

# MUSIC CONNECTION

Exclusive National List  
Music Attorneys

# DIY

Bundling Tips

## TRIBUTE BANDS!

### Flattery Through Imitation

Podcast Producer

## CODI FISCHER

# Trippie Redd

+ Wire

Cam'Ron

Robert Tepper

Noonday Devils

Las Vegas Connection

Vol. 44 • February 2020 • \$3.95/\$4.95 Canada



# COMPANY OF GREATNESS



Photo by Olat Henne



## RICHIE KOTZEN RK5 V2 SIGNATURE

"The great thing about the RK5 Fly Rig is that I have my ideal pedalboard in a tiny little box that I can literally put in my backpack. This pedal is very versatile, it's very convenient, extremely reliable, built to perfection."

--Richie Kotzen

## PAUL LANDERS PL1 SIGNATURE

"Although it is so tiny, I can dial in all the sounds I need for my band. I love the fact that I have an analog path, that it is not a digital animation. It is real! And what I love most is I can plug it straight into the mixer or the computer! No amp needed for the best distortion sound I know of."

--Paul Landers



Check out Richie's New  
50 FOR 50 Album



Check out Rammstein's  
2019 Untitled Album

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**"My Mom gave me a ticket and it changed my life. It's unbelievable."**

*-Finneas O'Connell - Grammy-nominated Producer, Singer, Songwriter*

**"This is our livelihood- this is for my future, for my family."**

*Yuna - Singer, Songwriter*

**"I was thoroughly inspired and my only complaint is that I have to wait another year to do it again."**

*Songwriter Attendee*

**"Best thing I ever did. I have met most all of my mentors, producers, and greatest friends at this event."**

*Songwriter Attendee*

**"Be entitled to nothing and grateful for everything and naturally your circle will grow."**

*Tomme Profitt - Producer, Songwriter*

**"The opportunity to interact with all of the incredible talent was unbelievable."**

*Songwriter Attendee*

**"Live your life...all that stuff is fodder for your songs. Don't quit."**

*Anthony Rossomando - Academy Award-Winning Songwriter, Producer*

**"Never in life have I met so many big wigs in the industry that were so caring, congenial, helpful, and real."**

*Songwriter Attendee*

**"You're never too old to get into it and start changing the world."**

*Steven Battey - Songwriter, Producer*



[ascapexperience.com](http://ascapexperience.com)



36

## Trippie Redd

In our exclusive interview with this Billboard #1 selling artist, he recounts leaving his native Ohio for Atlanta, GA where his freestyling was embraced and his creativity flourished. Trippie also dishes some great career advice and talks about how he found a special comfort zone working with recording engineer Igor Mamet.

By Daniel Siwek

Photos: Aidan Cullen



## 44 4D Acoustics

By Jonathan Widran

## Departments

- 08. Close Up
- 09. Assignments
- 10. New Toys
- 14. Book Store
- 16. Up Close
- 18. Studio Mix
- 23. Business Affairs
- 24. The Legal Beat
- 26. Signing Stories
- 28. Song Biz
- 32. Film•TV•Theater
- 34. Mixed Notes

## Reviews

- 45. Album Reviews
- 46. New Music Critiques
- 48. Live Reviews



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## Tribute Bands!

MC speaks with a half dozen individuals who, either as artists, managers, promoters—or all three—have achieved prominence in the ever-competitive tribute world.

By Brett Callwood



40

52

## Directory of Music Attorneys

Compiled By Denise Coso



- 20. Producer Crosstalk: Codi Fischer ..... By Rob Putnam
- 22. Exec Profile: Gustavo Lopez, Saban Music Group ..... By Andy Kaufmann
- 30. Songwriter Profile: Robert Tepper ..... By Dan Kimpel
- 62. Tip Jar: DIY Bundling ..... By Joshua Martin and Reggie Gooden



# Your SSL studio

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**SSL 2** and **SSL 2+** are more than just USB audio interfaces – they're the heart of your new Solid State Logic personal studio. Class-leading Mic preamps. Studio-quality monitoring. Pro Neutrik connectors. Punchy instrument inputs. Incredible SSL Production Pack software bundle. Then elevate your sound to the next level with unique 'Legacy 4K' analog enhancement.

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# APU B.M. IN COMMERCIAL MUSIC

[apu.edu/music](http://apu.edu/music)

**Overview of APU School of Music:** The College of the Arts at Azusa Pacific University offers an innovative arts community dedicated to preparing students to excel as talented artist-scholars in visual and performing arts and music. Its world-renowned School of Music is dedicated to preparing students to excel as talented music professionals. Its proximity to Los Angeles provides students unique learning opportunities in a world-class music culture, including courses taught not by career academics, but veteran working professionals.

According to Erin Giesenhagen, Director of Prospective Student Engagement, one of the elements that sets APU's program apart is the fact that "music technology is incorporated from the first semester and throughout all the music theory courses." APU is a Pro Tools certified school. Students are also allowed to take courses in all different genres. The school offers a number of undergraduate music majors, including Bachelor of Music (B.M.) degrees in Commercial Music, Composition, Music Education, Music and Worship, and Performance. Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Music degrees are also available. The school offers graduate degrees in Music Entrepreneurship, Conducting, Composition, Music Education and Performance.

**B.M. in Commercial Music:** To prepare students personally and professionally for careers in the music industry, the commercial music major focuses on integrating skills in the areas of music business, composition and arranging, live and studio performance, as well as audio recording and production. The combination of internship opportunities, an ever-growing network of working APU alumni, and experienced faculty-professionals offer graduates of the Bachelor of Music in Commercial Music program access to strategic links within the Los Angeles music industry. The program is customizable, allowing students to select from five tracks or areas of specialization: audio recording, composing/arranging, instrumental performance, music business and vocal performance. The program was developed 20 years ago by Dave Beatty, who serves as Chair, Department of Commercial Music.



**Breakdown of Student Objectives:** The Composing/Arranging track is for students who want to create new music as songwriters, composers or arrangers and who want to learn about music software, sequencing, orchestration and connecting music to media. The Audio Recording track is for those who have a passion for all things related to audio. The Vocal Performance emphasis is designed for those pursuing careers as professional singers. The Music Business track is for students who want to work behind the scenes; they learn about music publishing, record labels, music supervision, licensing and royalties, artist management, concert booking, etc. The Instrumental Performance track is dedicated to the professional players of tomorrow; it's for those who want to perform authentically in all musical styles at a pro level.

**Quote from Dave Beatty:** "Every student in our Commercial Music Program gets exposure to an aspect of all five tracks. By design, we encompass a broader reach in styles than most programs to allow for greater exploration of career possibilities in more areas of the industry. Our philosophical underpinning is that you can't neglect the development of your own personal musical excellence. We're large enough to provide a wide variety of experiences, but still small enough to offer a great degree of personal connection."

Contact APU School of Music, 626-815-3848

"Our Live Review in **Music Connection** opened up opportunities to perform with national acts. The folks at Music Connection are super-approachable and helpful. Plus, we read their articles online every other day to get pro tips." – **Westerner**

Find out how to get your live show or recorded music reviewed at [musicconnection.com/reviews/get-reviewed](http://musicconnection.com/reviews/get-reviewed)

**MUSIC CONNECTION**



## Martin Kloiber

*Chief Operating Officer*  
Apogee Electronics Corp.

**Apogee Electronics**, a brand of audio interfaces for recording, post production and aspiring musicians, has announced the appointment of **Martin Kloiber** as **Chief Operating Officer**. Previously he directed AVID's Audio Business Division as VP of Audio and Strategy. He led project teams to develop and execute delivery of products and solutions across multiple product categories. Before his work at AVID, Kloiber was CEO of Euphonix. During this time, he developed the EuCon protocol which enabled products to interface with third party applications. Kloiber is determined to provide human to machine interfaces that are both intuitive and ergonomic. To learn more, contact Marlene Passaro at marlene@apogeedigital.com.



## Luis Wasserman

*Sales Director, APAC*  
Mackie

**Mackie**, manufacturer of professional audio and musical instrument products, has announced the hiring of **Luis Wasserman** as **Sales Director for the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region**. Wasserman's professional background blends six years of product management experience in Honeywell and Broan-NuTone with over eleven years of international sales leadership at Scantron Corporation and AMETEK. In the late 1990s, Wasserman worked at EMI Music, promoting music in bars and nightclubs, which led to an interest in DJ'ing. For more, contact Shaunna.Krebs@loudaudio.com.



## Samantha Arevalo-Downey

*Publicity Manager*  
Dead Horse Branding

**Samantha Arevalo-Downey** was recently hired as **Publicity Manager** at **Dead Horse Branding**. Before relocating to Nashville three months ago, she worked as a publicist in the film and music industry with high-profile clients such as Steven Tyler, Paris Hilton, Afrojack, Vince Vaughn, Justin Long, Nicolas Cage, Chad Michael Murray and Screamfest Film Fest just to name a few. While attending college at Cal State Northridge, she also freelanced with the Walt Disney Studios manning advanced screenings and special events. In her new position, she will be creating and implementing complete PR and branding campaigns and overseeing account management.



## Chris Halaby

*Board of Directors*  
The Bob Moog Foundation

**The Bob Moog Foundation** has announced the addition of **Chris Halaby** to its **Board of Directors**. Halaby is CEO of KVRAudio, Inc., a website/forum founded in 2001 as a community for musicians, music composers and developers of music authoring products. The website currently receives over 600,000 unique visitors a month. Prior, Halaby was President, Chief Executive Officer and Director of Opcode Systems, Inc. from 1987 until 1999. Under Halaby's leadership, Opcode grew to become a leader in music creation software, hardware synchronizers and MIDI I/O devices. Contact info@getitwriting.net to learn more.



## John Bolton

*SVP Entertainment/GM Palm Springs Arena*  
Oak View Group

**Oak View Group** has hired **John Bolton** as **Senior Vice President of Entertainment and General Manager** of the new arena at Agua Caliente in Palm Springs, CA. Bolton will be part of the company's senior leadership team and will support all OVG venues in driving entertainment and programming content. Bolton will assist in developing grand openings and entertainment plans for OVG's eight new arena projects, as well as working with OVG's current venues under management. As General Manager of the Palm Springs arena, Bolton will oversee the development and opening of Southern California's newest arena. For more, contact solters@solters.com.



## Chris Blackwell

*SVP of Creative Content & Development*  
Republic Records

**Republic Records** named **Chris Blackwell** **SVP of Creative Content & Development**. Blackwell leads creative development for film, television and premium platform projects set to star and showcase Republic Records artists. His responsibilities encompass establishing partnerships to create, develop and release programming for digital, streaming and broadcast. Mr. Blackwell's career includes four years at All Def Media where he rapidly advanced through the ranks from Director of Social to CEO in 2019. Throughout his tenure at the company he led the creation and release of several iconic live, digital and media franchises. To learn more, contact Sydney.Feinberg@umusic.com.



## Peter Freedman

*Member*  
NSW Innovation and Productivity Council

It was announced that **Peter Freedman**, Founder and Chairman of Australia-based company The Freedman Group, home to RØDE Microphones, was appointed as a **Member of the New South Wales Innovation and Productivity Council (IPC)**. The IPC is the peak advisory body on priorities for innovation-led economic development and productivity for the NSW government, with an aim to support and drive innovation in the business, education and research sectors, and stimulate productivity and growth for the broader NSW economy. Freedman will join the Council for its first meeting in early 2020. For press inquiries, contact Nick.Stillman@rode.com.



## Giuliana Mignone

*Data & Research Coordinator*  
Big Loud

**Big Loud Records** has hired **Giuliana Mignone** as **Data & Research Coordinator** to revamp their Records division in 2020. Mignone is from Swampscott, MA, and is a senior at Nashville's Belmont University. She will receive a Bachelor of Business Administration with a concentration in Music Business. Set to graduate in May, she was previously an intern at imprint Big Machine Records of Big Machine Label Group and currently works with the Music Business Association as the Music Business Conference Coordinator. With several music business internships under her belt, Mignone will assist Big Loud in their initiative to be more data forward. Contact Jensen Sussman at jensen@sweettalkpr.com for more.





### ◀ IK MULTIMEDIA ILOUD MTM REFERENCE MONITORS

The IK Multimedia iLoud® MTM monitors are the “big brother” in IK’s Micro Monitor speaker line. The MTM monitors are much more powerful, with 100-watts of Class-D power and a 40Hz to 24kHz frequency range. They are also capable of 103dB SPL maximum sound pressure. IK claims coherent phase response within +/- 15 degrees from 200Hz to 24kHz. Phase integrity is vital for reproducing realistic stereo sound imaging.

I set them up vertically on my desktop on either side of my 29-inch DAW computer monitor. The adjustable tilt mechanism aims the cabinet’s center-mounted 1-inch tweeter and the two 3.5-inch woofers upward at me sitting in the listening position. The top woofer aimed a little over my head—good when an artist or producer stands and listens behind me. Also included is a base for horizontal setups.

The iLoud MTM monitors have a built-in, self-calibration system derived from IK’s ARC™ System that configures the monitors to work best given your room’s acoustic space.

The MTMs use DSP to convert incoming analog audio into digital audio for processing the crossover frequency, filtering, time alignment, equalization, dynamics control and auto-calibration. With the ARC microphone plugged in, pushing the CAL/Preset begins a 20 second calibration procedure.

I was immediately impressed with the sound of the MTMs! Because they are only about 32 inches from my ears, the sound is very present and “in my face” like a sonic microscope. The increased clarity is what I am looking for in a second pair of monitors to reference my mixes. I was also impressed by the amount of solid-sounding bass these speakers delivered despite their diminutive size.

These monitors track well up and down in volume—I can hear my mixes very clearly at very quiet volumes. Mixing errors show up immediately! The IK Multimedia iLoud MTM Reference Monitors come in two ways—one at a time or in pairs and both include an ARC™ reference MEMs measurement microphone. They are \$349.99 each or \$699.99 for a pair.

[iloudmtm.com](http://iloudmtm.com)

### ▶ SLR/ROYER LABS AXEMOUNT DUAL MICROPHONE CLIP

Made by the Canadian company SLR in collaboration with Royer Labs, the AxeMount model SM-21 is a new microphone clip that holds a Royer R-121 ribbon dynamic mic (or Royer’s R-122 or R-122 V) alongside a Shure SM57 moving coil dynamic. This is an awesome product idea—not only are the two mics locked in polarity, but you use only one stand/boom instead of two.

Made from injected molded polymer plastic, the AxeMount has a threaded brass insert in its base so that its threads will not wear out. The AxeMount lines up the SM57’s diaphragm with the magnets on the left and right sides of the side-addressed, R-121 grille. There is a small arrow on the AxeMount near the Royer badge logo to line up to the “seam” surrounding the 57’s body. This feature makes it a no brainer for fast and dependable setups and is consistent enough that it’ll work well most of the time. You can slide the 57 back and forth or in and out of the clip for different sounds but starting out with the alignment arrow is always a good idea.

The AxeMount SM-21 Dual Microphone Clip is essential for recording guitar cabinet speakers. Usually the Royer R-121 ribbon is aimed at the center of the dust cover, and the SM-57 is offset towards the cone itself. I liked being able to move both microphones together in tandem when dialing in tone with just the right balance somewhere between the high frequencies with attack and edginess (dust cover) and warmth and thickness (cone).

The AxeMount SM-21 Dual Microphone Mount sells for \$39.99 and joins the other dual microphone mounts such as the X-Clip and X Mount products.

[axemount.com](http://axemount.com)



### ▼ YAMAHA PSR-SX700 AND PSR-SX900 KEYBOARDS

Yamaha replaces PSR-S775 and PSR-S975 instruments with the PSR-SX700 and PSR-SX900 keyboards respectively. These are all-in-one workstation keyboard instruments that come with many powerful features from Yamaha’s Genos keyboard. The PSR-SX700 and PSR-SX900 offer realistic and expressive Super Articulation Voices, with greater real-time control over a performance.

I like the brilliant 7-inch touch screen that incorporates the same intuitive graphic user interface as in Genos, allowing users to easily navigate Voice and Style assignments, as well as assess and adjust other settings. Six new assignable controller buttons have been added beneath the touch screen, each assignable to a desired function and there is a new joystick controller with modulation for many expressive possibilities.

Built-in content from the Yamaha Voice & Style Expansion Library provides instant access to a huge variety of international musical content. Expansion memory size has been greatly increased in both keyboards—to 400MB in the PSR-SX700, 1GB in the PSR-SX900. It is easy to add a choice of content from [YamahaMusicSoft.com](http://YamahaMusicSoft.com).

The Yamaha PSR-SX900 (MSRP \$2,799) and PSR-SX700 (MSRP \$1,999) started shipping in October 2019.

[yamaha.io/2FzWQkL](http://yamaha.io/2FzWQkL)



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◀ **MOTU M2 AND M4 INTERFACES**

Both the M2 (2-in/2-out) and M4 (4-in/4-out) are bus-powered USB-C (compatible with USB Type A) audio interfaces for Mac, Windows and iOS and feature the latest converter technology including the ESS Sabre32 Ultra™ DAC. You get rugged metal construction and ultra-low latency and metering with full-color LCD displays on the front panel. With two and four channels of audio I/O respectively, the M2 and M4 include individually switchable 48V phantom power on the mic inputs, mono and stereo direct monitoring, MIDI I/O, and “loopback” driver channels for live streaming and podcasting.

The M2 and M4 deliver 120dB dynamic range plus the ESS converters also drive the headphone output. You get ultra-low 2.5-ms round trip latency with a buffer set to 32 samples at 96kHz.

Both feature two mic/line/hi-Z guitar inputs on Combo XLR/TRS jacks while the M4 has two balanced 1/4-inch line inputs. Both the M2 and M4 support 44.1kHz and up to 192kHz sample rates.

Both the M2 and M4 come with MOTU Performer Lite 10 and Ableton Live Lite 10 software, 100+ instruments (in Performer Lite), and over 6GB of included free loops, samples and one-shots from industry leading libraries.

Built in the USA with a 2 year warranty, the M2 sells for \$169.95 MSRP while the M4 sells for \$219.95 MSRP.

[motu.com/en-us/products/m-series/m2/specs](http://motu.com/en-us/products/m-series/m2/specs)



▶ **WARM AUDIO DIRECT BOX ACTIVE & DIRECT BOX PASSIVE**

Warm Audio introduces two new direct injection or DI boxes that provide pristine conversion between low-level high impedance sources and professional audio low impedance microphone inputs in the studio or for live performance stages.

You'll always need a DI for a direct connection to a PA system and/or for recording in the studio. You can DI: electric guitars, basses, electronic keyboards, turntable preamps, or drum machines. Besides impedance conversion, a good direct box provides isolation from ground loops and stray hum or noise that will corrupt the low level signals coming from guitars and basses.

Both these new Active and Passive DI boxes have an onboard -3dB to -30dB signal attenuator called a Variable Pad so any audio signal can be interfaced without overload. Variable Pad is a new feature for a passive DI. Other features are: identical custom-wound CineMag USA transformers, ground lift switch, a 1/4-inch Thru jack, polarity switch, and an Amp Out/Instrument toggle switch to use the output speaker jack of a stage amp.

Using either an Active or Passive DI box depends completely on the source. Passive guitar pickups or piezoelectric transducers or instruments without any onboard electronics/amplifier/EQs sound best using an active DI box. You'll have more level and a clearer sound. Warm Audio's Direct Box Passive is better for instruments with active electronics.

I first used the Warm Audio Direct Box Passive for recording my Strat here at my studio and later a P-Bass and yes, I got great clean and noise-free sound in both tests. I also tried the Active first in Passive mode and then in Active. There is the same circuit and transformer as the Passive model. I was surprised to hear no change in volume switching between the two—the Active Direct Box has two 9-volt batteries inside to power it or you can use 48-volt phantom power.

Both the Direct Box Passive and Direct Box Active are built in crush-proof extruded aluminum boxes—considering where DI boxes are located in live sound and in the studio—they have to be! They each have a balanced 600-ohm output, 1 meg-ohm input and a frequency response of 20Hz to 70kHz.

The Warm Audio Direct Box Active is \$199 MAP while the Direct Box Passive is \$149 MAP.

[warmaudio.com/products](http://warmaudio.com/products)

◀ **ROSWELL MINI K87 CONDENSER MIC**



The Mini K87 is the counterpart to Roswell's best-selling Roswell Mini K47 condenser. The Mini K87 is a general-purpose studio condenser mic ready for any source you can throw at it. The Mini K87 uses Roswell's 34-mm, center-terminated K87 capsule that's especially tuned for this microphone and is coupled to a low-distortion audio circuit with transformerless output.

