

INSIDE

- **SoundCloud Will Pay Independent Artists Based on Listeners, Not Streams**
- **Maestro Livestreaming Platform Raises \$15M From Sony Music, Twitch's Kevin Lin & More**
- **Interim Grammy Chief Harvey Mason Jr. Expects New Recording Academy CEO by May**
- **Michael Gudinski, Legendary Australian Independent Music Entrepreneur, Dies at 68**
- **After Selling Spinnin' Records for \$100M, Eelko van Kooten's New Focus Is Influencers**
- **T.I. and Tiny Harris Hit With Defamation Lawsuit**

Radio Is On Road to Recovery But Needs More Help From Podcasts

BY GLENN PEOPLES

Only in a pandemic could a business have bounding optimism after losing a fifth of its revenue in one year. That's radio in 2021 as companies dug themselves out of a deep second-quarter hole caused by store closures and stay-at-home orders across the country.

iHeartMedia's 2020 revenue was \$2.95 billion, down 20% from \$3.68 billion in 2019, according to the company's earnings report released Thursday. That deep loss is secondary to the improvements made over the year, however. Although revenues for the fourth quarter period covering October through December were 9% lower than a year earlier (\$1.03 billion compared to \$936 million), they were an improvement from the 47% and 29% deficits in the second and third quarters, respectively.

The upward trajectory makes sense: just as radio companies quickly took a hit when the economy sank in March, they have benefitted from economic expansion. At Cumulus, 2020 revenue fell 26.7% but fourth quarter revenue was down 13.9% year over year. Entercom's revenue fell 19% in the fourth quarter, slightly better than the 22.8% annual decline.

Despite showing year-ending improvements, radio

companies had mixed results on Wall Street on the days following their earnings releases: iHeartMedia shares fell 7.2% before recovering 2.6% the following day, Cumulus's share price barely moved, and Entercom Communications' shares plummeted 23.9% one day and fell another 11.1% on the next — 27.4% in total.

Each of these leading radio companies are managing expectations for the future differently. After a year of social distancing, "pent-up consumer demand" and "an economic bounce-back" will drive iHeartMedia sales back to 2019 levels by the end of 2021, president, COO and CFO Rich Bressler said during iHeartMedia's earnings call on Thursday.

Not so fast, said Cumulus CEO Mary Berner in the company's Thursday earnings call. Despite the upswing from a miserable second quarter, "we're not out of the pandemic woods yet," she said.

Beasley Media Group CEO Caroline Beasley offered tempered optimism, saying broad vaccine distribution will bring "more normalized revenue levels" later in the year.

The bright spot throughout the past year has been podcasts' continued growth, which is expected to play

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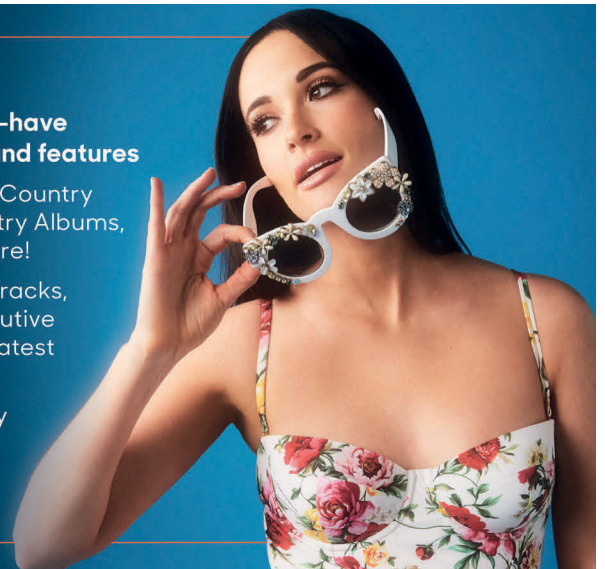
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a key role in these companies' recovery.

At iHeartMedia, 99.8% growth in podcasting revenue helped digital revenue improve 53% in the fourth quarter. Cumulus' 12% growth in digital sales was "led by podcasting growth of nearly 40%" in 2020, said Berner. Its stable of podcasters — including political commentators Ben Shapiro and Mark Levin, both in Apple's top 10 podcasts in January — have Cumulus' podcast revenue "pacing up nearly 30%" in the first quarter of 2021, she said.

For an industry needing to expand its digital footprint, podcasts' double-digit growth creates an attractive narrative for investors.

In dollars and cents, however, podcasts are a small part of radio companies' total revenue. Broadcast radio is still iHeartMedia's cash cow, bringing in \$2.2 billion, or 54.5% of 2020 income. iHeartMedia's podcasts accounted for 4.5% of fourth-quarter revenue, and even though it grew by \$21 million in fourth quarter, it was overshadowed by non-digital revenues' \$150.2 million decline. For the entire year, iHeartMedia's \$101 million of podcast revenue marked a 91% improvement from 2019 but was only 3.4% of total revenue. The key here is the growth potential, although it's questionable whether it can ever come close to broadcast revenue: U.S. podcasting revenue will grow 45% to \$1.13 billion this year, and climb to \$1.33 billion in 2022, [according](#)

[to eMarketer](#) — but that's still just a fraction of the \$18 billion broadcast radio market.

To their credit, radio companies are focused on building podcasting businesses from the ground up and making them priorities, despite their relatively small financial impact. They have not fallen into an "innovator's dilemma" by focusing on their core businesses at the expense of a small but important product. iHeartMedia has spent about \$350 million to build a tech and advertising business to support its podcasts: It will acquire Triton Digital for \$230 million, and previously purchased Voxnest, cloud-based audio platform Radiojar and podcast creator Stuff Media. For its part, Entercom spent "under \$50 million" on two podcast creators, Cadence13 and Pineapple Street, said CEO David Field during its Wednesday earnings call.

Outside of radio, some companies have turned podcasts into an arms race: Spotify, for instance, has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on podcast content creators, hosting and advertising platforms, and licensing — in 2019 it paid more than \$100 million to be the exclusive home of The Joe Rogan Experience. Few companies have such a large wallet. In a nod to Spotify's podcast spending spree, Frank Balboa-Lopez, CFO at Cumulus, said it will grow its podcasting business "organically and profitably." While Cumulus looks at deals being shopped

and are open to "smart acquisitions," he said, the radio company "made our bet on partnership arrangements with our talent as opposed to going out and spending a lot of money on I.P. or infrastructure."

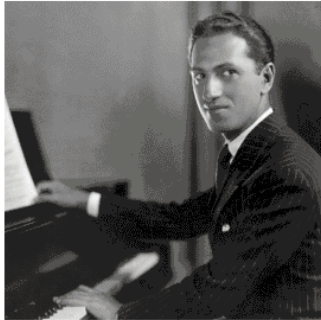
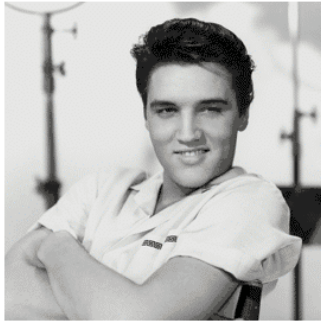
For all their digital growth, radio companies survived 2020 with old-fashioned cost-cutting. iHeartMedia had [three rounds of layoffs](#) last year and created a plan to save \$250 million through cost-cutting and "modernization initiatives," such as programmatic ad sales. Operating expenses did fall \$229.8 million in 2019, according to iHeartMedia's financial reports. Bressler said \$100 million of annual savings will be permanent after the pandemic, citing centralized resources, reduced hiring and changes in real estate needs, among other factors. Cumulus will continue the cost-cutting efforts that saved \$90 million in 2020, and Entercom lowered expenses \$100 million over the year. **B**

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Raleigh Music Group was founded in 2016 by industry veteran partners Peter Raleigh and Steven Storch. The company is headquartered in the heart of Times Square, NYC with offices in Los Angeles. In its first five years has experienced remarkable global growth and expansion.

The boutique music publishing company attributes its success to its "client first" approach to music publishing – delivering a high touch, high service experience to a select roster of music publishing clients it represents. The company has benefitted from the support of Susan Aberbach, an owner of the Elvis Presley catalog and an early stage investor.

Raleigh's client services are provided by A&R staff in NY and LA, a synch licensing team with strong relationships in the film/tv, advertising and gaming industries, and a first-class copyright and royalty administration department.

The company's best in class global sub-publishing partner network includes Budde, Café Concerto, Peer Music, Native Tongue, Supreme Songs, Schubert, Cloud 9, GL Music, Clippers, Som Livre, Nichion, Geoff Paynter Music, Fujipacific, IDM, Pelikan and others.

Raleigh represents numerous iconic catalogs and songs including Elvis Presley's "Can't Help Falling in Love", "A Little Less Conversation", and "All Shook Up", George Gershwin's "Summertime", "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" and "They Can't Take that Away from Me", The Tokens, "The Lion Sleeps Tonight", Gregmark Music's "Stormy Monday", Anthony Newley's "What Kind of Fool am I" and numerous other classics. The company also represents the classic catalogs of Bo Diddley, America, Anthony Newley, Willy (Mink) Deville, Lords of the Underground, Trax Records, and many others.

As Raleigh's reputation has grown, the company has steadily built a contemporary roster of songwriters, artists and producers and now publishes songs performed by or featuring superstar artists including: Ariana Grande, Chris Brown, Kid Rock, Madonna, John Legend, Lil Uzi Vert, A\$AP Ferg, Cardi B, A Boogie, Snoop Dogg, Trey Songz, Lil Durk, Busta Rhymes and film and tv composers Randy Edelman and Rick Marotta.

Please join Billboard in congratulating Raleigh Music group's 5th Anniversary.

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SoundCloud Will Pay Independent Artists Based on Listeners, Not Streams

BY MICAH SINGLETON

On SoundCloud, it's no longer about how many streams you have – it's about how many fans are streaming you.

Starting on April 1, SoundCloud will change the way it pays independent artists, becoming the first major streaming service to implement a so-called “user-centric” payment system.

The move to offer what the audio-sharing platform is calling “fan-powered royalties,” which [Billboard broke news of last month](#), marks a watershed moment for the music business. Until now, rights holders have collected streaming revenue based on a pro-rata model, which pools subscriber revenue and then doles out earnings based on the rights holders' share of total streams.

Effectively, if Taylor Swift gets 5% of all streams on Spotify in June, she and her label will get 5% of your monthly subscription fee, even if you never listened to one of her songs. But support has been swelling for a user-centric payment system, which would allow artists to get paid based on how many fans listen, instead of how many streams the artist accrues.

Under SoundCloud's “fan-powered” model, if a user paying \$10 a month only listens to five artists, those five artists will get an equal split of that \$10 – after SoundCloud takes its cut – no matter how many times the user listens to each of them.

“Many in the industry have wanted this for years,” [Michael Weissman](#), SoundCloud's CEO, said in a statement. “We are excited to be the ones to bring this to market to better support independent artists. SoundCloud is uniquely positioned to offer

this transformative new model due to the powerful connection between artists and fans that takes place on our platform. As the only direct-to-consumer music streaming platform and next generation artist services company, the launch of fan-powered royalties represents a significant move in SoundCloud's strategic direction to elevate, grow and create new opportunities directly with independent artists.”

