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40TH ANNIVERSARY
YEAR-END ISSUE!

Hot 100
Live Unsigned
Artists &
Bands

100+

Best Career
Tips of 2017

Top 25
New Music
Critiques

5 Ways
to Spend Less on
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Vance Joy

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BMI



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Vance Joy

In our exclusive interview, the "Riptide" singer-songwriter retraces the steps that took him from obscurity to more than 1 billion online listens and sold-out concert tours.

By Rob Putnam

All Photos: Justin Bettman



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Compiled by Mark Nardone

100 Best Career Tips of 2017

Compiled by Jacqueline Naranjo



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Compiled by Bernard Baur



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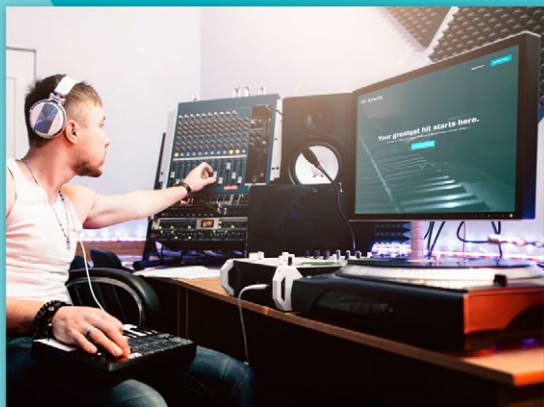
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PENSADO AWARDS 4

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A special thanks to Herb & Dave for creating the award show that truly recognizes the faces behind the sound. We are proud to be part of the team! • Lisa Roy and Robbie Clyne

DISC MAKERS

discmakers.com

A Legacy Rooted in DIY: Empowering artists to do what they love for over seven decades, Disc Makers is the world's largest CD, DVD and Blu-ray manufacturer for independent musicians, filmmakers and businesses. Irvin Ballen, founder of the Ballen Record Company, built his own disc pressing plant and began pressing 78's for his artists as well as for other local labels. Over the decades, Disc Makers (which launched in 1946) has gone through a series of format changes that have defined their eras, from 78 RPM shellack discs to 45s, to vinyl albums, eight tracks, cassettes, CDs DVDs. A year after Disc Makers celebrated its 70th anniversary, their original format, vinyl, has come full circle and continues its great resurgence.

One-Stop Shop: The Pennsauken, NJ based company is a complete one-stop shop offering everything indie artists need (under a single roof) to make their releases successful, including duplication, replication, printing, graphic design, audio mastering, DVD authoring, world-wide distribution and more. Disc Makers has also partnered with CD Baby to provide an easy way for artists to sell their CDs and downloads in the biggest stores in the world. Their Mega Distribution Bundle allows artists to sell their music on the largest and most popular music stores like iTunes, Amazon, Facebook, CD Baby and more, while getting paid for streams on Spotify, Apple Music, Pandora, iHeart Radio and other digital services.



Rolling with the Changes: Back in 2006, the digital revolution in music consumption had many ready to declare physical music a dying entity. Yet even amidst the hype, and a digital surge that has changed virtually everything, there has always been a need for disc manufacturing. Over 10 years later, artists continue to make careers with the support of Disc Makers, and the company continues to produce over 40 million discs for 40

thousand artists each year. Daniel Baker, Director of Marketing, says, "Because there are other ways now to sell their music, artists are ordering shorter runs, but our business has not slowed down. We will do everything for you except write and record your music. Come to us with your finished recording, and we'll take it from there."

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Mario de Arce

Western U.S. Accounts Manager
Focusrite Pro

Focusrite Pro has appointed **Mario De Arce** to the role of **Western U.S. Accounts Manager**. Reporting to Kurt Howell, National Sales Manager, North America, De Arce is responsible for growing sales of Focusrite Pro's Red, RedNet and ISA ranges. Working closely with channel partners, he provides effective product sales strategies and workflow solutions on Focusrite Pro's world-class portfolio of multi-format audio interfaces, modular audio-over-IP solutions, microphone preamplifiers and analogue signal processors. Mario joins from Avid, where he was Pro Audio Solutions Specialist. For more info, contact dan.hughley@focusrite.com.



Mark Love

Director of R&D
Sabian

Sabian has promoted Master Product Specialist **Mark Love** to the newly created position of **Director of Research & Product Development**. In his new role, Love will take on overall responsibility for the development and creation of new instruments, development of enhanced manufacturing techniques and ensuring that the highest levels of product quality are maintained. A 35-year veteran of the SABIAN team, Mark has been instrumental in developing some of the most innovative cymbals and has worked side-by-side with artists like Jojo Mayer, Terry Bozzio, and many others. For more information, contact Katie Bursey at katieb@sabian.comfocusrite.com.



Kerri Mackar

SVP, Brand Partnership
Republic Records

Republic Records has appointed **Kerry Mackar** to **Senior Vice President, Brand Partnership**. Mackar will work across platforms to align artists and key brands, launch high-profile events and maximize strategic revenue-generating opportunities. Kerri will collaborate closely with the Universal Music Group and Brands team on additional integrations. Since 2014, Mackar was Head of Marketing for Rolling Stone where she orchestrated partnerships with top brands and events related to the Super Bowl, Fashion Week, GRAMMYS, SXSW, Lollapalooza, and several others. For more, contact Joseph Carozza at Joseph.Carozza@umusic.com.



Barbara Cane

Vice President, Worldwide Creative
Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI)

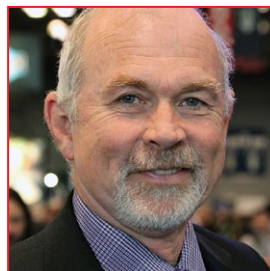
Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI) has promoted **Barbara Cane** to the newly created role of **Vice President, Worldwide Creative and Advisor to the EVP of Creative & Licensing**. In her new role, Cane will work together with BMI's Creative executives, continuing her efforts supporting BMI's songwriting community while cultivating essential industry relationships. She will also share her expertise in an advisory capacity to BMI Executive Vice President, Creative & Licensing, Mike Steinberg. Cane will be based in both Los Angeles and New York and will report to Steinberg. For more, contact Liz Fischer at lfischer@bmi.com.



David Scheirman

President
Audio Engineering Society

The **Audio Engineering Society** has appointed **David Scheirman** to **President of Audio Engineering Society**. Scheirman, an AES member since 1975, has been directly involved with PA rental companies, an installed system integrator, an electro-acoustical measurement laboratory, a computer-control system developer, a networking technology R&D firm and leading loudspeaker system manufacturers, with previous recent experience notably including his work with HARMAN Professional and JBL. Currently, he holds the position of Director, Global Concert & Rental Business at Bose Professional. For more, contact robert.clyne@aes.org.



Tom Biery

EVP Recorded Music
BMG

BMG has appointed **Tom Grover Biery** as **EVP Recorded Music**. In his new role, Biery will lead BMG's L.A. and New York recorded music teams, working alongside BBR Music Group, S-Curve Records and Rise Records to further build the company's scale in recordings. He will report to Zach Katz, President Repertoire & Marketing, BMG US. Previously, Biery worked Concord Music Group where he recently served as SVP, Streaming Marketing, overseeing the global digital and streaming strategy for all Concord labels, catalog and artists, while managing relationships at Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube, Pandora and more. For more, contact paki.newell@bmg.com.



Daniel Higbee

Vice President of Synch
Dualtone Music Group

Daniel Higbee has been named **Vice President of Synch** for **Dualtone Music Group**. In this role, Higbee will initiate all pitching and placement efforts for licensing in film, TV and advertising for Dualtone's catalog and the Dualtone Songs publishing roster. Higbee will also be signing talent and building out Dualtone's third party pitch roster. Prior to joining Dualtone, Higbee held various titles including Head of Film/TV and SVP of Creative at Secret Road, a boutique music services company. At Secret Road he helped sign and pitch a growing roster of independent acts including The Civil Wars, Joseph and Ingrid Michaelson. For more info, contact gmelchiorre@entonegroup.com.



Dr. E. Michael Harrington

Director of Music Clearance
Blue Night Soundscapes

Blue Night Soundscapes has appointed **Dr. E. Michael Harrington** as **Director of Music Clearance**. Harrington is a Professor of Music Business at Berklee College of Music, where he designed the Capstone course for the music business curriculum and is authoring the Music Business Law course for the new Berklee Online Graduate Program. He has served as a consultant and expert witness in hundreds of music copyright/intellectual property matters involving the We Shall Overcome Foundation, Pharrell Williams, Taylor Swift, Adele, Steven Spielberg, Tupac, Lady Gaga, Samsung, HBO and others. For more, contact BlueNightSoundscapes@gmail.com



▼ YAMAHA SESSIONCAKE PERSONAL AMP/HEADPHONE MIXERS



About the size of a stomp pedal box, the battery-powered SessionCake modules are compact amplifier and headphone mixer combos that interconnect over a short (included) cable. By “daisy-chaining” SessionCakes together, up to eight musicians and/or singers, each with their own SessionCake, can plug in their instruments or microphones and play and collaborate together anywhere, all using their own headphones.

For review, I received the first two SessionCake modules available: the red SC-01, with a mono input tailored for guitar and bass, and the blue SC-02 with an XLR mic input and a 1/4-inch inputs suitable for synthesizers, electronic drums and microphones. I popped in two AA batteries, and I was good to go for up to 10 hours of continuous use. Each SessionCake model has a 3.5-mm headphone jack plus an auxiliary input for interfacing a mobile device (iPhone) for playing music backing tracks, adding effects and/or record using a recording app.

I first set up the red SC-01 for electric guitar with my Ultimate Ears Pro Reference in-ears plugged in, and my iPhone 6 plugged into the Aux jack. Next for a stereo keyboard, I connected the blue SC-02.

I connected the two SessionCakes together using the included TRRS network cable going to each unit's Chain 1 port. It was easy to set all this up and I liked that both units have identical controls: the “More Me” level, Phones level, and Input level control. There is also a Pan control that sets the panned position across all connected SessionCakes of the particular instrument or mic plugged in to that unit.

So this is a new way to collaborate and “jam” over headphones with your own individual mix and volume level relative to the other players in your SessionCake group. The SessionCake SC-01 is \$100 and SC-02 is \$130, both MSRP.

usa.yamaha.com/products/musical_instruments/guitars_basses/amps_accessories/sessioncake/index.html

► LISTEN AUDIO DIFFUSE SIGNATURE MODULAR DIFFUSERS

Listen Audio's **DIFFUSE Signature** diffusers offer different sizes and shapes of diffusion products that begin to scatter sound starting at 600Hz and extend to up over 8kHz. By using different height standoff hardware you may vary the distance the diffuser is elevated off walls and ceilings. Adding to a very stylish look in your room, you can choose from 1, 1.75 or up to 2.5-inches tall standoffs to mount them.

Standard sizes include 2 X 2 and 2 X 4-feet but you can order custom sizes to cover any surface. DIFFUSE Signature Diffusers are crafted entirely in the United States from Baltic birch and MDF and start at \$295 MSRP for the 2 x 2-foot panel. You can order them to match any grain finish with veneer and/or stain or paint.

listen-speakers.com/products/diffuse-signature



▲ PSP NEXCELLENCE SPRING REVERB

PSP's new **Nexcellence** (ver 1.0.2 tested) is a spring reverb emulation plug-in inspired by the “Necklace” reverbs made by Hammond Organ company starting around 1959. Nexcellence models the three springs hung like a necklace.

Nexcellence provides two different spring set processors that can use one or both processing engines at the same time. And unlike the original hardware units, there are adjustable parameters to control the inherent characteristics of all spring reverbs.

PSP is super-accurate in all their emulations and I liked using Nexcellence on electric guitars—just as they are used in guitar amps. I used a lot of Nexcellence to develop surf music sounds of the '60s. It adds a “bubbly” twang but with more control over the brightness (Color knob), the bubbles and the twang (Decay Time knob) with 0.8 to 7.2 seconds.

I liked overdriving this reverb when the built-in opto-limiter kicks in and the sound of the reverberation mellows out and takes on a darker character. Lastly, the M/S processing and that one spring can be used for the left and the other for the right side. Having control over stereo width is something all new and not possible with hardware spring reverbs. Awesome!

Nexcellence sells for \$149 MSRP as a download from PSP Audioware.

pspaudioware.com/plugins/reverbs/psp_nexcellence

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◀ HARTKE HD500 BASS COMBO

The high-powered, lightweight HD500 Bass Combo packs a pair of 10-inch, patented Hartke HyDrive speakers with neodymium magnets, and is powered by a 500-watt Class-D amplifier. This comes all in a sleek enclosure weighing only 35 pounds.

The HD500's HyDrive speakers blend paper and aluminum materials into a speaker cone that produces an exceptional blend of warmth and attack that can't be attained by traditional all-paper cones. The rare earth neodymium magnets help to reduce the combo's overall weight but without sacrificing any of the Harke's legendary attack and performance.

The HD500's top-mounted control panel includes a selectable Shape control that activates a preset EQ curve for a unique tone with selective boosts/cuts across the entire frequency range. Further tone modification is accomplished using Shape's variable filter and on-board three-band EQ.

With an XLR direct out connector, 1/4-inch headphone jack and 1/8-inch stereo Aux input, the HD500 sells for \$599.

samsontech.com/hartke/products/combos/hd-series-combos/had500

▶ NEW AMPEG BASS PEDALS

Ampeg has a little love for all the bass players out there, two new pedals: the Classic Analog Bass Preamp and the Scrambler Bass Overdrive. These two add to Ampeg's popular SCR-DI Bass DI box.

The Classic Analog Bass Preamp pedal allows a wide range of authentic Ampeg tones with its three-band tone stack and highly flexible Ultra-Hi and Ultra-Lo circuits. The Scrambler Bass Overdrive pedal delivers a huge range of overdriven sounds—from minimally saturated all the way to over-the-top, flame-throwing. In addition to the Drive control, the Scrambler has a Treble boost control for more edge if required.

Both these new pedals feature an all-analog, true bypass design with a low signal-to-noise ratio design. They come built into all-metal enclosures and use either a 9V battery or a power supply—not included.

The Classic Analog Bass Preamp pedal sells for \$99 MSRP.

ampeg.com/products/pedals/classic

The Scrambler sells for \$99 MSRP.

ampeg.com/products/pedals/scrambler



◀ PRESONUS QUANTUM THUNDERBOLT INTERFACE

PreSonus' 26 X 32-channel Quantum 1U audio/MIDI interface takes full advantage of its high-speed Thunderbolt 2 bus architecture to provide super-low latency throughput. You may record directly through your DAW using minimal buffer sizes. Quantum uses 24-bit, 192 kHz converters with 120 dB of dynamic range and the eight onboard PreSonus XMAX microphone preamps are recallable via the included PreSonus Universal Control (UC) software and/or PreSonus' Studio One® DAW.

The only connection between your computer and Quantum is a single Thunderbolt 2 cable with an additional rear panel TB 2 connector provided for ancillary disk drives and/or monitors—no need to buy a hub. On its front panel are Talkback (mic), Mute/Dim and Mono buttons.

I liked using the two Combo XLR jacks on the front panel that “sense”

and automatically scale the pre-amp gain and input impedances for mics, instruments, or line inputs whichever you plug in. The rear panel has XLR Combo inputs 3 through 8 and they also automatically switch between XLR microphones or TRS line level inputs. Phantom powering is selected on the front panel or UC on an individual basis.

The rear panel has 1 through 8 line outputs plus the L/R stereo Main monitor outputs. There are: S/PDIF in/out jacks; Word clock in/out BNCs; ADAT Dual S/Mux in/out Lightpipe spigots and MIDI in and out jacks. With a single Quantum and using the ADAT and S/PDIF stereo digital I/O, you can have up to 18 additional digital inputs and outputs for a total of 26 in and 32 out.

Running a 2011 MacBook Pro, OS 10.12.6, 16 GB RAM and Pro Tools 12.8.1, we got sound playing right away by connecting the 1/4-inch TRS main output jacks to my powered monitors. The two Headphone jacks can be configured to play two different mixes with all configurations quickly done and stored in the UC.

We quickly launched a previous session that had been problematic for two other USB and Firewire interfaces. Not only did that session run flawlessly using the Quantum, we added another 50 tracks and put them into record with no problem whatsoever!

Quantum sells for \$999.95 MAP; comes with PreSonus Studio One® Artist DAW and the Studio Magic Plug-in Suite; and you can upgrade to Studio One Pro for 50% off.

presonus.com/products/Quantum

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



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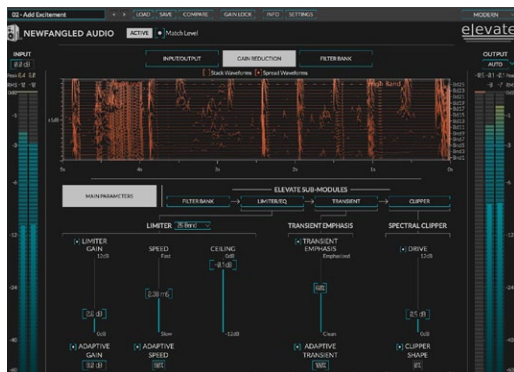
STOCKINGSTUFFERS 2017

BY BARRY RUDOLPH

Merry Christmas!!

Santa has an eclectic bag of musical Christmas gifts for those special in your life. There are goodies for that music engineer-producer, guitarist, drummer—anybody who plays, listens and enjoys music!

Newfangled Audio/Eventide Elevate Mastering Plug-in is an advanced mastering plug-in with multi-band limiting, human-ear EQ and audio maximizer. Elevate automatically adapts the attack, release and look-ahead parameters



for each of the filter bands to greatly reduce “pumping” and breathing artifacts. By manipulating transients across the critical bands you can preserve or emphasize fast transients to avoid squashing your entire mix. By using linear phase auditory filters, audio is equalized in a way that sounds natural. With a good set of presets by APS Mastering, Matt Lange, Jeremy Lubsey, Eric Beam and others. Elevate sells for \$199 with upgrades from Equivocate for \$75. eventideaudio.com/products/plugins/mastering/elevate-bundle



Samson's MediaOne M30 Powered Studio Monitors at \$79.99 are compact, full-range speakers with internal amplifiers, solid wood construction and high-quality components to produce big sound while occupying minimal desktop space. Great for producing music or just listening to Christmas songs, they have 10-watts per channel, mighty three-inch copolymer woofers and ¾-inch silk dome tweeters. There are: a bass boost switch, both stereo RCA inputs and 1/8-inch inputs for connecting headphones, and sub-woofer outputs. samsontech.com/samson/products/studio-monitors/media-one/mediaonem30



Promark by D'Addario FireGrain™ Drumsticks use a revolutionary heat-tempering process that transforms ordinary hickory drumsticks into precision, durable tools. While keeping their original weight, balance and feel, FireGrain sticks allow drummers to hit harder and play longer, naturally. No excess vibration, no space age gimmicks, just natural hickory, hardened by flame. FireGrain

hickory drumsticks are available in the sizes: 7A, 5A, 5B, 2B, plus Rebound and Forward models 5A and 5B. They sell for \$12.99 MAP. promark.com

StickItStand™ is a new patent pending stick-on guitar stand. It stays attached to your guitar yet the instrument will still fit into your gig-bag or case. Made from a high-grade silicon rubber, it sticks on your guitar via a peel-off, electronics-grade double stick adhesive. With it attached to the lower back of the guitar, your guitar will securely lean against a wall or amp with less chance of falling over. The “one size fits all” Stick-It-Stand works easily on most acoustic or electric guitars and is the perfect accessory for an active guitar player. It sells for \$19.95 MSRP or get in on an Amazon Holiday special at \$14.95. StickItStand.com

The Podcast Hotline Kit is a connection kit to interface your cell phone or tablet to your recording studio. It's 1.5-meter multi-cable starts with a 1/8-inch TRRS plug that goes into the headset jack in your cellphone. The cable splits out into a red-colored ¼-inch jack to receive external microphone input audio from your mixer and also a white cable for audio out of your smartphone. In this way you can use an external mixer to mix several audio sources in your studio and “patch”

them into your phone or tablet to facilitate your podcast. It sells for \$19.95. podcasthotlinekit.com



IK Multimedia iRig Pre HD is a certified Apple audio interface with a single XLR mic input and stereo output. iRig Pre HD is guaranteed to work with all iOS devices using a Lightning connector including those without headphone jacks. The iRig Pre HD comes with both a Lightning cable and USB cable for connection to Macs and PCs for recording anytime and anywhere with your favorite dynamic, ribbon or condenser microphone with phantom power (with batteries inserted). You'll have best-in-category sound quality with up to 96kHz/24-bit resolution and full, flat frequency response from 20Hz to 20kHz (+/- 1.5dB). iRig Pre HD bridges the gap between portable devices and professional microphones for recording instruments, sound for media, video, speech, interviews, documentaries and more. It sells for \$99. ikmultimedia.com/products/irigprehd

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2018!



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◀ TASCAM DP-32SD 32-track Digital Portastudio

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MSRP: \$549.99
tascam.com

▼ GIK Acoustics Portable Isolation Booth (PIB)

The GIK Acoustics PIB (Portable Isolation Booth) effectively isolates a vocalist or sound source and removes negative room ambience, which improves clarity and recording quality. Unfolded it acts as a vocal booth expanding to 6'6" tall x 3'7" wide. Collapsed it can be used as an isolation screen around instruments.

MSRP: \$325

gikacoustics.com/product/pib-portable-isolation-vocal-booth



▶ Cerwin-Vega Series

The CVE series offers legendary Cerwin-Vega Sound, advanced DSP technology and features an effective control panel for efficient setup. Access all controls with the push of one button to tailor the sound to your personal taste. Stream audio via Bluetooth in mono or stereo paired mode from any mobile device. The CVE Series is ideal for setups where portability is paramount, or a lightweight, integrated audio solution is essential.

MSRP: \$399

Cerwinvega.com



► LA Sound Panels' Skyline Diffuser

Based on the classic BBC formula, LA Sound Panels' Skyline Diffusers are custom milled from Douglas Fir for a clean, professional look. Easy to mount and highly effective, Skyline Diffusers are important additions to any studio environment.

MSRP: \$250

lasoundpanels.com



◀ Burl Mic Preamp

Based on the API 500 series form factor, the B1 is meant to complement the B2 BOMBER ADC and the B80 MOTHERSHIP and will give you multi-channel pleasure. With the proprietary BX3 input transformer and BX2 output transformer, the B1 MIC PRE delivers warmth with depth and clarity. The B1 gets the best out of any microphone, whether it be dynamic, condenser or ribbon.

