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\$LAYYYTER

MC chats with electro-pop star Slayyyter after a massive year that saw a new album, with another to follow in the fall. She performed at Coachella and Lollapalooza, highlighting her rapid rise, and we covered it all.

Photos: Alexa Zeliger

By Brett Callwood



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Video Game Composers Roundtable

MC spoke to Jon Everist, Niels Bye Nielsen, Rachel Hardy, and Akira Yamaoka about their careers to this point.

By Andy Kaufmann



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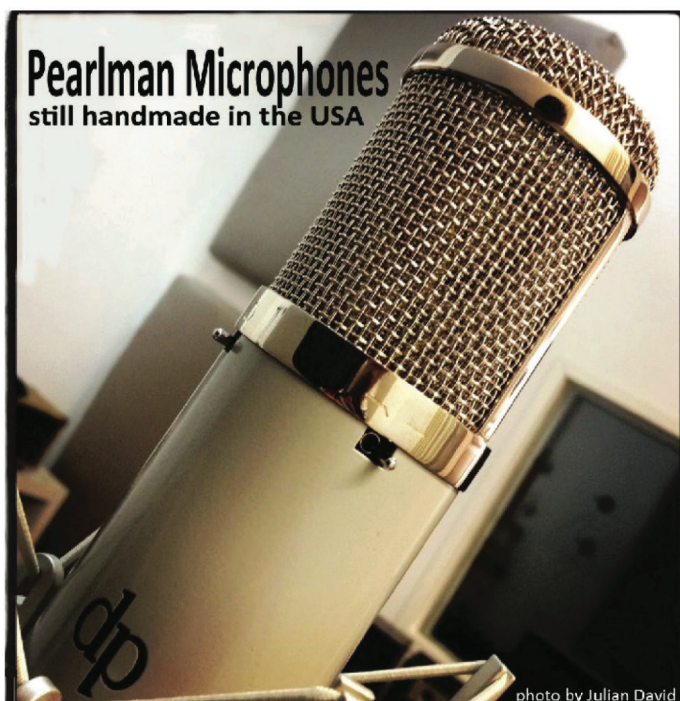
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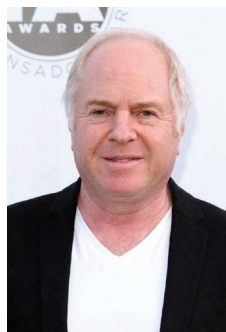
Studio Referral Service /Capital Audio

studioreferral.com

capitalaudiorental.com

Two Industry Veterans Create a New Way to Record: Founded in 1980 by recording engineer Ellis Sorkin, Studio Referral Service was born from his recognition that artists, producers, and engineers needed an easier way to find the right studio for their project, budget, and equipment needs. What began as a Los Angeles-based network has grown into an international resource representing hundreds of professional facilities worldwide. Sorkin's background as a recording engineer at A&M studios gives him an insider's understanding of the equipment, acoustics, and creative environments required for each project. Founded by Wassim Zreik in 2002, Capital Audio Rental is the world's leading pro audio resource, serving the biggest names in the music industry. Its extensive collection includes vintage and modern microphones, preamps, compressors, synthesizers, keyboards, and other essential recording equipment. Recognizing artists' growing desire to create outside traditional studios, Zreik launched Nomad Mobile Recording Studio, bringing a full professional recording experience to estates, hotels, and virtually anywhere inspiration strikes. In 2025, he expanded that vision with The Recording Estates.

Turning Destinations into Studios: The partnership grew naturally from years of working together on various projects and a shared recognition that artists increasingly want privacy, convenience, and inspiring surroundings without sacrificing professional equipment or technical expertise. Sorkin and Zreik can transform any desired location into a fully functioning professional recording environment. The service can handle the entire



process, from determining the client's needs and selecting the appropriate equipment to delivery, installation, and technical support. The possibilities extend well beyond Southern California. They can also bring a professional recording environment to destinations ranging from European villas to mountain retreats.

The Mission: "Our goal is to expand the possibilities of where professional recording can happen," says Sorkin. "For generations, artists have traveled to great recording studios. Today, we can bring the same caliber of professional recording equipment and technical expertise to the artists, allowing them to create in places that inspire their best work." Zreik adds that artists increasingly want to live and work under one roof, bringing their producers, assistants and other team members together while eliminating the daily commute between a studio and hotel.

A Flexible Creative Environment: The service is designed for projects ranging from albums and songwriting camps to film scores, private creative retreats and recording while on tour. One current client, working from a large Malibu estate, has five separate rooms configured for different producers, creating multiple professional workspaces within a single property. Beyond convenience and privacy, the model can provide an economic advantage over renting multiple traditional studios at daily rates. Sorkin and Zreik see the service as a complement rather than a replacement for commercial studios, particularly as technology has made sophisticated home and mobile recording increasingly viable. "We're talking about big estates where people can set up and create these things," Zreik says, while Sorkin describes their shared mission simply: "Anything you can envision."

Contact Ellis Sorkin/Studio Referral Service 818-222-2058

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Torben Müller

Business Development Manager
Celestion

Celestion has announced the appointment of **Torben Müller** to the position of **Business Development Manager**. Müller's primary focus will be identifying, exploring, and developing new opportunities for growth alongside Celestion's valued customers and partners. He is also responsible for serving many of Celestion's international distributors, plus several key OEMs across pro audio and guitar. "I look forward to being part of a devoted and dedicated team, meeting and working with our great partners and customers, and contributing to strengthening and growing the Celestion brand," said Müller. For more, contact john.paice@celestion.com.



Jennifer Caserta

Chief People Officer
Production Resource Group

PRG (Production Resource Group), has announced the appointment of **Jennifer Caserta** to **Chief People Officer**. As PRG's Chief People Officer, Caserta will focus on recruiting and developing talent and building culture, programs, and organizational structures that support PRG's employees, business, and growth. "We are building PRG for a bigger future, and that means investing across every part of this business: our leadership, crews, talent development, and the equipment, technology and systems that fuel and connect our operations worldwide," said Lawrence Burian, CEO of PRG. For more, contact prg_pr@hustleandco.com.



Taylor Perez

Senior Director, Digital Marketing
Spirit Music

Spirit Music has hired **Taylor Perez** as **Senior Director, Digital Marketing**. Prior to joining Spirit Music, Perez held digital marketing roles at Big Machine Label Group and Warner Music Group, where she developed audience growth, fan engagement, and release marketing campaigns for Dan + Shay, Rascal Flatts, Randy Travis, Ashley McBryde, Avery Anna, The Jack Wharff Band, and more. "It's an honor to join the team and I look forward to helping create new opportunities for its songwriters, partners, and catalog," said Perez. For more, contact cindy.hunt@monarchpublicity.com.



Syaheed MSBI

Vice President of the AMEA Region
Virgin Music Group

Virgin Music Group has announced the appointment of **Syaheed MSBI** to the position of **Vice President of the AMEA region** at the company. Syaheed will oversee the company's activities in Africa, Middle East, and Asia (AMEA). "I'm looking forward to working closely with the incredible labels and artists across the Virgin family, because when artists, labels, and partners win together, the whole industry moves forward. This is especially important for our emerging markets," said MSBI. For more, contact jv@spinlab.net.



Rene Erwin Mata

A&R, New York
Frontiers Label Group

Frontiers Label Group has announced the appointment of **Rene Erwin Mata** to **A&R, New York**, further strengthening the company's growing international A&R network and commitment to discovering and developing world-class talent across the rock, metal, and alternative landscape. "I'm looking forward to working with a team that shares the same passion for music that I do, and I've found that at Frontiers Label Group," said Mata. "It's an exciting time for the company, and I'm eager to help discover and develop the next generation of artists while contributing to Frontiers' continued global growth." For more, contact allie@thesyn.com.



Kip Zimmerman

Associate Principal Oboe
The Boston Symphony Orchestra

The Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) and Music Director Andris Nelsons announce the appointment of **Kip Zimmerman** as the orchestra's new **associate principal oboe**, beginning in the 2026-27 season. He will occupy the Farla and Harvey Chet Krentzman chair, succeeding Keisuke Wakao, who retires at the end of the 2026 Tanglewood season. With this appointment, Zimmerman also becomes principal oboe of the Boston Pops. "We are delighted to welcome [Zimmerman] to Boston and look forward to making music together," said Nelsons. For more, contact jdevereux@bso.org.



Valeisha Butterfield

CEO & Executive Director
The Guitar Center Music Foundation

The Guitar Center Music Foundation announced the appointment of **Valeisha Butterfield** as **CEO & Executive Director**. Butterfield will lead the Foundation's next chapter with an eye on expanding access and opportunity to the instruments, tools, education, and resources that empower people to discover, create, and thrive through music. "Music is a universal language and the most powerful tool in the world to connect people across generations," said Butterfield. "Guitar Center sits at the center of that extraordinary ecosystem, and this is truly a full circle moment as I help lead this next chapter of the Guitar Center Music Foundation." For more, contact pr@clynemedia.com.



Michael Curtis

Product Specialist & System Engineer
RCF USA

RCF USA announced the appointment of **Michael Curtis** as **Product Specialist and System Engineer**. In his new role, Curtis will provide loudspeaker system design and application support for RCF's growing network of consultants, integrators and sales partners while also leading the development of technical training, educational content and customer-focused resources across the company's professional audio portfolio. "I'm excited to help customers understand not only what our products can do, but how to get the most out of them through education, system design, and technical support," said Curtis. For more, contact pr@clynemedia.com.



AEA ACTIVE RIBBON MICROPHONES: KU5A AND N22



Located in Pasadena, CA, Audio Ribbon Mics occupies a unique and special niche in the recording industry. Being the de facto heir apparent to the historic and seminal RCA ribbon microphone technology was a choice borne in 1976 when AEA began servicing ribbon microphones. By 1998 AEA was manufacturing 100 percent of the parts for the legendary RCA 44 to support a worldwide user base of the popular microphone that was first made in 1932. RCA 44 ribbon microphones are still used in many of the finest recording studios, and given the demand for them, AEA decided to release their version of the 44 and thus was born AEA Ribbon Mics.

Why are ribbon microphones special? Ribbon microphones offer a natural sound with smoother highs and usually reproduce less harshness than condenser and dynamic designs. Ribbons naturally

roll off high frequencies, which tames bright instruments like brass, cymbals, or aggressive vocals. The highly responsive ribbon reacts instantly to sound waves, delivering fast transient response without a brittle edge. Their high-frequency roll-off closely mimics how human ears perceive the real world. There was a point in the Los Angeles recording scene where brass players became tired of the status quo of having extremely bright condenser mics placed in front of them to the point where many of them started traveling to sessions with their favorite ribbon mics to ensure a sweetness to their sound.

Now offering a line of 16 handmade microphones, AEA manufactures both vintage style ribbon microphones as well as modern active ribbon microphones. From the perspective of an engineer working on fast paced sessions, the notion of a phantom powered active ribbon mic brings a lot of comfort, as you know that you are in no danger of destroying a passive ribbon with an accidental blast of +48 volts! These new AEA mics are not the ribbon mics of yesteryear that were susceptible to destruction by phantom power or gusts of wind.

MC tested the AEA NUVO N22 and KU5A. The NUVO N22 is a phantom-powered active side-address ribbon microphone with a bidirectional pickup pattern. Featuring a rugged lightweight design, extended top-end clarity, and reduced proximity effect, it's intended for close-up miking applications like acoustic and electric guitars, vocals, drums, or piano. The N22 can also be used a few feet away from the source due to its healthy output level. The N22 features phantom-powered JFET electronics and a custom German transformer. With a highly protected pure aluminum ribbon, the N22 can be used in both live sound applications and vocal recording, often without the need for an additional pop-filter. AEA states, "Rooted in the RCA tradition just like other AEA ribbons, all NUVO microphones are designed to offer a fresh approach to the ribbon transducer and represent a contemporary take on the evolution of the ribbon microphone."

The KU5A is an end-address, phantom-powered, super cardioid ribbon microphone. It's equipped with active circuitry and a custom transformer optimized for all preamps. The reduced rear-lobe of the super cardioid pattern has greater rejection of ambient sound from behind. Sources within 3 inches of the KU5A display a strong and warm proximity effect, and it can handle 135 dB SPL at 1kHz. The KU5A's integrated electronic high-pass filter smoothly rolls off low end with a 6dB/octave slope at 283Hz. It's extremely durable in close range, outdoor, and live applications and can handle direct blasts of air from loud singers and other instruments that move air. AEA indicates this mic as being among their highest in clarity, versatility and ruggedness for both studio and live settings.

The AEA mics were used to record guitar amps for a blues band and a popular '70s legacy band. In both cases, they were recorded next to classic and modern American dynamic mics. They sounded very smooth and sweet with a subdued low end and a much greater sense of the room the amps were isolated in, which was a nice addition. There are certain recording tasks that ribbon mics will always excel at, particularly with brass instruments and strings. AEA mics are a valuable tool that will greatly enhance any microphone locker. NUVO N22: \$1,199; KU5A: \$1,599

aearibbonmics.com

GODIN ACS NYLON STEVE STEVENS SIGNATURE 25TH ANNIVERSARY GUITAR

Any serious guitar player is familiar with Godin instruments. Renowned for their playability, tone and craftsmanship, Godin Guitars have been 100 percent made in Quebec, Canada since 1972 and their reputation for building distinctive, unique, and excellent instruments is firmly entrenched in guitar making history.

The Godin ACS Nylon Steve Stevens Signature 25th Anniversary and ACS Nylon Steve Stevens Signature 25th Anniversary LTD are limited-edition acoustic-electric nylon-string guitars priced at \$2,999. Celebrating over 25 years of collaboration between Godin Guitars and Billy Idol's Grammy-winning guitarist, the rare model LTD is limited to only 100 signed and numbered units. But good luck finding one—the signed version sold out very quickly, though there may be a few still out there at some dealers. The good news is that the non-signed version is in full production and readily available.

Stevens and Godin have designed a masterpiece of a guitar. Designed to be the best possible electrified nylon string guitar, it is strikingly beautiful, with playful touches that embody Steven's sense of humor. The body is made of silver leaf maple with Canadian Laurentian basswood wings. The body top is Stevens' signature purple highly figured bookmatched flame maple. The gloss finish mahogany neck features his trademark pop kitsch ray gun on the top of the headstock and painted signature on the rear. Even the Godin custom tuning pegs are purple, and they are of the highest quality.

Sporting a 13-pin Multiac cable connection that interfaces with the Roland Synth Guitar System, as well as a standard ¼" guitar jack, the versatility of this guitar is staggering. "When I first discovered the Godin Multiac, it completely changed the way I thought about guitar," Stevens says. "I wanted to merge flamenco, rock, and electronic music into something cinematic and modern, and Godin was the first company that truly understood that vision."

Capable of expansive synth driven stereo landscapes articulated by an LR Baggs piezo pickup to provide the nylon string sound, the sonic tapestries available are incredible. The LR Baggs pickup requires an onboard 9-volt battery and sounds excellent without the synth.

MC tested the ACS Nylon with legendary guitarist Marc Mann (Danny Elfman, ELO, Concert For George Harrison), providing a Roland VG-8 guitar synth. The 5-fader onboard mixer on the guitar allows for combinations of the nylon string guitar sound and the synth blend, as well as 3 band EQ with mid shift and patch change buttons. The synth tracked extremely well, with minimal latency. Mann pointed out that care must be given to the Multiac cable as they are pricey and, if stepped on, the 13-pin connector can easily be crushed. He also noted that while most classical guitars do not have position markers on the fretboard, the ACS Nylon features fretboard markers on the players side of the neck as well as small subtle offset markers on the front of the fretboard, a feature that he likes very much.

Upon playing the guitar for many days we were convinced that the fingerboard was high quality ebony. But is the fingerboard ebony? No. Upon researching, we were surprised to find that both the fingerboard and bridge are made of Richlite. Richlite is a durable composite material made from 65 percent paper (often recycled or Forest Stewardship Council-certified), and 35 percent phenolic resin. The paper layers are saturated with resin, stacked by hand, and pressed under intense heat and pressure to form dense, solid sheets. Richlite feels like a very hard, dense wood, and with ebony being endangered and in short supply, its frequently used as an ebony substitute for guitar fretboards.

The Godin ACS Nylon Steve Stevens Signature 25th Anniversary Guitars are truly magnificent work. Every feature has been optimized to make the best possible electric nylon experience. Each guitar includes a custom hardshell case with purple plush interior, ray gun and signature painted on the case, a Steve Stevens guitar pick, and a signed Certificate of Authenticity. Highly recommended. \$2,999

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HARRISON TAPE SATURATOR PLUGIN

Nashville's Harrison Audio dates back to 1975 after Dave Harrison designed the world's first "in line" console, the MCI JH-400. Harrison combined the recording and monitoring console sections into one strip for the first time, and enabled console size to be cut in half. Studios immediately saw the efficiency in this, and this design quickly became industry standard.

Still located in Nashville, TN, Harrison expands on 50+ years of analog and digital experience and innovation by introducing The Harrison Tape Saturator Plugin. The Harrison Tape Saturator is an analog tape saturation plugin designed to emulate the sound of 2-track reel-to-reel tape machines.

The Harrison Tape Saturator is modelled on classic analog tape machines of the 1970's and 1980's, designed to impart the character of analog tape as well as the physical anomalies caused by the tape transport, from subtle warmth, rich saturation and tape deck irregularities.

Input and output gain controls, along with detailed metering, let you see how hard you're driving the Tape Saturator. The Drive control level is the main parameter that gauges how much saturation the plugin creates. Increasing the Drive knob intensifies the tape saturation. The Fidelity Selector lets you choose from five tape grades, with best offering the highest headroom and widest bandwidth with lowest distortion. Lowering the selector introduces lo-fi analog emulation.

The Speed Selector allows you to switch between multiple tape speeds, from 60 ips for the highest quality, studio grade performance, all the way down to 1 7/8 ips, like old school consumer cassette machines. Tape speed influences frequency response, noise floor, headroom, dynamics and the overall character of the sound. Like in the analog world, faster speeds offer cleaner, more accurate reproduction while slower speeds offer more degradation consistent with lower speed recording. While the vintage Ampex and Studer studio tape recorders never offered speeds beyond 30 ips, the 60 ips setting here offers yet another tonal option.

The Flutter, Dropouts and Hiss controls are all the parameters that emulate the electronics and mechanics of the tape deck. Each can be bypassed separately as well as automated. Flutter introduces subtle to extreme variations in tape speed, creating slight pitch fluctuations that authentically replicate the natural mechanical inconsistencies of real tape machines. Dropouts emulates the artifacts of worn or damaged magnetic tape that momentarily lose contact with the tape heads. The Harrison Tape Saturator offers 12 presets, with tape decks ranging from the 1950's to 1990's, to give you a starting point. Presets have names like 50's Dictaphone, 60's portable Suitcase, 70's Cassette No NR, and more. Parameters can be tweaked from there and saved into user presets.



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MAAT DIGITAL 2BC MULTICORR AND RSPHASESHIFTER PLUGINS: PHASE ANALYSIS AND CORRECTION TOOLS.



MAAT Digital is a professional audio software and hardware company founded in 2016 by pro audio veterans Friedemann Tischmeyer in Hamburg, Germany. MAAT stands for "Mastering Academy Audio Tools." Audio engineers and educators established the company to prioritize uncompromising sound quality over flashy graphics. The team focuses on high-fidelity tools for measurement, equalization, and effects. Over 20,000 audio engineers use MAAT products worldwide. MAAT contributes to global broadcast standards through active work with the European Broadcasting Union's (EBU) Ploud working group.

One of the very first things that student audio engineers learn about is the fundamental importance of both phase alignment and phase difference. *MC* examined two MAAT plugins concerning audio phase. The 2BC multiCORR plugin is a 31 multi-band correlation meter designed to detect issues in stereo phase. The 2BC multiCORR is a diagnostic tool and does not affect audio. The RSPhaseShifter plugin is a phase alignment tool, or phase rotator, that does affect audio. Note that this plugin is not what it sounds like—this is not a 1970's style swirly modulation phase shifter effect à la Pink Floyd.

The two plugins can be used individually or as part of the same workflow. Use 2BC multiCORR to investigate where problematic phase correlation issues are present across the frequency spectrum. If the problem traces back to similar signal paths, for example, the minute delay between a bass amp and bass direct track, the RSPhaseShifter plugin can be used to alter the phase relationship between the two tracks without changing the tracks' time alignment or EQ.

MAAT developed the 2BC multiCORR plugin because a conventional broadband correlation meter can conceal frequency-specific problems. A mix may show acceptable overall correlation while individual instruments or frequency ranges are producing significant cancellation. The plugin uses MAAT's trueLinear scale and provides stereo balance and broadband correlation measurements. Five monitoring functions, Left Only, Right Only, Mono, Difference and Flip, allow an engineer to investigate what is happening without leaving the plugin. The 31-band display is particularly useful

at the bottom end, where phase problems can have practical consequences. The RSPhaseShifter plugin is a 64-bit digital implementation of the 2016 analog hardware, Phase Shifter W2324, and was developed in partnership with Roger Schult's German Audio Lab. The design concentrates on the task at hand—manipulating and correcting phase issues without adding the noise and coloration associated with analog circuitry. The plugin changes phase relationships while leaving the signal's amplitude response intact. That makes it useful when two microphones, layered instruments or parallel signal paths are interacting in ways that produce phase cancellations and tonal changes. RSPhaseShifter provides 13 frequency selections from 16 Hz through 4 kHz.

A typical application might involve a kick drum recorded with multiple microphones. Instead of moving tracks in time, an engineer can use RSPhaseShifter to alter the phase relationship at selected frequencies while listening for changes in punch and low-frequency consistency. The same approach can apply to bass, acoustic guitars, piano, drum overheads, stereo microphones and subwoofer alignment. This is truly a plugin where listening is key. There are no buttons or lights to tell you when. Ultimately, it's your ears that will tell the tale.

2BC multiCORR \$49 AAX Native, AU, VST 2, VST 3 or as a standalone application.

RSPhaseShifter \$99 AAX Native, AU, VST 2, VST 3

[maatdigital](http://maatdigital.com)

Michael Stern, C.A.S., is a music engineer based in Los Angeles. He has recorded and mixed 260 film scores including *Iron Man 2*, *Sex And The City 1 and 2*, *The Notebook*, and *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm*. He has also worked with the artists Strawberry Alarm Clock, Richard Marx, Kenny Loggins, Jackson Browne, Micky Dolenz, The Cowsills, Bon Jovi, Tom Jones, Chick Corea, Lisa Loeb, and Rob Morrow. He can be reached at newtoys@musicconnection.com.

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The Jacksons: Legacy

By The Jacksons, Fred Bronson
(paperback) \$40



The Jacksons are never far from the public consciousness, and thanks to the recent *Michael* film, the legendary family are in the news once again. This book, tagged "From the family archives: The 50th anniversary book," offers "unparalleled access to the legend of The Jacksons." Essentially, it's their story told by family members with prose, some gorgeous photos, and a lot of record and magazine covers. The packaging is lovely, and the book does feel very personal. It's great to read more about Jackie, Tito, Marlon and Jermaine, and the book delivers on that front too.

Punk at Sea: A Rebellion Festival photo book

By Michiel Blijboom
(paperback) \$19.99



The Rebellion Festival is a punk fest that has taken place annually in the English seaside town of Blackpool since 1996, initially known as "Holiday in the Sun." It swiftly became one of the highlights on the global punk calendar (should such a thing exist), and *Punk at Sea* is a pictorial history of the whole thing. Blijboom has done a great job of conveying the sights and smells of the fest, largely through dazzling photos of the bands and attendees. There are some words, including a Q&A interview with Jennie Russell-Smith, the woman who started it all. Whether you've been to Rebellion before or not, there's a lot to enjoy here.

The Scene Police Story: A Story of Rebellion, Passion and Financial Ruin

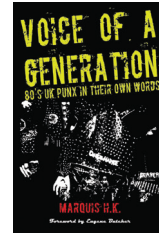
By Dennis P. Merklinghaus
(paperback) \$33.99



Much like Blijboom's Rebellion book, *The Scene Police Story* is a niche punk rock exploration about a DIY punk collective. According to the blurb, "From sweaty squats and empty venues to landmark releases, endless touring, ideological clashes, broken vans, and mounting debt, this is a story about what happens when DIY ethics collide headfirst with reality." It's a fascinating tale and, if nothing else, it vividly depicts the highs (and lows) that can be reached when a dedicated bunch of miscreants really put their minds to it.

Voice of a Generation

By Marquis H.K.
(paperback) \$33.99



Yep, MC has gone punk rock crazy with our books this month, thanks to this string of releases from the Earth Island imprint. *Voice of a Generation* is tagged "80s UK punx in their own words," and that's pretty much exactly what it is. It's as much about the characters as it is the music; we learn (or, if you were there, remember) some of the larger-than-life people that were integral to the British punk scene during that decade. Some of them are no longer with us, so it's gratifying to know that their legend has been preserved for posterity. The photos, including a *lot* of mohawks, are magnificent.

James Domestic is an Acquired Taste

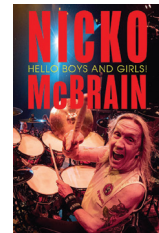
By James Domestic
(paperback) \$13.99



The glorious thing about James Domestic's book is that it's never really clear what it actually *is*. Is it a memoir? Not really. Autobiography? Not at all. It helps to know that Domestic, formerly of hardcore band The Domestic, considers himself a performance poet. "Being a performance poet, rather than solely a poet of the page, means that you regularly expose yourself—not literally—to a roomful of readymade critics whose reaction will make it abundantly clear (sometimes too bloody clear!) when a line doesn't land quite right and may need revision." So it's all slightly uncomfortable, in an other-worldly way. Enjoy!

Hello Boys and Girls!

Nicko McBrain
(paperback) \$13.99



In a metal scene jam-packed with larger-than-life characters, Iron Maiden drummer Nicko McBrain is one of the largest. Famously friendly and absolutely adorable, McBrain played on every Maiden album from 1983's *Piece of Mind* to, most recently, 2021's *Senjutsu*, having replaced Clive Burr following 1982's *The Number of the Beast*. *Hello Boys and Girls!* is his autobiography, and it's filled with warm stories and hilarious anecdotes, and a lot of new info for hardcore Maiden-heads. McBrain retired from touring in 2024, though he remains an important member of the band. Based on the joy in these pages, the great man has spent his time wisely.

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Rock Music Alliance

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Filling the Rock Recognition Void:

Founded in January 2020 by lifelong musician, recording artist, inventor and entrepreneur Cole Coleman, the Rock Music Alliance (RMA) 501(c)(3) nonprofit grew from a frustration he had carried for years: watching rock and metal gradually disappear from mainstream awards-show visibility. As a young musician, Coleman remembers rock being a much more prominent part of the televised Grammys, but over time the focus shifted increasingly toward pop and other genres. Rather than viewing that as something to criticize the Grammys for, Coleman saw it as a void that needed filling. His travels as a musician and inventor—he created the Thimble Slide mini guitar slide—reinforced his belief that reports of rock's demise were greatly exaggerated. While exhibiting at guitar shows in different cities, he encountered thriving rock scenes, talented young bands and audiences embracing everything from classic rock to metal and progressive music. What was missing, he realized, was a central place where the public could discover what was being created. RMA's mission is to raise public awareness of new rock, metal and prog releases, provide professional peer recognition and create an interactive community among artists, industry and fans.



