

MUSIC CONNECTION

EXCLUSIVE 2022

List of Music Publishers!

TAXI's

Michael Laskow

Songwriters Behold!

*The Awesome Power of
the Daily Journal*



z n u

If Your Voice Is Tired, *Give It a Rest!!*

+ Brian Eno ■ Hall & Oates ■ AFM & SAG-AFTRA Fund
Quavo + Takeoff ■ Michigander ■ **LIVE REVIEWS!**

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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.]

For over 30 years, SansAmps have been used for every kind of music style from hardcore metal to commercial jingles and with all kinds of instruments, not just guitar and bass. Engineered for both recording and live applications, all SansAmps are 100% analog, multi-dimensional, user-friendly devices that deliver the warm, rich, organic tones of the most desirable mic'd up tube amplifiers on the planet. Is it any wonder SansAmp is regarded as the standard of the industry? Now go check out which one is right for you.

TECH 21

Analog BrillianceSM
tech21nyc.com



NEW
SSL 360[®]
V1.4 SOFTWARE
NEW 4K B PLUG-IN
LUNA UF8 PROFILE
M1/ARM NATIVE

The SSL hybrid studio

The SSL hybrid studio takes our renowned large-format console workflow and ergonomics and combines it with the latest digital and analog processing technology. Control SSL plug-ins, including the new **4K B Channel Strip** with **UC1** Plug-in Controller and **UF8** Advanced DAW Controller. Add the perfect analog tone with **FUSION**, then glue your mix together with **THE BUS+**. The SSL hybrid studio brings the latest forward-thinking tools and unrivalled studio workflow to your production space.

The new 4K B Plug-in comes included with UC1 Plug-in Controller.

UF8

UC1

4K B PLUG-IN

SSL 360 V1.4

THE BUS+

FUSION

#WhatWillYouCreate

www.solidstatellogic.com

Solid State Logic

OXFORD • ENGLAND



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ZHU

It took eight years for San Francisco native Steven Zhu to launch his career as an electronic musician and become one of the most revered artists in the genre. In our exclusive interview, he tells *Music Connection* about his ups and downs and how he forged a unique live show with sidemen that now headlines major festivals.

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A songwriting power tool.

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TOOLS OF THE TRADE



WITH A LEGACY FOR AUDIO EXCELLENCE THAT SPANS 75 YEARS, AKG products have captured the essence of the world's most iconic artists, influencers and podcasters. From our legendary C414 condenser microphone, born in 1971 and a staple in top studios everywhere, to modern-classic headphones like the award-winning K371 and the budget-friendly K240, we provide the tools to take your project or performance to the next level. Create your own legacy with AKG.





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Velveteen Music

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Steady Evolution: Now committed to a multi-faceted full-service approach in helping artists build sustainable careers, Edmonton, Alberta based Velveteen Music began humbly back in 2007, when owner-producer Brad Simons was a full-time touring musician who recorded bands on the side to generate additional income when he was off the road. For the first seven years, it was a one-man freelance operation, with Simons going to rehearsal spaces and home basements to record, then bringing the recordings home to edit, mix and master. He took a major step forward in 2014, moving into a 600 sq. ft. studio with a partner and starting Velveteen's evolution into a full production team under the name, during which time the informally named Velveteen Audio became Velveteen Music.

The Studio: The company is now based in a 2500 sq. ft. facility that's a combination of three studios, with six full time producers on staff. Studio A has a control room, 2 iso booths and a main live room. Studio B has a mixing and production room and includes an iso booth. Gear includes a selection of vintage mics from Neumann, AKG, Josephson, Sennheiser, Rode, Sure, Miktek and others. Velveteen has an SSL Matrix 2 and console outboard units from TubeTech, Hazelrigg/DW Fearn, Universal Audio, Audio Scape, API, Neve, BAE, Chandler, Wes Audio, etc. They also have PMC 6-2 monitors.

Artist Services: Three years ago, Velveteen Music set up a distribution deal with Believe Music, ensuring that the artists they work with have access to digital and label distribution. They also established a partnership with Cymba Music. More recently, Velveteen expanded to provide full label services, which allows artists to hire them to do everything a label would do—including marketing, promotion, playlisting, press PR and radio and social media campaigns. Everything starts with planning aka Stage 1, in which the artist consults with a team which helps them with strategic planning, grant consultation/writing and scheduling. Stage 2 is Create,



with the Velveteen team helping the artist with songwriting, production, mixing and mastering their music. Stage 3 is Release, which involves devising a detailed marketing plan, distribution through Believe Music (including DSPs and pitching to editorial curators), playlisting, press, content creation, radio tracking, etc.

Quote from Brad Simons: "The name change reflects the paradigm shift as we became less focused on just recording at the highest level and more about using that as a foundation for developing independent artists and bands to give them their best shot at a sustainable career," says Simons. "During the pandemic, we created a hybrid system where sometimes artists worked at home, sometimes in the studio—all of which has served to expand our demographic and clientele. What we live for are those little moments of pure joy, satisfaction and pride when an artist we work with gets a Juno nomination or achieves a special milestone. And when an artist thanks us and tells us what we did helped open up a new world of career possibilities."

Contact Velveteen Music, 780-952-6228

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NOWHERE

Sean Stevens

VP, A&R and Head of Research
Warner Records

Sean Stevens has been promoted to **Vice President, A&R and Head of Research & Analytics** for Warner Records. Stevens first joined Warner Records in 2018 as Director, A&R Analysis before being promoted to Senior Director in 2020. He got his start in the music industry in 2016 at Big Machine Label Group. Since joining Warner Records in 2018, Stevens has discovered and worked alongside an array of talent from Warner Records' wide-ranging artist roster including Teddy Swims, Ricky Montgomery, Ezekiel, MyKey, Sombra, Bktherula, XIX. For more information, contact Laura.Swanson@warnerrecords.com.



Xavier Ramos

EVP of Pop & Rock Marketing
Interscope Records

Interscope Records has announced the appointment of music industry veteran **Xavier Ramos** to the position of **Executive Vice President of Pop & Rock Marketing** at the label. In his new role Ramos will oversee the creation and execution of marketing plans for the label's extensive roster of pop and rock artists. Prior, Ramos came from FaZe Clan and had a long history as a marketer for labels such as Warner Bros. Records, where he spent over a decade, rising to the position of Senior Vice President of Marketing. Ramos began his career at Interscope Records in 1995 as Director of Artist Development. For more information, contact jv@spinlab.net.



Cynthia Johnson

Board Chairperson
Brilliant Minds Collective

Brilliant Minds Collective, Inc. have hired music industry veteran **Cynthia Johnson** as the new **Board Chairperson**. Currently serving as Vice President of Urban Radio Promotions at Epic Records, Johnson established herself among leaders in the entertainment industry. The Notre Dame alumna holds a B.A. in Marketing and supported or led both local and national campaigns for several recording artists including DJ Khaled, Future, Beyonce, Alicia Keys, John Legend, and Maxwell along with notable brands as HBO, Roc Nation, and Powerbase Music. Contact ben.original@brilliantmindscollective.org.



Annie Flook

Director of Artist Partnerships & Business Development
Propeller

Propeller, a digital platform that unites social activism, charitable efforts and marketing campaigns in the music space, has welcomed **Annie Flook** as its new **Director of Artist Partnerships & Business Development**. Prior, Flook was at Warner Music Group for 8 years, where she served as Head of Touring & Artist Development at Elektra Music Group, Director, Touring & Artist Development at Atlantic Records, and Manager, Touring & Artist Development at Warner Records. For more, contact katej@grandstandhq.com.



Robert Kyncl

Chief Executive Officer
Warner Music Group

Robert Kyncl has been appointed **Chief Executive Officer of Warner Music Group Corp.** effective January 1, 2023. Kyncl currently serves as Chief Business Officer at YouTube, where he's been instrumental in its growth across all platforms. Since 2010, Kyncl has played a central role in YouTube's strategy and its impact on entertainment and culture, including overseeing its creative and commercial partnerships, as well as its operations. For more on this recent appointing as well as information of the former CEO, Steve Cooper, contact james.steven@wmg.com.



Orlando Wharton

Executive Vice President
Capitol Music Group

Orlando Wharton has been named **Executive Vice President of Capitol Music Group (CMG) and President of Priority Records**. In his new position, the executive will sign and guide artists across CMG's broad portfolio of labels, and will relaunch the Priority Records label as a dedicated home for new, developing and established hip-hop artists. As an A&R executive, Wharton has signed artists of recent years and guided them in the creation of albums and singles. For more information about the promotion, contact ambrosia.healy@umusic.com.



Nicole Marinake

VP, Partnership Marketing and New Ventures
Sony Music Nashville

Sony Music Nashville has announced the promotion of **Nicole Marinake** to **Vice President, Partnership Marketing and New Ventures**. Marinake previously held the role of Senior Director, Partnership Marketing. Marinake will work with SMN's regional Promotion and Artist Development team to expand both the label and its artist footprint on a regional level. In addition, she will explore areas of new technology, innovation, and more, bringing in new opportunities for the label group. For more information, contact meghan.kehoe@sonymusic.com.



John Bastianelli

CEO of Slate Digital
Audiotonix

Following the Slate Digital acquisition in October, **Audiotonix** have confirmed **John Bastianelli** as the new **CEO of Slate Digital**. Bastianelli brings a wealth of technology and creative expertise to the role, with 30 years' experience as a professional audio industry executive, music producer, song writer, and musician. In the music tech industry, Bastianelli has been at the helm of product management teams for leading audio brands including PreSonus (Fender), M-Audio (Avid Technology) and Tascam. For more information, contact martin.bennett@audiotonix.com.





◀ TECH 21 SANSAMP CHARACTER PLUS SERIES PEDALS

Tech 21 has broadened out the original Character Series pedals into four separate pedal board units. Each separately define the unique interaction of classic guitar amps and certain popular stomp pedals.

There are: Screaming Blonde, a Fender-style amp with Tube Screamer-styled pedal; English Muffy is a HiWatt-style amp with Big Muff-styled pedal; Fuzzy Brit is a Marshall-style amp along with a Fuzz Face pedal; and Mop Top Liverpool has to be a Vox-style amp connected to a Rangemaster Booster.

There are built-in speaker simulations individually tuned to match each of the speaker/cabinet configurations associated with each amplifier type. Finally, a three-band active EQ and XLR balanced audio output connector completes each Character Series pedal board.

Even if you were not even born yet, you can enjoy the sounds from the years when these amps and pedals came out and were used on classic records back in the day. Each of the four new Character Plus Series pedals measures 7.75L x 2.5W x 1.25H-inches and weighs 12 oz. They offer two channels, with independent SansAmp circuits and effects sections—sort of a stomp box within a stomp box. You may connect and use the SansAmp on its own or use the effects section with other pre-amps/amplifiers.

The all-analog SansAmps Character Plus Series pedals can be used as stand-alone pre-amps to drive a power amp, a studio mixer, or a PA system, or to complement your existing amp.

tech21nyc.com

▶ NEVE 88M DUAL MIC PREAMP & USB AUDIO INTERFACE

AMS/Neve Limited has an audio interface called the Neve 88M; it is the most professional-level featured desktop USB 3.0 interface I've seen anywhere. Pro features start with Marinair input transformers as used in the 88R studio consoles.

The 88M is built like a tank with both mic and headphone connections right on the front panel. I liked the push-button mic gain control to toggle between XLR mic, Line level or high impedance DI inputs. +48-volt phantom power is a separate push button and there is a signal present/level tri-colored LED to show relative recording levels with hot, and close to clip input levels clearly indicated. Monitoring facilities are excellent with both easy-to-reach front-panel volume and stereo headphone level controls.

There are four monitoring modes selectable by pushing in the headphone level control. First monitoring mode is Dir and routes the input channels' audio directly without using a DAW. Mix mode blends the inputs/mics signals with a stereo backing track also without any latency. The 3rd stereo DAW mode is the way I use the 88M with Pro Tools since I like to hear what I'm recording along with my monitor mix and all effects. Lastly, Mono Mix is a direct feed of both input channels in mono on top of a stereo DAW mix.

The 88M's utilitarian features continue with balanced line level Send/Return insert jacks on the rear panel for both Ch1 and Ch2. It is awesome to use my (hardwre) UA 1176LN limiter on any recording or even a Zoom call easily. There are also ADAT Lightpipe TOSLINK connectors making the 88M able to handle up to 10 inputs and outputs simultaneously all with the unit acting as master clock up to 192kHz rates if required.

I think it is a no-brainer to have the portable professional interface that will handle just about ANY situation that a pro recording studio facility could. Highly recommended. The Neve 88M sells for \$1,245 MSRP.

ams-neve.com/88m



▼ UNIVERSAL AUDIO VOLT INTERFACES

There are five new Universal Audio Volt USB audio interfaces ranging in price from \$139 to \$369. All five are USB 2.0 class-compliant interfaces for Mac/PC/iPad/iPhone devices with 24-bit/192 kHz audio converters. All come with professional XLR Combo input jacks, switchable +48-volt phantom mic powering with selectable Instrument inputs and a vintage mic pre-amp mode. There is a switchable 76 Compressor mode that uses an onboard analog preset compressor based on the UA's 1176LN Peak Limiter.

All the interfaces have headphone jacks with volume controls and all have rear-panel MIDI DIN connectors, a USB C jack, and a jack for an external 5-volt power supply.

The five interfaces are: the Volt 1 with a single mic input and stereo outs, a great basic unit for bloggers and Zoom meetings; the Volt 2 is the same but with two inputs for recording in stereo. Volt 176 includes the 76-compressor mode but is the same otherwise, while Volt 276 (my review unit) is the same except it has two mic inputs. Things get more serious with the Volt 476, a complete four-channel interface with multi-channel input/output metering, headphone monitoring and switchable line level inputs.

I hooked up my Volt 276 in place of another USB interface and it worked immediately and perfectly. Compared to my previous interface, the Volt interfaces are more practical to hook up while sitting on my desktop. I liked the front mounted XLR Combo jacks for plugging in mics; guitars or keyboards while the rear mounted jacks easily connect to powered speakers, computer and MIDI.

I think the new Volt interfaces are all great values especially considering all the software that comes with them—just download products from: Ableton, Celemony, Plugin Alliance, Relab, Softube, Spitfire and UJam—all free. Also available are various studio packs with Volt-badged microphone and headphone combinations—an awesome way to get going now!

uaudio.com/audio-interfaces/volt.html



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**DADDY
YANKEE**



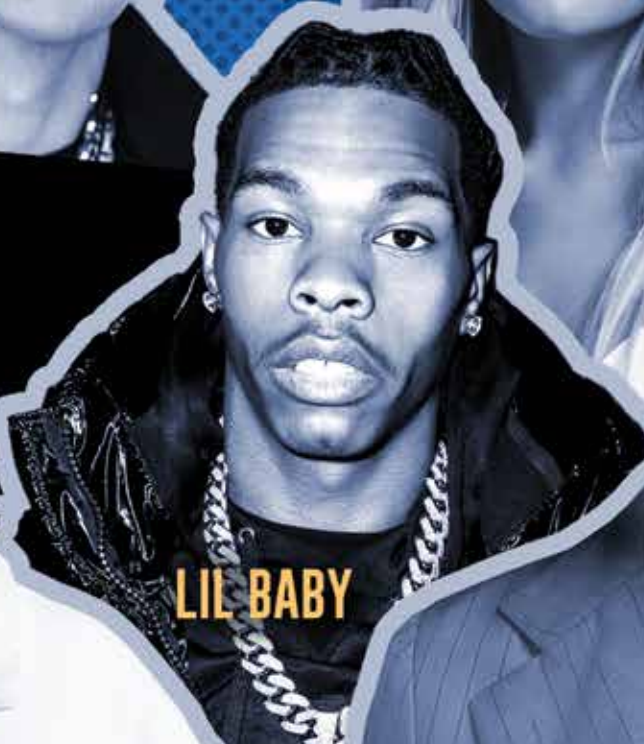
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FINNEAS



▼ RADIAL ENGINEERING POWER-1 AND POWER-2 SURGE SUPPRESSORS

The purpose of an AC power strip equipped with MOVs or Metal Oxide Varistors is to provide instantaneous and automatic protection from intense and damaging over-voltage spikes coming in on the power line.

The ceramic MOVs act as a "sacrificial" shunt across the AC line and either shorts out, blowing the unit's fuse or, in worst cases such as lightning strike or a power line faults, evaporates and become an open circuit! MOVs protect in microseconds whereas fuses or circuit breakers work much slower with catastrophic damage already done.



Both the Power-1 and Power-2 provide superior surge protect from U.S.-made MOVs. A green fault protector indicator LED means protection is active and if this LED goes out, you should unplug the strip immediately as a surge been detected.

The Radial Engineering Power-1 and 2 also have high-rejection interference filters to keep radio frequency energy such

as AM broadcast or CB/Ham radio signals out of the incoming AC power line. This noise manifests as intermittent buzzing and/or mysterious "hash" that is hearable within in your audio.

Both units offer very handy "always on" utility front socket(s)—the Power-2 has a single socket while the Power-1 has three. Both models have eight rear sockets to plug in all your gear into. These sockets are rugged 3-terminal, grounded AC sockets; four of them spaced far enough apart to accommodate wall-wart power supplies.

Power-2 also has a cool slide out tray with LEDs in selectable colors and a dim control. This tray slides out from the center of the unit and will light up the entire rack below; it makes a nice shelf for my iPhone with only a short cable required to reach the built-in USB charging port! Awesome!

The Radial Power-1 sells for \$109.99 and the Power-2 sells for \$199 MSRP.

radialeng.com

► JUICEBOX MULTI-EFFECTS PLUG-IN

Engineer/producer **Danny Majic** has come up with a simple to use plug-in that is a chain of four different effects. Originally, JuiceBox was designed for vocals but it works great for just about any source.

The effects are depicted as four, transparent half-gallon juice containers; you use your mouse to fill them up with more or less of that container's particular effect. The four effects start with Filter, a pink-colored container that you can saturate at a selected frequency anywhere from 30Hz to 5kHz. Next in the chain is a yellow container called Spread, a simple stereo chorus/modulation effect where you can also set the Depth Boost.

After Spread is the purple-colored Space, a basic reverb you may set the decay also by filling the container up or down using your mouse. Last is a lime green Echo container, a delay effect with a feedback on/off switch; it runs free or you can sync it to session tempo. It has all the usual time subdivisions offered complete with triplet timings.

I found a good workflow by picking one of the 17 included presets and then modify it to my music. JuiceBox has a good library feature where you can store your own modified presets in specific categories.

The whole purpose of the design of JuiceBox is to get to an effect fast without having to set up chains of several different plug-ins to get something special for your mix! The GUI is also a big conversation starter during the session and that is always good! I especially like the modulation effect and the whole system is very pleasant to use! The JuiceBox plug-in comes from JuiceBox and sells for \$50 MSRP as a download.

juiceboxplugin.com



▼ AUDIO-TECHNICA ATH-M50X WIRED AND WIRELESS HEADPHONES

Global crowd sourcing was used to determine the favorite color of the next version of ATH-M50X headphones. The new limited edition ATH-M50xDS and wireless ATH-M50xBT2DS both come in a luxurious "Deep Sea Blue" color.

These have the same 45-mm drivers with sound-isolating ear cups that are most popular with professionals working in live sound, recording, broadcast, DJ work or just personal listening at home.

The wired, over-the-head ATH-M50xDS model has a closed-back design with copper-clad aluminum voice coils and includes three detachable cables and adapters. The wireless ATH-M50xBT2DS pair is the same but adds an internal audio power amp, and the latest audio codecs and circuitry to allow you to hear yourself on the headphones when making calls. The ATH-M50xBT2DS quickly pairs up with your device to access the A-T Connect app for control over latency, EQ, L/R volume, and Multi-point pairing—pair two Bluetooth devices at the same time!

You get 50 hours of continuous use (that's a lot!) or three hours on a 10-minute charge using an included USB-C cable. Both models come with carrying bags with the wired ATH-M50xDS sells for \$169 MAP and the wireless ATH-M50xBT2DS is priced at \$219.00 MAP.

audio-technica.com/en-us/ath-m50xbt2



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

Scarlett

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Elton John @75

By Gilliam G. Garr
(hardcover) \$75.00

Documenting the former Reggie Dwight's accomplishments on and off the stage, every page is illustrated with concert and candid offstage photography, including gig posters, 7-inch picture sleeves, and more. This package

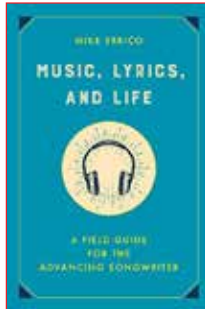


also includes a gatefold Elton John timeline, a previously unpublished gatefold artwork, an 8x10-inch glossy print, and a pullout poster. The result is a fitting tribute to one of our most admired stars.

Music, Lyrics, And Life: A Field Guide for The Advancing Songwriter

By Mike Errico
(hardcover) \$29.95

Author/teacher Errico takes you on a deep dive into the heart of questions asked by songwriters of all levels, from how to begin journaling, to when to know that a song is finished. With

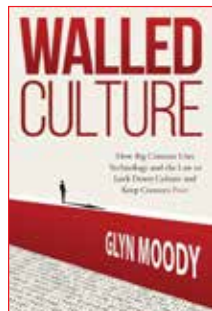


humor and empathy, acclaimed singer-songwriter Mike Errico unravels both the mystery of songwriting and the logistics of life as a songwriter. The book's mission is to help you build a creative world that's both intrinsic to who you are, and undeniable to whoever is listening.