MSRP: 875

burlaudio.com/products/b1-mic-pres



◀ Roland GO:MIXER

The Roland GO:MIXER is a compact audio mixer for smartphone video production. Compatible with iOS and Android smart phones, GO:MIXER connects digitally via an included cable, providing clear stereo sound. With multiple inputs available, users can connect a mic, musical instruments and media players, and mix them all together live while they shoot. Ultra-portable and simple to use, GO:MIXER is the ideal solution for adding a pro sound touch to social media videos.

MSRP: \$99

Roland.com



◀ iZotope Spire Studio

Spire is a versatile, wireless system that enables songwriters and musicians of all genres to capture, edit and collaborate seamlessly—at home, or on the road. Inspired by the recognition that great music can come from anywhere, iZotope designed Spire to go everywhere.

MSRP: \$349

spire.live

► Mojave Audio MA-50

The MA-50 large-diaphragm transformerless condenser microphone from Mojave Audio is a cardioid mic designed by technical Grammy-winning designer David Royer. It features a 3-micron capsule and a fixed-cardioid polar pattern and can be used in various applications, such as for vocals, voice-overs, broadcast TV, piano, percussion recordings and more. The MA-50 utilizes the same capsule as the MA-200 and MA-201fet microphone, handling the fastest transients with ease up to 140 dB. The Mojave Audio MA-50 large-diaphragm condenser microphone yields results that will appeal to pro's and semi-pro's alike.

MAP: \$495

mojaveaudio.com



Mojave MA-50



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mojaveaudio.com



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Spinal Tap: The Big Black Book

By Wallace Fairfax
(hardcover) \$40.00

Made famous by the 1984 mockumentary directed by Rob Reiner, the fictitious band Spinal Tap comes to life in this big black book. Explore stories that may (or may not!) have happened along with interactive pages and behind-the-scenes photos of the film's cast. *Spinal Tap:*

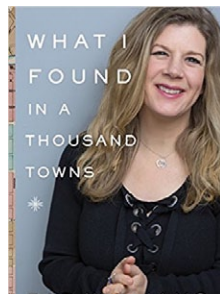


The Big Black Book will bring to the public, for the very first time, the story of the band in words, pictures and removable facsimile memorabilia. Fairfax's labor of love gives you a glimpse of what it would have been like to be in this cult rock band during the '80s.

What I Found In a Thousand Towns: A Traveling Musician's Guide to Rebuilding America's Communities – One Coffee Shop, Dog Run, & Open-Mike Night at a Time

By Dar Williams
(hardcover) \$27.00

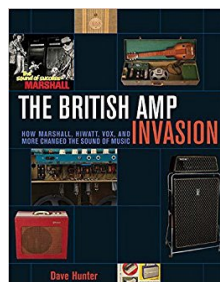
Through optimism and loving examination, Dar Williams takes readers to a small town that people want to live in, referring to it as "positive proximity." Williams gives a tour across the United States to show how it is within the small cities and towns where she has performed over the years. Through celebrating the creativity, hard work and determination of average people looking to build something meaningful, Williams offers a roadmap for other communities to do the same.



The British Amp Invasion: How Marshall, Hiwatt, Vox and More Changed the Sound of Music

By Dave Hunter
(paperback) \$29.99

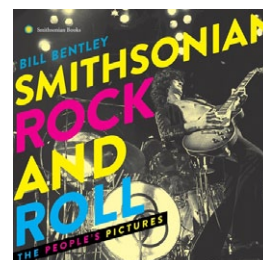
Hunter's book outlines the rise of British amps in rock & roll which was the result of a trade embargo that drove up American amp prices, giving British manufacturers the impetus to quickly produce amps that would arguably outperform American ones. Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Jimi Hendrix and many other prominent guitarists performed with amps made by Vox, Marshall, Hiwatt and Orange, influencing longstanding popularity of the musical device's British designs.



Smithsonian Rock and Roll: Live and Unseen

By Bill Bentley
(hardcover) \$40.00

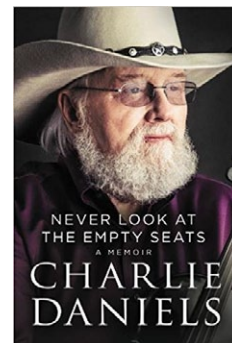
In 2015, the Smithsonian called on rock & roll lovers around the world to dig out photos and stories of their favorite moments in music and upload them to rockandroll.si.edu. Photos from Woodstock to The Whisky, from Lollapalooza to the 9:30 Club, and even from Portland's Melody Ballroom, fans overwhelmingly responded. *Smithsonian Rock and Roll* features 142 artists spanning more than six decades—Aretha Franklin, Chuck Berry, The Who, The Stones, and Metallica (no Rod Stewart?!), as well as 13th Floor Elevators, Velvet Underground, Prince, Clash, Ramones and many more are covered.



Never Look at the Empty Seats: A Memoir

By Charlie Daniels
(hardcover) \$24.99

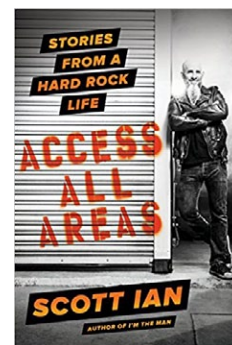
Country Music Hall of Famer Charlie Daniels shares his rise from a post-Depression era upbringing to winning a Grammy for his 1979 hit, "The Devil Went Down to Georgia." Daniels credits his sustained optimism for his many successes and refuses to associate his music with any genre other than the "Charlie Daniels Band" sound. Additionally, Daniels' memoir illustrates encounters with well-known artists throughout his career, including Bob Dylan, Elvis Presley and Leonard Cohen.



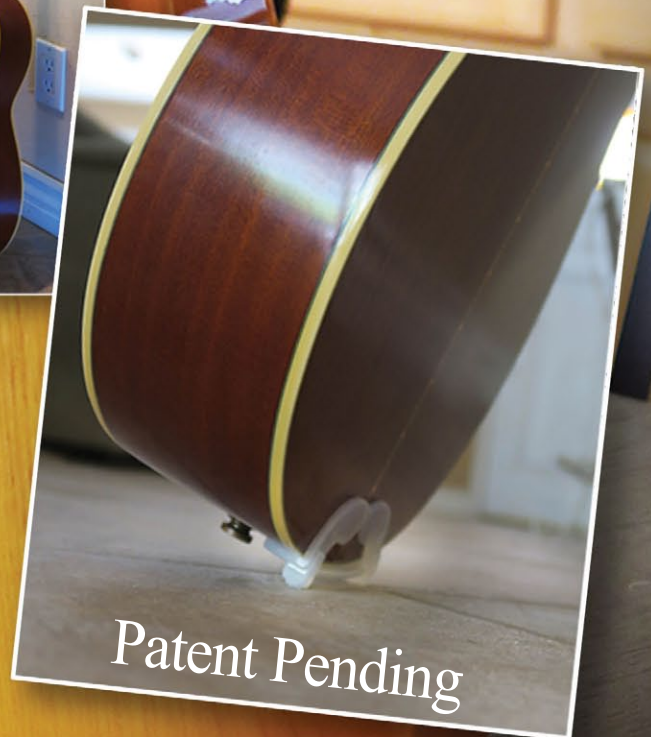
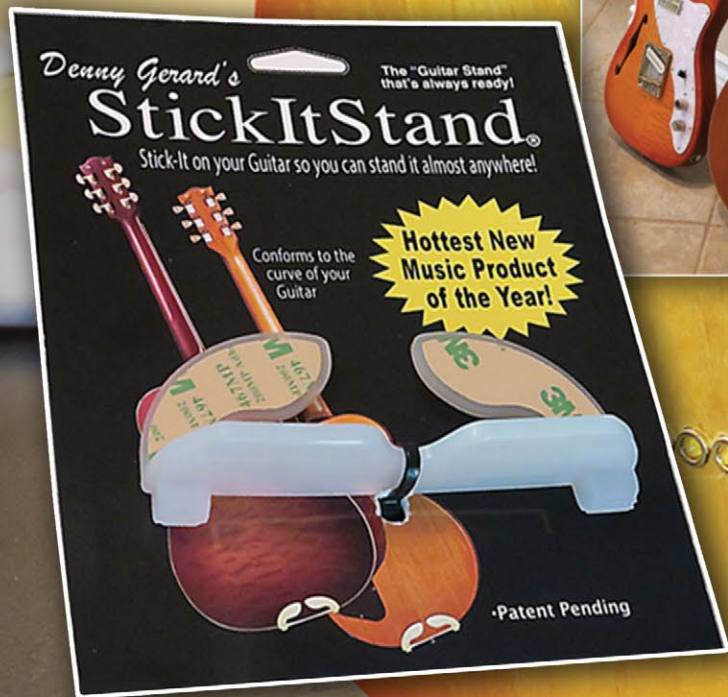
Access All Areas: Stories from a Hard Rock Life

By Scott Ian
(paperback) \$26.00

Anthrax co-founder, speed metal architect and born storyteller Scott Ian recounts his craziest collection of tales of life on the road as a touring musician, including memories involving backstage shenanigans at Madison Square Garden with Nine Inch Nails and the time he accompanied Madonna to a strip club. Dimebag, Lemmy and Slayer make appearances.



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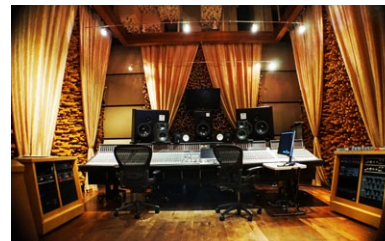
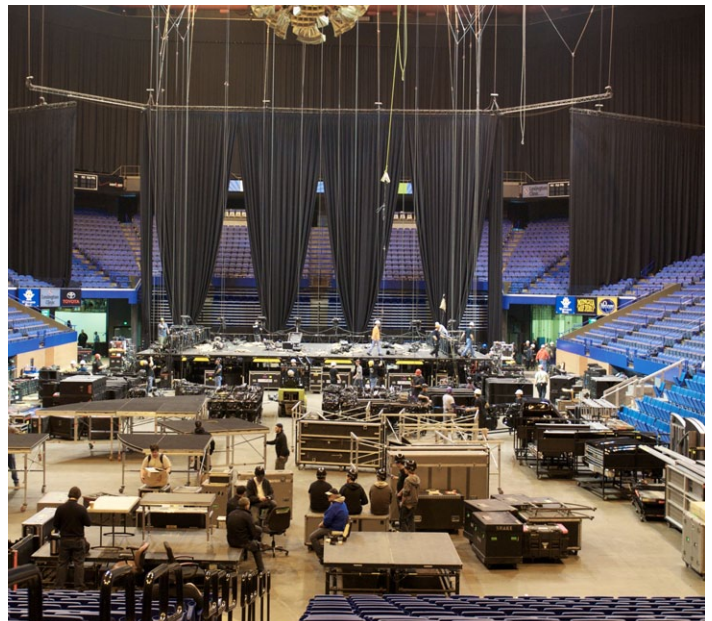
— JONATHAN WIDRAN

THE BLACKBIRD ACADEMY

theblackbirdacademy.com

Filling an Educational Need: Launched in Nashville in 2013, The Blackbird Academy was created by veteran recording and live sound engineer John McBride and his wife, country superstar Martina McBride. It is an outgrowth of their Blackbird Studio, which since its launch in 2002 has been a premiere production stop for hundreds of renowned recording artists—including Kings of Leon, Kenny Chesney, The Black Keys, Kid Rock, Tim McGraw, Steven Tyler and Taylor Swift. When interviewing prospective interns and employees, McBride realized that many graduates of traditional studio programs had little hands-on time in a recording studio. McBride developed the program with veteran audio engineers, musicians and educators Carma DiCianni, Mark Rubel and Kevin Becka. Career services manager Blair Gallimore says, "John wanted students to come out of the program with all the necessary tools that ensure they're ready to perform at a high level, working major tracking and label sessions."

Access to Studio Gear and Mentor Driven: The curriculum features access to Blackbird Studio's gear and facilities. Another unique feature of The Blackbird Academy is a mentor-driven, hands-on, experience-based education. Students learn from unique cast of professional instructors and award-winning guest mentors. They will have 350 hours in a 30-position classroom/lab and 350 hours in the studio in groups of five students. The studios are the same rooms used every day to



make hit records at Blackbird Studio. The classroom is itself a recording studio with an API console, patch bay, two iso booths, Pro Tools HD, three 65" flat screen TVs and 30 student Pro Tools rigs driven by Universal Audio's Apollo interface featuring every plugin in the UAD-2 collection.

The Two Programs: The Studio Engineering & Live Sound Programs are taught over a 24-week period, with four start dates per year. Classes meet five days a week, 30 - 40 hours per week. The Blackbird Academy's Live Sound Engineering Program has been developed in collaboration with Clair Global, the premier live sound company in the world. Because of this relationship, students will learn on gear that touring professionals use every day, from the massive Clair warehouses in Nashville, TN.

Contact The Blackbird Academy, 855-385-3251

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Lindsay Rimes - Award-Winning
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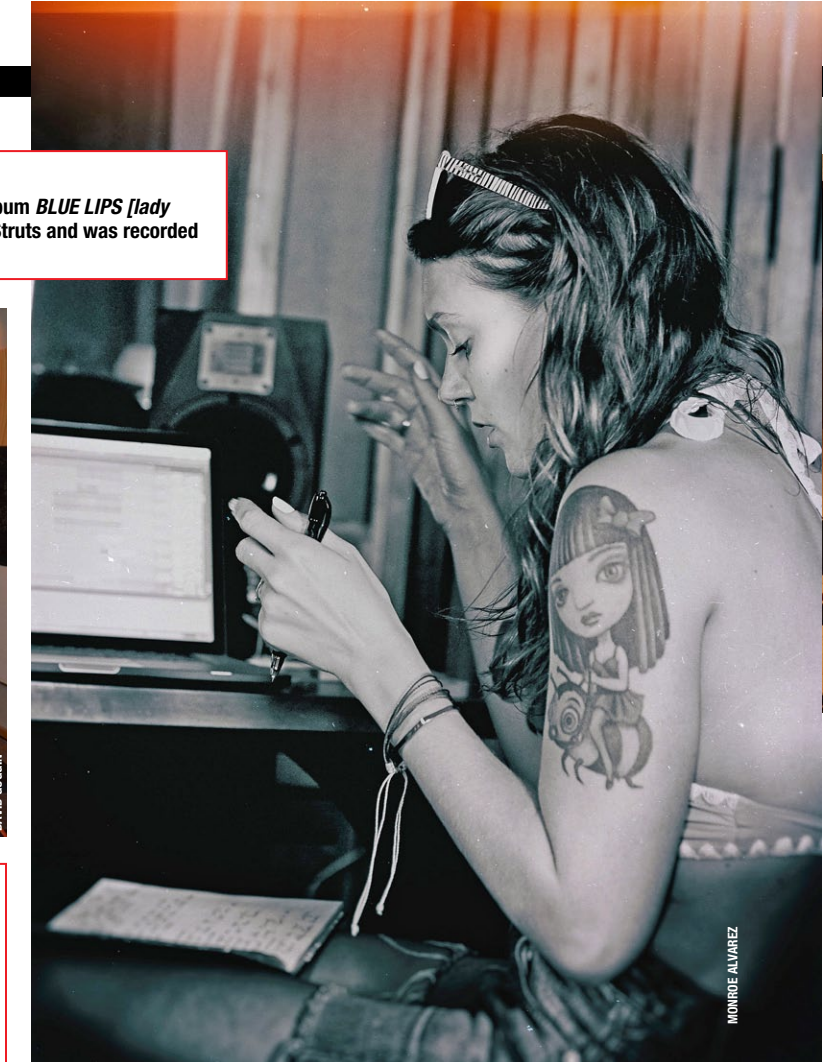
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► Tove Lo's Second Phase

Grammy-nominated and multi-platinum artist Tove Lo has released her third album *BLUE LIPS [lady wood phase II]* on Nov. 17 via Island Records. The album was produced by the Struts and was recorded while the artist was on the road. For more, visit tove-lo.com.



▲ Snowman Mastered at United Recording

The haunting soundtrack of the recently released crime thriller *The Snowman* was mastered at United Recording by engineer Erick Labson and composer Marco Beltrami. Beltrami's score producer, Buck Sanders, devised a novel way to create unique sound samples that combine evocative brass and strings. Pictured (l-r): Marco Beltrami, United Recording manager Rob Goodchild and Erick Labson.



▲ METAlliance Academy Records Following AES

The METAlliance Academy wrapped up a busy weekend of recording in NYC at Power Station BerkleeNYC following the AES Convention. METAlliance founders Chuck Ainlay, Ed Cherney, Frank Filipetti, George Massenburg, Elliot Scheiner, and Al Schmitt worked with singer/songwriter Kat Edmonson, jazz vocal group the New York Voices and New Jersey punk-pop band The Nectars. Pictured in foreground (l-r): Ed Cherney, recording artist Kat Edmonson, Elliot Scheiner and Frank Filipetti.

Producer Playback

"I try to get into the psychology of where they are, where they've been and where they need to go. It's crucial to understand their musical insecurities and musical strengths."

— Cisco Adler (*The Rocky Horror Picture Show: Let's Do the Time Warp Again*)





◀ Seal Studio Standards

British singer Seal released his 10th studio album, *Standards*, on Nov. 10 through Decca Records and Virgin EMI Records. The album was produced by Nick Patrick, engineered by Don Murray and recorded at Capitol Studios and United Recording Studios in Los Angeles. Pictured (l-r): Kevin Axt, bass; Dean Parks, guitar; Randy Walden, piano; Seal; Chris Walden, arranger; Nick Patrick, producer; Gregg Field, drums; Don Murray, recording engineer.



▲ In Studio with Hollis Brown

Rockers Hollis Brown are gearing up to release their 10th album in 2018 through Julian Records. The as of yet-untitled album is produced by Adam Landry, engineered by Anthony Lannucci, and recorded in Unity Recording Studio in Fort Myers, FL. For more, visit hollisbrown.com.



▲ Caroline Story at EastWest

Benmont Tench from the Heartbreakers joined Caroline Story for a studio session at EastWest Studios in Los Angeles. Pictured (l-r): Cam Luchterhand, engineer; Nick Autry, producer; Ben Roberts, Carolina Story; Brian Rhoades, management/Black River Ent.; Chris Hopkins, photographer and videographer.

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Disturbed, My Enemies & I, Adelitas Way

Chicagoan Johnny K (Karkazis) burst into the business when he took a shot with a rising band: Disturbed. He produced and engineered some demos for the then-unsigned metal group, which soon led to a deal with Reprise. Happy with the work he'd done on the demos, the band insisted that K produce its debut *The Sickness*, which went on to sell more than four million copies. He's known widely for working with metal bands but also strives to produce in a range of genres. Bands on his production roster include Megadeth, 3 Doors Down and Plain White T's.

His first hit was with Loudmouth's "Fly," which was included on the soundtrack to the 1999 film *Varsity Blues*. Lately he's also completed a number of mixes and he typically engineers every project that he produces. As an aside, this is K's second time being featured in Producer Crosstalk.

Recently he sold Groovemaster Recording Studios, his former 40,000 square-foot Chicago space. He now works primarily out of his substantial home studio. K has managed to carve out a successful career in America's second city. But it's not always easy to persuade bands to make a cross-country trek. "Some clients were okay with coming to Chicago, others like Staind weren't," he explains. "A majority of the bigger bands wanted to record somewhere else."

Every producer must discover ways to draw the best out of an artist. K finds that his approach varies from band-to-band. "One of the most important aspects of recording is the psychology of it," he explains. "There isn't any one way to get the best from an artist. Some respond best to being pushed, others respond best to being encouraged. The drummer in Disturbed [Mike Wengren] played better when he got a little angry or frustrated. Some people perform better when you're their bud and there's camaraderie, others work better when you challenge them. You have to feel out the artist at the beginning of the session."

One of his recent productions was *The Beast*, the debut from Fearless Records' Virginia metal outfit My Enemies & I. He caught the band one night at Chicago venue Bottom Lounge, met the guys and suggested that they work together. They came to his studio, recorded some demos and K was able to help them land a record deal. "There was a lot of potential," he observes. "We challenged ourselves to make the songs better."

In addition to his work with established bands, K still enjoys working with undiscovered acts. "We knew Johnny was our guy shortly after meeting him for the first time," Zach Jones, guitarist with My Enemies & I recounts of working with K. "He knew what we were going for in every aspect and how to get it there. He said to us, 'Let's have the performance make the record, not Pro Tools.' I think you can really hear that on the record."

K aims to relocate to Nashville. He mixed a record in 2000 with Chicago alternative band Caviar and fell in love with the city. Recently he completed an EP with Boston jam band Juice and another with L.A.-based country outfit Michigan Rattlers. He also produced Adelitas Way's 2017 record *Notorious*, which was released in October of this year.

Contact Johnny K – producerjohnnyk.com, info@producerjohnnyk.com

The three most important lessons he's learned as a producer and engineer are:

- You're always learning.
- Getting along with people is key while also getting the work done. You need to strike a balance.
- You can't work too hard on a record. Once it's done, it's done. But all the little things add up and the overall project will reflect that.

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the Straight Truth About Pickups by Jason Lollar

The "magic" found in some (but not all) classic vintage pickups was created by accident—don't let anyone tell you different. And over time, some pretty stellar accidents happened. The only way to recreate that magic is to study more than a few exceptional examples of all the classic pickup types, while acquiring a thorough understanding of exactly what materials were used and precisely how each pickup was constructed and wound. Only then is the "magic" repeatable, if you are willing to spend the time and money required to chase the dragon. I am.

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BACKGROUND

At 18, Jason Swartz began promoting hip-hop concerts in Los Angeles. Eventually, it made more sense to become an agent to these artists, as he was already funding as much as a third of their touring. Rap artists put Alliance Talent on the map, but the bi-coastal company has since branched out to representing pop and dance acts like Swedish House Mafia and Justin Bieber. More recently, they've shaken up the industry with their social media monetization strategies.

Evolution

My business evolved from being an agent representing musicians to one also representing hotels, music festivals and private events, basically getting them any talent they want, so we started branching out. As we expanded internationally, we started to get into other fields, like social media and music publishing. We started bringing an array of deals to these artists, because we have deep relationships with so many artists that there's no reason to just limit [ourselves] to concerts and tours. A big part of our business now is managing social media assets and helping people monetize them.

The Opportunity Hustle

When I was young, hip-hop artists were the most open to working with new agents, people who were hustling. Rock and pop were a very closed off set of opportunities that really weren't available to me. I had to kind of get in where I fit in. As I got older, more established and respected, it made it easier for me to work with other genres.

But also, music and times change. A lot of artists that were considered underground became pop. Over the last ten years, we've seen a huge explosion with electronic music. So as people's demands for different genres changed, I had to adapt to those changes and build relationships to include genres outside of hip-hop.

