

MUSIC CONNECTION

SPECIAL YEAR END ISSUE!

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CAREER TIPS OF 2024

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UNDER A GRAND!

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LL Cool J
Jeff "Skunk" Baxter
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Hot 100 Live Unsigned Artists & Bands

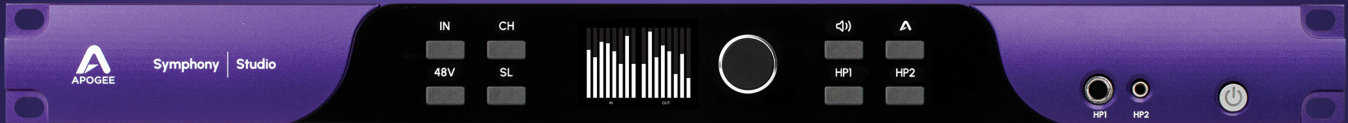
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"Weird Al" Yankovic

MC chats with funny man Weird Al about his career and catalog that has been just as successful as the superstars he parodies, as well as the newly announced Bigger and Weirder Tour.

By Joseph Maltese

Photos: Sam Jones, Robyn Von Swank



ZOE KO

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Fervor Records

fervor-records.com

Charitable Origins: Now a thriving, genre-transcendent indie label with a publishing arm and 10,000+ songs in their catalog, Fervor Records emerged back in 1990 via a charity holiday album for the homeless in Phoenix, AZ. Organized and produced by David Hilker and a few friends, the project featured Hilker and other local musicians. Released on cassette, Southwest Holiday sold over 4,500 units in six weeks, with all the proceeds going to Central Arizona Shelter Services. The label created multiple compilations, including more charity projects for St. Mary's Food Bank. One of their first signed bands, former *Star Search* contestants Brian Page & The Next, taught Hilker about performance royalties and he immediately saw great potential for himself and other artists he would sign. Fervor opened a recording studio, began writing and producing local hip-hop artists and R&B singers, and before long were licensing songs to film and TV. Their breakthrough was having a song in the hit Jack Nicholson film *As Good As It Gets*. The team went on to sign with Fox Music to compose music for Fox Kids Cartoons and the Fox Family Channel.

Licensing and Expanding: By the early 2000s, Fervor's publishing division was licensing to numerous hit TV shows and films. They operated on a non-hit model, signing artists and songs and placing them in royalty generating situations without concern for

radio airplay or charts. Their most recent placements include songs in *The Penguin* starring Colin Ferrell, *Abbott Elementary* and *What We Do in the Shadows*. Reactivating the label in the new century, Fervor signed new artists but also took advantage of emerging international digital distribution channels and began acquiring vintage back catalogs of lesser-known artists in all genres, dating back to the 1920s. They released music from artists in genres like '80s new wave, '90s R&B and '70s classic rock, becoming successful at monetizing dormant copyrights. Fervor's eclectic roster of indie artists led Fervor Records to success on MTVU (launching five indie artists), a placement on the official *Mad Men* LP soundtrack and recently landing a dozen songs in *Green Book*, the 2019 Oscar Winner for Best Picture.



Artists to Check Out: Fervor Records COO Jeff Freundlich mentions a few current artists he wants listeners to hear. Two-piece rock band Noonday Devils will release their latest single "Bring Their Bodies to Me" on December 13. R&B/hip-hop duo blakk. nostalgia's latest single "Sum Lite" drops January 10. Another artist the team is excited about is R&B artist Keagan, who released his most recent single "Home" in November. Freundlich says, "Our criterion for signing artists is simple. They need to know who they are and what they're looking for in a label, and believe that what we offer is in line with their goals. The reason that there's great synergy between Fervor and our artists is that we are in alignment in terms of having the highest quality production and push our artists to be the best they can be every time they record."

Contact Fervor Records, 602-595-3582

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Claire Ratliff

Senior Publicist
PLA Media

Claire Ratliff has joined PLA Media as Senior Publicist. The entertainment/media veteran joins PLA Media after nearly two decades as an independent publicist and owner of Laughing Penguin Publicity & Consulting. "I'm thrilled to welcome Claire to the PLA Media team. I've been aware of her work and stellar reputation for more than a decade and welcome her always-fresh take, optimism and dedication to great service. She brings a breath of fresh air and a can-do spirit to every challenge," says PLA CEO and Founder, Pam Lewis. Ratliff has worked with a variety of clients since launching her firm 20 years ago. For more, contact info@plamedia.com.



Amy Pugh

Global Digital Marketing
& Social Media Manager
Frontiers Label Group

Frontiers Label Group announced Amy Pugh has been named Global Digital Marketing & Social Media Manager of the Italian rock and metal label, home to such artists as Blue Öyster Cult, Jon Anderson & The Band Geeks, Skunk Anansie, and other leading musicians within those genres. Pugh, a N.Y.C.-based music industry veteran, is the founder of 10/13 Media LLC. She has been in the music industry for over 15 years and has worked at Sony/ATV Music Publishing, EMI, and Universal Music Group. For more, contact freeman@freemanpromotions.com.



James Oliver

Vice President of Strategic Partnerships
ACT Entertainment

ACT Entertainment has appointed James Oliver to the position of Vice President of Strategic Partnerships. As a proven executive with a track record for growth, Oliver has a history in the professional audio industry of bringing ambitious brands to new heights. In his role, Oliver has been tasked with developing a live sound division that mirrors the success ACT has created for its other partners. "We are pleased to have James join us in our efforts to increase ACT's position as a leader in the professional audio market," said Dale Williams, President and COO of ACT Entertainment. For more, contact toaelectronics@toaelectronicinc.com.



Dante Smith

Head of Motown Digital
Capitol Music Group

Capitol announced the promotion of Dante Smith to the position of Head of Motown Digital. In this new role, Smith will oversee digital marketing campaigns of Motown's roster of artists, D2C efforts, and branding of Motown Records. Smith will still continue to champion and collaborate with artists across Capitol's roster. Over the past four years Smith has been an integral part of the digital marketing team, working closely with such artists as Quavo, Toosi, JT, Kali Uchis, Lil Baby, Lil Yachty, Ice Spice, Queen Naija, Migos and City Girls, to name a few. Smith came to Capitol in 2020, after stints at Revolt TV and HipHopDX. For more, contact jv@spinlab.net.



Justin Grant

Senior Vice President/Head
of Urban Digital
Capitol Music Group

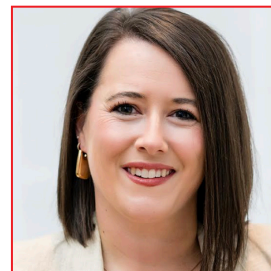
Capitol Records has named Justin Grant Senior Vice President/Head of Urban Digital at the label. In his new role Grant will oversee the creation and execution of digital marketing campaigns on the label's growing roster of R&B and hip-hop artists. The company's urban roster spans the iconic label brands Capitol, Motown and Priority Records. "Justin has a proven track record in building some of the best known artists brands in the world," said Tom March, Chairman and CEO of Capitol. "He knows what it takes to break artists." For more, contact jv@spinlab.net.



Erin Collums

Director of Marketing
EastCoast Entertainment

EastCoast Entertainment (ECE) has announced the appointment of Erin Collums as its new Director of Marketing. With over 12 years of experience in the marketing and entertainment industries, Collums brings a wealth of knowledge to ECE. Erin's diverse background spans high-impact marketing campaigns, digital marketing strategies, and brand development for renowned organizations, including the Carolina Panthers (NFL) and Charlotte Football Club (MLS). Her leadership in driving data-driven advertising campaigns has delivered significant results. For more, contact amylypskymedia@gmail.com.



Alana Dolgin

President of Digital Marketing
Atlantic Music Group

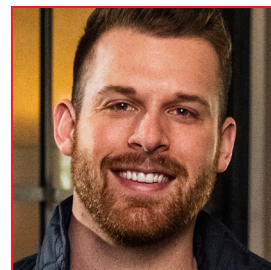
Atlantic Music Group has named Alana Dolgin to the newly-created position of President of Digital Marketing at the company. In her new role, Dolgin will oversee digital marketing across Atlantic Records, 300 Entertainment, and 10K Projects. She will also continue in her role as President of Homemade Projects, a successful talent management, merchandise, touring, and digital marketing company. "Over the years I have witnessed Alana's remarkable ability to drive results and inspire teams through innovative thinking and exceptional leadership," said Atlantic Music Group's Chief Operating Officer Zach Friedman. Contact jv@spinlab.net.



Matt Zahn

Director of Marketing
Gateway Studios and Production Services

Gateway Studios and Production Services announced Matt Zahn as its new Director of Marketing. In his new role, Zahn will be responsible for developing and executing strategic marketing initiatives to increase the visibility and awareness of Gateway, while also providing essential support to the company's Business Development team. "We are very excited to welcome Matt to our team at Gateway," says David Haskell, President of Business Development at Gateway. "His industry knowledge and strategic vision will be instrumental in our continued success as we prepare for the future." For more, contact otroutman@shorefire.com.





◀ ED SHEERAN BUSKER SPECIAL EDITION

The latest release from pop phenom Ed Sheeran's product line is The Sheeran Special Edition Busker. Harkening back to Ed's days of busking in British train stations, he hasn't forgotten his roots. This portable mini-P.A. is designed to be an all-in-one powerhouse with 200W of power, built-in Alesis DSP effects featuring reverb, delay, modulation, and a 3-channel mixer. The mixer offers two Combo inputs for mics, instruments, and line level sources with both XLR and 1/4" inputs. A master +48-volt Phantom power button powers condenser mics. The third channel is a Bluetooth input that also features a mini plug Aux In. The output section has an XLR Mix Out and a pair of RCA plugs for Record Out.

The Busker has a comprehensive feature set. Gone are the days of a portable speaker with no life to it—this amp has every connection you can imagine for both live performance and home recording. The Busker is a very well-made amp, and versatile. It feels solid to the touch and sturdy. Sonically it belies its small size and low weight. With a 6.5" driver and 1" tweeter, it is loud and clean, with pleasing sound from both instruments and music playback.

Connectivity is enhanced by the available Alto Pro App for iOS and Android which gives you Bluetooth 5.3 control over Busker's mix and EQ parameters directly from your phone or tablet. You can connect a second Busker for stereo monitoring and control them from the app. And as you would expect, Bluetooth can be used to pair the Sheeran Looper+ to complete Ed's system. I was able to pair my phone easily and control it quickly after downloading the Alto Pro app. But you don't need the Alto Pro app, The Busker can appear as a Bluetooth device for playback.

The Busker can be powered either by the provided standard IEC power cord, or by the built-in battery that provides 20 hours of battery life in standard mode and up to 24 hours in Eco Mode. A four-segment LED meter gives you battery charge status and a switch toggles standard or economy mode. Battery can be charged either by AC or via a 5-volt USB port.

In addition, the Busker has individual modes that will adjust the sound output depending on how the device is oriented for your performance—monitor style in vertical and horizontal positions or pole mounted on a tripod or subwoofer. With excellent design and sound, it's a great little amp! \$349

sheeranloopers.com

▶ BEYER DT 1770 PRO MKII HEADPHONES

Hot on the heels of Beyer's 100th anniversary, the new DT 1770 Pro MKII Headphones have arrived. And as the expression goes, they are solid as a rock. Designed for professional recording studio work, these closed back headphones are incredibly balanced, smooth, and easy to work with. Featuring Tesla 45 drivers with Neodymium magnets, the closest attention has been paid to making a low distortion and accurate headphone experience with plenty of volume and comfort.

Beyer headphones are an industry standard for good reason. They never disappoint. These headphones are truly a premium product and are physically robust, weighing more than the industry standard Beyer DT 770's, but still not too heavy and very comfortable on your head for long sessions. And made tough—as much as I try, headphones always end up getting knocked on the floor, and they must keep on working.

Mixing is a reactive phenomenon, and you can only mix what you hear. The DT 1770 Pro MKII bass is solid, and detail on the low end is incredible, with upper harmonic content on bass instruments being very informative and a rare find. The mids are smooth and the treble sweet. It's always a concern with headphones, are they hyped? Is the low end too hot? Is the high end too hot? These headphones are designed to go the distance. The depth and imaging is remarkable and designed to hear what is really happening in your mix.

The DT 1770 Pro MKII come with a "Hardcase Pro," which is a step up in protection from the nylon bag that many headphones come in. There are two sets of ear pads. A pair of velour ear pads provide an open sound and are recommended for mixing and mastering. A pair of leatherette ear pads provide a more isolation and are well suited for recording and monitoring applications where you don't want click track bleed into a mic. A straight cable and coiled cable are both included, and each have a screw off 1/4" adapter that can be quickly changed into a mini plug connection. Each connect to the headphones with a sturdy lockable 3-pin Mini-XLR connector on the left ear.

Headphones truly are a personal choice. There are headphones that are utilitarian, simply providing a decent sonic experience. The next level up is the professional experience. Whether using them for studio recording, mixing and mastering—Beyer headphones are among the finest made. The DT 1770's are top-shelf, robust, comfortable and accurate. Highly recommended. \$599

beyerdynamic.com



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◀ M-AUDIO FORTY EIGHTY REFERENCE MONITORS

Aimed securely at home and project studios as well as workstations, M-Audio has launched their new affordable Forty Series. With modern appointments and aerodynamic styling, they offer a lot of speaker and features at an entry level price point. Intended for near field monitoring, the Forty Eighty is a bi-amped powered speaker that sends 80 watts to an 8" woofer and 70 watts to a 1.25" high-frequency driver.

The front-panel offers a switch with three listening modes: Flat for reference monitoring, Hype for "consumer-style enhanced listening," and Custom EQ for personalized audio profiles. The flat setting sounds good on its own and is intended to provide a listening experience for mixing that is neutral so that your mixes translate accurately to the real world. The Hype setting provides a substantial bass boost with a moderate treble boost and is fun for a more beefy listening experience. This setting sounded good on a variety of different styles of music, and the low end was surprisingly deep. You could also use this setting to impress a client for a playback, as the Hype setting really fills the room. The Custom EQ setting is adjustable via Bluetooth 5 through the M-Audio Forty Series Control app. This feature has a five-band EQ that can switch the bands from Parametric EQ or Shelf EQ to optimize the speakers for your listening space or taste. The app was able to scan and find the speakers automatically and quickly with no pairing problems.

The speakers have XLR and 1/4" inputs and can also be paired for streaming playback. The pairing mode is activated by a switch on the front of each speaker and appears as a different Bluetooth device than the

app's Custom EQ feature in your iOS phone or tablet. Again, setup was clean and simple. The speakers are quite impressive sounding for the price point and offer a positive monitoring experience, clean and clear and not tiring. They are focused and offer precise imaging. Useful from a utilitarian standpoint or to impress clients, their sound transcends their low price.

Also available is the smaller Forty Sixty, with a 6.5" woofer and a 1" high-frequency driver with 60 watts LF and 40 watts HF for smaller studios. Forty Eighty \$299; Forty Sixty \$199

m-audio.com

▶ TAYLOR 810E LEGACY ACOUSTIC GUITAR

Released on the exact 50th anniversary that Taylor Guitars opened on October 15th, 1974, their year-long anniversary celebration finishes with the launch of The Legacy Collection that revisit Bob Taylor's original designs. The collection features three models inspired by Taylor's original 800 Series: a Dreadnought, a Jumbo, a 12-string Jumbo, and two models that honor Taylor's Grand Auditorium style.

Bob Taylor himself oversaw the development of the series. The Legacy models preserve qualities of the original builds, such as Taylor's X-bracing, but with updated features like Bob's patented NT neck design from 1999. Historically, Bob had used milestone anniversaries to introduce new designs. For the 50th, Bob embraced a more reflective approach.

"In earlier decades, I felt like our guitar designs weren't fully realized, that we needed to keep pushing them forward—which, by the way, Andy Powers continues to do for us here," Bob says. "But at 50, I feel like we're also entitled to look back. And there are a lot of folks out there who remember and love these earlier guitars, so we thought it would be great to re-introduce some of them."

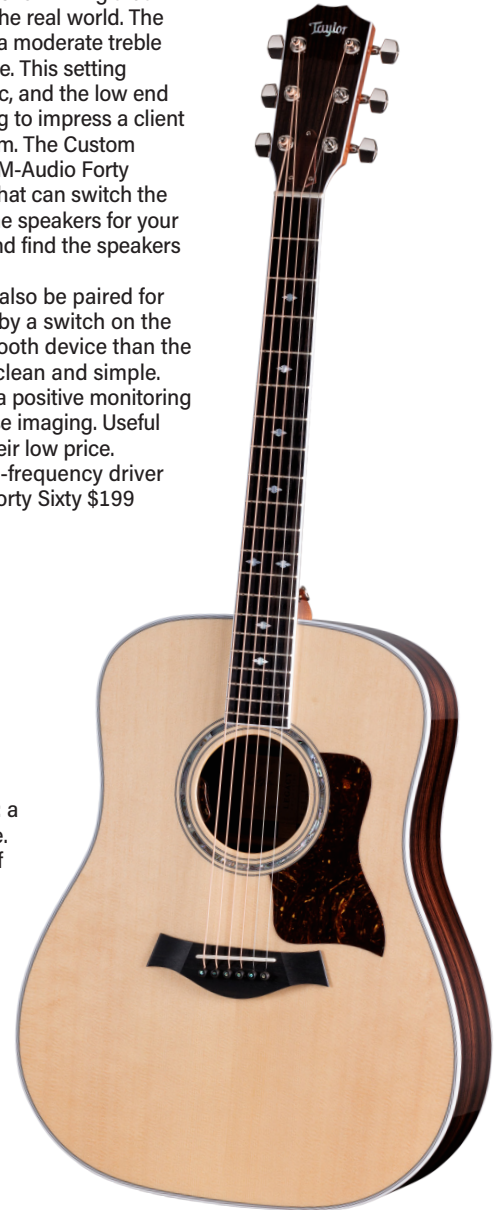
I've had the opportunity to review a few of the 50th Anniversary guitars and was sent an 800e Legacy. While all of them are exceptional instruments, they all have had their differences. The 800e has the look, feel and sound of the best guitars from the 1970s, but hot-rodged. Taylor went back to a dreadnought body design slightly modified from their '70s original. The top is Sitka spruce, the neck is mahogany, and the fingerboard and bridge are ebony. The back is a book matched piece of rosewood that looks stunning. The result is a guitar with a wonderful and pronounced bass presence that is warm but not boomy. The guitar sounds incredible, plays like a dream and intonation is excellent.

Aesthetics include a green abalone three-ring rosette, ebony bridge pins, a faux tortoiseshell pickguard, and nickel tuning machines. Neck inlays are diamond shapes.

The retro lookback also includes the electronics. Instead of the ES2 electronics system Taylor usually uses, the 810e Legacy has an LR Baggs Element VTC, an undersaddle pickup with a Class A preamp and soundhole mounted volume and tone control.

All Legacy Collection models feature a distinctive "Legacy" label inside the guitar. The labels for the first 100 of each model are hand-signed by Taylor co-founders Bob Taylor and Kurt Listug. You can't go wrong with any of the 50th Anniversary Taylor guitars. \$3,399

taylorguitars.com



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

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EBENEZER SCROOGE IS NOTORIOUS for asserting that Christmas coming only once a year was "A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every 25th of December!" However you feel about gift-giving, surely you have some musician friends, loved ones or perhaps even a Scrooge or two for whom you'll pick your own pocket to stuff one of their stockings. Once again, *Music Connection* has your back. As far as your front goes, you're on your own. So go on: pick your pocket, stuff a stocking and ghost the Ghost of Christmas Present with our 2024 stocking stuffer suggestions for musicians.

