER/CO-CHAIR, ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA INDUSTRY GROUP, REED SMITH
WHITTIER LAW SCHOOL

With one of the largest teams of dedicated entertainment and media lawyers of any international law firm, Reed Smith has a roster of clients that includes artists, producers, songwriters, promoters, executives and entrepreneurs as well as many content streaming services, video games companies, social media platforms and broadcasters. The surge in live-performance streaming deals has taken priority during the lockdown, says Shapiro. Of equal importance was helping clients navigate the Paycheck Protection Program and, he says, “the daily federal, state and local rule changes regarding what activities were deemed acceptable under the ever-changing conditions.”

WHAT HE MISSES MOST (SHAPIRO) → “Visiting El Capitan” in Yosemite National Park.

Daniel Shulman

PARTNER, EISNER LLP
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA HASTINGS COLLEGE OF THE LAW

Owen Sloane

PARTNER, EISNER LLP
YALE LAW SCHOOL

Andrew Tavel

PARTNER, EISNER LLP
HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

Shulman, 41, negotiated a catalog sale earlier this year on behalf of songwriter-producer Mark Batson to Kobalt Music Group for an undisclosed amount, renegotiated producer Boi-1da’s deal with Sony/ATV Music and struck a new deal for Highbridge the Label (home of A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie) with Atlantic Records. Sloane reports that his 2019 run of multimillion-dollar publishing catalog sales has continued this year despite the pandemic. Tavel, 64, renegotiated G-Eazy’s Sony/ATV publishing agreement and RCA Records deal. To further expand G-Eazy’s brand, he “negotiated deals in the worlds of sneakers, grooming products and cannabis, some of which were only product endorsements. [In others, G-Eazy] acquired an equity stake in the company.”

FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST (SLOANE) →

“Collaborate with the most talented people you can find.”

Simran Singh

MANAGING PARTNER, SINGH SINGH & TRAUBEN
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI SCHOOL OF LAW

In the past year, Singh, 41, negotiated Ozuna’s new multimillion-dollar contract with Sony Music Entertainment that is reported to be one of the largest global deals for a Latin artist in recent memory. “It sets Ozuna up to be a global prior-



From left: Rose, Ross and Rogers in Costa Rica in 2019.

RUSS AUGUST & KABAT

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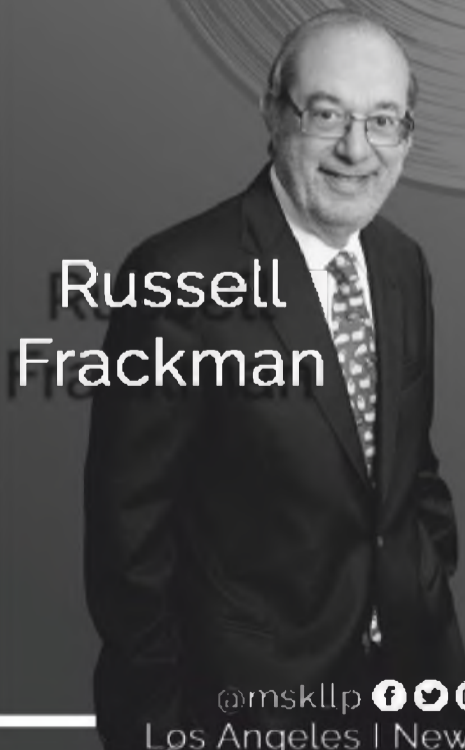
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Pitbull has had his signature "Eeeeyooo" yell trademarked by Zigel.



ity," says Singh, who also struck multiple deals for Daddy Yankee and the renewal of a Kobalt Music publishing agreement for Karol G, along with negotiating a Netflix series for Selena Quintanilla.

WHAT HE MISSES MOST → "Live concerts, dining out, my office and my gym."

Larry Stein

PARTNER/HEAD OF MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT, RUSS AUGUST & KABAT
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GOULD SCHOOL OF LAW
Drake, Post Malone and Simon Cowell are among those who have engaged Stein for legal guidance. He is the attorney for Todd Moscovitz in litigation that began late last year against 300 Entertainment, related to Moscovitz's ownership of stock in the label he co-founded with Lyor Cohen. Stein still represents the co-creators of the mockumentary *This Is Spinal Tap* in their ongoing disputes with Vivendi and Studio Canal but achieved a settlement with Universal Music Group over copyright termination and accounting issues surrounding the film's sound recordings and soundtrack.

TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT → Amid the national unrest over racial equality, Stein expresses a straightforward goal: "to be as kind to others as possible."

Rachel Stilwell

FOUNDER/OWNER, STILWELL LAW
LOYOLA LAW SCHOOL
Stilwell has been representing the Future of Music Coalition and the musicFIRST Coalition (which counts the Recording Academy, SoundExchange, the American Association of Independent Music [A2IM] and the RIAA as members) in arguments before the Federal Communications

Commission to counter efforts of the National Association of Broadcasters to further deregulate chain ownership of local AM/FM radio stations. If the deregulation occurs, the industry "knows it would be the homogenization of music" broadcasting, Stilwell said during an A2IM Indie Week presentation in June.

Ron Sweeney

FOUNDER, SWEENEY JOHNSON & SWEENEY; FOUNDER, RON SWEENEY & COMPANY
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GOULD SCHOOL OF LAW
(See story, page 53.)

Adam Van Straten

PRINCIPAL, VAN STRATEN SOLICITORS
THE UNIVERSITY OF LAW, GUILDFORD, ENGLAND
Van Straten works with artists from around the world but took particular pride in the past year advising Sekou Andrews, who was nominated for best spoken word album for *Sekou Andrews & The String Theory*, and Koffee, who won best reggae album for *Rapture*, both at the Grammy Awards in January. During the pandemic, he has been advising developers of a new online creative collaboration platform that is yet to be announced.
FREE ADVICE FOR A YOUNG ARTIST → "Find a lawyer early — and certainly before you sign anything — who genuinely believes in your music and understands your work and what you want to achieve."

Alex Weingarten

PARTNER, VENABLE LLP
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY LAW CENTER
Weingarten has been focused on assisting his artists with business interrup-

tion insurance claims. "Touring and live performances have come to a complete halt," he says. Last year, Weingarten represented the adult children of Tom Petty in a dispute with Petty's widow, Dana York Petty, helping to reach an agreement over management of the late rocker's estate "that honors his memory and is true to his legacy."

TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT → As chair of the community engagement initiative for the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, Weingarten says the federation is "focused on working with our counterparts in the African American community to combat injustice and inequity."

Douglas H. Wigdor

FOUNDING PARTNER, WIGDOR LAW
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA COLUMBUS SCHOOL OF LAW

With its focus on employment law and civil rights, Wigdor's firm has been reaching out to those in need of legal guidance with free weekly YouTube presentations "about the rights of employees in the pandemic," he says. During ongoing protests, his firm also gave advice on the rights of employees "if they speak out and their employer disagrees with them." Wigdor's most high-profile music client, Deborah Dugan, remains in arbitration with her former employer, the Recording Academy, over her wrongful-termination claims. He is also representing Dugan in her case against the academy brought before the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

WHAT HE MISSES MOST → "Group athletic classes. It means a lot even saying 'Hi' to someone as you roll up your yoga mat."

Helen Yu

PRINCIPAL, YU LESEBERG
WHITTIER LAW SCHOOL
The clients who turn to Yu and her colleagues include songwriters, producers and artists who have appeared on high-profile releases in the past year, including Kanye West's *Jesus Is King*, J. Cole's *Revenge of the Dreamers III* and Megan Thee Stallion's "Hot Girl Summer." Her firm has been working with client Ty Dolla \$ign on the release of his much-anticipated next album for Atlantic Records.
HOW HER CLIENTS ARE WORKING NOW → "I'm in awe of the creative community's support of one another through such challenging times. Their resilience is truly inspiring."

Adam Zia

OWNER, THE ZIA FIRM
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW
Zia has helped his clients make the most productive and creative use of their time during self-isolation. Interscope Records

A&R vp Caroline Diaz organized a talent show for unsigned artists on Instagram Live. Tierra Whack participated in an Instagram forum on COVID-19's impact on the creative process. French Montana took on Tory Lanez in a *Verzuz* battle for over 300,000 fans, he says.

TAKING ACTION IN THE MOMENT → "I have had lengthy discussions with our Black clients and executive colleagues sharing our stories and experiences, offering our legal help and friendship, and brainstorming for measures that we as a music community can take to push the social justice conversation forward."

Leslie Zigel

CHAIR, ENTERTAINMENT, MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY, GREENSPOON MARDER
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI SCHOOL OF LAW

Pitbull's recognizable "Eeeeyooo" yell is now trademarked thanks to Zigel and his team, who secured the hard-to-obtain sensory trademark. Zigel also negotiated Pitbull's deals with Boost Mobile and his joint venture with Horizon Media for multicultural ad agency 305. Bonus: The bass-playing lawyer got to record on Carlos Vives' new album, *Cumbiana*.