Artists signed to the three major record companies, however, won't see their SoundCloud payments change next month, because of the licensing deals SoundCloud already has in place with those labels. The streaming company would need to renegotiate those agreements in order to bring its fan-powered model to the full lineup of artists on its service.

In fact, the fan-powered royalties will only apply to artists who upload their music directly through one of SoundCloud's monetization programs: Premier, [Repost](#), and Repost Select. SoundCloud says it has “nearly 100,000” independent artists earning money through those three programs. Indie artists who don't participate in those special plans will still get paid under the standard pro-rata model.

SoundCloud tells *Billboard* that nearly 20% of its payouts to the recorded music industry are made to independent artists who upload through SoundCloud. The company expects revenue to go up for smaller and mid-sized artists under the new payment scheme, but the biggest indie artists under their direct upload programs are expected to see a decrease in revenue.

If implemented widely across streaming services, the user-centric payment system would likely lower streaming revenue for streaming superstars like Swift and BTS, whose fans have conducted coordinated streaming campaigns to push those artist's releases to the top of the charts with astronomical first-week streaming totals.

Under the current pro-rata system, those massive streaming numbers result in a larger payout for the rights holders of those songs; under a user-centric payment system, the payout would depend more on the size of the fan club. The move could also prevent [stream-](#)

[ing scams](#) that take away money from legitimate artists and rights holders. Under a user-centric model, a single account holder streaming the same song 100,000 times wouldn't have much impact, outside of the single user's subscription fees going directly to the song's creator. **■**

Maestro Livestreaming Platform Raises \$15M From Sony Music, Twitch's Kevin Lin & More

BY TATIANA CIRISANO

Maestro, the white-label livestreaming platform which powered [Billie Eilish's](#) *Where Do We Go? The Livestream* pay-per-view [concert](#) in October, has raised \$15 million in Series B funding to forward its mission of building the creator economy.

Sony Music Entertainment, Chinese internet technology giant NetEase and Twitch co-founder **Kevin Lin** are among the new investors, along with Acronym Venture Capital, Stadia Ventures and Moonwell Capital, the investment firm founded by former Activision Blizzard video game company executives **Michael** and **Amy Morhaim**. The round boosts Maestro's total funding raised to date to \$22 million.

“The Billie Eilish stream was a major moment – it [proved that] we could do a stream that big,” Maestro founder and CEO **Ari Evans** tells *Billboard*. “From there, more of the music industry said, ‘We're going to see the dam break, and a lot more talent is going to be open to doing this.’ That has certainly happened.”

Founded by Evans in 2015, Maestro allows artist and brand clients to build custom livestream experiences hosted on the website of their choosing, with the ability to add audience engagement tools like chat boxes



2021

TOP MUSIC LAWYERS

Behind every artist, songwriter and music producer is a trusted group of advisers who provide guidance, advice and negotiate deals. Billboard's 6th annual Top Music Lawyers list will recognize the biggest names and most prominent legal minds in the world of music and entertainment law. They are the deal makers behind the major contracts and lawsuits in the music industry.

This feature will also include a round-up of top law schools attended by the notable alumni on the Top Music Lawyer list.

Please join Billboard in congratulating this year's music power lawyers. Advertise and position your law firm to the decision makers in the industry who are always in need for the best legal counsel.

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and calls to action, and even integrate their merchandise stores thanks to a [partner-ship](#) with Shopify. Maestro charges creators in tiers based on usage, generally taking a cut of ticket sales plus a platform license fee.

After the pandemic-induced touring shutdown motivated the music industry to experiment with livestreaming, Evans says that Maestro more than tripled revenue in 2020, grew its team fivefold in the last six months and has paid out “millions of dollars” to creators who use its monetization tools (pay-per-view, subscriptions and e-commerce). Clients include artists like [Melissa Etheridge](#) (whose subscription-based livestream series through Maestro was [reportedly](#) raking in \$50,000 a month in August), [Erykah Badu](#), [Sam Smith](#) and [H.E.R.](#), along with companies like Epic Games, Microsoft, ViacomCBS, Universal Music Group and Adweek.

“We are pleased to be supporting the continued development of Maestro as part of our ongoing investment in new technologies that provide artists with cutting-edge tools and solutions for growing their careers,” Sony Music Entertainment president, global digital business and U.S. sales [Dennis Kooker](#) said in a statement. “Maestro gives artists greater flexibility and control to build the most engaging and customized events for their fans, allowing creators at any stage of their career to put together a world class live stream event.”

Added Acronym Venture Capital general partner [Joshua Siegel](#): “Maestro is at the forefront of redefining the relationship of content owners and creators with their viewers. Instead of relying on incumbent distribution platforms, customers control the audience relationship directly and maximize engagement and monetization in a way that fits with their brand objectives. We are very excited by Maestro’s potential to be a fundamental driver in the growth of the creator economy.”

The increased attention to livestreaming also upped the competition, though, spurring the launch of more than a dozen new livestreaming platforms into the still-nascent sector. Touring and tech giants are no longer sitting on the sidelines, either: Live Nation [acquired](#) a majority stake

in Joel and Benji Madden’s popular platform Veeps in January, the same month YouTube launched its first paid access livestream with [Blackpink](#).

So far, Maestro has set itself apart by emphasizing its tech know-how, five-year history in the livestreaming space and the easy-to-use, white-label format it terms the “Squarespace for livestreaming,” positioning the company as a competitor to Twitch. Now, Evans tells *Billboard* that the new funding will go towards finding more ways to “evolve quicker than the competition”—chiefly by expanding its customer base to serve artists at every level. “It shouldn’t just be for the Billie Eilishs of the world.” Maestro will introduce cheaper price plans ranging from around \$20 to \$100 per month, Evans says, and build out its engineering team to help make the platform as self-service as possible.

Evans argues that while the industrial revolution ushered in the business model of producing goods as cheaply as possible to sell to as many people as possible, today’s creator-driven economy does the exact opposite: It allows creators to make a living doing what they love by identifying and then monetizing their core audiences. “If we enable that, I think it’s such a powerful democratization,” Evans says. “That’s the social impact that I want for our company.”

To help spread that message, Evans will also direct the new funding toward scaling the company’s sales and marketing teams. Finally, Maestro will soon announce new integrations with merchandise providers — building on its existing partnership with Shopify — and focus on helping artists create multi-day (or even multi-month) livestreamed events in place of one-off, flash-in-the-pan moments.

As for the impending return of physical touring, Evans is among a growing number of executives who predict that the music industry will adopt a hybrid model where artists add livestreamed experiences as separate tour dates, or simply offer tickets to livestream every in-person show. He emphasizes that livestreams give artists the ability to create experiences they never could with physical shows, from experimenting with augmented and virtual reality

to selling exclusive merchandise and even digital memorabilia in the form of NFTs (non-fungible tokens).

“I think that you’re going to end up with a more diverse and rich set of experiences that an artist can give you,” Evans says. “You have your tour and then along the way, maybe once every six months or once a quarter, you’re mixing in this different type of artistic expression.”

Several existing Maestro investors also contributed to the round, including SeventySix Capital, The Strand Partners, Stadia Ventures, Hersh Interactive Group, Transcend Fund and technology executives [Richard Gatchalian](#) and [Aaron Lewis](#). ▣

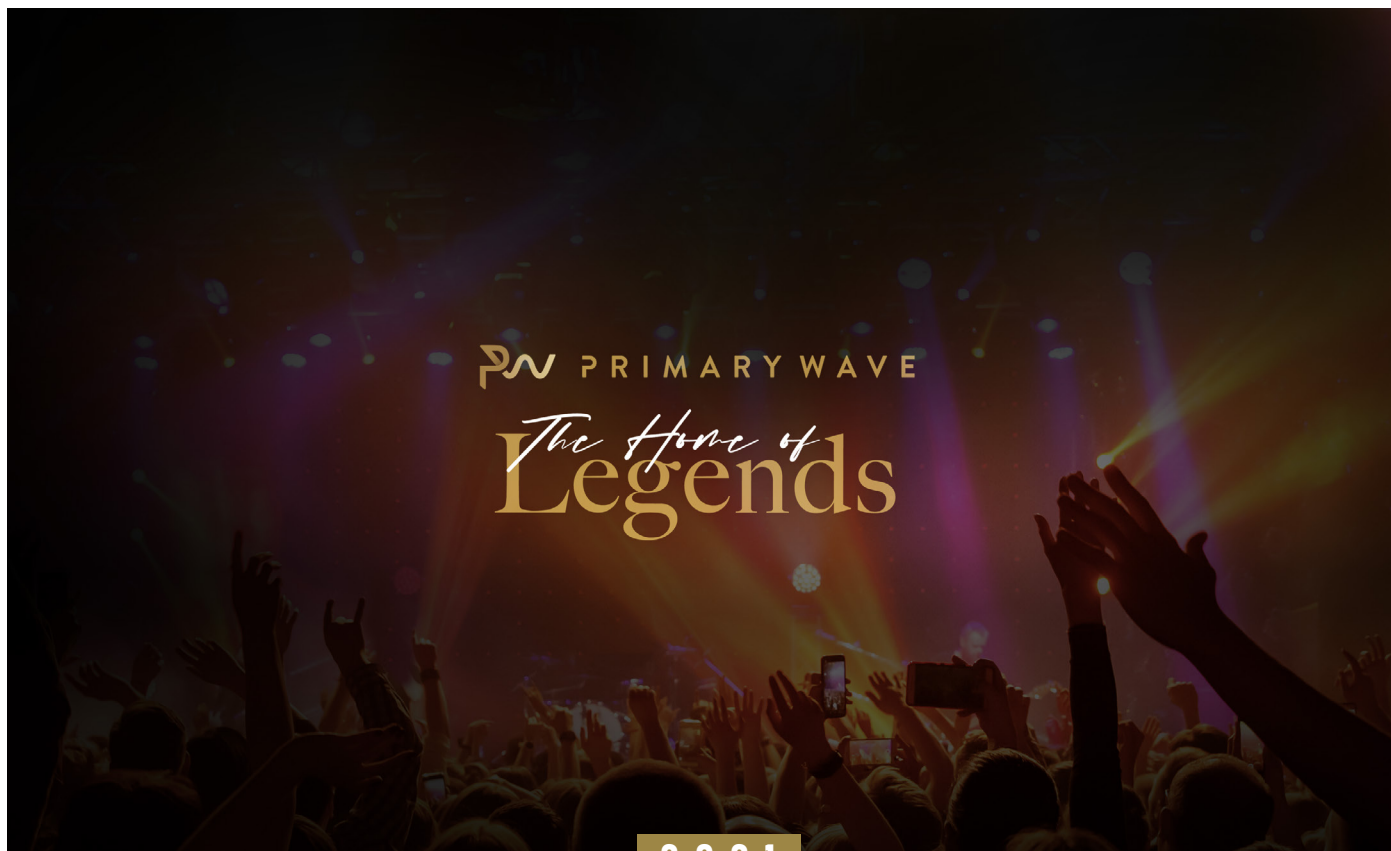
Interim Grammy Chief Harvey Mason Jr. Expects New Recording Academy CEO by May

BY PAUL GREIN

In a Recording Academy virtual town hall meeting on Monday (March 1), chair and interim president/CEO [Harvey Mason Jr.](#) gave an update on the organization’s continued CEO search, among other topics. Mason has been the interim president/CEO since January 2020, when [Deborah Dugan](#) — who assumed that role in August 2019 — was pushed out.