Walled Culture: How Big Content Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Keep Creators Poor

By Glyn Moody
(paperback) \$7.99

What happens when copyright laws of the past resist and fight against our digital future? Tech journalist and leading expert on copyright and digital rights Glyn Moody's newest book

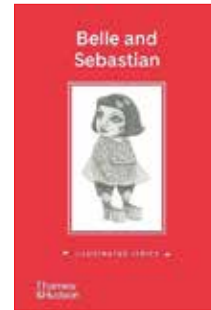


explores how the transition from the physical to digital world has locked up access to culture and knowledge through copyright walls—specifically, outdated laws designed for the traditional, analog world—and how artists and creators are being adversely affected.

Belle and Sebastian: Illustrated Lyrics

Lyrics By Stuart Murdoch, Art by Pamela Tait
(hardcover) \$24.95

Part of Thames & Hudson's *Illustrated Lyrics* series, *Belle and Sebastian: Illustrated Lyrics* combines words selected from over 24 years of the Scottish band's songs with 40

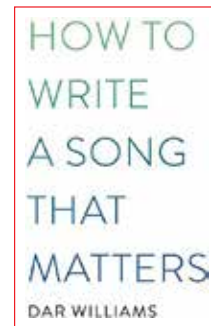


specially commissioned illustrations from Scottish artist Pamela Tait, whose intricate and whimsical characters band frontman Stuart Murdoch stumbled upon and fell in love with when he rediscovered old fan email she'd sent to him over a decade ago.

How to Write a Song That Matters

By Dar Williams
(paperback) \$19.99

In her new book, the acclaimed singer-songwriter (and former *MC* cover artist) uses her years of experience to show how you can tap into your OWN creative process, using your psyche, your unique life experience, and

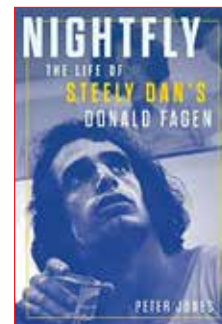


your muses to write the songs that you are meant to write. By focusing on the process of creating a song that matters, as opposed to producing a well-constructed "widget from a song factory," songwriters will be able to establish their own voice and use it to make meaningful music.

Nightfly: The Life of Steely Dan's Donald Fagen

By Peter Jones
(hardcover) \$30.00

Nightfly cracks open the door to reveal the life behind the lyrics and traces Fagen's story from early family life in suburban New Jersey,



to his first encounter with Walter Becker at Bard College, their long struggle for recognition as songwriters, and the formation of Steely Dan. The band's break-up in 1981, re-formation in 1993, and Fagen's parallel solo career are covered in detail.

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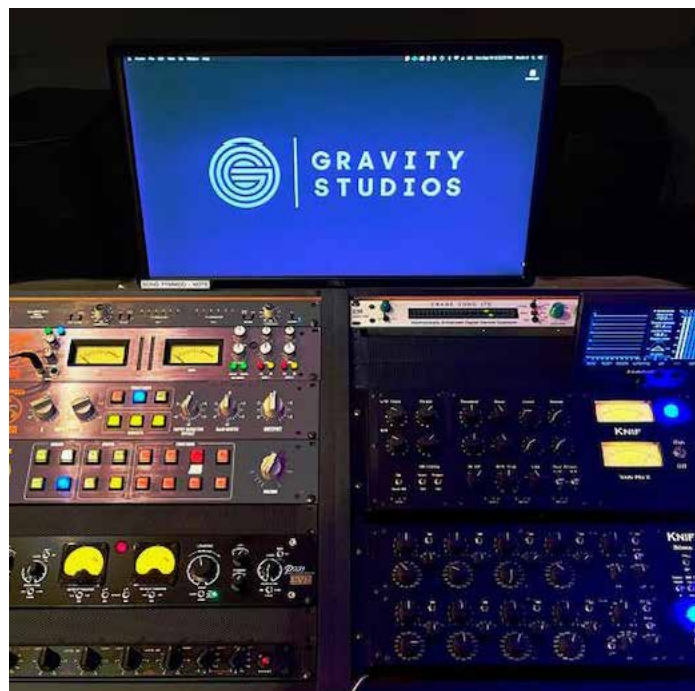
SESAC

Gravity Studios

gravitystudios.com

Chicago's busiest small studio was opened in August 1993 by Producer/Engineer Doug McBride: McBride is currently focused on mixing and mastering in the facility's purpose-built mastering studio, which doubles as a production suite and small recording studio. With a staff of six, the tight-knit club of engineers often work on the same projects, bringing different perspectives and ensuring quality control. One of Gravity's signature calling cards has been having different classic Neve consoles at different times, starting with the 8058 model, built in 1976. The facility's current model is the 5315 (also from 1976) and is flanked by a refurbished RCA tube console from the 1950's and racks of top-of-the-line analog gear.

Evolving Clientele: Gravity Studios' early work with future superstar bands like Smashing Pumpkins and Veruca Salt led to years of success with major label artists, including Fall Out Boy, Rise Against, NNAMDI, Alabama Shakes, Rachel Yamagata, Plain White T's, Goo Goo Dolls and Chicago legend Mavis Staples. Over the past 10 years, however, Gravity has increased focus on local artists and small Chicago-based indie labels, while McBride also mixes and masters projects for artists from all over the country. "We believe the reason artists and bands come to us is that we really care," says McBride. "We take a hands-on approach to help them identify what they do that's special, whether it's their music, vocals, or arrangements. In trying to bring out their uniqueness, we also help them work through their frailties, rough edges to take their sound to the next level."



Genres and Services: As stated on their home page, Gravity Studios is a home for audio engineers, music producers, musicians and other creatives from the worlds of rock, hip-hop, alt country, gospel, neo-soul, punk, jazz, and other genres. The team believes that every project is a story that deserves respect and should reach its highest potential. Services include: audio recording, mixing, mastering, music production, hiring out session musicians, editing, mix consultation, songwriting development, music chart writing and arranging. The sonic magic starts in Studio A—aka "The Bat Cave"—which has been called "the best sounding drum room in Chicago." It's equipped with two adjacent iso booths, allowing bands to feel at home playing together while capturing clean, isolated audio from each source.

Contact Gravity Studios, 773-862-1880



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▲ UKRAINIAN PUNKS GOGOL BORDELLO

Ukrainian punks Gogol Bordello recently released their fiery new album *Solidartine*, produced by hardcore legend Walter Schreifels (Gorilla Biscuits, Youth Of Today). The seven-piece have consistently riled up audiences with an inimitable patchwork of punk, dub, folk, Latin swing, and Eastern European magic.



▲ TOM MORRIS OF LITTLE CAESAR

Drummer Tom Morris joins frontman Ron Young and bassist Pharoah Barrett as hard rockers Little Caesar standardize their personal in-ear monitors with ASI's 3DME Gen2 Active Ambient Monitoring System.



▲ TALES FROM CHARLOTTE WELLS

Artist Charlotte Wells is pictured recording a series of albums titled *Tales From Six Feet Under Vol. 1, Vol. II, etc.*—"six feet under" referring to her basement studio.



▲ MITCHEL MUSSO 'GHOST'

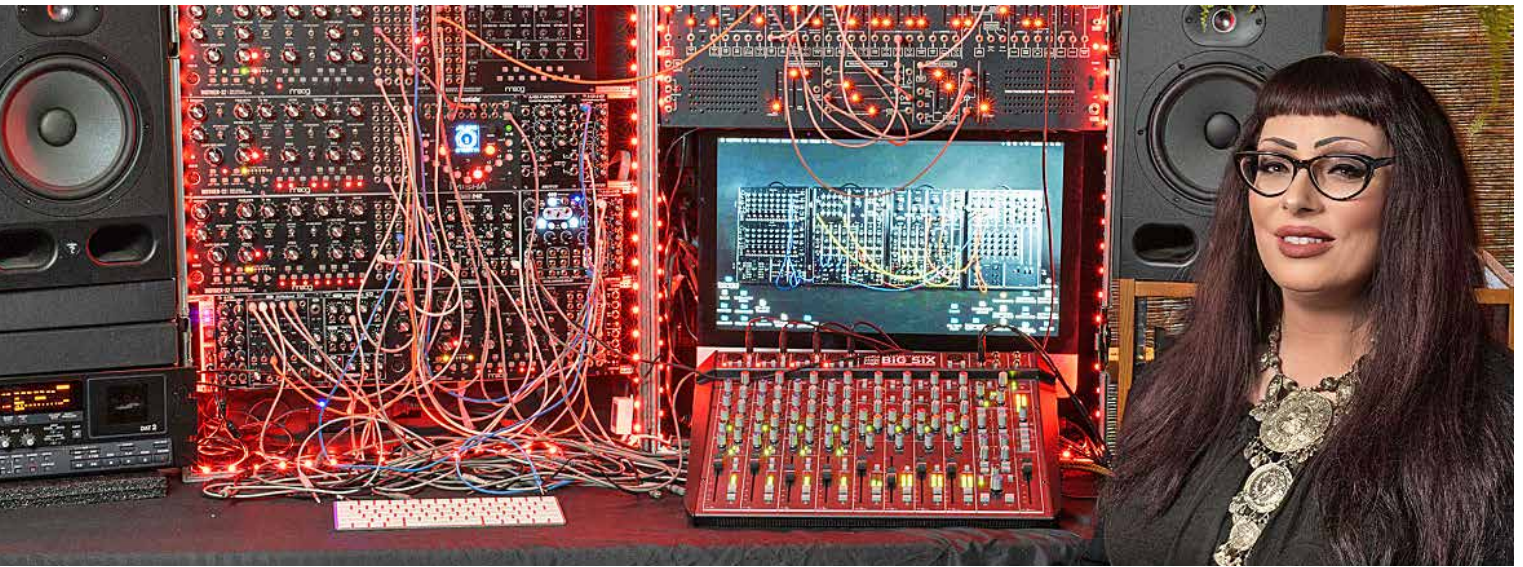
Many know Mitchel Musso from the Disney series *Hannah Montana* with Miley Cyrus. Musso has returned to the spotlight with new original music inspired by his experiences with love, heartbreak, emotional ups and downs, and life accomplishments. Up first, is his single "Drank," from the recently-released mixtape *Ghost*.

Producer Playback

"To me, getting the best out of someone is to get them to explore themselves. Anything that opens your mind and your god-given instrument leads to something new."

— TONY MORAN (*Gloria Estefan, Madonna, Donna Summers*)





▲ LISA BELLA DONNA 'TRAVELOGUE'

Lisa Bella Donna's latest album *Travelogue* captures long-form sonic photographs of the artist's recent travels across the United States: the Smoky Mountains, to the plains of the Midwest to the striking Pacific coastline. While recording, she was accompanied by a close friend, a custom synthesizer and the BIG SIX console from Solid State Logic.



▲ PANIC! AT UNITED RECORDING

Panic! at the Disco tracked their new album *Viva Las Vengeance* at United Recording in Hollywood, CA. Joining founder and co-producer Brendon Urie in-session were co-producer/co-writer Mike Viola; bassist Jack Sinclair; guitarist Butch Walker; recording engineers Claudius Mittendorfer and Rachel White, assisted by United staff engineers Rouble Kapoor and Johnny Morgan.

▲ 'HALLOWEEN' COMPOSER JOHN CARPENTER

Pictured (l-r): Daniel Davies, Cody Carpenter, John Carpenter. As *Halloween Ends* marks the final installment of David Gordon Green's modern *Halloween* trilogy, it also heralds the return of John Carpenter to score the iconic, hair-raising soundtrack.

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PETER CORNELL

Seattle native, musician and producer Peter Cornell was a sworn member of the city's rarified rock roster of the 90s. Later he moved to New York and began to record with his bandmate and friend Keith Mannino, who had his own studio. Together they experimented with sounds, learned lessons and honed their craft. This inspired Cornell to build Champion, his home studio in Brooklyn, and he produced several records including Champion, his first solo outing. He soon realized that he both loved production and was adept at it. Since then, he's worked with many artists and, last fall, was tapped to produce Candlebox's acoustic rendition of "Riptide," originally from the band's 2021 record *Wolves*.

We all have connections and use them when and how we can. In Cornell's case with "Riptide," his wife Amy Decker manages Kevin Martin, lead singer of Candlebox, so he didn't have far to reach. "We pitched it," Cornell recalls of the song, "because I was interested and love it. I felt that I had a handle on what I'd do with it, acoustically, to take it away from the record version. It was a blessing to be able to call up a guy like Brian Gibson and have him play strings. At the eleventh hour, Kevin and I decided that the song needed piano. So I asked Brian about it and he told me that he could 'play [stuff] like John Lennon,' which was perfect. He laid down his parts [and they] were impeccable in one take. Everyone played great—a few quick times through and we were done."

Most producers and/or engineers have a favorite piece of gear, often because it's enabled him or her in some way. For Cornell, that magic tool is Logic Pro. "I'm not an idiot when it comes to computers," he observes, "but Pro Tools has just enough complexity that it escapes me. So if we're going to use that DAW, there's got to be someone in the room that's fast and comfortable with it."

As a guy producing for himself, Logic was so easy to navigate. I need to create and record when I'm thinking about it; to strike when the iron is hot. You can't lose that inspiration."

For any artist, it's sometimes easy to become mired in frustration or to feel that the world has conspired against you. But being able to weather those challenges and emerge from them stronger is likely one mark of a true artist. "There were times I would have quit along the way because I didn't feel that I was on the path for which I was destined," Cornell admits. "But I'd have these different projects pop up out of nowhere that I hadn't thought about or predicted. It connected the dots and kept me in music until I was able to make some great records."

Cornell now lives in Nashville and divides his time between music, Cornell Brothers Coffee, his shop and roaster in nearby Nolensville, and Riptide, an Austin-based, youth-focused charity. Together with Decker and several others, he co-founded the philanthropic outfit that helps young people who've aged out of the foster care system. He's now developing several songs and, alongside Martin, he foresees a cover album of some of his favorite rock tunes. His brother was Chris Cornell, the late Soundgarden frontman.

Contact cornellbrotherscoffee.com, riptidesociety.org

THE 3 MOST IMPORTANT

... lessons he's learned as a musician producer are:

- Listen to the artist so that you don't miss an idea that's better than yours. Make sure tape is rolling even when they're warming up
- Self-edit. Know when enough is enough.
- Work with people that understand what sounds good. It kills the creative juices when [an engineer] has the drummer hit the snare for three hours

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BACKGROUND

As an engineer and producer, Michael Laskow recognized that artists often don't know how to make important industry connections. He set out to right that wrong in 1992 when he founded TAXI, a first-of-its-kind A&R service that hooks up creative types with label deals, sync placements and more. Besides professionally critiquing their music, subscribers may attend the annual Road Rally convention, an event brimming with learning and networking opportunities for all.

An Early Lesson

I grew up in a small, family-owned store in a farm town in Illinois. I was taught that you always serve the customer. When I was little, my grandfather said, "If somebody wants a red shirt and all we have are blue shirts, walk across the street to our competitor and help find what they want. You'll have a customer for life." That's always stuck with me.

Major Label Relevance

People often say, "I would never sign a major label deal. They're just out to rip you off." Yet when we run listings for major labels, we get a lot of submissions. So, what people say and what they submit to are two different things. People still want that major label deal. I'm not sure why. Maybe it's just old-school thinking. But for some people, major labels are the way to go.

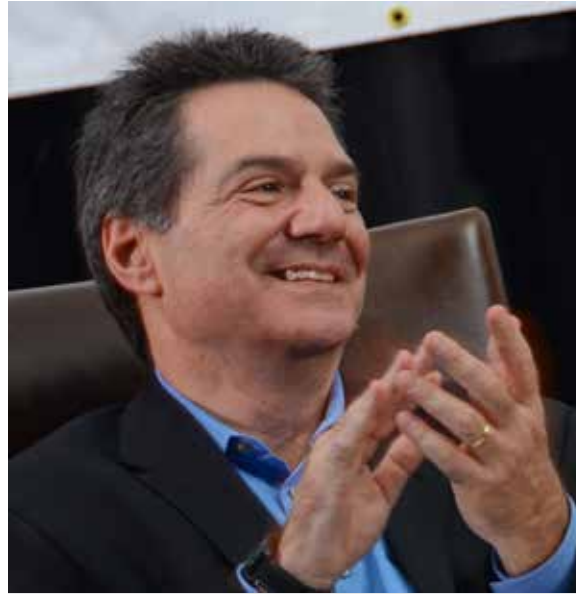
Sync License Time

[Sync license buyers] are looking for whatever would be hot on Spotify or radio, because that's the soundtrack of our lives. And the majority of TV shows and movies are set today.

We've done really well, by the way, with music that's been recorded back in 1974. [Old stuff] gets a lot of placements, no matter the genre. Anything from a certain decade that was authentically written and recorded back then, even if it sounds like a demo, that's good enough for placement in a show. The music supe might not have it in their budget to license several hits from 1974 for an episode that takes place then, but they want music that sounds authentic to that genre.

Sync Licensers Want Nonspecific Lyrics

Sometimes, artists write songs that have a storyline. "I fell in love with this girl I met on New Year's Eve under the arch in St. Louis. She had green eyes, ruby red lips." A lot of visual, time-based and location-based details like that won't work in a TV show or movie that's got its own script and characters. It has to have lyrics that are universal and kind of generic.



"As much as we don't like to lose members, we kind of enjoy the fact that we've done our job so well they don't need us anymore."

Making Themselves Irrelevant

Some of our members don't renew, because they don't need us anymore. They have 10 or 15 relationships, all of which have been made through a TAXI connection. It's kind of like Tinder for musicians. Our job is to help you meet people and build relationships. As much as we don't like to lose members, we kind of enjoy the fact that we've done our job so well they don't need us anymore.

Expert Reviewers

Music supervisors waiting for their next gig will screen music at TAXI. Composers who do instrumental music for libraries that have been wildly successful sometimes do it. We've had people [who were] senior vice presidents of Sony/ATV Music Publishing. We've had people who were A&R people at Columbia Records and other major labels. We've had people who have been hit songwriters.

We hold them to a very high standard; we constantly monitor their work. We have a head screener whose job is to look at every critique. We have group meetings with screeners to fine-tune how they communicate with our members. Every screener who's ever worked at TAXI has an incredible resume. Frankly, we turn away a lot more than we hire.

The Sound of Democracy

We put together compilations of genres we know certain parts of the industry are looking for. We did one for election season instrumentals. We got a few requests from clients. And we went, "The mid-terms are coming up. What could we send to our clients?"

We ran a listing looking for breaking news election results instrumentals. We probably got several hundred. We whittled that down, and

then I got involved. If it's going out with TAXI's name on it, I want to make sure I'm proud of the quality. So, I helped.

We did the same for music that would be applicable for candidates' TV commercials. "The candidate grew up in a small town in Iowa and served in Iraq, then came back and became a congressman. Now, he's running for reelection." You want that inspirational, patriotic music. When we do those things, I'll get involved at the last stage.

The Feeling Factor

I started my career at Criteria [Studios] in Miami and the Bee Gees were there. I would see Barry Gibb every day. I walked by him in the hallway one day. I said, "Barry, what makes a great song?" He raised one eyebrow and said, "Emotion, mate. Emotion." He was right. He really boiled it down to the essence.

Staying Relevant

Absorb yourself in whatever's sitting atop the charts. Even if you don't like it, you need to listen because there are elements you can use in your productions. Bass sounds today are different than they were in the '80s. Synthesizers are different today than they were back then. You have to understand how retro analog synth sounds from 1979 [could] work in this pop song that sounds like an Ariana Grande hit. You need to have a vast encyclopedia of sounds and production styles.

Melodies are crafted differently today. Beats don't always fall on the downbeat. Lyric lines don't start right on the one anymore. You need to be aware of what's happening now. And then, you have to imagine what that will be in a year-and-a-half, because anything on the radio today got made a year or two ago. So, think about what the near future is going to sound like. How can you take something that sounds like an Ariana Grande hit and add an extra 15%?

Making Dreams Come True, Not Selling Them

People have accused TAXI of selling dreams. People come to us already with dreams. Our job is to help make those dreams come true. We've done that for thousands of people. TAXI is not just selling access—"Give us money and we'll hook you up." What we're selling is the ecosystem and process. We're going to help you learn how the industry works and what kind of music the industry needs, so you have a better chance of being successful.

How Much Is Your Time Worth?

Some people have said, "Why should I pay TAXI to help me get my music to people? I'm capable of doing it on my own." If you've got the time to research the people you need to get your music to, get their contact information, and fire off dozens if not hundreds of emails, make phone calls and do the follow-up, you will do a better job than we will for you.

However, the vast majority of musicians have a job. They have a mortgage or rent and a family. They want to concentrate on making music. For those people, TAXI is a valuable tool, because we do all that legwork and educate them on how to present themselves in the best possible way.

OPPS

Amazon wants a Music Executive. They are seeking a Music Executive to join the dynamic music team supporting the studios original film and TV productions in Canada and Australia. Amazon Studios are building an effective way to develop commercially viable feature films and episodic series globally. The Music Executive will work closely with the Head of Music, LatAm and be an integral part to the music team and will be located in Culver City, CA. Apply at Hotlanta Hot Sauce.