AMOS TASTYSOUNDS RECORDABLE LOLLIPOP \$9.99

Since music's invention (or discovery, depending on your perspective), some must have wondered how they could also taste a tune. Thankfully, enterprising entrepreneurs have discovered a way to marry the two pleasures by combining bone conduction tech and sugary non-tech lollipops. Finally, you'll be able to eat what you hear and hear what you eat. TastySounds recordable lollipops come in various flavors, none of which is volume control. #MissedOpportunity tinyurl.com/yey32czy

MUSIC TRANSPOSE TOOL FOR NOTES, CHORDS AND KEY SIGNATURE \$8.97

Some people can transpose on the fly. For those who can't, this simple wheel might be a welcome stuffing to their stocking and can even help singers adjust to their ideal vocal range. Think old-fashioned slide rule without the pesky, utilitarian math vibes. tinyurl.com/5ery9y9d

GORILLA TIPS FINGERTIP PROTECTORS FOR GUITARISTS \$7.93 - \$10.99

Just like it shouldn't hurt to listen to someone play the guitar, it shouldn't hurt to play it, either. Already have callused digits? Gorilla Tips are like helmets for your fingertips. Play until they hurt and then don these. Unless, of course, you want an excuse not to practice. Not to call humbug, but excuses make terrible stocking stuffers. tinyurl.com/3ufxhvsj



▲ KIKKERLAND CUSTOM HAND-CRANK MUSIC BOX \$15.59

Music boxes are cute, quaint and quirky. But wouldn't it be cool if you could gift one that played a friend's own song, one that they had written? It might be a bit like hearing one of their original compositions being cranked out of an ice cream truck. But that can't be as bad as it sounds. Shucks, it may even represent the

STOCKING STUFFERS 2024

BY ROB PUTNAM

fulfillment of a childhood dream. tinyurl.com/5yz4jbn6

AZIMOM 3D ILLUSION ELECTRIC GUITAR NIGHT LIGHT \$17.99

What kind of musician needs a night light? Perhaps one for whom walking into walls in the middle of the night has lost some of its charm. But if you still want to slam into drywall, why not do it by the glow of this 10-inch, 3D-like guitar night light? It comes with a remote control and can be tuned to any of 16 colors. tinyurl.com/2r99zcb6



▲ CUSTOMIZED MUSICAL GREETING CARD STARTING AT AROUND \$1

Many online outfits will create a greeting card with custom sounds, such as a friend's song. If you prefer the DIY route, music/sound/voice recording player chip modules for greeting cards are inexpensive and are available from a number of outlets such as AliExpress for as little as \$1. tinyurl.com/26858kn8

WHISTLE MUSICAL CANDY \$2.49

With the obvious exception of four of the five kids from *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, there are few situations that aren't sweetened by candy. The holidays are no different. But go beyond typical treats and choose one that comes tune-enabled. How ridiculous would it be if this became a recording engineer's go-to piece of gear? Even if it doesn't, you've still got the candy. tinyurl.com/5n77aftb

QUIKSTAFF STAFF-DRAWING PEN \$11.99

It's a well-known and vexing problem for composers: there's often no staff paper around when it's needed. Banish the problem with QuikStaff's staff-drawing pen, an implement with which you can draw a five-line music staff on any blank piece of paper. To other musicians, this may almost seem like sleight of hand when you produce a freshly-drawn piece of staff out of thin air... nearly. Unless they also own a QuikStaff. tinyurl.com/3wje432y

CUSTOMIZED MUSICAL REFRIGERATOR MAGNET STARTING AT \$15.99

Old-school refrigerator magnets have always lacked the magic of music. Until now. You can select a pic and a song that will play

anytime you need to go from a sulky scullery to a bitchin' kitchen. It can even be controlled via a phone's Bluetooth. Add a classic song or one created by the musician you know. Refrigerators can now be both cold and cool. tinyurl.com/32m7bzun

AKG K240 MKII HEADPHONES \$79

These over-ear, semi-open headphones are billed as the most widely-used studio headphones in the world. That makes Santa's job easy and presumably yours too. tinyurl.com/3dua9umr

AIR VINYL SCENTED CDS AND TURNTABLE STARTING AT \$14.99

Someone's finally invented a mini turntable that will spin scented CD-like discs to freshen your car. These tiny twirlers clip onto AC vents and whirl when air is circulated, so no batteries or charging is required. The starter set includes one turntable and two CDs. With 100 covers to choose from, you'll find something to your taste, if not to your smell. airvinyls.co/collections/car-fresheners



▲ TINY HARMONICA \$6.99

Often when someone says they're a musician, people want to hear them play a song. Just as often, they don't. But don't accommodate the naysayers. Be a force for good or at least for an impromptu tune—an "imprompt-tune," if you will. Or even if you won't. With this Tiny Tim-sized four-hole, eight-tone harmonica slung around your neck, a melody can be conjured at any time. tinyurl.com/3956j6fd

OTAMATONE SANRIO HELLO KITTY 50TH ANNIVERSARY \$45.99

It's hard to believe, Hello Kitty invaded pop culture 50 years ago. That's .62 Keith Richards' lifespans or 5.36 of Mozart's. To mark the occasion, Sanrio has released their Otamatone that allows users to create music easily and quirkily. The pitch is altered by sliding fingers up the stem and vibrato is produced when the kitty's cheeks are squeezed, almost like with real kitties. The trio of required AAA batteries is a rich excuse for picking anyone's pocket for the 25th of December. tinyurl.com/yaw8r67x



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◀ BOSS KATANA ARTIST GEN 3 1 X 12-INCH 100-WATT COMBO AMPLIFIER

The BOSS Katana Artist Gen 3 leads the charge of BOSS's revamped line of Katana amplifiers, taking the series to fresh new sonic heights complete with the company's evolved Tube Logic technology. This 100-watt, 12-inch combo amplifier is equipped with a sweeping sonic arsenal of six amplifier voices (including a new Pushed voice), six voice variations, and the Gen 3 addition of a Bloom switch to sharpen up your sound. boss.info

\$599.99

▶ FENDER PLAYER II STRATOCASTER HSS ELECTRIC GUITAR

The Player II Stratocaster HSS is a stage-ready guitar with contemporary updates to power your performance and inspire your playing. Features include a contoured alder, chambered ash or chambered mahogany Body, modern "C" neck profile, and 9.5"-radius maple or rosewood fingerboard with rolled edges. fender.com

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▼ ROLAND JUNO-D6 61-KEY SYNTHESIZER

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▲ RADIAL NUANCE SELECT STUDIO MONITOR CONTROLLER

The **Nuance Select** is Radial's flagship studio monitor controller, offering a sleek and ergonomic design with extremely low distortion for complete transparency. The result is a pristine signal path for seamless switching between two audio sources and two sets of powered speakers. radialeng.com

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► WALRUS AUDIO MAKO MKII ACS1 AMP AND CAB SIMULATOR PEDAL

Equipped with true-to-life amp models, pro-designed cab IRs, and truckloads of performance-ready features, the Walrus Audio Mako MKII ACS1 packs a full-fledged guitar rig into a compact, easy-to-use a stompbox. The MKII ACS1 contains Fender-style cleans, Marshall-flavored crunch, and Vox-flavored chime, plus three additional high-gain models, putting a total of six fan-favorite sonic options at your feet. walrusaudio.com

\$449.99



► JOE BONAMASSA 1955 LES PAUL STANDARD COPPER IRIDESCENT

The **Epiphone Joe Bonamassa 1955 Les Paul Standard** was inspired by one of Joe's rarer finds: a 1955 Les Paul Standard he nicknamed "The Brown Thing." The original axe is a prime mid-'50s specimen, boasting typical Les Paul Standard specs, including P-90 pickups and a custom iridescent finish. epiphone.com

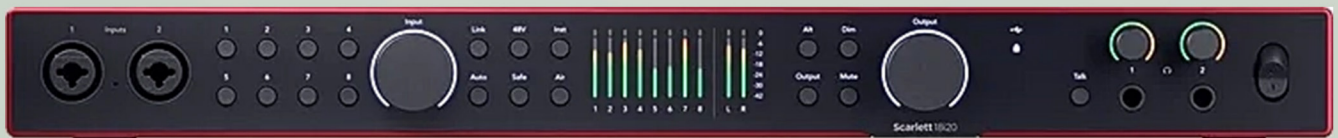
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▼ FOCUSRITE SCARLETT 18I20 4TH GEN USB AUDIO INTERFACE

The **fourth-generation** Focusrite Scarlett 18i20 offers a significant upgrade over previous generations, boasting updated mic preamps, RedNet-derived AD/DA conversion, Auto Gain and Clip Safe features, a Dynamic Metering display, and more. This 18-in/20-out USB-C audio interface includes guitar-friendly hi-Z inputs, a custom-designed headphone amp, loopback, Focusrite's acclaimed Air Mode, and enough outputs to accommodate two sets of studio monitors or your favorite piece of outboard gear. focusrite.com

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◀ FENDER PLAYER II JAZZ BASS

Fenders Player II Jazz Bass radiates timeless Fender charm, but under the hood, it's primed for today's players. Everything about the neck is designed for fast and fluid playability, from the Modern "C"-profile with silky satin urethane finish on the back to the comfy 9.5"-radius slab rosewood or maple fingerboard with smooth rolled edges and 20 medium jumbo frets. A classic alder body is available in both timeless Fender finishes and never-before-seen colors unearthed from the archives. Player Series Alnico V Single-Coil J bass® pickups offer sweet highs, growling mids and seismic lows that elevate any genre. [fender.com](https://www.fender.com)

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▶ JBL IRX ONE

Boasting legendary **JBL** fidelity and performance, IRX ONE utilizes concert line array-inspired directivity control, resulting in a custom-tuned, C-shaped array. Featuring six 2" high-frequency drivers, the array delivers rich clarity, a wide sweet spot and seamless front-to-back coverage. The advanced 8" woofer features a bass-reflex design that ensures low-frequency response down to 40 Hz. [jbl.com](https://www.jbl.com)

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▲ ALESIS NITRO MAX MESH ELECTRONIC DRUM SET

Nitro Max raises the bar for both beginner and more advanced drummers, delivering an authentic playing experience with ultra-quiet Alesis mesh drum heads, all in a compact design. Featuring 32 different kits from the renowned BFD drum sample library, Nitro Max offers seamless play along with music streaming services via Bluetooth, a host of built-in learning features, and three months of Drumeo for unlimited lessons. [alesis.com](https://www.alesis.com)

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▶ AEA R92 RIBBON MICROPHONE

Offering a classic ribbon character in the form of a near-field, the dual-tone R92 functions as a versatile creative tool with innumerable possibilities. Similar in sound to the AEA R84, but with a more pronounced midrange and minimized proximity effect, the R92 performs brilliantly when up close to brass, guitar amps, kick drum, and percussion. aearibbonmics.com

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◀ UNIVERSAL AUDIO ENIGMATIC '82 OVERDRIVE SPECIAL AMPLIFIER PEDAL

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▶ AUDIGO WIRELESS MIC AND IOS APP

Audigo is the first of its kind integrated solution—a high quality midside smart microphone, an audio+video iPhone app, and bundled cloud services that create a streamlined mobile multitrack recording solution that works anywhere your creativity strikes—not to mention can effortlessly increase the overall audio quality of iPhone videos. audigolabs.com

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▲ ARTURIA KEYLAB 61 MK3 61-KEY KEYBOARD CONTROLLER

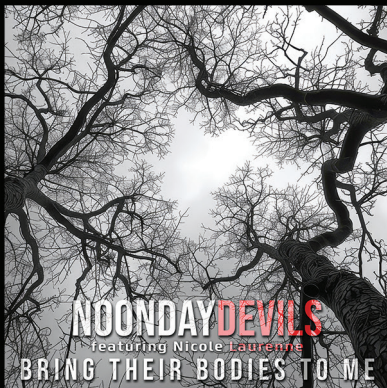
Arturia's KeyLab mk3 is an advanced MIDI controller designed to meet the demands of professional use and integrate seamlessly with software and hardware instruments. With a pro-grade semi-weighted keyboard, touch-sensitive controls and innovative creative features encased in a durable, high-quality construction, discover a keyboard built without compromise that musicians can rely on at every turn. arturia.com

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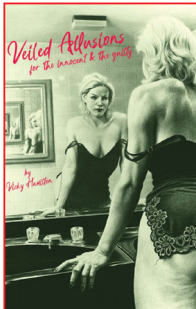
BOOK STORE

Veiled Allusions

By Vicky Hamilton

(paperback) \$25

Grammy Award-winning and longtime music industry executive, personal manager, and author Vicky Hamilton—who garnered acclaim for her *Appetite For Dysfunction* memoir



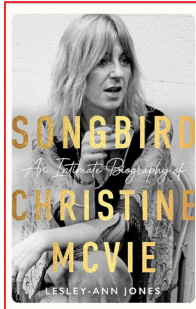
(recently optioned by Electric Panda which is working with a prominent writer to develop the book for television)—has set her sights on a new medium with her latest book *Veiled Allusions*. It's a collection of 50-plus poems, representing "me at 15 through me at 66," she says.

Songbird: An Intimate Biography of Christine McVie

By Lesley-Ann Jones

(hardcover) \$32.50

Writer Lesley-Ann Jones chronicles the life, career, and legacy of the late Fleetwood Mac co-songwriter/vocalist, Christine McVie, who passed away in 2022 at the age of 79. In addition to being friends with McVie, Jones has carved a place for herself with previously acclaimed biographies on Freddie Mercury, David Bowie, John Lennon, The Rolling Stones, Kylie Minogue, Marc Bolan of T. Rex, and more.

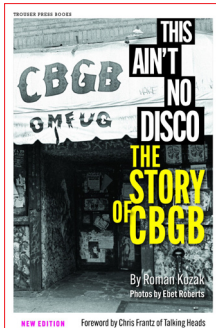


This Ain't No Disco: The Story of CBGB

By Roman Kozak

(paperback) \$22.95

CBGB was the birthplace of punk and new wave in America in the 1970s. The Ramones, Blondie, Television, Talking Heads and many other groundbreaking bands got their start in the rock club on New York's Bowery. Originally issued in 1988 and out of print for decades,



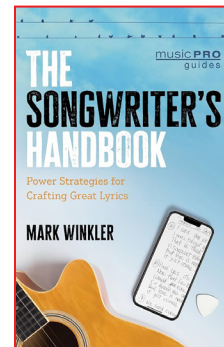
This Ain't No Disco is a detailed warts-and-all history, with memories, stories and gossip from insiders who worked, played or just hung out at CBGB, with rare photographs by Ebet Roberts. This new edition features a foreword by Chris Frantz of Talking Heads.

The Songwriter's Handbook

By Mark Winkler

(paperback) \$35

Written by award-winning songwriter and jazz performer Mark Winkler, *The Songwriter's Handbook* is crafted in a light, humorous style that reflects Winkler's expertise in the art of lyric writing. This meticulous how-to guide



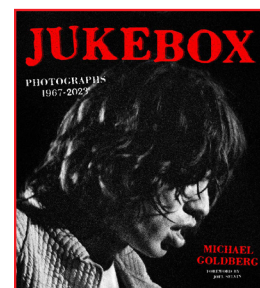
includes engaging songwriting exercises and is peppered with Winkler's wealth of knowledge and life experiences, shared through his self-titled "digressions." These anecdotes span his early forays into lyric writing to his career as a recording artist, offering readers both practical advice and entertaining insights.

Jukebox: Photographs 1967-2023

By Michael Goldberg

(paperback) \$33.99

For over 50 years, San Francisco-raised photographer Michael Goldberg has been bridging the gaps between the late '60s psychedelic era, first-wave '70s punk, soul and reggae. Included are never-before seen photos of: the Sex Pistols, Crime, the Ramones, the Avengers, Devo, the Clash, Lou Reed,



John Cale, Tom Waits, Courtney Barnett, Janis Joplin, Muddy Waters, Toots and the Maytals, Patti Smith, the Who, Neil Young, Jonathan Richman, Townes Van Zandt, and many many more.

Over the Influence

By Joanna "JoJo" Levesque

(paperback) \$30

Signed to a major label at just 12, JoJo quickly became a pop and R&B sensation in the 2000s. Her career spanned Top 40 hits, film roles, and major media appearances, but suddenly halted, leaving fans wondering what happened. In



Over the Influence: A Memoir, JoJo reveals her journey through family struggles, a grueling lawsuit, and her eventual comeback. Now, she's independently releasing music, performing globally, and headlining on Broadway, reclaiming her dreams on her terms.

Turn Key, State-of-the-Art Music Venue and Recording Studio For Sale



3410-3440 Industrial Drive, Santa Rosa, California

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This very well maintained warehouse building is available for sale. Included at the price of \$4.7M is all improvements, including the sound equipment, camera equipment, recording equipment, lighting, furnishings, fixtures and permits. At a price of \$4.3M the seller is willing to lease back the music venue at \$1.15 per foot for three years, maintaining all improvements, including the sound equipment, camera equipment, recording equipment, lighting, furnishings, fixtures. At this rate the building would have over a 6.5% cap rate. At a price of \$3.95M the seller will remove all sound and camera equipment, lighting, recording equipment, furnishings and fixtures from music venue.

This is the current location of the Rock Star University's HOUSE OF ROCK which is arguably the finest, intimate rock venue on the entire West Coast. This facility is a fully permitted, TURN KEY, state of the art concert venue, soundstage, and production facility which features the finest in industry standard equipment, beer and wine license, plenty of parking, and can remain open until 2AM each day. HOUSE OF ROCK consists of approximately half of the buildings space. In the other unit (both separately metered) there is a very nicely finished collector car storage warehouse area with a DMV Wholesale Dealers License attached to the address. Each unit has two at grade roll up doors with easy access. Zoned IL offering many potential uses. State-of-the-art recording studio equipment, stage, lighting, venue furnishings, restaurant equipment, video and recording equipment all available separately.

A fantastic opportunity to own the finest, intimate music venue on the West Coast and a recording studio designed and construction supervised by Capitol Records own, Art Kelm www.ground1.com/resume.htm with equipment personally selected and operated by legendary rock producer Ron Nevison en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron_Nevison



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Line Studio At WMS

linestudioatwms.org

Students Say Aloha to State-of-the-Art Studio: Located in Honolulu, HI, Washington Middle School is the only public school in the Hawaiian Islands that offers pro audio training, and one of the few to offer video production training. The vision that led the WMS to turn a computer classroom into a state of the art recording studio (Line Studio at WMS) is rooted in school principal Michael Harano's belief that "if middle school kids find their passion, find their voice and move forward in their education, high school, college and career, because they found their passion they're going to be successful in their life." State legislators originally approved funds to build a video production classroom, but Harano had the idea to instead create a recording studio, putting veteran sound engineer and WMS educator Sam Fong in charge of the project. Fong says, "I've always believed we should strive for the best, do everything to the best of our ability to educate young people. It's about helping them find their purpose." Currently in its "soft opening" phase, the world class facility is not just for students interested in music and music production, but for those WMS studying history, science and other subjects. Its founders are also doing community outreach to non-profit organizations, musical and otherwise, and to Hawaii's musical community at large.



The Design Team: Seeking out the perfect studio designer to create the facility, Fong hit the jackpot meeting members of the WSDG team at NAMM. One of WSDG's founding partners is John Storyk, who began his career with the 1969 design of Jimi Hendrix's Electric Lady Studios in NYC. The project manager for the Line Studio at WMS is Romina Larregina, a partner who is the company's Director of Production. The WSDG design team was tasked with creating a full studio design package including studio design, acoustic design and isolation, technical interior design, and systems design. The team is nominated for the Studio Design Tech Award at the upcoming 2025 NAMM show.

The Studio Design: The 1600 sq. ft. recording complex is a world-class recording studio designed to function equally well as a professional audio production space and as a classroom. The complex includes multiple iso booths, a substantial equipment closet, a full complement of outboard gear, and a Sound Lock with wheelchair access. The control room has dedicated consoles for both audio and video production - specifically the SSL AWS 948 and AVID MTRX and a NewTek Tricaster. Monitoring is provided by a custom Symphonic Acoustics speaker system, jointly designed by WSDG and George Augspurger, as well as a full Dolby Atmos 7.1.4 ATC speaker array for immersive audio production and mixing. The spacious live room also allows for multiple configurations and ensemble sizes. As with the rest of the studio, the interior and lighting design of the space was inspired by the lush Hawaiian surroundings. The WSDG design team integrated elements of the stems and leaves of the local kalo (taro) plant within the custom designed rear wall Wave Diffuser and other aesthetic/acoustic elements of the interiors. Local materials were also heavily favored in the construction process.

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▲ **THOMAS GULYÁS FLIES SOLO WITH RYCOTE**

Thomas Gulyás is among the most sought-after documentary sound mixers in Denmark and neighboring Scandinavian countries. "I started using Rycote mics because I had a very good first experience with them," he recalls. "I was working on a reality program about flea markets, where teams of two people purchase old items, restore them, and then try to sell them at a profit."



▲ **DAWES CELEBRATES OH BROTHER**

California rock band Dawes has been out on tour this fall, celebrating their ninth studio album, *Oh Brother*, out now on Dead Ringers via Secretly Canadian Distribution. Most recently, they shared their epic new single, "Surprise!," available everywhere now.



▲ **WILL SASS REVEALS DEBUT SINGLE "ALICA"**

New York City-based artist and producer Will Sass has released his debut single, "Alica (feat. Alvin Risk)." Sass is a boundary-pushing artist and producer. Inspired by musical savants like Kevin Parker of Tame Impala, Kaytranada, and Mark Ronson, Sass blends genres effortlessly, creating a signature sound that's both eclectic and cohesive.

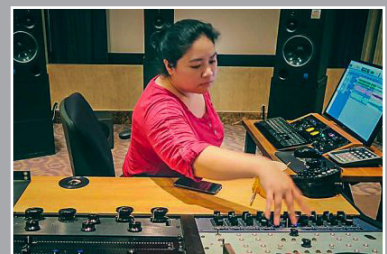


▲ **STEREOPHONIC WINS TONY AWARDS**

Garnering a record 13 Tony nominations, *Stereophonic* recently made history, taking home five wins including Best Play and Sound Design. Set in a music studio in 1976, the play explores the agony and ecstasy of music creation, following an up-and-coming rock band on the cusp of superstardom as they record their new album.

PRODUCER PLAYBACK

"When it gets to the mastering stage, I've found that there's a pattern of dynamics being a priority. In terms of loudness, it's not as loud as other genres and we're not fighting for level." - JETT GALINDO





▲ ATLANTA'S STANKONIA STUDIOS BEGINS THE NEXT CHAPTER OF ITS STORIED LEGACY

For the past 36 years, through several changes of ownership, Outkast's Stankonia Studios in Atlanta has produced a string of hit records and Grammy Award-winning projects on the Solid State Logic SL 4000 G analogue mixing console in its main room.



▲ SAMARA JOY PAINTS A PORTRAIT

Jazz artist Samara Joy's new Verve Records release, *Portrait*, is the proper follow-up to *Linger Awhile*, her 2022 breakthrough LP, and it represents the next phase in her continuing artistic evolution—unbound by expectations. Joy co-produced *Portrait* with fellow multiple Grammy winner Brian Lynch, a trumpeter and musical director who has been Eddie Palmieri's most vital late-career collaborator and was a member of the final lineup of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers.



▲ LIGHT YEAR STUDIOS WITH NUGEN AUDIO

Based in the U.K., Light Year Studios is a one-stop shop for creative audio recording and post-production on both high-end and independent productions. Pictured is re-recording mixer Rob Ackerman.

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PRODUCER CROSSTALK

- ROB PUTNAM



DAVE TRUMFIO

Producer, musician and studio owner Dave Trumfio started his first band with his brother Harry in the Chicago suburbs before either were even teenagers. In true wunderkind fashion, he began to record around the same time. Following an internship at now-defunct Seagrape Recording Studios in the early '90s, he opened Kingsize Soundlabs, which he relocated to L.A. in 2000. He's since worked with a number of artists including Built to Spill, My Morning Jacket and fellow Chicago outfit Wilco. His own band the Pulsars re-released its 1997 debut *Pulsars* in September and a tour is poised to launch.

Early in his L.A. days, an obstacle Trumfio encountered regularly was the relatively small budgets afforded artists on indie labels. But working with less established acts also gave him significant freedom. "Many of the bands I wanted to work with were on cool, up-and-coming indie labels," he recalls. "[But] the budgets just weren't there. I always gravitated to under-the-radar artists, which allowed me to be flexible. I did a lot of artist development at the time—bands like OK Go and singer-songwriter Patrick Park. I've always seen the studio as my instrument and I took that early on as part of my business plan."

With three-plus decades of experience, he's developed a nearly visceral sense of when a song has struck audio gold. "[I know it] when I get goosebumps," he says, half-jokingly. "When things come together quickly, they're usually good. I worked with Wilco [partnered with Billy Bragg] on [1998's] *Mermaid Avenue* and everything we did was supposed to be demos. But all of the [final] Wilco tracks came out of that session."