Recognition Based on the Music:

At the center of the RMA is its awards program, designed to recognize outstanding new music without regard to celebrity status. An artist can be an established star, an independent musician recording in an apartment or anywhere in between; the determining factor is the music. Entries must be commercially released during the designated eligibility period and fall within the organization's broad spectrum of rock, metal, prog. The RMA currently recognizes a dozen distinct styles, including classic rock, modern rock, alternative rock, hard rock, alternative hard rock, blues rock, roots/country/Southern rock, progressive/cinematic rock/metal, power metal, alternative metal, symphonic/gothic rock/metal and guitar instrumentals. The Academy of Judges evaluates releases for Best Album and Best Song/Track, while exceptional music can receive Awards of Recognition. Coleman sees the awards not simply as trophies, but a way to inform the public about great new music and give artists and bands a professional acknowledgment they may otherwise never receive.

More Than an Awards Organization:

RMA's reach extends beyond its awards through a three-pronged approach including podcasts, live events and digital exposure. Hosted primarily by Coleman, the RMA Podcast features in-depth interviews with established artists, studio musicians, touring players, and industry professionals, alongside conversations spotlighting emerging talent and new releases. Guests have included Tony Kaye, Chris Wyse, Becky Baldwin, Mike Plotnikoff and many others, with episodes distributed through YouTube, Spotify, iHeartRadio and other outlets. RMA playlists provide another avenue for discovery, while live events bring the community together through performances featuring rock bands and DJs. Coleman's ultimate goal is to build the RMA Awards into a major annual live celebration. To achieve that, he's seeking sponsors, donors, and celebrity support with performances. For him, the most rewarding part is discovering extraordinary music—especially from artists who have gone largely unrecognized—and finally giving them a platform.

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▲ TROUSDALE REINTERPRET "AMAZING GRACE" FOR SALT LICK SESSIONS' SONGS OF U.S. SERIES

Trousdale deliver a reflective take on "Amazing Grace" for Salt Lick Sessions' *Songs of U.S.* series, pairing performance with conversation around history, redemption, and identity. The appearance also previews additional selections exploring themes of gender, labor, and hope, contributing to a broader dialogue on the evolving American songbook.



▲ JAKE SOBERLAK INTRODUCES A NEW GENERATION OF BLUES WITH DEBUT SINGLE "YOU GOTTA LEAVE"

At just 17 years old, Canadian blues artist Jake Soberlak channels decades of musical tradition into his debut single "You Gotta Leave." Inspired by legends like B.B. King and Eric Clapton, the guitarist, singer, and harmonica player blends vintage blues authenticity with fresh perspective ahead of his debut album *I'm In Trouble*.



▲ JAMIE HANNAH FINDS HIS WAY BACK TO HIMSELF ON DIANE WARREN-PENED BALLAD "WHERE IS YOUR HEART?"

Opera-trained vocalist Jamie Hannah returns with a powerful new single written by legendary songwriter Diane Warren. Blending classical technique with modern pop sensibility, the piano-driven ballad explores self-discovery, vulnerability, and the search for a lost sense of identity. The track marks the first preview of Hannah's upcoming EP, and highlights his soaring five-octave range.



▲ SOLID STATE LOGIC POWERS THE VOICE - LA PLUS BELLE VOIX WITH ADVANCED LIVE AUDIO TECHNOLOGY

Solid State Logic's L550 Plus consoles helped deliver seamless audio production for France's *The Voice—La plus belle voix* season finale. Featuring four interconnected consoles and SSL's Blacklight II MADI system, the setup gave engineers precise control over vocals, music, and broadcast sound for the high-pressure live competition.

PRODUCER PLAYBACK

"Hire a publicist. Many people drop good music, but no one knows about it. Run commercials on your local radio station or get them to play your record. Publicity isn't just tweeting about your record or posting it on Instagram." – DRUMMA BOY





▲ KORG BRINGS ROBERT GLASPER'S SIGNATURE SOUND TO KRONOS WORKSTATIONS

KORG teams up with GRAMMY-winning pianist Robert Glasper to launch *Glasper's Grand & EP (Exs43)*, a free KRONOS sound collection capturing the acclaimed artist's iconic piano tones. Recorded note by note, the collection brings Glasper's expressive blend of jazz, hip-hop, and R&B directly to musicians worldwide.



▼ WILLY PORTER REVISITS "SCARS OF INDEPENDENCE" THROUGH AN INTIMATE HISTORIC PERFORMANCE

Singer-songwriter Willy Porter reimagines his American Revolution-inspired song "Scars of Independence" in a live studio recording that honors the personal stories behind history. Captured with Immersive Design Labs microphones, the intimate performance connects Porter's songwriting with the sacrifices and humanity of the nation's earliest days.

▲ A.C. CELEBRATES GLOBAL SUCCESS BEHIND SHAKIRA & BURNA BOY'S "DAI DAI"

Montreal-born producer and songwriter A.C. (Alexander Castillo Vasquez) is making history with his work on Shakira and Burna Boy's FIFA World Cup 2026 anthem "Dai Dai." As the track dominates global charts, A.C. continues a decade-long career shaping Latin pop's biggest moments while championing emerging Montreal talent.



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PHOTO BY KRISTI ELIAS



Mixer, recording engineer and producer Keith Armstrong launched his career as an undergraduate at Los Angeles' University of Southern California. He majored in music recording and, through the able assistance of Candace Stewart, longtime manager of EastWest Studios (manager of Silver Lake's Soundcastle Studios at the time), landed his first gig as an assistant engineer at The Mix Room in Burbank. He went on to work at several studios but most notably for fifteen years alongside legendary mix engineer Chris Lord-Alge and even followed him to various audio abodes. Artists he's worked with include Green Day, Shinedown and Halestorm.

With several decades in the business, Armstrong has engineered on countless projects. His experience has led him to a simple yet poignant conclusion about what puts a song on the path to success. "You need to believe the singer and feel that they're telling you something that *has* to be told," he observes. "It feels like they're literally talking to you; that the song *needed* to be written. I once worked on a record where we'd recorded all of the tracks but the singer hadn't written a single lyric. I asked him what he liked to write about and he said, 'Stuff that we think sounds cool. Our fans tell us what the songs are about later.' It occurred to me that once you release a song, it's not yours anymore or at least it's no more yours than it is anyone's else's. We all have a deep attachment and connection to our art but that doesn't invalidate the listener's experience. The strength of a song has to do with the listener's connection. For example, maybe it's a song they listen to when they have to do something brave."

Any engineer must possess at least a basic command of his or her craft, of course. But interpersonal skills also play an important and sometimes underestimated role. "Soft skills are a big part of the job," Armstrong asserts. "Everyone has their own way into this. I'm not a particularly talented person in terms of hearing the music, seeing chartreuse in my mind and then creating a chartreuse track that somebody thinks is amazing. The hard skills are what attracted me to the job but the soft skills are what kept me in it. The hard skills are the means to the end and the soft skills are the hard part because then you have to become every client's best friend for five minutes. The way that you get to that point is different for everybody."

Armstrong's favorite gear includes a blend of standard and bespoke pieces. "I need to mix with my hands so I love my faders," he observes. "At my main studio I run an old 24-channel Digidesign / Avid D-Command ICON series and I just got into the Avid Pro Tools Dock. Hardware-wise, I have an 1176 limiter, which was built for me by my friend Dim-E (Dmitar Krnjaic). He also made me a monitor switcher known as the Switchitar, as well as something called The Booger that has a little Frankenstein switch in it for fast attack/slow attack. Those are the ones that I'd take in a fire; the things that can't be replaced."

Armstrong works largely from his space in North Hollywood, which was a home studio built originally by Mike Melvoin of The Wrecking Crew fame. His recent and upcoming projects include the soundtrack to Green Day's comedy film *Nimrods*, and a live record for Durand Jones & The Indications.

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BACKGROUND

Craig Ericson, the founder of Rise Records, is a vaunted figure in the world of alternative and heavy music, having signed and developed an avalanche of heavy hitters including Dance Gavin Dance, Sleeping With Sirens, and Beartooth. He sold Rise in 2015, but now he's back in the game with a new label, Vaux Records.

Rising Up

I started Rise in 1991 and then got serious about it in 2000. It slowly kept getting bigger and bigger. BMG was sniffing around and announced they were looking to buy independent labels. I only had eight employees, and it was getting chaotic. And BMG made a killer offer. I wasn't looking to sell, so I got a good deal.

Outside the Labels

I opened a bar with a friend, and it did not do well. COVID happened, and it shut down. I'm part owner of a pizza restaurant in Portland, which is doing great. I was flipping houses. I would buy a mid-century modern house and fix it up. I did that five times, and then my back started hurting. I've been raising my daughter, too.

Back In

Last year, I decided to start a new label. I have six bands signed, and one announced [J Noire]. Over the next few months, I'm going to be announcing a slew of bands, and it's going to be diverse. It's under the rock umbrella, but it's going to have some metalcore, some industrial vibe, a female-fronted band, a band from Switzerland... It's been fun schmoozing and doing the hustle again.

The Itch

Rise was kicking butt when I sold it. It still is. Back then, I was like, 'I'd be crazy to start a new label.' But then you start missing it. You see all your music industry friends on Facebook and Instagram. I was a part of all that, and suddenly I wasn't. It's more than just a business. It's the camaraderie, the traveling, all that stuff. Discovering new bands is euphoric. It's addictive almost. I never was doing it for the money. Maybe that's why it worked in the first place.

Yes, Master

I'm going to own the masters, which is pretty rare these days. I'm not really into licensing. If I'm going to put all the money into it and risk everything, I need that asset not to go away after a few years.

Staying Hard

The music I focus on has always been under the



"I have a pretty good track record of being good to my bands, helping them get big, paying royalties on time. No bullshit."

rock umbrella: hardcore, punk, metal. It's guitar-based and mainly heavy. There are probably 50 subgenres of rock: death metal, black metal, speed metal, hardcore, shoegaze. I like it heavy, but I would sign Dashboard Confessional in a second. I don't want to try something too new. I know all the people in the heavy music industry, and it's where I fit.

Seeking Developing Acts

It's going to be hard to sign an established band, because I have limited resources. [I'm looking for] baby bands. They're not going to kick your ass over the contract too much, because they're unknown. I do really fair deals, so they're not going to get ripped off; it's just I don't have to pay a shitload of money upfront. You sign big bands for hundreds of thousands of dollars, and if it flops you're out. So it's a little more safe. And young bands typically tend to be these hardcore, metalcore bands. There's no other genre or scene where you can sign bands made up of 20 year olds.

Doing A&R

Have you heard of Sumerian Records? They put out Bad Omens and Poppy and Asking Alexandria. I worked for Ash [Avildsen] for like six months as an A&R guy. It didn't work out long-term, but I had fun doing it. It wasn't quite for me. I needed to be the boss. I had to ask for permission too much. It was a little too slow; I work faster.

J NOIRE

When I moved to Tennessee, my neighbor was Hugh McDonald, the bass player of Bon Jovi. I got to know him and his wife, and his stepson was in a metal band called Guillotine doing covers at JBJ's Nashville. And I'm like, 'Bro, you're too good to just play covers on Monday nights at the bar.'

Tour, Tour, Tour

The biggest thing is touring. That's the number one goal—get on the road. If you're not actively touring, it's pretty much impossible to make it to the next level. Number two is good videos and a publicist. Play-listing can get you somewhere now, but word of mouth is still king.

Roster Size

Once I hit 10 bands, that's probably all I'm going to be able to do for now. Maybe it's 12. Maybe it's eight. Whenever I say I'm done signing, the next day some band comes along. There's always room for a good band. When a label says, 'Our roster's full. Thanks for the inquiry,' it's just them being nice, because they'll sign at any moment if the artist is that special.

Putting Rise Artists On YouTube

Back when it was MySpace, you could post a whole album for free. And then MySpace went away, so there was nowhere you could listen to music for free except YouTube. And back then, the big labels didn't even post their videos. I was like, 'Let's post every single song.' We literally put thousands of songs on YouTube. And it worked. We were streaming a million a day. And we were getting paid for it. Our best marketing tool was writing us big checks.

[The labels] don't like to give away music. They wanted to post maybe one song, but not the whole album. And then people started downloading illegally, which helped me immensely, because they were downloading all of my bands. It's ironic that illegal downloading helped my label.

History and Principles

I have a pretty good track record of being good to my bands, helping them get big, paying royalties on time. No bullshit. So if an artist signs to my label, they should know what to expect. There shouldn't be a lot of bad surprises. Honesty, integrity... all that shit.

The Familial Touch

I'm proud of how I treated all the bands on Rise. I had a great relationship with just about all of them. They come to my house before the tours, stay the night at my house, and we have a barbecue. It's a family affair once they're in.

The Road Warrior Mindset

Have that mentality of trying to play every weekend. Look up a town an hour away, find a local band, and tour with them. Don't wait for shit to happen. Be proactive. You've got to self-promote. A lot of people are too cool to self-promote, but you have to in the beginning. If you just record and never play, it's never going to happen. Make friends with the other bands in town. Support them. Play the city a few hours from you, and then play the one a few more hours away. Get big in your region as best you can. And the singer should always sell merch after they play. They should run to the merch tables and meet their fans, because when that happens you sell way more merch. Go out and mingle.

Don't Just Take a Label's Word

Have all the things [a label promises] in writing. They should commit to the recording budget, hopefully a publicist, and some digital ad money. Make them pay for things. That's the whole point—they front things, and you split the money afterwards. It's a simple business concept.

Donna and Mark Isham's Alchemical Romance

Painter Donna Isham builds gestures, marks, accumulations, formations, and endless layers of oil stick, graphite, charcoal, and acrylic into grounded pictorial spaces for her abstract figures to occupy, and an expansive field where mellifluous and post-cubist expressions of their psyches can bloom. Increasingly curious as to how to push the experience of painting into further multisensory, experiential terrains without losing its heartfelt and handmade texture, she became intrigued by the powers of projection-mapping video.

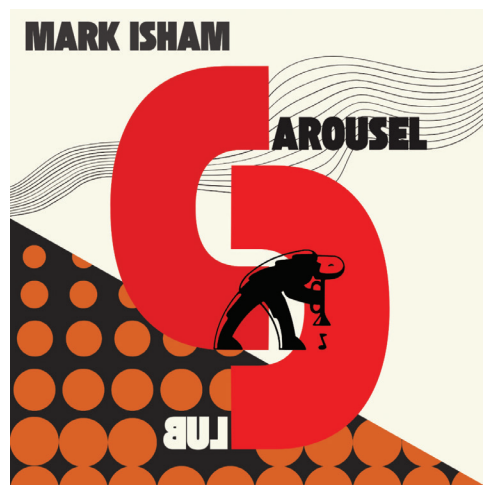
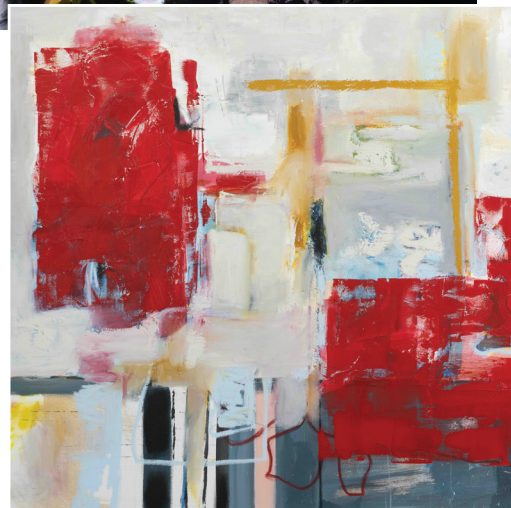
Of course, with any work of video art, music and sound are indispensable. As Isham's *Alchemy Immersive Collection* took shape, it became inevitable that she would need a musician to work with. Enter Mark Isham—the Emmy- and Grammy-winning, Oscar-nominated composer whose celebrated career includes scores for *Crash* and *A River Runs Through It*, as well as performances alongside Bruce Springsteen, Jerry Garcia, and Joni Mitchell—and who also happens to be Donna's husband.

As the enhanced video elements obscure, highlight, and translate patterns, imagery, gestures, and shapes from within the paintings into light and motion, Mark's scores build a parallel acoustic architecture using piano, strings, and vintage synthesizers. The music lends a jazzy, romantic and roaming, open-ended and picaresque sway, matching and counterbalancing the art's pacing and shifting density in a continuous cycle Donna calls *Samsara*—embodying “transformation as an ongoing process in which connection can still be found within darkness. A human voice calls out into the void, answered by a haunting melody...creating an atmospheric soundscape in which color, texture, and sound unfold together.”

For Mark's part, he says, “I approach Donna's paintings almost as I would another musician: I listen for what is already there. The color, gesture, and emotional tension all suggest a rhythm and a tonal language. My role is not to score the painting in a traditional cinematic sense, but to create music that enters into a dialogue with it. When the elements come together, the music changes how you experience the painting—and the painting changes how you hear the music.”

Donna Isham: Transformation and Beauty is on view October 2–December 20 at Nashville's Soulios Gallery—a program showing artists whose work “bridges disciplines and invites new ways of experiencing contemporary art.” So that works out perfectly.

donnaisham.com/immersive



ANDREA MAGEE

Northern Ireland-born indie folk artist Andrea Magee, based in Austin, TX, was just seven years old when she started performing in her family band.

"Coming from Ireland, music was just something we did at home—it was woven into daily life," Magee says. "The moment it got real for me was a week playing in a bar in Ardara, Co. Donegal, when someone handed me twenty punt at the end of the run. I remember thinking, 'I get to do the thing I love and get paid for it? This is so cool.' That was it. I was hooked."

The artist says that she's carved out her own little world with her sound. "I play traditional Irish instruments and build most of my sound around the bodhrán," she says. "If I had to put it in a box I'd call it Celtic Americana, but honestly, it's a bit of everything. I just try to keep it honest and real."

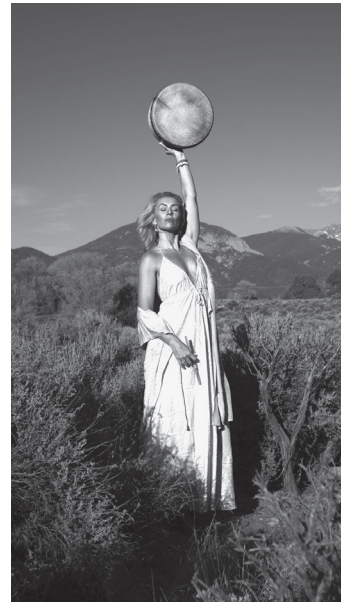
That can be heard on her most recent and third full-length solo album, *Wild Women*, which dropped in May.

"I'm really proud of it," Magee says. "It's an honest reflection of life—I use music to cope with whatever gets thrown at me, and I tend to write from that place. I got to work with some of the best musicians in Austin on it, I loved the recording process, and the response has meant the world."

For Magee, the DIY ethic is the core of her career to date. "When I first came to America twelve years ago, someone said to me: if there isn't a door, build one," she says. "It stuck, and it's been my approach ever since—I should probably get it tattooed on me at this stage. It's especially true of She Rises Fest, which just wrapped its fourth year. That festival is DIY to its bones, and I have a wonderful team who all work that way too. In this industry, if you want something to exist, you have to build it and figure it out as you go."

Looking ahead, Magee has plenty for the remainder of 2026. "Right now, I'm relishing the album and the success of *She Rises 4*," she says. "We've already started on *She Rises 5*, so expect a lineup announcement before long. I'm heading to Ireland for a month to see my family, then September is a very busy touring month around Colorado and New Mexico. After that, I'll let the world unfold and let the music go wherever it needs to go."

andremageemusic.com



THE LEGAL BEAT

BY GLENN T. LITWAK



On August 21, 2026, Ralph's parent company, Kroger, was sued by Sony Music for copyright infringement in U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

Sony alleges that Kroger used its recordings without permission or compensation in Kroger's social media as well as promotion of its brands by influencers. This includes an advertising campaign featuring a song by the Lovin' Spoonful entitled "Do you Believe in Magic?" Sony claims Kroger posted the song on its Facebook account in 2020 and asserts that the license for it expired on December 31, 2020. Sony also claims "that video

was, and as recently as August 17, 2026, remained viewable on demand by any consumer with an internet-connected device in California."

Other examples of songs plaintiff claims were used without a license include Bill Withers "Lovely Day," Harry Styles "Golden," Mariah Carey's "All I want for Christmas is You," and Outkast's "Hey Ya." Sony alleges, "It is no accident that the videos use some of the most popular sound recordings in Sony Music's catalog."

The lawsuit names numerous Kroger companies as defendants including Ralphs, Murray's Cheese, Mariano's, Ruler Foods and Home Chef. In addition to Sony, other plaintiffs include Arista Records, LaFace Records, and Zomba Recording.

The plaintiffs' complaint states that Kroger, "directly markets and sells its Private Selection, Simple Truth, Kroger Brand, and other private-label product lines advertised in the videos to California consumers through California retail stores operated by its wholly-owned subsidiaries including Ralphs Grocery Company and Food 4

Less of California, Inc."

Sony alleges that Kroger's infringement is "willful" stating, "the Kroger Parties know licenses are required for this use of Sony Music Recordings." Standard statutory damages for copyright infringement are from \$750 to \$30,000 per infringed work. For willful infringement the court can add enhanced statutory damages of up to \$150,000 per infringed work. Plaintiffs also seek declaratory relief, an injunction, accounting, attorney fees and interest.

Sony contends the proof of willfulness is the fact that Kroger licensed recordings in the past from Sony from 2017 to 2025, and these licenses included internet and social media.

The complaint states: "Having previously negotiated and paid for such licenses, the Kroger Parties cannot claim ignorance of the licensing requirement."

Sony put Kroger on notice of its claims in June of 2025 and alleges that Kroger continued to post infringing material as recently as August of 2026.

Sony asserts it attempted to

enter settlement discussions with Kroger and asked Kroger to agree to what is known as a tolling agreement. This is an agreement between the parties that temporarily pauses the statute of limitations deadline for filing a lawsuit. In this manner, plaintiffs are not prejudiced by a delay in filing a complaint. Sony claims Kroger refused to enter into a tolling agreement and therefore Sony was compelled to file the lawsuit.

GLENN T. LITWAK is a veteran music and entertainment attorney based in Santa Monica, CA. He has represented platinum selling recording artists, music producers and hit songwriters, as well as 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 SXSW and the *Billboard* Music in Film and TV Conference. Glenn has been selected as a "Super Lawyer" by *Super Lawyer Magazine* for 2022-2026. Email Glenn at gtllaw59@gmail.com or check out his website at glennlitwak.com

The above is a brief overview of the subject and does not constitute legal advice.



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Date Signed: April 2026

Label: Reprise/Warner Records

Band Members: Mila de la Garza, drums, vocals; Lucia de la Garza, guitar, vocals; Eloise Wong, bass, vocals; Bela Salazar, guitar, vocals

Type of Music: Rock

Management: Fly South Music

Booking: CAA

Legal: Mark Media MML

Publicity: Grandstand

A&R: Jeff Sosnow

Web: thelindalindas.com

Four kids who once played matinees in Chinatown are now labelmates with Green Day. Los Angeles' punk quartet The Linda Lindas—sisters Mila and Lucia de la Garza, their cousin Eloise Wong, and family friend Bela Salazar—have signed with Reprise/Warner Records, home to some of the artists they cite as heroes.

The group got its start playing kids' cover sets before forming their own garage punk outfit, eventually sharing stages with riot grrrl icons, punk mainstays, and even opening for The Rolling Stones. A viral 2021 L.A. library performance introduced them to a global audience, and two acclaimed albums later—2022's *Growing Up* and 2024's *No Obligation*—they've become one of the most closely watched young bands in rock.

For the band, the new label deal came together on their own terms. "We were working really hard on new music before knowing what label it would

"The whole team at Reprise/Warner were all interested in the music we were working on and what we had to say."

be released on, and so I think we felt secure knowing that everything we did creatively on this album would be ours," says Lucia. "The whole team at Reprise/Warner were all interested in the music we were working on and what we had to say!"

Mila agrees that the fit felt right from the start. "Everyone at Reprise/Warner has been super welcoming and warm towards us, and super excited about the music, which is what's important!" Wong adds a bit of star-struck excitement to the mix: "It's also unbelievable to be on the same label as bands I love like The Muffs, The Replacements, L7, and Green Day!"

The signing arrives alongside a new single, "Burning Out," written during a songwriting retreat in Palm Springs last summer—a trip the band says pushed them to slow down and focus. Lucia recalls the track coming together quickly once they sat with the demo. "Bela brought in the drum loop and chords and vibe and it all just stemmed from there," she says. Mila has her own theory about where that inspiration came from: "I believe that not only did Bela bring the chords, she heard them in a dream. Which is pretty rad." Wong remembers laying down a bass part before stepping away to cook dinner—and coming back to a finished song. "When I had finished cooking, they had completed the song, lyrics and everything. Impressive!" - **Ruby Risch**



Date Signed: April 2026

Label: Hard Working Records

Type of Music: Alternative

Management: Self-managed

Legal: Aaron Steinberg - Marucs & Colvin LLP

Publicity: Becky Kovach - Big Picture Media

A&R: Dirk Hemsath, David Conway

Web: nicolealexismusic.com

No sooner had alt-acoustic artist Nicole Alexis (often wonderfully stylized as N/A) dropped her debut *Mirrors & Smoke* EP, then the announcement was made that she had signed on with Nashville imprint the Hardworking Record Company. It's a just reward for an artist who has been writing songs for as long as she can remember.

"I started playing music when I was young, and songwriting became my way of making sense of whatever I was feeling," Alexis says. "I believe I was around 13 when I wrote my first full song—it was called 'Superman' and I never wrote it with the intention of writing a song, it just came so naturally based on the situation I was going through at the time. When I started middle school, I was playing in bands with my friends in a 'school of rock' program, which allowed us to play some of the most iconic venues in the Atlanta metro, and sometimes three shows a week. At first, I did not like it because I was so shy and insecure about my playing when I was young but after many years of performing live, I really grew comfortable with not being afraid of messing up and having fun, being able to do what I love for an audience. Over the years it's gone from being something I had fun doing to something I genuinely can't imagine my life without."

Alexis describes her sound as fitting somewhere between alternative rock and singer-songwriter.

"I've always been drawn to emotional, honest lyrics, but sonically my music has evolved quite a bit."

"I've always been drawn to emotional, honest lyrics, but sonically my music has evolved quite a bit," she says. "I produce, mix, and master all of my own music, which gives me a lot of creative freedom, but it also comes with plenty of trial and error."

The artist connected with Hardworking earlier in 2026, and it felt like a good fit after the two parties talked. "What really stood out was that they believed in the vision I already had instead of trying to change who I was as an artist," Alexis says. "They understood that I wanted to keep creating authentic music and growing the project naturally, so it felt like a partnership rather than just signing a deal."

Alexis recorded *Mirrors & Smoke* at her home studio in Nashville. "I wrote, produced and mixed it myself, which is always something I'm really proud of," she says. "I wanted it to feel personal from start to finish, so I spent a lot of time experimenting with sounds, recording live instruments, and letting the songs develop naturally instead of rushing the process. It's probably the most honest collection of songs I've written, and I think it really captures where I am both as a songwriter and as a producer."

With the "Goodbye" single also out now, and shows getting booked, expect a lot more from her. - **Brett Callwood**



BOYHOOD

Date Signed: June 2026
Label: Hand Drawn Dracula
Type of Music: Bedroom-Pop
Management: Jesse Northey
Publicity: Nathan Walker
A&R: James Mejia
Web: facebook.com/boyh00d

Boyhood is the bedroom-pop project of Caylie Runciman of rural Ontario. She recently signed on with Toronto-based independent record label Hand Drawn Dracula, and the *I'll Dream InSteAD* album is out in October. That's preceded by the single, "Loner."

The album points to a big year for Boyhood. It's all been building since Runciman first played in Bellville, Ontario. "I remember being so nervous I could barely sing—it sucked," she says. "I used to record using the USB microphone from the video game Rock Band. I'd sing into it, hang it over my little guitar amp, would often play guitar and pitch it down in the program Audacity to make it sound like a bass if I was too lazy to grab my dad's bass guitar. And for drums, I'd just clip the USB mic to the top of the kick drum. Honestly, it was a great sound!"

