

MUSIC
CONNECTION

Special Year-End Issue

2 0 2 1

**Dirty
Honey**

50 Best
Career Tips of the Year

Top 25
New Music Critiques

Our **Favorite** Signing Stories

5 Tips
How to Launch
a New Single

Stocking Stuffers
& Gifts Under a Grand

+ **Silk Sonic • Bob Clearmountain • Damon Albarn**

Vol. 45 • December 2021 • \$3.95/\$4.95 Canada



NOT NEW!



SansAmp GT2 (1993)

Affectionately referred to as the "desert island" pedal, the SansAmp GT2 is unchanged [except for the DC input very early on]. Consistently in production since introduced, it enables you to "architecturally" create your own rig in seconds.

SansAmp Classic (1989)

B. Andrew Barta's unique invention was the catalyst for the whole "going direct" movement over 30 years ago. Since then, SansAmp has evolved into an extensive line of pedals and racks, as well as being the heart of our Fly Rig® Series. Of the pedal formats, the SansAmp Classic is the most sophisticated.

EXCITEMENT
NEVER GETS
OLD



SansAmp Bass Driver DI (1994)

Often unseen, it's hardly a secret that the SansAmp Bass Driver is the secret weapon behind mammoth rigs on arena stages around the globe. It is also widely recognized as a studio staple for virtually every genre, and will make any FOH engineer smile.

DOES SOMETHING HAVE TO BE "NEW" TO BE EXCITING?

In a world of planned obsolescence and constant upgrades, it's rare an electronic music-related product can survive a lengthy lifespan. Yet these 3, in particular, have done just that. [We have more, such as the MIDI Mouse since 1995, but let's stay focused on SansAmp.]

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42 Dirty Honey

For our cover story feature, this young band—the only unsigned artist ever to hit #1 on Billboard’s Mainstream Rock Chart—opens up to Music Connection about how they’ve managed to achieve so much without the support of a record label.

By Brett Callwood

Photos: Mike Savoia



52 Our Favorite Signing Stories of the Year

Compiled By Mark Nardone

50 Best Career Tips of 2021

Compiled By Joseph Maltese



49

Departments

- 08. Close Up
- 09. Assignments
- 10. New Toys
- 20. Book Store
- 22. Up Close
- 24. Studio Mix
- 29. Business Affairs
- 30. The Legal Beat
- 34. Song Biz
- 38. Film•TV•Theater
- 40. Mixed Notes

Reviews

- 56. Album Reviews
- 57. Live Reviews



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46 Top 25 New Music Critiques & 20 Top Prospects of 2021

Compiled By Joseph Maltese



32

The New Era of Music PR

- 14. Stocking Stuffers..... By Rob Putnam
- 16. Gifts Under a Grand..... By Joseph Maltese
- 26. Producer Crosstalk: Bob Clearmountain..... By Rob Putnam
- 28. Exec Profile: Paula Salvatore..... By Rob Putnam
- 36. Songwriter Profile: Merry Clayton..... By Andrea Beenham
- 54. Product Profile: Spectrasonics Elevator Patch Library..... By Steve Sattler
- 62. Tip Jar: Launching a New Single..... By AV Super Sunshine

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MANUFACTURED AND PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Music Connection (ISSN# 1091-9791) is published monthly by *Music Connection, Inc.*, 3441 Ocean View Blvd., Glendale, CA 91208. Single copy price is \$3.95, Canada \$4.95. Subscription rates: \$35/one year, \$59/two years. Outside the U.S., add \$25 (U.S. currency) per year. We are not responsible for unsolicited material, which must be accompanied by return postage. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without written permission of the publishers is prohibited. The opinions of contributing writers to this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of Music Connection, Inc. Copyright © 2020 by E. Eric Bettelli. All rights reserved.

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HAZELRIGG INDUSTRIES

Artist: Chris Buck

Scarlett

TURN IDEAS INTO RECORDS

Scarlett, the world's best-selling range of USB audio interfaces, has already helped make more records than any other range of interfaces in history. And now, Focusrite is giving new Scarlett owners the ability to record studio quality vocals, powerful guitars, luscious keys and huge drums, then mix and master with iconic Focusrite studio hardware – all in the box.

From October 1, 2021, every new Focusrite Scarlett interface comes with an unbeatable range of tried-and-tested studio tools from some of the biggest names in the business.

Hitmaker Expansion – available to every newly registered Focusrite interface user – is built to get you creating records immediately.

Included free with every new Scarlett are all the tools you need to write, produce, mix and master your music in studio quality:

- Auto-Tune Access
- Relab LX480 Essentials
- Softube Marshall Silver Jubilee 2555
- XLN Addictive Keys
- XLN Addictive Drums 2
- Brainworx bx_oberhausen
- Three Month Splice Sounds Subscription
- Brainworx bx_console Focusrite SC
- Focusrite Red Plug-in Suite
- Brainworx bx_masterdesk
- Ableton Live Lite
- Avid® Pro Tools® | First with Focusrite Creative Pack (includes 21 classic amps, cab models, studio FX and effects pedals)
- Access to Focusrite's Plug-in Collective



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Musicians Performance Studios, Inc. *musiciansps.com*

Creating a True Music Community: Perhaps the most important line on the landing page of Rancho Cucamonga, CA-based Musicians Performance Studios, Inc. is: “MPS was created for musicians by musicians, we know how difficult it is to find a quality facility.”

Launched in 2008 as a multi-rehearsal room facility by veteran drummer Keith Jones, it has by his design grown over the years to become the Inland Empire’s top state-of-the-art fully equipped pro shop, equipment rental, rehearsal and recording studio, in addition to providing lessons for all ages and levels and instruments (woodwinds, brass, string, guitar, bass, drums and vocals). Aside from providing state-of-the-art services, Jones’ vision has always been to create an environment that encourage musicians to help each other and form a thriving creative community.

“I have been so blessed in this business,” he says, “and launching and growing MPS has been my way of giving back. People may know me as a great drummer, but I would rather be known as a good humanitarian. There was a need for these services in this area and being a giver has always been my nature, and those things were always the driving forces in my business plan.” Serving everyone from weekend warriors to pop superstars, MPS’ well-known clientele has included The Romantics, Ice-T & Body Count, Great White, Cameo and Los Lobos.

Rehearsal and Lock Outs: MPS’ spacious, sound-proof studios are designed to enable artists and musicians to maximize their practice sessions and allow them to create in a relaxed, stress-free environment with no distractions. Based on size and amenities, the seven rooms range from \$17 to \$26/hr with a two-hour minimum. The rooms with full backline include P.A. & mics/stands, guitar/bass/keyboards, amps and drums. Cymbals are available to rent for \$7. Lockouts range from \$250 to \$500 depending on the size. There is also a 1,000 sq. ft. showcase room available for \$26/hr. It’s designed for rehearsal, but clients can inquire if they are seeking to use it for other purposes.

Recording Studio: Madman Sound is a full-service recording studio located at MPS. Offering a comfortable, relaxed vibe, the facility has a



three-room layout consisting of a control room, tracking room and a vocal booth, ideal for artists looking to capture the vibe and feel of a rhythm section while still maintaining acoustic isolation. It is equipped with an assortment of mics, outboard gear and instruments. Led by Orlando Torres, MPS’ engineering staff consists of veteran pros with years of experience in all facets of audio production.

Other Services: MPS has a pro shop carrying instruments and gear from all major brands at the lowest prices anywhere, guaranteed. They also now offer graphic design by Sam Mountain, a SoCal based artist/graphic designer from Claremont who has experience in branding and many types of design (logo, promo material, merchandise, web) as well as photography and video editing. MPS also offers full-service, reasonably priced daily equipment rentals, video and photo shoots and live sound and lighting systems that can be rented out for events of any size.

Contact Musicians Performance Studios, Inc., 909-944-0100

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Devon Libran

SVP, Visual Content & Production
Republic Records



Republic Records named **Devon Libran** SVP of Visual Content & Production. After graduating from the University of Neles. Mr. Libran most recently served as VP of Video & Content Production at Artist Partner Group (APG) where he spearheaded visual content for chart-topping multiplatinum talent such as Jason Derulo, Lil Skies, Don Toliver, and more. In this newly minted role, Mr. Libran will oversee the creation, production, and distribution of immersive visual content for roster artists, spanning visualizers, music videos, lyric videos, and performance videos. For more information, contact sydney.feinberg@umusic.com.

Ellis Sorkin

Consultant
Immersion Networks



Immersion Networks, the immersive sound innovators, have enlisted industry veteran **Ellis Sorkin** to spearhead outreach and support for their content creation services to a broad base of clients. Sorkin will guide artists and labels seeking a high-quality, large-scale, and affordable solution to deliver immersive libraries from their legacy catalogs. Sorkin will work from Los Angeles, rounding out the Seattle-based team of audio scientists and music industry experts. Contact ellis@studioreferral.com for more.

Myka Miller

Executive Director
The Guitar Center Music Foundation



The Guitar Center Music Foundation announced the appointment of **Myka Miller** as the non-profit's new **Executive Director**. Miller is an award-winning and accomplished non-profit executive with more than 19 years of prior experience in entrepreneurship, program design, board development, fundraising, performance management, and cost management analysis. In her new role, Miller will be responsible for the successful operation and performance of The Guitar Center Music Foundation. For more, contact pr@clynemedia.com.

Kathy Steahle

CEO
New England Music Hall of Fame



New England Music Hall of Fame has named endorsed drummer **Kathy Steahle** as the company's new **Chief Executive Officer**. Steahle has played at the Vatican in Italy for Pope John Paul with Ed Perez and Our Lady of Assumption. She has opened up for such National Acts as: Joan Jett, NRBQ, The Ramones, Taylor Dayne, Sister Funk, Crystal Waters, Bethany Yarrow, B52s, Foreigner and UH HUH HER. Steahle is endorsed by Zorian Percussion, Creative Percussion, Creative drum, Bucks County Drums, and Trexist cymbals. For more, contact nemhofnews@gmail.com.

Jaclyn D. Carter

VP
Shore Fire Media



Shore Fire Media, a leading PR firm for entertainment, arts and culture, has promoted **Jaclyn D. Carter** to **Vice President**. Carter is responsible for artist and industry relations in Nashville in addition to leading campaigns for artists Britney Spencer, Justin Moore, Willie Jones, Natalie Hemby, Crowder, We The Kingdom; content curator talent Nabela Noor and Scotty Sire; athletes Shawn Johnson East and Chris Bosh; venues Brooklyn Bowl and The Factory St. Louis; Bud Light Super Bowl Music Fest, CreatiVets and more. Contact msatlof@shorefire.com for more.

Olivier Roure

Director, Live Sound Sales U.S.—East
QSC, LLC



QSC, LLC has announced that **Olivier Roure** has joined QSC as **U.S. Sales Director** for the Eastern Region for the company's Live Sound business. Roure was the owner of Ozone Recording, a production company with recording studios above Studio 54 in NYC and in New Jersey, working with major record labels including Arista and Elektra. In his new role, Roure will be responsible for managing the day-to-day direct manufacturing to channel partner relationships for the company's diverse portfolio of live sound products and solutions. For more information, contact kristine.fowler@qsc.com.

Samu Rast

Head of Sales
Sync Floor



SyncFloor, the commercial music licensing platform, has hired **Samu Rast** as **Head of Sales**. Rast comes to SyncFloor after stints at the production music house Anthem Entertainment/Jingle Punks and at BMG. Rast will apply his strong music sales background to SyncFloor's unique catalog of high-caliber, commercially released music from around the world, music ready to license for ads, podcasts, and fitness applications. Based in New York, Rast will ensure SyncFloor continues to grow and find new customers for its compelling, easy-to-license repertoire. For more information on the appointment, contact alexa@rockpaperscissors.biz.

Catie Sarnie

Technical Operations Manager
Merlin



Merlin, the independent digital music licensing partner, has announced the hire of **Catie Sarnie** as **Technical Operations Manager**. Sarnie brings extensive experience in the digital and independent music realms, having served in various roles at Redeye Worldwide, a leading worldwide distribution and music services company. At Redeye, she worked in sales before diving into data and content as Digital Metadata Coordinator, Digital Content Manager, and most recently as the company's Data & Product Operations Manager. At Merlin, Sarnie will work closely with the collaborative global team in developing and managing technical operational processes as they relate to Merlin members and partners.

▶ CORT X500 MENACE ELECTRIC GUITAR

Cort Guitars' new X500 Menace is darker and more aggressive sounding than its predecessor. Dialed-in for metal and extreme music with good access to the higher frets, the X500 Menace is reborn with a modern aesthetic and numerous feature upgrades including new tone wood selections, a reverse headstock and a compound radius fingerboard.

In addition, you get a Floyd Rose 1000 Series tremolo, and a set of Seymour Duncan Nazgûl and Sentient passive humbuckers. This combination means superb playability, awesome sound quality, and a constant unrelenting "in your face" presence that extreme guitarists require.

The X500 Menace is part of the Cort X Series and all models have a modern, ergonomic design with new finishes that capture today's metal guitar trends. The X500 Menace has a solid maple top on mahogany body with signature neck-thru construction that focuses the midrange punch and cut. The seven-piece maple/purple heart/panga-panga neck with a 25.5-inch-scale neck is rock-solid stable and built for speed across the entire range of its sleek ebony fingerboard. Aesthetically, the striped design of the neck provides visual intrigue against the Black Satin finish.

The X500 Menace was designed and built for metal but is versatile enough to cover a wide range of musical genres and styles. The X-500 sells for \$1,349 MSRP.

cortguitars.com



◀ SPITFIRE ABBEY ROAD ONE GRAND BRASS

The Abbey Road One Grand Brass library was recorded by multi-Grammy winning engineer Simon Rhodes (*Harry Potter*) at the Abbey Road's iconic Studio One using their legendary microphones and outboard gear. Performed by London's first-call session musicians, Grand Brass has awesome performances of horns and tuba plus a unique combination of horns and cellos.

I found it beautifully orchestrated and pre-produced; just load the library, start playing, and sound great instantly. The samples are beautifully mellow and a big winner here when we wanted a warm and cohesive sound.

This bite-size library consists of eight playing techniques or sounds conveniently arranged in one patch under a set of simple and intuitive controls. Playing techniques include: shorts, longs, swells, and Spitfire Audio's new legato patches. The legato

patches are beautiful and expressive with their soaring legato patches definitely now in the toolkit.

By playing with one hand on the mod wheel, it's easy to adjust the microphone mix specifically to your needs. This simple technique expands the expressive range considerably; check the Spitfire walkthrough video to see that the warm and controlled samples come to life just using your keyboard's Mod wheel.

I can recommend the Spitfire Abbey Road One Grand Brass library to my producer and composer colleagues who want to add a touch of class with a smooth, pre-orchestrated and classy brass sound.

Just one part of the full Spitfire Abbey Road library, Grand Brass sells for \$49 MSRP and is a great way to add a classy color to your music. Grand Brass is available as a stand-alone library or as an addition to the Abbey Road One Orchestral Foundations.

spitfireaudio.com/shop/a-z/abbey-road-one-grand-brass



▼ AUTO-TUNE VOCODIST

Antares's Auto-Tune Vocoder is their latest plugin that is capable of all the same vocoder sounds you've heard on countless hit records. Vocoder models the vocoder and includes a version of Auto-Tune. Now you have the two most popular vocal effects in one plugin.

A few artists who contributed presets include P-Thugg, producer Buddy Ross, Damien Page, Katy Perry, and Kimbra with more artist presets introduced soon. There are exact reproductions of 20 legendary vocoders and more than 125 custom presets created by influential artists and producers.

Vocoder has (at first glance) a daunting GUI but the included tutorials and quick starts will walk you through the main workflows for using it. You can vocode using the internal basic synthesizer or an external audio track or instrument and control its pitch and performance using an external MIDI keyboard controller or let your voice control it with or without the help of Auto-Tune.

I like that the tutorial is in alphabetical steps that are enhanced in the GUI with the same letters in a Pro Tips overlay; when you mouse over one of the letters, the function of that section is explained. The Voice, Noise, Synth, Filter, Envelope, and Output Mix sections are detailed nicely.

I'm loving and learning Vocoder and using it more all the time as another treatment or as the main show in my mixing work!

Auto-Tune Vocoder is available exclusively in the new Auto-Tune Unlimited premium subscription service that includes every current edition of Auto-Tune, all 11 of the vocal effects in the AVOX suite, unlimited upgrades for included plug-ins, and free access to select future plug-ins from Antares. New subscribers can access Auto-Tune Unlimited for \$24.99 paid monthly, or \$18.74 a month with a paid annual subscription. A free 14-day trial is also available.

antarestech.com/product/auto-tune-unlimited



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The Portacapture X8 is the new high-resolution recorder with 32-bit float technology from TASCAM. Record 8 channels simultaneously to micro-SD card or computer via USB-C. Capture a variety of sources easily with 4 XLR/TRS jacks, 3.5mm TRS, and 3.5mm stereo inputs.

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◀ OWC ENVOY PRO ELEKTRON MINI USB-C SSD

“Fast!” is first thing that comes to mind with the new OWC Envoy Pro Elektron Mini. Less than the footprint size of a credit card, the crushproof Elektron will fit in your hand and save a lot of time with real-time, transfer speeds of over 1GB/sec over a USB-C connection. It is bus-powered and comes with a USB-C cable with a cleverly attached USB-A adapter. I like the look of the aircraft-grade aluminum case with a drive status LED. In all-day long use, it barely gets warm.

I tested a 1TB OWC Envoy Pro Elektron during my typical archiving regime of copying Pro Tools sessions and also as a Carbon Copy Cloner drive. On my old 5,1 Mac Tower, I'm limited by slow USB-A speeds available but with a USB-C connection to a new 2019 Mac Pro Tower it was easy to get measurable write speeds of nearly 900 MB/seconds and read speeds just slightly slower at around 871MB/Sec.

I was able to copy a 8GB folder transferred from a new MacBook Pro in way under 10 seconds. Powered by OWC's Aura SSD advanced NVMe technology, you can expect twice as fast performance compared to other portable SSDs. In addition, the Elektron is plug n' play—totally compatible with Thunderbolt and USB Macs or PCs as well as iPad Pros and Chromebooks. Being able to put this much storage with super fast access in my pocket is a great way to start a session!

The OWC Envoy Pro Elektron Mini USB-C SSD comes in 240GB and 480GB, 1.0TB and 2.0TB sizes, has a three-year limited warranty with prices starting at \$119 MSRP.

eshop.macsales.com/shop/owc-envoy-pro-elektron

▶ WEISS MM-1 MASTERING MAXIMIZER

An old adage amongst mastering engineers goes: “it's not how loud you make it, but how you make it loud.” The Softube/Weiss MM-1 Mastering Maximizer uses the same algorithms as the hardware Weiss DS1-MK3 and is my new choice when producing competitively loud music mixes. I'm not a mastering engineer and no matter what, it is always comes down to how does it sound? Of course I want my mixes at competitive loudness levels, but with minimal sonic cost.

The Weiss MM-1 starts with an easy-to-use Style selector and uses two processors: a compressor followed by a brick-wall limiter. The Styles are preset compressor setups (ratio, attack/release timings, knees etc.) with descriptive names like: Transparent, Loud, Punch, Wide, and De-ess. After selecting a Style and depending on what you're after, the Amount control sets the amount of the process. I mostly like the Wide style for the stereo width it adds. It and the De-ess Style both use a Mid/Side stereo compressor while the others Styles use more conventional stereo compressors. The De-ess style does limit high frequencies more and worked well on a cymbal-heavy drum loop without dulling the kick and snare excessively.

Being able to quickly audition these various compression techniques within one plugin is awesome. I use Punch and Loud styles for straight ahead stereo compressors and they sound great.

Next is the Limiter Gain control—a kind of compressor makeup gain before the signal is passed onto the limiter. I especially thought the drop-down menu for the Output Trim excellent to set the final output for different industry delivery standards such as: -0.1, -0.3 or -1dBFS. Of course you may set any level between -0.1 and -1.0 dBFS using the continuous variable Output Trim fader.

I'm finding MM-1 a fast and effective tool that sounds awesome and is all part of The Softube/Weiss Complete Collection authorized by Weiss Engineering and Daniel Weiss. The whole collection sells for \$999 MSRP or purchase just the MM-1 at \$199 MSRP.

softube.com/manuals/weiss-mm-1-mastering-maximizer



▼ NUGEN AUDIO PARAGON ST PLUG-IN REVERB

The mono/stereo version of NUGEN Audio's Paragon convolution surround sound reverb is here. Paragon ST copies its big brother and uses immersive Ambisonic recordings for its impulse responses and their unique re-synthesis technology to offer the parameter adjustability of an algorithmic reverb. Re-synthesizing the IR means fewer impulse responses are required to be stored and pre-loaded into the plug-in, plus there is no time stretching of the IRs that can cause unpleasant artifacts.

You can change parameters like: reverb time decay, size, brightness of the IR's three-dimensional space, the reverb decay time at a certain frequency, and the mic distance controls the balance of early and late reflections.

Created especially for music mixers/engineer/producers (YES!), Paragon ST includes controls for adjusting stereo width up to 200% and a reverb tail modulation section/interface has been added plus an updated reverb pre-delay control adjustable in musical notation or in conventional milliseconds.

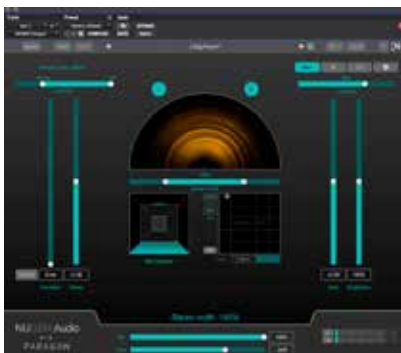
As a music mixer, I counted 19 IRs and 83 presets installed—plenty for starting out and configuring a reverb. The IRs are named and cataloged in a built-in mini search engine, according to what they are, where they were recorded, or what they are intended to do.