HOW HE'S WORKING NOW → "Law firms and accounting firms are all cutting salaries. It's challenging for everyone."

METHODOLOGY

Billboard's power list features are selective. Nominations for each list open not less than 120 days in advance of publication. (For a contact for our editorial calendar listing publication dates, please email thom.duffy@billboard.com.) The online nomination link is sent to press representatives and/or honorees of companies previously featured on any *Billboard* power list, as well as those who send a request to thom.duffy@billboard.com. Nominations close and lists are locked not less than 90 days before publication. *Billboard's* Top Music Lawyers for 2020 were chosen by editors based on factors including, but not limited to, nominations by peers, colleagues and superiors. In-house counsel were limited to the companies shown. Otherwise, Top Music Lawyers focused on outside counsel. In addition to nominations, editors consider the attorneys' representation of clients with notable music industry impact. That impact is measured by metrics including, but not limited to, chart, sales and streaming performance as measured by Nielsen Music/MRC Data and social media impressions using data available as of May 20.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Chartbreaker

No. 7

ON BILLBOARD'S RAP AIRPLAY CHART

Young T & Bugsey

The rap duo from Nottingham, England, is celebrating its first global hit, "Don't Rush," thanks to a viral trend that emerged during lockdown

🕒 In March 2016, Young T & Bugsey's hypnotic hip-hop track "Glistenin'" prompted Sony's Black Butter Records to reach out over email. Soon enough, the duo was meeting with co-founders Joe Gossa and Henry Village, as well as A&R executive Cian Cooper Davies, and six months later signed a recording contract. Following an opening gig on labelmate J Hus' tour, Young T & Bugsey also partnered with J Hus' managers, 2K Management co-founders Kilo Jalloh and Moe Bah. "We knew they could make very good, different types of songs and hooks," says Bah, "and they just looked like superstars." Young T & Bugsey (both 23, they were born Ra'chard Tucker and Doyin Julius, respectively) racked up hit singles in the United Kingdom through 2019, and by that April — while in a London studio with producer GRADES (Dua Lipa, H.E.R.,

Khalid) — the pair recorded its biggest hit to date: the rattling, club-ready "Don't Rush," which the duo finished in one day. It performed well in Britain but didn't gain global traction until 20-year-old university student Toluwalase Asolo used the song in a video that she tweeted March 22 — two days after Young T & Bugsey released their debut mixtape, *Plead the 5th* — of herself and seven friends transforming from loungewear to glammed get-ups. Within weeks, the #DontRushChallenge spread on TikTok, where videos using the hashtag have nearly 800 million views to date. The song started taking off in Africa, then the United



Jalloh



Bah

States, leading to a U.S. label partnership with Epic Records. "Our strategy was to react quickly, breaking from the traditional setup of taking a song to radio," says Epic chairman/CEO Sylvia Rhone. "Radio's reaction matched our pace, and top 40 followed two weeks later." In mid-May, "Don't Rush" made its Billboard Hot 100 debut, peaking at No. 56 on the June 27 chart following remixes from Rauw Alejandro and DaBaby. And though Young T & Bugsey have four follow-up singles ready for release, Bugsey says that "this song keeps changing our plans."

—JOSH GLICKSMAN

Bugsey (left) and Young T photographed by Ollie Adegboye on June 30 in London.



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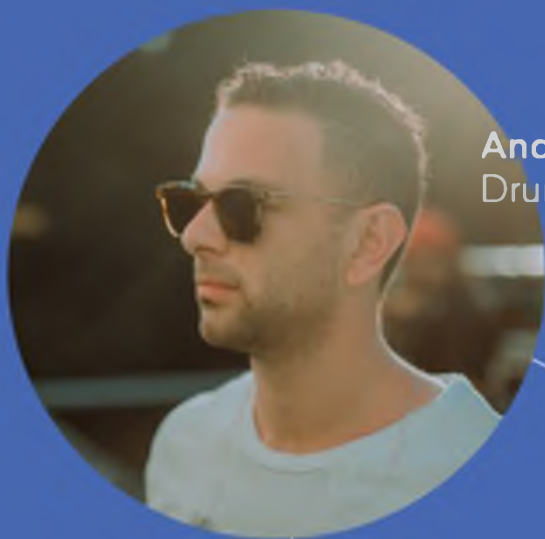
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