Runciman says that her sound has evolved as she's evolved as an artist and person. "It started out very scrappy, and I went through phases of trying to have a more polished recording sound—but I've definitely found myself again with this record," she says. "It's listenable, but also scrappy. A lot of my friends who've heard it have told me it reminds them of my early recordings, and I like that. I do feel like I've been experiencing a rebirth in making this record and, as it rolls out, it's nice to think I'm still in touch with my weirdo roots. Maybe more so than ever."

As it turns out, Hand Drawn Dracula is the perfect home for Boyhood. "I've had a lot of respect for Hand Drawn Dracula for a long time," Runciman says. "I thought they were so cool when I was a kid. Obviously still do. Jesse Northey of Victory Pool, who has been a huge supporter of my music for the last couple of years, suggested we all work together on this release—so stoked to be working with such lovely people."

"I do feel like I've been experiencing a rebirth in making this record."

"'Loner' is a song I wrote a bunch of years ago just having lots of fun with my 8-track in my living room," she shares. "I'd been meaning to re-record it for a long time and found it fitting to get into again with this record. I recorded guitar, bass, vocals and mellotron synth on my bed, and recorded the drums in studio at Port William Sound all by my lonesome. The smudgy spoken audio clip in the bridge is the saddest part in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the 1951 movie, where Mitch is yelling at Blanche to turn on the light, trying to expose her, and she yells, 'Don't turn the light on! I saw it for the first time this past year and really connected with the character of Blanche. It is an upsetting clip; I did wonder if it was a bit too heavy for the song. But it works and is pretty abstracted.'"

Expect plenty of Boyhood shows, as Runciman plans lots of touring this year. "I would love a booking agent," she says. "And I'm starting another record this month." - **Brett Callwood**



Date Signed: January 2026
Label: BLKIIIBLK
Band Members: Jamey Jasta, lead vocals; Matt Byrne, drums; Frank Novinec, rhythm guitar, backing vocals; Wayne Lozinak, lead guitar, backing vocals
Type of Music: Heavy Metal
Management: steve.ross@nonameworldwide.com
Booking: Tim Borrer - Sound Talent Group
Legal: Scott Bradford
Publicity: Amy Sciarretto - Atom Splitter PR, amy@atomsplitterpr.com
A&R: Mike Gitter
Web: hatebreed.com

Metalcore titans Hatebreed have had deals with numerous labels throughout their 32 years of making noise, enjoying stints with Victory, Universal, and Razor & Tie among others. Now a staple on the hardcore circuit, Hatebreed has reportedly played over 3,000 shows since its inception.

One figure in the metal world they met during their travels is Mike Gitter. As Director of A&R at Roadrunner Records during Hatebreed's tenure with the label, they had a great working relationship back in the day. "He's been a part of heavy music and hardcore for like four decades," notes Matt

"It made the most sense to land with BLKIIIBLK. We felt they would give us the push and direction that we need."

Byrne, the group's drummer since 2001. "He's a friend. He gets the band and understands us."

Having most recently released a trio of albums with Nuclear Blast, Hatebreed wanted to make a change. "They're a great team," Byrne diplomatically points out. "We just wanted to switch it up a bit."

Gitter's latest endeavor is BLKIIIBLK Records, a metal and hard rock-focused arm of Frontiers Label Group. Word got around fast about the GRAMMY-nominated band being a free agent, and it wasn't long before Gitter reconnected with the kings of hardcore. "It made the most sense to land with him and BLKIIIBLK," explains Byrne. "We felt they would give us the push and direction that we need." FLG made the grand announcement as part of its 30th anniversary celebration.

Hatebreed feels at home being on the same roster as other hardcore legacy acts Megadeth, Cro-Mags, and Biohazard. They're also confident that Gitter will be able to honor Hatebreed's history while simultaneously helping them carve out their future. Artists with the longevity of Hatebreed are likely to experience diverging goals with their labels over time. "We're more apt to do one-album deals now," Byrne reveals, and that's ultimately what they got with BLKIIIBLK.

The group is in the midst of recording a new album due this fall; it will be their first since 2020's *Weight of the False Self*. "They're not pigeonholed into a certain style or genre of music," observes Byrne regarding BLKIIIBLK's artistic mission. "Obviously, they're dealing with heavy bands, but it's fresh energy. Let's work well together and see where we go." - **Andy Kaufmann**



▲ BMG'S WOLFMOTHER ACQUISITION

Serving as his publisher since 2016, BMG acquires the publishing, recording, and neighboring rights of vocalist, guitarist, songwriter, Grammy-winning Wolfmother co-founder, Andrew Stockdale. Hundreds of millions of streams later, hits include "Woman," "Joker and the Thief," "Dimension," "White Unicorn," etc.



◀ KOBALT ADDS BRGR

Newly signed to global publishing, BRGR becomes the first Filipino-born producer to join Kobalt's roster. Getting started with European EDM tracks and remixes on YouTube's Trap Nation, BRGR is now a prominent producer, with hits including O Side Mafia's "Get Low," "Kunan Mong Pic," "20 Deep," "SMD," and "Crashing."

▶ CROW RECEIVES TROUBADOUR

Nine-time Grammy winner and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee Sheryl Crow receives BMI Nashville's Troubadour Award, recognizing her profound impact on American music and continuing commitment to songwriting excellence. Across decades and genres, Crow continues to inspire with her authentic vulnerability.



ASCAP Celebrates Gospel

Motown Gospel and The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) celebrated the best in gospel music at the Stellar Awards Nominee Mixer in North Carolina. With more than one million units sold, the duo honored Grammy-winning ASCAP songwriter Tasha Cobbs Leonard with an RIAA platinum plaque for the song, "Gracefully Broken." 2026's nominees for the annual celebration included JJ Hairston, Jovonta Patton, Kim Person, Mike Teezy, Nia Allen, Maurette Brown Clark, Brandon Camphor and One Way, Dante Pride, Stan Jones, William Murphy, and others. Details/winners at: thestellarawards.com.

MONDO NYC Returns

The Mondo music-tech conference returns to Brooklyn, New York this month for their 11th year, continuing in their mission to inform the music business, empower artists, and build community, while advancing the future of music. Combining



▲ GORLEY'S TOP HONOR

Ashley Gorley named top Songwriter in *Billboard* Country Singles history for No. 1s within the weekly Top 40 and elsewhere on country charts from 1944-2025. Gorley has 182 hits, 148 Top 40s, 101 Top 10s, 85 No. 1s (*Billboard* & Country Aircheck) with 140 weeks total at No. 1.

curated business content and new music performances, uniting global music and tech innovators, entrepreneurs, emerging artists and their fans, the four-day event includes panels, round table discussions, meetups, happy hours and receptions, networking and musical showcases (across various NYC venues). Details and last-minute registration at: mondo.nyc/conference.

BMI's R&B/Hip-Hop Awards

Paying tribute to the best in R&B and Hip-Hop, BMI awarded NAS with the 2026 Icon Award (joining previous winners James Brown, Al Green, Isaac Hayes, Janet Jackson, Patti LaBelle, and many others). They also awarded Kendrick Lamar with 2026's R&B/Hip-Hop Songwriter of the Year (for songs including "30 For 30," "hey now," "peekaboo," "squabble up," "tv off," and "luther"). "Luther" (co-written by Kendrick Lamar, Matthew "MTech" Bernard, Atia "INK" Boggs, Sam Dew, Roselilah (BUMA), Mark "Sounwave" Spears and SZA (with a Marvin Gaye sample from "If This World Were Mine") received Song of the Year, having landed at #2 on the *Billboard* Year End Hot 100 songs chart for 2025 after spending 23 weeks on the *Billboard* Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart. Producer of the Year accolades went to O Lil Angel (for collabs with Drake and PARTYNEXTDOOR), and Sony Music Publishing received Publisher of the Year, having represented 27 of the most performed songs of 2025 (including "Timeless," "Like Him," "Yukon," "25," and "luther"). Top BMI Producers and songwriters from 35 of the most-performed R&B/Hip-Hop songs across the U.S. from 2025 were also recognized (including 63 first-time winners).

Details at: awards.bmi.com/show/rnb-2026.

Bucks' Gregory & Aggy

As one of the U.K.'s longest-running independent, family-owned publishers (with a roster including David Bowie, The Rolling Stones, Black Sabbath, James Blunt, and more), Bucks Music Group has entered deals with Goldfrapp's Will Gregory and singer-songwriter Aggy.

Gregory's agreement covers work outside of Goldfrapp's electronica, with credits including *My Summer of Love* and the John Lennon biopic *Nowhere Boy* (both alongside Alison Goldfrapp), theatre production *Medea*,

and opera *Piccard in Space*. Television projects include BBC's *Serengeti*, *Spy in The Wild*, *Snow Chick: A Penguin's Tale*, AMC's *Soulmates*, Amazon's *Chloe*, and Hulu's *Extraordinary*. He has theatre work with the National Theatre of Scotland and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

With a blend of R&B, Afrobeats, Hip-hop, and classic soul stylings, singer-songwriter-artist Aggy has signed to Bucks for global publishing. Joining Alicia Keys for a duet on TikTok in 2021, Aggy added a million likes and grew a following, with features in a Beats By Dr. Dre campaign in 2023 (surpassing a million YouTube views), and appearing on JD Sports' *Who Did It?* with Chunkz, AJ Shabeel and Max Khadar. *Behind Closed Doors* was released in July.

Nashville Songwriters HOF

The 2026 Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame's 2026 honorees (to be inducted at a private ceremony later this month) include Taylor Swift, Lyle Lovett, Bruce Channel, Shawn Camp and Lee Thomas



▲ MOTOWN SIGNS HAWTHORNE

Signed to Motown Gospel, Grammy-nominated Koryn Hawthorne (*The Voice* finalist) releases *Big Gospel* this month, produced by J. White Did It (Doechii, Cardi B, Meghan Thee Stallion, etc.). Performing RIAA Platinum-certified "Won't He Do It" at 2026's ESSENCE Festival, she encourages positivity and confidence.



Miller. After more than 50 years, the organization honors the best in the business, with Camp and Miller elected for contemporary writing, Swift in the contemporary songwriting/artist category, Channel as the veteran writer, and Lovett as the veteran songwriter/artist. Further details at: instagram.com/nashof_official.

IAMA Awards Deadline

The 23rd Annual International Acoustic Music Awards (IAMA) returns, recognizing excellence in acoustic music performance and artistry. Artist participants in various acoustic genres are eligible to win radio and web exposure, with an overall grand prize winner receiving \$11,000 worth of merchandise and services. First prize for each category receives \$900 worth of merchandise and services, with runner-ups in each receiving \$600 worth. First prize and runner-up winners will each be given a track on an IAMA compilation CD (which is distributed to radio). Entries are \$35 per song. Deadline for submissions is early November, with details at: inacoustic.com.

SESAC Toasts Americana

Nominated for the Americana Honors & Awards' Artist of the Year, Album of the Year, and Duo/Group of the Year Awards, SESAC extends congratulations to member affiliates Margo Price (*Hard Headed Woman*) and Mumford & Sons. For a full list of nominees, visit americanamusic.org.

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

▲ FREDERICO7'S BRASILEIRÔU

Brazilian-born Frederico7 releases *Brasileirôu* (following his hit *Exótico*), with musicians from Austin and Brazil for Brazilian soul, jazz, chamber, Afro-Brazilian rhythm, and poetry. Producer/mixer Beto Martinez, arranger/orchestrator Pedro Dom, percussion maestro Luiz Coutinho brought the grassroots project to life.



◀ PAUL'S JAZZ MONEY

Producer-instrumentalist Zacchaeus Paul releases *Jazz Money Vol. 2: Swingin' R&B*. Dubbed 'hood jazz,' the sophomore album navigates love and death, blending modern jazz, Hip-hop and neo-soul. It follows NPR Music Essential Jazz list's *Jazz Money* debut in 2024 and features Eric Wyatt, Keyon Harrold, Kebbi Williams.



▲ SUBLIME'S DIAMOND CERTIFICATION

With 10+ million units sold, reggae-punk alt rockers Sublime celebrate Diamond certification for 1996's *Sublime* (frontman Bradley Nowell passed the same year). The influential SoCal music group added Nowell's son Jakob on vocals in 2023. *Until the Sun Explodes* is out now; Sublime Reef Madness cruise is next month. [L to R: Eric Wilson, Bud Gaugh and Jakob Nowell of Sublime]

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SONGWRITER PROFILE

- ANDREA BEENHAM

TT

Cathartic Creation



Raised in Colorado by a theater singer mother who had him performing and playing the piano at three years old, singer-songwriter-actor TT remembers first learning "Somewhere Over The Rainbow." Diagnosed with a chronic kidney condition as a youngster, he spent years in pain, working to regain the ability to walk. Music brought him a safe escape and a creative world to play in, and when he moved to Los Angeles to pursue music after college, he began performing local gigs. When his kidney disease flared up, adding more time in and out of the hospital (after being told he had six years left to live), TT returned to music, releasing his Americana-feeling debut, *Man on the Corner* in 2025.

"There's never a reason not to pursue something, so go ahead and take the risk, but try to make it calculated," he says. "Be creative: go sing, go write, go record things. It's a weird business. You don't know what the audience is gonna like. When I wasn't able to pay the bills with music, I had a second career in business. I see people struggling and at some point, maybe you need to try something else? Be smart about it. Is this really your core competency? Is this the thing that will really make you happy?"

Joe DiMuro (executive VP of Sony BMG Strategic Marketing Group, Burgundy Records) was the first to hear the project, telling TT he "had a career," and introducing Nicole Poulos, who linked TT to A&R rep Gabi Kochlani (and she connected co-writers/co-producers Emile Ghantous, Sam SZND, Sheppard Solomon, and Mathias Gavriel). Entering remission as the album was finalized, TT says the experience "made me really rethink and change my course." Amassing millions of viewers on YouTube (almost 3 million to date), the project earned the European Music Awards' Best Original Song and Best Production honors, and the single "Heal My Mind" received a Global Music Award bronze medal.

TT's writing process to date involves inventing a tune and writing based on a theme. "I wrote it when I was in an airport," he says of "My Confession." "I had a long layover, singing it into my phone. Next thing you know, I'm on an airplane working on it. By the time I land, I have things together, rushing to my guitar, riffing a chord change, and a melody hits me. I lived with that for a while, then put words to it."

While the first record was very angsty and cathartic, the second is more reflective and hopeful, and with a more rock and pop sound, the latter involved collaboration. "In all four originals that were co-written, they started with the music," says TT. "I did the lyrics, and then we tweaked both sides. I love that process. That's probably the way I want to keep going; it's a lot more fun than working by yourself."

"I was first sick when I was six, in and out of hospital for a year. I went into remission the first time and, coming out of that, didn't walk well. I was small and was bullied a lot," confesses TT. "That lasted through elementary school, so I have pretty low self-esteem. I don't think it's as much about being confident as it is about just not failing. That's what kind of drives me. I'm a total workaholic, but I also really love what I do."

Sometimes the unexpected just falls in our lap. As the central character in music videos "Let Us Breathe," "My Confession," and "Heal My Mind," writer-director Art Camacho loved TT's work and he has become a passionate mentor, casting him in the film *Dustlands* (TT is also featured in *The Hook*, *Sweet Redemption*, *Marx*, and *The Exorcist Archives*). Whether through music or film, TT's passion lies in storytelling, transforming survival into a form of artistic expression. "Stuck In Traffic"—co-written with Mati Gavriel (Jon Batiste, Kesha, Diane Warren) and Sheppard Solomon (Britney Spears, Kelly Clarkson, Natalie Imbruglia) is out now, as are his Alanis Morissette cover "Hand In My Pocket," and original "My Dear Woman" (also co-written with Gavriel and Solomon). The sophomore album *Dancing On The Ocean* is out this month.

Contact Deborah Radel - DRPR, deborah@drpr.us
Visit ttmusicstudio.com

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DROPS

The band **Lambchop** released their latest album, *Punching the Clown*, to widespread acclaim, with the record available across streaming platforms and in physical formats through Merge Records and Bandcamp. Along with the release, the band debuted *joke country*, a 10-minute short film styled as a mock radio interview, starring **Henry Phillips**, of 2023 film *Punching the Clown*, portraying Lambchop frontman **Kurt Wagner**. The film offered a cinematic companion piece to the album, and dropped in advance of a tour that included sold-out shows in Minneapolis and New York, and will stretch into February. Watch the video at tinyurl.com/24774 and see bnds.us/6wsjb5 for tour dates.

AMC Global Media and Lakeshore Records have released the official soundtrack for *The Vampire Lestat*, featuring original music by composer, songwriter and series co-producer **Daniel Hart**. The album dropped digitally on major platforms, including Spotify, Apple Music, and Amazon Music. Set against this rock-and-roll-driven season, the series follows Lestat as he tours multiple cities with his band, pursued by memories of his rebellious past, while his growing fame deepens his hold over humans and vampires alike amid the Great Conversion (a surge in the vampire population). Hart, who has composed for film, television, and audio

October 30 via Cold Plunge Records. The Guggenheim-winning trombonist and composer devoted the project entirely to compositions by Michigan writer **Gregg Hill**, distributing 10 pieces among 10 different arrangers, and featuring guest soloists **Dr. Eddie Henderson** and **Virginia MacDonald**. The album marked Dease's fourth collaboration built around Hill's catalog, following *The Other Shoe*, *Found in Space* and *City Life*, and assembled an all-professional, multigenerational ensemble from across the country. Dease produced the record himself, continuing an evolving musical partnership rooted in Hill's distinctive melodic and rhythmic style. For details, contact Jon Solomon at jon@dlmediamusic.ccsend.com.

Hollywood Records released the Original Video Game Soundtrack for *Marvel's Wolverine* on



was announced at San Diego Comic-Con. The game launched in September on PlayStation 5. Learn more by contacting Sarah Roche at sarah@whitebearpr.com.

The **Sierra Madre Playhouse** is preparing to celebrate the holidays with five festive programs lined up, spanning 59 performances across 37 days, running from late November 2026 through early January 2027. Highlights will include the return of **Bob Baker Marionette Theater's** marionette adaptation of *The Nutcracker*, a comedic musical parody of *Die Hard* (for the camp that believes it's a holiday movie) from troupe **30 Minute Musicals**, and an interactive, family-friendly staging of *A Christmas Carol*. The lineup will also feature holiday jazz from Grammy-winning pianist **Gregg Karukas** and a swinging seasonal set from **Matt Johnson & the New Jet Set**. For dates, ticket information, and additional details about each production, visit sierramadrepayhouse.org, or contact Libby Huebner at libby@adlibpr.com for more information.

Fatshark Games and Laced Records released Volume 5 of the *Warhammer: 40,000 Darktide Original Soundtrack*, composed by BAFTA-winning Danish composer **Jesper Kyd**, known for *NO LAW*, *State of Decay 3*, *Tumbbad* and the *Assassin's Creed Valhalla* and *Ezio Trilogy* scores. The soundtrack became available on digital music platforms. Kyd's score blended dark operatic textures with heavy synths, incorporating vintage analog and Eurorack modular synthesizers, organic instrumentation and gothic choir to push the Warhammer franchise into new sonic territory. This volume compiled 16 tracks drawn from the game's Skitarii and Hive Scum updates, tracing the shift from Hive Tertium's trenches to the wilderness of Atoma Prime. For further details, contact Greg O'Connor-Read at greg@topdollarpr.com.

OPPS

You haven't missed the late deadline – Oct. 14 – to submit your film to the **55th Anniversary**



storytelling, including **David Lowery's** *The Old Man and the Gun*, produced a score for this series with rock-inspired and atmospheric textures that mirror Lestat's journey. Contact Christian Endicio at christian@whitebearpr.com for more information.

Michael Dease and his big band will release *The Sleeper: The Music of Gregg Hill* on

all major digital streaming platforms. Composer **David Fleming**, known for the acclaimed *Widow's Bay*, *The Last of Us* and *Superman*, scored the project, drawing inspiration from western and ronin (a samurai from feudal Japan) archetypes to capture Logan's conflicted nature, while giving other characters, like Sabretooth and Jean Grey, their own distinct musical identities. Fleming's involvement in the project



Dance on Camera Festival will be held March 31-April 4, 2027. The longest-running dance film festival is calling for all dance films of all genres and lengths to enter for the chance to be screened at the New York City event alongside filmmaker panels and special events. Learn more and submit at filmfreeway.com/danceoncamerafestival.

Late and extended deadlines for the **New York Indie Shorts Awards**, which include music video as well as score and sound design categories every year, are scattered throughout the fall. The annual event, which celebrates short films and offers a cash prize for selected works, will take place Feb. 11-14, 2027. See the different categories, check deadlines and submit your film at filmfreeway.com/indieshortsawardsnewyork.

October 5 is the deadline (late deadline is Nov. 9) for the Dec. 3 **Rethink Dance Festival**, which showcases dance films from all over the world. With categories including dance music video, animation/experimental film and more, this celebration of choreographers, dancers and filmmakers aims to "reflect the beauty and synchronicity between the choreography of dance with the choreography of cinematography." Learn more and submit at filmfreeway.com/rethinkdancefilmfestival.

PROPS

On October 26, **Broadway's Richard Rodgers Theatre** will host a special one-night concert marking **Rent's** 30th anniversary, benefiting **Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS**, with **ViiV Healthcare** as the presenting sponsor. Original cast members and surprise guests will reunite for a full performance of **Jonathan Larson's** Pulitzer Prize-winning musical, with original director and five-time Tony Award nominee **Michael Greif** and music director **Tim Weil** returning alongside the show's original band. In-person tickets have sold out, but a livestream option will let audiences worldwide watch the celebration. New poster art from the original

design team will commemorate the milestone, honoring the production's legacy three decades after its debut. Learn more at broadwaycares.org/pre-event/rent30.

City of Hope will host its 2026 Music, Film and Entertainment Industry Spirit of Life

Gala on October 27 at the Pacific Design Center in Los Angeles, honoring music publishing and talent management company **Primary Wave** founder **Larry Mestel**. **Melissa Etheridge**, **Stevie Nicks** and **Jackson Browne** will perform, with more guests to be announced. Proceeds will fund City of Hope's CAR T cell therapy and other immunotherapy research, along with breast cancer initiatives. The gala follows a New

York kickoff event launching Mestel's fundraising campaign, continuing the music industry's decades-long partnership with City of Hope in advancing cancer treatment and patient care nationwide. Learn more at cityofhope.org/mfei, or contact mfeievents@coh.org.

On October 10, the 26th **World Soundtrack Awards Ceremony and Concert** will take place at **Music Center De Bijloke** in Belgium, celebrating the art of film composing with live performances by **Brussels Philharmonic** under conductor **Dirk Brossé**. Icelandic composer **Hildur Guðnadóttir**, known for scoring **Joker**, **TÁR** and **Chernobyl**, will be honored as Guest of Honor, while South African composer **Trevor Jones** will receive a Lifetime Achievement Award for his work on films including **The Last of the Mohicans** and **Notting Hill**. The evening will also present awards across categories such as Film Composer of the Year and Best Original Song. Learn more at worldsoundtrackawards.com/events/26th-wsa-ceremony-concert.

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



Yang Zhang

Composer

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

Most recent: *Quantum Prelude: The Evolution of the Universe*

Composer Yang Zhang's debut large-scale orchestral work, "Quantum Prelude: The Evolution of the Universe," grew out of a question about a single musical note and how it might be heard differently than expected. "It began with how we define the fundamental building blocks of music," Zhang says. "I was fascinated by the concept of imagining how a computer divides one single pitch, not to look for greater precision but to explore uncertainty and ambiguity. My task was how to translate that, both artistically and emotionally, so people could feel the shift."

Zhang wrote the piece in early 2026 during an artist residency at Château de La Napoule in France, bringing the ancient Greek aulos into dialogue with a full orchestra to create the Triple Shadow Effect, her own compositional technique in which one central melody splits and unfolds through several altered versions of itself at the same time. "I wanted the audience to feel emotion. Something like, this is different, but how is it different?" she says.

With a background in interdisciplinary research in developing quantum music technology, the 14th-century château brought a new perspective to her work. "As a composer, I bring my own intentions regardless of location, but the castle refreshed my perspective, because it has so much history," she says. "Before then, I was only thinking about the future. But the castle caused me to think about the past, and how to bridge that with the present and future. The instruments I used helped me build that story."

She paired the ancient Greek aulos and Chinese guzheng and suona with the intent of "intensifying [the listener's] emotional response."

Visual elements accompany the score and a companion video shot at the château, echoing an earlier project of hers exploring live coding as music. "It's very important when explaining a sophisticated concept for a general audience to bring in that visual element," she says.

► **TYLA BRINGS "IS IT LOVE" TO LIFE WITH VEVO'S NEW PERFORMANCE SERIES**

Global pop sensation Tyla teamed up with Vevo for an intimate 'Official Live Performance' of "IS IT LOVE," the first installment of a new visual series celebrating her latest album *A*POP*. Set in a cinematic industrial space of warm tones and shifting shadows, the performance showcases Tyla's captivating stage presence while offering fans a new perspective on her evolving artistry.



▲ **ORBITAL REVISITS A HISTORIC MOMENT WITH OFFICIAL GLASTONBURY 1994 RELEASE**

Electronic pioneers Orbital recall one of the most influential performances in dance music history with the first official release of their legendary Glastonbury 1994 set. Restored and remastered from the original tapes, the collection captures the moment the duo helped bring electronic music from underground clubs to the festival main stage, forever changing the perception of live dance performances.



◀ **JAYMIN EMBRACES VULNERABILITY ON SINGLE "PROUD"**

South Seattle R&B artist Jaymin explores the power of vulnerability on his single "Proud," a heartfelt track about setting aside ego to fight for love. Produced by Hollywood Cole and Ayex, the emotionally charged release pairs warm melodies and smooth vocals with an honest reflection on regret, reconciliation, and the strength found in admitting when you're wrong.

◀ **THE CRYSTAL METHOD CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF TWEENEED WITH VINYL REISSUE**

Electronic pioneers The Crystal Method commemorate the 25th anniversary of their landmark album *Tweekend* with a limited-edition double vinyl release via Interscope. Featuring collaborations with artists including Tom Morello and Scott Weiland, the remastered edition celebrates the album's role in bridging electronic, rock, and pop influences while honoring its lasting impact on the evolution of early 2000s dance music.





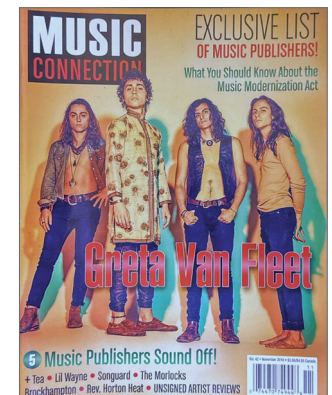
MUSIC CONNECTION

Tidbits From Our Tattered Past



2001 - Lenny Kravitz - #23

In 2001, MC sat down with rock icon Lenny Kravitz. Reflecting on his stubborn commitment to his artistic vision despite early industry pushback, Kravitz recalled, "Every time I tried to shop my stuff, the labels wanted to change me." Bluntly addressing the mechanics of commercial success, he noted, "Making a hit has to do with how much money is behind it and how much ass is kissed." Emphasizing his studio process, Kravitz shared, "I never do any pre-production. I write in the studio by laying down tracks and building on them."



2018 - Greta Van Fleet - #11

Looking back at our 2018 issue, MC spoke with young hard rock breakouts Greta Van Fleet. Discussing their identity amid constant classic rock comparisons, bassist Sam Kiszka noted, "We're a new band that has elements, I suppose, that are affiliated with classic rock. But by no means are we a classic rock band." Addressing the core purpose of their music and its overarching social message, guitarist Jake Kiszka emphasized, "I think it's the artist's job to make the public aware of certain truths. Your music is a mirror and a reflection of what's going on."