The biggest challenge Trumfio faces as a producer is addressing subpar vocal issues with singers. "It's always hard when there's a loose link in the band," he observes. "Usually it's one of the key members so it's very touchy. I always shoot straightforward and say 'You have to go sing with a piano so you can hit those notes a little better.' The trend now is that everyone sings through Auto-Tune and it's really weird. I get using it to tighten things by five or ten percent. Personally, I'm a fan of character. But there've been a few occasions when a singer was nowhere near the right notes."

In addition to his primary workspace, which boasts nearly forty rooms in total, Trumfio partnered recently with residential studio Gold Diggers in East Hollywood. Interestingly, sci-fi filmmaker Ed Wood used to live there and also maintained a soundstage, which has since been converted to studios. "It's a bow-trussed building that's a home studio away from home," the producer says. "We've got seven operating studios and 11 hotel rooms. For gear, I offer what I like to call 'The greatest hits.' Every studio has a minimum of a Neve 1073, LA-2A Tube Compressor plug-in, [Tube-Tech] CL 1B, etc. We do a lot of K-pop there."

Visit kingsizesoundlabs.com, gold-diggers.com, Instagram @pulsarsband

THE 3 MOST IMPORTANT

... lessons he's learned as a producer and studio head are:

- You have to be the person that people want in the room. This job is 60 percent personality, 40 percent tech.
- Be recording all the time.
- I used to work 16-hour days. I've learned that I'm way more productive when I only work eight. A lot of the stuff that happens after the 10-hour mark is mediocre at best.



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- Robin A. Jones (Host of the Jazz Hang Suite on WMEL Radio)


stevenb.net | stevenb.hearnow.com



Zoe Ko **MUSIC CONNECTION**

Congrats to Zoe Ko on being one of MC's Top Signing Stories of 2024!

"Nothing about Ko is lightweight, she channels Iggy Pop energy over her thrifted, draped aesthetic, a rummaging sound that builds into closed-fisted grit."

 ones to watch

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Paula Park

Founder
Soft Serve

Years with Company: Less than one
Address: 1320 Pico Boulevard, Apt. E,
Santa Monica, CA 90405
Phone: 213-322-4656
Web: [instagram.com/pepark](https://www.instagram.com/pepark)
Email: paula@soft-serve.co
Clients: Audrey Nuna

BACKGROUND

During her childhood in Brazil, Paula Park became entranced with the potential for music to inspire social justice. That fixation eventually led to a career helping entertainers explore hot button issues at organizations such as Scooter Braun's SB Projects. Now, the Berklee College of Music graduate is branching out with her own company, Soft Serve. Her first client is singer, rapper and fellow Korean Audrey Nuna.

Sound of Change

Growing up, I had this lofty goal of changing my country and working to build a better future for the people of Brazil, so I went to economics school and wanted to work in politics. As I grew older, I realized that wasn't the right fit for me. I always loved music and artists that are at that intersection of honoring their social responsibility and interweaving that with music. I decided to throw my whole life up in the air and pursue music.

Culture Barrier

I only worked [in Brazil's music industry] for a year. Brazil is very protective of its culture. If you assess the top 100 artists in Brazil, it's probably 80 percent Brazilian artists. They really protect what consumers listen to. It's different from other countries where they're very open to the import and export of music.

Brazilian artists can be very self-sufficient. They don't have any need or interest in crossing over into international markets. American artists kind of depend on global reach. Even if you see Brazilian artists trying to come to America, they still lack in fluency of the language and all these things, because crossing over is not something that's fostered in my country.

Finding Audrey Nuna

I discovered Audrey shortly before the pandemic through her feature with Jack Harlow. I was an obsessed fan. I'm Korean Brazilian and she's Korean American. The representation she brought was fresh. It was different from what I had seen as far as Korean women artists. A lot of that landscape is saturated with K-pop and what you would expect an Asian female artist to look and sound like. Audrey grew up in New Jersey and has a lot of hip-hop and R&B influence, genres I am personally passionate about. So I felt myself represented in her.

Through the years, I got to know the folks around her. Anwar Sawyer started her career and is involved with everything she does. I



"Have a sense of self. That's something the industry can't give you and nobody can teach you."

became close friends with him. We have similar outlooks on life, the industry, and culture. When the time was right and Audrey was ready to take on new management, they reached out to me. That's how I ended up managing her.

Starting Over

When I got out of college, I went back to Brazil. There aren't a lot of people who have the opportunity to leave Brazil, get an American undergraduate degree, and come back. Typically, those people stay in the U.S. Because I did come back, I was offered an executive position at Universal Brazil, which was amazing but also a little overwhelming. I was very young, but it was a great experience.

When I came back to America, nobody knew me. To them, I was just a recent graduate. It was also during the Trump administration, so a lot of companies were wary of hiring immigrants, having to sponsor visas, and all that. I got this advice of starting at the bottom from a mentor. He was like, "You need to prove you have what it takes, so be an intern." I went from being an executive to working for free again. It was a humbling moment, but it was the best decision ever because I got to work with amazing people at SB Projects and learn a lot.

And then they offered me a full-time position. From interning to my last role at SB Projects was a whirlwind. I went through the marketing department, promotion department, and then social impact and philanthropy. I was passionate about my role as social impact lead, because impacting society is what I've been passionate about since the beginning. It felt like a full-circle moment.

Fans Are Born IRL

It doesn't matter how many viral videos you have. And it doesn't matter how many digital

campaigns you build. At the end of the day, conversion happens in real life and at concerts - people seeing you live, feeling your stage presence and star quality.

Industry Misconceptions

People have an idea of what a career in the industry is, but they've never done it. It's this projection of what they think it is. Most of the time, they also didn't go to school for it. They don't know what it is, but they think they know so they want that. And they sometimes get married to this idea and prevent themselves from finding what they actually like. I see people investing five years [down one path] because they thought they wanted to be an A&R. They get a chance and they're like, "I hate this." So in the beginning of your career, shadow as many people as you can.

Believe In Something

Quavo was a client at SB Projects, and I led a lot of his philanthropy, especially after Takeoff's passing. We established the Rocket Foundation. There are things we've done with VP Kamala Harris and her office for gun violence prevention.

Intangible Returns

Soft Serve is a company I started to tackle projects focused on artists that take into account responsibility for social and cultural change. Audrey [Nuna] is our first client. As with everything we do, the bottom line is not just revenue. It's also the social change we insert into everything she does.

Looking for Socially-Conscious Artists

I'm looking for artists that are very mission-driven. I am passionate and can understand artists that are doing this for some reason beyond themselves and want to be cultural leaders even more than entertainers. That is a big prerequisite.

Aware Messaging

In a world saturated by talent, what ends up carrying that emotional bond between fan and artist is trust. One of the key ways of building that is showing their humanity and what an artist believes in. That allows for a more authentic bond than the ephemeral, ever-changing trends on social media or anything like that. One thing that's a through line between all these household names is that these artists have strong character. Most of them are outspoken and you won't get confused on which side of the line they stand on any given issue.

Know Thyself

Have a sense of self. That's something the industry can't give you and nobody can teach you. You have to know what that is so you're not swayed every time someone next to you is doing something that's not you and, by the time you get to yourself, you've spent 10 years chasing someone else.

OPPS

Warner Music Group wants a Director, Video Rights Management & Optimization

As Director, Video Rights Management and Optimization, you will be responsible for creating a center of video rights management and optimization expertise within ADA. You will work with key stakeholders across the business to create an optimal process for rights management of our distributed content around the world, with the goal of speed and accuracy in mind. You will also be responsible for finding ways to optimize the global video content at scale. Apply at BuiltIn.

Amazon Music needs a Product Marketing Manager

Amazon is looking for a driven, analytical and results-oriented Product Marketing Manager to help scale product and growth initiatives across Amazon Music tiers, aiming to think big, invent and simplify, and deliver on project roadmaps. This position will manage product marketing projects, roadmaps, and campaigns focused on growth outcomes. They will analyze campaign results for optimization and build playbooks to scale proven campaign structures. Apply at Showbiz Jobs.

World Wrestling Entertainment is looking for a Director of Music Strategy and Operations

Assists Head of Music with both long and short-term project management across both internal WWE projects and external

partnerships, including by leading communication efforts and providing deliverables across WWE, UFC, and music partner teams; takes the lead on and/or consults complex issues across multiple business avenues as appropriate Corporate Communications—Day-to-day focus on operational details to ensure information flow is appropriate and internal/external stakeholders are managed; facilitates communication between the Head of Music, other executives, and the rest of the organization Strategy Review/Development. Apply at ZipRecruiter.

Concord Music Group needs a Publishing Sync Intern

As the Publishing Sync Intern, you will gain the necessary skills to excel in the day-to-day life of a Sync department team member. You will develop your curiosity into self-sufficiency by learning foundational skills using different company systems and resources. You will develop a close eye and hone your attention to detail by working daily with incoming metadata. Apply at MusicCareers.

Elektra needs an Ambassador

Grow and maintain the Warner Music U brand on campus and within the community. Assist in organizing and hosting events to bring marketing plans to life. Enhance social media presence using targeted strategies. Monitor and approach various social media platforms with unique marketing concepts. Document and attend



▲ BABYFANGS DROPS PRIMA BELLA DONNA

Memphis born L.A. musician Babyfangs has shared her new single "Prima Bella Donna" along with a video, "shot within the confines of an ornate but unkempt Victorian mansion, worn by time and left in the care of a mysterious black cat." The lyrics, says Babyfangs (Ava Wilson), "subtly delves into queer relationships I had as a young teenager, using poisonous flowers as metaphors for the toxic relationships I endured during those years." For more info, contact vinyard@clarioncallmedia.com.

campus and community events with artists, and on behalf of the label. Apply at Zettlor.

SiriusXM wants a Music Coordinator

Receives daily assignments from Manager, Music Programming Operations and Program Directors; gains an understanding of the music scheduling software and automation system; Develops an understanding of and performs audio editing, fades and inserting correct digital markers that sound

the most appealing based on music/content selection and channel genre; Loads audio elements into music automation system and properly enters royalties related song information; Pulls listeners requests and calls from electronic webmail; Ensures on-air hosts receive daily music logs and updated talent schedules generated from music scheduling software; Monitors assigned specialty programming for content and technical quality control. Apply at talent.com.

DIY Spotlight

POLARTROPICA

LOS ANGELES-BASED Asian-American pop singer-songwriter Polartropica, aka lhui Cherise Wu, started singing and playing music at a young age.

[I began] with classical guitar and then playing trumpet as well in school band, jazz bands and youth orchestra growing up," Wu says. "I was always serious about music and at some point thought I was going to be an orchestra soloist or conductor but discovered rock and pop music and ended up going that route and forming Polartropica."

It's impossible to look at Polartropica without grinning. In these difficult and cynical times, Wu is a luminescent performer

and talented artist. She took the project's name from the song "Polartropic" by Mark Foster, as she was fascinated by the fact that you couldn't nail the tune down using conventional genre definitions. That's how she wanted her own music to be seen.

She describes her sound today as, "Dreamy, synth pop lover girl meets space princess street fighter indie rock." Highlighting that fact, her most recent release is the second part of her "Terminator Saga."

"The song is about revenge by coming back stronger and better than before, and living the most beautiful life," she says.

Wu says that DIY, from a

musical perspective, is about, "Doing it with yourself and your best, most trusted group of friends."

Looking ahead, there's a lot to look forward to from Polartropica in the coming months.

"We are in the process of finalizing the next single, writing a love song record and we're preparing for our music to be in another film," Wu says. "I am also trying to manifest a Polartropica jolly holiday tune for the world! Other than music I am looking forward to quality family time, winter coziness, baking and horseback riding!"

For more information, visit polartropica.com



TikTok wants a Music Product Operation Manager

Assist in troubleshooting and proactively identify any issues related to music content moderation and distribution processes among internal partnership teams, moderation teams, and artists. Apply at LinkedIn.

PROPS

Concert for Carolina Raises \$24.5 Million for Hurricane Helene Relief Efforts

Concert For Carolina, led by Luke Combs, Eric Church, Billy Strings and James Taylor, has raised \$24,513,185 and counting for Hurricane Helene relief efforts. Taking place in October at Charlotte's Bank of America Stadium, the record-breaking event welcomed 82,193 in-person attendees and is the largest concert ever for the venue. Even after the show, the Concert For Carolina team is still working to raise as much money as possible for hurricane relief efforts including a special silent auction, which is open now. Contact catherine.snead@sacksco.com for more info.

THE BIZ

UMG Enters Into Strategic Collab with Ethical A.I. Company Klay

Los Angeles-based A.I. music company Klay Vision Inc. announced today that it is collaborating with Universal Music Group (UMG), the world leader in music-based entertainment, on a pioneering commercial ethical foundational model for A.I. generated music that works in collaboration with the music industry and its creators. Klay aims to be the backbone for a new era of innovation, powering new products. Contact jeff@thesyn.com for more info.

BRETT CALLWOOD, MC's associate editor, has written about music for two decades, originally for Kerrang!, Classic Rock, Metal Hammer and more in the U.K. He's the author of two books, and was previously the music editor at LA Weekly and, before that, the Detroit Metro Times. A multiple award-winning writer, he's also a columnist at the Village Voice. He can be reached at brett@musicconnection.com.



▲ MEGAN MORONEY LIVES A FAIRY TALE

Sony Music Nashville/Columbia Records singer-songwriter Megan Moroney has shared the video for her latest single "Am I Okay?" "The music video takes you through what love 'always was'—a lot of failed attempts at finding the 'right one' and reminds you that the 'right one' may have been there all along if you look real close," said Moroney. For more info, contact jensen@sweettalkpr.com.

The LEGAL Beat

BY GLENN LITWAK



ROCK GROUP Limp Bizkit and its lead singer, Fred Durst, have sued Universal Music Group ("UMG") for \$200 million in alleged unpaid royalties. The lawsuit was recently filed in U.S. District Court in California. The band contends that UMG committed fraud, breach of contract and breach of fiduciary duty. In particular, the band contends that UMG designed a software system that "systematically prevented artists from being paid their royalties".

The group hit its peak in the 1990s and early 2000s. However, they had a second wave of

popularity in recent years. Despite not releasing any new music, the band had 450 million streams in 2024 and is selling out its concerts.

Bizkit is asking for a court order terminating its contracts with UMG and seeking the astronomical sum of \$200 million in damages. It should be noted that generally, plaintiffs are free to allege any amount of damages they choose.

Durst's legal counsel questioned why UMG was not paying any royalties to the group. UMG claims the reason is no royalties were due since the group had not recouped their advances. When Durst's reps reviewed UMG's royalty portal, they found that \$1 million was due to the group. So why then did the group sue for two hundred million?

The complaint alleges that the group's account "had been payable starting in 2019 and UMG then fraudulently reclassified it as 'unrecouped'" to prevent payment of royalties even though the

band had been selling millions of records. For instance, a royalty statement in 2022 showed a balance due, but the complaint alleges that it was labeled unrecouped six months later.

UMG claims this was a mistake due to its use of new accounting software. The main issue in this case is whether or not this is a simple accounting mistake or intentional fraud using "creative" accounting.

UMG claims it has paid the group approximately \$43 million in advances over the years, and that is why it has only recently recouped and started paying royalties to the band. Limp Bizkit disputes that it has received \$43 million in advances and claims that number is almost \$30 million more than they actually received. The issue of unpaid royalties to recording artists has come up often as labels claim they are unrecouped, even though some artists have sold millions of records.

After UMG discovered the alleged mistake, it paid the band

approximately \$1 million in past due royalties. In addition, it paid Flawless Records (owned by Durst) \$2.3 million.

The group claims that it has lawfully terminated its contracts with UMG based on UMG's alleged breach, although the label continues to exploit the group's recordings.

I would guess this lawsuit ends up settling, and for a lot less than \$200 million.

GLENN LITWAK is a veteran entertainment attorney based in Santa Monica, CA. He has represented platinum selling recording artists, Grammy winning music producers, hit songwriters, management and production companies, music publishers and independent record labels. Glenn is also a frequent speaker at music industry conferences around the country, such as South by Southwest and the Billboard Music in Film and TV Conference. Email Litwak at gtlaw59@gmail.com or visit glennlitwak.com.

LIMP BIZKIT SUES UNIVERSAL MUSIC FOR UNPAID ROYALTIES

This article is a very brief overview of the subject matter and does not constitute legal advice.

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ABSENTEES

Style: Punk/Power Pop
City: Detroit, MI
Website: rockindetroit.com/absentees

ARÐ

Style: Doom Metal
City: Sunderland, U.K.
Website: rushonrock.com

BBYAFRICKA

Style: Hip-Hop
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: instagram.com/bbyafricka

BLOOD MOON HOWLERS

Style: Blues Rock
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: bloodmoonhowlers.com

BROTHER SWAN

Style: Indie Rock
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: brotherswan.com

CHAIN REACTION

Style: Modern Classic Rock
City: Detroit, MI
Website: chainreactiondetroit.com

CHARLOTTE MORRIS

Style: Folk
City: Philadelphia, PA
Website: charlottomorrismusic.com

CHLOTHEGOD

Style: Neo-Soul
City: Fayetteville, NC
Website: instagram.com/chlotheagod

CIRCLE THE EARTH

Style: Rock
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: circletheearth.com

CLAY AND KELSY

Style: Electronic Pop
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: clayandkelsy.com

CROWJANE

Style: Post-punk
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: linktr.ee/crowjane

CROWLEY

Style: Occult Rock
City: Newcastle, U.K.
Website: rushonrock.com

DAKOTA 66

Style: Indie Rock
City: Dublin, Ireland
Website: instagram.com/dakota66_band

DASHER

Style: Americana/Folk/Country/Rock
City: Black Mountain, NC
Website: dashertheband.com

DERDE VERDE

Style: Indie Alternative Rock
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: derdeverde.net

DIXIE DRAGSTER

Style: Sleaze Rock
City: Nashville, TN
Website: dixiedragster.com

EARLY MOODS

Style: Doom Metal
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: instagram.com/early_moods

ELIZA NEALS

Style: Blues Rock
City: Jersey City, NJ
Website: elizaneals.com

ERENE MASTRANGELLI

Style: Singer-Songwriter
City: New York, NY
Website: erenemusic.com

FAETOOOTH

Style: Doom Metal
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: instagram.com/faetoooth

FERRIS PIER

Style: Dance Pop
City: Spokane, WA
Website: linktr.ee/ferris_pier

FIIZ

Style: Electropop
City: New York, NY
Website: linktr.ee/fiizmusic

FOREST CLAUDETTE

Style: R&B
City: Melbourne, Australia
Website: forestclaudette.com

FOXY ROXX

Style: Hair Metal
City: San Diego, CA
Website: instagram.com/foxyroxxhollywood

THE FANTASTIC FELLINIS

Style: Power-Pop
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: instagram.com/thefantasticfellinis

FEVER DREAM

Style: Indie Pop
City: Austin, TX
Website: feverdreamband.com

GRACE PETTIS

Style: Americana/Blues/Folk
City: Nashville, TN
Website: gracepettis.com

GREG SINNERS

Style: Rock, Acoustic, Instrumental
City: Wilmington, DE
Website: gssongs.com

HAL HENKEL & THE FLYING CAMELS

Style: Blues Rock Funk Jazz
City: Eugene, OR
Website: facebook.com/haroldhalhenkel

HASCO ENJOYMENTS

Style: Art, Alt-Rock
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: jpinc.tv

HOLIDAY SIDEWINDER

Style: Synth-Pop
City: Sydney, Australia
Website: holidaysidewinder.com

ISABEL LAROSA

Style: Pop
City: Annapolis, MD
Website: isabel-larosa.com

ISMAY

Style: Americana
City: Sonoma, CA
Website: instagram.com/ismaymusic

JEFF DRACO

Style: Alternative, Indie
City: Washington D.C.
Website: jeffdraco.com

JESSE LYNN MADERA

Style: Americana/Folk
City: Houston, TX
Website: jesselynnmadera.com

JHARIAH

Style: Emo/Prog Rock
City: New York, NY
Website: instagram.com/jhariah

JIVEBOMB

Style: Hardcore Punk
City: Baltimore, MD
Website: flatspotrecords.com

JIMMY & THE VEIL

Style: Alt-Rock
City: Yorktown, VA
Website: instagram.com/jimmyandtheveil

JOHN CURRY

Style: Indie/Folk/Rock Singer-Songwriter
City: Joshua Tree, CA
Website: johncurry.bandcamp.com

JOJO

Style: Pop, R&B
City: Brattleboro, VT
Website: iamjojoofficial.com

JONATHAN BARBER

Style: Jazz, Drums
City: New York, NY
Website: jonathanbarbermusic.com

JUSTIN HONSINGER

Style: SoCal Original Country
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: justinhonsinger.com

KAT VELASCO

Style: Western Pop
City: Nashville, TN
Website: katvelasco.com

KHANA BIERBOOD

Style: Surf/Garage Rock
City: Bangkok, Thailand
Website: facebook.com/khanabierbood

KRYSTOFER MAISON

Style: Rock, Pop
City: New York, NY
Website: krystofermaison.com

LARK

Style: Pop
City: New South Wales, Australia
Website: lalalark.com.au

LATE NIGHT DRIVE HOME

Style: Indie Rock
City: El Paso, TX
Website: instagram.com/latenightdrivehome

LEBRA JOLIE

Style: Hip-Hop
City: Houston, TX
Website: itslebrajolie.com

MUSIC CONNECTION'S ANNUAL LIST OF UNSIGNED LIVE PERFORMERS puts the spotlight on individuals and bands who delivered unique excitement, expert musicianship and intriguing songcraft to stages during the past year. In addition to MC staffers and freelance writers, the contributors to this list include producers, club bookers, music attorneys, managers, agents and other industry professionals. Currently, MC has reviewers in Los Angeles, New York, Detroit, Seattle, Asheville and Nashville. Livestreams are also part of our offerings. So, to be considered for an always-free live review, go to musicconnection.com/reviews/get-reviewed.