“The current search is ongoing,” he said in response to a member question. “We hired a search committee... They formed a job description. It went out to the marketplace. We’ve been speaking to over 100 candidates or potential candidates and then they narrowed it down to a few and we’ve done some interviews. It’s ongoing. It will continue to go on for the next two to three months. Our goal is to have a new CEO in place sometime around May, hopefully.”

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2021

PRIMARY WAVE 15TH ANNIVERSARY

On April 24, *Billboard* will salute Primary Wave Music on its 15th anniversary.

Founded in 2006, Primary Wave Music is home to some of the most iconic songwriters and artists across the history of recorded music including Bob Marley, Stevie Nicks, Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons, Smokey Robinson, Whitney Houston, Burt Bacharach, Olivia Newton-John, and many more.

With offices in New York, Los Angeles, Austin, Nashville and London, Primary Wave Music has embraced an entrepreneurial spirit, offering and executing proactive one-of-a-kind ideas, unique services and marketing campaigns for our artists. Primary Wave has earned a stellar reputation for being forward thinking and re-introducing classic artists and their music into the modern marketplace as well as nurturing young talent to become legends themselves. This success is based upon their team of seasoned and creative executives collaboratively working together closely with our artists as partners. As a company, Primary Wave strives for excellence in the pursuit of iconic artists and catalogs that not only reflect great artistry, but moments of culture.

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Mason pointed out that it was a desire to bring transformative change to the academy that motivated him to run for chair of the board of trustees in the first place. It was clear he was talking about making the academy staff and membership more diverse.

“In these last 12 months we have brought an enormous amount of change forward,” he said. “In April, we [brought on Valeisha Butterfield Jones](#) as chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer. In July, we formed a [partnership with](#) Color of Change, the nation’s largest online racial justice organization. In December, the partnership [re-leased](#) the Change Music Road-map, a guide to moving the music industry beyond conversation and intention toward actionable racial justice.”

In one of his most pointed comments, he called the Change Music Road-map “a guide to correcting the undervaluation of the contributions of Black music people to the world.”

Mason also pointed with pride to the 2020 new membership class, which he called the “the most diverse ever,” noting it is “over 48% female, 37% Black/indigenous/people of color, 51% under age 40.”

He said a key to that diversity has been aggressive outreach. “The academy has suffered in the past in specific genres because [people in those genres] don’t feel like they were equally represented or they were reflected properly, whether that’s in the awards, or on the television show, so we’re going into those areas saying ‘We need your help. Otherwise, we’re not going to get the representation and recognition that your genre is looking for.’

“We’re going into those communities, making sure that we’re listening, paying attention to what they’re asking for, paying attention to what their grievances have been in the past, trying to correct those things and trying to invite new people to the table to join and be part of the process. That’s the first step.”

Mason also shed some light on what he calls the second step of making the academy membership more reflective of the broad music community — a long-rumored but heretofore little-explained process of “requalification” for existing members.

Membership in the Recording Academy until now has been essentially for life — assuming a member was willing to continue paying the annual dues of \$100. But Mason explained that will be changing.

“We are starting a requalification process. If you made a lot of music 25 years ago, you may not be the most aware or most reflective voter for us at this point. So you’re going to be requalifying. [We’re going to] make sure you have updated credits, make sure you’re still creating music so you can continue to vote.

“So it will be a combination of bringing in new members and more representative members and slowly requalifying people [who] have been voting for quite some time. [These two steps] will start to change the make-up of our membership. It will affect the way we do everything.”

Mason also pointed to the formation of the Black Music Collective, which now has multiple members in each of the academy’s 12 chapters. He said its mission is to “raise awareness, acknowledgment and acceptance and make sure Black music is reflected in everything the Academy is doing and across the industry.”

When an academy member asked Mason if there were plans to extend this to Latin music, with some kind of Latin Music Collective, Mason’s response was not as sure-footed as the rest of his presentation.

“To be determined,” he said. “I think at this point, we are just literally getting the Black Music Collective up and running. I can see us doing other collectives as well, if need be. It starts from the outreach and really listening and seeing what the different communities need.... All the different genres, groups, constituencies are important.”

In a lighthearted vein, Mason also made a prediction related to the 63rd annual Grammy Awards on March 14. “Two weeks from today, the morning after our show, I’m pretty sure someone is going to be unhappy. I can bet that some fans are going to be emailing me or tweeting me or asking why I didn’t give the darn Grammy to their artist. Unfortunately, I can guarantee this is going to happen.

“When you’re trying to judge an award or

anything that’s subjective like art, it’s always difficult. There’s always going to be one person who’s happy and a lot of people are going to be upset. It’s always been that way for 63 consecutive Grammy shows.”

Mason summed up the 45-minute town hall with his hopes for the academy’s future.

“I want to make sure our membership is even more diverse and inclusive than it is now. I want to make sure that the [award] outcomes are more equitable than they ever have been and I want to make sure that the academy is trusted and respected more than it [has] ever been. There have been times that we’ve been accused of things, or we’ve had people bring things up as far as nominations or they’re upset about one thing or another, so it’s real important to me and I think to everyone at the academy that we continue to communicate, have outreach to different people...We can continue to evolve and transform the academy.” ■

Michael Gudinski, Legendary Australian Independent Music Entrepreneur, Dies at 68

BY LARS BRANDLE

BRISBANE, Australia — **Michael Gudinski**, the Australian music industry pioneer whose Mushroom Group would become the template for independent companies and who, with his exuberant personality, became the face of his country’s music scene, died Monday (March 1) at the age of 68.

Gudinski died peacefully in his sleep at his home in Melbourne on Monday night, and as word spread it sent a shock throughout Australia’s music industry.

Speaking with *Billboard* just last week,

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Gudinski was his typical, enthusiastic self, looking ahead to new TV projects, the vaccine rollout and the return of full-scale touring in these parts.

No other figure has done more to shape the Australian music industry than Gudinski.

In a keynote interview at the 2010 Big-sound conference in Brisbane, Gudinski told this reporter how, at the age of just seven, Michael flexed his growing entrepreneurial muscles on Caulfield Cup day when he charged race goers for parking spaces in a vacant block.

Gudinski would go on to greater things.

In 1972, at the age of just 20 years, Gudinski launched Mushroom Records, which would develop into the largest independent record label in Australian music, and later its publishing arm Mushroom Music, which remains the principal independent publishing company in the country.

Mushroom enjoyed early success with Skyhooks, whose debut album, *Living In The 70's*, logged 16 weeks at No. 1 in Australia, selling 240,000 copies, a feat no Australian album had achieved at the time.

Over the decades, Gudinski would guide the careers of countless artists, from Kylie Minogue and Jimmy Barnes to U.K. signings Ash and Garbage.

In 1998, MG sold Mushroom Records to Rupert Murdoch's News Limited Group (now News Corp), the proceeds from which enabled Gudinski to realize his dream of building an independent music powerhouse, covering touring, record labels, publishing, merchandising, booking agencies, film and television production and creative services.

Today, Mushroom Group spans more than two-dozen businesses and brands from Frontier Touring, to The Harbour Agency, labels I Oh You, Liberation and Bloodlines, Mushroom Music Publishing, neighboring rights operation Good Neighbour, and the new addition, Reclusive Records.

Frontier Touring, established in 1979, is Australia's leading independent promoter, and a record breaker. Gudinski and Frontier Touring produced Ed Sheeran's all-conquering *Divide* tour of Australia and New Zealand, which shifted more than 1.1 million tickets, an all-time record for a single trek.

In 2018, Frontier was ranked as the third largest promoter in the world according to Billboard Boxscore with a gross ticket sales of \$245.1 million and 2.77 million tickets sold from 440 reported shows.

The following year, 2019, Gudinski sold a 50% stake in Frontier Touring to American concert promoter AEG, unifying a long-standing relationship that widened the pipeline for both artists and audiences between the two continents.

"Michael Gudinski was one of a kind," says **Jay Marciano**, chief executive at AEG Presents who brokered the final details of the merger directly with Gudinski. "In a business built by forward thinkers and risk takers, he still stood head and shoulders above so many of his peers. The global music industry as we know it would not be where it is today without Michael's vision and creativity. Our business has truly lost a legend, AEG has lost a partner, and I've lost a friend. He will be missed."

The AEG deal came just as Gudinski was reuniting with former partner **Michael Chugg**, who announced [a joint venture in March](#), bringing their firms together 40 years after forming Frontier Touring in 1979 and then splitting into two companies in 1999.

Eagles manager **Irving Azoff** said the promoter's death represented the "End of an era" for Aussie music promotion. "He was everything to importing and exporting music in and out of Australia," Azoff told *Billboard*. "My heart goes out to Sue and the family. He was one of the greatest promoters that ever lived."

The latest jaunt under the Frontier Touring banner, Midnight Oil's *Makarrata Live Tour*, kicked off Sunday (Feb. 28) at Mount Cotton in Queensland.

With the pandemic bringing a halt to touring in 2020, Gudinski found a way to keep the music playing. MG spearheaded the small screen properties *From The Home Front*, *The Sound* and *The State Of Music*.

"This is not about my labels," Gudinski told *Billboard* in an interview last year. "This is about Australian music."

And on the pandemic that threatened to take down the live industry, Gudinski mused, "I've learned you've got to turn

something negative into something positive."

Gudinski achieved almost everything in his extraordinary life and career, including a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) medal in 2006 for services to the entertainment industry and a Melbourne Cup win. With his passing, Gudinski misses out the one thing he quietly coveted: a U.S. No. 1.

Gudinski leaves behind his wife Sue, son Matt and partner Cara, daughter Kate and husband Andrew and their children Nina-Rose and Lulu, and upwards of 200 Mushroom Group staff, who he often referred to as "family."

"Michael was one of the last true colorful characters in our industry. He was always full of energy [and] optimism, all with an intense passion for live music," says Rob Light, CAA's head of music. "He was one of the great promoters, whose productions were events. He touched every aspect of the music industry, and all with great success. And if you ever found yourself in Australia, there were no better hosts to show you an amazing time than Michael and his wife Sue."

Dave Brooks contributed to this story. 📧

After Selling Spinnin' Records for \$100M, Eelko van Kooten's New Focus Is Influencers

BY RICHARD SMIRKE

LONDON — After spending 18 years building Spinnin' Records into one of the world's biggest independent dance music labels, **Eelko van Kooten** sold Spinnin' to Warner Music Group in 2017 for more than \$100 million and decided to take a much-needed break from the music business.

"I travelled a lot," van Kooten tells *Billboard*. "I spent a lot of time with family and

▶ IN BRIEF

friends. I bought a lot of properties.”

Following Spinnin’s sale, van Kooten’s desire to “de-stress” and lead a more normal life saw him make a clean break with the company he’d grown into a global dance powerhouse — Spinnin’ was the first label to sign [Martin Garrix](#) and counts [Tiësto](#) among its alums — and begin to contemplate a life of wealthy semi-retirement.

It wasn’t long, however, before the Dutch exec started plotting his return to the music business. “I didn’t want to start a label or a publishing company, for me that was not special enough,” he says. “So I looked around at what was going on on the horizon of the music industry.”