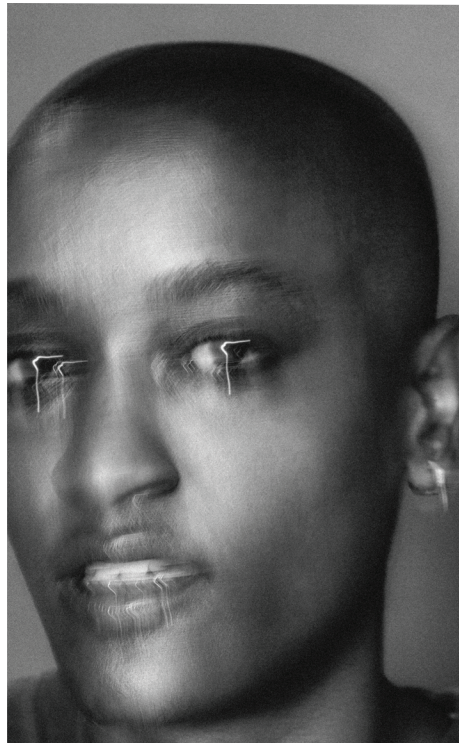
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▲ LOE SHIMMY ENTERS A NEW ERA WITH "SEDUCE YOU"

South Florida rising star Loe Shimmy showcases his evolving artistry with the cinematic video for "Seduce You," a standout track from his new album *Pretty Girlz Run the World*. Blending woozy trap production, hypnotic melodies, and his signature melodic delivery, Shimmy creates a seductive late-night world that reflects his growing influence in hip-hop's next generation.

► SYD EMBRACES SELF-LOVE AND EVOLUTION ON NEW ALBUM BEARD

GRAMMY®-winning artist Syd returns with her third studio album *Beard*, a deeply personal exploration of identity, confidence, and growth. Featuring collaborations with James Fauntleroy, Raphael Saadiq, Big Sean, and more, the R&B innovator celebrates embracing individuality while continuing to expand the boundaries of the genre she has helped shape.



◀ MCVERTT TAKES RAP TO NEW HEIGHTS WITH "SATELLITE HIGH"

Rising Jersey producer MCVERTT teams up with New York rappers TaTa and Kyle Richh for "SATELLITE HIGH," an otherworldly single blending off-kilter production, lush synths, and high-energy flows. Known for shaping the sound of Jersey club rap, MCVERTT expands his sonic universe with a track that proves his versatility as one of hip-hop's most inventive producers.





We're at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles on a Sunday evening in August. The air's thick; if you were to stick out your tongue, you could taste the anticipation.

The buzz from the crowd is tangible. Over the regular crowd noise, there's an audible hum of excitement, of pure *thrill*. Everyone is dressed to impress, distress, or both. Slayyyter's *Wor\$t Girl in America* show has pulled a glorious mish-mash of middle America-chic and queer dance club vibes from an adoring faithful that just keeps blooming.

Finnish synth-pop duo Pearly Drops expertly warmed that faithful up. You could practically hear the Daisy Dukes creak and the lycra slide as the psyched throng prepared itself for what was to come. Then, at 9 p.m., the lights dropped and the screams began. Slayyyter emerged from a house at the back of the stage—apparently designed to resemble a St. Louis residential home—and basically owned this corner of L.A. for 90 minutes.

MC has had our eye on Slayyyter all year. First of all, her set was, for our money, the best at Coachella 2026. Sabrina Carpenter fans might have something to say about that, but we left the mega-fest convinced that Slayyyter would one day be headlining.

Then there was the album that she's been touring. We scored *Wor\$t Girl in America* a

She's right to surf this wave while it's roaring. The Slayyyter buzz feels very similar to pre-*brat* Charli xcx. We all knew that something was about to happen, it was just a matter of when. But right now, this right here, is Slayyyter's time.

You can chart her blossoming success in parallel to her maturing sound, though she's been clever. From her 2019 self-titled mixtape through 2021's *Troubled Paradise* debut studio album, then *Starfucker* in 2023, right up to *Wor\$t Girl in America* this year and with *Wor\$t Man...* still to come, she's gone from catchy hyper/electro-pop to forward-thinking alt-pop that takes in influences as varied as industrial, death metal, hip-hop, and disco.

Impressively, she's retained all of the elements that saw her early stuff earn her that loyal fanbase: catchy-as-fuck melodies, dance-friendly beats, sex positivity, and a punk attitude. In those regards, Slayyyter hasn't changed at all. She just keeps getting better and better. *MC* told her as much, while asking how she views the musical progression through her albums, starting with the debut mixtape. How have things changed, and in what ways have they remained consistent?

"I think every song I have ever written, good or bad, has been very crucial to finding out what I like to make now," Slayyyter says. "There are bits and pieces of *WGIA\$* in my older music—little pockets of it here and there. It took me a while to feel comfortable in my

Slayyyter

THE BEST WORST GIRL IN AMERICA

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

9/10 in May, saying that it's "a start-to-finish riotous, debauched, genre-defying beast of a record. Not one second is wasted. Every opportunity to rub quality alt-pop in the face of the collective is grabbed with eager mitts."

Slayyyter's year just kept getting better; reports suggested that she killed at Lollapalooza, as well as the Governor's Ball. And then, as we were planning this story, news started to emerge that there would be a new "brother" album, *Wor\$t Man in America*, released soon. "Brand new chanel\$" is the lead-off single, mirroring "BEAT UP CHANEL\$," released a year prior.

abilities, to feel confident using my voice in the way I do now. I love a lot of my mixtape music because of how much I didn't overthink things back then. I would just *make*. I try to create with more intention now, but it's always for myself just like it was around my first mixtape."

Slayyyter's a fascinating personality. Blessed with no small amount of swagger and strut, one can imagine her charming a room, and then kicking every ass in it. Her modeling background has served her well. We're all the sum of our experiences.

Speaking of which, the *Wor\$t Girl in*



Photo by Kait Muro

America album really feels like an experience, something you need to marinate in. While the songs do provide instant joy with the melodies, you need to listen to the record multiple times to peel away the layers and get the full gratification. Which is partly why it will have longevity – people will keep discovering it.

"I appreciate that so many people are connecting with it," Slayyyter says. "I always make music with scenes and visions and visuals in my head; I think the different layers to it come from a place of having your feelings change over time about life and who you are and if you even belong here in the first place. I have spells of great confidence, only to find myself feeling hated by the world or like a loser the next day. This project takes the listener on that same ride."

The album sounds pristine, immaculate, and massive. From the opening, repetitive beat on "DANCE..." which builds to the arms-in-the-air, joyous call to action, *Wor\$t Girl in America* lays it on thick and never lets up. And yet, the artist says that it was recorded all over the place, mostly in her friends'/producer's home studios.

"We made 'CRANK' in New York but the bulk of the album was made in L.A. in different houses," she says. "It was always just me and the producer in a living room studio. I don't like big fancy glossy studios, I find the energy very sterile and stifling. Sometimes I need to kick my shoes off and sit on the floor and sing softly or scream at the top of my lungs while no one is looking at me."

Scream at the top of her lungs she does. As previously mentioned, there are moments on the album where Slayyyter flirts with metal, industrial and punk. "YES GODDD" is the clearest example, a song which sees the artist employ a death metal growl.

"Yes, [I'm a] longtime fan," she says. "I have always listened to a ton of different music. In high school, I really loved Slayer and random power violence bands my friends would show me. I remember finding this band Spazz [Californian hardcore punk band around between '92 and 2000], and I loved how blown out the audio sounded in my headphones. I would either dive into things from the internet, or get into things from friends showing me. I always loved music that would blend a few different genres at once."

We mention to Slayyyter that we were at Coachella, and noticed that the growl in "YES GODDD" was more pronounced live than on the record. She really got guttural with it. "It always feels like a nice release," she replies.

On the subject of *that* Coachella appearance, and the volume of lavish praise that's been heaped upon Slayyyter since that and other festivals this year, we ask her how much work she's been putting into her live show this year.

"So much," she says. "I knew from the minute I started making this record in 2023, it needed a live band. I wanted the live show in general to shift a bit from what I have done. I didn't want it to feel like a pop show. I want to let go on stage, and I want people to let go in

the crowd."

One might think that, when performing at a big festival like that, whether it be an outdoor stage or in a tented stage, she'd go about things differently. At Coachella, there were clearly a lot of Slayyyter fans in attendance, but also people who wandered over to check her out. How does she approach that?

"I approach all audiences the same," Slayyyter says. "Whether it's people showing up for me at a headline show, me opening for another artist, or playing a festival where no one is there for me at all, I always work for my dinner. I don't think I have ever half-assed a performance once in my life. Not even when I had a shyer stage presence. I always try to put on a big performance for anyone who is watching."

All of that is true. In the middle of a blazing hot day in the desert in front of a still-arriving festival crowd and at her own headline show in Los Angeles, Slayyyter gave it everything. She danced like a queen and stomped like a demon, all before you'd caught your breath. Half-assed? Not on your fucking life!

Those huge performances, coupled with the undeniable quality of the album, are why she's having such a banner year. And now we know that there's going to be another album released very shortly, called *Wor\$t Man in America*. The lead-off single from it is "brand new chanel\$," the 'inverse' of "BEAT UP CHANEL\$." We ask Slayyyter if that was always the plan, to record a "brother" album to *Wor\$t Girl*...

"Not at all," she says. "I was making more music when *WGIA\$* was finished just because I felt inspired to keep going. Some of those songs ended up being 'flips' of songs on the albums in ways. When the project came out, I was going through a lot in my personal life and wanted to keep writing. I kept writing with flips of titles from the album in mind, and it all started to form very naturally. Instead of a deluxe or doing remixes, I wanted to make a brother album, or a counterpart to this project, that felt linked to the music and visuals from before, but inversed, and from a different perspective."

Very cool. So let's dig into the "brand new chanel\$" single. We ask Slayyyter how it reflects "BEAT UP CHANEL\$."

"It's a song about betrayal," she says. "I think there is something devastating about being hurt or betrayed or lied to by someone you love and care for very much. The song feels like such an emotional burst, but there is still something hopeful behind it all. I think it

That, Slayyyter tells us, is by design.

"I love big, full, wall-of-sound style production," she says. "There are so many things going on at once, it kind of makes your head spin. But it also feels so intimate and timid and emotional at the same time. Like when you try to cry silently to yourself in public, and then it all bursts out and you don't care if anyone sees you."

The "brand new chanel\$" single was recorded in Los Angeles with Wyatt Bernard and Austin Corona, at Bernard's L.A. studio.

"It was actually an old demo for the original album with a sad melody and a few lyrics," she says. "I would always revisit it, but didn't quite have the words to finish it at the time. Then one day I did."

One has to wonder, then, if the rest of *Wor\$t Man in America* will follow suit. Will each track be the flip of a song off of *Wor\$t Girl*...?

"It's different for some—not every single song has an inverse," Slayyyter says. "It's about nine songs, and like a perfect flip of the album

"BEST BAND IN AMERICA!" Those guys are: Mike Robinson on drums, Jake Strate on bass, and Haven Cody on guitar.

"We have also had Austin Corona on guitar and bass for some shows and festivals, as well as Dan Graham on guitar for Australian shows and festivals," Slayyyter says. "All incredible musicians but also such kind, fun, wonderful, hard working people. Their performances every night blow the roof off the place, and they have given this show such a massive sound and feeling."

Naturally, we ask Slayyyter if there's any key piece of gear that she can't do without. Her simple, understandable answer is the U2 Special Edition iPod.

If 2026 was a big year for Slayyyter, 2027 could be bigger. She's on the cusp of something very special, and it's going to be a thrill ride just observing it from the outside. She's doing this her way—unapologetically, confidently her way. If anyone doesn't like it, or her, they can get out of the way. As for the



Photo by Kait Muro

was the most emotional vocal delivery I have ever given, because I was hurting very much in real time while so many good things were happening to me and my career. It felt like I was finally getting what I wanted in my career, but someone I loved wanted something new and someone else. It was hard to process it all in any other way than making music, and keeping the work going."

The song sounds lush, and beautifully "full."

before it feels lighter and softer and sadder. Not as bitter and angry as the music I made previously. Some of the flip songs are opposite of the subject, some are opposite of the sound. I want people to hear and discover for themselves what new song they think is a flip of the old ones. Some aren't so obvious."

Excellent, we love a puzzle! It's also worth noting Slayyyter has live musicians on stage with her, a group that she refers to as the

artist herself, she's keeping her eye on the prize and staying focused. She's got a busy period ahead.

"Tour, more tour, make more visuals, pray, be well, be happy, be healthy, release brother album, a little more tour, more tour," Slayyyter says in conclusion. "Then maybe I will treat myself to a float trip down the river."

It'll be well deserved.
slayyyter.com

VIDEO GAME COMPOSER ROUNDTABLE 2026

BY ANDY KAUFMANN

AS TECHNOLOGY PROGRESSES, video game developers have an increasing need for vibrant scores. What once amounted to mere blips and bleeps has now become sweeping orchestral movements and soundtracks of dizzying variety that stretch on for hours. The subsequent opportunities for composers are richer than ever. Absorb these insights from four individuals excelling within this competitive field, and let their words light the way for following in their footsteps.

JON EVERIST

Web: everistsound.com

Notable Works: *Star Wars: Outlaws*, *The Lamplighters League*, *The Solitaire Conspiracy*

How did you learn composition for interactive media?

Video games sort of propelled me into an appreciation for music. That sent me on a trajectory to making my own. I was taking piano lessons and got fascinated with producing, but I never connected the dots of composing for video games as a profession. I got a job I did not like but was still making music, producing, and even went on tours doing electronica and

hip-hop. I had this moment where I needed to try doing music professionally or I'd grow up to be the saddest person on earth. A friend sent me a brochure for a school program with a focus on composition for video games, and it was just a click.

But how do you learn to write for a medium that changes depending on the user's choices?

I got my composition degree at DigiPen in Redmond, WA. That was when Wwise was becoming more widely used; it's this software interface that attaches music to video games. And I was like, 'The only way I'm going to get hired is if I become an expert in the

implementation side.' That ended up being the best decision. Once you understand how the mechanics function, it influences every aspect. That helped me get my first larger gig, a remake of *Shadowrun* with Harebrained Schemes. For *Star Wars: Outlaws*, Will [Wilbert] Roget, the principal composer, and I threw around ideas for how we wanted the music to function. Once we found this elegant system, the ball started rolling. Once I know the rules, I can write functional music that can interact and still be musical.

Do you approach every project the same way? Or do you have to take each on a case-by-case basis?

It's definitely case-by-case, but my goal is to



be involved with a game early. Other times, you'll come into a project later in the process. For *Overwatch*, the game has been out for so long, it's been sort of building on itself. But I still approach the team with ideas that can work within the structure they have. You can attach a module on top and do something interesting.

Working on *Star Wars: Outlaws*, you're using John Williams' score. How do you balance that with being original?

When Will asked me to work on *Outlaws*, I was like, "Are you sure?" Because mimicking John Williams is very difficult. And you'll always fall short of what Williams does. Then [Will] explained, 'We're painting with the same palette as Williams, but we have a lot of creative freedom.' We saw there was the ability to speak the language of *Star Wars* with different compositional choices. We had more of a *Star Wars* sound during these big moments, but often times you're on the surface of planets and it gets more gritty and experimental. A lot of synths were used, but those synths are still communicating with this Williams-esque language. Will has a history with *Star Wars*; he knows these scores inside and out. He set up this document that was like a cheat sheet of how to [put] a bit of *Star Wars* spice into your arrangements. I studied it for a long time and then had this realization: Williams likes to have fun with the orchestra. That unlocked it for me. Will said, "Don't try to sound like John Williams. Just have fun and be yourself." That's what John Williams does. The colors we were painting with felt like they belonged in the *Star Wars* universe.

What are the skills you need to write for video games?

There's the *Star Wars: Outlaws* stuff, where it's hugely complex and we're recording with a gigantic orchestra. But then I'm on a survival horror game set in a dystopian future called *GRAFT*. It's a very small team. The budget is nowhere near what *Star Wars: Outlaws* is, but I have the freedom to do whatever. A key for being a composer in this industry is flexibility and becoming a utility player in terms of how you're going to help bring the studio's ideas to life. You have to be versatile. Experiment with sounds

and recording techniques, but also understand implementation and how the music is going to function.

What software do you use?

I use Cubase to record everything and Pro Tools for recording session stuff. But part of this process is being able to work within constraints. For this sci-fi horror game, it's almost all synthetic except we're going to have some musicians doing aleatoric techniques and then I'm processing those through modular synths. Working on that score, I'm not using Cubase as much. Getting away from my comfort zone has been really interesting. I still use Vienna Ensemble to house my orchestral samples and stuff like that. And Voice Memos on my phone is also important.

What are your recommendations on getting in?

I got lucky in terms of the network I made going through school. Those things are important – establishing real, true friendships with people whose work you admire. I've known Will for probably over 10 years now. I never approached our friendship with the idea of him doing something for me. I want to learn from him, but more than that we're buddies. Keep at it. If it feels like it's not going well, don't be afraid to put it on pause and come back later.

Explain the pitfalls in your work.

You have to be really good at managing your time. Every minute in front of your computer or writing desk, you're developing ideas. Maybe you're thinking of melodies while cleaning your house or going to the gym. Eventually, that due

date will come and you have to be really efficient. Also, take care of yourself. I can't write music if I haven't slept, eaten well, worked out, and done something that made me a fuller person.

In what ways is composing for video games evolving?

The landscape is much different than when I started. We have record profits but also a lot of studio closures and uncertainty. Ultimately, the video game industry is strong. I'm starting to see hints of studios getting back on their feet and publishers unlocking money for smaller studios. If anybody thinks it is doom and gloom for video games, hold on.

NIELS BYE NIELSEN

Web: byeley.com

Notable Works: *Hitman*, *Ratchet & Clank*, *PlayStation Move Heroes*

How did you learn composition for interactive media?

A wonderful composer and friend, David Bergeaud, took me under his wing. We worked on quite a few projects together, the most famous being the *Ratchet & Clank* franchise.



The best way to learn is by doing, and David threw me headfirst into the deep end. When I started *Hitman* almost two decades later, game technology had changed and evolved quite a bit. What was once a single, loopable track of two minutes had become numerous layers, expressing varying levels of intensity with context-aware stingers thrown on top. I threw myself into the deep end and somehow managed to keep up.

What is your approach to a particular project? Is it always the same or does it change?

It changes every time. It might even change within the same project. *Hitman* is a great example: although we could have scored each level using similar music representing the point of view of 47 [the game's protagonist], we decided to tell the stories of the geographical locations 47 would visit. Maybe the player just sees a mansion or a field, but the music will try to give that location a bit of soul. Who lived in that mansion? Who works in that field? Sometimes, this means researching the indigenous music of that location and then infusing the score with some of those elements. There's no roadmap. It feels different every time, which is both exciting and a source of stress.

What are the skills you need to write for video games?

Patience is a prerequisite. Projects can run for years. If you're easily bored, write music for commercials. That's 30 seconds of music they want delivered in 24 hours. And [with video games] you'll be dealing with the same people day in, day out. Establishing good relations is going to make your life a lot easier. Thankfully, the video game industry is populated by a lot of brilliant and wonderful individuals, so making friends is not difficult. Another skill specific to video games is that much is left to the imagination. As a composer, you have to fill in a lot of blanks.

What paths are available for getting in?

Have an open mind, and never say no to a job opportunity. I've accumulated a wealth of knowledge of and appreciation for all music. I've learned on the job, sometimes with my heart beating double-time and an acute need for a change of underwear, but I can't think of a situation where knowing more has been anything other than an advantage. Among the jobs I've accepted are student films, videos made for babies, internet cartoons, sports documentaries, music for stage plays, arrangements for musicals, arrangements for records, a ton of commercials, TV shows, a couple of movies, and a fair amount of video games.

Explain the pitfalls in your work.

Overwriting is top of my list. It's easy to get caught up in simply composing rather than composing for a media that often does not support a ton of musical information. If the player has to spend an extended period of time listening to the same two-minute loop, however cleverly constructed, it will get annoying.

In what ways is composing for video games evolving?

I feel strongly that AI can't replace human creativity. After spending time with an AI music generator, I'm more certain than ever that humans are still king of the hill in the realm of creativity. I believe people will simply prefer to work with other people. As a tool, AI can be great, and hopefully we can strike a sensible balance. Likewise, I believe the audience will appreciate

the difference between human ingenuity and AI.

What software do you use?

I've been a Logic user since Emagic launched it. Kontakt runs 90% of my samples. Zebra 2 and Omnisphere seem to take care of the synth-y elements. I also use a ridiculous amount of sample libraries to form my current orchestral palette.

RACHEL HARDY

Web: rachelhardymusic.com

Notable Works: *Aliens: Fireteam Elite 2, BitCraft Online, TerraStorm*

How did you learn composition for interactive media?

I learned from doing. I said yes to projects, even

Austin Wintory on *BitCraft*. I learned from him how to communicate with developers in a way that's collaborative. That's a skill you need to develop. You're interacting with people who don't know musical terms or how to describe the sound they want.

What software do you use?

I'm a Logic Pro user. I've worked with all kinds of DAWs, but that's my go-to. And I dive into middleware quite a bit. That is useful for composers, so Wwise is another program I use a lot.

What are the paths to getting in?

There are a million. Everyone who's a full-time composer for games has a different journey. But there are things you can do. Make meaningful connections. It's a small industry. At least half my jobs come from the same five clients. And a lot



though I didn't know a lot about writing music for games. I was excited to try. There's so much information out there that you can learn on your own, so that's what I did.

Do you approach every project the same way?

I try to get into projects as early as possible for brainstorming and immersing myself in the materials. And then it's establishing themes and palettes, that kind of thing. That's the foundation for the rest of the score. The stronger a foundation you build, the easier the rest of the score will come. A majority of my projects are kind of a reflection of things I'm inspired by or interested in at the time. You can find inspiration anywhere. It could be a trip, a performance, or genres outside of orchestral music. I've been into techno-pop recently and found a lot of inspiration in that.

Maybe the developers want you to do something, but you try something different and that becomes part of the game.

Definitely. I had the pleasure of working with

of work comes from people I'm connected with as friends. Being curious and excited to learn is a huge asset.

Explain the pitfalls in your work.

One that took me a while to learn is not getting too attached to your music. You have to make a lot of changes and sometimes throw things out. Also, there are a lot of cancellations. Be prepared for some heartbreak. Maybe you write a killer melody, but it's distracting from the story. You've got to do what's best for the game.

In what ways is composing for video games evolving?

That's tricky to answer, because I've been in the industry for less than 10 years. I haven't personally seen a ton of evolution. I didn't get to see it evolve from chiptunes to where we are now. But I've seen middleware change what's possible. It's also cool to see composers and developers pushing the boundaries. Austin Wintory, Tripod and Montaigne did an interactive musical called *Stray Gods* a few years ago. As far as I know, nobody had done

that before. That's an instance where music gets to shine as the main character. *League of Legends* put out a season of Teamfight Tactics called *Remix Rumble* where the team members have different genres. The music would remix depending on your team, which made the player experience unique. Stuff like that makes me excited to see how developers and composers will embrace what's possible and take it to the next level.

AKIRA YAMAOKA

Web: akirayamaoka.jp

Notable Works: *Silent Hill*, *World of Tanks*, *Dead by Daylight*, *Shadows of the Damned*

How did you learn composition for interactive media?

I didn't really learn through formal training. I started by working on games and learning through the process of creating music for them. Especially in my earlier work, I learned a great deal through experimentation and sometimes discovering that something unconventional worked better than what would traditionally be considered "correct." Another important aspect is that the player is ultimately the one in control of the experience. I believe the sound design should emerge from what the player creates. It should not simply force the player to follow the experience or emotions that we as creators have predetermined.

What is your approach to a particular project? Is it always the same or does it change?

My approach changes depending on the project. I don't think there is a single method that can be applied to every game, because each project has its own world, themes, visual language, and gameplay experience. Before I start writing, I try to understand what kind of experience the game is trying to create. I look at the story, characters, visuals, game mechanics, and overall atmosphere, but I also think about what role music and sound should play within that experience. It is important not to simply translate what is happening on screen directly into music. If a scene is sad, the music does not necessarily have to be sad. Sometimes creating a contrast, or even leaving space without music, can make the player feel something more strongly. So rather than beginning with the question, 'What kind of music should I write?' I often begin by asking, 'What does this game need?' Sometimes the answer is melodic music, sometimes it is texture or noise, and sometimes silence is the most effective choice.

Are there skills one needs to effectively compose for games beyond writing music?

Unlike film, a game does not always progress according to a fixed timeline. The player determines the pacing, direction, and sometimes even the emotional experience. So you need to understand how music and sound can respond to something that is constantly changing. Also, communication is extremely important. Game development is highly collaborative, and composers need to understand the intentions of directors, designers, artists, programmers,



and sound teams. Sometimes being able to understand what someone is trying to express, even when they cannot describe it in musical terms, is more important than technical knowledge. But technical understanding is increasingly valuable. You don't need to be a programmer, but understanding game engines, middleware, implementation, interactive music systems, and sound design gives you many more possibilities. Most importantly, you need the ability to think beyond music. Sometimes, the best solution for a game is not a better composition but a sound, texture, silence, or a completely different approach.

What are the paths to getting in?

There are many ways to becoming involved. Some people study composition or sound design formally while others begin by making their own music, working on independent games, creating mods, or collaborating with small development teams. I don't necessarily recommend one path over another. What I do recommend is making something with other people. Working on a real project teaches you things that cannot be learned through composition alone. You begin to understand deadlines, communication, revisions, technical limitations, implementation, and how your music functions within the game. It is also important to develop your own musical identity. Technology and production techniques can be learned, but what is much more difficult to acquire is your own perspective: why you choose a particular sound, what you find interesting, and what you can bring to a project. So create as much as possible, collaborate, and develop your own voice. Opportunities often come as a result of those things.

Explain the pitfalls in your work.

One of the biggest is becoming too attached to the music. In a game, music is only one element. A piece of music may work beautifully on its own but still be wrong for the game. Another thing I try to avoid is explaining too much. If the music constantly tells the player, 'This is scary,' 'This is sad,' or 'You should feel tension now,' it can actually reduce the player's ability to interpret the experience. Games are interactive, so it is important to leave space for the player's imagination and emotions. There are also practical pitfalls. During development,

scenes, levels, pacing, and even entire concepts can change. If you become too dependent on an early version of the game, you may end up creating music that no longer works. You need to remain flexible and be prepared to rethink or even discard something you have spent a lot of time creating. Ultimately, the biggest thing to watch out for is forgetting that the music exists for the game, not the other way around. Sometimes, you have to put your ego aside and ask what the player and experience actually need.

In what ways is composing for interactive entertainment evolving?

Composing for interactive entertainment is evolving from simply 'writing music for a game' into designing music as a system. In the past, game music was often limited by hardware and memory. Composers had to find creative solutions within those restrictions. Today, those technical limitations have become much smaller, but games have become far more complex. Music can now change dynamically. Because of this, the role of the composer is also changing. We are not only creating finished pieces of music; increasingly, we are designing musical elements that can be combined, transformed, and reconstructed by the game in real time. Technology will continue to evolve. But the interesting question is not simply what new technology allows us to do. It is how we can use those technologies to give more control to the player.

What software do you use?

