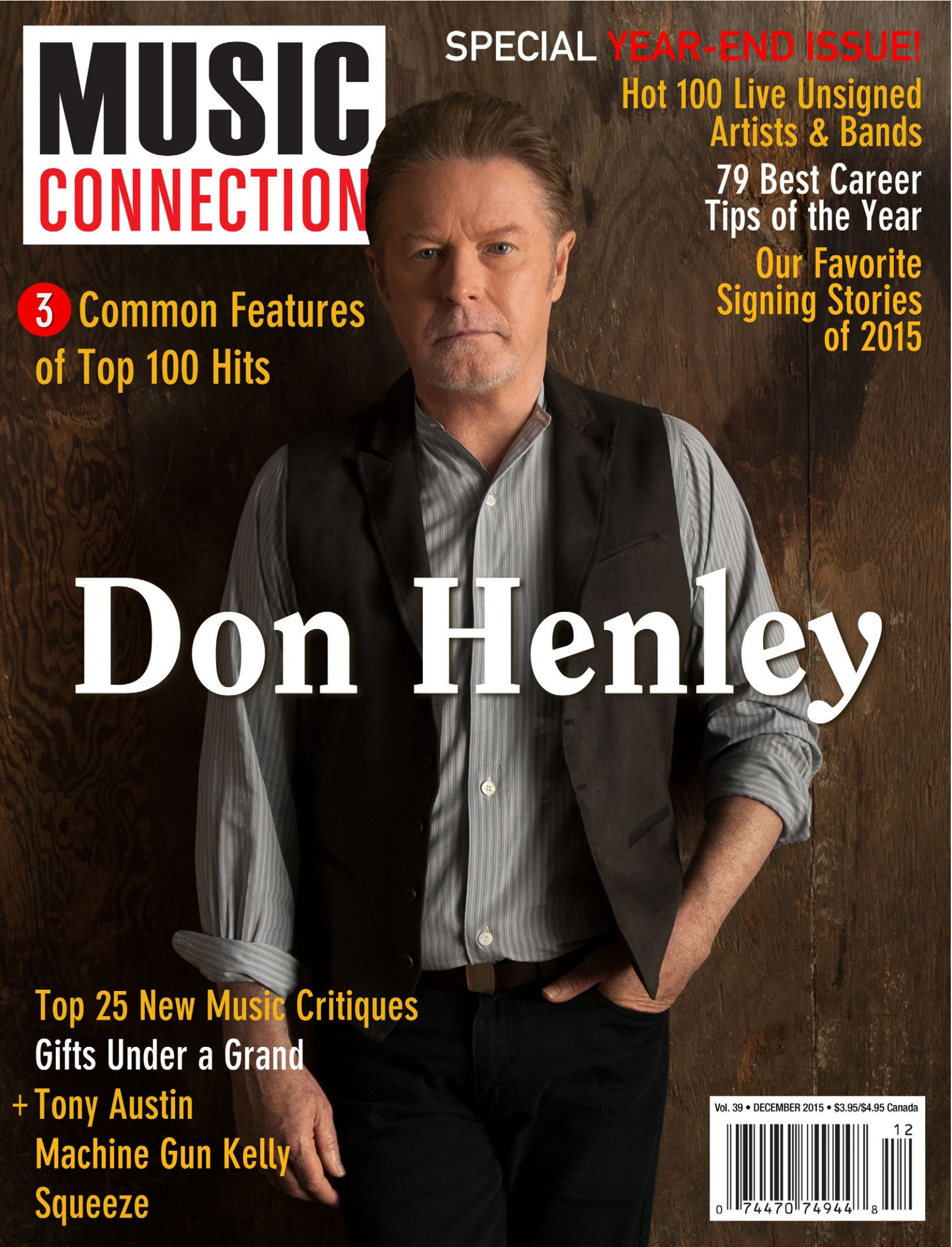

MUSIC
CONNECTION
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December 2015 • Anniversary Special Edition • Vol. 39 • No. 12



Don Henley

The Eagles legend talks about his songwriting process, voice maintenance regimen, his working relationship with producer (and former Tom Petty drummer) Stan Lynch and the guest singers he recruited for Cass County, his first solo venture in 15 years.

By Eric A. Harabadian

Photos: David McClister

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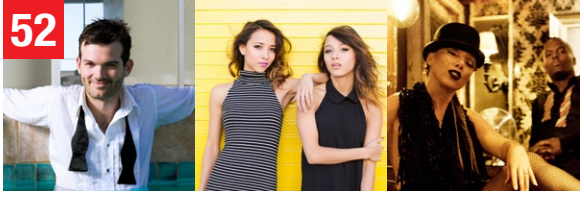
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RP STUDIOS

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Frustration Leads to a Whimsical Idea: When Ron Pak came to Los Angeles in the late '80s to attend the Musician's Institute, he was surprised and frustrated at the lack of quality, cost-efficient rehearsal facilities available for artists and bands seeking to develop their chops and hone their acts. In the mid-2000s, the drummer was rehearsing with his latest band in one of these places when the mother of his bass player casually suggested that Pak open his own facility.

In May 2007, what began as a whimsical idea reached fruition with the opening of his RP Studios in North Hollywood, a comfortable, functional facility that he says, is "a nice clean place, air conditioned and kept up. It's like a nice garage for musicians who don't have garages."


JODY DOMINGUE

Finding the Perfect Location: A stroke of luck helped Pak zero in on the building at 5716 N. Cahuenga after a lengthy two-year search for a place to lease. His mother sold another rental property she had and decided to buy this building; in turn, Pak is renting from her.

For the 21 soundproof spaces, Pak decided on a mix of 10 x 10 drum rooms and studios that are either 14 x 20 or 18 x 20 feet. With a standard rock kind of vibe, his main criterion was "utilitarian, yet it had to look nice. It's a place conducive to musicians working on their craft." Spaces are rented by monthly lockout, which offers clients the keys so they have access 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Pricing and Amenities: Very competitively priced, RP Studios has several common lobbies and there is covered parking for load in; musicians bring their own PA's and setup gear. All the rooms are carpeted, and air conditioned and there is free Wi-Fi access. His varied clientele includes national touring acts, independent, up and coming musicians and film/TV composers. RP has developed into a place where regular clients become friends and there's an ongoing "creative exchange" between former strangers.

Contact RP Studios, 818-859-0090

ASSIGNMENTS

David Angress



CEO Worldwide
ADAM Audio

ADAM Audio, a company with a long history of helping creative professionals record and mix award-winning projects, has appointed **David Angress** to CEO Worldwide. In his new role, Angress will oversee ADAM's reenergized operations from the Company headquarters in Berlin. In his audio industry career prior to joining ADAM Audio, Angress has held senior executive positions at companies including AKG Acoustics, Harman Professional and Guitar Center as well as being the principal in his own consulting business. For additional information on this appointment, contact Margaret Sekelsky at margaret@msmediainc.com.

Scott Adkins



VP of Publicity
Webster Public Relations

Webster Public Relations has added **Scott Adkins** as VP of Publicity. Adkins will lead a team of publicists to maximize exposure and brand awareness for all Webster PR clients. He will oversee day-to-day for Dolly Parton, Tanya Tucker, Hank Williams Jr., Phil Vassar, Gene Watson, Roy Clark, Crystal Gayle, Don Williams, Brenda Lee and Jeannie Seely. Adkins' experience includes leading PR/publicity for music festivals such as Bonnaroo and launching national brands, including Boot Barn's Moonshine Spirit by Brad Paisley. He previously worked at Kaleidoscope Media as Director of Publicity. Prior to Nashville, Adkins worked in television markets across the country. For more information, contact scott@websterpr.com.

Jake Lanier



Manager, Media Relations
New West Records

New West Records has appointed **Jake Lanier** as Manager of Media Relations. Lanier will assist with all publicity efforts, including national, regional and online, and work directly under Senior Director of Media Relations, Tim Plumley. Most recently Lanier was Associate Publicist in the Nashville office of New York-based public relations and marketing firm, Sacks & Co, where he worked under President/Founder Carla Sacks, Vice President Mary Moyer and Vice President Asha Goodman. He assisted in campaigns for Chris Stapleton, JD McPherson, Watkins Family Hour, Steep Canyon Rangers, Andrew Combs and Anderson East, as well as the grand reopening of Nashville's Historic Ryman Auditorium. Contact tim@newwestrecords.com.

J. Curtis Warner Jr.



Assoc. VP, Office of Community and Gov. Affairs
Berklee College of Music

Berklee College of Music has named **J. Curtis Warner Jr.** to lead its new Office of Community and Governmental Affairs as Associate Vice President. Warner joined Berklee in 1993 and was appointed Director of Berklee City Music in 1994, building the program that enables youth from underserved communities to develop musically, academically, socially and emotionally, primarily through the study of contemporary music. At City Music, he established strong community, city, state and foundational support around the program, and, under his leadership, it grew from serving Boston and the surrounding communities, to a nationwide network that includes 47 partner sites. For more, contact medwards@berklee.edu.

Robyn Booker



Sr. Director of Film/TV
Downtown Music Publishing

Downtown Music Publishing (Downtown), a rights-management firm, has announced an expansion of its Film and Television departments in Los Angeles. **Robyn Booker** has been hired as Sr. Director of Film/TV, reporting to Jumee Park, Vice President of Film/TV. Booker has spent the last dozen years in Los Angeles working in music for film and television, including four years at Paramount Pictures in the film music department as well as time spent as a Music Supervisor for film trailers at The Ant Farm. Most recently, she was the Sr. Director of Film/TV Marketing at BMG where she promoted their catalog for sync. For additional information on this appointment, contact jrainis@shorefire.com.

Louie Diaz



Program Director
Cumulus Media

Cumulus Media, a company in the radio broadcasting industry, has appointed **Louie Diaz** as Program Director of WRQX-FM 107.3 in Washington, D.C. Diaz moves to WRQX from Cumulus sister station KLIF-FM in Dallas. Cumulus is currently conducting a search for the Program Director position at KLIF-FM. Prior to joining Cumulus last year, Diaz was Program Director of Alpha Broadcasting's KBFF and KUPL in Portland, OR. A native of Queens, NY, he started his radio career at the age of 16 at WPLJ-FM in New York City, where he ultimately rose to Assistant Program Director of the station. For additional information on this appointment, contact Lisa Dollinger at lisa@dollcomm.com.

Cory Schaeffer



Director, Systems Solutions
QSC Systems

QSC has appointed **Cory Schaeffer** as Director of Systems Solutions. Schaeffer has been tasked with strengthening QSC's presence in the systems market. In her role, she will focus on development and execution of end-user strategies and forging relationships with consultants. In addition, she will be a key contributor to QSC's product development efforts and various marketing initiatives to ensure QSC's continued success in the AV space. Schaeffer has been in the audio industry for over 25 years. She is the co-founder of Listen Technologies Corporation and most recently was at Harman/AMX as Vice President, Western Sales for the Corporate, Education and Government Business Unit. For more, contact patrick.heyn@qsc.com.

Roger Jewell



Manager, Northeast Regional Sales
SABIAN

SABIAN has enlisted a team of industry veterans to bolster their U.S. sales effort, which includes **Roger Jewell** as the new Northeast Regional Sales Manager. A 16-year veteran of the MI industry, Jewell has worked in independent sales for a number of leading manufacturers–including SABIAN (1999–2003). In addition, he has been a principle in marketing firms since 1999, most recently with his own agency from 2004 to 2015. With 16 years of experience selling percussion, Jewell is passionate about selling cymbals–and playing them. His 42-year career as a drummer includes performing with top Country and pop acts, and a performance for President George W. Bush in 2004. Contact katieb@sabian.com.

► MCDSP SA-2 DIALOG PROCESSOR PLUG-IN



McDSP's SA-2 is an emulation of Mike Minkler's Sonic Assault dialog processor box. It has five bands of dynamic equalization with separate threshold controls and bypass buttons for each band. Although the SA-2 was designed for processing dialog tracks in film, TV and videos, I found it very useful for vocal tracks, instruments, drums and loops in my mixes.

SA-2 has two settings that govern the strength of the processing. The top Mode control selects between three different combinations of compression ratio, attack and release times: Assault, Normal and Gentle. The Band Mode button selects (globally) the bandwidth of frequencies covered by each of the five bands. They are Narrow, Normal, Wide and Variable—the deeper the processing, the narrower the bandwidth.

I had great fun trying SA-2 on vocals—where it is an excellent and nearly transparent de-esser because of the five frequency bands are useful to "zero in" on the problem frequencies. It also worked well for drum overheads for taming overly loud cymbals or for any overly shrill and bright source that needed mellowing out.

McDSP's SA-2 is part of the McDSP Everything Pack and also sells for $149 individually for the Native version or $249 for the DSP version. It uses double precision processing, has ultra low latency, requires minimal DSP and comes in both mono and stereo versions.

mcdsp.com/plug-ins/sa2

◄ IK MULTIMEDIA IRIG MIC STUDIO



The iRig® Mic Studio starts with a large 1-inch diameter electret condenser capsule, a built-in low-noise analog preamp with a gain control knob, LED level indicator and a 24-bit/44.1/48 kHz audiophile-grade A/D converter. The "studio" component of the iRig Mic Studio is its built-in audio interface with an onboard mini stereo headphone output jack and a level control for monitoring.

The iRig Mic Studio comes with all the cables for "plug-and-play" with your iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch, Android, Mac and PC for recording in studio-quality or using as the ultimate desktop mic for blogging, podcast and Skype VOIP calls.

I tried out iRig Mic Studio using my iPhone 6 running Sonoma Wireworks FourTrack and IK's iRig Recorder software. I also recorded into my Mac desktop computer using Audacity. In both trials I found the headphone level sufficient to drive any of my studio headphones to full level and the sound of the microphone first rate. The tri-color LED on the front of the mic let me know when I was going to peak levels over 133dB SPL max spec. This worked well when recording an interview; the iRig Mic Studio has plenty of gain to pick up everyone's voice in the room.

iRig Mic Studio sells for $179.99 MSRP and comes with a sturdy and portable tabletop tripod stand, travel pouch and an assortment of cables.

irigmicstudio.com

◄ SONNOX RESTORE SUITE UPDATE



Sonnox has lowered the price and updated their Restore suite of restoration plug-ins to support 64-bit AAX Native, RTAS, AU and VST host DAWs.

The Sonnox Restore bundle has three plug-ins. DeClicker is for removing pops, clicks and scratches displaying them as "bubbles" on its GUI. It has an intelligent dialog mode for cleaning up voice-over recordings with an "exclude" box where certain audio moments (bubbles) that sound like clicks can be "lassoed" and excluded from removal. DeBuzzer has three frequency ranges for the real-time tracking of buzzes and hums and their harmonics even if they vary in frequency. Lastly, DeNoiser, along with its de-hisser section removes wideband noise and hiss.

The process of audio restoration is as much science as it is art because of the many subjectively aesthetic decisions and compromises routinely made by the expert restoration engineer. The most crucial decisions being: in what order should these processes be done and at what point does the audio's original fidelity start to be diminished.

There are great starting or stored default settings that'll get you very close quickly. All three plug-ins provide intuitive, graphical information using their improved, larger GUI screens and there are various controls to sweeten restored audio and to do A/B comparisons quickly.

Available separately or bundled, the bundle sells for $599 MSRP.

sonnox.com/pub/plugins/products/restore.htm

► GIK ACOUSTICS 4A ALPHA PANEL DIFFUSOR/ABSORBER



GIK Acoustics Alpha Series is a new line of acoustic panels and bass traps that combine effective acoustic treatment with stylish good looks. The 4A Alpha Panel Diffusor/Absorber is a hybrid treatment panel with a wood front cut with a mathematical sequence of slots for the one-dimensional scattering/diffusion of incident sounds waves.

Each 4A Alpha Panel measures 23.75 X 23.75 X 4-inches and is a wood-framed panel filled with rigid fiberglass absorption material. The panel is then wrapped in fabric and finished with a blonde wood veneer fascia. The slots in the wood face allow low frequency waves to pass through to the fiberglass panel for absorption.

I installed two pairs of 4A Alpha panels—two each, one above another in the front corners of my Tones 4 $ Studios. I screwed eyehooks into the back of each corner of the Alpha's and then used tie wraps to secure the panels to eyehooks in the walls.

After measurement with Room EQ Wizard, the Alphas outperformed the old corner treatments with more reduction of the decay below 70Hz. In addition, I was now enjoying extra diffusion via the panel's front wood faces, and I love the great look of the 4A Alphas panels in my corners.

The 4A Alpha Panel Diffusor/Absorber Panels come in bundles of four and sell for $340.

gikacoustics.com/product/4a-alpha-panel-diffusor-acoustic-panel-bass-trap

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► YAMAHA VOCALOID SINGING VOICE SYNTHESIS TECHNOLOGY



Yamaha VOCALOID 4 enables users to input melody and type in lyrics to synthesize a singing voice. What's new is the Cyber Diva voice library in American English and the VOCALOID4 Editor for Cubase. Cyber Diva is the first VOCALOID exclusive Singer Library with an American English female voice that delivers remarkable expression with clear speech, powerful long tones and smooth vocalizations.

The editing package includes a new feature called Growl Expression to add hard tremolo for harsher and rougher vocal tones. Then for smoother vocalizations, there is Pitch Render for editing and smoothing pitch linkage or the level of vibrato application.

Cyber Diva also comes with instrument features for building temporary instrumental tracks for the virtual vocalist. Geared toward professional music producers, the Cross-Synthesis feature lets users design nuanced voice tones by blending two different sound libraries—one to enhance power and attack, the other to emphasize expressiveness like the sustain and release of notes.

Cyber Diva, VOCALOID Editor for Cubase and VOCALOID4 Editor are $130.99 each.

4wrd.it/vocaloid4



◄ KRK SYSTEMS ROKIT 4

The KRK ROKIT 4 G3 monitors are designed for mobile studios, temporary situations or desktop DAW rigs set in tight spaces. That would include apartments or smaller living spaces such as school dormitories. Two ROKIT 4 monitors provide the power, quality and performance of KRK's larger monitors albeit translated into a compact, portable size.

The ROKIT 4 G3 offers an accurate, tight bass extension from the 4-inch woofer made from a glass-Aramid composite material. The woofer combines good transient response with the ability to move plenty of air for a realistic bass sound. The 1-inch soft-dome tweeter reproduces highs smoothly up to 35 kHz without harshness.

KRK's ROKIT 4 G3 use Class A/B amplifiers with both high and low frequency level controls and the rear panel input connections include balanced XLR, TRS and unbalanced RCA jacks.

Available in black, white and silver, the ROKIT 4 G3 is a portable reference monitor you could pack into your audio equipment travel case and have an instant and accurate monitoring anywhere.

KRK Systems ROKIT 4 monitor speakers sell for $139.50 MAP.

krksys.com/krk-studio-monitor-speakers/rokit/rokit-4.html

▼ AKG C314 MULTI-PATTERN CONDENSER MICROPHONE

The C314 condenser microphone builds on the one-inch capsule of AKG's top-of-the-line C414 XLS and features four switchable polar patterns via onboard recessed toggle switches. I found these switches easy to operate with no need of a special tool or connection to phantom power for their operation. There are also switches for the -20dB attenuator pad and a bass-cut filter—a necessary feature to reduce the proximity effect when placed close to vocals and acoustic guitars.



I found using the C314 exactly like using the AKG C414B-XLII. A quick comparison revealed that the C314 has a warmer sound compared to the $1,200 C414B-XLII. This thicker sound offers a richer sound for vocalists who tend towards shrillness when singing loudly. Using the C314 for drum overheads, on guitar cabinets or acoustic guitars, for choir recordings are all excellent applications.

The C314 comes with a fully professional accessory kit including: an all-metal carrying case, H85 spider shock mount, the simpler SA60 clip and the W214 foam windscreen.

The C314 sells for $699.

akg.com/pro/p/c314



► ACOUSTIC CLASS-D/NEO SERIES

Acoustic® Amplifiers' new Class-D/Neo Series bass amps, cabinets and combo amps are 40 percent lighter than previous models but without compromising tone. This is due to the compact yet powerful Class-D amplifiers and more powerful neodymium loudspeaker magnets. The series includes three amp heads, four speaker cabinets and three combo amps.

All Class-D Series bass amplifier heads feature a foot switchable, overdrive circuit, Acousti-Comp™ compression, a notch filter with frequency control, an effects loop, a full-featured direct out and super Hi and Lo EQ boost controls.

Pictured is the impressive Acoustic B1000HD bass head on top of 410 and 115 cabs. The B1000HD weighs just 8.2-pounds, pushes 1,000-watts and features an 8-band edge-lit graphic EQ.

Acoustic Class-D/Neo Series bass amps, cabinets and combos range in price from: $349.99 to $749.99.

acousticamplification.com

BARRY RUDOLPH is a recording engineer/mixer who has worked on over 30 gold and platinum records. He has recorded and/or mixed Lynyrd Skynyrd, Hall & Oates, Pat Benatar, Rod Stewart, the Corrs and more. Barry has his own futuristic music mixing facility and loves teaching audio engineering at Musician's Institute, Hollywood, CA. He is a lifetime Grammy-voting member of NARAS and a contributing editor for *Mix Magazine*. barryrudolph.com

PORTRAITS IN TONE

Richie Kotzen RK5

Not just another version of the Fly Rig® simply bearing his name, the Richie Kotzen RK5 Signature Fly Rig was a close, year-long collaborative effort. Meticulous about every facet of his playing, singing, songwriting and tone, Richie's attention to the details of this pedal was nothing less.

What distinguishes the RK5 from the Fly Rig 5 is Richie's Signature OMG overdrive. Tuned specifically to Richie's ear, the OMG section brings in the organic Class A-style distortion, but with a tighter, snappier response. It is designed to articulate every nuance of Richie's dizzying playing style for all modes and moods, from clean to aggressive and from rhythmic chords to infinite sustain when it's solo time.

The RK5 offers the same other essential features as the Fly Rig 5: the all-analog SansAmp™, reverb, delay with tap tempo, and a powerful boost. For fly gigs across the globe, jamming at the local hang, and running off to last minute sessions, just pop your RK5 into your guitar case and head for the door.

photo by greg vorobiov



Actual size: 11.5"l x 2.5"w x 1.25"h • Weight: 18.6 oz.



The Richie Kotzen OMG Signature Overdrive is also available as a stand-alone pedal.

TECH 21

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Stocking Stuffers 2015

BY BARRY RUDOLPH



D'Addario Promark™ Active Wave 570 Drumsticks

Get the drummer boy (or girl) in your life a pair of D'Addario's Promark™ Active Wave 570 drumsticks. Made of hickory, these first-of-its-kind sticks feature ActiveGrip, a heat-activated grip coating that gets tackier as the player's hands heat up and start to sweat. In addition, they'll a have better and more comfortable grip from the wavy-shaped contoured handles called WaveHandle. The Promark Active Wave 570 drumsticks are $21.50 a pair. daddario.com/pmNewsDetail.Page?ActiveID=3895&id=1529

Acoustica Mixcraft Pro Studio 7.5

With over 125,000 registered users, Acoustica presents its latest version of DAW music production software for PC users, Mixcraft Pro Studio 7.5 now with Windows 10 support. It comes with over $1,100 worth of plug-ins with 52 pro audio effects and 20 virtual instruments. You get everything you'll need including a collection of royalty-free studio-quality loops and over 650 acoustic and electronic drum samples. It sells for $164 MSRP. acoustica.com/mixcraft/mixcraft-pro-studio.html





Waldorf 2-Pole Analog Filter

There is nothing like the sound of a real analog filter—hardware, knobs, switches that plugs into your gear. Since its very beginnings, Waldorf has been renowned for their 4-pole, x-Pole and AFB16 filters, a big part of the sound of the Wave, Q+ and Pulse synthesizers. Waldorf has "ported" a 2-pole analog filter into a standalone, stomp box-sized unit for guitar players, DJs or keyboard players. The 2-Pole uses a one-knob/one-function style interface. It is easy to add filter sweeps that can be modulated with the onboard LFO or get funky by connecting any pedal controller. It sells for $329. waldorf-music.info/2-pole-overview



Sample Tools by Cr2 Records Tropical House

For Christmas I've gone to the islands, man! My music seems to have taken on an island "feel" now that I am integrating many of the nearly 2 GB of Tropical House audio loops and one-shots, construction kits, MIDI loops from Sample Tools by Cr2. With 17 Spire and 20 Massive presets, three Prod-Cast video Tutorials, Music Productivity with Mike Monday and a Tips & Tricks booklet, Sample Tools by Cr2 Tropical House sells for £12.99. bit.ly/STTropicalHouse



CAD Audio Zoe USB Microphone

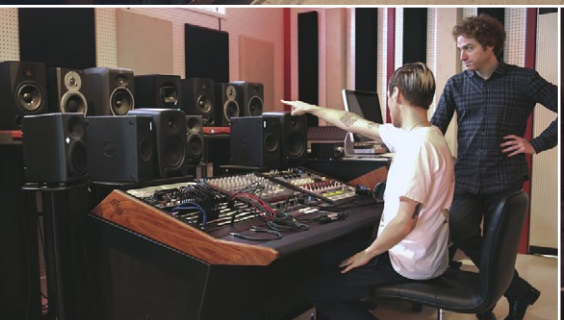
The Zoe USB mic brings high quality audio, easy operation and high style to social media, gaming, home recordings, podcasts, journaling and more. It features a TrakMix™ headphone output for precise monitoring and comprehensive control. Zoe's extended frequency response produces a full, well-balanced sound with detail and clarity. A headphone frequency response of 20 to 20kHz and output of 300mW guarantees the best possible listening experience. Fully compatible with Windows® and Mac® computers, Zoe comes supplied with a stand and USB cable. $99 MAP. cadaudio.com/UZoe.php

iCymbal

Jeffry Voorhees, founder and president of Motion Mounts, created the first mounting solution for use of the iPad® or MP3 player for drummers. Able to clasp onto any cymbal stand within a drum kit, the iCymbal® allows integrating any mobile devices conveniently into the kit's existing setup. Ergonomically designed by drummer Vorhees and available in numerous colors, iCymbal facilitates using your mobile device while seated at your drum throne. You'll have instant access to online lessons, music programs, apps and online videos. $29.95 iCymbal.com











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BY SIRI SVAY



Audio-Technica ATH-R70x

The R70x is Audio-Technica's first pair of open-back reference professional headphones. Featuring specially designed drivers and acoustically transparent housings fashioned from aluminum honeycomb mesh, these headphones provide an accurate and natural open-back sound. They also incorporate a new, improved design of A-T's popular 3D wing support system to provide even greater comfort during your long hours of working. Robust yet lightweight, and equipped with a unique, dual-sided detachable cable that automatically maintains proper stereo orientation, the R70x headphones are built for lasting comfort, convenience and audio purity.