Servicing Different Needs

Different artists have different needs at different times. Some people aren't open to everything and may already have people to handle things for them, but they know we can provide [what they need]. I don't go to somebody and say, hey, I'm only going to book you for this festival if you also let me handle your social media needs. My job has always been to present all the opportunities I can find for the artist.

The Dotted Line

Contracts are there to outline everybody's



"Making money off social media outlets is essential for anybody in the music business. If you're not making money off of it on a consistent basis, you need an extra person on your team to focus on that."

expectations. I've never gotten into a lawsuit with an artist, but it's important to have a clear, concise piece of paper so everybody can understand what the expectations are. That way, when there is confusion, it's there for us. When things happen, we're usually able to work it out—reschedule dates or, if it's a social media deal that money's already been paid for, they can give it back. Or, if something was executed wrong in terms of a social media campaign, maybe they post a bit more than originally expected so the brand's happy. My goal is always to make everybody as much money as possible, have it be as easy and stress-free as possible. That's a big reason people continue to work with me—we know how to deal with different personalities and where to set expectations so everybody's happy.

Always Accessible

We work all over the world; we have partners in China, Norway and the Middle East. We're based in L.A. and New York, so we really are spread across the globe in terms of our ability to help with things whenever is needed. And we're available 24 hours a day. We have eight employees who are full-time and maybe 10 consultants. I pride myself on being a smaller, leaner company that is readily available, even on weekends.

Counterintuitive Brand Matching

Oftentimes, we find that the brands that best help build [an artist's] fan base are things that are counterintuitive. For example, Snoop Dogg, who's known for hip-hop, marijuana and the gangster era, doing a cooking show with Martha Stewart could be brilliant because it's counterintuitive to who he is. His existing fans are going to follow everything he does, but now it's also people who've never heard of him before.

There are a lot of artists like that. Doing something totally counterintuitive, when done with a sense of humor and in a way that makes sense, can really help expand an artist's fan base to a much larger audience.

Worldwide Barriers

Fifteen years ago, having multiple currencies and not having the applications we have now for tracking flights, hotels and transportation, those were big challenges. A lot of that is now gone. Even the language barrier is gone, because so many applications allow you to translate email and with globalization everybody has a better understanding of English.

The one thing that is still a huge challenge, particularly when dealing with the Middle East, South America and Asia, is their culture of doing business is very different—where people's starting points are in terms of negotiations, how many counters may go back and forth and also the speed and pace at which people make decisions. There's still a big cultural divide in terms of understanding how people want to go through the process.

Disrupting Social Media

As far as I know, I was the first company to scale Facebook monetization to the music industry. About three-and-a-half years ago, I learned there were a few people doing this with comedians and athletes. Once I learned how the business model worked in terms of monetizing social media in ways

that allowed us to make money off the number of views content would get, it created an interesting business model that could be scaled to artists.

When we started doing this, companies would charge artists to build up their following. We disrupted the industry, because we weren't asking for money. It went from them paying a service company to us providing a service for them and making them money. The idea of not having to pay for it and still getting the same service, let alone make money on top, was a no-brainer win for most people.

Don't Miss Out

Making money off social media outlets is essential for anybody in the music business. If you're not making money off of it on a consistent basis, you need an extra person on your team to focus on that. Without having a dedicated team whose job it is to focus on this, you're going to be doing it at a mediocre level.

Building a Following

Before artists tour, they need to have good music and a good show prepared. Artists are going to make new fans from their live shows only if they come with a fantastic live performance and there's already some momentum behind their music.

At the same time, there's so much you can do through online platforms to build up your following before you go on the road. That's something artists need to focus on. And find a specific niche that's going to set you aside from other people in terms of look and sound.

Online Promotion

If artists can do clever things that attach them to trending topics and integrates their brand and music along with those moments, it's going to help bring attention. And once they're in that spotlight, things can move very quickly. There was a song, "Juju On That Beat," which became a huge viral song mostly because of this presence online which allowed that artist to tour and make tens of thousands of dollars a night.

OPPS

MusicCloud has announced a great tool they've been using and that is used by some names you'll probably recognize (**AirBNB**, **theChive**, **Tony Robbins**, **Tim Ferriss**). It's called **Sumo**, a set of tools that help to automate your music business growth. This new tool is something that is used by some of the biggest sites on the internet, but is also easy to use and accessible for any artists serious about a career. MusicCloud recommends you start with using their **List Builder**. It's a phenomenal way to grow your email list and the painless install takes less than a minute. You can check out Sumo at sumo.com/10130-0-5-3.html.

Spotify playlists have now become one of the most important avenues for music promotion. Getting your music on to a powerful playlist can generate thousands if not millions of plays for your music, which is why **The Music Industry Connection** have just released a brand new Playlist directory which includes **Streaming Platform Curators (Spotify / Apple / Tidal)** and **Independently Curated Spotify Playlists—over 200 Spotify, Apple Music, Pandora, Amazon Music Playlist Curators, Programmers, and Editors**. The new Playlist Directory, as well as the **The Music Blog Directory** and **The Indie Radio Directory**, can be accessed through a new subscription service. In fact, The Music Industry Connection offers unlimited online access to The Playlist Directory, The Music Blog Directory and The Indie Radio Directory for just \$9.99 a month. Furthermore, they are constantly updating each directory, adding new playlists,

blogs and radio stations daily so you will always have the most current information available. Log on to themicco.com for the details.

Bandsintown, the popular concert discovery platform, has opened up its platform to allow venues and festivals to claim their own official profiles and alert local music fans of new show announcements. Venues will now be able to establish their presence, customize their profiles, and add and edit new events. While over 15,000 promoters, venues and festivals have been using Bandsintown's promoter service to create campaigns in order to reach fans and boost concert attendance, this marks the first time venues will have their own access to **Bandsintown Manager**, allowing them to publish events independently. For venues, artists and fans, details can be found at manager.bandsintown.com.

Squidhat Records is seeking punk and aggressive in rock acts. Squidhat is an artist-friendly independent record label created to help talented, creative and passionate artists. They assist in helping acts record and promote their music, develop their brand and image, and increase exposure to a larger audience. Label President **Allan Carter** has over 25 years of experience and likes to work with acts that have great songs, a seasoned live show and the commitment to really work an album's release. The label offers short-term deals—involving one year and one project—with an option to renew if successful. They offer world-wide



▲ ZANDER BLECK GETS FASHIONABLE

Zander Bleck brought down the house during his stripped-down performance during Style Fashion week in Los Angeles. Bleck's appearance marked the final musical performance of the event, which took place at the Pacific Design Center in West Hollywood. Fans were treated to Bleck's hit "Alive" as well as his upcoming single "Mercy Me," which is expected to hit soon. Bleck was signed to Interscope Records by Jimmy Iovine, where he worked with producers RedOne and Mutt Lange, before being signed to 2101 Records. He now releases music independently. For more, see zanderbleck.com.

distribution with both physical and digital formats. If interested, check them out at squidhatrecords.com, or submit, for special consideration via MusicCloud.com.

LABELS•RELEASES SIGNINGS

Gene Simmons of KISS has given the traditional CD box-set the "next level" treatment. Commemorating an illustrious 50-year career in Rock & Roll, Simmons, the legendary entrepreneur and co-founder of KISS has launched **The Vault Experience**. As never done before, Simmons is offering the ultimate fan a journey chronicling **The Demon's** colorful life, including 150 never-before-released songs, photos, stories and a collectible item all held inside a 38-lb vault that the rock star will hand deliver to each fan. Personal deliveries, by Simmons, will begin during Simmons' VAULT World Tour set to take place January 2018 through December 2018. For details and cost, see GeneSimmonsVault.com.

Metallica has reissued their third album, **Master of Puppets**, on their own Blackened Recordings.

The album has been remastered for the most advanced sound quality and is available in various digital and physical configurations. **The Master of Puppets** reissue is available physically as a Standard LP, Standard CD, 3 CD Expanded Edition, and Limited Edition Deluxe Box Set. Digitally available as a Standard CD (available to stream and download), a 3 CD Expanded Edition (available for download only) and a Digital Deluxe Box Set (available for streaming and download). The Expanded Edition includes previously unreleased demos, rough mixes, interviews, live tracks, and a 28-page booklet. The Limited Edition Deluxe Box Set includes a 108-page hardcover book including never before seen photos, outtakes and previously unreleased interviews, three LPs, ten CDs, a cassette, two DVDs, a lithograph, a folder with handwritten lyrics and a set of six buttons. For more information, visit metallica.com.

Grammy-winning recording artist Zac Brown has teamed with songwriter **Niko Moon** and producer **Ben Simonetti** to craft an extraordinary new Southern pop outfit, **Sir Rosevelt**. The trio's



▲ THE CHAINSMOKERS JOIN THE ELITE

The Chainsmokers (duo of Alex Pall and Drew Taggart) infused **Billboard's Hot 100 Chart's** top 10 with their Coldplay collaboration "Something Just Like This," "Paris" and "Closer," all released on **Disruptor/Columbia Records**. The Chainsmokers joined elite company as only the third duo or group to log at least three concurrent top 10's, following the Beatles and Bee Gees, dating to the Hot 100's 1958 launch. Among all artists, the Chainsmokers are the 14th act with at least three Hot 100 top 10's in the same week. For the latest, visit thechainsmokers.com.

debut 11-track self-titled album arrives to all music retailers and streaming services on Dec. 15 via **Elektra Records**. The album is available for pre-order, joined by an instant-grat download of a brand new track, “**Something ‘Bout You**,” co-produced by four-time Grammy winner **Timbaland (Missy Elliott, Justin Timberlake)** and accompanied by a colorful new lyric video. Sir Rosevelt will celebrate the release of their debut self-titled album with a much anticipated performance at **CBS Radio’s “An Epic New Year’s Eve Weekend”** slated for Friday, Dec. 29 at **The Cosmopolitan** in Las Vegas. You can find out more of the latest news at sirrosevelt.com.

British soul singer Seal released his anxiously awaited new album, *Standards*, via Republic Records. The record sees Seal breathe his signature soulful sound into seminal classics such as “**Luck Be A Lady**,” “**I Put A Spell On You**,” “**Autumn Leaves**” and many more. The deluxe version of *Standards* also includes bonus holiday tracks “**Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting)**” and “**Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow**” just in time for the holiday season. For additional information, you can go to seal.com.

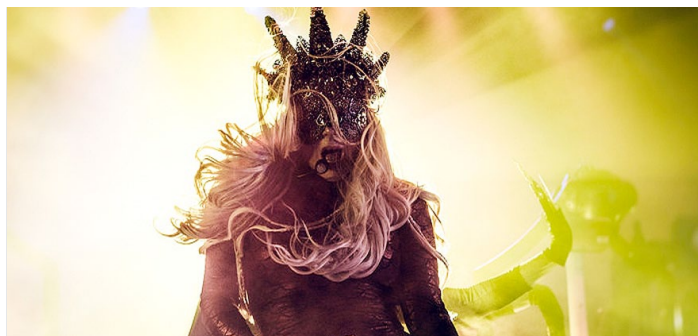
In the firmament of rock & roll’s first-generation creators, no artist looms larger than Chuck Berry. In a consistently innovative recording career that spanned more than 60 years, the iconic singer-songwriter-guitarist, who passed away on March 18, 2017, laid much of the groundwork for modern rock, while creating some of its most

distinctive and enduring anthems, from “**Johnny B. Goode**” to “**Roll Over Beethoven**,” “**Rock and Roll Music**” to “**Reelin and Rockin’**” and many more. **Geffen/UMe** will pay tribute to the immortal spirit of Berry, who would have turned 91 last month, with the ultimate vinyl version of his landmark greatest hits compilation, ***The Great Twenty-Eight***, as it celebrates its 35th anniversary with ***The Great Twenty-Eight: Super Deluxe Edition***. On Dec. 15, the album will be released as a limited edition five-disc box set on “**Chess Blue**” vinyl, limited to only 500 copies worldwide and available exclusively via **UDiscoverMusic.com**. A wide release standard black vinyl edition will be available next year on Jan. 26

PROPS

Congrats to Blackmore’s Night. The Renaissance rock band, led by **Ritchie Blackmore** (guitarist - **Deep Purple, Rainbow**) and **Candice Night** (singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist), is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. The duo’s well-known ***Winter Carols*** album (now available in its 2017 2-CD remastered edition) features familiar favorites, new songs including “**Christmas Eve**” and even a unique interpretation of **The Rednex’s “Wish You Were Here.”** Each track is a magical, velvety blend of lush orchestral arrangements, organic Renaissance instruments, guitar mastery and ethereal vocals. Contact carol@kayosproductions.com for complete details.

Elton John was honored at Harvard University for his philanthropic efforts to fight HIV and



▲ IN THIS MOMENT SET TO SAIL

In This Moment recently hit Riverside, CA for a stop on the third leg of their headlining “**Half God Half Devil Tour**.” The Los Angeles-based metal band is riding a massive wave of success following their new album, ***Ritual***, that was released via **Atlantic Records**. The OC band, **Of Mice & Men**, are serving **In This Moment** as direct support, with the Swedish band **Avatar** opening the shows. **In This Moment** are set to sail on Jan. 21 for the **Hard Rock & Metal (4-day) Caribbean Cruise**; “**2018: A Ship Rocked Odyssey**.” For more information, check out inthismomentofficial.com.

DIY Spotlight EVA

Eva came out of nowhere and ended up with a Top 10 Billboard single in the U.K. Now, the question is: How to transfer fame from the U.K. to the U.S.? To do so, she employs some interesting strategies and a determined DIY ethic.

Eva spent her early years in Lincoln, NE, before her family moved to Northern California where she fell in love with female artists such as Madonna, Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears.

“I started recording some of my own songs and covers—I was just messing around,” she recalls. Nevertheless, people took note, and she began working with Jason “Poo Bear” Boyd, producer Scott Storch and Snoop Dogg.

In 2011, Eva released her debut single, “**Not My Daddy**,” featuring rapper Gucci Mane. That proved to be a calling card, leading to invitations to support rapper, Nas, as well as Grammy-winning songsmith Alicia Keys.

She followed with “**Body On Mine**,” featuring rapper Tyga. It was a hit on SiriusXM radio. “They played it all the time,” Eva enthuses. “That was surreal.”

She performed at KISS FM’s Jingle Ball, and was the Headliner at the OC Gay Pride. She also embarked on Nick Cannon’s 2015 Celebrity High Magazine Tour, where she performed at California high schools, following in the footsteps of her idol, Lady Gaga.

Now Eva has recorded a slew of new material. “I want to spread joy in this world,” declares the California girl. “Everybody needs that moment where you take a break from all the crap and have some fun. But I don’t want to be portrayed as just another blonde party girl. That’s not me... beneath the surface, I’m very real.”

For more, visit evamusicofficial.com

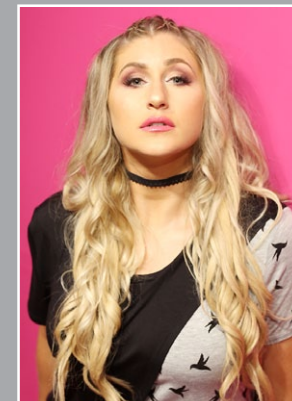
Have a successful DIY strategy to share? Email bbatmc@aol.com

AIDS. The 70-year-old singer was awarded the Harvard Foundation’s **Peter J. Gomes Humanitarian Award**. John, who runs an AIDS foundation, calls the award “both gratifying and tremendously humbling.” He says he remains committed to “sustain and grow the progress we’ve made to eradicate stigma and end the spread of HIV/AIDS, once and for all.” For additional information, go to eltonjohn.com and harvardfoundation.fas.harvard.edu.

The **Los Angeles City Council** declared Friday, Nov. 10 “**Morrissey Day**” in Los Angeles. During the council meeting, Councilwoman **Monica Rodriguez** introduced the resolution, which includes an official commemorative certificate presentation at the first of two sold-out **Hollywood Bowl** shows. For more info, go to facebook.com/Morrissey.

THE BIZ

Grammy winners John Legend, Lorde and Keith Urban will perform at the 2018 MusiCares Person of the Year tribute con-



cert honoring Fleetwood Mac on Jan. 26.

Haim, OneRepublic and Harry Styles will also join the performance lineup. Grammy winners **Fleetwood Mac** will close the evening’s performances. More guest performers will be announced shortly. Attendees will include **Neil Portnow**, President/CEO of MusiCares and the Recording Academy; **Michael McDonald**, Chair of MusiCares; **Alexandra Patsavas**, Chair Emeritus of MusiCares; and **John Branca**, Honorary Chair of MusiCares. **The MusiCares Person of the Year** tribute is one of the most prestigious events held during Grammy Week. The celebration culminates with the **60th Annual GRAMMY Awards at Madison Square Garden** on Sunday, Jan. 28, 2018. The telecast will be broadcast live on the **CBS Television Network** at 7:30 p.m. ET/4:30 p.m. PT.

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*.



“I’ve Stopped Snickering at These Ads... Want to Know Why?”

Keith LuBrant – TAXI Member
www.KeithLuBrant.com

I used to think TAXI was just feeding on poor artists and songwriters like me who wanted to catch their big break. *Years* went by, and I never thought twice about joining. Those people at TAXI weren’t going to “fool” me!

I don’t live in Nashville, L.A. or New York, so my chances of getting my music out there seemed pretty slim. I saw the TAXI ad again last year and noticed they offered a money-back guarantee. I probably never read that far in the advertisement because I was too busy feeling sorry for all those “poor” artists and songwriters “wasting” their money!

The Shocking Truth!

I figured I’d be asking for my money back at some point, but then something happened. I submitted some music that was just hanging out on my hard drive, doing absolutely nothing. TAXI sent it to a company and it was placed in a TV show. I was shocked!

Next, I wrote some music

specifically targeted at a few of TAXI’s Industry Listings, and one of *those* songs ended up being used on the TBS show, *Saving Grace*. The sync fee for that song *alone* would pay for my TAXI membership for many years to come. And that doesn’t even include the royalties I’m making on the back end!

Need Relationships?

TAXI has helped me build relationships with companies that keep asking for more of my music – a *lot* more! My songs started showing up on MTV and VH1 almost immediately.

Soon afterwards, a *Mattel Hot Wheels* commercial, then in sports training software, and most recently, my songs have been added to *American Idol*’s database for upcoming seasons.

I’ve also signed deals with several Film and TV music publishing companies. The possibilities for my music have now grown beyond my wildest imagination. Does TAXI perform miracles? No, but if your music is right for what the industry needs, TAXI can get it to the right people.

My Only Regret...

My one regret is that I didn’t join TAXI years ago! I try not to think about how much money I could have earned during the years I was still snickering at these ads. I never dreamed I could be placing so *much* music on so *many* television shows. And my wife is happy that we don’t have to move to a big city!

Stop snickering and call TAXI now. It’s real.



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▲ Lady A Honored

Seven-time Grammy-winning trio Lady Antebellum were honored with the SESAC Humanitarian Award at the organization's Nashville Music Awards. The trio founded LadyAID, a philanthropic effort to bring awareness to and generate support for those in need locally, nationally and globally. The multi-level entity is a component fund of The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee and is funded by ticket sales, donations and fundraising efforts. See LadyAID.org.

► Ashley Gorley: ASCAP Hit Writer and Secret Genius

Named ASCAP Songwriter of the Year for the fifth time, Ashley Gorley has recent smashes including "Dirt On My Boots" for Jon Pardi, "Black" for Dierks Bentley, "A Guy with a Girl" for Blake Shelton, and "Middle of a Memory" for Cole Swindell. Honored with the "Secret Genius: Country" Award from Spotify, he is signed to Atlas/Combustion. See atlasmusicgroup.com.



▲ NMPA In Three Cities

David Israelite, President & CEO of the National Music Publishers Association (NMPA), addressed the New York, Nashville and Los Angeles Chapters of the organization in a recent one-week span. Shown in Los Angeles (l-r): board members Tim Cohan, Todd Brabec, Linda Gallico, Frank Handy and Erin Jacobson, David Israelite/NMPA, board members Eric Polin, David Weitzman, secretary, Barbie Quinn, executive director, Sam Kling, Jake Wisely and Steven Ambers, treasurer, and AIMP sponsor Steven Hamilton/City National Bank.

Listening Room Event in California

Kick off your 2018 co-writing experience at the Listening Room's 16th annual songwriters event. Experience "Community Through Co-Writing" Jan. 7 - 13 amid the majestic Sequoia trees of Ben Lomond in gorgeous Santa Cruz county, CA. Attendance at the event includes housing, daily catered dinner service, workshops, daily guided co-writing, private song/career consultations, concerts and more. Interest-free monthly payment plan and generous referral program are available. Visit listeningroomretreats.com for details.

Chris Austin Songwriting Contest

The Chris Austin Songwriting Contest runs through Feb. 1, 2018. Presented in conjunction with MerleFest, the contest offers songwriters the opportunity to have their original songs heard by a panel of professional songwriters and others from the Nashville music community. Net proceeds from the competition help support the WCC Chris Austin Memorial Scholarship. Since its inception, the Scholarship has helped 84 students and awarded over \$34,600.

Visit merlefest.org for contest details.

Writing Lyrics That Succeed and Endure at UCLA

It has been 24 years and he's still going strong: hit songwriter Marty Panzer returns to UCLA Extension this winter with "Writing Lyrics That Succeed and Endure," his perennially popular songwriting class.

Having written a multitude of hits for artists including Barry Manilow (like "Even Now," "It's a Miracle" and "This One's for You") Panzer collaborated with Steve Dorff on the classic "Through The Years" for Kenny Rogers. Additional artists who have given voice to Panzer's words include Dionne Warwick, Gladys Knight, Julio Iglesias, Dolly Parton and many others, for record sales in excess of 70 million units. In recent years, the lyricist has contributed to multiple Disney Projects.

Read more about Marty Panzer at martypanzer.com and find more info or register at 310-825-9064, entertainmentstudies@uclaextension.edu. Previous lyric writing experience is a prerequisite.

Big Deal Music Named Indie Pub of the Year

The Association of Independent Music Publishers announced that Big Deal Music Group has been named Indie Publisher of the Year. On Dec. 7 at Candela La Brea in Los Angeles, Big Deal Music Group's Kenny MacPherson will accept the award for Indie Publisher of the Year.

"We're thrilled to be named AIMP Indie Publisher of the Year," said Kenny MacPherson. "It's a testament to all the hard work and success of our songwriters and amazing team."

Recently, Big Deal Music announced the formation of Big Deal Music Group, the new umbrella will house the existing companies Big Deal Music Publishing, Words & Music Administration and Big Deal Media, a recently developed content division, as well as other related ventures yet to come.

With a roster ranging from iconic,



▲ Copeland Visits with the C.C.C.