In the Modifier page, superimposed over the spectrogram is a parametric EQ curve for altering the spectral frequency decay times when re-synthesizing the IR. You could easily make only the low frequencies in Paragon's reverb have very short RT60 times.

The I/O panel allows individually muting the left or right channels and separate 12dB/octave HPF/LPF faders to set the overall “thickness” or “darkness” of the reverb itself. The ability to offset the pre-delay values for the left and right channels is brilliant—my secret sound design weapon on my next mix.

Just an excellent, awesome reverb that I've added to my Pro Tools stereo mix template, NUGEN Audio Paragon ST is \$299 MSRP

nugenaudio.com/paragonst



BARRY RUDOLPH is a recording engineer/mixer who has worked on over 30 gold and platinum records. He has recorded and/or mixed Lynyrd Skynyrd, Hall & Oates, Pat Benatar, Rod Stewart, the Corrs and more. Barry has his own futuristic music mixing facility in North Hollywood called Tones 4 \$ Studios. He is a lifetime Grammy-voting member of NARAS and a contributing editor for *Mix Magazine*. barryrudolph.com



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Stocking Stuffers 2021

A Stock of Stuff to Stuff into Stockings By Rob Putnam

2021 has been another challenging year. But one of the many lights at the end of the turbulent tunnel is *Music Connection's* annual and invaluable stocking stuffer gift ideas for the holidays. Worth its weight in gold records, it stands as yet another symbol of our unyielding, unstinting commitment to service (you're welcome). Think of it as if Eddie Van Halen, Janis Joplin and Prince got together in the great hereafter and compiled this inventory of sublime stuff for stockings. Have we overstated the case? Doesn't matter, because if you've read this far, the indoctrination is already complete.

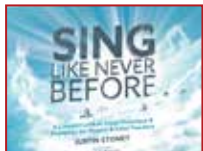
Infinity Orb Magnetic Levitating Speaker **\$89.99**

There are few things cooler than a levitating speaker. Except, of course, for nearly everything else on this year's list. The only potential problem is that you may have to get flight clearance from the FAA anytime you want to listen to Kanye West. Then again, Ye might insist that any of his songs would make speakers levitate anyway. But since these are guaranteed to float, grab 'em to be on the safe side. tinyurl.com/27us2shy



Sing Like Never Before **\$49.95 (Kindle or paperback)**

Six years in the writing, Justin Stoney's *Sing Like Never Before* sets itself apart from other vocal coaching books in that it includes hundreds of note-worthy illustrations. This is a great title for a vocal-coaching book, but bad legal advice for a mob associate while being interrogated. But Stoney has given thousands of voice lessons throughout his career, therefore it's unlikely to be construed as legal guidance. tinyurl.com/4zupe2aa, singlikeneverbefore.com



Music-themed Socks **\$8.00 and up**

Stuff these stocking-stuffer socks into your favorite musician's stocking this year. Sockologie has nearly 100 different music-inspired socks from which to choose. If you can't find something that you like here, you either secretly hate your friend or you're the Ebenezer Scrooge of footwear.

With these socks, you'll keep your feet both warm and cool concurrently. sockologie.com



Customized Flash Drives

Prices vary

A USB drive with a band's name and/or logo can be a handy way to present sample tracks to industry folk. Even if a recipient takes a while to listen to the music, they're likely to repurpose the flash drive, ultimately, which keeps the band name front and center, mentally. There are various companies that offer this service and price tends to vary with quantity, so look around. Some starting points include premiumusb.com, customusb.com and flashbay.com. Disc Makers (discmakers.com) even offers cassette-style drives at around \$9 apiece.



Hilitchi 26-piece Guitar Repair Tool Kit **\$17.64**

This tool kit was designed with guitars in mind, but it tackles tech tasks for a number of other stringed instruments such as ukulele, bass and perhaps even a marionette. Amongst its arsenal are variously shaped files, an exchangeable screwdriver and everything needed for string changes. If the tool kit is used even once during a performance emergency, it will have been worth the cover charge and then some. tinyurl.com/2ybcssz9



Custom Vinyl **Prices vary**

Vinyl has never not been hip. If the musician in your life has recorded any tracks, they'd probably love to see and hear their songs on vinyl. Allow them to be among the rare few who can say "I've got a record out" and actually mean it. There are a number of outfits that offer this service. If your friend doesn't have a turntable, they'll know someone who does, so a listening party could be an incidental bonus. Check out these sites: freestyle-vinyl.com, intheclouds.io, americanvinylco.com



Treble Clef Paper Clips **\$6.97 (6 colors, 50 pieces)**

Sometimes small reminders of a person's passion can have a profound effect. This assortment of colorful treble clef paperclips can be a shiny source of daily inspiration to any musician. Who knows, paper clips may have even been the inspiration for songs such as "Paperlate," "Paperback Writer" and even 50 Cent's "Fully Loaded Clip." For seven bucks, it's hard to go wrong. But easy to go right. tinyurl.com/pubtwanb



MuseScore **Free!**

The ratio of musicians who can't read or write music to the subset that can is likely high. Many who lack the skill would perhaps love to acquire it, but often can't find the time or discipline. However, with MuseScore, musicians can begin to add this asset to their artistic portfolios as they notate music. That is, they learn by doing. Moreover, MuseScore is a free application. The company has also uploaded a number of free (there's that word again) tutorial videos. Gift-givers can simply download MuseScore to a flash drive and slip it into their musician's stocking. Even if it's never used, the notoriously useful flash drive will doubtless be recycled wisely. musescore.org



Record Coasters

\$5.99 (Set of 6)

If you know a musician, then you know someone who could use a coaster or six. Better yet, in the form of a record. Four inches in diameter, they're made of glass. Amazon has a similar offering—coasters made of vinyl, if the intended recipient insists on coasting it old-school. tinyurl.com/7a3we87z,



tinyurl.com/9j83e8mw

Marshall JCM 800 Amp Head Rug **\$21.91 and up**

Marshall amps have been nearly synonymous with rock & roll ever since Pete Townshend complained that conventional amplifiers simply weren't loud enough. This throw rug comes in three sizes and is likely the perfect accent to the floor of any rec room, den or rug-deficient studio. It may not go to 11, but it'll certainly go on your floor. tinyurl.com/bcwnwfsm



Drum Tuning Key **\$7.99**

It's easy for drummers to feel overlooked or even ignored in a world where lead vocalists and guitarists tend to claim the vast majority of the on-stage glory. Let them know that they're not forgotten with a set of tuning keys that fit quarter-inch socket square drum key tension rods. They come in a set of three with an additional continuous motion speed key thrown in for free. If the drummer still feels neglected... then buy him or her a guitar.



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Gifts Under A

◀ Mackie MP-460 In-Ear Monitors \$499.99

With Mackie MP-460 quad balanced armature in-ear monitors, you'll hear your monitor mix with true clarity, helping you perform better and with more confidence. And thanks to their ergonomic design, MP-460 in-ear monitors offer 40dB of passive isolation for a noise-free experience. Complete with a durable internally-braided cable—detachable for easy management and replacement.



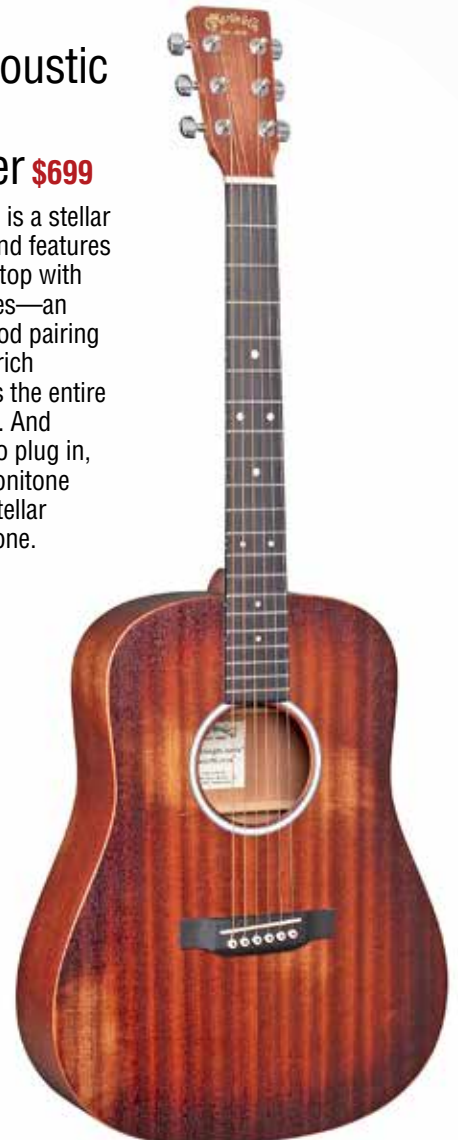
▶ AKG Lyra USB Mic \$155

The AKG Lyra Microphone is a USB microphone system great for bloggers, live streaming, podcasters, voice over artists, and for recording vocals and musical instruments. Using AKG's Adaptive Capsule Array, you may switch between four different microphone mode/configurations possible with four condenser capsules inside.



▶ Martin Acoustic D JR-10E StreetMaster \$699

The Martin D Jr-10E is a stellar junior-sized guitar and features a solid Sitka spruce top with sapele back and sides—an outstanding tonewood pairing that delivers warm, rich acoustic tone across the entire frequency spectrum. And when you're ready to plug in, onboard Fishman Sonitone electronics deliver stellar amplified acoustic tone.



◀ KRK Classic Studio Monitors \$300-\$500 per pair

KRK's Classic Series of powered studio monitors defaults to a new flat frequency solution toward more critical listening and more accurate mixes. With the option to engage the +2 dB KRK Bass Boost, the Classic Series provides the enhanced bass response and sound that music creators around the world have loved for years. All Classic Series models deliver natural, balanced response with low distortion and superior stereo imaging.

Grand 2021

▼ Casio Privia PX-S1100 Keyboard **\$649.99**

The PX-S1100 evokes a high-end acoustic grand, with a modern design that's not much larger than the keys themselves. The touch sensor controls are revealed only after the power button is pressed and are easy to see in any lighting. The PX-S1100 is loaded with 18 onboard Tones, including a stereo grand piano.



▶ Jackson JS Series Rhoads Zircote JS42T Limited-Edition Electric Guitar **\$499.99**

The Jackson JS32T Rhoads solidbody electric guitar gives you instant attitude—sonically and visually. The affordable JS32T Rhoads serves up thick, snarling tone and prodigious sustain—courtesy of its resonant, lightweight poplar body, string-through-body tail, and two toasty humbuckers. Down low, your fretting hand will appreciate the 12" radius that keeps things nice and comfortable for natural, relaxed chord work.



▶ PreSonus FaderPort 8 8-channel Production Controller **\$599.95**

This 8-fader control surface features 100mm motorized, touch-sensitive faders that handle effortlessly and follow automation precisely. Channel controls include all the standards, such as level, pan, solo, mute, and record arm, and a full set of digital scribble strip displays also help to keep you on track. The FaderPort 8 has native support for PreSonus Studio One, and support for HUI and Mackie Control Universal protocols, which means you can use it with virtually any DAW software. Gain hands-on control over your production software.



◀ Simmons SD1250 Electronic Drum Kit **\$919.99**

Master your craft with the Simmons SD1250 six-piece electronic drum kit. The SD1250 includes a mesh kick drum, 12" snare and four toms. Housed in a distinctive drum shell design, the snare features a rimshot sensor and includes its own stand to get the angle just right. Each of the four toms are dual-zone to easily trigger alternate voices, while each dual-layered mesh pad is tension-adjustable to accommodate for player preference. The SD1250 features a custom sound library containing 750 sounds. These include a wide collection of drums, world percussion and vintage electronic drums for additional creative inspiration.

Gifts Under A

▼ Audio-Technica Introduces AT2040 Hypercardioid Dynamic Podcast Microphone **\$99**

Audio-Technica's AT2040 brings professional broadcast-quality sound with exceptional vocal reproduction to podcasters and other content creators at an affordable price point. Featuring a stylish all-metal construction, the AT2040 excels at isolated/up-close vocal reproduction and rejection of unwanted room noise due to its tight hypercardioid polar pattern, ensuring professional-quality podcasts.



▲ Roland Blues Cube Hot 60-watt 1x12" Combo Amp **\$799.99**

The reinvented Roland Blues Cube Stage combo guitar amplifier delivers vintage-flavored tube tone and response in a gig-ready package. Roland's Tube Logic circuitry reproduces every stage of a tweed-era amplifier from preamp to power amp to speaker output. This 2-channel amp offers a large tonal palette and a variable power output, so you'll be ready for any gig. The versatile and powerful Roland Blues Cube Stage combo amplifier delivers vintage tube tone and the touch response you want from an amplifier.

▼ Gauge Mic Locker Plug-In **\$49 (\$99 MSRP)**

Gauge MIC Locker Plug-In, which quickly and easily enhances the sound of any track by adding the tone and character of the world's most iconic and desirable microphones, with stunning results. Mic Locker is incredibly simple and easy to use. Just insert it on an audio track, select a classic microphone, and adjust the slider to your taste. This is a recording and voiceover artist's dream.



► Tech 21 Fly Rig 5 v2 **\$299**

Tape recordings have a musical quality that digital mixes often lack. TAIP brings this quality into your DAW. It will add some authentic analog heat to your tracks, without the need to route any audio outside the box. AI-powered algorithm, giving you the true warmth and behavior of analog tape. The result is a truly faithful tape emulation that's intuitive and creative in use—with some added features to accommodate a modern workflow.



Grand 2021

▶ Focusrite Clarett+ 4Pre USB-C Audio Interface **\$699.99**

Focusrite's Clarett+ 4Pre 18-in/8-out audio interface is a powerful foundation for your studio or mobile recording rig. It sports four great-sounding Clarett+ microphone preamplifiers, upgraded conversion, an outstanding dynamic range, and ultra-fast, low-latency performance enabled by USB-C. The magic of the Clarett+ 4Pre starts as soon as you plug your microphones in—the mic preamps feature Focusrite's switchable Air effect, which switches in an analog model of Focusrite's classic ISA transformer-based mic pre. With flexible connectivity including analog and S/PDIF I/O, the Focusrite Clarett+ 4Pre is ready to integrate into virtually any recording rig.



▲ Nugen Audio's Paragon ST Mono/Stereo Convolution Reverb **\$299**

Paragon ST is a true convolution reverb with the flexibility and control of a classic algorithmic reverb. The updated ST is full of new controls for music producers, including modulation, stereo width and more. Via re-synthesis, Paragon ST offers full control of the decay, room size and brightness of reverbs modelled on recordings of real spaces.



▲ Baby Audio TAIP AI-Powered Tape Emulation Plug-in **\$69**

Tape recordings have a musical quality that digital mixes often lack. TAIP brings this quality into your DAW. It will add some authentic analog heat to your tracks, without the need to route any audio outside the box. AI-powered algorithm, giving you the true warmth and behavior of analog tape. The result is a truly faithful tape emulation that's intuitive and creative in use—with some added features to accommodate a modern workflow.



▲ Fender Aerodyne Jazz Bass **\$824.99**

The Fender Aerodyne Jazz Bass is something completely different. Cutting-edge bass players looking for a high-performance and lightweight bass with a strikingly different appearance will flip over the Aerodyne Jazz Bass. This is a special edition Jazz Bass featuring a bound basswood body with a new unique carved top, a maple neck with rosewood fingerboard and matching painted headstock. The Aerodyne Jazz Bass is loaded with a Precision/Jazz Bass pickup combination and rear routed/top mounted controls with no pickguard.

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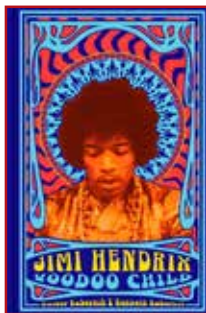
*U.S. Patent 10,838,683

BOOK STORE

Jimi Hendrix—Voodoo Child

By Harvey Kubernik and Kenneth Kubernik
(hardcover) \$30.00

Acclaimed journalists Harvey and Kenneth Kubernik celebrate the iconic guitarist with a multi-voice narrative that includes fascinating contributions from musicians of the time, including previously unpublished excerpts from interviews with the recording, producing, and engineering principals from Hendrix's career,

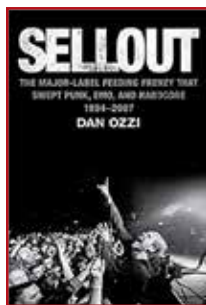


with a focus on his music. Along with stunning photos (Henry Diltz...!) and memorabilia, the book is the ultimate keepsake for Hendrix fans. The authors, who specialize in this kind of deep-dive rock & roll exploration, pull off another pleasure-filled page-turner with this one.

Sellout: The Major Label Feeding Frenzy That Swept Punk, Emo, and Hardcore (1994–2007)

By Dan Ozzi
(hardcover) \$28.00

What happened to punk after Green Day exploded onto the mainstream scene by signing with a major label in 1994? Ozzi chronicles the



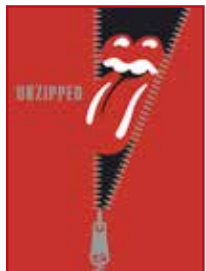
evolution of the punk scene during this era, focusing on prominent bands as they experienced the last "gold rush" of the music industry. He tracks the rise of successful outfits, like Green Day and Jimmy Eat World, as well as the implosion of groups like Jawbreaker and At the Drive-In.

The Rolling Stones: Unzipped

Introduction by Anthony DeCurtis

(hardcover) \$50.00

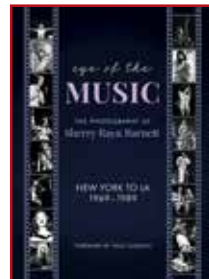
This tribute tome is packed with artwork, outtakes, memorabilia, and archival photos, an altogether eye-pleasing volume that chronicles the bands' influence on rock music, art, design, fashion, photography, and filmmaking. New commentary from Jagger, Richards, Watts, and Wood, plus Anthony DeCurtis' expansive essay examines the band's history and success, and contributions by Don Was, Martin Scorsese, Anna Sui, John Varvatos, Buddy Guy and many others take on various aspects of the Stones' impact on pop culture. A comprehensive compendium on the musical career and creative life of the "greatest rock & roll band in the world."



Eye of the Music: The Photography of Sherry Rayn Barnett

By Sherry Rayn Barnett and Leya Booth
(hardcover) \$55.00

If you're looking for a book that's chock-full of iconic artists doing their thing onstage, then look no further. Barnett began in New York City in the '60s as a teenager, using her camera to capture dynamic performers (Tina Turner, Joni Mitchell, James Taylor, and Laura Nyro) who were redefining what pop music.



Subsequently, Barnett settled into the west coast's Laurel Canyon scene where she documented a young Linda Ronstadt, Emmylou Harris, Jackson Browne, and the Carpenters before seeing the punk upheaval deliver the Go-Go's, Prince, and the Eurythmics.

True Love Cast Out All Evil: The Songwriting Legacy of Roky Erickson

By Brian T. Atkinson
(hardcover) \$28.00

Through interviews with those who were there, and a presentation of the late psych-rocker's own words, Atkinson mostly chronicles the solo years of the revered rocker and front-



man, formerly of the Thirteenth Floor Elevators, showing that Erickson was haunted by mental illness, likely compounded by his usage of hallucinogenics and other drugs. Despite that, however, his influence on Texas musicians is chronicled in hours of interviews with veteran and up-and-coming artists.

Twisted Business: Lessons from My Life in Rock 'N' Roll

By Jay Jay French and Steve Farber
(hardcover) \$26.99

In this self-described "bizoir" (part memoir and part business primer), *Twisted Business* chronicles how guitarist French developed Twisted Sister into a global brand with multiple revenue



streams, building it into one of the most licensed metal bands in history. French offers honest, funny, heartfelt, entertaining in-the-rock-band-trenches stories, as well as unique, hard-earned tips and advice to anyone hoping to create their own brand, re-invent themselves, grow a business or simply love what they do.

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— JONATHAN WIDRAN

VocoPro

vocopro.com

From Video Rentals to Audio Systems: After running a small video shop in Downtown L.A. during the peak of VHS rentals in the mid-'80s, Jason Hou saw the writing on the wall when big chains like Blockbuster began squeezing out the mom and pops. Visiting his parents in his native Taiwan, he was intrigued by their neighbor's home karaoke machine and promptly contacted the Taiwanese software manufacturer Yoko. He quickly scored a deal to become their West Coast distributor. Combining his success with this venture with his onetime hobby of building speakers, Hou switched from software to hardware manufacturing, launching VocoPro and getting a foothold in the industry in the early '90s with a huge 150 laser disc changer.

Though the company used Pioneer Electronics as a role model, it succeeded by becoming karaoke guys for the professional and home enthusiast and filling the gap between the high end Pioneer systems and the lower consumer/toy machine sector. For several decades now, VocoPro has been synonymous with professional karaoke systems. A few of their many "world's first" designs include an all-in-one entertainment PA system and a dual tray multi-format hard drive player. In addition, the Laverne, CA-based VocoPro's multi-channel wireless microphone systems rank as top sellers for most major music retailers.



A Dynamic Product History: Starting with their breakthrough shock resistant CDG-2000, VocoPro has enjoyed a long run of cutting edge, reasonably priced products. Among its most popular current systems are the HERO-REC 5&6 and the CHAMPION-REC 5&6. The HERO-REC 5&6 is a compact and portable 120W 4-speaker stereo system built around a 4-channel pro mic/line mixer and multi-format disc player that also supports SD and USB playback. In addition to jamming along with backing tracks, it allows users to make pro level recordings with the built-in SD recorder. The CHAMPION-REC 5&6 is VocoPro's portable two piece mini-concert system with an easy-to-use SD recorder. It has a powerful 200W 6-speaker stereo system that sets up in seconds and includes a 4 channel mic/line mixer with DSP Reverb and Hiss Filtering.