What he saw was a fast-evolving digital market where independent artists struggle to get their songs heard amid all the noise — and where social media stars have the power to break an unknown track or artist worldwide, often overnight.

The solution van Kooten came up with was Ledo, a global digital distribution platform that partners artists, producers and songwriters with social media influencers to enable both parties to reach new audiences through creative collaborations. The Amsterdam-based platform launches on Tuesday (March 2).

“It doesn’t require magic to be on Spotify,” says van Kooten, noting that tens of thousands of tracks are uploaded to Spotify each day. “The magic is in getting people to listen to you.” He cites the success of Lil Nas X’s “Old Town Road” and Fleetwood Mac’s re-released “Dreams” as recent examples of songs that have become huge international hits after first going viral on social media channels.

Ledo looks to democratize that process by acting as both a digital distributor and an online marketplace for independent musicians and social media influencers to discover each other and team up. To do so, both parties set up profiles on the platform, which invites artists to upload tracks to Ledo’s Free Music Library, placing their songs in the shop window for influencers and brands to use in social media campaigns (with an artist’s approval).

Artists can also choose to either pay an influencer a fixed fee to promote a certain

track or they can negotiate a split of future streaming royalties.

Songs are licensed to the platform for a period of two years, giving Ledo exclusivity on digital distribution across streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music, as well as social media channels like Instagram, TikTok and Facebook. After two years, the distribution license reverts back to the artist.

For its part, Ledo collects and pays out artists royalties from streaming services on a monthly basis. Ledo will not earn any money directly from content creators.

At launch, Ledo will be a free-to-use platform. Starting in September, artists can either pay Ledo €5 per track per year and receive 100% of the royalties their music generates, or pay zero fees and receive 95% of the royalties, with Ledo retaining the remaining 5%.

“Artists want to enjoy more creative freedom, but also more ownership in their music career,” says Ledo co-founder and CEO [Sarah Hildering](#), who is the co-author of the Association For [Electronic Music](#) Code of Conduct. Although the target market for Ledo is primarily independent and DIY artists from all genres, she says the platform will also appeal to established musicians and producers that are not exclusively signed to a label and want to tap social media influencers to gain exposure for a particular song. That includes artists with publishing deals that want to better exploit their master rights independently.

Hildering says Ledo is in discussions about working with a number of Grammy-winning artist ambassadors and publishing companies. The company has around 30 staff spanning customer support, tech, marketing and PR. And van Kooten is already eyeing future growth.

“We feel there’s a big gap in the market at the moment and I’m very motivated to fill it,” he says. ▣

T.I. and Tiny Harris Hit With Defamation Lawsuit

BY CLAUDIA ROSENBAUM

Following news Sunday that a lawyer is seeking criminal inquiries into [T.I.](#) and his wife [Tameka “Tiny” Harris](#) over multiple accusations of sexual abuse and assault, the couple is now facing a defamation lawsuit.

[Sabrina Peterson](#) filed the suit against T.I. (real name Clifford J. Harris Jr.) and Harris on Monday (March 1) in Los Angeles Superior Court, claiming T.I. threatened her with a gun and then recently denied. Hairdresser [Shekinah Jones Anderson](#), who has appeared on T.I. and Tiny’s reality show, *T.I. & Tiny: The Family Hustle*, is also named as a defendant. Peterson is suing for libel, invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress, among other causes of action.

Peterson, a business coach and founder of Glam University — described as an online education program for “the modern female boss” — says she has known T.I. and Tiny for more than a decade. At one point during their acquaintance, Peterson alleges that T.I. put a gun to her head and said, “Bitch I’ll kill you,” according to her 16-page complaint. It wasn’t until this year, on Jan. 26, after what Peterson calls a “traumatic carjacking” that she decided to share the details of her alleged assault by T.I. on social media. Peterson also posted to Instagram Stories other women’s accusations claiming T.I. and Tiny force-fed them drugs and then had sex with them. (T.I. and Harris’ attorney issued a statement on their behalf “emphatically” denying the claims.)

From there, Peterson alleges that T.I., Harris and Anderson all made defamatory comments about her on social media.

Harris, Peterson says, responded with a post directed at her, saying, “You strange” and “Everybody know you been special,”

▶ IN BRIEF

and included a picture of Peterson's 8-year-old son. T.I. subsequently posted a video to his Instagram followers denying Peterson's claim and that he had ever drugged, raped or held anyone against their will. Anderson also posted a video where she accused Peterson of engaging in sexual acts with T.I. and Tiny, according to the complaint. All these actions, Peterson says, were defamatory, and since coming forward with her allegations against T.I. she says she has been inundated with harassing and threatening messages.

T.I. and Tiny's attorney **Andrew Brettler** of Lavelly & Singer denied that his clients ever said anything defamatory against Peterson.

"Ms. Peterson is the definition of 'libel proof,'" said Brettler in a statement to *Billboard*. "She has a lengthy rap sheet for crimes involving dishonesty and violence. Nothing our clients may have said about her is defamatory. Ultimately, not only will Peterson's meritless lawsuit be dismissed, but also she will be responsible for paying the legal fees the Harrises will be forced to incur in connection with it."

Peterson's lawsuit comes the same day that Tyrone Blackburn, a New York attorney, held a press conference announcing that he represents 11 individuals — 10 women and one man — who all claim that they have been victims of T.I. and Harris. The individuals alleged the couple "have kidnapped them, drugged them, raped them, and terrorized them with threats of death or physical bodily harm," according to Blackburn, who also is one of the attorneys representing Peterson. The individuals' allegations, which were first reported by The New York Times on Sunday, reached out to Peterson and Blackburn to share their stories of alleged abuse.

Blackburn said this morning during a Zoom press conference that he sent a letter detailing his clients' allegations to the Georgia U.S. Attorney in the Northern District, the California U.S. Attorney in the Central District, the state attorneys general of California and Georgia, and the Los Angeles District Attorney Office imploring them to open an investigation into the couple.

"These women are unaware of each other,

and without any leading on my part, they recount eerily similar events of sexual abuse, forced ingestion of illegal narcotics, kidnapping, terroristic threats, and false imprisonment," Blackburn wrote in his letter to the California Attorney General urging him to open an investigation.

When reached for comment, California Attorney General **Xavier Becerra's** office told *Billboard*, "To protect its integrity, we're unable to comment on a potential or ongoing investigation."

Steve Sadow, Atlanta based attorney for the T.I. and Tiny, strongly denied the allegations against his clients and provided this statement on their behalf:

"Clifford and Tameka Harris deny in the strongest possible terms these unsubstantiated and baseless allegations," said Sadow. "We are confident that if these claims are thoroughly and fairly investigated, no charges will be forthcoming. These allegations are nothing more than the continuation of a sordid shakedown campaign that began on social media. The Harrises implore everyone not to be taken in by these obvious attempts to manipulate the press and misuse the justice system." ■

Big Machine Taps Peermusic to Sub-Publish Song Catalog Outside U.S.

BY TATIANA CIRISANO

Nashville-based Big Machine Music (BMM) has linked with fellow independent publisher peermusic on a long-term sub-publishing agreement, under which peermusic will represent BMM's catalog of more than 12,000 songs in all worldwide territories excluding the U.S.

BMM, owned by Big Machine Label Group, will continue to administer itself within the U.S. under the deal, which was

announced yesterday (March 1) by peermusic U.K. president, Europe and managing director **Nigel Elderton** and BMM general manager **Mike Molinar**.

"We see in peermusic a reflection of our own independent spirit and dedication to delivering personalized service to our songwriters," Molinar said. "The international team under the guidance of Nigel shares our business and creative values and we look forward to working with their team."

Peermusic's 38 offices in 31 countries have already lured publishing companies like Anthem, Concord, Beggars, BMG, Big Deal, Disney, Kobalt and Sugar to sign their own sub-publishing deals with peermusic.

"Mike, [BMM vice president, publishing] **Alex Heddle**, and the Big Machine Music team put their service to their clients first and foremost — we share that ethos," Elderton added. "What the Big Machine Music team have built in the past eight years is phenomenal. They are exceptional music publishers that have developed a rich catalog, overflowing with hits. We are thrilled to partner with them for global sub-publishing."

The BMM catalog includes such hits as "Better Together," co-written and recorded by **Luke Combs**, as well as work from songwriters like Laura Veltz ("The Bones," recorded by **Maren Morris**) and Jessie Jo Dillon ("10,000 Hours," recorded by **Dan + Shay** and **Justin Bieber**). BMM's current roster also includes **Brett Young**, **Brandy Clark**, **Ryan Hurd**, **Justin Moore** and **Maddie & Tae**.

BMM's catalog does not include songs by **Taylor Swift**, who protested when the wider Big Machine Label Group — which owned the master recordings for Swift's first six albums — was sold by founder **Scott Borchetta** to **Scoter Braun's** Ithaca Holdings for an estimated \$300 million in 2019. Swift's songs were not published by Big Machine, and the label group no longer has stake in her music at all, having sold her master recordings to private equity firm Shamrock Holdings in November 2020. ■

▶ IN BRIEF

Bunny Wailer Dead: Reggae Icon and Last Wailers Member Was 73

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bunny Wailer, a reggae luminary who was the last surviving member of the legendary group The Wailers, died on Tuesday in his native Jamaica, according to his manager. He was 73.

Wailer, a baritone singer whose birth name is Neville Livingston, formed The Wailers in 1963 with late superstars Bob Marley and Peter Tosh. They catapulted to international fame with the album *Catch a Fire*.

In addition to their music, the Wailers and other Rasta musicians popularized Rastafarian culture among better-off Jamaicans starting in the 1970s.

Wailer's death was mourned worldwide as people shared pictures, music and memories of the renown artist.

"The passing of Bunny Wailer, the last of the original Wailers, brings to a close the most vibrant period of Jamaica's musical experience," wrote Jamaica politician Peter Phillips in a Facebook post. "Bunny was a good, conscious Jamaican brethren."

The three-time Grammy winner died at the Andrews Memorial Hospital in the Jamaican parish of St Andrew, his manager, Maxine Stowe, told reporters. His cause of death was not immediately clear. Local newspapers had reported he was in and out of the hospital after a stroke nearly a year ago. **B**

Karol G & J Balvin Lead 2021 Latin American Music Awards Nominations

BY BILLBOARD STAFF

Colombian stars **Karol G** and **J Balvin** lead the 2021 Latin American Music Awards with nine nods each. Both are up for artist of the year, sharing the category with Anuel AA, Bad Bunny, Christian Nodal, Eslabon Armado, Maluma, Ozuna and Sech.

Bad Bunny follows with eight nominations — including artist, song, album and social collaboration of the year — while Ozuna is recognized with seven nominations, including artist and collaboration of the year, favorite video and virtual concert.

In a sign of the times, the Latin AMAs adds the brand new category favorite virtual concert of the year, as most concerts have gone virtual due to the ongoing global pandemic. As with all Latin AMAs categories, winners will be determined by fan voting.

Nominees are based on key fan interactions with music, including streaming, sales, airplay and social activity tracked by *Billboard* through its data partners MRC Data and Next Big Sound for data covering the periods of Jan. 17, 2020, through Jan. 21, 2021.