My main DAWs are Logic Pro and Ableton Live. I use Logic Pro primarily for composing, recording, editing, and mixing, while Ableton Live is particularly useful when I want to approach sound and music in a more experimental or flexible way. Beyond the DAW itself, I use a wide variety of software instruments, effects, and sound-design tools. I don't have a fixed setup that I use for every project. The tools change depending on what kind of sound and experience the project requires. Software is ultimately just a tool. I try not to let the tools determine the creative direction. I first think about what kind of sound or experience I want to create and then choose the software that can help me achieve it.

L-Acoustics: The Spatial Leader

Four decades in, with a global team of over 1,000 (20 percent of them in R&D), L-Acoustics has components incorporated into one-of-a-kind venues and events around the world—including Adele's Las Vegas residency, the Philharmonie de Paris, the Guangzhou Opera House, and more. We spoke with CEO of the L-Acoustics Group, Hervé Guillaume and CEO of L-Acoustics Americas, Bryan Bradley, to get more insight on the impactful brand.

"I would frame the last forty years as a single defining principle—the physics of a coherent wavefront—that we've successfully applied to more and more aspects of live sound, with the goal of making live experiences better for everyone." - Hervé Guillaume, L-Acoustics Group CEO

Founded in Europe by physician Dr. Christian Heil, with a mission to give every audience member the same high-quality sound experience, L-Acoustics continues to push the envelope on spatial audio, prioritizing consistency of sound over pure volume. "With offices and production facilities in France, the US, the UK, Germany and Singapore, the scale is different," Guillaume says, "but the criteria for launching a product have not changed. If it does not measurably improve what an audience hears, we don't release it."

With innovation leaning on neuroscience and psychoacoustics (not trends), the key to L-Acoustics' success has been the *right* kind of growth: starting with the right team, continually asking the right questions, taking the time to build quality products, and not being afraid to iterate.

Raising the bar for live sound with modern line array setups and developing WST (Wavefront Sculpture Technology) with 1992's V-DOSC system, they have become the gold standard in premium touring sound (with products including V-DOSC/ K1 / K2/ Kara/ A Series). Says Guillaume, "V-DOSC was the first proof that Wavefront Sculpture Technology worked outside the lab. Before WST, stacking cabinets meant interference. Christian [Heil] and Marcel Urban published five criteria for coupling drivers so an array behaves as one coherent wavefront, and V-DOSC turned that theory into a product that tour crews could actually rig. Everything L-Acoustics has done since starts from that principle."

In 2015, L-Acoustics added the L-ISA (L-Acoustics Immersive Sound Art) sound system, treating each sound source as an independent object in any physical space across the stage (rather than traditional left and right channels). "Engineers can mix for where the audience's attention actually is, not just where the speakers happen to sit," Guillaume explains. The technology has since been expanded for loudspeakers, amplifiers, predictive modeling software, networked audio, immersive processors, acoustic simulation, room design,



and spatial mixing workflows.

Moving from a hardware company to becoming a full experience platform, L-Acoustics' HYRISS (Hyperreal Immersive Sound Space) technology landed in 2024, expanding on tech developed from stadium performances and applying it to corporate environments, luxury homes, museums, wellness, hospitality and collaborative spaces, with the sound itself becoming part of the architectural design buildout.

2026 saw the introduction of the L1 large-format line array system, CS1 subwoofer, and the launch of Source Intelligence. The latter uses machine learning to bring real-time voice separation technology that runs through the L-ISA Processor, giving front-of-house engineers the ability to clean vocals in real time, adding clarity and eliminating PA bleed, stage and crowd noise, reverb, and feedback risk—with no loss in quality—while giving artists the freedom to perform anywhere.

The team also launched L-Acoustics DJ. "DJs have been mixing in stereo for fifty years," says Guillaume. "Mostly because the rooms they play are equipped for stereo, so there has been little reason to prepare an immersive mix. More rooms and festivals are adopting immersive systems, because they want to give their audience a better shared experience. DJs can quickly adapt using the real time, machine-learning-based separation to pull a stereo track into its stems and spatialize them automatically."

Starting as an L-Acoustics intern in 1994, Guillaume continues to be impressed. "Christian [Heil] started the company in a farm outside of Paris, and we were fewer than ten people at the time," he says. "Sound was not what pulled me in, the company was. What I found here, what still keeps me here, is a small group of physicists, engineers and craftspeople who believe there is always a better way to move air. That belief is contagious."

Adds Bradley, "The people-first framing is not marketing here. It shows up in how long people stay, the size of the education and training investment, the way regional teams get authority to serve their markets, and the fact that every product decision has been made against the same question: *does this measurably improve the*

connection between the artist and the audience?"

Bradley's career has always been tied to music—first a songwriter and television music director, then working with Guitar Center, Alfred Music Publishing, Harman Professional, and Group One before L-Acoustics. For him, L-Acoustics stands apart with their balance of continuity and renewal, alongside their discipline. "The company is renewing itself while it holds onto what made it work in the first place," he says. "That kind of continuity is unusual in this industry. L-Acoustics [also] really commits to long-term development in technology, building for where the industry is going rather than chasing a fiscal quarter. That has earned the company its leader position in the industry."

Respected as world class front-of-house, touring production, and acoustic consultants, with systems that behave as a coherent source with smoother frequency response, L-Acoustic products provide improved intelligibility, predictable coverage, less destructive interference, and easier (and lighter) design. They're used regularly for stadium touring, Broadway, symphony, performing arts centers, churches, festivals, and luxury hospitality spaces and they were the first manufacturer to create a certified partner network and education program to support it (leveraging standardized quality design and internationally available deployment). Artists frequently request L-Acoustics components as part of their rider agreements for good reason.

Now integrating amplification, software, acoustic modeling, immersive processing and networking into a well-oiled, stable ecosystem, L-Acoustics engineers can model a full venue before installation to ensure optimum performance.

l-acoustics.com.

[L to R, standing: Olivier Maynard, Bryan Bradley, Cedric Montrézor, Tim Zhou, Thibaut Jouanin, Céline Mutz, Jaboc Barfoed, Hervé Guillaume, Anne Hamlett, Laurent Vaissie, Marc Furstoss, Ayoub Mounaddam, Louis-Manoël K/Vella, Françoise Cardoso, Genio Kronauer, Etienne Corteel / Seated, L to R: Christophe Combet, Guillaume LeNost, Audrey Neustadter]

It's a Big Daddy Kane Thing

The Juice Crew Alum On His Final Album & Biz Markie's Impact

There's rarely a day that goes by that Big Daddy Kane doesn't think about Biz Markie. Whether he's making an appearance on *Drink Champs*, performing at a show, beatboxing on *Yo! Gabba Gabba* or crafting Instagram tributes, his fellow Juice Crew alum is never too far from his mind.

Biz died in 2021 following complications stemming from Type 2 diabetes. He was only 57. It was an understandably horrible day for Kane, who loved Biz like a brother. At his funeral, held on August 21, 2021 at Patchogue Theatre for the Performing Arts in Patchogue, Long Island, New York, Kane had an epiphany.

"People always ask artists what they'd be doing if they wasn't rapping or singing," he says. "I've always felt like that was a stupid question because it's like, 'I don't fucking know.' I am rapping. I made it. This is what I've been doing my whole life. I succeeded. That's a question that never really made too much sense until his funeral. When they closed that casket, the first thing that came to my mind was, 'What the hell would I be doing right now if it wasn't for this dude?'"

After all, it was Biz that welcomed Kane into the Juice Crew. It was Biz who encouraged him to make rapping his career. It was Biz who showed him it was possible.

Twenty-year-old Biz and 16-year-old Kane met in 1984 as they battled inside Brooklyn's Albee Square Mall. From a battle rap perspective, they were enemies; one wanted to lyrically demolish the other. So when Biz expressed interest in forming a friendship, Kane was somewhat shocked.

"My first impression was like, 'Wait a minute—you wanna be friends?'" he remembers. "I had never battled no one before and they want to be my friend."

The battle had started inside the mall, but security swiftly kicked them out and they were forced to continue outside.

"We were battling with regular rhymes and he realized he couldn't keep up with those type of rhymes, so he switched up to funny rhymes about girls," he continues. "He said this funny rhyme and the crowd started laughing, and then I came back with a funny rhyme about a girl, too. The crowd was laughing, but he also laughed. He started cracking up and says, 'That's dope,' and repeated one of the lines I said. Then he was like, 'You should get down with me.'"

Big Daddy Kane eventually joined the Juice Crew alongside Biz, Mr. Magic, Roxanne Shanté, Marley Marl, MC Shan, Mister Cee, Kool G Rap, Masta Ace, Craig G and others. In 1988, they released the ultimate posse cut "The Symphony" on Cold Chillin' Records, which put Kane on a path to solo success with lines like, "Put a quarter in your ass 'cause you played yourself."

Over the course of two years, he released

his now-classic solo debut, *Long Live the Kane* (1988), his gold-certified sophomore effort, *It's a Big Daddy Kane* (1989), and *Taste of Chocolate* (1990). He continued with *Prince of Darkness* in 1991, *Looks Like a Job For...* in 1993 and *Daddy's Home* in 1994. Along the way, he established himself among the upper echelon of MCs by continually flexing his lyrical aptitude—both live and in the studio. His (what appeared to be) last album, *Veteranz Day*, arrived in 1998. By all intents and purposes, it looked like he was done in the studio. The ever-changing state of the music business left him uninspired to hop in the booth—until now.

In 2025, Kane revealed he was working on what will be his final album, the aptly titled *Curtain Call*, after finding inspiration from LL COOL J, who had released the *F.O.R.C.E. (Frequencies of Real Creative Energy)* album a year prior. And though he ran into a sample clearing hiccup, the album is back on track and should be ready for release either at the end of the year or in early 2027. Of course, people don't want to hear that it's his last album, but Kane is secure in the legacy he's already built.

"I'm content," he says, confidently. "I hadn't been in the studio to focus on a full Kane album in years. I haven't sat and thought about a whole Kane album since '95. Music has changed so much and I'm cool. I want to give the real, true Kane fans something that they could appreciate and get an understanding of what I'm about right now and possibly create some sort of closure, but other than that, I'm good."

It's no secret streaming has drastically changed the music industry, and it's often impossible for new music to make a dent on the charts unless you're Drake or Taylor Swift. Erykah Badu and The Alchemist's new album *Before the World Blows: The Abi & Alan Experiment*, for example, was expected to move less than 10,000 units in its opening week despite their immense talent and impact



on the culture. These days, strategies for legacy artists look a little different—it's all about the core fans.

"If you have 1.5 or 2 million followers on social media, focus on those 250,000 or 300,000 that might actually be true fans and support your career," he says. "Target them and do what you got to do independently."

Kane laughs thinking about what Biz would likely say about *Curtain Call*.

"I think he would love it," Kane says. "But I'm pretty sure that one of the songs he would listen to and say something like, 'You know I had that record first' [laughs]."

Wherever "the Clown Prince of Hip-Hop"—as he was affectionally known—is, he's likely got a smile on his face and love in his heart. "This the person that made me realize there's more to hip-hop than just going around from project building to project building and block party to block party wanting to battle people," he says. "Biz made me realize that I can make this a career and be great at it. He made me see that I can still be a hip-hop student and learn more about performing and making records while having a sense of humor in my rhymes. He made everyone feel special."

officialbigdaddykane.com

Beat Junkie Institute of Sound

The best DJ school in the world is located in Glendale, CA, a turntable dojo that may just be the unlikely key to sharpening and broadening any role within the music business. That includes, but is not limited to, people who work as an engineer, producer, drummer, singer, songwriter and A&R exec.

Take it from me: I'm a journalist, professional DJ and budding beatmaker who has been thriving in private lessons at the Beat Junkie Institute of Sound since shortly after it opened in April 2017. My incredible teachers Babu and Mr Choc have helped me bloom into the music artist I never knew I could be.

I'm now working on a debut album called *The Peace Suite*, inspired by this year's close work with Choc, who I called to help me with my first-ever DJ battle in January. The turntables have since become a command center for creating original productions. Babu is considered to have coined the term "turntablism."

My 30-plus year interview archive of brilliant musicians has also provided incredible guidance in making music, and I'm having the time of my life being the writer of my own multidimensional artist story. If you told me in 2025 that I'd be releasing original music now, I'd have laughed loudly, but it will come out soon on Oxygen Music Works, a New York label that has worked with legends of house and hip-hop. None of this would have happened without this year's studies at BJIOS.

J.Rocc started the Beat Junkies as a friendly but deadly crew back in 1992. He now DJs on Sunday nights on the popular Santa Monica radio station KCRW. Rhettmatic, one of the earliest members, teaches at BJIOS. He recalls when the fellow Beat Junkie known as D-Styles suggested that they open a school in the first place.

"He put into the perspective of all the champion boxers who open up a school after they retire to coach the next generation right," Rhettmatic says of D-Styles.

Mr Choc, who previously was a director at another DJ school for over 10 years, taught his fellow Beat Junkies how to become instructors, which includes taking deep dives into the history and cultural context of hip-hop and music as a whole. In turn, students absorb that institutional knowledge and learn to unlock their own musicality, stage presence, poise and confidence.

When Beat Junkies like Rhett and Babu mopped the floor at the international DMC and ITF DJ battles back in the day, they weren't in the habit of sharing their secret sounds or techniques with would-be rivals. Now, all of their secrets and tricks of the trade are openly shared at school. Those who take them to heart and apply them to their own creativity will experience continual breakthroughs.

Speaking of breakthroughs, BJIOS is helping



to bring DJ education to other schools. Mr Choc as well as general manager and instructor C-Los teach junior high students in California's Palmdale School District. Babu is now also a professor of the craft of DJing at the oldest music

school in the country, the Peabody Conservatory of Music at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD.

"They loved the idea of us having our own school," Babu says. "I think that really was a big factor in them looking toward me." DJ Baby B, one of Babu's longtime students who started spinning in grade school, is currently in her first year at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music.

Samantha Garong went to college to be a music engineer, but she found DJing to be a better fit after taking classes with Mr Choc and Babu at BJIOS. She became an intern and then a paid staffer at BJIOS for six years, finding family in the coaches and their kids — some of whom, like Mr Choc's son and Garong's best friend, Thurston, are also headlining DJs. Garong helped enlist many women as students and make sure they felt powerful in a traditionally masculine environment.

Now, DJing has been Garong's full-time concern for almost three years and she has returned to BJIOS to host paid DJ business seminars. She makes music as Midi Riperton and is the touring DJ for the R&B singer Joyce Wrice.

"I've just noticed how far DJing alone has been able to take me," she says.

"I love their mission statement: Building Better DJs," says David Faustino, the actor best known for playing Bud Bundy on the TV sitcom *Married... with Children*. "I think that's exactly what they are doing."

Faustino's DJ name is Grandmaster B, and he just finished the 10-month Foundation Program at BJIOS. There are also eight-week group classes that cover introductory topics, Ableton production, battle prep and other evolving practical instruction. Faustino is looking forward to some big gigs in 2027, and is proud of stepping up at the school's Longtagon, an eight-turntable setup for round robin scratch jam sessions that can look very intimidating.

DJing can be about more than fun, profit and libido. Skills like split-listening to multiple tracks with headphones as well as cutting and scratching sounds and phrases in songs helps keep brains sharp. Programming sets enlighten the connection between seemingly disparate sounds. Forever students are highly likely to find this craft to be a fascinating way to understand their rate of learning at their age.

Students also learn intricate mechanics with both of their hands. The muscle memory that develops can lead to more ambidextrous activities off of the decks, like writing with one's non-dominant hand. For left-handed students living in a right-handed world, that is an incredible revelation.

BJIOS serves the wired world well, too, with over 1200 how-to and other educational DJ videos available to watch on a phone, tablet or computer for monthly or yearly subscription at Beatjunkies.TV. There's also an online record pool, with exclusive edits, remixes, instrumental and acapella versions of new and classic tracks available to download and keep in your party arsenal.

This season's in-person group classes are already in progress, but hourly private lessons are available for the rest of the year and beyond.

Visit beatjunkiesound.com for new class announcements for 2027, the school's 10th year in business!

Imperial Teen

All Over You

Merge Records

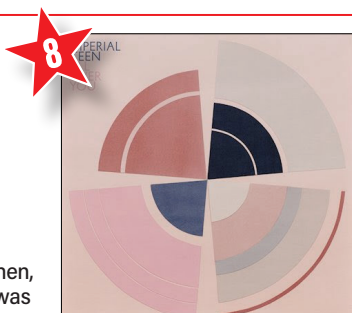
Producers: Imperial Teen

Imperial Teen released its debut album *Seasick* in 1996, an astonishing 30 years ago. Back then, vocalist/guitarist Roddy Bottum was an active member of a Faith No More that was still shining bright; the *King for a Day... Fool for a Lifetime* album dropped in 1995, and *Album of the Year* would be released in '97. People were fascinated by the fact that FNM were getting increasingly caustic, while Bottum's new band were, on the surface, a sweet indie-pop outfit.

Of course, there was more to it than that. Imperial Teen's lyrics have always been incisive and intelligent, and so it remains. Now on their seventh studio album and with the core lineup intact (Bottum, singer/guitarist Will Schwartz, drummer Lynn Truell, bassist Jone Stebbins), *All Over You* is a collection of atmospheric and lush indie-pop gems, all blessed with softly uttered but hard-hitting and poetic lyrics. "Kiss it Goodbye," for example, leads you down a path of droning delicacy, before the pace picks up with a melodic curveball.

"We want to make people dance and think and feel at the same time," said Schwartz in a statement. *All Over You* does precisely that.

- Brett Callwood



Interpol

This Mirror Weighs a Ton

Partisan Records

Producer: Andrew Wyatt

The post-punk revival legends toss out any notion of a stripped-back sound for their eighth album, giving audiences orchestral instruments, complex production, and ever-so-dystopian imagery and messaging.

The record is just as propulsive and melancholic as their acclaimed earlier works, but polished to reveal the nuance of every rhythm and texture. Glam and new-wave influences spill in; coupled with Andrew Wyatt's pop-heavy ear for production. The album is easily Interpol at their best, but through a new lens. - Cade Pinkerson



Zacchae'us Paul

Jazz Money Vol. 2: Swingin' R&B

Redeye Worldwide

Producer: Zacchae'us Paul

Zacchae'us Paul returns with *Volume 2* (following 2024's *Jazz Money*), in a 17-track project featuring spoken word (Marshall Allen, Eric Wyatt), emcee work (donSMITH, Happy Qavah), and navigating modern jazz, hip-hop and neo soul. Walking the line between edgy street and traditional sound, with instrumentals from Kebbi Williams, Morgan Guerin, Keyon Harrold, Eric Wyatt, and more, improvised solos and lyrical interludes provide intense jazz underpinnings. Interesting backing harmonies, syncopated beats and looping hooks add to the mix, while conflicting motifs juxtapose gentler-vibed moments in an intriguing journey for the musical connoisseur. - Andrea Beenham



ENHYPEN

The Sin: Bliss

Belift Lab

Producers: Various

When it was announced that Heeseung was going to leave ENHYPEN, many wondered how the six remaining members would fare without one of their aces. It's safe to say the group is doing just fine as *The Sin: Bliss* is one of their strongest projects to date. Opening up with the emotionally charged "Two Fools," this album feels moodier than their typical sound. "Stuck on You" is filled with hypnotic instrumentals, while the ballad "Bad for You," has yearning harmonies that crescendo beautifully. The standout song is, of course, the lead single "Bloody Paradise," which dabbles in Brazilian funk. The ambitious production of *The Sin: Bliss* makes this project one to remember. - Jacqueline Naranjo



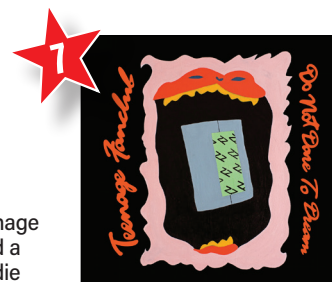
Teenage Fanclub

Do Not Dare to Dream

Merge Records

Producers: Teenage Fanclub

Back in 1989 when Scottish band Teenage Fanclub formed, they were considered a part of the vibrant and lively British indie scene, often performing on bills and festival lineups with the likes of Kingmaker, The Wonder Stuff, and Ned's Atomic Dustbin. *Do Not Dare to Dream* is their 13th studio album and, well out of their teens, it displays a warmth and maturity that quite honestly was always there. "Tomorrow People" sounds like it was born in Laurel Canyon, and the whole album is blessed with equally attractive melodies, harmonies, and sweet little curveballs. - Brett Callwood



V Torres

Woman

DistroKid

Producers: V Torres, Steve Aguilar

The sophomore project from Los Angeles' V Torres (Gorgeous Got A Gun) explores resilience, healing, grief and freedom in her latest journey of self-discovery. With soulful indie-rock/Americana, *Woman* delivers polished instrumental punches, dark string sound, and intriguing vocals that alternate between gritty angst and clean storytelling. Incorporating elements of grunge and soft country, the record provides a tasty insight into Torres' solo work. Lead single "Woman" provides a fabulous classic rock earworm, with the balance of the album delivering a great mix of rock, electronic-laced and cinematic sound.

- Andrea Beenham



Wadada Leo Smith

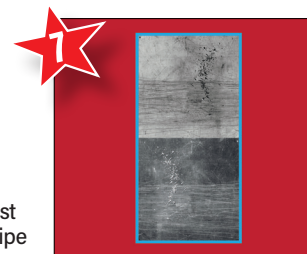
Constellations And Hemispheres

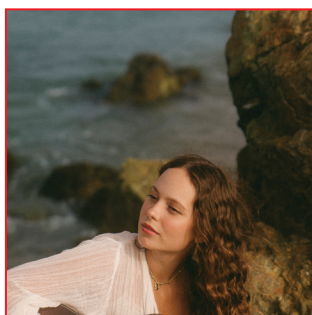
Burning Ambulance Music

Producer: Wadada Leo Smith

Smith remains one of the jazz world's most potent voices, and he's still active at the ripe age of 84. This excursion offers four distinct ensembles showcasing the additional talents of Marcus Gilmore, Melvin Gibbs, Bill Laswell, Pheeroan akLaff, and more. The variety pays dividends, from "Dark Energy," a Miles-like travelogue of the mind, to the atmospheric muck of "Deep Canyons On Mars." Only hip cats will dig the vibes.

- Andy Kaufmann





Amalia Fleming

Contact: info@amaliafleming.com

Web: amaliafleming.com

Seeking: Label, Booking, Film/TV, Management

Style: Folk, Pop

Raised in California and based in Nashville, singer-songwriter Fleming's online bio says that she, "draws listeners in with warm, honeyed vocals and intricate melodies, but it's her songwriting that leaves a lasting impression." It also mentions influences like Joni Mitchell, although based on the song she sent us, called "Can't Fight the Future," there are strong Stevie Nicks/Fleetwood Mac vibes here, too. It is certainly true that she's blessed with sweet, "honeyed" vocals that prove wonderfully emotive and expressive. Authentic, too. You can't help but believe every word that she sings. All of that makes for a satisfying listening experience.

Production	8
Lyrics	9
Music	8
Vocals	9
Musicianship	8

SCORE 8.4



Dark Sky Reserve

Contact: devlin.borra@gmail.com

Web: Spotify

Seeking: Label, Booking, Licensing

Style: Alt-Country

Right from the early, eerie opening notes of "Casey's Last Ride," Nick Cave is the name that blasts into your head. Yeah, classic outlaw country artists such as Johnny Cash are in there, too. But it's the dark, weary, Gothically beautiful elements that make this outfit interesting. Tom Waits and his anthems to hard-living are also prominent. It's all so dark, and yet so gorgeous. "The Loon" is essentially agony; a drone of pain that quickly turns into ecstasy thanks to some expert song writing, and a deft touch when it comes to melody.

Production	8
Lyrics	8
Music	8
Vocals	8
Musicianship	8

SCORE 8.0



The Empty Pockets

Contact: joshuasolom@gmail.com

Web: theemptypockets.com/pages/newalbum

Seeking: Review

Style: Blues Rock

Chicago quartet The Empty Pockets promise "stories and sounds without borders," and credit where due, it certainly seems like they are taking their own winding road. Take "Serrated" off their latest album *Dear Billionaires* (due October 23): the tight instrumentation screams classic blues-rock, yet the vocals almost lean into theatrical performance art. The two stylistic choices clash rather than collaborate, making for an awkward, disjointed listen. The instrumentation says one genre, the vocal delivery says another, and the two never quite shake hands. There's clearly talent in the room—it just hasn't agreed with itself yet.

Production	7
Lyrics	6
Music	7
Vocals	6
Musicianship	7

SCORE 6.6



Corey Morris

Contact: youngstarcrazy98@gmail.com

Web: coreymorris.net

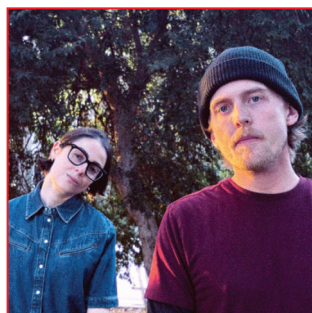
Seeking: Sync, Playlists

Style: Rap

Rapper Morris was featured in these pages back in 2026, when we said, "Corey Morris is a charismatic artist who shows he can be an emcee with deep, compelling lyrical content." That was true then and it's true now. The great news is that, based on the three songs that he sent over this time, he's only gotten better. His flow is still on-point—the man can clearly rap. But there are moments here, particularly on "Star Talk 2," where Morris goes up a level. He's firing the lines out, stuff that feels real and is also genuinely witty.

Production	8
Lyrics	8
Music	7
Vocals	8
Musicianship	8

SCORE 7.8



BLUUM

Contact: booking.bluum@gmail.com

Web: Spotify

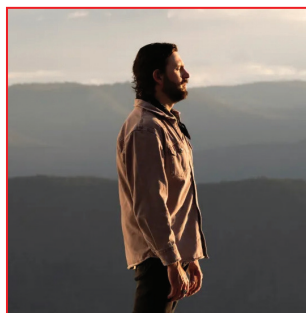
Seeking: Booking

Style: Alt-Rock/'90s

LA. duo BLUUM describe their sound as "guitar music your older cousin likes," and that's fair enough—the comparison lands: gritty, unpretentious, unbothered, and a little too cool to care whether anyone is impressed. Their self-titled debut, "Tough Break, Kid" is scuffed-up and unpolished in the right way, all loose edges and no apologies. "Lolia" softens the register and earns it. Nothing here is trying to be more than it is; the fun is real, and that remains the single best foundation for a rock record.

Production	7
Lyrics	7
Music	8
Vocals	7
Musicianship	8

SCORE 7.4



Jack Biilmann

Contact: management@richlynngroup.com

Web: jackbiilmann.com

Seeking: Booking

Style: Americana, Alt-Rock

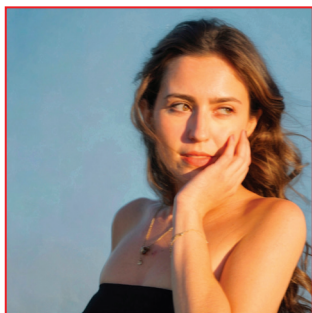
Australian singer-songwriter Jack Biilmann brings a soul-eating tone to his rich fusion of blues, rock, and folk. A decade of touring and headline shows has sharpened his instincts as both guitarist and storyteller, and it shows. Tracks like "Forbidden Fruit" kick off with an antique, dusty charm before charging full steam ahead. But "(Not) Easy to Love" is the real find here: more composed on paper, yet it's where Biilmann finally lets the vocal off the leash. More of that, please—the restraint elsewhere is good; the unraveling is better.

Production	8
Lyrics	7
Music	8
Vocals	8
Musicianship	8

SCORE 7.8

Music Connection critics rate recorded music on a scale of 1 to 10. Number 1 represents the lowest possible score, 10 represents the highest possible score.

MC can only guarantee that a review will be fair and honest. For more information, see Submission Guidelines on the next page.