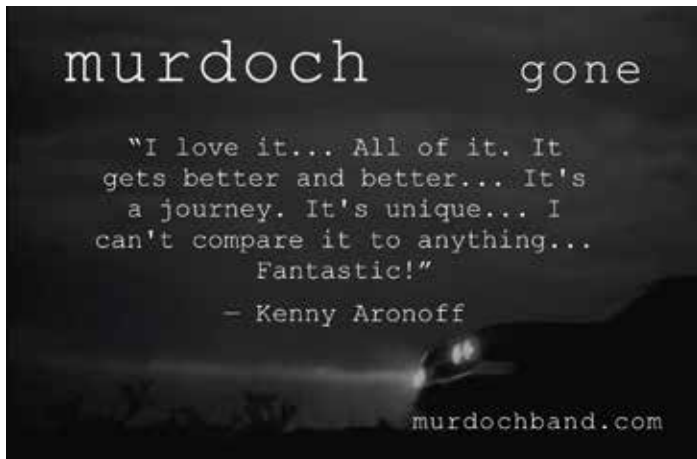
Digital Wireless Mics: VocoPro's strongest sector is currently their line of digital wireless mics, most prominently their new BOOST-ACAPELLA-8, a 600-foot long range mic package. It allows the user to easily send a signal across a stage with an extended range booster, which helps reduce possible cut outs and opens up more possibilities via less restriction on distance. It's a four microphone set with an antenna booster package and includes up to four frequency groups so that 16 mics can be used together with multiple boosters. A new related product that has been popular in churches and offices during the pandemic is the BOOST-CONFERENCE-4, which sends a signal across a hall with a booster whose range is also 600 feet. It includes a 16-inch adjustable gooseneck microphone.

Says Jason Hou: "I have three kids, and I consider VocoPro to be my fourth baby. I have enjoyed seeing it grow and the way my team and I work to solve all issues and problems that may arise along the way to better serve our unique clientele with the best possible mid-priced systems. I most enjoy coming out with new products and the reactions we get when people ask, 'How come nobody had thought about that before?'"

Contact VocoPro, 800-678-5348



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— Kenny Aronoff

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▲ ABBA's Maiden Voyage

One of the most successful pop groups of all time, ABBA has released their first album since 1981. *Voyage* will also be performed in a concert film, by members Björn and Benny (pictured), Agnetha and Anni-Frid, along with a 10-piece orchestra, in a purpose-built 'ABBA Arena' at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London in May 2022. The album set Universal Music's record for U.K. pre-orders—over 80,000 copies in just three days.



▲ Sleepy Gary's the Only One

Sleepy Gary, who releases a song every 21 days, is seen recording a Moog Sub 37 synth on "Field Trip (You're the Only One)" from his debut album. "This was mid-pandemic in November of 2020 when I was quarantined with my roommate, who just so happens to be an amazing recording engineer and synthesizer collector Gabriel Stanley (Prom, Paul Natural). The snow fell outside and the ambulance sirens howled endlessly through the streets of Bushwick Brooklyn."



▲ KUU Changes Our Mind

Dance trio KUU (Shungudzo, Riton and Alex Metric) have recently released their debut EP *How To Change Your Mind* via Warner Records. The EP, with lead single "Gimme Your Live," juxtaposes driving kick drums with delicate piano chords and Shungudzo's sensual vocals.



▲ Helix Collective at Sonic Fuel

Helix Collective are Los Angeles-based classical musicians breaking chamber group norms with crossover dance music, to storytelling, to film, television, and video game music. Members of the ensemble are pictured recording at Sonic Fuel—these sessions were recorded as part of the Film Music Connect program produced by SAGindie and Helix Collective.

Producer Playback

"Be true to yourself. And don't feel the need to emulate what someone else has done. The tide is changed by those who swim against it."

– The Bullitts (*Jay Electronica, Estelle, Mr. Hudson*)





▲ Charles Wiley at Clear Lake

Charles Wiley (left), ranked among *MC's* 2017 Top Prospects, was recently at Clear Lake Recording studios in North Hollywood, CA cutting drum and Hammond B3 organ tracks with engineer Eric Milos for his latest prog-rock album, *Corn Man Chapter 3—Operation Freedom Corn*. Other players on the album include Greg Mathieson on B3, Derek Sherinian, Travis Carlton and more.



▲ AIR's Nicolas Godin with Patti Smith

Nicolas Godin, one-half of the French duo AIR, has been spotted in the recording studio with punk Poet Laureate Patti Smith, as shared on his social media. AIR (Godin and Jean-Benoît Dunckel) have released a 20th anniversary reissue of their seminal 2001 album *10,000 Hz Legend*, enhanced with Dolby Atmos "3D" remastering.



▲ Chrystabell Sings For The Coyote

Writer, composer, and manifold crafter The Coyote (Elan Levy) just released his new EP *Bad Killer* on December 3. He recruited singer, model, and actress Chrystabell to record vocals at Ice Cream Factory Studio in Austin, TX. "This song, 'Girls Won't Sleep,' is like a fever dream," she says of the collaboration. "You're tossing and turning in your bed, hearing sounds that might just be in your head, until you give in to the unrest."

An advertisement for the Gauge Mic Locker Plug-in. The central image shows a silver, rack-mountable device with a gauge on the left and a microphone on the right. The gauge has a needle and numbers from 0 to 12. Above the gauge are several buttons labeled with microphone models: M49, U87, U67, U47, 47PET, C12, 414, and C800. Below the buttons is a slider control with 'MIN', 'NORM', and 'MAX' markings. The text 'MIC LOCKER' and 'GAUGE PRECISION INSTRUMENTS' is printed on the device. The background is a gradient of blue and green. The text 'MIC LOCKER PLUG-IN' is at the top, and 'USE WITH ANY MICROPHONE, OR ANY RECORDED TRACK' is at the bottom. The Gauge logo is on the left, and 'GAUGE-USA.COM' is on the right.

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BOB CLEARMOUNTAIN CODY CLUBE

Producer and mix engineer Bob Clearmountain has worked with some of the biggest artists in the industry—Bon Jovi, The Rolling Stones and Bruce Springsteen are among the names that sparkle on his inch-thick resume. Like many in the business, he got his start in a band. When things didn't work out group-wise, he asked if he could hang at N.Y.C. studio Mediasound. As a relative newbie, he came with hat in hand but also with some engineering experience in pocket. He was hired as a runner and expected to serve for at least a year in that lowly position. But on his first day, he was tapped to assist on a Duke Ellington session. He now works almost exclusively from Mix This!, his Los Angeles home studio, which is powered primarily by 72 solar panels.

Earlier in his career, he produced as regularly as he'd mix. On those occasions, he'd often bring in a separate engineer so that he could concentrate on his primary task. An outsider would also bring fresh ears to a record. "I did the Pretenders' *Get Close* with Jimmy Iovine," he recalls. "It seemed like he was on the phone all the time. That was good, though, because he'd come in with all these good ideas and keep out of my hair."

Despite his enormous number of credits, Clearmountain often found large projects to be a challenge, but for less than obvious reasons. "When I worked on the Bon Jovi record, there were so many people involved," he recalls. "There was someone from the label, a manager, maybe two or three different writers and they all had their opinions. I felt like I was pulled in five different directions. The Bryan Adams song 'Everything I Do' was another case where there were a lot of people involved. It felt like the phone was ringing constantly. I knew it was destined to be a huge hit and it took us a week to mix it because they were making a video at the same time. What you learn from all of that is patience. You can't get upset about anything. Whatever happens, you just deal with it."

The range of gear he's used over the years approaches incalculable. But there are a few pieces that stand out for him. "The Apogee converters make everything sound as good as possible," the engineer says. "It's a great baseline to start from. There's also the SSL G series. I've worked on that same basic console since about 1980. I can mix on just about anything but it won't be as easy or sound as good [as with the SSL]."

Recently Clearmountain completed work on a mix for Joe Bonamassa and a remix of The Band's 1971 record *Cahoots*. In addition to his bulging production and mix portfolio, he collaborates with Apogee Electronics—he's married to Betty Bennett, the company's founder—on his Clearmountain plugins. Chief among them is Clearmountain's Domain, which features a customizable suite of delays, reverbs, harmonizers and EQs. His latest offering is Clearmountain Phases, which is a phaser based on a device that he used at the Power Station in the '80s. Although he's worked with countless prominent artists, he'd still love to log some studio time with U2 or Wilco.

Visit mixthis.com; apogeedigital.com

THE 3 MOST IMPORTANT
 ... lessons he's learned as a
 mix engineer and producer are:

- Gear doesn't matter. People pay \$30,000 for a Fairchild compressor. I can make my little LA-3A distressor sound just like a Fairchild. Just put everything on really slow attack and release.
- Find something that you love to do and are good at—hopefully they're the same thing. For me, that was mixing. If you're really good at it, try to get to like it.
- If you're serious about this, work as hard as you can. Do every session possible and immerse yourself in the craft. If you're not going to make it a total priority, then you should be doing something else.

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Paula Salvatore

VP Client Relations and
Studio Marketing, UMG

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BACKGROUND

When she was nine, Paula Salvatore implored her father to buy her a piano. But after he yielded up a sewing machine instead, she spent some time as a seamstress. After two years in Boston, she came to L.A. and worked for a time in clothing design for musicians, but was drawn back inexorably to music. Salvatore started at Kendun Recorders after she made a call and talked her way into the job. Mentored largely by former Record Plant president Rose Mann Cherney, she went on to manage Sound City for nine years before being recruited by Capitol Studios. She helmed that storied space for a further 30 where she worked alongside the late, legendary recording engineer Al Schmitt. Earlier this year Salvatore was offered the plum position of marketing for all of Universal's American studios.

Her Start with Studios

I'd heard that someone had just left traffic at Kendun Recorders. I didn't know anything about studios, but I called my friend Vinnie and asked him what I needed to know to work in one. He wasn't sure, so I called and told [Kendun Recorders] that I was right around the corner, and I popped in. Althea Mathis, this really distinguished lady, came in and explained that I didn't really have studio experience. But I told her, "I have no bad habits, I'm completely trainable and all those girls that got laid off from the record companies are gonna give you attitude." So, she gave me a chance. That's when I realized, once you sneak in, you never sneak out.

Laying the Groundwork

I have such a great number of clients I've met over the years. A recording studio is an intimate setting: people are at their best, creatively, but they're sometimes self-conscious. You get to know them on a deep level, and I've always nurtured those relationships. I know studios like the back of my hand; it's a very osmosis kind of thing. That's how many engineers and runners learn to work in them. What's great about Capitol is that the technology is always growing. We've combined the vintage with the new, state-of-the-art and have gone into Dolby Atmos [immersive audio technology] strongly. I've never worked with more geniuses in my life. It's like being the concierge of a friendly audio hotel.

A Typical Day in an Atypical Business

There was some restructuring this year and they hand-crafted a role for me, due to my deep knowledge and interaction with my clients. They opened Interscope Studios in Santa Monica—all new studios for their artists—but they also built a soundstage and I'll help to bring in third-



"Having to cater to artists and to corporate life is difficult... Making [recording sessions] comfortable is a challenge."

party business there. I'm also helping to get clients to Nashville because Universal bought House of Blues years ago and renovated it to become East Iris Studios. A lot of L.A. engineers and producers moved to Tennessee and I'm courting them. I'm like a bridge between [Universal] and our clients.

I've always liked the security of having the scheduling book at my disposal. When you have the book, you have the clients. Often when we were slow, I'd call people and get them in. I kept aware of what was going on around town—who was doing records where—and I attended so many events that I always found out what was coming up next. In my new position, I actually have more time to pursue clients.

Puff Daddy was doing "Come with Me," a single for the *Godzilla* soundtrack, around 1998. He wanted to record live with Jimmy Page, who was in London at the time. I said "Sure, we can do that. We've done it lots of times. We'll just get the stems in advance and when he sings, it'll be [like it's] live." But he wanted to actually see and work with Jimmy and that kind of technology hadn't been invented yet. So I went to Jeff Minnich, our tech guy, who told me that the only way to do that was to have a satellite [link up] on both sides. I researched the cost and discovered that it was really expensive. But they wanted to do it and we got it done: there was a screen and Puff Daddy could see and record with Jimmy live.

There's also a lot of serendipity in this business. You can't always plan to go after clients. You have to hope that business begets business. Having Al [Schmitt] here for thirty years was such an asset as well; such a goldmine. Clients would come in and want to visit with him. He

was magic to me. It was the hardest thing to come back here [after he passed] and not see Al. He was such a proponent in and of my life. He helped me get into this new position.

Challenges in the Industry

Record companies know that people can do commercial hits in smaller rooms. How do you survive as a large studio with major real estate? You introduce those new artists to orchestras and big bands. Once they see the camaraderie in the studio between rooms and the sharing of ideas, that's what will be attractive. It's the hospitality that you give and the ease with which we can make it work. You'll walk away with a fantastic product.

Challenges in Her Position

Having to cater to artists and to corporate life is difficult. You have to blend them and to feel that it's not affecting you, [because] that makes people run away. Artists come to studios because they want to be creative, they want to be loose. Making it comfortable is a challenge. The most times I've been yelled at is for parking; because someone didn't get the spot they wanted. I have to worry about how people get in the door. Once they're in, they're fine. When "fires" would start, I'd run into them; I'd never shy away from jumping into a problem. It made me brave like that. I have the God-given trait of being accommodating and hospitable.

The Future for Studios—Large and Small

Studios will survive because they always have. When I was at Sound City, the drum machine came in and drummers freaked out. But I told everyone that people would get used to them and then they'd want to come back for real drums. It's all cyclical. I've seen the worries [in the past] but it always comes around; there's always new growth. There might not be a lot of them, but there will be studios where people like to come and bring friends. The only thing that will close them is people being selfish with real estate. That's why Capitol's building is a [Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument].

The Most Important Lessons

Treat everyone the same, irrespective of what they do. Put others' needs ahead of my own. That's always come back 150%.

Be authentic. Don't lose the client. As long as the time is available, make it work out. Business begets business. I don't like the sound of unbooked studios.

Horizons

I want to market all of Universal's studios, perhaps do a newsletter and maybe even YouTube interviews with clients. I also want to use my experience to mentor the up-and-coming women seeking careers in the music industry. I so enjoy speaking with and inspiring those who look to follow in my footsteps. With my new position, I hope to share my experiences and career path with these women who have as strong a passion as I do to be part of the musical community and to build their own legacies. •

OPPS

WarnerMedia seeks a Music Business Operations Manager, Cartoon Network. As kids, young adults and classic division becomes a central part of the WM strategy, there is a need for a day-to-day music business operations manager focusing on multiple KYAC content producing groups, including: Cartoon Network, HBO MAX Kids and Family, Adult Swim, and KYAC music. The role will be focused on ensuring that all guidelines and processes necessary for the release of music are adhered to. This role also partners with many internal WM and KYAC groups to ensure music information is centralized, accessible, and accurate. Apply at LinkedIn.

Warner Music Group is looking for a Social Media Strategist. For over 20 years, HipHopDX has been telling stories about hip-hop culture through all mediums—the written word, social media and video. With the recent move to be part of the Warner family (but still independent), they are taking the next steps of growth. They are looking for storytellers and people to help support them (editors, coders, marketers etc.). Through the company's combined properties, it reaches over 3 million hip-hop fans each month and growing. Apply at entertainmentcareers.net.

Soundplate needs a Global Head of Editorial, Music at Spotify. The Global Head of Editorial will be responsible for all global and North American editorial functions, including managing the network of editors across all genres and being responsible for setting, refining and executing Spotify's editorial strat-

egy. The role will work closely with all other leads in the music team to make sure Spotify continues to deliver the best editorial experience possible to users by surfacing and programming the very best music in the world. Apply at Jobs.Trabajo.org.

Soundcloud seeks a Head of Music. They are seeking a Global Head of Music to ensure artists and music remain at the center of SoundCloud's mission as they grow. This leader will set SoundCloud's global music strategy, framing the company's position in the center of trending music and breaking artists to drive long-term cultural and business growth. This role will report to the Chief Content and Marketing Officer and lead a global team to engage with music and artist partners at all levels. Apply at Melga.

For More Career Opportunities, check out musicconnection.com daily. And sign up for MC's Weekly Bulletin newsletter.

LABELS•RELEASES SIGNINGS

Ingrooves Music Group has signed Ziggy Alberts' Commonfolk Records to a global distribution deal. "This is one of these partnerships where everything felt right from the very beginning," says Nina Rabe-Cairns, Managing Director of Ingrooves Music Group in Australia/New Zealand. "Ziggy, Anneka [Alberts], and the rest of the Commonfolk team have created a very special business. We were instantly drawn to how open and welcoming the team is and their level of professionalism with such an organized focus on business



▲ Gliding Through France

AM Higgins' debut album *Hymning* is available now through Glide Records. This is the solo project of Annie Toth, and the album captures the feelings of moving from the States to rural France.

growth." Contact jv@spinlab.net for more info.

Musician, songwriter and producer Anderson .Paak has launched a new label, Apeshit Inc. The four-time Grammy winning artist is a prolific musician, and now a label head too. "I wanted to start a label that sets fire to a new generation of artists, who can play while performing," says .Paak. "This label is going to be about passion, about feeling, about honesty. It's about respect for the culture and art and it's about heart." Contact press@fullcoveragecommunications.com.

17-year-old Nashville artist Gayle has signed with Atlantic. Following her 2020 debut single

"Dumbass," the Gen Z anthem "z" is approaching three million streams. She was discovered by producer and publisher Kara DioGuardi, and will be touring with **Winnetka Bowling League**. "GAYLE grabbed my attention with her vulnerable yet strong, sexy lyrics and powerhouse voice." DioGuardi says. "I was blown away by her ability to translate her life into her songs and I'm excited to be a part of her introduction to the world." Contact christina.kotsamanidis@atlanticrecords.com for more info.

PROPS

Mandy Barnett is the newest member of the Grand Ole Opry. Marty Stuart welcomed Barnett to

DIY Spotlight

RICKY RAT

Ricky Rat is a well-known figure in the Detroit rock & roll scene. He was a member of beloved glam punks the Trash Brats, formed with singer Brian McCarty (originally just Brat). With their wild hair and makeup, and a New York Dolls-esque trashy dress sense, they made friends and simultaneously raised heckles.

"[It was] bad timing for sure in terms of the band's look and sound," Rat says. "We were pretty much DIY our whole career and never had much label or management support. No regrets as we had a great time and enjoyed a decent amount of success, especially in our hometown of Detroit."

The Trash Brats went on hiatus, occasionally popping up to play shows again. Meanwhile, Rat kept himself busy.

"I did a U.S. tour with Texas Terri, and did several tours in Europe with Kevin K," he says. "I finally started up my solo stuff in 2010."

One of Rat's highest profile gigs came when he joined a reformed version of punk pioneers the Dead Boys.

"I had been friends with Cheetah [Chrome, original Dead Boy] and Jason [Kottwitz], the other guitarist, for a few years, for a while," says Rat. "I got the call that they needed a bassist for a few shows on the 40th Anniversary run for the *Young Loud and Snotty* album, and that in turn led to me joining the band full time. Several tours followed."

"It's a shame that it didn't continue for a longer time, and that a bunch of great tours got cancelled in the end, but things were just too explosive within the band and the management," he says.

Now, he's fully focused on his solo career, which he says isn't a huge departure from his Trash Brats days.

"I dig songs with great hooks and melody, so everything I write comes out as like a rock & roll/pop type of thing," he says. "Three-minute songs with no fat."

Rat is currently mixing a solo album called *Ghosts of Isolation*. "No big touring plans at the moment just yet," Rat says in conclusion. "So I'm just playing a few shows here and there with my Rat Pack."

Follow on social media @RickyRat



BRAD E. SHAW

the famous Nashville institution in early November. Barnett celebrated with a set that began with her first ever single, “Now That’s Alright with Me.” “This is just so unbelievable,” said Barnett. “I’ve been pinching myself since the birthday invite. This means everything to me. I’ve wanted to be a part of the Opry since I was a little girl. This is just the greatest moment of my life, and I will cherish it.” For more, contact publicity@aristomedis.com.

Congratulations to all of the winners at the L.A. Press Club’s Southern California Journalism Awards. That includes this writer, who won first place in the Entertainment Feature category for an LA Weekly feature about Fortnite and Minecraft concerts. Mark Swed of the LA Times won first place in the Criticism of Music category. Go to lapressclub.org for a full list of winners.

THE BIZ

Rosedale Collective is the first BIPOC country music label developing country music artists of color. The label hosted a summit with the Grammy Museum, the National Museum of African American

Music (NMAAM), Propper Daley, and the Board of Nashville Music Equality, on November 8. The event featured performances to celebrate the impact of people of color in country music. Contact stephanie@beckmedia.com for more info.

Mötley Crüe man Nikki Sixx is now a four-time New York Times bestselling artist. His book *The First 21: How I Became Nikki Sixx* entered the list at number 8 for hardcover and number 11 for combined print and eBook. That follows *The Heroin Diaries*, *This Is Gonna Hurt*, and the Mötley Crüe biography, *The Dirt: Confessions of the World’s Most Notorious Rock Band*. For more info, contact michael_scher@dkcnews.com.

BRETT CALLWOOD has written about music for two decades, originally for Kerrang!, Classic Rock, Metal Hammer and more in the U.K. He’s the author of two books, about Detroit proto-punks the MC5 and the Stooges. He’s now the music editor at LA Weekly, and has regular bylines in the SF Weekly, Tucson Weekly and idobi Radio, as well as here in Music Connection. He can be reached at brettcallwood@gmail.com



▲ Saya’s Sick Single

Toronto alt-pop star Saya has released new single and video “Sick” via Popwrapped. “The video is an intimate and cinematic experience where I am performing for an audience of one—my ex-lover,” Saya says.