The 2021 Latin AMAs are set to take place April 15 live from the BB&T Center in Sunrise, Fla. The Latin AMAs return after the show went on hiatus in 2020 due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The sixth annual ceremony will be broadcast on Telemundo starting at 7 p.m. ET with the red-carpet pre-show followed at 8 p.m. ET by the awards show.

See the full list of nominees below.

Artist of the Year

- Anuel AA
- Bad Bunny
- Christian Nodal

- Daddy Yankee
- Eslabon Armado
- J Balvin
- Karol G
- Maluma
- Ozuna
- Sech

New Artist of the Year

- Camilo
- Eslabon Armado
- Los Dos Carnales
- Myke Towers
- Natanael Cano
- Rauw Alejandro

Song of the Year

- Bad Bunny – "Yo Perreo Sola"
- Black Eyed Peas & J Balvin – "Ritmo (Bad Boys For Life)"
- Karol G, Nicki Minaj – "Tusa"
- Maluma & The Weeknd – "Hawái"

Album of the Year

- Anuel AA – *Emmanuel*
- Bad Bunny – *YHLQMDLG*
- J Balvin – *Colores*
- Natanael Cano – *Corridos Tumbados*

Favorite Artist - Female

- Anitta
- Becky G
- Karol G
- Natti Natasha
- Shakira

Favorite Artist - Male

- Anuel AA
- Bad Bunny
- Christian Nodal
- J Balvin
- Maluma
- Ozuna

Favorite Duo or Group

- Banda MS de Sergio Lizárraga
- Eslabon Armado
- Jowell & Randy
- Reik

Favorite Artist - Pop

- Camilo
- Enrique Iglesias
- Luis Fonsi
- Ricky Martin
- Shakira

Favorite Album - Pop

- Camilo – *Por Primera Vez*
- Kali Uchis – *Sin Miedo (Del Amor y Otros Demonios)*

▶ IN BRIEF

- Pedro Capó - *Munay*
- Reik - *Ahora*
- Favorite Song - Pop**
- Black Eyed Peas, Ozuna + J.Rey Soul - "Mamacita"
- Camilo - "Favorito"
- Reik, Farruko, Camilo - "Si Me Dices Que Sí"
- Ricky Martin - "Tiburones"
- Shakira & Anuel AA - "Me Gusta"
- Favorite Solo Artist - Regional Mexican**
- Carin Leon
- Christian Nodal
- El Fantasma
- Junior H
- Lenin Ramírez
- Natanael Cano
- Regional Mexican, Favorite Duo or Group**
- Banda MS de Sergio Lizárraga
- Eslabon Armado
- Los Ángeles Azules
- Los Dos Carnales
- Favorite Album - Regional Mexican**
- Christian Nodal - *Ayayay!*
- Eslabon Armado - *Tu Veneno Mortal*
- Junior H - *Atrapado En Un Sueño*
- Natanael Cano - *Corridos Tumbados*
- Favorite Song - Regional Mexican**
- Banda Los Sebastianes de Mazatlán, Sinaloa - "En Eso No Quedamos"
- Banda MS de Sergio Lizárraga & Snoop Dogg - "Qué Maldición"
- Lenin Ramírez featuring Grupo Firme - "Yo Ya No Vuelvo Contigo"
- Los Dos Carnales - "El Envidioso"
- Natanael Cano - "Amor Tumbado"
- Favorite Artist - Urban**
- Anuel AA
- Bad Bunny
- J Balvin
- Karol G
- Favorite Album - Urban**
- Anuel AA - *Emmanuel*
- Bad Bunny - *Las Que No Iban a Salir*
- J Balvin - *Colores*
- Favorite Song - Urban**
- Bad Bunny - "Yo Perreo Sola"
- Black Eyed Peas & J Balvin - "Ritmo (Bad Boys For Life)"
- Karol G & Nicki Minaj - "Tusa"
- Maluma & The Weeknd - "Hawái"
- Ozuna x Karol G x Myke Towers - "Caramelo"

- Reik, Farruko, Camilo - "Si Me Dices Que Sí"
- Favorite Artist - Tropical**
- Marc Anthony
- Prince Royce
- Romeo Santos
- Silvestre Dangond
- Favorite Album - Tropical**
- Carlos Vives - *Cumbiana*
- Gloria Estefan - *Brazil305*
- Prince Royce - *Alter Ego*
- Favorite Song - Tropical**
- Alex Bueno & Romeo Santos - "Nuestro Amor"
- Carlos Vives - "No Te Vayas"
- Kyen?Es? - "El Carnaval de Celia: A Tribute"
- Prince Royce - "Carita de Inocente"
- Víctor Manuelle & Wisin - "Boogaloo"
- Favorite Artist - Crossover**
- Black Eyed Peas
- Dua Lipa
- Ne-Yo
- Snoop Dogg
- The Weeknd
- Collaboration of the Year**
- Banda MS de Sergio Lizárraga & Snoop Dogg - "Qué Maldición"
- Black Eyed Peas & J Balvin - "Ritmo (Bad Boys For Life)"
- Karol G, Nicki Minaj - "Tusa"
- Lenin Ramírez featuring Grupo Firme - "Yo Ya No Vuelvo Contigo"
- Ozuna x Karol G x Myke Towers - "Caramelo"
- Reik, Farruko, Camilo - "Si Me Dices Que Sí"
- Social Artist of the Year**
- Anitta
- Bad Bunny
- Cardi B
- Daddy Yankee
- J Balvin
- Jennifer Lopez
- Karol G
- Lali
- Selena Gomez
- Shakira
- Favorite Video**
- Banda MS de Sergio Lizárraga & Snoop Dogg - "Qué Maldición"
- Christian Nodal & Ángela Aguilar - "Dime Cómo Quieres"
- David Bisbal & Carrie Underwood - "Tears

- Of Gold"
- Ozuna, Doja Cat & Sia - "Del Mar"
- Rosalía & Travis Scott - "TKN"
- Selena Gomez - "De Una Vez"
- Favorite Virtual Concert**
- Alejandro Sanz y Juanes - "#LaGira-SeQuedaEnCasa"
- Carlos Vives - "#NoTeVayasDeTuCasa"
- Juan Luis Guerra - "Privé"
- Juanes & La Orquesta Filarmónica de Bogotá - "Concierto Sinfónico Virtual - #VolverteAVer"
- Marco Antonio Solís - "Serenata a las Madres MÁS En-Cantadoras"
- Ozuna - "#Latinosunidos"
- Pepe Aguilar, Ángela Aguilar, Leonardo Aguilar - "Mexicano Hasta Los Huesos"
- RBD - "Ser o Parecer 2020"
- Sebastián Yatra - "SOSFest"
- Yandel - "Goodbye 2020" 📺

Feid Inks Global Deal With Universal Music Publishing Group: Exclusive

BY JESSICA ROIZ

Feid has signed an exclusive, worldwide publishing agreement with Universal Music Publishing Group, *Billboard* can exclusively reveal today (March 2).

The Colombian singer-songwriter, born Salomon Villada Hoyos, has a catalog of nearly 200 songs and has collaborated with some of Latin music's biggest artists, including [Anitta](#), [De La Ghetto](#), [Grecicy](#), [Lali](#), [Manuel Turizo](#), [Pedro Capó](#), [Piso 21](#), [Sebastián Yatra](#), [Tainy](#), [Thalía](#), [Ximena Sariñana](#), and [Zion & Lennox](#).

"We are so proud to have supported Feid from the beginning," said **Alexandra Liou-tikoff**, UMPG President for Latin America and US Latin, in a statement. "To have witnessed his prolific songwriter output, and his rise from a go-to songwriter for various

▶ IN BRIEF

artists to successful solo artist simply evidences his admirable work ethic. UMPG is the best home for this exciting partnership.”

Feid added, “They’ve always shown me love and have introduced me to new producers who have been crucial for the development of my career. I’m going to keep pushing harder and writing so many more songs to become a better artist, producer, and songwriter.”

Born in Medellin, Feid kicked off his career composing for other artists as a member of the collective Icon Music/Dynasty Publishing, including [J Balvin’s](#) “Ginza” and [CNCO’s](#) “Mamita.”

As an artist, he’s known for hits such as his J Balvin-assisted “Que Raro,” “Boraxxa” with Manuel Turizo, and “Porfa” with fellow UMPG collaborator [Justin Quiles](#). The star-studded remix with Balvin, [Maluma](#), [Nicky Jam](#), and [Sech](#) entered various *Billboard* charts and peaked No. 1 on Latin Rhythm Airplay on Aug. 29, 2020.

Feid has received three Latin Grammy nominations: best urban music album for *19* (2019) and *FERXXO (VOL 1: M.O.R.)* (2020), as well as best reggaeton performance in 2020 for “Porfa.”

“Feid is a joy to work with, always happy to attend our song camps and open to collaborating with artists from Latin America and Europe,” adds [Ana Rosa Santiago](#), vp creative, Latin America and US Latin. “He’s always creating, bringing harmony to the mix, and we look forward to supporting his continuing success.”

Currently, he’s making the rounds with his single “14 de Febrero” and will release new track “Purrito Apa” on March 12. 📀

Another Planet Merges Management Company With Telegraph Road

BY DAVE BROOKS

Another Planet Entertainment’s management division is merging with Telegraph Road Management, giving the Bay Area promoter a new office in Southern California and a key partnership with manager [Laurence Freedman](#).

Freedman got his start working with [Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers](#) and [Billy Idol’s](#) veteran manager [Tony Dimitriades](#) at East End Management in Los Angeles. After Dimitriades segued out of his day-to-day role in 2018 following Petty’s death a year earlier, Freedman formed Telegraph Road Management and continued managing Idol, along with [Mike Campbell](#) and [Benmont Tench](#) of The Heartbreakers. Joining Freedman at Another Planet is long-time East End/Telegraph Road manager [Evan Bright](#), along with Telegraph Road clients [Cherry Glazerr](#), Miya Folick and Advertisement.

“I have admired their management company and the people working there and we often exchanged ideas and kept in touch,” Freedman said. “We were both looking for ways to beef up our resources to continue serving our clients and inject each other’s ideas into collaborative projects.”

Another Planet Management was created by [Bryan Duquette](#) in 2013 as an offshoot of Another Planet Entertainment, headed by chief executive Gregg Perloff. The roster includes Grammy nominated [Tycho](#) and Saint Sinner, [Poolside](#), Amen Dunes, Madeline Kenney, Nap Eyes, Minna Choi as well as recently signed artists Drama and Brijean. Combined, the two companies will service 15 clients and include Another Planet artist managers [Michael Bigham](#) and [Sarah Zweig](#).

“As promoters, ultimately our business is zero right now as everyone knows,” says Duquette. “When you’re totally stripped of nothing, how do you evolve and figure out how to do things differently? I think it’s made all of us feel that way during COVID.”

Another Planet Entertainment has not laid off any staff during the pandemic, which Duquette says is a testament to chief executive [Gregg Perloff’s](#) commitment to his employees.

“And since we already have a management company, this is a chance to focus on building that and finding new ways to increase our revenue streams with our artists,” says Duquette. “It’s important for all managers, promoters and everyone to be thinking about how we get more money in the artists’ pocket.”