MSRP $489

audio-technica.com

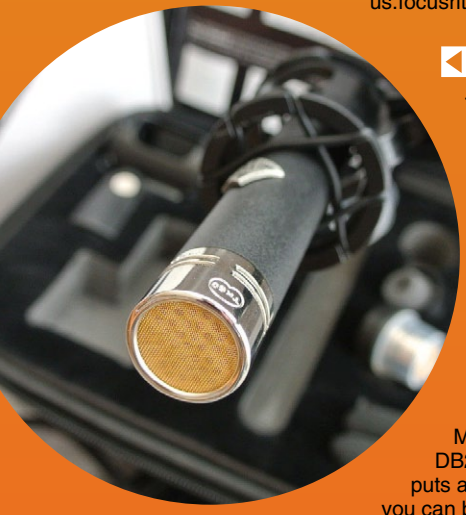
Focusrite RedNet AM2



Focusrite announced the RedNet AM2 at AES this year, and although it doesn't officially ship until Spring 2016, it is worth keeping an eye out for. RedNet AM2 is a compact, flexible stereo monitoring unit combining headphone and line outputs for monitoring of signals from the Dante network wherever required. It features a front-panel TRS headphone socket plus a pair of rear-mounted balanced line outputs with male XLR connectors for loudspeaker monitoring and other applications. Designed to drive high or low impedance headphones at high levels, the headphone output delivers significant audio output power. The unit is fitted with non-slip feet, and can either sit securely on a flat surface or mounted on top of a mic stand. Two volume control knobs are provided for Headphone and Line output levels, the latter featuring a mute button with associated LED. Dual locking etherCON connectors are included to connect the network and to daisy-chain to additional network devices.

MSRP $599.99 (ships Spring of 2016)

us.focusrite.com



Telefunken M60 FET Microphone

TELEFUNKEN Elektroakustik introduced the newly designed M60 FET (Field Effect Transistor) small diaphragm microphone at Winter NAMM—its first non-vacuum tube, FET-based solid-state condenser microphone. The M60 FET is an excellent tool for both acoustic and percussive sources. It utilizes a unique proprietary circuit topology with its reinterpretation of the classic FET mic amplifier, which produces an exceptional transient response and SPEL handling capabilities. The output is matched with a custom American-made transformer that offers an especially low self-noise and a typical THD+N of 0.015% or better, making it ideal for critical recording applications.

MSRP $595

telefunken-elektroakustik.com

PreSonus DigiMax DP88

Those looking to expand their professional or home studio should feast their eyes on the PreSonus® DigiMax™ DP88 8-channel microphone preamplifier and A/D/A converter that provides eight mic inputs on XLR and DB25 connectors, eight line inputs on DB25 and eight line outputs for monitoring, all on DB25. All inputs and outputs are on the rear panel, making it easy to incorporate the unit into any studio. It has mic pre's if you need them, or you can bypass the mic pre's and go straight to the converters. You also get MIDI I/O and word clock I/O. The DigiMax DP88 adds more to any audio interface that has ADAT I/O, and the 24-bit DP88 delivers great audio quality up to 96 kHz with its clean audio path provided by Burr-Brown A/D/A converters with 118 dB of dynamic range.

MSRP $699

presonus.com



Mackie FreePlay Personal PA



For a Friday Freebie this year, *Music Connection* gave away the Mackie FreePlay™, an all-in-one stereo PA solution with a portable, battery-powerable design to deliver powerful, full-range sound anytime, anywhere. FreePlay features Bluetooth® technology for music streaming from any mobile device that can be mixed with vocal mics, guitars and more. Plus, with the Mackie Connect™ app, you get mobile freedom to control everything from levels and EQ to sound-enhancing tools like a feedback destroyer for amazing sound in any situation. From the stage to the boardroom to the backyard, FreePlay delivers powerful, rich sound that inspires.

MSRP $499.99

mackie.com



Sony Creative Audio Master Suite Mac 2

Who needs this gift? Audio mastering engineers, musicians, sound designers, audio-for-video producers, forensics specialists, audio archivists, scientists or professionals who demand the deepest audio analysis tools. Audio Master Suite Mac 2 includes the waveform and spectral editing for OS® X. Sound Forge™ Pro Mac and SpectraLayers™ Pro are advanced waveform and spectral editing applications. They work together to form an editing system that offers immediate gains for audio professionals. Engineered for smooth round-trip communication, these new editions invite you to channel the power of each in turn as your tasks demand.

MSRP $499.95

sonycreativesoftware.com

Guitar Hero Live



It's been about five years since the last *Guitar Hero* game, but recently, Activision and FreeStyleGames partnered up to release *Guitar Hero Live.* The guitar playing is more realistic—changing from one line of five fret buttons to two rows of three frets (six total) that allow for more variation of chords including a barre chord. The game screen shows a live audience reacting directly to your playing. If you're rocking it, they cheer, scream and sing along, but if you're failing, they boo, throw things at you and your bandmates reconsider your role in the band, which causes you to sweat. One cool feature of *GHL* is GHTV, which harkens back to the days of MTV videos—a 24-hour playable video network that lets fans play along to a continually-updated collection of music videos (with more than 230+ songs in the current library) and compete with players from around the world. This is a fun Christmas gift to give to your kids or anyone who wants to be a rockstar.

MSRP: $99.99 (game + 1 guitar); $149.99 (game + 2 guitars)

guitarhero.com



BOSS SY-300 Guitar Synthesizer

The BOSS SY-300 Guitar Synthesizer is an analog-style synth designed to use with normal guitar pickups. It allows musicians to play latency-free polyphonic synth sounds with any guitar, with no special pickup needed, and users can also process their regular guitar sound with the SY-300's synth parameters and effects to achieve a limitless range of unique tones. The SY-300 can be used with any guitar or bass via a standard 1/4-inch cable and integrates easily with stomps and pedalboard setups due to its compact size and versatile I/O. In addition, it includes a USB audio interface to capture audio tracks directly into music production software on a computer, which can route existing tracks into the SY-300 to "re-synth" sounds using the synth engine and effects to create new sounds for music productions.

MSRP $979; Street $699

bossus.com

Native Instruments KOMPLETE KONTROL



Winner of the "Visionary Award" Herb Trawick Pensado Award, Native Instrument's KOMPLETE KONTROL S88 is a new keyboard for composers, performers and pianists with 88 fully weighted, hammer-action keys. Aimed at professional producers and performers alike, the keyboard provides a "piano-like" playing experience. Version 1.5 of the software adds Native Kontrol Standard, an extended plug-in format allowing third-party instruments to achieve the same deep integration previously only reserved for KOMPLETE Instruments. VST support lets owners load and play their entire instrument collection. A new "Control Panel" makes customizing assignments simple and intuitive—even across multiple pages—and any double assignments are recognized automatically. By using the control panel, producers can quickly and easily customize presets for specific use cases, such as a live performance.

MSRP $999

native-instruments.com

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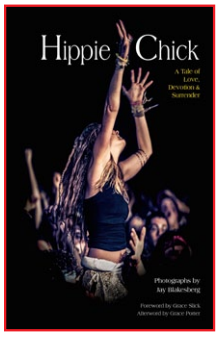
BOOK STORE

Hippie Chick: A Tale of Love, Devotion & Surrender

By Jay Blakesburg

(hardcover) **$40**

Jay Blakesberg, the Rolling Stone magazine rock photographer who has snapped famous shots of Nirvana, Grateful Dead, Tom Waits and many more, presents an art book fit for the coffee table. With over 445 images curated from his career, *Hippie Chick* outlines Blakesberg's 35+ year photographic study of passionate female music fans and their effects on popular culture. His images are complemented by essays from prominent female musicians, fans and rock writers like Grace Slick, Grace Potter and Edith Johnson.

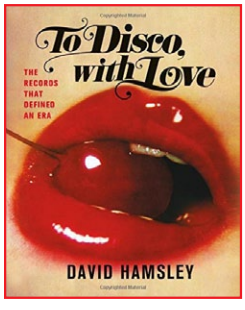


To Disco, with Love

By David Hamsley

(hardcover) **$19.99**

As the hair gets bigger, bell bottoms wider and platform shoes steeper, the vibrancy and energy of this unique moment in music history is brought back to vivid life. Accompanied by insightful, spirited descriptions that showcase the evolving trends in photography, illustration and design (and even includes rockers KISS, B 52's, Devo and more) *To Disco, with Love* charts the history of the music and the industry during the genre's groovy heyday.

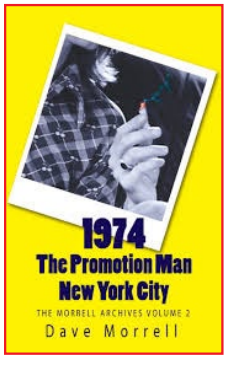


1974: The Promotion Man - New York City

By Dave Morrell

(paperback) **$12.99**

Here's an insider's view of the '70s music scene through the eyes of Morrell, who was barely 21 when he was plucked from a low-level job at Warner-Elektra-Asylum's New Jersey warehouse, relocated to Manhattan and given a plum assignment as a Warner Bros. promotion man. Getting high with Ron Wood, chasing radio spins for artists Jethro Tull, Gordon Lightfoot and Muldaur, being whisked away to the Bahamas by Deep Purple and more, Morrell's *1974* is, like his previous volume, a fun, breezy read.

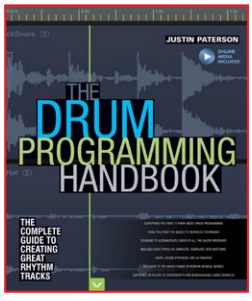


The Drum Programming Handbook

By Justin Paterson

(paperback) **$39.99**

Subtitled "The Complete Guide to Creating Great Rhythm Tracks," Paterson's book is a step-by-step course in how to create rhythm on any popular DAW system. The author is a drummer, record producer and teacher of drumming and music technology, and he takes the reader on a course that unfolds through extensive use of workstation screenshots and audio examples. Along the way are helpful tips and practical exercises to keep students motivated and engaged.

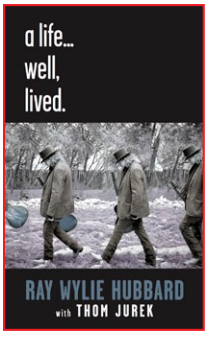


A Life… Well, Lived.

By Ray Wylie Hubbard with Thom Jurek

(paperback) **$20**

In *A Life... Well, Lived.*, singer/songwriter Ray Wylie Hubbard talks about his life the way he remembers it, tracing his remarkable journey from folk gypsy to outlaw country upstart to wizened architect of grit 'n' groove. Hubbard and Jurek deliver an engaging biography of Hubbard's life from early childhood on to his white knuckle ride through the progressive/outlaw/Texas country of the '70s.

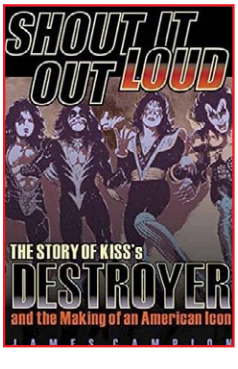


Shout It Out: The Story of KISS's Destroyer and the Making of An American Icon

By James Campion

(paperback) **$24.99**

Here's a serious examination of the creation of KISS's seminal work, *Destroyer*, including the band's arduous ascent to the unexpected smash hit, *Alive!*, the ensuing lawsuits between its management and its label, the pursuit of the hot, young producer, a transformative Bob Ezrin "boot camp," the wildly creative studio abandon, the origins behind an iconic cover, the era's most outlandish tour and the unlikely string of hit singles. Includes archived materials and new interviews with major principals in the making of an outrageously imaginative rock album.

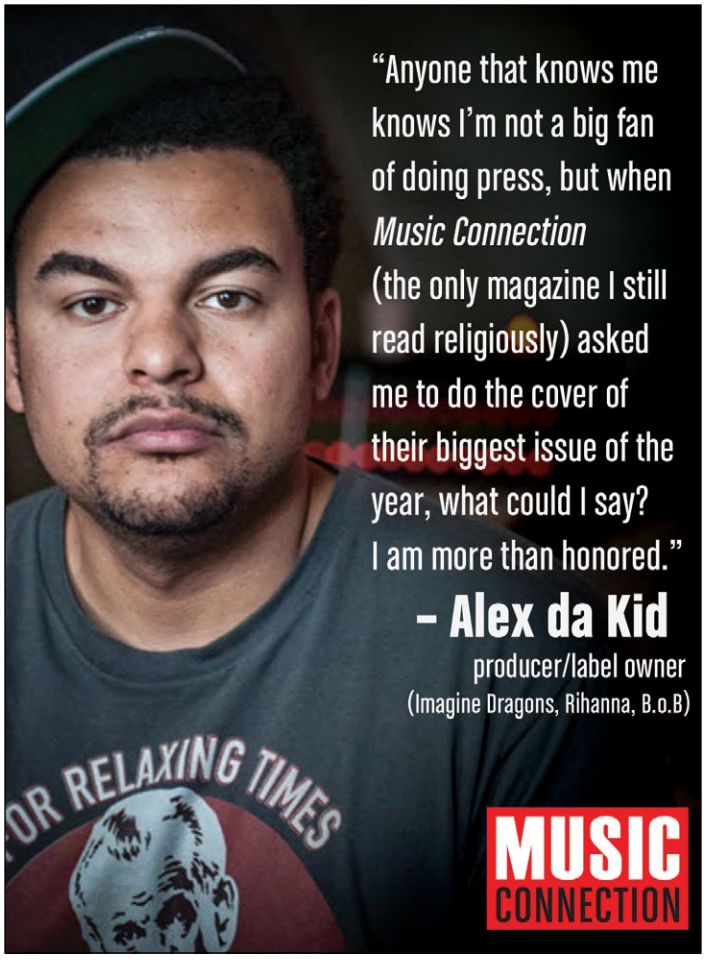



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From Consultancy to Thriving Audio Distributor: After launching his career in the manufacturing end of the pro audio industry, Brad Lunde in 1996 founded Lunde Consulting, which served as an outsource marketing and sales consultant to the manufacturing community. Attending a trade show in Germany, he learned from various small manufacturers that they were unable to find solid distributors in the U.S. to help them develop their business Stateside. He started TransAudio Group out of his home in Thousand Oaks, CA to help fill this niche. Drawmer and SoundField (both U.K. family run manufacturers) had hired Lunde Consulting to find them a U.S. distributor. When Lunde couldn't find one, one of the Drawmer's executives convinced Lunde to become a distributor himself. In 2005, Lunde—who moved operations to Las Vegas in 2000—formed the subsidiary Las Vegas Pro Audio as a product launch vehicle.



Partnered Brands: A large proportion of TransAudio's clientele is engineers, producers and studio owners. One of the focal points of TransAudio's ads in *MC* is ATC Studio Monitors, the core of a producer or engineer's work life. The brands that Lunde partners with have a strong emphasis on invention and new ideas. These include A Designs, Aura-tone, Bettermaker, Bock Audio, Cranesong, Daking, Dave Hill Designs, DrawmerHakan, Pauly, Pete's Place Audio, Sabra-Som, Sonodyne and Tube-Tech.

Product Management as Part of the Equation: TransAudio is a collective personal statement of its staff that business does not have to be selfish to be successful—and that in its very best form it exists to contribute something beyond the product it sells. The company's employees are all ex-musicians, and most have experience as a dealer or rep with established audio companies. Another part of the TransAudio business model is its auxiliary role as a product manager. "Our goal is to find unique products that are considered top of the line in the marketplace," Lunde says. "We often take info and input from our customers in the field and give them to the manufacturers to help them improve their existing products and create others that fit specific new demands."

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▲ Meisner Goes Vinyl with Sonic Past

Sonic Past Music will be releasing Randy Meisner's LP *Love Me Or Leave Me Alone* in 180-gram clear vinyl. It will be the first of many, including Rick Springfield, Richie Sambora and Huey Lewis, to name a few. Pictured (l-r): Sonic Past Music President Joey Stec and Meisner.

▲ *An Englishman in Love in LA*

Alex Rudd (BBC Young Composer of the Year, pictured left) and Richard Shelton worked in the studio recording Shelton's album *An Englishman in Love in LA*, which is available now on iTunes, Amazon and on all reputable distribution.



DIRTEE STAY OUT PRODUCTIONS



DAVID GOGGIN

▲ TLA's Spankin' New Barefoot

Engineer Tom Lord-Alge has chosen Barefoot Sound's MicroMain27 monitors for his Spank Studios in Miami Beach. A three-time Grammy-winner, he has amassed credits ranging from U2 to The Rolling Stones, P!nk, Peter Gabriel, Dave Matthews Band, Blink-182, Thirty Seconds to Mars, Avril Lavigne and numerous others. Recent projects include a studio album from Live, Kensington's album *Rivals*, Weezer's *Everything Will Be Alright in the End* and tracks for Angels and Airwaves, Ash Koley and Crosses. In 2015, Lord-Alge has mixed the Sleeping With Sirens album *Madness* and tracks for Tom DeLonge, Dweezil Zappa, Armin van Buuren and Japanese stars Shogo Hamada, One OK Rock and Scandal.

▲ United at the School of Rock

Stage musical composer Andrew Lloyd Webber joined Grammy-winning producer Rob Cavallo at Hollywood's United Recording studios to work on the upcoming Broadway show *School of Rock—The Musical*. Based on the 2003 film of the same name starring Jack Black, the musical had its world premiere on Broadway, with performances that began in early November at the Winter Garden Theatre. Pictured (l-r): (foreground) Webber and Cavallo; (back) Chris Chaney, bass (Jane's Addiction); Doug McKean, engineer; Eric Dover, vocals; Tom Rasulo, second engineer; Dorian Crozier, drums; Wesley Seidman, United engineer; Tim Pierce, lead guitar; David Wilson, musical supervisor; Mike Fasano, drum tech; and Jamie Muhoberac, keyboards. For more, visit unitedrecordingstudios.com.

Producer Playback

"There are hundreds of ways to produce a record and none of them are right or wrong. It's just what feels right as a producer."

–Tamara Saviano (concert producer, publicist and manager) Dec. 2014




JIM DONNELLY

▼ A Thumping Debut

Punk rockers Narc Twain are set to release their debut self-titled mini-album on Dec. 4. The album was written over six months and tracked live at Greenpoint, Brooklyn, NY's Thump Studios. John Thayer and Keith Rigling oversaw engineering for the recording for Thump, and Thayer mixed the record. Pictured (l-r): John Thayer, Brett Niederman, Tommy Siegel, Aaron Leeder and Dave Cohen. For more information, visit facebook.com/narctwainband.


MICHAEL DELLA POLLA

▲ New Music from Omen Room

Metal band Incite worked with producer Steve Evetts (Dillinger Escape Plan, Suicide Silence, Every Time I Die) at Omen Room Studios in Garden Grove, CA for their upcoming full-length coming in early 2016. Guitarist Kevin "Dis," who has written and performed on the first three albums, will continue to write with the band, while lead guitarist "Dru" will be taking on all recording and touring duties. Pictured (l-r): guest vocals Jose Mangin (Sirius - Liquid Metal), producer Steve Evetts, Richie Cavalera, Lennon Lopez, Christoper "EL" and "Dru Tang" Rome. For more information, visit facebook.com/INCITEband.




DANNY MIZICKO/STUCK IN OHIO

▲ GRABBITZ Gets *Better With Time*

Twenty-two-year-old singer/songwriter/producer Nick Chiari—otherwise known as GRABBITZ—will follow up his debut EP *Friends* with his upcoming new EP *Better With Time*, due out Dec. 11 on Monstercat. The self-produced and- engineered album will showcase his skills as a multi-faceted talent—singer, lyricist, producer and player. Pictured in his home studio in Buffalo, NY is Chiari. For more information, visit GRABBITZmusic.com.

▲ Using an Atlas in London

Two internationally acclaimed composers at London's Matrix Studios—Stuart Roslyn (pictured) and Vasco—have chosen Prism Sound's Atlas USB audio interface for their recording rooms. Roslyn first discovered Prism audio interfaces when Pete Tong left his Titan interface in Roslyn's studio. A friend also introduced Vasco to Prism, and after hearing one in action he bought one for himself. For more information, visit prismsound.com.





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Madonna, The Neighbourhood, twenty one pilots

Mastering engineer Chris Gehringer got his start doing live sound before formalizing his education. He studied at The Institute of Audio Research and landed a mastering gig with New Jersey's Trutone Records, where he discovered his love of sound. He was later instrumental in founding Hit Factory Mastering and now makes his home at New York's Sterling Sound. Past clients include twenty one pilots, Madonna and Nick Jonas.

Among the most vexing problems he finds in mastering today is loudness levels. "You get pushed into it," he explains. "It started when I was cutting 12-inch singles. The louder it sounded in the club or on the radio, the better people thought it was. But there's a limit to loudness. People do demos now where the mix is loud so the master has to be loud. Dynamic range has so much more character and feeling. People react to it in a different way than they do the loudness."

Mastering can be costly, particularly when artists arrive at sessions before having made basic choices and decisions. But there are ways to minimize costs. "Be sure of your mixes," Gehringer advises. "Don't go into mastering saying, 'I think this is what I want to do.' Find an engineer whose work you like and want to get that sound. Clients trust me to know what I do. The ones that come back to me get what I do. Find someone who fits your music's personality and your vibe."

The three most important things he's learned as a mastering engineer are:

- **Don't take it personally if someone doesn't like your work. And even if it is personal, just brush it off.**
- **Believe in what you do. Stand behind your work. If your room is the way you like it and you hear the magic, have faith in your work.**
- **Be open to anything that comes at you. Whatever way the business moves you, flow with it.**

Before a mastering engineer gets his or her hands on a project, it's been seen to by a mix engineer. Maintaining the mixer's vision and goals is important to Gehringer. "Always respect what you're given," he asserts. "I listen to the mix that I'm handed and ask myself, 'Can I make it better? Is there something that I think is lacking?' But be open to the sound that [the mix engineer] was after and build from there."

Like many in related fields, Gehringer finds that one of his biggest challenges isn't technical. It's interpersonal. "You have to know how to deal with clients, how to read people, how to interact with artists," he observes. "We're the smallest part of the record-making process, mixers being the quarterback. It's my job to hand artists their baby at the end.

"There's a lot of stuff that's a bigger part of the process now," he continues. "An artist like Rihanna might have 13 mixers and producers. I have to put all that together and make it sound like a cohesive piece."

With respect to vinyl, he says not all mastering engineers truly understand its intricacies and demands. It's almost an art form. "You have to be in a room with a lathe," he says. "Listen to the playback while you're cutting it. There's no way to judge what will happen. Hear the cutter head. You have to experience mastering vinyl in order to know what it's about."

He advises rising engineers to love all music genres and be open to everything that comes their way. Including criticisms, which also have value. "Listen to the music and absorb what the mixer has given you," he says.

Currently Gehringer is working with CeeLo Green, Mike Posner and Columbia Records' The Neighbourhood. He's been nominated for a number of Grammys and had a hand in several records that have won in various categories. Sterling Sound has been his home for 16 years. It's a mastering house readers will recognize from past Mastering Roundtables.

Contact Robert Robles / Sterling Sound, robert.robles@sterling-sound.com



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"Get educated. There is so much available. Even if you're not in college, you can take one class on copyright, on music marketing, on management."

BACKGROUND

Named one of the industry's top music lawyers by Billboard and The Hollywood Reporter, Dina LaPolt ran the concert committee at her college and managed acts for KISS drummer Eric Carr's company, Streetgang Productions, before moving to San Francisco and promoting all-ages punk shows. Later, she attended John F. Kennedy School of Law and, among other legal accomplishments, negotiated deals on behalf of the Tupac Shakur estate.

On Stage to Off

I was a musician. I never had plans to go to law school. I was 27 and tired of living in a van, making macaroni and cheese powered by a cigarette lighter on a hot plate. We got picked to be in this music business conference as a showcasing band. The band didn't want to go to any of the panels, but I did. I picked a panel called "Negotiating Record Deals." There were three guys—one had tattoos, one had a ponytail and the other had earrings. I waited in line to talk to the guy with earrings, because he impressed me the most.

He said, "I'm not taking unsolicited demo tapes." I was holding a cassette tape. I said, "Oh, I'm not talking to you about this. I want to know how to go to law school."