You could say it's all in the details and manufacturing care, quality capsule design, uncompromising parts selection, and excellent construction—everything counts. I received a factory-matched pair of the Mini K87 mics that came in a padded aluminum flight case that also had two Cutaway™ shock mounts.

Like the Roswell Mini K47, the K87 is about 3/4 the size of other popular side-address condenser mics. This is important when trying to fit microphones into tight locations or using more than one mic on a single source such as on acoustic guitars in X/Y stereo or when putting multiple microphones on a single guitar cab speaker.

I set up for a singer-songwriter for my first test. I used one K87 for the vocal and the other for his acoustic guitar. I processed the audio as I would normally with slight compression and high pass filtering on the vocal Mini K87 microphone and also the K87 on the guitar.

I liked that the microphones were sensitive. I could hear every vocal nuance and inflection with all the subtleties right there, front and center. I could hear the rustling of the headphones and cable on the singer's head, the peculiarities of my room's boxy sound.

I found the Mini K87 excellent with a solid and smooth sound. I think for my somber-sounded singer, the Mini K87 was a great fit. It was never shrill or harsh sounding no matter how loud he sang. My goal would be to own a pair of both the Mini K87 and K47! With those four microphones, you could do just about any recording project easily and always get great sounds. So thumbs up on this well-made microphone from Roswell!

A single microphone is \$399 MAP and hand-matched stereo pairs are \$899 MAP.

[RoswellProAudio.com](http://RoswellProAudio.com)

**BARRY RUDOLPH** is a recording engineer/mixer who has worked on over 30 gold and platinum records. He has recorded and/or mixed Lynyrd Skynyrd, Hall & Oates, Pat Benatar, Rod Stewart, the Corrs and more. Barry has his own futuristic music mixing facility in North Hollywood called Tones 4 \$ Studios. He is a lifetime Grammy-voting member of NARAS and a contributing editor for *Mix Magazine*. [barryrudolph.com](http://barryrudolph.com)

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### 1973: Rock At The Crossroads

By Andrew Grant Jackson  
(hardcover) \$29.99

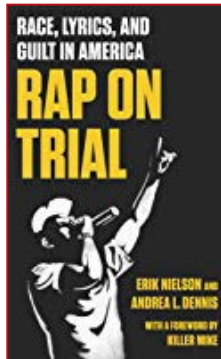
Just as he did in his excellent 1965 book, Jackson brings plenty of insight and observation to bear on 1973, a year that was packed with great music and movement—artistic, social and political. The author covers the era's established stars (The Stones, James Brown, Bowie), rising talents (Springsteen, Eagles), the nascent hip-hop scene and puts his spotlight on numerous heroes of the beat.



### Rap On Trial: Race, Lyrics, and Guilt in America

By Erik Nielson and Andrea L. Davis  
(hardcover) \$24.99

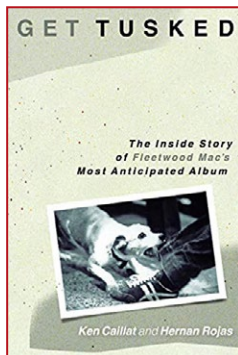
Since its birth in the South Bronx in the '70s, hip-hop has become a target for the criminal justice system, consistently presented as evidence in building cases. Authors Nielson and Davis find their answers at the intersection of race and history in America. Hip-hop is still perceived negatively in the minds of many Americans as a genre of music that promotes violence. The book looks at possible solutions, from the use of expert witnesses to legislation. The book asks how far the First Amendment reaches in art, and who does or doesn't get to take advantage of it.



### Get Tusked: The Inside Story of Fleetwood Mac's Most Anticipated Album

By Ken Caillat and Hernan Rojas  
(hardcover) \$29.99

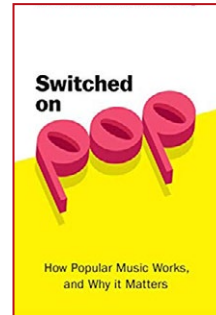
In this behind-the-scenes look at the making of Fleetwood Mac's epic, platinum-selling double album *Tusk*, producer-engineers Caillat and Rojas tell their stories of what it was like to spend a year with the band in their new million-dollar studio trying to follow up the mega-mega-selling *Rumours*, the biggest rock album of the time.



### Switched on Pop: How Popular Music Works, and Why it Matters

By Nate Sloan and Charlie Harding  
(hardcover) \$24.95

Based on the eponymous podcast of the same name, this engaging book explores why pop music is so popular. There is real and intentional sonic manipulation happening that leaves fans craving for more, and the song stuck in your head. The book gives the same academic

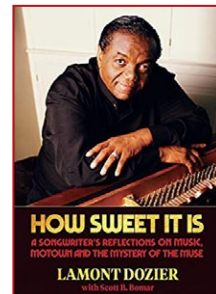


attention to pop that is normally reserved for genres like classical and jazz. Chapters are built around smash hits like Kendrick Lamar's "Swimming Pools," M.I.A.'s "Paper Planes," Taylor Swift's "You Belong With Me" and Luis Fonsi's "Despacito."

### How Sweet It Is

By Lamont Dozier with Scott B. Bomar  
(hardcover) \$27.99

From a humble upbringing to being named in "Rolling Stone's 100 Greatest Songwriters of All Time," Dozier is one of the most important songwriters of his generation. The Motown legend tells his life story in this new book, from growing up in Detroit to becoming one of the



finest songwriters as part of the legendary Holland-Dozier-Holland team. Dozier looks at what inspires him to continue to create music on a daily basis. His attitude and experiences as a songwriter will leave a lasting impression on anyone looking for a creative spark.

### Zappa Gear: The Unique Guitars, Amplifiers, Effects Units, Keyboards and Studio Equipment

By Mike Ekkers  
(hardcover) \$45.00

Frank Zappa was one of our most unusual artists, and his gear reflected that. Zappa always looked for ways to move music forward, and his career coincided with the invention of landmark gear like the Marshall Amplifier, the Gibson



SG, the wah-wah pedal and the Synclavier, all of which helped to define Zappa's sound. Illustrated with over 180 pictures, the book tracks the idiosyncrasies of the man's gear in detail and introduces the inventors, engineers and entrepreneurs who made them possible.



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**The Pioneer of Balanced Power:** The importance of the late Martin Glasband's pioneering work in the field of balanced power has earned him historical comparisons to Nicola Tesla, who was best known for his contributions to the design of the modern alternating electricity supply system. When he started Equi=Tech in 1992, he had developed the technology of balanced power with symmetrical power, applying and intending it to eliminate 99 percent of ground noise. A master electrical engineer by trade, Glasband's discovery allowed him to restructure how electricity comes into a transformer and how it is redistributed to eliminate feedback noise and interference. Balanced power technology promised to reduce ground noise and improve clarity in sound while protecting costly equipment. Over the years, the company expanded its range of products, evolving from portable 15 to 20 amp rack unit models to 30 to 100 amps. He later designed larger wall cabinets ranging from 50a to 200+a.

**The Mission:** Upon his passing in November 2017, Equi=Tech has been helmed by his sister, entrepreneur Jan Glasband, whose team of electrical experts is dedicated to continuing Martin's work. The company's stated mission is to improve the efficiency of distributed electricity and the performance of sensitive electronic loads used throughout science, industry and in the home – and in so doing, greatly reduce fuel consumption through pioneering and promoting Equi=Tech's patented power technology. Equi=Tech is a team that focuses on excellent customer service and building relationships beyond mere sales. Its trademarks are quality, integrity and a highly original, game changing concept. It's a no-frills company that puts performance over style.

**Greater Impact:** Beyond its obvious use in recording studios and related music industries, the company has expanded its reach into research facilities, hospitals, universities and megachurches. "We consider ourselves a boutique operation with phenomenal products," Jan says. "The market for clean power is endless. Clients use our gear to track music and not electrical noise. They want to hear and see their media and not electrical distortions." She adds, "Over time, Martin became the go-to guy for information and tech advice. If anyone knows about balanced power, it's Equi=Tech. Martin wrote the code for its practical use and presented it before the NEC (National Electrical Code) panel, twice accomplishing his goal of having the technology adapted into the NEC guidelines and enabling its commercial application and sales."

**Model RQ:** In demand by audio laymen and superstars like Keith Urban, John Mayer and Foo Fighters alike, the Model RQ (R is for rack mount) has long been Equi=Tech's flagship product. The result of many years of experience and application research in the field of balanced AC power, it is the highest quality and best performing balanced power system the company offers. The material used in the Model Q transformer core is made of a state-of-the-art magnetic steel alloy and none is spared in fabrication. The Model Q transformer has twice the mass of similarly rated competitive products. It drives amplifiers and other high current pulse type loads without skipping a beat. Power factor remains virtually stable regardless of the type of demand load. Testament to its efficiency and excellence, John Mayer's guitar tech said that the 2RQ "works so well that John forgot it was there." Others who use Equi=Tech's products include producer Michael Beinhorn, John McBride of Blackbird Studios in Nashville and top engineers at Oak Ridge Labs, the Library of Congress and numerous university research facilities.

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**▲ The Dirty South is Back Again**

Legendary Athens, GA band Drive-By Truckers is set to release their new LP, *The Unraveling*, on Jan. 31 via ATO Records. The album was recorded at Sam Philips Recording Service in Memphis, TN along with engineer Matt Ross-Spang and longtime Truckers producer Dave Barbe. The band is set to go on tour this year starting in Colorado, then head to Athens for their annual HeAthen's Homecoming at the 40 Watt Club. Pictured (l-r): Matt Patton, Patterson Hood, Brad Morgan, Barbe.



**▲ Pearce to Release Self-Titled Sophomore Album**

Valentine's Day 2020 is sure to be a special one as country singer Carly Pearce has set it as the release date for her sophomore album. Following a successful 2019—a nomination for CMA New Artist of the Year and the release of her hit single "I Hope Your Happy Now" with Lee Brice—Pearce is gearing up for 2020 with several more country bops. The album will be released by Big Machine Records.



**▲ Country-Folk-Rock Artist Turner Releases *The New Wrong Way***

Current Maplewood, NJ, resident Rebecca Turner (pictured) has recently released her third album, *The New Wrong Way*. A decade in the making, the record conjures sounds similar to early '70s West Coast folk-rock. The album was recorded in her home-based studio Storybook Sound. For more, visit [rebeccaturner.net](http://rebeccaturner.net).

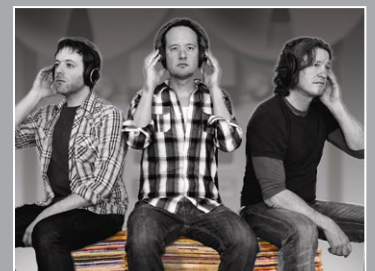


**▲ New Music to Come From Tel Aviv's Lola Marsh**

Indie duo Lola Marsh will release their newest album, *Someday Tomorrow Maybe*, on Jan. 24. The dreamy Tel Aviv-based band is known for earlier songs "You're Mine" and "Remember Roses." The band has announced a North American tour to coincide with the new release. The album was recorded at Anova Studio in Tel Aviv. New single off the album, "What Am I," is available now. Pictured: Yael Shoshana Cohen, Gil Landau, Mati Gilad and Dekel Dvir.

**Producer Playback**

*"We found that performing songs live with simple gear and miking techniques while driving the performance aspect [was key]." – The Title Trackers (Lost Title Tracks)*





▲ **Wainwright Tracks New Songs at United Recording**

Singer-songwriter Rufus Wainwright tracked new songs for his 10th album at United Recording. Wainwright collaborated with producer Mitchell Froom, violinist-string arranger Rob Moose and recording engineer David Boucher. The album's first single, "Trouble in Paradise," was recently released. Pictured (l-r): Wainwright, Froom, Moose and Boucher. To learn more, visit [rufuswainwright.com](http://rufuswainwright.com).



▲ **De La Vega Takes Us Beyond Space and Time**

Singer-songwriter Gab De La Vega shared his new single, "Perfect Texture," to announce the release of his third full-length album, *Beyond Space and Time*, set to come out Jan. 24. The album was recorded and mixed by Simone Piccinelli at La Buca Recording Club in Montichiari, Italy. De La Vega will release it under his own label, Epidemic Records, along with German label Backbite Records.



▲ **Steinfeld Steers Us in the Right Direction**

Academy Award-nominated actress and recording artist Hailee Steinfeld released new track "Wrong Direction" at the start of the new year. Baring her soul, Steinfeld penned the song with the help of several co-writers. Koz produced the track. "Wrong Direction" represents what fans can expect to hear more of as she readies new music for 2020.

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As is typical of evolving endeavors, podcasting had few if any rules or formalized protocols in its early days. But as the nascent medium began to gain traction, production quality ramped up, structure coalesced and now they're popular and occasionally profitable.

Podcast production company Earwolf was established in 2010 by performer Scott Aukerman and entrepreneur Jeff Ullrich when Aukerman launched his pioneering podcast *Comedy Bang! Bang!* The company now produces several comedies such as *improv4humans* and *Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend*. Senior podcast producer Codi Fischer came to Earwolf by way of her formidable background in film, television and live comedy production with UCB (Upright Citizens Brigade). She now has oversight over many of the network's most-heard shows.

Just as with records, podcast production comes with its own set of challenges. A good podcast producer must react swiftly as well as be flexible, proactive and farsighted. "I approach podcasts much as I did with live comedy," Fischer explains. "We work with a lot of improvisers or sketch comedians and comedy is my passion. We have to break down what the thesis or premise of each show is."

"I produced the *Ronna and Beverly* podcast with Jamie Denbo where we did a lot of off-site recording; a lot of stuff outside. She wanted to explore her character [Beverly] out in the world. There was one [segment] where we hiked at Runyon Canyon and it was really windy. We'd brought lavalier mics because we didn't want to carry a boom and they helped Jamie stay in character. Trying to find plug-ins that would filter out the wind was an interesting challenge but we found something eventually. One of my biggest challenges was to make that audio easy to listen to."

For some of the shows Fischer produces, listeners often submit original music for integration into the show. Other times commercial music is used that requires some form of clearance, as she recalls of *Office Ladies*, a podcast hosted by Jenna Fischer (no relation) and Angela Kinsey. "Most of our music is licensed. For *Office Ladies*, we couldn't afford *The Office* theme. Creed [Bratton] has been a musician since the '60s. We licensed his song 'Rubber Tree,' which was an easy experience because we were all friends. But we're very careful with licensing and what we play in clips. Many people here also work in the music or TV industry."

Fischer finds that keys to a successful podcast include an abiding interest in the chosen subject and a clear vision for what the show aspires to become. "If you're doing something just because you think it's hot at the moment, I don't think that works," she asserts. "What translates is the passion podcasters have for what they're talking about."

Currently Fischer remains immersed in the production of *Office Ladies* and a number of new shows for 2020. She relies on her Sennheiser headphones when she edits her shows and, indeed, Sennheiser sponsors one of their studios.

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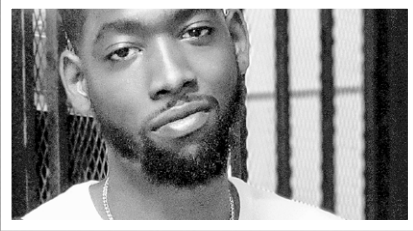
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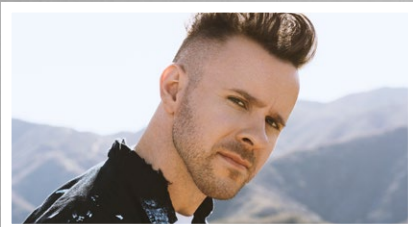
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## Gustavo Lopez

CEO

Saban Music Group, LLC (SMG)

**Years with Company:** Since March 2019

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**Phone:** 310-203-5881

**Web:** [sabanmusic.com](http://sabanmusic.com)

**Email:** [glopez@sabanmusicgroup.com](mailto:glopez@sabanmusicgroup.com)

**Clients:** Reykon, Chesca, Marie Monti, Static & Ben El

### BACKGROUND

First connecting with musician-publisher-producer-billionaire investor Haim Saban while serving as a senior executive at Universal-owned Univision Music Group, Gustavo Lopez left UMG after 21 years when Saban (the Israeli *Power Rangers* theme song composer) bought his company, Talento Uno Music. As CEO of Saban Music Group, Lopez seeks ambitious artists to join the newly minted, Latin-flavored organization.

### Not Just a Figurehead

Haim is intimately involved in the development of the company. Every decision, contract negotiation, song selection, producer selection, everything we're doing is coming with his involvement, passion and support. It's a blessing to have a visionary, hit-making machine like him by our side. It's not just Haim Saban making another investment; he's riding the wave with us every day.

### Loving and Realizing the Potential for Latin Music

Haim can call out dozens of Latino artists. He has a soft place [in his heart] for Latin music. On top of that, he's seen the growth and potential the market has now that there are more monetization avenues for music overall in Latin America. We're seeing more and more Latin-influenced music in the US and a lot of growth is coming. The Latin music space is growing at a higher rate than the overall market. And outside the US we see markets that had not been delivering much money to the industry finally coming into their own. The secondary and tertiary markets are beginning to make noise. So there's both a passion and a financial reason behind the makeup of the company.

### Not Just Latin

We're not a Latin-only company. Our company has a Latin flair, but we're not going to shy away from non-Latin artists. We believe music is, more than ever, international and can cross boundaries like it never has. That's who we are. Static & Ben El are an Israeli group that has 450 million views on YouTube. Over 325 million of those are in Hebrew. They're a superstar group in their country and we're looking to launch them outside of Israel in English. That has nothing to do with Latin whatsoever. So the company has a Latin flair, but we're not shying away from any artist or language. We're in the US, so it would be great for any artist to be able to do versions of their songs in English. That's a huge plus. But some of the things we're not doing—we're not doing country music, we're not doing regional Latin music, we're not into the hardcore rap business. We're a pop, Latin dance company.



*"Be consistent. Don't try to be multiple genres. A lot of artists listen to a lot of people and change direction as they go."*

### Language of Music

Three out of the four artists on the label happen to be Hispanic. Marie Monti is a French-born singer-songwriter. She's fluent in English, Spanish and French, but we didn't sign her because she can sing in Spanish. It was just an added value.

### Culling the Flood of Artists

Our [launch announcement] press release turned heads throughout the world. We've had calls from record producers in Germany, Australia, Italy, France, obviously the US and throughout Latin America. We are listening to so much music right now that it's really a matter of asking the basic questions. Who's behind the music? What does the management look like? We're not focused on whether a great artist or band that fits our model has one follower or one billion followers. We're music first because we're in the artist development world. That's our real focus.

### Credibility Counts

It's all about the credibility of who's bringing you music—people's history and how they interact with us speaks for itself. Sometimes it's hard to go through the clutter of music that's out there. But when it's the right person bringing it to you, either through a referral or someone you've worked with in the past, that's usually what makes the difference in getting through the door.

### Plentiful Resources Means a Limited Roster

We only have three artists signed right now and we're probably going to have somewhere between seven and eight artists total. We want to dedicate as many resources and as much financial support [as possible] to a small group of artists. We hope to sign four artists, maybe five, in our first year and build accordingly.

### A Head for Business

We love to engage with creators who love what they do but also have a strong sense of the business. The first meeting is always critical to

make sure the artist is all about the music yet, when we talk about business trends and opportunities, they have a solid head for that as well. Yes, we're talking about music and entertainment and it's a lot of fun, but ultimately it's a business.

### Pitching Genuinely

Pitching music should be simple. It should be, here are my favorite three songs. It could just be a portion of each. It's very important for us who produced and wrote the songs.

And as much video content of you being yourself as you can provide. Sometimes when I get music, I go on their social media and there's no music, there's no connection, there's no pictures of them recording or in the studio or doing renditions of other people's songs. You can really get yourself out of the picture by just not being genuine. We're looking for people who are, first and foremost, musicians. And if you are, everything will fall into place.

### Not For Everybody

Our deals are straightforward; there are no secrets. We are partners, first and foremost, with the artists. We go 50/50 across all income streams, including touring. If you want to tell us, I'm not

going to share my touring, it's totally okay.