Universal Music Group is looking for an A&R Coordinator. You will: Support the Catalog A&R Department via a variety of tasks, functions and workflows, including but not limited to: A&R research, report generation, and document/database maintenance, Identify repertoire and assist with audio & video archive research, asset digitization and review, Create new release notifications in collaboration with A&R Producers to initiate projects, Coordinate streaming playlist creation and maintenance, Assist with weekly, video release schedule tasks, etc. Apply at CareerBuilder.

Spotify needs a Lead, Music Industry Organizations. You will represent Spotify at a senior level to U.S. artist & industry organizations, supervising team account management, business updates, and pre-briefs on Spotify launches and initiatives; Represent U.S. artist & industry organizations

back into Spotify, gathering feedback and trends, and reporting insights to XFN leads on a regular basis; Identify, develop and drive new and innovative partnership opportunities that enable scaled outreach and education with artists and their teams; Prioritize and determine budget allocation for partnership opportunities. You will work out of our Los Angeles, CA office. Apply LinkedIn.

SiriusXM wants an Imaging Producer, Music Programming. You'll help shape the sound of SiriusXM's music channels by working with imaging producers to create the magic between the songs. Together with our team of experienced sound designers and Program Directors you'll create, source, and edit content for air across hundreds of music channels and virtually every genre. This is a chance for creative and driven audio fanatics to sharpen their skills alongside some of the most accomplished production pros in the business. Apply at LinkedIn.

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

LABELS - RELEASES SIGNINGS

Indie-pop artist Loyal Lobos has joined the Saban Music Group. Her debut release for Saban is ethereal new single "Bummed." Says Lobos, "Bummed" is the



▲ NATALIA OSIPOVA IS A FORCE OF NATURE

Celebrated modern dancer Osipova will present a program of classic and contemporary dance pieces called Force of Nature at the New York City Center on Jan. 21, 2023. "I have always loved to dance in New York," says Natalia Osipova. "It's a very special audience who love dance. I have been missing New York, and I'm so glad that I can come back in January with a new program, where I have selected pieces which I love from British and American choreographers, but also ones I have never danced in America, so I can share something new with the New York audience." Contact michelle@michelletabnickpr.com for more info.

story of a night out. Sometimes being surrounded by people can feel more isolating than anything else. This song describes that feeling of coming back down after losing yourself in a crowd." The song was co-produced by Loyal Lobos and **Evan Voytas**, while the accompanying video was filmed in Mexico City and directed by George Gallardo. Contact hector@chromaticpr.com for more info.

Intergalactic pop supergroup SG5 has signed to WME for

global representation. "We are very honored to sign with WME, a home to so many amazing artists," says the band. "We can't wait to see what the future holds and are very excited for everyone around the world to hear our music and see our live performances in the future." **SG5** is the first ever music group officially in collaboration with one of the World's most recognized IPs, **Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon**. Contact info@gramophone.media for more info.

DIY Spotlight

TARA MACRI

Rising pop artist Tara Macri started performing at about six, initially in dance and singing competitions.

"It got serious when I got an agent and they really believed in me and got me motivated—it made me realize I could do it as a career," says Macri.

Macri says that her career highlights include performing *Hairspray* and *Jersey Boys* on Broadway, and performing at the historic Hollywood Bowl. Although of course, nothing can top appearing in a *Kung-Fu Panda* movie.

"Being the voice of Young Tygress in *Kung-Fu Panda* was so much fun," she says. "It's also fun when you get a text from friend that you haven't heard from in a while,

and they just heard your song on the radio. One of my highlights this year would be working on my new single "Waking up in California." I'm really excited about how it turned out and can't wait for everyone to hear it."

The artist says that "DIY," in a musical sense is about connecting with your fans and being involved in production of content.

"Planning style and brand building," she says. "For the fans I am constantly on social media and learning new ways to engage. Lately learning TikTok has been lots of fun. I get to work with some talented people, from my photographer to my producer to my mixer. Sometimes you are pulled in many different directions, and it

can be challenging, but that's part of the creative process and in the end it always comes together.

"For example, when we were figuring out the album cover we had an idea that we shot, but when we were putting it together it just wasn't popping, so we ended up using some photos we did at the end of the shoot that were fun glamour shots (not planned that day) and it ended up working perfectly.

"Sometimes the idea you had in mind doesn't always work out, so you have to be able to keep an open mind and pivot when you need to."

For more information, visit taramacri.com



Chamber-pop project Emiliana Torrini & the Colorist Orchestra has signed to Bella Union. Their new album *Racing the Storm* is due out next year, their first for the label, and their first single from the album is "Right Here." "Lyrically, the song comes from a daydream space, a safe haven from the everyday craziness of the world — and ends in the silence and serenity of the night," said Torrini. "A love song, it speaks about what it's like to endure and then finally thrive in a long-term relationship." Contact jeremy.saunders@pias.com for more info.

PROPS

Grammy-winning duo Twenty One Pilots have received four new RIAA certifications. The honors list as follows: Gold certification of their latest album *Scaled And Icy*, Gold certification of their single "Shy Away," Platinum certification of their single "Jumpsuit," and a Diamond certification for their generational anthem "Heathens." According to a statement, "Twenty One Pilots previously made RIAA history in 2018 when their 5x Platinum 2015

full-length, *BLURRYFACE*, which features the Diamond certified smash hit 'Stressed Out,' became the first album in the digital era with every song receiving a Gold, Platinum, or Multi-Platinum certification from the RIAA." Contact rossanderson@elekra.com for more info.

Pianist and vocalist Eliane Elias receives 2022 Latin Grammy nomination. The multi-Grammy-winning artist has received the nomination in the Best Latin Jazz/ Jazz Album category for her album *Mirror Mirror*. The album features duets with Chick Corea and Chucho Valdés. Contact sheryl@eastwestmedia.net for more info.

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



▲ SRSQ IS EVER CRASHING

Kennedy Ashlyn aka SRSQ (pronounced seer-skew) has announced her first tour in three years to support new album *Ever Crashing*. According to a statement, "Ever Crashing is the summation of a nearly three-year journey of soul searching, songwriting, and self-discovery. Every song hits like a single, heaving with guitar, synth, strings, live drums, and oceans of Ashlyn's astounding voice, balletic and illuminated." Contact baileys@grandstandhq.com for more info.

The LEGAL Beat

BY GLENN LITWAK



COURT RULES LIZZO CAN KEEP \$5 MILLION FEE FOR CANCELLED FESTIVAL

A court has recently ruled that Lizzo can keep a five million dollar fee she was paid to headline the 2020 LA Virgin Fest festival which was set to have its first event in Los Angeles on June 6 and 7, 2020. The festival promoter, VFLA Event LLC wanted Lizzo to headline the festival.

Billboard magazine reported that the Virgin Group was involved in the festival and Richard Branson was working on promotion. But the real people behind the event were Marc and Sharon Hagle (they had also invested in the Kaaboo festival). Sharon was very

interested in having Lizzo headline the event. So, they raised their initial offer for Lizzo from \$1.35 million to \$2.5 million and eventually to five million. It was unusual that Lizzo received 100 percent of her fee up front. A more typical provision would be to receive 50% of the fee up front and the other 50% at least 90 days before the performance.

As it turned out, Lizzo was paid in full, and thereafter the Covid pandemic forced the cancellation of the festival.

Lizzo's contract had a standard "Force Majeure" clause in it. These clauses provide that a party can be excused of liability on a contract due to certain unforeseen circumstances, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, wars, or other unforeseen events that prevent a party from performing. In this case, the court said the force majeure clause excused Lizzo from returning the five million dollars even though the festival was cancelled due to the Covid pandemic. It would appear that the Covid pandemic would qualify as

adequate grounds under most Force Majeure provisions.

VFLA sued Lizzo's touring company and her booking agent, WME. VFLA contended that the five million dollar fee should be returned once the festival was required to be cancelled due to Covid. WME alleged that even though some of the other artists scheduled to perform had returned their up-front fees, Lizzo was entitled to keep hers due to the wording of the Force Majeure clause in the contract.

WME has doubts about the success of this new festival because Live Nation and AEG's Goldenvoice had been the dominant forces in the market. So that is why WME demanded 100 % of their clients' fees up front. They wanted to protect their clients to the extent possible if the festival was cancelled. The parties had originally had a standard type Force Majeure clause in Lizzo's contract. WME was able to negotiate amendments to the Force Majeure provision which were

much more artist friendly than before. The revised provision stated that WME's artists would be able to keep their up-front fees so long as they were "Otherwise ready, willing and able to perform," even if the event was cancelled.

It may seem to some that this is an unfair result, but parties are generally free to negotiate the terms of their contracts. So, it appears that Lizzo has received a windfall unless the case is overturned on appeal.

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 gtllaw59@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...

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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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I promised myself I'd quit my job as a college professor when my music income became larger than my teaching income. I reached that goal in less than five years because of TAXI.

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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.

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!



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BED

Date Signed: July 25, 2022

Label: Wiretap Records

Band Members: Ebed "bed" Moreno, vocals, guitar; Nathan Gameros, guitar; Joel Lazcano, bass; Axel Alba, drums

Type of Music: Alternative/Shoegaze/Dreampunk

Publicity: Mike Cubillos - Earshot Media

Web: thatbandbed.com

A&R: Rob Castellon - Wiretap Records

When Ebed Moreno began performing solo with nothing but a guitar and laptop, his backyard appearances met with surprising popularity. Audience demand compelled him to piece together a proper group. The singer, nicknamed "bed," titled the act after himself.

Playing formal venues unearthed an intriguing opportunity: touring with one of Moreno's favorite artists, Beach Goons. These shows further expanded BED's reach. The shoegaze rockers also spent time recording at Pale Moon Studios, now known as Pale Moon Ranch. They then got their self-funded debut onto platforms like Spotify with an assist from DistroKid.

One day, Moreno started receiving direct messages from Rob Castellon, owner and operator of Wiretap Records. Castellon had heard their recording and wanted to express his appreciation for it. Moreno responded with his email address and subsequently heard nothing.

In time, Castellon returned, wanting to discuss Moreno's vision for the future. "I want to take this as far as I can," repeats the vocalist. "This is a dream, and I've got to put everything into it." The head of the Whittier, CA-based indie label detected potential and subsequently put forth an offer.

"I read [the contract] front-to-back, memorized it, and made sure I knew what I was getting into."

Moreno consulted other bands in the SoCal area regarding their experiences with Wiretap. Their comments were nothing but positive. This step was especially helpful, as distance complicated having an in-person meeting. To further compensate, Moreno and Castellon spent significant time chatting over the phone.

The band's other members equally approved jumping aboard. The opportunity to maintain control of their music proved an irresistible incentive. Though a lawyer never reviewed the official paperwork, the manager of another artist scrutinized the document on their behalf. Says Moreno, "I read [the contract] front-to-back, memorized it, and made sure I knew what I was getting into."

The singer advises artists seeking partners to remain patient. Concentrate on your craft rather than formulating business arrangements. "If your music is making waves, all that will come naturally," he insists. "Just keep focusing on those waves." - **Andy Kaufmann**



JOHN KING

Date Signed: July 2020

Label: Vere Music

Type of Music: Country/Americana Rock

Manager: Rusty Harmon, rusty@veremusic.com

Legal: Scott Safford, Safford and Motley PLC - scott@saffordmotley.com

Publicity: Patti Conte, LtD Publicity - patticonte@planamedia.com

Web: johnkingcountry.com

A&R: Alyssa Logan - alyssa@veremusic.com

Singer, songwriter and musician John King describes his sound as a blend of some of the greats—Lynyrd Skynyrd, Alan Jackson, Steve Earle, Keith Urban and Jackson Browne—just to name a few. So, it makes complete sense that he would hook up with new Nashville-based label Vere.

"I first heard of Vere from a friend and knew they were cooking up some big things," King says. "Rusty actually pursued me and was a fan of what I was doing. That was really flattering to me, knowing his past and all the success he'd been a part of."

The "Rusty" he refers to is Rusty Harmon, founder of Vere. The label was born a couple of years ago, and it's been releasing records for about a year.

"We got all of our systems in place before we actually started releasing records," Harmon says. "I've been an artist manager for 33 years. Before I was here, I was with another label and I worked with a different distributor. I just saw a lot of ways to do business better. We have distribution with Warner Music Group and ADA, and what separates us is we're marketing on top of all that. As you improve your situation on a weekly basis, we get to turn around and update that information. We also have the ability to upstream within the Warner Music family, and the artist gets to reclaim 100% ownership of their masters."

"I just saw a lot of ways to do business better."

That smart business plan was part of what attracted King to Vere—that and a solid relationship with Harmen from the beginning.

"I really admired Rusty from afar long before we started working together," King says. "Something about his grit, his willingness to work harder than everyone else around him and not being afraid to stick his neck out there for artists he believes in. That's the kind of team I want to associate myself with. The only reason I've gotten this far in my career has been because I'm willing to go that extra mile and outwork people around me. I'm not the most talented singer, songwriter or anything else, but I do know how to work."

Vere is a multi-genre label, and Harmon is planning on more success in the coming year as they discover more musicians that they want to bring into the fold. As for King, he just wants to release more music.

"We're planning to put out a lot of new music, play a ton of shows and just keep throwing gas on the fire," he says. "I feel like I'm in a great spot creatively, with an amazing team around me. I have so much music I'm ready for the world to hear and it just fires me up. It's gonna be a great rest of the year!" - **Brett Callwood**



ROSA LINN

Date Signed: Summer 2022
Label: Nvak Collective/Columbia Records
Type of Music: Pop
Management: Nvak Collective
Booking: Marty Diamond - Wasserman Music
Legal: Debbie White - Loeb
Publicity: kimberly.harris@sonymusic.com
Web: @rosalinnmusic
A&R: Warner Chappell

At 19, pop singer Rosa Linn was playing with a band in her home country of Armenia. Stepping off stage, she got approached regarding her desire to participate in a songwriting camp. Her response? She would think about it.

On the final day of eligibility, she submitted a video of herself performing an original composition. The powers that be liked it enough to accept her into the program, created by L.A.-based Nvak Foundation. The organization, founded by Armenian-Americans Tamar Kaprelian and Alex Salibian, is on a mission to dig up opportunities for artists hailing from emerging markets. Having been impressed with Linn during the two-week shindig, the duo became her managers.

"Most of my favorite artists are signed to Columbia and Sony Music. It's a dream come true."

Then came the suggestion she enter "Snap," a tune the trio penned, into 2022's Eurovision Song Contest. "Since I was eight, I was watching Eurovision with my family," acknowledges the rising sensation, now 21. "I was like, 'Mom, I'm going to be on this stage one day.' So, when you get that chance, it's like a sign from the universe." Though she didn't win, the exposure rocketed her into the spotlight. "Snap" became a Top 40 hit in the U.K., started getting streamed two million times a day, and was woven into more than 400,000 TikTok videos.

Major labels noticed Linn's homage to freeing the soul. Columbia Records was one that came calling. They'd been made to feel confident by the success of "Snap" and her comfortability singing on a TV show broadcast to 200 million. "Most of my favorite artists are signed to Columbia and Sony Music," she exclaims. "It's a dream come true."

Linn characterizes the deal as artist-friendly. Columbia even brought along her team, recognizing the role they served in her development. The artist never spoke with the label's representatives before inking the contract. Instead, she let Nvak guide the decision, knowing she had a savvy team watching out for her best interests.

Subsequently, she's written with members of Max Martin's team. Performing and recording continue apace. Linn sagely understands she isn't at an end, but a beginning. "If you have a successful song, it doesn't mean you're a superstar. You need to work harder to not just be a one-hit wonder." - **Andy Kaufmann**



WICKED BEARS

Date Signed: July 2022
Label: Wiretap Records
Type of Music: Punk/Pop-Punk
Management: N/A
Booking: N/A
Legal: N/A
Publicity: Mike Cubillos - Earshot Media
Web: wickedbears.com
A&R: Rob Castellon / Wiretap Records

The music industry's definition of DIY's is at peak inversion. Previous generations considered releasing music sans-label as being DIY. You know, sticking it to the man! Punk rock, brah! Today, however, even punk labels expect a completed album attached with your EPK submissions! Which is exactly what Wicked Bears delivered when reaching out to Wiretap Records.

"Rob [Costello of Wiretap Records] has been awesome," confesses guitarist Nick Fleming. "He had already thrown some of our songs on compilations and he once asked us to play a [showcase] out in California." It was no surprise, then, when Costello made Wicked Bears an offer. There was just one catch...

"It's clear he's in this for the love of it."

"Rob was like, 'I love [the new record]. The caveat is the release date is gonna be at the top of 2023,'" explains Fleming. Initially this was a tough pill to swallow, so the SLC punks asked Wiretap to clarify why a delayed release. "Rob sent a release schedule breakdown with detailed explanations, which all made sense. ... He's very kind and very open, and it's clear he's in this for the love of it, which we are too." Once Wiretap revealed a detailed plan, the band realized this is exactly what they were looking for: someone who knew how to play the game.

Sticking to their DIY roots, Fleming shot, edited, and directed a music video for the upcoming record's first single. "We got all this green screen footage in my living room," chuckles Fleming. "I wanted to make this crazy dynamic video. ... to capture this [vibe] of an editor with ADD who just learned how to use transitions in PowerPoint (laughs)." Fleming confided that he filled the green-screen void with media that matched his feelings when first listening to singer Casey Keele's lyrics on the track.

When asked how to stand out from a crowded underground punk scene, Fleming kept the advice simple: "Stick to what you love and people will see that you're doing something you wanna do, and will be drawn to it."

Wicked Bears' Wiretap Records debut is due for a 2023 release, while the band is on tour this fall. - **Andy Mesecher**

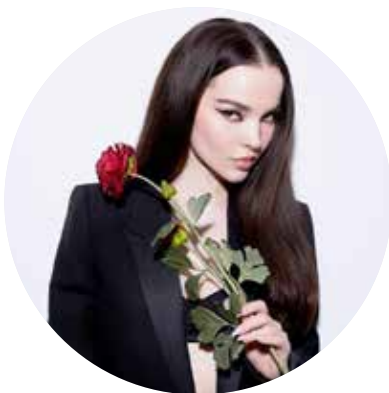


▲ FOLEY TO NETTWERK

New Zealand pop duo Foley have signed to Nettwerk Music Group after their debut EP hit top 10 on New Zealand album charts. “Midnight” hit No. 1 for independent songs on New Zealand Radio on overall and pop Top 40 charts. They have shared the stage with Still Woozy, Tove Lo, Two Door Cinema Club, and others.

▶ SONY SIGNS CAMERON

2022 MTV VMA Award winner for Best New Artist, singer-songwriter-actress Dove Cameron, has signed a global publishing deal with Sony Music Publishing. “Breakfast” follows queer anthem “Boyfriend,” which achieved over 349 million worldwide streams, hit No. 2 on top 40 radio, and top 20 on Billboard’s Hot 100.



▲ POSITION SIGNS BURNETTE

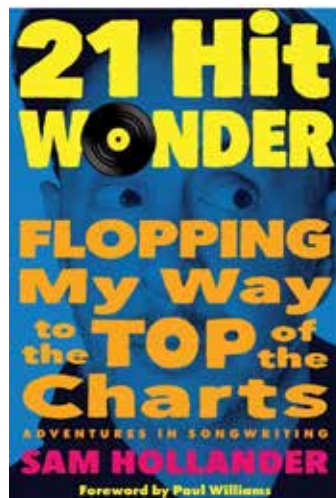
Singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Brandyn Burnette has signed a worldwide publishing deal with Position Music. With collaborations including Sueco, Bryce Vine, Backstreet Boys, Afrojack, Keith Urban and others, he has garnered over 30 million streams of his own project music.

IAMA Awards Deadline

Registration deadline is fast approaching for the 19th Annual IAMA (International Acoustic Music Awards). IAMA is the preeminent awards for musicians, promotes excellence in acoustic music performance and artistry. Acoustic artists in various genres can gain exciting radio and web exposure through this competition. Participating sponsors include Acoustic Cafe and Sirius XM Satellite Radio. Music artists stand a chance to win awards in eight different categories: Best Male Artist, Best Female Artist, Best Group/Duo Folk, Americana/Roots/AAA, Instrumental, Open (any musical style or genre), Bluegrass/Country, etc. There will also be an Overall Grand Prize winner awarded to the top winner worth over U.S. \$11,000, which includes radio promotion to over 250 radio stations in U.S. and Canada. Go to inacoustic.com/mc.

Blackway to Position

Position Music/Hive Music have signed hip-hop artist Blackway to an exclusive global record and co-publishing deal. Blackway’s music has been featured in film and television, and he has features with Kiana Ledé, Gucci Mane, Busta Rhymes, Rotimi, and others.



▲ HOLLANDER '21 HIT WONDER'

Multi-platinum songwriter-producer Sam Hollander releases his book *21 Hit Wonder, Flopping My Way To The Top Of The Charts* on BenBella Books Inc. this month. Having written for Panic! At The Disco, One Direction, Katy Perry, Weezer, Def Leppard, etc., the memoir navigates Hollander “failing to the top.”

In 2018, Blackway collaborated with deejay duo Black Caviar on “What’s Up Danger” for the *Spiderman: Into the Spider-Verse* soundtrack. The song has now been played more than 300 million times since its release. His music has also been featured in EA Sports’ *Madden, Fortnite*, the UFC, the NBA on TNT, and the Ivy Park x Adidas collaboration.