LILA BLUE

Style: Folk
City: New York, NY
Website: lilabluemusic.com

LIQUID MIKE

Style: Power Pop
City: Marquette, MI
Website: instagram.com/liquidmikeband

LISA JEAN MORAN

Style: Singer-songwriter
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: linktr.ee/lisajeanmaran

LOW CEILINGS

Style: Folk-Rock
City: Hartford, CT
Website: lowceilingsmusic.com

LOYAL LOBOS

Style: Pop, Singer-songwriter
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: loyallobos.com

MAIYA THE DON

Style: Hip-Hop
City: New York, NY
Website: maiyaonedon.com

MAGALI, A CULT

Style: Electropop
City: New York, NY
Website: [spotify](https://spotify.com)

MAGENTA MOON

Style: Pop-Rock
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: magentamoonparty.com

MATT MCCLURE

Style: Country
City: Athens, GA
Website: mattmccluremusic.com

MEERNA

Style: Indie-Pop
City: Oakland, CA
Website: instagram.com/_meernaa

MODEL/ACTRIX

Style: Experimental Rock
City: Brooklyn, NY
Website: instagram.com/modelactrix

MOLLY HANMER & THE MIDNIGHT TOKERS

Style: Americana Rock Blues
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: mollyhanmer.com

MORTAL WOUND

Style: Death Metal
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: instagram.com/mortalwound_death

NASCAR ALOE

Style: Punk/Hip-Hop
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: instagram.com/nascaraloe

NEW MEDICINE

Style: Rock
City: Minneapolis, MN
Website: newmedicinerocks.com

NYA

Style: Top 40/Hot AC
City: Tampa, FL
Website: thisisnya.com

THE NOBLE PRIX

Style: Modern Garage Rock
City: Burbank, CA
Website: instagram.com/thenobleprix

THE OPHELIAS

Style: Indie Folk
City: Cincinnati, OH
Website: theopheliasband.com

THE OTHER DYLAN THOMAS

Style: Americana, Blues, Roots
City: North Hollywood, CA
Website: instagram.com/theotherdylanthomas

PSYCHEDELIC PORN CRUMPETS

Style: Psychedelic Rock
City: Perth, Australia
Website: psychedelicporncrumpets.com

QBOMB

Style: Hyperpunk
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: qbomb.band

RAZOR BRAIDS

Style: Indie-Rock, Alternative
City: Brooklyn, NY
Website: razorbraids.com

RLYBLONDE

Style: Pop, Singer-songwriter
City: New York, NY
Website: rlyblonde.com

ROB MORROW

Style: Original Soulful Rock/
Funky Pop
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: robmorrow.com

SADIE BASS

Style: Country
City: Bath, MI
Website: sadiebassmusic.com

SAM AUSTINS

Style: Alt Pop/Rock
City: Detroit, MI
Website: instagram.com/samaustins

SARINA

Style: Pop-Punk
City: Tokyo, Japan
Website: instagram.com/sarinasmusic

SEAN BLACKMAN

Style: World Music/Acoustic Guitar
City: Clawson, MI
Website: seanblackman.com

SHANNON LAY

Style: Singer-Songwriter
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: instagram.com/shanny2dope

SMIRK

Style: Lo-fi Garage Punk
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: instagram.com/smirk.band

SOFTCULT

Style: Grunge/Shoegaze
City: Ontario, Canada
Website: softcult.bandcamp.com

SONS OF LEVIN

Style: Blues-Rock/ Jam Band
City: Boston, MA
Website: sonsoflevin.com

SONS OF THE GOLDEN WEST

Style: Americana/Indie Rock
City: San Francisco, CA
Website: instagram.com/sonsofthegoldenwest

SORRY MOM

Style: Punk Rock
City: New York, NY
Website: instagram.com/sorrymomband

SPIKE'S QUIREBOYS

Style: Rock 'n' Roll
City: Bedford, U.K.
Website: spikequireboys.com

STEVE GODDARD BAND

Style: Original Classic Rock
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: stevengoddardmusic.com

STRAWBERRY LAUNCH

Style: Female-fronted Rock/Pop
City: New York, NY
Website: strawberrylaunch.com

SURFBORT

Style: Punk
City: Brooklyn, NY
Website: instagram.com/therealsurfbort

TANSU

Style: Soul/Pop
City: New York, NY
Website: iamtansu.com

TERRA RENAE

Style: Pop
City: Louisville, KY
Website: instagram.com/terra.renae

THE CRAWLERS

Style: Alternative Rock
City: Liverpool, U.K.
Website: instagram.com/crawlersband

THE GREAT NORTH SPECIAL

Style: Country-Blues/Psych-Rock/
Funk-Soul
City: Laguna Beach, CA
Website: thegreatnorthspecial.com

THE MODBEATS

Style: Rock 'n' Roll
City: Cherry Hill, NJ
Website: themodbeats.com

THE WANDERING HEARTS

Style: Folk/Rock
City: U.K.
Website: thewanderinghearts.com

TIM CARROLL

Style: Rock
City: Terre Haute, IN
Website: timcarroll.bandcamp.com

UNI BOYS

Style: Punk
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: instagram.com/uni.boys

UTOPIA

Style: Jazz/Grind/Math Rock
City: London, U.K.
Website: rushonrock.com

VELVET HALO

Style: Indie-Pop
City: Los Angeles, CA
Website: velvethalomusic.com

VENDELA

Style: Alt-Pop
City: Lammhult, Sweden
Website: [YouTube](https://youtube.com)

VOXANNA

Style: Folk Rock
City: Royal Oak, MI
Website: facebook.com/voxannamusic

WRECKLESS STRANGERS

Style: Americana/R&B
City: San Francisco, CA
Website: wrecklessstrangers.com

WRENÉ

Style: Alt-pop
City: Toronto, ON
Website: waterstreetofficial.com



▲ **LANG TO RESERVOIR**

Reservoir Media inks publishing with 8x JUNO winner k.d. lang including parts of Lang's existing catalog and future works. Including 12 studio albums, multiple collaborative projects, work with The Reclines, and some singles, including Lang's hit "Constant Craving" and live rendition of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah."

▶ **NO CREEPS! FUNDRAISER**

Advocating for mental health, safety, and inclusivity in music (raising money for backline care), No Creeps! brought discussions (Adriana Arce, Ari Herstand, Jessica Vaughn, Bonnie McKee) and live performances (La Rhonza, Latasha, Galxara, Mynx, Bonnie McKee) to over 250 guests. Visit: [instagram.com/nocreepsmvmt](https://www.instagram.com/nocreepsmvmt)



▲ **BMGS BREAKING BENJAMIN**

Multi-platinum rockers Breaking Benjamin sign to BMG and releases their first single in 5 years, "Awaken." Launching in 2002, they have 10 No. 1s, 8.5 billion streams, 6.5 million social followers, and devoted international fans. Their recent tour had support from Staind, Daughtry and Lakeview. More new music is coming soon.

Songsalve! Songwriter Community

With workshops, showcases, and songwriting contests, Songsalve! is a songwriter secret that has been supporting creatives across the board with their careers for over 25 years. As a community of songwriters, composers, and lyricists from across the globe, in all genres, coined as "the Facebook for songwriters," Songsalve! provides resources, support, and opportunities to grow and succeed. As your "all-access pass to the craft and business of songwriting," Songsalve! now includes an app to support their members on the go. Find out more and become a member at: songsalve.org.

BMI Celebrates Los Producers

BMI joined Rebeleon Entertainment, Latin Recording Academy Círculo de Productores e Ingenieros (CPI), along with the Recording Academy Florida Chapter to present the 11th Annual Los Producers fundraising event supporting numerous charitable organizations during Latin GRAMMY week. This year's proceeds benefit the Michael J. Fox Foundation and the event included multiple performances by artists including Cimafunk, Kat Dahlia, El David Aguilar, Luis Fonsi, Juanes, Mon Laferte, and many others, and deejay sets by Mr. Pauer and El Dusty. Proceeds raised will be used for the Michael J. Fox Foundation research for better treatments and an ultimate cure for Parkinson's



▲ **ONERPM GETS RICH**

Country artist Tyler Rich has signed to international label services team ONERpm following half a billion streams of his debut album *Two Thousand Miles* (including gold and platinum singles "The Difference" and "Leave Her Wild"). The NorCal-raised, Nashville-based artist's sophomore album is on the horizon.

Disease. To find out more, visit: give.michaeljfox.org/event/2024-los-producers/e608889.

A.I. Regulation Petition

In light of mounting A.I. concerns, multiple ongoing copyright infringement lawsuits, and the increase of unchecked international A.I. training, 10,000+ creatives and supporting organizations are demanding A.I. training guardrails. Actors, artists, authors, and supporting organizations have joined forces to sign their names to petition for more significant A.I. controls. The petition statement rallying growing support reads "The unlicensed use of creative works for training generative A.I. is a major, unjust threat to the livelihoods of the people behind those works, and must not be permitted." To add your name, visit: aitrainingstatement.org.

SESAC Gets HAAWK

SESAC Music Group has acquired media software services company HAAWK (Helping All Assets With Knowledge), a company specializing in copyright management and monetization for independent music, film, television, and video catalogs. Providing full-service administration, copyright monitoring, and monetization tools across YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc., HAAWK will be used in tandem with Audio Salad as part of SESAC's artist and label distribution services division. The HAAWK tools include YouTube Content ID, Facebook Rights Manager administration, SaaS products, publishing administration, and digital music distribution. More at: bit.ly/4hHRW2U.

Performing Songwriter Workshops

Jonathan Brooke hosts "Passwords, Prompts & Permission," a three-day songwriting workshop in Nashville in April 2025. Working closely with all levels of writers to find fresh points of entry using poetry, rhythm, tuning, melodies, and more, Brooke aims to open the creative process and inspire songwriters by finding words and phrases that resonate, creating melodies to support the lyrical process, rhythms to uncover words, and by navigating collaborations, in addition to learning about Brooke's capo and guitar tunings. The event includes personal guidance from Brooke, phenomenal networking, and a closing night dinner and song circle. Limited to 15 participants,

find details and registration, and more workshop opportunities at: performingsongwriter.com/creative-workshops.

ASCAP Joins Sacem

The American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) joins La Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Editeurs de Musique (SACEM), combining and leveraging their data and expertise to support the members of both organizations. Having worked together already to distribute ISWC/ISRC links for work identification in 2017, and partnering for licensing in 2022 for ASCAP repertory negotiations in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, the new alliance is founded on four areas. ASCAP and Sacem are working towards more innovation to improve songwriter income, digital partnership for market growth, launching a joint A.I. task force, and bringing creatives together globally through a series of camps, networking events, and educational programs. More at: bit.ly/4emz5ra.

WMG Launches WMAFR

Warner Music Group has launched WM Africa Francophone (WMAFR)—a collaboration between Warner Music Africa, Warner Music France, and distribution-rights-development company Africori—to operate in France and French-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa. With an increase in French-language music streaming outside of Francophone countries (over 100 million on Spotify, an almost 100% increase since 2019), the new division will be led by Co-Directors Marc-André Niang and Yoann Chapalain, joining A&R, digital and marketing teams to work together on new collaborations. Chapalain will continue as A&R Manager at Africori and Niang will continue as the A&R Director, French Speaking African repertoire at Warner Music France.

Virgin Scoops Outdustry

Virgin Music Group has acquired London-based artist and label services company Outdustry, with founder Ed Peto named as Senior Vice President of International Strategy at Virgin Music Group (while continuing as CEO of Outdustry). The artist and rights management business for Outdustry has been focused on China, India, and other 'high-potential' markets, and it will continue to operate its marketing,

publishing (Outdustry Songs) and label (Outdustry Records) divisions under its own brand in partnership with Universal Music Publishing and Virgin Music Group. Outdustry has been running since 2008 and has been part of success stories in China and India for artists including Adele, Dua Lipa, Lauv, Laufey, Major Lazer/Diplo, and Charli XCX.

Listening Room Retreats

Now in its 22nd year, the Brett Perkins' Listening Room Retreats return with upcoming songwriting retreats in Ireland, California, Greenland, and Denmark. With over 2,000 songwriter alumni from over 30 countries, with varying skill levels from beginners to experienced professionals, participants have gone on to record, co-write and tour internationally as a result of the networking opportunities at the retreat. Many retreat songs have also been commercially released. Flexible, interest-free payment plans available, with full details at: listeningroomretreats.com.

ANDREA BEENHAM (aka Drea Jo) is a freelance writer and marketing consultant based in Southern California. The South-African born, Canadian-raised California transplant has a passion for music, people and fun. She can be reached at drea@dreaajo.com



▲ SMP SIGNS YULO

Sony Music Publishing Nashville signs songwriter-producer and multi-instrumentalist Elysse Yulo. With versatility across country and pop, hit credits include "Tough" (Lana Del Rey and Quavo), co-writes "Tears in the River" and "I Wanna Know" (both Maddox Batson), and "The Way I See You" (Zach John King).



▲ ORCHARD'S ALI SETHI

Singer-songwriter Ali Sethi signs exclusive distribution with The Orchard through label Zubberdust Media. Sethi blends traditional qawwali, ghazals, and modern sound, selling out Blue Note Shows and performing with Nicolás Jaar. "Pasoori" (1 billion streams) and *Intiha* (2023) gained global attention. New music will be out soon.



▲ AIMP IN MIAMI

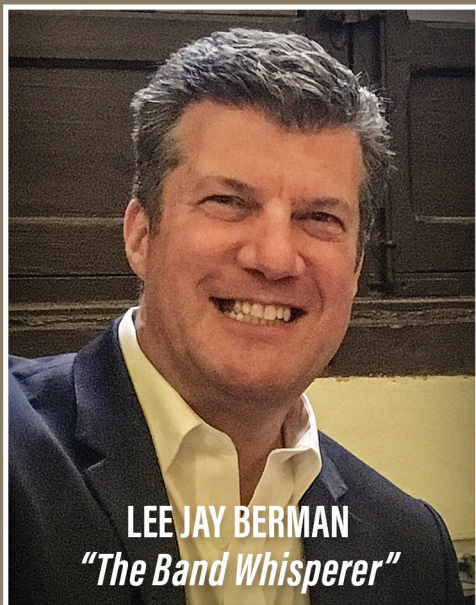
The Association of Music Publishers (AIMP) held the AIMP Miami Music Publishing Summit with Music Publishers Canada at the University of Miami Frost School of Music covering A.I., legal and rights management, finances, sync licensing, publishing, management, etc. Further AIMP details at: aimp.org.



▲ CARDWELL'S AMERICANA RELEASE

Signing to Americana Vibes, bluegrass artist Ray Cardwell is set to release his album *Singing Tree* (his fourth full album, but the first with the label), a project produced by Jeremy Garrett (The Infamous Stringdusters). Cardwell and Garrett met during lockdown, writing "Missouri Breeze" via Zoom. More at: raycardwell.com

Band Conflict? Partnership Issues? Royalty Disputes?



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Michelle Ray

Mama Mentor

Best known for appearing on NBC's *The Voice* Team Blake Season Four, soul/pop singer-songwriter and voiceover artist, Michelle Ray started singing professionally at age 10, was classically trained, and began submitting her work to agents. Working on ten *Kidz Bop* albums, she quickly became a 'studio kid,' with recording sessions after school. Passionate about musical theater, she took every opportunity to perform. Being heard live by someone with West Coast contacts led to a dual-coast, years-long commute, and eventual move West. As a student at the Berklee College of Music for a semester before landing a spot on *The Voice*, she never looked back.

Ray's paternal great-uncle (and namesake) was an opera singer at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow whose tenor voice was discovered by her maternal grandmother, a music manager responsible for bringing him to New York's Metropolitan Opera and introducing him to her daughter (Ray's mom). Her father was also a music buff and, while he didn't pursue music himself, he managed a rock band called Royal Hunt, who Ray opened for on tour with a project she and her dad wrote.

A great song is driven by lyrics, says Ray. "Vocals are my main passion, so I like to write melody first." She also keeps a notebook of inspired lyrics she pulls from to see what fits her melodies. "If I feel something I haven't felt before, or get goosebumps, I know this is good. Lyrically, melodically, vocally, there's something magical that comes together when you know it's a good song. That's the magic of songwriting." She adds that when you don't have the exact words to explain what you're feeling, sometimes a song you hear expresses it perfectly."

The journey into motherhood is what makes Ray the proudest. "Having my child has been the most incredible thing and the hardest thing in the world," she admits. She was dropped by her agent when they found out she was pregnant. "I told her I was pregnant for an audition," shares Ray. "She [said] we'll pass because wardrobe won't be able to fit you, and then literally never sent me anything again."

In music and motherhood, Ray says people are often telling us what we can and cannot do. "You're told what you should do or write, or what kind of artist you should be. We all have that inner voice within, that gut feeling we're scared to listen to or pursue, but our gut is usually correct. Do what you're most passionate about. That's where you're going to find the most success. You'll find your group if you do what you love to do."

Looking to advocate for equal rights for mothers in the music industry after her experience, Ray launched call to action #nobodyputsmamainacorner, and stumbled across organization Mamas In Music. Co-Founders Mary Leay and Tiff Randal loved her initiative and asked her to lead their Los Angeles Chapter (more at: mamasinmusic.org). Having just hosted their first annual fundraiser, Ray says, "I was just trying to rally everyone to make an equal place for moms. After Theo was born, I was even more driven than I was before."

With sold-out promotional touring in Japan as lead vocalist for pop/rock band Veil of Obscurity, Ray's theater roles have included *The Witch in Into the Woods*, touring as Klepto in *Alanis Morissette-The Album Project: Jagged Little Pill*, and Alyshia in *Green Day's American Idiot*. She has national commercial credits (including Maybelline, Mastercard, JC Penny, etc.), major voiceovers parts (Gary Marshall's *Mother's Day*, and shows on Amazon, Netflix, and Hulu), and over 10 million streams on Spotify. Ray writes, records, and performs regularly.

Contact Susan von Seggern PR Consulting - susan@susanvonseggern.com;
Experience Michelle Ray at michelleraymusic.com



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DROPS

On Dec. 14, the **Aloha Everywhere Concert Series** presented by **Hawaiian Island Creations Lifestyle** will bring three-time Grammy winner **Kalani Pe'a** to the Doney Theatre in Los Angeles for his **Hawaiian Christmas Tour 2024**. Known for singing a range of musical styles from classical and ballads to R&B and traditional and original Hawaiian music, Pe'a will showcase his talents as a songwriter and music composer alongside special guests **Kumu Hula Chase Keoki Wang** and **Hālau Nā Mamo O Pana'ewa**. Learn more by contacting Susan Gordon Public Relations at sgordon823@gmail.com.



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NOVEMBER 15 - DECEMBER 22, 2024
PREVIEWS NOV 9 & 10
WWW.CASA0101.ORG

A six-week run of **The Hunchback of Notre Dame**, a musical based on the **Victor Hugo** novel of the same name, will continue through Dec. 22, bringing audiences at Los Angeles' CASA 0101 Theater songs from the Disney film. With music by **Alan Menken**, lyrics by **Stephen Schwartz** and book by **Peter Parnell**, the production is directed by **Rigo Tejeda** and stars **CJ Cruz**, **Bimei Flores**, **Jack Bernaz**, **Drew Maidment** and **Christopher J. Thumé** leading a cast of 22 performers. Learn more at casa0101.org or by contacting Steve Moyer at moyerpr@earthlink.net.

Omar and Cedric: If This Ever Gets Weird, a documentary about the acclaimed progressive rock group **The Mars Volta**, hit theaters in November after a warm reception from audiences at its SXSW premiere in March. The film, directed by **Nicolas Jack Davies**, chronicles the 40-year musical partnership of **Omar Rodríguez-López** and **Cedric Bixler-Zavala** from their popular debut as post-hardcore band **At The Drive-In** to the later creation of **The Mars Volta** through hundreds of hours of video filmed by Rodríguez-López. For more information, contact Grace Jones at grace@theoriel.co.

Thirty years after its release, the musical world of **The Swan Princess** is coming to viewers in a complete, limited-edition DVD collection of all 12 of the animated features, starting with the original 1994 animated classic, **The Swan Princess**, plus a keepsake music box. The set includes 969 minutes of watch-time and singalong features. For more information, contact Jeremy Glassman at jeremy_glassman@spe.sony.com.

Cellar Door - Original Motion Picture Soundtrack is out now. The music was composed by **Marlon E. Espino** to accompany the Vaughn Stein-directed suspenseful thriller centered on a couple who learn about their house's dark secrets after they were gifted their dream home in Portland, OR, by a mysterious man on one condition—never open the cellar door. For further details on the 18-track song collection, contact Christian Endicio at christian@whitebearpr.com.

WaterTower Music has released **Juror #2 (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)** with music by Grammy Award-winning composer **Mark Mancina**, known for **Moana**, **Bad Boys** and **Training Day**. This marks the second collaboration between Mancina and director **Clint Eastwood**, and the soundtrack is available on all digital platforms in accompaniment to the theatrical release of the courtroom drama/thriller, which stars **Nicholas Hoult**—as a juror with a moral dilemma in a high-profile murder trial—as well as Oscar nominee **Toni Collette**. Contact Christian Endicio at christian@whitebearpr.com for more information.

Jim Henson's magical, musical and comedic world of **Fraggle Rock**, which made its debut in 1983, is back with a new series: **Fraggle Rock: Back to the Rock!** Season 1 is out now on a three-disc Blu-ray and DVD set with a cast of puppet characters brought to life by Jim Henson's Creature Shop and a string of celebrity guest stars like **Daveed Diggs**, **Ed**

Helms, **Cynthia Erivo**, **Patti LaBelle**, **Kenan Thompson** and **Foo Fighters**. Learn more by contact Jeremy Glassman at jeremy_glassman@spe.sony.com.

Categorical Records has released the official soundtrack for the original 1920 horror classic, **The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari**, with an orchestral score by Emmy-winning composer **Jeff Beal (House of Cards)**. It was released alongside a meticulously restored 4K UHD + Blu-ray edition of the film, courtesy of **Kino Lorber**. Beal's score premiered in June at Carnegie Hall, bringing new life to the classic horror film through 13 tracks. Contact

Sarah Roche at sarah@whitebearpr.com for more information.



OPPS

Want to attend the Super Music and Gaming Festival? The event is a four-day dedication to the appreciation of video game music, gaming of all types and the community that supports it, complete with consoles, arcades, live video game cover bands, panel speakers and more. Register for the Jan. 23-26, 2025, event at super.magfest.org.

