MUSIC CONNECTION

SPECIAL YEAR END ISSUE!

HOT 100
Live Unsigned Artists & Bands

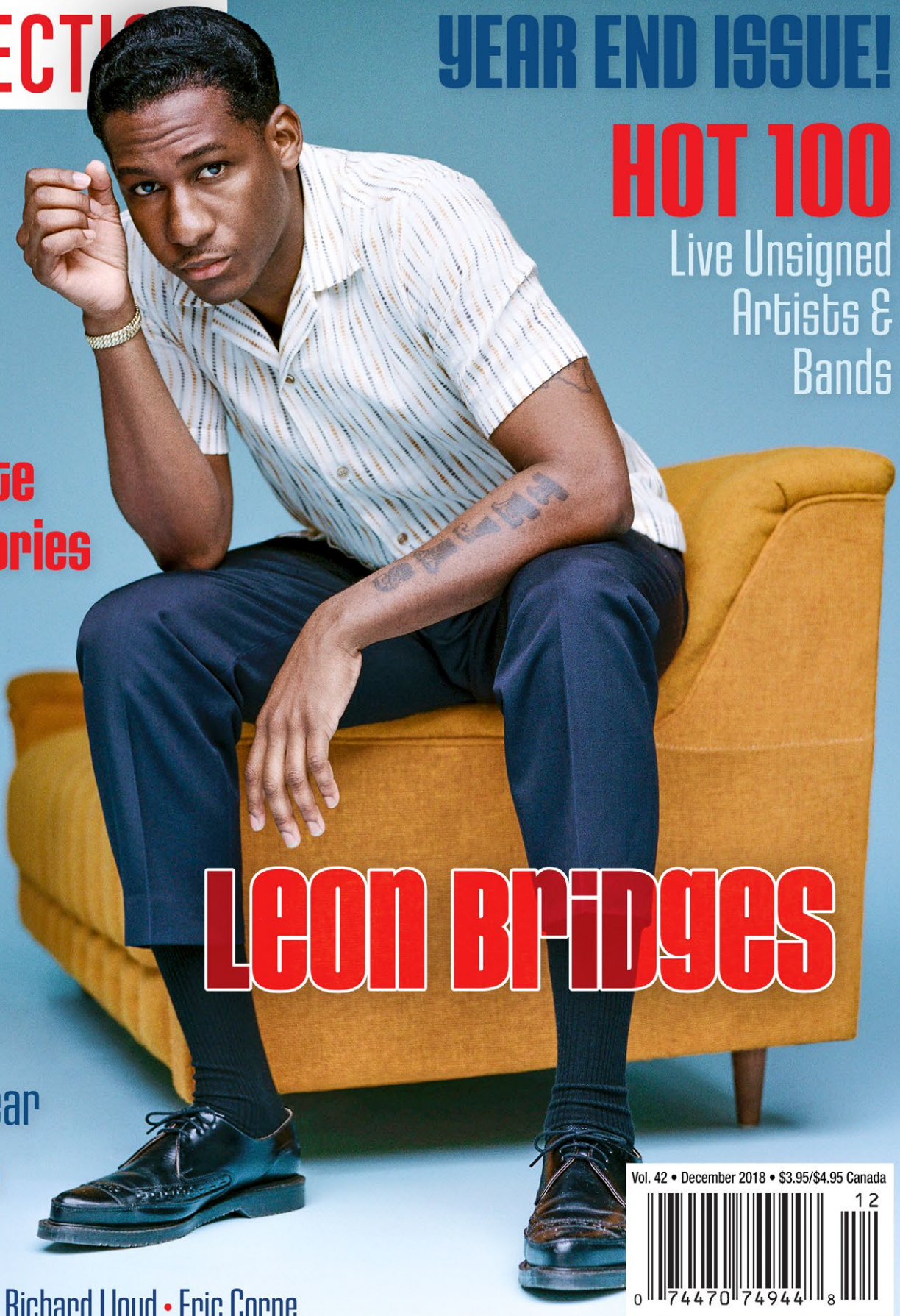
100
Best Career Tips of 2018

Our Favorite Signing Stories

Top 25
New Music Critiques

Gifts Under a Grand

6 Ways to Clear Your Samples



LEON BRIDGES

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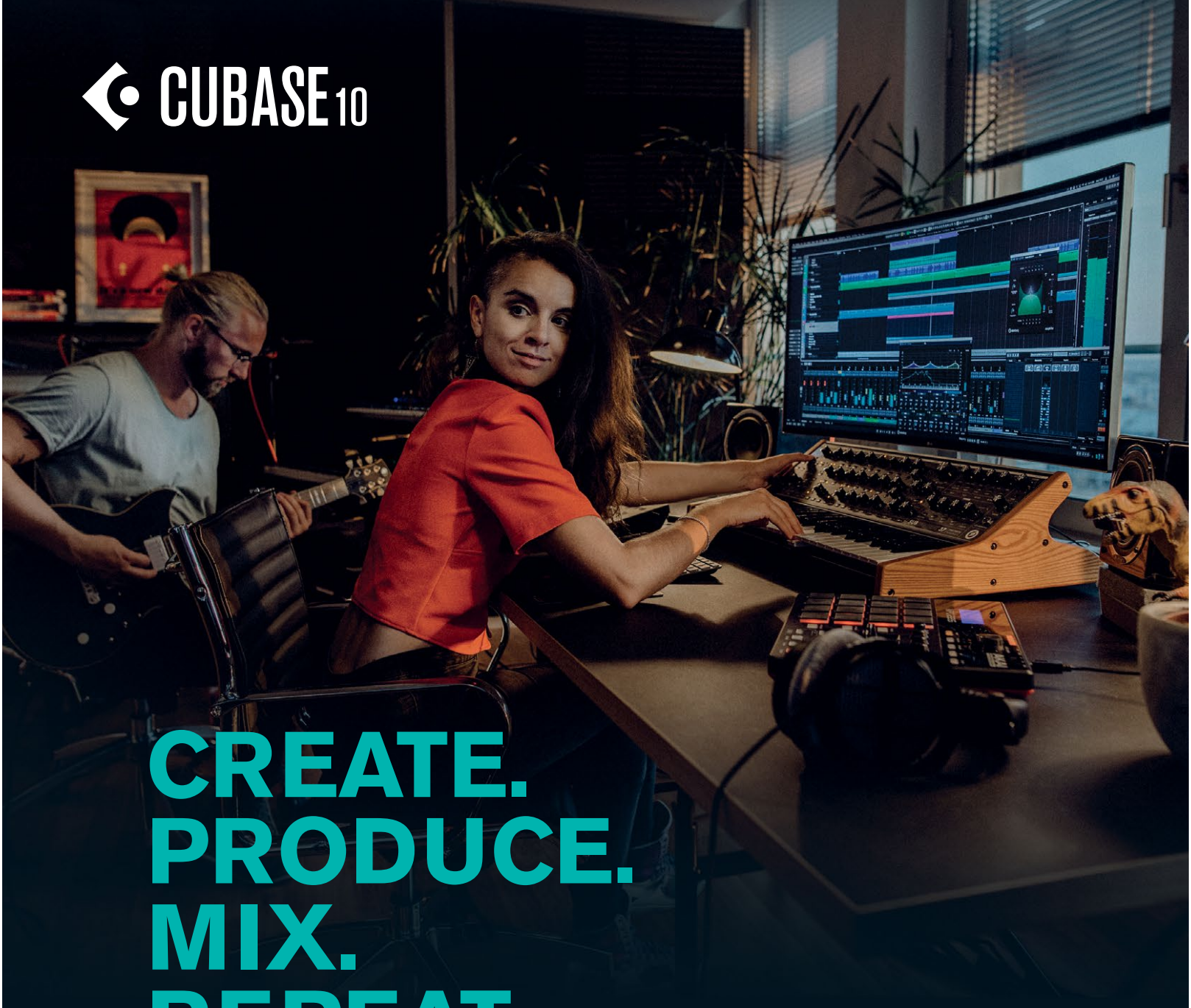


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Designed and Manufactured by Tech 21 USA, INC.

TECH21NYC.COM

Photo by Olaf Heine



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Informing Music People Since 1977
December 2018 • Vol. 42 • No. 12



Leon Bridges

In our exclusive interview, the eloquent artist talks about the careful steps he's taken to evolve his sound from vintage to modern. Bridges also discusses fruitful collabs with key producers and co-writers that have resulted in stellar songs, imaginative arrangements and inventive production.

By Dan Kimpel

Photos by Jack McKain



53 Our Favorite Signing Stories of 2018

Compiled by Mark Nardone



100 Best Career Tips of 2018

Compiled by Jacqueline Naranjo



Hot 100 LIVE Unsigned Artists & Bands of 2018

Compiled by Bernard Baur



Top 25 New Music Critiques & Top Prospects of 2018

Compiled by Jacqueline Naranjo

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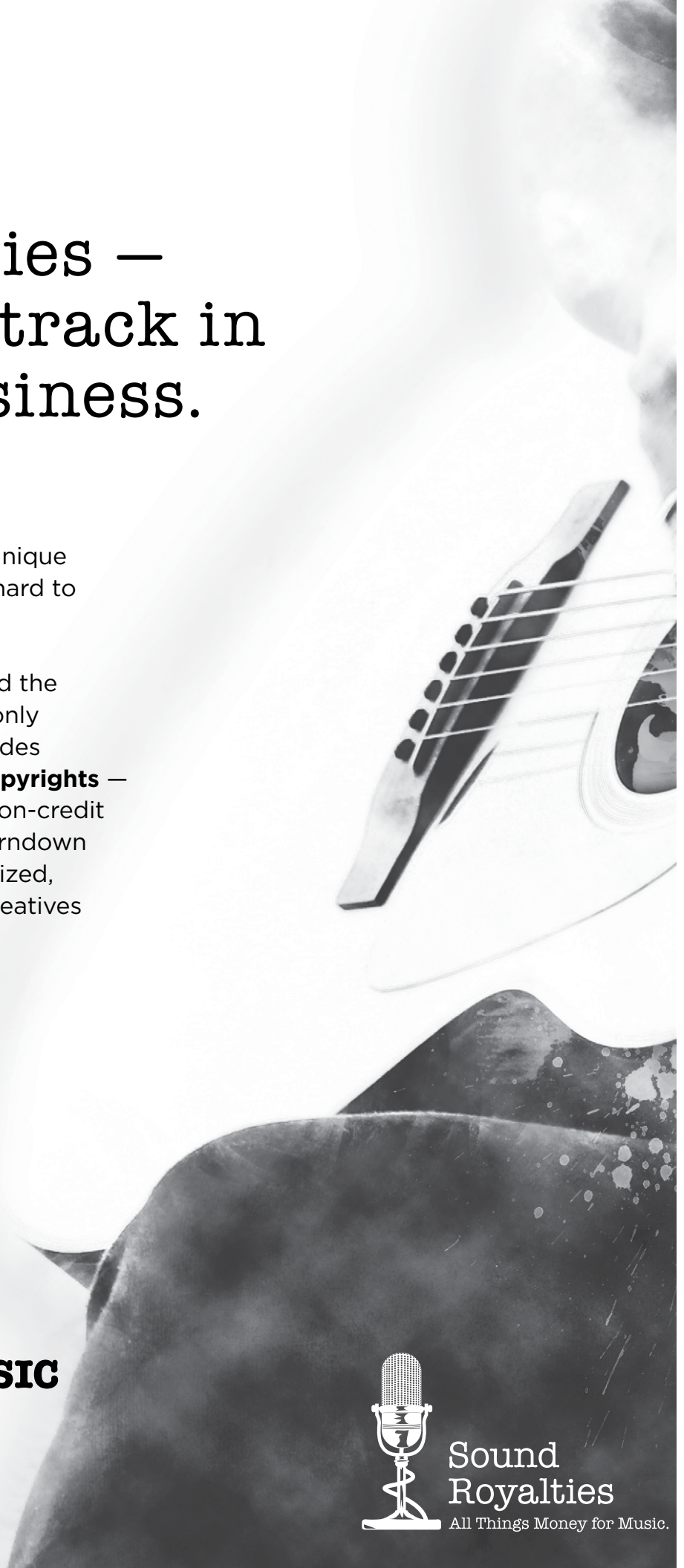
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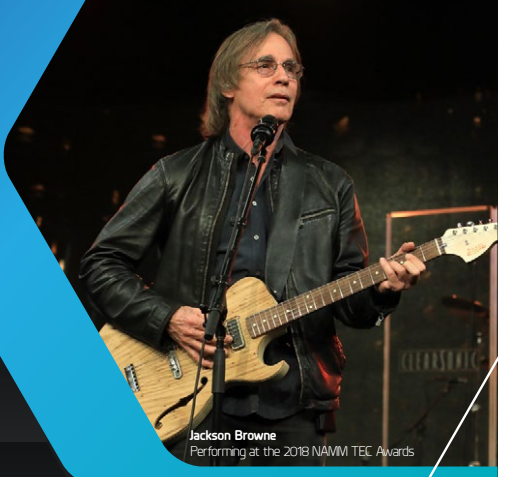
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34th NAMM TEC Technical Excellence & Creativity Awards®

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Jackson Browne
Performing at the 2018 NAMM TEC Awards

The studio is the heart of the TEC Awards. Here, artists and audio engineers merge creativity with science and technology to create humanity's greatest treasure: music. Meet this year's slate of nominees, comprising some of the most innovative facilities from across the world. **Vote today at namm.org/vote.**



Bandrika Studios, Tarzana, CA
Kaufman & Associates
Classic Hollywood meets modern design in this studio by architect and acoustic designer Jay Kaufman for Emmy-award winning composer Nathan Barr. Featuring a massive 1928 Wurlitzer theater organ, this space extends through a two-story, 10,000 square foot building. The main stage boasts a sonorous 1.5-second reverb decay, and a large acoustically-treated isolation room provides ample space for intimate solo performances.
kaufmanandassociates.net/bandrika



Berkeley Inc., Toronto, Canada
Pilchner-Schoustal International, Inc.
Berkeley Inc. is a full-service music production house providing underscore for agencies, production companies and direct clientele. The designer, Pilchner Schoustal International, oversaw the conversion of an historic row house into a post-production space. The control room holds a Barefoot MicroMain 35 5.1 monitoring system for surround sound mixing and outboard gear from Focusrite, Manley and others.
69berkeley.com



Hi-Five Studio, Milwaukee, WI
Haverstick Designs
Hi-Five Studio occupies a 5,000 square foot facility and features a decoupled room-within-a-room design by Gavin Haverstick. At the center of the control room lays a 16-channel Rupert Neve Designs Shelford 5052 and variety of classic outboard gear. Their robust mic locker holds a vintage 1969 Neumann U 87 and a large selection of Telefunken, Shure, Flea and ribbon microphones.
hi-fivestudio.com



Mick Schultz Studio, Los Angeles, CA
nonzero\architecture
Designed by nonzero\architecture, music producer and songwriter Mike Schultz operates a modern architectural beauty. With views of both the live room and garden, the green of the LA chaparral is juxtaposed against the various angular shades of white, black and gray. The wooden, control room desk holds MIDI controllers, outboard gear and a variety of computer stations.
nonzeroarch.com/portfolio_page/mick-schultz



Sonastério Studios, Belo, Horizonte, Brazil
WSDG -Walters-Storyk Design Group
Overlooking a breathtaking view of the Brazilian mountains, Sonastério is a true destination studio. Famed architect João Diniz collaborated with acoustician Renato Cipriano to create an elegant concrete and glass structure. The 750-square-foot live room boasts a 20-foot ceiling and is captured with an SSL AWS 924 board. Panoramic views greet the recording musicians and engineers alike.
wsdg.com/projects-items/sonasterio-studios



Sound On Sound Studios, Montclair, NJ
David Amlen
Formerly in the heart of Manhattan's Times Square, Sound On Sound Studios has been reborn across the Hudson River. The two-room facility houses a Neve VR board and a Euphonix S5 digital console. The 1,250 square foot Studio A offers a whopping 112 mic lines to the control room, four distinct isolation booths and a classic selection of microphones.
soundonsoundstudios.com



The Upper Deck, Nashville, TN
Carl Tatz Design
Built for a prominent MLB player, Carl Tatz Design paired an 18-foot ceiling with the Carl Tatz Design Signature Series acoustic treatment modules by Auralex. The control room utilizes a custom desk by Sound Construction & Supply, Tree Audio console and a pair of PhatomFocus bi-amped Ultra High Definition Monitors.
carltatzdesign.com/custom-built-studios/studio-the-upper-deck.html

Vote today at **namm.org/vote**.

– JONATHAN WIDRAN

ROYER LABS

royerlabs.com



Driven by a Passion for Music: David Royer, founder of Royer Labs, is one of an elite group of microphone designers who know that music and sound are inseparable from electronic design. He founded his first company, Mojave Audio in his Fullerton garage, where he modified amps and made his own condenser mics, mic pre's and compressors. Building gear under the Mojave and DVA labels, he created a number of condenser mics that became popular among top audio engineers like Bob Clearmountain, Mutt Lange and Sean Beaven. During this "garage period," Royer came across his first ribbon mic, a Reslo that needed repair, and his fascination for ribbon mics was born. Believing that the ribbon mics were more musical and like the human ear than any other kind, he set out to learn everything he could about them. The design of his first ribbon mic, the R-121 led to the opening of Royer Labs in 1998.

A Special Grammy: In 2013, Royer Labs received the coveted Technical Grammy Award for bringing ribbon microphones into mainstream recording around the world. John Jennings, VP of Sales and Marketing says, "Royer is made up entirely of musicians who really care about music and quality, so we don't cut any corners and are driven by the energy and excitement of everyone pulling in the same direction."

The Flagship R-121: The award-winning R-121 is Royer's flagship microphone; the world's first radically reengineered ribbon microphone and the model that reintroduced ribbon mics to engineers around the world. Royer Labs did away with the large, heavy, fragile "classic" approach to ribbon microphones and went in a completely new direction. The R-121 gives all of the warmth and natural sound that experienced engineers have long turned to ribbon mics for, but in a compact, light-weight, high output and tough-as-nails package that was unheard of in a ribbon mic before the R-121. In its two decades in the market, thousands of R-121's have been sold around the world and it's well established as a standard for tracking electric guitar and brass. Its users include Al Schmitt, Arturo Sandoval, Wayne Bergeron, Jerry Hey, Zakk Wylde, Eddie Van Halen and Jeff Beck.
The Royer R-10 Studio/Live Ribbon Microphone: The Royer R-10 is a passive mono ribbon microphone designed for use in the studio and on live stages. Hand-built in the company's Burbank factory, the R-10's sound and performance are all-Royer and it handles SPLs of up to 160 dB @ 1 kHz. The R-10's compact size and mounting system allows for flexible, unobtrusive positioning. The ribbon transducer is wired for humbucking to reject electromagnetically induced noise; you will never get a "harsh" recording. The R-10's built-in windscreen provides superior protection from air blasts and plosives. It also reduces proximity effect (bass buildup from close miking) so guitar cabinets and acoustic instruments can be close-miked with less bass buildup. The R-10's internally shock-mounted ribbon transducer isolates the ribbon element from shocks and vibrations, increasing the ribbon element's durability. The price point of $499 is significantly lower than Royer's other flagship products. The R-10 is currently being used on tour by the Foo Fighters and other acts.

Contact Royer Labs, 818-847-0121





ASSIGNMENTS

Michael Collins



Vice President, Government Relations
BMI (Broadcast Music, Inc.)

BMI has appointed longtime political strategist **Michael Collins** as **Vice President, Government Relations**. Collins will be based in Washington, DC and report to BMI President & CEO Mike O'Neill. He will be responsible for leading BMI's efforts to protect the rights of its songwriters, composers and music publishers at all levels of government. This includes oversight of the company's PAC as well as BMI's lobbying efforts in Washington, DC and states across the country. Collins joins BMI from Mehlman Castagnetti Rosen & Thomas, one of Washington, DC's premier lobbying firms. For more, contact lfischer@bmi.com.

Helen Murphy



Chief Executive Officer
ole

ole has appointed entertainment industry veteran **Helen Murphy** as **Chief Executive Officer**. Murphy is the founder and President of International Media Services, Inc. The company provides strategic and financial advisory services to clients in the global media and entertainment industries. Prior to founding IMS in 2004, Murphy was Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer for Warner Music Group (WMG). At Warner Music Group, Murphy was responsible for the finance, human resources, business development, information technology and real estate functions. For more, contact sylvia_lindae@olelabelgroup.com.

Moira McCarthy



Senior Director of Creative, Advertising and Marketing
Position Music

Position Music has appointed **Moira McCarthy** to the role of Senior Director of Creative, Advertising and Marketing. In her new position, McCarthy is responsible for overseeing creative advertising and marketing. Since joining the company, Moira has secured synch placements with Samsung, Google, Ralph Lauren, Jeep and McDonalds. Moira's ten-year background in both music and advertising production brings a unique perspective to the intricacies of the creative placement process. Prior to joining, McCarthy held positions at Grupo Spiro, The Napoleon Group and Audio Network. For more, contact deborah@drpr.us.

Kelly Walsh



National and Tour Publicist
Mitch Schneider Organization

Kelly Walsh has joined **The Mitch Schneider Organization (MSO PR)** as a **National and Tour Publicist**. As she begins her new position at the company, Walsh will bring her client Tod Waters, owner of Junker Designs and founding member/vocalist of punk outfit, DieFast. Walsh has spent the past eight years expanding her career in the entertainment industry handling publicity in-house at record labels, such as Century Media Records and Prosthetic Records, in addition to working independently and with boutique firms. For more information on this appointment, contact Walsh directly at kwalsh@msopr.com.

Meg Ryan



BBR Music Group
Director of Publicity

BBR Music Group has promoted **Meg Ryan** to **Director of Publicity**. Ryan joined the BBR Music Group publicity team in 2015 as an Associate Publicist before being promoted in 2017 to Senior Publicity Manager. She has worked closely with fast-rising act Lindsay Ell, helping to drive the media campaign behind her No. 1 debut album *The Project* as well the media launch of Wheelhouse Records' buzz-act Runaway June. Within the BBR Music Group roster she also works with chart-topper Granger Smith, new acts Walker McGuire and Everette as well as contributing to efforts on Kid Rock's latest release. For more, contact Jay@bbrmusicgroup.com.

Giles Martin



Head of Audio & Sound
Universal Music Group

Universal Music Group (UMG) has appointed Grammy-winning producer, composer and arranger **Giles Martin** as **Head of Audio & Sound**. In this position, Martin will lead UMG's exploration and adoption of emerging audio formats and consumer technology, inspiring artist creativity and providing the best listening experience for fans. He will be based in UMG's Abbey Road Studios in London. With a career characterized by studio experimentation and sound innovation, Martin will look at new audio technologies and potential partnerships with the most compelling innovators in the field. Contact James.Murtagh-Hopkins@umusic.com.

Tim Pithouse



The Orchard
Global Head of Artist & Label Services

The Orchard has named **Tim Pithouse** as **Global Head of Artist & Label Services**. In this role, Pithouse will be responsible for expanding the company's Artist & Label Services capabilities around the world, and driving greater global visibility and reach for artist releases from The Orchard. Based in New York, he will establish a presence for his team in all key markets, and leverage his expertise in developing and marketing artists internationally to collaborate closely with creators, set release goals, and execute im pactful sales and marketing campaigns across The Orchard's global network. For more, contact CCalabrese@theorchard.com.

David Rappaport



AEG
Chief Operating Officer of Global Touring

AEG has appointed **David Rappaport** as **Chief Operating Officer of Global Touring**. Most recently, Rappaport was Head of Artist Relations (Americas) at YouTube Music/Google Play Music. In addition to spearheading new education and strategy initiatives geared towards artists, management companies and agencies at YouTube, Rappaport also led promotional initiatives with several artists, including Camila Cabello, Panic! At The Disco and Led Zeppelin. Before joining YouTube, Rappaport was an artist attorney who worked with clients including Diplo, Major Lazer, ODESZA, Dillon Francis and Phantogram. For more, visit aegpresents.com.



◄ ROSWELL PRO AUDIO COLARES CONDENSER MICROPHONE

Roswell Pro Audio's Colares large-body condenser microphone is specifically designed and tailored for vocal recording—it uses a transformer-coupled JFET circuit said to deliver the sound of a vintage tube microphone. This hand-made, cardioid-only studio microphone measures 208 X 60-mm and weighs 850 grams. With an equivalent noise of less than 12dBA (quiet), it will produce a musical and harmonically rich, saturated sound that will enhance any vocal and/or instruments. It uses an edge-terminated 34-mm diameter, 3-micron thick Mylar capsule and has a unique dual-voicing feature by way of the attenuator pad switch.

Besides reducing output level by 10dB to enable recording loud sources, the pad switch also reduces the mic's harmonic coloration for a cleaner overall sound. In addition, the Colares mic has a deluxe, three-position high-pass filter with: flat, a rumble filter (-3dB @ 60Hz), and a more drastic filter (-3dB @ 150Hz). This feature is great for dialing in the amount of low-frequency buildup when singers work close to the mic.

My very first test was for a male singer singing and playing acoustic guitar at the same time. He was close to the Colares and I set the mic completely flat with no filter or pad. The results were remarkable! I got the presence and size I usually acquire from multi-thousand dollar vintage tube microphones. His voice was thick and warm but not boomy; the proximity effect was not bad as he is used to working close in for a dramatic effect. The sound was true to the source and not overly bright.

I tried switching the 10dB attenuator pad in and cranking up the mic gain and there was a thinning of the overall sound—a smaller but cleaner sound. Even though my singer was close, the sound remained good and undistorted.

Every Colares is hand-built, tuned, and tested in Roswell Pro Audio's Northern California headquarters. The mic ships in a custom, heavy-duty flight case and comes with a Rycote shock mount. The Colares sells for $1,259 MSRP and is a great choice for an all-around general purpose condenser microphone that will perform excellently for years!

roswellproaudio.com/products/colares



► JM ACOUSTIC STEREO MIC CLIPS

JM Acoustic has a line of fixed-angle stereo microphone clips made in America using nylon manufactured in an industrial-grade 3D printer. They have a matte black finish that makes them nearly invisible when flown overhead at stage/live/televised events. In the recording studio, it is now easy to quickly switch and experiment with different stereo microphone techniques and know that the fixed position/angle of the mics is always locked in—unlike when using adjustable stereo bars.