Lots of respect for your decision but we're not good partners. Those are the only deals we're negotiating with artists. In a nutshell, we're a boutique label that has the resources of a major. We're also a start-up, but we're unique because we don't need to go anywhere to get funds to develop talent.

### Bringing Reggaeton to the Masses

The first company I launched was a reggaeton company in 2004 called Machete Music. At the time, nobody knew what reggaeton was and most people told us you're crazy, that's not going to last long. It's a fad. And here we are in 2020 and I don't know if there's a more recognized or talked about genre in the world.

### Consistency #1

Be consistent. Don't try to be multiple genres. A lot of artists listen to a lot of people and change direction as they go. They're not sure if they want to be pop artists or dance artists or Latin artists or hip-hop artists. They're almost chasing yesterday's news. Stay true to yourself. It might take long to get there, but every day you spend in this business is one more day of experience and one more day you have the opportunity to present yourself to a new fan. Stick to your guns and your time will come.

### For the Long Haul

We're not for everybody, but we consider ourselves a partner to those we're going to be with. And we won't shy away from investing in our artists for the long haul. If the first single doesn't work, we're going to go after another. If that one doesn't work, we're going to go after another. And so on. Once you're at this company, we already believe in you, we see your commitment, so we're going to be by your side throughout. It takes a lot to break through, but once you do we're going to do everything in our power to help you find success.

**OPPS**

**Small Giant management and record label is looking for an assistant to the CEO.** They want a hard-working, detail-oriented, highly organized person who handles snafus with grace. Do you take pride in tackling any mission given to you, no matter how small? Do you have a passion for supporting an executive so he can take care of the big picture stuff while relying on you to have his back on the details? If this sounds like you then they hope you apply for the position of assistant to the CEO. They are looking for someone to serve as his right-hand support both administratively and personally. Go to ZipRecruiter.

**Universal Music Group is looking for a Manager of Tour & Events for their Republic Records office located in Los Angeles.** In this role, you will liaise with other departments within the label, as well as artists' teams, talent agencies, concert venues and production companies. You will develop and maintain key relationships with others in the industry, including box office personnel, junior staff with agencies and promoters, artist managers, tour managers and label staff. Go to Jobvite for more information.

**An independent record label in Silver Lake, in Los Angeles, is looking for a part-time, in-house employee in a licensing position.** Duties include: Mechanical Licensing, obtaining sync licenses for their recordings for use in videos,

publishing administration work, working with an in-place team on sync requests that come in from third parties who wish to use their masters and compositions in TV shows, films and commercials, and to proactively pitch their catalog for sync use placements, sheet music licensing, and working with third parties whose products and merchandise are made under license from the company. Go to LinkedIn.

**Ottimo Resources, a full-service independent record label dedicated to long-term artist development, is searching for a Marketing Director to join the team.** They are seeking a candidate to drive the marketing activities for their urban artists. This position will be involved in every step of a marketing campaign from concept through execution. The office is located in West Hollywood, CA. Responsibilities and duties include developing overall marketing strategies for their hip-hop, R&B and mainstream artists and releases, and coordinating input from their in-house staff, along with the artist and their team. Go to LinkedIn.

*For More Career Opportunities, check out musicconnection.com daily. And sign up for MC's Weekly Bulletin newsletter.*

**LABELS • RELEASES SIGNINGS**

Death metal band the **Voodoo Gods** have signed a worldwide



**▲ Prine For A Lifetime**

The Recording Academy will honor country-folk singer-songwriter John Prine with a lifetime achievement award in 2020, it was announced. This news follows his critically acclaimed album *The Tree of Forgiveness*, out now on Oh Boy Records, the indie label that Prine co-founded back in 1981 with his manager Al Bunetta and their friend Dan Einstein. Check out ohboy.com.

deal with **Reaper Entertainment**. Since their formation in Tampa, FL, the band has unleashed powerful death/thrash, which is influenced by voodooism, rituals and anti-Christian forces, as well as the spirits of nature. The current singer is **George "Corpsegrinder" Fisher (Cannibal Corpse)**, though

they're keen to point out that it's a band not a side project.

**PROPS**

Congratulations to all of the members of the music press who took home awards at the **LA Press Club National Arts and Entertain-**

**DIY Spotlight**

**NADIA VAEH**

Nadia Vaeh is a believer in the power of pop music, even if it means giving it a darker spin for the sake of honesty. Born in one of today's biggest music hubs—Atlanta, GA—she displayed a love of singing early on that led her mother to enroll her in the Atlanta Youth Choir when she was only seven. From there, Vaeh's passion for music turned into a drive for songwriting and various stints in local bands during her teens. Throughout her journey, she's found herself in traveling choirs, multi-genre projects and even the local Atlanta circus.

This journey was abruptly sidetracked at 17, however, with the devastating death of her mother—a poet and crucial influence in her life. This led to a period of deep pain and instability. Soon enough, Vaeh was ready to return to music. Pushing through the hardships of the industry and the moments of—as she puts it—"learning things the hard way," she put out seven singles

in 2019 alone. Vaeh's music embraces her traumas as part of her artistic voice; she feels that her authenticity is not only healing for herself, but can also help her listeners to get through their own struggles. This artist's deeply personal stories of love, lust, growth and inner strength sit comfortably atop stylish and morose electronic production reminiscent of Dua Lipa and even Billie Eilish. Coupled with catchy melodies and trendy drum programming, Vaeh's voice is emotive.

In addition to her single releases and international radio airplay, 2019 saw Vaeh come out with a mesmerizing cover of the somber Nirvana classic "Heart-Shaped Box." With a story and message all of her own, and plenty more music on the way, Nadia Vaeh is determined to make waves in the world of alt-pop. To keep up with her future releases and performances, visit [NadiaVaeh.com](http://NadiaVaeh.com).



**ment Journalism Awards.** For the full list, go to [lapressclub.org](http://lapressclub.org).

**THE BIZ**

Music-focused social video platform **TRILLER** has announced the addition of eight of the top 10 streaming artists to its roster of investors and partners. TRILLER's new investors include artists **Snoop Dogg, The Weeknd, Marshmello, Lil Wayne, Young Thug, Kendrick Lamar, Baron Davis, Tyga, TI, Jake Paul** and **Troy Carter**.

"We are incredibly fortunate to work with some of the largest artists on the planet, and today's announcement about our increasing portfolio of partnerships and collaborations with top labels and artists marks perhaps the most significant shift in music since the creation of streaming," said **Mike Lu**, Chief Executive Officer of **TRILLER**, via PRNewswire. "We are truly putting the music business back together, and artists recognize the importance of **TRILLER** to the future of the industry."

**Forbes** has announced that **Dr. Dre** was the top earner among music stars in the last decade, pulling in an estimated \$950 million thanks to his 20% stake in the **Beats** headphone company purchased by Apple in 2014. In second place was **Taylor Swift** with \$825 million, followed by **Beyonce** with \$685 million. However, if earnings by deceased stars were included, **Michael Jackson** would come in at number one with an estimated \$2.37 billion.

The lineup for the **2020 South By Southwest Conference & Festivals** is picking up steam, and all industry eyes will be on the "**Future of Music**" conference in March in Austin, TX. Says the SXSW website, "Emerging technologies and cultural trends are transforming the music industry more rapidly than ever before. The Future of Music Track examines these issues by exploring all aspects of the industry, from rights management and immersive live performances to experiential marketing campaigns and more." Further details at [sxsw.com](http://sxsw.com).



**▲ Knights Of The Signing Table**

The '90s influenced country band **Hot Country Knights** has inked a worldwide recording deal with **Universal Music Group Nashville (UMGN)**. Teaming with imprint **Capitol Records Nashville**, the **Knights** are promising "to bring real '90s country music back to a format that's been drowning in male sensitivity, cashmere cardigan sweaters and programmed drum loops." For more information on **The Hot Country Knights**, visit [hotcountryknights.com](http://hotcountryknights.com).

**The LEGAL Beat**

BY GLENN LITWAK



As a music attorney, most of my time is spent drafting and negotiating contracts. But another type of work frequently comes up—getting clients out of contracts, or trying to. When you enter into a legal contract, you can't just terminate it before the term expires because you changed your mind or you don't like the person you contracted with. You must have a valid legal reason, such as the other side breached the contract or there is a law that can be used to terminate it.

Let's examine the twists and turns of the Kanye West vs. EMI litigation. EMI entered into a music publishing contract with Kanye in 2003. The parties

agreed to a number of extensions of the agreement. In January 2019, Kanye filed suit against EMI in federal court in California claiming he had the right to terminate the agreement. Kanye relied on a California statute (known as the 7 Year Rule) that limits personal service contracts to no more than seven years. Kanye claimed that EMI was trying to tie him up in a contract for the rights to his music publishing for the rest of his life

does not have a similar seven year rule.

In September 2019, the parties appeared to have settled the dispute and informed the court that they had "an agreement in principal." Therefore, the Court indicated that the case was dismissed, but the parties had until Dec. 27, 2019 to reopen it.

After failing to finalize a settlement, on Dec. 23, 2019, EMI requested the federal court in New

Often these types of disputes are settled before trial. Record labels and publishers are concerned about losing such a case and setting a bad precedent. There are also attorneys' fees and costs to consider with litigation as well as possible bad publicity. So both sides usually have some incentive to settle.

There are a number of ways cases like this can be resolved. For instance, Kanye can buy himself out of it, he can enter into a new contract with EMI and be paid a new advance or the parties can agree to terminate the contract and agree that EMI will receive an override on any new publishing deal he enters into.

*"When you enter into a legal contract, you can't just terminate it before the term expires because you changed your mind or you don't like the person you contracted with."*

and that amounted to "servitude."

After Kanye filed his case in California, EMI filed a lawsuit in New York federal court asserting that Kanye was attempting to "forum shop" to avoid the provision in his contract, which provided that New York had exclusive jurisdiction over any dispute. EMI claimed New York Law applied and New York

York to re-open the lawsuit and the judge agreed. As stated by TMZ, EMI's lawyers said: "Unfortunately, the parties have been unable to finalize the terms of the settlement agreement." Sometimes in litigation lawsuits appear to settle only to fall apart before a written settlement agreement is signed by the parties. That is what happened in this case.

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

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





# Why I Don't Need TAXI Anymore

*Randon Purcell, TAXI Member*

**M**y name is Randon Purcell, and I'm so busy composing for *several* film and TV music publishers that I don't have time to submit to any new opportunities. I know that sounds ridiculous, but it's absolutely true!

## How did I get so busy?

In a word... TAXI.

Ironically, the very company that showed me the ropes, taught me how to satisfy my clients' needs, and brought me 100 new opportunities a month, is *now* the company I no longer need.

My wife and I live in Utah, we have three awesome sons, and my full-time day gig is creating software and doing web development. I make music part-time, and take advantage of every opportunity I can find to create more. The more music I make, the more placements in TV shows and films I seem to get!

## How TAXI changed my life...

I was finishing up a solo album

5 years ago, and joined TAXI to market my music. There really wasn't a demand for the style of music I was making, but I noticed a huge market for instrumental music. No lyrics to write, no vocals to record, and easier mixes. I started composing for TV and film, and bam, my life was forever changed!

I got a call from a publisher about a cinematic Dubstep track of mine they got from TAXI. That really showed me that I could actually *do* this!

## Need some motivation?

Prior to TAXI, I wrote 10-12 pieces of music per year, in a *good* year. Once I became a TAXI member, I started creating 70-120 pieces of music per year. And that's in my "spare" time!



# TAXI®

*The World's Leading Independent A&R Company*

**818-222-2464 | [www.taxi.com](http://www.taxi.com)**

When people want to *pay* you for your music, it's amazing how much more motivated and productive you become. You'll also get faster and better with each track you write and record.

## How to get started

Don't wait until you've got a big catalog before you join. That's actually the wrong approach. Instead, create what the industry executives *ask* you for, once you become a TAXI member! Don't expect miracles at first, take the advice of TAXI's A&R staff, and go to the Road Rally—TAXI's free convention for members and their guests!

## Why I'm still a TAXI member

TAXI's convention is the best of its kind, and I remain an active member to take advantage of all that education, resources, and unparalleled networking. There's one more reason I'm still a member. TAXI helped me launch my music career. Maybe you should let them help you, too!



**Date Signed:** Aug. 26, 2018

**Label:** Frontiers Records

**Type of Music:** Progressive, Melodic Hard Rock, Metal

**Band Members:** Zak Stevens, vocals; Aldo Lonobile, guitars; Yves Campion, bass; Marco Lazzarini, Antonio Agate, keyboards and piano

**Management:** Frontiers Records

**Booking:** Frontiers Records

**Legal:** Mario De Riso

**Publicity:** Jon Freeman and Frontiers Records

**Web:** facebook.com/archonangelband

**A&R:** Serafino Perugino - Frontiers Records

Under the moniker Archon Angel, veteran metal vocalist Zak Stevens and producer-guitarist Aldo Lonobile recently signed to Frontiers Music SRL before an album was recorded or a live show performed. While signings like this can be mis-categorized under “it’s not what you know but who you know,” we quickly learned about Stevens’ work philosophy which led to such a fruitful opportunity.

Stevens has been singing in metal bands since the early ‘90s, most notably in Savatage and Circle II Circle. And as he explains, this signing wasn’t the first time he had spoken with Frontiers about a record deal. “I had spoken to someone about my band Circle II Circle [around 2011-2012]” jests Stevens. “They explained the roster was full.” Fast forward just under a decade and Frontiers found themselves reaching out to Stevens about new releases. “They said, ‘Hey you’ve been working with this producer, Aldo Lonobile, from Italy on these Avalon records for Timo Tolkki,’” Stevens explains. “He likes everything you did in Savatage and is

*“I’ve been a guest on a lot of albums.”*

kind of a big fan. Why don’t you work together?”

From there the duo began to write the band’s upcoming debut, *Fallen*, with the help of additional musicians and Stevens’ wife penning the lyrics. “I asked her, why don’t you be my Bernie Taupin and let me be Elton John?” he mused. “She [also] came up with the Archon Angel name and concept.”

It’s not uncommon for metal bands to hang it up after a few decades. Stevens, instead, was sure to keep relevant through Trans-Siberian Orchestra, teaching vocal lessons over Skype and following a simple philosophy of saying yes to all new opportunities. He offered that advice to up-and-coming and veteran singers alike.

“Do as many different recordings as you can. I’ve been a guest on a lot of albums, and played drums on others. ... Every time somebody calls me and says, ‘Hey you wanna sing on my album coming out in Europe?’ I don’t turn them down because I really look at them as a learning opportunity. ... You can usually take something away from virtually everything you do, ‘cause every band’s art is beautiful and different.”

*Fallen* will be released in early 2020. — **Andy Mesecher**



**Date Signed:** May 2019

**Label:** Sign From The Universe Entertainment, LLC

**Band Members:** Alexa Villa

**Type of Music:** Pop/Rock

**Management:** N/A

**Booking:** N/A

**Legal:** N/A

**Publicity:** Monica Hopman, monica@thinkpress.net

**Web:** alexavilla.com

**A&R:** Stacy Ray

Based in Los Angeles, Alexa Villa is the perfect example of how taking the time to explore who you are as an artist—while talking unabashedly to everyone you meet about who you are and what you do—can open doors. While standing in line for a concert in Los Angeles, she struck up a conversation with a label assistant. After exchanging contact information and sending links to her music and videos (something Villa has done continuously), a meeting was set with the boss, which led to signing with the label Sign From The Universe.

After a break from her band Oversoul, Villa felt the need to branch out. Her *Act I* EP solo release in 2017 revealed a new sound and momentum grew from there. “Performing is such a powerful way for me to connect with others,” she says. “It is easier for me to say what I’m trying to say through music than to have a conversation.” Villa is now clearer than ever about who she is and where she wants to go musically. With her first single, “Own It,” coming out later this month, expect to see much more authentic expression from her.

*“Everything came from hitting the pavement.”*

After working so hard independently, the joy of being signed came from having a strong supportive team—the label provides the marketing and promotional budget—that gives her the freedom to focus on music and writing. Excited by the release of fresh material, Villa is now delving into new collaborations and loves all that she is learning in the process: “There is something about creating something out of nothing to connect with others and paint a picture.”

Villa’s deal was originally a single-song release, but the agreement grew to three singles, with a possible EP release in 2020 after more content was shaped following a listening party. Says Sign From the Universe’s A&R exec Stacy Ray, “Alexa pulls your guts out. She is the new rock. She speaks to everyone: relevant, empowering and a talented voice in this new era of music.”

When asked about advice for artists looking to be noticed and signed, Villa shared, “Everything came from hitting the pavement. Try new things, talk to everyone all the time and fearlessly follow your creative instincts. Be yourself when you are creating and trust who you are.” — **Andrea Beenham**



# LIL LOTUS

**Date Signed:** Aug. 22, 2019  
**Label:** Epitaph Records  
**Band Members:** Lil Lotus  
**Type of Music:** Emo-rap  
**Management:** Roger Gengo  
**Booking:** Jason Parent - APA  
**Legal:** Sebastian Zar - Sedlmayr & Associates, P.C  
**Publicity:** Michele Stephens, michele@epitaph.com  
**Web:** lilxlodus.com, @lilxlodus on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter

Lil Lotus is being heralded as something of a rarity right now—a hip-hop artist that has just signed with punk label Epitaph. It seems like a departure on the surface, but dig a little deeper and it makes complete sense.

Besides the fact that Lotus was previously in punk bands, such as Begotten, prior to starting up this solo project, the music isn't that much of a left turn. Rather, there's still a post-hardcore vibe, albeit with more electronic instrumentation and production.

Lotus started making music when he was about eight years old, and then started playing in bands when he was in his mid-teens. When he hit his twenties, his career really took off. Through his early years he had listened to a whole range of musical styles before he started to refine his tastes.

"My dad made me listen to everything," he says. "He wouldn't let me just listen to one artist. He had me listen to Marvin Gaye, the Bee Gees, Journey, all the pop and hip-hop that was on the radio. Even praise and worship music. But once I took the wheel and said this is what I want to

***"He wouldn't let me just listen to one artist."***

listen to, it was mostly rock and metal. A lot of post-hardcore, melodic hardcore and pop-punk."

Lotus cringes when he hears people describe his music as emo-rap, which is understandable. Still, styles are definitely being blended.

"It just depends on what I hear and where the guitars are coming from," he says. "I don't necessarily know what I would call it. It's like the new pop-punk with 808's. It's hard for me to confidently put a name to it but overall it's a big fusion of everything I've ever liked."

He certainly feels comfortable at Epitaph, a label that he has admired for a long time. Back in his band days, he swore that one day he would make a music video with the Epitaph logo in the corner.

"My manager asked me over the phone if I'd heard of 'Ebida,' and I said that I hadn't heard of them," Lotus says. "He said that they want to talk to me and work something out, so I told him to send me their info. He sends me the roster and I was like, 'You idiot, it's fucking Epitaph.'" I had talked to hella labels before but the kid in me that had grown up listening to Epitaph bands knew that I would feel comfortable there."

Lotus is currently putting the finishing touches to his debut album for the label and then he's heading out on tour for as long as possible.

"I just got out of a crazy relationship so I just wanna tour all year," he says. "Putting out the album, a bunch of collaborations with my friends—just make some crazy shit. I just wanna piss some people off." — **Brett Callwood**



# MARCUS KING

**Date Signed:** Jan. 1, 2016  
**Label:** Fantasy Records/Easy Eye Sound  
**Type of Music:** Blues/R&B/Rock  
**Management:** AMFM Management  
**Booking:** WME  
**Legal:** Kent Marcus  
**Publicity:** Doug Hall, doug@bigfeatpr.com  
**Web:** marcuskingband.com  
**A&R:** Joe McEwen

"Don't forget where you came from and know your worth." These words, passed down from his musician father and grandfather, have been a career mantra for young Marcus King. The 23-year-old Greenville, SC native, who now resides in Nashville, is embarking on his debut solo recording with the album *El Dorado*. Produced by The Black Keys' Dan Auerbach, it's an exploration of King's diverse musical palette as a songwriter, guitarist and lead vocalist. "I got a call in 2018 through Dan's representative," explains King. "We met in Nashville and became really fast buddies. A year later I moved there and we got in the studio and cut this record."