The Sony Future Filmmaker Awards is free to enter and elevates breakthrough and independent voices in filmmaking. The shortlisted filmmakers are flown to Los Angeles for an exclusive four-day event to learn about the filmmaking process to advance their

careers, followed by an awards ceremony at the Sony Pictures Studios. Categories include fiction, nonfiction, animation and student. Read about submission guidelines and enter your work at sonyfuturefilmmakerawards.com/competition/enter.

High school students who aspire to careers in musical theater have until Jan. 31, 2025 to enter The Musical Theater Songwriting Challenge, which is offered through the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the National Alliance for Musical Theatre. Through this competition, high school students can develop and showcase musical compositions that could be a part of a musical theater production. Learn more at namt.org/challenge.

PROPS

In honor of the film's 20th anniversary, actor and director **Zach Braff** is convening the artists who created the iconic, Grammy-winning soundtrack of *Garden State* for a one-night-only benefit concert.

The concert, which will take place on March 29, 2025 at Los Angeles' Greek Theatre, will benefit the homeless shelter The Midnight Mission and feature **The Shins, Iron & Wine, Frou Frou, Colin Hay, Remy Zero, Cary Brothers, Bonnie Somerville, Thievery Corporation** and **Sophie Barker** from *Zero 7*. The 2004, three-time Golden Globe-nominated film was written and directed by Braff and based on his own life. Braff announced the upcoming concert on Youtube with more details, and visit ticketmaster.com/event/090061497ED710EE for tickets.

It has been 10 years since the **Damien Chazelle**-directed, Oscar-winning psychological drama *Whiplash*—about an ambitious young jazz drummer on the rise under the tutelage of an unconventional and abusive instructor—came out.

To commemorate the film, *Whiplash in Concert* was presented for the first time at Beverly Hills' historic Saban Theatre in November, conducted by Oscar-winning composer **Justin Hurwitz**. Hurwitz, also known for his work in *La La Land* and *Babylon*, conducted his score performed by an 18-piece jazz big band ensemble and

world-class drummer accompanying the screening of the original film, providing viewers an immersive experience. Learn more at hurwitzconcerts.com/whiplash-in-concert.

Six-time Emmy Award winner, Screen Actors Guild Award winner, and Tony Award nominee **Hank Azaria** wowed viewers in the past year with his passion project—adopting the persona of icon **Bruce Springsteen** onstage alongside his tribute band, **Hank Azaria & The EZ Street Band**.



HANK AZARIA

The EZ Street Band.

The project has been received so well that Azaria, a lifelong Springsteen fan, has announced a tour to take his tribute on the road in 2025.

Proceeds from their shows benefit the 4 Through 9 Foundation, Azaria's nonprofit that supports education and social causes. The band has also premiered a video for Springsteen's beloved "**Thunder Road**," which can be viewed on Youtube. Find tour dates and tickets at ezstreetnyc.com.

The World According to Allee Willis is an insightful documentary capturing the vibrant life and career of **Allee Willis**, the trailblazing songwriter behind hits like Earth, Wind & Fire's "September" and the iconic *Friends* theme song. Directed by **Alexis Spraic**, the film delves into Willis's colorful and eclectic world, showcasing her fearless creativity and her impact on pop culture. Combining archival footage with interviews,

the documentary reveals Willis's journey from her '50s Detroit roots to becoming a Hollywood icon. Friends, collaborators, and industry legends share stories of her unapologetic approach to art and life. The film captures Willis's struggles with self-identity and her drive to break artistic norms, illustrating a legacy that transcends music into design and beyond. For more info, contact daniel@forcefieldpr.com, or visit theworldaccordingtoalleewillis.com.

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

OUT TAKE



Catherine Grieves

Music Supervisor

Website: 45rpm.film/music-supervisors/catherine-grieves

Most recent: *Baby Reindeer*

Award-winning and Emmy-nominated Catherine Grieves, music supervisor behind the thriller series *Baby Reindeer* and *Killing Eve*, grew up with a particular passion for film music. She pursued sound engineering and music in college, which placed her in a gig at a London music supervision and composing agency, which led to a full-time job and assisting on films like *Les Misérables* and *The Inbetweeners Movie*. "I really loved the combination of skills involved in the job, both creative and logistical, while being immersed in music every day," Grieves says.

Grieves says a large part of the appeal of music supervision is exploring new music to support a director's vision. "I love getting lost down rabbit holes of new artists or genres and finding lesser-known gems. It's a great feeling when a director or showrunner is on your creative wavelength from the start. Once you unlock that trust in each other's taste, it can be a really fun process," she says. "Sometimes my personal taste differs from the direction that a director wants to take. In those circumstances, it's about supporting their vision, and choosing my battles of where to try and move away from certain songs. Music is so subjective, you have to have a broad taste and be open to everything."

Having received multiple awards and nominations, Grieves credits her skills to adaptability. "As a music supervisor, it's our job to support the project creatively, guiding the music direction and collaborating with the directors and showrunners to find a musical identity," she says. "It's also our job to make sure that the producers have all the rights they require in all music, and ensuring that it's within budget. Having the knowledge and experience to be able to navigate any issue, and the ability to collaborate and anticipate what the creative voices on a project are looking for in the music, makes for a good music supervisor."

▶ **GINA CHAVEZ JOINS GIBSON PROGRAM**

Gibson has launched the brand's first-ever Gibson's Artist Spotlight program, which features an evolving and diverse roster of musicians and provides emerging artists from diverse genres around the world with global exposure and services committed to their career growth worldwide. The company has introduced Texas-based pop-rock artist Gina Chavez into the program.



▲ **MAREN MORRIS WILD ROBOT**

MC photographer David Klein recently attended Amoeba Music in Hollywood where Maren Morris performed and signed copies of *The Wild Robot* soundtrack, which includes her original songs "Kiss the Sky" and "Even When I'm Not." Her contributions to the animated film were written with her son in mind.



◀ **KINSKI GALLO DUCKS UNDER THE EMPRESS MOON**

L.A.-based multidisciplinary artist Kinski Gallo released *Under The Empress Moon*, the first EP in his four-part *Wild Cards* tetralogy, on November 1. Singing in both English and Spanish, Gallo seamlessly blends synth pop, progressive house, EDM, and Latin dance across four dynamic tracks.

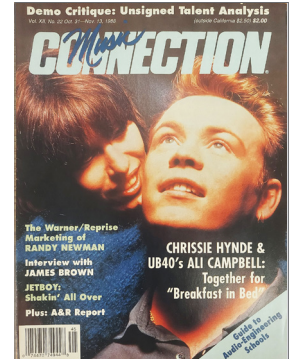


▲ **FEMME FATALE BACK ON TRACK**

MC associate editor Brett Callwood bumped into Femme Fatale and former Vixen singer Lorraine Lewis at the Belasco, at a concert by Brit metal vets Girlschool. Lewis teased that she's in the process of putting together a new FF band. More on that soon...

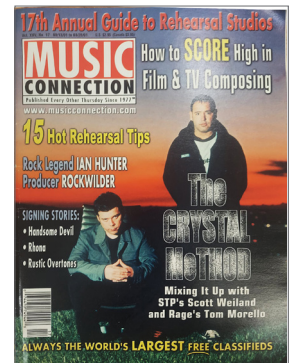


Tidbits From Our Tattered Past



1988 - Chrissie Hynde/Ali Campbell - #22

Pretenders' Hynde and UB40's Campbell graced the cover of *MC*'s November '88 issue. "We consider ourselves a genuine reggae band," said UB40's Jimmy Brown. "I mean, reggae is an accumulation of styles anyway. But we're called a pop band because we're played on the radio with people like George Michael and Culture Club." Elsewhere, the legendary James Brown told us that, "I'm going back to my own thing. I don't enjoy what I'm doing. I do it because I want to help everybody out, but I've got to get back to my own thing."



2001 - The Crystal Method - #17

Electronic icons The Crystal Method were our cover stars in September 2001. "We usually start with a riff, or a chord progression, something that's got a great sound and feel that we try to work around," said Ken Jordan. "We add drums and bass, which would be secondary. Vocal hooks usually comes last." In our feature about film and TV scoring, Dan Kimpel said, "Technology has now made it possible to achieve the full sonic thunder of an 80-piece orchestra in a broom closet. A new breed of artisans—including such high budget composers as Danny Elfman and Trevor Rabin—may be just as likely to own a Stratocaster as a Steinway."

Limited backissues available to order at musicconnection.com



▲ LIFE IS A CARNIVAL: LAST WALTZ TOUR

The Life is a Carnival: Last Waltz Tour—A Tribute to The Band was an historic evening performing the *Last Waltz* in its entirety live in San Francisco at the Warfield Theater. Pictured backstage with some of the players (l-r): Radiators guitarist-vocalist Dave Malone, Neville Brothers / Meters vocalist Cyril Neville, Flying Camels guitarist Harold Henkel, producer and Wolf Brothers bassist Don Was.

◀ SAWEETIE'S DEAR BIG SANTA HOLIDAY DROP

Grammy-nominated rapper Saweetie has returned to spice up the holiday season with her brand-new holiday two-pack release, *Dear Big Santa*. Known for mixing banging beats with a dash of attitude, Saweetie brings her signature ICY energy to these tracks, giving fans a festive treat that is both naughty and nice.



▶ STELLA ROSE SHARES MS.45

New York dark-pop artist, Stella (daughter of Depeche Mode's Dave Gahan) Rose, shares the announcement of a brand new EP, *Hollybaby*. The EP is a thrilling follow-up to last year's acclaimed debut LP, *f*, via KRO Records.





"WILD AL" YANHOVIC

By Joseph Maltese
Photos By Sam Jones, Robyn Von Swank

WEIRDER AND BIGGER

Al sits in front of bay windows and a bookshelf topped with Grammys (Al has five of them).

Obviously, he is in a Hawaiian shirt, nothing too flashy—dark and simple with large white florals and leaves.

Long curly hair, a light stubbly goatee, now showing gray, no glasses—he famously underwent laser eye surgery live on KTLA5 News in 1998 to prove how easy the procedure is. At the time, UCLA Health Center was one of only five facilities in the nation to offer Lasik. The newscast is still available to watch on Weird Al Yankovic's YouTube channel. It's remarkable to see that Al looks the same today as in the video—albeit the beard—where he's wearing a dark Hawaiian shirt with colorful hot rods and classic cars, a bit gaudy through the modern lens.

He's been fat. Amish. A surgeon. White and nerdy (he may actually still be both of those).

If you're basing your understanding of Al's past from his 2022 "biopic," you may be disappointed to learn of the fictitious liberties the film makes when addressing a fiery romance with Madonna. Or that he didn't actually play a part in dismantling Pablo Escobar and cartel kingpins in Central America. Or that the turbulence actor Daniel Radcliffe portrays, battling drugs, sex and pastiche rock bottoms, while sporting a "Weird Al" Halloween costume, is more than a bit over-the-top.

The record deals, influence and mentorship by Dr. Demento, importance of family and faith were all genuine and couldn't help but come across, even in the exaggerated parody of a rock star biopic.

Amazingly, the door-to-door accordion salesman did actually show up one day in Al's youth, pushing the music boxes like a Cutco knife set. Frankie Yankovic—America's Polka King who reigned supreme in the '40s—has no relation to Al, except as an inspiration and few-times collaborator.

"The first polka medley that actually got recorded and released was 'Polkas on 45,' which appeared on my second album. But out of these 14 studio albums that I've done, I believe there are polka medleys on 12 of them. And beyond that, I did a few other polkas, including one in 2018 called, 'The Hamilton Polka.' Lin-Manuel Miranda personally asked me to do a polka mashup of songs from the musical.

"But I hadn't done a polka medley that was a pop culture time capsule since my last album, *Mandatory Fun*, and I was looking at the calendar and realizing, 'Oh the 10 year anniversary of *Mandatory Fun* is coming up pretty soon, and also I'm gonna be on the road soon and it would be nice to have some new material.' All the planets were aligning and it became a perfect storm. It just seemed to make sense.

"So I went through the Billboard charts. That's a huge period of time to be looking at, so I limited myself to songs that had made No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. And beyond that, I just kind of narrowed it down to songs from artists that I thought made a huge impact, and as long as it had a very strong and identifiable musical, lyrical hook, and was ultimately something that I thought just sounded really fun and funny as a polka. So I got that list down to a manageable size and then I made my final selections."

"The way it works from there is I basically give that list to my manager Jay Levey, who I've been working with since the early '80s, and he works his magic. In the past he generally hasn't gone to the publisher, which I guess might be the more conventional way of doing it, but because I've been in the business for so long and I've got so many relationships with artists, he finds it easier to personally go to either the artists or their representation and get their blessing, because if the artists OK it, the publishers are not going to say no, right?"

"I'm a huge music fan. I'm not jaded at all by it. To get an email from Billie Eilish or Miley Cyrus saying that they're thrilled that they were in my polka medley—I mean that kind of blows my mind. I'm extremely honored by that."

BIGGER AND WEIRDER TOUR IN 2025

With a new polka medley and a title that will deliver, Al is seeming calm, excited and in control when it comes to his newly announced Bigger and Weirder Tour. Al lights up when given the opportunity to speak logistics. Mainly about the details of what makes the new tour his biggest yet, which include the massive venues and increase in tour personnel.

"Since I'm not releasing new albums every tour cycle, I try to think of different ways to make the tours different and exciting, and part of the hook of Bigger and Weirder is the band is, in fact, bigger! It's literally twice as big as it always has been.

"In the past, I've got my four main guys, who I've been with for several decades, and for this particular tour, we're adding four more people to add to the size and the sound, which also enables us to do a number of things we were just not able to do as a five-piece. So now not only are we back to doing all the costume changes and the props, and doing the parodies and everything you've come to expect from one of our big shows, we're also doing a few songs

that we've never done live before just because we wouldn't have been able to do those songs without using an inordinate amount of backing tracks, which we try not to do."

This comes just a few years after The Unfortunate Return of the Ridiculously Self-Indulgent Ill-Advised Vanity Tour, featuring original songs, and, upfront about its asterisked description, which boasted "non-parodies."

"I'm at a fortunate time of my life because I can do whatever I want to do," he laughs. "I just do what I feel like doing, and, you know, I really like the idea of doing the 'Vanity Tours.'"

For only a few tour cycles throughout his career, Al and his band have played genuine songs: original bluegrass and polka tunes, covers of his favorites—sans parodies, sans costumes.

"That's something that I certainly would not have been able to get away with early in my career, but, you know, for my own sanity, and for the sake of the band who's been doing iterations of the same show for a long time, it felt nice to be able to just walk on stage, sit down on the stools and play music like an actual band. And also do a lot of things that we normally wouldn't play because you have a finite amount of time when you're on stage doing a concert, and you can't play a lot of the deep cuts, so we wanted to do one tour that was just us focusing on those songs that you normally won't hear. But, now that the fans have been assuaged, and the band and I got that out of our systems, we're coming back with a show that's bigger and more complex than a lot of our earlier concert tours."

"I can tell you who the new band members are. They're all multi-instrumentalists because that was one of the criteria—we wanted them to be able to do different things during the course of the show. Like you can't just play the guitar, you have to also play tenor sax and be able to sing and do a stupid dance.

"So on this tour, along with my longtime band: Jon 'Bermuda' Schwartz, Steve Jay, Jim West and Rubén Valtierra, we're adding four new people, one of whom we've worked with before a number of times, Monique Donnelly. She was one of our female background singers. She's been working with me on the road and in the studio for many many years and she's coming back; also Scheila Gonzalez, who toured with Dweezil Zappa's Zappa plays Zappa and also Men At Work; Probyn Gregory, who played with The Beach Boys for a very long time; a wonderful multi-instrumentalist and the youngest member—she's in her early 20s—Payton Rose Velligan. My road manager handpicked her because she's on the road with Foreigner as a tour manager, and Payton's own band opened for Foreigner. They're all of course super talented and I just love being able to expand the band this way and I look forward to all the possibilities.

"I should point out it kind of blows my mind the places we're playing on this tour," Al says. "Seventy shows in three months, that's not unusual. What's unusual is we're playing Madison Square Garden. We're playing the L.A. Forum. We're playing these places that I used to say we were playing as a joke back in the day. And now we're actually playing them! And people will come! It's going to be one for the record books."

"When we're all in on the joke, then it becomes truly funny."

Just in July, Al released "Polkamanía" featuring straight polka covers of songs by: Billie Eilish, Adele, Miley, Taylor, and of course Megan Thee Stallion and Cardi B for a boot-stomping "WAP."

"Polka medleys are something that I've been doing for a very long time. Even before I had a record deal, I was doing them live just right out of college," Al says. Al studied architecture at the California Polytechnic Institute.

AL'S ADVICE

Al has charted a course in the music industry that has never been done before, and likely can never be done again—to the scale of Michael Jackson and Taylor Swift—a comparison that is no joke.

His staying power is an anomaly, perhaps attributed to being well-intentioned since his early days. His body of work translates well when rediscovered and reintroduced decade after decade to new generations, especially with the consistent tides of technology.

"My advice is the same as it's been for the last few decades," Al says. "The way to get your foot in the door these days is certainly online. Make your presence known on social media. YouTube certainly has created a number of huge stars and has been very lucrative for a lot of people. It's taken away all the gatekeepers used when I first started out.

"I was very fortunate, but I mean, back in the day, there were a bunch of people in a tower somewhere in New York City who decided if they were going to give you a shot or not. 'I like this person and I'm gonna give them airtime,' or 'I'm going to put them in heavy rotation,' or whatever it is—it was a small group of people that basically decided your fate. And now your fate is in your own hands. You can put your stuff out there and if it's good, chances are people will see it and like it and you'll get your clicks. You'll get your views and hopefully get your popularity, and from there, it depends how you want to build on it—with live shows, with streaming... There are so many options available to people now. It's almost overwhelming how many inroads there are to the business, which is not to say that it's easy—it's certainly not any easier than it was, but you just don't have those gatekeepers anymore."

"I consider my peers people like The Lonely Island and Tenacious D and Flight of the Conchords, who have done amazing work for decades now. Just a few minutes before this interview, I watched the new Randy Rainbow video on YouTube and he's been cranking out some extremely clever things, doing quite well, and he's touring now and I have to assume making a living just from YouTube at this point.

"There are a lot of people doing comedy and doing well at it, and that's something probably that wasn't the case in the '80s because record labels weren't really looking so much for comedy acts or novelty acts or anything like that. It was why, again, I say I was lucky, but it was very difficult for me to

get signed in the early '80s because everybody thought, 'Oh comedy music... You're a one hit wonder, you'll have, maybe if you're lucky, a fluke hit single and then you'll be in the dustbins of musical history.' So with an online presence, I think not only is humor not looked down on, but it's encouraged. I think that people want people like that, and if you do that kind of material, I think you actually have a better shot now than you would have had a few decades ago.

"Obviously The Lonely Island got their stuff exposed on *Saturday Night Live*, so that's a huge deal. Tenacious D had their HBO show, as well as Flight of the Conchords. So I mean all that definitely helps, but you can't discount the online presence. That's what's really helped establish acts, but also has broken a lot of new and up-and-coming acts.

"Usually when I'm online promoting myself, it's to promote something that's new, but every now and then, there will be a flashback like, 'Hey remember this?' of something that I did a long time ago, which sends someone down a rabbit hole, and then they wind up spending the afternoon watching old viral videos.

"It still cracks me up when I hear about fans that hear a song that my parody is based on, like 10 years after hearing my parody. They'll be in a supermarket and go, 'This sounds familiar. These lyrics aren't funny, what's going on here?'"

WEIRD FILM, SINCERE AL

This leads to *WEIRD: The Al Yankovic Story*, Al's biopic which he was heavily involved in and starred in (as one of those gatekeepers at the Big Record Company).

Channeling the great rock 'n' roll films of history: Oliver Stone's *The Doors*, *Buddy Holly Story*, *Rocketman*, *Walk the Line*; and with the ridiculousness of *Tenacious D & The Pick of Destiny* and *Spinal Tap*, *WEIRD* lacks in accuracy what the other great rock films overcompensate in drama.

When asked if other artists (and everyone in general) should be taking themselves a little less seriously, Al ironically got serious.

"I'm not going to dictate what anybody else should do. People can make up their own minds about that.

"For myself, I couldn't fathom any other way I'd want my [film] story to be told. I didn't want to be serious about it in the slightest, and I thought if there was gonna be a biopic, you would have to go completely off the rails. So that's what Eric Apell and I did. Eric of course directed and co-wrote with me—the idea be-

ing that we wanted to kind of pull people in, maybe thinking the first third of the movie had some basis in reality. There are a few things we pulled from my actual life—it was reality-adjacent. About halfway through, though, even the most gullible people are going, 'Oh yeah, this is a joke, right?' All of this keeps going down, and when we're all in on the joke, then it becomes truly funny and none of it is offensive.

"I suppose a true satirist would say nothing is beyond parody or satire, but I do have my line. Instead of trying to cross it, I really honestly don't want to offend people. I think it's possible to be funny and humorous without getting people upset at you or horrified. And, you know, I suppose that I'm a sincere person, but it's hard for me to write song lyrics that are unironic or unhumorous. I mean I've been asked to do that.

"I've told this story before about John Gourley from Portugal. The Man. We're old friends at this point, and he wanted to write a song together with me and I tried to write some vulnerable, from-the-heart lyrics, and my brain was just not wired that way. I couldn't do it. It was tough. It ends up having a punchline. I can't escape it."

"WEIRD"

Al is of course aware that the term "weird" has now come back into fashion.

"It's being used in a pejorative sense, and I have to confess, when I first heard it that way in the [political] campaigns, I had sort of a knee-jerk reaction to it, because, you know, obviously it's part of my professional name, and I've spent my entire adult life trying to empower weird—it's OK to be weird," Al says.

"A lot of kids that were outcasts or rejects or considered freaks in school would look up to me as a guy that was weird and did OK, so part of me was really taken aback by that and it kind of rubbed me the wrong way, but then I took a few steps back and took a deep breath and I realized, OK, well, I think people are intelligent enough to know that there's good weird and there's bad weird. There's like, you know, the creative, quirky, whimsical kind of weird, and there's the clown looking at you from behind a tree in a forest weird. I think people know that I'm the former.