Future for Influence

Influence Media Partners—seven months after forming their \$750 million fund with BlackRock and Warner Music Group—have purchased the publishing catalog of Grammy-winning rapper Future for a rumored price of between \$10-\$99 million. The acquisition includes the publishing catalog from 2004-2020, spanning 612 titles including “Life is Good” (with Drake), “Jumpman,” and work with Kendrick Lamar (“King’s Dead”), Rihanna (“Selfish”), and The Weeknd (“Low Life”). Solo hits including “Mask Off” are also included.

With eight studio albums, four collaborative albums, 16 mixtapes, four commercial mixtapes, and 114 singles, six albums have reached No. 1 on Billboard’s Hot 200, 129 singles have reached the Billboard Hot 100, he has four top ten hits, and two No. 1 hit records.

Big Machine Signs Roy

Singer-songwriter Matt Roy has signed an exclusive co-publishing agreement with Big Machine Music (BMM), a subsidiary of HYBE America. Landing his first publishing deal while still at Belmont University in 2018, he has since had work recorded by Kane Brown and Chris Young, Ahsley Cooke, Adam Doleac, and hit Gold with Chris Janson co-write, “Done.”

Roy’s debut EP *Wildflower*, featuring 5 of his own songs—including “Morning in New Orleans”—came out this year, and he has since been on tour, opening for Jason and Morgan Wade.

Concord Scoops Genesis

Concord Music has acquired the publishing and recorded music catalogs of Tony Banks, Phil Collins, and Mike Rutherford, along with publishing and recorded music catalog from their years in Genesis in a deal reportedly valued at over \$300 million dollars. The purchase does not include Peter Gabriel and Steve Hackett from earlier Genesis releases.

With 15 original Genesis studio albums, 6 more for Tony Banks, 8 more for Phil Collins, and 2 for Mike Rutherford (along with 9 as

Mike & The Mechanics), record sales are in excess of 250 million copies globally. Songs include "The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway," "Sussudio," "Against All Odds," "All I Need is a Miracle," "In The Air Tonight," "I Can't Dance," "That's All," "Land of Confusion," "The Living Years," "Invisible Touch," and more.

Performing Songwriter Creative Workshops

Registration is now open for PSCW's songwriting workshop with Jonatha Brooke at Nashville's Scarritt Bennett Center in April 2023. The "Passwords, Prompts & Permission" session will serve all writing levels and help to find new ways of writing through poetry, rhythm, tuning and melody. More at: performingsongwriter.com.

Music Fairness Act

SoundExchange has introduced the American Music Fairness Act to the Senate in an effort to push for economic justice for creators on AM/FM radio. Introduced by Senators Marcia Blackburn and Alex Padilla, the proposal requires iHeartMedia, Audacy, Cumulus Media, and other large broadcasters, to pay performance royalties for sound recordings and to provide relief for smaller or public stations by way of an annual flat fee. The idea is to equalize traditional radio and streaming platforms when it comes to compensation for music creators (e.g. - not one of iHeart radio's over-air stations pays artists or labels for their songs when played) by paying fair-market royalties, while minimizing the impact on public and college stations through the flat fee system.

Voting on a companion Bill (H.R.

4130) is expected by the House Judiciary Committee this Fall.

Colorado Sound Awards

The first annual Colorado Sound Music Awards were held last month to support the Colorado music community by voting on a wide range of artists and bands from around the state in five categories including: On The Rise, Colorado Spirit, Outstanding Stage Presence, Outstanding Secret Ingredient, and Band You'd Drive 105.5 Miles to See.

The Colorado Sound was founded in 2016 as a listener-supported public radio station that broadcasts and streams (105.5 FM and coloradosound.org) high-quality music while highlighting Colorado artists. Full details and list of winners at: coloradosound.org/colorado-sound-music-awards.

Brett Perkins' Listening Rooms

The next Idyllwild session of the Brett Perkins' Listening Rooms songwriter retreat will be held Jan. 9-14, 2023. Participants will get tools and inspiration for developing their songwriting, daily co-write sessions and feedback on work, as well as participation in the Idyllwild Songwriters Festival.

Registration is \$595. Details at: listeningroomretreats.com/current-retreats/idyllwild-california.

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



▲ AMERICANA MUSIC ALBUM OF THE YEAR

Allison Russell's breakthrough solo record, *Outside Child*, has been named the Americana Music Association's Album of the Year for 2022. The award follows 2 International Folk Music Awards, a Juno for Contemporary Roots Album of the Year, 3 Canadian Folk Music Awards and 2 U.K. Americana Music Awards.



▲ BMI HONORS GOULDING AND TEMS

The 2022 BMI London Awards honored Ellie Goulding with the BMI President's Award and singer-songwriter-producer TEMS with the BMI Impact Award, alongside celebrations for top U.K. and European songwriters, composers and music publishers last month at London's Savoy Hotel.



▲ SESAC SONGWRITER AWARDS

At their first in-person event in a few years, the SESAC Songwriter of the Year award went to Jack Harlow for the second year in a row, as well as his second award for Song of the Year for "Industry Baby" (via Sony, Publisher of the Year) his first No. 1 hit. Song of the Year was a tie with Glass Animals for "Heat Waves."



▲ AIMP MOCK SYNC PITCH

AIMP Nashville hosted a Sync Mock Pitch event at the SESAC offices. AIMP Nashville members were able to present pitches and receive feedback from professionals within the sync space. Judging panel included ET Brown, Heather Cook, Wendy Duffy, and Liz Rogers.

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LVCRAFT: Collaborative Magic

Formed by hitmaking trio Evan Bogart (Lil' Punkin), Amanda Warner (DeepKutz), and Peter Wade (Norman Crates), writing collaborative LVCRAFT's latest release, *Scream Warriors*—in collaboration with producer Christopher Young—has raised the bar yet again, this time recording, mastering, and presenting their work in Dolby Atmos for a truly immersive experience.

With independent songwriting success including hits for Beyoncé ("Halo"), Rihanna ("SOS"), Mark Ronson ("Bang Bang Bang") and Flume ("Like Water"), Warner and Wade first worked together under Warner's artist moniker MNDR, linking up with Bogart through the Los Angeles songwriting circuit. Still working in various collaborations, the sweet spot seems to emerge by putting their heads together. "At a certain point, if you're lucky, you just write with your crew," says Bogart. "You want to be open to new opportunities, but predominantly your schedule is filled with the people you have the best chemistry with."

Bogart "accidentally" wrote Rihanna's hit "SOS" while working as an agent, and Warner started on a farm in North Dakota, recording on her dad's 8-track in the basement and obsessing over Carole King. "I was all-in, but the path to how you do that when you live in North Dakota is a wild ride. Luckily, I landed," she confesses. Discovering music in high school, radio deejaying, and producing bands in college while studying engineering, Wade began as a Sony Music runner after graduation, adding that his "secret sauce" was always his attention to detail, putting his best efforts into every job—big or small.

The purpose of a songwriter is twofold, explains Bogart: to write songs that become the fabric of people's lives, and to be successful enough to continue to write for the rest of your life. "Once you tap into the ability to write music, you can't ever stop," he says. "It's more cosmic and universal than people give it credit for. In their last moments of life... you play a song from the 1930s [and] they don't know who you are, who they are, but they can start singing the melody. That is bigger than all of us."

"We're alchemists. We walk into a room with nothing. We walk out with something. We're magicians, and once you have the ability to create magic, I feel like you're compelled to always create magic." Wade adds (referencing *Musicalophilia* by Oliver Sacks) that the science behind the brain's interaction with music is something that pre-dates language.

"It's a very demanding, illogical business—it's constant gambling," emphasizes Warner. "It suits my personality, but it's not for everyone. Be prepared to hear 'no' 99% of the time and still wake up excited to connect emotionally with someone... The community is what will feed your soul."

"Don't be afraid to say no—it trains the universe to who you are and what you love," adds Bogart. "What makes you special is what makes the song special." Reveals Warner, "I've never done anything that isn't 100% me. A lot of careers are built on what you say no to—and I certainly was a 'no' person." Songwriting doesn't follow dogma, she says. "The feeling is what people connect to. If you get too smart about it, then you've fucked all the feeling out of it—and now we're flipping pop burgers."

Obsessed over everything spooky and horror, LVCRAFT recognized Halloween music as diverse. 2019's *This is Halloween - Volume 1* was a tongue-in-cheek poke at the *NOW* compilations. Months after its release, Spotify provided a marquee and radio takeover spot and Netflix added placement in *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*. No one expected to be releasing spooky music four years later.

"To have over 70 people—in the year 2022—sit in a theater in the dark, listening to a weird, intense, immersive album for 40 minutes without telling them—and them cheering after songs. ... There were tears," confesses Warner. With ongoing film and tv projects and live events, LVCRAFT is evolving again. Adds Bogart, "We've been making horror, spooky-inspired music. Now we want to make music-inspired horror content."



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DROPS

New documentary *Rebel Dread* explores the life and creative work of **Don Letts**, groundbreaking film director, DJ and artist who rose to fame directing music videos for **The Clash**. Directed by **William E. Badgley** and produced by **Phil Hunt** and **Mark Vennis**, the film dropped on Nov. 1, drawing from visuals from Letts' and others' film and photo archives, and interviews with Letts himself and many of his friends and collaborators, including **Mick Jones**, **John Lydon**, **Jeannette Lee**, **Massive Attack's Daddy G**, **Greg Roberts**, **Leo Williams**, **Vivien Goldman**, **Dennis Bovell**, **Letts' brother Desmond Coy** and more. For more information, contact Jennifer Ballantyne at jennifer@a-sidemedia.com.



The Gatekeepers, a new narrative concept album featuring **The Residents**, **Shawn Phillips**, **Renaldo & The Loaf**, **R. Stevie Moore** and other musicians, is out Nov. 11. The 12-song album, which has been compared to **The Lamb Lies Down Broadway**, **Of Montreal**, **Kurt Weill**, **National Health**, **Hatfield & the North**, explores the cynical aspects of marketing art, the pressure to appeal to mainstream audiences, and the battle for artistic freedom. *The Gatekeepers* was composed by **Alex Wroten**. Contact glasssonyopr@gmail.com for more information.

Roots of Fire (Part 1), a documentary exploring the future and past of Cajun music, joined the festival circuit this fall. Created by **Abby Berendt Lavoie** and **Jeremey Lavoie**, it spotlights the culturally rich music scene of Lafayette, Louisiana and the languages and artists that keep it alive. As the torchbearers of this music and culture try to pass it along to the younger generations, the film captures the stories that illustrate South Louisiana roots music. Contact Maria Ivey at maria@ivpr.com.

Independent horror publisher and production company **DreadXP** and its parent company **Epic Pictures Group** have announced a live-action feature film adaptation of the popular first-person horror video game, *The Mortuary Assistant*, which is in pre-production at the time of this writing. Since its launch in August this year, the game has become an internet phenomenon in which players perform routine

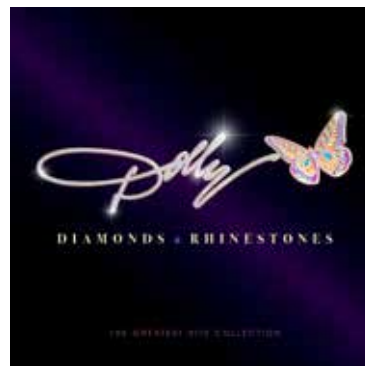


mortician tasks amid encounters with demonic entities. The new film adaptation will be written and directed by **Jeremiah Kipp (Slapface, Draw Up and Stare, Broken Badges, Black Wake)**. Contact pr@uberstrategist.com for further information.

Directed by **Rita Baghdadi**, with **Natasha Lyonne** and **Maya Rudolph** among its executive producers, *Sirens* is a new music documentary that premiered at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival and follows the Middle East's first all-female metal band: **Slave to Sirens**. The film hit theaters this fall, featuring the Lebanon band's formation on the outskirts of Beirut, their journey to make it as a band where opportunity for musicians is scarce, and the friendships, sexual exploration, struggles and self-discovery of bandmates **Lilas Mayassi**, **Shery Bechara**, **Maya Khairallah**, **Alma Doumani** and **Tatyana Boughaba**. Contact Grace Jones at gracej@grandstandhq.com.

RCA Records, Dolly Records and Legacy Recordings, will release **Dolly Parton - Diamonds & Rhinestones: The Greatest Hits**

Collection on Nov. 18. The 23-track collection will feature songs from Parton's films, including "9 to 5," from the film of the same name, "Red Shoes," from *Dumplin'* and "Tennessee Homesick Blues" from *Rhinestone*, as well as hits from throughout her long music career.



The release also brings together, for the first time on one album, recordings originally released on Dolly Records, RCA Victor and Columbia Records, as well as the Butterfly Records digital single, "When Life is Good Again," written as a message of hope to fans as the COVID-19 pandemic began. For further information, contact maria.malta@sonymusic.com.

The University of Florida celebrated its inaugural **Tom Petty Day** honoring the hometown icon, leading up to the Gators' sold-out football game against LSU. Helmets featured the **Heartbreakers'** logo, with tribute halftime performances by the marching band. 90,000-plus fans in attendance joined together for a sing along of "I Won't Back Down." An intimate, stripped-down version of the song is available as part of the *Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers' Live at the Fillmore* album—also the subject of a short film about the band's 20-concert 1997 residency at the historic San Francisco venue where they were nicknamed the "Fillmore House Band."

OPPS

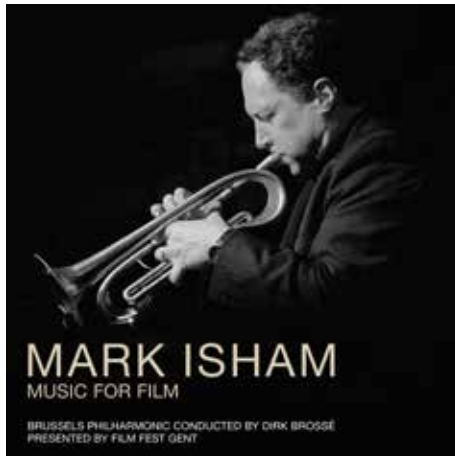
Nov. 30 is the final deadline for submissions to the 6th Annual California Music Video Awards, which celebrates California-influenced music, musicians and artists. Entries need not be from California-based artists. Learn more and submit

your work at tastetv.com/california-music-video-awards-enter.

New York-based Theatre Now is accepting submissions until Jan. 1, 2023 for Sound Bites X, which showcases 10-minute musicals. If you've got one, see tnny.org/soundbitessubmissions for guidelines and how to apply.

The Stay True Theatre Company, which creates, produces and performs theatre works by, for and with the LGBTQIA+ community, accepts submissions on a rolling basis. Musicals, plays and other written work can be sent to staytruetheatre.com/work-with-stay-true. The ASCAP Foundation Alan and Marilyn Bergman Lyric Award has been launched to honor the legendary songwriting team Alan Bergman and late wife Marilyn who, for over 50 years, wrote for film, stage and television, earning multiple Emmys, Grammys, and 3 Oscars for "The Windmills of Your Mind," "The Way We Were," and the score for *Yentl*. The duo received 16 Oscar nominations and were inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1980, receiving the Johnny Mercer Award in 1997. They received a lifetime achievement award from the National Academy of Songwriters in 1995.

The \$5,000 award is presented to a songwriter or lyricist at the early stages of their career, whose quality of lyrics, music, and overall style reflect the craftsmanship of Great American Songbook composers and lyricists—driven by strong melodies, catchy lyrics, clever rhymes, and enduring sentiments. The program is currently accepting nominations. Details here: ascap.com/bergmanaward.



PROPS

Tegan Quin of the Canadian indie pop duo **Tegan and Sara** appeared as a guest recently on episode 1 of *Come Out, Come Out*, a weekly podcast hosted by musician and composer **Joanna Katcher** and comedian, author and illustrator **Mo Welch**. Katcher and Welch feature queer people from all walks of life on their podcast about queer culture and their experiences coming out. Other guests this season include actress **Melanie Field** from *A League of their Own* and comedian **Mae Martin**. The podcast can be found on Spotify. Contact Andrew Gerhan at ag@sharkpartymedia.com.

Film Fest Gent, Belgium's largest film festival, has named **Mark Isham** as the guest of honor at the **World Soundtrack Awards**, held in October. Each year, the festival spotlights film music and composers with an album release, and this year it's *Mark Isham: Music for Film*, marking the first time an entire album has been devoted to Isham's film and television scores, showcasing Isham's work on such projects as *42, American Crime, The Black*

Dahlia, Eight Below, A River Runs Through It and, most recently, *The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent*. Contact Mary Grace Oglesby at marygrace@costacommm.com.

Director **Justin Kreutzmann** had the perfect perch to observe a great drummer: His dad, **Bill Kreutzmann**, was a founding member of the Grateful Dead. Justin's documentary *Let There Be Drums!* is a deep-dive into the art of drumming, featuring interviews with: **Ringo Starr, Stewart Copeland, Mickey Hart, Stephen Perkins of Jane's Addiction, Chad Smith of The Red Hot Chili Peppers, Adrian Young of No Doubt, Matt Sorum of Guns N' Roses, Tre Cool of Green Day and John Densmore of the Doors. Taylor Hawkins**, drummer for **Foo Fighters** who passed away in March 2022, appears in what may be his final filmed interview. Watch on Apple TV+ or Amazon.

The Guild of Music Supervisors 8th Annual State of Music in Media Conference took place Oct. 1 at the LA Film School in Hollywood and included appearances by award-winning actress and producer **Issa Rae**, a panel featuring the music creative team behind **Baz Luhrmann's Elvis** and a look at the hit video game to series *Arcane*. The annual event gives participants the opportunity to network with top industry leaders and attend informational panels on topics covering music in film, television, advertising, documentaries, games, trailers and more. For more information, visit gmsmediainformation.com or contact Chandler Poling at chandler@whitebearpr.com.

Soundful makes AI music creation available to everyone. The human-aided AI music creation platform for artists, content creators, and businesses, unveiled its tiered subscription model for users the month. The subscription model includes three levels: Standard, Premium, and Enterprise. "At **Soundful**, our mission is to be a new and powerful tool for music creators at all levels," said Soundful CEO and founder **Diaa El All**. "Our new subscription model gives songwriters, producers, artists and even creative companies the ability to harness the power of music on their own terms, without having to jump through all of the hoops brought on by tricky licensing deals." Contact molly@spinlab.net for more info.

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



Daniel Lir/Bayou Bennett Filmmakers

Web: dreamteamdirectors.com
Contact: daniel@dreamteamdirectors.com
Most Recent: *Destination Angels*

Husband and wife filmmaking duo

Daniel Lir and Bayou Bennett of Dream Team Directors recently won the Leonardo Award at the DaVinci International Film Festival for *Destination Angels*, a short documentary also directed by Jim Samps, produced by Dru DeCaro, and inspired by the groundbreaking American writer and Beatnik pioneer Jack Kerouac. Seattle folk artist Christopher Mansfield of Fences was asked by Kerouac's estate to write five songs, accompanied by five poems by Kerouac for the film, in which Mansfield and musical collaborators visit some of Kerouac's old West Coast stomping grounds.

"I met Dru DeCaro, and he said I got this project, I need a director, look at the trailer. It was like a pause moment. Kerouac was so important to me growing up. He opened my whole universe to what's possible with creativity," Lir says. "I think *Destination Angels* is a cool project, because Chris [Mansfield] incorporated organic sounds—like ripping pages—into the music along the way. I love how committed they were to finding what was important to themselves and Jack. It was not a conventional journey. You have to abandon roadmaps sometimes to make something that is going to be creatively important."

Not just a film about Kerouac, *Destination Angels* contains messages of searching for oneself and finding meaning, and about sobriety, with which Mansfield has publicly discussed his own struggles. "Almost every project we do is a passion project," Bennett says. "It has to be something we believe in. Filmmaking is powerful, and the Kerouac project turned into a film about sobriety as well, which, for us, was an important message." Lir adds, "We wanted to make something that was relatable, because everyone is dealing with depression and anxiety to some extent, just living in this world, and some of us use drugs or alcohol to deal with things. I think the movie approached that in an interesting way."

▶ NANCY WILSON AT TAYLOR HAWKINS TRIBUTE

Heart co-founder Nancy Wilson has released "Amigo Amiga," the tribute song she wrote for her friend and collaborator, Taylor Hawkins, a few days after his passing. At the request of the Foo Fighters, Wilson performed at the Los Angeles Taylor Hawkins Tribute Concert.



▲ SPIRIT OF INDIGO GIRLS

Indigo Girls were honored with The Spirit of Americana Award for lifetime achievement as songwriters and recording and touring artists, as well as outspoken social activists, during a televised ceremony at the historic Ryman Auditorium—the hallmark ceremony of Nashville's Americanafest.



◀ LIZZO 'THE SPECIAL' TOUR

Multi-platinum certified artist Lizzo is pictured at her The Special Tour kickoff in Sunrise, FL at FLA Live Arena. The show delivered an amazing performance, opening with "The Sign" and continuing on with hit songs like "Truth Hurts," "Good As Hell" and "Rumors."



▲ VICTOR DRAI'S VEGAS BEACHCLUB

Victor Draai (middle) opened Draai's After Hours in 1997 and forever changed the Las Vegas Strip by introducing nightlife to a casino. The iconic Draai's Beachclub - Nightclub - After Hours at The Cromwell is celebrating a first in Las Vegas nightlife—a 25-year anniversary for the iconic club.