The November 2017 edition of The California Copyright Conference's monthly meetings hosted "An Evening with Miles Copeland (Renaissance Man in the Ever Changing Music Business)." Pictured (l-r): Charley Londoño, Esq., President, California Copyright Conference; Miles Copeland, legendary manager and music impresario; and Steve Hochman, journalist-interviewer. Visit theccc.org for more information about the California Copyright Conference.

headline rock acts like My Morning Jacket and Sleater-Kinney to jazz innovator Kamasi Washington and Grammy-winning songwriter Dan Wilson, Big Deal's five-year run of growth and success includes a Grammy for St. Vincent, multiple No. 1 singles across several formats and the launch of a groundbreaking company initiative that creates a new business structure for some of today's top songwriters.

That evolution has resulted in the company's recent alliances with peermusic, Mushroom Group, Because Music, Native Tongue and The David Gresham Entertainment Group as global sub-publishers for the future.

Additionally, the company launched Big Deal Media, for producing master recordings as well as digital content such as the acclaimed songwriting podcast AND THE WRITER IS... a venture with hit songwriters Ross Golan, Joe London and Mega House Music.

Sales of Song Catalogs Soar

Sales of individual songwriter catalogs are booming and indie publishers are buying. Primary Wave has acquired catalogs from Motown great Smokey Robinson, Steve Cropper (Otis Redding) and classical composer Glen Gould; Kobalt has guitarist and songwriter George Benson; Downtown has acquired Wayne Kirkpatrick (Eric Clapton, Garth Brooks), and Reservoir has R&B classics from Willie Mitchell (Al Green); Leon Ware, (Marvin Gaye), and Thomas

McClary and Walter Orange (The Commodores).

Publishers are exploiting classic songs through film, TV, advertising, Internet and video game licensing. With deals ranging from \$250K to \$50 million, demand continues to rise for classic catalogs.

BMI Writers Honored in Miami

BMI honored its Latin writers at the 2017 La Musa Awards at the James L. Knight Center in Miami, FL. Hosted by actor Jaime Camil, the fifth annual ceremony celebrated the induction of songwriters Martin Urieta (SACM) and Camilo Sesto (SGAE), whose music BMI licenses in the United States, into the Latin Songwriters Hall of Fame.

Additionally, the organization gave special recognition to a selection of BMI songwriters. Wisin earned the Victory Award, while Luis Fonsi earned the iHeartRadio Song of the Year Award for his massive hit, "Despacito." Afo Verde was awarded the Premio Pioneer Desi Arnaz Award, and Ralph Peer was honored with the Premio Editores Award.

Other highlights of the evening included BMI VP, Creative, Latin Music, Delia Orjuela who presented Mexican songwriter Horacio Palencia with the Premio Conquistador honor, and the Song of All Time accolade being awarded to "La Bamba" penned by legendary BMI songwriter Richie Valens.

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



▲ Musicians Institute Hosts AIMP Panel

"You Wrote a Song...Now What?" a panel sponsored and organized by the Los Angeles Chapter of the Association of Independent Music Publishers (AIMP) was presented at Musicians Institute in Hollywood. Open to MI students and AIMP members, the panel included (l-r): Steven Ambers of SOCAN; Tim Cohan, AIMP Board Member and peermusic exec, and Frank Handy of SONGS Music Publishing, a Musicians Institute graduate and AIMP Board Member.



▲ Kelsea Ballerini on the Vanguard

Acclaimed singer, songwriter and performer Kelsea Ballerini was presented with the ASCAP Vanguard Award at the 55th annual ASCAP Country Music Awards. The celebration, which honors the songwriters and publishers of ASCAP's most performed country songs of the year, took place at the historic Ryman Auditorium.



▲ BMI Country Honors Bob DiPiero

BMI presented its 2017 BMI Country Awards, honoring the prolific songwriting career of BMI Icon Award recipient Bob DiPiero. The Song of the Year award was given to "H.O.L.Y.," written by busbee and Nate Cyphert and recorded by Florida Georgia Line. Sony/ATV was named Publisher of the Year. Pictured (l-r): Jody Williams, BMI VP Creative Nashville; Bob DiPiero and Mike O'Neill, BMI President & CEO.

▲ BMI Parties with peermusic

BMI's Barbara Cane and Michael Crepezzi were proudly on hand to help celebrate peermusic's 90th anniversary at the legendary publishing group's office in Burbank, CA. Pictured (l-r): Michael Crepezzi, BMI; Kathy Spanberger, peermusic; Jud Friedman, BMI songwriter; Barbara Cane, BMI; and Tuff Morgan, peermusic.

HOT 100 2017

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AMANDA YANG

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ANDREA HAMILTON

Singer-Songwriter
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ARTUR MENEZES

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World Music
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Soul, R&B, Neo-Soul,
Acoustic Folk
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HOWLIN' SOULS

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Psychedelic Instrumental
Soundtracks
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JANVI ANAND

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JENNIFER THOMAS

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[jenniferthomasmusic.com](https://www.jenniferthomasmusic.com)

JON GEIGER

Blues Rock
Los Angeles, CA
[jongeiger.com](https://www.jongeiger.com)

JUICE

Rock, R&B, Funk, Hip-Hop
Boston, MA
[istimeforjuice.com](https://www.istimeforjuice.com)

LEVY & THE OAKS

Americana, Indie Pop Rock
Asbury Park, NJ
[levyandtheoaks.com](https://www.levyandtheoaks.com)

LEWY

Hip-Hop, R&B
Los Angeles, CA
[lewymusic.com](https://www.lewymusic.com)

LISA FINNIE

Americana
Los Angeles, CA
[lisafinnie.com](https://www.lisafinnie.com)

LIVINGMORE

Alternative Indie Rock
Los Angeles, CA
[livingmoreband.com](https://www.livingmoreband.com)

MARK MACKAY

Country Rock
Hollywood, CA
[markmackayofficial.net](https://www.markmackayofficial.net)

LIO NICOL

Indie Pop
Los Angeles, CA
[lionicol.com](https://www.lionicol.com)

LOVE GHOST

Alternative Rock
Los Angeles, CA
[loveghost.com](https://www.loveghost.com)

MAGGIE "TATE" GABBARD

R&B, Pop
Los Angeles, CA
[soundcloud.com/maggiegabbardmusic](https://www.soundcloud.com/maggiegabbardmusic)

MATT JONES

Singer-Songwriter
Los Angeles, CA
[mattjonesmusic.net](https://www.mattjonesmusic.net)

MILLY

Pop Rock
Pittsburgh, PA
[millytheband.com](https://www.millytheband.com)

EVERY SINGLE ACT on our annual Hot 100 list of unsigned LIVE performers delivered something special onstage this year. Nominations to this list (shown below in alphabetical order) came from *MC* staffers as well as freelance writers, club bookers, A&R reps, music attorneys and other industry pro's nationwide. *Music Connection* currently has show reviewers in Los Angeles, New York, New Jersey, Boston and Detroit. To enquire about a live review for your band in 2018, check out musicconnection.com/reviews/get-reviewed. It's free & easy.

MOLLY HANMER & THE MIDNIGHT TOKERS

Americana
Los Angeles, CA
mollyhanmer.com

NATIVE

EDM, Pop
Los Angeles, CA
natiivemusic.com

O/B/A

Pop, Hip-Hop
Las Vegas, NV
obasmusic.com

OIL BOOM

Rock, Blues, Psychedelic
Fort Worth, TX
oilboomband.com

OLLIE GABRIEL

Soul, Pop, Funk
Los Angeles, CA
olliegabriel.com

O'NEILL HUDSON

Singer-Songwriter
Los Angeles, CA
facebook.com/oneillhudson

ORIEL POOLE

Electro Soul
Los Angeles, CA
orielpoole.com

PACMAN DA GUNMAN

Rap, Hip-Hop
Los Angeles, CA
soundcloud.com/1960pm

PARKER MATTHEWS

Indie Pop
Los Angeles, CA
facebook.com/officialparkermatthews

PIONEER THE EEL

Indie Art Rock
Bloomfield, NJ
pioneertheeel.bandcamp.com

POLAROID SUMMER

Alt Pop, New Wave, Indie Rock
Houston, TX
polaroidsummer.com

PRIME

Electro-Pop
New York, NY
followprime.com

PUSCIE JONES REVUE

Funk, R&B
Los Angeles, CA
pusciejonesrevue.com

REMY SHUCK

Alternative Indie pop
Santa Barbara, CA
remyshuckmusic.com

RIVVRS

Singer-Songwriter
Los Angeles, CA
rivvrs.com

ROBERT SARAZIN BLAKE & THE LETTERS

Folk Rock
Bellingham, WA
robertsarazinblake.com

ROBOT NATURE

Dream Pop, Alt-Rock
Los Angeles, CA
robotnature.com

RUSTIC UNION

Acoustic Rock
Novi, MI
reverbnation.com/rusticunion

SAM WILLIAMS

New 60's Pop
Los Angeles, CA
samwilliamsmusic.net

SARAH LEVECQUE

Roots, Blues, Rock, Country
Framingham, MA
sarahlevecque.com

SCARS ON 45

Pop Rock
Bradford, U.K.
scarson45.com

SHARON LITTLE

Singer-Songwriter
Los Angeles, CA
soundcloud.com/sharonlittle

SIDNEY B

Funk
Los Angeles, CA
sidneyb.com

SIREN CALL

Alternative Rock
Los Angeles, CA
sirencallofficial.com

SKYWARD STORY

Pop Rock
Baltimore, MD
skywardstory.com

SLOPE 114

Live Raw House Music
San Francisco, CA
facebook.com/slope114

STAGE 11

Alternative Rock
Los Angeles, CA
stage11music.com

SYLVIA JUNCOSA

Rampaging Guitar Wrangler
Los Angeles, CA
sylviajuncosa.com

TARAH WHO?

Hard Rock
Los Angeles, CA
tarahwho.com

TAYLOR JOHN WILLIAMS & THE CROOKED HAND

Indie Folk
Los Angeles, CA
taylorjohnwilliams.com

THE ALTERNATIVES

Classic Rock
Farmington Hills, MI
facebook.com/thelalternatives
band.detroit

THE COASTS

Rock, Pop
Little Rock, AR
thecoasts.bandcamp.com

THE GREATER VICTORY

Alternative Rock, Punk
Jonestown, PA
thegreatervictory.bandcamp.com

THE KILLING FLOORS

Latin Punk, Garage
Los Angeles, CA
thekillingfloors.bandcamp.com

THE OCCASIONAL MOONLIGHT

Alternative Folk, Indie Folk
Los Angeles, CA
soundcloud.com/theoccasionalmoonlight

THE PRETTY FLOWERS

Indie Rock
Los Angeles, CA
theprettyflowers.bandcamp.com

THE SLY DIGS

Rock
Long Beach, CA
theslydigs.com

THE SWEET THINGS

Rock & Roll
New York, NY
facebook.com/thesweetthingsnyc

THE WORLD RECORD

Power Pop
Los Angeles, CA
theworldrecord.net

TOO BAD

Electro Dance Rock
Venice, CA
toobadmusic.com

VALLEY LATINI

Singer-Songwriter
Brooklyn, NY
valleylatini.com

VALOR & VENGEANCE

Rock, Heavy Metal
Los Angeles, CA
valorvengeance.bandcamp.com

VERONICA BIANQUI

Garage Pop
Los Angeles, CA
veronicabianqui.com

VICIOUS ROOSTER

Classic Rock
Hollywood, CA
viciousrooster.com

WALKER BRIGADE

Femme-Fronted Art Punk
Los Angeles, CA
facebook.com/thewalkerbrigade

WALKER MCGUIRE

Country, Southern Rock, Acoustic
Nashville, TN
walkermcguire.com

WESTERNER

Psychedelic Electro Glam Rock
Los Angeles, CA
westernerband.com

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Atlanta, GA
yfnlucci.co

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Tim Myers

Songs for Capital Cities, Five for Fighting, Hailee Steinfeld, Ke\$ha

"It's been a pretty good month," muses songwriter, artist and producer Tim Myers. Indeed: he has two songs in major trailers, the first promoting *Wonder*, an upcoming film starring Julia Roberts, and the second song utilized in the *Coco* trailer for the Pixar animated Disney-released feature. Myers has also penned the end-title song, "Can't Stop This Love," for the upcoming Owen Wilson and Ed Helms movie *Father Figures* and has songs featured in Google and Coca-Cola Christmas TV ad campaigns this winter season. Add to these credits "Lover My Love," a song from his latest full length *Portraits* that recently hit No. 5 on the Billboard Dance Chart.

Tim Myers is no stranger to this realm. A California native who launched his career in a children's Christian vocal ensemble, it was through a friend at a church gig that he connected with Ryan Tedder, with whom he would become a founding member of OneRepublic and a co-writer of the No. 1 hit "Stop and Stare." Departing the band, Myers unleashed his prodigious career as a songwriter for Capital Cities, Five for Fighting, Hailee Steinfeld and Ke\$ha while becoming a go-to resource for sync usages—which exceeds well over 1,000 placements. He is also the founder and CEO of Palladium Records, a label that releases his solo projects plus music by artists including the Unknown, FM Radio and MoZella.

Despite these successes, Myers says he was surrounded by doubt. "I was told my entire life, 'You're not good enough, you'll never do it.' I was around people who would tear me down to nothing. But with *Portraits* I was able to write about that, to create a self-portrait, and to let it go. And radio, press, playlists, music videos, remixes—all of this started coming together."

He notes that the songs that comprise *Portraits* reveal his confidential side. "I have been reflecting on my life and my childhood. I think it's important to connect to songs on a personal level so others will connect to them emotionally and draw on their own experiences. It's interesting, when we share with others what we've gone through, how many people have gone been through the same things."

The lyrical honesty on *Portraits* is disarming. "Lover My Love" references two partners who don't have sex anymore. "Tana: Sorry Don't Live Here" is about a close friend of his wife's who committed suicide. "The King" is a pointed treatise on life in Trump-era America. Counterbalancing the weightier themes are the delightful "Daughter," written about his two children, and "18" and "Born for This," whose joyous choruses are positive and affirming. Add to this "Portrait of Home," the song that gives title to the collection, an exquisite avowal of the rewards of enduring love.

With a well-appointed recording studio in his home, Myers writes and records daily. "I will probably have a hundred tracks at the end of the day, and I throw in different combinations of sounds. Then I strip it away, peel back the paint a little bit and see what colors are there. If it was a canvas I'd be throwing tons of paint, scraping and moving things, but at the end of the day it would become, hopefully, beautiful."

With *Portraits*, Myers reflects the artistry of a deeply evocative songwriter whose lyrics and melodies connect the emotional dots with irresistible hooks. "If you listen to this album and dive into every lyric, you'll figure out who I am pretty quickly. I'm not one-dimensional. I'm a friend, a husband, a father a co-writer and a worker," Myers says. And of this process of creating music he adds, "There is no formula—It's magic."

Contact Amanda Blide, Director of Publicity, LaFamos Marketing & Publicity Dept., Amanda@LaFamos.com



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DROPS

Directed by **Austin Peters**, the new documentary **Give Me Future** tells the story of the global superband **Major Lazer's** March 2016 concert in Havana, marking the first performance from a major American artist in Cuba since diplomatic ties with the U.S. were restored. The film was released only via Apple Music on Nov. 17 after a Nov. 12 screening at **The Theatre at Ace Hotel** in Los Angeles. The concert, which took 18 months of planning, was the result of an idea to extend to Cuba the Caribbean roots of **Diplo**, **Jillionaire** and **Walshy Fire**, who make up Major Lazer. The film premiered at Sundance and follows the group as they journey to Havana to meet with young community artists and paint a portrait of youth culture on the verge of a major change. For more information, contact Reid Kutrow at Reid.Kutrow@sacksco.com.



MAJOR LAZER

America's favorite backwoods squids are back this fall with the 11th season of **Squidbillies**, which airs on **Adult Swim**. The iconic theme song was revived in the first four episodes with covers by **Against Me!**, **Steve Earle**, **Bob Mould** and **Ty Segall**, and fans can expect a theme song cover by a different artist for each episode this season, including **John Prine**, **Camper Van Beethoven** and **Weird Al Yankovic**. Previous seasons have featured musicians such as **T-Pain**, **Band of Horses**, **Alabama Shakes**, **Lynyrd Skynyrd**, **Todd Rundgren**, **Dwight Yoakam**, **Father John Misty** and **Kurt Vile**. **Squidbillies** is written and produced by **Dave Willis** and **Jim Fortier**. Contact Emily Mullen at Emily@orienteer.us.

Beats by Dr. Dre recently released a new short film, **Above the Noise**, starring French DJ and producer **DJ Snake**. The film captures the **Geffen Records** artist's performance on Paris' legendary **Arc de Triomphe**, one of the city's most iconic monuments, as well as a first-time look at the journey that took him there. DJ Snake was the first-ever performer to play on top of the monument's roof on Sept. 6. In the **Colin Tilley**-directed film, DJ Snake talks for the first time about how he went from the streets of Paris to becoming one of the world's biggest performers and producers. Contact Rebecca Marlis at Rebecca.Marlis@umusic.com.

The orchestral works of late producer **George Martin** dropped last month via **Atlas Realisa-**



ABOVE THE NOISE

tions/Pias Classics. George Martin: The Film Scores and Original Orchestral Compositions captures the work of the man who marked a watershed moment in music history when in June 1962 he signed an unknown band—**The Beatles**—to **Parlophone**. The album features Martin's original music from the films **Yellow**

dancer and entertainer in a time of racial prejudice in America, from the Civil Rights era through the '80s. **Sammy Davis, Jr.: I've Gotta Be Me** features interviews with the likes of **Billy Crystal**, **Norman Lear**, **Jerry Lewis**, **Whoopi Goldberg**, **Quincy Jones** and **Kim Novak**, and never-before-seen photographs from Davis'

personal collection and excerpts from his electric performances in television, film and concert. Contact David Magdahl at DMagdahl@tcdm-associates.com.

The **Brent Wilson**-directed doo-wop documentary, **Streetlight Harmonies**, made its New York debut in November at the **DOC NYC Festival**. The film spotlights doo-wop greats, and features comments from **Sherri Payne** of the **Supremes**, **Brian Wilson** of the **Beach Boys**, **Terry Johnson** of the **Flamingos**, **Charlie Thomas** of the **Drifters** and

more, complete with new interviews and archival footage that illustrate the social impact and history of the genre. For further details, contact Lauren Mele at Lauren@beachwood.la.

OPPS

The **Center Theatre Group** does not have resident actors and is therefore always looking for new talent. The group holds periodic auditions for productions in Los Angeles at the **Ahmanson Theatre**, **Mark Taper Forum** and **Kirk Douglas Theatre**, and sometimes in New York. Performers can invite **Center Theatre**



Submarine, **Live and Let Die** and the previously unrecorded choral and orchestral score for **The Mission** together with the **Overture to Under Milk Wood**, the suite **Three American Sketches** for violin and chamber orchestra, and other, previously unreleased original compositions. A limited-edition double vinyl release of the album is slated for January 2018, in honor of Martin's birthday. For more information, contact Sarah Folger at Sarah.Folger@pias.com.

The first major film documentary on **Sammy Davis, Jr.** recently premiered, showcasing the life and times of the multi-talented singer,

Group to their upcoming shows at casting@centertheatregroup.org or, if they are **Actors' Equity Association** members or **Equity Membership Candidates**, can audition with the group. Check out CenterTheatreGroup.org/about/employment/casting for details on preparation and open audition dates for actors, musicians or other types of artists.

Want to be a video director for a touring company? Candidates must be based in Los Angeles and need a valid passport to enter Mexico and Canada. The job entails managing local stagehand labor and setting up under the guidance of the tour production manager, handling the load-in, run of show and load-out of a multi-camera shoot, and managing a live webcast onsite, among other responsibilities. Experience with technological troubleshooting, studio or live event broadcasting, and managing a crew are a must. Pay is an average \$1,100 per city. Applicants should email a resume and related experience to qkxjg-6375382769@job.craigslist.org with "video tech application" in the subject line. Note if you have experience with any of the following: Sony PMW or EX3 Cameras, Blackmagic products, Final Cut Pro, Sony Vegas and Telestream Episode.



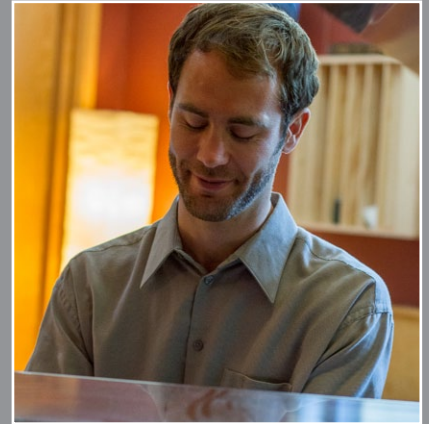
PROPS

Fans from 195 countries tuned in to watch **Demi Lovato's** feature-length documentary, **Simply Complicated**, on her **YouTube** channel, generating more than seven million views since its Oct. 17 debut. The film, inspired by Lovato's journey and launch of her new album, delves deep into the singer's personal life where she discusses her sexuality, breakups and struggles with an eating disorder and drug use. Bonus content and trailers released prior to the film generated an additional eight million views, surpassing 15 million views for the film and related content. For more information,

contact Cara Hutchison at CHutchison@rogersandcowan.com.

The **17th World Soundtrack Awards** were held in late October, honoring **Jóhann Jóhannsson** for **Best Film Composer of the Year**, **Rupert Gregson-Williams** for **Best Television Composer of the Year**, and **David Shire**, who received the **Lifetime Achievement Award** for his entire career. The awards ceremony featured jazz composer **Terence Blanchard**. Jóhannsson received his award for the **Dennis Villeneuve** feature, **Arrival**, while Gregson-Williams was honored for his work on the **Netflix** original

Out Take



Kevin Lax Composer

Web: KevinLax.com

Email: Dita.Dimone@heistmediainc.com

Most Recent: *Juanita*

After scoring two documentaries for R&B stars Mary J. Blige and Chris Brown, composer Kevin Lax made his Netflix scoring debut with *Burning Sands*, released early this year. The project went so well, Lax was recently tapped by again to score the Netflix original film *Juanita*. The in-demand young composer and USC grad has figured out how to stand out in a highly competitive environment.

"Sometimes there are fantastic musicians, but they have characteristics that are tricky to work with," Lax says. "The easiest people to work with—that is something that's considered. Also your work ethic and how you treat people, to a degree, are as significant as how skilled you are."

Lax describes his style as melodic and harmonic-based, and he seeks to write music that evokes strong emotional responses.

"You can fall into musical ruts," he says. "What triggers that is a sense of haste. You have just two days to write. When cooking, if you hastily read a recipe, you miss something. So you need to take the time to listen to other music out there and get familiar with the project."