"First, go to college and get a bachelor's degree."

"I have one in music. Does that count?"

"I don't know, but you should call the law schools."

I called them all. If you had a bachelor's degree, you could take the LSAT. I didn't do very well, but I met this girl who did worse than me, but she got in. She said, "Because I'm black, I think they picked me."

"Well, I'm gay. They should pick me."

"You should tell them that."

I called the dean: "You need to let me in, because I'm gay and you need more gay lawyers." He said, "You're right. I'm going to let you in and at the end of the year we're going to give you an exam. If you pass, you can continue." Thus, my law career began.

Getting Hired

I started working for a music lawyer named Deena Zacharin. At the time, she represented Cake and Susan Tedeschi. I convinced her to let me be her intern. She told me I had to move to L.A. and I didn't want to go, so she fired me. I was depressed, but my ex-girlfriend's sister called and said, "You should move in with me. I'm Miss June; I'm on the cover of Playboy." No one would hire me. I was having a great time, but I couldn't get a job. Miss June was asked to do a TV show, *Hard Copy*. While I was on set, I met Anthony Benson, who said, "You should meet our lawyer." I ended up being his intern, but he was a disaster. Within three years, I was running his entire practice and he wasn't even coming to work. When I left, 80% of his clients came with me and LaPolt Law was born.

Office Space

The clients who came with me were Ed McMahon, the estate of Tupac Shakur, Wild Orchid, Andy Vargas and all the Playboy Playmates. I didn't have an office, so the general council for the Tupac estate called Jimmy Iovine, because we'd set up a joint venture to release Tupac's music. He said, "Dina needs to stay there until she finds office space." I moved in with four employees on the third floor of Interscope. I was there for three weeks until I found office space in the 9000 building, and I've been here ever since.

Thug Life

Tupac estate was work. They had been sued a lot, because Tupac didn't have agreements memorializing anybody's rights. I settled a lot of litigation, learned about the Copyright Act—focused on learning. I wasn't in the clubs. I wasn't going to shows. I was taking classes at UCLA. The Beverly Hills Bar Association had lunches every month on different entertainment topics; I went there religiously. The California Copyright Conference met every Tuesday every month for nine months a year. I made friends with people like Don Passman. These people would teach me things.

When we finally got ownership of Tupac's masters back from Death Row, Interscope wanted to do a multi-record deal. I called Tupac's mom and said, "I don't really know how to structure this huge deal." She said, "Just hire whoever you need to get it done." I called Don Passman and he came aboard. He's a gracious, amazing man, because anybody else would've tried to steal my client.

Different Genres for Different Times

We have a bit of everything, but I've noticed that the music of the time is where the firm takes its flavor. In the late '90s and early 2000s, rap was the number one music, so I had a lot of rap. Now, the number one music is electronic, so I have a lot of electronic artists. People who are successful can hire lawyers, and when you're successful you have business. When you have business, you have contracts. When you have contracts, you need someone to review them. So I see my client base change with the tides of the industry.

Collaborating

I'm a big collaborator. Too many lawyers over-lawyer their agreements and, if they don't kill the deal, they leave a bad taste in everybody's mouth. Either one is malpractice. Your job is to do a good deal. I focus on parts of the agreement that help create an artist's career, rather than those parts that mean nothing unless a career has been created. Why am I going to spend two days negotiating the audit provision? It means nothing unless you're making money. And by the way, if you're making money and become successful, you can always renegotiate. So I stick to those parts of the agreement that are going to move the ball down the playing field.

Changing the Law

Right now, we don't have the moral rights of authors in America, but we have the derivative use under section 106 in the Copyright Act. Any time your music is substantially modified, they have to get your permission. There was a movement a couple years ago to relax that approval. That'd be terrible for creators. Steven Tyler and I got involved in that. We filed a comment paper. We met with Congress people. We educated them as to why this would upset the creative community. I was shocked to see I could change opinions just by explaining the issue. I've since hired a lawyer who works on legislative stuff with me and I've filed numerous comment papers stating opinions of what we think would be good.

There's legislation pending in Congress, the Songwriter Equity Act; I was helpful in getting that going. The Fair Play Fair Pay Act is a recent bill sponsored by Congress members Jerrold Nadler and Marsha Blackburn to get artists paid royalties for terrestrial radio. In America, we don't recognize terrestrial performance rights for sound recordings. We only pay songwriters and publishers for songs played over terrestrial radio, not record companies or recording artists.

I work closely with the Grammy people in advocating for the rights of creators. I've been to the Department of Justice and met with them recently, because there are consent decrees enacted in 1941 that govern the behaviors of BMI and ASCAP. They're very outdated.

Behind Closed Doors

I think everybody's coming to the realization that when you leave things to the legislature or rate courts, they don't get done, so they started getting together behind closed doors to make deals. A good example is the deal the labels made with Sirius XM Radio recently. Under the United States Copyright Act, we didn't recognize copyright in sound recordings until 1972, so all recordings created prior to 1972 are not getting paid on. We debuted a bill called the Respect Act last year, trying to get this loophole closed. As that was happening, the labels secretly met with Sirius and made a deal. I think Sirius XM saw the writing on the wall, as if they did a cross benefit analysis—look, we're not going to get what we want if the Respect Act passed, so let's compromise.

Ignorance is No Excuse

Get educated. There is so much available. You can go to artistshousemusic.org and get videos of people like Don Passman and Irving Azoff. Even if you're not in college, you can take one class on copyright, on music marketing, on management. Berklee College of Music now has online classes. There are so many resources for creative people that it's inexcusable to not be educated.

OPPS

Music I/O is hosting an online music contest with over $1 million in prize money. It is open to all genres of music. Each week $20,000 will be awarded to the most popular artists, with an annual total of over $1,000,000. Prize winners will be invited to **Music I/O Concerts**, which take place in major cities around the world. In order to submit, you must sign up for a user account with Music I/O and pay a small ($10) entry fee. Each weekly round begins at 6:00 a.m. on Monday and ends on Friday at 11:59 p.m. for the previous week. Visit musicio.com.

Radio program *Friend or Foe*, on the Universal Broadcasting Network (UBN), is seeking music with a comedic edge. Hosts **Kevin S. Michaels** and **Erik A. Williams** are looking for creative comedy music (think **Dr. Demento**–where "**Weird Al**" **Yankovic** debuted). UBN has a loyal audience of 600,000+ worldwide and is on **Stitcher.com** and **iTunes**. **UBN Radio** also hosts **National Lampoon's *The Final Edition Radio Hour***. The show tapes live at **Sunset Gower Studios**, a state-of-the-art facility in Hollywood every Thursday. Send submissions via a link to your song(s) to friendorfoeradio@gmail.com—be sure to mention ***Music Connection***. Do not send attachments. Visit ubnradio.com/artists/friend-or-foe.

Adva Mobile has integrated email marketing into a fan relationship platform for musicians, record labels and production companies. The marketing portal that uses mobile technology to acquire, engage and sell to fans has launched their email marketing service, specifically designed to enhance fan engagement. Through the Adva Mobile Marketing Platform, artists can create marketing activities and campaigns that reach fans with a combination of SMS text, email, web, mobile and social media outreach. The platform uses services to drive engagement across multiple digital channels, and, as fans engage the artist on these channels, a fan discovery engine helps artists collect, analyze and act on fan data. It is a marketing tool that delivers valuable information artists can use to engage fans in a new way. Visit advamobile.com.

Womenincharg3 have announced the Womenincharg3 Music Festival, which will be held in Atlanta, GA in April 2016. The organization is on a mission to empower indie female artists with exclusive events, including the **WomeninCharg3 Music Awards** and its all-female radio station for female artists across genres. The music festival will offer female artists exposure. If you wish to be part of this event, there is a **Performance Package** available for a $100 fee to secure your spot. It includes a four-song set and the ability to sell merch. To submit, send your EPK, a song (MP3) to be played on **Womenincharg3 Radio** and photo of you or your band. Deadline for submissions is Jan. 15, 2016. Go to womenincharg3.com/music-festival for further information.



▲ ROCK ROYALTY JOIN FORCES FOR MACALPINE

Guitarists Steve Vai, Zakk Wylde and John 5, bassist Billy Sheehan, drummer Mike Portnoy and keyboardist Derek Sherinian are joining forces to play a benefit concert for guitar and keyboard virtuoso Tony MacAlpine, who was diagnosed with colon cancer. The show will take place at the Wiltern Theater in Los Angeles on Dec. 12. MacAlpine's diagnosis comes on the heels of his wife's breast cancer diagnosis, making the situation even more trying. Tickets are on sale via LiveNation.com, with all proceeds going to MacAlpine's family. A GoFundMe campaign is set up for fans who can't make the show but want to contribute. Go to tonymacalpine.com and gofundme.com/BenefitForTony for additional details.



▲ MOTÖRHEAD CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Motörhead celebrated a 40-year anniversary with the release of their 22nd studio album, *Bad Magic*. The 13-track record doesn't stray far from what they're known for: Lemmy Kilmister's, deep snarling voice and infamous hard rock lifestyle. Working with longtime producer Cameron Webb, who has helmed every Motörhead record since 2004's *Inferno*, the band continues to show why they are one of the most respected hard rock bands ever, having sold over five million albums worldwide. After Kilmister suffered unfortunate health issues, the band took a month off, but has resumed touring, including the infamous "Motörhead Motorboat Cruise." They are currently in Europe to continue on their world tour. For more information, visit imotorhead.com.

Sennheiser is calling artists and bands to be product reviewers for its evolution wireless D1 series. Audio specialist Sennheiser is launching its "**Test D1 and Only**" campaign, encouraging artists and bands to trial and review its new D1 microphone systems, with reviewers able to keep their set for free. The opportunity is available to 150 prospective testers that write to Sennheiser at sennheiser-d1.com with the best reasons for why they would love to take part. If chosen as a tester, the artist or band will receive the selected set within two weeks. They will then have four weeks to put the system through its paces and write a review of at least 100 words and add pictures, or shoot a test video of at least 30 seconds. Campaign runs until Jan. 31, 2016.

LABELS•RELEASES SIGNINGS

Acetate Records and the Supersuckers are releasing "Holdin' the Bag" to global radio exclusively via AirPlay Direct. "This record is a reflection of the depth of commitment and craftsmanship required to create art that will stand the test of time. This band keeps getting better and better," exclaims **Robert Weingartz**, Chairman, AirPlay Direct. The Supersuckers' trademark balance of take-no-prisoners swagger and hardheaded introspection is reflected throughout the new album. The record's 11 songs find them in typical rocking form, while tapping deeply into the band's affinity for country music, which has grown prominent in their output since 1997's ***Must've Been High***. Visit supersuckers.com.

Grammy-nominated rock band Cage the Elephant has already released the first single "Mess Around" from their forthcoming studio album, *Tell Me I'm Pretty*. The new recording is set for release on Dec. 18 via **RCA Records**. The 10-song record was produced by **Dan Auerbach** of **The Black Keys** and **The Arcs (Lana Del Rey, Ray LaMontagne**, et al), mixed by **Tom Elmhirst (Amy Winehouse, Adele, Florence + the Machine)** and recorded at **Easy Eye Sound** in Nashville, TN, near the band's home town of Bowling Green, KY. Visit cagetheelephant.com.

Avenged Sevenfold have announced that drummer Brooks Wackerman has joined the band. Hailing from Long

Beach, CA, Wackerman was the drummer for **Bad Religion** for over 15 years and also played with **Tenacious D** for the last 10. Wackerman has known Avenged since meeting on **Warped Tour** 2004. Avenged have achieved worldwide success with a string of best-selling albums achieving Diamond, Platinum and Gold Awards for album sales in nearly a dozen countries. Last year, the band debuted their own action adventure role-playing game, ***Hail to the King: Deathbat***, which features classic tracks along with a new and original score. Most recently, the band collaborated with ***Guitar Hero Live***, offering three exclusive tracks that can be played within the game, which was released in October. Visit avengedsevenfold.com.

Atlantic recording artist Ed Sheeran has announced x – *Wembley Edition*, a deluxe two-disc CD/DVD set of his **RIAA** platinum-certified album **x** ("multiply"), paired with previously unreleased bonus tracks and a new full-length concert feature. The bonus tracks feature physical and digital versions highlighted by three previous unreleased tracks that see Sheeran collaborating with such studio hands as **Emile Haynie (Eminem, Kanye West, Lana Del Rey), Jeff Bhasker (fun., Jay Z), Johnny McDaid (Snow Patrol, Paul Van Dyk)**, and the legendary producer **Rick Rubin**. Visit edsheeran.com.

PROPS

The Recording Academy Producers & Engineers Wing will celebrate its ninth annual Grammy Week event by honoring multi-Grammy winner **Rick Rubin** for his commitment to creative excellence and ongoing support for the craft of recorded music. The event will be held on Thursday, Feb. 11, 2016, at **The Village** studios in West Los Angeles. Grammy Week culminates with the ***58th Annual Grammy Awards*** telecast on Monday, Feb. 15, 2016, airing live on the **CBS Television Network**, at 8:00 p.m. ET/PT. Visit grammy.org.

KISS is America's No. 1 Gold Record Award-winning group of all time. Now celebrating their 40th anniversary, the band has earned more Gold Album Record Awards than any American band in the history of The **Recording Industry Association of America's (RIAA's)** Gold & Platinum Awards certifications. In the last 41 years, KISS has earned 30 Gold albums (26 KISS albums + 4 Solo Albums that were all released simultaneously)—a feat never before achieved by any band. KISS is currently celebrating two other major milestones: their induction into the **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame** in April of 2014, as well as the band's ***KISS 40***, an album celebrating 40 years of rock & roll. Visit KissOnline.com.

Manatt, Phelps & Phillips has been named by U.S. News & World Report and Best Lawyers as "Law Firm of the Year" for Entertainment Law—Music. This honor is part of the publications' joint 2016 **"Best Law Firms"** rankings. This marks the second time **Manatt's Music Group** has earned U.S. News' top distinction. Additionally, the firm's **Entertainment and Media Practice** has been ranked nationally in Tier 1 since 2010. Manatt, Phelps & Phillips is a leading law firm, with offices in California (Los Angeles, Orange County, Palo Alto, San Francisco and Sacramento), New York (New York City and Albany) and Washington, D.C. Visit manatt.com.

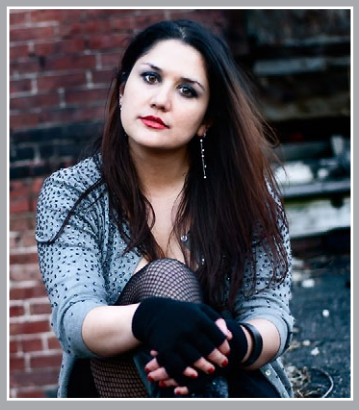


▲ ROCKETT QUEEN SUPPORT CREED'S SCOTT STAPP

Rockett Queen will take their high energy show on the road in early 2016 as direct support to former Creed vocalist Scott Stapp. "We couldn't be more excited about going out with Scott," said vocalist/guitarist Walter Lee. "We feel that teaming up with someone of his stature is exactly what the band needs to expose our music to the maximum amount of people." Rockett Queen is the first band signed to music industry veteran Paul Bibeau's new Fade to Silence Records. The group's label debut is a re-release of their *Goodnight California* EP. For more, visit rockettqueen.net.

DIY Spotlight

Shanta Paloma



Indie soul-rock singer/songwriter Shanta Paloma is an unusual talent. Her musical persona is a mixture of Ani DiFranco, Nancy Wilson and Joan Jett. And the way she approaches her career is just as independent as the ladies she's compared to.

Paloma has set out on a national tour to bring her music to the people of America. Indeed, this maverick musician has embarked on "The Guerrilla Gigs Tour" during which she will play almost every major city and national landmark in the country. With this unconventional strategy, she is performing in approximately 20 different cities. Some gigs are scheduled, while others take place on the fly.

As for her motivation, Paloma explains, "This project is a demonstration of not only following your bliss, but also on how the music industry has changed. Being an independent artist means doing everything yourself, and that takes resources away from your art. But, sharing good music will never change. Why can't it be just that simple? I believe in sharing my resources…and my songs are what I have to offer."

Occasionally, Paloma will add performance art to her act, using costumes and props to embody other artists as she covers their songs; she also performs with a live painter on stage; and has even set her music to Speak Easy and Burlesque themes.

Armed with her guitar and a GoPro camera, Paloma has been capturing her journey for a rockumentary series. You can share her adventure with her at:

YouTube.com/ShantaPaloma and her website, ShantaPaloma.com

Have a successful DIY strategy to share? Email bbatmc@aol.com

THE BIZ

Record companies are big winners in the consumer shift from ownership to access. Global analyst firm **Ovum's** latest forecast said, "2015 is a big year with global retail sales of recorded music crossing the digital tipping point. For the first time, digital spending will top physical sales. Subscriptions will lead the digital charge and dominate retail spending for the foreseeable future. Record companies will benefit most from streaming gains given the lower costs involved and are expected to register increased earnings annually."

New-model music company BMG has announced that it has acquired the recording and publishing assets of New York pop label S-Curve Records as it builds its presence in the record business. As part of the deal, S-Curve Founder and President, **Steve Greenberg** and his general manager **Milo Pacheco** will join BMG to develop the company's mainstream pop offerings. New York-based S-Curve is the third U.S. label to be acquired by BMG, following Los Angeles-based **Vagrant Records** and Portland, OR's **Rise Records**.

AirPlay Direct has announced a partnership with Folk Alliance Region Midwest (FARM) in support of their 2015 conference in Iowa City. "This is a fantastic partnership for AirPlay Direct and our members globally. This conference covers a specific yet diverse range of content in a smart, regionalized, focused and informative manner," said **Lynda Weingartz**, CEO AirPlay Direct.

BERNARD BAUR was voted one of the "Top Music Business Journalists" in the country. Bernard is the connection between the streets and the suites. Credited with over 1,200 features in a variety of publications, he's a Contributing Editor at *Music Connection*.



"We Had a Hit Single with Jesse McCartney, and it all Began with TAXI"

Andy Dodd and Adam Watts – TAXI members
www.reddecibelproductions.com www.adamwatts.com

Adam and Andy's success through TAXI is a little bit different from all the other stories you've probably heard. They got their *biggest* deal after their membership ran out!

Here's how it happened: "We joined TAXI in 2001 and found that it was a great motivator for us. We were members for two years. We learned a lot, wrote a ton of songs, and got a few film and TV placements -- some through TAXI, and some on our own.

We submitted a song we wrote with Jenn Shepard called "You Make Me Feel" to one of TAXI's Industry Listings. We didn't hear anything back for a while and eventually our TAXI membership ran out. Thankfully, we began to get so busy with production and writing gigs that we decided to wait and renew our membership at a later date.

Little did we know that TAXI had sent our song to a production/management company that was looking for material for a young, male Pop artist they were developing.

Later that year, Jesse McCartney's managers called us saying they had just heard "You Make Me Feel" on a CD they got from TAXI and wanted to have him cut the song. Although Jesse decided not to record "You Make Me Feel", his managers asked us to write more songs for him. We wrote a handful and they ended up putting his vocal on two of the tracks we produced, "Take Your Sweet Time" and "Beautiful Soul".

"Beautiful Soul" got played on Radio Disney, and Jesse's management got the song to a label executive at Disney. Soon after, Jesse was signed to Hollywood Records. "Beautiful Soul" became his first single, and we both signed publishing deals with Disney Music Publishing.

Jesse McCartney's album (entitled "Beautiful Soul") has gone Platinum in the U.S. and Australia.

"Beautiful Soul" went to #3 on Radio and Records CHR Pop Chart, #5 on Billboard's Top 40 Chart, #19 on Billboard's Adult Top 40 chart, it's a Platinum Digital Single Download, it's on the Gold-selling 'Cinderella Story' Motion Picture Soundtrack, the Gold-selling 'That's So Raven' TV Soundtrack, and the video was nominated for Best Pop Video at a 2005 MTV Video Music Awards."

All of this came about because Adam and Andy sent a song to TAXI. Call for our free information kit.



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▲ SHOF, Linda Perry at USC

Students from USC's Thornton School paid tribute to Grammy-winning writer/producer and 2015 Songwriters Hall of Fame Inductee Linda Perry during the school's Master Sessions event held in Los Angeles. Pictured (l-r): Barbara Cane, SHOF West Coast Committee member; Chris Sampson, Vice Dean of Contemporary Music, USC; Linda Perry; Mary Jo Mennella, SHOF Board Member; and Randy Poe, SHOF West Coast Committee member.

► Mining Gold at SONGS

SONGS Music Publishing has appointed David Gold to the newly created position of Business & Legal Affairs in its New York HQ. In his new role, Gold will handle all transactional legal matters including the drafting and negotiation of deals with writers and artists, notices, licenses and sub-publishing agreements for SONGS and the company's newly launched record label, RECORDS. Songspub.com has more info.





▲ Streetlight Cadence: Fresh Sounds from The Islands

Now living in Southern California, sterling songs, lustrous harmonies and dexterous musical interplay are helping this vibrant Honolulu quartet catch a wave on the mainland. Hear them performing in the streets, in Hollywood listening rooms or on their upcoming December tour back in Oahu. More details at streetlightcadence.com.

22 Years of Panzer at UCLA Extension

Now in its 22nd year, hit songwriter Marty Panzer's UCLA Extension winter Master Class, "Writing Lyrics That Succeed and Endure," imparts a breadth of wisdom that can deeply impact songwriters. The class is geared toward those with a body of work who are intent on reaching a wider audience with their songs.

Best known for his long collaborative relationship with Barry Manilow—with whom he penned the career-defining "Even Now," "It's a Miracle" and "This One's for You"—Panzer also co-wrote (with Steve Dorff) "Through the Years" for Kenny Rogers, plus cuts for a roster that includes Gladys Knight, Julio Iglesias, Dolly Parton and many others. He has contributed to multiple projects for Disney, including songs for *Lion King II* and *Pocahontas II*.

For his classes, Panzer invites a broad cross-section of industry friends, such as past guests Barbara Cane - BMI VP, and songwriters Cynthia Weil, Stephen Schwartz, David Zippel and Manilow who elucidate on the intricacies of their craft.

Classes are held on Thursday nights and begin Jan. 7 for 12 meetings. You can save money by registering early through Dec. 7. Call 310-825-9064, or if outside California, 800-825-9064. You can email espa@unex.ucla.edu and read about the class at uclaextension.org. Info on Panzer is at martypanzer.com.

Julia Michaels Says "Sorry"

A Song Biz shout-out to our March 2015 Profile subject, Julia Michaels, who is continuing with her banner year by co-writing "Sorry" by Justin Bieber and multiple tracks including the title track and lead single "Me & The Rhythm" on the Billboard 200 No. 1-debuting Selena Gomez full-length, *Revival*.

Appearing as a feature and co-writing Jason Derulo's "Trade Hearts," the busy co-writer also collaborated with Zedd on his latest, *True Colors*, co-writing three tracks. In additional to Michaels' co-write on Kelly Clarkson's "War Paint," other major credits include "Good For You" (ft. A$AP Rocky) by Gomez, "Poison" by Rita Ora and Hailee Steinfeld's debut single, "Love Myself."

You read about "Pop's Mystery Girl" in *Music Connection* first: Our Song Biz Profile of Michaels marked the 21-year-old's inaugural interview for a national press outlet. More info is at aaminc.com.

BMI Foundation Scholarships

The John Lennon Scholarships are an annual competition open to student songwriters and composers of contemporary musical genres including alternative, pop, rock, indie, electronica, R&B and experimental. Over the past 18 years, more than $360,000 in scholarships has been awarded to talented young musicians from colleges and universities throughout the United States, making this award one of the nation's most esteemed accolades for emerging songwriters. Established in 1997 by Yoko Ono in conjunction with the BMI Foundation, this scholarship program honors the memory of one of the preeminent songwriters of the 20th century: John Lennon. Lennon's enormous creative legacy includes such songs as, "I Want To Hold Your Hand," "Strawberry Fields," "Imagine," "I Am the Walrus," "All You Need Is Love" and "Come Together," and continues to inspire and uplift new generations of music lovers.

Through the generosity of Ono and Gibson Musical Instruments, three scholarships totaling $20,000 are presented annually for the best original songs submitted to the competition. Applicants must be U.S. college students between the ages of 17 and 24.

Applications must be submitted online no later than Feb. 15, 2016. For complete info, including a list of the contest's judging panel, visit bmi.foundation.org.



▲ SESAC Honors Country and Americana

SESAC kicked off CMA Week by honoring the songwriters and music publishers behind the year's most-performed Country and Americana songs at the organization's Nashville Music Awards at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Pictured (l-r): Tim Fink, SESAC; Cary Barlowe, SESAC Songwriter of the Year; Wyatt Durrette, songwriter; and Shannan Hatch, SESAC.

Sony/ATV Opens Pandora's Box

Pandora and Sony/ATV Publishing have announced a landmark multi-year licensing agreement for Sony/ATV's catalog of musical works. The direct publishing deal creates business benefits for Pandora, while modernizing compensation for Sony/ATV and its songwriters in the U.S.

While specific terms of the multi-year agreement are confidential, the companies worked together to build an innovative win-win approach to publisher economics. Sony/ATV achieved its goal of delivering improved performance royalties for its songwriters while Pandora will benefit from greater rate certainty and the ability to add new flexibility to the company's product offering over time. The public performance royalties Pandora also pays to rights holders of master recordings are not affected by this agreement.