Tidbits From Our Tattered Past



1987-Leonard Cohen-#7

MC sat down with the celebrated Canadian songmaster Leonard Cohen and, over cigarettes and Budweiser, talked about his creative process. "You don't get any significant budgets necessary for you to experiment," he said. "It requires me to have quite a clear idea of what the song's going to be. So, I usually go into the studio with just my little synthesizer, or I'll do it at my home."



▲ GORILLAZ LIVE!

In the studio, the Gorillaz are a one-man band (Damon Albarn) with various special guest artists across different genres of music, but live it's a whole band and a major production. Gorillaz played an "intimate" set at the YouTube Theater, featuring the animated band members on-screen. Albarn not only sang, but played guitar, piano, melodica, and keytar.

◀ VINCE GILL STILL BELIEVES

Vince Gill's 5x-platinum album *I Still Believe in You* celebrates its 30th Anniversary, having made its debut in September 1992. A televised event, *CMT GIANTS: Vince Gill*, presented a plaque to honor the album's 30-year milestone. Pictured (l-r): Cindy Mabe (Universal Music Group Nashville), Vince Gill, Tony Brown (producer), Larry Fitzgerald (Gill's manager).



▶ NAMM MEETS CONGRESS

A delegation of NAMM Members, music and arts advocates, music industry leaders, teachers, parents, and community supporters met with members of Congress to encourage support for quality, comprehensive music education programs for all children. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and its Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (SSAEG) advocates to expand access to well-rounded subjects, specifically including music and the arts.



2013-Miguel-#8

In our interview with the soul music sensation, Miguel talked about his Grammy-winning career thus far and what he'd learned on the way up. "When I was growing up, I didn't realize how useful a Performing Rights Organization could be. But it is amazing to watch how everyone is connecting." In a special sidebar, Miguel speaks about his experiences working with veteran voice coach, Lis Lewis: "She is the shit, man; I love her!"



PLEASED TO MEET ZHU
BY KURT ORZECK

It took eight years for San Francisco native Steven Zhu to launch his career as an electronic musician and become one of the most revered artists in the genre.

"The genre." Ha. To even define electronic music anymore is like trying to summarize music itself. Electronic music is now so sprawling, wide-ranging—all-encompassing, even—that the term itself seems antiquated. There is a strong argument to be made that electronic music is more far-reaching and inclusive than rock music, but we'll save that discussion for another time.

Instead, we'll focus this one on Zhu—who, as an artist, goes by ZHU. (And that's pronounced "Zoo," for the record.)

As apparent from our recent conversation with ZHU, the music project is one of the most ambitious and industrious to emerge in recent memory. Perhaps the best example of this is the expansion of ZHU from a DJ into a project featuring an evolving cast of musicians. (Insider tip: do not refer to him as a DJ anymore.)

That evolution of the electronic-music project might, in and of itself, encapsulate the magnitude of ZHU and the ways he is almost single-handedly smashing barriers. To put it simply, if you envision a dude wearing headphones at a console when you hear the term "electronic music," you've got some catching up to do.

We caught up with Steven Zhu, who is 33 years old, shortly after the release of his new Astralwerks EP, *Musical Chairs Mixtape* (Vol. 1). With *Dreamland 2021* more than a year in the rearview mirror, our conversation revolved mostly around the expansion of his music project, how it feels to perform with partners instead of by himself—and what intertwines music with his heart and mind.

Gratefully, the artist who once refused to have his identity known, was remarkably candid in discussing all those topics—and much more.

Music Connection: What propels you most as an artist, particularly in the dance music realm? Is it the act of discovery? Do you subscribe to the belief that there are a finite number of songs that can be written?

ZHU: When you get down to it, what matters is capturing the essence of music at a certain point in time. ZHU also want to be kinda cerebral, but with dance music, you also gotta connect with the people. You gotta make them feel your music physically, as well. It can be challenging to convey.

MC: How do you manage to do that—as an electronic-music artist in particular? When you perform at massive festivals to a sea of people, and you're coordinating so much with your equipment that you have your head down ... it seems like a taller order for an electronic music artist to establish and maintain a connection with the crowd.

ZHU: Actually, that's why I started incorporating a band in my set. And working on my vocals. When I'm performing live, certain songs feel more human to perform them with my voice. Others feel more robotic, more locked-in, so I perform those with decks.

MC: Is that what you find most gratifying while you're onstage—looking up and seeing the crowd all in sync?

ZHU: Yes, I'm looking at the way people are moving, I think. I used to find it a lonely experience being onstage. It has made me a better performer in some ways, being able to perform with other people onstage with me. When I first started playing music, I played to empty rooms. That's the worst feeling, when nobody wants to see you.

It's hard to explain, but there's a feeling I get when I see a look on people's faces that tells me the experience has taken them over. I can feel it physically and emotionally, in an immense way. Some people might be rolling their eyes, some people might be smiling, you know what I mean?

MC: Yes.

ZHU: The experience clearly appears jawdropping for some people in the audience. Some are in their own dance zone. But when I see people reach that point, that's when I feel a lot of joy.

"I USED TO FIND IT A LONELY EXPERIENCE BEING ONSTAGE. IT HAS MADE ME A BETTER PERFORMER IN SOME WAYS, BEING ABLE TO PERFORM WITH OTHER PEOPLE ONSTAGE WITH ME. WHEN I FIRST STARTED PLAYING MUSIC, I PLAYED TO EMPTY ROOMS. THAT'S THE WORST FEELING, WHEN NOBODY WANTS TO SEE YOU."

MC: It seems like playing with a band is such a major shift in ZHU that it can almost be considered a different project now entirely. Given your history with performing solo, how often do you run into the challenge of getting on the same page with your bandmates?

ZHU: It's always difficult with musicians because they, you know, always wanna play. And sometimes the most beautiful thing in a song is when there's silence and space. But the guys that play with me really understand and appreciate when live music makes an impact. Our relationship has progressed.

MC: Can you point to a song or two that you've noticed fans react to differently at your concerts now that you've incorporated a band?

ZHU: "Risky Business" [a 2020 song Zhu created with Mathame, brothers Amedeo and

Matteo Giovannelli]. In our live show, at the end of the song, there's a moment where it's just us, the band and me, playing. It feels almost like an arena-rock moment versus a dance or techno track.

I grew up playing various instruments, and I think there's something primal about different sounds coming together and fitting together. You can't necessarily achieve that with a digital track. Performing it live as a group adds another layer of humanness to it. It a very dynamic part of the show.

MC: Given how you keep your shows dynamic, are you more inclined to vary your setlist or is it baked in from the start of the tour?

ZHU: Currently, I know the first couple of songs, the last couple of songs—but I don't know any of the songs that I might play in the middle.

Certain types of shows, you want to make sure that everything is running smoothly. But, man, I like the mistakes. The moment when it's rough and it's a jam, and it's working its way through interesting kinds of spaces that are challenging for the audience too.

I mean, I have hits, so we could run through them if I want us to—but that's not the point of our live performance. That's not the point of why someone wants to come on the concert journey with me, in a sense.

MC: So, what is the reason, in your mind? Is it so the concertgoer goes on a personal or emotional journey?

ZHU: I think people, when they come to my show, they want to be entranced. They wanna slowly be drawn into a wavelength that they've never been on. A trance. And that feels great. And then, when everyone's on the same wavelength, the performance really starts.

Some shows take work getting everybody to be really in tune with you. Not everybody is always focusing on you a lot of times, right?

MC: Oh, I'm sure. Especially at festivals, I'd imagine.

ZHU: Oh yeah. At festivals, people are just coming to check you out. They might not even know what to expect—so they need to be roped in.

MC: And how do you do that? What's your hook?

ZHU: Well, that's why having some flexibility in your setlist is important. Sometimes, even when you're certain that a song is going to work, it might not be the right moment to play it. That's when you have to play the role of a DJ more. Jam bands can really swap things around. But it's a bit more of a challenge for me, as a DJ who also has a band.

MC: Can you call to mind any shows where the outcome turned out to be way different than you thought it might be beyond those three established songs you brought into the set?

ZHU: Oh, man. Some nights it may take six songs to get to the place where I really wanna be. But I believe that I will always get there.

MC: How do you feel about encores?

ZHU: I might do multiple encores or I might do zero. That's the beauty of feeling out a live show. Some audiences deserve more performance; and for others, they've had a taste that's just right, and I don't wanna stay any longer.

MC: So, the element of surprise is really a key part of your live performance now.

ZHU: It can be. At Lollapalooza [on July 28 in Chicago], at the end of the show, and I played a couple tracks in the audience. I thought that was very cool and different. There was so much energy.

When I'm on the stage, I'm like 25, 30 feet away. But I didn't feel any distance when I went down there into the barricades. The energy was substantially different. It felt more alive.

MC: That must have been quite reinvigorating.

ZHU: Yeah, it gave me a chance to look at everyone who was down there. To take it all in. It all felt more real.

MC: That's fascinating. Can it be hard to crack into the authenticity of the live performance when you're behind the decks and all the trappings of the stage?

ZHU: Well, nowadays, everybody's got LED screens, lights ... everybody's kind of larger than life. But going into the crowd [like I did] provided sort of a moment of verification for people to experience.

MC: Were you surprised to get invited to play Lollapalooza?

ZHU: Yeah. I mean, electronic music is now a very large lifestyle genre that, if you wanna have kids there partying and having a good time, you gotta book electronic acts. The culture's alive and well, and growing more now in America.

MC: Was that your biggest crowd to date?

ZHU: That, Coachella and EDC [Electric Daisy Carnival in Las Vegas].

MC: Did you run into many friends of yours there, backstage or otherwise?

ZHU: I played on the first day. Unfortunately, I didn't get to see Metallica. I haven't seen them.

MC: What else do your personal musical tastes encompass?

ZHU: I get into different phases. Sometimes I'm super-deep into electronic music and then other times I'm into some rock or hip-hop. I'm always going to take a peek and try to understand what a different kind of music is. Why a certain artist or style is as big as it is. There's so much music out there.

MC: It sounds like you take almost an anthropological approach to getting exposed to music.

ZHU: Especially with streaming, it's to trace the lineage of a sample. If you're into Greta Van Fleet, maybe you'll go back to Led Zeppelin.

MC: What are you satisfied about with *Musical Chairs Mixtape (Vol. 1)*?

ZHU: I tried to make it like a cassette mixtape, and we managed to clock it at like 29 minutes and 52 seconds, so that was pretty close.

MC: Clearly there's an appreciation for cassettes now, with all the cottage label releases. But as an electronic musician, do you find that the sound quality is decent enough to justify the resurgence in the format's popularity?

ZHU: I mean, I think '90s hip-hop on a boombox sounds fantastic. It bumps. And I might listen to Radiohead's *In Rainbows* on a Walkman. Maybe on a train ride.

MC: How would you describe or articulate your favorite production or sound qualities to someone who might not be an audiophile?

ZHU: Hmm. I guess if you're talking to someone who isn't fully tech-savvy, you'd probably want to explain what a "lush" sound quality is. I'd say that good drums have a "smack."

MC: Do you start writing a song by laying down the drum tracks first?

ZHU: If I want to start a groove? Yeah, absolutely. I started as a beat-maker before I started writing songs on keys and guitars. So, my innate nature is to work on the drums and the bass line.

But, lately, I've been challenging myself to write differently. To write songs first, and then to go back and adapt [the individual parts]. When you start with drums, when you're making beats, like you're writing rhythm. Writing on keys, you're writing mainly melodies.

MC: Are you heavily involved with both mixing and mastering, or do you dish off those duties at some point?

ZHU: I mix my own stuff. I don't master it, but like to hear the process. It keeps my ear fresh.

MC: What sound excites you most right now? What's the one that you see the most promise in, perhaps?

ZHU: Sounds that are heavily distorted and crunched. A 10-year-old reference would be Justice. I'm into heavy sounds that are still clean and not sloppy. They have more snare and rhythm.

MC: Does that crunchy sound lend a more naturalistic aesthetic?

ZHU: I think it's more of an attitude. When you're distorting things, you're destroying parts of it. So, it brings a bit of recklessness to the production.

MC: What do you have planned for your Red Rocks shows in November?

ZHU: I'm designing the stage right now. It'll be a bit more interactive. I'm planning to incorporate some '90s nostalgia. [Ed. note: ZHU has incorporated Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" into some recent setlists.]

MC: Given how visual an artist you are, does that explain why you launched a fashion line?

ZHU: Fashion has always pulled from club culture and electronic music, but there hasn't been any major fashion show that's focused heavily on a line by an electronic artist. I'm hoping that the fashion industry will kind of, like, connect with the culture a bit more. They've definitely been referencing electronic music in the '80s, '90s and even 2000s, with rave culture.

MC: Do you find any challenge in preserving your artistic integrity from your business ambitions? Or is that not really an argument anymore, because of how technology has evolved?

ZHU: I am an entrepreneur. The ultimate dream is that you can disconnect the two, but the reality is we live in 2022.

MC: What's the most memorable compliment you've ever received as an artist?

ZHU: That's a pretty challenging one. Some people have written me saying, "Your music saved my life." I'm still trying to wrap my head around the importance of that.

Contact courtnei.asbury@ledecompany.com

QUICK FACTS

- ZHU's Nov. 11 and 12 gigs at Red Rocks Amphitheatre will not be the artist's first at one of the most beloved music venues in the U.S. In fact, ZHU have performed there every year since selling out an eye-popping six shows at Red Rocks in 2020.
- ZHU blew up in 2014, beginning the year with an Outkast remix medley on Soundcloud that wasn't even originally attributed to the project.
- Also in 2014, ZHU struck a deal with Columbia Records and played a career-turning show at HARD Day of the Day that winter.
- While Steven Zhu grew up in San Francisco, he now calls Los Angeles home.
- Yes, that is Steven Zhu singing on his songs. And using the auto-tune as well.
- By Feb. 2015, Steven Zhu had only given three interviews.
- Even though Steven Zhu is no longer anonymous, good luck trying to spot him in public. He almost always wears black sunglasses and an unassuming leather jacket and white tee.

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BEHOLD!

The Awesome Power of the Daily Journal



BY MIKE ERRICO

Writing is a muscle, and journaling is going to the gym. That's

why the most important book I assign is full of blank pages: a journal. Every single writer I've had in as guest speaker journals in one form or another. Some of you may have been journaling since the days of diaries with the lock that didn't work and the key you lost anyway. That's a head start. But if not, I've taken cues from a few books to get you rolling.

Write Three Pages a Day, Rain or Shine, in Sickness and in Health, till Death Do You Part In *The Artist's Way*, Julia Cameron refers to these as "morning pages." Let me see if I can anticipate your questions.

"Do they need to be done in the morning?"
They don't.

"Are we expected to journal on holidays?"
As if holidays exist. Give me a day on the calendar—any day—and I can find a holiday/ reason not to write, work, get off the couch, or live. Maybe how often you journal is however much you care.

"What dimensions should the page be?"
Three pages is three pages, and you know what three pages is. The page is not a postage stamp, and it's not the menu at Denny's. If that's not helpful, I'd say you can default to 8.5 by 11 inches, which is the standard size a copier will spit at you.

"Can I draw pictures?"
Yes. Pictures, pressed leaves, band stickers, mugshots, whatever. It's your portable playground, and no one tells you what game to play. I do think it helps to start each entry with

the date and a couple of quick surrounding details so that if you have to come back to a particular thought, a few sense memories might help you access your state of mind.

"Why three pages?"

Because I think everyone's got a page and half in them, and it's mostly garbage. It's hot outside. I have a head cold. Work sucks. It's laundry day. Whatever. Once you've cleared that nonsense out, you've got a page and a half to go, and that's when things take off. You have to fill the space, so you do. What happens to me is that the writing starts to get ahead of the thinking, and the subconscious takes the wheel. That's exactly who should be driving, and it's why morning is good—you're still in a kind of suspended state between waking and sleep. People have tried to manufacture that in-between state, by the way. Salvador Dalí used to sit in a chair with a key in his hand and a plate on the floor; he'd relax until he started nodding off, and the key would drop and hit the plate. He'd wake up just a little woozy and liminal, which helped him continue to be Salvador Dalí. Whatever you have to do. But hit something and do it consistently, like, oh, reps at the gym.

Alternative: Pick a Specific Object and Write About It for 10 Minutes

Time yourself, and when 10 minutes ends, stop, no matter where you've landed. This style of "object writing" is in *Writing Better Lyrics* by Pat Pattison, and it's a little more customized to time-sensitive, "on demand" styles of writing. Singer-songwriter Madison Cunningham came to class and told us she uses a loose version of this method and never misses a day.

"Why ten minutes?"

By focusing on an object and then diving fast and deep, you train yourself to get to the heart of an idea quickly. This is helpful when you're in cowriting sessions and you're thrown into a room with someone, maybe a total stranger (who's also famous), and given a specific prompt. Timing yourself trains you to brainstorm efficiently. It's like running wind sprints at—yes—the gym.

Journal, You Say? Where Might I Find One?

Selling journals looks like it's a pretty good business. There are a lot of choices. Some are scented. Some have no lines, like nightmares. Some have ribbon bookmarks, which is hilarious for a journal because you know you left off where the words end, don't you? There are even "songwriter's journals," which remind me a little of people who order lobster and are given bibs—kind of infantilizing. But I guess if you're selling blank books, you need to add value, and I respect the hustle.

I get my journal at the pharmacy in the aisle that still sells blank CDs, and I go alone because I will not be rushed, distracted, or spoken to. College ruled, obviously, with a metal spiral—plastic is just ridiculous. It speaks of a fragile life.

It has to be three-subject. One-subject notebooks are flimsy and too short; thoughts

physically straddle the volumes, making it difficult to refer back to scribble that suddenly strikes me as genius. Color is critical! I let the color tell me which one I want to take home. This can take a while.

The point is, it's a ritual, and whether it's kicking one's cleats three times before stepping into the batter's box or heaving innocents into a volcano, we humans love ritual.

While You're There: Pens

Same aisle. Bold yet sensitive. Minimal drag but not excessively fast so that it slips out from under your grasp. I used to think the rubber grips were just for show, but I've grown to like them. They provide a sense of luxury. They say, I'm worth it. I assume people who go for weekend bike rides dressed like they're in the Tour de France can relate. It's a psychological edge. So go ahead. Treat yourself to the rubber grips.

Why Pens? Because of Longhand

I have a rule for journaling in my classes: it must be done longhand. No laptops, no in-app note taking. My students, so politically sensitive to one another, think nothing of attributing this rule to my age. To them, I suddenly appear

"Your journal records a live, first take of something it took a lifetime to process."

decrepit, Gandalfian (minus the magic). They audibly groan that longhand is from another time—one of trees pressed into thin sheaves the Elders call "paper," to which a fancy quill is applied. Do they picture me at home, listening to their demos through an old-timey ear horn? Probably.

So. Let me explain.

Nature

I'm reminded that working on computers is natural at this point. "We are native users," I'm told, with the ageism implied. My thought is that we are more native to ourselves than we are to tech. Until the Singularity arrives (assuming it hasn't), that remains true. We are looking for clues to ourselves, and longhand leaves more distinctive footprints.

Efficiency

I'm aware that typing is efficient—I have a laptop, myself, and oh yeah, I typed this article. But here's a simple question: What is the point of being efficient at making something when we're not sure what we're making? "Efficiency" will be our friend—later on. For now, we're wandering around the mind in search of the raw thing we will apply the blade of efficiency to.

Convenience

Yes, typing is a convenient way of writing, but Hot Pockets are a convenient way of eating. You might love Hot Pockets, and that's fine, but you have to admit there's something about their unwavering uniformity that is psychologically unsettling. I think of this when I type on a laptop and an A is an A. That makes no sense! They're all different A's, all being used differently—the stresses and meanings are flattened by the recording mechanism. So much of the language of songwriting is in the performance, but computers specialize in Hot Pocketing whatever gets typed in. I mean, how do you account for the performance of the language on the computer?

YOU CAN'T ALL CAPS EVERYTHING.

Nietzsche put it succinctly: "Our writing tools are working on our thoughts." To me, typing does it by erasing character—right at the moment when character is exactly what we're looking for. This isn't tech's fault; it just wasn't built to convey the specifics of who we are. It was created to convey the common denominators between us in order to serve as many of us as possible. Helvetica is speech in someone else's voice, and it works great—later on in the process, like on the lyric sheet or the recording contract. At the journaling phase, technology is a weak link in a game of telephone we play with the page.

When A Does Not Equal A

I think what intrigues us about cover songs is that we get to witness different artists' choices when faced with the same notes. Each variation argues that fixed writing has an endless number of shades and that a song can be recognizable and unknowable at the same time. The difference is performance. I'm reminded of the time a friend and I went to an exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum titled "Hip-Hop Nation: Roots, Rhymes, and Rage." After staring at empty tracksuits and Kangol hats for a while, one of us realized that, without Jam Master Jay walking in them, we were just staring at a pair of Adidas. We now refer to the exhibit as "Fat Laces in Glass Cases," and it's come to represent any moment when a detail can't stand in for the whole—when it's all sneaker, no swagger; all machine, no ghost.

Glorious Mess

Journaling is a nonlinear, visual art form with music in it that we can see. It speaks in our private voice. It reveals our character. Yes, there is writing in the way we write.