"Unfortunately the weirdos who are insulted are maybe a little less in on the joke, and they're maybe not able to take themselves less seriously. Here's a good way to tell: the people that are *bad weird* are always really insulted when you call them *weird*."

Visit weirdal.com for tour dates



QUICK FACTS

- ✦ First No. 1 hit was "Eat It" (a parody of Michael Jackson's "Beat It") in 1984
- ✦ Al has 17 Grammy nominations and five wins for: Best Comedy Recording for "Eat It," Music Video for "Fat," and albums *Poodle Hat*, *Mandatory Fun* and *Squeeze Box: The Complete Works of "Weird Al" Yankovic*
- ✦ Al attended Lynwood High School, where he was a straight-A student and graduated as valedictorian at the age of 16
- ✦ Parents were Nick and Mary Yankovic. Al married Suzanne Krajewski in 2001. They have a daughter, Nina, born in 2003. The family abstains from alcohol, drugs and using profanity due to their Christian faith



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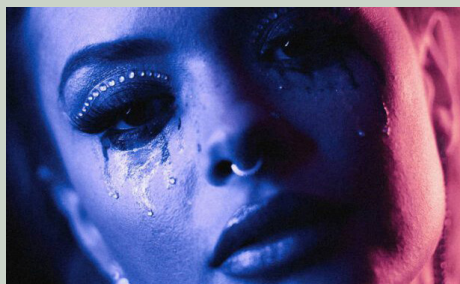


TOP 25 NEW MUSIC CRITIQUES

MUSIC CONNECTION offers a variety of ways for unsigned artists to receive recognition for creating exceptional music. Each month, for example, our New Music Critiques area spotlights the recordings of a dozen unsigned recording artists. The cream of the 2024 crop is here on the pages before you. 25 remarkable recording artists, plus 20 Top Prospects who are too good to be overlooked. Unsigned recording artists of all genres are welcomed to sign up for a free critique at musicconnection.com/reviews/new-music-critiques.

▼ WRENE ... 8.6

Web: irene.bandcamp.com
Style: Avant-pop



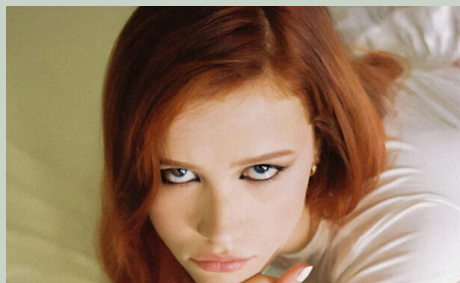
▼ PARIS PALOMA ... 8.4

Web: parispaloma.co.uk
Style: Folk-pop



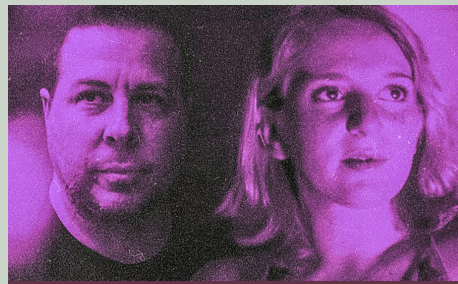
▼ VENDELA ... 8.4

Web: YouTube
Style: Alt-pop



▼ VELVET HALO ... 8.4

Web: velvethalomusic.com
Style: Soft pop



▼ FERAS ARRABI ... 8.3

Web: ferasarrabi.com
Style: Progressive rock



▼ NATALIE JEAN ... 8.2

Web: natalie-jean.com
Style: Country-pop



▼ SIESKI ... 8.2

Web: sieski.com
Style: Pop



▼ THE REQUISITE ... 8.2

Web: Spotify
Style: Pop-punk



▼ NO LOVES ... 8.2

Web: noloves.com
Style: Punk



▼ X ... 8.2

Web: instagram.com/theofficialx
Style: R&B



▼ ORAYVIA ... 8.2

Web: Spotify
Style: R&B



2024

▼ JOSÉ JAMES ... 8.2

Web: [Soundcloud](#)
Style: R&B



▼ JOHNNY STANEC ... 8.2

Web: [johnnystanec.com](#)
Style: Americana



▼ FIIZ ... 8.2

Web: [linktr.ee/fiizmusic](#)
Style: Electropop



▼ GORDON GOODWIN'S BIG PHAT BAND ... 8.2

Web: [bigphatband.com](#)
Style: Jazz



▼ MAGALI, A CULT ... 8.2

Web: [Spotify](#)
Style: Electropop



▼ RGB ... 8.2

Web: [listentorgb.com](#)
Style: Pop



▼ CASII STEPHAN ... 8

Web: [casiistephan.com](#)
Style: Soul-rock



▼ KATELYN TARVER ... 8

Web: [katelyntarver.com](#)
Style: Singer-songwriter



▼ CAITLYN MAHONEY ... 8

Web: [caitlynmahoney.com](#)
Style: Indie-pop



▼ LUCIE TIGER ... 8

Web: [Spotify](#)
Style: Country



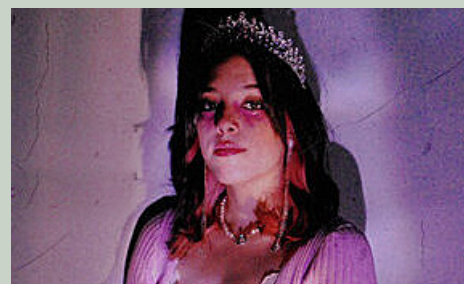
▼ HER LEATHER JACKET ... 8

Web: [herleatherjacket.com](#)
Style: Pop-punk



▼ MIKKI ... 8

Web: [Spotify](#)
Style: Alternative



▼ DOWNTOWN MYSTIC ... 8

Web: [downtownmystic.net](#)
Style: Rock 'n' roll



▼ BRENDA RUSSELL ... 8

Web: [brendarussellofficial.com](#)
Style: R&B



TOP 20 PROSPECTS

2024



◀ THE MIDNIGHT REVIVAL ... 8

Web: themidnightrevivalband.com
Style: *Alt-country*



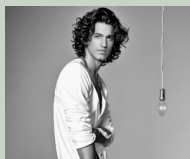
◀ CASSIA DAWN ... 7.8

Web: cassiadawn.com
Style: *Indie-folk*



◀ GODDAMN WOLVES ... 8

Web: goddamnvolves.com
Style: *Indie rock*



◀ ASHER MONROE ... 7.8

Web: ashermonroe.com
Style: *Pop*



◀ CINDERS ... 8

Web: cindersmusic.com
Style: *Alt-rock*



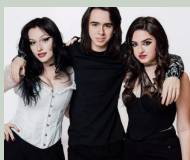
◀ ANNABELLE MARIE ... 7.8

Web: bohemianinlondon.co.uk
Style: *Future soul*



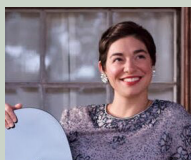
◀ WATER STREET ... 8

Web: waterstreetofficial.com
Style: *Pop-rock*



◀ EXIGENT ... 7.7

Web: exigentband.com
Style: *Hard rock*



◀ TENI RANE ... 8

Web: [Soundcloud](https://www.soundcloud.com/tenirane)
Style: *Folk-pop*



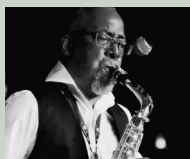
◀ GENRE PEAK ... 7.7

Web: genrepeak.net
Style: *Electronic*



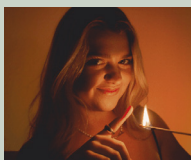
◀ MAN THE MUTE ... 8

Web: [facebook.com/manthemute](https://www.facebook.com/manthemute)
Style: *Metal*



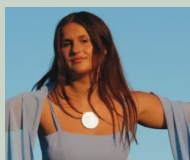
◀ STEVEN B. ... 7.6

Web: [Spotify](https://www.spotify.com)
Style: *Smooth jazz*



◀ BRIDGETTE STARR ... 7.8

Web: bridgettestarr.com
Style: *Alternative*



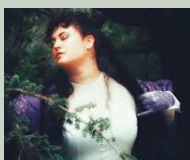
◀ LIBBY TISLER ... 7.6

Web: [Soundcloud](https://www.soundcloud.com)
Style: *Indie-pop*



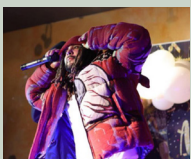
◀ IZZY SKINNER ... 7.8

Web: ditto.fm/haunting-izzy-skinner
Style: *Alternative rock*



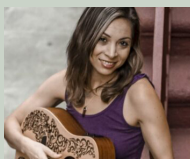
◀ POEINA ... 7.6

Web: poeina.com
Style: *Indie-pop*



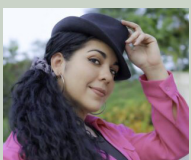
◀ KCI JONES ... 7.8

Web: [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com)
Style: *Hip-hop*



◀ SARAH LIGHTMAN ... 7.6

Web: sarah-lightman.com
Style: *Pop-soul*



◀ KETSYHA ... 7.8

Web: ketsyha.com
Style: *R&B*



◀ KELSEY HICKMAN ... 7.6

Web: [Soundcloud](https://www.soundcloud.com)
Style: *Country-rock*

BEST CAREER TIPS

FOR THE ARTISTS

DANI JUDITH, RAINBOW CITY PARK

"We definitely aren't making our music at home in our bedrooms (for the most part), but every other process is done by the hands of the members of the band. Publishing, distribution, marketing, you name it. All of the things you'd never think from an outside perspective would be involved in keeping a band alive."

BRITTA RACI

"DIY, in the musical sense, to me, means you are an artist who has no huge label, or any label helping you out," she says. "You pay for everything, you send the emails, you find the gigs, you write the songs—you do it yourself. Not to say, you can't have a little help from your friends along the way."



BRITTA RACI

FIONA GREY

"I understand how to write a press release so that when I bring a publicist in I know what to look for and what questions to ask. You hit a point where you've booked a tour (or many) for yourself but when you get a booking agent you understand their language."

FIIZ

"We turned our closet into a recording studio for *Nightcap*, we made homemade production demos for every one of our tracks before we even started looking for a producer. But in a way it's the whole mindset of an independent artist. You take an idea, and you just mess around with it until you have something concrete and then you just keep working until it's done."

ELIZA NEALS

"Know every part of the music biz. You are your own lawyer, contract reader, makeup artist, fashion coordinator, songwriter, producer, arranger, keyboardist, publisher, record label, PR agent, bandleader, merch agent, plus more."

DOLLY DAGGER

"Just like any business, it takes a lot of wheels turning together and even though I wear a lot of hats, the more we grow the less DIY it becomes and I'm so grateful for the people in our corner and do-it-together seems more fitting now."

SIZZY ROCKET

"Being able to make your own music and videos and release your art in the world on your own is so powerful."

SUSAN HYATT, PILLBOX

"Songwriting is about expressing your emotions and when you write a song you are being emotionally intimate with your audience."

GIRLI

"I always take like three weeks off social media over the holidays. It's important to me to reset and manifest for next year."



JACK ANTONOFF

JACK ANTONOFF

"It's different for everyone, but in my experience, I need a small team that's ready to go to the moon with me; people that are on my level. Most of the records I make [now] are either me, my band or me and another artist."

GREG GONZALEZ, CIGARETTES AFTER SEX

"You want [your] music to be felt. It's more about feeling than thinking. Keep that in mind when you write. Don't try to copy something that's selling. Never make a decision based on money. It can destroy the spirit of what music should be."

CHRIS BARNES, SIX FEET UNDER

"I've always tried to throw everything away and just concentrate on the music. It's not a natural evolution. It's purposefully a technique that I tried to implement. The vocals on *Butchered at Birth* are different than *The Bleeding*. I got deeper for *True Carnage* [SFU's fourth album]."

Those songs are vocally deeper than anything I did on *Cannibal Corpse*."

ANI DIFRANCO

"Album sequence is an unexpectedly complicated thing for me. For that matter, even a show set list is like a daily version of that. It's like it is somehow more important than it should be, the order that things come in life. Timing is everything, and flow is important. I always start out with an idea of song order for an album, and it always changes. I have to start thinking about it early on and give myself enough time to notice my fatal flaws in thinking."



ANI DIFRANCO

FRENCH MONTANA

"Believe in yourself. And don't put your career in other people's hands. You wanna be mad at yourself for making the wrong decision, or happy with yourself for making the right ones. Always look out for yourself to help yourself. And that's what it is. Your best teacher is going to be experience. And have faith, and one thing that's better than anything, that I can ever tell you is, pray. Pray and hustle."

SAMMY HAGAR

"I stay in shape. I go down to my basement and crank up my Les Paul and a little Marshall and I scream my ass off a couple times a week. (laughs) I recommend that to everybody. Just don't take too much time off."

GINNY LUKE

"I've seen how the business goes and how quickly it can change. And if it does, you just have to keep things going in alignment with your dream."

JETT HOLDEN

"I write the music I wish I heard when I was growing up. If someone hears my music and it makes them feel safe and less alone, it's done its job, and I've done my job."

BEST CAREER TIPS

2024

EMILY FREMBGEN

"When the pandemic happened and I wasn't running around and dating crappy guys I really had to dig deeper for material and get more honest than I have been in the past."



ELOUR

"I think women often try to keep their emotions in check because it's so easy to be called crazy or hysterical or to be seen as 'too much' or too intense or aggressive, while males seem to get away with much more, without being labeled or ostracized. So I like to lean into those labels and challenge those stereotypes by showing that there is strength in showing emotions, even if they're emotions that are discouraged for women, such as lust, rage, or anger."

ROYALE LYNN

"I've always wanted to create something that's 100 percent me and hope that someone out there relates."

RENA LOVELIS, HEY VIOLET

"We have a lot of freedom in designing album covers, video treatments and how we wanna create our songs. It feels really, really good to put the reins on what we're doing and steer it with a family behind us that really supports us."

TAHJER

"I just feel like if I put in my work and make sure my team's on the right page, nothing much can go wrong."

CHANEY, HOUSE PARTIES

"I felt being on a label would get us more traction. Also, people can follow a label and it's another way to discover and gain new fans and stuff. It's also really hard to get opportunities when you're independent. If you have a specific vision of something you want to do a label can help create those opportunities and get things done."

CASSIDY PARIS

"People weren't very kind to me in high school

and I wrote about it and channeled it into my music, and I think ultimately I'm glad that I did experience that because I feel like I'm a stronger person and I got a really good song out of it as well."

MIKE SCHLEIBAUM, DARKEST HOUR

"Practice. Do things slowly. Like, if you're gonna practice a set, practice the song slower than you normally plan to get everybody's group muscle memory together. Practice at home, the stuff that's really hard, slower. And if there's nothing that's hard, either you don't know how to practice, you're not listening, or you guys are not trying hard enough. You have to be as hungry to learn about practice as you are learning about success."



DEEANN DIMEO

"Write song introductions, band introductions, and between song banter, and rehearse it. You are performing the whole time you are onstage. It's not limited to the time the songs are being sung."

BILLIE JOE ARMSTRONG, GREEN DAY

"I think our intentions are always to make timeless music."

CHNNLL

"When you're starting to write your own songs don't be afraid to cover your favorite songs. When you do this, you should also analyze the lyrics, melody and chord structures. Covering songs you aren't that familiar with is also a great exercise. Because you don't know them as well as the songs you cover by your heroes, there is more room for interpretation."

FOR THE COLLABORATORS

DONNIE WAHLBERG, NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

"We learned how to own who we were and what we are and to be honest and true to ourselves as artists—while servicing our fans [too]. We want to give them our very best, for all

they give us and all the time and hard-earned money they spend on us. It's important to give them as much of ourselves as possible—while being mature enough to realize that we aren't entitled, but honored and humbled. I think we've done a good job of that."



GRETCHEN PARLATO

"We [Parlato and Lionel Loueke] chanted together on tour and that was really special to do before shows. In a technical sense, think of it as a warm up. You're vocally connecting, but there's an emotional and spiritual aspect. I wake up very early, diet keeps me well—and exercising daily. I've started reading some sacred text every morning and taking notes. That process helps my brain to take it in. It's that balance of creative time, independent time to be healthy, and balancing family giving and connecting."

AMMIFY

"We are the definition of our sum being greater than our parts."

MATT MAGINN, CURSIVE

"We've been a DIY band our whole lives, and (Run for Cover) understands that and is cool with whatever we deliver to them. That label is doing it right."

TIERINII JACKSON, SOUTHERN AVENUE

"We were such a new band when we started writing together. But the more our family has grown and the relationships have evolved, the stronger our collaboration is."

MOM ROCK

"We've always been a fan of audience participation, so we wanted our fans to become a part of our brand, too. When we were in our "baseball era," we wanted to give fans the opportunity to feel like they were a part of our "team," so we sold the jerseys as merch with the opportunity to customize the name and number that appeared on the back. After performances at festivals, we would walk around and hand out baseball cards that doubled as business cards (wallet sized for

easy storage!) It's always so amazing to see showgoers wearing jerseys in the crowds and find some common ground with not only us, but also each other."

FOR THE PRODUCERS

JESSE LAUTER

"Sometimes I'll do a project and won't get any feedback. Then 10 years later someone will tell me that they loved it. All of the stress and intensity that you put into an album or film then becomes worth it. If it had that effect on one person, it's a great feeling."

LYNNE EARLS

"Sharing food and getting a chance to relax with the people you work with after sessions is part of it. It's my favorite way to make records."



LYNNE EARLS

BONZIE

"I like how Pro Tools gives you so much control. Everything's transparent; there's not much that's hidden. I use it more as a tool for capturing something. I don't compose in it. Production for me is capturing and executing ideas that I already have."

CHRIS DUGAN

"I try hard to get bands to demo their stuff first, even if it's done on a rough boom box in a rehearsal space. That's an immediate telltale sign about a song in general and it tips me off to what it needs."

MATT ROSS-SPANG

"Sometimes a song works on its own but less so when packaged as a whole record. When you've got 11 songs, does one fit with the other ten or does it say something that another song already says better? I often look to the artist because if they're not fully singing it or they don't seem excited, that's my first tell."

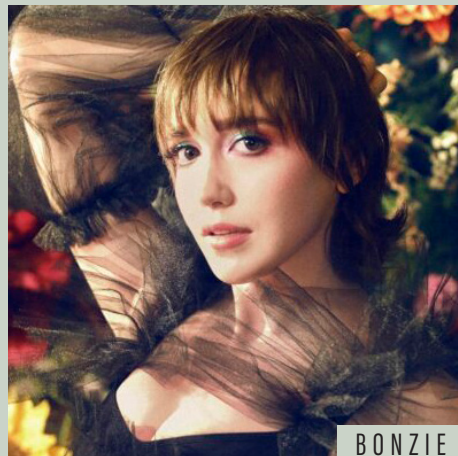
THE IVY

"If you use a certain amount of reverb on one instrument, then make sure that it blends into the mix so that it all sounds like it's in the same room."

MARK EVERTON GRAY

"I'm a big fan of using faders both large and small. I love the Neve 8058, but also the API

Legacy, as well as the SSL XL 9000 K and others. Whatever I can use to push it, get some real grit and up into the second and third harmonics, that's my favorite piece of gear."



BONZIE

DAN CAREY

"I don't like to divide the control room and live room. I've got a machine space in the back with all of the noisy gear. The main room is circular with everything arranged around the edge. At one end there's a desk and then it goes into a collection of guitar amps, piano, a whole wall of modular synths, etc. It's inclusive and everyone feels like they're in the same position. It's a practical thing because often I'm playing and engineering."

FOR THE MASSES

MARQUITA WATERS

"Breathing: We forget to breathe in tense situations. An interview can bring tension, so be aware of any situation where you find yourself tightening your body and your voice. This can cause your speaking to start to lower and have that gritty sound you want to avoid."

JESSE "JTJAZZ" THOMPSON

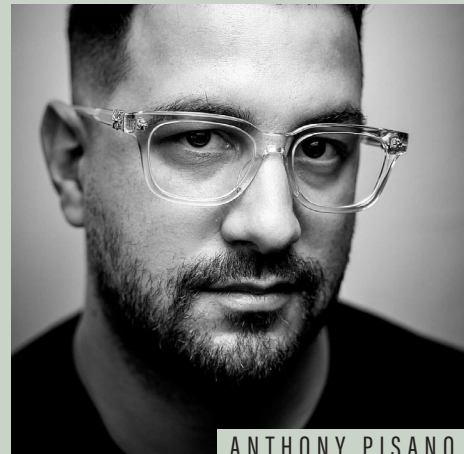
"Amidst the demanding landscape of artistic pursuits, safeguarding your mental and physical health is paramount. Research conducted pre-pandemic indicates that a staggering 73 percent of music creators grappled with symptoms of mental health challenges. Prioritize your well-being to safeguard your artistic journey. Mitigate stress and avert burnout by taking regular breaks, immersing yourself in nature, and embracing mindfulness practices like meditation."

KRIS HAWKINS

"The big thing to remember when you sit down and write music for a library is that it needs to evoke a mood or a feeling, the same as if you were writing music for a film—the biggest difference being that you won't have someone guiding you as to what they're looking for. This can be both frustrating and liberating at the same time. When composing library music, I sit down with a mood in mind. It may be with the intention of writing some upbeat pop/rock tracks, or I may be feeling a little melancholy, so I write something moody."

MIKE GOWEN

"You need to be pitching with proper lead time. Ideally you can also connect to a timely, newsworthy angle. By understanding who you are pitching yourself to, you'll have a better understanding of when to get in front of them. For example, if you're pitching the media because you have a new single or album, make sure you're pitching them months in advance, as they need that lead time. A publicist or marketing agency cannot help you on a project unless you start working with them months ahead of the planned release."



ANTHONY PISANO

EMILY WHITE

"Everyone loves sales and special items! So keep that in mind for holidays and especially for your birthday. They're your fans, so why not give them a reason to celebrate you? Fourthwall confirmed they see a massive sales spike when artists do this because unlike a holiday special, your birthday sale is unique to you."

ANTHONY PISANO

"It is important for artists to be in [the Twitch] space, because entertainment is merging. It's going to grow and be part of the landscape of where marketing and entertainment lie. When I started Game Over, there was no in-house gaming person within the labels. Now, every label has an in-house head of gaming."