The LEGAL Beat

BY GLENN LITWAK



Famed recording artist and actress Cher has filed a lawsuit in federal court in Los Angeles for declaratory relief and breach of contract. Cher claims that Sonny’s widow, Mary, and his estate are attempting to terminate her right to her share of songwriting and record royalties from Sonny and Cher songs.

The performing duo Sony and Cher were very successful in the 1960s with such hits as “I Got You Babe” and “The Beat Goes On.” They began performing in 1964 and were married in 1967 (they also had a hit TV show). Mary was Sonny’s fourth wife.

Cher Sues Sonny’s Widow

They divorced in 1978. Some may remember that Mary took over Sonny’s seat in the U.S. House of Representatives after Sonny passed away in the late 1990’s.

Sonny and Cher’s marital settlement agreement provided that they would evenly split the record and songwriting royalties from their musical career. However, Mary Bono and Sonny’s estate (“defendants”) filed a notice of termination of Cher’s rights to 50 percent of these royalties.

Mary is the trustee of the trust that administers Sonny Bono’s music. The lawsuit states that in 2016 Sonny’s trust sent notices of termination to some music publishers. The trust now contends those notices of termination to the publishers also terminated Cher’s right to her share of Sonny and Cher royalties.

Cher says she has recently been informed that the trust would stop paying her share of royalties when the termination of the publishers’ rights takes effect. The trust also told Cher that she would no longer have the right to approve uses of Sonny and Cher

songs (for instance, licenses for TV and film).

The Copyright Act provides that, in some cases, after 35 years songwriters can terminate a publisher’s rights. Cher has requested that the court stop the trust that administers Sonny Bono’s royalties from terminating her rights that derive from their marital settlement Agreement. This provision of the Copyright Act regarding termination of rights has also been the subject of recent disputes involving Marvel and baseball’s Philadelphia Phillies.

Defendants have been paying Cher’s 50 percent interest in royalties for many years. Cher argues in her lawsuit that terminating the publishers’ rights does not affect the rights Cher has under the marital settlement agreement.

In her lawsuit Cher asks for a declaratory judgment that the estate cannot legitimately terminate her rights to the subject royalties. Cher also requests one million dollars in damages for breach of the marital settlement agreement.

The defendant’s attorney, Daniel Schact, stated: “Representative Bono remains open to continuing a private discussion about this, but we are confident that, if necessary, the court will affirm their position.” This statement seems to indicate that settlement negotiations are ongoing and defendants are open to resolving this matter without further litigation. If the parties enter into a settlement agreement it is likely it will be confidential.

Only time will tell if this matter settles out of court or if it proceeds to a trial. And the beat goes on.....

GLENN LITWAK is a veteran entertainment attorney based in Santa Monica, CA. He has represented platinum selling recording artists, Grammy winning music producers, hit songwriters, management and production companies, music publishers and independent record labels. Glenn is also a frequent speaker at music industry conferences around the country, such as South by Southwest and the Billboard Music in Film and TV Conference. Email Litwak at gtlaw59@gmail.com or visit glennlitwak.com.

This article is a very brief overview of the subject matter and does not constitute legal advice.



I Quit My Day Job Because I Make More Money From My Music.

Matthew Vander Boegh, TAXI Member

That's every musician's dream, isn't it —quitting your day gig because you make more money with your music. Well, that's my life now, and here's how I did it...

I joined TAXI.

Looking back, I wish I'd joined years earlier. TAXI taught me how to create music that people in the industry actually *need*. Then they gave me 1,200 opportunities a year to *pitch* my music!



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My income keeps growing exponentially, and my music keeps getting better because it's my full time gig now! Here's the ironic part...

I live in Boise, Idaho, not Hollywood, yet my music is on TV nearly every day. My studio is in a glorified tool shed in my backyard, and my gear setup is so quaint other musicians ask, "Really? That's *it?*!" I've got a computer, monitors, a few mics, and a cheap little interface. No fancy outboard gear, no rack-mounted *anything!*

My Two Secret Weapons

Targets and deadlines are my secret weapons. Knowing who needs music and *when* they need it motivates me to get things done. It's changed my life! Actually, TAXI changed my life.



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I'm getting *paid* for my music now instead of sitting on my couch *dreaming* about it. I'm my own boss, and some day my music will probably pay for my retirement, a vacation home on an exotic beach, and some umbrella drinks!



Don't wait until you've built a catalog...

Join TAXI now and let them help you build the *right* catalog! Be patient, be persistent, and you'll hit critical mass like I have. My income keeps growing every year!

I'm all the proof you need that a regular guy can make enough money with his music to quit his day job! Do what *thousands* of other musicians have done to become successful—join TAXI. You might never have to work another day gig in your life!

THE NEW ERA OF

The music industry is ever changing and rapidly evolving. Quite often, artists seek professional help in promoting their latest career move. To gain insights into how exactly the new breed of public relations specialists are working on behalf of their artist-clients, we spoke with several leading music publicists—Mike Gowen (CEO/Founder of Milestone Publicity), Alexandra Greenberg (CEO/Founder of Falcon Publicity), Jay Jones (Senior Vice President of Publicity, BBR Music Group), and Susan Hamilton (Director of Communications, Sideways, Inc.)—to discuss the new era of public relations. Read on to get an insider's perspective on what has changed and what remains the same in their sector of the industry.

THE EXPANDING ROLE OF A PUBLICIST

MC: The role of a public relations professional is ever expanding. What moves the needle most for your artists/clients that may not have been the case two-three years ago?

Jones: "With the proliferation of platforms from social media to established big media brands and names, it's moved beyond just finding the narrative and what stories are we telling. It's a broader 'where does this piece of the story fit platform-wise and what is the language of that platform?' If you have a consistent narrative and you have a full team that understands that narrative, they then can understand how to find the 'language' for their world. Then you may find that an artist who might never have imagined themselves on a platform like TikTok can find a way to communicate on that platform in a way that helps drive the overall understanding of who they are to the fans. That creates music discovery on the streaming front, but also opens them up to journalists and editors who spend time on that platform and, in turn, show more interest on an editorial front.

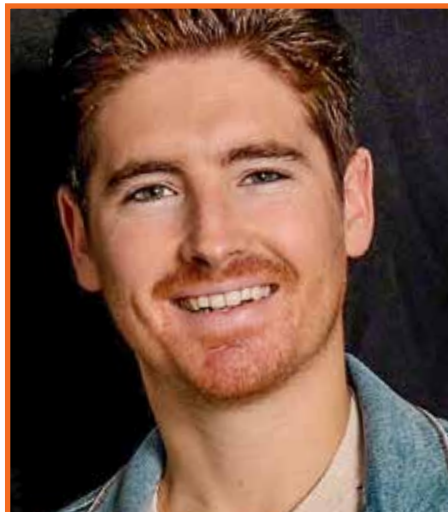
"Blanco Brown is a huge example of an artist with a purpose, message, and song that blew up on TikTok. You also have an artist like Chase Rice who you might not think TikTok will help, but created a viral moment in the way he reacted to Kierra Lewis' take on his song 'Ride,' which became a media story and within 24 hours he increased his followers by over 1300%. The core narrative helps create those initial platform moments, and then you bring those moments back to the more traditional media to help build the conversation there."

Greenberg: "People don't realize this, but our role has always been beyond getting a feature or review in a publication. We deal with all facets of the industry. We read a lot so we know about trends and media interests. Our job ex-

tends into these areas because the teams look to us to contribute ideas that would become interesting press stories."

Hamilton: "I have to say, again, using the reach of social media has been such a great way to reach listeners and potential fans for my clients. What's more 'public relations' than actually reaching the public with clients' stories to help folks connect even more closely to the music? You can more easily accomplish that with social media—think about stars like Beyoncé or Taylor Swift who can put out an album by telling their millions of Instagram followers they've got new music for them. It's hard to come up with a better way to connect directly with the folks who are going to download albums and—hopefully sometime soon—go to concerts.

"I'm not discounting the art and beauty of long-form journalism at all, it's just that when you're working with emerging bands, it's hard to compete for that kind of coverage, so you have to be



"Assisting in arranging brand partnerships and being overall relationship creators; connecting our artists and/or their teams with others in the industry, or even with other artists, is an area growing in my world."

– Mike Gowen
Milestone Publicity

realistic and find alternatives to get their music and message out to the public. Another thing that seems to move the needle for me is pitching user-curated playlists, and not just on Spotify."

Gowen: "Meaningful content that highlights the personality or various non-music passions of our clients seem to move the needle at a



"Story is, was and will always be of most importance."

– Alexandra Greenberg
Falcon Publicity

greater degree than ever before, especially for our clients who have a younger audience. I think fans are hungry for substance rather than anything leaning superficial. The long-form podcasts are excellent for this and especially when it's on a topic our client can speak in depth on. Again, this does depend on the specific artist's demo...maybe their fan base still leans toward very traditional media, like print magazines or national TV segments, as their biggest mediums of influence. It can vary artist-by-artist for that particular reason. What is important for one client's campaign might not be the same for another.

"Publicists need to have a strong understanding of their client's audience. I say 'We need to know our client's audience better than they do.' We need to know where their audience demographic gets news or discovers new artists, which social media platforms they are on, etc. Assisting in arranging brand partnerships and being overall relationship creators; connecting our artists and/or their teams with others in the industry, or even with other artists, is an area growing in my world."

PITCHING THE STORY

MC: We're seeing the growth of long-form podcast interviews and decline of plug-and-play premiere features. How important is it for your clients/artists to have a story to leverage as you're seeking earned media coverage in 2021 compared to how it was, in say, 2015?

Greenberg: "Story is, was and will always be of most importance."

Gowen: "When you're working with an icon or household name, it's not always extremely im-

MUSIC PR

CREATIVE CONTACT

portant to have a well-presented story attached to the latest release and publicity campaign.

The fact is, with that level of artist, a lot of media outlets know that if they feature someone like Kiefer Sutherland or John Dolmayan of System of a Down—in my roster's case—there are layers of stories already built in that a journalist can unpack with their own creative vision for the piece during an interview. Also, established acts that have been around the block once or twice are well-groomed in media training and can navigate interviews. They'll willingly offer up a colorful story and tie it to their current project; they are well versed in their talking points.

"Now with my clients that are emerging artists or semi-established, the story is a crucial element to a campaign and a direct connection to the level of results that come in. The more angles we can run with, the better. Right now, we have an artist who has a well-known business curating specialty tonic drinks, so that allows us to explore opportunities in the



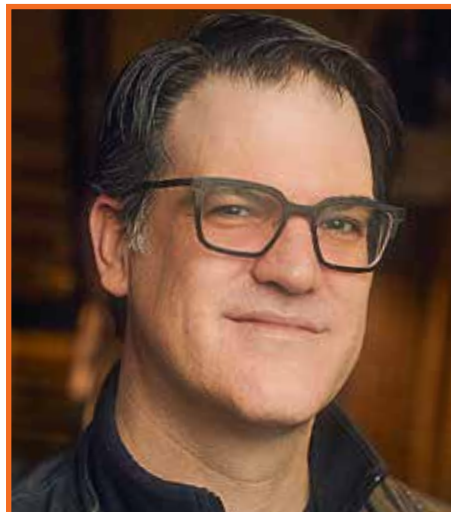
"The first thing I ask a potential client is 'what's your story?' It's so important to have a 'why' - why is music what you've chosen for your life's work, and how does your personal narrative weave itself into the art you create?"

— Susan Hamilton
Sideways, Inc.

health and wellness areas of the media. At the end of the day, music lovers want to connect with artists on a personal level beyond just the music they create."

Hamilton: "Premieres are definitely falling out of fashion. On one hand, that's a relief because pitching to secure them is extremely

time-consuming. But, it can be tough to get coverage without the enticement of an exclusive, especially for the emerging artists on my roster. That's why having a refined narrative is imperative. I think the first thing I ask a potential client is 'what's your story?' It's so important to have a 'why'—why is music [the thing] you've chosen for your life's work, and how does your personal narrative weave itself into the art you create? We are relational, we want to know we aren't alone in the world, and when we're able to identify with or understand the story behind a song or an album, that deepens the connection



"Connecting our artists and/or their teams with others in the industry, or even with other artists, is an area growing in my world."

— Jay Jones
BBR Music Group

we have with that artist's work. It also makes us more likely to follow that artist along his or her career. My goal is to build a foundation like that for my clients, not only with the media but with the listeners themselves."

Jones: "What is important, generally speaking, about podcasts is the connection. If someone is going to devote 30-plus minutes of uninterrupted headspace to a podcast, it's a connection to the host or a general topic that they formed. There are some general-topic podcasts and celebrity-driven podcasts that are fun and great to do under most any circumstance, but when you can find that right combo. Where there is a story and connection between the host and artist/client, it is going to translate to a connection in the audience that can be stronger than 100 other impressions. You are going to create a fan for life, and again you might create a story bigger than the podcast."

MC: Relationships with writers, editors and bookers are a publicist's currency. Inboxes have been flooded for years, calls go straight to voicemails and in a pandemic there are not many coffee/lunch/dinner/event scenarios. So how do you cut through the noise and get your pitch in front of someone? Are you taking any outside-the-box approaches (texting, Direct Messages on social media)?

Greenberg: "This has been the publicist dilemma since the beginning of time. Pandemic or not, I'm still working the email, phone call, texting, WhatsApp, DM...haven't done an old-fashioned hand written letter in a while. That's a nice one."

Hamilton: "I'm hesitant to hit journalists up on social media unless it's someone I've worked with a lot and I know that person doesn't mind, and even that's rare. I've done my best to forge new connections and maintain my relationships via email and the occasional Zoom happy hour. I've also tried really hard to keep checking up on folks, asking them about their lives, trading pictures of our kiddos and dogs, things like that. We have to remember that there is an actual human being on the other end of every email we send. Thoughtfulness definitely goes a long way."

Jones: "In the event of a tie, the tie always goes to the relationship, right? The only thing that has changed is how you nurture those relationships. A huge part of that right now is just paying attention and reading the virtual room. ...Be sincere, check on them when you don't need a damn thing from them just because you actually care. Over deliver and find opportunities for an artist to do something for them that you might have passed on pre-Covid. Find ways to transfer your personal connection with the writers, editors, and bookers to a personal connection with the artist. If you look at artists like Jimmie Allen and Lindsay Ell and the huge looks they get in the media, that is a reflection of them and their ability to connect beyond the pitch. Ultimately, that is what we are trying to do as publicists is to create that connection."

Gowen: "Something I aim to always remain aware of is that the media does not owe me anything and they do not owe my clients anything. I never want to come across as an annoyance to them. Every exchange I have with a journalist, booker or editor is an opportunity to deepen an existing relationship that may have been established weeks—or years—ago or make a positive impression if it's a newly established relationship. So, I try to make their job as easy as possible to cover our clients."

"Certain campaigns allow us to send really creative physical packages and personalize them to an extent. When budget allows, those types of physical pitches can go a long way. I read somewhere recently that the artist Shy Carter, during this pandemic, was going around Nashville in a truck with a PA system and a guitarist doing at-home artist performances for media players to promote his forthcoming album release...obviously with prior consent before showing up! Such an amazing, fun, outside-the-box idea to connect with music journalists in such a restrictive time."

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▲ ASCAP Herb Alpert Jazz Awards

This year's ASCAP Foundation Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer Awards submissions will close Dec. 15. Jazz composers under the age of 30 are encouraged to submit new, original works for a chance at a monetary prize. Full details and applications: ascap.com/herbalpertapp

► Khruangbin Buzz

After three sold-out nights at L.A.'s Greek Theatre, playing the Santa Barbara Bowl, San Diego's Open Air Theatre, and a tv debut on Austin City Limits, worldbeat psych-rock trio Khruangbin is creating a stir with five records out—including 2021's *Mordechai Remixes*—since their 2015 debut, *The Universe Smiles Upon You*.



▲ Aiyana-Lee's Rich Kids

British transplant and rising star Aiyana-Lee has released infectious pop track "Rich Kids" under HitCo Entertainment, and speaks to the inauthenticity of the music business. Her debut album is set for release later this year under the direction of manager Benny Medina.

SXSW is Back

South by Southwest returns March 11-20, 2022 in Austin, TX with panel sessions, music, film screenings, exhibitions, professional development, and loads of networking. This year's themes include: Discovering the Undiscovered, Built for the Future, We're All Connected, The Evolving Media Landscape, and The Power of Inclusivity.

With over 240 artists from across the world in attendance this year, the SXSW Music Festival component is set to include London R&B vocalist Poppy Ajudha, punk artists Surfbort and Maxo Kream, Brazilian folk-pop duo Anavítória, Swiss-Tamil R&B singer Priya Ragu, and Kenyan duo Duma.

Keynotes include Barack Obama and T Bone Burnett. Details at sxsw.com/conference.

Pandora Celebrates Hip-Hop

In honor of Hip-Hop History Month, Pandora has launched its new Hip-Hop Forever station, which takes listeners through four decades of hip hop history. Artist-curated listening modes from each decade will feature music and stories from each time period and discuss the music, culture and lifestyle of the era—with commentary from Kid n Play, Doug E. Fresh, Slick Rick, Naughty By Nature, Ghostface Killah, Lil Jon, Soulja Boy, Drumma Boy, BIA, Wale, Latto, Don Toliver, Lakeyah, Rich the Kid, and Hitmaka.

Listen at pandora.com.

CCC Synch & NFTs

The California Copyright Conference is hosting "The Latest

in Synch 2022" on Jan. 11 from 2:30-3:30 p.m., with a panel hosted and moderated by CCC President and President of Superior Music Publishing, Mara Kuge. Updates and registration at: theccc.org/events/the-latest-in-synch-2022

Non-Fungible Tokens will be discussed and explained, along with the relevant legal and ownership considerations for creatives and others during panel "WTF Are NFTs: What You Need to Know Now FTW!" on March 3 from 2:30p.m.-3:30p.m., hosted by CCC Board Member, Jane Bushmaker. Updates and registration at: theccc.org/events.

Create Acquires Nirvana

Privately held music and media company Create Music Group has acquired Mumbai-based Rights Management Company, Nirvana Digital. Nirvana provides monetization, distribution and rights management to artists, labels, film and television—including spiritual organization The Art of Living, artist Bohemia, and regional companies, Vats Records and Team Films.

Create and Nirvana receive over 25 billion streams per month combined, and with over 50% of India's 1.3 billion population under the age of 25, and more than 94% of India's online consumers listening to music. Create Music Group has also invested in content properties on Instagram and TikTok. The new partnership will help fuel Indian artist and label growth through global distribution and monetization on iTunes, Spotify, Amazon Music and Indian platforms JioSaavn and Gaana—as well as opening doors for U.S. clients to access India's music market.



▲ Prescription for Rideout

Rap beatmaker Derelle Rideout has signed to Prescription Songs in a joint venture with songwriter-producer Bizness Boi/BBMG. Having worked with Kevin Gates, Lil Uzi Vert, Saweetie, Quavo, Gucci Mane, Flo Milli, Baby Tate and Peewee Longway, Rideout also co-produced Kodak Black's *Painting Pictures*.

Sony and KP Sign Starr

Sony Music Publishing Nashville and KP Entertainment have partnered to sign songwriter-producer Lee Starr for worldwide publishing. Having penned songs with up-and-comers Elvie Shane, Ashland Craft, Conner Smith and Drew Green, Starr is known for country and pop writing and recently hit number one on Billboard's Country Airplay chart (with almost 30 million audience impressions) for co-write "My Boy" (Elvie Shane's debut single). The track also reached number four on Billboard's Hot Country Songs with almost seven million U.S. streams.

Crosby and Vandross Join Primary Wave

Primary Wave has acquired a stake in Bing Crosby Estate company, HLC Properties Ltd., which includes thousands of recording archives by Crosby and other artists—many unreleased. Covering artist master performance and writer royalties, as well as film, radio and television production rights (including *White Christmas*), the deal has been estimated to be worth over \$50 million and includes publicity rights and the use of Crosby's name and likeness.

Awarded the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1962, Crosby won four Oscar Awards for Best Song, had over 41 number one hits from 1931-1954, and sold almost a billion records worldwide (rivaled only by The Beatles, Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson).

The Wave has also partnered

with the Estate of Luther Vandross for a stake in publishing, master recordings, as well as rights to his name and likeness. Vandross toured as a vocalist with David Bowie, Roberta Flack, Diana Ross, Quincy Jones and Stevie Wonder before launching his solo career and producing music for Aretha Franklin, Diana Ross and Dionne Warwick. The deal includes hits, "Dance With My Father," "Here and Now," "Never Too Much," "So Amazing," and "Endless Love" (with Mariah Carey). With two AMAs, three NAACPs and eight Grammy Awards, Vandross released 11 consecutive platinum albums and sold over 40 million records worldwide.

BMI Música y Más

The BMI Música y Más: Producers Edition featured creators Andrés Torres and Edgar Barrera, contemporary creators behind some of Latin music's biggest hits. "Despacito," "Échame la Culpa" and "Mal de Amores" are three of Torres' most recognizable recent songs and Barrera is best known for "Hawái," "Baila Conmigo" and "Boyfriend."

Stay connected on social for more on this series using #BMIMúsicaYMás.

ANDREA BEENHAM (aka Drea Jo) is a freelance writer and marketing consultant based in Southern California. The South-African born, Canadian-raised California transplant has a passion for music, people and fun. She can be reached at drea@dreaajo.com



▲ Sony Scoops Allman

Sony Music Publishing has signed a global administration deal with the estate of singer-songwriter Gregg Allman, covering his time with the Allman Brothers' Band—including hits "Whipping Post," "Melissa," "Midnight Rider"—and his solo career albums *Laid Back*, *I'm No Angel* and *Low Country Blues*.