We may need graphic capability, moments for caricature, long division, exclamation points that gouge the page—who knows. Connecting lines are instructive; cross-outs are documents of where we've been. This is investigative action painting; like Jackson Pollock, we are recording the physical act of recording before assembling it in the medium of our choice. It's still a jumble, several needles in a haystack, with your longhand humming the internal music of whatever may emerge. On a laptop, that music comes out like quantized MIDI notes. That's what fonts are, aren't they? They're quantized letters, sitting on a grid at mechanized distances. No swing. An A is an A is an A.

The slop and stink and ketchup stains and taped-in ticket stubs are the natural

ecosystem that belches up song fragments. The performative aspects of your longhand have literal manifestation—they come out in tempo, arranging, choice of instrument, and personal opinion. Your journal records a live, first take of something it took a lifetime to process.

Physical Pain

Yes, I'm aware that your journaling hand hurts after a while. From what I'm told, everything hurts after a while. If you're looking to avoid pain, every business is the wrong business to be in.

"A Desirable Difficulty"

In 2014, Pam A. Mueller and Daniel M. Oppenheimer published a study in which they tested students' ability to absorb information while taking class notes in longhand versus on a laptop. They found, conclusively, that "students who took notes on laptops performed worse on conceptual questions than students who took notes longhand." They noted longhand's slower speed but its greater focus and synthesis—there was more interaction with the material. They noted that the longhand students wrote fewer words, and what makes sense is that a slower technique creates a need for word choice—a cognitive process that requires an understanding of the concepts. To me, that sounds a lot like a first edit taking place. Longhand was deemed "a desirable difficulty," whereas computer use generated more words but seemed to kick the cognition can down the road.

Surveillance

If you think these are grandpa reasons to journal in longhand, here's a more high-tech one: It's because they're eavesdropping. Who are "they?" I don't know, but they're staring at you through your camera and grabbing the keywords you're typing. They're serving you ads based on your emerging subconscious thoughts. They're reading your journal. Are you freaked out by that? And by "that" I mean "robots selling your unaccountable Franken-secrets back to you?"

I always took the Bob Dylan line "If my thought-dreams could be seen / They'd probably put my head in a guillotine" as a warning. If you're journaling on a laptop, your thought-dreams can be seen. What do "they" do with them? I don't know, but I mean, look at Mark Zuckerberg's face. He loses your data the way dogs lose tennis balls under the couch. He winds up in court and in front of congressional panels—a lot. The obvious takeaway: Your secrets aren't secret when you're typing them. Takeaway 2: You're not alone when you're alone at the computer. Takeaway 3: Your computer is not a tool you can trust. And you have to trust your tools.

You'd think this would be a golden age of longhand.

Maybe it is.

Where to Write

In *On Writing*, Stephen King says, "All you need is a door you're willing to shut." I'd add coffee to the list, but that's it. Annie Dillard is more brutal: "You can read in the space of a coffin, and you can write in the space of a tool shed meant for mowers and spades. . . . Appealing workplaces are to be avoided. One wants a room with no view, so imagination can meet memory in the dark." So goth. So good.

Priorities

Journaling requires you to make some time for it. If you like to get trashed and be up all hours but also find that your best writing happens early in the morning with a clear head, you're going to have to commit to one of those two jealous lovers. In presenting irreconcilable choices like these to my students, I have seen (some of) them change their habits. Some realize that being a better singer requires quitting smoking. Some realize far more profound changes than that, and the decisions push them toward prioritizing the creation of raw material, which is the root of the song, which is the root of everything.

Where to Look

We have tools, definitions, and pens . . . what now? Where do song ideas come from? The artists I've interviewed usually answer that question with a shrug. "It just came to me." "It was like I dictated it." "I sat bolt upright in bed

"What you have initially is the surface of the river. Sometimes you can see into it better and sometimes it's harder, depending on how clear the water is, how much reflection, or glare."

and ran to the guitar." In other words, they don't know.

Nobody knows.

In *Catching the Big Fish*, film director David Lynch writes that the subconscious is like a river, ideas are fish, and desire is the bait. I really like that image, but just because you know where the fish are doesn't mean you know how to catch them. Luckily, I know a guy who does.

Greg Felt is the cofounder of ArkAnglers, a full-service fly-fishing business on Colorado's Arkansas River, where he's been a guide since 1985. In 2016, he was elected commissioner of Chaffee County; in 2020, Governor Jared Polis appointed him to the Colorado Water Conservation Board, where he represents the Arkansas River Basin—28,000 square miles and nearly a million people.

You basically work inside a giant metaphor.

Oh, yeah. You don't have to say, "Get ready

for a metaphor." When you're talking about the river, you sort of weave in and out of it all the time. And I will say the river that I work on is a free-flowing, wild river—we fish it from about 10,000 feet in elevation down to about 5,000 feet, through all kinds of geology and geography. Some rivers are more formulaic.

What do you notice about people as they interact with the river?

One thing that's been interesting is that there's a lot of what some would call "superstition" involved. I always go back to Stevie Wonder: "When you believe in things that you don't understand," from that song, "Superstition." Working in a fly shop on a Saturday, you might have 20 or 30 people come in, and if it's a good day, they all have a theory as to what was going on or what was working. And when things aren't going well, all kinds of superstition starts to come in, and it becomes really clear they don't know what's going on. They have ideas that they try to match to very scant evidence. It's interesting how important it is for people to feel like they know what's going on, even when they don't.

What "scant evidence" are they working with?

What you have initially is the surface of the river. Sometimes you can see into it better and sometimes it's harder, depending on how clear the water is, how much reflection, or glare—all that. But you also have what you believe to be true about the river, and the fish, and the bugs. And for a lot of people, that's it. They just go to the river with their beliefs, and they throw their beliefs out there and see if they stick.

We try to coach people that there's a lot more information available, if you open up your mind a little more. I tell people, "Five minutes of observation is worth an hour of implementation." What does the river look like? What does the sky look like? What kind of day are we having? What's the wind doing? Are there clouds? Are the clouds coming? Are the clouds leaving? What are the birds doing? Some of these birds are focused on the same aquatic insects as the fish, and if you spend enough time out there, I'm convinced you can actually learn from the birds' songs. They really start talking when something's about to happen.

So, all these dynamics are at work, and I think some people have an intuitive sense of it, but they don't realize what it is, especially in their early years of fishing. They're focused on just catching fish and getting pictures and stuff, but there's value to what you can pick up by taking in the totality of being out there.

You're sort of an intermediary between the river and the expectations of it.

Yes. Visitors are very results oriented, and the results that they're looking for are fish. It's actually pretty stressful because the expectations don't tend to change from day to day, but the situation in which you're trying to fulfill them totally changes. So, we're often tempering that expectation.

How?

I have a saying: "You don't learn shit on a 50-fish day." Because basically what happens is it's just on, but there's no challenge, and you don't really have to figure much out. It's when we work hard all day to catch ten—that's where a lot of the learning comes from. I try to remind people of that. "Think about your life. Most of your good learning came in the face

of adversity, not in the easy successes. It's the same thing out here."

Is it different when you're out there on your own?

It can vary. Sometimes I'm like anybody else, like, "God dang, I just want to go down there and catch some fish." But for me, it's also a way to measure myself against the natural world. I think that's what human beings have been doing since they became, let's say, "conscious" or "self-aware." But it's funny because we're measuring the dynamic nature of human beings, and ourselves, against this thing that's not a yardstick—it's something way more fluid and amorphous. Time changes the relationship, too. No question.

It's amazing how you can know something so well and always be surprised.

It is. But I think some of the coolest relationships are some of the most unpredictable, right? Some really creative or spirited people—you can't box them in, and there's always that tension. Somebody wants to codify a relationship and the other person just wants to be free, and as long as they're free, they're themselves, and that's what you liked about them in the first place. It's kind of like that with the river, I think. You've got to accept it for what it is and embrace it—and just know that it's always going to be hard.

Then What?

Then you carve your journal up. Maybe a pink highlighter marks good titles, yellow are good verse lines, and orange are chorus concepts. Maybe you take all the good titles you have and compile them into a list of titles you can bring into a cowrite as a strong jumping-off point. (It's nice to feel prepared, even if you're crippled with anxiety in a writing room. At least you have some titles sitting there that you can reach for.)

Sometimes it's less logical. David Byrne wrote about the early filtration process of journaling in his book *How Music Works*:

When some phrases, even if collected almost at random, begin to resonate together and appear to be talking about the same thing, it's tempting to claim they have a life of their own. The lyrics may have begun as gibberish, but often, though not always, a "story" in the broadest sense emerges. Emergent storytelling, one might say.

The Results of the Results

How can the process be codified and repeated so that we might just leave the art machine on 24 hours a day and have it crank out shiny little Hot Pockets of song? I don't think it works that way, at least not for me. All you can do is generate the raw material, then work it through the process and detach your ego from the finished product. That's a lot. But you can do it.

When I say "detach your ego from the finished product," here's an example of what I mean: My mother is an artist who has done a lot of sculpting in stone. An irony about working with stone is that it's a very obvious, hulking thing, and yet you never know exactly what you're working with. There are natural deposits that run through quarries and can discolor or weaken its properties. Stone carving is also a very dusty business; it can be difficult to see detail, so what you have to do is splash the stone occasionally with some water to

clear the dust away. Mom had an idea to carve a bust of a reclining woman, and got a hunk of alabaster about the size of a healthy watermelon and went at it. After carving out the rough dimensions of the thrown-back head and exposed neck, she splashed the stone and revealed rose-red veins running through it—they now ran across the woman's face and down her neck, changing the sense of the piece entirely. Suddenly the questions were, "Has she been assaulted?" "Is her peaceful expression a comment on the pain she's been through?" "Is this political? Historical?" "Is she All Women?" "Is she Mother Earth?" And so on. None of this was in the original concept of the piece, but the raw material revealed a completely different energy.

I personally love when that happens. The medium wrestles back control from the artist's ego, and what arrives is a kind of compromise, or maybe it's a cease-fire that we refer to as "finished." When you get songs like that (and if you haven't, you will), you never forget it. You never forget splashing water on them and finding out what's staring back at you.

"Generate the raw material, then work it through the process and detach your ego from the finished product. That's a lot. But you can do it."

Journaling Jump-Starts

If you want to journal but don't know where to begin, here are some fuses for your firecracker brains. Refer to them. Scan them and cut them into strips and stick them around the house. Tape them to the bananas in your fruit bowl. Whatever gets you started.

What is your perfect workspace? Describe it in detail running through each of the five senses. Is it indoor, outdoor, dark, light, sunny . . . by the beach, a ski slope, the fire escape, a graveyard? Are you drinking coffee, a smoothie, whiskey, water? Is it midnight, 5 a.m., high noon? See it, touch it, lick it, and report back.

What do you want a listener to get from your music? And who is that listener, anyway? What do they look like? Where are they from? What are they doing while you're coming out of the speakers?

Pick a single object in front of you and write about it and only it. If you're staring at a ketchup bottle thinking there really isn't

much to say about it, remember astronomer Carl Sagan's words: "If you wish to make an apple pie from scratch, you must first invent the universe."

Play "Verbs and Nouns." Wilco lead singer Jeff Tweedy offers this exercise in *How to Write One Song*: in one column on a page, list 10 verbs that have to do with a job or action—surfing, hammering, testing. In a second column, write out 10 nouns within your range of vision—a cup of coffee, a book, the kitchen.

Next, draw lines to connect the verbs you chose with your nouns. Look for combinations you'd never have come up with on your own. Some will be duds at first, but play around with them until they conjure a fresh image, character, or scene. Maybe the rhythm in the words will spark a melody, but to be honest, I've tried this method, and it can just as easily spark a short story, a rant, or a home improvement idea. Doesn't matter—if you're jump-started, that's a win, and you'll have baked in what David Byrne calls "the pleasant ambiguity . . . [that] constitutes much of the reason we love music."

Let's say you had a "brand" as a writer, but you also had a pseudonym no one could ever trace back to you. What would that alter ego sound like? Funny? Political? Ambient? Twangy? Emo? A three-hour loop of sneakers tumbling in a dryer? What if you gave yourself license to try it? Maybe just one song, for fun—just to see? What would it be about?

Three steps. In an interview, songwriter Bernard Butler laid this plan out: (1) Write down something that happened, being as detailed and descriptive as possible. (2) Explain how it made you feel. (3) Describe where this experience has left you.

You've basically just written the arc of a song: number one is your verses, number two is your pre-choruses, and number three is the chorus. That may sound fairly simplistic, but we're just getting you jump-started here. It's a seed, but it may grow into something.

If you're in a touring band: What song does your set need? Is there a hole that you fill every night with a not-exactly-right song? Is it the opener? A closer? An anthem? Write about the kind of song that will make your show better. Start aiming that direction.

Song of the Week. What's the best song you heard this week? What tipped you off to its greatness? What did it have this week that no other song had?

I won't swamp you with more of these because you could just do a search for "songwriting prompts" and spend the rest of eternity being prompted. But if one of these or just part of one gets you up and writing, then all of them have done their job. I hope they help.

Alt-Journaling and the Riff du Jour

There's an obvious problem with the method of journaling I just outlined: It's that some things don't come out in words. Things like, say, music.

"Journaling" doesn't strictly mean writing in a notebook. Eric Bazilian (founding member of the Hooters; cowriter with artists including Cyndi Lauper, Ricky Martin, and Carlos Santana; and writer of Joan Osborne's international smash, "One of Us") has an approach he calls "Riff du Jour."

What is Riff du Jour, exactly?

Riff du Jour is journaling, but it's unconscious journaling. I'll start singing words, and sometimes there's gibberish, but eventually a story emerges. And sometimes it's surprising. Sometimes it's scary.

How do you catalog all your Riffs du Jour?

I have phone recordings, and sometimes I'll go back and find one and use it for something, but generally I really have to capture the moment and then dive in and take it as far as it'll go. It's a mystical, magical, mysterious process that goes on, and I just have to be open to it and show up for work.

Which of your songs do you attribute specifically to Riff du Jour?

Every song I've ever written has been a Riff du Jour, just about. "One of Us," absolutely a Riff du Jour. "And We Danced" [the first major hit for the Hooters] was a notable exception. Rob [Hyman] and I were on a songwriting retreat for a week, and I said, "Hey, let's try to write a song totally from a melody. And these are the parameters: It's going to start before the downbeat, and it's going to develop from there."

So, you made up rules based on the downbeat?

That's sort of been my philosophy. There are three kinds of melodies: melodies that start on the downbeat, melodies that start before the downbeat, and melodies that start after. Melodies that start after it have become much more common in songwriting since this whole "track making" and "topline" [writing melodies on "top" of tracks] thing has happened because the track is leading the singer and the melody. The topline person hears a chord and says, "Okay, I'm going to react to that." With melodies that start ahead of the beat, the singer is taking control, and the band is following the singer. There is a sense of urgency if you're singing into the beat because you've got a story to tell and you can't wait to hear what the band is going to play.

Interesting thing: Most Beatles songs? Before the beat. [Sings] "Oh, yeah I-I-I..." [Sings] "She loves you-u-u," and so on and so forth. "Yesterday" is on the beat. "All You Need Is Love" is after the beat, but he gets to keep that one. [Laughs]

Antennae Always Twitching

Former student Madison Emiko Love, who has worked with Selena Gomez, Lady Gaga, Ava Max, Camila Cabello, and others, has an ideating process that includes not just "being inspired" but also actively going out and hunting.

How do you search for song ideas?

I don't want to give away all my secrets, but I listen, read, and watch everything I can, old and new. I hear things at restaurants, on

TV—especially hit television shows because they have some of the best writers working on those scripts. I scour the internet for quotes, old song titles that were popular from other decades, and then I make them my own in some way. I don't judge when an idea pops into my head, good or bad. If it's the stupidest idea ever, I laugh about it and write it down, no matter what.

An example of things I research: I was looking up a synonym for the word "unique," and I found the word "rare" in the list. I scribbled it down in the corner of the page in my notebook and went to a recording session for Selena Gomez. Three years later, "Rare" was a single and the title of her album. She even created a makeup company with Sephora called "Rare Beauty." So it's things like that—little concepts that turn into bigger things. You don't always know how powerful they can become. A song concept turns into an entire album concept and a message for young people everywhere.

"Sometimes I'll draw a huge picture, and then I'll write lyrics inside it with different-colored pens. I never use pencils because I don't like erasing anything."

How do you organize the bits and pieces you compile?

I have song journals that I've kept since college. I'm on book number 11. I have thousands of concepts that I jot down all the time. Sometimes I'll draw a huge picture, and then I'll write lyrics inside it with different-colored pens. I never use pencils because I don't like erasing anything. So, I always have a place to look for concepts. Or I'll open up my safe, look through my old journals, and see what I was thinking back then.

Did you just say "safe"?

[Laughs] Yeah. I put my journals in a safe. They're very precious! It's a fireproof safe, too.

When you're in a session, do you take a journal and just flip to any page and see what happens?

I always prepare myself. Like when I worked with Katy Perry, I spent the entire week before writing down about 700 concepts, and categorized them in case she wanted to write a breakup song that day, or something else... I

only had two days writing with her, so I wanted to be 100 percent prepared and not caught off guard. I love to make sure I don't come to a session empty-handed. I'll have a chorus written or a bunch of ideas that I know are very strong.

Live Journaling

If these alternative methods don't feel immediate enough for you, you're not the only one. On the Song Exploder podcast, Grammy-nominated Philadelphia rapper Meek Mill and producer Don Cannon explained Meek's process while breaking down his song "Trauma":

Don Cannon: A lot of times when you write down things, you already got it—the feeling—out on paper. So now you're reading it back, and... it's very hard to give it the same energy.

Meek Mill: I make all my music on the spot. I don't write my music down, so as soon as I get a thought, I gotta rush to the booth and lay it down piece by piece.

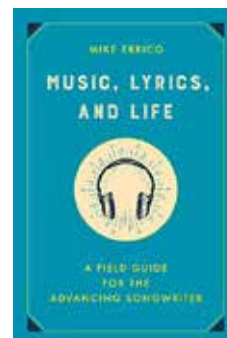
The song is the journal in this case.

Conclusion

A through-line between these approaches is that songs come on like an emergency and can disappear as quickly. Writers are forever rushing out of rooms, rushing to instruments, rushing to microphones, all feverishly hitting the Record button to answer the call so they can capture it, sing it, rap it, play it, and, ultimately, share it.

Is one better than the other? You can't physically see me right now, but I'm giving you the Italian shrug—shoulders up, chin thrust forward, lips drawn clownishly downward, palms at shoulder height, turned skyward. It means, "Who knows?" Accept the not knowing—resign yourself to the fact that what's true and beautiful is also elusive.

Parts of this article are excerpted from *Music, Lyrics, and Life: A Field Guide for the Advancing Songwriter*, available everywhere, including: | Bookshop | Books Are Magic | Amazon | Bandcamp (signed copies)



MIKE ERRICO

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Mackie MC-350 and MC-450 Headphones

The MC-350 and MC-450 are currently the top of the range of Mackie's professional headphone series and offer an affordable, professional grade solution for live and studio monitoring requirements. Both the MC-350 and MC-450 make use of premium materials and solid construction and are built to withstand a reasonable amount of real-world abuse. Both the MC-350 and MC-450 feature an adjustable metal headband attached to a leather stitched headband cushion and comfortable, conforming leather ear cups. The metal headband on the MC-350 and MC-450 can quickly and precisely be adjusted for a variety of head sizes. Both the MC-350 and MC-450 are designed to be comfortable enough to be worn for extended listening sessions.

The MC-350 and MC-450 have the same overall professional build specifications, the main difference between the two headphones is that the MC-350 is a closed back design, and the MC-450 has an open back design. Both the MC-350 and MC-450 have high-headroom, reference-quality 50mm transducers which provide clear, accurate sonic reproduction of your source material across the entire frequency spectrum. Frequency response for both the

MC-350 and MC-450 is 20Hz - 20kHz. Impedance for the MC 350 headphone is 32 Ohms, while impedance for the MC-450 is 54 Ohms. Sensitivity for both headphones is 97 dB.

Both the MC-350 and MC-450 are great for recording and critical listening applications. That said, the MC 350 being a closed back design has better sound Isolation allowing it to effectively be used for live and location applications while still offering a color neutral,

"The Included variety of cables, carrying case, professional specifications, not to mention the affordable price points, make the MC-350 and MC-450 a great choice for your next headphone purchase."

sonically accurate listening experience in the studio. For recording studio and critical listening applications, the MC-450 delivers tight punchy bass and clear and precise translations of treble and mid-range frequencies making the MC-450 suitable for just about any tracking, mixing or mastering session you will want to use them for.

Both the MC-350 and MC-450 come with a 9.8 ft. fabric-jacketed straight cable, a 4 ft coiled cable, and a 4 ft straight cable with multimedia

functions (volume +/-, play/pause). The cable on both the MC-350 and MC-450 connects to the Headphone via a twist and click bayonet twist connector that securely attaches whatever of the three cable options provided with the headphones are currently being used. The other end of each of the three cables is a 1/8th TRS connector that attaches to the provided gold-plated quarter inch adaptor. Both headphones come with a protective carrying case that holds both the headphone and a separate pouch to store whichever two cables you are not currently using. Both headphones have a collapsible, foldable "swivel and tilt" design that facilitate single ear monitoring if desired and allows them to lie flat on your desktop or recording console.