King began his musical journey while barely in his teens. He attended high school, worked odd jobs during the week and gigged with bands on weekends. "I was getting a lot of experience and trying to work

***"The only person that could hold me back would be me."***

my way into the clubs," recalls King. "I hired a band that was all older musicians and professional cats. I'd work out deals to allow bands to be my chaperones. In those early days it was a lot of movin' and shakin' and learning a lot of lessons too." When he was barely 18, King formed the Marcus King Band. From the Carolinas down to Atlanta, GA, they toured relentlessly. One night they had the opportunity to play in Nashville for a "New Faces" showcase. Fantasy Records A&R rep Joe McEwen was in the audience and signed them on the spot. "To me there was no way to go but up," says King. "I had it very clear in my mind at a young age that the only person that could hold me back would be me. There was only one way to go and that was forward."

The Marcus King Band has previously released three full-length albums, but *El Dorado*, at least on record, will be the first solo venture aside from his band. "I brought a lot of ideas to the writing sessions, and Dan and I wrote this record collaboratively, which is different than how I've ever worked in the past," explains King. "It was a learning curve for me. It strengthened my voice and what I needed to say. They helped me build a record around a story that needed to be told on my behalf." "It's a coming of age story," continues King on the new Auerbach imprint release. "The band and I are still cookin' and doing our thing, but this was a departure for me. It was a chance to take a step back from everything I've previously done and tell the story as it's been so far." — **Eric Harabadian**



**▲ Variety Toasts Billie Eilish**

The Variety's Hitmakers Brunch sponsored by Citi took place at Soho House West Hollywood. Billie Eilish was honored as Variety's Hitmaker of the Year. Pictured (l-r): Billie Eilish and co-writer, producer and brother Finneas O'Connell.

**► SCL's First-Ever Awards Show**

The award show was held at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles on Jan. 8 and included special performances from *Us* composer Michael Abels with the 38-piece SAG-AFTRA singers, violinist Philippe Quint and singer Dannielle D'Andrea, who was accompanied by veteran saxophonist Gene Cipriano. The SCL honored composers and lyricists in five categories, plus a special award to 1917 composer Thomas Newman and director Sam Mendes. Pictured at the event (l-r): FMSMF Exec. Director, Kim Roberts Hedgpeth and SCL President, Ashley Irwin.



**Songwriting University: Connecting to the Masters**

Songwriting University is providing experienced or novice songwriters one-on-one access to the world's top songwriters. Based in Nashville, TN, this online platform allows you to book a two-hour session online or in-person with a hit songwriter. The new endeavor is headed up by former A&R executive and producer Michael Blanton (Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith), and entrepreneur Gary Glover (founder of Nashville Arts & Entertainment Magazine), along with prolific songwriters Billy Sprague and Joe Beck.

Songwriting University is kicking off its launch by hosting an online songwriting competition with a \$10,000 grand prize. Other cash prizes will be awarded to the winner and runner up in each genre category. Original songs can be entered now at [songwritingu.com](http://songwritingu.com). Deadline for submissions is Mar. 1.

**ASCAP Experience Amps Up for Spring**

ASCAP Experience (formerly the ASCAP "I Create Music" EXPO), the largest gathering of music creators in the country, announced the first wave of programming for its 15th annual conference, April 1-3, 2020 at the InterContinental Hotel in Downtown LA.

The 2020 ASCAP Experience tracks include Brand, Wellness, Money, Create, Get Heard, Live Music and Network. Whether participants want to learn more about innovative ways to fund their careers or how to maintain their well-being, the ASCAP Experience will help equip music creators with the tools they need to succeed.

This three-day event will be filled with powerful performances, networking mixers, showcase opportunities and dozens of panels led by chart-topping music creators and top-level industry executives. Previous keynote speakers and panelists include Billie Eilish and FINNEAS, Stevie Wonder, Quincy Jones, Justin Timberlake, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Katy Perry and Tom Petty. Upcoming lineup announcements will follow throughout early 2020. Stay in touch at [ascap.com](http://ascap.com), on Twitter and Instagram @ASCAP and on Facebook.

**Sight and Sound at the CCC**

On Tuesday, Feb. 11, Emmy-nominated music composer Kris Bowers and Emmy-nominated music supervisor Aaron Byrd join the CCC to share and explore both the business and creative aspects of their involvement with the high-profile Netflix-distributed *When They See Us*, which was also nominated for an Emmy as Outstanding Limited Series. The two will be featured in an engaging evening of discussion surrounding the talent, preparation and serendipity intertwined in forging such an opportunity for their respective professional platforms. Attorney Garrett Johnson will moderate.

The event will be held at the Courtyard Marriott, 15433 Ventura Blvd., Sherman Oaks, CA. Registration information is at [theccc.org](http://theccc.org).

**Durango Songwriters In Ventura, CA**

Durango Songwriters Expo will hold their annual winter event from Feb. 20-22 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Ventura, CA. Panel discussions, listening sessions and



**▲ Natalie Merchant Honored**

Music icon and champion for social change Natalie Merchant was presented with The ASCAP Foundation Champion Award in New York. Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter and ASCAP Foundation board member Jason Mraz took the stage to present The ASCAP Foundation Life in Music Award to composer and leading music educator Francisco J. Núñez. Pictured (L-R): Colleen McDonough, ASCAP Foundation Executive Director; Núñez and Merchant.



**▲ Miranda Lambert Pulls the Pistol**

Miranda Lambert and trio Pistol Annies (Pictured: Lambert, Ashley Monroe and Angaleena Presley) have wrapped a whirlwind year and are looking into the future. Lambert's *Wildcard* and Pistol Annies' *Interstate Gospel* are testimony to wicked songcraft and sterling artistry.

live showcases are all a part of this intimate and engaging event. Attracting songwriters and music industry folks from Los Angeles and Nashville, the event will feature a prominent group of music supervisors. For performers, the Expo will be selecting singer-songwriters for live showcases on Thurs., Feb. 20 and Fri. Feb 21. Performers can submit for opportunities to showcase in front of major music industry decision makers.

Deadline for showcase submissions is Feb. 9. For registration information, check out Durango-songwriters.com. You can also call the event's dedicated producer Jim Attebery at 970-259-9747.

### MerleFest/Chris Austin Songwriting

MerleFest, considered one of the premier music festivals in the country, serves as an annual homecoming for musicians and music fans. Held on the campus of Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, MerleFest was founded in 1988 in memory of the late Eddy Merle Watson, son of American music legend Doc Watson. MerleFest is a celebration of "traditional plus" music, a unique mix of music based on the traditional, roots-oriented sounds of the Appalachian region, including bluegrass and old-time music, and expanded to include Americana, country, blues, rock and many other styles. The festival hosts numerous artists performing on 13 stages during the course of the four-day event. The annual event has become the primary fundraiser for the WCC Foundation, funding scholarships, capital projects and other educational needs.

MerleFest offers songwriters the opportunity to have their original

songs heard by a panel of professional songwriters and others from the Nashville music industry by participating in the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest. The 2019 judges were Joey Ryan and Kenneth Pattengale, better known as The Milk Carton Kids, Cruz Contreras of The Black Lillies, and Texas troubadour Radney Foster. Grammy-winning singer-songwriter Jim Lauderdale was volunteer chair of the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest, and Mark Bumgarner, musician and songwriter, was emcee for the 2019 competition. Both have agreed to be a part of the CASC for 2020.

Net proceeds from the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest help support the WCC Chris Austin Memorial Scholarship. Deadline for entries is Feb. 1. Visit merlefest.org/casc for details.

### Tin Pan South Lights Up Nashville

The famous Nashville songwriters festival, Tin Pan South, takes place Mar. 24-28. Produced by Nashville Songwriters International (NSAI), the long-running event features hit songwriters in intimate settings all across Music City. Concurrent with the event is the Songwriting Seminar, featuring classes, panels and workshops with artists, producers and instructors. Among the guests are songwriters Kevin Kadish ("All About That Bass" by Meghan Trainor), Josh Osborne ("Drinkin' Problem" by Midland) and many others.

Visit nashvillesongwriters.com for all information.

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



#### ▲ Allee Willis: Songwriter, Iconoclast, Legend

Song Biz notes the passing of Allee Willis, creator of hits for Earth, Wind & Fire, The Pointer Sisters, the *Friends* theme song, and a Tony Award nominee for co-writing songs for the musical *The Color Purple*. A Grammy winner and inductee into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, the Detroit native and longtime Los Angeles resident was 72.



#### ▲ BMI Parties in Atlanta

BMI festivities, sponsored by Hennessy, brought out ATL hitmakers and partygoers. Pictured (l-r): Mannie Fresh; Catherine Brewton, BMI's Vice President, Creative, Atlanta; Big Boi; Dallas Austin and Sean Garrett at the annual BMI Atlanta holiday party at Cape Dutch.



#### ▲ AIMP Honors Atlas Music

The New York Chapter of the Association of Independent Music Publishers (AIMP) hosted a party and presented the AIMP NY Indie Award to Atlas Music Publishing CEO-Founder Rich Stumpf and COO-Partner Phil Cialdella. Pictured (l-r): Cialdella; Warren Haynes, Gov't Mule, The Allman Brothers Band, and The Dead; Stumpf; Alisa Coleman, President, AIMP New York Chapter, COO, ABKCO Music & Records, Inc., and Peter Primont, former CEO, Cherry Lane Music Publishing.

#### ▶ Wyclef Jean Unites with Sound Royalties

Three-time Grammy winner Wyclef Jean and entertainment industry finance firm Sound Royalties have united with Carnival World Music Group. Wyclef is using financing from Sound Royalties to back the publishing-distribution company that will focus on talent in Africa and other underserved markets. In June, at Cannes Lions, Jean will serve as jury president in the Music category. Wyclef and Sound Royalties' Alex Heiche will also lead a Master Class on music production and monetization at MIDEM prior to Cannes. Pictured (l-r) Wyclef Jean and Alex Heiche.



# Robert Tepper

*Over the Top and Larger Than Life*

Upon first listening, Robert Tepper's latest release, *Better Than The Rest*, sounds like the songwriter and vocalist has discovered a magical formula for capturing the alchemy of classic rock in sonic amber. Anthemic choruses and impassioned vocals are emblazoned with cataclysmic drums and razor edged guitars—a historic sound steeped in authenticity, recast into the present.

Tepper knows that the '80s is a decade easily parodied. "The stigma of long hair, furry boots and the parking lot of The Whisky," says the engaging, Jersey-accented Tepper. "But the engineers of that time were groundbreaking. The records are live movies—huge drum and guitar sounds and gang vocals. We said, 'What if they never stopped making these records? What would they sound like today?'"

In tandem with guitarist and songwriter Pablo Padilla, Tepper tracked *Better Than The Rest*, his first full length since 2012. The project is released on the German label AOR Heaven. "Pablo and I are partners. I engineered and mixed with his feedback. When we started writing, songs with complete lyrics were coming out in single sessions. We weren't thinking about making a record. We weren't worried about someone looking over our shoulder. If AOR hadn't stepped in, we would have self-released it."

Aloft on expansive melodies, Tepper's newest songs soar with sheer adrenaline. But there are deeper textures; "Time Just This Time" and "You Know Just How You Feel" project a poignant sensitivity. Insistent hooks are imbued in lyrics, melodies, arrangements and productions. "I'm a guy who grew up on the Beatles and the Stones. I'd sit and listen to the record and sing every part. Everything was a hook—even the reverbs were hooks—that's how I learned to write. I'm a song person first. That's how I made my bones and got on the map," avows Tepper.

Bones indeed: As a songwriter, Tepper co-wrote the enduring hit, "Into the Night," with the artist Benny Mardones. It charted twice, in 1980 and 1989, and in 2010 Usher released his version of the song. More recently, an extended remix version by Eric Kupper, produced by Joel Diamond, hit the Top 10 on the Billboard Dance charts and reintroduced the song to a new audience, proving the song's remarkable longevity.

In the mid-'80s, "No Easy Way Out," showcasing Tepper as an artist, propelled him into the mainstream. It was featured in the Sylvester Stallone film *Rocky IV* and was included on the global best-selling soundtrack. Tepper was signed to Scotti Brothers Records and his studio album of the same name was released in 1986. "Scotti Bros. didn't give me shit money for the tour. I wasn't out there that long," notes Tepper.

Tepper is the father of five children. His sons, Julian and Max, were founding members of the band The Natural History. One of their songs, "Don't You Evah," became a left field hit as recorded by the group Spoon. Julian Tepper is also a novelist now, finishing *Between the Records*, due for publication in March 2020. A chapter previewed by Playboy magazine reveals the story of a young kid in Hollywood whose driven and distracted father is a hard-living rocker. "It's loosely based on the truth," Tepper professes. "The first galley was a tough read for me, but I'm excited to read it again."

Comparing his 1985 voice to his current recordings, Tepper's vocals are remarkably commanding in the present. "I'm working out all of the time. If I couldn't do it, or if I sounded wobbly, I wouldn't have made this album just to make it," he says. "I feel like I communicate. I'm really proud of what's going on. It's like Yogi Berra said, 'It's like déjà vu all over again.' I want the whole world to hear this record."

With a strong response in France, Holland, Belgium, Spain and the UK, European audiences are suitably appreciative. He has inked with a European agency, AHMM, for future tours, and he recently played the H.E.A.T. Festival in Germany. "The place was going fucking nuts," enthuses the artist. "I was floored. I said to myself, 'You're up here—enjoy this.'"



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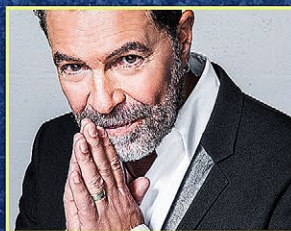
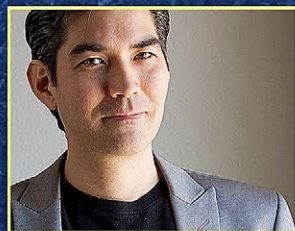
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DROPS

**Pink Floyd Records** recently released *Pink Floyd The Later Years*, an 18-disc set covering the material created by **David Gilmour**, **Nick Mason** and **Richard Wright** from 1987 on. This period generated record sales of over 40 million worldwide and included three studio albums: *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*, *The Division Bell* and *The Endless River*, as well as two live albums: *Delicate Sound Of Thunder* and *Pulse*.

With additional production from Gilmour and **Andy Jackson**, the set includes over 13 hours of unreleased audio and audiovisual material, including the 1989 Venice and 1990 Knebworth concerts. To celebrate the release, British immersive technology studio **Draw & Code** has developed an immersive, augmented reality experience that allows fans to explore the new album covers featured in the box set and personalize their own versions. For more, contact Maria.Malta@sonymusic.com.



If you're still feeling the post-holiday blues and wistful for Christmas in the Big Apple, you can still enjoy this music video released in December by actress, singer, author and New York native **Lea Michele** at bit.ly/2uxEdZr. Titled "**Christmas in New York**," the original track came from her first-ever holiday album, *Christmas in the City*.

The video finds Michele in an urban winter wonderland with shots of iconic NYC landmarks, including the Empire State Building, Central Park and the Rockefeller Center ice rink. The artist reunited with *Glee* songwriter-producers **Adam Anders** and **Peer Astrom** for her holiday



LEA MICHELE

album, which includes her original songs as well as holiday hits like "**Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas**," "**Silent Night**" and "**Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree**." Lea also starred in ABC's holiday movie *Same Time, Next Christmas*. For more information, contact jamie.bertel@sonymusic.com.

*High in the Clouds*, a 2005 children's adventure novel by **Geoff Dunbar**, **Philip Ardagh** and legendary songwriter, filmmaker and Beatle **Paul McCartney**, will be adapted by Netflix and Gaumont into a new animated feature film. The film will be directed by Oscar nominee **Timothy Reckart** with production and original songs by McCartney. **Bob Shaye** (*The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*, *The Golden Compass*) will also produce this film about a teenage squirrel named Wirral who finds himself pulled into a gang of teen rebels who

live in the clouds. Plans to adapt the work for film were first announced in 2013. A release date has not yet been announced. Contact Michael Moses at mmoses@netflix.com for more details.

Composers and longtime musical collaborators **Jacob Yoffee** and **Roahn Hylton** have teamed up for the eight-episode documentary series produced, hosted and narrated by **Robert Downey Jr.**, *The Age of A.I.* The series features experts in science, philosophy and other areas as they explore the impact of artificial intelligence and how it is transforming the way we live and work, both now and in the future.

The first four episodes of the series were released on **YouTube Premium** on Dec. 18. Yoffee has a background in classical and jazz roots music, while Hylton's background is in hip-hop and pop, resulting in an interesting score for the series that blends orchestral and acoustic chamber music with electronic elements. For more details, contact Maïke Eilert at maïke@whitebearpr.com.



VIDE NOIR

Last fall, **Lord Huron** and director **Ariel Vida** announced that they will be bringing their album *Vide Noir* to life in a feature-length film of the same name sometime in early 2020. The film is a neo-noir mystery set in late-'60s Los Angeles, chronicling a man's nighttime search for his missing fiancé. Directed by Vida and written by Lord Huron's **Ben Schneider**, the film features a score by the band with new arrangements throughout. It features newcomer **Victor Mascitelli** and *The Goldfinch* star **Ashleigh Cummings**. View a sneak peak at bit.ly/2QYlq10. A release date has not yet been announced at the time of this writing. Contact Taylor.Vaughn@umusic.com.



The soundtrack for the film **Color Out of Space**, starring **Nicolas Cage**, was released Jan. 24 with music by Grammy-winning saxophonist, songwriter and composer **Colin Stetson**. Stetson, who has collaborated with **Bon Iver**, **Arcade Fire**, **Tom Waits**, **LCD Soundsystem**, **The National** and more, created a blistering score to accompany the sci-fi thriller based on the short story by **H.P. Lovecraft** about a man and his family battling an extraterrestrial that infects their minds and bodies. Contact George Corona at [geo@terrorbird.com](mailto:geo@terrorbird.com).



registration details and a forthcoming list of panels and speakers.

## PROPS

**The Doors: Break on Thru—A Celebration of Ray Manzarek** is coming to cinemas worldwide for a one-night only event on Feb. 12. The film will bring fans of **The Doors** and the band's legendary co-founder keyboardist, the late **Ray Manzarek**, together in theaters to celebrate Manzarek's legacy on his birthday. This all-star documentary was filmed at the Fonda Theatre in Los Angeles with surviving Doors members **Robby Krieger** and **John**

## Out Take



## Inon Zur

Composer

**Web:** [inonzur.com](http://inonzur.com)  
**Contact:** Greg O'Conner-Read, [greg@topdollarpr.com](mailto:greg@topdollarpr.com)  
**Most Recent:** *The Elder Scrolls: Blades*

Initially an aspiring jazz pianist, Inon Zur found his way into "the wonderful, rich world" of composing for film, TV and video games through happy accidents, including a job in the mid-'90s as a composer for the Fox Family channel. Everything about video game scoring really captured his imagination, Zur says. "One thing about video games is that with movies or TV, the picture dictates exactly what you do, and that's limiting. I found that video game creators really have the guts to take on new approaches to scoring. They always look for originality in developing the musical tone for their games. I love to always test boundaries and look outside the box when it comes to writing music for new games, which comes with lots of challenges, but it also makes my day," he says.

Among those challenges is having to brainstorm the musical direction of a new game franchise. One he personally deems among his most successful is the music he wrote for Disney's video game *Fantasia*, which he recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra. He also counts the *Fallout* franchise as one of his greatest achievements, as the music is written "loud and clear in [his] own voice" with its combination of classical and hybrid instrumentation.

Zur recently told one of his sons, an aspiring composer, that maybe 60 percent of success is really up to chance. "That [percent is] not up to you—basically there has to be some kind of situation where you get a break, and maybe that has to do with luck or timing. It's sad to say, but that's so important, and it's why there are so many talented musicians but only some are making it and others aren't. What you do have control over is having a hardworking mentality.

"That means working every day, for hours a day. Even if you don't have projects going on, [compose], so when opportunity arrives, you're ready to dive in. The rest is obvious." •

## OPPS

**New York University** began accepting applications for its summer scoring workshops starting Jan. 15. Workshop focuses include scoring for film, television, video games and advertising, and allows participants to learn more about the craft and create their own work alongside New York's best in the industry.

For more information about the workshops and application guidelines and deadlines, visit [bit.ly/35EqoWb](http://bit.ly/35EqoWb).

**The National Alliance for Musical Theatre 2020 Spring Conference** will be held in Chicago on March 25-27 at Chicago Shakespeare Theater and The Marriott Theatre. This annual event convenes professionals throughout the music theater world to network and discuss the craft.