Sony/ATV has been telegraphing its desire to bypass Performing Rights Organizations and deal directly with Pandora for months. Under the just announced direct agreement, the music publisher says it can deliver improved performance royalties for its songwriters. For its part, Pandora will benefit from greater rate certainty at a time when regulators are reviewing rates, as well as have "the ability to add new flexibility to the company's product offering over time."

For additional details go to sonyatv.com.

Songwriters Collective in NoHo

If you are in Los Angeles and write songs, you need to know about the Los Angeles Songwriters Collective. The group is currently meeting on the first Monday of every month at TeaPop, 5050 Vineland Ave. in the NoHo arts district.

Founded in 2012, the Collective says, "We are active creators and songwriters that equip, encourage and support other songwriters to build an authentic community that invests in artists to help them reach their goals and dreams." Join their lively Facebook page, or check out their website, lasongwriterscollective.com.

Taylor's Swiftly Acting Legal Team

Taylor Swift is facing a $42 million lawsuit for alleged plagiarism in her song "Shake It Off." The lawsuit was filed by Jesse Braham—who performs as "Jesse Graham," a deeply under-the-radar R&B singer, who alleges that Swift lifted lyrics from his song "Haters Gonna Hate." Interestingly, Graham is representing himself according to the lawsuit he filed, "which contains handwritten content and is clearly not the work of a professional lawyer." The suit asserts that lyrics of Swift's chorus ("Cause the players gonna play, play, play, play, play / And the haters gonna hate, hate, hate, hate, hate") are similar to his lyrics, "Haters gonna hate / players gonna play."

It is also reported that Braham/Graham, who runs a non-denominational church called New Day Worldwide, plans to sue CNN because the title of its morning program is *New Day*.

Meanwhile, on another front, Swift is also being sued by David Mueller, a former Denver radio host who claims he was fired because of what he describes as false accusations that he groped her during a backstage photo session in June 2013. Instead, he asserts, it was one of his bosses who touched her inappropriately. Last month, Swift counter-sued Mueller, claiming Mueller was the lone groper.

DAN KIMPEL, author of six music industry books, is an instructor at Musicians Institute in Hollywood, CA. He lectures at colleges and conferences worldwide.



▲ ASCAP Goes Presidential

The ASCAP Country Music Awards were held in downtown Nashville, kicking off CMA Awards week in Music City. The event brought out top country hit makers and other luminaries, including former President Jimmy Carter and pop star Justin Timberlake, on hand to honor friend and ASCAP Voice of Music Award winner Trisha Yearwood. Ashley Gorley was named Songwriter of the Year, and Warner/Chappell took top publishing honors. Pictured (l-r): Carter and Yearwood.



▲ UMPG Climbs with Hill

Buzz act Kacy Hill has signed an exclusive global publishing agreement with Universal Music Publishing Group (UMPG). Her debut EP, *Bloo* (GOOD Music/Def Jam), was released in October with the single "Foreign Fields" registering over 1.6 million Spotify plays. Pictured (l-r): Derek Dolin, Senior Manager of Three Six Zero; Kacy Hill; and Jody Gerson, Chairman and CEO of UMPG.

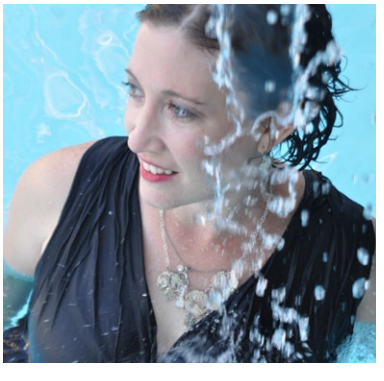


▲ BMI Honors Rodney Clawson

Congrats to *MC* Song Biz Profile subject, Rodney Clawson, who was named Songwriter of the Year as BMI proudly presented its 2015 BMI Country Awards in Nashville. Honored along with him that evening was the prolific songwriting career of BMI Icon Mac Davis, as well as the Country Songwriter, Song and Publisher of the Year. The 63rd annual event also celebrated the songwriters and publishers of the most-performed country songs of the past year.

▶ Sierra West: SD Music Award Winner

Song Biz congratulates San Diego singer/songwriter Sierra West on her 2015 San Diego Music Award for best singer/songwriter, an award she also claimed in 2014. Her latest full-length is *Long Way Down*, released by Big West Music. For info, check out the label home at bigwestmusic.com or her site, sierrarocks.com.



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"Music Connection continues to be a relevant publication. They were one of the first music magazines to write about Live From Daryl's House, when it was a fledgling web show. They have adapted with the changing music scene, as well as the ever changing technology associated with it." – Daryl Hall
MUSIC CONNECTION

Dave Bassett

Co-Writer on "Ex's and Oh's" and "Fight Song"

With co-writing and production credits on two mega-successful songs, "Ex's and Oh's" by Elle King and "Fight Song" by Rachel Platten, Dave Bassett is enjoying a banner year. "Both are new voices, examples of stars aligning and me being at the right place at the right time," says the songwriter/producer/musician of these tandem hits.

As a diverse range of credits from Fitz and the Tantrums to Idina Menzel confirms, Bassett's ability to contribute whatever elements are needed in multiple styles is his forte. "I've always prided myself on being able to step into any room and being able to contribute, whether it's lyrics, melody, track or whatever," he notes.

Originally from Chicago, Bassett came up as a rock musician. He was working a straight job in finance when, in a prophetic episode, he was pulled up from the audience at a U2 concert to play guitar onstage. "It was a sign that there was something out there for me," he recalls.

He moved to Los Angeles for a band project. "I had a friend from high school, named Rob Jacobs, who ended up being a successful engineer, working with The Eagles and Don Henley, and cutting his teeth working with Jimmy Iovine. Rob had an early demo tape and Jimmy offered this non-existent band studio time and that was the catalyst."


NICK STABILE

But Bassett still needed an income, so Jacobs referred him to the Record Plant, the recording studio where he toiled as a night janitor. "It was the heyday of hair metal and a lot of really crazy rock&roll going on. It was really fun—I learned a lot about the studio and the personalities of the business really quickly."

Bassett worked with Shinedown and was honored with ASCAP Pop Awards for the band's "Second Chance" in 2010 and "If You Only Knew" in 2011 before going on to co-write their next two full-length albums. He also worked with Halestorm, and contributed as a songwriter to their Grammy-winning 2013 hit "Love Bites (So Do I)."

For the millions who have viewed Elle King's "Ex's and Oh's" video, Bassett says that her onscreen portrayal is dead-on. "You see so many artists who are so cautious about the way that they're presenting themselves, trying to please the record companies. She is her own person and that's probably what I love the most about her. A close second is her voice, which is amazing." Written with Bassett playing an old Kay guitar, the song was recorded in a couple of hours. "The demo is actually the recording. She sang it three or four times and all the guitars are first takes."

"Fight Song," Bassett says, mirrors the frustration that Rachel Platten was experiencing in her career. Although the label liked it, nothing happened until Platten began doing a record on her own and released the song on the Internet. "She found out about this woman on the East Coast, who had advanced stage cancer and 'Fight Song' became her mantra. Rachel took a camera crew and surprised the woman with the song. The video went viral and picked up some steam, then a station in Baltimore started playing it and requests came flooding in."

With a solar-powered studio in Malibu and a variety of projects on the horizon including machineheart, a new band signed to Columbia that he is developing, Bassett appreciates the success that his longevity has provided. He also wants new creators to understand that they have unprecedented power. "When I started out you needed to go to a big studio. Now with a laptop and a couple of hundred bucks you can have the same program that every world-class producer is using. Learn to do everything yourself so you don't have to rely on anyone."

Basset notes that because of recording software and TuneCore, an aspiring artist can not only make a record but also distribute it in the same fashion as a major label. "When kids realize they have that power, then they're not creating music for their own amusement in the bedroom. They have a voice that can be heard around the world."

Contact Carla Senft, Press Here, 212-246-2640, Carla@pressherepublicity.com



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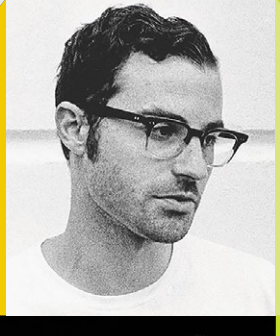
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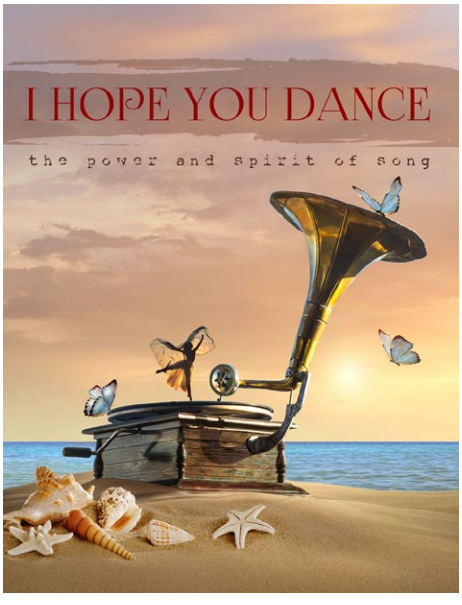
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DROPS

Noisey, started by **VICE** in 2011, just debuted the first art of ***Hot Sugar's Cold World,*** a new documentary series on producer **Nick Koenig**, aka **Hot Sugar**. In the first episode, Koenig ponders the question of why instruments are needed any more as he samples a $90,000 grand piano while posing as an interested buyer, records legendary filmmaker and musician **Jim Jarmusch** and raps with **Kool A.D.** (formerly of **Das Racist**). The first episode can be watched at Noisey.vice.com. For details, contact David.Marek@Vice.com.

Eleven years after releasing their live DVD and album, 2004's ***Argue With A Tree***, **Blue October** dropped ***Things We Do At Night (Live From Texas)*** as a double-disc DVD and Blu-Ray combo and double-disc CD album. Filmed at the **House of Blues** in Dallas, TX, *Things We Do At Night (Live From Texas)* features the hits and beloved tracks from the past four albums, including the Platinum-selling ***Foiled*** in 2006, ***Approaching Normal*** in 2009, ***Any Man In America*** in 2011 and ***Sway*** in 2013. The performance also features Billboard-charting singles **"Into The Ocean," "Hate Me," "Dirt Room," "Say It," "Bleed Out"** and the band's most recent hit single, **"Fear."** For more information, email Eddie Huddleston at Eddie@Girlie.com.



The chart-topping song **"I Hope You Dance,"** written 15 years ago by Nashville songwriters **Mark D. Sanders** and **Tia Sillers**, years later spurred a documentary, ***I Hope You Dance: The Power and Spirit of Song***, by award-winning writer and director **John Scheinfeld** of ***The U.S. vs. John Lennon*** and ***Who Is Harry Nilsson*** acclaim. Produced by **Spencer Proffer**, the film premiered on Thanksgiving on the **Hallmark Movies & Mysteries** channel. As its title suggests, the documentary captures the impact and sometimes unexpected effects of music. Contact Jean@CO5Media.com for more information.

Republic Records just released the ***Love the Coopers*** holiday-themed soundtrack album, including the studio reunion of **Robert Plant** and **Alison Krauss** on their Christmas original **"The Light of Christmas Day."** Also included are **Otis Redding's "Merry Christmas Baby," Sixpence None the Richer's "Carol of the Bells"** and seasonal classics from **Bob Dylan, Nina Simone, Fleet Foxes** and more. The film opened Nov. 13, the same day as the album's release. For additional information, contact Beau Benton at Beau.Benton@UMusic.com.





Kentucky rockers **Black Stone Cherry** catapulted from 200-capacity venues to headlining their first arena tour in just seven years, and they've just dropped their debut live performance DVD/Blu-ray with an accompanying CD. Entitled ***Thank You: Livin' Live***, the set was released on **Eagle Vision** and was shot on the band's **"Magic Mountain"** tour one year prior to the disc's scheduled release date at the band's sold-out **Birmingham LG Arena** show in 2014. The filmed performance includes favorites from the band's four studio albums, bonus interview material and other live tracks shot from the 2015 **Download Festival**. For additional information, email Carol@KayosProductions.com.

Dec. 1 is the release date of the documentary ***AMY***, chronicling the rise and tragic fall of multi-Grammy-winning singer **Amy Winehouse**. It will be available on Blu-ray (plus Digital HD) and DVD (plus Digital) from **Lionsgate Home Entertainment**. Helmed by the award-winning director of ***Senna***, and featuring raw footage of Winehouse, this "extraordinary, powerful" (Indiewire) film is the best-performing box office biographical documentary to date this year, and features never-before-seen footage (including collaborations with her musical idol **Tony Bennett** and producer **Mark Ronson**) along with interviews with her closest friends and family, as well as previously unreleased music recordings.

Certified Fresh by **Rotten Tomatoes**, the film was a **Cannes Film Festival** Official Selection, and was released theatrically in 2015 by **A24**. Featuring audio commentary by the director, never before seen performances by Winehouse and deleted scenes, *AMY* will be available on Blu-ray and DVD for the suggested retail price of $24.99 and $19.98, respectively. Check out amy-movie.com.

OPPS

The ***HA!*** podcast is an Internet radio show and live podcast that airs Monday nights and is looking for interviewees who can talk about music, film, pop culture and more. Email **Max Holiday** and **Jason Schindler** at The HApod@gmail.com for booking inquiries.

Recorded podcast ***Strange in the Membrane*** is all about movies, animations, television shows, webisodes and video games based on comic books, and its creators are looking for guests with the same interests. Booking queries should be directed to Jeff Strange at AskJeffStrange@gmail.com.

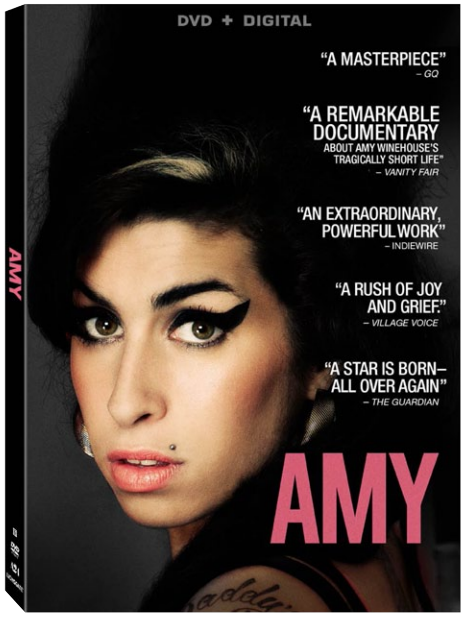
LA 18, the premiere Asian language TV station in the United States that broadcasts throughout Southern California, is looking for a director of live programming and production. The hire will be responsible for planning, coordinating and

directing the operation and staff of 19 full-time employees regarding the stations local studio live program production, studio production, field production and post production units. Interested candidates can send resumes to LA 18 KSCI-TV, 1990 S. Bundy Dr., Suite 850 in Los Angeles, or email Ckwak@la18.tv.

PROPS

Award-winning gaming composer **Norihiko Hibino**, revered for two installments of his ***Metal Gear Solid*** series ***Bayonetta*** and ***Bayonetta 2***, just joined the **Scarlet Moon Productions** roster of world-renowned talent. A Japanese composer and **Berklee College of Music** graduate, Hibino is also regarded for the ***Prescription for Sleep: Game Music Lullabies*** series.

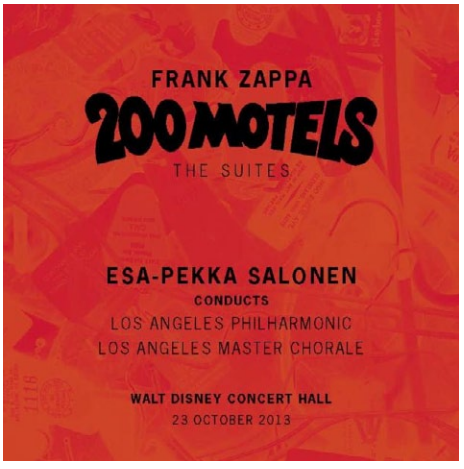
He formed his own sound production studio, **GEM Impact**, and also dedicates much of his career to musical therapy and how music can impact both body and mind, resulting in the founding of **Hibino Sound Therapy Lab** and the speaker system, **Rinshu**. At Scarlet Moon, Hibino joins **Sakimoto (*Valkyria Chronicles, Final Fantasy XII*), Hiroki Kikuta (*Secret of Mana, Indivisible*), Jake Kaufman (*Shovel Knight*), Vince DiCola** and **Kenny Meriedeth (*Transformers: The Movie* (1986), *Rocky IV*)** and others. Contact Jayson Napolitano at Jayson@ScarletMoonProductions.com.



Eminem and **Shady Records** have partnered with **Music Powered Games** to release the new mobile game ***Shady Wars***, which is available now for iOS and Android at shady.sr/ShadyWars. The game delivers a combination of rhythm and arcade gameplay powered by Shady Records' music, including Eminem's **"Phenomenal"** and **"Kings Never Die"** from the soundtrack to the movie ***Southpaw***, which was executive produced by the superstar rapper.

"This is a new, fun and potentially addictive way for fans to interact with and experience music from our label," says Shady Records CEO and co-founder **Paul Rosenberg** of *Shady Wars*.

Releasing a freemium game rewards millions of Eminem fans with a new way to experience Shady music. The game also hosts a combination of in-game ads and in-app purchases. Eminem's fans are already playing the game and sharing their reward stats on Twitter, which is driving downloads of *Shady Wars* and introducing Shady music to hosts of potential new fans. For more details, visit shadywars.com/getgame.



Congrats to the estate of **Frank Zappa**. A recently released live orchestral performance of a Frank Zappa masterpiece signifies the 101st Zappa album release as well as the last record **Gail Zappa** worked on creatively. On a night in October 2013, **Walt Disney Concert Hall** was the "it" spot in Los Angeles when **Esa-Pekka Salonen** conducted the **Los Angeles Philharmonic** and the **Los Angeles Master Chorale in** a sold-out orchestral performance of ***Frank Zappa's 200 Motels (The Suites)***. This was a one-night-only performance of Zappa's 1971 work, which recently dropped Nov. 20 on CD and digital audio on **Zappa Records/UMe**. The release will include photos from the live performance and essays from the show and recording's producers, Gail Zappa and **Frank Filipetti,** the show's director **James Darrah**, performers including **Diva Zappa** and **Michael Des Barres**, former Zappa band member **Scott Thunes** and more. For more information, email Press@LAPhil.org.

THE CRYSTAL METHOD

The Crystal Method, the Las Vegas-based electronic duo, recently released a statement condemning the Russian state broadcaster **VGTRK**, which used the band's song **"High Roller"** to soundtrack drone footage from Syria. It didn't go over well with the artists, who said they were against violence as a means to solve conflict. "The use of our music in this context is in no way authorized, and The Crystal Method do not condone the use of violence for the resolution of any conflict. Our hearts go out to the people of Syria affected by this terrible war and their friends and families," they said. For details, contact Alexandra Greenberg at AGreenberg@MSOPR.com.

JESSICA PACE lives in the Nashville area and writes about music, local government and education. Contact her at j.marie.pace@gmail.com.

Out Take



Jeremy Tisser

Composer

Contact: Ashley Moore, Ashley@KrakowerPolingPR.com
Web: JeremyNathanTisser.com
Most Recent: *Actor for Hire*

Jeremy Tisser is only 28 years old, which comes with pros and cons in the composing world. Tisser, who started out studying music business with dreams of being a studio drummer, ultimately stumbled into composing when he found out there was such a thing as a film scoring degree at the University of Southern California. He showed some of his music to the department head, who was won over by how "outside the box" it was, and learned about orchestra from there. "I fell in love with creating music to go behind a picture," he says.

Tisser had Emmy-winning composer Mark Watters as a mentor, which led to credits on projects including *Jurassic World*, Disney's Oscar-nominated short animation *Get a Horse!* and Disney's *Pixar in Concert*. That fortuitous meeting spurred from Tisser's involvement with his school's Studio Ensemble program.

When it comes to his young age, Tisser says it can be a roadblock as well as blessing in the composing world. "Elmer Bernstein wrote the score to the *The Ten Commandments* at 28. Igor Stravinsky wrote *The Firebird* at 23 and *The Rite of Spring* at 27," Tisser says. "It doesn't necessarily have to do with age, but when you're telling a story or relate it to a mass audience, the more life experience you have, the more you can tell a story. Older people have survived more of life and when they get a film that's dramatic or adventurous, they have more of life to pull from."

That said, the aforementioned composers lived in different times. Today is a "free for all," Tisser says. "It seems now you can be 25 and score 27 feature films if you have that kind of mad work ethic, and those can be enough to get you a movie." Regardless of the time, persistence is still the key, he says.

Tisser is now working on a score for a virtual reality game for the company Survios, but can divulge little about the project at this time.

HOT 100 Live Unsigned Artists & Bands of 2015

COMPILED BY BERNARD BAUR

EAGERLY AWAITED EVERY DECEMBER, the *Music Connection* Hot 100 puts the spotlight on superior live performers who caught our eyes and ears over the past 12 months. Contributors to this list are not only *MC* staffers and freelance writers, but club bookers and other industry pro's nationwide. *Music Connection* currently has reviewers in Los Angeles, New York, Austin, Nashville, Chicago, Boston and Detroit. If you'd like to put yourself in the running for a live review, go to musicconnection.com/reviews/get-reviewed. It's always free and always easy.

Adventure Band
Folk Rock
Los Angeles, CA
adventurebandmusic.com

Alexa Melo
Alternative Rock
Dartmouth, MA
alexamelo.com

Alexz Johnson
Soulful Folk Pop
Vancouver, BC
alexzjohnson.com

Amanda Lamb
Country Pop
Orange County, CA
amandalambmusic.com

Amber Rubarth
Folk
Nashville, TN
amberrubarth.com

Anthony De La Torre
Rock
Nashville, TN
delatorreband.com

Aradia
Electro-Pop/Synth Rock
Los Angeles, CA
aradiamusic.com

Art Decade
Symph Pop
Boston, MA
artdecade.com

Average Mammals
Indie/Alternative
Minneapolis, MN
averagemammals.com

Bad Bad Meow
Americana-Punk
Chicago, IL
badbadmeow.com

Bandit
Indie Rock
Nashville, TN
fb.com/thebandbandit

Band Practice
Post-Teen Angst
Brooklyn, NY
fb.com/bandpracticebandpractice

Battling Giants
Rock/Stoner/Blues
Omaha, NE
fb.com/battlinggiants

Bearwulf
Rock
Long Beach, CA
bearwulf.LA

Ben Mauro
Singer/Songwriter
Los Angeles, CA
benmauro.com

Benny and The Jets
Classic Rock
Inkster, MI
fb.com/bennyandthejets

Boat Race Weekend
Pop-Punk/Emo
Spokane, WA
boatraceweekend.com

Bondurant
Alternative Singer/Songwriter
Nashville, TN
bondurantmusic.com

Chris Price
Singer/Songwriter
Los Angeles, CA
chrispricemusic.bandcamp.com

Cuñao
Latin Folk
Los Angeles, CA
cunaomusic.com

Dana Williams
Folk/Jazz/Soul
Los Angeles, CA
danawilliamsofficial.com

Danger Escape
Loud Alternative Rock
Los Angeles, CA
dangerescape.com

Dankrupt
Cali Rock
Los Angeles, CA
dankruptmusic.com

Dark Waves
Dark Indie Pop
Los Angeles, CA
darkwavesmusic.com

Diet Cig
Slop Pop
New Paltz, NY
fb.com/dietcigmusic

Double Naught Spy Car
Instrumental Punk/Jazz/Surf
Los Angeles, CA
doublenaughtspycar.com

Eric Slater & Co.
Alternative Rock
Los Angeles, CA
ericslater.com

Evan Roth
Alternative, Film Music
Dove Canyon, CA
evanrothmusic.com

Four Eyed Four
Stoner Pop
Los Angeles, CA
4eyed4.bandcamp.com/releases

Ghost Lit Kingdom
Indie Rock
Los Angeles, CA
ghostlitkingdom.com

GOH
Acoustic Rock Jazz
Los Angeles, CA
composelife.com

Hipnotics
Psychedelic Rock
Los Angeles, CA
thehipnotics.com

Honey and Jude
Pop
Los Angeles, CA
honeyandjudemusic.com

Howling Diablos
Rock/R&B
Royal Oak, MI
howlingdiablos.com

HUDSON
Rock & Roll
Los Angeles, CA
hudsontheband.com

I am Blox
Indie Rock/Hip-Hop
Dallas, TX
iamblox.com

Incendio
Latin Guitar World Fusion
Los Angeles, CA
incendioband.com

Insect Surfers
Instrumental Rock/Soundtracks
Los Angeles, CA
insectsurfers.com

Isaac Rother & The Phantoms
Ghoulish Rock
Los Angeles, CA
isaacrother.com

J'Chelle
Pop
Lakewood, CA
jchelle.com

Jeremiah Daly
Indie Folk
Jacksonville, FL
jeremiahdalymusic.com

Kerchief
Indie Alternative Rock
Chattanooga, TN
kerchiefmusic.com

Kings of Carnage
Heavy Metal
Los Angeles, CA
kingsofcarnage.com

Last Bison
Indie Rock/Alternative Folk
Chesapeake, VA
thelastbison.com

Loren Smith
Soul Pop
Los Angeles, CA
sanglorensmith.com

Mackin Carroll
Alternative Folk
Los Angeles, CA
mackincarroll.com

Mad Revival
Alternative Rock/Blues
Los Angeles, CA
madrevival.com

Magnastic
Rock, Hip-Hop, Funk, Ukulele Comedy
West Hills, CA
magnastic.bandcamp.com