As with all Mackie products, the MC-350 and MC-450 offer a solid value proposition. The Included variety of cables, carrying case, professional specifications, not to mention the affordable price points, make the MC-350 and MC-450 a great choice for your next headphone purchase and should be a cost effective enough solution to outfit an entire band, club or recording studio.

The Mackie MC-350 is available now for \$199, the Mackie MC-450 is available now for \$299 MAP. Find out more at mackie.com.



Donner Alpha Cruncher and Revecho

Donner is a global music technology company offering a wide range of consumer-oriented musical instrument products. Established in 2012 and headquartered in Guangdong, China, Donner has over the past 10 years expanded from being a manufacturer of guitar effect pedals to developing a full line of family-oriented musical instruments focused on offering a high level of value for beginner or intermediate level musicians. With different divisions covering everything from band, general musical instruments (guitar, bass, drums and keyboard), musical entertainment and musical products for kids, Donner makes and sells a wide range of high-quality musical instruments and accessories worldwide.

While not as well-known of a brand as some of the mainstream guitar effect pedals sold here in the U.S., Donner makes a wide range great sounding, affordable guitar effect pedals. Two good examples are Donner's Alpha Cruncher and Revecho multi-effect pedals, which are compact, fly rig or gig bag sized multi effect pedals. Each of Alpha Cruncher and Revecho's controls are located directly above each effect and have a rubber grip making all the parameters easy to adjust on the fly. If you are on the go or on the road, Donner's Alpha Cruncher and Revecho guitar effect pedals are a terrific way to create, record and perform professional quality guitar parts.

Donner's Alpha Cruncher features British-style distortion, chorus and delay effects housed in a rugged, compact all-steel enclosure. Alpha Cruncher's multi-effects are designed to sound great by themselves or can be combined to create rich, harmonically complex textures. The Alpha Cruncher, because of its

great sound and flexible signal path, is perfect for live gig and home recording applications.

Alpha Cruncher's distortion effect has a volume control to adjust the output level, a gain knob to adjust the amount of distortion and a tone control. The chorus effect has level, rate, and depth controls. The delay effect has a level control to adjust the delay volume, a feedback control to adjust the number of repeats and a delay knob to adjust the delay time. The Alpha Cruncher comes with a nine-volt DC regulated 500 mA power supply. There is no battery compartment on the Alpha Cruncher, so you either need to use the included power supply

"I was pleasantly surprised how many usable sounds I could get out Donner's Alpha Cruncher and Revecho."

or a pedal board power supply. The back of the Alpha Cruncher has unbalanced 1/4" input and output jacks.

Donner's Revecho guitar effect pedal combines a tap tempo enabled delay and reverb effects in one pedal, allowing you to easily create complex ambient and spatial reverb and delay textures. As with Alpha Cruncher, Revecho is built into an all-steel enclosure with easy-to-adjust onboard controls.

Revecho's reverb effect emulates a classic hall reverb algorithm and is a great general purpose reverb effect for stage or studio. With Revecho's onboard controls you can fine-tune Revecho's overall effect level, delay time, delay feedback, and reverb time. Holding down the reverb switch

engages or disengages the tails (spillover) effect. Holding down the delay switch engages the tap tempo function. When the tap tempo effect is engaged, the delay indicator light will blink according to the tempo tapped into the footswitch. As with the Alpha Cruncher, the back of Revecho has unbalanced quarter-inch input and output jacks and a jack to attach a nine-volt DC regulated 500 mA power supply and no provision to operate the effect via battery power.

I like the way Alpha Cruncher and Revecho's small footprint and surprisingly great sound does not take up a lot of space on a desktop or pedalboard. For me personally, I was pleasantly surprised how many usable sounds I could get out Donner's Alpha Cruncher and Revecho. When combined together, Donner's Alpha Cruncher and Revecho gives you a complete signal path covering most of what a wide cross section of guitar players would consider essential for a live gig, as well as provides enough flexibility for recording

sessions. While Donner's Alpha Cruncher and Revecho do not have the deep editing capability of more expensive multi-effect pedals, Donner's Alpha Cruncher and Revecho nevertheless offers great sounding, surprisingly versatile utility multi-effects delivered at highly attractive prices. Whether you are purchasing them as your primary or backup guitar effects, the Donner's Alpha Cruncher and Revecho offer a cost-effective alternative with features and versatility to get the job done.

The Donner Alpha Cruncher is available now for \$69.99, the Donner Revecho is available now for \$59.99 both are on Donner's Amazon Storefront.

Find out more at donnermusic.com.

AFM & SAG-AFTRA Fund: A Saving Grace for Musicians and Vocalists

Backing musicians and vocalists make up the tapestry of sound on a great percentage of music and songs that we listen to throughout our lives. They work behind the scenes and rarely achieve individual fame, but their contributions are undeniable. Since the beginning of recorded music, artists, bands,

Distribution Fund only pays union performers, but that's simply not the case. "The Fund" is required under U.S. copyright law to pay both union and non-union musicians and vocalists. They collect and distribute these royalties for pretty much every genre of music you can imagine including Hip-Hop, Pop, Rock,

performed on songs from 1972 back to 1957 are now getting paid their fair share as well. Some well-known artists started as backing artists, so even if a known star/featured artist sings backing vocals or plays an instrument on other artists tracks where they are not listed as a "featured artist" anywhere in the song credits, they too can also receive royalties. Virtually anyone who performs a non-featured role on a recording that's covered by this Fund is owed, whether they are a professional or not.

Like all other performance rights organizations, the Fund does need the correct performer information or "metadata" to find and pay those who are owed royalties. A lot of singers and musicians use multiple names or AKAs on song credits, which can make it difficult for PROs to find them. Fortunately, this Fund does have a team of expert researchers with deep music backgrounds, many who specialize in different styles of music.

Any non-featured performer who is listed on a covered song, The Fund calls a participant because they participate or share in a royalty distribution. There are no membership fees and it is absolutely free to register with them. Vocalists and musicians can check out the Fund's "covered recordings" page to see



"Virtually anyone who performs a non-featured role on a recording that's covered by this Fund is owed, whether they are a professional or not."

and orchestras have relied on their expertise at making their sonic dreams come true. Fortunately for these well-deserving performers, the AFM & SAG-AFTRA Fund has their back.

The lion's share of royalties that The Fund pays out to backing musicians and vocalists is for their performance on music that's played on non-interactive streaming formats like SiriusXM, webcasting and any other digital radio-like services. The Fund has distributed well over \$550 million in royalties to date, and with the growth of these formats the organization expects to distribute even more royalties in the years to come.

Many vocalists and musicians might think that an organization with a name like AFM & SAG-AFTRA Intellectual Property Rights



Country, R&B, Punk, Jazz, Alternative, Classical and even some of the most avant garde music played on niche satellite radio stations.

This Fund has definitely made a seismic positive change for many non-featured artists who now have another income stream for the work they've done throughout their career. With the passage of the Music Modernization Act in 2018, non-featured artists who

if they're owed, and they can also check their "unclaimed royalties" page to see if they're owed any royalties that they might have overlooked because they are listed under a different name or AKA. Even if you're not receiving royalties from The Fund, chances are you know someone who is.

Check out afmsagaftrafund.org

Brian Eno

FOREVER AND EVER, NOMORE

Verve/UMC

Producer: Brian Eno

Who's better at creating galaxies of sound than Eno? Despite his age, the Brit who built ambient is vital as ever. Recorded in the iconoclast's West London studio, this record hits eardrums like a sonic essay on the beauty of entropy. While everyone else is attempting to soothe humanity's troubles with end-of-the-world-inspired overindulgence, introspective exercises such as this have more impact. Though one might argue Eno isn't from this dimension, it will be an irreversible loss when he departs for other realities. - **Andy Kaufmann**



Hall and Oates

Do It For Love

BMG

Producers: Daryl Hall, Sheppard Goodman, Kenny Gioia, T Bone Wolf, et al.

Originally released in 2003, this was sort of a comeback album for the duo. They returned with a collection of songs very reminiscent of their early R&B and singer-songwriter roots. Cuts like "Man on a Mission," "Life's Too Short" and the title track really pop, with acoustic energy and stellar signature hooks. "Miss DJ" and "Heartbreak Time" run the gamut from pure funk to classic soul. This foretells the same vibe Hall created on his TV show. - **Eric Harabadian**



Quavo and Takeoff

Only Built for Infinity Links

Quality Control

Producers: Various

The Two aMigos enlist many talented friends of hip-hop's past, present and future. *Infinity Links* (a nod to Raekwon) follows Migos' *Culture III*, as well as each members' attempts at solo debuts. Singles "Us Vs. Them" (ft. Gucci Mane), "Big Stunna" (ft. Birdman) and "Chocolate" (ft. Young Thug and GUNNA) are certainly standouts. While Offset is not missed, it is clear that the album would not have substance without the addition of guest artists and producers. The duo also enlists DJ Mustard, and Summer Walker. - **Joseph Maltese**



Lou Reed

Words & Music

Light in the Attic

Producers: Laurie Anderson, Don Fleming, Jason Stern, Hal Willner and Matt Sullivan

This is the first in a series of previously unreleased songs and early stripped-down versions of Velvet Underground hits. This collection is the embryonic Reed as a budding acoustic folk and blues-oriented singer-songwriter. Paired on many of these tunes with VU alum John Cale on harmonies, many of the songs have more in common with Pete Seeger or Bob Dylan than the art rockers they would become. It's a rare glimpse into a cryptic artist. - **Eric Harabadian**



Michigander

It Will Never Be The Same

C3 Records

Producers: Tony Hoffer and Andy Hull

Michigander, the nom de plume of indie soft rocker Jason Singer, serves up another EP of comfortable pop nuggets that could have been written in the '80s. Relatable lyrics and digestible compositions are amplified by spunky, offbeat elements. Check out the quirky start to "In My Head," featuring fellow alt-pop dabbler Manchester Orchestra, for a perfect example. While personable and likable throughout, the disc's half-dozen yarns don't demolish enough sonic barriers to reach classic status. - **Andy Kaufmann**



Pinera & Renick

Came to Believe

Rockzion Records

Producers: Mike Pinera, Dennis Renick and Tom Kampas

Guitarist-vocalist Mike Pinera was with several bands, including Iron Butterfly, Blues Image and Cactus. Along with keyboardist-vocalist Dennis Renick, he brings that pedigree to this collection of original Christian-based testimonials. But this ain't your parents' church music! The title track blends Latin-flavored percussion with Pinera's incendiary licks. More highlights: "Fool for the Fire" is reminiscent of Iron Butterfly's "Metamorphosis" period while "Down to the Water" pairs baptism and rock & roll. - **Eric Harabadian**



Goo Goo Dolls

Chaos in Bloom

Warner Records

Producer: John Rzeznik

This iconic band is back for their 13th studio release. It is the first full-length album to be produced by frontman Rzeznik. Recorded in a converted church in Woodstock, NY, the band took their time in crafting a well balanced mix of ballads, rockers and thought provoking material. They also went for a more organic and somewhat experimental approach in terms of sound design. But the hits are still there, like the uplifting "Superstar," the melodic "Loving Life" and the self-reflective "You Are the Answer." - **Eric Harabadian**



The Coronas

Time Stopped

So Far So Good Records/Blix Street

Producer: George Murphy

Emerging from pandemic lockdown with their seventh studio album, the Coronas unleash a work of sonic diversity and thoughtful lyrics. Aptly titled, there are numerous references to the uncertainty of the past two years in "Write Our Own Soundtrack" and the title track. Danny O'Reilly's voice expresses joy and angst without ever seeming too sentimental. Though it's hard to top *Trust the Wire*, when it comes to undeniably catchy chorus-laden hits, the band proves they never drop the ball when it comes to putting out a high-quality product. - **Ellen Woloshin**



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.

CIRCLE THE EARTH



"All true religions and spiritual paths lead to the same loving God and not one Soul will be lost."

NEW RELIGION



LA-based multi-cultural rock band Circle The Earth has released their hard-hitting new song "New Religion." now streaming everywhere!



linktr.ee/new_religion

Contact

JOHNNY MILLER, TRUPITCH ENTERTAINMENT
TRUPITCH.COM | 310-435-7195
www.circletheearth.band





Hart2Heavy

Contact: hart2heavy@gmail.com
Web: Spotify
Seeking: Label, Booking
Style: Heartbreak Rap

Hart2Heavy is a young hitmaker who can write relatable heartbreak raps. "You Changed Me" and "Trust Nobody" are great tracks, well-produced and radio-ready. Vocals are auto-tuned, pitched up and down over brooding melodies, channeling Roddy Ricch and Young Thug (Free YSL!) A less-recent single, "Cry," is notably amateurish compared to the aforementioned tracks. The vocoder effect is pitchy, and all mixes sound muffled. This either shows great progress or a previous bad collaboration with a producer. We would suggest even removing "Cry" from Spotify, since it leaves such a different impression of the overall catalog. As far as future content, the heartbreak niche might be limiting.

- Production 8
- Lyrics 7
- Music 7
- Vocals 8
- Musicianship 7

SCORE: 7.4



Slow Buildings

Contact: slowbuildingsmusic@gmail.com
Web: slowbuildingsmusic.bandcamp.com
Seeking: Film/TV Placement
Style: Indie Power Pop

Quirky, clever rhymes and a playfully smart sensibility come through on these tunes by New Jersey band Slow Buildings. "Chemical Dream Girl" has a playful vibe and features frontman Jason Legacy's nasally vocals. The song has an occasional Beach Boys (*Pet Sounds/Smile*) influence in its harmonies and marimba/xylophone parts. "Ghosts in the Winning Culture" has a friendly, upbeat energy, a walking bass line, and a nice violin part, while its borderline goofy lyrics are slyly smart. Though hampered by an undermixed lead vocal, the most modern-sounding tune is "Trying to Be Good," which has great song structure and a great chorus, with a Weezer-y sensibility as the whole band chants the tune's title.

- Production 7
- Lyrics 8
- Music 8
- Vocals 7
- Musicianship 8

SCORE: 7.6



Sharon Groom

Contact: sharongroommusic@gmail.com
Web: sharongroom.com
Seeking: Film/TV, Booking, Management
Style: Blues, Rock, Americana

Sharon Groom has a great Southern blues-rock voice and an ambitious vision that attempts to incorporate a mix of genres. Case in point: "Big Daddy," which delivers a weird, mysterious, smokey amalgam of jazz, blues and pop. From its muted trumpet to its odd time signatures, the song is an uncomfortable ride. Much more pleasing, despite its dark undertones, is "Any Time Any Minute," where Groom's voice is so well captured (we love the sultry hums!) amid expert production. Our favorite is "All That I Wanted," which from its relatable lyrics sung to a longtime friend, to its acoustic melody (which veers to country-rock), is quite infectious. We urge this gifted singer to collaborate with an equally talented songwriter.

- Production 9
- Lyrics 7
- Music 7
- Vocals 9
- Musicianship 9

SCORE: 8.2



Hats Off Gentlemen It's Adequate

Contact: hatsoffgentlemen.com/contact
Web: hatsoffgentlemen.bandcamp.com
Seeking: Booking, Film/TV
Style: Progressive Rock

These London-based gentlemen open the prog rock floodgates with "Refuge," which starts with a solemn piano, then eases into a series of formal moods and chamber group movements until, at the 7:30 mark, it explodes with a propulsive and complex keyboard-driven climax that culminates in a sparkle of tinkling piano. "The Confidence Trick" and "Silence Is a Statement" both possess a theatrical thrust as they warn of the dangers of mankind's collective gullibility and willful silence. The song would be more impactful vocally if its singer were fueled by an appropriate breathing strategy.

- Production 8
- Lyrics 7
- Music 8
- Vocals 7
- Musicianship 8

SCORE: 7.6



Aquila

Contact: aquilametal@gmail.com
Web: aquilametal.bandcamp.com
Seeking: Review, Distribution
Style: Metal

These guys definitely go for the early 2000s metalcore/thrash-metal sound with respect to guitars. The vocals are fresh enough to not be taxing to a new listener. Biggest shortcoming: the drum recordings. Whether it's a machine or just poor triggering, some parts sound a bit delayed/off-time (or something they're doing is too buried in the mix to find the best). That's true of "The Great Fire" in the fills and hi-hat breaks. Still, we like the drummer's musicianship; like, on the chorus of "Emperor's Curse," he does this nice start and stop of the double bass to give breath and space to the moment. All three songs felt different enough musically while remaining the same style and sound, which we rarely hear from demos.

- Production 8
- Lyrics 7
- Music 7
- Vocals 8
- Musicianship 8

SCORE: 7.6



Fino_Cory

Contact: coryelltgross@gmail.com
Web: Spotify
Seeking: Label
Style: Rap

Fino_Cory is clearly a fan of the craft—he knows how to rap with a confident, technical flow. Unfortunately, his album *Welcome to the Mafia* fails to add excitement to a tired formula. "Don't Play With Me" features a pensive piano with poorly recorded vocals, reciting predictable lyrics. "Big Dawg" and "On Mommas" follow the same structure and shortcomings. The latter opens with a skit set in a convenience store: Cory is hassling the Asian owner pleading for "no trouble." The stereotypes are dated and work against the song. To give credit, each track is under 2 minutes long, which is appropriate for the quality, avoiding redundant repeating choruses. Keep in mind 'less is more,' but try to step up the hooks and storytelling.

- Production 7
- Lyrics 7
- Music 7
- Vocals 7
- Musicianship 7

SCORE: 7.0

Music Connection's executive committee rates recorded music on a scale of 1 to 10. Number 1 represents the lowest possible score, 10 represents the highest possible score. A final score of 6 denotes a solid, competent artist. For more information, see Submission Guidelines on the next page.



IZ.M.B.

Contact: david@powderfingerpromo.com
Web: bluecollarrecordsllc.net/artists/iz-m-b
Seeking: Booking, Film/TV
Style: Singer-Songwriter

A rich, deep aura pervades these recordings by Philadelphia-based artist IZ.M.B., whose girlish vulnerability basks in a pond-full of reverb. Seems to us that "Six Feet Away" is a pretty enough song without all that. We suggest the artist do another polish on this one, capitalizing on a raw, more natural sound. "Breakout" is a guitar-driven song that has an overall pop-punk drive, and it reminds us vocally of Liz Phair. To our ears, IZ.M.B.'s best song of all is "Recover," where the artist's voice doubles very well amid tasty contributions by a guest trumpet. It's a sophisticated rock song (with perhaps some Evanescence baked into it) and the horns and various textures in the production are really exciting to hear.

- Production 8
- Lyrics 7
- Music 8
- Vocals 8
- Musicianship 7

SCORE: 7.6



Tyra Levone

Contact: tyralevone@gmail.com
Web: tyralevone.com
Seeking: Label, Booking, Film/TV
Style: R&B

Soul/R&B singer Tyra Levone has a terrific voice and is clearly a seasoned jazz and choral singer. It's the kind of voice that is easily able to convey the sweet love of a song like "Can't Love You More," which showcases the artist's classic soul chops. "Hope" shifts to a more modern edge with a hip-hop sound, complete with an edgy sarcasm ("Hope your life is great") in her lyrics. We only wish her vocals were mixed better. Our favorite from this artist is "Better Place," which is a hooky, complex, beautiful and ultimately uplifting song, with everything from neo-classical piano to jazzy fingersnaps. We especially like how Levone pushes her voice into a raspy zone among hi-hats and chimes, right up to the song's extended piano outro.

- Production 7
- Lyrics 7
- Music 7
- Vocals 9
- Musicianship 8

SCORE: 7.6



Creature Canyon

Contact: info@villamrocks.com
Web: creaturecanyonmusic.com
Seeking: Film/TV
Style: Indie Rock

As soon as its dense fabric of sound leaped from our speakers with an upbeat dance-rock vitality (complete with falsettos and gang-style chorus chants) it was clear that Creature Canyon's "Simulator" is a record—an infectious single—that is ready-to-go in all formats. The production, from its guitar tone to its cool, deep, drum tone, nails every aspect of what this song should be. "Faded Fire" has a strong but easygoing pace set by its awesome off-kilter drum + bass grooves. Not to be outdone in the hookiness department, "Sleepwalking" deploys a machine drumbeat that adrenalizes the whole thing. This band, with hints of Cage the Elephant and Fitz & the Tantrums, have cracked the pop-music code.

- Production 10
- Lyrics 9
- Music 9
- Vocals 9
- Musicianship 8

SCORE: 9.0



Wreckless Strangers

Contact: kate@richlyngroup.com
Web: wrecklessstrangers.com
Seeking: Booking, Film/TV
Style: Americana

Anyone looking for a blues-rock outfit that can bring the heart and soul in a big way should get to know these Strangers. The musicianship—piano, organ, incredible harmonica—is top-notch. Above all, though, is the vocal prowess of Amber Morris who brings such a rich, husky, soulful sound. And all of it, like the lurching "Sun State," is captured by excellent production. Piano and organ make a deep impact on the clever "Alexa," in which Morris describes the love/hate relationship—the creepy dependency—she has with the Amazon A.I. device. "Ain't No Thing" is a rousing, stand-up-and-shout rock & roller that features a harmony duet with Morris and a male singer. On each song, everything sounds exactly right.