A complete agenda on conference sessions

**Densmore** onstage for the first time in 15 years, along with exclusive interviews.

It also includes performances by **Foo Fighters' Taylor Hawkins** and **Rami Jaffe**, **Stone Temple Pilots' Robert DeLeo**, **Paul McCartney's Brian Ray**, **X's Exene** and **John Doe**, **Jane's Addiction's Stephen Perkins**, **Gov't Mule's Warren Haynes** and more. For further details, contact [jason.elzy@rhino.com](mailto:jason.elzy@rhino.com).

In 2020, the 20th anniversary of the **World Soundtrack Awards** will take place on Oct. 24 at Capitale Gent to celebrate the best in film music. Last year's winners included **Nicholas Britell** for Film Composer of the Year for *If Beale Street Could Talk*, and "Shallow" from *A Star is Born* for Best Original Song Written Directly for a Film.

The dates for next year's **Film Fest Gent** are set for Oct. 13-24. Audiences will be offered a program of more than 100 full-length



and activities is forthcoming. Visit [namt.org/events/spring-conference-2020/](http://namt.org/events/spring-conference-2020/) for registration details.

**The 35th Annual Winter Music Conference** will return to Miami Beach on March 16-19. WMC is the longest-running event of its kind, bringing together music industry professionals to discuss and hold events on the intersection of music, technology, education and culture. Check out [wintermusicconference.com](http://wintermusicconference.com) for

features and shorts from all over the world. Information about the Film Fest Gent can be found at [filmfestival.be/en](http://filmfestival.be/en) and about the WSA at [worldsoundtrackawards.com/en](http://worldsoundtrackawards.com/en). Contact Kim Verthé for further details at [kim@filmfestival.be](mailto:kim@filmfestival.be).

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

## ► Ricch Sells Out Antisocial Tour

Roddy Ricch kicked off his sold-out Antisocial Tour with a hometown show at the Hollywood Palladium. He is set to continue his first-ever North American headline tour on Jan. 14 at Seattle's The Showbox. The shows will continue into February with stops in Montreal, Chicago and Detroit. For more info, visit [roddyricchofficial.com/tour](http://roddyricchofficial.com/tour).



## ▲ Clark is Easy Like Sunday Morning

Grammy-winning artist Gary Clark Jr. was the musical guest on *CBS Sunday Morning* on Jan. 12. CBS visited Clark at his Austin, TX, home for an intimate interview and performance. He has been nominated for four Grammy's this year for the song, album and video "This Land." Clark will also be performing at The Grammy Salute to Prince.



## ◀ Styles Brings the Love Bus to LA

Harry Styles partnered with American Express for his sold out show at the Forum entitled Harry Styles Fine Line Live: One Night Only, which included a surprise performance from Stevie Nicks. The Harry Styles Love Bus by American Express surprised fans with tickets to the show and was present on show night. Fans were able to hang out and explore the '70s style vehicle before the concert.



## ▲ Defoe Kicks Off the New Year with KGUP

Rising LA alternative artist Defoe kicked off the New Year with an interview with Mikey Jayy at KGUP Presents. Her current single "Something's Happening" has already garnered more than 650,000 views on YouTube. Pictured (l-r): Ed Bunker (NP!M PR and Marketing), Mikey Jayy (KGUP Presents), Defoe, and Defoe manager Ron Winter (The Red Jumpsuit Apparatus).

## Tidbits From Our Tattered Past



### ▲ Dead & Company Went on a Fun Run

Dead & Company rang in the new year with the second of two sold-out concerts at San Francisco's Chase Center closing out the band's 2019 Fun Run, which also included two shows at the Fabulous Forum in Los Angeles. Just before midnight, seven-foot-tall Basketball Hall of Famer Bill Walton took the stage as Father Time alongside friend Wavy Gravy to help bring in the new year.



### 1993—Bee Gees—#22

The successful brothers Gibb were busy promoting their latest album, *Size Isn't Everything*, when we spoke with them. "For this album," said Barry, "we thought, let's make music that we like and not worry about other people in the business telling us what kind we should make." The issue also features live reviews of Juliana Hatfield Three and Morbid Angel.



### ◀ Nederlander Has Cirque Dreams

Nederlander Concerts presented *Cirque Dreams Holiday* from Dec. 13-15 at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. Sarah Bauers, Event and Marketing Coordinator for Dolby Theatre and Vanessa Kromer, VP of Communications for Nederlander celebrated with Cirque performers prior to the show. Pictured: Bauers and Kromer with performers.



### 2004—Brandy—#18

In this vintage issue's cover story on the multi-faceted soul-pop performer Brandy, she revealed to us how she prefers to work with her collaborator in the studio. "I had great chemistry with Rodney Jerkins, Timbaland and Kanye West. I'd rather have a raw track so I can give my all, and the producer can then add his own flavor." Elsewhere, we profiled busy producer Ed Buller (Ben Lee, Pulp, Psychedelic Furs).

### ▶ Sutherland Performs an Exclusive Set at The Troubadour

Actor-musician Kiefer Sutherland performed an exclusive concert at LA's historic Troubadour in West Hollywood. Rising star, New Mexico's Max Gomez, opened the night. Donning a white Lone Ranger-style cowboy hat, Sutherland strutted on stage to perform originals and covers, his Johnny Cash-like voice soaring throughout the room.



ALEX SEYMOUR

A close-up portrait of Trippie Redd. She has her hair in braids, some of which are dyed orange. Her face is covered in vibrant, multi-colored makeup, including silver and pink eye makeup and a purple lip. She is wearing a purple top and a thick silver chain necklace. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# TRIPPIE REDD

By Daniel Siwek  
Photos by Aidan Cullen

**T**rippie Redd (20, born Michael White) hails from Canton, OH, and got his big break when he was “discovered” by Lil Wop in Atlanta. He has been an Angelino (you can hear him repping “NoHo” on his tracks) for a couple of years now. He’s two albums and—with the recent release of *A Love Letter to You 4*—five mixtapes and seven EPs into his flourishing career. *Love Letter* is his fourth consecutive release in 15 months to enter the Top 5 on The Billboard 200 albums chart. But where *Love Letter 3* and the previous two albums (*Life’s A Trip* and *!*) debuted at #3, #4 and #3 respectively, his latest exploded out of the gate at the top spot on the hip-hop charts and it reached #1 on The Billboard 200.

Part of a breed of over-emotional rappers (emo rap), just a couple of days before his *Music Connection* interview and following the death of his friend and collaborator Juice WRLD (who appears on *Love Letter 4*, and is the latest in a string of emo rap pharmaceutical deaths) Trippie Redd took to Instagram to implore followers of the genre to stay off the pills and the lean (aka purple drank aka sizzurp, basically promethazine or codeine, hard candy and soda).

Though Redd can be seen sipping out of a typical Styrofoam cup associated with lean in his recent video for “Love Me More,” he swears off all drugs, telling fans to stick to weed.

We caught up with him on the way to a movie set, and getting ready for his upcoming European tour.

**Music Connection:** Where are you and what are you doing right now?

**Trippie Redd:** I’m in LA, I live here, and I’m on my way to do a movie scene right now. It’s always been about being versatile with everything in my life, and I’m trying to accomplish everything I can while I’m alive and well.

**MC:** You are from Ohio, you made it out of Atlanta but now you live in Los Angeles. Did moving to Los Angeles influence your writing, with songs such as “Topanga” [from the last mixtape in the series, *A Love Letter to You 3*]?

**Trippie Redd:** With “Topanga” I was out here and I was riding through the hills before I got famous out here, and it just came up in my head out of nowhere. There’s a Charles Manson reference, which was what I was trying to do with the video. That’s why the video is so dark, because it’s on some Charles Manson shit.

**MC:** Rappers like Kid Cudi made it while based in Ohio. Why did you go to Atlanta to find your success? And was it a welcoming city for you?

**Trippie Redd:** Atlanta was fun. I loved it. It was a good time to go work in Atlanta. There was a whole new era going up, a lot of stuff going on to where I could do what I needed to do.

**“I love KISS.  
‘Psycho Circus’  
[from the 1998  
album of same  
name] is my  
favorite song  
by them.”**

**MC:** Your new release debuted at #1 on the hip-hop charts and just went #1 on the Billboard Top 200 albums chart. How does that feel? And is it important for you to achieve such goals?

**Trippie Redd:** That feels amazing, super amazing. What makes me happy is just making music and actually getting to put it out, more so than going number one. But I feel like it’s a long-term goal that my fans have for themselves, and I ultimately reached that goal, but I’m more nostalgic for when the older hip-hop records went gold and platinum. Going number one helps that go faster.

**MC:** What are some of those early influences on you?

**Trippie Redd:** I listened to a lot of hip-hop and R&B, like the older stuff that my parents would listen to, like Tupac, Ja Rule, Alicia Keys, Mariah Carey and Missy Elliot. Just a whole lot of stuff. I love that whole era, I’m so nostalgic for it and I try to bring the older shit to my newer shit that I put out.

**MC:** I read that you also listened to KISS. Did their characters and theatricality influence your having a “persona” and a stage show, as well?

**Trippie Redd:** I love KISS. “Psycho Circus” [from the 1998 album of same name] is my favorite song by them. They actually wanted to meet me. I’ve been influenced by them for sure. I’m even going all out for my upcoming *Love Letter to You 4* Tour. It’s definitely going to be like a forest vibe on the stage and it’s going to look like, how can I put this...? Almost very blissful and beautiful and airy, almost like a play. There’s a lot going on. I think we are going to make it rain on stage and have confetti and shit. I’m trying to go all out with my performances, because I want the fans to experience the music like I do in my head.

**MC:** How does *A Love Letter to You 4* connect to the previous releases, if at all?

**Trippie Redd:** *A Love Letter to You* itself is a mixtape, and basically the concept behind this mixtape is all aspects of love. The grunginess and the heart and the music together make it a work of art. It makes it sound like an album. They all end up coming out different, but there is also something about what I always put in them that makes them the same too. Something like *Life’s a Trip* is an album, I was trying to be more alternative. When I work on an album, I pick a goal, I pick a specific thing to focus on with that album. And I really have been thinking about making *Life’s a Trip 2*, honestly, because I want to go for a more alternative feel and do more ambient guitar stuff and bring back the little rapping shit I was doing. But with this one I was trying to do everything

**MC:** Speaking of ambient guitar stuff, your music is very song oriented, with verses and choruses and lots of guitar textures [courtesy of producer FrankieOnTheGuitar] that sometimes resembles an alternative rock album more than a rap album.

**Trippie Redd:** Like how it’s so musical, the way it all comes together? And that comes with that nostalgia for music that I would listen to back in the day. The shit they would put in the background and the artsy shit that you would hear certain people do that nobody else would do. It blows my mind to hear people do different things and not just stay in one pocket, so that’s what I try to do. Everything I listen to I learn from. It’s like homework.

**MC:** Can you walk us through making a track like your lead single, “Who Needs Love”?

**Trippie Redd:** On that one, I was really

into my feelings, so I went to the studio and I listened to a beat that my engineer Igor had pulled up. I thought it was amazing, so I went into the booth and I started freestyling. I get the chorus done, and I get the verses done, then I do the ending and the beginning, and I add the sound effects and all that good stuff last.

**MC:** And what about your vocal performances. You sing quite a bit. Do you know when you are going to sing or when you are going to rap?

**Trippie Redd:** I don't know anything; I just do. It just comes from my head, it's like a gift. A lot of people don't do that, a lot of people write. I really look up to Lil Wayne, and he's always just said what was on his mind at the moment. Nothing I've ever done has been written. I'm just spitting from my head and it's written from the brain.

**MC:** Who are your most trusted music collaborators?

**Trippie Redd:** Mamet, since *A Love Letter to You 1*. The vibe we have is different. He just knows what I like. I mean, there's other people that can record me, but it would never be what my engineer does for me. He cares. It's not like a burden to record me. He's not expecting to go anywhere else.

**MC:** Who is your most important advisor or confidant? Any advice on who to trust?

**Trippie Redd:** My friends and my mom, that's pretty much it! When it comes to business stuff you need to get yourself a good lawyer and you need to make sure you have a great relationship. I got to sit back and analyze and talk to people and not say too much. People will go through things and remember what I said and go, "Oh yeah that's what he meant." So sit back pay attention to what people say, and don't be too anxious to say things. Choose what you say wisely, because every word matters.

**MC:** If luck or success happens when opportunity meets preparation, how did you prepare for that opportunity when you met Lil Wop and eventually got your record deal?

**Trippie Redd:** I sat back and watched everybody do what I wanted to do and waited my turn. And when you sit back watching people do things you learn a lot. I've been around people that were doing a lot, and just being around them and analyzing the right people, you will get yourself by. And just say no to drugs. For sure.

**MC:** Which leads us to the Instagram post you made the other day. First of all, RIP to your friend and collaborator Juice WRLD. We're sorry for your loss. You took to Instagram and made a plea for your scene to stop doing drugs. Can you go into that a little more?

**Trippie Redd:** It's just honestly fucking

**“Nothing I've ever done has been written. I'm just spitting from my head and it's written from the brain.”**

stupid. Drugs are just ridiculous. It's dumb, and a lot of people are doing them 'cause they look up to people like me or people that were before me, mainly people from five to 10 years ago that were saying they should. And we were just looking up to them and reciting what they say. But honestly, I've never done anything besides smoke weed, for real, for real. That's just how I'm coming and I think the world should come that way too.

We don't need to be popping hella percs, we don't need to do xans, we don't need to be sipping lean. We're young. We need to be getting our bodies together by working out, we need to be taking ginger shots. Let's go to Jamba Juice to get us a sour gummy off the secret menu. We're healthy, let's live and breathe fresh air, let's not die, you know what I'm saying? We should keep ourselves together, that's the best thing to do.

**MC:** Many artists are reluctant to identify themselves as part of a genre or sub-genre, but in the Instagram post you are speaking to and labeling your scene as "emo rap." Does that put you in a box?

**Trippie Redd:** When you look at an artist like me, and you think of an artist like Lil Peep [who like Juice WRLD died of a fentanyl overdose, and xanax was also found in his system], you think of an artist like XXXTentacion, and Lil Uzi Vert. You don't think of a lot of other people. So that's the box I'm put in, and we definitely do have the emo world on smash. I wear all black, I make a lot of sad music, so you know, that's just how it goes.

**MC:** Along with the pharmaceutical drugs, it seems emo rap also deals a lot with mental health issues.

**Trippie Redd:** There's definitely a lot of

people dealing with mental health issues just from the way they grew up. You can't be too mad at the person, but you gotta be on their ass. You gotta act like you are that mad because they just can't be doing that shit. We lost too many people to drugs.

And if you're depressed, there's so many ways to deal with it other than taking drugs. [Taking drugs] is not going to get your mind away from it for too long, because you're going to have to do those drugs every day, and they aren't going to do anything but kill you slowly—and that's the sad part about it.


**MC:** Every generation of music has had its own drug scene. Do you think the drugs associated with emo rap are an aid in the creative process other than just all the mentions that they get in the songs?

**Trippie Redd:** You don't have to do the drugs. Let it just be words to a song, you know? Let's not just do everything somebody says. If I told you to jump off a bridge, I hope you wouldn't fucking do that shit. I don't care how big my influence is, no one should ever harm themselves for somebody else. People use it to get in their creative space or whatever, but what's wrong with taking weed to get into your creative space? A lot of those drugs aren't good, and when you do them while doing your music, you ain't really saying shit.

Contact [Jennie.Boddy@umusic.com](mailto:Jennie.Boddy@umusic.com)

## QUICK FACTS

1. *A Love Letter to You 4* marks Trippie Redd's fourth consecutive release in 15 months to enter the Top 5 on The Billboard 200 and the first #1 for the young artist.
2. Trippie knocked Post Malone off the top spot on Rolling Stone's Top 500 chart.
3. He cites T-Pain, Nirvana, KISS, Lil Wayne, Gucci Mane and Marilyn Manson as influences.
4. He released his debut mixtape in May of 2017.
5. Trippie guested on songs by several other artists, such as Baby Goth, XXXTentacion, Lil Mosey, Smokepurpp, Coi Leray, Machine Gun Kelly and Jann Dior.



“I sat back  
and watched  
everybody do  
what I wanted  
to do and  
waited my  
turn. And when  
you sit back  
watching people  
do things you  
learn a lot.”



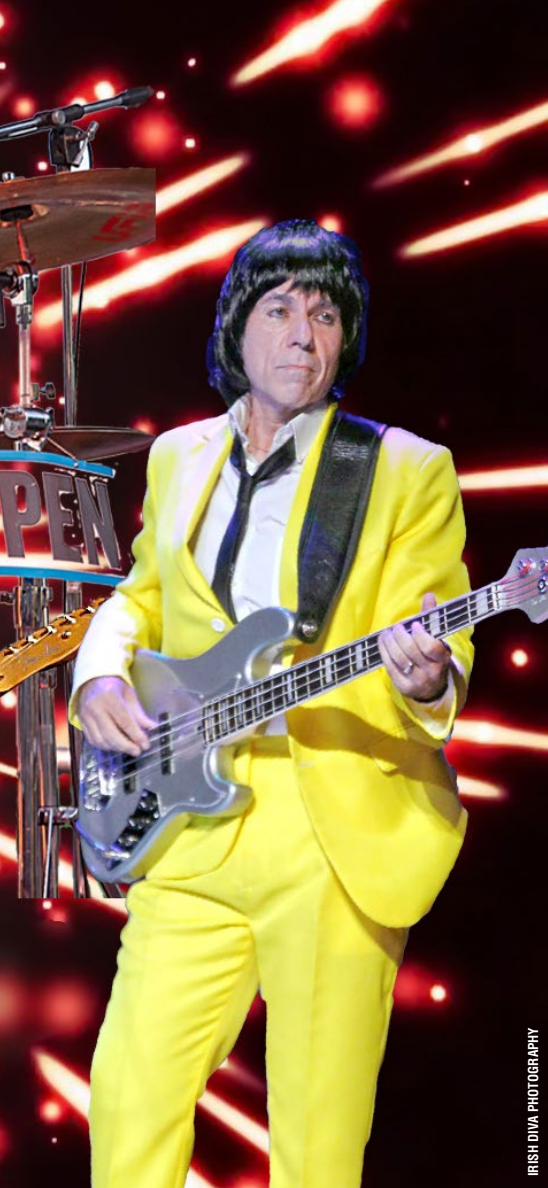
Mick Adams & the Stones

# TRIBUTE BANDS

## *Flattery Through Imitation*

By Brett Callwood





IRISH DIVA PHOTOGRAPHY

## Erin O'Brien

**Company:** Ultimate Entertainment  
**Clientele:** Mick Adams & the Stones, The Shagwells, more  
**Contact:** ultimateentertainment.org

*Erin O'Brien is married to Mick Adams, the "Jagger" in one of the country's leading Rolling Stones tribute bands. About 16 years ago, she was helping to book his band and that quickly turned into a fully formed business, Ultimate Entertainment. Now, the successful company has many tributes, cover bands and impersonators on the books as they go from strength to strength.*

### You started booking Mick Adams, your husband, then who was next?

He's got another band, a sixties band, called The Shagwells. I did that, then a couple of bands were referred to me that had been on AXS TV's show *The World's Greatest Tribute Bands*. It just snowballs. I kept having more bands call and ask if I'd be willing to work with them, and so I'm working with about 60 different bands now. 90 percent tribute but I have some cover bands as well.

### There is often an amazing number of people at tribute shows right now—what do you put that down to?

I think people like to relive good times. The music brings people back to a different time in their life. I think it's all about memories. Good memories. Not wanting a certain time to end.

### What makes a great tribute?

Attention to detail. There are some bands that will play all the music, cover just one band, but don't dress the part. I like the full experience. Play the material, dress like the band, move like the band—the whole thing. There are some great bands that don't dress the part, but that's my personal preference.

### How hard is it to mimic the musicians? How much work goes into it?

It's harder than being the actual band in a way. When you're the actual band, you're just up there being yourself and it's coming natural.

### Is booking tributes a national undertaking?

Very much so. My husband's band I book probably the most of all the bands I book, and in the last few months we've been to Wisconsin, Georgia, Arizona, Las Vegas, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina. We've got a cruise coming up and we'll be playing in Honduras and Belize. We've been to Bermuda. So it's international, actually.