Mark Mackay
Country Rock
Hollywood, CA
markmackayofficial.com

Migrant Kids
Synth Pop Rock
Austin, TX
migrantkids.com

MILCK
Cinematic Soul Pop
Los Angeles, CA
milckmusic.com

Myra Washington
Pop
Los Angeles, CA
reverbnation.com/myrawashingtonsinger

My Terrible Friend
Folk
San Francisco, CA
fb.com/MyTerribleFriend

Native June
Indie Rock/Grit Pop
Los Angeles, CA
nativejune.com

Nick Hawk
Rap/Metal Rap
Las Vegas, NV
nickhawkexplicit.com

Oldchild
Garage Blues-Rock
Los Angeles, CA
fb.com/oldchildband

Only On Tuesdays
Indie Pop
Los Angeles, CA
onlyontuesdaysmusic.com

Ovi Rey
Urban/Latin/Dance
Los Angeles, CA
fb.com/ovireyalooso

Post Paradise
Alternative Rock
Ft. Collins, CO
postparadiserock.com

Red Pill
Hip-Hop
Detroit, MI
fb.com/redpillrap

reKnHaunchu
EDM
Los Angeles, CA
reknhaunchu.com

Rick Elliot
Country
San Diego, CA
rickelliotmusic.com

Riders Against The Storm
Hip-Hop/Soul
Austin, TX
rashiphop.com

Sad Robot
Indie Electronica/Cine-Pop
Los Angeles, CA
mysadrobot.com

Sail
Classic and Alt-Rock, Pop Rock
Clarkston, MI
sailbandofficial.com

Sam Sims
Folk Rock
Rumson, NJ
samsimsmusic.com

Sarah Petrella
Country Rock
Los Angeles, CA
sarahpetrella.com

Silent War
Pop Rock
Los Angeles, CA
thesilentwarmusic.com

Silver Blueberry
Psychedelic Post-Punk
Houston, TX
fb.com/silverblueberryhouston

Slapbak
Funk Rock
Orange County, CA
slapbak.com

Space Lemon
Alternative Rock
Hollywood, CA
spacelemonmusic.com

Stash
Electro Pop
Los Angeles, CA
dancestash.com

State Line Syndicate
Pop Punk
Los Angeles, CA
statelinesyndicate.com

Steven Casper & Cowboy Angst
Americana Roots Rock
Los Angeles, CA
caspermusic.com

Stitches
Rap
Miami, FL
fb.com/StitchesTMI

Strangers You Know
Indie Folk Pop
Los Angeles, CA
strangersyouknow.com

Street Corner Renaissance
A Cappella Doo Wop/Classic Soul
Los Angeles, CA
streetcornerrenaissance.com

Sugar Fly
Rock/Soul
Los Angeles, CA
sugarflyband.com

Summer Wars
Pop-Punk
Raleigh, NC
fb.com/summerwarsnc

Sylvia Juncosa
Guitar Shredder
Los Angeles, CA
sylviajuncosa.com

Tacoma Narrows
Indie Folk Rock
New York, NY
tacomanarrowsband.com

Terraplane Sun
Indie Rock
Venice, CA
terraplanesun.com

The Clouds Are Ghosts
Ambient Electronic Pop
Austin, TX
cloudsareghosts.com

The Cover Letter
Americana Folk Pop
Austin, TX
thecoverlettermusic.com

The Fontaines
New-Wop
Los Angeles, CA
thatfontainesound.com

The Podunk Poets
Country Western
Los Angeles, CA
thepodunkpoets.com

The Royal Blackbirds
Garage Rock/Blues
East Detroit, MI
fb.com/royalblackbirds

The Scorch Sisters
Blues-Rock/R&B Revue
Los Angeles, CA
thescorchsisters.com

The Stereophones
Nonsense Pop
Los Angeles, CA
fb.com/thestereophones

The Towels
Eccentric Rock
Los Angeles, CA
thetowelsband.com

Travis Garland
Alternative R&B Pop
Los Angeles, CA
travisgarland.com

Tyler Lyle
Folk-Pop/Blues
Santa Monica, CA
tylerlyle.com

Valley Shine
Indie Folk
Los Angeles, CA
valleyshineband.com

VerseCity
Alternative Pop Rock
Houston, TX
versecity.com

Versus Me
Metalcore
Janesville, WI
fb.com/vsmeband

Via Victoria
Alternative Rock
Los Angeles, CA
viavictoriaband.com

Vinyl Soul
Latin Soul/Hip-Hop
Hollywood, CA
vinylsoulmusic.com

Wavy Maze
Indie Rock
Minneapolis, MN
fb.com/wavymaze

Whiskey Sour
Acoustic Folk-Rock
Garland, TX
fb.com/thewhiskeysour

Young Scum
Jangle Rock/Fuzz-Pop
Richmond, VA
fb.com/youngscumva



► The Fighters Focus Right with Dante

Foo Fighters integrated several Focusrite RedNet Dante™ interfaces—D16R and MP8R—into their sound system for the band's "Sonic Highways World Tour." In addition, Reynolds uses a RedNet 4 Mic Preamp for system testing. Pictured: Phil Reynolds, System Technician for the Foo Fighters, with a gear rack featuring Focusrite RedNet D16R and RedNet 4. For more information, visit focusrite.com.



▲ 35 in Hollywood

Public relations and entertainment marketing firm Arslanian & Associates, Inc. celebrated its 35th anniversary at the Pig 'n Whistle in Hollywood. Pictured (l-r): Nyla Arslanian, Annie and Eric Bettelli and Oscar Arslanian. For more information, visit arslanianassociates.com.



▼ CMJ Rocks NYC

The CMJ Music Marathon celebrated its 35th year at its new headquarters, Dream Downtown in New York City. The music jam featured five nonstop days and nights of live performances from breakthrough and rising artists, including new Joe Jonas outfit DNCE, as well as workshops at YouTube Space. For more information, visit cmj.com.



◄ Bringing the Country to the Kids

Country sensation Cam was in Washington, D.C. for a performance as part of the grand opening of Seacrest Studios, opened by Children's National Health System in partnership with the Ryan Seacrest Foundation. The studio is located inside the Children's National Main Atrium at the Sheikh Zayed Campus for Advanced Children's Medicine. For more information, visit childrensnational.org.



▲ A Celebration of Vintage Rap T's

DJ Ross One and Bud Light presented the official NYC launch party for the book *Rap Tees: A Collection of Hip-Hop T-Shirts 1980-1999.* Curated by DJ Ross One and published through POWERHOUSE books, Rap Tees is a unique collection of over 500 of the rarest vintage hip-hop t-shirts from 1980-1999. Pictured (l-r): Dante Ross, Mark Ronson, DJ Ross One, Dev Hynes.



▲ Rally at TAXI

***Music Connection* gave away three ADK microphones at another successful TAXI Road Rally event in Los Angeles. Songwriters and music industry professionals had the opportunity to network and attend informative panels such as "Writing Radio Hits vs. Film/TV Songs" and Music Supervisor Listening and Q&As. TAXI Staffers pictured (l-r): Lisa Laracuente, Gabriel Morgan, Matt Abel, Briagha McTavish, Andy Allen, Ryan Detletsen, Henry Ingraham, Anthony Cozza and Angel Maradiaga. For more information, visit taxi.com.**

▶ Festive Fotos from Fun Fun Fun Fest

Festival-goers gathered once again in Austin, TX for the festivities of Fun Fun Fun Fest, which incorporated intense wrestling matches alongside the live music stages. The festival featured headlining acts such as Jane's Addiction, CHVRCHES, Odesza, Chromeo, Venom, our October 2013 cover band Coheed and Cambria and more. Pictured is Parquet Courts. For more photos, visit musicconnection.com/festive-fotos-from-fun-fun-fun-fest.





◀ Prism Celebrates 20th!

Prism Sound celebrated its 20th anniversary of opening its sales and support office in the U.S. Festivities took place at Sterling Sound Studios in New York during AES. Pictured (l-r): the U.S. Team - Frank Oglethorpe, Doug Ordon, Janice Norton and Melissa Simmons. For more information, visit prismsound.com.



▲ Moccio and Porter Earned It!

Stephan Moccio (pictured), who has been managed by Harris Institute honors grad Jamie Porter (inset) since 1995, co-produced and co-wrote three songs, including "Earned It" (from the *Fifty Shades of Grey* soundtrack), on The Weeknd's *Beauty Behind the Madness*. The album entered the Billboard album chart at No. 1 and remained there for three weeks. For more information, visit harrisinstitute.com.

MUSIC CONNECTION

Tidbits From Our Tattered Past



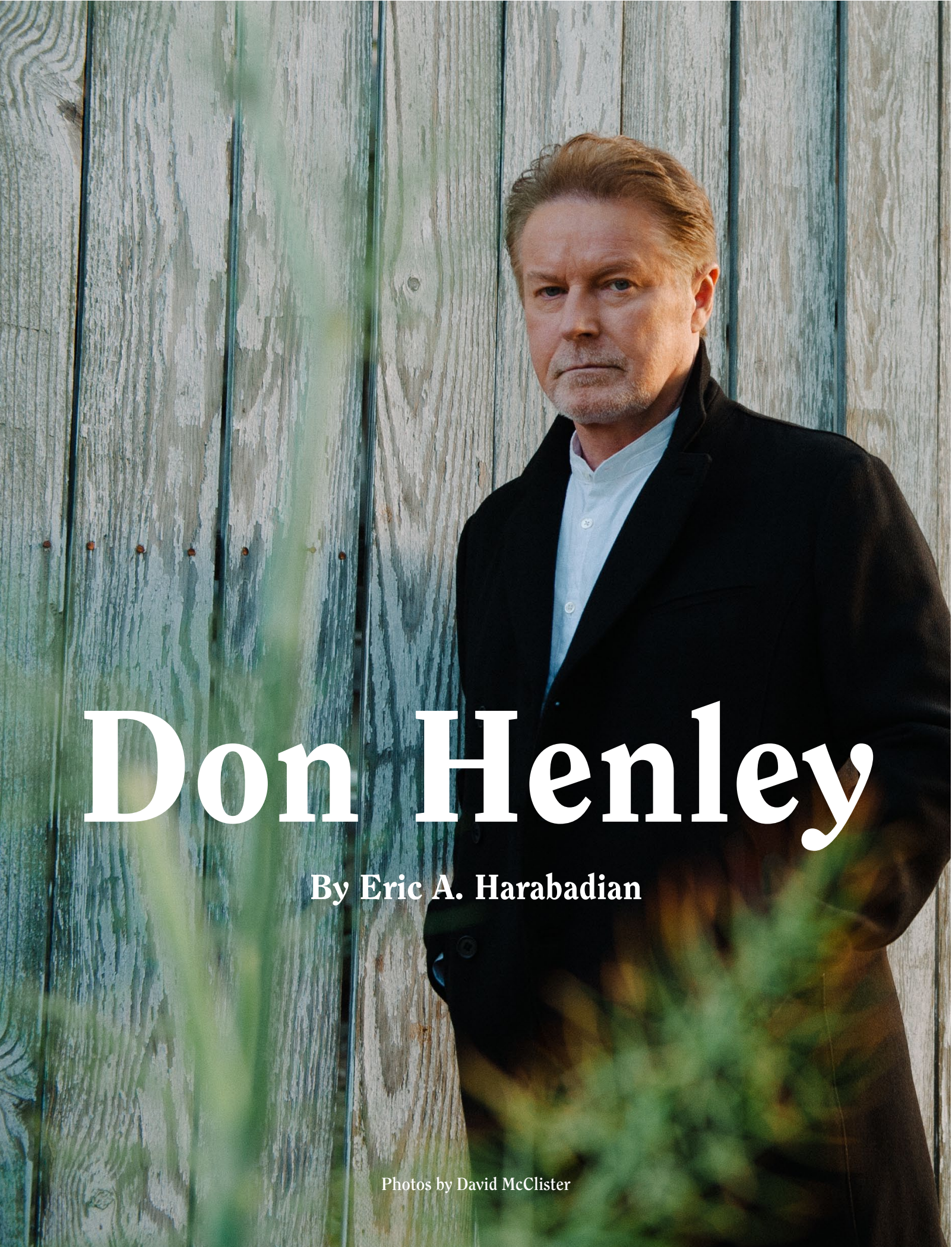
1985–Don Henley–#6

Eagles drummer/singer Henley was enjoying the success of his second solo release and the huge single "Boys of Summer" when *MC* hung with him for an interview. Of co-writing the song with a writer from outside his circle, Henley said, "It's really unhealthy to just stick together in little groups." Also in the issue: a profile of Latin Soul-man Coke Escovedo and a live review of Wham.



1994–The Ramones–#4

Music Connection looked back at 20 years of The Ramones, whose *Acid Eaters* covers compilation was newly released. Stated frontman Joey Ramone, "Being a band is about going out and playing live. Today, too many people sit on their asses and send their videos around, but video is really not what rock&roll is about." The issue also contains a live review of Mazzy Star and an exploration of the record promotion trade.



Don Henley

By Eric A. Harabadian

Photos by David McClister

Named for the northeastern Texas terrain in which he was raised, *Cass County* is multi-Grammy-winning singer/songwriter Don Henley's ode to small town America and the rich tapestry of humanity that runs through it. This is, arguably, The Eagles co-founder's most personal work and it has received critical acclaim across the board. *Music Connection* recently spoke with Henley about the impetus behind his first solo venture in 15 years, his songwriting process, his voice maintenance regimen, the star-studded list of guest singers he recruited and his working relationship with producer (and former Tom Petty drummer) Stan Lynch.



Music Connection: You've stated that *Cass County* is a work of interior rather than exterior landscapes. Can you explain that?

Don Henley: Yeah. It's more an album about looking back on my childhood and adolescent years. If you notice on the album I don't describe the landscape too much except in the song "Praying for Rain." But the rest of the songs are mostly about personal relationships. And they were influenced by music that I had heard going back to 1955 when I used to listen to the radio with my dad when I went to work with him.

MC: In addition to your originals, you've picked interesting covers.

Henley: The cover songs on this album span several decades, beginning with "When I Stop Dreaming," which was published in 1955, right up to the 2002 Tift Merritt title song from her debut album *Bramble Rose*. So the cover songs are just milestone songs and songs that I've loved that have influenced me—about one per decade. There's "When I Stop Dreaming" from 1955 and then the '60s, with "She Sang Hymns Out of Tune" and the Billy Sherrill song "Too Far Gone." And Merle Haggard's album *The Way I Am* came out in 1980 and that really blew me away. This all gave me a framework in terms of writing the original stuff.

MC: Is there a new song by you on the album that you feel the most personal connection to?

Henley: The most autobiographical song on the album is "Train in the Distance." That's about my actual childhood and the railroad tracks that ran by my mother's house that are still there. So, the album is more of a rumination, if you will, about the span of my life to this point. Some people would call it nostalgia, but I don't like that word. I like looking at the past and I like visiting the past, but I don't wanna live there. Just like I don't wanna live in my hometown (laughs).

MC: What's it like nowadays there?

Henley: My little hometown is one of those small towns in America that is fading and drying up. It's not the bustling little town it was when I was growing up there. It's shrunk from 2,500 people to 1,900 people. I think things have changed for a lot of small towns. … When the trucking industry became big after WWII they built bypasses around these little towns. So people don't come through anymore, they just zip on by. You know that happened in Winslow, Arizona (laughs). Route 66 used to go right through town. And they bypassed Winslow so they built that little park commemorating the song "Take it Easy" and they put a bronze statue out there to try to lure people there. So that's what we're trying to do in my hometown. We're trying to come up with things to revive it. I'm still a small town kid even though I've been around the world and seen a lot of things.

MC: It's great that you're using your art to call attention to these kinds of things.

Henley: I don't think my album is gonna revive my town or anything, but people need hope. They need something to hang on to in these times. The middle class is disappearing. The middle ground is disappearing, politically speaking. They can't even agree to disagree in Washington. And I wrote a song about that too called "No, Thank You." These are tough times.

MC: This is your first solo album in 15 years. What made the timing right to release it now?

Henley: Well, I finally got a break from touring with The Eagles. We've been on the road almost every year since we got back together in 1994. I also have three teenagers, so there hasn't been a whole lot of time for solo work. I started making this album about six years ago. And I just had to work on it during the little windows of time between touring with The Eagles and being a dad. I've never been that prolific. I've always believed in quality over quantity. But I'm gonna have to speed up the process because I don't have that much time. I can't wait another 15 years (laughs).

MC: Is there a favorite place you like to go when you have the time to write?

Henley: Yeah there are a few places. I've had really good luck off the Pacific Coast Highway out here. A lot of my '80s and '90s solo stuff was written out here. "Boys of Summer" was written at a place called Zuma Beach. I like to write in the car because it's a nice isolated space and the scenery's always changing. I live in Dallas, Texas and it's about 160 miles from my hometown in Cass County. And I've got a couple of hundred acres there. I have a campsite and I can build a camp fire and sit out there with a guitar and a beer or whatever and I have peace and quiet. I can write pretty much anywhere, except on the road. I don't have much luck when I'm on tour. My road manager and I exchange literally hundreds of emails a day so I don't have a lot of spare time. But the work gets done and I enjoy it. I feel fortunate to still be able to be doing this.

MC: You have so many amazing people that you sing with on this album. Did you have certain songs in mind where you thought this person would be a perfect fit to deliver a specific lyric?

Henley: When I wrote "The Cost of Living" I specifically had Merle Haggard in mind. Remember that album I mentioned he did, *The Way I Am*? He had a song on there called "Life's Just Not the Way it Used to Be." He's always been one of my favorite writers and singers, so I wrote my song with him in mind. When I picked the Louvin Brothers' song, "When I Stop Dreaming," I knew Dolly Parton was the only person to make that song work. When you're singing about teaching pebbles to grow and watching raindrops return to the sky you have to have somebody who has some authenticity in their voice to make that work. And she came into the studio and said she used to do that song with Porter Waggoner. And she did it in two takes.

MC: Were you able to get everyone you wanted?
Henley: The thrilling thing is that, of everybody I asked, nobody turned me down. I was so surprised and delighted when Mick Jagger agreed to sing on the album. We went through Don Was and he said that if Mick likes the song he'll do it. He's always been kind and generous to me throughout my career. But I just thought it would be a wacky but interesting combination to have him and Miranda Lambert sing on the same song. Because if you listen to the stuff The Stones recorded together between 1968 and 1972, there's a lot of country influence in there; "Wild Horses," "Faraway Eyes," "Dead Flowers."

MC: Speaking of vocals, you have one of the most distinctive voices in popular music. Any tips you could pass along? Every singer has a little regimen to keep their voice in shape.
Henley: There are three main things I need to do when I'm on tour. When I'm in between shows I have to remain quiet. I can't do interviews when I'm on tour, I can't go out to dinner. Because when I talk, especially when I have to talk above the din and ambient noise in a restaurant, I lose my voice. I usually lead a monk-like existence when I'm on the road and on my computer or reading or something.

The second thing is no alcohol. I love a good glass of wine as much as anybody in the world, but when I'm on tour I don't touch the stuff because it does something to my vocal cords.

And the third thing is sleep. I've tried doing vocal exercises but that just doesn't work with me. So what I do is carry a fitness trainer with me. I have a recumbent bike that they set up in my dressing room and I ride it 30 minutes before every show, which is the equivalent of about nine miles. And then when I'm soaking wet with sweat my trainer comes in and kicks my ass for another hour.

MC: I'm impressed!
Henley: Well, that's the only way I can keep doing this. In the corporate world they call it customer satisfaction. But it's really important to me that I do the best I can for the people who paid for seats to come and see me. My voice is my instrument, so if I don't do well, it's the worst feeling in the world. So, I do everything I can to make it the best performance it can be.

MC: You've worked with Stan Lynch as your co-producer and writer for years now. Is there a special bond that you have, being that you're both drummer/percussionists?
Henley: There is that, but we actually have a lot of other things in common. We both grew up in the south. He was raised in Gainesville, Florida. My mother was a school teacher and his father was a college professor. We both have been drummers in big famous bands and know what that's like. We both have a really strong work ethic. He's got a wonderful sense of humor and fun to write songs with. We can get in a room together and are comfortable enough to throw out ideas—even if they're bad ones—and feel okay about it. We both are into books and poetry and we each have a philosophical side. We're both do-it-yourself kinda guys. He's got a farm in Florida; I've got a farm in Texas. So we have a lot in common.

MC: That's a real blessing when you can work with someone like that.
Henley: Yeah. Someone else I have to give credit to is Steuart Smith. Steuart co-wrote, I think, three of the songs on this album and he is one of the best guitar players in the world. I don't think there would've been an Eagles reunion if I hadn't found that guy. I just happened to see him at a concert backing up Shawn Colvin and I said, "Wow, that guy is something else!" So he was a big part of the making of my current album and is also part of my solo band.





QUICK FACTS

- Don Henley's long-time manager is Irving Azoff.
- Don Henley is booked through Creative Artists Agency.
- Henley sang backup vocals on Bob Seger's hit "Against the Wind."
- The album *Cass County* was not only influenced by the music Henley heard growing up as a child in Texas, but by artists like Johnny Cash, George Jones and Elvis Presley when he would listen to the Louisiana Hayride radio broadcasts from Shreveport, LA.
- Among the singers Henley hoped to collaborate with on *Cass County* were George Jones, who unfortunately passed away before the sessions, and fellow Texan Kacey Musgraves whose touring schedule made her unavailable.
- Dolly Parton—who duets with Henley on the song "When I Stop Dreaming"—arrived at the *Cass County* sessions with female chauffer and hairdresser in tow. She mentioned the key was a tad too high for her but, instead of requesting a change, and being the consummate professional said, "I guess I'm going to rare back and get it done!"
- *Cass County* debuted at No. 1 on Billboard's Top Album Sales chart, marking the first No. 1 album in Don Henley's solo career. With more than 87,000 units sold in its first week of release, according to Nielsen Music, it was the top selling album of the week. *Cass County* is Henley's first solo album since *Inside Job*, which was released in May of 2000.

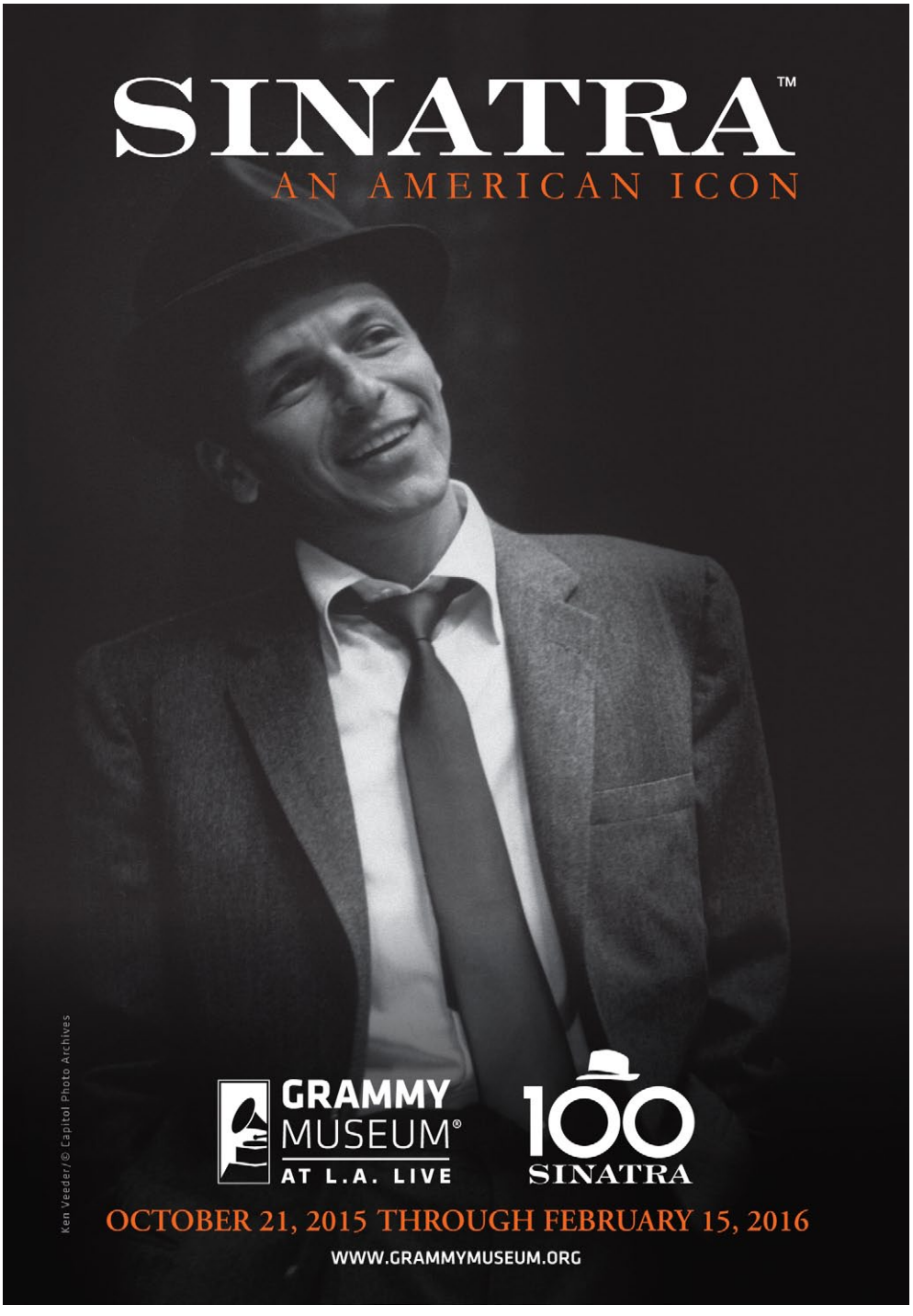
MC: On *Cass County* you solely focused on doing lead vocals and left the instrumentation to Stan and the other players. Why did you make that decision?
Henley: I wanted to stay in the booth and focus on producing. There are so many drummers who are much better than me, younger and more energetic. I have no ego about that. We used a drummer in Dallas who is my son's drum teacher. My son played on one track. The rest were Nashville and L.A. guys. I just wanted to concentrate on melody and lyric writing.