The merger was brokered by Another Planet Management’s co-founding general manager [Dan Kasin](#) who has had a long friendship with Freedman and called the deal “a natural fit,” adding “I look forward to combining forces so that we can grow our portfolio of artists by attracting new talent.”

The relationship between APE and Telegraph Road dates back decades and began with Perloff working with Dimitriades to promote countless Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers shows dating back to the late 1970s.

“I have had the pleasure to work with Laurence while he was with East End Management and Tony Dimitriades and he’s one of the best managers out there. Not only does he understand artists with careers that span decades, but he also has a great ear for developing artists in the contemporary space,” Perloff tells *Billboard*.

Recent highlights from the collective roster include Idol performing at the Super Bowl’s TikTok Tailgate with [Miley Cyrus](#) and a Poolside remix of Idol’s “Eyes Without A Face.”

“This deal is about having more smart people that can help and inform what each of us are doing with our clients,” Freedman said. “There’s a mutual respect and a mutual admiration for how each of us do business with so many different avenues to take into consideration and it’s clear that together we have a bright future ahead.” 📀

▶ IN BRIEF

T.I. Not Returning for 'Ant-Man 3'

BY AARON COUCH

T.I. will not be returning for Marvel Studios' upcoming *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*. The embattled rapper and actor is not a part of the cast, *The Hollywood Reporter* has learned, but it's unclear whether this is related to recent accusations of sexual abuse he is facing alongside his wife, musician Tiny.

On Monday, an attorney representing 11 alleged victims [accused the couple of crimes](#) including sexual abuse, forced ingestion of illegal narcotics, kidnapping, false imprisonment, intimidation, assault and harassment. The attorney, Tyrone A. Blackburn, is asking authorities in California and Georgia to open investigations. Through a lawyer, the couple strongly denied the accusations: "Clifford (T.I.) and Tameka Harris (Tiny) deny in the strongest possible terms these unsubstantiated and baseless allegations. We are confident that if these claims are thoroughly and fairly investigated, no charges will be forthcoming."

In *Ant-Man* (2015) and *Ant-Man and the Wasp* (2018), T.I. played Dave, a friend to Paul Rudd's Scott Lang/Ant-Man who helped him on his adventures along with ex-convicts Luis (Michael Peña) and Kurt (David Dastmalchian). While side characters such as T.I.'s Dave might have been expected to return for the third installment of a Marvel franchise, *Ant-Man 3* is still in development and does not yet have a release date from Marvel, meaning things can still shift, including which characters are in the script.

Peyton Reed returns to direct the third *Ant-Man* film, once again starring Rudd, Evangeline Lilly, Michael Douglas and Michelle Pfeiffer. Franchise newcomers include [Jonathan Majors as classic villain Kang the Conqueror](#) and [Kathryn Newton](#) as Cassie Lang, daughter of Rudd's Scott Lang. Jeff Loveness, known for *Rick & Morty*, is penning the script.

Elsewhere, VH1 halted production of the reality show *T.I. & Tiny: Friends & Family Hustle* last month in light of claims against the couple.

This article was originally published by [The Hollywood Reporter](#). 

CMA Fest Canceled For Second Year in a Row, But Is Slated to Return in 2022

BY MELINDA NEWMAN

For the second year in a row, the **Country Music Association** has canceled **CMA Fest**, its annual June four-day event that takes over many Nashville venues, including Nissan Stadium, due to COVID-19.

"After thoughtful deliberation, we are saddened to share that CMA Fest will not take place in 2021," said Sarah Trahern, CMA CEO in a statement issued Tuesday (March 2). "We know our fans near and far have hoped that the festival could safely return this summer, and while we are encouraged to see COVID-19 vaccines becoming more widely available, we still face several challenges that prevent us from bringing our fans around the world the CMA Fest experience they have come to expect. But rest assured, we have already started planning what will be the most epic celebration of country music next summer. Mark your calendars for CMA Fest June 9-12, 2022!"

In addition to Nissan Stadium, CMA Fest utilizes such venues as Ascend Amphitheater and Music City Center. In a letter to the CMA membership, Trahern said the decision was made to cancel instead of postpone to later this year because of logistics.


"To produce CMA Fest at the scale we normally do requires a significant amount of advance planning and production. Given the length of our production window, it was simply impossible to find an available win-

dow later this summer or into the fall," she said. She also cited the likelihood of ongoing capacity restrictions at those and other locations the Fest utilizes.

The 2019 CMA Fest drew attendees from all 50 states and 37 other countries. According to the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corporation, the event brought \$65 million in visitor spending to Music City, per the [Nashville Business Journal](#).

The 2019 CMA Fest drew attendees from all 50 states and 37 other countries. According to the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corporation, the event brought \$65 million in visitor spending to Music City, per the [Nashville Business Journal](#).

The event had not announced its 2021 line-up, but tickets from the canceled, sold-out 2020 fest rolled over to this year. Fans who are holding on to their tickets can again roll them over to 2022 or request a full refund.

Trahern also noted that the organization's Music Industry COVID Support initiative remains committed to distributing \$3 million over the long term to non-profit organizations providing resources to music professionals affected by the pandemic. Among its partners are Music Health Alliance, Musically Fed, MusiCares, Notes for Notes, Porter's Call, The Store and Touring Professionals Alliance Kitchen. 

Primavera Sound Festival Cancels 2021 Edition

BY GIL KAUFMAN

Update (March 2): The 2021 edition has officially been cancelled. See the new statement below.

While the world awaits world on when we can go to concerts again, Barcelona's [Primavera Sound](#) unveiled an ambitious lineup for its 2021 reboot, which is slated to take place from June 2-6.

The 20th anniversary edition of the event will feature headline sets from The Jesus and Mary Chain, Tame Impala, Massive At-

▶ IN BRIEF

tack, Pavement, The Strokes, The National, Beck, Tyler, the Creator, Gorillaz, Bad Bunny and more.

Also on the roster: Charli XCX, FKA Twigs, Young Thug, Kehlani, Doja Cat, Brockhampton, Earl Sweatshirt, Disclosure, Jorja Smith, King Crule, Freddie Gibbs & Madlib and Jawbox.

This year's events was originally pushed back until the end of August due to the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 50 artists have been added to the rebooted roster, including Slowthai, Kim Gordon, Kurt Vile, Rolling Blackouts Coastal Fever and Khruangbin.

Check out the full lineup below: [▶](#)

Nashville Club Owners Mark One Year Since Deadly Tornado

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

When frantic messages started trickling in that a tornado had hit a beloved music venue in Nashville,

Mike Grimes told himself it couldn't possibly be that bad.

Could Basement East really be destroyed? Just hours before, the club Grimes co-owns had hosted a benefit concert for Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders.

Affectionately known as "The Beast," the club was only 5 years old, but already had established a reputation as one of Nashville's trendiest music spots, across the river from the city's tourist-laden honky-tonks on lower Broadway.

The venue, with a capacity limit of 475, quickly became known as a premier site for hosting big-name acts in an intimate setting. Margo Price, Cage the Elephant, John Prine, Maggie Rogers, Maren Morris, Sturgill Simpson and many others played there.

Maybe, Grimes thought desperately as he drove over to the club, the people texting him about the destruction were exaggerating.

But when he pulled up to The Beast, his

stomach dropped. The tornado had ripped the roof cleanly off a little after 1 a.m., crumbling the majority of the walls and leaving a tangled mess of destruction behind.

"You just don't want to believe it," Grimes said. "It was immediate shock."

The [March 3 storm](#) killed more than 20 people, some in their beds, as it struck after midnight. More than 140 buildings were destroyed across a roughly 60-mile (97-kilometer) swath of Middle Tennessee, burying people in rubble and basements.

The six Basement East staffers who were cleaning up after the Sanders event escaped harm by running to the actual basement of the building just minutes before the powerful EF-3 tornado roared down the street. It took two staffers to shut the door against the winds, just as the twister passed over.

Right on the heels of the tornadoes, the virus outbreak slammed into the state with brute force last spring, and by Thanksgiving, Tennessee ranked among the [worst hit in the country](#), with a record number of hospitalizations and cases. To date, more than 11,000 residents have died from COVID-19.

The pandemic hit Nashville's renowned music scene particularly hard. Small, intimate clubs weren't designed to factor in virus-control measures such as social distancing.

"It's so strange to have a scenario where the building is gone and then we have something ... like COVID-19," a confluence of devastating occurrences "that has never happened like this in our lifetime," Grimes said.

As the virus raged on, the dream of once again packing Basement East full of music lovers seemed shakier than ever.

"There were times that thought crossed my mind: 'It's not going to happen,'" Brown said.

The club first opened its doors in 2015, but it took nearly five years for the venue to turn a profit. It wasn't until 2020 that Brown and Grimes felt they could breathe, that what they were doing was working. The partners — who describe themselves as grown teenagers with a love for rock 'n' roll — had wanted to celebrate their five-year anniversary in April 2020, but the tornado and pandemic had other plans.

Now, as the anniversary of the two catastrophic events approaches, the partners are hoping to finally reopen. Amid signs that virus cases are dropping and with [more people getting vaccinated](#), they've set their sights on this spring. But they still plan to require patrons to wear masks and will spread tables out throughout the club's 5,000-square-foot (465-square-meter) space.

When the tornado struck Basement East last March, it left one thing standing: A portion of a wall mural with the slogan, "I believe in Nashville."

Like that wall, the city itself is steadfast and resilient, Brown and Grimes note. Both believe Nashville's central role in the world of American entertainment and culture will ensure that it perseveres.

"The magic of music," Brown said. "That's what makes this place so strong." [▶](#)

BTS Spends 16th Week at No. 1 on Artist 100, Thanks to 'Be' Deluxe Edition

BY XANDER ZELLNER

BTS jumps from No. 5 to No. 1 on the Billboard Artist 100 chart (dated March 6), ruling for a 16th total week, thanks to a new deluxe edition of the group's LP *Be*, dubbed the "essential edition."

The set leaps from No. 74 to No. 7 on the [Billboard 200](#), after debuting at No. 1 in December, with 36,000 equivalent album units (up 254%), according to MRC Data. Of that sum, 28,000 are in album sales, helping *Be* return to No. 1 on the Top Album Sales chart for a third total week on top, BTS' longest reign on the ranking.

(No additional tracks were added to the essential edition of *Be*, which sells for \$30.98 on BTS' official U.S. webstore. The essential edition offers different packaging

▶ IN BRIEF

and internal paper goods, including one randomized collectible photocard, from *Be's* original CD release, which arrived selling for \$50.98 with more paper goods, although none were randomized.)

BTS extends its record for the most weeks spent atop the Artist 100 among duos/groups and holds fourth place among all acts, dating to the chart's 2014 launch.

Most Weeks at No. 1 on Artist 100

46, Taylor Swift

31, Drake

20, The Weeknd

16, BTS

15, Ariana Grande

14, Post Malone


12, Justin Bieber

12, Ed Sheeran

10, Adele

10, Billie Eilish

The Artist 100 measures artist activity across key metrics of music consumption, blending album and track sales, radio airplay, streaming and social media fan interaction to provide a weekly multi-dimensional ranking of artist popularity.

For all chart news, you can follow @billboard and @billboardcharts on both Twitter and Instagram. 