Alexa Kate

Contact: alexakatemusic@gmail.com

Web: alexakate.com

Seeking: Label, Booking, Management

Style: Pop

"The most important thing to me is that connection," Alexa Kate says on her website. "Music creates a space where people can feel like they fit in. I've always just wanted to make people feel less alone." That connection is apparent on the songs she submitted. With "Good for Long," she finds a way to make herself vulnerable with some delicately expressive vocals and lyrics, before revealing the catchiest of choruses. "The Aftermath" is less reliant on traditional pop structure, preferring to build a mood that fully envelops the listener. That songwriting dexterity hints at great things to come.

Production	8
Lyrics	7
Music	8
Vocals	8
Musicianship	7

SCORE 7.6



artxxnas

Contact: art.nsrv@gmail.com

Web: artxxnas.com

Seeking: Label, Management, Press, Booking, Film/TV

Style: Queer Pop

If you see artxxnas' genre defined as "queer pop," and you think you're going to get gloriously melodic synth-pop, designed to send a crowd wild at a gay club, then you're absolutely right. "I'm a star," the artist says, before following it up with "I'm iconic, you are not." Look at that—throwing shade right out of the gate. Artxxnas isn't short on confidence, but then why should he be? He's got a ton of big tunes, a gleefully outrageous vibe, and a sound that is destined for club success. So much fun.

Production	8
Lyrics	7
Music	7
Vocals	7
Musicianship	8

SCORE 7.4



Michele Gedney

Contact: harmonysing@gmail.com

Web: openbookmusic.com

Seeking: Booking, Press, Film/TV

Style: Singer/Songwriter

Michele Gedney's work as Open Book with her late husband Rick Gedney was built on thoughtful songwriting and interwoven harmonies, and that lived-in quality remains central. With five albums and folk songwriting accolades under her belt, the performances are steady and assured, though sometimes almost too comfortable in their pocket; the vocal delivery can settle into a similar shape from song to song. Gedney's lyrics frequently reach for profound emotional depths, but the restrained vocal delivery can make the tracks feel a bit monotonous. If she really let 'er rip, these heartfelt folk tunes would hit with considerably more force.

Production	8
Lyrics	7
Music	7
Vocals	7
Musicianship	8

SCORE 7.4



Anour

Contact: claire@penguinpublicity.com

Web: iamanour.com

Seeking: Reviews, Bookings, Fan Engagement

Style: Singer-Songwriter, Atmospheric Pop

"Born in Damascus, emerging from Montreal, Anour is a singer-songwriter who channels her reflections on modern life into cinematic pop songs that feel like lucid dreams," reads Anour's online bio. That's a great description too. There's a dreamy quality, the cinematic thing that she's talking about, that recalls the likes of Shakespear's Sister and even T'Pau. "I Am" is playful, toying with a cabaret vibe that one could image Liza Minnelli wallowing in. "Maybe I'm Crazy" is epic, and simultaneously heartbreaking. In both theme and vibe, it recalls Queen's "I'm Going Slightly Mad," and that's no bad thing.

Production	8
Lyrics	9
Music	8
Vocals	9
Musicianship	8

SCORE 8.4



Jay Divad

Contact: cortodaz@gmail.com

Web: faultyvault.com

Seeking: Booking, Label

Style: Hip-Hop, Alternative

Jay Divad strikes a smooth, resonant balance between atmospheric sample flipping and an effortlessly magnetic vocal flow. Tracks like "Shadows" and "Often" are low-key in temperature but high in confidence and what elevates Divad above the crowded indie-hip-hop noise is a tangible sense of originality. His sharp beat selections and deliberate lyrical cadence showcase a musician deeply connected to his craft. Divad's laid-back approach works, particularly on those standout cuts, suggesting an artist with a distinct ear and plenty more territory to explore.

Production	7
Lyrics	7
Music	8
Vocals	7
Musicianship	8

SCORE 7.4



Bobbo Byrnes

Contact: bobbo@bobbobyernes.com

Web: bobbobyernes.com

Seeking: Film/TV

Style: Americana, Roots-Rock, Alt-Country

Bobbo Byrnes operates in a self-described musical purgatory: "too rock for folk, too folk for rock." It's a tidy summary, and mostly true. Nothing here demands your attention, but nothing here squanders it either—this is lowkey, heartfelt songwriting from someone who's clearly logged the hours, over a dozen albums deep and counting. It's thoroughly solid songwriting from a seasoned artist, though you can't help but wish he'd occasionally kick down the boundaries he's settled into. The next move isn't more of the same—it's finding the edges of his sound and finally leaning past them.

Production	7
Lyrics	7
Music	7
Vocals	7
Musicianship	7

SCORE 7.0

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: There is absolutely no charge for a New Music Critique.

To be considered please go to musicconnection.com/reviews/get-reviewed. All submissions are randomly selected and reviewed by MC staff.

The Ford Los Angeles, CA

Web: judycollins.com

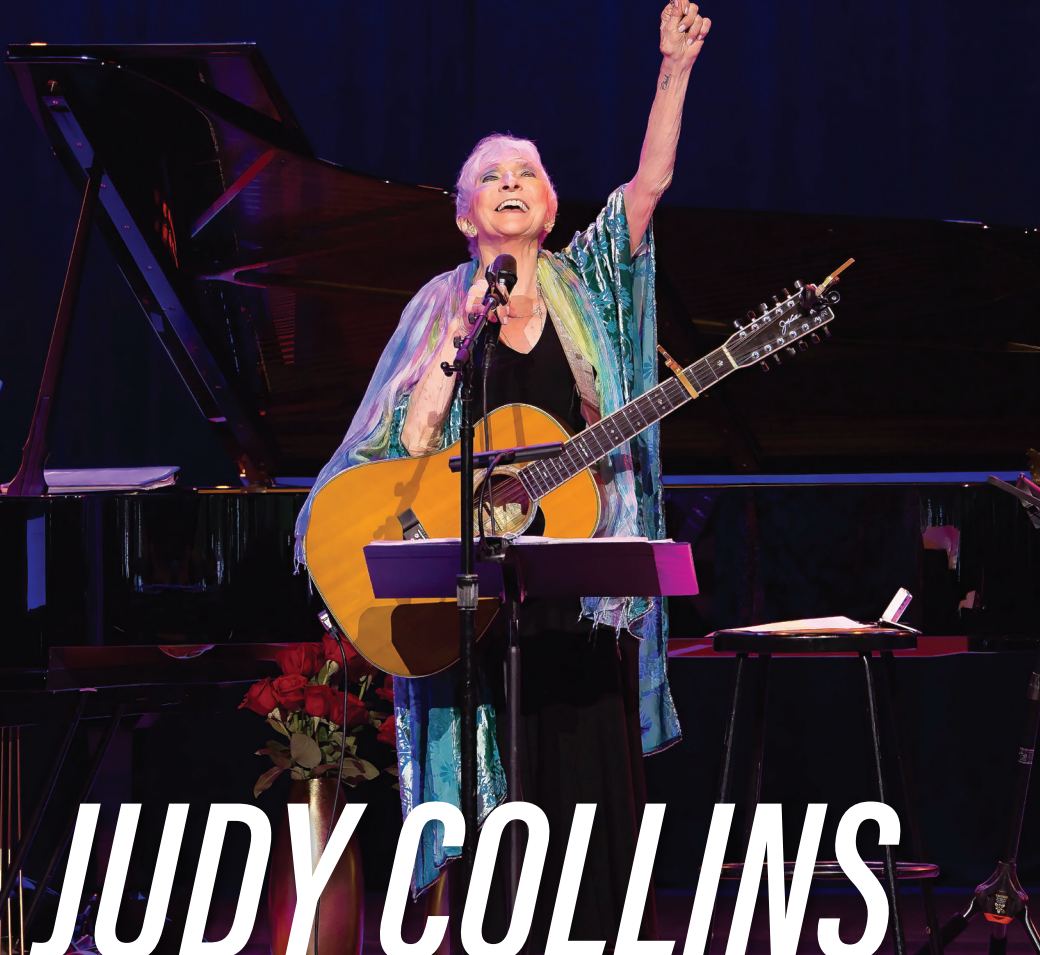
Players: Judy Collins, vocals, piano; Will Kjeer, piano

IN 2016, THIS WRITER INTERVIEWED folk songbird Judy Collins and wrote that, "Collins performs about 129 shows each year and shows no signs of slowing down. She has a new book coming out next year, and she's performing at SXSW this year, alongside new musical partner Ari Hest. The fact that she'll be performing for a younger audience that may not be familiar with her work is exciting to one of folk's all-time greats."

Fast-forward a full decade and much of that is still true, though one key detail has changed: Collins is finally showing signs of slowing down. Of course she is—she's 87 years old. She looks and sounds great, but age catches up with us all eventually.

You don't have to take our word for it; Collins' tour this year was tagged Sweet Judy Blue Eyes Farewell Tour. Whether that means that she's done with performing live altogether or just the arduous touring cycle remains to be seen. But on a gorgeous Friday in early August, The John Anson Ford Amphitheatre, or The Ford for ease, provided the perfect setting to see Collins for potentially the last time.

The venue is stunning. Outdoors but just intimate enough, it's like catching a show on the grounds of an old European castle. Meanwhile, the sound echoes beautifully off of the hillside. The Hollywood Bowl is across the street and



place at the front and kicking off her set with her beloved version of Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides, Now." Her voice took a couple of minutes to

vibes. Nobody can raise the hairs on the back of your neck quite like Collins when she's in full flow, and she got there at the Ford.

Her set weighed in at just 12 songs, though she was on stage for longer than you might think. Even after all these years, Collins appeared to enjoy herself immensely while performing, and she took her time. The grand dame of folk told jokes and got comfortable with an adoring audience, a crowd that was all-in from the start. Hanging on her every word, Collins' congregation is quite happy to let her do this her way.

An acapella take on Bing Crosby's "I'll Be Home for Christmas" is followed by two traditional numbers: "Barbara Allen" and "John Riley." Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land," meanwhile, is particularly timely right now.

We got Collins' own "Spellbound," before she sat at the piano for her beautiful "The Blizzard." Still a lovely pianist, Will Kjeer stuck around and watched the show from the side, admiration etched on his face. It was great to see Collins enjoying the ivories.

Collins told us about a crush she used to have on the late, great Leonard Cohen before singing his "Suzanne." Next came a change of direction, with Collins reciting some poetry from her recent *Sometimes It's Heaven* book.

The show ended with Collins' impeccable version of Stephen Sondheim's "Send in the Clowns," and then a rousing "Amazing Grace" that saw show opener Bruce Cockburn join her on stage.

The whole night was spine-tingling. Collins radiated warmth throughout, the songs were performed lovingly, and everyone left happy.

— Brett Callwood

Photo taken at Tanglewood by Hilary Scott,



that offers a bigger experience, but there's something very special about a show at The Ford.

Maybe it was just the setting, or the celebratory mood around the place, but Collins seemed to float onto the stage before taking her

warm up, but that opening number didn't suffer. With Collins, it's all about the feel, the emotion, and the love.

That said, by God can she sing. By the time she pours herself into Joan Baez's "Diamonds & Rust," she's hitting the notes, giving us angelic

The Hollywood Bowl Los Angeles, CA

Web: whiskeymyers.com

Contact: jess.pettigrove@ledecompany.com

Players: Cody Cannon, lead vocals, acoustic guitar, harmonica; John Jeffers, lead guitar, slide guitar, lap steel, vocals; Cody Tate, guitar, rhythm guitar, vocals; Tony Kent, keyboards, percussion; Jamey Gleaves, bass; Jeff Hogg, drums

MAKING THEIR HOLLYWOOD BOWL debut as part of their *Southern Hospitality Tour* with the Black Crowes (featuring Tedeschi Trucks Band on this stop), East Texan favorites Whiskey Myers delivered a powerful set for a packed crowd. Playing selections from *Firewater*, *Mud*, *Whiskey Myers*, *Tornillo*, and 2025's *Whomp Whack Thunder*, they brought their trademark gritty southern sound, while injecting some blues edges and powerful gospel-feeling backing vocals.

With a stellar rock opening and fabulous energy from everyone on the stage, the salt-of-the-earth collective shared a tight, easy sound, with palpable excitement pulsing from the stage, and a growing intensity building from the crowd from the first drum kick. Taking full advantage of their inaugural Hollywood Bowl show, Whiskey was *not* playing around as they dealt out solid drumming, impeccable guitar solos, and soulful bass, with "Midnight Woman" kicking things off. The hipster-styled visuals framing their solid, heavy rock and the heartfelt musicianship shone throughout the set.

"John Wayne" (2022's 17th most played American song) made it hard to sit still, with rumbling bass lines, gritty guitar (Tate),



harmonica (from Cannon), and belted backing vocals. The sharp lyricism did not disappoint either... *'My grandpa had a rifle that he took from a Viet Cong, but he pawned it on a guitar when he got back from Saigon.'* "Time Bomb" demonstrated cymbal restraint, transitioning to driving southern rock before "Tailspin" added a lengthy instrumental opener and steady southern stylings, rock guitar solo (Jeffers), belting backing vocals, tight cutoffs, and solid string work (Tate). 2019's "Glitter Ain't Gold" had three guitars front and center, with a thick syrupy solo from Tate, haunting vocal stylings and a fuller guitar solo from Jeffers. "Bury My Bones" had incredible backup vibrato, gravelly lead vocals, and the Bowl singing along. Slowing down for "Broken Window Serenade," Whiskey revealed a great rimshot-guitar opening,

delicious bluesy solos, and more harmonica. "Frogman" held a heavier, metal sound, and "Bitch" added some four-on-the-floor.

Playing crowds of 100,000+ across the U.S. and U.K., sharing stages with Lynyrd Skynyrd, Hank Williams Jr., Jamey Johnson, and opening for The Rolling Stones, the independent band has nine Gold, Platinum, and multi-Platinum RIAA certifications, has sold almost 3 million albums, and been streamed over 4 billion times. Whiskey's southern rock rowdiness has matured, adding a blues-tinged sound in addition to their trademark grit. From feisty frontman stage swagger to solid steel guitar licks, incredible syrupy harmonica, and great backing vocal harmonies, Whiskey Myers has it all. A solid and rousing southern rock gem continuing on their well-deserved rise to the top. — **Andrea Beenham**

The Blue Note Los Angeles, CA

Web: charlieberealmusic.com

Contact: leah@champagnehousemedia.com

Players: Charlie Bereal, lead vocals, guitar; Jairus "J.Mo" Mozee, guitar, backing vocals; DJ Ginyard, bass; Chris Dave, drums

HAVING COLLABORATED AS A producer-songwriter with JAY-Z and Beyoncé, and others, and now signed to Death Row Records as a solo artist, Charlie Bereal is best known for contributions on "More Than a Woman" (Aaliyah), "One Minute Man" (Missy Elliott), and "Love Is Like Whoa" (Mya). Joining Jairus Mozee on guitar, bassist David Ginyard, and drummer Chris Dave (D'Angelo, Justin Bieber, The Robert Glasper Experiment, Adele) for back-to-back shows at the Blue Note in Los Angeles, the quartet played an energetic set.

Originally from the Pasadena/Altadena area, Bereal shared selections from his 2025 debut, *Walk With The Father*, as well as covers of Curtis Mayfield's "The Makings of You" and William DeVaughn's "Be Thankful for What You've Got." Presenting an interesting blend of soulful vocals and high-level guitar chops, the evening kicked off with "Come Go With Me," which delivered great rhythm guitar sound and harmonized backing vocals from J.Mo Mozee as Bereal released his trademark falsetto, all wrapped in a solid groove.

Dedicated to the survivors of the Pasadena/Altadena community (many of whom lost



their homes in the early 2025 fires), "Hope" transitioned to a deep, slower bass vibe, with Mozee bringing incredible support and intriguing ghosted guitar notes on the group's cover of "The Makings of You," while "Energy" introduced a fun moment of call-and-response crowd interaction, and a more upbeat feel. While the show had some highlights—including strong crowd involvement, deep grooves, and a fabulous rock guitar solo—the evening occasionally felt somewhat disjointed and, while

the talent was clear, there were moments when the communication on stage felt disconnected. A contrast in dynamics was also absent, particularly from the drum kit, which could have added additional shape and movement to the performance. Show closer, "Walk the Streets of Love," felt more cohesive, with great vocals, a cooler, edgier feel, and tight cutoffs, bringing the show together to end the set on a strong note. — **Andrea Beenham**

Paddy Reilly's New York, NY

Contact: beatrice@empktrmedia.com

Web: samthemusicman.com

Players: Sam Edelston, dulcimer, vocals

WHEN YOU THINK OF the dulcimer, you most likely think of it in conjunction with other instruments. Similar to the guitar but with only three or four strings as opposed to six, it's easier to manipulate since a person has five fingers. Though often used in folk and Celtic music and occasionally in pop, it can function perfectly well on its own, as Sam Edelston demonstrated in his recent three-set performance.

Surrounded by several different dulcimers, Edelston dove full force into his repertoire, switching out different ones depending on the song. He covered the gamut from songs like "Time After Time," "City of New Orleans," "Me and Julio Down by the School Yard," David Bowie's "Space Oddity," and plenty of Beatles. He adapted many of the songs to flow as naturally with the instrument as possible while maintaining the songs' integrity. Some were more challenging to replicate than others, since we are used to hearing them with a full band.

Paddy Reilly's is a bar that offers an interesting lineup of music; however, it is still a bar setting and people often continue talking during a performance. Passing out brochures of his repertoire, Edelston wisely solicited patrons to submit requests, a good way to pull listeners into the fold. He fulfilled as many as he could manage, which resulted in a somewhat uneven



SAM EDELSTON

Photo: Mark Shiwolech

set, depending on how recently he performed a particular song or how the request fit into the mood of the venue. Overall, it was a good way to keep the spotlight where it belonged.

By introducing an instrument that people

aren't as familiar with, Edelston created not only a unique listening experience, but an educational one as well. He engineered a situation that drew people in instead of letting the situation dictate the outcome. - **Ellen Woloshin**

Whisky A Go-Go Los Angeles, CA

Contact: bruceduffmusic@gmail.com

Web: josiecotton.com

Players: Josie Cotton, vocals; Frankie Luis, drums; Marcus Watkins, guitar; Cherish Alexander, bass, vocals; John Miller, guitar, vocals; Paul Roessler, keyboard, vocals

THURSDAY NIGHT AT THE WHISKY, and an hour before punk/new-wave icon Josie Cotton took to the stage, the crowd was decidedly thin. Maybe it was because of the mixed (to put it kindly) quality of the opening acts, or maybe it was simply because it was Thursday. Thankfully, the room had beefed up a bit by the time Cotton bounded out, which is the least that she deserves. Cotton remains a beloved, if underrated, figure. She's inarguably best known for the "Johnny Are You Queer" '80s anthem, but it would be a disservice to refer to her as a one hit wonder (that term is stupid anyway). Cotton's output has been remarkably consistent. She genuinely doesn't have a bad album, and some of them are superb. 2007's *Invasion of the B-Girls*, for example, saw her covering music from B movies, and it was a rip-roaring joy.

Everything is Oh Yeah was recorded in '86 but not released until 2019, and it's essentially criminal that we had to wait so long. "I warmed up to the idea of '80s music," Cotton told this writer during an interview for the *LA Weekly*. "I wasn't appalled or trying to get out of the studio. When we found it, the publishing



JOSIE COTTON

company was working, finding places for your songs to go and they were in contact with *Stranger Things*. They were looking for unreleased records from the '80s, which was an odd request. Particularly mid '80s. I knew that I had done this record, but I wasn't sure if it still existed because it had gone through fires and landslides, earthquakes, moving in garages and all kinds of natural disasters and just, y'know, time."

So here we are in 2026. Cotton, apparently ageless, moves around the stage like a blend of Tina Turner and Deborah Harry, with a pinch of Billy Idol. She's all swagger. One can imagine her batting her eyelids at you, before punching you on the nose. More importantly though, she and her band sound great.

"He Could Be the One" and "School Is In" are big power-pop anthems, made for singing along to while dancing like a nutter. Cotton tunes tend to have the sort of choruses that you can hang your hat on.

Paul Roessler, best known as a member of mythical L.A. punks the Screamers, runs the Kitten Robot label with Cotton, and he was playing keys for her at the Whisky. The whole band was on-point and, by the time they reached the conclusion, predictably "Johnny Are You Queer," every hip in the house was moving. Superb stuff! - **Brett Callwood**

Cat's Cradle *Carrboro, NC*

Web: diggygraves.com

Contact: ryan@unitedtalentagency.com

Players: Mr. X, keys, synths, programming; Mr. Y, bass, electric guitar; Mr. Z, drums, percussion

THE BUSINESS OF DEATH—the unknown, the macabre, and the celebration of both—has become Diggy Graves' *raison d'être*. Onstage, that morbidity isn't a gimmick so much as a vocabulary: horror-movie imagery, goth iconography, trap-weighted rhythms and pop instincts all feeding the same strange machine.

At Cat's Cradle, the stage was stripped to the essentials, built around the MOTEL tour's enormous red neon sign. No clutter, no unnecessary production tricks. Just the sign, the darkness and a room full of people waiting to see what crawled out of it.

Then Diggy appeared in his white hockey mask. He hit "Motel Blues" and the room detonated. Bodies surged toward the stage, the beat hit with physical force, and suddenly the motel wasn't a prop anymore—it was the entire world of the show.

"The Grim Weeper" followed, then "Cyanide," each track tightening the screws before the set took a darker turn with "Dear Dracula." The imagery could easily have tipped into camp, but Diggy understood the crucial difference between merely wearing a horror aesthetic and actually performing inside one. The songs moved with purpose, driven by bass-heavy grooves,



programmed percussion and hooks that gave the darkness something to dance to.

And the audio was excellent. That matters more than it sounds. At a show built around rhythm, diction and character, muddy vocals would have killed the illusion. Instead, Diggy's voice came through cleanly and distinctly. He could spit, sing, bark or lean into a phrase without disappearing beneath the low end. Every word landed.

That clarity is part of what makes Diggy interesting. Whatever genre pigeonhole you try to stick him in—hip-hop, pop-rap, goth rap, alternative, whatever—he keeps slipping through the hole. The music is too melodic for one box, too rhythmically aggressive for another, too theatrical to sit comfortably anywhere for long.

The songs themselves are loaded with personality. "The Exorcism of Diggy Graves." "Hollow." "Boot Scootin' Diggy." "Red Vinyard." "Tac Town Two Step." Even before the music fully registers, the titles establish an alternate universe. Each one is an invitation, an audio

name tag, a little signpost telling you where to hang your attention.

There's something inherently slippery about that kind of theatrical anonymity. It can feel inauthentic, particularly when the persona becomes bigger than the person underneath it. But perhaps that tension is the point. The mask isn't necessarily concealing the artist; it may be giving him permission to exaggerate everything.

The crowd was packed, energetic and remarkably well behaved. No sense of menace, despite an aesthetic built almost entirely from it. People came to lose themselves in the music, not in each other.

And that might be the most revealing thing about a Diggy Graves show. For all the skulls, ghosts, exorcisms, motel rooms and graveyard imagery, the actual experience is communal. The darkness becomes a party. The mask becomes a mascot. The morbidity becomes rhythm.

Diggy Graves has built himself a little universe where death is the theme, but the groove is the life force. - **Eric Sommer**

Cat's Cradle *Carrboro, NC*

Web: margotsinclair.com

Contact: troy@forgeaheadtouring.com

Players: Kyle Mix, vocals; Luke Sutherland, guitar; Carson Baer, guitar; Owen Rice, bass guitar, background vocals; Donovan Hess, drums, background vocals

A TOTALLY UNEXPECTED QUARTET of Orange County escapees—perhaps slightly bewildered to find themselves this far east—takes the stage and, within seconds, traps the room in an opening crescendo. The "wow" factor is immediately off the chain. Mutinous electrons ricochet off the walls, rafters and bar, coalescing into soaring minor chords, barre-chord power surges and enormous slabs of guitar before somehow resolving back into the major.

Meet Margot Sinclair. Their first three songs are a gut punch to the inner ear. Imagine some of the country-rock brilliance of *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*, the early Byrds when Roger McGuinn's Rickenbacker was practically weaponized, and a dose of Henry Rollins-era Black Flag being fired through the same electrical grid.

After exploding through "POV," "Boat" and "Napalm," Margot Sinclair locks into a groove train that simply refuses to let go. "Jealousy," "Excuses" and "Jester" become absolute heaters—big, muscular songs propelled by a band that already understands something many young groups spend years figuring out: how to move as one organism without everybody fighting for the same square inch of sonic real estate.



These guys are dialed in from the first note, and frankly, they seem way too good to be from this part of the galaxy. As the set gathers kinetic propulsion, the thin crowd begins moving closer, bodies collecting around the stage as if somebody quietly turned on a giant musical electromagnet.

The four-piece rock machine bounces, swerves and rides the ramjet hard into "Ween," "Free" and "Watching," a closing three-song rattlesnake that leaves the room smoldering and the walls suspiciously sticky with groove juice.

There is unusual cohesion in this quartet. They ride each sound wave to its crest, then hand off verses, intros, rhythmic accents and melodic ideas with impressive smoothness. Nothing feels accidental, yet nothing feels overly rehearsed. There's muscle here, but also restraint—and that combination is considerably harder to manufacture than sheer volume.

Sutherland's guitar work is especially notable. Not overbearing, not underwhelming—just the right amount, at the right moment, saying exactly what the song needs said. Having already

been through the live-performance grinder at rooms like The Troubadour in Los Angeles and Rickshaw Stop in San Francisco, Margot Sinclair has clearly had time to sharpen the machinery.

Carson Baer and Rice kick this musical golf ball straight through the Garden Hose of Groove, supplying compression, clarity and dynamic punch while keeping the whole contraption moving forward. Then there's Kyle Mix, with enough vocal range, presence and raw power to suggest that this band has considerably larger stages ahead of it.

If there's a crack in the veneer—and you have to look pretty hard to find one—it's this: once Margot Sinclair reaches full bore, they are so strong, so relentless and occasionally so overwhelming that your head and ears start begging for a little dynamic daylight. Give us a whisper. A crack in the door. Twenty seconds to locate our internal organs before firing up the engines again. But that will come. Margot Sinclair has a future so bright it hurts your eyes.

- **Eric Sommer**

Use this exclusive Music Connection directory to connect with a mastering studio that suits your project's needs and your budget's limits. All data has been updated with approved info supplied by the listees.

ALABAMA

BATES BROTHERS RECORDING

3427 Davey Allison Blvd., Ste. 101
Hueytown, AL 35023
205-491-4066
Email: bbrbates@yahoo.com
Web: batesbrothersrecording.com
Contact: Eric Bates
Basic Rate: please see web for info

SOUND OF BIRMINGHAM

3625 5th Ave. S.
Birmingham, AL 35222
205-595-8497
Email: don@soundofbirmingham.com
Web: soundofbirmingham.com
Note: Call for Rates.

ARIZONA

1ST CHOICE MASTERING

650 N. 157th Drive
Goodyear, AZ 85338
623-234-1787
Email: info@billkeis.com
Web: billkeis.com/producer
Services: see web for info

ALLUSION STUDIOS

248 W. Elm St.
Tucson, AZ 85705
520-622-3895
Email: contact@allusionstudios.com
Web: allusionstudios.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

M L E STUDIOS

P.O. Box 27107
Prescott Valley, AZ 86312
866-246-8846
Email: mail@majorlabelmusic.com
Web: majorlabelmusic.com,
facebook.com/mlestudios
Contact: Col. Darryl Harrelson
Basic Rate: Call for rates.