MC: There's a verse in the song "Praying for Rain" where you wrote "I ain't no wise man, but I ain't no fool. And I believe that Mother Nature is takin' us to school. Maybe we just took too much and put too little back. It isn't knowledge, it's humility we lack." Please tell me about the background behind that song?
Henley: That's a song about mankind being a little too arrogant when it comes to living under Mother Nature's laws. I think we've overstepped our bounds in some places. And I know that climate change is a real controversial subject. I know that there's a lot of denial out there—even at the highest levels of government. There's actually a lot of songs about humility on this album, like the song "Too Much Pride." That was my pitiful white boy attempt to do my Ray Charles thing (laughs).

MC: You conclude the album with a song called "Where I Am Now." How much is that auto-biographical and how much a composite of people you've known?
Henley: That one's pretty auto-biographical. I do like where I am now. When you're in your 20s looking forward, the 60s look really old to you from that standpoint. My peers and I, band mates and people like Jackson Browne, Linda Ronstadt, have been through a lot. And we've lost a lot of people along the way. So that song is about just feeling a great sense of gratitude.

One thing about getting to be this age is you get this great thing called perspective—which is hard to get and even harder to keep—especially when you're on tour. You wake up somea days and you go, "Oh God, I've got to do this again?" And then you stop and you go, "I'm really lucky that there are thousands of people coming to see us tonight who are still interested in hearing these songs." You've really got to stay in touch with your gratitude and perspective, and then everything works out okay.

Contact Larry Solters at Scoop Marketing



79 TIPS:

Music Connection's Best Career Tips of the Year

COMPILED BY SIRI SVAY

Each month on musicconnection.com and in its venerable print edition you'll find a treasure trove of career tips from artists and music industry pros who generously share their hard-won knowledge. To help you benefit from the past year's advice, we've picked out the cream of the 2015 crop and organized each quote in neat, quick-hit categories that apply to all music makers. Whether you're a performer or a behind-the-scenes talent, the following tips will help you to improve in the new year and beyond. Every quoted tip cites the month it first appeared in, so you can locate the original interview.



Echosmith

SONGWRITING & COMPOSING

Don't get stuck in the traps of chasing hits. It's like a drug—once you have one and then don't have another for six months, you start feeling like you're not hot. It takes time and energy to create hits. **–Alex da Kid**, producer, owner, KIDinaKORNER, *Feb.*

If you have a microphone handy, or a voice recorder, you can record and remember [an idea]. As an artist you don't really control moments like that. It's like catching lightning in a bottle. **–B.o.B**, artist, producer, *Oct.*

Leave your songs to interpretation and let fans decide what it means to them, because that's what music is about. It's about connecting with the listener. Write for yourself, but [also] write for those listening, too. **–Sydney Sierota**, Echosmith, *March*

[When scoring for film and TV] the trap is going with what you see. Instead, get into the characters' minds and deal with what they feel, what they're about to feel or what they've felt in the past. Go with the movie's arc. The music needs to grow with the story; it needs to represent the [dramatic] drop and climb. **–C.J. Vanston**, producer, composer, *Nov.*

With every record, every session and every creative process, you have to push yourself and go beyond what you did last time. I don't think it's ever good to write the same thing over and over and over again. **–Alex Gaskarth**, All Time Low, *April*

Don't write for what you think other people might want. Once it turns into work, it's not fun. Write what you want to write and the song will come into itself. **–Julia Michaels**, songwriter, vocalist, *March*

If you want to cut through, you need to be great. You can't be good anymore—you have to be great. If an artist has spare time and there's a choice between putting a different photo on Facebook or writing a better song, pick up your guitar. **–Simon Perry**, Chief Creative Officer, Head of A&R, ReverbNation, *Oct.*

IN THE STUDIO

— *Producers* —

Get the band into a room where you're not spending money. Make your mistakes there. Try all the crazy ideas you have…Turn songs inside out. **–Rob Kirwan**, producer, *Feb.*

Get to the honesty quickly. Make artists feel as small as possible so that they get in touch with their real feelings. Cut away all the layers of the superstar, because that can often get in the way. **–Alex da Kid**, producer, owner, KIDinaKORNER, *Feb.*

A lot of tracks start with a drum idea. That gives me a groove, a tempo, a world to write the song in. Then add basic chords. That'll be the skeleton and I'll cut full vocals to it. I strive to leave the bed for the vocal because that's the most important thing. Whatever else I do to the track is in support of that. **–Frequency**, producer, *June*

I was brought up on tape. I started with a linear recording process of start to finish, which made me focus on getting proper takes. Kids these days miss out on that aspect. It's all fake. Trying to understand what music actually is might be their biggest challenge. **–Dan Korneff**, producer, *Jan.*



All Time Low

[When creating demos] do not make the mistake of getting a singer to sing like the artist you're pitching to. Obviously, stylistically you want them to sell the song, but you don't want to be off-putting to the artist either. **–Holly Knight**, songwriter, *June*

I hate looking at music. The more you look at the sound waves, the less you hear them. It causes you to dissect what you're looking at and not what you're hearing. **–Justin Collins**, producer, *Aug.*

I'll stop at nothing. I'll wait forever until I get the right snare sound. At the same time, I try not to get too stuck on one thing. If I'm hitting a wall, I'm not afraid to leave the studio. A huge weapon for me is knowing when to stop and take a break. **–Aaron Bruno** (a.k.a. AWOLNATION), *June*

When a song is too processed and the humanity has been taken out, you lose something. It might be a hit for a short time. But the classics that get played over and over? There's an energy and simplicity—something that people connect and relate to. **–Jake Gosling**, producer, *March*

Keep the creative atmosphere positive and upbeat. The best way to do this is to make sure there is a constant sense of progress. **–Michael Beinhorn**, producer, *Aug.*

Don't fall back on things that you think work, things that you've done in the past. I challenge myself to break a comfort mold. **–Yoav Goren**, composer, producer, *Sept.*

— *Artists* —

At the very least, [have] a simple, inexpensive program such as Logic, or GarageBand [for your home studio]. Learn how to program and engineer on a basic level. Engineering yourself saves money and time. You have the freedom to keep trying lots of different things without looking at the clock and worrying about emptying your bank account. **–Holly Knight**, songwriter, *June*

Pre-production is important. The best acts take weeks (sometimes months) to prep before they record. Know what songs you're going to do and how everyone is going to play



Alex da Kid


Holly Knight

them. Every part, including performances, should be reviewed. If you use studio time to write songs, choose songs or learn your parts, it's going to add up and be very expensive. **–Candace Stewart**, studio manager of EastWest Studios, *July*

Determining the correct match of mic for you can take about 20 minutes of trying out several to determine the one that brings out the best in your voice…Once the mic has been matched and the headphone mix is comfortable, the actual session starts. **–Jeannie Deva**, singer, vocal coach, *Feb.*

Take a break. You have to actually go out of the room and get to a bathroom, which gives you a minute to relax, calm down, change the air, change the environment. Go outside. **–Buddy Brundo**, Conway Recording, *Nov*.

Acts think they have to do a full album [even though] they don't have the material. Sometimes four or five songs on a well-done EP will be better than a 10-song LP, with five songs as filler. That alone can save time. **–Justin Lieberman**, Studio Co-manager, Chief Engineer of Studio Triology, *July*

Change is difficult, but it is also the essence of pre-production. The less resistant you are to change and new ideas regarding your work, the more fruitful the creative process becomes. **–Michael Beinhorn**, producer, Aug.

Minimalizing songs and sounds is a really important thing to realize as a musician. Less is more sometimes. **–Ashton Irwin**, 5 Seconds of Summer, *Nov.*

Try to get your mixes right in the first place by hiring somebody who knows what they're doing. Make sure that you deliver a mix [to a mastering engineer] that is ready to go and not slammed to the walls. **–Steve Hall**, engineer, Future Disc LLC, *Oct.*

It's important to have a good monitoring system. Play a mix in a few different places before asking for things. **–Gordon Bahary**, engineer, Right Touch Mastering, *Oct.*

You'll waste valuable studio time without a demo. You need to be critical and analyze the songs, arrangements, performances and sounds—especially the vocals. If you do that, you won't have to deal with those things in the studio. **–Matty Amendola**, owner, producer, 825 Records, Studio & Productions, *July*

People form opinions based on production value, and if you don't have a polished and professional sounding recording it can hurt your chances. **–Steve Burdick**, Crē•8 Music Academy, *Nov.*

SHAMELESS PROMOTION

Many media outlets influence other media outlets—[like] a domino effect. If you want outlet C interested you have to get coverage in outlet A and B. **–Chloë Walsh**, Co-Founder/Managing Partner, Press Here, *March*

Social media allows us to see how artists connect with people and what they think of them. But, big numbers alone don't influence me. I'm more impressed with how people react to the act and engage with them. **–David Wolter, Sr.** VP A&R, RCA Records, *Jan.*

Schedule exclusive online premieres for songs and videos, sort of like an online strip tease that reveals a little bit more each time… Then, when the time is right, contact music sites like Pitchfork, as well as publications. **–Mitch Schneider**, Founder/President, Mitch Schneider Organization, *March*

Sponsorships [can be] used when you want to create the perception of legitimacy, and you want to uniquely promote your products via your fans' lifestyles. Smaller businesses in your hometown can arrange playing your music in their stores and can host live acoustic performances. **–Bobby Borg**, author, *March*

[To get gear endorsements] approach companies whose product you use by choice. Find the contacts on their sites, which often have a link to input info [and] apply for the opportunities the company offers for endorsement deals. **–Justin Emord**, Love and a .38, *May*

If listeners have to go to yet another site and download a song you're submitting to them, sometimes they won't even bother. **–Holly Knight**, songwriter, *June*

There's no right or wrong way to make a [crowdfunding] campaign video. You don't need to spend days preparing, crafting and executing the perfect video. Plan it out and make sure that whatever production choices you make will support your message. **–Amanda Keating**, Program Associate, Fractured Atlas, *July*


5 Seconds of Summer


Scott Weiland

Placements are the new radio. If you place a song on a hit TV show, the potential for exposure is tremendous—better than radio. **–Tess Taylor**, president, National Association of Record Industry Professionals (NARIP), *Sept.*

SING YOUR HEART OUT

The singer is the focal point of any recording. No matter how great the rest of your band, the audience usually recognizes you by the sound of your singer. On your recording, the sound, style, personality and performance of the vocal must be of utmost quality. **–Jeannie Deva**, singer, vocal coach, *Feb.*

Cheese or dairy products create mucus. I have a warm-up tea that coats my throat. It has lemon, apple cider vinegar, apple cider, honey and cayenne pepper. I use it for every show, but it's really important when you have a cold. **–Scott Weiland**, Artist, May

The entire focus of the singer should be on the performance, not on technique. **–Jeannie Deva**, singer, vocal coach, *Feb.*

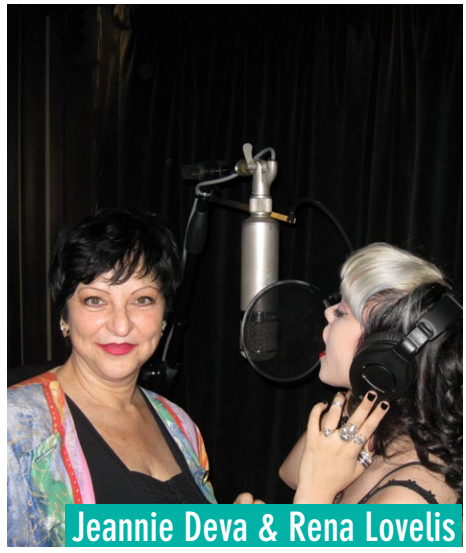
The most important thing is to not stay up late. And you've got to drink lots of water all day. Keep your vocal chords wet at all times, don't let them dry up. I sleep with a humidifier on the bus. **–Brittany Howard**, Alabama Shakes, *Aug.*

If your voice isn't working, it's best to cancel the show. People are going to be bummed, but not as bummed as going into a venue and seeing you not perform well. **–Matt Skiba**, Alkaline Trio, Blink-182, *May*

GOING LIVE
— Performance —

When they come to see you perform, they want a show. Entertain them! [Don't be] obsessed with chord changes, making sure you don't hit a wrong note, go out of key or break a string on stage. Focus on the crowd and don't get in your head too much about the sound and technical details. **–Jennifer Yeko**, President, True Talent Management, *Feb.*

Consider going after high-paying wedding or corporate gigs. On an hourly basis they can pay much better than day jobs. **–Mark Steiner**, Co-Founder/CEO, GigSalad, *March*


Jeannie Deva & Rena Lovelis

Even superstars will occasionally cover a well-known classic in their set. Throw one in toward the end of your show. People will appreciate a new arrangement of a popular song. **–Jennifer Yeko**, President, True Talent Management, *Feb.*

Your audience, no matter how big or small, wants to be engaged and like you. Pretend you're in a huge arena (it's good practice) and give them a reason to root for you…Audiences want to see you—not you as "perfect"—but you as an artist they can relate to. How you get to a moving performance is by letting go of having to be great and perfect. **–Teri Danz**, vocal coach, artist, *Oct.*







Look at the tops of people's heads. It will seem like you are looking at them, but will be far less distracting to you. We've all been to a show where the lead singer did not look at the crowd. That gets boring pretty quickly. **–Jennifer Yeko**, President, True Talent Management, *Feb.*

It's important to add to the [live] experience. If I wanted to hear a band play their songs perfectly, I would just listen to the CD. A big thing has always been, "Hey let's play our songs, but we're here in this room with all these people, let's make it an experience." It's about interaction with the crowd and making it something more than just hearing a band play their music. **–Alex Gaskarth**, All Time Low, *April*

Rather than thinking of gigs as a way to pay rent or a stepping stone to the next bigger opportunity, it is better to think of them as unique moments where you and your band mates come together in fellowship. **–Kyle Crane**, drummer, *May*

— Touring —

You need to think one step ahead all the time. So if you're booking a show now, right before you book that show you need to know what your next step is going to be in that market down the road…It's more about the long-term picture than short-term gains. **–Adam Brill**, agent, Agency for the Performing Arts, *June*

There were no opportunities. We had to email thousands of bars, clubs and promoters just to get on the bill for one show. Booking for yourself is a nightmare. But we put our heads down and asked people if we could play. There was never a bill that we turned down. We played every show offered to us. We created the opportunities by pouring everything we had into every live performance. **–Tyler Joseph**, twenty one pilots, *Sept.*

Initially focus on where a demand is. If there's little or no demand, start by doing small regional tours around home base and expand from there. The college market is a regional market. Plan to return to the places where [you] were most successful—every two to three months—or the fans will forget [you]. **–Chris Fletcher**, CEO, tour coordinator, Coast to Coast/The Cool School, *June*

If you're buying on to a giant tour, it could get expensive. And, if they put you on at 6:30—hours before the headliner—you're wasting money. **–Chris Maggiore**, president, agent, Artists Worldwide, *June*

It can take a while—a year or two—before [you] start to make real money. You have to be established [in a market] to command large fees. Always book an "anchor" gig first—one that will cover most of your expenses—and plan a route around it. **–Chris Fletcher**, CEO, tour coordinator, Coast to Coast/The Cool School, *June*

It doesn't sound very rock & roll, but save partying for when the tour is done or when your job is done. **–Matt Skiba,** Alkaline Trio, Blink-182, *May*

DO THE BIZ

Don't sign contracts without reading them completely and having a lawyer review them with you. Don't jump into working with anyone until you have done your "due diligence," meaning you have researched their experience, accomplishments and reputation. **–Glenn T. Litwak**, attorney, *Jan.*

Have a concise, well-executed and thrifty plan. Do not spend money until there's a return. Oftentimes, [artists] want to throw gasoline on the fire; they get a little spurt, but then all the money's gone. **–Kevin Day**, President, Skyrocket Entertainment, *Feb.*

Know what you own…whether they are written lyric and music compositions or audio/video recordings. Have an accurate and up-to-date record of what you have rights to and interests in, including all versions that might qualify for their own individual copyrights, both for the composition and the sound recording. **–Jennifer Cohen**, POBA | Where the Arts Live, *May*

[To] attract a booking agent, [artists] need basic tools: a recording, a website, an EPK and a performance video. It's also nice if they have a team around them to help out, like a manager, publicist and attorney. But, most of all, they must be pro-active—they have to work at it and have some idea of what they want. **–Barbara Collin**, founder, agent, Collin Artists, *June*





Be careful: becoming a personal manager does not require getting a license or state certification—anyone, from a used car dealer to a snake oil salesman, can be one—so proceed with caution. There are managers in the business, and there are damagers. Watch out for the damagers. **–Bobby Borg**, author, *June*

If you want your music placed, do your homework. It's a "Cardinal Sin" not to know anything about the supervisor or their projects…Know something about the rights involved and how money is made, especially with Performing Rights Organizations (ASCAP, BMI, SESAC). **–Tess Taylor**, President, National Association of Record Industry Professionals (NARIP), *Sept.*

Do [your] homework and know the type of music used on a TV show, movie or commercial. Know what kind of projects I work on. If you haven't seen my shows, your pitch will fail. **–Nora Felder**, President, Picture Music Company, *Sept.*

There are a lot of people pitching songs for synchronization and companies not as reputable as others. Questions to ask when you're interviewing somebody to place your music would be, "Do you take publishing or do you take a fee for a placement?" Nobody should take publishing unless they're a publisher. **–Carianne Marshall**, Partner, Songs Music Publishing, *March*

It's a much different world once you go with a major label. You're usually working with a bigger budget and more money, which is a nice thing. But at the same time it's a lot less personable and a lot less finessed. **–Alex Gaskarth**, All Time Low, *April*



The first and most important step in running your band's business is to accept the fact that it is a business. Producing music is your band's creative work. Selling that music is a business venture. The members should agree ahead of time how the business will run, how revenues will be distributed, what happens if one or more members leaves the band and, lastly, what type of entity structure is the most appropriate for your situation. **–Kory Klein**, CPA, *Nov.*

— Networking —

Learn the technical side so you can speak to engineers in a language they understand. Grasp the way people in the industry speak so that you can talk to A&R guys. When you communicate in their own language, they respect you more; they'll give you more and in less time. **–Alex da Kid**, producer, owner, KIDinaKORNER, *Feb.*








C.J. Vanston

Do your research. Find out who Weather Report is. Find out who Steely Dan is. You have to know your bands. Kids come out of school and they may be amazing players, but many of them don't know their history. **–C.J. Vanston**, producer, composer, *Nov*

Come to the [festival and conference] panels. So many bands just show up and play their gig and party and never go to the panels. I am apt to go to the shows of people that come to the panels, plug the band, get mentored and are there to further themselves. **–Allison Shaw**, Manic Monkey Management, *March*

Utilize ALL of your friends and acquaintances to further your career and, specifically, to get gigs. Be kind to those you meet on the way up—they may get a gig for you later, and help you when and if you are on the way down. **–Paul "Chico" Fernandez**, drummer, *April*

While the music industry is constantly changing, an old-fashioned gesture like [a handshake] can go a long way with a company when you're first introducing yourself to them…or to keep an existing relationship going. **–Justin Emord**, Love and a .38, *May*

Instead of looking at what "you can get" to further your career, look at how "you can give" to other people. You will be relieved of any expectations and instantly earn 10 more awesome points. **–Kosha Dillz**, artist, *March*

FANDOM

Have direct artist-to-fan communication, staying on the level of the fan and becoming a peer. Engage them in the process of making music and a musician's lifestyle so they really feel they're part of it and not just watching it or buying it. Be on the same level as the fan and don't try to be idolized. **–Adam Alpert**, Disruptor Management and Records/Selector Songs, *Jan.*

Be sure to tell everyone you'll be at the merch table after the set. Mention that you'll sign autographs and pose for photos. Fans will let their friends know not only how great the show was, but also how nice you were to them after the show. **–Jennifer Yeko**, President, True Talent Management, *Feb*.

[Fans are] the most important thing in the world these days. It's almost on level with the music. If you don't interact with your fans, you don't have anything. **–Ashton Irwin**, 5 Seconds of Summer, *Nov.*

STAYING INSPIRED

Going through challenges and low points helps prepare you for success. People who hit it big early aren't prepared to take the work that comes after. They haven't had enough experience and fizzle out. **–Frequency**, producer, *June*

Stop trying to be the best business man. If you [focus on your creativity] and just become the best band that you can possibly be, every single door will start opening for you; you won't have to pry them open anymore. **–Josh Katz**, Badflower, *May*

You've got to stay focused on that trueness inside of you; why you're the creative person that got involved in the first place. Keeping that passion from day one is difficult, but that's where you need to stay. **–Tony Valenziano**, President, Smile Media Group, *April*

You have to believe in yourself, that you're getting better with age. Be open to developing your own opinions and tastes, regardless of what critics think or what the new flavor of the month is. It's what's true to your heart and everything will fall into place. **–Aaron Bruno** (a.k.a. AWOLNATION), *June*

And, finally, be sure to ask yourself this question…

What is successful? What do you want to achieve? Do you want to tour your project and make a few bucks? Do you want to debut at No. 1 on Billboard? What do you hope to achieve, realistically? **–Kevin Day**, President, Skyrocket Entertainment, *Feb.* MC





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TOP 25

NEW MUSIC CRITIQUES OF 2015

Of all the unsigned and DIY recording artists we listened to during the past year, here are the absolute best — our 25 highest scorers, as well as an extra Top 20 Prospects who are too talented to ignore. Each score you see is based on the merits of production, lyrics, music, vocals and musicianship. *Music Connection* welcomes all unsigned recording artists who want to be reviewed in a national magazine to check out **musicconnection.com/reviews/get-reviewed**.



Aaron Durr . . . 8.4

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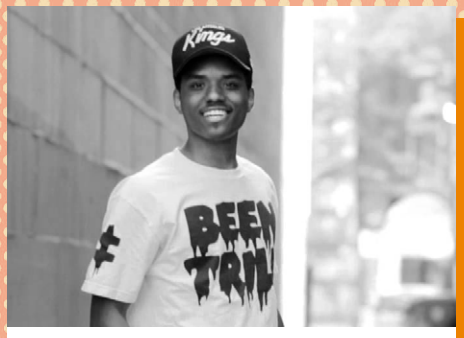
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Web: valleyshineband.com



Of Clocks and Clouds . . 8.0

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Web: ofclocksandclouds.bandcamp.com



Nalani & Sarina . . . 8.0

Contact: booking@nalanisarina.com
Web: nalanisarina.com



Distant Cousins . . . 8.0

Contact: angela@platformpr.net
Web: soundcloud.com/distant_cousins



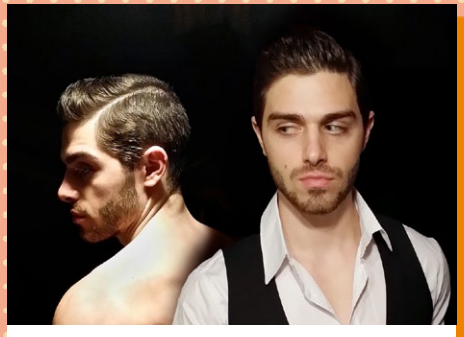
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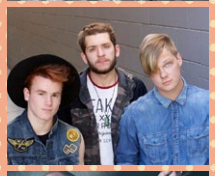
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OUR FAVORITE SIGNING STORIES • 2015

COMPILED BY *MC* SENIOR EDITOR MARK NARDONE

SHEPPARD



Label: School Boy Records/ Republic
Band Members: George Sheppard, lead vocals, keyboard; Amy Sheppard, vocals, keys, harmonica; Emma Sheppard, backing vocals, bass; Jay Bovino, rhythm guitar, backing vocals; Michael Butler, lead guitar; Dean Gordon, drums.
Management: Michael Chugg - Chugg Entertainment, michael@chuggentertainment.com (Australia); Nano Tissera - SB Projects, nano@scooterbraun.com (U.S.)
Publicity: Marisa.Bianco@umusic.com
Web: wearesheppard.com
A&R: Brett Alperowitz

Nothing has more impact on a band's signing prospects than a drop-dead great single, and Australian band Sheppard had just that with "Geronimo." (To date, the song has more than 45 million listens on Spotify and nearly seven million combined views on YouTube.) Prior to "Geronimo," Sheppard had some success with its single "Let Me Down Easy," spun heavily by Portland, OR radio station KNRK. "It went to number one on KNRK and we got to come over to the U.S. and do a show," George Sheppard recalls. "Then Australia started to take notice and we broke through on commercial radio there."