Ben Gibbard on Lockdown Creativity and the Future of Live Performance: 'We've all Gone Through a Collective Trauma'

BY MIA NAZARENO

Death Cab for Cutie frontman Ben Gibbard is the latest indie rock star to partner with Fender on a signature guitar. Modeled after

his touring guitar with hand-picked modifications from the singer-songwriter, The Ben Gibbard Mustang is the newest addition to Fender's [Artist Signature Series](#) — a collection showcasing stringed instrument collabs with acts like H.E.R. and Billie Eilish.

Besides working with the legendary guitar brand, Gibbard has been busy during the pandemic, playing both DCFC classics and covers with his [Live From Home](#) series, which has garnered up to 200k views for each set — many of which were around 45 minutes long.

Most recently, Gibbard and the rest of Death Cab for Cutie crew took to *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* to remotely perform their own rendition of TLC's "Waterfalls."

As musicians — just like the rest of us — have been in lockdown for nearly a year, Ben Gibbard shares what he's learned from a year of live streaming, his quarantine show recs, and watching *Harry Potter* for the first time in 2021.

Before we kick it off, I just wanted to say that I loved when you covered [Alvvays'](#) "Archie, Marry Me" on stage back in 2015.

I love that band so much. When I heard that song, I thought to myself, "This is a song I wish I would've written when I was 24." It feels like only someone in that age could write that song. It has a little bit of a "Wouldn't It Be Nice" [by The Beach Boys] vibe to it — with that optimism of youth as it pertains to huge life choices, like marriage.

So many iconic guitarists have been playing Fender guitars throughout the years. How does it feel to have your name attached to a signature model?

Oh, it doesn't even feel real. When they initially approached me to design a signature model, I was almost like, "Well, you guys know I'm a sh—ty guitar player, right?" *[laughs]* The crazy part is having your signature here on the back. I'm sure I've written my name a million times when I'm signing checks or filling something out at the post office, but I spent an hour getting my signature right. But yeah, this is a version of what I've played live.

What inspired its design?

I fell in love with these '70s-era Mustangs that have this maple neck. I've aesthetically

liked this maple neck on these guitars. The original Mustangs have these switchers that change the polarity of the pickups. When I started playing live, I had to tape all that stuff out because when I'm singing and playing guitar, I'd scrape my hand across the little switchers. Strangely enough, my guitar tech at the time worked for Kurt Cobain. And he said to me, "Yeah, I'd tape those up for Kurt, too."

So on my signature model, I took up the pickup switch that switches back and forth because I would always hit my hand across that. Then, I took the tone knob and made that into a pickup switch. There is no tone knob. I'm sure people have used the tone knob, but I have never in my life, on any guitar, have ever adjusted the tone knob. At the end of the day, it's just wild to have this thing that literally has my name on it.

When the pandemic hit, you started live streaming on YouTube. How was that experience?

I'd never done any kind of live streaming before. The process was kind of intimidating initially because I've performed in front of audiences that were physically in front of me for my entire career. And surprise, people act differently when they're in someone's presence versus when they're behind the screen. I didn't expect people to be mean or anything, but it was a very odd experience to be playing to 15 to 20 thousand people during the early live streams. If you were to put these people in a venue, it would've filled an arena, but when I was live streaming, I was finishing songs in this room, where I'm speaking to you right now.

Is there anything unexpected that came out of the experience?

Before each live stream, I'd do a check to make sure everything was working. And it was really moving to see the chat 15 minutes before the show. After some time, I began to recognize the same things being said, and I would see that the viewers were talking to each other in the chat and asking how they were doing. They'd ask each other things like, "Are you doing okay today?" Over the course of doing those shows, it was really heartening to see how people have formed this little community around these shows.

As a veteran performer, what do you

▶ IN BRIEF

think live performances will look like later in 2021?

My guess is that we will start to see some scaled-down, outdoor shows in the summer. In the fall, I think we'll start seeing some indoor shows. Those shows will also be subject to diminished capacity. For me, what'll be interesting to see is the level of consumer confidence in going out even after people get vaccinated en masse. It can't be understated that we've all gone through and continue to go through a collective trauma. We're slowly gonna have to dig our way out of this. It's unfortunate, but the reality is that our industry will be the last one to come back. Live performances will be the last thing to come back.

I don't wanna give you the impression that music isn't the most important thing in my life, because it is, but this year has really highlighted what the essential services are. Two years ago, I was really concerned about a rock club losing its status and becoming condos. While yes, that still concerns me now, I'd rather have the people living in the park near me have access to housing, medical care, and food. If we had to make the rock club a shelter, let's do that. This year has given us a lot of perspective.

Do you think that live streaming will stick around?

I think so, but the technology isn't quite there yet. I've watched a number of concert films and live streams this year, but it's just not the same. I'm sure we'll continue to see people in the industry do live streams to pay their bills and as a way to generate revenue. I have a lot of friends doing that, and I'm glad they have fan bases who are willing to shell out ten bucks to watch them play songs on Zoom. I think that's a necessary part of supporting the arts in these difficult times, but it's not something that I wanna particularly wanna continue doing once we're able to play in front of people.

The connection you have with people in front of you is still one of the most powerful things I've ever experienced. While doing the live streams was incredibly valuable to me and to people watching it at the time, I don't want people to become complacent and think this is an acceptable alternative to being in a sweaty room with people hearing

loud music. It's such a wonderful thing to experience.

Speaking of supporting the arts, what do you think is the best way for fans to support their favorite artists while touring is on hold?

That's a good question. It's a difficult question, because the revenue streams for a lot of artists have dried up. If people are interested in supporting the artists they love, it's worth looking into whether they have a Patreon account set up or are doing live streams, where you can give a donation for a nominal fee. Look into whether they're making special merch or doing a special sale on a website to generate revenue. Follow your favorite bands or artists on social media and check to see if they have crowd funding sites set up and sign up for those.

Almost a decade ago, Death Cab For Cutie released "Meet Me At The Equinox" for the *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* soundtrack. Stephenie Meyer recently put out another book in the series — if they were to make another movie for *Midnight Sun*, would you be down to write another song to soundtrack it?

I don't see why not? We did it once. We might have to maintain some continuity from it.

What movies have you watched in lockdown?

Two months ago, my wife finally made me watch the *Harry Potter* movies. I've never seen the movies. I never read any of the books. I've heard my friends talk about horcruxes and He-Who-Shall-Not-Be-Named, but I had no idea what they were talking about. You might feel this as you get older, but there are these moments when you lose touch on elements of pop culture. It's so weird. It's like going to another country, turning on the TV, and watching people pretend to be famous.

Or, it feels like I just landed in the UK and I'm around my British friends and they're watching their favorite TV shows, and I don't get the references or why they think it's funny. But yeah, I understand why people like the *Harry Potter* movies, but I kept pausing and asking my wife Rachel, "So they get to the train station and go through the wall, but why is there another train?"

[laughs]

How about TV shows?

Oh God, what have I been watching? These shows aren't secrets, but *Fleabag* and *I May Destroy You*. I've watched *Fleabag* in its entirety three times. It's phenomenal. The characters are phenomenal. The writing is phenomenal. And *I May Destroy You* is on another level. Michaela Coel's writing is just astounding. The show is like watching somebody fly. It's about watching someone deal with all these very, very heavy topics and weave them through a show that has as much humor and humanity. It's the best thing I've seen this entire time in lockdown. It's the best show. I can't recommend it enough.

How has the pandemic affected your creativity?

It's been a fruitful period for me creatively if only because there's no other distractions. It was difficult to hit a stride while touring, but in the last year, working on music is all I've been doing.

Does that mean you'll be coming out with new music soon?

Yes, Death Cab's been writing. I'm excited for the next record we're gonna put out. It won't be this year, but we're definitely looking at 2022. I really think this is gonna be good, and I hope you like it. ☑

Luke Bryan's 'Down to One' Up to No. 1 on Country Airplay Chart

BY JIM ASKER

Luke Bryan lands his 24th leader on *Billboard's Country Airplay* chart as "Down to One" rises 4-1 on the list dated March 6. In the tracking week ending Feb. 28, the single increased by 15% to 29.1 million audience impressions, according to MRC Data.

On the [Hot Country Songs](#) chart, which

▶ IN BRIEF

blends airplay, sales and streaming data, “One” becomes Bryan’s 28th top five hit, climbing 7-5. It drew 6 million U.S. streams (up 36%) and sold 2,000 downloads in the week ending Feb. 25.

“I absolutely love this song!” Bryan tells *Billboard* of the tune, which was written by Dallas Davidson, Justin Ebach and Kyle Fishman. “Down to One’ has a melody that just locked me in the first time I heard it. I know a lot of artists feel this way, but I’m definitely looking forward to doing this one live.”

“One” is the fourth Country Airplay No. 1 from Bryan’s LP *Born Here Live Here Die Here*, which debuted at the [Top Country Albums](#) summit last August, marking his ninth leader. The set was originally scheduled for last April but Bryan delayed both it and his planned tour because of COVID-19. A deluxe version of the album, with six new songs, is due April 9.

The set’s first single, “Knockin’ Boots,” led Country Airplay for two weeks in September 2019, followed by “What She Wants Tonight” (one week, April 2020) and “One Margarita” (two weeks, July 2020).

Bryan logged his first Country Airplay No. 1, “Rain Is a Good Thing,” for two weeks in July 2010. He boasts the sixth-most leaders in the chart’s history (which dates to January 1990). Kenny Chesney leads with 31, followed by Tim McGraw (29), Blake Shelton (28) and Alan Jackson and George Strait, each with 26.

Bryan is back for a fourth season on ABC’s *American Idol* with fellow judges Katy Perry and Lionel Richie.

TOP 10 ‘SONG’ Thomas Rhett earns his 17th Hot Country Songs top 10 as “What’s Your Country Song” jumps 13-7. On Country Airplay, it rises 5-4, up by 7% to 24.8 million in audience. It also drew 5.7 million streams (up 57%) and sold 2,000 (up 20%).

‘GOOD’ MOVE Gabby Barrett nabs her second career-opening Hot Country Songs top 10 (excluding holiday fare) as “The Good Ones” lifts 12-9. It pushes 12-11 on Country Airplay (16.6 million impressions, up 9%) and garnered 6.1 million streams (up 16%) and sold 4,000 (up 14%) in the tracking week.

The single joins Barrett’s debut crossover

smash “I Hope” in the Hot Country Songs top 10, as the latter rebounds for a 26th week on top. “I Hope,” which led Country Airplay for a week in April 2020, tallied 43 million in all-format audience, 7.2 million streams and 2,000 sold in the latest measurement week.

BIGGER ‘HOUSE’ On Country Airplay, Dustin Lynch rolls up his ninth top 10, as “Momma’s House” climbs 11-10 (16.6 million, up 1%). Lynch adds his first top 10 since “Ridin’ Roads,” which became his seventh No. 1 in January 2020.