- Production 9
- Lyrics 8
- Music 8
- Vocals 9
- Musicianship 8

SCORE: 8.4



Solitary Friends

Contact: solitaryfriends.mx@gmail.com
Web: solitaryfriends.com
Seeking: Label, Booking, Film/TV
Style: Dark Indie Pop Rock

Michelle McGregor fronts this Los Angeles-based dark-pop-rock outfit, and her vocals give "Breathe Deep" a quirky, Blondie-esque quality, even though she's sometimes challenged to keep up with the song's brisk octave-jumping pace. Mid-tempo rocker "Little White Lie" is powered by a classic rock-inspired riff that's accented by a cowbell/woodblock beat and, as it veers into metal territory, is topped off by a nice extended guitar solo. Finally, "Have You Ever Blacked Out, Amy?" is a heavy riff-rock with a growling guitar tone, and while the song has its moments, the overall effect is that of a demo-quality piece of work. Our overall takeaway is that the band's material is in need of stronger hooks.

- Production 7
- Lyrics 7
- Music 7
- Vocals 7
- Musicianship 7

SCORE: 7.0



Luke Stamenkovich

Contact: lukestamenkovichmusic@hotmail.com
Web: lukestamenkovichmusic.com
Seeking: Film/TV
Style: Instrumental Rock

Guitarist Luke Stamenkovich and company deliver the kind of instrumental themes that anyone can appreciate. Yes, he's clearly an adept player whose fretwork can dazzle, but he doesn't over-indulge. He's not from the Satriani school of ax-wielding, no prog-rock or math rock indulgence here. "Crossroads" pays tribute to the blues with a catchy, amblin' hook in which the guitarist contributes silky, bluesy 12/8 shuffle licks with ease. "Memories" is gentle and warm and is imbued with delicate, concise fingerwork. The upbeat and rockin' "Alfred's Coffee Jam" is a feel-good theme with strong drums and a fast, ripping bass line—bluesy to the bone. Film/TV folks should tap this artist for his accessible, down-to-earth sounds.

- Production 8
- Lyrics 8
- Music 8
- Vocals 8
- Musicianship 9

SCORE: 8.2

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: There is absolutely no charge for a New Music Critique. We critique recordings that have yet to connect with a label or distributor. To be considered please go to musicconnection.com/get-reviewed. All submissions are randomly selected and reviewed by committee.

The 5 Spot Nashville, TN

Contact: anchorthieves@gmail.com

Web: anchorthieves.com

Players: Cayce Keller, vocals, guitar; Paul Cavitt, vocals, bass; Simon Lynn, vocals, drums

Material: Musicians draw inspiration from their idols. To blossom into icons themselves, though, they must carve unique paths. Anchor Thieves plunder a range of alternative noisemakers to fuel their vision, with bands such as Dinosaur Jr. and Radiohead being cited influences. The resulting diversity between songs creates a patina of freshness. However, their appreciation for what's come before seems to have triggered a paucity of originality and a lack of cohesion regarding their overall sound.

Musicianship: This Music City trio has been making noise since 2009. As such, they seem extraordinarily comfortable playing alongside one another. Each note snaps perfectly into place, like pieces of a sonic puzzle forming a grand picture. Though every moment feels natural, the group's preference for showcasing sturdy songwriting means there's zero room for improvisation or tension, thus smothering whatever creative oxygen they once embodied.

Performance: Their 40-minute set carried listeners on a journey through time. After a speedy introduction by Grey Jacks of The Grey



APPLE KAUFMANN

A, whose headlining performance doubled as an album release party, Anchor Thieves launched into "Ice In the Desert." The song felt like a folk-rock ditty plucked from the heart of the '60s. Following this was what one might classify as '70s-style adult contemporary soft rock. Subsequent tunes could have existed within the new wave scene of the '80s. For their final songs, they seemingly transformed into a '90s grunge act.

Worthy of note is that lead vocalist Cayce Keller never spotlighted the players, nor was there branding of any kind. Fatally, there weren't any killer numbers that left listeners grooving or humming.

Summary: Anchor Thieves appear comfortable with the artists they've grown into, for better or worse. While this quality imbues confidence in audiences, the elements of discovery and danger are therefore missing. Paradoxically, Keller openly admitted to being thrown by the presence of a decent-sized audience. For a band that's been around, such a comment triggers worry. Despite the professional quality of their yarns and the grand sentiments they evoke, Anchor Thieves would do well to obliterate the source of their stagnation.

- Andy Kaufmann



BRETT CALLWOOD

Alex's Bar Long Beach, CA

Contact: dearblancaband@gmail.com

Web: dearblanca.bandcamp.com

Players: Dylan Dickerson, guitar, vocals; Cam Powell, bass; Marc Coty, drums; Pat Mertens, guest guitar

Material: On the eve of a tropical storm in SoCal, the air is hanging heavy, a dark vibe of anticipation somehow hanging over everything like smog over asphalt in 100 degree weather. Somehow, the lo-fi indie rock of Columbia,

South Carolina's Dear Blanca is the perfect soundtrack to the weird mood. There's an occasional folk lean, sometimes it's a bit shoegaze, but songs such as the opening "Overpass," "Moving to Texas" and "Joint Effort" are too memorable to fit that latter sub-genre comfortably. Still, when friend of the band Pat Mertens joins them to run through Dinosaur Jr.'s "Feel the Pain," it sounds perfectly fuzzy and scuzzy. They get quirkier during "A-Ha," when they play an excerpt from the Norwegian synth-pop band's classic "Take on Me." There's more than one string to this bow.

Summary: It can be hard to be an out-of-town band in the middle of a bill, but Dear Blanca acquitted themselves admirably. They did what they clearly know how to do best—they took their positions, plugged in, and played their songs with all of the passion that they could muster. The songs have a bit of an onion vibe—the more layers you peel off, the more you reveal. But that's a great thing for longevity. Give Dear Blanca a chance and they'll bury their barbed wire melodies in you and never let go.

- Brett Callwood



The Whisky A GoGo West Hollywood, CA

Web: soundhoose.com

Contact: mredridinghoodpr@gmail.com

Players: Jeremy Bauer, bass; Brandon Smith, vocals, guitar; Paul Burns, drums

Material: Soundhoose is a hard rockin', hard hitting rock & roll band with a unique sound.

You can liken them to Mötley Crüe, Green Day and Rage Against the Machine, but the punk styles of the '80s and '90s come oozing out of Smith's every pore. Songs like "Deja You" and "My Time" will have you jumping out of your seat to dance and head-bang.

Musicianship: The musicianship is very good and all the players have their roles

down. Each one superior in his own right, but when you put them together, they become enormously fun to listen to. Smith, with his strong vocals and crazy antics; Bauer, solid on the bass and taking each song to the next level with great harmonies and background vocals; and then there's Burns! Super-solid behind the kit. Don't think he missed a beat all night.

Performance: Excellent. Smith is a great frontman as he acknowledged everyone in the audience and danced around the stage, making sure everyone was having a great time. Bauer, the wing man, was driving that bass like no other and assisting anywhere he could. And then there was Burns! The most "awesomest" display of nonstop, high-impact, rock-hard energy anyone at The Whisky has ever witnessed!

Summary: Big on suicide prevention and dealing with depression in a healthy manner, Soundhoose has partnered with JED Foundation in the fight against teenage suicides in the U.S. Not only is their music hard hitting, but the impact these guys are having on the suicide prevention community is hard hitting, as well. If you want in-your-face rock & roll that you can dance to, check out Soundhoose and support the cause.

- Pierce Brochetti

The Peppermint Club West Hollywood, CA

Web: twitter.com/hellogigirowe

Contact: amoreno@falconpublicity.com

Players: Gigi Rowe, vocals; Dominic Cannarella-Anderson, bass; Eric McCoy, guitar; Max Meizlish, drums

Material: Gigi Rowe, with the help of a well-rehearsed band, is a solo artist crooning out pop/singer-songwriter tunes to the audience's delight. There is a certain country and Americana essence that seems to escape her soul as she sings songs like "Somebody for Me" and "Running From the Grave." Even the rock tune "Rockstar" seemed to have a little bit of a delightful, gratifying melody carrying the tune to the end.

Musicianship: Rowe has an excellent voice and she uses it to her advantage as she expertly serenades her audience. The tune "When the Time Comes" is a perfect example of a great vocalist utilizing falsetto to maximize her gains. The band is superb, as well. Anderson has all kinds of fun playing to and with Meizlish, and together they make an outstanding rhythm section. McCoy is a solid guitar player on all the tracks but ever so beautifully on "Color Outside the Lines." That tune made the night a special one.

Performance: Decked out in rhinestones, a cowboy hat and platform shoes, Rowe wowed the audience at this gig with her flair and stage presence. She has a certain aura and a pleasant stage persona that permeates the room as she dances and sings for the



audience. Great audience acknowledgment kept the audience in the loop and wanting more. Anderson and McCoy were animated throughout the evening and they kept everyone else hopping with energy.

Summary: Gigi Rowe is a singer-songwriter hailing from eastern New Jersey and she brought with her some beautiful music to

share with us in SoCal. The music itself is soft and heartfelt, but she has added a superb band to back her up and that has paid off. It has taken her music to new heights and added new genres to her repertoire culminating in a show with pop, rock, Americana and country! Beautiful vocals plus a confident band equals a hit show.

- Pierce Brochetti

The Whisky A GoGo West Hollywood, CA

Web: ninefinger.com

Contact: ninefingerofficial@gmail.com

Players: Mike Whinny, vocals; Joshua Picard, guitar; Buddah, drums; Ian Shea, bass

Material: Ninefinger is a hard rock band hailing from Los Angeles and laying down the rock ever so passionately. The music is very similar to that of the Stone Temple Pilots, Bush and Alice in Chains; grungy and rough, but with a little bit more melodic flavor to it. You can really sink your teeth into most all the tunes, such as the opening tune, "This is Your Life." With its great intro, the song set the stage for a great night of rock & roll.

Musicianship: All the musicians' play is top notch. Whinny has a very strong, distinctive voice resembling that of Scott Weiland of Stone Temple Pilots. It made for some interesting comparisons, but in the end, Ninefinger won with a more harmonious and melodious sound. Picard channels Tom Morello of Rage Against the Machine on the tune "Conditioner," and even pulls out some signature Morello licks that wow the audience and make everyone want to jump up onstage and head-bang with the band. Shea and Buddah stand tall between two trees (Whinny and Picard are both easily six foot) and although Shea and Buddah aren't six foot in stature, their play was six-nine—super-solid and thunderous was the rhythm section.



Performance: This performance was excellent. Whinny is a great frontman with a strong, powerful voice that was heard from The Whisky all the way to Colorado. He had the audience singing and dancing as he paraded around the stage trying to connect with every person in the room. Shea and Picard stood tall as Buddah pounded out the beats to an almost perfect time. Very fun show to watch.

Summary: Ninefinger is a superb band all around. Great background vocals accompany well-written tunes, and although grungy and dirty, the songs are put forth with grace and elegance. Odd time signatures are blended into great rock & roll tunes, "Live or Die," or you can have some in-your-face grunge like "Speed Queen Redux" shoved down your throat and love it. Any way you roll it, Ninefinger is a band to watch out for. – **Pierce Brochetti**



The Black Rose Los Angeles, CA

Web: hvnted.com

Contact: hvntedband@gmail.com

Players: Will Swanson, vocals, guitar; Chris Marshall, guitar; Seamus Neal, drums; Jack Cotter, bass, vocals

Material: Hvnted is a punk-infused hard rocking band that borders thrash rock, all the while suffusing metal with very likeable chord progressions and melodic guitar leads. Hints of Bad Religion, Hüsker Dü, Sex Pistols and Circle Jerks ooze out of Swanson's pores as he works to instill Hvnted's auditory theme of

debauchery and mayhem into the audiophiles on the floor.

Musicianship: The musicianship is excellent. Neal is a perfect timekeeper. Cotter, Swanson and Marshall all take advantage of it as each one does his own thing—together. The harmonies are also very good. Cotter and Neal take time to catch their breath and sing into the mic, when they aren't jumping around, and it adds another dimension to the already likable tunes.

Performance: This show was very good. Looking like Nirvana's Kurt Cobain, but sounding like Billie Joe Armstrong of Green Day, Swanson let loose, dancing and headbanging, only to be outdone by Cotter, who seemed to be the Energizer Bunny on steroids. Cotter coaxed and provoked the crowd for the full hour set, stopping only to wipe the sweat off his brow. Marshall was avid. He set his fretboard afire while posing shamelessly for cameras everywhere as the blistering solos mesmerized you and were incredible to watch.

Summary: Songs like "Killing Me," "The Fool," and "Flush" were all in-your-face hard rock & roll. The showstopper, though, was the ballad "I Miss You." A mellow rock tune dedicated to the family dog that had the audience "aww-ing" and "oooh-ing" at how much a pet can mean to someone. Very touching. If you like hard rock & roll and good rhythms topped with soaring solos and in-your-face vocals, you'll love Hvnted. – **Pierce Brochetti**



The Wiltern Los Angeles, CA

Contact: Taylor Funari - Trend PR, taylor@trendpr.com

Web: kard-official.com

Players: BM, vocals; Somin, vocals; J. Seph, vocals; Jiwoo, vocals

Material: With flashing lights around the stage, and a streaming backdrop of colorful psychedelic videos throughout the evening, four-piece co-ed K-Pop band KARD performed a non-stop show combining Latin, EDM, and hip-hop flavors at the Los Angeles stop of their U.S. tour. Performing for over 90 minutes with selections from *Hola Hola*, *You & Me*, *Ride On the Wind*, *Take You Down*,

Red Moon, and latest release *Re*, the group delivered coordinated hip thrusts and sharply choreographed dance moves to a young, bubbly crowd who sang, swayed, and screamed along enthusiastically to every word.

Musicianship: The foursome has clearly dedicated serious time to their vocal training and dance choreography, moving almost nonstop for the entire performance, sitting only once to focus on the tight harmonies in "Break Down": a theme song for a generation using their voice to speak out. Reggaeton-feeling bubblegum pop-song "Go Baby" added chanting from the crowd on refrain "go baby girl," with the singalong continuing on "GunShot."

Performance: Opening with a heavy Latin flavor, including sensual hip thrusts and smooth choreography ("Oh NaNa" and "Dimelo"), the group added crowd favorites "Hola Hola," "You In Me," and "Moonlight," sharing some breakdance moves before morphing into a tribal energy EDM bop, similar to the vibe in "Bomb Bomb." "Dimelo" added some slow, sensual dance choreography between the performers, with "Dumb Litty" bringing heavier percussive energy and punctuated angst lyrics. The Latin energy and heavy choreography returned for evening closers "Ring The Alarm" and "Ride on the Wind."

Summary: The members of KARD are clearly comfortable on stage and each possesses incredible stamina, moving easily while demonstrating great vocal command and confidence, even sharing Chris Brown's "Take You Down" (JiWoo solo cover) and great vocal harmonies in their cover of Camilla Cabello & Ed Sheeran's "Bam Bam" (performed as a duet between J. Seph and Somin). They showed continuous crowd connection through bilingual (English-Korean) banter, with J. Seph even sharing his mum's Instagram handle and encouraging fans to message her with videos of the evening. Adding intermittent motivating decibel checks, KARD shows a clear commitment to their sea of screaming fans with their upbeat, booty-swaying show.

- Andrea Beenham

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- Greg Wells,
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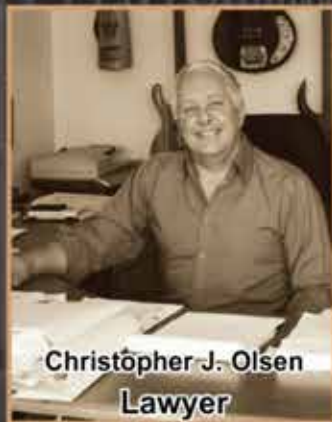
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If Your Voice Is Tired, Give It a Rest!

Every client who walks into my studio is struggling with some sort of vocal impairment or obstacle and requires vocal rehabilitation to reach their maximum potential. There are many students who push their voices past their limits, and others whose overload of vocal performances and gigs has taken a toll on their voice, body and health. Sometimes it's the singer trying to sing too strong and too soon, or the student who has never sung a note at all and who doesn't know where to begin. Voice rehab, or vocal therapy, is about how well you know how to take care of your voice and how well you implement the right vocal techniques.

The number one rule on singing is this: if your voice is tired, give your voice a rest. Vocal rest is when you don't use your voice at all. This is important as it gives your vocal folds and chords time to recover and regenerate. Depending on the severity of the situation, this means no talking and no singing at all, or no singing and limited talking. To avoid using your voice, get out your white board and dry erase markers, put it around your neck, and SSSH!

If your income depends on your voice, it is ideal that you limit your voice as much as possible. Always implement a warm-up routine before you sing and speak. If you don't have to use your voice, don't use your voice at all. This could be for a few days or a few weeks, depending upon your unique case. Making sure to get an adequate 8 hours or more of sleep will also aid in the recovery process. Finally, do not whisper. Whispering is bad for your voice and will make matters worse.

Another essential aspect to consider is your current vocal technique. If you have a vocal issue, most times it is because there is vocal abuse, which means that you are doing too much singing, speaking, or certain elements of your voice are not balanced enough to meet the demands that are asked of your voice. In that case, you need to focus on strengthening the weakened areas with the right vocal exercises.

In my 22 years of teaching vocal technique, I've noticed that there is a widespread lack of knowledge on how to bridge the voice properly (blending the bottom register with the high register with no breaks), whether it be a seasoned performer or novice singer. If you force your voice, you will cause damage. A singer needs to develop vocal muscles in a progressive, controlled way. The vocal exercises should also be tailored to the singer's specific needs.

My suggestion is to avoid using vocal

exercises on YouTube without expert guidance. The reason for this is because you don't know if these exercises are the ones your voice currently needs. Also, you are not getting real-time feedback, so you won't know if you are performing them correctly. You could end up making your voice worse and you will be in great confusion and frustration.



"There is a widespread lack of knowledge on how to bridge the voice properly (blending the bottom register with the high register with no breaks)."

Having a voice teacher gives you the opportunity to be able to receive one-on-one feedback so that you are in full control of your instrument at all times. This way you won't have to take long periods of time off for voice rest. Also, if after resting your voice (not singing/speaking) you go back to singing in the same way that led you to have to take time off, the whole vicious cycle repeats. Great vocal health stems from your daily vocal discipline. If you want different results you have to do things differently.

If you feel that you're warming up properly and singing well, but still having issues, I invite you to start looking into your lifestyle. You want to minimize external factors that could affect your voice. This could be:

Allergies: Do you know what you're allergic to? Some people are allergic to pollen, dust, grass, foods etc.

Diet: Your voice is part of your body so all the nutrients that you consume or do not consume will directly affect your voice. Eat a

balanced diet, low in sodium, high in water and stay away from dairy. Dairy creates an excess of mucus.

Hydration: Make sure you're drinking enough fluids throughout the day. Nothing too hot or too cold. Room temperature water is best

Smoking: It's like driving a car without oil.

Drinking alcohol and caffeine will dehydrate your voice. It loosens your mind, but you're more apt to lose control vocally.

Drug use: This is a no brainer.

Menstruation: The voice will change on a monthly basis. It will get higher a few days before ovulation and feel heavier during menstruation. If you don't have to, don't book a recording session around this time.

Stress: Imbalances the hormonal processes in the body. Stress can create inflammation in the body, vocal cords included. Indirect stress can contribute to acid reflux, which is one of the worst problems for the voice.

In short, vocal rehabilitation consists of:

Reducing the overload of the vocal effort that is causing the damage either through too much time spent doing it or too much effort due to poor vocal technique.

Strengthening the weaknesses in the voice and creating a balance in between effort and sound with the external help of a vocal coach (specialized in vocal technique, not style).

Balancing lifestyle to ensure you're minimizing external factors that could add or subtract from points 1 and 2.

The voice is a living instrument and anything we do, eat, drink, feel or go through will have an effect on our voice. You cannot buy yourself a new set of vocal cords like the guitarist can go buy new strings. Do your best to take care of your voice by considering the above and you will be well on your way to having a healthier voice with no need for vocal rehab.

Considered one of L.A.'s finest vocal coaches, **KATHLEEN RIGGS** has been teaching voice for over 22 years. Unfolding the vocal technique and confidence in singers, Riggs has been lauded by world-class superstar clients such as Dua Lipa, Ozzy Osbourne, Madison Beer, Saweetie, and CHRVCHES to name a few. To learn more, visit kathleenriggs.com.

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Mixcast 4



Having your unique voice be heard is more important now than ever. With Mixcast 4, anybody can easily create pro-sounding podcasts and live streams. Our free easy-to-use Podcast Editor Software allows you to record, edit, and prep your show without the need for a pricey DAW or big learning curve. Rise above other podcasts and give yourself that professional polish with built-in dynamics and effects on every channel.

Podcasting has never been so simple or sounded this good.

- Podcast production of up to 4 people:
4 mic inputs with auto-mix, 4 headphone outputs
- Mac/PC/iOS compatible
- XLR / 1/4" inputs for mics or musical instruments
- Invite guests and friends: Mix-Minus to connect call-ins via Bluetooth, USB Input, or 4 pole TRRS audio cable
- Dedicated iOS app
- Sound pads for instant sound triggering and effects
- Easy and intuitive control using the 5-inch touch screen
- Fully compatible with the dedicated TASCAM Podcast Editor software to cover entire production workflow
- Direct internal multi-track recording to SD card (up to 14 tracks)
- 14-In/2out USB audio Interface mode
- Nine language options - English, French German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese and Korean
- Optional custom carrying case (CS-PCAS20)



TASCAM

Plug,
Play,
Create.