Lax is somewhat methodical. He says he gathers several musical themes, whether textural or melodic, which he likens to writing an outline for a term paper. One of the greatest challenges of the pre-work, he says, is getting on the emotional level of the characters and narrative of the project, understanding the narrative arc, and tapping into the drama or intensity of certain scenes.

"One thing I've learned is patience. You give up some aspects of social life to do this work," he says. "You have to be mindful of why you made these decisions. At the end of the day, we're writing music, so enjoy the craft. It's artistic expression. And do it every day."



Artist Alexa Meade is in search of a full-time videographer to join her in the studio to shoot and edit her innovative painting sessions (view her work here: [youtube.com/watch?v=GaJmRRBt6Xk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaJmRRBt6Xk)). On-location shoots will take place one to three days weekly around Los Angeles with occasional shoots around the world. The right candidate will be able to work 12- to 16-hour days and a 40-hour work week. Experience shooting video and working on professional film sets is a must. Applicants should send a description of related experience, links to work samples and professional websites to 4vvn4-6372478179@job.craigslist.org.

series **The Crown**. Other winners included newcomer **Nicholas Britell**, who received **Discovery of the Year** for his Oscar-nominated score for *Moonlight*. For more information about the awards and this year's winners, visit WorldSoundtrackAwards.com/en or contact Riema Reybrouck at Riema@filmfestival.be.

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

► Raising Money for Children's Health Care

Salesforce.org in conjunction with Dreamfest hosted the eighth annual Concert for UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals, a benefit concert held in conjunction with the annual convention. The event featured live performances by Alicia Keys and Lenny Kravitz (pictured) at AT&T Park in San Francisco, CA. A record-breaking \$15 million was raised from sponsorships and tickets sales, which will benefit UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals.



DREW ALTIZER



▲ BANG! Screening at TAXI

TAXI concluded the first night of their annual three-day "Road Rally" with a film screening of *BANG!*, a rockumentary about the life of the late songwriter-producer Bert Berns. Berns' only son, Brett, directed the documentary. After the screening, Brett was joined on stage by his associate producer Betsy Hammer and co-producer Brooks Arthur, for an interactive panel with audience members.



▲ MC Dishes Up Gear Prizes at the TAXI Road Rally

Music Connection gave away two ADK microphones, a Holy Fire 9 pedal and an M-Audio M-Track 2X2 at another successful TAXI Road Rally convention in Los Angeles, where songwriters, composers and music industry professionals had the opportunity to network and attend informative panels. TAXI winners pictured (l-r): Jamie Parson, Bruce Stanfield, Angel Maradiaga and Ru Thomas. For more information, visit taxi.com.



▲ FMSMF at American Film Market

The American Film Market in Santa Monica was the setting for a Film/Music panel on Nov. 6, programmed by the Film Musicians Secondary Markets Fund. The standing room only crowd heard from industry leaders who offered valuable information and career advice on every aspect of scoring for film, TV and digital platforms. For more, visit facebook.com/filmmusicresiduals. Pictured (l-r): panel moderator Dennis Dreith, Magic Closet Music; Reggie Wilson, Owner/President, Guardian Music Service; Stefanie Taub, National Director, Music, SAG-AFTRA; Paul Broucek, President, Warner Brothers Music; and Kim Roberts Hedgpeth, Executive Director, Film Musicians Secondary Markets Fund.

Tidbits From Our Tattered Past



1985—Tears for Fears—#10

In an issue featuring reviews of debut albums by Chris Issak and 'Til Tuesday, as well as an exploration of Geffen Records' A&R process, our cover story on Tears for Fears contained this excellent quote from the British band's Roland Orzabal: "The biggest skill is to do something simple. It communicates to everybody, yet it's still good."



2004—Pink—#1

In our cover story Q&A with Pink, the artist had this wisdom to impart: "I don't really judge my success on how many records I sell. I judge it on how much fun I have and if I can look myself in the mirror and say, 'Okay, you took a risk and you believed in it and you stood up for it.'" Elsewhere in the issue there's a profile of producer Jazze Pha and a discussion with Bruce Forman about his Jazz Masters Workshop.



▲ Sparks Keep the Home Fires Burning

Although often thought of as a U.K. import, Sparks (l-r: brothers Russell and Ron Mael) played three hometown shows at the El Rey Theatre in Los Angeles, along with a rocking backup band. The duo offered up some of their greatest hits, but also included several cuts from their latest masterpiece (and 23rd studio album) *Hippopotamus*.



◀ SXSW Parties in L.A.

SXSW threw a party at the Sunset Marquis in Hollywood where they invited attendees of their 2017 event. Artists and industry movers and shakers who packed the party at the famed hotel included (l-r): EastWest Studios Manager Candace Stewart; Festival Manager Julia Ervin; and AFM & SAG — AFTRA Fund Associate Director of Participant Services, Colin Gilbert.

► Platinum Kaleo

Elektra/Atlantic band Kaleo received platinum plaques for their hit single "Way Down We Go" at a sold-out show at New York City's Hammerstein Ballroom. Pictured (l-r): Gregg Nadel, President, Elektra Records; Rubin Pollock, Kaleo; Craig Kallman, Chairman/CEO, Atlantic Records Group; JJ Julius Son, Kaleo; David Antonsson, Kaleo; Bruce Kalmick, Partner, Triple 8 Management; Daniel Kristjansson, Kaleo. For more, visit officialkaleo.com.





Vance Joy

An Aussie's Arrival

By Rob Putnam

Photos By Justin Bettman

Australian artist Vance Joy is blowing up both online and off. To date, he's earned more than a billion (yes, billion with a "b.") That's a thousand millions) online listens, and early into his North American headlining tour, all of his dates are sold out. The video for his 2013 hit single "Riptide" alone has amassed nearly 200 million views.

It is hard to imagine a better career path for an artist on the rise. In 2013, Joy (birth name: James Gabriel Keogh) signed a five-album deal with Atlantic Records and in 2015 he toured as the opening act for Taylor Swift. On the day *Music Connection* sat down with the artist, *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* was on his afternoon schedule and his evening plans included a sold-out performance at Hollywood's Fonda Theatre.

First Steps

Joy took his first steps into music as a teenager in Melbourne when he picked up a guitar. He began with parodies of popular songs for his friends. But when he expanded into writing his own lyrics, his confidence and competence blossomed and he soon waved goodbye to parodies.

After high school, he and some friends put a band together and took whatever gigs they could get. There was something of a hiatus while he completed his degree in English and law at Melbourne's Monash University. Upon graduation, not only did he emerge with a degree in hand, but also a cluster of songs in his pocket that he felt were worthy of an audience. In his words, "This isn't going to be wasting someone's time to listen to this three minutes of [a] song."

The first tune Joy wrote that signaled he was on the right path was "Winds of Change." That was in 2009 when the singer was nearly 22 and about to depart on a backpacking trip. Indeed, it's the kick-off song on his first album: 2014's *Dream Your Life Away*. That's when he realized he was on to something—that songwriting and performing were no longer simply things he did for fun. They were his job. So he stepped into Melbourne's Red Door Sounds and had his songs recorded professionally. "From then on, I was able to find my way into the industry," he explains. *Dream Your Life Away* peaked at No. 1 on the Australian Albums Chart and Atlantic dropped it stateside mere days after its release down under.

Paying His Dues

But of course success demands more than the simple recording and submission of a few songs. Indeed, Joy's first bona fide hit, "Riptide," remained several years in the future.

In 2010 he still had dues to pay, so he began to hit various open mics in and around Melbourne. He started locally at a bar called The Great Britain. He put his name on a list at 5:00 which usually landed him a 7:30 performance spot. At the time, he only had two original songs and needed one more for his set. Fortunately, the pressure of an upcoming gig triggered his creativity and he penned a third.

As momentum increased, Joy widened his circle and began to call around to other venues. He was told he could perform, but he'd need another two bands to fill out the bill. He tapped a pair of like-minded friends and the roster was complete.

Vance Joy's first "proper gig," as he calls it, was in October 2012 at The Workers Club, a 200-seat capacity venue located in central Melbourne. He booked the gig six months out, which left him breathing room to form a band and get six solid originals nailed by show time.

Before the gig, he uploaded his songs—notably "Riptide"—to SoundCloud, which he linked to his Facebook page. He checked the number of listens constantly for the first week. By the time he'd earned 100 likes, he had the reassurance he needed. Once his Workers Club date rolled around, people were familiar with the song. "Without that," he observes, "I wouldn't have been able to get people in that room."

Key Connections

After he recorded "Riptide" and several other songs in 2012, Joy reached out to Jaddan Comerford, someone he'd known at school who'd developed connections at Atlantic Records after graduation. Those connections proved pivotal. "A month and a half after I'd recorded the songs, Jaddan asked, 'You want to

go to New York to play for Craig Kallman, the Chairman and CEO of Atlantic Records?'" Joy recalls. "I wanted to do it, but was super-scared. That was a crazy opportunity and like nothing I expected. Those three days in New York before I met with him, I was super-nervous. I don't think I've been that nervous for anything before that. But when he came into the room, he had these beautiful blue eyes and was very calm. That helped me feel that it was all good." Soon thereafter, a deal was offered and Joy signed it after his repatriation to Melbourne.

Certainly social media has played a crucial role in his success. No modern artist can afford to ignore it, dual-edged sword or not. "That number of cumulative streams is very cool," Joy observes of his billion-plus online listens. "My manager mentioned that I was lucky to be an artist who embarked in music at the time when Spotify and several other streaming services were just taking off. All those huge bands from [back in] the day might not have had that same kind of clear statistic. I'm not a super hands-on social [media] guy. I use my Instagram to look at people, to look at friends. I post every few days, but it's not a diary. It's more maybe a photo from a show. But I like it because it gives you the ability to show your personality. As a human being, you want to know—if you have a CD or a book out—if people like it. That's a natural impulse, to crave that pat on the back. But it can't dictate your core happiness. It's nice to see [your work] connecting with people."

The Producer/Artist Relationship

Recently Joy's collaborated with several prolific producers, notably Phil Ek (Mudhoney and The Shins) as well as Ryan Hadlock (The Lumineers), who was a producer on Joy's 2014 record *Dream Your Life Away*. He came to work with him by way of his Atlantic A&R rep. "I had a song that was kind of half written called 'Mess is Mine,'" Joy recalls. "All I had was a verse and chorus; it wasn't fully worked out."

But Stefan Max [Joy's A&R rep] liked what he heard and wanted to get it done. "I wasn't sure that it was ready," Joy recalls. "I had a trial week with Ryan in Seattle. I played him the minute of the song that I had. He made suggestions, like, 'That sounds like the bridge, not the chorus.' It was nice to have an objective opinion. We spent the next four months honing it. He chopped it up a bit and we tried it in different ways, moved parts around and eventually came up with a song that worked. I'll always feel indebted to him for that. He's a really cool, creative guy. He added a piano riff for the song 'Wasted Time,' which I loved. It took the song to a different level."

When *Music Connection* interviewed Hadlock back in 2013 for the Producer Crosstalk column, he expressed the idea that every opinion is a valid one and that some of the best things happen by having an open relationship. Joy has come to appreciate this production philosophy. "It's a nice approach and I agree with it," he concedes. "Hear everyone out—you don't know all the answers and the ultimate goal is to make [a song] as awesome as possible. Everyone can throw their ideas on the wall and see what sticks. When one is out in its full form, we can appraise it later once we've tried everything. Let [each person] get their idea out and maybe by the time it comes into its full expression, it's actually awesome."

When Joy works with a producer, it is commonly for what he calls a "trial week." The week-long session typically results in two strong songs. "I've been lucky to work with great producers," he says. "It's less of a trial and more of 'Let's record two songs, we've got one week.' I've never gone to a trial and felt that it didn't work and scrapped the songs. I've always walked away with ones that I've felt good about."

The Joy of Collaboration

As he has grown into the role of successful singer-songwriter, Joy says he has learned the value of collaboration, particularly with producers who aid him with lyrics and song structure. "I used to think that going into a songwriting session with someone would diminish my voice," the singer explains. "When you work with someone that reinforces your voice, it's such a great experience. When that's happened with me, [I thought] 'These are songs I wouldn't have been able to do alone.' That's been an interesting discovery."

"Lay It On Me" came together when Joy was able to match a lyric he had on his phone—"Everything starts at your skin"—with a guitar riff he'd been noodling with for some time. But of course it was more complicated than it sounds. "It can be a long process turning that riff into a fully-fledged song," he admits. "I tried writing songs for it for ages. There were three years of having it lying around, trying ideas and giving up on it."

But then Joy went into a songwriting session at the start of this year with Dave Bassett [who co-wrote Elle King's 2014 hit "Ex's & Oh's"]. "He's a great songwriter and producer," he enthuses. "We managed to use that riff and put

"IT'S FUNNY HOW QUICKLY YOU CAN FLUCTUATE BETWEEN SELF-CONFIDENCE AND THAT FEELING OF NOT BEING TOO SURE. I TRY TO THINK THAT MAYBE IT'S GOOD TO BE A LITTLE BIT UNSURE."

it in a song that felt really right. I think I needed a different color; a little injection of 'Hey, have you ever thought about this?' He chuckled me a melody for that riff and the song opened up. That's evidence to me that you can write a song that feels totally you, but you can write it with someone you just met. That's a cool thing." [Read MC's profile of Bassett at musicconnection.com/songwriter-profile-dave-basset.]

Overcoming Obstacles

Although Joy's career is in its relative infancy, he's managed to write a number of well-received songs. That, however, doesn't mean that it's been easy. As with any creative endeavor, sometimes insecurity can creep in like an uncredited backstage groupie. "That must happen with anyone who's trying to mine themselves for creative ideas," the singer suggests. "Whatever ingredients you've got, sometimes they fit together perfectly, you make something and you're like 'Wow.' Other times, it's just not working."

"I was on tour once with Bernard Fanning," Joy continues, "and felt tapped out. I mentioned this to him and he said that they're just obstacles. Everyone encounters them—patches where you're not productive and your ideas aren't sticking. But those obstacles can always be overcome. That was something that made me think, 'I'll just forge ahead.' It's funny how quickly you can fluctuate between self-confidence and that feeling of not being too sure. I try to think that maybe it's good to be a little bit unsure."

Metaphor Man

Like any songwriter who is blessed with depth of artistry, many of Joy's lyrics are commonly meta-

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phorical rather than literal. As mentioned earlier, his song "Lay It On Me" includes the phrase "Everything starts at your skin." Are metaphorical lyrics something he strives for or are they simply inherent to his natural writing style?

"When I've written songs that are too literal, it doesn't feel like me," he notes. "I'm proud of the line, 'Everything starts at your skin,' but I stole it out of a book. But you can be great with specific details, which can be super-powerful as well."

In the past when I've tried to get too specific, it didn't always work. [Metaphorical lyrics] might be the kind I connect with. Without that lyric, the song wouldn't have been as powerful.

Sometimes you can have an ordinary, everyday line that's familiar and powerful as well, he adds. "For example, Ed Sheeran's song 'Thinking Out Loud.' There's something familiar and everyday about that which is also powerful: when you can capture an everyday expression, like, 'For what it's worth.' That can still carry a lot of weight. It's hard to know what will work unless you put the words in that space in the melody of the song. Everyday usage can turn into something powerful when it's in the right environment."

Variety—something that comes to him naturally—is also central to Joy's songwriting. "We all have our styles and that's what makes you who you are as a songwriter or creative person," he observes. "You do that repeatedly and that becomes your style. I'm always open to trying new rhythms and to collaborate with people just to see if there's a different way of singing or different melodies and rhythms with your words. I like exploring but I also feel like on the other side of that is this guy who has the same set of tricks and using those same ingredients and tricks comes up with variations and different songs. If you keep doing it, hopefully it keeps providing. That's the goal, anyway."

Under the Influence

In the early days of his career, Vance Joy was known for his cover of Green Day's "Good Riddance (Time of Your Life)." In view of that, how influential have other artists been on him?

"There are so many amazing songs and

Music Connection Top 25 New Music Critiques Of 2017



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when you listen to them, it's hard to see yourself writing one that good," he admits. "If I listen to a Peter Gabriel tune like 'Solsbury Hill,' I'm like, 'That's a song that's, like, far out. Imagine writing that.' That just inspires me to keep trying. There are a lot of godfathers and godmothers of incredible songs. They inspire all songwriters."

While in Los Angeles, Joy appeared on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* where he performed "Lay It On Me." He loves playing for an audience that numbers in the millions, but it comes packaged with other challenges. "I enjoy the experience because it's exciting," he observes. "Everybody gets dressed up and hangs in the green room. There's always some [other] famous person that's on. That's cool, just being in that environment. You're a bit more conscious of your performance because there's a camera. But there's a little more pressure. Is my pack turned on? Is the battery going to run out? All that kind of stuff that goes through your head before you play. It's just like any other performance but perhaps slightly heightened because you're nervous. As long as you have a grip on your nerves and you're in control, they can be useful."

Not being native to this land, does he find American audiences to differ significantly from Australian ones? "It's so variable," the singer asserts. "You can put them all together and go state-by-state. A Melbourne audience versus a Chicago audience; a New York crowd versus a Brisbane one. You could say that a Melbourne audience is similar to a New York one; Chicago is like a Brisbane audience. They're really enthusiastic."

Last summer, Joy played Chicago's Lollapalooza for the second time, giving him the opportunity to weigh indoor versus outdoor shows. "When the audience is as enthusiastic as that crowd and the vibe and energy are strong," he says of Lolla, "that's the best thing. That can also be recreated indoors. It really comes down to the atmosphere in the room and to you as a band—putting on a good show. That's put people in the mood. It's a bit of both. If the crowd is really receptive, you can feed off of each other's energy. That's the perfect atmosphere and condition for a great show. When it happens, you know it and you're like 'That was a good one, guys.'"

Looking Ahead

One can't help but wonder what the future holds for this rising artist as he climbs fame's ladder. "There's a vague desire to keep making albums of quality," Joy reveals. "Some records with some real meat about them. I'm living in the moment and enjoying being on tour; enjoying the ride. Every now and then I step outside of it and say 'This is pretty awesome. I get to tour [and see] these lovely people. I get to meet fans and have good and positive experiences.' It's just living in the moment, keep on writing songs, following the instinct and seeing where it ends up."

Shortly before he left for *Kimmel*, Joy confessed that he wasn't especially nervous for that night's sold-out show at Hollywood's Fonda Theatre. "I seem relaxed now," he jokes. "We've got friends in town. When you're performing for friends, you want to put on a good show. That'll give us a little pep in our step."

Contact Ashley.White@atlanticrecords.com

Music Connection interviewed Vance Joy in October. To hear him talk further about key moments in his career, check out the *Music Connection Magazine Podcast*. See podcastone.com/music-connection. And be sure to rate & review us!



- Joy's combined online listens top one billion.
- In 2013 he signed a five-album deal with Atlantic Records.
- On stage, he plays various guitars and a ukulele.
- He's worked with several prominent producers including Ryan Hadlock, Phil Ek and Dave Bassett.
- Joy's single "Riptide" stands as the longest-charting song in ARIA (Australian Recording Industry Association) chart history.
- Initially opposed to song-writing collaboration, his attitude has softened after he found it to be successful in ways he hadn't envisioned.
- He's inspired by prolific songwriters such as Peter Gabriel.
- Toured as Taylor Swift's opening act in 2015. His 2017 headlining tour is entirely sold out.
- His songs have charted in countries across the world including the U.S., Germany, Sweden and, of course, Australia.



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100 BEST CAREER TIPS OF 2017

Compiled by Jacqueline Naranjo

Whether it's our daily website, Weekly Bulletin newsletter, monthly print edition—or our newly launched podcast—our experts' career tips and industry insights are why you tap into *Music Connection*, right? So, here are our picks for the best of the past year...

SONGWRITING

If you believe in yourself and feel that being a songwriter is what you are meant to do, remember that it is a long road to success. As long as you love what you're doing, keep doing it.

— **Sophie Rose**
songwriter (Steve Aoki,
Charlie XCX)
November

I love writing with other people.... I actually prefer it—I like picking other people's brains and having them walk in my shoes and vice versa, and getting lines you wouldn't have thought of yourself. It's an exercise in empathy.

— **Maren Morris**
June

Collaborate as much as possible. Don't be afraid to be open. The more you put out, the more options you'll have.

— **Tony Shimkin**
songwriter (Madonna, Taylor Dayne)
November

Songwriters shouldn't sell their copyrights. In 99.9 percent of their work, they are writing about the pain and joy of their lives, and they'll never get paid for it. It's that lightning in the bottle that strikes. They don't know which one of their stories will pay. And they should be fairly compensated.

— **Alex Heiche**
Founder, Sound Royalties
April

MAREN MORRIS



You have to be a convincing storyteller and then you have to actually make someone believe what you're singing is real.

— **John Oates**
Hall and Oates
April

Singer-songwriters are understanding that by adding a rhythmic element they can achieve more than if they just had a traditional acoustic arrangement

— **Patrick Moxey**
Founder/President, Ultra Music
November

Dare to suck... One needs to share the idea that nothing truly sucks. Even a bad idea can turn out to be wonderful.

— **Shelly Peiken**
songwriter (Britney Spears,
Celine Dion, Ed Sheeran)
November

NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK...

Nothing breaks down barriers like making friends. It is hard to hate when you understand one another, and realize that even though you come from different cultures all people fundamentally want the same things.

— **Shahed Mosheni Zonoozi**
DIY artist
January

Have conversations and don't be afraid. Major brands have people who can easily be found on LinkedIn and through email.

— **Justin Lefkovitch**
CEO/Founder, Mirrored Media
February

The more people that know about your event, the more likely you will have a crowd to perform for. Use this as a rule: for your marketing, for every 10 people that are made aware of your show, maybe one will attend.

– **Antonio Ponce**
author/musician
March

I like artists who have a positive effect on the world. I look at lyrics and their messages, but I'm not opposed to controversy. After all, change does not occur in a comfort zone.

– **Tyler Porterfield**
Owner and President,
Pop Cautious Records
January

just do that. I'm more into the creation part of it, the blank page and finding what the key is. And I don't walk in with preconceived notions. That can interfere with finding the original voice for the project.

– **Joel J. Richard**
composer
May

drum kit that keeps detuning itself. All these things cost time

– **Mike Crossy**
producer (Arctic Monkeys,
The 1975, Twenty One Pilots)
February

It's important not to make too many suggestions. Let an artist find their way and discover things on their own. There's a tendency to be the smart guy and offer ideas. But by being dictatorial, you restrict them from growing.

– **Ryan Ulyate**
producer-engineer (Paul McCartney,
Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers)
March

Knowledge of storytelling is vital and separates quality music supervisors from amateurs. Ability to think like a director or producer is key.

– **Thomas Golubic**
music supervisor
(Better Call Saul)
June

It's a matter of really being thoughtful and being a self-starter and also ingratiating with the community.