Microphones snap into the clips and for non-standard sized mics, there are universal fit clips available where the microphones are held in place using supplied elastic bands.

Some of the basic clip models covering industry standard stereo techniques are a Mid-Side clip for holding cardioid and figure-of-8 microphones precisely, a 90-degree X/Y coincident clip, and a 110-degree ORTF near-coincident clip and many more.

The JM Acoustic Stereo Mic clips come in a whole range of sizes to fit microphones with diameters ranging from 12-mm to 24-mm for microphones spaced apart from 0-cm for X-Y and M-S configurations up to 30-cm for ORTF, DIN or 90-degree and near-coincident setups.

I tried both omni-directional and cardioid microphones and the ORTF and X-Y clips on acoustic guitar. It was certainly easy to hear and decide which technique produced the spacious stereo sound I was after. I ended up with 110-degree ORTF using cardioids.

JM Acoustics stereo mic clips range in price from $30 to $60.

jmacoustic.com



◄ SOUNDRADIX POWAIR PLUG-IN

Powair is a dual-stage dynamics processor that combines a K-weighted loudness Leveler with an Adaptive Dynamics section that maintains an average compression no matter how hard you push it. The goals are: greater transparency and control, the retention of the timbre and attack characteristics, and an increased perceived loudness and intensity.

The Leveler section allows you to set a LFKS loudness level Target and the Leveler will reduce or boost to that Target in an intelligent way.

The Compressor section is set up separately and includes the familiar controls of Attack, Recovery and a single main Compression knob. Powair also has two unique controls: Punch and Adaptive Comp.

The Punch parameter sets the level of transients occurring within the attack time period for fine-tuning impact—such as for kicks and snare drums. Adjusting the Adaptive Comp control works well for vocals that have big changes in level from quietly sung verses to loud choruses!

I tried Powair on a lead vocalist who sang verses quietly in the bottom of her singing range and then "belted out" very loud during choruses at near the top of her range. When she sang the choruses, they sounded clear even though, the compression knob read 26.1dB and I was seeing gain reductions as much as 18dB! This is magically awesome because the compression artifacts are minimal!

For my first look at Sound Radix' Powair compressor version 1.0, I'm impressed! It has a new degree of totally adjustable control that is especially good for dynamically wild vocal tracks. Additional features are M/S processing with a variable stereo-link, an analytical auto-makeup gain algorithm and a useful colorful spectral output level meter.

Sound Radix Powair sells for $149 and is available for Macs & PCs in VST2/3, AAX and Audio Units formats.

soundradix.com/products/powair

Model 24



Record
24 Track Digital Multitrack Recorder

Mix
22 Channel Analog Mixer

Connect
24 Channel USB Audio Interface

Recording. Reinvented.

TASCAM

▼ UDOQ UNIVERSAL DOCKING STATION



The udoq is a docking station for charging multiple mobile devices at the same time. Designed in Germany, the udoq is a sleek, extruded aluminum shelf—a single rail designed to cradle all your devices in a row with a backrest to prop them up so you can see and operate them while plugged in charging.

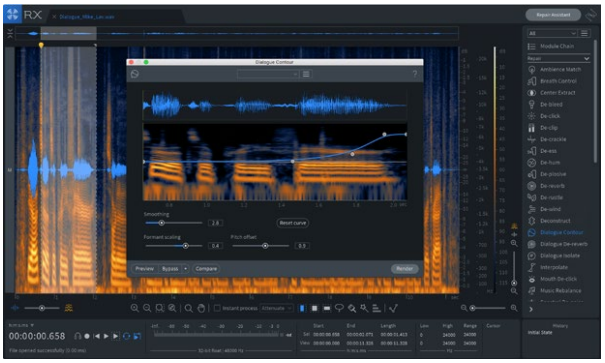
For review, I was sent the udoq 400. It's 400-mm long and will accommodate three phones and a single iPad or tablet. The udoq 250 model has the smallest footprint and will charge up to four smart phones. There are the udoq 550 and the largest udoq 700 that'll take care of a tablet and six smartphones plus an Apple iPod! The udoq 700 works great for large families and/or as a communal charging station in offices.

My udoq 400 came with four charging cables: an iPhone, a 30-pin cable for older iPads, micro USB and a USB-C plug for Androids. Of course, any USB charging cable, induction plate or Apple Watch charger can be added—you can use your existing cables for devices you already own. Powering the udoq is a powerful, 50-watt power supply with five USB sockets. All the charging cables thread underneath and into the back of the udoq and then plug into this power supply.

In addition to replacing all your individual USB chargers, the udoq is proving to be a great organizing element in my studio! The udoq Universal Docking Stations sell from $147 to $168 MSRP. Check out udoq.com/shop-2. Order a udoq already custom-configured for your own, unique collection of devices.

udoq.com/configurator

► IZOTOPE RX POST PRODUCTION SUITE 3



RX Post Production Suite 3 has become the one-stop, fully professional audio processing system you should own! It supports multi-channel audio including ATMOS 7.1.2 productions and now includes updated versions of RX 7 Advanced and Insight 2 plus Neutron 2 Advanced, RX Loudness Control, Tonal Balance control and 250 sounds from Pro Sound Effects and Groove3. RX 7 Advanced adds deeper control for problematic dialog recordings found in post-production work and there is standalone software called Dialogue Contour that'll change the intonation and inflection of dialogue in a phrase, word-by-word. Dialogue De-reverb now runs standalone as well as AudioSuite; it is used to reduce unwanted reverb/room tone using an optimized algorithm.

Standalone RX 7 Advanced and AudioSuite versions have these function-named modules: De-crackle, De-Hiss, De-plosive, De-rustle, De-wind, Deconstruct, the Dialogue Contour and Dialogue De-Reverb, Dialogue Isolate, Interpolate, Mouth De-click, Music Rebalance, Spectral De-noise, Spectral Repair, and Voice De-noise.

iZotope's audio metering/analysis tool, Insight 2 has an all-new look and is updated with the new film and TV, broadcast loudness standard targets. Insight 2's expandable GUI includes the 3D spectrogram and a new Intelligibility Meter that measures the intelligibility of dialogue relative to the rest of the mix.

I tried out the new Music ReBalance tool on a finished stereo mix. I was able to adjust the level of the vocals relative to the rest of the track. I could also adjust the level of the bass and the percussion (drum kit) and there is another fader for adjusting other designated parts of the mix. This works well and sounded amazing considering the magic it does.

iZotope's new RX Post Production Suite 3 with updated versions of RX 7 Advanced and Insight 2 make it vital for post-production work. I have been finding it extremely useful for cleaning up vocal and instrument tracks in my Pro Tools music mixing projects and I highly recommend it as an essential collection of tools for any audio pro. It sells for $999 MSRP.

izotope.com

▼ TECH 21 PAUL LANDERS PL1 SIGNATURE FLY RIG

Tech 21 has a new Signature Fly set up for the specifications of Rammstein's Paul Landers. A long-time user of Tech 21 gear, SansAmps have been an essential part of the guitar sound on all of their albums, and particularly prominent in their worldwide smash "Du Hast."

According to Paul, "With the PL1, I have everything I need in my pocket. No amp(s) needed for the best distortion sound."

The Paul Landers PL1 Signature Fly Rig offers 2 SansAmp channels, Feuer (dirty) and Wasser (clean). Features include Delay, a custom-designed Vibrato effect with tap tempo control, "Ambiance" with a choice of size and two modes of Boost.

Other features include a chromatic tuner, headphone jack, plus an XLR output jack for direct recording and/or going directly to a P.A. system. There are illuminated controls to show active status, studio-grade metal footswitches and jacks, and an included universal power supply. Enclosed in a rugged, all-metal housing, the Fly Rig measures 12.5L x 2.5W x 1.25H-inches and weighs 20.7 oz. It sells for $329 MAP.

tech21nyc.com/products/sansamp/pl1_flyrig.html



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

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STOCKING STUFFERS 2018

BY BARRY RUDOLPH

AUDIONAMIX XTRAX STEMS 2



At just $99, XTRAX Stems 2 offers faster, cleaner stem separations, backing tracks and a cappella vocals at the same low price. Created for DJs, music producers and remix artists, XTRAX STEMS allows users to separate any song into its vocal, drum, and remaining music components for easy sampling, remixing and unmatched control during live sets. This is standalone Mac or Windows software that targets vocal and instrumental melodies and can separate out drum audio as well.
audionamix.com/technology/xtrax-stems



VOVOX CABLES

Swiss company VOVOX cables celebrates their 15th anniversary with the Jubilee Edition of the sonorus protect. An instrument cable with straight phone plugs or angled-to-straight phone plugs, both in 3.5 meter (11.5-ft) length. I have experience with these marvelous cables in the studio and besides sounding awesome; they are rugged and look great too. You can find a dealer through Audio Plus Services at audioplusservices.com or (800) 663-9352. Special price for the Jubilee Edition is $119 USD each—they are normally $159 USD.
vovox.com/en

RØDE SC6-L MOBILE INTERVIEW KIT

Soon to be fully-reviewed in one of my upcoming "New Toys" columns in *Music Connection*, the RØDE SC6-L Kit has everything you need to conduct professional sounding, one-on-one interviews using high quality RØDE technology, the free Røde Reporter recording app and your iPhone. The kit comes with two, miniature RØDE smartLav+ pro-level lavaliere microphones with clips and windscreens. These are omnidirectional condenser capsules with Kevlar® reinforced cables. You can record in high-quality 24-bit/48kHz ready for video post-production use or either AAC or MP3 quality for immediate online upload. The SC6-L interface sells separately for $79 and the entire kit with the microphones included sells for $199.
rode.com/microphones/sc6-lik





SHEPTONE TRIBUTE 2 GUITAR PICKUPS

Guitarists looking for a warmer midrange tone will feel much warmer this Christmas morning with Sheptone's new Tribute 2 neck and bridge pickups for electric guitar. Hand-built with Alnico 2 degaussed magnets, 49.2 mm pole spacing, butyrate bobbins, nickel silver base plates, and vintage braided lead wire, Sheptone's Tribute 2 pickups are designed to replicate the classics but with a personality all their own.

Typically with Alnico 2 magnets, the bottom end is "squishier" in the bridge pickup, while a muddier, darker tone comes from the neck pickup. Sheptone scatter winds 57-58 spec 42-enameled wire to a specific number of turns per bobbin. This technique creates more air space in the coil and lowers the distributed capacitance so more treble comes through plus increasing the resonant peak of the pickup. Sheptone's Tribute 2 pickups are available in a variety of bobbin color combinations or with nickel silver covers plated in nickel, chrome or gold. They start at $129 each, or as a bridge-and-neck set.
sheptone.com

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shop.fender.com/en-US/hats-and-shirts





GUITAR GODS COLLECTIBLES

The next figure in the Guitar Gods Series is none other than legendary guitarist Steve Vai. These are officially licensed and numbered limited-edition collectible bobble-head figures.

This particular figure representing the musician is limited to 1,000 numbered units, stands at 7-inches tall, and is made of a lightweight poly-resin. Other Guitar Gods Collectibles guitarist bobble-heads available include Johnny Winter, Wayne Kramer, Zakk Wylde and James Williamson. They sell for $29.95.
guitargodscollectibles.com/Products/Detail/30



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presonus.com

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The PX-5S is part of the Casio Privia line of digital pianos. The PX-5S is loaded with a collection of acoustic pianos, vintage keyboard, and synth sounds, and has powerful controller features and sequencing tools that sets it apart from other keyboards.

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casiomusicgear.com

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The Line 6 HX Stomp delivers award-winning Helix line tones in a stompbox format. This lets you easily add pro-level multi-effects processing to your existing pedalboard, or replace it entirely. It provides programmable amp/cab/effects/IR versatility that seamlessly integrates into a host of playing and recording needs. HX Stomp can be used as a multi-effects stompbox, a super-portable amp/effects rig, or an audio interface.

MAP: $599

line6.com/hx-stomp





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The new CP Series is QSC's very first value-priced powered loudspeaker. The CP compact and lightweight, making it easy to load, carry, lift and deploy in a wide range of portable and installed applications. Beneath its elegantly designed exterior, CP is equipped with a highly efficient, 1000-watt power amplifier, matching transducers and advanced DSP, delivering performance beyond expectations for a compact loudspeaker. With the ability to mix up to three input sources (mic/line, line and music playback device) at once, CP makes a great single-box PA system that sets up in seconds.

MSRP: $399 and $499

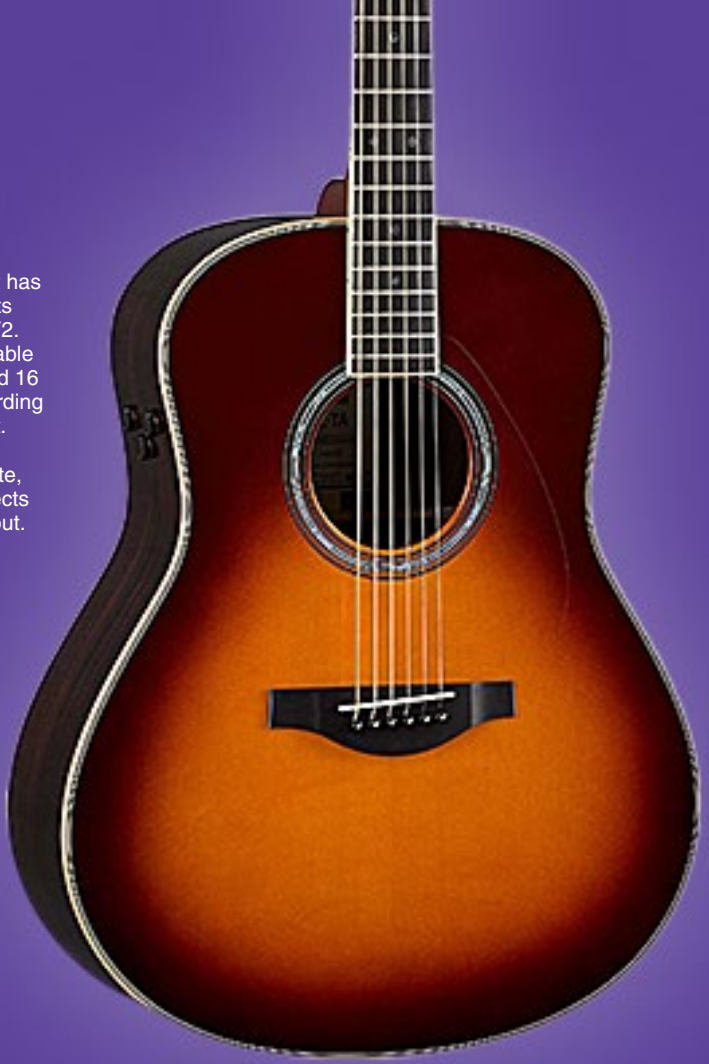
qsc.com

BAD CAT UNLEASH V2 ATTENUATOR & RE-AMPLIFIER



Back in 2012, Bad Cat released the original Unleash, the world's first re-amplifier booster/attenuator. Now Bad Cat has released the first upgrade of its original device, the Unleash V2. Improvements include switchable input impedances, for 4, 8 and 16 ohm amp outputs, silent recording switch and headphone output. The general operations of the device include boost, attenuate, transparent reproduction, effects loop and silent record/direct out.

MSRP: 499.99
badcatamps.com



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The MA-301fet is a multi-pattern large diaphragm, solid-state condenser microphone. Based upon the popular MA-201fet designed by David Royer, the MA-301fet adds a 3-position pickup pattern selector, a15dB pad and a switchable bass roll-off. Each microphone is packaged in its protective case with a professional grade shockmount.

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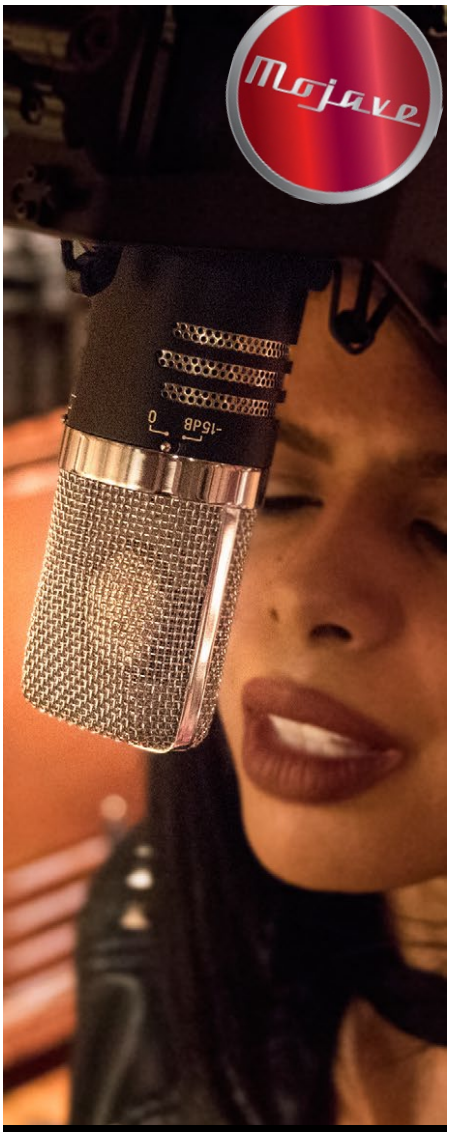
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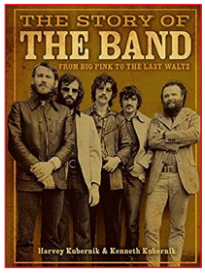
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The Story of The Band: From Big Pink to the Last Waltz

By Harvey Kubernik & Kenneth Kubernik
(hardcover) **$29.95**

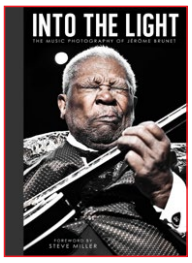
The prolific Kuberniks pay tribute to The Band in this handsome, unofficial retrospective, covering everything from collaborations with Dylan through the Thanksgiving 1976 farewell show. *The Story of the Band* features little-known and previously unpublished interviews with band members and associates—including Ronnie Hawkins, Jerry Garcia, Andrew Loog Oldham and Bill Graham. Add some great, never-before-seen photographs to the mix and this book becomes a mind-and eye-opening experience.



Into The Light: The Photography of Jérôme Brunet

By Jérôme Brunet
(hardcover) **$50.00**

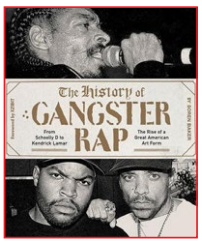
We've seen a lot of photo books, but this one is exceptional. Mainly because Brunet has captured so many of these performers "in the moment" when a song or a note or a chord is peaking. From legends like James Brown, B.B. King, Etta James to more contemporary performers such as Tom Morello, John Mayer, Alabama Shakes' Brittany Howard and Vintage Trouble, whom Brunet has photographed as all members of the band are locked in and feeling the music deeply.



The History of Gangster Rap

By Soren Baker
(paperback) **$24.99**

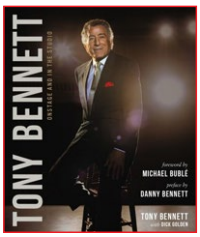
Baker examines the origins of the genre, from Schooly D all the way to the current artists such as Kendrick Lamar and Vince Staples. All of the scene's biggest feuds, like the East Coast vs. West Coast rivalry in the '90s, are explained and there are several interviews from major artists of the genre like Ice-T and Snoop Dogg. Examining the cultural influence of the genre, Baker provides an explanation as to why gangster rap has dominated the music industry and why it continues to be successful.



Tony Bennett On Stage And In The Studio

By Tony Bennett with Dick Golden
(hardcover) **$29.95**

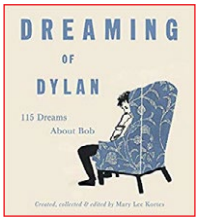
Now 92 years old, the quintessential crooner gives us a look back at his long and fruitful life, offering plenty of sage advice on how artists can achieve fulfillment. Authored by Bennett along with jazz expert Dick Golden, this handsome book conveys the genuine humility and warmth of this artist, his deeply felt regard for others and, especially, for his audiences. Bennett acolyte Michael Bublé provides an intro.



Dreaming of Dylan: 115 Dreams About Bob

Created, collected & edited by Mary Lee Kortes
(hardcover) **$24.99**

Realizing she is not the only Bobsessive haunted by regular Dylan dreams, singer-songwriter Kortes reached out to the world, asking others to share their subconscious sojourns, and the result is this amusing, artful compilation. From touching to disturbing and all points in between, these dreams are never dull. This heavily visual hardback book, printed on quality art paper, is a unique gift item for Dylan devotees.



The Cure: A Perfect Dream

By Ian Gittins
(hardcover) **$29.95**

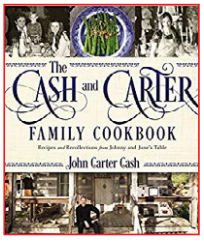
Veteran music journalist Ian Gittins has come up with the ultimate Cure book for the fans, an essential collection of interviews, photographs, and rare memorabilia of the acclaimed British rock band. Having interviewed the group numerous times over the years, Gittins provides an insightful look into exactly what makes them special. Documenting the group's numerous lineup changes and evolving sound over the years, this heavily visual retrospective tells a detailed story of The Cure's 40-year career.



Cash And Carter Family Cook Book

By John Carter Cash
(hardcover) **$29.99**

Gotta say, this might be the most entertaining cookbook we've seen. It not only presents beautiful images of the appetizers, main courses and desserts that the legendary clan prepared at home over the years, but includes snaps of the folks as they enjoyed those dishes. Photos with Johnny & June's house guests like Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson, U2, Billy Bob Thornton, Jane Seymour and Loretta Lynn add a special seasoning to this tasty tome.



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MUSICIANS INSTITUTE LIVE HOUSE HOLLYWOOD

livehousehollywood.com

Multi-purpose Performance Complex in the Heart of Hollywood: Musicians Institute in Hollywood now extends its reputation as a multi-faceted cutting-edge music college with the creation of a state-of-the art live performance and event space near Hollywood & Highland. Designed by Michael Warren of MW Audio—a premier installer of high-end audio systems with a client list including the likes of Google, YouTube, Electronic Art Games and Red Bull—Live House is part of a 15,000 sq. ft. educational, cultural and entertainment complex that includes MI's sister school IDA (International Dance Academy) and a conference room, coffee bar and a large lounge that also includes a small stage, lights and a wireless sound system. The dedicated Live House section measures 5,000 sq. ft. (including back of room and a "green room") has a capacity of 417, a 700 sq ft. stage, and 18x10 ft LED video wall behind the stage, 120,000 watts of power and full broadcast and recording capabilities. The entire building also features state-of-the art DANTE connectivity that can accommodate 20 HD-ISDN video camera feeds as well as a 64 channel/96k ProTools HD system. Tuned by Warren, the venue is also soundproof, and its subfloor is designed to be completely bass absorbing.





The Big Launch: Live House Director and longtime MI Program Chair Charles Chemery envisions the room as both an educational hub catering to the needs of MI students, as well as an income-generating private performance venue. Beyond rehearsals and concert showcases, it can accommodate video shoots, TED talks, standup comedy, yoga classes, award shows, product presentations, seminars, and parties (via an easy transformation into a nightclub vibe). At 6 p.m. on Sept. 28, after a ribbon cutting ceremony, legendary guitarist Steve Vai took the stage to launch 54 hours of continuous performances that were livestreamed on Facebook, generating more than 2.5 million views. This charity event raised money for leading foster family non-profit and adoption agency Extraordinary Families. The "Big Mama Jama Jam-a-Thon" included performances by Moby, Dave Navarro, Al DiMeola, Lee Ritenour, Dweezil Zappa, Steve Morse and many others. Chemery says, "During the event, Steve Vai mentioned that he feels that this is now the best sounding venue in LA."

In Capable Hands: In addition to creating and chairing such prominent MI programs as the DJ Performance and Production program and the Artist, Producer & Entrepreneur program, Live House Director Charles Chemery is a world class DJ and artist (known as "Charlie Sputnik") who has dropped beats everywhere from Havana and Casablanca to NYC, Paris and Tokyo. The French-born artist and educator has produced tracks for The American Film Institute, Audi, 20th Century Fox and Disney, and has shared the recording booth and/or stage with Chaka Khan, Gnarls Barkley, Jurassic 5 and others. "My goal is for this extraordinary venue to have an impact on the city and move the needle culturally, so that it can be used to further the cause of musicians and other artists. We want to expose the public to many interesting artists and art forms, using cutting-edge technology while also helping our students to learn and continue crafting their artistry."

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▶ Reel Big Fish Dances Back into Studio

Ska punk band Reel Big Fish will release *Life Sucks…Let's Dance!* on Dec. 21 through Rock Ridge Music. This will be their first album since 2012's *Candy Coated Fury*. The band began working on the album in January at engineer David Irish's recently built Pot of Gold Studio in Orange, CA. For more, visit reel-big-fish.com. Pictured: Aaron Barrett, lead singer and guitarist.





▲ Peter Bjorn and John Release Eighth Album

Indie pop/rock band Peter Bjorn and John have released their eighth full-length album *Darker Days* through INGRID. The album was recorded at East Side Sounds in New York, NY, Perfect Sound in Los Angeles and in Sweden. The album was produced and engineered by Björn Yttling (pictured), Peter Morén and John Eriksson. For more, visit peterbjornandjohn.com





▲ Leader Minoru Mukaiya Records at United Recording

Japanese bandleader Minoru Mukaiya, recorded *The Games - East Meets West 2018* at United Recording. The album, released in October, features both Japanese and American jazz musicians. Pictured (l-r): Abe Laborial, Sr., bass; Dave Grusin, co-producer, keys; Ernie Watts, sax; Harvey Mason, drums; Scott Moore, United engineer; Paul Jackson, Jr., guitar; Minoru Mukaiya, lead producer, keys; Don Murray, recording engineer.