But it was "Geronimo" that propelled the band to the major leagues. George Sheppard asserts, "Somebody in the States sent our ['Geronimo'] video clip to Nano [Tissera], who works with Scooter Braun at School Boy Records (Justin Bieber). Scooter went for it; he thought it was a great song. Before we knew it, he had a deal locked down with Republic and the rest of the world fell into place pretty quickly.

"In this day and age, it's so easy to get heard," Sheppard concludes. "So that's not the issue. It's learning how to write a song."

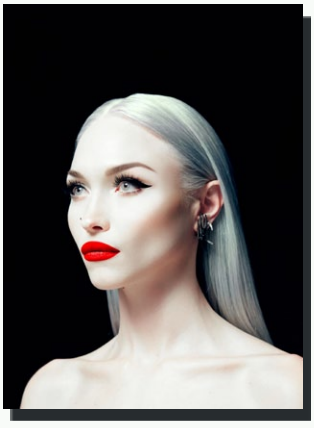
KRANIUM



Label: Atlantic Records
Management: Patrick "Pee Wee" Bonsu, thepeewee21@gmail.com; Pierre Bost, pierrebost7@gmail.com
Booking: Patrick "Pee Wee" Bonsu
Publicity: Sydney.Margetson@atlanticrecords.com
Web: officialkranium.com
A&R: Success (Yaasiel Davis)

When you look at the career path of the Jamaica via NY artist known as Kranium, the message is loud and clear as to how he landed his major label deal: he and his managers first created some noise on their own and the labels came calling. In the summer of 2013 he independently scored the breakout hit, "Nobody Has To Know," originally on Frequent Flyer Records—a label established by Kranium and his managers—which has since earned more than nine million YouTube views. This captured the interest of Atlantic Records and a rep reached out to him via Twitter. But he wasn't entirely swayed by the cyber contact. It wasn't until he met someone face-to-face that things started to move forward. The sing-jay was suspicious at first contact. "I wasn't completely confident about it. … It wasn't that I didn't believe Atlantic was legit—I was kind of shocked when they messaged me—but meeting [someone from the label] made me feel more confident [in the label's interest]." Several months later, a deal was signed.

IVY LEVAN



Label: Cherrytree/Interscope Records
Management: Lucas Banker - Blood Money, LLC, 310-463-1053
Booking: Marty Diamond - Paradigm, 212-897-6400
Publicity: greg.cortez@42West.Net
Web: ivylevan.com
A&R: Martin Kierszenbaum

Are you even ready to be signed? Do you know who you are as an artist? The label that's courting you—do they really get you?

Los Angeles-based singer and Arkansas native Ivy Levan started in the business when she was 18—old enough to sign a contract but perhaps not old enough to fully embrace the intricacies. She landed a deal with Virgin Records initially, but it was an ill-fated relationship and Levan left the label. "I didn't know who I was when I started," the artist explains. "I wanted to be a rock singer, but other people told me I should be like Celine Dion. But I didn't want to do that. I had a lot of angst and a lot to say. … So I took a few years off to be a kid; to go through what a normal person would in their college years: party, meet people, have fun."

Eventually she heard from producer Lucas Banker. The singer recalls, "He'd heard about me from a guy at Sony. He tried to chase me down, but I was terrified of people in the industry. I didn't want to do music anymore. But he coaxed me into it and we started writing together. It was magic; instant chemistry. We shopped my stuff around and the reaction was amazing."

LIAM LIS



Label: Lava Records
Management: Amy Thompson - ATM Artists, amy@atmartists.com
Booking: Brian Manning - CAA, 424-288-2000
Publicity: Crowd Surf, info@crowdsurf.net
Web: liamlis.com
A&R: Jason Flom, Natalia Romiszewski, Ryan Silva

Having a good YouTube channel is something that is propelling numerous artists these days. Thirteen-year-old singer/songwriter Liam Lis landed a deal with Lava Records when Nigel Talley, a friend at Atlantic Records, mentioned him to Jason Flom, founder and head of

Lava, who had numerous discoveries to his credit, including Kid Rock, Lorde, Black Veil Brides and Katy Perry. Once they saw footage from the young artist's popular channel that featured covers and originals, they invited him in to do a pair of showcases.

"When Liam showcased at our office I knew immediately that we had to sign him," Flom says. "His singing, dancing, musicianship, songwriting, style and swagger were so strong, especially for someone so young. It was clear that he was—and is—destined to be a star!"

JORDAN DAVIS

Label: ole Publishing
Management: N/A
Booking: William Morris Entertainment - Nashville
Publicity: Laurie Jakobsen, laurie@jaybirdcom.com
Web: jordandavisofficial.com
A&R: John Ozier, GM Creative - ole music publishing


JULIE MOE

"Make the most of your opportunities. They don't come too often." Well, sometimes, if you happen to make a mess of your opportunity, there's still some wiggle room. That's the lesson we learned from our Signing Story on Jordan Davis. Without a label, the country singer/songwriter was angling for a publishing deal when he found himself in the presence of a group of industry execs. "I was playing guitar around a campfire where I knew they [ole Creative Executives and other members of the industry] were there. I was, let's say, 'over-served,' and when I played, I screwed up my songs. I blew it! But later when I got back to town, I had an email from ole's Ben Strain saying, 'Oh, we were all kinda drunk!' And he invited me into his office to play some songs." The deal quickly followed.

The way the deal is structured, Davis is still being shopped to labels. "What's so cool about ole is that they have the ability to get me a record deal, get me on the road and allow my music to develop. We have been in talks with producers for recording an EP. They pay for this upfront, and a label can then buy the masters from ole. My publisher is my manager/publisher/stylist."

ALFA

Label: Pacific Records
Management: Paul Condon, mgmt@alfa-music.com
Booking: mgmt@alfa-music.com
Publicity: Pacific Records
Web: alfa-music.com
A&R: Gary Hyde, gary@pacificrecords.com



Having a dedicated team behind you is a key component in an artist's prospects for success. Even with her catchy mixture of folk with pop sensibilities, it wasn't Pacific Records that started the conversation with Garcia and her team, but rather her manager Paul Condon who reached out to them. He was on a quest to find a label that he believed fit her philosophies and approach to her artistry when he discovered Pacific Records. Soon after contacting the label, Condon heard back and the rest is now history.

The label, which is looking to extend to a more global reach after conquering the local scene, outfitted the singer with a two-year, two-album deal that also includes a publishing contract. "I give them so much props because they pretty much gave me creative control with this record deal," she said. "They basically said, 'We like what you do and we just want you to keep doing it.' That's the kind of deal you want! You don't want one where they like your look, but want you to write songs more like XYZ."

TWITCHING TONGUES

Label: Metal Blade Records
Band Members: Colin Young, vocals; Taylor Young, guitars, vocals, engineer.
Type of Music: Hardcore/Metal
Management: Mark Vieira - Good Fight Entertainment
Legal: N/A
Publicity: Austin Griswold, Austin@SecretServicePR.com; Vince Edwards - Metal Blade Records
Web: twitchingtongues.com
A&R: Brian Slagel



We love a band with this kind of loyalty. Hardcore-metal group Twitching Tongues have now released three full-length records—all on different labels. According the group's co-creators, brothers Colin and Taylor Young, each label signing has been a stepping stone while giving back to the hardcore scene. Interestingly, the move to Metal Blade stirred no bad blood with their previous label.

"Late last year, Andy [Williams] of Every Time I Die got in the ear of [Metal Blade founder] Brian Slagel, and kept telling him, 'You gotta check out this band,'" explains Colin. Twitching Tongues met with their then-current label who agreed it was a great opportunity. "[Metal Blade] asked us to meet backstage at a King Diamond show at the Wiltern Theatre in L.A. We got there, and it was like a total *Wayne's World* Alice Cooper 'We're not worthy' moment." Less than an hour into negotiations, a deal was done. And in a strange twist, as part of the deal, the Young brothers requested their previous label, Closed Casket Activities, be involved in Twitching Tongues' vinyl release of *Disharmony*. "It's important," proclaims Colin, "that regardless of our entrance to the metal world, we still stay connected and are involved as possible in hardcore."

MICKEY GUYTON

Label: Capitol Records
Management: Borman Entertainment with Steve Moir
Booking: Darin Murphy - CAA
Publicity: Lori.Christian@umusic.com
Web: MickeyGuyton.com/splash
A&R: Autumn House-Tallant

You gotta have a tough skin when it comes to facing rejection. Ask rising country singer Mickey Guyton. She was going to school in Los Angeles and on the verge of transferring or moving home to Texas when she ran into a friend who introduced her to Gary Borman, CEO of Borman Entertainment and manager for country star Keith Urban. In the "nicest way possible" Borman told Guyton, a budding songstress, that her songs weren't any good. Rather than give up, Guyton went back to the drawing board and got a second chance. "It was the kickoff of CMA," Guyton says, "and I flew to Nashville, got to his office and sang, and by the time I got to the riverfront, they offered me a record deal."



That probably wouldn't have happened if Guyton, now a Nashvillian, hadn't toughened her skin working three jobs and facing constant rejection in Los Angeles. Her advice: "Do writers rounds. Nashville is a small community. I guarantee you can go anywhere, and the way actors and models are in L.A., that's the way Nashville is for singers and songwriters and musicians. You can go anywhere and meet someone who is a songwriter. You have to let people know that's what you do."

LOST COYOTE



Label: Smile Records
Band Members: Brian C. Stewart, lead vocals, guitar; Chris Lawrence, steel, B Bender, 12-string guitars; Dusty Wakeman, bass; Bill Stewart, drums.
Management: Blue Rider Music
Web: something-music.com; smilerecords.homestead.com
A&R: Tony Valenziano

This Signing Story shows what can happen when a classic rock icon takes a shine to your material and offers to collaborate with you. That was the case when Phil Everly (half of the timeless pop duo the Everly Brothers) made that very proposition to L.A. studio session man and singer/songwriter/guitarist Brian C. Stewart. In 2013 they penned a dozen songs that, after Everly's death in January of 2014, became the 2015 release *Get Your Phil* on Smile Records, a label with a power pop-oriented heritage (The Knack, Dave Mason, Berlin).

"When we were working together Phil told me that he had no complaints with his life at all," recalls Stewart. "He said, 'I will sing "Wake Up Little Susie" until the cows come home and be thankful to my soul for it. But for all the pats on the back and the awards I've gotten, I really wish people heard what I was doing now.' Phil was my friend and with this record that's what I'm trying to do."

X-AMBASSADORS



Label: KIDinaKORNER/Interscope
Management: Seth Kallen/This Fiction
Publicity: Lindsay Bailey, Lindsay@stuntcompany.com
Web: xambassadors.com
A&R: Alex da Kid

We love a great artist-development story. When cross-genre, Grammy-winning producer Alex da Kid (Imagine Dragons) began working intently in the studio with X-Ambassadors, he had not yet signed the band. And once the band did sign with his KIDinaKORNER (Interscope) label in 2013, it would be two years before their full-length release, *VHS*. "It's not about a timeline, and this is not a vanity label," says Alex. "I'm trying to create great artists."

Based on a recommendation from Imagine Dragons' Dan Reynolds, who'd heard the band's self-released EP, Alex did some research. "I went online and checked out all their videos, interviews, not just their music," he says. "Chemistry is important, and I wanted to make sure it was there." He then spent a couple of weeks in the studio, writing and eventually recording an EP, before a deal was offered and signed. Why two years for an album? Says Alex, "You only get one shot, once you put out a full release. If you throw them out too early, it can destroy everything."

X-Ambassadors' hit single "Renegades" was just certified platinum, marking sales and streams of one million in the United States alone.

DENNIS DREITH

Label: Perseverance Records
Legal: Brian Cella, Esq. - Cella, Lange & Cella, LLC, 925-974-1112
Web: dennisdreith.com
A&R: Robin Esterhammer

It is gratifying when a labor of love gains the interest of a record label that has wide reach. Well known in the industry as an influential advocate for musicians' rights, Dennis Dreith served as International President of the Recording Musicians' Association (RMA) for 15 years and is currently Executive Director of AFM SAG-AFTRA's Intellectual Property Rights Distribution Fund. On the creative side, he has scored several indie films and composed for TV—but his bread and butter has been as an orchestrator and conductor of top film scores (*Jurassic Park*, *Braveheart*). Dreith has provided services for everyone from John Williams and Lalo Schifrin to Marc Shaiman and Hans Zimmer.



But, as he explains, "I had been thinking for quite some time about recording with musicians who played in my band during my formative years." When he gathered the 14-piece ensemble at EastWest Studios in Hollywood, Robin Esterhammer, founder of Perseverance Records, liked what he heard. But because of the company's renown as a soundtrack label, Dreith was reticent. He became excited, however, when he heard about the owner's commitment to developing jazz artists and his distribution with MVD, an international company with a major foothold in Europe, where Dreith hopes to secure major jazz festival dates for his ensemble.

CAKED UP



Label: Dim Mak
Band Members: Oscar Wylde and Vegas Banger
Management: Nate@WarpathGroup.com
Booking: Hunter Williams, hunter.williams@caa.com
Legal: Todd J. Mumford, TMumford@ReedSmith.com
Publicity: Jaime Sloane - Dim Mak
Web: wearecakedup.com
A&R: Dim Mak, promos@dimmak.com

It's cool when your all-time favorite label shows interest in signing you. As big fish within EDM's remix scene, Oscar Wylde and Vegas Banger have released songs on numerous noteworthy labels, like Mad Decent, Buygore and Fool's Gold. It is common within the genre to drop tunes everywhere, but there's one label they're now proud to call home—Dim Mak. "Every artist I've loved has been on that label," discloses Wylde. "[Label founder] Steve Aoki is why I got into music." Wylde cites perseverance, keeping up with style trends and releasing tracks when you want as keys to reaching the top in their quirky genre. "And don't pay attention to people's bullshit," he advises. "If people are coming at us, it means we're doing something right."

ALBERTA CROSS



Label: Dine Alone Records
Management: New Community Management
Booking: William Morris Endeavor
Legal: Gavin Maude - Russells Solicitors
Publicity: Tasya@pressherepublicity.com
Web: albertacross.net
A&R: Joel Carriere and Dan Hawie

Are you looking for your first label deal? Petter Ericson Stakee, frontman for rockers Alberta Cross, is way, way ahead of you—he's signed with Geffen, PIAS and Ark. But he decided it was time for another change when his next label, ATO Records, pushed too hard for commercial success. Having extricated himself from that deal, he secured a publishing arrangement via his manager, then took wing to Woodstock, NY's Dreamland Recording Studios, where he independently recorded precisely the album he wanted.

Already familiar with the band, Dine Alone Records caught wind of the group's free agent status. "My management sent them the record, they

liked it and there you go," recounts Stakee. "They seemed into what we were doing. We gelled pretty quick." And the alt-rocker got what he wanted—a 50/50 deal.

Stakee takes switching labels in stride—to him, it comes with the job. "Don't be too concentrated on getting signed," he says. "Concentrate on creating what you think is good, the stuff you burn for. That is more important."

DOROTHY



Label: Roc Nation
Band Members: Dorothy Martin, vocals; Gregg Cash, bass; Mark Jackson, guitarist; Zac Morris, drums.
Management: George Robertson - Teleport, teleportmgmt@gmail.com
Booking: Marty Diamond, Aaron Pinkus - Paradigm
Legal: Amit Krispin - Krispin
Publicity: katie@pressherepublicity.com
Web: itsdorothysucka.com
A&R: Jay Brown - Roc Nation

Dorothy Martin received the call of a lifetime one morning while eating a bowl of cereal in Los Angeles. Soon she was meeting with mentor Jay Z, and later snagged her band a record deal with Roc Nation. But working toward that label deal was fraught with plenty of frustration, delays and all-out anxiety.

"The most difficult challenge for me was to be patient—I want results now. I've had my freak-outs, but [the team] calms me down. I actually really love to learn. Even if it's a really hard lesson, I know it'll benefit everybody in the end."

Through it all, Martin can always rely on the support of manager George Robertson, whose expertise drove the band's eventual success:

"There's only so much that I know... How to deal with [proper business]—I can thank George for that. He's worn so many different hats [and] always has great ideas."

SHY CARTER

Label: Latium/RCA Records (via Sony Int'l)
Management: Charles Chavez
Publicity: Meghan.Kehoe@rcarecords.com
Web: facebook.com/shycarterofficial; twitter.com/shycarter
A&R: Ben Maddahi and Charles Chavez



It's so important to get out there and meet people, network face to face. Often "It's who you know…and who knows you." After graduating from Grand Valley State University in Michigan, Shy Carter moved to Los Angeles to pursue music. Almost immediately, he met a former manager of Nelly's, who introduced the two. Carter had sang as a child, joined an R&B group and, by age 16, was writing songs and experimenting with production. So when Nelly needed a producer, Carter obliged, producing tracks for Ashanti and Chingy. He went on to work with Rob Thomas, Faith Hill, Meghan Trainor and Jason Derulo.

Those gigs led to a publishing deal with Primary Wave that expanded his songwriting chops. And although he was living the dream he still sought what he calls his "end game"—a record deal. "I wasn't desperate. I was fine waiting until the right deal came along."

As it turned out, he didn't have to wait long. An industry friend told him about Latium Entertainment and said it might be a good fit. A meeting with Latium's Charles Chavez convinced Carter that he could rely on the company to fight for his music. "I felt that I could depend on them to support my vision," he says. MC







Tony Austin

The West Coast Get Down

When Tony Austin went into the studio in December 2012 to engineer and produce full-length albums by his musical compadres in the powerhouse Los Angeles jazz fusion collective the West Coast Get Down, he had no idea he was taking part in what would become an epic (literally) global phenomenon.

Friends since their teenage years, the veteran drummer and Miles Mosley (acoustic bass) started gigging at The Piano Bar in Hollywood in 2009, and once they asked their other musician pals to sit in, the core ensemble featuring Ronald Bruner, Jr. (drums), Thundercat (electric bass), Brandon Coleman (keys) and Kamasi Washington (sax) began drawing SRO crowds for what grew into a twice weekly residency. Responding to their fans' growing demand for recordings, they pooled their resources, raised money and set about writing and recording, with the intention of finding a label to sell and distribute their music.

Upon its release on May 5, *The Epic*—billed as the debut studio album by Washington, who most recently appeared on Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp a Butterfly*—became an instant critical hit, earning raves from, among others, Allmusic, Drowned in Sound, The Guardian, Pitchfork and Variety. In choosing it among their "45 Best Albums of 2015 So Far," Rolling Stone called the collection "as much about (jazz) tradition as expanding it. It is clearly shaped by crate-digger funk and film scores, hip-hop collage and gospel." An expansive three discs and 172 minutes of music, *The Epic* reached No. 5 on the Billboard Jazz Albums Chart.

> *"I think discerning jazz fans are ready for it."*

Though the West Coast Get Down had played the L.A. jazz circuit for years, including the LACMA Summer Jazz Series, the Central Avenue Jazz Festival and the Hollywood & Highland Summer Series, the out-of-the-box success of *The Epic* led to an extensive Summer/Fall tour of North America, Australia, Japan and Europe. Though Washington is the nominal star attraction, the trademark freewheeling West Coast Get Down aesthetic is in full effect.

"This band is all about the relationship we've had with each other since we all met and started playing together in various groups in either elementary school or high school," says Austin. "That's over 20 years of great camaraderie. When we got older, we stuck together and were excited to make an impact on a local jazz community that had been ignored a bit. We wanted to show the world that West Coast jazz was still happening. We knew if we stuck together, something great would come out of it. But we weren't prepared for the attention Kamasi's album would receive and the gravity of how it would be interpreted.

"We cut a total of eight records during that month in the studio," he continues. "When it came to Kamasi's work, I worried the richness of the music and the many sonic elements and instruments would work against its commercial acceptance. But I think people, especially discerning jazz fans, are ready for it. So much music these days is cookie cutter, unemotional and detached from anything genuine. But being genuine is what the West Coast Get Down has always been about."

Mosley, who also jams with Austin as the rock, pop and soul duo BFI, calls his lifelong musical connection to Austin a gateway to a "telepathic level of performance in a rhythm section that cannot be taught or manufactured." The two met at 15 when they performed at a multi-school performance to commemorate the opening of the West Coast chapter of the Thelonious Monk Institute.

Discussing West Coast Get Down, the bassist adds, "It is a rare occurrence, maybe once in a generation, that a collection of like-minded individuals are responsible for a shift in the soundscape of a genre. The main challenge we face is determining in what fashion we are going to release all of the music. *The Epic* is only one small piece of an equally impressive and genre-diverse catalog of music we documented at that time."

As to what Mosley refers to as the "mind and force" behind *The Epic* and the other sessions via his visionary drumming, engineering and production skills, Austin is excited about the arsenal of mics he used from the catalog of Burbank-based Mojave audio. These include the MA-301fet on Mosley's bass amp, the drum set toms and a Hammond B-3 Leslie cabinet; the MA-300 as a stereo room mic for many of the ensemble string and choir sessions; the MA-200 vacuum tube condenser mic and MA-100 condenser mic.

Austin's touring and recording credits include Lauryn Hill, Carlos Santana, Gwen Stefani, Willow Smith, Robbie Krieger, Terrence Howard, India.Arie and Roy Hargrove, and he has also composed for and appeared on numerous television and film projects. For the past five years, the drummer has travelled to Iraq and Afghanistan, performing double-duty as stage manager and drummer, entertaining U.S. Troops on numerous Army bases.

Growing up in North Hollywood as one of three children to a single mom, Austin considers himself fortunate to have become part of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America at a young age. He attributes his passion for the drums to his Big Brother and mentor, Roger Linn, who revolutionized the world of electronic musical instruments with the first drum machine to use digital samples.

"When I was seven, Roger let me hang out at his gigantic home studio and play and experiment with his equipment," says Austin. "I practiced drums as much as I could and was producing tracks in grade school! He also bought me my first synthesizer and mini-sequencer and gave me the opportunity to unleash my musical creativity. Technically and musically, everything I do today as an engineer and producer is a tribute to Roger's influence and guidance in my early life."

See facebook.com/westcoastgetdown

Johnny Thunders & The Heartbreakers

7

L.A.M.F. Live at the Village Gate 1977

Cleopatra Records

Producer: Brooke Arden Delarco, Walter Lure & Andy Shernoff



Rock out Like A Mutha Fucka! That's what dear, departed New York punk legend Johnny Thunders used as his battle cry. And that's exactly what the former New York Doll did during this two-night stint in August of 1977. While the sonic quality borders on abysmal, the raw energy and primal attack of the band more than make up for it. Sorely missing is one of Thunders' best tunes, "You Can't Put Your Arms Around a Memory." For punk completists and '70s rock historians everywhere. ***– Eric A. Harabadian***

Machine Gun Kelly

7.5

General Admission

Bad Boy/Interscope Records

Producer: Various



Energetic and defiant is what best describes this sophomore release by Machine Gun Kelly. Better than his debut, *General Admission* swings for the fences and hits with "World Series" and "A Little More;" however, it misses the mark on tracks like "Oz" and "Everyday." A sincere lyricist who doesn't mind skipping commercial success in order to preserve quality music that only he can sign off on, MGK takes listeners on an emotional ride through his life and times. Whether you're a fan or not, it's easy to appreciate the validity that MGK delivers to those with a ticket to his *General Admission*. ***– Adam Seyum***

Glenn Mercer

8

Incidental Hum

Bar/None Records

Producer: Glenn Mercer



Post-punk cult band The Feelies were known to throw hip and canny covers into their sets, from The Velvets to The Beatles and Stones. Here Feelie Glenn Mercer pays tribute to the classic Eno LP *Another Green World*. He's taken its Fripp-style guitar fuzz and the Eno keyboard sounds and crafted 15 instrumentals. The first 12 tunes are all place-named—"Mobile" has a bluesy R&B groove, "Yuma" and "Laramie" a spaghetti-western feel, and on "Hermosa" it's surf-rock, and so on. Covers include, of course, an Eno instro ("Here Come The Warm Jets"). This is all nicely produced and played, and begs to be used in your next movie! ***– David Arnson***

Squeeze

9

From the Cradle to the Grave

Virgin Records

Producer: Glenn Tilbrook and Laurie Latham



Pop wordsmiths and hitmakers Glenn Tillbrook and Chris Difford recently reformed their seminal New Wave band Squeeze, sort of, to create and record an album of songs (their 14th studio album, and first set of original tunes since 1998) that fans will warm to immediately. Highlights include the album's title track, and the first single, "Happy Days." There is a song, "Only Fifteen," which may spark some controversy. Otherwise, with terrific support from new band members, backup singers and skillfull production—and the fact that these guys can't write a bad song—the result is very Cool for Cats. ***– Brett Bush***

Marbin

9

Aggressive Hippies

Marbin Music/Moonjune Music

Producer: Danny Markovitch & Dani Rabin



Touring nonstop you meet all kinds. Hence, the amusingly titled new album by instrumentalists Marbin references a misadventure with overzealous fans. But the title could also describe this quartet's musical approach. There certainly is a jam band element that is organic and cerebral, combined with a hyperactive improvisational and rhythmic aesthetic. The band's sharp interactivity and ability to shift gears at a moment's notice is finely tuned. Saxophonist Markovitch wails with the harmonic complexity of Coltrane coupled with the fluidity of Charlie Parker. Guitarist Rabin matches him note for note and the results will floor you! ***– Eric A. Harabadian***

Denise Donatelli

8

Find A Heart

Savant Records

Producer: Geoffrey Keezer



The two-time Grammy-nominated jazz vocalist is up to her trademark magic, discovering dynamic outlets for her blend of exquisite intimacy and soulful easy swinging jazz via glorious obscurities from pop legends like Sting, David Crosby, Beck and Journey—in addition to Songbook era chestnuts popularized by Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald. Working seamlessly with longtime collaborator, renowned pianist and arranger Geoffrey Keezer, Donatelli uncovers the deeper essences of each lyric with her keen emotional insight and silky, inviting intonations. Donatelli is a fresh and original jazz voice for our time. ***– Jonathan Widran***

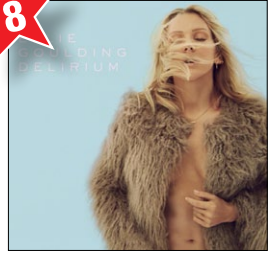
Ellie Goulding

8

Delirium

Cherrytree/Interscope Records

Producer: Various



English songstress Ellie Goulding envisioned her third studio album as "a big pop album." The "Lights" artist definitely accomplishes this feat by spawning pop-formulaic tunes with basic beats and repetitive lyrics—namely the song titles—which is usually bothersome and gets old quickly, but Goulding manages to ovecome this handicap. Each song is a lighthearted dance anthem that will keep club audiences moving. She thrives in her electronic driven tracks towards the end of the album. Standouts include: "Something in the Way You Move," "Devotion" and the *Fifty Shades of Grey* track "Love Me Like You Do." ***– Siri Svay***

Carved Up

9

Matador

Crowquill

Producer: Carved Up



When it takes a band 5.5 years to release its debut, expectations can be … well, sorta high. This skronky Philadelphia trio whetted appetites with four short-players—including the marvelously named "Tiffani Amber Threesome" and "Oksana My Mule"—but they've finally proven their endurance with a 10-track album. Like any post-hardcore band worth their salt (think These Arms Are Snakes or Botch), Carved Up expertly build the tension and release the dopamine. And while the first and third tracks could be, umm, trimmed, this is an otherwise dandy debut. ***– Kurt Orzeck***

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



THE SWANSONS

Avalon Bardot *Los Angeles, CA*

Contact: theswansonsmusic@gmail.com
Web: theswansonsmusic.com
The Players: Joe Finley, lead vocals, guitar; Angie Finley, vocals, percussion; Joe Alfaro, guitar; Super Dave, bass; Daniel Alexander, keyboards; Joseph Finley Jr., drums.