– **Eliot Glazer**
writer-musician
July

Don't debate. Just create. I've watched producers argue [with artists in the studio] for hours over ideas that would take three minutes to record.

– **Warren Huart**
producer (The Fray, Aerosmith)
April

PRODUCERS

Don't be afraid to say no. Accepting a job that you can't handle will sink you faster than saying no to a job that you know inside is beyond you.

– **Howard Massey**
producer
January

You can't put too much into your beat. I make sure there's room for the artist and the songwriters to make something groovy, tangible, catchy, interesting and beautiful—a blank canvas for someone to add their personality to.

– **Axident**
producer (Justin Bieber, Jason Derulo)
May



If you ever get the honor of being invited to play a music festival, you must do everything in your power to get there. Most festival showcases are attended by people who have the power to change your musical destiny, and it would be a shame to miss that opportunity.

– **Antonio Ponce**
author/musician
March

MANAGERS' PERSPECTIVE

Never sign a contract without counsel. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for most people to understand contract language. You need an expert to guide you through it and protect your interests.

– **Steve Gordon**
entertainment lawyer
June

Especially in the beginning.... Meet other local bands and play with them at the different venues.... Find a way to stay in touch, 'cause that's how you really build and you're able to keep it going—really amazing and loyal people who care about what you're doing and believe in it and feel it's their own.

– **Natalie Clossner**
Joseph
April

Working as a manager is about always going above and beyond. You should be willing to do almost anything for your acts. But, you have to pick your battles and still do whatever it takes to make your artists successful.

– **Tracy Brown**
CO5 Music/Sensei Management
June

A&R REPS

Working with an artist is like forming a partnership, or entering a marriage. So you want to be sure you can make a long-term commitment. And that might take a little while to determine.

– **Gary Leon**
A&R, Atlantic Records
January

I like self-sufficient acts that are in it for the long haul. Acts that understand the business and have put in work already are no brainers. What I won't sign are acts that feel entitled.

– **Portia Sabin**
Owner and President,
Kill Rock Stars
January

New artists are the future of the business. It's very rewarding when you help an act achieve success. Sure, it's a lot of work, but you can't just work with acts that are already established.

– **Chris Nilsson**
Tenth Street Entertainment
June

FILM/TV COMPOSING

Know your history of film. Know what came before you. And try to meet other filmmakers. When I started, I would stop by film schools, leave my name on bulletin boards and try to meet everyone.

– **Marcelo Zarvos**
composer
March

It's easy to settle into a comfort zone, find something that works and



JOEL J. RICHARD

Write your songs in your house or a rehearsal room. It costs a lot to spend the day in a studio. Most of the time people are in there writing. Work out the song in a rehearsal room; get the album first. Writing a song outside of the studio can save artists \$50,000.

– **Linda Perry**
producer/songwriter
(Pink, Christina Aguilera,
Gwen Stefani)
February

Look after your instrument. I have a tech in on the first day to check them all because there's nothing that can slow you down more than having a poorly set up guitar or a

Serve the song. It's not about you. Sometimes you'll think that something will help and be the right thing. Then you'll see that it's not working; that it's something you want to do. You have to continually check yourself and question if you're serving the artist and the song.

– **David Platillero**
musician-producer
June

Communication. You have to respect the other people in the room. It's not about who's better. It's about how to get the best out of us.

– **Tony Moran**
producer (Gloria Estefan, Madonna)
July

STUDIO TIME

If I'm going to go to the studio I make sure I'm surrounded by my friends. I try to create a good vibe before entering the studio.

– **Daye Jack**
April

Train your ear to hear things. Not enough people spend the time to know what a frequency or a good guitar sounds like.

– **David Platillero**
musician-producer
June

A big "take it or leave it" personality is great and admirable, but not always productive. It's a good skill to know when to calm down or amp it up.

– **Peppina**
May



RON McMASTER

Microphones capture creativity. Show a piece of creativity the respect it deserves by fully understanding the mic being used to record the performance.

— **Doug Fenske**
engineer-producer-mixer
July

You have to find a [cost] formula that works not just for larger acts with budgets, but also for the local heroes.

— **Jono Manson**
producer (John Popper,
Tao Seeger)
August

MASTERING

A lot of young people want to get into this field and it's a hard one to break into. But the better educated someone can be, the better an engineer they'll be.

— **Ron McMaster**
Capitol Mastering
October

Speakers are the most important thing. You can get the cheapest EQ, but as long as you have the best speakers, you can create the sound you want.

— **Vlado Miller**
Vlado Mastering
October

INSPIRATION & PERSPIRATION

Creativity is a very, very mysterious and very difficult-to-catch animal, and you're hunting for it all of the time so you have to change your methods the whole time, because it changes, too. You have to trick it, somehow, or trick yourself into finding it. So approaching it from a different angle, a surprising angle, a different method than you've used before is always a benefit

— **Sting**
May

It's the same whether you're into music or writing: we live in a world where you can make something

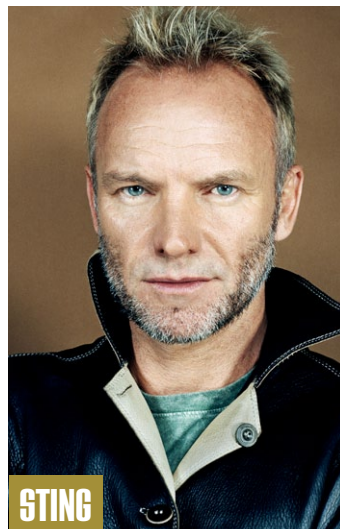
that doesn't cost anything. It's free to get it out there. So just make stuff. Record. Write a short script. Shoot and edit a video.

— **Kyle Jarro**
playwright
January

You can't just cram a bunch of instruments together and hope for the best. It's a lot of careful carving, weaving and bumping.

— **Adam Dutkiewicz**
producer (Killswitch Engage,
Underoath)
February

Know what kind of artist you are. Figure out what you want to be as an artist. Do research. Go through the history books and artists you



STING

feel you're comparable to. Study their music but don't follow or imitate their music—take some of the essence of what they created.

— **Marcus Spence**
Executive VP, Head of A&R,
TuneGO Music Group, Inc.
April

You never have someone teach you how to rap, you listen to artists that you really like and see what they're

doing and try to copy it, and at some point you realize that the essence of rap is expressing yourself.

— **Daye Jack**
April

An inexpensive creative concept will perform better than a high-priced paint-by-numbers video every time. So get creative!

— **Ari Herstand**
author, singer-songwriter
May

The story of the music is more than just the plain audio file. We should use all this technology to tell the story to the fullest.

— **Patrick Moxey**
Founder/President, Ultra Music
November

Bantering onstage for too long can kill the vibe. However, an incredible story can last forever.

— **Ari Herstand**
singer-songwriter, author
August

FANS ARE #1

It's all about giving fans content. We're not overanalyzing anything. We don't care if it's going to be a Top 10 radio hit. At the end of the day, we just want to consistently entertain our fans.

— **Matt Russell**
Cheat Codes
January

Don't think of production value in the sense of cost. It's just something that's going to create that moment in time that connects you with your audience and they're going to want to share.

— **Justin Lefkovich**
CEO/Founder, Mirrored Media
February

Studying data and the behavior of the audience. That's something every artist should do. The more

you acknowledge your audience, the more successful you'll be.

— **Shelita Burke**
DIY artist
November

Trust yourself. As an artist, people are paying attention to you because they love what you are creating. Stay true to that and your fans.

— **Justin Lefkovich**
CEO/Founder, Mirrored Media
February

Spend your resources on creating a great song and a great video and get it out. Fans expect music so much more regularly now than they did 10 years ago.

— **Ari Herstand**
author, singer-songwriter
March

Our main piece of advice for other independent artists touring would be to get out there and make connections with people—not just through your music, but off-stage as well. That's where you build your fan base.

— **Trevor McNevan**
Thousand Foot Krutch
May

Inspiration is everywhere. Start with the truth and what truth it is about you that you want people to know. Then, find the most impactful way to make that come to life."

— **Frank Crowson**
Senior VP of Marketing
Guitar Center
January

My highest aspiration is to inspire people and to make wide-open songs and compositions where people can find a little bit of what they need, or whatever they want. I don't like to dictate what the song may or may not mean to them.

— **Sam Phillips**
singer-songwriter
January



SHELITA BURKE

We're all human beings, we're all fucked up and we're all flawed. Why not be a voice that talks about it, admits it and has a little honesty?

– **Caleb Followill**
Kings of Leon,
January

I think the key is being real with people. Showing people what you're doing with your life. If you relate to people, they're going to want to follow you and check out your life.

– **Daniel Skye**
artist
May

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

– **Tony Moran**
producer (Gloria Estefan, Madonna)
July

Great songs, great films, great stories, great relationships—all of these are happening in front of you every day. You've just got to open your eyes and see them.

– **Andrew "Drew" Taggart**
The Chainsmokers
July

I feel like when you make music that feels good it's gonna feel good. I don't think it's a name or the category you put it in.

– **Timbaland**
August

active community, like YouTube, it is the easiest way to send someone a streamable song.

– **Ari Herstand**
singer-songwriter, author
March

Today, with Instagram and Twitter, it's better than ever to find the particular people that like the same musical, cultural and artistic things that you do.

– **Chainsaw Rainbow**
November

MUSIC IS A JOURNEY

Be positive and set goals. Ultimately, create a vision for what you want and slowly but surely it'll started happening.

– **Matt Russell**
Cheat Codes
January

Musicians bring a quality that I'm amazed by. It's folks who are not afraid to fail, because music is a journey and there are many difficult times you have to work through to get to the beauty of making music.

– **Frank Crowson**
Senior VP of Marketing, Guitar Center
January

Just because we've had small successes [with Compass] doesn't mean we're anywhere near where we need to be. Never be too comfortable or complacent. A good

WORK SMART

Focus on your strengths. It's easy when starting something new to focus on your weaknesses. ... Be positive and set goals. Ultimately, create a vision for what you want and slowly but surely it'll started happening.

– **Matt Russell**
Cheat Codes
January

keep on top of that. Partnering with a brand can create new methods of expression, and tap into the cultural aspects of music.

– **Martin Kierszenbaum**
Cherrytree Music Company
June

You gotta go through trial and error to get to perfection.

– **Timbaland**
August



Social Media is Your Best Friend
Radio promotion is an entrée best served hot with a side of social media.

– **Paul Loggins**
Loggins Promotion
June

It's an amazing time that the digital age has ushered in. It allows audiences to come to music without having it go through a traditional channel, like MTV or the radio, or some other filter that really narrows rowcasts.

– **Michael Franti**
July

You'll want to get all of your music up on SoundCloud. Not only is it an

artist should always think that he can do better.

– **Old Salt Union**
April

Stay honest with yourself. Don't try to do something you can't.

– **Eric Vasquez**
Head of Creative/VP, A&R SyncStories
September

It doesn't matter where you come from, it matters where you end up.

– **Siedah Garrett**
songwriter (Michael Jackson, Dreamgirls)
September

If you're in a major city, I recommend an internship. If you're in a place where you don't have the means to get an internship, start booking bands that are small and happy to play for \$100 or \$200 a night. Build relationships with bands and their teams and hope they get bigger and start making money. You'll grow with them

– **Heath Miller**
Vice President & Talent Buyer, Webster Hall
March

Artists have to have a full plan today to get things done. Don't rely on a label or anyone else to put things together for you.

– **Mondo Cozmo**
March

Your bio is your story. It is the single most important piece of your release—next to the music, of course. It should reveal why people should care about you. What sets you apart? Why are you unique? And more specifically, what is the album's story?

– **Ari Herstand**
singer-songwriter, author
March

The right partnership can offer many options for the delivery, promotion and consumption of music. There are new platforms launched almost weekly, and managers must

Don't burn bridges, even if it leaves a bad taste in your mouth. That's key, because if you rub people the wrong way chances are you're going to come across that person at some point.

– **Eric Vasquez**
Head of Creative/VP A&R, SyncStories
September

If someone is looking for music, it's tempting to send them a lot of songs, but you should give them a few great choices rather than sending everything, because no one has the time for that

– **Randy Frisch**
President, LoveCat Music
October

Artists should submit something as close to a final product as they can—something different that doesn't sound like 10,000 other records

– **Patrick Moxey**
Founder/President, Ultra Music
November

People think you can just put something out online. It's just not how it is. First you have to tap in with the attorneys, tap in with the label.

– **Ty Dollar Sign**
November

The best choice I could make was signing with a label more con-

cerned about my future than just a flash in the pan.

— **Molly Kate Kestner**
artist
May

BETTER BANTER

You need to think about your entire performance as a whole. It's not just about the music, it's about every single second on stage.

— **Ari Herstand**
author, singer-songwriter
August

Artists sometimes have a hard time understanding that stage banter should be rehearsed. You rehearse your songs, don't you? Why would you do anything on stage that isn't rehearsed? That's what separates pro's from amateurs.

— **Larry Butler**
tour manager, author
August

Banter is about connecting with the audience, so you need to try to show your personality. Tell them something about yourself...give them some insight into who you are.

— **Gilli Moon**
President, Songsalive!
August

Bantering onstage for too long can kill the vibe. However, an incredible story can last forever.

— **Ari Herstand**
author, singer-songwriter
August

A lot of musicians don't realize what the job is. The job is to entertain the audience. And unless you're a well-known artist with hit songs, the music alone isn't enough.

— **Mike Giangreco**
Founder, Meroke Sky Records
August

THE HUMAN FACTOR

I don't have "yes" people around me. It's so nice to have people around me who are proud but who can rib me and keep me humbled and sane.

— **Maren Morris**
June

Musicians should start banding together. We should all agree that we're better off if we can stand up for the profession of making music.

— **John Acosta**
President/Executive Officer,
American Federation of Musicians
August

There are a lot of people in the industry who don't get enough thanks or credit. Kindness doesn't cost anything. And it goes a long way.

— **Bent Knee**
August

You're no good without your team, and I have a great team. It allows me to stay in my space and they understand me as a person. You should have somebody just as hungry as you.

— **Timbaland**
August

Some artists get it backwards, where the thought is to be the big rock star. If you don't have that passion and love for what you do, you're not going to last.

— **Eric Vasquez**
Head of Creative/VP, A&R,
SyncStories
September

When pushing toward the best result, sometimes less feels like more. If it's meant to happen, it seems like it does happen.

— **Andrew W.K.**
October



BEBE REXHA

VALUE YOUR VOICE

Learn to sing properly, and learn to save your voice. If you're not learning, you're stagnating; it's as simple as that. It doesn't have to be formally taught; there's millions of ways of learning.

— **John Oates**
Hall and Oates
April

Dairy is not good for the voice; neither is turmeric. Although it's good for inflammation, it thins the voice.

— **Vassy**
April

We have both worked with vocal coaches and it really teaches you the importance of warming up and taking care of your voice.

— **Tyler Hubbard**
Florida Georgia Line
April

MEANINGFUL SONGS

We need real songs more than ever. We need honesty. We either need songs that help us get anger out, or songs that help us forget a little bit.

— **Bebe Rexha**
September

If I feel chills, that's what I'm trying to get to. It tells you you're alive. It's emotional in a way that you can't define as happy or sad. It's just being moved.

— **Andrew W.K.**
October

You've got to have a voice, stay true to it and try not to worry too much about what other people are doing. Make sure to develop your sound so it's exactly what you want it to be before you start pushing it out to the world.

— **Graham Dickson**
Founder, Axis Mundi Records
October

You never want to be pigeon-holed or stuck writing the same song over and over again, trying to replicate that success.

— **John Gourley**
Portugal. The Man
October

You can't really manufacture emotion and put it into a song. It should be about music that speaks to you and you don't feel like you're being lied to, or that it's over-produced.

— **Jake Kiszka**
Greta Van Fleet
October

DO WHAT YOU LOVE

Whatever you do, lend your honest, individual perspective to everything. That's what will make you unique and interesting. If you're pursuing anything in any industry, tune in, listen to your gut and don't lose yourself.

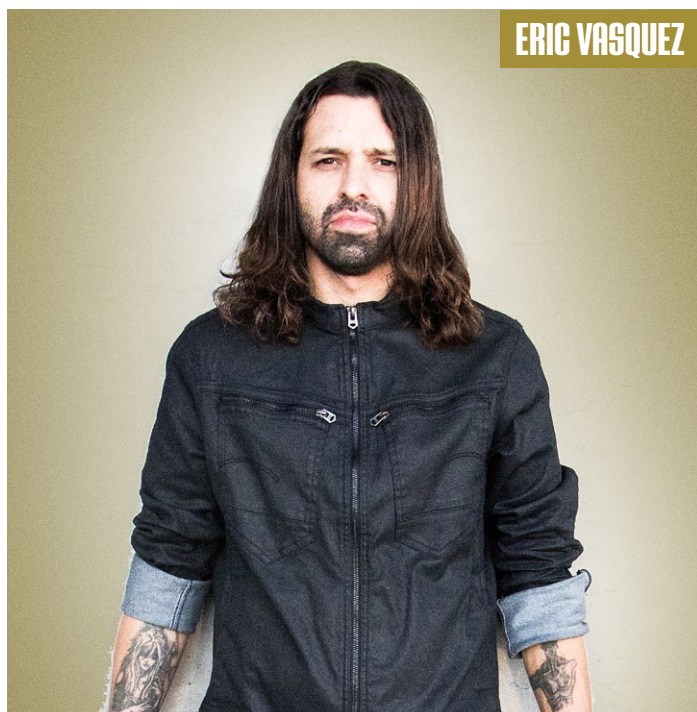
— **Lisa Roth**
Vice President/Creative Director, CMH
Label Group/Rockabye Baby
June

The music business is for real music lovers. It just depends on what you want to accomplish. As long as you are passionate and work with true artists you can overcome any naysayers.

— **Martin Kierszenbaum**
Cherrytree Music Company
June

If you want to be in the music business and have a career that means something, you've got to be bold; you've got to be brave; and you've got to put your ass on the line or it's just not the right place for you. This isn't the place to rest on your laurels and hope someone else does the scary stuff.

— **Ricky Reed**
producer (Twenty One Pilots,
Jason Derulo, Pitbull)
M&M



ERIC VASQUEZ

The Pensado Awards

Returning for its 4th Year

Five years ago there wasn't a single awards event that highlighted solely those in the audio engineering field. Herb Trawick and Dave Pensado, famed Grammy-winning mix engineer and Trawick's partner in all things audio, made it their mission to change that. Now the Pensado Awards stands as the marquee annual event that honors many of the hidden heroes of audio engineering with a live audience that numbers in the high hundreds. It's something of a spinoff from Pensado's popular YouTube mix engineering show "Pensado's Place." Past awards shows have featured Randy Jackson, Neil Young and even well wishes from Sir Paul McCartney.

Putting together an awards show on this scale requires months of hard labor to get right. "It's super rewarding and super brutal," Trawick says of the process. "The fascinating part is that I have to be so left-brained, right-brained about it. It's one thing getting it financed and there's a creative aspect to it. The blessing of it is that people seem to like it and they let us know that it feels important to the community. We're always trying to hit that bar, which sometimes requires more creativity than money."

The show now being in its fourth year, Trawick has learned several key lessons about how to optimize time and resources. "Using shorthand is pretty critical," he admits. "When we first started this, our weekly meetings were ninety minutes. Now they're quicker. Bringing in new elements is something that I'm careful about. I've also learned some of the touch points that make for a show that is satisfactory to the audience but that also represent our mission statement: to celebrate those who aren't necessarily celebrated in a way that they feel honored. Part of the Pensado ethos is that we're not machines. We're humans. We make sure to recognize the humane as well as the technical talent side."

"Once you start this, it's a rolling thing," Trawick adds. "You can't stop it. Once you commit, you're there and you just have to get through it."

Both Trawick and Pensado strive to keep the show fresh, interesting and dynamic. They accomplish this in a variety of ways. "We hear what people enjoy and may come up with a

different take on it," Trawick explains. "We determine year by year if we honor something musical. Last year we did the guitar. That went over well. This year we may do the drum. And we like to pair presenters in unexpected ways. This year we'll have executives from YouTube and Facebook who'll present together."

For the past two years, the show has taken place at the legendary Sony Pictures Studios where countless classic pictures including *Mutiny on the Bounty* and *The Wizard of Oz* were filmed. This year it will move to the historic Fonda Theatre in the heart of Hollywood. "We choose the venue in part by

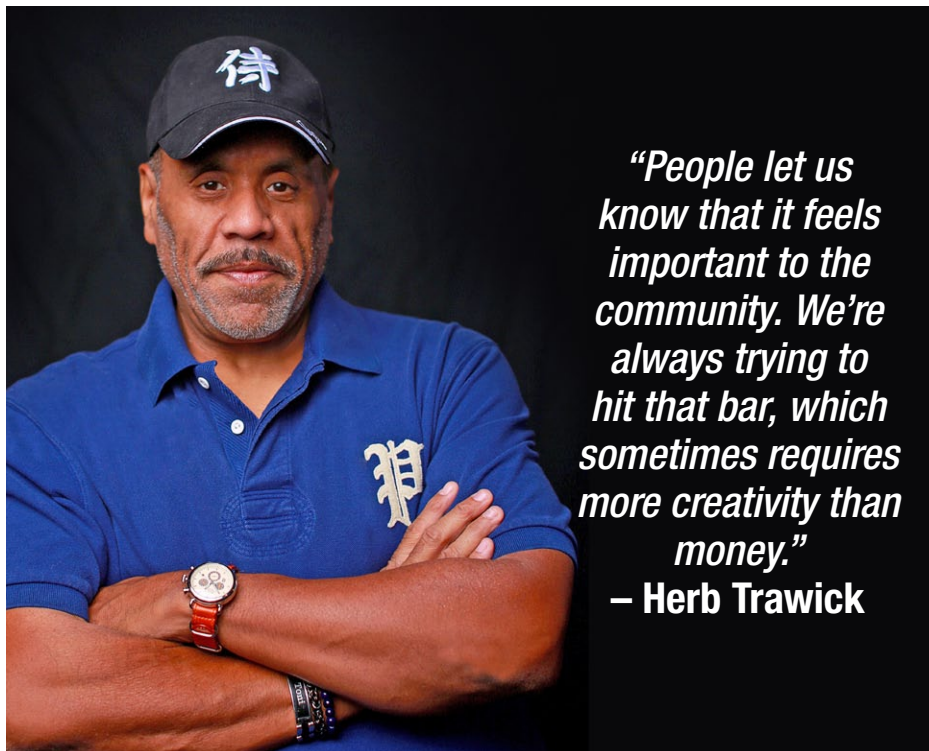
records of the year, here's what guests are doing on 'Pensado's Place,' a big audio event I saw at NAMM. I'm gathering intel, for all intents and purposes. Six months out, I start to figure out a framework; what feels natural. That's also when I'm financing the show, which ultimately tells me where to go. At four months out, that's where the actual hard work starts: nominating pro committees, who's doing what on what teams and then I try to bring the baby home. It's gotten easier over the years because the teams are so great. Financing is the hard part."