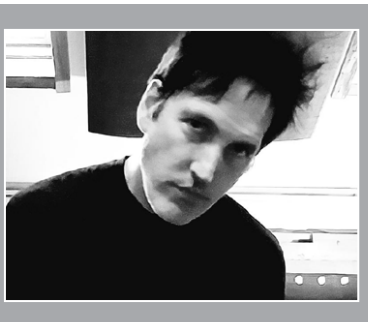
▲ Young's Roots Influence Sophomore Release

Country singer Brett Young's *Ticket to L.A.* is out Dec. 7 through BMLG Records. The album expands on a personal connection to the city as his Southern California roots have had a major influence on his music. The album was recorded at Blackbird Studios in Nashville, TN. Pictured (l-r): Dann Huff, producer; Brett Young; Laurel Kittleson, Director A&R; Jimmy Harnen, BMLG Records President / EVP BMLG. For more, visit brettyoungmusic.com.

Producer Playback

"Some people perform better when you're their bud and there's camaraderie; others work better when you challenge them. You have to feel out the artist at the beginning of the session."

– Johnny K *(Disturbed, My Enemies & I)*





◀ Castlecomer New Album

Five-piece band Castlecomer has released its self-titled album through Concord Records. The album was produced and engineered by Adrian Breakspear and Jean-Paul Fung. Pictured: Bede Kennedy, frontman. For more, visit castlecomermusic.com.



▲ Shure's "Off The Beaten" Path Contest Winners Visit Capitol

Lauranne and Maeva Andrianandrasana (aka The Baron's Jelly) pose alongside legendary 23-time Grammy winner Al Schmitt inside Capitol Studios in Los Angeles, CA. The pair were among the winners of Shure's "Off The Beaten Path" singing/songwriting contest. Their prize included $5,000 in Shure gear and a five-day trip to Los Angeles, which included studio time with Schmitt.

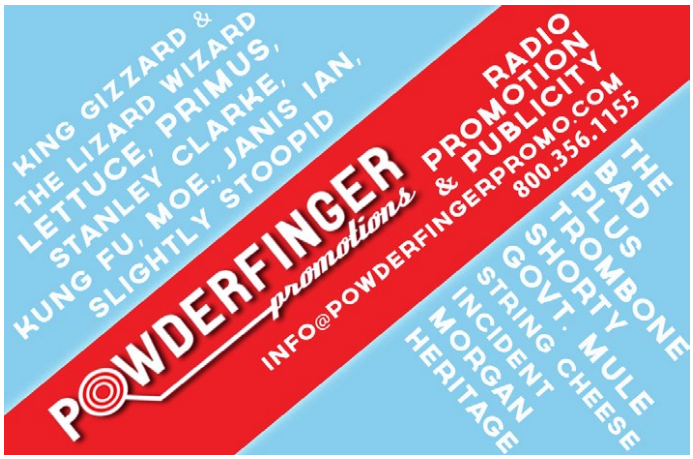


▲ Palisades Collabs with Benson

New Jersey-based rock band Palisades will release *Erase The Pain* on Dec. 28 through Rise. Produced and mixed by Grammy-nominated producer Howard Benson, the full-length album is a blend of melody and fury that doesn't sacrifice accessibility in their pursuit of aggression. Pictured (l-r): Brandon Elgar, bass; Matt Marshall, guitar; Mike Plotnikoff, engineer; Howard Benson, producer; Lou Miceli Jr., lead vocals; Aaron Rosa, drums; Xavier Adames, guitar/vocals.









PRODUCER CROSSTALK

– ROB PUTNAM



ERIC CORNE

Producer and engineer Eric Corne began his career as a musician in Winnipeg, Canada before he bounced for Toronto. In 2004 he made his way to Los Angeles and landed an engineering gig at Mad Dog Studios, run then by Dusty Wakeman (Dwight Yoakam, Lucinda Williams). There he was privileged to record with the studio's Neve 8088 that featured the coveted flying faders. Corne worked his way up to lead engineer and soon segued into production. He sharpened his skills under industry legends Eddie Kramer (Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix), the late David Bianco (Tom Petty, Bob Dylan) and, of course, Wakeman himself. He's since worked with artists including John Mayall and Walter Trout.

A healthy vibe in the studio has always helped Corne draw the best from an artist. "A big part of this job is mental," he asserts. "You make people comfortable with you on a personal level and make sure they're focused on the character of the song and the emotion it's trying to convey."

Corne always prefers to begin with the song. Moreover, the way that he records often lends itself to the occasional studio miracle. "I want to be sure that a song's skeletal structure is as sound as it can be," he explains. "Once I have the chord structure, melody and lyrics in place, I start to think about instrumentation and casting. My favorite way to make records is to bring everybody into the studio at the same time and record live. It's better because people have the ability to riff off of each other and the song becomes greater than the sum of its parts. That's where the real magic happens."

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

- **Be aware of what the options are.**
- **Understand who an artist is as well as their vision.**
- **Attention to detail. Persevere until it's right, no matter how much work it is.**

John Mayall has been an unstoppable force in the industry for more than half a century. Superstars such as Eric Clapton, Mick Taylor and John McVie were birthed into the business by way of John Mayall & the Bluesbreakers. Like many collaborations, Corne's and Mayall's came about in part through connections. "I'd worked on records with former Bluesbreakers member Walter Trout," Corne recollects. "John guested on a few of Walter's records. One of the most important lessons I've learned is to always be recording. That was a major factor in landing the Mayall record. When [John] sauntered into the studio, I ran into the control room and hit record. When he was done playing, Walter asked if he could play it again. John said, 'I could never do that again. Didn't you get it?' Everybody looked at me and I gave them the thumbs up."

Corne's Forty Below Records was established after he found himself working alongside countless gifted sidemen. He felt that their contributions often went unrecognized and that he could help. "It was around the time that the Funk Brothers movie [*Standing in the Shadows of Motown*] came out," he recalls. "It was like we had our own little Funk Brothers here. If I could find the right artists, wouldn't it be cool to make records with them? So many musicians don't know what to do once a record is complete. It's heartbreaking as a producer to see a great one die on the table. When I had the opportunity to release John [Mayall's] *A Special Life*, that was when things really elevated."

Corne's *Happy Songs For The Apocalypse* was released earlier this year on Forty Below. When *Music Connection* spoke with him, he was nearing completion of John Mayall's *Nobody Told Me*. He was also poised to begin work on Walter Trout's new record.

Contact Eric Corne / Forty Below Records, info@fortybelowrecords.com

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Jedd Katrancha

Executive Vice President
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"It's inexcusable to have had the right song in our catalog and not pitched it."

BACKGROUND

Downtown Music Publishing handles some of the world's most famous artists and songwriters. Subsequently, they're responsible for a list of sync licenses too lengthy to mention. One of the company's original members, Jedd Katrancha represents some 300-plus clients, including around 100 active writer clients.

Introduction to Publishing

I moved to New York from Virginia to pursue the music industry. I was lucky enough to have someone introduce me to music supervisor Susan Jacobs, who took me under her wing. I got to sit at the buyer's seat with an incredibly talented supervisor; she was the first Emmy winner for the category of music supervision.

Through some work she was doing with a publishing company, I transitioned to publishing and knew that's what I wanted to do. I worked at Spirit and EMI in the copyright department. I returned to Spirit with another gentleman who worked there, the founder of Downtown Publishing [Justin Kalifowitz]. I came with him to run creative and we've grown from two people to 110.

World Sync

My day-to-day focus is growing and looking after our global sync licensing team, making sure everybody is in the best position to find opportunities. And now I'm working with a global team; we have heads of sync in Sydney, London, Paris, Amsterdam and Tokyo. We're continuing to think and expand globally.

A lot of what I'm doing is making sure we're looking with the clearest vision in both directions—at the entire media landscape, understanding how other people work in their industries and that we're in touch with them about all the productions they're working on, and then internally, at our catalog and making sure we're in tune with our writers and all the songs that are added to our catalog. If we know every project that might use our music and put forward our best songs every time, that's as good as we can do. We don't want to miss anything and it's frustrating when we do. It's inexcusable to have had the right song in our catalog and not pitched it.

Listening and Learning

There's a level of understanding you need to apply to what you're doing. You're in the business of listening and learning. Doing that makes you a better sync person because it informs you on how to deliver music in a way that's going to make the person you're doing business with successful. We're trying to drive revenue for our company but we do it by making other people successful, by making other projects as good as they can with our music as a bed for what they're doing.

The Art of Sync

There's this structural understanding of what songs work for picture. Some of that comes from a lifetime of digesting media and music. There are things you learn by listening to music supervisors and having them tell you what works, understanding that even people who've had that job for a long time will hear a song, think it's great and then get in the edit suite and realize it's not moving their picture along in the way they'd hoped. We lay our music against stock pictures sometimes and that helps us better understand which songs work with certain visuals.

Songs That Work Vs. Songs You Know

People come to us because they want our writers to write something original for them. Way more frequently, we're licensing songs. When somebody's licensing a hit song, they're looking to make a connection with the viewer at first note. The song is doing some lifting for them in a different way than if they're licensing a song that works for a scene but for a lot of viewers it's going to be the first time they've ever heard that song.

Covers and Counterpoints

We're still seeing cover songs used where there's a re-imagination of a song. An up-tempo song is turned dark and moody. A happy lyric is made to sound creepy. And vice versa - something darker in tone is made to sound bright as a juxtaposition that's done with a wink. It's a big thing for us, looking within our catalog and finding songs we can breathe new life into. We turned to a writer on our roster and had him cover Reverend Gary Davis' gospel blues song, "Death Don't Have No Mercy," in a completely different approach than what the Grateful Dead or anybody else did. We licensed it to Call of Duty for a trailer for the most recent volume of that game. We also licensed one of his original songs to Call of Duty for a different trailer for the same game, so he won on both sides.

A Broad Representation

Through the years, we wanted to build a broad catalog and never attempt to corner any segment of the market. It's important for us to touch on great American songbook writing, great Latin music, classic heavy metal and British invasion and work with the most interesting writers out there today. In the earliest days, people came to us because they loved our active roster. We had to remind them we had these other great songs from other eras. We don't have to do that anymore.

Elevating Songwriters

We have an outstanding A&R team working to get our writers into sessions. They're looking to elevate writers and see them land successful cuts with big artists. And if there's another team supporting a song's forward motion, that helps us. That gives us another story to tell when we're working with somebody who's interested in the song and they want to know if there's anything else they can tell their team that might get them even more excited.

But we also want writers who understand what it is we're trying to do with their music. Everybody knows what they would like to see happen. At the basic level, they want their music licensed. But [we need people who] really understand how music licensing works in terms of creating music that's great for picture. We've started plenty of relationships that way—people who brought in licenses on their own because they're great songwriters but haven't been able to find a team to capitalize on what they've already built.

Representing John Lennon

I started playing music when I was five years old. An early fascination of mine was The Beatles. I named a seventh grade English project In His Own Write, which was an early John Lennon book. It's tough for me to lay out how meaningful that deal was for us because it did a lot for us as a company. As far as letting us know we were on the right track, there's no greater validation.

Smart Growth

We've achieved some things we're incredibly proud of, but we're just scratching the surface. We've been really mindful to staff at pace with the growth of the catalog so we didn't have any moments where the catalog grew and then we hired to catch up. We've always stayed one step ahead of the catalog.

Staying Put

There's this top-to-bottom belief that we're on to something. Because of that, there's an incredibly high retention rate. Writers will say, hey, does so and so still work at Downtown? Yeah, why wouldn't they? But I'm realizing that might be their experience with previous administrators—high turnover and frequently getting to know a new team. We have plenty of people at Downtown who will celebrate their seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth anniversary at the company this year. And there's the core four who have been here since the beginning. The fact that we're as excited as we were at the beginning of the company and we're all still here doing it together, I imagine that's exciting for writers.

OPPS

Squidhat Records is seeking punk and indie rock acts. This is an artist-friendly independent record label created to help talented, creative and passionate artists. They assist in helping acts record and promote their music, develop their brand and increase exposure to a larger audience. Label President, **Allan Carter** has over 25 years of experience and likes to work with acts that have great songs, a seasoned live show, and the commitment to really work a record's release. The label offers short-term deals–involving one year and one project–with an option to renew if successful. They offer world-wide distribution with both physical and digital formats. If interested, check them out at squidhatrecords.com, or submit via MusicClout.com for special consideration.

Vital Force Radio Show is a Christian music and talk show that is looking for any style of Christian music for broadcasts and podcasts. Vital Force will interview you on the air and share how people can hear more of your music. They will also play your original songs and continue to play them on future broadcasts/podcasts. The show is broadcast live every week on **88.1 FM WPRZ** and redistributed through podcasts. To find out more, go to facebook.com/The-Vital-Force-Radio-Show.

Hourglass Records is looking to expand their roster. The independent label works with indie, pop, acoustic/pop, country, rock and alternative, but are open to anything that will excite them enough to pull the trigger. One lucky submission will receive a record deal that will give them a fully funded 10-song album, a music video, digital distribution, and a marketing package. If you'd like to give it a shot, go to hourglass-records.com.

For fresh Opportunities every week, sign up for MC's free Weekly Bulletin e-letter at musicconnection.com.

LABELS•RELEASES SIGNINGS

Epitaph Records has announced the signing of **Bad Suns** with the release of their new single "Away We Go." Formed in Los Angeles county when they were teenagers, Bad Suns—Christo Bowman (vocals/guitar), Gavin Bennett (bass), Miles Mores (drums) and Ray Libby (guitar)—caught their first big break from L.A. radio institution **KROQ** after dropping a demo in their mailbox. The band, hailed by NYLON as "hard-driving with heart," have performed on *Kimmel* and *Conan*, broke the Top 25 on the Billboard 200, toured with Halsey and The 1975, played Coachella and other marquee festivals. Contact jrainis@shorefire.com.

PRS Guitars has announced its first round of new models and updates for 2019. New electric guitars from PRS include a revamped **"Paul's Guitar"** (Paul Reed Smith's signature model), the **CE 24 Semi-Hollow**, and a new **SE Custom 24** that sports an attractive ziricote veneer, while new acoustic models expand on an already robust line up. For further details, contact jnooney@prsguitars.com.



▲ THE HOTS ARE ON FIRE

Prior to the release of their debut EP and video, The Hots offered fans special "pre-sale bundles" (a vinyl record, CD, T-shirt, stickers, a temporary tattoo, a Hots badge, and guitar picks). The pre-release campaign was so successful, they attracted 3,000 new followers and grossed over $1,000 (US) in just a week. Their single, "Before You," also received radio airplay and received positive responses. Obviously, this band is on fire. Recorded in analog, with legendary producer Mark Opitz, the four-song EP is true to its roots, authentic to its hard rock core. For more, go to thehotsofficial.com.

PROPS

Billboard magazine will honor **Ariana Grande** with its 2018 Woman of the Year award. The singer, songwriter, actress and activist will accept the honor at the 13th annual Women in Music dinner and awards ceremony on Dec. 6 in

DIY *Spotlight*

Vikingo!



Two Colombians, a Norwegian and an American walk into a recording studio… Although that line may seem like the setup to some corny joke, it's actually the prologue to the artistic collaboration of rock n' roll group VIKINGO! With a sound that's reminiscent of bands like Queens of the Stone Age, The Strokes, and Led Zeppelin, this band excels at creating music that's honest, fresh, rebellious, and truly creative.

Building off of the political nature of the band's name, the music is a rebellious anthem against the status quo, with their latest EP *Set It On Fire,* specifically addressing the discourse in the United States surrounding issues like immigration, social equality and the environment.

Regardless of where your politics lie, there's no denying that this group has serious musical talent. From the driving guitar to the catchy, yet angsty, vocal leads, the band's music is easily palatable for all kinds of audiences.

Each member is also skilled in music production. Lead guitarist, Sejo Navajas is one of the head engineers and producers at 4th Street Recording Studio in Santa Monica, CA where he's worked with A-list artists like Weezer and Muse. Lead singer/guitarist, Daniel Jiménez Afanador and bassist, Andreas Kvinge Sandnes are both established producers in their own right as well, while Christopher Roberts is one of LA's most sought-after session and touring drummers.

It's clear VIKINGO! has some serious musical credentials. To hear it for yourself, check out facebook.com/vikingoband.

New York City. The event will also honor the most powerful female executives in the industry. Billboard also recently lauded **The Hollywood Bowl**, one of the leading outdoor music venues in the world, managed by the **Los Angeles Philharmonic Association**, as Top Amphitheater. This distinction marks the second consecutive *Billboard* Live Music Award for the iconic venue. See billboard.com.

On Jan. 25, 2019, The Blues Foundation will honor 11 individuals and organizations at its **Keeping the Blues Alive Awards** brunch, taking place in Memphis, TN. Decided by a select panel of blues professionals, the annual KBA Awards recognize the writers, disc jockeys, photographers, record labels, blues societies, music clubs, festivals and others in the blues world that have played vital roles in advancing the art and commerce of blues. The KBA Awards are just part of **The Blues Foundation**'s **35th Annual International Blues Challenge.** Held on Memphis' historic Beale Street, the IBC kicks off Jan. 22 with **International Showcase** performances and culminates with the finals on Jan. 26. More than 800 musicians from around the globe are anticipated to converge in Memphis to battle for glory—along with prizes and bookings—at this renowned blues music competition. Contact cary@conqueroo.com.

Guitarist **Shane Fontayne**, who has shared the stage and studio with an impressive list of rock music's elite, including Bruce Springsteen, U2, Paul Simon, Graham Nash, Shania Twain, Bryan Adams, Rod Stewart, and more, was honored by the **Rock Godz Hall of Fame** as one of their 2018 inductees. The ceremony took place on Nov. 18 at The Canyon Club in Agoura Hills, CA.

RockGodz Hall of Fame focuses on individuals in well-known groups that were not necessarily the "front" men/women and may not have received public acknowledgement for their part in bringing us the music that has played in the background of our lives. For complete details, see rockgodzhalloffame.com.



▲ BAND DONATES $30,000 TO CHARITY

Seattle-based band The West Coast Feed recently presented a $30,000 check to Charity Water, a non-profit organization that is dedicated to bringing clean drinking water to developing nations. Philanthropic support is a central theme to this act's mission. The band, whose debut self-titled album was released in October, donates all the profits they make at their merch table to charity. Pictured (l-r): Matt Simmons, Matt Collins, Carly Yoshida, DJ Park, Jesse Butterworth, Matt Woll, Brady Essmann, Maria Johnson, Chad Elrod, Tim Oas. For more information visit TheWestCoastFeed.com.

The LEGAL Beat

BY GLENN LITWAK

Chapman Sues Minaj For Copyright Infringement



During October of 2018 singer-songwriter Tracy Chapman sued rapper Nick Minaj for copyright infringement regarding the 1988 Chapman song "Baby Can I Hold You" ("Song"). Chapman alleges Minaj stole the lyrics and melody from the song.

The history of this dispute is rather unusual in that Minaj never actually released her song with the infringing material. Chapman alleges that prior to the lawsuit, Minaj's representatives contacted Chapman's reps and indicated that Minaj was "inspired by Chapman" and wanted to discuss sampling a song. Chapman further contends that beginning in June of 2018 Minaj and her reps made multiple "after-the-fact" requests to license the song. Chapman's reps denied these requests. In fact, the lawsuit contends that Nicki tweeted "Sis said no" which refers to Chapman's refusal to license the song to Minaj. This is damaging evidence against Minaj since it would show she knew Chapman had refused to license the song to her.

The Minaj song "Sorry" (which contains the infringing material) was supposed to be included in her new album *Queen*. However, Minaj did not include it in the album

> *"This dispute is rather unusual in that Minaj never actually released her song with the infringing material."*

Despite the denial of her requests, Minaj allegedly provided a copy of "Sorry" to a disc jockey in New York for the radio station Hot 97 as well as another DJ. The Hot 97 DJ then aired part of the song on the radio and posted it on social media. The infringing song can now be found online.

Chapman claims that Minaj "has caused Chapman to incur substantial injury, loss and damage as a result of her wrongdoing." Chapman seeks damages and an injunction.

In order to prevail in a copyright infringement action, a plaintiff must prove ownership of a valid copyright (apparently not an issue in this case) and copying of constituent elements of the plaintiff's work. It appears obvious that Chapman has access to the Chapman song since it was released many years ago. And the copying seems undisputed: Chapman requested a license for the song which was denied and there is actual copying of her song in Minaj's song.

Most copyright infringement experts think Chapman has a strong case. Minaj's song "Sorry" uses practically all of the lyrics of the song as a chorus. This appears to be direct copying, which makes it a stronger case than the Robin Thick "Blurred Lines" copyright case.

One defense to a copyright infringement case is "Fair Use." There are four guidelines court use to determine fair use:

- The purpose and character of the use
- The nature of the copyrighted work
- The amount and substantiality of the portion taken; and
- The effect of the use on the potential market for the plaintiff's original work.

An example of a situation where fair use could be a successful defense is where the allegedly infringing work is for educational purposes. But in the Chapman case, I don't see a fair use defense prevailing.

Under these circumstances, I would think this case will likely settle before long. The cost of defense is substantial and I don't see much chance of Minaj prevailing at trial.

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 gtllaw59@gmail.com or visit glennlitwak.com.

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



I Quit My Day Job Because I Make More Money From My Music.

Matthew Vander Boegh, TAXI Member

That's every musician's dream, isn't it —quitting your day gig because you make more money with your music. Well, that's my life now, and here's how I did it…

I joined TAXI.

Looking back, I wish I'd joined years earlier. TAXI taught me how to create music that people in the industry actually *need*. Then they gave me 1,200 opportunities a year to *pitch* my music!



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My income keeps growing exponentially, and my music keeps getting better because it's my full time gig now! Here's the ironic part…

I live in Boise, Idaho, not Hollywood, yet my music is on TV nearly every day. My studio is in a glorified tool shed in my backyard, and my gear setup is so quaint other musicians ask, "Really? That's *it*?!" I've got a computer, monitors, a few mics, and a cheap little interface. No fancy outboard gear, no rack-mounted *anything*!

My Two Secret Weapons

Targets and deadlines are my secret weapons. Knowing who needs music and *when* they need it motivates me to get things done. It's changed my life! Actually, TAXI changed my life.

I'm getting *paid* for my music now instead of sitting on my couch *dreaming* about it. I'm my own boss, and some day my music will probably pay for my retirement, a vacation home on an exotic beach, and some umbrella drinks!



Don't wait until you've built a catalog…

Join TAXI now and let them help you build the *right* catalog! Be patient, be persistent, and you'll hit critical mass like I have. My income keeps growing every year!

I'm all the proof you need that a regular guy can make enough money with his music to quit his day job! Do what *thousands* of other musicians have done to become successful—join TAXI. You might never have to work another day gig in your life!



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▲ Tony Joe White: 1943-2018

Song Biz notes the passing of the great Southern songwriter and *MC* profile interviewee Tony Joe White, who penned classics like "Rainy Night in Georgia," "Polk Salad Annie" and many other songs for over 100 artists including Elvis Presley, Dusty Springfield, Brook Benton, Ray Charles and Tina Turner.



▲ Feek Perseveres

Song Biz Profile alumni singer-songwriter Rory Feek celebrated the release of an album and DVD set that is one part love letter to his late wife Joey and one part chronicle of their Grammy-winning career as a country music duo. *The Singer And The Song: The Best of Joey + Rory* is a collection of more than a dozen of their most beloved hits, while the two-and-a-half-hour-long DVD provides an up-close-and-personal look at their timeless love story.



▲ Angry Mob Music Inks Westberg

Rune Westberg has entered into an exclusive worldwide co-publishing agreement with a new joint venture between Angry Mob Music and Pure Pop Music, encompassing future works by the Los Angele-based Danish songwriter-producer. Westberg has written songs for Rachel Platten, Colbie Caillat, Jason Reeves and many others. Pictured (l-r): Marc Caruso, Angry Mob CEO; Rune Westberg, and Patrick Conseil, Pure Pop Music Founder.

Marty Panzer: 25-Year UCLA Anniversary

"Writing Lyrics That Succeed and Endure," as taught by hit songwriter Marty Panzer, is certainly a class that has succeeded and endured as well, as this January marks the 25th year that UCLA Extension has presented this long-running academic offering.

Attendees discover how to craft meaningful and powerful lyrics using analyses of student assignments, works-in-progress, and the experience of writing on a deadline, rewriting, and collaboration in the 11-week course presented from Jan. 10 - Mar. 21, 2019.

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

Past guests at the classes have included executives from Disney, Grammy and Tony award winners and artists, songwriters and producers.

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

Bunetta and Ryan Launch Big Family

Julian Bunetta and John Ryan, two of the world's most successful songwriters, have struck a deal with one of the industry's leading independent music publishers, Big Deal Music Group, to form a new music company together, Big Family. Between them, Bunetta and Ryan are responsible for co-writing and/or producing dozens of hit songs by artists such as One Direction, John Legend, David Guetta, Thomas Rhett, Harry Styles, Maroon 5, Charlie Puth, Fifth Harmony and many others.

Based in Los Angeles, the new enterprise will be co-owned by Bunetta, Ryan, Big Deal Music Group and Family Affair Productions, a company founded originally by Julian Bunetta, his younger brother Damon, and their father Peter, whose relationship with Big Deal CEO, Kenny Macpherson goes back decades. Damon Bunetta and Big Deal partner Casey Robison will be co-CEOs of the new enterprise.

Big Family will operate out of the Bunettas' creative complex in Calabasas and West Hollywood, CA, as well as the Big Deal offices in Encino. The new enterprise will continue to foster an environment in which songwriters can collaborate and cross-pollinate by creating intensive songwriter retreats around the country, refining tracks in the Bunettas' studios, and working closely with A&R teams at all the major labels to secure song placements. Visit Bigdealmusic.com.