Material: The Swansons are an amalgamation of retro and modern pop rock with a twist of country. Their sound makes for some fun tunes, but the appeal may not reach past a niche audience. That isn't to say there isn't a market for the group to cater to.

In fact, much of their music would be a great contribution to a soundtrack. The song "Where Did Everybody Go" is a dead ringer for a teenage romantic comedy, and the saloon-style "Country This" would be suitable for a show such as *Hart of Dixie*. Each song is catchy and uptempo, a perfect mix for a series or movie.

Musicianship: What The Swansons are lacking in versatility they make up for with enthusiasm. Even though the Avalon Bardot failed to provide the band an abundant sound balance to allow their musicianship to shine, it's clear each member brings something unique to the table.

A musical highlight is the keyboard in "Country This," which lends a distinct and extremely appropriate country flavor to the song.

Performance: Most noteworthy about The Swansons is that Joe and Angie Finley clearly love what they do. It's apparent that the whole band does, but at this show the leads poured enthusiasm and energy into their performance despite a lackluster crowd. It was a shame to not have seen the band in a setting where people appreciated their spirited performance.

The set list, which was mostly songs from their debut album, hit a high with the closer "I'm Not Going Anywhere." Any band that can put so much into a performance when saddled with a crowd that isn't reacting back deserves nothing but respect.

Summary: The Swansons are an ideal band to stumble upon at a bar. With high energy frontmen and catchy songs, they're certainly capable of entertaining a crowd just looking to go out for a good time. It remains to be seen if the band can build upon its solid foundation and expand for a wider audience.

– Victoria Patneaude



THE DEVIL'S TWINS

O'Brien's Pub *Allston, MA*

Contact: thedevilstwins@gmail.com
Web: thedevilstwins.com
The Players: Jeremiah John Louf, guitar, vocals; Nikki Marie Coogan, vocals, tambourine; Ryan Manning, drums, backing vocals.

Material: A brother and sister duo invites smash-bang drums into their fold, blending rockabilly writing with punk rock arrangements and metal attitude. If Johnny Cash and Amy Winehouse had a baby that punched like Johnny Rotten, this would be it. Jeremiah Louf lays down dynamic, crunchy riffs while Nikki Coogan's vocals slide from sultry tang to pained howl, her tambourine tossing extra spice onto their recipe. Old-fashioned mikes contribute to the retro-hardcore aesthetic.

Musicianship: The Devil's Twins don't traffic in the technically complex, instead exciting audiences with execution and raw adrenaline. Most impressive is the manner in which they knit a wall of sound with two instruments; truthfully, adding bass would ruin them. While Louf's vocals hit their marks, it's Coogan's unusual style that delivers the feels. They would be wise to continue experimenting with tempos, however, as evidenced by their most successful song, a brilliant ditty about needing to be tough if you're dumb.

Performance: With a look that matches their musical groove, The Devil's Twins command the stage. Louf wags his finger, Manning makes throat slitting gestures with his drumstick and Coogan bangs the floor with her tambourine. It all makes for riveting showmanship. They also interact smoothly with one another as well as the audience, filling minor between-song moments with easy banter. The professional-quality logo on their drums proves their seriousness and technical hurdles are handled with grace.

Summary: Polished to a blinding shine, The Devil's Twins own a sound that's different yet accessible. They're also capable of putting on a hell of a show, one that will have you nodding your head while your feet remain glued in place for fear of missing a moment. Having received a host of accolades, including awards such as Limelight Magazine's Best Music Video of 2013 and runner up for Examiner Magazine's 2014 Best Band in New England, it would be highly surprising if a label doesn't snatch them up sooner rather than later.

– Andy Kaufmann



J'CHELLE

is not your typical up and coming, pop artist. Yes, she is a profound and prolific singer-songwriter specializing in the genres of Pop & Adult Contemporary, but she's also a full time philanthropist by being the host of the *Like A Mosaic* movement and mentor at her JEMA Star Entertainment Music School. Her very essence and motive for all she does is to inspire and empower others through music, and it is witnessed in both her music and her lifestyle.

She has been featured on various TV shows including *American Idol*, *Rising Star*, *America's Got Talent*, *The Singing Bee*, MTV's *My Own*, and *Nip Tuck* and has backed up the likes of Chaka Khan, Usher, Mary J. Blige, Phillip Phillips, Yolanda Adams, Queen, and more.

One of her songs she just recently recorded was made to be the theme song for the *Like A Mosaic* movement, a movement she created bringing artists and all "mosaics" --- art made from broken pieces --- together. She uses music to love, heal, and inspire through issues like low self-esteem, depression, shattered dreams, heartache, illness, disabilities, and more.

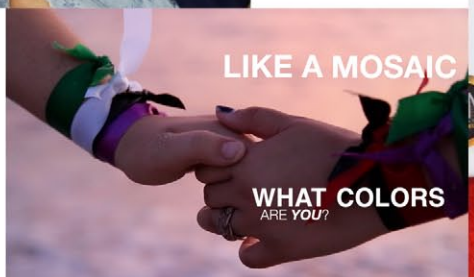
J'Chelle mixes her skills on the piano with her edgy songwriting and powerful vocal prowess, reigniting the resurgence of authentic artistry, songwriting, and heart in today's pop music.



J'Chelle mentors her JEMAStars at Westlake Studios in West Hollywood, CA for their Live the Dream 2015 program.



Above, J'Chelle interviews artist, Sabrina Gunn, on *Like A Mosaic*. Discussing the colors "purple" and "black" for low self-esteem and depression, J'Chelle and Sabrina strive to love, heal, and inspire through music.





J'Chelle's song, "Like A Mosaic", is nominated for an HMMA. Here she's walking the red carpet donning a big, red bow to represent heartache and passion --- one color in the *Like A Mosaic* movement.

JCHELLE.com



SHAWN ATKINS

Black Rose Tavern *Los Angeles, CA*

Contact: tha1shawn@gmail.com
Web: shawnatkins.com
The Players: Shawn Atkins, vocals; KiKi Kyte, backup vocals; Myra Washington, backup vocals; Ash Jangda, guitar; Christopher Wilson, keyboard; William Birkhead, bass; Stacey Lamont Sydnor, drums.

Material: Shawn Atkins is continuing the good work of CeeLo Green, covering the likes of James Brown and Curtis Mayfield while penning some songs of his own. For his original romantic soul jazz song, "It's A Beautiful Thing," Atkins is not afraid to get both funky and intimate with a bit of spoken word between singing, "Before the dawn's early light/your silhouette caught my attention/got me thinking about that love we made all night/how you released your inhibitions…"

Musicianship: Wilson and Birkhead do funk justice with a virtual horn section and jazzy bass lines. Jangda's guitar and Wilson's keys are mostly low in the overall mix. The band could work on their dynamics to highlight both Kyte and Jungda's solos but do achieve that goal when everyone comes down for "It's A Beautiful Thing." It feels like Wilson and Birkhead need more space compositionally for solos of their own. Stacey Lamont Sydnor transitions between grooves and hits breaks and finales flawlessly.

Performance: Myra Washington, aka DJ Karma Camille, started the night with a DJ set joined by a live drummer. Following this crowd warm-up she introduced Atkins, who took the stage for James Brown's "I Don't Want Nobody to Give Me Nothing." Atkins got audience participation going for "Better Day" and introduced the band with Curtis Mayfield's "Give Me Your Love," the perfect number to showcase them.

Kyte and Washington added fun energy with glittery costumes, synchronized dancing and sexy interplay with Atkins. Kyte did not let feedback issues affect her energy as she really went for it on a knock-out vocal solo, nearly stealing the show. The band only seemed to lose momentum after the feedback issue with the main mic, which peaked through the set.

Summary: The night played out like an old-fashioned revue. Kyte used Atkins' band with Washington as DJ, along with two back-up vocalists for a solo number. Washington also used Atkins' band and sang lead for her set, covering mid-1980s classics like "Meeting in the Ladies Room" by Klymaxx. Washington introduced that band's founder, Bernadette Cooper, sitting at the bar. It is a joy to experience this music live. The troupe should do well as a package tour. ***– Brooke Trout***



SAIL

Cooley Lake Inn *Commerce, MI*

Contact: sailbandcontact@gmail.com
Web: sailbandofficial.com
The Players: Anthony Fink, vocals; Ray Shaffer, guitars; Jarrett Holtslag, keyboards; Jimmy Redman, bass; Thomas Lowe, drums.

Material: Playing a strong cross-section of classic rock sprinkled with a smattering of contemporary radio fare and choice originals, this quintet performs multiple sets that include audience favorites like Santana's version of "Black Magic Woman," Radiohead's "Creep" and Train's "Drops of Jupiter." Rush's "Limelight" is a well-executed surprise and the perennial "House of the Rising Sun" does not disappoint. Their own "Monday Morning" features an upbeat vibe and tuneful chorus that resonates.

Musicianship: As one should expect, each member brings a unique personality and flair to his role in the band. Frontman Fink utilizes body language as well as an impressive range to sell the songs. Shaffer blends economy and taste in solos that are clean and really cut through the live mix. Holtslag primarily offers strong support, but belts out a soulful lead when the material calls for it. Though he seems to take the typical laidback bassist stance, Redman cultivates a solid foundation that never falters. The same can be said for Lowe. He appropriately locks in with Redman and gives the band a relaxed, yet dominant drive.

Performance: Overall, the band handled the extensive and somewhat daunting set list with professional poise and aplomb. At times they appeared a tad out of sync, with, for example, slightly shifting rhythms on Cream's "Sunshine of Your Love." And, while Fink is a gifted vocalist, there were specific songs where some choice backups would've put them over the top. But there were, moreover, many magic moments such as Holtslag's burning organ work on the aforementioned Animals classic. Also Fink's delivery of Styx's "Come Sail Away" was a definite highlight as well.

Summary: Though the members of Sail range in age from 16 to 20, they bring forth an extensive knowledge of rock and pop styles. Their collective ability to implement them is impressive. They also write originals and appear to have a point of view that is cohesive and well crafted. Simply put, Sail have a long way to go but a vast skill set to take them to the next level.

– Eric A. Harabadian



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Three Clubs *Hollywood, CA*

Contact: robbiewrites@yahoo.com
Web: robbiemcdonald.com
The Players: Robbie McDonald, vocals, multi-instrumentalist; Todd McDearman, synth; Hyosun Choi, cellist.

Material: McDonald co-produces this first "Fabaret" show with Leopold Nunan (Food Network). The costumes are a spectacular display of glitter and glamour, ranging from a Marilyn Monroe to a red devil. McDonald emcees parts of the event in both a suit and a kilt, beckoning audience members to dance on stage as well as work the red carpet with co-host Davi Davenport (*Davi Davenport Live*).

McDonald's lyrics are emotionally raw. He explains his song "Dear Walter" is about "gay bashing U.K. style," telling the story about a man named Walter who was afraid to hold hands in an Irish pub. Then there is "Comic Book Hero" of which McDonald explains was written about a lover of 11 years who left him for God. "Lone Correspondent" shows a good use of slant rhymes: "…You talk in tongues, blank mind charades/You're dry land, I'm water on your grave." A sincere romanticism is apparent on "Throw Your Weight Around" with its contrite appeal: "…if I use my words to cut you down/ kiss my wicked mouth/If my faith goes south, turn my love around."

Musicianship: McDonald performs primarily on piano and sometimes on electrified ukulele. The compositions are sparse and kept interesting with unusual but intentional minor key changes. McDonald projects well throughout. The keyboard levels from McDearman (producer of McDonald's latest album *Say Yes*) are pretty low in the mix but work to retain focus on McDonald. The cello from Choi is a lovely addition and fills the acoustic bass element of the compositions.

Performance: It was two hours before the scheduled start time for the show and several audience members started complaining and left. However, the wait did build the crowd's anticipation and the energy of each performance stayed high. McDonald gave, arguably, the most conservative performance of the evening, albeit a riveting one. Almost to negate that assumption, he flashed the audience at his finale.

Summary: McDonald is a storyteller without restraint. Musically the songs have a retro feel that seems to harken back to some of the great '70s piano pop. In fact McDonald does reveal, "Lionel Richie is my spirit animal," explaining that the two shared a meeting where Richie inspired him to keep pursuing his musical endeavors. McDonald has a soulful cover of "Easy" by The Commodores in his repertoire, which encourages audience participation.

– Brooke Trout


PAUL ZOLLO

ROBBIE McDONALD

Pianos *New York, NY*

Contact: amber@bigpicturemediaonline.com
Web: thenewregime.com
The Players: Ilan Rubin, guitar, vocals; Daniel Rubin, bass; Danny King, drums.

Material: Ilan Rubin has quite a resume when it comes to his past musical employment. After having worked with bands Nine Inch Nails, Angels & Airwaves and a brief stint with Paramore, Rubin is showing what he's made of as frontman and songwriter of this power rock trio.

His major influences include greats like Led Zeppelin, Queen and The Police (although he's more hard-edged than The Police), and they inform his own songwriting, which he showcases along with exceptional musical chops. So whether a listener is there for the catchy melodies or more interested in instrumental wizardry, "there's something for everyone," says Rubin.

In "We Rise, We Fall," a classic verse is followed by a memorable syncopated chorus, which helps it stand out musically and lyrically. In "Mannequin," a relationship gone south drives home an impression of a cold-hearted partner in its striking set up and metaphorical tag line: "You've shown a face that I want nothing to do with. You've got the soul of a mannequin."

Musicianship: The frontman is a multi-instrumentalist playing piano, bass, guitar and drums (and has recently added the cello to that list), and that made it possible for him to bring any one of those talents to previous bands; but for this show electric guitar was the choice. The other two spots—bass and drums—are filled by Daniel Rubin and King, all contributing licks and parts of arrangements that are essential to this tight presentation. Ilan Rubin delivers more than respectable rock vocals while displaying some prolific guitar work.


ELLEN WOLOSHIN

THE NEW REGIME

Performance: The set consisted of mainly wall-to-wall music with very little conversation in between songs, but it seemed appropriate for this type of outfit since much of the musical satisfaction came in the form of intricate musicianship and consummate band unity.

Stopping for incidental chatter would have broken the spell-like concentration that the music offered. This was in no way off-putting as the band displayed no attitude or arrogance. One potential, additional plus in the set would have been to include a notable cover in a similar vein, putting their own stamp on it and aligning themselves with other rock greats.

Summary: If you're up for some great playing, solid songwriting or just a lover of classic rock music, this is a band you want to hear. Ilan Rubin's past experience touring with well-known rock bands has given him a strong foundation and a good jumping off point for his own band.

– Ellen Woloshin



MARY LEMANSKI

MAKS THE FOX

Subterranean *Chicago, IL*

Contact: maksthefox@gmail.com
Web: maksthefox.com
The Players: Kori Simonson, guitar, keys, vocals; Marlon Aguilar, vocals, guitar; Sarah Cornish, viola, vocals; Rachel Schuldt, cello, bass, vocals; Jacob Fawcett, vocals, drums.

Material: MAKS THE FOX are an eclectic quintet who have a folk rock sound with an indie edge. They consist of two lead vocalists, keys, guitar, viola, cello/bass and drums. Lush vocal harmonies and the additional use of harmonica and small percussion instruments, like shakers, round out the sound. The drummer, Jacob Fawcett, was not at the Subterrananean show. They set up a bass drum anyway to symbolize his presence. Aside from a few unreleased songs, most of the set list was from the band's 2013 self-titled debut album.

Musicianship: There is no doubt that MAKS THE FOX are a group of talented musicians. The band originally began as a singer/songwriter duo comprising Simonson and Aguilar. They are solid songwriters and sound great singing together. Cornish and Schuldt are both wonderful string players and backing vocalists, and they truly add another dimension to the band's sound.

Performance: The quintet played to a growing crowd at the Subterranean as the audience filtered in for a national touring act for whom they were opening that night. The band started off their set with "On Your Own," an alternative indie rock tune with a catchy melody. "Babe" had a classic Tin Pan Alley feel to it, but with a modern, rock twist. Their song, "2 Friends," was dedicated to a couple of friends who were getting married. It had an interesting pizzicato passage on the cello during the breakdown. Aguilar took over lead vocals on "Love is a Fire," singing a lovely, sweet melody while the women sang gorgeous backing vocals creating a four-part harmony with the melody. "Kid," which had a roots rock feel, was a new song for MAKS THE FOX. It was an outro that became a song during their recording session. The rockin' "Come Around," with its quirky keyboard riff, was a great ending to the set.

Summary: MAKS THE FOX are good musicians with lyrically insightful songs. They have a diverse sound that span genres from folk to jazz to rock. While their performance is not filled with crazy stage antics and wowing displays of virtuosity, the music is left to speak for itself and that's just fine.

– Mary Lemanski

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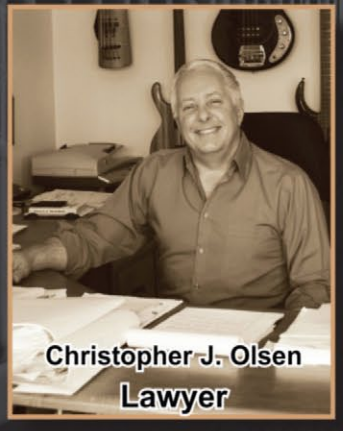
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3 Common Features of Top 100 Hits

Every song on the Billboard Hot 100 chart is there for a reason. Regardless of genre, these songs share particular features that help them communicate to millions of listeners.

After 10 years as an engineer and producer at Westlake Recording Studios, I've worked on hundreds of tracks designed to break that chart. Michael Jackson's record-setting album *Thriller* was recorded at Westlake, and we continue to work with chart-topping music from The Weeknd, Rihanna, One Direction, Adele and many others.

I've discovered there are often distinguishing factors that make hit songs more streamed, downloaded and consumed than their competition. If you apply what often works in hits songs to your music (within your own personal style and voice), it becomes more positioned to connect with a much greater audience.

This is the premise of Westlake's new Crē•8 Music Academy, which launches in January 2016. Based on what we see work in Westlake sessions every day, we are offering a 360 degree course for producers, songwriters and artists to create competitive sounds, songs and master recordings. I'll briefly touch on three areas explored in our curriculum: building a song's foundation, crafting melodies and mixing.

1. A Song's Foundation—Rhythm Or Melody?

Most popular songs have either a primarily melodic or rhythmic foundation. The Weeknd's current hit, "The Hills," is an example of a track based on a melodic foundation, including a steady chord progression and a radio-friendly hook. "Locked Away," which was tracked at Westlake by R. City and features Adam Levine, has a rhythmic foundation. Don't be fooled by its five-chord progression: the song would feel entirely different without the reggeton backbeat, whereas "The Hills" would feel almost identical, even with a different drum groove underneath.

For a melodic track, songwriters and artists often collaborate for hours around a piano or acoustic guitar to find that perfect hook. A demo is created and ultimately fleshed-out with a producer. Throughout the arrangement, the production stays centered around this melody of the song.

On the other hand, a rhythmic foundation is built around a drum groove with a great "pocket". This kind of track may "open up" to additional chords or melody in the hook, or stay simple throughout, but it's always fueled by the underlying rhythm. The arrangement of rhythmic tracks, rather than being driven by a melody that lifts and rises, is created through differences in rhythmic complexity and density. Verse drums and percussion should be solid, steady and basic; B-Section and hook drums can introduce new sounds and complexity.

To summarize: successful songs in today's market usually have EITHER a rhythmic or a melodic foundation, not both.

Tips:

- Choose a melodic or rhythmic focus in the beginning to simplify the writing process
- Fill space in a simple progression with either a strong melody or a strong rhythm
- For rhythmic productions, create a lift through changes in rhythmic density rather than in melody

2. Crafting Melodies

Melody in popular music has two main aspects—"topline" (lyrics plus melody) and melodies within the music itself. Many successful songwriters focus exclusively on topline, the best earning large retainers and hefty mechanical/performance royalties.

Songs meant for commerce tend towards a particular structure in their topline melody. The verse centers around the root, second or third of the scale. The B-Section (pre-chorus) leans on the third, fourth or fifth. The hook (chorus) melodies rise to focus on the fifth, octave or just above the octave, creating a sense of lifting or soaring.

If your verse melody emphasizes the root, try moving to something that centers around the third in the B-section, and the fifth in the hook. These notes can serve as a subtle "anchor" for your melody as it moves through the song, thus they may appear a few more times than any other note in their respective section. Alternatively, if the verse emphasizes the third, move up to the fifth during the B-section and the octave for the hook. You may be shocked at the impact such a seemingly simple idea can have on a song. If it happens more often than not on hit songs, why not give it a try?

For some examples of this concept, check out Justin Bieber's recent hit "What Do You Mean?," which centers around the root (Ab) throughout the entire verse. "Drag Me Down" by One Direction hovers around the root (C) in the verse, moving up to the fifth (G). "Photograph" by Ed Sheeran is in E major and centers around the third in the verse before rocketing up into his falsetto in the chorus.

The second aspect of melody is the arrangement. Hard rule: track melodies (guitar fills, synth leads) should never interfere with the topline. Instead they should weave in and out of the topline, resting and re-entering, providing a feeling of countermelody.

3. Mixing

The key here is to identify the few instrument or vocal elements that define the song. Mix those elements by themselves, applying effects and balancing levels. Leave the other tracks muted. Seriously. After the foundation is constructed, other elements of the mix will fall in place more easily.

For example, if the foundation is kick/snare/bass/lead vox, don't adjust the kick while blending the guitar. Instead, mix the foundation first, then adjust the guitar around the kick. The sound of the guitar shouldn't be sacrificed, just blended around the kick. If your foundation is weak or unstable everything will come crashing down. Take your time.

If you are targeting the commercial music market and want to refine your writing, production, mixing and mastering skills, contact Crē•8 Music Academy at 323-851-9908 or cre8info@cre8musicacademy.com to request a free music assessment and tour of our facilities.

DOUG FENSKE is the Director of Education of Crē•8 Music Academy at Westlake Recording Studios. A Grammy-nominated engineer-producer, Fenske has worked on multiple platinum and gold releases. For information about Crē•8 Music Academy's 30-day and 10-week intensive music production program visit cre8musicacademy.com.

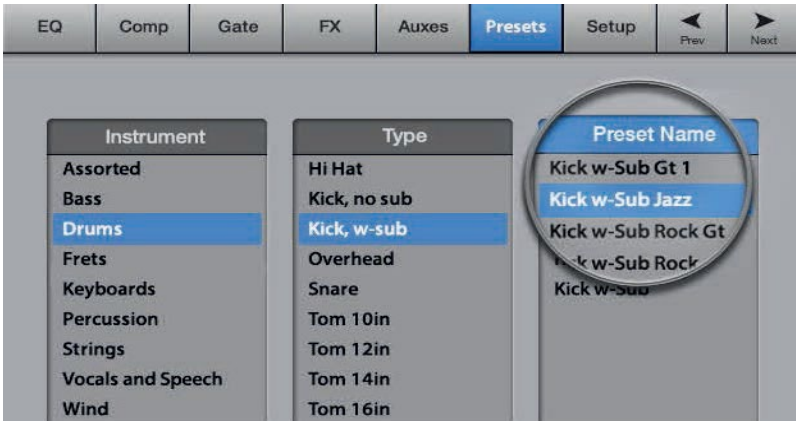
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