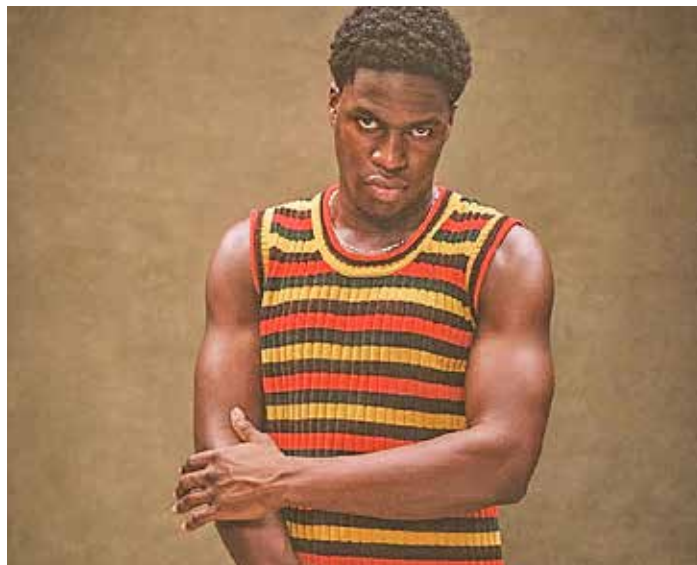
▲ Big Loud Signs Worthington

The Voice finalist Jake Worthington has joined Big Loud Records for publishing and management. With over 8 million streams and 230,000 followers online, the honky-tonk crooner has just released "Jonesin'" with Ronnie Dunn and Jake Owen, has more music coming soon, and is on tour through the end of the year.



▲ Flower Face for Nettwerk

Nettwerk Records has signed indie-folk artist Flower Face (born Ruby McKinnon), with her latest track release, "Cornflower Blue." McKinnon has been writing her own music since age 14. Breakout sophomore record *Baby Teeth* (2018) followed her own independent debut album *Fever Dreams* (2016).



▲ Warner Adds Caesar

Warner Chappell has added Grammy-winning singer-songwriter Daniel Caesar to its roster for worldwide publishing administration. The deal encompasses all catalog and future works—including "Best Part" (ft. H.E.R.) and "Get You" (ft. Kali Uchis), as well as recent Justin Bieber collaboration, "Peaches."



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Merry Clayton

A Divine Path

Born a preacher's daughter on Christmas Day, and singing gospel by age 4 in her father's church, Merry Clayton's path has always unfolded divinely—which is not to say that her journey has been without its challenges. Through it all, however, her faith in her musical destiny has always come to the surface. It is, in her words, her gift and, in everything she does, Ms. Clayton is dedicated to God's will for her life. Her latest album, *Beautiful Scars*, stands as a testament to her unshakable faith and resilience.

"I didn't choose anything—it all chose me," shares Clayton. "I have that gift God has given me. I'm just the vehicle that it came through. This was God's choice—it wasn't mine—just happened to like the choice."

As a former Raelette, Clayton has worked with everyone from Elvis Presley, Bobby Darin and Etta James to Michael Jackson, Tina Turner and Coldplay... to name only a few. Widely recognized for her work with Lynyrd Skynyrd ("Sweet Home Alabama") and the Rolling Stones ("Gimme Shelter"), and with increased notoriety following the release of the 2013 documentary, *20 Feet From Stardom*, a serious car accident the same year left her with a double leg amputation. Upon learning the news, and being assured that her vocal chords had not been affected, Clayton burst into song with "I Can Still Shine" (written for her by Ashford & Simpson). Described by doctors as "upbeat, unwavering and without tears," she was told that her faith and positivity was how they knew she would be fine.

When Chris Martin learned of her accident, he reached out to see how she was doing and, along with Clayton's team, hatched a plan to have her meet Coldplay in-studio to preview their album (2015's *Kaleidoscope*). After leading Clayton to the same room as her 1971 recording session, Martin had her sit with him at the piano and convinced her to add vocals to two songs ("Adventure of a Lifetime" and "Up and Up"). "It's amazing how this thing called music works," she admits. "When it's God's design—he brings what you need to you—that's how it always happens with me."

Being in the studio again inspired Clayton to start working on a record and she reached out to longtime friend and producer, Lou Adler. Martin had expressed interest in writing for her, resulting in "Love Is A Mighty River." Terry Young contributed five songs, along with updated arrangements of Leon Russell's "A Song for You" and Sam Cooke's "Touch The Hem of His Garment." Adler also reached out to Diane Warren and—in less than two weeks—she returned with "Beautiful Scars"...

*I've been on the battlefield of life, I've been through it,
but I just had to go through that to get to this.
I've been knocked out, I've been kicked down,
but faith brought me back and I'm still standing here and now.*

"When I heard it, I was done," confesses Clayton. "Everybody was just bawling, because it was like she looked into my life and saw what I had been through."

With songwriting, Clayton is emphatic that a great song requires three elements: lyrics, melody—and heart. "When you see someone's given their time and years to create something of value that you can add to, or subtract to, and express fully—that's very important," she specifies. "What is the song saying? What does it mean? That's the thing that inspires me."

While she recognizes that music artistry has changed, Clayton is disappointed by the lack of storytelling in most of today's songwriting. "Write from deep in the resonance of your heart and in your spirit and it always comes out wonderful. Don't just write something off the top of your head," Clayton instructs. "You've got to do the work—it's not going to just come right away. Once you dig deep, it will come. If you're playing, ain't nothing gonna come—and if it does come, it's not gonna last long."

Contact Jennifer Valentin, Shorefire Media, jvalentine@shorefire.com
Experience Merry Clayton at merryclayton.com





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DROPS

Billie Eilish has released the third installment of a live series on music video network **Vevo** for the track “**Lost Cause**” off her most recent album, *Happier Than Ever*. This special exclusive performance follows the release of Eilish’s previous Vevo live performances for “**Male Fantasy**” and “**Your Power**.” This latest installment was shot on 35 mm film, featuring the artist wandering around an elegant ballroom with her brother **Finneas** on guitar and **Andrew Marshall** on drums. Eilish has collaborated with Vevo on past exclusive live performances including for “**My Boy**” and “**You Should See Me in a Crown**.” For more information, contact Michael Eisele at michael@bighassle.com.



Punk’s not dead, as director **Ali Roberto** asserts in new documentary *Redefining Feminism in Punk: Los Angeles*, which explores the role of women in the past, present and future of L.A.’s punk scene. With archival footage and interviews with women discussing their creative work and experiences, the film sheds a spotlight on the younger, minority women on the scene and also features **Hole’s Patty Schemel**, **Exene Cervenka**, **The Linda Lindas**, **Backstage Pass** and **LA Witch**. The film is the third of six in the *Dr. Martens Presents: Music & Film* series, which explores the evolution of local music communities in N.Y.C. and L.A. For more, contact Grace Fleisher at gfleisher@shorefire.com.

Ozzy Osbourne and his longtime friend and colleague, the late **Lemmy Kilmister** of **Motörhead**, are reunited in an animated clip for a mash-up duet of “**Hellraiser**,” created in honor of their decades-long friendship. The clip was produced by **Hey Beautiful Jerk** and directed by **Mark Szumski** and **Gina Niespodziani**, opening with the two renowned artists hanging out with friends at Sunset Blvd.’s **Rainbow Bar and Grill**. The scene quickly changes to a post-apocalyptic world in which the two battle evil forces. Co-written by Osbourne, Kilmister and guitarist **Zakk Wyld**, “**Hellraiser**” originally appeared on Osbourne’s 1991 album *No More Tears*, which Motörhead then recorded and released as a single from their 1992 *March ör Die* album. This new mash-up was recently included on the digital



LEONARD COHEN

30th anniversary release of *No More Tears* in September and dropped as a standalone release on Dec. 3, Osbourne’s birthday, on a special 10” black vinyl with three versions: the original, Motörhead’s version and the mash-up. Contact Marcee Rondan at marcee@srop.com.

The *Sing 2 Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* is out Dec. 17 right before the second installment of the animated series opens in theaters Dec. 22. The soundtrack includes a new track from **U2**, “**Your Song Saved My Life**,” which is out now and is the band’s first new music since 2019. Lead singer **Bono** makes his animated film debut in the film as the voice of Clay Calloway. The track listing also includes **Sam i** feat. **Anitta**, **BIA** & **Jarina De Marco** on “**Suéltate**,” a cover of “**Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)**” by **Keke Palmer** feat. **Scarlett Johansson**, **Taron Egerton**, **Reese Witherspoon** and **Tori Kelly**; and songs by **Pharrell Williams**, **Elton John**, **Billie Eilish** and more. For more, contact sydney.feinberg@umusic.com.



of the fifth anniversary since the late, great songwriter’s passing in 2016. Directed by **Daniel Askill**, who also created the video for Cohen’s “**Happens to the Heart**,” this marks the fifth and final video created for the album. Askill worked closely on the project with Cohen’s son, **Adam Cohen**. Shot in black and white, it depicts artist and actor **Bobbi Salvör Menuez**. *Thanks for the Dance* was released in 2019, offering fans a collection of new songs by Cohen, which was completed through the collaboration and contributions of his son, friends and colleagues. Contact maria.malta@sonymusic.com for further details.

Warner Records re-released *Bruised* in November, the soundtrack to the Netflix film and directorial debut of Oscar-winning actress **Halle Berry**, who also produced and stars in the film about a female MMA fighter. The soundtrack features all female artists hand-selected by executive producers **Berry** and **Cardi B**, including **H.E.R.**, **Cardi B.**, **City Girls**, **Saweetie**, **Latto**, **Erica Banks**, **Flo Milli**, **Baby Tate**, **Young M.A.**, **DreamDoll** and **Roc Nation’s Rapsody**, **Big Bottle Wyanna** and **Ambre**. City Girls provided the first single, “**Scared**.” For additional details, contact aishah.white@warnerrecords.com.

“**Puppets**,” the final video from **Leonard Cohen’s** posthumous album *Thanks for the Dance*, was released in November in honor

In honor of the late **Phil Lynott**, frontman of **Thin Lizzy**, **Mercury Records** has released **Songs For While I'm Away**, a documentary film by **Emer Reynolds**. Interviews with Thin Lizzy band members, colleagues, family members, and footage from Lynott himself chronicle the artist's early life in 1950s Dublin as a Black boy to becoming a rock star whose song "**The Boys Are Back in Town**" achieved international fame. The film features Lynott's wife **Caroline Taraskevics**, his daughters **Sarah Lynott** and **Catherine Lynott**, band members **Scott Gorham**, **Eric Bell**, **Darren Wharton** and **Midge Ure**, **Huey Lewis**, **James Hetfield**, **Adam Clayton**, **Brush Shiels**, **Terry O'Neill** and **Suzi Quatro**. Contact Carol Kaye at carol@kayosproductions.com.

OPPS

Registration is open for the Super MAG-Fest, which will take place Jan. 6-9, 2022 in National Harbor, MD. **The Music and Gaming Festival** is a four-day celebration of video game music, gaming of all types and the gaming community with guest speakers, vendors, consoles, arcades, tabletop, LAN, live video game cover bands and more. To find ticket information, how to contribute, COVID-19 guidelines and more about the event, visit super.magfest.org.

Dancers are invited to submit choreography for consideration to be featured in the 2022 CDCFest, or **Contemporary Dance Choreography Festival**, which will be held in Orlando. Choreographers and dancers have until midnight on Jan. 1, 2022 to submit their work for the event to be held June 5 either in-person or streamed live, which will be determined at a later date depending on the state of the pandemic. Rules and regulations for submissions can be found at cdcfest.com/submit-your-work.

The application window for the first of three grant rounds offered by **Sacramento Film + Media** is now closed, but the second is now open from Dec. 1, 2021 through Feb. 15, 2022. The program offers four \$5,000 grants, with two grants awarded to applicants with budgets over \$100,000, and two awarded to applicants with budgets \$100,000 or below. Additional funds will be awarded for 75% of post-production done locally within the city. Eligible productions include music videos, feature films, shorts, television series, documentaries and commercials. For a complete list of rules and eligibility requirements, visit filmsac.com/grants.

PROPS

Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve with Ryan Seacrest 2022 will air live on Friday, Dec. 31 on ABC at 8 p.m. EST. It's the annual event's 50th anniversary, and for the first time, there will be a Spanish language countdown in Puerto Rico as the inaugural host destination. Festivities will take place on the grounds of the **Puerto Rico Convention Center** and **DISTRITO T-Mobile**, Puerto Rico's newest entertainment and nightlife complex. For the 17th year, headlining host **Ryan Seacrest** will oversee New Year's festivities in Times Square with more than five-and-a-half hours of performances airing until 2 a.m. For more details, contact Leah Palacios at lpalacios@mrcentertainment.com.

The **89th Annual Hollywood Christmas Parade Supporting Marine Toys for Tots**, which traditionally featured musical artists performing live in concert on the streets of Hollywood before the pandemic, will be telecast to air on The CW Network on Dec. 17 at 8 p.m. EST. The two-hour televised event will feature musical acts and

performers **Marie Osmond**, **Debbie Gibson**, **Ed Alonzo**, **Kimberley Locke**, **Jet Velocity Holiday All Star Band**, **Matt Hauser**, **The Sugarplums**, **The Band of Merrymakers** and more. **Erik Estrada**, **Laura McKenzie**, **Dean Cain** and **Montel Williams** will host the event with special co-host **Elizabeth Stanton**. Toys for Tots is a nonprofit organization run by the U.S. Marine Corps that distributes holiday gifts to children in need. For more details, contact Steve Moyer at moyerpr@earthlink.net.

AIDS Healthcare Foundation, the world's largest HIV/

AIDS care provider, again held a special free concert in Los Angeles on Dec. 1 in honor of World AIDS Day and to benefit the **Debbie Allen Dance Academy**. Renowned award-winning chanteuses **Jennifer Hudson** and **Christina Aguilera** performed at the event, with comedian **Randy Rainbow** as host. The concert was produced by longtime AHF partner and Emmy and Tony Award-winning dancer, choreographer and actress **Debbie Allen**, and also featured a performance by Allen's students from the Dance Academy. This year's event marks the 40-year anniversary of the CDC's recognition of the virus and the 35th anniversary of the launch of AHF. For more information, contact Jacinda Chen at jacinda@w-wpr.com.

JESSICA PACE is a music journalist-turned-news-reporter based in Durango, CO. She is from Nashville, where she started a writing career by freelancing for publications including *American Songwriter* and *Music Connection*. Contact her at j.marie.pace@gmail.com.

Out Take



Herdis Stefánsdóttir

Composer

Web: herdisstefansdottir.com
Contact: Kyrie Hood, kyrie@whitebearpr.com
Most Recent: *Y: The Last Man*

The 2021 series *Y: The Last Man*, about a post-apocalyptic world devoid of beings with a Y chromosome, is accompanied by a haunting, choral score that centers around the female voice and incorporates elements of western cinema music. It was written by Icelandic composer and electronic musician Herdis Stefánsdóttir, who in addition to television and film, has also composed for theater and dance. "It's very different," she says of composing for live performance compared to film and TV. "Dance is so free-form; the music and performance hold each other's hands. You have free space to create music in an open format while with a film, you have to adapt to a certain vision. You don't have complete freedom."

As a Master's student in film composition at NYU working to establish a career, Stefánsdóttir said she would work with student filmmakers and score short films. In New York, she met Jóhann Jóhannsson at a screening for *The Theory of Everything* and offered to be his assistant, which led to an internship with him as he worked on the score for 2016's *Arrival*. "That was my first insight into what it is to write, score and work on big projects," Stefánsdóttir says. "When I told Jóhann I wanted to write music and not have to have another job, he said the most important thing was to work on your own music, surround yourself with inspiring people and be open to whatever projects come your way. That advice led me to quitting working for him and making a record and really focusing on my own music. That's important—nurturing your own work."

It led to scoring work such as *The Sun is Also a Star*, which earned her a nomination for the Icelandic Music Awards, and the HBO series *We're Here*. "You just have to write music and really enjoy that process," she advises. "I can only give advice on what has helped me—and that was to start by working with student filmmakers and scoring short films. I would introduce myself to production companies. Reach out to composers and ask if they need an assistant. It's a lot of networking and knowing people."

► Miley Cyrus at Music Midtown

Miley Cyrus brought the crowd to a roar headlining Music Midtown at Piedmont Park in Atlanta. Performances included “Midnight Sky,” “Can’t Be Tamed,” “Wrecking Ball” and renditions of “Maybe” by Janis Joplin and “Where’s My Mind” by Pixies. The festival wrapped with throwback single “Party in the USA” sending audiences off with a firework bang.



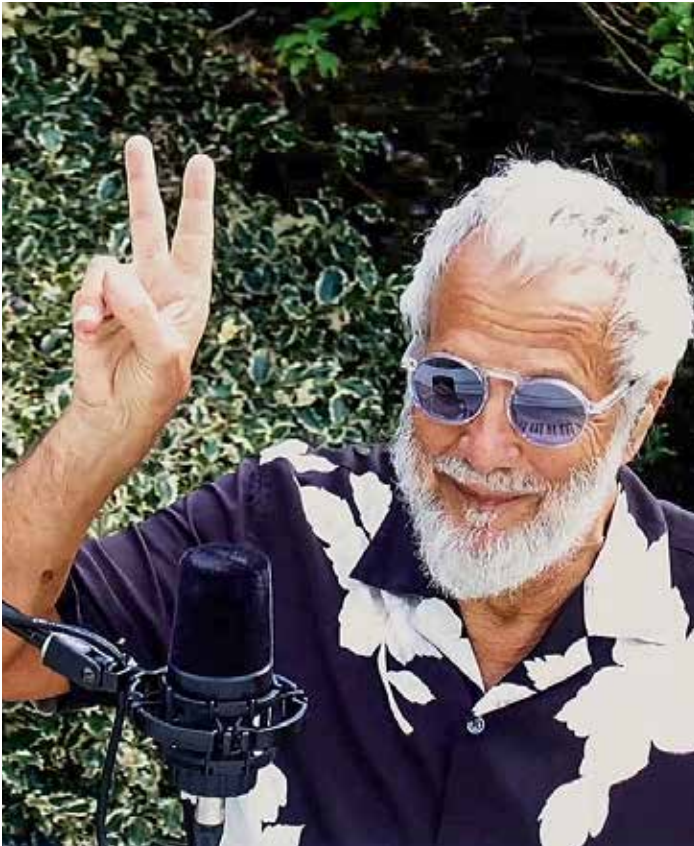
▲ Eddie and Olivia Vedder at Ohana Fest

At this year’s Ohana Festival, Olivia Vedder gave her first-ever live performance of “My Father’s Daughter,” her original, Oscar-contending song from the *Flag Day* soundtrack, which was written by her father, Eddie Vedder, and Swell Season’s Glen Hansard, pictured.



◀ Cat Stevens Rides the Peace Train

Singer-Songwriter, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee, and humanitarian Yusuf/Cat Stevens has teamed up with Playing For Change to produce “Peace Train” around the world with more than 25 musicians from 12 countries. Featured musicians include Keb’ Mo’, Senegalese artist Baaba Maal, and Silkroad’s Rhiannon Giddens.



▲ Whit3 Collr Battle for the Big Stage

Orange County, CA-based rock band Whit3 Collr, comprised of high school-aged musicians, won “Battle for the Big Stage: Road to Rockville Edition,” a virtual tournament-style competition held exclusively on *That Space Zebra Show* on DWPresent’s Twitch channel to play at the Welcome To Rockville festival in Daytona Beach, Florida.

Tidbits From Our Tattered Past



▲ Fugees Reunite for 'The Score' 25th Anniversary

Hip-hop legends Fugees reunited for their first performance together in 15 years. The trio stunned fans at N.Y.C.'s Pier 17 with a preview of what's to come from their international tour celebrating the 25th anniversary of the *The Score*. Ms. Lauryn Hill asked fans to "respect the miracle" of the reunion, and Wyclef implored President Biden to grant Haitian migrants asylum.



1982—Dr. Demento—#17

Radio icon Dr. Demento (Barry Hansen) was on this cover of *MC*, and he spoke about the genesis of his wacky weekly show. At first, Hansen appeared as just a guest on another DJ's program. "We played 'Transfusion,'" and one of the secretaries there said, "You gotta be demented to play that shit!" The next time I came in, without even being asked about it, I was introduced as Dr. Demento."



◀ Kawhi Leonard

NBA star Kawhi Leonard hosted the inaugural Culture Jam Sports and Music Festival at the Shrine in Los Angeles to kick off the release of his musical project: *Culture Jam Vol. 1*, via Virgin Music Label. Culture Jam celebrates the union of hip-hop, basketball, and community, and includes songs from: Lil Uzi Vert, Ty Dolla \$ign, Wale, NLE Choppa, Yung Bleu, Gunna, Polo G and others.



2004—Akwid—#13

In our cover story on Spanish-language rappers Akwid, the duo discussed their struggle for recognition. "When we first started, they'd throw us on first or second," recalled Sergio Gomez. "Even with the success of the record—we were on the Billboard charts for months—promoters still didn't believe." Meanwhile, the issue profiles "Grammy Recordings" producer Leslie Lewis and acclaimed singer-songwriter-producer Chris Stamey.

► Neal Casal Music Foundation

The Neal Casal Music Foundation with support from Fender Guitars donated instruments and accessories to students at Jefferson Township High School in New Jersey this past October. The late Casal is the focus of tribute album, *Highway Butterfly*, featuring: Bob Weir, Susan Tedeschi, Derek Trucks, Steve Earle, Warren Haynes and others. All proceeds will benefit the Foundation.