CCC Holiday Bash: Dec. 4

On Dec. 4, the California Copyright Conference (CCC) will host their annual holiday party and second annual "Apollo Awards" honoring Dina LaPolt of LaPolt Law and Teri Nelson Carpenter of Reel Muzik Werk for their copyright advocacy



▲ Songwriters Hall of Fame

The recent 2018 Songwriters Hall of Fame Chart Toppers event held at the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles featured performances and a panel discussion by hitmakers Louis Bell, Brian Lee, Ali Tamposi and Andrew Watts. Pictured (l-r): Rebekah Alperin, SHOF West Coast Committee member; Mary Jo Mennella, SHOF Board Member and West Coast Projects Chair; Louis Bell; Melinda Newman, panel moderator and Billboard West Coast Editor; Andrew Watt; Ali Tamposi; Donna Caseine, Event Chair and SHOF West Coast Committee member; Brian Lee; Barbara Cane, SHOF West Coast Events Director; and Michael Pizzuto, SHOF West Coast Committee member.

at Catalina Bar & Grill in Hollywood, CA. In addition to the "Apollo Awards," the CCC will also have its annual silent auction event to raise money for the CCC's John Braheny Scholarship Fund. Please contact manager@theccc.org or reach out to any of the organization's board members to inquire about advertising, donating auction items, or to discuss other sponsorship opportunities. Tickets are available at theccc.org and the deadline is Nov. 30.

ASCAP OnStage Deadline

ASCAP songwriters can receive royalties when their music is performed live at venues of all sizes throughout the country. Just provide ASCAP with the basic details of the performance and which of your songs were performed and you'll receive an OnStage payment with your normal ASCAP distribution. It's that simple.

You can make ASCAP OnStage a regular part of your post-show routine, no matter how big or small the venue. ASCAP OnStage is available 24/7 via your Member Access account. The Dec. 31 deadline is for the submission of all live performance claims from July 1 to Sept. 30, 2018. Ascap.com has further info.

Turner to Head SESAC

Kelli Turner has been promoted to President and Chief Operating Officer of SESAC Holdings. Turner will oversee day-to-day operations, including financial matters, and continue setting strategic direction in her elevated role at the music rights organization.

Turner previously served as Executive VP of Operations, corporate development and chief financial officer at the Nashville-based company. In that role, she led the 2015 acquisition of mechanical rights organization Harry Fox Agency, a move that solidified the firm's transition into a multi-rights organization. She also led last year's sale of SESAC to private equity firm Blackstone. Prior to joining SESAC, Turner was CFO at RSL Management Corporation and, before that, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia Inc. She also held executive roles at Time Warner and New Line Cinema. Visit Sesac.com.

Sony/ATV Songwriting Camp

Music publisher Sony/ATV has discovered a way to ramp up their sync opportunities for their songwriters, by hosting a series of Song Camps to generate music for advertising and other commercial outlets. Devised by Brian Monaco, president and global chief marketing officer for Sony/ATV, in Nashville. Sony/ATV invites 15 to 20 writers to each camp and divides them into groups of three to write songs. Often they are given assignments to create specific types of songs for brands, and reps from the brands are often present.

While Sony/ATV's camps are unique, other music companies, like Warner/Chappell, utilize teams of ad music experts that facilitate brands in connecting with artists and custom-made music. There has been a notable surge in demand for top songwriters, producers and artists to create music for brands. This year Sony/ATV had a record 52 songs from their catalog performed for brands on the Super Bowl telecast. See sonyatv.com for more details.

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



▲ ONErpm Opens In San Francisco

Label services, rights management and distribution company ONErpm has announced the addition of Josh Norek as Director, San Francisco & US Latin and Juan Manuel Caipo, A&R, North America & US Latin, to the team. Their hires also mark the establishment of ONErpm's first West Coast office, in San Francisco. This is the company's fourth US location, along with Brooklyn, Miami and Nashville. Pictured: Josh Norek and Juan Manuel Caipo.



▲ Mary J. in the House for ASCAP Song Camp

ASCAP recently convened a roster of top female songwriters, producers, artists and engineers for its first "She Is The Music" Song Camp, including the Grammy-winning, Oscar-nominated Mary J. Blige (pictured). Hit producer and music executive Ron Fair is donating his Faircraft Studio in Nashville for the event.



▲ AIMP Hosts "Meet SXWORKS"

The AIMP LA event "Meet SXWORKS" was held at Lawry's The Prime Rib in Beverly Hills. SXWORKS is the new publisher services arm of SoundExchange that was created after the company purchased CMRRA. They explained what this development means for publishers (in the US, Canada, and abroad) and the licensing marketplace in general, plus a view of SXWORKS tools. Pictured (l-r): Michael Eames, AIMP President, PEN Music Group Inc.; Caroline Rioux, the Canadian Musical Reproduction Rights Agency (CMRRA); Richard Conlon, SoundExchange, and Teri Nelson Carpenter, AIMP Vice President, Reel Muzik Werks LLC.

MUSIC CONNECTION

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angiewellsjazz1.com

BAD SNACKS
Alternative R&B/LoFi Hip-Hop
Los Angeles, CA
soundcloud.com/bad-snacks

BEST NOT BROKEN
Indie Pop Rock
Boston, MA
bestnotbroken.com

BINX
Pop
Los Angeles/New York
binxofficial.com

BLADE KILLER
Metal
Los Angeles, CA
bladekiller.bandcamp.com

BLANE HOWARD
Country
Nashville, TN
blanehoward.com

BLUE MIDNIGHT
Dream Metal
Los Angeles, CA
contact@bluemidnightmusic.com

BONESTEEL
Hard Rock
Hollywood, CA
Bonesteelband.com

BRENDON LINSLEY
Blues Rock
Detroit, MI
facebook.com/brendon.linsley

CARL HENRY
Blues/Folk
Plymouth, MI
carlhenrymusic.net

CHIEF WHITE LIGHTNING
Garage/Indie
Long Beach, CA
chiefwhitelightning.com

CHRIS CANAS
Blues, Funk, Soul
Milford, MI
chriscanas.net

CHRIS GREENE QUARTET
Jazz
Chicago, IL
chrisgreenejazz.com

CLAUDE HALL
Jazz
Los Angeles, CA
claude-hall.squarespace.com

CLOVET MAE
Electronic, Trip Hop, Downtempo
clovetmae.com

CZARINA
Synth-Wave
Brooklyn, NY
czarinaofficial.com

DALE JUSTICE
Outlaw Country
Nashville, TN
dalejustice.com

DEFSOUND
Hip-Hop/Alternative
Los Angeles, CA
cargocollective.com/defsound

DEVIL SEASON
Dub/Punk
Long Beach, CA
soundcloud.com/devil-season

DEVIN KENNEDY
Pop
Los Angeles, CA
DevKennedyMusic.com

DISCIPLES OF BABYLON
Alternative Rock
Los Angeles, CA
disciplesofbabylon.com

DISCO SHRINE
Electro Pop/Art Pop
Los Angeles, CA
discoshrine.com

DOWN NORTH
Rock/Soul
Seattle, WA
hyperurl.co/noretreatvol1

EBB & FLOW
Euro-Pop
Hollywood, CA
ebbandflow.band

FACEXHUGGER
Heavy Sci-Fi Synth
Seattle, WA
facexhugger.com

FEYER
Electronic Rock
New York, NY
feyermusic.com

FIND YOURSELF
Progressive Math Rock
Placerville, CA
Findyourselfband.com

FITNESS
Electronic Dance Rock
Los Angeles, CA
fitnesswastaken.com

FOX AND BONES
Folk/Pop
Portland, OR
FoxandBones.com

FOX WILDE
Rock
Los Angeles, CA
Foxwilde.com

GINA CHAVEZ
Latin Pop
Austin, TX
ginachavez.com

GOLD STEPS
Pop Punk, Easycore
Austin, TX
goldstepsband.com

HAL HENKEL & THE FLYING CAMELS
Blues Rock, Funk, Jazz
Eugene, OR
facebook.com/HaroldHalHenkel

HALO CIRCUS
Electronic Alt Rock
Los Angeles, CA
halocircus.com

HOLLYWOOD NIGHTMARE
Metalcore
Hollywood, CA
facebook.com/hollywoodnightmare

HOLY WARS
Dark Pop Rock
Los Angeles, CA
holywarsmusic.com

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INSECT SURFERS
Psychedelic Instrumental Soundtracks
Los Angeles, CA
Insectsurfers.com

JIBS BROWN
Blues Rock/Pop
Ferndale, MI
jibsbrown.com

JOE MOSES
Rap/Hip-Hop
Compton, CA
joemoses.lnk.to/SuWop

JOHN M
Americana Rock
Los Angeles, CA
johnm.com

JOJO MAYER NERVE
Jazz, Rock, Electronica
New York, NY
jojomayer.com

JOUR
Alt-Pop
Minneapolis, MN
jourmusic.xyz

LAS CAFETERAS
Latin Rock
Los Angeles, CA
lascafeteras.com

LINDSAY KAY
Indie Folk
Los Angeles, CA
lindsaykaymusic.com

LISA FINNIE
Americana
Los Angeles, CA
LisaFinnie.com

LIVINGMORE
Alternative
Los Angeles, CA
livingmoreband.com

HERE IT IS, *Music Connection*'s annual list of unsigned LIVE performers who showed us something special onstage during the past year. Contributors to this list are not only *MC* staffers and freelance writers, but club bookers, music attorneys and other industry pros nationwide. *MC* currently has reviewers in Los Angeles, New York, Boston and Detroit. To put yourself in the running for a free review, go to musicconnection.com/reviews/get-reviewed.

MIA AND JONAH
Folk Rock
Los Angeles, CA
miaandjonah.com

MARINA V
Singer-Songwriter
Los Angeles, CA
marinav.com

MICHELLE LEWIS
Folk Pop
Los Angeles, CA
michellelewismusic.com

MILITIA VOX
Heavy Metal
New York, NY
militiaismyname.com

MIRANDA GLORY
Singer-Songwriter
Los Angeles, CA
mirandaglory.com

MOIRA SMILEY
Folk, Americana
Los Angeles, CA
moirasmiley.com

MOLLY HANMER & THE MIDNIGHT TOKERS
Americana
Los Angeles, CA
Mollyhanmer.com

MOTHER
Rock, Pop
Los Angeles, CA
instagram.com/wearemother

NANCY SANCHEZ
Singer-songwriter, Latin Pop
Los Angeles, CA
nancysanchezmusic.com

OIL BOOM
Rock/Blues/Psychedelic
Fort Worth, TX
oilboomband.com

OJAI
Indie Rock
Omaha, NE
ojai.bandcamp.com

OLLIE GABRIEL
Soul Pop
Los Angeles, CA
olliegabriel.com

PAMYUA
Inuit Soul
Anchorage, AL
pamyua.com

PARLOR SOCIAL
Urban (Speakeasy Soul)
Pasadena, CA
parlorsocial.com

PAYSON LEWIS
Indie Pop
Los Angeles, CA
paysonlewis.com

POLAROID SUMMER
Pop Rock
Houston, TX
polaroidsummer.com

RAYSSA
Pop Rock
Los Angeles, CA
Rayssamusic.com

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Alternative Americana
Nashville, TN
roanokeband.com

ROB MORROW
Rock
Los Angeles, CA
robmorrowband.com

SCOTT MULVAHILL
Singer-Songwriter
Nashville, TN
scottmulvahill.com

SIMON XO
Electro-Pop
Los Angeles, CA
SimonXOmusic.com

SIN COLOR
Latin Pop
Los Angeles, CA
facebook.com/SinColorTheBand

SKOUT
Indie-Folk
Brooklyn, NY
skoutmusic.com

SOLAR EYES
Psychedelic Doom Metal
Los Angeles, CA
solareyes.bandcamp.com

SWAY
Pop Rock
Los Angeles, CA
iheartsway.com

TAKERS LEAVERS
Pop-Punk, Post-Hardcore
Orange County, CA
takersleavers.bandcamp.com

THE CORONAS
Alternative Pop Rock
Dublin, Ireland
thecoronas.net

THE DUKE OF SURL
Garage Rock
Milan, Italy/NYC
thedukeofsurl.bandcamp.com

THE EULOGY
Hardcore Punk
Los Angeles, CA
facebook.com/eulogyhc

THE FOXIES
Indie Alternative
Nashville, TN
facebook.com/pg/thefoxiesmusic

THE GLASS JAW POETS
Alt Country Singer-Songwriters
Hollywood, CA
theglassjawpoets.com

THE HOTS
Hard Rock
Australia/Los Angeles, CA
thehotsofficial.com

THE PRETTY FLOWERS
Indie Rock
Los Angeles, CA
theprettyflowers.bandcamp.com

THE NOBLE PRIX
Modern Garage Rock
Burbank, CA
Facebook.com/nobleprix

THE NOVA DARLINGS
Indie Rock
Los Angeles, CA
thenovadarlings.com

THE THINGZ
Punk
Long Beach, CA
thethingz.bandcamp.com

THE WORLD RECORD
Power Pop
Los Angeles, CA
The World Record.net

TRE WRIGHT
Urban, Pop
Los Angeles, CA
TreWright.com

TWOLIPS
Alternative R&B
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soundcloud.com/twolipsmusic

VELVET STARLINGS
Indie Rock
Chino, CA
facebook.com/VelvetStarlings

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victorfields.com

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Femme-Fronted Art Punk
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empire.lnk.to/SouthCentralAint4Everybody

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whitneytaimusic.com

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xariofficial.com

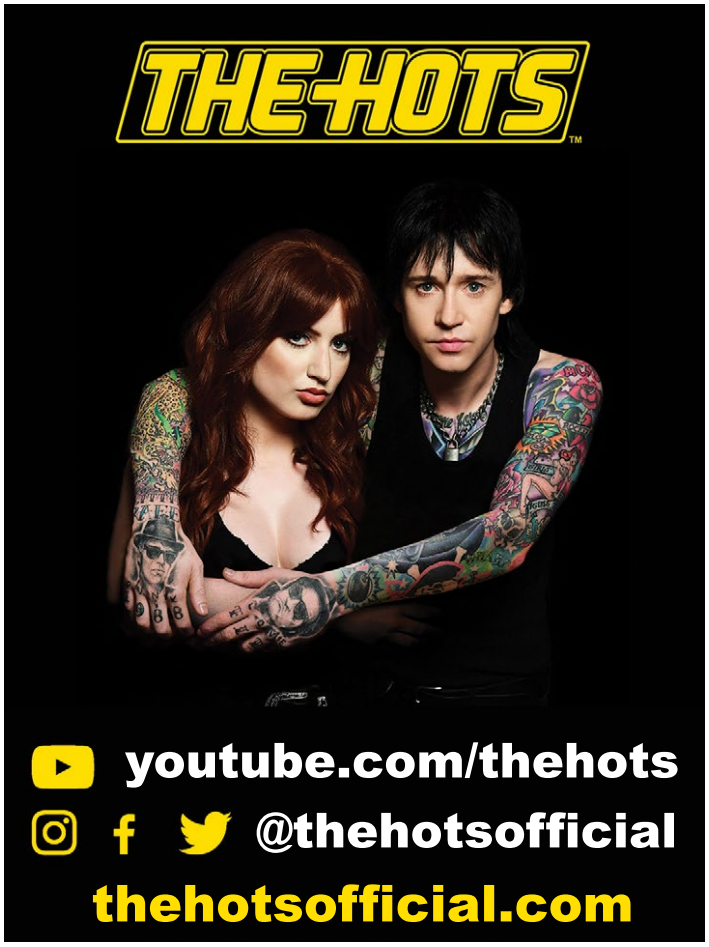
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Alt Rock
Hollywood, CA
zachcallison.com

ZARAGOZA
Acoustic Singer-Songwriter
Los Angeles, CA
zaragozamusician.com

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Richard Leigh

A Country Songwriter's Folk Legacy

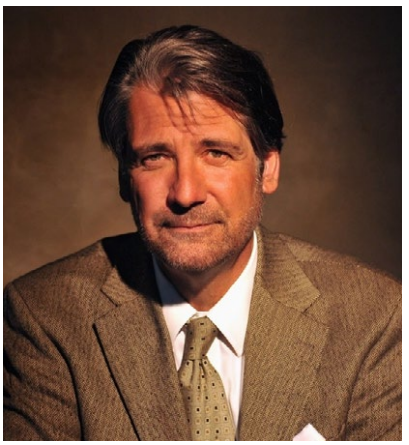
The sonic palette of Richard Leigh's newest solo release, *Wandering One*, is rich with wooden instruments: Guitars, dobros, violins and cellos surrounding his warm conversational vocals and candid songcraft.

An honoree in the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame, Leigh is the writer of hits including "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue" for Crystal Gayle, a Grammy and CMA Song of the Year honoree; and "The Greatest Man I Never Knew," by Reba McEntire. His credits include songs for artists like Dixie Chicks, Ray Charles, Don Williams, Tammy Wynette, Ronnie Milsap, Alabama and Kathy Mattea.

On this morning, Leigh has just returned from a concert at the Birthplace of Country Music in Bristol, VA, a museum that recognizes music publisher Ralph Peer's "Bristol Sessions," that introduced The Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers with songs that form the firmament of country music. *Wandering One*, with its homespun performances and story songs, is reminiscent of this Appalachian era.

Leigh interjects historic references. "Up and Down the Mountainside," depicts Rev. Bob Childress, a Blue Ridge Mountain preacher who sermonized to congregations facing abject poverty, alcoholism, domestic abuse and crime. "Brother Bryan of Birmingham" references James Alexander Bryan, a Presbyterian minister and outspoken civil rights proponent.

"Sometimes I think I'm a frustrated preacher myself," muses Leigh. "Wandering One" references a parable Leigh explains. "It was originally 'Rambling One.' I wrote it when I was in college in Virginia back in the '70s, when all of the folk singers had to ramble. Forty-four years later, when I was thinking about making this album, I remembered the song and changed the title. And I realized that it is the parable of the lost sheep from the Bible."



He relates he has been queried about his songs' meanings. "I was at a lake with a bunch of people on pontoon boats once," he recalls. "And a woman in a bikini asked me, 'How can someone have both brown eyes and blue eyes at the same time?" Similarly, "The Greatest Man I Never Knew," about the dysfunctional relationship between a father and a son, confused another listener. "There is the line, 'The greatest man I never knew lived right down the hall.' I was asked, "If the guy lived right down the hall from someone, how could he not know him?"

"Laurie" from *Wandering One* is also an older story song about a wedding night that turns deadly when a jealous groom is killed defending the honor of his bride. "I wrote it when I was playing coffeehouses in college," says Leigh. "It was my first kind of 'hit,' the one that the audience requested when I would perform, and that other artists wanted to do."

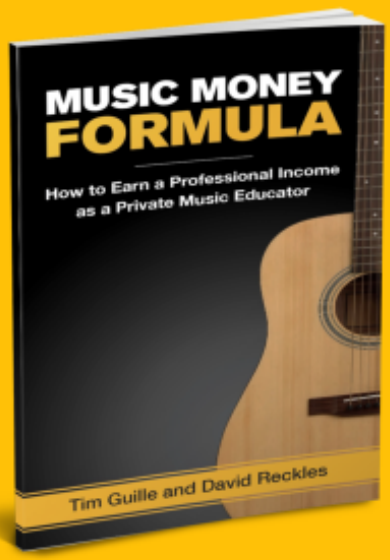
The early '70s, when Leigh arrived in Nashville, was a time of transformation. "The first night I was in town I went to a recording session with Waylon Jennings, produced by Jack Clement," he remembers. "I didn't fit it. They were cool and I wasn't." He co-wrote with the late Guy Clark, and his wife Susanna, who Leigh remembers as "…the brightest person I ever met," and with whom he penned "Come from the Heart," a Number One country hit for Kathy Mattea. It includes these rarely attributed lines, "You've got to sing like you don't need the money/Love like you'll never get hurt/You've got to dance like nobody's watchin…'" a part of the American cultural vernacular.

In concert, Leigh's stories about his songs and his life are integrated into musical experience. "Finding love, losing love and finding it again," he says. He spends a great deal of time traveling, as he explains, "Many hours behind the wheel. I don't fly, so it might take me a couple of days to get to and from a show."

Orphaned at an early age, Leigh had four fathers and three mothers by the time he was 14. He sponsors The Richard Leigh Songwriters Festival and a songwriting competition at his alma mater, Virginia Highlands Community College, to benefit foster youth. Above all, Leigh appreciates the freedom to keep making music and writing his indelible songs. As he sings on *Wandering One*, "I put my worries in a song/When trouble troubles me."

Visit Richardleigh.com

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"We've been reading Music Connection magazine regularly for a long time now; the most reliable music trade magazine that bridges the gap between indie needs and industry resources, way before it was trendy to be indie. From live show reviews to album critiques, we are always proud to say that MC has been a huge supporter of Parlor Social's cutting-edge ''speakeasy-soul'' music. Their desire to cater to all levels of music folks within the trade has helped them create their own lane and maintain the respect of our peers. A must-read to stay in the know."

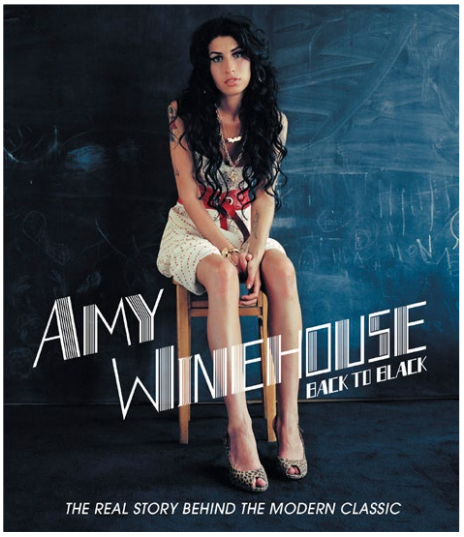
– Dessy Di Lauro & Ric'key Pageot of Parlor Social

MUSIC CONNECTION

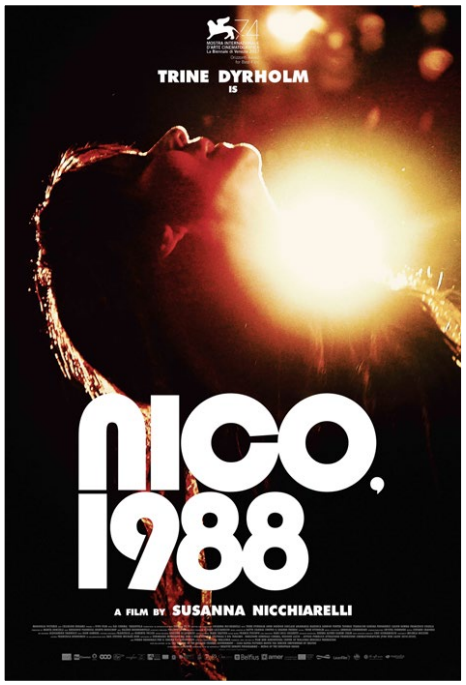


DROPS

Eagle Vision has released a brand-new documentary ***Amy Winehouse – Back to Black*** this month on DVD, Blu-ray and digital formats, a film that chronicles the making of the singer's seminal album. The film includes an exclusive bonus feature: a recently unearthed and never-before-seen private performance from February 2008, in which the late artist performs highlights from *Back to Black* and a handful of choice covers. In addition to unseen footage of Winehouse, the doc includes new interviews with producers **Mark Ronson** and **Salaam Remi** and musicians featured on the album. For further details, contact Carol Kaye at Carol@KayosProductions.com.



The **Susanna Nicchiarelli**-directed ***Nico, 1988*** dropped last month. The film examines the solitary life of singer-songwriter **Christa Päffgen a.k.a Nico,** approaching 50 with her '60s glam days as a **Warhol** superstar and vocalist for **The Velvet Underground** far behind her. With her career on the rocks and burdened by a broken relationship with her estranged son, Nico's new manager convinces her to tour Europe and promote her latest album. Contact Ranese_Southerland@bhimpact.com for more information.




JEN LILLY

With his new **Victory Records** album ***Whole New Life*** dropping on Nov. 30, roots rocker **The Reverend Horton Heat** and his band will be performing on the **NBC** television series ***Midnight, Texas***. The Rev will perform new album track "Hog Tyin' Woman." For more Heat details, contact Tom Wojcick, tom@victoryrecords.com.


ELVIS

Upcoming documentary ***On Va Continuer!*** (French for "we will continue") is expected to premiere in 2019, spotlighting Grammy winners **Lost Bayou Ramblers** and their quest since 1999 to preserve the French Cajun music, language and culture in Louisiana. In 2016, filmmaker **Bruno Doria** met band member **Louis Michot** while filming the aftermath of devastating floods in Maurice, LA. The film captures the past two years of the band's career, which included recording and winning a Grammy for their latest album, ***Kalenda.*** The film received $30,000 through the **#CreateLouisiana French Culture Film Grant** in July sponsored in part by the network **TV5MONDE USA**, which will receive a first look deal for potential broadcast. Contact HowlingWuelf@aol.

Actress and musician **Jen Lilley**, whose debut single dropped this fall with all proceeds donated to the **Project Orphans Foundation**, stars in **Hallmark** Christmas film, ***Mingle All the Way,*** which premiered Nov. 18. A children's rights activist and recipient of the **National Educators Award** for her work in Guatemala, Lilley is also known for her work in television and the five-time Academy Award-winning film ***The Artist.*** When not acting or working on philanthropic projects, Lilley honors her passion for 1960s girl groups by working on a collection of timeless songs with a talented backing band. The forthcoming album is produced by **Adrian Gurvitz (Whitney Houston, Stevie Wonder)** with string arrangements by **Rosie Danvers** and her 50-piece orchestra recorded in London **(Adele, Kanye West), Eric Wortham** on keys **(Adele), Peter Randall** on bass **(Adele), Dean Parker** on guitar **(Michael Jackson, Diana Ross),** and **Greg Bassinett** on drums **(Ringo Starr)**. Email AGPR@AndersonGroupPR.com for details.