JONATHAN SCOTT FRIEDMAN

"Part of the fun of being a composer is similar to being an actor in that you have to spend time immersing yourself in some kind of environment and new mindset. That's fun. And I think it's key to get involved in the creative trenches as early as possible."

BOBBY BORG

"Musicians of the future will take the lead in environmental activism. More and more artists will embrace the green music movement by adopting eco-friendly practices in their career. Artists just like you will use sustainable merchandise materials, opt for greener touring practices, and support eco-causes in their campaigns. You'll even organize eco-conscious events, like beach cleanups or tree-planting initiatives, and invite fans to participate."

OUR FAVORITE SIGNING STORIES

Gloom Girl MFG (April)

Label: Sign From The Universe Entertainment
Band Members: Paige MacKinnon, vocals; Connor McCourt, drums; Ethan Waggoner, guitar; Stephen Sobolewski, bass
Type of Music: Indie, Punk Rock, Alternative
Management: R+D Artist Group
Booking: Reliant Talent Agency
Legal: James Zumwalt - Shackleford Law
Publicity: Gomi Zhou - gomi@befeatrpr.com
Web: gloomgirlmfg.com

No matter what your business happens to be, networking is important. This includes those forging a career in music. Take Gloom Girl MFG. The buzzy punk rockers were playing a gig at Nashville's The 5 Spot on Halloween of 2022. After finishing their set, a fellow artist approached lead singer Paige MacKinnon and expressed how much she'd enjoyed the show. As they chatted, the admirer revealed she was



signed to indie label Sign From The Universe.

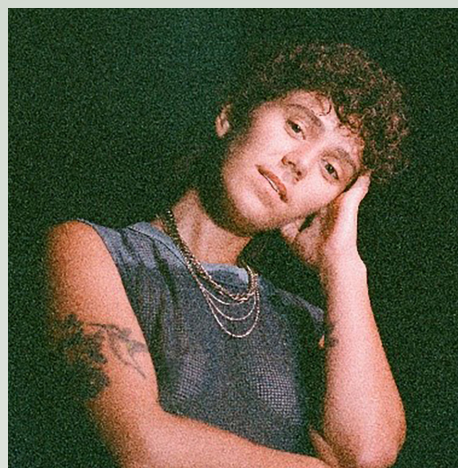
MacKinnon claims drummer Connor McCourt is the most business-savvy of the group. "It's what he does in his normal job, and he's able to translate a lot of those skills over," proclaims the front woman. Therefore, McCourt was the one who flew to L.A. to meet with Ray. There, he presented her with Gloom Girl's plans and goals. Surmises MacKinnon, "I think Stacy was impressed by that."

Even though they weren't actively looking for a label, the young players had been taking, and are still taking, the quest to succeed quite seriously. Playing 27 gigs that year maximized the odds they'd forge a fruitful connection. They were also savvy enough to have their attorney review the label's offer before signing. Though they negotiated for the best deal possible, their lawyer's insistence that what they had was more than fair gave them the reassurance to accept.

Gloom Girl MFG's shiny new EP, *Polycrisis*, is out now. - **Andy Kaufmann**

Olive Klug (May)

Type of Music: Folk
Management: Do Less Management
Legal: Jason Barth
Publicity: Deborah Radel - DR PR - deborah@drpr.us
Web: oliveklug.com
A&R: Isaiah Beard



Having released multiple singles and their debut release, *Don't You Dare Make Me Jaded* since exploding on TikTok, contemporary folk artist Olive Klug has signed with new management following their return to Folk Alliance in 2024 (this year with a showcase, video coverage, and a panel), and has new music coming later this year.

Starting in theatre at age 7, Klug produced their first EP with a friend after graduating with a degree in psychology. Stalled from practicing the in-person counselling they were trained to provide due to the lockdown, Klug began posting music on TikTok. Picking up momentum by early 2021, they gained a lot of attention, especially following viral hit "Raining In June" (which remains their most popular song to date). The momentum prompted a move to Los Angeles.

A manager-friend with connections in the folk community helped Klug starting out and, attending Folk Alliance in 2023, he encouraged Christiana Sudano, founder of Do Less Management, to meet up with Klug. Sudano says they stood out and that, "Olive is just magnetic. Their voice is something I hadn't really heard before and the storytelling is game-changing."

Having Sudano's help means Klug has more space to create, without the constant stress of logistics. With four tours behind them, alongside Kevin Atwater, Odie Leig, and Daisy the Great—the latest involving a full band—Klug says they "have been through a lot in their career this past year," emphasizing that, "Having somebody to trust with all of that is huge." - **Andrea Beenham**

Zoe Ko (June)

Label: Big Loud Rock/Double Down 11
Band Member: Zoe Ko
Type of Music: Pop-rock
Management: Ava Solomon - NXTWAVE
Booking: Brad Wiseman - Sequel Music Group
Legal: Felcher & Freifeld, LLP
Publicity: amanda@blackpandapr.com
Web: zoekomusic.com
A&R: Evan Lipschutz

Hyper-charismatic pop-rock artist Zoe Ko, a veritable volcano of punk rock 'tude, contemporary pop charm and indie angst, can't remember a time when she wasn't singing and performing.

"The performing mainly started when I



sang a song I wrote for my grandpa when he passed, and I performed it at his funeral," Ko says. "It was so special, and I saw how magical music could be."

Last November saw Ko release the *Baby Teeth* EP, while she also dropped acclaimed singles "Rib Cage," "Petri Dish" and "Pink Noise." All of that action saw her stock rise, while her sound has naturally developed.

New York-raised, Ko relocated to Los Angeles and initially missed the "dirt and grit" of her hometown. After getting over her homesickness, she fell in love with the City of Angels and things have been swell. She's now signed with Big Loud Records, the alt-rock imprint of Big Loud Records, in partnership with Double Down 11.

"I had been working with my A&R Evan independently for a year before," she says. "He started working at Big Loud and eventually we all met the BL team and it was love at first sight. It just felt right—the team and our visions aligned! And I loved working with Evan and my current team so much that I loved the idea of still working with all the same people but just expanding it with a bigger company."

- **Brett Callwood**

FOR YEARS, a staple in *Music Connection* has been our Signing Stories, showing our readers how other artists have arrived at their deal with a record label, music publisher or manager. The folks we talk to—artists, managers, producers and A&R reps—give you the ups and downs, the do’s and don’ts, of getting signed.

The Calamatix (July)

Label: Hellcat Records
Band Members: Raylin Joy, Adam Porris, Clarence “Pocket” Kidd III, and William “Matty” Taylor
Publicity: Jasmine Muldrow - Epitaph Records
A&R: Yarden Rafaely - Epitaph Records
Web: thecalamatix.com

Music by The Calamatix was born from a series of “on again, off again,” writing sessions between singer-songwriter Raylin Joy and Tim Armstrong (Rancid) during 2017. In the following years, the exploratory project evolved into Joy’s demo and the blueprint for a full-fledged ska/rocksteady band. Thus, Joy recruited guitarist Adam Porris (formerly of the Lost City Angels), who quickly identified Clarence “Pocket” Kidd III as an ideal fit to drive the groove behind their feel-good music. The subsequent addition of bassist William “Matty” Taylor, completed the rhythm section for the lively ensemble before their official signing at Hellcat Records.

Due to a wide range of cultural influences, Porris and Kidd III recently compared the band’s sound to the famous Louisiana cuisine known as Gumbo. “Our music is what we like to call,



“The bedrock of freedom and expression,” Kidd III explained. [We’re] spreading a great message of positivity and love, no matter what we go through. Within some of our songs, you’ll hear some of the trials that we have been through and how we’ve turned that into a positive situation.”

The optimistic sentiment surrounding the upstart group has been pervasive amongst the front office personnel behind Tim Armstrong’s iconic punk rock imprint and the label’s parent company, Epitaph Records since their formation. “The reputation at Hellcat Records is fantastic,” Porris said. “Everyone in the industry speaks so highly of them, so it was another reason to work with them. We were just really happy with everything that they talked about and offered. It was just a great situation for us.” — *Miguel Costa*

Cursive (August)

Label: Run for Cover
Type of Music: Rock
Management: Paul Clegg - Cursive
Booking: Eric Dimenstein - Ground Control
Legal: Matthew Kaplan
Publicity: Amanda Pitts - Chromatic PR
Web: cursivearmy.com

Try this (Signing) Story on for size: Two college kids from Omaha enroll in a business class requiring them to complete a commercially minded project before the semester ends. The longtime friends, engineer Mike Mogis and friend Justin Oberst, are so pleased with the results of the project that they decide to continue with it outside academia. In its first year in operation,



1993, Saddle Creek Records (originally called Lumberjack) unveiled its first release: the self-titled solo debut by the then-unknown, 13-year-old younger brother of Justin: Conor Oberst.

As *Cursive* bassist Matt Maginn said, Saddle Creek “started as a collective, and then after a while, it became sole ownership for one person (co-founder and now President Robb Nansel), and we lost some of our love for (the label). We still love Saddle Creek—past, employees, all that stuff—but once everyone realized there really wasn’t a collective anymore, they just all gave up and walked away.”

Turns out *Cursive*’s Plan B, 15 Passenger, was the band’s saving grace.

“The label gave us enthusiasm again,” he said. “(But) we just didn’t have enough time to dedicate to our own label.”

“Between their roster, friendliness toward artists, and creativity—and the easy hangs we had over Zoom—it seemed like the right move,” he said of *Cursive* signing to Run for Cover.

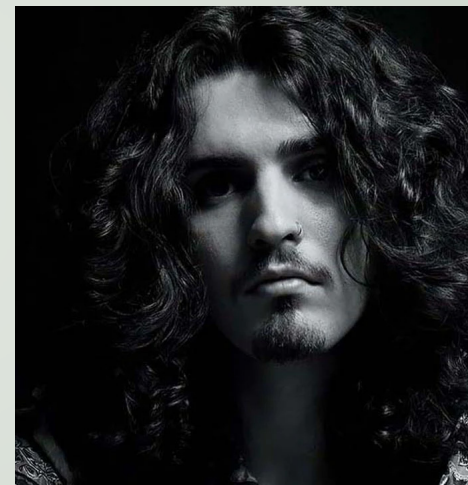
Under the terms of the deal, *Cursive* maintain ownership of their music and also have a 50/50 profit split with their new home. Run for Cover also repaid *Cursive* what they spent from their own personal savings to make *Devourer*.

— *Kurt Orzeck*

J.T. Loux (November)

Label: Slumerican Records
Band Members: J.T. Loux, Ethan Pecha, Zach McCoy
Type of Music: Indie Rock
Management: PK, East Iris
Publicity: Sarah, Facci PR
Web: instagram.com/jtloux
A&R: Yelowolf

Nashville-based alternative/indie rock artist, songwriter, and guitarist, J.T. Loux has surfaced in recent years garnering attention with his unique and pioneering sound. He just signed to Yelowolf’s label, Slumerican, and has swiftly established himself as a significant presence in the rock music scene. In 2023, he enthralled audiences while touring with the multinational rock band, Tesla. Building on that success, he expanded his reach by touring Spain in 2024. As he prepared to embark on a



tour with Yelowolf, J.T. also unveiled a much-anticipated album in 2025, which is expected to further cement his status in the rock genre.

Loux said, “I was heavily influenced by The Doors and Aerosmith, and this is where we get our sound.” Being diverse, melodic, and authentic, is what led to Loux to securing a promising career for himself in music.

J.T. also stated that he just released a new music video entitled “Daisy,” which is now streaming on all platforms. “Daisy” represents a pivotal moment in Loux’ musical journey.

“Daisy” features a combination of reflective lyrics and dynamic instrumentals; highlighting Loux’ talent for forging an emotional connection with his audience, while, maintaining the rock essence for which he is recognized.

Though he’s still grinding and establishing a name for himself, Loux was asked about words of wisdom that he’d share with up and coming musicians looking to solidify themselves in music. — *Adam Seyum*

Mixing Immersive Audio With Audient ORIA

ORIA from Audient is a professional grade audio interface and monitor controller purpose built as an advanced audio interface for mixing Dolby Atmos compliant immersive audio.

ORIA is designed with a dual purpose and can be integrated into your studio in two ways. Firstly, ORIA can be used as an all-in-one studio solution, acting as both your USB-C audio interface and monitor controller. Secondly, you can also integrate ORIA as a standalone monitor controller in a more complex studio configuration where you can take advantage of ORIA's advanced multi-channel monitoring capabilities.

ORIA's advanced onboard DSP processing lets you create custom onboard calibration profiles presets for any monitoring format from stereo to surround to 9.1.6 immersive setups making the process of reference checking your mix in different monitoring formats quick and easy. Each profile is a collection of levels, calibration parameters and choice of speakers

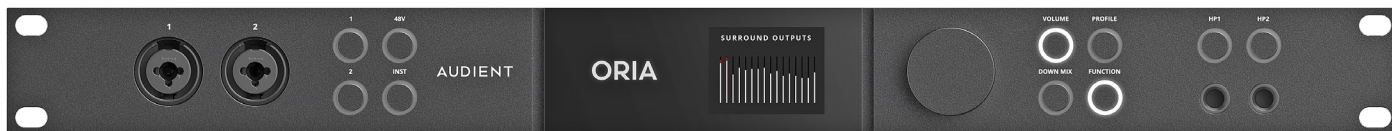
TRS or AES outputs on the back of ORIA. Next, connect your near-field speakers to the two dedicated stereo output pairs, which are relay-switched from the first two left and right channel outputs. Note that these two stereo pairs can be used independently of your immersive speaker configuration, meaning you can keep your favorite near fields dedicated to stereo mixing.

To allow you accurately calibrate your multi-channel speaker configuration, Audient teamed up with Sonarworks to provide deep integration between the companies SoundID reference software and ORIA's onboard advanced DSP speaker processing. ORIA unit ships with a SoundID reference measurement microphone and includes a 60-day trial subscription for SoundID's multi-channel reference software. Using the SoundID measurement microphone which is included with ORIA alongside SoundID reference software gives you the ability to accurately measure and calibrate a multi-channel speaker setup. Once you have created a Sonarworks

is coordinated and Audient has included a global lip sync delay, which can be stored in each profile. This allows you to switch between low latency monitoring for recording sessions and perfectly synchronized video with no complex reset needed. ORIA's software app will also provide the currently selected renderer status, so you know which formats you are monitoring at all times.

As an audio interface, ORIA provides more than enough I/O to take on immersive audio mixes while also having the flexibility to operate as a multi-channel recording interface. Connecting via a high-speed USB-C connection, ORIA offers ultra-low latency monitoring and rock-solid driver performance for both macOS and Windows, supporting 24-bit 96KHz.

ORIA has two of Audient's console microphone accessible from the front panel via combo jacks. This means you can add sound sources such vocal performances even at the final stages of the production process. ORIA's



condensed into one easy-to-use interface. ORIA is designed to let you calibrate, control, and monitor multi-channel speaker arrays from stereo up to 9.1.6 speaker setups that have been correctly calibrated to your particular acoustic space as well as store and recall profiles for different immersive audio speaker setups. Using ORIA's onboard DSP, each speaker can be adjusted using an 8-band EQ, per-speaker delay lines, individual level trims to compensate for level differences, and has advanced bass management controls, so if some of your speakers in your studio setup are smaller bass response, you can send the low end to the subwoofer.

You might for example have your 9.1.6 immersive speaker setup, calibrated at 85dB with a flat tonal signature, which can be stored as profile number one. If you needed to check the same speaker setup with a Dolby Atmos music curve, you could store that as profile 2. If you want to mix on a completely separate set of stereos near field speakers with their own calibration settings, you can make that profile 3. Up to 32 profiles can be stored on the ORIAS for ease and convenience, and up to four of these profiles can be saved as favorites and switched between with a single press of the button on the front of the unit, or from the iPad remote, giving you full access to ORIA if it is installed in a machine rack away from your mixing desk.

Let's assume you are using ORIA in an acoustically treated acoustic environment with multiple speakers correctly placed around your mixing position. To set up ORIA, the first step is to plug in your surround speakers via the analog

calibration profile, it can be directly loaded into ORIA's onboard DSP, meaning your room stays calibrated while taking the load off of your CPU.

ORIA has the ability to check your work on non-immersive combinations of speakers, such as 7.1, 5.1 or stereo, to make sure everything you have been working on in your immersive audio mix translates down channel to everyone in your audience. Audient worked with Dolby to let you take control of your Dolby renderer's downmix functionality directly from ORIA, which avoids having to switch screens in the middle of a session. ORIA lets you quickly cycle through different downmix formats using ORIA's dedicated hardware control or from the available free iPad app.

The ORIA app software suite features an advanced set of tools designed to integrate into the workflow a professional film score composer or postproduction or mastering engineer will need. The ORIA software app gives you full control of ORIA's front panel motion UI control or iPad app, to control calibrated volume levels as well as choose which speakers are active, check your metering and switch between different user profiles. Speaker groups are color coded for quick navigation, per speaker and speaker group mutes and solos are reflected as you make changes, as well as global volume dim and cut.

Other monitoring functions like return to reference level can be assigned to the user defined function button on ORIA's front panel. If you are working in film post-production, making sure your audio and video

two preamps can be digitally remote controlled and optimized to give you the sonic benefits of all its analogue design combined with accurate digital control. An additional 16 preamps can be connected via ORIA's two ADAT expansion ports. As an audio interface, ORIA is designed to be as transparent as possible with high-performance AD to DA converters. ORIA has a huge 126 dB dynamic range and professional grade AD/DA converters. When using ORIA as a USB-C interface, use the ADAT inputs to add another sixteen channels of preamps to expand the system into an 18-in, 16-out system for a versatile studio setting.

When using ORIA as a standalone monitor controller, you can use the ADAT inputs or the optional Dante card to feed 16 inputs from your pre-existing studio system into onboard calibration and monitoring system. While ORIA can be effectively used in a home recording environment to get the most out ORIA needs to be deployed in a multi-room, production, post, or mastering studios that are equipped with actual multi-speaker arrays properly configured in an acoustically treated environment.

On the other hand, as many people are successfully mixing immersive audio in home or project studios on headphones for delivery platforms such as iTunes and the growing number of delivery platforms which now requires music submitted to be Atmos compliant many project studio owners will find ORIA to be exactly what they are looking for.

ORIA is available now for \$2,699. Find out more at audient.com.

Solid State Logic SSL 2 and 2+ MK II



About five years ago, just before the pandemic, Solid State Logic developed two new interfaces: the SSL 2 and SSL 2+. Now fast forward a few years later, at AES 2024, SSL just released an upgraded version of both interfaces: the SSL 2 and SSL 2+ MKII.

The basic design parameters on the new interfaces are pretty much the same, namely a two-by-two interface and a two-by-four interface with MIDI on board. This includes individual buttons for toggling phantom power, switching between instrument and line level, a button for high-pass filter, individual gain knobs, and LED level meters. For each input channel, you also get a 4K button, which was already present on the original version, and emulates the sound of SSL's legendary 4000 series consoles. Both interfaces feature a large center knob to control the overall monitor volume.

Both the SSL 2 MKII and SSL 2+ MKII interfaces have a USB-C connection and are designed to be powered directly from your computer. On both interfaces are a set of balanced TRS outputs, which in most cases, will be used to connect to your monitors, but on the SSL 2+ MKII, you will get a second set of monitor outputs. Note that the second pair is routed straight through from your DAW without any volume controls on the interface, and this could also be used for things such as re-amping or connecting an external headphone amp.

On the second generation of the SSL 2 and 2+, you also get improved dynamic range and which now comes in at about 117 dB, which is a 6 dB increase over the previous generation. That should really be more than enough dynamic range for most situations and should guarantee low noise recordings. Additionally, with the 2+ MK II, you will find a MIDI-in and MIDI-output, which you do not have on the

non-+ version. In general, the overall build quality physical connections on both the SSL 2 MKII and SSL 2+ MKII have also been improved.

Since the original SSL 2 was released, a number of customers that were using the original version of the interfaces were asking for some specific features to be included in the next version of the interface.

At the top of the list of requested features, guitarists were asking for a much better input for their instruments, namely a proper Hi-Z level input. While the previous interface had a Hi-Z switch to the line level input, it was not nearly as loud as it needed to be, so the noise factor was a problem when customers were tracking guitars in terms of overall floor noise.

As a result, on the upgraded SSL 2 MKII and 2+, SSL separated the Hi-Z from the preamp, so that it is now a separate analog input, which is what guitarists were looking for. By contrast, you got roughly about 18 dB difference between the previous interface and the new SSL 2 MKII, which is a substantial difference over the original version. Not only that, on the SSL 2 MKII and 2+ MKII, SSL improved the microphone preamps, allowing for a difference of about 10 dB in headroom, as well as improved signal noise ratio from the previous version of the interface.

On the original SSL 2 and 2+, some customers were requesting the headphones could be placed on the front of the interface. As a result, on the SSL 2 and 2+ MKII, the headphone outputs are now on the front of the interface. In the new series, a further difference between the 2 and 2+ is that the 2+ actually gives you two separate mixes. This allows, for example, if you are doing a vocal overdub, you can go to output 3 and 4 and provide a vocal mix for the artist. When

the artist is done with their vocal overdub and they want to hear the full mix, all you have to do is just switch back to the main mix right from a switch on the front of the interface. This makes it quick and handy to be able to do vocal overdubs and keep your workflow moving.

Another key improvement of the SSL 2 and 2+ over the previous version, is that the previous SSL 2+ had a minus 10 dB output unbalanced RCA, which may be good for some situations. For example, if you want to connect and unbalanced input line input source, such as a turntable, but if you are trying to match four balanced outputs or gain stage four outputs, it could be problematic. On SSL 2 and 2+ MK II, SSL redesigned the interface to now have four balanced outputs, which you can use to connect a second set of monitors, or if you were reamping your guitar tracks.

Summing it up, both the SSL 2 MKII and SSL 2+ MKII are a great choice for content creators and professionals looking for a high quality portable interface for tracking or capturing ideas on the go. While they are essentially priced at budget interfaces both the SSL 2 MKII and SSL 2+ MKII share Solid State Logic's professional-level audio interfaces.