### Can tribute bands harm a local scene by taking paying customers away from original bands?

I think there's room for everyone. I think there's a market for all kinds of bands. There are venues that cater to original bands just like there are venues that cater to tribute bands. •

## Michael Twombly

**Company:** Music Zirconia  
**Clientele:** The Cured, Fooz Fighters, True Willie  
**Contact:** mxtributebands.com

*Twombly is considered one of the prominent bookers of tribute bands in the United States. He also plays in his own tribute to The Cure, called The Cured, and the former web designer started by booking that. Now, he says that Music Zirconia is the biggest tribute band agency in the world with nearly 1,800 acts on the books.*

### How did you get started?

When I first started The Cured, there were maybe a few dozen tribute bands where there's a few hundred dozen now. I got my Cured band going. I had previously done a little bit of booking—I used to work for a female mud wrestling company. I booked that. So I knew that the buyers really didn't enjoy talking to the bands, but as an agent you could open more doors.

I happened to be watching *Jimmy Kimmel* that night and he was interviewing Neil Diamond. He goes, "I had a Neil Diamond tribute when I was in college—we called it Neil Zirconia." I thought that was the most clever thing. I slept on it and it came to me in a vision to create Music Zirconia.

### What makes a great tribute?

If you can take the audience back to a time and place—it all depends what tribute it is. If it's an act that you can no longer see, that's a whole different thing than the guys doing Bruno Mars tributes. It's a whole different thing doing The Beatles or The Doors—something nobody's ever gonna see. So I think the best thing is that tributes take people back to a time in their life when they were happier.

### How much work goes into the costumes and mannerisms?

If you're Metallica, nothing. If you're Lady Gaga, a lot. They've got to sound like them, they've got to be convincing. Every band has its identity. If you're going to be Mick Jagger, you've got to run around like a rooster. If you're going to be Freddie Mercury, you've got some big shoes to fill.

### Are tribute bands taking audiences away from "original" bands?

Does *Beatlemania* take away from anybody going to see *The Lion King*? They're two completely different things. Nobody is going, "You know, I was going to go and support local music, but instead I'm going to see a tribute band." It's two different audiences.

In Southern California, there's 30 million people. There's not even a rock genre anymore—there's 40 rock genres. They ain't hurting anything. They're not hurting the original band either, because half the time the original band doesn't exist, or they don't play in that area. If somebody's a real fan, they aren't going to say, "I've just seen the tribute, so I won't go see the real thing." That's never a realistic scenario.

### Do you ever receive cease & desist letters from the main bands?

Journey's lawyer calls us—they harass the California band. We've gotten a letter from their lawyer. Actually, because I was a web designer before this and I knew internet law, I got to have a little fun with them. Selena's dad sent a cease and desist to a venue a few days ago because they had used a logo that was too close. They could have fought it, but they just took it down. I have way more stories of the actual members sitting in with the tributes than of them harassing the bands. Most of them think it's cute.

### Is there competition between the bands?

A Pink Floyd tribute can't really go on the road. Those things are eight people and a couple of trucks full of gear. Some of them have to stay regional. People get loyal to venues. Competition doesn't come into this a whole lot. Some of the bands have personality conflicts possibly, but there's currently enough work for everybody. Some places have run their cycle on tributes and have gone back to original bands, reducing the number of tributes.

### Is booking tribute bands a national undertaking?

Some bands tour. My former business partner is in a Depeche Mode tribute—they're doing 14 shows in Australia right now. After Bowie died, the David Bowie tribute show did big performing arts centers in Europe. Some of these guys are on another level. And he wasn't getting that work before Bowie died. The biopics help too. •

# David Hewitt

**Company:** DMH Enterprises  
**Clientele:** Queen Nation, The Canyon Clubs  
**Contact:** dmhenterprises.com

*Hewitt manages top Queen tribute band Queen Nation among others, and books tributes for the Canyon Clubs throughout Southern California. He's been in the industry for 30 years, and says that he has found an effective formula for assembling a successful tribute.*

## How did you get started?

I used to run a nightclub in the [San Fernando] Valley, when I was in college, called Pelican's Retreat. A nice room with a nice stage and patios. I booked all the rock. There was pay-to-play, but I would actually pay the guys, so they were stoked. This was in the '90s. There were a couple of tributes out there, and I put together a whole month of October and called it Rocktober Tribute Month.

I had Atomic Punks [Van Halen tribute], Sticky Fingers [Rolling Stones], a Doors tribute called Wild Child—so I put that together every Saturday. This was way before it took off, and it was pretty successful because it was new. You could see there was a market if it was done correctly and not cheesy. I put a few together, but the big one that's out of control is Queen Nation. I put those guys together in 2004. That's

gone to the next level. They're in the pinnacle.

## You can't see Queen, at least in the classic form—does that make a big difference?

I have rules that I came up with. My formula that works for me. You have to pick a tribute to an act that's mega popular. Ultimately not touring together as their core unit. You have to pick these acts and there's a lot of things that change that make them popular—if there's a deceased member, if they get elected into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame—that can help spike that tribute. But that tribute has to be the best at what they do. The Queen Nation guys study film, watch concerts. You've got to love the music. The fans will call you out if you mail it in.

## What do you think of accusations that tribute bands pull audiences away from bands playing original material?

I think there are so many different types of music. Tribute bands aren't pulling away from original bands. It's my opinion that everybody's music is, no matter who they are, pulling from different bands. Music is music. If anything, the tributes offer a more affordable and available way for people to see a show that they couldn't have seen. My kids can't see Queen because Freddie's been gone for years. They can't see that show intact. If it's done correctly, it exposes the market. Look at the biopic. That's exposure and people can't ridicule that. It just created more exposure.

## Is there competition between tributes?

There is a lot of competition, though it's a lot harder for people to compete with Queen.

If you talk to a vocalist or a performer, there's a difference between going up and being Freddie Mercury or one of the other bands. That's a tough one. But there's competition.

Worldwide there's four or five acts that are popular. When you get to a high level, just go look at Pollstar. You could be the best band in the world at what you do, but it doesn't mean anything unless you put bodies in the building and create revenue. If you're selling tickets, they're gonna rebook you and that will lead to bigger rooms.

## Have you or one of your bands ever received a cease & desist letter?

Each band has their own opinions on how they want to go after some of that stuff. Some see it as a threat, others as a compliment. It just depends on the band. I think a good show done correctly just creates more exposure. •

# Julie Dolan

**Bands:** Undercover Girls, INXSVE, etc.  
**Contact:** ucgband.com

*The mercurial Ms. Dolan performs with a number of tributes; the talented keyboardist*



GayC/DC

ALEC SLOICA

has made herself in demand, and she's also a dynamic and driven booker for her bands.

### How did you get involved with the booking side of things?

When you're in a tribute band, a lot of venues don't pay much, so you don't really need an agent. You just call them up and make a deal with the promoter of that particular venue. Some venues, like casinos and big festivals, they like to go through the agent. They don't want to deal with the artist themselves.

How I started was, my brother's Michael Dolan and he and I started jamming together years ago. He told me I should audition for an all-girl band that was looking for a keyboard player. I didn't want to be in a band. I'm an actor and I do voiceovers. This was 2003. I auditioned for this band, and I have not stopped working as a musician. I started in an all-girl cover band called the Undercover Girls, which have been together for 14 years now. Then I moved into the tribute band world, which is double the money for half the work.

For some reason—maybe being an actor and being good at marketing and negotiating—the job of booking the band fell to me. I developed my system. I know a lot of the agents; they all come to me asking what my next band is. I learned how to negotiate. You develop relationships with the agents, and they help you out. Most of them do. But if you're dealing with the buyer, the club, it's hard. They demand that you bring in 1,000 people. It's hard negotiating. There are so many bands around the corner that will do it for nothing.

### What makes a good tribute?

I would say trying to sound as much like the original artist as possible. If you can look like them organically, it's great. A lot of them throw on wigs, and sometimes it's a little cheesy. But there are a couple of bands, like DSB (they can't call it Don't Stop Believin' because Journey put a cease & desist on that)—they don't dress like the band at all, and they are one of the biggest tribute bands and have a huge following. They sound like them and they have a great following.

### What do you make of accusations that tributes drag attention from "original" bands?

When I would post that my INXSVE band was playing somewhere, I would get replies from one particular guy: "What about original music? Why do you have to do that?" And I said, "I don't write music, and I make money keeping other people's music alive." You can't see INXS anymore, or Queen. Or you can't afford to go see Journey or Aerosmith. You want to see them in their younger heyday. Fans will never see David Bowie again, but David Brighton takes people on a journey with David Bowie.

### Do bands need a manager, for finances and taxes?

With my bands, we've formed a partnership and opened a business checking account. We have a tax ID number and do it all ourselves. We do our own taxes and run it like a business. Some people will do cash if they can, but some of the gigs we play—where we're making seven grand—they're not gonna do cash. I certainly don't want that on my Social Security. So we have a checking account and pay the band members, have business expenses and so on. A lot of venues and casinos prefer to work with certain booking agents and only go through them.

### Is this a national thing now?

We travel all over the world. My Cheap Trick tribute guitar player plays with an all-girl AC/DC tribute and they just got back from Germany. That's ThundHERstruck. One of my best friends is the drummer in The Iron Maidens and it's rare that they play their home base California. They're always out of the country. •

## Chris Freeman

**Band:** GayC/DC  
**Contact:** gaycdcofficial.com

*Freeman is a name known to punk rock fans already—he's a longtime member of San Francisco queercore pioneers Pansy Division. He was also a member of Go-Go's tribute The Gay Gays and, when the singer of that band moved on to other things, formed AC/DC tribute GayC/DC...*

### Why AC/DC?

The singer [of The Gay Gays] got tired of doing it. He wanted to take a break. We wanted to go on, so we started throwing names around of what else we could do. Karl [Rumpf], our rhythm guitar player, threw out GayC/DC and snickered after he said it. I said, "Wait a minute, that's actually not a bad idea." It was as simple as that. We were thinking of Slayer and call it Gayer. That one may happen anyway. I was in Pansy Division and we did the *For Those About to Suck Cock (We Salute You)* EP, and it started to come together in my head—the logo, all the other stuff. It just wrote itself.

### How do you pay tribute with a gay twist?

First of all, we wanted to make sure the music was right on. So we could not proceed until we had a fireball guitar player, so we got Steve. Then he said, "If we're doing GayC/DC, it doesn't make sense for me to do the schoolboy outfit, I should do the Catholic schoolgirl outfit." That was an obvious change on it.

The main image is all t-shirts and jeans. We decided to turn that around. No black t-shirts on stage and no jeans. We went the opposite direction to their uniformity. As daring as possible. Each person was allowed to come up with their own personality. We changed some of the lyrics, but honestly some of them didn't need it. "Big Balls"—we didn't have to change a word.

### Do you find that GayC/DC makes more money than your original band now?

Funny enough it has. At this point in time, we're booking some shows for Pansy Division—we'll be 30 years old in 2021—and we're 20 or so shows shy of 1,000, so we're planning to hit our 1,000th show in 2021 in San Francisco. But we have some shows in February and we're making half of what GayC/DC's making. I never expected that. It's unnerving. I don't actually talk to Pansy Division band members much about that because they don't wanna know.

### Who comes to see you?

In the same fashion as we discovered in Pansy Division, the primary audience is straight. Especially in the case of GayC/DC, there's so few people that are gay and like hard rock like that. Even myself—for me AC/DC was a guilty pleasure. I loved them all along, but everyone was like, "Ew, that's for straight people."

I had to do music that I liked, regardless of whether the gay crowd was coming along.

Straight women especially. They look at it like it's a bachelorette party. •

## Colby Veil

**Band:** Hollywood Roses  
**Contact:** hollywoodroses.com

*Hollywood Roses is the premier Guns N' Roses tribute band in the United States, and they've been given the nod of approval from GN'R members Steven Adler, Slash and Duff McKagan. In fact, frontman Colby Veil has fronted Adler's own band, Adler's Appetite.*

### When did the band form and why?

1999, September. 20 years ago. It was just an idea, because there were no stigmas about being in a tribute band, and you couldn't see the original band then. I just thought, let's give it a try. We played a show in Marina del Rey and it was packed. I played with Steven Adler's Appetite for the 20th anniversary. Why a tribute? I want to preserve that real rock & roll edge.

### What makes a great tribute?

You have to have a sense of humor. We're not a Vegas impersonator show. The songs kick you in the nuts. *Appetite for Destruction* is never old. You blur the lines; it's fantasy but you're feeling authentic feelings. I step outside myself and just listen. There are some actual Hollywood Roses fans. Then there are people who can't afford a Guns N' Roses ticket, but can bring their kid to see us. I'm not a big fan of wearing a Halloween costume. I have real hair and I sing. It's amazing the depths some bands will sink to.

### Give us an example...

A perfect example is, we had a show at a casino in Indio, California. It was all set up, and the guy that booked it went on vacation. Another band came in and played the show drunk, spitting on people. We cleared up the fact that it wasn't us, but you have to prepare yourself for that kind of treachery.

### You played the first Rocklahoma—one of just a couple of tribute bands among masses of '80s hair bands...

I got that because we're good friends with Joe Lesté [Bang Tango] and Taime Downe [Faster Pussycat]. The truth is, The Atomic Punks were asked to do that show originally. Ralph [Saenz] was starting to do Steel Panther full time. The people at The Whisky suggested us instead. That first Rocklahoma was awesome.

### You've been endorsed by the real band, correct?

We're totally endorsed by Duff, Slash and Steven—everybody but Axl. Axl acknowledges that we exist, he just says that he doesn't care about us. Gilby Clarke is a good friend. So we've at least got the nod.

### Are you in an "originals" band as well?

I have a band called Dopesnake on Cleopatra Records. That's with Danny Nordahl from Faster Pussycat and The Throbs, and Marc Diamond from The Dwarves.

### Is it easier to book Hollywood Roses, though?

That's been a hard road to keep it real. I'm so grateful to headline The Whisky for 12 years. I love to play, sing those songs and see people light up! ☺☺

# 4D Acoustics

## *Innovative Software for More Natural Sounding Vocal*

“Our clients say our enhancements are unbelievable!” ... “We say, what we do is as basic and useful as reverb. And it’s a more natural form of compression, more than ANY compressor.” These quotes come from Rikki Swin, the originator of the groundbreaking 4D Acoustics Technology (4DAcoustics.com) that transform recorded vocals in unique ways that can enhance any recording’s featuring voice. Swin (grikki.com) is also a successful emerging independent singer-songwriter (with numerous songs on the fan interactive National Radio Hits AC40 chart) and owner-operator of Eclectic Lady Land Recording Ranch, LLC (EclecticLadyLandRecording.com).

4D Acoustics is not an automated process. Human-powered, with the help of software, it involves technically savvy musicians who have studied music theory and have booked thousands of hours applying the various processes. It primarily uses Melodyne 4 and Revoice Pro 4 along with some other lesser-known supporting apps.

4D receives and reviews an artist’s entire session or files. The 4D process involves only the vocals, but the accompanying instrument files are necessary for timing and instrument chords and pitch. The work is analyzed from a music theory perspective. Melody lines and chord structures, i.e. major, minor, diminished, augmented and their inversions, determine what pitch correction will sound best and directly influence the harmonies that can be written. According to Swin, “Often, we find small instrument chord conflicts that can be fixed with the software and it doesn’t require re-recording.”

The initial tasks are to optimize pitch, modulation and intonation. “Precisely tuning each vocal note is not what 4D does,” Swin explains. “There is commercially available pitch correction software that does a ‘perfect’ job, but that’s not real life. 4D does not use autotune. Really great singers don’t sing ‘perfect’ notes. If they did, their characteristic style would be gone. Intonation is the rise and fall of pitch level within words. Modulation is akin to vibrato, but when it goes too far it changes pitch—we regulate both of these in natural ways.”

After the pitch, modulation and intonation are optimized, the 4D process looks at the timing of lyrics to the track. Interestingly, lead vocal tracks can improve clarity by advancing them ever so slightly ahead of the downbeat,

say 15 milliseconds. It separates the vocal from the music bed and makes both of them individually distinct to our brains’ intelligibility. The result is amazing clarity for both. And no extra volume is needed, so all the dynamics are retained.

4D uses software that allows for the individual adjustment of the volume of each word. Outboard or plugin compressors are limited to a set correction value as determined by inflexible settings, whereas 4D can correct

adjustments, we can make the doubled vocal closer than Lennon ever could.”

Alternatively, 4D can create a doubled vocal by duplicating the original and then slightly changing overall components like timing, pitch and modulation in a random fashion to achieve a realistic doubling. 4D likes to use a second double (each one slightly different than the other) and pan one left and one right. The original vocal performance stays in the center at a slightly greater overall level. The

result is a thick rich vocal texture that makes the vocal “pop.”

“It’s almost magical how much all this makes the vocal come alive,” Swin says. “And for the final showpiece, there’s harmony!”

The original vocal recording is again duplicated and harmonies are written on a keyboard that can play the singer’s voice. This is where an understanding of music theory is essential. Knowing chord structure, i.e. inversions, and other elements like the circle of fifths, 4D writes harmonies in a way that is similar to writing orchestration for big bands in an earlier era. Modern music genres don’t need orchestration, but the method is the same. 4D writes parts that complement the lead vocal. It usually involves the endings of phrases and almost always includes the entire chorus.

To get started, 4D needs an artist’s entire session. Pro Tools users send actual sessions and others send individual stem files. The transfer method is explained on the website at 4DAcoustics.com. A key point to remember is that corrections, optimization

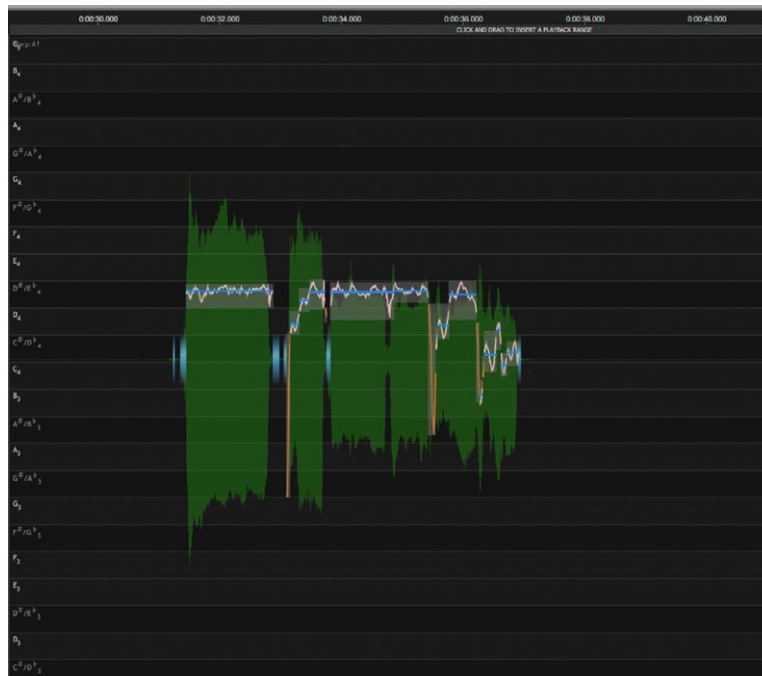
and suggestions are all done on copy tracks, while the original tracks remain untouched. “In the finished package,” Swin says, “you will receive additional tracks with all the changes and suggestions kept separate. You do the final mix.”

It’s not easy, Swin adds, “but our clients find our work stunning and unbelievable. Every vocal track can benefit!”

4D will provide a short example from your tracks at no charge. Send them your session (or individual files) and they send you back a 20-30 second portion and a cost estimate for completion. It isn’t inexpensive, a complete session will require hours of work. And just like a recording studio, 4D charges by the hour.

“All work is done at our state-of-the-art Eclectic Lady Land Recording studio,” says Swin.

Contact Rikki Swin, 360-298-4249  
Visit 4DAcoustics.com



*“It’s almost magical how much all this makes the vocal come alive.”*

each word and thus more closely retains the original dynamics of the performance. The result is a more natural-sounding vocal that does not have to be loud—and cover up the music bed—to be understood.

The next step involves serious enhancement. Thickening is probably the best word to describe what happens as 4D duplicates tracks several more times. The additional copies will be used to double or triple the lead vocal. Doubled vocals are the absolute necessity of some of the world’s most accomplished recording artists.