On Dec. 7, **Coldplay** will celebrate their record-breaking ***A Head Full Of Dreams*** **Tour** with the release of ***Live In Buenos Aires/Live In São Paulo/A Head Full Of Dreams*** on CD, DVD, vinyl and digital formats. The *Live In Buenos Aires* album was recorded Nov. 15, 2017 on the final night of the *A Head Full Of Dreams* Tour. The 24-track audio set marks the first time that an entire Coldplay concert has been released. The accompanying two-hour concert film ***Live In São Paulo*** was filmed a week earlier on Nov. 8, 2017. This tour was the third biggest of all time, having played to more than 5.5 million fans across the world. The combined live album and live concert film release, also known as the Butterfly package, is completed by the new *A Head Full Of Dreams* documentary film, which charts the band's 20 years of existence. For details, contact Ted.Sullivan@AtlanticRecords.com.

The 50th anniversary of **Elvis Presley's** groundbreaking 1968 NBC-TV comeback special was commemorated with the Nov. 30 release of

a five-CD, two Blu-ray disc deluxe box set by **RCA/Legacy Recordings,** just days before the anniversary of the world premiere broadcast of the original special on Dec. 3. In it, viewers can see The King at his best, and for the first time ever, all previously-released audio and newly-restored video from the taping of the special will be available in one package, including unused performances and studio outtakes. A 2LP vinyl presentation of ***The King In The Ring*** is also out now, after its original, limited Record Store Day release earlier this year, which showcases Presley's "sit down" sets from the '68 special. Finally, in 2019, **NBC** and **Ken Ehrlich Productions** will team up for a two-hour primetime television tribute to the original special, which will feature an all-star group of musicians recreating the show and staging of that night. Contact Maria.Malta@SonyMusic.com.

Thom Yorke's *Suspiria (Music for the Luca Guadagnino Film)* is out now on **XL Recordings**, featuring 25 chilling original compositions written by **Radiohead's** Yorke for this remake of the original 1977 **Dario Argento** horror classic. Featuring such tracks as **"Unmade," "Open Again," "Volk," "Has Ended,"** and **"Suspirium,"** the album is a mix of instrumental score work, interstitial pieces and interludes, and more traditional song structures featuring Yorke's vocals. The soundtrack was written and arranged by Yorke, recorded and produced by Yorke and **Sam Petts-Davies**, features the London **Contemporary Orchestra and Choir**, Yorke's son, **Noah Yorke,** on drums on "Volk" and "Has Ended," and **Pasha Mansurov** on solo flute on "Suspirium." Contact Laura Burrus at Laura@NastyLittleMan.com for further details.



Warner Bros. Records collaborated with **Netflix** for the exclusive music soundtrack of ***Westside***, Netflix's first-ever unscripted music series. The series follows the lives of nine young artists struggling for success in today's high-pressure music industry. Today, the unscripted eight-episode series launches globally on Netflix and the soundtrack ***WESTSIDE: THE MUSIC*** is available on Warner Bros. Records.

OPPS

Looking for a one-stop shop for open submissions to film festivals, competitions and video contests? The **Audience Awards** offers that, with submission guidelines for a range of categories including music shorts, hip-hop culture festivals, horror, documentaries and animated features. Visit theaudienceawards.com/video-contests to learn more.

The **Los Angeles Music Video Festival** is a category film festival for music videos judged by professionals and featuring prizes, panels, speakers, workshops, screenings and live performances. If you're an independent musician and/or filmmaker and want to submit your work, visit lamvf.com to sign up for the mailing list and be notified when the festival calls for entries.

The **Berlin Music Video Awards** is now accepting submissions for the 2019 festival. Applicants can submit videos (in any language) via the BMVA website at berlinmva.com/main/submissions. BMVA is an annual festival that supports both unknown and famous artists and offers awards in the following categories: best music video, narrative, animation, song, low budget, cinematography, art director, visual effects, editor, director, concept and experimental, as well as Most Trashy and Most Bizarre.

PROPS

The Hollywood Documentary Award went to **Live Nation Productions'** ***Believer*** at the **22nd Annual Hollywood Film Awards** on Nov. 4. *Believer* tells the story of **Imagine Dragons** frontman **Dan Reynolds** and his exploration of how the Mormon church treats members of the LGBTQ community. Reynolds, who was executive producer on the film, accepted the honor at the awards ceremony and joined producer **Tim Edgar** and award-winning composer **Hans Zimmer** in performing one of *Believer's* tracks, **"Skipping Stones."** Contact Kelly Striewski at KStriewski@dickclark.com for more.

It's been an eventful season for London-based artist **Marta**, who was recently named Best Artist this fall at the **2018 Ibiza Music Video Festival** after submitting two videos to the festival, including **"I Need A Love Story"** and **"All About Us."** Marta's music video for the former was also given "Selection" status in the music video category at the **London City Film Awards** in October. She also recently participated in **London Fashion Week,** curating the music and walking the runway for the **Ada Zanditon** Spring Summer 2019 collection presentation. Contact Heather Trotter at Heather@117group.com.

Award-winning documentary ***Mind Over Matter*** is set to release in early 2019, telling the story of how **Brandon Mendenhall,** who formed the band **The Mendenhall Experiment,** became a rock guitarist despite a paralyzed left hand due to cerebral palsy, and found friends and mentors in members of the band **Korn**. The film was directed by French filmmaker Sebastien Paquet and took home top honors including Best Cinematography, Best Screenwriting and Audience awards at the **2017 DOC LA Los Angeles Documentary Film Festival**, the Audience award at the **2018 Los Angeles Diversity Film Festival,** and Best Documentary Feature at the **2018 Sacramento Film & Music Festival**. Email Anderson Group Public Relations at AGPR@AndersonGroupPR.com for more information.

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



Michiel Groeneveld

Composer Manager

Web: infamouspr.com
Contact: Alastair Duncan, ADuncan@infamouspr.com; Alec Morris, AMorris@infamouspr.com

Michiel Groeneveld had no management experience prior to managing film composer JunkieXL (Tom Holkenborg), and yet he helped take his sole client from a touring electronic music act to one of Hollywood's most successful composers whose credits include *Tomb Raider* (2018) and *Deadpool*.

Groeneveld had to learn the ins and outs of film composer management on his own. "I learned it's really important to understand what intellectual property means. You need to understand what people are buying when they buy a record; what labels buy when they sign an artist," he says. "Additionally, I learned the importance of touring to bring in income."

While working with the distributor, Groeneveld met Tom Holkenborg, who asked him to be his tour manager, and then—four years later, in 2003—his manager. "I encouraged Tom to learn the technical and political aspects of the trade. I also thought he should learn from other composers, so he spent time with Hans Zimmer," Groeneveld says. "As a manager, you should be the voice of reason in the process, the anchor who allows the musician to spread their wings while you keep two feet on the ground."

It's not all that common for a film composer to have a manager, but that's changing as the film composing world becomes more complex and composers are now a part of the editing process. "Deadlines change all the time, and it takes more manpower to be a composer—you need a team, multiple studios. And you need to be able to work on multiple films at the same time as schedules change," Groeneveld says. "It helps to have someone manage those aspects of the business."

But those challenges aren't daunting to Groeneveld, who has an approach that's surprisingly optimistic for the music business: "You just need to keep a positive attitude and trust that things will be alright."

GUITAR CENTER

Holds Week-Long Celebration for the Rebirth of Its Iconic Flagship Hollywood Store

World's largest musical instrument retailer honors the rich music history of Los Angeles with a $5M redesign of its Hollywood location



HADAS

Anderson .Paak performs at Guitar Center's reimagined Hollywood flagship store on Saturday, Nov. 3, in Los Angeles.



RYAN HUNTER

Guitarist Nita Strauss performs a blistering set at Guitar Center Hollywood.



The redesigned Guitar Center Hollywood store features a revamped Vintage + Platinum Guitar room with a classic vaudeville theater turned guitar heaven with a stage for live performances. The room includes Guitar Center's largest collection of vintage and platinum guitars with classic memorabilia from legendary artists such as Eric Clapton's Blackie and 335 guitars; Johnny Cash's Martin guitar, Slash's Les Paul guitar and more.



RYAN HUNTER

Guitar Center presented its esteemed RockWalk Inductions to GRAMMY®-nominated singer, drummer, and percussionist Sheila E. and DW Founders Don Lombardi and John Good. Pictured (l-r): Don Lombardi, Sheila E. and John Good.



RYAN HUNTER

Designed by street artists Amanda Lynn, Scott Marsh and Patrick Griffith, Guitar Center's new mural prominently features Jimi Hendrix and was unveiled by Los Angeles City Councilmember David Ryu, with an official city proclamation honoring the mural, music makers and dreamers in a way that was uniquely true to Los Angeles. Pictured (l-r): Ron Japinga, Chief Executive Officer, Guitar Center; Jeannine D'Addario, Senior Vice President and Chief Customer Officer; and David Ryu, Los Angeles City Councilmember.

–JACQUELINE NARANJO *jackien@musicconnection.com*



▲ *MC* Gives Gear Prizes at Another Successful TAXI Road Rally

Music Connection **gave away three CADLive D90 mics and acoustic panels from L.A Sound Panels at another successful TAXI Road Rally convention in Los Angeles, where songwriters, composers and music industry professionals had the opportunity to network and attend informative panels. TAXI winners pictured (l-r): Kate Albright, Axel Schwiatzer, Elvira Kainik and Savannah Philyaw. For more information, visit taxi.com.**

▶ American Film Market

The American Film Market – the world's largest motion picture business event – wrapped up Nov. 7 in Santa Monica, CA and included the the well-attended film and TV scoring panel: SCORE IT GREAT! HOW TO GET THE BEST POSSIBLE FILM AND TV MUSIC FOR EVERY BUDGET. Pictured (l-r): Dennis Dreith, Transparence Entertainment Group; Germaine Franco, Composer; Paul Broucek, Warner Bros. Music; and Kim Roberts Hedgpeth, Film Musicians Secondary Markets Fund (FMSMF). The panel was programmed by the FMSMF. Check FMSMF's facebook page for video highlights from the panel.





◀ Spin Doctor on *MC* Podcast

Chris Barron of the Spin Doctors recently chatted on the *MC Podcast*. In the interview, Barron told stories about how the band got named, gigs at biker bars and overcoming his vocal challenges. Listen at bit.ly/MCBarron. Pictured (l-r): *MC* podcast co-hosts Arnie Wohl, Randy Thomas with Barron.

▶ Rostrum Launches D.R.I.P.

Rostrum Records celebrated the launch of their brand new production music catalog D.R.I.P. Library, dedicated to Hip-Hop, RnB, Soul and everything in between. Rostrum Records, an independent record label founded in 2003 by Benjy Grinberg, has developed and released music by artists such as Mac Miller, Mod Sun, Wiz Khalifa and more. Pictured (l-r): Dewayne Cowles, Theory, Justin Erin, Aydin, Emoni Matthews, G White, Krunkadelic, Karra Mane, LaMarcus Eldridge, Johnny Thomas Jr.



MUSIC CONNECTION

Tidbits From Our Tattered Past



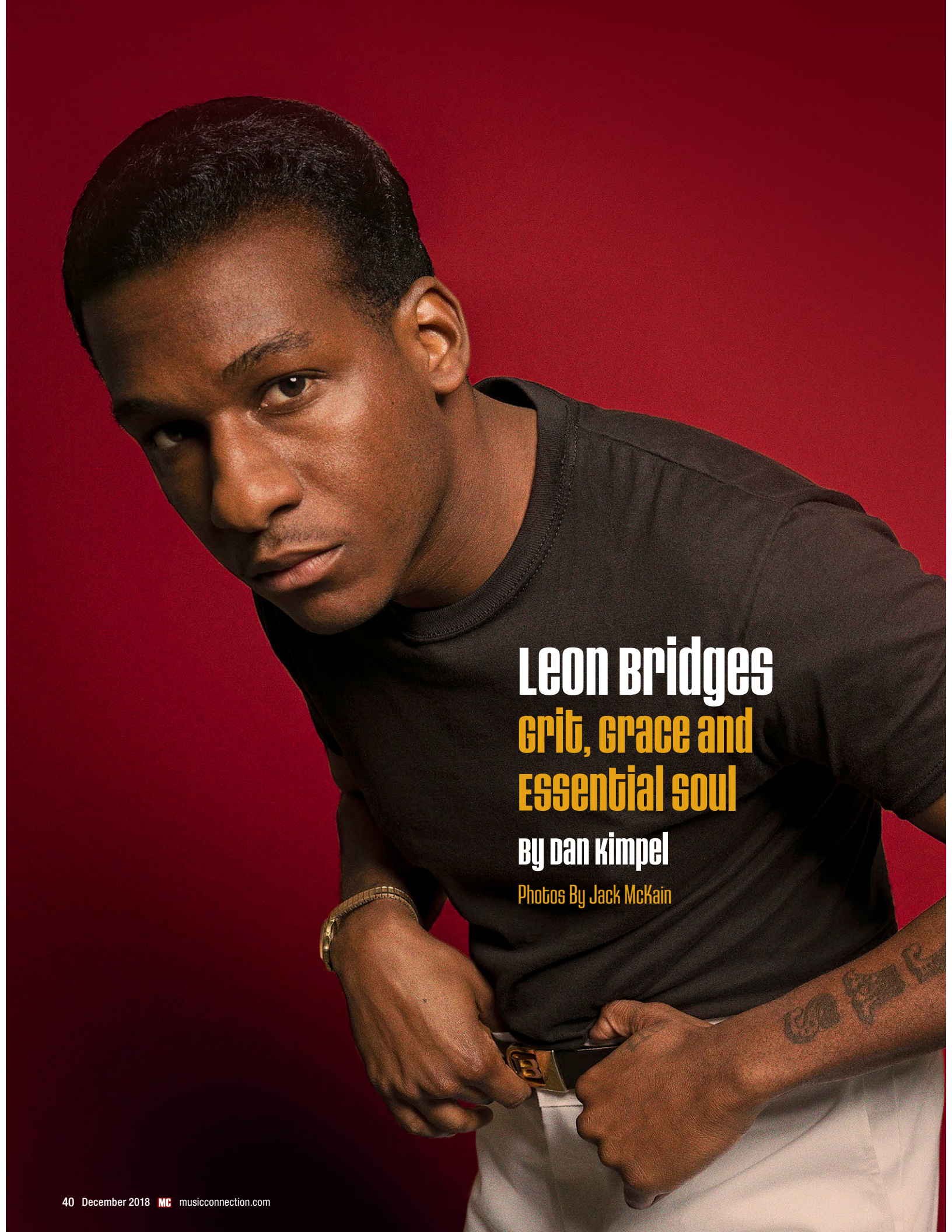
1998–Year-End Issue–#25

In *Music Connection*'s final issue of 1998 we addressed the year's biggest trend—the swing revival—spotlighting bands like Royal Crown Revue, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, Cherry Poppin' Daddies, and Brian Setzer. Said one pundit: "Swing dancing provides the opportunity to touch one another without having to worry about fatal deseases."



2002–Filter–#18

"It all comes back to the songwriting and not being afraid to do shit," said Filter frontman Richard Patrick in our cover story on the band. "I knew that I wasn't going to be able to do anything I wanted unless I just did it." In a sidebar with band guitarist Geno Lenardo, he details all of his guitar effects and processes. Elsewhere in the issue we speak with Warner A&R guy Kevin Anderson.



Leon Bridges

Grit, Grace and Essential Soul

By Dan Kimpel

Photos By Jack McKain

A modern day soul man with camera-ready cool: With his 2015 debut, *Coming Home*, Leon Bridges echoing influences of '60s greats like Jackie Wilson, Sam Cooke and Arthur Alexander, appeared seemingly out of nowhere. Nominated for Best R&B Album at the 58th GRAMMY Awards in 2015, *Coming Home* also garnered a nomination in 2016 in the Best Music Video category for "River." An electrifying performance on *Saturday Night Live* served as further introduction to a wide national audience.

Good Thing, released in 2018, proves that Bridges has no intention of being boxed in as a vintage artist. Tracked under the guidance of producers Niles City Sound, King Garbage and Nate Mercereau, executive producer Ricky Reed invited a team of collaborators to co-write with Bridges and his Texas crew, including heavyweight songwriters Justin Tranter, Teddy Geiger and Dan Wilson. A brilliant combination of Southern grit, stellar songs, imaginative arrangements and inventive production, *Good Thing*, which entered at #3 on the Billboard 200 chart, showcases Bridges' astounding emotional range and genuine, confessional vocals.

For this exclusive interview, *MC* checked in with Bridges between one of his European tour dates.

Music Connection: We're speaking to you in Aarhus, Denmark on a major European visit. How have the shows and the audiences been so far?

Leon Bridges: The tour's been great. I incorporated some new band members. We've been focusing on our live performance, and I've been focusing on growing as a showman. The audiences have been great, definitely different from American crowds. It's been interesting seeing what they react to here, but it's a lot of energy.

MC: Are you using visual elements in your production?

Bridges: Our production is a little bit more stripped down than the North American tour we just had, because the venues are a little smaller. So we have to bring it with the music.

MC: Most of the songs on your latest full length, *Good Thing*, clock in between three and four minutes. Do you lengthen them drastically to adapt to a concert situation?

Bridges: Definitely. The live interpretation of the album is so different. On a song like "Lion" we have a crazy psychedelic intro. All of the songs have a different vibe.

MC: As we understand, for *Good Thing* you had already done extensive recording with your production team in Texas, but you wanted to up the game, correct?

Bridges: Yes, definitely. I stopped touring in the fall of 2016 and I did a lot of writing back home in Fort Worth. The sound of those recordings went from a '70s soul thing to an '80s and '90s R&B vibe. My producers and I felt like we hit a wall creatively, so we went out to L.A. to work with Ricky Reed. I was a little reluctant to do it at first.

MC: We're big fans of Ricky and have interviewed and featured him on many memorable occasions at *MC*. He has shared with us that he doesn't believe in overly directing artists. He is more interested in capturing their vision.

Bridges: I had never worked with any other producer, and the whole idea of collaborating on a writing level was different. But it worked out great. And I love Ricky's approach to creating. Like you said, he didn't try to impose his thing on me. It was collaborative.

MC: We understand that you and Ricky worked very much in the moment, especially cutting vocals in the control room.

Bridges: They had a microphone that was way more expensive out in the other room that I never used. It was me singing on an SM7 in the control room with no headphones, which was a funny experience, hunched over the counter singing melodies.

MC: There is a common conception among indie artists that in order to be viable to a major label you have to come with a built-in audience. You met producers at gigs, placed songs on SoundCloud, and were exposed through the blog Gorilla vs. Bear who posted two demos. This garnered instant A&R interest, and your managers set up showcases in Nashville and Fort Worth plus performances at SXSW. So your journey was different.

Bridges: It was.The beautiful thing about Columbia Records is that they allowed me to release an album that was already done. And the A&R's only input was what would be the song order or the art for the album. It's been a really great experience. Everything they've done is awesome.

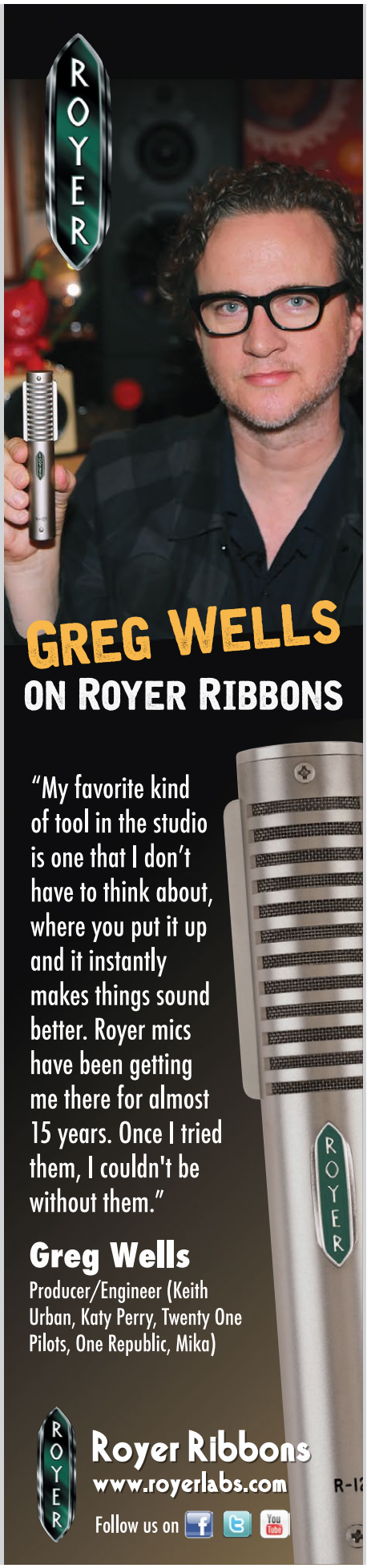
"If it wasn't for open mics I'd have never met producer Austin Jenkins."

MC: The track on *Good Thing*, called "Bad Bad News," incorporates a whole different sound. How did it come together?

Bridges: Some of those lyrics started out derivative of a ballad that I wrote and never released. I basically took those lyrics and changed the melody. That's the beginning. (Sings) "Ain't got no riches, ain't got no money..." During this whole process we did some stuff from scratch, but Ricky Reed had this library of really dope instrumentals. This was an instrumental that Nate Mercereau put together. Every single song started out with me flowing over it. For me, it's easier to write lyrics with the melody and the cadence already laid down.

MC: The instrumentation has those jazz touches and that amazing guitar synth solo.

Bridges: That's the sound. But "Bad Bad News" is an anthem for breaking past barriers. It comes from a place of when I was in college. At the time, 2012, I was getting started writing songs. I was working on this song about my

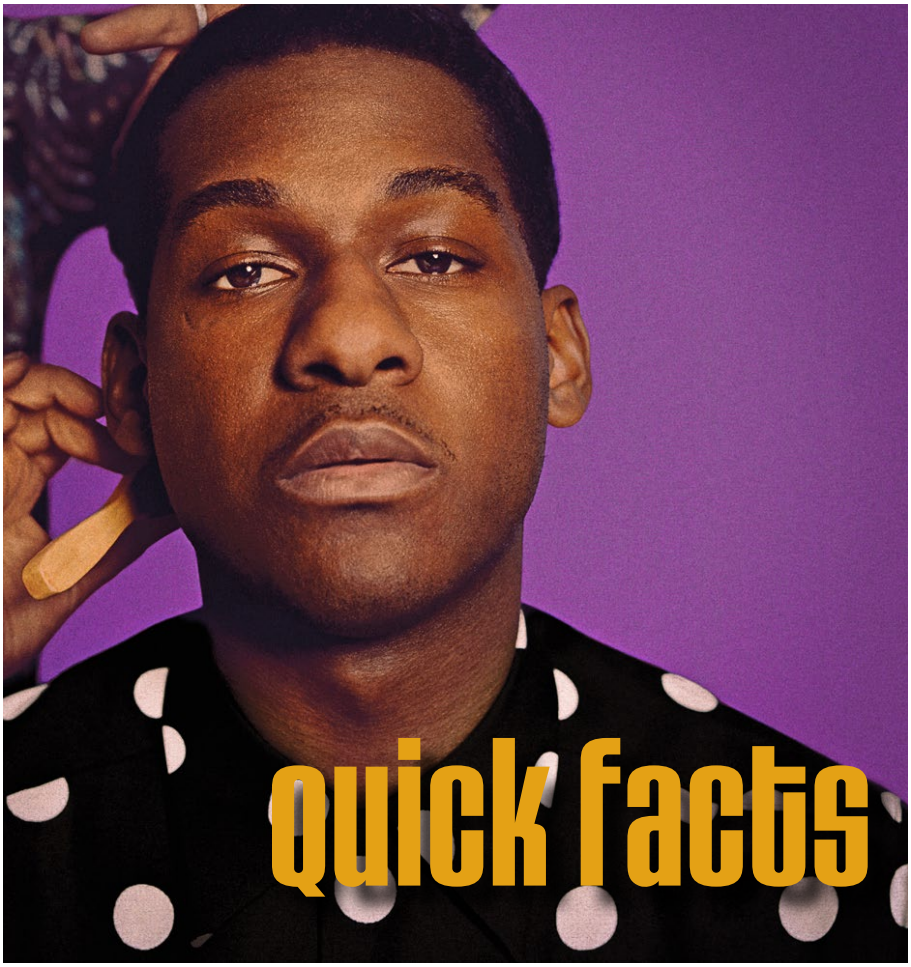


mom called "Lisa Sawyer." I remember there was a music professor. I sat down with him and played the song for him and asked him, 'Do you think I have an opportunity to be successful?' And he told me. "Nah, you can't do anything with that." "Bad Bad News" is a lot of things—it's almost political in a way, but it comes from that personal story.

MC: You use your personal history in your writing, talking about your mom on "Lisa Sawyer" that became a key track on your debut, *Coming Home*. In "Georgia to Texas" on *Good Thing* you describe her as a "504 girl," which is the New Orleans area code. How much does New Orleans weigh into your heritage?

Bridges: My mother's side of the family has been in New Orleans since the early 1900s, and my father's side moved to New Orleans later on. The song "Georgia to Texas" is vignettes of my narrative, speaking of my mother who moved to Atlanta, and then me being born in Atlanta, and going on to talk about relocating to Texas, and my experiences in high school, and losing my virginity to a prostitute in Oklahoma, to finding my love within music.

MC: In writing a song like that—and other songs on *Good Thing*—would you say was it difficult to be so emotionally naked, working in a room full of songwriters who were relative strangers to you?



quick facts

- Leon Bridges was born Todd Bridges in Atlanta in 1989.
- He chose the stage name "Leon" because he resembles Leon Robinson, an actor who played David Ruffin in the 1998 miniseries *The Temptations*.
- Leaving college to work various jobs in Fort Worth, he made ends meet by busing tables at Rosa's Cafe and washing dishes at Del Fresco's Grille.
- Bridges attended schools in Crowley, TX, just south of Fort Worth, and studied dance briefly at Tarrant County Community College, a school that also claims Post Malone as a famous dropout.
- Recently, Neil Young's song "Ohio" was reimagined by Leon Bridges, Gary Clark, Jr. and Jon Batiste, as part of a playlist curated by Spotify called "Echoes of Vietnam," inspired by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's PBS documentary series about the era.
- The late Curtis Mayfield has a writing credit for "Bet Ain't Worth the Hand" on *Good Thing* thanks to a sample of his 1970 hit "Makings of You."
- "If It Feels Good (Then It Must Be) from *Good Thing* credits the Whispers' 1980 smash, "It's a Love Thing."
- Leon Bridges is managed by Jonathan Eshak & Zeke Hutchins at Mick Management. Agency representation is by Bobby Cory and Jeffrey Azoff at CAA.