A COUPLE COUPLES Garth Brooks and Trisha Yearwood’s cover of Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper’s former [Billboard Hot 100 No. 1](#) “Shallow” hits the Country Airplay top 40, rising 42-38. The song is the fifth top 40 duet by the couple, who married in 2005, and first in 15 years:

No. 2 peak, November 1997, “In Another’s Eyes”

No. 18, October 1998, “Where Your Road Leads”

No. 16, March 2002, “Squeeze Me In”

No. 23, March 2006, “Love Will Always Win”

No. 38 (to-date), March 2021, “Shallow”

Another husband-and-wife tandem debuts on the latest Country Airplay chart with their first shared entry on the survey: Ryan Hurd’s “Chasin’ After You,” featuring Maren Morris, arrives at No. 60. **■**

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Announces 2021 Induction Ceremony Date

BY GIL KAUFMAN

The 2021 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony will return to Cleveland on Oct. 30, 2021, setting up shop at the Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse for the first time.

The 36th annual celebration of inductees

will take place in the former Quicken Loans Arena after a \$185 million floor-to-ceiling overhaul to the home of the Cleveland Cavaliers that the release notes will prioritize “health and safety and offers increased space and flexibility to host the Induction Ceremony in Cleveland as part of a multi-year partnership.”

This year’s diverse class of nominees includes Mary J. Blige, Kate Bush, Devo, Foo Fighters, The Go-Go’s, Iron Maiden, Jay-Z, Chaka Khan, Carole King, Fela Kuti, LL Cool J, New York Dolls, Rage Against the Machine, Todd Rundgren, Tina Turner and Dionne Warwick. Fans can vote for their favorite nominees through April 30 [here](#), with the top five artists, as selected by the public, comprising a “fans’ ballot” that will be tallied along with the other ballots to select the 2021 inductees.

The names of the finalists will be announced in May.

The 2020 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony honored [Whitney Houston](#), [The Notorious B.I.G.](#), [Depeche Mode](#), [The Doobie Brothers](#), [Nine Inch Nails](#), [T. Rex](#), and Ahmet Ertegun Award honorees [John Landau](#) and Irving Azoff in a produced HBO special that aired in November. The program was held in place of the planned May 2, 2020, event at Cleveland’s Public Hall that was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the past three decades, the RRHOF ceremony has bounced back and forth between New York and the site of the museum in Cleveland. **■**

BTS Added to MusiCares ‘Music on a Mission’ Event

BY GIL KAUFMAN

BTS and [Common](#) have joined the lineup for MusiCares’ [Music on a Mission](#) event on March 12. The virtual event will feature never-

▶ IN BRIEF

before-seen performances — some live, some on tape — from [Haim](#), [H.E.R.](#), [Jhené Aiko](#) and [John Legend](#). Music on a Mission is replacing the traditional MusiCares' Person of the Year gala, a mainstay of Grammy Week since 1991 that's been canceled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The event will also include video from the MusiCares vault of performances at past Person of the Year galas by [Stevie Nicks](#), [Usher](#), [Bruce Springsteen](#), [Tom Petty](#) and several more artists to be named soon. It will also feature a pre-show DJ set by DJ D-Nice and "special appearances" by Carole King, Jesse & Joy, Jonas Brothers, Ledisi, Lionel Richie, Macklemore, Mick Fleetwood, Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr and Shakira.

Tickets for the new event are on sale now and will be accessible to the general public in a way the Person of the Year gala never was. General-admission tickets are \$25 and Music on a Mission will take place in the Person of the Year gala's usual time slot — two days before the 63rd annual Grammy telecast.

BTS are nominated for best pop duo/group performance at the upcoming Grammys for their smash English-language hit "Dynamite."

Check out the announcement below. [▶](#)

Sebastián Yatra & More to Play Mexico's Tecate Pa'l Norte Virtual Fest

BY DAVE BROOKS

The Tecate Pa'l Norte festival in Monterrey, Mexico, is going virtual this year due to COVID-19, with an online event set for April 17.

Colombian pop artist Sebastián Yatra, Puerto Rico's Guaynaa, Martin Garrix, Molotov, The Hives and more will play Tecate Pa'l Norte, which will include more

than 1,000 minutes of music, produced in multiple green-screen studios with support from three-dimensional audiovisual production and special-effects companies from Belgium, United States and Mexico.

"The same team of experts who collaborated on Tomorrowland Around the World will work to transform this musical experience into a one-of-a-kind visual event," a press release announcing the show reads. "Eighteen Tecate Pa'l Norte style artists will be in charge of making three incredible scenarios come to life in the water, the jungle and the floating islands of the virtual planet."

The festival will run from 4 to 11 p.m. CT on April 17, with presales starting Wednesday. Tickets and more at [TecatePalNorte.com](#). [▶](#)

Jhene Aiko to Host Grammy Premiere Ceremony, Where Bulk of Grammys Are Awarded

BY PAUL GREIN

J[héné Aiko](#) will have a lot on her mind on March 14. Starting at noon PT, she'll host the Grammy Awards' Premiere Ceremony, where the vast majority of the Grammys are awarded. At 5 p.m., she'll shift her attention to the 63rd annual Grammy Awards, where her *Chilombo* is nominated for album of the year.

This is the first time the host of the Premiere Ceremony has been an album of the year nominee. *Chilombo* is also nominated for best progressive R&B album. Aiko has a third nomination this year, best R&B performance for "Lightning & Thunder."

The Academy had approached actress (and current Grammy nominee for best comedy album) Tiffany Haddish about hosting this year's Premiere Ceremony. Had-

dish was informed by an Academy staffer that she would not be compensated for her efforts, nor would her hair or make-up expenses be covered. (When Harvey Mason Jr., the Academy's chair and interim President/CEO learned how poorly Haddish had been treated, he called the star to apologize.)

Aiko will be compensated for her efforts, as will all seven performers at the Premiere Ceremony. All seven are current Grammy nominees. The performers (and the categories in which they are nominated) are Burna Boy (best global music album for *Twice As Tall*), Terri Lyne Carrington + Social Science (best jazz instrumental album for *The Waiting Game*), Jimmy "Duck" Holmes (best traditional blues album for *Cypress Grove*), pianist Igor Levit (best classical instrumental solo for *Beethoven: Complete Piano Sonatas*), Lido Pimienta (best Latin rock or alternative album for *Miss Colombia*), Poppy (best metal performance for "Bloodmoney") and Rufus Wainwright (best traditional pop vocal album for *Unfollow the Rules*).

Kicking off the event will be a performance celebrating the 50th anniversary of the [Marvin Gaye](#) classic "Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)." Here too, all of the artists who will perform the song are Grammy nominees — Afro-Peruvian Jazz Orchestra, Thana Alexa, John Beasley, Camilo, Regina Carter, Alexandre Desplat, Bebel Gilberto, Lupita Infante, Sarah Jarosz, Mykal Kilgore, Ledisi, Mariachi Sol de Mexico de Jose Hernandez, PJ Morton, Gregory Porter, Grace Potter, säje, Gustavo Santaolalla (Bajofondo), Anoushka Shankar, and Kamasi Washington.

"Mercy Mercy Me" was one of the standout tracks on Gaye's landmark album, *What's Going On*. The album was severely under-recognized at the Grammys for 1971. Gaye's only nomination that year was for another track on the album, "Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler)," which was nominated for best R&B vocal performance, male.


Bill Burr, Chika, Infante and Jimmy Jam, former Recording Academy chair, will present the first Grammy Awards of the day.

Imogen Heap hosted last year's Premiere Ceremony. Shaggy hosted the event two years ago.

Branden Chapman, the Academy's chief

▶ IN BRIEF

operating officer, and Bill Freimuth, chief awards officer, are the producers of the Premiere Ceremony on behalf of the Academy, Greg Fera is executive producer. Cheche Alara will serve as music producer and musical director.

The Premiere Ceremony will stream live internationally on Grammy.com. The Grammy telecast will be broadcast live on CBS and Paramount+ from 8:00–11:30 p.m. ET and 5:00–8:30 p.m. PT. 

Billie Eilish Teams With NTRK for Exclusive Prints Inspired by ‘The World’s a Little Blurry’

BY GIL KAUFMAN

Billie Eilish has teamed with NTRK for a series of three original prints inspired by her Apple TV+ documentary *Billie Eilish: The World’s a Little Blurry*. The colorful prints will be available on the NTRK livestream shopping app Tuesday (March 2) at 3 p.m. PT. The exclusive drop features three colorful prints interpreting the documentary via the unique styles of [three artists](#) hand-picked by Eilish; the prints will be available for \$50 each.


The colored pencil piece created by NYC-based multi-disciplinary artist Korea’s Worship Gallery owner Noelle Lee features an image of a doe-eyed Eilish trapped inside a snow globe singing into a mic surrounded by pink and blue bubbles.

“For this piece I was really inspired by the color palette and ethereal scenes in both ‘I’m a Mess’ and ‘ILY,’” Lee said in a statement about two tracks from Billie’s Grammy-winning 2019 debut album, *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* “This illustration features Billie on her bed, drawing to the idea of a place of comfort and safety.

To contrast this idea of comfort, I chose to encapsulate the scene in a snow globe. The globe represents the thought that although Billie may be in a state of comfort in herself and her work, she is still being viewed and interacted with by the outside world. In all, the purpose of the piece is to represent the fragile and blurry parts of Billie’s world and artistic life which is on view for all.”

New York multi-disciplinary artist Nathalie Nguyen cooked up an oil on canvas print in which Eilish is in mermaid mode, floating in the ocean in yet another reference to “ilomilo.” Speaking of the piece, Nguyen said, “The painting features Billie submerged in an underwater scene. Inspired by the line from the song ‘The world’s a little blurry. Or maybe it’s my eyes,’ which is also the title of the documentary. The painting was executed as a nod to impressionism and uses soft brush strokes, vibrant depiction of light, and blurry figures in the background to bring the subject, Billie, into focus.”

In the third piece, New York/London-based painter and digital artist Emma Stern said her digital illustration of an android-looking Eilish lying on the floor looking at a book of lyrics is based on footage from the film of the singer in her brother/producer Finneas’ room and lying on the bed while looking at a notebook filled with her handwritten lyrics. “This struck me as a really poignant moment because it is so tender, so stripped down and honest,” said Stern. “Most of the art I make involves female figures in intimate interiors, and that intimacy is something I really aimed to convey in this composition. Visually, I was also drawn to this scene because of dramatic backlighting which gives the whole setting a very specific, vibe-y moodiness that I enjoyed emphasizing, as well as the small details like the Murakami flower pillows peeking out from behind Billie, which kind of take on the role of secondary figures in the final piece.”

Check out all three prints below. 

‘Rebelde’ Is Coming to Netflix With 2022 Reboot: Watch Teaser

BY JESSICA ROIZ

Rebelde is coming back to the small screen with a Netflix reboot slated for 2022, *Billboard* has learned.

The popular early 2000s series, starring Anahi, Dulce Maria, [Maite Perroni](#), Christopher von Unckermann, Christian Chavez and Alfonso Herrera, returns with a new cast.

“*Rebelde* is coming back! In 2022, head back to Elite Way School as a new generation of students hope to win the Battle of the Bands,” Netflix announced on Twitter.

Set in the prestigious private boarding school, Elite Way School, *Rebelde* tells the story of six high school students who form a band. The series originally aired on Canal 5 in 2004 and later aired on Univision from March 2005 to December 2006.

The original cast later formed the popular music group RBD — known for hits such as “Salvame,” “Este Corazon” and, most recently, “Siempre He Estado Aqui” — which gained massive success from 2004 until their disbanding in 2009.

Check out the first teaser of *Rebelde* 2022 below: 