Purchase back issues: denise@musicconnection.com

DIRTY

BY BRETT CALLWOOD



HONEY



Photo by Mike Savoia

2021 was a big year for Los Angeles-based blues rockers Dirty Honey. After releasing their debut EP in 2019 and following it up with a string of singles, they toured like crazy and opened for such high-profile names as the Who, Guns N' Roses, Alter Bridge, and Slash. But this year has topped it all. First of all, they released their self-titled debut full length album and received mass acclaim. Then, they went out on tour with reformed soul brothers the Black Crowes, making a ton of friends along the way.

What they've achieved is miraculous, especially when considering the fact that they're still without a record deal. They signed on with Mark DiDia's Red Light Management in 2019, and that has turned out to be a masterstroke.

We caught up with vocalist Marc LaBelle and guitarist John Notto via Zoom shortly after the conclusion of the Crowes tour, and they're clearly still buzzing....

Music Connection: A bit of background first—how and when did the band form? What was the mission?

Marc LaBelle: I guess the official lineup happened somewhere in 2016/17. It's kinda murky. I'd been playing with John and Justin [Smolian, bass] for quite a while already and we had his rotating musical chair of drummers for a couple of years. It wasn't until Corey [Coverstone, drums] stood up at the drum set at a gig and said that he wanted to be in the band that, ok, we have our four guys now. Stylistically, the mission statement wasn't really discussed until things got really serious.

We figured out "When I'm Gone" and we had to define a musical direction. I had always wanted to do a bluesy rock thing, because all my favorite bands are that. The Allman Brothers, Led Zeppelin, AC/DC and Aerosmith, the Black Crowes, the Stones—I love blues-based rock & roll—so I was pretty adamant about doing that. The other guys were intent on trying to push rock & roll forward in the way that maybe Muse had, introducing some electronic elements into the music. It wasn't really my style and when people started gravitating towards "When I'm Gone" we all looked at each other and said, "This is easy, this is our lane, this is organic to us and authentic, so we should just do it and stop fighting ourselves."

MC: So, do early demos exist where you are experimenting?

ML: I think there's a song out, "Fire Away," that a lot of people really love. It's definitely missing that blues element to it, but it's still a great song. I love it. There were a couple of other ones like that, that maybe had more Iron Maiden in there, or Muse. Other influences. So, we can definitely do that, and those exist.

MC: Who in the band is from L.A. and who moved to L.A.?

ML: Justin is the only one from L.A. I moved from New York, John moved from Maine, and Corey moved from Portland, Oregon.

MC: Does that affect the sound?

ML: Not so much New York. I didn't really have much of a musical journey there. I love New York, it's one of my favorite places in the world. But in terms of doing gigs and trying to make this thing work there, there's no space there to play with a band and I realized that quickly.

MC: Since finding your lane, how do you think the sound has evolved?

ML: I think we have a definite sense of direction that helps when songwriting, and I think the evolution comes lyrically, musically. I think we're looking on the next thing to get just a little bit more experimental. I think you always have to have some evolution. Specifically, what that is, I think that will come out in the studio. Maybe using the studio as more of a songwriting tool—I know we've all talked about that. The last two records, we did in about seven days in the studio. I think we'd like to have a month, just to see what we can discover in there, just playing around and being creative.

John Notto: I feel like we're still on track for even more evolution. I feel, in a lot of ways, the first two records are one long thought. They're not really that long, either. The first record is an extension of the EP, I think. So, in that sense, I look forward to whatever the next evolution is. I don't think, with this unit, any evolution will be extreme. It'll always be slight, I think. That's the craft of it—to slightly twist it.

MC: It has all happened quite fast. Does it feel like a whirlwind from within?

ML: I think we all were ready for it and it was more exciting than anything. Certainly, COVID gave us a lot of time to reflect on what we've accomplished and what we've done, which was nice in a way. It was a pause button for everybody, to stop what would definitely have been a whirlwind year. We were on track for a lot of experiences to pass by or get lost in everything. I definitely feel more appreciative than anything, having been without music for the better part of 18 months. So, I try to pause myself while we're in it a little bit, here and there.

JN: I thought that 2019/20 was a whirlwind for me. We went from playing first of three, \$200 for the entire band, to selling out the El Rey after having opened for Guns N' Roses, opened for the Who, meeting and touring with Slash, I definitely think that year was crazy. Every time we left L.A. and got in the van, we came back having achieved a little bit more. It was increments the whole way.

It all happened so fast that when COVID did hit, that is the only time we got a chance to take a look at it.

MC: How did you manage to do so much without label backing?

ML: We're still without a label. That hasn't changed. It's really a testament to our manager and the great team that we have. They felt confident that we could achieve a lot without a label. Maybe reassess our label situation specifically after trying to get the music out to radio stations to streaming platforms and stuff, and see where we're at. The success of 'When I'm Gone' helped clarify our belief in not needing a label, certainly for North America. Again, it's a testament to the team and hopefully the music. People are responding to it.

MC: How was the Slash experience? Did you get to hang? Did he offer any advice?

JN: We did ten or 11 shows. We didn't get to hang with him, like hang out in his dressing room and in his personal space. He was gracious enough to tell us how great he thought we were and how he felt that what we were doing stood out amongst the other bands coming out, and he was really excited about us in general. I unfortunately missed that speech.

ML: John was partying hard that night and missed that nugget of his hero telling him he's a big fan of what he's doing. Myles [Kennedy of Slash's solo band plus Alter Bridge] is super good about letting us into his personal space. The way they set up everything at the gig is not amenable to just random opening bands walking in and saying hi to Slash. Myles is a little more chatty and very open. So is the rest of the band. Slash, I think, just wants to sit around and play his guitars.

MC: You've opened for the Who, Guns N' Roses, and Alter Bridge too—what are the overriding memories from those experiences?

ML: With Guns, I was fortunate enough after the gig to spend a bit of time with Axl one on one, which was super unexpected and awesome. He was great. It was at the complete end of the tour, in Vegas, and management walked me to Axl. He was very nice and we chatted about normal stuff. Justin got to meet Pete Townshend, we all got to meet Roger Daltrey. That was amazing of course.

I think the memory that stood out the most—remember being in Denver and John looked at me, when Myles Kennedy for the third time that night was like, "Give it up for Dirty Honey" on stage. John was like, "He really likes us." That was only our third gig with them at the time, and then subsequently we went on tour with Alter Bridge and did more Slash dates. That was eye-opening for all of us. There's a genuine appreciation coming from him about what we're doing. That was a special moment for all of us.

MC: You're a band based in Los Angeles, with long hair, but you've said that you don't consider yourselves a "long-haired L.A. band." Explain...

ML: I just think we didn't really have anything to do with Hollywood or the Sunset Strip, specifically. By our own design. I actually had a conversation with Slash about it, a year and a half ago. He asked what it was like, coming up in L.A.? I was like, it wasn't anything like what you had dude. We were not on the Strip, we never played The Whisky, we played The Viper Room for a digital online streaming show. We cut our teeth playing four hours in bars and clubs. Figured out some stuff that way. It was

more financial for us than anything, because those venues on the Sunset Strip became so famous that they could force a band from Akron, Ohio to pay them a thousand dollars to hit that stage because that club's name means something outside of L.A. We were looking at it as a local band. Playing The Whisky isn't that big of a deal to us. We'd all been to a lot of shows where nobody was there.

MC: What do you think of the current state of rock & roll—in L.A., the USA, and globally?

JN: It's definitely looking better than maybe it was five years ago. We pretty much know every band personally that is coming up in this new-school lane of doing it the way we do it. I don't think any of us existed five years ago on the national scene. So that's a good sign. They're all out there working hard. We toured with Joyous Wolf—we're friends with them and they're really cool. We toured with Goodbye June, a cool southern rock band.

"We're still without a label. That hasn't changed. It's really a testament to our manager and the great team that we have. They felt confident that we could achieve a lot without a label."

ML: Obviously, Greta Van Fleet is out there doing great. Marcus King is out there doing great. Badflower isn't quite in the blusier lane, but they're out there. So, it is happening. It's healthy, but it's not quite a movement yet, I don't think.

MC: Where did you record the album and with whom?

JN: We recorded it at Henson Studios at Hollywood, California with our producer Nick DiDia. We did it over six days—it was quick. It was right in the heart of the pandemic, it was an in and out, wham bam thank you ma'am. More because of the scheduling, the timing and the rough year financially, I think we chose to go in really sure of what we were doing, and just be quick about it.

MC: If we take the single "The Wire" as an example—how did it start with the germ of an idea and then how do you build on it to completion?

JN: That one started on an acoustic guitar riff that I sent to Marc, then he was like "We should only do half of it," and then we made it not acoustic anymore, and that's the riff as it is, basically. Actually, I think around one of the tours we were doing, we were able to, once Marc got a vocal idea down, to start

workshopping it as a band during soundchecks. That song grew over the course of that period of time. That's actually the oldest song on the new record. So that seed was early 2019. But it was done the way it is for the Rolling 7's tour in February 2020. But they are all different. It's a different story for every one.

MC: Did the pandemic help or hinder the album?

ML: It helped us, for sure. We definitely made a better record than we would have, had it not happened. I think, lyrically, it created some challenges just because you weren't living as much of a life as you normally would have been and experiencing various things to write about. There was nothing happening in society other than a social injustice movement that captivated a lot of people and really took over the news. So, you really had that and the pandemic that were happening on a social level, and nothing else. **JN:** And I don't really think that's our schtick. To comment on the big, negative thing that's happening that year. We definitely didn't want to write about the pandemic. Your song stays forever, and for me personally, if you're going to write a protesting kind of song, even if it's sparked by a current subject, it's got to be worded in such a way that it can be universal 50 years from now. If the mood strikes us, yeah. But I think we stay away from that stuff. So otherwise, we're staying in our apartment watching *Tiger King*.

MC: How did the tour with the Black Crowes go? It seems like a great fit. Did you hang with them? What did you learn?

ML: They're nothing but cool. We got to get pretty close with them over the last couple of months. They were kind enough to let us ride on the bus from New York to D.C. Chris [Robinson] was always telling us not to be scared to crash a Ferrari into the wall on the 405, let the chips fall where they may. Every band I've ever loved just absolutely obliterated their career at some point. Don't be scared to take risks, do drugs and get tattoos, of course. Live a full life. He totally lives by this motto. He just lives life to the fullest. There's no stopping that guy doing anything he wants to do. Which we all admire. More than anything, what I saw, from anybody we've played with, just be great every night. They truly were great every single night.

MC: What equipment do you each use and endorse?

JN: I was fortunate enough to meet the head of Gibson and establish a relationship with them. So, I have a couple of their standards, their starter guitars. I have my custom shop '58 reissue from '03. That's my number one. I use that as often as possible. I'm kind of a one guitar guy. I don't really desire to switch guitars a lot on stage. That's not a problem right now, because I can't afford it. Then I use my pedal board which isn't very big—there's about eight pedals on it. Then I use a 50 Watt Plexi reissue from 2018—that's Marshall. It's a 4X12.

I think for the next tour I'm going to use my spare head as my solo head. Click it on for solos. The real goal with that isn't really to be louder. It does feel better to push more air. But what I really love the most about it is not using a pedal for any overdrive. I'd much rather click on another amp that's just really saturated. I like amp tone more than I like pretty much any pedal tone, if you're talking about overdrive with distortion. I'm excited to add that extra thing. That's something Isaiah Mitchell did with the Black Crowes. He ran a Magnatone the entire time, and then for solos he just clicked on a

switcher and added an Orange.

I try to keep it real simple. I might mess with an effects loop, because I hear if you put your delays and your reverbs in there it's just a little more pristine.

ML: I admittedly am not much of a guitar player, but I like to write and try to get inspired. I've always loved Jon's '58 Les Paul. It's still the best guitar I've ever picked up. When I got home, a Bluesbreaker Marshall just showed up that I still haven't been able to plug in, because I live in an apartment complex. You can't really play it quiet. I've got another 25 Watt Marshall that showed up. Trying to accumulate some things that can help me write.

JN: Justin has two basses. He got one from Gibson—a Firebird bass. It's the only lefty they ever made. He uses an Aguilar Tone Hammer, I think. Just a 2x12 cabinet right now. Before the Firebird, he'd been using a custom-made bass by Seth Lee Jones from Tulsa, just somebody he knew.

ML: Corey uses DW drums. I believe it's a jazz series.

MC: Finally, what's next for the band?

ML: There's some big news coming. We're going out with Wolfgang Van Halen in January and February. That should be cool. Then we're going to Europe for the first time, and maybe some sort of a Canadian run. But next summer will be all Europe all the time.

JN: I think we'll push one more single from the record, but right now we're focusing on "The Wire."

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QUICK FACTS

- Marc LaBelle met manager Mark DiDia when he joined his Monday night hockey league.
- Rather than performing at The Whisky A GoGo and other Sunset Strip venues, the band cut their teeth at small bars such as Good Times at Davey Wayne's in Hollywood, and the Basement Tavern in Santa Monica.
- LaBelle said that he didn't go to many rock & roll shows while living in New York, because "there isn't a scene there."
- "The Wire" is their first song to hit the mainstream charts.
- KLOS radio in Los Angeles recently played their album in its entirety, something that they rarely do.

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Top 25 New Mus

In Music Connection's decades long mission to aiding unsigned music-makers, we make sure that every new issue of MC delivers reviews of recordings made by unsigned artists of all genres. Below are the top-scoring artists we heard during the past year, as well as an additional page of Top Prospects who are deserving of recognition. We welcome you to sign up for a free critique at musicconnection.com/reviews/new-music-critiques.



Arch Echo 9.0

Web: archecho.com

Style: Progressive Metal



Elan Suave 8.4

Web: elansuave.com

Style: Hip-Hop, R&B



Chanel Yates 8.4

Web: chanelyates.com

Style: Singer-Songwriter, Country-Pop



Emma Charles 8.8

Web: emmacharlesmusic.com

Style: Folk Pop



Katie Fry 8.4

Web: katiefry.com

Style: Singer-Songwriter



Trace the Sun 8.4

Web: tracethesun.com

Style: Jazz, Fusion



Talk 8.8

Web: iamtalkmusic.com

Style: Rock, Singer-Songwriter



Elijah Rock 8.4

Web: elijahrock.com

Style: Pop Traditional



Louis Anthony Delise 8.3

Web: louisanthonydelise.com

Style: Instrumental, Orchestral



Lil Alice 8.6

Web: lilalice.com

Style: Experimental, Ethnic, Ambient



Cody Weaver 8.4

Web: codyweaverofficial.com

Style: Country Rock



Ghoste 8.2

Web: ghostenyc.com

Style: Hot AC Pop

Music Critiques

2 0 2 1



Arhkota 8.2

Web: arhkota.com

Style: Atmospheric Dreamy Alternative



Little Hurt 8.2

Web: twitter.com/littlehurt

Style: Alternative, Alt-Pop



Zaydo 8.2

Web: decyphermusic.com

Style: Hip-Hop, R&B



Simon Jewell 8.2

Web: bandcamp.com

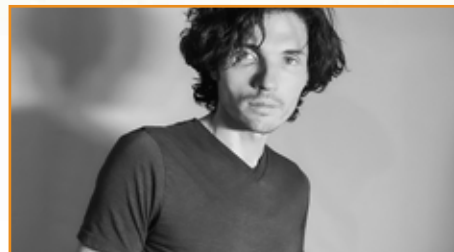
Style: Acoustic, Indie, Folk



Rachel McGoye 8.2

Web: rachelmcgoye.com

Style: Indie, Folk, Pop



Richard Tyler Epperson 8.2

Web: richardtylerepperson.com

Style: Singer-Songwriter



TDMJay, Bandrunna Mac, Yung Platinum 8.0

Web: youtube.com **Style:** Rap, Hip-Hop



Yve Mary B 8.2

Web: yvemaryb.com

Style: Folk, Country



Pretty 8.2

Web: prettytheband.co

Style: New New Wave, Alt-Rock



Kaatii 8.0

Web: kaatii.com

Style: Alt-Rock, Bedroom Pop



Waves of Distortion 8.2

Web: wavesofdistortion.com

Style: Hard Rock



Jeremy Shada 8.2

Web: jeremyshadamusic.com

Style: Pop



Sub-Radio 8.0

Web: sub-radio.com

Style: Indie-Pop

Top Prospects

2 0 2 1



Nomad Mr. Murk City 8.0

Web: nomadmrurkcity.com

Style: Hip-Hop, Rap, Trap



A Tale of Two 8.0

Web: soundcloud.com

Style: Jazz, Blues, Americana



Aveya 8.0

Web: [instagram.com/aveya.music](https://www.instagram.com/aveya.music)

Style: Progressive Metal, Film Score



Dolly Ave 8.0

Web: solo.to/dollyave

Style: Indie Pop



Animal Sun 8.0

Web: animalsunofficial.net

Style: Alt-Rock, Indie, Pop



Zana Messia Angelized 8.0

Web: zanamessiaangelized.com

Style: Indie Pop



Sonic Rebel 8.0

Web: sonicrebelmusic.com

Style: Electronic Rock



Rebel Kicks 7.8

Web: rebelkicks.com

Style: Indie Rock, Pop



John Salaway 8.0

Web: johnsalaway.com

Style: Americana, Rock



Zola Simone 7.8

Web: zolasimonemusic.com

Style: Indie Pop



Chisenga 8.0

Web: chisenga.co

Style: Hip-Hop



Byron Nemeth 7.8

Web: byronnemeth.com

Style: Rock, Metal



Tawmy 8.0

Web: tawmy.com

Style: Blues-Rock, Pop-Rock



Greye 7.8

Web: greyemusic.com

Style: Southern Rock 2.0



Caroline 8.0

Web: carolines-music.com

Style: Hip-Hop, R&B



The Sweet Kill 7.6

Web: thesweetkill.com

Style: Dark Wave, Gothic



Zero Theorem 8.0

Web: zertheorem.band.com

Style: Alternative Metal, Hard Rock



Danjul 7.6

Web: danjulmusic.com

Style: R&B, Pop



Jack Symes 8.0

Web: endjacksymes.com

Style: Folk



Ketsyha 7.6

Web: ketsyha.com

Style: R&B, Soul

50 BEST CAREER TIPS 2021

COMPILED BY
JOSEPH MALTESE

Every single issue of *Music Connection* is loaded with advice and insights that will help any music-maker—no matter what kind of music they make—to improve the quality, direction and prospects of their career. All year long we interview successful artists and industry pros (A&R reps, producers, engineers, managers, club bookers, publishing execs) and we grill them for inside information that our readers can find nowhere else.

“From the Street to the Elite” has been our motto since we began, and for a prime sampling of the kind of advice *MC* provides, please read on....

FOR THE ARTIST

1. “You need to create for yourself—know what you want or who you are—and that takes a lot of time to figure out in life.”

– Vanessa Silberman
June

2. “People feel like the way to success is to do more than everybody else. That’s just not what it is. It’s about having yourself in order. It’s about doing what you love. You have to have something in place that lets you know when you love your music and not ‘I banged out seven songs today and I’m proud of myself.’ If you knocked out seven bangers then yes be proud. But if they won’t see the light of day...”

– T-Pain
August

5. “Never close yourself off to something new—it’s vital. In music, it’s important to pick the thing you know the least about and dive deep into it. It’s those shades and the differences that actually in the end come together to make you more of an artist and a better musician.”

– Brian Tyler, film composer
July

6. “If you do this at a certain level every day of your life for this long, something’s bound to stick.”

– Hans DeKline
July

7. “When it comes down to it, the biggest risk in life is not taking a risk on yourself and following your heart.”

– Vanessa Silberman
February



T-PAIN

3. “When you’ve spent that many years preparing, you don’t let your nerves get in the way. You just go and do it.”

– Victory Boyd, Infinity Song
June

4. “If you’re just looking for a job, there’s always the money gig. But if you follow your passion and trust your intuition, in any field, that’s what ultimately gets you where you want to go.—Go with your gut and make content you’d like to see.”

– Kerry Brown
July

8. “An idea can come from anywhere—and oftentimes doesn’t feel like I’m setting out to make some epic song.”

– Amy Lee, Evanescence
November

9. “Whether or not to pursue a label deal for a band depends on what your goals are and what your metrics of success are. If you feel like you’re in a good spot, are reaching the people that you want to, and you’re comfortable, you don’t really need to take any further steps.”

– Mercci
February

10. "The thing I wish I had told my younger self would be to lean into the things that made me different. The best art is about unique perspective—and you need to figure out why your perspective is unique. That is not only what art needs, but that's what the world needs. That's how we create change; that's how we make breakthroughs."

– **TRISHES**
September

11. "Don't even think about the label side. It all comes, eventually, if you work hard for it."

– **The Happy Fits**
January

12. "Even when we started, we weren't trying to reinvent the wheel. We just wanted to be a rock 'n' roll band. My older brother George always said, 'You're just a guitar band.' He always saw that as a big plus factor, that the guitars were so strong. So we've just stayed with that. It's just a groove."

– **Angus Young, ACDC**
January



HAIM

13. "The idea of just being like, 'We just did this. Let's put it out' is kind of the vibe. And I think in doing that we really kind of touched on something cool, and something that we hadn't really sounded like before."

– **Danielle Haim, Haim**
February

14. "With this deal, I have an incredible sense of ownership. I own my masters. It's a 50/50 profit split. It's just incredible."

– **David Sabastian**
February

15. "We were pursuing our career as an indie band, but we had reached a point where it was going to be difficult to get big enough in the way that we were hoping

to achieve without that network of distribution and backing that a label offers. We were hitting the ceiling as an indie band."

– **Merci**
February

16. "As much as there is a method to making music—chord structure and song patterns—there's this other thing that is really just a little spark of magic, and it has to be about loving what you're doing."

– **Amy Lee, Evanescence**
November

17. "Get good projects, work them and don't leave them if they falter. You pick them up and push them a bit. You can name any classic rock act and the reason they were successful is because the label backed them up and was creative in helping them establish themselves."