Bridges: It was, man. It was really intimidating. We still had a nice flow and rhythm to the process, but it was rough in the beginning, being around these really awesome songwriters and trying to think of inspiration on the spot. When I write I start with an idea and it might take months or even years to finish that song. It's rough when there are so many possibilities on how you can do a melody or what words are there, or what the concept should be about. I'm glad we could work it out.

MC: While the songs on *Good Thing* have varying styles, every song seems to flow with the theme and your voice as the through-line. Do you arrange the backing vocals?

Bridges: I had a couple of ideas on some of the backing stuff, but that was all Ricky. I'm horrible at arranging backup vocals. I just do the lyrics and sing the main melody and my job is done on that.

MC: You mention "Bad Bad News" as being political. You recreate a very political artist, Gil Scott-Heron, with a cameo in the feature film *First Man*, Oscar-winning director Damien Chazelle's biopic of Neil Armstrong starring Ryan Gosling. You perform one of Scott-Heron's poems "Whitey on the Moon." Were you aware of him before being cast in the role?

Bridges: Barely. I remember my father introducing me to Gil Scott-Heron, and I thought it was really interesting because he was the origin

> **"Take steps to have a sound that no one can have – that's unique. Once you have that, I feel like success will find you."**

of what we call hip-hop and I thought that was really cool. Before getting that small role I didn't know that much about him.

MC: We see you in fashion magazines, looking polished and posed. Do you enjoy this visibility?

Bridges: I think it's a great extension of myself and the music. The songs are great, so I think it's important to have dope videos and visual content for the people. I want to continue as I progress to get even more abstract with the visuals. I've been able to work with some awesome directors.

MC: This season you're in a major Gap ad on television, singing "Now That We Found Love" a song made famous by Heavy D. & The Boys, and originally sung by The O'Jays. You do some steps that definitely reference your background as a dancer.

Bridges: That Gap ad was a two-day shoot, and during the whole shoot all I heard was "Smile, smile! Give us that Gap smile!" And I hate smiling. But it was a fun time, I got to basically live my dance dreams and learn some choreography. It's crazy how when I was studying dance it prepared me—learn the choreography in a couple of hours and then go. What I learned then is definitely helpful for what I do now.

MC: What do you say to artists who are coming up from your experience and perspective that can help them?

Bridges: I believe the music never lies. I feel like with any artist, when they take steps to have a sound that no one can have—that's unique. Once you have that, I feel like success will find you. I look at my story and some of my other friends' stories. I don't believe there is a formula to reaching success, hopefully having a manager and getting signed, and you can stop working a 9 to 5. It's not automatic. Life is in stages. But I'm horrible at giving advice."

MC: When you were coming up, how did playing at open mics in Dallas/Fort Worth help your career?

Bridges: When I started out, open mics were a great conduit to putting my music in front of people. If it wasn't for that I would have never met the producer Austin Jenkins and be doing what I'm doing now.

MC: How do you maintain vocal health?

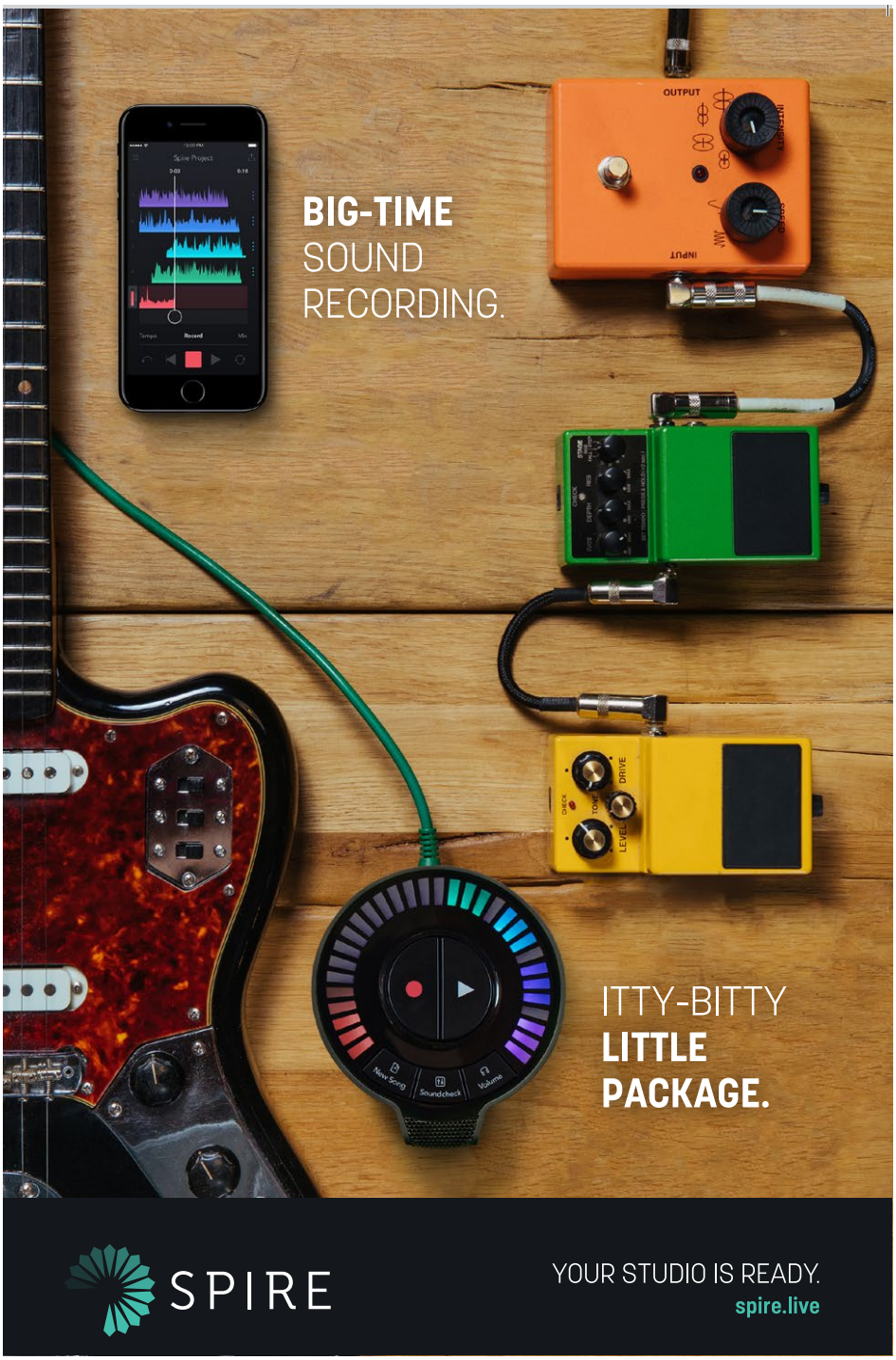
Bridges: I'm a person who loves to drink. It's all about doing it in moderation. Maybe try to avoid going to the bars every night and talking loud—that's how you can wear out your vocals. Before I go on I do a little bit of vocal warmups, and have apple cider vinegar and honey. Then, before I go on stage, a little shot of whiskey.

MC: Is that what gives you that fine falsetto?

Bridges: Falsetto, and little bit of rasp.

Contact sarahmary.cunningham@sonymusic.com

Hey singers! Check out MC's Singers Roundtable with P-Funk legend George Clinton at musicconnection.com/singers-sound-off-2018/



100 BEST CAREER TIPS OF 2018

Compiled by Jacqueline Naranjo

Music Connection's mission is to deliver timely insights and career advice to all music makers. That's why in every interview and article we post or publish there is at least one golden nugget of wisdom that can be applied toward making a success of your music endeavors. Below you will find what we believe to be the very best career tips we published in the past year. Each quoted tip cites the month it first appeared on musicconnection.com.

SONGWRITING

The song is boss. It'll let you know what it wants to be and how it wants to breathe and flow. Listen to it and don't be afraid to admit when you're wrong.

– Eric Bass
Shinedown
July

Seize the moment. When you meet an amazing artist, don't be too patient. … Once an artist goes home, they might change their mind.

– Jimmy Duval *producer (Lil Pump, XXXTentacion)*
November

I don't care about perfection; perfection to me is a great, soulful rendition of something.

– Neil Young
September

I'd rather make something that's good than make something that's popular.

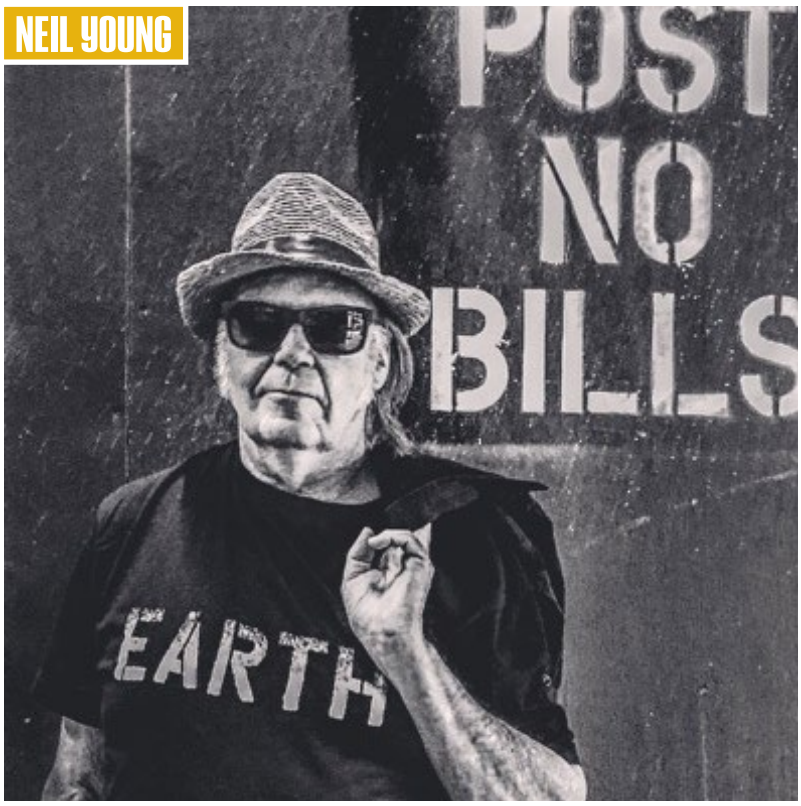
– Dallon Weekes
I Don't Know How But They Found Me
November

Think of this like a sport. If you don't get many hours of practice, you'll fail. I say make a thousand songs and then release your best 20. That helps to hone your craft.

– Jimmy Duval
producer (Lil Pump, XXXTentacion)

What you do before a show is so important. It can put you in the right spot or put you in the absolute wrong spot to go onstage.

– Sam Kiszka
Greta Van Fleet
November



What I tell most artists is that if they're going to do a produced-up version, it has to be stellar. I'd rather get something a little more bare-bones so that we can hear where it could go.

– Richard Stumpf
Atlas Music Publishing
November

HONE YOUR CRAFT

Take your time. Don't prematurely go to radio or go to press or get a publicist or manager. Work on your craft. Perfect it.

– Aaron Axelsen
Music Director/Assistant Program Director - Alt 105.3 San Francisco
October

Pace yourself when you work on a big record. It's a marathon, not a sprint.

– Doug McKean
producer
September

GET OUT THERE AND NETWORK

This is a people business. How many plug-ins you have won't bring you a decades-long career. How you interact with others and your overall attitude will.

– Bill Smith
producer (Barbra Streisand, Ray Charles)
January



The best connections happen when you meet someone face to face, smile, shake their hand and look them in the eye. It makes a world of difference.

– Tim Guille
All Play Music and Co-Founder of Music Money Formula
November

Don't be afraid to put yourself out there. The few times that I've done it, it's always been a turning point for me.

– David Andersen
engineer (Sound City, Slightly Stoopid)
March

Your resume doesn't speak for you. Employers don't look at it, so it's very important to network. Work hard and be the best at what you do. That will be your presentation card.

– Ruben Salas
producer (Guaco, Erika Ender)
August

You need to talk to people and attend events. You have to understand that world and dive into how you can be of service, how you can best support someone's vision and work fast on your feet.

– Test Shot Starfish
dance/electronic musicians
December

PRODUCERS

My story is working hard on a consistent basis and moving up a notch gradually as the years go by. I was looking at longevity. I want to be here for a long time. I don't want all of the money at once so I can spend it and be broke and forgotten.

– Zaytoven
producer (Migos)
January

Always serve the music, serve the artist, serve the song. That's primary.

– Terry Wollman
producer (Dionne Warwick, Melissa Manchester)
February

It's difficult for some people to bare their heart, soul and feelings. The more you can provide them with that comfort zone and the more they can trust you, the more they will give you back in terms of performance.

– Bill Smith
producer (Barbra Streisand, Ray Charles)
January

Know when to talk and when not to. You're not the star. It's all about the artist.

– Howard Benson
producer (P.O.D., Three Day Grace)
June

Learn how to be a leader. You have to hone our leadership skills because artists depend on your direction.

– Bruce Waynne
producer (50 Cent, Frank Ocean, Common)
September

It is difficult to move forward in a disorganized environment—it becomes much easier if you apply the small amount of discipline necessary to manage your time properly.

– Josquin Des Res
producer, author, songwriter
July

Remember, there are always less expensive options made of the same or comparable materials.

– Eric Corne
producer-engineer (Lucinda Williams, Devotchka)
June

Don't party with the band. The minute you do, they won't respect you. Your job is to be the adult in the room.

– Howard Benson
producer (P.O.D, Three Days Grace)
June

Make sure the mastering options fit your production style, and get to know what other features a service offers. Aim for the best sound quality with the best options within your budget.

– Kristian Haapasalo
CloudBounce COO
October

CRAFT MATTERS

Listen to a lot of music. Love all genres. Don't fixate on one.

– Jett Galindo
mastering engineer (Green Day, La La Land)
October

Our videos purposely don't have concepts or real narratives, so that people can focus on what we do with our mouths. We want everything to be about our voices and how we capture the essence of melody, rhythm and harmony the way we do.

– Scott Hoying
Pentatonix
May

BE SUPPORTIVE

You have to provide [the artist] with a feeling of comfort, support and security so that they know you're there to help them in any way you can.

– Bill Smith *producer (Barbra Streisand, Ray Charles)*
January

Be open-minded. There's no single solution to any studio problem. I see a session as a series of challenges that have to be solved.

– David Andersen
engineer (Sound City, Slightly Stoopid)
March



When you rehearse properly, you become aware of the dynamics each person brings to the mix. You need to be sensitive to the artist you're supporting and know what they need from you. You need to be a team player.

– Cindy Mizelle
singer
August

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

You can't sell music, so what do you sell? You sell the relationship and the products that fit your audience. You create value.

– Scott Page
CEO of Ignited Network
February

Find your audience. Because the fans won't let you down.

– Carla Olson
The Textones
November

Kids between 9 and 13 are the ones who get excited about records and stars coming out. Music that gets on your nerves or what parents hate is usually a pretty good gauge on what's the next shit.

– George Clinton
May

When following a band on social media, I want it to feel like a personal experience. That's something we focus on a lot—just making sure that when we're existing in the [online] world, it's us. What you're seeing is real.

– Thirdstory
June

If you want total strangers to appreciate your music, play it live to see what works before you spend the time and money to record it.

– Larry Butler
live performance coach & author
August

When someone else promotes you—especially someone people know, like, and trust—suddenly, people are listening.

– David Reckles
digital marketer and co-founder of Music Money Formula
June

You may have an audience, but if you don't know how to manage that audience you can't convert that audience into paying customers.

– Scott Page
CEO of Ignited Network
February

When communicating with your fans on social media sites, utilize a uniform hashtag where all of the tribe members can easily search, find, and share content from one and other.

– Bobby Borg
author and recording artist
August



I don't have time for an album. I need your single. If you don't know what your single is, pick the song that your mama, and your girlfriend, and your brother, or your boyfriend gravitates to.

– Kat Corbett
KROQ Los Angeles host-programmer
October

TEAM EFFORT

It's important to mold your own team and make use of the resources you have to the depth of your ability—always show them your worth.

– Thirdstory
June

Find someone who is willing to go to any length to get you what you need and want. Find someone who believes in you 100%, because there's little or no money in the early stages.

– Alexandra Lee
WatchuWatchu Productions
July

Communication is the key. You have to be able to be honest and relate with each other.

– Chris Fletcher
Coast to Coast Music
Music Biz Mentors
July

In film composing, whatever you bring to the table has to integrate fully with the vision of the director, producers, all the other creative contributors. It's definitely a team sport.

– Ronit Kirchman
composer (The Sinner 2)
May

Managers are not magicians. Even if they work really hard, success may not happen if artists don't also do their part. It's a team effort, and there has to be some fairness in the relationship.

– Bobby Borg
author and recording artist
July

I try to research everything about the artist I'm going to work with. I try to find every version of their songs to see how they're different. That way I'm prepared for whatever comes."

– Cindy Mizelle
singer
August

BE AUTHENTIC, DON'T FOLLOW TRENDS

As long as you stay true to who you are, no matter what you deal with, you're going to be okay. Perseverance is the most important thing

– Matthew Howl
Moonfall
February

Don't be afraid to take risks. You're going to fall on your face occasionally. That's okay. The floor is a great place to get some perspective.

– Noah Gundersen
musician
January

Someone who chases trends might never be true to themselves. True artists evolve and, ideally, set trends.

– Tyler Bacon
Position Music
November

Authentic music will prevail. So, stay true to what moves you to create and tell that story. More than ever, there's an audience out there who wants to hear it.

– Alex Heiche
founder, Sound Royalties
May

Often now, with people seeing overnight success on Instagram, that has changed the perception of what it takes to make it. Be patient and make sure that your sound is unique. Be yourself, because it's the only way we'll be able to see you in a crowd.

– Eric Bellinger
producer-songwriter
May

Don't chase the sound of another composer. It's impossible. There won't be a better version of Thomas Newman; you can't be him. You'll always do what you do better.

– D. Brent Nelson
composer (Days of Our Lives)
August

What I look for in an artist is not one song and repeating that song over and over again. I like when a rapper will make a rap album, and then have a song with guitar and be singing on it.

– Billie Eilish
August

Use every platform available to present yourself as authentically as possible. You need to be driven and prepare yourself for a high-pressure situation.

– Storm Gardner
contestant, performance coach, casting producer
August

I'm looking for an artist that has something different. If you're just gonna get into a Chris Brown-ish sound or a SZA-ish type of sound, then I could just go get Chris Brown or SZA.

– Kenny Smoov
Program Director and On-Air Talent - 92Q Nashville
October

You can't model your career on anything that happened even five years ago. Things have changed and it's a new day. I understand how difficult that can be, but today artists have more control and more opportunities available.

– Ari Herstand
Ari's Take
July

PICK THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Do your research on the person and/or company you are thinking of entering into a contract with."

– Glenn Litwak
entertainment attorney
August

Passion is number one. Your manager should be your best friend who is willing to die for you. They should also have confidence, energy, be organized and have a great sales technique.

– Ari Herstand
Ari's Take
July

The marketplace has changed—it's not just about getting signed to a record deal anymore. It's about having a successful career, which is possible as an independent act.

– Alexandra Lee
WatchuWatchu Productions
July

Artists can do a lot for themselves nowadays, and achieve a lot of success. But, if they want to be a mainstream pop star they're going to need major support and radio airplay.

– Don Grierson
A&R executive
February

NEVER STOP LEARNING

Never stop learning. Even inspired amateurs can teach you something. The minute you think you know it all is the minute you can be sure you don't.

– Bill Smith
(Barbra Streisand, Ray Charles) producer
January

Keep yourself as open as possible to other people's opinions.

– Doug McKean
producer
September

You think you're good at what you do until you get around the pros. I had to learn really fast that I had a long way to go, so I started going to these writer's nights where all these professional writers would go and play their songs.

– Eric Church
October



Do not listen to your family, friends or fans. They're way too close to you to be objective about you, your music or your show.

– ***Larry Butler***
live performance music coach
July

PERSEVERE

Don't give up; just keep doing it, because the minute I nearly gave up it all came to fruition.

– Tom Walker
March

Perseverance. No matter how many times you're told 'No, there's not a job for you in this industry,' keep moving forward. There will always be blocks.

– Ruben Salas
producer (Guaco, Erika Ender)
August

You can't get too demoralized. It doesn't help you reach your goals. It's easy to beat yourself up if something doesn't go the way you planned. Take things with a grain of salt and learn from it. ... As cliché as it sounds, as one door closes another door opens.

– Garrett Weakley
Discrepancies
August

When I talk to a band about their goals and what they want to see happen, I try to make sure they have realistic expectations, especially if it's a smaller band.

– Chris Hansen
No Sleep Records
September

LEGAL ADVICE

In entering into a 360 deal the artist should make sure that he or she understands all of its ramifications and have skilled and experienced representation to negotiate it.

– Glenn Litwak
entertainment attorney
March

You've got to make sure you are credited… I don't handle my contracts anymore, but the ones at the beginning of my career I'm just like 'They could [have] literally put anything they wanted.' You've just got to assume the worst, and at the end of the day just putting it on paper doesn't make you a bad guy; it's protection for you and protection for them."

– Gareth Coker
video game composer
September

There are many ways to pay a music attorney other than paying by the hour up front. Determine the fee agreement that you are comfortable with and carefully choose your music attorney.

– Glenn Litwak
music attorney
January

I encourage every songwriter to be in touch with their PRO [performing rights organizations]. Find someone there who's a fan and can advocate for you.

– Casey Robison
Big Deal Music Publishing
November



ERIC CHURCH

REHEARSE SMART

If you're not paying attention to the visual aspects of your performance, it's not a rehearsal—it's practice. Sometimes artists forget that people are watching them. It's not about simply playing live, it's about putting on an entertaining show."

– Larry Butler
Live Performance Coach & Author
August

If you've rehearsed enough, you're able to read the audience. That's important in a live show and will make you a better performer.

– Stevvi Alexander
singer (Justin Timberlake)
August



STEVVI ALEXANDER

If there's no plan or organization, it wastes a lot of time. You need to know what you want to do. If people bring problems or disputes into rehearsal it can affect everyone."

– Briana Lee
singer (Katy Perry, Elvis Costello)
August

You have to practice before you rehearse for tours, because you need discipline when you're on the road. It can be tough, but it's also very rewarding. There's nothing like performing in front of thousands of people.

– Stevvi Alexander
singer (Britney Spears)
August

Sometimes magic happens. Most often that occurs because of rehearsal and experience. Everything clicks and works together. But, that only happens after you've rehearsed enough and are aware enough to recognize it.

– Larry Butler
live performance coach & author
August

If you're totally prepared and have everything down perfectly, you can try different things. But, not before the show is planned out and ready to go.

– Stacy Jones
musical director, producer, drummer
August

If it's a big performance, choreography is important. It's not so much the moves you do, but where you need to be on stage. You have to be in certain places at certain times. You have to remember that a live performance is visual and you don't want to appear lost on stage.

– Stevvi Alexander
singer (Justin Timberlake, Britney Spears)
August

COLLABORATIONS ARE VITAL

My advice to all writers is to collaborate. Get into songwriting circles. Your name will start to bubble up if you're good and people will find you.

– Richard Stumpf
Atlas Music Publishing
November

It really helps when you have another songwriter in the room. You're both trying to please each other and trying to work together to create something.

– Sam Harris
X Ambassadors
February

I'm looking for someone who can bring something out of me and not oppose my style with their vision. Everything's got to be a collaboration or it's not gonna be unique.

– Jade Bird
May

When you're in the studio with the artists, skills, ego, everything has to be set aside. What matters is how you can relate. The studio is very intimate and you need to establish a relationship. It's all about energy transmission, which is key to the recording's success.

– Ruben Salas
producer (Guaco, Erika Ender)
August

Even if there are moments of doubt or frustration, you just have to remember that it started from a really good, honest, collaborative

place and that's where it's going to end up.

– Winifred Phillips
video game composer
September

Successful composers are pure collaborators. They leave their egos at the door, every time.

– Steve Schnur
Worldwide Executive and President of Music at Electronic Arts (Madden NFL, Dead Space)
May

LESSONS BEFORE SIGNING

Be cautious about what you sign. Don't go for the first bite that comes your way. Usually they'll lowball you out of your excitement and desire to do music for a living. I've seen so many friends get in bad contracts and it ruins their career or they have to suffer through a few years of a bad deal.

– Landon Tewers
The Plot In You
February

People don't hear with their eyes. Don't let advertisers fool you into thinking that you need X, Y and Z [gear] to be successful.

– Eric Bass
Shinedown
July

You just have to be realistic in what you expect. Even if they're really nice guys, you're in charge of keeping the music true to itself. They can't do that for you. You have to negotiate so that you have the conditions to actually create that [environment].

– Matthew Howl
Moonfall
February

Don't worry about which label has the most money, which label has the most credibility, just find passionate people because those are the people who are going to propel your career forward.

– Josh Katz
Badflower
November

Do your research on who you are dealing with. You can have a great contract, but if it is with a dishonest person or company, they could very well breach it.

– Glenn Litwak
entertainment attorney
May

It's easy to get excited about signing with a label, but diving into things blindly is rarely the best route.

– Adam Greuel
Horseshoes & Hand Grenades
May

Everyone has the perception that the minute you land in Los Angeles you will get signed and someone will discover you as you are coming off the plane.

– Bishop Briggs
June

Deciding on a label involves a lot of people, and there are a lot of conversations that need to be had. It's not an easy decision.

– Ben Schneider
Lord Huron
July

Watch out for big talkers who promise you the world—even if they have a big office with records on the walls. You want someone who's going to be in it for the long haul, who's going to stick it out with you, even during the tough times.

– Bobby Borg
author and recording artist
July



MOONFALL



BISHOP BRIGGS

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

We're told we're not good enough. We're told we have to do these 9 to 5 jobs. We're told to not aim higher and not take risks. But I don't believe that. I believe in taking risks. I believe we can think beyond.