“John Lennon was annoyed by the process because in his day it had to be done by singing the part again and again until he matched the original track as closely as possible,” Swin says. “This usually takes many takes and it wears out the performer. We now have software that helps us match the performances (takes) and, combined with our human

**Wire**

*Mind Hive*  
Pinkflag Records  
Producers: *Wire*

After over 40 (!) years of existence, Wire still comes up with a fantastic record! If you've ever liked them, you'll love this new release. It's punky, it's psychedelic. It's rhythmic, it's spacy. It's minimal, yet saturated with tone. Colin Newman's vocals are unmistakable, and tersely expressive. Graham Lewis gets the "sex" song again! "New kid" Matthew Simms on guitar plays all the perfect notes and chords. Again, Wire's sound is so uncannily consistent that these songs could have come off their 1979 *154* album as well as any ensuing release, and I mean that in the best way. Already one of 2020's best releases and we haven't even hit February yet! – **David Amson**



**Theory of a Deadman**

*Say Nothing*  
Atlantic Records  
Producer: *Martin Terefe*

Honest songwriting comes from real experiences, so a tune concerning the scourge of domestic abuse (in this instance, "A History of Violence") from a group of four men feels incongruous and inauthentic. This cognitive dissonance encumbers the balance of *Say Nothing*, which also serves virtue signaling tracks about white supremacy ("White Boy"), political acrimony ("Strangers") and wealth inequality ("Affluenza"). Despite trendy arrangements and pure intent, the Canadian hit-makers seem more like impostors than seers. – **Andy Kaufmann**



**Noonday Devils**

*Bitters*  
Fervor Records  
Producer: *Bruce Connole*

Phoenix natives Noonday Devils are an alt-rock act that delivers the unvarnished truth. Their songs are tuneful and melodic, yet raw and visceral at the same time. What sets them apart from other punks is their dynamics and strong vocals. Freddy Crouse is a hellacious guitarist, but an equally effective and emotive singer. Aptly named Joey Floortom lights the fuse behind each and every incendiary track. Highlights include the Social D-like "Under My Skin," the harmonious Smithereens-ish "Climbing the Walls" and the driving "Die in My Sleep." Fans of Green Day, The Clash and such, keep this on your radar. – **Eric Harabadian**



**Las Vegas Jazz Connection**

*Las Vegas Suite*  
Forgotten Song Music  
Producers: *Carolyn Freeman, Ann Parenti & Robert Case*

What happens in Vegas...swings! Shifting from rousing and danceable to sensual romantic cool, this engaging EP celebrates the powerful dynamics, buoyant brassy energy, solo instrumental excitement and all-around jazzy soulfulness of the Las Vegas Jazz Connection, a 32-piece contemporary big band-styled orchestra created and led by multi-talented composer and bandleader Nathan Tanouye. Highlights include stellar vocals by legendary Clint Holmes, who alternates cheerfully between sweet, dreamy crooning and wildly inventive scat. – **Jonathan Widran**



**Ethan Gruska**

*En Garde*  
Warner Records  
Producer: *Ethan Gruska and Tony Berg*

Balancing pop cool with heady abstraction, this modest compendium of puffy flotillas comes guaranteed to soothe the adventurous listener. The flipside is that the former Belle Brigade composer's mystical elixirs, which often utilize exotic instruments like juno, optigan, kalimba and celeste, will confound the less outré seeker. A gossamer tapestry woven via technomagic, *En Garde* feels like a high-tech portal into Gruska's soul. Here's hoping the multitudes find his vision accessible. – **Andy Kaufmann**



**Dustbowl Revival**

*Is It You, Is It Me*  
Thirty Tigers  
Producer: *Sam Kassirer*

After building a loyal fan base through incessant touring and personnel shifts, Dustbowl Revival arguably has released one of its strongest statements. The all-Americana band delivers an album that is musically sophisticated and leaves no topical stones unturned. The songs here include generational debates over voters' choice in "Enemy," an examination of Florida's Parkland High School shooting in "Get Rid of You" and the challenges of social media, with the song "Sonic Boom." It's an eclectic and captivating gumbo of rock, folk, cabaret, country and soul led by the masterful harmonies from Liz Beebe and Z. Lupetin. – **Eric Harabadian**



**Cam'ron**

*Purple Haze 2*  
Diplomat / eOne  
Producers: *Various*

It's been a cool decade since Killa Cam released a solo studio album. In between his hiatus periods, he's been carving out other projects, as well as dabbling professionally in acting and directing; but *Purple Haze 2* is still classic Cam'ron. From "Medellin" to "Big Deal" to "Fast Lane" among a few others on this album, Cam shows listeners that he can be a Jack of all trades and a Master, too, when it comes to delivering clever rhymes, sustainable songs and jumping on production. – **Adam Seyum**



**Colony House**

*Leave What's Lost Behind*  
Roon Records  
Producer: *Ben Shive*

Colony House's third platter, overabundant with florid embellishments and crepuscular passages, takes the artist's mandate to construct beauty overly seriously. So seriously, in fact, that the placid rockers fail to invoke the wonder and awe inspired by that which is unexpected. Deviating furthest from this decree is the deliberately warped love song "Julia," to delicious effect. The remaining tracks are deftly formulated, but what does that matter when their intended effect fades so quickly? – **Andy Kaufmann**





## Courtney King

**Contact:** ckmusicbooking@gmail.com  
**Web:** courtneykingmusic.com  
**Seeking:** Booking  
**Style:** Alt Rock

Artist Courtney King strives for an artfully dark demeanor and produces more than a few promising moments. She has a strong voice that's a good fit with her moody material, and is able to generate nice, floating harmonic blends. The most pleasant surprise was how she uses the flute—her primary instrument. What a unique and refreshing element! Unfortunately, in “Fantastic,” the song never gets off the ground, instead spinning its wheels. King shifts gears to a more meat n’ potatoes rock sound with “Cigarette Heart,” a heartbreaker where metatlesque guitar riffs provide a foundation for her vocals, which could use more grit. We urge this promising, DC-based performer to keep working.

- Production ..... 8
- Lyrics ..... 7
- Music ..... 7
- Vocals ..... 8
- Musicianship ..... 8

SCORE: 7.6



## White Collar Crime

**Contact:** whitecollarcrime.music@gmail.com  
**Web:** whitecollarcrime3.bandcamp.com  
**Seeking:** Label, Film/TV, Booking  
**Style:** Americana Rock

This proficient NY sextet’s material has a common thread—the conflicts that plague male-female relationships—and the band’s dueting male and female vocalists convey those sentiments well. The female delivers some especially gritty tones during her solo turns and harmonic blends. We hear an ample amount of tight musicianship all around (piano and guitar in particular) that makes these “criminals” (attorneys by day, actually) a solid, roadhouse rock band. In future, we suggest the production give the male singer a richer, less submerged profile. For film/TV placement, the song “Reason to Leave” has a distinctly laidback Tom Petty soundalike vibe, with a beautifully phrased and structured guitar solo.

- Production ..... 7
- Lyrics ..... 7
- Music ..... 7
- Vocals ..... 7
- Musicianship ..... 8

SCORE: 7.2



## Tyrants in Therapy

**Contact:** david@powderfinger.com  
**Web:** tyrantsintherapy.com  
**Seeking:** Booking  
**Style:** Punk Cabaret

AbbeAbbe & Michael J are Tyrants in Therapy, whose off-kilter, alternative act achieves a ragged charm by virtue of its comedic overtones. Despite or perhaps because of AbbeAbbe’s occasionally off-key singing and the lyrics’ determined lumpiness, a song like “You Are The One I Love” makes the most of its sly, comic moments. Michael J shines on the jazzy, catchy, repetitive “Drunk Women” (“Imagine what I could do with eight drunk women, all sexy and ready to mate.”) Interjecting R-rated parodies of “Spotify” ad spots between their songs is fun and keeps things interesting. Though not to everyone’s taste, this pair is guaranteed to elicit more than a few giggles and maybe a few good-natured groans.

- Production ..... 8
- Lyrics ..... 7
- Music ..... 7
- Vocals ..... 7
- Musicianship ..... 8

SCORE: 7.4



## JizzleJaaye

**Contact:** sixthecompany96@yahoo.com  
**Web:** soundcloud.com/user-861824667  
**Seeking:** Booking  
**Style:** Hip-Hop/R&B

He’s not out to dazzle you with complex, cluttered beats or speed-of-light spits; instead, rapper JizzleJaaye compels you with his less-is-more approach. First off, he’s got an interesting, credible voice, and on “Weekend” we hear him rattle off a recap of his “licker n’ weed” weekend, riding a laidback beat whose tones have an almost childlike simplicity. And on “Teenage Love” he again employs an atmospheric synthesizer while stating his case to an attractive female prospect (“I treat you like a queen, help you live your dream.”) Best of the bunch is “LadiesLoveJizzle” where he shifts to a speedier flow over a beat with some very nice electro touches and subtle ‘90s-sounding effects.

- Production ..... 8
- Lyrics ..... 8
- Music ..... 8
- Vocals ..... 8
- Musicianship ..... 8

SCORE: 8.0



## Jazlyn Gold

**Contact:** jazlyngoldmac@gmail.com  
**Web:** soundcloud.com/jazlyngold  
**Seeking:** Booking, Film/TV  
**Style:** Hip-Hop/Rap

Detroit-based artist Jazlyn Gold puts forth a strong, resourceful persona on her recordings, showing herself to likely be a captivating live performer at this point in her career. We are most impressed by “Paperboy” whose adroit placement of piano flourishes beneath her emphatic beats provides a fitting foundation for her chanted proclamation of undaunted individuality in the face of a mercenary, pay-as-you-go world. We are less impressed by her song “Hallelujah”—despite the artist’s undaunted, inspirational spirit, and the nice piano flourishes she puts beneath her beats, the song’s repetitiveness wore us down. We can easily imagine this artist connecting well with an intimate, coffeehouse crowd.

- Production ..... 7
- Lyrics ..... 7
- Music ..... 7
- Vocals ..... 7
- Musicianship ..... 7

SCORE: 7.0



## Analogue Spirit

**Contact:** analoguespiritmusic@gmail.com  
**Web:** analoguespirit.com  
**Seeking:** Label, Booking, Film/TV  
**Style:** Alternative Rock

An LA-based foursome led by Matt Davidson—whose voice really pops forward in the mix—are *this close* to putting it all together, where their gift for the catchy and the commercial mixes well with the band’s more daring instincts. “Sunday Paper” alternates contrasting time sigs—melodic and mellow vs. pressing and percussive—and the featured guitar has a cool, dissonant feel. “Rabbit Hole” shifts to a near-ambient feel with a dreamy, soothing vibe that morphs into a spiraling, melodic majesty. “Breeze” might be our favorite, with its upbeat, beach-y pop-rock framework. No, it’s nothing you haven’t heard before, but it is nevertheless quite effective.

- Production ..... 9
- Lyrics ..... 8
- Music ..... 8
- Vocals ..... 8
- Musicianship ..... 8

SCORE: 8.2

**Music Connection’s** executive committee rates recorded music on a scale of 1 to 10. Number 1 represents the lowest possible score, 10 represents the highest possible score. A final score of 6 denotes a solid, competent artist. For more information, see Submission Guidelines on the next page.



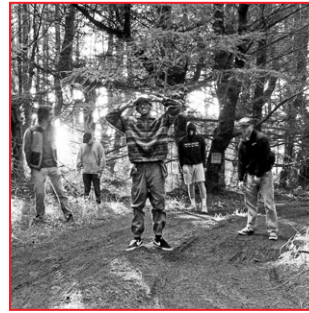
### Jamie Alimorad

**Contact:** ashleyd@empktp.com  
**Web:** jamiealimorad.com  
**Seeking:** Label, Film/TV  
**Style:** Pop

Boston singer-songwriter Jamie Alimorad has a vision that strives for the glitzier side of the pop genre and is not far afield from Disney "princess" movie soundtracks. The Latin-flavored "Not Ready to Say Goodbye" recalls '90s pop hits by the likes of Justin Timberlake. Alimorad switches to a cool, relaxed vibe on "Lucky Me," a jazzy, jaunty tune where the singer recounts being smitten—and then bitten—by a rich girl who made him feel like "a pauper in a queen's court." But he takes it in stride, living with a winning spirit of optimism. "A Moment..." is a ballad whose sweet sentimentality suggests that Alimorad, with a bit more development (and more clever, interesting lyrics), could break through.

- Production ..... 8
- Lyrics ..... 6
- Music ..... 7
- Vocals ..... 8
- Musicianship ..... 8

**SCORE: 7.4**



### 49th Parallel

**Contact:** mgmt@49thparallelmusic.com  
**Web:** 49thparallelmusic.com  
**Seeking:** Booking, Distribution, Film/TV  
**Style:** Alternative Rap

Six-piece Seattle rap collective 49th Parallel seem to be in the process of creating a commercial batch of upbeat alt-rap tunes with choruses that truly stick. "Safe House" is a case in point: this radio-friendly tune has the bones of a catchy pop song, not to mention some Drake vibes, and some solo turns at the mic that prove the band's singers can slap a slew of syllables into submission. "I Love It" has a light touch and an easily embraceable energy that echoes Gym Class Heroes. And, if there is any doubt as to the group's commercial sensibilities, the synthesized steel-drums that enliven "Just Another Day" are an inspired choice. All that's needed is a savvy hand at the recording desk.

- Production ..... 7
- Lyrics ..... 7
- Music ..... 8
- Vocals ..... 8
- Musicianship ..... 7

**SCORE: 7.4**



### The Unbroken

**Contact:** tamas@theunbroken.band  
**Web:** theunbroken.band  
**Seeking:** Label, Booking, Distribution  
**Style:** Heavy Metal/Hard Rock

Brooklyn's The Unbroken are a tight and tenacious outfit whose brand of metal celebrates the durable combo of weapons-grade riffs, armor-piercing solos and impassioned growls for an end-product that can be readily embraced by anyone with an ear for the genre. We especially dig the frantic fretwork in the staccato guitar solo on "Suffering in Silence." A pummeling riff propels "Stuck In The Way" whose demonic theme is well realized by its flaming sonics. Lead singer Chester shines on the dynamic "Human" where a solemn, otherworldly shimmer alternates with dynamic eruptions that allow the singer to convey the song's theme of Earthly suffering. Have you heard this stuff before? Yes, but never better.

- Production ..... 9
- Lyrics ..... 7
- Music ..... 8
- Vocals ..... 8
- Musicianship ..... 9

**SCORE: 8.2**



### Calvin Loron

**Contact:** calvinloron@gmail.com  
**Web:** calvinloron.com  
**Seeking:** Booking, Film/TV, Publishing  
**Style:** R&B/Soul

With an old soul and a voice that packs a slew of sweet falsetto tones, it's little surprise that artist Calvin Loron's signature song is "Old Fashioned Love" ("*I wanna give you my love from back in the day*"). The song has a soft, gentle beat drop and funky guitar flourishes that we like. What we dig even more is the alternate version of the song where Loron presents it like a boy band tune with pretty blends from a group of singers. This slowed-down version somehow works better. "Man on a Mission, meanwhile, is bouncy and optimistic, but has lyrics that are a bit awkward at times. In fact, Loron might want to get with a talented wordsmith to better articulate the overall message in his songs.

- Production ..... 8
- Lyrics ..... 6
- Music ..... 7
- Vocals ..... 8
- Musicianship ..... 8

**SCORE: 7.4**



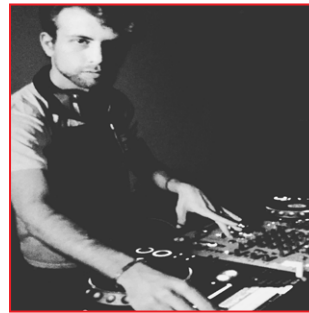
### Mel Stirling

**Contact:** melstirlingmusic@gmail.com  
**Web:** melstirling.com  
**Seeking:** Label  
**Style:** Alternative

Aussie artist Mel Stirling is an artful songstress whose voice oozes with an intelligence and confidence that is sometimes leavened by an element of sweetness. You can hear it on the verses in the darkly melodic "Slipping Slowly." On the song's choruses, however, her vocals seem to be mixed in the background. Better produced is "Standing to Fall" which has a mystical vibe, an introspective aura that's elevated by some terrifically languid guitar lines. Finally, "Here and Now" has a more positive sounding melody and beautiful guitar work but makes it clear that there is a darkness lurking throughout. Still a work in progress, Stirling is a performer with a theatrical flair and a unique swagger to her voice.

- Production ..... 7
- Lyrics ..... 7
- Music ..... 7
- Vocals ..... 8
- Musicianship ..... 8

**SCORE: 7.4**



### Frank Ventura

**Contact:** frankventuramusic.com  
**Web:** soundcloud.com/frankventuramusic  
**Seeking:** Label, Booking, Mgmt, Film/TV  
**Style:** Electronic

Compositions by DJ-producer Frank Ventura are patterned on a sonic blueprint that demonstrates a number of strengths. He is adept at transitioning to new movements, adding layers so that his themes evolve effortlessly. "Say Yes" and "Gloomy Bass" feature words uttered with a whispered urgency by a mysterious voice. And while the former composition emits a positive, socially conscious message, the latter's tone is that of an eerie and atmospheric space alien flick. Finally, the uptempo profile of "Metamorphosis" is peppered with a host of clangs, claps and synth-flatulence that keep things interesting. All in all, we feel that Ventura's skills could enhance a film soundtrack or an exhibition of abstract art.

- Production ..... 8
- Lyrics ..... X
- Music ..... 7
- Vocals ..... X
- Musicianship ..... 8

**SCORE: 7.6**

**SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:** There is absolutely no charge for a New Music Critique. We critique recordings that have yet to connect with a label or distributor. To be considered please go to [musicconnection.com/get-reviewed](http://musicconnection.com/get-reviewed). All submissions are randomly selected and reviewed by committee.

**Midway Café** Boston, MA

**Contact:** vinniehops@hotmail.com

**Web:** brianconnellfellowship.com

**Players:** Brian O'Connell, bass, vocals; Jim McCann, guitar, vocals; Jason Kaplan, drums

**Material:** Anybody familiar with jam band mainstays like Umphrey's McGee or My Morning Jacket will find immediate comfort surrounded by the prog fusion rock of Brian O'Connell and his Fellowship. Claiming influences as varied as Frank Zappa, Stevie Ray Vaughn, Igor Stravinsky, Pink Floyd, King Crimson and heaps more, the former Uncle Sammy member's current project, active since 2018, is a testament to the concept that it only takes a trio to craft auditory brilliance.

**Musicianship:** Landing somewhere between amazing and stellar, O'Connell and his mates consistently set the stage ablaze. Nothing compares to when guitarist McCann turns up the juice and lets the notes peel from his instrument like hot lava. Meanwhile, O'Connell serves genuine deep swamp funk on the low end while drummer Kaplan keeps everything sticky. Being a jam band, lyrics serve a secondary role to their relentless riffage, but the audience is kept abreast of the subject matter anyway—for example, an instrumental number we're cheekily notified concerns cats.

**Performance:** Like all serious musicians, BOF focus on playing—we aren't left with much by way of extraneous accoutrement. No logo is present and their sartorial decisions don't exactly demand attention. That being said, O'Connell is equally capable and



# THE BRIAN O'CONNELL FELLOWSHIP

comfortable introducing the band, prefacing each tune and generally holding court. One flash of attempted bass feedback hints at the possibility of elevated showmanship, but the seasoned rockers seem content merely laying down licks that could easily be confused with manna from heaven.

**Summary:** Exceptional players, O'Connell and his mates are nothing short of outstanding. The

deliciousness of their licks, beauty in their feel and overall power can hardly be overstated. Although they fail to knock down the walls of convention and some minor trimmings would bolster their overall presentation, O'Connell and travelers deserve a far greater audience than they currently command. Close your eyes, luxuriate in their rhythm and you'll easily imagine them earning a spotlight within the festival circuit. — **Andy Kaufmann**



# CAROLINE

**The Mint** Los Angeles, CA

**Contact:** Hello@Carolines-Music.com

**Web:** Carolines-Music.com

**Players:** Caroline

**Material:** Caroline is a singer-songwriter in the style of Ariana Grande, Selena Gomez, Camilla Cabello and very reminiscent of a young Britney Spears. She sings karaoke style to backing tracks while wardrobe malfunctioning

on stage—Well, not really. While she did have a wardrobe malfunction, she handled it so well you would have thought it was part of the show. Singing mostly originals with a few sprinkles of covers, the music is superbly written and sung. Tunes such as “Pretend” and “Why Can't You be Mine” are poppy, catchy, very melodic and will have you grooving on the boogie floor.