THE SALTMINE STUDIO OASIS

ARIZONA MASTERING
48 S. Macdonald St.
Mesa, AZ 85210
480-220-4007
Email: don@thesaltmine.com
Web: thesaltmine.com, arizonamastering.com
Contact: Don Salter
Basic Rate: call for a custom quote.
Gear: BetterMaker Mastering Compressor, Manley Massive Passive EQ, Weiss DS1 Compressor Limiter, Manley Backbone Console, Dangerous ST Monitor, Mytek AD/DAC, Millennia NSEQ-2 Tube EQ, GML 8200 Equalizer, Lydkraft Tube Tech Mastering multi-band limiter, Neve Portico II Master Buss compressor, Prism, Waves L2, ATR 1-inch Master Recorder etc.
Clients: DMX, Boosie Badazz, Young Buck, Prong, Jay-Tee, Trapp Boyz, DJ Class, Skylark, Futuristic, Japan, Dogan, Alwz Snny, Sincerely Collins and thousands of the finest AZ artists.

VAULT MASTERING STUDIOS

Phoenix, AZ
877-297-5940
Email: nathan@vaultmastering.com
Contact: Nathan James
Web: vaultmastering.com
facebook.com/vaultmastering
Previous Clients: Twenty One Pilots, Har-

risen Fjord, Gretchen Parlato, Charlie Hunter, Cyrus Chestnut, Takuya Kuroda, Nate Smith, John Zorn, Sting, Staind, Aretha Franklin, Joey DeFrancesco, This or the Apocalypse, The Fray, Civil Twilight, Sister Sparrow, Boston Symphony Orchestra, etc.

ARKANSAS

RANEY RECORDING STUDIO

P.O. Box 17
110 S. Front St.
Drasco, AR 72530-9282
870-668-3222
Email: jonr@raneyrecordingstudio.com
jon@raneyrecordingstudio.com
Web: raneyrecordingstudio.com
Contact: Jon Raney
Basic Rate: please call for info

CALIFORNIA

21ST CENTURY AUDIO

North Hollywood, CA
323-356-1177
Email: peter@21stCenturyAudio.com
Web: 21stCenturyAudio.com
Contact: Peter Doell
Rate: rates upon request

25TH ST RECORDING

426 25th Street
Oakland, CA
510-788-4089
Email: info@25thstreetrecording.com
Web: 25thstreetrecording.com/
Basic Rate: Contact for pricing info

2200 STUDIOS - SAUSALITO

Historic, Inspired, Vibey
2200 Bridgeway
Sausalito, CA 94965
415-729-9327
Email: info@2200studios.com
Web: 2200studios.com
Description: Full-Service Studio located in the Bay Area bohemian enclave of Sausalito at the former Record Plant & Plant Studios recording facility. Notable Projects: Fleetwood Mac (Rumours), Prince, Metallica, Grateful Dead (Wake of the Flood), Heart, Santana (Supernatural), Rick James, Huey Lewis, Journey, Sly Stone, Aretha Franklin, John Fogerty, and many more.
Format: digital and analog
Basic Rate: Call for info

AAA CAZADOR RECORDING

OF HOLLYWOOD
West Hollywood, CA
323-655-0615
Email: jimmy@jimmyhunter.com
Web: jimmyhunter.com
Basic Rate: negotiable/call and we can discuss

AB AUDIO VISUAL

3703 Albury Ave.
Long Beach, CA 90808
877-ABAUDIO (222-8346),
562-429-1042
Email: abaudio01@icloud.com
Web: facebook.com/abaudiouvisual01
Contact: President, Arlan Boll
Basic Rate: work with all budgets

ABET MEDIA

411 E. Huntington Dr., Ste. 107-372
Arcadia, CA 91006

626-303-4114
Email: info@abetmedia.com
Web: abetmedia.com
Contact: Aeron K. Nersoya

AUDIO MECHANICS

1200 W. Magnolia Blvd.
Burbank, CA 91506
818-846-5525
Web: audiomechanics.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

AUDIOVISTA

Los Altos, CA
650-428-1854
Email: info@audiovista.com
Contact: Jim LaForest

ARDENT AUDIO PRODUCTIONS

22122 S. Vermont Ave., Unit "E"
Torrance, CA 90502
310-782-0125
Email: rwenzelaap@aol.com
Web: ardentaudioproductions.com

BAKERY MASTERING STUDIO

c/o Sony Pictures, Thalberg E
10202 W. Washington Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90232
310-736-6661
Email: booking@thebakeryla.com
Web: thebakeryla

BEN BERNSTEIN MUSIC

Oakland, CA
Email: info@benbernsteinmusic.com
Web: benbernsteinmusic.com
Contact: Ben Bernstein
Basic Rate: \$50/Song

BERNIE BECKER MASTERING

626-782-5703
Email: hello@beckermastering.com
Web: beckermastering.com
Basic Rate: Please email for information

BERNIE GRUNDMAN MASTERING

1640 N. Gower St.
Hollywood, CA 90028
323-465-6264
Email: jack@bgmastering.com
Web: berniegrundmanmastering.com
Contact: Bernie Grundman, Mike Bozzi, Chris Bellman, Patricia Sullivan, Scott Sedillo
Basic Rate: please call for info

BIG CITY RECORDING STUDIOS

17021 Chatsworth St.
Granada Hills, CA 91344
818-366-0995
Email: paul@bigcityrecording.com
Web: bigcityrecording.com
Contact: Paul Tavenner
Basic Rate: please call or see web

BIG SURPRISE MUSIC

16161 Ventura Blvd Ste C PMB 522
Encino, CA 91436
818-613-3984
Email: info@carmengrillo.com
Web: facebook.com/grilloccarmen
Contact: Carmen Grillo
Basic Rate: call for rates

BLUE OAK MASTERING

5717 Figueroa St.
LA, CA
Email: yukon@blueoakmastering.com
Web: blueoakmastering.com

Basic Rate: call for rates

CHARLES LAURENCE PRODUCTIONS

Northridge, CA
818-368-4962
Email: clpstudio@gmail.com
Web: recordingstudio.com/businesses/
united-states/california/northridge/studios/
charles-laurence-productions
Contact: Charles Laurence
Basic Rate: call for info

CLEARLAKE RECORDING STUDIOS and FEVER RECORDING

10520 Burbank Blvd.
North Hollywood, CA 91601
818-762-0707
Email: contact@clearlakerecording.com
Web: clearlakerecordingstudios.com, fever-
recording.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

COAST MASTERING

1140 The Alameda
Berkeley, CA 94707
510-984-0554
Email: mastering@coastmastering.com
Web: coastmastering.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

DBU RANCH RECORDING

15448 Sierra Grande Rd.
Valley Center, CA 92082
310-413-0845
Email: dusk@yahoo.com, dbunumber1@
gmail.com
Web: dburanchrecorders.com

DENOISE STUDIOS

Web: 1050 Murray St.
Berkeley, CA 94710
510-653-3838
Email: sales@denoise.com, info@denoise.
com
Web: denoise.com
Contact: Albert Benichou
Basic Rate: please call for info

DIAMOND DREAMS MUSIC PRODUCTIONS

North O.C., Carbon Canyon 91709
909-393-6120
Email: diamonddreamsmusic@yahoo.com
Web: facebook.com/diamonddreamsmusic
Contact: Raphael De Giorgio
Basic Rate: please call for info, varies from
project to project

DINO M 4 RECORDING/ MASTERING STUDIO

Torrance, CA
(10 minutes South of LAX)
424-800-1394, 310-782-1440
Email: dinom4@aol.com
Web: facebook.com/dinom4recording
Contact: Dino Maddalone

DNA MASTERING

19528 Ventura Blvd., Ste. 315
Tarzana, CA 91356
818-992-4034
Email: info@dnamastering.com
Web: dnamastering.com
Contact: David Donnelly,
Perry Cunningham
Basic Rate: special rate for Indie and un-
signed artists

ELYSIAN MASTERS

Audio Mastering: Lacquer Cutting

2797 E Foothill Blvd. #120
Pasadena, CA. 91107
323-839-6283
Email: info@elysianmasters.com
Web: elysianmasters.com,
IG: @elysianmasters

EVREN GÖKNAR MASTERING
San Fernando, CA 91340
323-841-1073
Email: evren.goknar@gmail.com
Web: egmastering.com
Web2: soundbetter.com/profiles/423543-evren-goknar
Contact: Evren Gökna

EZEE STUDIOS
21550 Oxnard St., Ste. 990
Woodland Hills, CA 91367
818-444-4744
Email: brian@ezeestudios.com
Web: ezeestudios.com
Contact: Brian Zamorano
Basic Rate: please see web or call

Additional location:
75 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, NY 10019
212-275-2160
Email: James@ezeestudios.com
Contact: James Winner

GEZA X RECORDS
310-601-8707
Web: gezaxrecords.com
Email: gezaxrecords@gmail.com
Services: Mixing, Mastering, Vinyl Pressing, Video Production
Contact: Geza X, Larva X
Basic Rate: See Website
Indie Specialist!
Package Deals Available

GOLDEN MASTERING
Newbury Business Park
3541 Old Conejo Road #104
Camarillo, CA 91320
805-376-0548
Email: diane@goldenmastering.com
Web: goldenmastering.com
Contact: April Golden
Format: digital and analog
Basic Rate: please call for info

GROOVEWORKS
5536 Atlantic Ave.
Long Beach, CA 90805
310-403-5104
Email: info@grooveworksstudios.com
Web: grooveworksstudios.com
Contact: studio manager
Basic Rate: please call for info

HANS DEKLINE MASTERING
Los Angeles, CA
310-621-1896
Email: hdekline@gmail.com
Web: hansdeklinemastering.com
Contact: Hans DeKline
Basic Rate: call or check our website

HOWIE WEINBERG MASTERING STUDIO
8331 Lookout Mountain Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90046
917-455-1570
Email: howie@howieweinbergmastering.com,
will@howieweinbergmastering.com
Web: howieweinbergmastering.com
Basic Rate: rates upon request

HYDE ST. STUDIOS
245 Hyde St.
San Francisco, CA 94102
415-441-8934
Email: info@hydestreet.com
Web: hydestreet.com
Basic Rate: please call or see web

IMPERIAL MEDIA SERVICES
3202 Pennsylvania Ave.
Santa Monica, CA 90404

310-396-2008
Email: sales@imperialmedia.com
Web: imperialmedia.com
Services: Retail ready CD, DVD and Blu-ray packages ship within 24-48 Hour

JOE GASTWIRT MASTERING
4750 Rhapsody Dr.
Oak Park, CA 91377
310-444-9904
Email: joe@gastwirtmastering.com
Web: gastwirtmastering.com
Contact: Joe Gastwirt
Basic Rate: please see web or call

KEN LEE MASTERING
3060 El Cerrito Plaza No. 542
El Cerrito, CA
510-428-9276
Email: kenleemastering@me.com
Web: facebook.com/kenleemastering.studio
Basic Rate: please email

KINGSIZE SOUNDLABS
Los Angeles, CA
323-533-0022
Email: ronna@kingsizesoundlabs.com
Web: kingsizesoundlabs.com
Basic Rate: call for more info

LOADED MASTERING
North Hollywood, CA
818-830-8501
Email: contact@loadedmastering.com
Web: loadedmastering.com
Contact: Dylan Torres
Basic Rate: Contact for rates

LURSSSEN MASTERING
4109 W Burbank Blvd.
Burbank, CA 91505
323-924-7193
Email: jamie@lurssenmastering.com
Web: lurssenmastering.com
Contact: Jamie Fratta Peters, Engineer

MAGIC GARDEN MASTERING
Los Angeles, CA
614-620-4567
Email: brian@magicgardenmastering.com
Web: magicgardenmastering.com
Contact: Brian Lucey

MAMBO SOUND & RECORDING
2200 W. Esther
Long Beach, CA 90813
562-432-9676
Email: steve@mambosound.net
Web: mambosoundandrecording.com
Contact: Steve McNeil
Basic Rate: please call for info

MAOR APPELBAUM MASTERING
"Sounds With Impact"
Woodland Hills, CA
818-564-9276
Email: mappelbaum@gmail.com
Web: maorappelbaum.com
Contact: Maor Appelbaum
Clients: Faith No More, Yes, Meatloaf, Dream Theater, The Kooks, Matisyahu, Lupe Fiasco, Eric Gales, Daneil Powter, Walter Trout, Gilby Clarke, Abbaht III Nino, Josh Levi, Starset, Sepultura, Rob Halford, Yngwie Malmsteen, Lita Ford, Fates Warning, William Shatner, Dokken, Pepper, Treponem Pal, Annihilator, Lee Aaron, Robin Beck, Sabaton, Candlemass, HorrorPops, Green Carnation, Nekromantix, Hillbilly Herald, Treponem Pal, Billy Sherwood, Adrenaline Mob

MARC DESISTO / MIX LA STUDIO D
Recording Engineer, Mixing & Mastering
Grammy Nominated for Melissa Etheridge
Los Angeles, CA
818-259-4235
Email: marcdesistoaudio@gmail.com
Web: marcdesistoaudio.com
Notable Projects: Dwight Yoakam, Will Hoge, Tommy Emmanuel, Melissa Etheridge, U2, Chris Isaak, King Leg, Michelle Branch

MARCUSSEN MASTERING
5632 Hollywood Blvd
Hollywood, CA 90028
323-463-5300
Email: office@marcussenmastering.com
Web: marcussenmastering.com/index2.html
Basic Rates: please call for info

MARSH MASTERING
Los Angeles, CA
310-598-6038 Fax 310-598-5685
Email: marsh@marshmastering.com
Web: marshmastering.com
Contact: Stephen or Fernando
Basic Rate: flat rates for unattended sessions, hourly rates for attended sessions

MASTER GROOVE STUDIOS
Northridge, CA
Nashville, TN
818-830-3822, 615-562-5329
Email: info@mastergroovestudios.com
Web: facebook.com/mastergroovestudios
Contact: Dave Morse
Basic Rate: please call for info, reasonable rates.

MAURICE GAINEN PRODUCTIONS
4470 Sunset Blvd., Ste. 177
Hollywood, CA 90027
323-662-3642 Studio
323-376-2834 Cell
Email: info@mauricegainen.com
Web: mauricegainen.com
Basic Rate: please call for info
Credits: Starbucks (185 compilations), Disney, EMI, UNI, Warner, Sony, Rafael Moreira, Alex Skolnick, Andy McKee, The Hues Corp ("Rock The Boat"), Mighty Mo Rodgers, Orchestre Surreal, Angel Town Combo, TriTone Asylum, Little Willie G, Spoon, Rita Coolidge.

MELROSE MASTERING
5254 Melrose Ave.
Hollywood, California 90038
818-216-5409
Email: melroserecordingsstudios@gmail.com
Web: facebook.com/melrosemastering
Basic Rate: please call for info

Additional location
121 S. Palm Canyon Drive
Palm Springs, CA. 92262

NEATO MASTERING
313-580-6660
Nashville, TN.
Email: piper@neatomastering.com
Piper Payne
Email: colby@neatomastering.com
Colby Gustafson
Web: neatomastering.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

THE OC RECORDING COMPANY
3100 W. Warner Ave., Ste. 7
Santa Ana, CA 92704
323-244-9794
Email: info@ocrecording.com
Web: ocrecording.com
Contact: Asaf Fulk
Credits: Universal Pictures, Disney, ESPN, LA Clippers, Casio, Kendrick Lamar, Platinum & Grammy Artists
Gear: Pro Tools HD 11, Neve 1073, Sony C-800G, Neumann, Aurora, Avalon, Lynx, Dangerous, Focal, SSL

OASIS MASTERING
4109 W. Burbank Blvd.
Burbank, CA 91505
818-567-0500
Email: gene@oasismastering.com
Web: oasismastering.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

PEN STATION STUDIOS
Mixing and Mastering Services
1809 Olympic Blvd
Santa Monica, CA 90404
424-238-8800

Email: info@penstation.la
Web: penstation.la
Basic Rate: \$150 per hour unattended, \$250 per hour attended.
Credits: Babyface Ray, Est Gee, Lil Poppa, Stunna 4 Vegas, Yo Gotti, Black Label Society, Lebra Jolie, Rob49

PHUTURETRAX
Redondo Beach, CA
323-523-7499
Email: don@phuturetrax.com
Web: phuturetrax.com
Contact: Don Corrieri
PRAIRIE SUN
Box 7084
1039 Madrone Ave.
Cotati, CA 94931
707-795-7011
Email: info@prairiesun.com
Web: prairiesun.com
Contact: studio manager
Basic Rate: please call for info

PRODUCTION COMPANY
RECORDING, MASTERING & REHEARSAL
STUDIO, THE
673 Valley Dr.
Hermosa Beach, CA 90254
310-379-6477
Email: rockzionrecords@rockzion.com
Web: rockzion.com/productionco.html
Format: 2-inch Ampex 16 track and Trident Mixing Console, Pro Tools and Analog Mastering
Basic Rate: \$60 per hour Digital Recording / \$75 an hour Analog Mastering

PRIVATE ISLAND TRAX
1882 S. Cochran Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90019
323-856-8729
Email: info@privateislandtrax.com
Web: privateislandaudio.net/
Basic Rate: please call for rates

PROFESSIONAL MUSICIAN'S
LOCAL 47
3220 Winona Ave.
Burbank, CA 91504
323-462-2161
Web: afm47.org/press
Contact: Amie Moore
Basic Rate: please call for info

PYRAM-AXIS DIGITAL
Redondo Beach, CA
310-869-8650
Email: music@pyramaxis.com
Web: pyramaxis.com
Contact: Jim D.
Services: Virtual Mastering, Streaming Media, Distribution
Basic Rate: Please call or email for info

RESOLUTION MASTERING
Sherman Oaks, CA
818-481-7064
Email: info@resolutionmastering.com
Web: resolutionmastering.com
Contact: Ron Boustead
Base Rate: \$100/song

ROME PALERMO
Grammy Nominated Producer | Mix & Mastering Engineer
Web: instagram.com/romesempire/?hl=en,
instagram.com/romepalermo/?locale=French
Email: romesempire@gmail.com

RPD STUDIOS
1842 Burleson Ave.
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360
805-496-2585
Email: rpdstudios@roadrunner.com
Contact: Randy
Basic Rate: please call for info

SILENT ZOO STUDIOS
Glendale, CA
818-484-5222

Email: contact@silentzoostudios.com
Web: silentzoostudios.com
Rates: Email/Call for rates

SONIC LODGE STUDIOS

Contact: Kenji Nakai
 (Mixer / Engineer / Producer / Educator / Author)
 323-810-2280
 Los Angeles, CA 90068
Email: mixkenji@gmail.com
Notable Projects: Tom Petty, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Scorpions, Celine Dion, Boz Scaggs, Bill Champlin, Final Fantasy IX, Mario Kart 8

SONIC VISION MASTERING & AUDIO PRODUCTION SERVICES

818-269-7087
Web: sonicvisionmastering.com
Email: mike@sonicvisionmastering.com
Contact: Mike Milchner
Basic Rate: please call/check website for info

SONORA RECORDERS

3222 W Los Feliz Blvd,
 Los Angeles, California 90039
 213-841-0712
Web: facebook.com/richardbarronmusic
Email: richardbarronmusic@gmail.com
Contact: Richard
Basic Rate: please call for information.
Format: mixing, mastering & production

SOUND AFFAIR

2727 S. Croddy Way, Unit G
 PO BOX 20917
 Santa Ana, CA 92704
 714-540-0063
Email: ron@soundaffairltd.com
Web: soundaffairmastering.com
Contact: Ron or Andree
Basic Rate: please see web for info

STUDIO CITY SOUND

4412 Whitsett Ave.
 Studio City, CA 91604
 818-505-9368
Email: booking@studiocitysound.com
Web: studiocitysound.com
Contact: studio manager
Basic Rate: please call for info

THETA SOUND STUDIO

1309 W Riverside Dr.
 Burbank, CA 91506
 818-955-5888
Email: randy@thetasound.com
Web: thetasound.com
Contact: Randy or Cyndie Tobin
Basic Rate: please call for info

TIME ART STUDIO

Studio City, CA
 818-980-2840
Email: darlene@darlenekoldenhoven.com
Web: darlenekoldenhoven.com/timeart
Contact: Darlene
Basic Rate: please call for info

TOMCAT ON THE PROWL PRODUCTIONS

Canoga Park, CA 91304
 818-943-6059
Email: studio@tomcatontheprowl.com
Web: tomcatontheprowl.com
Contact: Thomas Hornig
Basic Rate: visit website for more info

VENETO WEST MASTERING

PO Box 6363
 Pine Mountain Club, CA 93222
 310-200-9010
Email: rcm@venetowest.com
Web: venetowest.com/mastering
Contact: Ronan Chris Murphy
Basic Rate: Please contact for rates

WESTLAKE RECORDING

7265 Santa Monica Blvd.
 West Hollywood, CA 90046
 323-851-9800

Email: bookings@thelakestudios.com
Web: thelakestudios.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

WOODRUM PRODUCTIONS

Burbank, CA
 818-848-3393, 669-323-8532
Email: michael@woodrumproductions.com
Web: woodrumproductions.com
Contact: Michael Woodrum
Basic Rate: please call for info

ZENMASTERING

P.O. Box 231097
 Encinitas, CA 92023
 858-231-1541
Web: zenmastering.com
Contact: Paul Abbott

COLORADO

1116 STUDIOS LLC

1753 S 8th St
 Colorado Springs, CO 80905
 419-704-8253
Email: misterg@1116studios.com
Web: 1116studios.com, facebook.com/1116studios
Contact: John "Mister G", Office Manager
Basic Rate: \$60/track for mastering; \$200/track for mixing; \$45/hr. for tracking

AIRSHOW MASTERING

Boulder, CO 80301
 P.O. Box 17632
 303-247-9035
Email: studio@airshowmastering.com
Web: airshowmastering.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

AUDIO PARK RECORDING & MASTERING

11919 I 70 Frontage Rd. N.
 Wheat Ridge, CO
 303-456-6122
Email: audioparkrecording@gmail.com
Web: facebook.com/audioparkrecording-studio
Basic Rate: please call for info

COLORADO SOUND STUDIOS

3100 W. 71st Ave.
 Westminster, CO 80030
 303-430-8811
Email: colosnd@coloradosound.com
Web: coloradosound.com
Basic Rate: please call or see website

QUAM AUDIO PRODUCTIONS

Boulder, CO
 720-644-9899
Email: info@quamaudio.com
Web: quamaudio.com
Contact: Michael Quam
Basic Rate: please call for info

DELAWARE

JAMLAND STUDIO

2326 Empire Dr.
 Wilmington, DE 19810
 302-475-0204
Email: music@jamlandstudio.com
Web: jamlandstudio.com

OCCUPY STUDIO

170 East Main Street
 Newark, DE 19711
 302-223-4441
Email: record@occupystudio.com
Web: occupystudio.com

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

LISTEN VISION LLC

2622 Georgia Ave. NW
 Washington, D.C. 20001
 202-332-8494
Email: info@listenvision.com

Web: listenvision.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

FLORIDA

BLACK DOG MASTERING STUDIO

3837 Northdale Blvd, Suite 271
 Tampa, FL 33624
 813-434-1483
Email: blackdogmastering@gmail.com
Web: blackdogmastering.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

FULLERSOUND INC.

3551 S.W. 116th Ave.
 Fort Lauderdale, FL
 305-556-5537
Email: info@fullersound.com
Web: fullersound.com
Basic Rate: please call for rates

NOISEMATCH STUDIOS

4306 NW 2nd Ave
 Miami, FL 33127
 786-796-7980, 800-609-4137
Email: info@noisematch.com
Web: noisematchstudios.com
Basic Rate: Call for info

UPCOMING STUDIO, INC.

601 W. Oakland Park Blvd., Ste. 13
 Wilton Manors, FL 33311-0913
 954-530-4710
Email: studioinfo@upcomingstudio.com
Web: upcomingstudio.com

GEORGIA

B CHILL MUSIC

17350 State Highway 249
 Ste. #220, #28843
 Houston, GA 77064
 678-660-8744
Email: bchillmusic@gmail.com
Web: bchillmusic.com

COS MASTERING

800 E. Ave., NE
 Atlanta, GA 30312
 404-524-7757
Contact: Larry Antony
Email: larry@cosmastering.com
Web: cosmastering.com

SING MASTERING

781 Wheeler St. N.W.
 Studio 8
 Atlanta, GA 30318
 404-827-8503
Email: info@singmastering.com, studio@singmastering.com
Web: singmastering.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

HAWAII

ISLAND SOUND STUDIOS

377 Keahole St.,
 Ste. D-03
 Honolulu, HI 96825
 888-458-2312
Email: aloha@islandsoundstudios.com
Contact: Kyle Spicer
Web: islandsoundstudios.com
Format: 2 SSL9000J, Digital/Analog

LAVA TRACKS RECORDING

P.O. Box 6564
 Kamuela, Big Island, HI 96743
 808-885-6558
Email: cb@lavatracks.com, studioinfo@lavatracks.com
Web: lavatracks.com, facebook.com/lavatracks
Contact: Charles Michael Brotman, Grammy Award winner
Basic Rate: call or check our website for contact info.

SEASIDE RECORDING

1320 W. Hiahia Pl.,
 Wailuku, Maui, HI
 808-280-0722
Email: joel@joelkatxmaui.com
Web: seasiderecording.com,
 joelkatzmaui.com
Contact: Joel Katz
Basic Rate: reasonable rates by hour/week/job

IDAHO

COTTONWOOD STUDIOS

4436 E. 49th S
 Ammon, ID 83406
 208-757-7328
Email: dudleys100@gmail.com
Web: cottonwoodstudios.net

DASH MASTERING STUDIO

Boise, ID
 208-639-1282
Email: dashmastering@gmail.com
Web: dashmastering.com

TONIC ROOM, THE

1509 S. Robert St., Ste. 103
 Boise, ID 83705
 208-338-8433
Email: info@tonicroomstudios.com,
 mastering@tonicroomstudios.com
Web: tonicroomstudios.com
Basic Rate: see web for info

ILLINOIS

BOILER ROOM, THE

1440 N. Western Ave.
 Chicago, IL 60622
 773-525-8551
Email: collin@brmastering.com
Web: brmastering.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

CHICAGO MASTERING SERVICE

3052 W Carroll Ave.
 Chicago, IL 60612
 773-265-1733
Email: info@chicagomasteringservice.com
Web: chicagomasteringservice.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

DON GRIFFIN MASTERING AND MIXING STUDIO VMR

5818 S. Archer Road
 Summit, IL 60501
 708-267-2198, 312-286-5018
Email: don@studiovmr.com
Web: studiovmr.com

GRAVITY STUDIOS

2250 W. North Ave.
 Chicago, IL 60647
 773-862-1880
Email: info@gravitystudios.com
Web: gravitystudios.com
Basic Rate: Call for more info

MASSIVE MASTERING

P.O. Box 68143
 Schaumburg, IL 60168
 630-237-4393
Email: master@massivemastering.com
Web: massivemastering.com
Contact: John Scrip
Basic Rate: hourly/project rates on web

INDIANA

AZMYTH RECORDING

5130 Brouse Ave.
 Indianapolis, IN. 46205
 317-281-3670
Email: info@azmythrecording.com
Web: azmythrecording.com

THE ROUND TABLE

6345 Carrollton Ave
 Indianapolis, IN 46220

317-981-5351
Email: booking@thertrc.com
Web: thertrc.com

MAHERN AUDIO
 2051 W Vernal Pike
 Bloomington, IN. 47404
 812-320-2437
Email: info@mahernaudio.com
Web: mahernaudio.com

IOWA

CATAMOUNT RECORDING, INC.
 5737 Westminster Dr.
 Cedar Falls, IA 50613
 319-268-1011
Email: catamount@cfu.net
Web: facebook.com/catamountrecording
Contact: Kitty Tatman
Basic Rate: please see web for info

MAINE

AYAN MASTERING
 45 Casco St.
 Portland, ME 04101
Web: ayanmastering.com

BELLWETHER MASTERING
 45 Casco Street Ste. 200
 Portland, ME 04101
 619-228-6941
Email: joe@bellwethermastering.com
Contact: Joe Goodwin
Basic rates: varies, see website

PATRICK KEANE AUDIO MASTERING
 103 Hanover St.
 Portland, ME
 207-807-5379
Web: patkeanemastering.com

MARYLAND

ABOVE GROUND STUDIOS
 3200 Annetta Ave.
 Baltimore, MD 21213
 443-255-5016
Email: abovegroundstudios@gmail.com
Web: abovegroundstudios.com
Basic Rate: please call/email for info
Credits: Tate Kobang, Lil Mo, The Beatnuts, DITC, Moneybagg Yo
Specialization: Mastering for iTunes and vinyl, radio ready mastering

BLUE ROOM PRODUCTIONS
 7718 Bradley Blvd.
 Bethesda, MD 20817
 240-505-5544
Email: info@blueroommusicstudio.com
Web: blueroommusicstudio.com

HIT AND RUN RECORDING
 18704 Muncaster Rd.
 Rockville, MD 20855
 301-948-6715
Email: info@hitandruncording.com
Web: hitandruncording.com
Contact: Steve Carr
Basic Rate: please call for info

LION AND FOX RECORDING STUDIOS
 9517 Baltimore Ave.
 College Park, MD 20740
 301-982-4431
Email: mike@lionfox.com
Web: lionfox.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

OMEGA RECORDING STUDIOS
 12712 Rock Creek Mill Rd., Ste. 14A
 Rockville, MD 20852
 301-230-9100
Email: admissions@omegastudios.com, shannon@omegastudios.com
Web: omegastudios.com
Basic Rate: Call for rates.