– Shelita Burke
March

Be honest with the music and yourself. Give both the chance to fail. Try different things without worrying about how people will judge it."

– Doug McKean
producer
September

You have to identify your slingshot. I've had my ups and downs but I discovered what my slingshot is. Once you've figured that out, all of a sudden you don't feel like an underdog. Life doesn't feel so intimidating anymore because you know what you can defeat.

– Dee-1
March

You will have many detractors who will tell you that it's a waste of time and energy. Thank them for their advice and ignore them! You have an internal spiritual voice that will guide you if you only listen.

– Peter Manning Robinson
composer, pianist
February

Learn your craft, be professional, be tech savvy, be on time, be bold, be confident, be an amazing composer and never ever allow anyone to take away your power.

– Lolita Ritmanis
composer (The X Files, Swimfan, Avengers Assemble)
March

Women should just remember: you're not alone. If you have a strong creative contribution, there will be people who want to hear that.

– Ronit Kirchman
composer (The Sinner 2)
May

I had labels and management and publishing telling me to stick with a genre. I never listened, and it's helped so much because I write in so many different genres, and they fit so many types of projects.

– Kari Kimmel
composer-songwriter (The Walking Dead, The Office)
July

It's funny how quickly you can fluctuate between self-confidence and that feeling of not being too sure. I try to think that maybe it's good to be a little bit unsure.

– Vance Joy
December 2017

Advice that people give you might have worked for them, but it doesn't mean that it's going to work for you. You are the only person who is going to make you be what you want to be. Give yourself some advice and just follow that.

– Billie Eilish
August

MC

Dave Pensado on
Putting the "Fab" in Fab Factory

Two years ago Grammy-winning mix maestro Dave Pensado partnered with engineer and entrepreneur Shaun Fabos to launch what they consider to be the finest studio in existence. Their aim was to make it a place that was designed around artists rather than consoles. The result is the ever-evolving Fab Factory, a state-of-the-art, 15,000-square-foot studio complex in North Hollywood, CA. Virtually everything about the space is custom: bespoke couches, Venetian plaster and original artwork.

Certainly there's no shortage of studios in the Los Angeles area. What sets Fab Factory apart, however, is not only the vibe but also its architectural philosophy. "The current methods of building studios almost never take the client into consideration," Pensado observes. "They're more concerned with fitting-in an 80-channel console so the design is predicated on wedging that console into the room. Fab Factory is designed around the engineer and the client first. Everything else is accommodated in that design. For example, the room that I lease is designed to put me in it, not some console. It's the first room I've been in where I don't have to stand in the corner to hear thirty cycles. The multi-million-dollar studios are still viable, but this is a new take on what the future should be.

"Sixty to eighty percent of all the music that's listened to is hip-hop," he continues. "It's a non-console, laptop-type music. The cool thing about Fab Factory is that you can get both worlds here. We tend to focus on the modern world and that can come out sterile at other places. Here it's the most unique studio I've ever worked in. To be clear, though, Shaun did all of the work. He did the heavy lifting and had all of the vision. I kind of tortured him with my opinions for the first few months. He always accommodated what I wanted to do."

Fab Factory was inspired in large part by the limitations both Pensado and Fabos had experienced at other studios. "I wanted to build something different that I saw was needed, bring it to a larger client-base but still deliver an incredible vibe," Fabos says. "That's what we've accomplished here. It's like an upgrade to what I saw the old was and what the new generation needs and wants."

"A lot of times you walk into a major studio and your shoulders stoop and you feel like you're in a library," Pensado adds. "Fab Factory is a non-intimidating space. When people record vocals here, they're relaxed. Traditional studios are a bit stiff. My hat's off to Shaun because he worked hard to accomplish that. Everybody communicates with everybody. I like that I can walk down the hall and borrow a cup of audio sugar. In a time when we're doing new music, we need new tools. If the studio is a creative tool, this certainly is one."

In line with that thinking, plans are afoot to include a sealed-dirt floor in one of the rooms, much like what was done at the height of Motown's heyday. "It's sealed dirt so when you leave, you won't have earth on your shoes or your gear," Fabos explains. "There's a way to compact dirt and seal it."

When the idea for the studio was conceived, specific goals were set. Fabos remains focused on those as he continues to expand and enhance Fab Factory. "We haven't differed [from our goals] other than [to] bring new concepts that we think people will love," he says. "For example, we came up with the idea to install the front-half of a car that people can sit in. Every room will be enabled to send their mix to it so that clients can hear it in the car." The car-listening environment will be implemented as part of Fab Factory's next expansion.

Pensado is a highly sought, Grammy-winning mix engineer and hosts *Pensado's Place*, his regular online show. He considers Fab Factory's setup vital to his workflow. "It's everything," he asserts. "The way this facility was constructed started as an empty space. The monitoring in my room is essentially flat: twenty to twenty K. I use both Augspurger and Amphion monitors. When one of them doesn't communicate to you in a language you speak––most engineers speak a language called "flat"—it's tiring. If you're in a room that's poorly tuned, you have to interpret. But at Fab Factory, what you hear is what you get.

"One of the things which I'm most proud of here is the accommodation for publishing companies," he adds. "We get some incredible vocals out of singers. Part of the bread and butter elements of the complex are that it's friendly for visiting engineers. And it provides an incredible opportunity for publishers to record vocals and do demos. We've done writing camps with some of the biggest artists in the world and they've turned out great. It's a creative, versatile space. Executives are very comfortable and [Japanese singer and producer] Joji cut his whole album here. This is a place for people to get their batteries recharged."

One of Fabos' standout experiences with Fab Factory was when he stepped into the finished space for the first time. "The day I came in and remembered what the feeling of planning and envisioning [was like], it came back to me." Pensado recalls a powerful session with will.i.am. "When I walked out, I couldn't hear," he jokes. "And my speakers didn't blow up."

In January, the pair aims to expand Fab Factory to add a further six rooms to their 30,000-square-foot lot. "One thing we'll have that a lot of studios don't is ample parking," Fabos quips. "We'll have a live room, green screens, fountains and gardens. We're trying to bring together a place where people can collaborate. That was one of the ideas Dave and I came up with. We want to bring back how it used to be in the studios. People can run into someone and the next thing you know they're working on a project together."

Visit fabfactorystudio.com







"The multi-million dollar studios are still viable, but this is a new take on what the future should be. ... Fab Factory is a non-intimidating space. ... When people record vocals here, they're relaxed." – Dave Pensado

TOP 25 NEW MUS

IN EVERY ISSUE OF *MUSIC CONNECTION* you'll find our reviews of unsigned recording artists. Below are the highest scoring artists and bands we heard in all of 2018—as well as an additional page of Top Prospects who are just too talented to overlook. *MC* welcomes all unsigned recording artists to sign up for a free review at musicconnection.com/reviews/new-music-critiques.



FATE UNDER FIRE - 8.8

Contact: fateunderfire@gmail.com
Web: fufmusic.com

Fans of Dreamers and Coin will warm to this synth-driven quartet, whose "La La Love" might be the catchiest pop confection we've heard in a while. Danceable, sensual and rendered with a superlative mix that puts singer David James' voice right out front and clear as a bell, the song is absolutely radio ready. The sweet, romantic "River" and the airy, lighter-sounding "Parachute," with its finger-snapping cadence, are maybe less catchy, but no less polished. The latter has an especially visual lyric motif that would surely inspire a dynamic video treatment. All in all, Fate Under Fire's sound is ultra-current and has been presented with a confidence that should impress labels to come calling.



ANNA SNOW - 8.4

Contact: snow.c.anna@gmail.com
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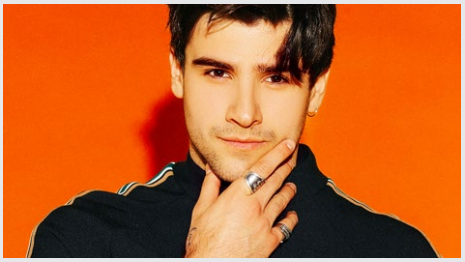
JFLO - 8.2

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SIMIO JAZZ TRIO - 8.7

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MATT LEGRAND - 8.4

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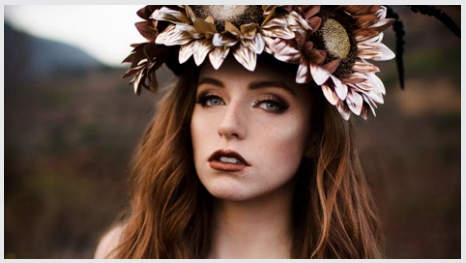
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GIC CRITIQUES OF 2·0·1·8



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RAI – 8.0
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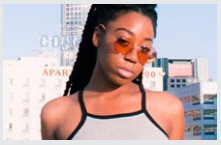


131ERS – 8.0
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BAND OF LIARS – 8.0
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TOP PROSPECTS 2·0·1·8



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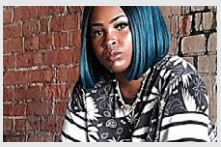
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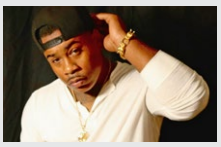
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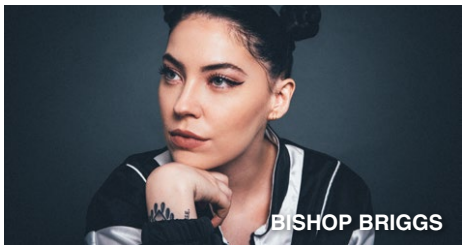


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OUR FAVORITE SIGNING STORIES OF 2018

Despite unprecedented DIY methods of forging a successful music career, there's still no shortage of artists and bands looking to get signed to a label. Likewise, there is no shortage of *MC* readers thirsting for insights into exactly how signings occur and what artists can do to make one happen. Of all the Signing Stories we published this year (approximately 50 in all) here are the 10 that truly stand out—not always due to the artists' subsequent commercial success, but because of the important lessons that their stories convey about perseverance, work ethic, networking smarts and good timing.



BISHOP BRIGGS

Date Signed: 2017
Label: Island Records
Type of Music: Alternative
Management: Kate McLaughlin
Booking: Mike Marquis - Paradigm Agency
Legal: Jodie Shihadeh - The Davis Firm
Publicity: nadia@nadiaalipr.com, lauren.schneider@umusic.com
Web: bishopbriggs.com
A&R: Jackie Winkler - Island Records

Thinking of going to Hollywood to become a star? Musicians often dream of being discovered there through gigs and showcases. That dream eventually became a reality for British singer-songwriter Sarah Grace McLaughlin, best known by her stage name Bishop Briggs. After growing up in Japan and falling in love with karaoke bars, the singer moved to LA to pursue a career in music.

"I think everyone has the perception that the minute you land in Los Angeles you will get signed and someone will discover you as you're coming off the plane." Briggs recalls.

That was not the case for the songstress. Briggs attended Musicians Institute in the heart of Hollywood and she focused on performing after graduating with an Associate's Degree in vocal performance. "I tried to write as much as I could, I played shows every couple of nights, wherever I could and wherever I was let in."

By chance, she was invited by a friend to perform at a songwriters roundtable where she caught the attention of former A&R representative George Robertson. "George was actually there to see a different artist and luckily he came up to me afterwards," she says. "He introduced me to two producers and within a month "Wild Horses" was written and got a placement in an Acura commercial for the Super Bowl."

The song entered the top 30 on the Billboard Alternative Songs chart and top 13 on the Billboard Twitter Emerging Artist charts. That was when Briggs signed with Island Records.

"It seemed as though they are truly passionate about the artists they work with," she says. "They are so committed and seem to have a true passionate relationship with all of their artists, so that was a sign that I felt was undeniable about them."

Through Island, Briggs released her debut album *Church of Scars* on April 20—a project that was two and a half years in the making.

CHUCK ADAMS

Date Signed: January 2015
Label: 300 Entertainment
Type of Music: R&B
Management: Dirk Hemsath, dirk@workinggroup-mgmt.com
Booking: Bruce Solar, bsolar@apa-agency.com
Legal: N/A
Publicity: Michael.Moses@bwr-pr.com
Web: imchuckadams.com
A&R: Pete Giberga - 300 Entertainment

There are no guarantees of success once you've signed your label deal. In fact, most signed artists do not succeed; many are dropped from the label. And having fallen short, a few are too shaken to regroup and give it another try. But some, like Chuck Adams, find it within themselves to reboot, restore and revive.

Adams thought he'd made it after penning a hit Ludacris song in 2008. The attention got him signed to Jay-Z's Roc Nation. By 2011, he was rubbing shoulders with Ne-Yo, Beyonce and Rihanna.

Then he got dropped. "I was just hurt," admits the rapper, formerly known as Range. "I took it personally, because these are people I was hugging every day." So hurt was Adams that he didn't even allow the label to explain its reasoning for letting him go.

Instead, he moved from New York to Nashville and reinvented himself. The dark R&B that



came out was nothing like his previous sound. Counter-intuitively, it's getting dropped, he says, that turned him into a true artist.

A friend introduced his music to another friend, who in turn took it to 300 Entertainment. The independent label's head of A&R, Pete Giberga, witnessed his performance at local venue The Basement and expressed interest. The deal became official in 2015.

As someone who'd stopped seeking a label, Adams acknowledges there's no single path to finding a partner. Getting signed remains a personal journey. "Just roll the dice," he instructs, "because you never know."

BADFLOWER

Date Signed: N/A
Label: Big Machine Records / John Varvatos Records
Type of Music: Rock
Management: Jesse Beer, The MGMT Company
Booking: Andrew Buck, APA
Legal: Doug Mark
Publicity: luke@bbgunpr.com, collin@bbgunpr.com
Web: BadflowerMusic.com
A&R: Julian Raymond

Rock quartet Badflower first graced the pages of *Music Connection* in 2014 when they scored a deal with the indie label Hundred Handed. Fast-forward four years later and the band signed with Big Machine Label Group and John Varvatos Records.

In fact, Badflower was the first artist to ink with the label under the partnership between Big Machine Label Group honcho Scott Borchetta and fashion designer John Varvatos.

Badflower has had an interesting relationship with Varvatos. While the band was still with an indie label and relatively unknown, Varvatos featured a Badflower song in one of his fashion shows during New York Fashion Week.

"When we saw that happen we discovered that he was starting his own record label,"



says frontman Josh Katz about Varvatos' other endeavors. Eventually Badflower showcased for Varvatos, got along really well and signed a deal with his Republic Records-associated imprint. When Varvatos left Republic for Big Machine, it became a no-brainer to come along for the ride.

"It made sense. 'Let's go follow John,' because he's been the champion for our band this whole time," Katz says.

The signing was entirely painless and has so far paid off. The first single under the new label, "Ghost," claimed the #1 spot on the Active Rock Radio Mediabase Chart. In 2019, they'll be joining Nothing More's The Truth Tour and will release an album, *OK, I'm Sick*, in Feb. 2019.

When asked what helped the band the most during the signing, Katz says, "Find the most passionate staff. Don't worry about which label has the most money, which label has the most credibility, just find passionate people, because those are the people who are going to propel your career forward."

DEE-1

Date Signed: October 2014
Label: RCA Inspiration
Band Members: Dee-1
Type of Music: Hip-hop
Management: Marlin Hollins
Booking: Marlin Hollins
Legal: Marlin Hollins
Publicity: Tasha Stoute, Strong Arm Media
Web: dee1music.com
A&R: Jeremy Castro

OUR FAVORITE SIGNING STORIES 2•0•1•8

New Orleans-based Dee-1 started rapping in high school and upped his game when he left school in 2008, but it was in 2010 that he really started taking it seriously and figured out that he just might be able to forge a career. He's been remarkably prolific, putting out 11 mixtapes and one independently released album since then, but his record deal with major label RCA has taken him to another level entirely.


DEE-1

"It's cool that I established my own lane—that's the exciting part. I'm not worried about trying to ride on the coattails of what's hot at the moment. I just try to my own thing, and it's proving to be the best route to take."

Dee says that his deal with RCA came about simply because of his own hustling—he was attracting so much attention by making so much noise that a number of labels were interested in signing him, all of whom he met with, and he was able to pick the one that he felt most comfortable with.

"The meeting with RCA felt the best in terms of the energy and the ability for me to actually be in control of my destiny creatively, and that's what I wanted," he says. "I just want a larger platform than what I can provide for myself. That's why I partnered with them."

That partnership began with Slingshot David (The Album), a record of which Dee says he fought with everything in him to ensure that no part of the artistic vision was compromised. It's a concept album, taking the parable of David defeating Goliath with a slingshot and applying that to real-life struggles and obstacles.

"Your Goliath can be anything from poverty, to racism and discrimination to community violence to depression, anxiety and things of this nature," Dee says. "You have to identify your slingshot. I've had my ups and downs but I discovered what my slingshot is. Once you've figured that out, all of a sudden you don't feel like an underdog. Life doesn't feel so intimidating anymore, because you know what you can defeat Goliath with."

THE CUCKOOS

Date Signed: October 2017
Label: Republic of Music
Band Members: Kenneth Frost, lead vocals, keyboards; Dave North, guitar, backing vocals; Eric Ross, bass; Cole Koenning, drums
Type of Music: Psychedelic Rock/Rock
Management: Maria Hoppe - One Step Management, mashahoppe@icloud.com
Booking: Kenneth Frost, thecuckoosaustin@gmail.com
Legal: mike@miketolleson.com
Publicity: hayley@bigpicturemediaonline.com
Web: thecuckoosaustin.com
A&R: N/A


THE CUCKOOS

Having someone who will advocate for you—persistently but politely hound the industry's gate-keepers to check out your music—is so important. In our Signing Story on English band The Cuckoos, we learned once again about the importance of a persistent manager. Mark McQuillan, Republic of Music's managing director attended a summer concert by The Cuckoos only because the band's manager, Maria Hoppe, suggested the distributor check out the fledgling group.

The unsigned psych rockers had only been together for three years, yet they'd garnered kudos from outlets like Relix and Classic Rock Magazine. Given their manager's recommendation of Republic of Music, the decision to work with the record distribution company was easy. "We looked at some of the artists on their roster and others who've worked with them in the past," says lead singer Kenneth Frost. "And it's important that they're based out of the UK It's important to reach people here in the US, but doing a distribution deal got things going in other parts of the world." Once the contract was in motion, they let Hoppe handle the details.

Frost's advice for artists emphasizes finding balance between music and commerce. "The creativity part is the most important, of course," he opines, "but you can't forget about the business side of things. You've got to get up in the morning and sell yourself to people every day."

SUR

Date Signed: July 2017
Label: Interscope Records
Type of Music: Alt-Rock
Management: Dyana.Kass@Novateurent.com


SUR

Booking: Brandon Zmigrocki - ICM, BZ@icmpartners.com
Legal: helenyu@hyulaw.com
Publicity: christine.wolff@umusic.com
Web: Surofficial.com
A&R: Tony Seyler - Interscope, anthony.seyler@umusic.com

Ever wonder whether a change of location will rejuvenate you as a music-maker? For the artist now known as SUR (multi-instrumentalist/producer Zack Arnett) getting outta town proved to be just what he needed to fully unleash the next phase of his creativity, music he calls "native electric." He created this music on a nomadic journey through some of California's wildest spaces. Frustrated by the confines of Los Angeles, the Northern California-bred artist built a makeshift studio in back of a friend's RV and set out on a two-month journey.

Arnett has previously been toiling to make a living doing music for the past 10 years. After finding some success as an indie artist with the hip-hop group Ostrich Head, he spearheaded the alt/indie band Fire in the Hamptons for five years, releasing the album *F.I.T.H* in 2012.

Arnett's girlfriend Gara Gambucci, a top stylist whose clients have included Madonna, sent his music to her friend Dyana Kass, who then worked in marketing at Interscope. Kass loved the band's live show, and when she left


PANDA$

Interscope to form Novateur Entertainment, she became Arnett's band's manager. She maintained her full support for Arnett even when the band split a short time later.

When he emerged from his RV trip with fresh new music, Kass shared some of that and his Fire in the Hamptons songs with her former colleague at Interscope, Tony Seyler, the VP of Film & TV Marketing. "Angel Bones," as Arnett calls Seyler, liked the material and helped him hook up a deal with Pulse Music Publishing. Seyler then asked the artist to give him a full recording of songs like "Lean Back" and "Make It Till Morning." Arnett signed with Interscope as SUR after he had completed the full EP of Savage Beast, his label debut.

"Tony saw in me what I didn't see," Arnett says, "an artist who could be touring all over the world. Dyana was always championing me, but I needed that second voice to go full force. I think it's great to start a career as a DIY artist, but once you've been on your own a long time, you realize the value of having a solid team behind you, with a great vision for what this could become."

PANDA$

Date Signed: Fall 2017
Label: Virgin Records
Band Members: Manny and Landa
Type of Music: Rhythmic Pop
Management: J. Hill - jhillmp3@gmail.com
Booking: N/A
Legal: Damien Granderson, dgranderson@davisshapiro.com
Publicity: christina.santamaria@umusic.com
Web: pandasmusic.com
A&R: David Wolter

We at *Music Connection* love it when music creators realize the benefits of making music just for the fun of it, with absolutely no strings, deadlines or obligations attached.

That's what struck us about the Signing Story of this rhythmic pop duo PANDA$, formed in New York in 2016 when longtime friends Manny and Landa witnessed the wisdom of collaboration. Manny came to the partnership as an industry veteran, a fulfilled Warner deal already to his name while Landa brought production credits. The pair worked casually yet highly focused as they brainstormed over the past 18


THIRDSTORY

months in pursuit of nothing more than authentic expression, artistic gratification.

"About a year and a half ago, I got out of my deal with Warner," Manny recalls. "Me and my homeboy [Landa] started to record music just for fun. It was literally about what we were feeling right then. No censorship, no anything. We just wanted to get in a room and write music that we loved. That's all we did, 12 hours a day."

A number of songs resulted, not the least of which was the single "PARI$," which features Toronto rapper Jute$. "Some friends came by, listened to our music and said, 'Yo, this is dope,'" Manny continues. Fortunately, those friends had connections and the relationship soon morphed into one of manager-client. "They showed [our music] to some labels and two weeks later we were in the offices of Capitol/Virgin. It's quite hilarious because in my last deal, I tried so long to make it happen. It didn't. In this one, we didn't try at all. We just kept it real and ended up in this great situation."

THIRDSTORY

Date Signed: 2014
Label: Verve Forecast
Band Members: Ben Lusher, Richard Saunders, Elliot Skinner
Type of Music: Pop/R&B/Soul
Management: Marc Johnston
Booking: CAA
Legal: Ted Harris - Grubman Shire Meiselas & Sacks, P.C
Publicity: Samantha.Sklar@umusic.com
Web: wearethirdstory.com
A&R: Karen Kwak; Dahlia Ambach-Caplin

Talking with the members of Thirdstory, we learned the importance of truly engaging with fans over time. And their label gave the YouTube cover-songs stars quite a bit of time to develop before releasing their first album of original material.

"We've come of age as a band in an era when the music industry is rapidly changing," explains singer-songwriter Ben Lusher. "It was really great finally getting the chance to dive in and figure out our sound without any restrictions, having full access to different musicians and connections outside of our own community."

"The first time working with Malay was almost a magical experience for us," adds Richard Saunders. "It's important to try molding your own team and making use of the resources you have to the depth of your ability—always show them your worth."

Released in March, *Cold Heart* is Thirdstory's first full-length album embracing a harmonious collection of original melodies and smoldering lyricism. Now it is up to their loyal grassroots following, mostly just familiar with Thirdstory's popular YouTube acoustic covers, to go along for the ride. And the guys are happy to oblige.

"When following a band on social media, I want it to feel like a personal experience," says fellow singer-songwriter Elliot Skinner. "That's something we focus on a lot—just making sure that when we're existing in the [online] world, it's us. What you're seeing is real."

Lusher would agree, and carries that same mentality onstage:

"Figuring out different moments and dynamics of a show has to do with range, and that leaves a lot of room for experimenting. We always want to make our shows a great emotional experience. We love those moments of crowd participation—it's really moving and fun for us, which translates to the audience."

DISCREPANCIES

Date Signed: January 2018
Band Members: ATG Metcalf, vocals; Garrett Weakley, bass; Addison Bracher, guitar; Phatbeatz Steve, drums
Label: InVogue Records
Type Of Music: Rap/Rock, NuMetal
Management: 3 Years Inc.
Booking: Discrepanciesband@gmail.com
Legal: Wofford Denius
Publicity: Mike Cubillos, mike@earshotmedia.com
Web: Discrepanciesmusic.com
A&R: N/A

St. Louis rap-rock quartet Discrepancies weren't even looking to be signed, but through their own sweat and smart self-promotion, the band's music hit the right ears at the right time, via a workout playlist.

Explains bassist Garrett Weakley, "Our basic plan for 2017 was to figure out how many shows we could do out of town and manage to make a profit. [Then] Pricella at InVogue found us on Spotify."

The band had sent their single to several streaming curators as well as Facebook tastemakers, asking them to promote the music to an audience who may need something to listen to in the gym. "We basically had been reaching out to a lot of people asking them to put us on their curated Spotify playlists," continues Weakley. "Pricella sent our stuff over to Nick Moore, president of InVogue, who ended up inviting us to Ohio for a sit-down." The band drove from St. Louis to Ohio on a Tuesday to sign on the dotted line.

When asked about his band's path and any advice he'd offer fellow struggling artist-musicians, Weakley focused on positivity. "You can't get too demoralized. It doesn't help you reach your goals. It's easy to beat yourself up if something doesn't go the way you planned. Take things with a grain of salt and learn from it. … As cliche as it sounds, as one door closes another door opens. If Spotify hadn't


DISCREPANCIES

worked out for us, there are so many platforms out there that your music can be streamed [on]. You can see how well rappers are doing on SoundCloud."

Discrepancies' InVogue debut, *The Awakening*, dropped March 23 and, by no mistake, is available to stream on Spotify.