– **Michael Carden, Quarto Valley Records**

February

18. "DIY is really just doing it yourself. I think the ethics behind it

21. "As a producer, it's important to create a safe, supportive environment. Studios can be intimidating, especially for first-time artists."

– **Bruce Sugar, producer**
February



AMY LEE

22. "The number one thing as a producer or engineer is not taking what people say at face value. You have to learn how to interpret what they're saying. Ninety percent of what people say and what they mean are two different things."

– **Justin Niebank, producer**
July

23. "I'm not big on the 'less is more' philosophy with production; I like a lot of stuff going on, but I'm very careful to not walk on the vocal. My biggest advice to anyone in the studio: stay off the vocal. That's paramount."

– **Jimmy Hunter**
September

24. "Subscribe to the hot lead sheets to see what is needed by artists and producers."

– **Kenny Lee Lewis, producer**
October

25. "There's a spontaneity involved that's key to the magic in the studio. You don't want to be over-prepared. You still want to leave leeway so that magic can occur."

– **Bruce Sugar, producer**
February

26. "While Brian's [recording] he'll get the rest of us in the other studio and be like, 'Okay, let's get another new track down,' and then we'll come back in to start putting down the track. Everyone keeps

busy, which is a good approach, because it gives everyone something to do and there's no sitting around bored."

– **Angus Young, ACDC**
January

27. "The human element is the 'lightning in a bottle.' The idea of what makes things beautiful is the imperfections—you would never auto-tune Etta James."

– **Brian Tyler, film composer**
July

28. "If you know how something works, it takes all the study and information gathering out. You don't even think about it."

– **Michael Carden, Quarto Valley Records**
February

29. "Keep the tape rolling at all times. I learned that from Ringo. Early in their career, The Beatles were jamming and George [Martin] didn't catch it."

– **Bruce Sugar, producer**
February

FOR THE MASSES

30. "When you're not trying to be the biggest in the room, you can be the most beautiful. That authenticity breaks through the popularity contest."

– **T-Pain**
August

31. "We take time in between [touring] for our families and for ourselves—to live life and refuel in the hole where the music



VANESSA SILBERMAN

FOR THE PRODUCER

20. "If you are prepared before you get in, all you have to do is get the sound you want and hit the [record] button."

– **Angus Young, ACDC**
January

is not waiting around for someone to make stuff happen, but making it happen yourself."

– **Vanessa Silberman**
February

19. "Retain a music attorney before entering into a personal management agreement."

– **Glenn Litwak, lawyer**
February

is missing, so that we want it again.”

– Amy Lee, **Evanescence**
November

32. “From the projects to getting a Doctoral degree from Lincoln. Don’t be afraid to change, grow and educate yourself. I did it! You can do it.”

– Master P
July

33. “Network your butt off!”

– John Bryon
July

34. “Keep a notebook and write things down while you are still emotionally charged about something in your life—uncensored—filing it thematically so that you can reference it later (Steve Miller wrote lyrics to ‘Abracadabra’ on a napkin in a ski lodge in 20 minutes)”

– Kenny Lee Lewis, **producer**
October

35. “I began to feel the beauty and the freedom in its imperfection. Music became a lot more about emancipation in some way.”

– Amy Lee, **Evanescence**
November

yourself isn’t working, or isn’t getting you where you want to go, don’t be afraid to tear it all down and start over.”

– Telenovella
January

39. “Experience is key. Get it however you can, even if you’re not paid.”

– Doug Diamond, **producer**
January

40. “The best part about music, for me at least, I always look at music as the thing that makes you feel less alone.”

– Este Haim, **Haim**
February

41. “People you may never meet in your lifetime are affected by your music. That’s why I think it’s important to be very aware of what you’re putting out there.”

– Stephen Flaherty
February

42. “The point of getting a written contract is to memorialize the terms of an agreement. In addition, a written contract can prevent honest misunderstandings and forces the parties to come to terms on all deal points.”

– Glenn Litwak, **lawyer**
February



THE IMMEDIATE FAMILY

It doesn’t work that way. You’ve gotta be in rehearsals, you’ve gotta be with people and really shove it out there so you can be at your peak on stage. You can’t just rudimentarily be working on it thinking you’ve got this nailed.”

– Waddy Wachtel, **The Immediate Family**
September

45. “If you want to get into management, pick out a mentor or someone you can learn from. Although I’ve taken on being more of a mentor than a mentee, I’m always looking for opportunities to learn from people.”

– Rosabelle Eales, **Overall Management**
September

46. “Co-write as much as possible to bounce creative ideas and build your network.” Very few people can sit alone and write music and Lewis’ greatest successes have come from co-writing—including *Abracadabra* and the *Pump Up The Volume* soundtrack.

– Kenny Lee Lewis, **producer**
October

47. “We’ve always done everything ourselves, but learned along the way that if we let people into our world who share our ambitions, we can do so much more.”

– Sports
January

48. “Navigating the business in general is a constant battle, full of forks in the road, and self-doubt. All the things that go along with being an artist. I think a lot of the

songs were definitely cathartic to write. We all decided that therapy was integral to our well-being, so we started unpacking everything that was happening in our lives.”

– Este Haim, **Haim**
February

49. “Keep doing what you’re doing. The right people will come along once you’ve created a band and songs that feel like you.”

– Hannah Hausman
February



MAEVE STEELE

36. “Learn to negotiate and learn from whoever you can. The first offer is only the first offer.”

– Rexx Life Raj
July

37. “Realizing that the way you look at things and your mindset plays a huge part in your own happiness.”

– Maeve Steele
November

38. “It is really important not to be afraid to reinvent the wheel. If the world you have built around

FOR THE COLLABORATOR

43. “At the end of the day we wanna work with a team that believes in us as much as we believe in ourselves.”

– Felicity
September

44. “You can’t generate what happens live. You can’t sit in your house and think, because you’re playing every day you’re gonna be ready to get on stage and blow.



ROSABELLE EALES

50. “Going through failure really lets you know if this is the person you should continue to write with. The joy of working together in a room really just kept pulling us forward through the failures and disappointments, until we finally had some success.”

– Lynn Ahrens
February

Our Favorite Signi

JULY ISSUE

Rexx Life Raj

Label: Empire Records
Type of Music: Rap/R&B
Management: Ari Simon - ari@empi.re
Booking: Victoria, vgutierrez@icmpartners.com
Legal: Joey Seiler, jseiler@loeb.com
Publicity: Mikaela, mduhs@shorefire.com
Web: rexxliferaj.com
A&R: Nima Etminiam - Empire

Rexx Life Raj's signing with Empire Records covers a royalty percentage—leaving Raj the majority of streaming sales income—and is a 30-song commitment with an open timeline: the perfect example of Raj's belief in artful negotiation.

Raj began writing poetry in elementary school, recorded his own music with beats on a Casio keyboard, and was making and selling CDs by middle school. Playing offensive tackle for Boise State in 2010, he kept a music studio set up in his room to record, explaining, "music was always the priority; football was a detour." Returning home in 2013, he worked in his parents' shipping business while his writing started to take form.

By 2014, a friend managing Raj's music shared it with Ari Simon, a radio show host at the time. Seeing potential, Simon became his manager and released Raj's first two EPs. The Father Figure distribution deal followed when Simon began interning at Empire Records.

"Learn to negotiate and learn from whoever you can," says Raj. "The first offer is only the first offer."

JANUARY ISSUE

Tele Novella

Label: Kill Rock Stars
Type of Music: Folk/Country
Publicity: Sarah Avrin, Erin Jean Hussey - Girlie Action Media & Marketing
Web: facebook.com/telenovellamusic
A&R: Slim Moon

Tele Novella's seemingly sudden success can be explained by a fearless ability to try something completely different. Originally formed as a quartet with a complex, psychedelic pop flavor of layered sound, the group has been reinvented by co-founders Natalie Ribbons and Jason Chronis as a duo with a stripped-down, minimalist retro feel—which is exactly what caught the ear of A&R rep and Kill Rock Stars founder, Slim Moon.

Taking a break from any serious musical push after burnout following the band's 2016 record, *House of Souls*, Ribbons dug into her vintage shop work and Chronis slowed down, although they were still loosely playing together with sounds and ideas. A turning point came when they were notified that they had been awarded a \$9,000 grant to record. With nothing prepared, they had to start from scratch. Inspired by Ribbons' discovery of 1950s country and a move to Lockhart, TX (30 miles outside of Austin), retro-country sounds seeped in, and the process felt much more natural and symbiotic than in earlier collaborations. "It is really important not to be afraid to reinvent the wheel," Ribbons says. "If the world you have built around yourself isn't working, or isn't getting you where you want to go, don't be afraid to tear it all down and start over."

Compiled by MC Senior Editor Mark Nardone

FEBRUARY ISSUE

Merci

Label: Rise Records
Band Members: Seth Coggeshall, Nick Jones, Colby Witko, Justin Mason, Jack Duniga
Type of Music: Alternative
Management: Ricky Butt, Matty Arsenault - Reclaim Music Group
Publicity: Stunt Company
Web: @mercitheband
A&R: Sean Heydorn, James Neely - Rise

After nearly six years of touring and releasing DIY EPs, alt-pop band Merci signed with Rise Records. While it may seem an unusual fit for an alt-pop band to sign with a label known for its metal bands, Merci don't see it that way. Says singer-guitarist Seth Coggeshall, "It didn't seem that outlandish. We could still be sort of weird. Not being on a purely pop label meant we didn't have to worry about not being pop-y enough."

The band got the attention of Rise in a very organic fashion. While touring with Under Fire, the band befriended bass player and manager Matty Arsenault, who would become Merci's manager. With his connections to Rise, he forwarded to label head Sean Heydorn two demos the band had recorded, and the exec took immediate interest and offered the band a deal.

"We were pursuing our career as an indie band," says Coggeshall. "But we had reached a point where it was going to be difficult to get big enough in the way that we were hoping to achieve without that network of distribution and backing that a label offers. We were hitting the ceiling as an indie band."

Whether or not to pursue a label deal, he continues, "depends on your goals and your metrics of success. If you feel like you're in a good spot, are reaching the people that you want to, and you're comfortable, you don't really need to take any further steps. There have been a lot of articles written about whether or not the record industry is still relevant. In my opinion, it is, because it takes a lot of capital to launch an artist, and a lot of expertise to not make expensive mistakes. It takes relationships and people who can open doors for you."

FEBRUARY ISSUE

CJ

Label: Warner Records
Type of Music: Rap
Management: James Cruz - jcruzcontrol11@yahoo.com
Booking: CAA
Publicity: aishah.white@warnerrecords.com
Web: press.warnerrecords.com/cj
A&R: jeff.juin@warnerrecords.com

When Puerto Rican rapper CJ released "Whoopy," it took off like a Bugatti. Its success was partially due to a pair of TikTok dance videos that used the song and went viral. To date, the official video for the amped-up banger has notched more than 118 million views. This, along with his other impressive chart statistics, triggered a host of labels into expressing interest in signing the rhymer who proudly calls Staten Island home.

One of those labels was Warner Records. The unfettered artistic freedom they offered appealed most to CJ. "They basically let me run free," he trumpets. He also digs the quality of their roster, serving shout-outs to NLE Choppa, Doja Cat and Saweetie.

After a Zoom meeting, the budding star flew to Los Angeles for an in-person powwow, during which he played multiple records for the executives.

CJ attributes several factors to the recognition he's received. One is keeping his songs as brief as possible. "Kids have short attention spans,"

he observes, “so I started making every song super-short and simple.” Another is his ability to drop Spanish vocals, helping him infiltrate the Hispanic market. A number of Latin artists have already expressed their desire to collaborate.

Before signing, CJ had already gained the attention of French Montana, who offered support and guidance to the newcomer, resulting in his Executive Producing CJ’s debut EP. Although Montana’s endorsement didn’t hurt his label-seeking game, CJ believes it’s the raw intensity of his music that caused the most bites. “Hip-hop and rap were missing that feel, especially due to COVID,” he opines. “I kind of filled that lane and brought some energy to the table.”

MARCH ISSUE

Natalie Gelman

Label: Blue Élan Records
Type of Music: Singer-Songwriter
Management: Andrew Hoffman, andrew@industrybites.com
Booking: jimlenz@tkoco.com
Legal: john.seay@theseayfirm.com
Publicity: mdragichcordero@blueelan.com
Web: nataliegelman.com
A&R: Mary Jurey, mjurey@blueelan.com

Having been on *Music Connection’s* Hot 100 Live Unsigned Bands list in 2020, Gelman soon after went on to sign with Blue Élan Records. It’s been a long journey for Gelman, who started singing when she was a young child in Catholic school and later became a subway station busker.

As it turns out, that period of busking among subway trains was crucial, as one passer-by who ended up helping Gelman was entertainment lawyer Steven Beer. He’s been in her corner ever since. Pieces have fallen into place, but it has taken dogged perseverance from the artist.

“I’m not 20 years old, or 25, or even 30,” she says, who has opened for Bon Jovi sung with Wyclef Jean. “I would love to go back in time and have this happen 10 years ago. But I think it’s inspiring, that if you feel compelled to do something, don’t give up. That was the thing with this record. I really decided I need a team. I was tired of hustling alone.”

Gelman’s deal with Blue Élan came about after a chance meeting with owner Kirk Pasich at a rooftop party. “I went to the bar, and as I was walking back I saw someone had a t-shirt that said Blue Élan on it. It was Kirk, who owns the label. He gave me his card and told me to send him music. I followed up as soon as I got home. I followed up last September and they started coming to my shows in October.”

AUGUST ISSUE

Melissa Aldana

Type of Music: Jazz
Management: Robin Tomchin - RT Productions, rtomchin@gmail.com
Booking: N/A
Publicity: cem.kurosman@umusic.com
Web: melissaaldana.net
A&R: justin.seltzer@umusic.com

In 2017, Juno award-winning jazz pianist Renee Rosnes was tasked by a European promoter with assembling a group of top musicians for a dozen or so festival dates spotlighting “Ladies in Jazz.” Among the culturally diverse mix of veterans she chose was Chilean born, Berklee educated saxophonist Melissa Aldana, who had once joined Rosnes for shows at the Village Vanguard and Dizzy’s at Lincoln Center in N.Y.C.

During the Euro tour, the band was focused on gigging and there was no specific talk of extending it into a long-term project—but everything

gelled a year later when they regrouped as Artemis and performed at the Newport Jazz Festival, a show NPR broadcast on Jazz Night in America. Blue Note president Don Was caught the performance and quickly got the ball rolling toward making a deal with the famed jazz label.

Aldana, who had previously released an album on Concord and later won a 2020 Grammy for Best Improvised Solo for “Elsewhere” from *Visions* on Motema Music, was in on the initial meetings with Was. “He learned about our individual histories when he signed Artemis,” she says, “and I had kept in touch with him.

“I wrote a lot of music early on during the pandemic, and by the middle of the year I started thinking about a new label for it,” Aldana adds. “I reached out and asked him if he would be interested in signing me as a solo artist. He’s been nothing but nice to me and a super-supportive fan of mine for a long time, so it was a natural fit. I sent him a recording of one of my live concerts playing some of the new music. He agreed to pursuing a deal, and luckily, I have a great manager, Robin Tomchin, behind me who took care of developing the details so I could continue writing and start recording.”

Was enthuses, “Melissa is one of the foremost musician/composers of her generation. Her vibrant artistic vision, mastering of her instrument and her deep groove make her a perfect exponent of the Blue Note ethos. We’re thrilled to be part of her musical life.”

AUGUST ISSUE

Payton Smith

Label: Big Machine Records
Type of Music: Country
Management: Eric Smith & Rob Beckham - The AMG
Booking: Jay Williams - WME
Publicity: Erin D. D. Burr, Shelby Paul - Big Machine
Web: paytonsmithmusic.com
A&R: Julian Raymond - Big Machine

Payton Smith’s tale of success begins in Nashville. The rock-influenced country crooner was making noise in a hotel lobby when a random session player strolled by. The quality of Smith’s sound inspired him to tip off producer Buddy Cannon to the unknown performer’s talents. Under Cannon’s tutelage, the Louisiana native continued to hone his already sharp songwriting.

Smith and his parents approached many labels, but always received “the Nashville no”—a.k.a. silence. He did, however, get a response from venerable country label Big Machine. Although he wasn’t ready to commit Smith to a deal, label president Scott Borchetta encouraged the newcomer, suggesting he focus on writing and playing. “I have so much respect for him doing that,” gushes the guitarist with the buttery voice. “I just felt like, okay, that’s someplace I would like to be.”

Fast forward to June of 2018, when Smith was playing his first CMA Fest. Smith glimpsed Borchetta talking on his phone, but then the C&W exec abruptly disappeared before Smith could say hello. The sting of a believed missed opportunity was eased by having recently signed a publishing deal with Eclipse Music Group.

Arriving home, Smith received a call. Turns out Big Machine’s founder had been impressed by the singer’s performance. A meeting with Borchetta followed. “I went into a little office and played an acoustic set,” the singer discloses. “And then he was, like, send me some songs.”

Having delivered a selection of homebrewed acoustic recordings, Smith waited. That July, he was driving when word of the label’s interest reached his ears. “I was on Old Hillsboro Road,” he reminisces, “and I pulled off and cried.” The actual signing didn’t occur until October, but recording sessions began almost immediately thereafter.

Smith used instinct to guide his decision. It’s a strategy he feels has paid off handsomely. “Your gut is always going to tell you,” the artist offers. “That’s why I signed with Big Machine.”

Spectrasonics Elevator Patch Library

The Elevator patch library from ILIO is a brand-new add-on for Spectrasonics Omnisphere created by sound designer Michael (MIDIhead) Babbitt. The Elevator patch library is specifically designed to work with Spectrasonics Omnisphere and will not work with any other software-based synthesizer. Omnisphere is one of the most powerful software-based synthesizers ever created and is the perfect platform to unlock Elevator's full potential as a sound design and performance tool.

Many of the patches in Elevator have been designed using Michael Babbitt's Tetra patch concept that allows you to mix and match and combine up to four different layers of sounds from a single patch.

The key feature of Elevator's Tetra patch concept is in the use of Omnisphere's four patch layers. Each layer has its own characteristics and is designed to be soloed, combined, or played all together. This gives the user the ability to "thin out," "thicken," or come up with different tones by simply turning off or on any of the four layers. The modified patches can then be saved for future use using the Spectrasonics onboard patch librarian.

Another key feature of Elevator is the included MIDI controls. Modulation wheel "elevates" the sound for transitional purposes, like builds and transitions. For example: You can control parameters such as pitch, depth, filter, speed, delay, reverb amount, waveform shape, symmetry, hard sync, FM Ring Modulation, movement, and color—all programmed for you. You can also assign as many controllers as you have MIDI-capable control, coupled with

available modulation routings in Omnisphere. In addition to modulation wheel, all the patches in Elevator have been programmed with aftertouch, allowing you to add pulsing and rhythmic effects as well as add additional depth and character that opens the possibility to create some unique and interesting theatrical effects and hits. Many of the sounds in Elevator have a more modern flavor that allow you to easily create exotic sound design effects that are perfect for film and television, gaming, and other applications that require unique one-of-a-kind sonic textures.

Elevator currently ships with 112 unique custom designed patches, all of which have been designed for maximum flexibility. Using the Tetra patches, you can almost triple that number of available sounds using the modulation wheel of your Keyboard controller or Hardware synthesizer to create different and unique sound effects.

Having the ability to dial the patch back to just the individual layers and perform just with those sounds or elements of the patch you have selected is a great tool for creating or modifying patches on the fly when you do not need a large texture in a live or studio performance. It also opens some unique possibilities for creative sound design.

The patches in the Elevator patch library are extremely intricate and well thought out and have been crafted using some highly unique recording processes. For example, one of the patches was created using a recording of a Lamborghini driving by. Another patch was created with a vibrating tuning fork with a Hexabug that was then run through a Rematrix convolution reverb. One of the patches utilizes

the sounds of a warehouse door slamming, another was created from 4th of July fireworks and then processed to sound like a drum hit. One of the most exciting patches in the library was created using Michael's own voice, layered 12 times, to create a unique rising sound effect. (I actually started at the same root note and raised my vocal pitch manually until I ran out of breath, repeated 12 times). Many of the source sounds in Elevator have been processed through outboard plugins (to give them more depth) and then mastered at 96 Hz / 24 bits to enhance them further.

With the Elevator add-on library for Spectrasonics Omnisphere you are getting a huge sonic palette offering unique out-the-box expression that you simply will not get anywhere else at a bargain price. In addition to the more exotic soundscapes, Elevator also includes a selection of pads, modified Pianos, and string patches. You also get a selection of Hits and other unique sounds that further enhances Elevator's value as a sound design tool.

The Elevator library has been very well received by sound design professionals in both film and gaming communities. It's a perfect platform for creating cutting-edge sound designs for professionals as well as home studio owners. The Elevator patch library will continue to be updated and expanded in future updates, which will be free to all registered users.

The Elevator library for Spectrasonics Omnisphere is available now for \$35. Spectrasonics Omnisphere is not included with Elevator and is sold separately.