TONAL PARK
 7014-C Westmoreland Ave.
 Takoma Park, MD. 20912
 301-891-9035
Email: contact@tonalpark.com
Web: tonalpark.com
Basic Rate: see web for info

MASSACHUSETTS

M WORKS MASTERING
 1 Fitchburg St,
 Somerville, MA 02143
 617-577-0089
Email: studio@m-works.com
Web: facebook.com/mworksmastering/, m-works.com
Basic Rate: reasonable rates

PEERLESS MASTERING
 Physical Address:
 161 N. St.
 Newtonville, MA 02460
 Mail Address:
 1089 Commonwealth Avenue #322
 Boston, MA 02215
 617-527-2200
Email: info@peerlessmastering.com
Web: peerlessmastering.com
Contact: Jeff
Basic Rate: please call for info

PILOT RECORDING STUDIOS
 1073 Main St.
 Housatonic, MA 01236
 413-274-1073
Email: info@pilotrecording.com
Web: pilotrecording.com
Contact: Will Schillinger
Basic Rate: please email for info

SOUNDMIRROR, INC.
 16 Hurd St.
 Lowell, MA 01852
 617-522-1412
Email: info@soundmirror.com
Web: soundmirror.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

MICHIGAN

BROADSIDE PRODUCTIONS
 901 S. Westnedge Ave.
 Kalamazoo, MI 49008
 269-720-2068
Web: broadsideproductions.com
Contact: Mike Roche
Basic Rate: by appointment only. Call for rates

STUDIO A RECORDING
 313-561-7489
Email: eric@studioarecording.com
Web: studioarecording.com
Contact: Eric Morgeson
 **No degree, Avid Pro Tools certificate

THIRD MAN MASTERING
 441 W. Canfield
 Detroit, MI 48201
 313-209-5212
Contact: Bill Skibbe, Warren Defever
Email: mastering@thirdmanrecords.com
Web: thirdmanmastering.com

MINNESOTA

FLOWERS STUDIO
 Mailing Address (Not Physical):
 2801 Hennepin Ave. #161
 Minneapolis, MN 55408
 612-567-1219, 612-327-8544
Email: info@flowersstudio.com, kjaudio75@gmail.com, flowersstudioplms@gmail.com
Web: flowersstudio.com

OMG STUDIOS
 550 Vandalia St. Ste. #220
 Saint Paul, MN 55114

612-238-5300, 612-238-5303 (vm Studio B)
Web: omgmediasolutions.com, kzmohd.com
Email: monique@omgmediasolutions.com
Contact: Monique Linder, Owner
Studio Features: OMG Studios is located in St. Paul's Creative Enterprise Zone – a thriving district of creativity and innovation (just off I-94/Vandalia). OMG Studios, the only Black-woman-owned space of its kind in Minnesota, headquarters its own innovations, features 3,200 square feet of studio production space, including: Podcast Studio, Live Performance Lounge and rehearsal space ("Flyte Tyme Sound Lounge"), Recording Studio and Artist Green Room. OMG Studios is outfitted with state of-the-art technology, fiber-optics network, live event sound, and lighting. Our boutique space pays homage to Minnesota's very own, the late Prince Rogers Nelson, who I had the distinct honor of working with and my greatest source of inspiration, both creatively and spiritually to this day. Studio Gear List: bit.ly/4gyblCH Rates/Reservations: bit.ly/3T9C2Dc

RARE FORM MASTERING
 712 Ontario Ave. W. #200
 Minneapolis, MN 55403
 612-327-8750
Email: info@rareformmastering.com
Web: rareformmastering.com
Contact: Greg Reiersen
Basic Rate: please contact for info

SKYLAND STUDIOS
 7452 236th St. E
 Lakeville, MN 55044
Email: skyland@me.com, darren@skyland-studio.com
Web: skylandstudio.com

MISSISSIPPI

MALACO MUSIC GROUP
 3023 W. Northside Dr.
 Jackson, MS 39213
 P.O. Box 9287
 Jackson, MS 39286 - 9287
 601-982-4522, 800-272-7936
Email: malaco@malaco.com
Web: malaco.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

TAPROOT AUDIO DESIGN
 107 Marcie Dr.
 Long Beach, MS 39560
 108 Co Rd 411
 Oxford, MS 38655662-801-3273
Web: taprootaudio.com/
Email: jeffrey@taprootaudiodesign.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

MISSOURI

EMERALD DREAMS LAB
 11802 East 23rd St. S
 Independence, Missouri 64050 S
 816-226-6490, 816-527- 3282
Email: ls@emeralddreamslab.com or thahiphopmonk@gmail.com
Web: dreamlabkc.com
Notable Projects: Joey Cool, Holli, LS810, Shawn John, Tha Gooniez, D Twist Yung Cat, Soopa Mooni, Wahyo
Contact: Julius Hitchche

ENDEAVOR STUDIO
 211 South College St
 Arcadia, MO.
 573-944-4449
Email: greggill45@gmail.com
Web: endeavorav.com

GFM RECORDING STUDIOS
 1118 W Main St.
 Blue Springs, MO. 64015
 816-598-8810
Email: contact@gfmrecording.com
Web: gfmrecording.com

STUDIO 2100
 2100 N. National Ave
 Springfield, MO 65803
 417-894-0692
Email: jeff@studio2100.com
Web: studio2100.com
Contact: Jeff Smith
Basic Rate: please call for info

NEBRASKA

FOCUS MASTERING
 6866 Willow St.
 Omaha, NE. 68152
 402-915-0557
Email: doug@focusmastering.com
Web: focusmastering.com

NEVADA

THE HIDEOUT RECORDING STUDIO
 14 Sunset Way Unit A
 Henderson, NV 89014
 702-445-7705
Web: hideoutlv.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

HIT TRACK RECORDING STUDIOS
 Las Vegas, NV
 702-481-1663
Email: tomparham@mac.com
Web: hittrackstudios.com

NEW HAMPSHIRE

CARDINAL MASTERING
 71 Lafayette Rd #2b
 Hampton Falls, NH 03844
 603-944-6710
Email: contact@cardinalmastering.com

CEDAR HOUSE SOUND & MASTERING
 P.O. Box 333
 North Sutton, NH 03260
 603-927-6363
Email: cedarhousesound@gmail.com
Web: cedarhousesound.com

JACOB'S WELL MASTERING, LLC
 79 East Wilder Rd.
 West Lebanon, NH 03784
 619-754-5050
Email: contact@jacobsowellmastering.com
Web: jacobsowellmastering.com

NEW JERSEY

ED LITTMAN MASTERING
 35 Harring Ct.
 North Haledon, NJ 07508
 201-824-7860
Email: littmuze@edlittmanmastering.com
Web: edlittmanmastering.com
Contact: Ed Littman
Basic Rate: available on website

HERB POWERS, JR.
 PM Mastering, Inc.
Email: pmmastering@mac.com
Web: pmmastering.com
Contact: Angie Powers
Masterclass: redbullmusicacademy.com/lectures/herb-powers

KNACK MASTERING
 Ringwood, NJ
 973-556-5749
Email: kimrosen@knackmastering.com
Web: knackmastering.com
Contact: Kim Rosen
Services: specializes in analog audio mastering for digital & vinyl formats, audio restoration and vinyl and tape transfers

THE SoundLAB AT DISC MAKERS
 7905 N Crescent Blvd.
 Pennsauken, NJ 08110
 800-468-9353

Email: info@discmakers.com
Web: discmakers.com/soundlab
Contact: Brian Lipski

STERLING SOUND
33 Hilliard Avenue
Edgewater, NJ 07020
212-604-9433
Email: mark.glaser@sterling-sound.com,
inquiries@sterling-sound.com
Web: sterling-sound.com
Basic Rate: please see web

Additional location:
805 Meridian Street
Nashville, TN. 37207

STORY BOOK SOUND
Maplewood, NJ
Email: info@storybooksound.com
Web: storybooksound.com
Contact: Scott Anthony, Rebecca Turner

NEW MEXICO

HIGH FIDELITY MASTERING
8100 Wyoming Blvd. N.E., Ste. 315
Albuquerque, NM 87113
505-459-6242
Email: andy@highfidelitymastering.com
Web: highfidelitymastering.com
Contact: Andy Rogulich
Basic Rate: please call for info

NEW YORK

BANG ZOOM MASTERING
P.O. Box 145
Orangeburg, NY 10962
845-445-4460
Email: bangzoomprod@gmail.com
Web: masteringzone.com
Contact: Steve Vavagiakis
Services: Analog and Digital Audio Mastering

BATTERY STUDIOS
(Sony Music Entertainment)
321 W 44th St., 10th Floor
New York, NY 10036
212 833-7373
Email: donna.kloepfer@batterystudios.com,
vanessa.gonzalez@batterystudios.com
Web: batterystudios.com

ELECTRIC KINGDOM STUDIOS
Hartsdale, NY 10530
800-933-1305
Email: info@electrickingdom.com
Web: electrickingdom.com

ENGINE ROOM AUDIO
42 Broadway, 22nd Fl.
New York, NY 10004
212-625-3467
Email: info@engineroomaudio.com
Web: engineroomaudio.com
Basic Rate: please call for info
JOE LAMBERT MASTERING
3 Marsala Ct
Cortlandt Manor, NY. 10567
914-737-2795
Email: joelambert@jmlsound.com
Web: joelambertmastering.com

KEVORKIAN MASTERING
77 Engert Ave, Brooklyn
NY, NY 11222
917-406-9147
Email: fkfk@aol.com
Web: kevorkianmastering.com
Contact: Fred Kevorkian, fkfk@aol.com; Larry
Lachmann, larry@kevorkianmastering.com

LODGE, THE
740 Broadway, Ste. 605
New York, NY 10003
212-353-3895
Email: info@thelodge.com

Web: thelodge.com, facebook.com/lodge-
mastering
Basic Rate: please call for info

MASTERDISK STUDIOS
1245 Park St. Suite #2A
Peekskill, NY 10566-4096
212-541-5022
Email: scott@masterdisk.com
Web: masterdisk.com
Contact : Scott Hull
Basic Rate: premium services, Indie mas-
tering
Services: Mastering for All formats (Vinyl, CD,
Streaming, iTunes, Video, Surround, HD), Vinyl
Disk Cutting Form HD Digital, Vinyl Disk Cut-
ting from Analog Tape, Direct to Disk Record-
ing, Restoration and archival of historic for-
mats. (Disk, Tape & Digital), Recording, Mixing
and Mastering, Mix evaluation and consulting

THE MASTERING PALACE
307 W. 121st St.
New York, NY 10027
212-665-2200
Email: mleedy@themasteringpalace.com
Web: themasteringpalace.com
Contact: Michael Leedy

PRECISION SOUND STUDIOS
100 W 80th St.
New York, NY 10024
Web: precisionsoundstudios.com
Email: booking@precisionsoundstudios.com

SKYLAB MUSIC PRODUCTIONS
37 W 37th St., 12th Floor
New York, NY 10018
212-789-8942
Email: info@skylab.com
Web: skylabmusic.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

THRESHOLD RECORDING STUDIOS NYC
517 W. 45th St.
New York, NY 10036
212-244-1871
Email: thresholdstudiosnyc@gmail.com
Web: thresholdstudios.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

TIMELESS MASTERING
361 Stagg St., Suite 401
Brooklyn, NY 11206
Email: info@timelessmastering.com
Web: timelessmastering.com

TRUTONE MASTERING LABS INC.
228 E. Route 59, #306
Nanuet, NY 10954
845-680-6490
Email: sales@trutonemastering.com
Web: trutonemastering.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

XTREAM AUDIO
East Amherst, NY
888-878-3292
Email: anthony@xtreamaudio.com, info@
xtreamaudio.com, audio@xtreamaudio.com,
Web: xtreamaudio.com
Contact: Anthony Casuccio
Basic Rate: call for customized quote

NORTH CAROLINA

BLUEFIELD MASTERING
1408 Fairway Ridge Dr.
Raleigh, NC 27606
919-859-0102
Email: info@bluefieldmastering.com
Web: bluefieldmastering.com
Contact: Jeff Carroll
Basic Rate: please call or Email

CATALYST RECORDING
Contact: Rob Tavaglione
Charlotte, NC
(704) 526-8400
Web: catalystrecording.com/
Email: rob@catalystrecording.com

Text: 704-526-8400 — during business hours
only 9 am to 6 pm
Basic Rate: please call or email

KITCHEN MASTERING
109 Brewer Ln., Ste. A
Carrboro, NC 27510
919-929-4494
Email: info@kitchenmastering.com
Web: kitchenmastering.com
Contact: Brent
Basic Rate: hourly and track rates available

STUDIO B MASTERING
821 Louise Ave.
Charlotte, NC 28204
704-372-9661
Email: dave@studiobmastering.com, joey@
studiobmastering.com
Web: studiobmastering.com
Contact: Dave Harris
Basic Rate: please call for info

OHIO

ACOUSTIK MUSIC, LTD.
511 W. College St.
Oberlin, OH 44074-1446
440-775-3681
Email: acoustikmusik@gmail.com
Web: acoustikmusik.com
Contact: Tom Bethel
Basic Rate: please call for info

CAULIFLOWER AUDIO
1305 W 80th St., Suite 104B
Cleveland, OH. 44102
440-539-5457
Email: info@caulifloweraudio.com
Web: caulifloweraudio.com

**THE DREAMCATCHERS RECORDING STU-
DIO**
7384 E Main St. Suite B
Reynoldsburg, OH
614-434-6012
Email: info@thedreamcatchers.studio

STARSOUND STUDIOS
10200 Royalton Rd. Ste 3
North Royalton, OH. 44133
216-374-8458
Email: starsoundstudioscleveland@gmail.
com
Web: starsoundstudios.com

OKLAHOMA

KL MASTERING
25 S. Oklahoma Ave
Oklahoma City, OK 73104
405-410-2706
Email: kevinlivelymastering@gmail.com
Web: kevinlivelymastering.com

VEUX STUDIOS
6729 Well Oak Cir
Oklahoma, OR 73127
323-486-3193
Email: booking@veuxstudios.com
Web: veuxstudios.com
Contact: James Conner

OREGON

CRAZY DAISY PRODUCTIONS
Beaverton, OR 97008
541-517-1458
Email: info@crazymastering.com
Web: crazymastering.com

FOSTER MASTERING
4711 S.E. 26th Ave.
Portland, OR 97202
503-222-9444
Email: ryan@fostermastering.com
Web: fostermastering.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

FUTURE DISC LLC
15851 N.W. Willis Rd.
McMinnville, OR 97128
213-361-0603
Email: steve@futuresystems.com
Web: futuresystems.com
Contact: Steve Hall
Basic Rate: please call for rates or more info

LIQUID MASTERING
1393 W 40th Ave,
Eugene, OR 97405
541-286-5434
Email: liquid@liquidmastering.com
Web: liquidmastering.com
Contact: Thaddeus Moore
Basic Rate: \$10/min of processed audio,
Stem Mastering, and Mixing available. Con-
tact for budget details. Any Style or Genre,
Film Audio, Podcasts, Forensic Recovery. 24
years experience in audio.

SPECIALIZED MASTERING
15438 S.W. 81st. Ave.
Portland, OR 97224
503-866-8383
Email: dana@specializedmastering.com
Web: specializedmastering.com
Contact: Dana White
Basic Rate: please call for info

PENNSYLVANIA

IMMERSIVE MUSIC MEDIA GROUP, LLC
1630 Manheim Pike, Suite 3A
Lancaster, PA 17601
717-621-2441
Email: info@imgstudios.com
Web: facebook.com/ImmersiveMMG/
Format: Digital, Dolby Atmos
Basic Rate: please call for info

MASTERING HOUSE INC., THE
Trythall Rd
Elverson, PA 19520
484-802-2624
Email: info@masteringhouse.com
Web: masteringhouse.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

SI STUDIOS
945 S. Main St.
Old Forge, PA 18518
570-457-0147
Email: tom@studios.com
Web: sistudios.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

TREELADY STUDIOS
1256 Franklin Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15221
412-816-0300
Email: info@treelady.com
Web: treelady.com
Basic Rate: please see web

RHODE ISLAND

STATIC PRODUCTIONS
46 Glenwood Dr.
North Kingstown, RI 02852
401-267-8236
Email: record@staticproductions.com
Web: staticproductions.com
Basic Rate: please call or see web

SOUTH CAROLINA

SIT N SPIN STUDIOS
10 Michael Dr.
Greenville, SC 29611
864-586-0557, 864-414-4855
Email: sitnspinstudios@gmail.com
Web: sitnspinstudios.com
Contact: Matt Morgan

STRAWBERRY SKYS RECORDING STUDIOS
1706 Platt Springs Rd.
West Columbia, SC 29169

803-794-9300
Email: info@strawberryskys.com
Web: strawberryskys.com
Basic Rate: call for rates

VLADO MELLER MASTERING
c/o Truphonic Studios
 816B Saint Andrews Blvd.
 Charleston, SC 29407
 304-633-4296
Email: andy@vladomastering.com
 vlado@vladomastering.com
 info@vladomastering.com
Web: vladomastering.com, truphonicmastering.com
Contact: Andy Rivas, Vlado Meller

TENNESSEE

BLACK MATTER MASTERING
 601 Lemont Dr.
 Nashville, TN 37216
 615-424-6509
Email: dan@blackmattermastering.com
Web: blackmattermastering.com, facebook.com/bmmastering
Services: Mastering, lacquers, vinyl etching
Contact: Dan Emery
Basic Rates: Check Website for Rates

DAVE TOUGH PRODUCTIONS
 Nashville, TN
 615-554-6693
Email: dave@davetough.com, trehouston.info@gmail.com
Web: davetough.com
Contact: Dave
Basic Rate: \$75/hr - specializing in internet mastering

DIAMONDISC AUDIO
 8161 Highway 100, Suite 262
 Nashville, TN 37221
 615-662-6870 (voice only), 615-212-8410 (text only)
Email: info@diamondiscaudio.com
Web: diamondiscaudio.com
Contact: Doug Diamond
Basic Rate: Mastering Package 'D' - \$30/song

EUPHONIC MASTERS
 Arlington, TN
 901-266-6075
Email: info@euphonicmasters.com
Web: euphonicmasters.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

FOXWOOD MASTERING
 108 Foxwood Ln.
 Franklin, TN 37069
 615-297-3929
Email: info@foxwoodmastering.com
Web: foxwoodmastering.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

GEORGETOWN MASTERS AUDIO, LLC
 33 Music Sq. W., Ste. 108b
 Nashville, TN 37203 USA
 615-254-3233 Fax 615-254-3237
Web: georgetownmasters.com
Email: info@georgetownmasters.com
Basic Rate: please call or see web

INDEPENDENT MASTERING
 1312 16th Ave. S.
 Nashville, TN 37212
 615-425-0739
Email: eric@independentmastering.com
Web: independentmastering.com

MASTERFONICS
 28 Music Sq. E.
 Nashville, TN 37203
 615-720-2761, 615-585-1797
Email: tommy@masterfonics.com, jr@masterfonics.com
Web: masterfonics.com
Contact: Tommy Dorsey, Jonathan Russell
Basic Rate: please call for info

MAYFIELD MASTERING
 2825 Erica Pl.
 Nashville, TN 37204
 615-383-3708
Web: mayfieldmastering.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

STERLING SOUND
 805 Meridian Street
 Nashville, TN 37207
 212-604-9433
Email: inquiries@sterling-sound.com
Web: sterling-sound.com
Basic Rate: please see web

TRUE EAST MASTERING
 Nashville, TN
 (615) 785-1749
Web: trueeastmastering.com
Email: alex@trueeastmastering.com

WOLF MASTERING
 1024 16th Ave. S.
 Nashville, TN 37212
 615-351-1688
Web: facebook.com/wolfmastering
Email: wolfmastering@gmail.com
Contact: Erik Wolf
Basic Rate: \$85/hr. plus masters

TEXAS

AMBIENT DIGITAL
 Houston, TX
 888-808-DISC (3472)
Email: bob@ambientdigital.com
Web: ambientdigital.com
Contact: Bob Boyd
Basic Rate: please call for an estimate

DES MASTERING
 1409 S. Lamar St., Ste. 100
 Dallas, TX 75215
 214-428-8777
Email: george@desmastering.com
Web: desmastering.com
Basic Rate: see website

FORT WORTH SOUND
 306 S. Main St.
 Ft. Worth, TX 76104
 817-922-5444
Web: fortworthsound.com
Contact: Bart Rose
Basic Rate: please call for info
JO MUSIK
 Sunnyvale, TX 75182
 972-226-1265
Email: info@jomusik.com, joe@joemilton.com
Web: jomusik.com
Basic Rate: please call for info

MASTERPIECE MASTERING
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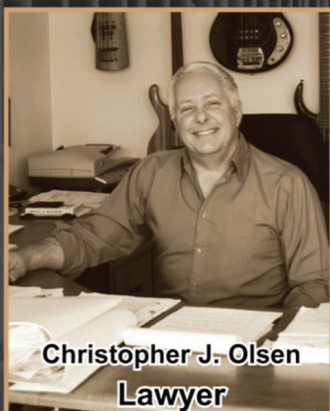
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TIPS FROM A DEATHROCK LIFER

We asked Scarlet's Remains drummer Tony Havoc to share advice for fellow musicians from his extensive experience as a member of multiple beloved LA deathrock acts. Havoc has been a fixture on the global deathrock scene for decades. Renowned for his powerful "tribal" drumming and striking, ghoulish image, he has also played for Voodoo Church, The Dirty Horror, and Fear Cult, among many others.

But Scarlet's Remains is Havoc's proudest achievement, having released two genre-classic albums in the 2000s, toured Europe, and recently reformed with a vibrant new lineup. With Havoc not only drumming but also being principal songwriter and de facto bandleader, the female-fronted quartet has been performing on the West Coast and in Mexico since earlier this year and is currently recording a new full-length.

Practice & Pump

Havoc originally aspired to be a guitarist, until his dad suggested, "Everybody plays guitar – why don't you get into the drums?" He fell in love with drumming and would frequently skip school to practice in the family home by day. He cites diverse influences including Stephen Perkins of Jane's Addiction, Wullie Buchan of The Exploited (especially on the *Horror Epics* album), and even Motley Crue's Tommy Lee.

"I like [Lee's] showmanship. I don't do any of that, but I appreciate it," Havoc explains. "I like being in the back and sitting behind cymbals – I'm not an upfront, limelight type."

These days, Havoc is restricted to keeping his chops up on a practice pad at home and the one night a week that Scarlet's Remains have at a Downtown LA practice space shared with multiple other bands. So, he takes another approach to maintaining his strength and stamina for the band's frenetic live shows.

"It's very good for a drummer to lift weights," he offers. "You don't need to be buffed and huge, but just to keep up the strength, because you don't get to play your instrument every day the way a guitarist or bassist can."

Do It Yourself

"There's a Minor Threat song that says '*Make do with what you have / Take what you can get*,' and that really stuck with me," Havoc recalls. "Because you *can* do it yourself. You don't need anybody else. If you've got someone with money backing you, it's a lot easier, but it can be done."

True to this ethos, Havoc has learned to approach venues and promoters with a "package" of three or four bands already lined



up, a particular night of the week in mind, and with an idea of the likely draw and the cover charge required for everyone to walk away happy. Upon first moving to L.A., he strolled into the famed Troubadour and did exactly that.

"When you approach a venue with a pre-made lineup, they don't have to do anything except open their doors," Havoc explains. "I think they appreciate that."

Adapt & Survive

Like most semi-pro drummers, Havoc seldom gets to use his own kit on stage. Typically, he's making do with a backlined kit provided by the venue, promoter, or one of the other bands on the bill. It's a reality that Havoc is amazingly sanguine about, once again leaning into his "make do with what you have" punk ethic.

"I've played with cracked cymbals and cracked heads – I've kind of just gotten used to whatever's thrown my way," he says. "It takes about three songs to get used to a 'foreign' kit, but everyone's warming up the first three songs, anyway."

Typically, Havoc will bring his own kick pedal, cymbals (which venues often don't supply), and

an extra rack tom. "I'm a kind of '80s style drummer; I like two high toms," he explains. "And the kits today usually just have one."

When Havoc does get to play his own kit, it's a Spaun set-up comprising a 22-inch kick, 12- and 13-inch rack toms, and a 16-inch floor tom ("I spend a lot of time on toms"). After years of choosing Zildjian cymbals, he now prefers Sabians simply for their sound. (Spaun Drums is a small Colorado-based company that manufactures all its products in the U.S.)

Genre Realities

Havoc's gateway to deathrock was the punk rock he first encountered as a teen, which has shaped his entire worldview and lifestyle ever since.

"I was raised by punk rock," he mulls. "All my ideals, all my thoughts, my emotions – everything was learned through punk." But there came a time when Havoc started encountering increasing racism, sexism, and homophobia in a punk scene that had been infiltrated by skinheads. Once he picked up a Christian Death record, he was sold on deathrock – an amalgam of punk, goth, and glam influences – as an adjacent alternative.

"In the deathrock scene, everybody was welcome. And I really, really like the idea behind that," Havoc recalls. "Deathrock just seemed very wide open and there was so much you could do with it. Punk rock started to seem a little in a box."

But, like any niche genre, deathrock is much more about passion than profit, and Havoc advises fellow subgenre musicians to be realistic about commercial aspirations. "If you're going to do pop music, I mean you're doing that strictly for the money. I get it," he says. "But when you do a genre like deathrock, you're doing it because it's the music that comes out of your soul and it's what you love to do."

Havoc describes L.A.'s deathrock scene as much smaller than it was during Scarlet's Remains' original 2000s run, meaning sparse local crowds and scant revenue. (By contrast, the band experienced sold-out pandemonium at a recent show in Mexico City). But although he's the band's sole original member and wrote the bulk of its existing material, he splits everything equally with his bandmates, who also contribute funds evenly when required.

"What I get out of it is just for my soul, my brain, and my heart. That's payment enough," Havoc concludes. "Being in a room with three other people, when the music's tight and everybody's on and it's connecting, that's a really magical feeling that you just can't get anywhere else."

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