Past Pensado honoree, veteran mix engineer and two-time Grammy winner Ed Cherney, shares his views on the event. "The Pensado Awards are extremely important," he asserts. "Dave and Herb find, identify and shine a light on the folks that are really making shit happen."

"I am a big fan and ultimate supporter of 'Pensado's Place' and now the Pensado Awards," adds Ross Hogarth, powerhouse producer as well as recording and mix engineer who's been recognized at past Pensado Awards. "Dave and Herb acknowledge music makers behind the scenes who for years have only been known to close peers or not at all. The awards show is a great night to party, have fun and honor the hard-working music-making space."

Beyond time, ample stacks of cash are required to put on the show. This year's premium sponsor is the Inglewood-based hip-hop collective 1500 or Nothin', a body that's been instrumental in the careers of countless artists. Recent collaborations include those with Jay-Z, Rihanna and Bruno Mars. "1500 or Nothin's passion for music, education and giving back is exactly like 'Pensado's Place,'" CEO Rance Dopson says. "We get down the same way. Big things are in store and we're thrilled to be the premium sponsor of this year's Pensado Awards."

The 2017 Pensado Awards will be held Sunday evening, Dec. 3, at The Fonda Theatre. Presenters will include fabled mix engineer Chris Lord-Alge, musician Samantha Maloney of Hole and Mötley Crüe fame and Marcos "Kosine" Palacios, who's one-half of Chicago-based production duo Da Internz. For more information, see pensadoawards.com.



"People let us know that it feels important to the community. We're always trying to hit that bar, which sometimes requires more creativity than money."
— Herb Trawick

vibe," Trawick observes. "You're always vying for time so the date that you want may not be available. What we've seen over the past two years is that we had this huge, sprawling event at this super-cool space that was very expensive. There were compromises we were starting to make that we didn't want to have to repeat this year. One of the things we can do to keep the show fresh is to change venues."

Producing any show, of course, comes bundled with a number of challenges. Accordingly, the Pensado Awards has several of its own. Trawick highlights a mere few. "Nominations, creating moments that you think people will enjoy and marrying them in a way that makes sense and keeps people entertained. There's an impresario side to putting on these kinds of things."

Planning for the show typically begins well in advance of the targeted date. "Eight months out, I start to gather things in my head," Trawick explains. "Who did the hot

TOP 25 NEW MUSIC

EACH YEAR, *MUSIC CONNECTION* staffers listen to scores of demos and unsigned band releases submitted to us. Of all these submissions, here is the cream of the crop—the 25 highest scorers, as well as an extra 20 Top Prospects who are too good to overlook. Each total score you see is based on the merits of production, lyrics, music, vocals and musicianship. *MC* welcomes all unsigned recording artists to send material to us in 2018 by first checking out “Get Reviewed” at musicconnection.com/reviews/get-reviewed.



THE COVER LETTER - 8.4

Contact: janelle@glgpub.com
Web: thecoverlettermusic.com



EMBER ATOM - 8.2

Contact: jmg_watson@hotmail.com
Web: emberatom.com



COREY PRO - 8.2

Contact: cmo115@yahoo.com
Web: Coreypr0.com



THE WINTYR - 8.4

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Web: soundcloud.com/thewintyr



FUTURE THIEVES - 8.2

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Web: futurethievesmusic.com



MEGAN DAVIES - 8.2

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Web: megandaviesmusic.com



BONSAI MAMMAL - 8.3

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MOLLY ADELE BROWN - 8.0

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RIOT CHILD - 8.0

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Web: youtube.com/user/Riotchildofficial



HARMFUL IF SWALLOWED - 8.0

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KEVIN FISHER - 8.0

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TOP PROSPECTS 2017



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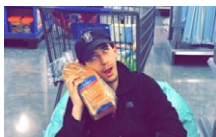
DEEPTOUCHSA - 8.0

Contact: deepelementsmusic@gmail.com
Web: soundcloud.com/deeptouchsa



CATASTROPHIC JONES - 8.0

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Web: soundcloud.com/realyungpeso



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MAYTEN - 8.0

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MATT ALLEN - 8.0

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PARADISE KINGS - 7.8

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Web: paradisekings.net



SCOTT COOK - 7.8

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Web: scottcook.net



WILLODEAN - 7.8

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Web: willodean.com



MCDUGALL - 7.8

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Web: mcdougallmusic.com



RADIO STRANGER - 7.8

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JUSTON HARGROVE - 7.8

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LIVINGMORE - 7.8

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LIL TARUS - 7.8

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MATTHEW WOLCOTT - 7.8

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TO GET YOUR MUSIC CRITIQUED IN 2018, CHECK OUT "GET REVIEWED" AT MUSICCONNECTION.COM

OUR FAVORITE SIGNING STORIES OF

2017

OBTAINING A CONTRACT with a record label, music publisher, booking agency or distribution company is no easy feat. A myriad of factors must align; a plethora of options must be weighed. In our Signing Stories, *Music Connection* seeks to demonstrate that every signing story is a unique journey that provides lessons to be learned by all artists about how art and commerce come together. We found the following artists' journeys—whether for their dogged work ethic, industry smarts, perfect timing or sheer determination to stay true to their own vision—to be our favorites of the year.



LUKE COMBS

Date Signed: September 2016
Label: River House Artists/Columbia Records
Type of Music: Modern Country
Management: Make Wake Artists
Booking: CAA
Legal: Noah McPike
Publicity: marycatherine.kinney@sonymusic.com
Web: lukecombs.com
A&R: Jim Cotino & Taylor Lindsay

Luke Combs has become a huge breakthrough success since our Signing Story on him back in May. His June-released debut album *This One's For You* spent 18 weeks inside the Top 5 on Billboard Country Albums chart. The artist has been heralded by Rolling Stone and American Songwriter as one of country's standout records of the year, garnering more than 371 million streams to date and generating Combs' platinum-certified multi-week No. 1 hit single "Hurricane." More recently his "When It Rains It Pours" has become his second multi-week No. 1 hit single, helping his fall headlining tour to be a pure sellout.

The 26-year-old seriously began pursuing a musical career only five years ago. He was at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC. "I was 21 and unhappy in school," says Combs. "I was bored and there was a guitar sitting in the closet. I started learning some basic chords and went from there."

As luck would have it Combs was bitten by the show biz bug. "I booked a show," says the singer-songwriter, "and I made \$200—that was more than I had made working two jobs." Combs expanded to other regions in North Carolina, then moved to Nashville in September 2014. "I had two EP's out and wrote more songs for seven or eight months without a publishing deal," says the artist. "I had enough digital revenue from my songs that I was able to survive just as a musician."

"It's all kind of fallen together super-organically," Combs concludes. "After I put out the EP (produced by Scott Moffatt), I got my booking deal and signed my independent deal with Lynn (Oliver-Cline) and River House Artists. And then all the major labels came to us. It wasn't me knocking on doors or anything."

MOLLY KATE KESTNER

Date Signed: March 2015
Label: APG/Atlantic
Type of Music: Singer-Songwriter/Pop
Management: Melanie Mitrof - Bill Silva Entertainment
Booking: Seth Seigel - WME
Legal: Jeff Worob - Serling Rooks Hunter McKoy & Worob, LLP
Publicity: Ashley.White@atlanticrecords.com
Web: mollykatekestnermusic.com
A&R: Ian Hunter - Atlantic Records; Gabz Landman - APG



More and more artists are being discovered via YouTube as label execs and their teams comb the Internet in search of raw talent. While many of today's web discoveries were seen performing covers of popular songs, Molly Kate Kestner created a huge buzz with an original song, "His Daughter," a spiritually driven narrative about someone she knew who had been abused and got pregnant at a young age. Kestner recorded a raw video of herself performing it on her great grandmother's out-of-tune piano on "this hideous, green, iPhone 4 with a cracked screen" and posted it on her Facebook page.

Within 48 hours, the clip had amassed

13,570 likes. When she posted it on YouTube, actor/social media star George Takei shared the link with his nine million plus followers with the provocative question: "Has America found its young Adele?" Her views skyrocketed—they now surpass 15.2 million—and the song caught the attention of celebs like Jordin Sparks, Ashley Judd and, not long after, Diane Sawyer, who introduced a segment about Kestner's viral fame, which included a live performance on *Good Morning America*.

The first and only major label execs who personally visited her in Minnesota in response to the buzz were Mike Caren, then-President of Worldwide A&R at Warner Music Group, and Ian Hunter, VP of A&R Research at Atlantic Records. "They immediately saw me as a prolific songwriter who could make a meaningful, long-term career out of this, rather than a 'one song wonder,'" Kestner says. "They immediately wanted to hook up sessions in L.A. for me with established writers and help me develop my craft. To me, that resonated. I have always believed that if you're writing music that's true, your truth will always be relevant."



GRETA VAN FLEET

Date Signed: Jan. 11, 2017
Label: Lava/Republic
Band Members: Josh Kiszka, vocals; Jake Kiszka, guitars; Sam Kiszka, bass; Danny Wagner, drums.
Type of Music: Rock
Management: Aaron Frank - ABI Management
Booking: Marc Geiger, Ron Opaleski, Mike Rosenfeld, Alex Bramwell - William Morris Endeavor
Legal: Nick Ferrara - Ferrara Entertainment Law
Publicity: Heidi Ellen Robinson-Fitzgerald
Web: gretavanfleet.com
A&R: Matt Masche, Lava Records

What's amazing about this very young band—beyond their incredible soundalikes to Led Zeppelin—is their work ethic, and what they have done to get this far. The band, comprising three brothers and one of their best friends, really came together as a working unit in 2013, the three Kiszkas going through a couple of drummers before eventually settling on Danny

OUR FAVORITE SIGNING STORIES

2017

Wagner. They got this good this fast by working hard, practicing as much as possible, and playing out-of-the-way bar gigs that allowed them to jam. "We'd play in bars for four hours and we loved it so much," bassist Sam Kiszka says. But then it got more serious. Eventually, they got noticed by highly respected Detroit-area producer Al Sutton of Rustbelt Studios, known for his work with Kid Rock, Sponge, Pop Evil and many, many more. Sam says, "He's a fantastic producer and a great mentor. He taught us how to be studio musicians and make really good recordings. We were in the studio for probably two years, until we finally got the whole concept." Under Sutton's wing, Greta Van Fleet attracted the attention of Aaron Frank of ABI management, which soon attracted a five-album deal from Jason Flom at Lava/Republic.



BOY EPIC

Date Signed: October 2015
Label: Hollywood Records
Type of Music: Cinematic Alternative
Management: Tracy Brown - CO5Music
Legal: Ian Friedman
Publicity: Hollywood Records and Girlie Action, Sharrin.Summers@disney.com
Web: youtube.com/boyepicmusic
A&R: Mio Vukovic

Are you so single-mindedly driven to succeed in your music career that you would drop friends from your life? Dallas-based singer-songwriter Boy Epic has that kind of drive. "Once I realized that this is something that I really wanted to do, it was all or nothing," he says. "I dropped a lot of friends because I realized that if I wanted to be successful, I had to give all of myself to this dream."

Boy Epic's dreams began to become a reality when he took on Tracy Brown of CO5Music as his manager, and that relationship led to a record deal with Hollywood Records. "I've got this fantastic fanbase, I've got views on YouTube—she asked why I haven't gone after a label and I straight-up told her that I didn't know how," he says. "We started working together, and within six months I was signed to Hollywood."

JULIEN BAKER

Date Signed: December 2016
Label: Matador Records
Type of Music: Alternative Rock/Indie Folk
Management: Sean Rhorer - Brixton Agency
Booking: Kevin French - Paradigm
Publicity: Shira Knishkowsky, shira@matadorrecords.com
Legal: John Strohm
Web: facebook.com/julienbaker
A&R: Robby Morris - Matador Records

Julien Baker, a Memphis-based singer-songwriter, sings in a lush and darkly toned style and accompanies herself on acoustic and electric guitar. Her raw and deceptively sparse delivery has captivated audiences. What we really like about her signing story is that she is an artist—decidedly alternative—who knows exactly the



kind of label that's right for her music.

Baker began her career in 2010, and after several years in a band called the Star Killers (later named Forrister) she met Sean Rhorer of 6131 Records. Rhorer and 6131 label chief Joey Cahill had connections with Matador Records and were more than happy to facilitate Baker climbing the next career rung.

"Matador seemed like the best fit because of the diversity of their artists," says Baker. "They like to do things a little bit different and they are innovative. There is also a level of trust that they put in their artists where they want you to achieve the best concept of your art. They have a niche sound and a lot of their artists have been with them a long time. They follow the natural progression of your career. Now I've just got more time to develop a song—when to tweak it and when to let it be."

Baker's *Funeral Pyre* and *Sprained Ankle* are available now.

MILES MOSLEY

Date Signed: Feb. 1, 2017
Label: UMG/Verve Label Group
Type of Music: Soul/Jazz/Funk
Management: Barbara Sealy - SB Music Mgmt.
Booking: Jesse Rosoff, James Wright, Mary Petro - United Talent Agency (UTA)
Legal: KHPS, Peter Paterno, Brent Canter
Publicity: Carleen Donovan - Donovan Public Relations
Web: MilesMosley.com
A&R: Mike Viola, Jamie Krents

Getting out there and being seen and heard face-to-face by the right people at the right time—that's one of the prime lessons of how Miles Mosley snared his contract with a respected record label. In December 2012, when



the bassist-vocalist headed into the studio with his musical compadres in the powerhouse Los Angeles jazz fusion collective the West Coast Get Down, he and his bandmates—including drummer Tony Austin and saxophonist Kamasi Washington—had no idea he was taking part in what would become a global phenomenon.

Those sessions, which came in the wake of their longstanding residency at The Piano Bar in Hollywood drawing SRO crowds, resulted in *The Epic*. Billed as the debut studio album by Washington, it earned huge critical accolades and led to extensive touring in North America, Australia, Japan and Europe.

During what were billed as Kamasi's shows, each member of WCGD played a solo number. Mosley's performances of the spiritual soul funk/rock audience participating romp "Abraham" in Central Park and at the Monterey Jazz Festival caught the attention of three prominent execs with the Verve Label Group: Danny Bennett (President and CEO), Mike Viola (VP of A&R) and Jamie Krents (SVP, International Marketing and Label Development for Verve and Universal Music Group). Each was already familiar with Mosley, but seeing him perform live sealed the deal.

Mosley's eclectic full-length label debut is *Uprising*.

BRETT YOUNG

Date Signed: May 2015
Label: BMLG Records
Type of Music: Country
Management: Van Haze - Red Light Management
Booking: Barrett Sellers - WME
Legal: Josh Brackin - Greenberg Traurig LLP
Publicity: Charlotte Burke - Big Machine Label Group, Charlotte.Burke@bmlg.net
Web: BrettYoungMusic.com
A&R: Laurel Kittleson - Big Machine Label Group



There are plenty of people who can play great guitar licks, plenty who can belt out a hot vocal. But a talented songwriter is rare and highly valued in Nashville. Which is why Brett Young moved there. "I moved from L.A. to Nashville three years ago to pursue songwriting, and I planned to keep my publishing," he admits. "But when we'd pitch the songs to labels, A&R guys would say, 'Who's the guy singing the demo?'"

Young credits one A&R exec in particular—Laurel Kittleson of Big Machine Label Group—with being a "bulldog" about pushing him at the label. After meeting with her in early 2015, she got the ear of BMLG EVP/Republic Nashville President Jimmy Harnen, who in turn invited Young to play for radio reps at one of his famed pool parties where the artist won nods from a few of the attendees—Harnen included—and shortly thereafter was recording with top-notch producer Dan Huff (Taylor Swift, Bon Jovi).

"Was I nervous? Ab-so-lute-ly," Young discloses. "Dan has access to the best musicians in Nashville. Playing with those guys, I sat back and was in awe and blown away."

Young co-wrote 11 of the 12 songs on his debut, and trotted out many of them while touring as part of Brad Paisley's recent Country Nation College Tour.



BENT KNEE

Date Signed: Jan. 17, 2017

Label: InsideOutMusic/Sony

Band Members: Ben Levin, guitar; Chris Baum, violin; Courtney Swain, vocals, keys; Gavin Wallace-Ailsworth, drums; Jessica Kion, bass; Vince Welch, production, sound design.

Type of Music: Rock/Experimental

Management: bentkneemusic@gmail.com

Booking: Andy Leff - aleff@apa-agency.com

Legal: Ronald S. Bienstock - Sarinci Hollenbeck

Publicity: Stephanie Williams, Stephanie@presshererepublicity.com

Web: bentknee.com

A&R: Thomas Waber

What we love about eclectic indie outfit Bent Knee is how smart they are about the business and how they've protected their artistic integrity—and how, well, highly evolved they are.

Previously signed to Cuneiform Records, Bent Knee gained the Maryland label's attention through brute force touring. "It opened up doors," states lead singer Courtney Swain. When the InsideOut label became convinced that Bent Knee's artistic vision stretches well beyond prog, they become seriously interested in signing them. First, however, label head Thomas Waber offered constructive criticism, impressing Swain. "I found it refreshing that this person was down to give it to us straight." She also appreciated

InsideOut's alignment with out-of-the-box performers. "We definitely fit that profile."

The two-option deal, which took months to complete, granted them their top priority: a licensing deal. "Our music is really important and we wanted it to belong to us. That was something we negotiated for and had to have." Swain welcomes the muscle of InsideOut's parent company, Sony. "When the single came out, I saw it was already available not just on iTunes and Spotify but on a streaming service back home in Japan. That was something I hadn't seen before."

Swain suggests artists take stock of karma, a perspective she received from her booking agent. "There are a lot of people in the industry who don't get enough thanks or credit," notes the vocalist. "Kindness doesn't cost anything. And it goes a long way."



CHEAT CODES

Date Signed: Sept. 28, 2016

Label: 300 Entertainment

Band Members: Trevor Dahl, Kevin Ford, Matthew Russell.

Type of Music: Electronic/Pop

Management: David Conway & Sean Sheahan - Working Group Artist Management

Booking: Hunter Williams & Phil Quist - CAA

Legal: Robert Meitus & Jordan Gutglass - Meitus Gelbert Rose, LLP

Publicity: Violet Foulk, violet@golightlymedia.com

Web: cheatcodesmusic.com

A&R: Roger Gold & Pete Giberga - 300 Entertainment

Quite a lot has happened for electronic music trio Cheat Codes since we wrote about their signing. They collabed with Demi Lovato for their song-of-the-summer, "No Promises," which hit No. 6 at Pop Radio and has racked in over 277 million streams on Spotify. They performed the track on *Good Morning America* and *Fallon*.

What initially caught our attention about this act was their refusal to succumb to stifling major label standards. It made their marriage to 300 a perfect fit. The label's honcho, renowned industry executive Lyor Cohen, vehemently expressed support for the trio's "no creative limitations" mentality.

"We were pretty adamant about staying independent because we really like our freedom and the respectability of it," explains songwriter Matt Russell. "Business-wise, we want to be able to put out as much material as we can without any real constraints. We have the same mindset as 300 Entertainment, because they work really well with Spotify."

Russell insists, "We don't want to be told to wait. It's all about giving fans content. We're not overanalyzing anything. We don't

care if it's going to be a Top 10 radio hit. At the end of the day, we just want to consistently entertain our fans."

He believes it's imperative to believe and trust in your own unique talents: "Focus on your strengths. Be positive and set goals. Ultimately, create a vision for what you want and slowly but surely it'll started happening."

JOYNER LUCAS

Date Signed: Sept. 20, 2016

Label: Dead Silence/Atlantic Records

Type of Music: Hip-Hop

Management: Sha Money XL & Dhruv Joshi, shamoneyxl@joynerlucas.com, djoshi@joynerlucas.com

Booking: bookings@joynerlucas.com

Legal: N/A

Publicity: Ariana White - Atlantic Records, ariana.white@atlanticrecords.com, 212-707-2236

Web: joynerlucas.com

A&R: Riggs Morales, riggs.morales@atlanticrecords.com

Worcester, MA rapper Joyner Lucas isn't typical, whether with his serious lyrical content (which covers everything from suicide to gang violence) or his methodology, which entails conceptualizing the video before writing the song. But the arresting results made him go viral on Facebook, subsequently grabbing the attention of Atlantic Records Chairwoman/COO Julie Greenwald. Excitedly, she showed everyone the video for "Happy Birthday." Atlantic then contacted Lucas' manager, Sha Money XL, instructing the duo to meet them in New York.

Although Lucas had communicated with numerous labels, he viewed the selection as a "no-brainer." "I felt they really wanted me over there," he explains. "They understand what I was doing and didn't want to change it at all."



Lucas knew he needed the strength of a major after tackling the indie route with his own Dead Silence Records. Keeping things in perspective, Lucas knows not every deal's the same. As he puts it, "Some of the things I felt were important probably aren't to another artist." He also knows this is a beginning, not an end. "It wasn't like I signed and suddenly I'm in all these magazines and on all these TV shows. It doesn't work like that. I have to keep working and things are going to fall into place. It's a process."