To learn more, see: ilio.com/elevator

MICHAEL BABBITT, SOUND DESIGNER





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Yes
The Quest

Inside Out Music/Sony Music
Producer: Steve Howe

Founded in 1968, with over 20 albums to their credit, it would be easy for Yes to simply retire and reside within some kind of classic-rock time warp. But original guitarist Steve Howe and company still have fresh ideas on this latest musical adventure. Longtime member Billy Sherwood was hand-picked by the late Chris Squire to keep the bass fires burning and he does so valiantly on the grooving and austere opener "The Ice Bridge." "Dare to Know" and "Minus the Man" are significantly reflective and harmonically rich. Included is a three-song bonus disc featuring a tuneful tip of the hat to the Beatles' legacy, titled "Mystery Tour." — **Eric Harabadian**

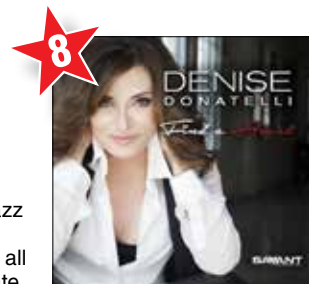


8

Denise Donatelli
Whistling in the Dark – The Music of Burt Bacharach

Savant Records
Producer: Larry Klein

Teaming up with legendary bassist/producer Larry Klein, Grammy nominated jazz vocalist Denise Donatelli finds fresh and unique ways to share her lifelong love of all things Bacharach on an exquisite, intimate and sparsely arranged collection that balances recognizable classics and sparkling obscurities. With the lone exception of "The Look of Love," Donatelli, backed by a group of excellent musicians, uses her warm, soulful voice to convey the heartrending essence of the legendary songwriter's genius for heartbreak. — **Jonathan Widran**



8

Damon Albarn
The Nearer the Fountain, More Pure the Stream Flows

Transgressive Records
Producer: Damon Albarn

Damon Albarn originally intended this second solo outing to be an instrumental meditation on Iceland's otherworldly landscapes. Best known for his work with Blur and Gorillaz, the multitasking Brit altered his approach toward these compositions as a reaction to the pandemic. The result is 11 slabs of murky beauty that perfectly express humanity's terrifying fragility. More performance art than rock, this is the sort of soundscape that requires opening one's third eye to properly appreciate. — **Andy Kaufmann**

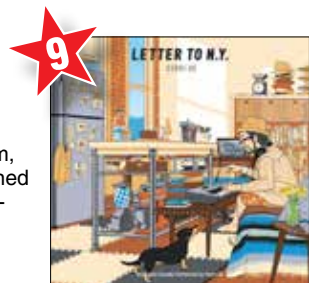


8

Senri Oe
Letter to N.Y.

P.N.D. Records
Producer: Senri Oe

On Senri Oe's perfectly titled latest album, the onetime Japanese pop superstar turned acclaimed jazz composer/pianist dynamically captures the restless, soul-stirring energy of the pandemic quarantine era and his enduring love for all the colorful, rhythmically varied musical styles of his adopted hometown. Using a simple arsenal of his upright piano, electric keyboard and Logic Pro X music app, Oe complements tracks specifically influenced by the bustling magic of the Big Apple ("Out of Chaos," "A Werewolf in Brooklyn") with more hopeful universal messages about "Love" and the importance of "Togetherness." — **Jonathan Widran**



9

Sleeping Dogs
Somewhere Out in California

Rock Jett Music
Producer: Paul Miner

This southern California quintet is composed of alt-rock vets from the bands WANK and Ziggy Marley. They were signed to Maverick Records in 1998 and garnered a modicum of success, and reforming in this format proves they are still up to snuff. Imagine sort of a hard-edged Beatles, with a Green Day-meets-Weezer sensibility. "Tomorrow's Gonna Suck" is a brash power ballad, while "Encino" features engaging stories and hooks. The songs "No Mercy" and "Let's Be Friends" feature amusing and clever videos, but the tuneful ska flavors of the former and the pop craftsmanship of the latter are what shine. — **Eric Harabadian**



8

Laura Ainsworth
Top Shelf

Eclectus Records/Ratspack Records
Producer: Brian Piper

Specializing in the Great American Songbook, jazz vocalist Ainsworth releases a deluxe package featuring cuts from her acclaimed albums including *New Vintage*. Essentially, the vibrant redhead's shtick infuses standards and deep tracks with irony, humor and indelible charm. It's a modern reinterpretation and reinvention of beloved Tin Pan Alley fare like "Skylark," "Love For Sale" and "My Foolish Heart." But she also pulls out the stops on the hard swinging pseudo-biographical "That's How I Got My Start," the film noir-ish "Necessary Evil" and the playful "An Occasional Man." — **Eric Harabadian**



9

Silk Sonic
An Evening With Silk Sonic

Atlantic Records
Producers: Bruno Mars and D'Mile

Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak collaborate on this lush and soulful album, combining Mars' vocal athleticism with Paak's roller-rink groove to produce a vibrant swirl of symphonic drama. However, the surplus of power ballads lacks the visceral punch of *24K Magic*. Tracks like "Smokin Out The Window" come close, offering a dynamic pop-melody that gushes with personality. "Blast Off," conversely, closes the album with a modest goodbye despite its epic title. Still, the project achieves a captivating mood—thoroughly retro, unpredictable, and infectiously fun. — **Heather Cunningham**



7

Shakespeare & the Blues
E.G., Rhapsodic

Nouveau Electric Records
Producer: Shakespeare & the Blues

When drummer Cam Smith and bassist Bryan Webre met harpsichordist Cassie Francillon, the duo suddenly transformed into a trio. Excited by the musical chemistry between them, they swiftly headed into the studio and cut what became the basis for this enchanting sonic tapestry, woven out of hip-hop rhythms, jazz licks and electronic flotsam. One factor that makes this album so appealing is the way it throws unexpected elements into the audience's lap, alternating between delighting overactive brains and mollifying souls seeking solace in a topsy-turvy world. — **Andy Kaufmann**



8

To be considered for review in the Album Reviews section, you must have a record deal with a major label or an independent label with an established distributor. If you do not, please see our New Music Critiques section.

The Viper Room West Hollywood, CA

Web: evanroth.com

Contact: info@esrmusic.com

Players: Evan Roth, vocal, keyboard; Adam Gust, drums; Tim Kozba, guitar; Eric Sitner, bass

Material: Evan Roth is a keyboard player and singer-songwriter whose writing style closely resembles Chris Martin of Coldplay. Martin, who was influenced heavily by a band called Travis (not to mention U2), seemed to ooze out of Roth at every turn during the performance. Hints of Martin, Travis and U2 slowly eased out of Roth during “Growing Up” and “Mystery Woman,” whose intro, by the way, was a great opener.

Musicianship: The musicians are very good. Though at times they seemed unrehearsed at this show, when called upon they put out an A-Game. Kozba came through on “Mystery Woman” as he wow’d the audience with his solo with perfectly placed chops that catapulted the song to another level. Sitner and Gust were very solid as they held down the rhythm section with professionalism and class. On “Growing Up” the rhythm section stood out and stood tall as they held it strong for the others to do their thing. Great tune.

Performance: Roth is a natural entertainer and has a very likable persona. He addressed the crowd repeatedly and kept them up-to-date on the songs and where the inspiration for each song came from. He had a unique bond with the audience that showed through in his music. Sometimes sad, “Not Over;” sometimes hopeful, “Space Cowboy;” and sometimes optimistic, “Growing Up,” his songs



EVAN ROTH

encompass a wide spectrum of topics and personal experiences. But the “sometimes angry” ones, as in “Woman,” were the ones that really ignited the crowd. Playing piano, Roth’s raw emotion came shining through as if his heartbreak had just happened yesterday.

Summary: Evan Roth is a very emotional person. He wears his heart on his sleeve and

his music is an extension of that emotion. Writing from the heart, he opens it up for people to have a look (and listen) and his writings are a catalyst for his musical inspiration (an insight to his soul, as well). His music is unique and danceable and if you like that Coldplay style, you will find Evan Roth’s music pleasing and relatable.

– **Pierce Brochetti**



TK AND THE HOLY KNOW-NOTHINGS

The Hotel Café Hollywood, CA

Web: tkandtheholynothings.com

Contact: meganlettsmusic@gmail.com

Players: Taylor Kingman, guitar, vocals; Tyler Thompson, drums; Lewi Longmire, bass, pedal steel; Jay Cobb Anderson, guitar, harmonica; Sydney Nash, keys, bass

Material: Hailing from Portland, OR, TK and the Holy Know-Nothings is a country/pop

group tearing up the U.S. of A’s bar scenes. The songs are heavily laden with deep, soulful, heavy grooves, superb leads and perfectly placed, melodic lyrics that are an outstanding catalyst for the stories that are being told. Hard rock, punk, pop, R&B and sprinkled with a bit of ‘60s psychedelia, the songs are all encompassed within the early country/pop genre reminiscent of Clint Black, Dwight Yoakam and Alan Jackson and are so pleasing to the ear, you just want to get up

and dance. Songs like “Window of your Mind” take you to places few have been able to take you before.

Musicianship: Each band member is an extremely gifted and talented multi-instrumentalist. The rhythm section, comprised of Longmire and Thompson, is so solid, an earthquake couldn’t shake them. They blanketed the Café with a shroud of solid rhythm that was perfect for the others to write the stories of their lives on. Anderson is a passionate musician who leaves it all on the stage every night, as he shreds his way through every song with a zealous thirst. Nash was the icing on the cake as he subtly, yet confidently, played his keys and made each song sweeter than the next.

Performance: All the Know-Nothings have exceptional stage presence and are fun to watch. Together they seem to own the stage and they want to share it with you. Great audience acknowledgement and storytelling in between songs kept things very interesting as TK and Anderson told of their escapades on the road. The whole band exudes confidence and self-assurance and that makes for a great show.

Summary: The songwriting is great. The musicianship is outstanding. Their performance was superb. Songs like “Lost My Beer” and “Wake Up” will have you singing along to the great melodies and “The Horn Song” will wow you with their creativity. – **Pierce Brochetti**

Vibrato Grill, Jazz, Etc. Beverly Hills, CA

Contact: kumalomusicmgmt@gmail.com

Web: bakithikumalobass.com

Players: Bakithi Kumalo, bass, vocals; Ron DeJesus, guitar; Dan Boissy, horns; Tony Moore, drums; Munyungo Jackson, percussion; Hans Zermuehlen, keyboards

Material: Celebrating the release of his first solo album after more than four decades of music, bassist Bakithi Kumalo delivered a spellbinding, energetic show of originals written around the stories along his musical journey to date. The new songs include elements of ambient, funk, jazz, Latin and African music and—as masters of their craft—the sextet on stage had an incredible ease of energy and skilled delivery that combined for a captivating performance.

Musicianship: Wayne Shorter cover, “Footprints,” highlighted the incredible level of musical sensitivity and strength of the group as they supported a delicious rotation of jazz solos. Dan Boissy added great saxophone licks and growls (especially in “Green Onions”), Tony Moore demonstrated exquisite drum control (“Nice Day” and “Hottentot”), and Ron DeJesus added superb guitar riffs and solos (“Nice Day” and “Root Down and Get It”). There were gorgeous Latin keys from Hans Zermuehlen (“Electric Flow”) and Munyungo Jackson added a rooted elegance throughout the evening on percussion, resulting in an overall soulful, funky jam.



BAKITHI KUMALO

ALEX KLUFT

Performance: Kumalo kept the audience magnetized, opening with tribal percussion, tight syncopation and synthesized pipes on “What You Hear Is What You See.” “Zululation” continued the Xhosa with a percussion/guitar/scat trifecta, and “Nomvula” and “Electric Flow” introduced smooth jazz and a more ambient vibe. “Root Down and Get it” added tight syncopation and organ sound, and offered fantastic band ‘shots’ throughout. Opening with congas and leading to a 12-bar blues feel with a heavy groove, “Green Onions,” was the highlight of the night. It built to a finish with

kickdrum and bass solos, with Moore and Kumalo trading fours. Fabulous!

Summary: With an incredible ability to emote and communicate through his instrument, Kumalo created a pure musical experience that was equal parts assertive, gentle and soulful. Alongside his killer band at the top of their game, Kumalo’s grounded bass sound and trademark punctuation illustrated unequivocally why the humble showman remains respected and admired by international listeners and performers alike. — **Andrea Beenham**



STRANGE HOTELS

KIRBY C. FORTENBERRY III

Harvard and Stone Hollywood

Contact: cristinacano@cristinacanomusic

Web: strangehotelsband.com

Players: Nick Sadler, drums, percussion, synthesizer, vocals; Ben Braden, keyboard, guitar, bass, percussion, vocals

Material: Celebrating the release of their latest single, “Teen Dream Fantasy” (produced in collaboration with Gordon Raphael of The Strokes fame), Strange Hotels delivered their trademark

party vibe with a seven-song set of electronic pop. Their tracks drew from various musical influences and the show opened with crowd-pumping “Ring Ring,” followed up with the ZZ Top drum feel pulse of “Changes.” By the third song of the night—“Jackknife”—the group had added an ethereal trance, with fabulous vocal harmonies and a Genesis-esque transition to full tribal dance beats that included a Daft Punk drive.

Musicianship: Clearly committed to their artistry, captivating showmanship, and top-

notch sound production, Ben Braden and Nick Sadler combined a plethora of preamp and synth sounds alongside skillful drum, guitar, bass, keyboard and percussion playing. Their live bongo, drum and guitar loops decorated with great vocal lines and melodies (especially on “Ambient Dreams”) created a unique blend of EDM / party rock music, while “3 Floor Walk Up” unveiled a slow synth grinding R&B bedroom jam with intermittent nods to Pink Floyd. The musicians created an immense amount of sound and it was easy to forget that there are only two of them on the stage.

Performance: Opening to a buzzing crowd of all ages, cultures and persuasions—in an eclectic industrial atmosphere complete with burlesque dancers, smoke machines and incense - the barefoot duo delivered an energetic set of live and synthesized dance sound and know how to keep their audience engaged. Their continuous energetic, driven show resulted in a bumper-to-bumper dance floor as they performed to a packed house of diverse, die-hard hipster fans.

Summary: Strange Hotels’ sound is extremely versatile, with the performance itself offering unmatched continuity for a nonstop bash. Combining live instrumentation and synthesized loops, Braden and Sadler offer a unified expression of sound and deliver the ultimate party grooves. From the thumping bass, dancefloor-mosh-inspiring latest release, “Teen Dream Fantasy” to the electro pop retro dance feel of “Kick Bounce” (think: New Order), these two are badass groovesters.

— **Andrea Beenham**

The Hotel Café Hollywood, CA

Contact: fiona@thebloomeffect.com

Web: trishes.com

Players: Trish Hosein, vocals, keyboards, loop station, theremin; Gray Robertson, bass, synthesized bass; Guy Azoulay, SPD-SX drum pad

Material: Celebrating the release of her debut album, *The Id*, TRISHES (born Trish Hosein) delivered a powerful performance of socio-political musical art. With lyrics addressing matters of immigration, police brutality, nationalism, poverty and self-acceptance, Hosein combined various beats and effects with her strong melodic vocals, blending beautiful sounds with spoken word intros and outros between tracks.

Musicianship: Rooted harmonies and interesting loop effects added to solid bass and drum pads, delivering an eclectic mix of choreographed sound alongside talented bandmates. Solo track, "Chemicals," highlighted TRISHES' vocal loop layering, vibrato and operatic ability, while "Instant Gratification" incorporated dissonance and piercing vocal cries—along with an intense drum roll outro—to amplify her lyrical expression of frustration.

Performance: With a hipster buzz, the animated artiste opened with an explanation of her Freudian philosophy, with "Animal" sharing tribal beats and scat sounds to create an intriguing, dark vibe. A Michael Angelo



reference introduced "Hard As A Rock," with its heavy bass and drum effects. Fabulous backing beats on hit "Big Sunglasses" amplified the guttural war cry against inauthenticity, and "Cotton Candy" layered pretty vocals over guitar and synth sections. Evening standouts included "Taximan," with its beautifully stripped-down storytelling, and closer, "Riled Up," with captivating vocal looping and pretty falsetto lines leading to a full-on dance jam.

Summary: As an outspoken humanitarian and goodwill ambassador, TRISHES does not hold back in her description of the inequity and imbalance in the world, nor does she tone down lyricism or emotion. Unleashing her vocal narrative with harmonic layers and operatic moments that speak to the current torment of being human, TRISHES' show provided a unique combination of self-expression and presented a memorable musical event to stir the conscience. — **Andrea Beenham**

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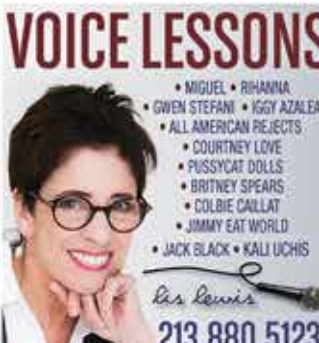
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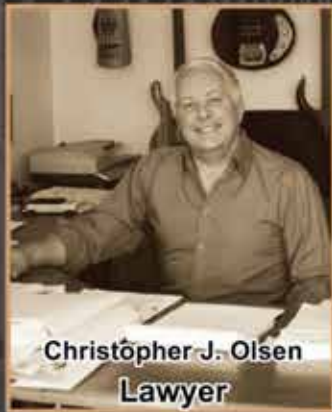


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The Best 5 Tips When Launching a New Music Single

I've been asked to do several "expert advice" articles in the past few months. This time around nothing immediately jumped out of my brain. After contemplating what I could bring to the table at this moment in my career, it came to me. I'm presently launching a new single called "Frankenstein," and since the internet is already full of great expert advice, I thought I'd write an article sharing the best 5 tips I could find and how we can apply them. For this I'm going to assume you've already created some sort of a marketing plan, chosen your distributors, registered your work, updated your press kit, and created artwork for your CD and press.

1. The first tip is: get your song into distribution. This is important. I use a European distributor for digital content and a Chicago-based distributor for physical content and merchandise. Through my distributors, I can confirm that my new song "Frankenstein" has been delivered to Amazon, Deezer, iTunes, KKBox, MediaNet, Napster (Rhapsody), Pandora, Spotify, Tidal, TikTok, and YouTube Music. Since I always personally check each of these sites for my release, I know that my distributors are doing their job.

2. Second, contact the media. This tip calls for the artist to create a list of media contacts and asks the artist to send a downloadable song link along with your one-sentence pitch and your one-page flyer to this list. I service the Indie press through an Indie PR outlet out of Seattle that's very well connected and relatively inexpensive. I supply them with an MP3, a one-paragraph writeup explaining my song, a one-paragraph bio, song lyrics, a jpg image of the CD single art, and several PR photos. When I have had a really good song and extra budget, I am very fortunate to be able to hire a top PR firm out of New York City. The firm's owner is very well connected and has established relationships with just about every major entertainment outlet you might ever want to reach.

This tip also suggests to include local music critics, morning news stations, local newspapers, and local radio stations (college and commercial). I've tried this in the past. I personally have made several visits to all of the radio stations within a 75 mile radius of my home who play independent music and to all of the music critics in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin area. I brought T-shirts, my latest discs and swag. On one trip, I included handmade art with a swag bag of Halloween candy. With the local and regional newspapers, I emailed each with song links as well as with our national and global music charts.

What I found is that the newspapers wanted to run articles only if I was playing an event they could promote in their area, the music critics wanted access to a live show for review, and the radio stations would lend support if I was, again, playing in the area. I'm blessed to network with top promoters and musicians who have extensive experience and currently work with some of the biggest artists and labels in the world. I have the luxury to be able to call them for advice based on their first-hand knowledge. When they give advice, I try to follow it.

They tell me to stay focused on the bigger picture of gaining the fan-base first to fill theaters in the radio markets I'm building. They warn me not to be tempted to join in on the local music scene, as ultimately it will only waste my time and dilute my efforts to become a recognized recording artist. Instead, they tell me I should be writing and practicing. Because of this, I no longer service these local outlets. I have, however, saved these contacts for when I can give them a worthwhile local performance.

3. The third tip is to go worldwide with radio. I agree with this. Building relationships with DJs outside the U.S. can build new markets for touring. Promoting with a global radio promoter is a great way to achieve this. I use a company out of Jacksonville, Florida that always does an excellent job of introducing my music to DJ's worldwide. To illustrate how game-changing it can be to use a radio promoter, my current single "Frankenstein" has been fortunate enough to get airplay support from BBC 6 Music, BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio Berkshire, BBC Radio Bristol, BBC Radio Cornwall, BBC Radio London, BBC Radio Scotland, BBC Radio Shropshire, and BBC Radio Ulster. Love from these stations by themselves could be enough support to launch a successful tour of the U.K. Global radio promotion is fairly inexpensive and it's something worth trying.

4. The fourth tip is to create a music video. Even if it's just a lyric video, having it will direct Google and YouTube searches for your song to your YouTube channel. To me, this is gold. Getting fans to watch your videos is hard enough. It only makes sense to have a visible and available music video for fans to easily find when they search for your song after hearing it on the radio. If it's well received, you can get a lot of new and loyal fans this way. I've been able to accumulate over 1 million YouTube channel views this way and it's also been helping all of my older music videos to continually rack up more and more views.

5. The fifth and final tip is to create a social media campaign. I usually do several tweets about my release, as well as retweeting any tweet where I'm tagged. The tagged tweets are usually from radio playlists that my song was featured on. I also tweet any online review I get. I post the video on YouTube and Facebook and then share it with my mailing list and fans. I currently don't spend much time on my Instagram, but I do post an embedded YouTube link of my music video on my website and keep it updated with an image of any major music chart I've made. "Frankenstein" is currently #14 on the DRT

Global Rock Airplay Charts. It's great to show the world that I can chart with big label artists in major music markets around the globe.

Which brings me to the most important bonus tip which is to always be thankful. I am super-thankful for the continued success of AV Super Sunshine. Regardless of success or failure I always thank everyone who helped or lent support. The music industry is a person-oriented business. DJs only play Indie artists who they know and like. First, they have to know who you are and trust that you're not going to disappear and change your artist name with the next music trend.

With tens of thousands of new songs being serviced to radio every week, any opportunity to get in front of these influential career makers is a blessing in itself. So be extra thankful to everybody. Being known in the music world as polite, respectful, and thankful will enhance your chances of being introduced to others and liked by many individuals in the music industry.

AV SUPER SUNSHINE is an international recording artist who is best known for his songs "The Wedding Song" (#4 DRT Global AC Airplay), "Baby Goodbye" (#5 DRT Global AC Airplay), and "Together" (#6 on DRT Global Rock Airplay). Check out avsupersunshine.com.



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