THE PO' RAMBLIN' BOYS

Date Signed: April 30, 2018
Label: Rounder Records
Type of Music: Bluegrass
Band Members: C.J. Lewandowski, vocals, mandolin; Jerome Brown, banjo, vocals; Josh Rinkel, guitar, vocals; Jasper Lorentzen, bass
Management: mike@rainmakermanagement.net
Booking: Barron Ruth, barron@crossovertouring.com
Legal: George Clark Shifflett III, Gshifflett3@shiflettlegal.com
Publicity: Katie Keller, Katie@thepresshouse.com
Web: theporamblinboys.com
A&R: Ken Irwin - Rounder Records

And, last but not least, here's a band whose Signing Story wisdom is basically "make great music, enjoy yourself while doing it, and everything will basically take care of itself."

It's also a good idea to put yourself in front of the right people.

For bluegrass bands, there's no better place to be seen than the International Bluegrass Music Association Awards. When The Po' Ramblin' Boys got nominated for a Momentum Award, everyone who could accelerate their career saw them. The morning of last year's ceremony, a 20-minute spot in front of 500 of the genre's biggest movers included Rounder Records co-founder Ken Irwin. "I remember seeing him and it scared the daylights out of me," recalls lead singer and mandolin strummer C.J. Lewandowski.

Irwin tracked him down during the awards ceremony itself and expressed his desire to sign the band. Despite Rounder's interest, the group was mulling over two other offers. Still, Irwin and fellow label creator Marian Leighton-Levy knelt with them in their hotel's hallway and negotiated a prospective agreement. Months later, however, the band came close to inking with a different label, but had doubts. They abstained and, two days after witnessing their performance at Boston's Joe Val Festival, Irwin made an official offer via conference call.

"Rounder was the only way to go," reflects Lewandowski, noting the label's storied history with bluegrass. They also knew Rounder could aid them in reaching the widest possible audience. Extracting themselves from their RandM Records arrangement proved no obstacle; CEO Paul Cavanaugh insisted they deserved a home better versed in bluegrass, even declaring they needn't sign a release.


THE PO' RAMBLIN' BOYS

Around this time, they also hooked up with Mike Drudge of Rainmaker Management and Barron Ruth of Crossover Touring. Lewandowski insists these opportunities came not as a result of searching but, rather, hard work combined with a relentless focus on their music. "You can't push that kind of stuff," he muses. "There's a natural process to life. And if you let that natural flow go, everything's going to happen better than you can even plan.

COMPILED BY MC SENIOR EDITOR
MARK NARDONE

Willapa

Willapa

Cave Hollywood Records

Producer: David Kessel

8



Self-described as "Pacific Northwest Rock 'n' Roll," the Bellingham, WA-based trio does, indeed, reflect a sort of raw and natural openness that is a product of said environment. Guitarist-vocalist Chad DeRoux has a haunting resonance that recalls Layne Staley or a burgeoning Eddie Vedder. The rhythm section of David Kessel and Russell Bogle Dingus allows all 11 songs to breathe and follow various exploratory paths. "You Need Love" is a blues-based rocker followed by "Three Twenty Four" adding Kessel's hypnotic harmonica. "Way Out (And Beyond)" delivers the urgency of surf rockers in the vein of The Ventures or Los Straightjackets. ***– Eric A. Harabadian***

mmhmm

mmhmm

Red Distribution

Producer: Brad Jones

7



Hannah Fairlight and Raelyn Nelson are the irrepressible duo known as mmhmm (yes, all lower case!). It certainly is a curious, albeit fun name to emphasize and say. And it is that goofy and amusing spirit that stems from the group's collective personality and approach to music. The duo's harmonies and rich and right on and infuse a hefty amount of humor and drive to infectious singles such as "Aw Hell" and "Let's Get Together" to love songs like "Coy Boy" and "Blue Eyes." "Mama's Little Yella Pills" is sort of a take on The Stones' "Mother's Little Helper" and they even include an uptempo bluegrass-fueled cover of REO's "Take it on the Run." ***– Eric A. Harabadian***

Hearts of Oak

Moves

Deer Lodge Records

Producer: Ezra Meredith & Barry Walker, Jr.

7



Given the cookie cutter nature of our contemporary country scene, Hearts of Oak represents a welcome paradigm shift. Lacquering their core focus on Americana songcraft with drippy guitars and psychotropic overtones, the stylistic makeover mostly works, especially on sprawling opus "California." Yet while Nate Wallace's pinched, barrel-aged vocals sweetly convey rural sentimentality, the Portland established outfit's experiment in genre bending, while eminently captivating, obscures the dreamy nostalgia lurking deep within their yarns, lowering emotional resonance into a secondary consideration. ***– Andy Kaufmann***

Jon Spencer

Spencer Sings the Hits

In the Red Records

Producer: Bill Skibbe

8



Garage rock/punk/blues godfather and innovator Spencer takes a sabbatical from his trio Blues Explosion to venture out on this solo debut. Recording in Michigan at Key Club Recording Company, Spencer retains his street cred for delivering visceral and immediate sounding rock. The grooves are solid, with the assistance of keyboardist Sam Coomes and studio drummer M. Sord. Spencer's underground cool and lo-fi guitars are defined by tunes like "I Got the Hits" and "Do the Trash Can." The former features a declarative hook that connects with the heart and feet, while the latter recalls backing to a "Something Weird" video. ***– Eric A. Harabadian***

Richard Lloyd

The Countdown

Plowboy Records

Producer: Richard Lloyd and Ben Ewing

8



When your recorded debut was playing guitar on one of modern rock's most influential albums (Television's *Marquee Moon*), then you've set a pretty high bar for yourself. Lloyd in his solo career has always favored the traditional verse-chorus pop song format, but let's just politely say that he ain't no Shakespeare lyrically, although, interestingly enough, he does reprise a line about 'the smell of water' from 'Marquee Moon' here. But his guitar approach is impeccable, hitting riffs and tones worthy of Hendrix and Keith Richards. ***– David Arnson***

Mick Kolassa and the Taylor Made Blues Band

149 Delta Ave.

Endless Blues Records

Producer: Michael Freeman

9



Memphis-based Mick Kolassa is back with his unique perspective and a voice that is slightly gruff and filled with character. And, while Kolassa is an excellent guitarist, he concentrates on his vocals, leaving guitar duties to David Dunavent and guests like Toronzo Cannon. This is a smorgasbord of blues treats; from the confessional "US12 to Highway 49," to the horn-induced R&B "35 Miles to Empty." Kolassa also has a clever edge, as on the witty backdoor man turn around, "Alternative Man," or the socially conscious "American Intervention." ***– Eric A. Harabadian***

T.I.

Dime Trap

Grand Hustle/Epic

Producer: Various

8



Dime Trap is T.I.'s 10th studio album and with such a fitting title, 15 songs makes it come off a bit lengthy. While tracks like "Laugh At Em," "Wraith," "The Weekend," "Jefe," "Light Day" and "Be There" truly gleam, others appear to be satisfactory fillers. All in all, T.I. is established, experienced and comes off as something of a war general still willing to get his hands muddy. *Dime Trap* is a noteworthy record and good for his repertoire. He's a young hip-hop heavyweight with honors and only time will tell how much further he will excel. ***– Adam Seyum***

Little Mix

LM5

RCA UK and Columbia Records

Producer: Various

7



British girl group Little Mix preach female empowerment, equality and self-love on their fifth album, *LM5*. Ballad "Told You So" discusses the importance of being there for your friends through tough breakups, while "Joan of Arc" teaches the value of self love, and "Strip" is an anthem for woman of all shapes and sizes. The real strength of the album is apparent when the girls harmonize and showcase their powerful vocals on singles like "More Than Words" and "The Cure." Although most of the bubble-gum pop tracks are filled with cliches and lack cohesiveness, the group manage to deliver powerful anthems that are worth a listen. ***– Jacqueline Naranjo***

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



DOWN NORTH

The Viper Room *West Hollywood, CA*

Contact: sammy@wolfsonent.com
Web: downnorthband.com
The Players: Anthony Briscoe, vocals; Brandon Storms, bass; Nick Quiller, guitar; Conrad Real, drums

Material: Down North is a jam band at its core, due mainly to their expansive instrumental breaks. The passion and enthusiasm is apparent in each song, but the melodic content could be improved. Briscoe is a talented vocalist and it is a shame to not see more of that melodic power, especially in choruses. The arrangements across the board could be streamlined; songs kind of dragged as the set went on. Lyrically, the songs don't necessarily stand out, but lyrics are not the band's primary concern. For the songs to be even more fun, trimming them down and adding more pop to those choruses will go a long way.

Musicianship: These performers have clearly invested time into practicing and they played a tight and professional set. Immediately striking is the rhythm section, Real and Storms. Influenced by some of the funk masters, their skills created a tight and impressive force. Quiller ,however, stuck out in the set with rambunctious guitar stylings that seemed to belong in a different band. When he played as a rhythm guitarist, he fit into the mix with just as much grace as his bandmates. Most of his screaming guitar solos, however impressive, were not necessary and detracted from the performance. Finding a different guitar tone could likely fix that entire problem.

Performance: Briscoe is a powerful trifecta of moves, pipes and charisma. He comes out swinging with unparalleled energy, and his band backs him up with as much enthusiasm. Clearly inspired by the greats, the band offers a unique blend of Cee Lo Green vocals, James Brown moves and Gap Band jam stylings. Not one of the players lacked in energy, and shined just like their frontman as they were each given their moment. Every player carried the team equally, and the crowd responded in turn to the infectious performance.

Summary: Down North is a band of incredible players whose skills can deliver a fantastic show. Their song structures and arrangements, however, are not all they could be. Trimming some of the songs, perhaps aiming to keep them under four minutes, and modifying the exhausting guitar tone would be a vast improvement. They have the guts, they have the skills, and they have the show down pat. Getting their songs in the perfect place will make this band unstoppable. ***– Carah Wes***



HARDSHIP ANCHORS

Alex's Bar *Long Beach, CA*

Contact: hardshipanchors@yahoo.com
Web: facebook.com/hardshipanchors
Players: Trevor Lucca, guitar, vocals; Joey Luck, drums; Brett Gillies, bass

Material: Just the name Hardship Anchors generates the sort of images and ideas that work as the ideal descriptor for this band's music. Sailor Jerry tattoo art and muscle cars, greased hair and pin-up girls — it's all part of that great rock & roll/punk-rock mash-up. So the tunes are a glorious blend of fellow local band Social Distortion's jailhouse rockabilly punk, and the catchy melodies of a group like Face to Face. That's the rough-as-hell majesty of these Long Beach boys—the music has a rugged simplicity, yet is utterly infectious and wonderfully unrelenting.

Musicianship: That unrelenting vibe introduces a driving, hard edge to the Hardship Anchors sound and, while it can often be tempting to underestimate the musicians in the group due to the aforementioned simplicity inherent in punk rock, that would be a huge mistake here. Luck and Gillies are a solid rhythm section, a pair of musicians that are perfectly in sync, while also allowing themselves the occasional moment of wild flamboyance. But frontman Lucca holds the attention—he has an expressive voice and fascinating guitar style that, together, allow the songs to both breathe and blossom.

Performance: Honestly, there's not a lot to see. The three men climb up onto the stage after a swift backline change, plug in, and get on with the job in hand—walloping out their songs. Luck is expressive enough from his stool, while Lucca and Gillies stand on either side of the stage and barely move. But the lack of any sort of big show doesn't distract from the fact that the band pours all of their passion into the music. Lucca stands, legs spread, right up against the mic stand, closes his eyes, and belts out one life lesson after another.

Summary: This sort of gig, on this occasion opening for Messer Chups in their hometown, is the Hardship Anchors' bread and butter right now. And that's just about perfect; the trio can hone their craft playing with name bands passing through town, in front of good-sized crowds that apparently enjoy what they hear. But on this evidence, there's no reason why the Hardship Anchors shouldn't be headlining at rooms like Alex's Bar very soon. ***– Brett Callwood***



ZYLES

The Mint *Los Angeles, CA*

Contact: fardigitalpr@gmail.com
Web: zylesmusic.com
Players: Zyles, vocals and guitar; James Small, drums; Zack Bleach, bass; Matt Grandy, keyboard

Material: An East Coast to Bay Area transplant, Zyles has successfully showcased two sides of his musical persona in, well, two singles. Debut track "Sundresses" highlights heavy retro grooves and swoon-y vocals to play alongside the story of a traveler taking in all the delectable sights and offerings of his temporary home, while "Secretary" showcases a modern pop/R&B seductiveness with a darker underlying theme to its lyrics hidden behind mesmerizing synths. Both singles show similarities to the musical growth of former child star artists like Nick Jonas and Jesse McCartney.

Musicianship: Zyles' musical background in a collegiate jazz orchestra, combined with his career experience in the tech industry, give his music that harmonious blend of retro and modern and current pop acts sometimes miss the mark on. While still relatively new to the industry as his own act, there is a calculated professionalism that he eloquently showcases within his recorded work and into his live sets that makes the listener beg for what other tricks he may have up his sleeve.

Performance: It's a shame that Zyles is currently located in the Bay Area, because he proved to be a perfect fit for The Mint. He was willing to not only share stories about his past experiences in music, which includes a fun little encounter with the Jonas Brothers, but to also make sure that his touring band got the recognition they deserve with introductions and special solos. His undeniable humility and charisma packed a punch with the club's audience, who grooved and swayed.

Zyles' dreamy synth-pop tunes combined with the power of live instrumentation demonstrated that pre-recorded modern pop tracks are still capable of translating to a live setting. He used the opportunity to hook his audience with unreleased tracks that sound like Maroon 5 meets The 1975 with a hint of Charlie Puth. Peppy earworm "Cuddle Puddle" held the attention of the hard-to-please Angelinos, while his impressive cover of Prince's "Do Me, Baby" demonstrated his goal of appealing to a spectrum of listeners.

Summary: Zyles' combination of well-produced singles and a confident live demeanor will make new audiences take notice. He has new music and show dates lined up, so he's gotten the ball rolling on his new career path for the time being. Soon we might hear him included in indie-pop focused playlists or at events where that style reigns supreme. ***– Heather Allen***



CHEMICAL DIARY

The Whisky A GoGo *West Hollywood, CA*

Web: ChemicalDiary.com
Contact: ChemicalDiary@yahoo.com
The Players: Roland Numbers, bass, vocals; Dudee Numbers, guitar, vocals

Material: Chemical Diary is a covers duo consisting of a bass player and guitar player accompanied by a backing drum track. They play well-known songs like "You Shook Me All Night Long" by AC/DC, "Sweet Emotion" by Aerosmith, "Roxanne" by The Police, "Love Hurts" by Nazareth, "Satisfaction" by The Rolling Stones, "Hot Blooded" by Foreigner and "Johnny B. Goode" by Chuck Berry.

Musicianship: The band's musicianship is okay, but it's really difficult to tell without a drummer to keep the time in place. Their cover versions of familiar songs are easily recognizable, which is a good thing, but an adept drummer would help things out immensely. The bass lines are basic and the guitar riffs are pretty close to the originals; but only close.

Roland has an okay voice and can play while singing, but the pleasant surprise of the evening came from Dudee and his background vocals. He hit some pretty high notes on "Love Hurts" those moments made the whole evening; superb tone and placement. Perhaps he should become a more prominent part of the Chemical Diary vocal presentation?

Performance: In contrast to an impressive Chemical Diary sign that was truly electric, the duo's stage presentation was lackluster. It needed the physical energy that a drummer would definitely provide in a live situation.

Summary: This is the second time I've reviewed Chemical Diary in *Music Connection* and this time around it really seems like their presentation has slipped back a notch or two. It's time for the band to regroup and fine-tune their act.

– Pierce Brochetti

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MIGUEL COSTA

CLAUDE HALL

The Baked Potato *Studio City, CA*

Contact: claudehall@mac.com
Web: claude-hall.squarespace.com
Players: Claude Hall, vocals; Dori Amarillo, guitar; Jamieson Trotter keys; Chris Colangelo, bass; Peter Buck, bass

Material: The voice of Claude Hall carries a sentimental tune that has grown beyond her New York City roots and her Caribbean background. Her live show offers tales full of jubilation, boldness, musicality and improvisation. Although this solo artist has never officially released original music, her charismatic vocal technique and alluring stage presence has helped her to enlist the services of renowned jazz figure Dennis Dreith for her upcoming debut EP (*August Afternoon*).

Musicianship: Hall presents her live music like an actress reciting a jazz monologue on Broadway. She often enhances her contralto range with a tantalizing brand of jazz phrasing. The songstress works primarily with three music producers: Steve Rawlins, Michael Farrell and Dori Amarillo. Together they have reimagined several classic jazz songs, while making Hall's dynamic vocal technique the foundation upon which their creative arrangements are built. The collaborative effort that best defines this group is their rendition of "Moondance." This smooth jazz song blends elements of soul and R&B with a spirited piano solo and bebop-style drumming.

Performance: The intimate stage setting at The Baked Potato helped Hall to create a genial mood for her three-hour show. An essential part of this 27-song set was the support provided by her band. From the side of the stage, her co-writer Dori Amarillo played acoustic and electric guitar with a smooth demeanor. Meanwhile, the charismatic trio of Jamieson Trotter, Chris Colangelo and Peter Buck often aided the theatrical bravura of their lead singer with skillful musicality and comedic adlibs. When the band performed a quiet storm called "August Afternoon," it served as a fitting way to balance the emotions of their overall performance.

Summary: Claude Hall told a story on this night, a story brimming with songs that resonated with her personal experiences. Singing in a tone reminiscent of Billie Holiday, this artist entertained her audience with an engaging essence that also echoed Lena Horne. All in all, Hall's set proved to be a consistent balancing act of crowd engagement and vocal performance.

– Miguel Costa

Three Clubs *Hollywood, CA*

Web: BlueMidnightMusic.com
Contact: BlueMidnightMusic666@gmail.com
Players: Justine, vocals; Mike Hill, bass; Matt Hornbeck, guitar; David Allen, drums; Edgar Sandoval, violin; Caleb Hulin, guitar

Material: Blue Midnight is a hard rock group complete with outstanding vocals, two guitars, a great rhythm section and even a violin. Think Evanescence meets Iron Maiden with the violin adding another dimension of mostly rhythms to all of the songs.

The opening tune, "Acid Rain," brings out the band's true colors as they sit nicely atop the hard rock/metal genre. Dueling guitars, a la Judas Priest, take turns on solos, harmonizing and keeping the rhythm tight and intact. The bass neatly complicates the beats, while Justine puts icing on the cake with delicious vocals.

Musicianship: This band is tight as can be, with a minimal amount of flubs. Hill connects with Allen to solidify a great rhythm section as Hornbeck and Hulin go head to head laying down rhythms and harmonics. Both possess excellent soloing abilities. Meanwhile, you don't expect a violin in a rockin' band, but Sandoval is a pleasant surprise as he contributes layers of pleasurable, squealing resonance to all the tunes. Justine has an exceptional voice and is impactful and energetic, but there is an untapped potential to it. She holds back ever so slightly—that is evident in her delivery—but at the same time she is on that cusp where a little push will send her over to the next level.



PIERCE BROCHETTI

BLUE MIDNIGHT

Performance: Blue Midnight's show was successful from the first rumbling of the guitars. All the players exhibited good rapport with each other and all interacted with the audience to some degree. Justine connected with the crowd numerous times, while Sandoval remained in his own little world, grooving to all the tracks. He gave all that he had and left it on the stage.

Summary: Blue Midnight performed two cover songs, and although those tunes were rendered extremely well, they mixed into the band's own style a bit too much. The songs melded together, which detracted from the creativity that is Blue Midnight, who've got very likable original songs, good stage presence and superb, unique musical ideas. All in all, this band is making music that can appeal to a wide audience. ***– Pierce Brochetti***

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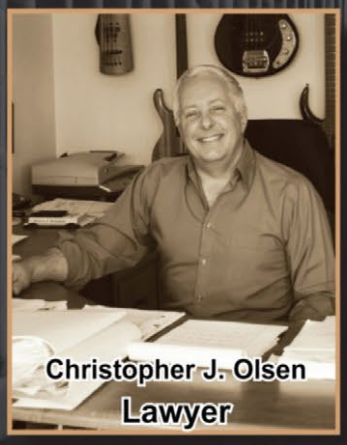
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Clear Your Samples FIRST and Save Yourself the Headache

As all musicians know, sampling is the act of taking a portion or "sample" of a sound recording and utilizing it in an element of a new recording.

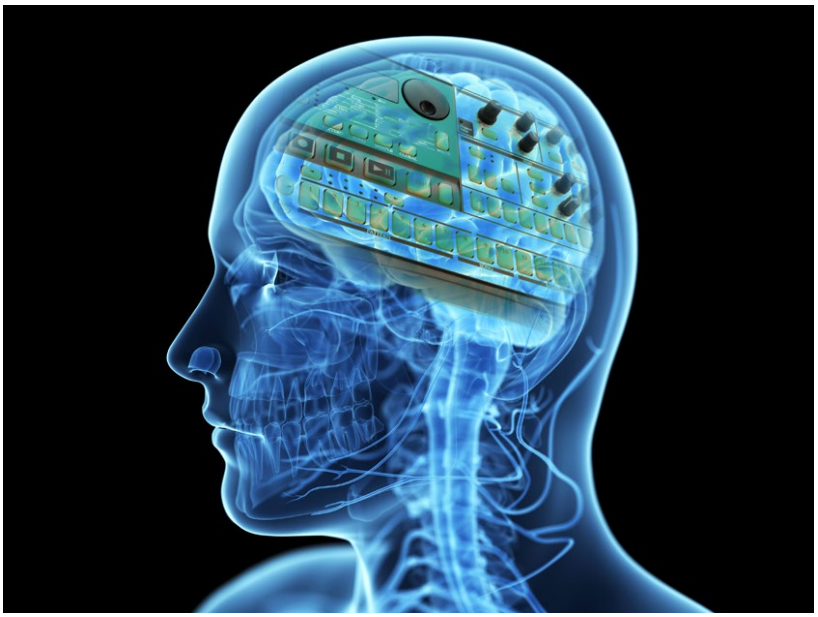
While this common practice can result in fun new interpretations and well-meant tributes to prior work, it should be done with caution.

Sampling without authorization can result in a creative and financial nightmare. Luckily, it can easily be avoided by following the proper process.

Where It All Began

Sampling in music has been practiced for ages, but was first thrust into the mainstream spotlight in 1991 when Biz Markie was sued by Gilbert O'Sullivan for using unauthorized samples from Sullivan's '70s hit "Alone Again (Naturally)" in Markie's song "Alone Again," which was released decades later. Markie's song featured several familiar bars from the former's piano riff and even included Markie singing part of O'Sullivan's hook in his own chorus.

Markie was found guilty of infringing on O'Sullivan's copyright and ordered to pay $250,000 in damages. Markie's label was barred from selling the single or album. The judge even referred the case to criminal court, alleging that Markie was liable for theft. Though he was never charged, this highlights the gravity of the situation.



This landmark ruling permanently changed the standards for sampling. Obviously, the practice is still popular today, but this case forever altered the creative and business practices surrounding it.

In the years since, countless more sampling lawsuits have followed, further underscoring the importance of always clearing your samples and the potentially detrimental impacts of not doing so.

The Consequences of Not Clearing

Most musicians don't clear samples and don't get into trouble because the work doesn't end up being a hit. But not clearing a sample leaves you in a very vulnerable spot.

If your dreams do come true and that track does become an unexpected hit, the copyright owners can sue you for infringement, force you to take it down, AND will most likely make unreasonably steep demands to clear the sample, knowing that you then have no other choice.

In contrast, the cost of clearing a basic sample ahead of time is likely to be quite reasonable, and realistically much less than attempting to do so after it's part of a hit song.

Just Clear It

Musicians often ask how many bars are needed for a sample to be considered an infringement. Others change the sample sonically and assume it's okay. The reality is, there is no hard-and-fast rule, and in this case, it's much better to be safe than sorry.

If you know you're sampling, get a clearance. If the sample is even remotely "identifiable," get a clearance. Even if it's one note or you don't think it is noticeable, others may disagree.

What to Clear

So, what exactly do you need to clear when sampling? Well, there are two rights to consider, one for the master composition and another for the actual sound recording.

If you're using someone's composition, you need to clear the publishing. If you're sampling someone's sound recording, you also need to clear the master rights.

How to Clear

For starters, it's vital to research and know who owns what you're sampling.

On the publishing side, you can usually find the rights' owner through ASCAP, BMI or SESAC's websites, where they list applicable songwriters and publishers.

For sound recordings, go straight to the label. To first identify the proper label, the Harry Fox Agency's website can be quite helpful.

Once you have this information, take the following steps:

• Send in a request to the rights' owners to clear the sample, and be thorough.

Providing all information increases your likelihood of success and speeds up the process. Include a list of the original track's owners and full details on what you sampled—the number of bars, length of the sample, total length of your track, when you plan to release the song and even a copy of the track with time-stamps of where the sample occurs.

By sending this through email, you're also helpfully documenting your attempt to clear the sample.

• Be persistent. If you get no response, start calling. Then, call again.

• If you still get no response, consider recreating your work. Is that riff or couple of bars really needed? Is it worth the risk of a costly lawsuit? (The answer is likely no.)

• Know that you need authorization from ALL relevant parties.

If the label says yes, but the publisher says no, you still don't have authorization to use the sample. If you get publisher clearance, but hear nothing from the label, consider clearing just the publishing rights and re-recording the sample yourself.

• Take alternate avenues. If you feel the sample is vital to your piece, try contacting the artist and/or songwriter directly. They may be able to help expedite the process.

• If you're still getting nowhere, seek the help of a clearance expert. They know the system and requirements in-and-out and can likely provide some helpful suggestions and connections that will get you an answer.

At the end of the day, clearing your samples is the right thing to do for the original owners of the work and the smart thing to do for your career.

As Benjamin Franklin's old adage says, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Clear your samples from the get-go, and save yourself the hassle, headache and dollars of a potential lawsuit.

ALEX HEICHE is the CEO and founder of Sound Royalties, a company dedicated to transforming the way that music professionals fund their creativity. To learn more, visit soundroyalties.com or call 1-866-752-8292.



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