**Musicianship:** Caroline is gifted with high-quality pipes that are just starting to find out

what they can really do. They still need to be strengthened a bit, but they are very good and solid. She hit all her highs and all of her lows effortlessly, making it look easy. This is a performer who projects her vocals with a confidence and brilliance that makes her appear untouchable. Clearly, this is an artist who has trained hard and that hard work shines through in her delivery of every number.

**Performance:** Caroline's performance was superb, to say the least. She likes being onstage and it shows. Supremely confident, she can weather any adversity that may arise during a performance. For example, during the second song, while she was singing a cover, her shoe came undone and she nearly fell as she stepped on a lace. But, like a trooper, she shook it off and continued on her trek—even posing for a camera shot like a pro. She's got all the moves and poses down, and she looks great doing it. She seems to act out her songs as she sings them, giving the viewer a double dose of Caroline as she tells her story.

**Summary:** Caroline, Caroline, Caroline! Cute as a button, guys, but she'll break your head right off at the shoulders with a snap of the finger. Tunes like “Simple as That” and “Trust a Boy” will mesmerize you with charm and appeal as they get you moving to the grooves that lure you onto the dance floor. A super performance and a lot of fun to watch, Caroline will captivate you with every move.

— **Pierce Brochetti**





**Moroccan Lounge** Los Angeles, CA

**Contact:** Mike Browne, fardigitalpr@gmail.com  
**Web:** federalepdx.com

**Players:** Collin Hegna, guitar, whistles, vocals; Sebastian Bibb-Barrett, trumpet; Brian Gardiner, drums; Rick Pedrosa, pedal steel; Colin Sheridan, electric guitar; Nalin Silva, bass; Maria Karlin, vocals, keys

**Material:** The Moroccan Lounge was temporarily transformed into what felt like the set of a Quentin Tarantino flick, as it was

home to not just one, but three Spaghetti Western-influenced bands, the main course being the Portland-based Federale, led by former Brian Jonestown Massacre bassist, Collin Hegna. Federale takes a more cinematic approach to the genre, employing the trademark whistling, operatic background vocalizations and baritone singing that instantly harken back to the music of Italian composer Ennio Morricone, who scored over 400 pieces of music for film and television since the early '60s, including the soundtrack for *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*.

**Performance:** Where Federale really shine is in their mostly instrumental pieces, as they truly showcase their dynamic range and proficiency in composing absolutely gorgeous soundscapes. Silly as it may sound, Collin Hegna is a master whistler, and he truly captures the essence of the Giallo genre by virtue of his sometimes eerie, foreboding warbling and detailed storytelling, with brooding themes like murder, revenge and corruption. Background vocalist Maria Karlin stole the show on two or three different occasions when she stepped back from the keys to reveal a resonant, chill-inducing voice that was so incredibly powerful; it literally made the room vibrate.

**Musicianship:** The masterful playing of Bibb-Barrett (formerly of The Builders and the Butchers), Sheridan (formerly of The High Violets), Gardiner, Silva, Karlin and Pedrosa give Federale a unique color and texture, and create a moody atmosphere around Hegna that envelopes him, rather than overshadows him as a vocalist. This caliber of musicianship you don't come across often, and for these stellar players to put their skills to use in such an uncommon fashion made it all the more interesting to watch.

**Summary:** The night in its entirety was one for the books in terms of its overall uniqueness, but the music of Federale stood out as the most emotive, thematic and musically expressive act of the evening. As exciting and breathtaking as this was to watch and experience live, it would also be a thing of beauty to hear their music as it narrates a pivotal scene in a major feature film. — **Alex Calise**

**The Canyon Club** Montclair, CA

**Contact:** steve@firesetsfire.com  
**Web:** firesetsfire.com

**Players:** Matt Patin, vocals; Steve Garth, guitar; Brooks Larson, guitar; Ray Solario, bass; Shane Caldwell, drums.

**Material:** From the barefoot acrobatics of lead vocalist Matt Patin, to the driving bass and drum lines throughout their show, Los Angeles-based FIRE sets FIRE is spirited and entertaining. The powerful rhythm creates a solid foundation on which the band's surprising harmonic melodies and strong emotive lyrics are built. From the dark undertones of "Angry Boy" to the alluring Pink Floyd/Zepplinesque opening notes of "Fire Sets Fire," the group offers a riveting and varied musical conversation.

**Musicianship:** The brainchild of guitarists, Steve Garth and Brooks Larson, FIRE sets FIRE presents a balanced interplay of rhythm, based on the tight paradiddle work of drummer Shane Caldwell and the confident vocal delivery of frontman Matt Patin. The flying fingers of guitarist Brooks Larson on "Angry Boy" overlay beautiful melodic vocal lines, and Steve Garth's wailing guitar solos on "Fire Sets Fire" show a Les Paul vibrancy. All on stage are clearly invested and enjoying themselves, and there exists an air of vulnerability to the entire set.

**Performance:** A cinematic opening of recorded symphonic sound adds to the intense feel of opener "Waiting" when the guitars and drums



kick in, with angst and palpable irritation coming through on "Angry Boy" and "Speechless America." Most surprising, given the overall heavy rock flavor, was the layered vocal harmony in songs, "Angry Boy," with its opening a cappella lines, and in the trademark track, "Fire Sets Fire," the latter a clear crowd favorite showcasing Patin's vocal stylings and the group's overall passion for the music they create.

**Summary:** With alternating growling and sensitive vocal lines, dotted drumline rhythms and intermittent screaming guitar licks, FIRE sets FIRE radiates frenetic energy with a nod to Godsmack, Disturbed and the Kings of Leon. The obvious musical respect between players on the stage presents an honest delivery of original hard rock, making this band a great backdrop to a lively night out with friends. — **Andrea Beenham**

**P.J.'s Lager House** *Detroit, MI*

**Contact:** christophercasello@comcast.net

**Web:** chriscasello.com

**Players:** Chris Casello, guitars, vocals; Tammi Savoy, lead vocals; Jesse Woelfel, stand up bass, vocals; Russ Deluca, drums, vocals

**Material:** Attending a Chris Casello show is like ear candy for vintage guitar-oriented enthusiasts. The band takes you on a two-hour journey that ignites the senses and gets you on the dance floor. Original tunes like "Opus de Otis" and "Fine and Dandy" span the gamut from swinging rock and blues to pedal steel country flavorings. Classic American Songbook contributions come by way of gems from Duke Ellington, Sarah Vaughan, Esther Phillips, Gary U.S. Bonds and Willie Dixon.

**Musicianship:** This combo is a road-tested quartet that plays off each other's energy and freely transmits it to the crowd. Casello is a consummate showman and a complete guitarist. He embodies the chops, wit and charisma of all the masters, from Les Paul and James Burton to Stevie Ray Vaughan and Brian Setzer. Lead vocalist Tammi Savoy not only plays the role of elegant chanteuse to the hilt, but she is the real deal. When she sings a tune like Sarah Vaughan's "Whatever Lola Wants" or something by Ruth Brown, she embraces the natural and bluesy essence of the artist and the material.

Meanwhile, you certainly can't stay in



your seat, thanks to bassist Jesse Woelfel and drummer Russ Deluca. From rockabilly rave-ups to gentle ballads they always find a balance and are one of the best rhythm sections on the scene today.

**Performance:** The band opened with an original instrumental that set the night's pace, with a swinging groove. That led to the classic slow and burning "Harlem Nocturne." At this juncture Ms. Savoy entered in a stunning yellow dress and, with her captivating mix of gutsy emotion and mellow phrasing, commanded the room right away. She and Casello really worked well

together on numbers like Willie Dixon's "Ain't Gonna Be Your Monkey Man No More" and their original bopper "Uh-Huh." Also, Casello's fluid maneuvering from standard six-string guitars to pedal steel throughout the night was sonically mind-bending as well as a visual treat.

**Summary:** The Chris Casello Combo is an attraction that is certain to please any audience that digs virtuoso guitar work, timeless songwriting and an upbeat vibe. They are a rough and ready group that is tailor-made for everything from mid-size clubs to festivals, casinos and beyond. — **Eric Harabadian**



**Catalina Bar & Grill** *Hollywood, CA*

**Contact:** Jodi Jackson, Joddith@aol.com

**Web:** tierneysutton.com

**Players:** Tierney Sutton, vocals; Alan Bergman, vocals; Christian Jacob, piano; Kevin Axt, upright bass; Trey Henry, electric bass; Ray Brinker, drums/percussion; Serge Merlaud, guitar

**Material:** With the Grammys and Oscars just weeks away, the versatile veteran jazz vocalist and her seamless, longtime ensemble were all about celebrating her ninth "Best Jazz Vocal Album" nomination for *Screenplay*, their exquisitely produced, imaginatively arranged ode to some of Hollywood's most beautiful, memorable and sometimes quirky film songs.

These ran the gamut from a sly and hypnotic, scat-filled duet with Brinker on "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend" to a feisty, Latin tinged romp through "You're The One That I Want," to a snappy and frequently hilarious stroll through two *Wizard of Oz* songs NOT named "Over The Rainbow" (though that was referenced). The highlight of the set was a suite celebrating "all aspects of Bergman love," featuring classics with lyrics by Alan and Marilyn Bergman. The 94-year old Alan Bergman brought his exquisite, understated voice to several of these and held the audience rapt, singing solo and swinging through another of his classics, "Nice 'N' Easy."

**Performance:** Enjoying the effortless chemistry and snazzy camaraderie between

herself and her highly celebrated ensemble, Sutton is charming, engaging and compelling whether she's expressing the heartfelt intimacy of a ballad, swinging fast with the guys, wrapping her vocals around spiraling electric and acoustic basslines or sharing the funky delights of the Wicked Witch and Scarecrow. With her nimble phrasing and effortless shifts in tone and spirit from tune to tune, she is a master storyteller both as an interpreter and purveyor of colorful anecdotes. Clearly by design, she at times humbly allowed Bergman, one of her songwriting heroes, to take the audience on a whole other journey that she seemed happy to be a part of as well.

**Musicianship:** Formed over two decades ago, The Tierney Sutton Band has been a mainstay on the jazz scene, thanks to that batch of Grammy nominated recordings and fresh, colorful arrangements that allow Sutton and her crystalline voice to mine multiple shades of emotional gold from songs people think they know, yet understand more intimately and dynamically thanks to her approach. In addition to dynamic harmonies and grooves from her core band, she also effectively showcased her husband, electric guitarist Serge Merlaud, on a few numbers.

**Summary:** Some of the most enduring popular songs of the past century originated in films, and Sutton and her wonderful band celebrated this legacy with an eclectic set full of tears, laughter, wonder and surprises. She closed with another Bergman gem, "The Way We Were," hopefully setting the stage for more Hollywood swinging to come in the future.

— **Jonathan Widran**



# THE OCCASIONAL MOONLIGHT

MIGUEL COSTA

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**Players:** Ryan Rawlings, vocals, acoustic guitar

**Material:** There's such symmetry in the way Ryan Rawlings sings a sad song at a live show. The blue acoustic guitar that he strums is symbolic of the mood that he sets as he looks down at the ground and howls the introspective

lyrics to indie-folk songs like "Isolation" and "With All My Might." The stories behind the music from his debut album (*Nobody Knows This Is Everywhere*) run so deep that you would think he has lived an entire lifetime already. And in a way, he has. As a teenager, Ryan Rawlings was the charismatic lead signer of two heavy metal bands. But as the decade passed, he slowly evolved into a folk singer and decided to go solo under a new stage moniker, The Occasional Moonlight.

**Musicianship:** Many of the compositions written by this artist are contemplative tracks about heartbreak and love. His songs are a mixture of indie-folk, blues-rock, folk rock, neofolk and Americana music. In that regard his songwriting is comparable to bands like The Lumineers. Nevertheless, The Occasional Moonlight's best attribute during live shows is his vocal range. The Maryland native highlights that notion quite well when he sings in his falsetto during the performance of a folk-pop track called "Love Song."

**Performance:** The artist sat on an old wooden chair as he sang eight songs in the venue's back room. This was very appropriate for an acoustic set with such personable lyrical content. He sang softly throughout the duration of his show, but occasionally belted out the high notes. Such was the case during his cover of a Jason Isbell track called "Elephant." With every song that Rawlings played it seemed as if he were revealing a very delicate layer of his personal life experiences.

**Summary:** The Occasional Moonlight obliged his onlookers with an encore by saying: "This is a sweeter song, but it also ends in death." That sentence could easily be the name of his next album. Because it was funny, deep and very serious all in one breathe. In the future it would be nice to see him sing a duet or two with a female collaborator, a component that would bring a whole new dimension to his songs.

— Miguel Costa

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**Players:** Mark Oblinger, acoustic guitar, vocals; Chris Daniels, electric guitar, mandolin; vocals; Linda Lawson, vocals

**Material:** After logging years on national tours, backing artists like Garth Brooks, Amy Grant and Pure Prairie League—not to mention a few Emmy's for songwriting—Mark Oblinger has added solo performing songwriter to his resume. While on a tour in 2015, Oblinger began presenting his own material, transforming himself from a backing artist to a solo one. Straddling country rock, blues and folk, these genres serve as a foundation for themes addressing an array of human struggles, from love lost, to various soul-searching endeavors. Somber at times, the lyrics are conversely laced with silver linings.

In "Pressure Makes Diamonds," when life gives you lemons, make lemonade, or in this case, diamonds: *Sometimes your world just falls apart/bust at the seams/leaves you nothing left to chase but empty dreams.../pressure makes diamonds...* In "No Regrets," perhaps the most commercial of the set, though ultimately we don't get what we want, we don't mourn it: *Time comes again/it's right here my friend/it's not what you choose/no more what you lose/when time comes and takes your "Little Bird" tells us to get off the fence and fly, an apt metaphor for taking chances and going after what you want.*

**Musicianship:** Keeping company with the musicians that he has, it's no surprise that Oblinger is a top-shelf musician. With spot-on



# MARK OBLINGER

MARK SHLOWITZ

guitar work and a voice that's easy on the ears, he has proven technical skills. Both Daniels and Lawson, each a strong vocalist in their own right, along with Oblinger, create a smooth and consistent harmonic balance. Daniels delivered a rockin' mandolin solo in "No Regrets."

**Performance:** Sidemen have the unique vantage point of observing the headliner while making vital contributions; perhaps even learning through osmosis; however, one step away from that spotlight can be a bigger leap than it appears. While Oblinger's affable

presentation connected with the audience, he can afford to step out and own the stage even more, while still maintaining his mild-mannered vibe. Throwing in one big cover song in his genre would also go a long way to getting more fans on board with his originals.

**Summary:** Mark Oblinger is a musician of high caliber who pens thoughtful and intelligent songs. The more time he devotes to solo shows will give him the opportunity to fully grab the spotlight that the role demands.

— Ellen Woloshin

Never sign anything until you have a qualified legal pro look over it first. Expert legal advice is essential to any successful career, and this exclusive MC list—updated for 2020—will help you connect with an attorney who can advocate for you.

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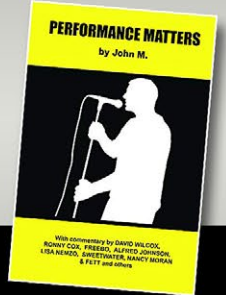
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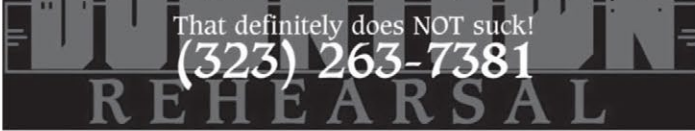
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# DIY Bundling

The ever-changing landscape in the music industry requires musicians to be extra creative—with their music, of course, but also with the business side.

Free streaming has altered musicians' bottom line so dramatically that today, music itself is the least profit-generating product an artist can offer. With abysmal payouts from streaming services like Apple and Spotify, even huge-name acts like Cardi B, Taylor Swift and DJ Khaled have turned to "bundling" their music with other items like T-shirts, concert tickets or even energy drinks to drive sales.

Up-and-coming acts can—and should—be doing the same, because this alternate revenue source can be truly empowering. Streaming services may control payouts, but artists still control what merchandise they sell, and for what price.

In the simplest terms, bundling is packaging a digital music project with physical merchandise. It's a good idea to set up a merch table at your shows, but artists should also be making the most of available tech to engage with fans and sell their items by using a three-pronged approach: social media for building a fan base, websites to connect with those fans, and a drop-ship company to efficiently get your merch into their hands.

Though growing in popularity, bundling as a practice has been very polarizing in the music community. After initial hesitancy to embrace it back in the '90s when Prince essentially created the first bundle, execs now encourage top-tier acts to package merch with their music. We are now living in the era of the bundle, from legacy acts like Bon Jovi and Queen packing concert tickets with their music to Ariana Grande selling music-inspired jewelry with her albums.

Some insiders have griped about how these sales impact the Billboard charts, and Billboard has not definitively ruled on which items can be bundled and still count towards album sales. For example, earlier this year, DJ Khaled threatened to sue Billboard after his *Father of Asahd*/energy drink album bundle was disqualified, while his Billboard No. 1 rival for the week, Tyler The Creator, beat him with the *IGOR* album, packaged with clothing.

Last year, there was also a very public dispute between Nicki Minaj and Travis Scott when both artists were neck-and-neck in competition for a Billboard No. 1. Scott wound up edging out Minaj, due in large part to his "Season Pass" bundle, which offered both limited-edition T-shirts and early access to performances.

While many other artists offer similar bundles, the real controversy stemmed from the fact that Scott sold over 50,000 of these bundles without requiring fans to redeem the album and with no set touring schedule. Minaj's side argued that Scott's 50,000 Billboard-certified units weren't really music sales, but simply sales of merchandise and a theoretical promise of tickets to shows that hadn't even been scheduled yet.

Despite the controversy, bundling can provide distinct advantages for musicians. For example, an artist may produce a music project and retail it through their website for \$10. They can also offer a band T-shirt, which may cost just \$10 to produce, at a retail price of \$35. The artist can then offer a discount: fans who opt for the music-plus-shirt bundle will pay only \$30. That bundle nets \$10 on each sale (\$30 retail minus the

\$20 production cost). Many fans would be incentivized to buy the bundle because of the discount and, because...hey..., artist merch is cool!

However, keep in mind that though it's great to bring in as much money on a project as possible, it's more important for a developing act to view bundling simply as a promotion game. Your primary objective as a professional musician is to use any means at your disposal to bring awareness to your art. The more energy you can direct towards your music, the better your odds of not getting lost in the crowd.

That said, a unique bundle will help get people talking and sharing photos on social media, which means more opportunities for further promotion. For example, Paul McCartney's most recent album, *Egypt*

*Station*, was available in a bundle with a small suitcase, "train tickets" and a map. Taylor Swift's merch includes a heart-shaped purse. Beyonce sells phone cases. T-shirts are always popular, but if you are able to do something creative that ties in with your music, it's something to consider.

During the process, another way musicians can keep the focus more on their art and less on the T-shirt business is by using a drop shipper. A drop shipper is a wholesale company that can receive orders from a seller (that would be you), and handle creating, storing, packing and shipping your merch to fans.

The advantage of working with a reputable drop shipper is that someone other than you is manufacturing your bundles. You won't need to hold physical inventory, and your orders will be tracked and managed independently.

Unlike a show merch table, a drop shipper allows online sales to happen anywhere, any time. Some drop shippers will create an online store page for you (for a fee, of course), and many will accept orders placed through a Shopify shopping cart that you can integrate into your band's website yourself.

There are also cons to using a drop shipper, most notably the lack of control over the quality and timeliness of your shipping. Also, your profit margins will be

somewhat lower than if you packaged and sold your items directly to your fans.

Of course, more people will know about your merch bundle if you promote it on social media, with plenty of photos. Don't be shy about letting existing and potential fans know what you have to offer through every social media channel available.

After you've recorded, mixed and mastered your new smash project, brainstorm on a unique item or complimentary, novel event or service to offer with your music. The big name artists are doing it, and you can too.



*"With abysmal payouts from streaming services like Apple and Spotify, even huge-name acts like Cardi B, Taylor Swift and DJ Khaled have turned to "bundling" their music with other items like T-shirts, concert tickets or even energy drinks to drive sales."*

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