Both SSL 2 MKII and SSL 2+ MKII come bundled with SSL's Production Pack, creating a complete hardware and software SSL studio setup, featuring a selection of must-have virtual instruments, plug-ins, samples and DAWs, including a three-month subscription to Complete Access Bundle, Harrison Mixbus 10 DAW, and much more.

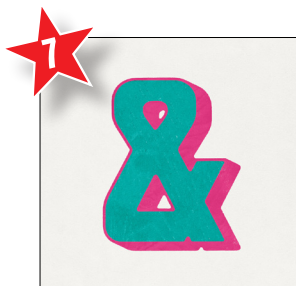
The SSL 2 MK II is available now for \$229. The SSL 2+ MK II is available now for \$299.

Find out more at solidstatelogic.com.

Bastille Presents

&
Best Laid Plans Records
Producers: Dan Smith, Mark Crew

Bastille's frontman Dan Smith lets his imagination go wild with his new solo project "&" (Ampersand). The ambitious 14-track album features imaginative stories about various historical figures from poet Emily Dickinson in "Emily and her Penthouse in the Sky" to Chinese pirate Zheng Yi Sao in "Zheng Yi Sao Questions For Her." Tricked through all the tracks are interesting arrangements filled with immersive orchestras and choirs. **-Jacqueline Naranjo**



Zzzahara

Spiral Your Way Out
Lex Records
Producers: Jorge Elbrecht, Sarah Tudzin, Alex Craig, Franco Reid

Having grown up in Los Angeles, zzzahara clearly absorbed the qualities of that storied locale. Indeed, the city's complexities are perfectly reflected in their music. *Spiral Your Way Out* is gritty but sensitive, poppy yet bursting with pain, and filled with personal reckonings filtered through the Hollywood prism of glitz and filth. Beyond that, there's something eerily familiar present, like a '90s alternative artist phased in from a parallel cosmos. **- Andy Kaufmann**



Marc Broussard

Time is a Thief
Distributed by: _____
Producers: Eric Krasno, Jeremy Most

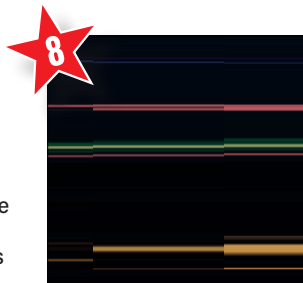
Marc Broussard's latest album *Time is a Thief* brings his soulful vocals and Louisiana roots to life in a set of ten original tracks. Produced by Grammy winners Eric Krasno and Jeremy Most, the album blends funk, soul, and R&B, creating a rich soundscape filled with gritty hooks and warm grooves. Standouts like the title track, "Way You Shine," and "Give You The World" showcase Broussard's passion and lyrical depth, highlighting his dynamic range and heartfelt style. **- Jane Mann**



LL Cool J

The F.O.R.C.E.
Def Jam
Producers: Various

Frequencies of Real Creative Energy is the title of rap legend LL Cool J's 14th studio album. With features from Eminem to Nas to Busta Rhymes and Snoop Dogg, *The F.O.R.C.E.* is a lyrical force to be reckoned with. Though this album is mostly produced by the Abstract, Q-Tip of A Tribe Called Quest, songs like "Spirit of Cyrus," "Praise Him," and "Murdergram Deux" is what makes *The F.O.R.C.E.* hit hard. From doing music to movies/TV shows, at the age of 56, LL exhibits no indication of diminishing his pace. **- Adam Seyum**



Matt Hillyer

Bright Skyline
State Fair Records
Producer: John Pedigo

On the heels of his critically-acclaimed 2021 album *Glorieta* comes an even stronger successor, with "Bright Skyline." Hillyer is the real deal; cutting his chops for over 30 years playing dance halls and listening rooms throughout Texas and the southwest. This package features a heaping helping of original western swing, rockabilly and straight up country that is certain to connect with the faithful and expand his fan base. The spirit of Hank Williams, Sr. and Waylon Jennings, with a spark of Dwight Yoakam flow freely. **- Eric Harabadian**



Good Neighbours

Good Neighbours
Capitol Records
Producers: Scott Verrill, Oli Fox

British duo *Good Neighbours'* charm and energetic spirit come to life with their debut self-titled EP. *Good Neighbours* begins with the high-energy number "Keep It Up," a fun track that features infectious chanting noises. The album transports us into the early 2000's indie and electronic dreamscape scene of artists like MGMT and Passion Pit. Tracks "Daisies" and "Bloom" feature euphoric beats that make you want to dance. The five-song EP is a delightful introduction to the band. **- Jacqueline Naranjo**



Jeff "Skunk" Baxter

Speed of Heat - Storytellers Edition
BMG/Renew Records
Producers: Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, CJ Vanston

Multi-gold and platinum album, Grammy winning and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee guitarist Jeff "Skunk" Baxter expands his first-ever solo album, *Speed of Heat*, with a brand new *Storytellers Edition*, which pulls back the curtain in the form of candid stories and insightful commentary on every track. Baxter is joined by guest vocalists and songwriters Michael McDonald, Clint Black, Jonny Lang and Rick Livingstone. A must-have for anyone interested in the craft and hearing a master's process. **- Joseph Maltese**



Brass Queens

Hot Tub Sessions
Harmony Park Pro Records
Producers: Brass Queens

The all-female ensemble brings their signature mix of jazz, funk, and hip-hop to life, delivering spirited, vibrant tracks that pulse with New Orleans soul and contemporary swagger and sounds. Each song feels both nostalgic and innovative with influences including balkan, mambo, film scores, pop, and classic rock. "Karma Queen" and "Look At Me Now" are bold and badass standouts, although the body of work as a whole captures the energy of their live marching second line performances. **- Joseph Maltese**



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

Cat's Cradle Durham, NC**Contact:** frank@highroadtouring.com**Web:** jonathanrichman.bandcamp.com**Players:** Jonathan Richman, guitars, various artifacts; Tommy Larkin, traps, various artifacts

Material: From the moment Jonathan Richman bounded on stage with Tommy Larkin taking his post behind the "traps," it was clear: this would be no ordinary concert. Armed with a guitar, some mysterious "artifacts," and a disregard for setlists, Richman led the audience on a raucous, rollicking romp through a medley of songs, barely pausing for breath. Fans who knew the tunes sang along; those who didn't stood rapt, mesmerized by this cyclone of joyous unpredictability on a huge, shadowy stage.

In his trademark style, Richman transformed the space, toe-tapping into every corner and occasionally ricocheting back to the mic to deliver "Sun," "Hungry for a Touch," and "Summer Feel" with sudden, Zen-like calm. The crowd was hooked on every note, mumble, and half-delivered line as if entranced by some musical pied piper from a parallel universe.

Musicianship: This is Jonathan Richman, folks, unfiltered and pedal-free. He doesn't need effects—his delightfully wonky guitar playing and refreshingly quirky originality fill the stage. Cradling his guitar between his arm and torso, he suddenly swung into



JONATHAN RICHMAN

a 30-second riff of Santana's "Oye Como Va," shaking the audience to its core. They erupted, totally absorbed by this everyman magician who seemed to conjure up musical mayhem on a whim.

Performance: Onstage together, Richman and Larkin were pure kinetic magic, covering every inch of space with sound and spark. Playing together for three decades must've given them some mystical ESP because they're as loose as a five-cent cigar, but tighter than a drum when it counts. Somewhere between a madcap skit

and a serious jam, they wove one tune into another, crafting a whirling sonic tapestry that seemed to defy gravity.

Summary: There's a reason the crowd was packed in, and it's not just for the music—it's for the whole Jonathan-and-Tommy experience. Wild, wonderful, and wackily authentic, their show is one you can only truly appreciate in person. If you ever get the chance, grab it with both hands and hold on tight. It's a show that hits you "like the hot kiss at the end of a wet fist." — *Eric Sommer*

**The Crocodile** Seattle, WA**Web:** wilderado.co**Contact:** wilderado.co/contact**Players:** Max Raine, vocals, guitar; Tyler Wimpee, guitar, vocals; Justin Kila, drums; Colton Dearing, bass.

Material: Originating from Tulsa, OK, Wilderado is an indie-Americana band that readily draws from the acoustic guitar-based, singer-songwriter tradition of folk music—a style brought into prominence by fellow Oklahoman Woody Guthrie. However,

they extend beyond the genre's roots by embracing multi-instrumental, melodic layers popularized by The Jayhawks and Wilco. Wilderado branches into more experimental territory by incorporating elements of ambient folk reminiscent of Fleet Foxes' "White Winter Hymnal," and The War on Drugs' "Under the Pressure" heard in songs like "Surefire" and "Tomorrow." In turn, Wilderado has created a distinct alternapastoral rock sound. The band further lures listeners into their indie-folk stylings with escapist storylines that elucidate the beauty of overcoming life's everyday challenges.

Musicianship: Wilderado's Americana-made sonics thrive on the band's natural musicality and genial effervescence. Frontman Max Raine's smooth vocals, laced with a slight southern drawl, sit in the sweet spot of the live mix, effortlessly winding around the band's rich tonalities. Tyler Wimpee's lead guitar work and backing vocals create a bright counterpoint to the band's overall warmth.

Performance: Opening their show with "Stranger," Wilderado leaned into its wistful undertones, with Max crooning an echoey 'over and over' chorus, creating nostalgic soundscapes suited for the evening's intimate venue (The Crocodile). At the same time, the dreamy intonations transported the audience to the countryside on a hot summer night. Sustaining this dual tonality was Wilderado's mission as they moved through their performance, featuring the radiant atmospherics of "Morning Light" and the beautiful western-twanged, honey-hued guitars of "In Between." The Oklahoma-based band circled back to end their set with the equally effortless and sweet-sounding "Outside My Head" and the two-step, country-tinged "Rubble to Rubble."

Summary: The future of indie-folk rock shines brightly with Wilderado leading the way. Their skill in crafting solid alt-country songs, glazed with swathes of sonic experimentation, brings a mesmerizing mainstream aesthetic to the genre while retaining a radically honest approach to songwriting. — *Megan Perry Moore*

The Blue Note Grill Durham, NC

Contact: nick.losseaton@gmail.com

Web: vanessacollier.com

Players: Vanessa Collier, vocals, sax, guitar; Ben Rice, guitar; Justice Guevara, bass

Material: Blues, blues, and more blues was Vanessa Collier's calling card this evening. With her perfectly stylized sax playing, she opened a can of whoop-ass and kicked it effortlessly off the stage, and in the process gave a nod to her Texas roots: Ben Webster, Charlie Parker, Pamela Hart and she seems to have jumped into Joyce Spenser's skin a little bit. Playing all original material, she had no trouble moving through her new record, which she touted with thoughtful and memorable narratives. She introduced each one to this adoring crowd: "Sweating Like a Pig, Singin' Like an Angel" was a crowd favorite, as was "Wild as a Rainstorm," both climaxing into blues oblivion driven by her melodic and punchy sax. Ben Rice on guitar provided tasteful, in the pocket fills that left room for her soaring vocals and complemented the smoldering, low-to-the-ground groove.

Musicianship: If you were looking for flashy, over-the-top blues-Magoo nonsense, there's no place for it on this stage, on such a rare and enchanting evening. Collier's ensemble was a study in near-perfect musicianship, effortless playing and, with grace and occasional homage to that distant animal



Roberticus Johnsonasaurus Rex, she brought the goods, had the near capacity crowd on their feet and hyper-groovin' to her well-executed original material.

Her rhythm section was as tight as a drum, and sounding shiny and new, like they had been together for decades, without the cobwebs. Standout lower-register magic-man Justice Guevara and his knee-level slung bass (in the style of Dee Dee Ramone and Dusty Rhodes) gave a visual clue, that no matter where we are in the musical spectrum, we owe so much to the blues, a sound style that scratched out its existence over the eons to emerge as this uniquely American music.

Performance: This was as sophisticated a performance as it gets. This quartet—with Collier out front calling the show—was a slow-

burn study in how to pace a performance, work an audience into a near frenzy and deliver a set of original material that was engaging as much as it was breathtakingly professional.

The sound was excellent, very well mixed, there was little if any downtime between songs and the whole experience flowed like Crown Royal poured over #2 sandpaper: smooth with a little bit of grit!

Summary: Every now and then, a Texas sax player steps out enough to make her own mark, blaze her own trail and build an impressive resume in a relatively short space of time. Vanessa Collier is an artist who will be with us for a long time since her talent and writing seem to have no bounds and the sky's the limit for this remarkable cyclone of sound, sax and song. - *Eric Sommer*



The Mamba Huntington Beach, CA

Contact: ronnynorth@ronnynorth.com

Web: ronnynorth.com

Players: Ronny North, guitars; Mark Mora, bass; Steve Stafford, drums

Material: Ronny North is a guitar player hailing from Los Angeles, CA and playing all-instrumental, rock and metal tunes that are straight out of the Satriani and Vai stables.

Huntington Beach was graced with solid, kick-butt rock 'n' roll as a good crowd absorbed the musical soundwaves of the Ronny North crew.

Musicianship: To say that Ronny North is a good guitar player is an understatement. Equipped with a Laney head and cabinet combo, great tone filled the nearly-full venue. North's technique is superb. His finger speed is amazingly fast and clean and you could hear every note played.

Performance: The performance was great. North loves being in front of the camera and it shows. When he's not concentrating on the licks of the songs, he's posing in wild and crazy poses for whomever wants a picture. He hams it up just enough to make great pictures, bringing them to life in this Rock n Roll realm. Very fun to watch and very fun to listen to, also. "Sea of Deception" and "Chasing the Flag" are two prime examples of his fire-y, melodic Metal work.

Summary: Ronny North has been around for a while. Emerging from the Hair-Metal bands of the '80s, he has played on numerous Platinum-selling albums and songs. He is a consummate showman and musician armed with a great rhythm section and well written tunes. He has five CDs under his belt and all well worth a listen: "Pieces," "Going Psycho," "Disconnected," "Light" and "Inertia," with one more single out by year's end, and a new CD out early in 2025, tentatively entitled, *Substantially Less Fun*. His tunes include: "Dawn of Hope," "Remember," "Race With Me," "Snowflakes," "Into the Gray" and the very melodic, hard rock tune "Sea of Deception." All of his music is written, recorded, engineered, mixed and mastered in his home studio, all the while appearing at trade shows; NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants), attending awards shows, attending jam sessions and doing live shows with his own band. - *Pierce Brochetti*



Greek Theater Los Angeles, CA

Web: michaelkiwanuka.com

Contact: trevor@biz3.net

Players: Michael Kiwanuka, guitar, vocals; Michael Jablonka, guitar; Steve Pringle, keys; Alex Bonfanti, bass; Graham Godfrey, drums; Simone Daley Richards, vocals; Emily Holligan, vocals; Paul Butler, vocals

Material: Winner of England's Prestigious Mercury Album of Year Award, Michael

Kiwanuka and his stellar band stopped in Los Angeles for a highly anticipated performance as part of his co-headlining tour with Brittany Howard. With fans traveling from as far as Chile, this marked his first L.A. appearance since before the pandemic, and the show comes ahead of his latest album, *Small Changes*, just released in November.

As the band took the stage to the sounds of "Hard to Say Goodbye" playing over the PA, Kiwanuka himself emerged last, launching into the energetic "You Ain't the Problem,"

immediately bringing the audience to its feet. The 12-song set showcased selections from his three albums, as well as two new songs from his new release: "Floating Parade" and "The Rest of Me."

Musicianship: Since his early days as a session musician and touring guitarist for Adele, Kiwanuka has refined a unique modern soul/R&B/rock style, shaped by collaborations with iconic producers like Inflo and Danger Mouse. His band was tight and well-rehearsed, moving seamlessly between upbeat tracks and softer, more introspective songs like "Light," which highlighted the talents of his backing vocalists.

Performance: Kiwanuka's joy at being back on an L.A. stage was palpable, and he drew the crowd in, song by song. By the final number, "Love & Hate," the entire audience was on their feet, captivated by his artistry. The show featured thoughtful video imagery behind the band that underscored themes of love, loss, identity, and resilience. In a particularly moving moment during "Floating Parade," footage of the Challenger disaster created a stark yet powerful juxtaposition with the song's poignant lyrics, "Ooh, love, like this, nothing like this."

Summary: At the end of his concise yet impactful 65-minute set, Kiwanuka left the crowd wanting more, likely converting many Brittany Howard fans in the process. - *Benjamin Jones*

54 Below New York, NY

Web: karenmason.com

Contact: zevelyrecordsinc@earthlink.net

Players: Karen Mason, vocals; Christopher Denny, piano, musical director, Barry Kleinbort, director

Material: Mastering the art of cabaret is its own unique challenge. Simply stringing a group of your favorite songs together or finding a theme that grabs you is only the tip of the iceberg. Unlike pop and rock performers that rely heavily on the songwriting and vocals, cabaret artists, who often don't write their own material, need to take you on a different kind of journey; one that aligns with life experience and how it has influenced their musical choices. Karen Mason did just that in her CD release show, "Karen Mason And All That Jazz," Mason takes a deep dive into the songs of John Kander & Fred Ebb which is the centerpiece of her new album for which the show was named. The performance not only highlights the parts of her professional life that intersected with theirs but also includes works of other songwriters.

Musicianship: Mason is a vocal tour de force delivering each song with forethought and a dynamic range that follows the storyline. She reigns it in when called for but can belt with the best of them. Partnering well with Denny, they play off each other adding to the overall entertainment factor.



Performance: Kicking off the show with "All That Jazz," from *Chicago*, Mason delivered a sultry rendition inviting you to an evening that promised to be uplifting. She followed up with "Wilkommen," from *Cabaret*, maintaining that same spirit." The performance went on to combine hits with the more obscure. Another highpoint in the show was "Coloring Book," the one Kander & Ebb song that did not come out of musical

theater. She also performed a particularly refreshing interpretation of "New York, New York" coupled with "One Good Break." In a running bit throughout the show, Mason intermittingly held up the new CD for the audience to see, eliciting laughs every time.

Summary: Karen Mason knows exactly how to reach an audience and to shape a performance accordingly. - *Ellen Woloshin*

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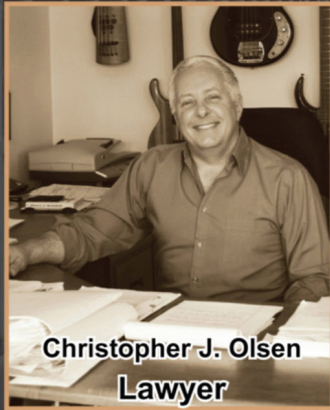
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Mark Maxwell... "If You're in a Band"

If there is any one human being that knows about the trials and tribulations of living a musical life it is Mark Maxwell. The 50-something lead vocalist for Louisville, Kentucky band The Crashers and owner of Maxwell's House of Music in Jeffersonville, IN grew up in a musical family. His father Marvin was a drummer in Dick Clark's Caravan of Stars and also owned a music store. And his older brother Max is a 30-year veteran of the Louisville music scene and drummer in The Crashers as well.

"I was around a lot of good people and met some interesting players that worked with my dad," recalls Maxwell on his formative years. "I had no choice but to fall into this thing. I worked in my dad's music store at 18 years old. And for 40 years I've worked in a music store and played in original and cover bands."

Being immersed in the music world, Maxwell garnered a ton of experience that he wanted to share with his customers and his immediate music community at large. He had developed a strong business sense as well as a creative one as a vocalist and guitarist. Undoubtedly, a major turning point in his musical career happened 16 years ago when he formed The Crashers.

"We're just a fun cover band that is comprised of the same six guys who started it," says Maxwell. "The best thing we did was, when we got together, we sat around a table and got to know each other. We knew we were good players, but could we live with each other for the rest of our lives? Once we determined that, we discussed what were our goals? And then we came up with these lofty goals and hit each one within three and a half years."

Over the years The Crashers have become one of the premier cover bands in the Louisville area, warming up for major acts, playing lucrative municipal, private and corporate events and doing feature shows in Mexico and the Caribbean. The affable singer and front man has learned a lot along the way and wanted to simply pay it forward.

About six months ago Maxwell consulted with his store videographer about the notion of starting a series on their website offering

tidbits on aspects of being in, and running a band, that would help other established and musicians in their town.

"Everybody knows The Crashers in Louisville and we've built one of the most stable businesses in this town," says Maxwell. "And everybody started doing the same thing we were because I kept saying this is what you oughta do."

So, Maxwell began posting 30 to 60 second



videos on maxwellshouseofmusic.com that soon got added to Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and throughout the social media universe. The series is called *If You're in a Band* and features Maxwell casually positioned in various sections of his store nonchalantly extolling tips on musical performance, practice methods, audience interaction, marketing, etc. Initially, as with anything new, there was some push back from the public. But then the tide began to quickly turn in a favorable direction.

"After about a month or so of me posting

these videos the world started biting in," says Maxwell. "People from Hawaii, Colorado, Canada, Israel, New Zealand and Australia started buying into, and loving, the series. And once that happened, all of the naysayers in town, for the most part, had stopped."

If You're in a Band comes out every morning 8 a.m. Monday-Friday EST. And, despite the phenomenal success that Maxwell has personally had through his band and related exploits as a music merchandiser, he humbly maintains his motivation for doing the series and offering real world advice comes from a place of empathy, and is organic and real.

"We're just a local music store that is solid in our foundation in what we're trying to do to help musicians," says Maxwell. "We're here to help you get to wherever you need to go, with whatever gear and whatever ideas. I never once say you should buy this drum set, guitar, bass or amplifier. But this is the big key. When you don't try to do something and you just do it for the right reasons, which was just to share this with my little town, things blow up! I never tried to sell anybody anything. But it's the algorithm that connected with musicians and brought everyone here."

Maxwell is living proof that if you remain dedicated to your craft, develop a game plan, keep open lines of communication fluid with your band mates and keep dreaming big anyone can attain whatever level of success in the music business, or life for that matter, they want to achieve.

"Being in a band is more like playing chess than checkers," says Maxwell. "And I think most of the bands in the world are playing checkers—meaning I get one, you get one. It takes a moment to realize that the first move you make affects the eighth move you make, or the third move affects the 12th. So, if you can stop and readjust the way you make these moves it will change your thought process on how to run a band. And I don't see a whole lot of people doing this."

The series *If You're in a Band* is on all social media platforms. But to go to the source, visit maxwellshouseofmusic.com.

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