COMPILED BY MC SENIOR EDITOR
MARK NARDONE

Warbly Jets

Warbly Jets

Rebel Union Recordings

Producer: Samuel Shea w/ Julien O'Neill, Dan Gerbang

Swirly, pleasant melodies, smart lyrics and occasionally crunchy guitars make up Warbly Jets eponymous debut album, released in October. The Los Angeles-based quartet has a garage-influenced sound with a healthy dollop of sophistication and provides a bit of reminiscence of the '80s psychedelic pop scene. Highlights include "Keep Pushin" and the bouncy "4th Coming Bomb." Some of the tunes are more on the heady/trippy side ("PT. II," "Head Session") but with songs including "Raw Evolution" in the mix, it all balances out for a good listen. Oh yeah, and they're cute guys! — **Brett Bush**



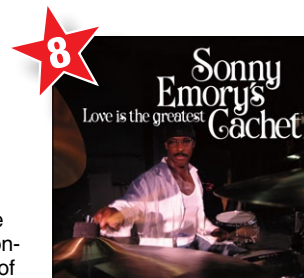
Sonny Emory's Cachet

Love Is The Greatest

DCT Entertainment

Producer: Sonny Emory

Most renowned for his groundbreaking grooves with Earth, Wind & Fire, longtime first-call session and touring drummer Sonny Emory steps out powerfully as leader of a fresh, spiritual-minded ensemble that taps into everything from pop and R&B/funk to rock, jazz and gospel. Complementing seven rhythmically eclectic originals with explosive new takes on classics by Mavis Staples and Aretha Franklin, Cachet is all about uplifting souls though vibrant and danceable eclecticism while creating provocative anthems that remind us of its title mission. — **Jonathan Widran**



Stephanie K

Troublemaker

Woodward Avenue

Producer: Various

Working primarily with four-time Grammy-winning producer Michael Powell, the Detroit songwriter and vocal powerhouse debuts with a five-track EP driven by a sly, sizzling mix of raw, in-your-face honesty, supercharged with lyrics of empowerment, an eclectic vibe infused with dance, R&B, pop and fiery rock elements. All of this brings out a freewheeling sense of sass. Beyond being a remarkably emotional singer, Stephanie uses her natural gifts for melody, harmony and lyrical poetry, drawing naturally from her wide range of influences. *Troublemaker* marks Woodward Avenue's first foray into pop—and it's a winner. — **Jonathan Widran**



Jackie Allen

Rose Fingered Dawn

Avant Bass

Producer: Hans Sturm

While so many jazz vocalists with her range of gifts and stylistic leanings hone in on a single trademark vibe, veteran Chicagoan Jackie Allen is delightfully all over the map on this set of dynamic originals composed by her husband, bassist Hans Sturm. Launching the set with the title track, an exotic, spoken word venture to Morocco, Allen digs in on some deep New Orleans blues, Kansas City jazz, a playful gospel romp and jazzy songs with rock edges. Most fascinating, her vocal dynamics artfully move from emotionally raw and guttural to soaring with scat and back down to exquisite, gossamer storytelling, sometimes with a literal whisper. — **Jonathan Widran**



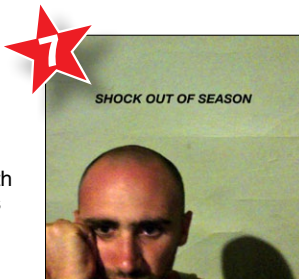
Friendship

Shock Out Of Season

Orindal Records

Producers: Friendship

Friendship is a Philly-based quintet that blends ambient and electronic sounds with pedal steel guitar and Rhodes piano. This is their third release, where they seem to have found that sweet spot between focused minimalism and ample storytelling. Lead vocalist Dan Wiggins has a style that recalls Lou Reed or David Byrne. His thoughts are articulate and his words are clear in the way he turns a phrase or rhymes a lyric. Songs like "If You See My Beloved" and "Moment of Discovery" get inside your head in a dreamy and very personal way. When he's addressing a loved one or friend in song you'll feel like a fly on a wall. — **Eric A. Harabadian**



Joe Deninzon and Stratospheerius

Guilty of Innocence

Melodic Revolution Records

Producer: Joe Deninzon

On the seventh album for the "Jimi Hendrix of the violin," Deninzon and his band continue his signature blend of prog rock, jazz, funk and classically derived sounds. For all the accolades as a strings-based band they are equally strong with vocal harmonies. Hence, all the tunes are tightly arranged and contain a radio-ready pop sensibility. Standouts include the violin extravaganza "Dream Diary Cadenza" and the "Soul Food." The band pulls out all the stops on this final piece featuring guests Alex Skolnick and Randy McStine on guitars and a string quartet. — **Eric A. Harabadian**



Tav Falco

A Tav Falco Christmas

ORG Music/FRENZI Films & Music

Producer: Tav Falco

So what makes a good Christmas record? And why do many artists put them out every year? Well, since not everyone can write the next "Frosty the Snowman," veteran musician and songwriter Tav Falco (Panther Burns) decided to record several of the classics, including "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," "Jingle Bell Rock," and "Blue Christmas." Without any irony, Falco and band do a nice tribute to these tunes. A standout is "Santa Claus is Back in Town." The tunes remain faithful to the material and include some playful piano, making a tasty appetizer for your holiday gatherings. — **Brett Bush**



Walk the Moon

What if Nothing

RCA Records

Producer: Mike Crossey, Mike Elizondo, Captain Cuts

After dominating the music charts with the inescapable 2014 summer hit "Shut Up and Dance," the Ohio-based pop-rockers' attempt at experimenting with sound on *What if Nothing* is a huge setback. Although there are a few standouts, like the banger "One Foot" and "Surrender," the album is filled with generic and cheesy lyrics that are occasionally cringe-worthy. All in all, this is a messy blend of pop, rock and even auto-tune that is in need of cohesion. Now with three albums under their belt, it's a shame Walk the Moon are still struggling to find their identity. — **Jacqueline Naranjo**



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.

Alex's Bar Long Beach, CA

Contact: thekillingfloorsla@gmail.com

Web: facebook.com/TheKillingFloors

The Players: Jorge Martinez, guitar, vocals; Irbinn Rocha, drums; Josue Alvarado, organ, vocals; German Cruz, bass; Mario Garcia, guitar.

Material: From the opening note of the opening song, it's clear that Los Angeles' the Killing Floors have something special going on. This five-piece ensemble formed in 2014 over a shared love of 1960s rock & roll blended with a garage-punk attitude. The tunes are huge, from the Brit-invasion-y "You Know it Ain't Right" to the gloriously snotty and mildly aggressive "Se Fue, Se Fue." On the latter, keyboardist Alvarado takes the lead vocals and he turns in a spectacularly oddball, fun performance. Those moments of quirk among the '60s rock & roll fun make the whole thing fascinating, as does the fact that the music switches between Spanish language, English and instrumentals.

Musicianship: There isn't a weak link in this band, but a particularly large amount of praise must be heaped upon drummer Rocha. The guy is impressively precise for someone who hits as hard as he does, and the power does nothing to diminish the groove. When he gets the opportunity for a fill, he grabs at it and lets rip, but he also does the simple things perfectly. But again, every musician in the group is an integral cog in what appears to be a well-oiled machine.

Performance: No complaints here. The band put a lot of thought into every aspect of the



THE KILLING FLOORS

show, including the clothing. They all look immaculate in retro suits and appropriately stylish haircuts. There's little in the way of theatrics in the show, but that's kind of the point—they're playing this straight, like those bands of old. Their faces betray the fact that they're having a good time, and they'll pull the odd guitar hero pose. That's more than enough.

Summary: The Killing Floors is an incredible act that deserves a lot more attention, although

the hefty number of people who arrived early on a Thursday evening to see them (the opener on a three-band bill) is reassuring. All of the ingredients are in place for the band to have a solid drive at wider success: the songs are awesome, the musicians are tight together, and they look fantastic. Given the right backing, one would imagine that they have a real shot and, with the dual languages, they can appeal to a variety of markets. The world is their oyster. — **Brett Callwood**

The Hotel Café Hollywood, CA

Contact: JenRonan@RareClover.com

Web: EricTessmerBand.com

The Players: Eric Tessmer, guitar; Gian Ortiz, bass; Marc Redix, drums.

Material: The Eric Tessmer Band is a rock group with their feet firmly planted in the blues and driven by the sounds of Stevie Ray Vaughn, Robben Ford and Johnny Lang. Well crafted and performed, all the songs are instant hits. They sounded exactly like the recordings and let you know that rockin' blues is alive, kickin' and taking names. This band pushes the boundaries that separate the blues/rock genres and take it to the limit, as in the hard rockin' blues tune "Love has Taken Its Toll." The song left you feeling like Robben Ford was in the house and just left the building.

Musicianship: Eric Tessmer Band are experienced veterans playing top notch hard rockin' blues. Tessmer's solos seared and ripped through the rhythms like a hot knife to butter. Ortiz filled the room with superb bottom end that gave Tessmer the right foundation to expertly and easily stand tall and lay down lick after hard rockin' lick. Redix kept the time flawlessly as he didn't miss a beat and slayed in a small spotlight drum solo. Was Redix using a click track or were they just ear muffs? We may never know!

Performance: The performance by Eric Tessmer Band was great. It wasn't so much



ERIC TESSMER

the performance itself, but the music being played and how they played it that carried the performance. Tessmer company could do no wrong and hit no bad note as they played with confidence. The music was executed with such coolness and assurance that it seemed effortless, making it fun to watch.

Summary: Hailing from the state of Texas, Eric Tessmer Band is an outstanding trio

marked by great musicianship and huge songs. Put that together and you have an impressive show with entertaining music. The blend of the hard rock beats and the bluesy rhythms make for an extremely enjoyable ear-candy listening experience. All cylinders were firing at the Hotel Café as the sound was dialed in and the guitar chops were free flowing.

— **Pierce Brochetti**

PJ's Lager House *Detroit, MI*

Contact: booking@actcasual.org

Web: actcasual.org

The Players: Nick Small, guitar, vocals; Will Richardson, guitar; Ryan Stafford, keyboards, saxophone; Danny Flynn, bass, vocals; Ryan Yoskovich, drums.

Material: Act Casual is a group of highly skilled musical chefs that each stirs into the pot their own batch of scintillating ingredients. A dash of funk, a dollop of country, a pinch of jazz and a helping of blues are all essential in making this stew a success. Their tunes are original and span the gamut from a great opening number like the overdriven two-step-fueled "Detroit City" to the space rock epic "Voodoo Thang."

Musicianship: Everyone is tastefully solid on his respective instrument. Small and Richardson work really well together and never get in each other's way. Their solos are also distinctive, complimentary and push the band forward. Stafford is not so much a soloist as an ornamentalist. He spices up the music with an overall ambience and well-placed chord choices. Flynn is a diligent machine on bass as he mixes walking lines with melodic leads that mimic the guitars. Yoskovich is a reliable time-keeper, to be sure, but his strength is just as much in the way he ebbs and flows with the rest of the band. You have to be ready for anything in this group and Yoskovich can play quiet or thunderous depending on what the song calls for.



ACT CASUAL

Performance: The band really takes one on a musical journey where motifs and ideas morph from one thing into the other. They kicked off their set in a somewhat standard country vein and quickly shifted to something resembling Ozric Tentacles or Krautrock a passage or two later. They tactfully appeared to be in sync and relied on sly visuals and subtle audio cues that would lead from one groove to the next. Lead vocalist Small maintained a decent dialogue with the crowd between tunes and kept them engaged. Then, about halfway through their set, Stafford jumped on sax and took this reviewer aback with some classic

Motown/Stax-type soul textures. That seemed to add another dimension to the fray and raised the bar.

Summary: "Act Casual" is, perhaps, an apt name for the way the band "casually" communicates on stage in a seemingly free and sub-conscious manner. Much like Phish, Jimmy Herring or The Grateful Dead, their stock in trade relies heavily on the "jam" aspect. However, in a nightclub setting with limited time, it would be nice to hear a balance of more outlined "songs" represented as well.

— Eric A. Harabadian

The Whisky A Go-Go *West Hollywood, CA*

Contact: ChemicalDiary@Yahoo.com

Web: YouTube.com/ChemicalDiary

The Players: Roland Numbers, bass, vocals; Dudee Numbers, guitar.

Material: Chemical Diary is a cover band (except one original that was just okay) playing music from very well known acts like Pink Floyd, the Rolling Stones, Tom Petty, the Police and more.

Musicianship: Chemical Diary, comprising of a guitar, bass and vocals, were also accompanied by backing tracks on a computer. They started out the set with "Comfortably Numb" by Pink Floyd and, by the end of the song, people were shaking their heads as if to say in agreement that a train wreck was coming or had just happened.

Low and behold by the midway point of the second song, Chemical Diary grabbed hold of their proverbial balls and kept the ship from sinking. Roland and Dudee Numbers (are these guys for real?) are both very good musicians in their own right playing their instruments like pros. By the end of the second song everyone was looking forward to the next song and the next and the next.

Performance: The performance was a bit lackluster as Roland had to set up the next tune by having to go to the computer. Their audience engagement was not great until midway through the set. The duo had finally settled down about the mid-point and felt a bit



CHEMICAL DIARY

more comfortable and talked to the audience a little more. Dudee just stood there and played guitar, while Roland set up the songs on the computer, talked to the audience, played bass and sang. Not a very good performance overall, but there's a lot of potential.

Summary: The Chemical Diary have a few original tunes on YouTube and probably

were short-handed not having a drummer at The Whisky on Saturday night and had to resort to cover tunes to fill their time slot. Their recorded material seemed okay and it would have been nice to hear more of it. The performance was really uninspiring but they did have a nice sign with their name on it that was lit in the background.

— Pierce Brochetti



LAUREN FLOWERS

Hotel Café Hollywood, CA

Contact: info@katiecostellomusic.com

Web: katiecostellomusic.com

The Players: Katie Costello, vocalist, keyboard; Mark Stepro, drums; John Spiker, bass; Adam Tressler, guitar.

Material: This was a very heartfelt mix of both radio-friendly and completely danceable numbers interspersed between slower alternative-pop ballads. The best of the bunch was "A Beautiful Mystery" from Costello's latest album. The song shows her growth as an artist, highlighting her ability to create upbeat songs

with a pop-punk sensibility. Costello's lyrics tend to gravitate toward the adventures of youth, both the uncertainty and promise of the future. That is best exemplified by "New York Graffiti," which is based upon her moving to that city to pursue her dreams at the tender age of 18.

Musicianship: It is notable that Costello performed with musicians outside of her regular band for this show. Despite this, it was clear that the group did its best part to showcase Costello on her keys, as this element was always the focal point. Together they offered nice little touches, like brushes and rim work by Stepro, bouncy spot-on bass

lines from Spiker and Tressler's subtle lap steel tones. Costello herself really got into the spirit of her music with several rockin' glissandos. Overall the mix was very good within the small space of the venue.

Performance: Costello presented herself as a singer-songwriter and introduced each song thoughtfully. She seemed to channel her inner Dolores O'Riordan and really projected well throughout the performance. At points the choice to keep several verses stripped down seemed to lose the audience a bit, but overall the set's energy had a good ebb and flow. Costello encouraged group singing from her audience for her finale, but unfortunately the anticipated increase in volume didn't manifest well, possibly due to the dynamics not coming down to a low enough whisper for the band to have something to build up from.

Summary: What is most exciting about Costello's music is that it not only has a positive message, but is also entirely danceable. The set list is the perfect balance between faster and slower songs. Costello also keeps things doubly interesting with tempo changes within each individual song. The only room for improvement here could be some song transitioning: When do we merge straight from one song into another? When do we let the outros to the songs sizzle out versus just ending them on a punchy abrupt note? Mixing up these options would only strengthen an already tight set.

— Brooke Trout

The Knitting Factory Brooklyn, NY

Contact: abandcalledSAD@gmail.com

Web: abandcalledsad.bandcamp.com/releases

The Players: Marlon Marcy, lead vocals; Taylor Crawford, guitar, background vocals; Matthew Serrianni, guitar, background vocals; Shane Duda, synthesizer; Andrew Williamson, drums; C-Bunz, bass.

Material: These six enthusiastic bandmates delivered a high energy collection of alternative rock songs (with some occasional rapping). Aptly described on their Facebook page as "Upbeat alternative rock with an undercurrent of sadness that tries to capture a nostalgia for things that never really happened," they defy that notion with their high voltage performance. The juxtaposition of relentless sadness and disappointment with their exuberant presentation makes for an interesting mix. "God/Love/America" is a powerful rap-style piece that paints a bleak picture of our current state of affairs: "It's Armageddon/God bless the red, black, and blue/As if our country's pride will make up for what the heart can't do."

Musicianship: His voice is neither polished nor pristine, but Marcy's vocals work well enough with the style of the material in a live setting. He is a proficient rapper and could focus more on that aspect of his talent. The band, though casual in their demeanor, is supportive and in sync with Marcy. No one musician is featured over another except a few lead lines courtesy of Crawford who serves as a quasi right-hand man to Marcy.



MARK SHWOLICH

Performance: Marcy is a charismatic showman with some signature moves and an extroverted presentation, at times referencing Mick Jagger. In spite of the dark themes, the band convey the underlying thrill of youth. Exploring their emotional options, pushing the envelope in search of empowerment and genuine expression. The pain of growing up is something everyone experiences, but over time, one hopes those feelings are put into perspective. In an almost fashionable statement, it's hip not to be too optimistic. The

performance still rings true enough with room to expand the emotional landscape.

Summary: By exploring darker themes in the context of a performance, SAD has found a positive outlet for feelings of negativity and portrayal of an unsavory world filled with disillusionment. With youth on their side and the world as their oyster, there is room for these artists to experience a fuller spectrum of emotions while staying true to their vision.

— Ellen Woloshin

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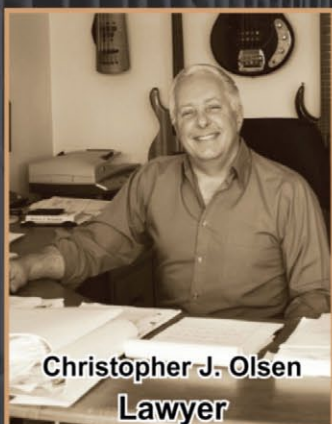
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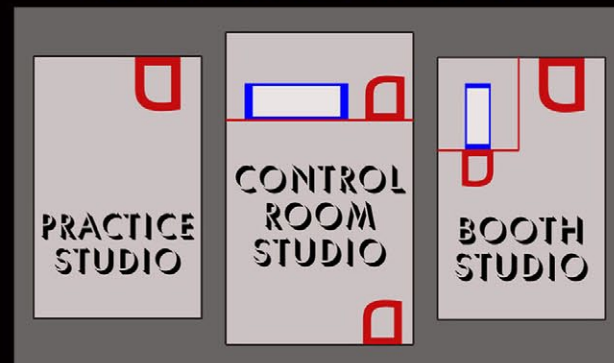
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5 Ways To Spend Less On Your Next Electric Guitar

Your daily practicing has paid off and you don't consider yourself a beginner guitarist anymore. And with the upgrade in skills, you feel like you deserve a reward in the form of a new electric guitar—a better, intermediate one that you can use for gigs and recording your own compositions. Something that will inspire and motivate you to keep improving as a musician.

The thing is, while you don't consider yourself a newbie anymore, you still have a beginner's budget and are keen on saving money while making music. So, what to do?

1. Take a look at midrange offerings from top brands.

If you're looking to upgrade but not wanting to spend a fortune on your next electric guitar, big-name brands have models in a more consumer-friendly price range. Epiphone, Gibson, Fender, ESP, Paul Reed Smith, Ibanez and Jackson all have electric guitar models that can be bought new in the \$400 to \$1,000 price range—not bad, especially considering that these models come equipped with premium features like locking tremolos, higher-quality fingerboard wood such as ebony as well as active electronics.

Take a look at guitar manufacturers' product catalogs to see the different guitars that are within your budget. Take time to read guitar reviews and watch the guitars in action. If you choose well, the guitar you pick will last you your entire music career and would not cause you any unnecessary financial pain (frequent professional setups, repairs and whatnot). Branded electrics also hold their resale value well, so if ever you decide to build up a fund for a higher-end guitar, you can sell off your old axe for a good sum.

2. Buy a used electric guitar.

If you can't afford buying a brand-name electric guitar new, why not buy it used? Quality-made instruments from Fender, Gibson and other brands are tough and hold up well even when they've been previously owned. They just need a set of new strings, a few adjustments and some tender polishing with a cleaning cloth and they're good as new.

There are many places you can check out for used electric guitars: online selling platforms like eBay, Amazon and Craigslist; guitar-centric music forums and websites; Facebook groups or community pages; even big-box guitar stores and local music shops would have a "used instruments" section where you can poke around.

As with buying other secondhand items, you need to be discerning with purchasing a secondhand guitar especially if you're doing so online. Do a background/reputation check on the seller and ask for clear, detailed photos.

3. Go for a B-stock or a refurbished guitar.

Another way to spend less on your next axe is to choose a refurbished or a B-stock guitar. Refurbished guitars are those that have been repaired because of some damage, structural flaw or playability issue. These guitars are marked as "used" and at a lower cost than their perfect-from-the-start counterparts. B-stock guitars, also called blemishes, are those that have been found to have cosmetic flaws and marked as "factory second" guitars and you can buy these at a lower cost as well. Refurbs are a good option for those looking for brand-name guitars but have a rather limited budget. Since these guitars have all been professionally restored and repaired, you really won't notice the difference. They look new, they play like new but they are similar in cost to top-tier secondhand guitars.

Blemishes, too, are great for those who don't mind a little scratch here or a weird dab of lacquer there. A minor blemish on the surface doesn't affect playability and tone quality, and you're bound to put some scratches on the guitar yourself anyway.

4. Visit a music store.

In particular, the back of the music store where they store all the discounted items. Many local music stores, especially family-run ones, don't really have a website where they sell their items. There's a good chance you can find good deals on electric guitars in these stores' clearance section, so try your luck there. If you're not in a hurry to buy your next guitar, you can also wait until the store goes on its annual clearance sale.

When you visit a brick-and-mortar store, it's best not to expect too much by way of choices unless the store is part of a chain and they can arrange to have the guitar you want delivered from another store. The same goes when you're shopping during a sale—best-value guitars run out of stock quickly, so you'd better move fast.

Here's another thing. Local music stores may not get to update their prices often unlike online ones, so if you find a discounted guitar you like online and see it's being sold at a local store at a higher or at the original price, ask the store if they can match the online price. Rather than not get a sale, music stores are more likely to say yes. What's good about this is that you'll be able to test and get a good feel of the guitar first before buying.

5. Ask around or post an ad.

Sometimes all you need to do to pay less for a guitar is ask! Someone out there may have the guitar you want but haven't considered selling it yet. Your question or "looking for (electric guitar model)" ad can make people think about selling the gear they're not using anymore.

Try posting a Wanted: Electric Guitar ad on your social network and ask your friends to share it with their friends. A friend of a friend may know someone who may be interested in your offer. You can also post your ad in guitar forums' Buy and Sell threads, Facebook groups, neighborhood bulletin boards, band rehearsal studios, music schools, and other channels and venues where you think fellow musicians hang out.

When asking or posting an ad, make sure you specify your budget range, preferred electric guitar brands and models, location and information on how interested parties can get in touch. You have to be aware of the current selling prices of the guitars on your list (new, refurbished, discounted, used). You want to spend less but you do not want to turn people off and make them ignore your post if you make a terribly low price on an electric guitar. Be honest and realistic, and people will respond in kind and help you out.

That's about it. We hope those strategies work for you in helping you spend less (and therefore save more) on your next electric guitar. Here's a bonus tip: don't be afraid to negotiate a lower (but still fair price) for an electric guitar or ask how you can get a discount. There's no harm in it, plus you might just get the seller to agree!



SARAH JACOBS has been writing about guitars and other instruments for the past five years. She has been playing the guitar for over 10 years. Jacobs is a blogger at Know Your Instrument (knowyourinstrument.com) and enjoys writing about guitars and interesting ways to get the kick for your money. Besides writing about guitars, Sarah enjoys long walks with her dogs and backpacking in places less traveled.

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